

Keen contributor to nation-building

NOEL FREDERICK GOSS
JOURNALIST, COMMUNITY LEADER
21-9-1912 - 25-5-2004

Richard Goss

Noel Goss, who made lasting contributions to modern Australian planning, urban heritage and literature, has died in Melbourne after a brief illness.

Born in Adelaide, Noel was educated at St Peters College and Adelaide University. Graduating in history with honours, he secured a job with *The Advertiser* in Adelaide, and then married Elizabeth Hackett in 1939, a union that would last 57 years.

Noel was inspired to report extensively through South-East Asia for Keith Murdoch, and returned to Australia with Elizabeth only weeks before the start of World War II.

Seconded to the Department of Information in Canberra in 1943, Noel played an active role in the establishment of Radio Australia. Soon after the war he was posted as press attache to the Australian embassy in Rio de Janeiro. He returned to Australia in 1948, and his work for the Department of Information covered support campaigns for migration and the Snowy River scheme.

At the invitation of Andrew Fabyini, Noel joined the publisher Cheshires, editing Joan Lindsay's *Time Without Clocks* and Robin Boyd's *The Ugly Australians*, works that shaped the emerging post-war national identity. Yet, perhaps Noel's most lasting contribution was in the area of local politics, planning and heritage.

He and Elizabeth had moved to East Melbourne in 1939 and would retain a 60-year association with this historic inner-city suburb. With his diplomatic and journalistic skills, Noel was appointed chairman and founding president of the East Melbourne Group in November 1953.

Born out of community determination to preserve

the neighbourhood's 19th century trees after outrage at the unannounced destruction of two blocks' worth of streetscape by the Melbourne City Council, the group soon became one of Australia's first local community assemblies to develop an



organised structure from which to challenge local government planning and preserve urban heritage. With support from Maie Casey, Daryl Lindsay, Hubert Smith, Dr Clunes Ross, Roy Grounds, Sir Russell Grimwade, Nada Brozel and many others, the objectives have been sustained to this day. Three members of the group have gone on to become lord mayor.

Tied to his interest in heritage and the urban environment, in 1955, along with Daryl Lindsay and others, Noel was a founding signatory to the articles of incorporation of the National Trust of Victoria and was appointed honorary secretary in 1956.

In the 1960s, he lectured in international relations at RMIT and at the Victorian Council of Adult Education.

Noel and Elizabeth remained active in the East Melbourne Group and the National Trust till the mid-1980s, serving as councillors at the trust for more than 30 years and taking roles in the acquisition and preservation of such historic Melbourne landmarks as Como House, Rippon Lea and Tasma Terrace. They also helped bring to the public the home of Georgiana McCrae, and Henry Handel Richardson's Lakeview.

In his last years, Noel took an interest in Aboriginal reconciliation; he remained a humanist throughout his life. Elizabeth died before him in 1996.

Richard Goss, Noel's son, prepared this obituary with his brothers Michael and Jasper.