

APOLLO
&
THELMA

A TRUE TALL TALE

JON FAINE

Hardie Grant

BOOKS

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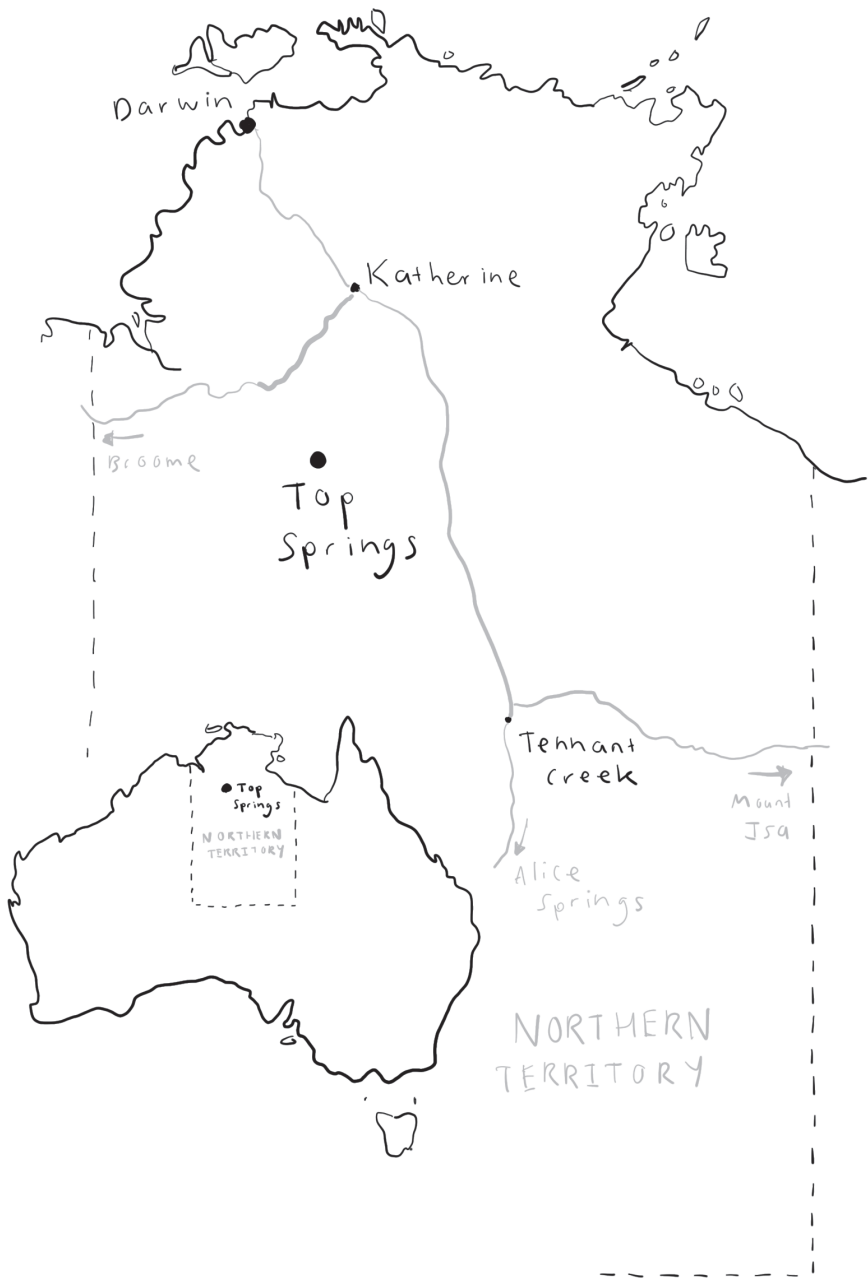
Hardie Grant acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the country on which we work, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation and the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and recognises their continuing connection to the land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this book contains names and images of people who have died.

*To my parents, Solly and Eva,
who taught that you finish what you start.*

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A map of the Northern Territory showing the location of Top Springs.

CHAPTER 1

APOLLO, THELMA AND ME

I only met Thelma Hawks after she died. Her brother Paul Anderson, ‘The Mighty Apollo’, introduced us. To tell their story, I have to tell some of mine.

Apollo, the ‘Iron Jaw King of Strength’, ‘Australia’s Indestructible Man of Steel’ and sometimes billed as ‘The World’s Strongest Man’, became my favourite client when I was a baby lawyer. The Estate of Thelma Cecilia Hawks kept me busy on and off for years. Because of Apollo, I learned to never forget that the files on my desk were not only about the law, not just about the money, nor solely about the documents or corporate structures or old deals gone sour. Fundamentally, each bulging file on my desk was about people, in all their vanity and weirdness, their bewildering irrationality, their naivety, their flaws and failings. Files were people – and to represent them properly, you had to learn their stories.

The inescapable contradiction was that in order to hear those stories, you had to charge for the time it took to listen to them. To sit enthralled for an afternoon to listen to Apollo while I charged him \$350 an hour was plainly wrong. Trying to filter out what



Paul Alexander McPherson Anderson, The Mighty Apollo, in his Hawke Street gym surrounded by trophies and antiques.

was work and when yarns became pleasure was not just awkward – it was nigh on impossible. He did not organise his thoughts in neat stacks with labels attached. People never walk into your office with all the legal issues packaged and flagged for attention. They tell a story, and the legal knot to be unravelled is buried somewhere within.



Thelma Cecilia Hawks, born Anderson.

In 1981 Apollo and his three teenage sons unexpectedly inherited Thelma's modest wealth, tied up in a remote pub in the Northern Territory. I soon realised that I was more interested in their unconventional story than the legal problems. This seems obvious now but was shocking to me then. The tussle about money was getting in the way of hearing him tell of breaking world strength records, surviving an elephant standing on him, tugging a tram down the street by a toggle clenched in his teeth and lavish accounts of his life as a 'carnie' touring around the nation decades earlier. As I heard more about Apollo, so too did I become more intrigued about Thelma, a formidable solo woman running a rough outback pub.

Although a strongman, Apollo was in some ways quite weak. While undeniably physically impressive, he was a fragile soul, insecure and anxious, only comfortable with himself while crushing an opponent in a wrestling match or a strength contest on stage. Away from showbiz, he struggled. Just as many comedians suffer from depression, and escape their

sadness by making others laugh, so Apollo used his muscles to avoid his demons. His authority came from performing, his energy drawn from the applause and admiration of crowds. His comfort in the spotlight was matched by his discomfort away from it.

When Apollo first ‘introduced’ me to his recently deceased sister Thelma, I was a naive law graduate, goggle-eyed on joining the world of work. The seductive lure of money and corporate power was opening up a tempting future, and I had glimpses of what my life could become. By the time the estate was finally sorted, seven years later, I had shed that skin. Like so many young lawyers, I decided to chance my arm at something else instead of losing sleep looking after other people’s money. Despite learning the trade of a streetwise litigator, I detoured from law to the sceptical and judgemental faux world of the media. I always expected the detour to be brief. It lasted thirty years.

Even after the file was closed, Apollo’s unique tale and Thelma’s ghostly presence remained constants in my life. My favourite client kept popping up at the most unexpected times. Long after the estate was wound up and the money distributed, threads remained. I felt obliged to tell their story and that obligation came close to an obsession.

Apollo and Thelma grew up in the tough working-class streets of Melbourne’s inner north in the 1920s. The squalid and filthy lanes of their childhood were populated by sly grog peddlers and even slyer bookies, gangsters and thugs, standover merchants and debt collectors. The descendants of English, Irish and Scottish migrants, the Collingwood and Carlton gangs fought each other

and the world, plotting and scheming their escape from crowded poverty and homes that were little more than slums.

Apollo chased fame, and the secretive and enigmatic Thelma sought fortune. Apollo was never satisfied, no matter what level of celebrity and adulation he reached, while Thelma cannily accumulated her riches in the most harsh and unforgiving landscape this continent can offer.

Thelma cannot be found in the official histories of the Northern Territory and is barely mentioned by any of the flamboyant tellers of colourful outback yarns. If she is mentioned at all in the occasional memoir penned by a Territorian old-timer, she is mentioned as the ex-wife of her entrepreneurial husband, Sid Hawks. Her pioneering role as a solo woman publican, ruling the roost for decades at Top Springs, in one of the most remote pubs in the country, should be acknowledged. While she relished and cultivated her local notoriety, her ghost would disapprove of the embellished stories told about her and savoured by those who stopped for a warm longneck beer all those decades ago.

Apollo is the opposite – he spent his entire life seeking the spotlight, craving fame and the ‘legend’ status he was eventually granted. The veneer of his public and performing life is amply documented, recorded in official archives, his exploits magnified through his enthusiastic – even narcissistic – pursuit of media attention. But beneath, there is a deep sadness. His three proud sons, fiercely protective of their father’s professional legacy, are less effusive about his qualities as a parent. But whatever his failures, any critique of Apollo pales to insignificance beside their entirely scathing memories of their mother, Rondahe, who abandoned them and shot through with her younger lover

when they were small boys. The eldest and youngest brothers are determined that the painful truth about their mother is told, while excusing their father his shortcomings.

All lawyers are governed by the rules of confidentiality. I have the permission of my former clients to tell their family story. The three now-adult sons of Apollo, who were the ultimate beneficiaries of the estate of their aunt Thelma, have participated fully and generously in so doing and insisted on only one condition – that I not try to contact their mother. I was assured that it would be detrimental to her health if ancient wounds were opened. I reluctantly agreed.

Gaining their trust and permission in the telling was one essential ingredient. The other was far more complex and much closer to home. In fact, it was at home. Without realising it was happening, immersing myself in the lives of Thelma and Apollo made me see my own family afresh, and especially one particularly emotional part.

Thelma Hawks' outback pub at Top Springs in the Northern Territory is an improbable springboard from which to educate myself on the truth about Indigenous massacres and colonial atrocities, but learn I did – and with a personal motivation I have until now kept private. My own son's Aboriginal heritage was always important to all of our family, but I never really appreciated or understood how profoundly everyday casual racism impacted his life. Unscrambling Thelma's story was a catalyst and revealed to me terrible things that happened a long way away – but not that long ago. It forced me to acknowledge how little I knew about Australia's true origin story, unrecognisably different to the scant history we were taught at school.

Wandering back to find out more about the pioneers of the Victoria River district of the Northern Territory, I learned true tales that were compelling, confronting and sometimes too sad to absorb. They were not suppressed; but like a family secret, they had been tucked away from scrutiny. It forced me to recalibrate my understanding of that local history, to acknowledge the deep prejudices upon which modern Australia has self-consciously built itself. We were not taught about massacres and rapes of Indigenous people in high school – we were taught myths and lies instead of the truth. We still look the other way and do not acknowledge the full horror of colonial settlement and the impact it had on the lives of our First Nations people. When those stories collided with my own family story, I felt that pain in a new and acute way and felt compelled to draw the link.

Blatant prejudice in contemporary Australia is evident and profound. Cowardly apologists for racism brush off colonial savagery as an irrelevant historical artefact, with no bearing on the present. But it is undeniable that the impact of racism is felt across Australia every day, seen with my own eyes as the protective father of our Bundjalung son.

Our country is belatedly and slowly changing, and for the better. As my eyes were being opened over the last forty years, so were those of many others. This must continue. To keep pretending these atrocities did not happen is to perpetuate a cover-up, to be complicit. Even if we did not know then – there is no excuse now.

Although Apollo and Thelma principally taught me to be a more sensitive lawyer, caring about my clients as people and

APOLLO & THELMA

not just piles of paper, they also somewhat circuitously led me to enquire about Australia's troubled past, our foundation myths and my own responsibilities as a father.

Apollo, the world's strongest man, made me stronger too.

NOTE TO READERS

Transcribed passages of direct speech are as spoken; an approximation of punctuation has been applied to retain the conversational tone.

In writing this book, I have borrowed from sources and interviewed people who freely use the racist and offensive terms ‘half caste’, ‘lubra’, ‘gin’ and other similarly horrible descriptions. After much thought and guidance, the original language has been retained for veracity. There are also obscenities quoted, but only where relevant for context. The vernacular is retained to highlight, not to trivialise or excuse, the inherent racism and sexism of those times. Most of those using that language were white, some were Indigenous.

Much of that language is not and should not be in common usage today and none of that language is included in these stories to in any way encourage it – precisely the opposite. Nor is it used just to shock readers, even though it is often shocking. It is used to authentically show the sensibilities of the times and how much has, thankfully, changed. Cultural and social change continues – it cannot stop now. We still have a long way to go.

But change is neither inevitable nor linear – it is up to each of us to make change happen, and a sharper appreciation of our history is a catalyst for more change, and faster progress.

Some events recounted are crimes but were never treated that way, despite being reported and occasionally scrutinised by police or other authorities. Invariably, perpetrators escaped punishment altogether. It is too late to pursue them for criminal responsibility,

but it would be a fresh crime if we were to ignore what happened back in those days, now that accounts have emerged.

Many of these events were within living memory – they are historical truths, not ancient history. They did not happen thousands or even hundreds of years ago. Although survivors and eyewitnesses are unlikely to still be alive, their children and grandchildren certainly are.

Indigenous readers are forewarned this book contains names and references to and borrows words from people who have died. Wherever possible, permission has been sought. I apologise when it has not been known to whom that request should be addressed.

I include this painful history to ensure we urgently repair the damage done and free future generations from the burdens of recent history. Our grandchildren must not still be arguing the case.

CHAPTER 2

THE FROG

Policeman Kevin Dailly was gaoled in 1982 for ‘larceny as a constable’. He stole \$28,550 from a dead woman and was dobbed in by a frog. I should thank that frog. Although I was 3000 kilometres away, the frog not only dobbed in the thief but introduced me to the Mighty Apollo.

The stolen money was part of the inheritance of three teenage boys in Melbourne, sons of Apollo. I became their lawyer. In May 1981 they inherited the Wanda Inn pub in Top Springs, 800 kilometres south of Darwin, on the sudden death of their publican aunt, Old Ma (Thelma) Hawks.

A more remote pub you would struggle to find. At the intersection of two red-dirt rutted roads, the roadhouse was the only watering hole for miles around, relied upon by an occasional optimistic tourist but mostly local stockmen, drovers and truckies heading to the Victoria River district, dotted with cattle stations the size of small European nations.

Rising from the surrounding open grassland like a pile of Lego, Toppie offered brief respite from the heat and dust. A local drunk described it as being ‘as cheerful and welcoming as an

empty coffin', offering just the basics – beer, rum, fuel, fags or food. And fights.

The local Aboriginal population could buy takeaway grog but never ventured inside – they knew they were not welcome and drank their beer and rum in the shade of the nearby trees, keeping well clear of Ma Hawks and her vicious dogs. Not dogs that you wander over and pat, but a Rottweiler, Doberman and an enormous snarling Alsatian trained to make a mess of anyone in their way.

Thelma Hawks had been the publican and unofficial Queen of Top Springs for thirty years. Each morning, her loyal sidekick and barman, the skinny, aging, occasionally shaven Pom Norm Douglas, would open the day's proceedings with a customary breakfast beer, lubricating his perpetually dry throat. Tiny, ferocious and authoritarian, Thelma would emerge perfectly groomed, plaited hair in her typical bun, hoping forlornly that it would increase the visual impact of her 5'2" frame. Her uniform was a white shirt, buttoned high to hide any glimpse of cleavage, and a pair of short shorts, cuffs turned to highlight impressively muscled thighs.

On Sunday 10 May 1981, confounding the locals – both of them – Thelma Hawks did not make her way down the concrete stairs from her private – very private – flat. Norm had never known a single day where she did not arrive to imperially issue orders and commands to him.

Although he had worked with Thelma for over twenty years, Norm had never been into her rooms. Ever. No-one joined her upstairs since her husband, Sid, had left in the 1960s. This Sunday morning, when, for the first time, she did not come down the stairs, Thelma's discreet henchman was at a loss.

THE FROG

Lunchtime approached with still no sign of Thelma, so Norm conferred with the only other permanent resident of Toppie. Doug Stillson was a huge man, with the appearance and demeanour of a giant. He was only ever seen in a filthy torn blue singlet and ill-fitting greasy shorts that only just immodestly straddled his beer belly, leaving skinny legs poking out below like matchsticks. An alcohol-ravaged nose split his rheumy eyes and with fist-sized hairy ears the entire package was utterly unattractive. If Norm's routine was dominated by the ever-present bottle of beer, Doug took it to the next level. Anchored at one end of the brick bar, wedged into the corner, Doug transacted his life entirely within these walls.

The rumour was that Doug had been a lifeguard in Sydney in his younger years but had been in a bar-room brawl where a man had died. He was not at Toppie hiding from the law – the police were regular visitors – but could better be assumed to be hiding from himself. His range of conversation was limited to the weather or the character and drinking capacity of local truckies. He handed his pension to Ma Hawks each fortnight and simply drank it away. He occasionally helped out pumping petrol, but otherwise just held up one end of the bar.

After deliberating with Doug, Norm went to check on Mrs Hawks. He gingerly made his way up the stairs and knocked loudly on her door, calling out. After a few more attempts, he opened the unlocked door and let himself in. Nothing. Fearing the worst, Norm did a quick inspection of the crowded living room, then bedroom, before he found Thelma in the bathroom. She was slumped on the toilet, head against the wall, eyes bulging, an out-of-date asthma puffer at her feet. Norm gently

shook her body, then swore. Thelma Hawks was already stiff and cold. For the first time since he was a child, he wiped a tear from his eye.

Norm called Katherine Police and reported the death to Sergeant Paddy McQuaid, explaining he had found Thelma, eyes bulging 'frog like'. He surmised she had died from an asthma attack. McQuaid instructed Norm to lock everything and wait for police. Norm returned to the bar to tell Doug and the only other customer – a contractor – the news. The shock was best soothed by cracking open a few more beers.

Sergeant McQuaid referred Thelma's death to Wave Hill Police Station, a mere two hours' drive from Toppie. The sergeant there had been transferred elsewhere weeks before, and Constable Kevin Dailly was, for the time being, running Wave Hill solo – his only companion a new puppy, named Len after the senior sergeant at Katherine, Len Pryce. The mongrel had turned out to be untrainable and a nuisance; just days before, Dailly told a mate he would have to summon up the guts to shoot it. Dailly enthusiastically agreed to go to Top Springs to investigate the publican's death, grateful for a break in the monotony. His mate William Purdie, a stock agent, came along to keep Dailly company and score a few free beers at the pub.

Around 13:30hrs Dailly pulled up in the police Toyota LandCruiser 'Troopy', big whip aerial shimmying. He found the Top Springs population in 'a distressed state due to the death of Thelma Cecilia Hawks', according to the Wave Hill Police Journal. Carrying the assumed authority of any man in uniform, Dailly assured Norm that he should keep the pub and petrol pumps trading. Dailly, Purdie and Norm went up to Thelma's

flat, but Norm found it too distressing and left. Purdie helped Dailly place Thelma into a body bag and they carried her down to the cool room. They returned to the flat and emerged nearly two hours later, carrying some garbage bags they put into the police vehicle. A funeral contractor arrived from Katherine and took Thelma Hawks' body away. Dailly told Norm that Thelma's valuables and personal effects were secured in cartons and bags for the Public Trustee. Meanwhile, the pub should shut early – a moot point as there was no-one there. Purdie's quest for free grog was not disappointed and they settled in for the night.

Late the next day, having urgently driven the seven hours from Darwin, the Northern Territory Public Trustee John Flynn and his assistant John Hyde arrived. Dailly showed them upstairs and explained he had found a substantial amount of cash, stored in biscuit tins and a locked briefcase. Flynn thanked the policeman, took the valuables, then set about taking stock of the pub. He assured Norm that he should keep trading, because if the pub shut, the liquor licence lapsed, and the value of the entire business would evaporate. The Liquor Commission required a licensed person to be in charge at all times. Barely literate, Norm was not suitable to be even a temporary licensee. Flynn had to look further.

Dick Philip from Montejinni cattle station just 15 kilometres down the road had been flirting with buying the pub from the aging but wary Thelma Hawks. Her idea of its value was vastly different to his. She was banking on a rumour that a Malaysian sultan from Sarawak, who had just purchased a local cattle station, was planning to open an abattoir. If its road trains came through Toppie, she would hit the jackpot. Philip was sceptical,

but Thelma would not drop her price. On her sudden death he readily agreed to a temporary lease at bargain rates and asked for an option to buy.

Back in Darwin, John Flynn wrote a letter of appreciation to the Police Commissioner praising young Dailly: 'He has been most helpful and co-operative, outstandingly so'. Thelma's brother in Melbourne was notified of her death, but could not make it to Katherine in time for her sparsely attended funeral.

Norm kept things ticking over at the pub, the only difference being the absence of Ma Hawks. As there was no part of the daily operation he could not manage well except the paperwork, life maintained its boozy Top Springs rhythm.

Six months later, in mid-December, at Wave Hill Police Station, an Aboriginal gardener was watering its tiny patch of lawn and tending the forlorn yard. A frog on the path was casually swept away and hid in the leaf pile, in front of Constable Dailly's puppy. Len chased the hopping frog into a crevice and tried to dig it out. As Len scratched in the soft red dirt, the glossy edges of a plastic garbage bag were revealed, then banknotes. The astonished gardener chained the dog and ran into the police station.

'Senior, come quick – money in the ground, money in the sky ... that there frog ... he find money,' he told the incredulous copper, who brushed him off, muttering something disparaging about the entire Aboriginal race.

The gardener ran back to the hole, grabbed a few \$20 and \$10 notes from the still-buried bag and showed them to Senior Constable 'Bob' Bruce. Wide-eyed and apologetic, the cop came out to see for himself. As a passing willy-willy swirled across the

yard, scattering banknotes into the air, Bob Bruce pulled the bulging garbage bag from its crevice. How had tens of thousands of dollars come to be buried outside Wave Hill Police Station? He had his suspicions.

Bruce radioed his superiors in Katherine to alert them to a problem for which there was no guidance in the police manual. He next called in his sidekick Dailly.

‘Mate, I need you back here ... straight away,’ said Bruce, without mentioning the money.

With Dailly back at Wave Hill, Senior Constable Bruce confronted his mate and asked determinedly if he knew where the money came from. Poker-faced, Dailly denied any knowledge. Bruce was unconvinced so with neither evidence nor confession he called headquarters in Darwin.

The next day, an irritated Detective John Maley flew in from headquarters. His chief concern was that his planned Christmas holiday might be interrupted by this case so he was keen not to waste time. He interrogated Dailly with all the banknotes spread out on the table for theatrical effect. Dailly’s denials crumbled once the experienced and no-nonsense detective applied the blowtorch.

‘Shit, when we saw the old lady was dead, we started to go through everything. There was all this money in a biscuit tin; we thought she didn’t really need it and no-one would ever know. I divvied it up with my mate, we didn’t even count it, just made equal piles. We left half for her and divided the other half between us. Am I still in trouble if they get the money back?’ is how Maley remembered Dailly’s eventual confession.

The record of interview tendered to the Supreme Court at the trial was somewhat toned down, with the prisoner ‘making full

admissions after his initial denials and was quite frank about how he came about the money and readily admitted he was aware of his duties’.

Dailly told his assembled police colleagues, ‘I was going to shoot that dog ... it’s a mongrel, but I felt sorry for it ... now it has betrayed me’. Maley wondered if the dog sensed he was going to cop a bullet and had done Dailly in first!

Maley noted that the young constable Dailly ‘was a pushover, not some mean and nasty bastard, and once he knew he was caught he did not try to wriggle out of it’. Maley could not hide his disappointment that a policeman would breach the ethics of the force so cheaply.

In custody in Darwin, Dailly dobed in his mate Purdie as recipient of half the money, but Purdie refused to answer questions formally or informally. His lawyer flat denied any crime and suggested a counternarrative – that Dailly squirrelled away all the missing stash and was using Purdie as a smokescreen. Detectives checked if Purdie had been on a spending spree of late and established that although Dailly had arranged to buy a car for cash next time he was in Darwin, no similar transactions or mysterious bank accounts were found to confirm Purdie’s probable windfall.

To avoid a brewing public scandal and media coverage about ‘thieving coppers’, the top brass arranged Dailly’s court appearance for late on Christmas Eve. Dailly was suspended without pay but allowed bail – an unusual liberty. No information about the theft leaked out until April 1982 when Dailly pleaded guilty before Mr Justice Gallop in the Supreme Court.

Reading the court transcript, it must have been an amusing day for everyone except Dailly. The judge was given the entire

story, frog on the path, dog and all. The Crown explained that *'the general opinion of the deceased is that due to her thrifty business ways, she was in possession of a considerable amount of cash, coins, old bank notes and valuable jewellery'*.

The Crown conceded that other than succumbing to this temptation, Dailly carried out his duties in a *'proper manner'*. The money stolen was the second stash of notes, discovered after he had followed police procedures fully with the first.

Dailly was described by the prosecutor Mr Tiffen as a 24-year-old, originally from Scotland, who arrived in Australia aged nine. He had left school in Doveton, Melbourne, after completing only Year 3 of high school and worked as a labourer and truck driver. He had been a policeman in the Northern Territory for less than three years and had struggled to get through the basic police training. The court was told he had been depressed since being charged and would be dismissed from the force.

Mr Peter Ward appeared for Dailly and explained *'I'm from Melbourne and was admitted to the Territory yesterday'* by way of introduction. He had little to work with but told the judge that, after initially following procedure to the letter, this immature, inexperienced and unsupervised policeman *'fell across a gold mine'*.

'His education is not the most appropriate for someone who had to discharge the onerous responsibilities that my client had ... His lack of academic skills would have exacerbated the pressure in this difficult undergoing of his duties ... This greatly tempting situation of a 23-year-old fairly new constable confronted with over \$52,000 cash and valuable jewellery, old bank notes ... an astonishing find. He finds himself in a situation far beyond where he should have been ...

PC gets jail over buried \$28,000

DARWIN. — A Northern Territory police constable who stole \$28,000 from a deceased estate and buried it in a garbage bag in the backyard of a police residence has been sentenced to six months' jail.

The court was told the money was dug up by the constable's pet dog while digging for a frog in the backyard seven months after the bag was buried.

Constable Kevin Dailly, 24, who was suspended from the force after he was charged, pleaded guilty to larceny.

Mr Justice Gallop in the Northern Territory Supreme Court sentenced him to two year's jail but ordered that Dailly be released after serving six months on condition that he enter a \$5000 two-year good behavior bond.

The crown told the court that Constable Dailly was the only policeman stationed at Wave Hill, 820 km south of Darwin, in May last year.

He was sent to May 10 to the Wanda Inn at nearby Top Springs to take possession of the assets of the proprietor, Mrs Thelma Hawkes, who had died.

The Crown alleged that the next day, Public Trustee officers arrived and Constable Dailly gave them \$52,000 in cash and a quantity of jewelry.

The Crown alleged that Dailly had a further \$28,000 and buried it in the backyard of his police residence at Wave Hill.

The court was told an Aboriginal tracker attached to the police station saw a large amount of money scattered about the yard while he was watering trees on December 14.

He had reported this to Katherine police.

Senior Constable Robert Bruce said he went to the police residence and saw a garbage bag, which appeared to be torn in a hole.

He said there was a frog in the hole and Constable Dailly's pet dog was nearby.

Senior Constable Bruce said he believed the dog had uncovered the money while digging for the frog. He said the money added up to \$28,450.

The court was told Constable Dailly initially denied all knowledge of the money when questioned, but later admitted he had found it at the time of Mrs Hawkes' death.

Herald May 1 1982

succumbing to temptation, with no pre-meditation and of course Your Honour should take into account that this was a career-ending move.'

Mr Ward emphasised to Justice Gallop that his client only earned \$15,000 a year and chanced upon an amount vastly greater than that. Ward told the judge that Dailly's years with the police had been the happiest of his life and he was facing ruin because of one bad decision. His wife had just given birth to their second child and there were great stresses in their lives. Dailly's pensioner father had flown in from Melbourne and testified how shocked the family were as Dailly had always been an honest and reliable son until this one terrible mistake. Ward pleaded that his client not be sent to gaol.

The next day, the judge recited the unusual facts in open court to the delight of the few journalists present.

'In the scale of larceny as a public servant the offence committed by the accused loomed large and grave. Not only did he succumb to the temptation to take the money, he furtively hid it and perpetuated the breach of trust. His crime was only discovered accidentally. I am told it is inevitable that he will be dismissed from the police force with all the disgrace and dishonour appropriate for that dismissal. There are strong grounds for leniency, but I believe that the general public would expect a custodial sentence to be imposed in the circumstances of this case as a general lesson to police officers or other public servants who have committed breach of trust reposed in them by their office ...'

Dailly was sentenced to two years' gaol, to be released after serving six months, the remainder to be converted to a two-year good behaviour bond. The NT Police press release emphasised this was a rare example of police abusing their office for personal

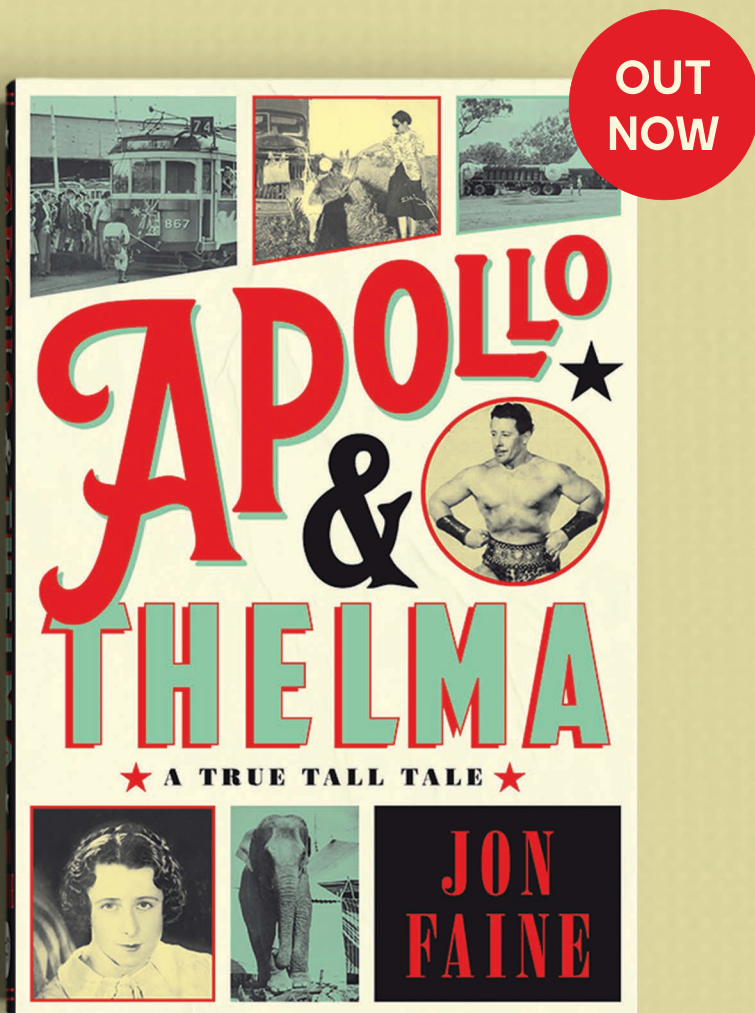
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gain and claimed, counterintuitively, that the integrity of the NT police had been upheld by the prosecution and sentence.

And back at Wave Hill, when the news about the policeman going to gaol filtered through, the elders in the Aboriginal community all nodded with understanding and told anyone who would listen: *'That there frog? You know that frog, he the spirit of Old Ma Hawks.'*

Apollo and Thelma by Jon Faine

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