

'Immense pressure on Oscar photographer'

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TWELVE years ago, former police photographer and crime scene expert Rinus Viljoen attended his last scene, an accident.

A father had driven over his 2-year-old son. It was 2002 and Viljoen's own son had been born that year.

"To me, that scene was too much," says Viljoen.

He never took another crime scene picture and six months later, he ended his almost decade-long career with the police. Viljoen was

stationed at the Criminal Records Centre in Pretoria and Centurion and worked closely with the witness in the Oscar Pistorius murder trial, Warrant Officer Bennie van Staden.

"I have the utmost respect for Bennie and believe that he went by the book," says Viljoen. He says that in his experience Van Staden was one of the best. He was always professional and thorough in his work.

Viljoen said he understood the pressure Van Staden would be under as he was once kept on the stand for three days. A 14-year-old girl had been raped in her home,

while the perpetrators kept her parents and brother tied up in the lounge.

Each of the four accused had their own defence and each grilled Viljoen.

"They (the defence) take you apart. They are trying to get information out of you that is not consistent with what you said earlier," he said. All four accused received life in prison.

For Viljoen, this was the only tangible upside to a job that caused a lot of stress and trauma.

He was part of allowing justice to be done. "The exhibits tell a

story," said Viljoen. The crime scene expert lets that story guide them to capturing the right person.

The police photographer is often the first person allowed into a cordoned-off scene and must take note of as many details as possible through their pictures.

"The crime scene photographs are the most real-time account of the event that actually transpired," says Dr Jackie de Wet, forensic criminologist and forensic psychologist at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

"They can unpack the narrative of the scene visually.