

The Columbus Dispatch

February 20, 1997Pg. 8-C

Shootout suspects last seen at rural campground

■ The two men may have used a stolen 1985 Oldsmobile Cutlass to escape from the Wilmington area.

By Jim Woods

Dispatch Staff Reporter

CHILLICOTHE, Ohio — Two men being sought for their involvement in two shootouts with law enforcement officers in Wilmington Saturday were sighted at a campground Sunday evening, Ross County Sheriff Ron Nichols said. Nichols said his department also is trying to determine if a black 1985 Oldsmobile Cutlass found Tuesday in an IGA parking lot in Frankfort could have been used by the gunmen as a getaway vehicle from

Wilmington. "One of the fugitives, the driver of a 1977 Chevrolet Suburban, told a State Highway Patrol trooper during a traffic stop Saturday in Wilmington that he worked in the Ross County area. 'I am working in Chillicothe right now at a campground down there,' he said. The driver's remark can be heard on the patrol cruiser's in-car videotape of the shooting.

Nichols said the pair, who have yet to be found or charged, were spotted at the Lake Hill Campgrounds in rural Ross County. Nichols said they were seen leaving Sunday night.

Authorities have not released a description of either man or revealed who spotted the pair.

Nichols said the owner of the Cutlass is deceased. He said the vehicle was being stored by a relative in a barn a few miles outside of Wilmington. The barn's owner wasn't aware the car was missing until notified by authorities Tuesday. Deputies found the keys in the car, Nichols said.

Detective Nick Franklin said the car was being discussed for fingerprints. He said no witnesses have been found who saw the two men in the car.

Patrol Sgt. John Born said he cannot answer questions about the possible Ross County connection. Born said the patrol is closer to making an identification.

"We have been close to not only identifying them but locating them," Born said.

A remark on the videotape indicates they may be related. The trooper can be heard responding to an unidentifiable remark from one of the men, "Well, it's OK to be his brother-in-law."

The two men were in the Suburban with Washington state plates when the trooper stopped them for a registration violation at 1:30 p.m. Saturday on Rt. 73. The driver ran from the trooper and got back in the Suburban while the passenger exchanged shots with the trooper and a Clinton County deputy sheriff. The passenger fled on foot and the driver sped off.

Minutes later, a Wilmington police officer and the

driver exchanged shots at a parking lot off Main Street, injuring a passerby. The driver got away on foot.

The video recording of the first shooting has produced several tips, Born said.

The video was shown yesterday on Good Morning America and The Today Show. Born was interviewed on both shows.

Dick Coffey, a Spokane, Wash., police spokesman, confirmed that the Suburban abandoned in Wilmington was registered to a Jacob Settle of Priest River, Idaho.

Settle is a former Winthrop, Wash., police officer who is known to have been affiliated with the Aryan Nations, a white supremacist group, the Spokane

Spokesman-Review newspaper reported yesterday.

Born said weapons and ammunition were found in the Suburban.

■ The Supreme Court has ruled that passengers can be ordered out of a vehicle during traffic stops / 10A