

Durk's Career as a Politician Emerges

BY FRED FERRETTI

A self-portrait of Detective Sgt. David Durk as a lobbyist and political operative moving through the corridors of power in the Lindsay administration emerged yesterday in his testimony before the Knapp Commission.

A graduate of Amherst, he took a financially successful fling at selling art objects imported from Africa, then moved to Columbia Law School for a while. But law bored him and so he joined the Police Department in 1963.

Two years later he was a regular visitor to the campaign headquarters of John Vliet Lindsay, at that time a Republican mayoral hopeful, helping to write the candidate's white paper on crime. And how did he get there?

"I met Jay Kriegel on the street while I was on foot patrol. We talked in general. He was amazed I was a cop. I asked him, 'What's wrong with being a cop?'"

Wrote Background Reports

The friendship ripened until Mr. Kriegel asked Patrolman Durk if he could "give background information on how I felt about police efficiency" for use in the Lindsay campaign. His background reports were soon being given not only to Mr. Kriegel but also to Robert Price, the Lindsay campaign manager.

At the time, Patrolman Durk was taking a course in criminal justice at City University. Later he became a fellow at the National Institute of Law Enforcement of the Department of Justice. He was subsequently assigned to the chief inspector's investigating unit, the city's Department of Investigation, and finally to the Police Department's Internal Affairs Division.

It was Mr. Price, he said, who told him, "If I was really interested in corruption, I ought to meet Arnold Fraiman." Mr. Fraiman was the city's Commissioner of Inves-

tigation. Three years after being a rookie foot patrolman in Harlem, Patrolman Durk found himself a staff detective in Mr. Fraiman's office.

Philip Sprizzo, a commission member, asked if he got into the chief inspector's investigating unit because of his relationship to Mr. Price or Mr. Kriegel. "I'd like to think not," Sergeant Durk said.

How did he get into the Department of Investigation? Mr. Sprizzo asked.

"I was not taken in on a contract," Sergeant Durk said. "You knew Fraiman?"

"Only in the context of the job application."

But "you had a close personal relationship with Kriegel?" "Yes."

Spoke Crisply

Sergeant Durk bridled visibly as Mr. Sprizzo pursued this line of questioning about the Police Department front office. Finally Sergeant Durk inter-

rupted, "I could not stroll into the first deputy commissioner's office and say 'What the hell are you doing?'"

Before the start of the morning session, he stood to the rear of the Great Hall of the New York Chamber of Commerce Building, where the hearings are being held, and refused to talk. He was tense and nervous, his attorney said.

But once the questions were put to him by Michael Armstrong, the commission attorney, he was cool and delivered answers crisply and quickly. He volunteered impressions and conclusions. He lost his temper several times but recovered.

When Mr. Sprizzo finished questioning him, Sergeant Durk asked to read a statement.

"To me," Sergeant Durk read, "being a cop is believing in the system of law . . . Being a cop is not a job, but a way of living a life . . . It's a vocation or it's nothing at all."

He said he and Detective Frank Serpico, who testified Tuesday, had given five years of their lives to bringing police corruption to a public forum and that now "it's up to you." He pointed at Whitman Knapp, the chairman.

He said the commission had "to fix the responsibility for the rottenness that was allowed to fester," "speak to the conscience of the city" and "help give us a sense of priorities."

Sergeant Durk said that he had seen too many policemen give in to corruption and that "they weren't cops anymore . . . they were on the way to not being men any more." He said the "issue is not Jay Kriegel or Arnold Fraiman."

His voice broke as he finished. He choked, sobbed "Viva Policia!" into the thicket of microphones before him, got up and stalked from the Great Hall.

Chairman Knapp, who was nonplussed, said there would be "a temporary adjournment" as many of those in the room applauded the seat where Detective Sergeant Durk had sat.