

The background of the cover is a vibrant sunset over a blue ocean. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon where the sun is setting. A large, stylized footprint, composed of golden-yellow clouds, is positioned in the upper right quadrant, appearing to step across the sky from right to left. The title 'the BAREFOOT Spirit' is centered in the upper half. 'the' is in a white, lowercase cursive font. 'BAREFOOT' is in a large, bold, white, uppercase sans-serif font. 'Spirit' is in a white, lowercase cursive font, overlapping the bottom of 'BAREFOOT'.

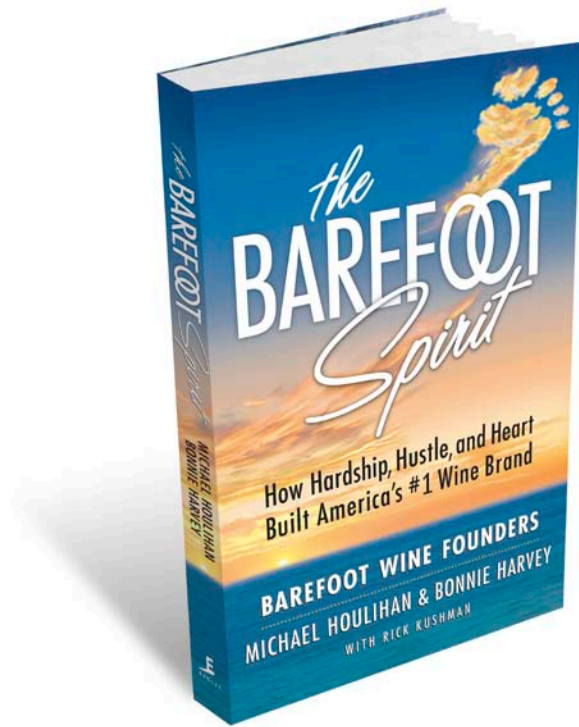
the
BAREFOOT
Spirit

**How Hardship, Hustle, and Heart
Built America's #1 Wine Brand**

BAREFOOT WINE FOUNDERS

MICHAEL HOULIHAN & BONNIE HARVEY

WITH RICK KUSHMAN



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and left its footprints across an industry*

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When Michael Houlihan and Bonnie Harvey started Barefoot Wines in their laundry room in 1985, they had no money or experience, but they made up for that with creativity, resourcefulness, guts and grit. By the time they sold the brand in 2005, they’d won a ton of awards and helped transform an entire industry from stuffy and intimidating to fun, casual, and socially aware. *The Barefoot Spirit* is a surprising, enlightening and entertaining guidebook for anyone in business and a great read for everyone who loves a rags-to-riches tale. It’s a case study, an idea book, and a snapshot of the American spirit West Coast style.

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The Barefoot Spirit

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The Barefoot Spirit

Michael Houlihan & Bonnie Harvey
with Rick Kushman

INTRODUCTION

They had a saying at Barefoot that says a lot about the people who created one of America's most recognizable wine brands: You sell more wine wearing a funny hat.

It's simple, true, and something many wineries would never have admitted in the mid-1980s when Michael Houlihan and Bonnie Harvey started

Barefoot Cellars and launched the Barefoot Spirit. In the mid-'80s, that idea was nearly revolutionary.

Michael and Bonnie didn't know they were defying convention because they didn't know what the wine industry's conventions were. They started in the laundry room of a rented farmhouse with no money, no wine experience, and no clue about what they were getting into – and that was one key to their success.

The tale of Barefoot Cellars is like no other in wine and it's a landmark in American business. It's a rags-to-riches story in the first degree, a chronicle of how outsiders followed their own path, believed in their ideas and each other, and changed an industry.

Barefoot transformed American wine so completely that it's hard to remember how staid and unimaginative it once was. Before Barefoot, wine marketing and wine labels were as serious as a

masters seminar on viticulture. Wine seemed exclusive, unwelcoming, almost foreboding.

Barefoot's success brought fun and energy and lightheartedness to wine, and it led the way for animals and art, for bikes, for silly pictures, for embracing everyone. It helped make wine into something that was approachable and egalitarian and thoroughly American.

The Barefoot Spirit is also a close-up of the American entrepreneurial spirit with a West Coast smile, an ode to originality and perseverance, and just as much, one terrific tale.

But this book is more than just the story of Barefoot's unlikely success, it's also a guidebook for any entrepreneur. The against-the-odds triumph of Michael and Bonnie and Barefoot Cellars is a business lesson in creative thinking, optimism, flexibility, using your lack of money and experience,

and maybe most of all, in how to learn from the astounding number of mistakes you will make.

This is also a lesson about people. It shows how independent thinkers can succeed, and how listening to everyone – customers, allies, employees, and each other – is the first way to solve problems. Plus, it's a reminder never to be afraid, if the moment is right, to put on a funny hat.

A couple notes about this book: *The Barefoot Spirit* is Michael and Bonnie's story as they and dozens of other people told it to me. But this is not an attempt at pure journalism; it's an act of collaboration, a way for them to tell what they learned and how they learned it.

The conversations among people in the story are, obviously, reconstructed. They came from interviews with as many people as possible. We stand by the gist of them all, but we are not pretending they are accurate word for word. They're in the book so you

can understand more about the people who played a roll in Barefoot's story.

Finally, I'm doing the writing because, honestly, I've fallen for Michael and Bonnie as businesspeople and just as people. They're creative, quirky, and thoughtful, they stand for something, they love each other, and they listen to everyone. I'm doing the writing because Michael Houlihan, Bonnie Harvey, and the Barefoot Spirit are all worth getting to know.

– Rick Kushman

* * *

Many people have been asking us to tell our story because it's such an important chapter in American wine. We chose Rick to write it after we learned the first time we met that he's one of us – a Barefooter at heart. He's a journalist who's covered politics, business, and Hollywood, but for us what

matters most is that he's a wine writer who writes and teaches about wine like he actually enjoys it.

He thinks like we do: Wine should be fun, friendly, and interesting, but it shouldn't be scary. We also think the same about business and life. We all believe your values should be apparent in everything you do. So, simply enough, we chose Rick because he, too, has the Barefoot Spirit.

And we agree that Barefoot's story is a significant step in the evolution of wine in America. Our success gave the wine industry and wine drinkers permission to have fun, to be inclusive, and to believe there is not just one way to sell or enjoy wine.

We also want to tell our story because we want to share what we learned. We want entrepreneurs in any industry to know it's not going to be easy, but there is a way to persevere and succeed. And we want people to know, that even while you're building your

business, you can still give back and help the causes you hold dear.

We created – discovered, really – something we called Worthy Cause Marketing, because we had no money for advertising or much of anything at the beginning. So we found a way to support both Barefoot and the people and causes we cared about. We aided hundreds of non-profits with our wine, energy, and time, and their members spread the word about Barefoot. As we grew, we never did advertise, we just supported more worthy causes, and they made Barefoot one of America's most popular brands.

Worthy Cause Marketing was a key piece of Barefoot's success, but there were many other pieces that we discovered, too, through trial and, often, error.

We always tried to be mentors when we were running Barefoot, and now we have the chance to pass along to everyone the lessons that came so hard.

There are too many to list, but they include everything from how to survive when you're small and how to turn your debts into assets, to how to grow into a national brand, how to create a company culture that works for you, and how to make your values part of your success. We believe this book can help good people avoid some of the pitfalls and the growing pains we experienced. We learned the hard way; you don't have to.

Within our story are the lessons all entrepreneurs need to survive, to thrive, to be successful, and to give their own brands and companies a spirit of fun, purpose, innovation, and heart. That's the Barefoot Spirit, and we believe it can help anyone with a dream.

- Michael Houlihan and Bonnie Harvey

CHAPTER 1

How Hard Could It Be?

(unedited and abridged)

Michael Houlihan drove to the far end of the Piggly Wiggly parking lot in Columbia, South Carolina. That's what he did in every parking lot, and it's what all good sales people do, park as far away as they can. The spots by the door are for customers. Store managers notice the courtesy.

It was mid-May. The sky loomed thick and close, a dark, steely greenish gray. Michael didn't so much see the clouds as feel them – hot, heavy, and steamy. It was the kind of day that discourages movement. Ah, spring in the American South.

Michael is a tall man, 6-foot-2, a bit gangly, with reddish hair and an air that says he spent some time on a surfboard. He was wearing a dark suit, carrying Barefoot wine samples in a bag over his shoulder, and holding a large, foam-core sign with a 5-foot-tall purple foot. This was not a guy they saw every day at the Piggly Wiggly.

When Michael had driven up, a dark-haired teenager was collecting stray shopping carts and wheeling them back to the store. By the time Michael started lugging his wine and sign across the 30-yard lot, the kid had abandoned his carts and was sprinting for the supermarket door.

“Hey buddy,” he said as he flashed past Michael, “you better run.”

Say what? Run? Michael looked left and right. All he saw were parked cars. Did he hear the kid right?

Then, *BOOM!* The thunderclap almost knocked him over. Michael felt it in his spine. “Whoa,” he thought, “was that it?” He stood there shaking it off. Maybe five seconds later, it began to rain. Not gentle, soothing, wimpy spring rain like he knew in Northern California. This was rain from a fire hose or a falling river. Buckets and buckets in seconds. Drops that felt like walnuts. “Got it,” Michael thought.

In seconds, his suit was soaked. His tie was soaked. His shoes and socks and pockets filled with water. He started running for the store.

Then came the wind. Huge, uneven blasts, blowing hard from the left, then hard from the right. Michael’s sign turned into a sail. It yanked him west halfway across the parking lot. Then it pulled him east. Then another gust pulled him west again. He was hanging on, figuring if he let go, the sign would land in Georgia. Left, right, lurch, wobble, just don’t let go.

Inside the store, people had stopped. No one was checking out or bagging groceries or moving. They were watching this tall, fair-haired California-looking guy in a suit, getting hammered by rain and staggering back and forth, wrestling with a giant purple foot. He disappeared out of view for a moment, then re-appeared and heaved off in the other direction. He was barely making progress toward the door.

The whole show took maybe four minutes. Michael tottered into the store, through the automatic doors, and just stood for a second, catching his breath. He was leaking water onto the floor like a broken barrel. He looked up. The whole store, the shoppers, the clerks, the bag boys, the kid who'd been pushing carts stared at him wide-eyed. No one moved. Just people staring.

Michael stared back, dazed and dripping. That was the only sound, the dripping. No cash registers,

no rustling, no chatter. Just drip, drip, drip. Above them, out of the ceiling, that supermarket mechanical voice broke in. “Wet mop,” it said. “Up front.”



A few seconds later, the store manager, a tall man with a Southern gentleman's manner, walked up to Michael.

“Son,” he said, “I know you have something to sell me. And I know you want to sell it real bad.”

“Yes sir,” Michael said. “I do.”

* * *

In the spring of 1985, Bonnie and Michael were living in a small, rented farmhouse on a hillside of the MacMurray Ranch in west Sonoma County wine country above the beautiful Westside Road. They were just over one hill from Davis Bynum's winery, and Michael knew Davis because he was pals with his son, Hampton, going back to their days together in the East Bay.

But Bonnie and Michael were only vaguely connected to the wine industry and they didn't know much about the stuff inside the bottles. Actually, wine scared Bonnie.

She was like many people, especially in the early 1980s. Wine seemed encased in an impenetrable code and culture, and she was embarrassed to ask about it. She couldn't pronounce most grape names and she figured some snoot would make fun of her if she tried. She loved wine country but didn't like feeling that she needed a master's degree to order wine in some restaurants.

But Bonnie knew business, and her company, In Care Of, organized the offices and dealings of a few people in the wine industry, including her friend, Mark Lyon, an accomplished, unassuming winemaker who is now the head of winemaking at Sebastiani Vineyards. Back then, he was already working at Sebastiani, plus he owned 98 acres of

grapes in Sonoma County's Alexander Valley. But in 1985, Mark had a problem.

Although Mark was widely respected as a winemaker who brought an artist's outlook to wine, he was never enthralled with the business side of the industry. That's why he hired Bonnie to handle his office, and how she found that one of his biggest grape-buying customers, a winery in Alexander Valley named Souverain, owed him for his 1984 crop. Souverain was rolling toward bankruptcy and had not paid for about 300 tons of Mark's grapes.

Michael at the time was working around the edges of the wine business, too, consulting on contracts, financing, and negotiations with government agencies, but he didn't know loads more than Bonnie about actual wine.

Still, Bonnie figured Michael could help Mark get at least some of his money back, so in summer 1985 Michael started negotiating with Souverain.

Problem was, the winery had been taken over by creditors. The people running the place were mostly trying to salvage some of their own money before the ship sank.

It was a sunny day in July when Michael sat in a big conference room at Souverain talking about their debt to Mark. He was getting nowhere.

It was the kind of conference room you see in lots of wineries, with big windows looking over barrel rooms or winemaking equipment. This one had a view of tanks and a large, white, two-story room. In the middle of the room was a massive, polished metal machine with gears and levers and tracks.

Michael had never seen anything like it. He got up and looked out the window. He'd been getting stumped for a while, so he was vamping a bit to diffuse the tension.

“Excuse me, guys,” he said. “What’s with the chrome locomotive in the handball court?” Partly, he

was making conversation, but Michael was also curious. This thing was huge.

“We call that a clean room,” one of the Souverain guys said. “And that’s a bottling line.”

“A what?”

“A bottling line. It bottles 3,000 cases of wine a day.”

Wow, Michael thought. He kept looking out at the winery’s interior. He was thinking maybe he could claim something for Mark – cables, hoses, benches, anything to ease the loss.

“What’s in those tanks?” he asked.

Funny he should bring that up, the Souverain people said. The tanks held the cabernet sauvignon and sauvignon blanc that had been made from Mark’s grapes. There were about 18,000 cases worth of wine sitting there.

Michael kept looking at the winery. The next thing he said came from desperation to recover at

least something, but even more, it came from sheer ignorance of the maelstrom he was about to jump into.

“Here’s what we’ll do,” he said. “We’ll work your bill off with that wine and some bottling services.”

Huh? the Souverain people said.

“We’ll take Mark’s wine,” Michael said. “We’ll use your locomotive to bottle it. That’ll cover what you owe him.”

Michael figured they could bottle and sell the wine and earn Mark a chunk of his lost money. The thing was, in 1985, few California wine people operated like that. There were plenty of wineries with buildings, tanks, and storage rooms that bought wine in bulk and bottled it under their labels. And big places like Souverain rented their facilities and their equipment to winemakers who brought in their own grapes. But instantly becoming a large wine company

selling 18,000 cases without any vineyards or buildings or even any land, that didn't happen much.

But the Souverain people said why not. Given their financial mess, they had no guarantee the wine in those tanks would ever get sold. They were happy to have one debt off their books.

Michael was surprised to get anything out of Souverain, so 18,000 cases of wine sounded pretty good. He knew it would take some marketing and some effort, but he figured they could research this, use Mark's experience, and get the wine sold. How hard could it be?

* * *

It didn't take much for Michael and Bonnie to see they were babes in the wine industry, so they questioned everyone they could find. And not just big names or longtime winery owners – though they did

talk to many of those folks – but they picked brains at every level, particularly people on the front lines. That would stay a guiding principle for them. They called it, no disrespect intended, “making friends in low places.” Those “friends” were the men and women with clipboards or grease and grape stains on their hands who could describe how things worked, because they were the ones who made them work.

Michael also talked to supermarket managers and wine buyers. They were the people he hoped to sell the wine to, and they were the ones who watched wine sell in their aisles. One of those was Don Brown, the wine buyer for the Lucky supermarket chain in Northern California and something of a legend in the region’s commercial wine culture.

Brown was old school before there was old school – gruff, abrupt, sometimes profane, seemingly perpetually irritated. It didn’t always win him friends,

but it was a style that got people in and out of his office quickly.

It was late summer when Michael went to see Brown in Hayward, across the bay from San Francisco. It was a bit like trying to get an interview with royalty, if the royalty worked in a concrete industrial park with dark halls, the low hum of fluorescent lighting, and cement floors.

Michael signed in, got a visitor's badge, and waited on a small, stiff chair outside Brown's office for what seemed half the afternoon. He sat looking down the long, cement-walled hallways, expecting a forklift to come buzzing through the office space.

When Brown let him in, Michael sat on another hard folding chair in front of Brown's desk. The office was crowded with wine and spirit samples from companies hoping Brown and Lucky would carry their lines. Brown went right into his act.

“Say what you need to say,” Brown told Michael, “and get out of here.”

“My name’s Michael Houlihan and I just closed a deal with a winery to pay off some debt,” Michael said. “I’m sitting on thousands of gallons of cabernet and sauvignon blanc. When I bottle it, what should the label look like?”

Brown’s grumpiness eased a notch.

“You know, Houlihan, nobody ever asked me that before,” Brown said, “so I’m gonna help you.” He looked away from Michael as he said that, lest it be interpreted as friendliness.

“Don’t make it a hill or a leap or a run or a valley or a creek,” Brown said. “I got enough of those. I can’t sell more. Don’t put a flower on it. And for crissakes, don’t make it a chateau.”

He was getting a little wound up. Michael figured Brown was seeing the rows and rows of

identical-sounding wine brands and thinking about how much trouble he had getting them to move.

“Make the logo the same as the name. It has to be something familiar, something people will recognize and remember. And whatever you do,” Brown said and paused for effect, “do it in plain English.”

“Got it,” Michael said, trying not to get the man any angrier. He hoped Brown would pick up his wine when it was bottled. “Thank you. I appreciate your time.”

Michael got up to leave.

“And Houlihan,” Brown said as Michael reached the door, “make it visible from four feet away. She has to be able to see it when she’s pushing her cart down the aisle. Now get outta here. I got work to do.”

* * *

All of that was gold, but that last point, the last sentence just before Brown booted Michael into the hall, would become a cornerstone of Michael's and Bonnie's wine business philosophy. They just didn't know it yet.

An equally useful, but far more benign, visit was with Lou Toninato at Souverain. He was the manager of the winery's bottling line, Michael's "chrome locomotive," and Michael and Bonnie both went to see him to learn as much about that monster as they could. While Lou was explaining how the bottling would work, they asked if he had any thoughts on labels.

"I'm no expert," Lou said, "but I have a label room here. Let me show you."

The room was Lou Toninato's library. It had every label from every wine that had been bottled there. Some were from little wineries and winemakers, some were from big boys. There were

thousands of labels in small trays that held them like index cards in a library. The trays lined the walls and went nearly floor to ceiling.

“I see which ones get used up the fastest and come back to bottle more,” he told Michael and Bonnie. “And I can tell you that most of these only got used once and never came back.”

There was a consistency to the failed labels. They were fancy, with curly-cue writing, or ornate lettering, or script that looked like it belonged on the Magna Carta. There were labels that made you squint to read them, and labels that looked like inkblots and abstract paintings. One looked like a carrot stew. Those were the ones Lou never saw twice.

“You have to remember, these are going on a curved piece of glass,” Lou said. “You’re only going to see about two inches of the thing.”

He said the repeat customers had their images centered and visible, not on the top or bottom or in the right-hand corner.

He said when a bottle is filled with red wine, it basically looks black. The labels that stood out were mostly white.

And, Lou said, think about the process of shipping wine.

“OK,” Bonnie said and looked at Michael. They had no clue about that process. They nodded anyway.

The bottles come off the line in a hurry, Lou told them, and they get stuffed into boxes with hard cardboard dividers. Then they bang around on handcarts or in trucks. The boxes get tossed into warehouses or shipped to backrooms at stores. When they get displayed, they get yanked out quickly and nearly thrown onto shelves because the clerk has a lot of work to do.

That means lots of labels get scuffed, and when the labels are in color, the scuff shows the white paper underneath. “It looks like damaged goods,” Lou said. “No one buys it. When it gets to the front of the shelf in a store, it stops the sale of all the bottles behind it.”

Plus, he told them, keep it simple.

“One image, not a bunch of images,” Lou said. “Your bottle will be up there with all those other bottles and the section already looks messy and crowded.”

Michael and Bonnie stood there and kept nodding. This was so much good information, they didn’t know where to start.

“Anyway, that’s what I see working,” Lou said. “But I’m no expert.”

They wanted to hug the guy. He’d given them a master class on wine merchandising and almost apologized for it. And what he said connected to

what Don Brown and others were saying. They were starting to get an idea.

* * *

Another stop was Petrini's supermarket in San Francisco. It was just Michael again and he went to talk to Art Mueller, the Petrini's wine buyer.

He asked the questions he asked everyone: What do you need? What sells? What don't you have? Where is the gap? We can bottle it any way you want, put any label on it that works for you, he told Art.

"Here's what you gotta do," he said. "Give me a salt-and-pepper act, make it better than Bob, make it cheaper than Bob, and put it in a pig."

"Got it," Michael said. "Thank you."

Michael walked to his car, unlocked it and sat in the driver's seat. He just sat there a moment.

“What the heck was that?” he said to no one.

The next day Michael called Hampton Bynum, who was working as a winemaker with his father, and asked him to translate.

“Salt and pepper is a way of saying white wine and red wine,” Hampton said.

“OK, that makes a little sense,” Michael said.

“So who’s Bob?”

“You don’t know Robert Mondavi?” Hampton said.

“‘Bob’ is Robert Mondavi?” Michael said. “Mr. Napa Valley wine?”

“Mr. American wine,” Hampton said. “Don’t undersell him.”

“I have to be better than Robert Mondavi?” Michael said. His voice had some panic to it.

“And didn’t your guy say cheaper, too? I think you have to be better and cheaper than Mondavi,”

Hampton said. He was trying not to laugh at his friend. “It should be a snap.”

“How am I going to do that?” Michael said.

“Make it good. Make it cheap.”

“Funny. I’m afraid to ask the last one. What’s a pig?”

“That’s a magnum,” Hampton said. “A 1.5- liter bottle. It’s twice the size of a regular bottle. Some people call ’em pigs ‘cause they’re big and round.”

When Michael hung up, he told Bonnie what Hampton said.

“Really?” Bonnie said. “Wine comes in different sized bottles?”

* * *

Sometimes, information needs to germinate. And sometimes, the weight of it all will eventually hit a mental button or make an image pop up. The advice

from Don Brown, Lou Toninato, Art Mueller, and everyone else had been bouncing around in Michael's head. He was thinking about his San Francisco Bay Area days when he and Hampton would do what they called "product research." Hampton had keys to his dad's Albany winery and they'd sneak some Barefoot Bynum wine before it got bottled. There were days they did "research" for hours. Now, Michael was remembering the old jug bottles with the foot.

They'd need a new label. The old one had the foot on the bottom and it didn't look lively or cheery enough. But it was a good direction. It was a solid image without a hill or a valley or a chateau, and it could be fun. Plus a foot was pretty straightforward.

Michael went to Davis Bynum and worked out a deal. They bought the name and would start up a new brand, and Davis would sell the wine in his Healdsburg tasting room. This was progress, but he and Bonnie needed to figure out the look of the label,

something that would be full of life, that would not get scuffed, that would stand out, and that wouldn't tick off Don Brown.

Bonnie and Michael tossed around ideas for weeks, trying to be sure they had their concept right, digesting all the advice and information, analyzing labels they saw on store shelves. One night in October, coming back from a dinner with friends, it was Bonnie's turn to have the weight of all that information suddenly push a button in her mind.

They walked into the kitchen in their little rented farmhouse. It was near midnight. Michael started down the hall, headed for bed. But at that moment in the middle of the night, all those talks, all that info from Don Brown and Lou Toninato and everyone else, all the musing, it all bonded together, became focused and struck Bonnie like a thunderbolt. She had a bright moment of clarity.

“Wait,” Bonnie said, “come back here. I’ve got it.”

Michael was exhausted. “Can’t we wait until morning,” he said. He was close to pleading.

“No, no, no,” Bonnie said. “We have to do this now.” She was bouncing with energy, almost giggly. Michael looked at her. She didn’t get like that often, but when she did, it usually meant something important. He trundled back into the kitchen.

“Go to the chalkboard,” Bonnie said. “You’re the artist.”

Well, sort of. He could at least draw better than Bonnie. They had a small blackboard in the kitchen they used for everything from leaving notes to scribbling stray thoughts.



“I know what the label looks like,” Bonnie said.
“This is going to be a big success. I can see it stacked
in supermarkets. This is going to sell a lot of wine.”

Michael picked up the chalk and started to draw.

* * *

CONVERSATIONS WITH BONNIE AND MICHAEL

There were so many stories and lessons in the tale of the Barefoot Spirit that we couldn't fit them all into these chapters. So, instead, here's a chance to listen into the conversation as Michael and Bonnie told their story.

Rick: Did you have any concept of what you were taking on?

Bonnie: No. None whatsoever. We thought we were going to bottle some wine, sell it, pay Mark

back, and have a little left over. We didn't even know enough to be afraid. It was like, Why not?

Michael: We had space in the laundry room because we couldn't afford a washer and dryer. We thought, "Great, we'll use that as an office." If we knew how long it would take, we probably would've said, "Sorry, Mark, looks like you're gonna take the loss."

Rick: Michael, when you were looking at the silver locomotive at Souverain, what was going through your head?

Michael: I was looking for comic relief. The tensions were so high, I wasn't getting anywhere, but I had the floor and I wanted to be in charge of the meeting. I just wanted to keep talking.

Bonnie: You were asking them for money and they didn't have any.

Michael: That's what they kept telling me. You get into a corner and you say, "Hey, look, a puppy."

Rick: Why did you work so hard on the label?

Michael: We thought, gee, we were lucky to get at least something from those stone faces. So we had the wine and the bottling services. Then it dawned on us, we had to sell the stuff. But we knew opportunity is fleeting and sometimes you have to take the opportunity you get.

Bonnie: We thought Mark would sell it, but we knew we had to come up with the details and business plan. Then it seemed like the obvious next question: What's the label look like?

Rick: But you didn't start by brainstorming, which is what lots of new businesses do. You started right off talking to people. Why?

Michael: We approached it like we approached everything else. We looked around for the old guys, the guys with high mileage, who've been doing it for years.

Bonnie: We first asked, who were the people we should talk to? It's the logical next step. If you don't know what you're getting into, ask somebody who's been there.

Michael: And be humble enough to go in with your hat in your hand ...

Bonnie: ...and say, "Will you help me, please?"

CHAPTER 6

Mama Mabel, Surfers, and Monks

(unedited and abridged)

The rain was coming down solid and straight on this late winter day. Michael was at Ace Hardware in Santa Rosa. His cart had a load of plastic rain gutters and downspouts, and he just needed a couple rolls of duct tape.

Ah, duct tape. The multitalented roll that can fix pretty much anything. When you're a start-up, your entire world seems stitched together with duct tape. In this case though, the tape was more than symbolic. Michael was doing office repairs.

It was 1988 – before they hired Randy, before they became Bonded Winery No. 5626 – and Barefoot was still in the attic above Davis Bynum Winery. Davis had his own cash-flow issues and

didn't spend much on building repairs. So the large, rectangular skylight in the center of the Barefoot office leaked.

In truth, "leaked" wildly understates it. "Poured" is closer. Water seeped down most of the edges, raining on the conference table and desks on storm days. Michael, Bonnie, and the crew had buckets lined in strategic spots around the room, but they took constant tending and quick repositioning when winds shifted and moved the leak spots.

If anyone had time to think about it, the water problem was something of a metaphor for Barefoot. They were constantly scrambling, constantly adjusting to outside forces, constantly working to keep from getting washed away. But who can stop for irony when it's raining?

Michael hooked up the rain gutters under the skylight, making a rectangle along the outer edges. Then he connected the downspout and sent it out a

window. The contraption not only worked, on heavy rain days, it gave the office the background noise of a waterfall. (Unfortunately, when the rain was light, they got a much less endearing drip.)

On one drizzly Saturday, just a few weeks after Michael hooked up his anti-leak system, he was at the office catching up – standard procedure for most Saturdays. He wore jeans and boots and clothes for the rain. The phone rang, and it was a man with a Japanese accent. He represented Kenan Busan (busan translates, more or less, to trading company) and he said his boss, Mr. Matsumoto, wanted to visit.

Sure, Michael said. He expected another fly-by-night broker looking for a discount.

A half-hour later, five Japanese businessmen walked up the stairs and filed in. They were decidedly not fly-by-night. They each carried a briefcase and wore well-cut gray suits, silk ties,

slicked hair, and polished shoes. Michael looked at his muddy boots. “Oh well,” he thought.

Only one of the men spoke English. He introduced himself as the translator, then introduced Mr. Matsumoto. Mr. Matsumoto bowed. Michael bowed. Mr. Matsumoto handed Michael his business card.

This was an important moment. In Japan, exchanging business cards – they’re called meishi – is a ceremony laden with etiquette that can signify the start of a partnership.

Michael knew something about this because his father had worked on projects involving trade with Japan, and Michael had picked up some fundamentals of Japanese business culture.

Mr. Matsumoto handed Michael his card with both hands, a sign of respect. It was turned toward Michael so he could read it. Michael took it with both hands and did not look up. He stared at the card and

read it carefully, as if memorizing it. In the U.S., looking too long at a business card can seem like you don't trust someone's credentials. In Japanese business, you study it. But it's an insult to write on it, or to put it right in your pocket, because the card is considered an extension of the person and an announcement of that person's station in the company.

After Michael read the card carefully, he looked up and gave a slight bow, then presented Mr. Matsumoto with his Barefoot card, the one with the foot and the title, "Head Stomper." Mr. Matsumoto looked at it carefully. He did not snicker.

Michael went through the business card rite with each visitor. Then everyone sat at the table. Michael was at one end, Mr. Matsumoto at the other. No one spoke for a moment. The only sound was the drip, the dink, dink, dink of the indoor rain gutters. The businessmen looked up. Their heads all followed the

downspout out the window. They looked back at each other, but no one said a word. Michael figured they were too polite to ask, but he was hoping they thought it was part of the American winemaking process.

The interpreter sat next to Mr. Matsumoto, who would speak in Japanese, but directly to Michael. Then the interpreter would get up, go to Michael and talk quietly in his ear. Michael would answer in English straight at Mr. Matsumoto, and the interpreter would hustle back to talk in his boss's ear. This was a tiny room. The shuttle diplomacy was beyond unnecessary, but tradition is tradition.

“Before we begin,” the translator told Michael, “Mr. Matsumoto wants to make something perfectly clear.” He opened a briefcase and carefully placed a document in front of Michael. It was from Bank of America, 555 California St., San Francisco, and it said \$45,000 had been placed into an account from

Kenan Busan for Barefoot Cellars. It didn't say for what.

That told Michael two things. These guys were serious, and the meeting was about how much the \$45,000 would buy. He was also pretty sure these weren't people who would leave a shipment of wine sitting on a dock for a week.

“There are lines that haven't been filled in,” Michael said to get things started.

“Yes,” the interpreter said. “We will talk about that.”

So they haggled over how many cases the \$45,000 would buy, what wines – cabernet or sauvignon blanc or both – would be in the deal, and all the smaller details.

Things started to get a little edgy. Often, when a negotiation starts to stall, Japanese businessmen set it aside for a moment and talk about something else.

“Mr. Houlihan-san,” the interpreter said, “Mr. Matsumoto wants to know why you have only two Barefoots?” He meant, why just the two varietals?

Michael got a playful look. He smiled straight at Mr. Matsumoto. Then Michael put his left foot, boot and all, on the table, followed by his right foot. Michael gave Mr. Matsumoto a palms-up shrug that said, “This is all I’ve got.”

The room went still. Mr. Matsumoto started laughing. He had a hearty, slap-the-table laugh, and his team laughed with him. Whatever tension had been in the room was gone. Mr. Matsumoto slowed his laugh, then it kicked in again.

He brought his interpreter to his end of the table and spoke to him. The interpreter came back to Michael.

“Mr. Matsumoto respectfully asks,” the translator said, “if you could print the back labels in

Japanese.” That was it. There was going to be a deal, now they were just working out the fine points.

Michael figured he’d stay with what seemed to be working. He had a Barefoot cork in his pocket. He took it out and put it in the interpreter’s hand, then folded the man’s other hand over it so the cork was covered.

“Tell Mr. Matsumoto,” Michael said, “the cork’s already printed in Japanese.”

The translator went down to his boss, told him what Michael said, then showed him the cork. All that was on it was the foot.

Mr. Matsumoto cracked up again. He passed the cork around to his team. They all laughed, too.



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On a hot afternoon in late 1992, Michael was driving around San Clemente, a small city on Southern California's coast. He was a little lost. He was looking for an office he thought would be near the beach.

But the address took him through some very un-beach-like commercial streets in the middle of town, and when he found the office, it was a tiny storefront in a busy street-side strip mall.

Michael was wearing a suit, his standard uniform on a business call. He went in the front door, but still wasn't sure he was in the right place. The group he was looking for was getting a formidable reputation.

This room was maybe 12 by 15 feet. A guy with medium-long, sun-bleached hair sat behind a battered, crowded desk. He was in his late 20s or early 30s, and looked fit and tan. He wore bright shorts, huarache sandals, and a faded T-shirt. A surfboard hung on a wall rack behind him.

“Is this the Surfrider Foundation?” Michael asked

The guy smiled. “You found it,” he said.
“International headquarters.”

Michael immediately liked the unassuming guy. Michael also liked the unfussy room filled with papers, files, and surf gear. He introduced himself and said he had been learning about Surfrider.

“We want to help,” Michael said.

Michael showed him a bottle of Barefoot and the Surfrider laughed. “Very cool,” he said. “Love the foot. It’s like Hang Ten or something.”

They talked a bit. Michael explained Barefoot’s approach to wine and its connection with the beach. The Surfrider told Michael about the foundation’s latest project, the Blue Water Task Force.

“What can we do?” Michael said.

“We don’t have much money,” the man said.

“Neither do we,” Michael said. “But we have wine.”

Michael heard about Surfrider through a Southern California distributor rep, who said the group was a natural fit for Barefoot. He said Surfrider was interested in the same things as Michael and Bonnie – clean water, safe beaches, open spaces, and the environment. Plus Michael used to surf.

The Surfrider Foundation started in 1984 trying to protect a prized surf break at Malibu. They spread through Southern California, working to preserve beaches, keep the ocean clean, and protect beach access, and they grew to include programs that taught people about the coast and the environment.

They were, mostly, grown-up surfers – lawyers, businesspeople, wage earners, doctors, teachers, folks who had jobs and families and still surfed and loved the beach. Every day they surfed, they saw the threats

to the water, the coast, and the people who lived and visited there.

Their latest front in 1992, the Blue Water Task Force, was a ground-breaking idea designed by chemists, engineers, and oceanographers. It was part Neighborhood Watch for the ocean and part giant chemistry project. Surfrider gave little kits to surfers all along California's coast that could help diagnose exactly what was in the water and where.

The kits were the size of a pack of cigarettes. A surfer would open the top, slide out a little Petri dish, dip it in the water, seal it up, write the location on it, then drop it into a mailbox with pre-paid postage. It went to a Surfrider lab that would test the sample. They were creating maps of California's coastline, piecing together the details of what spots were clean and what spots were not.

Surfrider came up with this plan because lots of surfers and lifeguards, and lots of kids just hanging at

beaches, were getting rashes or infections or serious illnesses when they spent long days in the ocean, especially along some of Southern California's most popular beaches.

The Blue Water Task Force quickly developed both credibility and some political muscle, because environmental officials couldn't ignore the hard data from the kits, and because their own tests confirmed the results.

And when Surfrider found dirty beaches, a lot of those spots would get closed down. That meant businesses along those stretches, the hotels, restaurants and more, had serious incentives to either clean up their acts if they were responsible, or to pressure whoever was polluting – which included municipal sewage operations – to fix the problem.

When he learned the details of the Blue Water Task Force, Michael wanted Barefoot to help. But donating wine was only one piece. They needed to

get more people to use the kits, and to raise money to pay for them and the lab work.

“We’ll give you wine for your fundraisers,” Michael told the guy at “international HQ.” He was thinking out loud. “And how about this? We’ll put neck talkers on our bottles. We’ve got Barefoot spread all over Southern California, and most of it is in beach towns.”

“What’s a neck talker?” the guy said.

Neck talkers are common in supermarket aisles. They’re the small tags that hang off bottle necks and usually say something like “\$2 off cheese with this purchase.” Michael’s version would say “Hang Ten for Clean Water” and would ask people to send \$10 to Surfrider to help pay for the tests.

“Our typical buyer is a mom out shopping,” Michael said. “She’s got kids getting all those ear infections you were talking about. Maybe we can get her to send a check.”

In June 1993, the Surfrider Foundation issued a press release announcing the partnership. “Barefoot Cellars, long-time advocate and supporter of environmental causes, has put its ‘foot down’ on the side of clean coastal waters,” it said.

“These surfers are responsible professionals and are the real guardians of our coast,” Michael said in the release. “Their intimate relationship with our coastal waters has made them painfully aware of the pollution that threatens us all.”

The neck talkers came out on August 1, 1993. They were surfboard shaped and the circle around the bottle neck was a cartoon surfer dude dangling his toes off the front of the board. They asked people to send \$10 to the Surfrider Blue Water Task Force and promised that Barefoot would contribute \$1 for every \$10 sent in. It was the start of one of the most enduring, and most visible, worthy-cause relationships in American wine.

Barefoot would hang the neck talkers on thousands and thousands of bottles of wine, and raise thousands of dollars for Surfrider. The Blue Water Task Force would test water all along the California coast, and in coming years, its chapters spread the tests throughout the country, from Hawaii to the Eastern Seaboard and the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast. They would force cleanups along some world famous beaches like Santa Monica, San Onofre, Santa Cruz and more. And they would create a permanent, nationwide, citizen-powered water-testing program.

Barefoot got questioned at first for the campaign, mostly by analysts who said you should never ask for money on your product. But Michael and Bonnie believed in the Surfrider Foundation. And they believed lots of people who drank Barefoot wanted to protect the coast, too. Barefoot was a major help kick

starting the Blue Water Task Force, and it never stopped supporting the Surfrider cause.

By the late 1990s, when Barefoot had become a national brand, and Surfrider had spread around America, Michael was back at a chapter meeting in Orange County to say hello to some old friends. Surfrider meetings have a touch of happy zealotry to them. People stand up, introduce themselves, and say what kind of surfboard they use, like, “Hi, my name is Sally Smith, I ride a 10-foot O’Neill.” When it was Michael’s turn, he didn’t want to misrepresent. These were die-hards, serious surfers. He hadn’t been on a board in years.

“Hi,” he said. “My name is Michael Houlihan. I ride a 750 Barefoot.”

He got cheers.

* * *

It was a quiet Monday morning in 1993. The phone rang in Barefoot's office. The secretary told Michael it was a lawyer from New York.

Michael is not the world's most serious man. He picked up the phone and answered the way he usually did.

“Hello,” he said, “this is the Head Stomper.”

The lawyer ignored it. “I represent the Baron Eric de Rothschild,” he said.

Michael was thinking, you just can't make lawyers laugh. “What can I do for the Baron today?” he said.

Baron Eric de Rothschild is a towering figure in the wine world. He owned, and still owns, Chateau Lafite Rothschild, one of the most celebrated and expensive wineries on the planet. It's in Bordeaux, France, its reputation is centuries old, and its wines can sell for hundreds, or thousands, of dollars.

Barefoot, of course, was a wee bit different. In 1993, its wine sold for \$4.99 a bottle, though often it was on sale for a dollar less. And there was that foot on the label.

“The Baron takes umbrage,” the lawyer told Michael, “with your use of the term ‘the Chateau La Feet’ of California wine. He feels it will cause confusion in the marketplace. He has retained our firm to take all the legal steps necessary to compel you to cease and desist.”

Barefoot had been using that little wordplay since its start. It was Davis Bynum who began the joke. Now, here was a powerful bastion of Old World wine, maybe *the* bastion, threatening to sue Barefoot for, in short, having a sense of humor.

And Michael could not have been more thrilled. That’s because he and Bonnie and the Barefoot team had been working toward this moment for more than two years.

This was, remember, a wine company with no budget for ads or PR, so they scrambled continually to generate any kind of Barefoot publicity. The idea for this play dawned on them after Michael's frustrating sales visit to a snooty New York wine shop where the owner bragged about how much Chateau Lafite he sold.

"You know what we need?" Michael told Bonnie when he got home. "We need to get Chateau Lafite to sue us."

Well, as long as Lafite didn't actually sue. They wanted the threat, something to get enough attention to show how different Barefoot was from wineries that used words like "umbrage." And they thought that if the Baron or Lafite lawyers got wind of Barefoot's "La Feet" slogan, that might push the button.

So in mid-1991, Barefoot started giving its "Chateau La Feet" T-shirts to friends and business

allies heading to Europe or international wine festivals. When brokers wanted Barefoot wines for trade shows like Vinexpo in France or the London International Wine Fair, Michael and Bonnie made sure they also took stacks of the shirts, and that they put them on anything that moved.

Finally, the Barefooters think, a young Rothschild relative saw the slogan at a wine marketing seminar Michael gave at the University of California, Davis. Maybe she even wore a T-shirt back to the Chateau.

But if Michael wasn't sure what exactly prompted the lawyer's call, he did understand this would only work if he got something solid to show to newspapers before he gave in to Lafite's demands.

“Really?” Michael said. “The Baron takes umbrage? I'm sorry to hear that. But you're going to have to threaten me in writing. Can you write that down and fax it to me?”

Fine, the lawyer said. He'd send it by the end of Tuesday.

Tuesday morning, Michael and most of the Barefoot office staff paced hopefully around the fax machine. A little after 10:30 a.m., the phone rang and the fax started beeping. It was a threat from something in Paris called the Societe Civile de Chateau Lafite-Rothschild. Even the stuffy name was perfect for this story.

Michael re-sent the fax to Dan Berger, a respected Los Angeles Times wine writer. Michael had gotten to know him a bit because Dan had been generally appreciative of Barefoot. He wrote about it the next day.

The Lafite vs. La Feet story went national on Thanksgiving week after a wire service picked up Berger's piece. It was ideal for newsrooms trying to fill a quiet holiday weekend.

The story of the powerful Baron threatening plucky little Barefoot “to avoid confusion in the marketplace” showed up in places ranging from the Chicago Tribune, the Orlando Sentinel, and the Independent of London to CBS radio, the Osgood File, and Paul Harvey’s “The Rest of the Story.” It eventually, and improbably, made the Weekly World News, that goofy tabloid that ran stories of aliens hanging out with American presidents. (The item ran near a story of a multi-headed cow.)

The first media call came in at Michael and Bonnie’s house at 6 a.m. on Thanksgiving morning. Michael spent the weekend giving phone interviews and answering reporter after reporter.

“I agree with the Baron,” Michael told them, “if people confuse our wine, which costs \$4.99, with his, which costs \$100, we’ll be ruined.”

“These guys have to be kidding,” Houlihan told other reporters. “Our bottle has a big purple foot.

Theirs has lots of fancy European writing, most of which you can't pronounce."

Michael said he would change the slogan to "Chateau La Foot." "We have a foot on our label," he told the San Francisco Chronicle. "We're always going to be Chateau la Something-of-the-Lower Leg."

The news stories worked out so well they could have been written by Barefoot's PR people, if they'd had PR people. The stories said Chateau Lafite embodied what scared people about wine. They were unbending, exclusive, humorless. But Barefoot, the stories said, was the opposite – friendly, innovative, playful. And they laughed. Nobody in polite wine society laughed.

The Barefoot crew didn't let it end there. They clipped and copied the columns and stories for Barefoot's sales team to hand to every mom-and-pop and wine shop owner, every supermarket manager

and wine clerk, to tell them that carrying Barefoot made *them* look good. Now Safeway or Bill's Bottle Shop was siding with the little guy, the Americans with a sense of humor who were getting bullied by French fuddy-duddies.

There was an immediate and sustained spike in Barefoot sales, and the echoes lasted for years. Nearly a decade later, Michael and the sales people would still hear wine buyers or store managers asking, "Wasn't there some baron or duke in Europe trying to shut you guys down?"

* * *

When they launched Barefoot, Bonnie and Michael thought they would be in it for four years. That was their guess on paying off the debt to Mark Lyon and building Barefoot enough to make it an attractive acquisition for another winery. Eight years

later, they were laughing at those naïve estimates. They could see this would be a long haul, and in '94 they'd come to understand they had no idea what the length of that haul would be.

By the early 1990s, the Bynum name had not been on the bottle for years, and Barefoot had also moved from Davis Bynum Winery to a business park in Santa Rosa, but Michael and Bonnie were still friends with Davis and Hampton.

On a mild, late winter day in 1994, Michael went to visit Davis and wound up standing in the parking lot with him, watching a repair crew high up on the roof hammering away.

“Why didn't you fix the roof when we were there?” Michael said.

“It wasn't worth it,” Davis said.

“So why now?”

“I have to. The leaks are coming into the tasting room,” Davis said. “I don’t have you guys up there anymore to move the buckets around.”

* * *

CONVERSATIONS WITH BONNIE AND MICHAEL

Rick: Tell me more about that tiny, leaky office at Davis Bynum’s winery.

Bonnie: It was one large room, about 600 square feet or something. We had three people in the field and three of us in the office, and it was stuffed.

Michael: When we went to four in the office, it started to get crazy. Everybody had to sit down for the door to open. If someone was standing, it would hit them. When we got a knock on the door, everybody sat down.

Bonnie: We were audited for California sales tax once. It was summer when the auditor came. There was literally no room in the office for another body, so we put him out in the hall.

Michael: We put him in a utility closet, remember?

Bonnie: Oh, that's right. We put up a card table and a folding chair. It was about 105 degrees in there.

Michael: There was no window, no AC.

Bonnie: It had one bare light bulb. It was a multi-year audit. That audit was over in two days.

Michael: We felt bad for him. We tried to give him a bottle of wine but he couldn't accept it.

Rick: Of all the worthy causes, the Surfrider Foundation seems to be the most perfect for Barefoot.

Bonnie: It seemed so natural.

Michael: Bonnie had always been a stickler for clean beaches. Ever since I met her, she's been

picking up garbage wherever she goes, especially on the beach. When we heard they were actually testing the ocean for swimmers' safety, we thought, geez, these are our kind of people. These guys are the guardians of the beach. How can we help?

Bonnie: It was a match for our lifestyle and for the Barefoot Spirit.

Michael: It really set the tone for a lot of our Worthy Cause Marketing. It showed us how much a business could help a non-profit and, in return, how much we could create goodwill toward the brand.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Michael Houlihan and Bonnie Harvey, authors of *The Barefoot Spirit: How Hardship, Hustle, and Heart Built a Bestselling Wine*, started the Barefoot Wine brand in their laundry room in 1986, made it a nationwide bestseller, and successfully

sold the brand to E&J Gallo in 2005. Starting with virtually no money and no wine industry experience, they employed innovative ideas to overcome obstacles and create new markets.

They were pioneers in what they termed “worthy cause marketing” and performance-based compensation. They held a comprehensive view of customer service, resulting in the National Hot Brand Award for outstanding sales growth in 2003 and 2004.

They now share their experience and innovative approach to business as consultants, authors, speakers, mentors, and workshop leaders. Their book, *The Barefoot Spirit*, chronicles the history and lessons learned building the popular Barefoot Wine brand.

To learn more, visit www.barefootwinefounders.com

PRAISE FOR THE BAREFOOT SPIRIT

“This is a warm, wonderful, inspiring book that entertains and motivates at the same time.”

–Brian Tracy, Author, *Eat That Frog!*

“When you have a passion but no formula to follow, *The Barefoot Spirit* will inspire and direct you and your energy. A book that shows those with the true entrepreneur’s spirit how not to get stuck on the small things and make decisions from the soul. This book is as unpretentious as the wine they produced.”

–Sonya Gavankar, Broadcast Journalist, Face of the Newseum

“I picked up Michael and Bonnie’s book chronicling the Barefoot story with the intention of a quick scan and found myself spending the better part of a Sunday thoroughly enjoying myself reading cover-to-cover. I believe students will find *The Barefoot Spirit* both a great read and an important lesson in

creative problem solving in the face of critical challenges.”

–Pat Dickson, 2013 President, The United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship and Associate Professor, Wake Forest University, North Carolina

“I thoroughly enjoyed *The Barefoot Spirit*. I will make it required reading because it tells a lovely story and it embodies so much of the entrepreneurial mindset. I loved the “voice” of the book and storytelling is such a wonderful way to communicate. I believe students will find it a fun addition to their library and in the process they will learn the most important lessons of entrepreneurship!”

–Rebecca White, Professor, Entrepreneurship and James W. Walter Distinguished Chair of Entrepreneurship and Director, Entrepreneurship Center, The University of Tampa, John H. Sykes College of Business. 2012 President, United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE)

“In 1986, Michael Houlihan and Bonnie Harvey started Barefoot Wine—in their laundry room. Through the years they managed and marketed it into a product that was eventually sold to E & J Gallo. *The Barefoot Spirit* confidently guides any start-up company to success.”

—David Bruce Smith, Publisher and Author of *American Hero: John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States*

“Michael and Bonnie’s book is a must read for anyone who is looking to start a business that will make it in today’s economy. Whether you are starting a company from scratch or investing your money or someone else’s, *The Barefoot Spirit* illustrates the hands on and no cost best practices that will make your company a success.”

—Andrea Keating, Founder, The International Video Crew Staffing Firm

“As an entrepreneur, publicist, and publisher, I found great insight in *The Barefoot Spirit*. Michael Houlihan and Bonnie Harvey’s tips on how to survive on less than a shoestring are clever, practical—and best of all, provides a good giggle to any entrepreneur in

panic mode. This book is one that I'm already recommending to my readers, colleagues, and clients in start-up mode—as well as those who are ready to take their business to the next level. Here's to going Barefoot!”

–Hope Katz Gibbs, Publisher of *Be Inkandescent* Magazine

“Michael and Bonnie took a chance on potentially losing sales when they supported our cause with Barefoot Cellars in the early 1990's. Their co-promotion with the League to Save Lake Tahoe took a strong position on a very controversial issue involving the development of the Lake Tahoe Basin. They helped us get the word out about our cause through wine shops, markets and restaurants in California.”

–Darcie Goodman-Collins, PhD, Executive Director, League to Save Lake Tahoe

“Michael and Bonnie started the tradition of Worthy Cause Marketing and for well over a decade used their winery, Barefoot Cellars, to support the Mono Lake Committee's grassroots efforts. Their approach helped spread the word about protection,

restoration, and education at Mono Lake—inspiring people to get out and get involved.”

–Geoff McQuilkin, Executive Director, Mono Lake Committee

“The Barefoot Spirit will appeal to entrepreneurs, business people, non-profit leaders, and anyone who is passionate about activism, unlikely success stories, and – oh yes – wine. In content, message and even writing style, it’s smart, funny, self-deprecating.”

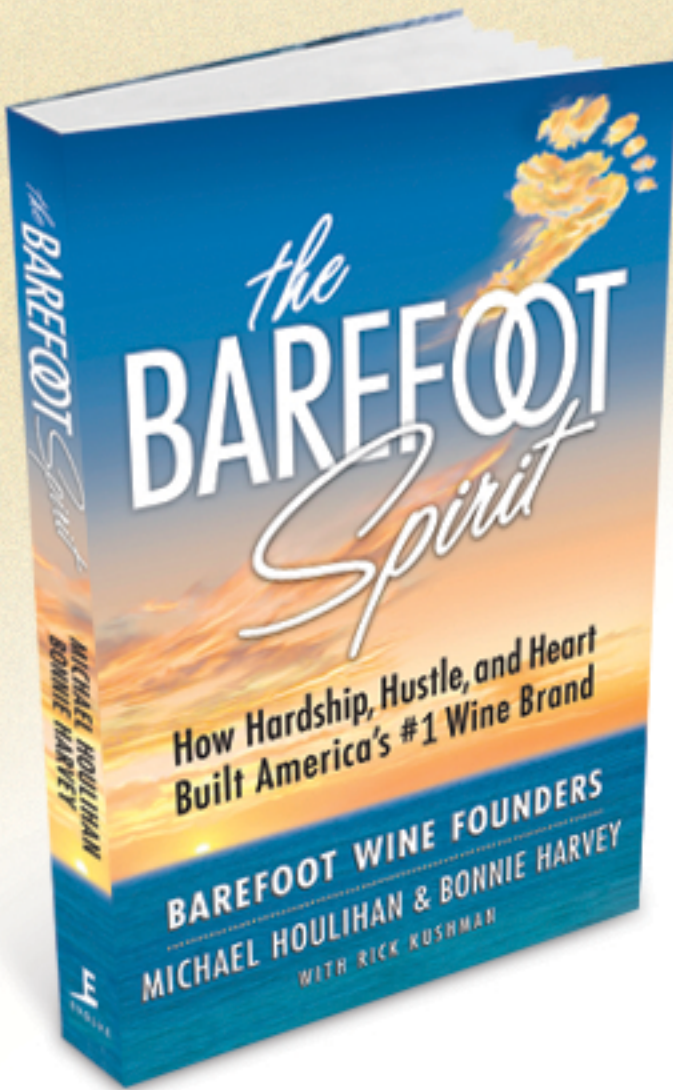
–Michael Tate, Board President, San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus

“What I like best about the book is that Houlihan and Harvey lead by example, and explain how they took an idea and little blood, sweat, and wine, and turned it into a multi-million dollar brand that is now a household name. Talk about a financial gold mine.”

–Bryan Beatty, Certified Financial Planner, and a partner at the financial planning firm, Egan Berger & Weiner

WE'VE LEFT OUR FOOTPRINTS ALL OVER THE U.S. MEDIA.

See below for just a few of them.



TIME Business

REUTERS

FOX BUSINESS
THE POWER TO PROSPER

YAHOO!

Inc.

Entrepreneur

THE HUFFINGTON POST

OPEN Forum
Powering small business success

INVESTORS.com
POWERED BY INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Sales and Service
Excellence

★ Chron

The Seattle Times
Winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting

The Boston Globe

StarTribune

Newsday

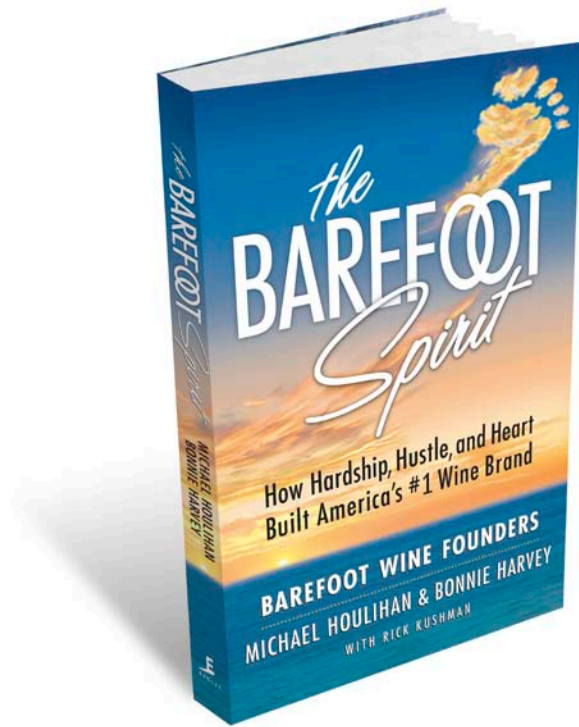
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