

A distinguished career devoted to police service

DON DAVIES exemplified a life committed to public service and civic duty. Born in 1920, he was the only child of Abner Joseph Davies, boilermaker, and Emily May Davies, of Balmain, Sydney.

As a child growing up in Sydney in the '20s and '30s, he bore the impact of the Depression and was forced to leave school in his matriculation year. Although a very gifted child and a Fortian student at Fort Street Boys High, his father's loss of work saw him truncate his formal schooling at that time and apply to join the NSW Police Cadets. Many applied but few were chosen, and following medical and academic examinations, only 70 candidates remained for 20 vacancies. Don's selection by the gruff, tough Scotsman, Commissioner William John MacKay, marked the beginning of a distinguished career in policing lasting 45 years.

In 1940 Don was awarded the

Silver Baton, the equivalent of the Military Academy Sword of Honour, in recognition of the most outstanding police cadet. It was no doubt very proud parents who watched the presentation made at the Police Depot in Redfern by the Premier, Sir William McKell, who had worked with Don's father during the 1920s before graduating in law, entering politics and becoming Premier, and later Governor General of Australia.

While working as a policeman Don returned to formal education, and as a young constable matriculated into the Economics Faculty at Sydney University and studied law part-time.

Another student attending Sydney University at the time, who became a friend and would feature throughout Don's career, was Lionel Murphy, later Attorney General and High Court Judge.

The war intervened and in 1944 he was called up to the

RAAF, where he underwent intensive aircrew training until the discontinuance of the Empire Air Training Scheme in 1945. His return to the NSW Police Force in 1945 was accompanied by his marriage to Joan Brown, a marriage that was to last 54 years.

His move into detective work saw him work alongside many famous and sometimes notorious detectives such as Ray Kelly, Fred Krahe and Don Ferguson. He retired from the NSW Police Force in 1961 to take up a position as Inspector 1st Class with the Commonwealth Police (COMPOL) in the Sydney Office of the NSW District. Upon Don's discharge from the NSW Force, Commissioner John Delaney described him as an excellent officer, a rare tribute from the Commissioner.

His work with COMPOL was varied. While conducting a fraud investigation in Darwin he met and worked with a



young solicitor from the Deputy Crown Solicitor's Office. Much to his delight, many years later this same young solicitor, John Gallop, who became a Judge of the ACT Supreme Court, was to admit his son Paul as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Territory. He was also involved in con-

ducting security advances for senior government officials, and had the honour of accompanying Sir Garfield Barwick on an official tour of Asia.

In 1969, Don was promoted to the position of Deputy Commissioner (Crime). His field work continued as he commanded many operations such as the protection of Australian Defence Installations, and the maintenance of law and order in Darwin following Cyclone Tracy.

On Boxing Day in 1974, at the request of the then Attorney General, Lionel Murphy, Don took command of the combined force of police from other states who were in Darwin to assist the Commissioner of the Northern Territory in dealing with the aftermath of this devastating cyclone.

Whilst representing himself as an outstanding officer, he was also to have considerable influence on the future structure of federal policing. He ac-

tively sought a means to provide Australia with a much needed streamlined and effective investigative agency to counter burgeoning national and international criminal threats. Don, in association with the then Commissioner, Jack Davis, developed a blueprint for a national policing agency which combined the law enforcement functions of Commonwealth government departments and the Territory Police Forces with COMPOL. The plan envisaged an Australian Police organisation with the Australian Bureau of Investigation making up the detective component.

Lionel Murphy, Attorney General, in 1972, supported the plan, and the government of the day endorsed the new super-policing organisation, the Australia Police, to become part of the mega Department of Police and Customs, to include all the key investigative components of the Commonwealth and Territories.

However, it was the dismissal of the Whitlam Government in 1975 by another Fort Street High ex-student, Sir John Kerr, who as Governor General had earlier that year presented Don with the Queen's Police Medal for distinguished service, that ended the Australia Police initiative. The incoming Fraser Government did not endorse the concept.

Don retired in October 1979, though for much of the next 19 years he contributed to the International Police Association, the Australian Federal Police Association and the Police Historical Society. He also wrote his memoirs portraying the length and breadth of a rewarding career. He is survived by his wife, Joan, daughters Lynette and Sue, son Paul and their families.

John Donnelley Davies, born October 12, 1920; died January 23, 1999.