

26 January 2002

AUSTRALIA DAY COMMITTEE **WOLLONGONG**

Speaker: IOAN MICLĂU

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

My name is Ioan Miclau, I live in Wollongong's suburb of Cringila, for over 20 years, with my family. My wife Florica (Flora) and three daughters, but two daughters have now their independent life. Elena is married with two children, Tania will have her wedding this year, and Otilia still is living with us. We are proud to live in Australia, and be Australian citizens. Australia deserve for our full loyalty. How happy I was with my family reaching here, as a refugee, I can only feel, but not to explain.

I came to Australia since 1980, more exactly on 4 January 1980, from Romania. I will never stop to thanks because that country gave me a chance of life. I was an optimistic person, with will and hope, decided to accept any sorts of job offered to me. It was not easy, any way, because I haven't any command of English Language. I was forty years old, three children plus my wife and me; there were 5 mouths to feed.

I remember, I not forget, I will like to thanks to BHP – Steel Works, Port Kembla, too. First my job, as I remember, was to “ drive “ a wheelbarrow and a shovel (saval). But, my will and hope were strong, with the help of educational system conducted by BHP for workers, I improved my English Language, I gathered the professional knowledge, I entered into qualification courses, and in the final my qualification was as a Operator in steel making, Department BOS (Basic Oxygen Steel making).

My wife didn't speak the English Language, too. You know, the women have sometimes better brain, so she made efforts and helped the family too. She loved to help old people, it was a pleasure for her, so she did work some 12 years for Homecare. But the principal purpose for us was, to look for children's education, to give them a future, to be useful and for that sweet-mother Country, which gave them the opportunity for a good life.

We understood from the beginning, that me and my wife Flora's duty is to help our children to have a good behaviour, to respect the people around, to respect the work and money, because they sow us how hard we work for their bread. Thus, our three daughters, Elena, Tania, Otilia, entered primary school, then high school, then University of Wollongong.

Elena graduated as a Bachelor of Mathematics, today with a full-time job, Tania graduated as a Bachelor of Commerce, with a fulltime job in Sydney, and, Tania is a member of N.S.W - Writer Centre, as a poet. Otilia, the little one, after

finished High School, she loved "Fine Arts", to be an artist of landscape, she entered University too.

Now, I recognize, I tell to you, I tell to myself, that all the respect is to be expressed only to Australia, for its protection and toleration done, when my family needed and craved for a free life, as a refugee from Romania.

My retirement from work came in 1996. But, I was not going, after 18 years employed, to lose the time for nothing. Now, I followed my daughters. To improve my education and to learn about Australian culture, I entered at TAFE-Wollongong.

OK! There I met nice teachers, like Heather Milroy, Karen Moore, really enthusiastic teachers. From my childhood back in Romania I dreamed to be a writer, a scholar, but there I never can do anything, because everything there was only communist theory. Thus, at 39-40 years old here in Australia I started to write. I wrote verses, poems and short stories.

PEN - Sydney Centre, published my poem in 1988, entitled "Port Kembla's Fire Fortress". It was a poem of dedication to Port Kembla Steelworks, as a respect, because that company gave me a job, a chance to survive. Then I published many poems and verses in our local publication "Voice of Cringila".

Once I entered at TAFE -Wollongong, I worked hard, I put in my brain an ambition to enter as a student at University of Wollongong. In 1999, I was succesful, and I entered University, studying Modern History. I studied with great pleasure about Australian History, just which is more interesting period-1780-1880, the establishment of First Australian Colonies. (1788-Botany Bay as a penal colony -26 January - now-214 years)

But , what I think the best of my success, was to became a member of the South Coast Writer Centre - Wollongong, the area where we are living, the area where my children and grandchildren will have to live.

In my family there is understanding of the fact that positively thinking, optimistic, with strong will and hope we can be confident of our success. For that AUSTRALIAN DAY CELEBRATION, I want to wish you and everyone a Happy New Year 2002, health and good luck!