

How evil overwhelmed

THEY remain Wollongong's worst crimes and among the state's most notorious killings - the grisly mutilation murders of former lord mayor Frank Arkell and Dapto shopkeeper David O'Hearn in June 1998.

In frighteningly similar circumstances came the death of Albion Park carpenter, Jack Van Krevel, in an horrific axe slaying two years later.

All three were found butchered in their homes.

The motive for each brutal murder differed - Mr Van Krevel died the victim of greed and revenge, Mr Arkell because his killer believed him a paedophile and Mr O'Hearn's murder was a random act of evil.

Now a book is being written and an independent film made of their tragic deaths.

The chilling saga has more twists and turns than any Hollywood thriller.

But the cold reality is that it happened in

the Illawarra, in sleepy suburbia.

The central characters revolve around three young people - all 19 at the time.

There is Jack Van Krevel's son Mark Valera, who killed both Mr Arkell and Mr O'Hearn.

Valera's best mate Keith Schreiber then slaughtered Valera's father as he lay asleep in bed.

And in an end to the tragic cycle of death, Mr Van Krevel's daughter Belinda -

Schreiber's secret lover - was sentenced last week to a maximum of six years in prison for soliciting her father's murder.

She will be walking the streets in two years, with her minimum four-year jail term backdated to include the time she has already spent in custody.

Here JODIE DUFFY reports on how evil destroyed a household, rocked the community and shattered the lives of many Illawarra residents.

'Satan' left gruesome signature after slaying

MARK VALERA

NICKNAMED "Satan" at high school, Mark Mala Valera found killing a pleasure, a NSW Supreme Court heard during his trial in 2000.

After slaying and mutilating his neighbour David O'Hearn in a frenzied attack in June 1998, Valera used the shopkeeper's severed hand to write "Satan" in blood on a mirror.

It was his own reflection which had startled and terrified him.

Valera had just spent more than an hour decapitating, disembowelling and trying to cut the body in half.

But what he saw in the mirror came as a shock. "I looked devilish. I scared myself and I jumped back, because my eyes were all lit up like a Christmas tree," he said.

As he wrote the word Satan, he said: "I kind of felt like I was writing my name then, leaving my signature".

Valera had chosen the 56-year-old at random, because he was angry that day and wanted to kill someone.

He pierced the eyes of his victim with a knife and then cradled the head for five minutes, deciding whether to take it as a trophy. It was found later floating in the kitchen sink.

Valera had gained access to Mr O'Hearn's townhouse by pretending he was looking for accommodation.

After unleashing incredible violence, he walked calmly to his home, 12 houses away, where he lived with his best friend, Keith Schreiber.

Valera kissed his girlfriend hello, had a shower and enjoyed drinks with his flatmates. They would later comment that Valera seemed "unusually happy" that night.

He also acted as though nothing had happened after murdering former Wollongong lord mayor Frank Arkell two weeks later.

After clobbering him with a lamp-

shade and heavy ashtray, he had poked Rotary lapel pins in one of Mr Arkell's eyes and cheek.

Valera then went home, ate dinner and attended a martial arts class.

Mr Arkell lost his life because Valera believed he was a paedophile and at the time the former NSW MP was facing child sex offences.

Valera told police his second victim had deserved to die, because of "all of the nasty things he had done to kids".

The 19-year-old hated his father Jack Van Krevel so much, he changed his name by deed poll.

Just a week before his trial and for the first time, he told a psychiatrist that he had been sexually assaulted by his father from the age of seven.

Those claims were later strongly denied by Mr Van Krevel in court.

During the trial Valera told the jury that when his murder victims had made sexual advances towards him, the childhood traumas came flashing back and he exploded into rage.

Judge Timothy Studdert found that there was not enough evidence to prove that Valera was ever sexually assaulted by his father.

But Mr Van Krevel had admitted he often had beaten him until his son wet his pants, and he once held a .303 rifle to his head, threatening to blow his brains out.

When Valera was found guilty of double murder he suppressed a giggle, then turned to one of the victim's family and grinned.

As he was led from the dock he said to his mother Elizabeth Carroll and sister Belinda Van Krevel: "Don't worry about it. Paedophiles always get away with it."

Judge Studdert sentenced him to two life prison terms. When Valera appealed the severity of the sentence, the highest court in NSW confirmed a lifetime in jail was not long enough.



Growing up: Father and son Mark and Jack Van Krevel (top) when the young teenager was passionate about motocross riding. He won several trophies. Above, Valera had hopes of one day joining the police service or the air force. Left, blowing out the candles at his 16th birthday party.

Tragic facts

■ Mark Valera, the youngest man jailed for life in NSW, is the first in the state to receive a life term for crimes committed as a teenager.

■ Valera studied The A to Z Encyclopedia of Serial Killers, writing "ME" next to a section on the world's most horrific killers.

■ He was inspired by death metal bands, including Cannibal Corpse, whose songs he would write out, including Scattered Remains, Splattered Brains.

■ He prepared a list of possible future victims and told his sister that his father was to be his "number three".

■ Valera told a psychiatrist he had dreams in which he would attack his father with a tomahawk. His best friend Keith Schreiber used a similar axe to kill Valera's father, Jack Van Krevel.

■ Valera hero-worshipped his martial arts teacher and stood to attention as he entered and left the courtroom.

■ In his early teen years Valera was passionate about motocross riding, winning trophies.

■ The Planet Hollywood dishwasher had hopes of one day joining the police service or air force.

■ At school he carved pentagrams and crosses into his forearms.

■ His sister told police Valera had allowed two girls to suck his blood after he slashed his wrists on a train.

■ When he left home at 18 he lived in caves at the bottom of Macquarie Pass for a month.

■ Valera attempted suicide in 1997, seven months before the deaths, and again in jail.

■ He had low self-esteem, was a slow learner and a misfit. He was expelled for weeks from Albion Park High for pushing a pregnant teacher down stairs.

■ A psychiatrist found abuse suffered as a child created a crisis in his sexual identity and caused a borderline personality disorder.

■ His sister told police that when they were young they had been in a foster home for three weeks, where he often would be forced to sleep in the chook pen.

■ He told a psychiatrist, "After I take someone's life, I... want to take my own life."

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