

GUN PERMIT

by James Collins

Charlie Murphy was the police officer responsible for issuing and inspecting gun permits in the 34th precinct NYPD. After 30 years, as a beat patrolman, he was brought inside to handle this administrative task. In New York City, each person issued a gun permit to carry a weapon must, once each year, appear to be at the precinct that issued the document with all of their weapons. On the New York City permit, the serial number of each authorized weapon is listed on the margin. The owner has to show up in person and present each weapon to the officer in charge. He then verifies, by serial number, that the weapon in question is in their possession.

Bernie Schwartz held a permit for two weapons because of his liquor store, which was a target for armed robberies. Today was the appointed time for his annual validation he had been through this procedure for the last 10 years. True to form, Bernie brought two bottles from his liquor store for the men of the precinct a bottle of wine and a bottle of whiskey. As he entered the room, he extended his hand and shook hands with Charlie. Then they changed pleasantries, discussed the weather and the neighborhood, and went through the normal annual ritual. Then Charlie got down to business.

"Okay Bernie, time to get down to the paperwork. Let me see your gun permit please."

"Sure Charlie, I've got it right here."

Charlie, put the permit from of him, read the details to make sure everything was there and noted that the document authorized two guns.

"Bernie, first let's take a look at the 32 caliber."

Bernie reached inside his jacket to a shoulder holster and started to extract the automatic pistol to show it to officer Murphy. As Bernie extended the weapon, it pointed directly at Charlie and went off.

BANG

Simultaneously three separate events occurred as if in slow motion. Charlie gasped, pushed the chair back from the desk and was patted his chest all over looking for an entry wound. He was speechless.

Bernie gasped, "Oh my God!" dropped the gun and threw both his hands up to cover his face. In less than 10 seconds at half dozen patrolman, guns drawn, pored through

the door. Four cops jumped on Bernie, beat him to the ground, handcuffed him and then sat on him. The other two rushed to Charlie pulled him out of the chair and laid him on the ground.

Charlie kept yelling, "I'm all right. I'm all right. I'm all right."

"But Charlie, you've just been shot. How far away was he with the gun?"

"He was reaching across the desk to hand me the gun when it went off. It couldn't have been more than 4 feet away from me."

"Charlie, at 4 feet, even a blind man could not miss you. You must be hit and you're in shock."

"Trust me I felt all over. He didn't get me. The good Lord must about looking out for me."

"Then where's the bullet? The guns over there on the floor and there is still smoke coming out of the barrel"

With that patrolman started scouring the office. They look at the desk, the desktop, the chair, the wall, and all the books. They individually opened the books to see if the bullet might be inside, but they came up empty.

By now, a sergeant had arrived, and he took charge. Once the search proved fruitless, the sergeant asked, "did anybody look inside the gun?"

One of the offices picked up the still warm automatic and said the slide was jammed back. They then removed the clip to make the gun safe, and examined the barrel. Lo and behold halfway down the barrel was the missing bullet. Then they took a bullet out of the clip and examined its caliber as stamped on the rim. Lucky for Charlie, Mr. Swartz had put the wrong bullets in the weapon. The bullets he inserted were for a 32 auto, rather than a 32 caliber and the diameter of the rounds were a few millimeters larger than the barrel could accept. This small oversight saved patrolman Charles Murphy's life.

Charlie was sent home for rest and relaxation after a very stressful day. Charlie lived happily for another 25 years.

THE END