

The Crime Cafe with Andy Caldwell

Presented By:



Debbi: [00:00:13] Hi, everyone. This is the Crime Cafe, your podcasting source of great crime, suspense, and thriller writing. I'm your host, Debbi Mack. Before I bring on my guest, I'll just remind you that the Crime Cafe has two ebooks for sale: the nine-book box set and the short story anthology. You can find the buy links for both on my website DebbiMack.com, under the "Crime Cafe" link. You can also get a free copy of either book if you become a Patreon supporter. You'll get that and much more if you support the podcast on Patreon, along with our eternal gratitude for doing so.

Debbi: [00:01:04] Hi, everyone. Our guest today worked as a police officer and detective with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, up until his retirement. He's investigated a number of high-profile cases, including the armed robbery and kidnapping case brought against O.J. Simpson. His book, *Room 1203*, is the true crime story of that O.J. case. The one from Nevada. That book has also provided the basis for a documentary, *O.J.: Guilty in Vegas*. It's with great pleasure that I bring you Andy Caldwell. Hey, Andy, thanks for being here.

Andy: [00:01:45] Thank you so much, Debbi. Thank you for that kind introduction and I thank you for your time today.

Debbi: [00:01:50] Well, I appreciate your being here very much. Before we talk about your book, I have to say I was heartened by your philosophy of criminal justice. I like the emphasis on seeking solutions rather than vengeance. Has that been a.. has that been a difficult position to take in any way?

Andy: [00:02:13] Yeah, sometimes, you know, because sometimes even in the law enforcement community, people get frustrated with suspects who are committing crimes and you just want them to pay right now. And sometimes taking, I guess, a more whole approach or whole community approach, isn't always the most palatable to other people.

Debbi: [00:02:37] Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah, I can see where it would be tough. But I like the way you approach it. And, in some ways, it reminds me of Buddhism.

Andy: [00:02:51] Well, I guess one of the things that I always embraced was the fact that when people commit crimes, they've gotta be held accountable for it. But it doesn't

mean we have to hate them. And sometimes there's this desire to instantly be angry with the individual. And sometimes all it does is create barriers to actually holding them accountable and then trying to help them back on their feet. And if we can't help them back on their feet, then we just create a perpetual problem in society. So at some point in time, we've got to try to help some people.

Debbi: [00:03:26] I couldn't agree with you more. I think that's great. How long were you with the Vegas police and how much of that time was as a detective?

Andy: [00:03:35] So just under 20 years, and I spent about nine years as a detective? You would think I would know that right off the top of my head. But yeah, it was about nine years as a detective.

Debbi: [00:03:50] Well, sometimes you just gotta do the math. I know the feeling. How did you end up assigned to investigate O.J. Simpson?

Andy: [00:04:00] Well, so I was assigned to the robbery-homicide bureau. I specifically worked robberies. And I would love to tell you that it was because I'm a crack investigator. And they said, hey, it's O.J. Simpson, we need their best guy on the job. But the reality was the crime occurred in the area of town I was primarily responsible for. It was the type of crime I was responsible for. So when it came out, it just automatically was grounded to me.

Debbi: [00:04:29] Uh-huh. So you sort of lucked into it, so to speak.

Andy: [00:04:33] I guess it depends on your definition of luck. But yes, it's, you know, it's always been a hard case, because it's so simple at face value. And yet it ends up being somewhat of a crowning achievement of my career, where so many of my other cases were so much more complex, so much more enjoyable. And yet this one ends up being the one I'm remembered for, which, you know, it can be a blessing and a curse at the same time.

Debbi: [00:04:59] Yes. Yes. I thought you came up with a really cool idea, having your book giveaway done on Facebook, where you challenge readers to post the funniest real O.J. Simpson quotes?

Andy: [00:05:13] Yes.

Debbi: [00:05:15] And I assume you're picking a winner from among those who enter in that manner.

Andy: [00:05:21] Yeah. So luckily my wife, she put it on Pinterest also, and I think she did something on Twitter as well. She gave me a list of everything she had on her end. And we had about, I think, about 50 quotes to choose from. But yes, last night I went through and I picked the funniest line and then the one I actually think would probably be the best to win the contest with.

Debbi: [00:05:46] Can you share some of the best of the bunch with us?

Andy: [00:05:50] So I think my wife actually found the funniest one. And I just, I can't let her win because that's just not fair. She found one where he said---and this is O.J.--- saying, "I don't understand what I did wrong except live a life that everyone is jealous of." And I thought, what an absurd thing to say. And so, of all the quotes I had, I thought that one was the funniest, but it's my wife, so she couldn't have it.

[00:06:25] But I think the more appropriate one, you know, given some of the gravity of who he is and the things he's done in his past. Kathleen Templeton wrote, "In America, you get as much justice as you can afford." And that, in fact, was one of his quotes. And I thought, okay, that takes the cake. So that's the one I'm going to give the book and subpoena to.

Debbi: [00:06:51] Oh, my goodness. Well, congratulations to the winner. That's a good one. Oh, my gosh.

Andy: [00:06:58] Yes.

Debbi: [00:07:00] Let's see. What was it like to be part of that investigation?

Andy: [00:07:06] You know, it's hard because oftentimes, you know, people instantly associate him with the homicide case in Los Angeles. In fact, even today, if I tell

somebody I was the detective who put O.J. Simpson in prison, they'll instantly look at me and they'll say, well, you don't look that old. And you've got to process through your mind what people think he went to prison for. So there's so many misconceptions about being associated with the case.

[00:07:35] So even getting assigned the case at the time, I think my partner and I knew that there were going to be problems associated with it. You know how it was gonna be scrutinized, how we were going to be watched. And then people were going to think that we treated him differently because of, you know, presuppositions we held based on what happened in Los Angeles. So, you know, being involved in the case was, it truly was a roller coaster ride. And I guess I should say, has been a roller coaster ride, because even today, you know, I still do the occasional interviews to promote the book. It was hard promoting the book, because when we signed the contract for the A&E special, our ability to promote the book really was reduced drastically.

Debbi: [00:08:25] Yeah, yeah, I can imagine. Can you give us a teaser of what you talk about in the book?

Andy: [00:08:33] Sure. You know, I think most people when they find out or have an interest in the topic of O.J. Simpson and true crime, you want to know about about the crime. So if I may give you a teaser, I'm going to tell you that the public perception that he stole his own property back is absolutely incorrect. And I would love for people to actually take the time and read the book and see how that's not correct. In fact, how he represented himself even at his parole hearing was just factually not accurate. It's just there was no truth or basis in the truth. But I also think I'd like to share that in the book we talk about some of our personal interaction with him and some of the odd behavior he displayed. Not just with me, but also with my partner throughout the investigation that I think is fascinating when you talk about it. Unfortunately, it's funny. And I guess I make light of it in the book. And, you know, I've heard some feedback that we shouldn't have made light of it. But, you know, and it was funny at the time and I still think back and it was funny. It's funny now.

Debbi: [00:09:35] And you can't please everyone.

Andy: [00:09:38] You can't please everyone.

Debbi: [00:09:40] Far as I'm concerned, that kind of stuff is like insider stuff. It's great.

Andy: [00:09:46] You know, to me, it's interesting, also. And, for the most part, when most people ask, you know, they'll ask me, what was it like to interview him? You know, when I write in the book, there's this interesting moment when he answers the door where there's no getting around the fact that even as infamous as he is, you're still a little starstruck by the fact that you're standing in front of this man, that you know, whether, you know from football, movies, the trial, it's still a little odd to stand there in front of him. You know, I guess I don't want to give way too much. I prefer people read the book. But, you know, as a cop, what brings you back to reality was, you know, recognizing that he was still wearing the same clothes days later that he was wearing at the robbery. And I knew that because I had the video of the robbery. So that kind of brings it full circle and kind of gets you able to focus back on the fact that, wait a second ... this is just the typical guy who commits any other crime and just focus on the fact that ... what he did and try to solicit out the facts and put a case together.

Debbi: [00:10:53] Was there a reason for your writing about this case other than his celebrity?

Andy: [00:11:01] So initially, you know, I don't want to give too long of an answer here. Initially, we turned down, we were contacted by somebody who wanted to write a book for me after the trial. I turned it down because we actually had no interest in this. When I say we, I mean me and my family, because it's just a period of time we wanted to put behind us and just go on with my career, because it did open some doors for me and my career. I never really gave any thought to writing a book. And just as years passed, I thought, well, let me write something down for posterity. We were just going to self-publish a book. Again, I say we, me and my wife. And we contacted a neighbor and said, how do we self-publish? And our neighbor was a published author who said, "No, no, no. Don't self-publish, don't do it for just posterity. Write a book, present it to an agent, and see what happens." And so it somewhat got a little out of hand on me. Initially, it had its own legs. I don't know a better way to describe it. Once I gave it to my agent, she thought it was good. She'd promote, presented it to a production company. They thought it was good. So then it kind of took off from there. So I say this to say the initial intent was just for posterity. But I'm not going to lie, that it's nice to be a published

author, and it's nice to sell books. And, you know, all the other perks that came along with it is wonderful. So even though it wasn't my initial intent, I have enjoyed that.

Debbi: [00:12:30] Wow. That is really an unusual story for most authors. Most authors go into it wanting to be authors, you know? So to hear this perspective, that is really something. I like that.

Andy: [00:12:42] Well, there's no getting around the fact that it has, you know, given me interest to write another book. And I've started the market research on it. And, you know, it definitely stirred an interest in me.

Debbi: [00:12:55] Well, it's really interesting. That's cool. What kind of book would you imagine writing next?

Andy: [00:13:03] So what I'm working on is ... it'll go back to, I guess, a philosophy of forgiveness and accountability and how we can reconcile those two thoughts. How we don't just need to forgive everybody and still be true to our faith, whatever that faith might be, because all that does is enable people. It lets other people become victims. You know, we have to be willing to somehow reconcile forgiveness with accountability and just approaching it from a perspective of Christian faith, of how you can make those things work. And it's actually the way we should be looking at it. So that's ultimately the direction I've gone. I've already got a little bit written on it. But, you know, life is busy and you just ...

Debbi: [00:13:50] I understand.

Andy: [00:13:54] The nice thing is the anecdotes I can, I guess, include in it. I can include throughout the course of my law enforcement career of, you know, all the things I saw that were very admirable in the application of accountability and things that I thought were inappropriate in, you know, people just constantly forgiving and creating almost a safe haven for addiction and a safe haven for people to go out and continually, perpetually commit crime.

Debbi: [00:14:25] So the idea of some good middle ground, something in between completely forgetting and retribution, or whatever you want to call it.

Andy: [00:14:36] Absolutely. Yeah. And how the two can work together, you know. You often say you can love somebody, you don't have to like them. You know, kind of the same thing is true. You know, you can forgive somebody and not, you know, ride around in a car with them. You know, you don't have to be best friends with somebody you forgive. But if you can't forgive people, you put yourself in your own prison, you make yourself miserable. So, you know, how can we embrace this concept of, yes, I'm going to move past this, but no, you still need to be held accountable in our system of law.

Debbi: [00:15:16] That just sounds like a fantastic book. Good luck with that.

Andy: [00:15:21] I hope so.

Debbi: [00:15:23] I mean, I just like what you're saying so much. I would love to see that in a book. Next question: What's the most interesting or funny experience you had while working with the Vegas PD?

[00:15:41] [laughter] Yeah, yeah.

Andy: [00:15:43] You know, one of those things is that there's always something hidden in that question in the perspective of the person who it's coming from. Right? So, you know, for a police officer to ask that question, I know there's some cynicism involved and they're looking to hear something about, you know, the craziest pursuit you've been involved in. If it's being asked by a citizen, they're asking for something that's not gonna make them be shocked. Because I currently work around firefighters. I love sharing this story.

Debbi: [00:16:14] My husband's a fireman, so ...

Andy: [00:16:14] Well, then you'll love this. There's this wonderful difference between police officers and firefighters in the public's eye. I was working one night as about a five-year officer, and this young man had been shot in the leg. And I was the first arriving unit and he was bleeding pretty bad. And I knew I needed to stop the bleeding. Now, I could hear the fire department coming. You could hear the sirens. And so I knew

I needed to apply pressure to the wound. And I needed to see the wound. I needed to know what was going on. So I pulled the knife out of my pocket. The regular knife? The folding knife I keep even today. And I go to cut his pant leg and the kid panics. He says, "No, no, no. What are you doing?" And by the time I'm just kind of trying to figure out how to answer his question, one of the firemen, paramedics come running up to kind of assess the scene. And he instantly makes the same assessment of "I need to see the wound." So he whips out his exact same knife from the exact same location. And the kid looks at him and says, "Oh, thank you. Thank you so much." I stepped back and I thought, I was trying to do the exact same thing and help you, but ... so that's one of my lasting memories of the difference between the public perception of law enforcement and firefighters. So there is, I guess, one anecdotal story lasting from my career.

Debbi: [00:17:39] That definitely sums it up, unfortunately, for good or ill. Yeah, that is nailing it. Yeah. Let's see. What authors inspire you most?

Andy: [00:17:59] So I find that I like reading philosophy and theology. My, I guess, absolute favorite author is David Platt. That's more in, I guess, the theological realm when it comes to philosophy. I like William Lane Craig. Sometimes he confuses me because he writes at a level that I find myself, I'll read a page. He'll grab a concept like infinity and he'll write on it and I'll read a page and I'll find myself having to go back and reread the page thinking, okay, I thought I had it. Let me read it again. And I love people that challenge you like that. So I guess, yeah. David Platt would be my favorite author. And then, yeah, I guess in a different area, William Lane Craig would be probably second. A close second.

Debbi: [00:18:52] And, let's see, you're a Dodger fan. I love baseball.

Andy: [00:18:56] I'm a huge Dodger fan.

Debbi: [00:19:01] Oddly, I'm both a Mets fan and the Nationals fan. I used to live in New York. Now, I live in Maryland. But go Dodgers, as a former California resident.

Andy: [00:19:10] The Nationals and Mets. They, uh, I don't know ... They should have done a bit in the off-season to be a little bit better this year. But hey. But yes, I am. I love the Dodgers. Win or lose, I love them.

Debbi: [00:19:27] Same here. I mean, I just love the game. Win or lose, no matter which team we're talking about.

Andy: [00:19:34] I sat down with my daughter, my middle daughter, Mackenzie. She loves baseball. And sometimes I think she loves it cause I love it. And we sat down and we watched some of the great moments in baseball history. She watched the Kirk Gibson home run with me. She watched Cal Ripken, Jr.'s breaking the record. She watched Derek Jeter's last game. And it was so much fun to just sit down with my kid and enjoy those kind of historic baseball moments. It was really a lot of fun.

Debbi: [00:19:58] Those moments are really cool. I especially love the old one of the Dodgers winning the pennant. When they go crazy. Oh, my gosh.

Andy: [00:20:09] Those videos are so fun on YouTube. Yeah. Good stuff.

Debbi: [00:20:13] Indeed. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

Andy: [00:20:20] People, buy the book, you know? Sometimes I feel like I don't promote it well enough. But, you know, it'll go back to the ... you enter into a contract with a production company and you don't know how far you can push. What limits were outside the scope of that now. I do need to get on to promoting the book now. So, yeah, I would love to hear people buying the book. And I love feedback and I try to do my best to respond to feedback. To make it personable. But take a look at the book. And you know, I think most people enjoy it when they take time to read it. It's a different perspective of what happened and a different perspective on O.J. Simpson, I think.

Debbi: [00:21:02] Excellent. And they can always find you on Facebook and I assume on Twitter?

Andy: [00:21:06] So actually my wife does all my Twitter stuff. So the best way to find me is on Facebook. Unfortunately, I turned it off for a while, because I just got so tired of just the heavy political stuff. But then I found myself missing the funny political meat, so I found myself back on Facebook. Interesting dichotomy. But, anyways. Yes, I'm on Facebook.

Debbi: [00:21:33] Very good. Excellent. Well, Andy, it was really great to have you on. Thank you so much.

Andy: [00:21:40] Thank you so much, Debbi. I appreciate your time.

Debbi: [00:21:41] And I appreciate yours. And thank you, listeners, for stopping by and lending your ears. As always, I'll remind you that we have the two Crime Cafe books for sale: the box set and the short story anthology. You can find the links to them and my Patreon page on my website DebbiMack.com. I think it's time to come up with another special offer for the Patreon page. I have no idea what that's going to be yet, but I will let you know. Thanks again for listening. And please leave us a review. I'll see you soon. And in the meantime, happy reading.