

The Story of Osmond Wines

Cargo Road, Orange, NSW

By Malcolm Holmes QC

The founder of Lionel Murphy Chambers, Michael Osmond Tubbs, was born in April 1935 in the small Lincolnshire village of Braetoff. In January 1936 he was put into a children's orphanage and was later told that his mother was dead and nothing was known of his father.

As a child he was sent to various orphanages around England and Wales, ending up in an orphanage on the Isle of Man. He was told, at the age of 14, that he was to be sent out to Australia as part of a scheme organised by Dr Barnardo's Organisation and later sailed here on the *SS Asturias*, which many years later was featured in the TV series 'The Leaving of Liverpool'.

On arrival in Australia in September 1950 at the age of 15 he was sent to Dr Barnardo's orphanage Mowbray Park Farm School just out of Picton near Sydney which housed about one hundred boys shipped out from England. He was given no schooling at Picton, but was part of a group of older boys who were required to milk the 60 cows kept on the property, tend to the 3,000 to 4,000 chickens and grow the vegetables. 'We also grubbed out the bush to make new arable land,' as Mick put it.

Mick stayed at Mowbray Park Farm School until February 1951 when he was thrown out. At the time the man in charge was the share farmer who had run the farm whilst the school was closed down during the war years. At the time, authoritarian behaviour was acceptable and it was part of the normal discipline of children that they would be beaten. Mick and a few others had trouble accepting that the person in charge and responsible for discipline had no control over his



temper. As a result Mick became part of a small revolt in the school resulting in six boys, including Mick, being taken away as they were regarded as the ringleaders and put in the Yasmar Children's Prison in Sydney where they spent some weeks. He and the other ringleaders were charged with an offence under what was then the *Child Welfare Act 1939 (NSW)* as being 'an uncontrollable child'. The charges were dismissed but the Magistrate held that it was useless to send him back to Picton and instead put him in an orphanage called Royalston, a boys home in Glebe.

He recalls later in life the irony that he experienced Yasmar both as an inmate of the prison, which was to later become the Yasmar Juvenile Justice Detention Centre and as a barrister when he

appeared in the same Yasmar Children's Court. He enjoyed sharing his reminiscences with the Magistrate at Yasmar over morning tea in later years when appearing as a barrister.

Eventually Dr Barnardo's Organisation found him a job on an orchard in Young which paid 21s. 6d per week with keep. Young has a fairly cold climate and he soon got rheumatic fever and was put in Young Hospital for rest and convalescence. He was then sent back to Sydney where he spent the next twelve months in lodgings at Milsons Point. From time to time during this period as health permitted he was sent back to Picton to do farm work at Mowbray Park.

After he had recovered he spent the next four to five years in the country doing any farm work that came along. He recalls picking peas and potatoes at Robertson, cherries and plums in Young; doing fencing

work and cutting fire wood and trying to make a living selling firewood in Canberra. He worked on wheat properties; he mustered cattle at Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo; worked in shearing sheds at Tullabong and at Pallathan where he was mainly employed as a shed hand picking up around the shearing sheds. He worked in dairy farms at Branxton near Newcastle and near Gundagai where he had a relapse of rheumatic fever and was put into Gundagai Hospital.

When he returned to Sydney in the mid-1950s he found employment as a process worker at Ashfield when he met his first wife whom he married in 1956. Mick then worked in her parents' milk bar in Bondi for about twelve months. There were three children of this marriage. As a young married father Mick worked in and around Sydney in a variety of jobs, mainly in the metal trades. His marriage unfortunately ended in 1970.

He became active in trade union and socialist politics and was active as a shop steward or a delegate on the shop floor and later worked as an organiser for the Communist Party of Australia. Being an active and articulate shop steward and not afraid to speak his mind, he soon met and got to know most of the leading ironworkers officials of the time including, Laurie Short. He occasionally raised the ire of union officials because, in his words, he 'resisted the union and employer's attempts to get the union delegate to be subservient to both the union and to the employer.'

At that time there was an overlap of union coverage and various unions fought for membership for people performing the work that Mick did. The Builders Labourers' Federation had similar coverage to that of the Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia and he soon got to know the leading BLF officials of the day such as Jack Munday who to this day remains a lifelong friend of Mick.

As an adult, Mick has gone back to England and tried to find out details of his family. He learned that his father had lived until 1964 and that his mother, who was suffering from an advanced state of tuberculosis at the time of his birth, had lived until 1938 when she had died. He was able to get photocopies of eight letters from his mother in her own handwriting and also discovered that he has an older brother and two older sisters, one of whom was adopted out by foster parents but has severed her association with her siblings.

In 1975 Mick started the next stage of his life when he went to Macquarie University to study law as a provisional matriculant or what is now known as a mature age student. He was helped in this

endeavour by his current partner, Muriel, who has shared his life since 1971.

After graduating from Macquarie University with 1st Class Honours he went to the Bar of New South Wales. One of his early major cases as a barrister was the long running Bikie trial arising out of the shooting in the car park of the Viking Hotel, Milperra. At the Bar he showed the same fearless determination to represent the interests of the underdog that he had demonstrated earlier in his life. He was also instrumental in establishing the Lionel Murphy Chambers in 1984, some two years before the death of Justice Murphy in 1986.

Eventually, he was able to pursue a long held dream to own and operate his own vineyard and winery while still continuing his day job as a barrister. He purchased 13 acres of land at Orange – seven acres of apple trees and five acres of 40 year-old Muscat vines. These muscats had been used over the years to produce table grapes, which Mick planned to sell while establishing the more traditional wine varieties in place of the 600 apple trees. His long-term dream was to establish a small winery on the property.

Unfortunately, in his first year the price of table grapes at the markets in Sydney collapsed and he was left with a crop of Muscat grapes. At the time (1996) the cost of picking, packing and transporting the grapes to Sydney would have been more than what he would have been paid for the grapes at the markets. As a result he turned to a nearby vigneron and with his son Glenn produced his first vintage made from the black Muscat grapes. From these grapes he made three wines; a Claret, a Rosé and a white which, because of its pale pink colour, he called Kallistra. His wines were an immediate success and this first vintage achieved reviews that 'most winemakers would give an arm and a leg for after five or ten years of winemaking.'

Winewise magazine, in its October 1997 issue, described these wines as:

The Osmond Muscats

Here's an oddity - a winery that uses only black Muscat grapes. What's more, the wines are dry. Quirky? Yes. Uninteresting? No. The Osmond family have shown

definite winemaking skill in turning out three 1996 wines which are all clearly varietal but differ in style. The Jack's Paddock Claret is appropriately bright ruby in colour, has intense black Muscat flavour, firm tannins, and is bone dry. Although it runs counter to the claret concept, a touch of sweetness would benefit this style.

The Rosé is the pick of the trio. Its vibrant pale garnet colour is eye-catching, and the Muscat aromas and flavours are complemented by hints of dark cherry. The finish is dry and crisp. A good picnic wine.

The most idiosyncratic style of an idiosyncratic bunch is the Kallistra. The colour is pale salmon, and the



nose is faintly perfumed, with a touch of under-ripe potato peel character. The palate is very dry indeed, and needs more flavour.

He left the Bar in November 1998 to become a full time vigneron. True to his character, he has also taken up the fight against the state government's new laws regulating (i.e. making them pay for) the ability of farmers to use rainfall gathered on their property

In early 1997 he completely sold out his Rosé production before it had even left the vineyard. When Mick became intrigued at the number of telephone orders he was getting for his Rosé, he found out that, the leading wine writer Huon Hooke had written the following article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

A Rosé by any other name

Michael Tubbs, a new boutique vigneron in the Orange district, has a theory on why Australians don't drink Rosé. 'In the past, male winemakers have held the rather chauvinistic view that not being a robust, full-bodied red wine, Rosé was only fit for women to drink', he says. 'As a further expression of this chauvinism they generally made the wine sweet to meet what they perceived to be a female's

sweet tooth.' You're spot on, Michael. He practices what he preaches and makes a dry rosé. Unusually for rosé, it's made from Muscat Hamburg and hence has a spicy flavour. He sells it for a very reasonable \$10.00 at cellar door (Osmond Wines, Tubbs Vineyard, Cargo Road, Nashdale NSW 2800 phone 6365 3388).

Mick now also makes wine from more traditional wine grapes: his first Cabernet Sauvignon in 1998; Semillon and Shiraz in 1999; this year he will celebrate his 5th vintage by making his first Merlot and further down the track will be making Pinot Gris wine.

For those at the southern end of the city who like good wine with character, you can sample his wines at Diethnes Restaurant which was a frequent haunt whilst he was at the Bar and for those at the Northern end you can sample his Rosé at Chris's Seafood Restaurant in York Street and at Rigoletto's Restaurant.

Australia says thank you, Dr. Barnardo.

CRICKET

New South Wales Bar v Queensland Bar

On 29 April 2000, the New South Wales Bar Cricket Team hosted its annual match against the Queensland Bar at Camden Park. This match has been played in great spirit every year since its inception in the early 1970s, with each team taking turns to host the other for the match and for the post-match festivities. The matches have generally been very competitive although in the recent past have been dominated by Queensland, with the New South Wales team this year facing its seventh consecutive defeat.

Things again did not look promising when the usual array of ex-Queensland Sheffield Shield players arrived at the ground, and looked even worse when Queensland was 2/100 off its first 20 overs, the second wicket only have just fallen due to a quick-fire stumping by Ireland QC (Nigel Bowen Chambers) off Durack (11 Selborne). After drinks, however, things were turned around by the inspired run-out of the star Queensland batsman Traves by Barwick (43 Edmund Barton) which together with inspired spells from Russell (3/Selborne) and Hastings QC (12/Selborne) saw the Queenslanders bundled out for 156.

The New South Wales innings did not begin well as Douglas QC (10 Selborne) playing for the enemy under State of Origin rules, cut a swathe through the New South Wales top order and amazed all (including himself) by catching New South Wales opener Harris (43 Edmund Barton) in the outfield. At 3/40 things could have gone either way until a brutally compiled 76 not out by Barwick, ably supported by Neil (5/Wentworth), Gyles (10/Selborne) and White S.C., (7/Wentworth) saw the home team to victory with wickets and overs to spare.

The New South Wales team will be defending the Callinan Trophy in Queensland next year and any able-bodied cricketers are encouraged to participate.