

Baltic and Bond
by Abe Mittleman

It was a warm summer afternoon day in August. The year was 1985. The sun was shining bright. I was having a rather busy day in my NYC Taxi. It was one fare after another with very little time in between dropping off one fare and finding another.

Park Avenue in Manhattan is a two way traffic street. A concrete island separates the traffic going uptown and downtown. I dropped off a passenger on the downtown traffic side between 33rd and 34th street. After paying for the ride my passenger opened the door to exit and before the door was closed two men were sitting in the back seat.

The taxi I was driving did not have a partition that protects the driver. I can't explain why. But, my intuition was telling me that these two men may be trouble. I thought to myself, "well you have had this feeling many times in the past and all turned out well, so why worry?"

One of the men in my taxi asked me to take them to the corner of Baltic Street and Bond Street in Brooklyn. This would be, depending on traffic, about a 20 to 30 minute ride down the FDR Drive and over the Brooklyn Bridge. The location was only a block or two from the exit of the bridge.

When we reached the destination, I noticed that there were many people old and young on the street. There was a large housing development located there. Never the less, the next thing that would happen was one of the men in the back seat reached over with his arm and held me down by my throat while with his hand on the other arm put a sharp object on the side of my neck. I need not wonder anymore. My intuition was real and true.

"GIVE ME THE MONEY" said this man. I reached into my shirt pocket and gave him all of my earnings for that day and said "DON'T HURT ME." He took the money and then ordered me out of the taxi. The two men left me standing on the street while they rode away with my vehicle.

I stood there shocked! I reached into my pants pocket and pulled out one penny. I was confused. I have no money for transportation. I have no way for communication. These were the first thoughts that ran through my head. Then all

of a sudden a tow truck pulled up to me. The driver said. "GET IN, WE SAW THE ENTIRE THING, MY BUDDY IS CHASING THEM"

Still, in shock, I climbed into the tow truck. We rode around for about twenty minutes unable to locate the other vehicle. I then asked the tow truck driver to take me to the nearest police station. He dropped me off at the police station. When I walked in and told them why I was there, one of the officers said out loud "THE TAXI DRIVER IS HERE."

What happened was when the criminals realized they were being chased they abandoned the taxi still running with the keys in it. The police were alerted and while I was at the station they were driving the taxi to the police station. I would soon have my taxi back. The police asked me to look at mug shots. I agreed, but I told them I didn't get a good enough look to positively identify them. They said I would have to be positive. So, that ended that.

Now here is the best part of the story. I hadn't up to this point remembered that I had a carry bag on the front seat that I always take with me. At that time I was responsible for collecting money from the drivers of two taxis that my partners and I were running. I had in my carry bag close to \$900 in cash. I was given the keys and then as I approached the taxi a police officer was holding my carry bag. He asked me "IS THIS YOURS?" I replied, "YES." I took the bag, then zipped open one of the pockets and held in my hand the rubber banded wad of the money. I looked at the officer and said "THAT SCHMUCK, HE COULD HAVE HAD ALL THIS!" You should have seen the look on the officers face!

I may add that when I was in the Police Station I phoned Alan Decker. Mr Decker was the head of my association, The Mini Fleet Association. He was also an attorney and later on I would be a writer for his newspaper. While telling him where I was and what had just happened, I broke out into tears thinking about how I may have lost my life. This was a very unpleasant thing that had happened. I called my wife and told her that I was OK. I was crying that I came out of this unhurt. The money meant nothing.

If you ever saw the film "Captain Phillips", Tom Hanks the actor who played the part of Captain Phillips after being rescued by the U.S. Navy was holding back tears while the Navy nurses were examining him. That was exactly how I felt!

