THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
OF THE STATE REFERENCE LIBRARY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

OPENING SPEECH BY THE HON. JUSTICE ASCHE, CHIEF JUSTICE

COMMENCING THIS DAY AND FOR ALL THIS WEEK WE CELEBRATE THE
FIRST DECADE OF THE STATE REFERENCE LIBRARY. IT HAS SERVED
US WELL. IT HAS, AS ALL LIBRARIES MUST, GATHERED TOGETHER
FOR US NOT ONLY THE WISDOM AND LEARNING OF THE AGES BUT ALSO
THE FOLLIES FROLICS AND FOIBLES OF PEOPLE OVER THOUSANDS OF
YEARS. ONE MUST ACCEPT HUMANITY WARTS AND ALL. WE NEED
RABELAIS AS MUCH AS WE NEED WITTGENSTEIN.

WE NEED REMUS THE MOCKER AND JUMPER—OVER OF WALLS AS WELL AS
ROMULUS THE MAKER. CHIEF JUSTICE BRAY, WHOM I WOULD BE
TEMTED TO CALL THE POET—LAUREATE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, WERE
IT NOT FOR THE PRESENCE OF GEOFFREY DUTTON, WROTE "A
CONSOATION TO REMUS".

"YET YOU HAVE YOUR ROLE IN THE STORY,
YOUR HALF OF THE SEED OF THE GOD,
IDENTICAL TWIN WITH ROMULUS, HAIRRED
TAIL TO HIS STATELY HEAD."
HIS THE OPEN AND CIVIC, THE CEREMONIAL
CLOAK,
YOURS THE HOODED AND HIDDEN, THE SWEAT
AND THE STAIN ON THE SHIRT,
THE GRIN AND THE SPIT IN THE GUTTER, THE
JERK OF THE UPTURNED THUMB."

THE GREAT LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA HAD INSCRIBED OVER ITS
ENTRANCE THE WORDS "A HOSPITAL FOR THE MIND" —, MEANING THAT
IT WOULD RESTORE SANITY TO THOSE WHO DESPAIRED OF THE
BARBARISM WITHOUT. THE BARBARIANS ACHIEVED A TEMPORARY
VICTORY — AS THEY OFTEN DO — BY HAVING IT BURNT DOWN IN THE
CIVIL WARS OF THE THIRD CENTURY. WE HAVE KNOWN SUCH THINGS
IN OUR OWN CENTURY. THE GREAT BURNING OF THE BOOKS BY THE
NAZIS WAS UNDERTAKEN BECAUSE JOSEF GOEBBELS WELL KNEW WHERE
THE THREAT TO TYRANNY LAY.

POOR OLD GEORGE III COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT. "WHAT! ANOTHER
OF THOSE GREAT BIG THICK BOOKS! ALWAYS SCRIBBLE, SCRIBBLE,
SCRIBBLE EH MR GIBBON?". BUT IF EDWARD GIBBON HAD STOPPED
SCRIBBLING WE WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD THIS LOVELY COMMENT ON A
ROMAN EMPEROR:

"22 ACKNOWLEDGED CONCUBINES AND A LIBRARY OF
62,000 VOLUMES, ATTESTED THE VARIETY OF HIS
INCLINATIONS; AND FROM THE PRODUCTIONS WHICH HE
LEFT BEHIND HIM, IT APPEARS THAT THE FORMER AS WELL
AS THE LATTER WERE DESIGNED FOR USE RATHER THAN
OSTENTATION.".

WELL, LIBRARIES SURVIVE SOMEWHAT LONGER THAN CONCUBINES, AND
I NEED NOT POINT OUT WHICH INVESTMENT IS APPRECIATING AND
WHICH DEPRECIATING OVER 10 YEARS.

THE JAMES HARDIE LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIAN FINE ARTS WAS GIVEN
TO THE STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND IN 1988 BY THAT WELL
KNOWN AND ENTERPRISING AND PROUDLY AUSTRALIAN COMPANY JAMES
HARDIE INDUSTRIES LIMITED. ITS NUCLEUS WAS THE COLLECTION
OF MR PAT CORRIGAN PURCHASED BY THE COMPANY IN 1982. IN THE
FOLLOWING YEARS THE COMPANY PURCHASED MORE AUSTRALIAN FINE
ARTS BOOKS AND HAD THEM ON DISPLAY TO THE PUBLIC IN SYDNEY.
ON GENEROUSLY GIFTING THE COLLECTION TO THE STATE LIBRARY OF
QUEENSLAND THE COMPANY MADE IT A CONDITION THAT THE LIBRARY
ARRANGE FOR TOURS OF THE COLLECTION FROM TIME TO TIME
THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA. THE COLLECTION HAS JUST TOURED THE
COUNTRY AREAS OF QUEENSLAND AND WE ARE TODAY THE
BENEFICIARIES OF THE GENEROSITY OF JAMES HARDIE INDUSTRIES
AND THE STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND. I REFER YOU TO THE
EXCELLENT COLLECTION DISPLAYED HERE TODAY.

I LIKE THE TERM STATE REFERENCE LIBRARY FOR OUR N.T.
LIBRARY. IT LOOKS FORWARD TO THE TIME WHEN A SEVENTH STATE
WILL TAKE ITS PLACE IN THIS GREAT COUNTRY, AND HELP THE
SOUTH TO RECOGNISE WHAT WE SEE MORE CLEARLY THAN THEY DO,
THAT THE FUTURE LIES NOT WITH EUROPE, WHERE THE BARRIERS ARE
GOING UP, BUT WITH THE NORTH WHERE THE BARRIERS ARE COMING
DOWN. IT WILL ALSO SAVE A LOT OF CHANGING OF TITLES AND REPAINING OF NAMES.

IN 10 YEARS WE HAVE HAD SELF-GOVERNMENT, WHICH CREATES A MORE STABLE POPULATION, WHERE CIVIL SERVANTS NO LONGER REGARD THE TERRITORY AS A TEMPORARY STEPPING STONE TO THE PROMOTION WHICH LIES IN CANBERRA. WE HAVE SEEN THE EMERGENCE AND THE MERGING OF A T.A.F.E. AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE INTO A UNIVERSITY, SO THAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE TO GO SOUTH FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. AND WE HAVE A LIBRARY WHICH HAS CONSPICUOUSLY HELPED US IN THE RECOGNITION OF OUR OWN IDENTITY. IT HAS IN MANY USEFUL WAYS FOSTERED AN INTEREST IN THE TERRITORY AND IT DOES SO AGAIN TODAY WITH THIS EXCELLENT SERIES OF OCCASIONAL PAPERS.

WE HAVE SIX TODAY, AND I AM NOT GOING TO PUT THEM IN ANY ORDER OF PREFERENCE BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL FASCINATING, AND ALL HELP US TO UNDERSTAND FURTHER THAT GREAT ADVENTURE, THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.
I START WITH MY GREAT AND FAMOUS FRIEND ALEC FONG LIM;

BECAUSE WE STILL FEEL THE SADNESS OF HIS RECENT DEATH. WHAT

A GREAT TERRITORIAN AND AUSTRALIAN HE WAS. HERE ARE HIS

REMINISCENCES OF EARLY DAYS IN KATHERINE, ALICE SPRINGS AND

DARWIN. I TOO CAN REMEMBER CARBIDE LAMPS (VERY DANGEROUS

THINGS) AND COOLGARDIE SAFES. AUSTRALIANS OF CHINESE

DESCENT CONSTITUTED MOST OF THE POPULATION OF DARWIN AND

MADE UP MOST OF THE OLD DARWIN PRIMARY SCHOOL WHEN I

ATTENDED IT; BUT I CAN WELL UNDERSTAND THE INITIATIVE AND

COURAGE ALEC'S FATHER MUST HAVE SHOWN TO START A BUSINESS

OUT OF CAVENAGH STREET AND INTO "WHITE MAN'S TERRITORY". WE

HAVE BEEN WELL SERVED BY SUCH CITIZENS. THERE IS A SPLENDID

PHOTO OF ALEC HERE - A LITTLE YOUNGER PERHAPS BUT JUST AS

WE KNEW HIM, FULL OF LIFE, ENERGY AND GOOD HUMOUR.

BARBARA JAMES WHO HAS WRITTEN THAT ABSORBING BOOK ON WOMEN

IN THE TERRITORY "NO MAN'S LAND" HAS DONE US A GREAT SERVICE

IN COLLECTING THE LETTERS OF ELSIE BOHNING WRITTEN BETWEEN
1922 and 1932 when Elsie was a young girl at Helen Springs, which is between Tennant Creek and Katherine. Her father had the station there and it was obvious that Elsie did everything a man could do including droving the cattle. What comes through is a zest for life and a deep love of the territory. She wasn't impressed by Adelaide when she went there and loved getting home.

"HURRAH". Here we are back home amongst our dearly beloved animals and birds and trees and flowers, it is simply grand to be out in our garden of wilderness again and to fill one's lungs with fine fresh air; one cannot breathe properly down there or even sleep at night with all the cars and buses rushing past and making a noise like distant thunder".

In Adelaide? In 1929?
THERE ARE, OF COURSE, ANXieties ABOUT THE WEATHER, BUT THERE IS NO WHINGEING AND THERE IS NO DOUBT WHERE ELsie BOHNIng WANTED TO BE - DESPITE THE DROUGHTs, THE LACK OF ELECTRICITY, THE DISTANCE AND THE RISks. BUT I REGRET TO SAY SHE SOMETIMES INDULGED IN A LITTLE DARWIN BASHING.

"DARWIN FIRST DARWIN SECOND AND AGAIN DARWIN, AND THE WAYBACK TAKE THE HINDMOST" SHE COMPLAINS. THE BERRIMAH LINE PHILOSOPHY IS NOT A NEW PHENOMENON.

SHE MARRIED FRED HARRIS OF McLaren VALLEY STATION IN 1932. LATER THEY LEFT THE TERRITORY BUT I LIKE TO THINK SHE STILL HOLDS IT DEAR. HER PARENTS REMAINED AT HELEN SPRINGS UNTIL THEY DIED.

NOW MOVE ACROSS TO ARNHEM LAND WITH TED EVANS. HE FIRST SAW THE AREA AS A PATROL OFFICER IN 1946. IN THE NEXT 30 YEARS HE CAME TO KNOW IT WELL. WHAT IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING
IS HIS SURVEY OF SACRED SITES AT NHULUNBUY BEFORE THE SWISS ALUMINIUM CO. BEGAN TO DEVELOP THE BAUXITE DEPOSITS. TED EVANS TAKES PRIDE IN THE THOROUGH IDENTIFICATION OF THE SACRED SITES; AND THE RESULT IS STILL TO BE SEEN BY THE SUCCESS OF THE SITING OF THE PLANT AND MACHINERY WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE ABORIGINALS; RATHER THAN THE RESISTANCE WHICH WOULD HAVE OCCURRED WITH THOUGHTLESS INTRUSION.

OF COURSE TED HAD THE RIGHT INTRODUCTIONS THROUGH BILL HARNEY, ANOTHER GREAT TERRITORIAN. I HOPE THE LIBRARY HAS TAPES OF THOSE MAGNIFICENT CONVERSATIONS OF HIS, WHICH SURVEY THE WHOLE OF HIS EXTRAORDINARY LIFE IN THE TERRITORY, AND ALSO OVERSEAS DURING THE 1914-18 WAR. HIS LOVE OF THE TERRITORY AND ITS PEOPLE WAS LEGENDARY. I MUST QUOTE FROM ONE OF HIS POEMS ALTHOUGH IT DOESN'T RELATE TO ARNHENM LAND BUT RATHER SOUTH OF ALICE.

WE CAMP IN KULGERA'S WEATHERED HILLS, SCARRED CORE OF AN ANCIENT RANGE, WHERE THE CAMP-FIRE FLAME Throws OUT ITS LIGHT, ON A SCENE THAT IS EVER STRANGE AS A DINGO WAILS BY THE PAINTED WALL OF A SACRED CAVE NEAR BY
AND THE STARS SHINE BRIGHT AS WE LIE AT NIGHT
BENEATH A FROSTY SKY.

WE RISE AS MULGA-PARAKEETS GO WHIRLING THROUGH THE
DAWN,
WE SEE OLD STAR-MAN MANBUK RISE, FROM DEPTHS OF
MIDNIGHT DRAWN;
WE HEAR THE GRADER'S ENGINE ROAR WITH SAM BEHIND
THE WHEEL,
AND I SING MY SONG AS WE PLUNGE ALONG TO THE
CHATTER OF WHEEL AND STEEL.

W.E. ("BILL") HARNEY

I NOTICE TED ALSO MEETS ANOTHER TED – TED EGAN WHO KNOWS THE
COUNTRY AND HAS GIVEN US HIS GREAT SONGS ABOUT IT.

DEFINITELY MY FAVOURITE COUNTRY & WESTERN MAN TED, AND LONG
MAY HE SING.

SIR EDWARD WOODWARD, "TED", A FRIEND OF MINE FOR MANY YEARS,
HAS GIVEN US SOMETHING MORE SOPHISTICATED "THREE WIGS AND
FIVE HATS". HE HAS HAD A DISTINGUISHED CAREER WHICH AT
TIMES BROUGHT HIM TO THE TERRITORY EITHER AS A FEDERAL JUDGE
OR ON MISSIONS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE, FIRST IN THE STEVEDORING
INDUSTRY THEN LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE LAND RIGHTS
CHAIRMAN OF AN INQUIRY INTO ARMED SERVICES PAY AND
CONDITIONS; AND LATER INTO AN INQUIRY TO DETERMINE HOW

KANGAROO MEAT WAS SOMEHOW AND MOST ILLEGALLY TURNING INTO

CANNED BEEF FOR FOREIGN CONSUMPTION. HE IS, I AM GLAD TO

SAY, A PROPERLY INFECTED SOUTHERNER WITH A GREAT

APPRECIATION OF THE TERRITORY. I AM GLAD HE TOO SEES DARWIN

AS THE FUTURE AND AS AUSTRALIA'S GATEWAY TO ASIA - AS YOU

WILL FIND IN THIS PAMPHLET.

ANOTHER WELL-RESEARCHED ARTICLE IS THAT BY ERIC ROLLS - "THE

ERRATIC COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AUSTRALIA & CHINA". IT WOULD

BE STRANGE IF THIS GREAT CIVILISATION DID NOT HAVE AT LEAST

SOME REALISATION OF GREAT LANDS TO THE SOUTH. ERIC ROLLS

MAKES OUT A GOOD CASE THAT THE FAMOUS SAILOR ZHENG OR SAN

BAO MIGHT AT LEAST HAVE GOT VERY CLOSE IN THE 15TH CENTURY.

LATER, TRADE WITH CHINA INCREASED, THOUGH RATHER ERRATICALLY

IN THE 19TH CENTURY; SOME OF THE IMPORTS BEING PEOPLE. WE

HAVE THE GOLD DISCOVERIES AT PINE CREEK TO THANK FOR THE

FIRST INFUX OF CHINESE IN THE TERRITORY, AND THEIR
DESCENDANTS HAVE ADDED GREATLY TO OUR DEVELOPMENT. MANY ARE
FOURTH GENERATION TERRITORIANS AND WE BOAST SUCH FINE
CITIZENS AS HARRY CHAN, ALEC PONG LIM, CHARLES SEE-KEE,
EDDIE QUONG, AND MANY OTHERS. AND LET ME REFER YOU HERE TO
AN EARLIER PAMPHLET BY CHARLES SEE-KEE - "CHINESE
CONTRIBUTION TO EARLY DARWIN" RELEASED BY THIS LIBRARY IN
1987.

BACK TO THE ABORIGINAL HISTORY AND THE WORK OF OUR WELL
KNOWN CITIZEN HARRY GIESE WHO WITH HIS WIFE NAN HAVE MADE
SPLENDID CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS TERRITORY.
NAN HAS LABOURED TIRELESSLY FOR EDUCATION - AS CHAIRMAN OF
D.I.T. AND LATER AS DEPUTY CHANCELLOR OF THE NORTHERN
TERRITORY UNIVERSITY. HARRY GIVES US THE HISTORY OF
ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS, AND MY ONLY COMPLAINT HERE IS THAT HE
IS FAR TOO MODEST ABOUT HIS OWN ACHIEVEMENTS. I AM GLAD
THAT HE COMES TO THE RESCUE OF DR MICK COOK WHOSE WORK IS
SOMETIMES CRITICISED TODAY AS OVERLY PATERNALISTIC. THIS IS
Taking hindsight to a remarkable degree of intolerance. As Harry points out there would be fewer tribal Aborigines living in the territory today were it not for Mick Cook. Harry tells us of the arrangements for education, scholarship and teacher training, courses for nurses and recruitment of managers, carpenters and mechanics to build the necessary housing and schools. In 1962, when Aborigines gained the right to vote, Harry looked after the progressive removal of protective or restrictive legislation. The census itself was a massive task. Encouragement was given to the development of Aboriginal arts - and we see many of the results today. Tourism, fishing and forestry were studied, and Harry brings us up to date on these continuing matters.

When I was attending Darwin Primary School I had the great good fortune to be taught by Mr Tambling the father of our present Senator. He was a great teacher in many ways, and
HE WAS THE FIRST TO INculcate IN ME AND MANY OTHERS THAT
LOVE OF THE TERRITORY WHICH NEVER DIES. ONE OF THE WAYS HE
DID THIS WAS TO INTRODUCE US TO THE CHARACTERS IN "WE OF THE
NEVER NEVER" AND TELL US ABOUT THEM. THIS STORY "THEY OF
THE NEVER NEVER" BY PETER FORREST TAKES US FURTHER BACK TO
THE FOUNDING OF THAT ELSEY STATION WHERE THE BOOK
ORIGINATES. IT IS AN ACCOUNT OF ENORMOUS HARDSHIPS,
TRAGEDIES AND FINANCIAL DISASTERS. UNLIKE MANY OTHER NAMES
"ELSEY" HAS A REAL CONNECTION, SINCE IT WAS THE NAME OF THE
MAN WHO ACCOMPANIED A.C. GREGORY IN EXPLORING THIS PART OF
THE COUNTRY. A.C. GREGORY AND STUART HELPED TO OPEN UP THE
COUNTRY. PETER FORREST TRACES THE SLOW DEVELOPMENT
THEREAFTER. IT WAS VERY MUCH A CASE OF TWO STEPS FORWARD
AND ONE STEP BACK. SETTLERS SUCH AS WALLACE, WHO DIED
TRAGICALLY BY HIS OWN HAND, FOLLOWED "THE QUEENSLAND ROAD"
AND PETER FORREST HAS ALREADY TOLD US ABOUT THAT. WE HEAR
OF AENEAS GUNN AND HIS SCOTTISH BACKGROUND AND HIS WIFE THE
AUTHOR JEANIE, AND HIS DEATH AND HER LEAVING NEVER TO
RETURN. IT IS STRANGE THAT FOR SUCH A VIVID BOOK, SHE SPENT ONLY ONE YEAR IN THE TERRITORY. BUT SHE WAS A GREAT PROPAGANDIST FOR IT. AFTER OTHER FINANCIAL VICISSITUDES, WHICH PETER DESCRIBES, ELSEY STATION CAME INTO THE THONEMANN FAMILY WHO APPOINTED HAROLD GILES AS MANAGER. MY MOTHER WAS A GREAT FRIEND OF MRS GILES AND AS A SMALL BOY, I SPENT A MARVELOUS HOLIDAY ON THE STATION. PETER IS RIGHT, HOWEVER, TO WARN US THAT, WHILE THE BOOK AND THE STATE OF MIND IT PRODUCED, DOES STAND FOR THINGS DISTINCTIVELY AUSTRALIAN WE SHOULD, AS HE PUTS IT, "NEVER NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE HISTORICAL FACTS THAT ARE SOMETIMES OBSCURED BY THE SYMBOLISM".

SO HERE ARE 6 FACETS OF THE LIFE OF THIS GREAT, VITAL, OFTEN HARSH BUT OFTEN LOVELY TERRITORY OF OURS. SHE HAS A GREAT FUTURE. WE MUST SEE THAT SHE ACHIEVES IT. THESE PAPERS HELP US TO SEE HER IN DIFFERENT WAYS. WE ARE GRATEFUL THAT THE LIBRARY HAS GIVEN US THIS OPPORTUNITY.
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