The siege

The siege started with nothing more than a detective knocking on the
door of a Sydney house. But over ten incredible days one man held
the New South Wales police at bay, the police gave him one of the
most powerful rifles in the world, and there was a wedding ...

On July 2 1968, the detective and his colleagues were investigating
everal car thefts. They had come to a Glenfield house to ask some
questions of Wallace 'Wally' Mellish, a convicted thief who had been
released from gaol five months before.

But Mellish wasn't in the mood to answer questions. He shouted
at the detective and waved a shotgun about, and finally he fired it at
the ceiling. The police hastily retreated to call in some help.
The problem was not only Wally Mellish. There were two other
people in the house with him—Beryl Muddle and her baby daughter,
Lesley. Mellish and the Muddles had moved into the house Together
weeks ago, but now Mellish was making them his hostages.
The media camped outside as the police set a cordon around the
house and tried to talk Mellish out. But he wouldn't move.

In fact Mellish told police he would shoot Muddle, Lesley and
himself if he couldn't speak with the top high-ranking police officer.
As a result, Police Commissioner Norman Allen talked to Mellish
over the phone eight times, agreeing to some of his demands.

Allen actually visited Mellish in his house, and in one of those
visits Mellish shoved the barrel of the shotgun into Allen's mouth,
but the newspapers and the police regarded Allen not as a brave man
but as a fool.

Mellish told Allen that he wanted to get married to Muddle—right
now! So halfway through the siege, Mellish and Muddle were
married in the lounge of the house by the Long Bay Gaol chaplain
Reverend Clyde Paton, with Allen as a witness.

Allen might have been thinking that the siege was about to finish,
but then Mellish suddenly made it terrifying.

When Allen visited the house the next day, according to Allen,
Mellish 'put a gun against his wife's head and demanded a machine-
gun.' Melli is afraid that the police were about to storm his house. Allen told Melli the machine-gun was impossible.

Then Melli told Allen, 'If I don't get a weapon as good as the police have, I will immediately kill my wife, the baby and myself. I've got nothing to lose—that will end all my troubles.'

He wasn't given a machine-gun but instead an Armalite—a high-powered assault rifle. The police under Allen were appalled, saying that they had no protection against the Armalite. Melli demanded a helicopter to enable him, Beryl and Lesley to escape. Allen finally said no.

The siege continued, but the police would not allow food to enter the house. Finally hunger drove Melli to surrender—on the condition that he could try to join the army after he left the house.

But the army rejected him and he was arrested, charged, tried and sentenced to a lengthy prison term. The Armalite had been fixed so that it wouldn't fire, and with the siege over, Muddle said she'd never loved him and the marriage was annulled.

Commissioner Allen and Reverend Paton were decorated for bravery.

Activities

Key questions

1. How did the siege start?
2. How long did the siege last? What were the dates?
3. What were Wally Melli's demands?
4. How did the siege end?