

TRADE TALK

Donnelly goes to Bimini and beyond, and he's not tapped out yet

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VANCOUVER SUN



BUSINESS LUNCH: Donnelly Group founder-chief **Jeff Donnelly**, 36, owns more bars and clubs than some patronize. For this lunchtime, he's enjoying Vietnamese-style short ribs and pulled-pork sliders with deep-fried dill pickles at Bimini, which will officially reopen tonight after a \$2-million rebuild. The Fourth-off-Maple landmark was to have opened in 2007 after a \$350,000 renovation. One day earlier, though, it was gutted by fire spurred by newly painted walls awaiting touch-ups. "You see they're not painted now," Donnelly said dryly of the present, 186-seat facility's millwork-and-tile finish.

His flavoursome lunch and many of the group's other dishes resulted from executive chef **Michael Knowlson** consulting **Fuel-Refuel-Campagnolo** chef **Robert Belcham**. It's a far cry from anything served to the fellows whose photos enliven Bimini's walls. They're Don't Make A Wave committee members who sailed north in 1971, hoping to block underground nuclear-weapon testing at Amchitka Island, Alaska. Failing, they returned, founded the Greenpeace organization and soon hung out at Bimini, which *did* make a wave. **Peter Uram** launched it as a newly permitted neighbourhood pub that helped put paid to regimented drinking in hotels.

Those "beer parlours" offered only one draft lager; Bimini has 20 varied beers on tap. Donnelly Group premises average 24 beers, with Smiley's on Pender Street offering 32.

Donnelly, meanwhile, is busy at the corporate taps, turning out pubs and clubs. Astonishingly, the furthest from city centre of the group's 14 is the Broadway-off-Fir Academic — 2.7 km away. Bimini became number 13 at its Nov. 26 soft opening. But the 66-seat Clough Club followed on Water Street five days later after Donnelly spent \$300,000 and change readying "a kind-of dark, creepy place" commemorating 19th-century Gastown lamplighter John Clough. The 66-seat joint specializes in dark spirits, with only one vodka and gin served. That will reverse next spring, when a \$1-million project sees the 120-seat Bedfellows feature gin and dim sum on Hamilton Street. Close behind will be a million-dollar remake of the nearby, 150-seat Capone's, which **Howard Cohen** founded in 1996 and linked by stair to his and **Michelle Olma's** Soho Cafe. The latter joint is now the Donnelly Group's New Oxford. Maybe they'll call its downstairs teammate Webster's.

It's not all drinks and dancing, though. Donnelly and Montrealer **Martin Rivard** recently



Photos of Greenpeace's 1970s beginnings back Jeff Donnelly in his hospitality group's 13th operation, Bimini, which officially reopens today.

opened the three-chair Dominion Barbershop on Water Street, offering classic straight-razor shaves. And Donnelly should hear this week whether the Sundance Film Festival will screen *Nash*, a 78-minute documentary about basketball star **Steve Nash** he executive-produced, **Michael Hamilton** and **Corey Ogilvie** directed, and that Vancouver International Film Festival audiences saw. Alliance Atlantis became Canadian distributor through acquiring Maple Pictures from Lion's Gate Entertainment, and should release it theatrically in April. A global deal will be done before he attends the May 16-27 Cannes Film Festival, Donnelly said, adding: "Steve is very big in China."

As for getting big himself, "People say they like it when you're independent. But how independent do I have to get? I'm from here. I started my business here. I have all my operations here," he said of an outfit that could still fit in Stanley Park.

MELLOW ZELLER: Eurozone worries doubtless outweigh Canadian trade at the Quai d'Orsay. Still, recently

posted French ambassador **Philippe Zeller** touched on the matter during a debut visit to Vancouver this week. Emphasizing the Ubifrance trade mission's "great job" here, he noted the recent opening of a consulate in Calgary and the addition of a scientific attaché to the Vancouver consulate. Calling France B.C.'s 12th-ranked commercial client, he added, in French: "I'm happy to tell you that our principal exports aren't only wine and food products but principally equipment." B.C.'s rapid economic development, the need for further equipment and the foothold established "make increased commercial exchanges one of my ambitions." Agro-business and information-technology enterprises are high on his list, Zeller said.

NEW TRICKS: Apartment buyers, vendors, appraisers and other commercial-realty professionals in B.C., as well as thousands more worldwide, regularly scan *The Goodman Report*. That's the physical and electronic newsletter **David** and **Mark Goodman** publish while maintaining a \$125-million gross yearly sales average as co-principals, with **David**

England and **Grant Wilson**, in HQ Real Estate Services.

Mark, 34, wasn't supposed to join his dad in business a decade ago. Then again, the latter wasn't supposed to be a B.C. realtor. But when 1970's October Crisis put anti-terrorist armed troops on his native Montreal's streets, the elder Goodman quit the *schmatta* business, and he and artist-wife **Lilian Broca** pointed their Rover TC 2000 car westward.

Only brothers **Arthur** and **Henry Block** answered David's application letter to major realtors, whereupon he began a Richmond-based, 22-year sales career that saw him top the firm's Canadian residential sales.

But Goodman wanted to "break into Shaughnessy, and a [business] card from a Menonite firm just didn't cut it." So he printed 10,000 copies of a newsletter showing him wearing lots of hair and a checkered sports jacket visible from space. Predicting a four-per-cent home-value increase for 1978, the single page urged buyers or refinancers to "take advantage of 10 to 10-1/4% mortgage rates."

"All of a sudden, the phone



French ambassador Philippe Zeller joined consul-general Evelyn Decorp on his debut visit to Vancouver this week.



Commercial realtor David Goodman's industry newsletter, *The Goodman Report*, went global when son Mark signed on.

started ringing," and five successful years ensued. But he longed for commercial business "void of emotion. It's all numbers — not Mrs. Smith disliking the curtains or [the house] is too close to her in-laws." But how to get his foot in that door?

Bingo! Another newsletter for sons **Eric** and **Mark** to spend hours stuffing into envelopes. "The first thing I did," Mark now says of leaving an internal bartering job with the Jim Pattison Trade Group to join David, "was automate the envelopes."

The newsletters worked, though. David got the late **Jack Poole's** Daon Development firm to pay \$7 million for a Grosvenor-owned 80-unit Burnaby rental-strata building worth \$35 million today. Of the material he circulated, "Nobody from the street had served up hard-core data that would help [investors] optimize their assets," David said. "It was information the reader couldn't normally get."

Rival newsletters rose and faded. Of staying the course Goodman said: "Fortunately, madness runs in our family."

Common sense may, too. Augmenting papa's single-market know-how, former barterer Mark had learned "profit margins from bottled water to radio time."

He'd also "used the Internet to move razor blades from Bombay to Israel." Now he used it to generate 50,000 subscribers globally for *The Goodman Report's* e-edition. "It's a beast we can barely control now," he said.

Still, he learned a key real-estate lesson while calling another agent for information during his first day on the job. "Mark, I have to ask you one question," he recalls hearing. "Am I cooperating?"

"That's when I realized there are no freebies in this business," he said. Other than *The Goodman Report*, of course.

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