



GROWING UP IN ITALY IN THE MID 1960'S, MY FATHER WOULD ALWAYS REMIND ME THAT NO MATTER HOW TOUGH THINGS WERE, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS TRY TO TREAT YOURSELF TO A SHOE POLISH AND A FACE SHAVE. THOSE WORDS ALWAYS STUCK WITH ME, WHICH BECAME ONE OF THE INFLUENCES IN HOW MY CAREER AS A BARBER STARTED. THAT WAS REALLY THE START OF ALPHA BARBERS.

Like any young man with an older sibling, I grew up admiring my older brother, Carmelo, who became a hairdresser. My dad set up a small hairdressing studio in the garage and he would cut all his friends hair. I would sit and watch. At the time it was just a thrill to be around the older boys. Who knew this was one day going to be my passion. While my brother was cutting hair I was playing soccer and reached the national league level representing the Australian under 17's. So after high school, I tried to continue my sporting career and was given great opportunities. I soon realised however, that this was not going to be my long-term career path. My brother, Carmelo, encouraged me to complete a hairdressing course. So I did. Once qualified, I was fortunate enough to work with some amazing people and at some of the most prestige salons, but I didn't really enjoy all aspects of the hair salon. Washing out colour, blow waving, waiting on appointments - it wasn't me. During this time my brother had moved to London. He was managing multiple salons, but by 2007 he left hairdressing and started working as a barber in Melbourne. After having enough of salons and hairdressing, I too decided to take on

a barbering position at 'Barber on Central', now known as 'Alpha barbers'. Working in the heart of the city I started to understand that my passion was in mens grooming and managing a business that suited what most males are about – no appointments and reasonable pricing. The number of people who would come in and request a face shave amazed me, which was not something we offered at the time. Although I worked as a barber I did not consider myself one until I mastered this technique. This is where the other strong influence in my career, my father, came into play. My father knew some older Italian barbers, so I decided to make myself known to them and asked them to show me this dying art. They were so overwhelmed that I wanted to learn this skill, as barbering was becoming a lost trade and maybe not really respected by the hairdressing industry. They were always ready to teach and never turned me away if they were busy. These skilled barbers would explain techniques to me as they treated their clients. This is something I have carried with me to this day, not only the skill set, but the friendly and inviting approach to anyone who walks through the door, customers or staff. In 2009 when my father decided to return

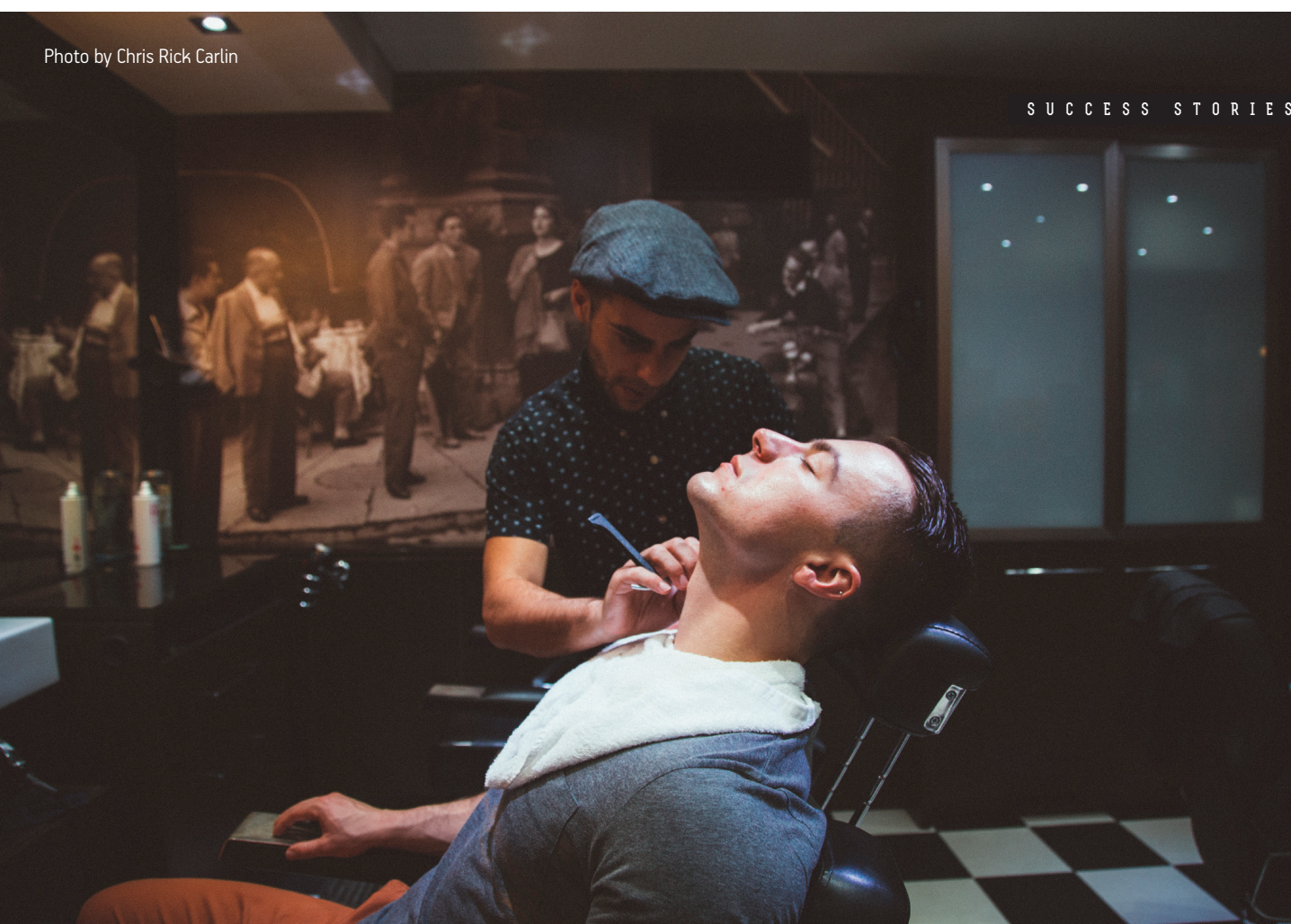


Photo by Chris Rick Carlin



AT ALPHA BARBERS, OUR PHILOSOPHY IS TO BE PROFESSIONAL, PERFORM CONSISTENTLY, AND TO PROVIDE OUR CUSTOMERS WITH AN ENJOYABLE RELAXING EXPERIENCE THAT THEY WILL REMEMBER. THE GROWTH WE HAVE ACHIEVED IS BEYOND OUR BELIEF.

to Sicily to see his family I returned with him. My ambition was to learn how to face shave, the traditional way. There was no better way to learn than to spend time working in Sicily in a town called Floridia, where there are more barber shops than 7/11 stores in Melbourne's CBD. This experience inspired me to become a master at barbering. I wanted to be the best and know the best, so I ventured overseas again to do a master barber course, where I completed my training under a celebrity barber, UK's first grooming guru, Daniel Rouah. I felt as though I needed to do this to be the best barber I could be from an education and learning perspective. Men have become more knowledgeable and more conscious about looking after themselves and I wanted to be able to provide my clients with the best treatment and advice even when they have left the store. Daniel Rouah taught me how to combine a face shave with a treatment. Understanding that it is not just about some facial

hair, cream and a blade, but knowledge of the skin, assorted products, ingredients to best suit certain people and comprehension of razors and brushes for the best process and finish. As we all know, everyone is unique and one size doesn't fit all. In 2010, my brother Carmelo and I bought 'Barber on Central'. In 2011, we opened our second store in Melbourne's Hardware Lane with a good friend, Adam Scott. We changed our name to 'Alpha Barbers'. I cannot continue without noting that Adam is very unique in our barber trade. He grew up in country Victoria, a town called Kerang, where he completed a barbering apprenticeship. To this day his flat top is the best I have ever seen. Adam often reminds us that when he moved to Melbourne 10 years ago he struggled to get work as a barber, and now we can't get enough of them. Carmelo, Adam and I all share the same passion and values, which is so important in business partnership.

At Alpha barbers, our philosophy is to be professional, perform consistently, and to provide our customers with an enjoyable relaxing experience that they will remember. The growth we have achieved is beyond our belief. We have a great team and we are like family. Our knowledge is second to none, and our staff is always striving to raise the bar. Although we have had opportunities to open up franchises, we are unwavering in staying true to what barbering traditionally is. To us it is all about individual service. Our barber shops are our homes and we are working in them all the time. There are three words we feel represent us and represent our business; warm, friendly and proud. We would like our customers, the old and the new, to associate those words with us too, as we bring back what was once old and recreate this custom across many generations. Story by Frank Bazzano.