Vinaceous Correspondents:
Martin Ray's Friendships with Eminent Oenophiles
The Third Article in a Series / Seventh Section
by *Barbara Marinacci*

This segment continues a lengthy portrayal of the close relationship between California's quality-promoting winegrower Martin Ray and UC Davis's increasingly renowned enologist Maynard A. Amerine. It focuses mostly on their epistolary communications during the latter part of 1954, which Prof. Amerine, on sabbatical leave from UC Davis, spent mostly in Germany but also, for a time, in France. The author is Martin Ray's stepdaughter who, with her mother Eleanor Ray, wrote Vineyards in the Sky: The Life of Legendary Vintner Martin Ray (1993—available soon in a revised edition). *She continues to be grateful for assistance from UC Davis Library Special Collections, that archives the Ray Papers, and also thanks* WTQ *editor/publisher Gail Unzelman for her continuing interest, patience, and indulgence in publishing this series, based primarily on Martin Ray's own writing.*

PART III. MARTIN RAY AND MAYNARD AMERINE (1937-1976)
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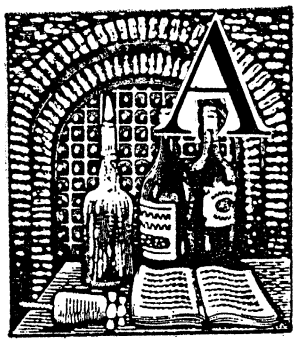

As Maynard Amerine's year-long sabbatical stay in Europe reached its midway point in May, he left his residency in Spain to travel eastward to Italy and Yugoslavia, then head to the north, to spend time in Austria and Switzerland before settling down at Geisenheim-am-Rhein in Germany. There he would continue pursuing both wine research and winery-visiting jaunts in a favorable milieu.

Martin Ray missed his good friend Maynard's company, and he was reminded of that by the chatty postcards and discursive letters—which first had been handwritten until a typewriter was acquired in Switzerland—that he and Eleanor received frequently from him. Apart from being a boon companion who provided him with current news about the wine industry, Amerine had understood and strongly encouraged MR's determination to consistently produce high-caliber, pure-varietal wines that would demonstrate California's great potential for winemaking. Furthermore, the enologist had often helped MR in the past by offering technical advice; he also provided organoleptic or laboratory evaluations of various Ray-made wines, and supplied special yeasts cultured at UC Davis for properly launching fermentations.

MR had a copy of Amerine's schedule and itinerary and knew he intended to visit some of the French wine lands before heading for home. Now MR hoped to benefit again from Maynard's generous assistance.

Amerine as MR's Agent Abroad

In late June 1954, MR wrote a lengthy letter to Amerine. In it he made several requests that Maynard might be able to handle if indeed he did visit some of the French wine country, most particularly Burgundy.

> There are three things I'd like out of France. A bound set of Ampelography [Viala & Vermorel's *Traité Général de Viticulture. Ampélographie*. 7 vols. 1901–1910], preferably used if the cost could be cut sufficiently.... Then, we want 6 casks of approximately 66 gallons capacity each and of old oak whether or not used and in good condition. They should be sulphured with an extra heavy shot of SO_2 and bunged and strapped tight then shipped via boat direct to San Francisco with instructions to notify us upon arrival.... We want the regular Burgundian cask and made of the best wood. Of course, if they are new it would be best to ship them unbunged and unsulphured. The thicker they are and the harder the oak the better I'll like it. Then, I want the information I have never been able to get from anyone as to the extent Pinot Blanc is grown in Burgundy as versus Pinot Chardonnay. I'd like to know if the best growers favor one definitely over the other and if so do they grow both and blend or use one exclusively. I must graft our new St. George planting [on the] first of August and after that the knowledge will do me no good. I am going ahead with the Chardonnay if I have not advice to cause me to alter. But I have long suspected that the Pinot Blanc may be considered most favorable by at least some growers whose wine I have drunk from over there.

Then MR added another assignment specific to MA's present location.

> There is one thing I'd like very much out of Germany. In fact, I've <u>got</u> to have 100 filter pads of the dimensions: 16" x 16" and which I can use in my Seitz type filter. The pad should be the one they use not for the sharpest filtration such as would render the wine completely sterile [containing no live microorganisms] and like medicinal houses sometimes use but the pad that comes next, which is almost that sharp and yet through which I can pass a puncheon of white wine which has not cleared up [by] itself. I want a pad that will render a wine ready for bottling but not one that removes every yeast cell. There should be four holes, punched in each pad, one at each corner. [He made a sketch in the margin.]

> Our domestic pads simply will not do.... These pads are most important to us and if you can find out for sure what the best pad is and send me 100, well packed, it would be wonderful of you.

(Although MR always aimed to make white wines that needed no fining or filtering, he sometimes required technological assistance to achieve the satisfactory translucent clarity, and he didn't trust local sources. "Our filters in California are ruining what good whites I have tasted," he'd write MA later [8/10/54].)

Apparently it then occurred to MR that he might be requesting too much of his friend:

> Always I am asking favors of you. I wish you would ask some of us. I did send the vines you requested [Ruby Cabernet cuttings for a Portuguese grower] but that was very little.... [6/27/54]

The ampelography volumes were wanted to replace the ones burned in the recent house fire. This would be a straightforward task, if Amerine had time for it. The German filter pads (as commission #4) he could order for MR while in Geisenheim, the nation's center for winegrowing investigations and technological developments. That left two other errands for Amerine to accomplish if he would and could: one basically informational, the other rather demanding. Both—the identity of Burgundy's prime white grape and the acquisition of French oak barrels—were noteworthy, for reasons to be discussed later.

By the time he received MR's requests, Amerine must have been traveling in the south of France, on his way to Italy. In Florence he wrote out his response on several sheets of lined notepaper. The oak wine casks, he said, "will be rather expensive but I will see what can be done." Then:

> I expect (??) to go to Paris in mid September and will return to Germany <u>via</u> Beaune. I will get full information for you there, if I go. If not, I will enter into correspondence with someone in Beaune. As to the Pinot blanc vs Chardonnay, I don't know and will personally inspect the vines if I go there during the vintage. I have never been in Burgundy later than July 15th and that was in 1937 when the problem had not arisen. One cannot take the word of anyone on this because both names are used for both varieties in different vineyards and by different authorities.

Obviously MA hadn't noticed that MR needed to get by the end of July his findings about which white grape to grow in the new vineyard block. Still, he had said this:

> I have made white Burgundy-tasting wines from Chardonnay (you yourself have tasted the famous 1936 Livermore Chardonnay that I made). This and reading leads me to <u>believe</u> that the best white Burgundy is made from Chardonnay. Until someone (or I) does it from Pinot b. I stick. [7/12/54]

A month later, MR was still in a dither about whether to graft Chardonnay or Pinot Blanc budwood onto the hundreds of vigorous Rupestris St. George rootstock vines he'd started in the new vineyard section. Resistant to the phylloxera infestation that had devastated vineyards in Europe and California in the late 19th century, they now awaited being topped with some Vitus vinifera stock—to sprout vines that in several years would start supplying grapes for Martin Ray's production of both still and sparkling white wines.

Maynard not having perceived the urgency of his need for information, MR couldn't wait for any direct investigation in Burgundy. Yet MR also hadn't noticed MA's inference that he should go with Chardonnay. As the August days came on, he grew ever more edgy, for he had to do the field-grafting *now*—before the vintage season hit, usually by late August or early September, with all its work and distractions.

Planting Chardonnay on Mt. Eden

But why was Rusty Ray so worked up during the summer of 1954 over which of the two Burgundian fine white wine grapes, Chardonnay or Pinot Blanc? The choice MR had to make, in fact, was scarcely a "no-brainer" at the time. It must be realized or remembered that in the 1950s in the U.S., Chardonnay, so familiar (even over-familiar) nowadays to most American wine drinkers, was an obscure grape variety, known to very few wine producers, let alone consumers. (It's also interesting that Amerine had noted then that even French wine people seemed not to bother to distinguish between Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc in their vineyards or when vintaging.)

In the two decades following Repeal the statewide acreage occupied by Chardonnay and its grape tonnage produced in California (let alone elsewhere in the U.S.) were so miniscule that they weren't even listed separately in annual reports from the agricultural department—just grouped with the miscellaneous white wine grapes grown in the state. Yet prior to Prohibition the variety had been extensively planted in vineyards in the Livermore and Napa valleys, with its fermented juice often the main constituent in the better-quality so-called Chablis wines.

Paul Masson started his own plantings of both Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc in his mountain vineyards at La Cresta in Saratoga, most probably from cuttings he had brought over from France—though possibly he also got budwood from vineyards that belonged to Almaden, his wife's family's winery that he managed. (Masson's vineyards, both MR and Amerine had seen, contained a confusing miscellany of varieties and their variants.) After taking over Masson

in 1936, MR had supplies of the two major Burgundian white grape varieties to use in both his pure fine-varietal table wines and his sparkling wines (which still, and for a long time ahead, could legally be called champagnes, as Masson had done).

When marketing Masson's varietal wine Pinot Blanc, MR had added the French word *Vrai* (often in brackets), calling attention in writing and on labels to its status as the "true" variety and varietal—thus distinguishing it from wines made from inferior white grape varieties prevalent elsewhere and vintaged by the handful (then) of better wineries when making wine they labeled—or fraudulently labeled, as MR declared—Pinot Blanc. (He had asserted, for instance, that Beaulieu's Pinot Blanc in fact was made from Aligoté grapes.)

The 1936 federal regulation required that a wine in a bottle labeled as a varietal had to contain at least 51% of fermented juice from that particular grape variety. But the law had no teeth in it: no systematic government inspections of grapes or wines were made, no penalties exacted for infractions. Thus vintners could still label wines whatever they wanted. They could either be honestly misidentifying the grape varieties growing in vineyards or else be deliberately assigning fine-varietal names to wines made mostly from lowly grapes in order to charge higher prices.

As for Chardonnay, for some years after it first appeared as a varietal in the late 1930s it was known as "Pinot Chardonnay," as can be seen on old wine labels and long out-of-print books and articles. MR used this double name at both Masson and, for a few years, the new winery bearing his own name. Since Chardonnay could be blended legally (the 51% rule) and still be sold as a varietal, some of the grapes that wineries vintaged may well have been Chardonnay. However, the variety was notoriously a low producer; and because of Prohibition, anyway, it was rarely grown anywhere. So the Pinot Chardonnays produced by the better wineries probably used mostly Melon or Chenin Blanc grapes. The great exception in the late 1930s through the 1950s were the Chardonnays made by Martin Ray, first at Masson and then at his own small winery: these were the pure, 100% varietal. Always finding fault with other wineries' Pinot Chardonnays, MR pronounced that even if half or more of the wines therein was made from Chardonnay grapes, that variety's unique and delicate characteristics would be blended out—and then further destroyed by deleterious or shoddy winemaking practices.

But back now to 1954: By the second week of August in 1954 Eleanor rushed off a telegram to Maynard, reminding him of her spouse's urgent need to know which white grape variety to graft onto the waiting rootstock. The Rays, though, had a backup: Peter Martin Ray. Eleanor's son—adopted by MR a year earlier—would be traveling through the French wine country after attending a botanical conference in Paris, with introductions to the proprietors of several notable wineries, arranged in advance by MR (who had been visited in earlier years by both the Marquis de Lur Saluces and Louis Latour). ER now urged PMR to provide Rusty "instantly" with advice as to whether Latour used Chardonnay exclusively for Corton Charlemagne or whether part came from Pinot Blanc grapes. "He is going to bud next week," she said.

Peter handily came up with the crucial information just when it was needed. So MR now could reassure Amerine in his latest letter:

> You need not worry about the frantic SOS Eleanor sent regarding the Chardonnay versus Pinot Blanc matter. We will be just as interested in learning all you can find on the subject when you get to France. But Peter came through with a wire, "CHARLEMAGNE ONLY CHARDONNAY." This is after a visit with Louis Latour and it swayed me off my feet the day before we budded. Just finished budding the new Chardonnay block at noon today. [8/20/54]

MR had already conveyed his gratitude to PMR two days earlier:

> Thank you so much for the cable which arrived yesterday. It came just in time. We made the decision last night to bud Chardonnay. We had just about decided to turn to the Pinot Blanc vrai which I have grown so successfully for so many years. We had but a small planting of Chardonnay at the old place [Masson's] and I had not at that time developed a system of pruning which would provide a really satisfactory crop.... Then, there has always been the frustration of not being able to learn actually what the better growers of Burgundy have experienced in all there [*sic*] history with these two varieties. No one at Davis could tell me and Amerine doubted that anyone in Burgundy would give out reliable information. He has said he would go into some of the vineyards over there and see for himself. But no word from him on this subject has yet reached us. But with your wire I felt I could rely upon Louis Latour. You must rely upon such people until there is reason to doubt them. [8/18/54]

After sending his telegram in August about Latour's Corton-Charlemagne being a product exclusively of Chardonnay grapes, Peter Martin Ray wrote a detailed report to his adoptive father informing him, based on his talks with French viticultural experts, that in France the grape's name was *not* preceded by "Pinot." Unlike its appearance in the United States, Chardonnay, he said, was declared to have no familial relationship whatsoever with Pinot Noir and its other relatives and descendants, including Pinot Blanc. (However, in 1999 Carole Meredith's DNA research at UC Davis would famously disprove this assertion.)

So MR would take up a minor new cause in 1955 when he announced to the wine trade at large that the name "Pinot" should no longer precede that of Chardonnay on labels or when writing about either the grape variety or the varietal wine made from it. Other wineries began to follow suit. As for the enologist Maynard Amerine, he sent Martin a caustic note.

> Several years ago I told you that "Pinot" Chardonnay was a misnomer. It is correctly described & named in Hilgardia "Composition & Quality ..." (1944). You told me then I didn't know what I was talking about and not to interfere in "commercial" matters!!—M.A.A. [undated, but probably mid-1955].

Whence the Mt. Eden's Distinctive Chardonnay "Clone"?

Over the years, wine historians and writers, as well as wine aficionados, have sought the derivation of various distinctive Chardonnay clones—or "selections," as the term is now more properly called when grafting wood is obtained in a vineyard from different vines of the same variety with features that appear identical. A number of people, including winemakers, have become enchanted with the Chardonnay varietal wines made from the small, rather loosely clustered grapes sparsely produced on Mt. Eden (and vintaged in the acclaimed Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Chardonnay)—or else grown on vines that originated from cuttings gathered on Mt. Eden or from their scions cultivated elsewhere, transported to various viticultural areas far beyond the Santa Cruz Mountains. Where did this special type of Chardonnay vine originate?

What both Martin Ray and Maynard Amerine wrote about the Chardonnay budwood that MR had just grafted onto rootstock in his vineyard on Mt. Eden in the summer of 1954 provides clues that might lead to determining the still-elusive beginnings of what would later gain fame as "the Mt. Eden clone." MR told Maynard this:

> We used the wood that was originally obtained for the Smiths from Winkler at Davis. You will remember checking that particular record to see what its origin was with you at Davis and I was able to rely satisfactorily on that as an authentic and good Chardonnay. Furthermore, we pruned the Smith Chardonnay last year and it has a real fine crop on it this year, at 5 years of age. [8/20/54]

MR's statement that his Chardonnay grafts came from the Smiths' Saratoga vineyard, which he had planted five years earlier, takes the Mt. Eden grapevine's genealogy one definite step back in time. But the second clue—that the selection came from Davis—leads to complications. Where had the parent vines themselves originated? Interestingly, almost two years earlier, on November 18, 1952, Amerine had written a note to MR telling him specifically that the budwood for the Smith vineyard Chardonnay had come from "Block D" at UC Davis—which, records showed, had been "imported from France by Profs. Flossfeder and Bonnet." (Professors Leon O. Bonnet and Frederick Flossfeder were active in viticulture research prior to and during Prohibition.) And that was all he had said, probably in response to an earlier query from MR.

But here's a mystery that has yet to be solved. Elsewhere (notably in a letter to publisher Alfred Knopf, 6/27/56) MR declared that his Chardonnay planting on Mt. Eden had come from "grafting wood" that had originated from a vineyard in Pleasanton, a Livermore Valley property once owned by Theodore Gier. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries this prominent winegrower had developed extensive vineyards in Livermore Valley as well as Napa Valley. The former area he had especially planted to various fine white-grape varieties, including Chardonnay. A portion of his land there was later owned and farmed by Frank Garatti, who made his own commercial wines but also sold them in bulk to other wineries. In *Vineyards in the Sky* Eleanor Ray recounted MR's encounter with Garatti when he tried to buy some Chardonnay grapes, to illustrate the scurrilous doings during the many years when wines labeled as varietals were made from almost any type of grape—the cheaper and more abundant the better, since neither the federal nor state government, or the wine industry itself, enforced the 1936 varietal-blending regulation.

MR had purposely chosen to plant this Chardonnay selection in Saratoga because he well remembered that the wine Amerine had made from grapes picked in Garatti's vineyard, by him and Prof. Albert Winkler in 1936, was judged the best of *all* Chardonnays derived at that time from various vineyards around the state and vintaged at Davis—better even than the wine Amerine had made from the grapes he'd obtained

from MR at Paul Masson. And intent upon eventually replicating on his own wine estate this particular Chardonnay, in 1949 MR had requested grafting wood from UC Davis taken from offspring of Garatti's own vines. He would remind Amerine of this much later, when sending him a recently bottled Chardonnay for both laboratory and organoleptic evaluations:

> Virtually all our Chardonnay will have come from the wood you took from the Theodore Gier vineyard to Davis. And I have employed this stock because, perhaps 20 years ago, I tasted with you through all your Davis Chardonnay wines and we thought the best was the one from the Gier Pleasanton place of Garatti's. [10/12/59]

Furthermore, in 1954, when Amerine, in Germany, had basically encouraged MR to plant Chardonnay, not Pinot Blanc, he had written this, which went back to his winemaking research in the late 1930s:

> The only white wine that tasted like white Burgundy that I had ever made was from Chardonnay (from the Gier Place at Pleasanton and now pulled out). But the Chardonnay at Davis were (I am reasonably sure) from there or are the same. Ours bears well & your [*sic*] welcome to cuttings, buds, etc. [8/17/54]

Although Maynard acknowledged here the unique superiority of the Gier–Garatti Chardonnay, he also seemed to indicate that the actual lineage of the budwood that Winkler had given MR five years earlier to plant in the Smith vineyard might not be what MR had asked for. (And why in 1952 had he traced the Smith budwood back to the two Davis professors who had imported it from France, probably several decades earlier?)

So where and when did Mt. Eden's special Chardonnay genotype actually originate? Some diligent researcher might wish to pursue the precise derivation. But at least it's clear that it did *not* come either from Paul Masson's vineyard, as a direct import from Burgundy, or from Louis Latour, MR's friend of long-standing years—as Eleanor Ray later told Gerald Asher when he interviewed her about its origin for his article in Gourmet in May 1990: "Chardonnay: Buds, Twigs, and Clones."

MR: First in California to Import New French Oak Barrels

MR was delighted to get a typed message from Maynard in early October reporting on his success in ordering a half-dozen new French oak barrels for him. Probably it had helped that the prominent French wine man Louis-Noël Latour, with his young son (now Louis Latour IV), had visited Martin Ray and his new vineyard on Mt. Eden a few years earlier, and was favorably impressed. (The two men had established a personal relationship, which would be resumed in person again, when Latour for a time stayed with the Rays at Mt. Eden, and also through correspondence and other visiting Latours.) MA wrote:

> Your six barrels have been ordered and are being specially made for you. Mr. Latour and I personally visited the cooper and made the arrangements. They cost 7200 francs each, which at an exchange rate of 350 to the dollar comes out nearly $125 and in fact I have given Mr. Latour my personal check for this amount.
>
> Mr. Latour is arranging the shipping. They will be shipped to you in San Francisco. The prospective date of shipment is about November 20th, so you should have them as a New Year's day present....
>
> They will not be sulfured as they are new. They are made from well-aged oak, as this cooper has his own drying yard for his wood, which I saw. I have also asked Mr. Latour to ask the cooper to put some identifying mark on the casks to show that they were coopered here—possibly his initials, the village and the year.
>
> I hope that all of this proves satisfactory.

Then in a postcard Maynard reported: "In a dream last night I calculated 225 ÷ 3.8 and it comes out 59 gal. Where did you get 66 gal.? All (I think) Burgundy "pieces" are 225 liters." [10/19/54]

Having heard Maynard's good news about the acquisition of the oak barrels from Louis Latour, MR responded, explaining why he'd wanted them to begin with.

> You asked in a card where I got the idea of 66 gallons for the casks. I once had six of them that had been shipped from Beaune to Los Angeles filled with Burgundy. I paid 75¢ for each of them.... They were the best casks I ever had. The oak was different than any other I have seen. I was told by someone that it was the oak used in Burgundy and that the size of the casks is standard there. We need a cask smaller than a puncheon to properly finish for bottling either Pinot Noir or Cabernet-Sauvignon. And our barrels are so thin and the oak so poor and green to start out with it is discouraging. I am most happy over knowing you have arranged for us to have these. [11/7/54]

The six brand-new *pièces*—made by Louis Latour's cooper using aged, air-dried oak staves—would eventually arrive at the port of San Francisco in mid-February of 1955. It is significant, of course, that MR had initially planned to use these new barrels for aging his red wines, *not* for fermenting or finishing his white wines. But a chance factor that would alter MR's techniques in the future fermenting and aging of his Chardonnays would come in the 1955 vintage season, when he made an unexpected use of one of the new French oak barrels that Amerine had secured for him. Finding that he'd run completely out of empty barrels, MR filled one with some newly fermented Chardonnay, and was amazed later when he tasted it against wines from the same lot that had been put in older barrels.

It should be recognized that in the mid-1950s little attention indeed was being given yet to the intricate variations on the combination of oak and wine. The now-customary practice in certain high-end American wineries of actually fermenting Chardonnay in new French oak barrels was still far in the distance. California winemakers at the time paid little heed anyway to the special properties of different kinds of oak, whether old, new, or specially "toasted"—though they preferred oak to redwood, which was widely used when storing and aging wines, and some suspected that French oak was indeed preferable to American oak.

It is significant to mention here that MR had ordered and imported his French oak barrels barrels *a year* before the Hanzell Winery did so. Yet James Zellerbach's new, well-funded winery in Sonoma County and its winemaker, R. Bradford Webb, are almost invariably credited for pioneering this practice, beginning with their 1956 vintage. This is but one example of MR's failure to achieve, and hold, a significant place in California wine history, despite his high aims and accomplishments. Surely it is attributable to his adamantly principled refusal to join wine organizations and his disdain for networking with most of his winemaking peers—at whose wines he almost invariably directed insults.

Martin Ray Considers the Future

When MR revived, after selling Masson in 1943, his desire to have a bonded winery and make and sell fine table and sparkling wines, he needed to buy fine wine grape varieties from other vineyards—at least until he could fully develop his own on Mt. Eden. Some of these vineyards, like Rixford's at La Questa, were already well established. Others he either planted himself or else directed the planting, including selecting the grape varieties for them. However, he was always reluctant to reveal in publicity or to private customers that some of his high-priced wines actually had been vintaged from grapes not grown by him on his mountain.

Like other winemakers, MR didn't like having to depend upon grape supplies coming from outside his own control. He resented vineyard owners who demanded that he pick their underripe grapes right away, because wasps, birds, and raccoons were attacking the crop; or who wanted to delay harvesting because they had chosen a future time convenient to family members and friends who'd come and pick for free—and then delivered rotting grapes; or who had failed to sulfur-dust the vines adequately to prevent mildew. MR wanted, of course, to make the decision to pick based on his own Brix readings of the grapes' sugar, and on their acidity. And though he felt entitled to refuse delivery of seriously defective grapes that he'd agreed earlier to buy, he found himself paying for loads that had to be picked through carefully, with most grapes then unceremoniously dumped over the mountainside.

In 1954 MR wrote to MA in Germany that recently he had noted warning signs that two of the vineyard owners he bought grapes from annually might soon become unreliable sources.

> The Smiths by now have planted trees by many of their grape stakes—so we can see the writing on the wall there. And the Waylands' vines aren't being pruned properly. The old doctor doesn't look well. If something happens to him, heaven knows what will come of the vineyard. So we can't depend on grapes from anybody very far into the future. [10/20/54]

Thus MR's growing dissatisfaction made him anxious to expand his own operations on his mountain, where the half-section of land there (320 acres), held abundant acreage that could be bulldozed into vineyards. He could hardly wait to talk with Maynard about strategies for improving his sources of premium wine grapes.

MR often studied from afar what was going on across the canyon from him, and in the summer of 1954 he and Eleanor went over to the Paul Masson property that Seagram had owned since he'd sold it to the distillery corporation in 1943. He wanted to check on the changes introduced there. As he described the experience to Amerine:

> Yesterday I went over to our old place to look at their vines ... as I wanted them to see what we have achieved by our pruning as against the Masson system. They expect a man to do 400 vines a day. They leave no canes other than a long spur of perhaps 4 buds on each vine. We do 40 vines per day, leave long canes which we carefully tie. We have ten times the grapes Masson has. In fact, they have not a single full sized bunch on any of

their cabernet. Everything has gone into wood. It is a terrible thing to see that in their entire vineyard there is not a single block producing even a quarter crop. Everywhere they are throwing money away and they are getting nothing for it.

MR then reported on various alterations of the Masson chateau that had once been his and Elsie's home. The lavish additions to the headquarters of Seagram's winegrowing division in California included a third story, a much-expanded kitchen, a swimming pool, and a large platform or veranda that faced the foothills and the valley 1500 feet below—all appropriate for large-scale entertainment at corporate events. The winery too increasingly took on a more ceremonial function than a utilitarian one. (The public-welcoming Paul Masson Champagne Cellars was to be constructed within the town of Saratoga, far below and a few miles away, opening five years later, in 1959. And the greatly expanding Masson winegrowing operation itself was already moving southward to the Salinas Valley and Monterey County, with thousands of acres being developed into vineyards by Masson and other large-scale producers.)

The whole change in ambience at his "old place" both astounded and annoyed MR.

They entertain for 200 at a time and run greyhound buses in with their bar-tender and package store guests. They serve them sherry and Scotch and it is quite a thing to see what Seagrams does to work up their business. I told Eleanor and Will, "They have everything but a vineyard and a cellar of wines." What I could have done with the money they have spent on just the vineyard alone!

And envious in his own way, MR began expressing some estate-building aspirations of his own.

I'm going to have to do something on a little larger scale that will at least establish by comparison the difference between a merchandising system and a wine growing operation. By "larger scale" I mean larger than we have been doing. We'll have to get that lower 60 acres planted the next year or two and into Pinot Blanc and Folle Blanche or Pinot Chardonnay and Folle Blanche. Then we can distribute our wines a bit wider and show an effort a little more impressive. It will cost a lot and I will not go into debt. But perhaps I may find an Angel who would like to share in the thing. I am thinking best how to do it. [8/10/54]

Partly in response to this airmailed letter from MR, and thinking ahead to the approaching vintage time, Maynard wrote:

Don't work too hard during the vintage. Surely you can train someone to do the hard work... Hard physical work killed my father—plus other things—but there comes a time when you get tired twice as fast and recover half as slowly as you once did. That is the time to say "its later than you think" and SLOW DOWN!! [8/13/54]

Then, as if he'd been giving further thought to his previous cautionary instructions, a concerned MA, aware of MR's serious stress-caused health problems in earlier years, counseled MR in his next letter:

No matter what ideological motives drive you to work hard you owe it to yourself and your family* first to protect your health. When have you last had a good physical check up! Better do a little less and live longer, or at least easier. Amen. End of sermon for today. The best—Maynard * and your friends [8/26/54]

As Amerine was nearing the end of the year spent in Europe, MR sent a few letters in which he went into more detail about his ambitions for his wine-growing business. He was obviously giving some consideration as well to his friend's admonitions. But of course he had to explain why he often worked so devilishly hard at whatever needed doing—not so much for himself as for the future of fine winemaking in California.

As for working too much or too hard, your advice is good. I accept, it is correct. But I must work harder rather than less, before I can rest. If I get through the next 3 or four years without a heart attack or some other ghastly thing, I will then rest. But our sales are now ready to be developed. And there is no one but me to do it. When I have gotten them going again, I will put one of your young students on the job and start to rest. I would just as soon be dead now or any time as let all I have devoted myself to fail just with my thinking first of myself.

And now MR made as simple and strong a statement as he would ever make about his dedication to his kind of winemaking.

A man is no good without his work and my work will in the end be a failure unless I establish it so well it can continue without me. I am determined that fine wines shall not disappear from California and I don't know who in hell is going to insure that if I do not. Nor do I think that an egotistical statement. Rather, it is a shameful condition that plagues me relentlessly. I cannot buy a bottle of wine that is what its label proclaims and hardly one that I can drink with entire pleasure, once I go beyond Beaulieu. So, I look ahead, always ahead. Old 2004 is what they used to call me in Elsie's family. I will be 100 then. Perhaps you will be strong enough to attend the scattering of my ashes! (in this vineyard). [10/20/54]

In this letter, following her husband's heavy-duty discourse, ER added her own short note, knowing how their friend enjoyed a lighter touch in their letters—along, of course, with whatever gossip the Rays could share.

Dear Maynard, when Rusty wrote all this several days ago I said I had three things to tell you about, which I'd add to his—and now, with lapse of only a couple of days I can't recall ONE of them, isn't that ghastly? All very juicy tales, too, I'm sure! I'll try to bring them back, and send on to you later. Much love to you from both of us.

Formulating Plans

In one of Martin Ray's lengthy letters to Amerine in 1954 (this one seven pages, single-spaced), in a rush of words that left no time or thought for creating appropriate paragraphs, he set down his rambling, real estate- and money-oriented musings for Amerine's consideration—much as he used to do in his letters to Julian Street in the early 1940s. The document shows in detail MR's tendency to ruminate over and prognosticate future circumstances, including needs for money and task assistance, and thus start laying down plans to enable or forestall whatever might come.

> I have written of the decision to buy no more grapes. There must be some organization of purpose and for this discussion let us start there.... It follows logically that then we must grow more. For, our present vineyard will not ever afford us sufficient grapes to make enough wine to support the growing costs on all sides. Thus far, yes. We are getting $48 per case for our Pinot Noir and it is outselling our $24 La Montaña non vintage Cabernet, as is the Vintage Cabernet at $35. (Just shipped 10 cases of the latter to our Club.) But our family is growing. Soon there will be grandchildren, we expect.... Then consider that as our sales expand, we must entertain more. And as we get older we must hire much we now do ourselves. It is going to be more expensive every year as far as I can see into the future. So we must have more vineyard. Yet, I will not endanger our financial position by borrowing money. If nothing comes from our discussion of this subject, we will develop our land by very gradual steps. Out of earnings. But we are both 50 now and it looks to me like something more immediate should be considered. Then, we <u>have</u> all this land. We are paying taxes on it and they are increasing in an alarming way. It should be developed or sold. There is one quarter section we could sell for $75,000. That is about $500 per acre. And included in it is not less than 50 acres that is just the right situation and soil for whites. It could cost $50,000 to bring it in. To expand our cellar space to accommodate the increased production would cost another $50,000. Therefore we need $100,000. There is ample security to borrow for such an undertaking. But that would involve all we have and that I will not mortgage. We have no debts and we will not take on any. It is here we have been wiser than most growers. Always we have held our doings within the range of our purse.

And now, as he often had done in his letters to Julian Street during the Masson years, MR brought up the subject of searching for the right partner-investor to join him in his winemaking endeavors, hoping now that Maynard could find one.

> There remains, then, only the possibility of bringing in new capital, that is permanent invested capital.... You might say, I want an angel. Let us face it. Now, other people find angels. Why not us? Only I would prefer one that was capable of feeling pride in the undertaking and its results, it must be one who either knows or wants to know something about wines and can appreciate quality in taste of some range. And it would be best if the person could have a real pride and enthusiasm in the over all thing to the extent of contributing something more than just money.... Well, you meet a lot of people and you know what we would want in this line. Please let me know what you think and if you have any ideas. I would rather go into such a consideration without any idea of preconceived requirements beyond the one that I will not fool with any idea of sharing management or responsibility unless someone like yourself should turn up. It would be ideal, perfect.

MR finally brought his lengthy missive to a close by stating this recognition:

> Your advice on all these matters is much valued. You see,you have become so very much a part of our family you must accept even some of our problems. [11/7/54]

And Amerine soon wrote back:

> Yes, you will need more vineyard, not less, if you are not going to buy any grapes. I too do not want you to borrow. But where can we find a sympathetic "angel" in this modern world?... What you need is a <u>silent</u> partner. Trouble with too many people is that you would have to talk to them, socially. And God, how few people are worth having to talk to? I would think that you would be better off with someone between 50 and 60 who has a large and increasing income. He would not miss losses and investments over a period of ten years, when you would surely be in a position to begin to pay off. I think you might begin by drawing up some sort of prospectus, outlining your program in detail and your plans for liquidating the investment. I will think this over en route to California. [11/19/54]

MA added this newsy bit as a handwritten postscript, summarizing his latest jaunts: "Berlin is very lively, but oh! so badly bombed. Hamburg is 'mad'—better than Reno in 1935. Copenhagen is a shopper's paradise. Made me regret that I wasn't rich. Beautiful things. Good old wines too."

MR appreciated Maynard's continued interest in his winegrowing and looked forward to the time when he could sit again with his enologist friend—and get his advice and help in figuring out how best to expand his operation As he had done with Julian Street, MR also admitted how isolated and lonely he felt; and how much he appreciated Amerine's supportive encouragement of his high winemaking goals.

> You are most encouraging to consider what is really a problem for us here. For we must plant more vineyards and on a sound basis. It is a problem that can not be discussed with many people. When you get back we will have a good talk about it. Anyway, over the years you have come to occupy sort of an advisory position with

— continued, p.20

ers west. Truman was liked and respected by Messrs. Crocker and Huntington who gave him great freedom in accomplishing his mission. Like Johnson before them, they recognized that Truman was the right man in the right place to materially help their cause.

A great outpouring of tourist guides, clever pamphlets, magazine and newspaper ads flowed from the Bureau, but the chief production was the 1883 *Homes and Happiness in the Golden State of California. Being a description of the Empire State of the Pacific coast:; Its inducements to Native and Foreign born emigrants; its productiveness of soil and its productions; Its vast agricultural resources; Its healthfulness of climate and equability of temperature; and many other facts for the information of the Home-seeker and Tourist.* Packaged in the tradition of *Semi-Tropical California*, but with grand illustrations added, it covered the marvels of the entire state, went through three editions, made money on its own behalf and was nationally considered one of the most reliable guides to the Golden State.

> Forty acres of land is enough for any man to handle as a vineyard – twenty acres of this land might be better, in fact; and the young man, the middle-aged man, or the old man, with or without a family, who can procure twenty acres of this land, and can for two years live upon and cultivate a portion of it as a vineyard, will be better off in a little while, healthier and happier, than if he were a clerk, mechanic, laborer, or small merchant in the city; and his children will be stronger in every way, and better able to fight the battle of life than they would be if raised in any city.

Mr. Truman, I have seen the light! I am moving West. Here is my money for an extra parcel for my grandchildren.

He kept his position with Southern Pacific all through the next decade, but that didn't mean Ben gave up any of his other activities. Time was made to found the Capital, a weekly devoted to the local affairs and people of Southern California. Life remained peripatetic for the Trumans. The 1880 census recorded Ben, Augusta, and Georgie as residents in a San Francisco boarding house; Ben listed his occupation as a journalist.

[*In the concluding installment next issue we shall become closer acquainted with Maj. Truman the wine man, his monumental wine series, and his final decades.* — Ed.]

MARINACCI, ***continued from p.35*** —

> regards our operations and you have most certainly contributed a very great deal in a great many ways. As we both grow older I hope this relationship can grow, too. I have always felt quite alone in our wine growing. There is not a single grower we could have a confidential conversation with. They have all lied about themselves whenever I have talked to them and jumped at the chance of carrying away to others any little problem I have confided. Everyone of us has our problems and it is a damned shame a couple growers can not discuss such things. Masson and Wetmore did. They even wrote in letters of their financial worries and one suggested remedies to the other.

Then MR returned to the theme of the need for further expansion in the near future, to enable him to improve the overall reputation of California's wine industry:

> Well, we can make money here but I know we must have more vineyards now, with costs rising and other growers grown so large their sales and advertising and talk drowns out a smaller volume. It has got to be worked out so that there is established once and for all that more than a trickle of fine wines can come out of California. Wente and Almaden and Paul Masson are proving the very opposite, as is Martini and the others. I can deliver Pinot Noir now at last. And I can turn out Cabernet and I can make a champagne that will stand with any. There remains only Chardonnay to develop! Now, I want to have 50 acres more of these vines. I am terribly anxious for you to taste through the cellar when you get back.

MR knew that Amerine would soon be leaving Germany and traveling elsewhere during the upcoming holiday season before heading for home on a ship going through the Panama Canal en route to San Francisco. He signed off the last letter to him of that year in this way:

> We would like to meet you in San Francisco and bring you down here over night then drive you up to Davis. Have you other plans? We both send you our love and best wishes for a gay Christmas, where ever it finds you. [11/28/54]

Amerine didn't take the Rays up on their offer. No doubt he was eager to spend time with friends while lodging at the Bohemian Club in The City, and then go off to his home in Davis, vacated now by its year-long renters. Soon he would resume his faculty position at the University. But the three of them would meet soon after the year 1955 began. It would prove to be a busy year for them all. And, for both their wine quality crusade and their close friendship, a highly challenging and ultimately perilous one.

[*To be continued next issue*]