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## Fine tribute to a virtuoso

JOHNNIE Walker's name once graced these pages. His many years as a wine merchant and restaurateur provided him with an innate ability to share his wisdom with an audience thirsting for more knowledge.

John Keith Walker died 21 years ago aged 82. During his latter years, I was this great man's wine-column "ghost" — a fortuitous association that enabled me to pick up scores of tips and helpful advice from an absolute master.

One of the many companies that benefited from Johnnie's Rhine Castle wine distributorship was the iconic Hunter Valley winery, Tulloch.

Fifty-seven years ago, when the late Hector Tulloch launched his Pokolbin Dry Red, a traditional Hunter Valley shiraz style, he banked on Johnnie's ability to sell table wine to an inquisitive public keen to move on from fortifieds.

Within a short time, Pokolbin Dry Red became a huge success.

Now, in a splendid gesture, Hector's son, Jay, has decided to honour Johnnie Walker by labelling his latest bottling the 2006 Tulloch Pokolbin Dry Red J. K. Walker Commemorative Release (\$40).

Gathering the finest fruit in the Pokolbin district, Jay Tulloch has produced a memorable wine revealing distinctive Hunter shiraz characters.

J. K. Walker would be the first to give it a tick.