

Case NO – 1618

**CRAIG ALEXANDER HOOPER
DEAN ROLAND FINDSEN**

**SILVER MEDAL
BRONZE MEDAL**

In the early afternoon of 8 January 2005 at Greta Cutting on State Highway 1, North Canterbury, three vehicles were involved in a crash which resulted in all three being destroyed by fire.

The first vehicle in the collision, a camper van, immediately caught fire, as did the others in quick succession.

Craig Hooper, who had been following, managed to avoid the wreckage and stopped immediately after passing beyond it. He noted that the underside of the van was already alight. He ran back to the van and found a female passenger who was slumped forward and unconscious with her seatbelt fastened. The fire had by then broken through the floor, setting her feet and lower clothing alight. Her hair was also burning. The van was rapidly filling with smoke.

Mr Hooper entered the vehicle from the driver's side. Kneeling on the driver's seat and reaching over the engine cover, he undid the seatbelt. Holding her under the shoulders and with some difficulty he commenced to pull her back over the engine and towards the driver's door.

At this point he was joined by Dean Findsen, a passenger in another passing vehicle. Standing on the road, Dean leant over the steering wheel and took a hold of the lady also. Together they pulled strongly and were successful in getting her out of the van and away from it. She had suffered burns and broken limbs.

The heat in the smoke filled vehicle was now intense with a constant risk from toxic fumes and of explosion from fuel and an LPG gas bottle. The fire took a firm hold of the whole vehicle immediately after the passenger had been removed from it.

It is certain that without the bravery displayed by Craig Hooper and Dean Findsen, the lady would have perished.