

Royal Western Australian Historical Society's
Annual Pioneers Memorial Service
on Sunday 28th May 2000 at St Bartholomews Chapel, East Perth Cemeteries,

Commemorating Quinlan, Connor and O'Connor Families

Citation by Michael F Quinlan, Professor of Medicine

Your Lordship Bishop Robert Healy, Sir William Heseltine, President of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, Mr Joe O'Sullivan, President of the Australian/Irish Heritage Association, members of the Australian Irish Association, members of the Quinlan and Connor families, welcome to this celebration of the families, gathered near the graves of Daniel Connor and his daughter Teresa, my Grandmother, and wife of Timothy Francis Quinlan. Of course I must include many other families who can claim descendancy from the original ones. They include the Murphy, Hayes, Daly, Benari, Dease, Bourke, Esmonde, Whitely, Peacock, Kirwan, McIntyre, Secombe, Poland, Oakes, Summerhayes, Byrnes, Walsh, Arundell, Sheldrick, McCall, Clune, Thompson, Coffey, Onn, Keleman, White, Pine, Harding, Coltrona, Gilman, Peachey, Rice, Collins, Treadgold, Hales, Ladyman, and Noble families, and I am sure others for whose omission I apologise.

Max Connor has referred to the extended family as the Catholic Mafia, a term I have heard before and again just recently when I was told that I was the hidden instigator of the inquiry into King Edward Hospital with the aim of having it closed down because of my opposition to abortion! What an extraordinary power - but totally unfounded.

Life is full of coincidences. Today is no exception as it just happens that while we are here, just down the road to the West the Eagles are hopefully beating Carlton! I am grateful that Bishop Healy, a devoted fan of the Eagles has gracefully consented to be with us for the celebration this afternoon. Indeed we are graced by the presence of an A.F.L commissioner, Mr Terence O'Connor, as well; although I believe that a bolt of lightning from heaven, sent by Desmond, his father, would have struck him down at Subiaco Oval if he had dared to turn up there.

There is another remarkable coincidence about today the 28th May 2000 because almost to the minute my grandfather Timothy Francis Quinlan met the S.S. Adelaide at Fremantle wharf as it docked at 3.00 p.m with the first Dominican Sisters to come to Western Australia - the date May 28th 1899. It wasn't the first or the last time he had welcomed a Religious Order to Perth - but more of that later.

The first member of the Quinlan-Connor families to come to W.A. was my greatgrandfather Daniel Connor in 1851 on the good ship "Phoebe Dunbar" courtesy of Her Majesty's British Government. Daniel was from county Kerry and there is some doubt as to his birthplace. This piece of history is being vigorously pursued by his great-grandaughter Elizabeth Connor, now Peacock, and her husband Peter. He was a farm labourer and a licensed hawker who walked around old Newcastle/Toodyay, and to quote the description of that time:-
"with a bundle of small goods, such as needles, pins and cottons tied up in a red handkerchief dangling from a stick over his shoulder"

He later became a storeowner, farmer and landowner, merchandiser and miller and property owner in Perth, Fremantle and Guildford, and finally according to the record he was classified a gentleman. At one time a very large part of the Central Business District of Perth was owned by him and the extended family. Meanwhile my other great-grandfather, Michael Quinlan and his

wife Maria had arrived in Perth on the ship Palestine in 1863 with their two children Timothy Francis aged 2 and Mary, newly born, from the town of Boris O'Kane in Tipperary. He was a blacksmith and they settled on a small farm near Toodyay. In 1865 he joined a Government Expedition to the ill fated settlement at Camden Harbour in the far North-West.

He was described by the Government Resident Commissioner Sholl in the none too flattering phrase of "a civil, lazy fellow" although it was acknowledged that he was an expert craftsman and that the enervating climate of the North West at that time of the year could have accounted for his "laziness". He died by drowning on September 5th 1865 while the party was fleeing from a group of aborigines. He was just 24 years old. He did not know that in the meantime his wife Maria had died on 13th June 1865 giving birth to twins neither of whom lived. Interestingly Daniel Connor was asked to look after the 3 family cows. He claimed £6 18s for the fodder required. In 1866 Father Mathew Gibney, later Bishop Gibney, famous for his role in the events surrounding Ned Kelly's last battle at Glenrowan, and a Mr J T Reilly journeyed to Toodyay by gig and brought Timothy and his sister Mary to Perth. J.T. Reilly and his wife fostered them both. J.T. Reilly was the founding Editor of the Record newspaper and his book, Reminiscences of 50 Years in Western Australia, published in 1901, remains an invaluable source of information about the Swan River Colony in the second half of the 19th Century. J.T. Reilly was an extraordinarily generous man and brought up his foster children as his own and encouraged Timothy in his early business career as well. Mary later went to Adelaide to marry and settle there. By 1859 Daniel Connor had married Catherine Conway and they had a family of three sons and three daughters, one of whom, Teresa, married Timothy Quinlan in 1883. They had five sons and four daughters. Teresa died at the age of 41 from what was described as peritonitis, in 1904. It was most likely due to a ruptured appendix - remembering that the first successful appendectomy was done on the Prince of Wales in 1900. Teresa was by all accounts an extraordinary woman, described as being very generous and concerned for all who came into contact with her, as well as much loved by her husband and family.

Perhaps his care and concern for her was responsible for Timothy's belief, stated in the Legislative Assembly in the 1899 debate on the vote for women that "women, like cats were best kept at home". You can imagine the uproar this created in the House as well as the West Australian the next day. A wholehearted apology and explanation occurred quickly!

Descendants of four of Daniel and Catherine's children are here today. Somewhere in that generation the surname O'Connor came into being, so that we have Connors and O'Connors with us now. Two of Daniel's sons became doctors, Daniel and Michael. I remember Terry O'Connor's father Desmond referring to "Uncle Mike". He was quite an identity in Perth as Perth's Health Officer, Senior Physician of the Perth Government Hospital and Chairman of the Stanley Brewing Company, and later the Swan Brewery. He had been educated as a doctor at Trinity College in Dublin. Perhaps Dr Michael O'Connor's Chairmanship of the Brewery put the imprimatur on beer as a health food! Certainly a considerable number of the family down the generations since, have assiduously incorporated beer and wine as essentials for their survival - with some achieving legendary status in that regard!

Timothy Quinlan became a wealthy businessman, landowner, vigneron, Publican and Politician. He was extraordinarily and quietly philanthropic. As a politician he was a colleague of Sir John Forrest and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for 8 years. He was also a very prominent figure in the Catholic Church and was made a Papal Knight in his early 40s. As mentioned previously he personally welcomed religious orders to Perth, not just the Dominicans but also the Sisters of St John of God, the Sister of Our Lady of the Missions, the Good Shepherd sisters and the Oblate fathers. He was also by repute a dab hand at poker - a very serious game of the day, played for high stakes.

My father, Daniel, was of the next generation, with his sisters Eileen, Gertrude and Kathleen, brothers Cecil, Harold, Gerald and Frank along with Daniel, Francis, Clem and Vincent Connor, Eileen, Sheila, Ted and Dorothea Hayes, Desmond, Bob, Kevin and Maurice O'Connor. Many of them were educated at secondary and tertiary level in Melbourne, England and Ireland. There were a smattering of doctors and farmers and soldiers amongst them and the beginning of what was to become a Legion of Lawyers in later generations. Desmond O'Connor, as many of you know, died recently leaving only Kathleen Connor, nee O'Neill, and now in her 90s, as the only survivor of that generation. Two - Harold Quinlan and Clem Connor were killed in the First World War and Arthur Patrick (better known as Kevin) O'Connor in the Second World War. The next generation of which I am a member with my brothers Tim and Tony and sister Mary, along with Max Connor, Dan Connor, Clem Connor, Betty Connor, Dorothy Connor, Dorothea Connor, Terry, Erin, Jock and Prudence O'Connor, Jeremy, Jocelyn, Monica and Rosemary Hayes, Sally Gwynne and many others have personal memories of many of our preceding generation.

Who will forget Bob O'Connor, Leo O'Connor and Stan Murphy. Stan the learned studious man who generously endowed St Thomas More College. Major Bob, jovial big-hearted bon vivant and master of the good ship Dorina, Sheila Hayes, later Gwynne, supreme horse breeder and winner of important races across Australia. I will not forget my Aunt Eileen, Imperial Hostess of extraordinary soirees at the Palace Hotel - in earlier days wife of the owner of a station on Dirk Hartog Island. I will not forget my uncle Sir John Kirwan, first editor of the Kalgoorlie Miner and Federal Member for Kalgoorlie in the First Federal Parliament and later Speaker of the Legislative Council in the Western Australian Parliament.

I read an article on the first traffic accident in Perth, held in Sir John Kirwan's pages in the Battye Library. He wrote of the occasion in a newspaper article. He was seated alongside the driver of the car as it sped at something like 6 m.p.h. down the dusty unsealed surface of St George's Terrace of the time. Out of the dust loomed the figure of a man and before they could stop, the car caught the man a glancing blow and he was bowled over in a cloud of dust. They got out and helped him up and after brushing him down recognised the victim as the then Premier, Mr A E Morgan - fortunately unhurt! The article did not name the driver, but in the archival copy my uncle had written his name in the margin - none other than Dr Michael O'Connor! Here today is Sir John Kirwan's daughter-in-law Mary and by wonderful coincidence Teresa Quinlan now Teresa Bourke, the oldest member of our generation named after her grandmother Teresa Quinlan, whose grave we honour today. Teresa and her husband Joe delayed their return to England to be here and it was entirely apt that she was able to do the reading today. She is the daughter of Patrick Francis Quinlan who captained the W. A. State cricket team and died at an early age of tuberculosis. Two of that generations were killed in war, Edmund Kirwan in World War II and Keith MacIntyre in the Malayan campaign.

The next generations number a very large number, scattered throughout Australia and the world, contributing to their communities and society, representing all the major professions, priests, farmers and horse breeders, soldiers, sailors and airmen, vintners, geologists, businessmen and women, teachers, nurses, hoteliers, tourism and the arts and many more. Several nights ago, Josephine Byrnes unforgettable presence was seen on T.V. again. On my mother's side I can claim the late Johnny O'Keefe as a cousin. It is no surprise, therefore, that my sister Mary is such a great singer and my brother Tony's and my ability to tell great jokes is a common talent with our other cousin Dave Allen! Our children deny that we have this talent - unfortunately!

Such a short overview cannot do justice to the individual members of the family, many of whom have contributed greatly to their own families, society in general, their communities,

local, State and Federal Politics, Education and the Church - but that is the story of the Pioneers in Western Australia. Dan Connor, a labourer and Michael Quinlan a blacksmith bringing their Irish Heritage with them would not have envisaged the legacy that followed their arrival in their new country.

Finally, on your behalf may I thank the Royal Western Australian Historical Society and the Australian/Irish Heritage Association (W. A.) and Bishop Healy for the honour they have done the family on this day of commemoration.