

A policing career on display

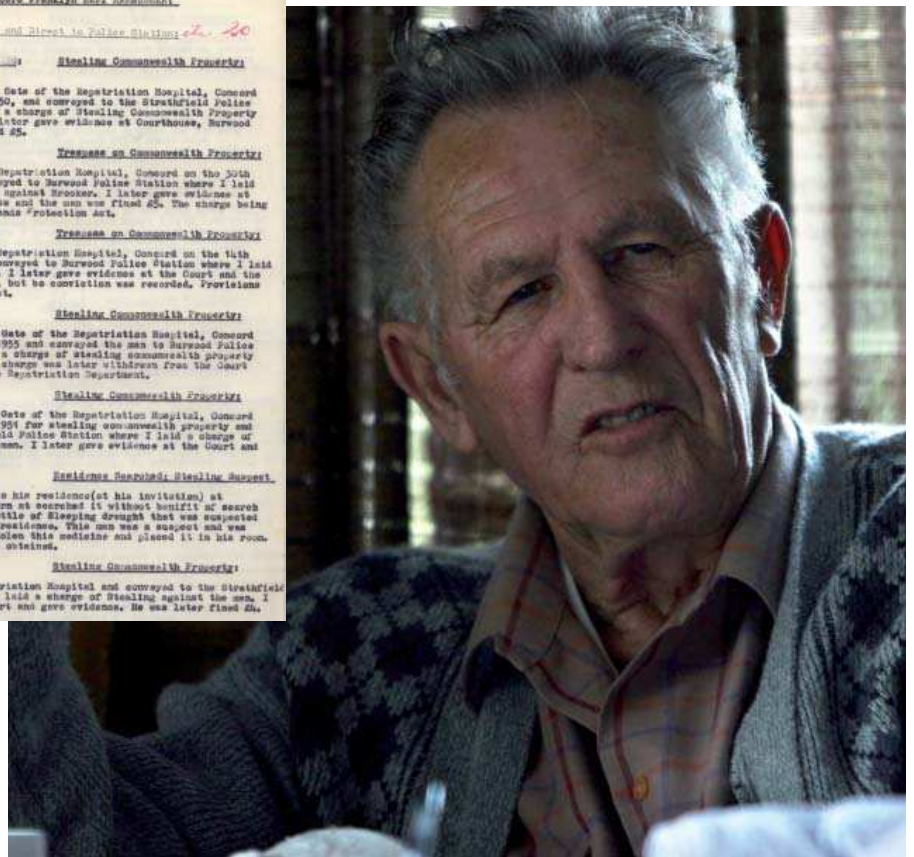
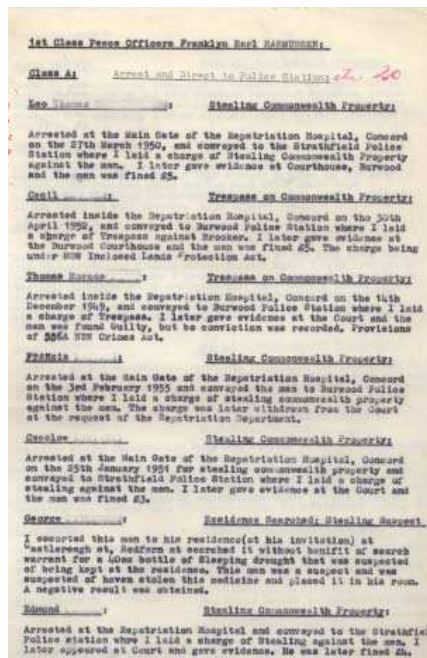
Words: Federal Agent Kate Levings, Marketing and Communications

A collection of arrest records, newspaper clippings and handwritten notes spanning more than 60 years of a policing career were recently donated to the AFP Museum.

Retired Inspector Frank Rasmussen made the donation in July, with the records set to become part of a display at the museum in Canberra. Some of the files will also be available for research purposes.

AFP Museum curator Chris Cranston said the donation would become a valued part of the museum's collection. "Items such as those donated by Frank Rasmussen contribute to our understanding of the way in which this organisation functioned historically, how it was perceived and ultimately, how the work of the AFP came about," she said.

"Through its collection and preservation of documents, photographs, news-clippings and objects, the AFP



Mr Rasmussen was a member of the Peace Officer Guard, the Commonwealth Police, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Protective Service. He kept records of his career and they are now on display at the AFP Museum. Photo: Brian Hartigan, AFP Photographer.

Museum endeavours to capture and recount the history of the organisation and its predecessors including structural changes that have taken place, the development of methods

and equipment used in policing, including those related to science and technology, and the fascinating stories which have led to the AFP being what it is today." >



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A career of service

During a policing career spanning three decades, Mr Rasmussen saw law enforcement in Australia evolve from a time when drugs were rare and property crimes were committed “just for the sake of stealing”, to the increasingly complex environment of the 1980s, after the Australian Federal Police had been created to address the changing nature of crime in Australia.

Mr Rasmussen’s career began when he enlisted in the Australian military three days after his 18th birthday in 1943, joining the 2/16 Infantry Battalion (7th Division), with service at Morotai and the landing at Balikpapan in Borneo.

He joined the Peace Officer Guard branch of the Attorney General’s Department in 1948, where he remained until the Peace Officers were absorbed into Commonwealth Police in 1960. When the Commonwealth Police and ACT Police merged in 1979 to become the Australian Federal Police, he was appointed to the Protective Services Component, serving mainly in the supervisory section. Mr Rasmussen retired in 1985.

Peace Officer Guard — 1925 to 1960

The Peace Officer branch was the uniformed counterpart of the Commonwealth Investigation Service although there was no interchange between the two. “Peace Officers carried out duties in connection with State and Commonwealth offences

and, when assistance was required, it was obtained from the local NSW police stations. Street violence was the order of the day back then,” Mr Rasmussen said.

“The Peace Officer Branch in NSW was an active police body and the members gained practical police experience.

“I was first stationed at the Repatriation General Hospital in Concord from 1948 to about 1955, but while stationed at this section was engaged in general police duties and participated in the arrest and prosecution of persons for several offences including stealing of Commonwealth property, offensive behaviour, arson and vagrancy.”

Mr Rasmussen remembers some of the difficulties of his time at the hospital. “Staff were employed in various fields and no police checks were made into their backgrounds. Many persons employed, both male and female, had criminal convictions and some were involved in stealing from the hospital.”

Throughout his career, Mr Rasmussen was involved in major events such as the Royal Commission on Espionage (the Petrov affair), the first visit of Queen Elizabeth II, and the first atomic test at Woomera. He also witnessed the 1978 Hilton Hotel bombing, a catalyst for the AFP’s formation.

“On February 13, 1979 I was on the afternoon shift and was due to finish work around 11 pm,” he recalled.

“The night shift supervisory sergeant called in sick and, as was usual practice, I continued on to cover the vacant night shift. As the Commonwealth Finance Conference was being held at the time, there were Commonwealth Police members placed at different venues to cover the delegates, with one lot of Commonwealth Police members on duty at the Hilton Hotel to cover the safety of conference delegates.

“I drove to the Hilton and, being tired from just completing the afternoon shift, I did not bother to park in George



Mr Rasmussen donated documents of great historical interest.



Street outside the hotel, instead driving around to the Pitt Street entrance which meant I had less distance to walk from the car to the desk.

"A few minutes after I arrived at the desk, a massive explosion came from the George Street entrance. With some of the NSW Police, we ran down passageways to the front of the hotel and observed major damage to property, and one NSW Police member lying on the ground with massive injuries. A radio call was made from my mobile radio to our radio room and for the remainder of my shift, I worked with other NSW Police units to carry out searches of reported suspicious parcels in or near many buildings in the central business district."

Mr Rasmussen recalled the only words offered as he ended that traumatic double shift — a reminder to be back at 3pm for the afternoon shift.

"I finished my double shift, returning a few hours later for the afternoon shift — in those days, there was no such thing as a counselling service".

The value of history

The importance of keeping stories of policing's history 'alive' cannot be underestimated, Chris Cranston said.

"The museum preserves objects which reflect the traditions from which the AFP stems, and in doing so assists in the evolution of these traditions and the creation of new ones. The collection is frequently called on for examples of how things were done in the past. Whether it is the design of uniforms, the creation of procedures manuals or examples of activities on the parade ground, items from the past contribute to the ongoing development within the organisation.

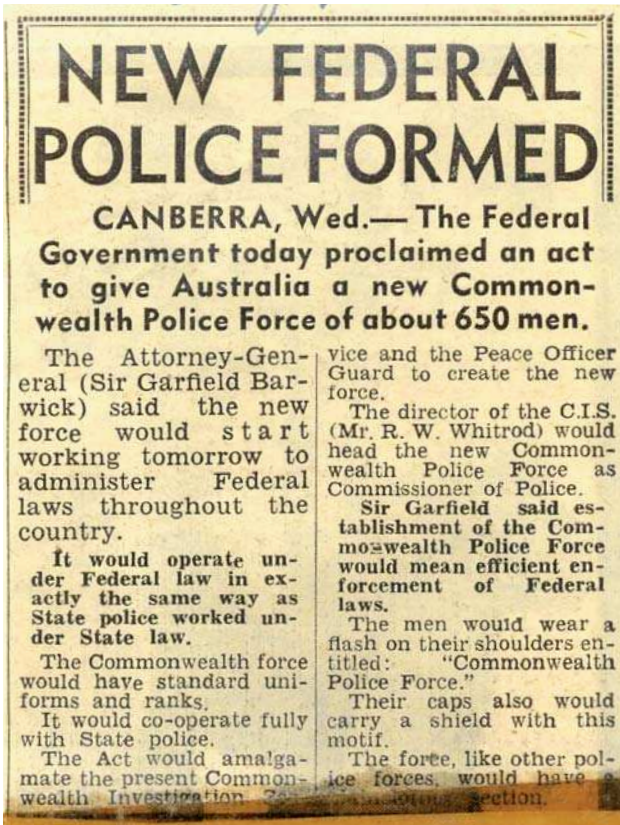
"There are many reasons to build and use a collection such as that held by the museum. The AFP has a rich and varied history which can be traced back more than 100 years to the formation of federal policing in Australia and of policing in the ACT region," she said.

The museum also serves to educate the community about the role of the AFP.

"Exhibitions in particular rely on objects to make a visual impact. This can comprise general examples of equipment or uniforms or other significant objects such as those associated with specific events or investigations," Ms Cranston said.

"Collecting items from members contributes to the acknowledgement of the work carried out by AFP members. The museum wishes to pay tribute to the past success, not only of individuals, but also teams and even whole organisations. For example the Peace Officer Guard was a significant policing and guarding organisation in existence from 1925 to 1960 and its place in Australian history is worth recognising. Its members provided the backbone of the first Canberra-based police service, and its functions during World War Two were an important part of the national war effort.

"Similarly, significant investigations or overseas missions, when highlighted in a museum display, resonate with the many members who were involved or



Museum staff are always on the lookout for items of historical significance. Among Mr Rasmussen's donation are newspaper clippings reflecting the ups and downs of Australian policing.



< who have some related story to tell. The museum is delighted to acknowledge these achievements."

The museum also provides assistance to outside researchers, having helped authors with photographs and information about Canberra's history and development.

"Fulfilling these requests is not only a public relations exercise for the AFP, but also contributes to a better understanding of how the organisation fits into the history of both the ACT and Australia," Ms Cranston said.

"The museum is currently undergoing a period of change, having closed its exhibition space at Weston (although the museum store and office are still located there), concentrating on off-site displays and looking to the future when a new, purpose-built facility is established. To this end, its acquisition of objects, documents and photographs

continues, in conjunction with its other important role of preserving the collection already in its keeping. This mammoth task ensures objects are kept in optimum condition to ensure their preservation, and that they are easily accessible when needed."

Donations

Museum staff are always on the lookout for items of historical significance, not only from Australian policing's early days, but also more recent examples of the organisation's progress. "Whole collections of objects occasionally land on the museum's desk when members clean out their offices, retire, or even from families after a member's death. Staff are more than happy to accept

such donations, or to discuss the suitability of objects for the museum's keeping," Ms Cranston said.

Australia Police

The museum would like to hear from anyone with objects or information relating to the Australia Police — the organisation planned by the Whitlam Government in 1975 which did not eventuate after the change of government.

The museum can be contacted on (02) 6223 3618 or via email to chris.cranston@afp.gov.au.