

Couple leads police on chase after failing to stop in Austin

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An Austin couple who allegedly tried to outrun police on Wednesday, May 6, entered not guilty pleas to charges filed against them in Scott Superior Court.

Michael S. Kemper, 28, and his wife, Tammy Kemper, 31, were charged after purportedly being involved in an incident of vandalism and fleeing in the early morning hours of May 6.

According to the probable cause affidavit prepared by Austin Patrolman Robert Gudgel, the officer located the couple as he was traveling to investigate a report of vehicle vandalism that had occurred shortly after 3 a.m. in the Spicertown section of Austin. The dispatch had described a dark-colored Dodge Caravan with a driver side brake light out having been involved in vandalism. Reportedly, Michael Kemper had broken front and rear windows and a rear hatch window in a parked Chevy Trailblazer near Spicer Drive.

Spotting a mini-van answering the description going north on Dowling Drive, the officer turned on his emergency lights and siren and pursued the van as it turned westbound onto State Road 256. He said he followed it, speed at times reaching 90 mph. It then turned north onto State Road 39 and then east onto County Road 600 South in Jackson County. Speeds at that time were around 60 mph, the officer noted.

Eventually, the mini-van was stopped by Crothersville Police Chief Vurlin McIntosh. Chief McIntosh had heard dispatches on the pursuit and blocked the county road with his patrol car. The van stopped about 30 feet from the police vehicle, and Michael Kemper reportedly got out clutching the couple's 15-month-old child in his arms, running into a nearby woods.

Police officers searched for him and the toddler without success. A Seymour Police Department canine unit was called to the scene. After two hours of searching, the man and his child were found in a pond in about four to five feet of water. The youngster was wearing a t-shirt and a diaper.

Tammy Kemper was the driver of the mini-van. She was placed into custody on a charge of fleeing law enforcement, a Class D felony. Michael Kemper was charged with criminal mischief, a misdemeanor. Their child was turned over to Child Protective Services.

At her initial court hearing on May 7 before Judge Nicholas South, Tammy Kemper was assigned a jury trial date of August 18. Her husband appeared before Judge South on May 8. His trial date is August 20. Tammy Kemper's bail was set at \$15,000 corporate surety or 10% cash.

Additionally, Scott County Deputy Prosecutor Chris Owens filed a State's petition for detainer and/or greater than standard bond against Michael Kemper. The petition was granted by Judge South, allowing the man to be held for 15 days without bond and thereafter his bail will be \$10,000 corporate surety or \$1,000 cash.

Additional charges against the couple are pending in both Scott and Jackson counties, according to sources.

Public defenders were appointed to assist each of the defendants.