



Azzopardi's interrogator A PROVEN LIAR

How Police Sergeant Adrian Lia deceived the public, the government and the force 10 years ago

KARL SCHEMBRI

ONE of the two police officers who interrogated Nicholas Azzopardi at the Floriana headquarters had deceived the police force and the government into believing he had saved a woman from drowning 10 years ago.

Police Sergeant Adrian Lia, who interrogated Azzopardi at the police depot where the deceased sustained the injuries leading to his death 13 days later, had duped the nation into believing he had behaved heroically by jumping into the ice cold sea in Sliema to save Mary Farrugia on 23 December 1997.

Lia – then a 23-year-old police constable – was awarded a gold medal for bravery after he claimed to have jumped into the sea to save 54-year-old Farrugia from Sliema as she was drowning near Qui Si Sana at around 5.15am.

His fabricated story not only eventually embarrassed the



One of the two police officers who interrogated Nicholas Azzopardi was decorated for bravery after claiming to have saved a woman's life in 1997

government and the police, but also made it to the official police press releases issued by the corps.

In fact, his alleged heroic act was widely reported in the press, with journalists taking his word about his selfless

deed and reporting how he had braved the stormy seas to rescue Farrugia, who according to the police statements was some 15 metres offshore.

Also according to the official version, Lia went on site together with Sliema Duty Sergeant

Carmel Pace – who later transpired did not even go there.

His story went as far as the office of the prime minister, where former minister Joe Mizzi, together with police commissioner George Grech, had awarded him a gold medal for

bravery.

“In Malta we hear more negative criticism than positive feedback about the police,” Mizzi had declared at the presentation of the medal at police headquarters on 8 January 1998. **pg 6 ▶**

PKNT
SPICE UP YOUR LIFE

Trade enquiries: tel: 2147 0400 email: ccaruanaturner@redoct.net