

STAR OF COURAGE (SC)

Senior Constable Stephanie Leanne BOCHORSKY,
Western Australia Police Force

In the early morning of 28 August 2015, Senior Constable (then First Class Constable) Stephanie Bochorsky rescued two young children who had been covered with fuel and set alight at a house in Doubleview, Western Australia.

At approximately 12:30am, Constable Bochorsky was off-duty and at home when she heard a female neighbour screaming in the street. She opened her door and saw a woman running and yelling that her children were being injured in a neighbouring house.

Constable Bochorsky immediately left her own home and approached the property. As she entered the home, she smelt a strong odour of petrol. She made her way to a bedroom and on entering the room, found a naked man - the father of the children - armed with a fuel can and a cigarette lighter. He was in the process of pouring petrol onto a young girl who was lying on a bed.

She then saw another small child standing in a cot. The upper part of the child was alight and she was in extreme pain. Despite the presence of the violent man, Constable Bochorsky grabbed a nearby blanket and began to extinguish the flames on the small child as the offender continued to pour petrol onto the young girl on the bed.

Constable Bochorsky, without regard for her own safety, removed the young child from the cot and grabbed the girl from the bed and quickly left the house. She took the girls to her own home where she placed the youngest child in the bathtub and began to administer first aid to the child's burns.

Meanwhile, another neighbour rushed into the offender's house armed with a fire extinguisher. The offender was now agitated and armed with a filleting knife with a 20cm blade. Without warning, the offender lunged at the neighbour with the knife, attempting to stab him in the abdomen.

The neighbour used the fire extinguisher to stop the attack. He disarmed and restrained the offender, while another neighbour entered the house and removed a third child from the scene.

The children were all taken by ambulance to hospital and despite her severe burns, the small child continues to recover.

By her actions, Senior Constable Bochorsky displayed conspicuous courage.

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Mr Shaun Michael McHENRY, Denmark WA 6333

On the morning of 12 October 2012, Mr Shaun McHenry displayed conspicuous courage during a fire burnover event at Black Cat Creek, Western Australia.

The Black Cat Creek fire ignited around 9.00am and the firefighting effort was concentrated on two sectors. A change in wind direction to the south-west caused the fire to escalate dramatically and burn over the top of a group of firefighters, who were parked in the bush for a briefing.

The fire intensified so quickly that two trucks were unable to escape and were completely gutted. A number of the firefighters sustained burns, two seriously. The strength of the fire was unusually high, due to the existence of heavy fuels in the area and very strong winds fanning the flames up a slight hill.

Mr McHenry moved his truck between the approaching fire front and the utility vehicle of two colleagues, offering them protection from the heat and flames, which were now eight metres high.

At this point, the engine of Mr McHenry's vehicle malfunctioned and he and another colleague became trapped in the ferocious burnover. A window of his truck blew out and the fire was sucked inside the vehicle. The cab started to melt and toxins from burning plastics and exploding cans filled the space.

Knowing the immediate danger, Mr McHenry signalled to his colleague that they should seek refuge in another vehicle which appeared to be less impacted by the fire.

With low visibility and very hot conditions, Mr McHenry led his colleague toward the other truck. The burning continued around them and they could hear the roar of the fire. They reached the other vehicle and as Mr McHenry opened the door, he discovered a distressed male inside. Unfortunately, this vehicle was also inoperable so he decided they needed to return to a safe area. Using a fire blanket for protection, Mr McHenry, his colleague, and the distressed male navigated through the smoke filled air.

Suddenly, Mr McHenry felt something hit him in the back and push him over. His clothes caught fire and he used the fire blanket to extinguish himself. Headlights of another vehicle appeared and Mr McHenry and his two colleagues were then removed to the relative safety of the control point.

By his actions, Mr McHenry displayed conspicuous courage.

STAR OF COURAGE (SC)

Mrs Mary SAWAN, Malvern East VIC 3145

In the early morning of 19 March 2015, Ms Mary Sawan went to the defence of family members during a home invasion in Malvern East, Victoria.

At 4:30am, Mrs Sawan was upstairs in the family home getting ready for work, while her husband was downstairs in the kitchen and one of her children was asleep in the living room.

Three armed and masked intruders entered the rear yard of the residence and approached the back door of the house. Mrs Sawan's husband heard the sound of breaking glass and attempted to prevent the intruders from entering but they forced him back. Two intruders then made their way into the house, while the third man standing in the rear doorway with a long arm firearm drawn.

One of the intruders began assaulting Mr Sawan, who had fallen backwards onto a couch. He frantically called out for his son, who was sleeping in the living room, to call the police. The boy quickly entered the room to assist his father who was being held down and assaulted by one of the intruders with a machete. At this point, the third man discharged his weapon a number of times.

On hearing the shots, Mrs Sawan left the bedroom and ran to the bottom of the stairs. She saw her husband and son being assaulted by the two masked and armed intruders.

Without hesitation, she jumped on one of the intruders, pulled off his balaclava and pushed him against a wall. Shocked, the offender stepped away and attempted to retreat through the back door. Mrs Sawan clawed at his clothing and scratched the man as he got away from her.

Despite further gunshots being fired by the third man, Mrs Sawan then tackled the second intruder who was holding a pistol. She grabbed at his balaclava causing him to lose his balance and drop the backpack he was carrying, spilling its contents. He frantically began retrieving the contents.

From his position outside, and witnessing the struggles inside, the third armed and masked offender again raised his rifle and discharged it in Mrs Sawan's direction, narrowly missing her.

By this time, Mr Sawan had gotten to his feet and together with his son picked up household items and began throwing them at the second intruder, who was trying to collect items that had fallen from his backpack.

The second offender scrambled out the back door and all three intruders immediately left the scene. The three men were later identified by police and charged.

By her actions, Mrs Sawan displayed conspicuous courage.