

Donovan News

Number 3

An Occasional Publication

Autumn 1989

...keeping in touch with clients and other friends...

PEOPLE MAKE HISTORY

In the days before government policies of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity the noted Australian historian W. Keith Hancock claimed that if Geography was about 'Maps' then History was about 'Chaps'.

What he was suggesting is that people are important in history. This is basic to the philosophy of those at **Donovan & Associates**.

We are primarily concerned with the people in the businesses and organisations that we are asked to research and write about. They are the ones who have the dreams and ideas. People are those who make the decisions that influence future directions and present day activities. People suffer the consequences of good and bad decisions and react to these in a multitude of ways. People are they who embody a Corporate Culture: the very concept is meaningless if people are not considered. There are yet no fully automated industries so the management of people remains fundamental to the success of any business and organisation.

Lessons can be drawn from the description of profit trends and technological innovations, but it is only when the story examines the decisions that lay behind these developments and the people that made them that the full value can be obtained from this analysis.

So it is that at **Donovan & Associates** we are concerned first of all with the people who have created and influenced those organisations that we have been commissioned to write about. With this emphasis the history can be useful in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the past so that better plans can be made for the future.



PEOPLE

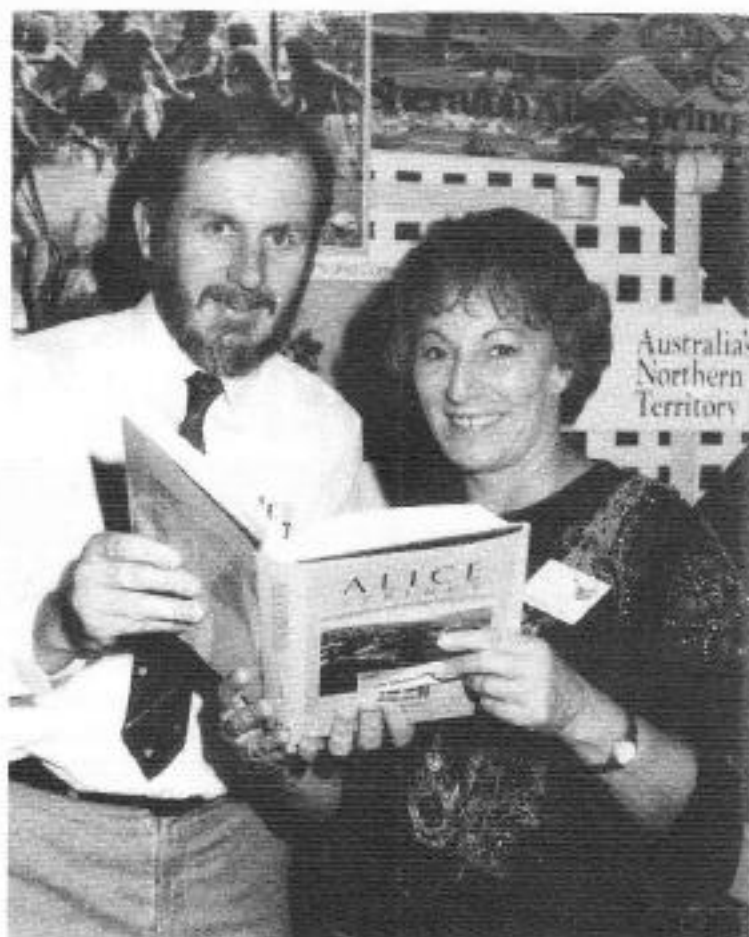
Donovan & Associates are delighted to welcome aboard **Allison Painter**. Alison has been co-opted primarily to help with the research and writing of the history of the Real Estate Institute of South Australia (REI). She is a B.A. (Hons) graduate of Flinders University, an executive member of the Association of Professional Historians, and has written a history of Adelaide's famous Coopers' Brewery, which was published in 1987 under the title *Jolly Good Ale and Old*. Alison will also be helping with Stage #2 of the project to record the oral history of the Adelaide Gaol.

Pamela Runge is renewing her relationship with **Donovan & Associates**. She is to undertake research work for the history of the REI and to help with the oral history of the Gaol.

The co-author of the history of Australian National, **Bernard O'Neill**, has recently been undertaking editorial work for the Petroleum Exploration Society of Australia (PESA). His research on

South Australia's pioneer geologist, Johannes Menge (1788-1852) progresses well and will be nearer completion following another visit to the United Kingdom and West Germany in the middle of the year. This visit has been made possible by a 'study and research scholarship' from the German Academic Exchange Service. While away he will be attending the 18th International Congress of the History of Science which is to be held in Hamburg and Munich in August.

During Easter and for the following week **Donovan & Associates** were hosts to **Dr Philip Cantelon** and his wife **Eileen McGuckian**. Phil is the President of History Associates Incorporated (HAI) of Maryland in the United States, a history consulting company presently with a staff of 57; in 1986 it was #302 of America's 500 fastest-growing private companies with sales of almost US\$2m. Phil was in Australia to attend a conference and speak on Public History. Peter Donovan first met Phil on a visit to the USA in 1982. Eileen is the executive director of Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation Ltd, a non-profit organisation concerned with heritage conservation in Maryland. She was particularly eager to see conservation initiatives that are being undertaken in Australia.



Peter Donovan is pictured with **Leslie Oldfield**, the Mayor of Alice Springs at the Adelaide launch of *Alice Springs: Its History and the People who made it*, held in the Northern Territory Tourist Bureau in Adelaide, on 15 December, 1988, on a hot day befitting such an occasion. The book had already been launched in Alice Springs on 6 December.

THE FAULDING FORMULA

Mention was made in the previous *Donovan News* of our commission to write the history of F.H.Faulding. Founded in 1845, Faulding remains one of few South Australian companies to have maintained its own identity in the face of raids from interstate and overseas interests. But rather than simply survive, it has thrived, and has developed pharmaceutical products that are sold in more than 32 countries. The history seeks to highlight what it is about Faulding that continues to make it so special, and what has been its formula for success. The history is scheduled for publication in 1990.

ORAL HISTORY

The use of oral history techniques is fundamental to the work of **Donovan & Associates** and it brings lasting benefit to our clients.

The oral record has been a major part of all our corporate and institutional histories from SAGASCO, to Baulderstone, Australian National, F.H. Faulding and the Real Estate Institute. It is the basis to our history project for the Australian Submarine Corporation.

In many instances, such as those important decisions taken in taxis, airport lounges or lunchtime meetings, the memory of the participants is the only record of decisions taken and developments that followed. It is therefore, the oral history component that is able to provide interest and texture to a history that is not readily apparent from other sources.

From a purely practical point of view, we have also found that an oral history programme is a means of facilitating our other work in an organisation. It provides the stimulus for our historians to get out and meet the people, it is a means of promoting the project amongst them and it is a valuable means of our becoming familiar with the organisation.

As outlined in our previous issue, some clients find it more attractive to commit themselves first to an oral history programme rather than to produce a book. This ensures that valuable material is collected and preserved while giving the client additional time to assess interest in the project and the value that it can be to the organisation. We encourage this because some managers frequently have very low expectations of what a sense of history can do for them and for their organisation, and it provides us with the opportunity to educate them in this.

The results of any oral history programme can also be of lasting benefit for the client. Only a small percentage of the interviews might find its way into the printed record. But the material remains as a resource to be used by the organisation in regular newsletters to staff, for company promotion, or as the basis for some future historical work.



CONFERENCES

Donovan & Associates have been represented at two conferences since the previous *Donovan News*. In late February Peter Donovan presented a paper *F.H. Faulding and the Drug Revolution* to the First National Conference of the Australian Society of the History of Medicine at the University of Sydney. The paper illustrated the manner in which the recent history of F.H. Faulding has reflected that of the development of drugs.

In March, Peter Donovan also presented a paper to the Public History Conference organised by the History Institute of Victoria at the University of Melbourne. This paper illustrated some of the uses for Public History and highlighted the contributions that historians can make to managers of corporations. An edited version of this paper is featured as the Supplement.

PUBLICATIONS

Apart from the launch of *Alice Springs: Its History and the People who made it*, three other Donovan publications have appeared during the past few months.

In the November 1988 issue of *Human Resource*

Management Australia

there appeared our article *Looking Back to the Future* which extolled the utility of history in management. The message of the article is something that we have been stressing for several years and many of the concepts were very basic, but the nature and prestige of the journal gave the article greater significance.

Late in 1988 appeared the proceedings of papers presented at the *Frontiers in Australian Tourism* conference held in Canberra in June 1988 and published by the Bureau of Tourism Research in Canberra. The collection included Peter Donovan's paper, *Protecting the Geese that lay the Golden Eggs*, which argued for the greater involvement of historians in more quali-

tative research on the benefits and impacts of tourism.

Working Paper no 176 of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University appeared in January 1989. It carried the paper, *The Northern Territory in the Defence of Australia: Historical Overview*. This was written while Peter Donovan was a Visiting Fellow at the Centre in 1988.

NEW PROJECTS

Donovan & Associates have begun two new projects since the publication of the previous *News*.

In February, work began on the history of the Real

Estate Institute of South Australia which is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year.

The comprehensive history is due for publication late in 1990 so that it will include developments and celebrations in the Institute's anniversary year.

Another exciting project we are involved with concerns Stage #2 of the Oral History of the Adelaide Gaol project. The primary purpose of this oral history programme is to provide a record that might be used for self-conducted tours of the Gaol.

The further backward you can look, the further forward you are likely to see' - Churchill



DONOVAN and ASSOCIATES
History and Historic Preservation Consultants

P.O. Box 436, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051. Ph. (08) 270 1770

- Corporate and Biographical History
- Local and Regional History
- Heritage Survey and Assessment
- Advice on Archives & Records Management
- Advice on Cultural Tourism
- Litigation Support
- Public Relations, Display & Education
- Social Science Research
- Manuscript and Report Preparation



Adelaide Research Assistance

P.O. Box 136 Blackwood South Australia 5051 • Ph. (08) 270 1770

Donovan News

Supplement - 3

HISTORIANS ARE THE CHANGE MASTERS

Writing about 'The Uses and Abuses of Business History', Donald Coleman (*Business History*, vol XXIX, no 2, April 1987, pp. 141 - 156) observed that so many commissioned histories have little relevance beyond the companies that commissions them.

He considered this particularly unfortunate because 'the business company is now, and has been over the past one hundred years, the single most important organisational unit in the . . . economy' (p. 147).

Many histories of corporations and institutions are important for the manner in which they hold up a mirror to these organisations. However, most are simply celebrations of the past. Few are such that managers can learn a great deal from them that will help them prepare for the future. This is to be regretted, but is generally a product of the manner in which managers commission historians.

However, a growing number of Public Historians are focussing on business studies and they have become increasingly familiar with the development and management of business organisations. They are admirably placed to help managers formulate appropriate theories about business growth and development.

The American historian, Alfred

Chandler (*Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1962) looked at the notions of business strategies and structures, and propounded theories about these, but few others have followed his lead. Indeed, it has been left to writers like Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman (*In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*, Harper and Row, Sydney, 1986) and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (*The Change Masters: Corporate Entrepreneurs at Work*, Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1983) to seek to draw lessons and theories from the management of companies.

The works of these latter writers seek to identify those features that characterise America's excellent companies, but they fail to provide a historical perspective and to show how the companies developed, though Kanter at least acknowledges that 'In conceiving of a different future, change masters [i.e. the successful corporate entrepreneurs] have to be historians as well' (p.283). The field is wide open for historians to establish their credentials as the real Changemasters. After all, it is their business to observe and understand change.

The importance of fostering a positive Corporate Culture, that intangible thing that infuses any

organisation, is something of which all managers are aware. However, few would really understand how the corporate culture of their organisation has been determined. Here is where historians can help, for the present culture of any organisation is based firmly upon its history and traditions.

Charles Dellheim ('Business in Time: The Historian and Corporate Culture' in *Public Historian*, vol 4, no 2, Spring 1986, pp. 9-22) is one who has undertaken business history, with his study of the Cadbury and Jaguar organisations. He proposed an analytical framework for approaching the notion of corporate culture in any company. In particular, he focussed on four critical concepts 'founding, transmission, perception and transformation'. By understanding these, and the way they help shape the corporate culture, the historian has gone a long way to understanding the success or failure of the organisation.

Armed with their MBAs, modern managers are a mobile lot. However, lessons from history suggest that the more successful remain those who identify - and have become identified - with the firm. This has implications for succession, a factor which is important in any organisation. Good management theory urges managers to groom their successors, and suggests that successors preferably should come from within the organisations. This is not always followed, sometimes with grave consequences for the organisation, which are often reflected in the bottom line.

Drawing upon examples from the histories of a number of firms a

historian is able to demonstrate the wisdom of particular management rules of thumb. The historian is able to illustrate how managers with an inadequate appreciation of the history, culture, traditions, of a company have made inappropriate decisions about future directions. The historian is able to demonstrate how the importing of ready-made managers has often frustrated aspirants from within a firm who have had their advancement stymied and which raised uncertainty in the minds of others. With access to case studies, the historian is able to build up theories about those successions that are more likely to be successful, and those that are not.

But managers need to do more than simply be aware of the culture of an organisation. They have to nurture or change it in accordance with the mission of the organisation. The manager most likely to succeed in changing the culture of an organisation is one who is identified closely with the organisation and who commands a great deal of respect, rather than a new recruit, no matter how highly qualified.

If the followers are to be expected to believe in the mission of an organisation, the leaders and lieutenants certainly must.

This is all serving to reinforce the notion that historians have a great deal to offer managers, management schools, and management consultants, essentially because historians are able to provide a sense of perspective on the changes to any organisation over time. They are essentially 'Change masters', who are able to help managers and others adapt to change.

Donovan News

EXTRA

DONOVAN & ASSOCIATES

History and Historic Preservation Consultants

P.O. Box 436, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051, (08) 270 1770

20 April, 1989

History has repeated itself.

Once again important news has been received too late to be included in the latest issue of *Donovan News*. And once again, the news concerns a distinction for Peter Donovan's *Alice Springs: Its History and the People who made it*.

The book has been judged a joint finalist of the publication category of the 1989 Australian Heritage Awards, 'recognising authors', photographers' and publishers' outstanding achievements in books or periodicals'.

The Australian Heritage Award 'is designed to recognise outstanding contributions to the preservation and promotion of Australia's heritage' It is made annually by the Australian Council of National Trusts with the national sponsorship of Jones Lang Wootten. This year the award is to be made by the Governor-General in Brisbane on 21 April.

The book was nominated by the Alice Springs Town Council which was responsible for commissioning the work.