

Hanging Tough

BY EDWARD PITTMAN

A police commissioner meets controversy head on, two teams triumph at Pinehurst, and an admiral defends the free world.

THE COMMISH

People tell Clothilde V. Hewlett they didn't even know what a police commissioner did until she was appointed in 1992. Since then she's tackled one controversial issue after another. "We're generally in the press at least once a month, if not once a week," says Hewlett (below), a member of the **San Francisco Tennis Club**.

She first fired the chief of police, then pushed through a \$1.2 million referendum to supply SFPD officers with automatic pistols after an officer was killed in the line of duty. Then she reformed police department intelligence guidelines after an officer was caught spying on local interest groups. Currently she's focusing on what she calls community-based policing, entailing everything from officers coordinating community social and athletic programs to just being good listeners while on the beat. "It has a very positive effect on officers as well as on the community," says Hewlett. Since 1991 she's also been director of moral character determinations for the office of admissions for the State Bar of California — a duty made more complex by the fact that in California it is possible for convicted felons to practice law. "Some felonies could have happened at a time in a person's life when things were falling apart," says Hewlett. "In California we recognize that one has the ability to rehabilitate." Hewlett says it wasn't chance that led her to the law: "I came from a neighborhood where narcotics and violence were a way of life. It was a miracle that I made it out alive. I made a pledge to myself that if I ever made it out of that hell, I was going to come back and help other people." She kept her pledge.

Hewlett was one of the first female investigators for the district attorney's office, then an assistant district attorney for 11 years. "Whenever I think things are really bad, I think back to my childhood when I had to dodge bullets, when I went without eating, and I think things are not that bad," says Hewlett. "I get my energy from tackling the problems of society. In the future you may see me handling the most controversial issues to hit the United States. And I'll probably be loving every minute of it."



ERIC RILLETTE

As a police commissioner Clothilde Hewlett (above) encourages officers to become personally involved with the citizens they serve.