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Pat Callahan (1)

Interview with Pat Callahan, Multnomah County Senior Deputy District Attorney
Interviewed by Kristy Morris
May 15, 2005

Kristy Morris: How long have you lived in the Portland Metro area?

Pat Callahan: Since 1981...so I wonder how long that is...24 years and I've lived a in that area also for undergraduate work for three years before that

Undergraduate work in what?

I was at Lewis and Clark school, as an undergrad in 1974; I graduated in 1977 with degrees in communications and political science.

And what is your job title now?

Senior deputy district attorney Multnomah County

What do you believe is the biggest problem concerning the Portland Metro Area?

.....Lack of jail space IV D

How often do you deal with criminals and/or law enforcement?

Every stinking day.

And how do you deal with them? What's your job?

I am one of the leaders of the felony person crime unit. I prosecute sex crimes and felony assaults...

Ok...and what kinds of crimes do you see most often over the past 25 years, not just now?

O God...well it all depends on your assignment... the current assignment if have is the mostly assaults, felony assaults with dangerous or deadly weapons. We also see sex crimes. Rapes too.

Are those often with dangerous weapons?

No, most of the times it's ...actually, most of the sex and rape crimes not all, but most of them are age upon age crimes, they're statutory offenses. They're underage, consensual, but underage. Before that I built the years with property crimes, stolen cars, thefts, forgery, ID theft. Before that I dealt with robberies, burglaries. I pretty much covered everything I done in the 24 years I've been there.

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* not all crimes are violent statutory consensual

You think more crimes happen in the Portland Metro area than people think?

Oh absolutely I think it's always people like grand jurors get a eye opening experience when they sit on a grand jury and here about all the crimes that happen in Portland. And most of us sit in our discreet little neighborhoods and they don't understand maybe our car gets broken into once every couple of years. You don't have a clue

How often do you think the wrong guy is caught or if the wrong guy is convicted? Or something like that in the Portland Metro area?

Well, those are two very different questions. How often is the wrong guy caught, they may catch the wrong guy, but usually the police are very quick to identify that because they'll show it to somebody and they'll say no that's not him. Or the guy will give them an explanation and they'll understand that they've got the wrong guy. How often the person is NOT caught that happens all the time.

I meant like convicted, so what if the wrong guy is caught and he's not convicted, you ever have two trials with the same case, does that happen very often?

Never, I say never. It's like OJ right you know, it's like OJ was a not convicted but they had the right guy. So they're never going to try somebody else for those murders. OJ did it but he just got off. Now that's a national example. What about around here? The fact of the matter is that no body takes a case to trial if they don't believe that they have the right person. So if a person is acquitted of that charge, the..I...in 24 years, I've never seen somebody get acquitted and then us go back and oh looks we have the wrong guy, lets go after someone else.

Think that's different in other bigger cites, like New York or L.A?

Well there's certainly been a history of problems in for us in Chicago; Chicago had a history of bad police work where they would beat basically confessions out of people and force confessions out of people. We just, we just haven't had, it not our history with that.

How often do you see crimes being committed out of your work?

I think, I think I'm more vigilant so I see stuff other people don't see. But you know my car a has been broken into, tires have been slashed, but I also I keep my eyes open and I see stuff that other people might not have seen I see hookers you know I see bummers, I see drug deal that other people might miss.

Maybe that's just your experience dealing with the criminals you know there movements and attitudes.

That's probable...not that I know their movements but I see sketchy people, and I watch them and I have some experience so I know what's going on ...people may be shaking hands, but I know there making a deal.

What are some of the biggest differences or differences that you've seen in the past 25 years?

.....in crime and law enforcement...well probably the biggest change in crime will be the use of computers, well you know just the basic technical that computers give criminals access to. The the surge in identity theft for instance people manufacturing credit cards excuse me, and identification and phony checks through computers. There's a huge difference you know. I think the biggest sort of false story about this huge meth epidemic. Its not that's a false story, but it's always been there and that's always been a huge part of the crime picture its just that its more in the spot light now for what ever reason.

III 4

You think that happens to a lot of things?

Well I don't know, I just think that the biggest example lately.

Do you feel safer with the justice system with the justice system then you did 25 years ago?

Well that's an interesting question, I say no. And I think the reason is that well when you think about the justice system, if you think of the justice system as just courts than a nice safer ah I don't know I mean

Well the courts or the police or...

Well see that's when I think the justice system starts. Towards the police officers out on the streets, I mean that's what really community safety is all about, is the police officers out on the streets. And I won't feel as safe as I did because their budgets keep getting squeezed. And they keep losing officers and they keep doing ideas like a particular chief would come in with idea like community placing. But I don't really think necessarily makes the city safer because the idea is good but more officers out in the communities and interact with the community. But typically they have to fund that by taking money away from other parts of the department. Things like detectives, which is what detectives do- investigate, detectives put cases together, detectives put away bad criminals by their good police work, its going to be missed by some officers who just now work in the street.

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IV b

Are dare officers and officers that hang out at a school, are they counted as community law enforcement?

Well, sure that's a community effort you know and, there's always a question as to how productive those efforts are, well is a dare officer in a school going to actually stop kids from using drugs? I don't know the answer to that. I think it's a worthy effort.

IV b

Do you see more criminals that are minors or adults?

You mean... what do you mean. I mean I saw a lot of minors when I was the head of the juvenile section and I see minors now, because about measure 11 I see people 15 16 17 that are charged with really serious offenses and there treated as an adult in the system. If you need an overall. It's hard to say. A percent of population I can't tell you. There plenty of crime to go around and there's never been a shortage.

What about the rest of the demographics as far as the criminals and victims and law enforcement are most of the criminal black or law enforcers white or...

Well um... in law enforcement is primary white I mean There is an effort for us to inspire the Portland police crew to recruit minorities. And there certainly an over representation of blacks in the correction population

IV_e

By over representation you mean...

Percentage wise

Bigger percentage

Right

Also the same is true of Hispanics, there is an over representation in the prison population. But that doesn't necessary mean that I think that some people would jump to the conclusion that because the police are white, that they look for black people committing crimes. I think that that's too simplistic I mean I think that the fact of that matter is, in the black and Hispanic community, they're more crimes committed period. Social economically the same is true In south east Portland that are right as can be there a more crimes committed because of the lower social economic because of there's were drug houses are and that's where drug people hang out. There's I mean you could have patrols in guns store that aren't going to come up with any people arrested because of the social economic strata, that's why we have more officers in the lower social economic areas

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So you think that in poor communities crimes happen or is it just different types of crimes?

Its more obvious crimes...yes...i thin k in poorer communities, because you got people that aren't working, you got people who are working at job that can't get the ends to meet. There is a...well there's all kinds of reasons that go together, well when people are desperate people commit crimes.

How often do you think suburban crimes find there way into down town courts.

Well suburban crimes I mean you know they in the suburbs they get burglarized people break in their houses. If you mean suburbanites, people you would not ordinary think of

as of being the crooks...accasionally they do we see those when we in doing economic crimes that sort of things, because its those people you are in the position to steel from companies you know book keepers the book pay role people you know the white collar kind of workers are in that kind of position to embezzle from a company

You think more crimes in a downtime other than outskirts of the city of you town

Well...it all depends you know... if the outskirts of the city ant were the bad area is found...if that's what you want to say, then I say maybe not...like downtown tends to draw people who are looking for opportunities rather there pan handling or weather there looking to break into cars you know there a concentration of targets down there

You believe people turn crime free after they've gone through the jail systems

Can be...yeah

You think they are?

O not...it's a...it's not the system that's going to do it, it's got to be them...it has to be an individual thing. And you just can't predict. You can have somebody who is the most hardened crook who been that way a number of times and maybe this time will do it. Actually they'll go I've had it, this is enough, and I'm going to make the change. You can have a new guy that is in there for the first time and the term of incarceration doesn't nothing, they'll just go right back to it. So I think its...I always said if your trying to get someone treatment...I want to prosecute someone to get them treatment.... the system does a bad job of that.... it's very expensive...the system is short of money.. And the system make a lousy parent...well then we can't make somebody do treatment.... we can't make somebody benefit from treatment. They have to do those themselves.

IV D

IV H

How has you job changed in the past 24 years?

Well part of it of course...as you get more responsible the cases get more bigger...well its really. Theres little things that change...the rules change...the cases that come in and throw things into a tizzy and the legislator changes the law or a ballet measure comes in like that measure 11 that changes something like big time...the basic function is still the same...you know I've always been viewed as the good guys wearing the white hats riding the white horse..Beacuse we're protecting the community from the predators and taking bad people off the streets and that's, you know, a good thing.

IV H

How did measure 11 change the system?

Well it has had a number of impacts on the system. The first, that most people don't get, it really has an impact on the percentages of crimes has gone down since measure 11. Ballot measure 11 has returned some sort of real accountable not just the crooks for the system to the people.... people after awhile they think that the system just gives people a slap on the wrist. Well ballot measure 11 is a abrupt change from that now there are very certain consequences for certain activities, and there substantial consequences I mean

IV H

there painful...so...ballet measure 11 gives that back to the citizens... and you know there's been moves to try to weaken measure 11 or to repeal it and they have been cold hearted voted down by the people of the state of Oregon. The citizens around here are unlike the some of our elected leaders who would like to think that they should be softer on this word but most people out there go "no lock those people up"

IV_H

Has there been any other measure or legislations that have changed?

Not that it had the impact of measure 11. I mean there is legislation session every two years and so the laws get changed there are court decision that change the way that we do things and then the legislation reacts to that but I would say that measure 11 would be the biggest thing.

Are there anything that comes to mind that have changed the way law enforce has view everything in the Portland metro area or anything like that.

No you mean local type causes or national type cases

Local type cases

Every case that catches the headlines just give you a snap shot of a particular you know sad story. And these sad stories happen all time. You might think about the police shootings, you know those most certainly had an impact. And they had made a difference in a.... there's more review...there's more oversight of police activities...but other than that I don't think so.

How did Rodney King and the LA riots affect your job? Or did it?

Well ah...once again I think that kind of ties into the Portland police shootings I mean I think that the Rodney King videos ...it shows the problems with a short attention span. We see the video highlights of Rodney King getting beating but in fact the video was many minutes long...and when the jurors actually saw the whole thing it presents a very different picture...so the highlights that you see are very inflammatory. So I think really what the Roby King did is to show the power of the media to change people's think. Most people think that police were beating him were no reason, when in fact there was some. Weather it was justifiable or not...there was a lot that went on before that that led to that. So it seems to me that it just shows the power of the media to affect people's thinking in an inaccurate way.

Are they any particular intense or cases that you've worked on that are remarkable to you?

Well...yeah..All the big cases that you work on are remarkable. There remarkable to me, I don't know if there remarkable to the community because I'm just one prosecutor in an office of 70 plus and there's hundreds of persecutors across the state. And they all have

hard cases. But I think some of them that you do leave a personal mark on you ether because of the people that were involved or the intensity of the case.

Can you share any of the cases?

Well I had a case that I trail with another guy from our office. And other man who killed two people. And he's now sitting in death row. And that's an significant case to me. You know its funny...is that an accomplishment? I don't know if it's an accomplishment I mean I'm just doing my job...enforce the law that the people of the state of Oregon enacted...they passed the death penalty for certain crimes. They said that if you commit these crimes then you are potentially subjected to the death penalty. This guy committed those crimes and he was convinced of those crimes and he was sentenced and given the ultimate sentence. I feel good about that because it's difficult to obtain that measure of justice. Weather he'll be executed but the fact of the matter is I'm just happy he's just off the street so that he's not able to do that do somebody else.

IV_u

How is your job affected you family and social life?

Oh I think it has affected a lot. I think I'm more belligerent, I think I'm very protect of my kid when there small, perhaps I passed on some of my Sinicism to my kids...when you deal with the kind of people we deal with all the time its harder to have a rosy sort of cheer I call it naive outlook on the basic human nature. And so you are suspicious of people's motives and I'm sure that that's affected my relationship with my family. Many of my good friends are friends from work, some people think that that's not healthy. You need to have friends that are outside from work and I agree with that, but I work with some very great people and I'm very happy that their friends of mine. But I think to, when you associate with people who are dealing with the same stuff and having to deal with in similar ways that it also affects you in what you present to people out side of that circle.

Do you think you and your family are mare hardened to crime like what you see in movies so something like that, does it not have as great of a impact or soft factor.

Well I know, yes I think that's probably true I know that's true for me, I've seen a lot of dead bodies and been to a lot of autopsies, and not the sort of thing that I expected when I was in college I've seen a lot of man's in humanity to man.

Are you obligated to report criminal actions?

I think it all depends for instance I have to report child abuse I'm speaking as an attorney, I am legally required to report this to the courts if you're asking are you as a citizen required to report crimes, there are legal obligations if you are witness to a car accident to be relied upon as a witness, but if you see someone shop lifting a roast from the store you do not have a legal obligation to report that, you might have a moral obligation

Do you think people in the last 25 yrs have been hardened to crime?

Well certainly expose to movies and TV shows make them more aware of the crimes but I meet people that are the victims of crimes when you actually visit a victim I don't think movies hardened them to the actual effects, I think we don't know how it's like when it actually happens

Have you yourself been victim of crimes?

Not serious crimes

How do you cope with your job and responsibility?

I don't have an answer for that I think one of the things that I do is I just -humor is very important we make a lot of sick jokes you just have to laugh about these awful things, it would seem callous to someone on the outside, I mean you're standing there at a table and some poor person has had something horrible done to them, you have to watch that process you have to deal with it somehow

Why is the lawyer required to be at the auto?

You're not required, but its important to the job, you should go to the crime scene, it's the same thing, you want to be there on two levels, technically to see what's done the path of the bullet of much of the death sec more of an emotional you cant help but become more invested in the case when you see that process.

What do you think are the main motives for violent crimes?

There are traditional its interesting motive implies thinking out, most crimes are spontaneous most assaults are spun. They are just drunk or high idiots who act

Do you think that has changed in the past 25 years?

Not necessarily. There is the whole TV show murder where people calculated decision to set up and kill these people, those just don't happen very often its usually in a fit in jealous rage or a drunken rage or both

It's more emotional?

Absolutely- someone's pride gets challenged, someone gets in a fist fight and someone pulls a knife, a number of things can happen, people get into a fight at bars its either going to be all be alright or someone is coming back with a gun that's what happens

How big of a problem are gangs?

Oh they are a problem their kind of- ebb and flow like other things in the last year they have started to come back in the past 2-3 years there was a down swing in some ways

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they are a constant the Hispanic gains have been more prominent not a lot of Asian gangs are out there, same with the black gangs we still see them but not as much anymore but there was an effort a number of years ago our office got a Rico action against gang bangers and we were very successful and got some pretty hefty prison sentences

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What is RICO?

Rico is Raquetering in corrupt organizations it is a law you can bring charges involving Rico when there is a pattern in an organization with criminal activities it is a potent tool it is very difficult to use it hasn't solved all the gang problems but a major part of it in the last 10 years. The fact is I'm prosecuting the children of people I prosecuted 10 years ago, there's always a supply

Do you see and Caucasian gangs?

They are there- mainly they are pretty loosely structured the skinheads the white power we also have Caucasian. That joining black gangs not many in his or Asian

How long has Rico been there?

It's been on the books for 15 years but it's been there just it isn't used very much

Is there any other major differences or something you want to share about crime in past 25 years?

Well of course one of the big changes has been with computers the law enforcement seems to be a step behind there is a great need for additional computer forensics everyone thinks now because of the new hit TV shows of CSI to be into the whole forensic scientific stuff that is greatly overblown people don't leave finger prints on everything but there is a great need for computer fore because crimes have evidence on computers or the computer is the instrument used to commit the crime we see a lot in economic crimes weather making checks or building ids we also child porn cases or sex offenses because of stored video images, we had to develop that expertise but we always seem to be a day late and a dollar short not enough people or facilities so they are all backed up

III 4

How effective do you think composites are?

You know I've never had a composite in one of my cases but it depends on the circumstances many of these cases we solve pretty quickly we know who did it but in many of the cases we don't have eye witness that are capable of giving a composite I've seen composites that have been very helpful and very close they recreate these people using an artist and a witness, you only have a minute or two to see somebody's face and how accurate is your recollection some people are really good at that

Any last stories you want to share

No