

lasting memories



Lisa Pettinau

Detective Sergeant
Sturt CIB

Her love of art and the natural wonders of the world might just have balanced out the horrors she has seen as a police officer.

Dealing all at the same time with a murder investigation, a convicted rapist who was stalking me, and the absence of my then fiancé, a police officer who had taken an interstate secondment. It was the first time I realized how far my stress levels go, in terms of what you put yourself through, and what you put up with, and think that it's okay.

Having nowhere to examine a dead baby at the Lyell McEwin Hospital, because it was busy. We had to take him into a doctor's office and just put him on a desk and it was surreal having this deceased baby there. Looking for signs of foul play and then wrapping him up again and giving him back to the mother was awful.

Videotaping the death of a week-old baby as it was taken off of life support at the Women's and Children's Hospital. The 17-year-old mother's boyfriend had beaten it to within an inch of its life, but we had to see if the mother would admit to causing the baby any harm. We were trying to choke back tears as we saw this poor baby die.

My dad asking my two brothers and me, when I was 12, if we wanted to go to live with him in Sydney after he and my mother had split up. I sat down in the kitchen with him and said: "No, I don't want to go." I didn't want to leave my mum; and it was a tough choice to make as a 12-year-old.

My mum being diagnosed with early Alzheimer's. I felt shock and disbelief because I didn't realize that there was no cure. She's retired now but had been a family solicitor, and had had her own practice, and was very bright. She was like my very close friend and confidante, and we could discuss my police career because of her legal knowledge.


Walking into a hotel on Lake Louise in Canada. The foyer had massive picture windows and a harpist was playing *What a Wonderful World*, and through the windows you could see this stunning lake and the Canadian Rockies. I went outside to have a look and it was so beautiful that it brought tears to my eyes.



Responding to a suicide where a guy had slit his wrists in front of a video camera. We had to take the videotape to try to get the recording back and we found that he had given a talking account of his will. But he had kept passing out and, when he did, the video camera kept falling over and turning off behind his desk.

Seeing *La Sagrada Familia*, an unfinished cathedral built by Antoni Gaudi in Barcelona. It was just breathtaking – the art, the intricacy, and the hours of labour that had gone into it. I had just gone to look at it on my own. I couldn't believe that it was so magnificent, and that I could be so moved by this building.

Interview by Brett Williams



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