

Dispute results in arrest

By Chris Butler

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A minor dispute between two men at the Sonic on Farmerville Highway turned violent last week, and that resulted in Ruston police officers arresting and charging one man with aggravated assault with a firearm.

Officers arrested Jesse Earl Otwell, 58, of Dubach, after he allegedly took a small handgun out at the drive-in restaurant and punched another man with his fist, said Lt. Curtis Hawkins, spokesman for the Ruston Police Department.

Otwell and the other man were not together at the restaurant, but the two quarreled about the headlights on the other man's vehicle, Hawkins said.

"This was a very silly and unnecessary thing that happened. This whole incident elevated to a state where someone could have gotten killed or injured," Hawkins said.

The first man reportedly parked his vehicle at Sonic without turning his vehicle's fog lights off. The lights were blinding other customers, and Otwell complained to a Sonic employee, Hawkins said.

A Sonic employee told the first man about Otwell's complaint and asked him to turn his headlights off. That's when the man reportedly used his hand to extend an obscene gesture toward Otwell's vehicle. Otwell then got out of his car and approached the man. That man then pulled a large knife out, Hawkins said.

"Otwell then reached into his own pocket and pulled out a (small handgun) and held it to the man's head. Otwell then struck the other man in the head with his fist and ran back to his car before leaving the area," Hawkins said.

Police officers responded to a call about a man waving a gun at the restaurant, but Otwell had already left the scene. Someone at the restaurant, however, had Otwell's license plate number and gave it to police. Police used that information and found Otwell at his home, Hawkins said.

Officers arrested Otwell and charged him with aggravated assault with a firearm and simple battery.