

Presentation of Administrator's Medals
Northern Territory Board of Studies

SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory

Parliament House – 13 February 2009

Ladies, Gentlemen and students, I would like to share some details with you of a school set amongst palms and hibiscus, with school colours of buff and blue, representing sand and sea.

It was founded in 1841 to provide quality education to the children of missionaries and the first class had just fifteen students. The curriculum included logic and rhetoric, pure and mixed mathematics, natural theology, mental and moral philosophy. It then expanded to include mental and moral science, Greek and geology. Boys played quoits and went duck hunting; Girls took calisthenics and played croquet.

In 1941, the centennial celebration of this school was celebrated by a spectacular pageant, But six

months later – and this will provide a hint as to where I'm describing - Pearl Harbor was bombed. For the next four years this school, on the previously peaceful island of Honolulu, was occupied by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Today, Punahou School has 3,750 students, in kindergarten through to grade 12, and these students proudly reflect Hawaii's ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity.

Why do I describe this particular place? It is because this is the school President Barack Obama attended when, from age ten, he lived with his maternal grandparents. He was a member of the Class of 1979 and graduated with honors. The name of his school was originally chosen because *Ka Punahou* means “the new spring” – a name that resonates with many Americans at this time as they look to Obama for leadership.

In North America they have a saying “out of little acorns a massive tree can grow.” And that is the

point for all of us: A tiny remote school can grow into a flourishing campus, a small child raised away from his father and mother can become President of the United States.

My Administrator's Medal recognises scholastic achievement, outstanding citizenship and concern for others at the senior primary school level. Each one of the Junior Scholars, who will receive this medal today, can go on to achieve the most wonderful things out of life and I wish them, and all the awardees here, the very best for the future.