



## ***The Beekeeper's History***

Apiarist Rupert Phillips was born in Kenya and at a young age moved with his family to Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Rupert's interest in bees started at the age of 8 when he had been keeping an eye on a colony of bees in a tree at his family's farm in Winterskloof. Intrigued by the constant stream of bees whizzing past his head, he ran back to the house to find a cardboard box to lure the colony into. He left the box, which was decorated with numerous cut flowers from his mother's garden, at the base of the tree and was excited to find that some bees came to look at the flowers. He left the box all night and eagerly returned the next morning to see if the bees had moved into their new home. Alas, disappointed was he to find no bees in the box and that all the flowers had wilted!

Rupert's father, encouraged by his son's enthusiasm for bees, took Rupert to see an old beekeeper called Vernon Lake who lived nearby. Vernon began teaching Rupert the intricacies of beekeeping. Soon Rupert had his first beehive and bee veil and learnt that the cardboard box would never have tempted that colony from the tree. He had no queen in it!

In subsequent years, Rupert kept a few more hives, and entered his honey into the local Agricultural Society's show in Pietermaritzburg. To his delight, many of his exhibits attracted First, Second and Third Place - which in turn fuelled his enthusiasm.

Rupert moved to Australia in 1982 and lived briefly in Tasmania before moving to West Australia where he resumed beekeeping in 1988. A small beekeeping business named Rubees Apiaries was operated with about 50 hives, specializing in comb honey production.

He then moved to the Mariana Islands with his wife Kim, whom had also developed a love of honeybees since meeting Rupert. It was not too long before he had sourced a supplier from Australia to provide him with bee boxes and other beekeeping equipment to start up a small apiary on the Island of Tinian. The tropical environment proved hard for the bees but they still managed to store enough honey to have a fresh pot of Mariana Island's honey on the table.



Beekeeping was to become a lifestyle as well as a passion for the Phillips when in 2005 when they returned to the Swan Valley. Rupert had a lifetime dream to develop a dedicated honey shop and café for people to taste and learn about bees, a shop where people could experience and understand the amazing bee. Rupert bought an apiary from Roland Bennett (a beekeeper of two generations) to start his career as a commercial beekeeper.

In 2008 the construction of “The House of Honey and The Sticky Spoon Café” commenced and opened in 2010.

On radio, when Rupert was asked how he found the transition into beekeeping, he said “Coming from a job where you don’t have any windows in your office, I love being outdoors and working in nature. I also don’t miss the shift work!”