

DENVER AND THE WEST

Det. Michael Dowd added to Denver police monument to fallen officers

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The Denver Post

POSTED: 05/14/2015 11:25:58 AM MDT [ADD A COMMENT](#)

UPDATED: 05/15/2015 12:25:04 AM MDT



Lt. Todd Fuller carries a flag that was presented to the family of Detective Michael Dowd, who was shot in a 1969 standoff and died of the injuries in 1997. Dowd's name was added Thursday to the Denver police Fallen Officer Memorial. (*Steve Nehf, The Denver Post*)

When Michael Dowd faced down an escaped killer nicknamed "Mad Dog," the fugitive had a stick of dynamite and a map of a shopping center in his pockets and a pistol in his hand.

Eleven bullet wounds later, both men were lying on the sidewalk. James "Mad Dog" Sherbondy was dead and Dowd had injuries that would slowly, painfully lead to his death years later. The confrontation may have prevented carnage planned for a suburban mall.

On Thursday, 45 years later, the Denver Police Department unveiled the etching of Dowd's name on the city's Fallen Officer Memorial at police headquarters, 1331 Cherokee St.

Dowd, who was shot six times during the Nov. 28, 1969, standoff in front of the old post office at California and 15th streets, managed to return fire and kill fugitive Sherbondy.

Dowd, who was 34 at the time of his injury, suffered chronic, debilitating pain until his death in 1997. His name wasn't placed on the memorial until his former partner, 85-year-old Steve Metros, led a recent campaign to recognize Dowd.

"He is a true hero," said Metros. "Anybody can get shot. His legacy to his kids is that he continued to work for years while suffering debilitating pain so that he could support them."

Dowd and Metros likely saved many lives on the day of the shoot-out, which interrupted a planned attack on the Meadlark Shopping Center. The confrontation happened

shortly after Sherbondy had loaded up a 1964 Thunderbird with hoodlums and bombs for the drive to Jefferson County.

Sherbondy, who escaped from prison after being convicted of the 1937 murder of Oscar William Meyer, an Eagle County sheriff's deputy, was driving the Thunderbird with four accomplices including another prison escapee when he saw the patrol car pull up behind him in downtown Denver. He sped away.

A chase ensued in which Sherbondy veered into an alley that ended behind the old Denver Post building.

Metros jumped out of the patrol car and aimed his gun at three men who were still in the Thunderbird. Sherbondy got out of the Thunderbird and ran down the sidewalk.

"Halt, stay where you are at," Dowd yelled while chasing the fugitive.

Sherbondy wheeled around, pulled out a .38-caliber gun and began firing at Dowd, striking him several times. A bullet hit Dowd's abdomen and pierced his liver. Other bullets struck him in the left arm, the left calf, the right thigh and twice in the right knee.

A stray bullet crashed through the window of James Mills, the Denver Post personnel director.

When patrolman William Carter arrived on scene, he saw Sherbondy lying on the sidewalk trying to aim his gun at Dowd. Carter kicked the gun out of the fugitive's hand.



Det. Michael Dowd (*Handout*)

Dowd, who was lying on the sidewalk, told Carter that Sherbondy had shot him and he returned fire.

Sherbondy died moments later. One of his pockets was stuffed with a stick of dynamite. Inside a paper bag found near his body police also found a 9-inch pipe filled with black powder and a wick attached.

Also inside his pocket was a hand-drawn map of the Meadowlark Shopping Center at West 6th Avenue and Garrison Street in Jefferson County, complete with an escape route.

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