

Death brings end to legend of a city 'heavy'

NH 20.7.87

THE death of one of Newcastle's most infamous underworld figures, Wayne Newman, whose body was found on a Zaara St, Newcastle East, footpath on Friday, brings to an end a career that was fast reaching legend status in the city.

Mr Newman, 44, was notorious as a Newcastle 'hard man', a convicted murderer believed to have been in prison riots while he was doing time, and a doorman and 'heavy' for many of Newcastle's Greek clubs and gambling houses.

He was known as an associate of criminals and was reputedly linked to the drugs and prostitution underbelly of the city, although some who knew him denied that he had connections with prostitution because 'he didn't like women much'.

Mr Newman was linked by rumours to many underworld happenings in the city, although in reality he probably had little to do with any of them.

When he died Mr Newman was on remand on an assault charge.

Police said last night that Mr Newman died of natural causes. When his body was found in the street at about 6pm on Friday it had been thought that he may have been murdered.

A post-mortem revealed that he died of a massive heart attack.

Further tests are being carried out but police do not suspect foul play.

Mr Newman spent 10 years in prison after being sentenced to life in jail for the murder of Mr Haralanbos Spinos at Islington in 1971, although he was not the man who pulled the trigger.

The murder was rumoured to be linked to 'girls and drugs', a policeman of the time said, but it was never proved. It also was said that the fatal rifle shot was meant for another man.

The day he was released from jail Mr Newman went to Newcastle detectives' office to shake the hand of his arresting officer, then Det Sgt Frank McDonald, and tell him there were 'no hard feelings'.

Now an inspector at Wyong, Insp McDonald said last night that he had known Mr Newman for about 30 years and 'he was probably a victim of circumstances, really'.

'He was a big boy, and he was knocking around with all the hard-heads in town,' Insp McDonald said. 'He was in street fights as a 15- to 16-year-old with all the toughs in town.'

Insp McDonald said that because of his size 'everybody was trying to knock him over. That's what his problem was'.

He had charged Mr Newman a few times for assault but 'to me he was always a well-mannered fellow. . . he just got in to the wrong environment.'

'I felt sorry for him. He was used by a lot of people.'

Insp McDonald said Mr Newman was known for stepping in to get others out of trouble.

He did not go looking for trouble himself. It would come looking for him.

He asserted that Mr Newman had a reputation bigger than he should have had.

Denis Wayne Newman was born in Newcastle and lived in the city almost all his life.

'Admitted planning a beating'

As a youth he was an exceptional athlete and was a top rugby union player with Mayfield East club for many years, from where he represented Newcastle against a touring New Zealand All Blacks side.

He was already known to police over a number of assault charges when he was tried for murder in 1971.

Court reports show that during the evening Mr Newman and other men had been drinking together and talk had turned to a man named Dennis Spinos.

One of the men told the court that there was talk about Mr Dennis Spinos having fired a shot outside the Mardi Gras club and outside Mr Newman's gymnasium.

Before leaving someone said 'Are you going to let a rat like that stand over you?' and Mr Newman replied that he would see Mr Dennis Spinos that night.

Later that evening Mr Haralanbos Spinos was shot under the right eye. He died later.

Police said Mr Newman had admitted going to the house to give Mr Spinos's son, Dennis, 'a beating'.

Mr Newman also is reputed to have taken part in a bloody riot at Bathurst Jail in 1974 where 12 prisoners were wounded by shotgun blasts and bullets.

More than 250 prisoners seized control of the maximum security jail and set fires which caused hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of damage.

'Lifers' were understood to have inspired and organised the riot.

NAA 6 8 87

Wayne Newman

From Charlie Goffet

AS a former teacher of the late Wayne Newman at Newcastle Boys' High, and as a friend of his family for many years, I should like to challenge recent media predictions that he is likely to pass into folklore as the epitome of the underworld gangster strongman.

Despite his enormous strength and sporting successes, Wayne Newman was always a quietly spoken, retiring person. He even chose to play the gentleman's amateur game of rugby union rather than professional league and he often won the award for the best and fairest player during a match.

On the various occasions that I saw him as a bouncer in the local gambling clubs of the 1950s and 60s, I often commented that he never manhandled any disgruntled player who had to be ejected. Wayne's size and quiet demeanour were enough to induce the offender to go quietly.

It was these qualities that led to Wayne's downfall. He was often called upon by weaker associates to fight their battles for them, which he always did if he thought they were in the right.

He paid dearly and uncomplainingly for taking justice into his own hands.

Because his funeral was private and unadvertised I offer the Newman family on behalf of myself and a host of those who really knew and understood Wayne our deepest sympathy.

CHARLIE GOFFET
Barker St, Newcastle.