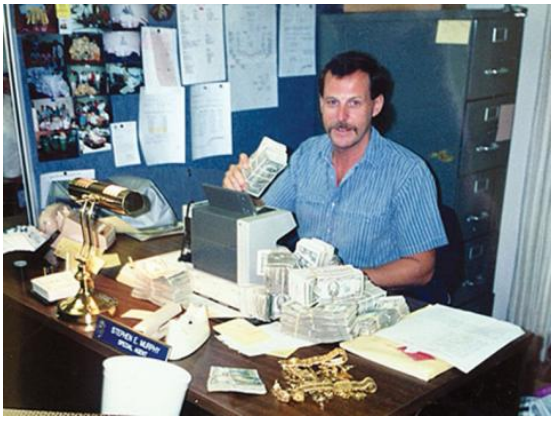
AWESOME stories

Steve Murphy - Real DEA Agent in Narcos



As the cocaine trade began to spiral out of control, Steve Murphy - a DEA agent portrayed by Boyd Holbrook in the *Narcos* series - was assigned the job of doing something about it.

How do you do something about an illicit drug trade which employs lots of people and makes drug lords really, really rich?

For Murphy ... try to track-down, and apprehend, one drug-related crook at a time. Murphy calls the drug-lord crooks "the bad guys."

What was the drug situation like when Murphy first began doing what he could to slow-down the flow of cocaine into America? Working in Miami, he (and events in his life) could be part of a script for a TV program (such as "Miami Vice").

In an interview, with the *Observer*, he tells part of his story:

> *It was not unusual to find multiple bodies in the trunks of cars almost on a daily basis. First case I got to work on — I had been a police office for 11 and a half years before I went to DEA, so the most cocaine I had ever seen at one time was two ounces.*
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> *Very first case I got to work on as DEA, I got to go to the Turks and Caicos Islands. Long story short the bad guys flew in 4 kilos of cocaine from Cuba. To go from 2 ounces to 4 kilos, I was like "holy cow," and that was just the beginning. The biggest case I ended up working on, we seized 500 kilos.*

For Pablo Escobar - the biggest drug lord of all, and a man who could bribe all kinds of people to stay clear of arrest or prison - the worst thing would be extradition to the United States. He worried that he couldn't bribe people if he were sent to America.

To help him avoid capture, Escobar made eliminating DEA agents, who were helping Colombian law-enforcement officials, a priority. Steve Murphy tells us how much Pablo - a man who thought nothing of ordering the deaths of judges, presidential candidates and anyone else who stood in his way - was willing to pay for the death of DEA agents:

> *It was a lovely time. Not to mention there was a $300,000 price tag on any DEA agent.*

Was the price tag the same for non-DEA agents?

> *The sad thing is, for a regular uniform cop the price on their head was $100. That's how cheap life was down there.*

What is it like to do a job when one's life is constantly threatened?

> *And not that we're overly macho, it's not like we weren't afraid. But your senses are heightened, and you're more aware of what's going on around you.*
>
> *There's times when we'd come flying in on those gunships — and I've got my 9 millimeter pistol and these guys got their long guns and everything, and I've got on blue jeans and tennis shoes. And the commander is looking at you and he says "Steve, you and me, front door." And it's like, "okay." You're very aware of what's going on around you. We never let fear control our actions.*

Not letting fear control one's actions is part of staying alive when the job is to catch Pablo Escobar who, at the time, controlled about 80% of the cocaine which entered the States.

How close did Steve Murphy and his colleague, Javier Peña - portrayed by Pedro Pascal (of "King of Thrones" fame) - come to actually capturing Escobar? Close ... very close, according to Murphy:

> *There were times when you go in and the coffee would still be warm. That's how close you'd get to capturing him.*

When Escobar surrendered - and spent time “incarcerated” at his hand-picked “prison,” known as La Catedral - things slowed-down for Murphy and Javier Peña. But ... after Colombian officials decided that Pablo’s life was “too cushy,” at Le Catedral, Escobar escaped.

He was “on the run” for eighteen months.

Life in Medellin, and throughout Colombia, became extremely violent during those eighteen months. The situation was extremely intense for Murphy and Peña. Steve recalls that he came close to burning-out:

> *For 18 months, from the time he escaped from the time he was killed…was the closest I’d ever come to burnout. Not to mention I had a wife living in Bogotá, and we had adopted our first daughter.*

Neither Steve Murphy nor Javier Peña captured Escobar on December 2, 1993. Steve Murphy was the first American on the scene soon after, however:

> *So when Escobar was killed…I got to say it was one of the happiest days of my life. You’ve probably seen the* [very graphic] *photograph, where I’m holding him up by the hair on his head. Not that I’m a sick individual, or maybe I am a sick individual, but that was the amount of elation. Thank God this is over.*

Murphy is also the person who took the photograph of Pablo, dead on the rooftop of a Medellin home.

Today, Steve Murphy is no-longer working as a DEA agent. He lives in the greater Washington D.C. area. Throughout his career, he did what he wanted to do - to be in law-enforcement. As he told Greg Jordan, who interviewed him for the *Times West Virginian*:

> *I’ve never wanted to be anything else, and I don’t know why. I was always intrigued by police and law enforcement. You know the old saying. “If you find a job you like, you never work a day in your life,” and I did it for over 37 years.*

In the image, at the top of this page, we see Steve Murphy doing the job he liked. Specifically, the picture - which he submitted to the *Times West Virginian* - shows him at his desk in Miami, counting the cash and assessing the jewelry which law enforcement officials had seized during a drug raid.

Credits:

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http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Steve-Murphy-Real-DEA-Agent-in-Narcos

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