Rear Admiral Sir David James Martin KCMG, AO

David James Martin was born on 15 April 1933 at Darling Point, Sydney, the only child of Sydney-born parents William Harold Martin, naval officer, and his wife Isla Estelle, née Murray. His father was killed in action on 1 March 1942 when the cruiser HMAS *Perth* was sunk at the battle of Sunda Strait. David was educated at Scots College, Sydney, and in 1947 entered the Royal Australian Naval College, Flinders Naval Depot, Westernport, Victoria, as a Cadet Midshipman. He was studious and an excellent sportsman, becoming Cadet Captain of his division and captaining the rugby union first XV in his final year (1950).

After training in Britain with the Royal Navy, Martin served (1951-52) in the aircraft carrier, HMAS *Sydney*, during the Korean War. In 1953 he undertook further training in Britain and was promoted to Sub Lieutenant. Returning to Australia in 1954, he joined the aircraft carrier, HMAS *Vengeance*, the following year as an Officer of the Watch. The ship sailed to Britain to pay off, and the ship's company transferred to the new aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne*. Promoted to Lieutenant in 1955, he was posted the following year to HMAS *Torrens*, a shore establishment in Adelaide.

On 5 January 1957 Martin married Suzanne Millear at All Saints Church of England, Willaura, Victoria. Later that year he returned to England where, after attending specialist gunnery training, he undertook exchange service with the Royal Navy in the destroyer, HMS *Battleaxe*. He joined the destroyer, HMAS *Voyager*, in 1962 as Gunnery Officer and next year was promoted to Lieutenant Commander. Martin left the ship in August - six months before it sank in a collision with HMAS *Melbourne* on 10 February 1964 - to become weapons adviser on the naval staff at Australia House, London. In 1966 he trained at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, before returning home to take up an appointment as Executive Officer in the destroyer, HMAS *Vampire*. Later that year he gave evidence at the second royal commission into the loss of the *Voyager*. Promoted to Commander in 1967, he was appointed in July as Executive Officer of the Royal Australian Naval College, Jervis Bay, Australian Capital Territory. There he made a significant impression on a cohort of young officers.

Martin took command in 1969 of the training frigate HMAS *Queenborough*, and the following year he was appointed Fleet Operations Officer, responsible for the movements and activities of all Australian naval units. In 1972 he attended the Joint Services Staff College, Weston Creek, Canberra, and in December was promoted to Captain. He then became director of naval reserves and cadets. Although it was a low profile position, he approached it with vigour and imagination.

In 1974 Martin returned to sea as Commanding Officer of the destroyer escort, HMAS *Torrens*, and commander of the Third Destroyer Squadron. During a successful command, Torrens escorted HMY *Britannia* from Norfolk Island to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, in February during Queen

Elizabeth II's tour of the South-West Pacific. From 1975 to 1977 he worked as director, capability review, within the force development and analysis section, Department of Defence, which assessed future force structure options. This civilian-dominated section generally viewed its uniformed members with suspicion but Martin demonstrated an excellent ability to get on with a diverse range of people. He subsequently served for seven months as Deputy Chief of Navy Materiel.

By this time Martin was being prepared for flag rank. From 1978 he served briefly as Commanding Officer of the tanker, HMAS *Supply*, before being promoted to Commodore in January 1979 and assuming command of HMAS *Melbourne.* As a Commanding Officer, Martin was again well liked.

In 1980 he went to Britain once more, this time as a student at the prestigious Royal College of Defence Studies, London. On returning to Australia in 1981 he was appointed Director-General of Naval Manpower, Canberra, a difficult role in which he excelled. He served as a councillor of the Australian Naval Institute and as president of the Navy Ski Club. Martin was promoted to Rear Admiral and appointed Chief of Naval Personnel in April 1982. This was a particularly demanding job as the Navy had downsized after the government's decision not to replace HMAS *Melbourne*. Adding to his burden, he was diagnosed with emphysema.

In 1984 Martin became Flag Officer, Naval Support Command, Sydney, the Navy's fourth most senior position. In addition to the heavy administrative load, the job entailed a substantial social dimension, the pinnacle of which was his organisation of the shore-based activities of the RAN's 75th birthday celebrations. With his communication skills and experience, he was ideally suited to this post and did much to rebuild the navy's post-carrier standing and morale. In 1985 he was appointed AO.

Martin, who retired from the Navy in February 1988, possessed a ready smile and a sparkle of the eye that left a lasting impression on many he met. He was one of the most admired and respected naval officers of his era and his rapport with sailors was exceptional. Later in 1988 Martin received the New South Wales Father of the Year Award and in August he accepted the government's offer to become the State's 34th Governor. Sworn in on 20 January 1989, he was the first RAN officer to hold the position. In December he was appointed KCMG.

His governorship was marked by less formality, but retained the pomp and ceremony. Handsome and charismatic, Sir David became hugely popular and was dubbed the people's governor by the media. In 1990 he was diagnosed with mesothelioma and, in a public announcement in August, he revealed his condition and impending resignation.

On 7 August he and Lady Martin left Government House intending to retire in Sydney. Survived by his wife, and their two daughters and son, he died at Darlinghurst three days later, on 10 August, and, after a state funeral, was cremated. An official portrait of him by Brian Westwood hangs in Government House, Sydney.

Martin's sense of humanity, his deep concern for the less fortunate and his awareness of the need to provide practical ways to help improve their circumstances were recognised in the establishment of the Sir David Martin Foundation, which assists disadvantaged youth in the State. A reserve at Rushcutters Bay, Sydney, and a Sydney Harbour catamaran ferry bear his name.

With thanks to RAN News