



# *Preface*

## **Sparks and Bonfires in Whiskyland**

I STARTED WRITING about Scotch whisky in 1989. Rich Colandrea of the *New York Times* asked me to write a story about Scotch whisky for a special advertising section in the *Times* Sunday magazine. The projected publication date was the first Sunday in December of that year. A month after signing the contract, I traveled to Scotland in May to conduct my research. Considering that I'm notorious for having less than brilliant memory skills, I recall that inaugural trip extraordinarily well. Something deep within me started to stir the day I was driven deep into the misty, green, and desolate Scottish Highlands on the winding A9, the main road that stretches from Scotland's Midlands all the way north to the town of Wick in the northern Highlands.

Though it wasn't raining, brooding clouds hung over the Highlands like a dark gray umbrella. Past the towns of Pitlochry and Blair Atholl, the snow-capped Cairngorm Mountains towered to the right of the A9 and the Monadhliath range rose like a monolithic giant to the left. *No wonder the Highlanders made whisky*, I wrote in my journal, my hand shaking from the chill, as the rugged, lonely, and dank but somehow beautiful landscape flashed by the passenger-side car window. Leaving

the A9 at the exit marked “Boat-of-Garten/A95,” I was unaware at the time that I would travel this route at least a dozen more times over the ensuing years as my fascination with Scotland and its whiskies grew from a flickering spark to a blazing bonfire.

Though I was an admitted whisky neophyte, the name of the first malt whisky distillery that I visited had a recognizable ring to it: The Glenlivet. The name was familiar because The Glenlivet was the best-selling single malt Scotch whisky in the United States. Still is. Vibrant impressions about my first stop at The Glenlivet included the sweet, beery, malted barley smells that permeated the atmosphere of the entire distillery complex, the spotless, shining, almost noble images of the tall copper pot stills, and the serene, rolling countryside that surrounded the distillery property. Fast-running streams and grazing sheep seemed to be present everywhere. When the sun emerged from the clouds in narrow golden bands, the color contrast from the ashy gray stone buildings to the intensely verdant hillsides to the cobalt blue patches of sky forced me to stop and gaze. The pastoral, narrow trough-like location is known as Glenlivet, the river valley in which Scotland’s finest malt whisky has been made, legally and illegally, for centuries. As it turns out, Glenlivet is the setting for much of the first two parts of *A Double Scotch*.

Since that initial foray in 1989, Scotland and its whiskies have become integral parts of my being as a writer and as a person. On my third trip to Scotland in 1991, Logan Air, an internal carrier, lost every piece of my luggage, and consequently, I quickly became acquainted with Marks & Spencer, the U.K. department store chain. Three months after Logan Air sent me a compensation check for \$1,700, my luggage with no prior warning turned up at my New York office. In 1993, I traveled the length and breadth of Scotland writing a *New York Times* story on the intertwined histories of golf and Scotch whisky. At the Brora Golf Course, I found myself reluctantly, and awkwardly, pitching short iron shots over the sheep that were grazing around nearly every green. Brora’s greens were actually ringed with electric shock wires to protect them from the sheep. I played so poorly that day, though, it is the only time I’ve ever heard sheep boo.

In 1995 for another *Times* story, I performed a different job in a different distillery each day over the course of 12 extremely long and



The Glenlivet distillery in Banffshire.

arduous days. During that dreamlike period, I cut peat in peat fields in Speyside. I worked in a distillery mash tun room (Glengoyne Distillery), a stillroom (Cragganmore), and a warehouse (Longmorn). I filled casks with new whisky off the still at Macallan. I turned barley at Benriach. Imitating a famous assembly line skit from *I Love Lucy*, I did an action-filled stint on the Glenfiddich bottling line. I even constructed, or “raised,” an oak barrel from nothing more than a bunch of staves and metal hoops at Speyside Cooperage and lived to tell about it. I sat in on blending sessions at Invergordon and created my own blend, deemed “Glen Horrible” for its ferocious nature. At times, my mind entered another dimension as I was introduced to yet another distillery worker with the first name of Ian. How many Ians could there be?

Two years later in 1997 for my monthly column in *Sky*, the Delta Air Lines in-flight magazine, I spent the night locked in the spooky aging warehouse of Highland Park Distillery in the Orkney Islands, attempting to catch a glimpse of the ghost of Eunson Magnus, the long-deceased Orkney man believed to haunt the building. Though I came away thinking that I hadn’t bumped into Eunson, the warehouseman who unlocked

the door at dawn assured me that though I might not have seen Eunson, Eunson doubtless saw me. The next year, 1998, I was inducted into the Keepers of the Quaich, the world's most exclusive Scotch whisky society, at Blair Castle in Perthshire. It was a rousing night of humorous speeches, singing, bagpipes, and ribald toasts recited while standing on chairs and tables, eating haggis, and drinking whisky. In other words, just a typical Thursday night in the Scottish Highlands.

### **And, Now, A *Double Scotch***

I conceived *A Double Scotch* knowing that a host of fine books on Scotch whisky by other writers had already been published. I wanted to explore the subject matter, however, by walking a different path. The other books have been written from the viewpoint of wide-angle examination of the distilleries, the whiskies, the whisky makers, or the industry as a whole unit.

By contrast, *A Double Scotch* maintains a keen focus on Scotch whisky's business, history, and marketing spanning more than five centuries, as viewed through the unique prisms provided by Scotland's two most illustrious brands, Chivas Regal Blended Scotch Whisky and The Glenlivet Single Malt Whisky. Among the scores of Scotch whiskies, these two brands especially, one the ultimate luxury blend, the other the quintessential single malt, have come to symbolize for whisky drinkers around the world what Scotch whisky is and should be.

*A Double Scotch* focuses largely on three enterprising, if idiosyncratic, families—the Chivas clan of Chivas Regal, the Smiths of The Glenlivet, and the Bronfmans of Joseph E. Seagram—who were alternately haunted, wounded by calamities, and rewarded for the success that befell the two brands. Intertwined with the families' compelling journeys are accounts of the continual excessive governmental taxation and ill-advised legislative interference imposed on whisky, which gave birth to an infamous era of widespread skulduggery, illicit distilling, rioting, smuggling, and even murder. Don't despair, though. For amid all the familial drama, industry intrigue, and occasional bloody mayhem thrive the inherent dry humor and survival sense of the Scots, who have always held that making whisky is an inalienable right.

Though *A Double Scotch* chronicles how a modest avocation fostered by resourceful Scottish Highlanders in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries blossomed into a modern industry that wields enormous global influence, this is a contemporary tale. *A Double Scotch* is timely reading both for seasoned Scotch mavens and for wide-eyed beginners because Scotch whisky is more than the world's most popular and admired distilled spirit. It is *the* foremost prestige spirit of the early third millennium.

This is due, first, to Scotch whisky's immediate and irrefutable association with Scotland, throughout history a place of mythical, romantic, and mystical proportions; and, second, to Scotch whisky's aura of genuineness. Amid the present-day consumer clamor for product authenticity and impeccable credentials, Scotch whisky epitomizes the soul of its country of origin more accurately than any other fermented or distilled alcoholic beverage. Blended Scotch whiskies like Chivas Regal reflect Scotland's bold, hearty national character, whereas the single malt whiskies such as The Glenlivet identify and evoke specific Scottish Highland, Lowland, and island locations. No other distilled spirit offers such a broad array of virtues, tastes, and personalities. Scotch whisky, it can be said, is a nation, a nationality, and a notion captured in a glass bottle.

René Descartes, the seventeenth-century French mathematician and philosopher, wrote in 1637, *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). My own altered version of Descartes' famous aphorism has guided the majority of my adult life and, more importantly, my career choice—I *drink, therefore I am*. That said, I recommend that you savor a dram of Chivas Regal or of The Glenlivet when you settle in to begin *A Double Scotch*. It is only natural that you, too, experience the feel, smell, and taste of the best of Scotland.

Here's to personal bonfires, sheep that boo, elusive distillery ghosts, and the scores of Scottish guys I know named Ian.

F. PAUL PACULT

Life Member, The Keepers of the Quaich

Wallkill, New York  
September 2004



Map of Great Britain.



# *Acknowledgments*

*A DOUBLE SCOTCH* became a living, breathing entity because of the following people, companies, and organizations without whose help I never could have completed the manuscript:

- Sue Woodley is my wife and business partner. Like everything we do, we researched this book together in Scotland and the United States.
- At John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: Matt Holt, Michelle Patterson, and Tamara Hummel.
- Iain Russell, the archivist from Glasgow University who was hired by Seagram in the 1990s to conduct in-depth research on the origins of both Chivas Regal and The Glenlivet. I have no doubt that Iain's generosity and painstaking research precision made *A Double Scotch* possible and accurate.
- At Chivas Brothers in Scotland: Yvonne Thackeray, Linda Brown, Alan Greig, Colin Scott, and Jim Cryle.
- At Chivas Brothers in London: Jim Long, Paul Scanlon, Robert Holmes, Christian Porta, and Martin Riley.
- At Pernod Ricard USA: Kevin Fennessey, Chris Willis, Rick Tapia, and Sandrine Ricard.
- At Pernod Ricard S.A. in France: Patrick Ricard.
- At Hunter Public Relations (USA): Joe Moscone, Amy Felmeister, and Claire Burke.

- At the Hagley Museum and Library—Soda House, Marge McNinch.
- Former House of Seagram USA marketing managers, Arthur Shapiro, Robert Dubin, and Ralph Pagan.
- Special thanks to Edgar Bronfman Sr.