

# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

## Brooklyn's Favorite Crime-fighter, Curtis Sliwa, Is Honored by Local Politicians

03-06-2008

### At a Rifle Club in Manhattan, the Guardian Angel Receives the Rough Rider Award

*By Ryan Thompson*



WEST VILLAGE — Surrounded by guns hanging on the walls of an Italian rifle club, Brooklyn's own Guardian Angel, Curtis Sliwa, accepted a couple of awards last week from local Republicans. Sliwa, born and raised in Canarsie, was given the Rough Rider award from The TR Group, a Manhattan-based Republican organization that derives its name from the initials of Theodore Roosevelt. Sliwa was further presented with a certificate of recognition from Brooklyn Congressman Vito J. Fossella, who is New York City's highest-elected Republican.

"Curtis has done a lot to improve the quality of life in New York City," said Robert Capano, director of Brooklyn operations for Rep. Fossella, whose 13th Congressional District encompasses Staten Island and the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights and Gravesend. "Curtis' work with the Guardian Angels was a big part of that."

Sliwa, a longtime Republican advocate, founded and still heads the Guardian Angels, a semi-vigilante group whose mission is to protect citizens and prevent crimes at times when the police are not around. Sliwa fully advocates the legal use of the right to make a citizen's arrest, as well as the application of physical force if necessary.

Sliwa, who had just come from the taping of his "Political Rundown" television show on NY1, was dressed in his customary Guardian Angels uniform, with shiny red jacket and a red beret. He was also wearing his walkie-talkie and had to pause during a taped interview with Moscow television reporters to answer a radio call from one of his fellow Guardian Angels on nearby patrol.

After delivering a vivacious and commanding speech to his Republican supporters last week in the lounge of Tiro a Segno, the city's oldest ethnic club, which sits unobtrusively on MacDougal Street and has a rifle range in the basement, Sliwa told his harrowing tales

of crime-fighting to a Russian film crew. Sliwa spoke about John Gotti's ordered assassination of him that failed in 1992, when a stolen and altered taxicab picked up Sliwa, and a gunman popped out of the dashboard and started shooting him.

Sliwa was shot multiple times with hollow-point bullets, and when he reached for the door handle to bail out, he realized that the door handles had been sawed off. He managed to dive over the front seat and out the window, where the mobsters left him for dead. But Sliwa survived.

He has always been a survivor. Sliwa grew up on the tough streets of Canarsie and battled the neighborhood kids who grew up to become the criminals that he still fights. Nicholas Corrozo, the Gambino crime-family captain who remains the sole mobster still at large after the recent Mafia takedown by the feds, was the one who devised the method to have him murdered in the taxicab, said Sliwa.

"I grew up with him. I grew up with them all," he said. "I've been battling them since I was a youngster." The seeds of his anti-crime ideology and community activism began when Sliwa was very young. After being given a scholarship to attend the prestigious Brown University, Sliwa was forced to forego enrolling when he was expelled from Brooklyn Prep School during his senior year for student activism. Instead, Sliwa became the night manger of a McDonald's restaurant in a crime-ridden section of the Bronx.

It was on the subway known as the "Muggers Express," which Sliwa rode back and forth from his home to his work, that the concept of the Guardian Angels was born. Sliwa was sick and tired of the crime that he saw plague the riders on the 4 train in the late '70s. And on Feb. 13, 1979, Sliwa started the group of crime fighters, which now has grown to include more than 100 Guardian Angel chapters worldwide, as well as a nationally renowned Internet safety-program called CyberAngels.

Capano, who grew up in Bay Ridge, remembers the violence and crime that too often posed a threat to him as a youngster on the Muggers Express back then. But Capano, an avid and unstoppable New York Yankees fan, would not be dissuaded from making the long subway journey to the Bronx during baseball season. "It was scary," he said. But Sliwa put an end to a lot of that.

Even the coat-check woman at Tiro a Segno remembered the Guardian Angels quickly responding to the scene when she was mugged in Greenwich Village years ago. "I like him," she said. "They're good."

Possible mayoral candidate and grocery-store mogul John Catsimatidis, also made some remarks. State Senate candidate John G. Chromczak, who is running as the Republican opponent to Democrat Marty Connor for a seat in the 25th Congressional District, which includes parts of Brooklyn Heights, Carroll Gardens and Downtown Brooklyn, was also in attendance.