

# Deputies with special ties to Short get special treatment

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Pasco County Deputies Al Denning and Victor Morris were fired for taking an unauthorized coffee break — in a department where other deputies survived despite the fact that they filed false police reports, flunked polygraph tests and associated with organized crime figures.

Deputies with special ties to Sheriff John M. Short frequently escape serious punishment while others are fired over minor infractions, according to files reviewed by the *Times* over the past seven months.

Denning and Morris were among four deputies caught in a convenience store parking lot in a photograph that a citizen mailed to Short in August 1981.

Denning, the only deputy who was in his assigned patrol area when the photo was taken, was fired without being given an opportunity to explain the circumstances. Denning said the owner of the convenience store had asked him to crack down on people cutting through his parking lot.

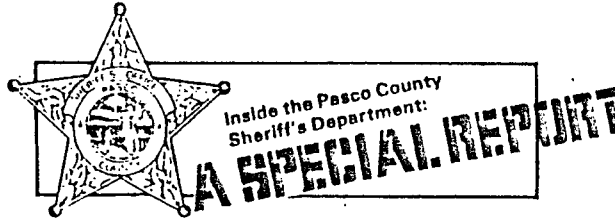
**DENNING SAYS** he was notified of his dismissal in a letter that was delivered by two officers who visited his home. They ordered him to load his sheriff's department equipment in his patrol car while his family and neighbors watched.

Morris, a deputy who had been the department's Officer of the Year in 1980, was forced to resign.

Denning contends that the coffee break was not the real reason he was fired. He says Short had been looking for a reason to get rid of him because he attempted to investigate complaints of illegal activity made against Capt. Joseph Donahue.

Short said at the time that Denning set a bad example for a new deputy who was riding with him.

A day after Denning was fired over the coffee break, Donahue failed a polygraph test given to him after a female prisoner in the county jail complained of sexual harassment.



A few weeks later Donahue, a close friend of the sheriff, was transferred from his job as jail warden to courts coordinator with no loss in salary and no disciplinary action.

Donahue remained on the payroll until the FBI advised the sheriff that he was about to be indicted on racketeering charges with alleged Mafia leader Santo Trafficante.

**DONAHUE WAS** only one of several old-line Short associates who managed to escape serious punishment despite recommendations from middle level supervisors. Donahue was found dead shortly after his indictment.

Other examples found by the *Times* include:

✓ Deputy James Tilley, who worked for Short in New Port Richey, gets a higher salary than most of the department's sergeants despite the fact that he was caught falsifying reports and has repeatedly been chastised for unacceptable work activity.

Tilley's supervisors, Sgt. Wayne Thomas and Lt. Mike Wilkes, caught Tilley filing false reports. Their investigation is outlined in reports obtained from the department by the *Times*.

In one case the supervisors checked, Tilley had marked a burglary report at the home of Jimmy Dorsey "unfounded." His report said he had checked with Mrs. Dorsey and determined that their garage door had blown shut.

The supervisors called Dorsey, who told them there is no Mrs. Dorsey and that he had

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never heard from a detective after first reporting the theft of a gun.

When confronted, Tilley said he could not recall the case "but if there was no Mrs. Dorsey I would not have put it in the supplement."

**TILLEY LOST** his rank as a corporal and was briefly transferred to the patrol division of the department, but he didn't suffer any loss in pay. Last week, Tilley was given an office job, helping check the backgrounds of job applicants.

Tilley still makes \$821 every two weeks — more than the \$792 salary that Sgt. Thomas receives.

Dorsey, reached by the *Times*, says he still is not married. "Never been married," he said. "And my mother is dead, so it couldn't be her."

Dorsey said that somebody broke into his house a second time since he reported the first incident and that no one has been arrested in either burglary.

✓ Deputy Mike Foremny arrested the sheriff's campaign treasurer and his son during Short's 1980 re-election campaign.

A few days after the election, Foremny was forced to resign. His personnel file reflects no reason for the action.

Foremny and others interviewed by the *Times* say he was forced to resign because of the arrests.

"I was never given a reason," Foremny told the *Times* in a recent interview. "I don't know if it was political pressure or what. I guess I know in my mind what may have been the reason, but I have no hard evidence to back it up."

Foremny said his dismissal "still burns me up," but he now works with the Florida Marine Patrol and says he is much better off.

The campaign treasurer, Carl F. Schalles Jr., pleaded guilty to opposing and obstructing a police officer and was fined \$350. His son, Lawrence C. Schalles, pleaded no contest to battery on a law enforcement officer, resisting arrest with violence and opposing and obstructing a police officer. He was placed on three years' probation. The Schalleses got into trouble when a state trooper investigating an accident went to their home and a fight broke out.

✓ Kenneth Modzelewski, assistant to the administrative services major in the department, and Deputy Donald Montague operated a delicatessen in a building owned by the sheriff.

Modzelewski was director of the corrections division in 1981 when an investigation focused on an allegation that he was dealing in real estate with an inmate and also attempted to sell her a car.

**OPERATIONS** Maj. Gil Thivener reported that three witnesses, including one who passed a polygraph exam, said Modzelewski was helping an inmate find a house.

Thivener said Modzelewski denied the allegation but admitted offering to sell the inmate a car.

Thivener was critical of Modzelewski for his management of the jail and said that he had little time for his corrections duties since he was also in the real estate business, owned a number of rental properties, operated a delicatessen and taught college classes.

Short took no action against Modzelewski, and in fact gave him a pay raise a few weeks later.

(In May 1983 Modzelewski recommended a reprimand for another deputy after he posted a notice to sell some guns and tools.

"I pointed out to him that he was using department equipment for personal gain and to withdraw any other advertisements he had posted," Modzelewski wrote in a report criticizing the deputy's conduct.)

✓ Transport Officer Bill Spivey survived repeated internal investigations after several prisoners in his custody escaped.

Supervisors began asking Short to fire Spivey in June 1977 after two prisoners escaped. They said he also had been unable to perform duties as a bailiff.

Spivey reported that he was sick in mid-1982 but continued to get his paychecks until mid-1983 despite repeated reports from supervisors who said that Spivey was well enough to go fishing all night and had told several different stories about his illness.

Spivey remains on sick leave without pay. While on the department's payroll he openly boasted that Short could never touch him because "I know too much."

Spivey made the boast in the presence of a *Times* reporter and several other witnesses at the time the department was investigating the escape of a prisoner in his custody.

Short refused to answer detailed questions dealing with Spivey, Tilley, Modzelewski and the others mentioned in this story. Tilley and Modzelewski also declined to comment. Spivey could not be reached.