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In 1996, a black teenager protected a white man from an angry mob who thought he supported the racist Ku Klux Klan. It was an act of extraordinary courage and kindness - and is still inspiring people today.
Keshia Thomas was 18 when the Ku Klux Klan, the white supremacist organisation, held a rally in her home town in Michigan.

Liberal, progressive and multicultural, Ann Arbor was an unusual place for the KKK to choose, and hundreds of people gathered to show them they were not welcome. The atmosphere was tense, but controlled. Police dressed in riot gear and armed with tear gas protected a small group of Klansmen in white robes and conical hoods. Thomas was with a group of anti-KKK demonstrators on the other side of a specially-erected fence. Then a woman with a megaphone shouted, “There’s a Klansman in the crowd.”

They turned around to see a white, middle-aged man wearing a Confederate flag T-shirt.

He tried to walk away from them, but the protesters, including Thomas, followed, “just to chase him out”.

It was unclear whether the man was a Ku Klux Klan supporter, but to the anti-KKK protesters, his clothes and tattoos represented exactly what they had come to resist.

The Confederate flag he wore was for them a symbol of hatred and racism, while the SS tattoo on his arm pointed to a belief in white supremacy, or worse.

There were shouts of “Kill the Nazi” and the man began to run - but he was knocked to the ground. A group surrounded him, kicking him and hitting him with the wooden sticks of their placards. Mob mentality had taken over. “It became barbaric,” says Thomas.

“When people are in a crowd they are more likely to do things they would never do as an individual. Someone had to step out of the pack and say, ‘This isn’t right.’”
So the teenager, then still at high school, threw herself on top of a man she did not know and shielded him from the blows.

“When they dropped him to the ground, it felt like two angels had lifted my body up and laid me down.”

For Mark Brunner, a student photographer who witnessed the episode, it was who she saved that made Thomas’ actions so remarkable. “She put herself at physical risk to protect someone who, in my opinion, would not have done the same for her,” he says. “Who does that in this world?”

So what gave Thomas the impetus to help a man whose views it appeared were so different from her own? Her religious beliefs played a part. But her own experience of violence was a factor, too. “I knew what it was like to be hurt,” she says. “The many times that that happened, I wish someone would have stood up for me.”

The circumstances - which she does not want to describe - were different. “But violence is violence - nobody deserves to be hurt, especially not for an idea.”

Thomas has never heard from the man she saved, but she did once meet a member of his family. Months later, someone came up to her in a coffee shop and said thanks. “What for?” she asked. “That was my dad,” the young man replied. For Thomas, the fact that the man had a son gave her actions even greater significance - she had potentially prevented further violence.

“For the most part, people who hurt... they come from hurt. It is a cycle. Let’s say they had killed him or hurt him really bad. How does the son feel? Does he carry on the violence?”

Teri Gunderson, who was bringing up her two adopted mixed-race daughters in Iowa at the time, was so touched by Thomas’ story that she kept a copy of her picture - and still looks at it
17 years later. Gunderson even thinks the student made her a better person.

“The voice in my head says something like this, ‘If she could protect a man [like that], I can show kindness to this person.’ And with that encouragement, I do act with more kindness. I don’t know her, but since then I am more kind.”

But she asks herself whether she could be as brave as Thomas. What if one of the hurtful people who had racially abused her girls was in danger, she wonders. “Would I save them, or would I stand there and say, ‘You deserved it, you were a jerk.’ I just don’t know the answer to that, yet. Maybe that is why I am so struck by her.”

Brunner and Gunderson both often think of the teenager’s actions. But Thomas, now in her 30s and living in Houston, Texas, does not.

She prefers to concentrate on what more she can do in future, rather than what she has achieved in the past. “I don’t want to think that this is the best I could ever be. In life you are always striving to do better.”

Thomas says she tries to do something to break down racial stereotypes every day. No grand gestures - she thinks that small, regular acts of kindness are more important.

“The biggest thing you can do is just be kind to another human being. It can come down to eye contact, or a smile. It doesn’t have to be a huge monumental act.”

Looking back at his photos of Thomas pushing back the mob that day in June 1996, Brunner says: “We would all like to be a bit like Keshia, wouldn’t we? She didn’t think about herself. She just did the right thing.”

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Alfredo Moser’s invention is lighting up the world. In 2002, the Brazilian mechanic had a light-bulb moment and came up with a way of illuminating his house during the day without electricity - using nothing more than plastic bottles filled with water and a tiny bit of bleach.

In the last two years his innovation has spread throughout the world. It is expected to be in one million homes by early next year.

So how does it work? Simple refraction of sunlight, explains Moser, as he fills an empty two-litre plastic bottle.
“Add two capfuls of bleach to protect the water so it doesn’t turn green [with algae]. The cleaner the bottle, the better,” he adds.

Wrapping his face in a cloth he makes a hole in a roof tile with a drill. Then, from the bottom upwards, he pushes the bottle into the newly-made hole.

“You fix the bottle in with polyester resin. Even when it rains, the roof never leaks - not one drop.”

“An engineer came and measured the light,” he says. “It depends on how strong the sun is but it’s more or less 40 to 60 watts,” he says. The inspiration for the “Moser lamp” came to him during one of the country’s frequent electricity blackouts in 2002.

“The only places that had energy were the factories - not people’s houses,” he says, talking about the city where he lives, Uberaba, in southern Brazil.

Moser and his friends began to wonder how they would raise the alarm, in case of an emergency, such as a small plane coming down, imagining a situation in which they had no matches.

His boss at the time suggested getting a discarded plastic bottle, filling it with water and using it as a lens to focus the sun’s rays on dry grass. That way one could start a fire, as a signal to rescuers. This idea stuck in Moser’s head - he started playing around, filling up bottles and making circles of refracted light.

Soon he had developed the lamp. “I didn’t make any design drawings,” he says.

“It’s a divine light. God gave the sun to everyone, and light is for everyone. Whoever wants it saves money. You can’t get an electric shock from it, and it doesn’t cost a penny.”

Moser has installed the bottle lamps in neighbours’ houses and the local supermarket.
While he does earn a few dollars installing them, it’s obvious from his simple house and his 1974 car that his invention hasn’t made him wealthy. What it has given him is a great sense of pride.

“There was one man who installed the lights and within a month he had saved enough to pay for the essential things for his child, who was about to be born. Can you imagine?” he says.

Carmelinda, Moser’s wife of 35 years, says her husband has always been very good at making things around the home, including some fine wooden beds and tables.

But she’s not the only one who admires his lamp invention. Illac Angelo Diaz, executive director of the MyShelter Foundation in the Philippines, is another. MyShelter specialises in alternative construction, creating houses using sustainable or recycled materials such as bamboo, tyre and paper.

“We had huge amounts of bottle donations,” he says.

“So we filled them with mud and created walls, and filled them with water to make windows.

“When we were trying to add more, somebody said: ‘Hey, somebody has also done that in Brazil. Alfredo Moser is putting them on roofs.’”

Following the Moser method, MyShelter started making the lamps in June 2011. They now train people to create and install the bottles, in order to earn a small income.

In the Philippines, where a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line, and electricity is unusually expensive, the idea has really taken off, with Moser lamps now fitted in 140,000 homes.

The idea has also caught on in about 15 other countries, from India and Bangladesh, to Tanzania, Argentina and Fiji.
Diaz says you can find Moser lamps in some remote island communities. “They say, ‘Well, we just saw it from our neighbour and it looked like a good idea.’”

People in poor areas are also able to grow food on small hydroponic farms, using the light provided by the bottle lamps, he says. Overall, Diaz estimates, one million people will have benefited from the lamps by the start of next year.

“Alfredo Moser has changed the lives of a tremendous number of people, I think forever,” he says. “Whether or not he gets the Nobel Prize, we want him to know that there are a great number of people who admire what he is doing.”

Did Moser himself imagine that his invention would have such an impact?

“I’d have never imagined it, No,” says Moser, shaking with emotion. “It gives you goose-bumps to think about it.”

Return to the rainforest: A son’s search for his Amazonian mother

By William Kremer
BBC World Service

David Good’s parents come from different countries - hardly unusual in the US where he was raised. But while the 25-year-old’s father is American, his mother is a tribeswoman living in a remote part of the Amazon. Two decades after she left, David realised he had to find her.

After three days on the Orinoco River, David Good felt sick. He had been eaten alive by the relentless biting gnats, he was tired and thirsty. The air was dank and humid.
Fierce rays of sunlight bounced off the surface of the piranha-filled river as the 40-horsepower motor puttered and the launch pushed further upriver, deeper into the Amazon.

His stomach was a knot of apprehension - he had not slept the previous night at all.

He was not a natural traveller or explorer. The lawns and parks of eastern Pennsylvania were his habitat and this trip to the Venezuelan Amazon - in July 2011 - was his first outside the US since early childhood.

And yet - as everyone kept telling him - things were going well. Normally, travellers heading to the Orinoco headwaters had to stop at the Guajaribo Rapids, unload all their goods and haul them overland, before pulling the boats past the treacherous rocks by rope.

But it was raining heavily, off and on, and the river was higher than it had been for years.

So Jacinto, a local indigenous man in charge of the tiller, was able to shoot the rapids, fiercely opening and closing the throttle, and steering the aluminium launch left and right of the rocks.

A few hours later, the boat turned a corner and suddenly shouts could be heard from the riverside. It could only be members of the Yanomami tribe - no white people lived so far upriver.

“They started screaming ‘Motor! Motor!’ because it’s a big event - they don’t hear motors too often,” says David. He expected to see them with bows and arrows, but they had come unarmed. Word had gone ahead and the little boat was expected.

“I saw children and men and women on the riverbank just waiting for us to arrive. The women were all topless, the men had shirts and shorts on.”
They had come from the village of Hasupuweteri. As David disembarked they began speaking rapidly in the Yanomami language and prodding him.

“I was just completely mobbed - all the women and the children gathered around me. I had so many hands all over me, pulling my ear, touching my nose, touching my hair,” he recalls. At 5’5” (1.6m) David was used to being the smallest in a group, but he found himself nervously standing above the Yanomami, who are one of the world’s shortest ethnic groups.

It was not the first time the people of Hasupuweteri had encountered nabuh - white people. But the nabuh they had met before had been missionaries, medics and anthropologists.

They knew that David was different - he was not looking to save their souls or their lives or ask strange questions. He was looking for his mother.

The Yanomami live in 200-250 villages in an area of 60,000 square miles (96,500 square kilometres) of jungle, sprawling across the Venezuela-Brazil border.

This is the region where the English adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh believed he would discover the untold riches of El Dorado - he launched two expeditions up the Orinoco in 1595 and 1616.

But in the 20th Century it was the Yanomami themselves who excited the imagination of scientists, journalists and artists from the developed world.

The Yanomami are a diverse group. They vary from relatively Westernised communities living close to church missions to villages which have no regular, direct contact with the outside world - although they will trade goods with villages that do.

Village life centres around a shapono - a large oval or round dwelling made out of wood. The entire village lives under the
thatched roof of the shapono, cooking at separate family hearths and sleeping in hammocks. It is an arena for the rituals of trade and shamanism, for public rants and fights.

In 1968, the US anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon published his bestseller Yanomamo: The Fierce People. He described the tribe as being prone to petty disputes - usually over women - which escalate into wars between villages. He painted a picture of a world where chronic warfare, gang rape and murder were all facts of life.

It was as a graduate student of Chagnon’s that David Good’s father, Kenneth Good, first travelled to the Amazon in 1975. He travelled up the Orinoco past the Guajaribo Rapids, just as his son did 36 years later. He made his home in a little hut a short distance from the Hasupuweteri.

The plan was to stay for 15 months of fieldwork, measuring the animal protein intake of all the village members. This was to give Chagnon the data he needed to show his many critics that inter-village warfare was not related to the scarcity of food but stemmed from the drive to maximise reproductive success.

Good dutifully weighed every spider monkey and armadillo hunted by the tribe. They laughed at this strange display. If he explained to them he wanted to know how heavy an animal was, they would ask why he didn’t just pick it up.

Towards the end of the 15 months, Good was becoming fluent in the Yanomami language, but he was also becoming dissatisfied with the narrow focus of his research brief.

“Measuring the animals and calculating the [protein] yields was insufficient,” he later wrote. “Food gathering and intake had to be placed in the cultural context.”

To get to know that context better he moved into the village shapono and observed as many of the daily rituals as he could.
He went on treks, hunts and observed funeral rites. The Hasupuweteri called him shori - brother-in-law.

And he began to question the picture of the Yanomami that Chagnon had painted in his book.

“He thought that the Yanomami weren’t as fierce as they were represented to be,” says David Good. “And I think there’s some substance to that, because my father ended up living there 12 years, and I couldn’t imagine living 12 years with a savage, warlike, fierce people.

“So he became enamoured with the people. And he fell in love - he fell in love with my mum.”

One day in 1978, the headman of the Hasupuweteri presented Good with a proposition.

“’Shori,’ he said, ‘you come here all the time to visit us and live with us... I’ve been thinking that you should have a wife. It isn’t good for you to live alone,’” wrote Good in his 1991 memoir, Into the Heart: An Amazonian Love Story.

At first Good refused, but over time he came around to the idea. “I found myself thinking that maybe being married down here wouldn’t be so horrendous after all: certainly it would be in accordance with their customs. In a way the idea even became attractive. After all, what better affirmation could there be of my integration with the Hasupuweteri?”

When he relented, the headman said, “Take Yarima. You like her. She’s your wife.”

Yarima, the headman’s younger sister, was a vivacious young girl whom Good did indeed like. But he was 36 and Yarima wasn’t older than 12. There was no wedding ceremony and the match was not consummated - it was part of the Yanomami system of child betrothal, designed to shore up ties between families and prevent conflict.
Yarima remained at her mother’s hearth in the shapono. She occasionally brought Good his food, and he spent more time with her than with the other children.

But with every trip he made upriver, Good and Yarima became closer, and the theoretical tie between them felt more real. The villagers began to treat them as a married couple, and he thought of her more and more when he was away from the Amazon.

Unlike doctors or psychologists, there is no fixed code of practice barring relationships between anthropologists and the subjects of their research. There is much debate about whether sex is ever permissible in the field, either for enjoyment or study.

In Kenneth Good’s case, it was not about research - he and Yarima developed a romantic attachment. She affectionately called him Big Forehead. He called her Bushika - Little One.

“Where do you draw the line - if there is one?” Good asks, in the documentary film Secrets of the Tribe. “Seeing as I have lived with them so long, that line fades away - there is no line.”

Age is unknown amongst the Yanomami since they have no counting system (they only have words for “one”, “two” and “many”). So in his memoir, Good is not specific about Yarima’s age when they first had sex - he wrote that she was “about 15”.

Yarima would have married another man if he had backed out of the betrothal. She had had her first period and so, in Yanomami culture, was of an age to settle with a husband and have a family.

“We’re always trying to judge from our own perspective - an ethnocentric view,” says David Good. “You have to keep in mind our ancestors didn’t have to go through the maturation of adolescence that we have to go through in the modern world. Girls became married and started having children after their first period.
“And I always tell people, my father married my mother, but my mother also married my father. You know, it was a mutual agreement between two people and it’s not like he snatched her away. This was a marriage based on love and romance and friendship.”

The reason David was mobbed when he got off the boat on the Orinoco river was that he was famous. His father was remembered by the older Hasupuweteri, while the younger ones had grown up with stories of how Yarima and Kenneth’s children had been raised in the world of the nabuh.

His mother, they told him, was at the village of Irokaiteri, 10 minutes further up the river. But he would not be permitted to complete the journey by boat - he was altogether too interesting.

Instead, he was taken to the village shapono. A young man called Mukashe was introduced to David as his half-brother. He ran off into the jungle to fetch their mother.

After 19 years, David would have to wait a few more hours to meet his mother.

David’s father married into an Amazonian tribe, but it was impossible for him to live in the Amazon indefinitely.

He could not hunt and live like a true Yanomami tribesman. He needed extra food and medicine and special permits to remain in the region. This meant he had to continue academic work.

But getting grants for fieldwork was difficult. Moreover, whenever he temporarily left, to make contact with academics or raise funds, Yarima was left in danger in the male-dominated Yanomami society.

On one of his trips downriver, when he had been held up for several months, she had been gang-raped, abducted and badly assaulted - her ear was ripped.
This precipitated Yarima’s first contact with the modern world. Good took her to the town of Puerto Ayacucho, to get her ear attended to.

The short flight there was terrifying for Yarima - but the town itself was overwhelming. Upriver Yanomami pictured nabuhs living in villages much like their own, but with more nabuhs wearing their nabuh clothes. They had no idea that the forest ever came to an end, to be replaced by open spaces of cool hard ground and huge square houses.

“Every little aspect of this world was new and unique and strange to her,” says David Good. “When you turn on a car, it kind of looks like an animal with the headlights - I heard stories she would hide behind a bush.”

Another surprise awaited Yarima when she and Kenneth Good checked into a hotel - the mirror. She had never seen her full reflection before. “She freaked out,” says David. “She hid behind a bed and my dad had to cover the mirror with blankets, just so she wouldn’t be scared anymore.”

Yarima adapted to some things very quickly. She grasped the idea of using clothes for decoration and she enjoyed shopping. After overcoming her initial fears, she loved travelling by car, motorbike and aeroplane. Wondrous machines like elevators, Good wrote in his memoir, she accepted as examples of nabuh magic. But other things were more difficult for her to grasp.

In the Amazon, food takes time to hunt or grow. It is never wasted or refused. “’Are you hungry?’ is a question without meaning,” wrote Good. “You might as well ask a person if he cared to breathe air.” So the experience of a supermarket, in which an almost limitless amount of food sat, ready-picked and plucked, or of restaurants, where one was presented with a choice of what to eat, made the world feel upside down.
Yarima also feared the police. When she left the jungle, in the mid-80s, upriver Yanomami had heard of the police, but they pictured them as being an especially fierce tribe who all lived in the same village. Myths abounded about what they might do if they caught you - a common belief was that they ate stray Yanomami tribespeople.

In Caracas, Yarima warily observed the policemen and policewomen with their guns. Whenever she saw them her eyes searched for their police children and police babies.

The end of Kenneth and Yarima’s Amazonian life together came in 1986, four years after they had consummated their marriage and eight years after their betrothal.

Kenneth had failed to secure the grants he needed to stay in the region and sank deeper and deeper into debt. On 17 October 1986, they took a Pan Am flight to New York.

Within a week they were married legally at Delaware County Courthouse. Nine days later, David was born on a hospital bed in Philadelphia.

His sister Vanessa was born just over a year afterwards on a banana leaf in the Amazon, while the family were on a trip back to Hasupuweteri. A baby brother, Daniel, came along three years later.

David has happy memories of his mother.

“I remember being with her - we used to have this little routine, where we’d stop by Dunkin’ Donuts and get coffee and donuts,” he says. He recalls her love of rollercoasters and how they would wrestle together. “I don’t remember a sad or distressed mum, not at all,” he says.

But life in New Jersey was not working out for Yarima. It wasn’t the weather, food or modern technology but the absence of close
human relations. The Yanomami day begins and ends in the shapono, open to relatives, friends, neighbours and enemies. But Yarima’s day in the US began and ended in a closed box, cut off from society.

Other than Kenneth, no-one could communicate with Yarima in her own language and she had no means of speaking with her family back home.

In Hasupuweteri, the men disappeared for a few hours in the day to go hunting, but husbands did not disappear all day, every day. Yarima would spend the day at home or roaming the shopping malls. Good also gave her video and sound recordings from Hasupuweteri that she would listen to over and over.

Together with a co-writer, David Chanoff, Kenneth wrote his memoir, which was reviewed well, sold well and was translated into nine languages. He and Yarima became minor celebrities, appearing in People magazine three times. Articles appeared in newspapers with titles like Americanization Of A Stone Age Woman and Two Worlds: One Love.

A 1992 film with National Geographic charted the family’s first visit back to the jungle for almost four years. A five year-old David is seen squabbling with Vanessa over a heavy bunch of plantains, while baby Daniel is carried on Yarima’s back in a sling attached to a headband, in the traditional Yanomami style.

The film contains some joyful moments of Yarima showing off her children to her sister and going crab hunting again in the creeks, but it also captures her despondency.

“They say I have become a nabuh,” Yarima’s translated voiceover tells us. “I live in a place where I do not gather wood and no-one hunts. The women do not call me to go kill fish. Sometimes I get tired of being in the house, so I get angry with my husband. I go to the stores and look at clothing. “It isn’t like in the jungle.
People are separate and alone. It must be that they do not like their mothers.”

A few months after the making of the film, on another return trip to Hasupuweteri, Yarima decided to stay.

“I was up here with my sister in the United States and my mum and my brother were down there in the Amazon,” recalls David. “And I remember my dad saying: ‘Look, I’m going to go back to the jungle, and I’m going to go get your mum and I’m going to go get your brother and then I’ll be back.’”

Kenneth returned to New Jersey with baby Daniel but no Yarima. David says that as the days turned into months, he slowly realised his mother wasn’t coming back.

Yarima asked Kenneth to send Vanessa down to be raised in Hasupuweteri, but he refused. All three children were brought up in Rutherford, New Jersey, then Pennsylvania.

David came to resent his unusual family background.

“Growing up, I used to go to those annual anthropology meetings,” he recalls. “And I could hear people saying, ‘Oh, those are Yarima’s kids!’ Sort of like I was an experiment, you know?”

On one occasion, an anthropologist asked him what he wanted for Christmas. When David gave the standard reply for his age and era - a Nintendo games console - the woman was shocked.

“She’s like, ‘A Nintendo games console? You’re just a typical American kid! I thought you would be different.’ And that was ingrained on my mind for the rest of my life and helped fuel my hatred for my heritage. I just didn’t want to have anything to do with it.” David tried to become that typical American kid. He played baseball and got a paper round. He told his father that if anyone asked, he was to say he was Hispanic, not Yanomami.
He did well at school, getting straight As and earning his place on the honour roll. But inside, he was a mess. He was consumed with hatred for the mother who had abandoned him - but he thought about her almost every day.

He started to drink. He broke up with a girlfriend of four years and dropped out of school.

“I felt like I was slipping away,” he says. “And I knew what it was - it wasn’t all to do with my mum’s leaving, but that’s what it stemmed from.”

When he was about 21 he watched, for the first time, the National Geographic film that he had participated in when he was five. When he saw his mother’s face and heard her speak, he broke down in floods of tears.

He was with a friend at the time. “She put it so simply. She said, ‘You know, there’s nothing really wrong with you. You lost your mum.’”

Shortly afterwards, David read his father’s memoir and began to read up on Yanomami culture.

“I started having an understanding as to why she left and what she’d dealt with up here,” he says. “I realised that... I don’t think she could’ve made it up here, you know? As far as her being a Yanomami mother is concerned, teaching me Yanomami ways - it’s virtually impossible.”

When he was about 22, he felt a sudden yearning to reconnect with his Yanomami heritage.

In 2009, following some enquiries from his father, David was put in touch with Hortensia Caballero, an anthropologist at the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research who knew Yarima. She also knew David - she had met him on her first trip to the upper Orinoco, when he was a one-year-old baby.
After that, Caballero had met up with Yarima in the 90s and in 2001, but she had not seen Yarima since.

“He started telling me that he was very interested in finding out about his mother,” Caballero says. “It was a very beautiful thing. David is a very sensitive guy - he has a great heart.”

The opportunity to help David didn’t come until February 2011. While Caballero was doing some workshops on land demarcation in Mavaca, a mission close to Yanomami country, she organised a quick detour up past the Guajaribo Rapids.

She found Yarima amongst the Irokaiteri. The community had splintered from the Hasupuweteri, and were in the middle of building a new shapono.

For Caballero, it is important that the Yanomami have some control over their interactions with nabuh. She wanted to make sure that the village was ready to welcome David before he made the trip.

“The people gathered together in the village they were building,” she says. “Everybody spoke, especially the leaders. And then I asked Yarima, I told her she had to tell me her demands. She said, ‘Yes, I really want to have David here.’”

Caballero asked the village to write a letter of invitation to David to help him get a permit to visit the protected area.

David added the letter to a file of photographs and news clippings of interviews with his parents from the 90s - evidence of who he was and of his right to visit the forest. He also included his Venezuelan passport, since foreigners are no longer permitted in protected areas. It was uncertain whether this document would stand up to close scrutiny, since the photo on the inside cover was of an 18-month-old baby (amazingly, it was indeed good enough for the military checkpoint in the Amazon).
His family watched as he made his final preparations for the trip (David says that his brother and sister have so far shown no strong desire to be reunited with their mother). “My sister laughed at me,” he says. “She said, ‘How are you going to make it? You’re scared of a ladybug.’”

David thinks his father - by this time almost 70 - was worried for him, and frustrated that he couldn’t be of more help after such a long break from the community. But he helped fund the trip, and he came with David to pick out the gifts to take to the village.

When he set off for the Amazon in July 2011, David knew only two Yanomami phrases, remembered from childhood. One was ya ohi - I’m hungry. They other, ya bos si shiti - my bum itches.

After David had been waiting for about three hours, Yarima burst into the Hasupuweteri shapono. She had run all the way there.

She was in her mid-40s, short, vigorous and strong. She had a basket around her head filled with roots she had gathered, which she threw to the ground while she tried to catch her breath. The village became hushed.

It had been two decades, but David recognised his mother.

“I knew it was her right away,” he says. “I stood up and approached her. And then it just hit me - what do I do? Everything in me just wanted to hold her, to hug her, but that’s not the Yanomami way of greeting people.

“So it was just this awkward encounter. I put my hand on her shoulder and she started trembling and crying. And I looked into her eyes and I just couldn’t help but start crying myself.”

“There was a silence,” says Hortensia Caballero, who had come upriver with David. “What I remember was a silence. It was a very beautiful, intense moment. Of course all the women in the village, including me, found we had tears on our cheeks.”
David started to speak softly in English. He said “I’m here, I’m finally here,” and “I made it, I’m back” and “It’s been so long”.

Then he was flooded with memories of his mother from childhood, which he relayed to Caballero to translate into Spanish, so that Jacinto, the local boatman, could put them into Yanomami.

David did not ask his mother why she had left. Yarima asked if everyone was alive and well, but they did not discuss the past at all. “I had this realisation,” says David, “I don’t really care what happened. I don’t care about the controversy. I don’t care what all these critics think. I don’t care why she left. None of that matters to me now - I can leave that for everyone else to speculate. All I’m looking forward to is developing a bright future with my mum and my family and my people.”

A video captured another emotional meeting, this time with his uncle (wrongly identified in the video as his grandfather). He had been headman while David’s father had been in Hasupuweteri.

“He just grabbed me and was in my face - this emotion was just overcoming him,” says David. “Of course, I didn’t understand a word he was saying.”

He later found out he was being given a Yanomami name which had come to his uncle in a vision - Anyopo-weh, which roughly translates as a way around an obstacle. He was also being thrust into Yanomami politics. His uncle was telling him that if anyone asked where he was from, he was to answer Irokaiteri, not the village that it had split away from, Hasupuweteri.

“They’re really quick to establish your place in the village,” he says. “It wasn’t like my father’s situation where he had to spend years gaining their trust to be accepted.”

In fact, the Irokaiteri had a plan to cement David’s place in the village. Soon after his meeting with his uncle, David’s mother came up to him with two beautiful young girls.
“She said, ‘This is your wife and this is your wife. You’re going to have children with them.’”

David listened politely, thinking that perhaps “wife” was being used as a loose kinship term. The Yanomami classify relatives in a different way from Americans. For example, a maternal aunt is also addressed as “mother” and a paternal uncle as “father” (hence the mix-up over David’s own uncle).

“I just sort of thought, you know, I have a brother there, a sister there, an uncle there - oh - and a wife here,” he says. “But then, as I spent more time in the village it became evident to me that they were absolutely serious in becoming my wives.”

Yarima began to push David to consummate marriages to the girls, who David thinks were in their late teens. On one occasion, while David was bathing in the river, the women ganged up on him, saying “Come on, we have to do this!” David instructed his translator to tell them he had a wife waiting for him back home - not true, but it made no difference to them anyway. He receded into the water, resisting their pleas.

The purpose of his visit to the jungle wasn’t just to get closer to his mother, but to understand better what his father had gone through in the 1970s and 1980s. Like his father before him, David found he was a constant source of amusement.

“The Yanomami have a particular sense of humour,” says Caballero. “They always make jokes of everything and they love to tease, especially nabuhs.”

The Yanomami have little concept of the very different lives of outsiders. Many put nabuhs’ lack of practical and language skills down to the only thing it could be - stupidity.

“I would say Yanomami keye - I am Yanomami,” says David. “And then I would fall down riverbanks, I’d trip over vines, I’d hit the wrong tree and all these biting ants would fall on my head... They just thought it was absolutely hilarious.”
A couple of months after David first arrived at the village a big day came. He opened a small black box containing crackers and jam. These were emergency rations, in case he got sick of eating grub worms and termites - but he was in a culture where everything is shared.

“We had this sort of crackers and jam festival,” he says. “Everyone was so happy, so content eating this food, which was for them so exotic.”

Since his father’s time, some of the Hasupuweteri have taken to wearing clothes and watches. While he was in the forest David gave away all his best clothes, thinking that a cheap pair of trousers or trainers meant nothing to him but would be treasured by the recipient of the gift.

When he returned to the mission downriver, his appearance had undergone a transformation.

“I looked so bad, so dirty, so raggedy that the missionary said: ‘You’re starting to look like a Yanomami,’ and she gave me some clean clothes. It was kind of funny, that I was starting to become a Yanomami, needing donations.”

On a separate visit to the mission - this time with his mother - David managed to establish a Skype connection with his father.

“My father said to my mum, ‘You still look young and beautiful’. And she said, ‘You look old!’”

Yarima was disturbed by Kenneth Good’s baldness, since the Yanomami do not go bald. He had to run and get a baseball cap before they could continue the conversation.

David watched his father making his mother laugh - the two seemed to be getting on well. “They just seemed so natural together,” he says. “It was clear that my mum didn’t want to talk about the past. She was telling my father that I was married and
I had two wives. And she told him that she was going to take me back, I was going to be down here. She told him to tell me not to run away from my wives.”

David spent three months in the Amazon, but he travelled around, making four separate visits to his mother. Yarima couldn’t understand why he kept coming and going. David didn’t try to explain that he was in the process of establishing a non-profit organisation and was conducting research across the region.

He knew when he left for the final time it would be hard.

“When you untie the knot that hangs your hammock - in their eyes that’s the ultimate symbolic gesture that you’re leaving. And as soon as I untied that knot, there were tears all over. It just moved me so much.”

Yarima was devastated. It seems she really had believed David would settle in the village forever.

“I told her, ‘I’ll be back’. Unfortunately, it’s been two years and a lot longer than I wanted it to be,” he says.

He wants his organisation, called The Good Project, to help indigenous people find their way in the market economy, a process he sees as inevitable. He says that those who live in more Westernised villages near missions can struggle with their identity, just like he did.

“Today there are Yanomami who are becoming criollos - who are becoming Venezuelan. But just because they learn Spanish and are wearing clothes, they are no less Yanomami.

“Who am I? Am I Yanomami or am I nabuh? The Yanomami see me as a nabuh and the nabuh see me as Yanomami. I get caught in the middle.
“The person I am today is completely different from the person I was five years ago. I am now proud to be a Yanomami-American, I’m proud of my heritage. I love my mother and I look forward to being with her again and studying Yanomami ways.

“I want to create this bridge of friendship between the Yanomami and this world of the United States - and I want to bring to it the perspective of someone who is a family member.

“I am not an anthropologist, I’m not a politician, I’m not a missionary. I’m a brother and a son.”

Nicky Crane: 
The secret double life of a gay neo-Nazi 
By Jon Kelly 
BBC News Magazine 

He was one of the British extreme right’s most feared street-fighters. But almost right up to his death 20 years ago, Nicky Crane led a precarious dual existence - until it fell dramatically apart.

The skinhead gang marched in military formation down the High Street clutching iron bars, knives, staves, pickaxe handles and clubs.

There were at least 100 of them. They had spent two days planning their attack. The date was 28 March 1980.

Soon they reached their target - a queue of mostly black filmgoers outside the Odeon cinema in Woolwich, south-east London.

Then the skinheads charged. Most of them belonged to an extreme far-right group called the British Movement (BM).
This particular “unit” had already acquired a reputation for brutal racist violence thanks to its charismatic young organiser. Many victims had learned to fear the sight of his 6ft 2in frame, which was adorned with Nazi tattoos. His name was Nicky Crane.

But as he led the ambush, Crane was concealing a secret from his enemies and his fascist comrades alike. Crane knew he was gay, but hadn’t acted on it. Not yet.

Twelve years later, the same Nicky Crane sat in his Soho bedsit. His room looked out across London’s gay village - the bars and nightclubs where he worked as a doorman, where he drank and danced.

Crane flicked through a scrapbook filled with photos and news clippings from his far-right past. For years he had managed to keep the two worlds entirely separate. But now he wasn’t going to pretend any more.

Nicola Vincenzo Crane was born on 21 May 1958 in a semi-detached house on a leafy street in Bexley, south-east London. One of 10 siblings, he grew up in nearby Crayford, Kent.

As his name suggests, he had an unlikely background for a British nationalist and Aryan warrior. He was of Italian heritage through his mother Dorothy, whose maiden name was D’Ambrosio. His father worked as a structural draughtsman.

But from an early age Crane found a surrogate family in the south-east London skinhead scene.

Its members had developed a reputation for violence, starting fights and disrupting gigs by bands such as Sham 69 and Bad Manners. In the late 1970s, gangs like Crane’s were widely feared.

“When you’ve come from a tough background, when you get that identity, it’s a powerful thing to have,” says Gavin Watson, a former skinhead who later got to know Crane.
The south-east London skins also had close connections to the far right. Whereas the original skinheads in the late 1960s had borrowed the fashion of Caribbean immigrants and shared their love of ska and reggae music, a highly visible minority of skins during the movement’s revival in the late 1970s were attaching themselves to groups like the resurgent National Front (NF).

In particular the openly neo-Nazi BM, under the leadership of Michael McLaughlin, was actively targeting young, disaffected working-class men from football terraces as well as the punk and skinhead scenes for recruitment.

Crane was an enthusiastic convert to the ideology of National Socialism. “Adolf Hitler was my God,” he said in a 1992 television interview. “He was sort of like my Fuhrer, my leader. And everything I done was, like, for Adolf Hitler.”

Within six months of joining the BM, Crane had been made the Kent organiser, responsible for signing up new members and organising attacks on political opponents and minority groups.

He was also inducted into the Leader Guard, which served both as McLaughlin’s personal corps of bodyguards and as the party’s top fighters. Members wore black uniforms adorned with neo-Nazi symbols and were drilled at paramilitary-style armed training weekends in the countryside.

They were also required to have a Leader Guard tattoo. Each featured the letters L and G on either side of a Celtic cross, the British Movement’s answer to the swastika. Crane dutifully had his inked on to his flesh alongside various racist slogans.

By now working as a binman and living in Plumstead, Crane quickly acquired a reputation, even among the ranks of the far right, for exceptionally brutal violence.

In May 1978, following a BM meeting, he took part in an assault on a black family at a bus stop in Bishopsgate, east London, using
broken bottles and shouting racist slogans. An Old Bailey judge described Crane as “worse than an animal”.

The following year he led a mob of 200 skinheads in an attack on Asians in nearby Brick Lane. Crane later told a newspaper how “we rampaged down the Lane turning over stalls, kicking and punching Pakistanis”.

The Woolwich Odeon attack of 1980 was described by a prosecutor at the Old Bailey as a “serious, organised and premeditated riot”. After their intended victims fled inside, the skinheads drilled by Crane began smashing the cinema’s doors and windows, the court was told. A Pakistani man was knocked unconscious in the melee and the windows of a nearby pub were shattered with a pickaxe handle.

In 1981 Crane was jailed for his part in an ambush on black youths at Woolwich Arsenal station. As the judge handed down a four-year sentence, an acolyte standing alongside Crane stiffened his arm into a Nazi salute and shouted “sieg heil” from the dock.

Crane’s three jail terms failed to temper his violence. During one stretch, he launched an attack on several prison officers with a metal tray. A six-month sentence following a fracas on a London Tube train was served entirely at the top-security Isle of Wight prison - a sign of just how dangerous he was regarded by the authorities.

All this may have horrified most people, but it made Crane a hugely respected and admired figure across the far right.

He was neither an orator nor a conversationalist. His vocabulary was sparse at best. But he managed to exude a powerful charisma.

“I knew him, I liked him. He was friendly,” says Joseph Pearce, who was leader of the Young National Front during the early 1980s before turning his back on extremist politics.
“He was not the most articulate of people. It would be yes or no. It was difficult to have anything but the most superficial conversation with him.”

In the aftermath of a violent march through racially mixed Lewisham in 1977, much of the UK’s extreme right had concluded the path to power lay in controlling the streets and destabilising the multicultural society rather than through the ballot box.

At the same time, groups like the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and, later, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) were becoming more and more confrontational.

“The opposition were very, very combative,” Pearce says. “Their strategy was to smash the nationalist movement. It was a necessity to have a street presence that had muscle. Someone like Nicky Crane was a powerful physical but also symbolic presence.”

This was a description with which even Crane’s enemies concurred.

“By appearance and reputation he was the epitome of right-wing idealism - fascist icon and poster boy,” writes Sean Birchall in his book Beating The Fascists, a history of AFA.

Unbeknown to his comrades, however, a very different side to Nicky Crane was emerging.

It was a Thursday night at Heaven, a gay nightclub below London’s Charing Cross station. Underneath the venue’s arched roof stood a young man, up from Brighton for the evening. A garrulous character, he was universally known by his full title of John G Byrne. Since 1969, when he discovered reggae music as a 13-year-old, Byrne had been a skinhead. As he looked across the dancefloor, he caught sight of a man he’d never seen before.

The stranger was tall, shaven-headed and tattooed. Byrne introduced himself.
It was Nicky Crane, fresh out of prison.

“He stood out quite a lot,” says Byrne. “A lot of people used to be quite keen on him because he was a very butch-looking geezer.”

Years later, Crane said he hadn’t had sex with a man until after he turned 26 in 1984. But now he was becoming a regular at places like Heaven.

“I just used to chat to him,” Byrne adds. “Nicky was quite a friendly person. He was quite quiet, really. He was the opposite of what he looked like.”

He appears to have thrown himself enthusiastically into the gay scene around this time. His imposing frame meant he easily found work as a doorman at gay venues through a security firm.

But if the neo-Nazi world would have abhorred his sexuality, the vast majority of London’s gay scene would have been equally horrified to learn that he was a neo-Nazi.

Among the leadership of the largely liberal-left gay rights movement that was growing in London during the 1980s, fascist symbolism was an obvious and outrageous taboo - a reminder of the persecution that lesbians and gay men had suffered.

According to feminist scholar Sheila Jeffreys’ book The Lesbian Heresy, a commotion unfolded in 1984 when a group of gay skinheads turned up at a gay bar in London’s King’s Cross and began sieg heiling. She also records that a well-known far-right youth organiser was thrown out of the same pub after taking off his jacket to reveal swastika tattoos.

A huge row erupted the following year at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre in King’s Cross when a gay skinhead night was held at the venue. It’s not clear whether Crane was present at any of these incidents.
But it appears that, at least initially, he was able to deflect questions about his politics by presenting himself on the gay scene as a skinhead first and foremost.

His friend Byrne, who describes himself as “sort of more a Labour person”, had no time for the far-right element that had infiltrated the skinhead movement. But Byrne was convinced at the time that Crane “wasn’t really a Nazi. It was all show”. The softly spoken Nicky he knew was too nice to be an extremist, Byrne believed.

This wasn’t as fanciful as it might sound.

By the mid-1980s, a gay skinhead scene was beginning to flourish in London, says Murray Healy, author of Gay Skins: Class, Masculinity and Queer Appropriation.

Gay men had many different reasons for adopting the look, he says. Some had been skinheads before they came out. Others found that, in an era when all gay men were widely assumed to be camp and effeminate, “you were less likely to get picked on if you looked like a queer-basher”. There were also “fetish skins”, attracted to the “hyper-masculinity” of the subculture.

Against this backdrop, even the swastikas and racist slogans inked on Crane’s body could be explained away, at least initially. During the 1980s, says Healy, “gay Nazis were assumed to be left-wing even if they had Nazi tattoos”.

“People refused to read these tattoos politically. People thought it was part of the authenticity ritual. People thought he was just playing a part.”

And indeed it wasn’t just gay skins who flirted with the iconography of fascism. While “redskins” and “Sharps” - an acronym for Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice - confronted those with links to the far right, many heterosexual skinheads who were apolitical also adopted fascist garb, says Byrne.
“A lot of skinheads that weren’t right-wing used to wear Skrewdriver T-shirts,” Byrne adds. “It was about the fashion of being a skinhead.”

But Crane wasn’t just playing with the imagery of Nazism. He was living it. His decision to start frequenting venues such as Heaven wasn’t the only thing that had changed since before his sentence. During the years 1981 to 1984, which he mostly spent incarcerated, his fame had grown far beyond the narrow confines of the far right.

In 1981, the journalist Garry Bushell helped put together a compilation album of tracks by bands from the burgeoning Oi! scene. Oi!, a cheerfully crude sub-genre of punk, was popular with skinheads. Its politics were fairly broad - while there were right-wingers within its ranks, some of its most prominent acts, including the Angelic Upstarts, were avowed socialists. Others, such as the 4-Skins, condemned political extremism of all kinds.

That was to count for little after Bushell, desperate for a cover image after a photoshoot fell through, seized on a Christmas card which he says he believed showed a scene from the film The Wanderers. In fact, it was a picture of Crane.

It was only when the image was blown up to 12in cover size, Bushell says, that he noticed Crane’s Nazi tattoos. Faced with the choice of airbrushing out his markings or pulling the release, the writer chose the former option.

“It was a monumentally, cataclysmically stupid decision,” he says. The title of the compilation was Strength Thru Oi! - which Bushell says was intended as a pun on Strength Through Joy, the title of a recent EP by punk act The Skids, but which in turn was borrowed from a Nazi slogan.

The Daily Mail seized upon the title and the connection with Crane, condemning the “highly controversial” record as “evil”.
According to Bushell, who had only recently left the Socialist Workers Party and still regarded himself at the time as a left-winger, the story was a “tissue of lies”. But as a result of the coverage, the hitherto obscure Oi! scene became associated by many with the far right - to the chagrin of acts featured on the album, such as the socialist poet Gary Johnson.

Crane’s musical background had hitherto extended to starting fights at ska and punk gigs, plus a short-lived stint singing in a punk band called The Afflicted.

The notoriety, however, transformed him into a skinhead icon. The Strength Thru Oi! cover image - featuring a topless, muscle-bound Crane snarling and raising his boot - was widely reproduced in the wake of the row.

T-shirts featuring the image were sold at The Last Resort, a clothes shop favoured by skinheads in London’s Whitechapel. They were a huge hit. Although the album was withdrawn from sale, reproductions of its cover adorned thousands of bedroom walls.

“He was literally a poster boy,” says Watson, who at the time was a teenage skin in Buckinghamshire. “Even a 15-year-old was like, ‘That’s what a skinhead should look like. He just fell into our living rooms. These little kids in High Wycombe - we didn’t know anything about the Nazi stuff.”

On the surface, the idea of a gay man embracing neo-Nazism might appear baffling and self-defeating. Just as Adolf Hitler’s regime had thrown gays and lesbians into death camps, the neo-Nazi movement remained staunchly homophobic.

Crane was becoming all too aware of the contradiction of being a gay neo-Nazi. “A lot of people that I did used to hang around with, they did sort of like hate us,” he said in 1992 - “us” meaning gay men.
“They’d go out queer-bashing. It’s something I never did myself. And I’d never let it happen in front of me, either.”

He had, however, chosen fascism long before he had embraced his sexuality, and much of his social life and prestige was bound up with his status as a prominent neo-Nazi activist.

To maintain his cover, Crane would often appear in public with a skinhead girl on his arm. “He often had a so-called girlfriend but they were never around for long,” says Pearce. “Nicky had no chemistry with girls.”

Certainly, after coming out, Crane always described himself as gay rather than bisexual.

Nonetheless, his relationships with women, coupled with rumours that he had fathered a son, allayed any initial suspicions his comrades might have had. So too did his propensity for racist violence.

On Sunday 10 June 1984, Greater London Council leader Ken Livingstone held a free open-air concert to protest against unemployment and government spending cuts.

Thousands of Londoners turned out to watch acts like The Smiths and Billy Bragg. Most would have been attracted principally by the music and the summer weather.

To Nicky Crane, however, anyone attending a left-wing-hosted event like this was a legitimate target.

As The Redskins, a socialist skinhead band, played, Crane led an attack on the crowd. Around 100 fascists began setting about the audience closest to the main stage.

“They were organised, they were used to violence, the audience wasn’t,” says Gary, an anti-fascist activist who was present that day and asked to be identified only by his first name.
The neo-Nazis were beaten back by a group of striking Yorkshire miners, invited to steward the event by Livingstone as a solidarity gesture, and members of the militant far-left group Red Action.

Crane was not cowed, however, and after regrouping his forces, he charged a second stage at the other end of the park where the Hank Wangford Band were playing.

This time, however, the anti-fascists were better prepared. Militants grabbed empty cider bottles to use as improvised weapons.

As the anti-fascists fought back, Crane broke away from the main battle. “He was busy attacking the rest of the crowd, on his own, stripped to the waist,” says Gary.

As Crane tried to make it over a barrier on to the stage, he was knocked over by a Red Action member. He escaped the furious crowd by using a female left-wing activist as a human shield, according to witnesses.

As the violence subsided, anti-fascists confronted another skinhead in the crowd. His Harrington jacket was unzipped to reveal a slogan on his T-shirt. It read “Nicky Crane”, in tribute to the young man’s hero.

Given the carnage Crane had just instigated, the left-wingers had little sympathy for his admirer. The skinhead was set upon and beaten.

Crane was never prosecuted for his part in the riot. In the febrile atmosphere of the mid-1980s, however, violence was everywhere.

As clashes between police and striking miners becoming increasingly bitter, football hooligans across the country were fighting it out with unprecedented ferocity. The formation of AFA in 1985 resulted in increasingly bloody stand-offs between anti-fascists and the far right.
Several years later, Crane told the Sun newspaper about an attack on a Jewish Remembrance Day ceremony for which he also appears to have escaped arrest.

“We hurled insults at them and started punching and kicking as they went by,” he admitted to the paper in 1992.

On another occasion, Crane and his gang spotted a left-wing activist on a Tube train. “Me and a few mates beat him really badly,” he said. “Even though he wasn’t moving we all kept jumping on his head.

“I think he survived. It must have been a miracle.”

After the BM collapsed in 1983, Crane had become something of a free agent. He was a visible presence on demonstrations held by other far-right groups. These included the NF - now split into two warring factions - and the British National Party, formed in 1982 by John Tyndall, which had begun to attract a significant football hooligan following.

Among the rank and file of each group, Crane remained a hero.

“You could very easily drop him into the Weimar Republic in 1923 and, some language difficulties apart, he’d fit right in,” says Gary.

His closest affiliation, however, was with the neo-Nazi rock band Skrewdriver. Originally the group had been apolitical. In 1982, however, singer Ian Stuart Donaldson came out as a supporter of the National Front.

With song titles like Europe Awake and Flying the Flag, the group gained a huge following among far-right skinheads.

Opposition from anti-fascists meant gigs had to be forcefully stewarded. Donaldson appointed Crane as Skrewdriver’s head of security, and he became a trusted lieutenant.
Reportedly, Crane wrote the lyrics for a Skrewdriver track called Justice and provided the cover art for the albums Hail The New Dawn and After The Fire.

Archive footage of their concerts shows Donaldson barking neo-Nazi lyrics as he loomed above Crane who stood, arms folded, at the front of the stage. The T-shirt on his chest said “Skrewdriver security” in Gothic script.

Crane wasn’t playing an instrument, but it was as though he was part of the performance.

His status as a neo-Nazi icon had never been more secure. But for the first time, the twin strands of his double life were about to intersect.

The anti-fascist magazine Searchlight was, despite its political leanings, required reading for activists on the extreme right. Each month the publication would run gossip about the neo-Nazi scene, and fascists would furtively buy it to see whether they had earned a mention.

In April 1985 it ran a feature on Crane. It mentioned the GLC concert, the south London attacks and the jail sentences he had served. The magazine revealed it had received a Christmas card from him during his time on the Isle of Wight in which he proclaimed his continued allegiance to “the British Movement tradition” - that is, violence.

The Searchlight report ended its description of Crane with the line: “On Thursday nights he can be found at the Heaven disco in Charing Cross.” Even a neo-Nazi audience might be aware that Heaven was at this point London’s premier gay club.

Nicky Crane had been outed. And homosexuality was anathema to neo-Nazis. But the response of Crane’s comrades to the revelation was to ignore it. A number of factors allowed Crane to brush off the report, Pearce says.
Firstly, homosexuality was indelibly associated with effeminacy by the far right, and Crane was the very opposite of effeminate.

Secondly, no-one wanted to be seen to believe Searchlight above the word of a committed soldier for the Aryan cause.

Thirdly, on the most basic level, everyone was afraid of being beaten up by Crane if they challenged him.

“I remember it was just sort of furtive whispering,” adds Pearce. “I’m not aware that anyone confronted Nicky. People were happy for things to remain under the carpet.”

Sightings at gay clubs were dismissed by Crane.

Donaldson claimed Crane told him that he was obliged to take jobs at places like Heaven because the security firm he was employed by sent him there.

“I accepted him at face value, as he was a nationalist,” Donaldson told a fanzine years later.

For his part, Heaven’s then-owner, Jeremy Norman, says he does not recall Crane working on the door: “I would imagine that the door staff would have been supplied by a security contractor and that he would have been their employee but it is all a long time ago.”

Rumours circulated that a prominent football hooligan and far-right activist had hurled a homophobic slur at Crane, who in response had inflicted a beating which the victim was lucky to survive. Word of this spread among the skinhead fraternity, too.

“My mate had a shop in Soho,” recalls Watson. “People would come in to say, ‘Have you heard Nicky’s gay?’ He would say, he works around the corner, why don’t you go and ask him? Of course they never did.”
Just as some in the gay community refused to believe that a gay man could be a neo-Nazi, others on the extreme right were unable to acknowledge that a neo-Nazi could be a gay man.

In 1987 Crane and Donaldson set up a group called Blood & Honour. It was a cross between a White Power music club and a political party.

It staged concerts for Skrewdriver and other neo-Nazi bands with names like No Remorse and Brutal Attack. T-shirts, flags and records were sold by mail order through its magazine. The operation had an annual turnover of hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Donaldson was its head, Crane his right-hand man and head of security. Around the same time, the latter’s organisational skills were being put to use elsewhere.

Searchlight reported in October 1987 that “Crane, the right’s finest example of a clinical psychopath, is also engaged in building a ‘gay skins’ movement, which meets on Friday nights” at a pub in east London.

Crane’s sexuality might by now have been obvious to any interested onlooker, but the neo-Nazi scene remained in denial.

While his right-wing colleagues studiously ignored the report, AFA took an interest. Its activists put the pub under surveillance.

The anti-fascists didn’t care about Crane’s sexuality, but were concerned that the gatherings might have a political objective.

“Here were gay skinheads wearing Nazi regalia,” says Gary. “We could never get to the bottom of it - whether it was purely a sexual fetish.”

The gay community had, by this stage, begun to take notice of Crane, too. He was confronted by anti-fascists attending a Pride rally in Kennington, south London, in 1986.
The campaigner Peter Tatchell recalls a row erupting after it emerged Crane had been allowed to steward a gay rights march. The organisers had not been aware who Crane was or what his political affiliations were.

But now they were, and Crane must have realised he would no longer be welcome in much of gay London. The gay skinhead night may simply have been an attempt to carve out a space for himself where he would not be challenged either for his sexuality or his politics.

While his status in the far right was secure, he was being pushed to the fringes of the gay community. The double life he had been maintaining was beginning to erode.

The Bloody Sunday commemoration rally was held every January to mark the deaths of 14 unarmed protesters at the hands of the Parachute Regiment in Derry in 1972.

For years the rally had been a target for the far right, whose sympathies in the Northern Ireland conflict mostly lay with the loyalists.

So when Nicky Crane was spotted within the vicinity of the march in Kilburn, a traditionally Irish enclave of north-west London, in January 1990, it was assumed he had trouble in mind.

Crane was confronted by anti-fascist activists who were stewarding the event and, after a brief exchange of blows, he managed to get away. But when he was spotted in a black cab heading back into the area, marchers took it as read that he was about to spearhead an ambush on the march.

After the taxi became stuck in traffic at the top of Kilburn High Road it was quickly surrounded. Crane was pulled from the vehicle and found himself on the receiving end of the kind of violence he had inflicted on others. After putting up fierce resistance, he was beaten unconscious.
Three anti-fascists were jailed for a total of 11 years for their part in the incident. Unusually for a political street fighter who deplored the system, Crane testified at their trial.

It was a hint that Crane was preparing to cut his ties with the extreme right.

“I don’t think he’d have done it in his fascist days, put it that way,” says Gary. “You didn’t go to the police. Hard men don’t do that, they sort it out among themselves.”

It was not the first indication that Crane was losing his enthusiasm for the Nazi cause. In May 1989 he had fled when anti-fascists turned up to a meeting point in London’s Hyde Park for a Blood & Honour gig.

After the Bloody Sunday march, there is no record of Crane taking part in any further political activity. He had begun drifting away from the extreme right.

Friends say he had begun spending an increasing amount of time in Thailand, where his past was not known and he could, for the first time since Strength Thru Oi! was released, be anonymous.

Back in London, he appeared in a series of skinhead-themed amateur gay porn videos. The films did not achieve wide circulation but, to star in them in the first place, he must have been indifferent to whether or not he was exposed.

Eventually he made a decision. It was time to end the double life once and for all. The Channel 4 programme was called Out. It featured a series of documentaries about lesbian and gay life in the UK. The episode broadcast on 27 July 1992 was about the gay skinhead subculture. Its star attraction was Nicky Crane.

First the programme showed recorded interviews with an unwitting Donaldson, who sounded baffled that such a thing as gay skinheads existed, and NF leader Patrick Harrington.
And then the camera cut to Crane, in camouflage gear and Dr Martens boots, in his Soho bedsit.

He told the interviewer how he’d known he was gay back in his early BM days. He described how his worship of Hitler had given way to unease about the far right’s homophobia.

He had started to feel like a hypocrite because the Nazi movement was so anti-gay, he said. “So I just, like, couldn’t stay in it.” Crane said he was “ashamed” of his political past and insisted he had changed.

“The views I’ve got now is, I believe in individualism and I don’t care if anyone’s black, Jewish or anything,” he added. “I either like or dislike a person as an individual, not what their colour is or anything.”

The revelation attracted considerable press attention. The Sun ran a story with the headline “NAZI NICK IS A PANZI”. Below it described the “Weird secret he kept from gay-bashers”.

Crane reiterated that he had abandoned Nazi ideology. “It is all in the past,” he told the paper. “I’ve made a dramatic change in my life.”

The reaction from his erstwhile comrades was one of horror and fury. Donaldson issued a blood-curdling death threat on stage at a Skrewdriver gig.

“He’s dug his own grave as far as I’m concerned,” Donaldson told the Last Chance fanzine. “I was fooled the same as everybody else. Perhaps more than everybody else. I felt I was betrayed by him and I want nothing to do with him whatsoever.”

But according to Pearce - who by this stage had made his own break with the NF - it was Crane’s disavowal of National Socialism, rather than the admission of his sexuality, that proved particularly painful for Donaldson.
“I think that Ian would have been very shocked,” says Pearce. “He was deeply hurt. But it had more to do with the fact that he switched sides politically.

“Nicky didn’t just come out as a homosexual, he became militantly opposed to what he previously believed in.”

British Nazism had lost its street-fighting poster boy. For the first time in his adult life, however, Crane was able to be himself.

Watson recalls catching a glimpse of Crane - by then working as a bicycle courier - shortly after he came out. “I saw him riding around Soho in Day-Glo Lycra shorts,” remembers Watson. “I thought, good for you.”

On 8 December 1993, Byrne took the train to London. He had arranged to meet his friend Nicky Crane at Berwick Street market, just a few yards from his Rupert Street bedsit.

Byrne was looking forward to having “a good old chat” about skinheads they both knew. But Crane didn’t turn up.

When Byrne got home, he found out why. Crane had died the day before. He was 35. The cause of death was given on his death certificate as bronchopneumonia, a fatal inflammation of the air passages to the lungs.

He was a victim of the disease that had killed so many other young gay men of his generation.

“He didn’t tell me about his problems with Aids,” says Byrne. “He didn’t talk much about it really. I thought it was a shame.”

Word had got around that Crane was ill, however. Gary recalls his shock at seeing his one-time foe looking deeply emaciated, waiting on a platform at Baker Street Tube station. Crane’s stature was such, however, that even at this point fellow passengers were careful to keep their distance.
Those who suffered as a result of his rampages may have breathed a sigh of relief that he was no longer able to terrorise them.

But his death marked more than just the end of Nicky Crane.

It also coincided with the passing of an era in which the extreme right hoped to win power by controlling the street with boots and fists.

In 1993, Crane was dead, Donaldson died in a car crash and the British National Party (BNP) won its first council seat in Millwall, east London. The various factions of the NF had by now all but withered.

The following year, BNP strategist Tony Lecomber announced there would be “no more meetings, marches, punch-ups” - instead, the intention now was to win seats in town halls.

The party would try to rebrand itself as respectable and peaceful - a strategy continued, with varying success, under the leadership of Nick Griffin. Streetfighters like Nicky Crane were supposedly consigned to the past.

The broader skinhead movement was changing, too.

Watson, like many other former skins, had by the time of Crane’s death, abandoned boots and braces for the rave scene. His skinhead days already felt like a different age.

“The skinhead stuff was washed away by rave and it’s, ‘Oh yes, Nicky’s out of the closet,’” Watson says. “It’s the story of that side of skinheads, isn’t it?”

By contrast, the presence of skinheads in gay clubs and bars was no longer controversial. Shorn of its political associations, the look was by now, if anything, more popular in London’s Old Compton Street or Manchester’s Canal Street than on football terraces or far-right rallies.
Two decades after Crane’s death, says Healy, the skinhead is “recognised as a gay man unambiguously in London and Manchester”. He adds: “If the Village People reformed today there would be a skinhead in the group.”

He may be an extreme case, but Crane reflects an era in which people’s expectations of what a gay man looked and behaved like began to shift.

“All everybody always knew gay people, but they just didn’t know it,” says Max Schaefer, whose 2010 novel Children of the Sun features a character fascinated by Crane. “The neo-Nazis were no different from everyone else.”

It’s unlikely Crane reflected on his place at this intersection between all these late 20th Century subcultures. He was a man of action, not ideology - a doer who left the thinking to others, and this may be what led a confused, angry young man to fascism in the first place.

As he lingered in St Mary’s hospital in Paddington, west London, waiting to die, a young man named Craig was at his side. Craig was “one of Nicky’s boyfriends”, says Byrne.

According to Crane’s death certificate, Craig was with him at the end.

6 December 2013

Malala: The girl who was shot for going to school
By Mishal Husain
BBC News

One year ago schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head by Taliban gunmen - her “crime”, to have spoken up for the right of girls to be educated. The world reacted in horror, but Malala survived. Her full story can now be told.
She is the teenager who marked her 16th birthday with a live address from UN headquarters, is known around the world by her first name alone, and has been lauded by a former British prime minister as “an icon of courage and hope”.

She is also a Birmingham schoolgirl trying to settle into a new class, worrying about homework and reading lists, missing friends from her old school, and squabbling with her two younger brothers.

She is Malala Yousafzai, whose life was forever changed at age 15 by a Taliban bullet on 9 October 2012.

I have travelled to her home town in Pakistan, seen the school that moulded her, met the doctors who treated her and spent time with her and her family, for one reason - to answer the same question barked by the gunman who flagged down her school bus last October: “Who is Malala?”

The Swat Valley once took pride in being called “the Switzerland of Pakistan”. It’s a mountainous place, cool in summer and snowy in winter, within easy reach of the capital, Islamabad. And when Malala was born in 1997 it was still peaceful. Just a few hours’ driving from Islamabad brings you to the foot of the Malakand pass, the gateway to the valley. The winding road up to the pass leaves the plains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province, far below.

I remember it well from childhood holidays in Pakistan. But my latest trip felt very different - the BBC crew made the journey with a military escort. Although the Pakistan army retook control of Swat from the Taliban in 2009 and it is arguably now safer for foreigners than some other areas, the military clearly didn’t want to take any chances.

Historically, the north-west has been one of Pakistan’s least developed regions. But Swat, interestingly, has long been a bright spot in terms of education. Until 1969, it was a semi-autonomous
principality - its ruler known as the Wali. The first of these was Miangul Gulshahzada Sir Abdul Wadud, appointed by a local council in 1915 and known to Swatis as “Badshah Sahib” - the King. Although himself uneducated, he laid the foundation for a network of schools in the valley - the first boys’ primary school came in 1922, followed within a few years by the first girls’ school.

The trend was continued by his son, Wali Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb, who came to power in 1949. Within a few months, he had presented the schoolgirls of Swat to the visiting prime minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, and his wife Raana.
As his grandson Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb says: “It would have been unusual anywhere else in the [North-West] Frontier at that time, but in Swat girls were going to school.”

The new Wali’s focus soon turned to high schools and colleges, including Jahanzeb College, founded in 1952, where Malala’s father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, would study many years later. Soon, Swat became known across Pakistan for the number of professionals it was producing - especially doctors and teachers. As Adnan Aurangzeb says, “Swat was proud of its record on education... one way to identify a Swati outside of Swat was that he always had a pen in his chest pocket, and that meant he was literate.”

Against this backdrop, the fate that befell the schools of Swat in the first years of the 21st Century is particularly tragic.

By the time Malala was born, her father had realised his dream of founding his own school, which began with just a few pupils and mushroomed into an establishment educating more than 1,000 girls and boys.

It is clear that her absence is keenly felt. Outside the door of her old classroom is a framed newspaper cutting about her. Inside, her best friend Moniba has written the name “Malala” on a chair placed in the front row.

This was Malala’s world - not one of wealth or privilege but an atmosphere dominated by learning. And she flourished. “She was precocious, confident, assertive,” says Adnan Aurangzeb. “A young person with the drive to achieve something in life.”

In that, she wasn’t alone. “Malala’s whole class is special,” headmistress Mariam Khalique tells me.

And from the moment I walk in, I understand what she means. Their focus and attention is absolute, their aspirations sky-high. The lesson under way is biology, and as it ends I have a few
moments to ask the girls about their future plans - many want to be doctors. One girl’s answer stops me in my tracks: “I’d like to be Pakistan’s army chief one day.”

Part of the reason for this drive to succeed is that only white-collar, professional jobs will allow these girls a life outside their homes. While poorly educated boys can hope to find low-skilled work, their female counterparts will find their earning power restricted to what they can do within the four walls of their home - sewing perhaps.

“For my brothers it was easy to think about the future,” Malala tells me when we meet in Birmingham. “They can be anything they want. But for me it was hard and for that reason I wanted to become educated and empower myself with knowledge.”

It was this future that was threatened when the first signs of Taliban influence emerged, borne on a tide of anti-Western sentiment that swept across Pakistan in the years after 9/11 and the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.

Like other parts of north-west Pakistan, Swat had always been a devout and conservative region, but what was happening by 2007 was very different - radio broadcasts threatening Sharia-style punishments for those who departed from local Muslim traditions, and most ominously, edicts against education.

The worst period came at the end of 2008, when the local Taliban leader, Mullah Fazlullah, issued a dire warning - all female education had to cease within a month, or schools would suffer consequences. Malala remembers the moment well: “‘How can they stop us going to school?’ I was thinking. ‘It’s impossible, how can they do it?’”

But Ziauddin Yousafzai and his friend Ahmad Shah, who ran another school nearby, had to recognise it as a real possibility. The Taliban had always followed through on their threats. The two men discussed the situation with local army commanders.
“I asked them how much security would be provided to us,” Shah recalls. “They said, ‘We will provide security, don’t close your schools.’” It was easier said than done.

By this time, Malala was still only 11, but well aware of how things were changing.

“People don’t need to be aware of these things at the age of nine or 10 or 11 but we were seeing terrorism and extremism, so I had to be aware,” she says.

She knew that her way of life was under threat. When a journalist from BBC Urdu asked her father about young people who might be willing to give their perspective on life under the Taliban, he suggested Malala.

The result was the Diary of a Pakistani Schoolgirl, a blog for BBC Urdu, in which Malala chronicled her hope to keep going to school and her fears for the future of Swat.

She saw it as an opportunity. “I wanted to speak up for my rights,” she says. “And also I didn’t want my future to be just sitting in a room and be imprisoned in my four walls and just cooking and giving birth to children. I didn’t want to see my life in that way.”

The blog was anonymous, but Malala was also unafraid to speak out in public about the right to education, as she did in February 2009 to the Pakistani television presenter Hamid Mir, who brought his show to Swat. “I was surprised that there is a girl in Swat who can speak with confidence, who’s very brave, who’s very articulate,” Mir says. “But at the same time I was a bit concerned about her security, about the security of her family.”

At that time it was Ziauddin Yousafzai, Malala’s father, who was perceived to be at the greatest risk. Already known as a social and educational activist, he had sensed that the Taliban would move from the tribal areas of Pakistan into Swat, and had often warned people to be on their guard.
Malala herself was concerned for him. “I was worried about my father,” she says. “I used to think, ‘What will I do if a Talib comes to the house? We’ll hide my father in a cupboard and call the police.”

No-one thought the Taliban would target a child. There were however notorious incidents where they had chosen to make an example of women. In early 2009, a dancer was accused of immorality and executed, her body put on public display in the centre of Mingora. Soon afterwards, there was outrage across Pakistan after a video emerged from Swat showing the Taliban flogging a 17-year-old girl for alleged “illicit relations” with a man.

Ziauddin Yousafzai must have known that Malala’s high profile in the valley put her at some risk, even though he could not have foreseen the outcome.

“Malala’s voice was the most powerful voice in Swat because the biggest victim of the Taliban was girls’ schools and girls’ education and few people talked about it,” he says. “When she used to speak about education, everybody gave it importance.”

By the time Malala was shot in 2012, the worst days of Taliban power in Swat had receded. A high-profile military operation had cleared out most militants but others had stayed behind, keeping a low profile.

“Life was normal for normal people, but for those people who had raised their voice, it was now a risky time,” says Malala. She was one of those people.

On the afternoon of 9 October, she walked out of school as normal and boarded a small bus waiting outside the gates. These vehicles are seen everywhere in Mingora - a little like covered pickup trucks, open at the back, with three lines of benches running the length of the flatbed. Each could carry about 20 people and would be waiting to take the girls and their teachers home at the end of the school day.
In Malala’s case, it was only a short journey, past a small clearing where children played cricket, and along the canal bank to her house.

Once she had walked, but then her mother, Tor Pekai, intervened. “My mother told me, ‘Now you are growing up and people know you, so you must not go on foot, you must go in a car or a bus so then you will be safe,’” Malala says.

That day, she was in the middle of her exams, and had a lot on her mind. But there was still the usual after-school chat and gossip to share with Moniba, who was sitting next to her. But as the bus progressed along its route Malala says she did notice something unusual - the road seemed deserted. “I asked Moniba, ‘Why is there no-one here? Can you see it’s not like it usually is?’”

Moments later, the bus was flagged down by two young men as it passed a clearing, only 100 yards from the school gates. Malala doesn’t recall seeing them but Moniba does. To her they looked like college students.

Then she heard one ask: “Who is Malala?” In the seconds between that question and the firing beginning, Moniba at first wondered if the men were more journalists in search of her well-known friend. But she quickly grasped that Malala had sensed danger. “She was very scared at that time,’ she remembers. The girls looked at Malala, thereby innocently identifying her. The two girls sitting on Malala’s other side, Shazia Ramzan and Kainat Riaz, were also injured.

“I heard the firing, then I saw lots of blood on Malala’s head,” says Kainat. “When I saw that blood on Malala, I fell unconscious.”

Moniba says the bus remained there for 10 minutes, before anyone came to the aid of the panic-stricken women and children.

When they reached the hospital, it was assumed all four girls were wounded, as Moniba’s clothing was drenched in her friend’s blood.
News of the shooting spread quickly. Malala’s father was at the Press Club when a phone call came to tell him one of his school buses had been attacked. He feared at once that it was Malala who had been targeted. He found her on a stretcher in the hospital.

“When I looked towards her face I just bowed down, I kissed her on the forehead, her nose, and cheeks,” he says. “And then I said, ‘You’re my proud daughter. I am proud of you.’”

Malala had been shot in the head and it was clear to everyone, including the Pakistan army, that her life was in danger. A helicopter was scrambled to airlift her to the military hospital in Peshawar - a journey that would eventually take her not just away from Swat but away from Pakistan.

The Combined Military Hospital in Peshawar is the best medical facility in the region, treating not just military personnel but their families too. As he flew in with Malala, Ziauddin Yousafzai was braced for the worst, telling relatives at his family home in rural Swat to make preparations for a funeral. “It really was the most difficult time in my life,” he says.

From the helipad, Malala was brought in by ambulance and placed in the care of neurosurgeon Col Junaid Khan. “She was initially conscious, but restless and agitated, moving all her limbs,” he says. The entry wound of the bullet was above her left brow. From there it had travelled down through her neck and lodged in her back.

Malala was treated as a severe head injury case and placed under observation. After four hours, she deteriorated visibly, slipping towards unconsciousness. A scan revealed a life-threatening situation - her brain was swelling dangerously and she would need immediate surgery.

“The part of the brain involved was concerned not only with speech but also giving power to the right arm and leg,” Khan says.
“So contemplating surgery in this very sensitive area can have risks. The person can be paralysed afterwards.”

Nevertheless, he told Malala’s father that surgery was vital to save her life - a portion of her skull had to be removed to relieve pressure on the brain.

The procedure began with shaving part of Malala’s hair, and then cutting away the bone, before placing the portion of removed skull inside her abdomen in case it could be later replaced. Blood clots and damaged tissue were extracted from inside the brain.

Before that day, Khan says, he had never heard the name Malala Yousafzai, but he was soon left in no doubt that he was treating a high-profile patient. Camera crews besieged the hospital compound as a tide of shock and revulsion spread through Pakistan.

TV presenter Hamid Mir looks back on the attack and the country’s realisation that the Taliban were capable of shooting a young girl as a defining moment.

“It gave me a lot of courage and strength [a sense] that enough is enough, now is the time to speak against the enemies of education,” he says. “If they can target a little girl like Malala, they can target anyone.”

From Adnan Aurangzeb, so closely connected to Swat and its people, there was anger - not just at the Taliban but at the government of Pakistan, which he held accountable for failing to protect Malala.

“She should have been under the protection of Pakistan,” he says. “Not left to go unescorted like any normal student in an area infested with militants and Taliban.”

Inside the intensive care unit in Peshawar, Malala appeared to respond well to the surgery. Her progress was by now being followed not just in Pakistan but around the world. In Islamabad, the army chief General Ashfaq Kayani was taking a keen
interest, but wanted a definitive and independent opinion on Malala’s chances.

As it happened, his officers were looking after a team of British doctors at the time - a group from Birmingham who had come to Pakistan to advise the army on setting up a liver transplant programme. The multi-disciplinary team was led by emergency care consultant Javid Kayani, a British Pakistani who maintains close links with the land of his birth.

When the request for help came through, Kayani knew which one of the team he wanted to take with him to Peshawar on the helicopter that was standing by. Given Malala’s age, paediatric intensive care specialist Fiona Reynolds was the obvious choice.

Although she had her doubts about security in Peshawar, she had heard enough about Malala from news reports to feel the risk was worth taking. “She’d been shot because she wanted an education, and I was in Pakistan because I’m a woman with an education, so I couldn’t say ‘no,’” she says.

What the doctors discovered in Peshawar, though, was not encouraging. Although Malala had had what Reynolds calls “the right surgery at the right time”, she was being let down by the post-operative care. A similar patient in the UK would have been having her blood pressure checked continuously via an arterial line - according to Malala’s charts, hers had last been checked two hours earlier.

Reynolds’ instinct told her that Malala could be saved, but everything depended on how she would be cared for.

“The quality of the intensive care was potentially compromising her final outcome, both in terms of survival and in terms of her ability to recover as much brain function as possible,” she says.

That clinical opinion would be vital to Malala’s future. An army intensive care specialist was sent to bolster the team in Peshawar,
but when Malala deteriorated further, she was airlifted again, this time to a bigger military hospital in Islamabad.

In the first hours after her arrival there, Fiona Reynolds remained very worried. Malala’s kidneys appeared to have shut down, her heart and circulation were failing, and she needed drugs to support her unstable blood pressure. “I thought she was probably going to survive, but I wasn’t sure of her neurological outcome, because she’d been so sick. Any brain damage would have been made worse.”

As Malala gradually stabilised, over the next couple of days, Reynolds was asked for her opinion again - this time on her rehabilitation. She asked what facilities were available, knowing that acute medicine is often far ahead of rehab. That was indeed the case in Pakistan. “I said that if the Pakistan military and the Pakistan government were serious about optimising her outcome... I said that everything that she would need would be available in Birmingham.”

On 15 October 2012, Malala arrived at the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham, where she would remain for the next three months. She had been kept in a medically induced coma, but a day later the doctors decided to bring her out of it. Her last memory was of being on a school bus in Swat - now she was waking up surrounded by strangers, in a foreign country. “I opened my eyes and the first thing I saw was that I was in a hospital and I could see nurses and doctors,” she says. “I thanked God - ‘O Allah, I thank you because you have given me a new life and I am alive’.”

Malala’s parents and brothers were still in Pakistan but Javid Kayani was standing at her bedside.

“When she woke up she had this very frightened look and her eyes were darting back and forth,” he says. “We knew she couldn’t speak because she had a tube down her throat to assist with her breathing. But I knew that she could hear
so I told her who I was and I told her where she was, and she indicated by her eye movements that she understood.”

Malala then gestured that she wanted to write, so a pad of paper and a pencil were brought. She attempted to write, but she had poor control of the pencil - unsurprising for someone with a head injury. Instead, an alphabet board was found and Javid Kayani watched her point to the letters one by one.

“The first word that she tapped out was ‘country’. So I assumed she wanted to know where she was and I told her she was in England. And then the next word was ‘father’ and I told her that he was in Pakistan and he’d be coming in the next few days. That was the limit of the conversation.”

More “conversations” would take place with one of the few visitors allowed in - Fiona Reynolds, who brought Malala a pink notebook in which to write down her questions.

Malala showed it to me, It is a poignant reminder of her search for answers in that period, especially the page where she simply asks, “Who did this to me?”

For Reynolds, the fact that Malala was able to articulate her questions was a huge relief.

“I was hoping that her cognitive abilities would still be there. I was also hoping that she hadn’t lost the power of speech.

So the fact that she was mouthing words and writing - I thought she’s not lost the ability to speak. And remember she was talking in her third language [Pashto is Malala’s mother tongue, Urdu her second language], so her speech centre was pretty intact.”

Malala would go on to make an outstanding recovery, a tribute not just to the quality of the care she received - but also, her doctors told me, to her own resilience and determination.
Once she was out of intensive care, doctors began to consider what could be done about the paralysis of the left side of her face, which had caused great distress to her parents when they were reunited with her in Birmingham.

Malala’s father felt she had lost her smile.

“When she used to try to smile I would look at my wife and a shadow would fall on her face, because she thought, ‘This is not the same Malala I gave birth to, this is not the girl who made our lives colourful.’”

Malala’s ear specialist Richard Irving thinks that in those early weeks, she was troubled by her new appearance. “She was very reluctant initially to speak, she preferred to be photographed from the good side,” he says.

“I think it probably did have an emotional impact on her, which she didn’t really voice to anyone, but it’s very easy to understand in a 15-year-old.”

After tests and scans, Irving’s view was that the facial nerve was unlikely to repair itself, but without surgery, he couldn’t be sure exactly what state it was in. The procedure would be a lengthy one, and this time Malala was herself able to weigh up the risks.

“She was in control,” Irving says. “She would take advice from her father but she was making the decisions. She took a great interest in her medical care and didn’t leave it to someone else.”

During a 10-hour operation last November, he discovered that Malala’s facial nerve had been entirely severed by the bullet and that a 2cm section of it was missing.

For any movement to return to her face, the two ends of the nerve would have to be re-attached, but the missing section made it impossible to do this along the original route.
Instead, Irving decided to expose the nerve and re-route it so it travelled a shorter distance.

In February this year, a further operation replaced the skull section removed by the surgeons in Pakistan, with a titanium plate.

A cochlear implant was also inserted into Malala’s left ear to correct damage to her hearing caused by the bullet. No further surgery is said to be required - her face should continue to improve over time, with the help of physiotherapy.

On 12 July, nine months after the shooting, came a major milestone - Malala stood up at the UN headquarters in New York and addressed a specially convened youth assembly. It was her 16th birthday and her speech was broadcast around the world.

“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world,” she said.

How did it feel to speak in public once again - this time on a bigger stage than she could ever have imagined?

“When I looked at 400 youth and people from more than 100 countries... I said that I am not only talking to the people of America and the other countries, I am talking to every person in the world,” she says.

Ziauddin Yousafzai remembers it as the biggest day of his life. For him, Malala’s speech was an assault on negative perceptions of Pashtuns, of Pakistanis and of Muslims.

“She was holding the lamp of hope and telling the world - we are not terrorists, we are peaceful, we love education.”

Malala was introduced to the audience in New York that day by former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the UN’s special envoy on global education.
He has no doubt about her power to focus attention on the bigger picture of nearly 60 million out-of-school children around the world. “Because of Malala,” he says, “there is a public understanding that something is wrong and has got to be done.” There is even speculation she could be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The life of Malala
- 1997: Born in Swat Valley, Pakistan

- 2009: Wrote anonymous BBC blog about life under the Taliban

- 2009-10: Identity revealed in TV interviews and a documentary

- 2011: International Children’s Peace Prize nominee

- 2012: Shot in assassination attempt by Taliban

- 2013: Nobel Peace Prize nominee, named one of Time magazine’s most influential people

The girl from Swat has gone global, but she believes she will return home to Pakistan. Few would advise her to do that anytime soon. There are still fears for her security and also criticism that she attracts too much attention, especially in the West. But she seems sanguine about any criticism. “It’s their right to express their feelings, and it’s my right to say what I want. I want to do something for education, that’s my only desire.”

The danger for Malala is that the more time she spends away from Pakistan, the less she will be seen at home as a true Pakistani, and the more she will be identified with the West. But she has little time for distinctions between East and West.

“Education is education,” she says. “If I am learning to be a doctor would there be an eastern stethoscope or a western stethoscope, would there be an eastern thermometer or a western thermometer?”
Still only 16, she has to balance being the world’s most high-profile educational campaigner, in demand around the world, with the completion of her own schooling.

“I am still the old Malala. I still try to live normally but yes, my life has changed a lot,” she tells me.

There are moments when she misses her old anonymity, but says it’s “human nature” to want what you don’t have.

She is an extraordinary young woman, wise beyond her years, sensible, sensitive and focused. She has experienced the worst of humanity, and the best of humanity - both from the medics who cared for her and the messages from many thousands of well-wishers.

I find one of those well-wishers in her own street in Swat, just outside the home that she never made it back to, on the afternoon she was shot. He is a young man called Farhanullah and he says the Taliban have blighted his life, destroying Swat’s economic, social and educational fabric. Malala was “Pakistan’s daughter”, he says. “We should be proud that she has made such a big sacrifice for Pakistan.” I ask if he would like to send a message to Malala. Yes, he says. “She should continue her struggle. We are all with her.”

The voice of the girl whom the Taliban tried to silence a year ago has been amplified beyond what anyone could have thought possible. When I ask her what she thinks the militants achieved that day, she smiles.

“I think they may be regretting that they shot Malala,” she says. “Now she is heard in every corner of the world.”

7 October 2013
Fifty years have passed since campaigners overturned a ban on ethnic minorities working on Bristol’s buses. Today the boycott is largely forgotten - but it was a milestone in achieving equality.

A spring afternoon in 1963. Eighteen-year-old Guy Bailey arrived on time for his job interview. Bailey was well qualified for the post, but he would not be taken on. Because he was black.

He strolled up to the front desk. He told the receptionist why he was there. She looked up at him. “I don’t think so,” she said.

Bailey thought she must be mistaken. “The name is Mr Bailey,” he told her.

The receptionist stood and went to the manager’s office. Bailey heard her call through his door: “Your two o’clock appointment is here, and he’s black.”

The manager shouted back from inside his room: “Tell him the vacancies are full.”

Bailey protested. There was an advert for applicants in the local paper only the day before. Just an hour ago, his friend had rung the same office and been told there were plenty of jobs.

“There’s no point having an interview,” said the manager, still in his office, refusing to come out and meet Bailey’s eyes. “We don’t employ black people.”

Encounters of this sort were then familiar in many parts of the world. The newspapers were full of stories about the struggle against segregation in the deep south of the US and the fight
against apartheid in South Africa. But this wasn’t Alabama or Mississippi. This wasn’t Johannesburg or Pretoria. This was Bristol, in England, in 1963.

The manager who refused Bailey a job was acting entirely within his rights. Half a century ago it was legal in the UK to discriminate against someone because of the colour of their skin.

At the state-owned Bristol Omnibus Company, run by the local council, the “colour bar” was an open secret. Despite the presence of an established Caribbean community in the city, no non-white driver or conductor had ever been employed on the network.

The company’s management acted with the connivance of the local branch of the trade union that represented bus crews.

These were the days when workplace unrest was common, but on this issue both sides of the industrial divide stood together against integration.

But Bailey’s unsuccessful interview marked a turning point. Members of the local black community, supported by many of their white neighbours, led a boycott of the network in protest.

Quite consciously, the campaigners imitated the non-violent anti-racist crusade of Martin Luther King and other American advocates of racial tolerance.

The Bristol boycott was to prove a watershed moment. The campaigners maintain that their efforts directly led to the UK’s first ever laws against race-based discrimination.

Today, outside Bristol, the story of the bus boycott is barely known. But to those who led it, this was the UK’s own version of the civil rights movement that shook the American south.

In 1960, Bristol’s Caribbean community numbered about 3,000. Most had arrived from the Caribbean after World War II. The
1948 British Nationality Act meant they had British passports with full rights of entry and settlement to the UK. Many had served Queen and country. Nearly all, like Bailey, had been schooled under the British education system. And at a time of virtually full employment, employers like London Transport and the National Health Service had actively sought their labour.

But the reception they received from their fellow British subjects was frequently less than welcoming. Bailey recalls his shock, not long after he came to Bristol in 1961, when he was chased by gangs of Teddy Boys wielding bicycle chains, their blows landing on the back of his head as he ran.

For a young man raised in Jamaica by a fervently monarchist British Army veteran father, this went against everything he had been brought up to expect of the place he knew as the “mother country”.

“Bristol was a very cold city,” recalls Bailey of his early years in the UK, “both in terms of the weather and the people.” Fearful of physical attacks, the black community was largely confined to the deprived St Paul’s area.
The few boarding houses prepared to rent rooms to non-whites charged a premium. Some others displayed signs in the window reading: “No Irish, no blacks, no dogs.”

“You couldn’t go into pubs in Bristol on your own, not if you were black,” remembers Roy Hackett, who emigrated to the UK in 1952.

“You’d get a hiding. You had to go in two or three at a time. There were shops that wouldn’t serve us. Ninety per cent of us, if we had been able to go back we would have. If I’d had £35, I would have done it.”

Hackett knew from bitter experience that the “colour bar” existed in employment. When he went for one labouring job, he was told the company did not employ “Africans”. Hackett protested that he was Jamaican - if he was going to be discriminated against, the least they could do was get his nationality right. In 1962, his wife Ena applied for a job as a bus conductor. She was turned down despite meeting all the requirements of the post. Everyone assumed her colour was the disqualifying factor.

At the time, there was no Race Relations Act, and employers could not be prosecuted for discriminating on racist grounds. Newcomers from the Caribbean encountered prejudice when applying for work in other towns and cities, too.

But even in the early 1960s, Bristol’s race bar on the buses stood out. Non-white drivers and conductors were a familiar sight across much of the UK. Just 12 miles away in Bath, black crews were working on buses. London Transport recruitment officers had travelled to Barbados specifically to invite workers to come to the capital.

To the black community, the history of Bristol - a one-time major slave port, which still had multiple streets and landmarks named after the slave trader Edward Colston - loomed large.
Hackett had had enough. Along with several other St Paul’s residents he formed a group called the West Indian Development Council to lobby for rights.

The group was galvanised by the arrival in Bristol in 1962 of a young man called Paul Stephenson. The son of an African father and a white British mother, Stephenson had been brought up in Essex before National Service in the RAF and a social work degree in Birmingham.

Unlike the older immigrants who had served as de facto representatives of black Bristol, Stephenson did not fear rocking the boat and had no interest in effecting gradual change. He was bold, pushy and wanted equality there and then.

Stephenson was employed as a youth officer. But what really motivated him was racial injustice and the inspiration of the US civil rights movement.

In particular, he recalled the year-long bus boycott in the city of Montgomery, Alabama, launched after one African-American woman famously refused to take the seats reserved for black passengers.

“I had seen Rosa Parks - her defiant struggle against sitting at the back of the bus,” he remembers.

Stephenson had an idea. At first no-one admitted that black people were banned from working on Bristol’s bus crews.

Anyone who was even vaguely acquainted with the service, however, was aware that no non-white person would ever be seen behind the wheels of its fleet.

The cover was broken in 1961 when the local newspaper, the Bristol Evening Post, ran a series of articles alleging the existence of the “colour bar”.
Ian Patey, the general manager of the Bristol Omnibus Company, told the paper that it did employ a few non-whites “in the garage but this was labouring work in which capacity most employers were prepared to accept them”. In other words, he would not tolerate them working as drivers or conductors.

Patey made his position more explicit before a meeting of Bristol’s Joint Transport Committee in March 1962. He told members there was “factual evidence” that the presence of black crews would downgrade the job and drive existing staff away. The committee voted not to overturn his policy.

But it was not only management which took this attitude. According to at least one account, in 1955 the Passenger Group (which represented drivers and conductors) of Bristol’s Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) passed a resolution that black workers should not be employed as bus crews.

The union operated a closed shop on Bristol’s buses - no-one could be employed on the service unless they belonged to and were approved by the TGWU. Unlike management, however, the TGWU did not acknowledge at the time that discrimination represented branch policy.

Indeed, the union - then the UK’s largest, with more than a million members - was at least in theory committed to anti-racism. Its national leaders spoke out against apartheid in South Africa. In Bristol, hundreds of black employees at the city’s Fry’s chocolate factory belonged to the TGWU. So too - in the days when a union card was often essential to get work - did Bailey, Hackett and Stephenson.

There were even black TGWU members within the Bristol Omnibus Company. At the same time that the Passenger Group voted to exclude black workers, the maintenance section - which represented the garages - appears to have voted to take on non-white members in the garages.
But those who worked for the company were all too aware that black employees were not welcome on board once the buses left the station.

“I knew it was going on,” says Steve Bishop (not his real name), who worked both as a conductor and a driver in Bristol. “It was a colour bar.”

A young man with two small children to support, Bishop kept out of union politics. But he was aware of the mutterings in the canteen and the pubs after work.

If black workers were hired, he recalls, “everyone said there would be overtime cuts if not job losses”.

Bishop didn’t argue with them. He adds: “It wouldn’t stand the light of day now.”

As part of his youth worker duties, Stephenson had been teaching night classes to young people. One of his pupils was Guy Bailey.

Stephenson had decided the time had come to challenge the bus company’s race bar. Bailey, he judged, made an ideal “stalking horse” - well-spoken, educated, a cricket player, churchgoer and former Boy’s Brigade officer - and it would be difficult to justify refusing such an upstanding young gentleman a job.

For his part, Bailey was excited about the prospect of working on the buses. He had a steady job as a dispatch clerk in a garment warehouse, but the vehicles he saw rumbling through Bristol each day offered a more exciting career.

“I thought they were really unusual because I’d never seen them before I came here,” Bailey recalls. “I thought, I’d love to drive one of those things.” Driving sounded like a more exciting career than working behind a desk.

An advert had appeared in the Evening Post asking would-be conductors to call to arrange an interview. Bailey knew that
drivers had to serve an apprenticeship collecting tickets before they were allowed behind the wheel. Stephenson saw an opportunity to expose the racist hiring policy.

Fifty years on, the two men’s recollections differ as to just how aware Bailey was of the company’s discriminatory policies. Stephenson insists he warned the younger man not to get his hopes up. Bailey says he had no idea he didn’t stand a chance.

Both agree what happened next, however. One day in April 1963, Stephenson - who spoke with an Essex accent, and would not be identified from the other end of the phone line as black - called the company’s headquarters on Bailey’s behalf.

He said one of his night school pupils was keen to work as a conductor. Stephenson was told to send him along.

For his interview, Bailey wanted to look his best. His fashion role model was Simon Templar, the sharply dressed action hero played by Roger Moore in the TV serial The Saint.

“He used to dress quite nicely, he used to wear a blazer and grey trousers,” smiles Bailey. “So I had shirt and tie, blazer, grey trousers and I thought I was Simon Templar.”

It didn’t do Bailey any good. That night he turned up to his night class and told Stephenson that he had been refused the job because of his colour.

The older man had been expecting this. The campaign he had been planning was about to begin.

“Now was the time to take up the issue and do what Martin Luther King was doing,” he says.

It started with a press conference. The local media were invited to Stephenson’s St Paul’s flat and told what happened to Bailey at the bus company headquarters. Passionately denouncing the
“colour bar”, Stephenson urged a boycott of the service until the policy of discrimination was ended.

“I put the emphasis on the manager of the bus company to take responsibility,” he says.

To illustrate the parallels with the US, local photographers were invited to follow a young black man named Owen Henry on to a Bristol bus. Pointedly, Henry stood at the back.

The stunt caught the imagination of the newspapers. They contacted Patey, who confirmed explicitly once again that black people were not welcome to serve on his fleet.

“We don’t employ a mixed labour force as bus crews because we have found from observing other bus companies that the labour supply gets worse if the labour force is mixed,” Patey told the Evening Post.

In an editorial, the newspaper strongly condemned the policy. But it did not lay all of the blame on Patey and his management. The TGWU, it alleged, was not doing enough “to get the race virus out of the systems of their ranks and file”.

As the national as well as the local media began to take notice of the boycott, the focus was about to shift towards the drivers and conductors.

The bus crews and their union were caught off-guard by the boycott. For as long as most of the younger staff could remember, the absence of any black colleagues had been an unmistakable, if rarely acknowledged, fact.

“I never worked on the buses with black guys,” says Bishop, who had previously served quite happily alongside black colleagues in other workplaces. “I was a member of the union but I didn’t give it much thought - I wasn’t directly affected.
“I was always a union man. I remember being of the opinion - well, it’s the union, and they’re of the same mind.”

At first the TGWU’s regional secretary Ron Nethercott - at the time dubbed “the most powerful man in the West Country” by the local media - publicly declared that the crews would have no objection to black labour joining their ranks. He was soon contradicted by drivers and conductors who told the media they would refuse to serve alongside non-whites.

However, Nethercott, now aged 90, insists the bus workers were not motivated by colour prejudice but by a fear that their income would be eroded.

Basic wages on the buses were relatively low by Bristol standards. Before the war they had matched those of skilled workers at the city’s British Aerospace plant, but had since fallen behind.

To match the standards of living of their neighbours, bus crews invariably volunteered for overtime.

According to one ex-conductor, it was common to work from 04:30 or 05:00 each morning until midnight. Most aimed to clock in 100 hours a week, which would raise their take-home pay to £20 - just above the average weekly wage in the early 1960s.

To be guaranteed this much overtime, however, the bus crews’ rotas had to be understaffed.

At the same time, management had raised the prospect of “one-man operated buses” (OMOs), which required only one bus worker on board each vehicle to act both as driver and conductor. As a result, many felt their jobs were precarious. According to Nethercott, it was the threat of having their incomes diluted by a newly arrived pool of migrant labour that motivated the Passenger Group’s members to uphold the bar, not a case of racial prejudice.
“Wherever they they came from, Europe, China, Alaska, it made no difference,” he says.

“The busmen would have still resented it because they were taking away their overtime. Their wages were so damn low that they depended on overtime to make a living.”

Not everyone agrees that the crews were entirely motivated by economic concerns, however.

Tony Fear began working as a “strapper”, or a new conductor, at the start of 1961 aged 18. Having served in the Territorial Army he had a number of black friends, and was shocked by what he considered outright racism on the part of his new colleagues.

“The worst were the conductresses, I have to say,” Fear recalls.

“They were terrible. They’d say a black conductor would eventually become a driver, therefore they’d have to work with a black driver, and the things they could do at the end of the journey, you know? It was terrible. They thought they were wide open to rape. They believed that.”

As for male bus crews, the older staff - men in their 40s and 50s who had typically served alongside Commonwealth regiments in WWII - tended not to have a problem with the prospect of black colleagues, according to Fear. It was their younger counterparts who were more likely to be bigoted.

“Where did that prejudice come from in that generation, people in their 20s and 30s? I was saddened by it,” recalls Fear.

As voices from outside the depot were raised in opposition to discrimination at the company, Fear voiced his support for Bristol’s black community: “I was sympathetic and I wasn’t afraid to say so.” His colleagues listened to him respectfully, but few signalled their agreement.
For all that the union undoubtedly played its part in denying black workers jobs, however, Stephenson believes the ultimate blame for the discriminatory policies lay with the management for having set the terms of debate.

“The ordinary workers took their cue from the Bristol Omnibus Company,” he says. “The unions were more concerned about their economic situation. They thought the black workers were lower status and would bring about wage decreases - it was economic racism.

“Some of them were racist - they didn’t want to work with black people. But it was the management, it was the city council that was ultimately responsible.”

The boycott quickly gathered pace. Supporters refused to use the buses. Marches were held across the city. Depots were picketed.

Students at Bristol University - particularly those in radical groups like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination - swelled the ranks of the protests. Around a hundred of them marched on the TGWU’s offices.

High-profile politicians lent their support, too. Bristol South East MP Tony Benn - then known as Anthony Wedgwood Benn - declared he would “stay off the buses, even if I have to find a bike”.

Labour leader Harold Wilson, who would be elected prime minister the following year, told an anti-apartheid rally in London he was “glad that so many Bristolians are supporting the [boycott] campaign... we wish them every success”.

Sir Learie Constantine, the celebrated ex-West Indies cricketer who was High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago, publicly condemned the bus company. So too did diplomats from Jamaica and other Caribbean territories.
The media was lobbied tirelessly by the indefatigable Stephenson. Intrigued by the parallels with the American south, reporters from London headed west and made the comparison, to the embarrassment of Bristol’s civic leaders. They were not the only ones who found the attention uncomfortable.

“I was being bombarded or harassed or being set upon by the media,” says Bailey, who had a less effusive personality than Stephenson.

And yet as Stephenson predicted, Bailey’s quiet dignity made him an ideal figurehead. It wasn’t only outsiders who disapproved of his treatment. Public opinion in Bristol itself shifted in favour of the protesters.

In Montgomery, Alabama, the boycott had succeeded in part because African-Americans formed a large proportion of the bus operators’ customers. In Bristol their numbers were not so large.

Instead, the purpose of the British boycott was to generate propaganda - drawing parallels with US segregation and shaming the authorities - while causing as much disruption as possible.

Pickets of bus depots and routes were a key part of the strategy. Hackett organised blockades and sit-down protests at Fishponds Road in the north-east of Bristol to prevent buses getting through to the city centre.

“White women taking their kids to school or going to work would ask us what it was about,” Hackett says. “Later they came and joined us.”

Like King’s campaign, the methods were strictly non-violent. “I said to everyone, not one stick and not one stone.”

In fairness, he says, their opponents responded on the same basis: “They gave us a lot of harsh words but they never harassed us physically.”
By now, it was the bus crews who were bearing the brunt of the pressure. As the summer wore on, the TGWU in Bristol was increasingly isolated. Their erstwhile comrades in Bristol’s other unions were becoming hostile.

At a May Day rally organised by Bristol Trades Council, the bus workers were condemned from the platform while TGWU members were heckled and barracked by other unionists for bringing shame on the labour movement.

Passengers, too, were increasingly voicing their disapproval of the bus crews. “In those days the buses were so important that all they’d want to do was see a bus that they could get on,” recalls Fear. “I don’t think they cared who drove it or who conducted it.

“People were saying: ‘If it was a black driver we’d be on time.’ That didn’t help. Or: ‘Oh flipping heck, if you were a black conductor you’d know where I want to get off.’ That caused a lot of bad feeling, it really did.”

Nethercott was feeling embattled. Attacked by his own members for suggesting they would be prepared to work alongside black crews, he engaged in a public war of words with Stephenson which led to the union leader losing a libel action brought by the young activist.

An attempt to broker a compromise, with a black TGWU member signing a statement which called for “sensible and quiet compromise”, came to nothing.

“Everybody was scared of it,” complains Nethercott, still visibly aggrieved 50 years on. “The great problem around that time was that people lacked courage. They didn’t want to get involved. So it was left to the likes of me.”

It was clear something had to give. “I think the union realised they were losing the argument,” says Fear.
On 28 August 1963, 250,000 people marched on Washington DC to demand civil rights for African-Americans. At the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King stood before the crowd and delivered his famous “I have a dream” speech.

“From every mountainside,” King declared, “Let freedom ring.”

That same day was a momentous one for Bristol, too. On 28 August, Ian Patey declared a change in policy at the Bristol Omnibus Company. There would now be “complete integration” on the buses, “without regard to race, colour or creed”, Patey added.

The night before, a meeting of 500 TGWU bus workers had voted to agree to “the employment of suitable coloured workers as bus crews”. The boycott had succeeded. The colour bar was dead.

By mid-September Bristol had its first non-white bus conductor. Raghbir Singh, an Indian-born Sikh, had lived in Bristol since 1959. On his first day, he told the Western Daily Press he would wear a blue turban to work because it “goes with my uniform. If I wear a brown suit I have on a brown turban”. Further black and Asian bus crews quickly followed.

Guy Bailey was not among them. The rejection which he had experienced, and the campaign that followed him, had put him off the notion of working on the buses.

“I felt unwanted, I felt helpless, I felt the whole world had caved in around me. I didn’t think I would live through it,” he says. “But it was worth it.”

Those black and Asian crews might have expected a hostile reception but, says Tony Fear, the most bigoted conductors and drivers handed in their notice rather than work with non-whites. The impact of the boycott’s success was not only felt by those who gained jobs with the Bristol Bus Company. Stephenson believes the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, which banned
discrimination in public places and in employment, were brought in by Harold Wilson’s government to prevent a situation like that in Bristol occurring again.

“I met him at the House of Commons,” says Stephenson. “He made it quite clear he was going to do something against racism.”

Bailey, Hackett and Stephenson were all subsequently awarded the OBE for the part they played in the boycott. Their names may not be as recognisable to most Britons as those of King and Parks are to most Americans, but all remain quietly proud of their achievements.

Those who found themselves on the other side of the barricades feel differently. Tony Fear celebrated when the bar was lifted. Before this, he argued against discrimination with his fellow bus workers, but never went to any union meetings to state his case because he disagreed with the concept of the closed shop. Today, he wonders if he should have done more.

“When you get to my age, you think: ‘I should have said this, I should have stood up,’” he says.

Bishop, who now has two mixed-race grandchildren, kept quiet at the time, something he now regrets. “When I was a callow youth, I wasn’t much concerned about it,” he says. “But later I felt guilty about it. You get more aware of it as you get older.”

Their union eventually voiced its remorse, too. Unite, into which the TGWU merged in 2007, issued an apology in February 2013 for siding with management 50 years earlier. However obscure the dispute remains today, Britain’s post-colonial legacy was shaped by its contortions. It began in a bus company office, when a young man walked up to reception.

26 August 2013
Former Los Angeles police officer Christopher Dorner shocked the world when he took up arms against ex-colleagues and their families. After a nine-day manhunt, the college graduate was cornered and died in a remote cabin. What made him go bad remains hard to understand.

It ended as he surely knew it would - alone, besieged, a blaze consuming the walls around him.

After the fires subsided, his former comrades found the charred remains of Christopher Dorner, ex-police officer, US Navy veteran, college graduate and suspected mass killer.

A single bullet was lodged in his skull.

For nine days, he brought terror to southern California as he pursued a vendetta against his one-time colleagues in the Los Angeles Police Department and their families.

He is accused of murdering the daughter of an ex-LAPD captain and her fiance on 3 February and shooting dead an officer in cold blood. Three further police personnel were shot and wounded while he was on the loose, and another died in the final siege this week at the ski resort of Big Bear.

The United States has grown wearily accustomed to spree killings of late, but Dorner, 33, was no Jared Loughner, James Holmes or Adam Lanza - the mentally disturbed outsiders accused of the mass shootings at Tucson, Aurora and Newtown.

By contrast, he had once been an upstanding citizen, an athlete, a law enforcement officer and a decorated military veteran. He
was remembered by many of those who knew him as intelligent and sensitive. In a photo released by the police, he stands upright in uniform, smiling warmly against a backdrop of the American flag.

Somewhere along the line, Christopher Dorner’s life went dramatically awry.

His downward spiral appears to have begun in 2008, when he was dismissed from the LAPD on a charge of making false statements.

In a rambling 6,000-word manifesto he posted online as the rampage began, he unleashed his rage and bitterness at that decision five years ago - and at the racism he insisted remained rife in the force, two decades after the beating of black suspect Rodney King by white officers unleashed waves of rioting in Los Angeles.

What terrified those leading the hunt for Dorner was the lethal potential of a heavily-armed, 6ft (183cm) 19st (122kg) man, schooled in combat techniques, who had pledged to bring “unconventional and asymmetrical warfare those in the LAPD uniform”.

“Of course he knows what he’s doing,” Charlie Beck, the head of the LAPD, told reporters while Dorner remained at large. “We trained him.”

There are few clues to the demons that consumed the suspect on the quiet, affluent street in La Palma, Orange County, where he lived with his mother Nancy.

The Dorner home is an attractive, tasteful bungalow backing on to a park, set amidst a sun-bleached, middle-class California suburb. There are SUVs parked outside most properties along the road. Disneyland is 20 minutes’ drive away.
Neighbours, who occasionally saw Dorner lifting weights in the garage, recall that he would say hello to them as they passed by. Those who knew him closely speak of their bewilderment that the warm, personable man they remember was capable of such atrocities.

“It’s just shocking to me,” says James Usera, a 34-year-old lawyer, who was a good friend of Dorner’s at Southern Utah University, where both men played on the college’s American football team. “The person I knew was this smart, good man. He was honest and thoughtful, he had a lot of integrity - he was a really likeable guy.”

It was a mismatch that Dorner, even as he embarked on his rampage, was self-aware enough to recognise.

“I know most of you who personally know me are in disbelief to hear from media reports that I am suspected of committing such horrendous murders,” his manifesto begins.

“You are saying to yourself that this is completely out of character of the man you knew who always wore a smile.”

Dorner was born in New York State, it has been reported, and moved to California with his mother and sisters shortly afterwards. From an early age, he was made aware of LA’s often troubled racial dynamics.

In his manifesto, Dorner said African-Americans made up “less than 1%” of the population in the areas in which he grew up. He was the only black pupil in each of his classes at elementary school in the LA suburb of Norwalk, he added. He described getting into playground fights with pupils who racially abused him.

But he was no hoodlum. As he put it himself, pointedly, he was not an “aspiring rapper” nor a “gang member” nor a “dope dealer”. Instead, from an early age he appears to have settled on a career in law enforcement.
As a teenager in La Palma, he signed up with the local police department’s youth programme with a view to eventually becoming an officer.

“No-one grows up and wants to be a cop killer,” he wrote. “It was against everything I ever was.”

At university he was a well-liked figure, according to Usera. After graduating in 2001 with a degree in political science, Dorner enlisted in the US Navy.

There, he was trained in combat techniques and counter-terrorism. He was recognised as a skilled marksman, receiving commendations for his proficiency both with rifles and pistols.

In 2005 he applied to join the LAPD. He remained in the Naval Reserve, rising to the rank of Lieutenant and serving in Bahrain. His list of Navy decorations included the Iraq Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal and the Pistol Expert Medal.

In contrast to his experience with the military, however, his passage through the force’s academy was far from smooth.

In the manifesto Dorner said he was accused of punching another recruit, a charge he angrily denied. He was reportedly suspended for accidentally discharging a firearm and various accounts have suggested he frequently clashed with authority.

According to Ron Martinelli, a forensic criminologist and former police officer, the warning signs about Dorner’s temperament were visible from the very outset of his career.

“His personality process, in my opinion, did not fit with law enforcement,” he says. “You can’t seek to control others unless you are in control of yourself.”

“I’m very surprised he was even selected to be a police officer.”
But to Dorner, it was the LAPD rather than himself who was dysfunctional.

He wrote in the manifesto that he was racially abused by two fellow officers, and described their punishment - suspensions of 22 days - as a mere “slap on the wrist”. Dorner concluded that the force had “gotten worse” since the days of Rodney King beating and the widespread corruption exposed in the 1990s at the notorious Rampart Division.

What appears to have pushed him over the edge, however, was the incident that led to his dismissal.

In 2007 Dorner made an official complaint that, two weeks previously, his field training officer had kicked a mentally ill suspect in the head during an arrest.

An internal affairs investigation concluded that the kick had not occurred, however, and Dorner was charged with making false accusations.

At his disciplinary hearing in 2008, the father of the man allegedly assaulted testified that his son told him he had been kicked by an officer.

But the alleged victim had not said anything about this to a physician who inspected him immediately after the arrest, and three witnesses testified that they did not see any such attack. In between the alleged assault and Dorner’s complaint, the training officer had criticised his performance in an evaluation report.

The discipline board found that Dorner had lied and fired him - a setback he took extremely badly.

According to Usera, the verdict would have come as a huge psychological blow to a man who often talked about how much he valued his own sense of integrity.
“I don’t think this had as much to do with his career so much as his being called a liar,” Usera says. “Of course that doesn’t excuse what he did, but I think that’s what pushed him over the edge. You could call him whatever you want, just don’t call him a liar.”

Dorner spent the next few years battling to overturn his dismissal, to little avail. In 2010 a judge upheld the LAPD’s decision.

His personal life was unravelling, too.

An ex-girlfriend, Ariana Williams, with whom he had a relationship five years before his rampage, told CNN she left a warning on a website called dontdatehimgirl.com after they split, warning women to steer clear of him because of “the fluctuation of his behaviour, the swinging from the highs to the lows”.

According to CBS News, he was married for less than a month to a woman called April Carter.

As his rage at his mistreatment intensified, he grew ever more isolated, withdrawing from his friends. Usera says he had no contact with him after 2008.

The manifesto offers an insight into Dorner’s state of mind as his chances of vindication grew ever more remote.

In it, he claimed he had lost his relationship with his mother and his sister and was suffering from “severe depression”. He insisted he had been victimised by the LAPD for challenging a culture of lies, racism and excessive use of force.

Above all, he demanded absolution. “I want my name back, period,” he wrote. “There is no negotiation.”

The impression left by the document is of a well-informed, but disturbed mind. Thomas Jefferson and DH Lawrence were quoted in his defence. He expounded upon his tastes in popular culture as well as his views on society and politics.
He affirmed his support for a range of liberal and progressive causes including gay marriage, the right of women to serve in combat and - incongruously - gun control, including a ban on assault weapons.

Although he said his first choice for the White House in 2012 was the moderate Republican Jon Huntsman, he praised President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and the First Lady (“Off the record, I love your new bangs, Mrs Obama”), Colin Powell, Bill Clinton (“my favorite president”) and George HW Bush (“2nd favorite”).

He endorsed Hillary Clinton for the 2016 ballot and urged her to support Democratic Mayor of San Antonio Julian Castro as her running mate.

In addition, he hailed Piers Morgan, Ellen DeGeneres, Larry David, Chris Rock, Eddie Murphy, and the celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain. “Charlie Sheen,” Dorner declared, “you’re effin awesome.”

Take Five by Dave Brubeck was declared “the greatest piece of music ever, period”. He wrote that he regretted the fact that he “won’t be around to view and enjoy The Hangover III”.

These passages may have appeared ludicrous, but by the time Dorner posted them on the internet, no-one was laughing. The killing spree had begun.

The first victims, Monica Quan, 28, and Keith Lawrence, 27, were found shot dead in the parking lot of their apartment building in Irvine, California on 3 February. They had only recently announced their engagement.

Neither served with the LAPD. But Quan’s father Randall was a former captain in the force. He had represented Dorner at his disciplinary hearing, though inadequately, Dorner believed. In his worldview, this made the couple a legitimate target.
“I never had the opportunity to have a family of my own,” Dorner wrote in the manifesto. “I’m terminating yours.”

After the manifesto surfaced, authorities guarded some 50 families, several of them belonging to former police department colleagues, against whom Dorner had pledged vengeance in the manifesto.

Four days after the Irvine shootings, two officers assigned to protect an individual named in Dorner’s document were fired upon, injuring one of them.

Shortly afterwards, two police officers in Riverside were ambushed as they waited at a red light. One of them, 34-year-old Michael Cain, a father of two, was killed and the other was critically injured. The manhunt intensified. The police offered a reward of $1.2m (£773,500) for Dorner’s arrest and capture.

Around the same time, Dorner posted a package to CNN news anchor Anderson Cooper. It included a yellow Post-It note that read, “I never lied” affixed to a DVD, and a LAPD commemorative coin, wrapped in duct tape and inscribed with the legend “Thanks but no thanks, Will Bratton” - a reference to the reforming former LAPD chief. It was shot through with bullet holes.

After the discovery of the suspect’s burned-out Nissan Titan truck, the search moved to the area of Big Bear Lake, a ski resort 80 miles (130km) east of Los Angeles.

Dorner had been hiding out in a condominium, able to watch the manhunt, until the couple who owned it entered. He tied them up, stole their car and fled, but was eventually pursued to a cabin, where he made his last stand.

In his manifesto, he had insisted he wanted only to inflict revenge on law enforcement officers and their families, and, true to his perverse sense of integrity, he stuck to his word.
After a failed attempt to steal a boat in Point Loma on 7 February - presumably in a bid to head for Mexico - he let the owner live.

And he spared the lives of the condominium owners, leaving them bound and gagged, though they were able to reach a mobile phone to raise the alarm.

The LAPD let out a collective sigh of relief after the charred body in the cabin was identified as Dorner’s. But the suspect’s testimony may outlive him.

It’s possible the case will have reopened wounds dating back to the time of the Rodney King case, when the LAPD was widely regarded by the city’s minority communities as institutionally racist.

Under the 2002-2009 leadership of Chief William Bratton - with whom Dorner had once been photographed - the LAPD had focused on dispelling such perceptions, launching drives to hire minority officers and insisting that prejudice among officers would not be tolerated.

Nonetheless, Charlie Beck, Bratton’s replacement, felt compelled to announce during the manhunt that Dorner’s firing would be re-examined.

“I do this not to appease a murderer,” he said in a statement. “I do it to reassure the public that their police department is transparent and fair in all the things we do.”

It was not enough to satisfy sections of the community whose mistrust of the police persisted. Some declared Dorner a hero, creating Facebook pages with titles like “Christopher Dorner for President”.

Asked by the BBC whether Dorner’s claims would damage the relationship between the force and those it was meant to serve, an LAPD spokeswoman said Beck’s decision to re-open the
disciplinary case would ensure there was “no misunderstanding between the police and the community”.

Connie Rice, an African-American civil rights lawyer who helped broker reforms of the force after the 1992 riots, warns that Dorner’s rants should not be conflated with the legitimate grievances of a bygone age. “Today’s LAPD is not your father’s LAPD,” she insists.

However, according to Renford Reese, professor of political science at California State Polytechnic University, the folk hero status bestowed by some on Dorner reflects a lingering mistrust, the root causes of which the authorities have yet to address.

For this reason, he insists, it’s not enough simply to dismiss Dorner as crazy.

“Of course he’s a murderer, of course he did wrong, of course we grieve for the families,” Reese says.

“But he’s a product of our institutions - our education system, our military, our police. Somehow all these things converged to create a monster.”

Whether or not Dorner’s grudges were legitimate, it’s clear from his manifesto that they had consumed him long before he took cover for the last time in a lonely cabin.

As the flames rose around him and his erstwhile comrades closed in, he was left alone with the only enemy he had left to confront.

Himself.

16 February 2013
The US Navy Seal who went from Chris to Kristin
By Stuart Hughes
BBC News

Chris Beck spent 20 years as an elite US Navy Seal, often operating in secret behind enemy lines. But the highly decorated serviceman was always hiding a deeper, personal secret - since early childhood, he felt he was a female born into a male body. As a Navy Seal, Chris Beck’s world was tough, macho, sometimes violent. He took part in covert missions from the Pacific Ocean to the Middle East and fought alongside members of Britain’s SAS on the Shatt al-Arab waterway near Basra during the 2003 war in Iraq.

But in February, more than a year after retiring from the US Navy, he replaced the photograph on his LinkedIn profile with one of a tall brunette in a white blouse smiling in front of the Stars and Stripes and wrote “I am now taking off all my disguises and letting the world know my true identity as a woman.” Chris had become Kristin.

As she awaited the reaction from her former brothers-in-arms, Kristin knew there was no going back from her decision to go public. US Navy Seals are sent on some of the most difficult and dangerous military operations in the world. One of Kristin Beck’s former units, the US Naval Special Warfare Development Group - also known as Seal Team 6 - went on to carry out the mission that killed Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan in May 2011.

The Navy Seal code demands that fighters uphold the unwavering values of loyalty, integrity and trust. Kristin feared some fellow Seals would accuse her of dishonouring that code by coming out as transgender. While some did find the decision difficult to accept, the response was overwhelmingly positive. “A lot of them said ‘Kris - I really don’t understand what you’re going through but I know where you’ve been,’” she told the BBC.
“My Seal team brothers said, ‘you stood the watch in the field for 20 years and you did a great job. I don’t understand it one bit but I support you 100% and I hope I can learn more about this and see you at the next reunion.’”

Knowing the news would eventually spread beyond the tightly-knit Navy Seal community, Kristin decided to tell her story before someone else did. She co-wrote a book, Warrior Princess: A US Navy Seal’s Journey to Coming Out Transgender, with Anne Speckhard, a professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University in Washington DC.

It charts her childhood in a religious and socially conservative household, her attempts to suppress her gender identity by secretly buying and then discarding women’s clothes, and her two failed marriages.

“I was trying to live three lives,” Kristin says. “I had a secret life with my female identity, I had my secret life with the Seal teams and then I had my home life and what I would show my wife and children or parents and friends. “People would see snippets of the real me but for the most part nobody really got to know me.”

The rapid and aggressive tempo of special forces operations following the attacks of 11 September 2001, combined with an emotional life which she says was “totally squashed”, took its mental toll on Kristin and she developed post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She says that for years she dealt with the psychological impact of “so much death, so much pain” through “beer, motorcycles, more beer”.

Yet she says coming out as transgender has had a “dramatic impact” on her PTSD symptoms. “I’m not as angry and I sleep better just because I’m happier,” she says. “So many people have said, ‘Kris, for the first time in my life I’ve actually seen you smile.’”

The repeal of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy in 2011 ended the ban on openly gay men and women in the US military. That shift
doesn’t apply to transgender individuals, however, who can still be discharged if they are found out. Kristin Beck believes that policy could, and should, change. She proposes allowing transgender service personnel to undergo gender reassignment in a military setting in return for extending their time in uniform once the process is complete.

“It’s a human condition,” she says. “The military needs to get past gender and look at people like me as a person, not just as a male or female, and understand that I can still do a great job. I may not be able to do all the jobs I was doing before but I can do something else. I could be an intelligence analyst or a security officer at a checkpoint. “None of us are perfect. I’m not Conan the Barbarian and I’m not Barbie. We’re all different.”

Kristin says she would have preferred to go through her continuing gender transition in private, rather than in the glare of attention that has inevitably followed the publication of her book.

She says, however, that she is approaching her new role as an unofficial spokeswoman for the transgender community with the same “warrior spirit” - a sense of leadership and commitment to duty despite the odds - that defined her military career.
“I think I’ve saved some lives. I’ve had some heart-wrenching emails from people who are caught up in pain and prejudice and that does make it worthwhile,” she says. “I’ve also had emails from straight men who have said ‘thank you for your service for our country. I never understood what this was but now I do.’”

“Fear of the unknown is the biggest problem and I think reading my book has helped break down that fear for many people,” Beck says. “I’m not going to hurt anyone and I’m not contagious. I’m just me.”

31 July 2013

Pisces III: A dramatic underwater rescue
By Vanessa Barford
BBC News Magazine

Forty years ago two British sailors plunged almost 1,600ft into an abyss, 150 miles off Ireland, in a deep-sea submersible. Trapped in a 6ft-diameter steel ball for three days, the men had only 12 minutes of oxygen left when they were finally rescued.

The story of Pisces III, which made headlines at the time, is now largely forgotten. But on Wednesday 29 August 1973 former Royal Navy submariner Roger Chapman, then 28, and engineer Roger Mallinson, then 35, plunged to the bottom of the Atlantic ocean in an accident, sparking a 76-hour international rescue operation.

Here’s how the incident and rescue effort unfolded:

01:15 - Dive begins
Pilot Roger Chapman and senior pilot Roger Mallinson commenced a routine dive in Pisces III. The Canadian commercial submersible - working on a charter for the Post Office - was
laying transatlantic telephone cable on the seabed 150 miles south west of Cork.

“It took about 40 minutes to sink down to not far off 1,600ft (500m) and a bit faster to get back up,” says Chapman. “We’d do eight-hour shifts, going along the surface of the seabed at half a mile an hour, setting up pumps and jets which liquefied the mud, laying cable and making sure it was all covered. It was very slow, murky work.”

Mallinson says the poor visibility made the job tiring. “It was like driving down the motorway in thick fog and trying to follow a white line - you had to concentrate beyond belief. One pilot would have the controls for the sub in one hand and the manipulator - a mechanical hand, which would lift, twist, extend and move sideways - in the other, then we’d swap,” he says. “It was also uncomfortable. We had to kneel, with our heads by our knees.”

For Mallinson, the shift followed a 26 hour-stint without sleep. “A previous dive had damaged the manipulator so I worked through the day repairing it. I knew Pisces III inside out as I’d rebuilt it when it came over from Canada as a wreck,” he says.

By a stroke of luck, the engineer also decided to change the oxygen tank. “It was quite ample to run the dive, but for some reason I decided to change it to a full one, which was no mean physical feat as it was very heavy. I could have got into trouble for changing a half used bottle, but as it happens, if I hadn’t, we wouldn’t have lived.”

As well as laying cable, the pilots had to look after life support. Every 40 minutes they turned on a lithium hydroxide fan to soak up the carbon dioxide they breathed out and then fed in a small quantity of oxygen.

They also kept a video commentary during every dive for records.
09:18 - The accident
Pisces III was on the surface being recovered.

“We were waiting for the towline to be attached to lift us and take us back to the mother ship. There was lots of banging of ropes and shackles - as normal during the last phase of the operation - when suddenly we were hurtled backwards and sank rapidly. We were dangling upside down, then heaved up like a big dipper,” says Chapman.

The aft sphere - a smaller watertight sphere where the machinery was - had flooded when the hatch was pulled off. Suddenly the sub was over a tonne heavier. “As we sank my biggest worry was whether we were anywhere near the continental shelf because if we hit it we’d be crushed.”

Mallinson says the sub was jolting, with everything breaking loose, as they went down. “It was very frightening - like a stuka dive bomber with screaming motors and the pressure gauges spinning around.”

The pair shut the electrical systems and switched everything off so it was pitch black, dropping a 400lb (181kg) lead weight to make it lighter as they descended.

“It was about 30 seconds until we hit. We turned the depth gauge off at 500ft (152m) as it could have burst and got cushions and curled ourselves up to try and prevent injuries. We managed to find some white cloth to put in our mouths so we didn’t bite our tongues off too,” says Mallinson.

The sub hit the bottom - 1575ft (480m) - at 09:30.

Mallinson says his first thought was relief they were alive. He later learned it crashed at 40 mph (65 kmh).

“We weren’t injured but there was kit everywhere and we were hanging on to the pipe work. We just sat there with a torch.
Unbeknown to us we had hit a gully, so we’d half disappeared below the seabed,” says Chapman.

09:45 - Making contact
Pisces III made telephone contact, sending a message that they were both fine, morale was good and they were getting organised.

Early indications suggested oxygen supplies would last until early Saturday morning. The sub carried 72 hours of oxygen in case of an accident, but they’d already used eight hours on the dive. They had 66 hours left.

10:00-16:30 - Scrambling ships
The pilots spent the first few hours “getting sorted”, according to Chapman. “The submersible was almost upside down, we had to rearrange it, mend the kit and make sure nothing was leaking,” he says.

They decided if the oxygen was going to last, they needed to do very little. “If you switch off, you use one quarter of the oxygen. You don’t talk or move,” he says.

The two men lay as high up in the sub as possible above the foul, heavy air sitting at the bottom, according to Mallinson. The internal diameter of the crew sphere was just 6ft so the men had little space.

“We hardly spoke, just grabbing each other’s hand and giving it a squeeze to show we were alright. It was very cold - we were wet through. I wasn’t in the best condition anyway as I had just suffered three or four days food poisoning from a horrible meat and potato pie. But our job was to stay alive,” he says.

On the surface the rescue effort was under way.

Support ship Vickers Venturer, then in the North Sea, was contacted just after 10:30 and ordered to return its sister submersible Pisces II to the nearest port.
The Royal Navy’s HMS Hecate was sent to the scene with special ropes at 12:09 and RAF Nimrod aircraft flew overhead.

A US Navy submersible, CURV III - designed to pick up bombs from the sea - was sent from California and Canadian Coast Guard ship John Cabot departed from Swansea.

Thursday 30 August
Mother ship Vickers Voyager arrived in Cork at 08:00 to load Pisces II and Pisces V, which had arrived overnight by aircraft. The ship sailed from Cork at 10:30.

Meanwhile, Chapman and Mallinson watched supplies begin to dwindle.

The pair only had one cheese and chutney sandwich and one can of lemonade, but they didn’t want to eat or drink them, according to Chapman.

“We allowed the CO2 to build up a bit to conserve oxygen - we had egg timers to keep track of every 40 minutes, but we’d wait a bit longer. It made us a bit lethargic and drowsy.

“We also started thinking about our families. I’d just got married, so could focus on my wife June. But Roger Mallinson had four young kids and a wife, and he began to get a tiny bit distressed about how they were,” he says.

However Mallinson says one ship left the pilots a message which did “a hell of lot good”.

“We got a message from Queen Elizabeth, who sent her best wishes for our quick recovery - which was a real warmer. It’s amazing how bitterly cold you can feel, and then something happens that gets the adrenalin going, the heart rate up

“It turned out it was the Queen Elizabeth II, which had altered its course from America to stand station with us in response to
the mayday. But because it was so formal, we’d assumed it was the Queen. Then the message came ‘sorry boys, wrong lady’.

Friday 31 August
“Friday was a disaster from a surface point of view,” says Chapman.

First Pisces II was launched - with a special polypropylene rope attached to a “toggle” or collapsible snap hook - at 02:00, but the lifting rope tore from the manipulator because of its buoyancy, so it had to return to the mother ship for repairs.

Then Pisces V - launched again with a polypropylene line attached to a toggle - managed to make it to the seabed but couldn’t find the stricken Pisces III before it ran out of power. It returned to the surface and later tried again.

“It was nearly 1pm before Pisces V found us. It was amazingly encouraging to know someone knew where we were. But when Pisces V tried to attach a snap hook the attempt failed because of the buoyancy of the rope,” says Chapman.

Pisces V was ordered to stay with Pisces III, despite the fact it couldn’t lift it. Pisces II descended again, but had to resurface after it got water in its own sphere.

Then CURV III - which had arrived with the John Cabot at about 17:30 - had an electrical fault so was unable to launch.

“By midnight on Friday we only had Pisces V out of almost everything, and two broken submersibles,” says Chapman.

“Then Pisces V was ordered to the surface just after midnight, which was a bit of a blow. It was like we were back to square one with no-one around. Our 72 hours of oxygen was up, we were running out of lithium hydroxide to scrub the CO2, it was very manky and cold and we were almost resigned to thinking it wasn’t going to happen.”
Mallinson agrees that hope was fading. He says one thing that helped him was the presence of dolphins. “We’d seen them on the 28th, and even though we couldn’t see them, I could hear them on the underwater telephone for the entire three days. That gave me a lot of pleasure,” he says.

**Saturday 1 September 04:02 - Getting a line**
Pisces II was launched again with a specially designed toggle and another polypropylene line.

“Just after 5am it had a line on us, on the aft sphere - they knew we were still alive,” says Chapman. “Then at 09:40 CURV III came down and fixed another line, with the toggle inserted in the aft sphere opening. We were wondering what was going on, why we weren’t being lifted.”

Chapman says it was at this point - when the pilots knew the line was attached - that they had the can of lemonade and sandwich.

But Mallinson says he didn’t feel confident the lift would work. “The aft sphere wasn’t the strong point - we were in the fore sphere, and I was very annoyed we weren’t being lifted by that. I thought it was the wrong decision.

“I think at that point if they’d asked either of us if we wanted to be left or lifted we’d both have said ‘leave us alone’ - the recovery was so terrifying and the chances of getting up next to none,” he says.

**10:50 - The lift**
Lifting of Pisces III started. “As soon as we got off the sea bed it was very rough, very disorientating,” says Chapman.

The lift was stopped twice during ascent. Once at 350ft, for CURV to be disentangled, and a second time at 100ft, so that divers could attach heavier lift lines. “We were thrashing and rocking about so they needed to get more ropes, so they could all be heaved together,” says Mallinson.
13:17 - Clearing the water
Pisces III was dragged clear of the water.

“Apparently they thought we’d died when they looked at us, it had been so violent,” says Chapman. “When they opened the hatch and fresh air and sunlight rushed in it gave us blinding headaches, but we were sorted, we were euphoric. But we were also a bit pathetic. It was quite difficult to climb out of the sub, we’d been so cramped up, we could hardly move.”

In fact Mallinson says it took a good 30 minutes to open the hatch. “It had been jammed shut and wouldn’t open upside down. When it did open, it went off like a gun, we could just smell salty sea air,” he says.

The pilots had been in Pisces III for 84 hours and 30 minutes when they were finally rescued. “We had 72 hours of life support when we started the dive so we managed to eke out a further 12.5 hours. When we looked in the cylinder, we had 12 minutes of oxygen left,” says Chapman.

The aftermath
The rescue attempt captured the imagination of the media and the public.

Shortly after the rescue, Roger Chapman left Vickers and formed the company Rumic, providing subsea services and operations to the offshore and defence industries. He has become a leading authority on rescue submersibles, being mobilised to the sinking of the Kursk on behalf of the Royal Navy in 2000, and playing a central role in successfully rescuing the seven-man crew of Russian submarine AS-28 Priz in 2005. Rumic was acquired by James Fisher and Sons the following year, and is now known as James Fisher Defence.

Meanwhile Mallinson, 75, who lives in the Lake District, carried on working for the same company in submersibles until 1978.
He’s now heavily involved in restoring steam engines, receiving a Lifetime Achievement award from Prince Michael of Kent for his involvement with The Shamrock Trust, in Windermere, in 2013.

The two men still keep in touch, meeting up every year.

While Chapman’s brush with death has influenced his career, the 68-year-old says it hasn’t had many other repercussions. “I’m a bit more reluctant to go in a lift - I think it’s the up and down - but that’s the only thing that physically worries me,” he says.

Mallinson says if the submersible went down again, he “wouldn’t do anything differently”.

“Roger Chapman is a great lad. Somebody else might have panicked. If I could have chosen anyone to go down with it would have been him,” he says.

Now their ordeal is set to be made into a film.

29 August 2013

Escape from Alcatraz: My swim back to life

In 2008 Gavin Maitland underwent a life-saving double lung transplant. Five years later he swam from Alcatraz Island to San Francisco accompanied by his son and daughter - a feat that mirrored his journey back from the brink of death.

Zander’s whole body briefly submerged out of sight as he jumped from the rear of the boat. As his head suddenly resurfaced, I could see the look of shock across his face. “Ahee, the water’s cold!” he spluttered. Splash! My daughter, Riley, hit the water a split second later, and she too surfaced with a look of horror on her face.
I had jumped from the boat moments before, and turned around to face them, treading water as I watched them join me in the icy waters of San Francisco Bay.

“Dad, dad, stay with me,” Riley cried, as she frantically oriented herself in the water.

“It’s OK, guys,” I said, looking at their alarmed faces. “You’ll get used to it in a few minutes.” I hoped I sounded reassuring, but I too was surprised by the sudden surge of cold.

We were among a group of 10 swimmers braving the swirling waters and strong currents of the San Francisco Bay on a one-and-a-half mile (2.4km) open-water swim from the notorious Alcatraz Island to the mainland.

It was 08:11 on Sunday 12 May 2013.

We turned and started swimming. The jagged assortment of buildings that made up the San Francisco skyline seemed so far away from our low vantage point. I could feel the cold water ripping across my face and hands.

Any initial uncertainty felt by Zander and Riley quickly disappeared. They were both swimming as hard as they could toward the distant shoreline with Mark, our kayaker guide, hovering reassuringly next to us.

Zander and Riley began steadily pulling away from me. I switched to breaststroke to catch my breath, then forced myself back into front crawl. As soon as I caught up, they sped off towards the shore again. Mark paddled after them, turning around to me frequently. “Everything OK? Heart feeling strong? Breathing feeling good?” he asked.

I nodded. Everything was fine. My breathing was heavier than I had anticipated, with the freezing water encasing my body, adding to the exertion of swimming and the restrictions of my wetsuit.
But I felt physically strong and, most importantly, spiritually indefatigable.

“I want to swim from Alcatraz to celebrate my fifth anniversary,” I announced at dinner one Sunday evening last October.

My wife, Julie, rolled her eyes. She said nothing, but I could almost hear what she was thinking: Oh great, another of his crazy ideas. Zander and Riley looked up at me. They did not say anything either.

The anniversary I was referring to was the five-year mark since my bilateral lung transplant on 14 March 2008. Lung transplantation is an incredibly complex procedure, and patients are typically judged on their post-operation survival at various stages - one year, three years, and five years.

Outcomes for lung recipients are the worst of all transplanted solid organs. It was a significant achievement to reach the five-year milestone, and I wanted to mark it with something special.

Water has always had a strong allure for me. I have always enjoyed swimming, in whatever lakes, ponds or oceans I can find.

The previous summer, one of Zander and Riley’s swimming coaches had mentioned that she had competed in “the Alcatraz swim” a few years before. The Alcatraz swim? That really captured my imagination.

I did some research online and found that there were several companies that organised swimming expeditions and races. In my mind, it was conclusive - the open-water swim from Alcatraz would be the perfect way to celebrate my fifth anniversary.

“Think I can do it?” I asked to break the silence. “It’s not too far, just over a mile.”

“Sure,” Zander said cautiously. “But I want to do it too.”
“You too?” I said, somewhat surprised. “But you’re only 13. The water will be really cold, you know. Cold, with waves, currents - maybe sharks.”

“Sharks?” I had Riley’s attention now. She paused for a moment, deep in thought. Then she said carefully, “If Zander’s doing it, can I do it too?”

“Rye,” I reasoned, suddenly nervous. “You don’t even like the waves. The water’s really cold, and it’s a long way in the open water.” Both Zander and Riley were very strong, competitive swimmers, but most of their experience had been in heated 25m swimming pools, with lifeguards and lane ropes.

“But you just said it’s only a mile,” she fired back with a hard stare. Her logic was incontrovertible. “I want to do it!”

“Yes, but Rye, you’re only 11.” I could feel my defences crumbling.

“I want to do it. With you and Zander,” she confirmed emphatically. It was not a question any more. “OK,” I said, resignedly. I knew when I was beaten. “I’ll look into it.”

When I went online, I found a San Francisco-based swim expeditions group, so I got in touch and asked for more details. Initially, I wanted to swim in March, exactly five years after my transplant, but Leslie, the group’s founder, advised us to wait until May, when the water would be several degrees warmer.

“How old are your kids?” she asked.

“Thirteen and 11.” Their ages sounded young even as I said them. “They’re really good swimmers, though,” I added.

“What’s their experience swimming in open water?” She sounded hesitant. Truthfully, none of us had a very convincing open-water swimming pedigree. Instead, I settled on telling her: “Living in Colorado, there’s not so many opportunities for ocean swimming.
However, they’ve both swum in lakes during triathlons, they train in a pool several times a week,” I paused. “And they’re pretty tough kids.” Leslie seemed satisfied.

“Take a look at the training plans on the website for a preparation guide,” she suggested.

The Alcatraz training plan set out a gradual build-up of distances, starting with three swims per week of around 20 or 30 minutes each, and steadily increasing distance and intensity.

So we started training. Zander and Riley were already on a swim team, and had regular practices. I took the opportunity to swim too while they were in the pool, and I easily chalked up 1.6km (one mile) in an hour.

As the weeks went on, I trained diligently, enjoying the excuse to be in the water almost every day. I swam this way from January until April, and felt confident that I was in reasonably good condition for the challenge.
The day of the swim started early. Zander, Riley, Julie and I rose at 06:00 in our hotel room in San Francisco, wide awake with anticipation. We had flown in the day before from our home in Boulder, Colorado. Our wetsuits were neatly laid out in the room, and we pulled them on as we wolfed down mouthfuls of omelettes and toast.

With jackets, hats and bags full of dry clothes ready, we left the hotel room and hailed a taxi. We were the first ones at the meeting point, looking out across the calm waters of San Francisco bay as the sun came up.

I put my pack against a tree, stretched briefly, and started a warm-up run along the walkway next to the sandy beach. With my new, transplanted lungs, it takes me longer than most people to open the small airways so oxygen can flow more easily.

I reached the end of the walkway, turned around and ran back, striding faster and faster as I neared the end.

I slowed down and stopped, panting heavily.

“Hi, I’m Mark,” said a man with an outstretched hand. “I’m your kayaker this morning.” He was in his early 50s, with shorn hair, sparkling eyes and a wide grin.

I introduced him to Julie, Zander and Riley. He told me he had done the crossing dozens of times, that that we just needed to follow his directions, and we would easily make it to shore.

I checked my watch. Drug time. I had carefully adjusted my morning dose of Prograf, the immunosuppressant drug I take twice a day, exactly 12 hours apart.

I pulled out my tiny box of pills, and gulped down three capsules. In the few months after my lung transplant, I often resented having to comply with a strict drug regimen that is a life-saving necessity for all organ transplant recipients.
Now, five years on, I gulped them down with the enthusiasm of a labrador devouring his breakfast, wholly appreciative of the vital role they play in keeping me healthy and alive.

There were 10 swimmers on the grassy slope at 07:15 that morning. I stood with the others, suited up and eager with anticipation, Zander and Riley on either side of me.

“You have all been assigned to your kayaks, so ensure you stay close at all times, and please stay within 25 yards of each other as you swim,” Leslie reminded us.

“You will be swimming across two rivers, one flowing from the Golden Gate Bridge from west to east. Once you cross that, there is a second river flowing in the opposite direction from east to west. So watch the currents and keep sight of your target building on the skyline.”

We walked together around the walkway and on to the 30ft (9m) support boat that would take us out to the island. Within minutes of casting off, we were motoring out towards the mesmerising, forbidding island of Alcatraz.

Alcatraz, the small island often referred to as “The Rock”, was developed with facilities for a lighthouse, a military fortification, and, most famously, a prison from 1933 until 1963.

While several well-known criminals, such as Al Capone, served time on Alcatraz, most of the 1,500 prisoners incarcerated there were not high-profile.

During its 29 years as a prison, the penitentiary never logged any successful escapes. Potential escapees were either shot dead or assumed drowned in the frigid waters of San Francisco bay.

In 1962, three would-be escapees disappeared from their cells in one of the most intricate attempts ever devised - portrayed in the 1979 movie Escape from Alcatraz, starring Clint Eastwood.
Although no evidence was found that these famous prisoners died in their attempt, they are officially listed as “missing, presumed drowned”.

As the support boat pulled up alongside the island, I looked back at the San Francisco skyline. The proximity was striking.

It has been said that prisoners on Alcatraz were often tantalised by the sounds of normal city life, maddeningly close just across the water but, at the same time, as good as a million miles away.

Was the shore really that close? I felt the rush of exhilaration as Leslie began instructing the swimmers to jump.

Exercise is strongly linked to recovery in lung transplant patients. After the operation, I exercised at least in line with the doctors’ recommendations, and often a lot more.

After 13 months with my new lungs, I competed in my first sprint-triathlon, consisting of a 750m swim, a 20km cycle ride and a 5km run.

Out of all the competitors, I placed dead last, but I didn’t care. Getting back to swimming was a natural progression in the process of recovery.

The three of us swam closely together for the first 20 minutes, alternating between front crawl and breaststroke. Mark continued to shout encouragement from the kayak.

Zander and Riley had quickly acclimatised to the cold water and began to enjoy the sensation of being tossed around in the water. I could see their bright green caps just in front of me and hear their high-pitched voices as they bantered back and forth.

I concentrated on my swimming, pulling slow steady strokes, and aimed for the buildings silhouetted on the skyline.
After half an hour, Zander and Riley were getting impatient.

“C’mon, dad!” they shouted as they waited for me to catch up. I would break into front crawl but as soon as I got to them, they would dart forward and leave me behind again.

I felt like a stage performer doing his best to entertain a restless audience, only to be mercilessly heckled.

“Wow,” I thought to myself. “They’re a tough crowd.”

Distances in open-water swimming are deceptive. For most of the time, it seems as if you are getting nowhere, as the scenery does not change.

You have to trust that you are still moving slowly and steadily through the water, closer and closer to dry land. The huge expanse of water can be mentally overpowering, especially if you dwell on how deep the water is beneath you and how endlessly it stretches on all sides.

Even so, there is something soothing and relaxing, even spiritual, about swimming in open water. The waves gently move you up and down, and you feel the silkiness of the water on your exposed skin.

A couple of times I flipped over and did a few strokes of backstroke. The sensation was amazing - all I could see was the expanse of sky above me. But I was unable to tell where I was heading, so after a few seconds I flipped back on to my front.

Out in the vastness of the San Francisco Bay that morning, I revelled in the energy of the ocean and the gift of breath that buoyed me on this adventure.

No-one knows why my lungs failed when I was 41. I am an unusual case. The pathologist at my transplanting hospital gave the disease a unpronounceable 43-letter name. “It’s some kind
of pulmonary fibrosis,” he said, “where the soft lung tissue becomes hard and useless.”

His official conclusion was: “We have no idea what caused your lung disease.”

A lifelong non-smoker and fitness enthusiast, I enjoyed perfect health up to my mid-30s. I swam and ran competitively in school and all the way through university. After graduating, I took up running 10km races, as well as half and full marathons.

The decline of my lungs began with a persistent, dry cough. At first I waved it away as an irritant, but it would not leave.

I consulted my general practitioner, who thought it may be asthma, but was not sure. Months passed and I consulted many different doctors, dissatisfied with their lack of diagnosis or treatment.

One specialist pulmonologist, looking up from a freshly-minted computed tomography (CAT) scan, admitted: “Honestly, I’m perplexed.”

Time went on, and my tolerance for exercise lessened, my breathing became more laboured, I was noticeably thinner and still no-one could tell what was wrong.

Five years after the cough began, Julie frantically drove me to the hospital one memorable Saturday morning after I lay down on the floor and could not get up.

I could read the concern on the faces of the hospital pulmonologists. The chest X-rays were a mass of white, my oxygen saturation level was below 90% and I could not stand on my own.

Over the next few weeks, a succession of bad news was broken to me. I was told that I only had six months to live and my only chance of survival was a bilateral lung transplant.
And then, after weeks of consultation, testing, appointments and procedures, a transplant physician at the hospital telephoned Julie and told her that they did not think I could survive the transplant procedure, so they did not want to accept me as patient any longer.

In the following three frenetic months, Julie researched, identified and contacted 17 different transplant hospitals across the country, and followed up tenaciously with phone calls and emails.

Amid an avalanche of rejections, one hospital eventually responded positively. Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, said, yes, we might be able to help, come on over.

I hurriedly arranged a one-way plane journey, and before long - carried by hope and in-flight oxygen - I was on a transplant waiting list.

Soon after, there followed the tragic death of a young man, the heart-wrenching decision of his family to donate his organs and the roller-coaster ride of logistics, 21st Century medical genius, raw emotion and arduous recovery that all goes together to make up an organ transplant.

Prior to the operation, I could only breathe in short, shallow gasps.

When I woke from the anaesthetic, I inhaled the most beautiful, deepest and longest breath that I could ever imagine. Despite the searing pain in my torso, I felt like standing up on my bed and cheering.

People often refer to lung transplant as a “second wind”, although transplant doctors emphasize that transplant is not a cure, but simply the exchange of one acute condition for another.

The current average survival period of a lung recipient in the US and Europe is five years.
Statistics say that the current 10-year survival rate of a lung transplant patient is 30%, meaning that only one out of every three patients will celebrate their 10th anniversary.

So how long will my second wind last? I honestly don’t know. Statistics undoubtedly tell a story, but it’s partial.

I know a man in his early 40s who is 10 years post-transplant and a woman in her mid-50s who is 17 years post-transplant.

My pulmonologist told me recently that he rated my health in the top 1% of his transplant patients. As a result, I remain optimistic that I will be around for quite some time yet.

As we neared the entrance to Aquatic Park, Zander and Riley surged forward with a new kayak escort while Mark kept his eye on me.

Cramp spread suddenly from my left leg to my right leg. Both legs locked and I knew I could not swim through it any more.

I needed drinking water in a few seconds or I would be contorted in agony.

I signalled to Mark that I needed some help. He was next to me in an instant. “Cramp!” was all I could grimace, as the pain shot through both legs. “Sorry,” I gasped. “I need to get out.”

“But you’re so close,” he shouted. The entrance to the Aquatic Park was only 200 yards (182m) away.

The support boat powered up next to me, and I grabbed the rail at the back and hauled myself on to the back of the boat. Julie thrust a bottle of water into my hand. “Drink!” she yelled.

I tilted my head back and drank the whole bottle in a continuous gulp. Almost instantaneously, the cramp that had hijacked and tormented the muscles in both my legs eased, then evaporated.
I pulled on my swim cap back on, adjusted my goggles, and jumped off the back of the boat again into the water. I had been out of the water for less than five minutes.

This time, in contrast to our initial entry, the water felt deliciously warm and welcoming.

By now, Zander and Riley were small dots in the distance, already on the beach. I swam determinedly towards the shore, focusing on the finish.

A giant sea lion turned lazily in the water about 20 yards (18m) in front of me, reminding me of the jokes we had made about sharks before the swim.

People often wrongly associate the San Francisco bay with shark attacks, and this supposed danger was a frequent comment from our friends on hearing about our proposed swim.

In reality, there have been no recorded shark attacks in the history of the bay. The myth probably originates with prison guards who would tell inmates that the waters were shark-infested to deter escape attempts.

The sandy shore was just in front of me. I tried to put my feet down, but it was still out of my depth. Two, three more strokes. I tried again, and I could feel the gritty bottom. I pulled forward, then stood up in the water and waded on to dry land.

I was struck by the silence and peace of this sunny Sunday morning. All of a sudden, I felt overwhelmed by a surge of energy, and I started to run across the beach towards my children, water gushing from my wetsuit.

I was shivering wildly, but did not feel cold. I was hugely elated. “Zander, Rye! Great job! You did it. We all did it!” I grabbed both of them and hugged them tightly. The swim had taken us just over an hour.
They let me hold them for a few moments.

“Dad!” Riley pulled back and looked up at me sternly. “Dad, next year...” she paused. “Next year, you’ll need to have your own kayak.”

“OK,” I said, grinning. “OK.”

Like I said before, tough crowd.

So where to go from here? Will we swim Alcatraz again next year?

Maybe. But perhaps there is another challenge to set our sights on? I read recently about another open-water swim that crosses the Dardanelles, a narrow strait in north-west Turkey, formerly known as the Hellespont.

The English poet, Lord Byron, famously swam it in 1810, the first swimmer to make the crossing in modern times, in honour of the Greek mythological figure, Leander. It looks like a great swim, only three miles (4.8km) across from Asia to Europe.

I wonder when it would be a good time to mention this to Julie?

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