

📷 Dion Garry Yost was responsible for one of the Territory's most infamous crimes, a shooting rampage in Palmerston. Art: Evolet Chen

## The Palmerston shooting left a mark on many of those involved

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AFTER being kicked out of a Parap pub an intoxicated Dion Garry Yost went home, picked up a shotgun, packed a bag of 500 rounds of ammunition and began to walk the streets of Palmerston.

Four cops and a member of the public were shot during the Palmerston shootings.

The shootings came at time when Australia was reeling from the horrors inflicted on a sleepy Tasmanian town.



A member of the public says I can see him in the bushland and he points, and the second they point Yost opens fire

”

The Palmerston shootings took place on June 1 1996 — just months after the Port Arthur massacre devastated Australia taking 35 innocent lives.

The haunting chaos of the Palmerston shooting left a lasting impact on those caught in the crossfire.

It took Superintendent Shaun Gill about 20 years to discuss the events in public.

Back then Supt Gill was a constable with a few years' experience under his belt and "living the life".

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The shooting changed his outlook on life forever.

"We were living the dream and having a great time and then it became real, real very quick," he said.

"That changed my outlook forever, in terms of you don't take anything lightly, not that we do or did in this circumstance.

"I'd suggest for most people involved in it; it would be one of the biggest incidents they've done in terms of how real it can be and how dangerous it can be," he said.

The Territory Response Group, back then was not a 24-hour operation as it is now.

Life was simpler, after hours TRG members were called in on a needs basis and on Friday's it was the men with families who were called in as they were the most likely to be home.





📷 Police witnesses detective Senior Constable Kris Evans and detective Senior Constable Mark Coffey (in plain clothes) leave court in 1996 when Yost was standing trial.

Yost had been drinking at the Parap Hotel when he got kicked out and caught a taxi home to Palmerston at which point he picked up a shot gun and ammunition.

In the dead of night Yost began to walk the streets. He was seen by a resident

Palmerston general duties cops attend and three TRG officers on call get dispatched to Chung Wah Tce.

Things turn at this point.

“

He just started shooting at everything again, it was bizarre

“A member of the public says I can see him in the bushland and he points, and the second they point Yost opens fire,” Supt Gill said.

The first shot hits the member of the public in the abdomen the second shot hits a female officer who has turned around and started to run.

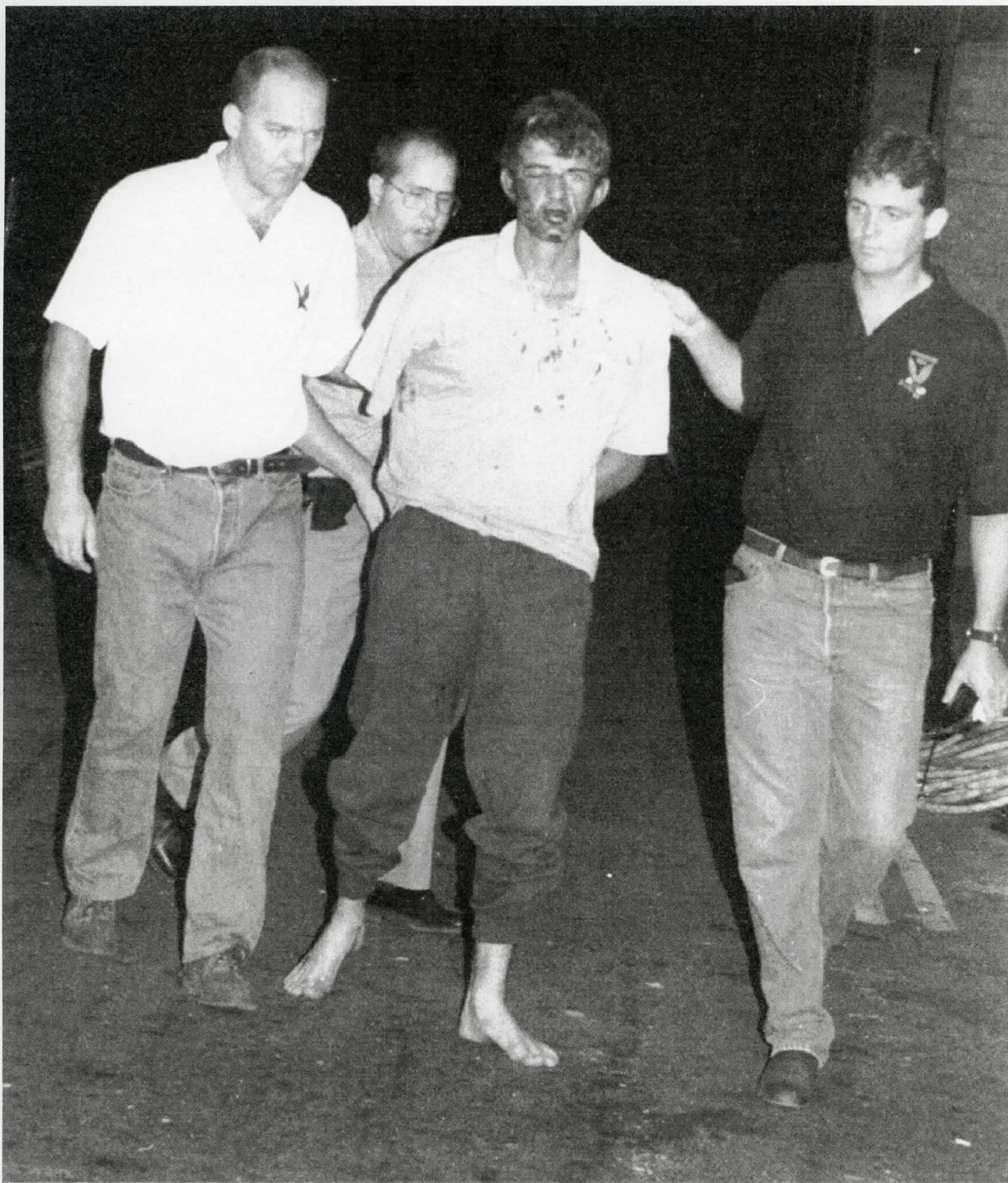
She is hit in the back — the shot punctures her lung and begins to fill with blood.

“There were three TRG members there they immediately open fire on Yost,” he said.

“One of the TRG blokes gets shot in the arm and he continues, stays in the fight.

“After a while Yost just disappears. As quick as it started, it stopped.”





📷 Yost being taken into custody by police.

The entire TRG team was called in to help. Supt Gill said it was a stroke of luck that almost all of the 30 member team was at home and able to make it down to the scene.



Their aim was to keep Yost in the scrubland, now Bellamack, and stop him from making it back onto the streets.

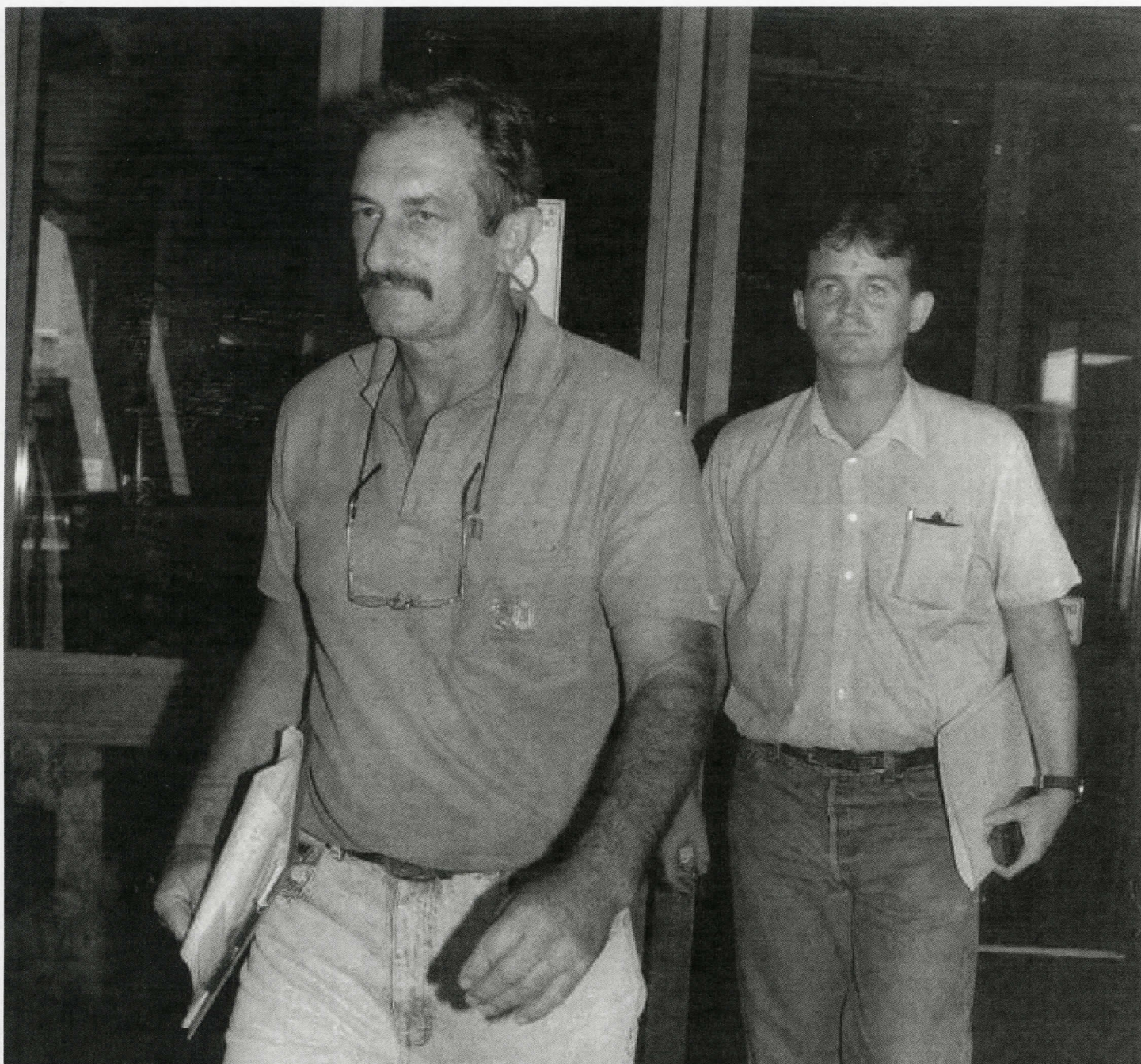
Supt Gill was stationed with another officer on Chung Wah Tce near where the shooting had taken place.

It was four hours before Yost made himself seen when he opened fire at the old Palmerston Police Station.

“He starts shooting police cars, shooting the police station, sees a plain clothes officer upstairs through the glass and starts shooting at him,” he said.

“He just started shooting at everything again, it was bizarre.”

He then runs off again and a member of the public calls in to say Yost was headed in the direction of the bus stop.





📷 Detective Sergeant Les Chapman and Sen Cons Coffey leave the Royal Darwin Hospital after interviewing Yost.

Supt Gill said the tip-off was interpreted as Yost had headed to the bus interchange — near Roystonea Ave. He had in fact walked down towards University Ave.

The misinterpretation meant the officers were put straight into the firing line.

“As soon as they got out of the car ... one (officer) gets shot with a rifle slug in the shoulder and the other one gets hit in the hip,” he said.

“One of them we thought was dead because he was just lying there and bleeding quite profusely.

“The one that got shot in the shoulder he’s lying in the curbing.

“He goes to fire and as bad luck would have it his magazine falls out of his gun so he’s just of this pistol and he’s just shooting, he’s trying to stay alive.”

The rally at the city's King years ago.

## Police seek Glenorchy boy



● Missing boy Dion Yost.

**POLICE** are concerned about the welfare and safety of a 15-year-old Glenorchy boy missing since Monday, August 17.

They believe Dion Garry Yost may have gone to Launceston or the North-West Coast.

Yost is 170cm tall, of slim build, with a fair complexion and light-brown, medium-length hair.

He did not return home from school on the Monday and was last seen wearing blue jeans and a blue school shirt.

Anyone who can assist police should telephone 38 1356.



Supt Gill said at this point Yost, “just unleashed hell” and the TRG responded in force. Their objective was to get the two injured officers out of harm’s way. The gunfire stops. “One TRG bloke actually runs across in the middle of the gun fight grabs this fella and carried him out of the field of play. It was pretty courageous,” Supt Gill said.

In the heat of the moment and to retrieve the other person laying on the ground two St John Ambulance vehicles are driven onto the scene — in the middle of the showdown.

In the confusion the first ambulance reverses, realising it’s not safe to be there. In doing so they reverse into the second ambulance vehicle and end up having a car accident in the middle of the scene.



📷 Yost attacked police cars during his five-hour shooting spree, wounding five police officers.

Supt Gill said they managed to get out of the way.

There is still no gunfire — but they can hear Yost yelling and carrying on. Yost had started to walk through the underpass under University Ave.

Yost was injured — he’d been shot in the arm during the shootout.



we decided to throw a stun grenade at him just a distortion device to see what he'd do. Once we did that he surrendered. He yelled out he wanted to give up and it was all too much for him," he said.

"After shooting all those people he surrenders, gives up."



Supt Gill said the incident in which four police officers are shot and a member of the public, changed is life forever.

“I’d suggest for most people involved in it; it would be one of the biggest incidents they’ve done in terms of how real it can be and how dangerous it can be,” he said.

Two of the officers who were shot are no longer in the police force.

Supt Gill said “there was no indication, no historical indication that this person was going to do these things”.

He was given a life sentence for the crime but released after 12 years.

In 2011 he was found in Melbourne with a loaded gun and 53 rounds of ammunition.

He is now serving the rest of his life sentence in Victoria.

Originally published as ‘He just unleashed hell and the TRG responded in force’