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

This portion of the long-continuing series profiling Martin Ray, the notoriously pugnacious wine-quality advocator—often using his own written words—approaches the termination time of his close friendship with noted UC Davis enologist Dr. Maynard Amerine during 1955. This impasse came over their growing disagreement over MR's strong-arm tactics in trying to induce the more reputable California wineries to plant more acreage of fine winegrape varieties and to produce honestly labeled varietal wines. The author, MR's stepdaughter, is the coauthor with her mother, Eleanor Ray, of Vineyards in the Sky: The Life of Legendary Vintner Martin Ray *(1993; 2006). Thanks again are due to Special Collections at UC Davis Library, which has housed the Martin and Eleanor Ray Papers since 1999.*

PART III. MARTIN RAY AND MAYNARD AMERINE (1937-1976)
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By the start of June 1955 Martin Ray felt he was on the verge of achieving what he had been working to bring about for nearly two decades: the imposition of quality control measures on that smaller portion of California's wine industry which made and marketed wines superior to the jug and mass-produced generic ones—often proclaiming them to be varietals. And why wouldn't MR be buoyant? His lengthy phone talks with Louis Gomberg, the organizer of the new Premium Wine Producers of California group (PWP), as well as some letter exchanges between them, indicated that the PWP seemed almost ready to cave in to his demands.

Gomberg had said that he intended to introduce at the group's meeting on June 2nd MR's proposals for a form of QC that the member wineries would agree to undertake and police themselves. Adhering to new self-imposed rules would not only improve among connoisseurs at home and abroad the abject reputation overall of the state's "better" wines, but it should prevent having strict measures forced upon them later by government regulatory agencies. Behind this reasoning, however, lay MR's confidence in his prior threat to expose to the national press various wineries' malpractices and deceits—unless they capitulated by publicly declaring their intention to undertake the reforms he insisted upon.

But at that early June gathering LG decided that persuasion time hadn't yet arrived, for not only were several key members absent (ones possibly favoring quality improvement) but indifference or downright opposition among attendees must have been detectable. Soft-pedaling whatever he had to say about Ray's QC position, Gomberg didn't ask for a vote. He called MR afterwards.

Here is what MR then reported to his friend Maynard Amerine, several days after he and Eleanor had dined at his home in Davis. It showed his intention of passing on to Maynard the responsibility of actually designing the QC plan's specifics. He now portrayed himself primarily as the agent for change, who was forcing this crucial quality-ensuring action upon reform-resistant wineries through tough public relations tactics.

> Gomberg phoned yesterday to tell me what he is writing. Herman [Wente] and [Robert] Mondavi are still in New York. They could not act but he felt the feverish anger had subsided and he personally believes that they will go on record next meeting with all present as approving quality control. He said he felt that Herman [Wente], John [Daniel, of Inglenook], [Aldo] Fabbrini [Beaulieu's general manager] and [Robert] Mondavi would like first to come down to Saratoga and have a talk with me. He said the whole thing had come up so suddenly it was difficult to imagine but he believes they will go for it. I told him that if they did, the thing to do would be to get you to write the "controls" and that in such case I would like to step aside and have you direct it. He said he thought that the idea was wonderful and that all would go for that, too. I told him that you and I have not been working together in this effort of mine and that surprised him. I made it quite clear that your speech [at the Wine Institute's Technical Advisory Committee; see #12] surprised me very much, coming as if so timed by mutual agreement between us. I obtained from the Wine Institute copies of the speech and sent one to him. Neither he nor the group attending had seen it, he said.
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> So there you are, Maynard. If they go for it, it will be the biggest job anyone has ever done for the industry—the actual writing of the controls. And it will be ours as is correct. And the growers can have credit for having allowed idealism to triumph [over] materialism! No matter about the past or what either of us has said. It is quite possible now that you can achieve

just what you have been working for so long. [6/4/55]

Four days later, Amerine hand-drafted or dictated his response, which was then typed up by a secretary on letterhead stationery of the University of California College of Agriculture / Agricultural Experiment Station. It was cc'd to Dr. Winkler. First, he answered a prior question by telling Martin that he didn't "know what Pinot St. George is"—meaning its origin or whether it was connected with "the Pinot family"—and that others at Davis also didn't seem to know either. Then he went on:

I am glad also that you told Gomberg yesterday "that you and I have not been working together in this effort of mine." Nothing could be truer than that. I have consistently and even persistently told you that I could not condone or support any such campaign as you have been carrying on because I felt strongly that the methods you were employing were wrong. I have said to you again and again that the ends do not justify the means and that one should not fight fire with fire. I believe this philosophically and personally. And I especially believe this when the ends are not clearly defined. [6/8/55]

These blunt statements shocked MR. He was more than disappointed at Maynard's words; he was both hurt and incensed. So shortly after receiving the letter, he wrote back, creating another of those monumental and often scolding missives addressed to Amerine during mid-1955, in which he recapitulated various major and minor talking points.

I am sorry you sent a copy to Dr. Winkler on account of its last paragraph. It could prejudice his views before I give him all the material [documents about MR's current Quality Control Fight, which he'd already written Winkler that he'd send; see #12]. And the University cannot possibly adopt your personal attitude. If my plans carry, you will be contacted in the not too distant future for comments by a publication of national distribution ... a quite natural thing since the University at Davis has been fighting throughout our viticultural history for precisely what I am working to bring about. As a matter of course, it might be said <u>you</u> more than anyone have inspired me to stand for what I am and you have supplied me with most of the information I have employed, giving me as recently as this month suggestions to help me even though at the time you strangely condemn me. When I told you <u>you</u> should be doing what I am doing, you replied that you had not been idle as I would see when your [May] 13th TAC [Technical Advisory Committee] speech be published. You even sent me a mimeographed copy of it. Yet, when I phoned to compliment you and asked for other copies to send to friends you backed away, sent me to the Wine Institute which in turn has taken an interesting stand I will report to you later on. Since you had made clear to me how you felt about my undertaking, I told Gomberg that you and I are not working together on this. I thought that a fair thing to do. I also told him that if Quality Control comes, I want you to write it if you can be secured to do the job. And I told him that at such time I would like to step aside, having done my part. I told him, too, that I wanted this thing to be the work of the growers themselves and that I wanted them to get credit for it if they underwrite it. But you have criticised <u>my methods</u>! Of all things. Morals are not involved in this thing, unless it be the immoral attitude and acts of the growers all down through their history. Now let me tell you, Maynard, there is nothing wrong with my methods. Nor is there any occasion for you to go off philosophizing on whether the ends justify the means and then to question even if the ends are clearly defined. We are concerned now with a situation that exists and which I have brought about by straightforwardness. In your recent speech referred to, you stated your own position so clearly that no one can see that it in any way differs from my own. Nor is there a difference. You merely speak in generalities whereas I have been specific. And you speak to me of my methods as if they would not bear inspection. I resent this with growing bitterness because that word has been associated in all minds with methods in no way related to any I have employed. You can, if you wish, continue your policy of the past years as favoring what I am plugging to bring about, stating only it is something that the University has had no hand in but that if the growers are ready for Quality Control you will be glad to assist them in any way possible. As a matter of fact, Quality Control would come as a grand climax to all that Dr. Winkler and you have worked for. Only by some well planned and administered Quality Control can your work ever actually succeed fully.

MR used history to bolster his argument and justify his tough-guy tactics, then proudly named some notable supporters.

You have been holding up to me the French Appellation Contrôlée and now when I make possible acceptance of something like it in an initial effort you speak of my <u>methods</u>. Consider long and well what methods brought the original controls to France and even the present Appellation Contrôlée. The former came as a result of sheer force, the latter as a result of circumstances not unlike our very own. There they at first beheaded offenders and even in recent years sent many a one to prison for his practices. Here we honor them and the assets of the entire viticultural effort of the state are drawn upon to advertise their fraudulently blended and labeled products! Think also of what Hilgard would have done in your position. The position of the growers is no different now than it was in his day. They have always been against improving quality if at the expense of their purse and often when the opposite was the case as would be [in] Quality Control. Where do you think

the drop of 1% in sales of our California wines the past year came from? And what of the increased sales of imports from 500,000 gallons in 1948 to 3,000,000 gallons in 1954? Is Berry Bros., Rudd wrong in approving all I have done? Is Louis Latour wrong? Is the Marquis of Lur Saluces wrong? Is Lichine wrong? Is Codman wrong? Are all our best domestic wine merchants wrong? Are John Esquin, Price, Lucia, wrong, too? Is every single person with whom I am presently in touch on this matter wrong, save only you? Is one of our greatest publications, to which I have supplied copies of all letters and exchanges [MR is referring to his and Eleanor's contacts with a *Life* magazine editor], also wrong? They are working with me and understand well the position of the growers, pointing out to me to my surprise just who among them would oppose. I repeat, we are concerned with a situation. It has passed quite beyond the stage of birth. In the beginning I did not envision this development nor the present possible success. But I would not be so foolish as to turn away from it.

We are not going to have Quality Control tomorrow. But whereas Gomberg told me at first that it would not come in our lifetime, he later reconsidered to say it was two or three years away. And now he tells me that he personally believes that something can be worked out now along the lines proposed by me. Of course the growers will try to delay it. Then they could appoint a committee to study it. They will try to kill it the way many a good bill of Congress has been killed. It is my job to prevent this if I can. I have purposely confined myself to narrow limitations in stating a plan because it could not be approved in a fully worked out and complicated plan. The thing is to get them to accept in principle the idea and then get them to delegate authority to write the plan so that it will be their plan. They would be much more inclined to vote it in than if it were thrust at them.

MR pointed out the chief differences between their two now obdurate stances, but also suggested how they could be reconciled:

You, Maynard, are not of the industry. You are in a very real sense supported by the industry, directly or indirectly. You have provided the research and work-background that has made possible consideration of Quality Control. Without the work of the University, Quality Control would never come in the foreseeable future. The whole purpose of the Viticultural efforts of the University is aimed at such an achievement. Your speech points out clearly this fact as well as the faults that must be so corrected. But your work alone can never do more than bring the industry up to the point where it will do some such thing to bring about your proposed reforms and safeguard them. You must remember, I am of the industry. If this thing can be brought about, it will be the growers who do it, as I have pointed out to them, saying that my proposal is that we sit down together and work out what we want, then delegate authority and get it done. You will be in no different position than this newly formed Premium Wine Growers [*sic*] of California if you go on record as against our plan. It was only contemplation of such an untenable position that caused them at first to reconsider. Perhaps you will prefer to remain against. That is for you to decide. But I can tell you it would be much better if you were to adopt the attitude of "It is well known that the policy of the University has always been to lend itself to improved standards in our winegrowing, and if the growers see fit to establish some form of self-imposed quality control we will most certainly aid them in all ways possible both in pointing out the mistakes that can be made and the benefits that can accrue from such a plan which, if properly brought into being can be a very great step forward for the industry." I have not asked you to help me. You have, nevertheless. I have cleared you of being in any way associated with my efforts, because you said you would not support them. But if you are consulted in an advisory way, that is another matter, and I know I can always count on you. By constantly keeping after the growers all these years in the very way I have in my mimeographed articles that have run into some 20,000 copies at times [!], you have become respected but hated, too. It is no secret within the industry that some of the letters you have written to members, some of the talks you have made and some of the teachings at Davis have caused many growers to become angered. They would have your head if they could bring it about. Throughout all this I have stood beside you because our interests were common and you were obviously right. You will do well to stand behind me now, however silent, ready to lend aid to a plan when, as and if it comes about that it is further considered and possibly adopted.

MR wanted Maynard to recognize that what he had been saying, writing, and *doing* had real historic value for the wine industry, even though his enologist friend now wanted to dissociate himself completely from all of it.

Joe Jackson has requested Melville to place with the Bancroft Library all correspondence on this subject and he tells me he has done so. This letter I am not sending in. Let's forget pettiness and work together. The fact is, I am working on what you want. And you are the man to carry it through when the time comes. I have no preconceived ideas beyond a broad approach to what we have stood for and discussed in full agreement all these nearly 20 years. I beg of you to stop speaking about disapproval of my methods. It is vicious. For by so speaking you suggest something evil, when the very opposite is the truth. Your caution and carefulness have not won you the love of the growers any more than my forthright approach!

Then MR told Maynard at length about his frustrating attempt to obtain more copies of Amerine's TAC talk at the Wine Institute. (See #12.) Finally he revealed what would transpire very soon on Mt. Eden. It appeared that his and Eleanor's efforts to engage some members of the press in revealing the skullduggery going on within California's wine industry was nearing fruition. By keeping up pressure on the wineries and bringing the hard facts and controversies out in the open, MR felt confident that quality control could finally be engendered.

> After all, when you told the growers some years back of your hospital research on cheap sweet wines and their effects on alcoholism and pointed out that they should plant varieties that could be picked earlier in acid and make light table wines before they brought prohibition on themselves again, what did they do? Nothing! Nor would anything have come of your recent speech, they even suppress it! But with your talks and your research and all the good-will of the University behind quality control it could be the greatest single step forward in the entire history of the industry. I repeat for emphasis! And I do not ask anything of you that is not what the attitude of the University should be. You can lend your hand when and if it is asked. And you cannot afford to attack me on the flimsy grounds that you do not like my methods. I did not like you saying this to Dr. Winkler. It was for him to decide without your putting into his mind there is something wrong with my straightforwardness, an approach which no one else has the strength to initiate.
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> One of my strongest assets in this activity is the known friendship between us and between the University and me. It is not my idea to destroy this understanding. Our friendship must stand!

Obviously MR didn't quite realize that this "known friendship" had become a downright professional liability to Maynard Amerine. And before signing off, he reminded his friend that he'd agreed to put on a dinner at his Davis home for the Rays' new fast-friends—the leading performers (presented in #8) who would soon be appearing in nearby Sacramento in The Teahouse of the August Moon.

> Expect to hear from Burgess Meredith shortly as to which date for the dinner with you. I will advise. Must breakfast now. [6/10/55]

Amerine sent only a brief response to MR's long harangue on UC letterhead notepaper.

> Dear Martin: I am never idle so you should not surmise that I support your campaign from that standpoint. I am thinking of retiring to a Monastery directly after the Short Course (Lake Tahoe) and I will return to Davis only for Meredith's dinner. [6/15/55]

MR began his reply with this:

> If you are thinking of retiring to a Monastery, do tell me more about it! I would like to know the Order, if it is devoted or friendly to wines and if so if it has good vineyards and wines. For, I would like to retire to such a Monastery, too! And who wouldn't, at times! [6/19/55]

But being Martin Ray, he would have a lot more to say in this latest letter. (See the final subhead section.)

Aiming for the Big News Break

From the start of their Wine Quality Fight both Rays engaged in frequent communications, in letters and over the phone, with several writers they knew and some magazine editors they didn't know. And despite their criticisms of both John Melville and his *Guide to California Wines*, when sending off to him MR's initial correspondence with Gomberg they tried to gain his commitment to writing an article about the urgent need for quality control—featuring, of course, MR's current yet long-held position. At the time, Eleanor had even composed a three-page letter detailing for Melville how he could research and write an article appropriate for the New Yorker. The Rays decided not to send it but—as they customarily did with rejected drafts—kept the original on file. In the shorter letter sent instead, she had even suggested that Melville infiltrate the next PWP meeting and report back to them on its transactions.

> Louis R. Gomberg is their Wine Consultant in charge of all this furor, as you see from Rusty's letter. He may suspect you of being the chappie referred to in Rusty's letter to him, so you'll have to let him know you're out to do an impartial reporting job or maybe you won't get in. [5/29/55]

Melville diplomatically declined the Rays' assignment of undertaking to write something that might be grabbed up by a major publication.

> Read letters to Gomberg with great interest and will follow developments. However I could not possibly have the time to study the subject thoroughly and do the necessary research for proper articles at this time. I would rather concentrate, besides, on stressing the necessity of constantly improving the quality of California wines rather than get involved unnecessarily by jumping into the fray. I have no wish to antagonize the majority of the producers of the so called premium wines and I think it would be foolish for me to do so. Also, I think you will agree with me. [6/2/55]

In their two-person battle with the California wine industry, the Rays had focused on a theme long favored by MR: the plummeting of quality standards in almost all facets of American life and culture. They saw this frightful decline as escalating alarmingly and felt that waging the fight for quality in wine had a better chance to win than in other areas of American culture. ER was researching and writing her own lengthy coverage of the largely dismal

history of quality-promoting efforts in California's wine industry (see #10), to send out to their wine writer contacts and a few interested magazine editors. At least two writers they knew had now tentatively agreed to compose a piece about the present deplorable situation with California's wine quality.

From the start, MR had let Gomberg know—and, through him, had put the PWP membership on alert—that he was cultivating contacts with several national magazines as well as print news organizations. (In the mid-1950s the new media of TV, with news programs and talk shows, was still in the fledgling stage. Besides, MR despised television and derided friends who watched it. He even avoided listening to the radio and out of principle never saw movies.) Thus MR had written to Gomberg in mid-May:

> ... I received word that one of the articles I have inspired to be written, to put a burr under the tails of some of these chaps [PWP winery owners], will appear at an early date in a magazine of wide circulation. I have turned over to the author all this correspondence for material on the growers involved. He will do whatever research he likes among retailers, importers, consumers. [5/16/55]

Less than two weeks later, MR again sent another letter to Gomberg. It indicates how they sometimes discussed things rather amicably over the phone. It also shows how the Rays were working toward establishing a definite deadline for releasing news about the quality control issue to their press contacts. Thus MR warned Gomberg to alert the PWP membership to the crucial importance of deciding whether or not they assented to the very principle of self-imposed quality control that he demanded of them. If they agreed, they would then work on establishing a definite plan to be enacted. But if they did *not* agree, Martin Ray would quickly expose in news releases the fact that the collective membership of PWP had voted *against* improving quality and honesty in the wines they made. Earlier and often enough MR had made this threat; in this letter, however, he now took a more positive tone, which approached fond fantasy.

> Confirming our most recent telephone conversation relative to the presentation to your members on June 2nd of the plan for self imposed quality control, I would like it to be pointed out that I have now completed arrangements for breaking the story of quality control with a tie-in to the various great steps forward taken by the California growers over the past 100 years.
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> The news break will be on a Sunday—either June 11th or June 18th, as you may designate, and it will have a tremendous audience to be followed by a magazine story in a national publication and in which each of the growers who take part in the initial decision will be interviewed and quoted. The various people who have been instrumental in bringing this about who are outside the actual industry will also be quoted....
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> The news release will be presented as the greatest single step forward in our viticultural history. It gives me great pleasure to present the opportunity for this reform. The increased prestige and other rewards to the growers will be great. [5/28/55]

Meanwhile, MR's current camaraderie with actor Burgess Meredith had revived his contact with their mutual friend John Steinbeck, who in the late '30s and early '40s often had both worked and relaxed at the Paul Masson vineyards and winery when Ray owned them. (Meredith began his friendship with Steinbeck in 1939 when playing the role of George in the movie *Of Mice and Men.*) After John relocated to New York City by the mid-1940s, communication between them had become sporadic. Probably it was Eleanor who had this brainstorm: Rusty should ask his influential and talented old friend to undertake an important mission within America's media center. Steinbeck's position as a contributing "editor-at-large" at the *Saturday Review of Literature* should at least enable him to contribute an op-ed, if not an entire article in that highbrow weekly magazine. And what about other useful press contacts he might have?

MR wrote to Steinbeck in early June. Before moving into the principal reason for his contacting John after some years—a big favor to ask of him—Rusty (John had used his nickname) sketched in personal updates (buying and developing new vineyard property, Elsie's death, his marriage to Eleanor), and then the background for the quality push. Some of that QC argument would be familiar to John, since it dated back to the period after Repeal, when the Steinbecks, living nearby in Los Gatos, knew well Rusty Ray's fighting spirit with regard to quality and promoting pure varietal wines.

> Our new place, Mt. Eden, adjoins the old but is up 2000 feet at the summit where we live looking down directly on the vineyards—there's no place like it anywhere, I'm sure you'd be crazy for it. Have you seen this new book just out, "A Guide to California Wines"? Joe [Joseph Henry] Jackson wrote the foreword, John Melville authored it, and Doubleday is doing a terrific promotional job here in California. We get top billing in the book— Melville said without qualification that we made "the finest and costliest wines of California." We've moved into front place in a comparatively short time after bringing out our well-aged varietals from this new place under our Martin Ray label—and we're now in a position where we no longer have any competition. We get $100 and $120 a case for our two champagnes, $48 a case for our Pinot Noir, and $36 for our Cabernet-

Sauvignon. We have had about as much recognition as anyone could hope for ... things are going mighty well. But as to the industry—! California wineries (and I refer to those who sell wines under their own labels and at more than $1 a bottle) stepped up production during war years to as much as ten times what their own vineyards would provide, because they could sell whatever amount they made, no matter how bad. The result is, the quality of most California wines has severely suffered, and imports which were half a million gallons in 1948 have increased to three million gallons in 1954, thus filling the quality gap. Sales of California table wines are now jeopardized, and the growers are clamoring to tax competing imports out of the way (the same old cry they've been raising all through California's viticultural history!). These growers proclaim the excellence of their wines and insist on a quality reputation they no longer deserve. They have just formed a group called the "Premium Wine Growers of California" [sic] which is devoted to keeping out imports and stepping up radio, TV and newspaper advertising of their wines, when they should be devoting their efforts to improving their wines, thus meeting competition.

So I'm at war with them, trying to force a self-imposed quality control like they have in every other wine country in the world. It is in fact a fight for quality. This fight has been lost in many fields, but there is a very good chance that I'm going to win it here, and if I do, it's because I have an effective economic lever to bring it about, the retailers. They're behind me, and the complaining growers now are squirming. They're holding a meeting today, and I've forced them into a position where they must either sponsor my plan for quality control or go on record against it. Dr. Amerine of UC Davis just gave a speech to the Technical Advisory Committee of the Wine Institute in which he ripped into the growers just as I have been doing for all their malpractices in which they blend away their quality and fraudulently label their wines.

The news story is going to break nationally later this month, whether or not these growers accept a self-imposed quality control. If they do, it will be the first time in history they've given in to quality objectives; if they don't, it's going to be a dramatic fight to report anyway. I'm going to send you a portfolio I'm getting together of all the letters which highlight this fight, and if you read them you'll have the entire picture, and will see at a glance the great significance of the struggle—symbolic of the quality struggle in all fields today.

Now came MR's expectable request of John.

I am wondering if you could do something on it—perhaps a little story or editorial in the Saturday Review, as they are always keenly interested in the fight for quality. You will find in the portfolio names you can quote for added spice.

I'd like to break the news story in New York papers, as soon as I have word from the growers as to whether they are going to accept or reject the quality control. If they reject, by breaking it in the press they'll be forced to reconsider. Don't you have some friend on one of the New York papers who could do a walloping job on this? I'd like your help on this, John, and in a way it's your sort of thing. Goddamn these big bastards who've gotten control of the industry—they no longer care what they put in the bottles, something must be done to stop them. You might be interested to know there's no opposition except from the growers themselves. Their organizer, Louis Gomberg (formerly of the Wine Institute, but fired because he was claiming to be favoring the interest of table wine growers!) said to me a month ago that such a control as I proposed couldn't possibly come in our lifetime; a couple of weeks ago he said such a thing couldn't come for two or three years at least; and right at this moment the fight is on to see whether or not they will accept it now! That's what pressure can do, and I'm going to continue to pressure them by every means I can get hold of. That's how close we are to victory.

Finally Rusty brought his long missive to a brief and personable conclusion.

With best of good wishes to you, and hoping we can get together up here on the mountaintop one of these days—you'll be struck with the greatness we've achieved with our wines today, far greater than ever before! [6/3/55]

Then the Rays began waiting impatiently for a response. Receiving nothing from Steinbeck during the week after mailing the letter, Rusty again wrote Steinbeck, injecting more urgency in his request for aid.

The Premium Winegrowers of California organization is making a tactical maneuver to smother the story value of this fight by delay. They say they can't consider such a big thing as quality control without having more time to think it over. I know exactly what will happen if I let them control it, and put off releasing the story. They'll delay and hedge until the many people now vitally interested in this fight will lose hope of its accomplishing anything, and all interest will evaporate. These same growers did the same thing to my effort toward quality control twenty years ago in the new Wine Institute organization. Now it's the same strategy all over again, with this newly formed "Premium" group. So I'm releasing the story of this fight on June 21—the news angle being that I've been pressured into telling all, giving the score on what's happened to date, giving the press the full story, including letters from big names and showing wide public interest in the outcome of this quality fight. Actually public interest if roused widely and sustained by the press may be the necessary force to make these growers finally give in to quality control, after all these years.

We have made arrangements to release the story in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston and Baltimore, but have no newspaper contact in New York, so are hoping either you will be able to do something on it, John, or hand it to some friend who will. The moment the news-story is broken a national magazine is going to follow it up, but it must be broken in the newspapers first. Whether or not you are able to help us with a New York newspaper story for Tuesday, June 21st, I'm hoping very much you may do something in the Saturday Review or in any other publication you may have in mind that would be interested in this quality fight.

I don't care how either story is handled. There's but one thing I would stress, I don't want individual growers of the opposition singled out, but refer to them as the growers' group; for, if they are hurt as individuals our chances of getting them to back quality control will be lessened. But if the story is slanted as if taking for granted they're finally come around to a mature point of view, with idealism triumphing over materialism, maybe they will come round!

Thanks very much for anything you can do, John. Wire or telephone me collect if you want anything further. With all the best personal regards— [6/12/55]

There was still another letter from MR to Steinbeck, a short one, composed and sent two days later. (Decisions and actions usually had to move fast with Martin Ray.)

You probably surmised that it's LIFE aiming at this story, if they can get the story broken first in the newspapers so they can pick it up and do a terrific exploratory job. I've just been talking with Dick Pollard, TIME-LIFE Bureau Chief in S.F.—and he stresses that he wants the story to break explosively with lots of controversy. He says the New York Times would be the best possible paper—is it possible that you could arrange this? Actually the more interest roused the better, he suggested Newsweek also be given the story. I know how busy you are, but do hope you have someone you can turn this over to who'd be vitally interested in this quality war and do a bang-up job just for the hell of it. There'd be less chance of interference back there. Here in California the Wine Institute is an advertiser to be reckoned with, and may be able to kill the story—Joe Jackson tells me he's certain they can get it killed. So you see much can depend on what a paper such as the New York Times does with it.

Steinbeck proved willing to help out to some degree by turning over the portfolio of documents that MR gave him to *SRL*'s publisher, who then sent it over to editors at *Collier's* magazine. But then the process stalled—doubtless meeting up with resistance from the advertising department. (See subhead section following the next one.) And the two old friends would never meet again. Steinbeck, covering the Republican convention in San Francisco in the following year, found a bottle of Martin Ray's rosé champagne, Sang de Pinot, chilled, waiting for him in his hotel room. Though scheduled to visit the Rays on Mt. Eden several days later, he never made it, to Rusty's dismay.

Courting Other Wine Writers

Another author whom the Rays were hoping would help their cause by writing something was now a wine columnist with the *Los Angeles Times*. Rusty Ray had first known Robert Balzer in the late '30s when as a seemingly feckless young man he hung around the Paul Masson winery. (MR later maintained that he had encouraged Bob to learn everything possible about wine and make a career of writing about it.) ER's letter to Balzer, sent in mid-June, indicates that the Rays' hope for a big spread in *Life* magazine, which for a while seemed imminent, had recently fizzled, at least for the time being. This was unfortunate for MR's ploy, since he had already warned Gomberg, and also indicated to Amerine and others, that a big story featuring his Wine Quality Control Fight was going to break by mid-June, at which time the growers' stand—against QC—would be revealed.

But the Rays hadn't yet given up hope for the big story, somewhere, and thought that Balzer might help them out. As ER wrote him,

We've all had our past excitements over LIFE possibilities that never came through. Still you can't ignore these possibilities, because when they do come through they do such a stupendous job in carrying through a message to everyone. They've told us exactly what they must have to pick up the story—an explosive news story with lots of controversy. This includes lots of contending quotes, including furious remarks against Rusty, I imagine, for stirring up what they (the other growers, the Wine Institute, the "Premium" organization, etc.) consider "this unfortunate situation." "What's unfortunate about it?" Rusty said to Gomberg. "I'd say it's most fortunate, if it can bring about the self-imposed quality control we need so badly!"

Anyway, it's my conviction that aside from any editorial or feature type story you may plan, if you could get some crack news writer friend to whip out a red-hot news flash on this and get it into print fast before some opposition "spy" kills it, maybe we can crack the LIFE story!! Wouldn't it be wonderful? If so we'll have to put on one stupendous celebration in Madame Pinot Champagne!

Carry on! With love— Eleanor

P.S. Rusty told Pollard of LIFE about your angle of approach to the story, that you've tasted fine wines in the various cellars but can't get these wines with any consistency, and he thinks it a fine angle, but said it should be sharpened up, however, so the public not only

understands that such wines can be made in Calif. but that they definitely are not generally available. Rusty says you can quote him as saying that Dr. Amerine told him that most of the great wines of Calif. are lost in the cellars where they are produced. Rusty says this is precisely the case—they are blended out. And adds that you don't have to speak of it as dishonest, but it should be stated that most of the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays and even Cabernets so labeled are not authentic. After all they've gotten a law that allows them 49% blending out which in itself destroys all varietal flavor, and such a loose law as that allows them to blend out entirely, for who challenges them but Rusty? Did you know, Bob, that this law reads that the 51% only of varietal in a wine is allowable only if the wine retains its varietal character? Amerine calls attention to this in his speech. Exact wording, as Amerine give it in his "Table Wines" book is as follows: "Varietal names for wines are authorized provided the wine derives it predominant taste, aroma, and other characteristics, and at least 51 per cent of its volume, from the given variety." The public should know that the fine wines of France are not permitted to be blended out this way. Rusty says it is difficult enough to make a truly fine wine of difficult varieties like the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay using 100% varietal, so they're hopeless when blended out. With delicate Chardonnay you can lose the precious varietal character just in moving a cask in the cellar, etc. Such varietals can't stand being tampered with; and when bended out they lose all identity. [6/14/55]

Wine writer John Storm (whose book *Invitation to Wine* emerged that year) had also been cultivated for the Ray's publicity purposes. When MR checked in with him in late June, he sent one of his precious copies of Amerine's TAC talk reprint that he had managed to purloin several weeks earlier from the Wine Institute.

Have been too busy to follow up on what's been going on with you re. the article on Quality Control. Enclosed is a copy of a recent speech made by Dr. Maynard Amerine, which has been suppressed by the Wine Institute, but Maynard sent me a copy, and I thought you might be greatly interested in reading it, to see that he substantiates every statement I have made. Strange as it may seem, Maynard and I were not working together, as it may appear. He planned this talk at precisely the same time that I was sending out those two first letters to Gomberg.

Incidentally, you might be interested to know that Dr. Winkler has made a recent survey of Traminer plantings in Napa, and found that no Traminer whatsoever existed there, but that Veltliner grapes have been sold as Traminer!

No wonder wine connoisseurs over the years have believed that European grape varieties do not grow true to character in California, due to persistent false claims.

We had a great dinner up here a week ago Sunday, at which John Melville played host to the Joe Jacksons as well as Doubleday people who've done such a superb job promoting his book. John is going to correct sections of the book when permitted for future editions, re. the false information given him by growers on White Pinot and Red Pinot; as he says, he was simply doing a reporting job on what they told him, and he's plenty annoyed to see that he was "had."

An additional enclosure that MR sent to Storm was an article (to be detailed in the next section) that had appeared some days before in a San Francisco Bay area newspaper.

Also I'm enclosing a recent newspaper clipping, supposedly on this Quality Control controversy, but you see how they leveled off all controversial angles, making it appear that a few of the boys have gotten together to improve quality, with complete amity!

Though MR was upset over it, he still found something good to say about this press exposure. His grand cause had not yet been relegated to the sidelines.

However, all publicity helps toward eventually pushing Quality Control into existence. The "Premium" group is still squirming, trying every possible dodge in order not to be put on record as definitely opposing Quality Control, yet won't approve the idea either.

He indicated that he was still engaged in a new tactic to get the PWP on board through some new negotiations with Louis Gomberg.

I'm now trying to get them to ask the U. of Calif. to draft a plan for them to consider. This would take it out of my hands altogether, but allow them [the PWP's vintner members] to save face. [6/28/55]

Meanwhile, the Rays were puzzling over this newspaper coverage implying that MR's leadership involvement had brought about quality control measures—prematurely giving the still unresolved situation a wholly positive spin. Yet the Premium Wine Producers group hadn't agreed to adopt *any* quality control measures ... or decided to reject them, either. Something odd had happened here.

So Who Jumped the Gun on QC?

Above the article's text was a photo of a man holding a large goblet partly filled with a dark-colored wine in his right hand; his left hand held a wine bottle. His puckered mouth indicates that he is savoring a mouthful of wine. Another partially filled wine glass sits on the table in front of him, and behind him can be seen three empty, souvenir wine bottles. Here is the long caption:

TASTE TELLS—Martin Ray, Saratoga vintner, smacks a speculative lip over two fine wines: California Pinot Noir and the famous Chambertin from Louis Latour vineyards of Burgundy. Ray is a key figure in organ-

izing Premium Wine Growers of California which aims to enforce labeling standards and put California wines in the running for the select wine market.

The headlines read:

TO STEM THE FOREIGN FLOW

Quality Wine Men Boosting Standards

And the article itself began this way:

California's quality wine producers are "jacking up" their standards with a self-imposed quality control organization to avoid being drowned in the virtual river of foreign wines flooding the United States.

Formation of the "Premium Wine Growers of California" [*sic*] as a policing organization was revealed yesterday by Martin Ray of Saratoga, maker of some of America's foremost wines. Ray said the organization at present will include in addition to his own, such famous wineries as Santa Clara Valley's Paul Masson and Almaden Vineyards, as well as the C. Mondavi & Sons of St. Helena, Inglenook Vineyard Co. of Rutherford, and Charles Krug, Louis Martini and Beaulieu Vineyards of Napa Valley.

Target of the organization is elimination of the ambiguous labeling customs of California wine makers which have enabled European wines to sweep the American market. Labeling customs long have been the focal point of a controversy within the wine industry ...

The entire article, containing some 700 words, gave MR's perspective on what was wrong and deceptive about the state's wine industry and why quality control was essential. But it presented QC as if it was already a "done deal." Yet it definitely was *not*—not yet, anyway. The text prepared for the article was actually what MR would have liked to release if the PWP members had endorsed the self-imposed quality controls he was demanding of them, which Gomberg had told him they were almost ready to do.

The Rays must have bought at least several issues of the newspaper that contained the article. Two eventually ended up in their albums. On one ER had later typed a commentary, in capital letters, over the photo: "This story was planted to deceive the public into thinking he joined them!" On the other, "'Premium Winegrowers' group would <u>not</u> go along with M.R.'s effort to impose Quality—would not even go on record as approving it." The Rays did not, however, bother to identify the newspaper that had published it or the date of publication. Most likely it was either the San Jose *Mercury* or the San Francisco *Chronicle*, with the reporter's interview set up by book columnist Joseph Henry Jackson, a wine-loving friend of the Rays.

But why did the Rays think the PWP had "planted" it? Martin Ray was the only person whom the unnamed reporter had interviewed for the article. And he was also the only one actually quoted—except for a brief remark by Dr. Maynard Amerine, given at the end and lifted from his TAC talk, when it was said that he had "recently told the Wine Institute that there is a clear need now to 'stop preaching quality and start practicing it.'" Louis Gomberg and the various "wine men" supposedly involved weren't even named—only some wineries. Moreover, the entire article made it look and sound as if MR was the group's main spokesman, not Louis Gomberg.

"Our objective," Ray said, "is not to legislate foreign wines out of the country, but to regain our rightful quality markets by producing wines equal to the best that France and Germany can offer."

"The day is at hand," Ray continued, "when the label that says the wine was bottled by 'The Premium Wine Growers of California' will mean as much to the American wine buyer as the famous 'Appellation Controlee' on a bottle of Bordeaux or Burgundy from France."

Target of the organization is elimination of the ambiguous labeling customs of California wine makers which have enabled European wines to sweep the American market.

Labeling customs long have been the focal point of a controversy within the wine industry over whether such varietal wines as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Riesling should be allowed to be blended and still sold under the grape variety name. Traminer, Gamay Beaujolais, Sauvignon [Blanc] and Semillon may also be included.

Such a designation will, in effect, set the high quality table wines apart from the huge bulk wine industry of California. The organization will place controls on the growing, making, tasting and bottling of the varietals. These now are bottled with only limited restrictions as to blending and are sold as America's competition for France's Burgundy and Bordeaux and for Germany's Rheingau and Moselle.

The organization also expects to eliminate from the quality market such ambiguous terms as "Red Pinot" and "White Pinot" when the wines are made from Pinot St. George and Chenin Blanc grapes instead of the hinted Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes....

Under the control organization, acreages of each varietal grape would be carefully recorded. Timing of harvest would be designated to assure that the flavor characteristics of the grapes is retained. Sample wines from each crush would be tested and stored and comparisons made frequently.

This would mean, Ray explained, that when a wine buyer pays the high price that varietal wines cost, the quality control label would assure him that the wine inside the bottle will be exactly as indicated.

Controversy over quality control and labeling has raged within the industry since the close of World War II. During the war, Ray explained, most wine producers

began blending varietals to meet the increased demand. In the last few years, however, foreign wine firms have taken advantage of this

Actually, California grapes of the same varieties are capable of producing wines every bit as good, and in some cases better than the foreign parent vines. Ray's own Pinot Noir, for example, is often tasted on a comparable basis with the famous Chambertin made by Louis Latour of Beaune, which is considered the greatest of the Pinot Noirs of Burgundy.

This fact often has been pointed out by Dr. Maynard Amerine, senior enologist of University of California, who declared recently that "many of California's great wines are lost in the cellars where they are made."

Everything in the article is pure Martin Ray, presenting his own view of the urgent need for QC. Furthermore, the name given in the article for the organization was *not* the Premium Wine Producers of California, but the incorrect Premium Wine Growers —a misnomer MR often used in his correspondence.

Much as they desired publicity, the Rays became incensed as they read the newspaper article. How had this news release come about? Paranoia quickly took hold. They figured that the Wine Institute's clever publicity people had persuaded their well-cultivated press contacts to trump MR's quality campaign, averting the potentially damaging situation by defusing all the controversy MR had stirred up within the Premium Wine Producers group. Had this been a clever trick of Louis Gomberg's?

But the article's topic itself had been set up some while ago. After all, there had been MR's previous statement (or threat, really) to Gomberg that he would release to the press on either June 11th or 18th the news of whether the PWP had endorsed quality control or else rejected it. There was the implicit warning that if they didn't go for it, the refusal would be made public, causing severe consequences among America's wine retailers and consumers. A negative vote, after all, would indicate that business would go on as usual—that the wineries didn't see the need to improve their bad reputations among connoisseurs.

A paragraph that MR had written in a letter to Amerine seems to pinpoint the interview date on Mt. Eden as June 10.

I have gotten up at 5:30 so as to write this letter. Today the press is going to be here all day, going over all the material I have assembled and all Eleanor's research material. They are extremely friendly to this matter and it will be tied in to the very long struggle for quality. The battle in many fields has been lost already. Here it is being fought with some hope of success. The outcome is not certain, but come what may we will be further along toward what must come. [6/10/55]

The article, then, must have been published on June 11 or 12, a day or two after the long interview took place. And there's no indication whatsoever to back up the Rays' contention that it had been "planted" either by Gomberg (who was still waiting for the membership to vote on acceptance of MR's proposal for introducing QC) or else some other nefarious person or organization, to gull wine lovers into believing that quality was on the way, and was willing to allow favorable press exposure crediting MR with heroically leading the campaign—to nowhere.

It appears, then, that the reporter who interviewed Martin Ray that day didn't understand that the information given to him during his visit to Mt. Eden was in fact conditional. His interviewee would scarcely have spoken so ebulliently had he known that the PWP group would soon shelve this latest push of his for quality control of California's better wines.

After that brief local news flurry there was nothing more. Nor did the Rays succeed in their strenuous attempt to publicize nationally their quality control fight out in California. They always maintained that the Wine Institute, and possibly various wineries and well-connected individuals in the wine business, had sabotaged their efforts by telling publications that if Martin Ray, his wines, or his QC agitations were ever even mentioned, they'd no longer run advertisements —thus cutting into significant revenues on which periodicals depended. And as if confirming their suspicion, from time to time in the coming years writers and editors who wanted to publish stories they'd written about the mesmeric Martin Ray and his pure, potent wines would report back to him that they had run up against intractable resistance from publishers.

Promotional Ploys ... and Some Backfires

Here's our new folder. How do you like it?" was how MR had ended his June 28 letter to John Storm. Despite intense involvement with their Wine Quality Fight, the Rays hadn't totally neglected marketing efforts. They wanted to produce a small, attractive price list that would present the Martin Ray Winery's currently shippable wines, including recent releases. Probably the embedded publicist, Eleanor, proposed quoting some notable peoples' praises of Martin Ray wines over the years. Printed on cardstock and then folded over, the outer side would use a reproduction of a horizontal black-and-white photograph, recently taken by actor Burgess Meredith, of MR leaning over to extract a wine bottle from a tirage in his cellar. On facing pages the inside right would proffer a list of available varietals and champagnes (six in all), their vintage dates, and prices per case; the quotations would appear on the

left. (In the future, when leftover fliers were abundant, they'd paste over the list with a typed one showing the new releases, and bottle prices were given, so that customers could mix wine selections, to be packed and shipped off in sturdy wooden boxes nailed at the top, emulating the French.)

FEB 1970

"A vineyard any Burgundian would be proud of."
DR. MAYNARD AMERINE
Author of "Table Wines"

"Wine which will make the vineyard known throughout the world . . . with commendable insistence Martin Ray has withdrawn his wines from comparison with other California (wines) and set his standards on par with any in the world. Favored by fortune and with wisdom to establish unique marketing practices (he) has stepped into leadership of an industry which may one day be able to emulate (his) puristic and classical methods."
ROBERT LAWRENCE BALZER
Author of "California's Best Wines"

"(His are) the great wines of California."
ALEXIS LICHINE Author of "The Wines of France"

"The highest priced, most expensively made, most carefully bottle-aged native vintages in the country . . . their quality is so high they cannot be neglected."
MABON: "ABC of America's Wines"

". . . the finest and costliest California wines . . . comparable to the finest wines of France."
MELVILLE: "Guide to California Wines"

". . . wines comparable in character and quality to the finest European growths in their greatest years."
DR. ANGELO PELLEGRINI
Author of "The Unprejudiced Palate"

"Mr. Ray . . . has done a lot to raise the standards of winemaking in California."
JOHN STORM: "An Invitation to Wines"

"I'd love to try (his Pinot Noir) on a good Burgundian. It would greatly astonish him to get that unmistakable, unforgettable flavor out of California. I'm still excited when I think of (his wines) . . . they prove what California can do if it ever gets around to following the best practices of the finest European vineyards. . . . He has made the best wines that have ever been made in the United States."
JULIAN STREET Author of "Wines"

Martin Ray
Saratoga, California
ESTABLISHED 1852

- MADAME PINOT CHAMPAGNE . . $180
  FREE-RUN JUICE OF PINOT NOIR
- BLANC DE NOIR CHAMPAGNE . . $200
  PALE-GOLD RARITY, PINOT NOIR NOT CRUSHED, PRESSED ONLY.
- SANG DE PINOT CHAMPAGNE . . $180
  CORAL-PINK PINOT NOIR PRESS
- CHAMPAGNE DE CHARDONNAY . . $180
  SUPERB BLANC DE BLANCS
- PINOT NOIR
  1964 FIRST CRUSH . . . . . .$ 96
  1962, 1964 GREAT CRUSH . . . 180
- CHARDONNAY
  1965 . . . . . .$ 96
  1966 FIRST CRUSH, 1967 . . . 120
  1966, 1968 180
  FINEST CASK 1966, 1968 . . . 240
- CABERNET SAUVIGNON
  1965 . . . . . .$ 96
  MARIAGE 1946-1949, UNIQUE. . 120
  1953, GREATEST OF CABERNETS. 180

RETAIL CASE PRICES

Probably when they were up at Davis on May 29th the Rays had asked Amerine to supply a brief comment about Martin Ray's wines, for use in their little brochure and other wine-marketing purposes. So Maynard Amerine obligingly wrote this on a small piece of paper, perhaps at the Rays' suggestion: "A vineyard any Burgundian would be proud of." After MR acknowledged the contribution in a letter written a few days after their visit to him, he indicated to his friend that only certain persons were right for this purpose; thus praise coming from a celebrated novelist who had been MR's friend during the Masson years, would be inappropriate.

Thanks for the "quote." That makes my little folder complete, in every way, as I wanted it. After all, there are not many people you can quote for one reason or another. For years I have kept a file, "Remarks Complementary" [*sic*] and as I look through all collected, there are hardly any at all I can use. The people are unknown to me, they are unknown to others or they are unpublished. You'd be surprised at how many names I could employ, and yet they would for one reason or another not serve the purpose here, often because of association. Take John Steinbeck. What he would say would only associate our wines with those of Cannery Row! Yet, he would let me use any statement! I have settled for those names that have published, and the 8 of you represent all different types and even fields but all have a common interest—wine. It is not necessarily the same kind of interest in wine. But I think taken all together the impression will be very good. [6/4/55]

In the earliest printing of the folder—along with laudatory comments from Dr. Maynard Amerine, Robert L. Balzer, Julian Street, Alexis Lichine, John Melville, Dr. Angelo Pellegrini, and Mary Mabon—MR had used a brief compliment from Frank Schoonmaker, who in his and Tom Marvel's 1941 book had called Paul Masson's "the best wines of California," deliberately failing to acknowledge that they were being vintaged by Martin Ray. This citation soon elicited a blast from Schoonmaker in New York City.

Dear Sir: My attention has been drawn to a folder which you have printed and presumably are circulating, in which you quote me.

As you are perfectly aware, the very flattering five words that you have taken from "American Wines" and printed out of context over my name without my permission were written of wines that have nothing whatsoever to do with those you are producing and marketing today. They were wines from old vines (not young vines) in an entirely different vineyard (a vineyard which has not belonged to you for over ten years)—wines made by a wine-maker other than yourself [i.e., Oliver Goulet, in his opinion] and which have no conceivable connection with those you now list, and not much resemblance to them. I must, therefore, ask you to withdraw this circular at once.

This folder would also lead the innocent consumer to suppose that what Julian Street said, was said of your actual vineyard and present wines, whereas you are quite aware that Julian Street was dead long before your present vineyard yielded its first grapes. Mary Mabon, too, was writing of wines of an entirely different origin when she said what she did, which you quote. I can only say that to use these quotations in this way seems to me grossly misleading.

Finally, I am astonished to note that you include in your circular the words "Established 1852." I must say that unless I am totally ignorant of the history of wine growing in the Santa Clara Valley, this claim can only be described as fraudulent. It is true that for a time, over a decade ago, you owned a corporation which had belonged to a man whose father-in-law [actually, the father-in-law's father-in-law] had founded a vineyard in 1852. This is as close to 1852 as I believe you come. If you can demonstrate the contrary I would be glad to see the proof. [6/28/55]

FS ended his curt letter by saying, "I feel that I must send copies of this letter to a number of my friends in the trade and I am doing so." Following the "cc" he listed their names, totaling 17 and all prominent in the wine industry, most of them winery proprietors—including the four whose wines MR had attacked in the widely circulated Gomberg letters (presented in #9).

MR naturally shot back at once an equally ill-spirited letter. "Dear Frank," he started out, as if to emphasize the fact that in former years, when both were devoted to the making and marketing of the finest varietal wines possible in the U.S., they had first-named each other. MR naturally suspected that Schoonmaker's nasty protest had been contrived by his enemies in the PWP group: notably Louis Benoist of Almaden, for which FS served as consultant and publicist.

Anyone knowing the fight I have been making for self-imposed Quality Control among the varietal wine growers of the state will see at a glance that your attack stems from my opposition.

MR reminded Schoonmaker of his attempt in 1941 to gain full partnership with MR in owning Masson—without turning over to MR the full amount of cash he'd agreed to bring to cement the deal. And after MR refused him, FS said he would "jerk the entire chapter" he'd written about Martin Ray from his forthcoming book. He'd neglected, however, to excise that particular statement about the Masson wines. (This incident was described in *WTQ*'s April 2004 Supplement.)

Then MR moved into full-scale defense.

Every important writer on California wines has always said substantially what you then said, only all current writers agree that our efforts here at this vineyard have eclipsed anything we ever did in the earlier days of which you wrote.

I have thus far made only an initial run of the folder, using two different covers to see which would prove most effective. I will remove your quotation from the final run.

Although I made some very fine wines at the old place, there were never any that compare in quality with those produced on this property. What you conveniently ignore is that the wines made at the old vineyard, which adjoins this mountain property, were not made exclusively from grapes grown in that vineyard. Some of the wines which you once sold for me and to which obviously you referred in the quotation I have reprinted originated from Almaden, some from Woodside, some from Napa, and some from the valley land below our old vineyard. Today we grow <u>all</u> our own grapes. The vineyard is but the carpenter's tool. Would you say that Roy Alciatore [owner-chef of Antoine's in New Orleans] could not continue to turn out magnificent dinners if he decided to build himself a new kitchen or if he found better suppliers? To a winegrower your inference is ridiculous!

Our vineyard is ten years old. You surely must know that some of the greatest wines coming out of France today are from vines not yet ten years old. By 1951 we had a great year; and 1952 and 1953 are even bigger years.

What better weapon could MR now wield than the name, and highly favorable opinion, of the nation's foremost enologist?

I could quote you the opinion of a lot of people as to these wines, but I think there is no judge you respect more than Dr. Maynard Amerine. Upon tasting through our Pinots upon his return from his sabbatical in Europe he said that if he never tasted another great Pinot grown in California he had that day tasted one, and he likened it in character and quality to the great ones of Burgundy.

As everyone knows I have always been my own winemaker, although my foreman [Oliver Goulet at Masson, whom Benoist had hired in 1941 to become Almaden's winemaker] was given that title at one time because I thought he deserved recognition. That was before any of our greatest wines were made.

Julian Street spoke of me personally and the wines I made. I have a very good file of letters to substantiate this. It is presumptuous for you to undertake to question the meaning of his words, particularly when he was my dearest friend, and you were not on friendly terms with him.

Now he defended the issue of the Martin Ray winery's claim to a corporate founding date, over a century earlier, that had originated with Etienne Thée in 1852. It got transferred to his son-in-law Charles Lefranc, and thence to *his* son-in-law, Paul Masson, and finally to Martin Ray. (Martin Ray wine labels for 1952 vintages therefore proclaimed this "Centennial Year.")

I <u>still</u> own that corporation! In selling certain of its assets including the old vineyard we amended our articles of incorporation so as to take my family name and make the old name essentially available to those who purchased the old vineyard [Seagram]. They thereupon formed a new corporation making use of part

of the old name [Paul Masson Corporation]. There is a clear line of succession from 1852 on, which the Alcohol Tax Unit long ago approved for me, and I have always carried the line "Established in 1852" on certain of my labels.

MR ended on a more conciliatory tone.

I have said of you in the past that I have never known you to fail to give just due to a wine in your hand. With this in mind I invite you to taste through our cellars so that you can see for yourself that your quotation which I used still holds true: "... the best wines of California," only it is more true today than ever, as is generally accepted wherever fine wines are known. After all, Frank, they do sell, and for prices roughly twice to three times as high as any other wines made in the country. You might say that is the final evidence that they are the finest. Would you venture to name others as good? And if so, why don't you offer them in the market at prices comparable to mine. [6/29/55]

Schoonmaker apparently didn't reply to the letter, and the offending quote was removed from the folder's next printing. If FS ever subsequently drank any wines made by Martin Ray, probably no word of his foe's reactions to them, whether negative or positive, ever got to MR himself, who continued to judge him a very clever but duplicitous, money-grubbing wine promoter and marketer. His opinion of Schoonmaker's character would be further lowered when he suspected that FS was behind the terrible nuisance he experienced four months later, when his bonded cellar was invaded by inspectors from ATTU (California's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Unit), bent on gathering evidence of various winemaking malpractices and illegalities. (MR's account of this will appear in the next installment.)

More Letters to Amerine

When Maynard sent that brief note to Martin expressing his current impulse to retire to a monastery—perhaps thereby to escape not only from the deluge of letters from MR, but also from all the ruckus he had been stirring up among Amerine's winemaking friends and acquaintances—MR had concurred with this escapist feeling. Then he had gone on, as he sometimes did, to reminisce about the heartwarming extended-family connections of his childhood years spent on his maternal grandparents' ranch in the area that is now Cupertino, and to express his regrets over what might have been.

In fact, that and kindred desires stem, I believe, directly from the deterioration of the family and particularly the family settled on the land and presided over by a head (of the house). I often think with nostalgia of our old home on the ranch and all the members of the family that came and went and joined together for great feasts and also to meet the tragedies that came our way. It was not until it was broken up by my mother, when she stood against the old people and with my brothers who would not work on the ranch, that I felt for the first time in my life that I would like some place of refuge to which I might go and knew that there was no such place —any longer. My grandmother was head of our family. My grandfather was too old to do the ranch work and they had looked to us boys to carry on. My mother thought we should be educated and she had no love of the ranch. That broke the family. The ranch was sold. The old people soon died. And there was never again a meeting of the family. There was no authority, no strong person to hold them together. Had they held on 10 years, Elsie would have been able to hold them together with me. I did not have the patience to bother with a lot of the relatives. But Elsie would have.

MR now at least had high hopes for the future of this mountainous land on which he had carved out new vineyards, especially since Eleanor had become his wife.

It is this family on the land I am trying here to build. I am greatly interested in the vines and wines, yes. But if it were not for the hope of rebuilding the family, I would have chucked it all for good long ago. The two, the family and the vineyard, are now inseparable in my mind. You can't rebuild what I seek and center your activities in a city apartment. There must be always the land and a home on it.

Then MR expressed once more to Maynard his dream of establishing a winegrowing dynasty on his hilltop. He was hopeful that Eleanor's three children, along with his new daughter-in-law (Peter's wife of nearly a year), would ultimately make his Mt. Eden wine kingdom hereditary, despite past conflicts over his autocratic, intrusive paternalism—a total contrast to their formerly single mother's freewheeling, child-empowering parenting style, which MR decried.

Eleanor and I have come a long way, particularly since the first of this year. Of course it's the wives the boys have and the man Bobo [ER's daughter, Barbara, by then living in NYC to escape from MR's clutches] marries will determine our success. But Terry has come around most amazingly since our understanding over the holiday. Or lack of the same, at the time. She and Peter are more considerate and more a part of everything than ever before. And Barclay is more thoughtful, shows clearly his desire of this thing which we have discussed. With Bobo we must wait and see [6/19/55].

MR was clearly trying to reestablish the emotional intimacy he had once shared with Maynard. Amerine, though, was already moving out of the personal and familial orbit circling around Martin Ray's forceful and controlling center.

[*To be continued in the next issue*]