

= Johnny Broderick =

Johnny Broderick (January 16 , 1896 (some sources say 1894 , 1895 , or 1897) ? January 16 , 1966) was a New York City Police Department detective who became known in the 1920s and 1930s as one of the city 's toughest officers , patrolling the Broadway theater district and policing strikes as head of the NYPD 's Industrial Squad , sometimes personally beating gangsters and suspects .

In his career as a detective between 1923 and 1947 , Broderick built a reputation for physical courage , for assaulting gangsters like Jack " Legs " Diamond and " Two @-@ Gun " Crowley , and for facing down armed gunmen in a prison break at The Tombs prison .

Broderick was a " celebrity detective " whose exploits were a favorite of gossip columnists and the press . He and his sometime partner Johnny Cordes were probably the best known officers in the NYPD in the era between the two world wars . A character based on Broderick was the subject of the 1936 film Bullets or Ballots , with the Broderick character played by Edward G. Robinson . He was also portrayed in a comic book about police , and a film , TV series and Broadway musical based on his life were once contemplated .

Broderick won eight medals for valor during his career , but he was dogged by accusations of excessive force . The Industrial Squad under his command was accused of brutality toward strikers and corruption , with Broderick himself accused of taking bribes , and he once beat a prisoner in his custody so badly that he was permanently crippled . He would sometimes beat up innocent people , and brutality complaints against him were futile . He was finally forced into retirement by Mayor William O 'Dwyer for associating with gangsters .

= = Early life = =

John Joseph Broderick was born on Manhattan 's East 25th Street , in the impoverished Gashouse District , the son of Margaret Kendall and Michael Broderick . At the age of 12 he left parochial school to drive a brick truck , and then a coal truck , to support his mother after the death of his father . He served in the U.S. Navy in World War I and worked as a bodyguard for Samuel Gompers , the labor leader . He joined the New York City Fire Department in April 1922 , but found that boring . Having taken both the Fire and Police Department examinations , in January of the following year he joined the New York City Police Department .

In their 2001 book NYPD , James Lardner and Thomas A. Reppetto describe Broderick as a " Gashouse district tough guy " and " former labor slugger . "

= = Career = =

Broderick joined the NYPD on January 16 , 1923 , and he became a detective third grade on April 2 of that year , obtaining in less than four months a promotion that would usually take five years . The New York Herald Tribune called his swift appointment as detective " extraordinary luck or influence or both . " He continued to rise rapidly in rank . He was promoted to detective second grade in May 1925 and detective first grade in March 1926 . The Daily News reported years later that " no few of Detective Broderick 's contemporaries [felt] that he plainly had an angel somewhere in the city . " In 1934 it was reported that before joining the police department he was a chauffeur for a coal merchant who was close to chief inspector William J. Lahey , who was believed to be Broderick 's sponsor in the department .

Broderick was put in charge of the Industrial Squad , a plainclothes unit was created in 1917 to monitor the labor movement , to keep it free from political radicals , Communists and racketeers , and to suppress violence during strikes . Broderick " had little patience with labor militants , " according to one history of the NYPD in that era , and he led the Industrial Squad in violent confrontations with the fur workers ' union , which was led by Communists , and railroad workers insurgents in 1926 and 1927 . Strikes in the city 's Garment District also turned violent , and in August 1925 Broderick 's nose was broken when he tried to disperse a crowd of striking garment

workers .

In November 1926 the Gangster Squad was absorbed by the Industrial Squad , with Broderick in command . While commander of the Industrial Squad , Broderick received acclaim for his role in quelling an attempted prison break at The Tombs , the Manhattan prison , on November 3 , 1926 . He faced down two armed convicts , one of them mobster Hyman Amberg , in the Tombs yard after they had already killed two prison officials . Police said that the convicts , who were already wounded , committed suicide as Broderick approached .

He remained in charge of the Gangster and Industrial Squad until 1928 , when he received what The New York Times described as " lesser assignments . " After Fiorello LaGuardia became mayor in 1934 , Broderick and other police officers fell out of favor for connections with the Democratic Tammany Hall political machine . In 1934 , by then assigned to the Manhattan District Attorney 's office , he was reduced in rank to patrolman , his pay was cut by \$ 1000 and he was transferred to Long Island City by police commissioner John F. O 'Ryan . Syndicated columnist Westbrook Pegler said at the time that Broderick " has been busted and sent out to walk a beat because he has enjoyed for some years the endorsement and assistance of some of the most pernicious Tammany politicians in the city . He was reinstated as detective third grade by O 'Ryan five months later after meeting with Broderick , saying that the original demotion was a result of " vague criticism regarding their political connections , " and that he was viewed by his current commander as a " model cop . " He was promoted to detective second grade in 1935 and detective first grade in 1939 .

On the Broadway beat , Broderick swiftly gained a reputation for violence . His fists were once described as " huge lethal pistons that could beat a man senseless in half a heartbeat , " and to " broderick " became Broadway slang for being knocked out by a single punch . His knuckles were broken many times . Once he knocked out the gangster Francis " Two Gun " Crowley with a single punch , even though Crowley was pointing a gun at him . He was said to have demanded that hoodlums tip their hat to him , and once was said to have gone to the funeral of a member of the Hudson Dusters gang and spat in his eye . Broderick would wrap a lead pipe in a newspaper , which allowed him to beat gangsters while it looked like he was giving them a friendly swat with a rolled @-@ up newspaper .

Broderick 's exploits were widely reported in the New York media , gaining him celebrity status . His tenth anniversary on the police department was commemorated by a dinner in his honor in January 1933 at the Della Robbia room of the Vanderbilt Hotel , attended by politicians and civic leaders including Tammany Hall district leader James J. Hines . Entertainment was provided , gratis , by Bill Robinson , Bert Lahr and Harry Richman . Hines was subsequently convicted of racketeering for protecting Harlem numbers rackets run by Dutch Schultz .

Broderick 's exploits were a mainstay of the New York newspapers . He tossed hoodlums who had been bothering women through a plate @-@ glass window , one by one , and then arrested them for malicious destruction of property , for which they were sentenced to 30 days in jail . He also disarmed a man who was robbing a crowded restaurant at Columbus Circle with two guns and a knife . He once reputedly responded to a threat from gangster Legs Diamond by emptying a trash bin over his head , and forced him to crawl away . Other accounts of the confrontation hold that Broderick dumped Diamond in the trash bin head @-@ first , while others say that Broderick knocked out Diamond with a single blow , with one account claiming that Diamond was left unconscious for 20 minutes . Broderick 's reputation for toughness was such that Jack Dempsey , the heavyweight boxing champion , once said of Broderick that " He 's the only I wouldn 't want to meet in a fight outside the ring and its rules . "

He would offer himself as an informal protection service for crime victims , especially young women , and personally beat up offenders .

Broderick worked often with Johnny Cordes , a two @-@ time winner of the department 's medal of honor , and Barney Ruditsky , whose exploits inspired the 1959 TV series The Lawless Years .

Broderick was often selected as a bodyguard for visiting celebrities . President Franklin D. Roosevelt requested that Broderick be his special bodyguard when he visited New York for the 1936 World Series , and he also was bodyguard for Queen Marie of Romania and King Albert of Belgium .

= = Allegations of misconduct = =

Throughout his career , beginning with his days in the Industrial Squad , Broderick was a subject of allegations of misconduct , and the Industrial Squad under his command was accused of violence toward strikers and corruption . He sometimes beat up people who were totally innocent , and lawsuits and complaints of brutality were futile because of his public image , honed by favorable media coverage , and connections .

In a column on Broderick 's brief demotion to patrolman in 1934 , Westbrook Pegler said that the demotion would do him some good , that he " was excessively tough at times and there were occasions when , pining for action , he bounced round people who were in not particular need of bouncing around . " Pegler said that Broderick was selective in whom he would harass , that " there were many low characters in the city , notorious for their activity in the rackets , who were walking right past Detective Broderick on the street and in the lobby of [Madison Square] Garden , whom he did not find any occasion to bounce around . " Pegler said he found that " strange . "

In July 1926 , Broderick and the Industrial Squad were accused by the American Civil Liberties Union of clubbing and beating striking Interborough Rapid Transit Company workers , injuring 20 . Broderick denied the charges , saying the police were acting in self @-@ defense . The squad was accused by the Teamsters Union of beating striking drivers , and it was accused of brutality against striking paper @-@ box makers in 1926 . The following year , Broderick 's squad was accused of attacking fur industry strikers . In 1928 , Broderick and officers from his squad were accused of beating two spectators at a Madison Square Garden bicycle race , sending them to the hospital with broken jaws and internal injuries . In this incident Broderick 's career was rescued by favorable press coverage .

In 1927 , a furriers union official , Isidor Shapiro , told a special committee of the American Federation of Labor that his union paid the police \$ 3800 a week in bribes for protection during a 1926 strike . Union officials claimed that non @-@ union workers were beaten while police officers " stood idly by . " Shapiro claimed that the " Industrial Squad chief " was paid \$ 100 a week and that ten men in the squad were paid \$ 50 a week . Broderick and the other officers were clearly after an inquiry by a judge . The charges were revived in 1939 , when a former Communist , Maurice L. Malkin , accused Broderick and other officers of corruption in testimony before the House Un @-@ American Activities Committee . Malkin testified that the furriers union , which was controlled by Communists in the 1920s , borrowed \$ 1 @.@ 75 million from racketeer Arnold Rothstein to finance the 1926 strike , and that \$ 110 @,@ 000 of that went to Broderick and other members of the Industrial Squad , including Barney Ruditsky . The amount that Broderick received was said to be \$ 45 @,@ 000 and \$ 50 @,@ 000 . No action was taken against Broderick or the other detectives .

As a mayoral candidate in 1929 , Fiorello LaGuardia accused the Industrial Squad of extorting payoffs from labor and management , and that " instead of preserving order , this agency has done more to create disorder than anything else . " The squad was disbanded in 1933 .

In 1937 , a justice of the New York State Supreme Court freed a prisoner who had been arrested for parole violation and beaten by Broderick , saying that " the police of the City of New York beat him so badly that he will be a cripple for life . I think this man has more than expiated his crime . " The prisoner sustained fractures to the knee and ribs , his jaw was dislocated , and he was not given medical attention while in police custody . Broderick 's superiors found no reason to discipline the detective .

= = Retirement controversy = =

In September 1946 , Broderick was assigned to the office of Mayor William O 'Dwyer in an unannounced confidential capacity , a move that many in city government found surprising . After a few months he was abruptly transferred to the Main Office Division , and in July 1947 , he retired from the police department .

In 1949 , he sought to become a Democratic leader in the Broadway district on Manhattan 's west

side . One of the two incumbent district leaders Broderick was challenging , Gerald V. Murphy , accused him of having been forced out of the department for associating with gangsters . The charge was confirmed by Manhattan 's District Attorney , Frank Hogan , who disclosed that Broderick was forced to retire by Mayor William O 'Dwyer after Hogan 's office learned that in November 1946 he had accompanied a gambler and ex @-@ convict , Ben Kaye , to Hot Springs , Arkansas , where he " associated with " mobster Owney Madden . Broderick denied the charge , conceding that he was on the same plane as Kaye but that it was a " coincidence . " He admitted that he knew Madden and " every gangster in New York . That was my job . " His bid to become a district leader failed in the September 1949 primary elections .

In an editorial , the New York Herald Tribune pointed out that the circumstances of Broderick 's forced retirement only came to light because he was seeking a new career in politics , and that " voters may wonder how much they are really told about city government , when the Broderick incident demonstrates how discreetly a little embarrassment can be obliterated . "

= = Personal life = =

In 1931 Broderick was 5 feet 10 inches tall , weighed 170 pounds , and " dresses like Beau Brummel . " He neither smoked nor drank , worked out at a gymnasium every day , and kept in top physical condition .

At the time of his demotion in 1934 he was described as having an affluent lifestyle . Though drawing a salary of \$ 4 @,@ 000 a year , cut to \$ 3 @,@ 000 as a result of the demotion , he drove a Cadillac , dressed expensively and owned a home in Jackson Heights , Queens .

Broderick was a devoted prizefighting fan , rarely missing a fight at Madison Square Garden . During his days as a detective , Broderick enjoyed listening to his wife play the piano and was described by his New York Times obituary as fond of " monogrammed , cream @-@ colored silk underwear " and that off @-@ duty he was " the gentlest of men . " He was said to be upset by his portrayal by Robinson in Bullets or Ballots because Robinson was shown drinking and smoking .

After his retirement he sold his life story to RKO Pictures for \$ 75 @,@ 000 , to be made into a motion picture titled " Broadway 's One @-@ Man Riot Squad . " A 1948 report said that the screenplay was to be by Herman J. Mankiewicz , who knew Broderick from his days as a newspaper reporter . The film , which was to star Robert Ryan , was never made , and plans to have a television series or musical made about his life persisted through 1959 , but did not come to pass .

He died of heart disease on his birthday at his farmhouse outside Middletown , New York , where he raised horses and dogs . He was survived by his wife , the former Marion McShea , his daughter , Marion Farinon , three sisters and nine grandchildren . He was buried in Pine Lawn Cemetery in Massapequa , Long Island . In 1933 it was reported that he had been married for 14 years at the time , and that he had two daughters , Margaret and Marion .

= = Legacy = =

The brutal methods used by Broderick and other officers were sanctioned by the police department during their era , and praised as " fearless . " Beginning in the 1960s , however , New York police sought to curb that kind of conduct . Training programs were established teaching officers to observe the civil rights of suspects and the public . By the 1980s , it was feared that the pendulum had shifted back toward brutality , as complaints of assaults by police climbed . Broderick was cited by The New York Times in 1985 as an exemplar of the old methods of policing .

At the time of his death in 1966 , Walter Henning , an assistant chief inspector and a colleague of Broderick 's , called him a " man of his time , " and said that " under restrictions today , he 'd have a difficult time doing the things he did . " But during Prohibition , he said , " when these people [gangsters] went in and out of court it was like a revolving door , they had rather be locked up than to meet Johnny . "

In his 2011 book American Police a History , 1845 ? 1945 , Thomas A. Reppetto , a former Chicago detective commander and ex @-@ president of the Citizens Crime Commission of New York City ,

said that despite his fearsome reputation Broderick was actually beaten up on several occasions . Broderick 's image , he says , " rested to a great extent that Broadway show business figures relied upon him for informal protection , " as well as on " rave accounts " of his career by Ed Sullivan , Gene Fowler , Toots Shor and others .

Repetto observed that the " real strength " of Broderick and Cordes was that they " had what the gangster did not , the legal right to use deadly force and the practical power to slug hoods on sight . "