

Welcome to:

MajorRobertEChapman.com

Thank-you for taking a few minutes or many minutes to review the documents on this web site.

It isn't easy picking the right place to begin, but I'll try. How about getting know me a little? Perhaps there, you can begin to get a sense of me as a husband, a dad to two wonderful daughters, son, son-in-law, brother, brother-in-law, nephew and friend to hundreds, maybe thousands of people. I am a 57 year old man who has worked literally since I was a 14 year old paperboy. I was very fortunate to have jobs that I loved. I knew throughout all these years that education would get me farther than not, but never had enough sense to finish. Oh, I've been in loads of classes and schools, but never got that piece of paper to frame and hang on my wall. I was too interested in doing what I loved and along the way Debbie (my wife) and I built our family. More about all of that later.

I'll move a little closer to present and tell you that I spent 32 years in law enforcement serving my community. The first 22 years were for the Sheriff's Office in Elmira, NY. The last almost ten years were with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office working for a man I have a tremendously high regard for, Steve Oelrich. I was fortunate to have been able to retire (at a too early of an age) from my NY position and relocate to Gainesville. My wife's family; Armand & Frances Cirulli, brothers Joe and Dan, sisters Linda (and Jim), Ro (and Lee) and Crissy were all here. This was home to them and now ours, too. There is an almost unbelievable story about how I got to be one of Steve Oelrich's Majors assigned as director of the county jail. I'll share that story a little later too. During all of my years I have had several background investigations done by local law enforcement, state law enforcement, governors and senators, and FBI. My record is squeaky clean. I don't even think they knew about the time I was stopped for going 62 mph in a 55 mph zone in Maryland 20 some years ago and received a warning ticket or of the time in 1966 I was stopped for going too fast in my neighborhood wherein the local policeman pulled me over and threatened to tell my dad if I didn't slow down from then on. I did not want my father finding out. That would have been worse than a ticket!

This brings me to the purpose of this letter, this web site and my desire to share the real truth of how I came to resign from the Alachua County Sheriff's Office in June, 2007.

Before you begin, I would ask you to contemplate a couple of things that play into the story you are about to read and scratch your head and say, "Is that all there is?" and "Why did this happen?" One thing Steve Oelrich always stressed was complete cooperation particularly with other law enforcement professionals and to tell the truth as you best remember. Another is to put you in my spot of having just arrived at work gathering the weekend reports, getting coffee and trying to ignore the two depressing people you see first thing and ask them how each are doing and they reply, "I'm here." (By the way, they are Joyce Gallagher and Walter Withey, who you will get to know in the reports.) Know too, that you have spent your entire life without having purposely done anything against the law. Mistakes are different and anyone who says they have never made a mistake is just plain, lying. Then, have two investigators come into your office and they want you to talk to them truthfully about things that happened while you've been employed at the Sheriff's Office. In particular, think about the area of the report that dealt with a used car purchase and transaction two years earlier, or think about a former inmate that sent a photo of her boxer dad and wrote "have your dad take care of my dad," on a sticky note or think about them suggesting I double dipped on travel documents and checks for I don't know how long.

The documents that appear here are not made up stories or statements; rather they are actual documents used by the present sheriff of Alachua County to conclude I no longer needed to be working there. I believe they are direct proof to you, that, like the former Duke lacrosse coach, Mike Pressler and the title of his story written by Don Yaeger which said it all; "It's Not about the Truth."

As you review these documents, I would ask that consideration be given to the bigger picture. In my career I worked everyday finding the six *W's*, *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, *Why* and *How*, when I was either working a case or helping someone. The information that I have put here are the actual reports filed. I hope you realize that I have to do this for my peace of mind. The truth and boring mundane stories don't sell newspapers.

Sensational stories containing the spin of the originator or the spin of the writer sells papers or draws an audience for the local TV news.

When the entire interview was finished and the tape turned off, two things crossed my mind, one of which I said out loud to the investigators in my office and later to two members of the sheriff's office who took me home. I'll bet as you read this, you have been put in a situation where you are trying desperately to remember one thing and say another and are sorry for what you said, but knew there would be a later opportunity to make amends? Boy was I wrong!

The first thing that crossed my mind was why I didn't ask for an attorney from the onset regardless of the cooperation Sheriff Oelrich had instilled. I had done enough interrogations in my career to know when an attorney would be advisable. (In retrospect and as you read the report and statements, you'll see that whether I had an attorney or not, the end result would have been the same: getting me out of the agency.) The second thing however; I did say out loud that I didn't really remember the car deal, as it had been two years prior. I didn't remember dates or any of the transaction timeline, or documents nor did I recall the timeline of the former inmate and the picture. The investigators said they would note it in the report or the two sheriff's employees said they would let her know, too. None did. My comment was not referenced in the FDLE report and the two sheriff employees were two that wanted me gone, too, so why would they say more?

After I arrived at my home and greeted my wife, cried, called family and friends and then sat down and wondered just what the hell had happened! Here I am, 56 years old (then), in law enforcement for 32 years, in charge of a multi million dollar detention operation, sitting on the most prestigious law enforcement panel in the State of Florida, sitting on a corrections accreditation board, one of a few statewide planners for county corrections events through the sheriff's association, sitting on several judiciary panels in the 8th Circuit and Alachua County, sitting on two committees at Santa Fe Community College and a host of guest lecture dates on both the UF and SFCC campuses. Would I purposely violate the law? A resounding NO! Could I have made a mistake? Well, probably.

When I told my wife that I must not have paid sales tax on the car deal and told her that these investigators had said I only paid \$65.00 at the

tag agency, I did say I probably saved a few sales tax dollars. They then asked if I had ever not paid sales tax before and I said yes. (I had just purchased a GPS system from E-bay over the internet and paid only for shipping!) When these guys said \$65.00 I can only surmise that I was trying to make it more plausible. Truth was and is today, I don't remember the transaction. I especially could not remember what had happened with personal finances two years prior. I even told these guys during the interview that my wife pays the bills and knew better than me these details. I was really only the messenger as the tag agency was closer to where I worked and more convenient for me than her making a special trip.

We went through our checkbook and found a check in the amount of \$175.85 to the tax collector for the car. It was not \$65.00. I don't think I was in that tag agency for more than five minutes. I have since gone back to the tag agency for another car transfer and registration (a car for my daughter) and during that time learned from the tax collector, that they only have you sign here, then sign here and initial there, without questions, etc. I can state that had a clerk brought to my attention a question regarding the tax, I would have paid it. There was more than enough money in several accounts to cover the cost of sales tax. My mistake? Not paying the sales tax, that's all. (As an aside, I went with my attorney following my statement, and paid the sales tax. I offered to pay any penalties or late charges and was told by the tag agency employee, this was no big deal and the tax due in 2005 was more than sufficient.) As I write this I am reliving the disgust I felt for the present sheriff and her administration in the way this was handled. The inspector assigned to the case was the same guy that said, "I'm here" and he's the same guy that worked his butt off for the present sheriff's election campaign and he's the same guy that was not worthy to be a higher rank in the previous administration in part because of his work ethic and he's the guy who she promoted after I departed, and he's obviously a "yes" boy. There was not a bit of fairness in his investigation and I submit it wasn't just Withey that made that decision but he spent enough time with Joyce Gallagher trying to dig up some dirt. There is one of the Blue Collar comedians, Bill Engvall, who will say, "There's your sign." I saw a bunch of signs along the way with this present sheriff that didn't register with me as individual occurrences, however, now that I have had time to think and put a chronology in some semblance of order, the signs were pieces of a bigger picture that had me expendable at any cost to include trying to ruin an excellent reputation.

Now, understand, there were two investigations. There was the FDLE case that closed as quickly and as soon as they had their "smoking gun" or my acknowledgement of the not having paid the tax. In fact, during the interview, one of the investigators said, "Let's beat him up on the car." The second investigation was the sheriff's office administrative inquiry and they even asked for two different 30 day extensions. I submit the extensions were to put together a case wherein my termination was their projected goal, obviously. As I said above and reiterate here is, the fact that I went into the ACSO interview believing even then, roughly seven weeks after the FDLE interview that I would be treated fairly; I would give them my four pages of notes and answer their questions with a much clearer head and a much better understanding of the three issues they supposedly had. Here again, the sales tax was my acknowledged mistake. When I say that they wanted me gone, they based ALL of their findings on what they perceived as the gospel in the original FDLE report. A novice investigator would have known there were leads and parts missing in the FDLE report. And, as you read the report, you will even ask yourself, "Why didn't they talk to his wife?" or "Why didn't they talk to Steve Oelrich?" for starters. Numerous people give statements with their attorneys. Why didn't FDLE or ACSO attempt to meet with Della Davis *and* her attorney?

I'm going to give you a respite from the case and tell you a little about me. I came from a little village in western New York called Horseheads. It's one of those places where you know everybody or everybody knows you. You couldn't lie, cheat, steal or act inappropriate without someone knowing or worse, calling your parents. Strong moral values develop young through repetition and good teachers. When I was 14 I did get a paper route because I wanted a pair of Chuck Taylor All-Stars and that was the only way I was getting anything different than the W.T. Grant \$3.00 canvasses! While still in high school I had some enviable jobs. I had a chance to cover high school sports for the local paper, then I was given an opportunity to realize an up till then dream, working in radio. I started covering evening meetings, then weekend news, then weekend news and my own Sunday show! I was an announcer! All this time, I was only getting by in school. I didn't care because I was living my dream in radio. After graduation, I gave community college a less than fair try. I wasn't drafted and looking back I should have joined the military, but I didn't. I kept pursuing my broadcasting dream. I also worked as an aid for our local senator. It was a great experience and I was bitten by the public service bug. I got into law

enforcement by accident. I was almost 21 and the local sheriff needed a dispatcher. So with my radio experience, I became a member of this great fraternity and spent 22 years there. I became a road deputy, and then was promoted to investigator (a lieutenant grade) and because we were a smaller agency with limited upward mobility, I accepted a promotion to jail superintendent. That turned out to be my blessing in disguise when I arrived in Gainesville. During my New York law enforcement days, I went to quite a few classes at Elmira College under the old Law Enforcement Education Assistance Program. I went to selective schools like John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I graduated from the FBI National Academy, the DEA basic school for local law enforcement, the Secret Service Academy for dignitary protection and the FBI Hostage Negotiator school to name a few. I went to more seminars than I can remember.

Along the way, I met and married Debbie Cirulli. That was in 1978. We'll be 30 this year and we have two beautiful daughters, Danielle, 26 and Kimberley, 19. Debbie's a 35 year cancer survivor, so when people say to live one day at a time, we do. She still has her health issues but the sun comes up every morning. We never dwelled on things past. If you need to say it, say it now and move forward. Fortunately we have a wonderful relationship with our kids and the dialogue is always good and not much gets put off till tomorrow if we can deal with it today. Tuck that little thought into your brain as more of the story unfolds.

I experienced spring break for three years in Daytona Beach. I knew someday, I would have a Florida address. I just wasn't sure where until Debbie and I married. Her brother Joe was opening a health and fitness center in Gainesville, so the *where* was answered. It was the *when* we didn't know. In 1986 after graduation from the FBI Academy, we came to Gainesville for a short vacation. Joe introduced me to Steve Oelrich. Little did I know then, what a fine gentleman he was and is today. I went back to my job and had a terrific 8 years more when the county offered a retirement incentive that I qualified for as a member of law enforcement. Just before that occurred, Steve Oelrich was running for, and then elected sheriff. My family supported him and when he won, I know we sent a congratulatory note and I seem to recall sending him a resume', too! In late 1994 we moved to Gainesville and I stayed away from the sheriff's office because, quite frankly, I missed it...everyday.

I'm certain as you read this you will recall a lot of press regarding the way the county jail was being run. I'm sure you remember the grand jury investigation and I'm sure you remember jail employees at every public meeting complaining about the conditions at the jail. To Sheriff Oelrich's credit, he offered to take the jail and run it for the county commissioners. This is where the true measure of Steve Oelrich comes in. He remembered my resume' and one day during all that mess, he ran into Joe, of all places, at the Los Angeles International Airport. The sheriff had been visiting his sister and Joe was there on health club industry business. The sheriff and Joe start talking about things and it was then that the sheriff mentioned to Joe about wishing I was in Gainesville to sit on a committee to explore the feasibility of running the jail. Joe told him we were living in Gainesville and that I was working for him in the private sector. Needless to say, Joe called me and suggested I call the Sheriff the next business day. I did and the rest is history. After a while the sheriff did sign an inter-local agreement to run the jail and asked if I would join him. I jumped at the opportunity and it took four months to complete my background investigation. We had that jail turned around and state accredited in a little over a year and nationally accredited in 18 months.

Time to get back to the case. After the interview was finished, it didn't take her two cronies more than five minutes to walk down the hall and back to my office and serve me with administrative suspension papers. She had them signed sealed and delivered, probably before my tape was turned off. Following the service of papers in my office, I was escorted from the jail and my assigned car inventoried and I was brought home. No more than ten minutes after arriving home, the media began calling my residence. (Please note here for future reference that they called my house.) Needless to say I said nothing, but it was interesting that a press release had already been issued. My guess is that too was completed long before my interview concluded.

And so begins the most bizarre 16 months that few people have to endure. It was not until June 14, 2008 that I was in any position to make any public statements about this case because of this case had been pending closure. I only said one other thing through the media and that was a letter to the editor at the Gainesville Sun right after I resigned. It will appear on this website, too.

When I spoke of Yaeger's book regarding Coach Pressler, I am reminded of a line used by the coach's young daughter, Janet, and his reply to her. She asked, "Dad, if you tell the truth, why do you need a good memory?" and the coach replied, "You are who you are." "When the shit flies, who are you? That's it. You've got to decide what is right and what is true and you make a stand. You've got to judge now, what are the consequences here?" "The truth." "As soon as you deviate from that, then it's over."

I waited from February 26, 2007 until April 9, 2007 to be interviewed by ACSO. In that interim, I had time to piece together my recollection of the allegations. During my interview with FDLE I made a couple of comments that were worthy of follow-up or clarification. I said at about 43:47 in the interview that my wife did all our banking and around 55:56 they told me I paid \$65.00 and change and zero tax. They then asked if I recalled no tax paid and I replied I guess that true. My wife does in fact do all of our banking. I even call her if need money from an ATM. Regarding the tax, that's where it went down hill. I believed what they said to me and in my cooperative sort of way, acknowledged that was true. I really didn't know whether I did or did not pay sales tax. When I found out that I wrote a check for \$175.85 and had they said that figure, I very well might have said something to the effect, "didn't that include tax?" We know that was not to be. Still personally believing and my attorney likewise believing that we could clarify any discrepancies during the ACSO interview, we waited for that interview to make the clarification. In the interim, State Attorney Bill Cervone writes a letter back to FDLE stating that my case is not criminal and that he will not entertain prosecuting, rather let ACSO deal with the matter internally, believing that I would maybe get some time off and maybe a worse case scenario, demotion to captain or reassignment. The newspaper got the story and everybody thought it was over and that I was going back to work. Wow! We all were wrong. As a matter of fact, this sheriff even called the newspaper to offer a correction stating that my deal was criminal contrary to what the state attorney said! Of course, she is double or triple upset with me and my family by now.

On February 26th, she called Joe and told him she had to do what she did, and then after my ACSO interview, not only called him and left a message of how bad it was and what she had to do, she offered him a copy of the report! I didn't even have a copy of the report and she wants my

brother-in-law to have a copy! She hinted at desiring his support in what she had to do. She obviously has no understanding of family and relationships. Regardless of anything, good, bad or indifferent, my brother-in-law would stand by my side as I would for him. (In fact, as you will see later, he was at my side, as was Steve Oelrich and another wonderful human being, Jeff McAdams when the standards and training commission agreed to closure in my case wherein no admissions and full denial by me was approved by an overwhelming majority to the dismay of this sheriff.) She even provided a copy of the report to TV20 and the Gainesville Sun before I had been given a copy and even state statutes indicate I must have a copy for three days.

I went into my interview with ACSO truly believing that by clarifying the allegations, this matter could come to a close and some accommodations made for either me or the accusers that worked for all. I knew I wanted nothing to do with Joyce Gallagher, Karen Keith, Cheryl Stinson or Jeff Cloutier. They cared nothing for that; rather took everything that I said in the interview plus the prepared four page statement, and twisted it around calling the FDLE report, the gospel and as they say the rest is history.

I have many letters and many notes saved over the years from governors, moms, dads, and friends who asked for and received help from me for their inmate, because very simply, it was the right thing to do. I am not sorry for any one of those times. FDLE and ACSO made it sound like the young man whose mom I bought the car from was the only former inmate given "special privileges." There was nothing "special" about working, or getting appropriate medical treatment or a special visit because of some urgent family matter. I have done that for hundreds of inmates. It is within the law, standards and then policy. Nothing was ever given to an inmate outside the law or to his family. That's probably why I like Steve Oelrich so much. He and I both knew that some people need to be in jail, but we also knew they were humans and providing they behaved, would get reasonable considerations from time to time. Often they would not.

In 32 years and even today, I have never had an unlisted telephone number. Countless moms, dads, husbands, wives and friends would find my number, call me at home and ask me to check on their inmate. I always did and always called them back with whatever the decision providing I could divulge certain things. I might have them follow up with me next work day.

But no one went without some kind of reply. What's really amazing is this sheriff even asked for a special favor when she was an officer with Gainesville PD.

As this case closed, she even sought the help of a mutual friend in an attempt to get his support for her forthcoming election campaign! That will never happen.

I will add more to this web site to include a transcript of my FDLE interview. I am hopeful it will be finished for publication here in the next couple of weeks. I will have a transcript of the generous comments made by the FDLE attorney at my final appearance with my attorney, brother-in-law, Senator Oelrich and Jeff McAdams. The state's fiscal year is July 1-June 30 and they stopped doing requests such as my case in April, well before my case, so that won't be available until after July. State Attorney Bill Cervone's second letter is made a part of that record as is a letter from the good senator. They both are attached now.

I have received literally hundreds of calls, letters and cards from friends, family, professional contacts and people I don't even know, offering their support and particularly, knowing me, knowing what I say and do is the truth.

My priest has assured me that good will out do evil everyday. My faith is strong and the good Lord doesn't give us more than we can handle. I had my doubts a couple of times, then looked in the mirror and knew better. I never hung my head through any of this. My little Italian girlfriend and our two beautiful girls never doubted their husband or dad because they know me better than anyone.

Please read this as often as you like. I will add other passages through time and I will also have comment links to the statements made by subordinates and some ideas as to why some said what they said.

Thank-you.

Sincerely,

Bob Chapman