

# THE STORY OF MITCHELL'S



R. Mitchell and S.M. Mohsin



# The Story of Mitchell's

By

R. Mitchell

&

S. M. Mohsin



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## DEDICATION

Dedicated to the three generations of workers without  
whose efforts this story could not have been written.



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## PREFACE

Richard Mitchell was eighteen years old when he enlisted for service in the British army towards the end of World War I. He was wounded on the front in France and after medical aid in a Red Cross field hospital he was evacuated to his home country. He carried the scars of his wound throughout his life never forgetting, especially on Poppy Day, the debt he owed to the Red Cross for saving his life.

He arrived in India in 1923 to join his father F.J. Mitchell and his elder brother, L. Mitchell, who had been granted lease of 720 acres largely barren land in 1920 in the Lower Bari Doab canal colony of Montgomery District. The terms of the lease stated that they would develop the land for fruit growing and would render it productive within a period of five years.

This narrative is an account of his and his family's struggle not only to establish, after several disappointments, a highly productive fruit orchard but going on to create a fruit and vegetable processing enterprise which is today recognised virtually throughout the South Asian sub-continent and indeed in some parts of the world as a purveyor of quality food products under the "Mitchell's" and "Kissan" brand names. The latter name originates from a small station on the North Western



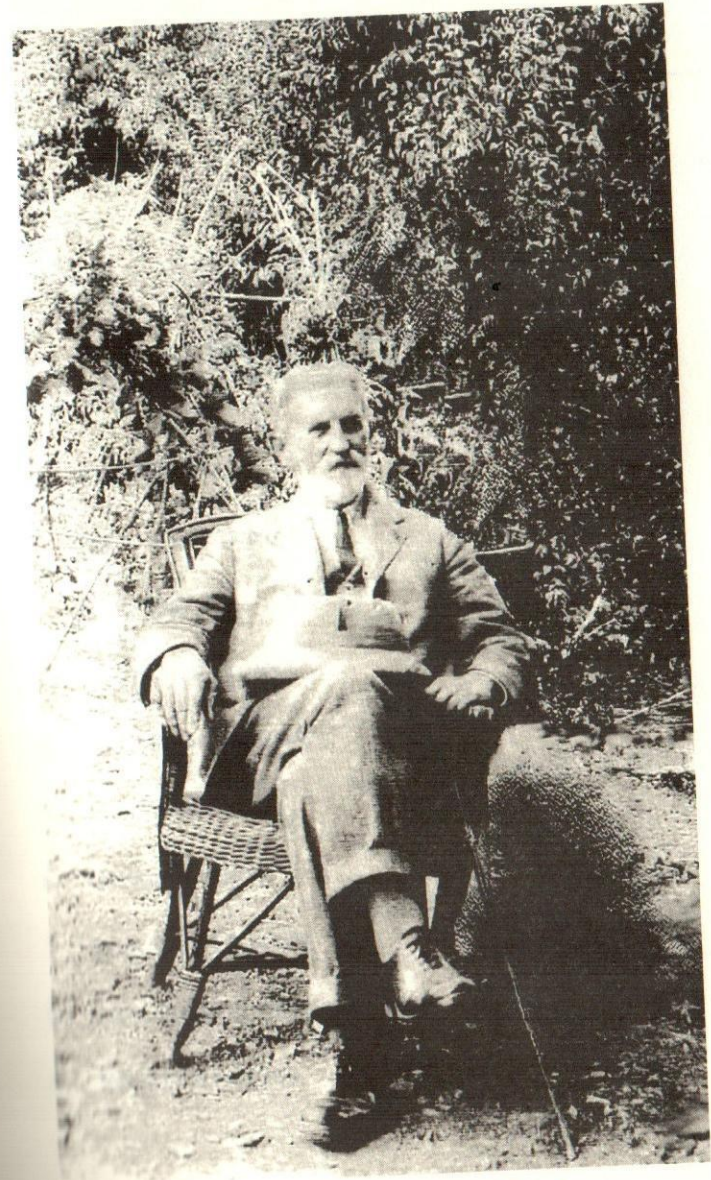
Railway. The Mitchell's farm ran parallel to the railway line and Richard Mitchell built his bungalow near Kissan Station.

He raised his family here, lived at Kissan during the World War II years and was a witness to the political and demographic upheavals that engulfed the province of Punjab on the eve of independence.

Richard Mitchell retired from his business in 1960 having moved residence to Eastbourne, England where he died in 1987. The first part of this story unabridged relates to the period 1920 to 1960 and the second part to the succeeding years with the business under Pakistani ownership from 1960 to 2008.

Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Ltd. was incorporated in 1933. Soon after independence the name was changed to Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd. This record is being published in 2008 to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the company.

**S. M. Mohsin,  
Chairman.  
Lahore, 2008.**



**F.J. Mitchell 1853 - 1933  
Founder and Governing Director**



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**The Story of Mitchell's**  
**Part One**



# 1

## FRANCIS JAMES MITCHELL

Had it not been for an unfortunate financial accident in the early part of the 20th century it is unlikely that F.J. Mitchell would have gone to India at all. Three of his brothers were already there and doing well in their fields. William Mitchell had a very prosperous carpet factory in Kashmir as well as side interests in Speddings, a company engaged in frontier road construction in the Gilgit area.

Speddings had battle honours in this defence project in which William was wounded and saved by his cigarette case. "It should have been a bible" he said. Sir Mortimer Durand, who eventually demarcated the line between India and Afghanistan, was also concerned with this project. This adventure is outlined in the book "Where three empires meet."

James Mitchell was head of Speddings which in addition to road building had vast forest concessions in Kashmir and had obtained the first contract for sleepers for the young North Western Railway running from Karachi in the South to Peshawar near the Afghan border.

Harry Mitchell was also working for Speddings on the Jhelum Valley Road being built between Rawalpindi and Srinagar, the Kashmir capital.



F.J. Mitchell was comfortably off at the relatively advanced age of 47 and was playing golf at St. Andrews where he had spent his school days. He was below average academically but won a few medals in the sports field. Like all his brothers he was a good golfer. They were all either scratch or thereabouts.

On this occasion he was playing in a friendly foursome while on the ninth green he was handed a telegram. He opened it, read it and put it in his pocket. After the match they went into the club house for the usual drink and Frank turned round to his companions and said "I am sorry, but I must leave you now. That telegram was to inform me that I had lost all my money. I do not now possess a penny in the world."

This will have been a great shock to him with a wife and three small children and it was a credit to him that he did not walk off at the ninth hole when the telegram was handed to him.

The reason for this crisis was that some months before his brother-in-law had persuaded him that there was a fortune to be made in South African mines and induced him to invest his whole capital which unfortunately he did. The South African bubble and the very attractive investment was the ruination of many including Frank James Mitchell.

With three young children he was in a hard spot. He managed to place his sons aged 3 & 5 in a charitable institution in Malvern while the daughter at 7 was put in a convent in Fulham London where they were born. His brother William in Kashmir heard of the tragedy; he may have been mildly involved himself; and immediately cabled to Frank to go out to Kashmir and help him with his carpet factory.

His wife died before he went out to India where he spent a few years in establishing himself in his new surroundings and business in Kashmir. Hard work must have been very difficult for a man who had spent many years in safe and leisurely

conditions. He progressed, however, to such an extent that in a few years he produced a dye which was of great value to the carpet industry.

He came back to England and after settling his sons in more comfortable schools met some of his old friends again. In conversation with the Duke of Bedford he arranged for some trout ova to be sent out for stocking the beautiful streams in the valley of Kashmir. These were duly sent but the long boat journey plus the train ride from Bombay to Rawalpindi and the road journey of five days on to Srinagar was too much for the ova. In spite of the fact that fresh water supplies were arranged throughout the journey they all arrived dead.

On his return trip to England, he arranged a further supply of ova from the Duke of Bedford's trout hatchery and took them out himself. He arranged a flow of fresh water through the tanks for the whole of the long journey and installed the ova; in a small stream under a hut at Harween about 20 miles from Srinagar, the Kashmir capital, and waited. Eventually the first trout in Kashmir were born and every stream in this beautiful valley was stocked with trout. The Maharajah of Kashmir was so pleased with this achievement that Frank Mitchell was appointed Honorary Director of Trout Culture in Kashmir and told that he and his family had free access to all fishing in Kashmir for their lifetime.

A little later Frank Mitchell started an olive plantation at Khaira Meerut in the Attock District of the Punjab from imported Italian olive trees which did quite well although the olive oil industry has never been developed.

During his work there he noticed the locals dipping small vessels in the ground. On inquiry he was told "this water burns". On further investigation it was obvious that the soil was oil



bearing. He found a bright geologist who soon confirmed that there were good prospects of oil in the district.

His brothers and friends were invited to subscribe to the formation of a company to prospect and the Punjab Governor, Sir Louis Dane, was most ready in obtaining government support to proceed with the work. Unfortunately they could only produce one million pounds for the capital required and Frank Mitchell came to London and persuaded Messrs Steel Brothers to put up a further million. The Attock Oil Company Ltd. was thus formed and after a few years of severe struggle found the deeper oil on which the company has prospered to this day.

His pioneering efforts being so successful Frank Mitchell was easily persuaded by the next Punjab Governor to join in a development scheme for the development of land in the Lower Bari Doab canal area which had been opened in 1913. Contracts had already been given to others for the development of horse breeding, cattle breeding and pure seed production and Frank Mitchell was allotted a narrow strip of 720 acres between the canal and the North Western Railway, running from Renala Khurd to within a few miles of Okara, about 70 miles South West of Lahore, the Punjab capital. Frank Mitchell undertook to grow grapes and produce dried raisins and currants as was done in Turkey and in the Mildura district of Australia.

## 2

### EARLY DAYS

The land handed to him in 1920 was part of three different areas – *Chaks* as they are called. *Chak* No. 20 was nearest Renala Khurd and *chaks* 25 & 57 further along the land which was 7 miles in length but only about 400 yards wide being bordered on the North side by the Lower Bari Doab canal and on the South by the main North Western Railway line between Lahore and Karachi.

The only access roads to the estate were the upper level canal bank road which was motorable and the lower level road which was generally used for private carts. The higher level road running along the canal was used mainly by irrigation department officials.

Permission was very sparingly given to non-officials for use of the upper level road. As a matter of courtesy he wrote to the Chief Engineer Irrigation in Lahore inquiring if he had any objection to his using the lower road for access to his estate.

The reply was very surprising. He informed Frank Mitchell that he had no objection to his use of the road provided he made up and maintained half of this road for the whole 7 miles to Irrigation Dept. specification for the use of canal carts while the other half could be used for farm carts. This was a reminder of the fact that government were anxious to show that no special



favour was granted to British subjects. This particular case may have been made harder because prior to the Mitchell allotment the land in *chak* 20 was being developed by the local canal authorities who had planted an orchard of Mandarin oranges there. The fact that this orchard had produced no fruit before the Mitchell possession was beside the point. The displeasure of the canal authorities was a very serious thing especially as the estate water supply was in their hands.

The irrigation water supply took off from the main canal about one mile upstream of the North Western border of the plantation on what is known as the volumetric system. There was a meter at the entrance to the estate and we could take the water when we wanted it. There was some difficulty at first in getting the gauge man to turn it on when required but he was cooperative in the end.

Frank Mitchell's brother in law in Adelaide, Australia, arranged the despatch of grape cuttings of several varieties. Muscat of Alexander, a round green grape of excellent flavour and suitable for Sultanias was the best. Sultana and Zante Currants were also sent for drying purposes. Waltham cross late variety, Black Hamburg (the Hampden Court Grape) and Doradillo (the spirit grape for Brandy) also came and all succeeded fairly well after planting. The main losses were due to attacks of termites (white ants); very prevalent in this area which previously was a forest plantation. With the cuttings Tom Bar-Smith, Frank Mitchell's brother-in-law, also sent a fruit expert named Paul who was left to do the initial planting while Frank Mitchell attended to his other business activities. He was interested in the growth of Artemisia on the frontier which is the basis of Santonin, a powerful drug used mainly in the eradication of worms in animals and humans. He contracted a firm of chemical engineers from Scotland to process the frontier crop

and his elder son Leonard left the army in order to assist in this work as well as organize the farm.

Having been left on his own for long periods while Frank Mitchell attended to his interests in Kashmir and on the frontier, Capt. Mitchell soon found out that Paul was more interested in lining his own pocket than the planting of grapes and was therefore dismissed. The *malis* on the farm were quite capable of continuing the work of propagating and planting, which is quite simple with grapes. Some 50 acres were planted by 1923. It was then decided to bring me out to help with the farm while Frank Mitchell and Leonard concentrated more on the Santonin business.

I had been studying business in London since leaving the army in 1919 and arrived in Bombay in September 1923 and went straight up to Kashmir to meet my father and brother. This long journey reminded me of the trouble my father had with the trout ova early in the century especially as he travelled from Rawalpindi to Srinagar by tonga for five days while I did it in less than 8 hours by car only stopping for meals in the state run rest houses on the Jhelum valley road.

After two months in beautiful Kashmir going round the hills and valleys with my father and seeing my sister who had taken holy orders and been installed in a convent in Baramulla built by F.J. Mitchell to insure that his daughter should be near him, I was left at Renala while our father and Leonard pursued the Santonin project in the North. They returned before Christmas which was spent in Lahore.

The two months lonely vigil before Christmas was a nightmare for me. I had not a clue of the language or what to do to run the estate. Newly arrived from England I felt as though the end of the world had come with no roads or any kind of conveyance and only one room in the canal rest house about two miles from the estate. My nearest British neighbour was the



My return journey was quite an adventure. I was due to connect with a coastal boat from Colombo to Karachi but this boat had not waited for the liner which was delayed and there was no other boat for ten days. I enquired from the local P&O office explaining that I could not afford a ten days stay in Colombo as much as I would have liked to stay that time in this beautiful island and was immediately given a first class rail ticket to Lahore even though I had only a second class ticket on the boat. The journey was a tiring one. Leaving Colombo that night I travelled all through the next day and night to arrive in Madras the following morning. Catching the Bombay train in the evening it was the same journey – two nights in the train and the same from Bombay to Lahore arriving dirty and exhausted.

Work at Renala had proceeded and a further 50 acres of grapes had been planted besides a few citrus trees. The termites (white ants) had a particular liking for the grape vines. The sweetness of the grape vine sap probably accounted for this but the vine progressed in spite of this invasion. In the meantime we had a much worse menace to the grapes. They were invaded by a swarm of caterpillars which proceeded up the land like an army in line tearing rings round the young grapes and thus destroying the crop. Samples were sent to the agriculture institute at Lyallpur. We were advised that the method of eradication was to fill a spray gun with water and with a sharp squirt dislodge the caterpillar which when it fell to the ground could be killed by rolling a wooden roller over it. We realized that this was impractical on our large orchard which was rapidly being ruined and found an arsenic spray which wiped them out much sooner.

In the meantime, I was again left on my own to carry out the principles learned in Australia. Much money was spent in pruning and wiring on Australian principles and as the crop ripened the grapes were dipped in all the mixtures advised. The

hot caustic dips appeared to be most successful and I had a hard time during the months of June and July having fires lit to produce the beautiful golden raisins. The farm labour was quite enthusiastic and I would sometimes step back from my efforts at one point to have the seat of my shorts burned by a fire hastily lit behind me.

Fortunately we had built a small bungalow on the estate in the spring of 1925 which saved the two mile walk to the rest house on the other side of the canal. During the spring of 1924, before the bungalow was built, Leonard decided to make a short cut to the rest house by swimming across the fast flowing canal rather than cross the bridge a mile upstream. Handing over shirts, shoes and socks to the servants to take round we swam across and landed in our bare feet outside the rest house to see a black cobra in the grass nearby. Had the weather been a bit warmer that cobra might have been less sleepy but Leonard pointed out that it was a good thing further swimming of the canal would be unnecessary when we have a bungalow.

As we employed more labour we housed them on the land where the tenants had left. The labour and their families required a lot of attention, medical and otherwise. One problem which confronted me in the early summer was a man brought to me who was covered in hornet stings. He was in a ditch and his *kahi* (spade with its blade at right angles to the shape and used like a pick), struck a hornets' nest and he was soon in terrible agony from the stings which are more potent than the English type. The only medicine I had that could help was a large bottle of strong ammonia which I used in my bath water to refresh myself on hot evenings. The workman was dressed only in a loincloth as the weather was hot; after bandaging his eyes I swabbed him with ammonia all over his body hoping to cover all the hornet stings and told him to go to his quarter and lie down. There was no



properly qualified doctor in the village at that time or I would have called one. In the evening I went to his quarters hoping to see the man still alive and to my surprise I was told that the man had gone back to his work. When I cursed him for disobeying orders the man's answer was that the Sahib had given him medicine and therefore he was alright. The faith that these people had in the Sahib's medicine was extraordinary and frightening at times.

After another year's work on the grapes it was found that in spite of all the Australian methods which were carried out the yields at Renala were so low as not to be profitable. The early monsoon would damage the raisins and the late rains the Sultanias.

The white ants were also a serious menace as they thrived on the sweet sap of the vine. This was in spite of another effort on my part to suppress their attacks with application of Paris Green, a very strong arsenical powder. This could not be trusted with the labour so with the help of one or two experienced workmen, I bored holes in the runs of the white ants and puffed in small quantities of the Paris Green mixed with saw dust. This proved very successful over fifty acres of vine which was a week's very hard work. White ants being cannibals would readily take in the poison mixed as it was with the sweet sap of the vine and when killed were eaten by the followers who were progressively killed until the large white ant queen laying her thousands of eggs some three or four feet below ground was eventually poisoned.

In spite of this success it was decided, in view of the monsoon hazards, to give up the vine fruits project and change over to citrus fruits; some variants were already doing well on the estate. A small citrus nursery had also been started to propagate the varieties already imported including Valencia Late oranges and Marsh Seedless grapefruit imported with the vines from Australia. The director of agriculture was notified of our plans

and it was pointed out to him that although it was possible to develop a large area of grapes in a few years from cuttings ready for planting in the field after one year in the nursery, budded oranges could not be planted out for two or three years after budding on indigenous stocks and also that the losses in the nursery were far higher with citrus than with grape vine. We therefore asked for longer time to complete our contract.

The answer was not unhelpful. The director stated that he had no objection to Frank Mitchell changing over to citrus but that no extra time could be given to extend the contract which started in 1920 (although security of tenure was not given till 1924.). He also pointed out that good citrus plants could be obtained from Lyallpur Agricultural College and other nurseries in Lahore and elsewhere.



### 3

## THE CITRUS PROJECT

We realized that further argument with the director was useless and even the governor of the province said that although he realized that our principle was correct he would not reverse the ruling of the director of agriculture. The plants we could get from Lyallpur were very few of poor quality. The Lahore nurseries had plenty of plants but of doubtful quality. We made a contract with the largest supplier offering him 25% extra should all the trees, when they are matured, prove true to type.

In the meantime Leonard was sent down to South Africa to study the citrus position in that country, particularly in the Sunday River Colony, an enormous citrus estate of many square miles in which many people had invested money which eventually proved another South African bubble as did a ground nuts project, equally as expensive. Both might have been successful had they been started on a less grandiose scale. It takes time to get water round to such a huge project.

Leonard came back with plenty of ideas and some useful varieties. Some Valencia Late oranges, we already had these from Australia; some Cape seedless oranges and Duncan Grapefruit. It was a good thing that he got more Valencia as we had a serious tragedy with those imported from Australia. They developed a disease called Gumosis which took some time to diagnose and

50% died before we got properly down to it. The sap of the tree became poisonous and gradually rotted the base of the tree as the sap returned to the roots. By hacking away the diseased wood and applying either Bordeaux Paste (a tincture of copper sulphate and lime) or a strong solution of potassium permanganate (Pinkie) the spread of the disease was arrested. Pinkie was found to help the healing of the wood much quicker than Bordeaux paste. We were fortunate to save about 25% of the trees.

By this time about 200 acres of trees were planted, about half the contracted area, and the director was threatening with expulsion unless the contract was completed in a reasonable time. It was at this juncture that a most unexpected tragedy overcame us. The Punjab usually has a mild frost in January or February of about two or three degrees which only affects the hedges and young plants while the grass turns brown. In late February of 1926 we suddenly had 12 degrees of frost in one night while I was laid up with malaria I had contracted the previous October which was being treated by my sister-in-law who was previously a Minto Nurse.

However, when Leonard brought a solid block of ice from a water bucket into my room it was realized that there was an exceptional frost and that this was a great danger to the orchard and so it proved to be. The sharp frost came down in waves which could be seen on the trees being blackened from the tops like waves on the seashore. As the sap in the trees rises in February it was frozen and then killed the trees. Had the frost come in January far less damage would have occurred and only the young trees would have perished. As it was over 50% of the 1926 orchard was ruined.

Ever since that frost we have started smoke fires on the northern border of the land on clear cold nights of January and February. Dried leaves mixed with sludge oil create heavy



smoke which hangs over the area at about 20 feet from the ground creating a cloud cover which prevents any frost penetration. Fortunately no such heavy frost has occurred since but this protection does certainly prevent such a serious toll.

Our big troubles in this period were malaria and the debts due to local money lenders by the workers. Up to 50% of the labour would be affected by malaria during the months of August – October & March – May each year so also the women and children. Quinine Hydrochloride was the only effective remedy and was even used as a palliative. The labour debts were probably a worse problem as the money lenders had got the families in a state of permanent poverty.

A provident fund was started by taking two annas in the rupee per month from the workers pay adding two annas from the company. The members were not allowed to borrow from the fund until they had contributed for one year and then too for only specific purposes so the process of getting rid of the money lender was slow but eventually succeeded.

We were still short of 200 acres planting. The purchased trees had proved mainly of poor quality and in spite of the frost tragedy the government still threatened us with expulsion. We heard there was good nursery stock to be had from the Taj Mahal gardens in Agra at reasonable rates. I went down to purchase sufficient plants to complete the contract. I found the superintendent of the gardens to be a most pleasant official and after being shown the historical monuments of the district an arrangement was made for the despatch of a large number of plants purchased at a fraction of the price paid for poor quality stock from Lahore and Lyallpur.

We had a Christian overseer at that time who arranged for the collection of the trees from the station and planting out in new areas. It was soon discovered however that Wadhawa Mah,

the overseer, was planting a nice orchard in a Christian village some 20 miles from Kissan. Under the threat of a long prison sentence he confessed and offered reparation. So the planting programme was completed but further trouble was encountered with trespassers, illegal grazing and theft as the fruit ripened over a long, exposed area of orchard.

As the fruit increased we found it difficult to sell privately and auctioned off large portions to contractors who were usually fruit commission agents from Lahore and other provincial towns. F.J. Mitchell was happy to see the large amounts of money he had invested gradually coming back and before the end of the contract in 1930 he had recouped all the investment he had made at such considerable risk and we could now look forward to some profit in this venture.

1930 marked the first 10 years of our contract and we could apply for continuation. The settlement of the district was made in this period. The Deputy Commissioner Montgomery F. J. Bourne undertook this task. Our land was upgraded considerably which showed that we had worked the land well in the first ten years of our lease.

Bourne was however most annoyed that government had allowed us some years earlier to alter our land markings from North and South to North West and South East. This had been done in order to square up our own land which was a narrow strip running at one angle which meant that small triangles formed on the borders made it difficult for ploughing.

Bourne was disgusted and probably justifiably so because the whole of his huge map of the Punjab had been upset by a tiny plot with the lines of the squares running other than from North South East and West. He later became Sir Frederick Bourne the last British Governor of East Pakistan.



We applied for continuation of the lease and soon thereafter registered the company – Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Limited – which was formed in 1933 with F.J. Mitchell as Governing Director for his life time with this office to cease at his death. Leonard was a Director and I was Director and Secretary. In November that year F.J. Mitchell died suddenly of heart failure in his beloved Kashmir and was buried in the convent cemetery in Baramula where his daughter was installed as mother superior. He was in his 80th year; half of his life time had been spent in great pioneering adventures. Leonard was with him at the end but I was on the farm and drove with Leonard's wife night and day to reach Baramula for the funeral. Many tributes were paid to his work by the Indian Government but none from the Maharaja of Kashmir although he had completed a long note on the Kashmir fisheries only a few days previously at the expressed wish of the Maharaja.

## 4

### STARTING AN INDUSTRY

The winter of 1933-34 continued sadly but with purpose. The citrus yields now becoming larger our thoughts turned to methods of using the crop including finding some use for fallen and damaged fruit. We first started with a production of fruit squashes. Early crude experiments encouraged us to build a small factory with improvised machinery. An old motor car shaft with revolving roses attached formed a juice extraction line and the bottling performed by siphoning through rubber pipes from the tank of juice mixed with syrup. As we progressed in quality and method we interested the important firm of wine merchants viz Cutler Palmer and Co. to take up the sales agency. This stimulated production and our increased sales began to embarrass the main importers.

Our agents also encouraged us to produce marmalade from our orange crop. Our fruit specialist at the time was a Hindu gentleman named Kashi Ram Verma who was also a chemist. He was therefore transferred to factory production while the farm work was left to the excellent malis (gardeners) who had proved so efficient through the years. A farm overseer was



appointed with Mr. Verma in periodical visits mainly by horse in the mornings.

By this time a large part of the fruit crop was auctioned off to the fruit contractors and the annual auctions held yearly in October were a big event in which all the larger contractors in the province were interested. It was also at this time that the government appointed a Fruit Specialist to the province. We had agitated for this for some time and the first government choice was fortunately a very happy one. A Sikh by the name of Sardar Lal Singh had honours from California and elsewhere and approached his post with energy and enterprise. He was quite interested in our venture apart from the fact that we sold a large part of our crop to contractors while he was eager to promote a system of cooperative marketing of fruit. We assisted in the formation of the Punjab Cooperative Fruit Development Board and promoted the sale of fruit packed and graded as is done in America and South Africa in standard sized cases in our own wrappers as well as those of the board. We even encouraged local growers to bring their fruit to us to be packed expertly for sale in the market and to private buyers. It was found, however, that only a few private buyers were interested in this special selection and grading whereas the market gave little or no premium to the specially selected, graded and wrapped fruit. Our efforts made little headway in persuading growers to sell their fruit privately rather than to a contractor at a cheaper price. The advantage of the contractor was that he did his own watching and picking of the fruit which would be an added expense and labour for the grower.

In the meantime our production of beverages and fruit products was progressing and business with our good agents grew to such an extent that we had to enlarge our office. One of the executives of M/s. Cutler Palmer and company decided to join us. His name was Harold Leslie Harris and we installed him

in new offices built in the factory area. His first occupation was to tour the whole of India and reorganize our sale and distribution. He found that the importers from foreign countries were bringing in low grade produce to compete with our rapidly growing trade. The Punjab Fruit Specialist had been alive to this threat. The newly formed Cooperative Fruit Development Board with help from government and with Chaudhri Sir Shahab-ud-Din as its President inaugurated the Fruit Products Control Order which laid down minimum standards for manufactured fruit products. A levy was put on the fruit processing industry which was readily accepted and the import of low grade products was gradually eliminated.

The industry grew rapidly throughout India. Calcutta already had several rising businesses including some famous pickle & chutney manufacturers. Bombay contained a number of progressive canning concerns specialising particularly in mangoes for which that part of the country was famous. Fresh Alphonso mangoes had been exported to England for some years at high prices and were most popular in the high class hotel trade. In the Savoy Hotel in London up to five shillings would be paid for one Alphonso mango. The industry in Delhi and the central parts of India was mainly in syrups and *morabbas* (an indigenous form of preserving vegetables and fruit).

In the University of the Punjab in Lahore our Fruit Specialist found a student with advanced ideas of producing wines and spirits from fruit juices and easily persuaded us to take him on at Benauli to further his experiments. He advised us to install a distillation plant developed by the French scientist called Pigri which proved very efficient. It had fractionating columns standing about five feet above the boiling tank making it all a very impressive setup. We built three large tanks each of about 1000 gallons capacity and when the citrus season started in



October the early windfalls were collected daily and the tanks filled one by one. The chemist had collected a variety of yeasts from a firm in Holland and fermented the tanks in turn with one of the varieties of yeast. The results were miraculous for, as the juice was distilled through the Pigri distiller, the end product assumed the same flavour as that of the yeast used to ferment the juices. Beer, wines, champagne, sherry and brandy were all produced by the still. The beer was rather like an old bottle of Tenants beer which had been lying about in the Multan railway restaurant for several hot weathers and the wines and champagne were not much better. The brandies and sherries, however, proved a great success especially in the middle part of the distillation.

So successful were these results that Harris and I took samples over to England in 1938 and showed them to the wine trade. The trade was impressed until we confessed that they were produced from orange juice. This produced violent indignation in the trade that we should name anything called sherry or brandy produced from anything but grapes. Unfortunately the supply of yeasts from Holland dried up and the enterprising chemist returned to the University to write his thesis. Should a copy of this thesis still be available it might prove a valuable project to the greatly extended citrus growing industry in Pakistan.

Another interesting experiment took place around this period resulting again from two of Lal Singh's friends from the University of the Punjab at Lahore who were in London surveying the Covent Garden market. They called for a consignment of oranges from India expertly packed to test their quality and potential in the Covent Garden market. As we were the only recognized packers of citrus on modern lines, we were asked and eventually dispatched a consignment of our best Valencia late oranges (the best keeping variety in the world) by

sea to London. The result of this shipment was fantastic. Our case was presented to Queen Mary and the English national press broadly published this shipment as a very first and most promising supply of citrus fruit from India. This publicity was followed by quotations from all the shipping lines as well as offers from Covent Garden traders. Adding everything up, we found that we could not possibly compete as the long 600 mile train journey to Karachi killed any profit even though the North Western Railway offered generous concessions for wagon loads.

In April 1937 I married and established a home at the outer end of the land at Kissan where there was a Railway Station. When this station was opened in 1922 the railway authorities wrote to us suggesting the name of the new station as 'Kissan' which is the Punjabi word for a small land holder. They thought we might wish to name the station ourselves with something like Mitchellpur in the same way as other neighbours had done such as Renala being named by Major Vanrenan but we thought Kissan a very good name and have since used it as our trade name for the factory produce.

In 1938 our first son was born which was a cause of great excitement among the staff on the farm as there had been no issue from Leonard's marriage much to their distress. The chief clerk produced a minute for the board meeting announcing an heir arriving to the joy of all the faithful servants of the farm. The comings and goings by the management and staff during the next few weeks to see the baby was most embarrassing and we were glad when the excitement died down.

The Fruit Products Control Order being on all India basis raised anxieties in many of the smaller producers who found the levy on fruit products a strain on their resources. A meeting was called in Agra and the All India Fruit Preservers Association was named with me as its first President and Mr. Bhargava of Agra



as its Secretary. The association grew rapidly and secretaries were appointed in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi to look after provincial interests.

The industry at Renala had been growing all the time and we were now recognized as the leading producers of fruit squashes in the country and were enlarging our lines of jams, marmalades and canned fruits when in 1939 World War II broke out.

## 5

## WORLD WAR II

On September 1st 1939 my wife Betty, our young son and I sailed from Tilbury on the Stratheden. We saw the ship one day in its attractive cream colour but by the time we got on board it had been repainted to battleship grey and a two inch gun had been installed in the stern. Some military and civil service officers had been posted to camps in the North of England while their wives and children joined us on the Stratheden. We sailed with about 800 wives and children and less than 100 men on board. Before reaching Gibraltar the war had started. The ship was blacked out and put under war time conditions with the men appointed to watches and other duties on the ship. In the straits of Gibraltar we narrowly missed colliding with a freighter but arrived in the harbour safe and sound.

On learning from the captain that his ship was faster than enemy submarines and that his water supply was probably insufficient for the trip round the cape, the Stratheden was the last merchant ship allowed by the authorities through the Mediterranean without a convoy in war conditions but with passengers carrying their life jackets everywhere. I found myself doing three watches on end but nobody grouched about the failures of others and the happy atmosphere continued apart from



one dangerous incident when a crank claiming himself to be a big noise in the Old Comrades Association and wearing his World War I medals called a meeting in the lounge where most of the ladies were assembled. He expounded on the fact that we were in great danger and that providence would protect us as it had done in World War I. Fortunately before he had much time to enlarge on his theme I had collected a few stalwarts and we led him into the anteroom and told him in the strongest language that if he attempted any such nonsense in future he would be immediately taken to the Captain who would put him in chains for the rest of the voyage. The victim was so frightened that he gave a solemn vow to refrain which he faithfully carried out.

When we thought the danger was almost over and we were between the toe of Sicily and the North African Coast very early one morning the ship gave a violent wrench which threw many of the passengers out of their bunks. There was a lot of speculation as to what had happened until the following evening when we were assembled in the lounge by Capt. French. He told us that they had spotted an Italian submarine and that two torpedoes had been fired at the ship. Fortunately the Captain had seen the danger in time and turned the ship quickly showing her tail to the danger and the torpedoes passed harmlessly on each side of the ship.

Harris, who had left London later travelling in a ship round the Cape, was talking to the wireless operator who told him in confidence that he had picked up a message from the German command that an Italian submarine had sunk the Stratheden. Harris was shocked and told the operator that his boss, wife and child were on that ship. The operator gave him some comfort by saying that nothing official had come from the admiralty and until it did it was only a rumour. Officials in India however preferred to believe the German reports rather than our own and

when we arrived at Karachi after many merry parties aboard a lit-up ship passing port the welcome ashore was as though we had all come back from the dead. The customs officials, however, were as cool as ever and I had a very severe time because I had overlooked the fact that I had a parcel of a gross of secuteurs on board which had been delivered by the makers. It was no easy matter to convince the authorities that I was not trying to smuggle them in.

We eventually arrived at the farm to be blessed for surviving the terrors of the deep and to find everything going on as usual as though the war had not started. This happy situation was short lived as Capt. Leonard Mitchell being on the reserve of officers was soon recalled to the Frontier Force. Shortly after that the war committee formed in Lahore demanded the services of Harris who was posted to Intelligence where he was eventually gazetted to the rank of Colonel.

The Department of Supply had already sent senior officers to the farm and we had produced for them a lime juice which contained no water, the syrup being made from the lime juice itself which was named 'Lime Juice Ordinary' as against 'Lime Juice Cordial' the commercial product. Specifications for lime juices and other products were laid down by the supply department under the Ministry of Defense and many tenders were accepted which strained our resources to the utmost. It was necessary to build a new factory to cope with the demand for canned goods which increased enormously in later years particularly for canned grapefruit so popular with Americans.

Captain Mitchell, whose wife had died suddenly some time before the war started, was posted in easy reach of Delhi and was able to visit the department of supply to arrange contracts and prices. Harris, later posted as a Colonel in the Intelligence Corps in Delhi, was able to continue with helpful contacts there.



At Renala the main problem concerned the staff which made persistent demands for increased pay and many left when these demands were refused. They had heard reports of fortunes being made from army contracts for wheat straw and other products and it was useless to try and persuade the clerks against the hopeless gamble involved.

The head clerk who had six unmarried daughters left us to embark on this venture and was eventually taken back at the end of the war a broken man. This meant serious disruption of the office and the difficult task of compiling the necessary forms to apply for sampling and dispatch of army contracts in triplicate, became a severe burden. Fortunately my wife Betty had many years experience as a secretary and her help in the office was invaluable.

The acceptance of army contracts was at times most precarious. We could not persuade the authorities to accept delivery at Renala Khurd Railway Station. It was most difficult to get wagons locally without bribes to the Station Master. On one occasion a telegram was sent to the Director of Supply, who was complaining of a delayed dispatch of an order, explaining that wagons were not available at Renala Khurd. A visit to the Station Master a few days later was astonishing. I was shown a telegram which the Station Master had received direct from the Director of Supply asking him to kindly arrange dispatch of this important consignment. The Station Master said that of course we would get the wagons required but the price of wagons from henceforth would be doubled. It was amusing that the Director had asked a local Station Master for favours when he should have gone to the Agent of the Railway for assistance. This is the sort of ignorance that we suppliers had to suffer.

Another instance was when we received a new specification for lime juice ordinary which the chemist pointed out was only

citric acid. We found out that a big company making synthetic products had bribed the right people in the department of supply to alter the specification from the pure lime product we had helped to formulate. It probably cost the company a great deal. Personally we were not interested in this synthetic product and refused to tender. At the same time we received a telegram from Delhi informing us that a consignment of 1600 dozen lime juice ordinary dispatched under the old specification had been rejected under the new one. A long telegram to the Director led to an enquiry resulting in our order being relabelled departmentally and we got our money for the order. Thereafter we offered our own branded product only for sale to the defence forces.

Even then our troubles were far from over. Although we were given the concession of delivering consignments to the depot in Lahore cantonment we found that this did not help much. We were asked to repack a consignment in one dozen cases although two dozen packs were always previously accepted. Then on four further occasions we were ordered to remark consignments. Our cases were always carefully marked with stencils and I myself went into the depot to object to the order to take our cases out of the depot for remarking. I pointed out to the O/C depot, a lame and aged British Officer that other suppliers were being allowed to repaint their cases inside the sheds. The rude answer was to take our cases outside for marking. I sent in our head clerk to the final inspection which was passed but the clerk came back with a sorry story. He reported that a bribe of Ten Rupees would have passed the consignment provided that three of the cases had an agreed mark on them. In that depot was a huge stock of sacks of *atta* (whole grained flour for making *chapatis* for the Indian troops) stacked as high as houses all over the enormous warehouse. One could imagine the troops fighting in the Eastern Desert and looking for



a well deserved meal to find in their rations the same sand that they were sitting on. Such was the terrible state of corruption in the supply department which continued to get worse throughout the war period. It is not surprising that the cost of this war was so high and that the corruption fever grew among the Indians to a very high degree. When the Japanese invasion of India was imminent and was only saved by the bravery of a small destroyer of the Indian navy which attacked a large Japanese naval force single handed and drove it back was any real effort made to stop corruption in India itself.

One rather amusing incident happened when Mr. Ogden arrived as a refugee from the Mandalay Brewery. His last act there was to burn all Burmese currency in the brewery before the Japs arrived. A more difficult task than it appeared as when they fed the notes into the furnace too quickly, they would fly out of the chimney unburned.

On arrival at Renala Khurd station the station master now taken to spirit drinking from the substantial bribes collected, spotted a Johnnie Walker case. He asked the tall and bulky Ogden if he was coming to work at the farm. The affirmative reply was followed by a demand for a case of whisky. Ogden used to quick action in Malaysia knocked the station master flat on his own platform. The reaction was serious for a time but soon blew over. The Station Master had to be retired later as the wood alcohol soon sent him blind.

The work on the farm progressed with few problems. The annual auctions of fruit grew larger and sufficient petrol and oil was sanctioned for the tractors. I was living four miles away at Kissan and had purchased a motor cycle to take me and Betty to the office. As I had a petrol ration for both the car and the motor cycle the daily trips were easily covered. A few spills occurred on the canal bank especially in the hot months when the

workmen watered the road in the shady parts which could not be seen until the last second. Betty sitting high up on the pillion usually came off worse in these encounters.

We were always interested in encouraging the wild bees to the farm and planted early flowering trees in the windbreaks to try and bring them in before the citrus flowering started early in March. The big bee (*Apis Dorsetta*) a large producer of honey and the little bee (*Apis Floria*) are both hibernating and did not move up from the south in some years until the citrus flowering was well advanced. At Lyallpur they had started hives of domesticated bees (*Apis India*) imported from Kashmir and we were persuaded to get some hives for the farm. We also took on a young Kashmiri to handle them. We had some exciting times during windy weather when the wild bee hives on the trees near the hives were blown down and one day, when showing some Air Force boys who used to spend their leave with us, we were attacked by swarms of these big wild bees. Betty and the boys got away with little trouble but I had to replace the tops carefully on the domesticated hives. I had to be treated for over 20 stings in my head and neck when I got home but fortunately soon recovered. This was one of many adventures we had with the wild bees but soon learned to avoid serious trouble. The experiment with the domestic bees was not very successful. We could only show a profit in one year of the three we kept them. The one profitable year was when the *sheesham* flowering came much earlier than the citrus and we were able to produce cone honey in the upper layer of the hives. It was probably this year that we kept most of the hives in the grapefruit area at Kissan. The crop of grapefruit from that area was very much greater that year than in any other area which relied only on the wild bees.

The company had sponsored a prize for development in Horticulture in memory of the late F.J. Mitchell and the first prize



was awarded to Sardar Lal Singh and one other faculty member for their work on In Situ budding of mangoes. This was a very good development which, unfortunately, was not continued.

The end of the war came as a great relief from the difficulties of defence supplies. Our efforts had rapidly expanded our manufacturing potential and the new factory was fully extended towards the end of hostilities. We had a visit from the Quarter Master General in Burma in the later part of the war who was anxious for advice regarding supplies of vegetables to the troops in Burma as the supply route through Calcutta was entirely used for munitions and troops. As he had unlimited areas of land we could only advise him to grow tomatoes which can grow in all climates. The departure of this senior general covered in sores resulting from constant attacks of prickly heat was quite amusing. The only convenient train available at the time for travel to Lahore was the Frontier Mail and it was too late to catch it from Okara. The general supplied us with a top class priority consisting of a large number of letters and figures. The Station Master was not impressed and stated that his orders were received from the agent in Lahore and nobody else. Len Mitchell's driver, a character of great interest, told us not to worry as he had already arranged to stop the mail. We took the general down to the Renala Khurd Station and the train duly stopped as stated. The general while stepping on board asked how this miracle had happened. It was pointed out that the driver had given the signalman one rupee to miss giving the line clear token to the driver of the mail train so it was compelled to stop to pick this up. The signalman, of course, was fined, the maximum being 50% of his daily pay, which was 8 *annas*, so the signalman made a profit on the transaction and everybody was happy including the general who had realized that his high authority could be exceeded by a one rupee bribe.

The demand for lime juice during the war caused us to purchase limes from contractors in ever increasing quantities and as the demand grew so the contractors' prices went up. We finally started a branch in Bangalore in Mysore state and bought a plot in the lime growing area of Madras. This was a great saving to the company as the landed cost of limes came to a fraction of what the contractors demanded and they lost a valuable customer. Our squash business was quite an embarrassment to the English importers and we had a suggestion from Messers L. Rose & Co. Limited; the famous lime juice experts, to manufacture their product in India. Col. Harris was on leave in England and concluded a deal with them which happy association has continued ever since. John Boyter Smee, their director who himself was a farmer in his spare time, paid many winter visits to the farm and his interest and advice were most welcome.

During the war the agitation for Indian independence had progressed, and although Indian troops in all fields had done wonderful things and contributed greatly to the final victory, political parties in India under the main leadership of the great Mahatma Gandhi created constant difficulties for government. The Muslim leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah was no less able, and realized that in spite of the Gandhian principles, Muslims were likely to get a poor deal in an All India government and therefore insisted on a separate Muslim state in those areas populated by a Muslim majority. Little did we think in the North that this policy would succeed and were surprised when the British Prime Minister suddenly announced Indian independence and sent out a judge to draw a line in the Punjab and another in Bengal to give the Muslims a separate state. Mohammed Ali Jinnah and his assistant Liaquat Ali Khan had only a small team of top rank advisors to negotiate boundaries and the Indians won by



negotiation many vital areas which possibly should have gone to the new state of Pakistan.

The Pathans in the North West Frontier decided unilaterally that this was the time to liberate the state of Kashmir and went into that country as a wild and uncontrolled force. They proceeded up the Jhelum valley road looting and destroying and when they got to the electric power station at Rampur proceeded to put it out of action. This terrible mistake warned Srinagar by the darkness that the attack was on its way and a fierce battle at Baramula lost the Pathans a surprise victory. The Convent at Baramula started by F. J. Mitchell was sacked by the Pathans and several of the nuns were killed. A full account of their terrible experience has been recounted and a book called the 'Flaming Sword' makes a story of it. Frank Mitchell's grave was used as one of the covers of attack in the battle and his head stone was completely wrecked. Frank Mitchell's grave was restored to its original state by the family and we hope will be allowed to remain so.

## 6

## RECONSTRUCTION

The partition of India did no good to our business which had grown to large proportions. We were confined in Pakistan to about one quarter of our market. Leonard and I were both in England in 1947. I had travelled with my wife and three sons aged 8, 6 and 4. The idea was to settle Frank the eldest in the preparatory school of Eastbourne college and bring the other two back to Kissan until they were old enough to join him. In August, however, we got news of the terrible killings taking place in the whole of North India. As Betty insisted on returning with me a nurse was found to look after the younger ones while Frank was installed in the College Preparatory School. We arrived at the farm to find the worst was over but what a terrible time we had. Harris was in charge over this dangerous period and it was due entirely to his expert handling that there were no disasters in the farm. The gangs of rioters were all round the farm. Col. Harris had the tractors patrolling this difficult area (7 miles long by 400 yards wide) with men on board a trailer with Tommy guns. They made loud bangs with bird scarers and this gave the false impression that we were fully armed to protect ourselves. The Hindu & Sikh employees were given a



guarantee by the Muslims that they would come to no harm provided they stayed within the farm.

In spite of terrible stories of massacres of Muslims in Delhi and other parts of the south our Muslim employees were faithful to their promise until eventually the convoys came to remove the non-Muslims to India.

One convoy being marched to Okara 10 miles away had a bad experience. Someone in the convoy had fired a shot at a passing train. The train unloaded its passengers in Okara and came back to the convoy with the military aboard which fired at the convoy with machine guns. Fortunately there was a mud wall nearby which the convoy hid behind for shelter and there were few casualties. The factory chemist Mr. Puri was part of that convoy.

Our assistant manager P. E. Bartley, a rather dark Anglo-Indian, had a harrowing experience. He was in Karachi when the trouble started. In spite of desperate pleadings from his father he insisted on returning to Renala to help Harris. His father said good bye to him never expecting to see him alive again and was nearly right. He boarded the Frontier Mail and was taken out of the train on more than one occasion and beaten badly being taken for a Hindu. He eventually arrived at Okara and was taken into police protection near the station. Seeing a goods train facing the Renala way was too much for him and he made off to board it. Hearing furtive footsteps behind him he turned just in time to avoid a long knife which passed over his shoulder. He caught the train and got off at Kissan to be welcomed with open arms by our cook Barkat Ali at Kissan Bungalow where he enjoyed a well earned rest.

Our own journey from Karachi had been far from comfortable. The train was overflowing with refugees who were on the roof and hanging on the side of the carriages. In the evening we noticed a very old man hanging to our door and

could not refrain from opening the door to give him a better hold. When we looked sometime later he was gone; whether on purpose or had fallen we will never know. In any case one could not sleep from the noise on the roof and constant dripping of liquid through the ventilator, what the liquid was we preferred not to guess.

The first urgent business on arriving at Renala was to relieve Harris who had not heard from his wife for over a month and was anxious to ascertain whether she and his young daughter were alive or dead. We sent him off immediately after thanking him for the wonderful work he had done in saving the farm from any of the kind of horrible slaughter that had taken place locally as well as in most places in Northern India. This was also due of course to the loyalty and steadfastness of our Muslim employees. If one spark had been set off by any of the men in reprisal of the horrible atrocities reported from the south we could easily have had a blood bath on the farm and we are most grateful to them that they stood firm and protected their Hindu & Sikh fellow workers under this great mental strain. In one instance they supplied the Sikh farm manager with a cart and a pair of our best bullocks to take his family and belongings to the Wagha border provided he sent the cart & bullocks back with Muslims coming the other way. Needless to say, we never saw the cart & bullocks again.

The second urgency was to get money to pay the staff and labour for the past two months. At the Imperial Bank of India there was a contrasting result of the riots. Most of their staff being Hindus had been hastily evacuated and the whole of the business of this premier bank was now left in the hands of a few Europeans but there was no difficulty in getting the money we required. The remaining branches in the area had been shut down and the entire business concentrated in Lahore. All the rooms in the bank - and there had been many large rooms - were stacked to



capacity with the mail orders and other correspondence accumulated over the last months plus that collected from the closed branches. The Europeans in charge, mostly known to me, were quite cheerful about the situation and estimated that they would take about a month to balance the books. Actually they were not very far out in their estimate.

As petrol rationing continued we travelled to Lahore by train several times during the next few months. Every journey showed a large number of newly dug graves as more of the refugees gave up the uneven struggle. One million deaths have been reported officially as the result of this terrible tragedy but one doubts if this figure takes account of the subsequent deaths in refugee camps such as that at Lahore and other parts of the country which might double the official figure.

One other tragic figure comes to mind during one of our train journeys. On arrival at Lahore we were delayed by a long queue at the ticket barrier. Nearing the head of the queue I recognized the old station master from Renala. Although nearly blind from his long consumption of wood alcohol he had managed to secure himself a post of ticket collector and had to hold the tickets very close to his badly affected eyes to check them. When we called out to him in greeting he quickly waved us through without examination but we wondered how much of his ill-earned gain he had to pay in bribes to secure this post.

I had arranged to collect a Humber car in Lahore in exchange for an old model Bentley which I found difficult and expensive to run probably because I had little knowledge of handling and adjusting a car of this sort and for which I found an owner who was an expert in old Bentleys and who gave the Humber in exchange. My driver travelled with Betty to Lahore by train to collect the car.

Had I realized the danger to be encountered on the return journey I would certainly have gone myself, but fortunately Betty met Col. Sir Edward Cole's daughter Mrs. Miller of Coleyana Estate and their agent Col. Stratton who had gone in by truck. Col. Stratton offered to drive the car back and they sent the driver by train as Mrs. Miller had a large wolf hound to take back. They ran into trouble about two miles short of Bhai Pheru, 35 miles from Lahore, where they encountered two large convoys of refugees, one coming from and the other returning to India. In order to avoid this congestion Col. Stratton had to take to the fields and the dust stirred up by the traffic made it almost impossible to see the way. They were almost through the worst when Mrs. Miller stopped the car as she had not seen the truck which was carrying the stores for Coleyana. She insisted on walking back and Betty went with her. They were shortly sent back by a British officer with the Gurkhas who thought them rather mad in their adventure and offered to help the truck if he saw it. Actually it arrived at the farm ahead of them.

The arrival of the truck at the farm ahead of the car raised anxiety in my mind especially as the truck driver had not seen the car at all. I got the workshop manager Jannet to drive me towards Lahore and the car was found about ten miles up the road fully covered in dust of course. As the cars stopped about fifty yards apart I walked back to see Betty. The doors of the car opened and a large blue dog stepped out. It looked very blue in all the dust which caused me to have serious doubts about my own sanity. On getting close, the picture became more real and we proceeded back to the farm in convoy.

I drove Mrs. Miller and Col. Stratton over to Coleyana where I found the colonel, who was then over 80, in an anxious and frustrated state. His Hindu manager had fled to India in fear of his life and he was completely heart broken at the whole situation.



obtaining simple services such as licenses was very trying until one learned to send in one's driver with a small bribe to obtain quick service. The higher officials however were more sympathetic when one managed to see them. I remember many weary hours waiting to see officials and to obtain permits to carry on business. We had already had to sell all our built up reserve of government securities to keep ourselves going on the restricted business and the banks were not too liberal with loans.

Now that the dust of the aftermath of partition had died down there was some desire to get cooperation with India. The High Commissioner for Pakistan in Delhi arranged a cricket match to be played in Lahore between the two countries. He arranged to give visas very freely to all Indians wishing to travel to Pakistan for this match and the response was enormous and I was on the Lahore committee arranging the match and every one was very tense anticipating this invasion from across the border. The police and army were all alerted days before and orders were posted throughout Lahore and the districts regarding any offence against the Indian visitors. The most severe punishments would be imposed on anyone committing any offence against guests from the neighbouring country.

On inspection of arrangements the evening before the match I was told by committee members that the morrow would not produce a cricket match but another bloody war between the two countries. We gathered on the following morning on the Lahore Gymkhana ground which was properly arranged and decorated to accommodate about ten thousand spectators in a very apprehensive mood. The committee dutifully gathered at the entrance to conduct the governor as principal guest into his specially arranged enclosure. An ominous silence reigned as the governor entered and the crowd rose to its feet in proper respect and the game started in a silence that could be felt. Shortly after

the start there was a pause when the first wicket fell. During this short pause, a Muslim met an old Sikh friend on the field and embraced him in the Muslim style. This act broke the tension and the field was invaded by Pakistanis embracing their old friends from across the border with affection and brotherhood. The game was held up for some time while this extraordinary display of affection continued amidst cheers from the crowd in general. The rest of the day's play was of little consequence as the crowd were more interested in greeting their former friends than what happened in the match in the middle of the field. In the evening and on the following day we learned of all the affection and fraternisation occurring through out the city. *Tongas* and taxis refused to accept payment from their visitors. Even restaurants refused payment for meals and there was never any question of any danger to the large numbers of visitors who were welcomed with open arms throughout the province. Tales were heard of huge parties everywhere and the visitors were housed and fed everywhere they went to visit old friends. It was thus that a cricket match produced the most wonderful reunion since the terrible bloodshed which occurred only a short time before. It is sad that serious political difficulties such as Kashmir and the division of the water of the Punjab rivers prevented the continuance of this great friendship. Such questions should have been settled before the British left India and although the division of the Punjab water has eventually been settled it seems as though the difficult question of Kashmir will remain a running sore to divide these two countries for a long time to come.

Reconstruction continued at Renala and it was necessary to form a separate company in India as the finances of the two countries must now be separate. Under the agreement with L. Rose & Co. Ltd., we received their investment which we decided to use in building and equipping a factory at Bangalore where we already



had a branch besides the land at Tadapilli from where we had a good supply of juices that had so helped us in supplying the services during the war years. Col. Harris was sent to Bangalore and the Indian company was formed by shareholders from Renala who invested the dividend from their shares. Puri, the chemist from Renala, who narrowly escaped death on his departure, was employed as chemist. Bhatia from Renala became chief clerk. These and a few others were joined by Gregory who had been so valuable as a maintenance man in Renala during the war.

## 7

## POST WAR TROUBLES

Troubles started when Harris decided to leave Bangalore and take up residence in Rhodesia. The Board decided to send me down to take over the Indian company. It was a particularly distressing decision for me and Betty to have to leave the pleasant home at Kissan where we had brought up our three sons, leaving the old faithful servants, the horses, cows and chickens etc. besides the garden that had become such a joy. We had sold quite a lot of crockery, furniture and other possessions accumulated over the twelve years of residence when a further tragedy occurred.

Just before Christmas in 1949 we received a phone call from Karachi to inform us that the night plane to Karachi had crashed at Jungshahi and there were no survivors. I had no idea that Leonard had gone to Karachi by that plane so the shock was very considerable. However I caught the first train available at Okara and could only get a 2nd class upper berth and arrived in Karachi in the morning in a very dusty state, so much so that the agent of Smiths Chemicals failed to recognize me.

After a clean up and some breakfast I went to the airways office which had promised to lay on transport to the scene of the accident but was informed that the manager and most of the staff had gone to the funeral of the three Generals killed on the plane.



We therefore proceeded in our taxi arriving to find the hospital where the survivors, if any, would be but found our way blocked by the mile long funeral procession. I left the taxi at this point and found a police officer in the procession who told me that there were no survivors but that all arrangements had been made for receipt of information at the British military hospital where we proceeded via the back of the long procession.

At the hospital we found the coffins all laid out and labelled and were advised to see the High Commissioner. He of course was at the funeral and I had to suffer a long moan from a tearful voiced lady who was eventually advised to contact the Military Attache. I was finally informed that it would be a waste of time visiting the scene of the accident but that all the personal effects had been collected in a police post at Thatta a few miles from the accident.

I went to Thatta the following day but could find nothing belonging to my brother to take back to his wife at Renala. There were a heap of shoes mostly ladies, lots of coins melted into solid blocks by the heat of the fire and several watches all stopped at nine O' clock the time of the accident, some documents and other bits and pieces burned or charred.

So I returned to Renala to report to Leonard's wife that death must have been instantaneous when the plane hit the top of a 300ft. hill 60 miles from Karachi when it should have been 1000ft. up and that nothing was found at Thatta belonging to Leonard. The report on the tragedy issued later revealed that the pilot, who was not trained for night flying and was also inebriated, reported that he was coming in to land. The plane was grossly over loaded and had not been serviced for one year. This, in spite of the fact that there had been a fatal crash a year earlier in Vehari. This only goes to show what sturdy machines the Dakotas are.

In Lahore I had to arrange for three church services. A memorial service for Leonard, another for Joy Bergyl killed on the same plane. Her husband had flown to London to be with their son. The third was for the funeral of Aunt Beatrice who had died in Ayrshire. Uncle James had died of interic fever many years earlier and Beatrice had rented the grave next to him for all these years. She arranged to have herself embalmed and shipped to the undertakers in Lahore. As the shipping company objected to carrying a corpse, the embalmed consignment was a terrible weight and I had to find eight stalwart men to act as pall bearers. The cemetery trolley could hardly stand the weight and it was quite a tricky business guiding the beautiful oblong oak coffin into the normal coffin shaped grave.

A full requiem Mass was performed for Joy Bergyl who was a catholic in the Roman Catholic Cathedral. The memorial service for Leonard was in the Lahore Cathedral with a large attendance. The Governor of the Punjab was represented by the military attache. All these services took place the week before Christmas which we spent quietly in Lahore as both Betty and I were quite exhausted with all the arranging and distress of these events. On our return to Renala we had to deal with much embarrassment from the staff there.

The situation at Renala was fairly tidy and Betty and I decided to take a trip to Bangalore. Harris had returned for a short time at my request so we took the coastal boat from Karachi to Bombay and from there to Bangalore by train. The boat journey was very pleasant with a most comfortable large cabin and only a few passengers. The train was well serviced for part of the way but after we changed for the Bangalore train there was no service at all. We purchased fruit at the station and enjoyed the varied scenery down the long slow journey to Bangalore. We had to buy far more fruit than we needed as we



often had an invasion of very clever monkeys who were quick in stealing our stocks.

We found the Harris family in good form in Bangalore and stayed in their comfortable bungalow. There was considerable reconstruction necessary including finance. Harris had inducted an extra Director in Mr. Vithal Mallya who owned the Bangalore Brewery besides many other concerns including McDowell's the wine merchants in Madras. We also paid a visit to the Davis estate in Courg where contracts for grapefruit had been made and returned to Renala quite satisfied that things were going well.

On our return to Renala I had several alterations and reconstruction to carry out. In the first place we found it necessary to leave our old home at Kissan and take up residence at Renala. Fortunately the Pakistan Tobacco Company wanted a residence for their European manager at that time and we were happy to rent the Kissan Bungalow to him especially as he was an old friend. Leonard's widow having settled her affairs in Pakistan shortly left for England.

I had, on the death of Chaudhri Sir Shahab-Uddin, become president of the Punjab Cooperative Fruit Development Board but found this a tiring job indeed entirely through being an Englishman; national prejudice being very prevalent and the hot heads mainly from Lyallpur most resentful. Fortunately a relative of Sir Shahab-Uddin, Ch. Nazir Husain, was ready and agreed to take over and I was happy to drop that hot potato.

The Pakistan Fruit Preservers Association progressed in a loose sort of way and it was necessary to contact government effectively to maintain imports of tin plate and other essentials for the fruit preserving industry. As President I and Mr. Kathoria as secretary maintained a fairly good membership in West Pakistan with no support from East Pakistan. We managed to maintain support for the inspectors of the Fruit Products Control Order and

the imports of sugar and glass containers then most necessary, was continued in spite of opposition from the indigenous industry whose products were very substandard.

A serious situation developed at this time when our auditors pointed out that we were contravening the Foreign Exchange Control order which had come into force at partition and of which most concerns had taken little notice. It was a great embarrassment to many companies when government announced severe penalties for contravention of these regulations and in some cases the proprietors or directors of foreign firms decided to cut and run with great loss to themselves. I decided that the best course was to make a full report to government and had a complete review of the position. We owed the Bank in London about £6,000 and there were many other commitments which in all amounted to a fairly large sum. A complete list was made out and sent to the controller in Karachi. This list, perhaps fortunately, included some assistance given to one of our employees for the education of his son in England.

Eventually I was called to Karachi to see the controller. It was an anxious time but fortunately no charge was made and the controller sanctioned exchange which was more than we required. Thinking this was a mistake I reported accordingly and was told that the amount was correct much to the great relief of the directors.

Harris informed me that he must now return to Rhodesia and recommended the affairs in Bangalore be handed over to Gregory whose work at Renala and Bangalore had been so splendid. I readily agreed to this knowing how helpful Gregory had been in keeping construction going at Renala during the war and especially his improvisation when spare parts were impossible to get. I therefore let Gregory take over and was



disappointed to receive, during the next few months, most depressing reports from Bangalore.

As the situation at Renala was progressing favourably I decided to fly to Bangalore to see the situation on the spot. I found Gregory in a most awful mess, not able to cope and in an acute state of depression advising the winding up of the whole project. I made a quick visit to Vithal Mallya the resident director and the banks and eventually Vithal Mallya took over control and Gregory gave up the uneven struggle and resigned. This was a great disappointment for me as I had such a high regard for Gregory. I came to the conclusion that this very practical man was a splendid worker under supervision but was entirely helpless when given complete control. Such is the difference in maintaining production under management than in taking control.

## 8

### NEW ARRANGEMENTS AT RENALA

A letter from the Pakistan government enquiring about my position with the company and how long I intended to maintain control caused me some anxiety. I replied that I was not certain at the moment but had thoughts of retiring in a few years.

This enquiry I realized could not mean that government had any ideas of enforcing any move by me but I did realise that although my own situation with government and my own people was still sound, there was a strong nationalist feeling in the country which was growing rapidly and which might make my position less secure in the future.

The Anti-British feeling over the Suez Canal affair had nearly involved me in serious trouble in Lahore when I was attacked by university students in my car while shopping in the university area and the driver later saved the car from destruction by a bluff. This affair was soon forgotten but in Montgomery itself the Anti-British sentiment amongst officials lasted quite a while.

I had already sold a few of my brother's shares to Pakistanis and now looked for a large buyer and eventually contacted Sir



Maratib Ali the largest contractor to the troops in India during the war and highly respected by all including the high command in the army. He and his family were very influential also in the Pakistan Government and Sir Maratib eventually made a deal with me for the sale of the remaining shares.

It was necessary to inform the resident manager Major Cranfield of the state of affairs as part of the deal was to train Sir Maratib's son-in-law in the management of affairs at Renala. S. M. Mohsin had married Sir Maratib's youngest daughter two years earlier and he happened to be a member of the family of the Pir of Shergarh, a large estate some ten miles from Renala. Mohsin and his wife Sitwat were at that time living in their home only a few miles from Renala and came to visit us.

In the meantime Cranfield had decided to leave the farm and Mohsin was able to get some good advice before he left, sufficient for him to be appointed as manager to work with me before Cranfield left. Mohsin's first assignment was in connection with the farm and coming from a land owning family he soon found his feet.

In common with most fruit growers, we auctioned most of our fruit to contractors annually only retaining sufficient for our factory needs. In the past this had been a most profitable procedure although we were always worried that the contractors would form a ring to corner the bidding. Our assessments of the price for each block had always been exceeded in the past although we sometimes had to let one or two blocks go at a lower rate to break a suspected ring.

It was most unfortunate that in this first year with Mohsin the ring really worked and the few lots we let go cheap to break it failed completely and we could not obtain bids of anything near our reserved prices. We were therefore left with the best part of 600 acres of fruit to deal with ourselves. This would have

been a very serious situation had it not been for the fact that we had an evaporation plant in the factory which had been working well for a year or two.

Mohsin was very worried when, after a number of stupid bids, I closed the auction and we all walked off. Some of the contractors came along later and made some reasonable bids and some were accepted but we had quite a problem on our hands.

The concentration plant had to work hard that winter and early spring to process a large volume of juice to a concentrate of one gallon to every five gallons of juice. This was packed in ten gallon carboys, glass jars used for storing liquids. The fruit was sold to the factory at the agreed price and to other customers so the profit on the farm was maintained although there was a loss on the concentrate sales mainly due to spoilage in storing and transit in the hot weather.

I had arranged with Sir Maratib Ali that the transfer of shares should only operate when I had obtained permission to transfer the money to England.

My application to the State Bank of Pakistan in which I requested permission for transfer of capital pointing out that I was taking up residence in England was processed and transfer was sanctioned within a reasonable time.

During this period I was still concerned with other interests although I had handed over the Fruit Development Board which was functioning successfully under Ch. Nazir Husain. The Fruit Preservers Association continued to ensure that sugar and bottle supplies to factories was being maintained until the indigenous product was more suitable for factory use. Sugar mills produced a better quality sugar acceptable for squashes but less suitable for canned fruit than the imported variety and bottles for squashes improved greatly although jars for marmalade were never up to standard for the clip on caps which were permitted to be imported.



I had been a member of the West Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry for a number of years and was elected chairman of that body for the 1957-1958 year. I had been awarded the M.B.E in the previous year and it transpired that I was the last British Chairman to hold this post. My address to the Punjab Governor on my retirement at the 35th annual general meeting was published in full in the Pakistan press whereas it had previously been customary to publish the governor's speech only with a few remarks on the chairman's address.

This may be due to the important points raised in respect of flooding in West Pakistan which had occurred too often in the past. The fact that our part of Pakistan had not suffered in recent years may in part be due to the reforestation which had been carried out in Indian occupied Kashmir. It would still be advisable, however, for the forest department in West Pakistan to further examine the possibility of forestation along the river banks just as the canal authorities have done in the canal areas.

Again the water logging and salinity position has greatly improved with the splendid work done by the Water and Power Development Authority and this organisation could still do better by conserving its water supply and extending it over a far larger area.

Water for irrigation in Pakistan has been used in a very wasteful way ever since the canal system started apart from the fact that the canals were not lined when they were first built which lead to water logging in a number of areas. The wasteful practice of flood irrigation of the fields not only added to water logging but restricted the scope of the water available.

In most other countries, where water supply is precious, the system of overhead sprinkler irrigation has been employed and it is quite possible that were this system encouraged in the canal areas the present supplies could be extended to cover at least two

times the present areas. The engineering industry in Pakistan can easily produce the motors, pumps and pipes for this purpose and government would be well advised to give grants or interest free loans to farmers to put this method into practice.

The Renala area was particularly affected by water-logging. About 1000 acres of Renala estate was put out of production and our own estate lying alongside the canal on the south side was being badly affected. Realizing the danger to our small holding of 720 acres, I had to do some serious thinking. We consulted many experts including Sir Roger Thomas who was a consultant to the government of Sindh. On his advice a pit was dug in the worst area with two lines of trenches in the canal land and one in our own property draining into this tank. A pump was installed to pump the water from the tank to our water supply channel running along the canal at a higher level. The drains worked well and the water flowing into the tank was not very saline being seepage supply from the canal and the pumped water supplemented the irrigation facility for the land at the tail. Thus the level of sub soil water in the area was kept at a safe depth and we could grow *guavas* and *phalsas* which are less affected by water logging and saline conditions. These crops were partly useful in the factory so the fruit and extra water were a great benefit. Without this assistance our holding might have suffered a serious setback. Drainage schemes have now been taken in hand at considerable government expense which has helped reduce the damage.



## 9

## ROYAL OCCASIONS

In 1958, I went to Buckingham Palace to receive my insignia of the M.B.E. from the Queen, a most impressive occasion in which Her Majesty had words for each of the 200 members present receiving awards. I happened to look at the court programme the following day in the paper and realized what an exacting programme the Queen had and was amazed that she had been so generous to all these people receiving their awards.

In 1961 the Duke of Edinburgh paid a visit to Pakistan and Betty and I attended the governor's banquet in Lahore. The governor, Nawab of Kalabagh, must have advised the Duke to talk to me on fruit farming and preservation and I found myself being grilled by the Duke who is a great seeker after knowledge. Many of the Duke's searching questions were difficult to answer with no notice but apparently I got by which was fortunate. He next tackled Col. Conville who is probably one of the best farmers in the country. When asked about his work, the colonel said he was a 'zamindar', the Indian word for a farmer. The Duke not knowing the language and having just talked to me on the difficulties of getting imports of jars for jams etc. said 'what did you say you were a "jam jar"? This created much amusement for all and we thought of, but unfortunately did not carry out, the

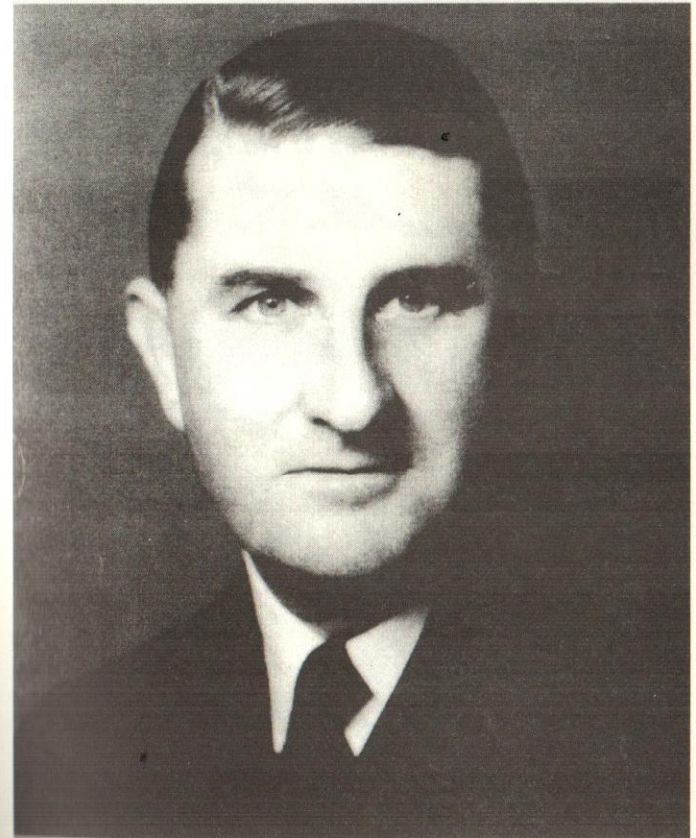
idea of forging letters of appointment to the colonel as the "jam jar" of Montgomery. We met the Duke the following evening at a reception with the High Commissioner where the Duke had a dig at me a fruit juice preserver being found drinking whisky.

The Duke's visit was a dress rehearsal for the Queen's visit the following year which took place at the end of February. I was very fortunate to get to the celebrations in Lahore as just after Christmas I had an operation to remove a large stone from the bladder. The operation was performed by Dr. Badinoch in the Royal Masonic Hospital. This great surgeon performed so well and the eventual nursing was so good that the surgeon allowed me to leave for Lahore to attend the ceremonies.

The garden party in the High Commissioner's residence was attended by Betty and myself and two hours standing was quite a strain for me. After lunch instead of going to the races I rested until the governor's reception in the evening. The race meeting was a great pleasure for the Queen, who with her wide knowledge of horses, knew the pedigree of many of them including those of Col. Taylor of Renala stud farm, one of the best known breeders in the whole of the sub-continent. Taylor was of course presented to the Queen at the meeting. A special polo match was arranged for the Duke with many of his polo friends.

I thoroughly enjoyed the evening reception following the afternoon rest and did not feel the strain of a further two hours long standing. I was particularly pleased to have a further long talk with the Duke. Betty and Sitwat Mohsin were unfortunate to just miss being addressed by the Queen.







L. Mitchell, Managing Director,  
1933 - 1949





R. Mitchell 1900 - 1987  
Chairman 1960 - 1987

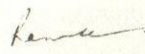
### Certificate of Incorporation.


No. \_\_\_\_\_ of 1933-19

I hereby certify that Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Ltd.

is this day incorporated under the Indian Companies' Act, 1913, and that the Company is Limited, as a private limited company.

Given under my hand at Lahore this 25th day of April One thousand nine hundred and thirty three Feb 30/14 (three hundred & eighty one) only.

  
 Registrar of Joint Stock Companies.



J. B. G. Co.

HOPP—61470—DE-1100—2-7—2-200.

Certificate of Incorporation issued in the name of Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Ltd. at Lahore on 25th April, 1933.



No. 48 201W-48

In the OFFICE of the REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES UNDER ACT VII OF 1913.

IN THE MATTER OF The Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Limited.



I do hereby certify that pursuant to the provisions of section 11, sub-section (5), Act VII, 1913 (The Indian Companies Act, 1913), and under order of the Government of West Punjab, conveyed by their No.3063-Com-48/44914.

Industries & ~~Business~~ Medical Dep'ts, dated the 9th October, 48.  
to the address of

The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, West Punjab.  
the name of " Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Limited,  
has this day been changed to " Mitchells Fruit Farms Ltd.  
and that the said Company has been duly incorporated  
as a Company under the provisions of the said Act.

Dated this 13th day of October, One  
thousand Nine hundred and forty eight.-

*M. L. Lush*  
Registrar,  
Joint Stock Companies,  
West Punjab.

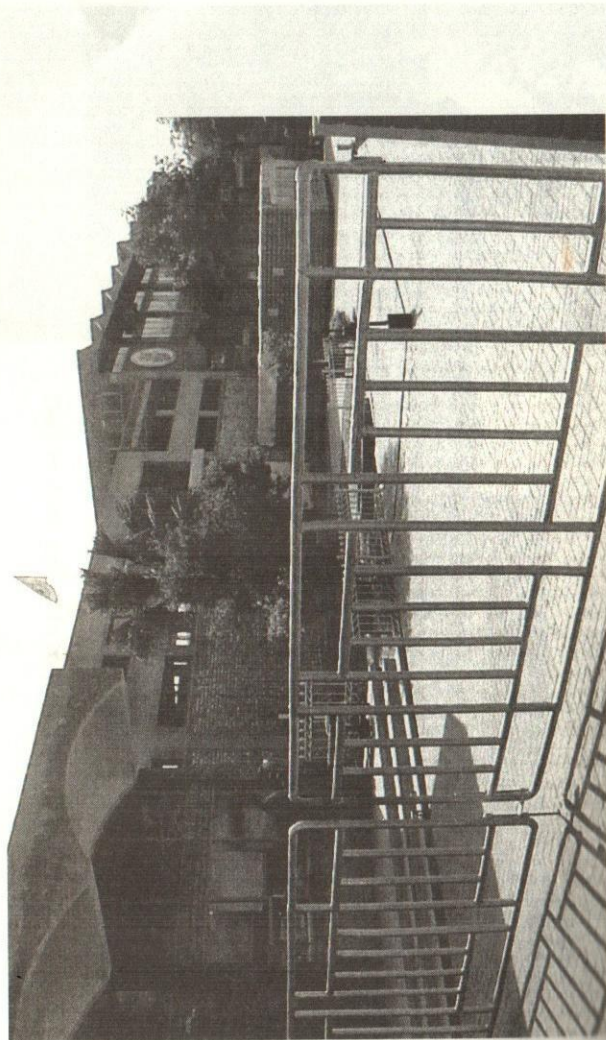
J. S. C. 39.  
MPP-550 JUC-12489-(M-1870)-8-11-48-4,000.

Certificate issued by the Registrar, Joint Stock Companies,  
West Punjab, authorising change of the name of the  
company from Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Ltd. to  
Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd. on 13th October, 1948.



First conference of Food Preservers of Pakistan held at Karachi in 1948. Seated in front row, left to right, Dr. Nazir Ahmad, Planning Commission, Agha Hilaly, Ministry of Commerce; R. Mitchell, seated second row fourth from left; Sheikh Ijaz Ahmad; fifth from left, Mohammad Shoaib.





Present view of Mitchell's factory office.

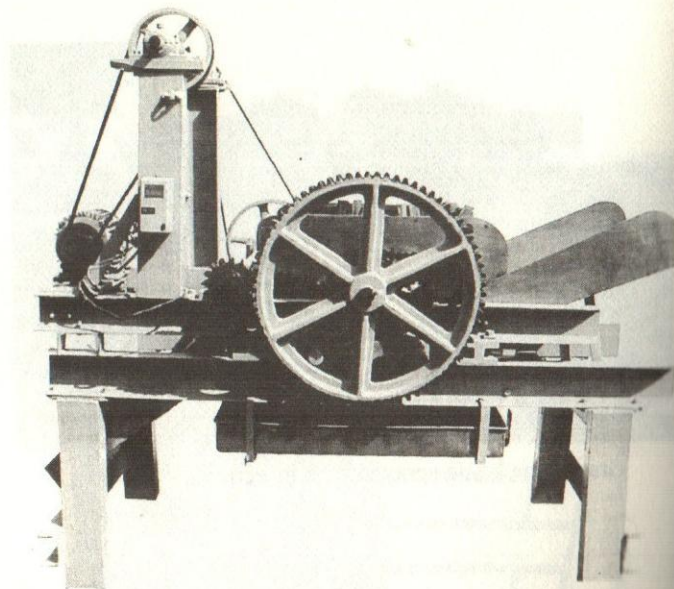


Grape vine being sprayed with insecticide - c.1920's.

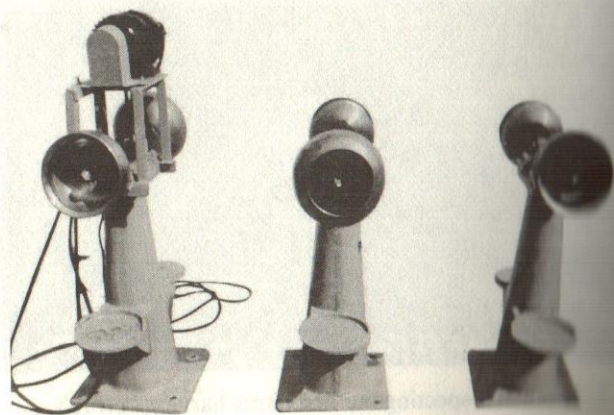


L. Mitchell inspecting the first citrus harvest - c.1933.





Roller press for extraction of lime juice - 1941.



Semi-automatic Citrus Juice Extractors - 1941.

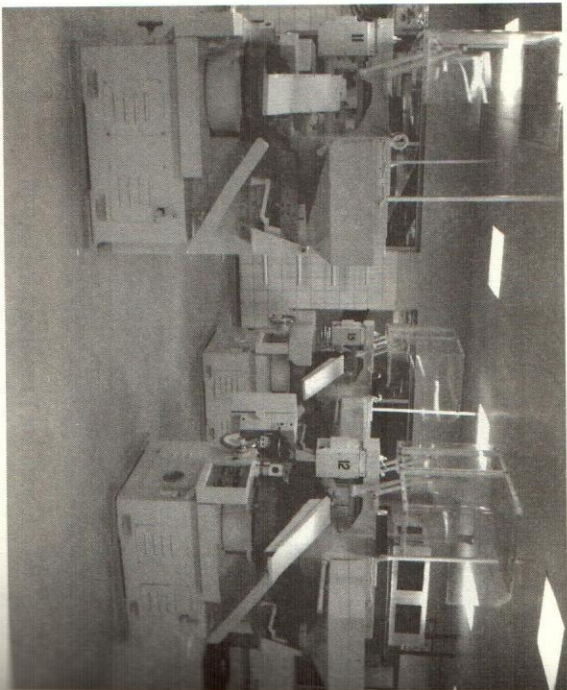


Chocolate Enrobing Line - 2004.



Moulded Chocolate Line 2001.





Sugar Confectionery wrapping section as it appears today.



A contemporary view of the Groceries Processing Hall

# KISSAN

## FRUIT PRODUCTS

THE INDIAN MILDURA  
FRUIT FARM LIMITED  
MENALA KHURD  
MONTGOMERY, (PUNJAB).

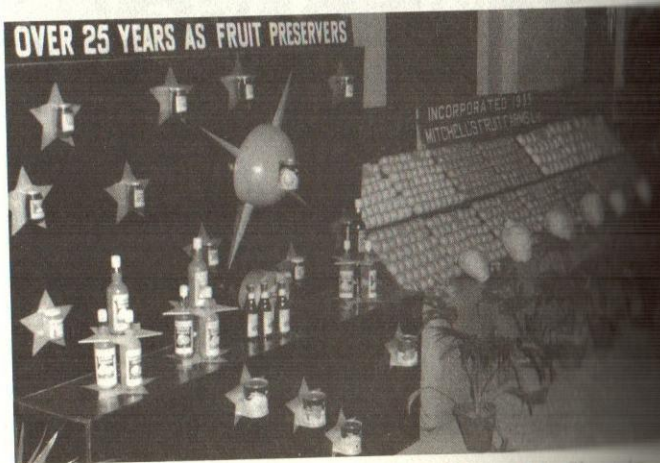
AGENTS  
**CUTLER PALMER & CO**  
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA,  
LAHORE & MADRAS.

An advertising poster used during 1941 - 1942.





Mrs. Sitwat Mohsin showing a jar of orange concentrate to President Muhammad Ayub Khan at the Annual Fruit & Vegetable Show, Lahore - 1960.



Company stall at the Annual Fruit and Vegetable Show in Lahore, 1958 marking the Silver Jubilee of the company.



Mr. Akhtar Hussain, Governor of Punjab, presenting a memento to Mr. R. Mitchell on behalf of the management & employees of the company to mark the 25th anniversary in 1958 at Mitchell's Factory, Renala Khurd. Khan Sahib Mohammad Masood, Company Secretary, is seen in the background.



Syed Babar Ali, Managing Director, Packages Ltd. presenting a Long-Service Award to Syed Ehsan Ali; automobile mechanic, on the 50th Anniversary of the company - Mitchell's Factory, Renala Khurd, 1983.





S.M. Mohsin, receiving from Sheikh Ikram-ul-Haq, Chief Secretary to the Government, a trophy presented by Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, Governor of West Pakistan, Lahore, 1957.



Richard Mitchell (sitting left) with Mrs. Betty Mitchell (sitting right) seated with Mrs. Sitwat Mohsin and their children (left to right) Mehdi, Matanat and Maimanat Mohsin. S.M. Mohsin (standing left) at their bungalow in Renala Khurd - c.1964.



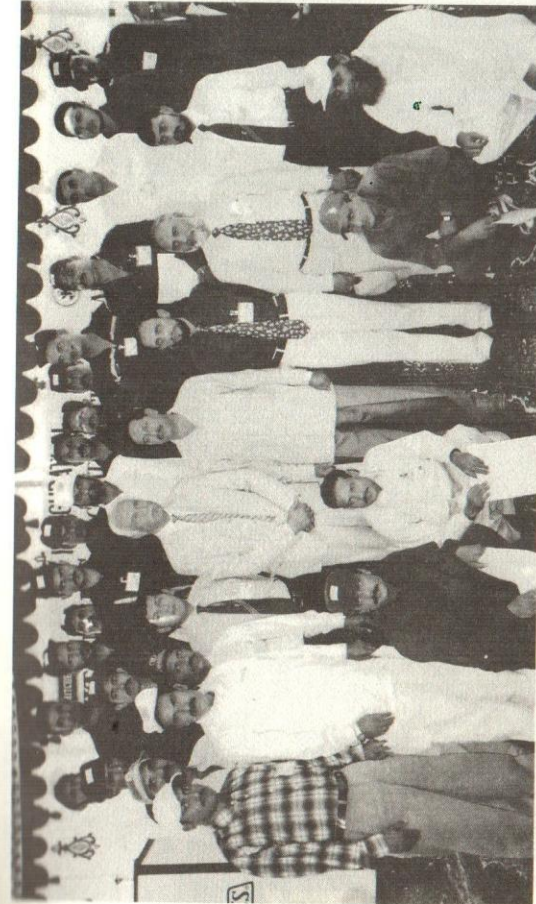
S.M. Mohsin with S. Mehdi Mohsin at the Company Office at Renala - c.2000.





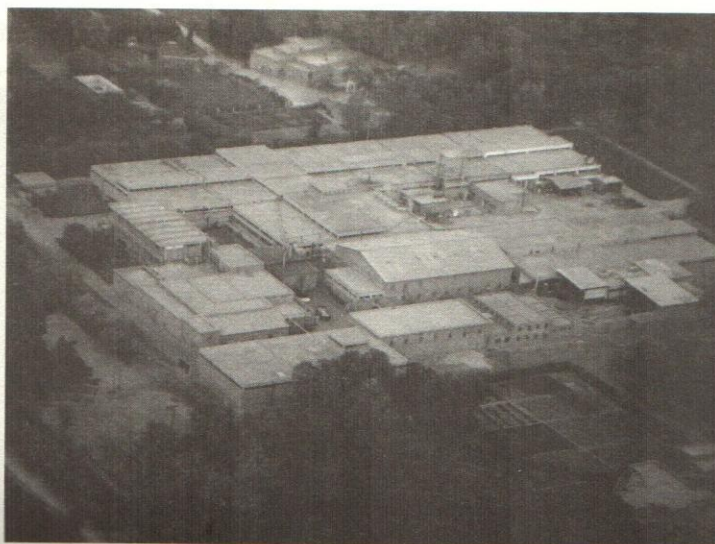
Mehdi Mohsin, Executive Director, Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd., receiving Top Company's Award from General Pervez Musharraf, Sheraton Hotel, Karachi, March, 1999.

(The Chairman, Mr. S.M.Mohsin, received the same award from General Pervez Musharraf in 2000.)



Lt. Gen. (R) Khalid Maqbool, Governor Punjab, in group photograph with executives and technical staff of the company who helped install the chocolate plant - Oct, 2004.





Aerial View of the Factory, March, 2008.  
Pilot: Mr. Naveed Riaz  
Photograph: Mr. Tariq Mehmood Rao



Some Mitchell's Products - 2008.





## *Celebrating 75 years*

Three generations of discerning families understand what farm freshness means. It is that special brand of customer who wants to provide the best of everything for their families and Mitchell's, a name which is a synonym for quality in food, fulfils those high aspirations.

We wish to extend to all of them our profound gratitude for their patronage, and retaining that special bond of trust with us for over seven decades.



Platinum Anniversary commemorative campaign - 2008.



Original Trade Mark discontinued in the 80's.



Corporate Logo



50th Anniversary Logo



Confectionery Logo



Groceries Logo



75th Anniversary Seal



# The Story of Mitchell's

## Part Two



## Introduction

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During 1956-1957 Richard Mitchell began exploring the possibility of selling, in the first stage, company shares owned by his elder brother, late Capt. Leonard Mitchell and his widow, Mrs. Ray Mitchell. While Capt. Mitchell had two daughters from his second marriage to Doris Mitchell he had no issue from Blossom Mitchell, his first wife and Ray Mitchell, his third wife, who survived him and was permanently resident in U.K.

Richard Mitchell broached the subject in a letter to Syed Maratib Ali, the head of a prominent industrialist family, with investments in a diversified group of industries located at Karachi, Hyderabad and Rahim Yar Khan. In view of the dispersed nature of his business and his advancing years Syed Maratib Ali sent a reply to Mr. Mitchell regretting his inability to take up the offer of shares.

Soon after writing his letter Syed Maratib Ali casually mentioned the contents of his correspondence to his youngest daughter, Mrs. Sitwat Mohsin, who happened to be visiting Lahore at the time. She assumed that since my family and I lived in the vicinity of Mitchell's farm and also owned agricultural property in its neighbourhood I may have interest in pursuing the proposal.

We thought over the matter and agreed to advise her father of our interest in the purchase of the shares and to suggest a reconsideration of the initial response to Richard Mitchell's letter. Syed Maratib Ali concurred with the proposal by notifying Richard Mitchell in a revised letter that my wife and I would be willing to



take up his offer and recommended a meeting at Mitchell's Farms at Renala. The earlier letter was retrieved and soon after the delivery of the second communication Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell invited us to their home. It was agreed over a cordial cup of tea that the proposed transaction and terms of sale would be acceptable to both parties.

I was elected to the board of directors and worked simultaneously as General Manager for two years. Thereafter in accordance with the understanding with Richard Mitchell the majority of Leonard Mitchell's shares were sold to members of the Maratib Ali family; the principal part having been bought by my wife and me. L. Rose & Co. Ltd., who owned 25% of the equity of Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd. retained their share and continued to be represented on the board of directors.

Roses had in fact been given the first refusal before the Mitchell family sold the shares to Pakistani investors. However, in the case of the associated company in India, Kissan Products (Pvt.) Ltd., Bangalore, Rose's chose to buy the shares owned by Richard Mitchell while Leonard Mitchell's shares had been sold earlier to an Indian industrialist, Vithal Malliya, a prominent businessman with a considerable interest in breweries and glass manufacturing in South India.

In 1957 John Boyter-Smee was the regular nominee director for Rose's; after his death in 1958 Basil Collins, who later rose to the position of CEO Cadbury Schweppes Ltd., replaced him to be succeeded finally by Andrew Harvie Clark until 1986. In the absence of John Smee and Basil Collins H.J. Pearson, former finance secretary Government of Punjab, acted as alternate director.

Richard Mitchell remained the Chairman of the company until his death in 1987; although inactive he continued to receive regular reports about the progress of the company. His wife, Betty Mitchell, was elected director after his death and she too retained a nominal shareholding for the remaining years of her life.

# 1

## FARM

The original name of the company was Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Ltd. which was changed to Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd. in October 1948. It was incorporated in 1933 although the lease of the land had been acquired and the area planted, in part, with grape vines almost a decade earlier.

As the grape vine trial proved unsuccessful most of the land measuring 720 acres was rapidly replanted with citrus to comply with the conditions governing the lease which stipulated that the area must be rendered a productive fruit orchard within an agreed time limit.

Given the normal productive life span of citrus trees to be about 25 years and the fact that the planting had been completed within a short time the entire orchard attained the end of its normal productive life and began to decline from 1945 onwards. Consequently during the decade following the creation of Pakistan in 1947 the plantation had to be renovated gradually adopting an annual routine of removal of 40/50 acres of old trees at a time and planting of an equivalent area about a year later allowing a few months of rest for the soil.

The aftermath of the partition of the sub-continent had also meant that the market, developed assiduously for the company's



finished products on the Indian side of the border – Delhi, Bombay and East Punjab in particular – was lost to Mitchell's Fruit Farms, Renala.

The farm, however, continued to be the mainstay of income for the shareholders. The total number of shareholders was seventeen. In addition to Roses; Mitchells and the Maratib Ali family they consisted mainly of present and ex-employees and the Doctor Basheer family of Lahore. The directors, as a policy, had followed the view that as agricultural income was exempt from income tax, emphasis should be placed on maximizing income from the farm while holding on to a more modest profit from the operation of the factory. This approach, while it hindered higher income generation from the sale of processed fruit products which in turn limited the scope for investment in manufacturing capacity, nonetheless helped to enlarge market share for Mitchell's products. In good years there was sufficient income available from farming not only for payment of dividends but also for building reserves. The surplus accumulated from agricultural income over an extended period proved a valuable source for investment in the processing business.

A yearly event, which excited wide interest among the community of fruit merchants, was the public auction of the annual citrus crop of Mitchell's Fruit Farms. A press advertisement would be put out during October in the vernacular newspapers of the country listing the area and variety of fruit to be auctioned; a sizeable gathering of fruit dealers would assemble on the playing field at Kissan Staff Club where a regular auction would be held. These were early years when the trend of citrus fruit growing amongst agriculturists in Punjab had not yet taken hold. There was thus a keen demand for citrus throughout the country; the red blood oranges grown at *haji* 191 & 192 had acquired an impressive reputation for quality.

In the auction held in October 1958 the contractors appeared to have formed a cartel and the prices offered were unacceptable. The only solution to this problem lay in expanding the utilization of citrus fruit in the factory. Together with the effort to raise demand for the company's finished products the increasing sales of orange concentrate was an opportune development. Thus within a few years the entire crop of citrus began to be processed in the factory and annual auctions were no longer necessary.

The practice of "ringing" old fruit trees a year before their scheduled removal was adopted to ensure maximum yield; this involved an incision made on the bark around the tree trunk to prevent the sap flowing back into the roots so that the entire nutrition was held in the body of the tree. Major Cranfield had acquired considerable experience in this procedure and in fact contributed a learned article on the subject to the Punjab Cooperative Fruit Development Board Journal, a highly respected quarterly published by the board from Lyallpur. One particular *burji* – no.191 – yielded a record crop of Valencia late oranges which was unprecedented both in quality and yield. In the following year, however, the trees had to be removed, as their vitality was completely exhausted.

The Mitchell brothers had instituted a Francis. J. Mitchell award, which amounted to a payment of Rs.25,000/- each year to a scholar or teacher producing the most outstanding paper on fruit growing. The judges were to consist of a selected panel of specialists from the Agriculture College, Lyallpur while the award was to be administered by the Secretary, Agriculture department, govt. of Punjab. Richard Mitchell made inquiries about continuing the award after the first recipient had won the prize but the agriculture department showed little interest in sustaining an admirable initiative.



Both the Cooperative Fruit Development Board which had, as one of its primary duties the certification of reliable fruit nurseries, and its prestigious quarterly journal seemed to have suffered terminal decline.

Richard Mitchell, after his marriage to Betty Mitchell in 1937, took up residence at Kissan Bungalow, so named due to its location near Kissan railway station at the southern end of the farm. The North Western Railway (NWR) had consulted the owners regarding an appropriate name for a new railway station which was expected to provide service to the fruit farm and the neighbouring community; the name Kissan was adopted by agreement. The word "Kissan" later became a household brand name signifying high quality fruit squashes, jam and canned goods as they began to be distributed all over the country. In India today the registered trade mark "Kissan" is one of the leading brands in a growing market.

Close proximity to the arterial Lower Bari Doab Canal, which carried 6000 cubic feet of water per second, was a mixed blessing. While it was the source of unhindered and regular supply of irrigation water vital for growing fruit in the dry Punjab climate, the seepage from the canal over the years led to a rise in the water table. By the year 1950, which is about 30 years after the irrigation facility started, some parts of the farm, particularly *burji* no. 169, 170, 171, 172 & 173, equal to 5% of the total area of the plantation, had a sub-soil water level of about four to five feet. In *burji* no. 170 tractor cultivation had started to be a difficult operation as the machine, with its heavy body weight, began to sink in the soft water logged sub-soil. Land reclamation work was begun by digging a pit in *burji* 170 at the one of the worst affected land. The pit took up nearly one quarter of an acre, was about 8 to 10 feet deep and was planted with willows on its banks to help soak up as much water as possible. Drains, running parallel to the canal, all along the length of *burjis* 169, 170, 171 &

172 were dug at varying depths to intercept the seepage water and empty it into the collection pit. The drains were constantly kept clear of undergrowth and obstruction to allow smooth flow of water and they were also dredged from time to time.

A pump driven by a 20 H.P electric motor was installed at the pit to ensure regular pumping into the plantation minor. At the tail end of the farm, which received relatively less irrigation, the reclaimed water became a useful supplement for the area which suffered from shortage. Thus two objectives were achieved simultaneously – the water logged land was successfully reclaimed for growing mainly shallow rooted trees such as guavas – and the shortage of irrigation water at the tail was relieved.

The farm was divided into 34 *burjis* – generally of 20 acres each – stretching from *burji* no. 164 at the Renala town end to *burji* no. 197 at the Kissan end; the long narrow strip was sandwiched between the LBDC and the Lahore/Karachi highway and railway line. "*Burjis*" – a vernacular name for "reduced distances" used as a measure of distance along the canals (5 RDs equal one mile) – were taken as a standard for the administrative division of the plantation. Four sections with independent *jemadars* (supervisors) and their individual groups of *beldars* (workers) were housed in four separate sections (B. No. 170, 176, 185 & 191) where quarters were provided together with accommodation for bullocks. Until about 1958 the land was cultivated through a combination of tractors and draft cattle. The complete change to mechanized farming was made at about this time. Four other sections, namely nursery, picking & packing, – pruning and watch and ward, had separate *jemadars* who were employed to attend to their particular duties. The number of workers employed in the picking/packing section as also the watch/ward section would increase or decrease according to the fruit ripening and harvest season. The P&P section *jemadar* arranged the issue of rice straw and the collection of straw covers, produced mainly by female workers



resident at the farm, for protection of goods packed in glass containers to be further put into wooden crates.

The headquarter section was assigned work in the dairy, stables and bungalows. This section consisting of sweepers, syce, *dhobi*, gardeners, Kissan Staff Club and bungalow staff reported to the Labour Welfare Officer at the factory.

A farm workshop was built at *burji* no. 169 equipped with a band saw, small flour and salt grinding mill, charcoal making unit and tools and equipment for repair and maintenance of tractors and pumps. It was under the supervision of a farm engineer who reported daily to the General Manager.

Likewise a Farm Overseer, based at Kissan, was responsible for the over-all day to day supervision of work related to farming. He had been provided with a riding horse and later, when his age necessitated it, a motorcycle to visit the farm daily for inspection of routine jobs. He too reported directly to the G.M. on a daily basis.

A block of 12 ½ acres of land adjoining the Renala town was gifted to the convent of our Lady of Fatimah as dowry to the church on behalf of F. J. Mitchell and his daughter Phillipa Mitchell. Mother Phillipa was stationed briefly at the Renala convent while the nuns, over the years, built a church, a school, and a dispensary on the premises.

The terms of the original lease deed carried a condition that the lessee would have the option to acquire proprietary rights of the leasehold after paying an agreed amount within a stipulated period of time. Accordingly the company exercised this option in 1946 when full payment was made and the land passed into the proprietary ownership of the company.

## 2

## FACTORY

Pakistan, at its birth, inherited only nominal and small scale industrial capacity which consisted almost entirely of elementary processing of raw material such as cotton, oil seed, wheat, rice, leather and fruit and vegetables.

Although Mitchell's happened to be the largest fruit preservation unit of its kind and had won a large national market for squashes, jam & marmalade it remained, nonetheless, a small scale operation which relied mainly on manual work.

The factory employed during the busy season not more than a total number of one hundred and twenty workers. Citrus fruit juice extraction on small halving and hand reaming machines followed by chemical preservation and storage in wooden vats was the principal activity in the winter. An Italian oil extractor and an American sharples centrifuge machine were used for the production and filtration of citrus peel oil. This process followed after the juice had been extracted; the orange and lemon skins in the form of cups were fed into the oil extractor which produced a slurry to be processed finally into clear filtered essential oil. The entire stock of Lemon and Orange oil was utilized as a natural flavouring agent for citrus squashes and orange marmalade. Jam & marmalade was also produced in



small quantities in four steam jacketed open pans where loading, stirring, and emptying all involved manual work and continued intermittently during the year.

The summer season extending up to mid-July was taken up with the production of fruit squashes and the extraction of mango pulp. This too consisted largely of manual work on small scale equipment such as pulpers, mechanically driven bottle brushes for bottle washing, semi-automatic filling and labelling machines. The total output of squashes was about 400 dozens in an eight hour shift.

The product, in all cases where glass jars or bottles were used, was protected by individual covers made from rice straw and packed finally into wooden crates. The name of the product, its quantity and weight was stenciled on the crate which would finally be reinforced by steel strapping.

The small canning line was a little more complex where clinching of lids and seaming involved faster mechanical handling. Canned preserves and a modest quantity of fruit in sugar syrup such as golden plums, grapefruit, cape gooseberries and figs were produced.

The factory remained closed for the most part from mid-July up to the middle of October. During these three months about a dozen workers would be employed for a few days to extract juice in the roller press from Kaghzi Limes and to produce guava extract from pulp cooked in open steam jacketed pans.

Fruit Vinegar processing continued round the year though the main selling season was in the summer. To this day it remains a small but useful part of the business; its principal advantage was the commercial utilization of premature fruit fall.

A noteworthy development was the addition of apple jam which soon became the largest volume product in the preserves group, in the early 60s. Until then only Apple Jelly was produced

from apple extract and the pulp was discarded as a by-product of no commercial value. An experiment was made with making jam from the rejected pulp. The result was a preserve which was rich in taste and nutrition and which gained wide acceptance in a short space of time. Mitchell's "golden apple jam" is today the biggest revenue and profit generating item in its particular range of fruit preserves.

Until 1960, liquid fruit pectin used in the production of jelly & marmalade, was derived entirely from citron of commerce (*galgal*) grown on the farm mainly for this purpose. The fruit contains a thick layer of *albido* under the skin; together with seed and pulp the whole fruit was boiled, preserved and stored in wooden barrels. In-house processing of fruit pectin was discontinued after this essential raw material began to be imported in dried form.

An interesting activity that started about four weeks before Christmas and proceeded at a measured pace throughout the month of December was the preparation of mixed candied peel. It was called mixed because it was produced from the peel of three different citrus fruits. The main component was Citron of Commerce (*Galgal*) which was specially grown on a small patch on the farm; the other two fruits were Eureka Lemon and Seville Orange. These three varieties of citrus were preferred as they all possessed a thick skin, citron of commerce in particular, and they each had a distinct citrus taste and flavour.

The fruit was halved and, after extraction of juice and pulp, the peel in the form of cups stored in brine solution in wooden vats. After the skins had developed sufficient tenderness they were washed, dried and brought to a boil in sugar syrup in steam jacketed pans. This process of cooking was repeated two or three times increasing the concentration of sugar with each boiling. The peel was then placed in wooden trays and allowed to dry in



the sun over a period of several days. Finally the dried peel was glazed with a coating of sugar and packed in kraft paper lined wooden cases.

Demand was brisk over Christmas and the New Year primarily from the bakery trade which utilized the peel in the preparation of cakes. The product was discontinued because the volume of business had become relatively small.

Two attempts were made at product diversification in subsequent years. The first related to dehydrated vegetables. A complete processing line was bought from Lever Brothers Ltd., Rahim Yar Khan. It consisted mainly of pea shelling and grading equipment and drums for warm air circulation. A small sophisticated machine for puncturing individual peas in order to remove moisture formed an interesting part of the process. It was assumed that as peas, onions, bitter gourd and turnips were a staple and were marked by a steep rise in prices in the off-season a reasonably large market could be tapped with the supply of hygienically packaged vegetables in dehydrated form. Suitable packaging in the form of printed paper bags of two different sizes together with display cartons was designed and the product was delivered in properly sealed condition. Market response was, however, disappointing; one primary problem was that as compared to fresh vegetables the appearance of the dehydrated product was not very appetising.

The other attempt at broadening the range of processed fruit/vegetables had to do with tomato puree and fruit juices in tetra pak. An investment was made in a complete pre-heating, sterilising, filling and packaging line. German equipment was bought for pre-heating of tomato puree while the remaining machines were supplied by Tetra Pak. The pre-heating and the filling of higher density tomato puree in tetra pak cartons could not be achieved according to the requirement of the product.

indeed even the performance standard provided by the machine suppliers. The entire line had to be sold after a brief unsuccessful trial.

A skeleton staff of technical hands which included the electrician, mechanics, boiler engineer, storekeepers, coopers, masons and *mistris* was employed on a permanent basis. The juice extraction hall, which had a mezzanine floor, was a central feature of the factory premises; it was known as the "Latoo Kamra" because it contained a row of motor driven stainless steel spinning rosettes against which halved oranges were pressed manually for juice extraction. Similarly the squash filling room came to be described as the "bharai kamra". Two underground cellars – one beneath the filling room and the other under the present office building – were used for storage of squashes; one of the two cellars was linked to the filling room above by a roller conveyor. The general atmosphere surrounding the storage facility of juices in large wooden vats and smaller barrels as also the dark underground cellars suggested that production of alcoholic beverages may have been in the directors' mind at some stage. A small trial had, in fact, been made with brandy produced from citrus juice in an earlier year and it is learnt that the product had been shipped to U.K. where it met with favourable comment. This impression receives some support from the considerable investment of Leonard Mitchell in Murree Brewery Co. Ltd., of which he was also Chairman for a few years. Any thought of entering the field must, however, have faded from their minds after 1947.

The storage of juices and pulps in wooden vats and barrels necessitated the development of an in-house facility for making wooden vats from highly seasoned *sheesham* wood as also their regular repair. A permanent coopers' shop employing a highly skilled carpenter assisted by trained workers was an on-going



operation which functioned round the year in a reserved corner of the factory. Old sheesham trees, grown along the boundaries of each *burji* as wind breaks for protection of blossom and newly set fruit against storm, were removed on a planned basis to provide the required quality of timber for fabrication of wooden storage vessels. The *sheesham* wood was properly seasoned before it was used. The filled vats and barrels required a daily spray of water to maintain humidity and to prevent the drying of wooden planks and resulting leakage of the contents. A permanent worker, Fateh Ali, was assigned this particular job and he performed it dutifully over several years. Paraffin wax was used as a sealant all over the inner surface of the vessels before they were filled.

The first factory extension, consisting of the present groceries hall and part of the finished goods store, was made in 1962. While Covell, Matthew & partner, Architects were hired to prepare the design and the structural details McDonald Layton & Co. were given the contract for construction. The architects had been asked to prepare drawings including the proposed new office block and future additions; the plan was to build in phases. Consequently the new office was put up three years later in 1965 and regular expansion continued in the following years.

Some idea of the relatively modest size of the operation can be gained from the annual quota of sugar of 400 tons sanctioned for Mitchell's through the recommendation of the Fruit Specialist, Faisalabad who was authorised under the Fruit Products Control Order (F.P.C.O.) to recommend release on a quarterly basis. The provincial food department, after receiving FPCO recommendation, would issue a permit enabling the company to obtain the sanctioned sugar from a specified mill. The whole quarterly routine was time consuming and a recurring burden. Glass containers, both bottles and jars, had to be

imported against a license issued by the Controller of imports and exports on the basis of a pre-determined category. The receipt of import licenses every 6 months was an occasion of immense satisfaction. In the earlier years – 1957 to 1959 – imported straight corks were used as closures for bottles. These were covered with aluminium seals to protect the closure and to present a more attractive look. Later the straight corks were replaced with stopper corks, which were easier to apply; but a real advance was made when aluminium pilfer proof caps applied with the aid of sealing machines were introduced. The change from rotary press printed labels to those produced on offset printing machines made a huge difference.

During 1960-1961 the old method of manual extraction of citrus juices on hand reamers was replaced by Italian automatic juice extraction machines supplied by Fratelli Indelicato of Sicily. This was a significant advance which helped raise output. In the meantime the factory began to receive orders for orange concentrate from pharmaceutical companies in Pakistan, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Richard Mitchell had earlier invested in a small BCH (Brierly, Collier and Hartley) vacuum concentration plant. As this was not adequate to meet the existing demand, it was replaced by an APV plate evaporator. Demand for orange concentrate dropped to a much lower level in two to three years as the pharmaceutical companies discontinued the production of items requiring this ingredient.

Over the next few years the jam and marmalade line was automated and converted into a continuous operation. It was transferred from the old canning hall built by Leonard Mitchell in the war years, and put up in a new groceries hall located alongside the old premises which are now being used as groceries raw/packing materials store. The squash line, the tomato processing line and the production of sauces were totally



renovated by 1970 with the addition of a vacuum cooking system and modern higher capacity filling, sealing and labelling machines. A fruit and vegetable canning line leased from the Metal Box Company of India, was used during the war mainly for canning of jam, marmalade and fruit – especially golden plums, figs and grapefruit. Fruit juices and vegetables were added to the list a few years later. Grapefruit segments canned in sugar syrup, offered prospects of an expanding market in U.K. Regrettably, increasing difficulty in importing expensive high quality sugar and an increase in packaging cost, left little scope for competing with the prevailing prices. The terms of the lease provided for maintenance of the equipment by the Metal Box Company, which was also at that time the only supplier of tin containers. After 1947 Hashimi Can Company Ltd. Karachi became the successors of Metal Box Company, India and continued to supply the packaging material until new relatively more efficient sources of supply were developed.

The system used for receiving and handling of orders and their dispatch was based mainly in the factory. There were only small scale dealers -both wholesale and retail -spread out all over the country. They would either post their orders accompanied by cheques or the co.'s travelling salesmen would collect orders and send the cheques on behalf of the customers directly to Renala for dispatch through the goods delivery service of Pakistan Western Railways (PWR). The concept of Regional Sales Offices and sole distributors in all major cities and towns had not yet been adopted. There were, however, sales depots in Karachi and Lahore equipped with limited storage facilities catering directly to wholesalers, retailers and institutional buyers all over the two cities.

A tractor trolley and bullock carts were the usual means of delivering the goods at the Renala railway station. A

supervisor" was responsible for ensuring the preparation of the dispatch documents and loading of goods to all destinations, either in wagon loads or in "smalls."

Consignments for East Pakistan were sent to M/s. Plummer Bros. our distributors, by wagon-load for shipment from Karachi by sea. A traffic manager, Kyrie, was employed to handle clearance of all imported goods and shipments to Chittagong. M/s. Plummer Bros. were a subsidiary company of James Finlay & Co. a large diversified U.K. registered company with interests in tea and textiles in Pakistan and India. As business was growing a regional office had been opened in Chittagong in the late 60s to promote sales. Yar Mohammad, the finished goods store-keeper who retired recently at Renala, and Mohammad Ibrahim, sales representative, were amongst the last group of West Pakistanis to escape with their lives in September 1971.



## 3

## MANAGEMENT

An integrated fruit growing and processing operation had its undoubted advantages and yet it was not without its problems.

The location of Mitchell's Fruit Farms at Renala Khurd, a virtual village until recently, was not the best posting for a high calibre manager or bright young people looking for professional advancement.

In 1957 the road links were poor, the other means of communication slow and inefficient and the journey between Lahore and Renala could be taxing. There was no proper schooling available for children and of course little or nothing by way of entertainment.

In these circumstances the management team inherited from Richard Mitchell consisted of four managers who were past retirement age and three comparatively younger people who had risen mainly from the ranks. The company secretary who also dealt with matters related to accounts and taxation was Khan Sahib Mohammad Masud, former auditor general, Nabha state, East Punjab, recommended to Richard Mitchell by Sir William Roberts of Khanewal. The Labour Welfare officer was A.H. Holloway, who had retired a few years earlier from N.W.B. station superintendent Lahore. Samuel, a younger man, was

Assistant manager, buying while Mohammad Akram, a graduate with a master's degree from the institute of chemical technology, Punjab University held the job of chemist/factory manager. M. Iqbal Biring was Sales Manager, promoted from the job of sales invoice clerk. The small group of senior managers was assisted by Khushi Mohammad, Head Clerk and Jacob C.S. Lall, accounts superintendent. Two depot managers, one each at Karachi and Lahore, Critchel and Tahir Shah respectively, were responsible for distribution at these two cities. Both were approaching retirement age.

As the company's capacity to attract and retain competent executives in the proper age group was limited by its circumstances, not the least of which was the size of the business itself, it was concluded first that perhaps the best hope lay in finding local talent. This meant employing suitable persons from Okara district; especially from the vicinity of Renala. The second course which suggested itself was promotion of able younger people from within the company. While we had limited success with our attempt at finding qualified local people we found the latter approach of encouraging and promoting employees from within a more rewarding exercise.

Mrs. Betty Mitchell played a big role in the training and motivation of staff. She encouraged several younger employees amongst the clerical staff to learn short hand, typing and book keeping. As a trained secretary herself she was well qualified to perform this task. She spent many hours in her bungalow office in product costing, a complex and time consuming work before the advent of computers. Above all she provided strong support to her husband and encouragement to employees in all sections of the factory & farm.

The change in management and ownership of an established British business gave rise to unease, particularly amongst the



older members of the staff, in regard to their future and continued service with the company. They felt that Mitchell's would be no exception to the general decline in the standard of administration that had set in throughout the country after the departure of the British.

The other important consideration which weighed with them and which added to their feeling of insecurity was the relatively young age of the new chief executive and his lack of sufficient business experience. He was after all not yet twenty seven years old while the company already employed over 300 workers in the farm and the factory.

An inkling of the senior managers' concern came early when A.H.C. Holloway ("Halwa Saab"), during a walk round the factory casually asked whether he would be given "a proper burial in the bone yard". As it happened about two to three years later he died peacefully in his bungalow. After a simple funeral service in the Convent Church at Renala he was laid to rest in the Lahore Jail Road cemetery in the presence of Mitchell's management and some members of the clerical staff.

Evidently he and Mrs. Holloway had not been in touch with their son in U.K. and their daughters in Australia for a fairly long time. Contact was, however, established through the assistance of the British High Commission in Islamabad with one of their daughters and after a few months Mrs. Holloway left to join her in Australia.

Khan Sahib Mohammad Masud, though active almost to the end, would occasionally express his doubt concerning his future with the company. Whilst he had a caring family of sons and daughters settled at Khanewal and at Lahore he appeared to have a marked preference for an independent life at Renala. He remained with Mitchell's until a few weeks before his death in hospital at Lahore.

After about a year or two the management and office staff sensed that the chief executive was serious in his commitment to the company and would be in it for the long term. Their fears were allayed further as the business made steady progress despite a restrictive regime of controls and import licensing. It also became clear gradually that the new management would adhere to ethical business standards and would be diligent in fulfilling its obligations under the law.

The initial feeling of uncertainty was not helped by the rumour that had gained some ground amongst the trade about decline in product quality following the departure of the foreign owners. Some of this was part of a whispering campaign conducted by growing competition. In order to dispel this impression concerted effort was made not only to maintain but to raise quality wherever possible. Although marketing through media such as radio and television was not yet in vogue a consistent sales policy, prompt servicing of the trade and an expanded distribution network were a few of the measures which helped strengthen confidence amongst the customers.

In making the transition to local management as smooth and trouble free as possible Dick and Betty Mitchell gave invaluable help. After 1958 they continued to visit annually for two years and were a constant source of encouragement and advice.

Mohammad Iqbal Biring, Khushi Mohammad, MWM Thaddeus, Mohammad Jamil, Akhter Aleem Ansari, Matloob H. Zaidi and Mohammad Shafi all of whom started at the clerical/assistant level rendered outstanding service to the company in subsequent management positions assigned to them. Aslam Anjum and Mukhtar A. Salik served as Assistant Manager in the accounts section and left after few years to take up employment abroad.



Iqbal Biring was employed by Richard Mitchell in 1947 as a clerk in the sales section. Through hard work and loyal service to the company he rose to become Sales Manager and functioned as General Manager in the last few years of his life. He died suddenly of cardiac arrest while on tour at Islamabad.

Khushi Mohammad, a conscientious and diligent worker, was employed at Renala Estate Limited before joining Mitchell's. He was appointed Supply Supdt. and later Supply Manager, in which position he handled the buying section until his retirement.

Ishtiaq Hussain joined the company as Sales Assistant. He was promoted first to the post of Regional Sales Manager becoming Marketing Manager a few years later. He had grown in the job and remained a dependable and industrious executive. He left to join a firm of merchants in Saudi Arabia.

Malcolm Thaddeus was employed by Critchel at Karachi sales depot fresh out of school having passed the Cambridge School Certificate examination with distinction. He was transferred to Renala a few years later where his duties were varied; dealing mainly in accounts, taxation, product costing and secretarial work. He assisted Muhammad Masud in the beginning, later worked with the company tax advisor and was finally appointed Secretary of the company. On the recommendation of Basil Collins he received four months training at Cadbury Schweppes, U.K.; subsequently he took up a regular job with them. He also attended to management and accounts duties at Boder Farm.

Akhtar Aleem Ansari, who came with a short experience in the textile industry, rose to the position of company secretary and accounts manager. He acquired valuable experience in taxation and in legal and secretarial work. He left after reaching the age of retirement having rendered long, devoted service.

Saleh Mehmood Tareen joined the company in 1970 as General Manager. He left to join PIA nearly three years later. Salman T. Qureshi, a former Unilever executive, worked as Marketing Manager from 1964 to 1965.

S. M. Akram, Dr. Abdul Haq, Ihsan-ul-Haq Chaudhri, Mukhtar A. Khan, Najamuzaman Qureshi, Shafaat Ahmad and Tufail Maher were prominent amongst the food technologists who rendered valuable service as production executives and later joined other organizations or entered private business.

The death of Mir Azhar Jan, a bright young engineer, who expired suddenly in April, 1994, while at work at his desk, caused great distress to every one, especially to employees at the factory.

As a pioneer in fruit and vegetable processing with a record of consistent growth the company had to pay a price for its success. It acted virtually as a nursery which produced qualified managers who facilitated the development of the industry in other parts of the country. While the company had to hire new talent more frequently than it would have liked there was some satisfaction to be derived from the knowledge that work experience with Mitchell's carried commendable value; several amongst Mitchell's former production executives made a positive contribution in the evolution of a new industry.

The sixties saw remarkable expansion in the national economy. Demand for consumer goods had been rising throughout the decade. New investment led to the emergence of strong competition in the processed food sector. At the same time vigorous marketing of goods started with the advent of television.

In order to sustain Mitchell's position as a leading brand and to meet the growing challenge of competition it was decided that an office under the guidance of a professional marketing



executive should be opened in Karachi. This had a two-fold advantage. As Karachi was the single largest urban market in the country and was also the headquarter of prominent advertising agencies the marketing office would remain abreast of changing trends and would be able to ensure close collaboration with the advertising agency.

A rented office in the National Bank of Pakistan building was opened in 1967. Sakhi Sarwar Sultan, an experienced professional, took over as Marketing Manager. In due course the office was moved to Rex Chambers, Abdullah Haroon Road. The regional sales office, which had been opened earlier under the management of Waheed Najam, shared its premises with marketing. Hasan Jawad was appointed Marketing Manager in 1979 shortly before the launch of sugar confectionery.

As demand for sugar confectionery grew consistently from year to year the need arose for strengthening the marketing team. It was also necessary, before the addition of chocolate confectionery in 1983, to hire the services of new marketing executives. Pervez Adil, Gulrez Mojez and Feroz Hasan Khan were employed to assist the Marketing Manager. Pervez Adil and Feroz Hasan Khan served in the position of Marketing Manager in subsequent years.

The existing arrangements had to be changed once again following the transfer of the company's head office from Renala to Lahore. It was felt that with the re-location of the director and senior managers the marketing section should also move to the new head office. The marketing manager took up his duties at Lahore in mid 1991.

The head office was transferred from Renala and began to operate smoothly in a short time under the management of Nadeem Rashid, Khalid Toor, Akhtar Aleem Ansari and Matloob Hasan Zaidi; computerized accounting

accomplished in the following two years. Naeem Khan was Finance Manager for a brief spell followed by Fakhar Nasim Afzal who also handled the process of converting Mitchell's from a private to a public limited company.

Our son, Mehdi Mohsin, after completing his education in America joined the company as a Management Trainee at the end of 1985. With a view to gaining further experience he joined a renowned paper and board manufacturing company in March 1988 and remained with them for over a year. On rejoining he was appointed executive director in October 1989; Chief Executive Officer thirteen and a half years later in April 2003.

During these years he has made a significant contribution to the development of our business. Above all he has been able to assemble an enthusiastic management team consisting largely of young people to whom he has provided encouragement and opportunity for personal growth and self expression. As a result Mitchell's were able to modernize and expand production capacity. In a matter of four to five years exports have registered a strong upward trend while the range and quality of Mitchell's goods remains a solid base for the business.



## 4

## BUSINESS WITH FOREIGN COMPANIES

At the end of World War II it became clear that India and Pakistan would soon gain freedom and the withdrawal of British authority was imminent. This strong perception was reinforced by the election of the labour government which declared the negotiation of the independence of India as one of its primary policy objectives.

The directors took two important decisions in the perspective of the rapidly approaching transformation of the political scene. They decided first to acquire the proprietary rights of the agricultural land measuring 720 acres which had heretofore been held as leasehold property. As the original lease agreement contained a clause which permitted such an acquisition the company proceeded to exercise this option by paying the requisite amount. In February 1947 the name of Indian Mildura Fruit Farms Ltd. was entered in the record of rights as the owner of the property.

It appears that as foreigners of U.K. origin with highly visible assets they had their apprehensions about an uncertain future. Recalling his feelings on his return to Pakistan in October 1947,

after having settled his family in England, Richard Mitchell commented in a light vein that he was not sure "he would have to climb a tree" on his return to Renala. The directors had understandable concern about possible radical changes that the new government might introduce. They decided, as a further insurance, to induct a foreign investor, L. Rose & Co. Ltd. of St. Albans, U.K., a renowned company of lime juice manufacturers, by offering them a large 25% share in the equity of both Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd., as well as Kissan Products (Pvt.) Ltd., Bangalore, India. An attractive price was quoted for the shares in return for extending full proprietary rights for the manufacture and sale of Rose's Lime Juice Cordial and other Rose's products throughout South Asia i.e. India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Burma and Sri Lanka. While MFF Ltd. inherited the markets in Pakistan and Afghanistan the other three territories fell to the share of Kissan Products (Pvt.) Ltd. Roses were also regular customers for Mitchell's distilled lime oil for a few years.

Leonard and Richard Mitchell had, during the war, set up a company for fruit-processing, identical with the facility at Renala in Bangalore, South India. The location was selected basically to take advantage of the variety of soft fruits grown in the Nilgiris. The factory was also designed to better serve the growing South Indian market which now also included a large number of U.S. and British servicemen stationed there.

In a time of scarcity in the war years Kissan Products were able to make an early start in production through the sale and transfer of manufacturing equipment from Renala. The amount due continued to appear as payable in the annual report of Kissan Products until well into the sixties. It had, eventually, to be written off in Mitchell's accounts as non-recoverable. The directors of Kissan Products at one point suggested that since they were advertising Mitchell's Kissan Products on the media in



India, especially in the Northern state of Punjab, Mitchell's, as an indirect beneficiary, should share part of the cost. In a subsequent note they also asked that as they had developed a substantial export market for "Kissan" products they wished to be the exclusive owners of the brand name "Kissan". Until that time both companies had been using "Mitchell's Kissan" as their common brand names. It was then agreed that, as soon as our existing stock of labels was exhausted, the Pakistani company would have exclusive right to the "Mitchell's" name and the Indian company to the name "Kissan".

Until 1946 Rose's Lime Juice was being imported for sale in India by M/s. Herbertsons, wine merchants based in Bombay with branches in a few other major cities of India. It seems that Mitchell's were able to obtain the distribution rights of Herbertsons wines in Punjab through the good offices of John Boyter-Smee of Roses. This arrangement lasted for a brief period and came to an end when it became evident that the business did not have a future. Until 1947 M/s. Cutler Palmer & Co., prominent Wine Merchants, were Mitchell's agents for India. Their main office was located on the Mall, Lahore where WAPDA building stands today.

Richard Mitchell, in the years following immediately upon the creation of Pakistan, felt the need to supplement the company's income through distribution of other imported products of repute. Consequently an agreement was made with Boots Pure Drug Co. (Pakistan) Ltd. for distribution of their products in Punjab and NWFP. One of the two underground cellars, directly below the present office, was used for storage of their drugs and medicines. Chaudhry Ali Mohammad, the grandfather of Mohammad Nadeem, the present Assistant Manager (Planning & Stores) and the father of Mohammad Jamil, ex-Planning & Stores manager, held charge as the Boots

store keeper for several years. Later the distribution of Mitchell's products was assigned to Boots since they possessed a fully equipped office and stores at Karachi and Lahore. This reciprocal arrangement came to an end after a few years.

Basil Collins was elected director in place of John Boyter Smee, who died suddenly in 1958. A few years after his appointment to the Mitchell's board, a communication was received from him, as secretary of L. Rose & Co. Ltd., that Lauchlan Rose, Chairman, had decided to merge his company with a famous soft-drinks manufacturer, Schweppes Ltd. U.K. Lauchlan Rose served on the board of Schweppes for a brief spell after which Basil Collins took his place as director. In 1969 it was learnt that Cadburys, the world-famous chocolate manufacturers, had acquired Schweppes Ltd. and that Basil Collins had been appointed secretary of the company which was to be known as Cadbury Schweppes Ltd., after the merger. It was not long after this development that Basil Collins rose to the position of CEO of the entire international group of Cadbury Schweppes Ltd., which is recognized today as one of the leading food processing companies of the world.

For most of these years Basil Collins continued to be a member of the board of directors of Mitchell's. Sometime before his retirement, however, he was replaced by A. Harvie Clark.

During one of the visits of the Pakistani directors to U.K. in 1977 I made a courtesy call on Sir Adrian Cadbury, Chairman of Cadbury-Schweppes at Bourneville. It was suggested that Mitchell's should explore entry into the market for sugar confectionery in Pakistan. Sir Adrian immediately walked over with me to the main office adjoining his room to introduce an executive in the Cadbury's planning section by the name of Barman. He directed Barman to join me in preparing a technical study of a sugar confectionery project for Pakistan.



After a broad outline of a suitable plant and a list of products to be manufactured was prepared, it was agreed that Keith Simpson, another Cadbury executive, would take over the development of the project.

Simpson and I together visited well-known confectionery equipment manufacturing companies in Italy and Germany. It was decided, finally, to buy Hamac-Hansella machines for the full, sugar confectionery production line except for wrapping machines which were to be bought from G.D. Bologna, Italy. The suppliers agreed to send their technicians to install and commission their equipment. Cadburys agreed to provide the services of two technicians from England to help train our operatives. It was agreed that while Mitchell's would produce Cadbury's chocolate éclairs under agreement, the remaining products – Fruit Bon Bons, Milk Toffees, Butter Mints and Fresh Fruits would be sold under the Mitchell's brand name. The original recipes and the process detail were provided by Cadburys. One of the more popular items – Butter Scotch – was formulated and produced exclusively by Mitchell's with no assistance from Cadbury. The sugar confectionery line was commissioned in 1980 and has since proved a profitable investment.

The encouraging performance of sugar confectionery led to the decision to expand into the production of chocolate. A study was prepared ~ and it was agreed, as a result, that although climatically Pakistan did not present a big opportunity for chocolate, prospects for growth were good and a reasonable profit could be gained through sale in the winter months. I again visited German, British and Italian machinery manufacturers and it was agreed in consultation with Cadburys that equipment of Sollich (Germany) and McIntyre (U.K.) would be considered. While the latter machine for refining/conching of chocolate was not ideal it was considered at the time the best affordable option.

Cadbury assigned two technicians from Bombay for commissioning the plant and to train the workers, at Renala. "Jubilee", which was to become a favourite with children, and which consisted of a layer of caramel and nougatine enrobed in chocolate, was launched in 1983. It was named "Jubilee" to commemorate 1983, the Co.'s golden jubilee year.

The sugar and chocolate confectionery business expanded steadily and began to yield a healthy profit.

Within the first 6 years after launch revenue derived from the sale of confectionery exceeded the total annual revenue of the company's traditional products. The diversified product list had a significant impact both on operations in the factory as well as on the sales and distribution network spread out all over the country. With regular growth in the demand for preserves and sauces, squashes had ceased to be the mainstay of the company's business. However in spite of the changing pattern of production the factory had remained a largely seasonal operation dependent upon the availability of seasonal fruits and vegetables. Production and sales peaked during the summer while the winter was a relatively quiet part of the year. The distributors of the company's products, through want of sufficient demand showed a diminishing interest in handling Mitchell's goods in the winter. Indeed distributors had to be changed frequently in some of the smaller cities and towns.

With the introduction of confectionery the pattern of production was transformed; the winter season was marked by equal, if not greater activity, than the summer. The manufacture and availability of a large range of chocolate and sugar confectionery resulted in optimum utilization of the company's assets both at the factory and at the regional sales offices. Distributors, who had hitherto been reluctant to handle the company's product in the winter, soon found themselves in competition with others wanting to acquire distribution rights.



Until 1986 Cadburys remained the sole suppliers of Cocoa powder and Cocoa butter; two principal ingredients of chocolate. It was noted, however, that prices charged by Cadburys had risen to a point where the contribution earned on chocolate confectionery had shrunk to an unacceptably low level. Other suppliers of comparable quality product quoted much lower rates.

Eventually as Cadburys interest in acquiring control of the company could not be reconciled with the desire of the Pakistani shareholders to retain majority shares Cadburys decided to sell Roses shares. M/s. A.F. Ferguson & Co., auditors, were asked to prepare a valuation and the sale transaction between the Pakistani directors and Roses was completed soon after their report was received, in 1987.

While Cadburys agreement with Mitchell's for the manufacture and sale of chocolate eclairs under their brand name ended on the expiry of the ten year agreement they had some doubt about the validity of Mitchell's right to the ownership of Rose's patents. They had evidently misplaced their copy of the original agreement transferring the use and ownership of the brand name to Mitchell's. On their request a copy of the original document, in the possession of the company, was sent to them and the doubt was removed.

In October 2004 a modern automatic chocolate making plant together with two higher capacity lines one for moulding and the other for production of count lines was inaugurated by the governor of Punjab, Lt. General (R) Khalid Maqbool. A sophisticated kitchen supplied by a Dutch company had been installed a few years earlier for the manufacture of nougats. Together this new equipment enabled us to ensure output of consistent quality and in much larger volume than had been possible heretofore.

## 5

## LAND REFORMS

Land reform had become a politically emotive issue shortly after independence. The Punjab provincial government under Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Chief Minister, often articulated the imminent implementation of land reforms. However, the first concrete measure was taken under the administration of President Muhammad Ayub Khan, who, as Chief Martial Law Administrator, promulgated the Land Reform Regulation in 1959. All big land owners had to supply information under specially designed forms giving the required detail of their holding. The area which an individual could own was determined by a Produce Index Unit (PIU) a scale which was applied to measure the varying qualities and productivity levels of agricultural land throughout the country. Thus irrigated areas in fertile districts such as Faisalabad, Sargodha or Sahiwal were assigned a high PIU value per acre whereas barren land with no artificial irrigation facilities was at the lowest end of the PIU scale.

Mitchell's Fruit Farms Limited duly filed their returns with the Deputy Land Commissioner at Sahiwal providing the required information. A representative of the management was summoned to the district headquarter and at the conclusion of the hearing where the detail of the company's holding was checked



and verified, the deputy land Commissioner made his notes for the order to be passed at a later date.

In due course we were advised that as the Land Reform Regulation allowed the shareholders of joint stock companies to be treated as owners in proportion to their holding in the share capital of the company and as Mitchell's had 17 shareholders the area owned individually did not exceed the limit prescribed for each person. The company therefore continued to enjoy unabridged ownership of its agricultural land.

Soon after the election of Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, Martial Law was again imposed in the country. Land Reform Regulation No. 115 of 1972 announced that in consonance with an underlying philosophy of distribution of land amongst the landless peasantry all agricultural land owned in excess of 14,000 PIUs would be acquired without compensation by the state and redistributed.

At first there was some ambiguity about land held in corporate ownership but it appears the commission appointed to make its recommendations advised that a joint stock company, unlike the reforms under the previous Martial Law regime, would be treated as a person or an individual holding title of the land. Thus out of a total area which was calculated to be the equivalent of 45,713 PIUs Mitchell's Fruit Farms Limited would be reduced to 14,000 units; the area under the factory, residential colony, dairy and staff club being excluded from the definition of farm land. The end result was that two thirds of the land – 430 acres – passed into the ownership of Punjab Land Commission without compensation.

The directors held the mistaken view that the new land reforms regulations would follow the earlier principle adopted in 1959 concerning title belonging to individual shareholders. It was also believed that as a foreign company had a 25% share

there would be some consideration shown in the expropriation of the property.

An appeal, drafted by the former Chief Justice of the Federal Court, Mr. Justice A.R. Cornelius, was submitted to the President of Pakistan. Various weighty arguments were put forward for orchards to be treated differently from general open crop farming including the fact that in Mitchell's case the fruit farm formed an integral part of an agro-industrial operation. We were informed that the President had been pleased to accept the appeal only to the extent that the foreign shareholder, L. Rose & Co. Limited, would be given financial compensation on the basis of the valuation to be determined by the government. No such consideration was extended to Pakistani shareholders.

The company filed an appeal against the order of the Deputy Land Commissioner, Sahiwal before the Land Commissioner, Multan. After its rejection an appeal was made to the additional Chief Land Commissioner, Lahore. The order passed by the Deputy Land Commissioner was generally upheld by the additional Chief Land Commissioner but he did concede that insufficient allowance had been given for the non-agricultural area owned by the company; namely the factory and its related facilities.

The company had the right to choose the property it wished to retain. Thus 80 acres (*Burjis* 164, 165, 166 & 167) were retained at the Renala end and 190 acres (*Burji* 188 to 197) were kept at the Kissan end of the farm. The factory, bungalow and all ancillary structures and facilities remained in the ownership of the company.

During this whole saga which lingered on for nearly three years some interesting lessons were learnt.

A gentleman, who had served as a member of the land reforms advisory commission appointed by Mr. Bhutto sent



messages to me soon after the announcement of Martial Law Regulation 115, that I should meet him. In a brief interview I was advised courteously to follow his advice for obtaining relief for Mitchell's from the application of land reforms. As he was scheduled to travel shortly to Karachi by the Khyber Mail I was asked to meet him at the Okara railway station. When it was suggested in the meeting at Okara that some idea of his professional charges would be appropriate he expressed his view that the fee could be paid to a charity he could designate.

While there was no further meeting with the gentleman it was later reliably learnt that while serving on the land reforms advisory commission he had been the principal proponent for bringing corporate owners, as individual proprietors of agricultural land, within the ambit of the martial law regulation.

In 1973, The Chief Land Commissioner was officially advised that the company wishes to hand over management of the expropriated land and a mutually convenient arrangement should be made for the Punjab Land Commission to take over possession. The Chief Land Commissioner began designing detailed proformas in his office for preparing an inventory of the assets, trees, crops and quarters. The local revenue officials took a few days filling in the proformas and eventually a representative of Punjab Agriculture Department was sent to take over possession and management of the land which at the same time passed into the ownership of Punjab Land Commission, in the record of rights.

In the meantime an offer was received from the Punjab Chief Land Commissioner for concessional lease of the expropriated land. The Chief Land Commissioner was thanked for his kind offer which was respectfully declined.

A message was sent a few weeks later by the Chief Land Commissioner which stated that I should come to Lahore to meet

Mr. Ghulam Mustapha Khar, Governor of Punjab. Before leaving for Lahore I had advised the senior managers of the company that the Land Commission had offered Mitchell's the lease of the expropriated land and the directors were of the considered view that the offer should be declined.

The reason was that as fruit farming had become a capital intensive venture and the cost of management was escalating the time and effort expended on managing lease hold property could be utilised much more profitably on the development of our fruit processing interests. In any case the required fruit and vegetables could now be bought from other growers or suppliers at reasonable prices.

The other important reason was that unionised farm labour, after the registration of the Mitchell's trade union in 1972, had started making demands for being paid on the same basis as our factory workers. In other words remuneration in the form of wages, allowances and facilities should follow the same pattern as applicable to industrial workers. The directors concluded that management of the leased farm could not be a beneficial arrangement; it would inevitably result in huge waste of time, energy and resources. Far better to buy fruit.

Both the Chief Land Commissioner and I reported for the meeting with the governor at his official residence.

The Chief Land Commissioner was closeted with the governor for some time. The governor then emerged from his office and strode across the hall to another room where he apparently spent some time in a conversation over the telephone. One could only surmise the content of the talk.

Neither the governor nor the Chief Land Commissioner could have guessed what a relief it had been for me not meeting the governor.



Legal advice was obtained subsequently to assess whether a successful appeal could be made to the High Court for restitution of the expropriated land. In this connection a meeting with the late Mr. Manzur Qadir, Barrister-at-law and former foreign minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet was an object lesson in professional competence and integrity.

A meeting was arranged at Mr. Manzur Qadir's chamber adjoining his residence on Lawrence Road. He had already studied the file and proceeded to discuss the matter threadbare with me, the company's legal advisor and the Company Secretary. He answered all the questions with precision and in detail.

In sum his advice was that the best we could hope for from an appeal before the High Court would be compensation for the fruit trees and timber. We concluded that legal and other cost in terms of time and effort would probably outweigh any advantage that may be gained. Mr. Manzur Qadir was inclined to the same view.

Several months later it was suggested that with the passage of the *shariat* bill there was some hope of obtaining redress from the High Court. As the appeal had not yet become time barred the suggested course was adopted, but after a slow and protracted process, it failed to find favour with the court.

## 6

### BUSINESS WITH OFFICIALS

From the start the supply of irrigation water to the farm was regulated by a contract between the Punjab irrigation department and the lessees/owners of the land. This was known as contract supply based on a volumetric measure of the agreed level of water provided to the farm. As a fruit orchard requires double the volume needed for general farming a measure of 6.2 cusecs (cubic feet per second) was fixed for delivery at the head taking off from the Lower Bari Doab Canal at *Burji* No. 163 near the Renala Hydro Electric power house. Four outlets were put in along the channel running parallel to the farm; while each outlet was allotted 1.5 cusecs for fruit farming the remaining 0.2 cusecs was for open crop farming at the tail end of the farm. A "Pansaal Navees" was employed by the department to perform the specific task of measuring the water supply at the head and at the tail by reading the fixed semi-submerged scales provided for this purpose. He was required to report daily after reading the flow levels.

Every three years the executive engineer, Balloki, summoned the directors or authorised representatives of the company to sign the fresh 3-yearly agreement, which would of course contain revised charges if applicable and other changes which had to be made. This contract system was in vogue with only a small



number of farmers in the entire province. The general method of appraisal of "abiana" (water rate) for all other farmers consisted of a field check of the crop and its acreage by the canal *patwari* and the preparation of the bill based on his assessment of the particular crop and the area on which it is grown.

The contract system described above was both efficient and easily regulated and it remained in operation until about 1964, when the last 3-yearly agreement was signed. Since then contracts which were signed and observed on a tri-annual basis by the two Co-signatories over the last forty years were discontinued without notice to the company.

The condition of the plantation minor began to deteriorate in the eighties. At one stage the entire channel from burji no.165 up to outlet no. 4 in *burji* no. 185 was in disuse as it had been choked with weed, undergrowth and had been levelled to the ground with deposit of silt.

This serious situation persisted till the appointment of military personnel to oversee the performance of various government departments in October 1999.

The cleaning and maintenance of our section of the plantation minor and its banks was a routine which was performed under the supervision of a farm supervisor by a group of beldars. While they were attending to the job one morning an inspector of police who had only recently been appointed at Renala arrived with a small body of policemen, arrested the entire crew of workers with their supervisor and locked them up in the police station. An FIR had been prepared a day earlier before his arrival on the scene alleging that the farm workers were breaking the law by illegally removing silt from the bank of the LBDC. The FIR was lodged by a complainant belonging to 20/2.L., a neighbouring village; he was incidentally an employee, until a short time ago, with my uncle, Ayad

Mohammad Abbas of Shergarh. He was reported to be on visiting terms with the police station on a regular basis. Much time and effort had to be expended, including a call on the Inspector General of Police at Lahore, to get the men released. The inspector was transferred from Renala a few days after the release of the employees.

Central Excise duty was levied on Fruit Squashes, Syrups and Juices in 1963. The system of collection was to be in accordance with the rules prescribed for "supervised" collection of duty. This meant that a uniformed central excise inspector would be resident on the premises of the company and he would have two subordinate *sepoys* to assist him in the performance of his duties.

Directly after the announcement of the Federal Budget a group of officials from the department, including the district excise superintendent, arrived at the factory. They asked that a complete set of documents, which required filling of elaborate information, should be provided and stock entries made immediately. At the same time Mr. Zaidi was introduced to the management as the excise inspector for whom living accommodation had to be provided on the farm.

It was learnt, that Mr. Zaidi had three wives which necessitated the provision of accommodation for an unusually large family. However for want of adequate housing only two of his spouses could move in with him in the staff quarters.

The factory, especially the sales and clearing personnel, were soon put through their paces. For Excisable goods, i.e. squashes, syrups & juices, separate enclosed space was to be reserved in the finished goods store. Any sub-standard product or stock rejected due to quality problems could not be moved elsewhere without the approval of the excise superintendent, an exercise which required physical examination and meant interminable



delay. Signature on the clearing documents was withheld from time to time on various technical grounds. Frequently the Inspector was unavailable as he was unwell, away on leave or had been summoned to head quarters.

The "supervised clearance" was, in short, a thoroughly frustrating experience. Relations with the inspector were not improved by frequent administrative interference in the storage and despatch of goods.

A few weeks before the announcement of the Federal Budget for the following year I met the Federal Finance Secretary, Mian Mozaffar Ahmad, at Islamabad and delivered to him a representation seeking the withdrawal of excise duty. A case was made relying on the fact that fruit juice processing was a nascent industry based largely on indigenous agricultural produce; it had promising potential provided proper conditions were created for unhindered growth.

The Federal Secretary gave a patient hearing and in the next Federal Budget excise duty was withdrawn. The relief at Mitchell's was palpable.

A tragic incident occurred in 1986 when the General Manager, Mian Sarfraz Ahmed, while driving from Lahore to Renala in a company owned car, was stopped by a gang of three dacoits near Wan-Radha Ram (Habibabad). One of the dacoits pointing a pistol to his head asked him to hand over the keys of the car. Eye witnesses saw him plead with the dacoits to take the keys and to let him go. They, however, forced him into the rear seat and reversing the car drove off towards Pattoki.

A police patrol travelling in a jeep fitted with radio communication also happened to have seen the car snatching incident. They passed a message to the Police Station at Pattoki notifying the description of the car. In response the Station House Officer, Pattoki accompanied by an armed posse of

policemen arrived hastily at the junction of the highway and the road leading into Pattoki. This was a time when the Tableeghi Jamaat members were returning from their annual gathering at Raiwind causing the usual heavy traffic congestion on the road. The SHO seeing the approaching car attempted to stop the dacoits; he had also put up a flimsy and hastily assembled barrier of tables and charpoys to prevent the car being driven at high speed from fleeing.

The dacoits did not stop the car and instead drove desperately past the barrier. The SHO and his party of policemen opened fire at the rear of the car after it sped past the improvised barrier. The bullets piercing through the boot hit Sarfraz Ahmed and one of the other two dacoits sitting in the back seat. A young Tableeghi Jamaat member travelling in a passing bus was killed in the police firing. The dacoits drove off taking a side road in the direction of Sarai Mughal having dumped the heavily bleeding Sarfraz Ahmed in a sugar cane field where he expired due to excessive loss of blood.

The tragic news was conveyed to me at Lahore. Sarfraz Ahmed's young widow and his four school going children were inconsolable. The Inspector General Police, Mr. Jami, called me on the phone and a meeting was arranged at his house. While he expressed his concern he withheld the news of Sarfraz's death merely saying that the police were in pursuit of the dacoits and the stolen car was yet to be found. He advised on the following day, in a second meeting, that at last Sarfraz Ahmed's body had been found abandoned in a sugar cane field.

Mr. Jami joined in the "soyem" of late Sarfraz Ahmed. One wonders whether his SHO and the policemen were ever arraigned for manslaughter. One of the three surviving dacoits, Bala Gadi, admitted to Sarfraz Ahmad's brother-in-law in jail, that they only wished to take the car. The whole tragic incident



could have been averted had the police shown greater professionalism and self-discipline; it will remain a strong indictment of the Punjab Police Force.

Sheedee, the leader of the gang, met his end in a police encounter at Shahdara where, it is reported, he had to be smoked out of his hiding place before he was killed. Bala Gadi reportedly died in jail through want of a regular supply of heroin.

Before joining Mitchell's Sarfraz Ahmad was employed by PIDC as General Manager of their penicillin plant at Daud Khel, District Mianwali. In the short duration of his service with Mitchell's he handled the installation and commissioning of the company's first chocolate production line. He was a knowledgeable and cultured person whose untimely death was deeply mourned by the entire staff at Renala.

## 7

## VISITORS & EVENTS

Only a small number of visitors, who had particular relevance for Mitchell's, is recorded in this short list.

Khawaja Nazimuddin, Governor General and second head of state of Pakistan, honoured Mitchell's with a visit in 1951. He was shown round the factory by Richard Mitchell.

A particular incident that found resonance in a meeting of the marketing team, nearly fifty years later, related to the emerging threat of competition from India. Some members of the team wished to know about prospects for retaining market share in the face of large imports and aggressive marketing of competitive products from the neighbouring country. While expressing my faith in Mitchell's ability to compete successfully both on quality and price I reiterated my confidence by narrating a chance meeting with a businessman travelling with me in the same railway compartment from Lahore to Renala Khurd in 1946. He was a distributor of Mitchell's Kissan products in Kanpur, Central India, and had lost distributorship for the city. He asked me, then a student in my last year at school, whether I knew "Barra Mitchell" – the name by which the elder brother, Len Mitchell, was known all around. To my response that I was



not acquainted with "Barra Mitchell" he mentioned with much regret the loss of his distributorship and his keen desire somehow to be re-instated.

In subsequent years the brothers L. Mitchell and R. Mitchell whose pictures hung on either side in the meeting room under a large photograph of their father, Francis Mitchell were to become known as Left Mitchell and Right Mitchell.

In September 1957 the new extended playing field of Kissan Staff Club was inaugurated by Syed Fida Hassan, Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab. An exhibition cricket match was arranged; famous Pakistan test cricketers participated. Richard Mitchell stood as umpire briefly. The game was followed by a lunch at Bungalow no. 1.

The Company's silver jubilee was celebrated in March 1958. Mr. Akhtar Hussain, Governor of Punjab, was the chief guest at a brief ceremony held in the garden of Bungalow No.1. Syed Maratib Ali was one of the distinguished guests at the reception. I welcomed the guests giving a brief account of the company's progress from 1933 to 1958.

FCM Alexander, captain of the touring West Indies Cricket Team, who was my contemporary at Cambridge (1950-1953) accompanied by two members of the squad, Rodrigues and Hendricks, were guests at Renala in 1959. They were introduced to Richard and Betty Mitchell and some members of the management and staff.

Christopher Mitchell, the middle son of Richard Mitchell, came to Renala in June 1984. He was shown round the farm and factory and took particular interest in the Kissan Bungalow where he had spent a considerable part of his childhood years. He recalled some happy memories; one was of Father Christmas descending into the bed room through the chimney of the fire place. Regrettably the June weather did not agree with him.

Air Commodore(R) Frank Mitchell RAF, visited with his wife Mary Mitchell in February 1998. A memorial service was held for his parents at the chapel of the Renala convent. He gave an address as did Mehdi Mohsin. At another gathering at Kissan Staff Club, where former employees of the company who remembered Leonard and Richard Mitchell had assembled, a large oil painting of his father clearing a jump on horse back was presented to him by Richard Mitchell's old *syce*, Hidayatullah. Frank Mitchell seemed a little disappointed to see that Kissan Bungalow was no more. It had to be demolished with much regret as there was no suitable tenant available after the closure of Pakistan Tobacco Co.'s business in Okara. They had held an uninterrupted lease from 1950 onwards.

As a young teenager Frank used strong persuasion on his parents to let him ride with the engine driver on the railway train from Kissan to Lahore. He was taken aboard by the engine driver and put to work shovelling coal into the boiler. The state of his appearance, as he alighted from the train at Lahore is not difficult to imagine. He was met at the station, taken directly for a scrub down and a bath before return to his parents.

A member of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's cabinet in India H.L. Bhagat and his wife stopped on their way to Sahiwal for a largely attended tea party at bungalow no 1. While he belonged to Sahiwal (Montgomery as it was then known) his wife's family were from Bama Bala, an old village ten miles from Renala. He paid a special visit to his family's residence at Sahiwal.

Jean and Phillipa Mitchell, the daughters of Leonard Mitchell came to Renala in November 1998. They had a few vague memories of bungalow no.1; evidently one of its bed rooms was haunted. Their cousins, who stayed at Kissan bungalow, visited them occasionally. Both the sisters were shown round the factory which they could not remember having



seen. The foundation stone of the new workers' changing and rest rooms was laid by them at a simple ceremony.

During their short visit I recalled my grandfather, Syed Mohammad Husain, having attended the funeral service for Leonard Mitchell at the Lahore Cathedral in 1949 and asked whether Jean and Phillipa would wish to see the grave of their father. An intensive search was made in the yard and the records of the church but to no avail. It was remembered later that Hidayatullah, Richards Mitchell's *syce*, had heard from his employer how on his visit to the site of the air crash in which his brother had died he recognized his remains by identifying the wrist watch on his hand. Richard Mitchell had asked for burial at the site of the crash.

Jean and Phillipa Mitchell wanted a long standing problem of their mother's accumulated dividends from her shares in Murree Brewery Co. Ltd. lying in a blocked bank account to be settled. They were seeking permission of the State Bank of Pakistan for remittance of the funds to U.K. Fortunately permission was obtained and instructions for remittance were given to their bankers during their visit.

Mitchell's Golden jubilee was celebrated with fanfare in 1983. A special two page supplement was published in the Daily Pakistan Times. Richard Mitchell contributed a special message which was printed with his photograph. The supplement included articles by me and Hasan Jawad the Marketing Manager. A largely attended dinner was arranged on the playing field of Kissan Staff Club which had been lit up for the occasion. Syed Babar Ali was the chief guest. He gave away the souvenirs and long service awards to company employees. Dinner was followed by musical entertainment.

A new chocolate confectionery product, "Jubilee" was launched in the same year. Distributors from the larger cities and

towns were invited for the occasion. They were all presented with gifts to mark the 50th anniversary of the company.

The fruit, vegetable and honey show was an important event organised annually at Lahore in the winter. Weather permitting it was held in the Bagh-e-Jinnah or in Burney Garden near the Al-Hamra complex. It attracted wide interest amongst horticulturists and fruit processors from all over the country. In addition to fruits, mainly citrus and apples, a large variety of vegetables and honey were exhibited. The products of processors from all four provinces enhanced the colourful display.

While senior government officials, growers, processors and the citizens of Lahore showed keen interest the exhibition received proper attention from the press. Generally the provincial governor or a senior minister would visit on the last day and distribute prizes amongst the winners.

Mitchell's enjoyed the distinction of having won the impressive shield, specially donated by the Governor, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed Gurmani, who presented it to Richard Mitchell for producing the finest quality fruit products in the country. Many other prizes and medals were won over the years both in the growing and processing categories.

Regrettably this remarkable annual exhibition which had become such a regular part of the calendar ceased some years ago.

During the monsoon season of 1988 we were overtaken by an event which had been dreaded and its possible occurrence was the cause of occasional anxiety over the years. An abnormally heavy and sudden downpour resulted in a breach in the Lower Bari Doab Canal about five miles upstream of Renala town on our side of the canal. Since the main Lahore/Karachi railway line and the highway as well as much of the population lay on our



side the local administration decided on a cut to be made in the opposite bank so as to relieve the threat of rising flood water.

Despite this diversion the town and half of Mitchell's farm along a length of about six miles was soon knee deep in water.

Very fortunately the water course which ran right through the centre bisecting the farm along its length and which was built on a plinth of about three feet prevented the flood water from entering the other half of the property where the factory, bungalows and ancillary structures were located. The water had risen to a level where the trunks of fruit trees were almost invisible and the whole scene appeared like a sheet of water covering half the land along the railway line.

Another serious threat surfaced when the back flow from the choked sanitation pipes imperilled the factory. Again emergency measures taken to block the inflow of water with sand bags helped to prevent flooding.

After about a week the water level fell sufficiently to enable us resume normal life. It was an immense relief to find that apart from the factory and bungalows the trees had also escaped serious damage.

## 8

### BODER FARM

Demand for fresh kaghzi limes was increasing steadily within the country while interesting inquiries for products derived from this fruit had been received from foreign customers. At the same time the unpredictable nature of the tomato crop in Punjab necessitated developing a more reliable source of supply to meet the needs of an expanding market for tomato sauce and puree.

In this situation lower Sindh province appeared to hold the best promise. The soil and the more equable climate in the region suited the cultivation of *kaghzi* limes while a good crop of tomatoes could be grown over an extended winter season. This also made an ideal match with the Central Punjab crop harvested during the summer.

A search for a suitable block of land in the Tharparkar district of Sindh was started in 1966. An old college friend – Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad Khan – was at that time posted as Collector, Tharparkar district, with his head quarters at Mirpurkhas. He happened to have been asked a little while earlier by a foreign resident of Mirpurkhas, Lady Ethelwynne Thomas, widow of Sir Roger Thomas, ex-agriculture minister, Sindh, for help in



finding a customer for her farm in Umerkot Taluqa of the district.

Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad Khan suggested to me during a visit at his house, that I should see Lady Thomas. A meeting was arranged and after further negotiation with Lady Thomas and her legal advisor the basic terms of sale were agreed.

The agricultural property of Lady Thomas measured 1120 acres, was divided into two blocks of land on either side of the Mirpurkhas – Umerkot road and was known as Boder Farm. The main bloc which was about 710 acres contained the village named Boder with a small house, a farm office and stores. The smaller bloc on the other side of the road at a distance of about one kilometer from the village was about 410 acres and was known as Sophiya, named after Lady Thomas's daughter.

Before completing the transaction legal opinion had been sought from Ms. Dingoomal Ramchandani, a prominent law firm in Karachi. They advised that three separate joint stock companies should be registered and the land should be bought in the name of the proposed three corporate entities. This opinion appeared to run contrary to the preferred and more convenient plan to register a single company. It proved extremely fortunate, in retrospect, that the advice of Dingoomal Ramchandani was followed and three companies; Haider Fruit Growers (Pvt.) Ltd., Sindh Fruit Growers (Pvt.) Ltd., and Punjab Fruit Growers (Pvt.) Ltd., were incorporated and the land was bought and registered in their names.

Mitchell's Fruit Farms Ltd. owned the majority shares in all three companies. My family members and several employees at Renala bought the remaining shares. A bank account together with a proper management and reporting system was set up by Malcolm Thaddeus. Two members from Mitchell's staff were transferred to handle routine work at Boder. Much to the

bemusement of neighbouring farmers a kaghzi limes nursery was started and within two years an area of about 60 acres had been planted with limes. Special tomato seed was imported and a large area was put under this crop.

The annual requirement of *kaghzi* limes at Renala began to be met entirely from fruit grown at Boder. There was also a surplus available both from the summer as well as the winter crops; the latter fetched particularly good prices in the fruit markets at Hyderabad and Karachi. Good quality tomatoes were received for processing at Renala over a three to four month period during the winter season. Other field crops; cotton, wheat and chillies, grown on the remaining land yielded a fair return to supplement the annual income.

Although the decision to buy a large bloc of agricultural land so far removed from Renala carried considerable risk the income and advantage resulting from an assured supply of some basic fruit for the factory amply justified the investment.

It was only after the promulgation of land reforms regulation 115 imposed under Martial Law in 1972, that difficulties began to arise. The advice of Dingoomal Ramchandani proved prescient. However despite the abundant precaution taken in buying land in the name of three separate companies about one hundred acres were lost as these were found in excess of the ceiling allowed for the three corporate owners. The relatively lower PIU value assigned to agricultural land in Sindh as compared to central Punjab helped in retaining a larger area but was not sufficient to cover the entire holding.

The altered circumstances at Boder were aggravated in the following years by a worsening law & order situation. A few years later it was decided, in the first instance, to sell the property at Sophiya. Relatively small blocs were sold in the beginning. In due course customers were found for larger tracts



While this development resolved the problem of agricultural land the question of an acceptable share capital structure of the proposed public company lingered on. However with Cadburys decision in 1986 to sell the shares held in the name of Rose's the path was cleared for the formation of the public company.

I met the Controller of Capital Issues at Islamabad and presented to him an outline of the proposal to go public. While the controller approved of the plan in principle the details were submitted later in an application seeking approval of the capital structure of the company and the issue price of the shares to be offered for subscription. In compliance with the directive of the controller 10% of the new capital was to be offered to NIT and 4.5% to company employees. The premium allowed was Rs. 10.00 for every ten rupee share.

On receipt of official approval M/s. A.F. Ferguson & Company were asked to prepare a prospectus which was required to be published at the time of the public issue. All the preliminary work regarding appointment of underwriters, bankers to the issue, selection of a shares registrar and the printing of new share certificates was accomplished within the prescribed time limit.

The prospectus was published and the subscription offer opened on 12th September 1993. It met with an overwhelming response; the amount subscribed was more than ten times the amount offered. A ballot was therefore held at the Pearl Continental Hotel, Lahore and the successful numbers duly announced.

It was learnt that not long after the commencement of trading many of the shares allotted to employees had come up for sale. NIT, on the other hand, increased their holding through purchase of additional shares.

The decision to go public and to seek listing on the stock exchange was prompted by some important considerations. There was of course the advantage of being in a position to mobilize capital through the stock exchange should this be required in the future. The additional incentive was the benefit of lower tax as compared to the rate payable by private companies. Experience over recent years has, however, shown that enhanced transparency and openness has reinforced a priceless asset of the company – trust of its bankers, shareholders, employees, suppliers and customers.



# THE STORY OF MITCHELL'S

The Lower Bari Doab irrigation scheme started in 1913 with the aim of bringing under cultivation large tracts of barren land in the present day districts of Kasur, Okara, Pakpattan, Sahiwal, Khanewal and Multan. The Punjab government, in order to provide incentive for promotion of horticulture and cattle and horse-breeding, set aside blocks of land to be leased to farmers on condition of producing fruit and livestock within an agreed number of years. Under this plan F.J. Mitchell acquired the lease of 720 acres near Renala Khurd, District Okara in 1920 for the purpose of fruit-growing. His two sons, Leonard Mitchell and Richard Mitchell, joined him to help give practical shape to this venture. "The Story of Mitchell's", as the title suggests, is an account of their struggle from 1920 to 1960 in setting up not only a productive fruit farm, which was eventually incorporated in the name of Indian Midlura Fruit Farms Ltd., but also going on to establish a fruit and vegetable processing industry which gained renown throughout the subcontinent under the brand-name "Mitchell's Kissan". In Part One, R. Mitchell, the younger of the two sons of F.J. Mitchell, has recorded an account of his and his family's pioneering efforts in rendering an arid tract of land into a productive orchard as well as a profitable fruit processing industry. The company was acquired by Pakistani investors and has continued under their management from 1960 to 2008. Part Two, contributed by S.M. Mohsin, Chairman of the company, consists of an account of the progress of the business from 1960 – 2008. This volume is being published to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the company which was registered in 1933.



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