

Four years on, EL kidnap drama finally laid to rest

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BRAD Jones will never forget the day he was told his wife had been kidnapped and that, if he wanted to see her alive again, he would have to pay the kidnapers R50 000.

He thought that kind of thing only happened in Hollywood movies.

"It was unbelievable," he said from his office in Amalinda last Friday, some four years after the ordeal.

"I took the phone call demanding R50 000 for her safe return seriously, but it was like being in a film."

The wheels of justice may turn slowly, but turn they do, and Eugene "Haan" Sharp and his accomplice Fabian Nelson were sentenced to 15 and 10 years respectively on March 31 for kidnapping Jones' wife Cathryn in April 2005.



Brad Jones. Picture: Ntokozo Yingwana

The sentencing closes a tumultuous chapter in the lives of the Beacon Bay couple, who eventually turned to private investigator Christian Botha to track down one of the perpetrators.

"The whole thing was dragged out for so long," said Jones. "The investigation took for ever and then the number of times we had to go to court and face those people and their friends was not easy. It's nice to see the justice system work, though, because I was starting to lose hope."

The couple's ordeal started when Cathryn received a call from a man claiming to be a Mr Smith (Sharp) from the traffic department. He asked her to meet him at the court house to sort out a traffic fine. From there, he asked her to accompany him to his office at Group 8 on the West Bank and en route they picked up Nelson.

Then they took her to Leaches Bay where they tied her up. Jones said: "I had been at gym and when I finished I saw I had a whole bunch of missed calls from Cathryn's phone. I was worried why she had phoned so many times and when I phoned back a man answered and said if I wanted to see Cathryn alive again I should do as he said."

Jones scraped the ransom money together and met with the kidnapers at the East London race track. "They took the money, my car, wallet and cellphone and drove off, telling me Cathryn was tied up in a car parked in the bushes nearby."

Jones found the car, but not his wife. "I looked all over," he said. Desperate, he flagged down a passing vehicle and, with the help of the driver, contacted the police. Unbeknown to him, Cathryn, who was not harmed, had escaped from the kidnapers' vehicle while Jones was with them.

The couple were reunited when she returned to the vehicle in which she had been tied up. "It was the worst day of my life by a million times," said Jones.

A short while later police arrested Nelson after his identikit picture appeared in the Daily Dispatch.

Several months later, Jones was concerned that the investigation had stalled and was going nowhere, so he hired Botha.

Through an informer, Botha learnt that Sharp had thrown a party soon after the kidnapping and was overheard to say: "Geniet die hijack geld." (Enjoy the hijack money.) He obtained a photograph of Sharp, matched it to the identikit picture and went to the police. After a photo identikit parade in which Cathryn pointed out Sharp, he was arrested.

Jones added: "I'm glad it's all over now and I'm thankful to everyone for their help." - By ANDREW STONE, Senior Reporter