

First print June, 2007

For Paul Funnell

Autobiography – In Spite of My Eyes

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data:
ISBN 978-0-9586907-3-7.
Funnell Paul, 1949

© Copyright 2007 Paul Funnell
All rights reserved

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise by any process without the permission of the publisher.

Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Website: www.paulfunnell.com

Sketch by: Irvine Campbell, Brisbane Artist

Cover by: Chris Walker - Artroom Creative Brisbane

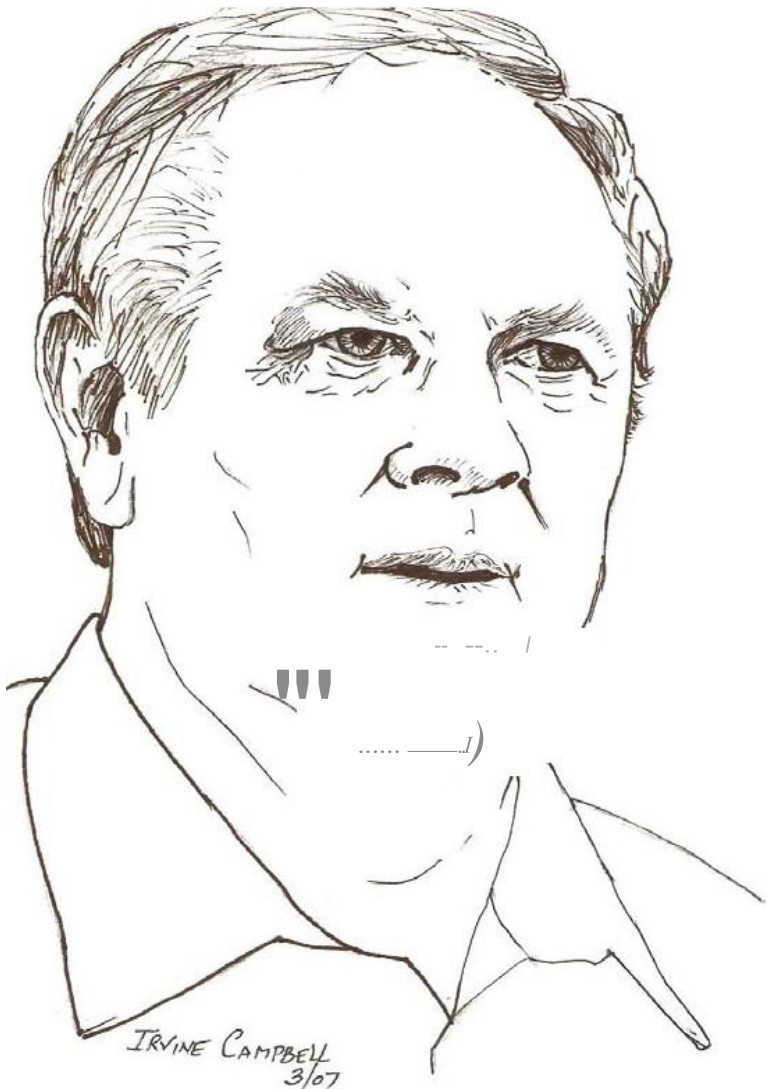
Printed by: Harding Colour Brisbane

**UNSPITE
OF
MY EYES**

The Paul Funnell Autobiography



ANTELOPE



FOREWORD

We called him ‘Leader’, because that’s what he was, our leader.

We were a small group of everyday teenagers growing up in a small country town, finding our way in life. Paul Funnell brought us together, and helped us build close-knit friendships based on trust and loyalty to each other. We experienced wonderful fellowship as we grew together over the years.

It comes as no surprise to me that Paul is living a successful and satisfying life. His book, ***In Spite of My Eyes***, is the story of his life’s journey, complete with its highs and lows. Paul pulls no punches as he shares with us the hard times, along with the lessons he has learnt.

I’ll never forget the harmless fun – although some may call it mischief - that we continually got up to. I recall one night we believed we had sprung a middle-aged neighbour of Paul’s canoodling with a young lady in a popular parking spot not far from my Cawdor home. It was a hot summer’s night in the sixties and we quickly plotted to play the role of moral crusaders. It was at a time when such behaviour was frowned upon from a great height. We raided my mother’s kitchen cupboard, and spent the next half hour making sloppy ‘flour bombs’. My older brother, Robert, drove his

Falcon Ute, and Paul and I stood in the back. I was aware Paul couldn't see in the dark, so as we drew closer, I called the directions that guided his aim; except he missed the target, which was to be the front windscreen. It got even worse; the poor bloke's side window was open, and Paul's flour bomb went straight through. When Robert realised we had scored a bull's eye, he sped off into the night.

Being in the country, one lap around the block meant a fifteen kilometre journey back to the driveway of my father's farm. We quickly changed cars for the second drive-by and to survey our work, only to discover the occupant of the car was not who we thought it was. Paul might have been able to blame his lack of sight in the dark for the mistaken identity, but there was no excuse for Robert and me.

What exhilarating fun it must have been for Paul, as he experienced the adrenalin rush of success many times over during his life. He won prestigious hydraulic engineering design projects during the boom decades of Queensland's great development. Across Brisbane, the great south-east triangle, up the coast to Far North Queensland and taking in the Great Barrier Reef, Paul has left his mark.

He built successful businesses whose services were sought after by the leading contractors for whom quality was paramount. His understanding and commitment to delivering what his clients needed, when they wanted it, was one of his most enduring qualities.

As you'll discover in this absorbing account of Paul's life, he is a talented orator. He has always been a natural. As a young teenager on church camps, he often entranced those attending - some in tears - as he delivered his version of religious events and his own 'Parables of Paul'. There was

always truth, and definitely a message in what he said, but most of all we enjoyed how each time he related it he put a different spin on the content. Maybe it was his desire to be another Billy Graham, Paul's role model, in having an audience in the palm of his hand. Regardless, Paul captivated those who took the time to listen.

His ability to communicate saw him become a talented public speaker, delivering addresses at conferences in the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

But I imagine his greatest oratory performances occurred when he communicated his company's compelling values and proposals to architects and project managers across Queensland. I can understand why they wanted to sign him for their projects. Just as he had the teenagers spellbound at our church camps forty years ago, his clients would also have been similarly receptive.

His obvious talent for presenting his knowledge and ideas in the written form helped him become a published author, with two much-applauded textbooks on plumbing design, and now this autobiography.

It is said in life that the setbacks we encounter are sent to test us and develop us into more mature people. This is probably true. But I reckon Paul has had more than his fair share of setbacks. Maybe over the years he had a lot of maturing to do; I am sure some of his school teachers whose classes he disrupted thought so!

How many times can a man rebound from unexpected business disasters over which he has little control? Setbacks brought about by his failure to see the weaknesses in colleagues he trusted? Or the sad developments in relationships with those whom he loved who blind-sided

him? Or an increasingly debilitating physical handicap; and in the background from his early years, a father who didn't want to know about this disability?

The most compelling part of Paul's story, to me, is how he faces up to his adversities, digs deep, and fights his way back, unwilling to accept failure. Even now he bounds ahead with renewed exhilaration for his next dream, and his sheer love for life and achievement. Paul has remade himself over and over, not because he wanted to, but because his disability demanded it. Each time he showed courage and optimism, and each time he learnt from what he calls 'small hurdles' in life. To most, they would be giant mountains.

Paul's story is at times heart-rending, but it is also an inspiring story for those who encounter setbacks in life ... and isn't that all of us?

I am proud to call Paul Funnell my friend and to have shared in his life. I know you will understand why as you read on.

John Stuckey
Sydney, May 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my appreciation to all those who have given their time and effort in assisting me to achieve the desired result in writing this book.

In particular, I acknowledge the professional assistance of my editor, Elizabeth Leitch, and Lise Funnell for the layout and typeset.

A special thanks to Nancy Warren for her time in reading and recording my final draft, so I could hear what I had written.

*In appreciation of the scientists and researchers
who will one day find a cure for blindness*

CONTENTS

Chapter			Page
1	Growing Up Wasn't Easy	1949 - 1960	1
2	My High School Years	1961 - 1964	25
3	The Journey	1965 - 1971	63
4	Family And Career	1972 - 1980	97
5	Soar With The Eagles	1981 - 1984	133
6	Losing The Lot	1985 - 1988	177
7	My Fight Back	1989 - 1995	203
8	Some Call It Gold	1996 - 2005	239
9	Inspirations		271
10	If I Had A Magic Wand		295

*For some, life is like living with a
blindfold over our eyes.*

