

From auctioneer to penning a novel

LISA GRIPLAS – Wellington Times
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"One of the most memorable times in my life was when I was living and working in Wellington. It was a thriving town, not functioning in the shadows of Dubbo."

It was these fond memories which helped spark former Wellington man Peter Maidens to put pen to paper and write a novel.

"I was living and working in Wellington in the early 1960s as a stock and station agent," Mr Maidens said.

"At that time Wellington was the headquarters for sales of merinos and wethers.

"It was a thriving time and helped change the direction of my life.

"It was in Wellington I learned to respect livestock and sheep dealers within the market.

"There was a certain degree of wealth and affluence there in those years.

"Although the Dubbo airport, fat-stock saleyards, abattoirs and shopping facilities were much appreciated, Wellington was not at all the poor relation."

Not conceited about being "one of the best auctioneers around," Mr Maidens said he "got his chance in Wellington".

He was transferred here soon after the company he worked for, AML & F Co. Ltd, acquired the thriving stock and station agency of Storrier & Hawker.

"Austin Storrier had spent many years with another woolbroking and stock and station firm known as Pitt Son & Badgery.

"After serving in New Guinea during WWII he came back to that firm and then married Nancy Scott from Wellington.

"Though fundamentally conservative, Storrier had a natural flair about him, and a gifted ability to install confidence in people.

"He was not at all the traditional bushie, either in speech or dress.

"It was not uncommon to find Storrier drafting sheep in a Nyngan dust storm, dressed in a tailor-made suit and English baroque shoes.

"Another well-remembered dealer of merino wethers was a most colourful personality Bill Sheridan, and to a lesser extent, his brother Andy.

"Bill Sheridan was a very unique man. A self-confessed 'uneducated' man, he was in fact one of the most worldly people I've ever known.

"Big Sheridan, as he was commonly known, was also an outstanding judge of race horses.

"During my time at Wellington he quickly persuaded me to become a member of the Wellington Race Club. It was my job to be the weights supervisor."

It was mates and memories like this which prompted Mr Maidens to tell his story.

"If you are carrying a story around for so long it should be shared with others."

The auctioneer-come-author described his book, *Fame or Fortune*, as fictitious, which involves a vast outback rural property and an intriguing art collection.

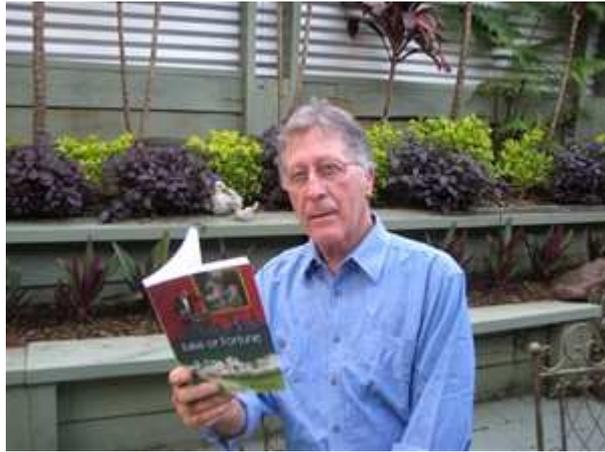
"I have had the story in my mind for quite a long time but I was struggling with character creation.

"One of the central characters in the book is not unlike a noted and well-loved Wellington sheep dealer in that era, who also had a profound interest in fine art."

Readers may at first assume the character Peter Sharp is based on Mr Maidens since they share the same name.

"But it's not my life story. We may have had some of the same life experiences but I didn't fall in love with the beautiful girl nor have the knowledge of fine arts.

"If I can inspire a few people along the way to change their life's direction, to put their mind and heart into something they are passionate about and to remind people of the bygone days with an era that was so important to Australia, then I have done my part."



Former auctioneer Peter Maidens regards his time in Wellington as some of the best days of his life. His new book, *Fake or Fortune*, is loosely based around the mates and memories from Wellington and its surrounds.