WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY

Vol.15 No.1 A WINE BOOK COLLECTOR'S SOCIETY January 2005

THE VINEYARD: A REVIEW ESSAY

by *Allan Shields*

[Allan Shields, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, California State University, San Diego, first graced our pages in 1999 with a piece on the Brady Collection at California State University, Fresno. Since that time he has sent us articles on: Jancis Robinson; The Bancroft Oral Histories of California Winemen; Wine Aesthetics; a two-part history of the Thompson Seedless grape; Wine Press to the Printing Press; Prof. Petrucci's Singular Vine; and a remembrance of Walter Ficklin—to name a bunch. A Tendril toast of thanks to our octogenarian professor! — Ed.]

- *The Vineyard* by Louisa Thomas Hargrave. New York: Viking, 2003, 254 pp., hardback.
- *The Vineyard* by Idwal Jones. Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1997. Foreword by Robert Mondavi. 279 pp., paperback. First edition, 1942, New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 279 pp., hardback.

Separated by half a continent and sixty years, the memoir by Louisa Hargrave, a largely factual, descriptive, and historical work, the Idwal Jones novel, a literary, fictional story—nevertheless, these two sagas of dedication, love, labor, and disappointment converge on a nexus sufficiently to be treated together. Both works, obviously, are on the same subject: development of a vineyard. Both works hold powerful lessons for anyone who is contemplating entering the field of viticulture and enology. Jones' novel has been praised for its accuracy of facts, historical and scientific. Hargrave's historical memoir reads like a lively novel told by an unlikely fictional character—a first-person account.

Hargrave's testimonial to the ancient romance of vine and wine, weighted toward a detailed, analytical presentation, is told with the flair of a novelist and literator, albeit a lighthearted one. Idwal Jones (1890-1964), well known to select readers of a previous generation (mine) for his later work, *Vines in the Sun* (1947), as well as his earlier one, *The Vineyard* (1942), a literary gem suffused with detailed, factual vinous matter possible only to an author deeply schooled in the lore and lure of the vine. Both authors exhibit extensive research in viticulture and enology.

Idwal Jones, *The Vineyard*

In 1943, the young Maynard Amerine published a brief book notice, not really a review, about Idwal Jones' *The Vineyard,* in which he praises Jones' careful research into the vineyards of Northern California, stating of the story itself, "Altogether it is a very pretty picture of life at the [fictional] Villa Montino." (*Wayward Tendrils Newsletter*, Vol. 4 # 4, p.14) One needs to read but a few paragraphs into *The Vineyard* to find confirmation of Amerine's authoritative assessment. The book is replete with historical late 19th century and early 20th century details of life in the Napa Valley and the region. In the work, we learn of vine and wine names, some no longer in use, as well as familiar varieties whose names remain currency among the elect: Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Zinfandel, Grenache, Alicante, Gamay, Chablis, and the fictional grape hero, Regols-

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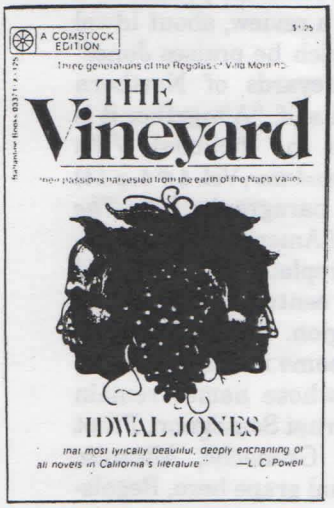
berg. Soil descriptions of the Mayacamas area, native growth on the slopes above Napa Valley, meteorological data respecting micro-climates (not Jones' term), and much more lend a constant tone of unquestioned authority to the ongoing events over twenty years in the lives of the central characters. (In 1949, Idwal Jones published his better known work on California vineyards and wineries, *Vines in the Sun,* where he further capitalizes on his long-running research after an on-the-ground tour of the wine regions of California. Interestingly, the 1949 book, by a novelist, though meant to be a factual Baedeker, is suffused with the art of a literator.)

Setting aside the story line, the characters, dramatic events, family intrigue and back-biting, it is worth noting that, on the way to the story's sad finish, we meet, in cameo appearances, professors F. C. Bioletti and Eugene W. Hilgard of the University of California, Agoston Haraszthy, his son, Arpad, the Novitiate of Los Gatos, the Wentes, Charles Krug, Jacob Schram, Henry W. Crabb, and many other actual worthies of the period. Through them, we learn of the many destructive hazards (such as viruses, Pierce's Disease, the ubiquitous Phylloxera), contour plowing and erosion control practices, weed eradication (really, reduction), mildews, rots, insect scourges, insect benefits, not to forget completely the fragility of human relationships.



Jones thoughtfully provides us with aphoristic, bumper-sticker homilies, such as, "It wasn't a farm he ran for money," or "The great gifts [such as a superb wine] are possible only to those fit to receive them," (actually a tautology if made explicit), and my favorite, voiced by an old, deeply experienced wineman in the story, "After all, no matter what they tell you, the prettiest wine is only to drink." (p. 146)

Following the decades of hard, physical labor, major set-backs, financial crises, dreams (always the dreams) of the ideal vintage and blend, teetering on the cusp of enological/financial success, it all comes up against the unexpected and unpredictable consequence: Prohibition. Even though Prohibition was much in the political air for many decades, many winemen chose not to act on possibilities, when they had so much to lose. Passage of the constitutional amendment for Prohibition, enacted by Congress in 1916, was ratified by the States in October 1919, after decades of effort by various dry states, Maine leading the way in 1846! Prohibition spelled disaster for those vineyards planted in wine grapes. Jones' telling description of how entire, established vineyards were ripped out, the stumps piled into "funeral pyres" which at night presented the disillusioned family with a clear view across the Napa Valley of an eerie scene from a kind of Armageddon. Actually, Jones' book was written long after the Repeal of Prohibition in 1933, and so the author softens the huge blow to vineyardists by suggesting that in the future, all of their efforts would not have been made in vain, obviously a comfort disallowed within the framework of the novel's story. The reader, at least, is given the reassurance. Cool comfort.

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF *The Vineyard*

The first edition, published in 1942, was reprinted in 1973, available in a paperback Comstock edition, and finally, to date, it has been republished in 1997 by the University of California Press as a paperback, with a Foreword by Robert Mondavi, the venerable icon of the Napa Valley wine industry. Mondavi, like Maynard Amerine, credits Jones with a factual grasp of the science, art, and history of winegrowing, adding that Jones is even somewhat prescient about advancing the need for "natural winegrowing philosophy" which Mondavi's vineyards have long ago adopted, eschewing the environmental hazards of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in the interest of preserving the uniquely advantaged soils of Napa Valley and environs. The Mondavi family actually own part of the original vineyard lands of Henry Crabb's "To-Kalon" estate. Mondavi takes "To-Kalon" to mean "highest" or "best," from the Greek, *to kalon.* In the Greek of Plato's time, it also meant "beauty" or "the beautiful." Mondavi's Foreword cites previous editions of *The Vineyard*, but the publishers mention nothing about earlier editions. The final page of the paperback edition does have a brief biography of Idwal Jones, with a portrait. The back of the cover has statements by the publisher (which calls the work a history), by M.F.K. Fisher, and by Thomas Pinney. Fisher's brief statement recognizes the book's novel, literary qualities, while Pinney underscores the vinous, historical authenticity aspects. Mondavi says, "But it is not profit that motivates most of us in the wine business, and Jones makes that clear in the book. The families that succeed will be those that 'honor the vineyard' and make the best wines they can without putting profit first." (p. xii)

Louisa T. Hargrave, *The Vineyard*

During a phone conversation, Louisa Hargrave said she had titled her memoir, *Harvest Home*, but the publisher's editors, at the last moment, thought *The*

Vineyard would attract more readers, whose interest would be piqued, especially with the sub-title, *The Pleasures and Perils of Creating an American Family Winery*. Her preferred title, *Harvest Home*, a trope to evoke the familiar hymn of Thanksgiving she believed represented the emotional center of her story: a family's achievement, a family's mutually shared saga. By any other title, her story must be read and her lessons in viticulture and enology examined and heeded.

Louisa and her husband, Alexander McKenzie Hargrave, both well-educated in leading northeastern universities—Harvard, Smith, Rochester, Princeton, Simmons, to mention some in their collective experience—prepared them in standard curricular subjects, as well as in some arcane linguistic, literary, and humanities studies. They were not prepared—not the least—academically, or even physically, to undertake the demanding and difficult labors involved in an expansive vineyard and a winery. Alex was raised in the Rochester and Finger Lakes area of New York, and was visually familiar from a safe distance with the great vineyards nearby, and only vaguely aware of the mysteries of actually making wine. Louisa, who grew to maturity on Long Island ("I was baptized, confirmed, and married in St. John's Episcopal church") in an established, residential neighborhood, had had even less exposure than Alex to the furrow-hopping tasks of farming grapes or growing wines. Because they both came from families with—ahem—comfortable incomes, they had well-developed tastes in excellent wines and shared a nascent dream of one day—maybe—actually producing such wines from their own vineyard.

To their credit, they spent many months researching the literature of viticulture and enology, the different varieties of wine grapes, the wine-grape growing regions of the United States, from California, Oregon, Washington on the west coast, to the New York regions of the Finger Lakes, Canandaigua Lake, parts of New England, to the southern east coast, areas where they actually traveled, talking their way through many viticulturists and vintners. Eventually, for reasons made transpicuously clear in her book, they determined to return to the east coast and to Long Island.

Devoted to the standard varieties of Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay—all *vitis vinifera*—they were clear-eyed and well-schooled in the history of the east coast failures to grow these vinifera grapes successfully in just about every region they visited. One guru's books they examined, Philip M. Wagner, though not mentioned in the final book's draft, were understood as a formidable caution against planting vinifera. Other experts consulted warned them emphatically against undertaking their project on Long Island. "While it's true that [John] Wickham was the person who showed us the benefits of the North Fork [Long Island], he did not suggest we move there to plant grapes. On the contrary, he said, 'Listen to me well. This is a wonderful place to farm, but I advise you not to do it. You have no experience, and it is far too risky. You have no idea how expensive it is to develop a new crop in a region. Don't be pioneers. Pioneers always pay twice. You'll end up with arrows in your backs.'" (p.85)

Their assessment of the approach of California winemen and California university plant geneticists was that Americans typically feel they must out-do the European traditions by breeding up (selecting) hybrids, instead of just planting the tried and true varieties. The Hargraves passionately wanted to produce excellent wines from the standard, European varieties, but also following the best practices of blending, the real art of the vintner.

Despite all warnings, they bought an old potato farm near Cutchogue, Long Island, on the North Fork, ordered ten-thousand (!) vines and plunged ahead. Mildly accused by some doubting Thomases that they chose Long Island because of Louisa's attachments to place, Louisa goes to some pains to explain their decision, in the process noting the scientific advantages of farming grapes on Long Island.

> "...I insisted that the real reasons we were there had to do with hard scientific facts. Looking at statistics, we found that the North Fork compared favorably to the Finger Lakes, the Hudson Valley, Virginia, and the Connecticut shore. We could get a crop on the North Fork in three years instead of four. Here, in contrast to those other places, our vines wouldn't be killed to the ground in winter, so we would have a predictable crop every year. The pests that had devastated earlier attempts to grow vinifera could now be controlled with specialized pesticides and grafting. There was enough rainfall that we wouldn't need irrigation. There were none of the rocks and boulders so common in upstate territory, nor were there streams or heavy clay soils. Frost and drainage wouldn't be a problem, so we didn't need to find a slope or install drainage tiles..." (p. 84)

Nearly thirty-years later, when they reluctantly decided to sell their winery and vineyard, Louisa finally found time to write their story. Their success with vinifera wine grapes, producing prize wines starting about 1974, pioneered a new wine region, successful against great odds, and contrary to all professional advice. That success was theirs, and they took enormous satisfaction in the achievement.

Having said that, it cannot be ignored at what great cost and effort their goal was achieved. Louisa writes,

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NEWS & NOTES

RENEWAL TIME !!

January brings us a new year, a new volume of W-TQ, and time to renew our membership / subscription. Dues remain the same: $20 USA/Canada; $25 overseas. A renewal form is enclosed.

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is enclosed with this issue. We send kudos and Tendril thanks to our contributors for 2004—some eighteen members, from Benson to Wemyss who covered wine-y subjects from Allen to Winkler. In the process, over 120 books were noted or reviewed. POSTSCRIPT: Hold on to those W-T Newsletters and Quarterlies ! A single issue (July 1999) is offered for sale on the internet for $20!

NOVEL CELLAR ENJOYMENT

The Best Cellar by Charles Goodrum (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987, 218 pp) is an engaging mystery based around the perfect cellar—not a wine cellar, but a cellar hiding 3,000 antiquarian books (including wine titles, we're sure). The scholarly crime involves rare books, Thomas Jefferson, the Library of Congress, and murder. ▪ Equally entertaining is the vintage 1919 *Six Best Cellars* by Holworthy Hall and Hugh Kahler (NY: Dodd, Mead & Co., 106 pp). "Set in an affluent New York City suburb, this is a satirical period piece on the problems of social survival under the burdens of Prohibition and an empty wine cellar" (Gabler, p.164). Enjoy!

LOVELY MENU COLLECTION FOR SALE

After "much soul searching" **Jeffrey Benson** has decided to part with his collection of "well over 1,000 menus dating from 1890, mainly European—many have the wines listed, and the majority are very colorful, some very elaborate...fascinating reading of what we ate and drank over the last 100 years." Contact him at bensonwines@connectingbusiness.com for all the lovely details.

THE WAYWARD TENDRILS is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1990 for Wine Book Collectors. Yearly Membership / Subscription to the WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY (ISSN 1552-9460) is $20 USA and Canada; $25 overseas. Permission to reprint is requested. Please address all correspondence to THE WAYWARD TENDRILS, Box 9023, Santa Rosa, CA. 95405 USA. FAX 707-544-2723. E-mail: tendrils@jps.net. Editor and Publisher: Gail Unzelman. —

GOURMAND WORLD COOKBOOK AWARD: BEST WINE BOOK IN ENGLISH - 2004

James Gabler's monumental achievement, ***Wine into Words*** (2nd ed), has been awarded this prestigious prize as the best wine book in English. The winner in each language will compete against winners in the same category in other languages, and "The Best in the World" will be announced in Grythyttan, Sweden at a Gala Dinner, 11 February 2005, in the presence of the King of Sweden. Congratulations, Jim! Get your tux pressed and your plane ticket reserved.

"COOKING WITH WINE"

by Vince Pirolli. This little fine-press booklet has been produced by Vance Gerry at his Weather Bird Press (Pasadena, 2004). Only [3] pages, but finely designed, decorated and crafted, it is a lovely addition to our "Fine Press / Wine Press" collection. Fifty copies printed and bound at the press (card covers, sewn). Available from Vance Gerry, 450 So. Arroyo Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91105. $15.

OXFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FOOD AND DRINK IN AMERICA

London/New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Editor-in-Chief, Andrew F. Smith, with a dozen assistants on his editorial board, and over 200 contributors. Vol.1: A–J, 751 pp; Vol.2: K–Z, Appendixes, List of Contributors, Index, 790 pp. 8½ x 11, 400 illustrations. $250. Editor Smith states the objective of this encyclopedia: bring "together in one authoritative reference work the best scholarship on the history of American food." Culinary matters are obviously the main focus, while "Drink" (including wine) plays a minor supporting role in this story. Included in the 32-page "Wine" section: an "Historical Survey" by Thomas Pinney, "Eastern U.S. Wines" by Hudson Cattell, and "California Wines" by Charles Sullivan. "Wine Books," covering the history of books on wine in America, is allotted a one-page overview by Pinney. ("Cookbooks and Manuscripts" gets 32 pages!) Still, a worthwhile resource.

PRINCE FAMILY ARCHIVES

We appreciate the following letter received from Jeff McKay, Brooklyn, New York: To the Editor, I have been interested for some time in the early history of American viticulture and enology. When I moved recently from Northern California to New York City, I thought I would look into what resources were available in the New York Library system regarding early viticulture. To my amazement the Queens Borough Public Library, Long Island Division, in Jamaica, NY, still has original documents from the Prince Family Estate, which was located only a few miles away in the town of Flushing. This collection contains materials which are not held in the National

Agricultural Library in Maryland. Included are copies of letters sent and received by William Robert Prince (1795-1869), of Prince Nursery fame and author of *A Treatise on the Vine: Embracing Its History from the Earliest Ages to the Present Day, with Descriptions of ...Two Hundred Foreign, and Eighty American Varieties...*(New York, 1830). Of particular interest to California and Missouri viticulture is a letter addressed to Wm. R. Prince, Flushing, NY, written by a young George Husmann, January 1856, Hermann, MO. While requesting to purchase "25 to 30,000 cuttings," Husmann reports "Our vineyards look very promising, and if, as all vintners prophesy, we should not have any mildew next summer, we can make a great crop. As far as my experience goes, I have never seen the vines in so healthy a state as at present." The Public Library in Jamaica is not the easiest or nicest place to visit. The farms and forest of 19th century Queens have been converted to mile after mile of ugly urban sprawl. It is interesting to think how the area must have looked at the time of Husmann's letter. For your readers who would like to visit it, I would suggest taking a taxi there unless they don't mind a long and confusing subway or train ride, and a good walk to and from the local train stop. For anyone wishing to access this collection, an alternative would be to give me a call or email, and I'll see if I can find what is being requested. Sincerely, Jeff McKay, 131 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217. (917) 902.1136. jeffreyamckay@aol.com

"Pardon, Monsieur..."

John Hayes writes from Boston: "I thought I would inquire as to an interesting aspect of an André Simon book I recently acquired. The Special Edition of *The Art of Good Living* (London: Constable, 1929) has a title page referring to a frontispiece 'after Daumier,' but in fact has a color frontispiece, 'Pardon, Monsieur... after Bouchot.' The 1929 trade edition, with a frontispiece, 'Le Supplice de Tantale after Daumier,' refers to a Special Edition with a color frontispiece and 11 other illustrations, so I assumed the color frontispiece was the Daumier. Is yours the same?" Your editor replied that, yes, her copy of the Special Edition of 300 copies (numbered, and signed by Simon on the verso of the half-title) had the same Bouchot frontispiece. It seems safe to conclude that the Special Edition, although presented in a larger page format with wider margins, was printed from the same type set for the trade edition, and no one reset the title page to reflect the different frontispiece used for the limited edition. Pardon, Monsieur, pardon!

"With All Good Wishes"
INSCRIBED ANDRE SIMON BOOKS
"P. S."

[Inspired by our article in the October 2003 issue, several Tendrils rushed to their bookshelves to search their Simon books for inscriptions. We offer this "P.S." for your further enjoyment and insight into André Simon. — Ed.]

FROM THE LIBRARY OF RICK WITSCHONKE

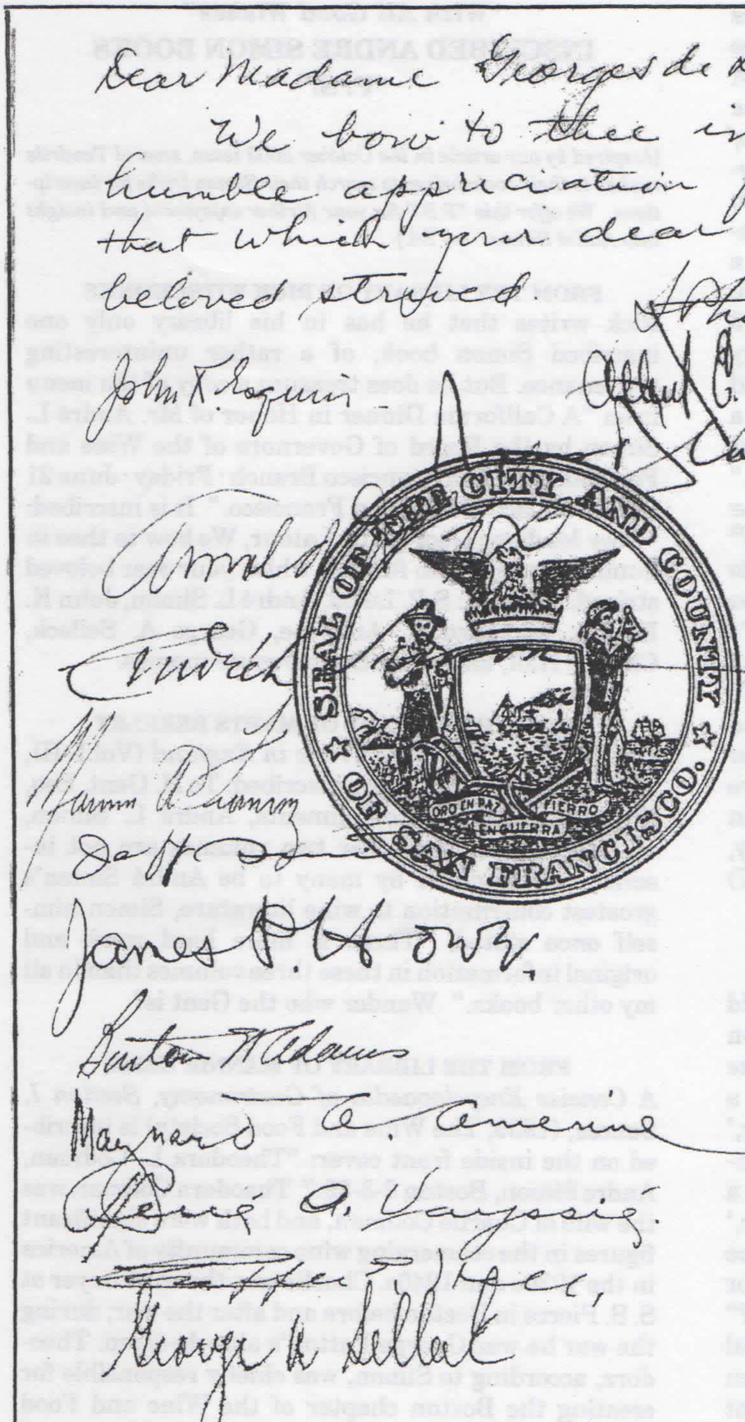
Rick writes that he has in his library only one inscribed Simon book, of a rather uninteresting provenance. But he does treasure a copy of the menu from "A California Dinner in Honor of Mr. André L. Simon by the Board of Governors of the Wine and Food Society · San Francisco Branch · Friday · June 21 · 1946 · Palace Hotel · San Francisco." It is inscribed: "Dear Madame Georges de Latour, We bow to thee in humble appreciation for that which your dear beloved strived." Signed: S.P. Lucia, André L. Simon, John K. Esquin, Maynard A. Amerine, George A. Selleck, Chaffee Hall, and other Society gastronomes.

FROM THE LIBRARY OF MARTS BEEKLEY

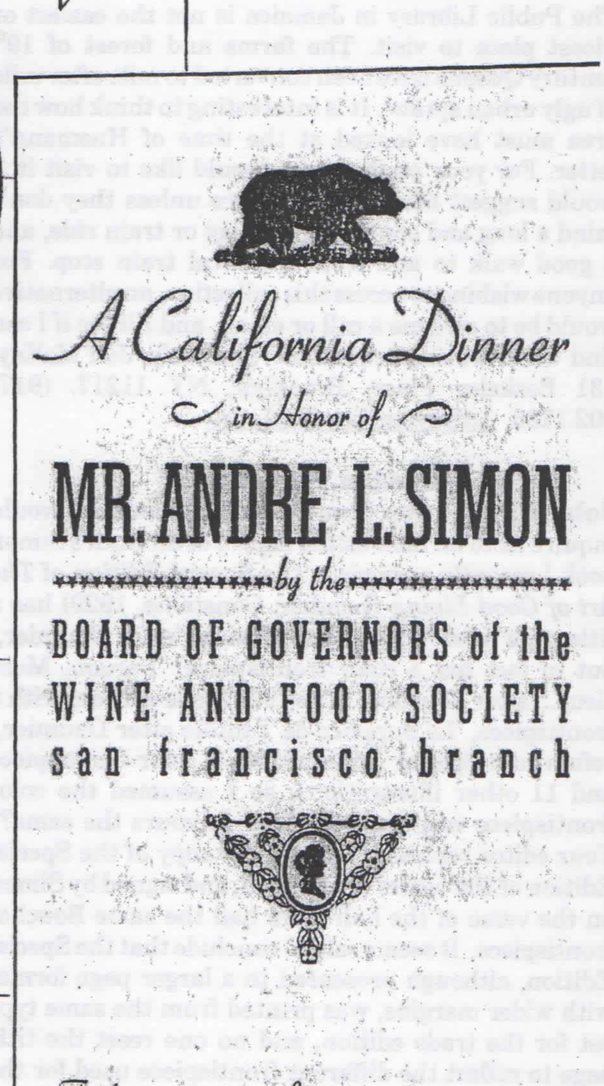
The History of the Wine Trade in England (Vol.I–III, 1906, 1907, 1909). Vol.I is inscribed: To H. Gent, Esq, With the author's Compliments, André L. Simon, 16.11.06. Alas, the other two volumes are not inscribed. Considered by many to be André Simon's greatest contribution to wine literature, Simon himself once stated, "There is more hard work and original information in these three volumes than in all my other books." Wonder who the Gent is?

FROM THE LIBRARY OF MANNIE BERK

A Concise Encyclopaedia of Gastronomy, Section I, Sauces, (1939, The Wine and Food Society) is inscribed on the inside front cover: "Theodora L. Codman, Andre Simon, Boston 2-3-39." Theodora Codman was the wife of Charlie Codman, and both were significant figures in the reemerging wine community of America in the 1930s and 1940s. Charlie was the wine buyer at S. S. Pierce in Boston before and after the war; during the war he was George Patton's aide-de-camp. Theodora, according to Simon, was chiefly responsible for creating the Boston chapter of the Wine and Food Society. Simon had a special relationship with her and wrote warmly about her in *In The Twilight*: "To find, in Boston, those few men who were genuine wine lovers was not only a great surprise for me but a tonic, but the greatest gift of Providence was Theodora. She was the dynamic and highly intelligent wife of Charlie Codman, and she realized at once that a Boston Wine and Food Society would do far more for the recognition and appreciation of wine than the dinners of the Club des Arts Gastronomiques for a few men only. It


Dear Madame Georges de Latour

We bow to thee in humble appreciation for that which your dear beloved strived



was really Theodora Codman, not me, who started the Boston Chapter of the Society. Gus Loring was the President, benevolent, amiable, Pickwickian somewhat and lovable, but Theodora was the Hon. Secretary, quick, efficient, the 'no nonsense' type of woman who gets things done, and well done, but does not expect and rarely gets a thank you." Theodora Codman also wrote the charming 1935 book, *Was it a Holiday*, about a wine-buying trip she and Charlie took through France.

Bottlescrew Days (London: Duckworth, 1926) is inscribed: "Tommy Layton's Own Book André L. Simon 25-9-43." During and after World War II, Layton was a colorful figure on the London wine and food scene. He owned two restaurants, and was well-known for his wines. Eventually he started Layton's Wine Merchants, which exists today. According to Christies, Michael Broadbent's first job in the wine business was working for the "brilliant but eccentric" Layton (1952). He wrote numerous books on wine and food and was editor of Wine Magazine in the late 1950s.

Augustus Muir (1892-1989) was a crony of Simon's and the last surviving member of the Saintsbury Club who actually knew Professor Saintsbury. Muir was a student of Saintsbury's and made his living writing, as a journalist and by taking on corporate history commissions. On his death, we purchased many of the wine books in his library, a large percentage of which were Simon titles, some with inscriptions and the occasional A.L.S. signed menu or post card. But two are of particular interest here.

Bottlescrew Days (London: Duckworth, 1926) from Augustus Muir's library, inscribed "With all best wishes Andre L. Simon To G.H.A. Wilson 23-2-32," with the bookplate of G.H.A. Wilson M.P. Loosely inserted in the book are two items. One is a visiting card to Wilson from Mrs. Stanley Baldwin (the wife of the Prime Minister). The other item is a poignant letter from A.L.S. from his home, Little Hedgecourt, East Grinstead, written to Muir (5/3/69) the year before Simon's death: "My dear Augustus, Thank you so much for your good wishes! It was a surprise – a very pleasant one! To hear from you! I have so few old friends left now! I am nearly blind but still do my best to write 'blind' hoping to be legible otherwise quite fit without a pain or an ache! Kindest regards, André."

By Request, An Autobiography by Andre L. Simon (The Wine and Food Society, 1957). This copy is inscribed: "Andre Simon to Augustus Muir, Gratefully André L. Simon 28/2/57." Loosely inserted is the bill to have the book's manuscript typed, which Muir had arranged for Simon. The bill, from a Miss M. Howey in Stansted, Essex, totaled 11 pounds, 8 shillings for 99,000 words, including paper and carbons.

The Art of Good Living (Constable, 1930). Signed by André L. Simon. On p.128, within Simon's A-to-Z "A Gastronomic Vocabulary," Haggis is asterisked by hand, with a marginal note in Simon's hand: "Don't Miss it! Try it with 'Black Dog.' A.L.S." While Simon defines Haggis in his book as "a mess," presumably the Black Dog he refers to is a Scotch Whisky.

A.L.S. on the Motor-car in its Infancy

Inserted loosely in Volume One of *The History of the Wine Trade in England* is a letter from Simon, on 24 Mark Lane stationery, dated 21 April 1909, presumably to the original owner of this volume. It reads: "Dear Sir, I am extremely obliged to you for so kindly taking the trouble to point out what is–I fear–only one of the errors to be found in my Book. I am making a note of it, so as to correct it in a Second Edition, should I bring one out. If only you knew how absorbing my business and how numerous my social engagements, I am quite sure that you would forgive the ... errors you may find in a book much too hastily written. How I do envy you, these beautiful spring mornings, the peacefulness and old world charm of the delightful spot you live in! I have only been once to Budleigh Salterton and I remember being ashamed of the motor-car which struck me as desecrating the charming old place. Yours very truly, André L. Simon."

FROM THE LIBRARY OF BILL DICKERSON

In response to "With All Good Wishes," I can make one addition if it warrants inclusion without a previous inscription to a famous English wine personality... I lived in London on a medical fellowship during the year of 1959 and had the good fortune through my dear friend, Otto Loeb (O.W. Loeb, Wine Imports), to meet and dine with André Simon. He was kind enough to present me a copy of his *Bibliotheca Gastronomica*, inscribed: "To William Dickerson, with my best wishes, André L. Simon, Christmas 1959." Returning to the U.S. to finish my psychiatry residency, I had little opportunity to be with Mon. Simon again until the occasion of a wonderful get-together planned by Belle & Barney Rhodes when we sponsored a dinner at Gravetye Manor on 17 May 1967 with Otto Loeb, John Avery, Robert Knudsen, and the Robert Adamsons. This occasion is described by André Simon in his *In the Twilight* (p.92). Thank you for helping me to recall such happy memories.

[EDITOR NOTE: As we were going to press, we learned the sad news of the death of our long time fellow Tendril and friend, Bill Dickerson. Bill and his wife, while vacationing in Thailand, were killed in the horrific tsunami that swept Southeast Asia in late December. A well-respected San Francisco / Marin County physician, lover of fine food & wine, and gallant promoter of wine and its healthful benefits, Bill was also the proprietor of Dickerson Vineyard & Winery in Napa Valley. His facile wine-pen gave us the fine biographical sketch of S. Weir Mitchell in the Introduction to the 1975 Corti Bros. reprint of Mitchell's classic, *A Madeira Party*. Thank you for the memories, Bill. We will miss you.]

continued from page 3 –

"I spent most of that first vineyard summer hand-hoeing seventeen acres of vines. I did it three times, by myself, and ended up doing it [on about 50 acres] for part of every summer after that, like the mythical Sisyphus..." (p. 29)

To paraphrase a proverbial dictum, inexperienced viticulturists rush in where experienced veterans fear to tread. Such an injunction applies to many other formidable obstacles to their goal of making prize wines in an untested region, untested completely for a vitis vinifera. *The Vineyard's* candid and extensive treatment of the major, and minor, obstacles allows me to adumbrate by means of simple listing. For nearly thirty years, their venture faced many problems: Financing, refinancing, mortgages, insects, birds, rabbits, viruses, weeds, misinformation from experts and even disinformation, personnel problems, personal physical threats and injuries, developing a new, complete winery with cooperage, fermenters, stemmer, laboratory, etc., new tractors, posts and wire for trellises, hurricanes, freezes, government regulators (including uncooperative threats), bottling equipment, labels, sales, distribution—not a complete list.

At the start, Alex and Louisa held only a vague, but excited, understanding of what they were up against, as Hickham warned. For the life of their winery and vineyard, they approached each stage as a learning experience, one fraught with daily discouragements; but through it all, they succeeded primarily because there was no turning back once begun, like a tightrope walker who steps forth.

Louisa discretely and artfully refrains from divulging detailed financial information, preferring to leave it to the reader to consider just how much money was required even to try to farm, let alone buying those initial 10,000 vines, or funding later developments. Alex, we are told, inherited a trust from his grandmother, widow of T. J. Hargrave, for 30 years CEO of Eastman Kodak Company. A serious question can be posed, even in retrospect: Would they have been able to consider buying a farm to launch into an untried crop requiring a large financial risk if they had not had a substantial resource of initial capital? At any point in their career, it seems, they might have been able to recover some of their losses, though the saga suggests otherwise.

The Hargraves established the winery region of North Fork, Long Island, beginning after 1975. Subsequently, many other vineyards and wineries have become established, and a ready market for wines made from vinifera grapes has developed as a direct result of their pioneering efforts. "By 1988 there were thirty vineyards whose thirteen-hundred acres produced grapes, all vinifera, for twelve wineries." (p. 208)

Conclusion

Despite obvious differences in location (east coast vs. west coast), in time period (19th century vs. 20th century) literary genre (novel vs. memoir/ history) and other, minor contrasts, it is instructive to draw out some similarities and lessons available in the two works under discussion.

First of all, both key characters are women, young women who dedicate themselves completely to a vinous dream wherein they live the good, bucolic life in daily, hourly contact with nature and family members. Both women labor in the vineyards, pruning, tying canes, weeding, harvesting, making wine, bottling, selling crops and products. Both thrive on the life of a vigneron and, looking back over decades, they are prepared to re-dedicate themselves to the demanding tasks. Even the varieties of vinifera they treasure are held in common.

Perhaps Louisa Hargrave speaks for her distant, fictional soulmate a century earlier when she writes, "The first day I spent farming, following the tractor with a grape planter, was a model for the next thirty years. Under the open sky, work fell into a rhythm that was at first boring and then consoling. My mind could go anywhere because the work didn't require much new thinking. I could feel the power of my body increasing as I worked every muscle in my 110-pound frame." (p. 3)

Clearly, the great romance of the vine sustained them, above all other practical motives. When one asks more pointedly just exactly what kinds of motivation for the strenuous life of the vigneron operate in their souls, certain answers are plausible, despite the danger in divining motives.

In the Jones novel, heroine Alda Pendle, comes into possession of the legendary Villa Montino through a series of fortuitous inter-family developments. The land becomes hers as a kind of reward (by the novelist) for her decades of dedicated service, only, in the end, to be cast down by the specter of Prohibition.

In the case of Louisa Hargrave, the land and the vineyard-winery development are won for her and her husband, Alex, by virtue of the never-revealed amount of a trust from Alex' grandmother, supplemented by friendly investors, generous bank lenders, and fortuitous success of their venture, a gamble that could have gone completely sour but didn't. (I refrain from divulging the highly personal, poignant ending of her memoir, reserved for the reader.)

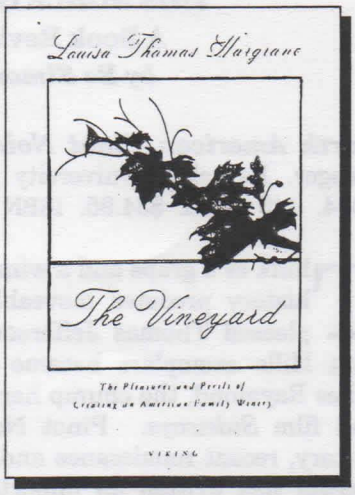
If, on the other hand, innocent amateurs (lovers) who knew only the love of the vine and the wine as dreamy ideals, as romances to be welcomed, is it likely that friends would be moved to invest, that bankers would be thrilled to share the venture vicariously, that success might be the goal? In short, even though the story by Jones appears to be an attractive plausibility

for the fictional persona—and even Hargrave's experience held such high value for her that she would do it all over again "in a heartbeat,"—can their stories be seriously evocative for someone else ready to embark on that same, ill-understood quest? "Oh, yes!" she said emphatically when I posed the possibility to her—without hesitation. Still, what is the prudential lesson for other amateurs without comparable, realistic means? Reason must dictate caution, at the very least, and wisdom must conclude that no amateur should undertake to start a winery-vineyard lacking financial backing, extensive research, and preparation.

It is doubtful that either the Jones or Hargrave work was intended to evoke in a reader any real desire to go and do likewise. Certainly this is true of Jones' highly idiosyncratic, fictional account. It couldn't be duplicated for the necessary and sufficient reason that it (the vineyard-winery) never did exist. On the other hand, Louisa Hargrave's spirited, often lighthearted prose exudes a great deal of attraction for some readers, readers who might just be in the throes of possibly duplicating what happened at the Hargrave Vineyard and Winery. She tells us that, subsequent to their initial success, the vineyards and wineries on the North Fork were established in considerable number, though not as a result of her memoir, of course, which came nearly five years after the Hargraves had vacated their place. Their reputation, example, and publicity attracted new investors to the novel, promising wine region. Clearly, Louisa Hargrave's book, though incitive, was not ever intended as a real estate tract to draw investors or wide-eyed amateur vignerons and wannabe vintners to the area. Still, even the sub-title, *The Pleasures and Perils of Creating an American Family Winery,* suggests that the publishers, at least, may have wanted the work to pose as a "how to" book. The reader, too, might easily have made the allure of a family enterprise, a harvest home, the emotional focus of his reading out of her book the possibility of reaching his dream.

Because both books do appear to induce others to join the vinous frolic, the dream of creating the ideal wines and vines, we must conclude that no such invitation can reasonably be accepted. In point of fact, the history of wineries in California, as well as in New England and the east coast, is replete with failures that do not, usually, make the public record the way successes do. Winery, vineyard, and business failures in general, do not make good copy. The wreckage of vinous dreams is strewn all up and down California and the east coast, as well as the resale of vineyards and wineries as proprietors come and go, for whatever unannounced reasons.

Unhappily, it is not uncommon to find that the romance of harvest home sometimes results in a vintage of sour grapes, given the vicissitudes of nature, cultures, histories, and human motives.



The dreamy fantasy of an ivy-covered estate winery can be overpowering; but if you walk the furrows of a dedicated, sunburned, sweaty vigneron, you may come to estimate realistically the fundamental allure of that sense of place built on the foundation of blood, sweat and tears. Perhaps the perennial, romantic singing sirens of Bacchantes should continue to draw some aside from their given odyssey, to strive in ways the rest of us can only imagine.

NOBLE ROT, continued from page 11 –

water into wine. We're still waiting for the second miracle, which is to turn wine into profit.'" (p.155)

The title, *Noble Rot*, is an unfortunate choice on two counts: It is off-putting to the unknowing; it invites waggish, impish, facetious animadversions I valiantly restrain myself from writing out.

Why is it that wine tasters of the world, even Wine Masters, refuse to take seriously Maynard Amerine's profoundly reasonable writings about "sensory evaluation"? If there exists a better corpus of documents on the subject, I haven't seen them.

Finally, "Sixty-two-Buck-Chuck" makes a splendid and tempting title for a critical essay on the subject of the frivolous pricing of wines. ■

IF you cannot read all your books, at any rate handle, or as it were, fondle them – peer into them, let them fall open where they will, read from the first sentence that arrests the eye, set them back on the shelves with your own hands, arrange them on your own plan so that you at least know where they are. Let them be your friends; let them at any rate be your acquaintances.
— WINSTON CHURCHILL (1874–1965)

THIS NOBLE GRAPE
A Book Review
by Bo Simons

North American Pinot Noir by John Winthrop Haeger. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 445 pages. $34.95. ISBN 0520241142.

Think of a grape and a wine made from it whose history predates moveable type, whose wine pleased Thomas Jefferson, and whose Santa Rita Hills exemplars became the grail quest for Miles Raymond, the chump hero of the recent novel and film *Sideways*. Pinot Noir enjoys that long history, recent renaissance and current buzz. John Haeger has written an important book about this noble grape and its expression on the North American continent. It is a big subject, but Haeger is up to it, shining a focused light on the grape's genetics, history in this country, and a detailed study of many of California, Oregon, and Washington producers.

Haeger brings the skills of a scholar and the levelheaded practicality of a manager to the task of making sense of this sprawling and elusive subject. He has been a professor of Chinese at the Claremont Colleges, and for some 20 years was a vice president of Research Libraries Group, a major research libraries association.

The University of California Press still cares about making a good book: This one sports an attractive burgundy cloth cover, an understated and classic dust jacket, pleasing typeface and layout. There are no illustrations but the center pages contain adequate if not terribly detailed maps. (By the way, maps that I would wish to see would require an atlas sized book.) The book consists of three parts, the first two of roughly equal size and the third, considerably smaller—Part One: The Grape, The Wine and The History (176 pages); Part Two: Profiles of Key Producers (207 pages); Part Three: Enjoying Pinot Noir (22 pages).

The Grape, The Wine and The History.

In the first eight chapters that constitute Part One, Haeger covers a book's worth of ground. He tells us about Pinot Noir, its supposed origins, DNA, history, how it's grown, its clones, and compares Burgundy with North American Pinot. Along the way he weaves his history with several themes and dispels some common misconceptions about it. Two themes compliment each other: the transparency of the grape, and primacy of site. Transparency refers to the ability of Pinot Noir to take on characteristics of its site and to suffer from rough handling or interventionist winemaking. This transparency leads to Pinot's being site specific, and also means the winemaker's task, once he has good fruit from a good site, is stewardship rather than manipulation. Prevailing wisdom had it that America's initial lack of interest in Pinot stemmed from the difficulty in growing the grape. Not so fast, says Haeger: The allure of claret, hyped because of the Anglo-Bordeaux connection, dazzled the 19th century American wine men who were more entrepreneurs than connoisseurs. A few good Pinots were made in California before and after Prohibition, but by the 1970s when other wines had benefited from high-tech manipulative winemaking, Pinot had suffered, and it took simple small-scale, back-to-basics winemaking—espoused by Martin Ray, David Bruce, Joe Swan, Merry Edwards, the boys up North in Oregon and others—to make good Pinot here.

Part of the problem with relating the history of Pinot Noir in America is that it is many smaller stories. Haeger realizes this, and gives a broad sweep in Chapter 3, "The Rise of Pinot Noir in North America," and individualizes the regional histories in Chapter 4, "Where It Happens." He gets down to the winery and vineyard level in his "key producer" profiles in Part Two. The stories of Russian River, Carneros, Santa Rita Hills, Willamette Valley (not to mention Canada and New York) are diverse yet intertwined. Like a good Pinot, its history is layered and complex.

Profiles of Key Producers.

Haeger picks 72 "Key Producers" of Pinot Noir to profile in depth. Any such limitation is bound to provoke controversy. Reasonable arguments can be made that your favorite Pinot maker does not appear. However, Haeger, limiting his selection to those who would consent to "provide the access needed for inclusion," has omitted some biggies that belong in such a book as his: e.g., left out are the stellar producers Dehlinger and Marcassin. Now these producers probably figured what is there to gain from the exposure. They sell every drop of what they produce, and have waiting lists from here to Tokyo of connoisseurs wanting to buy more. Still, I think they have blown it by not granting Haeger the access he required. Those who are making wine history have an obligation to present themselves to its chroniclers. But Haeger, even if he could not get Tom Dehlinger or Helen Turley to talk to him, needed to include them. Haeger is no slouch at research. He could have found out about them, and included a profile with a disclaimer of some kind. While a profile assembled from other sources is a poor substitute for an account informed by a visit, interview, and a tasting conducted by the winemaker, it beats the exclusion of these important

Pinot producers. The profiles he does supply are wonderful. We learn a lot on an intimate level about the men and women who make Pinot Noir sing.

Cover to cover

Despite the one flaw, which like a quirk in a great Pinot, might only serve to accentuate the overall greatness, this book stands as rewarding and worthwhile. Few wine books merit reading cover to cover. This is one of them. Haeger writes well, has a worthy subject, and brings ideas and a lively intelligence to the telling. Where else can you get involved in discussions of clones, revisionist history, the role and limits of *terroir*, the difficulty or ease of growing Pinot, whether great Pinot can be made in quantity, and the Zen of non-interventionist winemaking style?

NOBLE ROT
A BOOK REVIEW
by *Allan Shields*

Noble Rot: A Bordeaux Wine Revolution by William Echikson. New York: Norton, 2004, 302 pp. Cloth. $25.

Noble Rot is not about noble rot, a natural process of a lingering harvest with Botrytis cinerea fungus to increase desirable sugars into the wine. It is about the Bordeaux region in France during the past three decades, roughly; about the market revolution created by a vignerons-vintners revolution in which Robert Parker is claimed to have been a principal factor; and it is about the history of key *terroirs* of Bordeaux. Across an expanse of nearly three-hundred pages of 10-point font, we are treated to a Cook's tour of the region primarily through the means of fifteen chapters featuring key personalities and their clashes à la Napa family contentions. Much of the debate within the wine cellar circles revolves around matters of proper vineyard-winery practices, promotion, distribution, and pricing, and, in a dominating way, MONEY. Undercurrent one can find Francophilia *vs* Francophobia so much in the news of foreign affairs and politics lately. The silliness of pouring French champagne down the drain in defiance (of what?); denial of French fries, French bread, French kissing (oops), and Frogs' legs, are not discussed, though Echikson does intimate that there exist real prejudices about time-honored French wines that are refreshingly questioned by his knight-in-American armor Mr. Parker.

It must be said, too, that the more you are already a Francophile, the better equipped you will be to follow the primrose prose path through the French names of wines, *châteaux*, *garagistes*, (artisanal wineries), *terroirs*, and the nomenclature of the enormously complex *patois* (that's French, too) of the Bordeaux region and traditions. At the end of the tour, if you aren't thirsty for a glass of something, anything, you will have skipped pages.

Robert Mondavi (p.84) shows his annoyance with "wine speak," preferring the wine in the glass to the vaunted and inflated *patois* (fr. Fr.) of tasters. (The indexer missed entering Robert Mondavi's name with references.) However, it is Robert Parker who figures mainly in the "revolution" in Bordeaux. A full chapter is devoted to his influence and biography, and he figures in many other parts of the work. Jancis Robinson's name is barely whispered—once. Parker is credited with at least a quarter of a century of influence resulting in dramatic changes in vineyard practices, but especially with developing a different standard of taste expectation of wine qualities geared to the taste of—you guessed—R. Parker. Parker's published rating of 91 vs., say, 86 became so powerful a judgment, Echikson argues, that wineries could be projected instantly into fabulous, famous (financial) success, or cast down (86!) into a purgatory of self-loathing. I do not claim this result; I only report.

Actually, there is enough to doubt without emasculating the exorbitant claims of Parker. Echikson writes, "Parker spits out ten thousand wines a year and still remembers them all." (p.93) I have a U.S. aircraft carrier I'll sell you for a buck if you can believe that claim.

"By the end of the day [Rolland] had tasted and judged almost 350 unfinished wines. His mouth was purple. Even for this professional, the senses were numbed." (p.253) Maynard Amerine states: "The maximum number of wines that can be ranked accurately at one session may be as few as five and is certainly no more than ten to fifteen." (p.7, *Wines: Their Sensory Evaluation,* Maynard A. Amerine and Edward B. Roessler, 1976.) No comment required.

Noble Rot claims that Parker's newsletter, The Wine Advocate, reaches 40,000 subscribers at $80 per year. That figures to $3,200,000 per year gross income, enough financial support to increase one's confidence in the validity of one's wine judgments. It is also enough to buy several cases of Two-Buck-Chuck, or even Sixty-two-Buck-Chuck.

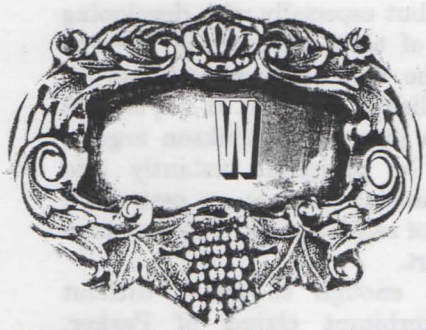
Often, through *Noble Rot,* the author sympathizes with the financial risks of winery owners, given the vicissitudes of the market, nature, disease, insects, etc. "One manager of a major food company once told The Economist, 'Two thousand years ago, Jesus achieved the first wine miracle by turning

continued on page 9 –

A *Sterling* Book Review
by
Wilson G. Duprey

[Tendril and long-time member of the Wine Label Circle, Bill Duprey is a retired librarian and curator of rare books, manuscripts, prints and maps—at Stanford University, New York Public Library, and New York Historical Society (where he catalogued the Society's collection of 500 antique wine labels). He is still surrounded by books and fine printed things at his farm home in western Ohio "where Concord grapes are everywhere." — Ed.]

Wine Labels 1730 – 2003. A Worldwide History. Edited and co-authored by John Salter. London: Antique Collectors' Club in association with The Wine Label Circle, 2004. Hardbound. £85 + 6.50 S/H in the UK. Available in the USA from Amazon.com or The Antique Collectors' Club (www.antique-acc.com).



ine labels developed out of sheer necessity. How else to know which wine is within a decanter or bottle of wine? This new book has been produced by a team of experts headed by Professor John Salter and members of The Wine Label Circle. *[See WTQ Vol.13 No.2 "The Wine Label Circle" and "The Literature of the Wine Label" by Darrell Rosander.* – Ed.] Published by the Antique Collector's Club, it is a splendid volume weighing-in at 5 pounds (11" x 8½"), with 1400 illustrations, 130,000 words, and 447 pages. The paper, typography, binding and photography are of the highest caliber—a stellar addition to any wine library.

With an exceptionally detailed Table of Contents listing topics within (with credits to individual authors of each article), the reader can dive into any aspect of wine label history from the first mention in literature to the manufacture of hand-worked silver from around 1730 through the various stages of creation—such as Sheffield, die-stamping, enameling, electroplating—right up to the present day.

Sections of the book discuss shapes and designs, makers and their marks (with much biographical information), the amazing multiplicity of wine label names—there is a listing of 2353, plus 305 more on bin labels—among many other cogent topics. Although London makers (including labels made from materials other than silver) far outnumber those working elsewhere, there is good coverage of those labels from "The Provinces," and "Outside the British Isles and Ireland." Biographies of the early collectors of wine labels provide an unusual insight.

Fifty pages are devoted to the important appendices: (1) Names of Wines, Spirits, Liqueurs and Alcoholic Cordials; (2) Makers of Wine Labels; (3) Glossary; (4) Bibliography; (5) Footnotes to the text; (6) Index. Appendix 2 is an ingenious listing of label makers by town (Aberdeen to York), then makers within that town (A–Z), the first and last recorded dates of the maker's labels, his or her death dates (if known), and last, and very important, the illustration number in the book.

And the Index really works! If one wishes to find data and / or reproductions of labels made of leather, tortoiseshell, enamel (there are several), ivory, gold, or other non-silver materials, the Index will guide you to the pertinent pages.

One of the most interesting and extensive sections of the volume discusses labels made outside the British Isles, with a country by country approach: Australia, Belgium, Burma, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Malaysia and Singapore, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United States of America, and other Colonial Territories.

Although aimed at collectors of wine labels, the almost three-century coverage indirectly mirrors the wine drinking habits, particularly of the British world, of the era. The supply of imported wines from Spain, Madeira, Bordeaux, the Rhineland, and other areas varied greatly through the years, due to the continental wars, politics, and the economies. Individual tastes often had to change unless one had a cellar full of preferred wines.

Professor Salter and his wine label experts have produced a book loaded with information of great value to the collector or researcher, yet the narrative style also makes the book a joy to read and use. He has authored only last year another unusual title closely related to wine labels, *Sauce Labels 1750–1950*, also published by the Antique Collectors' Club in association with The Wine Label Circle, as a companion volume.

BOOKS & BOTTLES
by
Fred McMillin

Reflections on Life, Wine, Literature

The Book: *The Gadding Vine* by Walter James. Melbourne: Georgian House, 1955. Decorations by Harold Freedman.

Walter James, heralded as Australia's first popular wine writer, had earlier abandoned journalism to become a winemaker. But when his winery was destroyed by fire, he turned his attention to writing about wine and life—his books are richly filled with anecdotes and philosophy. Gabler's *Wine into Words* bibliography lists seventeen James titles—from *Venite Apotemus*, published in 1940 under the name of Tom Turnspit, to *Wine in Australia: An Alphabetical Guide,* 1978, 5th ed. (see Gabler, p.201).

Tendrils will recall the April 2002 Quarterly article by Valmai Hankel (retired librarian of the State Library of South Australia) on 20th century Australian wine books, in which she includes James' works in her Top Twenty. He "introduced people...to both the literature of wine and to wine itself at a time when both received very little attention in Australia...his books are just as readable today as when they were first published."

Let's enjoy a sampling from *The Gadding Vine*, his 118-page charming potpourri of food, philosophy, and fermented grape juice.

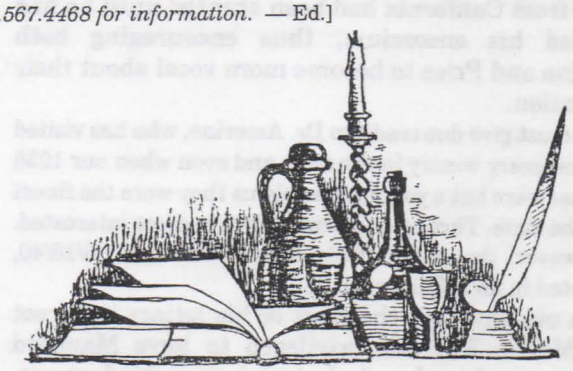
- "The best glass of white wine is the first and the best glass of red is the last."
- "There is no pin-prick worse than hot food on a cold plate."
- "All authors are frauds, and I, for all my talk of wine, am in truth no apostle of Bacchus ... I do not by any means wish to see more wine on the table. All I wish to see is a little wine on more tables."
- "The wise Greek Alciphon wrote, 'Let us drink moderately and prove to each other that pleasure is the aim of life. The Deity allows us only a short time to live; do not waste it foolishly in trying to solve riddles.'"
- "Observed the sagacious Kai Kaus, prince of northern Persia, 'Wine-drinking is a transgression; if you wish to commit a transgression it should at least not be a flavorless one. If you drink wine, let it be the finest...so that even though you may be convicted of sin in the next world, you will at any rate not be branded a fool in this.'"
- On the quality of Australian wine in the 1950s: "At Sydney's Wine and Food Society a celebrated local vintner said that 'we might be puzzled to decide whether the gift of Bacchus, which delighted the palates of ancient kings, has in itself made any advances under modern conditions of growth and making.'"
- "The purest, most disinterested hobbies are those which are the most useless, and if they are also a little bit stupid, like collecting bookplates or fishing in the rain, so much the better. Mine (as you know by now) is scribbling, and a little time ago I thought I would have a shot at filling twenty printed pages without using a single punctuation mark other than the fullstop. Here's the result. The story is a true one..." [see page 103]

The Bottles: Australia's premier wine grape is the Shiraz. Here are the best my classes have tasted recently.

1st – Tyrrell's Reserve Shiraz, 2001. $25.
2nd – Jacob's Creek Reserve Shiraz, 2001. $13.
3rd – Wyndam Bin 555 Shiraz, 2002. $10.
4th – Alice White Shiraz, 2002. $8.
5th – Black Opal Shiraz, 2001. $10.
6th – Jacob's Creek Shiraz, 2002. $9.
7th – Reynolds Shiraz, 2001. $15.

Look at those prices. Little wonder that last year U.S.A. imports from Australia increased 50%. Somewhere, Walter James is smiling.

[Fred McMillin, our faithful Tendril Quarterly contributor, has taught wine history for more than 30 years, on three continents. His monthly wine courses are now based in San Francisco. Fax him at 415.567.4468 for information. — Ed.]



Vinaceous Correspondents:
Martin Ray's Friendships with Eminent Oenophiles

The Third Article in a Series (continued)

by *Barbara Marinacci*

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

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

-2-

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

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

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

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

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

Martin Ray's First Publications

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amerine's Wine Judging

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

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

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

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

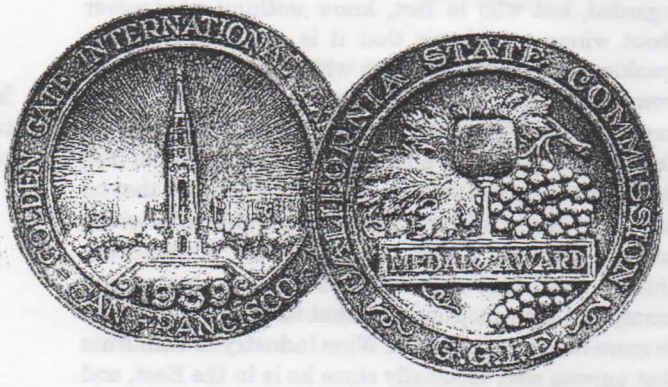
> He is on all the important wine judging committees, was Chairman of the Committee at the Golden Gate International Exposition, which I have told you did not, in my estimation, do a very noble job but which was not his fault. He did all he could, I believe, to make the awards what they should be. The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

Several weeks earlier, MR had said:

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Insights into a Sensitive and Somewhat Taciturn Young Man

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cordially, Maynard Amerine

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amerine's Correspondence with Julian Street

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Two months later, Amerine wrote Street again.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> ... The rains have given us an early spring and also have brought wonderful green grass in the fields. Some of the more tender grasses are very good for cream soup while others are very fine in simple salads. I had both last Sunday and it was a fine combination.
>
> The early lambs (those of last September and October) are just getting to the proper size and I am anticipating some good meat in a week or two. As a matter of fact good food is plentiful now—and the best philosophy it seems is to live every minute to its fullest, taking advantage of all that one's means and opportunities offer. Because there is no way of predicting just what the future will bring. This has always been true but it seems more so now.
>
> The winter has been a good one here. Sales of wines were high—though not so high as anticipated—and there is a general mood of satisfaction in the industry. I do not believe in self-satisfaction and find myself constantly disatisfied [*sic*] with my own work. But perhaps a certain amount of self-satisfaction is all right if it leads to a really intelligent examination of the position of the industry. The whole set-up of the industry just now trends to larger and larger units and this does not mean better and better wines but the contrary. [1/30/41]

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

> Today is so fascinating—but it is only because tomorrow is so damnably dark. Whatever ray of light one can find today must be in the individual. There are no hopes for nations. The sins of the past, of some, and of the present of others, will eventually bring them low. Strangely enough it is in France that perchance the love of life and light will again spring.
>
> And it is because the only optimism today is in the individual that I find so much pleasure in working with and for wines. In wine there <u>is</u> joy and life and light. How much pleasure and relaxation it could bring to Americans if they could only drink it with understanding and without excess. But how few do, or can!!
>
> Two changes however need to transpire. One in the basic attitude of Americans towards alcoholic beverages and the other in the type of wines made and in their proper distribution. How difficult it is to find really "light" wines—wines which one can drink without becoming sleepy!!...
>
> The other problem of quality wines is, with the exception of Ray, still pretty much unsolved. There does not seem, even with the New York demand, to be a profound spiritual interest in quality which is, of course, very important. You would be surprised at how little interest many winemakers have in their vineyards. The vineyard is paramount. If good varieties are not planted and properly cared for there can be no fine wines. Prof. Winkler and I have both been practically jeered for suggesting that more care in harvesting would pay dividends in cleaner fermentations and better keeping quality. [3/1/41]

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

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

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

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