

PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF STAFF CADET JULIAN KNIGHT RE: RMC DUNTROON

Attachment (8):

R -v- Knight, Supreme Court of Victoria, transcript, Friday 28 October 1988, pages 1 & 20-23.

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF VICTORIA

CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

MELBOURNE

FRIDAY, 28TH OCTOBER, 1988

BEFORE THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE HAMPPEL

THE QUEEN v. JULIAN KNIGHT

CHARGE: Murder (7 counts)
Attempted Murder (46 counts)

THE ACCUSED pleaded Guilty

MR J. DICKSON, with MR J. LECKIE, appeared on behalf of the
Crown.

MR R. RICHTER Q.C., with MR PIRRIE, appeared on behalf of the
Prisoner.

(During the arraignment):

ASSOCIATE: You are further charged that you did at Clifton Hill on the
tenth day of July 1987 - - -

MR DICKSON: I seek leave to amend that to August.

HIS HONOUR: Amend the 7th count from the tenth of July 1987 to tenth
of August 1987. Mr Richter, is there any objection to that?

MR RICHTER: No, sir.

HIS HONOUR: I will allow that amendment. Would you read that count
again, please?

(The arraignment continued).

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

and at the age of fourteen was permitted to use a machine gun.

Now, it would seem from the material that he had had a preoccupation with military life even as a child, and many people have recollections of him playing military games as a child, as they would of a lot of other children. However, with him, his passion continued through his adolescence and indeed during his adolescence he was involved in two cadet corp units at Norwood High School and then at Melbourne High School, and he was so keen to be involved that, although Fitzroy High School didn't have its own cadet corp, his father would drive him once a week to participate in the Norwood cadet corp and when he transferred to Melbourne High he was prepared to in fact drop in rank in order to remain in the Melbourne High cadet corp. He also, as was indicated, had subsequently joined the Army Reserve.

In 1986, in August, he applied to be admitted to the Royal Military College at Duntroon, and a couple of weeks thereafter he was invited to attend for medical assessment and psychological testing, and he must have obviously been assessed as suitable, and one wonders about the degree of rigor with which one is assessed when applying. Although the criteria of course make it desirable that when joining the army, people have certain traits which may not be desirable elsewhere, but one accepts and believes that the army does not want to retain mentally unbalanced people. Nevertheless, it is clear that with all his deficits he passed the short tests that were administered to him and in October of 1986 he was advised that his application to join Duntroon had been successful. That gave him great pleasure because, for as

long as he could remember, he had always wanted to join the army, although it did create some confusion in his mind because it meant having to go to Canberra, and whilst there was some confusion for the remainder of that year about the point of time at which he would accept the offer of a place at Duntroon, in the final analysis and following discussions in particular with his father, and forming the belief that he may not be reinvited if he in fact deferred it for some time, he arrived at Duntroon on the thirteenth of January 1987 and it was not long after that that his mood began to deteriorate.

He was younger than a lot of the other recruits. He felt that he was being treated as though he had come from the wrong side of the tracks, albeit that he in fact came from a middle class family. There was clashes with his instructors. He felt that he was being ridden too hard.

We do not make out a case where we say this man was bastardized in any culpable sense and we want to make that very, very clear. There is a difference between perception of a person who, in the end, obviously turns out to have a mind that was impaired in a number of ways, and the objective reality of what happened. One can accept and understand that in a place like Duntroon, as in a lot of boarding schools and various institutions, where young men are brought together, certain practices of rough play and other problems may occur, and most people take them in their stride.

We do not assert that there was a deliberate programme of brutalization and bastardization, although the nature of the institution is conducive almost by definition to some rough play.

Nevertheless, as far as Julian Knight's own perception, be it well founded or not, he felt that he was being picked on, and he felt that he was being subjected to treatment that was unwarranted. He would occasionally go AWOL, but he felt that he was penalized for it more than others. Once again whether that be true or not is not really a matter of concern. If it was true, it would indicate that or rather tend to indicate a number of features with which we are not really concerned. If it was not true, all it indicates is that his perceptions were not as clear as they ought to have been.

There was an episode in a nightclub in Canberra, as a result of what he perceived to have been a situation in which he was picked on when under the influence of alcohol, he took to his sergeant with a pocket knife, and that matter is yet to be disposed of. Nevertheless, what that incident indicated was a situation of a build up of stress, a disinhibition by alcohol, and an explosion of temper. He recognized that what he had done was wrong and immediately surrendered himself to the authorities, asserting, as the materials indicate, that he had been pushed to the limit.

Now, once again, whether that was only his perception or whether it is the fact, does not really matter for these purposes because, if it was his perception, it is what drove him to snap; if it was the fact, those factors drove him to snap. But he did snap to some extent. The charges he is facing are not as serious as the ones here and he has not been dealt with for them and the precise circumstances of that incident remain to be explored on another occasion.

He did feel very lonely and upset for some time prior to that incident and he did have fantasies of being in combat and of heroically killing and being killed and the like. Those are fantasies that he had had for some considerable time. The end result of that incident was that he was in effect made to resign from Duntroon and did resign from Duntroon, coming back to Melbourne at the beginning of July of 1987.

When he came back to Melbourne he had had his whole life dreams shattered in terms of the way he had perceived himself, namely, as a soldier. That dream was completely finished and finished forever.

But there were a number of other factors which created great stress. There was a former girlfriend with whom he had sought to re-establish contact, and there were rebuffs there.

When he returned back home, he found that his bedroom was relocated so that he no longer had a room of his own. His things were in boxes and that was a factor of some stress and anxiety. It was expected that he not stay at his home ultimately, that as soon as he got a job he would have to move out, and so he was in transit in more than one way. He had with borrowed money purchased a car that he could not really afford to keep and, indeed, on the day of the shooting, trivial though it might seem, it was probably that car that finally triggered off the complete crackup because the car broke down. Now, to people who are not under a lot of stress, to people who can cope with life, ordinarily that might be something which is annoying, but to people on whom, as the evidence will indicate, there had been an accumulation