

# For the Police, the Latest Attack Enlarges Already-Large Haystack

By HOWARD BLUM

At 2:50 yesterday morning, Deputy Inspector Timothy Dowd, the head of the homicide force hunting for the killer who calls himself the "Son of Sam," heard the first report over the special police radio frequency: "Shots fired in Bath Beach, Brooklyn."

As the sketchy information came to Inspector Dowd at the task force headquarters in the 109th Precinct station house in Queens, he was at first unconcerned.

The inspector had been at his desk since early Thursday evening directing intensified patrols for the July 29 anniversary of the Son of Sam's first murder—a date, the killer suggested in a letter, that he would commemorate with another shooting.

And the inspector was still at his desk early last evening, as he is on all weekends, the hours when the psychopath has struck most frequently. Over this three-day period, Inspector Dowd had monitored more than 20 radio reports of "shots fired."

## 'Code 44' Is Ordered

Only the report from Bath Beach was subsequently confirmed.

Within two hours after the shooting, Inspector Dowd had decided to institute a "Code 44"—the special strategy police put into use when the Son of Sam strikes.

While the police at the scene roped off the site of the shooting and immediately

began the search for witnesses, other units were alerted to watch bridges and highways—possible escape routes for the killer.

A grim Police Commissioner Michael J. Codd, tieless and in shirt sleeves, spent his Sunday morning first checking with Inspector Dowd in Queens and then visiting the temporary command post that had been set up at the 60th Precinct station house in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn after yesterday's shootings.

After these conferences, the Commissioner summed up the frustration of the police force with an analogy he has used before in this case: "It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. Except when you look through a haystack, you know what the needle looks like."

## Frustration Evident

An angry Sgt. John Coffey of the homicide force said, "We had 2,000 cops out looking for Sam this weekend. "We thought for sure he'd strike in Queens or the Bronx, but all the publicity must have driven him into Brooklyn."

The frustration of the task force officers was also evident as they conceded that their chief suspects—all under surveillance since Thursday—had now been dramatically and conclusively able to establish their innocence.

The task force spent the early morning hours performing another painful and equally frustrating task—reviewing the files of suspects who had been eliminated before the latest shooting.

"It's a whole new ball game now," a detective complained. "There were many people we had ruled out and now, after this shooting, we have to go back and check them out again. The worst thing would have been for us to have talked with Sam and then to have let him go."

## 'An Entire City to Protect'

The hunt is further complicated by at least one new development—and potential clue—in the shootings of Stacy Moskowitz and Robert Violante: for the first time the .44-caliber killer, as the Son of Sam is also known, struck in Brooklyn.

"We now have an entire city to protect. Sam is now telling us he will strike anywhere," said Inspector Dowd.

The police at the Brooklyn unit on West Eighth Street interviewed a man driving a blue Corvette who said he had witnessed the shooting. "He said he saw this guy just very calmly walk up to the car and fire four times and coolly walk away," said a spokesman for the police.

Throughout yesterday, the police continued to search for witnesses.

"We know that many more people were in the area sitting in parked cars when the shooting occurred than have come forward," a detective said. "We should have more witnesses to this shooting than all the others. But I guess some people are scared to come forward and others maybe just don't want to admit that they were parked in a car with someone else's wife."



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Commissioner Michael J. Codd at Brooklyn command post.