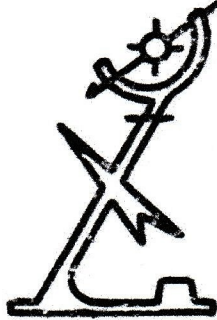


Book Launch

Looking Back to See the Future.

18/08/2022



Programme

Daina to Introduce Squadron Leader [Rtd] Lindsay Campbell as our guest Speaker

Lindsay to speak for 10-15 minutes

Lindsay to introduce Mike Wohltmann

Mike Wohltmann 15minutes talk plus 10-minute questions

Mike Wohltmann 10 minutes to thank various people

Daina to close the proceedings

People have a chance to eat, drink and be merry

Mike will then sign/ his book

Talk

I would like to welcome our distinguished guests Squadron Leader Peter Know, Lindsay Campbell and welcome you all to my Book Launch.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land [The Kaurna peoples] on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Thank you, Lindsay Campbell, for your very informative talk and generous comments about the book.

1 Why I wrote the book? What is in the Book

Brief overview of Chapters

Chapters:

Chapter 1 A The Cold War and the impact on Australia: Rocket Testing and the Atomic Bomb.

Chapter 1 B Woomera, WRE and Mallala

Chapter 1 C Woomera and Maralinga.

Chapter 2 The Joint Project, Nation-building, Defence Science and ESTEA AND OSTEE Programmes.

Chapter 3 Role of Universities in the Joint Project/ Woomera and WRE.

Chapter 4 Protest Movements against the Rocket Testing.

Chapter 5 Project Falstaff. Code named: CQ-941. Secret testing of PAC.

Chapter 6 The Never-Ending Story/Conclusion

2 Why the Title-Looking Back to See the Future

Conclusion-Never Ending Story

Purpose of History

As the great British historian Robin Collingwood [The Ideas of History] reminds us

"The historian's job is to tell plausible stories, made out of the mess of fragmentary and incomplete facts, facts which he or she processes and to which he or she thereby grants meaning through employment"

I like Collingwood's notion, as it sums up well the process of trying to establish historical meaning and representations. For the whole point of history is to pull together the connections and integrate them as parts of temporal wholes. Much of my research was like this.

What did the Book set out to do?

There are 4 things that I set out to achieve in the book:

1 To place the Joint-Project within the Cold War context both within Australia and the global context of the Cold War-Arms race, space race and the quest to for Britain to be a key player in having a nuclear deterrent, and place Australia in that context

2 To try and place the Joint-Project and show the interconnections between the key Agencies, Woomera, WRE, Mallala, and Maralinga. Use of the Military -Industrial- Complex. [MIC]

3 The third area of my research is to try and understand why the Joint-Project is never placed in the context of Nation -Building and the 'Golden Years', of the 1950-1970s, where Australia surged ahead as the country rebuilt and recapitalised, fuelled by migration, baby boom and the building of great projects like Snowy Mountain Scheme and post war reconstruction.

It was Robert Menzies who declared that: **'SMS is teaching us and everybody in Australia to think in a big way, to be thankful for big things, to be proud of big enterprises.'**

Yet there has been very little written about the role of the Joint-Project, and its contribution to post-war reconstruction. Why?

4 Project Falstaff.

You will need to read the book to find out what the Government has kept secret for all those years!!

The Department of Defence has a culture of secrecy, whether it concerns the Anglo-Australian Joint Project, Maralinga or Australia's high rate of veteran suicides. Underlying the secrecy shroud, is the problem of accessing information. This happened to me. I had to fight an 18-month battle, trying to access files that were over 50 years old. Do not get me wrong, the government has the right to guard its secret, however they do not have the right to restrict material which has way passed its used by date.

Do we know the past only through the present? Or is it a matter of only being able to understand the present through the past?

I chose the title, looking back to See the Future, as I believed that there are many parallels between then and now, importantly that we learn from the past. For example, if you are going to commit to developing a PROJECT, fund it properly and commit to it. Australia lost a wonderful opportunity to build on the Joint Project by scrapping it in the 1980.

Let us hope that our political leaders learn this lesson as South Australia becomes the Defence State. Closure of the township of Woomera is a case in point.

Parallels between the past and present include:

For example: rise in defence budgets/alliances between US and UK/New Cold War

Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union and now the threat of Russia and China

Weapons of Mass destruction, the dropping of the atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima, killed 140,000 people and 74,000 in Nagasaki. Thousands of Japanese citizens would die from radiation sickness and others had their lives ruined by other illnesses and birth defects passed on to their children. Will we learn these lessons from the atomic bomb?

The Joint-Project was all about helping Britain in its quest to acquire a nuclear deterrent, and Australia during the 50's and 60s very much kept its nuclear options open. This is no different from the AUKUS arrangement currently.

Are we seeing history repeating itself as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which threatens to plunge the World into a new Cold War?

During the Cold War there were two major players who had nuclear arsenals, today we have nine countries. [US, Russia, France, China, Britain, Pakistan India, Israel and North Korea] having an estimated arsenal of 13,000 nuclear weapons.

During the Anglo-Australia Joint Project, years, and up to now, we as a country sought close relations with both Whitehall and Washington so that we could enjoy the nuclear umbrella it provided.

With the AUKUS arrangements, we see again Australia closely aligning itself with both the US and UK.

Australians and the Australian governments need to think very carefully about their role in the brave new global nuclear world order.

What are the benefits /cost of AUKUS? Are they sustainable?

The uranium enriched to fuel naval propulsion reactors is above levels used in civilian power reactors, near-weapons-grade levels, and even weapons-grade, which poses a growing risk to achieving the non-proliferation goals of the treaty. The use and sharing of nuclear technologies and materials for military purposes could run counter to the spirit and objectives of the treaty, as it could potentially set precedence for other similar arrangements and complicate safeguards mechanisms. What this space as to whether or not the nuclear can gets kicked further down the nuclear road in Australia.

How should Australia see herself as a middle power in the future?

Should the Australian government revive middle power diplomacy and return to bringing back the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of nuclear weapons that was initiated in 1995 by the then Keating/Evans

Can we have both?

My book canvasses many other parallels.

My conclusion was called the Never-Ending Story. I do not want readers to come to the conclusion that the Woomera story has now reached its end. There is still much to be told!

Finally, I would like to formally acknowledge all the people who in the past were involved in the Joint-Project-All the ordinary men and women who worked on the Joint Project. The new Australians, the £10 Poms, the men and women of the armed services, both Australian and British, technicians, contractors, scientists, workers, academics and public servants whose total contribution, added something unique to Australia's nation-building.

It also needs to be remembered the role of protesters and dissenters in any historical story. If you look back throughout history, you will notice that the only way to bring change is by starting the chain reaction. Both of these protesters / "dissenters" did just that. For if society, took a minute to research Australia's protest history, they would learn that protest has been critical to so many social advances that we often now take for granted. Protest helped to

win the eight-hour working day, to protect the Franklin and the Daintree and advance Aboriginal land rights. Protest helped to secure women's right to vote, to stop our involvement in the Vietnam War and end the criminalisation of homosexuality-just to name a few issues. Protest is particularly important for those whose interests are often ignored by our formal political system. We also have a history of governments trying to suppress protest. This was also an important part of the Woomera story which my book covers.

Throughout the Woomera story there were protesters dissenters/rebels who pushed against the grain, including Communists, Trade Unionists, Common Cause Movement, key individuals like Dr Charles Duguid who fought against the atomic testing and its impact on the lives of Aborigines. And peace activists like Elliot Johnstone and Graham Smith, whose legacy built the modern peace movements in Australia. Women's groups, who advocated for a nuclear free peaceful world. We need to look also at their achievements in trying to both improve the world and create a better future.

Finally, we need to remember those whose lives were cut short and the disruption done to our indigenous groups. Men and women who suffered the indignity of contracting cancer in the post Maralinga years and governments that acted that like nothing ever happened.

In Conclusion, my wish for future generations is that with current technological developments, that we somehow reset back the Doomsday clock. The Doomsday Clock was design to warns the public about how close we are to destroying our world with dangerous technologies of our own making. At the beginning of the Cold War, it was set at seven minutes to midnight. It has since been set backward eight times and forward 16 times for a total of 24, the farthest from midnight being 17 minutes in 1991.

Currently it is set at 100 seconds to midnight:

Thank you and enjoy the historical journey in the book.

Part Two: Official Thank you's.

My work on and study of Woomera and the Joint-Project began in 2018. The people who helped me and gave me friendship and encouragement are innumerable and from many diverse backgrounds. I cherished my memories of them and thank them all for their generosity.

Anyone who has ever undertaken to write a book knows that it is never a singular process.

In absentsia I would like to publicly thank my editors Jason and Roz Shute. Without their help the book would not have seen the light of day.

Could, Lindsay, Dave and Robert please make your way to the front.

In particular I like to thank [outline specifically each of their contributions in bring the book to life.

Dave Stoeckel

Bert Tiley

Lindsay Campbell.

I sincerely thank all my friends and colleagues, Nick Sidoryn, Mareea Smith and others for all their encouragement, help and support over the years.

Finally, I thank my wife Jeanette and family for their encouragement, and belief in me to complete the book. Thank you to my daughter Danielle in organizing those wonderful biscuits.

Before closing, sincere thanks to Daina Pocius and Jessica Paul for making this book launch so successful

Please give them a sincere acknowledgement they deserve.

Please join us for some light refreshments



Lindsay Campbell from Defence SA



Mike Wohlmann delivering his speech



Book launch 18th August 2022. Elizabeth Civic Centre Library