

## ***Football, Compliance and Blogging-Jim McGrath***

*Ed. Note-in this post I continue my interviews of persons I read and follow in the social media world related to FCPA and compliance. In this article I post an interview with Jim McGrath, well known and long suffering Cleveland Browns fan who blogs at The Internal Investigations Blog.*

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*1. Where did you grow up and what were your interests as a youngster?*

I grew up in an inner ring suburb of Cleveland. My Dad was an attorney and later a Common Pleas Court judge and so it was expected that my sister, brother, and I would go to college. We were the only family with a college graduate as the head of our household in our neighborhood, to the best of my knowledge. We were good kids and well thought of by the neighbors, because my father beat (mostly figuratively) honesty, respect, integrity, personal responsibility, hard work, and humility into us.

My interests were always sports, and primarily football, although I also played baseball (catcher), basketball, and soccer. I always liked controlled violence and hitting or being hit. That attitude was common in my youth and I was often the youngest kid in the pick-up game and so I had to be tough. Even at 48 years of age, it still brings a smile to my face to remember that I never shied away from a hit, even with much bigger guys. I think that I am still that way.

Just as importantly, I worked a lot as a kid. When I was 13, he got me a job washing dishes at a mom-and-pop pizza joint about a mile from home. By the time I was 14, I was a cook. That job taught me almost everything I know about working: the customer is always right; you have to be on time; you have to give your best effort; the boss has the final say (even if he is an idiot), how to balance school, work and extra-curricular, etc. It has been a tremendous benefit to me to have had that job. In college, started and ran my own house-painting business. In law school, I clerked, worked at another pizza joint, and drove a dump truck (many times, all in one day) in order to pay my tuition.

*2. Where did you go to college and what experiences there led to your current profession?*

I went to Marquette University in Milwaukee for my undergraduate education. I wanted to go there because it was a Jesuit institution and although the Jesuits have a tendency to irk the Pope, they certainly can teach. Because my Dad was an attorney, I was exposed to the profession early. It was a natural progression for me, I guess. I used to go to his office with him on Saturdays when I was a kid and would bang out fake motions on the old typewriters. Plus, it was “downtown”, which meant something here (as elsewhere) before the explosion of freeways, malls, and exurbs. My Dad had been a prosecutor, as well, so I always wanted to do the same and “wear the white hat”.

3. *As we would say in Texas, you look like you played some 'ball' in your day? What positions did you play and did you play professionally?*

I played ball and even had tryout offers with the New England Patriots and the New York Giants. I went to Marquette for academics. I guy already there mentioned me to the football coach and he contacted me and asked me to come out for the team. Here was the rub: the program was not a varsity one. Marquette had a club program. The team played varsity Division III teams in the Illini-Badger Conference and others. As a sophomore through senior, I was the fullback. More like Robert Newhouse than Earl Campbell. I opened a lot of holes and caught swing passes. I loved it, especially the contact as a lead blocker.

I went to a tryout with the Patriots in 1987. My goal was to not be the first running back sent home and I wasn't. Of course, I didn't make it to training camp, either. After I got cut, there was something there from the Giants. It was a "heard you got cut, come on up and see us" wire. I had to get back and get ready for law school and the Giants were coming off a Super Bowl win in January. I figured that if I couldn't stick with the Pats, who were on a downward trend, I surely wasn't going to displace Maurice Carthon in New York. And that was the end of my football career.

4. *You started your legal career in law enforcement. What can you tell us about that and how did it shape your professional career going forward?*

A few years after getting out of law school, I got an offer to be an assistant prosecutor in another inner ring Cleveland suburb. By age 29, I was the chief prosecutor and had my hands in everything from multiple-slaying homicides to mortgage frauds. We did it all and at tremendous volume.

About the same time (age 29), I was asked to replace the former CLO of a regional narcotics unit that was run under the auspices of the DOJ and funded through a Byrne Grant. I did that for almost 15 years and it was there that I got the chance to work with some truly excellent investigators. I also had the opportunity to make a lot of very good and helpful contacts across a broad spectrum of law enforcement agencies and professionals, some of whom I am now able to tap for corporate internals.

Between both law enforcement gigs, I supervised and directed 3,000+ investigations of varying sizes and complexities. It was a great training ground for what I am doing now. The narcotics unit won an award as the undercover unit of the year from the Ohio Attorney General while I was there and we were excellent at what we did. We used to sit in surveillance vehicles and dream about how we could turn these talents into careers in the private sector, and when the corporate landscape began to favor internal investigations by outside counsel, I decided to tab some of my former cohorts and launch this firm.

5. *Why did you start your Blogsite, what did you hope to achieve from it and what will be your focus going forward?*

I started my blog site, as a means to gain exposure to readers as potential clients. In addition, I have always enjoyed writing and felt that I had some worthwhile impressions

to give on the lay of the investigative land. The blog has netted me a tremendous network of readers and fellow C&E professionals that has translated and will continue to translate into business opportunities. I enjoy writing the posts, although sometimes it is daunting when I get very busy. If I could, and if there were a market for it, I would write full time on investigations or C&E issues, but I doubt that I would be able to make a living that way, given the relatively narrow focus of my writings. It is being picked up and rolled into Dick Cassin's **ethiXbase** consortium, which itself is an honor. I intend to continue to write on my impressions on a wide variety of investigations facets across various sectors of the economy, business, and sports.

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