



The Chairman

Community Development and Justice Standing Committee

Perth Western Australia

May 1, 2012

My name is David Matthews and I was a front-line Police Officer with the Western Australia Police Service for 12 years. I joined the Service in 1984 and attained the rank of Senior Constable.

I was a very hard working, proud and dedicated Police Officer.

After graduating from the Police Academy, I was first stationed at Fremantle Police Station and assigned to "general duties" policing.

The term "General Duties" includes anything and everything. I would attend to stealing offences, assaults, violent domestics, traffic matters, fights, burglaries and damage complaints. Sudden deaths by suicide were a fairly common task to be assigned too, and I have witnessed the death and destruction of road trauma.

I made frequent arrests when attending the afore-mentioned tasks. Witnesses and suspects would be interviewed, statements taken, court briefs would be prepared and appropriate charges preferred.

I have had to cut the rope of people who have taken their own lives and hung them-selves. I have carried a body bag with the broken body of a car crash victim inside and I have tried to assist a burns victim with horrific and fatal injuries after she set fire to herself.

While these tasks are a very grim side of Police work, it was the following event that led me to a nervous break-down and retirement at the young age of 34 years.

On June 5th 1989, I was rostered on night-shift with another Police Officer. We were on a general duties van patrol assigned to the outer suburbs of Fremantle which included Coolbellup, Willagee, Hilton, Palmyra and Bicton.

At 11,15pm we were called to attend at 99 View Terrace in Bicton where a male person was "threatening children" with a knife. Violent domestic disputes are a fairly routine task for Police to attend.

On arrival I ran to the front of the house armed with my Police issued baton. I looked down the hallway to see a naked man armed with a large kitchen knife in his right hand. He was holding a naked female by her hair with his other hand. She was crouched down in front of him screaming for help and trying to get away from him.

The man shouted "I am serious, I can do it". He was moving the knife in an up and down motion toward the girl's neck and upper body area.

The situation was extremely volatile and somebody had to do something, so I discarded my baton, and withdrew my firearm and entered the house through the unlocked flywire door. Two other officers followed me into the house. I pointed my revolver at the man and ordered him to "Drop the knife".

He said "Go on, shoot me".

I said "Drop the knife now".

He said "You don't think I could do it can you".

I said "Drop the knife".

He then raised the knife well above his head, pulled the girl's head back and began to bring down the knife toward her neck area with a greater degree of force.

I fired one instinctive round at the man and the force of the projectile hitting him propelled his body sideways into an adjoining room. The round passed centimetres above the girl's head and she was able to scrambled to her feet and run past me to the front door into the safety of other Police Officer's nearby.

I ventured down the passage way and saw the man lying on his back with a bullet entry wound to his chest.

I saw him take his last breath and he died almost immediately.

Despite his immediate death, other officers performed CPR and mouth to mouth resuscitation on the man. An off-duty nurse was allowed into the crime scene to assist Police with their resuscitation attempts.

I walked outside and sat down on a small fence in a state of shock and thought "that I had just ruined my life."

From the time we arrived at the house, until the time an ambulance was called, was some 90 seconds.

As events unfolded, I learned the man had held his two female housemates against their will, at knife point, where he systematically sexually assaulted them both over several hours. It was only when one of the females was allowed to go to her distressed child, in another room, that she managed to escape from the house and call police.

Once the first female had escaped the house and knowing the Police would arrive soon he made no attempt to flee, or even barricade himself inside the house.

Case Detectives advised me to go the Fremantle Hospital and be examined by a Doctor, which I did.

I was interviewed by Case Detectives and I provided a statement to them about the sequence of events.

My firearm was seized and taken from me, Forensic Officers took swabs from my hands so they could match the powder residue from my hands to that of the bullet wound of the man I had just killed.

Internal Investigators also interviewed me, and an Investigator told me the young female had looked up at the offending male, to see the knife coming down toward her just before I shot him. This I feel justifies my actions.

I completed my shift at 0600hrs and went home to bed.

I was asked to re-attend the crime scene some 14 hours later, to enable the Forensic Branch to film a video re-enactment of the shooting.

To complicate this matter further the person I had killed's brother was a serving Police Officer and I was to meet him a few days later. This was a very awkward situation.
(See Appendix A 1 to 4)

I was given four days sick leave and returned to work one week after the shooting.

Some 2 weeks later a round table group discussion was held at the Fremantle Police Station. All officers that were there on that night were given a communal round table talk by two or three Police Health and Welfare Officers. The meeting lasted only 15 minutes. No one on one counselling was provided to me.

Instead I was handed two A4 sheets of paper with information on "stress" related symptoms. I was told should I begin to feel or suffer any of the symptoms listed on the paper, I should seek help. The symptoms included anxiety, sleeplessness, irritability etc. etc.
(See Appendix B 1 to 2).

That was all the counselling, help, advice, support that I received from the Police Department, whilst media coverage reported that I would be given “extensive counselling.”
(See Appendix C 1 to 2).

Looking back, the Police Department failed me miserably in their duty of care.

Fatal Police shootings are rare in Western Australia and firearms are used mainly in self-defence of oneself or another Police Officer. My situation involved protecting a member of our community.

In December 1989 I was summoned to attend the Coroners Court to give evidence in regard to my actions on that particular night. In court I was again to meet other family members of the deceased. Guilt prevailed at these meetings.

After a 2 day Inquest a finding of “Justifiable Homicide” was handed down by the Magistrate and I was found to have acted in good faith. It was then that I realised that I had really been on trial for Murder. Thankfully for me, the coroner found it was “Justifiable Homicide” which is murder approved and excused by law.

After the Coroner had closed the case, I was invited to “afternoon tea” with the then Police Commissioner Brian BULL. There I was presented with another sheet of A4 paper, this time a “Certificate of Merit” for my “meritorious conduct”. I was somewhat disappointed in this award for two reasons. One, my first name is David and not John as is written on the certificate, and secondly, it seemed a meagre recognition of what was a life and death situation.

(See Appendix D)

I remained at Palmyra Police Station for a further 2 years and in December 1991 was accepted into 79 Division, which is a rapid mobile response squad whose job is to respond to major crime after hours. My acceptance into 79 Division proved I was a hard and diligent worker.

Armed robberies, murders, violent assaults, sexual assaults, sieges, high speed pursuits were the core functions of 79 Division. I performed well and felt comfortable in my position within the squad.

In October 1994, I was involved in the Central Police Station siege where a gunman had taken hostages, inside the Central Police Station. I was guarding an inner cordon for several hours before members of the Tactical Response Group shot dead the gunman when he exited the building. This was the closest I had come to reliving the events of 1989 and my Doctors believe that this event may have triggered my Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

On September the 3rd 1995, I suffered a nervous breakdown whilst at home, and I was never to return to work as a Police Officer again.

I was in a terrible state emotionally, and my life was thrown into chaos.

My wife contacted the Health and Welfare department immediately; however it was three days later that I was able to see the police psychologist. The psychologist placed me on sick leave and referred me to see a psychiatrist, who prescribed anti-depressant medication.

It was deemed I was too unwell to return to Police work and I was to be medically retired from the Police Department.

I was retired on the 6th December 1996. Obviously my wage stopped on that date and my medical bills also became my responsibility.

Police Officers are not covered by workers compensation. So I had to rely on two superannuation policies that I had been personally contributing to every fortnight over the years. On the day of my retirement I received \$76,000.00 of my superannuation money. If I didn't have a superannuation policy, I would have received nothing.

Over the next two years I had to challenge and fight the superannuation bodies for the remainder of my full entitlement. I was later paid a further \$220,000.00.

Whilst this appears to be a substantial amount, it only equates to \$9,900.00 a year or \$190.00 per week, to the age of 65. I no longer have any superannuation policies to speak of and if I do reach age 65, there is very little light at the end of the tunnel in respect to my financial well being.

I am currently on a Centrelink Disability Pension, earning approximately \$95.00 per week so I am totally reliant on my wife's earnings. There are some weeks I don't receive any benefit. The lack of financial support/income exacerbates my stress problem. I have 3 children to support.

In 1997, the Police Union asked the then Government for an "Act of Grace" payment to be awarded to me. I believe a small offer was made but it was decided not to accept this offer as the Police Union believed the Police Department should continue to pay my mounting medical bills which they were refusing to do. As a result a "writ" was issued and the matter was heard before a Justice in the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

(See Appendix E 1 to 2)

Needless to say the Justice found that the Police Commissioner was not liable for my work related medical bills. However, this court case did contribute towards the implementation of the Former Police Medical Expenses Bill 2007. This was of no benefit to me but at least Officers are now covered for medical related expenses.

Carol Adams, the Police Union lawyer, later helped me win a criminal injuries compensation claim and I was awarded some \$48,000.00. One third of this amount accounted for my own out of pocket medical expenses.

I wanted to write this letter to you to enable some insight as to the way I was dealt with by the Police Department and its Health and Welfare Branch. I would have thought, given the enormity of the situation, surely trained psychologists or psychiatrists would have been brought in immediately and on-going consultations organised. Instead, I was left to deal with all the emotions of having killed somebody without any psychological help. I have been trained to use firearms, and to shoot at targets. I was never instructed on how to cope with the aftermath of having killed someone. The hierarchy of the Police Department are ignorant of the consequences that a Police shooting (resulting in death) has on its officers.

If I didn't receive help, support, guidance or counselling after doing what could possibly be described as the worst job a Police Officer could ever do, I really do wonder what hope has any officer got of receiving the appropriate help.

People have told me that my incident happened a long time ago when nobody knew about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This thought is very untrue. An article in the Sunday Times appeared whilst I was on sick leave in April 1996 and it tells of the "scars" and "emotional" trauma suffered by Police Officers who kill in the line of duty. The article stated it takes about 5 years for an Officer to fall ill and be medically retired from their chosen occupation. I lasted some 6 years. This study was undertaken in Canada. It appears that the Police Department are not employing properly trained staff. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was realised back in World War 1 when it was called battle fatigue. This is not a new phenomenon.

(See Appendix F)

I was the "Judge" the "Jury" and the "Executioner" and the responsibility of all three roles was way too much for one person to bear.

Loosing ones chosen career, is sole destroying. The inability to remain the "bread winner" is demoralizing. I do try and maintain a happy disposition, for the benefit of all around me and often that is a job within itself.

Out of sheer desperation I have attempted to re-enter the workforce on 4 separate occasions. Unfortunately I now find it too difficult to hold down a job. Each attempt at work has resulted in my mental health deteriorating to the point where I can barely cope with each day. This is in stark contrast to the confident man I was as a soldier in the Australian Army and as a Police Officer. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is very real.

In 2006, after taking anti-depressant medication for over 11 years I was admitted to Fremantle Hospital suffering from "Drug induced Hepatitis" caused by the anti-depressant "Effexor". Three years ago, I again started to suffer severe side effects from my anti-depressant medication and I have made a decision not to take medication. Whilst this is very difficult, it is the lesser of the two evils.

I did write a letter to Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan in 2006 and made him aware of my situation. His reply was largely unsympathetic and his predecessors Commissioners Falconer and Bull were like minded. I would have thought the well-being of their men and women would be their top priority. Sadly this is not the case. I had to do one of the hardest jobs a Police Officer could ever face and it is not right that "front line" Police Officers who do the real dirty work are largely ignored by these officers in Police administration who are pre-occupied with study and self promotion.

Surely those in charge, who make daily decisions from a relatively safe environment, can implement changes, put a mechanism in place to ensure the well being of their officers. It is obviously too late for me but something has to change.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is and can be a debilitating illness. I unfortunately, still find myself tormented some 22 years on.

I am not complaining about the career I chose, as I believed I knew what I was getting into and all the risks involved when I became a Police Officer. At the Police Academy you can be instructed on the safe handling of firearm's and be taught the correct circumstances when lethal force is your only option. What they do not teach you are the consequences and ramifications on one's mental health after taking another person life.

I believe early intervention after a traumatic event by trained professionals is probably the answer to quelling and allaying any negative thoughts and fears that arise in your mind from doing jobs that not many people in our community think about let alone actually do. In my instance not having received any guidance, support or counselling directly led to a nervous break- down.

If the Police Department cannot provide adequate psychological counselling help and support for their Officers maybe it is time that a "Police Pension" be implemented, similar to the military "gold card", so sick and injured Police Officers like myself, do not have to endure the humiliation of standing in the queues of Centre link Offices.

The Police Department did have a Health and Welfare Branch at the time and I am still at a loss to explain why I was neglected. The shooting still plays on my mind, several times every day and often at night, but the real heart-ache lies in the way I was treated with virtually no support, guidance or counselling from the Police Department. It is no wonder I had a nervous break-down some 6 years later at the ripe old age of 34.

The community in general expect their Police Officers to protect them in times of need. I was willing to put my "neck" on the line when I confronted this deranged man and save a person's life. However, there is no apparent willingness on the part of anyone within the community, let alone the Police Department to look after me and what is left of my dignity. When suffering depression, you are told to "let people know" you have a problem and "seek" help. Well I have sought all kinds of help, from all kinds of people and there is very little anyone can do for me now.

I guess one would have to "walk a mile" in my shoes to fully understand. Post Traumatic Stress is hard enough to deal with without the added burden of financial pressure. If I had done something wrong, maybe, I could understand.

My story and this open letter to you, is a true and honest account of what happened to me as a Police Officer. I don't think that the situation I find myself in is acceptable and I hope you feel the same way.

It is not right that my family suffers because I "did my job."
(See Appendix G 1 to 2)

I have enclosed newspaper clippings relating to the incident and copies of the only counselling advice I received from the Police Department.

My predicament has taken its toll on my mental health. I served my community well and I feel let down by the inactions of the Police Department and the hopeless financial arrangements in place, which left me no choice but to exhaust my own superannuation to survive.

To remedy and make good the points I have talk about, I suggest the following.

- **Mandatory counselling for Police Officers involved in traumatic events/disasters.**

I have no doubt if counselling was provided to me, at the time of the event I would not have suffered to the degree that I have. I still may have developed Post Traumatic Stress but the symptoms might not have been as debilitating. Quick and on-going intervention is required.

- **Implement a Police Pension Scheme similar to the Australian Defence Force.**

A Police Officer should not have to be forced to access their superannuation, when medically retired as a direct result of carrying out their duties for the benefit of the community. Superannuation is for retirement! The fact I no longer have a superannuation fund for my retirement at age 65 is wrong.

For me to be reliant on a Centre link Disability pension of \$95 per week is unacceptable.

- **A “Police Veterans Office” formed to represent Medically Retired Officers.**

Whilst the Police Union provides some support for Medically Retired Officers, membership of the Police Union also ceases upon forced retirement. The Police Unions main role is to represent the working rights of “serving” Police Officers and over time Medically Retired Police Officers have been forgotten about and neglected.

- **Employ MRO’S as advocates/consultants.**

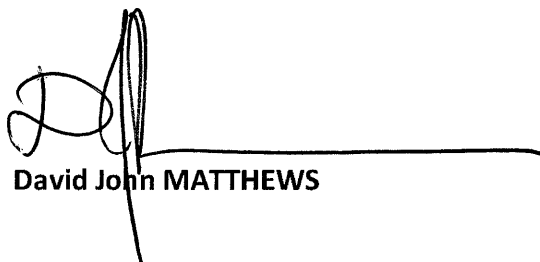
I don’t know where the staff at Police Health and Welfare received their training or qualifications when attempting to understand the ramifications and trauma associated with front line Police work. Not once have I been asked to share my experience and provide advice, which could go a long way towards assisting the health “experts” in the understanding of the reality of being involved in a traumatic event.

Instead of having university trained counsellors to deal with frontline officers, perhaps former officers could advise these professionals.

In March, 2012, I participated in an SBS television program "Insight," which dealt with the trauma suffered by people who have killed in the line of duty. The episode was titled "Trained to Kill." An expert psychiatrist also appeared on the show and made several poignant remarks, very relevant to this topic. I have enclosed five copies of the program on DVD and would appreciate it if the members of the inquiry could take the time to watch it.

I will be attending your hearing on May 16th 2012 and I am willing to give evidence to support any matter I have raised in this document.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' and 'J' followed by a horizontal line, positioned above the printed name 'David John MATTHEWS'.

POLICE SHOT KILLS KNIFE TERROR MAN

By BILL POWER

A POLICEMAN shot a man dead last night as he was about to plunge a knife into a woman he had held hostage in a Bicton house.

The constable fired his revolver from the front door down the passage, hitting the man in the chest.

The man died shortly afterwards, despite receiving help at the scene.

The man, whose identity has yet to be released by police, was standing over the woman, who was kneeling on the floor in the passageway.

The constable was about four metres away.

His shot would have passed only centimetres above her head.

The woman had been cut several times by her attacker while she was trying to fend off his knife.

A second woman, who had also been held hostage, and her daughter, aged about nine, who also lived in the house, had escaped minutes earlier.

They ran screaming for help to neighbours, who called the police.

Shock

Both women had been sexually attacked by the man, although they were not raped.

The woman who was being attacked when her assailant was shot is receiving treatment for her wounds and shock in hospital.

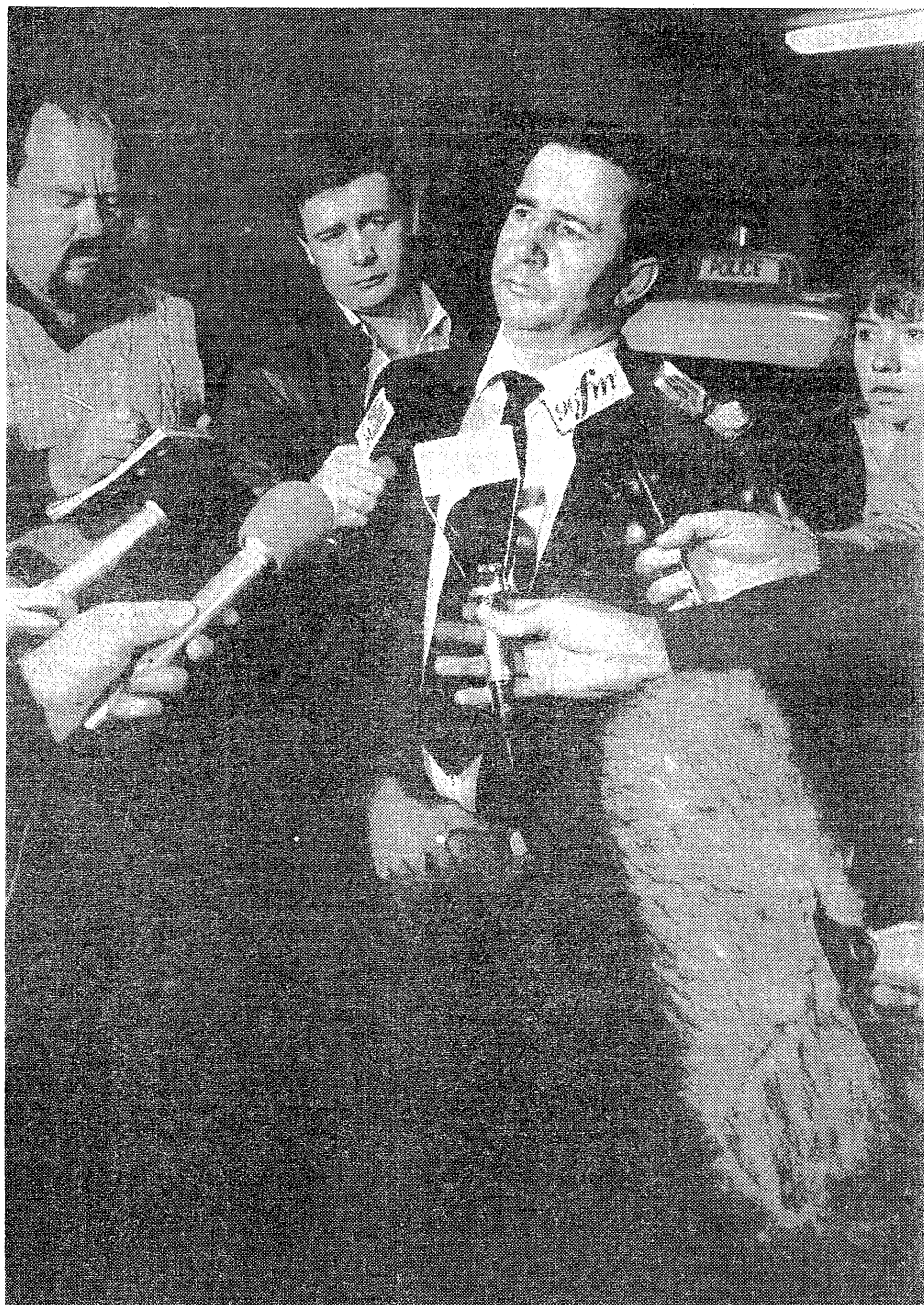
The constable, who has been a police officer for five years, is also in shock and has been treated at Fremantle Hospital.

Fremantle CIB head Detective-Sergeant Fred Zagami believes the constable saved the woman's life.

He demonstrated how the man had the knife raised above his head and was about to stab her in the head or neck when the constable fired.

He said the constable and his partner, part of a combined patrol from several stations including Fremantle, arrived at the house at 11.30pm and called on the man to release the woman.

He said the man had been a boarder with the women for about three weeks.



6 *Daily News, Thursday, June 8, 1989***WE SAY**

Real cost of taking a life

OVERDOSING on TV cop shows could induce many of us to believe there's nothing particularly stressful about killing a villain.

In the real world, nothing is further from the truth.

The young Palmyra policeman who decided in a split second that Geoffrey Nugent had to be shot to save the life of a woman hostage, will live with that nightmare for the rest of his days.

Unanswerable questions will haunt him over and over: Was I too hasty? Was Nugent bluffing when he raised the knife above her head? Could I have talked him out of it?

Perhaps — although his superiors have no doubt: "It was either him (Nugent) or her."

There appears no reason to dispute that testimony.

Nugent had sexually assaulted two women hostages. The one he held captive at the time of the shooting already had several knife wounds.

These were facts known to the policeman as he entered the house. He knew he was dealing with a deranged man.

Suddenly, face to face with Nugent and his terrified hostage in the passageway of the Bicton house, the constable had to make a decision — he shot Nugent in the chest.

Five years in the police force could never be enough time to train a young lawman about coping with the anguish and torment of taking another man's life.

He could never imagine that what some may say was an act of heroism could be...

Innocents suffer in trauma of rape

CATRIONA: "IT WAS an awful scene. The police were called to a house where they were told a man with a knife was threatening two women. One had escaped with her young son and with a male friend. The second woman was still inside."

"The police shout to the man inside. He shouts back he will kill the woman. They hear her scream."

"They break down the door and see a naked man in the hallway holding the woman by the hair so she is forced to kneel in front of him. He is grabbing at the knife which he holds above her head."

"The policeman shoots and the woman screams and screams. The second woman tending behind the police sees her run and the naked man collapse."

What happens to all these people?

Cartriona has the answer: "We are told the policeman who killed the man is devastated and will be given counselling."

"The woman in the hallway who was sexually assaulted is brought to SARC."

"The other woman, who was also sexually assaulted, is not taken anywhere until a SARC counsellor suggests she too might need support and should come to the centre."

"Her child, who regarded the dead man as a friend, heard the screams and had seen the man holding the knife, is referred by a GP to a child psychiatrist."

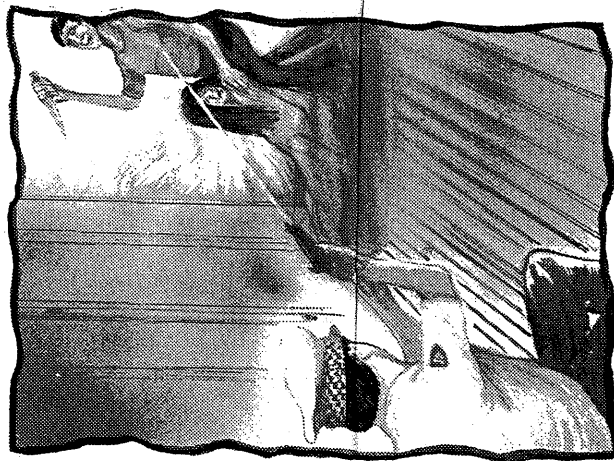
"The other man in the house who was unable to do anything to help receives no help himself."

"The families of all these people who took them back home received nothing."

"Weeks later the women were not able to talk to each other at all and the families were estranged."

"The policeman: who knows?"

"The child would not talk to anyone let



◆ The shooting as depicted in the *Daily News* at the time of the woman's ordeal

alone the psychiatrist.

"The women got a bill from the estate agent managing the house for damages to the door and bloodstains in the hallway."

The trauma that rape victims go through is the same as the trauma inflicted on victims of a train crash, an earthquake or a war, Ms McComish says.

"Rape trauma syndrome is the same as battered wife syndrome, Hoddle Street Massacre syndrome, Ash Wednesday Fire syndrome, incest survivor syndrome and war veteran syndrome."

"Of course there are terrors and shames unique to the individual case but there are also characteristics which connect them."

"Research on veterans of the Vietnam War

and survivors of sexual assault shows they share common disorders.

"In the case of rape there is severe psychological distress. In the first three months, victims are highly anxious with nightmares, flashbacks and terrors. They are depressed and withdrawn, sexually crippled and have a very low opinion of themselves."

"Three months after the rape and they are still significantly disturbed. There are still problems and distress even three or four years later."

Can anything be done to stop long lasting psychological and social problems affecting victims caught up in horrors such as last week's?

One thing that could work is a centre for all victims of violence, Ms McComish says. Her fellowship took her to America and Britain where she studied centres giving continuing care and counselling.

N WA, help for victims is disjointed and not long lasting. "A victims centre would provide consultation and support for those who provide the various crisis services."

"Staff would train them and conduct research. There would be a common approach to survivors and victims of sexual assault, family violence and natural disasters."

"By splitting up who does what between health, community services and the police as we do now, we fail to meet the crisis."

"Dividing up the victims dramatically increases their sense of shame and secrecy. Their chance of a full recovery is reduced."

Ms McComish will take her plan for a victims centre to various government officials in the New Year. "Until such a centre is established — one that cuts across the artificial boundaries of community service, health and law — the helplessness among WA's victims will continue," she believes.

"The rising tide of violence in our society will drown more and more of us."



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Stress blamed for man's violent acts

GEOFFREY NUGENT'S distraught family yesterday blamed financial problems for the bizarre behaviour leading to his death in a Biction house on Monday night.

They believe money worries caused him to "snap" and sexually assault two women before threatening to stab one of them.

Nugent died when a police constable shot him in the chest as he was about to stab the woman at 11.30pm.

Coroner David McCann has moved quickly to launch an inquest into the fatal shooting of Nugent.

Mr McCann officially opened the inquest yesterday then adjourned the hearing until a date to be fixed.

By WAYNE MILLER

The Nugent family described Geoffrey, a former school-teacher and driller in the state's north, as a family man who had never wanted to hurt anybody in his life.

He had boarded at several places because he never had enough money to get his own place.

They said his actions on Monday night were totally out of character.

His older brother David said yesterday Geoffrey, who had two children by a previous marriage, loved his family and tried hard to make his way in life.

"The relationship with his ex-wife and kids was great," he said.

"He had a problem with money and I think that's finally what tipped him over the edge. His money problems got on top of him and he snapped.

He said the family was close and four brothers were the best of mates.

"I suppose you'd call it some sort of a nervous breakdown in the end.

Such is the character of this family that they have told the constable who fired the fatal shot that they bear him no malice.

"Even the people that were there on the night said that it wasn't him.

"We completely understand and have done from the start," David said.

"The way he went was completely the opposite to the way he lived his whole life."

"We know he had no choice and what he did was quite correct.

David said Geoffrey was "a real funny bloke", not a crazed, violent man.

"We completely understand and support him in that. We just know it wasn't our brother he was shooting at."

If a fight looked imminent, he would step in and "square everybody away" by cracking a few jokes.

He said the family were happy in their own minds about what happened, both as far as what Geoff Nugent did in the last hour of his life and what the constable had to do.

"If everyone else was down he'd get you laughing," David said, fighting back tears.

STRESS RESPONSE SYMPTOMS

APPENDIX B 1

- RESTLESSNESS
- IRRITABILITY
- EXCESSIVE FATIGUE
- SLEEP DISTURBANCES
- ANXIETY
- STARTLE REACTION
- DEPRESSION
- MOODINESS
- MUSCLE TREMORS
- DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING
- NIGHTMARES
- MENTAL IMAGES OF SCENE
- SOUNDS TRIGGER MEMORIES

CRITICAL INCIDENT

- THE EXTERNAL EVENT IS WHAT WE CALL THE CRITICAL INCIDENT.
- ANY INCIDENT THAT CAUSES EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL TO EXPERIENCE UNUSUALLY STRONG EMOTIONAL REACTIONS WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO INTERFACE WITH THEIR ABILITY TO FUNCTION EITHER AT THE SCENE OR LATER.

EVEN THOUGH THE EVENT MAY BE OVER, THE INDIVIDUAL WORKER MAY NOW BE EXPERIENCING OR MAY EXPERIENCE LATER, SOME STRONG EMOTIONAL OR PHYSICAL REACTIONS.

IT IS VERY COMMON, IN FACT QUITE NORMAL, FOR PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL AFTERSHOCKS WHEN THEY HAVE PASSED THROUGH A HORRIBLE EVENT.

SOMETIMES THE EMOTIONAL AFTERSHOCK OR STRESS REACTION APPEARS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRAUMATIC EVENT.

SOMETIMES THEY MAY APPEAR A FEW HOURS OR A FEW DAYS LATER. AND IN SOME CASES, WEEKS OR MONTHS MAY PASS BEFORE THE STRESS REACTIONS APPEAR (LIKEWISE).

THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A STRESS REACTION MAY LAST A FEW DAYS - A FEW WEEKS OR A FEW MONTHS AND OCCASIONALLY LONGER DEPENDING ON THE SEVERITY OF THE TRAUMATIC EVENT.

NOT EVERYONE WILL EXPERIENCE A TRAUMATIC REACTION TO THE SAME EVENT!

FOR EXAMPLE, WITH A SHOOTING SITUATION:

37%..... EXPERIENCE A MILD OR NO TRAUMATIC REACTION
 35%.....EXPERIENCE A MODERATE REACTION
 28%..... EXPERIENCE A SEVERE REACTION

Daily News, Wednesday, June 7, 1989 3

Knifeman a mystery to police

By BILL POWER

POLICE are trying to piece together events which could have led to the shooting of Geoffrey Allen Nugent in Bicton on Monday night.

Investigations have been unable to find any reason for Nugent to arm himself with a knife and suddenly attack two women from whom he rented a room.

"There is no prelude to it," Det-Insp. Derek Farrell said at police headquarters this morning.

But he did not know if alcohol had been involved in the incident.

Nugent, 32, of Bicton, died from a single gunshot wound to the chest fired by a Palmyra police constable as Nugent was about to plunge a knife into a naked woman in the passageway of their house.

Nugent was also naked, Det-Insp. Farrell said this morning.

However, he said there was no relationship between either of the two women and Nugent in the house in the three weeks that he had been boarding there.

And Nugent has no record at all with police.

He is a complete enigma to them.

It is believed Nugent, who is the son of a prominent footballing family, headed by East Fremantle champion Laurie Nugent, was at some stage married but had been separated.

However, attempts to speak to the family about what could have sparked the incident have met with blunt refusals.

Police said yesterday that Nugent had sexually assaulted the two women before the shooting incident.

One of the women and her son was held a naked hostage in the house before she managed to snatch some clothes and flee with the boy to neighbours for help.

Det-Insp. Farrell said both women were still very upset and they had left the house to live with relatives while trying to get over the trauma.

The constable involved in the shooting is also taking some time off from work and receiving counselling.

Police have declined to reveal the officer's identity fearing it could lead to further problems similar to that which happened in Victoria after two officers were shot dead who had been involved in an earlier police shooting.

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN WEDNESDAY JUNE 7 1989 3

Killing justified, say police

A POLICEMAN who shot dead a man on Monday night was justified in his action, police said yesterday.

Geoffrey Allen Nugent, 32, of Bicton, was shot about 11.30 as he was about to stab a woman he had sexually assaulted.

He died from a bullet wound in the chest.

Police said yesterday the fifth-year constable from Palmyra who shot Nugent had no doubt that the hostage was in serious danger.

Police routine order 6-2 (7) states, in part: "A member to whom a firearm is issued will not use the firearm except where the member believes on reasonable grounds that such use is necessary to protect life or prevent serious

By WAYNE MILLER and HELEN WINTERTON

injury and then only when satisfied that no other reasonable means are available."

Monday's incident is the first police killing of an offender in WA since German tourist Josef Schwab was shot in a gun battle at Fitzroy Crossing in June 1987.

Nugent, who had been a boarder in the Bicton house for three weeks, had also sexually assaulted another woman living in the house.

The second woman raised the alarm when she ran out with her eight-year-old son.

Police were called to the house about 11.30pm and saw Nugent,

who was naked, making threats with a knife while holding on to a woman who was kneeling in front of him.

When police called on him to drop the knife and leave the woman alone, he raised the knife above his head.

Police say there was no doubt Nugent was about to stab the woman when he was shot in the chest by a constable standing about four metres away.

He died almost immediately.

The woman being held by Nugent was taken to hospital with minor cuts.

Neighbour Erin Tomlin, 26, said she had heard a loud noise and a woman scream for help.

After the shooting, police let Miss Tomlin into the house when

she told them she was a trained nurse.

Miss Tomlin said she saw blood on the wall and on the floor.

There was a small bullet hole near Nugent's heart but no exit wound.

With two police officers she tried for about 15 minutes to revive him.

Miss Tomlin said she had heard someone moving in her backyard about two hours before the shooting.

"It sounded like footsteps," she said.

"I saw my cat crouch down as if it was trying to get a better look at something, then the noise stopped."

"I sat very quiet and then the noise started again."

Miss Tomlin said she armed herself with a broom and turned the outside light on but couldn't see anything.

"I went inside and locked the doors and pulled the curtains closed," she said.

Both houses have open access to a side street.

Another neighbour said the women had been renting the house since December.

A police spokesman said the constable who fired the shot had been shaken by the incident and would receive professional counselling.

More than a dozen people, mostly women, and organisations had telephoned to give their support to the constable.

WESTERN



AUSTRALIA

CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

Awarded to Constable John MATTHEWS Number 6884, for meritorious conduct under stressful conditions, while responding to a situation in which a woman was being attacked by a mentally disturbed man armed with a knife at Bickton, during the night of June 5, 1989.

A.P.M.
Commissioner of Police

December 20, 1989

Stress leads to test case

Discharged officer wants police to pay his medical bills

By Roy Gibson

FOR 12 years, David Matthews was a dedicated policeman doing a difficult job well — until the stress got too much for him.

He was discharged on medical grounds in December 1996 but then found the police service had stopped paying his continuing medical expenses for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Now Mr Matthews is fighting back.

In the first case of its type, he has taken Police Commissioner Bob Falconer to the Supreme Court in a legal challenge to police regulations. Justice Michael Murray reserved his decision after hearing submissions yesterday.

The police service pays an officer's hospital and medical expenses from illness or injury arising in the course of duties. The case hinges on whether this should continue after an officer leaves his job.

Mr Matthews, a 37-year-old father of two, of Williams Road, Melville, is classed as totally unfit for work. He joined the police in 1984 and, after service at various police stations, moved to 79 Division — the department's quick response unit.

Two incidents are believed to have caused his problems. During an emer-

gency in June 1989 he was confronted by a naked man, armed with a knife, who was threatening a woman. When the man raised the knife to stab the woman, Mr Matthews had no choice but to fire his revolver.

"As I feared for the life of the woman, I fired a single shot from my service revolver which struck the male person," Mr Matthews said in an affidavit to the Supreme Court. "The female was able to break free and run from the house."

Geoffrey Allen Nugent, 32, of Bicton, died from a gunshot wound to the chest. The official verdict in the case was justifiable homicide.

Mr Matthews said he tried to put the killing behind him and get on with his career. But he was affected by a second incident, in October 1994. He was on

duty the night Ray Gould walked into Central Police Station with a shotgun and held then Det-Sgt Denis Perich hostage for several hours.

Mr Matthews spent seven hours helping to secure an inner cordon around the police station until Mr Gould walked outside and was shot dead by officers from the tactical response group.

"That shooting brought all the memories flooding back and it reached the stage where I just could not go on with my job," he said yesterday.

"I was discharged on medical grounds in December 1996 and I am still receiving professional help.

"I am taking this court action not just for myself but for other officers who are on sick leave or are out on medical grounds."



Mr Matthews

Change urged as former officer loses compo fight

■ By Roy Gibson

THE WA Police Union will push the State Government to change the work status of police after a court ruling that a retired officer was not entitled to medical expenses for a condition resulting from his former duties.

Union president Mike Dean wants police to be classified as civil servants so they would be able to claim workers' compensation from their employer.

"Police Minister Kevin Prince can do it with the flick of a pen," he said yesterday.

Mr Dean's comments were made outside the Supreme Court after Justice Michael Murray rejected a claim by former officer David Matthews that the police service should be responsible for his medical and hospital bills.

Mr Matthews, 37, of Williams Road, Melville, was discharged on medical grounds after 12 years as a police officer in December 1996 because he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mr Matthews, a constable at the time he left the force, is still unfit for work and takes medication and gets counselling.

Two incidents are responsible for his problems. In 1989, he shot dead a man who was about to stab a woman with a knife and in 1994 he saw a gunman shot dead by the tactical response group after a siege at central police station.

Justice Murray said such incidents required police to display courage and judgment beyond that of most citizens.

The judge had to consider Section 1306 of the Police Force Regulations, which said

the commissioner should pay the medical and hospital expenses incurred by a member as a result of injury or illness arising out of or in the course of duties.

Justice Murray ruled that the use of the word "member" meant a serving member — rejecting Mr Matthews' lawyers' submission that it should cover a person who had held office but no longer did so.

Turning to liability under workers' compensation, the judge said police were expressly excluded and had no entitlement to workers' compensation.

Outside the court, a disappointed Mr Matthews said: "I have been treated very poorly and now I have been left to fend for myself."

Mr Dean estimated that another 15 or 16 former police had been hanging on the result of Mr Matthews' case.

SUNDAY Times 7/4/96

Police who kill carry scars: expert

By ANN TREWEEK

POLICE involved in fatal shootings can bear scars for life and often quit within five years, says a Canadian expert in behavioral health.

Dr Wayne Corneil was in Australia recently to talk about post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTS) at a Sydney seminar staged by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission.

On police shootings, he said nobody, in his experience, had walked away without being psychologically or emotionally scarred.

He told *Worksafe News* police were confronted with ambiguous situations.

They were required to make instant decisions with little information while facing a dangerous, life-threatening dilemma.

In Canada now, police underwent training which simulated the use of weapons under duress.

"They use scenario-based situations using videos where officers have to walk through a maze, for example, and make quick decisions about if their attacker is a good guy

or a bad guy — and if their life is being threatened.

"All this helps determine if a firearm is to be used," Dr Corneil said.

People tended to forget that where officers discharged a firearm, and someone was injured or killed, they had to live with that for their whole lives.

"In my experience with Canadian police, this has tremendous impact," he said.

"Often, within five years of the incident, the officer concerned has left the force, usually with mental health problems, and we arrange counselling for them and their families."

In WA an inquest resumes in June into the fatal police shooting of Ray Gould — who died in October 1994 after the Tactical Response Group fired nearly 40 shots at him following a siege.

Police did not wish to comment, but the acting manager of health and welfare services, Ms Dora Volleman, said the department's usual response was to arrange counselling after a major incident.

From the Wife's Perspective by Robyn Matthews

I met David John Matthews whilst I was working as a Police Officer at Fremantle Police Station in the late 1980's. We became close soon after he shot a man dead whilst on duty in Bicton in 1989. He saved a woman's life.

We married in 1993 and had our first child that same year. David seemed happy enough, but I wasn't searching for warning signs..... In 1995, he broke down. He could not stop crying. He told me that he could never go back to work. He asked me to telephone his boss, his police partner and his mum, to tell them that he could no longer be a policeman. Every time he placed his gun in his holster, he was reminded of the night he shot a man and he was terrified that he might have to shoot someone else. He was a mess.

It was a horrible, very scary and emotional time for both of us. Dave couldn't leave the house. He cried all the time. We panicked about our financial dilemma and put our house on the market. Life became an emotional rollercoaster. I kept hoping that Dave would just get better and everything would be ok. Money worries became a daily norm, a miserable thing that we still live with every day, 17 years on.

Some years later, just after the birth of our third child, I left my part-time position in the Police Force to care for the children. David had been prescribed anti-depressant drugs to "treat" his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The drugs dulled his existence. He slept away eleven years of his life, did very little and rarely showed signs of happiness. When he wasn't asleep he was often highly stressed, anxious or angry. During all this time, David was receiving a disability pension from the government, equating to about \$100 per week! I was bringing up a family and working as much as I had time for as a music teacher.

About six years ago David became gravely ill as a direct result of taking a particular anti-depressant drug. His cholesterol reached 19 (21 is critical) and he was admitted to hospital and removed from all medication (cold turkey). The result of that was an emotional nightmare. My husband suffered very badly for several months, as his body became accustomed to the lack of medication. His family suffered too. I feel extremely sad now as I remember that time.

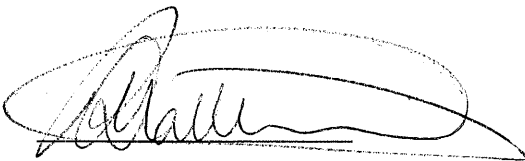
David then started to take on the role of the main carer of our children, doing the mundane tasks that women usually complain about, shopping, cooking, washing, cleaning and driving the kids to and from school and sporting venues. I increased my music teaching hours and now I spend little time with my children, working odd hours and missing out on afternoons with them. Dave does not enjoy his "motherly" role at all.

David doesn't cry as often. He doesn't sleep as much. He is still very easily stressed and easy to anger. He is still suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and I am convinced that he will suffer for the rest of his life. He still earns \$100 per week through centre link and we still struggle to pay our bills. Our kids have learnt not to ask for much. They have never enjoyed the luxury of an overseas holiday, none of us have. I am almost forty eight years old. David is fifty one.

If David had not been involved in that terrible incident back in 1989, he would most likely be working at the rank of inspector, still employed by the Western Australian Police Department. He would be earning a very good wage and he would have a nice healthy superannuation fund to look forward to when he retired. David now has no superannuation, no future financial security at all.

I married a devoted, proud Policeman, a really happy man. That same man is not able to work or to earn a reasonable wage. His life, my life and our children's lives are very different to what we all would have hoped for and believed possible a long time ago. None of what has happened to Dave was his fault. He did his job, saved a life and in turn, wrecked his own. He is a good man with a very kind heart. He is a loving man and a very good father. He is a sad man. I wish I could make him happy and just make the past go away.

He is very bitter about the complete lack of interest, care and support from the Police Department with very good reason. Something needs to change. Someone has to look after the good guy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robyn', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Robyn Diane Matthews