

BY THE TIME HER CHILDREN peered through the bedroom door and discovered her body, she had been dead for several hours.

Her petite corpse, dressed in a summer nightie, was propped up against some pillows in the narrow bed of the spare room. Her hand was raised in a claw. Her face, partially lit by the morning light through frosted louvres, was fixed in a grimace.

The dead woman's small son fled to his father in the back bedroom of the flat in Bonney Avenue, Clayfield, in Brisbane's inner north-east. The eldest daughter, who had also come to the bedroom doorway, stopped and stared in shock, then ran to the phone and called the ambulance.

It was about 8.15 a.m. on Saturday 4 March 1972.

In the bed in that cramped, airless room was the late Shirley Margaret Brifman, thirty-five, former prostitute and brothel madam, and informant and lover to senior corrupt police in Queensland and New South Wales.

The year before, she had blown the whistle on the bent coppers she had been paying off for over a decade, agreeing to a live national television interview and effectively signing her own death warrant.

In less than five weeks she was due to appear as the chief witness against a senior Queensland detective in a perjury case.

She knew it was coming and that she had to die. She knew too much, and had said too much. Brifman had been given an ultimatum by the former cops she'd once called her close friends – either commit suicide, or we'll kill your children.

Brifman had overdosed many times in the past. But against all odds she had continued to survive.

Only hours before her kids found the body in a state of rigor mortis, Brifman received a visitor to the flat in Bonney Avenue. She knew someone was coming to deliver her a cocktail of drugs that would finally do the job properly.

Brifman and the visitor talked quietly in the foyer of the first-floor flat, then she was handed a small amber jar of lethal drugs. The visitor left around midnight.

So Shirley Brifman, crying and shaking with fright, swallowed the contents of the jar, stuffed it under the mattress in the spare room, reclined on a bank of pillows in the dark, and saved her children.

Later that chaotic Saturday, when the police and ambulance officers and coroner's officials had left the scene, the shock of her mother's sudden death finally hit Shirley's eldest daughter.

Mary Anne Brifman, just fifteen years old, issued a scream of grief so loud it disturbed the elderly neighbours in the house out the back.

Shirley Margaret Brifman would be buried in an expensive casket in her home town of Atherton in Far North Queensland. There would be no inquest into her death. Her official 'suicide' file would vanish into police headquarters' archives.

But her death, and her name, would continue to haunt those men who destroyed her.

1940s-1950s

The Probationary

The storm blew in from the west around 6.10 p.m.

It had been a humid Sunday, and the wind and rain roared over the tree fringes of Mount Coot-tha and down into the bowl of the inner-Brisbane suburbs of Bardon, Rosalie and Paddington, strafing the ridges and gullies and the suburbs' timber and corrugated iron houses. Other dangerous cells were ranging across greater Brisbane, throwing lightning to earth.

Trees were felled. Rectangles of roof iron lifted off and sliced through electrical wires. Flower beds were beaten down.

By 6.30 p.m. the storm had passed, and residents of the city's inner west, their evening dinner interrupted, emerged to inspect the damage. It was 16 January 1949.

Up on the neighbouring ridge of Petrie Terrace, 110 young police cadets, in training at the police depot – an imposing brown-brick edifice and its attendant two-storey wooden sleeping dormitory facing the Brisbane River and the wild pubs and bordellos of South Brisbane – had had their tea in the ground floor canteen.

For nine weeks the recruits, young men from all over the state, had lived shoulder to shoulder. Most had little formal education. Some had worked as post office boys, or on the land on the family property, or behind the counter in grocery stores, before entering the machine of Queensland's postwar constabulary.

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The Americans had left Brisbane a few years earlier, and the town had settled back into its quasi-rural mediocrity. Pike Brothers menswear in Queen Street no longer had a need for its specialist military cutter, and orders for ‘Imperial’ winter coats dropped to nothing.

In the wake of war, Brisbane was forced to stare, once again, at its own face – plain and unremarkable; a sub-tropical tableau that, for a few years in the 1940s, had doubled in population with the arrival of the US military, and become something resembling glamorous. The city – all ox-blood iron awnings, sandstone banks and the Salvation Army Band playing in King George Square – was inexplicably at the forefront of things that mattered in the world. And it was crawling with US military men in their expensive and beautifully made salmon-hued uniforms. Hollywood no longer belonged on the screens of the Regent and Her Majesty’s and the Metro. It was living and breathing on the streets of Brisbane.

Then the chic evaporated, and Brisbane went back to being Brisbane, and in the residue of a city once bristling with wartime strength and force and protection, and missing some of its young women, caught in the slipstream of the Americans’ departure, came an inevitable vacuum. The Queensland capital needed to firm up its local police force.

So on that Sunday night, in the aftermath of the storm, the city cleansed and steaming, the police cadets at the depot returned to their quarters – a long, rectangular dormitory crammed with steel cots and lockers.

Some of the men were nervous. From this night on, there would be no more lectures from former school teacher Senior Constable Merv Callaghan. No more marching with old rifles on the parade ground. No more memorising and tests.

For those several weeks they had risen at 6 a.m., made their beds with precision, attended classes on policing and the law, performed physical training exercises, and retired to their cots by 9 p.m.

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They were not permitted to socialise, despite the Christmas and New Year season. They could not catch a quick tram into town and buy yuletide gifts for their families, their girlfriends. They had to sit through fifty-two lectures before their training was done.

As the storm headed out into Moreton Bay, the men joked and smoked, or contemplated the view of the parade ground through the lattice on the verandah of the dormitory. They had, the day before, been issued their navy police uniforms: two pairs of trousers, two shirts, four detachable collars, a tunic, a tie, a white helmet and a pair of black boots. Each was also handed a wooden baton and a pair of handcuffs, some so ancient they didn't function.

On that weekend, they made sure their collars were starched at the local cleaners. That Sunday night after tea, a young cadet, Terence (Terry) Murray Lewis, twenty, sat on his bed and buffed his new boots.

Just a few months earlier, he'd been manning a counter at the Main Roads Commission's Liquid Fuel Control Board office at the corner of Adelaide and Turbot streets. And before that he'd worked as a messenger boy for the US army, Small Ships Branch, Water Transport Division, across the river at Bulimba during the war. And prior to that he'd manned another counter, at Pike Brothers menswear. And another, at Greer and Jamieson clothiers, before that.

Lewis had been looking for direction, for some semblance of a career, since he left school at the age of twelve following the separation of his father and mother. By chance, at the Liquid Fuel Control Board, opposite the Roma Street police station, he'd found one.

He'd got to talking with former detectives and constables who worked with him at the Fuel Board, and they suggested he join the police. Young Lewis was a little in awe of one of the men – Walter (Wally) Wright. Walter had been a detective. Another was Stewart (Stewie) Willis, a constable based at Nundah police station who'd retired early due to injury.

'Why don't you go up to the police depot and join?' they suggested.

‘They’re desperate for keen young men,’ they told him. ‘If you can breathe in and out, you’ll qualify.’

Lewis was tall, over 180 centimetres, and weighed in at 67 kilograms. He was living in Hawthorne with his mother and stepfather, though he would never think of him, let alone refer to him, as his stepfather. Lewis played no sport. He had few, if any, male friends. As a child of the Depression, he was tight with his finances. Recently, though, he’d met a pretty young woman, Hazel Gould, who had come into the Fuel Board for the motor loss assessor she worked for.

He was tired of his living arrangements, and of working on the busy counter. He saw no future for himself. But he did quite literally see the Roma Street police station every day when he came to and left work. And suddenly it made sense. The police force. It was structured, and its administrative demands – record-keeping, diaries, logbooks, charge sheets – would complement his fastidious nature. It was regular pay. It would take him away from counters.

And there was Hazel, sixteen, who would soon become his first ever formal girlfriend, to consider.

So colleagues Wright and Willis took Lewis up past the rail yards to the depot on the Petrie Terrace rise, where he met two sergeants and lecturer Callaghan, and had his medical. He was a little underweight, but they needed new recruits. Although he was twenty, he had the face of a hurt, vulnerable boy. And about him, too, was a vague aura of disappointment. He’d already been out working in the world for eight years, and it seemed to have prematurely wearied him.

He was estranged from his father, who was still living in Ipswich after his wife abandoned him. Lewis’s mother – originally from Brisbane and a part of the large Hanlon family, prominent in the city’s horse training and racing circles – never took to Ipswich. It was devoid of glamour. It was too far from the charmed racing suburbs of Ascot and Hamilton and, specifically, the Doomben and Eagle Farm racecourses.

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Lewis, then ten years old, came home from school one day to find his mother and only sister, two years younger, had simply disappeared. He waited alone until his father came home from work at the Ipswich Railway Workshops.

The boy was offered no explanation as to the absence of his mother and sister. It left him feeling bemused. Rejected. 'I realised it would have been her fault, not his,' Lewis reflects on the separation and subsequent divorce. 'I can't even remember her [ever] kissing me, actually. I can't remember it.' A year later he, too, made the decision to leave his father behind, and joined his mother in Brisbane, where he was relegated to a cot bed on the side verandah in Hawthorne.

Lewis had a confused concept of family, until the police took him in. He entered the police depot as a probationary constable on 8 November 1948.

The staff at the Fuel Board farewelled him with the gifts of a travelling bag and a wallet.

Those weeks of training and cramming and neatly making his bed at the police depot eventually paid off. On 7 January 1949, he sat his probationary examination in law and police duties. (Define 'offence'. Define 'assault'. Define 'arrest'.) Lewis secured fifty-seven and a half marks out of eighty. He came third in his class.

On the night of the storm, at lights out, Lewis knew that when he woke the following day he would be stepping into a new life. On a Monday morning in mid-January, he and his fellow recruits would be formally sworn in as officers of the Queensland police force and issued their official officer numbers, fitted on their epaulettes.

His ambitions at that moment may have extended no further than to one day work in plain clothes – like former Detective Walter Wright from the Fuel Board – down at the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) headquarters in a cluster of old church outbuildings at the corner of Elizabeth and George streets, the city.

There, bracketed by the state's grandiose Treasury and Executive

buildings, once stood the Cathedral of St John, demolished in 1904. The cathedral's outbuildings, a rectory and church institute built in the 1890s, were soon seconded by the CIB, and detectives for decades had toiled away in their brick and VJ-boarded warrens, cold in winter and sweltering in summer. In this one-time holy place, with its narrow arched windows and arched doorways, came and went the city's underclass: prostitutes and their bludgers, petty thieves and the occasional cross-dresser, murderers and vagrants. Any notion of sacred soil was scotched in 1930 when a new by-law decreed that no public meetings or preaching be held in the vicinity of the Executive Gardens – fashioned on the grounds of the former cathedral and abutting CIB headquarters – without written permission.

Lewis, if he'd been allowed to leave the police depot that stormy Sunday night, might have strolled down to CIB headquarters and come across Anthony (Tony) Murphy, twenty-one, a tough and ambitious officer from Brisbane's working-class Yeerongpilly.

Murphy also left school early and worked as a telegram boy in the post office at Amberley RAAF base, eight kilometres south-west of Ipswich. In the early 1940s 'Amberley Field' was a hive of activity – constructing and repairing aircraft, training, hosting US troops. And the post office was authorised to issue money orders and old age and invalid pensions and handled personal mail that went out all over the world.

In one instance, the alert Murphy noticed that money was missing from a particular envelope and he established that a work colleague was forging his signature. The police were called in. It was a turning point in Murphy's life.

Shortly after, Murphy stopped off at a barber shop for a trim one afternoon and he noticed in the newspaper an advertisement for police cadets. He decided to join up. It was 1944. By 1949, after a stint in the Photographic Section, Murphy was already a rising star in the force.

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Lewis might also have encountered the locally famous Sub-inspector Francis (Frank) Bischof, forty-four, a huge, imposing figure both in the corridors and hutches of CIB headquarters and among his men.

At 188 centimetres and 102 kilograms, Bischof had been a part of the CIB since 1933 and had a habit of positioning himself at the forefront of the city's major criminal investigations. Wherever there was murder and death, there was Bischof.

Born on the family dairy farm at Gowrie Junction outside Toowoomba, up on the range 127 kilometres west of Brisbane, the 'Big Fella', a Mason, was working on a fatal house fire and the mystery of a corpse found on Stradbroke Island as Lewis prepared for his induction up at the police depot.

Another former Toowoomba boy, Glendon (Glen) Patrick Hallahan, also the son of a dairyman, was at that moment working as an aircraft apprentice at Wagga Wagga RAAF base, 452 kilometres south-west of Sydney.

Within two years he would abandon the apprenticeship, return to Queensland due to a family tragedy, and take up odd jobs before joining the police force and becoming one of the state's most celebrated detectives alongside Bischof, Murphy, and Lewis.

Down in Adelaide, thirty-three-year-old police detective Raymond (Ray) Wells Whitrod was having a busy Christmas and New Year. Whitrod had been a South Australian detective before the war, and after serving as a navigator in the RAAF in Europe and North Africa, he returned to police duties in Adelaide.

As new recruit Lewis was performing drills on the Petrie Terrace parade ground, Whitrod was involved in high-speed police car chases across the City of Churches, and investigating the drowning suicide of a young Australian digger who had left a note, his great coat, and shoes at the end of Henley Jetty.

And up in Atherton, on the elevated tableland inland from Cairns in Far North Queensland, a young, petite, athletic brunette called

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Shirley Emerson was celebrating her thirteenth birthday. She loved ball games and fashion. She was a Girl Guide. She was one of thirteen Emerson children.

But for all her external vivacity and obsession with clothes, she struggled through an impoverished and itinerant childhood. Her father was an alcoholic and several of her older brothers could look forward to run-ins with the law. And her mother, the child of a relatively well-to-do family from the coast south of Brisbane, would look at her lot in Far North Queensland, and her pitiful husband, and wonder where she took a wrong turn.

Shirley Emerson's life would intersect spectacularly with those of Bischof and Murphy, with Hallahan and Lewis and Whitrod. But not yet. In January 1949, she was just a child enjoying a Christmas holiday, a girl on the brink of adolescence, during which she would become Atherton's belle of the ball, its princess, chased by suitors and sartorially imitated by her female peers. All that beauty, before she ran away to nearby Cairns and made a singular decision that would determine her destiny and tragically shorten her life.

And just a month after Lewis started his police training in late 1948, the first-term Country Party state member for Nanango – Kingaroy peanut farmer Johannes Bjelke-Petersen – refused a parliamentary salary rise and to join the parliamentary pension scheme. He said the pension, in particular, 'savours too much of feathering one's own nest'. 'I would not touch it with the proverbial forty-foot pole,' Bjelke-Petersen reportedly said.

Back at the police depot on Petrie Terrace, Terry Lewis, son of a railway storeman, rose by 6 a.m. on Monday 17 January, and dutifully made his bed. He had breakfast in the canteen then dressed in his constable's uniform.

Later that morning, the new recruits entered the lecture room of the police depot and were asked to take the oath by Chief Inspector John Smith. (Even the cadets had heard the rumour that Smith had

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changed his name by deed poll from ‘Schmidt’ after the war.) The men were told that each and every one of them had an opportunity to rise to the top of the Queensland police force. There was no casual banter or congratulation. With that, the chief inspector left.

‘Get down to Roma Street,’ they were ordered.

The new constables proceeded outside to Petrie Terrace. Across the pubs and shopfronts, residents of Rosalie and Bardon and Paddington were cleaning up after the storm, gathering broken branches, inspecting damaged roofs and attempting, in vain, to right fallen flowers.

Lewis – daunted, conspicuous in his new uniform (the trousers were a little baggy, the jacket too tight) in the punishing humidity – and his colleagues hopped a city-bound tram – no fare, police officers travelled for free – and went directly to Roma Street police station, in view of Lewis’s old counter at the Liquid Fuel Control Board, and reported for duty.

Within moments, Constable T.M. Lewis (No. 3773 on his uniform; No. 4677 when mentioned in any correspondence) was walking down Albert Street and into the crosshatched streets and noon shadows of Brisbane city’s heart. He was officially on duty.

At some point in the next few months, he secured an old and unused 362-page leather-bound government minutes book and began a diary of personal arrests.

On page one he wrote a brief summary of his antecedents, schooling, and employment history. On page two he glued in his typed farewell card from the Liquid Fuel Control Board. On page three he affixed his final examination paper from the police depot.

And on page four he recorded the details of an early arrest, William Joseph Thornhill, twenty-one years of age: ‘That on the 11th day of June 1949, at Brisbane, in a Public Place, namely the Hong Kong Café in Queen Street, he did behave in a disorderly manner.’

Terence Murray Lewis was on his way.

Constable Lewis on the Beat

In his first few weeks as a constable, Lewis was based out of the old two-storey Roma Street police station. The basement housed the Brisbane Police District, the next floor the Traffic Branch, and the top floor the Licensing Branch (including a ‘wet bar’ – beer only).

Roma Street was dubbed ‘The Order of St Francis’, for its heavy representation of Roman Catholics. Similarly, the Woolloongabba CIB was called ‘The Vatican’.

Lewis was quickly seconded to traffic and performed point duty on several of the city’s major intersections. He oscillated between the 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. shifts.

With the majority of business concentrated in the city grid, commanded down its centre by Queen Street, Lewis was keeping order in a hive of trams, cars, lorries in and out of the Roma Street markets, and pedestrians. Brisbane’s population was around 442,000.

On point duty, Lewis worked alone. And despite the mundaneness of the task, he managed to collar a few drunks and vagrants whose faces would become familiar to him over the years. There was Bill Millwood, forty, who behaved in an indecent manner in Albert Street. And Ed Ebzery, forty-four, who in Queen Street called Lewis a ‘fucking choco cunt’.

All the while, he was getting to know and understand the rhythm of the city and its people. He became acquainted with members of the legal fraternity and journalists, with shopkeepers and business operators. He began to understand who drank where, the patterns of vagrancy and begging alms, the different complexions of the city during the day and at night.

Not far away, up at the police depot, a former London police officer – Jack Reginald Herbert, twenty-four – was jumping through the same training hoops as Lewis had only months before, eating in

CONSTABLE LEWIS ON THE BEAT

the same canteen and bunking down in the evening in the latticed dormitory on Petrie Terrace.

Herbert had drifted to Australia after the war, keen for sunshine and adventure, and had kicked around Victoria and hitchhiked to Toowoomba with a mate before deciding to join the police in Brisbane.

He was a restless man, always on the lookout for a better deal. ‘Until now I had been a young bloke in a hurry to be somewhere else,’ he reflected in his memoir. ‘But I knew that sooner or later I would need a place to settle down. I never imagined that place would be Brisbane but at the same time I knew I hadn’t been happy anywhere else.’

In December 1949, he spotted a young redhead across the dance floor at the famed Cloudland Ballroom in Bowen Hills. Her name was Peggy, and she was a typist at the Immigration Department offices in the city. It was Peggy who gave the restless Herbert a reason to stay in Brisbane.

By mid-1950 Lewis found himself behind the handlebars of a police motorcycle. Here, he encountered some action.

His first mention in the press as a policeman came after a wild, sixty-miles-per-hour chase on 25 August. At about 7.40 p.m., Lewis and another motorcycle cop noticed three youths travelling in a utility truck along Main Street, Kangaroo Point. The vehicle did not have its headlights on.

They stopped the driver – Norman Gleeson, twenty, a seaman – who said the truck lights had fused and he had left his driver’s licence at home. Also in the truck were John Croke, seventeen, and Alexander Philp, twenty, both labourers. Lewis said they’d follow Gleeson home to check his licence.

The truck drove off at twenty-five miles per hour but soon hit forty and the chase was on. Gleeson sped through stop signs, crossed to the opposite side of the road on numerous occasions, swept in front of trams and narrowly missed a group of pedestrians in Fortitude Valley.

Lewis repeatedly drew alongside the vehicle and shouted to the

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driver to stop, but Gleeson attempted to run him off the road. Croke then hurled three milk bottles at their pursuers and one shattered on impact. The youths were ultimately apprehended after several hair-raising miles through the suburbs of Spring Hill, Morningside and Woolloongabba.

The chase was news: THREE YOUTHS FINED AFTER WILD JOY RIDE. After nineteen months in the job, Constable T.M. Lewis had made the newspapers.

He also received, as a result of that job, his first official favourable citation from the chief inspector: dated 25 September 1950, Lewis and Duncanson ‘of the Traffic Branch, Brisbane, are commended for the good work performed by them in these cases. Have this memorandum noted by the Police concerned, and returned.’ It was signed ‘J. Smith’.

Over the next two months Lewis continued to pursue more drunk drivers across the city before noticing gazetted vacancies in the CIB.

The recruitment drive was part of a major restructure of the CIB, courtesy of a six-month European study tour of police methods – particularly those of Scotland Yard – taken the previous year by Brisbane CIB chief Tom Harrold and Sub-inspector Frank Bischof. The new crime-busting techniques were to be implemented by early 1951.

Down at CIB headquarters they were putting the finishing touches to a new ‘information room’, where detectives and radio operators would control the movements of squad cars across Brisbane. As part of the fresh plans, the public would be able to phone the CIB – at no cost – and report suspected crimes or suspicious individuals. The plan was based on Scotland Yard’s revolutionary 999 system.

In addition, the Survey Branch of the Lands Department was preparing the most comprehensive map of Brisbane and its suburbs – from highway to back alley – ever attempted. It would be installed in the information room and affixed with variously coloured small flags apportioned to different types of offences.

HALLAHAN COMES HOME

As the *Courier-Mail* reported, ‘The information officer will then be able to tell at a glance where more concentrated police effort is required and will switch cars from quiet areas to the one needing attention.’

It was the type of exacting detail that would have excited Lewis. He had, to that point, been a diligent officer. He kept his police diaries up to date, continued recording arrests in his own personal logbook, which had reached fourteen pages, and he’d been commended by the upper hierarchy.

He was only twenty-two in November 1950, when he went to work with the big boys in the old church buildings at the corner of Elizabeth and George streets. He would leave the stiff-collared uniform behind and replace it with a jacket and tie.

And Lewis would no longer work alone, but be partnered on jobs – theft, robbery, assault, prostitution, even murder – with fellow CIB officers. One of the first of those partners would be Tony Murphy.

Hallahan Comes Home

As Lewis was chasing hoodlums across Brisbane on his police motorcycle, Glendon Patrick Hallahan’s dream of a future in the RAAF evaporated when his father fell gravely ill back in Toowoomba. Hallahan returned home from the air force base in Wagga Wagga to help out with the family ice and milk run, but the business soon foundered.

The tall, dapper Hallahan was just eighteen years old and even then was showing a restless nature, constantly on the alert for greener grass. He would chase it for the rest of his life.

After the family business was sold, he took work as a labourer with the Forestry Department and was based in Cooran, a small, pretty village nestled in a valley between Noosa and Gympie.

Cooran had the ubiquitous railway hotel, a school of arts, a king street. In the 1920s its bananas were proudly displayed at the Brisbane exhibition every August.

The town also had a plethora of saw mills, a toy factory, a joinery, and a thriving dairy industry. By the time Hallahan arrived, the town sported its very own branch of the Queensland Band of Hope Young People's Temperance Union.

Hallahan, as with Lewis and Murphy, hopped from job to job looking for a purpose. Unlike the early work of those men, however, he immersed himself in physical labour. He would soon leave Cooran and try his hand at cutting sugarcane up the Queensland coast.

It was unusual, given his intelligence, and his aborted bid for a RAAF apprenticeship. There was plenty of employment for canecutters after the Second World War, but it was serious, back-breaking labour, working in gangs for more than forty hours a week with a seventy-centimetre wood-handled cane knife.

Around 1950, farmers began burning their sugarcane crops prior to harvest to expunge them of vermin and rubbish, but the stalks were sticky with sugar syrup and the cutters would finish the day covered in soot.

At some moment, bearing down on a clutch of five-metre cane stalks with his machete, brushing away bees attracted to the sugar, a career in the police force entered Hallahan's mind.

Sub-inspector Bischof Investigates a Gross Fraud

Labor Premier Edward (Ned) Hanlon secured another term after the 1950 state election thanks to his pre-installed gerrymander, an act that would similarly advantage the Country Party if and when it ever took power after seemingly endless years of Labor domination.

SUB-INSPECTOR BISCHOF INVESTIGATES A GROSS FRAUD

But the purse-lipped, autocratic Hanlon, his health in the early stages of decline, came under ferocious attack from members of the Opposition, in particular the eloquent businessman and leader of the Liberal Party, Thomas Hiley, over an apparent irregularity in election ballot papers at a polling booth in the riverside suburb of Bulimba, just east of town.

As the political furore was building in the final weeks of 1950, Lewis was ensconced in the CIB and assisting in his first big arrest as the new boy in the branch.

The defendant, apart from committing dozens of break and enters, had stolen 174 pounds from the trustees of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society, Southern Queensland District. He was prosecuted and jailed.

Among the officers on the case were Detective Senior Constable A.B. (Abe) Duncan, Detective Sergeant W. Beer, Police Constable T.M. (Terry) Lewis, and Police Constable A. (Tony) Murphy. All officers received for their work a letter of appreciation from Inspector Jim Donovan, a Catholic.

Before Christmas, Lewis would nab some car thieves, nick two men who had stolen eight tons of firewood, and arrest a Moorooka housemaid for stabbing a man with a butcher's knife after a party fuelled by cheap wine.

Lewis loved the CIB work, relished being around tough senior police like Bischof, Norm Bauer, Don (Buck) Buchanan, and Syd Currey. He worked obsessively, putting in long hours. He was by no means physically imposing with his thin frame and his narrow, sloped shoulders, but he discovered a talent for observation – vehicle plates, items of clothing, faces – and was in thrall of the architecture of hierarchy. Throughout his career he would always refer to senior officers by their rank, friends or otherwise.

From the outset he was perceived by many in the branch as akin to the kid who always came top of the class but desired to hang around

the tough guys. By association, that gruff and powerful exterior might rub off on him. Some instantly assessed Lewis as ‘weak as piss’. He was the runner, the messenger boy, the fresh recruit who dashed out at lunchtime for pies for the senior men.

The rumour in the branch at the time was that the only reason the powerful, punting-addicted Bischof had any interest at all in the young constable was that Lewis was connected, via his mother, to the Hanlon family – rich, as it was, with horse trainers, jockeys, and aficionados of the track.

In January 1951, Bischof – always available for investigations with a political connection – was put in charge of the Bulimba poll fraud case. Following the 1950 state election, the Liberal Party candidate for Bulimba had asked for a recount and the issue was investigated by the acting chief justice, who concluded in a 10,000-word report that corrupt practices in relation to the vote had taken place. Eleven fake ballot papers were discovered.

Over the next two months the government and police were criticised for the tardiness of Bischof’s investigation, then, on the morning of 9 March, Queensland’s chief electoral officer, long-time public servant Bernard McGuire, was arrested at his home in Kedron Park and charged with having forged a ballot paper.

McGuire would face three trials over the fraud, with each jury disagreeing and a *nolle prosequi* entered. He took some long service leave in the aftermath of the drama.

What the Bulimba case ignited, however, was an enduring enmity between Liberal leader Hiley and the police force, in particular Frank Bischof.

In parliament in March, Hiley baited Bischof, hinting that the inspector had ignored evidence of a ballot paper fraud in another electorate. Then, on the evening of 4 April 1951, at a function in support of a Liberal by-election candidate, Hiley unleashed an extraordinary attack on the police and the government.

THE CLEVER MR WHITROD

In a forty-five-minute tirade, he declared that Labor had protected major SP bookmakers from police action. He added that the government was misusing the police force and telling them how to conduct political investigations. He further alleged that one of the state's biggest SP bookies was a member of the Police Boys' Welfare Club and a personal friend of Premier Hanlon.

'Every politician knows that the handling of SP in this state has become a highly political racket,' Hiley reportedly said.

He continued his attack the following week, naming an Ipswich SP bookie – the brother of a state Labor member of parliament – who had been 'protected'. The police force, Hiley said, wanted to do its job but had to 'close its eyes' when an issue involved politics. He said some SP bookies were 'the Royal favourites' and enjoyed protection.

'One of the operators in Ipswich is a J. Marsden,' Hiley said. 'When I noticed that Marsden was untouched though every other operator in Ipswich was put through the hoops, I wrote to the Police Commissioner. Shortly afterwards Marsden for the first time was convicted.'

Hiley was hinting at the existence of a so-called Premier's Fund – a slush fund used to finance favoured candidates in state elections. The word was that the money – cash only – was provided by SP bookies, collected by the private secretaries of ministers of the day, and delivered in black bags to the premier's office.

After his twin-forked verbal spray, Hiley was naturally criticised by the government, but a slow fuse that would burn across decades had been lit, and Hiley and Bischof would memorably collide again in the future.

The Clever Mr Whitrod

Back from the war, where, during his two tours of duty as a RAAF navigator, he specialised in coastal surveillance, Raymond Wells Whitrod returned to the Adelaide CIB. He was war weary.

Whitrod's two small sons barely recognised their father, and he had difficulty adjusting back to civilian life. In the CIB, he recognised some old faces and saw many more new ones.

Then, out of the blue, he received a phone call from a well-known Adelaide lawyer named Bernard Tuck. Whitrod recalled the conversation in an interview:

[Tuck] said, 'I don't suppose you know what I want to talk to you about'. And I said, 'Yes, I do . . . You'll be looking for some good field investigators . . . I'm one of the best.' And he said, 'How did you know that I'd be looking for field investigators?' I said, 'Well, Mr Tuck, you were a very prominent lawyer in Adelaide. You suddenly disappeared . . . You closed down your law firm. Nobody knows where you've gone to.' I said, 'It coincides with the creation of the security service [in 1949].' I said, '. . . Blind Freddy would have worked out where you were . . .' He said, 'Well nobody else has worked that out.'

By coincidence, too, the first director-general of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) was Geoffrey Reed, a South Australian Supreme Court justice. As a detective, Whitrod had, on many occasions, given evidence in various cases before Justice Reed.

Whitrod was hired by ASIO. He was excited. It was, he thought, work of national importance. The family moved to Sydney and Whitrod began duties in ASIO headquarters – a one-time four-storey brothel known as Agincourt. It was one of the last great harbourside mansions left standing in Wylde Street, Potts Point, after the resumption of land and construction of a nearby graving dock. Whitrod thought it was a perfect home for ASIO – built of sandstone and flanked on three sides by the naval dockyard.

He was put in charge of a small team of investigators, some returned veterans and former police like himself – the best of the state forces – and his brief was to locate the organiser of a wartime Russian spy ring based in Australia. The counter-espionage team was

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named B2. Whitrod's men were keen, enthusiastic, and patriotic in the aftermath of victory in Europe. In a pre-Cold War environment, they rightly assessed that Australia's next enemy would be the Soviet Union.

B2 worked with a British MI5 liaison officer and they charted a dozen or so members of the supposed spy ring, shadowing local members of the Communist Party (controversially banned by Prime Minister Robert Menzies in October 1950) and its leadership tier. Whitrod used his own family car for these subterfuge missions.

One of the team's primary targets was journalist Fedor Nossov, the Sydney-based correspondent for Soviet news agency TASS. He had a flat in Kings Cross and came under intense surveillance. Whitrod even arranged a crude bug to be installed in the flat, without the permission of the director-general. A team member and his wife rented the apartment above Nossov and had drilled a hole down through the floorboards and into Nossov's plaster ceiling to secure the listening device. At one point, in a comedy of errors, Whitrod had to get the caretaker to open Nossov's flat to clean the plaster crumbs off the carpet.

The brief was not met – years later it was proved that Nossov was indeed a Soviet spy – but the experience was Whitrod's first in a managerial capacity. He liked being in charge and absorbed the lessons it taught him.

Despite failing to expose the spy ring, Whitrod's work was noticed by his superiors, and he was transferred to Melbourne.

Debutante

Lewis and Murphy were working together in the CIB; Hallahan was about to enter the police depot on Petrie Terrace for police training, physically hardened from a season cutting cane; and up in the little

town of Atherton, Far North Queensland, young Shirley Emerson was about to make her debut in the region's hectic ball season.

She was one of thirteen children, had many friends and loved to socialise. While her brothers – timber workers and labourers – were in and out of court on minor charges of theft and public drunkenness, Shirley left behind her squalid life, if only for a few hours, dancing at balls and functions across the tableland and as far away as Cairns.

The Emersons were prone to accidents. Shirley's tumble from a bicycle earned a line in the local newspaper. In 1940, a brother, Vic, lacerated his foot with a saw and was treated in hospital.

The eldest Emerson child, Horace, twenty-five, was seriously injured after being crushed by a log at Danbulla, north-east of Atherton, and spent nine months in the local hospital. However, one leg healed shorter than the other and Horace was soon back in hospital, this time in Brisbane, for corrective surgery. He died following the operation, and his case was subject to a government inquiry. It was a big working-class family, well versed in hard luck and misfortune.

Shirley, however, maintained a sunny outlook: 'I was so active. I was never at home,' she would later describe her youth in a newspaper report. 'I would travel sixty or seventy miles a night to a dance and I would go dancing six nights a week. My girlhood was one of the happiest imaginable. I wish I could have it all over again. I wouldn't change it – or only a few things.'

What would become, with time, one of the highlights of her life was the military debutante ball in Atherton on Thursday 3 July 1952.

On that night little Shirley led the debutantes, partnered by a Private Bourke. According to the *Cairns Post*, she wore 'an exquisite frock of *broderie anglais* over ice-white satin. The fitted bodice had puffed sleeves and a portrait neckline with a wide shawl collar and her skirt featured voluminous fullness. Short mittens of matching material with a deep

frill at the wrist had the edge of the frill cut to show the broderie pattern. She wore a cape of fur fabric.'

Later in life she would tell a newspaper reporter, 'The military ball at Atherton was the one I remember best. I was the littlest deb there and I was chosen Queen of the Debs and Belle of the Ball.

'I was so scared I couldn't believe it when the brigadier who received the debs congratulated me. Life is what you make it. You can have plenty of happy moments, and you can have bad ones too.'

The Ascent of Detective Lewis

It was a quiet Sunday night on 23 March 1952, when Detective Lewis, now stationed at the Woolloongabba CIB, and Detective Merv 'Hoppy' Hopgood made a routine patrol of the back streets of South Brisbane.

In less than four weeks Lewis would marry his one and only sweetheart, Hazel Gould. She had secured a job as an usherette at the Tivoli Theatre, opposite the Brisbane City Hall, with its pitched roof and broad balcony facing Albert Street, when Lewis was training at the police depot, and then she was poached by the Metro, further down Albert, as Lewis was doing traffic point duty through the CBD. The Metro reputedly had the prettiest usherettes in the city, and the most fetching uniforms.

Their courtship, since meeting at the Fuel Board, had not been the stuff of high romance. They went to the cinema. If his Traffic Branch shift allowed it, he met her after her own shift at the Tivoli or Metro, accompanied her to the ferry near Petrie Bight, travelled with her the short trip across the Brisbane River to Kangaroo Point, where she lived, and walked her to her door.

It was Hazel who was keen to marry. Lewis, though exasperated he had attracted the attention of such a pretty young woman, was completely consumed by his police work and the prospects of