



*Peter Purcell in 1968 relaxing in the May River in the Canning Basin during a gravity survey.*

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

# Save Our Century Fund

## Aims to preserve industry history

The launch of the Save Our Century Fund last December by the WA State Library Custodians Inc. heralded a unique opportunity for Australia's petroleum sector to help preserve and present its own 20th century history.

The Save Our Century Fund project is dedicated to collecting and preserving the history of Western Australia through the 20th century. Collection objectives focus on a number of themes or 'stories': Arts and Literature, Banking and Finance, Law, Business, the Land, the Sea, Mining and Resources Development, Oil & Gas, Science and Technology and Sport.

Save Our Century has a Western Australian focus, in everything except the oil and gas story. The Custodians have taken on board APPEA's suggestion that the collection might best serve the industry by adopting a nation-wide perspective, and establishing an archive for all oil and gas exploration in Australia.



To help with the project and the funding it requires, the WA State Library initiated the formation of a business network group - the WA State Library Custodians Inc. A number of Custodians have been appointed, with each person representing the different themes or stories.

One of the big stories on the agenda for the Save Our Century Fund campaign is The Story of Australia's Gas and Oil Industry and to represent the petroleum sector, Mr Peter Purcell has been appointed as a WA State Library Custodian.

With a long standing interest in the history of petroleum exploration, Peter's concern for the industry is that precious resources such as personal memories and archives such as photos, films, diaries and papers will be lost forever unless collected and preserved now. He hopes to be instrumental in helping to secure industry support to create the national petroleum archive.

The contribution made by the gas and oil industry to the economic welfare of Australia is so well documented we almost take it for granted. There is a firm belief, however, that behind this 'known history' there are a multitude of fascinating stories that must be captured, preserved and made accessible.

"Some of these stories are undoubtedly held within company archives but many are in the minds and personal papers of people involved in the industry over many years" says Mr Purcell. The old adage that when a person dies a library burns to the ground is a relevant reminder of the importance of collecting and preserving our history.

Another great supporter of the Save Our Century Fund is Dr Lynn Allen, the State Librarian of Western Australia and also a Custodian. Dr Allen passionately believes that 'history', as written in the future, will only be as accurate as the documents and supporting materials that are deposited in libraries and archives.

"Library archives should be all encompassing. To interpret history correctly, and gain a true picture of the situation, libraries need to collect a wide variety of materials including films, photographs, personal diaries, research notes, academic papers, oral histories, official publications, government records and, of course, business records.

"Depositing materials in major library institutions such as LISWA, will ensure that heritage documents and information resources are stored and preserved correctly.

"At the Library we have identified The Story of Australia's Gas and Oil Industry as being a significant Australian story that demands to be told and preserved forever through the creation of a dedicated archive.

"Of particular importance is the collection of 'oral histories'.

"At the beginning of the 20th century the petroleum sector was in its infancy and investment was considered to be highly speculative. In less than 100 years the industry advanced to where it is now - national and international companies contributing to the economic, recreational, cultural and social needs of the people of our world.

"So try to imagine the significance of being able to hear, in 50 years time, (probably on the Internet or perhaps something more sophisticated) the voice of someone describing historic industry developments as they saw them happen in the middle of the 20th century. To hear descriptions of people, places and events, of struggles, setbacks, hardships and determination, and finally success, this is one of the most marvellous experiences we can offer future generations," Dr Allen said.

Apart from the donation of materials, significant funds are required to establish the archive.

Funds are needed to organise the archive - for storage and sophisticated finding aids; for specialised preservation projects such as microfilming, digitisation and encapsulation; and for the creation of learning and information resources such as CD-ROMs and Internet displays; for exhibitions, and a series of in-depth oral history recordings.

The processes involved are time consuming, labour intensive and expensive; hence, the Custodians request for financial support as well as material donations.

Dr Allen so rightly points out, "The Save Our Century Fund emphasis is on access as well as preservation. With the evolution of the Internet and learning resources such as CD-ROMs we can provide information to all Australians. The story of the gas and oil industry in Australia during the 20th century is marvellous. We want to showcase it."

This exciting project will only be made possible with industry support. Custodians and representatives of the WA State Library will be approaching companies and individuals in early 2000.

Materials donations to the Save Our Century Fund may be eligible for taxation benefits under The Cultural Gifts Program - see (Subdivision 30-A) of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* and cash donations to the Save Our Century Fund may also be eligible as tax deductions.

*To find out more please contact Jenny Underwood at The Library and Information Service of Western Australia on 0894273154 or email: [junderwood@mail.liswa.wa.gov.au](mailto:junderwood@mail.liswa.wa.gov.au) or telephone Dr Lynn Allen on (08) 9427 3328 or email: [llallen@mail.liswa.wa.gov.au](mailto:llallen@mail.liswa.wa.gov.au)*