

# A MELBOURNE CASE

by Brian Minards

**I** sat opposite the young attractive policewoman who was telling me of her experiences as a case officer in a recent investigation.

**Her tone of voice was clinical. 'The offender said when you cut off someone's head the eyelashes keep blinking for a while.'**

My first reaction was to smile, probably because it was said in the same unemotional way as you would ask someone whether they had had a nice weekend. I also thought to myself that my eyelashes would blink a bit as well if I were beheaded.

But my only reply was, 'Really'.

It was enough for the young woman to add, just as clinically, 'and he also told his wife he would cut off her head, place it in her hands and record the event on film.'

I wasn't sure how to respond to that so I said nothing.

I was talking to Detective Sergeant Dorothea Koopman who was recounting one of her experiences when she was attached to the fraud and general crime unit in Southern Region.

The case involved the arrest of a man who took up residence in Melbourne in 1981 after fleeing the United States for allegedly battering his de-facto wife to death with a hammer.

A second woman, whom he had married after settling in Melbourne, was so alarmed by his violent nature and gruesome threats she asked the US Consul in Melbourne whether his background could be checked.

It was ultimately revealed that the US authorities did want to question the man about the death of his de-facto in America.

The case was referred to the AFP and given to Detective Sergeant Koopman.

Her inquiries uncovered an individual who had changed his name a number of times and had used as many as five different passports to cover his tracks.

Federal Police compiled a strong enough case to take the man into custody and in May this year they raided his house in Templestowe.

In a bid to elude police he jumped through a closed window, sustaining minor injuries from broken glass but was caught and taken into custody where he remained pending extradition to the United States. Detective Sergeant Koopman said that as the case officer she had enjoyed the experience of being in charge of an investigation.

'We put in some long days,' she said.

'On the morning of the arrest we started at six and worked through till six that night, but it was worth it, particularly as case officer, to see it come to a successful conclusion.'

She said it was also interesting to come face to face with someone who had allegedly made such ghastly threats.

'He was very polite,' she said.

'He used my rank and name every time he addressed me, and said he was very sorry he had caused so much trouble.'

'He even thanked us, which seemed to be a real turn-around from the type of person we were led to believe he was.'

Detective Sergeant Koopman said three US law officers arrived in Melbourne recently to carry out the extradition.

She said they showed great interest in Australia and Australian policing, so much so that all three intend returning for a holiday.



*Detective Sergeant Koopman*

Away from the job Detective Sergeant Koopman has been renovating a house she bought two years ago.

She has also taken on the responsibility of a cub leader in the scouting movement. She said she owed it to the scouts: 'I was a brownie and a guide when I was young and derived a lot of enjoyment from it, so I feel I should put something back into it. My father had also been a cub leader'.

Detective Sergeant Koopman said she had charge of a troop of boys aged between eight and 11 and in some respects it was more demanding than being in charge of a murder investigation.

'They're always falling over, or shapping up to each other, and they never listen to what you're saying so you have to keep repeating yourself.'

I smiled to myself, for the second time during the interview, as I thought if only those little terrors knew what blood curdling tales their leader could tell as they sat around the camp fire... It would certainly quieten them down a little.

