Devious, evil man says bereft wife

SELF-MUTILATION: A police photograph of Brent Garner's back after the faked attack. He later admitted that the wounds were self-inflicted.

By NAOMI LARKIN

The wife of shamed police detective Brent Garner says her husband's faked attack was the work of "an evil, devious man" who lacked "the guts" to end his marriage.

In an interview with Radio Pacific, Sam Garner yesterday described the devastation wreaked on her family and friends by the discovery that her husband of 12 years had orchestrated a bizarre fraud.

At the Palmerston North District Court yesterday Garner admitted eight charges, including torching the couple's Ashhurst home, staging an attack on himself which involved carving up his own back with a scalpel, sending threatening letters and making a false insurance claim.

He has also been fired from the force.

Mrs Garner said her husband concocted the elaborate plan because he "just wanted out of the marriage."

"He didn't have the guts or the balls to tell me directly, to walk away ... He had to do this devious, evil thing and hurt so many people."

The 32-year-old detective was having an affair with a civilian female typist at the police station where he worked and the scam would have enabled him to start afresh, she said.

"They can have each other. I hope they both get syphilis and die."

The distraught Mrs Garner described her marriage as a "sham" riddled with affairs on her husband's behalf which he "always vehemently denied."

However, both women were unaware of the officer's scheme, she said. "He just played the victim so well."

Mrs Garner said she had accepted the theory that the horrific attack was the work of a Satanist and that her life and the lives of the couple's two little girls were in danger. Mr Garner joined in speculation about the offender — helping to whip up fear.

The "accurate" description of the attacker which he gave — initially put down to good police training — was a description of himself with a goatee.

"... No wonder he had such a brilliant memory for the description."

Mrs Garner said her heart went out to all the people who had supported the couple, given money and gifts and she would not blame anyone who wanted to take their money back.

"I just feel so embarrassed that they could be duped but they're not the only ones. All his close friends and family, people who loved and thought we knew him so well were taken in by this complete stranger. He's just an evil devious man to do this to people who love him."

His fellow police officers had also been sorely deceived.

"They've been through so much and for this egotistical self-centred nothing. He's a nothing. He's not worth people's sympathy. He's not worth people's anything, anger or anything."

Mrs Garner said she had been left with a $99,000 mortgage and little chance of paying it back.

• Fatal clues — A3; how a "pleasant" detective went wrong — A13.

Sam Garner arrives at the Palmerston North District Court.

Back wounds inflicted with scalpel tied to stick

By WARREN GAMBLE

PALMERSTON NORTH — The sacked and disgraced detective Brent Garner cut deep into the flesh of his back with a scalpel blade tied to a stick as one of the finishing strokes in his masterplan to get out of his marriage.

Palmerston North police said yesterday that in Garner's confession to faking the vicious attack on him by a supposed Satanic attacker, he said he lay on his side on his bed and carved up his back.

"Obviously it was a terribly painful process," the investigation head, Detective Inspector Doug Brew, said yesterday. Garner had admitted eight charges, including arson, relating to the October 18 incident described by police as a "one in a century crime." He was dismissed from the police shortly after his guilty pleas.

He told police he wanted to leave his wife and two young daughters, give them the insurance money from the Ashhurst house, and start a new life, presumably with his girlfriend, a non-sworn police receptionist.

Mr Brew, a 31-year police veteran driven to tears and near collapse from lack of sleep during the five-week investigation, said Garner broke down after asking to see him following his confession and arrest on Saturday.

Asked how he reacted, Mr Brew said: "It's not anger really, it's not that. It's relief that he has finally taken the time to tell his story."