



'They're engaging in outright vigilantism and intimidation. I don't care if it's done by someone who calls himself an angel or someone who calls himself a devil — it's still vigilantism.'

— Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward

Ward: Angels Have Dirty Faces



Several Angels watch patrol leader Ramon Mercado talk to a man on West 47th Street Tuesday evening.

Says grand jury should probe Sliwa

This story was reported by Timothy Clifford, Richard Espinoza and Joseph W. Quinn, and was written by Quinn.

Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward launched an all-out verbal assault on the Guardian Angels yesterday, branding them a vigilante mob and calling for a grand jury investigation of their leader, Curtis Sliwa.

He also criticized Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau for refusing to prosecute 11 Angels arrested Tuesday for allegedly bullying two undercover cops in Hell's Kitchen Park, saying the case should have gone before a judge.

"They're engaging in outright vigilantism and intimidation," Ward said. "I don't care if it's done by someone who calls himself an angel or someone who calls himself a devil — it's still vigilantism."

But Sliwa, whose group was asked to patrol the neighborhood around West 48th Street by business owners on crack-infested Restaurant Row, shot back that Ward's attack was just another case of the police refusing to chase the real criminals — the drug dealers.

"I'm calling this the city's 'Week of Shame,'" Sliwa said. "The city has gone after all the major criminals — the food vendors, newsstand operators and Guardian Angels — and let the crack dealers continue to operate out in the open."

Ward, who has been critical of the Angels in the past, turned his angry rhetoric up a notch at St. John's University in Queens, where he gave a graduation speech to 763 Police Academy cadets.

The commissioner called for a grand jury investigation of Sliwa, saying it should focus on the Guardian Angels' source of income and on accusations he has fabricated crimes.

"If you don't investigate them, you only encourage them," Ward said. "No one looked at the Rev. Al Sharpton and now we wish we all had looked at him a few years ago."

Sliwa said he "would welcome an investigation" and volunteered that he

Newsday Photos: Daniel Sheehan

Back on the Mean Streets

Angels say they're filling a void

By Alison Carper

Fresh faced and graceful, Alberto Rosario, 16, rose from a bench in the former Café de France, arranged his red beret and cocked an eye to absorb the latest assignment his mentor, an angel among Guardian Angels, was issuing.

In a moment he would be on the street with seven of his companions to be on alert that he heading west on 46th Street in search of a man with a knife, whose a reported return in the crack-infested Clinton section, reported over the Guardian Angel hot line.

But tonight, between the soft brown curls peeking out under his beret and the golden-fuzz asserting early manhood on his upper lip, Rosario is spun up a pair of the pipe under his eye. Monday the night before, this one, Rosario had spent in jail.

The young Angel was among the 11 Guardian Angels arrested by two police officers posing as homeless men in Hell's Kitchen Park. The officers charged the Angels with threatening and harassing them, seized their hand-dressed brass knuckles and used a German shepherd dog to back the officers against a chain-link fence.

Eighteen hours later, Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau announced he would not prosecute, and all 11 Angels were back on the street.

"All we did was ask them to leave," Rosario said of the confrontation with the undercover officers. "We're always polite. We just talk to people, we don't touch them. We just went up to them and asked them what they were doing there."

By Tuesday night, Rosario, who pro-

Please see PATROL on Page 21



Mercado holds seized crack pipe.

'The city has gone after all the major criminals — the food vendors, newsstand operators and Guardian Angels — and let the crack dealers continue to operate out in the open.'

— Guardian Angels leader Curtis Sliwa



Newsday: Thursday, July 14, 1988

NY 3

Hepatitis Trace in S.I. Beach Vials

By Bob Liff

Two sealed blood vials picked off of Staten Island's Midland Beach, tested positive for the viral antigen associated with hepatitis B, but the vials apparently had been exposed to beach con-

ditions long enough so that the blood was not infectious, city health officials said yesterday.

Dr. Kenneth Dressler, director of the city's Bureau of Laboratories, said the vials tested negative for the HIV anti-

body that signals the presence of the AIDS virus.

"The hepatitis antigen is a little bit more hardy than HIV but it won't endure in the salt water very long," Dressler said. It had been a "lost

specimen, and had that antigen been positive, that could have been an infectious specimen."

It was Dr. Dressler's laboratory that the city learned when its beach was assaulted by an unrelated combination of raw sewage from a Staten Island treatment plant afflicted by a 12-hour power outage, and medical waste.

Working in the busiest AIDS laboratory outside the city blood bank, the AIDS technicians used the Eitest sandwich screening test, which uses chemical enzymes to isolate the HIV antibody. A small amount of an enzyme is inserted into the mixture, and a yellow color would show the possible presence of the HIV antibody.

The stronger the presence of the antibody, the deeper the yellow and the easier to see with the naked eye. Samples are also checked under an optical reader to detect fainter evidence of HIV.

On another floor, technicians in the bureau's water microbiology laboratory were handed samples of sea water gathered in sterile jars by technicians from the Health Department's Public Health Engineering Bureau in New York Bay and at city beaches. Their job was to measure coliform bacterial contamination caused by the Staten Island sewage.

The suspect water is inserted into a lactose mixture in a test tube that has another, smaller test tube upside down in its middle. If the bacteria are present in large amounts, they will produce carbon dioxide that will show up on the inner surface of the upside-down test tube.

Those results are expected this morning.

Sewage Plants Without Backup

SEWAGE from Page 1

Joseph said that sewage plants pose the much more significant public health problem than the threat posed by pollutants, needles and other medical waste that has washed up on the beaches of Staten Island and Long Island.

There are 10 plants, however, to spend an estimated \$5 million it would cost to add backup power to Port Richmond, which had emergency lighting during the blackout. Casey said. However, there was not enough power to run primary and secondary sewage treatment systems that remove 85 percent of the pollutants from the more than 2 million gallons of sewage that flow through the plant every hour.

Casey said it would cost an estimated \$30 million to equip all city sewage treatment plants with backup power systems. According to Con Ed spokeswoman Martha Lipfert, the Port Richmond plant consumes a quantity of electricity equivalent to that used by 1,000 homes.

Three city sewage plants have enough backup power to operate primary and secondary treatment facilities during a blackout. Three others have the ability to operate primary treatment but not secondary in case of a blackout. The city's newest plant in Red Hook, Brooklyn, has the capacity

to continue spraying sewage with disinfecting chlorine if power is lost.

The assessment that backup generators were not needed was made in cooperation with a federally mandated improvement to the 35-year-old Port Richmond plant and the other 11 plants that existed at the time. Casey said. City sewage treatment plants failed to comply with a July 1, 1985, federal deadline for complete secondary treatment of the 1.6 billion gallons of sewage produced every day. Casey said the city, which has signed a consent decree with state regulators, expects to

have been in compliance by the mid-1990s.

City officials described this week's sewage spill as the most serious power-related spill since the citywide blackout of 1977. Two major feeder tunnels to the Port Richmond plant on the north shore of Staten Island went out during Tuesday's blackout, which affected 13,000 homes at its peak.

Department of Health officials this week repeated a little-known recommendation against swimming for two days after a heavy rain because of the release of untreated sewage.

Medical Waste Washup

BEACH from Page 1

"When it's 98 degrees, we should be breaking business records, but instead we're losing 60 to 70 percent of our normal business," said Donna Walker, who works at a Brighton Beach Curved Ice Cream store. "There's no one on the beach so they're not coming in for ice cream."

Business owners in nearby Coney Island seem to be hurt less by the swimming ban, since beachgoers can instead enjoy themselves at the amusement

park. Matthew Kennedy, executive director of the Coney Island Chamber of Commerce, said ride operators reported a healthy business over the weekend when city beaches in nearby Rockaway, Queens, were closed because of the discovery of several used syringes.

Joseph and Parks Commissioner Henry Stern reopened the Rockaway beaches after deciding syringes found there were dropped by local drug addicts rather than washed in with offshore dumping waste. —Bob Liff

Ward: Guardian Angels Have Dirty Faces

ANGELS from Page 3

and his wife, Lisa, made about \$42,000 last year.

"I'm the beneficiary of having a wife with high cheekbones who works for Elite, the modeling agency," he said, adding that the only money he made came from speeches. He said the Guardian Angels, a not-for-profit group, raised \$112,000 last year and that he drew no salary.

"I'm in an open book," he said. Shiva said he lives in a building in Alphabet City in Manhattan and that "crack heads" infest the area.

Shiva also defended the Angels' tactics in dealing with drug dealers, saying that because the dealers know the Angels are willing to "star and die" and as a result of taxes, they usually just move along. He said complaints about the Angels have come from the dealers and that the police, by acting on them, are being turned into the dealers' personal security force.

Ward said the police would continue arresting the Angels because they travel around in "wolfpacks," intimidating and harassing pedestrians at night. He said that during the Tuesday confrontation in Hell's Kitchen Park, the Angels threatened two undercover cops with a large dog and held when they resisted they had seen one of the men dressed as a junkie, shoot up.

Ward was not only critical of the Guardian Angels, but also of the restaurateurs who asked the group to patrol Hell's Kitchen and residents who have cheered the Angels on.

"Those who encourage vigilantism have responsibility for the Howard Beaches when they occur," Ward said.

"If you tolerate them, lynching or putting down is the only black-

in the ovens and Catholics in the ovens and you're next." Ward told the graduates during his speech.

Afterward Mayor Edward I. Koch, in a joint press conference with Ward, also criticized those who applaud the Angels' efforts, saying, "In Germany, they cheered at Auschwitz."

Koch was referring to the infamous Nazi death camp in occupied Poland. But when pressed, Koch denied he was trying to compare the Guardian Angels with the Nazis.

Both Koch and Ward criticized Morgenthau for not pressing charges against the Angels arrested in the lat-

est encounter.

"It's what's known as biting the bullet," Morgenthau said. "Not to do that [dismiss the charges] is view as an abdication of our responsibility and a waste of a judge's or grand jury's time. I believe that's what we are getting paid for, to make those kinds of decisions."

Back Out on the Mean Streets

PATROL from Page 3

by the street name Phantom, had been patrolling the streets from the Angel Restaurant Row headquarters for four streets before returning to his job. He has in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, once sleeping in a room at the back of the makeshift headquarters at the Cafe de France, a former restaurant that has taken on the look of a fraternity since the Angels took it over June 8 and began patrolling the street at the request of the restaurant owners.

Soon after the Angels arrived in the Clinton section of Manhattan, small clusters of uniformed police officers began appearing on neighborhood street corners, residents say.

Passing a group of officers, Rosario says he pities the police for their meager resources.

"I do believe that they have a job to do, but when they're not backing as up I wonder what their job is," he says. Now, at 8:20 p.m., with Dean White, an 18-year-old with the street name Lightning Bolt and the 22-year-old, a sprinter, at the lead, the crimefighters are within a block of the man reported to have the knife.

"You're great," says a man more than twice Rosario's age as the squad

marches past.

"That's you, son. Hey, a nice night," Rosario responds.

Twenty minutes earlier, Christina Ruzic, a mother of two, said she was in the neighborhood's Spanish warehouse area. The Angels' headquarters and headed there to check for \$200.

"I just came from watching the news on TV. I think it's terrible what they're doing to those kids," she said. "I go to the theater a lot, and you know, it isn't safe down this street a year ago. Maybe if I was with a gun I would consider it, but if I was with a girlfriend I wouldn't. But now, there's no danger, it's cleaned up, out here. I kid, I'm not doing a great job."

Back on the street, Lightning Bolt reaches the man, alleges to have the knife sitting on a stoop with a friend. But before the rest of the group has even caught up, he is convinced the pair was unfounded.

The Angels' officers admit to being a little more cautious than usual this night before going out on this call, their group leader warned them. "Now remember, we're not these cops under cover following. So, this guy gives you any trouble, just drop it. Try to pin him and wait for the police."

There is a courteous exchange with the man on the stoop and the group leaves to begin its routine patrol.

An hour later, half the group has split to search for a suspect linked to a recent quadruple murder in the same area. In new leader, Ramon Mercede, known as Crazy Legs, is marching down 47th Street with Phantom, Lightning Bolt, and three others in his wake.

Around his left shoulder, Mercede wears the double barrel of beads that marks him as a Angel chapter leader.

Crazy Legs reaches a group of two men and a woman sitting on a stoop between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. He hand claps at the concrete step beside one of the men and comes up holding a glass crack pipe.

"Party favors," Mercede announces. Then he turns toward the man, who is in his mid-40s and who is holding the pipe. "Get out of here," the 22-year-old Mercede growls. He turns to the other man. "Get the hell out of here," he commands again.

Without a word, the group obliges Mercede, holds up the pipe, presenting it crown-mustache to a small gathering of onlookers, then crushes it underfoot. "Get you didn't see that one, did you?" he says to an impressed colleague as the group marches on.

NEWSWEEK (MARCH 23) 1990

NY 21