

ADDRESS BY
HIS HONOUR MR TOM PAULING AO QC
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
ON THE OCCASION OF
LAUNCH OF *SPRINGVALE AND THE KATHERINE*
Springvale Homestead, Katherine
21 September 2008

I acknowledge the Jawoyn people and their ancestors, traditional owners of this land.

The publication *Springvale and the Katherine* is a wonderful tribute to those who have enjoyed this historic site before us.

I encourage you all to read of explorers and their travails, the expansion of primary industry, of characters of the Northern Territory who are colourfully depicted. The book inspires those of us gathered here this evening to recreate in our minds the Katherine of earlier times:

Katherine township as recalled by Ernestine Hill in “The Great Australian Loneliness” *is a few angles of tin roofs among the trees on the banks of the beautiful Katherine River ... There were a few railway cottages, a one-roomed school with three white pupils and eleven Chinese.*

Of Tim O'Shea's pub, this story is recounted: *Katherine boasted the record, £700 pounds in a scrap of paper that one Len Adams once passed over the bar. He was a young English teamster from the railhead out to Wave Hill, 800 miles there and back.*

Finishing up five exemplary years, he sold the horse-team, drew his cheques, and set out for the lights of London. At Katherine he stopped for a whisky and forgot where he was going. The cheque and the celebrations lasted six months!

The first settlement at Katherine, dating back to the 1870s, was at the site where the Overland Telegraph Line crossed the river. This crossing was named after Frederick George Knott and his wife Kate who were the first people to farm the north side of the river.

They ran the Gallon Licence Store, so named because in 1916 under the Government policy of trying to restrict the supply of liquor in the NT, the Hotel at the Crossing lost its licence and the Knotts' General Store was given a Gallon Licence.

The Katherine region of 18,000 people spread over a 500 kilometre radius is rich in eco-tourism, geological wonders and signs of ancient times. It has pride in a community that survives, embraces new endeavours and is welcoming to visitors. It owns a worthy history, both ancient and modern.

Peter and Sheila Forrest have recounted historical tales literally across the length of the Northern Territory: Mount Ebenezer, Arltunga, Bonney Creek and Birdum, Eley Station and the Daly, the Top End and Tiwi. But I would like to suggest to you tonight that there is a tome that is missing from the Forrest's long list of publications.

It should be entitled "Keepers of Memories" – keeper as in "custodian, protector and curator". This is because Peter and Sheila have spent a great deal of their life's work collecting history not in a dry and dusty manner, but with anecdotes and reminiscences, following trails of fading memorabilia and recapturing life's dramas.

I'd love to read of Sheila's own Scottish heritage and of Peter's great grandmother who, in 1896, migrated by pony to Winton in outback Queensland, to a community originally known as Pelican Waterhole.

I'd like to learn of Peter's youth in Longreach, broadcasting experiences, his part in the growth of the National Trust movement in the 1970's; the formation of the Australian Heritage Commission and the role played as a founder and member of the executive of the Australian National Committee of the International Council of Monuments and Sites. There are the interstate and international projects and then there's the home in Darwin, in a suburb appropriately named after John McDouall Stuart.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Peter and Sheila for an immense body of work that preserves the history of the Northern Territory. I know that they have been oft inspired by the words of Banjo Patterson so I'd like to finish by sharing a few of Banjo's verses with you, in tribute to Springvale, entitled "Pioneers":

They came of bold and roving stock
that would not fixed abide;
They were the sons of field and flock
since e'er they learnt to ride,
We may not hope to see such men
in these degenerate years
As those explorers of the bush –
the brave old pioneers.

Tw'as they who rode the trackless bush
in heat and storm and drought;
Tw'as they who heard the master-word
that called them further out;
Tw'as they who followed up the trail
the mountain cattle made,
And pressed across the mighty range
where now their bones are laid.

But now the times are dull and slow,
the brave old days are dead
When hardy bushmen started out,
and forced their way ahead
By tangled scrub and forests grim
towards the unknown west,
And spied at last the promised land
from off the range's crest.

O ye that sleep in lonely graves
by distant ridge and plain,
We drink to you in silence now
as Christmas comes again,
To you who fought the wilderness
through rough unsettled years –
The founders of our nation's life,
the brave old pioneers.

I would now like to introduce the authors – Peter and Sheila
Forrest.

Thank you.