

THE HERON FAMILY'S 89 YEARS OF S

Amanda Beadman, *Police Monthly*

Inspired by the Force's 150th Anniversary, the Herons have shared their family's story of policing through the generations.

Julie Wallington's mother, Vera Heron joined the NSW Police Force around 1948 after having served with the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) since 1942.

Vera was a police officer in Kings Cross during the notorious time of the razor gangs featured in the Underbelly TV series, and Julie remembers her mother's colourful stories of that time.

"She told me about Tilly Devine and the ladies of the night and about

Kate Leigh running sly grog shops. Kate, who she described as dirty, violent, unkempt and foul mouthed, lived in Devonshire Street where policewomen did much of their work in those days," Julie said. "My mother was truly an inspiration. She served with Beth Hanley, Del Fricker and June Kelly, who were all power-brokers when I joined."

Vera married country policeman William John Heron in 1950. As was required at the time, marriage meant the end of Vera's policing career.

Julie recalls her Dad telling her about life as a trainee

"This tale brought a smile to my father's face every time he told the story. One of his class mates got very inebriated one evening. On putting him to bed on the top floor of the Police Academy at Redfern, they then rounded up one of the horses from the stables and led it up the stairs to the accommodation. There, the inebriated classmate and the horse co-habited throughout the night. Over the hours of darkness the horse did what horses do, all through the room. Imagine the horror of our inebriated friend on waking and having to be on parade first thing. Boys will be boys."

Clear destinies

Julie said it had always been apparent that her brother, William Jnr, would follow his parents into law enforcement.

"He wanted to be a police officer from the day he opened his eyes – but for all of us there was a family flavour running through it," Julie said, adding that when she opted to join the Force herself in the 1970s, her mother was supportive.

"Mum was very encouraging – she was a woman before her time. She told me to do it because she believed I had the right attributes and in those days the pay for women (equal pay with men) was very good."

Julie began her own policing career with the Traffic Branch in Rosebery and went on to work at various commands, including the Criminal Investigations Branch, Gosford, Orange, Lithgow and Sydney.

Julie, who also married a detective, retired in 1999 and said there is little likelihood of her own 20-year-old daughter continuing the family tradition.

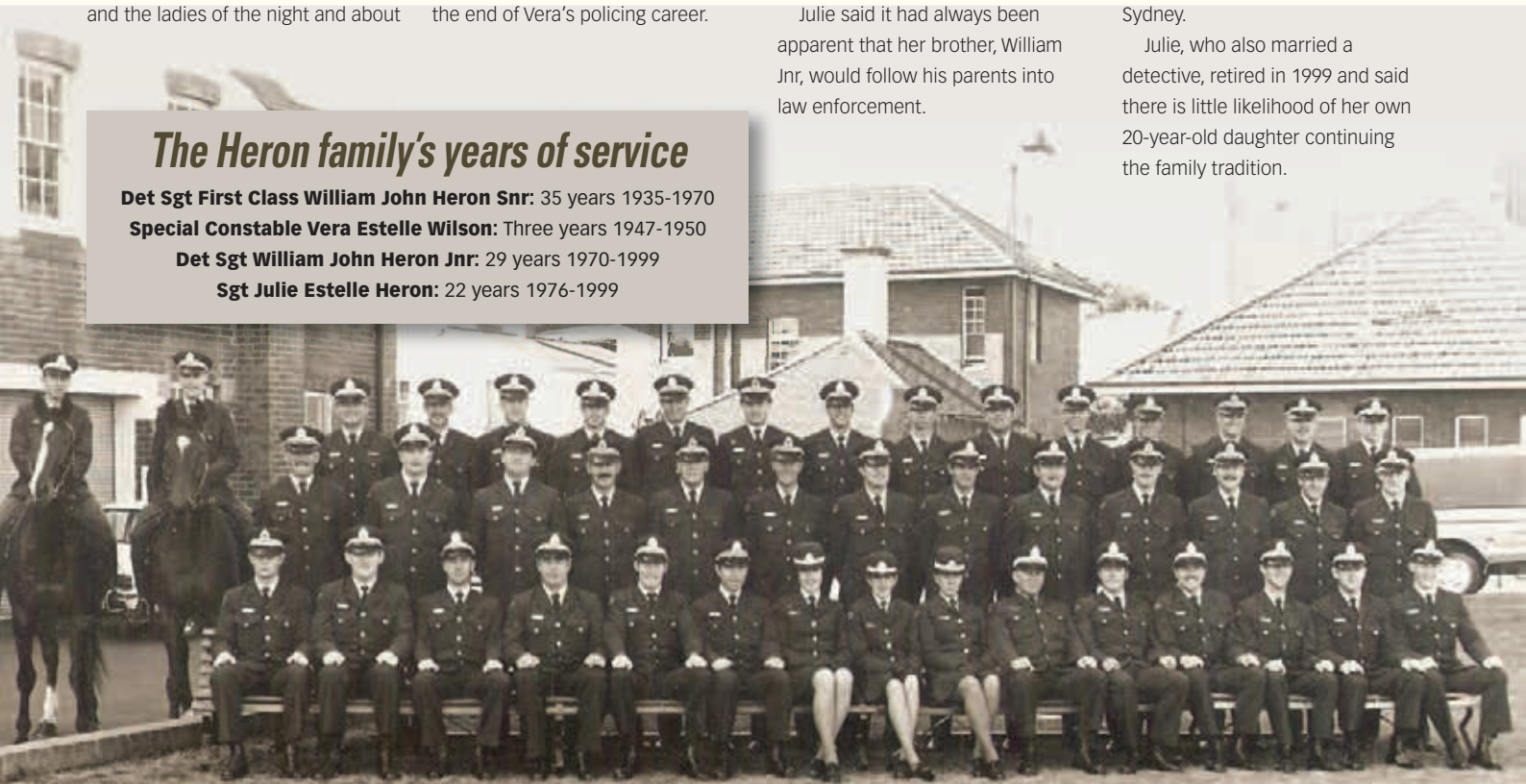
The Heron family's years of service

Det Sgt First Class William John Heron Snr: 35 years 1935-1970

Special Constable Vera Estelle Wilson: Three years 1947-1950

Det Sgt William John Heron Jnr: 29 years 1970-1999

Sgt Julie Estelle Heron: 22 years 1976-1999





CELEBRATING



SERVICE

Proud to be a part of our history

In the year of the 150th Anniversary of Policing, Julie has attended a number of parades as a spectator, and said she is inspired by the way the organisation has thrown itself into the historical occasion.

"I think it's fantastic that our history is being celebrated and I think it's lovely that people want to come out and celebrate it and say: this is what we've done," she said.

"There are so many policing

milestones that are valuable not only to the community but also to individuals. I remember the celebration of 100 years of the CIB in 1978 and the organisation brought out a book and all our pictures were taken for it. For me policing has been a great career, I've enjoyed my 22 years as a police officer. It taught me resilience, dedication and commitment – and all those things that are invaluable to the community and to yourself."



ABOVE Julie with her mother Vera Estelle Heron (nee Wilson) and her brother William John Heron Jr. "Note the issue handbag under my arm. We were issued with handcuffs but no firearm, however, I could land a lethal blow with that handbag," Julie said

LEFT Julie Wallington (nee Heron) at her passing out parade in 1976

A hero in the family

Julie's father Det Sgt William (Bill) Heron, who served on the Force for 36 years, including 24 years at Lithgow, was instrumental in the arrest and prosecution of the offenders who murdered Snr Cst Clarrie Pirie at Capertee in the early 1960s. The case was extensively reported in the Sydney Morning Herald at the time.