

CHARLIE SOSINSKI – CRIME AND FIRE SCENE INVESTIGATOR

Charlie Sosinski has worked for the Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Department for almost thirty years.

TSA: We've featured individuals with a wide variety of professions, but you are our first fire and crime scene investigator. We have to start with how you came to be one.

C.S.: I always had an interest in law enforcement. The opportunity came up and it worked out for me. I actually started with the Sheriff's department as a dispatcher. From there I became a patrol officer and then a detective. I worked my way up through the ranks.

TSA: The impact of TS varies from person to person. What has been the biggest impact of TS on your life?

C.S.: TS had a lot of impact on my life. Certainly when I was growing up and didn't know I had TS, there were some difficult times. I couldn't use it as a reason or excuse, because I wasn't aware of it at the time. Another thing about having TS, was that I learned who my friends really were and how important good friends really are.

TSA: What was it like when you were a child? Did you have any role models?

C.S.: Actually there were several different people who were role models. One of them was my grandfather. I spent quite a bit of time with him and he was a big part of my life. We got along very well and he accepted me as I was.

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TSA: When you were diagnosed did you look back at your family and see that anyone else had symptoms that might have been TS?

C.S.: No, we don't know of anyone in the family with TS. No one was diagnosed or displayed symptoms.

TSA: How did your family cope?

C.S.: One of my problems was that doctors—and I saw quite a few over the years—each had a different spin on what I had and what to do about it. More often than not, the common thing would be to say to try a drug or say that my tics were bad habits that my parents had to break me of. I don't even know what the drugs were, but there were different pills here and there including Valium when they said it (TS) was nerves.

TSA: Some kids withdraw, some discover a special outlet, what worked for you?

C.S.: Growing up, and as a young adult, my family had an auto repair service. I was really into high performance cars and I worked in the garage doing auto repair. I always had something to do and I always had friends—a circle of good friends. I never really felt that I had a problem socially. People either accepted me or they didn't. My friends were the ones who didn't make a big deal out of me making noises.

I had facial tics then and made noises like throat clearing. If somebody would say something I'd just repeat what the doctors had said—just that it was nerves. No one pursued it.

TSA: When were you diagnosed?

C.S.: In 1981, when I was 28. TSA had just started doing PSAs and TS was becoming something that was recognized. One person at work saw the PSA and so did my Mom. So I made an appointment at a clinic in Wisconsin and went through the process of getting a diagnosis. When it was all said and done they said—you have Tourette Syndrome.

At the time the major drug used for treatment was Haldol and they offered it

to me. It wasn't really a good option for me, because of my job. It wasn't something I could take and continue my job, on Haldol I just wouldn't be able to function in my line of work.* I opted just to keep going the way I had been.

TSA: Stress has a big impact on people with TS. Do you do anything to help alleviate your stress?

C.S.: The kind of stress that I'm typically under is different. I guess the best way to put it is that most of what I do requires total commitment and concentration, so I find that when I'm working—at a crime scene or whatever—I don't really have a problem with TS. It's the level of targeted focus. For me the hardest time is when I don't have anything to do—when I'm sedentary. I have a hard time just sitting still.

TSA: TS is in the media a great deal lately. Some of the presentations are more realistic and more positive than others. What do you think of the role of the media in increasing awareness?

C.S.: Some media is very good about it. They get the facts straight and pay attention, but some just sensationalize TS for the sake of a story. I think by and large, people can tell the difference. And you really can't control the media.

TSA: Do you have any last words for kids with TS and their parents?

C.S.: Growing up without knowing that I had TS, I never said—I can't do this or that because of my TS. Early on I made a point of believing that nothing is impossible. Put your mind to it and make it work. That's really been my experience.

** Recommended dosages for Haloperidol were higher at that time and the side effects were more pronounced.*

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