

# Brian Guay's attention to detail fostered a strong family bond

BY KELLY EGAN

Brian Guay had a pretty ordinary life, but gloriously so, and to learn about him is to feel good about the man, and feel overwhelmed by the utterly senseless manner of his death.

Mr. Guay, a shipper and receiver at OC Transpo, was one of four co-workers gunned down Tuesday in a bloody rampage at transit headquarters on St. Laurent Boulevard. Clare Davidson, described as his best friend, lay dead nearby.

It is an ordinary little detail, in what should have been an ordinary day, but if the killer had arrived 20 minutes later, Mr. Guay, 56, might have already left for a dental appointment.

Instead, in extraordinary fashion, his life came to an end.

Mr. Guay, 56, married with three grown step-children, was a favourite among OC Transpo workers, so much so he was sometimes called the "Dear Abby" of the bus garage.

He was obviously a well-loved man — no one could speak of him yesterday and be free of tears.

They are only ordinary details, but it is impossible not to smile for the man when you hear that he loved ice cream and used his bread-making machine like a demon.

"Brian was my best friend," said his first cousin, Barbara O'Flaherty, 67, who lives near the old Guay homestead in Riceville, 80 kilometres east of Ottawa. She says they were unusually close for cousins because there were only three children from her parents' generation.

Further, she lives next door to Brian's only sibling, younger brother Terry.

When she heard the tragic news at her home Tuesday night, she literally dropped the telephone. "The hardest part of this is that it's so senseless."

She described her cousin as a kind, considerate man who was always ready to help someone in need. "I don't think I ever saw him say no to anybody who needed something."

Armed with a keen sense of humour, she said Mr. Guay, who had a head of wavy grey hair, was a man of integrity. "He was a happy person, you know?"

She said her cousin delivered a generator to the house during last year's ice storm and checked on her and her

family regularly.

"I don't think we would have made it through the ice storm without him. He was our hero," she said yesterday, fighting tears.

Mr. Guay was born on Oct. 26, 1942, in Riceville, the son of Raymond Guay, a native Montrealer, and Elizabeth Ryan, whose family arrived in the area in 1817.

The family lived on a farm, with about 100 acres, and Mr. Guay had a younger brother, Terry, who is now 44. Raymond Guay, a Navy man, died at a young age and the family moved away from the farm.

After finishing high school in Maxville, Mr. Guay joined the Canadian Navy, where he trained as an underwater weapons technician in Digby, N.S. He served on two different ships and saw a good part of the world: Italy, Gibraltar, Portugal, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, England and Ireland.

He left the Navy in 1964, but not before acquiring a couple of tattoos.

Mr. Guay later drove a bus for the Montreal transit service then was a manager at the Canadian Tire store on Kent Street in Ottawa before joining OC Transpo about 20 years ago.

An avid outdoorsman, Mr. Guay liked hunting and canoeing in Algonquin Park, or taking his all-terrain vehicle through the nearby Larose Forest.

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Barbara O'Flaherty  
Brian Guay's cousin

Family members describe Mr. Guay as an enthusiastic handyman who was a perfectionist.

Terry Guay said the two brothers, despite the 12-year age gap, became much closer during the last couple of years, after Brian moved from Ottawa to Plantagenet.

"I remember one time he ordered this special screen door. It cost him something like \$250, including having it installed. Well, the next day, he looked at it and, for Brian, it wasn't

quite right."

So his brother took the door down, sanded and fiddled with the frame and re-installed it. "I think he did that five or six times until he had it just right." As he tells the story, Terry is laughing through the tears.

On another occasion, he recalled Brian installed half a ceiling of square floor tiles before deciding it wasn't lining up quite right. Ever the perfectionist, he ripped them all out.

Terry, who was clearly heart-broken by the loss of his only sibling, said the death is that much harder to accept because it was so sudden, and so pointless. "It's not like you had time to get ready for it."

Terry said his brother was a doting uncle to his 12-year-old son, Jeff, buying him new hockey skates, attending his games and taking the boy on camping and outdoor trips.

It is an ordinary detail, but he was nicknamed 'Buckshot' by the children of Linda O'Flaherty, Barbara's daughter.

"I always had a crush on him," said Linda, who called Brian a true gentleman. "I called him my 'good-looking' cousin and he would always turn red."

Brian Guay married wife Loretta in November 1985 — she already had three children, Rob, Lynne and Brad. They lived in various locations in Ottawa before the couple moved to Plantagenet, 70 kilometres east of Ottawa, a couple of years ago.

The couple owned a six-unit apartment building and lived at the back. Mr. Guay was meticulously renovating the building, a task that was part work, part labour of love.

Mrs. Guay, also an OC Transpo employee, could not be reached yesterday.

Relatives say Mr. Guay had recently ordered a brand new runabout, a 15-footer with a 50-horsepower engine, that he intended to use to take his nephew waterskiing. He even joked about boating to work.

Mr. Guay went to the hospital yesterday to see his brother's body, but not because he wanted to.

"I had to do it."

He said he heard his brother had actually taken a martial arts course with his killer, fellow Transpo worker Pierre Lebrun, a couple of years ago.

"I hear Brian was the only guy who was nice to him," said Terry.

"Brian was just a great guy."

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