

James Whitey Bulger, 9 years later

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BOSTON — Nine years ago Tuesday, New England awoke to blockbuster news: Whitey Bulger, caught in Santa Monica, California.

It was just about midnight on June 22, 2011, that I got word that James Bulger, one of the FBI's Most Wanted Fugitives, was really in custody.

I was on my way home from a long day at work, but I turned around, headed back into the newsroom, and the next 24 hours were a complete blur.

I don't know about you, but in 2011, I thought Bulger would never be brought to justice.

But he was.

I wasn't the only one thinking Bulger might escape the long arm of the law.

Retired Massachusetts State Police Detective Lieutenant Bob Long was thinking it too.

"We were running out of time because I thought sooner or later, he was going to die," Long told me today.

Bob Long was on Bulger's trail for more than thirty years.

In the early 1980's it was Bob Long and his team who had Whitey and his gang under video surveillance at the Lancaster Garage.

For weeks, as the State Police video camera was rolling, Bulger and his partner, Steven Flemmi held court on Lancaster Street, meeting criminals, accepting cash payments, all right out in the open.

Eventually, Long's cover was blown when Bulger's law enforcement allies, including now disgraced Boston FBI Agent John Connolly, alerted the crime boss he was being watched.

Whitey Bulger slipped away.

But decades later, Bob Long saw Bulger again. In US District Court in Boston, when Long was the government's first witness in Bulger's blockbuster trial.

"I lived with that since 1980," Long told me. "I was so sick and tired of hearing about him being on the loose and it was very gratifying to be the government's lead off witness at his trial to see he is finally facing justice for everything that he did."

Bulger's capture in Santa Monica was the beginning of the end for the one time South Boston mob boss.

On October 30, 2018, was found beaten to death in a cell at Hazelton Federal Prison in West Virginia, hours after his transfer there.

Authorities said Bulger's killer used a lock wrapped inside a sock to savagely kill him.

For Steven Davis, brother of murder victim Deborah Davis, Bulger's violent end was justice.

"I know my sister is resting in peace. But I know, I hope (Bulger), is going to be tortured eternally," Davis told me on the 9th anniversary of Bulger's capture.

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