



# An Interview with Detective Ray Quinn

BY **MARK MYNHEIR**

I first met Ray Quinn about four years ago when we were working on a homicide task force together, tracking down a serial killer who was plaguing Central Florida. Ten detectives from various agencies gathered together in that unit with a single focus—to catch this one vicious killer. While it was a great idea in theory, the problems begin when you get that many homicide cops together. Most detectives have strong personalities, to say the least. You don't find a lot of passive, wimpy people chasing down killers. That being said, Ray Quinn was the alpha dog of the pack. At our first meeting, Ray swaggered in with his Orlando Police Department badge clipped next to his belt and a Glock 9mm on his hip. His dark brown hair was cut short, but not military style. His hazel eyes darted around the room, making contact with each detective, sizing them up. He sported an athletic frame, and the former kick boxer moved about with the purposed gait of a cat, balanced like he could pounce at any moment. Ray Quinn was a fighter; any rookie cop could have spotted it.

Ray quickly took control of the whole operation. His cop instincts were good, better than most detectives I'd

known. But Ray was . . . a little difficult to work with. He had his own way about him and wasn't inclined to explaining himself to anyone. Ray just didn't play well with others and often ran afoul of the supervisors who were trying to keep the task force focused. Ray and I got along okay, mainly because I wasn't about to challenge him, and I would do some of his computer work for him without giving him any grief. He called me his "geek." So we developed a loose friendship during our time together. I'm not too sure that anyone could get real close to him; he didn't seem the type. But love him or hate him, Ray Quinn made that task force work. We caught our man, and Ray broke him in the interrogation. The suspect confessed to killing five prostitutes throughout Central Florida. The task force disbanded, and we all went back to our agencies. But I never forgot Ray Quinn.

I hadn't seen Ray since our task force days until he agreed to the interview. I had been keeping tabs on him, though, and his career. Over a year ago, he and his partner, Trisha Willis, were ambushed outside a house in Orlando. Trisha was killed, but Ray survived . . . barely. The shooting left him crippled,

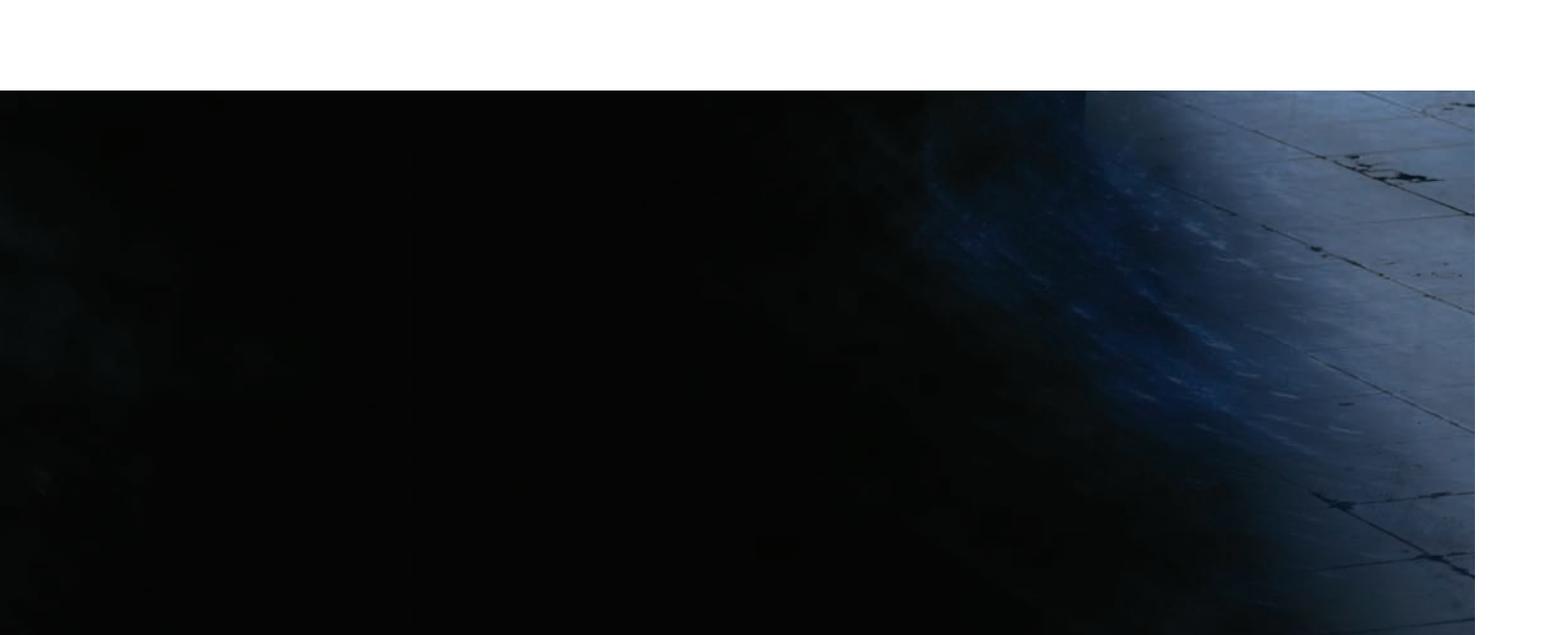
and he had to medically retire from the force. Some of my contacts at Orlando PD told me it wasn't only his body that was injured in the shooting. The attack wounded his psyche as well.

Ray dropped out of sight for a while after that. I thought he was gone forever and then I read about him in the *Orlando Sentinel*, solving a string of homicides as the night watchman at a condo in Orlando. The tale intrigued me, as did Ray's remarkable personal journey. I knew then I needed to tell Ray's story.

We agreed to meet in the lobby of the Marriott World Resort Hotel in Orlando. I found a corner with two comfortable chairs we could use. Even though I knew everything Ray had experienced that year, I still wasn't prepared for what I saw. Ray, once athletic and vibrant, hobbled toward me, the brass tip of his cane echoing off the marble floor. He stooped some and dragged his right leg behind him, like a man thirty years his senior. Ray seemed unsure of himself and unsteady as he approached.

"Good to see you, Ray," I said, extending a hand.

Ray shifted his cane to his left hand and then took mine. "You've porked out a bit, Mark," he said. "Looks like



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the writing life is making you look like the Pillsbury Doughboy.”

“Same old Ray,” I said. His body might have been wrecked, but his snarkiness was still a finely honed weapon. (I hadn’t really put on that much weight.) “I appreciate you agreeing to the interview.”

“Not a problem,” he said. Using the arm of the chair, he lowered himself down. He posted both hands on the handle of his cane, his eyes locked on mine. “I figure you can buy me lunch when we’re done.”

I had my legal pad at the ready. We made some small talk as I flipped on the digital recorder. “So, Ray, it seems like you’ve had an interesting year, especially the last couple of months. Can you walk me through what happened at the Coral Bay Condos?”

“It was all pretty crazy,” he said. “After I got shot, I retired and took a job as the night watchman at the Coral Bay Condos. A friend, Sgt. Oscar Yancey, told me that I was becoming a hermit and that I should get out of my apartment more. Oscar was the only cop who kept in touch with me after I retired. Working security wasn’t a bad gig—I had the nightshift, watching the security monitors and answering the phone. I could work my sudoku puzzles and mind my own business. It was quiet and

a good place to hide, until that night.”

“What happened with the murders?” I said.

“This pastor and a young girl, a stripper at a local club, were found dead in his condo,” he said. “Orlando’s homicide detectives, my old unit, cleared it as a murder/suicide—the pastor had killed his lover in a fit of jealous rage, so they said. Pretty tawdry stuff. But the case was all sewn up in a nice little package and put away forever . . . supposedly.”

“I remember the write up in the papers,” I said. “They pilloried the pastor and his ministry for weeks. It was ugly.”

“How did you get involved in the case?”

“At first, I didn’t want anything to do with it, and even though it happened in my condos, I stayed out of OPD’s way. That kind of stuff wasn’t my business anymore, and I liked it that way. Too many painful memories to deal with to get all wrapped up in the goings-on there. But the pastor’s sister, Pam Winters, found out I used to be a homicide cop and hounded me to review the case, to see if I could find any holes in the investigation. She was convinced that someone framed her brother and murdered them both. Of course, I thought she was a religious kook like her brother and wanted nothing to do

with that whole thing. But then I made a huge mistake.”

“What was that?” I said, leaning in, giving him my full attention.

“Like an idiot, I looked at the case file.” He tossed his hands in the air. “I couldn’t help it. It’s like I’m a homicide junkie or something, addicted to sorting through peoples’ shattered lives. As I reviewed the case, I found some serious problems with the initial investigation. Before I knew it, I was sucked into this thing and just couldn’t stop myself.”

“I heard you ruffled a few feathers along the way,” I said.

“‘Ruffled a few feathers?’ Nice cliché, Mark. Don’t give up your day job yet. But, yes, a couple people got a little uppity about my investigation . . . and then tried to murder me.” He raised his cane and opened his arms, as if displaying his crippled body. “Like that’s the first time anyone has ever tried that. I’m a bit like a roach—easy to hit, but hard to kill.”

“I see your sweet disposition has remained with you, even after being shot,” I said.

He shrugged. “I was chasing down a killer. Sometimes I left my manners at the curb and certain dirtbags didn’t appreciate that. But like the old days, I’m not inclined to give these murder-

ing thugs an inch, even if I'm hobbled up. All they did by coming after me was to ensure that I would never stop until I had them all behind bars."

Ray's eyes radiated the fire that I remembered from the old days—the Ray Quinn of the past, at the top of his game and on the hunt. Just talking about the case amped him up. He was still a cop at heart, no doubt.

I needed to switch the direction and tone of the interview and to dig a little bit deeper. "I was real sorry about what happened to you and Trisha. She was a class act and a great cop. Do you think about her often?"

Ray swallowed hard and released a deep, slow hiss. "Don't go there, Mark," he said with authority. He shifted his hands on his cane ever so slightly, making me wonder if he were about to jab the tip into my eye. Ray was formidable in any condition. Besides, I sensed that he and Trisha were a bit more than just partners. The ache of the staggering loss was still evident in his countenance. I'd give him some space there.

"Fair enough, Ray," I said. "What about this Pam Winters?"

Ray rubbed his chin and regarded me. Normally, Ray peppered answers back in rapid succession. That's just how his mind worked, swift and sharp like the cut of a Samurai sword. But he ruminated a bit on that question, letting several precious seconds tick by before he answered.

"She's . . . different," Ray said. His taut jaw muscles loosened. "She's not quite what I expected."

"What do you mean, expected?"

"When we first met, I thought she was a religious nut like her brother." He eased back and rested his cane across his legs. "But I was wrong, at least about her being a 'nut.' She certainly is religious, baiting me with God talk all the time. But there is something different about her. Something I'm not quite used to dealing with. She is genuine."

"You say it like it's a bad thing," I said. "She sounds like a real nice lady. You might want to hang out with her and listen to what she has to say."

"I forgot that you're one of those religious zealots too. You and Pam would have some wonderful conversations, trying to out-God each other. I'm sure it would be very interesting," he said,

rolling his eyes. "But, as I was saying, Pam is the real deal. You know how it is, after being a cop for so long you tend to think everyone's a scumbag, a liar, or has a hidden agenda. Pam's not that way. She just loved her brother and her God. Even if I didn't believe what she believed, I grew to respect her for her strength. Plus, she jumped right into the investigations and didn't take any garbage from me. Pretty tough little lady."

"Sounds like she might have piqued your interest in more ways than one," I said.

Ray squirmed and side-eyed me. I'd caught him off-guard with that. "Looks like your detective skills need a serious tune-up, Mark," he said. "You're reading a little bit too much into that. Sure she's attractive, intelligent, principled, caring, and has a decent sense of humor, and did I say attractive? Anyway, I can appreciate those qualities and still maintain a professional distance. I don't go ga-ga for every woman who breezes in and out of my life. So your way off base with that one."

"You're mighty defensive about that," I said.

Ray checked his watch. "Really, do we need to spend all day on this? I've got places to go."

"Nice deflection and avoidance, Ray. We'll move to a different subject." I thumbed through my notes and then continued. "I heard you had an assistant helping you out on this case. You replaced me with some guy named . . . Crevis? Tell me about him."

"Crevis Creighton," he said and then chuckled. "A bit naïve and a whole lot of ugly, Crevis is the biggest cop wannabe I've ever met. Imagine a spider monkey with red hair and bad skin. That's Crevis. We were working together as the night security at the Coral Bay Condos when this whole thing exploded. The kid started out as a real nuisance, always pestering me about police work and such. He has issues."

"I'm sure that went over well with you." I raised my eyebrows. "Please tell me you were kind to him."

A malevolent smirk creased his face. "Okay, I might have had a little fun at Crevis's expense. You know, some practical jokes and a little harmless teasing."

"I've seen your 'teasing,' Ray," I said. "It often borders on felony assault."

"Well, be that as it may," he said, "even as goofy as Crevis is, he came through when I really needed him. He has the heart of a lion and can fight with the best of them. There's more to him than I first thought, than anyone thought. The kid saved my life. I owe him for that."

"Between Pam and Crevis, it sounds like you had your own little homicide unit working."

"You could say that." He gave his attention to a group of people passing by and then returned it to me. "There were plenty of rough spots, working with amateurs and all. A couple of times I thought I was going to seriously bludgeon someone with my cane. But we survived and really started clicking as a team there at the end. It felt good to be running on a hot case again."

"So, Ray Quinn, where do you go from here?"

Ray tapped his finger on the cane handle. "After the shooting and losing Trisha, I wasn't sure that I could ever adjust to life outside of police work, or life at all for that matter. With the constant pain in my hip and leg, I was trapped in a nightmare that brought me to some very dark places. But since this case has been solved, I've seen a glimpse of what's possible out there, outside my expectations. Pam talked to me a lot about a greater purpose and stuff like that. I don't buy everything she said, especially about God and all, I couldn't ignore some serious points she made."

"Ray Quinn being introspective? Does this mean you're going soft on me?"

"Don't bet your life on it." He raised his cane, aiming it at my head. "It just means that I'm heading a new direction. Crevis and I are starting a business together—The Night Watchman Detective Agency. I like the name."

"Not bad, Ray," I said. "I think Orlando could use a good PI firm. I'm sure there's no lack of business out there."

"I'll teach Crevis everything I know." He settled the cane to the floor again. "He'll make a good investigator and be a solid back up for me. He can do the physical stuff that I can't. We'll take the cases no one else wants."

"Sound's like things are finally working out for you. I just feel sorry for the bad guys." ■