

## Sallie-Anne Huckstepp

On 6 February 1986, Sallie-Anne Huckstepp received a phone call from convicted drug dealer Warren Richards, an associate of Arthur 'Neddy' Smith and Roger Caleb Rogerson. She left her Edgcliff apartment at 10.55 pm in a hurry, telling her flatmate that she would be back in five, ten minutes. At 8.45 the next morning, a jogger ran into the ranger's office behind the kiosk in Sydney's Centennial Park and said that he'd seen a body floating in Busby's Pond. Escorted by two uniformed constables, the ranger rowed out into middle of the pond and towed in the body of a female and hauled her face down onto the sandy bank. When detectives rolled her over one of them said, 'That's Huckstepp!'

Five years earlier, Huckstepp had appeared on *60 Minutes* and accused Roger Rogerson, one of New South Wales' most decorated police officers, of shooting dead her lover, Warren Lanfranchi, in cold blood. Within hours of appearing on television, Huckstepp went into hiding. A contract was taken out on her life for revealing that a cabal of corrupt detectives led by Rogerson was running Sydney's drug trade and disposing of criminals who got in the way.

Smith was later secretly recorded confessing to Huckstepp's murder in Long Bay Jail, but he was acquitted by a jury. For many people, including the prosecutor at Smith's trial, Huckstepp was regarded as the most important police whistle-blower in New South Wales, but for the mainstream media she continued to be described as 'murdered heroin addict' and 'former prostitute'. Those descriptors clung to her well after her death but in recent years there has been a growing recognition of the pivotal role she played in exposing

widespread police corruption. This has coincided with a renewed assessment of the wider contribution that gutsy women like Huckstepp have made in shaping Australian history. A feature film on her life is now being produced by director Sean Kruck and Nash Edgerton.

This is not to suggest that Sallie-Anne Huckstepp was some kind of caped crusader. She was a woman of striking contradictions. She enjoyed the persona of being a corruption fighter and yet she was attracted to criminals with a certain rugged charm. She was intelligent but she lacked commonsense. Born into a middle-class Jewish family, she was extremely saleable as far as the media were concerned. Here was this well-groomed, articulate and forthright young woman telling the world she would be killed for speaking out. And then she was.

Her sister Debra recalls her earliest memories of she and Sallie-Anne growing up in the 1960s without a mother. Their parents Pat and Jack Krivoshow divorced when the two girls were less than five years old, their mother left and they were packed off to live with their strict Jewish grandmother in an apartment block in North Bondi. Uncle Ike, Aunt Rose, Jack, the grandmother and the girls occupied one upstairs apartment with its two bedrooms and a sunroom. Jack, a keen photographer, drove cabs at night and enrolled his daughters at Moriah College where they discovered they were different to other Jewish girls because of the blonde hair and blue eyes they had inherited from their English mother. According to Debra, who is 20 months younger, Sallie-Anne was studious and always achieved high marks:

‘She was strong physically and mentally and never seemed to be frightened of anyone or anything’. The happiest times, Debra remembers, were living in Bondi and going to the beach with their Aunt Rose.

A TV producer at Channel 7, and friend of their father's, took Sallie-Anne and Debra along with her to work and got them on the Johnny O'Keefe show. They were on 'Sing Sing Sing' with JOK and the young Bee Gees. Sallie's appearance was met with such success that she was invited back. JOK was impressed with the six-year-old and asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up and Sallie-Anne said, 'a dancer or an actress'.

As she grew older, Sallie-Anne was invited to model for Grace Bros and Myer catalogues but by then her father had re-married and bought a house in Dover Heights and when his new wife moved in with them she perceived the strong-willed, older girl as a threat. While the rest of the family went on outings, Sallie-Anne would be locked in her bedroom sitting within a circle chalked on a piece of paper. Sallie-Anne's stepmother cropped her hair, and took her own daughter, instead of Sallie, to modelling. Sallie-Anne claimed that her stepmother often struck her across the face with her gold-ringed hands; her stepmother admits to striking the child, but only on the legs and the backside. Conditions between Sallie-Anne and her father grew so intolerable that he phoned the Children's Court requesting her removal from the family home.

At the age of fourteen Sallie-Anne was sent to the Minda Remand Centre in Lidcombe and after her release she found work as a waitress at the Whiskey A Go Go. 'My sister got caught up in the criminal system at a very early age,' Debra says. 'I think the drug abuse was just something that happened to a lot of people in the 70s, there was very little information about drugs at that time and cocaine and heroin were readily available and some people dabbled and for others, the habit became entrenched. I think this

happened to my sister. It started as a guilty pleasure and turned into a life-long addiction.'

To pay for her habit, Sallie-Anne began working as a prostitute on Darlinghurst Road and soon came into contact with Vice Squad and Drug Squad detectives to whom she made regular payments. From what Debra witnessed and from what Sallie-Anne told her, 'police corruption in Sydney in the 70s and 80s was deeply ingrained'. At the age of 20, Sallie-Anne was ordered by the courts to undertake treatment at the private hospital at Chelmsford where the psychiatrist, Dr Harry Bailey, was believed to have phenomenal success in unhooking young people from narcotic addiction.

After Dr Bailey's treatment Sallie nearly died. 'She was down to four and a half stones,' Debra says. 'She couldn't talk, she couldn't walk. They'd given her fourteen shock treatments over fifteen days. She had epileptic fits from the barbiturates Bailey gave her.'

Debra was living in New Zealand at the time and received a phone call from her uncle asking her to help. She flew over and when she arrived in Bondi she found Sallie-Anne crawling around on her hands and knees.

'I took my sister and her daughter Sascha back to New Zealand and cared for her for months. She was addicted to Tuinal, a barbiturate they used in high doses to keep her unconscious while they inflicted electric shock treatment on "the addiction centre" of her brain'.

Debra believes that Sallie-Anne was never the same after Chelmsford.

One of the other addicts Dr Bailey experimented on at this time was the singer Stevie Wright of the Easybeats and he and Sallie-Anne became close friends.

‘My sister knew a lot of people from the music scene in the 70s and early 80s,’ Debra said. ‘There were a lot of drugs being used in the eastern suburbs in those days’.

It was through a drugs contact that Sallie-Anne met the 22-year-old Warren Lanfranchi, recently released from Long Bay Jail and working as a heroin dealer and standover man. It was a whirlwind romance. Within two weeks they were living together; within five months Lanfranchi was dead, shot at close range with a .38 special by Roger Rogerson in Dangar Place, Chippendale: one bullet entering below Lanfranchi’s left ear and fourteen seconds later a second bullet — the kill shot — entering through the right side of his chest, passing through his heart and right lung.

Two weeks after the shooting, Sallie-Anne gave a detailed account to Internal Affairs investigators at Police Headquarters of every payment she had made over ten years to Vice Squad and Drug Squad detectives. ‘After Warren’s death,’ Debra said, ‘Sallie knew that she had a bounty on her head because she spoke out about Rogerson and his gang of criminals. She knew her time was limited.’

During the Lanfranchi inquest, Sallie-Anne became a media celebrity. Each day of the hearing she was on radio and national television. Her photograph appeared on the front page of the major newspapers. The late Brian Johns, publisher at Penguin, gave her an advance to write her autobiography. She found work as a journalist at Penthouse and with the assistance of author Richard Neville, Sallie-Anne moved into Martin Sharp’s house in Bellevue Hill.

‘My sister had a very high regard for Martin Sharp,’ Debra says, ‘Sallie was fascinated by the other artists who lived there. She felt that she had found

her tribe.'

When she left 'Wirian' she drifted back into drugs and the criminal milieu. She was struggling with her addiction at the time, as she was up until her death. 'Being addicted to drugs didn't make Sallie less of a person,' Debra says, 'it just made her life more of a struggle.'

Thirty years on and no-one has been convicted of her murder, but the decision by a Supreme Court jury in 2016 that Roger Rogerson was guilty of murdering UTS student Jamie Gao during a drug deal completes the former detective sergeant's downfall and vindicates the stance that Huckstepp took in warning the public that Rogerson was a cold-blooded killer.

'If there is a lesson that Sallie-Anne would want young women today to take from her life, as short as it was,' Debra says now, 'is to speak out if you see injustice. I love my sister and I want people to realise how brave and strong she was.'