

UNFORGET

South Australian police continue to confront some of the highest-profile criminal and disorder incidents in Australia.

Now, six cops look back at jobs they know will stay with them forever.



By **Brett Williams**

TABLE

The coldest of killers

TWO Major Crime detectives found her “dead cold” and “as calculating as anyone” they had ever investigated. In the police car, after her arrest for murder, she asked: “Will I get served a glass of wine in custody?”

Two months earlier, in her shed, she had dismembered the body of her 82-year-old victim, Vonne McGlynn, while her two young children were at home.

Detective Brevet Sergeant Matt Fitzpatrick later appealed to her to reveal where she had hidden McGlynn’s severed head. Angelika Gavare replied: “I’ll never, ever tell you that!”

The conversation was the last Fitzpatrick ever had with the now jailed killer, who copped a 32-year minimum sentence in the Supreme Court in 2011. No woman had ever received a longer jail term in Australia.

Fitzpatrick, who investigated the 2008 killing, still finds it incomprehensible. “It’s the fact that a woman in her position, with two children, actually did commit this crime!” he exclaims.

“It was a particularly gruesome crime with a body disposed of in a particularly gruesome way. And it was the targeting of a particularly vulnerable member of the community.

“But to comprehend that she likely dismembered Ms McGlynn in her (Gavare’s) backyard while her children played inside... That’s cold, calculating, bizarre and difficult to comprehend. And it’s frustrating that we can’t locate the rest of the remains.”

The last sighting of McGlynn, a widow who lived alone in her Reynella home, came on Wednesday, December 3, 2008. A witness had seen her walking along Somerfield Ave toward home after her usual morning walk to McDonald’s for a muffin and coffee.

But, when the Red Cross rang her, as it did each

day as part of its Telecross service for the elderly, she never answered the call. The Red Cross alerted her brother in Queensland and, ultimately, reported her to Christies Beach police as a missing person.

A local police patrol went to her home to check on her but no one answered the door. Nor did anyone respond later that day, when police checked for the second time.

Neighbours could shed no light on the missing McGlynn as they had neither seen nor heard anything of her. So, when she had still not turned up the next day, a patrol crew forced entry to her house.

McGlynn was not inside, and the house was not in the meticulous condition in which she always kept it. Someone had moved items around, packed up belongings into bags, and left the place generally untidy.

“Anything of value had been packed up and taken,” Fitzpatrick says, “and everything else looked to have been packed up to be thrown away.”

On the dining table were maps and travel brochures, which seemed “strategically placed” to suggest that McGlynn had gone on a holiday.

The uniformed patrols called in South Coast CIB detectives to investigate. And, as McGlynn was a missing person, Major Crime Investigation Branch received a subsequent briefing on the status of the case.

Just days later, on Tuesday, December 9, Gavare turned up at the ANZ bank at Morphett Vale where McGlynn held an account. The killer had equipped herself with a forged power-of-attorney document and bank card and aimed to withdraw \$2,000 from her victim’s savings.



Detective Sergeant John Schneemilch and Detective Brevet Sergeant Matt Fitzpatrick (now based at Crime Gangs)

She gave the bank staff a concocted story: that McGlynn had asked her to manage some renovations and attend to some of her (McGlynn's) affairs.

But the Gavare deception failed to convince the bank staff, who rang the police and wound up connected with Missing Persons senior constable Robyn Ferraro. She ended up with Gavare on the other end of the phone and sought some answers from her.

Gavare claimed, among other things, that McGlynn had gone away on a holiday, but Ferraro was ill at ease with her story.

So the bank incident led South Coast CIB detectives to question Gavare and search her Christie Downs home on December 10.

They found McGlynn's passport, house keys and bank card as well as other forged power-of-attorney documents in the names of other principals. And among other items were stolen credit cards and drivers' licences.

"Gavare had history for fraud and some history for theft," Fitzpatrick says. "And, now, she was starting to delve into forgeries. So we believe she actually did the (McGlynn) forgery herself and filled out all the details."

The South Coast detectives took their search out to the shed and backyard, in which a smell like rotting flesh was evident.

"But there were a couple of small animal carcasses there," Fitzpatrick says. "And it appeared that they (the Gavares) had also used that back area as a makeshift toilet because they'd done some bathroom renovations."

But none of that made Gavare any less suspect over the McGlynn disappearance. The South Coast detectives arrested her that day, not for murder but for dishonesty offences related to her forged documents.

In a subsequent interview, Gavare gave those detectives an account, albeit a false one, of her interaction with McGlynn. Major Crime detective sergeant John Schneemilch, who worked on the case with Fitzpatrick, saw a video recording of the interview.

"She was just dead cold," he recalls. "She really showed no emotion at all in that interview. It was almost like she already had a plan in her head about how she could explain things, and she was all matter-of-fact (in her manner)."

THE South Coast detectives continued to investigate Gavare with input from Major Crime.

She was a 33-year-old Latvian immigrant and single mother-of-two who spoke with a Baltic accent. Fit and healthy, she had had the physical strength to carry out her own home renovations.

Her mother, Inara Dombrovska, had for a time lived in the same street as McGlynn. That was how Gavare came to know of her then future victim, with whom she had no relationship.

After Forensic Response officers examined the McGlynn house on December 18, South Coast detectives reinterviewed Gavare and seized her car on December 19.

Luminol had revealed "big swipes" on the floor of the boot, as if someone had cleaned it with bleach.

"But," Fitzpatrick says, "we subsequently found DNA in very low amounts, which identified as being McGlynn's. We couldn't tell whether it was blood or anything else: it had been obliterated."

Five days later, on December 24, police declared the McGlynn disappearance a major



Top left: Vonne McGlynn; **top right:** the manhole through which Gavare exited the roof space; **left:** McGlynn's Reynella home

“We were never able to say definitively what was used, but she had access to an angle grinder and a chainsaw.”

crime. That left the investigation to continue under the control of the Major Crime Investigation Branch.

And, in the weeks that followed, the branch managed more searches and door-knocks around the McGlynn home and implemented a range of covert strategies.

On January 6, 2009, Fitzpatrick set out to conduct a third video interview with Gavare – this time in her home, as her children played outside. And he intended to take a more forceful approach than he would have normally.

“Because,” he explains, “we were thinking: ‘Do we know if she (McGlynn) is still alive? Is she being held somewhere? Has she been put somewhere? She is elderly.’ So we thought we could go in far more aggressively.”

Fitzpatrick cautioned Gavare and told her that he suspected she was involved in the McGlynn disappearance. She responded with a one-and-a-half-hour repeat of the story she had peddled in her previous interviews, but added some more “made-up details”.

After that, Fitzpatrick suggested to her that she simply “cut the shit”. He explained that this

was her opportunity to “tell us what’s happened for the sake of the family”.

“And everything went silent,” he recalls. “There was a big pause and she took a deep breath. I genuinely thought she was going to say: ‘This is what I’ve done’. I really thought she’d cracked.

“And she says: ‘I’ve not told you the whole truth. I’ve told you half-truth. I’ll tell you the whole truth through my lawyer.’ So I said: ‘Well, we’ll get your lawyer down here now.’ ”

But Gavare rejected that offer and, with or without a lawyer, she would never take part in another police interview. Nor would she ever tell the truth.

“And we still hadn’t found the body,” Fitzpatrick says. “So we looked at other covert techniques to identify where the body might be and (gather) other corroborative evidence.

“Whilst we had a pretty good circumstantial case, we were a long way from finding any parts of the body and connecting her (Gavare) to an actual murder.”

But, with help from Inara Dombrovskia, Fitzpatrick and his colleagues were soon to come much closer to that connection. She agreed to try, in conversation, to draw the truth of the McGlynn disappearance from her daughter and provide it to police.

And, when that secretly recorded conversation came about, Gavare revealed herself as the killer. She explained how she had committed the murder and boasted that police would never find the body, or any DNA.

What detectives gathered from the Gavare story, as told to her mother, was that she went to the McGlynn home on December 3. It was soon after her victim had left for McDonald’s.

Gavare broke into the home’s roof space and lay in wait, a method she had used before according to records Major Crime later secured from Interpol.

After McGlynn returned, she pounced on her, striking the frail elder on the head with a soapstone statuette. Unclear is whether that blow caused immediate death or unconsciousness and then death.

Whether McGlynn was dead or alive, Gavare took her out to the backyard where she positioned and left her hidden from view.

After leaving the house herself, Gavare that evening went out to dinner with her daughters and mother and her boyfriend, Ejaz Ahmed. It was her birthday.

"She gets home about 9 o'clock that night and puts the girls to bed," Fitzpatrick says. "Her boyfriend doesn't come home with her that night and she waits for them (the girls) to go to sleep. She then takes the car out and goes back to McGlynn's house.

"I believe she placed McGlynn in her car by herself. She's a physically strong woman and physically capable of doing that and, I think, emotionally capable. So I believe she (McGlynn) got transported in the car – whether dead or alive – to Gavare's house."

The best answer to how and where the killer dismembered McGlynn's body would come later, from an autopsy and an interview with Gavare's eldest daughter.

Her story was that, on December 4, the day after the murder, Gavare had allowed her girls to play inside. At the same time, while allegedly suffering a headache, she went to spend some "quiet time" in the shed.

"We believe that that's where the dismembering probably occurred," Fitzpatrick says. "I don't for one minute believe that it occurred at McGlynn's house.

"Due to the logistics, the clean-up (needed) and the timeframe, it would have been very hard for her to do that.

"We were never able to say definitively what was used, but she had access to an angle grinder and a chainsaw."

Over two days in late February, 2009, Major Crime brought in STAR Group, SES and police cadets to conduct extensive searches of Myponga dam and Christie Creek.

On February 23, in Christie Creek, searchers discovered a small section of a human upper thigh

"I think she thought ... that she'd done everything she needed to do to distance herself from (the murder)."

in a plastic bag. The next day, a pathologist confirmed that the body part, which had undergone a hip replacement, belonged to an elderly human with osteoarthritis.

Discovered in another search, on February 25, was a human upper body – also in a plastic bag – with its head and arms missing. Other items discovered were a blood-stained pram and two sections of a large statuette in plastic bags.

"The leg section was within 100 metres of her (Gavare's) front door," Fitzpatrick says. "You could stand on her front veranda and look directly at where it was found. And the torso section was found 200 metres away from that.

"Forensic Science found it extremely difficult to obtain DNA from the remains because they'd been exposed for so long.

"We did subsequently get DNA but, ultimately, identification was confirmed via the serial number on the titanium hip. So we were able to identify that it was McGlynn.

"We think it may be that she (Gavare) disposed of some (body parts) in the ordinary rubbish-bin collection day.

"And, then, to get rid of the rest, she takes her little dog and her children for a walk along the Christie Creek area. In the pram, she has the remains wrapped in garbage bags and deposits them into the creek."

The blood on the pram proved, through DNA testing, to belong to McGlynn. And Agnes Dombrovska identified the pram as belonging to her sister, Angelika Gavare.



THE time finally came to arrest Gavare on the morning of February 26. Fitzpatrick and Detective Brevet Sergeant Jason Tank, who Major Crime had seconded from South Coast CIB, had just seen her drop her daughters off at childcare.

Dressed up and headed for a job interview, she was now waiting for a bus she would never board. The two detectives stepped out of their unmarked car in Christies Beach and arrested her.

"I've arrested a few people for murder," Fitzpatrick says, "and her reaction was stone cold, absolutely no emotion. And when we got in the car, she was almost flirtatious towards us, almost jovial."

Fitzpatrick and Tank took her first to Christies Beach police station, to charge her with murder, and then the City Watch House. It was on the way there that she asked about getting a glass of wine in custody.

"It was just bizarre behaviour," Fitzpatrick says. "I'd never experienced anything like that. I think she thought she could talk her way out of it (the charge), and that she'd done everything she needed to do to distance herself from (the murder)."

Gavare refused to answer any questions and the Magistrates Court granted her bail. A Supreme Court review, however, kept her in custody.

"We had significant concerns for the safety of her mother and her sister," Fitzpatrick recalls.



Facing page: plastic bag containing the remains of McGlynn's torso; **above left:** the torso found in a plastic bag among reeds in Christie Creek; **top:** the pram used in the disposal of McGlynn's body parts; **above:** Angelika Gavare; **left:** belongings packed up into plastic bags in a spare bedroom of the McGlynn home

Later forensic testing of the recovered statuette, which was likely the murder weapon, revealed no traces of blood or any other human DNA. So detectives showed the ornament to McGlynn's brother.

He described it as "very similar" to statuettes his mother and sister had owned. And, later, he came up with a photo which showed those statuettes on his sister's mantelpiece.

More critical evidence came from the seizure of Gavare's computer. Her search history brought up such topics as true crime, murders, DNA, and power of attorney. On real estate sites she had looked at how to transfer ownership of houses.

Also on her search history were hard-rubbish collections and Salvation Army pick-up services. And her phone records showed calls to both the Salvation Army and the Onkaparinga Council.

"Bookings had actually been made for the collection of hard rubbish and household items from McGlynn's address," Fitzpatrick says.

"She'd made contact with these relevant services. We think she was using them to empty out the house, because her ultimate goal was to take ownership of the house."

But, in that evil enterprise, had Gavare had an accomplice, such as her boyfriend, Ejaz Ahmed?

"She tried to blame him and then another partner," Schneemilch says. "He (Ahmed) was a taxi driver and they'd been in a relationship for a couple of months.

"We searched his house, seized just about every power tool he possessed, and interviewed him a number of times as well.

"He willingly gave statements and put himself at different places that basically alibied him."

Of course, the investigation continued after the Gavare arrest. On March 15, STAR Group, SES and Water Ops searched Christie Creek Reserve, west of the original search area to the beach.

And a search of the Southern Expressway and bike track, south to Flaxmill Road, uncovered two more pieces of statuette in plastic bags.

More evidence came from a sample of handwriting Fitzpatrick got from Gavare when he briefly took her out of custody. That was when she told him she would "never, ever" reveal what she had done with McGlynn's head.

For that refusal, even Supreme Court justice Trish Kelly would denounce her in 2011.

In any case, the handwriting sample proved Gavare to be the author of the forged power-of-attorney document.

And, in 2011, when she did front the Supreme Court charged with murder, she pleaded not guilty

and falsely implicated former boyfriend Giuseppe Daniele. Gavare claimed he had run over McGlynn with his car and then forced her (Gavare) to help him ransack the woman's house.

Justice Kelly accepted Daniele's total rejection of the wild allegation.

She also described Gavare as greedy, narcissistic, deceitful and without morals or empathy as she set the non-parole period of 32 years.

In 2012, the Court of Criminal Appeal dismissed an appeal Gavare made against her conviction and sentence.

While the upheld sentence brought Fitzpatrick and his colleagues great satisfaction, the missing body parts left him with regret. "You can't do much more than we did to locate the remains," he says.

"We were able to give the family some sort of closure by locating the remains we did find and, then, securing a conviction. So at least they know the person who did this to their loved one won't be able to do it to anyone else in the foreseeable future."

With "no-body no-parole" legislation now in force, Major Crime detectives expect to seek Angelika Gavare's co-operation in locating the missing body parts of Vonne McGlynn.

Fled the state... and the country

A massive storm had Detective Sergeant Ash Grant thinking his flight back to Australia would never take off from Kuala Lumpur International Airport. And with two prisoners he and his Holden Hill CIB colleagues were about to collect and extradite to South Australia, a cancellation was what he most dreaded.

It would take a major break in the weather for the extradition plan to come together but, on the drive to the airport, that looked increasingly unlikely.

"It was the biggest storm I've ever seen," Grant says. "Even the AFP officer who was driving us was frightened. It was crazy. And then it just blew over as we got to the airport."

But still to play out was the handover of the two Adelaide-bound prisoners. They were 26- and 23-year-old working parents who had abducted – and fled to Malaysia with – their two-year-old son.

Billy (not the boy's real name) was then under the guardianship of the Minister for Education and Child Development. Families SA had removed him from his parents because of alleged, but never substantiated, sexual abuse by his father.

Grant and his colleagues were to receive the parents into their custody from the Royal Malaysia Police at the airport. And that soon happened, after a truck turned up loaded with dozens of other deportees bound for their home countries.

"They (our prisoners) just got out amongst all the other persons who had been detained for whatever reasons," Grant recalls.

"There was a big army of Interpol and Royal Malaysia Police surrounding them, and they walked them (the deportees) through into the airport police station. And that's where we did the handover."

So, with their prisoners, Grant and his detective colleagues – Snr Sgt Mick Clarke, Brevet Sgt Michelle Alexander and Snr Constable 1C Erin Dring – boarded their extradition flight.

For the 5,700km journey back to Adelaide, they separated the parents. Grant and Clarke settled in with the father, Holbrook, while Alexander and Dring sat with the mother, Jones (not the parents' real names).

Each offender had spent the past three months in a tough Malaysian prison, where Holbrook had lost around 20kg. So he and Jones were delighted to be heading home, despite the charge they would face back in Adelaide: aggravated unlawful removal of a child from a jurisdiction.

The offence carries a maximum penalty of 19 years' imprisonment.

The parents had committed the crime on Saturday, August 2, 2014, when Holbrook and Jones went to seize their son from his (Billy's) grandparents.

Raoul and Jessica Holbrook (not their real names) had legal custody of the boy. His parents were not, by virtue of an assessment order, allowed unsupervised access to or custody of him.

And an order served on them the previous day extended that restriction by another 12 months, sparking them into the act of abduction.

After seizing Billy, Holbrook and Jones headed off with him to Adelaide Airport, where they caught a flight out to Kuala Lumpur.

Grant, Dring and Detective Sgt Sean Willdin wound up on the case the next day, after Golden Grove patrols responded to a call from Raoul Holbrook. He had waited until the Sunday to report that his son had taken Billy and not returned him.

Fleeing Australia with Billy, a child under the guardianship of the minister, was a crime with the potential to embarrass the government. But that was no issue for Grant and his colleagues to consider.

All that mattered to them was running a successful investigation, which they began with a raft of enquiries and seemingly endless administrative tasks.



"There were thoughts that he (Holbrook) could easily pick up a cash job and set up a place over there."

"On going to the parents' house we found documents (which showed) that they were looking at trips outside the country, to Malaysia," Grant explains.

"So I started making enquiries with AFP and we confirmed that they'd left the country from Adelaide airport to fly to Malaysia on the Saturday."

But precisely where, in Malaysia, Billy and his parents were remained unknown – although not for long. The detectives, using covert methods, established that the trio was staying in a Penang hotel.

"We didn't know if they were going to return because they'd travelled over there extensively and knew the area quite well," Grant says. "There were thoughts that he (Holbrook) could easily pick up a cash job and set up a place over there."

Grant now had to co-ordinate the input of such agencies as Interpol, Royal Malaysia Police, the



Detective Senior Sergeant First Class Ash Grant

Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, the Office of the DPP and Families SA.

To retrieve Billy and arrest his parents, the detectives would need funding, overseas warrants, and an undertaking that the DPP would prosecute Holbrook and Jones. They would also need SAPOL consent to extradite the pair.

"We started liaising with the Royal Malaysia Police to locate the parents," Grant says. "Then we had to get Families SA involved because (Billy) was their child. We had to get them to start liaising with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

"In that first 48-hour period, the whole CIB floor jumped on board and got a lot of those initial tasks completed: CCTV footage, statements, following trails, checking taxis..."

On Monday, August 4, the detectives arrested grandparents Raoul and Jessica Holbrook for aiding and abetting their son and Jones. And by Thursday, August 7, Grant and his team had had a provisional arrest request rushed through a Malaysian court.

With that piece of red tape dealt with, Interpol and the Royal Malaysia Police went in search of Billy and his parents. The Holden Hill CIB crew had armed them with its intel on the trio's whereabouts.

And the intel was spot-on: the Malaysian police pounced on Holbrook and Jones as they came out of their Penang hotel with Billy.

"They grabbed the boy," Grant says, "so he was safe and then immediately taken to the hospital and put into care.

"The parents were quite stunned by what happened, and happened so quickly. They weren't prepared for that at all; and the Malaysian courts remanded them in custody."

Mick Clarke flew out to Kuala Lumpur – where Malaysian police had taken Holbrook and Jones – and two Families SA workers followed the next day. As Clarke dealt with the court processes the Families SA workers collected an unscathed Billy and brought him back to Adelaide.

In the weeks that followed, Grant and his team went about making applications to extradite the parents and, in late August, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's department gave its approval.

Then, with the consent of the SAPOL senior executive group, Grant and his three colleagues flew out to Kuala Lumpur in mid-October to collect Holbrook and Jones.

Getting the extradition done took six days of co-ordination with the AFP, Interpol, and Malaysian police and government officials.

"We dealt with all the court processes and the transfers and had to collect some statements, which the AFP helped us out with," Grant says.

"Malaysia isn't a party to the Hague Convention so it doesn't have the same processes in relation

to children. But the Malaysians were still fantastic to work with."

On the flight back to Adelaide, a generous Grant gave his meals to the ravenous Holbrook. And he had a sense that both parents understood the depth of trouble they had made for themselves.

By the time the detectives landed back in Adelaide they had gone without sleep for more than 24 hours and so handed their charges over to waiting police.

A few weeks later, Erin Dring and Sean Willdin interviewed the parents, who ended up in the Adelaide Magistrates Court in March, 2015. Each pleaded guilty to one aggravated count of unlawful removal of a child from a jurisdiction.

Raoul Holbrook later pleaded guilty to the aid-and-abet offence but the same charge against Jessica Holbrook did not proceed.

It was the first time police had charged anyone with the unlawful removal of a child from a jurisdiction; and all three offenders are yet to face sentencing.

To Grant, the toughest aspect of the investigation was securing all the authorities and approvals from the range of agencies.

"We had to make sure that, in that first 48 hours, we covered off on everything" he says. "Because we were on (those tasks) so fast it was a lot easier for us. But if they (Billy and his parents) had disappeared in Malaysia somewhere, we would've struggled."

Predictable protest

ANY talk now former prime minister Tony Abbott gave on an Australian university campus back in 2014 was always going to attract radical protestors. And they turned up in their hundreds when the unpopular-in-the-polls leader came to the University of Adelaide to deliver the Sir John Downer Oration.

Early in the evening, before disorder erupted, Mounted Ops member Senior Constable Trevor Hood was close to the scene in a nearby staging area with 11 of his colleagues. And, on horseback, it would be his first experience of a protest since joining Mounted Ops in 2012.

"I was nervous and excited and not sure what to expect," he says. "Only two-and-a-half years earlier I hadn't even sat on a horse, and now I wondered: 'With all this training, will I ever pull it off?'"

Hostilities started early with 500-odd protestors shouting abuse at Abbott as he arrived in his car, and at those entering The Braggs building to hear him.

As the evening wore on – with the Mounted Ops members standing by, ready to react – the mood of around 150 protestors became more and more aggressive.

Toward 8pm they started shaking a temporary perimeter fence set up around The Braggs. It was then that Hood and his colleagues, wearing helmets and patrol outfits, got the call to respond to, and contain, the disorder.

"We all mounted up," Hood says, "and as we were deploying toward the (scene) we got a call to say that they'd breached the line. They'd pulled down sections of the fence and were starting to flood into the containment area."

Hood and his colleagues got to the scene where they saw the broken-down fence and "a few stragglers". The rest of the protestors had advanced on The Braggs, posing a serious threat to Abbott and other dignitaries.

"So we broke off into two sections," Hood explains. "One section went around to where the protestors had got in near the building. They were up against, or getting toward, the doors."

"There were a few coppers guarding those doors but they were outnumbered, and even with the horses there we were still largely outnumbered."

The riders positioned their horses in an echelon (a staggered formation) and moved in to sweep the protestors away from the walls. But as those protestors screamed "lots of abuse" at the Mounted Ops contingent they refused to move and tried to stand fast.

"So we physically had to force our way through at a walk," Hood recalls. "We didn't want to go any faster and injure people. And, at a walk, there's enough power behind a horse to move people away."

Drawing on their equestrian skills and experience, the Mounted Ops team cleared the walls of protestors and created a buffer between them and The Braggs.

But the still 150-strong mob regrouped and headed for the opposite end of the building, where 400 audience members and dignitaries were soon to leave.

"They repositioned themselves to disrupt the exit phase," Hood says. "We then deployed between the protestors and the exit for all the dignitaries."

"Again, all 150 constantly shouted abuse. At any female who walked out they were calling: 'F--k you, sluts!' Any sort of insult you can think of, including the C-word and F-word, came thick and fast."

But, ultimately, Hood and his fellow riders kept the protestors about 10 metres back and the exiting dignitaries and audience members safe. Tony Abbott left by a separate exit and avoided the hostilities.

"The mission was successful," Hood says. "No injuries to horses, riders, other police and dignitaries. I believe we did it well as a unit."

"It was an eye-opening experience, and I guess that's why it's memorable."

"... all 150 constantly shouted abuse. Any sort of insult you can think of... came thick and fast."



Above: Senior Constable Trevor Hood and Constable Carly Barber; **right:** CCTV footage of Mounted Ops members responding to the fight in Hindley St





Fight night

FISTS and feet were flying and bodies hitting the deck in Hindley St when Mounted Ops member Constable Carly Barber got to the scene. It was a wild New Year's Eve brawl involving 15-odd youths outside McDonald's in the first few hours of 2016.

Barber, along with other Mounted Ops members, had heard the call go out for police to respond. The report of a brawl was no surprise to her: she figured many would break out in the notorious entertainment precinct during that night shift.

But she found this one, in which even girls were throwing punches, to be "one of the most violent" she had ever confronted.

"I'd worked in Hindley St as a foot copper between 2009 and 2011," she says, "and even then I hadn't seen fights like this one."

Nature had delivered perfect conditions for brawlers: a particularly warm night after a 40-degree day. And the human environment, thousands of revellers in the street, was always going to make the police response more difficult.

Says Barber: "I hadn't seen that many people in Hindley St for years. And, of course, you still had people trying to walk up and down the street and people coming in and out of McDonald's."

So the call went out for backup and, as Barber remembers it, about 10 beat cops had descended on the scene within 30 seconds. They joined her and five other Mounted Ops members and went about breaking up the still ferocious brawl.

The cops on the ground started to pull some offenders out of and away from the violence and handcuff them. At the same time, Barber and her fellow riders positioned their horses between those cops and bystanders so as to create a safety barrier.

"That was not only to ensure their safety but also make sure no one else could get in (to the fight)," Barber says.

The joint action of the Mounted Ops members and foot patrols seemed, after several minutes, to have calmed much of the violence.

So Barber and other riders moved around the corner – only to find several more fights going on in Bank St. And these equally vicious brawls involved as many as 50 youths.

"So we went in and started breaking up more fights and more coppers were coming through arresting people," Barber says.

"They (offenders) were all screaming and shouting and threatening to riot."

"My main concern was just to make sure that I provided cover for any coppers wrestling with offenders on the ground. Making sure that no one came in and king hit or kicked them, or tried to grab any of their gear.

"Using the horses, we pushed offenders away and were providing safety for the coppers up against the wall.

"They (offenders) were all screaming and shouting and threatening to riot. So we thought: 'We're going to have to do something quick about this because there's not many of us.' "

The riders decided to implement a baseline sweep, in which the majestic 750kg police greys would form an impenetrable wall against the brawlers.

"So," Barber says, "the six of us all came together facing north on Bank Street. We started pushing all these people towards the train station to prevent any further fights.

"They weren't happy. There was a lot of yelling and swearing and (cries of) 'You can't do this to us.' "

But the horses and their riders did do it, with a successful sweep which went on for 30 metres along Bank St from Hindley St. And, ultimately, the riot-threatening mob ended up across North Terrace at the railway station.

"That was pretty satisfying," Barber says, "knowing that we'd trained for that and it definitely paid off.

"And it's a good feeling when you walk away from a job like that and the foot coppers say: 'Thank you. That was really good. No one got injured.' "

While that Hindley St brawl and its offshoots in Bank St were over, others were yet to erupt. Through the night, Barber and her colleagues – on horseback and on foot – would have to quell around 10 more serious fights.





Constable
Sid Leavold

Under attack... at home

NAKED, fear-struck and with multiple stab wounds, she had escaped her deranged son and staggered around 300 metres into the protection of a neighbour's place. There, on the edge of a bath with a towel draped over her, she sat holding some of her dislodged teeth in her hands.

The battering she had taken left her face so swollen that Sturt patrol officer Constable Sid Leavold simply could not distinguish any of her facial features. And seeing, as he did, her whole body covered in bleeding stab wounds, he thought she was "probably going to die".

It was just after midnight on that October morning in 2014 and death seemed as serious a risk for this innocent woman as it did for her husband. He remained in the clutches of their still knife-wielding son, Nicholas Chattaway, 21, back in the family's Torrens Park home.

And, as the incident continued, it prompted urgent calls to police communications. "The neighbours (who called) must have heard quite a ruckus going on," Leavold says.

He and his patrol partner, Brian Mayger, had rushed to the home of the neighbour who had given the woman refuge. And, now – with directions that neighbour gave them to the attack house – they would swing into action.

Backing them up were senior constables Ben McLeod and Jason "Crowie" Crowe, Constable Kim Elbourn and dog handler SC1C Ryan Frisby. And transmitting his instructions to the patrols by radio was supervisor Sergeant Paul "Murgs" Murgatroyd.

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Mayger remained with the distraught mother, for whom an ambulance was on its way. Leavold and the others headed off on foot to the scene of the attack which, unknown to them, Chattaway was still unleashing on his father.

After they ascended a particularly steep hill leading up to the victims' home, the cops started a cautious approach to the two-storey house along its 150m driveway. In the circumstances they could afford not even the slightest lapses in concentration.

An alert Leavold absorbed every feature of the surroundings and kept Murgatroyd supplied with SITREPS (situation reports).

“The house was in darkness,” he recalls, “and there was a four-wheel drive in the driveway. And, because of a lot of trees, the driveway was only enough for one single car.

“We didn't know where the offender was: we couldn't hear anything. I remember breathing hard, and Crowie was breathing hard.

“We'd set up an all-round defence so, if anyone did come out of the house, we had it well covered. Basically, we were going to react to whatever we saw.”

The silence lasted only another minute or two until two figures, partially illuminated by a porch light, suddenly appeared at the side of the house. Leavold saw the first figure, seemingly trying to flee, take a hit from the second one and fall to the ground.

The tall, muscular attacker, wearing only track pants, was Chattaway, and the victim he had felled was his imperilled father.

“The dad was on the ground trying to clamber back up again,” Leavold recalls. “Then the son came in behind him, and you could clearly see him stabbing (the father) to the head, neck and shoulder. I think he was just stabbing wherever he could.

“It was almost like he was doing it in slow motion, but it wasn't slow motion: they were fatigued. They'd been fighting for probably 25 minutes. Dad had been fighting for his life.

“We all yelled: ‘Move! Move! Move!’ and we all moved forward. Everyone was shouting: ‘Put the knife down! Put the knife down!’

“He wasn't responding and was still actively stabbing his dad. And, by this time, I could see his dad had been stabbed in the eye, and a lot of his eye was hanging out.”

The officers had charged toward the attack from about 50 metres away. Ultimately, Leavold came within five metres of the two men and fired his taser at Chattaway. But only one dart connected, ending up in Chattaway's arm.

“It was enough to stop him because he froze for a second and dropped the knife,” Leavold says. “That gave the father enough time to break free and actually walk past me and then past Crowie (who was just behind me).

“Then the son started walking at (us) police with the barbeque prong.”

Within the next second or two, as Leavold moved to change his taser cartridge, Crowe fired a “perfect shot” at Chattaway. So, after all the brutality he had inflicted on his parents and the threatening move he made on the police, Chattaway finally went down.

The officers handcuffed, and sat him up, on the ground, but he said nothing and remained emotionless.

“He never listened to us at all,” Leavold says. “There was just a vacant glaze in his eyes and he was physically exhausted as well.”

Behind Leavold and Crowe, the critically injured father had collapsed on the ground, where Kim Elbourn “came into her own”.

“She was there straight away and dealt with the father,” Leavold says. “If she'd not been there, he could easily have died of shock. Kim probably kept that bloke alive long enough for the paramedics to get there.

“He was on the ground in a bad, bad way, blood everywhere. He had stab wounds, which were like tears to his neck, and blood all over him.

“Kim placed him in the recovery position and calmed him down, avoiding him going into even worse shock. More than anything, she reassured him.”

With Chattaway contained and the father in police care, the next duty of the cops was to check the house for any other victims – or offenders. Leavold and Crowe went to do the checking, with guns rightly drawn, while McLeod and Frisby kept watch over Chattaway.

The interior of the house looked to Leavold as if it were a movie set. “I'd never seen a scene like it,” he says. “Blood was everywhere and there were knives on the floor.

“You could tell the majority of the attack had happened in the kitchen but, in the front room, these French doors had been completely smashed off.

“The front room looked like 10 people had gone in there and someone had said: ‘Do your best. Just smash it up.’

“Everywhere you went in the whole bottom part of the house there was blood, and blood handprints on walls and architraves.”

Although Chattaway was himself covered in blood – which likely came from his parents – he had no bodily injuries that Leavold could see.

Paramedics treated and stabilized the father at the scene for around 10 minutes, and after ambulances rushed both parents to Flinders Medical Centre, they underwent emergency surgery.

Chattaway wound up charged with two counts of attempted murder. Owing to his mental incompetence, however, the Supreme Court found him not guilty.

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