

VIC ANDERSON RETIREES

by Brian Minards



Assistant Commissioner
Vic Anderson

THE Australian Federal Police lost one of its most highly respected senior officers recently with the retirement of Assistant Commissioner Vic Anderson. Mr Anderson retired on July 31st after serving 30 years in the Victoria police and the Commonwealth and Australian Federal police dealing mostly in criminal investigation, intelligence and organised crime work.

At the time of his retirement he was Director of Investigations with the National Crime Authority.

Born at Mordialloch in Victoria on 15th January 1928 Mr Anderson proved to be a very determined young lad, on the completion of his schooling he spent a brief time as a messenger boy and would-be motor mechanic until turning 18 when he fulfilled a lifelong ambition and joined the Royal Australian Navy. He spent 12 years serving as a gunnery officer mostly on destroyers except for a 12 month stint aboard the aircraft carrier Melbourne.

Although happy in the service by 1958 he had a young family to support and he opted for discharge to allow him more time with his wife and children. Always looking to the future Mr Anderson completed the Victoria Police entrance exam just prior to leaving the navy and he was accepted into the police force only two months after being discharged.

His potential for success as a policeman was evident at the outset when he was named Dux of his recruit class.

After graduating he spent the next eight-and-a-half years at Russell Street and Brighton and Frankston police stations on general duties before transferring to the CIB special patrol which was regarded as an apprenticeship to the CIB. Fourteen months later he joined the CIB and in 1970 was promoted to Sergeant a rank which at that stage was unattainable in less time.

Mr Anderson said during those years he found his work in the breaking squad the most demanding, professionally and personally.

He said it was even tougher today.

'They were a different kind of criminal in those days. It was a battle of wits to a large degree, the violence evident today was not there then.'

He said even as a young constable his authority was respected.

'I recall when stationed at Frankston I was frequently sent on my own to the three hotels in the area to enforce six o'clock closing which was the law of the time and there were no problems', he said.

'I went back there seven years later,' he said, 'and it was different altogether, you'd need about six people to close one hotel.'

In 1974 after serving 16 years with the Victoria Police Mr Anderson applied to join the former Commonwealth Police force as a means of furthering his career. He was accepted and took up duties as a Sergeant within the Criminal Intelligence section in Melbourne, and was later promoted to the rank of Inspector in charge of the section.

In 12 months he was promoted to Chief Inspector in charge of the Currency Squad. With the formation of the AFP in 1979 Mr Anderson was posted to Canberra as Superintendent in charge of B Division the Organised Crime Unit, and in 1982 he became the Acting Assistant Commissioner National Operations and was given the responsibility for the AFP involvement in the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. In 1983 there came a challenge of a different kind, Mr Anderson was required to take over control of the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, a fledgling unit made up of officers drawn from the police forces of all Australian states and territories responsible for the gathering and dissemination of intelligence on criminal activity.

He said it was a tough but rewarding experience in a unit which he believes is still not completely understood by the 'run of the mill' policeman. He said the ABCI plays a vital role in fighting crime and deserves to succeed.

'It's the way that we need to go,' he said. 'This business of having different States doing their own thing is not good enough. Criminals are not restricted by state borders and the police can't afford to be either.'

In August of 1985 Mr Anderson was appointed Assistant Commissioner, Southern Region, in Melbourne and remained there until last January when he took up the post of Director of Investigations with the national Crime Authority in Sydney where he remained until he retired.

Mr Anderson says the police officer today probably has it tougher in some respects than it was when he first joined up.

'The thing that concerns me is the amount of violence that exists today, particularly the way innocent people get caught up in it,' he said.

'In the four years I was in the breaking squad I would have seen about four guns in all.'

Today a police officer may be confronted with an armed offender at any time, he said. On the future of the AFP Mr Anderson believes that with the strong foundation already laid the force can only go on to bigger and better things.

On his future... as in the past he has planned well ahead, he has already taken up duties as Security Manager with the Pratt Group of Companies, one of Australia's largest manufacturers of cardboard and paper products.

What advice has Mr Anderson got for the young police man or woman?

'Where possible treat people with respect, and as ladies and gentlemen, the force will benefit and so will the community,' he said.

Vic Anderson has earned enormous respect from his friends and colleagues over the years, not only as a police officer, but more importantly for being a gentleman, qualities that any aspiring police officer would do well to emulate. Good luck Vic, our best wishes go with you. ●