



# WHO'S THE MAN?

A stranger's senseless act of bravado cost Andy Marshall his life, just 10 months after his cousin Scott Guy was gunned down at his farm gate. Andy's father, Alan, talks to Joanna Wane about Taken, a new initiative to remember the victims of violence – and challenge society to reframe what it means to be a man.

JOANNA WANE IS *NORTH & SOUTH*'S DEPUTY EDITOR. PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD BRIMER.

**S**ometimes there's a moment in your life that changes everything.

For Andy Marshall, that moment was captured on the security footage police seized from the beachside hotel where he fell from the second floor after being shoved with such force that he dislodged a window. The glass hit the ground below a split second before he did, shattering on the concrete footpath.

It was Mother's Day, 2011. Just a few hours earlier, Andy had been talking to his parents back in New Zealand and they'd settled on a date to come over and visit him in Perth. Originally headed for the UK, he'd stopped off in Australia and ended up staying, working as a roofer and playing drums in a local garage band, Rich Widow. He was 29. Tall, athletic, with an open, friendly manner. And single. So when a couple of young women at the hotel caught his eye, he decided to stop for a chat.

"Watching the CCTV footage is heart wrenching," says his father, Alan Marshall. "You feel like yelling, 'Don't do it, Andy. Don't do it!' He walks past these girls and looks over. You can see it going through his mind, 'Will I or won't I? Yes, I will...'"

What Andy didn't know was that the women had connections to a local bikie gang – or that former bouncer and gang associate Stefan Pahia Schmidt would take exception to an outsider moving in on his patch. According to evidence later given at trial, Schmidt had been arguing with a mate over who was "the man" before he confronted Andy. "It was a real macho, testosterone-fuelled thing," says Marshall, who sat through the court hearings with his wife, Wendy, on one side and their daughter, Katie, on the other.



Alan Marshall with photos of Andy (left) and the family.

As Andy lay dying on the footpath, Schmidt fled. “Never again will you doubt me,” read the text he sent to his mate.

In Tauranga, Alan Marshall had just come out of a sales meeting when a call came through from the police in Western Australia. At first, the shock was so great it was impossible to process the news. “[The detective] said he’d spoken to Andy’s girlfriend, and I told him Andy didn’t have a girlfriend, so it couldn’t have been him. You’re just desperately trying to find a reason it’s *not* your son. But he told me he’d got his cellphone and pushed ‘Dad’. Then the worst call in the world was having to ring Wendy and hearing her collapse at the end of the phone. And the nightmare started.”

It took two weeks to bring Andy’s body home. Songs by the Foo Fighters, his favourite band, were played at his funeral. The next day, the couple flew to Perth to sort out their son’s affairs. “We hadn’t been over to see him in those two-and-a-half years,” says Marshall. “I know you’re not supposed to have regrets, but that’s one. Then, when we did go over, we were met at the airport by media. Cleaning out his flat, all his clothes, closing his bank accounts... it was devastating.”

Schmidt, who weighed 150kg, admitted pushing Andy, but claimed his death was an accident. In an almost inconceivable coincidence, he went on trial for murder in Perth as Ewen Macdonald faced a High Court jury in Wellington for the killing of Andy’s first cousin Scott Guy. The two boys had grown up together in Feilding; as a teenager, Andy worked on the Guy family farm. “Katie and Scotty were particularly close; his death really affected her,” says Marshall. “Then 10 months later, to the day, she lost a brother. To be touched twice... it was just beyond belief.”

Schmidt, who has New Zealand roots through his mother, was found guilty of murder, but the verdict was overturned on appeal. At his retrial last year, Schmidt was convicted of manslaughter. Again, Wendy and Alan were in court to bear witness for Andy, and also for Katie and Ben, the youngest of their three children.

“People say Andy was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don’t accept that. He was an innocent person doing nothing wrong. To me, it’s the offender who’s the wrong person in the wrong place.”

In May, the family made one last trip to Perth, for the unveiling of a plaque set into the footpath outside the hotel after a fundraising campaign, organised by the lead detective on the case, raised more than \$4000 to foot the bill. “My name is Andy Marshall,” the message reads, etched in bronze. “On 8 May 2011, 29 years of age, my life was ripped away. An act of senseless violence that has no place in this world. It’s a matter of choice. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Love is the greatest power of all.”

Finding the right words wasn’t easy. But Marshall hopes they’ll make people stop and think about the consequences of their actions – “that the heartache they create is irreversible. It can’t be undone.”

For the Marshalls, who now live in Napier, there’s no sense to be made of their son’s death but meaning to be found in his life. In the next few weeks, when they launch their online tribute site Taken, both Andy and Scott will be among those remembered. Created as a place where family and friends of murder victims can share photographs and memories, they hope Taken will also become a forum for debate over the causes and consequences of violence – and a catalyst for change.

**North & South:** Tell us about Taken.

**Alan Marshall:** It came from the whole process of Andy’s plaque and realising there was no public place for others to remember their loved ones taken through violence. That developed into Taken, not

only as a site to remember them, but also to support survivors of homicide and to generate the awareness to bring change.

One of the problems, and it’s symptomatic of the trauma that survivors experience, is you feel very isolated. Honestly, you feel like you’ve landed on a foreign planet. You’re navigating a landscape that’s completely alien. For months, even the first year or two, you’d be sitting in a cafe and everything going on around you is just noise. You hear people talking about their cat being sick, or the weather...

It’s like looking at life through a big sheet of plastic. There’s something on the other side, but it’s all cloudy and nothing makes sense. Hopefully by sharing their tributes, other people who have gone through this will know they’re not alone, and provide strength for others to do the same.

**N&S:** You also want to challenge the idea that violence is something that happens to “other people”?

**AM:** We want the impact to be quite confronting. This kind of violence affects all of us, even if you just read something in the paper or hear it on the news. It’s another death, another tragedy, that somehow affects our psyche. The closer you get to that epicentre, obviously the more devastating the effect is. And it’s a continual process through the generations. I think of little Olive [the oldest of their three grandchildren] being born and she hasn’t got an uncle. She comes to our place and looks at his photo and we tell her, “That’s Uncle Andy.” And the grandmothers, they’re absolutely devastated.

Every New Zealander plays a part in keeping our society safe. It’s the way we treat one another; it’s understanding the power of kindness. It’s also learning to speak up when you see someone who’s unsafe or needs support. Fifty per cent of homicides in New Zealand are related to family violence; that’s a massive issue. Home should be the safest place in the world. It’s the deadliest for many people, particularly children.

**N&S:** Is there something wrong in the way we’re raising our young boys to be men?

**AM:** There’s a disconnect between consequences and accountability; that whole bravado thing about proving yourself and being “the man”. Part of the problem is if [violence] becomes ingrained in the culture as an accepted way to handle things. People say Andy was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don’t accept that. He was an innocent person doing nothing wrong. These are our streets, our communities, and we need to make them safe. To me, it’s the offender who’s the wrong person in the wrong place.

**N&S:** How have you and Wendy coped with losing Andy?

**AM:** As a couple, it certainly puts pressure on you, but I don’t think we’d have got through without each other. We were both back at work three weeks later. In some ways, that was good, because it gave us something to concentrate on. But you’d just collapse at the drop of a hat. You feel pretty fragile for a long time.

We live in two worlds – the life we had before Andy died and the life since – and they are two very different worlds. Part of your recovery is learning not to filter everything through that experience and learning to build another life. But we’re not there yet, not by a long way. You go through a process every morning where you make the decision to face that day.

**N&S:** Did you feel you had to be strong and pull the family through?

**AM:** As the man, I probably didn’t cry as much [early on] – although I cried a lot after that. You keep up the façade that everything is all right, that you’re coping. That’s a big issue for us as Kiwi men, learning to be open and face our emotions. We tend to want to put them in a box somewhere and lock them away. But with that depth of grief, you just can’t afford to keep it in. Unless you deal with it somehow, it’ll get the better of you. I’ve learnt how important it is to talk.



“We’ve had people avoid us because they don’t know what to say. Or when they talk about Andy, they don’t use his name. But in a way, that’s like erasing him.”

Andy Marshall was 29 when he was killed while living in Perth.

**N&S:** That’s something we’re not always very good at, isn’t it?

**AM:** Death is a difficult subject to talk about, especially sudden death. We’ve had people avoid us because they don’t know what to say. Or when they talk about Andy, they don’t use his name. But in a way, that’s like erasing him. Now, if someone tells me they went to their dad’s funeral last week, I’ll ask, “What’s his name? How old was he?”

Because you’re traumatised, you do block people out. It’s hard to let them into your world. What cuts through is someone just acknowledging what’s happened, asking about your son, his name, what he did, giving you a hug. A couple of guys would text me regularly and say, “How’s it going? Are you okay? Want you to know we’re thinking of you...” Sometimes it’s just those simple things. You don’t want anyone to try and fix it, because no one can.

**N&S:** As a Christian, has it made you question your faith?

**AM:** You do feel shaken, absolutely, almost like God has abandoned you. But at the same time, to go through it without faith would be incomprehensible as well. We discovered a lot of the principles and values we’d built into our lives gave us incredible strength and resilience. On a human level, it does shake your faith in people. You lose a lot of trust

in those things. But you learn to draw strength from the spiritual side.

**N&S:** Tell us about Andy.

**AM:** A very cruisy lad. He slept 13 hours a night from when he was five weeks old till he was 13. After that, he almost never slept. We say he was asleep for the first part of his life and awake for the second half. That pretty much sums him up.

We were pastoring at a church in Feilding and he got involved in the youth band. We bought him a drum set and some earmuffs, and away he went. He was a lefthander, but started playing with his right; someone picked it up and switched him, and it just clicked straight away.

Sport was his other passion. [A left-arm bowler, Andy was selected for the under-19 Canterbury cricket team. He was also a multi-sport athlete and trained for his pilot’s licence, but gave it away after discovering he was colour blind.] We were never surprised when he came home and said he was doing this or that now. He just crammed everything into his life. We’re glad he did now, looking back. We’re glad he tried everything.

• *Taken has a Facebook page (search for “Taken Life Trust”), and the website – [www.taken.life](http://www.taken.life) – is due to be launched by the end of October. Email [team@taken.life](mailto:team@taken.life) to ask about creating a tribute for the site.* +