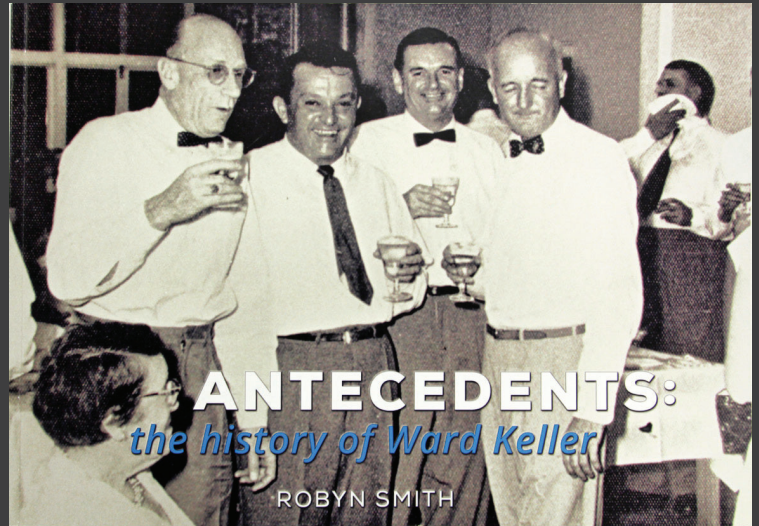


ANTECEDENTS: the history of Ward Keller

by Robyn Smith

Published by Ward Keller 2013

Reviewed by Megan Lawton



'luge-less propulsion of the human resource':

Preparation: a tropical evening and an abundance of Christmas spirit in 70s Darwin.

Equipment: a secretary; a linoleum floor; a generous covering of melted ice and spilled drinks.

How to play: propel said secretary across the floor at speed using any means.

The winner: the person achieving the greatest distance.

For this and many other reasons we are grateful to Ward Keller for publishing a history of the firm in honour of its 50 years.

Robyn Smith's researching and writing of the history of one of Darwin's oldest corporate citizens has resulted in an engaging and delightful history easily exceeding expectations of corporate vanity publishing.

'[Robyn] has recorded episodes which are uproariously funny, terribly sad, extremely frustrating and often quite mundane.'

The book travels through a history of Darwin from 1910 to the formation of the Ward Keller partnership on 1 November 1963 through the 2006 retirement from the bench of former partner and then Chief Magistrate Hugh Bradley and including a little where are they now from 2013.

In the early years Robyn captures the frontier town of Darwin with its 'easy-going spirit' that attracted Ross Ibbotson Dalton Mallam counted as a founding father

of the firm. Robyn captures also the political landscape and the 'Darwin Rebellion' and the Royal Commission into the then Administrator Gilruth. Robyn also captures the tension between Mallam and Deputy Justice Gerald Hogan which resulted in the suspension of his practising certificate and Mallam's successful appeal to the High Court for reinstatement and compensation. Mallam was later appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory in 1928.

Robyn records the arrival of Henry Jacomb Foster in 1927 and William Joseph Pius Fitzgerald in 1932 and Andrew Brough Newell in 1935 in addition to the firm's founding fathers Richard Ward and Richard Keller. Robyn also records the contributions to the pioneering town of those that crowd the Ward Keller hall of fame as well the partners and families and other key figures of Territory history that appear outside its halls. Robyn draws generously from wide sources, including local newspapers, court decisions and the gazette.

Robyn brings together not only legal adventures and career exploits, pro bono work and judicial appointments but also community involvement. In addition to sports of their own invention Robyn does not omit tennis, golf or football achievements, be they social or seniors. Robyn records Ward's awards at the Alice Springs Kindergarten Ball in 1947 and Newell's resignation as head of the Air Raid Precautions First Aid Director on January 1942 due to poor volunteer participation almost on the eve of the bombing of Darwin.

Richard Charles Ward's political commitment and the battle with Canberra bureaucrats are also well covered. Of course Keller is one of the founding fathers of the Northern Territory Law Society forming a steering committee in 1967.

There is something for all Darwinians in this book it captures a slice of life in an engaging collection of figures and facts. ●