



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Reality TV

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Image: Filming "Traffic Court". Photo, Reni Photos.

Decades before *The People's Court* and Judge Judy, Washington-area viewers tuned in to *Traffic Court* which aired on Channel 4, WRC-TV, from the late 1950s into the 1960s. The program portrayed trials of true cases and used real judges, prosecutors and police officers, but professional actors depicted the defendants. In this 1958 photograph from the personal collection of retired Alexandria police captain Carl Dutzman, the young private can be seen testifying on the witness stand while Alexandria judge James Colasanto hears the case.



Years later in 1970, Judge Colasanto was shot at his Russell Road home when he answered an early morning call at his door. The assailant fired several shots and then escaped. Several hours later, a man contacted Joseph McCaffrey, a newscaster for Channel 7, then WMAL-TV. The caller said he had shot the judge and he wanted to give McCaffrey an exclusive interview. The suspect invited McCaffrey to his residence on Four Mile road.

McCaffrey immediately contacted Alexandria detectives and with more than a dozen officers and two K-9 units, they approached the suspect's home. An officer thought he heard a gunshot and when police entered the suspect's home, they found the man dead in front of his television, the victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Judge Colasanto, 64, died of his injuries two days later. Police believe the gunman held a grudge against the judge for dismissing a complaint five years earlier that the suspect had brought about his neighbor's dogs.

"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.