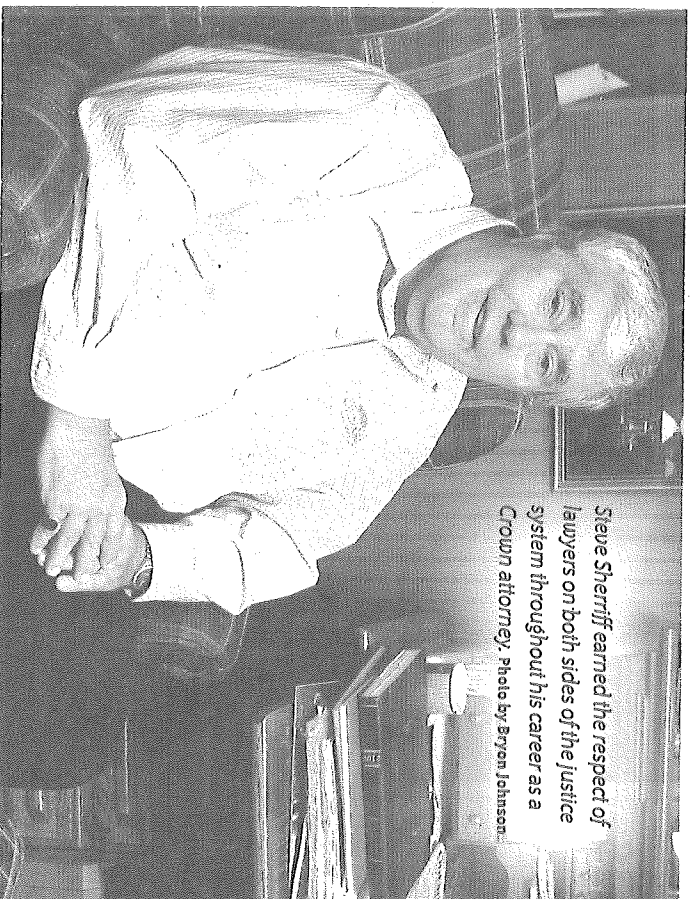


Retired Crown reflects on career, 'amateur' lawyers, police

SHERRIFF Steve



Steve Sherriff earned the respect of lawyers on both sides of the justice system throughout his career as a Crown attorney. Photo by Bryan Johnson

titative units. I believe on his watch, the quality went down. You will not find me saying anything positive about chief Metcalf. I think he hurt the administration of justice in the Region of Peel."

Peel police have yet to respond to a request for comment.

In a basement office that includes countless awards from the likes of police, the Ontario Crown Attorneys Association and the Law Society of Upper Canada, and a portrait of Osgoode Hall painted by former Attorney General and Solicitor General Roy McMurtry, given to Sherriff as a retirement gift, the seasoned Crown sat down with *The News* to discuss his career in Peel, which ended in June with his retirement.



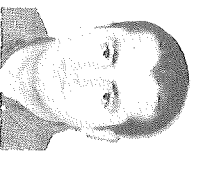
Joseph Duhnan

"In cases where the defendant had a reasonably good defence, some amateur lawyers would persist in attacking on the Crown and the police, when, if they were focusing on the issues, they would have mounted a better defence.

"The trouble with this is they don't focus the issues because they're what I sometimes call a legal aid make-work project. They're trying to bring silly motions to run up the tab. That doesn't apply to the professionals. I greatly enjoyed doing the cases with the pros."

Sherriff, 68, made a point of always involving himself early in police investigations, instead of waiting until the case reached the courtroom.

"It's a lot better than taking a product from the police and then sort of just carrying through with it. I was in it at the ground floor. Like the concept of being part of a team with Peel Regional Police. It's a natural recipe for fair, just and successful prosecutions."



Mauricio Castro

Sherriff said there have been some cases where he wishes the outcome was different, including the conviction of drug producer Ian Tonner, who later managed to bribe a jail guard and remains at large.

"It's a reminder to me that it's not over until it's over. Even though I convicted him, he got away," he said. "That was a humbling experience for me."

Sherriff prides himself on never turning away from the tough cases.

"I've been accused of being an American-style district attorney," he said. "I plead guilty to that."

Sherriff hopes to be active in his car clubs during retirement. He owns two Jaguars and a Rolls Royce. Travel and flying planes, another one of his passions, are also on the list.

He said it's imperative that the public has confidence in the Crown.

"We exist to protect the public," he said.

Defence lawyer Paul O'Marra, former president of the Peel Criminal Lawyers Association, said Sherriff's reputation preceded him as a tough but extremely fair-minded Crown.

"He made courageous decisions in cases that were always based on a principled approach to the evidence," he said. "He made up his own mind and he never let Crown policy get in the way of those decisions. A maverick the likes of which we may never see again."

By Louie Rossella
@LouieMissisNews

HN Oct 2, 2014

He has prosecuted 74 murder cases, only two of which ended in acquittals.

With a record like that, it's obvious Crown prosecutor Steve Sherriff is as tough as they come in the courtroom, willing to stare down any killer or fraudster even in the face of threats against his life.

His maverick and no-nonsense style in Brampton court, which earned him the respect of lawyers on both sides of the justice system, continues into his retirement, as Sherriff pulls no punches about his thoughts on policing in Peel and lawyers in general.

"I have dealt with the best of the Peel Regional Police Service, who've been really, really good," he said, pointing to recently-retired Peel Deputy Chief Frank Roselli. "I'm really impressed with the high-calibre detectives the force has produced."

But, Sherriff added, he has become "less and less impressed" with some of the frank and file on the force, "some who seem to be far more interested in benefits and promotion than they are about protecting the public."



Mike Metcalf

Sherriff said he has seen some top-notch young officers come along, but generally has seen an erosion in attitude and police caring for public safety.

"Do they really care about public safety or just themselves? The thing I don't appreciate is their attitude. Too much self and not enough public interest. I don't see the dedication, not as much of it, as I used to see. I have concerns about their ability to function well in court, and I have concerns about their desire and attitude."

In recent years, Sherriff said, it seems "lower quality of officers" are getting promoted in Peel.

"We don't have the universal high quality we once had," he said.

Sherriff said the force is in good hands under the leadership of Chief Jennifer Evans, but was negatively affected by former chief Mike Metcalf.

"I was not a fan of the previous chief and his management," he said. "He didn't seem to be interested in the inves-

Sherriff began his career in 1975. He spent 29 years as a Crown and 10 years as senior counsel of discipline with the Law Society of Upper Canada.

Nothing would get in the way of Sherriff's work as a prosecutor, not even a diagnosis of non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2003 in which he was given eight years to live.

"I drove my motorcycle to chemotherapy," he said. "I wasn't going to let this illness get the best of me." Sherriff also stayed calm and never missed a day of work after a man whose bail he opposed, Daniele Renzi, attempted to hire a hitman to kill Sherriff and his wife, Beverly, back in 2000.

Renzi was seeking bail after being charged with conspiracy to kidnap and kill his estranged wife. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy to kidnap and counselling to commit murder.

The plot against Sherriff was thwarted because the 'hitman' Renzi had attempted to hire was an undercover Peel police officer. Renzi was sentenced to jail and has since been deported to Italy.

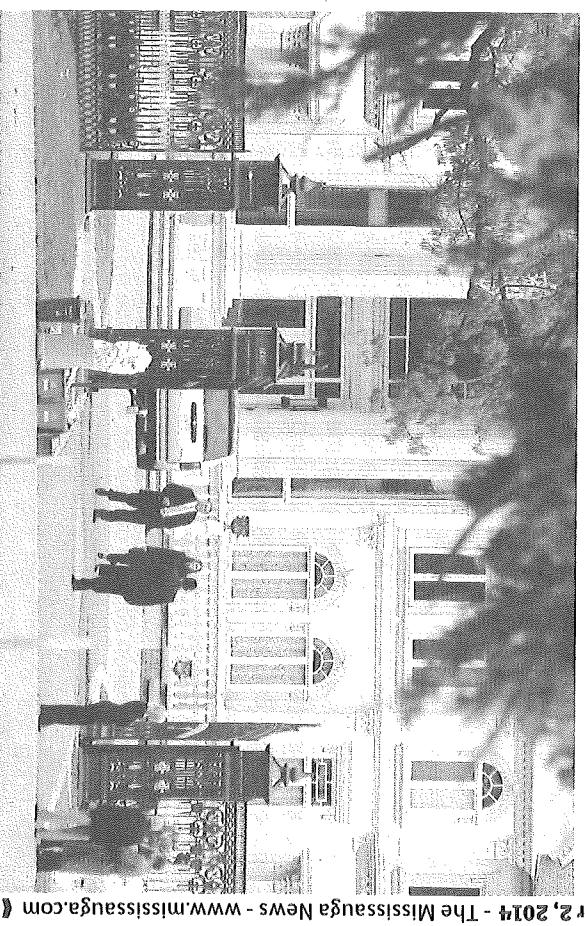
"I was scared my wife was going to say 'Steven you've gotta get out of this line of work,'" he said. "But she never did. She stayed calm and so did I... never lost a day's work."

Sherriff had a bulldog's intensity in the courtroom, and prosecuted some of Peel's most high profile murder cases.

Sherriff said some that stick out in his memory are the murder of Jocelyn Duhnan, 27, in a massive Doullon Place mansion back in 2007, the high-level Colombian drug assassination of Mauricio Castro in a parking lot at Square One Shopping Centre in 2005, and the killing of Nancy Kidd, a defenceless TD bank employee, during a violent robbery on Jan 11, 1999 in Brampton. All ended in convictions.

Sherriff enjoyed working with professional lawyers but dreaded working with amateur defence lawyers.

"It's one thing to attack the Crown's case. It's needlessly abusive to attack the individual prosecutor. The good news is it didn't have much affect on me. I got used to it," he said.



Jury members visit the scene of a murder in the trial of a man accused of killing a maid in a mansion on Doullon Place.