

RUNNING AT NIGHT

By James Collins

John was a big, rugged man. He stood 5 foot 10 and weighed over 200 pounds. He was a weightlifter an outdoorsman, a hunter and a biker. To keep in shape, he went on a regular regimen. Each night, John would run three to four miles. Usually he started his run about seven o'clock and ended around eight. John looked like a regular blue-collar New Hampshire worker, but looks can be deceiving. He had a PhD in physics and was intelligent, inquisitive and innovative. He also was witty with a quirky sense of humor.

One night in the middle of the week, John went into his garage to get his reflective vest. It was time for the nightly run. John searched every inch of the garage, but could not find the vest. He assumed his son, who had left two hours ago for work, left it in the back of his truck. This fact did not faze John. He reasoned I need a reflective unit on my body for safety purposes; what else is in this garage that I can use? John had an idea. He got a flashlight turned off the lights and scanned the inside of the garage with the flashlight beam. He got his answer. Several years before the state of New Hampshire had converted to reflective license plates. New Hampshire also changed the license plate each year. Therefore, John had three sets of reflective plates hanging on the wall. Now, John had his reflective material, but how would he attach them? After a few minutes using some string, wire and a pair of wire cutters, John was able to rig a plate on his chest and a plate on his back. He was ready to roll.

Manchester Road is a bucolic two-lane road winding through the New Hampshire woods. John was on the left hand side facing traffic for safety purposes and ran on the edge of the road. He was happy.

Driving home from work, Phil Smith spotted an unusual apparition. There was a man built like a small truck wearing a license plate on his chest running alongside the road. When he looked in the rearview mirror, he noticed that there was another plate on his back. He reached for his cell phone and dialed 911.

Patrol officer Johnson received the call of a suspicious person wearing license plates running down Manchester Road in the dark. He went to investigate.

John was into his routine chugging along the road just raising a sweat. A squad car came up from behind him and that officer leaned out the window and politely said, "Sir, could you pull over to the side of the road so we could chat"

"Certainly," said John as he trotted over to the other side of the road.

Patrol officer Johnson got out of the car and walked over to John. "We received a report of a suspicious person running down this road wearing license plates, and I was asked to investigate."

"Well I haven't seen anyone make matching that description and I've been running here for the last half-hour. As far as I know I am the only one wearing license plates running down this road. However, I am not breaking any laws. The license plates are mine. I bought them from the state to register my car. I

know they're out of date but I don't think I'm required to wear current license plates when I'm running so I don't believe there's any problem here."

"Sir, you are correct but could you please explain why you are wearing the plates in the first place?"

John gave the patrol officer his entire story; the missing reflective vest; the need to run every night; the search for a safety reflective color cover and finally, how he attached the license plates. The officer listened intently to the story, nodded at the appropriate times, and kept biting his lip to keep from laughing. He then thanked John for his explanation, climbed back into his car and John resumed his run.

I would have loved to be a fly on the wall when the patrol officer got back to the station house and related the tale of the runner wearing license plates. It is great to live in New Hampshire, where the motto is 'Live Free or Die'. It attracts unusual people with amazing imaginations and it keeps life interesting.

THE END