The kidnappers would now want to negotiate ransom in secret. Everyone was painfully aware that the darkness to petrify relatives with threats of death to their loved one if they ever let anyone know. It’s a covert crime that calls for secrecy and petrify relatives with threats of death to their loved one if they ever let anyone know. It’s a covert crime that calls for covert police action. But in the spring of 2006, in one violent burst, all the rules changed. This time it was public, in the bright light of day and the harsh light of the media. Graham Lee McMynn, a 20-year-old university student, was driving to school with his girlfriend when his car was surrounded and boxed by a number of vehicles. He was dragged from his car, thrown in a vehicle and ran off, that he could probably only survive eight days at most without food and water. The clock was ticking when police got their first break. One of the witnesses supplied a license plate number that led police to a rental agency. Within 20 minutes of the crime police were there. Incredibly, one of the kidnappers called in to the agency to say he was coming back to retrieve a cell phone charger he had left in the vehicle that he had just returned. Police were waiting for him. “We put him under surveillance hoping he would lead us to Graham or at least to some of the other kidnappers,” said Inspector Les Yeo, who was in charge of what would soon become the largest integrated police operation ever seen in B.C. “The pressure not to lose sight of this guy was incredible. Everything was riding on it.” Police followed their man for days. Every time he met someone else, police followed that person as well. Every location, every house, more police were assigned assaults on 14 houses, some of which were in Surrey, Vancouver, and Nanaimo. If Graham was to be found, it would take the combined efforts of several police and non-police agencies, information from 19 surveillance teams, analysis of 32 cellular phones, more than 9,000 phone intercepts, and forensic analysis of thousands of exhibits. On day eight, more than 150 officers broke down the front door of a house in Surrey, they arrested several people inside, then kicked in a basement bedroom door. Sitting on the bed was Graham McMynn. Police radios crackled with a single message from the ERT officer: “We’ve got your boy.” McMynn had survived an ordeal of being held naked and blindfolded in a closet, threatened with rape and death, and every day not knowing whether this would be his last. “There were high-fives all the way around,” says Inspector Yeo. “I’ve never seen anything like it, the teamwork was incredible. Five adults and one juvenile were charged. Three were convicted and a trial is pending for the juvenile.”
Gunfire Shatters Peaceful Neighbourhood

When Constables Douglas Brown and Davor Tolja were on routine patrol along Davie Street near Thurlow on a Friday afternoon in July 2008, the last thing they expected to hear was gunfire. But when 50 metres away from them a drug deal had gone bad, a shot had been fired, a man lay bleeding on the ground crying in pain, and people were scrambling and screaming in all directions.

When they arrived at the scene they saw a man running away. They immediately gave chase. “You see a guy screaming with blood pumping out of his leg and you look and see another guy with a gun running down a lane... you don’t think, you just go after him,” said Constable Brown.

They broadcast an accurate description, but lost sight of him. In case he was planning to return to finish off his victim they doubled back. “Doug painted a very clear picture for us over the radio and Alex and I knew what we needed to do. Our immediate reaction was that there was imminent danger to the public and our fellow officers. I was very concerned that if the guy had already used a gun in broad daylight, he might not think twice about using it again,” said Constable Eugene Fung. Constables Fung and Alex Ng spotted the man in the crowd. Taking cover behind their vehicle, they ordered the man at gunpoint to get down. “There was no time to think or react with any emotion. We just had to react with our personal instincts,” said Constable Ng. “Eugene and I both saw the suspect in the crowd of people and knew this was the gunman. There was the potential for things to escalate if we didn’t act forcefully and immediately overwhelm him.” They took him safely into custody and found a loaded handgun in his waistband. “The last thing we wanted was a gun battle in mid-day in the 1000 block of Davie Street with hundreds of people around,” said Constable Tolja.

The quick and decisive actions of these four officers demonstrated outstanding skill, judgement and bravery. Constables Douglas Brown, Davor Tolja, Eugene Fung and Alex Ng were awarded the Chief Constable’s Unit Citation. ■

Police Survive Battle of Deadly Force

When looking down the barrel of a loaded gun, sometimes all an officer can do is pull his own weapon and hope that his finger hits the trigger before the other guy pulls his.

It was the situation that faced Detective Constable Stan Cratchley when he and his team tried to arrest a drug dealer in late January 2006 in an underground parking garage on Homer Street. Unknown to the dealer, he had been selling drugs to undercover police officers for weeks. But when they moved in for the arrest, the dealer had other ideas and pulled a loaded semi-automatic handgun, pointed it directly at the officers, and refused to obey their directions. Shots were fired and the dealer suffered several non-life-threatening injuries.

For demonstrating sound judgement, exceptional skill and teamwork, Detective Constables Stan Cratchley, Peter Sadler, Giusepppe Sorbara, Doug Brown and Don Coghill were awarded the Chief Constable’s Unit Citation. ■

Fear Factor Threatens the Lives of Elderly Pair

It was that type of fear that gripped two elderly people on October 31st, 2008, as they stood motionless and seconds away from being burned alive. Flames shooting 20 feet above the roof were destroying their home, turning it into a roaring inferno with heat so intense it could be felt half a block away. Their home was engulfed, debris was crashing everywhere and a blanket of thick black smoke was making it impossible to breathe.

They were only a few feet away from their front door. They could see it, but their fear made it impossible to reach. Constables Wayne Thompson and Nick Bell could see it as well. Without hesitating they tore up the front steps and into the burning building. Constable Thompson put his arms around the elderly man and was able to run with him to safety. Constable Bell carried the woman out of the house.

The constables tended to the two people until the ambulance arrived. They were both suffering from smoke inhalation and the man had second degree burns to his head and face.

Constables Thompson and Bell put their own lives at risk to save the lives of others. Their courage and heroic actions exemplified the highest traditions of the Department and merited its highest distinction, the Award of Valour. ■

Taking cover behind their vehicle, Constables Eugene Fung, Davor Tolja, Douglas Brown and Alex Ng prevented a gun battle.
**Dramatic Bridge Incident Ends Safely for All**

**Officers’ compassion and courage make the difference**

THE SUN WAS DIRECTLY overhead and the temperature was climbing past 30 degrees Celsius on a sunny Canada Day in 2008. Traffic was heavy on the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge. At first glance it seemed like a normal summer day, but before the afternoon was out a group of police officers would risk everything, a city would be divided in anger, and a life would hang in the balance.

Just past noon, police saw a woman who was visibly distraught standing on the sidewalk mid-span on the bridge. When they approached her, she climbed over the railing. She perched precariously on three parallel cables, reaching up and behind her to hold on with one free hand. There was nothing beneath her. If she released her grip she would fall to her certain death.

Negotiators were called in, along with members of the Emergency Response Team, the Marine Squad and the Coast Guard. Traffic was halted in both directions. This reduced the risk of her being dislodged by vibrations on the bridge deck and allowed negotiators to be heard without shouting over the roar of traffic.

“I made a decision to stop all the traffic because she was speaking in such a low voice that we couldn’t hear her,” said Inspector Bob Chapman. “I was well aware that it was Canada Day, but we were determined to save her life.”

Constables Lawrence Carlson, Linda Stewart and Graham MacDonald continued to talk to the woman for more than five hours in the stifling heat, while hundreds of motorists fumed. As the day wore on, the woman refused offers of water and concern grew that she would simply fall from exhaustion.

As the woman became increasingly despondent, the negotiators knew that time was running out. While Constable Carlson distracted her, Constable MacDonald reached through the railing and grabbed her arm. ERT members rushed in, anchored themselves to their vehicle, and went over the railing to assist and pull her to safety.

While a life was saved that day, the rescue would prove to be a controversial one, with city residents divided in the ensuing debate over whether the bridge closure was necessary.

“There was no debate among the grateful friends and relatives of the woman who was taken safely to hospital that day,” Inspector Bob Chapman said. “We gave that lady another chance at life. We gave her a chance at life. We saved a life.”

Police Dog Injured in the Line of Duty

**His partner fights to protect him**

**WATCHING YOUR PARTNER** being strangled and punched would be a gut-wrenching experience for any police officer, but when your partner is a German shepherd, that special bond between police dog and handler makes it as terrifying as watching someone attack your best friend.

That’s just what happened in the early hours of a summer night in 2008, when Constable Ray Wong and his police dog Bear were on patrol in one of the city’s east side commercial districts. Constable Wong saw two men attempting to break into an auto-repair shop. They had been spotted, the pair drove off with the police team in pursuit. Eventually trapped in a cul-de-sac, one of the men let their vehicle and ran. Bear chased him and brought him down. Constable Wong was holding the second man at gunpoint when he heard yelps from his partner. Telling the man to stay put, the constable ran to his partner’s aid.

“The thief had Bear in a strangeshold and was repeatedly punching him in the head.”

“*There are no words to describe it, to hear your best friend, who can normally handle his own, yelping in pain as he was being choked and continuously punched on the head by the six-foot-two-inches tall, 220-pound, goal-oriented parolee, who did not want to go back to jail,*” said Constable Wong.

“When the desperate thief refused to comply with Constable Wong’s order to release the animal, the constable holstered his weapon and fought until Bear was free.”

“Though cover was only minutes away, it seemed like an eternity as the situation was evolving rapidly for the worse. The passenger who was originally compliant was now exiting the vehicle and coming towards us yelling and screaming.”

Constable Wong pulled his firearm to hold the man at bay. Meanwhile, Bear was once again being strangled and punched.

When backup arrived, both men, who had lengthy criminal records, were arrested and a number of break-in tools were seized. Bear survived with two cuts over his right eye and was generally sore and slow for a few days. For their proactive policing that prevented a crime and for ensuring the successful apprehension of multiple suspects regardless of the resistance they encountered, Constable Ray Wong and Police Service Dog Bear were awarded the Chief Constable’s Commendation.

**THEIR MISSION: To Save the Children**

**THEIR ASSIGNMENT: Arrest child pornographers**

“There are few crimes more repellent and few victims more helpless and vulnerable than those caught up in the insidious web of child pornography. For more than six years, two VPD officers have made it their mission to save the children and put away the criminals who hurt them.”

Detective Constables Nancy Yingling and Russ Mitchell between them have investigated more than 450 incidents of child exploitation on the Internet. The majority of these investigations involve graphic, disturbing images of children.

They have identified and arrested many offenders locally and abroad.

“For me, these investigations were what I went into policing, to help those victims who without a doubt needed our help,” said Detective Constable Yingling.

Detective Constables Nancy Yingling and Russ Mitchell pursue child pornographers across the globe.

“Often these children were being abused by the very people one would think would never dream of abusing them - their parents or relatives and/or friends, and therefore the police role is extremely important with respect to the welfare of the child.”

One investigation led to Spain where more than a dozen children were rescued. One child was only 11 months old. Five people were arrested.

An investigation led to the arrest and guilty plea of a local man who had been luring children over the Internet. Detective Constables Yingling and Mitchell are considered pioneers in this field and are recognized experts. They have brought distinctiv to themselves and the VPD and were awarded the Chief Constable’s Commendation.

Detective Constables Nancy Yingling and Russ Mitchell pursue child pornographers across the globe.
VPD’s Powerful Report Highlights the Problems of the Mentally Ill

Government response promises action

THERE ARE TIMES when old-fashioned work is just not the right tool in the box. Some public safety problems are so overwhelming and so pervasive they require extraordinary measures, innovative tactics and ground-breaking research. That’s what drove Detective Constable Fiona Wilson-Bates to produce what has been called “the most powerfully written document ever to come out of the Vancouver Police Department.”

“In my almost 10 years as a Vancouver Police Constable, there are few situations I’ve been involved in where I felt so empowered and so able to lend a voice to people whose voices often aren’t heard,” said Detective Constable Wilson-Bates. In her report, titled “Lost in Transition,” Wilson-Bates reveals the incredible fact that more than a third of all police calls in the city deal with the mentally ill. She documents a mental health system in crisis that drains police resources and criminalizes the mentally ill because of a lack of capacity. The issue is explained in a compelling manner, mainly through the eyes of those who have to deal with it. She writes about mental patients who survived on the street, who were involved with police on a daily basis, and bounced back and forth between jail cells and hospital beds. She also tells us “Corey’s story” through the eyes of his mother, who lost her son to suicide after he fell through the cracks of the mental health system.

Detective Constable Wilson-Bates’ efforts did not go unnoticed. Her report received massive media coverage, was lauded by community groups, and prompted government to take action and promise new mental health facilities.

“This was the most rewarding part of doing Lost in Transition for me. I met countless service providers, family members, police officers and lawyers who have been working on this issue for years, often at times when the topic of mental illness was not a conversation that many people wanted to engage in. It was my privilege to shine a light on their efforts and to see that bringing attention to the issue has actually made a difference.”

Her extraordinary efforts to help those coping with devastating illness, and at times a seemingly uncaring health system, embody the very principles of the “beyond the call” standard celebrated by the Vancouver Police. Detective Constable Fiona Wilson-Bates was awarded the Chief Constable’s Commendation.

Detective Constable Fiona Wilson-Bates prompted attention and action to assist the mentally ill.

Con Air Program Gives Justice a Lift

Criminals take flight…back to jail

THERE WERE THOSE who called it the dirty little secret of the Canadian justice system. Others argued that the public would be horrified if they knew what every criminal seemed to know. Still others said nothing could be done about it.

Sergeant Ruben Sorge took it upon himself to change all that. For decades in Canada, thousands of criminals every year had been evading prosecution simply by leaving the jurisdiction in which they committed their crimes. Knowing that other police departments would not pay to send them back, they lived freely, apparently immune from the warrants for their arrest.

“We end up just letting them walk… it’s just wrong. We should be able to arrest them and bring them to justice… people expect that of us.”

Sergeant Ruben Sorge spent years convincing justice officials that these criminals could be successfully returned and prosecuted. His efforts resulted in a program popularly dubbed Con Air. Under his direction, the first of these fleeing criminals were arrested in Vancouver and sent back for prosecution.

His unrelenting dedication and refusal to accept a shocking injustice has led to national attention, community involvement and a renewed will by police departments and politicians across Canada to send a strong message to criminals that getting on a bus is no longer a ticket to freedom.

Sergeant Ruben Sorge was awarded the Chief Constable’s Commendation.

For outstanding bravery and professionalism, the following members were awarded the Chief Constable’s Unit Citation: Constaberies Lawrence Carlson, Graham MacDonald, Linda Stewart, Marco Veronese, James Hewelling, Francis Aquino, Justin Leung, Shawn Hardman, Warren Turkulake, John Crawford, Tony Blouin, Kyle Furness, Acting Sergeant Jason High, Sergeant Steve Elyz, and Inspectors Bob Chapman and Daryl Wirbel.

Vancouver Police Department

Dramatic Bridge Incident Ends Safely for All

CHANCE to go home to her family and her nine-year-old son. We saved her life,” said Inspector Chapman.

For outstanding bravery and professionalism, the following members were awarded the Chief Constable’s Unit Citation: Constaberies Lawrence Carlson, Graham MacDonald, Linda Stewart, Marco Veronese, James Hewelling, Francis Aquino, Justin Leung, Shawn Hardman, Warren Turkulake, John Crawford, Tony Blouin, Kyle Furness, Acting Sergeant Jason High, Sergeant Steve Elyz, and Inspectors Bob Chapman and Daryl Wirbel.

For more information, please email media@vpd.ca.

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Beyond the Call is a publication produced by the men and women of the Vancouver Police Department’s Public Affairs Section.

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