

Snake Bitten

"Some agents are just snake bitten," BNDD (Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs) agents often said about Special Agent Jeffrey Hall. It something bad was going to happen, it would most likely happen to the boyish looking five foot eight Harvard graduate. However the taking of a human life, no matter how justified, is about the most unpleasant and tragic occurrence an agent could experience.

So when Special Agent Jeffery Hall opened the morning paper on June 1, 1973, he decided that the following article would not be part of his scrap book.

Gunned down in drug bust

A Puerto Rican national was shot to death in an Elmhurst apartment yesterday after he allegedly drew a gun on Federal Narcotics and Dangerous Drug agents.

Wilfredo Reyes, 28, of 32-25 93rd St., Jackson Heights, drew and cocked a 9-mm automatic after two undercover agents told him he was under arrest, according to Regional Director Daniel Casey. A third, surveillance agent Jeffery Hall, killed Reyes with one bullet in the head, Casey said.

One of the undercover agents, who was not identified, had arranged to buy a half a kilo of cocaine on a table in front of Reyes, Casey said. The second agent was the there supposedly to provide money for the buy.

Six other agents were in the vicinity of the apartment at 87-41 Elmhurst Ave., in anticipation of a major raid.

Five Argentine nationals near the apartment were arrested, and are to be charged today in Brooklyn Federal Court with conspiracy to violate narcotics laws.

They are Carlos A. Moreno, 26, who lived in the apartment; Jorge R. Nara, 25, of 104-45 43rd Ave., Cornea, a waiter; Francisco A. DeMarco, 25, 41-22 Gleane Street, Elmhurst;

Jose R. Sosa, 20, 1042 Gerard Ave., the Bronx, a prize fighter, and George Caio, 27, of 40-79 Gleane St., Elmhurst.

Moreno and Nara were arrested in the apartment while the others were picked up outside the building.

The case, as most BNDD cases did, began with the introduction of undercover to a narcotic source of supply by an informant. The snitch was Jimmy R., the bartender at the Steak and Brew restaurant where the source, Jorge Nara, worked as a waiter. And since they were coworkers and "friends", Nara unquestionably accepted Jimmy R.'s two "buddies", Special Agent Joe Sullivan and Special Agent Irvin "Herky" Lightcap, as reliable customers.

After a few ounce quantity buys, Joe and Herky went for the brass ring. They asked Jorge Nara for a half kilogram of cocaine. As expected, the over weight hispanic waiter would need a little time, he would have to first speak to his "man" before committing himself to such a large amount.

Days later, the two undercover agents went to see Nara at work to confirm the deal. Special Agents Eddie Cremins and Eddie Magnuson sat at the bar to cover the meet and although they consumed about four Bloody Marys apiece, the five dollar bill placed on the bar was never touched. It would have been "bad business" in Jimmy R.'s eyes to take the agents money since he was being paid handsomely to "rat out" a buffoon like Jorge Nara.

The meet took longer than expected since the restaurant tables were filled and the very busy waiter had to divide his time between delivering delicious charcoal broiled steaks and talking "business" with his two affable cocaine customers. "Forget about a tip for this moron," Herky joked with Joe. "He'll get his tip tomorrow."

The deal was scheduled for the next morning at a "friend's" apartment in Queens and it appeared that Nara's source was going to be there. At eleven AM the following morning, surveillance was initiated in the vicinity of the ground floor apartment located at 87-41 Elmhurst Avenue by GS Ronald Caffrey, S/A Eddie Cremins, S/A Greg Kornloff, S/A Billy Mitchell, S/A Sam Meale, S/A Mike Dunham, and S/A Eddie Magnuson. And when all was in order, GS Caffery called the undercovers onto the scene.

The knock on the door was answered by Jorge Nara and when Special Agents Sullivan and Lightcap stepped into the apartment, they saw Wilfredo Reyes, to their immediate left, seated at the kitchen table. Another hispanic male, Carlos Moreno, was standing nearby. A clear plastic bag containing the white powdery cocaine was in clear view on the table.

Undercovers do not make arrests, it is a pure and simple "no no" in narcotic law enforcement. So Special Agents Sullivan and Lightcap, after examining the "product and making a few comments about its expected purity, excused themselves to get the money which was in their car. "There's three people in the apartment," Special Agent Sullivan transmitted on the car radio. "And there's a door leading to the back yard."

An instant plan was hatched. Special Agents Magnuson and Meale would jump the back yard fence and cover the rear door while Joe and Herky returned to the apartment. The remaining surveillance agents would follow in trace a short distance behind and make the arrests. To ensure that the door would not be shut behind the undercovers, Special Agent Joe Sullivan was to place the attache case allegedly containing the money in the door jam. The plan was simple and covered all the bases.

However the plan needed split second timing and the "arrest team" lagged a little bit too far behind. Standing in front of the table, Joe and Herky waited for a few tense seconds while a bewildered Wilfredo Reyes glared menacingly. Hearing the foot steps coming down the hall, Special Agents Joe Sullivan and Herky Lightcap went for their guns while screaming, "Federal Agents, you're under arrest."

An infinitesimal second behind, a stunned Wilfredo Reyes stood up from the table while drawing and cocking a 9mm automatic pistol just as a "snake bitten" Jeffrey Hall entered the apartment. Hall, reacting instantly, fired one shot from almost point blank range.

In less than twenty seconds it was all over; Nara and Moreno were arrested inside the apartment while the two look outs were rounded up outside. The only good part about the "deal" was that this time the "good guys" walked away unscathed.