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From the Desk of:
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NEWS RELEASE

Wilmette Police Charge Homeowner with Violations of State Firearm Owners Identification Act, and Village Ordinance Regarding Possession of Handguns

Today the Wilmette Police charged **Hale L. DeMar, 35 Linden Ave., Wilmette** with violating the Illinois State law that requires a firearm owner to have a valid Firearm Owner's Identification card. Mr. DeMar was also cited under the Wilmette Village Code for possessing two handguns in violation of the ordinance prohibiting possession of handguns in Wilmette. The State charge is a misdemeanor and the initial court date is February 6, 2004 in Skokie at 10:30 AM in room 106. The Village ordinance violation is a petty offense carrying a maximum fine of \$750 if convicted and the initial court date is February 6, 2004 at 9:00 AM in room 102.

Mr. DeMar is charged with violating these laws by virtue of being in possession of two handguns on December 29, 2003 in violation of State law and Village ordinances. On that date at 10:30 PM, he confronted an intruder on the first floor of his home and fired four shots, two of which hit the intruder. The burglar, Morio Billings, is being held on \$3 million bond pending trial for two charges of Residential Burglary and one charge of Possession of a Stolen Motor Vehicle.

Chief of Police George Carpenter said the Police Department's first priority was to thoroughly investigate all of the circumstances surrounding the events of December 29, and to successfully prosecute Billings, who has a lengthy criminal history. However, Mr. DeMar is also accountable for violating both the State law and Village ordinance, and these laws must be enforced as well.

"It would be unfortunate and potentially tragic to conclude from this incident that Wilmette families will be safer if they keep a handgun in their homes", said Chief Carpenter. "The opposite is true. Wilmette families are in greater danger if they keep a handgun at home. The Wilmette Police experience is that a handgun in this community is far more likely to be

- Stolen, or
- Used in a domestic argument, or
- Used in a suicide attempt, or
- Accidentally discharged in the home

than it is to be used in self-defense. If a resident believes there is an intruder in their home late at night, choosing to use a handgun actually reduces your family's safety. We want the Wilmette resident instead to immediately lock the door to their bedroom and dial 9-1-1, which will connect them in seconds to telecommunicators at the Wilmette

Police Department. These experienced professionals will keep you on the line giving instructions, and will ask relevant, important questions designed to result in a quick and effective police response. Your family's safety is far more likely to be preserved by calling 9-1-1, and allowing experienced police officers to search your home, than by arming yourself and searching your home in the dark without calling police", said Carpenter.

The Wilmette Police are preparing a public education campaign to better educate residents about its handgun ordinance and about family safety during an emergency. That campaign will include cable television programming, web site information (www.Wilmette.com/police), news releases to the Pioneer Press Wilmette Life and other events.