

MUGGER PATROL

by James Collins

In New York City, especially in the summertime, mugging becomes a high profile crime. More and more people are out walking on the city streets in the evening because the weather is conducive to taking a stroll. However, this is just what muggers love. Drugs and their requirement for daily amounts of money are the reason for this type of crime. Drug addicts are frantic to get \$5, \$10 or \$20 so they can get a fix. Any civilian walking alone at night is a potential target. The mugger will hide in wait between parked cars or in an alley, and watch the potential victim. When they appear distracted the mugger will slip up behind them and either use a knife or grab them around the throat from behind. Then they quickly frisk him take their money or their purse and run quickly to the nearest corner so they can disappear.

To combat this growing threat, the New York Police Department (NYPD) sends selected patrolmen and detectives, in disguises, out onto the streets at dark. Since women are the preferred target for most muggers, this is the disguise of preference for the NYPD. It is a great cause of laughter in the precincts when those selected for mugging patrol show up in dresses, high heels, wigs, floppy hats and lipstick. Photos are always taken, and are used at selected parties to embarrass the disguised individuals. Back in the 50s, there were few if any women on the NYPD. That is no longer the case, but this story is about a previous generation of police.

John Kelly was a detective of note whose name was drawn at random for two weeks duty on mugger patrol. Now, John was a big man, came from a big family, whose concept of everything was big. John's dog was a massive Great Dane and his children always towered over all their compatriots in their classes and on the football field. They all took after John. John stood six foot three and weighed 350 pounds. All of it was muscle as John still lifted weights on a regular basis. To outfit John for his task, they dressed him in a large flowing flowery dress that came down to his ankles to hide his tree trunk legs. Instead of high heels, they gave him flats to fit his size 13 feet, and a floppy hat with a wide veil to hide his big, square face with the dark stubble that could not be erased. To enhance his vulnerability, John was given two shopping bags filled with empty boxes as part of his disguise. When John moved, he took little half steps to indicate there was a disability. Overall, as he moved, he appeared the size of a small van. However, John really wanted to pull this off. He hated muggers and felt that this was his opportunity to take some of these vermin off the street. Anyone who would attack an old woman walking at night really would gain John's ire. John reported to duty, and was sent out on the street.

After two weeks of intense patrolling, John came up to the north Bronx to a party I attended. John was depressed.

"Big John, why are you looking so down in the mouth?"

"Jim, I'm disgusted."

"What's wrong, your sports team going the wrong way? I hear everything is going great with your family and the kids are doing wonderful. Why are you depressed?"

Then John enthralled me with his tales about mugger patrol. He indicated how he had been selected by chance to play dress-up and to go out on the street and catch some bad guys. He also showed me a snapshot of himself in drag. I stopped laughing after I saw his face turned red and the muscles in his neck started to bulge.

"I just wanted to show you what extremes I would go to catch those damn muggers. The guys in the precinct took this shot to irritate me, but I'm proud of what I am doing to clean the streets of New York and get rid of these perpetrators."

"But John, no offense, but it is a funny picture. How successful have you been? How many muggers did you get?"

"None! After two weeks out on the street every night, I never got mugged. Every other member of the patrol picked up two or three muggers. I didn't get a single bite. The rest of the team is razzing me about that every day. I don't know what to do. I don't know what's wrong. I can't figure out why I haven't got any muggers."

"John, once again no offense, but they should take you off that patrol. You've got the right attitude. You're a dedicated police officer. You're fearless as your medals already show. However, the picture says it all. John, nobody is ever going to try to mug you because nobody wants to mug a rhinoceros."

THE END