

York Dispatch

Noise complaint leads to 5-hour impasse, morning arrest

By CHRISTINA KAUFFMAN *The York Dispatch*

Monday, May 23, 2005 - A five-hour standoff in the 600 block of Salem Avenue in York City that began when police responded to a noise complaint ended this morning after officers fired tear gas into the house and the man surrendered to police.

When York City Police responded to the noise complaint around midnight, Scott Wertz, who shares a first-floor apartment at 634 Salem Ave. with his mother, Wendy Wertz, fired several shots at the officers, said York City Police Capt. David Arnold. The bullets ricocheted off the officers' body shields; no officers were injured.

Wendy Wertz was standing in front of a neighbor's house in a baby blue nightgown. After the county's Quick Response Team arrived at the scene, she became upset and police moved her to their command center, out of sight from the house.

Several neighbors -- some standing outside in nightgowns and bare feet after being told to evacuate their homes -- said Wertz had been fighting with his mother and yelling to rap music earlier in the evening.

Scott Wertz's screams and the bass of rap music could be heard outside the house for hours after officers surrounded the house.

Several blocks around the scene were blocked from traffic, and residents were either kept inside their homes or asked to leave their homes for their safety.

Randall Doyle Sr., who lives at 636 Salem Ave., said he and his three children were asleep when police knocked on the door shortly after midnight and evacuated the family. A little while earlier, Doyle's son, 15-year-old Randall Doyle Jr., said he heard several "cracks" that sounded like gunfire as he lay in his bed.

Randall Doyle Sr. said it was not unusual for Wertz to blast his stereo and loudly sing along to the music.

Attempts to negotiate: Police officers moved silently around the property for about three hours before police started talking to Wertz.

An officer asked Wertz, who is in his 20s, what he wanted. Wertz apparently replied that he would like a drink, because the officer said he could get him a drink if he dropped the gun out of the window and came out of the house.

But Wertz refused.

Police brought in a negotiator who had been talking to Wertz on the phone. For about an hour-and-a-half, Newberry Township Police Sgt. Jay Smith talked to Wertz.

"I promise nobody's gonna hurt you," Smith said. "I don't even have a weapon. I use my voice as a weapon." He told Wertz that he wanted to get him help for the problems he has with his mom and his girlfriend and their baby.

"Nobody's gonna hurt you, and we're gonna get you a drink," Smith said. "I know you're upset and you're probably scared, too."

About 5 a.m., police fired two shots of tear gas into the house.

"Come out the window with your hands up," officers screamed a couple of times.

Minutes later, police arrested Wertz in the rear of the house.

He was taken to York Hospital for observation, Arnold said.

No charges were filed at press time, but York City Capt. Bruce Veseth said Wertz will likely be charged with aggravated assault today.

Veseth said that because the officers were not injured, it is not clear whether they will be placed on leave.

Fire personnel assisted on the call.

-- Staff writer Elizabeth Evans contributed to this report.