

STAR OF COURAGE

Constable Garry Lawrence THORNTON
New South Wales Police Force

On 15 January 1983, at approximately 5 pm Constable Thornton was winched 70 metres down a cliff face to reach an injured woman who had fallen from a lookout in the Blue Mountains. Although the woman had come to rest on a small ledge, Constable Thornton was not able to be set down on it due to a large dead tree projecting from the cliff above. He was eventually landed on a small sapling growing at right angles from the cliff, and which was growing 200 metres from the valley floor. At any time the small sapling could well have carried away, which would have meant the Constable would have fallen. In order to effect the rescue of the woman, Constable Thornton had to crawl from the sapling along the cliff face to her, secure a litter which he arranged to be winched from the helicopter, place the injured woman on it and supervise its return to the helicopter. Once the woman was safe, he crawled back to his original landing point and was winched back to the helicopter. During the time he was on the cliff, Constable Thornton was unable to wear any form of safety harness; and he had to cope with gusting winds which were threatening the safety of both himself and the injured woman. From the commencement to the end of the operation his life was at risk.

Constable Thornton displayed conspicuous courage in such circumstances and undoubtedly saved the woman's life.

BRAVERY MEDAL

Mr Leonard Roy ANSFIELD
5 Walpole Court
WATSONIA VIC. 3087

On 6 February 1982, at approximately 8.15 pm, a fire was deliberately started in a detention wing of Fairlea Prison. Mr Ansfield, in company with two other prison officers went to the inmates' assistance. On opening the door to the detention area where five people were confined, he was confronted by dense black smoke, flames and heat which forced him back. Mr Ansfield dropped to the floor and attempted to crawl into the room but was again repelled by the heat and smoke. By wrapping his head in some material, he was able to crawl some ten to twelve feet into the room and effect the rescue of one of the occupants. The rescue of a second prisoner was effected in the same manner. Because of the heat, Mr Ansfield was unable to enter the room a third time and it was later ascertained that three other prisoners had lost their lives.

By his actions in rescuing the two women, Mr Ansfield displayed considerable bravery.

Mr Gregory Charles STEWART
86 Pelican Parade
JACOB'S WELL QLD 4207

On 5 September 1983, at about 7 pm, Mr Stewart heard the sound of an explosion from a house across the road from his own. When he ran out, the dwelling was well alight and the occupant, who was 85 years old, still inside. The house was timber framed and walled with fibrolite. Electricity was not connected, power being supplied from large gas cylinders mounted outside the house but adjacent to the walls. Despite the obvious risk to his life through collapse of the roof and the danger of the gas cylinders exploding, Mr Stewart entered the building. Although he was unfamiliar with the interior of the house and it was filled with dense smoke, Mr Stewart was able to locate the occupant, who had been overcome by fumes, and drag him to safety, although in effecting the rescue, he was burnt on the hands and face. Shortly after, one of the gas cylinders exploded and the safety valve blew out of the other thereby adding to the intensity of the fire.

By his actions in entering the burning building and rescuing the occupant, Mr Stewart displayed considerable bravery.

COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT

Miss Sherilee Kate BELL
12 Johnson Street
PORT PIRIE SA 5540

On 29 October 1983, at about 10 am, Sherilee Bell, then aged 14 years, was one of five persons in a boat practicing rowing on Port Pirie Harbour. Hearing screams for help from the shore, she saw a young boy, whom she recognised and knew could not swim, in difficulties in deep water. As the rowers in the stress of the moment could not get the boat to the boy, Sherilee dived into the water and swam some 50 metres to him. After a brief struggle, she was able to get him to shore and to safety.

By doing so, she undoubtedly saved the boy's life.

Senior Constable Trevor Norman CURRIE
Victoria Police Force

On 16 February 1983, at about 10 pm, during the bushfires in the Macedon area, Senior Constable Currie, together with other officers, was involved in the evacuation of a number of people from areas threatened by fire.

Because flames were across the road being used by the evacuees, motorists had stopped causing a bank up of traffic. On at least five occasions, Senior Constable Currie escorted motorists through the flames on the road and assisted people whose vehicles had been trapped by them. The fire was so intense at times that the visibility was practically nil and at all times the Constable was at risk in getting motorists to safety. Had he not acted as an escort, or misjudged his way, lives would certainly have been lost.

By these actions, Senior Constable Currie displayed commendable courage.

COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT

Mr Charles Peter GATT
2 Bernard Street
MAIDSTONE VIC 3012

On 23 August 1983, at approximately 8 am, Mr Gatt, who was on his way to work, detected a house fire. After asking a neighbour to ring the fire brigade, he approached the burning house. When he heard a woman screaming, he forced the front door and escorted the woman standing inside to safety. As she was screaming that her children were still inside, Mr Gatt re-entered the house, but was driven back because of the intense smoke. He again tried to get into the house but was again driven back. Mr Gatt then went to the rear of the house where he saw a man and child. By breaking a window, he and the man inside the house were able to get the child out.

Through his actions, Mr Gatt displayed commendable courage.

Constable Lionel Douglas HOUSTON
New South Wales Police Force

On 15 January 1983, at approximately 5 pm Constable Houston piloted a helicopter to the site where a woman had fallen down a cliff from a lookout in the Blue Mountains. She had come to rest on a small ledge from where a rescue was to be attempted. Constable Houston was required to maintain a position as close as possible to the cliff face to enable another officer to be winched to the injured woman. His task was made very difficult by strongly gusting winds, the angle of the cliff and a large dead tree which projected from the cliff above the injured woman. Constable Houston was required to pilot the aircraft to this position on a number of occasions to lower the rescuing officer, to lower and raise a litter to which the injured woman was strapped and to retrieve the rescuing officer.

By his actions, Constable Houston displayed commendable courage and skill.

COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT

Mr David Owen PHIPPS
7 Vivian Place
leinster wa 6437

On 28 March 1982, at approximately 3 am, Mr Phipps was advised that a house near his was on fire. He and two other men approached the house, broke a window and attempted to enter the building. Heat and smoke forced the men back. However, on a second attempt, Mr Phipps was helped into the house where he located a young boy. When the child was passed to the men waiting outside, Mr Phipps was forced to leave the house due to excessive heat and smoke. Unsuccessful attempts were then made to rouse the other occupants by banging on windows and attempts were made to contain the fire until the fire tender arrived. When the blaze was extinguished, it was found that two people had died.

By his actions, Mr Phipps displayed commendable courage.

Sergeant Stephen Norman QUINSEE
Victoria Police Force

On 16 February 1983, at about 10 pm, during the bushfires in the Macedon area, Sergeant Quinsee, together with other officers, was involved in the evacuation of a number of people from areas threatened by fire.

As fire was threatening to trap some 64 people, Sergeant Quinsee, together with another officer, directed them to a brick garage where they waited in comparative safety for a time. When it became apparent that people were becoming affected by heat and smoke, Sergeant Quinsee and another officer, checked the road to ascertain whether vehicles could get through. This necessitated driving along the road with fire burning on each side and across it and moving fallen trees. The officers then organised a convoy, led by Sergeant Quinsee and another officer, to ferry the trapped people to safety.

By his actions, Sergeant Quinsee ensured the safety of a number of persons in a situation of extreme danger.

COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT

Senior Sergeant Geoffrey John MORPHETT
Victoria Police Force

On 16 February 1983, at about 10 pm, during the bushfires in the Macedon area, Senior Sergeant Morphett, together with other officers, was involved in the evacuation of a number of people from areas threatened by fire.

Senior Sergeant Morphett, who was off duty, found himself trapped together with some sixty-four other people. He took charge of the situation, directing people onto a property and into a large brick garage which, at his direction, had been emptied of all toxic or flammable substances. Because people were becoming affected by the increasing heat and smoke, Senior Sergeant Morphett and another officer examined the road to see whether evacuation was possible. Fire was burning on both sides of the road and across it and three trees had to be moved before they could ascertain that the road was useable. A convoy of six vehicles was established which, in three trips, successfully moved these people to safety.

By his actions, Senior Sergeant Morphett ensured the safety of a number of persons in a situation of extreme danger.

Sergeant Dennis Graziano MORRESI
Victoria Police Force

On 16 February 1983, at about 10 pm, during the bushfires in the Macedon area, Senior Constable Morresi, together with other officers, was involved in the evacuation of a number of people from areas threatened by fire.

Senior Constable Morresi, in assisting people to safety, was required, on a number of occasions, to alight from his vehicle and encourage occupants of trapped vehicles to proceed through the flames. When stationary vehicles were encountered, he checked each one to make sure there were no occupants and, in one case, assisted a woman and child into the police vehicle. Thereafter, Senior Constable Morresi, together with other officers, travelled to a residence to see whether there were any occupants in it. When they reached the house, three drums of petrol exploded, setting it on fire and singeing the Constable's shirt and hair.

By his actions, Senior Constable Morresi ensured the safety of a number of people in a dangerous situation.

COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT

Constable First Class Christine Lynn SIMPSON
New South Wales Police Force

On 15 January 1983, at approximately 5 pm, Constable Simpson was involved in the rescue of a woman who had fallen down a cliff face from a lookout in the Blue Mountains. Constable Simpson was required to act as observer for the helicopter pilot to ensure that the rotor blades did not become entangled in scrub growing on the cliff face. During the entire operation, winds were gusting strongly which added to the difficulties caused by the terrain. When the litter on which the injured woman was to be placed was lowered to the rescue site, strong winds caused one of the strops on the litter to become entangled on the helicopter skid. The only way to free it was for Constable Simpson to inch her way along the skid and manually free the strop. This was a delicate task as the equilibrium of the helicopter had to be maintained at all times.

By her actions, Constable Simpson displayed commendable courage.

Chief Superintendent Geradus STEVENS
Queensland Police Force

On 25 March 1983, at approximately 11.30 am, police were alerted that an armed man had entered the Toowoomba Municipal Library where a shot had been fired. Sergeant Stevens, together with another officer, proceeded to the Library and entered the premises from the rear. Finding the office section of the Library empty, Sergeant Stevens approached a door leading to the public section of the building. As he approached this door, he could hear a man talking. Surmising that this was the offender, he opened the door and confronted him. At this time, the offender was speaking on the telephone and had a rifle pointing at the ceiling. When Sergeant Stevens was some five metres from the offender, he rushed him and was able to disarm him before more shots could be fired from the rifle which was subsequently found to be loaded, cocked and with the safety catch off. At the time, the offender was holding twelve people hostage.

By his actions, Detective Sergeant First Class Stevens displayed commendable courage in confronting the armed offender.

COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT

Constable Kevin Bruce TREVAN
Victoria Police Force

On 16 February 1983, at about 10 pm, during the bushfires in the Macedon area, Constable Trevan, together with other officers, was involved in the evacuation of a number of people from areas threatened by fire.

Because flames were across the road being used by the evacuees, motorists had stopped causing a bank-up of traffic. On at least five occasions, Constable Trevan escorted motorists through the flames on the road and assisted people whose vehicles had been trapped by them. The fire was so intense at times that visibility was practically nil and at all times the Constable was at risk in getting motorists to safety. Had he not acted as an escort, or misjudged his way, lives would certainly have been lost.

By his actions, Constable Trevan displayed commendable courage.