

Not so sweet a deal

JOHN McGRATH

A HARLESS would-be creative user has learned a bitter lesson in court — after discovering that his cake wasn't the real thing.

When cops found wraps of a white granular substance on Co Londonderry man Daniel Martin Mullin, he confessed to buying cocaine.

But it later emerged the 26-year-old had been duped into buying sugar — but he still got busted over his not-so-sweet £30 deal.

Mullin — from Gortnamoyagh Road, Garagh — appeared at Limavady Magistrate's Court last week.

It was revealed he had been arrested on February 7 after being seen sitting suspiciously with other men at the back of a Masonic Hall in the Protestant Street area of Limavady.

Police found two wraps of a white granular substance in his possession and Mullin told officers it was cocaine.

He later said the drug was for his personal use and he had paid £25 for it.

But it was later revealed the 'cake' was really sugar.

Mullin's solicitor, Johnny Smith said that his client was pleading guilty to attempted possession of cocaine.

District Judge Bazian King fined Mullin £100 — commenting that he could not think of a wittier remark about the bizarre case.

He then ordered that the substance be destroyed.

That's

PONTIAC
Father-in-law Manuel Gutierrez claims his secret for catching so many serious is that he plays them the harmonica from the deck of his ship.



Falcon

...the world's most powerful...
...the world's most powerful...
...the world's most powerful...

Life

STEVE 'IBBO' IBINSON 1976-2009

BRAVE IBBO TRULY WAS ONE OF A KIND

MARTIN GREEN

Specialist Editor

THE man behind some of Sunday Life's biggest stories tragically died aged just 33, in Afghanistan on Thursday.

Many of our readers won't know the name Steve Ibinson. He never wanted a full byline for his work in Sunday Life, other than a simple "IBBO".

But former soldier Steve's undercover work earned him a reputation as one of the best investigative journalists in not only Northern Ireland, but the whole of the UK.

Steve helped expose the illegal sale of pitbulls and crust puppy farms with Sunday Life as far back as 2005.

The ex-Special Forces soldier, a dedicated animal rights activist, received death threats from localists, republicans and gangsters from as far away as Russia and Finland for his undercover work.

His work, which received the highest public profile via his TV exposure of an international dog-fighting ring based in Doncaster, Co Armagh, called 'The Warriors' Boys.

Posing as a dog-fight organizer, Steve (known to friends as undercover Steve) infiltrated the gang and travelled to Finland, risking his life, to help bring them to justice.

I once remarked to him that it was a shame, due to the fact he had to keep his identity secret, he never personally received any awards for these BBC programmes.

The show has won many accolades but to Steve the fact the gang had been thwarted and exposed was enough of a reward for him.

He had also risked his life working undercover as part of an investigation into neo-Nazi thugs.

Within the past year he played a prominent role in Sunday Life's high profile campaign 'Your Right to Know' when we sought to show you the faces of killers and rapists on day release from jail.

A set of photographs taken by Steve for this newspaper were central to the campaign.

A judge stepped in and banned us last February from publishing the unflattering pictures of the thugs, such as sex killer Ken Cattanach, walking the streets of Northern Ireland.

His words did a good Steve justice as we fought the ban and re-united hopeful that one day the faces of these monsters would be shown to the Northern Ireland public.

Having worked with him since 2005 I had got to know him very well, not only as a work colleague, but as a friend too.

Words such as fearless, meticulous and dedicated are often over used, but in Steve's case, due to the unique nature of his work, they seem understated.

As soon as I heard the words "Bright pal" on the other end of the



PHOTO COURTESY: Steve's wife Sharon and of a sweet attack in Afghanistan

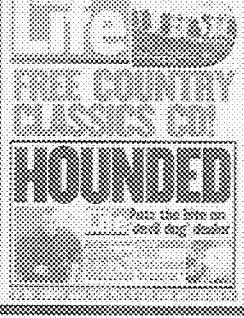
Farewell to a soldier, husband, father, journalist and good pal

phone I knew it was him, at one time or another he always seemed to be working undercover on a major story for a news paper or for the BBC's Spotlight or Panorama team.

Outside of work we spent many evenings chatting about his desti-

ning life which included not only investigative journalism, but private security work in war zones such as Iraq, Afghanistan and some African countries.

Without going into too much detail it is fair to say he had more than his share of rocky escapades



were necessary for his private security work.

Professionally we worked on many major investigations in Northern Ireland, the Republic and in England.

I spent a number of days with Steve in England as we tracked down New Britain, the killer in silhouette for (Punch), to his seaside home after his release from jail.

We also tracked down a fugitive Dublin killer living in Strabane in 2004, an exclusive photograph of whom Steve obtained after many hours.

Recently he was on hand to assist when I had a magazine were approached unexpectedly by cousins of IRA's senior chief, Denis 'The Bowler Hat' O'Hare in south Armagh, following the terrorists' release from jail in the Republic.

I met him for lunch recently in Belfast city centre where he told me he would have some interesting stories for Sunday Life on his return from Afghanistan.

He was due home this week. Steve instead to call his coffin with other lives home in Belfast towards the end of next week.

His grieving wife Sharon said: "He followed his heart in everything he did and he possessed so much animal empathy in Northern Ireland and got an end to it much pain."

He was a tough man with a soft heart who knew right from wrong and who always made sure everyone around him was OK before he even thought about himself.

He was due to leave Afghanistan on Tuesday and would have been home by Thursday and I was getting prepared for his homecoming.

I was so pleased because he planned to resign from the Aertron own company had been working for because we were both tired of the long absences and we both wanted to spend more time with the kids.

In Afghanistan he had been undertaking work to help end the opium industry and had been involved in negotiations with the Taliban.

On Thursday morning his brother Denis found him barely breathing at their accommodation in Kabul but he could not be revived. It is believed he suffered a massive heart attack.

Calvin's feared that one day he would meet Steve in bloody circumstances involved far being him and when I received a call from a close mutual friend at lunchtime Thursday, announcing Steve had been found dead in Afghanistan, this is what I sadly assumed.

To hear that seemingly random deaths robbed him of many years to come with his wife, their children, family and friends seemed unjustly cruel.

Investigative journalism is his last one of his greatest talents.

He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.