

US gives insight into our crime future

Arriving in Washington early in 1984, Superintendent Alan Mills had the task of opening the Australian Federal Police overseas liaison office. It was his plan to first get the office running smoothly before "looking for business".

Things didn't quite work out that way.

"Within two days of arriving in Washington, I found myself being approached by a number of agencies who were keen to establish a relationship between themselves and the AFP," Alan said.

Since then, things have continued to get busier to such an extent that Alan has been joined by Acting Station Sergeant John Davies.

John initially came to Washington last year on a temporary basis for a stay of 4½ months, but has now been given a two-year posting. He travelled back to Australia in January to take his family to Washington.

Alan and John see their task as being very much one of laying foundations for the AFP in Washington.

"First, we are here to examine policy and trends in the United States, legislative reforms, approaches to specific issues, and to learn from the US experience in these areas," Alan said.

"Secondly, our task is a liaison role, the development of links with law enforcement agencies here which will facilitate the exchange of information between them and Australia. The area of liaison covers a broad spectrum and involves many inquiries relating to operations."

The sheer number of agencies in the US is something that takes getting used to.

Where Australia does have State and Federal agencies, there is nothing to compare with the huge number of law enforcement bodies in the US (estimated at 38,000).

Alan believes the Washington office has the potential to become one of the more important of the AFP's overseas posts.

"Being in the United States is like



• Continuing our series on AFP Overseas Liaison Posts.

having your own crystal ball on law enforcement problems and possible remedies," he said.

"Generally speaking, what happens here is likely to occur in Australia in microcosm in a few years."

Professionally, Alan and John find the US challenging and rewarding. Both feel that Australia has a head start over many countries because of an underlying favourable disposition of Americans toward Australians.

There are plenty of similarities in the US and Australian lifestyles but there are also differences which take some adjusting.

Alan says that like most Australians posted to Washington, he felt it took him about six months to "get over the hump" before things began to fall into place and he came to understand how the US system works.

One of the first things to be noticed is the problem Americans have with the Australian accent.

"Initially, I could be speaking to a group of people and immediately sense that some were having difficulty understanding me," John said.

"You soon realise the need to speak slower."

He describes Washington as similar to Canberra but on a larger scale.

"Like Canberra, it is a planned capital with wide tree-lined streets and a large number of monuments and parks," he said.

It is a public service town, fairly

• Superintendent Alan Mills (left) with Judge William H. Webster, Director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

formal and protocol conscious. It is often described by local residents as not being typical of America, very much a comment often directed at Canberra in the Australian setting.

"Picking up the telephone and discussing matters is not the way business is done here. You find yourself writing a lot more letters but soon adjust to the local system," he said.

John's wife Julie, and their children Jacqueline (8) and Geoffrey (6), arrived late in January this year. Julie was thankful for the support given by other Australian wives during the settling in period. It was a great relief to the whole family to be able to move into their house after 3½ weeks in a hotel.

The children now have enrolled at a local elementary school and both have settled in extremely well and are making many new friends.

Their acceptance at the school has been greatly assisted by the fact that there are a large number of pupils of many nationalities from the large diplomatic population.

Alan and John see Washington as an exciting place offering a unique career experience.

For families, the living standard is high and there is plenty to see and do (providing you don't mind standing in long queues with a lot of other people who have the same idea!).

Washington's climate has very distinct seasons; summer is very hot with high humidity, winter is extremely cold. This is evidenced by the cancellation of this year's Presidential Inauguration Parade when the low was minus 20°C — it was the first time in history that the parade had been cancelled.

Alan says he will never complain about Canberra's winters again. On an average, there are three or four heavy snow storms each year. Plenty of excellent skiing is available within two hours of the city.

Alan said that in setting up any new post the attitude of the people already there can make an enormous difference.

"On that score, I have been most fortunate," he said.

"The Ambassador, Sir Robert Cotton, and his staff have been very supportive. And we are fortunate to have Debbie Yeates, a talented and hardworking lady who greatly adds to the efficiency of the office."

LETTERS

The Commissioner has received the following letters of appreciation from members of the public.

Dear Commissioner Grey

I write to commend the actions and quick thinking of two of your officers — Constable N. Maher and First Constable C. Wisbey, of Have-lock House.

I have been unable to write earlier because of a badly swollen, bruised and very painful right hand and a broken finger.

On Tuesday 27 November, soon after midday, I experienced a very heavy fall outside a shop in Brad-don. I tripped on a raised slab of concrete footpath and down I went, hitting hard my ankle, knee, thigh, elbow, shoulder and forehead and badly damaged my right hand.

Fortunately two of your officers were in the shop and managed to get me up on my feet and into the coffee shop; they showed concern for me as my family were unavailable (one returning from Queens-land, one overseas and a son at lunch somewhere in Civic).

Also I have a left knee problem which necessitates the use of a stick in my right hand to walk.

The officers returned, helped me round to the car wash, drove me home and then onto John James Hospital for an X-ray.

It is actions like this by these two kind and concerned gentlemen which reflects great credit on the AFP and also on their work in our community.

Please pass on my warm and sincere thanks to Constable Maher and First Constable Wisbey.

Nora Randall
(Lady Randall)
Narrabundah ACT

Welfare can help you

Thinking of applying for a position interstate? What is the housing situation? The sales market? The rental market?

Did you know that your Regional Welfare Officer has information on the latest housing situation in each capital city? Each month the Welfare Officer receives a copy of 'Market Facts' published by the Real Estate Institute of Australia. This is the same as used by Real Estate agents, so the information is current.

Don't be caught out. Give the Welfare Officer a ring beforehand so you know the real situation.

There may be additional information you should have before coming to a decision — special schools, medical facilities, educational opportunities for teenagers, public transport, etc.

The Welfare Officer in the Region concerned may not have all the information at his fingertips, but he is in a position to get it quickly and if necessary check it out for you.

If you are contemplating a move, don't gamble on secondhand or hearsay information. Ring the Welfare Officer.



• Thirty-one senior officers of the Royal Thai Police Force recently visited Canberra during an inspection tour of police facilities. They are pictured at Weston with instructor Station Sergeant Roger Thorpe. Thai Deputy Commissioner Major-General Euncha Netinunt is on Station Sergeant Thorpe's right.