NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEW YORK POST, MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2001

Devils amid ground-zero Angels

By SIMON CRITTLE

EXCLUSIVE

Three Guardian Angels — including the head of the New York chapter — have had their wings clipped over thefts from ground zero.

Two of the red-beret-wearing crime fighters were booted after they were caught stealing work clothes and equipment, and the head of the New York chapter stepped down because the thefts happened on his watch.

The thefts were never reported to the police, but a disgusted former Angel, who claims he quit over the thefts, told The Post at least 10 people made off with thousands of dollars worth of booty.

Curtis Sliwa, who founded the group 22 years ago to patrol the then-crime-ridden subways, admitted to The Post that two members — one from Boston, one from New York — were thrown out for stealing work boots, sweatshirts and socks.

Sliwa said a New York chapter chief left the organization over the thefts and other matters.

"We felt it should have been incumbent on our leadership at the scene to make sure that proper standards were followed," Sliwa said.

He said the thefts occurred in the week after the terrorist attacks, when Angels and other volunteers were stationed at Stuyvesant HS near ground zero.

Sliwa said cops were not informed because "we took care of it internally" and because some stolen items found on the thieves were returned.

But a three-year member of the Angels, who said he quit in outrage over the thefts and what he said was a cover-up, said the stealing involved at least 10 members.

"They were putting equipment and clothes into garbage bags and taking it back to headquarters or to their houses," said the man, who asked not to be identified.

He said he saw Angels carting off bags filled with firefighting equipment, gas masks, work pants, boots and food stored at the high school. He said leaders of the group knew the names of the wrong-doers.

"When I saw that, I didn't want to wear the [Angels] T-shirt anymore, and I took off my beret because it felt horrible to be with the guys," the ex-Angel said.

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