Vinaceous Correspondents:
Martin Ray's Friendships with Eminent Oenophiles
The Third Article in a Series (continued)
by *Barbara Marinacci*

[This is the second segment of an article within the continuing series based primarily on the writings of California's "legendary" vintner Martin Ray (1904-1976). For 40 years he zealously promoted the cause of wine quality, particularly in the forms of planting more fine winegrape varieties, producing unblended varietal wines, and assuring their honest labeling. Part I was the Introduction; Part II told of the remarkable epistolary relationship between Ray and East Coast wine authority and author, Julian Street. The first segment in this third article appeared in the WTQ July 2004 issue; several more sections about Ray and UC Davis enologist Amerine will follow this one. Author Barbara Marinacci, the stepdaughter of Martin Ray, prepared the Martin and Eleanor Ray Papers for permanent storage in Special Collections, UC Davis Shields Library. Comments about Amerine in Martin Ray's letters to Julian Street quoted herein, as well as excerpts from Amerine's own letters to Street, are reprinted with the kind permission of the Manuscript Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.]

PART III. MARTIN RAY AND MAYNARD AMERINE: 1937–1976
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Doubtless Martin Ray had quickly alerted Maynard Amerine to Street's enthusiasm for his new Paul Masson wines, expressed in a telegram and letters beginning in mid-January of 1940. This good news was then passed on to Harold Price, the head of San Francisco's Wine and Food Society—who had refrained from proclaiming to his oenophilic peers his admiration for the pure varietal wines MR was making. Confident now, Price soon arranged to put on a Society dinner at the end of March that would feature some of these Ray-made Masson wines ... and there he read a letter from Street praising them. This acclaim from a greatly respected East Coast wine authority instantly got the California wine industry's attention, since Wine Institute officers and various prominent winery proprietors were present.

A month and a half later, Elsie Ray told Julian Street—dictating her message through Martin's letter—how attention to these startling pure varietal wines from California had been stunted until he had awarded his encomium, thus encouraging both Amerine and Price to become more vocal about their admiration.

> We must give due credit to Dr. Amerine, who has visited about every winery in the state and even when our 1936 wines were but a year old he told us they were the finest in the state. Through Amerine, Price became interested. However, they were afraid to talk out loud. [5/16/40, quoted in an MR letter to JS.]

It's evident from the start of his letters to Street that Martin Ray felt privileged to have Maynard Amerine as a friend, technical adviser, and informant. In the latter capacity MA told MR about what was going on in other wineries and vineyards of the state, as well as the industry at large; described his experiences when traveling in 1937 through Europe's principal wine districts; and acquainted him with salient and relevant research projects at Davis and elsewhere. MR's early letters to Street made sure he'd know about the important role the young UC professor played in promoting an appreciation for and knowledge of fine wines. At the same time MR expressed his own determination toward joining the campaign to raise the level of quality in winemaking by educating consumers and encouraging them to expect—indeed, demand—that California wineries produce ever better wines by vintaging fine variety grapes.

Over the years, MR would never halt in his pedagogical efforts concerning wine. In his years at Masson, he welcomed members of the local and national press. He also wrote several informative articles for publication. These also served to publicize the unusual efforts he was making to improve the reputation of California wine.

Martin Ray's First Publications

In October of 1937, a year and a half after he bought Paul Masson's property in Saratoga and not long after he first met Maynard Amerine, Martin E. Ray, identified as manager of the Paul Masson Champagne Company, published "California Wines Versus French Wines" in the Pacific Coast Review. No doubt he had already discussed with Amerine some, even many, of the statements he made in this essay, and gleaned useful information. His chauvinism over his home state and its potential for future winemaking glories was obvious from the start:

> California soil and climatic conditions are for grape growing and wine making, unequalled elsewhere in the world. It is well established that conditions in California are adaptable to the production of some of the finest

agricultural products from the standpoint of quality, quantity and variety. This is made possible by the many types of rich soil and its varied climates.

However, it is not as yet so generally known that in this country, especially in California, the finest varieties of grapes can be and have been naturally made into wines both still and sparkling of a soundness, quality, character and delightfulness impossible to duplicate in the older and perhaps better known wine producing countries.

MR regarded his state's benevolent climate as a major asset to its reviving wine industry:

In the fermentation of the grapes a certain sugar content is required to produce a definite amount of alcohol. This is of primary importance.... In California, the vineyardists and wine makers have the first major advantage over their competitors elsewhere, nature having provided the long spring and summer months, the late fall and a warm and continuous sunshine without which the grapes can never ripen into sufficient sugar content to produce in fermentation enough alcohol to make a normal wine, and it is the lack of this condition which has given, where it does not occur, the first and major handicap to the wine makers elsewhere the world over. Little realized and but barely known, this fact is of great importance and goes a long way toward providing California with a lead in wine making which, when time and the efforts now being employed by its wineries are giving effect, will serve to put California again not only in the foreground as a producer of quality wines, but may see it recognized as the producer of the finest wines in the world.

Despite his own admiration and fondness for particular European wines, MR recommended to his readers: "It is a good policy to drink the wine of the country in which you reside." In other words, Drink American—or better yet, Drink California Wine.

In the next few years MR, as Masson's proprietor, produced two other articles, for the monthly trade publication Wines and Vines: "New Masson System Clicks Instantly" (December 1940) and "The Classic Method of Winemaking" (March 1941). Probably he asked Amerine to read them before he sent them off to the publisher, for by then the two men corresponded, and they saw each other often.

In the first article, he introduced the procedure of wine "futures" by barrel-tasting well in advance of bottling, thus enabling both individual consumers and tradesmen—wholesalers, distributors, and retailers—to place advance orders on particular wines, paying for them in three installments. (It's possible that Amerine had suggested this innovation, based on his firsthand knowledge of European wine marketing.) But before he set down the particulars, MR felt impelled to provide a mini-lecture to readers:

There is very little new about winemaking. That is because it is primarily a work of Nature, although Man must control it. There are different kinds of wines resulting from different kinds of winemaking and by far the most important is the making of ordinary wines because they are made for the average person. They must be pure, wholesome, inexpensive. The making of these ordinary wines is, then, entirely different and a subject completely removed from the making of fine wines under the classic method.

Fine wines are a luxury. They are the result of a particular climate, soil, vine variety and cellar method, all in complete harmony. In a great year sometimes great wines are achieved. But whether fine or great, and the distinction between them varies, such wines can be made only under the classic method and only in certain spots in the world where soil, climate, and vine variety in complete harmony with nature, has willed that such wines may be made. The number of such wines made and the extent of this volume is of necessity limited and yet the demand for them is great. There is actually no competition in this field of endeavor, for those who succeed in making wines under the classic method, but one producer complements another. Each wine has a definite personality and there is a ready market for more than can be made.

Then MR introduced the main subject of the article and staked his claim on being the first American vintner to follow a customary European practice in the early marketing of wines.

In California the Paul Masson Company has pioneered in producing wines under the classic method responsible for its 1936 and subsequent vintages. Yet in its best years its production of varietal still wines does not total more than four hundred cases of each of four varieties, a total of two thousand cases, and its champagnes are limited to four thousand cases of a given vintage. With this small volume and the great demand the Paul Masson Company has had to set up its own method of merchandising which has become known as "The Paul Masson System."

Just as there is little new in winemaking so there is little new in merchandising. For, it is all a matter of supply and demand. The terms of the Paul Masson endeavor to bring these two factors into line with each in such a manner as to have, under certain conditions, the wines so merchandised, available to all.

The Paul Masson System involves conditions of sale which are used largely in the older winemaking countries. On Thanksgiving Day an announcement is sent to the trade of the size and quality of the vintage and the minimum prices which will be acceptable for the wines some four years hence. The period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is known as the Tasting Period and at this time prospective purchasers may taste and judge the new wines, subscribe to the number of cases which they wish. Against the total of subscriptions so received, allotments are made on Christmas Day. At the option of the firm, the allotments may constitute all

or any portion of the subscription. Payments fall due twenty-five per cent upon receipt of allotment, twenty-five per cent upon notification of bottling (some three or four Christmases hence, this also the option of the firm), fifty per cent upon shipment. The date of shipment may vary with the wine and the vintage, but the purchaser is notified substantially in advance of the shipment.

A percentage of these wines must be reserved by the firm for its private inventories and releases, and at the time the announcement is made that percentage is also stated. With the 1940 vintage it was announced that allotments would be made constituting not more than seventy-five per cent of the wines.

Martin Ray, after claiming his right to two activities that distinguished him from other winery proprietors, was pleased to report the already positive results:

While neither the making nor merchandising of these wines involves anything new to this, one of Man's oldest creative efforts, both are new to California. It was therefore with great interest that members of the firm waited and anticipated the results of its first announcement under the terms of the Paul Masson System of the four varietal still wines which were priced at twenty-five dollars per case to the Trade. These prices anticipated that when these still wines ultimately reached the Consumer Market it would be at price around forty-eight or fifty dollars per case, proper for a great wine in a great year, but something new for California wines.

It is true that several firms of national distributing facilities had, prior to this announcement, agreed to take all or any portion of the 1940 Vintages, which insured the success of the system. But it was with much gratification that the first results of the announcement disclosed subscriptions from others, which assured the complete success of the system and provided a new manner of merchandising California wines which, it is hoped, will become general in usage since by its terms the wine-maker is paid and financed in proportion to his ability and success in winemaking under the classic method.

Finally, MR strove to summarize in his last paragraph why his barrel-tasting, wine-futures system made good sense:

Just as the character of a great, or lesser but distinguished variety, is always to be found in its natural and unblended wine, so the type of wine-making, whether classic or not, can only be judged by visiting the cellar *and* tasting the wines there made. Great wines are being made in California and are being merchandised under a system fitting their respect. It is a part of winegrowing in which there can be no competition and for which there is a great reward.

In his article for Wines and Vines that followed four months later, Martin Ray went into some detail about his use of traditional winemaking methods, on which he prided himself, calling them "classic." Here MR described his current pursuit, which endured until his demise, of what he called "the Good Life." It combined living close to the land, drinking wonderful wines, and eating well-prepared foods—a lifestyle that Amerine too would always follow in his own way. For MR, it would come from being a hands-on vintner who dwelled among his beloved vines and above a capacious cellar containing "natural" wines—wines, as he'd often say in the coming years, to which nothing had been added and nothing taken away.

The *Classic Method of Winemaking* describes more a way of living than a method of work. For, those who make wines under the classic method must truly live with their wines. For them there is no more rule for making wines than for living each day....

It is soil, climate, vine varieties, methods of winemaking, that permit fine and sometimes great wines to be made. The romantic and historical background of the producing property, its reputation or labels, have nothing to do with it.

MR declared that the wines he produced were making high-quality prototypes for an industry that currently strove primarily for quantity. He then voiced his expectation of worthy competitors who would try to match or surpass his unique varietal wines and champagnes:

In California, the Paul Masson cellars have pioneered in producing wines under the classic method responsible for the 1936 and subsequent vintages, and as its achievements have become known, interest in this sort of thing has grown until now there is evidence that others may undertake to make, successfully, fine natural wines by these methods.

Amerine's Wine Judging

As a fledgling wine connoisseur on the fast track, intently learning everything he could about wines, Amerine had been taken under the instructional wing of some San Francisco-based wine aficionados, inevitably to be influenced by them. It's evident in his letters to Street that MR didn't respect most of these men, such as the San Francisco Wine & Food Society's Harold Price (who at one point asked for a job at Masson). He considered them pretentious fellows with limited and biased knowledge of wines—though he'd use their names and connections when doing so would be advantageous.

When MR first met him, Amerine was undertaking to author or coauthor articles about different wines, and also about wine judging, which he maintained could be done methodically and analytically, not subjectively. According to MR, Amerine's first major disillusionments with other oenophiles who regarded themselves as expert wine tasters occurred in 1939, on

the occasion of the Golden Gate International Exposition, the world's fair held on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. Amerine served as organizer of the event that would judge the California entries in 20 different wine categories. It was the most important and prestigious showing of wines in the half-dozen years since Repeal. At first MR had not been asked to submit Paul Masson wines. Probably hearing of this oversight from Amerine, he wrote an irritable letter to the Wine Institute. After being issued an invitation belatedly, he entered some of his best wines in the competition—all no doubt ones that Maynard had suggested. The consequence for Amerine, however, was a heated dispute over the superiority of the Masson wines. The whole adverse experience both enlightened and disillusioned Amerine.

Sometime in early 1940 MR must have written a letter to Street giving the details, revealed to him by Amerine, about the miscarried wine-judging event in the previous year. However, that letter isn't in the Princeton collection. But MR later mentioned it several times when describing Amerine to Street:

> He is on all the important wine judging committees, was Chairman of the Committee at the Golden Gate International Exposition, which I have told you did not, in my estimation, do a very noble job but which was not his fault. He did all he could, I believe, to make the awards what they should be. The trouble was, I think, the members of his Committee were not entirely competent to judge and one or more of them dominated where it should not have been possible. But Amerine at least limited the awards and tried to do all a man could do. Amerine and I don't discuss that incident any more because we covered all the ground and understood each other pretty well. He said the event caused him grey hairs and sleepless nights, which I can well understand. I doubt if he would judge again unless he could have a committee of genuine authorities to sit with him. [5/4/40]

Several weeks earlier, MR had said:

> You may keep Amerine's letter. I want in time to introduce him to you, if he goes east this year. He has been influenced by Price, who has turned him into a more sophisticated chap than he was, in exchange for what Price didn't know. Amerine is a comer. He hasn't broken away from those who influence him but that will come. They are leaning on him now although he is but 27. Unfortunately, their "opinions" are often [not] his decisions and that accounts I believe for the mess they made of the judging at Treasure Island. Amerine was chairman of the (5 man) Judges. Price, de Mattei [Mathé] and two lesser members. Amerine aged several years with that experience. I fear it may have been the worst judging ever done. I would not want to have been on that Committee. But Amerine is the one of ability. He also has personal charm. He will grow away from them all. [4/20/40]

At the Golden Gate Exposition Amerine had found himself outnumbered by the four other wine judges whose palates proved on that occasion to be either lamentably undiscerning or anxious not to offend the better-known premium wineries, which produced far more commercial wine than Paul Masson, most of which were Wine Institute members (and Paul Masson decidedly was not, thanks to MR's adamant refusal to join). In the blind tasting these judges had preferred the blended and more genial table wines. Therefore the majority voted for white and red still wines far less distinctive than several unblended fine-varietal ones that MR had vintaged at Masson—which only Amerine had chosen as the best of their class. A white still wine and a sparkling burgundy made by Martin Ray at least earned Honorable Mentions. However, these honors didn't mean much, as many such awards were given out, to avoid offending any winery.

But the deed most offensive to Amerine, and in turn to MR when he heard of it from him, came with the champagnes. All the judges initially chose as top winners two Masson sparkling wines in the Dry (Brut) and Sweet (Semi-Doux) categories. But everyone on the panel—except Amerine, again—then decided it would be politic to withhold the gold and give *all* submitted champagnes co-equal silver medals. Amerine, already upset about often being outvoted on other wines, fought insistently to give the two gold medals to Martin Ray at Paul Masson—and eventually won.

In after years MR said he'd been so disgusted after Amerine told him about the entire experience that he refused ever to enter his wines again in any official wine-judging competitions, such as state and county fairs, since he never expected to get the high approval they merited. (He had no control, of course, over events in which other people submitted his wines.) He believed that many judges played favorites as part of the "wine politics" directed by the Wine Institute; others, unacquainted with qualities necessary in fine table wines, simply preferred bland, slightly sweet, invariably blended commercial wines lacking varietal identities. The wines of his own making were apt to be

tartly dry, heavy-bodied, intensely flavored (with youthful reds astringent with as yet unsoftened tannins)—not readily accessible to judges whose palates weren't properly attuned. (Of course MR would always rejoice whenever told that some wine of his, tasted blind along with anonymous others in gatherings of oenophiles, had taken first place, particularly if besting distinguished French vintages. He then might publicize this triumph, and the Ray Papers contain abundant evidence that this flattering outcome happened often.)

Sometimes ditching his careful professional neutrality when he was with MR, as he had done when talking about the Golden Gate judging, Amerine would surely have criticized that special breed of men who herald themselves as wine experts—including the growing number of snobbish wine writers, most of them located in the East, who automatically disdained all wines made in California. His opinions, though, may not have been expressed as virulently as this one, given to MR by a wine journalist named Eddy, who had accompanied the Wine Institute's publicity man on a visit to Masson. MR paraphrased his discourse in a letter to Julian Street:

> You will be interested to know that he said that he had formed the opinion that the greatest enemy and the most detrimental influence that the California Wine industry has, is in that group of men who have either set themselves up as authorities on wine, or come to be so regarded, but who in fact, know nothing whatsoever about wines, only know that it is smart to go about speaking of them in the lingo which they have learned from the trade, and endorsing anything which is imported, tearing down anything which is made in California. I gave him a long talk on this and told him that there was some truth in his assumption, but that he had better distinguish between the genuine authorities and the phonies. I told him that most of them are phonies, but that Julian Street is an outstanding example of the exception and that he is in a position to do more individually for the Wine Industry in California that anyone else, especially since he is in the East, and has a vast following everywhere. [4/19/40]

Insights into a Sensitive and Somewhat Taciturn Young Man

In his letters to Julian Street and doubtless in his conversations with other people in the industry, Martin Ray praised Dr. Amerine's growing knowledge of wine, his tasting ability, and his intense dedication to discovering, as a scientist, the hidden secrets of winemaking—and then revealing them to all who were interested in improving the caliber of the state's wines. Yet at the same time, because of the seven years' difference in their ages, MR tended to regard Maynard Amerine, despite his growing academic and enological eminence, as a brilliant protégé with some perplexing quirks and social naiveté that he could help him overcome.

Knowing that effecting an epistolary connection between his two wine-oriented friends might be interesting and even beneficial to both of them, and even to himself as well, MR encouraged Maynard to write directly to Julian Street. Several times MR had praised Amerine in his letters to JS, and in mid-May of 1940 he said, "Dr. Amerine will write you very soon, and I hope that you may find in each other a friendship." MR's intention to bring Amerine into Street's orbit must have been partly intended to pull him a bit away from the influence of the San Francisco "wine phonies" he often hung out with.

> Of Dr. Amerine, I have said that he has been influenced by others who know less than he, and I have attributed this to his youth. It has been over a period of four years, I have learned to know him—a gradual process, quite unlike the way we have gone to it.
>
> Since being privileged to know you and as our friendship has developed, I have often thought Amerine should know you. He is devoted to wines. Your life is filled with treasures he may serch [*sic*] for elsewhere in vain. I hoped he might contribute interesting things he is thinking and doing in wines. I knew he could profit much and I hoped you might enjoy him. So I asked him <u>once</u> to write to you, telling him I had arranged the introduction this way. I tell you, he was flattered and clearly showed he was impressed with this invitation I extended. [5/25/40]

By then, though, Amerine had already sent off, on May 23, a three-page handwritten letter that contained a single huge paragraph. It started off conventionally with "Dear Mr. Street."

> For sometime now Friend Ray has been at me to write a line to you—hoping I think that the combination of many invitations to visit California will induce you to pay me a visit. He is right—you would find a good welcome here and some good wines. California still drinks more than five times as much wine as the average American state and as the Bohemian Club list which I am sending to you under separate cover shows, some of us drink some rather good wines. Incidentally, I should like your comments on that list with particular reference to the loose leaf idea. We believe that wine lists should, more or less, stay up to date. When there is more than a change or two per page we intend to reprint that page.... Of course, if a Club really had the foresight it would stock enough for a 5 yr. period. But, as you know, it is very difficult to predict the demand for any particular wine and hence to know just how much to stock. In addition few Clubs care to stock up too much on wine when they sell so much more spirits. But with time I have every confidence that there will be enough demand for the best that it will be stocked and kept. I do not hope that

progress shall be in a straight and easy path—but MAN today does have more than he has had in past centuries and even if he fails to use it at the moment, trying to find progress in wars etc., I think that with time he will again choose the best. After all, Europe was not much a pleasant place during the Thirty Years War nor even as late as 1800 when Napoleon ran back and forth across Europe setting his relatives up on spare thrones (and what horrid people his relatives were). People will, if given time, take the best wine, the best books and the best music. The trouble is that they use such circuitous routes in arriving at the place where they all want to go. And sometimes when the routes are bad they get shipwrecked on the way. The price of a bad means is frequently a bad end. England therefore now pays for her folly in trying to tie Germany to a lie. The Versailles treaty was not bad because of the end which it attempted to achieve—peace—but it was rotten because England thought to gain peace and profit at the same time and all at Germany's expense. Now she pays—thus ever does time catch up with us—unfortunately the innocent suffer too— Write if you care to.

Cordially, Maynard Amerine

Granted, enologist Amerine had composed a most peculiar introductory letter to send to Julian Street, the illustrious wine man. Certainly it lacked the adulation that MR had showered upon JS at first, and still continued intermittently. Maynard wrote it at a time when Americans were becoming deeply concerned about the probability of being hauled into another world war—this one, as MA saw it, brought on by a harsh treaty that had sabotaged Germany's economic recovery after its defeat in WWI. Also, Maynard must have dutifully written it after imbibing several glasses of wine. (It is interesting to note here MA's comment about bad means often resulting in bad ends—a prophetic theme that would recur in his final appraisal of Martin Ray.)

MR sent a commentary to Street soon after he saw a copy of Amerine's letter. First he expressed his disapproval of the tone and contents of that letter. Then he launched into an analysis of his young friend Maynard, who was remarkable later for his absolute discretion in self-disclosure. MR, though, was a diligent observer of other people's behavior. He would also intently probe other people's psyches—often, it emerged later, to gather up material perhaps useful for his own controlling or even nefarious purposes. Just as he frequently set down for Street the virtues, faults, and failings of friends, acquaintances, and foes, he now disclosed information and insights to him that decidedly would have alarmed and displeased Amerine had he known of this communication.

Today I received from [Amerine] two expensive bottles of wine, which he cannot afford to buy for me, and a copy of his letter to you. I am shocked at his lack of tact, especially as indicated in the introductory and closing statements. The letter in its entirety I thought in very poor taste. The letter is nothing like him or what I hoped he would write. It is the way these "arranged" things turn out sometimes.

Now, I realize he has a very great inferiority complex, which explains to me a lot of things about him—how he could write such a tactless letter, for one thing. That letter is not Amerine as he is to me, yet I see Amerine as he is to some who do not know him as well.

At this point I must drop out. If you want to ignore his lack of tact and give him another chance, it is my suggestion that you switch him into his own and familiar ground, tell him you are interested in his work and ask him to tell you all about it. Maybe that will work. Maybe you prefer to skip it. I shall tell him what I think of his letter but I can hardly expect him to write a better one if I ask it. Damn it all, it is hard to get along with people in some cases! If I get after him, no good can come of that. So I'll merely tell him my opinion of his letter. I know he tries desperately to do the right thing.

Once he confided to me, no woman has ever cared for him and he asked me if I thought love would come to him in time. There is something human but pathetic about that. He fears it may not come to him. He tries to do the right thing and actually he is very proper, thoughtful, considerate in all his relations I have observed. He sends cards, presents, goes out of his way to help, insists on doing more than his share. But all this fits in, yes? He has had some affairs I think and he will marry in time no doubt. If the right kind of marriage, it will do a great deal for him. It would teach him a lot he doesn't know about human relations. Does this permit you to know him a little better?

MR had apparently been touched when Maynard confessed to feeling so insecure that he doubted his ability to conduct a conventional heterosexual courtship. In MR's rulebook one's life trajectory was already set: Man and Woman should marry, preferably in mature young adulthood and be steadfast, lifelong companions, taking complementary roles within the household (with the male necessarily dominant) and hopefully producing progeny. MR knew that in the traditional winemaking families in Europe, generational succession was crucial. (He and Elsie, however, never had children. Eleanor Ray said that Elsie had told her that Rusty's high-strung nervous system could never have tolerated kids' kinetic behavior, noise-making, and demands for attention.)

In this Amerine-revealing letter to JS, MR at last began softening his criticism.

He has worked hard, put himself through school after seeing his people fail and lose all their large land holdings when he was a kid. All this may not interest you, but I am in it and this far I will continue because he

is my friend and I like him and I don't want you to think he is like his letter! He is not. Feeling inferior he simply had to write as if it was a great favor to you and me and of no importance to him. Then he struck out at the power of Britain because that made him (he unconsciously hoped) appear very brave, which he is not. [5/25/40]

Amerine's Correspondence with Julian Street

When introducing people he liked or admired to each other, MR aimed to be the center around which they would gravitate after he had orchestrated the initial contact. Hoping Amerine might provide technical information to Street and even meet him someday when he was back East, he had in mind a very different kind of letter that his friend should write. However, though MR thought that Maynard's tone had been flippant or even arrogant, the letter didn't seem to bother, let alone offend, Street himself. He responded with a two-page typed letter, written on June 9, 1940. (Fortunately, he made a carbon copy, which ultimately found its way to the Princeton Library. On it the addressee had been incorrectly called "Dr. Raymond Amerine.")

It was good to have your letter after having heard such interesting things of you and your work from our common, yet uncommon, friend, Martin E. Ray of the Paul Masson Co. I greatly admire Ray for the things he has done and the things I believe he will do. It is good to see a man with inflexible idealism setting out to make, in this country, the best wines that can possibly be made here. Do you know of anybody else who is going at it as wholeheartedly and intelligently as Ray? He is the only California wine man I have encountered (I've encountered him only by mail, at that) who knows the best foreign wines and consequently has the standards that such wines alone can set.

Then JS made a few favorable comments about the Bohemian Club wine list that Amerine had sent him, along with some suggestions for improvement. The list then brought on this comment:

It is pleasant to see so many of the Californian growers making use of grape-names [varieties] now, or California place-names. I hope that when they use grape-names the wine is what it is declared to be—that is, that the grape named is <u>used</u>, and no other grape. I have tasted wines from out there that were called Pinot Noir which did not have a shadow of the Pinot Noir flavor and which I am convinced were not made from the Pinot Noir grape. The Pinot Noir made by Ray is, in fact, the only U.S. wine I have tasted that was unmistakably made from the Pinot Noir grape. I've tasted several Cabernets from California which seemed genuine as to the grape, but the best—at least the most promising—I have had, is Ray's 1938, though it is too young to drink as yet. But I think it is going to be the best claret type wine that has so far come out of this country. It is absolutely clean and balanced and I shall be much interested in tasting it from time to time as it matures, and seeing what it develops into. I resent the use in this country of such terms as "Burgundy" for domestic wines which don't resemble Burgundy; "Sauterne" (especially when spelled without the final "s"...) which isn't like the real Sauternes; and still more so, "Chablis," when there is no wine made in this country that even remotely resembles a true, good Chablis (nor abroad either, for that matter); and when it comes to calling an American wine by such a name as "Johannisberg Riesling" (albeit not "Johannisberg<u>er</u>"), I think it is shameful, just as it was when they had a wine out there they called "Yquem."

I used to buy some California wines long ago.... I found [the Masson Champagne] superior to Golden State. I don't think, at that, that the old Paul Masson, in its day, as good as the present product.

Not wishing to let Amerine's inappropriate anti-British (and pro-German) remark pass without a challenge, Street expressed his own view of the mounting war in Europe, which was certain to engage the U.S. soon. (It should be kept in mind that by this time Germany had conquered and occupied Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, and Holland, and had already invaded France. Five days before JS wrote this letter, over 300,000 French and British troops were evacuated from the French port of Dunkirk, transported across the Channel by a brave armada of British seagoing vessels, including fishing boats. And by the 13th of June, four days later, the Nazis would occupy Paris.)

I don't quite understand what you mean when you say that England now pays for her folly in trying to tie Germany to a lie. Do you mean the matter of war guilt for the last war? If so, I do not agree with you at all. I saw Germany in 1900 when she was coming along by peaceful means, catching up and passing other nations in commerce &c., or getting ready to pass them. There was every reason for her to remain peaceful and to win out by the arts of peace, but she chose the other road. Now she has chosen it again. Britain and France, if they erred at all, seem to me to have erred in getting soft; in forgetting that the Barbarians of the North are there today just as they were in the First Century or thereabouts.... Anybody who thinks the Versailles Treaty was a terrible treaty had better read it over....

Britain and France have made their mistakes; so have we made ours; so have all nations made mistakes; but Britain, France and the United States, among the great powers, have on the whole been the most liberal and enlightened in modern times....

I state these views simply because you wrote of these matters in your letter. I had much rather talk with you of wines, for Ray tells me you really know a lot about them. So let's lay off European politics....

Before signing off, Julian indicated that he'd welcome getting some technical information from Amerine in the future:

> Thanks for your letter. I shall be greatly interested in getting information from you as California wines improve.
>
> This reminds me of the fact that so many of them seem, to my taste, to have been pasteurized or similarly treated. Do you know which are and which aren't? It would be very interesting to me to know about that. The way a lot of them are bottled suggests that the producers aren't worrying about their keeping. I've never seen a good straight corking job out of California yet—except Ray's champagne corks, which I don't like for still wines, but the reason for which I fully understand.

Amerine showed MR the letter he'd recently received from Street, and MR, in his next letter to JS, said:

> Glad Amerine's letter didn't bother you. My mistake (or my fear) [was] I wanted you to like him. Anyway, you will know him the better, now. A fine letter you wrote him. I also appreciate the kind remarks about my wines and the old boy himself. [6/7/40]

Julian Street's Amerine file at Princeton contains six more letters from Amerine, indicating that occasional correspondence continued between them over the next years. Unfortunately, there's only one copy of a JS letters to MA: the first. But clearly he wrote Amerine from time to time and requested information and opinions, and the UC Davis enologist would respond, at times frankly and in implicit or explicit confidence, as in this letter he penned in a hotel in Seattle:

> Prof. Winkler and I have been preaching about the nomenclature of California Wines for nigh onto five years. No one in the industry that I know of apparently has the money and idealism to maintain completely non-objectionable names (either varietal, regional or fanciful). Even Ray doesn't dare stop calling his sparkling wine "Champagne" and there is little difference in the names Champagne, Port, Burgundy, Sherry (Jerez) and Sauternes as far as objectionable-ness is concerned.
>
> I think there are two reasons why some of the wines you have tasted did not closely resemble the variety. Many growers have their varieties incorrectly named. In most cases they are entirely honest, but ignorant. Even when they do have a patch of a good variety they frequently do not know enough about their vineyard to keep it separate from different varieties of contiguous plots. Then there are the dishonest vintners, always trying to turn an extra penny at the expense of their own reputation and eventually to that of the industry. Finally, and perhaps most important, not every variety reacts the same under different climatic conditions. In general, I think the red and the more distinctly flavored white varieties resemble wines of the same varieties from abroad. But subtle differences in pruning, soil, rainfall, spraying practices, length of day, fog, hail, wind, crushing practices, method of removing from the vine, method of transportation, size of fermenter, size of aging cask, temperature during fermentation, temperature after fermentation, pressing practices, method of punching the cap down, frequently of filling up, amount of aerating during racking, type of metal in the crusher, must lines and faucets, and even how far from the winery the pomace is dumped (flies) <u>all</u> influence the character of the wine of a given variety. For these and other reasons, I continually tell everyone that the better California winemakers make the best <u>California</u> wine in the world, but they do not make Sauternes, etc. as you and I very well know. Comparing wines is always a difficult task, because the smallest defect may be magnified by the prejudice of one person against that defect. If everyone had a stronger prejudice against sulphur dioxide, we would have a better industry, and so would France. But to return to nomenclature, I see very little chance of straightening it out in the near future....
>
> In general, I think that some of the bad California practices have come about through ignorance, through an industry in which not more than a very few wineries drink, test, age and try their own wines (let alone other people's wine for comparison) and because of insufficient capital to carry out the dictates of their conscience. Lack of a clientele for the <u>good</u> wines has been a final handicap. [6/19/40]

Two months later, Amerine wrote Street again.

> Your letter has been here these past weeks recalling its pleasurable comments to my mind every now and then when I was here at my desk. But in these past few weeks I have not been here much and now the Vintage is well along. Prof. Winkler and I have just completed a tour of 10 districts over 600 miles apart at the extremes speaking to all 10 in 5 days. The talks were on grape varieties and climatic factors which influence quality. I don't know whether or not the growers understood what we told them or not. It is all so clear to me that they should plant better varieties and should give their wines acceptable names. <u>But</u> when it is a matter where their pocketbooks are to be affected they do not wish to change. In a few weeks you will receive a copy of a new wine circular which we have put out. In it we have said more about nomenclature than the University has ever attempted before. Even so it is pretty mild. After all, usage doesn't justify a practice but if the usage is sufficiently prevalent the dictionary eventually accepts it. I take the attitude that the time is not yet ripe for the desired changes. At the moment the consumers are not ready for the change; the producers likewise are not ready—they lack the varieties which could be identified by their wines and they lack the vision and enthusiasm to carry this into practice. Even some of the varieties

which they have are not correctly labeled and they show little interest in seeing that they are properly identified. The time will be ripe when a number of companies get together voluntarily and agree to jump in all at the same time....

You ask specifically about Pinot noir vineyards in California. I know how much controversy there is over this now and while waiting the word of our ampelographer, Dr. Olmo, I can't say. He spent 5 months in France checking varieties in 1928 and a number of vineyards which used to say they had Pinot noir now admit they don't. Others are not admitting it and finally others have types of Pinot whose exact identity is difficult. The Pinot is a family of varieties you know....

The vintage season here started out to be early, but we have had a very cool August. This should help to protect the acidity of the grapes and if it doesn't turn too hot or if the growers don't let the grapes hang too long it should be a good year. Unfortunately many growers don't pick on time but start 4 weeks late which in our hot climate is fatal—no matter what variety is being used.

Now I must get started on some experiments and to planning more lectures. The Univ of Calif. starts early—I had my first lecture of this term this morning....There is a period of 8 weeks now when time is not mine but the grapes'. The best of the year will be Thanksgiving when I will be free again. [8/26/40]

Two letters to Street from Amerine (6/19/49; 10/20/40) have two forms: the original handwritten letter and a JS-made, somewhat edited typewritten copy, showing that he circulated it among associates in the wine business. The typed versions don't give Maynard Amerine's name. Instead, one has the heading "From a California Wine Authority"; the other says, "The foregoing is from an expert. As it is a personal letter I do not give his name but he is one of a few men who have gone deeply into the study of winemaking in California. Please regard this as confidential material.—J.S."

Amerine continued to furnish Street with observations and opinions that demonstrate the kinship of his wine philosophy and Martin Ray's—and indicate the gist of the conversations about honest or accurate labeling and wine quality that engaged both vintner and enologist:

The hectic Vintage season is now over, leaving me somewhat worn out but quite satisfied with the season's results. We started in early August and we have a few grapes for making dessert wines here on the Farm still to be picked. On the other hand, in the industry there is still, with one or two exceptions, an appalling lack of recognition of the critical importance of picking at the proper stage. Not only does the sugar rise too high but the acid decreases too low when the grapes are picked late in the season. The resulting wines are heavy, lacking the essential fruité quality and frequently have an overripe grape or raisin taste. (This is for the Table or "dry" wines; the grapes for the dessert, fortified, wines such as Port, do not suffer from high sugar and moderate acidity; although there is plenty of evidence from Portugal that they do not want their grapes to get dried up else they contribute a raisin flavor to the wine.) But even more important is the influence of late picking on the fermentation. As the grapes pass their time of optimum maturity the number of rotten & diseased berries increases and the chemical composition becomes unfavorable to yeast growth and more favorable to the growth of harmful organisms, particularly spoilage bacteria. Aside from Ray you would be amazed at how few of our growers or vintners have the least conception of these facts. This is one of the recurring reasons for the lack of quality (or even drinkability) of California wines. The basic difficulty is of course the lack of fine varieties of grapes. Not only is there a lack of varieties but many vineyards have their varieties incorrectly labeled; this results in consumer confusion as well as self deception on the part of the producers. In most cases I think this is entirely unintentional. As long as Calif. wines were labeled with type names the exact varietal identification was not of critical importance. However there is every chance that this will be cleared up in the next few years. I am more worried about the harvesting and fermentation practices. There are many practices which the winery can use and which it is difficult to discern. But we can see the vines. There are some fine new vineyards now being planted and the prices paid for the better varieties of grapes was in some cases twice that of the ordinary grapes.

The harvesting and fermentation practices however require constant care, knowledge and work. This latter is the main difficulty.

Amerine then asserted an ethnic prejudice that usually, and obviously, he had to express *sub rosa* in his professional capacity. It was one that MR in his own talk and writings would often amplify both publicly and privately. Unlike his professor friend, he was uninhibited by the need to be politic about certain members of a nationality who had excelled in bootlegging wine during the Prohibition years and therefore were well positioned to convert to bonded wineries at Repeal.

I may not have told you that the California industry is about 80% in control of Italians. Their interest in careful, precise, laborious winemaking has been nearly nil in Italy and it is no exception here. They are mainly interested in "big" wineries or in quick profits. The above is of course strictly confidential as I have to work with these self-satisfied little Mussolinis who "know it all." They mainly have the Italian peasants' belief in the efficacy of the supernatural. In this case the divine agency is construed to be science. Now science can explain a great many things and can, in many cases, lead

to more rational procedures, but it is not yet ready to prepare wines from sugar, water and acid, and as long as our winemakers insist on leaning on "helps" rather than on grapes they will not get far in making fine wine.

Though he acknowledged the desirability of abundant and affordable vin ordinaire, Amerine recognized the need for both marketers and consumers to distinguish between it and wines of superior origins and intentions.

The companies which are producing ordinary wines must not attempt to pass them onto the public for fine wines. There is a great deal to be said for the bulk producer producing large quantities of standard red and white wine. If he can standardize his practice sufficiently and reduce costs wine can be delivered to the American people at prices which will encourage them to drink it at regular intervals rather than as a luxury drink.... But fine wines are in a different class. They require more expensive material and methods and their ultimate quality depends on their own precious "individuality." This is the real reason why blending, increasing the acidity &c. are not to be considered for the quality wines.

Now and again, Amerine would add winsome personal touches in his letters to Street:

The weather has turned beautiful for the fall. I like this time of year—a sort of recovery from hard physical labor and getting ready for the winter's work. I trust that you enjoy good health and regret my delay in answering your delightful letter. [10/20/40]

Not long after the start of the new year, 1941, Amerine wrote Street again, but more briefly than before. Knowing that Julian, a connoisseur, was almost as interested in attractive foods as he was in fine wines, he could mention a recent culinary use of nature's provender and awaiting a future feast—from there moving, rather surprisingly, into somber reflections: first on the dark uncertainty of life in a world being torn apart by war, then on a sense of his inability to measure up to his expectations for accomplishment, and finally on the current wine business.

... The rains have given us an early spring and also have brought wonderful green grass in the fields. Some of the more tender grasses are very good for cream soup while others are very fine in simple salads. I had both last Sunday and it was a fine combination.

The early lambs (those of last September and October) are just getting to the proper size and I am anticipating some good meat in a week or two. As a matter of fact good food is plentiful now—and the best philosophy it seems is to live every minute to its fullest, taking advantage of all that one's means and opportunities offer. Because there is no way of predicting just what the future will bring. This has always been true but it seems more so now.

The winter has been a good one here. Sales of wines were high—though not so high as anticipated—and there is a general mood of satisfaction in the industry. I do not believe in self-satisfaction and find myself constantly disatisfied [*sic*] with my own work. But perhaps a certain amount of self-satisfaction is all right if it leads to a really intelligent examination of the position of the industry. The whole set-up of the industry just now trends to larger and larger units and this does not mean better and better wines but the contrary. [1/30/41]

A month later, Amerine—with literary leanings that Street might appreciate—started a note to him by quoting some lines from "Time, You Old Gypsy Man" by British poet Ralph Hodgson; its images moved from a restless itinerary ("Last week in Babylon, / Last night in Rome ...") to finality in the tomb. Amerine's mood was brooding and bleak (probably he was already anticipating being drafted if the U.S. entered the war); still, he managed to see hope of redemption in wine. Yet how he wanted wine consumers to push the California vintners into reform!

Today is so fascinating—but it is only because tomorrow is so damnably dark. Whatever ray of light one can find today must be in the individual. There are no hopes for nations. The sins of the past, of some, and of the present of others, will eventually bring them low. Strangely enough it is in France that perchance the love of life and light will again spring.

And it is because the only optimism today is in the individual that I find so much pleasure in working with and for wines. In wine there is joy and life and light. How much pleasure and relaxation it could bring to Americans if they could only drink it with understanding and without excess. But how few do, or can!!

Two changes however need to transpire. One in the basic attitude of Americans towards alcoholic beverages and the other in the type of wines made and in their proper distribution. How difficult it is to find really "light" wines—wines which one can drink without becoming sleepy!!...

The other problem of quality wines is, with the exception of Ray, still pretty much unsolved. There does not seem, even with the New York demand, to be a profound spiritual interest in quality which is, of course, very important. You would be surprised at how little interest many winemakers have in their vineyards. The vineyard is paramount. If good varieties are not planted and properly cared for there can be no fine wines. Prof. Winkler and I have both been practically jeered for suggesting that more care in harvesting would pay dividends in cleaner fermentations and better keeping quality. [3/1/41]

Establishing and ensuring wine quality in California was ever the holy grail for both Martin Ray and Maynard Amerine. And although they agreed on the measures that needed to be taken to achieve it, each already took a distinctive approach to bringing the needed changes into fruition. ▪

3/ This means, particularly in the San Joaquin valley, a plentiful supply of grapes for the 1941 vintage. The consumption is still increasing.

Incidentally, have you found any Eastern wines you can drink?

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[Excerpt from Maynard Amerine's handwritten letter to Julian Street, 1 March 1941.
See "Vinaceous Correspondents," beginning p.14]