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

This is the sixth section of a long article about the wine-focused yet social relationship between California's zealous, quality-promoting vintner Martin Ray and noted UC Davis enologist Maynard A. Amerine. Documentation comes primarily from their written communications in 1954, when the latter was on sabbatical leave in Europe, and includes notes from MR's second wife, Eleanor Ray (author of Vineyards in the Sky: The Life of Legendary Vintner Martin Ray*). The article itself is part of a continuing series about Martin Ray—the first American winemaker to produce and market pure varietal wines in the period following Repeal, begun during his ownership of the Paul Masson Champagne Co. (1936–1943), and continuing at his own much smaller, eponymous establishment—early precursor to the coming plethora of "boutique" wineries. The quoted material comes from the Martin & Eleanor Ray Papers, housed in Special Collections at UC Davis's Shields Library. Author Barbara Marinacci is Martin Ray's stepdaughter.*

PART III. MARTIN RAY AND MAYNARD AMERINE (1937-1976)
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In early February of 1954 Martin Ray sat down at the typewriter to compose a letter to his close friend Maynard Amerine, who had been abroad now for over a month, ensconced in Spain, where he was doing enological research along with exploring the countryside. It would be sent along with the one Eleanor had just written, apologizing for the communication delay and then reporting at length, mostly amusingly, on a dinner party the Rays had recently attended at a San Francisco wine merchant's home, in the company of several cranks. (This story was recounted in the previous issue of *WTQ*—October 2005.) Not having had the chance recently to converse with Amerine, MR created a marathon five-page letter, in single-space typing. In an early paragraph he said, hinting at ominous news to come later:

> We were at John Esquin's, with Dr. Knudsen and his mother and father and your Dr. Luccia [*sic*] the other night, where you were discussed at some length, about which more a little further on. But Luccia did say he had heard from you and that you were now in good shape and that you have in you sufficient of what it takes to put down any attack, either physical or insidious of human origin, this last already referred to [by ER] and shortly to be explained.

But before MR launched his lengthy discourse unveiling an apparent badmouthing conspiracy in the California wine industry against Amerine and his university colleagues, he responded to a comment that MA had made in a postcard (1/31/54) about the availability in Europe of decent *vin ordinaire* and also to his passing remark about Harold Olmo, UC Davis's grapevine breeder: "He and many people do not distinguish between fine wine and wine which is sound and drinkable."

> It is interesting what you say of the table wines. It is not easy to get a good table wine to drink in California, you must always remember. In fact, we dined with Mr. and Mrs. Louis Benoist the other night and had a poor Champagne, a Riesling that had no Riesling flavor in it and a Cabernet that had in it no trace of Cabernet! [2/6/54]

Just seeing Benoist socially would have been a challenging experience in itself. In MR's last three years as proprietor of Paul Masson (1941-43) he'd dealt at times with Benoist as the new, primary owner of the nearby Almaden Winery—mostly in annoyed frustration but also highly suspicious of his and Frank Schoonmaker's motives and actions in attempting to acquire ownership of Masson from him. (This conniving activity was described in *WTQ*'s April 2004 issue: MR and Julian Street #4.)

Having introduced the scene, MR segued into his coverage of an extraordinary occasion that would interest, and possibly infuriate and agitate, Amerine.

An Industry Plot Against the Absent Enologist?

When the Rays first entered Benoist's home, MR was shocked to find Oliver Goulet there. Goulet had been Almaden's official winemaker for over a dozen years, and Benoist doubtless hoped that Goulet's presence might unnerve Martin, as much of the evening's talk, as reported to MA, would indicate. After MR bought Masson in 1936, he had made Goulet his head cellar man, but jettisoned him right after the old winery burned in July of 1941. Although MR believed he had solid evidence that Goulet had committed arson, he refused to press charges, fearing eventual retribution.

Benoist offered his guests martinis as aperitifs, but of course the Rays, eschewing hard liquor, declined. Instead they accepted the proffered Almaden champagne—awful though they found it. MR told MA the conversation that followed.

> He then remarked that we were evidently still on the

Mountain and followed that with a declaration that good wines simply could not be made from Mountain grapes. I let it pass, not understanding how he could make such a statement, although I might have asked him why, then, his labels say, "Mountain Cabernet" etc. Now he told me in Goulet's presence that he had asked Goulet to stay for dinner thinking we would enjoy going over old times together. This, despite the fact he knows I discharged Goulet and never have any contact with him. He even got Eleanor's ear on the side during the early evening and asked her if she knew the story of why I fired Goulet. She said, of course she did. He asked her to tell him what she knew and she told him she would not tell him anything.

Well, that is how we started our evening. He was insulting at every turn but I took it at first and waited.

Finally, though, MR's forbearance ended and his fighting spirit got roused. "We did enjoy some fireworks, however! And that is where you come in!" he exclaimed. Then he disclosed to Maynard the outlines of a nefarious plot afoot.

He said something would have to be done to get rid of you and the Davis crowd who were getting too much influence and especially in judging wines and expressing opinions. He said that you had a dislike of wines from this district [*i.e.*, Santa Clara Valley and its enclosing foothills] and had never at any time said a good word about any wine except one originating in Napa or Sonoma. I told him he was mistaken and mentioned our wines and he said that that story was well known and that it was because we were friends and that Amerine helped only his friends. I told him the story of the [Masson] Cabernet 1936 you liked so much and how you had written to inquire what part of it came from Louis' own vineyard and how I had told you most of the Cabernet was from Almaden. And told him of how you had told this to others and declared that it is the wine you support, regardless of origin and not the grower. I told him I had disagreed with you on many subjects but that I would support you fully as an impartial and the most capable judge of California wines.

To this Louis said you knew nothing of French wines or German wines. He said you never drank anything else but Napa and Sonoma wines and I had a long wrangle with him over this unrelated subject which I mention here because that is a part of something else, as you will see.... As ridiculous as it seems, you must understand that a thing oft enough repeated may become for many [a] fact.

At about this point Goulet spoke up with great feeling and said that you were not competent to judge and none of the other Davis people were. I told him that it was a ridiculous statement to make and he said that at a recent meeting of some committee on which he sits he had made this statement to the group and that he was going to work toward getting all Davis men put out of judging. I then told Louis that it had been your idea from the beginning to merely get the thing started and then educate the industry to take over. I pointed out the steps already taken but then the both of them challenged even the appointments you had made.... He was furious.

I am not going to try to go into all else that took place, although I will tell you about it when you return...

He laughed at my vintaging wines, said there is not a difference between years. He is obviously blending his varieties to the point they are not varietal. And he is trying to destroy the respect that exists for those who would keep some standards.

Ever since selling Paul Masson to Seagram in 1943, MR had mostly kept quiet—avoiding making strong statements in the public arena while he mostly concentrated on developing his own vineyard property on a mountain just northwest of the "old place," as he called his former home. But that evening at Benoist's, full of venomous debate, along with several other instances of Amerine-bashing, were causing MR to intensify his commitment to advocating the imposition of quality standards in winemaking and wine marketing—even volunteering, surprisingly, to become a proactive, vocal spokesperson who would defend the UC Davis department's honor. As he told MA in that long letter:

I'm tiring of what is going on in the industry. And I refer to that particular part of the industry in which I have been interested. But I see now that someone must meet the threats represented by Paul Masson, Almaden and their like and I intend not to remain silent. In fact, although I have never favored going outside our vineyard to express myself, I am going to have a talk with [Albert] Winkler [longtime chairman of UC Davis's Viticulture and Enology Department] and tell him that if he can place me in any position at any time where I can counter these fellows publicly I will gladly accept the responsibility.

MR also wanted to alert Amerine to other recent verbal assaults against his high reputation as a judge of wines so that he'd realize that malevolent forces were busily at work, determined to undermine his credibility as an impartial judge of wines. So he provided two more stories:

I met [Karl] Opper ["wine master" at Paul Masson] in the post office. He said, "I see your friend Amerine is in Europe." We talked a few minutes, then he said, "You know, So-and-so tells me that Amerine can not even tell the difference between a Moselle and a Rhinegau." He used the name of their new chemist, son-in-law of some Gheisenheim [*sic*] professor—the chap you asked me to meet and about whom I have heard from Esquin. I said, "This chap said this of Amerine?" And Opper said, "Well, I was surprised, but you know Amerine knows nothing of French and German wines, he never drinks them and his knowledge is mostly of the Napa and Sonoma wines." I

told him he was mistaken and we argued. But I came to realize it was not his chemist [who] said that. Opper, in my judgement, made up the story.

And at the dinner at Esquin's, Luccia [*sic*; Dr. Salvatore Lucia] said, "Maynard Amerine has done wonderful things for the California wine industry but he seldom drinks French or German wines except as they are served by others. It is a queer thing, but I have never drunk anything but a California wine with Maynard, except at a dinner given by others." At that young Bob [Knudsen] said, "Amerine doesn't know anything about foreign wines. He never drinks them. He drinks only Napa and Sonoma wines and I have found his knowledge of German and French wines to be lacking." Even old Dr. Knudsen spoke up and said he had met you perhaps four times at Davis and each time you spoke only of California wines. Well, there you see what can happen. Your own Friends can join your enemies in cutting you down, if the thing is organized right and if someone doesn't speak up. By God, I spoke up and I made all of them at Esquin's swallow their words. Before the evening was over old Dr. Knudsen had understood why you naturally spoke of California wines at any meeting of Davis or California people. He asked me to have a talk with Bob and put him straight and told me how Bob had gotten off on the wrong foot and how fanatical he is on subjects in which he takes interest. Finally, I told them that you had drunk more French and German wines than all of them put together, I told them the Opper story and the Benoist story and told them it was time they junked the "line" being put out and understood both your ability and background and came to your support. It all ended pleasantly and successfully, as it will elsewhere.

Throughout his career as a winegrower, Martin Ray was not averse to conveying, in talk or letters, similar tales of criticisms and backbiting to those persons who had been maligned or ridiculed in his presence—whether in actuality or in his own skewed view—and then portraying himself as their loyal friend and eloquent defender, as he did here. Tending toward paranoia himself, he was pleased to pass on fearful fixations to others. It is likely, though, that much of what MR reported here to MA was true. If so, it illustrates the extent to which both human relationships, along with the industries that engage people's strong commitments, energy, and expenditures, are apt to be fraught with and affected by skullduggery of many kinds, as well as small-minded personal attacks. It also shows that Martin Ray was hoping to engage Maynard Amerine as his ally in a coming major war against his own adversaries in the California wine industry—who were now emerging as his friend's nasty-behaving foes too. As he said:

Hope this does not upset you[,] Maynard, it need not. [!] I want you, however, to understand what is afoot. I want you to realize that certain parts of the industry are bitter against things you and I stand for. We can manage, if we understand from where comes the attack, how it is being organized and what is intended. I will be active, from now on. But just a little word let drop here and there can be like a pebble thrown into a quiet lake you know. It would be much worse, of course, if no one even spoke of us! At least we are worthy of some effort.

If Amerine commented, at length or briefly—which is likely—to MR on this lengthy coverage of the malignant attacks on him in absentia, that letter is not in the file. Probably MR forwarded it to another person who'd be interested in his reply, but then it wasn't returned. (Other response letters appear to be missing as well.)

As for MR's view of the competence of his and Amerine's most apparent opposition at the time—the men most closely involved with operating Almaden—he was to write this to MA in the following year:

I understand Benoist and Goulet and Schoonmaker are in France traveling through the wine country. One of their friends, Chuck Dilling, told me that they had gone over to try to pick up some dope on wine making! I know of no better way of admitting that they don't even believe themselves that they know what they are doing! Most likely they have come to believe that there is some magic secret to it all, as done abroad.

Mention of this notion that one could do something special to a wine to make it superb then put MR in mind of the ignorant gullibility of that young man, a UC Davis graduate, whose parents had purchased the Ray vineyard property on Mt. Eden a half-dozen years ago so that he could become a winemaker. MR had delighted then in playing an alchemist's role.

Remember Ken Kew and how I told him my secret was the "Magic Elixir" I put in into all my wine? He believed it and finally came to me complaining that he and his dad had bought the place and that he was entitled to know about the "Magic Elixir" and just what it was! I never told him and so far as I know he never knew the joke of it. A newspaper writer friend of Ken's who used to visit here phoned me this week and asked for an interview. He said what he particularly wanted to know is just what it is I put in our wines that makes them different from all others. He said he had never been able to learn this and no one seemed to understand it. I have promised to tell him. Dear me! The middle ages! [5/27/55]

No wonder Martin Ray often grew impatient with people in the wine business—and also the people who talked and wrote about wine. All too frequently whatever they did or said seemed to merit his derision, disdain, or disgust. But as for Maynard Amerine, in his university position he necessarily had to be discreet about what he said and did, for much of his work increasingly involved cordially interacting with a wide number of winemakers and winery proprietors. Let Martin Ray defend him valorously in private

arguments, such as the ones recounted in that long letter.

Soon—in the middle of the following year—MR would leap into militant actions against the California wine industry, hopeful that the ardent quality-promoting Amerine would join him as a comrade-in-arms.

On Wine Experts, Wine Writers, and Their Ilk

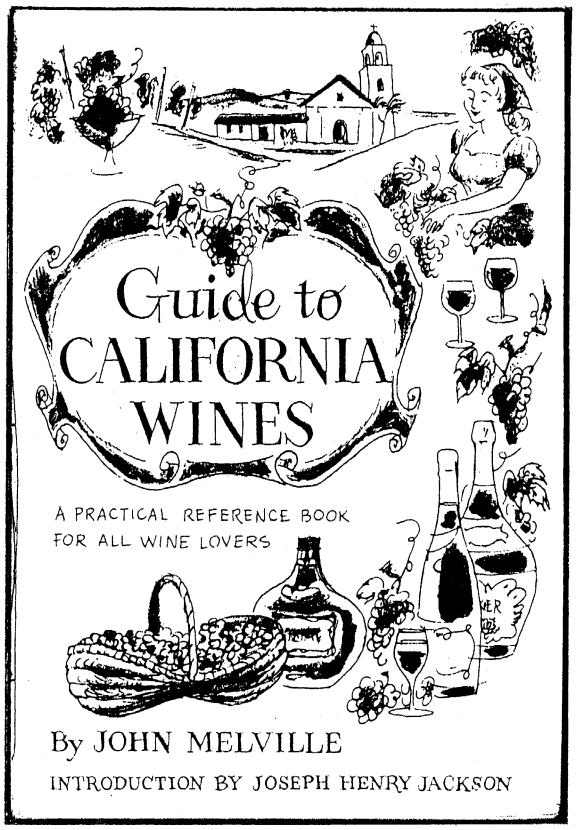
Three months after Amerine had left for Europe, a verbose letter from MR told of a recent visitor already known to his enologist friend.

> There was a chap here—[John] Melville—some sort of an ex-Baron and who is writing a book on wines. He is the most persistent fellow I ever had to assist. We asked him to lunch, since he has been after an interview for many months and we have stood him off. During the lunch we could not keep him from a constant reading of his text and taking down notes—thought he would never eat. But I found out he could gulp more food than anyone I ever had at our table. He was a good drinking man but he doesnt know anything about his subject. He was calling Folle Blanche a "soft white wine that comes early to maturity." I gave him a drink of one that has been in the bottle for 12 or 13 years and it sent him scurrying to his copy. He had the idea that Sourvin [*sic*] has the best Pinot possible to make. So I had to tell him he is selling straight Zinfandel as Pinot Noir and I had the unfortunate experience of buying two cases of the same which I gave away in disgust.

Here MR obviously meant Souverain, the Napa winery that Lee Stewart had founded in the 1940s. Aware of its growing reputation for varietal wine quality among connoisseurs, MR would naturally have investigated at least one of its wines. (In a letter to a friend [4/26/60] ER later recounted how MR had sent a bottle to Amerine after removing the label, asking him what he thought it was. "He telephoned that evening saying ... that it was obviously straight Zinfandel and not an especially good one and why did we want to know about it! We told him it was a (Souverain) 'Pinot Noir,' and his reply was simply 'Oh my God!'")

> Well, anyway, perhaps he will publish his book and if he does he believes it is because you read over his copy! I saw some of your pencil notes in the margins and I agree with you. Why the hell is it people want to write books on wines when they know almost nothing about which they write[?] This fellow has gotten every grower to help him, it seems. And he is quite good at squeezing out information. But he hasn't the ability to edit what he gets. I edited enough of it, if he listens. But there was so much I did not even see and I gather he has written much since you saw the copy.... Maybe he will become another Frank Schoonmaker—he has enough push if he has enough ambition and if he can sell! [3/20/54]

Toward the end of the year, MR would have amazing news to report to Maynard in Germany about what had happened with Melville's project.



> Melville has sold his book. Joe Jackson sent it in to Doubleday and they bought it. I personally saw the letter from Doubleday to Melville and in which they said they were indebted to Joseph Henry Jackson for putting the MS before them. They enclosed a check for $500.00 as an advance on 10% royalties. Melville was saying that the book could not help but be a success since Dr. Amerine had approved of everything in it. From the way Melville speaks of your aid I dare say it influenced Joe Jackson to lend aid in selling it. And Jackson is to write the introduction. Well, it seems to me that the book should not be published. Melville says in it that our wines are the finest and most expensive wines produced in California and I can not therefore be said to be grieving over his treatment of us. But Melville just doesn't know his wines. But, for all of this, Melville is going to become our agent in Monterey for that peninsula territory.... Wherever I went when down there they spoke of him as a very great authority—Gallatin [a Monterey restaurant owner who had hosted a dinner for the Rays and the Melvilles] said that Melville is a great international authority! It's the damndest thing! Well, if he is such an authority he can perhaps sell some wines. He already represents Beaulieu and various other(s).... But Eleanor almost had a stroke, I think, when she read some of the

Melville MS and then found Doubleday had gobbled it up on Jacksons recommendation. Melville told us, without the slightest qualification that he is the greatest American authority on wines. He said, "Schoonmaker knows nothing. Julian Street knew nothing. Lichine knows nothing. I have made a long study of wines and I am now ready to invade the national publications and take over the position now held by Schoonmaker in the writing for the slick publications." When we met Melville a few months back he had not acquired this self esteem to such a degree. But he has it now. It will be interesting to see how far he succeeds. I believe he possibly has the greatest brass and uncontrolled [*sic*] ego I have ever known, but such ignorance! He is now at work on writing a vintage list for California wines, of all things. Frank S [Schoonmaker] is very wrong when he says there are not vintage years in California but he would be very correct to say that there are not vintages wines outside a very few exceptional cases. Growers blend for uniformity and make such a thing as a vintage chart ridiculous. I can show you as wide a range in wines in our cellars as you might expect in any French cellar. And I have sold grapes to Martini when I would not even think to crush them myself (1940) because it commensed [*sic*] raining and never stopped. But most growers will continue to blend out the vintage differences. [11/27/54]

In response, Amerine sent off from Germany a quick reply on an airmailed postcard.

I am appalled at your letter re Melville... [W]e are obligated by UC policy to answer all reasonable requests for information. But as for approving his book—never. But have just talked to [Prof. James F.] Guymon and he and I agree that UC attorney and us (we?) will have to find a formula to protect us. He too gave advice to Melville! [12/4/54]

There would be more about John Melville and his *Guide to California Wines* in the correspondence between MR and Amerine in the months to come, and also in letters from both of the Rays to other people—including Melville himself.

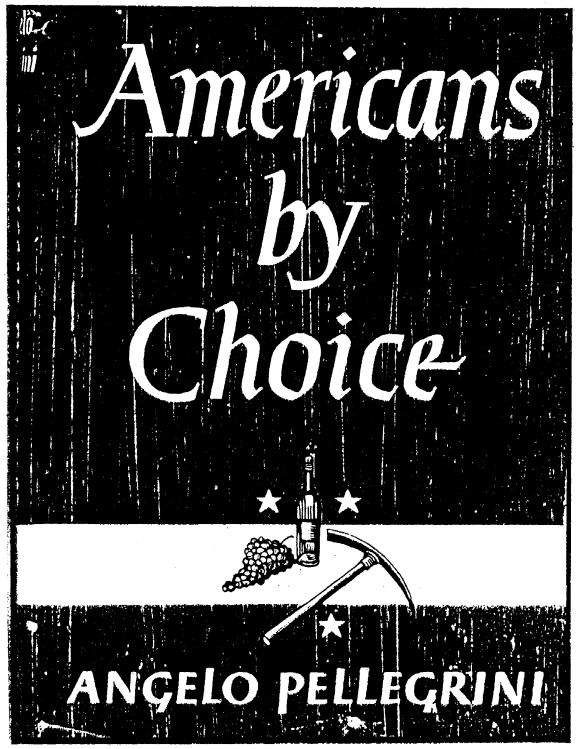
MR also expressed to MA his annoyance that his good friend Angelo ("Pelly") Pellegrini, an English professor at University of Washington, seemed intent, too, upon writing a book about wine.

I am going to try with utmost effort to get Pelly to see that he can't write about wines until he has a knowledge other than limited to his own domestic efforts. God damn it! Why is it that people seem to want to write a book or give speeches on wines almost as soon as they have recovered from their first introduction to wines[?] Just recently a young fellow named Dan Wheeler—oh, yes, you know him—came to us. He really doesn't know anything about wines. This week he phoned us saying that he is giving an address before a philosophical society in Palo Alto on Wines and he wanted to know if we wouldn't like to come! For Christ! [6/27/54]

Writing now from Florence, Amerine told MR that talking to Pellegrini about wine quality was a pointless and hopeless waste of time. (At the time, most Italian wines were shoddily made, and those being made commercially by Italians in the U.S. were mostly bulk wines or extensions of bootleggers' lucrative activities during Prohibition.)

The Pelly story will get worse before it gets better but I admire your courage and fortitude in trying to convert an Italian to the idea that quality exists in wines. Italy is a great storehouse of beautiful art (Florence is full of it) but the Italian thinks of wines as a sort of lubricant for food and Pelly showed that in his first book [*The Unprejudiced Palate,* 1948].... My own idea would be to duck and run if Pelly comes around. Or talk of art, music, nature, heaven or hell, anything but wine or the wine business—and tell him why. He can hardly quote or use you then. [7/12/54]

Then MR complained that Pelly appeared to be drawing alarmingly close to several other California vintners but wouldn't disclose their identities. He suspected, of course, that they were Italian. And when Pellegrini's new book, *Americans by Choice* [Macmillan, 1956] emerged two years later, these winegrowers turned out to be Louis M. Martini and the Mondavi family (centered on its matriarch, Rose) at the Charles Krug winery, and he had devoted whole chapters to them. After MR picked up a copy of the recently published book (by then he was almost alienated from Pelly), he investigated what had been said about Martini, as "The Dean of Winegrowers." He had al-



ways regarded Louis *père* as a poorly educated, coarse-mannered, crude-talking ex-bootlegger. Now he read a Pellegrini-"recorded" Martini monologue that went like this:

> "[To] produce great wines we need men, both in the vineyard and in the cellar. The quality of a superior wine—let us say a Barbera ten years old—derives first of all from the cultivation of the vine. The hoeing and the pruning and the spraying must be properly done. Then comes the harvest. Then the vinification in the cellar. All of these operations are of critical importance. If any one of them is imperfectly done, the quality of the wine is diminished proportionately. Do you see what I mean when I say that to produce a great wine we need men?... "Every winegrower has a few such men working for him.... They are the core in every cellar and in every vineyard. They are the ideal workers. They know what to do and when to do it. They need no one to give them orders. Frequently they give valuable advice to their employer. No one of them carries a watch. They go home when a job is done and not when a whistle blows. In other words, Signor Pellegrini, labor for these men—as indeed for artists—is a way of life. They enjoy what they are doing. When we have a great vintage, they rejoice more than we do."

Irritably, MR began penciling expressions of outrage in the margins. "These are all my words put in Martini's mouth and given an Italian twist!" he said, adding, "—only Barbera is never a great wine." (p.48). Another one was, "Martini blends all his Cabernet with Zinfandel. He admitted to me he can not even recognize Cabernet Sauvignon from either the fruit or vine!" (p.74) And toward the end of that chapter, after reading this sentence on page 75, "You don't mind, Signor Pellegrini, if I try to make you into a wine master?," MR, with his tolerance totally exhausted, exclaimed, "Wine Master, indeed! No Italian has yet made a great wine—they do not know what great wines are."

When Eleanor took her turn in reading the Martini profile, she zeroed in on the story about his father's sending him, at age 19, from San Francisco to Italy in 1906 to learn about winemaking. Although his education had been minimal, Louis was admitted as a "special student" at Alba, "one of the finest oenological and viticultural schools in the world." ER scribbled this in: "By now they've worked this up until he's a graduate cum laude of the University of Milan!!" And for sardonic emphasis she added a smiley face.

In that same chapter section MR had encountered Pelly's recounting of a scene in which the youthful Louis at the end of the Alba enology course had to pass two tests given by the Master: the first in the laboratory (where he got a perfect score) and the second an organoleptic one. In the latter, he detected "a slight metallic taste" in the wine but missed, he learned, a "faint smell of twine"—both coming from a house key on a string that the Master had earlier dropped into the barrel and now fished out to show him. Still, he congratulated Louis on his "brilliant performance." MR declared in disgust, "This is a rehash of an old story. What balderdash to tell it as a true incident! Anyway, Martini's wines are proof of his tasting ability!" (p.51)

Would there be no end now to the persons who intended to write books about wine and therefore insisted upon bothering him? An exasperated MR complained to Amerine:

> I hear Ernie Peninou has published his book [*Wine Making in California*, 2 vols., 1954] and that fellow Melville at Carmel had no trouble selling his book. There are two others that have been after us for material the last few months—understand they, too, [are] bringing out books. Knowing nothing about what they write in some cases and knowing nothing about how to write what they do know, in other cases, makes one wonder. [11/7/54]

Usually MR eventually let wine writers—for periodicals or of books—come up and talk with him, since he wanted, and needed, favorable publicity. By 1954, he was beginning to launch his new line of wines for sales outside the Bay Area. Also, ER would have urged him to make himself agreeably accessible to an interview, in hopes that it would then be published. On such occasions MR might begin by opening a bottle of Champagne and then, when that was consumed, have the visitor sample some of his varietal still wines, whether down in the cellar or even during a meal in the house or out on the veranda on a sunny afternoon. And thereby he usually managed to be a charming, loquacious, even mesmerizing host.

A Patriarchal Vintner

While engaging in his many physical labors in vineyard and cellar, MR often pondered how best to deal with the future of his fledgling wine enterprise. He had long admired the European tradition of perpetually holding a winery and vineyards as a solid heritage within a family. As he had done before at Masson, he pictured himself as having joined a California-based ancestral succession of vintners, albeit not through marriage but by default—assuming the place a son of Paul Masson surely would have taken had there been one. In a statement MR drafted by hand two decades later he proudly stated his qualifications for belonging to a California wine aristocracy.

> This "family of wine growers" was established in 1852 and has continued to [be a] dominant factor in the making and marketing of California's finest varietal wines and champagnes through the now more than 120 years during which succeeding generations of the family

> have directed and adheared [*sic*] to the same objectives, standards and procedures.
>
> First, in the family was Etienne Thée. Then came Charles Lefranc who joined the family through marriage to Thée's daughter, Adele. The third generation came into the family in the same manner—Paul Masson, who was Lefranc's right hand man, had joined the family firm in 1878 and married Lefranc's daughter Louis[e]. After Lefranc's death in 1887, Paul Masson headed up the family firm which then became known as Lefranc–Masson until 1892 when Masson changed that name to Paul Masson Champagne Company, as Resident-Owner-Director....
>
> As age overtook Paul Masson, he introduced the fourth generation of this famous family, Martin Ray, his long time protégé. Martin Ray, like each of his family predecessors, brought the quality of their wines and the fame of the family to new peaks of perfection and far flung recognition. Under Martin Ray the wines and the name achieved worldwide recognition and he has continued to maintain the close personal relations with the foremost wine growing families of Burgundy, Bordeaux and Champagne, he and his family visiting back and forth in an international social and wine growing relationship.

(MR always made much of Thée's founding date. In 1941, when he rebuilt the entire interior of fire-ruined Masson winery, he attached a plaque to its stone façade giving the date 1852, thus causing visitors ever since to believe that this was when the old "Mountain Winery" had been constructed—though the actual year was 1906. And when selling Masson to Seagram in 1943, MR retained possession of the original corporate charter, derived from Thée. Therefore MR felt entitled to claim a 100th anniversary for his own 1952 "Centennial" vintages when he released them! Such pretensions always tended to amuse his critics.)

Having recently adopted Eleanor's twin sons, Peter and Barclay, in 1953, when they legally became adults at age 21, MR now was keen on soon starting the production of a new, replacement generation. His grandsons would be the sixth one in line, he figured, coming after Thée. And they would now bear his surname. Judging them self-absorbed and often inconsiderate, he had already begun his campaign to transform them in needed social ways, attributing their faults to their growing up without strong paternal guidance, as well as a tainted heredity from their father, his former friend and estranged business partner. (By 1954 ER's daughter, Barbara, or "Bobo," who had resisted MR's insistent interference in her life, had removed herself totally from the family.)

Like a number of childless people, MR considered himself an expert on childrearing. He drew upon his own childhood experiences, declaring that his widowed mother had utterly spoiled, and thereby ruined, his two older brothers by indulging their every wish. Fortunately for young Rusty, though, his maternal grandparents—with whom the Ray boys had lived after their father's death in 1910—had been very strict though loving with him. He attributed his later success in life to the work ethic, self-discipline, and appreciation for fine quality that they had instilled in him. He advocated training all children from the very start of their lives—like dogs or, for that matter, grapevines. "You can spoil a puppy or a young human just by letting them get away with things," he remarked to MA. [11/7/54]

MR's letters to Barclay and Peter Ray, and his mentions of them in letters to other people (including Amerine), demonstrate how proud he was not only of their academic accomplishments but also how much he appreciated their helpful labors in wine cellar and vineyard. They also show how he worked hard to influence many facets of their lives with advice, warnings, scoldings, teasing, and motivational messages—the last particularly pushing them toward marriage, though they were only in their early 20s and still in graduate school: Peter at Harvard and Barclay at Caltech.

MR's intense desire to create and perpetuate a family winegrowing dynasty had become an abiding obsession. It was as if he'd deliberately set up a competition between the boys as to which one would marry first—though when either of them courted some girl he judged unsuitable for his purposes, he took swift action calculated to terminate the relationship. He contrived other covert contests as well, such as who deserved the greatest praise either for recent labors in assisting him or for academic accomplishments.

By the summer of 1954 MR felt he had succeeded in remodeling his adopted sons, as shown when he bragged to Maynard about his proven disciplinarian prowess with Stefan von Schorlemer, the young scion of a notable German winegrowing family, whose insouciant, even loutish behavior had greatly annoyed Maynard after he'd enabled him to enroll at Davis. But "Stef" had never even attended class, and instead took his stay in California mostly as a partying, not a learning, opportunity. As MR told MA:

> Three and one third years ago our boys would not have made a better impression. They had never had a father or any discipline [*sic*]. And they were headed toward a pretty sad end. In this short time of influence that Eleanor and I have been fortun[ate] to have with them as a unit of Mother and Dad and a big stick to back up correct dicipline they have been made into completely different social beings. It is not by boasting that I say that neither of them would be today either married or engaged as they are but for our influence.
>
> In past years MR had hoped that his nephew Willis

Ray, when out of the Army at the war's end and helping him put in his new vineyards during the mid-1940s, had some potential for future management, though he clearly lacked his uncle's fierce drive, savvy, and sharp intelligence. But then Will had reenlisted. When his tour of duty was over in 1953, he returned to the mountain and MR again had put him to work. Will showed unmistakably now that he was unsuitable not just as MR's successor in his future wine kingdom, but even as a dependable worker. MR described the situation to Amerine.

> Will just hasn't it in him to carry on without constant direction. I don't know why it is but he just hasn't his mind on what he is doing, ever. We have been in the south [Los Angeles] twice of late and each time we left him three things to do. We even emphasized the importance. He did none of the things. He was to have watered Eleanor's flowers, hoe and hill up around the St George and adjust the clutch of the Caterpillar [tractor] which was slipping. He let the plants die, he did not hill up around the St. George and he did not adjust the cutch. He said upon our return that he had decided the plants needed watering only once a week and it was not necessary to adjust the clutch. The vines he had forgotten to hill up. You can imagine what it would be like to leave him in charge of the cellar or give him access to it. He doesn't take any better care of his own affairs. [6/27/54]

Eleanor's sons were obviously far more suitable candidates for carrying on Martin Ray's winegrowing legacy. By mid-1954 MR's campaign of intense urging (visible in his letters to them) had propelled both young men, who were then just 22, into engagements to marry. With Peter already scheduled to wed first, Rusty had then persuaded Barclay to fly off to Germany to woo a young German law student he had known only briefly while she was in California—and MR told Maynard how he had given him a quick course in courtship techniques, along with Elsie Ray's diamond engagement ring. Since Barclay would be coming to Germany, Amerine had graciously offered to drive around and introduce him to the winegrowing countryside, still recovering from neglect and damages during WWII. After spending two days with Maynard in mid-September, Barclay wrote home to report in detail on his attentively avuncular attentions, which had possibly enabled him to visit some wine-producing areas he hadn't seen yet. As if teasing them, Barclay saved the news of his successful betrothal for later. En route to California, he stopped off in the Boston area to serve—just in time—as Peter's best man.

In a letter to Peter written soon after his marriage to Margery (Terry) Marsden, an English biologist he'd met at Harvard while getting his Ph.D.—Eleanor explained why MR had been urging both him and Barclay to get engaged and married soon, after searching for and finding a suitable bride: they should then start making babies. MR sorely regretted now not having had children with Elsie: "His own mistake in the past added up to bitterness, and that is why he wants to leave no word unsaid to you both on the subject." And then—

> You can understand, with Rusty crumpled with tiredness as he is, how very much it means to him to have you and Barky now at the point of starting families—as he works it gives him the drive to carry on until such time as grandchildren can take over, just dreaming on it, with fresh hope for the future, making it seem worth while to make the extra effort to finish the job today.... Rusty himself dreams of grandchildren like other men might dream of inheriting a fortune from an uncle, or finding gold in the Yukon! As he works, even when most tired, the thought of future grandchildren urges him on.... And on a night when we're drinking wine out on the veranda, with the day's work finally behind us—when he lifts his glass it's more often than not to those grandchildren who will carry on this place in years to come! [9/27/54]

Pursuing Both Tradition and Innovation

Martin Ray felt ebullient when contemplating his grand design for founding a winemaking family dynasty. However, it was already evident to him that both Eleanor's sons were quite determined to become research scientists and academicians, so that winemaking could only be an avocation for them. Thus he placed his greatest hopes on their future offspring, whom he intended to introduce early to the winegrower's noble art and craft.

And in the meantime, as he had done before, MR proselytized among likely adherents, looking for acolytes to celebrate in his company the Good Life: that inestimable lifestyle made possible through living on the land where fine wine grapes were grown and harvested— concurrently, of course, with imbibing their juices that had been vintaged in the time-honored "classic" manner. MR told how his spiritual forebears in Santa Clara Valley had lived this same way, and his descriptions of the romantic continuity of venerable winemaking to visitors resembled the way he would later portray it in the drafted pronouncement written in the early 1970s, quoted earlier. Having told of his winery's interwoven family origins originating in France, he went on to differentiate his own painstaking, artisan techniques from the other wineries' vast acreages and assembly lines.

> Thus, and uniquely, the same pattern has continued to reproduce itself, without any deviation from the methods and policies of the most famous French winegrowers—the same old time-proved methods, for which there is no substitute. The basket press—the identical one brought around the Horn in 1852 by

Etienne Thée—unchanged but for new oak staves (several times over the 120 years) and the addition of stainless steel in replacement of the black iron tube, bands and screw jacket. selective hand picking of the grapes, hand pressing of the must, the use of only small oak casks. Nothing is added, nothing is removed from the 100% varietal fermenting new wines or maturing and aging old wines. There is a ten year backlog of Pinot Noirs and Cabernet Sauvignons aging in bottle and making up the most valuable inventory of such wines in California—each bottle of which is hand decanted into a fresh bottle before leaving the cellars to move into trade. This entire classic method is elsewhere today unknown. With the ever increasing demand for more wines, "new methods" have been introduced of necessity by the big producers—mechanical harvesting, bulk transportation of grapes, chemical treatment and preservative additives and vast fermentations and storage. The chemist has come into his own! The wines produced in such manner and in such scale have never the less produced sound and better wines and at lower consumer costs than the secondary imports now flooding our markets—as evidenced by the great increase in sales of "huge wines," the gallons and half gallons. But no great wine has yet been made by perennial innovators, experimenters or chemists who would by-pass or "improve" on the original age proven classic methods by which all truly great wines must be made. And such wine grower families as remain in Europe, like the Martin Ray family, look upon their efforts as the greatest possible way of life, not a money making adventure.

MR composed the above statement while still holding onto a fast-fading dream of perpetuating his wine kingdom on Mt. Eden. He continued to declare, even believe, that he was the only winemaker in the U.S. with lofty standards. But its aptness really harked back much earlier, to the 1950s, when his claim to a unique position in fine and "classic" winemaking, on a small scale and requiring hands-on, daily involvement, had been valid. Two decades later, though, Martin Ray's egotistical tunnel vision blocked much recognition that the many-sided realities of California's burgeoning wine industry now included small wineries that practiced quality standards for which he had so long agitated, and produced fine wines that were rivaling and even outshining his own vintages, which were increasingly erratic in quality and reception. Most of the new and younger winemakers, however, were using technologically advanced equipment not available to him and applying current research-based knowledge of viticulture and enology that he wasn't tracking—and hadn't really done for a long time.

But in 1954 Martin Ray had still been open to learning about the latest speculations and research-based declarations of viticulturists and enologists. He was also hearing or reading about superior new paraphernalia useful in grapegrowing and winemaking. As a traditionalist, MR couldn't be sure that new techniques and materials would necessarily improve his grapes and wines, so tended to approach them warily. And as for new field or winery equipment, even if something was suitable for small-scale winegrowing enterprises like his and could make his work easier, he might be unable to afford it. His main assets were his land, his new family ... and that perennial drive to prove to the world that great wines could be made in California.

MR wasn't resistant to making certain changes that might make his wines even more superlative, if they were things he himself could do. Though maintaining that he always followed the classic methods his predecessors had brought from France, he was always improvising and experimenting mostly within their confines, and sometimes discovered improvements serendipitously. He'd compare one lot of a particular varietal with another he'd made and then matured at the same time but with particular variations. He would speculate, on the basis of his careful notes and recollections, why one was definitely better than the other. And he'd plan to repeat in the next vintage season whatever he had done, but maybe with another lot introduce something different. He often shared his observations and conclusions with Amerine, and from time to time called upon Maynard's tasting skills in evaluating both his latest and his maturing wines, during cellar visits or when MR brought wines to MA's home in Davis.

Maynard Amerine had naturally served as MR's best conduit for frequent news and important information ever since his return to UC Davis from WWII in 1946. He thus supplied a vital connection for Martin Ray with the much larger sphere of winemaking that was slowly being transformed in the postwar period, well beyond his own mountain in the Saratoga foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Since MR also considered Maynard his closest friend, with him he could gossip and tell tales, dissect mutual acquaintances, spout enthusiasms, vent anger, reveal fears and fixations, discuss plans and strategies for the future. Their yearlong correspondence reveals the remarkable depth, breadth, and candor of their association, especially on MR's part, and indicates the kind of talks they always had in person, of which MR was currently deprived.

[*To be continued next issue.*]