

'The Joke'

by

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"The best division of right, one kind to be natural, and the other voluntary calls it a lawful right in the strictest sense of the word law, and sometimes an instituted right. Of this kind is the evil of certain actions compared with the nature of a reasonable being." Aristotle

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Introduction

The 1986 to 1987 Royal Commission of Inquiry into police and government corruption was referred to by the media as the Fitzgerald Inquiry. Whilst much is known about this two year inquiry most people are unaware of significant events during the sixties when a Minister of Police, nine police officers, and a barrister consulted with each other for the purpose of developing an anti-corruption strategy. A part of their plan included going back to the courts with fresh evidence after an earlier inquiry had failed due to evidence that could not be properly corroborate and therefore was deemed unreliable. These events are the starting point of a true story best titled, 'The *Joke*'.

Whilst the following is not entirely chronological in the manner of its telling, I hope that the summarized occurrences I have essayed will help others to understand the dynamics of corruption and organised crime not only in Queensland's past but anywhere for the benefit of future generations of journalists, police officers, lawyers, politicians, and the general public.

Evolution of a sneering remark

There is a misconception in the media and academia that the situation as opposed to the people involved in corruption was originally so named "*The Joke*". This is because the dishonest made claim to the expression as their own, before and from the witness box so as to say that what they were doing was a '*Joke*' upon all others not involved. Because of this they caused their listeners to misconceive the meaning and therefore to miss the point of the remark entirely. The point being that every instance of a corrupt system of things has members that bear a name by which they become known by. Names and symbols delineate people into groups and in some cases those of the group manufacture signals that they keep secret.

The truth about the group of corrupt Queensland police officers is that an honest and somewhat under the weather police officer issued the sneering remark loudly at the bar of the police recreation club which was above the former Bureau of Criminal Intelligence. He issued the remark to a small group of police officers that he firmly believed were corrupt, and the remark became the name by which they were known by, by those in the know. The members of '*The Joke*' were regulars at the club and the sneering remark was overheard by other police and it stuck to the corrupt like the proverbial on a blanket. Unfortunately like many things to do with corruption it got twisted around to mean something completely different. Australians particularly in the 50s and 60s often used the expressions "*It's a joke*", "*they are a joke*" or "*he's a Joker*" when faced with something or someone's behaviour that was appalling, and what those of '*The Joke*' did was not only appalling at times it was downright pure evil.

It is important to note that after the sneering remark was issued the corrupt police officers went from routinely drinking at the club which was a short walk from their respective offices of false power to driving across the city to the National Hotel at the fringe of the Fortitude Valley business district. They may have controlled organised crime but they were certainly influenced to leave the police recreation club. Regrettably those that were labelled a joke would have you believe that corruption was simply a matter of being a part of it or not. The truth about corruption is that usually there are only a small number of people inclined to seek power who eventually become extremely corrupt while all others who have no desire to become powerful are sicken by its existence.

Many of these some people whilst powerless to do much about corruption were inclined to fight against it, whenever and however they could. The dynamics of corruption cannot be accurately understood by only reading a report prepared by lawyers or from the perspective of a journalist trying to understand another culture.

A proper understanding can best be gained from various perspectives including the lawyer, the journalist, the police, and most importantly, the victim. Another instance of the importance of understanding the meaning behind a remark is the evolution of the remark in the 1980s into "*The Jobs a Joke*". It was also an indication that the situation in Queensland was about to change but as to what would bring that change no one could have possibly known this was because the internally used expression "*The Jobs a Joke*" was being said by more and more younger police officers whom had no idea there was a corruption problem but had become quickly frustrated with a system of things that seemed to give the high profile criminals an advantage.

It is also important to understand that whilst it was the good work of the media that finally turned the wheel in the concluding chapter of "*The Joke*" there were many fine police officers and politicians both in power and in the opposition along with various law abiding citizens from all walks of life that fought the good fight, often standing alone, at great personal risk long before the very public end to the decades of decay. My story is to help people understand the dynamics of the unknown battles against corruption and to enlighten the public that people did in fact lose their lives.

Dusty past

I was called to the Fitzgerald Inquiry as witness 51 and remember thinking later that the lawyers seemed more interested in the recent history of "The Joke". I assumed that this was because the dusty past was far more difficult to look into. Regrettably because of the problems associated with things long since passed I and many others are firmly of the belief that a small number of corrupt police and their criminal associates literally got away with murder.

Brag to his mates

Even recently some of the people I have spoken too are still too afraid too to be completely open about what they have heard and witnessed. Someone that wasn't afraid to talk told me about the details of a meeting at night in the car park of the Milton Tennis Courts that illustrates how criminals avoid being served up justice. Two prominent business men from Fortitude Valley gave a well-known criminal a large sum of money with instructions to buy drugs in Hong Kong and bring them back to Australia. He said his friend who went to the same martial arts school was walking through the grounds of the Milton tennis court as a short cut home after training when he saw three men standing at the boot of one of the three cars there. He recognised each of them and stop, watched, and listen in the dark. A few days later, as young men do, he bragged to his mates at the martial arts club about what he had seen and heard. He was last seen two weeks later leaving a house party at Paddington.

The next morning he was found dead and the cause of his death was a beating and his murder remains unsolved. Later it became obvious to those of the Fortitude Valley business district that two seemingly failing businesses where each experiencing rapid growth. Today the shop fronts of each of those businesses can be found in most major shopping centres throughout Australia.

As a member of the public you have most probably been in one to either pick up something for yourself or to have something done to yourself. As to which two shops and the three men, I am unable to tell you because the man that witnessed the event first hand was murdered.

Secrets of a murky river

Another example associated with the difficulty of investigating the past is the acquisition of information supporting circumstantial evidence. The best way to explain this is to tell you about an event that took place in the sixties involving the Brisbane Water Police. The Water Police Diver I spoke too was stationed at Brisbane. The divers will tell you that a male body found floating in the river will float face down and a female face up. There is an exception to this, when a male victim suffers wounds to the torso such as broken ribs the damaged areas bloat more than other areas of the body due to increased decay. This causes the body of a male to float face up when it would normally float face down. So when they took this victim of crime from the Brisbane River it was confirmed later at the morgue that he has been severely beaten to death. The words of the officer were, "*He was really badly broken up.*" The man was recognised immediately as a courier for one of the Fortitude Valley Italian crime families.

Not a courier as in the modern sense of the word which associates the person to drugs. In the sixties a courier could have been many things. In this case, he was a man that would often carry good quality watches, valuable gem stones, a bottle of fine whiskey or a message to a business associate of the crime family across town at a time when there were no mobile phones, no fax machines, and land lines often had a cross line. The officer returned to the morgue and walked in on two detectives removing items of clothing and other personal effects off the body and throwing them directly into the incinerator which he thought was very strange.

After he left his thoughts troublingly concluded that maybe the detectives sent to investigate the murder had something to do with the murder. When he returned to the Water Police Station he told the Sergeant in charge and he made an uptown call, however little if nothing further was done by uptown police.

It was rumoured to the Brisbane Water Police that the courier's employer had killed him by accident as a result of a beating that involved kicking him after he fell to the floor onto a large carpet. It was said that after it was realised he was dead that they simply rolled him up in the carpet and dumped him in the Brisbane River and as for the reason for the bashing? It is believed that the courier had been short changing his employer.

Into the light

Like a body that eventually floats to the surface of a murky river, everything 'dark' has its particular moment to surface into the 'light'. The dark allegations in a 'Four Corners' television program that aroused complacent Queenslanders and resulted in an immediate response from a government, happened at a time when many thought the government would dismiss the allegations. No one anticipated that the timing was just right for the story to force the government to take action.

Quiet conversations in the dark

What is not appreciated about the history of *'The Joke'* is that decades before this television program the same revelations along with the details of dirty deeds done dirt cheap had been the subject of intense back room conversations between concerned police, a barrister, and state government politicians in the both the opposition and ruling government.

Shirley Brifman

They were matters that dare not be spoken in the light of day for fear of physical harm by those in control of organised crime in Queensland and for good reasons. Consider the sad case of Shirley Brifman. As one of a small group of criminal informants that eventually spoke out during the era of police controlled organised crime she is deserving of special mention.

After a long association with some very corruption police officers and having once lied at the instruction of these men from the witness box of an earlier inquiry in 1971, she was coerced by the resource poor police internal affairs to give evidence about she had heard and seen as a result of being in the company of the corrupt and their criminal deputies. She was interviewed by senior police from Queensland and New South Wales and gave firsthand accounts about the criminal activities of fifty police officers from each of the states.

Her allegations involved prominent officers but the Crown's case against the only police officer to face criminal charges collapsed when she was mysteriously found dead of barbiturate intoxication in her flat at Clayfield, Brisbane on 4 March 1972. Shirley Brifman, a victim of the system and the ruthless was not the only witness to have died before giving evidence to a court or to the internal affairs police seeking to bring charges to the other members of *'The Joke'*.

The language of intimidation

I began my exposure to the language of intimidation in 1974. I was less than fifteen when I witnessed the explosion of a car owned by a police woman. Moments before the fire ball my childhood friend and I were playing in the backyard of her parent's home on Norman Avenue, Norman Park where she lived next door to the former homestead estate house.

My friend and I did not realise and we were not told that the fire had been set. Later in life as a young Constable I learnt that the fire had been a warning to the police woman and was connected to her investigation of a criminal that was suspected to be in the employ of a corrupt police officer. The fire had nothing to do with the events in the sixties that involved the Water Police although the people it impacted upon were one extended uniform policing family living in a suburb of Brisbane.

It just so happened that I was there on the day in the back yard with my friend playing with a stock whip when the fire ball nearly burnt the house down. If it was not for the quick response of the people from the local fire station the house may have been lost. Years later when I learnt the fire was deliberate, my mind went to work trying to remember more about that time and it occurred to me that something did stick in mind that may be connected to the fire. I remember sometime before that fire we, my friends and I were playing on the footpath throwing a ball and tackling each other in muck around game of league.

As boys do, we were playing, running back and forth in front of the house next door to the house that where the fire occurred later. The house was where my friend the child cousin of the young police woman lived. My friend and the other boy were wrestling on the ground and I was standing holding the ball when this Holden sedan drew alongside the footpath back up the road a little. There were three men in the car, two in the front and a younger man in the back. They were looking past us towards my friend's cousin's place.

The man in the front seat put his window down beckoned me over. Reluctantly I moved a few steps towards them and stood looking at him. He said, *"Who lives there" pointing to the house.* Feeling uncomfortable I quietly said, *"Don't know"*. He then put up his window and while I could not hear him I could see him talking to the others. After a short while they drove away slowly down the road. The investigation into the fire resulted in a young man being charged and convicted but as to the other two I suppose we will never know who they were. If you asked me to tell you what the men looked like I could only give you a very general description as the event whilst overt in my mind is too far into the past.

Courage

Of the circle of boys I grew up with in the late sixties and seventies a few ended up years later on the wrong side of the law. Of particular significance to me and sadly ironic to my childhood past is the death of my former work partner and friend, Peter Kidd.

A boy we knew by his nicknamed Burnie later becomes the killer 'Paul Mullins' who mortally wounds Peter and seriously wounds three other officers in the same gun fight. Before Peter succumbed to his mortal wounds he shoots Mullins almost point blank after crawling across the floor to where Mullins is shooting back at the other police in the house. Peter's shot ends the argument but not before Mullins has shot and seriously wounded three other police officers with a deadly semi-automatic rifle. Peter's family later receives in his name the highest award, an award that represents the courage and bravery for which can be given in the name of a non-military person. Others that were involved in the incident were also offered other awards for their bravery. However they each turned the offering of an award out of respect for Peter.

My father, James or as his friends called him Jimmy, tried to help many troubled young men including Burnie during his time as a plain clothes officer in the Juvenile Delinquents Squad or JD Squad as they were commonly referred to in the 60s. It is during this time of many visitors to our home at Norman Park that I first meet Burnie in the company of his friend an older boy. Many years later I hear my father say to another man referring to this quiet and very unsettled young man, *"He was always behind the black ball and wasn't the same kid after prison."*

A good mechanic for their boats

My father became very unhappy with the system of things when he was in the JD Squad and suspecting some of his superiors may be corrupt he sought to be transferred to the Brisbane Water Police to distance himself from corruption. Ironically his transfer to the water police puts him in direct contact through his job with some uptown corrupt detectives. He was successful in his transfer because before joining the police he was a diesel fitter and the Water Police needed a good mechanic to maintain their boats. Becoming a diver was a requirement that he enjoyed apart from some of the murky river jobs dragging victims of crime on board the Police launch.

My father supplemented his low police wage by working after hours on the speed boats and cars of neighbours and friends mostly on the south side of Brisbane. Under the house of our old Queenslander in Norman Park was his workshop. The pride of his workshop was a retired open wheeler race car, red in colour bearing the number 7, a car previously owned by the Jack Bradman race team.

My father purchased the car from a mechanic of the race team and while it was still in good order, its life as a race performer had past as the technology evolved. Although the car had been retired from professional racing my father maintained it and raced it at the Lakeside raceway on amateur race day meets. Occasionally in a fit of frustration from the job he would race it across the Story Bridge late at night in a circuit that took in Fortitude Valley before heading back over the bridge just as police cars started to roll out in a hopeless effort to catch the mysterious but not all that frequent appearance of a race car in the Valley just before dawn.

I think that the satisfaction he gained from racing the old car through the streets of Brisbane always put a big smile on his face and helped evaporate his frustrations with the job. I knew of his infrequent habit because I would hear him arrive home just as the sun was coming up. I would look out the window to see the race car on the back on its trailer and father walking up the driveway grinning like a Cheshire cat. Years later he recounted to me one story when he said that the police cars were so slow that one morning he stopped at the lights in the city next to Rock and Roll George and had conversation with him about the weather.

My father sold number 7 for a modest sum to a UK race museum and occasionally the car returns to Australia on exhibit. I best remember the car, not in a black and white news reel on its way to the race line driven by Jack Bradman but coming down Longfellow Street, Norman Park with my father behind the wheel as it roared along the road into our driveway after a test drive around the block to the delight of some neighbours and to the annoyance of others that didn't like its loud but very characteristic race car exhaust noise.

Brief of evidence

My father along with the other water police by way of their professional standing and personal decisions supported the plight of nine police officers from other areas of the force. The result of the investigation of these nine officers was a brief of evidence. Within the brief are extracts of statements and other information including the details of the proposed testimony intended for a well-respected Magistrate. It is the first step of a plan to bring about a fresh Royal Commission of Inquiry with much wider terms of reference and scope relative to previous inquiries that had failed. From the original the carbon copies were hand delivered to three people that will play an important part in the plan. A copy is handed to a Barrister who has agreed to help them, a copy to a senior Politician in the state government who will stand before Parliament to support them, and a senior member of Police they believed could be trusted.

Betrayed

Prior to court several things happened that derailed their plight. The Barrister is killed in a presumed single car accident on the Cunningham Highway between Warwick and Brisbane. The Politician died of presumed natural causes and in the Magistrate's court the senior Police Officer denies from the witness box that he never received his copy of the brief of evidence.

Without the key witnesses and their testimony the Magistrate in all correctness concludes that there is insufficient evidence to proceed further. To proceed further was to move one step closer to a Royal Commission of Inquiry into police and government corruption in Queensland. During the sixties and late seventies, in addition to Shirley Brifman at least five other potential witnesses are believed to have been murdered either at the hands of corrupt police officer or the criminals in their employ.

Flames on the water

Of particular significance to the Brisbane Water Police is the death of a witness and her male companion. They were killed in what certain detectives claim to be nothing more than a boating accident on a Gold Coast water way. The Brisbane Water Police have however found a cross threaded pipe connecting the propane to an on-board stove. They have found in the burnt out remains of the boat an open primary valve to the gas cylinder. The oil companies in the early 1960s have not yet began to put mercaptans in propane gas so that a leak can be smelt. Cross threaded gas lines and a source of probable ignition such as the alternator is what the corrupt call an accident. As for the Brisbane Water Police they call it a crime scene that could not be legally claimed to be within their jurisdiction to investigate further for murder is a matter for the Criminal Investigation Branch.

Nine armed men

My subsequent direct involvement in this story is in the concluding chapters of 'The Joke'. I complete a three year police cadetship, and I am immediately transferred to City Station and soon after to the historic Fortitude Valley Station as a Beat Officer. I have little knowledge of corruption in the police force and my father and the others have intentionally not told me anything apart from some guiding principles to work by.

Later after I discover for myself through a series of events commencing with random selection as a result of a radio call to a fight in progress between Chinese and Vietnamese men my suspicion that my employer, Police Commissioner Terrance Lewis may be corrupt comes to life. My testimony to the Fitzgerald Inquiry is about the smoking gun incident involving suspected Chinese regulator, Malcolm Sue. I knew Sue from my days walking the Fortitude Valley Beat. We knew he had a security business and it was suspected that he created his own business so to speak. However no one in the Valley was prepared to commit to a statement for fear of reprisals.

After the Valley I was transferred to Brisbane Mobile Patrols, however from time to time I find myself in a triple 'O' patrol car in the Valley. On the night in question before the inquiry I was routinely working with a temporary partner because my usual work partner Peter Kidd has taken his annual leave. We received a call from Police Operations and are directed to attend to a fight in progress at a unit complex that is within the Fortitude Valley Police District. Another police car containing two officers we know and trust contact the radio Operator and offer back up. On the way to the units our cars arrive in the street at about the same time.

Instead of parking outside the units we drive up the driveway off the street. About the yard there are broken furniture and about twenty Vietnamese, many with blood coming from their faces indicating they had been in a fight. All but one of the Vietnamese can speak any English and the young man that does has difficulty finding the words.

He said, "*Chinese come, big fight, brother gone!*" While I am standing there asking him questions I notice two cars briefly stop outside the units in the street and then quickly drive off.

The other Police see the same thing and we run to our cars after the cars that were speeding away. Whilst the two cars drive away quickly they stay together and the lead car is a Fiat sedan and the following vehicle a Rover four wheel drive. With the lights and sirens on briefly the two vehicles finally stop at 2 a.m. in morning outside the Fortitude Valley Post Office. As they come to a stop I said something to the Police in the other car over the radio and we come to a standard defensive position with our cars next to each other.

With our revolvers drawn and with my three partners behind the lights crouched shielded by our police cars I then walked along the footpath a little way to the side of their line of fire. I advanced cautiously towards the stopped cars and counted nine men in the two cars ahead of me. I walked slowly without wearing my cap, with my winter tunic open and my revolver in my hand. As I pass the first vehicle, the 4WD I look to see the men looking back at me. I gave them a false smile and kept walking to the first car a Fiat sedan because I figure the person I need to speak too is in that car.

I arrive at the Fiat and standing on the footpath again with my revolver pointing across me from right to left at the driver as I stand with my shoulder to the car I look in and see the stock of guns beside the two men in the rear of the Fiat. Between the two large Chinese men in the rear seat is a very slim and young Vietnamese man. I recognise the front seat passenger as Malcolm Sue and talk to him in a casual tone. I said to him that my partners were behind the police cars hidden by the lights and that they have their weapons trained to the back of their heads in case there is trouble. As I said this I looked at the men with the shotguns in the back on his car. He then said something in Chinese to his men and through the back windows the stocks of two shotguns arrives and I take possession of their weapons.

Upon seeing this, my partners moved forward and the other men in the 4WD passed out various weapons through the windows as they remained seated in the vehicle. As we stand on the footpath their boss who is a Kung Fu urban war lord and suspected underbelly regulator tries to intimidate me into doing nothing further because he has a close personal relationship with my employer the Queensland Commissioner of Police. Despite calls for back up at Police Operations, none came. It is later revealed during the Fitzgerald Inquiry that at least one officer in the Operations radio room was part of the corrupt league of disgraced officers that eventually find themselves behind bars. My three partners and I continued to interview the gang members and as we searched each of them in closer detail we found Chinese fighting sticks and knives, and revolvers. They are an armed Triad and they were on an urban gang war patrol.

Hit men in the valley

While standing on the street still with my revolver in my hand, Sue told me that the Vietnamese had hired four gun men from Melbourne to kill him because there has been trouble in Chinatown. He said to me that the Vietnamese man in his company was invited to come with him to find the men responsible for hiring these alleged hit-men. He also said that he had a dog in their community, a spy that has told him certain things.

The hit men he said were former soldiers of the Vietnamese army. His dog has tipped him off that he was about to be hit and not far from his Kung Fu school they have been seen sitting in a car armed with machine pistols. They are waiting for him to arrive at his normal time. Obviously he doesn't follow his normal routine and thus begins their search firstly for the blood money, the cash for the murder of Malcolm Sue.

Blood money

While we were interviewing the men a car with some of the Vietnamese we encountered earlier that night arrive. The park behind our police cars and I then searched these men and their car and found a bundle of money enough to buy a house in Brisbane. This amount of money is consistent with the level of payment the killers would have required to knock such a high profile Chinese regulator. It would seem that there is some truth in Sue's story, and perhaps some truth in what he is saying about our Commissioner of Police. After a while the detectives arrive and take men we have detained, the money, and the Vietnamese away. We left the Valley with the confiscated weapons along with the carbon copies of firearm licences for the weapons which are the assets of Sue's security business.

Angry rude words

We return to Mobile Patrols to write up our hand written occurrence sheets I found myself becoming increasingly angry at our Commissioner. Just before dawn I ask the office clerk at Mobile Patrols who is responsible for collating occurrence sheets if I could deliver the copies of the occurrence sheets intended for the 7th floor of Police Head Quarters. He hands me all the occurrence sheets including those about Sue and a short time later I push them under the doors of the offices on the 7th floor. I then turned and shouted into the empty hallway some foul angry words with realisation that something very foul stunk in the halls of police headquarters because the small things I had overhead the men of the Brisbane Water Police say years before in combination with the events of that night began to make sense to me.

Down in the basement

Following this event my partner Peter Kidd who had returned to Mobiles after being on leave discussed with me the options. We decided to conduct our own unauthorised investigations into the triad's activities. Late one night when I am driving home from work I decided to park around the corner from police headquarters and walked to the bottom basement of police headquarters beyond the boom gates where the non-commissioned officers including ourselves cannot drive. I had a feeling that perhaps the triad leader and the leader of the police may meet for what they could say was a conversation about community policing in China Town.

I was alone standing in the shadow of door where I could see the Rolls Royce owned by the triad's leader. It was a situation of not wanting to believe in the obscurity of our Commissioner of Police being in league with a criminal but needing the absolute proof. I waited there with a revolver hoping to see or hear something that would confirm my strong suspicions. I wait for over an hour however no one returned to the car and I felt somewhat exposed so I left the basement thinking to look another day with partner Peter Kidd.

Smoking gun mystery

The following night I noticed shot gun shot damage on the Rolls where it is parked in the street not far from his Kung Fu school in the Valley. There seemed to be some further truth in his story that the Vietnamese had hired four gun men from Melbourne and his actions on the night of the smoking gun incident at Wynnum appeared to have something to do with his actions on the night we intercepted his gang in the Valley. Had he killed a man at Wynnum as alleged at the Fitzgerald Inquiry? I do not know.

Bombs and promises

During my time at Mobiles there were mysterious events and because I had little knowledge of the system of things I was unable to comprehend certain matters including circumstances that had me swimming in dangerous waters oblivious to the sharks that lurked in the shadows.

On these times was the day when I was head down working on a court brief when my Sergeant asked me to take the Inspector's car next door to Victoria Barracks. As it was the Inspector's car, I assumed that I was to pick him up but when I arrived there were soldiers waiting with various kinds of minors inclusive of one with little handle and wheels to look under the car.

Even before I had gotten out of the car they were all over it with the mirrors looking under and into the engine bay before declaring to a senior police officer standing nearby that it was all clear. I then returned the car in Mobiles with no idea why the soldiers may have been looking for a bomb. After my unapplied for transferred out of Brisbane I learnt from another officer that had been stationed at the previous station where the Inspector had been a detective of the reason. He had been transferred to Mobiles from a country CIB after a child had been killed in a house as a result of his curiosity when the boy entered a vacant house on the outskirts of town presumably out of curiosity to look around. The detective had received a telephone call from an anonymous caller to the effect that there were drugs and money in the vacant house. Instead of drugs and money, there was a bomb in a cupboard trip set to go off upon opening.

Perhaps the boy had seen someone coming from the house and went to look to see what they were up too. As to his reason for exploring the house we will never know. Immediately after the incident the detective was transferred to uniform as an Inspector of Police of Brisbane Mobile Patrols. Perhaps he felt safer in Brisbane at a desk surrounded by dozens of armed police including those of the nearby Police Emergency Squad comprised on Vietnam veterans and other very capable police. Later the squad was renamed the TRG which was short for 'Technical Response Group', but some thought that perhaps 'Terribly Rough Guys' was a more amusing description for this group of highly trained urban soldiers in police uniforms.

Unapplied for transfer

Six years after my unexpected transfer out of Mobiles I learn there is no trace of the occurrence sheets and all but one police notebook with information relating to the smoking gun incident is in existence. I know this because a police officer assisting a Queens Counsel telephones me at my home asking me to come to George Street, the 'Fitzgerald Inquiry' to tell them about the my dealings with the Fortitude Valley triad run by the urban warlord, Malcolm Sue.

The next day in the middle of my very long testimony from the witness box the QC Drummond who was cross examining me said in a stern voice, *“Constable, you have a remarkable memory of events that night”* to which I was pleased to reply while holding up the only remaining police notebook, my own notebook, *“Not really Sir, I refreshed my memory from my official police notebook just before entering the witness box!”*

He asks me to repeat my reply, inspects my police notebook and then looks directly at QC Fitzgerald at the bench staring down with a puzzled look on his face and said to Mr. Fitzgerald before looking back at me with a strange expression, *“May we have a recess for a moment your Worship?”*.

The hidden notebook

All physical evidence about the incident apart from my official police notebook was removed from the system. It was my father’s advice to keep hidden my notebook and put into the system my training notebook so that it would look like my field notebook had become lost in the system. After producing my official police notebook with details of the shot guns, revolvers, nomination and serial numbers of notes enough to buy a house in Brisbane along with the names of people detained the atmosphere in the court room completely changed and the tone of the lawyer was no longer threatening.

Risky business

Soon after the smoking gun incident each of the police who was there on the night including myself were transferred with little notice out of Brisbane to various parts of Queensland. I was transferred to the country station, Tewantin. Before leaving Brisbane my partner and friend Peter Kidd and I had a conversation. He announces to me that he is thinking about transferring from mobiles to the police emergency squad. The squad was based at the police depot a short walk from mobiles.

Being concerned I say to Peter, *“What we do is risky enough Peter, if you do that job you’re going to increase the risk of either getting shot or shooting someone.”* Peter responded saying he understood the risks but really wanted to do it for the training and the experience. Years later, sadly the risk he takes becomes a reality.

Day of rebellion

My last day with Peter before I leave for Tewantin is a fishing trip on the Noosa River with him where we hire a small boat and fish from Makepeace Island. It was our day of rebellion because it is not our assigned rest day. We simply take off in the police car and go fishing. As far as the rest of the police force is concerned we are off the air at a court waiting to give evidence somewhere in Brisbane.

Later after I am retired from the Police Service I return to Makepeace Island because the new owners of the island engaged me an environmental consultant. As a result of my unexpected return to the island, I decided to write the essay, *‘The Joke’* in memory of not only Peter but all others that fought the good fight against corruption and had suffered and for some, had lost their lives.

Why didn't you tell me?

Six years later after delivery of my evidence to the inquiry I find myself in an emotional state that compels me to ask my father why he never told me about what he knew of the system of things in the police force.

He replies in earnest sincerity, words to the effect, *"A little information to a young and inexperienced officer is more dangerous than having no knowledge. It was more important that you go about your business just like the rest of the dummies. Knowledge without wisdom is a dangerous thing."* My father explained to me that Lewis was also a dummy, the last bloke in the chair when the music stopped. He explained to me that by the time Lewis became Commissioner the corrupt police had already started to lose control over organised crime in Queensland. Whilst bring an end to corruption is cause for celebration it is unfortunate that corrupt from an earlier era were not brought to justice given the extreme and frequent use of violence as the means to keep the order of things within organised crime firmly in their control.

Lewis as my father explained to me was a dummy compared to the much harder men of the past. He believes that in some respects police corruption can be traced back to the days of the rum rebellion in Sydney over two hundred years ago, and that Queensland was not the only state with a serious corruption problem. Police have always been the intermediates of powerful politicians that have connection to big business, and the premise for a corrupt officer's justification statement is *"If they can get away with it, why not me?"* Point in case why wasn't a similar corruption inquiry like the Fitzgerald Inquiry allowed to occur by the politicians in all of the other states when it was obvious that organised crime had tentacles and police connections throughout Australia? Lewis and the minor few were caught but the bigger fish all swam around the small net that was casted by keeping out of the waters of Queensland.

Courier Mail rounds men

As a young Constable walking the Fortitude Valley Beat in the early 1980s there were times when I was assigned to station duty. It is at this time when I answer the station desk phone and have my first conversation about the possibility of corruption with someone outside of the police force. The caller is a Courier Mail rounds man, a reporter. I know his voice because he has routinely rang in the past doing his rounds of the police stations for news. However on this occasion his tone is different and he asks me some very valid and specific questions to do with the number of illegal brothels and gaming dens in the Valley.

He said with a little anger in his voice, *"Why don't the Fortitude Valley police close down the brothels and gaming dens in the Valley?"* To which I replied, *"Because we have been instructed to say that the brothels and gaming dens are the jurisdiction of the Licensing Branch."* adding quietly into the phone, *"It stinks doesn't it!"* He said something in understanding that brings closure to our conversation. It is the beginning of the day of the investigative journalists that brings closure to *'The Joke'* through public pressure on the government.

Our telephone conversation is the day after each of the Beat Constables have been made to stand at attention at Fortitude Valley station for instruction from a senior uptown officer not to enter certain night clubs and other venues unless the proprietor has requested our assistance as a result of a disturbance such as a brawl.

From time to time I see the reporter that I have spoken to on the streets of Fortitude Valley asking people questions about the brothels and gambling dens. He approaches some of the Beat Officers and later we discuss him at the station between ourselves. We all agree that he is taking a risk and unknown to him we take an interest in his where about when he walks the Valley and report his location in our own coded way over the two way radios. These are the things in my early policing life that indicates to me a problem but as for the details and the extent of the problem I am ignorant and like all the other hard working beat police we are mushrooms kept in the dark and feed you know what.

The hard men of the past

Surprising during the Lewis years the eighties was the softer decade of 'The Joke'. Decades before and long preceding Commissioner Ray Whitrod another commissioned officer, a former Commissioner of Police was said to be extremely dangerous and ruthless. In fact, one might hear an officer in the know say, *"Watch him, he'll kill you if he thinks you're a threat"*. The fifties, sixties and seventies are the decades of police-controlled organised crime in Queensland.

It is the era of the *'hard men'* so named by Commissioner Whitrod as the men he wanted removed from the Force but found little support from the government in so doing. He fought a battle against a deeply entrenched corrupt police under his command. His approach to policing also has been characterised by a deep concern for the education of police, a concern often resisted by other police mostly made up by those of *'The Joke'*.

Commissioner Whitrod made good and bad decisions. Occasionally his bad decisions impacted upon honest police officer wrongly thought to be corrupt. It was a time when it was difficult to know who was corrupt and who was not. One decision that definitely had a very good outcome was his initiative to improve the education of Police Officers. Following his resignation because he could no longer tolerate the interference of the Queensland government, the Queensland Police Academy became a future project for completion during the era of Commissioner Lewis. The Academy offered both the traditional six month probationary training as well as a three year Police Cadetship.

This new training program was delivered by both police and civilian trainers and lecturers. The Cadetship comprised of studies not only in law and self-defence but in criminology, social psychology, history, and humanities. The Academy had many fine lecturers and trainers including the renowned footballer and coach, Mr. Wayne Bennett.

Friends in the mist

Whilst not related in any way to the fight against a corrupt system of things but relevant as an unexpected healing experience something happened years after my retirement in 1991. My wife who was of Polynesian descent from the eastern islands of PNG had a shared heritage with the people of New Zealand. So I took my wife and teenage daughter on holidays to their north island and by no plan we arrived at a place that was culturally significant.

Because the day was windy and it was raining lightly there were few tourists at the place. A guide, a lady native to the islands appeared in the waiting room and the four of us, my wife, daughter, the guide and me walked about looking and asking questions about heritage. During the friendly discussion our guide asked us where we were from.

I told her and immediately her expression changed. I said to her, *"Do you know where that is?"* and she replied in a tone different to our prior discussion and a very slowly sounded, *"Yes"*. The expression on her face told me there was pain in her words. I then said, *"If you don't mind me asking, do you have family there?"* She replied, *"Yes, my brother lives there."* I said, *"Your family name wouldn't be (name withheld for the privacy and respect of family) would it?"* to which she said, *"Yes"*. As we talked more a sad but warm solace surrounded us and despite the connection former from a horrible past event we enjoyed our time together although we did speak of the matter.

The lady with the brave face was the aunt of a school age girl who had been taken from her family. My daughter was about the same age and of similar appearance to the young girl. Unique to our encounter was that the lady later said that when she first entered the room where we were waiting for her, she felt something unusual. I also felt something unusual when she walked into the room. Later in the day there was a spiritual moment.

I will not say what happened because it was a small private affair. What I will say is that the brave lady invited then instructed firstly my 14 year old daughter, then my wife, and lastly, me to be involved in a cultural ritual associated with the return of their warriors after a campaign. We ended our afternoon with warm hugs and good-bye. I said to the lady we would return but later when we were further along the road I felt very sad and thought I may not be able to return to the same place because as one of the police that played a very small part in the overall team effort to solve a horrific crime, I was for her also a reminder of a part of the part best put to one side.

Clenched fist dreaming

For the police that have to deal with the very bad things in life they are often faced with the possibility of becoming either emotionally weather beaten or thick skinned. For me the murder of the young girl along with the other murders I have some original knowledge of, including the murder of my former partner and friend Peter, was my breaking point emotionally. Before I asked Commissioner James O'Sullivan to retire me by way of a conversation with the police Chaplin I was having a lot of trouble sleeping and when I did sleep and awoke the next morning, it was with clenched fists wanting to fight something but not knowing what or who to fight. Commissioned officer O'Sullivan had been Fitzgerald's lead field investigator during the inquiry and it was therefore appropriate that he consider my request to be retired from duty. After my retirement when he said some kind words by way of a Police Service Certificate he issued to me.

A Police Officer's Police Officer

With regard to the fine detectives of Tewantin and Noosa Heads such as the very honourable and capable senior detective Bob Atkinson, my faith in detectives was well and truly restored. I admire police and anyone that is exposed though their work to violence in one form or another who continue in their respective jobs as a life time career and still manage to remain relatively sane and light of heart.

The right outlook

Regarding the professional outlook a police officer should have, I think about the attitudes towards life and work exhibited by the hard working men of the Brisbane Water Police that I knew as the son of a police man, a fellow diver. They were men that not only work together but socialised together as one extended family.

Their river side police station is a historic yet sadly dilapidated building that still stands today in the shadow of the Story Bridge. It once had two mysterious iconic gate keepers, Captain Cook era black powder cannons that guarded the entrance to their station. Poetically only those that manned the station knew that the cannons could actually be loaded and fired. Those of the station worked in interesting times that were very difficult for them to deal with.

They often discussed the problems within the Queensland Police Force only a cannon ball away from the National Hotel where the corrupt and their criminal partners drank and plotted to gain greater wealth and **POWER**.

Brisbane Water Police hamming it up, 1967

