

TRUTH BE TOLD

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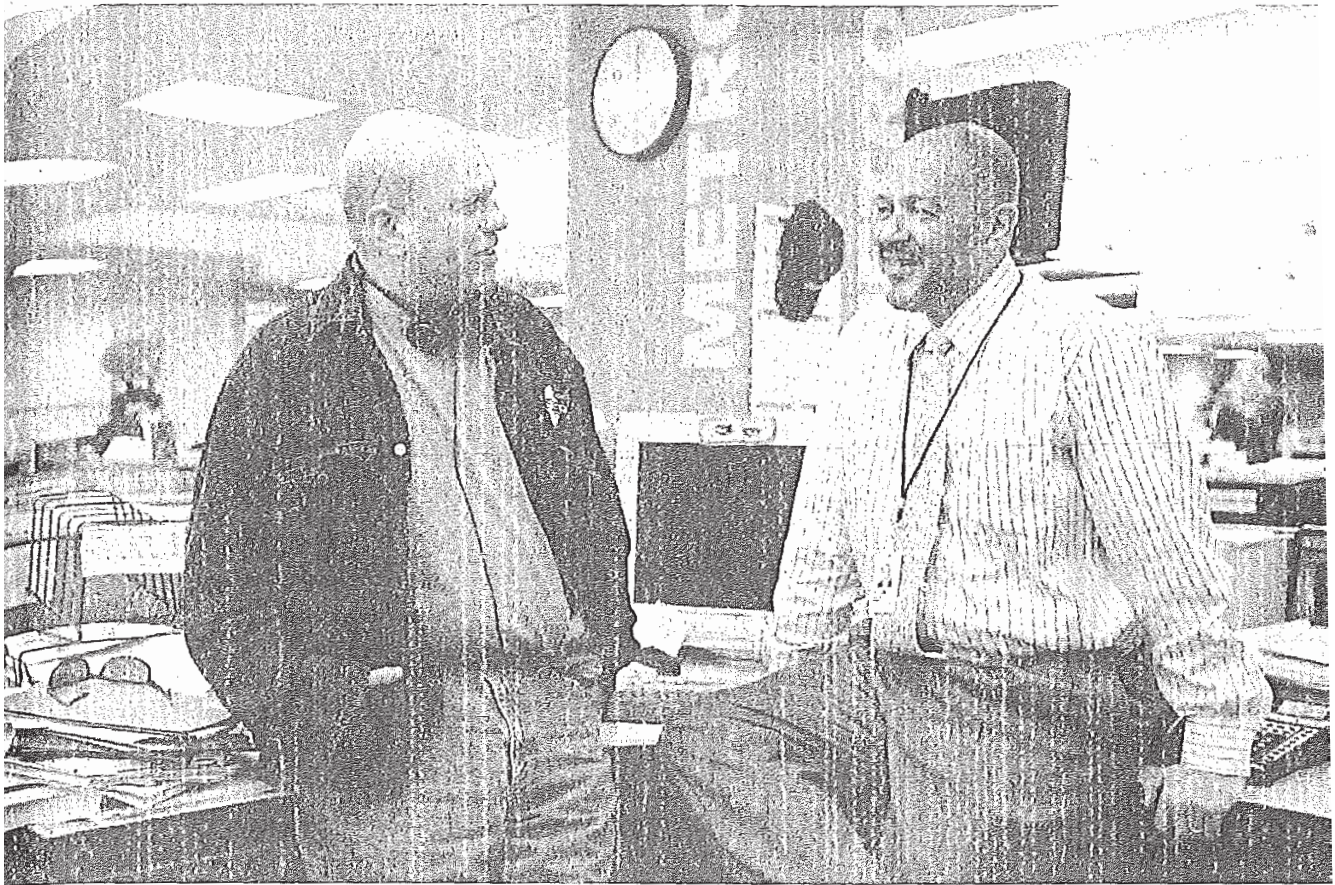
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WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

CAMEOS AND STUNT CASTING

"Simon and Ed Burns send 'em over to read and I do the best I can with 'em . . ."

— PAT MORAN

ROBERT F. COLESBERRY AS DETECTIVE RAY COLE

Played by *The Wire*'s late executive producer, Robert F. Colesberry, Detective Cole was a low-key piece of work, better suited, perhaps, to teaching high-school history.

"It was a brave move on Bob's part to get out there on the floor with the actors," said Pat Moran, "and he had that handsome, beleaguered look of a homicide cop."

Even when there was something for him to cheer about, things never got too good for Ray Cole, evidenced in the day he is all smiles because he "got laid last night."

"Oh, yeah?" says Bunk. "Does your asshole still hurt?"

Cole's skills as an investigator are best shown in Episode 22, when he tries to pin a gun on Bodie after the shoot-out that killed a nine-year-old boy. He shares the scene with another ringer, former Baltimore police commissioner and Maryland State Police superintendent Ed Norris, playing a homicide detective of the same name.

"The thing is . . . you're unbelievably stupid," Norris says to Bodie. "I don't say that to upset you, just to state a fact."

When Bodie doesn't flinch, Norris says to Cole, "He doesn't think so."

"Nobody ever thinks they're stupid," says Cole. "It's part of the stupidity."

Cole then tells Bodie they not only have the guns used in the shooting – true – but he himself crosses over to the Continent of Stupidity by bluffing that they have his prints on one of them.

"Which one?" says Bodie.

Like a guy trying to remember which shell hides the pea, Cole guesses wrong, and Bodie – who will survive the corner by *not* being stupid until his pride gets the best of him – simply says: "Lawyer."

In the words of Dominic West: "It seemed this incredible inside joke to have the boss himself play this shambling, half-competent detective."



WILLIAM F. ZORZI AS BILL ZORZI

Season Five's political reporter was played with a cantankerous game face by Bill Zorzi, a respected *Baltimore Sun* journalist who filed hundreds of stories under the byline William F. Zorzi, Jr. before the idea of hitting a mark on a soundstage entered his cynical mind.

A man with an aversion to wearing socks, Bill was known at the *Sun* as "Zorzi" except to Peter Meredith, the paper's whimsical British weekend editor, who christened him "Zorz Babe."

Few outside the newsroom know that there were years in the late 1980s when Zorzi played it conservative by pulling back his bushy Irish-Italian mane in a ponytail.

At other times he was known to wear barrettes.

As a thespian, former City Desk colleagues of Zorzi said the Loyola High School graduate wasn't half bad.

But he's no Scott Shane.

EDWARD T. NORRIS AS DETECTIVE ED NORRIS

Edward T. Norris, a New Yorker brought to Baltimore to fight crime by Mayor Martin O'Malley, was the city police commissioner when *The Wire* debuted in 2002.

The then-commissioner's first line on the show was a nod to the department's rank and file.

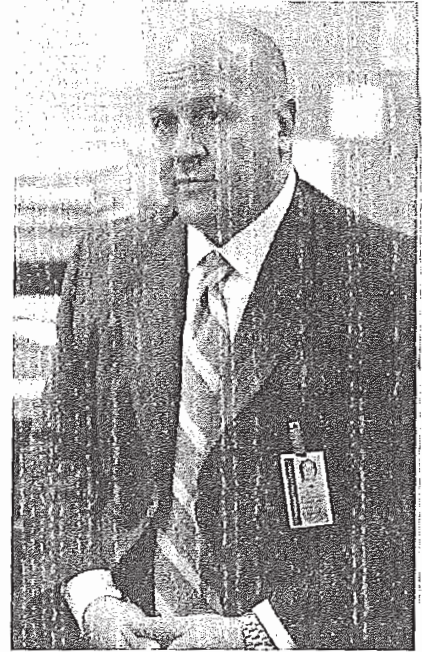
"Show me the son of a bitch who can fix this department and I'll give back half my overtime."

By Season Two, Norris had jumped the O'Malley ship to become superintendent of the Maryland State Police. And before production began on Season Three, Norris had resigned after being indicted on federal tax and misappropriation charges on misuse of a quasi-public city police fund. He pleaded guilty in March of 2004.

Of Norris's acting chops, Simon said: "He says his lines and he doesn't walk into furniture."

Casting director Pat Moran was similarly impressed, but more so when he was the city's top cop: "When Ed Norris was city police commissioner, the drug corner in my neighborhood got cleaned up."

Norris held his own well enough to last through Season Five, when Bubbles goes into withdrawal in a police interrogation room and throws up on him.

**LAURA LIPPMAN AND MICHAEL OLESKER AS THEMSELVES**

Lippman, a longtime *Baltimore Sun* reporter and daughter of a *Sun* editorial writer, shared an early scene in Season Five with Michael Olesker, who wrote a local column for the paper for many years.

Together, they stand at a conference room window and watch smoke rise from a fire on the other side of town, sort of like a couple of kids trying to figure out what animals passing clouds look like.

Their reverie is broken when city editor Gus Haynes comes in and questions the heart of reporters who would watch a fire instead of chase one.

"David [Simon] approached me with a shyness totally out of character for him and asked if I'd mind doing a cameo," said Olesker. "Are you kidding? He's been a friend through good times and awful times, and from

the moment I met him maybe 25 years ago, I realized this was a guy who was out to tell the truth.”

Added Olesker: “Standing in that remarkable recreation of the *Sun* newsroom was like being transported back before newspapers started falling off the side of the earth.”

JEFFREY FUGITT AS OFFICER CLAUDE DIGGINS, MARINE BOAT PILOT

Ahab to McNulty’s Ishmael, Diggins was played by Officer Jeffrey Fugitt of the city marine unit, proving it’s easier to teach a boatman to act than the other way around.

Fugitt’s best line comes while watching in disbelief as McNulty tries to tie a line from the police boat to a pier piling: “Why don’t you just do bunny ears?”

Said Moran, “I think he was more terrified of our cameras than plucking five floaters a day out of the harbor.”

RETIRED BALTIMORE SUN REWRITE MAN DAVID MICHAEL ETTLIN AS HIMSELF

“I showed up to find my name taped on a cast trailer door, received a shirt and tie picked out by the costumers, enjoyed lunch with the extras, memorized my precious few seconds of dialogue in the script,” said Ettlin, who spent 40 years working for his hometown newspaper.

“I had my recent haircut blessed by the stylist and a few years of wrinkles and blemishes removed from my face and walked up to the second floor of the production building for my first look at *The Wire*’s *Sun* newsroom.

“I was flabbergasted. Had I fallen asleep in the real newsroom and awakened on the set, I would have been very disoriented for the first minute or so . . . all so amazingly real.”

Following his own, well-honed edict that the first rule of rewrite when an editor floats a story is to “shoot it down”, Ettlin delivered this line – spoken in the real *Sun* newsroom more than a decade earlier – on his final screen appearance.

“Just because something happens doesn’t mean it’s news. There’s always a salmonella outbreak somewhere. I don’t see why we have to cover this one.”

DE' ANDRE MCCULLOUGH AS LAMAR

Brother Mouzone's bodyguard is played by De'Andre McCullough, protagonist of David Simon's non-fiction narrative, *The Corner*.

A man of few words, Lamar delivers a mouthful with a subtle look when Mouzone sits with a pile of books – including *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez – outside the Franklin Terrace high-rise.

“Do you know what the most dangerous thing in America is?” asks Mouzone, who has just run Cheese off the turf with a shot of ratgut to the shoulder. “A nigger with a library card.”

Lamar and a fellow lieutenant share a look that says: How many times do we have to hear that one?



FORMER MARYLAND GOVERNOR ROBERT EHRLICH AS A STATE TROOPER WORKING STATE HOUSE SECURITY

To Mayor Carcetti, whom the fictional governor has kept waiting for more than an hour, Ehrlich says: “. . . the governor's office says he's ready to see you now.”

BLUE EPPS AS A MAN AT BLIND BUTCHIE'S BAR ARGUING THE MERITS OF PORT VERSUS SHERRY

George “Blue” Epps, a real-life survivor of the corners of West Baltimore. Clean and sober for more than a decade, Epps works as a drug counselor in West Baltimore.

“A real corner guy who straightened himself out,” said Moran. “He has a great face. You don't go through a war zone and escape with your life without some battle scars.”

NATHAN “BODIE” BARKSDALE AS A RECOVERING ADDICT WHO REFUSES TO SIGN JUNKIE JOHNNY'S COURT SLIP IN SEASON ONE

Barksdale had only recently been released from the Maryland Correctional Institution in Jessup when this episode was filmed.

Although no specific character in *The Wire* was modeled on him, Simon and Burns were familiar with his status as a drug trafficker in the 1980s and used both his surname and street moniker in homage.



RETIRED BALTIMORE POLICE SERGEANT JAY LANDSMAN AS LIEUTENANT DENNIS MELLO

The real-life Sergeant Jay Landsman, a key player in David Simon's 1991 non-fiction narrative *Homicide*, and a friend to young police reporters, played Mello.

The bigger Robert Wisdom's role as Howard "Bunny" Colvin became, the larger Lieutenant Mello's screen presence. Mello was most prominent across the "Hamsterdam" arc of Season Three.

"He's got a great sense of humor, which is good, because if you're humor-impaired, making movies in Baltimore alleys is not the place to be," said Moran. "And he might have one of the thickest Baltimore accents going and he looks like a cop."

BOXING TRAINER MACK LEWIS AS HIMSELF

Lewis, now in his nineties, played the old trainer hanging on the ropes who gives Lester Freamon an old promotional poster of former Golden Gloves boxer Avon Barksdale. The scene was filmed in Lewis's East Baltimore gym where John Waters filmed the fight scenes in his 1977 film *Desperate Living*.

BALTIMORE TRIAL LAWYER BILLY MURPHY AS HIMSELF

William H. Murphy, Jr., was born into a prominent Baltimore family: an ancestor bought the fledgling *Afro-American* newspaper in the late 19th century and made it one of the most influential black papers in the country. His father was one of the first black judges in the State of Maryland.

The Murphy Homes housing projects on the Westside, which imploded like the fictional Franklin Terrace high-rise at the beginning of Season Three of *The Wire*, were named after his family.

On the show, Murphy plays an attorney accompanying state senator Clay Davis into a courthouse. Former Maryland state senator and local radio host Larry Young – whose career was not dissimilar to Davis's – plays a talk show host on *The Wire* who has Clay Davis as a guest.

Though one of the most successful attorneys in metropolitan Baltimore – he has successfully defended boxing promoter Don King and has said of his clients that they are “. . . a child of God and everyone else is a son-of-a-bitch” – Murphy’s first love is jazz.

A drummer, his playing is about as subtle as his courtroom theatrics. If Keith Moon had lived to play jazz, it might sound like Billy Murphy on a good night.

CLIFTON GROSS, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN’S ASSOCIATION LOCAL
NO. 333, AS A CARGO HANDLER

In Season Two, Gross helps Frank Sobotka unload a container in the scene where Sobotka – wracked with guilt over the way his best intentions on the docks turn to shit – works a ship to “get clean.”

RICHARD PRICE AS A PRISON ENGLISH TEACHER

Richard Price, author of the novels *Clockers*, *Samaritan* and *Lush Life*, as well as the screenplay for *The Color of Money*, led a group study of *The Great Gatsby*.

In the class, D’Angelo Barksdale – having accepted the truth about his Uncle Avon – sees beyond Gatsby’s glitter as well.

DAVID SIMON AS AN OBNOXIOUS REPORTER

Simon, notebook in hand, plays one of a number of anonymous reporters haranguing Frank Sobotka for a quote when the union leader leaves the longshoremen’s headquarters after his arrest by the FBI.

Of the performance by the *Wire* creator, Pat Moran said, “He should stick to what he knows best.”