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Vinaceous Correspondents:
Martin Ray's Friendships with Eminent Oenophiles

The Third Article in a Series / Fourth Section

by *Barbara Marinacci*

[*This is the fourth section of an article within the continuing series based primarily on epistolary writings reflective of the close relationships several acknowledged wine experts had with the inimitable California vintner Martin Ray (1904-1976). For four decades MR fiercely promoted the cause of wine quality, particularly in the forms of planting more fine winegrape varieties, producing 100% pure-varietal wines, and assuring their honest labeling, as to types of grapes vintaged and their derivation—long before geographic appellations were mandated. Book author and editor Barbara Marinacci assisted her mother, Eleanor Ray, in writing* Vineyards in the Sky: The Life of Legendary Vintner Martin Ray. *(Acknowledgments are at the end of this piece.)*]

PART III. MARTIN RAY AND MAYNARD AMERINE: 1937–1976

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When writing to author Julian Street, his East Coast wine-loving friend, vintner Martin Ray often mentioned wine scientist Dr. Amerine, with whom he had formed a solid personal relationship by the time their remarkable transcontinental epistolary exchange began, in late 1939. He made it amply clear that Maynard Amerine, like himself, was a firm advocate of raising the overall quality of winegrowing in California and of the making of fine wines in particular, especially pure-varietal ones. Thus MR could share his strong opinions with Amerine, as well as swap gossipy reports, which he often passed on to JS. Two months after Street's telegraphed enthusiastic response to the Paul Masson 1936 Pinot Noir, MR wrote:

> It is good to see the [MR's pure-varietal Masson] wines being recognized after some years of most pleasant but unrecognized effort. You know how it is at first, when anything is undertaken in a serious and proper way. Only today in writing Dr. Amerine at the School of Viticulture (University of California) I told him we must look to the new proprietors that will come, for the wine making that will produce the fine wines that are yet to be made. The old timers and present producers are both incapable and unwilling to learn. Think of [Georges] de Latour of Beauleau [*sic*] requiring his grapes to be left on the vines until they have reached a maximum of sugar (possibly 30) then cutting down with water. My friend who was in charge there until recently was telling me the various reasons he couldn't make fine wines. They get the quantity and I guess that is what they want. It is that way everywhere. When we had our crusher made, the California Press Company wanted to know where they should install the water connection. They build them in the equipment. They, too, thought me crazy because I would have no water connection. I am trying to illustrate that new men must come with different values, before the wines will be made that can be made. Like the settlers who came to California before 1849 and never dreamed of the wealth under the soil, these present vintners do not dream of the wealth that is in our California vineyards. For they can see only today and tomorrow. [3/10/40; underlinings done by MR]

Just as surely as MR put such statements, both critical and visionary, in writing, he would have said as much—or, rather, probably a great deal more—whenever talking with Amerine in their frequent get-togethers. (Amerine often visited and stayed with relatives in the San Jose area, which was convenient when he was checking on vineyards and wineries located in Santa Clara Valley and the Santa Cruz Mountains.) MR continued to praise MA to Street and clearly took comfort in the U.C. Davis enologist's supportive approval of his ambitious 100 percent varietal-vintaging venture. MR's vintner peers at the time, however, didn't understand this noble calling and never tried, it appears, to duplicate it commercially for several decades. Still, they were becoming aware of the acclaim being given to the new Paul Masson table wines, and certainly were impressed with the high prices MR charged for them (even as much as $2 a bottle!)—and was actually getting.

Promoting the Concept of Varietals

By 1940, encouraged by Frank Schoonmaker's wine-promoting and -distributing efforts, California's other premium wineries had begun assigning varietal names and vintage dates to some of their better, earlier-made wines, and raised their prices accordingly. And by then MR's verbal assaults on his perceptions of the likely compositions of these other so-called varietals weren't confined just to his letters to Street. He shared them too with Maynard, who also—implicitly in confidence—expressed his own misgivings about them, especially when they were tasting such "mongrelized" wines together.

MA would have been highly familiar with the currently available California wines. And he knew what real varietal wines should taste like. After all, ever since 1935, each harvest season he and Prof. Albert Winkler had been picking, at select vineyards in almost two dozen counties of the state, well over a hundred winegrape varieties, in small batches. As the grapes were crushed each lot was subjected to various laboratory tests, and again after fermenting and aging in their Davis wine cellar. These 100 percent varietal wines—not being separately produced at commercial wineries—were given tastings to rate their quality, as a wine grape as well as a product of a particular locality and climate. In this long-term viticultural and vinicultural research project conducted by U.C. Davis, strict controls were maintained, precise records kept, and a point system for judging the wines originated. Amerine, who had worked assiduously to become an expert taster, was well aware of the difference between these authentic wines (and the Ray-made Masson ones) and the blends being claimed and marketed as varietals. (At this time, wineries were legally permitted to use the varietal name if the wine contained over 51 percent of the grape variety given on the label. However, as both MR and MA knew, no inspection system was in place to assure that anything even close to this halfway amount went into the mixture of grape musts or finished wines.)

MR recognized the importance of both Street and Amerine to his aspirations and accomplishments, for they both gave him the sense of an almost spiritual camaraderie in his lonely dedication to achieving quality. His goals seemed aesthetic worlds apart from those of the other wineries and of wine distributors, who had distinctly different interests, based on profit-making. He was aware that he was now regarded as the chief activist (and at that time the only one) among California vintners for practicing—actually reverting back to—what he called the "Classic Method" in winemaking, which Amerine too followed in the Davis cellar. As MR told JS:

> It took us four years to have our first great year [1939]. We waited for the year, yes, but we also blundered more than once, for we were learning to adopt here in our vineyards and cellars the proven methods of France and Germany and we had no help. Our study of cooperage required those years, too. I know we are that far ahead and it is pleasant even though it holds a threat of continued isolation ... a lonely way to behold. It is like being in a foreign land of a language strange to you. When it comes right down to it, you are the only one, excepting only Amerine, who cares a damn <u>how</u> we make wines or even <u>what</u> we make if they be, intoxicating, merchandisable, famous, romantic, of the immediate, or whatever it is that is <u>their</u> true interest. The "Classic Methods" satisfies all. These words intoxicate, promote trade, are themselves famous words and romantic and therefore always good for the immediate. But what those words, "Classic Methods," mean, you feel and Amerine feels, while most neither feel nor care to feel. [2/15/41]

With Street, and almost certainly with Amerine as well, MR would at times admit that the chauvinistic-sounding statements he made to boost his wines (possibly while denigrating those of other wineries) was a marketing ploy, and he'd add that the best wines he would make still lay ahead, in the future. (Winemakers, of course, have only one chance each year to achieve perfection when vintaging a winegrape in a particular way.) MR's ingenuous admission that he exaggerated his accomplishments because publicity required it might help to explain his notorious braggadocio throughout his reign as the maker of America's purest, rarest, and costliest varietal wines—which became ever more strident as the years went by.

> As I have recently written you, as you must so well understand, we are just beginning, here, and it is rather embarrassing to observe that by striking out in self defense, we have now been given command of a position of apparent achievement which we do not claim. Perhaps I should add here that in the merchandising of our wines our propaganda must always run ahead of actual achievements. That is, it accepts our ultimate aims as accomplished facts. But we are talking man to man. But this position that has been handed over to us is all very good and I do not propose to deny that. There is no one else to have it. And such a position is both desired and desireable [*sic*]. The public wants someone to have it. [2/15/41]

One might even modify Voltaire's famous statement about God, to speculate that if Martin Ray hadn't existed, in his place and time—the California wine industry in the years following Repeal—it would have been necessary to invent him.

Changing Times

During the period when Martin Ray's correspondence with Julian Street was at its peak (1940–41), wine promoter/merchandiser Frank Schoonmaker had begun talking about buying a half-interest in the Paul Masson winery so that he and MR could operate as partners—with FS taking over the business side of the enterprise, involving promotion, merchandising, and distribution, that MR had already been trying to unload for more than a year, as his letters to Street revealed. MR really longed to devote most of his time and energy to tending the vineyards and wine cellars at Masson. (The history was detailed in Part II—about MR's friendship with Julian Street: particularly in segments #3 and #4.)

American wine wholesalers, retailers, and connoisseur-consumers increasingly found it difficult to obtain European wines due to the Nazis' attacks upon and invasions of Germany's neighboring nations. Furthermore, wine dealers and shippers there—many of whom were Jewish—had fled Europe for America. By early 1941 both in-place distributors of alcoholic beverages and would-be entrepreneurial amalgamations were laying plans and garnering capital for taking over the top-notch wineries in the California wine industry. Schoonmaker by then was cooking up an ambitious winery-acquiring scheme in league with some big but unnamed financial backers on the East Coast, to corner the market on top-grade California wine. Apparently FS had already talked to Maynard Amerine about joining the business in some capacity when MR first wrote to Street about the plan, proposing that he too might find an income-generating place in it. As MR confided in JS: "Frank has already talked to Dr. Amerine, he wants him, so Amerine tells me. As now visualized, it is big enough to include all." [3/4/41]

As it turned out, MR didn't finalize a partnership deal with Schoonmaker; instead, they wrangled bitterly, and soon afterwards the latter bought shares in the nearby Almaden winery and vineyards being revived under new ownership. And not much more than two months later, on July 7, MR watched the entire four floors of the Masson winery consumed by a raging fire. Only the external walls and the old Romanesque façade—plus a lucky cache of bottles of wine stored underground—survived. (MR always thought that FS had an indirect part in this probable arson, since as a part-owner and consultant at Almaden he had become a competitor, and furthermore still aimed to acquire Masson, but now at a fire-sale price.)

Determined to prevail despite his terrible loss, Ray rebuilt the winery and, while doing so, made it far better than the original Masson-created one. It's probable that his social contacts with Amerine—whether by letter, telephone, or the enologist's visits—decreased considerably. He was also occupied with resurrecting the Masson wine-selling business as much as possible, largely by buying wines made elsewhere. He was working, too, with wines he'd made during the post-fire vintage season of 1941—with all cellar work now being done by himself, his steadfast wife, Elsie, and some of her relatives.

Moreover, large distractions were taking place in the outside world. On December 7, 1941, the United States had entered what now became World War II. MR described to JS how the town of Saratoga was being transformed by the presence of soldiers, and how nightly blackouts were enforced so as to hinder enemy surveillance and damage during expected air raids. And though he didn't write as often to Street, MR made a few mentions of Amerine in his leaner letters, such as this one, which showed how the enologist/wine expert was increasingly getting known as he traveled around, making friends in high places:

> The Chief Justice [Harlan Fiske Stone] had expected to come out again this year and we had a tentative agreement we would have a lunch for him here but now Amerine sends along a letter he just received from Stone and I note in it that he says he thinks it unlikely he will get as far away as California this summer. That is sad news. I had looked forward to a visit with him. There are many things he could tell that would be interesting, besides bringing himself. [7/14/42]

Two letters that Amerine had written to the Rays in the first year of the war were forwarded by them to Street. He put them in a file folder, so eventually they ended up at the Princeton Library. One

apparently accompanied a letter that MR had handwritten on small notepaper, in which he recalled a discussion he had once had with MA about the desirability of growing fine winegrapes on hillsides instead of on flatlands. (JS hand-dated MR's letter as written "About June 22/42.")

> Once I said all the fine wines of the world are from hill vineyards. Amerine called me, pointing to the vineyards of the Medoc, never seen by these eyes. I countered by saying the Gironde must have some banks and there must be some hills that rise from its waters. I had assumed this but stood corrected until I read a Julius Wilde illustrated paper on wines that said Lafite gets more for its wines largely because their vineyards are hill-vineyards which is reflected in the superiority of Lafite wines. This I sent on to Amerine, begging to reopen an old conversation, saying they are either hill vineyards or they are not, which is it? His reply is the first satisfactory answer I have ever had.

Here's what Amerine had written to MR, which then was forwarded to Street.

> Re the hill country ... His [Wilde's] pictures don't show hills, his eyes didn't see them and they aren't!! That's all!! Of course if you want to discuss hills vs. mountains that is something else again. Switzerland and a good part of the Moselle is so steep it is terraced. [Here MA drew three steps with a "vine" in the middle of each.] Burgundy is a very definite single hill. [He drew a curve going upwards with sticklike "vines."] But the Medoc is very gentle up and down. A single vineyard may look like this. [He had drawn rolling curves with stickline "vines" atop them.]
>
> Mrs. de Latour and John Daniel have as much right to call their vineyards hill vineyards as the Medoc!! But enough of this. The factors which influence use of the steep slopes in the Moselle are climatic. In the Medoc they aren't. Whether they would get better wines if the Medoc were very hilly is ? [*sic*] It just isn't now, and the wines are pretty good in good years. In so far as you go up you get cooler (which is very important) and in general the steeper vineyards are the poorer soils (which isn't the case in Livermore where many of the vineyards are just plain rocks). Soil, slope, exposure etc are important. But the hotness or coolness of a region is more important. Thank god you have a cool location – at least it's a hell of a lot cooler than most other Calif. vineyards. [6/8/42]

MR's letter to Street had more to say about the preference for hillside vineyards when he moved on to something he had learned from Masson.

> In this regard, did I ever tell you, Paul Masson once told me, right after we bought here, that at Almaden there is one small part of their perfectly flat vineyard from which comes the best wine grown there. He said, "Buy those grapes whenever you can, never buy any of the others." It is planted to Folle Blanche. [This now little-grown variety was favored by MR, when at Masson, as quite promising for making a refreshingly tart white wine.] The piece is a long narrow strip which runs along the irrigation ditch and is in fact the lower bank of the ditch. The dirt was artificially thrown up there when the dirt-ditch was constructed long ago. A slope was thus created on one side of the ditch. For, it carries water from a creek, gathered upstream some distance from the vineyards, along which is situated a flat land in turn separated from the vineyard elevation by this ditch. The rise is but a few feet. But it gets and holds the early morning sun. Water has nothing to do with it, for the ditch is long since dry. But on hot days, a breez[e] often passes along the creek and brushes the vines of that slope. There is never mildew there, as a result of the ventilation of these vines and their lesser growth due to poorer bottom soil.
>
> Just as Paul said, I found this strip of Folle Blanche always has had 1 or 2% more of sugar, too. So, for years, I always have bought these grapes. So far as I know, no one else has ever thought of the difference of why I always reserve the right to pick the grapes from any section, then pick along this ditch. Goulet doesn't know about it, surely not Frank. [After the winery fire a year before this, Schoonmaker had hired Oliver Goulet, MR's former head vintner, to become Almaden's principal winemaker.] People are slow to appreciate the differences of sections of their own vineyard. [7/14/42]

Amerine's second letter to the Rays, safely archived now at Princeton, responds first to a complaint MR had made about some disappointment—probably business-connected. "Dear Rays—" Amerine started off.

> Yes, human beings are difficult—but knowing that they are is some help. Trusting people is something like loaning them money—they don't stay your friend. I do hope that you got it straightened out all right—at least the temporary difficulty. Frank [Schoonmaker] phoned Saturday AM and wanted to bring his vermouth man up—they stayed for lunch (Frank stayed longer) and we had a pleasant talk. Perhaps I was wrong on the tentative explanation re Frank previously discussed—at any rate it doesn't make any difference since I certainly don't know. He said he was coming to your place so you will doubtless be able to talk to him. [6/8/42]

After mentioning Schoonmaker's recent visit to him, perhaps MA was commenting on MR's latest report about the collapse of a renewed effort on FS's part to raise sufficient funds from an investment group to purchase an interest in the Masson premises. This would have enabled MR to stay on as winemaker and vineyard manager, leaving most business-connected work to others. In spite of his

heroic stance in the previous year, the stresses of rebuilding the winery, then of carrying on both the commercial end of things while tending the 60 acres of vineyards and the cellared wines—and being unable to afford sufficient help—were taking their toll. So MR had resumed his effort to unload the continuing burden, financially and managerially, of sole proprietorship. Since once again the proposal had fizzled, to MR's great irritation, he detected more skullduggery behind it all. Despite his deep suspicions of FS, MR at that time might even have made a pact with the devil if the price and situation seemed right.

Schoonmaker did indeed go to see MR afterwards at Masson, and MR reported to Street in detail about this visit, in which FS deliberately acted impassive while touring the rebuilt winery. MR must have described this occasion even more fully to Amerine by letter, over the phone, or in person.

> ... I must say that after going through every foot of each floor of the new cellars, he had absolutely no comment to make, either good or bad. He remained silent and said nothing at all, which to me meant more than if he had put in words what I believe must have been going through his very active mind.

But MR, host that he was, and still valuing FS's evaluations of wines in spite of the bad feelings between them, proffered some of the last season's wines still in casks:

> Then we tasted the 1941s. He said of the Pinot Blanc vrai that he thought it better than any French white wine he had ever tasted. That was giving it a pretty big vote. But I think it is a great wine, at that, and I know Frank was anxious to underrate rather than overrate. Everyone has liked the Pinot Chardonnay better than the Pinot Blanc vrai and Frank came here fresh from a visit with Amerine and no doubt heard a lot about the Chardonnay as it was Amerine's favorite. Anyway, he didn't say very much about it. [6/16/42]

Amerine Prepares to Join Up

By the time MR wrote the above letter, both Amerine and Schoonmaker knew that their wine-focused lives would soon be drastically altered, taking wholly different directions. Each was eligible for the military draft imposed when United States entered into the worldwide fighting that had been swiftly engulfing most of Europe, much of Asia, and parts of Africa. Amerine was also aware that the Davis campus would soon be turned over to the Army for conversion into a training camp for the Signal Corps. The entire college operation basically would close down for the war's duration. Only a skeleton crew of staff members would remain on the premises. A few persons in the College of Agriculture would take care of the experimental vineyards and the cellared wines that Amerine and Winkler had made from sampling California's vineyards. The wines that remained from tests and tastings were all to be stored in glass bottles and kept under lock and key, secure from pilfering.

A half-year earlier, three weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, MA—no doubt seized by a strong patriotic impulse—had told MR of his intention to enlist voluntarily, and the vintner reported this decision to Street, along with his misgivings.

> Amerine writes he is taking a commission and entering the service, which I think quite right, only he will be much missed and I don't know who can carry on his work. It just won't be carried on. [12/28/41]

Apparently, however, MA began thinking better of this precipitous plan. Perhaps he found out that it wouldn't be so quick and easy to earn an officer's commission. An even more important factor would have been his realization that before departing for training and then probable entry into a war zone, he needed to write up the painstakingly complex research work that he and Winkler had been doing since 1935. If he didn't take charge of doing it, who would? (Apparently Winkler wasn't keen about doing much of the writing and chart-making involved, since Amerine was to be listed as the paper's primary author.) MA knew it would take considerable time and effort to finish assembling, reviewing, and condensing the statistics about grape varieties, where they were grown and how well they thrived, and the quality of the wines made from them—with all considered from the perspective of regional temperatures. The paper had to compare the abundant figures that were set down and reach conclusions—from them then making specific recommendations about which winegrape varieties to plan in particular areas of the state, to be grouped according to their temperature ranges.

Actually, this explicit information-giving work was something that Amerine and Winkler had already been doing in their outreach efforts to viticulturists and winemakers since 1938, when they starting going to agricultural stations in grape-growing areas. As he recollected later, he and his colleague had spent three weeks a year at meetings given once or twice a day in various places in the state, providing practical feedback to grapegrowers and winery proprietors interested in improving their vineyard plantings, based on the university staff's observations, laboratory readings, and organoleptic assessments. As MA remembered it later:

> In these we showed our results on grapes we had collected in different regions, and what the analyses were and what our recommendations were. All the grower had to do, literally, was go to the nearest Farm Bureau meeting place and there we would be, either in

the afternoon or in the early evening, and occasionally we would have a morning meeting. [From interview with Ruth Teiser for Bancroft Library's Regional Oral History Office project, "The University of California and the State's Wine Industry," 1969, p10] (Amerine told Charles Sullivan that he couldn't recall Martin Ray ever attending such a gathering. And why should he? He could get all the guidance he might need from Amerine himself.)

The most relevant data, along with specific grape variety guidance, now had to be set down in shape to go into final print. Meanwhile, Amerine waited for the inevitable draft notice to arrive in the mail. As he wrote in an extant note to MR:

> Now I am working many hours per day on the new variety bulletin. It runs now to 300 typewritten pages and I am working with the scissors & blue pencil. Its dreadfully boring as I have so many other things to do before the Army gets me—which should be soon. [6/8/42]

Another, less demanding writing task for Amerine that year was to pen an article for the *Wine & Food Quarterly*, "Some Comments on Wine in America." In it he managed to cover a lot of ground. Doubtless his friend Martin Ray read it with high approval for both its reverential attitude toward superior, unblended wines and its forthright criticism of aspects of the wine industry.

> The acreage of fine varieties is small. Though Vinus vinifera, the majority are *gros producteurs*, capable of producing none but ordinary wines. Not only are grapes poor but the handling methods are too....
>
> It is also necessary to consider the wine makers. Although wine is certainly greater than the men who make it, sell it and drink it, it is surely man-made. This is equally true of music or literature. And it is the fact that wine is nobler than any mere commodity that we buy or sell, which establishes its place in history and explains its permanence and stability....
>
> No one is born with or suddenly acquires discrimination and judgment in taste. Those of limited experience may easily be taken in by the sophisticated or adulterated article. In literature a generation often consumes the most obvious trash, indeed prefers it. Only under critical appraisal of later generations does the fake become obvious. But wines disappear, only current goods remain to be evaluated. The influence of the public on the quality of the wines is thus doubly important.
>
> The lack of standards subjects the American wine industry to a deficiency of basic criticism or, what is worse, to over-profuse praise. As the science and art of the wine-maker and the palate of the consumer become attuned to each other, typical table and dessert wines will eventually be evolved....
>
> Industry unfortunately has seldom co-operated on production problems. The experiences of each are still so jealously guarded that progress is slow. This secretive attitude is rather futile, since there is still so much room for basic improvement in wines produced. Co-operative efforts [as with California's Wine Institute and the Wine Advisory Board] are mainly directed towards economic problems of a legal, legislative, or marketing nature. These problems of course are important in a country where serious trade barriers exist, where hostile legislators use alcoholic industries for bargaining as well as an extra-curricular source of income, and where distribution of wines is not only faulty but handicapped by excessive price markups by middlemen and retailers.
>
> One promising development is the increasing consumption of wine. Many who came to maturity during the dry era were acquainted only with violent potions commonly called "bathtub gin." It has taken time to "expose" these people to wine so that they will appreciate and consume it regularly. It will take much longer to cultivate their taste to fine wines....
>
> The tempo of living favors stronger alcoholic consumption—or no consumption. In this country too few have fostered the drinking of wines on a sound basis. The advertising of wines by those who are in the trade is not completely circumspect. The failure of society to educate itself towards the rational use of wines becomes more obvious each year. The critical consumption of fine wines also decreases during periods of crisis. It is no accident that the great classics of wines occurred in the middle of the last century, when the prosperity of aristocracy had enormously increased the demand. A happy combination of leisure, means, and taste were in full force, and great wines were produced.

The crisis now was that wine was fast becoming the handiest source of alcohol bought primarily for intoxication purposes, not aesthetic enjoyment, because of wartime restrictions on using corn and other grains in the brewing of beer and the fermentation and distillation of alcohol into such high-proof beverages as whiskey and gin. Grain alcohol was needed for medical usages and the manufacture of explosives. Wine could also be distilled into brandy, to make a worthy replacement for other spirits.

Exchanging News from Afar

After turning in the final draft of the lengthy, complex article turned over for publication in *Hilgardia* in mid-August of 1942, Maynard Amerine, age 31, was now ready to be taken off to war. Fortunately, he wasn't positioned so as to take part in active combat. As he told interviewer Ruth Teiser 27 years later:

> I was drafted as a private. However, a friend of mine

put in to the Chemical Corps to select me for Chemical Corps basic training. I was sent from Monterey to Camp Sibert, Alabama, for the Chemical Corps. And then while there I applied for Officers' Candidate School and went [to it] at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland. So I became a second lieutenant there in the early part of '43 and went abroad that summer. [From Bancroft interview, p56]

During leaves from training camps MA spent time back East in urban areas visiting fellow oenophiles in prominent positions. Thus on July 1, 1943, MR could report to Street: "Amerine is in New York now. He writes of visiting with the Chief Justice in Washington."

Several months earlier, in April, MR had sold the Paul Masson premises to Seagram, and he and Elsie had gone off to live on a 20-acre property, far smaller and on flatland, that they'd bought within the town of Saratoga, in a prune orchard area that contained an old house along with a watertank structure in which the Rays set up cramped housekeeping while remodeling their new home.

MR would have written to his friend Maynard to give him the news. As Amerine commented to Charles Sullivan many years later, in 1984: "That sale was a great surprise to me. I was then in the Army.... [H]e had always said that he was going to stay on that hill forever." Indeed, MR at first expected to remain living there when making the deal with Seagram executives, but then pulled out when it became apparent that they didn't really want him around to insist upon maintaining quality. During the war period's enforced price controls they intended to exploit Masson's established high prices.

MR, bitter from past experiences, told Street that he had no intention of ever reentering the wine business. However, a year after selling Masson he would at least say: "I have decided to plant a vineyard in the Spring. I have to have a vineyard. And I've waited long enough. From working around some nursery stock today I felt very good, somehow. Vines are the nicest things I know of, to grow. [7/25/44]

He decided that Pinot Noir would be the chosen winegrape, because of its versatility: from it he could make both red and white table wines, as well as champagne and a rosé. It was Elsie's favorite vine and wine, and he had begun referring to her as "Madame Pinot"—which evolved into his title for the Mistress of his wine domain, and he later hoped it would become hereditary.

On December 1, 1943, Amerine sent a handwritten letter off to the Rays. Because after its receipt they sent it on to Julian Street, it got preserved and eventually archived:

Merry Christmas from North Africa. Much to my delight we completed training in Alabama in September & were alerted for overseas service. We shipped from an east coast port in October and are temporarily camped somewhere in North Africa en route to our final destination. I am pleased to stop here because in many respects the climate & scenery resemble that of California. I feel doubly at home since there is a large vineyard only 50 yards from my tent and there are four wineries within walking distance. Needless to say after the dry South and trip en route (as well as natural inclination I am losing no time in becoming acquainted with the wines & foods of North Africa. In general the wines are entirely uninteresting, but last evening I drank a palatable Cabernet (?) about 9 years old according to the label. I am on the track of several other wines which promise some merit. No French German Italian or even Spanish wines are available here. The food is highly rationed, not cheap and only fair. All the large hotels have been taken over by the army (French, British or US) and there are only a few respectable places open. But it is all proving very interesting and since we are only here in a transitory status we have very little to do and I have plenty of time for sightseeing. I trust that all goes well there. Did you make any wine this year? Hope the ranch is going per schedule in spite of labor famine. My very best wishes to you both for a pleasant holiday & a fine 1944.—Amerine

It's clear from several mentions in MR's letters to Street during the war years that correspondence continued between the Rays and Amerine—who in 1944 ended up on a long-term assignment in south Asia. Like his friend Martin, MA needed to live among grape-producing vegetation and other plants yielding edibles.

Amerine writes from India that he has planted some grape vines out there. And he has hired a native to break the sod with a water buffalo and crude wooden plow (before the monsoon) so he could try to grow some other things even during this season. So I guess a fellow likes to grow if he has been a grower. [7/25/44]

And three days later MR said more about his enologist friend: "Amerine writes interestingly from India. He has jaundice, he says."

Earlier that year, Amerine and Winkler's formidable report about grape varieties and the varietal wines made from them, the basis for their recommendations to California growers and wineries, had finally been published by the University of California, almost two years after the manuscript had been submitted. A year earlier, though, a far briefer report had condensed and summarized the material. Amerine remembered those publications when he was interviewed by Bob Travers in 1983:

The major variety paper was published in 1944. It was almost 200 pages. That reviewed all the pre-War

variety research and was summarized in the little 15 page bulletin that went along with the *Hilgardia*. The thing was that we didn't expect the growers to read 200 pages of detailed tables about the sugar and acid and our appraisals. The *Hilgardia* was in '44 but the bulletin was actually published in '43. I read proofs of that bulletin en route to India via North Africa in 1943. How they ever got to Camp Patrick Henry (Virginia) in just the last 3 days, I don't know. [From "History of Napa Valley: Interviews and Reminiscences of Long-Time Residents," Volume IV, 1985]

The Hilgardia Paper

The most influential report recommending which winegrape varieties were most suitable for planting in California's vineyards has been, undeniably, the monumental paper written by M.A. Amerine and A.J. Winkler of the University of California's agricultural campus in Davis.[1] It was published in 1944 in the Volume 15, Number 6, issue of *Hilgardia*, the agricultural-science journal launched in the late 19th century by noted U.C. Berkeley professor Eugene Hilgard. "The Composition and Quality of Musts and Wines of California Grapes," running to 183 pages, is virtually a book unto itself. In its acknowledgments is this: "The authors wish to express their appreciation to the following companies and growers for their cooperation in securing the many lots of grapes:" Among the names was that of Martin E. Ray. (Perhaps pointedly, the Paul Masson Champagne Co. wasn't mentioned, since it was now owned by Seagram.)

This project was no small undertaking. The two men—viticulturist and enologist—had been scouting and then scouring through vineyards throughout the state between 1935 and 1941: inspecting vines, picking grapes and taking them back to their campus to make wine, testing their juices for various components at different stages of fermentation and aging, and later conducting periodic evaluative tastings. They had also been gathering up intricate records of the daily temperature ranges throughout the year in many different localities where vineyards were located. (The first segment of this MR-MA article in *WTQ*'s July 2004 issue presents their ambitious research project at some length.)

The authors introduced the aims and methods of their ambitious research undertaking in this way:

> The utility of a given variety of grapes for wine making depends upon several factors. These include production factors such as scion–stock interrelationship, susceptibility to disease, inherent vigor of the vine, resistance to frost (which depends on the time of leafing out, the vine's ability to produce crops after frost injury, and the like), and the yield and composition of the grapes under various soil and climatic conditions. One must also carefully evaluate: (1) the influence of environmental conditions (rainfall, wind, fogs, humidity, exposure, mean daily temperature, and time of maturity); (2) the adaptability of the must to various vinification and amelioration practices (temperature, type of yeast, aeration, and other variations); (3) the suitability of the wine for aging in the wood and in the bottle (rate of clarification, bouquet development, and resistance to disease); and (4) the basic quality of the wine produced by the variety. The production of wine may be considered as the complex interrelation, interaction, and mutual influence of all these factors with and upon each other. In order to study wine-grape-variety adaptation in California, one must consider each of these critically and separately.
>
> The primary problem in enology is to determine the influences which affect the quality of a wine. Since grapes are the raw material, a study of the various varieties is the starting point. Because of the numerous variations in environmental conditions in California, the experiments must be repeated with each variety in as many different localities as possible. [p493]

After briefly surveying previous research on winegrape varieties done by University of California scientists, particularly Hilgard and Bioletti, Amerine and Winkler summarized their methods of winemaking, conducting chemical analyses, and organoleptic testing. Then they considered the influence of environmental conditions on wine quality:

> The interrelation of environment and variety is revealed in every recognized type of wine. The relative importance of each as a factor in the production of wines of high quality is debatable, with many salient points on either side. Generally speaking, and because each outstanding table wine type takes its character primarily from a single variety, one is inclined to attribute the principal difference between wine types to the variety used rather than to the region of production. Environment limits grape growing to definite regions on the surface of the earth. It likewise, just as definitely, limits the adaptation of individual varieties to certain areas within these regions. It is their environmental–variety interrelation that furnishes the bases for distinct wine types in most European counties. The significance of variety in European types indicates the great importance of choosing grapes adapted to the particular environment. The fact that the variety of varieties grown in certain European regions are so perfectly adapted to these regions has made it possible for the wines produced there to establish a worldwide reputation for quality.

And they judged climate to have paramount

importance in determining the quality of wine produced by particular grape varieties:

> The experience and research of the European vintners and enologists also afford a fairly definite indication of what climate does to grapes. Climate influences the rates of change in the constituents during development and the composition of the grapes at maturity. Under relatively cool conditions ripening proceeds slowly, and this is favorable for producing dry table wines of quality. These conditions foster the retention of a high degree of acidity, a low pH, and good color.... With most table-wine varieties they bring the aroma and flavoring constituents of the grapes and the precursors of the aroma and flavoring substances of the wines to their highest degree of perfection in the mature fruit. The combination of specific environments with the quality of the White Riesling, the Pinot noir, the Cabernet Sauvignon, or the like, has made possible the great table wines of the world. If, on the contrary, the varieties lack special character, the most favorable climate conditions will not make possible the production of quality wines. The table wines of these varieties will be improved because of a better balance of the sugar, acid, tannin, and flavor of the grapes at maturity; but they will still lack the special qualities such as aroma, bouquet, and freshness that are characteristic of high-quality wines. [p503]

The authors then explained why temperature became the main determinant in assessing the optimal locations in California for growing particular winegrape varieties:

> Climate includes many factors such as wind, rain, humidity, and temperature. Of these, apparently, temperature is the most important single factor in grape and wine production. It is measured fairly readily, though in actual practice not too accurately. Although climate in general and its influence on the quality of wines are of interest, more complete records are available for the differences in temperature between the seasons of the various regions in California than for the other factors; hence temperature will be used not only to explain further the data of table 3, but also to show the considerable annual variation between the years, from 1935 to 1941, for a number of locations in the state. [p507]

The researchers' use of heat-summation statistics, or "degree-days," in different grapegrowing areas of the state led them to create, for the sake of both clarity and convenience, five different categories—regions into which all vineyards, whether already planted or planned, would be classified:

> To evaluate the influence of environment many varieties have been collected from all the principal grape-growing regions of California. In order to reduce the size of tables and to differentiate among the recommendations, the grape districts of the state have been grouped into five climatic regions. This grouping was based upon temperature differences or more specifically upon the summation of heat as degree-days above 50º F for the period April to October inclusive.... The summations for the regions are: I, less than 2,500 degree-days; II, 2,501 to 3,000 degree-days; III, 3,001 to 3,500 degree-days; IV, 3,501 to 4,000 degree-days; and V, 4,001 or more degree-days. [p504-05]

It's interesting to find out that the two scientist-professors hadn't begun their research in 1935 with the hypothesis that temperature ranges and durations were the primary factor in determining which winegrape varieties would do best in particular regions of California. As Amerine admitted forty years after the publication of that signal *Hilgardia* issue:

> We had no idea of degree days at that time. Winkler had done some work at Lodi and we did know, in a way, that Bioletti had made recommendations so far as the coast counties and the interior valleys were concerned. But there was not any collection of degree day data or anything like that yet. That concept came about five years later when we actually analyzed the data [From transcribed interview with Charles L. Sullivan, 7/23/84].

In the long report there are altogether 25 tables or charts that both quantify and qualify the various grape varieties and the pure varietal wines made from them. Table 4 displays the five main California regions, with two "representative stations" in each, in "The Summation of Temperature as Degree-Days Above 50 for Several Typical Grape-Producing Areas" during the years between 1935 and 1941. With these seven-year figures then averaged, it's clear why each has been assigned to a particular heat-summation region between I and V.

Statistical comparisons are made between representative grapes in the several different areas (Fresno, Davis, and Bonny Doon—regions V, IV, and I) in terms of the sugar (Balling degree), acid (as tartaric) and pH (acid/alkaline balance) measurements, as well as color intensity in red or black grapes. Two interesting tables are 5 and 6, which assign "Relative Values" as table and dessert wines to 29 red and 27 white grape varieties, and relative productivity and desirable type of pruning (cane-and-spur or spur). Only two reds score above 90 for table wines: Cabernet Sauvignon (an amazing 98) and Pinot noir (92), even though both have low productivity. There's only one red in the 80s: Grenache (82). Zinfandel scores only 67 and its productivity is high medium. As for white varieties, only one grape scores above 90 as a table wine: Chardonnay (92). (Curiously, it would take three decades after the Amerine-Winkler report for this high-rated winegrape to become widely planted—

and then eventually overplanted.) Only five white varieties made it into the 80s: Pinot blanc (83), Red Traminer (81), Semillon (85), Sylvaner (85), and White Riesling (88).

The ambitious Table 7 is "Recommendations for Wine Types and Regional Adaptability of Varieties Fully Tested." There are altogether 122 winegrape varieties named on this main table; on a much smaller second one, #8, covering 17 "Varieties Not Fully Tested," only two have seemingly escaped the censure of five numbers, if barely, because they hadn't yet been fully judged in Regions I-III. (The now highly popular Merlot, among these 17, was said to yield a wine of "Average quality," and therefore was given five No's, though there were reference marks at regions II and III indicating that it "should be planted in the region only under special circumstances," to be explained elsewhere. Other now-prevalent varieties, such as Syrah [or Durif] weren't subjected to testing at all.)

Of the combined total of 139 varieties studied by Amerine and Winkler, *a full 109 were assigned numbers for all five regions*—78% of the many types of winegrape-producing varieties identified as growing in the state's vineyards! Of the varieties named on the main list, those not recommended were summed up in the "Remarks" in these ways: they produced grapes or wines of "Very poor," "Poor," or "Average" quality, or were judged to be "Excelled by others," "Too neutral", "Very common"; or they were said to have "Little character" or be "Deficient in color," "Barely average"; or they had defects such as "Lacks acid," "Unbalanced must," "Lacks character," or "Too neutral; flat"; or else presented growing problems such as "Poor production" and "Fruit rots." "Not suitable for wine" was another reason for dismissal.

Some varieties could sneak by if they qualified "For blending." Interestingly, the unloved Mission winegrape, which dated back to the Spanish settlement of Alta California and had been widely propagated since then, was found acceptable as a dry white dessert wine, "soft and mellow" if planted in Regions IV and V. The list even vetoed the planting of any more Zinfandel grape anywhere because there was "too much planted now." (If things could be done *his* way, MR would have eliminated Zinfandel entirely, since he disdained the wine made from it.)

Martin Ray of course would have heard quite a lot about this ambitious research project from his friend Maynard Amerine over the past years, and known that the Masson property was decidedly within region I, probably on the upper end of its heat-summation scale—with other Santa Cruz Mountains winegrowing areas, such as the hills above the town of Santa Cruz and in Bonny Doon, high up in the Coastal Range, on the low end. When he read through the list of recommended varieties for region I, he would have seen only 10 winegrape varieties deemed best—given the desired "Yes"—for planting for the purpose of making high-quality wine., even though not all were enthusiastically promoted. These were:

Cabernet Sauvignon*	("Very good quality")
Chardonnay*	("Excellent quality")
Gamay*	("Fruity wines")
Grenache	("Good basic; sensitive to heat")
Pinot blanc*	("Good quality")
Pinot noir*	("For coolest regions only")
Red Traminer	("Requires cool climate")
Refosco	("Average quality")
Sauvignon blanc	("Low producer; high quality")
White Riesling	("Good quality")

Perhaps significantly, five of these wine grapes (marked * above) had been abundantly grown in the Masson vineyards, or nearby. MR obtained Cabernet Sauvignon and some of his white grapes from Almaden's vineyards in what was region 2. The only other varietal wine that he produced while proprietor at Masson was Folle blanche, said to be "Good quality" but only really suitable for Region II—and he seems to have gotten most of these grapes from Almaden. (In 1944, when MR began planting his own vineyards on Mt. Eden—just across a small canyon from Masson, he narrowed his selections down to three varieties. He began by creating a Pinot noir vineyard, using budwood taken from Masson, which possibly was a clonal variant known as Pinot noiren, which had smaller grapes. Meanwhile, before doing any large-scale planting he tested different Cabernet Sauvignon clones for both vineyard and wine performances, finally settling upon using both Rixford and Jackling budwood. Eventually he added Chardonnay, propagating vines from cuttings of a clone he'd originally gotten from Villa Armando's Frank Garatti, who was farming Theodore Gier's old vineyard property in Pleasanton, in the Livermore Valley area—so apparently *not* from whatever budwood Masson had directly imported from Burgundy. His decision was based on drinking the wine made by Amerine at U.C. Davis from grapes he had picked there. Thus the much-circulated Mt. Eden clone may actually be closely related to the vaunted Wente clone. Years later, after MR had launched Mount Eden Vineyards, he was planning to add a fourth variety that Amerine and Winkler had judged best suited for Region I: White Riesling. But this never took place, although he had managed to secure two special clones, actual contraband, from Germany's Giesenheim Institute.)

Though tremendously important, Amerine and Winkler's report on their research was largely ignored for two decades and more by grapegrowers and vineyard-owning wineries. But it began to be consulted, then pored over by them as the consumption of table wines increased and wine-buying consumers became ever more interested in wine quality and varietal wines. Furthermore, the pressure of industrial and residential developments continuously drove up the value (and cost) of arable land within or near urban areas given over to producing winegrapes, thus encouraging vineyard expansion or migration into new and possibly untried areas in Regions I-V—for premium wineries especially, of course, the two cooler ones, best for varieties that made the finest wines.

Getting Back into Winegrowing

Only briefly did MR manage to back away from playing his self-chosen contentious role in the wine industry. While master of Masson, MR, whose stroke some years earlier had damaged his nervous system, had found that to avoid unpleasant experiences he needed to be abstemious around any form of alcoholic beverage, even wine. When he no longer felt under pressure as the proprietor and primary promoter of a sizable wine business, he began allowing himself to actually *drink* wine, not just sample a bit of it on his palate when tasting. But he appeared to do so with moderation (and Elsie would have made sure of this). As he told Street:

> You know, I am drinking a little wine these days, thank God. One or two or three or four glasses with dinner. Two if large, three or four if small glasses. I could enjoy a bottle of that Gamay. But then, I drank a lot for some 20 years. And for that I am thankful. Just being able to have a glass without any ill effects is great, after waiting so long with only tastes and memories. [7/28/44]

Perhaps this new acknowledgment of his innate love for wine persuaded him to renege upon his declaration of retirement from the winegrower's life. Intent upon starting anew, toward the end of 1944, not much more than a year after selling Masson to Seagram, he succeeded in purchasing two quarter-sections (160 acres each) on the northern side of Table Mountain, which was bisected on its eastern side by a small, steep canyon that contained an arroyo. The topmost part of the new property—studded with oak, laurel, and chaparral—connected with the highest but undeveloped section of the Paul Masson premises. Ray would always tell people that this was the exact location where his prescient mentor Masson had urged him to create out his own grapegrowing and winemaking enterprise.

It would take a great deal of labor as well as expense to carve out his wine estate, but MR, now 40 years old and full of new energy and ambition, eagerly took on the task. He used funds available from the Seagram sale and also from selling his fixed-up Saratoga home (he and Elsie then rented from Masson's daughter the little country house her father had built at the foot of his former mountain). He hired men to help him push through a road to the top, which years before had been modestly farmed; and there they chopped down trees, hacked away scrubby vegetation and removed roots, plowed the raw earth, and finally planted grapevines (Pinot noir, first)—and put up an encircling barbed-wire fence to keep out deer. He built a warehouse-like structure that could serve as garage, storeroom, and makeshift winery. And on a slope below an oak tree grove he constructed a cabin, with a concrete-slab floor; made of redwood, it had one large all-purpose room, with a tiny kitchen and a bathroom on either end. (Eventually he'd put a wine cellar beneath it all.)

Meanwhile, MR was tending the historic but near-abandoned La Questa vineyards in Woodside that now belonged to Emmett Rixford's two sons. He made wine from its four different red Bordeaux grape varieties, and he kept it at first at the nearby Gemello Winery.

He was in the midst of such activities when his old friend Maynard returned from his Army service to join again the faculty at U.C. Davis. In a letter to Street he recorded their get-together and how his acting on a tip given by MA about an attractive wine-buying opportunity, which didn't pan out.

> Perhaps I told you of Dr. Amerine's return. I drove up and had lunch with him recently. It was a most pleasant day. Elsie is going up with me again to visit with him soon. We talked of French wines and I came home encouraged over his understanding that a Romanee-Conti 1937 was being offered in New York at $45 per case wholesale. I sat down and wrote three letters and I enclose the answers thereto. Now, if you think my old prices were high what in the world do you think of such nonsense as this? I was ready and anxious to buy two or three or perhaps five cases of Romanee-Conti 1937 if it measured up to the 1934 and sold at $45 wholesale. But not only can it not be had at this figure, it cannot be had at all, apparently. [3/11/46]

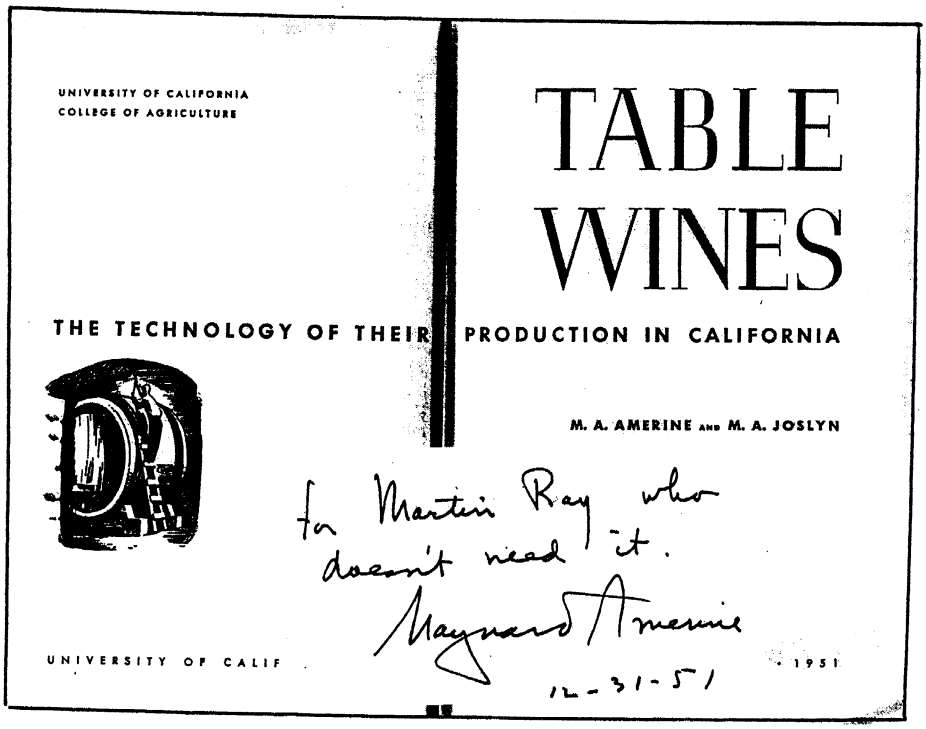
But at least this incident led MR to realize that as fine wines from France became available again, among connoisseurs and status-seeking consumers they would at once put to shame California's output of wines. Eagerly coveted in the immediate postwar years, their short supply enabled them to command high prices. And they posed a new threat to California vintners, who had grown accustomed to selling their vintage-dated and varietal-claiming

blends and other schlock unchallenged by the quality zealot, Martin Ray—who was gearing up now to put his trademark of pure varietals back into the marketplace.

At U.C. Davis Dr. Amerine again took up a multitude of teaching, research, publication, wine judging, sociable culinary interests, and educational outreach activities, with the latter including giving winetasting courses to interested lay consumers and writing articles and books. Many ex-servicemen matriculated at the Davis campus, having their college careers supported by the G.I. Bill. A few of them were enrolled in viticulture and viniculture courses, but Prof. Amerine, then and later, was scarcely sanguine about their futures in the wine industry, which showed little need or desire to hire trained wine scientists. As he would remark to MR six years later:

> Registration is on here—little interest in enology. Perhaps we make it too difficult? But the industry is certainly not prosperous enough to attract the new students. The veterans who came in 1946–47 have nearly all left the wine industry now. Perhaps our teaching did not inspire them enough to continue? Or maybe we should have a course in marketing. [2/12/53]

(What a difference there would be between 1946 and several decades later, when the Wine Revolution began creating a surplus of applicants to the Viticulture and Enology Department's academic program!) Although there seems to be no surviving evidence of letter exchanges between Amerine and the Rays during this period—due to fire (at MR's house) and deliberate destruction (on Amerine's part—it's clear that frequent social contacts went on during the latter part of the '40s, and doubtless Maynard also took an active, even participatory interest in both the vineyard plantings and winemaking endeavors of his friend Martin. In 1951 he inscribed the gift copy of the book, just published, that he had written with Maynard A. Joslyn, *Table Wines: The Technology of Their Production in California,* simply: "For Martin Ray who doesn't need it."



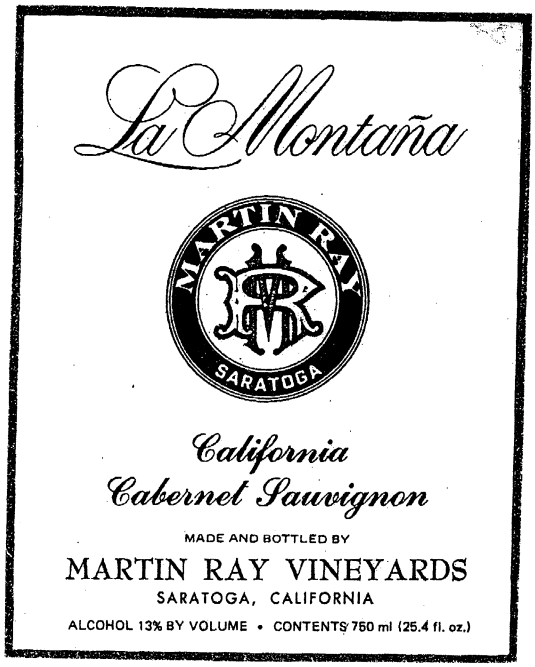
A Shift in Plans

In the late 1940s Martin Ray began selling his pure varietal wines again, but this time under his own name, and sometimes also using on the label title La Montaña. His small estate vineyard on the northern topside of Saratoga's Table Mountain (eventually becoming known as Mt. Eden) was beginning to produce enough Pinot noir grapes for a proper harvest, and he was also purchasing winegrapes from other sources for vintaging. Withholding it from Seagram when selling the Masson property, he had cagily kept the winery's 19th-century incorporation date of 1852 claimed by Paul Masson, to whom it had legitimately descended, first from his wife's grandfather, Etienne Thée, and thence to her father, Charles Lefranc, whose business Masson had partly taken over after his death. Displaying the longevity of a business enterprise meant a great deal to MR, and he believed it would impress potential customers as well, especially when they considered the high prices of his wines. (He was already planning for a Centennial Vintage release.)

Martin Ray was poised to cut a significant swath in California's benighted and torpid wine industry, which was bedeviled by its overall reputation of poor quality, by comparisons with the new wines coming from France and Germany, and by cheap imports from Italy and Chile.

But a personal calamity intruded. In 1949 Elsie Ray was found to have breast cancer. Surgery had at first promised full recovery. As Rusty faced the possible loss of his life partner—who in so many ways, as he himself would have

admitted, was his "better half"—he began losing much of his driving interest in reestablishing himself as America's foremost vintner and wine quality advocate. He decided to sell his new wine ranch property to the Kew family of San Francisco, whose son Kenneth had been a viticulture and enology student at U.C. Davis. As part of the deal,



the Kew parents wanted Kenny to receive on-site practical training from Martin Ray in both the vineyard and the above-ground temporary winery that held some of the wines that MR had been making since 1946, mostly from purchased grapes. To make their life easier now, MR and Elsie left the redwood cabin on the mountain, to move into a rented house in Saratoga—actually the very one they had bought and fixed up six years earlier.

But the new arrangement with Kenneth Kew as ranch caretaker had proven unsatisfactory, as Rusty reported it to his soldier-nephew. Willis Ray, stationed in Berlin, five years earlier had helped his uncle put in the Pinot noir vineyard on Mt. Eden. MR wrote to Will much as he might have written to Julian Street, had the latter not died suddenly of a heart attack four years before.

> The young fellow didn't take care of the place, his wines or the responsibility of it all. He is a nice lad but it wasn't working out. So, first of the year we made a new deal. You may be sure I took care of the wines made for him in that new upper cellar where the barn had been. But, as I told Elsie, having made the first deal I actually was faced with the same responsibility as before, unless I wanted to let everything sold go to hell. All I had gained was the money received. And that is why we made the new deal first of the year.
>
> We formed a new Corporation. This letterhead [Martin Ray, Inc.] bears the new name. Into this new corporation the Kews deeded all they had purchased from us, together with $10,000 with which we can build a new cellar underground. And we deeded into this new corporation the wines we had kept in our original cellar plus those made last vintage. So, the whole property and all the wines and equipment are now owned by this new corporation. And Elsie and I own ½ of the corporation and the Kews own the other ½. I am President and Treasurer. The young fellow is my assistant. In time he hopes to buy us out. Then it can all go to hell, you see. That is the way of life. One fellow builds, the other fellow tears down or permits it to fall down. [5/11/50]

Rusty's tone conveyed an uncharacteristic cynicism about the long-term value of what his labors and expenditures had recently created on Mt. Eden. Still, he could tell Will, "There are some mighty fine wines in our cellars now."

A Friend in Need—and Friends in Deed

By the end of 1950 it became apparent that Elsie's health was faltering. The malignancy now showed up in her lungs, and the doctors declared it untreatable. When Rusty wrote to nephew Will early in the next year he didn't mention his worries about Elsie's condition, but did inform him of certain changes that had come about:

> In the cellar [of the house] are some of the same wines that were there before, too. Not all have been drunk up, you see. But now there are newer ones there, too, aging. Some are from the vineyard you planted on the Mountain. We call that Ken's place, now. That is the name of the chap we wrote you about who bought into it first about a year and a half ago. We told you then that it was the ultimate intention that he would buy us out entirely. I am sure I wrote that we had formed a new Corporation in which each of us owned one half. Well, Ken's family bought all our interest in that property. But relations are good between us and I go there quite often. Only yesterday I went up to help him bottle a puncheon of wine....
>
> Someday that ranch will be for sale cheap. Because Ken will never take care of it and in time the father will be gone or disgusted. Right now the problem is that of Ken's possibility of being required to return to the army. He is only 25 and single and while a vet present regulations can change very quickly if things thicken, as you know. And if Ken has to go, then what! [1/14/51. Note: This was the time of the Korean War and a new military draft.]

The next letter to Will, a very long one, contained on its last page some additional information about the Rays' latest deal with the Kews. The entire involvement with the Kews demonstrates MR's

notorious and abiding tendency to involve other people in convoluted deals over financial investments in property or wine (made or prospective), and which when they went sour, and often became litigated, earned him the reputation of being a confidence marr and wily manipulator. In past years he had been, after all, a shrewd salesman of stocks and bonds, and a real estate investor on the side.

> You see, while we sold the ranch, we finally purchased back the controlling interest in MARTIN RAY, INC. which owns everything but the ranch and we have additionally a ten year leas[e] on the bonded premises, the house and exclusive right to the grapes. So, in a sense, it is better than owning the ranch. Because we do not have to take care or pay for all that up there. [8/5/51]

MR now needed to get used to using first-person singular, an "I" instead of "we." For here he had added, "But now I wonder. I frankly do not know what I will do. I have thought of chucking the vintage. I just don't give a damn."

But why? His lengthy letter at its very start had already given, in detail, the dreadful news: Elsie had died of cancer five days before.

> Not once did she complain. She was like an angel. And in the early days drawing me to her and telling me I must allow the spirit to survive, the will to live, grow in me. I have promised to try to make me a new life.... [But] I do not know if I can bring myself to even want to....I just can't seem to want to live, without her. And if I tell myself I can make a new life, that seems the saddest thought of all—that it might be so....

For Martin Ray there was, at least, a worthy solace:

> The only one thing that remains good, is a bottle of wine. It makes stout the heart, for a time. And I have been having this treatment....The day little Elsa went I had two bottles of champagne myself, to the horror of [Elsie's] family members. And that night Dr. Amerine drove down [from Davis] especially to cook me a dinner and we drank together four more bottles. [!]

It's significant that after hearing from Martin of Elsie's death early that morning, Maynard Amerine did what only a close friend would and could do. Like many other people, he had always been very fond of Elsie Ray. (In fact, his first acquaintance with her had come about when she was his uncle's girlfriend, before she married Rusty.) He understood how much, and in how many ways, Martin depended upon Elsie's strength of character, commonsense, and sociability—and her ability to soothe his high-strung nervous system and curb his demons.

Imbibing ample wine may have allowed MR to verbalize his anguish later to his nephew:

> In sober mind, I wonder just what new interest I can develop, if any. And I know there can never be anything filled with the holy fire I once dished out. If anything, it must be something less vigorous. I'll soon be 50. With my heart gone out of living, it could only be some other and new life, if any. And so, I will go along, and I will see just what time will turn.

MR would next send a short letter to Will that seemed more composed, again crediting wine for some surcease in perturbation:

> I'm trying to concentrate on plans for the future, nowdays.... What they say about <u>time</u> is a damn lie. You just got to build yourself another life, that's all. In the mean time I am taking a little wine for my stomach's sake. In the many years immediately past everything has changed while I have lived in the present, all the time. So it isn't going to be an easy thing to build a new life. Only wine has not changed. It, alone, has remained constant. It is a great thing to stand by. [8/24/51]

Less than two months later, MR wrote to his nephew again. This time he told of the extraordinary recent happening that signaled a sudden dramatic shift in his life circumstance, offering the immediate resurrection of his energetic ambitions as a winegrower.

> Say whatever you will, life is never dull! Not for me, anyway, as you very well know. I must tell you, Willis, of a very wonderful thing. Eleanor Kamb and I were married September 15th in Santa Barbara.
>
> It was Elsie's wish that I marry. She asked me to, but I was then horrified at the thought of it and refused to discuss it. Elsie also wrote to Eleanor a letter I did not see until we were agreed on marriage and in which Elsie confided to Eleanor her fears and wishes for me. So, it is all a very wonderful thing. [10/18/51]

The new Eleanor Ray (also the name of MR's mother, still alive at the time of the marriage) had first known Rusty Ray when they were students together at the University of Washington. She had then married his best friend, Walter Kamb, who for years was MR's business partner. Both Rusty's and Eleanor's connections with him terminated in 1936 —at the very time MR had arranged to buy Paul Masson Champagne Co. Over the years, though, Eleanor had kept her friendship with both the Rays and visited them on trips she took northward from the Los Angeles area, where she was raising her three children. And MR in his desperate loneliness after Elsie's death had summoned her to his side.

Eleanor was introduced to Amerine by Rusty even before they got married. (In fact, while the Rays were briefly honeymooning, Maynard, with Eleanor's son Peter, picked the harvest-ripe Pinot grapes in the vineyard, crushed them, and put juice and skins in a fermenter—Peter's introduction to winemaking.) From the very start of their associa-

tion, Eleanor admired Amerine, and both understood and appreciated the special bond between these two men, so different in many ways but sharing a deep passion for both vineyards and wine. And because of Eleanor Ray's stewardship, from then on, of all personal and business correspondence, the written communications among the three of them (for ER wrote often to Maynard herself) have been preserved. Many of the letters Martin Ray wrote to Amerine during the first half of the '50s, as well as copies sent to him of communications that he was writing to other people, displayed a fierce resurgence of that "holy fire" he had shown earlier as the zealous promoter of the Paul Masson pure varietal wines.

Variable in content and tone—gossipy, information-conveying, playful, advice-giving, anecdote-telling, admonitory, lecturing, then becoming scolding and even waspish, and finally just cool and businesslike—the letters, and Maynard's postcards, as they proceed through time, first display the attractions of a highly compatible trio, and go on to document the absolute and sad corrosion of a friendship, coming from the clash of two very different approaches to pushing America's wine industry into achieving honesty and quality-ensuring standards in winemaking and wine selling.

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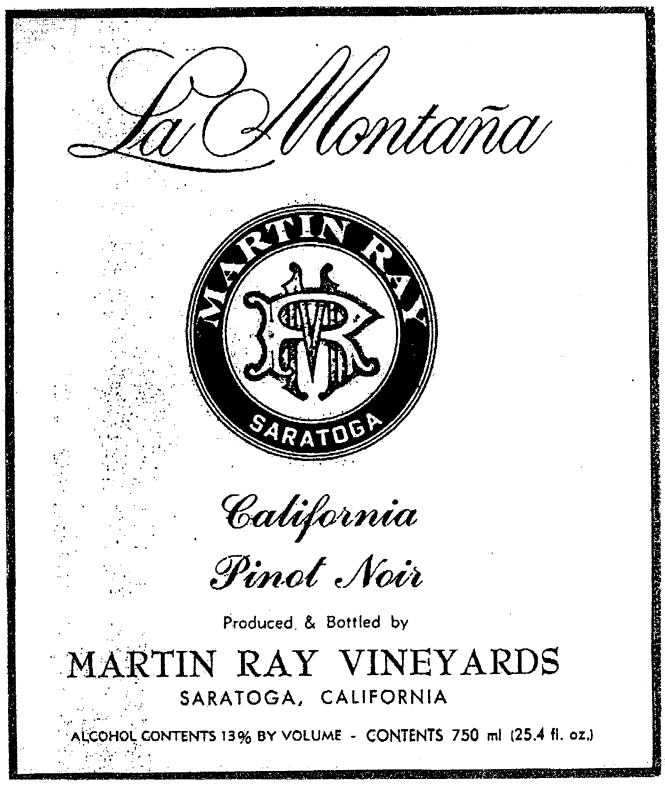
1. In the 2nd edition of his bibliography, *Wine into Words*, James Gabler states in the introduction to the Maynard Amerine entries that Professor Amerine, a member of the faculty of U.C. Davis from 1935 to 1974, "authored more books on the technical aspects of wine and wine making than any other author in the English language." The *Bibliography of Publications by the Faculty, Staff, and Students of the University of California, 1876–1980, on Grapes, Wines, and Related Subjects*, compiled by Maynard Amerine and Herman Phaff (U.C. Press, 1986), lists, chronologically, over 290 works by Amerine. His early 1940's monographs include: Amerine & Winkler, A.., *Grape Varieties for Wine Production*, 1943 (Circ.356, 15p.); Amerine & Joslyn, M.A., *Commercial Production of Table Wines*, 1940 (Bull.639, 143p.); *Commercial Production of Dessert Wines*, 1941 (Bull.651, 186p.); *Commercial Production of Brandies*, 1941 (Bull.652, 80p.).

[To be continued in the next issue. The author thanks John Skarstad and Axel Borg of Special Collections at Shields Library of U.C. Davis for supplying copies of MR's letters and of the *Hilgardia* issue's pages; Charles L. Sullivan for lending copies of interviews with Amerine and providing his own. Also, she is grateful to the Saratoga Library for frequent use of its microfilm reader and printer; and to the Dept. of Rare Books and Special Collections of Princeton University Library for continuing permission to quote from MR's letters to Julian Street, available on microfilm, and for locating the letters from Amerine to the Rays.]



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
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GRAPE VARIETIES FOR WINE PRODUCTION[1]

M. A. AMERINE[2] AND A. J. WINKLER[3]

ALTHOUGH CALIFORNIA WINERIES have utilized a considerable tonnage of raisin and table grapes since repeal of Prohibition, their preferred material is wine grapes. In this state there are now only 170,000 acres of such grapes, producing about 600,000 tons per year. The average annual winery crush (1937 to 1941) has exceeded 900,000 tons, but the annual crush of wine grapes has not exceeded 450,000; hence wine grapes have constituted approximately only 50 per cent of the total crush.[4] Should normal winery demands continue, the acreage of wine grapes could probably be expanded with profit. The grower is interested in planting varieties that produce well, but the consumer is concerned with securing a product of good quality.

Interest in wine-grape adaptation to the climatic regions of California has extended from the time of Agoston Haraszthy in 1860 to the present. From 1880 until Prohibition, the California Agricultural Experiment Station conducted detailed studies, first under Dean E. W. Hilgard, later under Professor F. T. Bioletti. Since Prohibition repeal the studies have been continued, and the present circular summarizes the best information available.

Table wines may be either sweet or dry. They contain less than 14.0 per cent of alcohol, and the dry types should have over 0.6 per cent acid. The sweet types contain 0.5 to 5.0 per cent sugar and appear balanced with only about 0.5 per cent acid. The best grapes for the standard dry types should not exceed 24° Balling nor have a must acidity of less than 0.65 per cent. The natural sweet types of table wines will require musts with a Balling degree of 24 to 28, because it is necessary to maintain residual sugar in them; yet their acidity should be about 0.60 per cent.

Dessert wines also may be either sweet or dry. They contain over 18.0 per cent alcohol. Since this concentration is not easily obtained by natural

[1] This publication summarizes the recommendations of the Hilgardia article, *Composition and Quality of Wines and Musts of California Grapes*, by M. A. Amerine and A. J. Winkler (in press). Those interested in more complete information on the merits and defects of specific varieties should write to the Division of Viticulture at Davis stating the varieties, the proposed region of planting, and the type and quality of wine desired.

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[3] Professor of Viticulture and Viticulturist in the Experiment Station.

[4] For more complete data see Bulletin 651, *Commercial Production of Dessert Wines*, by M. A. Joslyn and M. A. Amerine. The percentage of wine grapes in the crush increased in 1942 because of the almost complete diversion of raisin grapes to drying.