

Admiral who fought Keating over the flag

PHILIP KENNEDY
Rear-Admiral

Born: Sliema, Malta, 1931
Died: Inglewood, aged 80

Rear-Admiral Philip Kennedy, who died on May 24, capped a career in the Royal Australian Navy by fighting to preserve the Australian flag when, in the 1990s, former prime minister Paul Keating denounced the presence of the Union Jack on the design.

The admiral was already retired from the services when Mr Keating launched the republic debate in 1991 and provocatively called for a new Australian flag, describing the presence of a Union Jack in the corner of the existing one as appropriate for a colony.

Australia rejected a republic in a referendum in 1999, an outcome that pleased the admiral, who believed there was little to be gained in meddling with our present system of a constitutional monarchy.

Moreover, the admiral was WA president of the Australian National Flag Association, and had lobbied hard to retain it by pushing for the flag to be made more visible on flagpoles along Mounts Bay Road, Great Eastern Highway, Barrack Street and Kings Park.

His naval career was characterised by efficient service worldwide.

Appointed commodore in 1981, he was commandant of the Joint Services Staff College for two years, during which time he was honorary aide de camp to two governors-general, Sir Zelman Cowen and Sir Ninian Steven.

Subsequently, he was promoted to chief of staff/deputy commander of the fleet at Garden Island in Sydney. Six months later he advanced to rear admiral and spent three years making the navy's case for procuring new ships, submarines, helicopters and other hardware. Before retiring, he was made an Officer in the Order of Australia (AO).

Philip Graham Newman Kennedy was born on February 22, 1931, in King George V Hospital for Sailors in Sliema, Malta, the eldest of three children to RAN officer Vincent Kennedy and wife Eulalie (Browne). She died of cancer in 1937 and her family in Adelaide took in the children, allowing Vincent to pursue his career.

Young Philip boarded at Xavier College in Melbourne and in 1942, when his father was captain of HMAS Leeuwin in Perth, Philip attended St Louis College in Claremont, later describing these childhood years as his happiest. He finished school at Sacred Heart College in Adelaide when his father was in Milne Bay, New Guinea.

Young Philip followed his father into the RAN in early 1949. After five months training in Victoria, he sailed to England to train with the Royal Navy. He cruised the Mediterranean, revisited his birthplace in Malta and located his godmother before celebrating his 19th birthday at the casino in Monte Carlo. In 1950, he cruised the West Indies.

In 1951 he served on the Rhine in Germany and, after serving on warships in Korea and South-East Asia, he spent two years from 1956 at the RAN College, then at Flinders Naval Depot in Melbourne, guiding recruits, many of whom later held senior ranks.

In 1958, he returned to further training in London and met future wife Judith Daly Smith, a Perth



surgeon's daughter travelling and working in London. They wed in 1961.

Philip Kennedy was made commander in 1967 and two years later was executive officer at the RAN College HMAS Cresswell in Jervis Bay, NSW. His first command was HMAS Parramatta and, in 1972, he was fleet operations officer responsible for planning the deployment of all ocean-going vessels of the RAN. Then, as captain, he directed a project for installing computerised weapons systems in ships.

His second command, in 1977, was HMAS Hobart and he then came ashore briefly before going to London for the year-long Royal College of Defence Studies course based in Belgrave Square, involving some 40 countries. He returned to Australia in 1981, retiring as rear admiral in 1987.

He had vowed to return to Perth which he did, settling in Dalkeith. In 2001, he co-chaired a review of men and women who served the military in South-East Asia between 1955 and 1975, which highlighted anomalies relating to medals and entitlements.

He was patron of several veterans' organisations including the Royal Naval Association.

Philip Kennedy had dementia and died at Brightwater Village, Inglewood. He was 80. He leaves his wife and children Angela, David, Fiona and Justin, and six grandchildren. A son, Philip, predeceased him in 2006.