

MURRAY, Kevin Ross (1930–1991) – Barrister and Citizen-soldier

By P A Selth

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Kevin Ross Murray (1930-1991), barrister and citizen-soldier, was born on 17 June 1930 at Casino, New South Wales, elder of two sons of New South Wales-born William Henderson Murray, schoolteacher, and his wife Josephine Agnes, née Ford, a Queenslander. Educated at Swansea Public and Newcastle Boys' High schools, Kevin studied arts and law at the University of Sydney (BA, 1950), but did not finish his law degree. He was an active union debater. Joining the Sydney University Regiment (SUR) in 1949, he was commissioned as a lieutenant in December 1952. The following year he went on full-time duty with the regular army to help ease an officer shortage. Although disappointed at not serving in the Korean War, he gained valuable experience before returning to the SUR in June 1955. On 3 September 1955 at St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, Sydney, he married Noela Joan Drury, a public servant with an arts degree from the University of Sydney.

Murray completed articles with the Sydney firm Abram Landa, Barton & Co. and was admitted to the New South Wales Bar in November 1957. He developed an extensive courtroom practice, initially in the common law and industrial jurisdictions, then focusing on criminal law, where his flair and energetic style soon made him prominent. He was a master tactician and consummate cross-examiner, who could captivate a jury and even have a magistrate spellbound. He could also bully: one prosecutor described his experience opposing Murray as unpleasant. When Murray represented Geoffrey Chandler at a coroner's inquest into the deaths of Dr Gilbert Bogle and Margaret Chandler in 1963, the coroner, J. J. Loomes, reminded Murray that he was not conducting the inquiry.

Murray became counsel of choice for high-profile defendants. He represented Peter Kocan, who shot the Opposition leader, Arthur Calwell, in 1966, and the next year he appeared for the television personality Charles (Chuck) Faulkner on a charge of being an accessory before the fact to a robbery at Channel 10 at North Ryde. Meanwhile, his military career prospered: on 1 July 1964 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and appointed commander of the SUR. He was 'a colourful, sometimes abrasive figure' in the SUR, but gave the regiment 'three vigorous, successful years' (Chapman 1996, 787). When the SUR expanded during the Vietnam War, he started a vacation training camp for officers, aiming to bring standards as close as possible to those of the regular army. He later recalled: 'I had the ambition to just literally train the arse off those fellows—to extend them' (Chapman 1996, 787). In 1965 he was awarded the Australian Efficiency Decoration and took it upon himself to form an SUR company at the Australian National University. In 1968 he served for fourteen days in Vietnam as a Citizen Military Forces observer. Though demanding high standards of conduct and discipline from his soldiers, he professionally defended those accused of erring; in 1970 he was counsel for Leslie Edward Lewis, charged with conspiracy to dope racehorses, including Big Philou before the 1969 Melbourne Cup.

Appointed OBE (military) in 1971, Murray was promoted to colonel in May 1972. He took silk in November 1973. The next year he was counsel for a Croatian crane driver, Angelo Maric, on bombing charges, and appeared for Kevin Humphreys, who had been charged with

fraud. He was promoted to brigadier in 1976 and appointed as commander of the Royal New South Wales Regiment. In July 1978 the newly promoted Major General Murray assumed command of the 2nd (New South Wales) Division of the Army Reserve. In court, he appeared for two company directors, Francis and Kenneth Nugan, charged with conspiracy to defraud; for a former New South Wales police officer, Murray Riley, on conspiracy to import cannabis; and for Arthur Stanley 'Neddy' Smith on a goods-in-custody charge.

Appointed AO (civil) in January 1982, Murray was named chief of the Army Reserve on 1 April. He retired from the military in 1985 and became an honorary colonel, SUR. He again represented Humphreys, this time at the 1983 (Street) royal commission into committal proceedings against him. In 1989 he appeared at the first hearing by the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption, representing the property developer Tibor Balog. In 1990 he represented a former police superintendent, Harry Blackburn, at the royal commission into Blackburn's arrest and charging. Appearing with a cannula in his arm while dying of melanoma, he represented tactical response officers at a New South Wales Police Tribunal inquiry into a bungled operation.

Murray's marriage to Noela had been dissolved in 1978. On 31 October 1987 at Goulburn, New South Wales, he married Lynette Jean Shannon, née Gorton, an economist, becoming stepfather to her two children. Survived by his wife, and two daughters and a son from his first marriage, he died on 31 March 1991 at his home in Newtown, Sydney. One daughter had predeceased him. Following a military funeral at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, he was buried in Northern Suburbs Lawn Cemetery, North Ryde. In a eulogy Barry O'Keefe, QC, observed that Murray was 'a dominant character . . . whose presence was always felt.' Murray had 'a gift with words, a sense of fun, an ability to laugh at himself and the world. . . . He was big and tough, yet at the same time gentle and soft hearted' (O'Keefe 1991, 16).

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