

## From my photo album



Here I am with my beautiful sister, Ena. I'm about 21 years old in this photo. I can't remember exactly where it was taken but I'm obviously enjoying a drink.



This is a photo of me at about five years old, standing outside our house in Smithfield, on the corner of Alt Street and The Horsley Drive.



This photo was taken while I was mayor. I'm here with Cr Anwar Khoshaba, local MP Janice Crosio and an engineer from Fairfield Council on the site of Prairiewood Leisure Centre. It's a place I'm very proud I helped to build.

# Migrant babe-in-arms who became mayor

By LAURA SPERANZA

Frank Campolongo's first view of Australia was not a happy one – he was a prisoner of war.

But he fell in love with the land of his captors so much that he returned after World War II as a migrant.

And Tony, the little boy in his arms, was destined to become a proud Aussie business and social leader and city mayor.

Not that Tony Campolongo isn't proud of his Italian roots.

He's the president of Club Marconi and last month the 53-year-old was named 2003 Italian of the Year by the National Migrant Association of Australia and Americas.

As he was only six months old on his arrival, Tony has no youthful memory of his family's ancestral home in Cosenza.

Most of his memories are bound up in the city he calls home – Fairfield.

"My father had a real passion for Australia," said Tony.

Frank Campolongo contacted the people who had employed him as a POW in Australia. And they were more than happy to sponsor the hard-working man so he could come back with his young family.

"Our family headed to Cootamundra where Dad had a job," Tony said.

But Frank believed he could provide a better home for his growing family in Sydney. He met a woman called Mrs Shore – the gatekeeper at Fairfield station – who invited them to stay in her spare room.

So Tony, his parents and sister, Maria, lived in a little house near the railway. A second sister, Ena, was born locally.

Tony's father bought five acres of land on The Horsley Drive, Smithfield, and started his own fruit shop and deli.

Tony started at St Gertrude's Primary School.

"It was only two classes back then, very different from the school there today," he said.

He went to Fairfield Boys High. With a keen interest in real estate, he took a Diploma of Business after graduating in the 1960s. Tony started a business in Guildford, then Smithfield.

"Real estate was something that I was interested in and it also gave me a chance to help Italian migrants who were settling in the area."



Everyone has a story to tell. This week we look at Club Marconi's Tony Campolongo.

He and wife, Josephine, married in 1976 in St Benedict's Church, Smithfield, and settled in Braeside Avenue, where they still live today.

Immediately, there is a smile on Tony's face as he talks about his daughters – Corina, 26, Christina, 25, Bianca, 24, and Deanna, 19.

"They are just wonderful girls and they make me very proud," he said.

A sense of wanting to help people was the reason Tony became involved in the Chamber of Commerce in the early 1990s.

Tony was elected deputy mayor of Fairfield in 93-94 and mayor in 94-95.

Among his achievements, he lists installing cameras across Cabramatta to help fight crime

and the highly successful Festival of Nations, held in 1995.

Tony was the man behind the construction of Prairiewood Leisure Centre.

He found another passion in helping the elderly and was a founding member of the South West Italo-Australian Association. The organisation was behind the construction of the retirement village in Bossley Park.

"I saw [my presidency of] Club Marconi as a challenge because it was experiencing a lot of difficulty at the time," he said.

"I knew it was possible to turn the club around and I'm pleased to say it is doing very well today.

"The club had a special place in my heart, too. It's a place where I have been socialising since I was 21 years old."

"This area has been good to me and I enjoy giving back to the community," he said.

His father Frank died five years ago. But his 85-year-old mother still lives in Smithfield.

"My parents taught me the values of life, to treat others the same way you expect to be treated."

### CLUB BOSS

... Tony Campolongo has been one of the best-known faces in Fairfield for years – but what is his story?

