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## **Retired deputy police chief Jerry Gallagher was a tenacious leader**

By CHRISTINE VENDEL  
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While driving home in October 2011, Jerry Gallagher passed the unusual bustle of an active crime scene along a rural Northland road.

As commander of the Kansas City Police Department's capital improvements unit, he didn't need to stop. But his insatiable curiosity prompted him to pull over.

Someone had dumped a partially clothed woman's body and doused it with bleach. The Jackson County medical examiner's office later ruled the death an accidental drug overdose, but Gallagher never bought it.

After a second woman's body turned up in Kearney in a similar pose, Gallagher inserted himself into the death investigations even though he commanded the department's fiscal and budget units. He relentlessly pressed Chief Darryl Forté to launch a task force into what he thought was the work of a serial killer.

Focusing on what needed to be done, despite any political implications, was typical of how Gallagher operated during his career, co-workers said.

Gallagher, 51, retired as a deputy chief in February, shortly after the task force arrested a murder suspect whose DNA matched evidence at both crime scenes. Investigators still are checking unsolved deaths in other cities and states for possible links.

"One thing he's known for is trying to do the right thing," Sgt. Doug Niemeier, who supervised the task force, said of Gallagher. "He just says it like it is."

Forté described Gallagher as tenacious.

"He came in here a number of times, and I had reservations," Forté said about the task force. "But he convinced me to dedicate more resources."

Gallagher retired after 30 years of service to spend more time with his family, including his oldest daughter, a highly recruited high school golfer approaching her senior year. In recent years, he shepherded the construction of several new police facilities built with money from the public safety sales tax.

But in the beginning of his career, Gallagher was known for his endurance and speed.

He set the record for the mile run at the police training academy at 5 minutes and 5 seconds, back when they trained in karate-style canvas outfits that were hardly aerodynamic. Despite a flapping belt, Gallagher ran like a gazelle, co-workers said.

His first assignment was at East Patrol, where he memorized the names and faces of all active criminals in his area, got involved in every call and never lost a foot chase.

He was selected for a tactical team that served nearly 60 warrants within three months to take down a notorious Jamaican drug ring. He then worked undercover, where he met Forté, a fellow undercover detective.

They became fast friends, and Forté became his role model, because he treated everyone right, Gallagher said.

One of Gallagher's drug buys netted the largest crack cocaine seizure in the Western District of Missouri — more than five kilos, along with \$80,000 and several assault-type weapons.

After a few years, Gallagher earned a promotion to sergeant. He later held weekly classes, on his own time, to help other promising officers, including Forté, get promoted to sergeant.

"He took me under his wing," Forté said. "He helped a lot of people."

In fact, 21 of the 28 people Gallagher mentored that year received promotions.

Gallagher also moved up the ranks, to captain, and was assigned to the South Patrol Division. He took note of a bank robbery pattern with escalating violence and decided to stop it.

After an eyewitness described the getaway car and provided a partial license plate, officers throughout the city searched for the car. Gallagher set up a grid system and criss-crossed the streets in the Metro Patrol Division — not his assigned area, but where he thought the car would be.

Sure enough, Gallagher spotted the car backed into a yard. The car sped away and Gallagher followed. The robber eventually jumped out of the car, thinking he could lose Gallagher in a neighborhood.

“He wanted to take his chances on foot,” Gallagher recalled. “He made the wrong choice.”

Gallagher vaulted over fences and zipped through yards, eventually arresting the suspect, who still had money tucked in his pocket that police could link to the bank.

“I was determined to stop these robbers,” Gallagher said. “I never give up on something.”

Running down a suspect as a captain is unusual, but not for Gallagher. He did it again as captain of the robbery unit. He and his sergeant got a tip that a robber was at a drug house, so they cruised by, and Gallagher ended up running down the suspect.

“He might have been faster at the start, but I wore him down because I don’t stop,” Gallagher said.

In 2007, Gallagher was selected for a prestigious and grueling Naval postgraduate program to earn a master’s degree in homeland security studies — knowledge he later used to construct safer buildings as commander of the capital improvements unit.

Gallagher immersed himself in each capital project, gaining expertise that helped him find ways to save money and make each building more energy efficient, said police board President Lisa Pelofsky.

“Being a good steward of public money was always in the forefront of his mind,” she said. “And doing the job well, as if it were his own home.”

Throughout his career, Gallagher kept the energy level of a brand-new officer, Forté said.

“He gives 100 percent to everything he does,” Forté said. “He doesn’t cut corners. He’s willing to give a divergent opinion. We’re really going to feel this loss.”

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