

It's been 20 years since John Sharpe killed his wife and daughter.

Only in New Idea

# Revisiting the

# SHARPE FAMILY MURDERS

## THE BRUTAL DEATHS STILL HAUNT VETERAN DETECTIVE NARELLE FRASER

Most police officers will attest that there is at least one case from their careers that they just can't shake, even after the investigation has wrapped up. And that is certainly

true for veteran Victorian detective Narelle Fraser. Although two decades have passed, the double murders of Anna Kemp and her 20-month-old daughter Gracie at the hand of her husband, John Sharpe,

continue to occupy Narelle's mind. Sharpe used a spear gun to kill 41-year-old Anna, who was pregnant, and Gracie – and Narelle says it was one of the most harrowing crimes she's ever come across.

It was March 2004 and Anna and Gracie had been reported as missing. Anna's mother in New Zealand had contacted police as she hadn't heard from her

daughter in six weeks. Local Melbourne police, including Narelle, started investigating.

Remembering the first time she stepped inside the Sharpe family home in Mornington, Narelle says there were none of the usual knick-knacks or warmth. Instead, each room was neat and very clinical.

She recalls Sharpe explaining that Anna had been having an affair and left, taking Gracie with her.

"He put on a good show. He was crying and seemed broken-hearted," says Narelle. "I went up to the

master bedroom and there was no mattress. John said he'd got rid of it because of Anna's affair – it brought back difficult memories.

"Gracie's cot was missing and John said Anna had taken it. That was all understandable, but my gut feeling was something was wrong."

Narelle's instincts were correct. There had been no affair. On the night of Tuesday March 23, Sharpe shot his wife with a spear gun as she slept in their bed. He then buried Anna in the backyard and told friends she'd left him.

Four days later Sharpe killed Gracie in her cot with the same spear gun. In the following days, Sharpe dug up Anna's body and dismembered it with a chainsaw. He placed her remains and Gracie's in bags and dumped them at a tip near their home.

In a calculated attempt

### 'He was as cold as cold could be'

to cover his tracks, Sharpe used Anna's mobile phone and bank card to make it look like she was alive. But police had him under surveillance

"He described the killings as if he'd killed an ant on the footpath. I'll never forget his unbelievable cruelty.



Police combed landfill to find Anna and Gracie's bodies. Narelle was the one to locate the mum's remains.



Sharpe, now 57, is serving two life sentences.

And his reasons? He said Anna was 'moody and controlling' and that Gracie 'needed to be with her Mum'.

Sharpe eventually revealed where the bodies were. He pleaded guilty to the two murders and in August 2005 received two life sentences in the Supreme Court of Victoria.

and arrested him.

Narelle says Sharpe's interview was one of "the worst" she's watched as it was "incredibly distressing... he was as cold as cold could be". When Sharpe refused to confess, police appealed to his parents.

"Understandably, John's family had trouble grasping what we were telling them – until they realised we had evidence of John retrieving Anna's mobile from a bag he'd hidden behind a rubbish bin near his home. His parents then spent some time with John and said 'he'll talk to you'," says Narelle. "His demeanour didn't change.

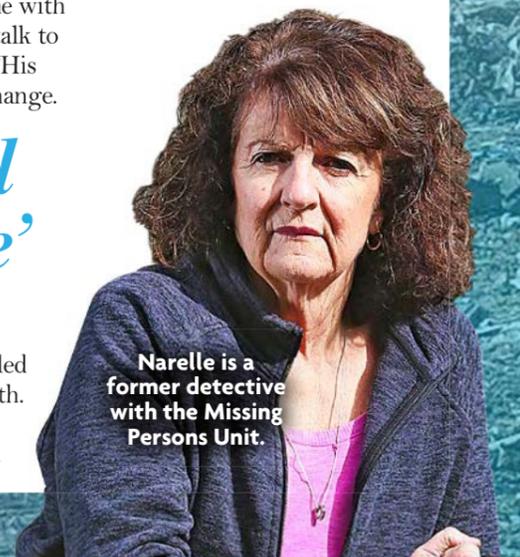
"Contacts in prison have told me John keeps himself to himself and has very little to say. At his sentencing the judge described him as a loner and I don't think that has changed," says Narelle, who has a podcast series *Narelle Fraser Interviews*.

"I don't think he should ever be released. The world is a safer place with him locked up and not breathing the same air we breathe."

By Sarah Marinos



Gracie was Anna's whole world.



Narelle is a former detective with the Missing Persons Unit.