

50th Anniversary of Cridlands MB Opening Address
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory
Darwin Convention Centre – 6 February 2009

Welcome everybody. We are all here to celebrate the historical fact that on 29th January, fifty years' ago, you hung up your shingle to announce to the unsuspecting world that Cannonball Cridland was open for business. The shingle modestly stated "G W Cridland Barrister and Solicitor".

It was a far cry from Winton, Western Queensland, where your father was postmaster. The eldest of eight children, it is rumoured that the first time you wore shoes was when you attended boarding school.

This was at Nudgee College, the cradle of Rugby in Queensland, where you had a fearsome reputation for never taking a backward step. It was a very good team in 1950 and that is saying something for a school that has produced Wallaby captains Mark Loane and Paul McLean plus a host of international and state players.

Having attained your Bachelor of Laws at the University of Queensland in December 1958, you came to Darwin and earned the nickname “Cannonball” in the rough and tumble of Darwin Rugby League for your uncompromising front on tackles.

One of your early partners was Harold William Henry Bauer. Harry moved to Sydney in 1969 and later became a Judge of New South Wales Industrial Court and Workers Compensation Commission.

Your first office was on the upper floor of Cashman’s Building, near what was then the Star Theatre. Cashmans was built by Harold Snell, who arrived in Darwin in 1912 to work as a carpenter on the Myilly Point houses before constructing most of the main block of the Smith Street shopping centre. Claude Cashman established a general store which then became the Darwin Newsagency; many of us still call it Cashmans.

George W Cridland's File no 1 was: McMillan, D; re sublease to Anthony, P. Dan Mc Millan was Allan O'Neill's stepfather and the sublease was to Platon Anthony who was married to Dorothy Haritos. The premises in question were a Sidney Williams Hut type shop on a site in Smith Street Mall inherited by, and for a time owned by, Allan O'Neill who was a partner in the firm when I was there.

Your first client was a bloke, long since forgotten, who was waiting at the top of the stairs with your secretary at 9 am on Day 1 - wanting to be defended on a DUI charge; an immediate indication of the hard drinking reputation of the Territory. A reputation that unfortunately included a predecessor of mine.

The Honourable John Langdon Parsons SM was the 5th Government Resident. Following his resignation, he became the first Minister for the Northern Territory in the South Australian Parliament in 1890. But *The Northern Territory*

Times & Gazette wrote disparagingly: “All the principal southern papers contain references with more or less sting in them concerning the drunken pranks of Mr J L Parsons, who has evidently forgotten whether he is the elect of a political constituency or a brewer’s advertisement”.

During my time at Cridlands I was engaged by Carlton United Brewery to act as a director and undertake legal work for them. George was most miffed, claiming that he should have been retained instead. He took to sporting a tie embossed with the letters “CUB”. When I enquired why he was wearing this tie he claimed that it stood for “Cridland und Bauer”! It didn’t change Sir Edward Cohen’s mind. (NB: George claims that I was the one to coin “Cridland und Bauer”)

I played my small part in the history of Cridlands eleven years after its founding. At my Swearing in, fourteen months ago, I recounted the tale of being caught in a traffic jam in Sydney in the summer of

1969. When I belatedly reached my office I cursed the heatwave and the traffic and told my workmates that I had had enough and would leave Sydney. Amid the jocular jeering I picked up the NSW Law Society Journal. It fell open at page 50 where the first column read:

The following ladies and gentlemen were admitted on 14th March 1969. Amongst the names listed was M.D.A Maurice later to feature prominently in Territory legal affairs and briefed in some of your big cases. He and I began the independent bar in 1974.

The second column included an advertisement stating: *Darwin Firm requires two Practitioners, one principally for Court Work (Supreme Court and Magistrates Courts), other principally for non-litigious work. Salary from \$130 weekly, dependent on experience. Will pay fare to Darwin and return air fares two yearly (not incl. family). Partnership prospects. Enquiries to Cridland and Bauer P.O. Box 1302.* Unknown to me the ad was six months

old but there had been no takers and I got the litigious job.

My experiences with Cridlands were numerous and I soon discovered that George bore a distinct resemblance to Kenneth Grahame's Toad of Toad Hall. Just like Toad, he became enthused with great passion for something new – until he got sick of it.

Water skiing was one such passion. George taught many enthusiastic beginners to ski around the sand bar - one of those he induced to try the sport was me. Unfortunately he overlooked any meaningful instruction with the result that I could have won a world record for skiing on my head as I didn't know to let go of the rope when I fell off the skis. As for attempting to ski with elbows bent, this caused subsequent problems in the workplace as I was unable to write or sign documents for several days.

George then progressed onto equestrian pursuits. Initially there were a series of photographs of his

horse rising over the jumps sans George. A later group of photos showed George going over a jump sans horse. George swiftly displayed considerable talent in the show ring, although when dealing with other riders he was known as the great dictator. As President of the Fannie Bay Pony Club, his reputation was that of Regimental Sergeant Major.

All in all, my time at Cridland and Bauer was never boring. But this is not about me. The Territory has certainly benefited from all the work George and his colleagues have put in over the years. The roll call of legal practitioners has included many prominent names including David Farquhar, George Roussos and Richard Giles; Peter Barr, Terry Coulehan, Cec Black, Graham Hiley and Shane Stone.

Congratulations George on the fiftieth anniversary of that innocent looking sign “G W Cridland Barrister and Solicitor” tucked away at Cashmans

Building in Smith Street. For my part, George, thanks for the opportunity.

As I mentioned in relation to Rugby and Nudgee, your reputation was of never taking a backward step. We have had the chance, some for fifty years, I myself for almost forty years, to watch you apply the grunt up front. It is a pleasure to be able to mark the event with you and I ask you all, in a historical note, to lift your glasses to Cannonball Cridland.