

Marquis: DA decides not to seek another term

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seek re-election and will leave office in January 2019.

The early announcement is due to the timing of the May election. Marquis, 65, decided against seeking an eighth term and is throwing his support behind Chief Deputy DA Ron Brown.

Marquis was appointed to his post in 1994 by former Gov. Barbara Roberts.

It was a time of complete chaos in the Clatsop County District Attorney's Office.

Then-DA Julie Leonhardt had been indicted in October 1993 on a dozen charges, including forgery, tampering

with public records, falsely accusing two Astoria police officers of dealing cocaine and trying to get her fiancé's reckless driving charges dismissed.

Marquis' career already was on firm footing by 1994.

He'd earned his law degree from the University of Oregon, served as deputy district attorney for Lincoln and Lane counties and was working as chief deputy DA in Deschutes County.

He'd previously been a reporter for the legal newspaper Los Angeles Daily Journal and a speech writer for California Attorney General

John Van de Kamp.

But getting the call from the governor was both blessing and curse.

Clatsop County employees and the County Commission all supported then-Chief Deputy DA Cindee Matyas, now a Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge.

"It was very difficult for me when I moved here because I was a total outsider," Marquis said. "I was not the employees' choice and they had undergone a tremendous trauma."

He assumed he'd have the place in order within six months. It was closer to six years.

"You have to earn people's respect," he said. "In my business, if I tell people I'm going to be tough on crime, there's this whole subcommunity – the media, the police, the judges -- they want to see what you're going to do."

Today he is one of the country's go-to experts in support of the death penalty.

He has written articles for the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times and dozens of other publications. He was co-author of the book "Debating the Death Penalty," which was cited by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

He was one of four panelists invited to discuss capital punishment at the New Yorker Festival in October 2011, appearing with Innocence Project founder Barry Scheck, crime victim advocate Marc Klaas and death penalty opponent Danalynn Recer.

Despite what may seem a passion, he has only once asked a jury to use the death penalty.

That was for the 1998 murder of Dana Bailey on a boat at the Warrenton Marina.



Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis in his office.

Anthony Scott Garner of Seaside stabbed her twice and then set the boat ablaze.

The cases that make it all worthwhile?

"It's often the smaller ones," Marquis said.

The conviction of a man in Lincoln County who got angry with his girlfriend, killed her two kittens and smeared their blood all over the walls of her trailer. "Rarely do I get as much satisfaction sending someone to jail as I did him."

In 1998, it was the manslaughter case of a driver on Highway 26 who was impaired by alcohol, methadone and marijuana. He wiped out an entire family except for a 10-year-old boy.

Marquis had gone to visit the boy, now living with his grandparents, and the boy began talking about his pet.

"He said, 'My cat lives in the house where nobody lives.' And it hit me, his own home, his room, his cat – the sheer enormity of what happened to him -- hit me."

The case with the most profound impact on his career was "the 20-year prosecution of Randy Guzek."

Twenty years, he said, because he made a rash promise to the victims' families that he would handle any retrials and there have been plenty over the years. Guzek,

a teenager from Bend, had murdered Rod and Lois Houser in their Redmond home in 1987.

What will Marquis miss the most?

"Not to sound melodramatic, but standing in the well of the courtroom. That's what we call area in front of the bench," he said. "What I have loved most about being DA in terms of the job itself is trying cases and actually being in trial."

As his office has grown – from seven employees to 20 today – he's been forced to be more of an administrator than a law officer.

What won't he miss?

"Preparing budgets or dealing with the bureaucracy of the state and county."

The most unpleasant thing that happened in office was when county commissioners voted to take away nearly 25 percent of his salary, which is largely provided by the state.

"I expect to have to fight when I go to court ... but I don't expect to have to fight over things like simply maintaining my budget," he said. "I'm very conscious that the money paid to the DA's Office is, in fact, taxpayer money. I treat it way more carefully than my own money and I have never gone a dime over budget."



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