
ACTIVELY RETIRED

By PO Trae Stratton

BOMB SQUAD CENTENNIAL REUNION

The NYPD Bomb Squad held a Centennial Reunion as part of their 100th anniversary celebration at their Disposal Facility at the Rodman's Neck Outdoor Range. The eleven former members who made the journey, a veritable who's who in the annals of Bomb Squad history, were shown several displays showcasing the latest in Bomb Squad technology and equipment.

The first featured the Bomb Squad robot, a technological advancement we may now take for granted, but had the Bomb Squad alumni shaking their heads. Equipped with several cameras and gripping mechanisms it can even go up and down stairs to retrieve suspicious packages while personnel wait a safe distance away. Wes Somerville, who was assigned to the Bomb Squad in 1957 when the unit expanded to hunt down the Mad Bomber, later remarked, "They didn't make tools for bomb technicians in my day so you made your own. We had a bullet proof windshield we took from a gangster's car, then we laid behind it and used one of those hand claws you see in supermarkets to get at the device."

The group then moved down-range for the disposal of confis-

cated fireworks, and as evidenced by their sentimental smiles, each of these retired, seasoned veterans came away impressed by the latest methods employed by the Bomb Squad

"These are the men who did it
with their hands..."

—Sgt. Tony Biondolilo,
NYPD Bomb Squad

Afterward, it was back to the Administration Building for lunch and then the stories started spooling. There was the capture of George Peter Metesky (the Mad Bomber) in his Connecticut home with two pipe bombs hanging behind his kitchen sink; the unveiling of Explosive Detection

Canines (EDC) Brandy and Sally at Kennedy Airport, the subpoena of Sally at a suppression hearing and her nationally televised retirement, good old EDC Young leaping off the Police Academy roof (then returning to full duty!), and an especially warm welcome for Tony Senft who was caught in the One Police Plaza bombing in 1982.

The best was saved for last as the Bomb Squad displayed its Pan Disruptor, a tool with which bomb technicians can render safe specific Improvised Explosive Devices from a distance without setting them off. To say the least, the alumni were shocked at its capabilities and happy to see that the Bomb Squad of the new Millennium is so well prepared. Many of them often iterated how proud they were of the response to the tragic events of 9/11.

Yet both Sergeant Tony Biondolilo and Detective Jeffrey Oberdier, who put the reunion together for their forerunners, were quick to point out, "These men here today are some of the bravest men the Department has ever known. They went into their jobs with practically none of the tools we have today. It is because of them that members of the unit now are honored to be a part of the tradition and dedication that the NYPD Bomb Squad is known for."



Current and former members of the Bomb Squad at their July 25, 2003 centennial reunion.