

Great Aussie Misadventures

[first published at Economics.org.au, Aug, 2010]

Recently I came across a particularly interesting reading list that has absorbed a lot of my spare time. So when I at the same received my copy of *Heroic Misadventures*,¹ I was positively surprised to find that this book made me put all the other great reads aside. Ron Manners'² most recent book is a gem, and one thing that makes it so interesting is that it provides great value on so many levels.

First of all, the book provides a great account on how a libertarian can stand up to the government bureaucrats at all levels and succeed. Manners has done this through wit and wisdom, in theory and practice, and the book tell us about many fresh ways of doing this. As a 16-year-old, he found Foundation of Economic Education (FEE)³ libertarian writings used as packing material by an American client of his father. That's an amazing story when you think about it – this wasn't only pre-Internet, but pre-fax and pre- a lot of other things. But he who seeks finds.

Eventually Manners ends up associating with many great international libertarian scholars like Leonard Read, Murray Rothbard, John Hospers and F.A. Hayek, and of course all the famous Australians. He established his own 'FEE', called Mannkal Economic Education Foundation⁴ in West Perth, Western Australia, in 1997. According to Wikipedia, Manners also "is an active member of the Mont Pelerin Society⁵ and is on the Co-ordinating Committee for the Commonwealth Study Conference⁶. In 2010 he was appointed to the Board of Overseers for the Atlas Economic Research Foundation⁷, Washington, DC."

But to my surprise, I still meet Aussie libertarians that haven't heard of the libertarian scholar Ron Manners, something that seems strange to me. After all, with Internet it seems hard to miss his contributions.

Second of all, the book is a source of many laughs; something that also was surprising in a positive way. I think about the sequence when Manners as President of the local chamber of commerce in the 1970's got a phone call from Mona, a famous Madam running a perhaps dubious but successful commerce, and how Manners convinced her to join the Chamber under the new category 'Essential Services', and how he helped also this kind of commerce to fight the local bureaucrats in one of the most bizarre fashions (I won't tell you more).

Or when Manners was given instructions to navigate his airplane towards the highest mountain in Australia, but since at that time the mountain marked highest on the map in reality was only the second highest, resulting in Manners flying towards the wrong mountain, getting completely lost, out of fuel only to be saved by the legendary Lang Hancock.

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Or when a certain child-molesting Mr. Tony apparently needed to be scared by Mr. Marty, a imported professional leg-breaker, but Mr. Tony and Mr. Marty instead were found holding hands at the Bali pool-side.

There are numerous hilarious stories like this throughout the book. Incidentally, it seems he might become the next Aussie PM⁸ as well (or maybe not).

Third, the book serves as a good guide to four decades of Australian politics. This should come as handy to both Non-Aussies and younger readers. For example, I believe both Aussie and foreign libertarians could benefit from reading about Manners views on Prime Ministers like Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke, Keating, as well as on the last two before Gillard, Howard and Rudd. Especially someone interested in resources, prospecting, mining and precious metals could get important insights into the past, the present and the future of a great Australian industry.

Lastly, the book provides a chance to get to know the author. Taking all the misadventures together, the book gives you a chance to join bits and pieces about the person behind the book. And the sum of all of those bits and pieces are larger than the parts, something that is confirmed by having a quick glance at Wikipedia again, we find that:

"Between 1972 and 1995 he floated several Australian listed mining companies. [...] Manners is Emeritus Chairman and a Patron of the Australian Prospectors and Mining Hall of Fame⁹. [...] He is a Fellow of both the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy¹⁰, and the Australian Institute of Company Directors¹¹, and his contributions to industry and Australia have been marked by several awards including being elected as a "Mining Legend" at the 2005 Excellence in Mining & Exploration Conference in Sydney."

So this isn't just some armchair libertarian, it seems to me we rather have a full-fledged entrepreneur and an artist at living an interesting life.

Sure, the book could have been better edited, but that would also take away some of charm, the feeling that it is the real thing straight from the Aussie wild west. Ron Manners' most recent book, *Heroic Misadventures*, is indeed a gem and a highly recommended read for anyone.

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.heroicmisadventures.com/>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Manners

³ <http://www.fee.org/>

⁴ <http://www.mannkal.org/>

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mont_Pelerin_Society

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_Study_Conference

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas_Economic_Research_Foundation

⁸ http://www.linkedin.com/share?viewLink=&sid=s75275125&url=http%3A%2F%2Finkd%2Ein%2FscpQPh&urlhash=2iii&uid=d5538b16-aede-4352-ad2f-4d88f7eacb2e&trk=NUS_UNIU_SHARE-title

⁹ <http://www.mininghall.com/Home.php>

¹⁰ <http://www.ausimm.com.au/>

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Institute_of_Company_Directors