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Sheriff's Office shelters its own

Whistle-blowers ousted; Rahr defends system

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SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTERS

At least two rookie officers in the King County Sheriff's Office recently lost their jobs after they reported senior deputies for alleged wrongdoing.

As soon as they blew the whistle, the system started working against them.

First, their identities were revealed to the officers they reported. Next came a cursory investigation -- or none at all -- of their claims. Then, their performance evaluations suddenly turned sour.

In both cases, the accused officers were allowed to vote on whether their accusers should keep their jobs. Not surprisingly, they voted against them, and both rookies were gone. The accused officers went unscathed.

It's a pattern within the Sheriff's Office that has existed for years. In a third case 17 years ago, a veteran deputy accused by a rookie was investigated and disciplined for serious misconduct, but allowed to stay on the job. His accuser, meanwhile -- a new recruit who'd been receiving high marks -- felt pressured to resign.

The King County sheriff's complaint and internal investigations system is a largely closed process with little outside scrutiny. It is an old-fashioned approach that can hinder accountability and breed public mistrust, several nationally recognized law enforcement experts say.

"There is clearly an accountability problem in this department in several dimensions," said Sam Walker, emeritus professor of criminal justice at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, and one of the nation's most noted independent experts on police discipline.

Despite what some experts describe as a dated model, there has been no effort in recent times to change King County's internal investigations system. The powerful county deputies' guild says any such attempt must first win the union's approval.

And Sheriff Sue Rahr -- even while claiming her hands were tied in several recent cases in which deputies avoided firings -- said there is no need for change.

"King County has demonstrated that we are capable of fairly and objectively investigating our officers," Rahr told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer in August. "... I don't think the system we currently use is broken."

Others who've gotten a first-hand look at how the system works disagree.

As a rookie deputy in 2000, Joseph Pellegrini brought to department commanders evidence that deputies were making traffic stops in southwest King County based on drivers' appearances. Pellegrini thought it amounted to profiling, which is frequently associated with race.

A senior deputy sheriff exhorted Pellegrini, then his trainee, to pull over disheveled motorists in old and dirty cars for minor equipment violations on the chance they might be carrying drugs. Investigations of



King County Sheriff Sue Rahr says there is no need for change within the department.



zoom Scott Eklund / P-I
Joseph Pellegrini left the King County Sheriff's Office in 2000, convinced that what he was being asked to do as a rookie deputy by training officers was illegal.

profiling in other states have led to major shake-ups in law-enforcement operations.

Jennifer Schubeck, a student deputy, complained to a superior in late 2003 that her training officer, Pat Covey -- a cop who had a long record of complaints, including accusations of violence against women -- backed her up against her patrol car in a remote east King County parking lot, then screamed at her with so much rage she feared for her life.

The King County Sheriff's Office had problems in the late 1990s with reports that training officers were abusing their trainees, including sexual harassment, said Sam Pailca, who served as the sheriff's lawyer back then in her position as chair of the prosecutor's labor and employment division.

As a result, changes were supposedly made to be sure officers who had such problems were not appointed as trainers, she said.

Pailca said the fact that Covey was made a training officer, with a sustained violation involving domestic violence in 1995, is "pretty shocking."

"You don't assign people into FTO (field training officer) programs who have those kind of problems. You just don't. That's a pretty stupid thing to do," said Pailca, who has served since 2000 as a civilian head of the Seattle Police Department internal investigation unit and the director of the Office of Professional Responsibility.

The two rookies each had relatively high marks as trainees and had won respect of fellow recruits and training officers at the state police academy before the King County system -- they say -- sidetracked their careers.

Records indicate only a cursory investigation was done on Pellegrini's report of alleged misconduct, civil rights and profiling violations.

Although the deputy Schubeck reported soon was convicted of a domestic violence-related crime against another woman, nothing came of Schubeck's complaint. In fact, she says that, **contrary to its own policy** (125K PDF), the Sheriff's Office didn't even investigate it.

Both Pellegrini and Schubeck appealed their firings to then-Sheriff Dave Reichert and Schubeck also met with one of his top chiefs, Sue Rahr, who is now sheriff. Their pleas were rejected.

Reichert and Rahr refused to talk about the cases with the P-I.

"They seem to protect their own at any cost. That's the cost of someone's career like mine," said Pellegrini, 37. "They have these renegade deputies running around in the field. It's a can of worms and they don't want to open it up. They don't want to clean house, or they aren't able to clean house."

"That's a bunch of crap," said John Urquhart, spokesman for the Sheriff's Office. "Because what he is alleging is that we are consciously trying to cover up wrongdoing. It doesn't even deserve an answer."

Still, complaints such as the rookies' need to be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated, said Walker, the police oversight expert.

The fact the complaints weren't taken seriously, he added, indicates a need for the Sheriff's Office to undergo an independent review.



zoom Meryl Schenker / P-I

Jennifer Schubeck came into the sheriff's department highly regarded and with glowing recommendations. But after filing a complaint against her field training officer, she was fired in a vote by a sheriff's training review board. The panel that voted included the supervisor she complained about. "I felt completely railroaded, let down by the system," says Schubeck, who now works as a police officer with the Upper Skagit Tribe.

Allowing accused officers to vote on the future of their accusers, Walker noted, is the most disturbing aspect of each case.

"That is an absolute violation of fairness. This is a twist I've never heard of before."

An FBI case study

An ethics class at the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Va., recently discussed a 1988 case in the King County Sheriff's Office eerily similar to Pellegrini's and Schubeck's. A student deputy accused a veteran cop named Denny Gulla of assaulting a prisoner in custody.

Gulla didn't lose his job, but he was found guilty in an internal investigation of conduct unbecoming. The whistle-blower, rookie deputy Corey Darlington, eventually felt he had no alternative but to resign. As Darlington explained it, he'd received "a very good probation report and work performance reviews" during his early training. But after the Gulla incident, "Magically, my probation reports became unfavorable. It was peer pressure."

"Some of the senior officers did not like a less senior officer telling the truth," Darlington recalled. "I wasn't about to lie to the investigators."

Darlington resigned around his one-year anniversary. "It wasn't a very pleasant experience," he said.

The FBI instructor who used the Gulla case didn't tell the class this example of bravery involved a student in the classroom that day. Then he introduced Lieutenant Darlington of the Tacoma Police Department, handing him a plaque honoring ethical behavior, and noting how he went on to have a successful career elsewhere.

Not everyone's careers recovered so well. After he lost his job, Pellegrini returned to a much lower-paying position as a county security officer. Schubeck, after being turned down by multiple municipal departments, accepted a police job at a tribal reservation.

Losing Darlington for Gulla wasn't a good trade. [A P-I investigation](#) recently detailed Gulla's extensive disciplinary record, and also revealed accusations of several instances of sexual abuse of teenage girls. The FBI is investigating Gulla for threatening to kill the husband of his lover. Sheriff Rahr and County Executive Ron Sims recently cited him as an officer the county needs to weed out.



Corey Darlington, a former King County deputy, is now a police lieutenant with Tacoma.

So why more than a decade after Darlington were two rookies ousted under similar circumstances -- Pellegrini in 2000 and Schubeck in 2004?

"I don't think it has changed much," said Pellegrini of the sheriff's disciplinary process. "Still plenty of corruption at the top."

Class profiling?

Pellegrini came out of the state police academy and was assigned for training to the Southwest Precinct, a rough, mostly low-income area around Burien and White Center where sheriff's deputies are, at best, loosely supervised.

The sheriff's department as a whole doesn't keep a tight rein on its deputies the way most police departments do. Deputies work alone, in one-person cars, and annual personnel reviews by supervisors were dropped a number of years ago under Reichert for reasons neither Reichert nor department spokesmen have explained.

But it gets worse in the Southwest Precinct, where a sergeant might be responsible at any time for as many as 15 cars, more than twice what's normal elsewhere.

Pellegrini rode in a two-man car during training. He said one training officer in particular -- Raphael Crenshaw -- was

teaching him to pull over drivers and search them because they had dirty, beat-up old cars and/or disheveled clothing. Pellegrini's attorney, Peter Connick, said that's an illegal procedure known as "profiling," often associated with race but in this case based on social class. The sheriff's spokesman and others in the department said that's just good police work -- spotting criminals before they can commit crimes.

"We don't profile people, we profile behavior," said Urquhart.

But Walker said class profiling can be just as nefarious as racial profiling.

"The practices these officers were engaged in, in terms of these searches, are very serious in terms of disregarding people's rights," he said.

Crenshaw -- a military veteran and son of a retired Tacoma officer -- did not respond to interview requests.

Pellegrini was convinced what he was being asked to do was illegal, but when he asked his sergeant for a new training officer, she declined his request. He agreed to write a report.

The report went to then-Capt. David Germani, who ordered Pellegrini to take his information to the department's Internal Investigation Unit. IIU has a captain and two sergeants who investigate all administrative complaints against any of the 700 sworn officers in the department. Criminal complaints go to the criminal investigations unit.

Germani knew Pellegrini's dad, who was a former deputy sheriff, and he knew that a cop's son would fear that a trip to IIU in the sheriff's department could end a career. He assured Pellegrini that wouldn't happen.

"I said, 'Captain, this is not how I want to start my career in law enforcement,' " Pellegrini recalled. "He basically threw me under the bus."

The sheriff's manual requires any officer who observes wrongdoing to report it.

Father's footsteps

Pellegrini, a Beacon Hill native, dreamed of following his father Vincent into the Sheriff's Office. After studying criminal justice at a community college and working as a King County Courthouse security officer, he finally applied for his dream job at age 30.

"It was more than a job to me," said Pellegrini, whose father died soon after Pellegrini was drummed out of the Sheriff's Office -- but not before the dying veteran tried unsuccessfully to get his old colleague Reichert to talk to him about his son.

The IIU investigator urged Pellegrini to tell him about more violations. During their only interview, the young deputy complied, describing a scene at a Motel 6 where several officers gathered outside a room occupied by a known prostitute. Pellegrini asked before knocking on the door how to give the woman her "Ferrier warning" -- a court-ordered assurance that she could refuse a warrantless search. A fellow officer replied: "F--k Ferrier," he recalled.

Crenshaw threatened the woman unless she opened the door, Pellegrini said. They searched, handcuffed the woman's companion and in the end cited their failure to give a Ferrier warning as the reason why they didn't arrest anyone or take a crack pipe they found into evidence.

Pellegrini also told investigators that his first training officer, a deputy named Paul Thiede, had pointed his loaded gun at Pellegrini, which is forbidden. Thiede later joked about it when he complained, Pellegrini said. Thiede did not respond to



zoom

Family Photo

Joseph Pellegrini has his badge pinned on by his father, Vincent, a former deputy himself, at his police academy graduation in 2000. Pellegrini says he was "railroaded" out of his job in his rookie year after accusing senior deputies of wrongdoing.

requests for comment.

Investigator Pat Raftis cleared the officers after only a cursory inquiry into Pellegrini's complaint, records show. Essentially, Crenshaw simply wrote a report denying the allegations, and Raftis had to remind him to get that done. No attempt was made to contact any motorists who could have been profiled, or to interview some officers. No civilians at the motel were interviewed.

Pellegrini was already gone from the department when Raftis completed the investigation.

It's unclear whether Raftis combed through Pellegrini's training records for the numerous signs of profiling ([see example - 649K PDF](#)).

'Dopers' and 'dirtbags'

Crenshaw's daily observation reports described rides with Pellegrini in which motorists were followed for miles before being stopped for minor violations such as a "broken taillight lens cover." Crenshaw and other officers instructed Pellegrini to pull over old cars where the drivers looked like "dopers" or "dirtbags." They frisked and sometimes handcuffed anyone who made so-called furtive movements.

Before Crenshaw became a detective in 2002, he was known as the master of the "Terry stop," a stop of an obviously suspicious driver that, in order to be legal, shouldn't involve profiling. He was also known as the "VUCSA king" -- a nickname derived from the initials that designate a felony drug violation.

Another trainer, Deputy Michael Starrett, put it all together for Pellegrini on April 21, 2000. He was substituting that day for Crenshaw. He started out chastising Pellegrini for pulling over an "older guy" driving a Ferrari without a license plate -- "not very interesting," he wrote. ([See Starrett's daily observation report for Pellegrini for April 21, 2000 -- 927K PDF](#).)

Then he launched into a lecture, about his second training officer, Joel Banks. "Banks taught you something about profiling and finding more than the obvious mom-and-pop stop. Now you are with our department's VUCSA King. He has the Terry/Traffic stop down to a science. You are intimidated by his style

"It sounds like you're setting up for failure. I hope that isn't true. If you quit making stops because you think they won't measure up, you'll never stop anything. Take this opportunity to learn something from the master."

Banks and Starrett didn't respond to phone calls from the P-I.

For his "protection" and further training, the department transferred Pellegrini to the Shoreline area after he made his report to IIU. He worked under trainer Diana Neff, an 18-year veteran who had her own run-ins with the power structure. By her own account, Neff successfully appealed to Sheriff Reichert two disciplinary actions recommended by supervisors -- one for sexual harassment of a female officer and another for intervening in another officer's handling of a case. She said Reichert rejected both allegations against her.

She told Pellegrini she'd never failed a recruit, and she wouldn't start with him. During their rides, she, too, would point out "dirtbag" cars for traffic stops, but she told the P-I she forever stopped using that term after Pellegrini's lawyer questioned her about it.

Her assessments of Pellegrini started out glowing, and the grades she gave him were high right up to the end. ([See samples of Neff's daily observation reports for Pellegrini -- 2.6MB PDF](#).)

But one day Pellegrini told Neff during a ride that he'd had some kind of problem with his trainers in the Southwest Precinct. Pellegrini said she quizzed him repeatedly for days. Neff said she didn't pry.

Afterward, Neff's narratives became more critical of Pellegrini. She says it was because he was entering a more difficult

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phase of his training. Pellegrini thinks otherwise.

On June 12, 2000, training Sgt. Steve Sowers told Pellegrini to take his gear home because the sheriff's department was holding a special board to consider terminating him.

That night, Pellegrini tendered his resignation, hoping to avoid a special board that might hurt his chances for another police job.

A board met anyway the next day. Present were Germani, four sergeants and all his training officers including Neff, Crenshaw, Thiede and Banks. Urquhart said rules require all training officers to attend special boards, regardless of their IIU status.

The final report was sent to Rahr by Maj. Robin Fenton, the precinct commander. It was devastating, just as Pellegrini had feared.

Pellegrini said the allegations against him presented to the special board ranged from exaggerated to false.

The most serious item was Neff's claim that on June 11, 2000, the day before Pellegrini's last day of training, "Joe becomes upset and throws the handcuffed subject, who we had in protective custody, into the bushes. Threw him about 6 feet." (See [Neff's written allegations about Pellegrini's conduct that day -- 448K PDF.](#))

Nothing about throwing a handcuffed man was mentioned in Neff's 350-word account of the incident with a sleeping drunk the day it occurred. (See [the account -- 815K PDF.](#)) Neff admitted no other report was filed aside from her report to the special board.

When a reporter read Neff aloud the contradictory reports and questioned her twice about them, she could come up with no explanation. She said she told Sowers about the incident the night it happened. In a terse interview, Sowers denied that, saying she didn't tell him for a day or two -- either the day Pellegrini was sent home, or the day of his special board.

"Fabrication. That's what I call it," said Connick, Pellegrini's attorney.

"I can see how bad it looks. I don't blame you for looking into it," said Neff. "There's nothing wrong with policing the police."

Pellegrini filed a lawsuit for unlawful termination, but his attorney failed to submit a response on time to a motion for summary judgment. An appeals court, noting that he had resigned rather than being fired, wouldn't give him a second chance.

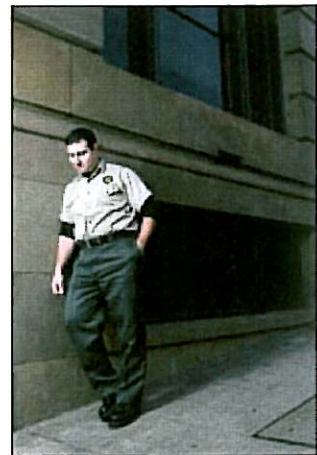
In May 2001, Reichert named Crenshaw "Deputy of the Year" for 2000.

Pellegrini still wants someone in law enforcement to examine the "red flags" in his case, and perhaps to punish the officers who "railroaded" him. He has offered to take a lie-detector test. He wants the sheriff to re-examine the policy that allows accused officers to essentially fire their accusers.

Frightening encounter

Jennifer Schubeck became interested in police work in the late 1990s after meeting her eventual husband, Gene -- a cop with the tiny La Conner Police Department in Skagit County. Schubeck, of Mount Vernon, studied veterinary medicine, but after marrying, she took a job as an emergency dispatcher.

After the couple had a son and Gene landed a job with the Seattle Police Department, Schubeck looked to become a cop



zoom Meryl Schenker / P-I

Pellegrini is now a security officer with King County Facilities.

herself -- and the King County Sheriff's Office was hiring.

At 30, she was older than most recruits in her state police academy class -- and its only woman. Classmates voted Schubeck vice president, and by the time she graduated in early 2003, one of her training officers had written her a [glowing recommendation](#) (254K PDF).

[High regard](#) of Schubeck continued (319K PDF). She passed her initial field training assignments with strong marks and few problems. She'd advanced into Phase 3 of her probation and was patrolling solo when she was assigned under a Master Police Officer named Pat Covey.

From their first meeting in October 2003, the gruff, cowboy-boot-wearing deputy made it clear her previous grades meant nothing to him.

"I want you to know I just make up my own mind about people," Schubeck recalls Covey telling her.

Covey quickly began treating Schubeck differently than other cops, she said.

Though he promised to equip her with basic tools he gave to other recruits -- a Nextel cell and a patrol-car computer uplink to state licensing data -- Schubeck said he never did.

One night while she patrolled her Fall City district, Schubeck was dispatched to a domestic disturbance -- a priority response. While en route, a second priority call came in -- an accident lay ahead on the same highway Schubeck was driving.

Because Schubeck's route was taking her past the accident scene, she said, department policy mandated that she stop.

She also had time to spare, she said, because agency rules also require that no deputy approach a domestic disturbance alone -- and Schubeck's backup was several minutes behind her.

Along the Fall-City-Preston Highway, she came across a pickup partly in a ditch. A man in the truck told Schubeck he was unhurt, but in need of a tow. Schubeck quickly got back on the road and radioed in the man's plate and location, requesting a tow truck. "It only took a few seconds," Schubeck said.

Suddenly, Covey's voice was on air, shouting down her request and yelling at Schubeck to get back on the road.

"I've never heard somebody being that rude and abrupt (on police radio)," she said.

Schubeck arrived at the domestic disturbance scene, waited for her backup, then took 20 to 30 minutes to handle that call. On her way back, she found the man in the truck still waiting. After getting him a tow, she then went to meet Covey, who'd ordered her to wait for him at a nearby Preston parking lot.

"It's dark, wet, rainy, and at that hour there's not anyone around really," Schubeck recalled. "We're supposed to be turning in for the evening. Why not just go back to the precinct or somewhere more appropriate?"

As soon as Covey arrived, he bailed out of his Jeep and advanced on Schubeck's car, she said. "Immediately I can tell it's a heightened situation by his demeanor," she said.

The ranking officer backed her up against her patrol car, and while thrusting a finger at her, began screaming in her face: "What part of policing don't (you) get?" Schubeck recalls Covey's rant. "He said that I wasn't to question his authority in any fashion."

As he continued, Schubeck was afraid to speak, fearing she'd anger him more, she said.

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"At this point, there's spit going on my face," she said. "... I'm very fearful because he keeps getting louder and more aggressive, and I'm thinking this guy's going to hit me.

"I had no idea what was going to happen. I just wanted it to end."

Schubeck said Covey issued her this warning: "You go ahead and try to report this. You won't get anywhere. I own this department. I walk on water. I get people things. I get them things that they can't get otherwise. And you will get nowhere with your complaint."

'Go tough it out'

After Covey left her, Schubeck immediately called her husband. Gene Schubeck, a Seattle cop, advised her to make a complaint.

Schubeck soon met with field training Sgt. Steve Sowers to report the incident and ask that she be assigned to a different training officer. She says Sowers told her: "'You'll have to just go tough it out.'" Sowers did not document her complaint, Schubeck said, and no internal investigation took place.

The next time Schubeck saw Covey, he already knew about her complaint.

Seattle police are required to notify officers of internal investigation complaints within five days, and that includes the name of the complainant. But in sensitive cases such as Pellegrini's or Schubeck's, where there might be retaliation, the SPD substitutes the name of the captain who received the complaint, said Pailca, the civilian head of SPD's internal investigations unit.

"We would take steps to change a complainant's name if we needed to," she said. Ultimately, if the complaint was sustained, the name of the complainant would be revealed.

Covey also informed Schubeck he had her latest evaluations ready -- completed nearly a month late and only after she complained. "Suddenly my numbers dropped to unacceptable values," Schubeck said of Covey's reviews.

In December, Schubeck got a call from Sowers. He told her not to report for her next shift. She'd been placed on administrative leave pending a field training board hearing. These things usually didn't turn out well, Schubeck says Sowers told her. She could resign now instead of facing firing. Schubeck refused to resign.

Her board -- a panel that included, among others, Covey -- soon convened and unanimously voted to fire her. She learned the ballot was done in the open and included votes cast against her by former training officers, including Travis De Fries, who'd previously passed her.

The vote against Schubeck also came not long after the King County Police Officers' Guild -- through a lawsuit on Covey's behalf -- won a \$7 million settlement from the county for unpaid overtime and vacation pay that was doled out to scores of deputies.

FLAWS IN THE SYSTEM	
<p>The King County Sheriff's Office has a complex system for handling personnel complaints. A P-I investigation has found several weaknesses in the system.</p>	
<p>PERSONNEL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE</p> <p>INITIAL ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Supervisor becomes aware of complaint. ▶ Performs preliminary investigation. ▶ Determines if complaint amounts to misconduct. ▶ Fills out complaint report. ▶ Submits report to commander. ▶ Commander reviews complaint report and ensures accuracy. ▶ Forwards to Internal Investigations Unit (IIU). <p>FORMAL INVESTIGATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ IIU conducts a formal investigation. ▶ Accused is notified of investigation. ▶ Investigation must be completed within 30 days unless an exception is granted. ▶ An investigative report is filed. ▶ Report is passed to the section commander for review and approval. <p>DISCIPLINE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Section commander recommends the appropriate discipline. ▶ Report is sent to member's division chief for review and approval. ▶ Report and recommendations are passed back to IIU. ▶ IIU ensures recommended discipline is in line with department guidelines and current practices. ▶ Accused is notified of completed investigation. ▶ IIU presents investigative findings to sheriff. ▶ Sheriff has final approval of findings and discipline. <p>LOUDERMILL HEARING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ When findings result in suspension, demotion or termination, accused has the right to meet with the sheriff to explain the circumstances. 	<p>WEAKNESSES IN THE SYSTEM</p> <p>The accused is notified too soon in some cases and has an opportunity to retaliate.</p> <p>Some IIU investigations appear to be cursory.</p> <p>There is no citizen oversight in the investigation or disciplinary process. The King County Ombudsman looks over some cases, after the fact.</p>
<p>Source: King County Sheriff's Office</p>	
<p>SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER</p>	

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"This was the month everybody was getting paid out from the Covey lawsuit," Schubeck said. "I felt completely railroaded, let down by the system."

Schubeck initially appealed the vote to fire her in January 2004 at a meeting with Fenton, the precinct commander, and Capt. Tony Burt. During the meeting, Fenton informed Schubeck that the vote was unanimous.

Later that month, Schubeck appealed her firing to Reichert, who seemed sincerely interested. "I'm going to look into this. Just give me a couple of days," she recalled Reichert saying.

What Schubeck didn't know at that time was that Covey had a history of complaints -- including allegations of abusing women -- the Sheriff's Office had long tolerated. In fact, by the time she met with Reichert, Covey had just been relieved from duty after illegally entering his estranged wife's home during a domestic violence incident.

In early February, Schubeck was called in once again, but this time Reichert wasn't there. Instead, she was met by Fenton and then-Chief Sue Rahr, who quickly got to the point.

"You just don't fit in," she remembers Rahr saying. "She said, 'Maybe you can be a domestic violence advocate.' It was very patronizing."

Schubeck demanded Covey's reports about her be removed from her file. Rahr denied that -- and Schubeck's request to see her own personnel file.

In the months that followed, Schubeck said she was forced to draw unemployment checks. Her confidence was crushed. "I felt ashamed," she said.

After several months, she began applying to police agencies again -- and immediately drew attention. "I was at the top of all the lists," she said.

But when Schubeck got to the point in the hiring process in which her King County experience was checked, each department she applied to -- Monroe, Everett, Mount Vernon, Arlington -- took a pass on hiring her, she said. During one job interview with the Marysville police chief, she said, his first question was: "What's your culpability in being fired from King County?" Schubeck said.

"When that's how you start out your job interview," she added, "it's kind of tough to recover from it."

Schubeck, now 33, finally landed a job last year with the Upper Skagit Tribe, the only police force she could find that would hire her.

This week, Schubeck is expected to file a [wrongful-termination lawsuit](#) (PDF) against King County, seeking damages for lost wages and benefits and emotional distress.

Now, there's no question in Schubeck's mind the King County Sheriff's Office is an agency willing to protect bad cops -- even if it means sacrificing good ones.

"My complaint had no value," she said. "They just wrote me off the entire time. ... Like, 'If she's going to be honest and have integrity, let's get rid of her.' "

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