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For Dunne, It's Not the Money

By Leonard Levitt
STAFF WRITER

If the past is prologue, First Deputy Commissioner Joe Dunne's decision to leave the Police Department gives him a better chance at becoming commissioner than had he remained.

Dunne announced his retirement after mayor-elect Mike Bloomberg chose Ray Kelly as his police commissioner. Bloomberg knows Kelly, who endorsed him for mayor. Kelly also is eminently qualified.

Dunne, who was passed over 16 months ago when Mayor Rudolph Giuliani selected Bernard Kerik as commissioner, will join the financial firm UBS Paine Webber as director of security and triple his first deputy's salary of $158,800.

Dunne and his wife, Barbara, say he didn't leave for the money.

Unlike baseball players Alex Rodriguez or Mike Hampton, they're telling the truth.

"It was never about the money," said Barbara Dunne, who, in fact, urged her husband to remain. As she put it about the first dep's job, "It's the second greatest job in the world." But having been passed over a second time, Dunne decided it was time to move on.

Dunne said Bloomberg called him at home two days before he announced he'd selected Kelly. "He said he wanted me to hear it from him," Dunne said. "I appreciated the call. He told me, 'We would like to keep you in city government,' but there was no follow through." Instead, a day later Kelly called him, "I understand you're not interested in staying," Dunne quoted Kelly as telling him.

So what's the moral of the story? "It's not that life is unfair," Dunne said. "It is that the mayor must be entirely comfortable with his police commissioner. He can make mistakes with other appointments and fix them. But he has to get it right with the police commissioner."

History supports his view. Former Mayor David Dinkins didn't know Lee Brown, who was a disaster as police commissioner. Ditto for John Lindsay and his commissioner Howard Leary.

Of course, there are exceptions, such as Ed Koch and Robert McGuire. They didn't know each before Koch appointed him and they got on like gangbusters. McGuire also proved to be one of the department's finest commissioners.

On the other hand, Rudy Giuliani knew Howard Safir.

As for Dunne, here is the good news. In the past 28 years, only one commissioner has come directly from the ranks. That was Kelly, who succeeded Brown in 1992 after the Crown Heights riots and the collapse of the Internal Affairs Division.

In those 28 years, five officers from the NYPD ranks were appointed commissioner *after* they left the department. They include Patrick Murphy, appointed by Lindsay; Mike Codd, appointed by Abe Beame; Ben Ward and Richard Condon, appointed by Koch; and Kelly, who after serving as commissioner until 1994, left the department after Giuliani appointed Bill Bratton.

By retiring, Dunne's chances would seem to improve 500 percent.

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Lost Son Answers. Here is the official explanation for two questionable actions involving Commissioner Kerik's autobiography, "The Lost Son." The best-selling book, in which Kerik discloses his mother was a prostitute, has become the subject of increased grumbling throughout the department.

First complaint: the 32 photographs of Ground Zero taken by police photographers John Botte and David Fitzpatrick, some of which Kerik appears in, most of which he does not.

According to Kerik's spokesman, Tom Antenen, Kerik calculated the cost of each picture if sent over the wires of the Associated Press at $75, doubled it, then went beyond that and wrote out a $7,500 check to the Twin Towers Fund that is controlled by Mayor Giuliani.

No explanation of how the use of those photos does not violate what Patrolman's Benevolent Association officials say was Giuliani's warning to city employees working at Ground Zero against selling photos of the site for commercial purposes.

Second gripe: Kerik's relationship with Det. Lenny Lemer, his friend who traveled to Newark, Ohio, to help Kerik learn the details of his mother's murder.

Documents made available to Newsday show Lemer made three trips to Ohio. The dates: June 19-21; July 10-12; and Aug. 3-5. Kerik maintains Lemer went on his own time, drove his own car and reported bills totaling $838.74. Kerik reimbursed him with a personal check on Aug. 19. The check was shown to Newsday.

But was Lenny paid back in another way? Earlier this month, Lemer and three other detectives received the department's Combat Cross, its second highest medal for "extraordinary heroism," for their role in apprehending seven members of a violent drug gang. After two other suspects began shooting at the cops, Lemer and Det. Thomas McGrath pursued the fleeing gunmen, mortally wounding them.

But note the incident's date: June 29, 1996. That's more than five years ago. Was there a reason the previous commissioner hadn't honored the four earlier?

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