

A Tragic Night

In 1972, BNDD New York's Group #21 was supervised by a likable ex-Marine Sergeant named Tommy Devine. A large and balding man in his early thirties, Tommy incorporated an Irish sense of humor and a no nonsense attitude when it came to the "job." And in the winter of that year, the lives of his loving wife and children would be forever altered.

Two adjoining rooms had been secured on an upper floor in New York's west side Sheraton Hotel for the "deal." One room was to be used by the undercover, Special Agent Frank Tumillo, to "flash" the money while the other, occupied by Tommy and a few of his agents, would provide security. To Tommy's personal satisfaction, the first part of the plan went well. The two hispanic cocaine traffickers had showed up at the UC (undercover) room on time and were "flashed" the money without incident; if they had any intention of "ripping off" the undercover that would have been the best time to do it. However, the two drug dealers left peacefully to get the kilograms of cocaine.

Policy required, as it still does, that large "flashrolls" be scrupulously guarded. So the door separating the rooms was opened and the money was removed and handed over to agents on another floor for safekeeping. Meanwhile, the two traffickers took an elevator to the lobby and it is now speculated that they returned to their vehicle to get weapons.

A few minutes later when the surveillance agents in the lobby observed that the two drug traffickers had returned without any "packages" and had gotten on an elevator, they frantically tried to call the rooms above. However fate had dealt them a losing hand; the line to the undercover room was dead and the telephone in the surveillance room was busy.

Unaware that the hispanics had returned, Special Agent Tumillo answered the knock on the door and then slowly backed

across the room with his hands in the air. Seeing the plight of the undercover through the still opened door, Tommy Devine rushed in and was immediately shot in the leg by one of the startled "rip off" men. Falling to the floor, Tommy's body blocked the doorway between the rooms. Instantly, Special Agent Frank Tumillo lunged at the other theif and was shot through the heart.

After viciously shooting Tommy again, his assailant picked up Tommy's automatic from the floor and tried to flee from the room with his partner only to come face to face with Special Agent Paul Sennet, a BNDD agent for only a little over a month, and Group Supervisor Ron Caffrey. Pointing Tommy's automatic at Paul Sennet's head, the excited shooter pulled the trigger. But God smiled on Paul and the gun didn't go off; providence had interceded and Tommy had left its safety on. Without hesitation, Special Agent Paul Sennet gunned down his would be murderer.

Almost simultaneously, Group Supervisor Ron Caffrey, who was Tommy Devine's best friend, angrily emptied his .38 caliber revolver into the body of the other "scumbag." And when the smoke and smell of cordite had settled in the air, three bodies lay forever motionless on the floor and Tommy Devine was paralyzed for life. Years later, a heroic Tommy Devine would also succumb to the wounds he received on that tragic night in 1972.

Tommy Devine's son is now a member of the New York City Police Department.

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