

## a centenary of canberra's catholics

**In the fifth in a series of portraits of significant Catholics of the national capital, 2009 Canberra Citizen of the Year Bishop Pat Power remembers Fred Quinane**

# 'Lord Mayor' was man of compassion and justice

In 1959 I sat with a group of young seminarians while Archbishop Eris O'Brien explained to us that as chairman of the ACT Advisory Council, Fred Quinane was effectively the Lord Mayor of Canberra.

I don't remember the context of the Archbishop's remarks, but he clearly had a deep affection and admiration for Fred who had occupied that role since 1955.

The Advisory Council was the forerunner to the ACT Legislative Assembly which ushered in self-government for the ACT in 1989.

Labor politics and the Catholic faith were deeply imbued in Fred's life when he moved to Canberra in 1948 with his wife, Mary, the year after their wedding.

His father, Joe, had been a supporter of H V (Doc) Evatt but there had been an acrimonious falling-out in which Fred was also embroiled.

However, Fred had enjoyed good relations with Ben Chifley, Eddie Ward, Arthur Calwell and many other ALP notables.

Little wonder that when he and Mary moved to Canberra one of the first things he did was to apply for membership of the ACT branch of the ALP.

The officer bearers were Prof Fin Crisp (president), Peter Lawler (secretary) and Bill Byrne (treasurer).

At that time, Canberra was still not represented in

the Federal Parliament and Fred campaigned for Jim Fraser to become its first member in 1949.

Among the highlights of his time as chairman of the Advisory Council were welcoming the Olympic Torch to Canberra in 1956, and with Mary being presented to the Queen Mother in 1958.

Fred Quinane hosted a citizens' welcome to the Queen Mother, the event taking place at the foot of City Hill.

A plaque at the southern end of Northbourne Avenue records this piece of history. An important part of Fred's duties was presiding over the naturalisation ceremonies of the time.

Retiring from the Advisory Council in 1959 allowed Fred to further his public service career and take key roles in many developments in Canberra's burgeoning Catholic community.

He was very much a mover and shaker actively involved in building the O'Donnell Youth Centre in Braddon, St Brigid's in Dickson and the Dominican priory and convent in Watson.

Later in life he was to help in fund-raising for a new chapel for the Carmelite Sisters.

In the late 1960s he was part of a group which set out to establish what was to become the Canberra Southern Cross Club.



ABOVE: Fred Quinane and wife Mary escort the Queen Mother at a citizens' welcome to the royal visitor in 1958.



RIGHT: Fred Quinane... "Lord Mayor of Canberra".

In 1971, with club patron, Bishop Alo Morgan, he turned the first sod and when the club was opened he became its first president.

His fellow board members included Paul Rice, Mary Scholtens, Barney Lewis, Ron Keogh, George Wilde and John Reilly.

Alex McGoldrick, a future ambassador to Saudi Arabia, had been associated with Fred Quinane while the former was a senior official in the Department of Trade and Fred was working in the Trade Commissioner Service.

Alex writes: "Running the Trade Commissioner Service was a labour of love for Fred. He was a tough manager but

a compassionate one and he was liked – admired indeed – by those he regarded as his people around the world.

"In 1979 he himself was appointed Australian Trade Commissioner in San Francisco, retiring on his return to Australia in 1982."

Fred Quinane's great love for Canberra found many expressions, and on his return from overseas, he became the first executive director of the Canberra Association for Regional Development which was to become the Canberra Business Council.

Later he was to be a member of the National Capital Planning Authority from 1991 to 1994.

Fred Quinane lived through the Great Depression growing up in Sydney and, although he always had a pair of shoes himself, he vividly remembered other children who didn't.

He would forever have a concern for those less fortunate.

This was part of the motivation which drove him politically and which expressed itself as he lived out his Catholic faith with a keen sense of justice.

He used his fund-raising skills in helping the St Vincent de Paul Society to raise around a million dollars in 1988 assisting in the building of centres in Mitchell, Belconnen and Tuggeranong, allowing people in need to be assisted with dignity and compassion.

He was always involved in parish life and served as an acolyte in St Augustine's Parish, Farrer, with his good friend, Fr Tommy Wright.

Anne Quinane summed up her father at his funeral Mass which I was privileged to celebrate following his death on 8 June, 2005.

"Fred was a natural leader with an impressive capacity to get things done. Sustained by his deep Christian faith and motivated by his abiding commitment to community service, Fred took on responsibilities of office because he felt it important to make a contribution.

"Fred was a man of action, never happier than when chairing a meeting or launching an undertaking – relishing in the planning, delegation and execution and finally the main event. Fred could always be relied upon to deliver a great speech and ensure that everything went just right on the day."

Anne, currently Australia's High Commissioner to Malta, has clearly been given a good share of her father's (and mother's!) genes.

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