

Is this the most honest man in the city?

He turned in 50G and didn't get a tip

By DENISE BUFFA

A Brooklyn court officer got the surprise of his life when he searched a fanny pack left behind at the courthouse X-ray machine — it contained \$50,000 in cold, hard cash.

"That's basically what I end up making in a year, but well before taxes," said John Hoover, a mortgage-paying homeowner who has a wife, two grown kids and a 2-week-old granddaughter.

"I'm standing there saying to myself, 'That could be the answer to a lot of my problems, but it's not my money.' For all I knew, that could be somebody's life savings."

Hoover summoned a supervisor swiftly.

"I said, 'I don't know whose this is, but it ain't mine. Take it,'" he said.

After supervisors took the big green bundle upstairs to their eighth-floor office, two men who were at the courthouse to bid at an auction of foreclosed houses appeared at the X-ray machine, looking for the green bag. Hoover says he told them it was upstairs.

"But I don't think they believed me because I had to tell him a couple of times: 'It's upstairs in operations,'" Hoover recalled.

Hoover had only eyeballed five bundles of one-hundred-

dollar bills — and estimated it to be \$50,000.

By the time the two men made it upstairs, Hoover's boss, Sgt. Tom Reilly, had counted the contents: two bundles of \$15,000, one bundle of \$10,000 and two bundles of \$5,000.

That's \$50,000 total — all of it \$100 bills wrapped in rubber bands.

"I said, 'How much is there?'" Reilly recalled.

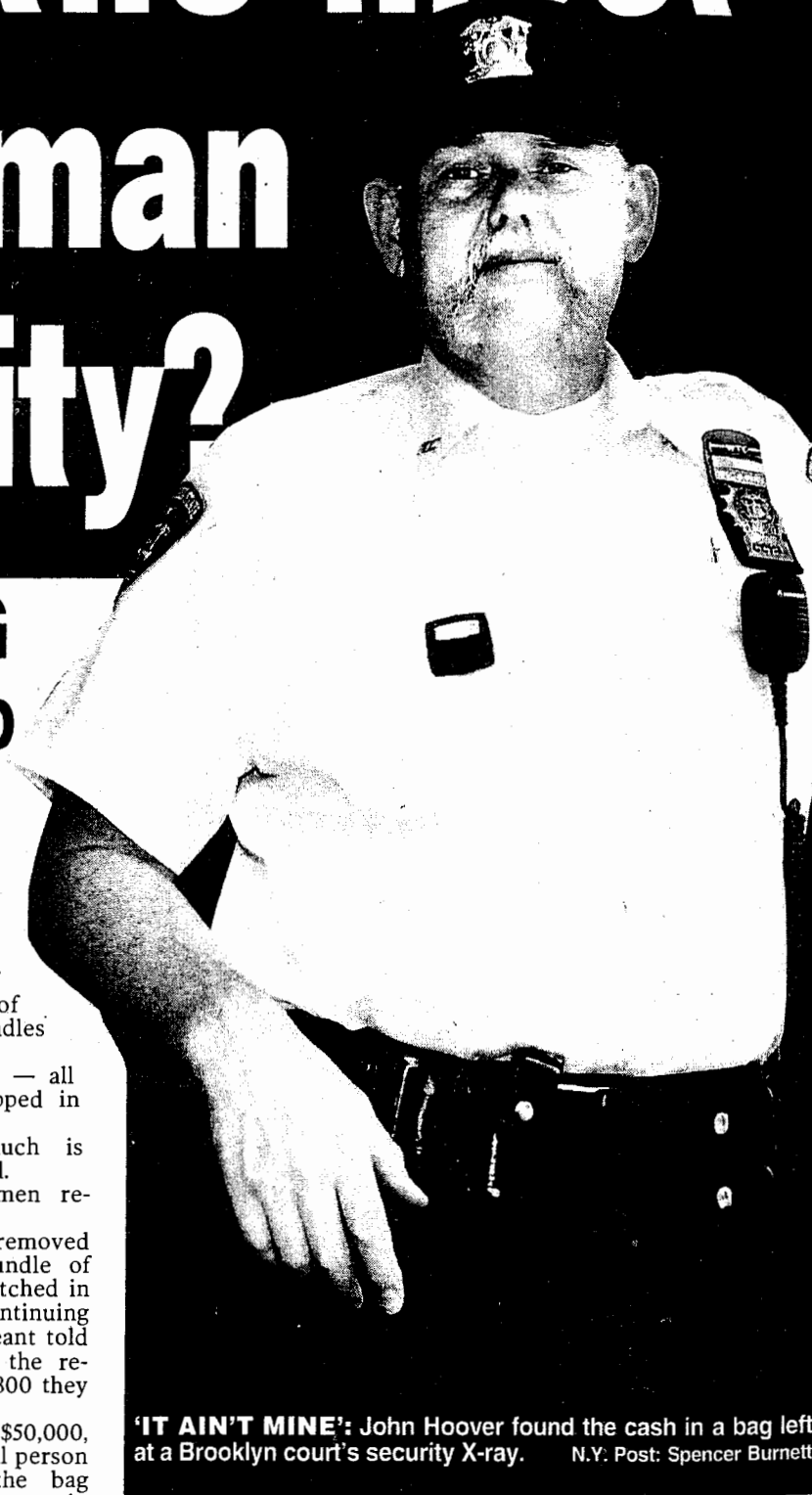
And one of the men reported: \$44,800.

Jokingly, Reilly removed \$200 and then a bundle of \$5,000 as the men watched in amazement. Then, continuing to kid them, the sergeant told the men he guessed the remainder was the \$44,800 they were looking for.

"I told them, 'It's \$50,000, not \$44,800. The actual person who was holding the bag didn't know how much was in it,'" he said. "He said, 'Oh, OK.'"

The men were very grateful for the find — but didn't thank Hoover personally that day. They could not be reached yesterday.

Hoover's big boss at Brooklyn Supreme Court, however, acknowledged his act of honesty in a letter of commendation put in



'IT AIN'T MINE': John Hoover found the cash in a bag left at a Brooklyn court's security X-ray. N.Y. Post: Spencer Burnett

his permanent personnel file — and posted at the courthouse.

"Your sense of integrity upholds the highest standards of law enforcement. It would be easy to say 'you were just doing your job,' however, the manner in which those duties were carried out reflect favorably not only on yourself, but on all members of this command,"

Major Eric Long wrote. "I commend you on a job well done."

Hoover, who smiles as he proudly wears his blue and white uniform, said he didn't become a court officer 16 years ago to make a quick buck.

"If I was going to be a thief, I'd be in here for a different reason," he said. "In other words, I'd be in cuffs."