

COP OUT

**THE END OF MY BRILLIANT
CAREER IN THE NZ POLICE**

GLENN WOOD



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**To my long suffering wife Eula and the cadets of the 24th General
Poananga cadet wing.**

In memory of Sergeant Rodney 'Jacko' Edwards.

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EPILOGUE

Police Constable Gonzo

It was lucky the New Zealand Police didn't check my employment history before accepting me for training. It would have made pretty hairy reading.

The first of my employment disasters was a part-time job I took while attending school in my home town of New Plymouth. I was employed, very briefly as a paper boy for the Daily Mail. It was a job destined for failure right from the outset, as I had a somewhat controversial approach to the route plan.

I was going through a short-lived period of political rebellion, having just learnt about communism in Mr Edgely's mathematics class.

Mr Edgely was a strange little man who used to read us 'Bridge over the River Kwai' when he was supposed to be teaching us equations (which led to my having to take 'technical certificate maths' in my next school year, or 'thickie maths' as it was more commonly known). He also taught us the workings of Stalinism and used to prattle on for ages about how great Gandhi was. Wonderful as the little Indian bloke may have been, this didn't help me decipher the mysteries of long division.

Anyway, due to my new found Marxist belief, I decided I was going to redress the balance between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' by delivering a paper to everyone in the street, whether they wanted it or not. This bold move was met by a lot of grumbling from miserable old people who hadn't ordered a paper and bloody well weren't going to pay for it.

Then of course, there was the equally vocal crowd who had subscribed to the newspaper and didn't get it because I'd run out before I made it to their houses. I suggested sharing but no-one was listening.

My employers were correspondingly unimpressed with my views and after my steadfast refusal to compromise my political principles; my contract was terminated, thus ending my career as the Robin Hood of paper boys. It seemed the Daily Mail wasn't yet ready to embrace the classless society.

Nor was I as it turned out. The need to earn money easily surpassed my principles and dragged me back into the bosom of capitalism, where I planned to suck greedily on the nipple of financial prosperity. However, the only job I could get was at a local store called Jim's Foodtown and the only thing that sucked was my wages.

Jim was a family friend, which is probably the only reason I got the job. He was a hell of a nice bloke and very patient and tolerant. Actually, the guy was a saint, albeit a stingy one. My wages came just below Guatemalan peasant on the pay scale and I had to work extremely hard for the pittance I got. The worst job was delivering sacks of potatoes to Mister Papodopolis's fish and chip shop. The sacks were heavy and dirty and there were normally twenty or more which I'd lu

about on a rickety wooden trolley.

—I didn't think much of Mister Papodopolis. He was skinny, weasel-like and had a stupid, thin, greasy moustache. Plus he always smelt of stale sweat and chip fat. A babe magnet he was not. Aside from these rather obvious drawbacks there was something else off-putting about Mr. P, I couldn't put my finger on it but he made me feel uncomfortable. Perhaps it was the fact that the miserable jerk never once offered me a cold drink during the two years I delivered his stupid spuds. I had to make do with 'borrowing' a bottle or two of lemonade from Jim's stash out the back. The soft drinks were kept in the same storage area as the spuds so I'm pretty sure Jim knew they'd be illegally drunk.

I like to think he left them there as compensation for the shitty job of spud lugging. If not, sorry about that Jim.

Just when I thought the job at Jim's couldn't get more horrendous, it did. Mr Papodopolis's brother opened a fish and chip shop as well. Oh goody. Twice the Papodopolis's, twice the opportunity to rupture myself. I prayed to god they weren't triplets.

Papodopolis number two looked quite different from number one. He was big and fat and sported a thick beard. I thought he bore a startling resemblance to a goat. Smelt a bit bestial too. But at least his shop was out of rickety trolley pushing distance. Instead it was within rickety delivery van driving distance, which meant carrying the spuds to the van, loading them and then hauling them out again at the other end. Then, just to prove he was an even bigger dog's butt than his brother, Papodopolis number two made me drag those hateful sacks down two flights of dark and dingy stairs to the basement, where he'd decided to store them. After damn near breaking my neck trying to negotiate the steps with the first sack I figured out a better method. I put the sack on the top step then gave it a vicious kick and let it bounce to the bottom. Much easier.

I was careful not to use the boot method when P number two was about and had to chuckle when I heard him complaining to Jim that he seemed to get more squashed and bruised potatoes per bag than his brother. I suggested that he should offer mashed spud rather than chips with his fish. He glared at me and muttered something in Greek. I think it may have been a curse because ever since that day I've never got on with goats. Coincidence? I think not.

A string of equally dismal jobs including rag bag collecting and camp leader at YMCA youth camps (fun, but below 'drunken tramp' on the pay scale) completed my pre-police curriculum vitae. Fortunately the boys in blue weren't looking for budding entrepreneurs, they wanted big, fit, honest and keen. I was all those things and was accepted for cadet training at Trentham Police College on the 22 January 1980. I had just turned eighteen.

The course was one year long and extremely hard, as anyone who has read my first book will attest. The police instructors (or miserable bastards as they were commonly known) pushed us to our physical and mental limits and several cadets cracked under the strain. But we were taught the rudiments of policing, and given just enough knowledge and experience to struggle through our first

few months as real policemen.

—Once I'd completed training I applied to be posted to Palmerston North, a large (by New Zealand standards) student town situated in the lower North Island. I wished to be based there for one reason, and one reason alone. Women. Or more particularly a woman. Her name was Carey and we were in love. Carey was a student at Palmerston North Teachers College, as were a lot of my friends at the time. We had met two years previously in New Plymouth and had carried on a long distance romance while I was training. I was keen to be romantic from a much, much, closer perspective and was over the moon when my request for placement was granted.

I began work at Palmerston North Police Station (est. 22/12/1871) on 1 January 1981, mad keen to begin my long and illustrious career in the New Zealand Police.

I knew the job wouldn't be easy but I was young and full of the sort of blind confidence possessed only by those who haven't the slightest inkling of what they are in for.

My unwavering self-belief was made even more incomprehensible by the unbelievable incompetence I'd displayed during my life thus far. Even my closest friends and family referred to me as a jinx. I had a reputation for disaster that surpassed belief and had thoroughly earned my nickname of Gonzo.

The first one to experience my disposition for disaster was my new found room-mate Warren. No-one who knew me at that time will remember me flattening with a 'Warren' because he was seldom called by his given name. Everyone knew him as Sheep, mainly because of his curly white hair and beard but also because of his tendency to baaa. He was a baker by trade which was convenient for both of us. It meant we worked similar hours and shared a lot of the same down time. It also meant we had copious quantities of pies and sausage rolls in the freezer, allowing me to continue the culinary tradition of eating crap I'd begun in Trentham.

We'd only been rooming together for a few weeks when I decided our place of residence was looking a bit bare and needed decorating. I searched high and low for something that might brighten up the house and quickly came to the conclusion that, unless you counted Sheep's beer can collection, we owned nothing even remotely ornamental.

However, I did come across something interesting during my hunt. It was a box of items I'd 'borrowed' from training college. At the bottom of the box was an item I'd retrieved from a tear gas demonstration our instructors had inflicted on us during weapons training. It was a spent tear gas canister. I had retrieved the canister after the exercise because it looked like a rocket and was sort of cool. I then smuggled the empty shell out of Trentham under my text books. As you do.

In the absence of any other options I decided this was exactly the sort of adornment our living room needed. I mean how many houses could boast a real live tear gas bomb poised over the fireplace? Excellent. Students hung stolen STOP signs on their walls, so it stood to reason that a police/baker house should be decorated with a lethal weapon, and perhaps a few sausage rolls.

Once Sheep recognised the coolness factor of the rocket he agreed to help me put it up.

We decided the best way to rig it would be to run string through the holes in the body of the canister then hang it from the roof. There were four holes in the rocket, two at the front and two at the back. The purpose of the holes was to allow the tear gas to escape once the bomb had been fired. Rigging up the rear holes was easy and we quickly threaded them. I climbed a small step ladder to hang the bomb from several strategically placed thumb tacks. Now all we had to do was run string through the front holes and our masterpiece would be complete.

This wasn't as simple as it first seemed. There was still a rubber plug jammed in the front left hole. It was stuck fast and I decided the best way to remove it was with a turkey skewer. Sheep grabbed the required implement from the kitchen and passed it to me. His job was to hold the ladder steady so I could poke the skewer into the tear gas container as it dangled from the ceiling. Sheep was most encouraging from what he (wrongly) thought was a position of safety and he offered me helpful poking advice. After a few minutes fiddling around with the skewer I lost patience and gave the plug an almighty stab. It worked and the plug burst free, unfortunately so did all of the tear gas that hadn't been released when the bomb exploded. Somehow a pocket of deadly toxins had remained trapped inside the canister all those months. Go figure.

Now it was free to burst all over Sheep and myself. Which it did, burning into our skin and eyes with an intensity that was beyond belief. Sheep ran howling into the bathroom and plunged his head under the taps in a vain attempt to wash away the searing pain. He took off so quickly that I didn't have time to tell him that water made the gas burn more fiercely. Judging from the screams coming from the bathroom he had discovered this for himself. I wasn't sympathetic as, in his haste to look after number one, he'd abandoned his post and left me gassed and blinded up a ladder. Fortunately I was a highly trained professional and knew exactly what to do in a situation such as this. I fell off the ladder onto the lounge floor. Then I lay in a foetal position on the carpet till the pain stopped. It wasn't pretty but at least I wasn't in the bathroom trying to remove my eyes with toilet paper.

The next day, we very gingerly removed the bomb and put it back in my box. Its place above the fireplace was taken by a beer can. It wasn't as spectacular as the rocket but it was a very nice beer can and it never gassed us.

I have improved slightly in the gullibility stakes as I've aged but probably nowhere near as much as I should have. I still make the same mistakes I've always made but am better at covering my tracks now. I also have a level-headed wife to guide me around life's pitfalls. This is probably the best advice I could give to anyone who suffers from excessive Gonzoness. Marry someone sensible.

Sometimes even this isn't enough. Case in point. I'm writing this current section while under the influence of pain killing drugs. I need these because I have recently suffered a shoulder injury brought about by my belief that I am still in my teens and can indulge in any activity I like without warming up first. I am

also stuck at home at present because the car I purchased just two weeks ago is at the panel beaters because I drove it into a wall last weekend. But the truly frightening thing is that even including my current disastrous streak, I'm much more sensible now than I was when I was in the Police. My clumsiness, poor judgment and misfortune were at their zenith back then, both in my home life and at work.

My first few months in the Palmerston North Police were made up of a constant stream of nasty surprises. I discovered that the camaraderie I'd experienced while training didn't exist in the world of 'real' policing. Well, not in my section anyway. Sure, there was a common bond but it was considerably weakened by political in-fighting and an age gap. At Trentham we were all young and keen; now I was working with cops who were old and bitter. Not a good combination. I also realised that the real criminals I was now dealing with were much nastier than the pretend offenders we arrested when in training. Suddenly I was dealing with real scum, people who had no respect for the police and wouldn't think twice about calling you a pig and spitting in your face.

Another discovery that came as a shock was that I hadn't finished studying yet. In fact all the classroom work I had done at Trentham was just a precursor to the extension studies I was expected to take as a probationary constable. This continuing education came in the form of units, which consisted of photocopied sheets of information, case law, legalities, police procedure and question and answer tests. Basically a 'how to' guide on modern policing methods. There were twenty one units in all and you had to pass every one of them before you could receive your permanent appointment as a police officer. According to the memo that accompanied these units the aim of the course was to 'help policemen to acquire the attitudes, knowledge, skills and experience needed to fulfil their role effectively'.

A pass mark of eighty per cent was required on every unit and all twenty one had to be completed within seventeen months of your starting date. To add to the pressure, the first unit was accompanied by a threatening letter that stated that 'those students who do not apply themselves energetically, co-operatively and/or fail a unit test three times will have their overall position in the police reviewed'.

As if that weren't enough, the units were all written in 'police speak', which means using the most confusing and difficult language possible. Take these following examples.

A calendar month ends at midnight on the day in the ensuing month immediately preceding the day numerically corresponding to the commencing day.

'Person' includes a corporate sole and also a body of persons whether corporate or unincorporated.

Words importing the singular number include the plural number and words importing the plural number include the singular number and words importing the masculine gender include females.

Got that?

~~My final unpleasant discovery was that my sergeant of the first few months was not very good. He'd been in the job for a long time and his heart wasn't in it anymore. I think he was waiting to retire which meant he spent most of his time avoiding trouble. This placed additional stress on the other members of my section, keeping them on edge and ensuring that no-one had any time to teach me anything.~~

There were a lot of aspects to the job that I really enjoyed but I was finding it much more difficult than I imagined. I couldn't talk to my friends or girlfriend about what I was experiencing because no matter how hard they tried they couldn't understand what my job was like. My friends were mainly students and their biggest worry was that one of their lecturers made them work for three hours without a coffee break. Oh my God!

No, the only person who would understand my trials and tribulations would be another new cop. I decided to phone my best friend from police training college. His name was Phil and he had been posted to Christchurch in the South Island.

It was a most uplifting phone call. He said he had spoken to a number of cadets who were finding it hard going, himself included. Apparently my Gonzoisms were minor compared to the misfortunes of some ex cadets. He couldn't wait to tell me about one in particular.

The story concerned a cadet that Phil and I had despised at Trentham. We'll refer to him just as Phil's room-mate because that's what he was. The guy was the most weasel-like man I've ever known and that's saying something considering I've been working in the advertising industry for the past eight years. I disliked the guy from day one and the longer I knew him the more I detested him. He was more of a nuisance than a rat in a drainpipe shop. Even writing about him gives me the hump.

It is very unusual for me to respond to someone in this way, as I tend to give people the benefit of the doubt. Not a good trait for a police officer. Phil's room-mate obviously lacked a few essential police officerly traits too, as the following story will attest.

He was based somewhere in the South Island (the exact location won't be revealed to protect the innocent and because I can't remember where it was). All was quiet this fine night in the town in which he worked. Probably because he was off duty. The Ministry of Transport weren't though, and just after midnight one of their officers noticed a car swerving all over the road. Calling on all his years of experience, the officer deduced that the driver was probably under the influence of something a little headier than just the joys of life.

He was right; the driver of the other car was as pissed as a newt. Actually he was as pissed as a newt that's gone on a bender because his girlfriend had left him for one of those flashy Mexican walking fish.

Anyway, he refused to pull over and stop when the MOT officer flashed his lights, speeding off into the night instead. A minor, but apparently very exciting

car chase ensued whereupon the drunkard's car collided with the Ministry of Transport car and they both careened off the road. Justifiably peeved at this turn of events, the MOT officer leapt out of his pranged vehicle and set about apprehending the offender. The pissed guy had other ideas and a full scale punch up ensued. So serious was the altercation that the police were called. Imagine their surprise when they arrived at the scene to find that the violent drunken criminal slugging it out with the MOT officer was none other than their colleague Constable Phil's room-mate. Not only had he been drunk in charge of a vehicle and tried to evade capture he had also committed a serious assault on a fellow officer. Plus he lost the fight.

The breadth and magnitude of his misdemeanours were magnificent. If Phil and I had got together and plotted his deserved demise we couldn't have done better. He was bundled unceremoniously out of the job with charges to follow. I couldn't work out what the charges were as it was hard to hear what Phil was saying, due to his hysterical laughter.

Phil had a number of (lesser) stories of rookie stupidity. My favourite was the tale of one of the more naive cadets who, after several months on the job, released a suspicious person after duly recording the suspect's full name and address. The details he recorded were 'John Johan Johnson of 69 Johns Road, Johnsonville'.

Even I wouldn't have fallen for that one. Or at least I wouldn't have at thirty seven, I can't be certain about what I would have done at nineteen.

I felt much better after speaking with Phil and went home that evening a much happier little policeman.

Things were going well at the flat too. Sheep had forgiven me for gassing him, although he did make me promise to confine my more appalling acts of stupidity to other people's houses. Fortunately there were a number of places around for me to make a fool of myself in, the most likely candidates being my girlfriend Carey and my best friend Quentin.

I'd known Quentin from an extremely young age. Our first meeting was as toddlers, when our mothers met up by chance at a local supermarket. Quentin and I were confined to our respective trolleys, he resplendent in his lovely pink baby suit, me in my masculine blue one. As soon as I saw him I immediately recognised a friend for life and climbed upright in my trolley to say hi. He whacked me in the face with a packet of frozen peas and then cried, claiming I'd been the cause of the ruckus. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Carey was flattening with three other teacher's college students. One of them was Quentin's girlfriend Lynette, a tall, friendly girl with a wicked sense of humour. This arrangement was extremely convenient for us; although I had the feeling their housemates didn't think so. Sometimes our reception was chilly to say the least.

Most of the time we all got on well and Quentin and I tried to cause as few problems as possible. We even volunteered to help out occasionally. Thinking back I can see that the girls would have been better off without our special kind of help. One specific time springs to mind.

Lynette had a pet rabbit. I'm not sure where she got it, but it was a very nice rabbit in a rabbit sort of way and she and Quentin were very fond of it. He called it Gatsby - God knows why as it was a girl. Lynette had long since given up trying to make sense of Quentin's actions. On this particular occasion the girls were out for the day and Quentin was put in charge of feeding the rabbit. I was off duty and thought I'd pop round and give him a hand. It was a simple task and one that shouldn't have been above our collective abilities. Pick grass, give it to the rabbit and watch her eat it. Piece of cake.

Having successfully completed the task we felt we were ready for a bigger challenge. We decided Gatsby looked cooped up in her hutch and thought it would be nice to let her frolic in the back yard. It was well fenced and there were two of us watching her. What could go wrong?

Things were fine at first. Gatsby took her new found freedom in her little bunny stride, hopping about but making no attempt to escape. She seemed quite content to sit in the middle of the lawn chewing the grass. It was a peaceful scene like something out of 'Bambi'. Then things got even cuter. Another bunny rabbit appeared from under the hedgerow and hopped over to join Gatsby.

'Oh look!' said Quentin with charming naiveté, 'They're playing.'

I inspected the action more closely. 'Err, Q, I don't think they are playing,' I replied.

Quentin gave me a confused look, bless him and then he realised that it was not leapfrog he was watching.

The scene had gone from 'Bambi' to 'Bambi Does Dallas'.

We rushed to the middle of the lawn to protect Gatsby's virtue but were too late. The other rabbit had got what he'd come for and had run away (typical male!). Quentin gave Gatsby a stern talking to and put her back in her hutch. We debated whether to tell Lynette what had happened and decided not to. The other rabbit had only been on top of Gatsby for 30 seconds max - surely that wouldn't have been enough time to get her into trouble?

Several weeks later and much to Lynette's amazement, Gatsby became the proud mum of seven little baby bunnies. Quentin and I made a pact to keep quiet about our lapse in supervision but I think Lynette worked it out because from the birth onwards Gatsby and family went to live at Quentin's flat. Quentin didn't mind as he really was quite fond of the bunny. He also discovered that if he held her upside down above his stereo turntable she made a great record cleaner.

The Big Cases

Good news. My sergeant got punched in the nose. Naturally I wasn't happy that he suffered, but it caused him to re-evaluate his police career and he decided he'd had enough. This meant my section would be getting a replacement sergeant and I had high hopes of finally getting some leadership.

In the meanwhile the two senior members of my section took turns at being acting Sergeant. This was a problem for me as I didn't get on with either of them. One in particular, a policewoman in her mid-thirties, hated my guts. I don't know why, she took an instant dislike to me and treated me like dirt. I won't mention her name but will refer to her as 'the hell bitch' from now on.

The other senior member on my section was a much older guy with a drinking problem. He didn't like or dislike me - he just didn't care. Most of the younger guys were okay with two in particular (Bruce and Rob) becoming my friends, but they were not in positions of power and spent most of their time watching their own backsides.

It was going to be a long two weeks.

Things improved momentarily when a constable from one of the other sections joined us on a temporary assignment. His name was Bill and he was a good bloke. He had a fourth-dan black belt in Karate, so he was very useful in a fight. I tried to persuade him to demonstrate some of his moves one night while we were on the beat together. After two hours of nagging he finally agreed. He asked me to stand very still then stood directly in front of me. Suddenly he burst into action and hit me thirty two times in about twenty seconds. Each blow barely brushed my uniform or my skin. His control was incredible, he timed every punch perfectly, applying just enough pressure for me to register the blow but not be hurt. I was most impressed. I half hoped we'd get into a fight that night just so I could watch Bill in action. We didn't. Typical.

I really enjoyed having Bill on the section. Not only was he friendly and fun to be around but he was also a very experienced cop. Every incident I attended with him was a learning experience. He was generous with his knowledge and always took control of the situation, no matter what it was. His karate skills gave him tremendous self-confidence but not arrogance. He was easy going and never let the job get to him. Not that I saw anyway.

I attended my first death since training with Bill. The person who passed away was a man in his late forties. He had suffered a heart attack while playing sport and expired in hospital. We were only in attendance because he had died

unexpectedly and the police are required to look into any sudden death. This particular death was routine. There were no suspicious circumstances and we just had to make sure the hospital had done everything by the book, which they had. For the family, however, their day was anything but routine. Their lives had been ripped apart. The man had a daughter in her late teens and a younger son. When we arrived the family was all there and the girl was hugging and crying over the body of her dead father. She wouldn't let go of him and her mum had to physically drag her away. This poor woman had to deal with her own grief as well as the palpable trauma her kids were experiencing. It was heart wrenching. I just stood in the background feeling like a ghoulish onlooker who had no right to be there. I didn't want to intrude on these people's grief; they were obviously a close knit family who were devastated by what had happened. The last thing they needed was some pimply young cop asking stupid questions.

I kept my mouth shut and watched as Bill spoke to them. He was sympathetic and professional. The family made it obvious they wanted to be left alone so we ensured a support network was in place and signed the appropriate paperwork for a quick release of the body. The hospital staff was excellent and, for a death, everything went smoothly. I have seen bodies in far worse condition, but for some reason this death really affected me. I have never been able to shake the image of that young girl clinging so desperately to the corpse of her father. It shocked me. Her emotion was so intense. I felt utterly ineffectual and there was not a damn thing I could do, except try and forget. Sadly, not an option for her.

Bill went back to his own section just before my new sergeant joined us in April 1981. His name was Sergeant Nelson (no it wasn't but I'm not telling you what it was as I don't want him to hunt me down and kill me) and he was a huge man. His reputation was equally large, mainly for being a tough guy.

He was in his early forties, but despite his relative youth he was an old-school cop, with old-school attitudes and little patience for anyone who did things differently. In many ways he was a very good policeman and in just as many others, he wasn't. He was a hard drinking, hard living son of a bitch who had a passion for the job and a real nose for crime. One of those guys who threw away the text book and got by on gut feel. The exact opposite of me. The only gut feel I ever had was a bit of a rumble at dinner time.

Right from the start he thought I was soft. He had mistaken my dislike of confrontation for weakness and was unable to understand the subtle difference. I think he saw potential in me even though after the first few weeks he was questioning my suitability for the job. His style of policing and mine differed wildly. He lived for the street. He loved conflict and the way he dealt with criminals was to push them until they cracked. He advocated brawn over brains which I had little time for. I hated dealing with low-lives whereas he lived for it. I had a real loathing for the reprobates we had to deal with on a daily basis. Scumbags whose idea of a great night out was getting pissed with their mates then going home and hitting their wife and kids. And the dickheads who thought it was amusing to call you a pig in front of their mates. There was always plenty of that sort around - morons who wanted to prove how tough they were by taking on a

cop. I couldn't be bothered with that sort of crap and most of the time I just walked away. I know my sergeant and several of my colleagues saw this as a sign of weakness and maybe it was, but I never felt the need to butt antlers with these clowns. I found his methods of policing unnecessarily combative and hard to stomach.

This was tempered with the enormous respect I felt for Sergeant Nelson. At least he made an effort to forge me into a better police constable. Sadly though, he was trying to shape me into the sort of policeman I was never going to be.

There was of course fault on both sides. I was too young and foolish to sift through his advice and separate the good from the bad and he was too arrogant to concede that there was a place for my style of policing. Sergeant Nelson (and the Police Department as a whole) was also completely unprepared for the random acts of Gonzo that occurred with disturbing regularity in my life. Random misfortune can be very hard for people to accept. There is a tendency to believe the unfortunate victim of fate's twisted sense of humour must somehow be at fault, however this is not always the case. Oh sure, a good portion of the blame can be laid at the doorstep of Mr Clumsy and Mr Careless, but it's normally fortune's little knife twist that really does the damage. Observe.

The first example of Gonzo during Sergeant Nelson's reign came with the loss of my hat. Not, you'd think a very big deal but it was to haunt me throughout my entire career.

It was a busy Friday evening on late shift and I was working I-car (Incident Car) with another young cop. We were called to the Fitzherbert Tavern to attend a disturbance. The Fitz, as it was known, was a notorious student hangout and it was packed solid. So lively was the night that the front car-park was teeming with students in various states of disrepair. The mood of the crowd was quite convivial and we were not expecting any serious problems. Just the appearance of a few uniforms normally sent the troublemakers scurrying for the back door and the rest fumbling for fake IDs.

My partner and I disembarked from the car, placed our flat caps upon our heads and pushed our way through the crowd to the front door of the pub. It was crowded inside and after a quick chat with the manager we decided a walk through was all that was required. There was no point trying to weed out the under-age drinkers as it would have meant throwing out half the pub.

I had a loose attitude to under-age drinking as I was indulging in it on a regular basis. I was a lot of things but hypocritical wasn't one of them.

My partner and I became separated as we pushed our way through the heaving throng. About half way through the crowd I was accosted by two attractive young female students who engaged me in conversation. One was rather taken by my police hat and wondered if she might be able to try it on. This was seriously against regulations but I thought what the hell, it can't hurt and it may even help the student population see us in a more positive light. At least that was how I rationalised it later, at the time I was just being a dumb male - a sucker for a sweet smile and a generous amount of cleavage. The girl popped my hat on her head and managed to look rather fetching. Her friend certainly thought so

and went out of her way to tell me what a good sport I was being, thus distracting my attention from her hat wearing friend, who took this opportunity to slip off into the crowd. That was the last I saw of her or my hat. When I turned around again her friend was gone as well. I'd been had. I searched the crowd for about half an hour and aside from the occasional glimpse of black and white checks in the distance I came away empty handed. There were just too many people milling about to conduct a proper search; besides I was keen to get out before I lost anything else.

My partner was horrified at my stupidity and helped me come up with a more plausible tale to tell the sergeant. The official report stated that the hat had been grabbed off my head by an unknown perpetrator as I walked through the crowd. My sergeant treated the story with the scepticism it deserved and made me file a full report on the incident. Apparently losing your police hat was very naughty and I had to undergo a lot of tut-tutting by the officer in charge of the stores before I was issued another one.

Had this been anyone else that probably would have been the end of the story. But no. Like a good constable I had put my name on the tag in the original hat. 'This hat is the property of Constable Wood.'

The student population found this phrase rather amusing and my stolen hat became a centrepiece in student marches. It was seen on many a demonstration, always in the inaccessible middle section of the crowd and almost always being worn by an attractive female. Normally its appearance was preceded by a loud chant of 'This hat is the property of Constable Wood'.

Great. Whoever said no publicity was bad publicity obviously never had their nicked hat paraded before their superior's eyes during unruly student rallies.

I guess I should have been flattered to have achieved cult status, but the Police Department didn't see it like that. It was just a constant reminder that Constable Wood's stolen hat was still out there somewhere, flaunting the law at every turn. Towards the end I think the police believed I was in cahoots with every rebellious element in town. Bloody students, I was developing a healthy dislike for the lot of them.

Except of course for teachers' college students. They were a completely different kettle of fish. I was surrounded by them and thought they were alright. I had to: I was going out with one, as were Sheep and Quentin. The only person who had nothing to do with teachers' college was our new housemate, Michelle. Sheep and I had been using the third bedroom of our four-bedroom house as storage for empty beer cans and had recently decided it might be better to fill it with a flat mate. Michelle was a friend of a friend and we thought having a female around the flat would be a good thing. The theory was that we would be much tidier and be more responsible with the cooking, which at that stage involved not so much cooking as thawing and reheating. She was also a nurse which was bound to come in handy given my accident prone history.

It would have done too except Michelle turned out to be an invisible roommate. In the first six months she lived with us I saw her four times. The house was just a front for her parent's sake. While they thought she was living with us, she

was in fact staying with her boyfriend. Still, she paid the rent on time so we weren't complaining.

The only problem was the complex charade we had to go through when her parents rang. Our cover story was that she was in the shower or something equally plausible and she'd ring them back, then we'd call her boyfriend's house and pass on the message. The things we go through for love eh! Or lust. I don't know which causes more problems.

Of course that wasn't the way things were for Carey and me. We were truly in love. Pure, Disney-like love, the sort Snow White had for her handsome prince, right up until the first time he cut his toenails in bed.

The only problem with this kind of dedication is that it makes Jack (or in this case Glenn) a dull boy. Sergeant Nelson noticed it and made several strong and derogatory references to my devotion to Carey in my first progress report. These written assessments of your performance were completed by your sergeant at regular intervals (every three months) and formed part of your personal record. During my first 'chat' with Sergeant Nelson he told me I was spending too much time with my girlfriend and not enough time getting pissed with my police mates and shagging other women. His words not mine.

I was flabbergasted. What I did in my private life was of no concern to the Police Department as long as it didn't affect the way I did my job. His comments got my back up. Who the hell was he telling me how to live my life? And advising me to cheat on my girlfriend, no less. I couldn't believe his nerve. I was so astounded I didn't think to let him know how I felt. I just sat there and said nothing, steaming away.

Looking back, I think my indignity stopped me from realizing what he was trying to tell me. In an extremely heavy-handed way he was trying to give me some very sage advice. He was telling me not to rush into a serious relationship before I was ready. Remember I was only nineteen at the time. It all makes perfect sense now and it would have been good counsel had it not been delivered with Sergeant Nelson's trademark size twelve boot marks all over it. Once my hackles were up there was no getting through to me and I dismissed his 'advice' out of hand.

A wake-up call to the reality of my relationship came about a month later.

I had always been a sociable guy with plenty of friends and a passion for life. But of late I'd been feeling quite low. My job was hard. I wasn't impressing Sergeant Nelson as much as I needed to. I was tired from all the early starts (I'm not a morning person in the same way that Freddy Kruger wouldn't be the best choice of baby sitter) and I wasn't seeing my friends as often as I used to.

I was at a low ebb in my life and I didn't know why.

The answer came loud and clear at a party Carey and I attended. It was the first get-together we'd been to for a considerable time. We had been spending every spare moment together to the exclusion of everything else, bar work and study. I hadn't wanted to go but the girl who was holding the party was a good friend of Carey's and we'd promised to be there.

The party was being held was a typical student house: dingy and full of really

bad furniture. It was also rocking. By the time we arrived things were in full swing. We made our way awkwardly to the lounge and Carey and I sat down together on the couch, watching the chaos that surrounded us. I got up, poured us both a drink, then returned to sit with Carey and watch everybody else have a great time. As we sat there holding hands, I watched two drunk guys I didn't know doing a limbo dance under a broomstick. They were both wearing comical face masks and spent more time cheating the height of the broomstick than actually limboing, especially when the limboee was a woman. As I sat there like an old man on the couch, realization of how dull I was becoming hit me like a sharp slap across the face. Sergeant Nelson was right (not that I credited him for my revelation) my youth was passing me by. Carey and I had become inwardly focused. It wasn't her fault but our affair was strangling the life out of me.

Our relationship changed forever that night. I told Carey I wanted to mingle, jumped off the couch and joined in the half-arsed limbo contest. The two guys in the face masks were called Bruce and Dave and they were teacher's college students as well, surprise, surprise. They were also the devil incarnate. We hit it off immediately and a night of drunken revelry ensued.

Half way through the night, a not so secret society was formed from the punch-line of an embarrassing commercial that was playing at the time. Those of you who have good memories and are really old may remember it. The ad was for the most bizarre product to hit the New Zealand market: it was a non-alcoholic drink called Claytons that looked vaguely like whisky but tasted nothing like it.

The idea of a 'man's drink' like whisky existing in a non-alcoholic version was revolutionary back then. Low alcohol drinks were yet to be invented. In the early 1980s there wasn't the choice of beverages we have today. If you had an extra teaspoon of sugar in your tea that was an energy drink, no-one drank water unless they were really poor; and the only time you got an alcoholic soda was if your dad spilt his beer in your Fanta.

So it was a brave move introducing non-alcoholic Claytons to a very sceptical market. It was doomed to fail, which was a shame because Claytons had the most fantastic tag line I've ever heard: 'The drink you have when you're not having a drink.' I've never worked out what that meant; although once you'd tasted the gunk you realised the line should have been: 'The drink you have when your taste buds have ceased to function.'

The television ad was a gem. It opened with an Australian bloke in a pub telling the punch line to what was obviously the best joke in the world. The line was: 'Now we can all get some sleep.' Gales of laughter ensued from the rest of his mates at the pub and the barman replied: 'Good one Jack, what'll you have?' Jack says: 'I'll have a Claytons and soda.'

Fabulous stuff.

Naturally this ad had a cult following with the opening lines changed to: 'Now we can all kill some sheep.' After much hilarious repetition of the hallowed lines, Dave, Bruce and I became respectively known as Jacks One, Two and Three (after our new found hero) and 'The Jacks' were born.

With a new lease of life, I decided to enjoy the party to the full.

~~I was not the only one.~~

Around midnight, the call of nature, and quite a few beers caught up with me and I made my way to the only toilet in the house. This was a civilized move on my part as the temptation to have a squirt in the backyard loomed large, but I'd promised Carey I'd be on my best behaviour and I'm a man of my word. So I made it to the toilet, unzipped myself and had a contented pee.

As least it was contented until I got the shock of my life. A hand suddenly reached around from behind me and grabbed hold of my penis.

This was a good news, bad news scenario.

The good news was that the hand wasn't male and the bad news was that it didn't belong to anyone I knew.

The young woman who had suddenly taken it upon herself to 'help me' told me to relax as she was a nurse. This fact offered me little comfort. I was busy thinking of what would happen to the piece of my anatomy she was currently examining (with a less than professional eye) if Carey happened to walk in. It turned out that Carey was the least of my worries. Before I had the chance to open my mouth to register my objection there was an insistent banging on the toilet door. A loud and very angry voice boomed out.

'I know you're in there Cheryl.'

'Oh shit,' said my new 'friend' 'That's my husband.'

Oh great. One minute, I 'm minding my own business, innocently having a pee, then the next thing I know I'm trapped in the toilet with a mad nurse's uninvited hand wrapped around my genitalia and her irate husband about to smash the door in.

Instinctively I knew that telling him 'It's all right, she's a nurse,' wasn't going to help so I decided to get out of there as quickly as I could. I retreated from the nurse's grasp and sent 'Mr. Floppy' to his room without any supper, slamming the door as he went through. Sadly he wasn't all the way in when I zipped up. Any men reading this may want to take a moment to readjust themselves. You know what I'm saying.

My yell of pain prompted Hubby to another fit of bashing.

'What's going on in there?' he yelled.

I'd had enough by now, and was in excruciating pain, so I kicked open the door. I was relieved to see that her husband was smaller than me. Knowing I could take him, I became justifiably indignant.

'Your wife's a loony.' I told him, hobbling away in the most dignified manner I could muster.

After a careful re-zip I joined the others in the living room and related my sorry tale to the lads. Bruce and Dave almost spilled their drinks. I wasn't the first guy to be accosted in the toilet that evening. The nurse had tried it on with every guest at the party who had a pulse and a penis. This didn't do a lot for my ego but it did get me off the hook with Carey. Actually to her credit she took the whole event in her stride, treating the incident with the levity it deserved. I think the only person at the party not to find it amusing was the nurse's husband. Not

surprisingly their marriage ended soon after.

However, their union looked like a match made in heaven compared to some marriages I saw while in the police. Everything they'd told us at Trentham about domestic disputes turned out to be true and then some. I can't calculate how many domestic incidents I attended in the course of my brief career but it was a hell of a lot. They ranged in ferocity from small misunderstandings to all-out war and they were always unpleasant and unpredictable.

Nine times out of ten it was the woman who had been assaulted, either physically or mentally.

I always felt out of my depth with domestics. It was very hard to offer matrimonial advice to a couple twenty years your senior when the only steady relationship you've had was a year old. Often it was like offering marital guidance to your mum and dad. The uniform seemed to help. Most people failed to recognise that the uniform was just a cover for a nervous nineteen year old boy. Sometimes just talking to the combatants was not enough and one or other of them would have to be removed. If physical violence had occurred we'd normally have enough evidence to lock up the offender (almost always the male) for the night. This was obviously just a temporary solution and more often than not the offender was shown forgiveness by the victim the very next day. It wasn't unusual to see the offender being bailed out by the woman he'd beaten up the night before.

'I'm sorry,' is easy to say. It's also easy to believe if you really want to. Until the next time.

In those days the law made it difficult to break the cycle of violence. Today the police have the power to press charges without a complaint from the victim. This is a very good law because it takes the pressure off the person who has been assaulted. If criminal action is brought by the police, the offender is forced to take the blame on their own shoulders and realise that applying pressure on the victim won't result on the charge being withdrawn. Still, no amount of legislation can assist the couples who really don't want help. I remember being called to an extremely violent domestic which I was sure would end in a serious assault charge being laid. The neighbours called us believing that the couple involved was killing each other. They weren't far wrong.

We could hear the screaming argument before we got out of the car. This, and the fact that the front of their house looked like a bomb site, made us wonder what we were about to encounter. The front door lay broken and splintered on the lawn. Shards of shattered glass littered the steps and bright red splashes of blood speckled the doorway. Were it not for the raised voices within I would have expected to be walking into the scene of a murder.

The first thing we saw when we got inside was the husband. He was bleeding profusely from a nasty head wound. His wife was arguably in a worse state. Her clothes were ripped and blood flowed freely from an assortment of cuts and scratches to her face, arms and legs.

As soon as they saw us they stopped yelling at each other and began

screaming at us, ordering us from their property and abusing the life out of myself and my partner. A few choice words and dark threats from my fellow officer calmed them down but they made it very clear they didn't want our assistance. We told them that as a complaint had been laid we wouldn't be leaving until we found out what had happened. After much muttering about 'bloody pigs sticking their noses in where they weren't wanted' they calmed down and started talking. The husband had popped into the kitchen while his wife was cooking their evening meal and had proffered some less than constructive criticism. She had taken exception, grabbed hold of a cast iron frying pan and smashed it into the side of his head, knocking him to the ground. Being extremely solid in the skull area (more bone than brain) he was only dazed by a blow that I estimate would have rendered an elephant unconscious. He got straight back up and retaliated by throwing his wife through their glass-inlaid front door. She, evidently, was as thick skinned as he was thick skulled and she ran back into the house to continue the battle by throwing furniture at her husband. And that's how we found them, screaming and bleeding inside their wrecked home.

Dinner was still cooking on the stove, though I suspect the vegetables may have been overdone. I wasn't going to tell her that as she obviously didn't take criticism well.

Neither of them wanted to press charges but we did manage to persuade them both to seek medical attention. We had to - if one of them had died from their injuries after we'd left, there would have been hell to pay. Grudgingly they let us call an ambulance to ferry them to an Accident and Emergency clinic, at great cost to the taxpayer. We even secured their front door before we left without receiving a word of appreciation. In fact all we got was abuse. It was a thankless bloody job some days.

In case you are wondering how the police reported on cases like this, I'll let you in on the secret. We carried with us at all times a notebook of short report forms called Police 101 Reports. According to Police General Instructions the form could be used for logging details of:

- Street Arrests and Minor Offences - i.e. offences liable up to three months' imprisonment.
- Cautioned Offences - Where the offender's details can be obtained at the scene and the reporting member believes that a verbal caution is a sufficient deterrent.
- Suspected Offences - When investigation subsequently discloses no offence.
- Incidents - Where Police attendance is sufficient and no further correspondence need be submitted.

The cover flap of the notebook contained a list of frequently used incident and offence codes that were on the 101 forms. As many of these are still used by the police I think it's worth noting the list down. This will give you an insight into the incidents and offences most commonly attended. Some may surprise you.

INCIDENTS

- 1A - Alarm Sounding
- 1B - Bomb Scare
- 1C - Car/Person acting suspiciously
- 1D - Domestic Dispute
- 1E - Emergency (It doesn't say what kind, could be anything from a cat stuck up a tree to a sniper loose in the CBD.)
- 1F - Fire Call
- 1M - Mental Case
- 1N - Noisy Party
- 1P - Premises Insecure
- 1S - Sudden Death
- 1T - Truancy
- 1V - Vehicle Collision
- 1X - Attempted Suicide
- 1Z - Other requests by public for service (Would you like fries with that?)

The most common offences, according to my old 101 book were, minor found in bar, obstruction/hindrance of police, disorderly behaviour, offensive behaviour, obscene language, insulting language, drunkenness, fighting, idle and disorderly wilful damage, unlawfully in building, careless use/driving and excessive speed.

Of the twenty two incidents recorded in my book, nine were audible or silent alarm calls, four were domestic disputes (one being the case mentioned earlier), three were suspicious people calls, plus we had one suspicious vehicle, one suspicious lights, a breach of a non-molestation order, a disqualified driver, a cannabis incident and my favourite, a 'public relations' event. My notes on this incident read as follows:

Minor motor accident involving dog, no injuries, minimal damage to the motor bike, dog's owner says the dog is okay."

Oh yes, Constable Wood got all the big cases.

Protection Detail

Late shift, early May 1981. I finally got something right. I'd been patrolling the town square, taking bags of glue out of the hands of stoned kids, who should have known better and probably would have done had they not fried their brains with Bostik, when I noticed a suspicious vehicle. It was a clapped out Triumph Herald (a typical student vehicle) and it was parked right in the centre of town. This in itself wasn't particularly suspicious. No, the thing that aroused my suspicions was that the car was filling with smoke.

I was fairly certain the car hadn't caught fire, due to its two occupants showing no sign of vacating the vehicle. Indeed, they seemed happy to stay where they were. I figured out why when I got closer.

Ahhh, the sweet smell of cannabis. That pungent aroma of instant arrest.

I was anti-drugs in those days of course, in a particularly priggish, self-righteous way, and was more than happy to fall upon these law-breakers like an avenging angel. I feel a little embarrassed by my ebullience, as the first thing I did when I left the police was dye my hair red, get an earring and go to Amsterdam to get legally stoned. But that was in the future, my only experience of drugs up until then had been smoking bracken behind the bike sheds at school. It made me feel sick and I got a fungal disease. At this point in my career it was my sworn duty to lock up any druggies I stumbled across. And there they were, two teenagers having a toke in a Triumph.

I quickly leapt at the car door and wrenched it open emitting a self-congratulatory 'Gotcha' and scaring the shit out of them as I did so.

As the smoke cleared I saw I'd caught two young, gorgeous female students in mid puff. I'm proud to say their radiant beauty did not distract me from my duty and I hauled their sorry asses off to the station.

One of the reasons I was able to shrug off their sobbing apologies was because of my recent painful loss at the hands of beauty ('this hat is the property of Constable Wood').

Back at the station things didn't go as planned. My new sergeant turned out to be nowhere near the hard bastard I thought he was. In fact he was quite charitable. A quick search of the girls' car revealed one half smoked joint in the ash tray but nothing more. Taking this, and their tearful contrition into account, the sergeant decided to let them off with a warning.

This was probably the right decision as they weren't really doing any harm but I was annoyed because I had lost my first drug bust. I also suspected that

Sergeant Nelson's decision had been influenced by their sex. I wonder if he'd have been so lenient if they'd been a couple of young guys. It was hard to tell because, in my opinion, Sergeant Nelson was erratic with his prosecution decisions. On some occasions he let comparatively minor offenders feel the full force of the law while letting others off with a slap on the wrist. I could never figure out which way he would use his discretionary powers. Fair enough, he had many years' front-line policing experience and more instinct in his little finger than I had in my whole body. But it made it tricky for me to work out which way he was going to jump.

In this instance he did make a point of telling me I'd done a good job, even if I had been a touch over-zealous. Still, it was a compliment of sorts and I was taking all the praise I could get.

I realise this particular tale is a small event, in the realm of exciting policing stories but it has relevance in the continuing story of Constable Wood, drug buster extraordinaire.

The next day I received a call to a burglary in a central-city house and what started off as a straightforward missing property report turned into an information goldmine. The woman complainant and I got on well and she decided I was a nice young policeman and she'd like to help my career along. God knows, it needed it, so I sat back and let her chat. It turned out she had been into drugs for a few years and knew some of the key characters in the Palmerston North dope scene. Amazingly enough she was happy to tell me who they were and what they were dealing in. I couldn't believe my luck. I'd stumbled across my first informant.

An hour later I had a notebook full of juicy information about people with names like Spoon, Bong, Horse and Mr Asia. Obviously it wasn't the Mr Asia, more of a 'Mr Owns A Small T-Shirt Business At Kuta Beach', but you've got to start somewhere. I thanked my newfound supergrass and rushed back to the station to tell Sergeant Nelson the good news. He was impressed and told me he'd submit a report to the drug squad based on my information. This was cool: the drug squad was full of plain-clothes detectives and they were like gods to me. I thought detectives did the really important police work (boy was I wrong) and they got to wear stylish threads as well. Actually, thinking back, stylish threads is stretching it. In fact most of them had the fashion sense of a Norwegian pop band.

My information caused quite a stir in the drug squad offices. The material led to a number of arrests and combined with my recent car dope bust, meant I very briefly became a star. Later that week a senior sergeant passed me in the corridor and instead of glaring at me with his usual disdain, he actually deigned to speak to me.

'I hear you'll be joining the drug squad soon, Constable Wood.' he joked. I blushed, giggled inanely and walked into a door frame.

Things had also improved on the home front. I was relishing my new found freedom and was no longer spending every waking moment with Carey. I'd successfully completed a few of my police units and wasn't studying as hard. This

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