

BRUNSWICK 30

DURING AN INTERVIEW AT WILTON'S, A 275-year-old dining establishment in central London, Alan Parker deflects question after question about his accomplishments. He is the primary owner and a founder of the Brunswick Group, an advisory firm that employs 1,050 people in 24 offices around the world. He received a knighthood in 2014 for his philanthropic efforts at Save the Children, whose financial health soared under his management. He is a friend and confidante of business and political leaders around the world – “a figure of almost incomparable influence,” *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper once declared.

Parker shrugs off all of that. “I’m not really good at anything,” he says, over a filet of sea bass. “I see intelligence and talent in others and I hire it.”

Only once during the evening does Parker’s modest posture dissolve into unabashed pride. It happens when a friend stops by his booth, accompanied by a woman who looks down and sees on Parker’s table a copy of the autobiography of Peter Parker. “Are you Peter Parker’s son?” she asks, in the tone of an excited Beatles fan.

“I am!” he says, the grin on his face suggesting that, finally, someone has recognized his true measure. When the woman steps away, Sir Alan says, “The newspapers still call me that sometimes – Peter Parker’s son. I love it.”

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER THE DEATH OF PETER Parker, his influence as a parent and mentor endures. An accomplished actor whose two youngest sons have forged important careers on stage and in film, he was an early student of management, and a famously successful practitioner of it who shared that passion and insight with his oldest son, Alan, and his daughter Lucy.

During the years that Peter Parker ran British Rail – transforming it into a service that was both reliable and financially stable, and in the process becoming a hero to both liberals and conservatives in Britain

As it turns 30, Brunswick has cause to celebrate, with offices and influence that now span the globe. Our founders tell **KEVIN HELLIKER** how it all began

– Alan skipped college, worked on an oil rig and managed rock and roll bands. Alan says his father encouraged all of that, then helped him land a job in communications when the younger Parker was ready to launch a serious career.

In the early 1980s, Alan took a job at Broad Street, a communications firm specializing in companies involved in mergers and acquisitions. Broad Street faced minimal competition and intense demand for its services. The British economy, after years of stagnation, had caught fire, fueled in part by the privatization of state-owned firms such as British Airways. As Broad Street landed client after client, Parker emerged as a star. A raconteur as popular among chief executives as among Fleet Street journalists, he had a way of intuiting every party's needs, and an extraordinary capacity for awe. Smart executives impressed him. So did good journalism. On all sides, he developed a reputation for honest dealing and hard work. Taking calls at all hours, he lugged everywhere with him a concrete-block-sized device most people didn't know existed: a mobile phone.

As a top performer at Broad Street, Parker had his own team there, including an administrative assistant named Dawn Walker. As she recalls, his larger ambition was no secret to his team. "Alan often spoke about setting up his own business at some point with 'when we go' featuring fairly regularly, although I'm not sure if he ever asked if I did actually want to go with him!" Walker recalls.

The team members themselves weren't certain Parker was really serious until everyone returned from the holidays that ushered in 1987. "It was clear that Alan had done a lot of thinking over Christmas," says Andrew Fenwick, who had joined Broad Street the summer before. An "absolute indicator" to Fenwick that Parker had big plans in the works: "He had a new briefcase."

Sure enough, Parker asked Walker and Fenwick to join him at a new firm. Walker didn't hesitate. Fenwick needed a bit of persuading.

An accountant formerly with Deloitte, Fenwick was cautious both by training and nature. Yet there was a limit to how much he had to lose. The 26-year-old's family, for four generations, had owned and run one of Great Britain's premier department-store chains, Fenwicks. The Newcastle-based retailer's Bond Street store was a fashion icon in London. Even if Parker's new company succeeded, Fenwick figured he would leave eventually to join his family's business. So he said yes.

Crucial to Parker's plan was Louise Charlton. For most of his time at Broad Street, she had been a member of his team, and was now embedded in the offices of a client, British Airways. BA wanted Charlton's full-time services during its privatization process – no surprise to those who worked with her. Smart, thoughtful and hard-working – growing up in Yorkshire, she had toiled in her mother's catering and restaurant business – she radiated charm. Any number of employers had tried hiring her away from Broad Street, but when presented with Parker's offer she didn't hesitate. She liked and trusted Parker and Fenwick. As a 26-year-old career woman in an era when many employers made few allowances for motherhood, moreover, she says she felt implicitly that her future plans to raise children wouldn't harm her prospects with Parker and Fenwick. "Family is very important to them," she says.

Underscoring the risk for everyone involved was that Parker, 29, did not come from money. His father had earned no fortune running the government-owned railroad and his mother was a physician. If the family had had riches, Alan's two younger brothers – aspiring actors both – wouldn't still, in their twenties, have been living at home.

Yet it is proof of Charlton's observation about family as a Parker priority that the new company set up shop in the kitchen of Alan's parents. On that first morning, Feb. 23, 1987, laughter broke out over the limitations of a single phone line, recalls Walker. "I was told that I had to be first to answer the phone with the Brunswick greeting," Walker said. "This was not easy on the basis that Alan's mother, a general practitioner, and two brothers, both actors at the time, were all living in the apartment and waiting for the phone to ring." Back then, it could take weeks for the phone company to install a second line. But as a physician needing emergency access to her patients, Alan's mother, Gill, managed to get that process expedited.

It also said something about the closeness of the Parker family that when the founders that first morning pondered potential names for their company, they chose to name it after Brunswick Gardens, the Kensington street where Peter and Gill had raised their four children. "Brunswick sounded strong and established – like something that we could grow," says Charlton.

Of course, they also needed clients. Earlier, when they'd informed Broad Street of their intentions to leave, the company had called them into a meeting with its lawyers. "They produced six pages of



SIR ALAN PARKER

Chairman of Brunswick Group, Sir Alan acts as senior consultant on many retained accounts. He is also Chair of Trustees of Save the Children International.

LOUISE CHARLTON

Vice Chairman of Brunswick, Louise has led teams in a number of Brunswick's most high-profile projects. She also serves on the Board of the Natural History Museum.

ANDREW FENWICK

Vice Chairman and Chief Financial Officer, Andrew is a director of the Royal Parks Agency and a founding Trustee and Deputy Chairman of the Royal Parks Foundation.

Brunswick is a global partnership with a single profit center. It is still led by the same three Partners who founded the firm around Alan Parker's parents' kitchen table in 1987. Over 30 years, they have steered it through remarkable times, expanding its reach and influence to all parts of the globe. Brunswick now employs over 1,000 people, including 150 Partners, in 24 offices and represents many of the companies and deals shaping global economies.

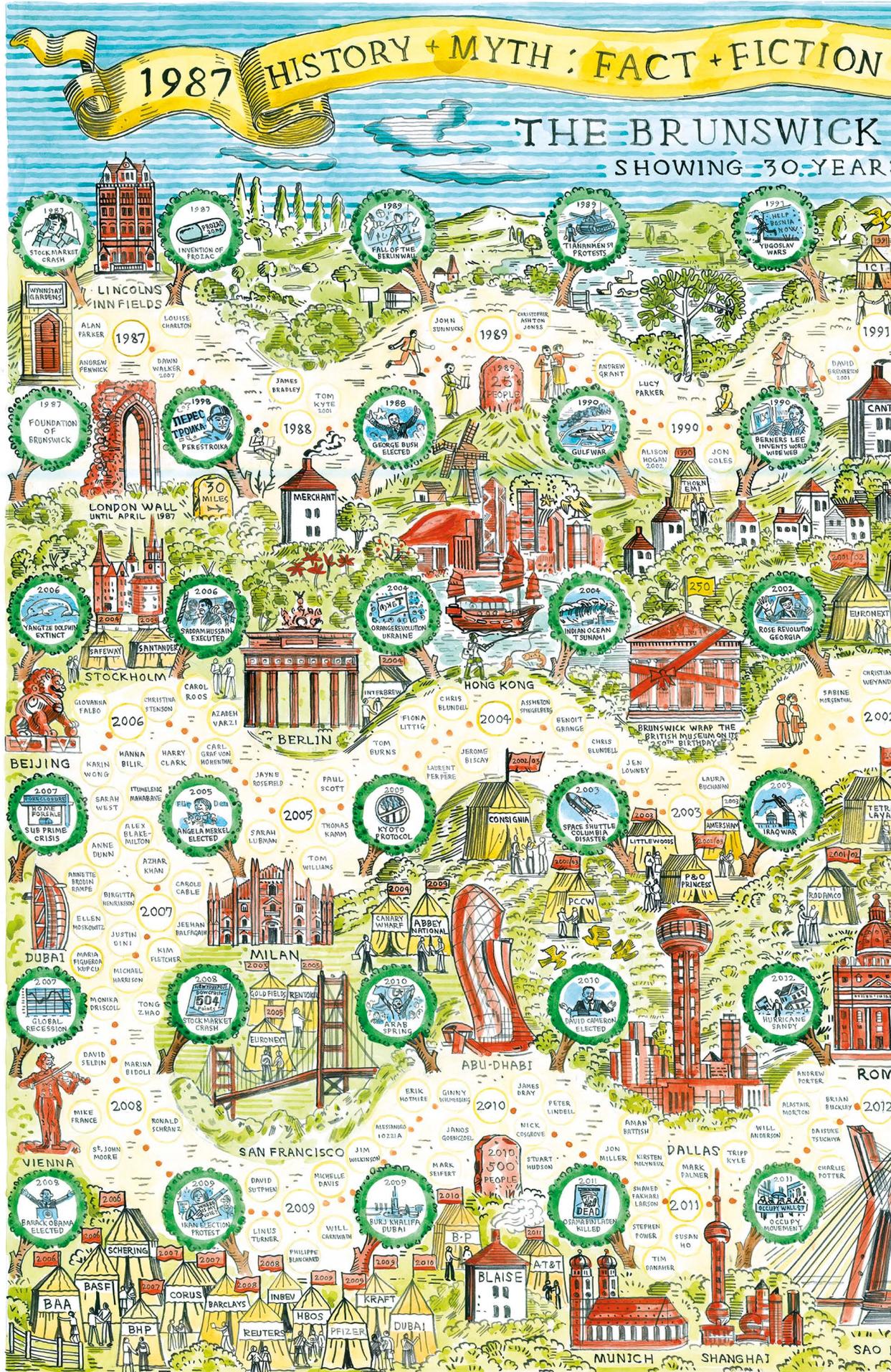


ILLUSTRATION: ADAM DANT

REAL + IMAGINED: REMEMBERED + FORGOTTEN. 2017

ILLUSTRATED TIMELINE OF PEOPLE, PLACES + EVENTS.

This illustrated timeline covers the years 1991 to 2017, featuring a variety of locations and events. Key locations include New York, Paris, London, Singapore, Mumbai, and Chicago. The timeline is populated with numerous historical and cultural figures, as well as significant events and milestones.

Key Locations and Landmarks: New York (Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building), Paris (Eiffel Tower, Louvre), London (Big Ben, Houses of Parliament), Singapore (Marina Bay Sands), Mumbai (Gateway of India), Chicago (Navy Pier), Washington D.C. (Capitol Building), Brussels (Atomium), and various other cities and landmarks.

Key Events and Milestones:

- 1991:** World's 1st Website
- 1992:** Bill Clinton Elected
- 1993:** 50th Anniversary of the Waco Siege
- 1994:** End of Apartheid
- 1995:** WTO Commences
- 1996:** Dolly the Sheep
- 1997:** Tony Blair Elected
- 1998:** Simon Sparrow
- 1999:** Birth of the Euro
- 2000:** George W. Bush Elected
- 2001:** 9/11 Attacks
- 2002:** Quantanamo Bay
- 2003:** Invasion of Iraq
- 2004:** Athens Olympics
- 2005:** Hurricane Katrina
- 2006:** FIFA World Cup
- 2007:** Subprime Mortgage Crisis
- 2008:** Global Financial Crisis
- 2009:** Barack Obama Elected
- 2010:** Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
- 2011:** Fukushima Nuclear Disaster
- 2012:** London Olympics
- 2013:** Ebola Outbreak
- 2014:** Crimean Annexation
- 2015:** Charlie Hebdo Shooting
- 2016:** Brexit
- 2017:** Donald Trump Elected

Key Figures and Names: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Tony Blair, Hugo Chavez, Kim Jong-un, Pope Francis, Nelson Mandela, and many others.

Other Notable Elements: The timeline includes various cultural and scientific milestones, such as the opening of the Channel Tunnel, the birth of the Euro, and the discovery of the Higgs boson. It also features numerous smaller illustrations of people, buildings, and events throughout the year.

The roles of the three founders are distinct. Parker is the visionary, Fenwick the Chief Financial Officer, Charlton the ambassador to clients and partners. “We were very lucky to meet each other,” says Charlton

clients’ names that they said we couldn’t touch,” recalls Charlton. “Alan just said, ‘That’s ridiculous. And we walked out before we had even sat down!’”

“Alan, Andrew and Louise were escorted from Broad Street’s building,” recalls Walker.

In launching his own firm years earlier, Broad Street founder Brian Basham, a legend in British communications, had taken along a few clients. And now Parker, Fenwick and Charlton did the same. Brunswick’s original three clients were the food companies United Biscuits and Albert Fisher, and the dry cleaner Sketchleys.

Speaking of United Biscuit and its Chief Executive Hector Laing, Fenwick recalls, “It was quite a shock that a FTSE company would go with a startup, but Hector had a good relationship with Al.”

Before finding some modest office space, the Brunswick foursome operated out of the Parker household for six weeks. “Although I was essentially the dogsbody, everybody appeared equal, we all mucked in,” recalls Walker. “We all laughed quite a bit as we wondered what we’d done, but I certainly didn’t think failure was an option.”

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, BRUNSWICK expanded from a London public-relations agency specializing in mergers and acquisitions to a global advisory firm offering expertise in social media strategy, healthcare, litigation, cybersecurity, regulation, employee engagement, diversity and inclusion, corporate responsibility and sustainability, marketing, mergers and more. Its list of partners includes former top executives, law-firm partners, physicians, academics, top-tier journalists and other top professionals. A global network of 150 Partners – many of them years-long veterans of the firm – manage with autonomy but also collaborate as members of a cohesive team.

“I had been a management consultant and a journalist, and I thought Brunswick would be the perfect fusion of both,” says Susan Gilchrist, a 22-year Brunswick veteran who now serves as its Group Chief Executive.

The firm’s success is also attributable to a long record of first-class service to clients. How it established that record, and how it maintains it, is a topic Brunswick prefers not to discuss. “It’s bad manners to get between the footlights and the clients,” says Parker.

But what is obvious is that its success grew out of a culture that might offer insight to executives everywhere. It is a tribute to that culture that

Brunswick’s founders – Parker, Charlton and Fenwick – remain together after 30 years. In a 2011 article, former Walt Disney Chief Executive Michael D. Eisner lamented the lack of research behind such dynamic duos as Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger, Bill Gates and Paul Allen, and Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank. “My partnership with Frank Wells at Disney represented the most successful 10 years of my career,” Eisner wrote. For the Brunswick trio, the same is true about the last 30 years. The roles of the three founders are distinct. Parker is the visionary, Fenwick the Chief Financial Officer, Charlton the ambassador to clients and partners. “We were very lucky to meet each other,” says Charlton.

The culture that developed under those three bore the influence of Peter Parker. Although he never held any title, he always had an office at Brunswick. “Alan’s father was a very important mentor to the company in the early years,” says Fenwick.

After serving in World War II (which claimed the lives of his two brothers), Peter Parker studied management at Harvard and Cornell, displaying in the career that followed a talent for serving the interests of all stakeholders. Tapped in 1976 to save British Rail – a government operation plagued by poor service and busted budgets – he won vital concessions from recalcitrant union leaders, gaining the approval of Margaret Thatcher. By tradition a member of the Labour Party, he never lost the support of the working classes, in large part because – in a nation that reveres trains – Parker managed to cut costs while significantly improving and expanding service.

His management maxims implore leaders to hire smart people “and delegate more than you think is good for you,” to view others in the best possible light, and to lavish praise on others but not so much on one’s self. “He was a pioneer of modern management,” according to *The Guardian* obituary of Parker following his sudden death in 2002. “He had a concern for other people and a penchant for optimism that seldom let him down.”

Over that file of sea bass back at Wilton’s, Alan Parker is asked whether Brunswick has fulfilled his father’s vision of how a company should treat its clients and employees. He hesitates, noting that the title of his father’s memoir, *For Starters*, reflects a strong belief in looking ahead.

“There’s no room for complacency or even satisfaction,” he says. “My father still beat me at tennis when he was 65.”

KEVIN HELLIKER is Editor-in-Chief of the *Brunswick Review* and a former Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist for *The Wall Street Journal*. He is based in New York.