[Snap Judgment]

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Growing up, I marveled with the kids in high school who insisted on standing out. The ones sporting spiky, multicolored hair, vampire makeup, platform boots, wearing the whole ensemble to history class. They rejected the social order, even as I tried so desperately to work myself into it. You casting about like a new arrival from a different country because, basically, for all intents and purposes, I was foreign. My home, my church, the places where my family spent the majority of our time was a land apart from high school. Not only could our apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong, routinely speak to the Lord God of the Universe, the Lord God of the Universe spoke back.

[somber music]

Every week in services, we learned the end times were nigh, in our secret world, devils were cast out of sinners and healings performed in the name of Jesus with that anointing cloth and holy olive oil. "Come out, spirit of cancer. Begone wicked chest cold. Begone in the name of Jesus Christ."

I did not speak of this land in high school. No, instead I put on a mask and disparage other religious kids as them crazy holy rollers, just in case somebody mistook me for them.

[upbeat music]

Well, today on Snap Judgment, I'm going to ask you to put on a very different type of mask. We proudly present, No Angel. My name is Glynn Washington. Begone foul spirits when you're listening to Snap Judgment.

Now, there are lots of places that good, law-abiding people don't get to see, and today we're going into several of them. As such, sensitive listeners should note this story does reference incidents of police violence, because Snap producer, Bo Walsh, brings us a story about one man going deeper than he ever thought possible. Snap Judgment.

[crowd cheering and shouting]

[commentator commentating]

**Bo:** In the spring of 1985, a young wide receiver out of the University of Arizona named Jay Dobyns walked onto the football field at the NFL's pre-draft combine, hoping for a chance to make it to the big time.

**Jay:** I've got paired with a couple guys that I never heard of, same size, same build as me. One guy was from Kutztown State, which I'd never heard of. There was another guy from a small school in Mississippi. So, we start running around during these drills and 10 minutes into the workout, I realized I wasn't going to be a professional football player. I couldn't do what these guys could do. I wasn't as athletic. I couldn't run as fast. I couldn't jump as high. I wasn't as skilled. And I was like, "Man, I never heard of these dudes, and I can't keep up with them. How am I ever going to make it in the league?"

Well, as it turned out, the kid from Kutztown State was a player named Andre Reed, who went on to play 15 years in the NFL for the Buffalo Bills, was on all their Super Bowl teams, is in the Hall of Fame now. And the kid from the small school in Mississippi went to Mississippi Valley State. It was Jerry Rice, arguably the greatest football player to ever put on a helmet and shoulder pads.

**Bo:** In college, Jay had gotten used to crowd screaming for him and was addicted to the adrenaline rush. But now, with his NFL dreams crushed, he didn't have a plan B.

**Jay:** The television show, *Miami Vice*, had become very popular. We had never seen a cop show like that. Everything had been uniformed policemen and detectives responding to crime scenes. And then, *Miami Vice* shows up. It's this undercover world and Sonny Crockett's wearing a Hugo Boss suit and he's driving a Lamborghini around South Beach and he's meeting with these drug kingpins, and there's tons of cocaine on the table. He's got models bringing him Mojitos at mansions. And I was like, "Man, you know what? I think I can do that. This is super interesting. It's super challenging." And so, in a hokey way, I was actually inspired into law enforcement by Hollywood and by the vision that Hollywood had created for me of what a life in undercover might be.

**Bo:** Jay was 26 years old when he was hired by ATF, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. And his first week, it was TV worthy.

**Jay:** I got hired on a Monday, I got sworn in, raised my right hand, took my oath, was given a badge and a temporary gun. I hadn't been through any training academy. On the fourth day, on a Thursday, I was part of an arrest scenario, like far removed from the point of attack. I was on a perimeter position more as probably an observer than anything else. The federal agents had included me but had included me graciously to give me up a little taste of what the job was like.

**Bo:** The plan was to arrest a man who'd just gotten out of prison and was rumored to be in possession of firearms.

**Jay:** We arrive at the suspect's residence, and we're waiting on him. He pulls up on a motorcycle [motorcycle stops] and gets off. And the agents start exiting their vehicles and closing in on him. Well, the suspect sees the cops coming, and he makes a run for it. And just very spontaneously for me, I just joined in the chase.

[intriguing music]

The suspect is running through the neighborhood, and he knows the neighborhood. We didn't. This was a really run-down trailer park on the very far south edge of Tucson. And so, I'm closing in on this kid and gaining ground on him and then the guy vanished. As we're searching the area, the suspect who was hidden, popped up out of nowhere and had his gun on me, and put me in a chokehold and had a gun to my head and started moving me towards a vehicle that was there on the scene.

My partners, now realizing what's happened, start to close in. There was a two-door Monte Carlo, and the suspect pushed me into the front seat, pushed the seat forward, climbed in behind me, the gun never leaving my head, and he's screaming at me to leave, to get out, get him out of there, like I was going to drive his escape.

As I went to start the car, I pulled the car keys out of the ignition, I dropped them to the floorboard. I just said, "Man, I dropped the keys." As I leaned forward to grab them, the suspect's gun came off my head, it gave my partner's an opportunity at the suspect. For five seconds, it was complete chaos. In the process with the suspect getting shot, the gun had moved off my head and onto my back. And he fired around point blank into my back in between my spine and my shoulder blade. The round went through my lung, it narrowly missed my heart, and it exited the left side of my chest.

I get out of the car, I fall to the ground. And after four days on the job, I was laying in the dirt in the dogshit of this trailer park, bleeding to death. That event was both a blessing and a curse. The blessing obviously is that I survived it. It brought me some notoriety within ATF that this young agent who was just on the job was shot after four days, came back to work very quickly, was enthusiastic to come back and try again and do the job. So, there was a lot of good things that came from it. Probably, the bad thing that came from it is that it gave me a false sense that I was bulletproof. I felt like I was invincible.

**Bo:** Jay started taking on cases that others often deemed too dangerous or impossible.

**Jay:** I had solely focused my energy and attention on undercover work. That's what I loved. That's what I wanted to do. That is why I came to ATF. And I tried to touch every undercover investigation that was available to me. Gun cases, from popguns to shoulder-launched rockets. Drug deals, from street-level dope to cartel-level dope. I did gang infiltrations, one-on-one cases, portrayed myself to be a contract killer in murder-for-hire cases.

**Bo:** After 15 years of undercover work, Jay had thought he'd seen it all as a special agent, but then came an opportunity that will define his career.

**Jay:** Operation Black Biscuit was my infiltration of the Hells Angels motorcycle gang.

**Bo:** The Hells Angels Motorcycle Corporation, a worldwide biker organization. With over 400 charters spread throughout 59 countries and 5 continents, they are the largest motorcycle club in the world. A string of violent incidents began to occur in the five years since the club had arrived in Arizona. Jay Dobyns and ATF wanted to build a case to prove that the Angels were a criminal organization, indictable under RICO, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

**Jay:** In Arizona, and in the West Coast, the Hells Angels were operating with impunity. The plan was to be side by side with the Hells Angels, to get next to them, to try to figure out who was ordering the violence within the Hells Angels, who was executing the violence within the Angels.

**Bo:** At the beginning of Jay's career, deceiving people while undercover had made him uneasy but over time, lying and misrepresenting himself to suspects simply became what he did to do his job well. And sometimes, creating a persona for Jay was too easy.

**Jay:** Jaybird Davis was actually very close to who I am, maybe actually too close at times. I was nicknamed Jaybird as a kid, Davis was my grandmother's maiden name. And ultimately, the cover story that I used was built over time and experience. I played a debt collector. I played a gunrunner. I always had two guns on me.

**Bo:** Jay and his team, two cops and a couple of informants, posed as members of a small motorcycle gang from Tijuana, and he began making introductions through a series of gun deals.

**Jay:** By the way, I carried myself and presented myself, suspects began to assume that I did contract killings. And then, I started getting solicited for murder for hires. When the Hells Angels infiltration actually kicked off in the Bullhead City, Arizona area, I had already had a reputation as a criminal on the streets there.

**Bo:** The next move for Jaybird would be to attend an annual biker rally called Too Broke for Sturgis. The whole team hopped on their Harleys and rode into a Northern Arizona campground.

**Jay:** Man, it was a big event. Tents and vendors and music. We were returning a lot of heads. People hadn't seen us. They were very familiar with each other. They were very unfamiliar with us. "Who are these dudes? Where did they show up at?" The Hells Angels had a tent, and they had their own isolated area within the party and a lot of people, most of the people were intimidated to even approach, like man, you didn't go into there. You are walking into the lion's den to go around and socialize and approach the Hells Angels under their tent, under their banner. A Hells Angel member came up and said, "Bad Bob wants to invite you over to the Mesa clubhouse." And we were being a little bit coy like, "Okay, thank you. We'll see." And then, he corrected his invitation he goes, "You need to understand something. It's not an invitation. It's an order."

Bad Bob was the president of the Hells Angels Mesa charter. He had influence. He was a shot caller. If we were going to operate, the first pass, the first check was going to be through Bad Bob. We show up at the Mesa clubhouse and park our bikes and are backing our bikes into some parking spots, and we're greeted by a couple members with guns out and baseball bats. You know that's how they say hello. During this case, I open-carried twin Glock pistols in a shoulder holster. So, I had a gun hanging under each arm, almost everywhere I went.

We come to the front door at the Mesa clubhouse, and we're getting ready to enter, and the member that was working the door, he said, "Sorry, Bird," he goes, "You can't bring those in here." A couple of my partners had already stepped inside. I knew that at this point, it was critical. I had to take a stand. And I just replied, "I don't take my guns off for anybody, not even for the Hells Angels. If you think you're the only people out there that have enemies, you're wrong. So, I'll let my brothers go, walk through, and say hello and party with you guys. I'll just wait out here on the sidewalk. If Bad Bob wants to come and speak to me, he can speak to me out here but I'm not taking my guns off." And there was a bit of a standoff there. And the doorman, he said, "Bird, I don't make the rules." And we're just kind of eyeballing each other toe to toe, neither side willing to give in.

[door opens]

And then, Bad Bob appeared. And he said, "I do make the rules. Come on in." He put his arm over my shoulder and brought me in the clubhouse. Just the way he walked us around his clubhouse, like his sense of pride in that gang, there was no faking it. It was entirely sincere. There were trophies and banners and pictures that documented the Hells Angels' history and their heroes. Bob said, "I know you guys are running guns. I know you're taking guns south. I know you're involved in the criminal underworld. I just need to know what's going on. I don't want to have surprises. If you're doing something, you can do what you want. You have my permission to run your black-market business however you see fit. Don't be keeping secrets from me. I don't want to hear about problems. I don't want to be dealing with your issues because I have vouched for you."

[rock music]

**Glynn:** Jaybird's got one foot in the door but will his cover story stick? Stay tuned.

[pensive music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the No Angel episode. Our story follows an undercover officer and as such, contains descriptions of violence. When we last left Jay, he'd made a powerful ally in a high-ranking member of the club, as we get into the outlaw biker underworld. Snap Judgment.

[pensive music]

**Jay:** Bad Bob was vouching for us, and Bad Bob was vouching for us to very influential Hells Angels, his brothers and saying, "Hey, man, you need to meet these guys. I believe in them. They're good dudes. We want them around. They support us." So, that introduction, that statement on our behalf made things much easier for us. We would go and introduce ourselves to new people, to new members and they'd be like, "Man, I know who you are. Man, I heard about you. Man, welcome. Come on, let's go have a beer." Starting small and being relatively unthreatening allowed us to get our feet on the ground, establish ourselves as being solid, and then try to expand from there. It wasn't like we showed up and wanted to do a 50-key methamphetamine deal with people that they didn't know, but to buy an eight ball of meth. Instead of looking for a tractor trailer full of M-16s, buying a pistol on the street.

**Bo:** With every low-level street deal, Jay and his crew looked more believable, so much that they showed up on the radar of the local Bullhead City police who had no idea that Jaybird Davis was an undercover agent.

**Jay:** I found out about their interest through a member of the task force who was going to statewide criminal gang meetings, and it was being discussed at those gang meetings. "Hey, Bullhead City is looking at this new group of guys up here." He came back with a flyer that just basically said like, "Beware, these guys are armed and dangerous." But the flyer had a picture of me on it that was taken at a traffic stop. Now, we knew we had to be careful. We knew that Bullhead was on us. But we also knew like, "Hey, even the cops are buying this."

**Bo:** In just a few months of Operation Black Biscuit, Jay had gotten in quicker and deeper than he thought possible, and evidence was piling up to build the case.

**Jay:** We were getting guns, we were getting drugs, we were getting explosives, we were getting contraband. The gunrunner role was beautiful in that it let me come back to someone who I purchased a gun from and ask for more and ask for volume and try to find guns that maybe someone needed to ditch or get rid of, whether it'd be stolen or it had been used in a crime or had been used in a homicide.

**Bo:** Jay was working 70-hour weeks, living out of an undercover house in Bullhead City. Five hours away in Tucson, he had a wife and two children. But the deeper Jay got into the case, he was thinking less and less about his family and was becoming more and more the man he was pretending to be.

**Jay:** I never stopped being Bird. I didn't turn it off when I came home, and then turn it back on when I got back on the streets. I wasn't Jay Dobyns, husband, father, friend on Saturdays and Sundays and then, Monday through Friday was this smoking and joking gangster. I just didn't do a good job of separating those two different lifestyles.

I had been in role and with the gangsters for an extended period of time, probably a couple months. And I came home, and I was in my street role. And my wife pulled me aside and she said, "You are not allowed to be gone for an extended period of time, and then walk in this house and treat me and your kids like we're street people." In my self-defense, at that time, I told her, "I am not a light switch. I can't turn this on and off. I have to be all in. People that dabble in this, people who are not entirely committed end up dead. I'm not a light switch." And then, her response was, "I understand that but when you're around me, and when you're around our kids, and you come to this house, you better install a dimmer switch and dial that attitude down. And if you can't, don't come back."

I would come home and do the bare minimum that I had to do to keep my family running. I'd pay the bills, pat the kids on the head, have a cup of coffee with my wife. But in my heart, in the back of my head, I didn't want to be there. I wanted to be out with the gangsters. I wanted to be smoking and joking. The danger and the violence and the intensity of that world had become my heroin. I needed that fix and the mundane pace of being at home and a family man wasn't getting me high.

**Bo:** So, Jay left his family that weekend and came back less and less each month. Back among the Hells Angels, Jaybird's reputation was spreading. At the time, there were six active Hells Angels charters throughout the state of Arizona, and several of them were sizing him up as a recruit to join their family.

**Jay:** Bottom line is, is I wanted in. I started making decisions to get inside because that is where I felt like I could do the most damage, and I started positioning myself for membership. When the various Hells Angels charters started recruiting us based on us doing our jobs well, man, it felt pretty special. Like I was playing the prom queen. It was like everybody wanted to take me on a date.

**Bo:** But Jay's superiors at ATF didn't actually want him to become a Hells Angel. They thought it was a step too far, but Jay wanted in.

**Jay:** I desperately wanted to get my patch. I wanted to be the first guy, the first law man that had infiltrated the Hells Angels. It had never been done before. My focus selfishly had evolved from really trying to gain evidence and further the investigation, and had become personal for me to achieve that status.

**Bo:** And then, Jay got a break. The Skull Valley Charter in Arizona accepted him on probation. He would need to spend at least a year as a prospect proving his loyalty to the club before receiving his patch and being made an official member.

**Jay:** You were not going to be made a member any sooner than one year. And there was no guarantee that on your 366th day, you were going to be given a patch. One of the big mistakes that you could make as a Hells Angel when you're a prospect, if someone ever asked you like, "Hey, man, when are you going to get your membership? When are you going to be a full patch?", if somehow you had that date marked on your calendar, man, you're going to get throat punched. The answer was, "As long as it takes."

**Bo:** Joining the club as a prospect meant giving up control. If you want it in, you had to be all in.

**Jay:** When we were operating independently, we could come and go as we pleased, we could go where we wanted, when we wanted. We weren't subject to any orders. We weren't subject to anybody else's authority. Then, once we got on the inside and we're prospecting with the Hells Angels, now they controlled that. Now, they told us where to be, when to be there. It was nonnegotiable. The Skull Valley Charter, the president was an old, old-school Hells Angel, very traditional in his views of the Hells Angels, how the Hells Angels should look and act and conduct themselves.

And I showed up one day at Skull Valley with flip flops on, and he dressed me up and down. "I don't know who you think you are. I don't know what you're used to. I don't know where you've been. No member in my charter is going to wear flip flops. You get your boots on. I don't want to ever see that again. We are not the West Coast California Hells Angels. We are the Skull Valley Hells Angels, and we are going to look it and we are going to act the part."

**Bo:** But Jay never really loved riding a motorcycle. And now, he was going on 300-mile rides across the desert.

**Jay:** What I really thought is when I die in this case, I'm going to die hitting a telephone pole on my motorcycle at 100 miles an hour. They only know full throttle. So, when you're riding with them and you're riding in a pack, at times when they do it right, it's beautiful, it's orchestrated. It's high speed, 80, 90, 100 miles an hour, 18 inches apart. It's beautiful to watch. It's beautiful to be a part of. In essence, they're the Blue Angels on motorcycles.

**Bo:** Being able to keep up wasn't limited to riding motorcycles. It also applied to partying, and the party never stopped.

**Jay:** When you entered a bar with the Hells Angels as their friends, as their associates, many times it was like the parting of the Red Sea. They pretty much run every joint that they walk in when they really started like hammering shots. And some of these guys, I mean, can handle a whiskey all on their own, and you wouldn't know it. I couldn't. I was never a good drinker. I would get a bottle of beer, a dark bottle and keep it mostly empty. And then, I would take a shot, bang a shot back with them, chase it with my beer. What I do is I would spit that shot back into my beer bottle. And then, they'd line up the next shot and I'd bang that one back. And so, in their eyes, man, I was going shot for shot with them.

**Bo:** Throughout the case, Jay grew tight with many of the Hells Angels. He slept in their homes, held their babies, spent holidays with them, but never lost sight of the fact that he'd eventually have to bring them down.

**Jay:** No one, none of us is ever comfortable with betrayal, just because you're in an undercover role. I never set out to ruin someone's life. I was very much less concerned with being hurt by the members of Angels. What I became concerned with was being a victim caught in the middle of a gang war.

The Bandidos motorcycle gang predominant in Texas was a very powerful, a very violent, threatening motorcycle gang, and they were adversarial with the Hells Angels. Information came in that the Bandidos were going to be in Las Vegas, Nevada. And they were going to be there without having requested permission or getting authority from the Hells Angels who considered Las Vegas in Nevada their territory. So, I was called into the Skull Valley clubhouse, I was told to bring all my hardware, which meant whatever guns or knives or weapons I might have, without much detail. I show up, and I receive a briefing that said, "You're going to go to Vegas. The Bandidos are going to be throwing a party. And when they show up for this party, before they even get their kickstands down, you better shoot them off their bikes. And we're going to be watching you from a distance. If you don't shoot them, we are going to shoot you." There was no nonsense here. These guys were ordering the murder of some rivals.

In the journey between Prescott and Las Vegas, which is plus or minus three hours, I got on the phone with my case agent and briefed him on the situation. "Man, I'm heading to Vegas and these guys expect me to kill Bandidos. Man, it's going to turn out bad." So, the case agent, he rallied up with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and orchestrated a traffic stop of the Bandidos before they could arrive at the location that was targeted for this assault. But I was there. I went to the location. I was standing there pacing, waiting, ready for the Bandidos to show up. The Hells Angels were watching from a distance. In the eyes of the Hells Angels, when it ended, when the Bandidos never showed, they didn't know why they didn't show. They didn't know that we had circumvented their arrival at this location through law enforcement and that it was never going to take place. All they knew is what they saw, which was Jaybird standing there, waiting and ready to throw down on these guys. Man, I came home to a hero's welcome.

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** After the break, can Jay avoid becoming the very thing he's trying to stop? Stay tuned.

[pensive music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment. My name is Glynn Washington, and you're listening to the No Angel episode. When we last left Jay, his quest for membership in the club had become an obsession. And sensitive listeners, Jay's story does contain graphic imagery and descriptions of violence, but his real struggle is trying to maintain two lives. His made-up biker persona, and his real life as husband and father. Snap Judgment.

[somber music]

**Jay:** My son, who was a little boy at the time, for years, I would come home from operations and when I was ready to turn around and get back to work, he would run out in the yard and he would grab a rock. He'd grab a little stone, and he'd come running up to me, "Dad, dad, I got something for you." And so, for years, hundreds of times, my son who was seven, eight years old at the time, gave me these stones. And, man, I kept at least one with me at all times. I had one in my pocket. They were in the saddlebags in my motorcycle, they were in my undercover car, they were in my undercover house. I was handing them out to my partners. And I was saying, "Man, like, I don't know what kind of blessing Jackie is putting on these stones, but you have to keep one of these with you. We're operating and surviving and thriving in this tornado with violence. Man, keep this good luck charm with you."

And there was a day, we're getting ready to finish up, and we had one last big operation to perform. And I'm getting ready to leave, and the routine was the same. Jackie comes running up, "Dad, don't leave," and he gives me a stone. And he goes, "I've been saving this one for you. It's special. It's shaped like a heart." And I was a 40 plus year old man trying to comfort this little boy. And I said, "Dude, all these good luck charms you've given me, man, I'm almost done. And as soon as I finish, I'm going to do all those things with you that I should have been doing. We're going to play catch. We're going to go swim. We're going to ride bikes. I'm going to help coach your little league team. I'm going to do all these things that as a dad, I should have been doing for you. But it's due to your good luck charms. These things work so good, I've given them to all my friends."

And this little boy is standing in my driveway, and he's got no shirt, no shoes on. Tears start running down his cheeks. And he said, [voice breaking] "Dad, they were only for you, you should have never given them away." And I didn't know how to react to that. And he said, "Dad, those were for you to put in your pocket. And every time you think someone is going to hurt you, I wanted you to be able to reach in there and touch it and know that I was there to help you fight back." That is what I had done to my son.

**Bo:** Jay needed all the protection he could get as the Angels were in the middle of a longstanding blood feud with a rival club, the Mongols. The story was that the Mongols were founded by a group of Latino men who originally tried to join the Hells Angels in the 1970s and were rejected because of their heritage. As the Mongols grew throughout the country, confrontations between the rival clubs became more and more violent.

**Jay:** I had accepted that I wasn't going to make it through this. I had accepted it. I wasn't comfortable with it. I was doing everything I could to avoid it. I didn't want that. I wasn't seeking it. I didn't have a death wish. But I accepted, "Man, you're not going to make it through this." And that came from just living day to day as a gangster in the midst of a gang war. 8 or 10 people I knew on one level or another were murdered during this timeframe. I figured my day was coming. Is it coming from a bullet? Is it coming from a bike crash? Is it coming from a beating because there's a crack in my story? I knew it was coming. I just didn't know where from.

**Bo:** Jay's superiors at the ATF could see how close he was to cracking the case but also, the danger he was in.

**Jay:** Any investigator, at any point, in any case, is always looking at, "How much evidence do I have? How much more do I need before this case is prosecutable, before you feel like you have enough to take our case, to take our evidence and our testimony into a courtroom and win?"

**Bo:** The one thing Jay knew was that once he was a member, the evidence would just get better, and he'd get the real dirt on the Hells Angels. But the ATF couldn't afford to wait months for that to happen. So, Jay started to wrestle with an idea that he thought could speed things up.

**Jay:** When I first started hanging around the Hells Angels, "I asked what do I do if I see a Mongol?" The response to me was very simple. "It's your job to kill them." I saved that information. I put it in my back pocket until I needed it. There was a point in time where I offered to kill a Mongol. I said I had intelligence on a Mongol that was in Mexico, and I wanted to go kill him on behalf of the club. That plan was embraced. I was provided the murder weapon. I was provided instructions on how to do it. I went to Mexico. I found a Mongol in a tavern, captured him, beat him with a baseball bat, duct taped his hands and ankles, buried him in a shallow grave. Took pictures of it and cut the vest off of him. Then, I took the bloody vest and the Polaroid pictures back to the Hells Angels. Anyone given that evidence, anyone presented that story would be running the other way dialing 911. The Hells Angels embraced it. They loved it, they honored it.

Ultimately, what they didn't know at the time it was all a bluff. It was a ruse. It was street theater. The reality of it is, is that we took a member of our task force, we dressed him in a Mongol vest, we dug a shallow grave, we duct taped him, we used cow blood and cow brains in the grave next to his head to make it appear that he had been beaten and shot. We took pictures of it. We used a homicide detective, who was very familiar with crime scenes, and made sure that it looked appropriate, that it wasn't overdone or underdone. And then, we took all this self-developed fabricated evidence of a murder back to the Hells Angels.

After the evidence was presented, a member draped his Hells Angels coat over my shoulders and said, "Hey, welcome to the gang. You've proved yourself. You took care of business. You showed that you understand what it takes to be a Hells Angel. Welcome to the club."

**Bo:** But a few weeks after Jaybird was welcomed to the club, the ATF shut down Operation Black Biscuit. After 21 months, it seemed there was enough evidence for an indictment and prosecution. The financial costs of the case were mounting, but perhaps most importantly, Jay says the ATF feared he'd gone too far.

**Jay:** Ultimately, what I thought was this brilliant Mongol murder plan probably is what ended the case because the decision was made, the violence has grown too great, like, "You are too close to the violence. We are no longer willing to risk a human asset to leave you in." My argument was like, "I've positioned myself to now do the greatest amount of damage. The access that I will have, as a member is going to open up to me. I can go wherever and do whatever. I will follow your instructions." But the shot callers did not see it that way.

**Bo:** Even though Jay felt there was more evidence to gather, ATF had built a prosecutable case which resulted in 52 arrests, with 16 members being indicted under RICO. The various charges included murder, drug trafficking, trafficking in stolen property, RICO conspiracy, and numerous felons in possession of a firearm. In total, over 650 guns had been collected as pieces of evidence. But when it came time to bring the case to court, it somehow wasn't enough.

**Jay:** The bureaucracy got us. The prosecutors started arguing with the case agents on how to present the case in a courtroom. When it was all said and done and the prosecution kind of came unraveled, charges were dismissed, charges were reduced. Some people took a full lick, but others got off easy. Others got off really with nothing.

**Bo:** As living a double life came to an end and Jaybird Davis returned to being Jay Dobyns, he found out leaving the Hells Angels behind was not going to be so easy.

**Jay:** When the reports were delivered to the Hells Angels defense team, that Jay "Jaybird" Davis, the debt collector, hitman, gunrunner, was in reality, Jay Dobyns, an ATF agent, it was out at that point, now they knew that Jaybird was a Fed. I was continuing to work undercover. I was out at a bar one night with another undercover agent, and I ran into one of the Hells Angel defendants. And then, the Hells Angel proceeded to say, "We know where you live. We followed you. We know who you are. We know where your kids go to school." He said, "I know you love that little boy. Someday, you're going to wait for him to get off the school bus and he's not going to. You are going to spend the rest of your life running from the Hells Angels."

**Bo:** Jay packed up his entire family and relocated to California. But when his location was exposed, he had to move again.

**Jay:** There were murder contracts placed on me. The contracts had been farmed out to the Aryan Brotherhood, to the MS-13, to a street gang in Los Angeles. The threats and the intelligence around them were deemed as credible, they were verified. My complaint is that ATF didn't pursue an investigation of them. You have to chase these into the ground, you have to be detectives and figure this out. And my agency didn't want anything to do with that.

**Bo:** Jay and his family moved 16 times over the next five years. Then on August 10th of 2008, in a Tucson, Arizona suburb, during the middle of the night while his family was asleep, their home was set on fire.

**Jay:** My house was attacked by arsonists. It was burned to the ground. A real-time threat had actually taken place, and I thought to myself, "Now, they have to react. Now, they have to deal with this." And I was wrong. They didn't. That ultimate abandonment and betrayal that I felt, stung so hard in the beginning. Now when I look back on it, I'm like, "You know what, Jay? You had that coming. You created such bad karma for yourself." I was so angry that my agency had abandoned and betrayed me. And then, I looked at myself very hard and I said, "Dude, you abandoned and betrayed your own family. What happened to you from your agency, you did that to your wife and your kids. When you're selfish, when all you cared about was yourself and your personal achievement, you abandon and betrayed them. Now, it's happening to you, and you don't like it very much, do you."

The people that loved me and supported me the most, I treated the worst. The battle damage I put on my wife and kids and the self-reflection that I went through where I was just-- that Jay, that Jay Davis, that Jaybird, how humiliating that was and how ashamed I am of the things I did. And all of a sudden, all those things, all those awards, and all that acknowledgement that at one point was so important to me, had exactly gone the opposite direction, and now had no meaning to me. It had no value to me.

After 27 years, I literally had storage tubs, multiple storage tubs, cardboard boxes stuffed with commendations and plaques and trophies, and praise and acknowledgments. And every single one of those is buried somewhere in a landfill. I had no problem loading them in a garbage truck knowing that they were going to be buried in a landfill. That's where I wanted them. I wanted them buried and gone and never to be seen again.

And people say, "Would you do it again?" And it doesn't take me but a second to answer, "Yes. Yes, I would do it again." I believed in it. I loved it. I loved my job. I did it the best I could. I would do it better though. I would do it cleaner. I wouldn't scuttle everything that was important to me, but would I do it again? I would do it again in a second. I would just do it better.

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** A huge thank you to Jay Dobyns for sharing his story with the Snap. After a 27-year career as an undercover agent, Jay won a landmark lawsuit against the ATF in 2014 for the agency's failure to handle threats against him following Operation Black Biscuit. You can read more about Jay's experiences in his two memoirs, *No Angel* and *Catching Hell*. We'll have links on our website, *snapjudgment.org.*

Special thanks to George Christie, and the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club did not respond to requests for comment on this story. The original score for this piece was by Dirk Schwarzhoff. It was produced by Bo Walsh.

[upbeat music]

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[upbeat music]

Well, this is not the news. No way is this the news. In fact, you get free first Thursday of the month chocolate sundae from the Dairy King, limit one sundae while supplies last, and after you eat your last bite, you could then put on your Spider-Man mask and go undercover to get your second free chocolate sundae, and you would still not be as far away from the news as this is, but this is PRX.

[music fades away]

*[Transcript provided by SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription]*