

Coming back home: Deputy Inspector Dwayne Montgomery

By DAMASO REYES

Special to the AmNews

The recently promoted commanding officer of the 28th precinct in Harlem looks far younger than his 45 years. Deputy Inspector Dwayne Montgomery always seems to have a smile and handshake ready for anyone who passes by and spoke fondly of his 25 years on the job during a recent interview.

"I just wanted to take the test to see how difficult it was and to see if I could pass it," Montgomery said, recalling his motivation to join the force. "Next thing you know, after I passed it I said to myself 'this would be a good prerequisite for law school.' So I said I'd come here, this way I'd have an option: if I like it I could stay, if not, I could leave."

More than two decades later, the deputy inspector has no intention of leaving; in fact, it's like he has just returned home.

Harlem is more than just a workplace to Montgomery, it is the place where he is from. Born in Harlem Hospital in 1959 he attended PS 163, growing up on the very streets he is now in charge of keeping safe. In a twist of fate, Montgomery spent his first four years as a police officer working at the 28th

precinct, where he had an unusually close relationship with the community.

"It was real nice, people were always glad to see you," Montgomery said of his days patrolling his old neighborhood. "My tour would end at three o'clock and I would still be out there, just interacting, mingling with the people," he added.

While working as a police officer, Montgomery attended classes at John Jay where he would earn a degree in criminal science. Sheepskin in hand, he went on to teach police science at the Police Academy where he had been a student five short years before. His patrol experience fresh in his mind, Montgomery felt lucky to have been able to share his firsthand knowledge with the recruits.

"In order for them to understand what the patrol guide is really talking about you have to more or less give them an example, and nothing's better than giving them your own experiences," he said of his time as an instructor.

It was during this time that the future leader decided that he "wanted to go as far as my own abilities would carry me." A tough-minded Lt. Matthews

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On the Job: Life at the 28th Pct., Part 3

Jumping across rooftops and chasing paperwork: A sergeant's life

By DAMASO REYES

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"Watching these shows on T.V. you would think we spend all our time jumping across rooftops," Sgt. Kenan Sheppard said with a smile. "You do have those days but not that many," he added. If the commanding officer of a precinct is like a C.E.O and a patrolman is an assembly line worker then a sergeant could reasonably be compared to a middle manager: He or she must be both answerable to the bosses above and responsible for the actions of the officers below. In a NYPD dominated by CompStat, the computerized collection of even the most minor crime statistics, a sergeant's job is harder than ever.

If there was ever anyone who seemed tailor made for the job it would be Sgt. Sheppard, a New York native and ten-year NYPD veteran who has spent the last year and a half learning his new role of sergeant, as well as the 28th precinct. Looking like an actor on NYPD Blue, Sheppard, who stands well above six feet, has an easygoing manner which seems to put everyone around him at ease, a helpful quality to have when everything around you seems to be spinning out of control.



Sgt. Kenan Sheppard (left) supervises the crime scene of a suspicious murder. Part of a dead body (center) can be seen between the two buildings.

(Damaso Reyes photo)

"There are plenty of days like that," he said with a laugh. "Some days you feel you're being pulled in ten different directions."

A recent day in 28 proved him right.

One of the city's smallest precincts, the 28 is home to more than 35,000 New Yorkers and has two housing projects along with central Harlem landmarks like the Apollo Theater and Sylvia's Restaurant. It is also a prime example of just how much New York has changed in the last fifteen years

and how Harlem, once known as the place where white people feared to tread, is now an increasingly safe and diverse community. In 1990 there were 41 murders in the precinct, in 2005 there were just six. Similarly, there was a 78% decrease in rapes, a nearly 70% decrease in robberies and a more than 85% decrease in robberies over the past fifteen years.

On an unusually warm January morning all those numbers seemed to fly out the window as the sergeant, who was assigned to

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“It’s through their spirit to do things differently,



"The innovators, the revolutionaries,
the visionaries—those are the ones
that inspire me. Their different way of
thinking opens new doors for all of us

that I am inspired to go even further.

to walk through and go even further.

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Haiti

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candidate closest to winning this first round of elections, and Préval would most likely win any second round vote, which – if needed – would take place on March 19.

Local authorities have promised to investigate the dumped ballots incident and any other allegations of electoral fraud.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., California's Rep. Maxine Waters has publicly supported a new appeal to have the OAS's Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

investigate the Bush administration's role in the February 29, 2004, coup d'état of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

TransAfrica Forum, the Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic at Yale Law School, the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, and Haiti's Bureau des Avocats Internationaux have filed a 47-page petition asking for the OAS's human rights division to determine if the coup was orchestrated by Aristide opponents in Washington and the Dominican Republic alongside members of the current Haitian interim government.

since.

Promoted to sergeant in 1985, Montgomery began to fall in love with both the camaraderie the department offered as well as the challenging nature of being a leader. "Once you make boss, it becomes a competitive thing. You don't want someone you've supervised to come up the ranks and pass you," he said.

Making the transition from being an officer to being a leader of men and women took some adjustment and when Montgomery became a lieutenant in 1993 and began working at

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The New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is seeking an experienced and highly motivated physician to serve as Assistant Commissioner to the Office of Child and Family Health. ACS investigates reports of abuse and neglect; provides foster care settings and adoption services to families; facilitates children's and families' access to appropriate preventive services; and provides Head Start and Day Care Services. Preferences will be given to candidates with extensive experience in child and adolescent primary health care, including developmental pediatrics.

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Sheppard

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patrol that day, responded to call after call. Patrol is perhaps the most glamorous, if difficult duty a sergeant can pull. Sgt. Sheppard was not only responsible for making sure all the precinct's emergency calls were responded to, he had to know where his officers were, what they were doing, whether or not they had eaten their meal and when they were due back in the station. All while also fielding calls from a precinct commander known for staying on top of things.

First up: a woman lying on a Harlem street with a broken leg, obtained during a fight with another woman over a man.

police headquarters after a brief stint at the 20th precinct, he had to adjust even more.

"When you go inside from being on the street and being active, going indoors, you have to change gears because you're not out there running around, aiding and assisting people, chasing bad guys; you're more or less doing the administrative work that keeps the department running," he said. "If you're like me, high strung, then you definitely have to shift gears," he added with a laugh.

As well as he did in the department's traffic and later information systems division, Montgomery's heart was always in the street and when he became a captain in 2002 he got to go back to where the action was as the executive officer of the 32nd precinct in Harlem, a position he described as the commanding officer's "mover

Who hit whom first? Who responded with more force? Who, if anyone, will be arrested? And just where is this Don Juan that these two ladies, who themselves seem to be leading less than straight and narrow lives, are fighting over?

"As a sergeant you're responsible for a lot of different things and you're expected to have the answers as well," Sheppard said later in an interview.

Soon after the dispute between the two ladies a dead body is found between two buildings by a construction crew. Lying at an odd angle with no identification, the body had been there for no one knew how long. The bitter cold weather could have kept the body from decomposing for several days. With temperatures climbing into the upper 50's the flies are out and the sergeant must assist detectives however he can while the precinct's commander asks whether the body is a result of natural causes or mur-

and shaker." Being second in command also gave him a new perspective on the importance of management and how important it is for leaders to have close relationships with those they work with.

"You have to understand that your success or failure is dependent upon your officers working for you and getting the job done," he said. "You have to let them know that you appreciate what they do, that it's not all about numbers; it's about them as well," he added.

In June of 2004, Montgomery came full circle, returning to where he began his career as the executive officer of the 28 under Deputy Inspector Higdon. It was here with more than twenty years on the job that he began to think about his future and how far he might go. After being an executive officer he knew he was ready for com-

Bird flu

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Lawan said, "But if people continue to poach and the birds keep coming in their millions, some of which may likely carry the virus, anyone that kills or captures these birds – and some people capture and keep them alive for aesthetic purposes – may lead to the virus spreading if the captured birds are carrying them."

Experts from the National Veterinary Research Institute in Plateau State have visited the notorious poaching site [Dagona Waterfowl Sanctuary] and conducted tests on some of the migratory birds to establish if they are carrying the bird flu virus.

der. Right now it is simply labeled a suspicious death, but a murder, in addition to being a tragic loss of human life, would not be good for the precinct's CompStat numbers and the last thing anyone wants is for the bosses at One Police Plaza to start asking questions like: "Why are your homicides going up?" Like water, pressure rolls downhill and that day Sgt. Sheppard was working hard to keep from being run over.

"A lot of management is about assigning the right people to the right job," Sheppard said. "You control the tempo of the patrol by where you decide to assign your people," he added. A former youth officer in the Bronx, Sheppard is especially sensitive to how the department is perceived in the community and as a sergeant he is "held to a higher standard" whenever he shows up at a crime scene, something he doesn't have a problem with.

When asked how he felt about his precinct, Sheppard said, "I've always loved Harlem, it's a great place to work."

mand and apparently headquarters thought so too, naming him commanding officer of the precinct in May of 2005.

Promoted to deputy inspector less than one month ago, Montgomery revels in the challenges of commanding the 28 where he says "I look at it as a chess match between me and the bad guys out there." Looking back at when he started, Montgomery said back then he figured he would put in 30 years, but the closer he has gotten to that number the more he realizes that he loves the job.

"I don't want to retire from something I love doing. I'm going to retire to do what, be bored?" he asked. "I could do 43 years on this job, from the time I came on to the time I reach the age in which I'm forced to retire, and I kid and tell some people: 'don't be surprised if you see me 43 years later.'"