

Jewellery store staff relive day of terror

Women thrown to ground, kicked, struck with tyre iron in brutal assault

Shannon Pitman

One of a group of five robbers who left three women suffering after a violent raid on a Michael Hill Jeweller store is behind bars – but the effects of his actions still linger.

“You have put me in a mental prison and I want you to know what that feels like,” one of the store staff told Dayton Perham as he was sentenced in the Whangārei District Court this week for his role in the August 2023 aggravated robbery.

Michael Hill International has seen several robberies over the years but the incident at its flagship store in Whangārei – the first to be opened by Northland-born Hill in 1979 – marked a significant escalation.

Michael Bell, a company representative, said employees have a close connection to their workplace and the robbery left them with long-lasting effects.

“The five offenders intentionally targeted our staff, who were more than compliant with their demands. Yet these perpetrators felt the need to violently kick our staff, push staff to the ground and stand over them, armed with a tyre iron.”

One victim vividly recalled the terror of the robbery and said that, 10 months on, the memories were still fresh.

“I can still hear the glass breaking and the alarms going off. I still feel guilty I wasn’t able to protect them [her colleagues] – that’s bull****, I shouldn’t have any of those feelings. I didn’t put myself in this position, you did,” she told the court.

“You hurt three women at work doing their job. How is that okay?”

For another woman, the experience was particularly harrowing as she was held up against the wall with a crowbar, thrown to the ground and assaulted.

“I’ve been told what happened but don’t have much memory. I thought if I got out the back, I would be safe.”

She suffered concussion, bruising and a cut and now has post-traumatic stress, low memory recall and is on long-term medication.

Perham, 19, was part of a group that planned to arm themselves and rob the jewellery store in Cameron St, which was staffed by one security guard and three female employees.

About 3.45pm on August 2, 2023, they arrived in a stolen Mitsubishi.

Armed with a hammer, crowbar, screwdriver, tyre iron and disguised in hooded jackets, masks and gloves, the group ran into the store.

The security guard was overrun as they began to smash glass display cabinets, removing rings, watches and other jewellery.

CCTV captured Perham smashing cabinets with an orange-handled hammer and taking jewellery.

It acted as one person in the group acted as a lookout while the others continued the robbery.

The three female staff retreated to the back room. One of the robbers leapt over a counter and chased

them, kicking one in the lower back, bringing her to the floor.

The same man threatened a second woman with a tyre iron, pushing her to the floor.

He then returned to the first victim, who was on her knees covering her head with her arms. He swung the tyre iron, striking her in the head.

A member of the public was outside filming the robbery and was allegedly kicked in the arm by the lookout, preventing her from filming.

The group fled with more than \$50,000 of stolen goods, having caused \$200,000 damage.

They were found and arrested. Perham’s background of hardship was laid out by his lawyer, Wayne McKean.

His father was frequently in prison and his mother, who was 16 when he was born, struggled with drug addiction. The only constant figure in his life was his grandmother, who died when he was 11.

By 14 he had left school.

“Growing up, no one was really ever there for him,” his stepmother, Nikita Albert, told the court. “As Dayton got older, he just gave up, he just ran with the hand he was dealt.”

She expressed the family’s regret to the victims and acknowledged their trauma.

“We were all young, just kids having kids, we didn’t know what we were doing. It’s our fault now,” she said through tears.

McKean said on the day of the robbery, Perham had got into a physical altercation with his father.

“I thought f*** it, f*** this and my mates picked me up,” Perham said through his lawyer. “I was crying and I just lost it, I never wanted to hurt anyone. I had a girlfriend and I thought I was a good guy, and now I’m in jail.”

When Perham was arrested, he weighed 65kg. McKean mentioned that, since his incarceration, for the first time, he had been eating three meals a day and his weight had increased to 80kg.

Despite being approached by numerous gang members in prison, he had been steadfast that he would not join a gang.

“This is a shocking case when you think about a young Māori man with no connection with his culture. If he had other opportunities as a young boy, he might have turned out okay,” McKean submitted.

Despite the factors leading to Perham’s criminality, he blamed no one but himself, the court heard.

“Spending time in prison has made me realise this life is not the life I want,” Perham said in a letter to the court.

Judge Gene Tomlinson sentenced Perham to three years in prison.

“This offending smacks of emotional dysregulation but I am satisfied you have real rehabilitation capability.”

“When I look at the seriousness of this robbery, I am struck by the fact that 36 months seems inadequate but I am applying the law as I must.”



Dayton Perham



The Festival of Colours at the Hare Krishna Centre in Riverhead. Photo / Alex Burton

Life squared: Photos capture faces of generation



Auckland’s Hare Krishna community celebrate Rathayatra on Queen St. Photo / Dean Purcell

The theme for the year’s Auckland Festival of Photography is Believe — a pertinent one for NZME photojournalists tasked with obtaining an image that reflects the truth of a story. A selection of their best work will be on display at Silo Park for the festival, from images catching moments of energy and fun to striking portraits that capture the essence of a person. See these photos and more at Silo 6, from Wednesday until June 15, 11am-4pm.



Ria Hall is running for the mayoralty in Tauranga. Photo / Alex Cairns

Cadaver dogs used in hunt for tramper missing since March

Cherie Howie

Cadaver dogs have been used in the latest police search for an Auckland woman missing in the bush since March.

Judy Donovan hasn’t been seen since March 23, when the experienced tramper disappeared while laying bait lines in Pureora Forest, between Te Kūiti and Lake Taupō.

The 79-year-old became separated from her companions, sparking a large search that included LandSAR volunteers, dogs, Canyon Search and Rescue and thermal imaging by the police Eagle helicopter.

The search of the 78,000-hectare forest reserve, which has a thick canopy, multiple waterways and waterfalls, was suspended on April 6.

“While your efforts have not resulted in the outcome that we were



Judy Donovan

all hoping for, the energy and compassion that you brought to the search did not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated,” Waikato West area commander, Inspector Will Loughrin, told those involved at the time.

But searchers returned to the area almost a month later, when police used Search and Rescue cadaver dogs on May 1 and 2, a police spokesman said yesterday.

Specialist support from Search and Rescue and LandSAR was also used, he said.

“Unfortunately, Judy was not found.”

Police were reviewing all material and further searches would be considered if new information emerged.

“Hunters and trampers in the Pureora Forest area are encouraged to contact police if they notice anything out of place, such as pieces of clothing or camping equipment.”

“It’s important if you see something to lock the location on your GPS and include that information in your report to police – that way we can pinpoint areas to focus our efforts.”

• Anyone with information that could help find Donovan should call police on 105, or online via www.police.govt.nz/use-105 and reference file number 240326/8540.

Kiwis still in Bangkok nursing flight injuries

Two New Zealanders remain in hospital in Bangkok for medical attention after being injured when a Singapore Airlines flight was hit by severe turbulence.

Another of those injured – a man who received 31 stitches after his ear was sliced apart and his head was bruised when he was thrown from his seat – has since been discharged.

There were 23 New Zealanders on board, the airline said.

A spokesperson from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said their post in Bangkok had been “following up” with the injured Kiwis.

Singapore Airlines earlier confirmed a British man had died and its chief executive extended his condolences to the man’s family. The airline said there were “multiple” injuries on the flight.

The family of a New Zealand man

who was hospitalised told *INews* about how he had described the turbulence and the moment he was thrown from his seat.

He said the turbulence was “violent shaking for 30 seconds and then a massive drop”, *INews* said.

Photographs of the man’s injuries showed the back of his ear sliced apart and bruising on his face, *INews* said.

Another photograph showed where the man had slammed into the aircraft’s ceiling and left a dent.

The man had been discharged from hospital but he and his wife were still in Bangkok, *INews* said.

The Singapore Airlines Boeing 777, which departed from London’s Heathrow Airport for Singapore with 211 passengers and 18 crew members aboard, was diverted and landed in stormy weather in Bangkok.



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