

Morning Tea for Ionian Club of Darwin
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory
Government House – 27 August 2009

Whenever “home” is established a long way from familiar friends and family, then it poses a challenge. It does not matter if you are an expatriate in Singapore or, nearer to home, posted with the army to Palmerston or sent by the bank to Darwin’s CBD. All relocations can pose a challenge.

It may seem like a headline from the Womens’ Weekly but in 1946 “a lady in Launceston found herself lonely”. That lady, Phyllis McDonald, founded the first Ionian Club and two years’ later her sister, Joan Tapp Quinn, set up the second club, in Sydney. Only nine years ago, the Ionian Club of Great Britain was established and meets periodically at Australia House on the Strand.

The name “Ionian” was chosen after the Hellenic race who occupied Attica, bringing with them art and culture. I immediately think of the classic Greek columns – simple styled Doric; taller, scrolled Ionian and the most decorative of all, Corinthian columns.

Forty years ago, I was a newcomer to the Northern Territory. I had done a school project on Rum Jungle and knew about Ayers Rock, as it was called then, but the reality of scale, climate, character, indeed larger than life outback characters, was all a mystery to me. I came in answer to an advert by Cridland and Bauer Darwin for a barrister and solicitor and became part of the legal fraternity here.

Tessa and her friend Carole were both nurses who had trained at St Martin’s Hospital in Brisbane and arrived in Darwin on an initial one year contract. The “Train at the Top End” guide to a nursing career in the north, published in that era, included important details such as: *A good supply of casual dresses is ‘a must’ for the nurse in Darwin. Bring a ball dress if you like ...nurses in Darwin need never have a dull moment when off duty! Normal hours: 80 per fortnight, board and lodging \$14.40 per fortnight.*

Drama was a common denominator. Following Cyclone Tracy, Brown's Mart was saved from destruction and the first theatrical show there was a double bill *Lysistrata* and *The Taming of the Shrew* followed by *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertold Brecht. Tessa saw me in the *Chalk Circle* and determined to make me hers. It took a few years, but we met at a pie party in Mitchell Street and that was that.

As the years passed, and we built a home and enjoyed our children Fred and Zoe, we also found a shared passion for gardening. In fact, Tessa and I have opened our own garden at Philip Street, Fannie Bay on four occasions for the Open Garden Scheme which has proved a very rewarding experience. Now we revel in the glorious grounds at Government House, so beautifully tended by Dermot and his staff.

I know that some of you are intrigued to learn what it is like to live here and to perform the role of Administrator. Let me tell you that except in the most formal parts of the role, I could not do without the support, assistance and contribution of my wife Tessa. If you had seen her last Saturday in a wonderful costume as a pirate wench at our Kids Fun Day for children with special needs you would know what I mean.

We are frequently astounded at the excellent work of voluntary carers and ordinary community members who contribute so much. As a former Administrator frequently told people *I have the best job in the best city in the best part of the best country in the world*. I couldn't put it better myself.

Thank you for coming to enjoy this special home and garden. May your Club prosper and extend the hand of friendship and company to those away from "home".