

'What Would Sharon Raydor Do?' Podcast with Mary McDonnell – Episode #2

Mina: It started with 'What Would Laura Roslin Do?' and now we're asking 'What Would Sharon Raydor Do?'. Welcome to episode 2 of the "What Would Sharon Raydor Do?" Podcast where we take an in-depth look at Sharon Raydor from *Major Crimes* from the woman that knows her best, Mary McDonnell. Hi Mary!

Mary: Hello!

MS: I'm the host of this week's podcast. My name is Mina Sharpe of MajorCrimesTV.net and we want to thank you all for tuning in to our first podcast last week. We were blown away by the response and can't wait to talk to you again today and to delve into this week's episode of *Major Crimes*, season 5 episode 2 "N.S.F.W". We're looking forward to talking about the episode and answering some questions from last week's season premiere. Just a head's up, if you haven't seen this episode yet, there may be some spoilers ahead.

We had some wonderful questions from our listeners and wanted to jump into them right away because it deals so much with some things we've seen with this episode. Hayley3 from Twitter asks "At what point did Sharon go from fostering Rusty to loving him and wanting to adopt him?" and how have those feelings progressed as she's had him in her life?

MM: That's a great question Hayley. I don't think there was a point where Sharon made the leap. I think it was an evolving attachment and care. The impulse being the same now as it was then, which was - here is a very beautiful, gifted young man who needed help and that was the impulse to adopt Rusty. It wasn't to have another son, she already had a son. It was really about this would be the most protected way for this human being to be given the maximum opportunity. Eventually what grew between them is love and it is a very natural, organic process and they get along quite well. They're kind of an odd couple together. So I think there really wasn't one decision made. It was a series of awareness's and also Rusty revealed to Sharon over and over again how quickly he blossomed under a feeling of security and order and sanity in his life. So it just was, to a certain extent, it was a no brainer and eventually that led to a real love.

MS: So this week we see Rusty now dealing with the other Sharon in his life, his birth mother, who is once again back with a life altering revelation for him. Sharon Beck, to Sharon, calls Rusty "our son" and it is somewhat implied that Rusty talks to and is involved in his mom's life. What does Sharon think about this co-parenting that she is now doing with Sharon Beck when for the first 4 years Sharon has had Rusty all to herself.

MM: Well I don't think Sharon ever had Rusty all to herself. I don't think there is an "all to yourself" when there is a birth mother, when there is DNA. I don't think having your own children is ever all to yourself. I think that Sharon Raydor respects deeply the birth mother relationship. There's nothing that could be better for Rusty than to have that relationship with Sharon Beck turn into a healthier, safer place.

Because there's been such extraordinary dysfunction and when one's birth mother or father is in a dysfunctional place with a child well into adulthood and beyond and that never gets improved or healed, it gets very damaging to a human being. And I don't care how good your adopted parents are or what kind of opportunities you have in your life. Your primary relationship is with your birth parents and the opportunity to have that perhaps improve and perhaps heal is the very best possible thing for Rusty. So it's hard to trust. It's very tricky, but Sharon Raydor would never ever want that not to happen. The closer they get in a safe manner, the closer Rusty gets to his birth mother as long as there are safety boundaries implied, the better it will be for Rusty. That's how she feels.

MS: Going back to last week, you talked a little bit about Sharon having relationship fear. It's interesting because we've seen Sharon grab onto so many things and really go for it and just not show a lot of fear

in so many parts of her life. But we're not seeing that part with her relationship with Andy Flynn. Do you think fear is a reason they're taking this so slow or does Sharon have other concerns that are prompting this?

MM: I think caution is better word. I think Sharon Raydor has been through a very difficult marriage. And we talked a little bit last week about the addiction. About the relationship with an addict. I think there's a caution in her heart. She's also at an age in her life where she's managed to create tremendous independence. She doesn't mind in the least living alone. This is not a lonely woman. This is not a woman that needs another man to define her. She is none of that. So it isn't all fear. Part of it is simply, you know, it's working out really well, dating, so why rock the boat. Which is the truth with a lot of women who have been through a divorce. They're not running around looking to live with someone again. When you have a career you love and you've got children, you know she's got such a full life. And she lives with Rusty and he's such an interesting wonderful person to be compatible with. And you have the squad which she adores and loves each one of them and cares very deeply about their well being and their safety. It's a big life. And it would be a very risky situation to make a move that doesn't work out and very upsetting to her at the workplace, very upsetting to others at the workplace potentially. Very upsetting. And you know, I think Sharon, I suspect Sharon, because she's surrounded by men in her life has observed a lot of the impulsive nature of the male gender. And I think Andy carries a bit of an impulsive nature. Which I'm sure led him into his addictions to begin with. So Sharon just exercises caution here. And I think emotional caution is probably the part of her that she doesn't really want to push. Open that door too quickly.

MS: It's interesting you talk about Sharon and being in that male dominated workplace because we had two similar questions come in, from @MindtheBat on twitter and Nicole on Facebook ask about how Sharon, in general, deals with being a woman in such a male dominated workplace and how does she handle that. And does she have issues that come up as a result?

MM:

I don't think there's any woman alive who works in a male dominated workplace and doesn't run into issues, whether the issues are with the men themselves or the issues are internal material on their own that can nourish insecurities. So internally, women in a male dominated workplace, have to make sure they lean in - to quote the famous quote - because culturally we haven't. Certainly my generation wasn't raised from the time we were born to you know, speak up and speak out - compete fully. Now that is not the truth for every woman for sure. Now, do I think Sharon has... I think she's comfortable with it. I think partially because when you were in Internal Affairs, it has nothing to do with male or female at that point. It has to do with being very comfortable with being the outsider. And she is very comfortable.

So, in the male domination of it all, I don't really think there is an issue. I think that it would be very wonderful to find out about Sharon's energies in relation to friends who are women. I would like to see more of Sharon with her own daughter, but so far that doesn't seem to be part of the fabric of the writing. I'd never for a second imagine that she doesn't have women in her life because I don't think you become that strong of a woman without other women in your life. I've seen women who have grown up in male dominated environments, who work in male dominated workplaces and who have only men as their friends and they do not demonstrate the kind of strength and wisdom and balance that Sharon applies to situations.

MS: Sort of taking off on that question, Christine on Facebook asks if being a woman leader for Sharon means she's overcome some personal demons and weaknesses and what might have they been.

MM: Well, I don't know about demons or weaknesses. I think that being a leader of any kind, male or female, I don't think it applies particularly to women. I know some male leaders who have had to sacrifice

tremendous amounts of personal relationships in their life to be able to focus all of their energy into the leadership position. So I don't think that that's a particularly a female issue. I think that leadership requires sometimes a certain amount of alone-ness. You're just not in the same position as other people. You're not able to hang out as much. You're not able to schmooze as much. You're not able to sit around and gossip. You're not able to do all the things that people like to do to waste time. So, if you feel uncomfortable being isolated then you're not going to do well as a leader. As much as your connection to whoever you're leading is based quite often on love and care and what have you, you don't get quite the relaxed intimacy with everybody with someone who is not a leader does attain. So I think getting comfortable with that.

But I don't know, I think Sharon kind of came in the door with some of this. I don't think it's been a struggle for her. I think her struggles have been in her marriage. I think most of it has been there honestly.

MS: So one thing that I admire about Sharon is that she is so determined to get her man when it comes to prosecuting and arresting the bad guy. And in this episode particularly, it seemed like that everything Beau McClaren, the porn star guy, was doing was going to be legal, and she found something to finally hang him on Can you talk a little bit about that and how she manages to do that.

MM: Yeah. I think a quality that Sharon has actually grown in, but also is directly related to her time in IA is Sharon is not a big talker, in case you haven't noticed. She doesn't comment a lot on life. She listens very deeply, and in the listening she's able to suddenly hear or see or sense something. It's always a lot of little things pushing at her. It's a little bit different than a detective spidey sense. It's not quite that because she's not out there in the field like that. She is a gatherer and I almost feel that she has a sensation about something that isn't quite... hasn't been spelled out. So I really do think it's about her listening when she's able to suddenly get "oh I get it, I have a hunch."

Here's a great example of it from the episode There was something about, always is, the issue with women and sex, whether it is paid for or free, is consent. That issue is the key to any of these discussions. You see it on the news as we are seeing right now.

Consent. A woman needs to give consent. That's period end of conversation so that idea was on her mind when she suddenly went "Oh Wait a minute! Consent was given while under the influence of drugs, we got him". If Sharon wasn't the kind of woman that she is, which is she's deeply concerned about victims. Deeply. She might not have been thinking so much about that word consent as a driving force of the way she listened. But it was on her mind. It was on her mind because she was so completely turned off by the abuse of this man and his making money from women in that sense. And I remember when we were shooting it She and I kept drifting off as I was listening to him, to all the women and young women in the world that are being victimized in that way. Whether it is a woman used as a weapon of war or whatever it is, in this case women were wrongly and naively allowing this man to make a lot of money and then being ruined forever by it really. And in this case there was death involved.

So you start hearing, you know we're surrounded by these stories. And it always comes back to consent and ownership of self. So that's kind of how she suddenly got it. Because that word was on her mind.

MS: One thing we've seen with Sharon that is so wonderful to witness, on TV especially, is how much of a wonderful mother she is both to her own children and Rusty who she has taken in as her own. What do you feel like Sharon's relationship with her own parents is? And is that contributing to how she is as a mother herself?

MM: It's a great question. In my imagination, Sharon has had a very, very good upbringing. I think there was a lot of attention paid to little Sharon Raydor, who was given a good education and a lot of communication. I have a feeling she's an only child, or there might be one other sibling because she's so specifically raised her children and Rusty with dialogue and attention. And I think that it was modeled on what she was raised with, she saw this somewhere.

I feel that Sharon Raydor, we're always joking about it, was a bit of a trust fund kid. And that money was not really an issue. Having to work hard to figure out finances with Jack was more a complexity with his dysfunctional gambling addiction. As opposed to someone who was really hurting for money, meaning Sharon. I think the kids are well taken care of by Sharon's parents. I think her father is very successful - probably a lawyer. I think she was heading to perhaps in her father's footsteps. But somehow, as happens in life, the fiancée becomes the model of the woman's father.

And I think that, part of it that I don't quite have figured out yet, which is part of the wonderment of doing an ongoing series, is where in Sharon's background, in Sharon's life, in Sharon's DNA, did her vulnerability towards falling in love with such an addictive personality as Jack and taking responsibility for him for so long. I'm not quite sure where that is. I mean, nobody's perfect. Certainly not her. And we're all given surprising challenges. But we're always trying to explain them away. "Well this person was damaged in childhood from this or that and therefore is playing it out in their adult life." But I don't think it always works that way at all. I think there's karma involved in how we heal, how we grow. And I'm not sure that there was anything in Sharon's background that particularly set the stage for her to fall in love with Jack. Jack was a great guy without his addiction and I think he very much was like her dad. Very smart, very potentially successful.

I think she had a quieter version of a good relationship with her mother. But I think her mother's influence over her has blossomed as Sharon has gotten older. But I do think in her early years she was very driven by the example of her father. And her mother's beautiful care came out eventually in Sharon's parenting.

MS: So you talked about what may or may not have contributed to Sharon becoming involved with someone like Jack, who didn't start off maybe being so problematic but certainly did throughout their marriage become an issue with his addictions and gambling and eventually Sharon sort of gave him the boot.

Does Sharon have any regrets on how she handled life with Jack and that past marriage? And does that have any bearing on what she does moving forward now?

MM: Well, it's interesting, because sometimes I wonder, like, through the lens of Sharon Raydor and *Major Crimes* which is all we see of her, I wonder where the kids are. Why are they not more often coming home. And I get the sense that they are very close. I remember one season there was a really wonderful telephone call with her son that was cut. I do feel that there is a part of Sharon that wishes that she had handled Jack with a little more confidence and a little more efficiency.

I think she understands that she meshed with and made up for his addiction maybe at a little of cost, and wishes that she could have been stronger in handling it and perhaps ended the marriage a bit sooner. And that had she done so when the kids were perhaps younger, that they could have done it all together in a way that was more conscious. I think if there's a regret that she didn't have it together faster perhaps. And that feeling of wondering about that in herself, even though Jack isn't gone, they're just not married anymore. He will always be her children's father.

So the truth of it is there is a great deal of care always in her heart for Jack Raydor. It's so easy for us to say the addict is a bad person. The addict is an ill person, and when you've loved that person deeply before they became ill you don't just eradicate them. And she couldn't anyway because he is her

children's father. So I think, in order to continue life with Jack, even though they're not married, she has got to work on forgiveness of herself, with Jack and continue to work on her relationships with her children to make sure there aren't any trust issues. Of course there are going to be, that's what addiction does to a family. And I'm sure we will talk about this on a future podcast, how does that truly influence her caution with Andy. It's all tied in.

MS: How complicated for her.

MM: It is complicated emotionally, even when logically it isn't complicated because she loves Andy and she trusts him as a human being. And his commitment, by the way, to AA is so steadfast that, boy if you're going to fall in love with an addict he's a good one. Trust issues are not logical and that's probably what we're dealing with underneath it all.

Thank you for listening this week. Mina, thank you! We all know the kind of work that Mina does at MajorCrimesTV.net and Mina, thank you for coming!

MS: Thank you Mary! And thank you everyone for tuning in to "What Would Sharon Raydor Do?" We'll be back next week to talk more about Sharon Raydor. Don't forget to send in your questions at #WWSRD, on Facebook under this post or on MajorCrimesTV.net. Thanks and see you then!

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