

Shoots tire of fleeing vehicle, pharmacist faces police charges

By Eileen Argyris

Last Thursday morning, some downtown residents were awakened before 4 a.m. to the unaccustomed sound of gunfire in the streets of Colborne.

The shots were fired by Colborne pharmacist, Steve Bowskill, whose business, Downey Pharmacy, was being robbed. It has been the target of eight robberies in since December, 1991.

"We have not been able to get this stopped. At the rate we're going I don't think there's any small business that could withstand this kind of losses," says the pharmacist.

Eight break-ins, insurance cancelled

Mr. Bowskill says he has lost goods (mainly drugs and tobacco products) worth over \$15,000, as a result of his numerous break-ins.

In addition, the insurance company he has used for 14 years, since he took over the Colborne business, has cancelled his coverage.

After a lot of searching, he finally found a company that would take the risk of insuring him — but they are charging him premiums of \$8,000 a year.

So, he says, when he heard a noise and realized someone was breaking into his drugstore yet again, he says he just couldn't turn over in bed and go back to sleep.

The noise was caused by the suspects prying open the front door. Once they gained access, they went straight to the drug counter, Mr. Bowskill said.

The \$5,000 burglar alarm he has installed in the store was set off by their shadows and movement.

Mr. Bowskill, armed with a gun, entered the store and ordered the balaclava-clad men to stop where they were.

"I did not point the gun at them," he insists.

They did not stop, but ran out the back way into an alley behind the store. Mr. Bowskill pursued.

A van was parked on Victoria Square, he says, and the fleeing

suspects got in.

Mr. Bowskill, who is a collector of firearms and a marksman, fired and hit the rear tire of the escape vehicle.

He then pursued the van in his own car, but, because his car had to be unlocked and started up, the getaway van got a head-start, going north on Percy Street.

From his car-phone, he called the police and described the vehicle and the route it was taking. He lost the suspects somewhere south of Castleton.

This time, the suspects took "several hundred dollars worth of drugs," said the pharmacist, but he feels certain that it would have been more, if he had not interrupted them at work.

"Pharmacies are targets" for break-and-entries, he said, "because of the cigarettes and the drugs."

He said his own store has been hit so many times because of its "strategic location between two OPP districts (Cobourg and Brighton). The police response time, at best, is far more than what they need (to get away)."

As well, Colborne offers ready access to

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Preventive measures — Colborne pharmacy owner Steve Bowskill erects a protective 'cage' around his tobacco counter every night. He has a burglar alarm and good locks, but he is a continual target for robberies. Photo by Eileen Argyris

COLBORNE CHRONICLE FEB 22/94