



By King Wekenmann

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K-9 Lion?

This is a true and funny story about Jupiter's K-9 Lion.

I remember that on one Sunday morning, myself and another officer (Tim Furey) received a call that there was a Lion loose on the 300 block of Indiantown Rd., on the South side of the roadway, behind the alley.

Now I admit that police receive many a strange call, but a loose Lion in Jupiter? That was not a call normally heard. So I asked the dispatcher:

"203 Jupiter, did you say there was a Lion that was loose, or do you mean there is a bob cat in the area?"

The dispatcher answered:

"203 that is confirmed, it is a Lion that is loose. Like in African Wildcat."

Now I have to tell you, that this call made me a little nervous. Officer Tim Furey and I responded to the call. Well, sure enough when we arrived, we were able to confirm that it was a Lion: A real live African Lion was loose in Jupiter. We just sat in our cars looking at the Lion wondering if we should get out of our cars. It looked to be just getting out of cub stage and not quite a year old yet. We felt that it was okay, we can get out of our cars and who ever does not get mauled, can do the shooting, if necessary. The Lion went running up to Officer Furey and started nuzzling him (Thank God it was not me!). I told Officer Furey that the Lion probably was looking for breakfast and was looking at him first. That was fine with me.

As it turned out the Lion was friendly. We quickly learned that there was a new exotic pet shop that was setting up on the 300 block of Indiantown Rd. We contacted the Florida Wildlife commission who came to investigate. They found out that the guy who was opening the shop did not carry the exotic license required to have certain types of pets, such as Lions.

Officer Furey put the Lion in the back of his cruiser while we waited for the owner to show up. We received an emergency call to back up the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office off a call at Limestone creek Rd. We proceeded there and drew quite a crowd with the Lion in the back seat. People asked us why we had a Lion in the car. Now I am not sure who answered first, Officer Furey or the Deputy. But the answer that went out to the on-lookers is that the Jupiter Police Department had a K-9 Lion. When we got back with the Florida Wild Life Officer, he took custody of the Lion and the store owner for violation of exotic license law.

We didn't think much more about the Lion after that call, but as we were answering calls during the week, we had a lot of questions about our K-9 Lion. So we kept it up for a while letting the bad guys believe that we had a K-9 Lion. But after the story came out in the local newspaper, it wasn't believed any longer.