Vinaceous Correspondents:
Martin Ray's Friendships with Eminent Oenophiles

The Third Article in a Series / Twelfth Section

by Barbara Marinacci

As with the last three installments of this long-running article about the friendship between California vintner Martin Ray and UC Davis enologist Maynard Amerine, this segment covers the critical period in mid-1955 when MR and his wife, Eleanor, were conducting their determined battle against prominent wineries and wine men in the industry's well-entrenched Establishment. They aimed to arouse widespread attention, especially among wine writers, retailers and connoisseurs, to their grand cause: pushing the better wineries into planting far more fine winegrape varieties and from them making unblended and honestly labeled varietals that would prove California's ability to produce world-class wines. By May, though, it was evident that Amerine, who disliked MR's pugilistic methods, might abandon their close alliance of almost 20 years. As before, the author thanks the staff of Special Collections of the UC Davis Library for providing access to the Martin and Eleanor Ray Papers and frequent assistance in copying documents.

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

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Maynard Amerine's note sent toward the end of May 1955 had alerted Martin Ray to the prospect of soon seeing evidence in print of his enologist friend's concurrent activism in promoting improved quality in California winemaking. "Be sure I get the publication of your TAC talk," MR quickly wrote back. "I know you are not idle, Maynard," he said. But that wasn't enough, for MR again wrote one of his lengthy letters (sent on May 27, four single-spaced pages).

Some days later, when MR could finally read the promised document, he saw that Maynard indeed had not become a slouch so far as promoting wine quality was concerned. As the text of Amerine's speech—given two weeks earlier, on May 13th, to the California Wine Institute's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)—would demonstrate, Amerine had scarcely been silent while MR and Eleanor were deeply immersed in their Wine Quality Control Fight, spending much of their time composing and duplicating the typed letters sent out to friends, acquaintances, and customers on their large mailing list.

In his above-mentioned message, Amerine also pointed out that long ago he had told MR that the name "Pinot Chardonnay" was a misnomer for both the grape and the wine made from it. But only recently had MR admitted his mistake. He changed his labels and price list accordingly, to plain "Chardonnay," while also alerting other growers to the correct varietal name used in France—as his adopted son Peter Martin Ray had confirmed in 1954 when visiting French vintners and viticulture researchers. (At the time, before DNA proved otherwise, it was also firmly declared that this white grape variety was *not* a mutant offspring of the Pinot Noir grape.)

So in his latest epistle MR couldn't resist reminding MA of a noteworthy UC Davis identification error in the past, which appears to have escaped the notice of wine scholars. The professional confusion during the post-Repeal period, even at Davis, over white grape identities may partly explain why—as MR invariably complained—most bottles labeled Pinot Chardonnay by other wineries didn't contain a wine with much, if indeed any, Chardonnay (or White Burgundy) identity. Sometimes growers and winemakers actually *thought* they had Chardonnay.

> But don't forget the University was wrong in 1936 and before. They were giving out Pinot BlancVrai cuttings as Chardonnay and visa versa. It was I who first investigated and called [Harold] Olmo in. He said he would check when he went to France. Upon his return shortly thereafter he confirmed his mistake and my findings.

Now having said this, MR decided to compliment Maynard as a way to show gratitude and even display some humility.

> I take no man's word unless I can know what he knows. You are the only man alive I would trust to buy wine for me. And you have aided me numerous times on vines, even as recently as last summer. My knowledge of vines is limited to very few varieties. I have gradually learned to know them well. In the beginning almost everything I did was wrong. Our friendship has matured sufficiently to permit us to speak out our minds and I won't hesitate to say what I believe and I

expect the same of you. You can never peg a man who won't speak his mind. I am not comfortable with them.

When writing to Amerine at this turbulent time in their relationship, MR didn't entirely neglect technical wine matters A day after sending off the previous letter, he asked Amerine to correct statements made in a recent publication by two UC Davis enologists. They had said that pink was the proper color of a rosé-type table or sparkling wine, and that an orange tint indicated undesirable oxidation or overaging.

There are so many things coming out in print that have to do with wines and which are untrue I simply cannot keep up to correcting them! But I did not expect to have to address Berg and Webb. I am sending the letter to you and I will ask that you hand it to them because I anticipate you may wish to discuss it between you.

Then he wrote several paragraphs explaining why rosés made from Pinot Noir grapes should be orange as "a great achievement" and *not* pink—as exemplified by Masson's Oeil de Perdrix (his renowned partridge-eye champagne) and, now, MR's Sang de Pinot (Pinot Blood). He also pointed out that the popular pink champagnes, or sparkling wines, were usually made from "doctored" (or dyed) white wines, not lightly pressed red ones.

Now, since there is so very much being said right now about the Pinot Noir, I think this should be straightened out. A letter to me will be satisfactory so that I may quote from it. And I hope that you are able to accept my statements and employ them for whatever comments may be published hereafter. Already I have been told by two people that our color is not right. One is Dr. Crahan [an oenophile with whom the Rays had been communicating and sometimes socializing]. I don't know where he got the idea. And last night John Melville wrote me at length criticising the color in our wine. God only knows where he got the idea. I know it was not original with him. I have blasted right back at both of them! But at all times, as in the past, I want to work with the University and I will be distressed if you cannot accept this correction. I will not sue you, however! So please correct. And thank you very much. [5/28/55]

Perhaps MR mailed the letter on the day he wrote it. Or maybe on the next day he just delivered it in person to the addressee, in Davis.

The Trip to Davis Inspires an Enlistment Effort

On May 29th Martin and Eleanor Ray drove northeastward to Davis, over a hundred miles away, to dine with Amerine at his home, as had been previously arranged. But Maynard had warned them that they couldn't stay there overnight, as was customary, for he had a houseguest—actually the Dr. Salvatore Lucia, who, as MR reported to Amerine in 1954, had disparaged him. In the conversation at Amerine's table that afternoon, everyone may have initially skirted the entire touchy issue of the Rays' Wine Quality Fight—though it's hard to picture MR, once he'd imbibed sufficient wine, refraining from fixating upon the topic occupying the center of his universe. And if he did "carry on," as he was wont to do, his host wouldn't have been at all pleased.

There's good indication, though, that this culinary convocation stirred up a new strategic move. Shortly before taking the trip to Davis, Maynard had informed MR that he was deliberately maintaining a professional *hors de combat* stance.

I have discussed your letters or copies with no one. I have not even spoken to Winkler of my thoughts thereon. [Undated but sent toward end of May 1955]

Since it had become clear to MR that Amerine wanted no part of these agitations aimed at forcing (or at least embarrassing) the Premium Wine Producers of California (PWP) into accepting some form of quality control, he decided he needed a new confederate at UC Davis. Possibly while at Amerine's home in Davis, MR decided he should try to engage Dr. Winkler. Since Maynard had refused to do it, Winkler might be willing to design and propose a practicable quality control plan that the Premium Wine Producers of California might actually accept.

Two days later, MR wrote a letter to Dr. Albert Winkler, UC Davis's renowned professor of viticulture, who had hired young Amerine to join the faculty there in 1935, even before he'd received his PhD from UC Berkeley in plant physiology. Given the directive to learn as much as he could about wine science, Amerine rapidly became the staff's main enologist as well as an expert wine taster. Also, he and Winkler together began their six-year investigation of which winegrape varieties would best succeed when grown under the various climatic conditions within California's many winegrowing regions.

So who better to approach now than Dr. Winkler—who apparently knew nothing as yet about the Rays' Wine Quality Control fight? In a final grace note to his lengthy letter to him, MR perhaps indicated the very time and place of this new inspiration.

I am happy to tell you that over the week-end Mrs. Ray and I had the pleasure of dinner at Dr. Amerine's house which occasioned our meeting your Provost, and I proposed there a toast to you which we all drank. I told of a conversation with you in the early years after Repeal when you were building your staff of young professors and I said that while now they are all well known and established under their own names it was you who brought them to the University and that credit

for their success must therefore always be shared. Were your ears itching? [5/31/55]

But first, of course, MR had needed to detail his intentions and recent activities.

Dear Dr. Winkler [MR was never on a first-name basis with him]: It has been nearly 20 years now since I asked you to come down to our old place [Paul Masson] and go over the vineyard with me. You will remember my interest from the first was in the better varieties and I set off on a replanting schedule at once. It was established as clearly justified by the straight unblended varietals when I finally brought them to market. And our new vineyard here has permitted a more concentrated effort on the wines themselves. We have held our varieties down to Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. As the vines became older we got from them better wines. 1948 was our first vintage at the new vineyard, 1953 has been our best. 1952 is the finest we have thus far brought to market.

During the past months I have been almost constantly in touch with retailers throughout the state. Our sales have been splendid and even at this early date in the reintroduction of our wines in many places I can say that our plan of operation is sound and profitable. But I have been greatly concerned to discover dealers have little respect for most California varietal wines, completely distrusting the varietal claims of the labels. They all know about the law permitting blending and they need no suggestion to visualize it being carried further than permitted. They know that there is little Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Traminer in the state. Yet they see all the labels carrying these names. The sales people who sell California wines are poorly trained whereas those who sell imports are as a group more expert at influencing the thinking of retailers. Within certain price brackets all this has permitted the increased of imports, in 1948 500,000 gallons, to 1954's total of 3,000,000. These are Gomberg's figures. And this has brought on the organization of the Premium Wine Growers [*sic*] of California.

MR finally got around to explaining to Winkler why he was writing this letter.

Now, I have not wanted to involve you in the effort which I am making to drive the growers to some form of self imposed quality control. Nevertheless, when and if we ever get it, it is something that must tie-in to your long and successful fight for the planting of fine varieties. For, it is well known in the industry and beyond that the University has pioneered in sponsoring the planting of fine varieties in California, and while the commercial aspect of bringing wine to market is out of your field, the control of quality in fine varietal wines would come as a magnificent climax to all your efforts. There has been rather an extensive accumulation of letters between Gomberg, Wente, John Daniel, Mondavi, the Marquise de Pins and myself—and involving other correspondence as well. So, I have kept a file of it for you and during the week it should be sufficiently complete to send along to you. It will give you the exact facts of the negotiation between us. Gomberg has agreed to submit my plan to the growers on June 2nd. [It's presented in #11 in the January 2007 *WTQ*.] Some of them are very bitter, as you may well understand. But their position is untenable and there has been and will continue to be sufficient hammering away at them to insure some form of quality control being brought a lot closer if, indeed it is not actually endorsed.

MR recognized that what he had been doing, and what he was doing now, was surely important to record for the interest and use of posterity, in the forms of nascent and idealistic vintners or wine scholars. Unfortunately for this vision of his, few people would ever learn about these documents, let alone actually look at them. Little is now known by the young, let alone remembered by the old, about those many dismal quality-dismissing years following Repeal, three decades and more, before the Wine Revolution began utterly transforming the high end of America's wine industry.

This file I will send you I would like to become a record for reference of viticultural students at Davis and all other interested parties, in the years to come when quality control has passed into history. I have found invaluable the old files of the San Francisco Examiner which in the years 1889 and thereafter so ably and completely reported the fight made by Professor Hilgard for improved quality and in which fight the growers opposed him so bitterly. For, it has showed a perfectly natural reaction which has continued right down to this day. He had nothing to back him up but his great prestige. Today there is an economic need for the growers to do something and it is my hope that they can see that this is their way out. It is the only way to meet the threat of growing imports—improve their wines sufficiently to meet the competition, then train those who sell their wines to intelligently present them and apply the stepped up sales effort which can then be insured. The years that have passed since repeal show very clearly that without some form of quality control our wines will not be made better. And in the years since the start of the last war we have seen what happens to quality when the growers have a sellers market.

In winding down his prospectus to Dr. Winkler, when telling of the highly positive responses he'd been getting from wine retailers and consumers, MR slyly hinted at one significant but unnamed approval-withholder, before moving on. It was Winkler's associate Amerine, of course.

You might be interested to know that of all those with whom I have had correspondence on this subject, all

support vigorously my efforts, save only the growers themselves and one other person. Those who are going to give us the publicity referred to see in this situation which has developed a parallel to the struggle for quality which has extended into nearly all of man's efforts and it is to be presented as man's struggle for quality. If the growers line up for the plan they will be tied-in as symbols of man's ideals triumphing over his purely materialistic motives. [5/31/55]

Over the next several months, some back-and-forth communications between Winkler and Martin Ray proceeded by mail, mostly in phone calls.

Further Doings with Melville

During May and June, while the whole quality issue raged on, the Rays were all agog about their new fast friendship with actor Burgess Meredith (portrayed in #8). They also had frequent contact—in letters, over the phone, and in person—with John Melville, whose just-published *Guide to California Wines* had quickly become a bestseller in the state (discussed in #10). In a letter to Amerine, written a week after their social trip to Davis, first MR, then ER, described Melville's recent visit to Mt. Eden.

Melville came bringing us a magnum of Louis Martini's "Pinot Noir" and a bottle of Cresta Blanca "Pinot Chardonnay." The Magnum had no Pinot Noir in it so far as I could tell. It was obviously a blend but I would not try to guess what it contained beyond Zinfandel. I was surprised to find he would put Zinfandel in this particular wine but it was unmistakable. He evidently does not have a standard blend because the wine was entirely different than the last Pinot Noir of his I tasted. That is a mistake, too. He should at least stick to one blend. But it illustrates what usage and time do to a maker. Evidently he has by now come to believe no one can tell the difference. I wonder what the magnum cost? I must ask.

The Cresta Blanca wine was not good. Perhaps it was made of Chardonnay. All I can say is that it, too, was unlike their last bottle I tasted. And if it was Chardonnay it was Chardonnay wasted because it had none of the varietal character of that grape. Melville said the wine maker swore to him that it is 100% Chardonnay. But then he also told Melville that it needed two years in bottle to bring out its varietal character! That, to me, is an admittance that suggests he knows it is not Chardonnay. Anyway, the wine would not hold up two years in bottle because it was low in acid and, surprising enough, did not have excess sulphur in it.

Melville told us, "You know who I really would like to have dinner with is Dr. Amerine." Would you rebuff him? He is most anxious to get in with you because he knows you know all the things he doesn't know. His plans are really most amazing. He has even planned so far ahead now that he includes a trip to France and Germany and a book on French and German wines! I wonder what will become of him. I don't see what can stop him. He evidently has enough money to live on so he will presumably keep right on going. His publisher is really going to town for him. They have Radio and TV shows lined up for him, and Joe Jackson seems to think he is a very great authority. Books, Inc. ordered 200 or 300 copies of the book, their first order. It is unbelievable! I see someone reviewed for the Chronicle yesterday, the name was James Benet. Know him? He starts out: "It has been for some years inevitable and desirable that there should appear a guide to California wines such as this; what was not inevitable was that it should be so wholly and satisfying and brilliantly informative." I wish to God my success was that inevitable! But goes to show what a man can do, especially if he gets the right names behind him. Your name gave him [Joseph Henry] Jackson. Joe Jackson [book columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*] sold his manuscript and Joe Jackson is going a long way in selling the book now.

It's hard to imagine the existence of someone whom Martin Ray couldn't outmaneuver and outtalk. But with this brazenly assertive fellow at times MR actually found himself outmatched.

I like to watch people like Melville. He is so intent that it is hardly possible to even briefly mention anything he has not set upon to discuss. Knowing this I jotted down some things I wanted to tell him. I put them by my side and time after time tried to speak of them. But when he had left after about 2 hours, my list was still there—I had been unable to crowd my points into the conversation. He is now in correspondence with Andre Simon, and Simon is making over him! He really means to establish himself permanently as the authority. Barring some act of God, he is going to get there. The one really great weakness he has is that he cannot taste a wine even as well as the average unskilled person. But I have an idea when out in public he has a method that prevents disclosure. That is not uncommon.

When ending his letter, Martin Ray felt ready now to resume, at least for a time, his work as the winegrower who loved riding his yellow Caterpillar tractor in both directions through his mountain vineyard acreage, between the rows of the thousands of vines that stood singly, 10 feet apart. With their "basket-pruned" canes securely strapped to redwood posts, they were still busily leafing out while producing infinite scores of those tiny clustered inflorescences that became grapes.

Have just finished plowing the second time. Now I must roll the ground before a wind brings the canes down in

the aisles else it will be too late as last year happened. Eleanor wants to thank you for us for that beautiful dinner ; we surely did have a beautiful day. Here she is.

So ER added a footnote to MR's letter. Similarly disliking Melville's wine gifts, in her inimitable, lighthearted way she portrayed how they turned rejection into a celebratory occasion.

Dear Maynard, we must be slipping, being so late in thanking you—or did we, and being still in worse shape than we even suspect, have lost track???? As usual it was all pure unadulterated pleasure at your house, and went by all too fast. Your little herbs you gave me are coming along, despite the really intense summer heat that hit here all of a sudden. It's been beautiful out on our veranda these past nights, full moon, wish your life allowed you time to sit out here with us and watch the moon rise for hours, as the orientals do—the past two nights we've done that, and it is so wonderful we had to go to bed—early last evening we drifted off to sleep out there, waking up just as the moon rose—we were tasting all these pretentious wines Melville left us, Rusty would just dump out the bottles, finally, letting them drain across the bricks and off the porch, somehow giving us a very satisfying gesture of contempt, rivers of the stuff flowing away from us into oblivion—then we'd drink some wonderful wine, sing to the guitar, laugh and talk—what a life, we couldn't pull ourselves away to bed till nigh onto 3 a.m.

If you can snatch away some time, do let us know, because you know how we'd love to have you up here with us whenever you can make it.

Much love from us both ... [6/6/55]

By early June, though, Maynard Amerine was pulling away from his intimate connection with the Rays and their Mt. Eden haven.

Amerine's Own Quality Crusade

Surely MR understood Amerine's need to maintain a careful distance from his Wine Quality Fight when in professional milieus. Yet he had expected better support from him in person, in the form of interested encouragement instead of cold censure. After all, in the past, in MR's and Elsie's, then Eleanor's, company, Maynard had often gossiped and complained about the overall situation in the state's wine industry. He would name people whose personalities he disliked or wineries whose methods he decried, and he'd dismiss or scorn many of their wines, some of which he and the Rays tasted together.

But Amerine had to be discreet; he couldn't, and didn't, behave this way publicly, whether vocally or in print. His position as an eminent professor and researcher at UC Davis required diplomatic behavior. Faculty members interacted frequently with the commercial vintners of all winery sizes. Much of their enological and viticultural research was basically funded by the big producers, and over the years numerous cutting-edge experimental projects went on jointly with venturesome winemakers, especially in Napa Valley. So when Amerine was out tasting wine among connoisseurs, as frequently happened, he felt obliged to be a prime spokesman and promoter for California wines, thereby likely to incur (as MR had twice reported to him) the utter disdain of any vinous Francophiles. Except when he was in military service in WWII, Amerine had never halted in his own efforts to change how things were done—to persuade vineyard owners to grow fine varietal winegrapes and help wineries and winemakers to start producing wines of the highest possible quality. After all, ever since the latter part of the 1930s he and Albert Winkler had been advocating the extensive planting and separate vintaging (with no blending) of the fine varieties, even though their efforts—like Martin Ray's parallel ones—for the most part were minimally heeded. Few growers planting, expanding, or replanting vineyards consulted recommendations in their 1944 landmark publication, "Composition and Quality of Must and Wines of California Grapes."

And now in mid-1955 MR's strident attacks and squabblings with winery proprietors had virtually gone public, alarming the far more genteel and circumspect Amerine. When MR started exposing wineries' deceptions to retailers and cultivating national press representatives to reveal winemaking malpractices, his hot dispute with the wine industry took on a blackmail mien. This wasn't gentlemanly behavior. Ray's rough-house methods for bringing about better wine through quality control measures were unacceptably outré to Amerine.

Despite his friend's insinuation, though, Maynard wasn't abandoning his own wine quality advocacy. Apparently he hadn't told Martin much, if anything, about the presentation he was scheduled to give, and then gave, to attendees at the Wine Institute's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting on May 13, 1955. Later, of course, as he'd written MR in late May, he'd give him a copy, once his talk—"Some Facts and Fancies About Winemaking and Wines"—got printed up. It would serve as evidence of his own consistently held, quality-promoting position.

Contemporary wine aficionados who know little or nothing about the much-delayed planting of fine winegrape varieties and the slow development of high-caliber winemaking in the U.S. might take interest. Professor Amerine's presentation of many hard-hitting facts of that time, delivered over a half-century ago. What he said indicates the kind of dialogues he and MR had been having over the years. But there was a significant difference between what

the two men said. In his TAC talk the prudent Amerine didn't name names, as MR had been doing in specifying vintners' flagrant winegrowing sins and marketing deceptions. His talk discloses the wine industry's low point in the mid-1950s.

When Amerine received from the Wine Institute a set of mimeographed copies of his talk for his own use, he sent one to MR. It probably arrived in early June, just after the Rays had visited him. Much of the paper's contents the Rays, of course, had heard already from their UC Davis friend and discussed with him. But how good it was to see it here "in print"! Yes indeed, Maynard hadn't abandoned the battlefield after all, even though he no longer fought at Martin's side. So Martin was delighted now to read the tough talk Amerine had given. Amerine even started out by commenting, albeit obliquely, on the PWP's intention to widely promote California's "premium" wines.

> It is much easier to say that we are producing the world's finest wines than it is to make critical suggestions about the quality of our wines. However, there is nothing to be gained by joining a mutual admiration society. What I propose is to outline some of the fallacies that I believe the California wine industry is operating under and to suggest certain other points of view which appear to me to be more logical. Nothing much that I have to say is new. But perhaps the organization of the material will be new to you. Many of these points have been discussed previously, both at industry meetings, in private conversations with my friends in the industry and with my colleagues in the University. The errors or misinterpretations which remain, however, are my own.
>
> Let us consider, first of all, the varietal problem. During the last 20 years we have preached consistently, year in and year out, that our variety plantings needed to be revised. There have been some changes, but how many California Rhine wines contain any Riesling grapes? Even if you consider Sylvaner a Riesling variety, which is stretching the point pretty far. And, how many California Rieslings have a distinct and recognizable Riesling odor? And how many California white Riesling (not Johannisberger) contain more than 51% White Riesling? ... Just before the war there was a large howl from many producers because the ATU [California's Alcohol Tax Unit] took the attitude that Riesling was a varietal wine. The attitude of some is that if they buy 50 tons of Chardonnay [grapes] they should be entitled to sell almost any amount of Chardonnay wine. I have heard of one case where 500 gallons of Chardonnay were sold. This then became 1000 gallons of Chardonnay; in a second transfer it became 2000 gallons. Considering that the original 500 gallons was already blended the final wine was about 12% Chardonnay!
>
> What is needed is a regular supply of high quality grapes. This we do not have.
>
> Closely connected with this problem is the utilization of these varietal types and their proper naming.
>
> A type name is intended to tell the consumer what he is getting: silk or wool or cotton or rayon or nylon or mixtures; small, medium or large white or brown eggs; ale or light beer; etc. The types are distinct first because of their unique origin or unique processing or both. The value of a type name is that it conditions the consumer to expect a certain type of product. And such a consumer is a most valuable one because his sales resistance is less and hence specific sales promotion is not so necessary.
>
> Now, one does not need to be very perceptive to note that there is considerable confusion about types in California. After Repeal only generic names were employed. These proved limited in scope because they had no meaning. They still do not have except in a most general way. Claret to one is burgundy to another. Some bottle both out of the same tank–?one time out of the claret tank and the next time out of the burgundy tank. Moreover, where a firm does make a distinction between the two the distinction may be the opposite of another firm and a third may have entirely different ideas regarding the characteristic flavor which each should have. It is doubtful if any very marked distinction can be developed for generic table wine types separate from some distinction in the varietal components of each. At least it appears impracticable at present.
>
> Several years ago the ATU approved sweet burgundy as a type name. At the time I protested vigorously in writing and was informed that some sort of industry need justified the name even though no such type existed in France.

Besides the numerous names for generic wine types, there was the matter of vintaging fine winegrapes and then marketing named varietals.

> Even today [the meeting must have started with a wine tasting] you may have noted some of our so-called Cabernets had only a small amount of Cabernet aroma. A type name to have any value must cover a wine that is distinctive and different from all other wines.
>
> There is another and more painful aspect of this. Tasting our generic type named wines, burgundy, chablis, sauterne, rhine, sherry, champagne, port, with their wide range in quality, odor, color, the public soon recognizes that each of them does <u>not</u> represent a single type but a variety of types. They also know that a French burgundy will always have some Pinot character. Therefore, the consumer sets up by that as <u>the</u> type.

Here Amerine seemed to address the matter of competition from foreign, especially French wines that so perturbed the California winegrowers in the

Premium Wine Producers group—most of whom surely had representatives, their winemakers, at this TAC meeting.

> What we are doing when we use European type names is to give European wines free advertising as the original prototype. I have long advocated dropping this free advertising service. In 20 years the invidious comparisons would disappear and our native types would stand on their own characteristics and not invite comparison with foreign types.

"Now, what is to be done?" Amerine then asked, pointing out that both the Wine Institute and this Technical Advisory Committee had asked specific faculty members at UC Davis to help set the wine industry standards. He made it clear, though, that leaders within the wine industry itself were the ones who had to make decisions and take the essential actions to change conditions that caused confusion and disapproval among wine consumers.

> This is very well and we appreciate the confidence that the industry has in the University, but no standards can really be developed unless they arise out of the industry. The industry must recognize that the need for them is so great that they will respect and adhere to the standards set up even when there is a temporary inconvenience.

But Amerine reminded his listeners of historic reality: resistance to new quality-enforcing measures in the past had come from the winery people—implying that therefore they would likely continue.

> When the present state Public Health Code was set up we tried to get the industry to put teeth into the wine standards. However, the sauterne sugar standards were removed entirely. The sherry standards, previously mentioned, were manipulated so as to allow pale dry sherry to be sweet and the total acid values were reduced until even Malaga Chablis was possible.

Saying that "The essentials are clear," Amerine began making strong recommendations for specific changes, such as tightening varietal regulations so that grape varieties should be properly named and overcropping eliminated. Also, the 51% varietal content regulation could be applied only if "the wine has the characteristic flavor of the variety named." The industry should also start a stricter control of generic names.

So how might improvement goals be reached? Amerine proposed that industry members "must be sold on wine as a beverage first." Mostly abandoning formal prose, he proceeded to make a series of suggestions, and even demands, in numbered entries.

Winery managers and employees should know

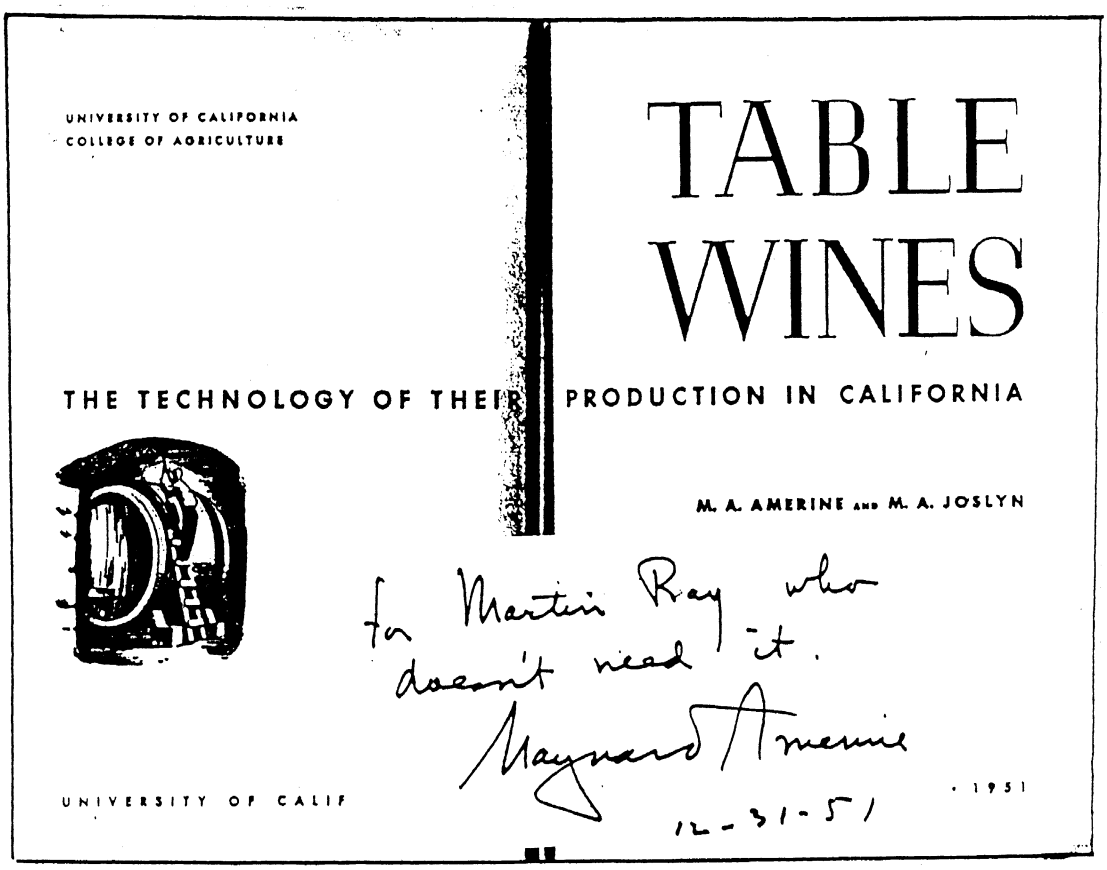
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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TABLE WINES

THE TECHNOLOGY OF THEIR PRODUCTION IN CALIFORNIA

M. A. AMERINE AND M. A. JOSLYN

for Martin Ray who doesn't need it.
Maynard Amerine
12-31-51

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF · 1951

their jobs technically by improving "tasting mechanics," since wineries' tasters often "mark bad wines as good wines." So people should "Practice. Study. Practice." Great advances could be made even in generic wines through deft blending that might include "discrete use of old wine." Competitors' wines should be bought and sampled—tasted blind and using some sort of statistical rating system.

Amerine then provided painful evidence of the wine industry's poor support of technical training and continuing education in viticulture and enology, so vital in ensuring the production of quality wines. For example, the American Society of Enologists had only 83 industry members within California, and not all of them worked in the wine industry. The ASE's journal had only a small number of subscribers, and its meeting last year had less than one hundred attendees.

Table Wines by Amerine and Joslyn

As for the book *Table Wines* authored by himself and Maynard Joslyn, and published by the University of California Press four years earlier, it had sold to date only 900 copies — even though "it represents the most authoritative treatise on the subject in English." The conclusion?—"This means little technical interest" among wine industry personnel. And with an underlying bitterness Amerine disclosed that the authors had been paid nothing at all for their writing efforts. (Separately, of course, he had told MR how he resented the popularity and sales of Melville's book.)

Amerine provided further evidence of poor interest in the technical aspects of winemaking. The highly useful, intensive "short course" program, which UC's Department of Viticulture had been giving for years to both outsiders and interested students had only 12 enrollees in 1952, 10 in 1953 and "As of today, there are only 4 for 1955." The low enrollment in the UC enology program was "a disgrace. Contrast Germany, Austria, and Italy, where enrollment is high and continuous. Even Spain has about 40 students in enology." (A half-century later, of course, the situation has changed dramatically, as reflected in enrollment statistics. During the recent academic year of 2005-06, a half-century since Amerine's complaint, the campus had 95 undergraduates majoring in viticulture and enology, and 22 enrolled in its M.S. program. Eight courses in viticulture were offered, and nine in enology. Not all applicants, by any means, seeking these degrees can be accommodated. The university's extension division offers a number of short courses throughout the year, and the Graduate School of Management helps to prepare MBA candidates for administrative positions in the wine industry—if they aren't working in it already. Various California state universities also offer degrees useful in the business of winegrowing: notably Fresno, but also Sonoma and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.)

Amerine asserted that wineries should employ many more technicians—and pay them far better. "They barely get more than unskilled, untrained labor today," he declared. "Every year prospective students call and ask about the wine industry prospects. I say—Go and talk to the technical people already in the industry. They seldom come back! While sales force bleeds off huge bonuses and commissions many technicians get little. The wine industry has lost a number of technicians for this reason alone in recent years. Competition for brains is very keen today. Of course, the technicians must perfect themselves professionally and this cannot be done in a day. They must have a thorough technical background."

When Amerine looked toward the future, he saw hope in "unrivaled climatic possibilities," observing from his own recent experience that "how they made wine in Germany in 1954"—under undependable, often adverse weather conditions—"should make us all be thankful to be in California." He moved on to some final suggestions. Though wineries' physical plants were mostly adequate, their fermenting rooms needed improvement; otherwise "much of wine quality's potential would be lost." Although winemaking itself was generally adequate, it "lacks imagination." Sodium dioxide was being overused as a "cure all. Anyone can make wine with SO_2." Since winery personnel tended to be ignorant about grape varieties, "How can you make varietal wines if you don't know how to recognize the varieties?" Improvements in crushing, pressing, and clarification should be made; "Also we will have more and more fermentation controls." Wineries could try out new wine types, such as vermouths and sherries, and new grape varieties, such as Gewürztraminer, Orange Muscat, Zinfandel. And they should introduce processes like continuous fermentation, fractional blending, and controlled aging systems.

Impatient to end his peroration, Dr. Maynard A. Amerine had jotted down notes that got reproduced in the text itself. "Theory and practice available. Time not a factor. It's 22 years since Repeal!" From his perspective there was no excuse for the wine industry's reluctance to advance rapidly into producing the best possible wines. He came to this conclusion:

> The American people have the leisure to enjoy fine wines, they have the money to buy them, and they have an appreciation for them. California can produce such wines. We need the best grapes, honest type labels and the finest technical skills to do so. Our technicians must become our finest

tasters if they are to produce such wines. Tasting and training are essential.

Amerine then ended his talk with a typically wry comment derived from Lewis Carroll's classical children's tale:

The Red Queen spoke to Alice in Looking Glass Land—"one must run fast to stay in the same place and one must run very fast indeed to get anywhere."

In his cryptic way, wasn't he telling California's better wine producers that they needed to make really significant improvements soon—if they wanted to stay competitive with their foreign competitors, let alone surpass them?

Martin Ray Storms the Wine Institute

For years, both vintner Martin Ray and enologist Maynard Amerine had been motivated, and in fact bedeviled, by a sense of urgency in delivering their similar messages to the wine industry—usually in very different ways. But few people in positions of power or influence, even if they heeded them, were ready to alter their ways of planting vineyards or to change how the harvests from them got vintaged, processed, and packaged for the growing wine-consuming American public. Yet much as Amerine wanted the wine industry in California to reform the making of its highest-quality commercial wines, he was extremely wary of Martin Ray's current tactics. Was it he or the Wine Institute that decided to issue a prominent warning at the top of the first page? —NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR GENERAL DISTRIBUTION.

In early June, when MR received a copy of Amerine's TAC talk, as soon as he began reading it he knew that a single copy would scarcely be sufficient for his aggressive agenda's needs. He phoned Maynard and requested more. Knowing only too well what MR would do with multiple copies, he declined. But he did furnish the name of a man at the Wine Institute whom MR could contact with this request for additional copies. Desiring them right away, MR drove the 50-some miles up to San Francisco, mostly on surface streets, for this was a time before swift highway travel was available.

"Now about the Wine Institute and your mimeographed speech before TAC," MR began in his letter to Amerine soon afterwards. His account displays—as his letters to Maynard often do—the close attention to details that characterized his work as a winegrower. This perspicacity also abetted his affinity for detecting sinister motives in other people's words and behaviors. Though some underlining malevolence might be wholly absent, MR routinely collected "evidence" that he might someday use either in broadside or covert attacks on foes, or else in justifying his own conduct.

I went to the Institute and asked for six copies. They told me I could have them. I went to the mimeograph room with the girl of the switchboard whom I had asked in the absence of your friend to whom you referred me. There I saw and examined a stack of mimeographed copies of your speech. It was more than 12 inches thick. Since 500 are about two inches thick, 12 inches suggests 3,000 sheets. Your speech being on two sheets, it looks like they had not less than 1500 copies. Yesterday I returned and found your friend in. He was very nice to me, extraordinarily so, in fact. But he stalled me and did not give me the six additional copies I requested. I did not tell him I had gotten six already and he made no reference to it. So I have no way of knowing if he knows I got them. But his secretary knew my name very well, I noted. We talked nearly an hour. I asked him for the copies three times, telling him I wanted to get going ahead of the traffic. Finally he said they had no copies. I said, none? He said they had only run off enough for the committee. I gave him the names of the six people I wanted them for. He knew of all of them. But he said he was sorry, but there were no copies other than those for the committee and a few for you, which had been sent off. I asked, how many members are there on the committee. He said 29! He talked on, saying that in any case he could not give out the speech without the approval of the chairman of the committee. I inquired who that might be. He mentioned a man I did not know. Upon inquiry I was informed he was of the Italian Swiss Colony. Then he went carefully into a long talk about how such material is not always best released as it may not be to the best interests of the industry! I thought than an interesting comment. If they are suppressing your fine speech what good will it do?

MR scarcely veiled his disgust at being stonewalled by the Wine Institute in his desire to spread the text of Amerine's talk to some of the important contacts he'd mostly developed during this fight over Wine Quality Control. How he would have liked to be positioned to investigate the political chicanery and financial vice that went on behind those doors closed against him!

The TAC is of the Institute and it is in fact underwritten by the Wine Advisory Board. As a tax-paying grower I am entitled to know about what goes on. In fact, even though I am not a member of the Institute they send me what material they wish and screen out what they do not want growers to have, I gather. If ever I had the time and interest I could learn a lot about the doings of the Wine Institute and, indeed, the Wine

Advisory Board, too. How they spend their money would interest me. [6/10/55]

Amerine had doubtless warned his friend at the Institute not to provide Martin Ray with extra copies, since he'd probably ignore the prohibition on distributing the talk. He'd surely send them out to important names on his mailing list of wine retailers and well-heeled consumers, as well as to a few writers and magazine editors already primed to produce a "smashing" story (ER's descriptor) about MR's Wine Quality Control Fight. And sure enough, one of the fortunate few to whom MR sent a precious copy of the TAC reprint was the international wine connoisseur and author André Simon, in England. An informational letter accompanied it.

We are having quite a time with some of the better known California growers over my proposed plan for self imposed Quality Control—to prevent blending out all the fine varietals and to prevent the fraudulent labeling.

Dr. Maynard Amerine gave a speech on May 13th before the Technical Advisory Committee of the Wine Institute which they have suppressed on the grounds that the knowledge of what he said is not to the best interests of the industry! So the speech is "hot." I thought you might like to read it. The Institute has refused to release any copies but Dr. Amerine sent me a copy. You can see what it is the growers do not like.

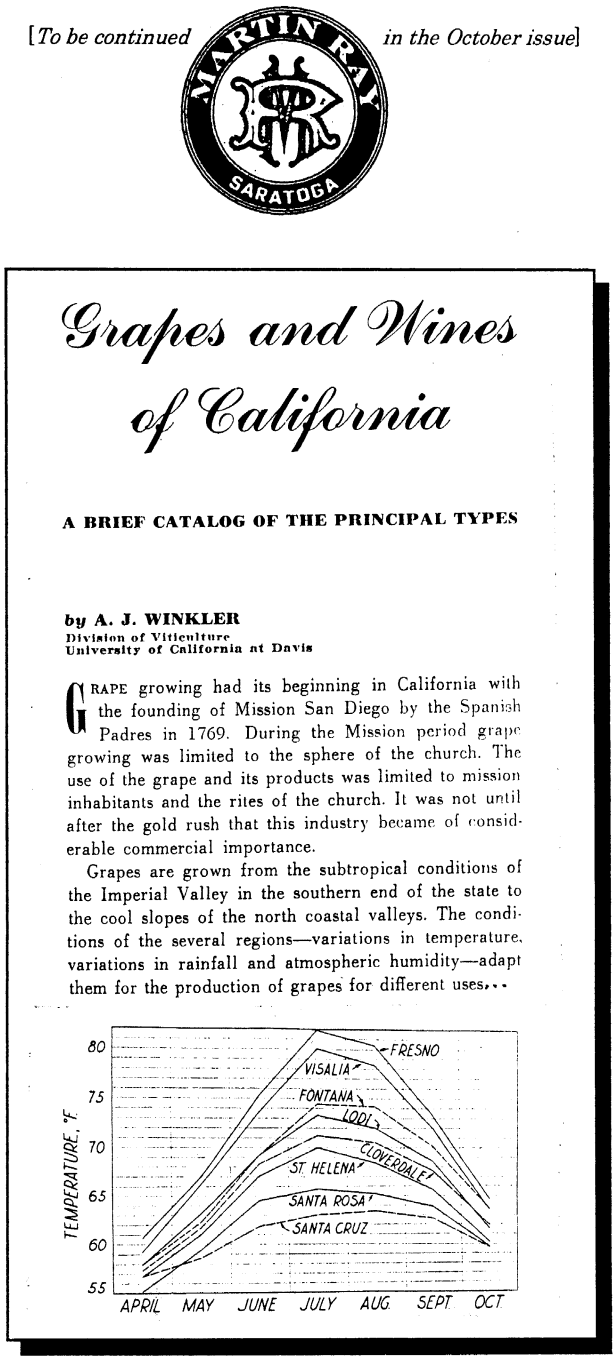
We must force the growers to some form of honest labeling. It is absurd to be selling Pinot Noir and Chardonnay that are made entirely from other grapes or that have no varietal character left as a result of being so blended out. I think this time it will be a fight we will win. I lost it 20 years ago. The Wine Institute at that time prevented me from getting any press on the threat to the publications that they would withdraw their advertising if they ran anything coming from me. But the University has done a great job in the years that have passed and I have kept after them (the growers).

If I can ever be of any service to you I would consider it a favor that you so advise me. [6/22/55]

(Despite this fawning remark at the end, MR actually held little respect for Simon, on display in some letters to others. But he never refrained from using people for his own purposes whenever it suited him, and this wine authority, author, and publisher of the Wine & Food Society newsletter wielded undeniable influence.)

Encouraged and energized by all the verbal backing he'd been getting from disgruntled wine consumers and retailers, Martin Ray enjoyed a heady sense of impending triumph, as if picturing himself seated at the very top of California's winemaking hierarchy. Meanwhile, Amerine was trying to prevent having his own name and work inextricably linked up in wine industry people's minds with Martin Ray's latest crusade.

[*To be continued in the October issue*]



Grapes and Wines of California

A BRIEF CATALOG OF THE PRINCIPAL TYPES

by A. J. WINKLER
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GRAPE growing had its beginning in California with the founding of Mission San Diego by the Spanish Padres in 1769. During the Mission period grape growing was limited to the sphere of the church. The use of the grape and its products was limited to mission inhabitants and the rites of the church. It was not until after the gold rush that this industry became of considerable commercial importance.

Grapes are grown from the subtropical conditions of the Imperial Valley in the southern end of the state to the cool slopes of the north coastal valleys. The conditions of the several regions—variations in temperature, variations in rainfall and atmospheric humidity—adapt them for the production of grapes for different uses...

AN EXCERPT FROM A REPORT BY A. J. WINKLER ON CALIFORNIA'S PRINCIPAL GRAPE VARIETIES AND ITS GRAPE GROWING REGIONS. — From *American Wine & Liquor Journal,* September 1940