

the bank president, who authorized him to hand over the money. Cavosi and Edwards then drove with the money to the site where Edwards was supposed to meet the criminal, but the man never showed up. Instead, Edwards was taken to a park where a bomb squad arrived and removed the device from his neck. They concluded immediately that the bomb was fake.

The problems were not yet over for Edwards, though. The FBI suspected he had made up the entire incident, and as a result the bank fired him. Edwards countered by

suing the bank for racial discrimination and demanding restitution. Edwards spent the next five years under a cloud of suspicion, with most people believing he was a bank robber.

Then, in March 1993, the FBI arrested Earl Smith for armed bank robbery. When federal agents searched Smith's home they found masks and materials matching those used in the fake bomb of the 1988 bank robbery attempt. Smith admitted to perpetrating that crime. The reason he never arrived to pick up his money on that

occasion was because he spotted an FBI car at the meeting spot.

After Smith's trial, Edwards was officially cleared of suspicion. Merchants Bank reached an out-of-court settlement with Edwards in which he was given an undisclosed sum of money and was rehired. Although Edwards had his job back, he was unable to settle into his former position. His coworkers could not look him in the face after so many years of wrongly suspecting him, and Edwards himself found it difficult to face the people who had wronged him after so many years of loyal work.

In July 1994, Edwards resigned and left to study law in Little Rock, Arkansas. He decided to dedicate his life to defending wrongly-accused people like him.

After the 2003 incident in which pizza deliveryman Brian Wells was killed by a collar bomb that turned out to be genuine, Edwards was interviewed. He expressed his disappointment that Wells had been marked as a possible collaborator and bank robber. It reminded him strongly of how badly he himself had been misunderstood and mistreated. ■

The Collar Bomb Ransom Mystery

Moshe Miller

It sounded more like a best-selling thriller than a news story. Teenager Maddie Pulver was home alone when a man wearing a bright, rainbow-colored ski mask walked into her parents' \$12 million mansion and tied a black metal box around her neck that he said was a bomb, along with an extortion note. Police had few clues and only a limited amount of time to figure out if the box was a bomb and who the culprit was. ...

Young Madeleine "Maddie" Pulver was sitting alone at her desk, studying for her high-school graduation examinations. From her room she savored a breathtaking view of Sydney Harbour through the light-filled windows of her home in the exclusive Mosman neighborhood of

Sydney, Australia, where huge homes lined the leafy streets and luxury yachts were moored on the northern shores of the harbor.

Pulver enjoyed a privileged life with her parents and three brothers in the large, gorgeous home. Just the day before, the modern-style mansion designed with

Japanese influences overlooking the harbor had been featured on an Australian television program about architecture. The \$12 million house had been designed by her mother's first cousin and her parents were happy to allow their home to be shown off to promote the architect's reputation.

Maddie's millionaire father was the CEO of a large technology corporation, an international businessman with connections all over the world. Gossipers claimed he was one of the richest men in Australia. Her mother ran a renowned landscaping company that catered to society's elite. Maddie had many friends at Wenona, the prestigious all-girls



Maddie Pulver lived with her family in this \$12 million mansion in Sydney, featuring intriguing contemporary architecture with Japanese influences.



The home, with breathtaking views of Sydney Harbour, was featured on an architecture television program just the day before the incident. Here: Lounge room.

private school she attended for children of the super-rich. Today, like most of her friends, she was at home studying for her exams. What she did not realize was that unlike her friends, her life was about to change forever.

It was 2:30 PM on a typical Wednesday in early August 2011, winter season in Australia. Maddie's father was at work, her mother shopping. Two brothers were at school and the oldest one was on vacation. She was completely alone, but had left the front door unlocked...

Suddenly, there was a noise from behind her. She looked up from her studies and to her horror beheld a strange man standing at the door, a black, aluminum baseball bat in his hand and a rainbow balaclava (ski mask) over his head.

She leapt from her chair in alarm.

"I'm not going to hurt you," proclaimed the intruder. "Sit down and no one needs to get hurt."

Maddie retreated to her bed. "What do you want?" she pleaded, but the man would not answer. He took off the small backpack he had been wearing and removed a black metal box the size of a small laptop. Using a chain and a bike lock, he forced the object against her throat, ominously securing it around her neck. Next, he took a purple lanyard attached to a USB flash drive and placed it around her neck, as well. A handwritten note in a clear plastic sleeve was also attached to the lanyard. Maddie could see a label with an email address printed on it stuck on the black metal box.

As the man leaned over to lock the contraption around her neck, she noticed gray hair, and wrinkles around his eyes—the only part of his face she could see—so she knew he was not a young man.

When he finished, he turned to leave the room. "Count to 200," he ordered the high-schooler. "I'll be back. Don't move."

Maddie sat on the bed, frozen in fear. She thought the man was going to rob the house, but after some time had passed she heard nothing. She called out for help—no answer.



A view of the posh Sydney suburb of Mosman, where the Pulvers live. Visible in the background is the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Cautiously, she inched her way to her cell phone and sent her mother a text message. Then she called her father and told him to call the police.

At that point, she removed the note from the clear document sleeve attached to the lanyard around her neck. When she caught sight of the word "explosives," she began sobbing.

The two-page letter read, in part:

Powerful new technology plastic explosives are located inside the small black combination case delivered to you. The case is booby-trapped... I am a former Special Forces Green Beret munitions specialist, and have constructed such devices [sic] for over twenty years... If you disclose these Instructions to any Federal or State agency, the Police or FBI, or to any non-family member, it will trigger an immediate BRIAN DOUGLAS WELLS event... If the Remittance Instructions are executed CORRECTLY, I will immediately provide you with the combination that can open the case WITHOUT triggering a BRIAN DOUGLAS WELLS event and an explosive mechanism embedded inside... SO, ACT NOW, THINK LATER, or YOU will inadvertently trigger a tragically

avoidable explosion... CONFIRM receipt of these Instructions by CONTACTING: dirkstruan1840@gmail.com.

Maddie did not know who Brian Douglas Wells was, nor had she ever heard of Dirk Struan. Petrified, she sat in place, hoping to avoid doing anything that would trigger the bomb. She phoned her dad and told him *not* to call the police, in light of what the note said... but it was too late.

Police Arrive

Minutes later, police vehicles screamed down ritzy Burrawong Avenue. They immediately set up roadblocks and cordoned off



The mysterious device the man strapped around Maddie's neck.

