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## WILLIAM CHORLTON AND HIS *AMERICAN GRAPE GROWER'S GUIDE*

by Gail Unzelman



his pilgrimage into the life of William Chorlton began with a letter from fellow Tendril Joseph Lynch: "I have four copies of Chorlton's *Grape Grower's Guide*, 1852, 1879, 1905, 1914. Gabler (*Wine into Words*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p.87) states the 1852 edition was published by Orange Judd, New York, but my copy was published by Saxton, New York." He was perplexed with another bibliographic issue as well, the so-stated title change in 1874 that indicated "The Cultivation of the Exotic Grape." Joe's 1879 edition still carried the original title, with no mention or pages on the exotic grape. "Not of utmost importance," he said, "but interesting, don't you think?" Indeed I did. A subsequent review of Chorlton's listings in Amerine & Borg, *Bibliography on Grapes, Wines, . . . Published in the U.S. before 1901*, clarified the Saxton /

Orange Judd question (both published an 1852 edition), but interestingly, neither bibliography recorded an 1879 edition. Apart from the bibliographical points, I wondered how can the man who authored this "very popular treatise" of "numerous subsequent and revised editions" and in print until 1920—with so many editions/printings that all are not recorded—remain so unknown in grape and wine literature? No bibliography gives the briefest biographical sketch, or even his birth and death dates. Who was William Chorlton?

He was not an important figure in America's winegrowing history—he is not mentioned in Tom Pinney's comprehensive *History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition* (1989). Yet Chorlton should merit a spot in the grape growing historical picture; the listings of his books in both Gabler and Amerine/Borg attest to his contribution.

### William Chorlton, Gardener

William Chorlton was born in 1811 in Lancashire, northern England, and died at New Brighton, Staten Island, New York, in 1889. His life's proud work was gardener. He came to Staten Island, with his wife and four children, in 1849 as the gardener to John C. Green, Esq., a recognized and prestigious position.

His employer, John C. Green (1797–1875), was a very successful, wealthy, and philanthropic New York City merchant. In partnership in a corporation that owned much land on the north shore of Staten Island, he established his summer home and spacious gardens on the island at New Brighton, in 1849. In 1856, a visit to the Green country estate,

under the care of William Chorlton, was described in The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste:

Taking a carriage to New Brighton, we first called upon Mr. William Chorlton, an esteemed correspondent, gardener to John C. Green, Esq. Mr. Chorlton has under his charge twelve acres, two acres of which are vegetable garden, four acres pleasure-grounds consisting of lawns, flower-bed,



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and shrubberies, and six acres of pasture-land and meadows. The whole is in the nicest order, suf-



ficiently so to satisfy the most fastidious. The views of the Bay of New York are exquisitely beautiful, and advantage is judiciously taken in the planting to conceal defects and open the finest vistas. Altogether, the scene about the house presents an appearance of rural luxury and ease. . . . There are four plant houses, from which are produced a very fine show of regular succession of flowers. The camellia house is 78-feet long, and is filled with large and fine plants, from which were cut last winter some 4,000 flowers. The vineries are devoted to the grape entirely, and produce an average of 1,500 pounds of the finest quality, which have always taken the first prizes when exhibited. Including cold frames ... there is at Mr. Green's a total of 8,000 square feet of glass. For this amount of ground and glass, Mr. Chorlton has, besides himself, two regular assistants and two others for about eight months. The produce of this highly beautiful place is made use of by the proprietor's family ... but were it to be sold, Mr. Chorlton has no doubt the aggregate value would amount to about \$4,000 annually. Here are valuable results for imitation, exhibiting Mr. Chorlton in the character of a master of his business.

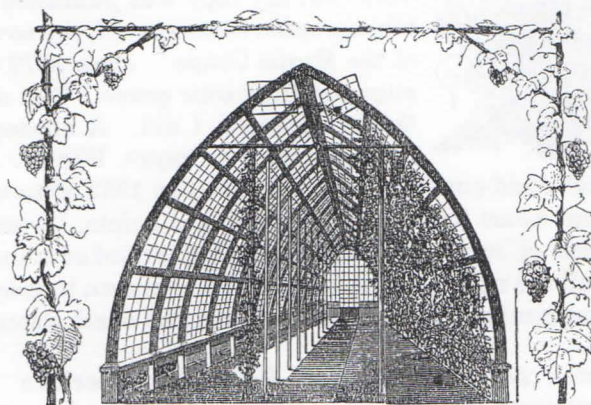
#### The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art & Rural Taste

Soon after Chorlton's arrival in New York in 1849, he became a regular correspondent and contributor to the The Horticulturist, one of the most important American horticultural journals of the day. The journal enjoyed a succession of notable editors—all recognized men in the fields of horticulture, landscape gardening, botany, pomology, and other rural pursuits—including A. J. Downing, Patrick Barry, Peter Mead, and Geo. Woodward. A vast amount of material on grapes and wine was published in these pages during the journal's long run (1846–1875), reflecting the nation's keen interest in grapes as a horticultural crop, and preserving for today a fine archive of early American grape and wine culture.

Chorlton's first contribution to the respected journal was an article on the culture of the dahlia. "An excellent article; and we shall be glad to hear from Mr. C. again," the Editor commented. He quickly obliged with substantial articles on carnations and geraniums. For almost 15 years Chorlton, who signed his articles and letters "Wm Chorlton, Gardener to J. C. Green, Esq, Staten Island," would be a familiar contributor offering practical gardening information (and advice) on such topics as flowers, fruits, viticulture, vegetables, and the construction of greenhouses and vineries. In a May 1851 letter to the editor, "Education of

Gardeners," he lamented the "miserable position in which professional gardeners generally stand," and implored the nation's cities to form more horticultural societies, with grand gardens, for the practical education of gardeners, and the general public alike. He concluded, "I have had some experience in the working of such societies in England, and can assert with confidence that they have done more to elevate gardening in that country than anything else."

Early in 1852 Chorlton sent to the journal a "Detailed Culture of the Grape in Vineries" with a "description and management of the cold vinery, erected two years ago at this place by my employer." He described a house 74' by 60', with a total of 74 vines that "should yield from six to seven hundred bunches." Chorlton encouraged "lovers of this inestimable fruit to erect houses for its cultivation, as no fruit-bearing plant is more easily grown, or gives greater reward for kind treatment."



Inside View of the Cold Grapery of J. C. Green, Esq., Staten Island.

#### William Chorlton's Books on Grape Culture

In 1852 Chorlton published his *American Grape Grower's Guide, Intended especially for the American climate. Being a practical treatise on the cultivation of the grape-vine in each department of hot house, cold grapery, retarding house, and outdoor culture. With plans for the construction of the requisite buildings, and giving the best methods of heating the same. Every department being fully illustrated* (New York: C. M. Saxton, 171 pp.). The same title, published the same year in New York by Orange Judd, contained a "Calendar of Operations" and 204 pages. Chorlton provided a thorough treatment of the subject, based on his "own experiences and observations," and included a long list of grapes suitable for indoor, and outdoor, cultivation. (I searched the pages of The Horticulturist for 1852 for a notice or a book review of Chorlton's book, but found none. I have a feeling the untimely death in July of the journal's esteemed editor, A. J. Downing,



in a tragic accident on the Hudson River, curtailed the "Book Review" section for the remainder of the year. The January 1853 issue contains a review of Robert Buchanan's *Culture of the Grape and Wine Making*, 1852 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, but no Chorlton.)

Gabler lists six editions/printings of the well-received treatise between 1852 and 1874 (when the title changed). U. P. Hedrick, in his *History of Horticulture in America to 1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950) explains the success of Chorlton's book:

Scarcely any under-glass endeavor received more attention in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century than grape culture. In the 1850s the grape was receiving more attention from amateur fruit growers than any other fruit. [In the North Atlantic States], there were at the time only two good grapes that could be grown out of doors, Catawba and Isabella. Grapes could not be imported from California or Europe. If people in eastern America were to have grapes over a long season, some must be grown under glass. Several authors wrote books on this fruit, and by far the most popular was William Chorlton's *American Grape-Grower's Guide* . . . not of much interest now but then of immense popularity because it contained full information on growing grapes under glass.

As is stated in the Gabler and Amerine / Borg bibliographies, the title of Chorlton's book changed in 1874 to *Chorlton's Grape Grower's Guide. A Handbook of the cultivation of the exotic grape. New edition. With descriptions of the later exotic grapes by Dr. George Thurber* (New York: Orange Judd, 208 pp). Although a "new" edition with a new title, this is basically the same book as the 1852 edition, with a few minor changes: title page, table of contents, a publisher's preface is added and the preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is omitted, and Dr. Thurber's descriptions of the exotic grapes are added. (For a survey of the numerous printings and editions see the Gabler and Amerine / Borg bibliographies.)

William Chorlton's other book, *The Cold Grapery, from Direct American Practice: Being a concise and detailed treatise on the cultivation of the exotic grape-vine, under glass, without artificial heat* (New York: J. C. Riker, 95 pp.), has a publication date of 1853. But it must have preceded his *American Grape Grower's Guide* of 1852, for the author states in the Preface of the *Guide*: "Owing to the favorable reception of my monograph, the Cold Grapery . . . I comply with the request of friends, by giving a more comprehensive edition" (almost double the pages with more practical instruction and an enlarged list of recommended grapes).

### Last Years

William Chorlton left Mr Green's service in 1865 and "retired" to his fruit and vegetable gardens at his West New Brighton home. For a time he engaged in a florist business there, and he became active in local affairs, serving as president of the New Brighton Board of Trustees and a trustee of the Staten Island Cemetery. He died in 1889 and was buried in the Staten Island Cemetery.


Later in life, with pen still in hand, Chorlton turned to poetry to extol life's riches. One of his poems, written circa 1876, is titled "An Ode to Staten Island." It begins:

Thou lovely island by the sea—  
My Island Home, I sing of thee;  
Thy shady nooks, where mosses dwell,  
And ferns co-mingle in the dell.

When I on thy hilltops stand,  
And view the panorama grand,  
Words fail to tell or thoughts express  
The grandeur of thy loveliness.

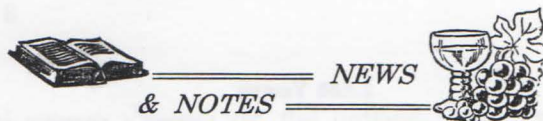
Amidst thy beauties oft I've trod,  
And looked through nature up to God;  
My happy home, I sing of thee,  
Thou lovely Island by the sea.

[My sincerest thanks to Marty Schlabach and Mike Fordon at Cornell University for their diligent searches to find Chorlton's biographical dates and birthplace and the title of a short article on his life, "Victorian New Brighton Figures, Houses, and Gardens: William Chorlton: Botanist and Gardener" by John Woodall (*Staten Island Historian*, Summer-Fall 1988). Thanks to Bo Simons, Sonoma County Wine Library, for digging up this article. Also, special Tendril thanks to Eberhard Buehler for first making me aware of *The Horticulturist* journals and the bounty of information they contain. His 1998 "Wine & Gastronomy Catalogue GH" contains a long run of the journals (1846–1865), with detailed annotations—a gold mine in itself and an invaluable tool for all researchers. These volumes, in their attractive leather and marbled board covers, are now on my bookshelf with great pleasure, I refer to them often.]



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Welcome, new Tendrils! Jon Osbeiston, proprietor of the Ultimo Wine Centre in New South Wales ([jon@ultimowinecentre.com.au](mailto:jon@ultimowinecentre.com.au)) confesses that he collects wine books, not wine—much more fun, he says. His special interest is the works of André Simon (see John Danza's article this issue, Jon!). John Daniel in Toronto ([john.daniel@lcbo.com](mailto:john.daniel@lcbo.com)) found us while "surfing the net." He has been collecting books on "all" wines for about 8 years.

#### WEB WINE APPRECIATION

The self-described "oldest, largest, and most popular independent wine appreciation site on the World Wide Web: [www.wineloverspage.com](http://www.wineloverspage.com)" is hosted by wine lover and journalist Robin Garr. His "Favorite Wine Links" (numbering almost three dozen) will send you to "Books and Authors" (including Wayward Tendrils), "Corkscrews" (museums & collector sites), "Labels" (wine label collections), "Scholarly Sources" (colleges, universities, advanced wine scholarship) ... he even has a "One of a Kind" link that lists "wine sites so unusual they don't fit in anywhere else."

#### BOOKSELLERS' & AUCTION CATALOGUES

Christopher Fielden writes that he has "about 250 catalogues from the last 25 years from booksellers and auctions—including for some reason 3 copies of the Sotheby's André Simon sale catalogue. These come mainly from dealers in the UK, US, France, and Switzerland. I am happy to send these to anybody who will send a generous donation to help support relief work in Sudan." Contact Christopher at [winesource@sagnet.co.uk](mailto:winesource@sagnet.co.uk)

#### TWO WINE GENTLEMEN OF NOTE

Two new releases feature historic wine gentlemen, one famous, one not so famous. *Thomas Jefferson on Wine* by John Hailman (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006; 457pp., Illustrated, Cloth, \$38.) Hailman, syndicated wine columnist and international wine judge, has written "the definitive account of Jefferson's lifelong pursuit of good wine." *John Ignatius Bleasdale: A Friend of Wine in New Worlds* (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 2006; Illustrated & With a Checklist of Bleasdale's Writings on Wine, 67pp., Cloth, \$70) is the fascinating subject of Thomas Pinney's latest contribution to wine lore.

#### ROSTER UPDATES!!

An updated Membership Roster will be mailed with the April issue of the *WTQ*. Please e-mail Madam Editor ([tendrils@jps.net](mailto:tendrils@jps.net)) any contact information

changes. For now, please note new information for Warren Johnson, Second Harvest Books: PO Box 8, Joseph, OR 97846-0008 USA. 541-432-1890 (W). [info@secondharvestbooks.net](mailto:info@secondharvestbooks.net) / [www.secondharvestbooks.net](http://www.secondharvestbooks.net)

**THE "BARCHIVES" LIBRARY AND COLLECTION** of Brian Rea will be placed on the market this Spring. This splendid and extensive collection of drink-related materials, acknowledged to be one of the most comprehensive in America, was formed during his lifetime of service in the Adult Beverage Industry. Brian has catalogued the collection into twelve categories: Bartender & Cocktail Guides (some 950 books); Beverage Containers; Historical References (England & Europe / American); Pubs, Inns, Taverns, Laws; Bars, Bartenders, Saloons; Bar Games, Bets, Tricks, Jokes; Toasts, Hangovers, Intoxication; Design & Management; Famous Places, People, Companies; "Last Call" (anthologies, fiction, satire, &c); Ephemera (artwork, old prints, beverage trains & trucks, miniature bars, vintage photos, videos, and much more!). Available February 1<sup>st</sup> is a detailed listing of all categories. The "Barchives" will be sold as a collection with the intent to keep this valuable archive intact. Contact Brian at [barguru@aol.com](mailto:barguru@aol.com).

#### CONTINUATION Notice . . .

If you are searching the pages of this issue for the continuation of Marvin Collins' absorbing portrait of Charles A. Wetmore—"the most diversely brilliant man," who was also "the most contradictory, self-righteous, contentious, and combative individual to bring his talents to the California wine industry in the 1880s"—it will be found in our April issue.

#### TAPE REPAIRS ?

A concerned Tendril wrote: "I recently bought a book in which six leaves have a jagged tear a couple of inches long. Is there anything other than tape to fix the tears? Is there a tape that really does disappear?" We look to the April 1998 issue of *O.P. World* where book restoration expert Bob Colver deftly addressed this question in his series, "The Book Mender." He writes:

Let's assume you already know better than to use cellophane tape to repair a torn page. You may be using one of the many paper "archival" mending tapes sold in easy-to-use rolls by library supply houses. They are certainly better than cellophane tapes. But I still have problems with a lot of them—both in a philosophical and practical sense.



For one thing, they have cut edges, and the adhesive makes them stiffer than most of the paper you'll be mending—which means there is more than a potential for the old paper to break along the cut edge.

Secondly, they, and glue and “instant hinge” solutions and a lot of other products are sold as “archival” because they are reversible in water. This tempts a lot of well-intentioned souls to use them with abandon and without regard to what the amount of moisture necessary to reverse the adhesive will do to the old, infirm materials the adhesive is solidly attached to.

I've found in cleaning off numerous “archival” mending tape repairs, by the time I've moistened it enough through its highly calendared surface to soften the adhesive, the paper underneath has been moistened enough to return to rag pulp. Or the adhesive is stronger than the paper pulp, and the top layer of paper—the one with the ink on it—comes up with the adhesive.

For utility paper repair, almost nothing beats the Library of Congress “heat-set tissue.” It comes in a large sheet which can be torn into any shape you need. It is an almost transparent, but strong, lens tissue, treated with a clear, heat-set acrylic resin on one side as an adhesive. You lay a piece of it over a page tear—or even on the reverse side of a whole page or a map—and go over it with a tacking iron. The heat from the iron sets the resin into the paper and you have a nearly invisibly mended tear with no water, paste, or glue touching the paper. The tissue is so transparent it can be used over the smallest 6-point type or the most faded document ink, and the text will still be perfectly readable. And the acrylic resin is reversible in alcohol—not water—which is far less damaging to the underlying materials. Use this stuff once and you'll swear by it.

If you don't want to invest thirty-odd dollars in a Teflon-coated tacking iron, I don't blame you. Spend twenty-odd bucks and get a good Silverstone coated steam-and-dry iron. It does absolutely everything the tacking iron does when you run it dry. Set it on “cotton” or “linen” and you can heat-set tissue just fine. And, if you need a little humidification to press the wrinkles out of a page, you've got the steam.

EDITOR NOTE: Talas (“Your one source for the finest in professional archival, conservation, preservation and restoration supplies since 1962”) has online shopping and also issues catalogs. Their “Filmoplast R”—“an archival heat-set transparent mending tissue”—is available in four different-width rolls. For book repair needs as described above, the 12.2” width roll is recommended.

## IN MEMORIAM: LEN EVANS [1930–2006]

by *Darrell Corti*

*[Len Evans, one of Australia's foremost wine champions and wine writers, passed away August 2006. Darrell Corti's special tribute will be followed next issue with an essay by our Aussie Tendril, Valmai Hankel, highlighting Len Evans' distinguished wine writing career. We invite other remembrances. — Ed.]*

It is fitting that at the end of a list of fine Australian wines [in *Corti Bros. Newsletter*], I remember a friend of some thirty years who was MR. AUSTRALIAN WINE. Len Evans, a larger than life personality, probably single handedly created what we are now enjoying as fine Australian wine. This is not to say that fine Australian wines did not exist before Len, but he put them on the map. In fact, he put a lot of wine on the map in most of the English speaking world.

Len left us on 17 August 2006, after the previous evening's delightful entertainment at his home in the Hunter Valley which has been reported by Jancis Robinson both on her website and in her column in the *Weekend Financial Times*. Len had gone to pick up his wonderful wife Trish at hospital and the angels came and took his breath away.

I was always in awe of him. Not because he was so fearsome, but because he was Len. A prolific writer, ex-hotelier, gastronome, winemaker, raconteur, golfer, and expert judge of wines. He was one of a dying breed of wine lovers who really did like wine, in all of its facets, as long as it was good. His mantra of “wine is just a lovely drink” is something more of us should remember. Not one to mince words when something did not appeal to him, he was accepting of new tastes and styles.

He was an endearing man. Hospitable to a fault and very protective of his persona as a fearsome type. He was also a very accomplished artist. He liked to work with his hands and was very proficient at doing very lively ceramic works with which he regaled his friends. A wonderful grandfather, he was putty in his grandchildren's hands. But it was his non-wine persona that was so startling—his prowess as a raconteur I had not seen before.

I last judged with Len in Perth, Western Australia, in 2002, and at dinner with friends, where there was no pretense about wine, Len started telling tales, stories, anecdotes and what have you, to us, his appreciative audience. I have never laughed so much in my life; by the end of dinner I ached from laughter. Len was just in his element—enjoying himself and seeing others enjoy him.

He is sorely missed. But Len has gone on before us. After all, someone has to arrange the festivities for when we get there!



## IN THE WINE LIBRARY

by  
Bob Foster



*Marilyn Merlot and the Naked Grape: Odd Wines from Around the World* by Peter F. May. Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2006. 256 pp. Softback. \$16.95.

*"the ingenuity of wineries is amazing"*

**T**his book is a hoot. The author has collected an amazing assortment of odd wine labels from around the world. The ingenuity of wineries (or winery public relations directors) is amazing. Some of the labels are funny, and some just off beat. But it's a fascinating collection. The author, who lives in England, presents a full-color reproduction of the label, a paragraph with the story behind the label, and a short tasting note.

Amongst the more unusual labels in this collection of "more than a 100 of the oddest wines ever produced" is one from France, destined for the British market, called "Frog's Piss." It plays on the ongoing rivalry between the English and French and uses the Brits' derogatory reference to Frenchmen as frogs. The author calls the well-selling wine "pleasingly drinkable."

May's book is not limited to European labels. He includes some from the U.S. (such as Cardinal Zin and Truck Stop Girl), Chile (Chile-con-Cabernet), South Africa (Goats Do Roam and Goat Roti), and Australia (The Laughing Magpie, Suckfizzle, and Hair of the Dingo).



*"Dingoes are native wild dogs, and a 'hair of the dog'—a small amount of what you drank the previous night—is a traditional cure for a hangover. This wine is a fine example of a uniquely Australian innovation: blending a Bordeaux variety Semillon with a Burgundy variety Chardonnay."*

At the end of the book, May provides tips for removing labels from bottles, plus winery contact details for the wines featured, and a glossary.

The title of the book of course refers to the Marilyn [Monroe] Merlot brand that has been made since 1985. Before you laugh, that original bottle is highly sought after by label collectors. It now sells for around \$3,500.

This book is a delightful trip through one of the more ingenious portions of the wine world. It's a quick but fascinating read. Highly recommended.

*Sonoma County Wineries*, by Gail Unzelman and the Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County. Arcadia Publishing (Postcard History Series), 2006. 128 pp. Card covers. \$19.95. Autographed copies available from the author at [nomis@jps.net](mailto:nomis@jps.net).

*"this book is a delight..."*

**I**f you love wine books and are visiting Sonoma County in Northern California, the one place you must visit is the Wine Library housed within the Sonoma County Public Library in Healdsburg. Located just a few blocks north of the town square, the library has one of the finest collections of wine books and ephemera in this country. The library, under the direction of wine librarian Bo Simons, always has interesting exhibits in the large display case located at the entry of the wine library wing of the building. One of the largest private collections of wine books and other materials is owned by Sonoma County resident Gail Unzelman, one of the founders of The Wayward Tendrils, the only club for wine book collectors in the world. *Sonoma County Wineries* began as a display that Unzelman assembled for the Wine Library—a postcard historical tour of the wineries of the region. The display was so well received that it became the impetus for a full book telling the story of the wineries of Sonoma County.

I love old postcards. They capture a moment of time that reveals so much about the era and all of its complexities. For example, the cover photo-postcard shows a load of grapes arriving at the old Scatena Brothers Winery in Healdsburg in the early 1900s. The horse-drawn wagon is stacked high with wooden boxes; the men are all wearing hats and the ground is dirt. From this image it is easy to imagine the huge amounts of manual labor that lay ahead to turn those grapes into wine.

The book contains pictures of almost 200 postcards from the past two centuries. They are fascinating. The book is divided into seven major sections including the four major winegrowing regions in the county, and separate sections on the huge California Wine Association, on wine country "promotion," and



a section on the Italian-Swiss Colony winery. For those of you old enough to remember the advertising campaign, there is even a postcard of the "Little Old Winemaker—Me!" that was the symbol and slogan for Italian-Swiss Colony for years.

This book is a delight. Each postcard is accompanied by at least a paragraph that describes what the postcard shows and ties the scene into the larger pattern of winemaking in the region. For example, there is a photograph of the steamer *Zinfandel* that was used to haul wine from Sonoma and Napa counties to San Francisco. The caption goes on to describe the humanitarian trips made by the steamer in the days after the devastating earthquake and fire of 1906.

This is captivating material, very well presented. It is a top notch effort that belongs in your wine library. Very highly recommended.

[With our sincere thanks to Bob and the *California Grapevine* for permission to reprint his reviews from recent 2006 issues. — Ed.]

## WINE IN PRINT

by Hudson Cattell



*Ancient Agriculture: Roots and Applications of Sustainable Farming* by Gabriel Alonso de Herrera. Compiled by Juan E. Arellano; translated by Rosa Lopez-Gaston; illustrated by Bryan Romero. Layton, Utah: Ancient City Press, 2006. 168 pp. Cloth. \$25.

**A**ncient Agriculture is the first translation into English of *Obra de Agricultura*, first published in Spain in 1513. Gabriel Alonso de Herrera [c1470s–1540], who is known today as the father of modern day Spanish agriculture, wrote this agricultural textbook at the request of the Archbishop of Toledo to help improve growing conditions in Spain. Herrera drew on his own experiences on the land working with his father, the agricultural advances practiced by the Moors, his extensive travel throughout Spain and Europe, and reading works by Greek, Roman, and Arab authors.

Herrera's book went through five more editions during his lifetime and through many more either under its original title or *Agricultura General*. It was influential in Spain and elsewhere in Europe, and the fact that many of the agricultural practices described in his book are in use today in northern New Mexico makes it probable that his manual came into the southwestern United States at an early date.

*Obra de Agricultura* was divided into a prologue and six books. The English edition is being published in two volumes, of which this is the first. (Publication

of the second volume is anticipated in about a year.) This first volume contains the prologue and books 1, 2, and 6 of the original, renumbered here as the prologue and chapters 1, 2, and 3. Chapter 1 covers soil preparation for raising vegetables and grains and includes site selection. The second chapter is entirely devoted to planting and harvesting vineyards. The topics include soils, climates, and locations most favorable for vineyards; grape varieties to grow; planting, weeding, grafting and pruning vineyards; and winemaking. Chapter 3 is concerned with the use of timing methods based on astrological influences, specifying the agricultural tasks to be performed during the waxing and waning moon cycles, weather indicators, and seasonal predictions.



[Tending a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Vineyard]

The man responsible for having Herrera's book translated into English is Juan Estevan Arellano, a farmer and a native of northern New Mexico. He first learned of Herrera's book from Orlando Romero, head of the History Library at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. Arellano realized that many of the agricultural practices described in the book were similar to those used in northern New Mexico. While no 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century copies of the book have surfaced in New Mexico, and only one copy of an 18<sup>th</sup> century edition has been located in California, it is probable that copies of the book were brought from Mexico along with the first settlers in 1598. Arellano told *Wine East* that he has found documents from that period referring to people in Mexico who were using an agriculture book that came from Spain. Herrera's book was the only one it could have been.

Arellano's decision to have the book translated and published was based in part on his desire to preserve the heritage of agriculture in northern New Mexico.



He also realized that Herrera's book could be important today to drought-ridden areas of the West where irrigation can take place using *acequias*, or man-made ditches. By pointing out the relevance of the ancient book to today's concern with sustainable agriculture, he was able to get a grant to fund the translation. The book had never been translated into contemporary Spanish, and the present English translation was based on a reprint edition published in Spain in 1998.

*Ancient Agriculture* is a valuable contribution to our understanding of 16<sup>th</sup> century agriculture, and of viticulture and winemaking in New Mexico in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is also a fascinating book to read.

EDITOR NOTE: Early California winegrowing was also influenced by Herrera's book. See *Wayward Tendrils Newsletter*, Vol. 3 No. 4 (Oct 1993), for an essay by Thomas Pinney on the book and California's Mission fathers.

*A Fool and Forty Acres: Conjuring a Vineyard Three Thousand Miles from Burgundy* by Geoff Heinrichs. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2005. Hardcover, 278 pp., \$34.99.

At first glance this is another of the relatively rare first-person accounts of learning how to grow grapes and make wine as a pioneer in a new winemaking region of the East. This time the setting is Prince Edward County, a peninsula extending southward from the north side of Lake Ontario. But, while the book does recount Geoff Heinrichs' early attempts to grow grapes near Hillier, it is a far more wide-ranging memoir that extends to many aspects of his personal life, his love of nature, and his interest in the history of the County and what living there is like, not only for his family but for people who lived there in the past. All of these subjects and themes are interwoven throughout the book.

Geoff's vineyard experiences are told in a combination of his chronological events and that of the vineyard year. After telling the story of how he initially established his vineyard, he goes into what happens during each month or season of the year, variously recounting his early experiences, the lessons he learned, and the way he did it later. It always makes for entertaining reading. For example:

I'm reminded why Deborah Paskus calls my vines 'Picasso vines.' To combat the damage of winter, I have pruned them all differently. Some are textbook examples of Guyot cane pruning, with small grey trunks 18" above the ground, and symmetrical arm-bearing canes out to each side along the fruiting wire. Others show the traditional French goblet shape. A contingent is arrayed like peacock tails. And not a few, yes, do look like a cubist painting of a vine.

There are many descriptions of nature. The coming of spring is obviously a special time:

One day they just arrive, and you know spring is but days away. At first you mistake them for a piece or two of ice, floating in a tiny unfrozen puddle on West Lake near the liquor store in Wellington. A day later you drive by, and instead of one pair you see ten or a dozen, majestically riding the surface, the puddle now a small pond, the ice beginning its inevitable retreat.

The swans have returned.

There are many such vignettes, often insights:

Weather and daylight are the only real boundaries on time in the vineyard. It slows down during the performance of a necessary task, and is measured more in the arc of the sun than by the tick of a clock. Or at least so I try to tell Lauren when I've forgotten to make the jump back from vineyard-time to that of the outer world and am late for something. I muse on this, lost in my digging, trying to remember if I promised to be home before dark this evening.

Geoff's love of history goes beyond that of Prince Edward County. There are references to England, France, and other parts of the world. The story of St. Vincent is told in all of its grisly detail. An interesting chapter is devoted to Al Purdy, a home winemaker who wrote many poems about wine and who deserves to be better known.

Not everything works well in the vineyard. There are battles with voles, birds, bugs, and raccoons. Towards the end of the book he reports on a devastating year when he loses his vines to phylloxera. But it will not be the end. If all goes well in the spring, they will be back to two acres of St. Laurent and Pinot Noir, replacing all the vines lost to phylloxera. He then concludes:

Spring is always a time of quiet terror as we wait for the extent of vine damage to show itself: this year the devastation may well break the spirit of some County growers. In their place will come dozens more. Even with brutal winters these past two years, the dream of owning a vineyard is too alluring. The dream is nice, and sometimes it should remain a dream. We, however, are as firmly rooted as our vines ... Our story continues, and if it's not to be recounted in the pages of a book, it can be read in the glass.

Geoff Heinrichs has been a freelance writer, national affairs editor of *Frank* magazine, and the author of a column, "The Grape Vine," in *The Citizen's Weekly*. He is literate, engaging, and knows how to tell a good story. His book is recommended for a variety of readers.

[With *Tendrils* thanks we print Hudson's reviews from recent 2006 issues of *Wine East*, the excellent bi-monthly of "News of Grapes and Wine in Eastern North America." For subscription information visit [www.wineeast.com](http://www.wineeast.com).]





## BOOKS & BOTTLES

by  
Fred McMillin

### ALL IN THE FAMILY

The Book: *Concannon: The First One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years*, by Jim Concannon, with Tim Patterson. Photography by Andy Katz. Published by Concannon / The Wine Group / Andy Katz, 2006. Cloth, 12" x 12", 84 pp., \$50.

The scene of this warm, very personal narrative of a family winery is the Livermore Valley, about an hour's drive east of San Francisco. The cast, in order of appearance, Concannon hands-on winegrowers all: grandfather James Concannon, father Joseph Concannon, and sons Joseph and James (our author, "an Irish yarn-spinner in the grand tradition"). The family is the heart of the story.

#### Choice Concannon Lore

By 1883, grandfather James and his wife Ellen had reached San Francisco, many miles from their native Ireland. Having taken the "cold-water pledge to abstain from drinking," it seemed unlikely that he would become the first successful Irish winemaker in America. Yet, when Archbishop Alemany of Mission Dolores in San Francisco suggested James might make altar wine, the couple were soon on their way. But to where? The "Church had kept records about the winegrowing potential of California winegrowing regions," and one region won out because of the resemblance of its rocky, gravelly soil to that of parts of Bordeaux and the Rhône Valley . . . the Livermore Valley. And it was here that the first Concannon vineyard was planted.

In 1886, the first Concannon altar wine was produced, and would be made for some 100 years. Archbishop Alemany specified the wine be white, since red stained the church linens. (Charlemagne's wife also insisted on white wine—red wine stained his beard.)

In 1911 the future flagship varietal of Concannon was first planted—Petite Sirah. The year 1915 saw Joseph Concannon—known as Captain Joe because of his service during the Mexican Revolution in the First Calvary under General John Pershing—take

over the operations. Capt. Joe always wore khakis at the winery, and sent a case of wine to the General every year. In 1954, son Joe takes over the vineyard management and wine sales. In 1960, author Jim Concannon becomes the third-generation Concannon winemaker. A year later, the winery produces the first California wine labeled Petite Sirah.

#### Notable Concannon Contacts

In Jim's book, lavishly illustrated with archival pictures and the always spectacular photography of Andy Katz, there are many stories and surprises to delight wine history buffs.

The numerous memorable winery visitors recalled throughout the book include Dr. Edward Teller, the hydrogen bomb guru, who drove over from the nearby Lawrence Livermore Laboratory to taste and buy wine. One day in the 1950s, Queen Frederika of Greece, after a visit to the famous Laboratory, decided to visit the winery—with only a half-hour's notice. Captain Joe calmly told his wife, "The Queen of Greece is coming by, so I'm going to put on a suit." When she realized he wasn't kidding, she put on her best blue dress, and they met the Queen. Louis Martini of Napa Valley enjoyed talking wine with his good friend Capt. Joe. Their frequent shoutings heard coming from the winery office were explained: "No argument, just me and Louis discussing wine." Crooner Rudy Vallee "came by in his fancy Rolls Royce every year, usually with a new wife." Once he sent some of his records, and when Jim's mother heard the "risqué" lyrics, she ordered the boys to destroy them. André Tchelistcheff, "the New World's greatest winemaker," was a genuine friend of Captain Joe. The great winemaker credited Joe with the best description of the aroma of a fine Pinot Noir: "Rose petals that have been in the glass a few days."

The Bottles: "P S I Love You" is a Petite Sirah advocacy organization run creatively by Ms Jo Diaz (707-620-0788). While Concannon Winery was the first with a Petite Sirah, there are now some 328 additional producers. Here are the top seven of these "newcomers" that were recently tasted at our San Francisco City College classes.

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> — Silkwood    | 5 <sup>th</sup> — Guenoc (Langtry) |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> — David Bruce | 6 <sup>th</sup> — Two Angels       |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> — Bogle       | 7 <sup>th</sup> — Foppiano         |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> — Trentadue   |                                    |

[Fred McMillin, a *Tendril* from the beginning in 1991, has entertained and enlightened us with his "Books & Bottles" column in every issue of our *Quarterly*. A passionate person of wine, its history, and its literature, Fred has taught wine appreciation courses around the world "forever." Saluté, Fred! —Ed.]



NOTES FROM A DEPLETED LIBRARY  
*"books from the wilder shores of the wine world"*  
 by Christopher Fielden

[Tendril and wine author Fielden, a long-time member of the British wine trade, recently donated his 30-year collection of wine books to the Institute of Masters of Wine. Now, quietly refilling his library shelves, he keeps us abreast of some very interesting new wine books. — Ed.]

A recent trip to Hungary has led to a number of new books on the wines of that country appearing on my shelves. Whilst some are more or less standard guides to producers and the wine regions, two of them are distinctly different.

*The King of Wines*

The first is a wonderful facsimile edition of *Tokaj-Hegyaljai Album* which was first published in Pest in 1867. The text appears in four languages (Hungarian, German, French, English); the preface clearly states the book's objectives:

- 1 – To make known to the civilised countries the birth place of the far famed Tokay wine; to show with what prodigality of beauty and grandeur Nature has endowed the place where the king of wines has fixed his throne.....
- 2 – To point out those powers of nature, mind and labour which form the basis of a judicious and solid cultivation of the vine.....
- 3 – To give a detailed account of its towns, its ranges of hills its rivers and all its other particular beauties.....

To achieve these objectives, a number of authors came together to write on the various aspects of the region, its vineyards and its wines. The oversized (10"x13") book is complemented by a series of engravings and by a detailed map of the region. This is one of the classic wine books of its era, worthy to be classed with Lavalley on Burgundy and Cocks & Feret on Bordeaux. Thanks are due to the Tokay Renaissance group for reprinting this wonderful book.

*"Unexpected Wine Book of the Year"*

And now, as they say, for something totally different. After a brief holiday by Lake Balaton in the summer of 1945, Bela Hamvas sat down and wrote *The Philosophy of Wine*. The opening words of the book are, "I decided to write a prayer book for atheists. In the distress of our time, I felt sympathy for the sufferers and wanted to help them in this way." He continues, "I am aware of the difficulty of my task. I know that I cannot even utter the word 'God.' I must speak of him by using all sorts of other names such as kiss or intoxication or cooked ham. Hence the title of the book, *The Philosophy of Wine*, and hence its motto: after all, two will remain, God and the wine."

The writer has been described as 'one of the great thinkers of eastern Europe,' but do not let this put you off. This slim, and quirky, book is a wonderful guide to the drinking of wine, particularly Hungarian wine, but includes a list, entitled the *Most Important Literature* of twenty-nine books you must read. These include *The Sermons of Meister Eckhart* and *In Defence of Sensuality* by John Cowper Powys. The first item in the index is: Abstainer (see Atheist).

I find this a wonderful book to dip into; on every page you can find joyful nuggets, be they about wine, life or religion. It is certainly my unexpected wine book of the year!

*James Bond's Handbook?*

Whilst, I have not yet seen it, I gather the latest James Bond film features the Bordeaux-produced vermouth Lillet. For information on this, and all the other members of the Vermouth family, including the distant, and slightly shameful cousins, the Absinthes, one should turn to *Vermouth* by Gerard Noel. This is based on notes the writer made many years ago, which were mislaid and have only recently resurfaced. Michael Edwards, the well-respected writer on Champagne, has assisted with their rearrangement. This to be another 'dip-into' book—a miscellany of history, recipes and profiles. And, there are plenty of suggestions, should "007" seek to change the formulation of his cocktail.

Occasionally, I do find that the style of the writing jars. Here is one brief passage, "This plant flowers high in the Alps in mid-summer, releasing a scent of great aromatic power that pervades the passes and trails where the Chamois roam. The Alpine shepherds are particularly adept at picking the best blades...." Why does Chamois have a capital 'C'? This sounds as though it is directly translated from a promotional leaflet.

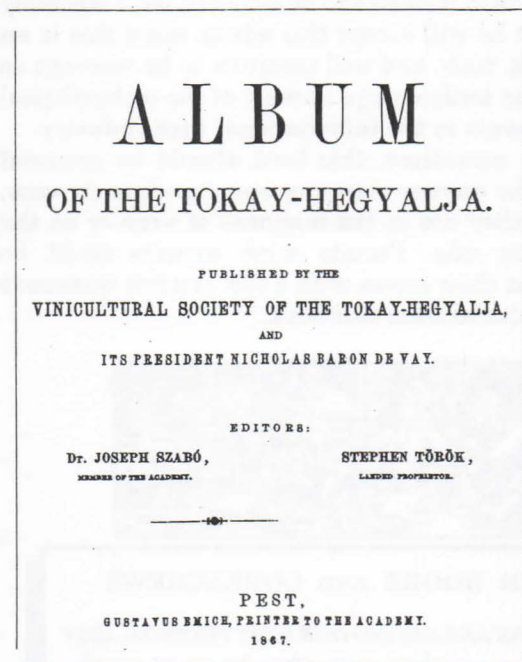
The Honourable Gerard, for he is an Honourable, is way out of his depth when he comes to write about *English Vermouth*. "During the dark days of the Second World War, imported vermouths were not available. Vine Products, a company then based in Aylesbury, produced an ersatz English version called Vortex that, according to those who are old enough, still sends shivers down their spines just to recall it." Whilst I cannot comment on its spine-chilling capabilities, the product was called Votrix and was



made at Kingston-on-Thames.

Notwithstanding these reservations, this is a fascinating book, which will provide the basis for many bar-side conversations.

- *Tokaj-Hegyaljai Album*. Dr. Joseph Szabo and Stephen Torok, eds. Pest: Gustavus Emich, 1867. 185pp. Facsimile edition, Tokay Renaissance, 2001.
- *The Philosophy of Wine*. Bela Hamvas, trans. by Gabor Csepregi. Budapest: Editio M, 2003. 108pp.
- *Vermouth*. Gerard Noel, with Michael Edwards. Wine Destination Publications. 112pp.



*Understanding Wine Technology:  
The Science of Wine Explained*  
A Review by Will Brown

I wrote a short review of the first edition of this book by David Bird for the July 2006 issue of the *WTQ*, and promised to review the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of 2005 in more depth. Why would I want to review this book more than once? Well, because it is such a good book! Hugh Johnson, in the Foreword, states the first edition has been a stand-by for him for years—that is a pretty strong recommendation from one of the world's best wine writers. The Wine Appreciation Guild of San Francisco published this 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in the U.S., and the book is available from the Guild and Amazon, among others.

I have been involved in wine for many a year in a number of ways: consumer, collector, sponsor of wine tasting groups, wine historian, and finally in the

production of wine. I have encountered many wine enthusiasts, a few of whom consider themselves to be experts in the field, but I am often dismayed at their lack of a minimal grasp of the principles of wine technology. Now that David Bird has explained the science of winemaking in a book written for non-scientists, it should be mandatory reading for the wine mavens who open their mouths before engaging their brains.

David Bird the British author is an analytic chemist by training, and became a Master of Wine in 1981. He is a Chartered Chemist, and specialist in quality assurance techniques, consulting with clients throughout Europe. His book grew from lectures given to students sitting for the Diploma Examination of the Wine and Spirit Education Trust.

The book, predictably, follows the product from the vineyard to the bottle, in an orderly sequence, following the chronology of events leading to the finished product. In the vineyard there are many factors entering into the culture of grapes which impact the quality of the harvest. "The choice of rootstock is now regarded as important as the variety of the vine itself" (p10). Soils, water, climate, canopy management, and vineyard systems, are all in the equation, but "fine wines are produced around the world, on various combinations of soil and vine" (p11).

The major and minor components of the grape and their roles are discussed, along with the role of oxygen. Newer techniques of hyper-oxidation and micro-oxygenation are covered. The decision of when to pick the grapes for optimum maturity is singled out, as this is of primary concern in the quest for quality. The method of harvesting varies but the use of machines is increasing.

Once the grapes arrive at the winery, operations of crushing, de-stemming and pressing are initiated, and various types of presses are discussed here. Not all musts are created equal so Bird addresses the adjustments made in sugar, and acidity, as well as the addition of sulfur dioxide. The latter is used for management of the yeasts, which he describes as "good" and "bad." What he means is that good yeasts are the wine yeasts, most of which are cultured, and the bad ones come in with the grapes from the vineyard, and are to be discouraged. I believe that many winemakers in North America prefer "native" yeast fermentations, but it has been shown that most wineries are colonized with "good" yeasts, and the native ones do not get very far in their presence or in the toxic milieu of the wine. The author declares "the disadvantage of using standard yeast strains is that the result is a standard wine, irrespective of the country of production, always the same, always perfect...one of the great drawbacks of this technique is the standardization of style, the production of



'industrial wines' which lack individuality" (p72). While it is true that many industrial wines are produced, I don't know many winemakers who would agree with this statement about cultured yeasts since it disregards all of the other factors involved in winemaking as well as the art and science employed in the production of wines, especially at the high end of the market.

Then, in the chapter on winemaking processes the author states that "at every stage the winemaker can choose from a vast array of different techniques and it is this choice that makes the difference between wine and great wine" (p81). Many of these techniques are described. A nice graph of fermentation showing wine density and temperature is one that is widely used in the wine industry.

A discussion of the use of oak in wine aging is very succinct and lucid. Red wines improve with barrel age due to micro-oxygenation among other factors, while white wines, that can stand up to it, can gain complexity and structure with barrel fermentation, and lees aging with *batonnage*.

The author continues with chapters on the principal constituents of grapes, on clarification and stabilization of finished wines and filtration. He devotes eight pages to a discussion of the use of sulfur dioxide, not surprising that a chemist would elaborate on a chemical additive, without which not many wines are made. Some of the main faults of wines are noted...oxidation, tartrate instability, "corked" wines from TCA, volatile acidity, and *Brettanomyces*, among others.

Bird concludes with chapters on quality control and analysis and quality assurance. The latter is a commitment of the producer which includes elements of control from the former. The final chapter is about wine tasting and includes a fine wine evaluation sheet, used by the Wine and Spirit Education Trust.

The 265-page book has an excellent table of contents, a foreword by Hugh Johnson, a glossary of technical wine terms, and a comprehensive index. At the end of several chapters there are suggested further readings, but there are neither footnotes nor a bibliography. Numerous photographs are used to augment the text, but in the absence of captions it is not always clear to what part of the text they belong.

If one needed a small but definitive collection of books on wine, this book would have to be included because it is the only book of its kind that I know of that is up to date. There are far more technical books written for the professional community and students of enology and viticulture, but this one manages to cover the same ground for the general wine buying and consuming public who have little or no background in the sciences of wine production.

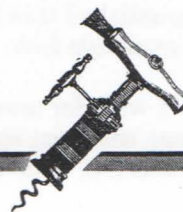
I found little to criticize in this book. My main complaint is that the author is perhaps too Eurocentric, ignoring the rest of the wine world. There are few references to practices in California or Australia which because of climatic differences from Europe employ some techniques not widely used there. For example there is no mention of commonly used procedures to reduce the alcohol in wines produced in hot climates from over-ripe grapes. An expanded worldview could easily be attained for the third edition if the author would just venture into the New World and visit some of the more progressive and high-tech wineries to be found there. I sincerely hope that he will accept this advice since this is an important book, and will continue to be relevant as long as the author stays abreast of the technological developments in the international wine industry.

In the meantime, this book should be required reading for anyone claiming any expertise in wine, whether they are in the business of wine or on the consuming side. Pseudo wine experts could be brought to their knees with a few incisive questions about material from this book.



#### ON BOOKS AND CORKSCREWS

*"BOOKS ARE AMONG OUR BEST FRIENDS: they have so much to give: they know so much and they are so modest about it: they make us laugh and they make us sleep; they can teach us almost everything, but not quite all; not Wine for instance. Books, of course, can tell us everything about the history, the geography, the names, the vintages, and the prices of wines, all of which is interesting to a point, but not wholly satisfactory. The only really satisfactory knowledge of wine is inside knowledge. No book about wine ever had the draw of a good corkscrew. I know. I have written more books on wine during the past forty years than anybody alive today..."* ANDRÉ L. SIMON, *Wine and Food*, Spring 1945.





## FROM THE "BARCHIVES"

by Brian Rea

*The Gentleman's Table Guide*

[*Barchivist and Tendril, Brian Rea, a 60-year veteran of the Adult Beverage Industry, has compiled one of the finest drink related collections in the country. (See note in "News & Notes.") We enjoy another tasty "drink" from his vast library. — Ed.]*



In 1871, *The Gentleman's Table Guide: Being Practical Recipes for Wine Cups, American Drinks, Punches, Cordials, Summer & Winter Beverages, Recherché Bills of Fare, with Service of Wines, &c.* was published in London by the authors Edward Ricket and C. Thomas. Their smallish (6¼"x4½"), hardbound

book contains 53 recipe pages and 32 advertisement pages. It is handsomely produced, with a gilt-decorated front cover, gilt page edges, a title page printed in red and black, and a frontispiece still-life of different fruits used in the recipes; on each page the text is printed inside a decorative red border, and there are many engraved illustrations.

Unfortunately, as in the case of numerous drink recipe books of the period, the recipes are not in alphabetical sequence. The categories listed in the Index are: "Wine and Other Cups," "Punches and Liqueurs," "American Drinks," followed by "Wedding Breakfast," "Ball Supper and Refreshments," "Dinner Bills of Fare and Wines," and "The Appetiser."

The ads at the rear of the book, some with finely engraved illustrations, preserve an excellent record of provisions, household equipment, and purveyors of 19<sup>th</sup>-century England. A few of the more eye-catching ads are for Farrow & Jackson "The Largest and Best Makers of Iron Wine Bins, Bottling Wax, and Every Article for the Dealer or Consumer of Wines...," "Kent's Refrigerator & Ice Safes in Great Variety," "Red Heart Rum," "Himmel's Novelties and Choice Perfumery," and "Hungarian Wines."

The Red Heart Rum endorsement declares "This Fine Old Spirit is celebrated for its great age, purity, and freedom from the bilious character of ordinary Rum. It was especially supplied to the sick and wounded during the late war between France and Germany, and is medicinally recommended as a preventive in cases of Cholera, Diarrhea, &c."

Numerous distilling, brewing and wine producers of the period posted endorsements by various medical staff and institutions, although in today's world, this would most certainly be viewed with disfavor. And it would seem that with the number of ads contained in this book, there was no expense in its publishing.

*The Preface*

Usually I prefer not to quote the entire Preface of a book, but I believe one can make exceptions when the Preface provides clarity, purpose, beautiful language composition, and confidence on the part of the authors, or publisher. The Preface reads:

"A long preface to such a volume would be a sort of impertinence, and yet to publish it without some introduction would be like serving a dinner without a menu; and, even when the repast is *a la Russe*, the guest expects some information of the wines and dishes of which it is to be composed. We have not, however, given a long account of the various details; a brief but clear reference, with distinct instructions, alone seemed to be required. During considerable experience in the service of various festivities to persons occupying distinguished positions in society, we have been frequently reminded of the necessity for such a simple book as that we now seek to supply.

If there is to be one characteristic which distinguishes an Englishman, it is a hearty hospitality which is only satisfied by presenting an abundance of good things, and the best of their kind, to those who are its objects.

There are many ladies and gentlemen who maintain a small, quiet household, where the servants are not expected to be versed in the precise method to be observed on special occasions. There are gentlemen living in chambers who have no opportunity of engaging a regular servant. There are ladies and gentlemen of refined taste who, being anxious that any festivity shall be celebrated with a well-appointed table and some *recherché* feature, like to arrange the service for themselves, and to be able to see to their own wines, cups, and liqueurs. There are experienced butlers who, like all butlers since the time of the Pharaoh, have occasional difficulties in compounding seasonable drinks; and upper servants are frequently uncertain as to the exact order of serving the wines with the proper dishes.

For all these, as well as for hotel and tavern proprietors and their attendants, this book is intended.

The recipes (many of them entirely original) have already been adopted with acclamation by a number of connoisseurs whose reputation entitles them to be regarded as a committee of taste.

All the recipes have been subjected to repeated experiments, and have been collected during visits to France and Russia. The art of American Drinks, which is a special feature of the volume, was acquired in the United States of America, under the instruction of a celebrated professor, whose un-



surpassed manipulation was the pride successfully of the St. Nicholas, the Metropolitan, and Fifth Avenue hotels. The directions for mixing the various cups and cordials are also the result of many years' experience in the business of wine and spirit merchant. The *menus* for each month have been written with a view to shorten the time at dinner, as suggested by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. The order for the service of wines has been composed after long practice and careful observation of the best establishments and *coteries* in England." A modest preface to say the least!

The professor referred to was probably Jerry Thomas, whose book *How To Mix Drinks, or The Bon-Vivant's Companion* had been published in 1862. Thomas's subtitle reads: "Containing clear and reliable directions for mixing all beverages used in the United States, together with the most popular British, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish recipes, embracing punches, juleps, cobbler, etc., etc., in endless variety." Again we are exposed to an author's modest claims of expertise.

Most of the American Drink recipes in the *Gentleman's Table Guide* are measured for individual portions, whereas all other categories are for bulk, or multiple, portions. The recipes for "Wine and Other Cups" include wines such as Champagne, Madeira, Sherry, Moselle, Sparkling Moselle, Chablis, Claret, Burgundy, Sparkling Burgundy, Muscat, Sparkling Hock, Port, Sparkling Perry, and Imperial Tokay. And, as I mentioned in an earlier WTQ article, my old friend Borage is a frequent recipe ingredient.

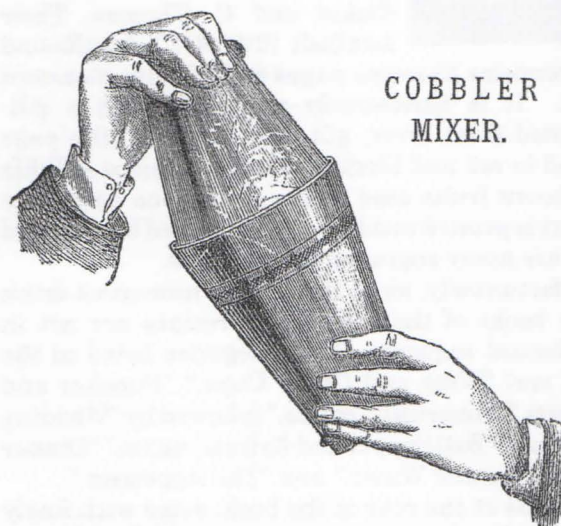
In many cases, the Cup recipes require time and effort to compound their formulas, though the combination of ingredients listed definitely results in a *mélange* of great flavors. Most Punch recipes are also for service of multiple portions. Some recipes are so complex they would require an extensive, groaning liquor sideboard. An interesting note is made on page 23: "A Clergyman is mentioned by Fielding who preferred punch to wine for the reason that the former was nowhere spoken against in Scripture." Obviously a benevolent God!

#### *American Mixed Punch*

**R**ecipe #38 "Mixed Punch—American" makes for a challenging potion: Take 1 gill of mixed spirits—brandy, rum and Irish whisky; a tablespoon and a half of powdered sugar, the peel and the juice of half a fresh lemon; fill up with shaved ice, and mix well; ornament with 2 or 3 slices of Tangerine oranges on the top. Use 2 straws to imbibe." Gin in the place of the mixed spirits, or port, or sherry, is a nice change. Gin, sugar and lemon juice is like a Gin Sour, and with a little soda water added, becomes a Tom Collins. But, mixing brandy, rum,

and Irish whisky together is not my idea of an enjoyable mixed drink, or even a morning-after-experience of such book titles as "By Dawn's Ugly Light," "Bonjour Hangover," or "Wake Up and Die." Many years ago while visiting Cheltenham, England, and after a few adult beverages, the barkeep and I decided to test this concoction, especially since I was paying. It was apparent the mixture of brandy, rum, and Irish whisky does make for an acquired taste, and the next morning, challenging!

From the agenda of "American Drinks" on page 36 (see below), it appears that our Mother Country was under the impression that our consumption habits were on a steady twelve-hour schedule, which though it might be desirable, requires a physical regimen well beyond most citizens' capabilities at the time.



#### **AMERICAN DRINKS.**

IN submitting these drinks to the public we do not recommend them to be taken as enumerated in *The Echo*, dated the 25th March, 1871, viz. :—

At 6 a.m. Eye-opener.	At 3 p.m. Cooler.
" 7 " Appetiser.	" 4 " Social drink.
" 8 " Digester.	" 5 " Invigorator.
" 9 " Big reposer.	" 6 " Solid straight.
" 10 " Refresher.	" 7 " Chit-chat.
" 11 " Stimulant.	" 8 " Fancy smile.
" 12 " Ante lunch.	" 9 " Entr'acte.
" 1 p.m. Settler.	" 10 " Sparkler.
" 2 " à la Smyth.	" 11 " Rouser.
12 o'clock p.m. the Nightcap.	

#### *Captain Marryat's Mint Julep*

**T**he Mint Julep recipe, as submitted by "Captain Marryat," was: "Put into a tumbler about a dozen sprigs of young mint, upon them put a tablespoon of white pounded sugar, and equal



portions of peach and cognac brandy, so as to fill one-third or, perhaps, a little less; then take rasped or pounded ice and fill up the tumbler; epicures rub the lips of the tumbler with a piece of lemon or pineapple, and the tumbler itself is very often encrusted outside with stalactites of ice. As the ice melts you drink through two straws. The 'Virginians' says Captain Marryat claim the merit of having invented this superb compound, but, from a passage in the 'Comus' of Milton, he claims it for his own country."

Be assured that requesting a Mint Julep in this country will nowhere be of the same taste and quality of Marryat's recipe. A visit to the Kentucky Derby will definitely make you wonder after tasting a Mint Julep there, what the hell was ever wrong with the original recipe, what ever that was.

### "Mountain Dew"

Another interesting drink recipe found in this enchanting book is "Athole Brose" — To 1 bottle of "mountain dew," or Scotch whisky, add and mix thoroughly in a bowl half a pint of heather or virgin honey; the whisky must be added by degrees till the honey is dissolved.

I was always under the impression that "mountain dew" was an American term; I stand corrected. A question arises though: was this old recipe the base formula for Drambuie, which came on the market in 1906?

### Wine Etiquette Lesson

And last, but not least, authors Ricket and Thomas close with a Wine Etiquette Lesson, "Red and White" —

As a supplementary note, without which some readers might scarcely think our TABLE GUIDE was complete, we may refer to a practice which, though only occasionally adopted in this country, appears to be growing in the appreciation of *connoisseurs*, who without the ambition to be regarded as *gourmets*, are yet recognized as authorities in gastronomic art.

We allude to the service of small dinners with only a few *recherché* dishes, where wine of the same character is alone provided throughout: wine in accordance with the viands, and without any abrupt transition from one description of vintage to another. To speak in general terms, no admixture of Red and White Wines, or of Red and White viands, is admitted at these little banquets; so that as Red Wines go with Red Meats and White Wines go with White Meats, we may conveniently speak of them as

### RED AND WHITE DINNERS

Some of the most fastidious promoters of this elegant and satisfactory mode of serving a repast, go to the extreme length of forbidding the introduction of any but *related* wines: that is to say, wines of different growths, but the product of one district or of one wine-growing

province, such as varieties of Red and White Burgundy, Clarets or Rhenish; and we cannot say a word against the interdiction, if only the chooser of the wines has consummate taste and has made his arrangements only after actual experiment. We cannot, however, expect that any general reader will be willing at once to adapt this plan without scientific or even artistic rigour, and so we shall do no more than indicate one or two Red and White Wine Dinners respectively.

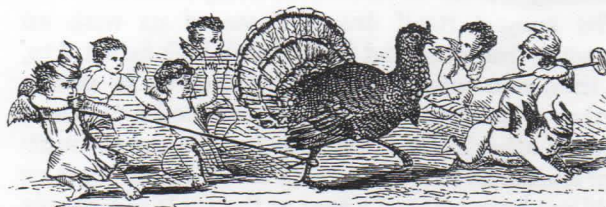
The Red Dinner consists of soups made from red meat stocks or game, of beef, venison, ham, game with red flesh, and of course only the Red Wines, claret and Burgundy, with a little fine port at dessert. It is best served without fish, since the Red Wines seldom accord with fish to most palates. Red mullet, carp, salmon trout broiled, tench, or a course of dried fish, such as anchovies, cured herrings, or smoked salmon, with brown bread and butter, can be effectively introduced. The White Dinner, of course, offers a much greater variety of viands, but all Red Wines should be excluded, while no greater variety of White Wines should be permitted than Sherries, Hocks, and Moselles, unless access can be obtained to a bin of Haute Sauternes of great vintage; or of fine dry Sillery, and then it would be better to exclude the Rhenish instead of mixing.

I wonder what the penalty would be for violation of this etiquette? As André Simon would say some sixty years later: "An 'all-white' dinner, without red meat as without red wine, is an experiment worth trying, but not worth repeating." I'll toast to that. Give me a glass or two of Sillery.

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*The Gentleman's Table Guide, being Practical Recipes for Wine Cups, American Drinks, Punches, Cordials, Summer & Winter Beverages. Recherché Bills of Fare with Service of Wines, &c.* by Edward Ricket. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1872. London: Frederick Warne & Co. 53 pp.

*The Gentleman's Table Guide and Table Companion to the Art of Dining and Drinking. With Table Habits and Curious Dishes of the Various Nations,* by Edward Ricket. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1873. London: Frederick Warne & Co. 167 pp. (below)



ARISTOLOGY, OR THE ART OF DINING.



## THE PERFECT WINE BOOK?

by John Danza

[John Danza is a long-time member of the International Wine & Food Society, and an avid wine book collector with a passion for the works of André Simon. Earlier articles for our *Quarterly* included "The Importance of Ephemera," "André Simon & the Star Chamber Dinner Accounts," and "Inscribed André Simon Wine Books." — Ed.]



I am going to go out on a limb. I'm going to make an assumption that all of my fellow Tendrils got into collecting wine books because they first got into wine. That certainly is the case for me. I started my wine affliction about twenty years ago. Not long after that, I found I wanted to be with other wine people and share knowledge and experiences, so I joined the International Wine & Food Society (IWFS). That also led me to the books of André L. Simon (ALS), the founder of the Society. This, in turn, got me into another affliction—collecting wine books, particularly those written by ALS. Fortunately, The Wayward Tendrils was there for me, so I could gain, and hopefully share a little, knowledge of wine books.

### *Tables of Content*

So why did I make you sit through that little trip down memory lane? Well, I was re-reading one of Simon's works, *Tables of Content: Leaves from my Diary* (London: Constable, 1933). By the time I had finished it, I had come to the conclusion that this is the perfect wine book!

For those of you not familiar with the book, it is a collection of short reports on memorable meals that ALS had been party to as either host or guest. He lists all the technical details—date, time, place, attendees, food, wine—and follows with approximately a page of notes about the experience of the meal. While we learn mostly about the wine, we also hear about the people and the food.

What makes this the perfect wine book? It has so many components that deliver interest for a wine-oriented, and book-oriented, person that it must take top billing. Let me review these components.

The subject itself draws those of us with an interest in fine wine and food. We all look forward to, and then remember fondly, the times we've gotten together with friends to share good food and wines and each other's company. This book is the recounting of similar events in Simon's life. Who amongst us would not have wanted a seat at the table of a simple luncheon at Denmark Hill in Bristol on 14 April 1931? Hosted by Edward Harvey and his partners

for ALS and five other friends, the intent of the lunch was to check the development of a variety of 1870 Bordeaux wines. Yes, a simple luncheon consisting of three courses and eight wines, all of which were 60 years old!

That leads me to the next component of this perfect wine book, the historical context of wine. There are some of us out there (sadly, I'm not one of them) who have access to and drink some of these old wines. This historical reference of wines from the 1840s up to the 1920s is invaluable and not really accessible in other sources, except perhaps *Michael Broadbent's Vintage Wine* (New York: Harcourt, 2002). *Tables of Content* is splendidly indexed—the hosts and guests, the wines, and the vintages. It is an important reference.

The final component is the style in which it is written. I find the prose used by ALS in this book to be incredible, his best ever. With words, he paints a picture that puts you in the place and gives you the feeling that you are there. He exhibits that same writing style in most of his other books, but this book is the absolute pinnacle.

As an example, observe the luncheon held on 8 August 1929 hosted by Ian Campbell, with ALS, James Todd, Robert Clark, and Ernest Oldmeadow in attendance. Simon reports:

The food does not matter. The occasion was Campbell's wedding-day anniversary. The wines were worthy of the occasion.

First of all, a glass of very fine *Fino*.

Then a 1919 *Chambertin* which tasted and looked younger than its age: sweet and pleasing but not great. It was followed by a *Clos du Vougeot 1909*, which looked and tasted older than its years: a fine bouquet but a *pointe d'amertume*—no bigger than a pin head—but a sure sign that the time had come to drink it.

Then came, unannounced, a very startling wine. I could not place it anywhere. It was a *Château Carbonnieux 1893*. A Claret after a Burgundy. A daring thing to do, indeed, but Campbell is a brave man and fortune favours the brave. This Graves was not only acceptable after two Burgundies, but it was most enjoyable, fresh and sweet and perfectly balanced.

Then another puzzle in the shape of *Lafite 1858*. A splendid old fellow. All that a fine Claret ought to be, but, of course, in an attenuated form: sound but feeble of body; its bouquet charming but so faint; its fruit still sweet but so little of it. Not the least suspicion of acetic acid. Truly wonderful wine! To be not only alive and drinkable, but standing up still, smiling on and truly enjoyable after seventy years of solitary confinement behind a cork door—and just the juice of a few bunches of black grapes gathered all those years ago—without any help of any sort and hardly any care since! A miracle!



In spite of being August, and in spite of all good resolutions, I could not refuse the Port which had been decanted before lunch and could not possibly be expected to remain in the decanter until the return of cold weather. It was a *Graham 1878*, bottled in 1882, and very good indeed, but the weather and the old Claret were in league against it.

Yes, my friends, I am convinced. This is the perfect wine book. Of all the wine books I've read, this is the one I return to time and time again. For me, this book has it all.

What about you? What's your perfect wine book?



The dust jacket of *Tables of Content*. This very scarce dust jacket features a photo of ALS flanked by long-time friends Ian Campbell (left) and Francis Berry at lunch at the Trocadero restaurant in London. The magnum is said to be 1905 La Mission Haut-Brion. Simon credits his "dearly beloved disciple" Maurice Healy for the book's title, and Michael Sadleir, fellow friend of wine and books, and the director of Constable, for the suggestion to write the book and for the rather original dust jacket illustration. See Simon's *In the Twilight*, page 85, for his humorous story about this photo.

MARGERY ALLINGHAM:  
MYSTERY NOVELIST  
(who had her wine references right)  
by Bo Simons

[Sixteen years ago, during the pioneer days of the Wayward Tendrils, co-founder Bo Simons and wine librarian of the Sonoma County Wine Library, wrote this article, the first of many to come, on one of his favorite subjects, novels with a wine theme. We are genuinely pleased to reprint it for all those who may have missed it—Allingham is timeless. — Ed.]



Margery Louise Allingham wrote detective stories with unusual subtlety, strength of imagination, and wit. Many of her novels and short stories featured a bland, facetious, kindly, bespectacled gentleman named Mr. Albert Campion. Campion hid his keen intelligence behind a foolish counte-

nance and a foppish manner, but took no trouble at all to hide his impressive knowledge of wine.

Campion's ability to appreciate old port and to discern among the three Romanées, Richebourg, and La Tache should not be surprising. His creator was married to [Philip] Youngman Carter, an artist-journalist, and author and illustrator of several books on wine. His illustrations and writing for the Hamish Hamilton "The Drinking for Pleasure" series were charming and informative. [SEE EDITOR NOTE AT END.] After Allingham died in 1966, Carter continued the character Campion until his own death in 1969.

Those who study detective fiction have declaimed that there are three first-ladies of the classic period of British mysteries: Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, and Margery Allingham. Christie's strength lay in intricate plots—brilliant puzzles that kept you turning pages so quickly that you did not notice the dull prose in which they were wrapped. Sayers paraded her erudition like a gangster's moll flashes her diamonds. She made an aesthetic mistake by falling in love with her gentleman detective, Lord Peter Wimsey. This plunge remained something from which many of her readers found it quite easy to refrain. Allingham, although she is not as widely read these days as the other two novelists, constructed intricate, pleasing plots and wrote well. Her characters, especially Campion, seemed natural and wore their aristocracy with ease and grace, their connoisseurship with genuine pleasure. Her plots and her mystery craft were formidable; often her mysteries revolved around valid psychological motives rather than the parlor tricks of disguised clues, red herrings, and locked rooms.



### The Case of the Widow

In the following passage, Miss Allingham deftly drops the telling details, and evokes through well chosen examples and mannerisms, not only considerable wine knowledge but also a whole social milieu. The passage appears in "The Case of the Widow," a short story included in the collection, *Mr. Campion and Others*, and it describes Mr. Campion visiting a London wine merchant to purchase some birth-year port for a godson:

Mr. Campion called to see Mr. Thistledown in Cheese Street, E.C. and they went reverently to the cellars together.

Mr. Thistledown was a small man, elderly and dignified. His white hair was inclined to flow a little and his figure was more suited, perhaps, to his vocation than to his name. As head of the small but distinguished firm of Thistledown, Friend and Son, Wine Importers Since 1798, he very seldom permitted himself a personal interview with any client under the age of sixty-five, for at that year he openly believed the genus "homo sapiens," considered solely as a connoisseur of vintage wine, alone attained full maturity.

Mr. Campion, however, was an exception. Mr. Thistledown thought of him as a lad still, but a promising one. He took his client's errand with all the gravity he felt it to deserve.

"Twelve dozen of port to be laid down for Master Brian Desmond Peterhouse-Vaughn," he said, rolling the words round his tongue as though they, too, had their flavour. "Let me see, it is now the end of '36. It will have to be a '27 wine. Then by the time your godson is forty—he won't want to drink it before that age, surely—there should be a very fine fifty-year-old vintage awaiting him."

A long and somewhat heated discussion, or, rather, monologue, for Mr. Campion was sufficiently experienced to offer no opinion, followed. The relative merits of Croft, Taylor, Da Silva, Noval, and Fonseca were considered at length, and in the end Mr. Campion followed his mentor through the sacred tunnels and personally affixed his seal upon a bin of Taylor 1927.

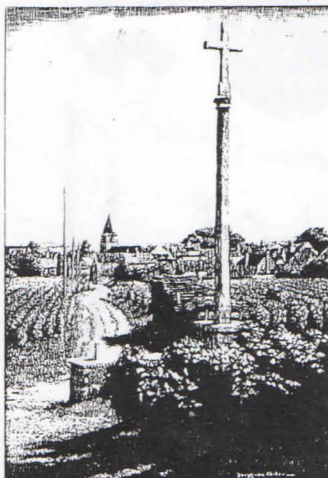
### Coroner's Pidgin

Wine figures most prominently in Miss Allingham's *Coroner's Pidgin* (London: Heineman, 1945; published in the U.S. as *Pearls Before Swine*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1945). With an intricate plot where the setting of wartime London is essential, this book explores the themes of friendship and class, with their respective obligations and responsibilities—fairly heady stuff for a thriller. The subplot involving wine is centered on a London wine museum which, during the blitz, is compelled to relocate its treasures to safer country houses. The museum contained not only artifacts, such as antique

drinking vessels and corkscrews, but it also provided wine storage for museum members, approved connoisseurs all, to mature their rarest vintages.

The lorry containing wine belonging to Campion's uncle, the Bishop of Devizes, turns up missing during the evacuation to the country and is believed to have been bombed. The wine includes three cases of a mythical Burgundy that comes from a little vineyard just beyond La Tache, called Les Enfants Doux. The owners of the vineyard, the Bragelonne family, reserve the entire vintage, forty-five cases a year, for family use on the strength of a wonderful and tragic bit of Burgundian folklore (which I will not spoil by relating here) that instills in them the fear of ill luck should any of the wine find its way off the estate. How the Bishop of Devizes got six cases of this impossible-to-secure wine sometime after World War I remains a marvelous and romantic story that I also shall not reveal. Between wars the Bishop's six dozen shrank to three dozen and were stored in the wine museum until the evacuation. This is wine worth killing for, and its apparent loss, which looked like a casualty of war, resulted from a monstrous plot which Campion uncovers. But, in time to save the Allied cause and the remaining three cases? Read the book.

Margery Allingham (1904–1966) wrote more than twenty-five books. While Albert Campion appears in the majority of them, most do not feature wine so prominently. Some transcend genre and approach literature. All are good reads.



EDITOR NOTE: Philip Youngman Carter (1904–1969) wrote his four wine books under the name Youngman Carter. His first book, *On to Andorra* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963, 175 p.), is a delightful, leisurely "travelogue" through the great vineyards of Bordeaux, Cognac, Burgundy, and the Rhône Valley, richly illustrated with some two dozen full-page drawings by the author (Romanée-Conti

above). Carter's "Drinking for Pleasure Series," all published by Hamish Hamilton, followed a few years later: *Drinking Bordeaux* (1966, 95 p); *Drinking Burgundy* (1966, 91 p); *Drinking Champagne and Brandy* (1968, 96 p).



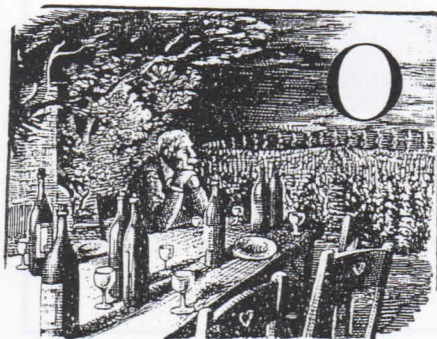


*Vinaceous Correspondents:*  
**Martin Ray's Friendships with Eminent Oenophiles**  
 The Third Article in a Series / Tenth Section  
 by *Barbara Marinacci*

*This is the tenth segment of an article about the longstanding friendship between wine quality control-promoting vintner Martin Ray and renowned enologist Maynard Amerine. As with previous segments, it is based primarily on correspondence between them, as well as letters that MR and his second wife, Eleanor Ray, wrote to or received from other people. Once again the author—"Rusty" Ray's stepdaughter—thanks John L. Skarstad and Daryl Morrison of UC Davis Library's Special Collections for permission to utilize documents now in the archives there, as well as for supplying copies of many letters. This significant and intriguing 1955 battle of MR with the California (and, at the time, American) wine industry has rarely been acknowledged, or perhaps even known about and therefore addressed by subsequent wine scholars. Thus it will be presented in some detail over several issues, as much as possible within the narrower context of the Ray-Amerine relationship.*

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

-10-



ver the telephone in April 1955, Martin Ray had declined Louis Gomberg's invitation to attend the first meeting in early May of the Premium Wine Producers of California—the new association that Gomberg was shepherding into existence. Still, he wanted Gomberg to present, there and then, his proposals for ways by which motivated wineries could raise the quality, honesty, and ultimately the reputation and marketability, of the state's better and costlier wines, thereby diminishing the competitive attraction of inexpensive imports. MR's expectation was definitely out of bounds. The initial convocation of potential members would set up organizational matters and discuss the PWP's primary goal: overcoming the serious economic threat to the state's superior wines of those duplicitous foreign "shippers" wines by conducting an effective nationwide public relations campaign. The topic of imposing the quality control measures that MR insisted upon could have no place on the agenda.

Moreover, any suggestions, let alone pressures, coming from Martin Ray were certain to meet with strong resistance. Over the years he had made few lasting friends in the wine industry. He wasn't a joiner of clubs or associations. He rarely visited or socialized with winemaking peers, nor had he made himself beloved over the years by delivering verbal and printed diatribes about others' winegrowing

practices. His closest friend by far was UC Davis enology professor Maynard Amerine. For almost 20 years the two of them had been pushing in separate ways for improving both the selection of grape varieties grown for making wine and the methods by which wines were made, along with insisting upon honest labeling of the higher-priced varietals. (If they actually were blends, the label should say so.) The first man did it through research, teaching, wine judging, and publishing both technical and popular writings; the other, through producing dry and pure fine-varietal table and sparkling wines ... and periodically blasting at other winegrowers' ignorance or greedy pigheadedness. Among California's vintners, MR had made enemies instead of allies, whereas Amerine was widely respected for his knowledge, many accomplishments, and adroit manners.

*A Cascade of Correspondence Begins*

**T**wo days before the first formal meeting in San Francisco, on May 5th, of representatives of the state's better wine-producing firms, MR sent off notes to four winery proprietors, accompanying copies of his two letters to Louis Gomberg written in April. (Their contents were presented in the previous *WTQ* issue.) By the meeting day, probably none as yet had received MR's note; but if anyone had and then taken time to read the enclosed letters, he might have mentioned their combustible contents and tone to the other named recipients.

During his visit to the Rays' mountaintop in Saratoga in the previous week, Amerine had counseled MR not to send out these Gomberg letters to the owners of Wente, Beaulieu, Inglenook, and



Krug, as he intended. Doing this would only stir up trouble—infuriating instead of persuading them to agree to imposing on their operations MR's various long-advocated quality-ensuring measures. Nor did Amerine at all approve of the Rays' intention to distribute these same letters far and wide, among the 200-some wine retailers, wine writers, and customers on the Martin Ray winery's mailing list.

The first irate reaction came in a letter to MR from John Daniel, Jr. of Inglenook, composed on the day after the PWP meeting. Among its seven paragraphs are these:

In your view of so much that is virtuous abroad and so much that is sinister at home, it occurs that you may inadvertently be grasping the telescope by the wrong end.... Your inferences that the preponderance if not all other California growers except you ignore all fine wine practices, blend nine parts of neutral wines to one of Cabernet Sauvignon, lowered such standards as you left to them in your description, etc., etc., are not only contradicted by the facts but are a great disservice to the California wine industry, particularly when stated to members of the trade who may not be in possession of the facts.... We are as proud of our reputation as any wine firm. We do not presume to set ourselves up in judgment of others, but do not make statements regarding our products lightly, nor do we regard derogatory remarks about them in that vein. There are additional statements regarding our products and practices which are unwarranted, unmerited and untrue. [5/6/55]

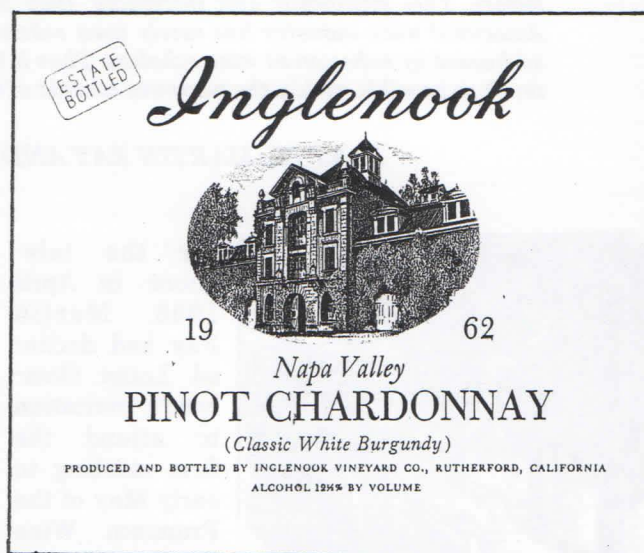
The "cc" at the foot of Daniel's letter indicated that he had forwarded copies to the proprietors of the Wente, Beaulieu, and Krug wineries, and also to Gomberg.

Although Maynard had told Martin to expect incensed rebuttals like this one, if recipients bothered to respond at all, he must not have asked him to refrain from reporting any such repercussions. MR, of course, couldn't resist doing so. He either sent Amerine fresh copies (made by Eleanor) of the irate letters from winery owners or else read them to him over the phone, followed by the texts of his own immediate, trenchant replies.

Here is a portion of MR's response to John Daniel.

As I made very clear, your group cannot attack imported wines without hurting most of all the fine European growths that set all quality standards.... You perhaps forget that you personally admitted to Julian Street in my presence at your table that your Chardonnay was made from Chenin Blanc and your Pinot Noir from Pinot St. George. And I am obliged to call to your attention that Dr. Winkler did not certify that the wine you sell as Chardonnay came unblended from the authentic Chardonnay grape. Having

Chardonnay vines in your vineyard does not guarantee the truth of your label. I am not going further into any personal correspondence with you in this spirit, for I am interested solely in safeguarding standards of quality, and any personal references were used merely to show our great need for a self-imposed industry control such as they have in France. Like conditions forced them to it there, and they have proved that authentic labeling policed by their own group is the first step in protecting fine wines in the market. [5/10/55]



[Vintage Label Courtesy of Angela Stewart]

As more letters arrived—from Herman Wente, Robert Mondavi (at Krug), and finally even Beaulieu's Marquise de Pins (the de Latour founders' daughter)—MR liked this evidence that at least he and the wines he made were important enough not to be ignored. Even more pleasing were the approving letters sent by influential wine connoisseurs, respected wine merchants, and wine writers. The best of them he shared with Maynard. Among the first group was the eminent publisher Alfred A. Knopf, who had visited Rusty Ray before the war at the original Paul Masson premises in Saratoga. ("The old place," as MR called it, lay just to the southeast, across the small canyon that split Table Mountain in two. The Rays were now calling their own "hogback" side of it Mt. Eden.)

How right you are. Good luck to you. Book publishers could learn something from you. As a matter of fact, I find myself drinking less and less California wine. It is not a matter of price, because I buy practically no cheap French wines, i.e., the kind that can compete on the basis of price with wines from California. It's simply that the California wines aren't good enough. I'd be very glad indeed to have your list. [5/16/55]



Another connoisseur whose supportive message the Rays proudly quoted was W.H. ("Hal") Smith, a vice president of the Anglo California National Bank in San Francisco.

I appreciated receiving copies of your letters to Mr. Gomberg, as I am very interested in the problems of the wine industry. Certainly there can be no serious criticisms of your proposals, for what you advocate for the premium producers has worked well for you. [5/25/55]

Wine author Ernest Peninou contributed his own pro-QC vote, having found the MR's letters to Gomberg "very interesting and unfortunately so true."

If the so-called "premium wine producers" would only take a few of the constructive steps or measures you advocate they would be proving a much brighter future for the next generation of winemakers and vineyardists of California than are their claims of quality we hear about on radio and T.V. and read about in magazines and billboards. [5/22/55]

Since the availability of photocopiers—those now-ubiquitous, low-cost, xerographic devices—still lay several decades away in the future, both Rays routinely typed up carbon copies of all letters they wrote. To make copies of other people's letters, Eleanor now transcribed them, using thin carbon papers layered between "onion-skin" sheets to produce multiples. Such copies could then be sent out to Amerine and other favored recipients. Any communications that MR wanted to distribute in large quantities could be turned over for mimeographing by a commercial service.

The most notable letters and other documents of the time were also inserted in a few expandable, clasp-bound binders that contained various written materials. These would serve as informational press kits or, eventually, as permanent archival records. Special Collections in the UC Davis Library has such a binder that holds the fascinating, articulate, and often volatile letter exchanges that took place during May 1955 between MR and the wine proprietors he had targeted for special attention. There too are additional Gomberg-Martin Ray letters, as well as other documents written or received by the Rays during their "Wine Quality Control Fight." Both MR and ER later added some commentaries on the entire affair.

The sheer bulk of these 1955 communications defies easy extractions and summaries for use in this article, which in any case focuses primarily on MR's friendship with Maynard Amerine. None of MR's letters to Amerine are in the Quality Control binders, since the growing conflict between them remained a private matter. Nor can they be found

among Amerine's papers, for he destroyed most personal correspondence; doubtless the incendiary MR letters were torched early. However, the Rays' carbon copies and a few original notes to them from Amerine are in the Martin & Eleanor Ray Papers, as are numerous other Ray letters covering their QC Fight period.

At this midpoint in Martin Ray's 40-year-long winegrowing career, his battle of words with the California wine industry reached its apogee. At some future time MR's correspondence with Gomberg, Prof. Albert Winkler, the four winery proprietors, and others at the time may be more fully presented in *WTQ*, for the convenience of interested wine historians. For now, there's ample material in MR's letters to Amerine, plus several to John Melville and a few of ER's and others', to select from, to provide detailed accounts of, along with some colorful glimpses at, this brief but remarkable period in 1955.

Unfortunately, Gomberg's correspondence with other people, his notes, the PWP meeting minutes, and other materials relevant to MR's dealings with him and the Premium Wine Producers group—as well as anything else he may have written possibly tracing back to Martin Ray the upcoming surge of certain wineries' and winemakers' determination to improve the wines they produced (for it's apparent that Gomberg secretly admired, even agreed with, MR's perfectionist stance, even in the mid-1930s)—cannot be accessed at this time at their Gomberg & Fredrikson location. Hopefully they will be archived and made available to scholars in the future.

### *Reacting to John Melville's Book*

In mid-spring, while the Rays were busily mounting their Wine Quality Fight, Amerine received an advance copy of *Guide to California Wines*, sent to him by Doubleday, doubtless at its author's behest. He was not impressed.

Dear Rays—

Well Melville's book is here and it is surprisingly like Mrs. Mabon's! [He's referring to *The ABC of America's Wines*, 1943.] The Wine Institute boys really got their licks in. Everybody gets praised. To wit: "The policy of Benoist and Goulet [at Almaden] is to produce only wines of the highest quality" "Paul Masson produces ... wines of superior quality." You get 2 pages but so does San Martin who produce "wines of fine quality." The story of Silvear and how Goulet made his champagne will slay you. Too bad it isn't true. He has collected together a lot of history, some of it new to me. But he hasn't done any particular harm or good. Some of his praise may be tongue-in-cheek comments. I can't say for sure.



(This undated note had a final sentence, "Well—will be looking for you the 29th around 3:30 in the afternoon," indicating that MA had written it in May.)

The author was temporarily spared MA's unfavorable yet genteel review until the autumn, when it would be published in *Wine and Food*, the Society's quarterly publication. [See *Review at end* — ED.] The Rays lacked a public platform for discharging their own negative opinion of the author's opus. As she'd done earlier, first after meeting Melville, then after hearing of the book's acceptance by a major East Coast publisher, Eleanor ripped into it in letters to family members and friends. Even before she and Rusty had secured a copy of *Guide to California Wines*, she expressed vast annoyance to her East Coast author friend Helen Augur, with whom she sometimes exchanged book-trade gossip.

Say, Doubleday must be mad—they're actually publishing that character Melville's book on Calif. wines.... Recall he's the one we called Baron von Rieken (the stinkin Baron)? [The Rays were almost floored by his B.O. when, on visiting them, he removed his jacket.] He's one of the most ignorant but brassy lugs in history, knows less than nothing because he thinks he knows all, can't tell one wine from another, just ran around to all the wineries and lapped up whatever they said, praised them all, passed along all the lies, frauds, usual stuff. Why don't they look into something before they publish such? Joe Jackson [Joseph Jackson of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who had sent the manuscript to Doubleday and then wrote the book's Introduction] of course is such an enthusiastic amateur wine man that he was bent on associating his name with wine in a book. Melville said our wines were the finest & most expensive in the country — but he wouldn't know — great God, when I think of all the idiots writing books on wine I can't sleep for gnashing my teeth! [5/15/55] [See *Melville bio note at*

*end.* — Ed.]

Ironically, despite the Rays' objections to both Melville and his book (though they hadn't read it yet), they had earlier encouraged him to show up at that first PWP meeting in early May. Having provided information about its time and place, they expected him to report on its transactions. ER had followed up MR's letter with an instructional one of her own.

Gomberg may suspect you of being the [journalist] chappie referred to in Rusty's letter to him, so you'll have to let him know you're out to do an impartial reporting job or maybe you won't get in.... Certainly all these growers are in trouble over competition, and you can give them sympathy—but you must bring out how they themselves have gotten themselves into this jam.... Is it possible for you to get different ones to give you their increased production figures in the war years??? They're too cagey, I suppose—but they certainly were proud of shooting their volume up, and would expose this whole picture, if not suspecting you would use it against them.... You should get quotes that really could be terrific, as to how these various

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

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

ROBERT LAWRENCE BALZER  
Author of "California's Best Wines"

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

"The highest priced, most expensively made, most carefully bottle-aged native vintages in the country . . . their quality is so high they cannot be neglected."

MABON: "ABC of America's Wines"

". . . the finest and costliest California wines . . . comparable to the finest wines of France."

MELVILLE: "Guide to California Wines"

". . . wines comparable in character and quality to the finest European growths in their greatest years."

DR. ANGELO PELLEGRINI  
Author of "The Unprejudiced Palate"

"Mr. Ray . . . has done a lot to raise the standards of winemaking in California."

JOHN STORM: "An Invitation to Wines"

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

JULIAN STREET Author of "Wines"

## Martin Ray

Saratoga, California  
ESTABLISHED 1852

### • Madame Pinot . . . \$100

A blanc de noir Champagne made entirely from the free-run juice of the Pinot Noir. Vintage 1953.

### • Sang-de-Pinot . . . \$120

A coral-pink Champagne, from the first light press of Pinot Noir. Made only by Martin Ray. Vintage 1953.

### • Pinot Noir . . . . . \$48

Vintages 1950, 1952, 1954.

### • Pinot Noir 1954 . . . \$96

The Great Third Crush

### • Chardonnay 1955 . . \$48

Dry, fragrant, spicy.

### • Cabernet Sauvignon \$48

Vintage of 1948.

### • Cabernet Sauvignon \$72

1947 - a collector's item.

### • Cabernet Sauvignon \$36

Mariage - a remarkable 1946-1949.

Retail Case Prices

fellows think they can cut off the cheaper foreign wines without hurting the fines ones—that should be



interesting, when skewered on a needle in direct quotes. You know all the personalities, so you could do a wonderful picture of it all, letting them expose themselves.... Say, would you do something for me? I'd love to have some comments about Rusty for my humorous collection, [so] will you please tell me any really hot comments against him at the meeting? Or any stories they tell? There are sure to be some comments with sparks flying. [4/29/55]

Apparently, though, Melville steered clear of crashing the vintners' gathering as an undercover agent sent in by the Rays.

Sometime in mid-May the Rays managed to purchase a copy of *Guide to California Wines* prior to its official publication date in June. The first thing they must have done was turn to the index to check on the pages containing what Melville had written about "Martin Ray, Inc., Saratoga"—though they had surely seen it all before, in manuscript.

High above the Saratoga foothills rises Mt. Eden to an altitude of some two thousand feet, commanding a grandiose view of the whole of the Santa Clara Valley. It is here on the very summit of the mountain that Martin Ray devotes his skill to the production of the finest and costliest California wines, of which the Pinot Noir champagnes and table wines especially rank as supreme achievements, comparable to the finest wines of France.

After several more paragraphs describing Martin Ray and his small-scale, high-quality operation on Mt. Eden, Melville neared the conclusion.

Martin Ray's wines are all 100 per cent varietal vintage wines and of the best years only. Any wine not measuring up to the highest standards is disposed of and sold in bulk. The policy is to produce only the very best and to improve wherever possible, regardless of cost. Production is in a small scale, the wines being destined for gourmets and connoisseurs and for the best restaurants and clubs. It is not surprising that their cost is high.

In an appendix Melville listed currently available Outstanding California Wines in different regions of the state—in categories for red, white, and rosé table wines; sparkling wines; aperitif and dessert wines. Wines were marked "V" if they were vintage, and were awarded stars (asterisks, really). Six of Martin Ray's vintage wines were starred. The only one listed that didn't get a star was the non-vintage La Montaña Woodside Cabernet (a blend of vintages) in the Claret group—and Rusty now wished he'd spoken more favorably about it, since he judged it superior to the three Cabernet Sauvignons (besides his own V one) that Melville had starred, among a total of 10. The Rays naturally were pleased that Martin Ray wines were given the topmost ratings for fine quality.

## *Great Wine of a Superior Year*



*Martin Ray*  
1953

*California Cabernet-Sauvignon*

Produced and Bottled by Martin Ray, Saratoga, California  
ALCOHOL CONTENTS 13% BY VOLUME • CONTENTS 4/5 QUART

[The wine label (reduced) features a sketch by Peter Martin Ray of the Mt. Eden Martin Ray home (left) and winery (right).]

In the author's foreword, the third paragraph had said:

California wines have their own and diversified charm. The best of them match in quality, flavor, and savor all but the finest estate-bottled wines of Europe and have the advantage of being very reasonable in price. Even the great wines of California are remarkably inexpensive.

In his copy MR underlined "all but the finest" in pencil, and in the margin added an exclamation mark.

After reading the whole of Melville's book, Martin tried to rein himself in while writing to its author. His damning critique was far more detailed than Amerine's would be. His carefully composed letter of three single-spaced pages (which Eleanor typed up) began: "Dear John / and dear Willy too! because I know you worked hard on the book too as did John—" (ER may have had a hand in this extended salutation, since she well understood the crucial functions of a wife in many creative men's lifework. It's significant that Melville gracefully acknowledged ER's role in the Martin Ray Winery's success in the new, 1960 edition of his book.)

Eleanor and I want to congratulate you on this triumph, the publication of "A Guide to California Wines," on all the perseverance you displayed in bringing it to successful issue, and on all the industry that went into it. I do believe it may sell better than any wine book yet.... You deserve credit for setting a lot of things right in the book, John. I only wish you'd shown me the complete copy so I could have stopped the furthering of a few false claims and completely



fabricated stories whose sources are obvious to me—though these won't make or break the industry, of course. I'll discuss these with you sometime so you can correct them when further editions are issued.

Paragraph after paragraph followed, mostly covering MR's corrections, objections, and dire warnings.

Despite the fact that I like so many things about the book I must point out something which perhaps you have [not] realized in advance would be a cruel blow to me in my perennial fight to elevate quality in the industry—for unwittingly perhaps you have been used by the growers who have been turning out false varietals and who are responsible for the present lack of confidence in California wines and increasing sales of imports.

As far as I know your book is the first that has authenticated the misuse of varietal names. I know you are in the quality camp and your intentions are sincere, John, but evidently you didn't realize that these growers have made you an ally in print of their malpractices. You cannot allow yourself to become identified with their untenable position, or that of the Wine Institute which is the organization fighting quality standards and which in fact represents the distillers and volume valley producers of cheap skid-row alcohol. Let them help you with your book but don't identify yourself with their practices.

A great mistake was in lending authenticity for the first time to Chenin blanc as a pinot, to "Pinot St. George" as a pinot, actually classifying them as "White Pinot" and "Red Pinot" as they concocted those terms in Napa Valley. You even bolster these false classifications by calling the Pinot Meunier (a true pinot) "Black Pinot," and by thus allying it with the fraudulent white and red classifications create acceptability for them through association....

By usage alone wrong is not made right. I am aghast at all those Napa growers admitting their malpractices to you; they never would to me, knowing what I thought of such!... These growers have had many years to weed their poor grape varieties from their vineyards, grow fine varieties only and label them honestly. When I bought Paul Masson's I inherited similar conditions to theirs, but within a year's time pulled out all second-rate vines and started right, dumped hundreds of bales of false labels. But these fellows have never made any effort to right their situation from the vines up; their only concern has been to cover up and make false claims for their poor varieties and poor wines.

When I see all the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay people claim to have throughout the book I am overcome! The total tonnage of both together is but a tiny amount in the entire state. I am deeply disturbed that you presented these varietal problems in such a manner

as to pass on the deceit of these hypocritical growers to the public. Other writers in turn will use your book as reference, and the evil thus is perpetuated, you see. [5/21/55]

In another letter written to Melville ten days later MR lumped him in with a host of other wine writers whose works were inevitably bound to contain innumerable errors due to poor knowledge of actual winegrowing, plus the limited or biased perspective endemic to uncritical authors, who repeated whatever winery publicists and vintners had told them—perhaps having been charmed into gullibility—and then passed it on to those writers (and wine scholars too) coming after them, who probably would never have even tasted the wines cited for excellence.

One of the great faults found in virtually all wine books is that they are written by people who have never been winegrowers, and consequently their information for the most part comes from former authors of wine books or from winegrowers who may know their own cellars and their own vineyards and varieties but assume the same facts are true of other varieties and other districts.... Amerine tells me there has never been a book written on wines by a Frenchman other than scientific or otherwise limited, though they actually have more knowledge viticulturally speaking than others. [5/31/55]

Luckily for MR, the timing of the book's publication, and its immediate popular reception, merged with his push for wine quality control. It added fuel to the firestorm that the Rays had begun engendering in April. The best use MR made of the book was to point out that this seemingly authoritative guide exemplified how the wine industry's practitioners constantly and often deliberately misled the wine-consuming public. Martin Ray, within the generation of post-Prohibition winegrowers, had already proved that great wines could someday come from California. He regarded as reprehensible the damage being done further to the state's reputed ability to produce truly high-quality wines. The industry deserved the public beating he intended to deliver through the medium of journalism. Under his threat of broadly exposing their lack of knowledge or downright deceptions, its premium-wine leaders, embarrassed or chagrined, might wisely choose to mend their ways.

Thus when communicating with Maynard Amerine and others at the time, MR claimed that Melville's book demonstrated the dangerous consequences of wine writers' believing everything they had been told by winery spokesmen. He emphasized the timeliness of his current war against the industry's methods in growing wine-



grapes and in the making and merchandising of wines. The situation would only be made worse by the Premium Wine Producers' future publicity efforts, as envisaged by Lou Gomberg. As he would soon write angrily to Maynard:

Melville's book would have just about authenticated their mal practices [*sic*] had I not attacked them just when I did. It was very fortunate. It had already just about been accepted that a Pinot Noir grown in California did not carry over the varietal characteristics or quality of the old country. And it was simply because all these wines labeled Pinot Noir are fraud and people had no other alternative but think what they did. The same with Chardonnay and Gamay and Pinot Blanc. Why should these frauds be treated differently than other frauds? When Frenchmen have gone to prison for the same frauds and even lost their heads, why should Wentz and Daniel and Mondavi be treated as gentlemen? The same kind of people in the industry fought to retain the right to duplicate French labels and sell their California wines as "imports" not so long ago. Paul Masson had Clicquot yellow labels and Clicquot corks and sold just as much Clicquot as Paul Masson before prohibition. He would give you Mums if you preferred, too. I have drunk recently [John Daniel's] Inglenook Chardonnay that was identical to his white Pinot which he says is Chenin Blanc. Why should he be permitted to get by with it and maintain the position he occupies? And who but me can stop him? [5/19/55]



Who, indeed? Only someone with an almost megalomaniacal sense of his own special, intensely purifying mission in the wine world. If such a zealous and aggressively articulate quality control advocate as Martin Ray had not been around at that very time, when the public was starting to take much greater interest in wine, it might have been essential for true wine connoisseurs in the U.S. to

put forward some fearless hell-raiser very much like him. Also, it's important to recognize that another wine-loving group was lurking in the shadows: vintners who wanted the high-end of the industry to raise its standards and change for the better, but whose positions didn't allow them to risk sticking their own necks out, to be professionally guillotined. They were pleased that Martin Ray spoke out for them and then took all the abuse, ridicule, ostracism, and—it often turned out—virtual censorship when trying to gain access to the press and publicity. (His notable paranoia in this last regard was partly justified.)

In one of his long letters to Amerine, MR kept up the harangue over mislabeling and other deceptions that urgently required correcting through quality control edicts. At the time he felt confident that his and Eleanor's efforts to elicit print media interest were about to pay off.

Now we have a magazine story coming on it and maybe one more. I can spare enough time to keep popping away at them [the PWP group] and something good may yet come of it. I will give them satisfaction if they will give me the chance but don't ever let it be said that any of them wanted [quality control]. I hope to make it ultimately their plan. You can see I am working toward that. But they all hate it. They want to continue to be respected crooks. The more I think of this the more absurd it seems to me that they should be able in this age to put on their labels all sorts of untrue statements and get away with it....

Just as you can see many of [Melville's] words are lifted directly from [Robert] Balzer [*California's Best Wines*, 1948; 1949] and other writers, so others to come will lift words from his book. I am going to write him at length and very critically and I am going also to his publisher. At least they can not say "sour grapes" and he has given me the platform from which I will be heard. [5/21/55]

Because Martin Ray and his wines had been elevated to near cult status in *Guide to California Wines*, he could hold the high moral ground when delivering attacks upon those other winegrowers whose operations were vaster and far better known and endowed than his own small domain. And whatever the Rays really thought of Melville and his book, they certainly didn't hesitate to quote widely from his note written after receiving copies of the two Gomberg letters.

I think your quality control idea a very good one.... Many a so called Pinot Noir is not a Pinot Noir as you and I well know.... I join you in trying to improve wherever possible the quality of California wines.... Better would be to call these wines by their true name(s) ... a typical job for "quality control." [5/24/55]



### *Heading into the Fray*

When Eleanor wrote to her son Peter, at Harvard, about *Guide to California Wines*, saying that she and Rusty would send author-inscribed copies to both him and twin brother Barclay, she sketched in the madly bustling scene going on at the home front.

Melville's book is out, causing us to have a stroke—first night we brought it home and read excerpts as we drank icycool Chardonnay, wonderfully tart, out on the front veranda as it was a hot summer evening—and we laughed our heads off at the wild fabrications being passed along from one phony author (& grower occasionally) to posterity thru the Stinking Baron. We had lots of fun. But we were wild about his putting his stamp of approval on all those fraudulent labeling practices like White Pinot for Chenin Blanc, etc., and have been writing letters to him, more to Gomberg, more to [John] Storm who's writing an article probing into all this—we've stacks of letters, copies, great god we sometimes forget whom we've sent what, and it takes all our time!! [5/21/55]

ER also indicated in this letter that Rusty, influenced by Gomberg's diplomatic good sense and perhaps recognizing that his attacks upon the four winery proprietors had been a bit impolitic, had been making an effort to be more moderate in his next responses to John Daniel and Herman Wentz. For instance, to the latter he had written:

Well, Gomberg just phoned me and we have had a long talk. And we have agreed that when you fellows get fully organized and elect your directors, I will be asked to come before you and tell you more about this problem as I view it. He holds out the hope that ultimately some such approach may be made and he has spoken especially of some of the younger members of your families. .... A board of quality control must ultimately be established. If I can aid that and hurry it along, I will feel I have done something. I would like to think some of you fellows would support my effort. And toward this end I am going to ask a few of you here for a dinner, perhaps around vintage time.... Perhaps Gomberg is right. Perhaps it must be a movement that matures slowly. Anyway, you know where I stand and I will ask you up after you get organized and I will look forward to talking to your group when it is ready. [5/12/55]

From the start, MR had been operating under the misimpression that prospective PWP members had actually wanted him to join their group. Thus he had written this to Gomberg:

As you know, Lou, I have been fighting for some means of self imposed quality control for well on to 20 years now. It was because of their unwillingness to even consider such that I refused to join the Wine Institute when they were organized. They wanted me

for the same reason your group does—simply because I am known as uncompromising when it comes to quality. I could work with your group and bring to it something no one else can. If they are smart they will see it. I think it is time you call off all the letter writing. They are getting in deeper and deeper and that is not what I want. So why don't you talk to them, calm them and make them see how they stand. [5/16/55]

In his quick response, Gomberg tried to set MR straight on two of his misconceptions.

There are two points in your letter I would like to clarify. One concerns the invitation extended to you to join the group. That was my own idea. They left it up to me to decide to whom the invitations should be directed. The other concerns the possible adoption of a control program along the lines you propose. I did not intend to give the impression that the present generation of growers would "never" accept it. What I thought I said, and so intended, was that under the circumstances, adoption of such a plan would take a long time no matter how desirable it might be and that the way to sell the idea is to win people over to it through friendly persuasion. [5/18/55]

Although MR continued to express a willingness to talk to the PWP group or, preferably, to select members thereof, and even to join the organization if it agreed to accept self-imposed quality control as a goal, he remained as adamant as ever—maneuvering so that, no matter what, he'd be in a winning position. As Eleanor told Peter—

But let me tell you the worm is turning under all this pressure—Gomberg tells Rusty he is doing better in his last letters at soothing feelings among the injured and even holds out hope of getting the leaders together to hear Rusty's plan for quality control. Rusty laughs, since he has not given an inch—it's merely that he's scared them, when they see he is going to put each of them on record as approving or being opposed to quality control. You know [Robert] Mondavi [at Krug] wrote him asking if he understood libel laws. Rusty wrote back saying something like this: "Let me repeat what you have made no attempt to deny: your Pinot Noir is not an authentic unblended Pinot Noir"! He told him, however, he wasn't interested in particular wines, and not to get off on personal tangents—it would be more to his credit to help organize some plan of quality control rather than go on record against it. [5/21/55]

Then ER also remarked about how Melville's abundant praises of most California wines and wineries greatly spurred their determination to carry on with the battle.

You'd think we would be purring like cats—he really gave us the works as producing the finest and costliest of Calif. wines—yet Rusty has been so concerned over



Melville being used as an ally in print of those rascals that the personal gain is overlooked. [5/21/55]

Eleanor's opinion of the book soon began mellowing when it became apparent that Melville's *Guide*—or misguide, as the Rays judged it—had undeniably whetted the public's appetite for exploring both California's wines and its "wine country." The latter increasingly meant the attractive Napa Valley, easily accessible and welcoming to motoring tourists. Melville's guidebook was inspiring enthusiastic readers to undertake tours to wineries near and far in hopes of sampling wines, buying them at the premises, and even conversing with the winemaker himself. (Back in those days of yore, female winemakers of course were unthinkable.) Sometimes wine aficionados even attempted to visit the Martin Ray winery, for the book had stirred up an extraordinary new interest in its wines and their maker. As ER wrote to their young physician friend Robert T.A. ("Bob") Knudsen several weeks after the book's publication:

Everyone seems to have read Melville's book, and it's a good thing we keep our chain across the road or we'd be swamped with the many [people] wanting to come up here and look around. Also letters ordering cases of wine, quite astounding. He certainly did well by us in that book, giving us top billing—and even if we were disappointed in his handling of "White Pinot" etc. in that chapter about wine classifications, he says he's going to change that in future editions when he has a chance to rectify the thing, so seems to us we shouldn't be too hard on the guy. After all, he certainly worked hard, and nobody's work is perfect, what? One thing I like about him very much, he's most willing to learn—when I say this, Rusty groans and says that's the trouble, John wears him out asking questions, never ceasing! But one thing is certain, with his determination he's going to get ahead. The book is selling like mad, simply astounding for a wine book. [6/21/55]

As more and more people became knowledgeable and discriminating, having moved into buying French and German vintages and comparing them with the disappointing California wines, many would start insisting upon adherence to quality standards and honest varietal labeling. Ultimately, then, how could Martin Ray's cause *not* triumph in the long run? Still, he has seldom received credit for having lobbed off all those early attacks—particularly in 1955—upon other wineries' integrity from his aerie in the Santa Cruz Mountains, to which visitors were rarely invited. (And when a privileged few were, they felt as if they'd been summoned for an audience with royalty, or America's veritable pope of fine wine.)

Both MR and ER would maintain a cordial but

exceedingly two-faced social, and sometimes even business, relationship with John Melville, despite their disapproval of his book as well as his personality and hygienic drawbacks. As with MR's correspondence with the four winery owners, and additional letters to and from Gomberg, his abundant communications with and about John Melville during 1955 can only be touched upon here. (And like the Amerine-MR letters, they weren't included in the Rays' Quality Control binders.)

#### *Meanwhile, ER Prepares a Treatise*

The Rays were extraordinarily energized and busy during the entire month of May and well into June, consumed by their furious battle (as they saw it) with the wine industry at large, spending hours almost every day, and sometimes far into the night, on the telephone or at the typewriter. Somehow they also managed to take part in social activities, especially with actor Burgess Meredith (as described in July 2006 *WTQ*). Meanwhile, the several thousand vines in their acreage atop Mt. Eden—mostly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, but also expanding blocks of Cabernet Sauvignon derived from budwood originally taken from Rixford's La Questa vineyard in Woodside—were bursting forth in lush green splendor. Each vine, standing 10 feet away from its neighbors, during late fall or winter had been "basket"-pruned, with several stout young canes (if available) fastened tightly with metal straps to a tall redwood stake and four or five spurs selected for next year's cane candidates, all to be ready for the rapid springtime growth that now went on. Rusty sulfured his vineyards every two weeks—or oftener if it rained soon afterwards—to prevent the mildew that could ruin the future crop. He also frequently walked down the rows, securing any lengthy canes that risked being broken off by the strong winds that assaulted his mountaintop from all directions.

A few magazine publishers' editors, whom the Rays—primarily Eleanor, the winery's in-house publicist—had contacted toward the end of April by telephone or letter, had been willing to consider running a lead article about the urgent need to introduce quality standards in America's wine industry, centered in California. Not surprisingly, the Rays especially hoped to place it with the most popular, wide-circulation weekly, *Life*, and kept up communications with an editor there. But publishers' people asked for written information to convince them to go to all the trouble and expense of mounting a major story.

The several wine writers whom the Rays had approached—Melville, Robert Balzer, John Storm [*An Invitation to Wines—An Informal Guide to the*



*Selection, Care, and Enjoyment of Domestic and European Wines*, 1955]—felt overwhelmed by the need to quickly research the subject and then compose an article, with no assurance of ever being paid for the efforts involved. The Rays began to realize that in order to grab the print media's interest in the potential of a timely article focusing on the fierce argument that they claimed was now going on within the industry over honest labeling and improving wine quality, they themselves would have to write up the background for this fight, over which Martin Ray had long been spoiling. If the idea landed a contractual assignment, another author—maybe even one they favored—might then take over, as well as a photographer or two.

So Eleanor, who earlier had failed to sell her novel to book publishers, took on writing a synopsis. Actually all the wine-history reading she had done in the past three years to spin the inspirational life story of a hell-fire, quality-fixated hero much resembling her vintner husband, plus of course all the rich and dastardly tales she had listened to when Rusty was carrying on as he customarily did, had prepared her well to do what needed doing. It took her several weeks to finish the job. Her essay and chronological notes could now be sent off as a portfolio to magazine editors.

Secured within the Rays' Quality Control binder, with its collection of relevant letters and other documents, are these two pieces: the single-spaced, nine-page "Letter written to a national publication by Eleanor Ray, May, 22nd, 1955, background of material on story" and her accompanying six-page "Boom and Bust Cycles in California Winegrowing Related to Quality of Wine." Both provide ample evidence of the extensive historical research ER was doing to bolster MR's arguments pertaining to imposing wine quality control measures in the near future.

The background piece also gave ER the chance to supply an engaging profile of her husband. As she put it, "There never has been a real fighter for quality within the industry until now." She portrayed him as the true successor to Professor Eugene Hilgard of the University of California, who in the late 19th century had alienated winemakers with his insistence upon vintners' adhering to quality standards. "They would listen to no criticism, quite as today," ER wrote. "And Dr. Hilgard had no economic lever to force better quality." A half-century later, though, the deplorable situation was hopefully heading for correction.

But now we have for the first time in all California viticultural history a battle for quality standards brought on by one of the winegrowers himself—

Martin Ray—in a lone stand against everyone else in the prestige sector of the wine industry (table wines). Acknowledged as the grower of the finest and most expensive wines in the country since 1936, eminently sound and successful financially as well, he has a natural lever for prying quality out of the growers who merely claim to produce quality wines but make little effort to do so—his retailers. And much to the fury of the industry he is applying this lever through them. The battle started when table-wine growers of California recently organized in still another fight to curb importation of European wines. Their promotional organizer, Louis Gomberg, wrote an article in the current issue of "Wines and Vines" attacking imports and blaming the sale of cheap imports for the present economic crisis in sales of California wines. When Martin Ray was asked to join in this effort against foreign wines the fireworks started. He not only refused to join but immediately went into action condemning their stand. He wrote a series of letters to Gomberg (copies of first two enclosed), had them mimeographed and sent them to all his retailers, to connoisseur friends throughout the country, and to some of the growers themselves whose practices he attacked. In these letters he scorches the other growers for blaming imports for their loss of sales, says the truth is their wines aren't good enough, that people are willing to pay more to get wines of character and quality; the thing for them to do is to face this fact and start making better wines—and the first step toward that is a self-imposed quality control such as they have in France. His open attack suddenly changed the entire aspect of the situation, made the issue now one of whether or not they would accept quality control. Many of the growers now wished they'd never started their attack on foreign wines, for they've been maneuvered into an untenable position where they either have to approve some plan for quality control or be placed on record as opposing it. They're afraid to oppose, as Martin Ray will use it against them with retailers.

With the material sent off in the third week of May, the Rays felt confident that, whichever direction the Premium Wine Producers group decided to go—toward quality control or against it—they themselves would come out as the big winners. MR was pressuring Gomberg to get their definite yea or nay. Some outlets of the national press, then, would soon announce either the intended future move in California toward making truly fine wines ... or else expose the shoddy and deceptive practices among the so-called premium wineries that they had just refused, "on record," to alter.

#### *MR's Efforts to Re-engage Amerine*

**D**uring the super-busy month of May 1955, the Rays were thrilled about the responses, overall and individually, to their having sent



out MR's letters to Gomberg the several hundred people on their mailing list. Toward the end of the second week, MR had heard from Gomberg that he intended to present MR's "plan" to the Premium Wine Producers group when they next met later in the month. It looked as if MR's campaign to get the winery owners to self-impose quality control measures now might actually succeed.

But as the days went by, MR—so wrapped up with Eleanor in conducting their cottage-industry attacks upon premium winery proprietors and the Wine Institute over quality control—grew alarmed by the increasingly negative signals emanating from his good friend at UC Davis Department of Viticulture. Amerine the enologist displayed an obvious lack of enthusiasm in his voice whenever MR telephoned him to report on his continuing talks and correspondence with Gomberg and the latest progress in his mounting epistolary war with certain members of the new Premium Wine Producers group. Worse than that was when the downright disapproving Maynard delivered critical comments or caustic remarks.

Eleanor Ray reported to her son Peter that only one significant person, once an avid quality ally, was disappointing and even deserting Martin Ray in his furious battle for wine quality control.

All kinds of people are writing, phoning, etc—all hearing about these letters, wherever they go—and all seem tremendously in favor, with one exception—can you guess? Maynard Amerine! Rusty's been bombarding him with copies of all, and [MA] says he can't fight fire with fire, whereupon Rusty sends him a wonderful cartoon about fighting fire with fire which says this is the only way. This is sort of like the Russians, they put on such an offensive that everyone else scrambles around on the defensive—most people are too afraid to take a stand. [Note that the Rays' fight took place during the first, and heated, decade of the Cold War.] Maynard seems to be going soft. These birds never were friendly to Rusty's efforts to quality, so why not force them to it, for you certainly wouldn't get anywhere with them being a Milquetoast, they'd never like Rusty a bit better, merely dismiss him sneeringly. Now he has them on the run. [5/21/55]

Whenever MR got really worked up about something or somebody, he and ER tended to move to their typewriter as if to a battle station, and there start verbalizing whatever positive or negative things currently occupied much of their thoughts, talk, and activities. MR's often extraordinarily lengthy letters to Julian Street had set the pattern during the early 1940s. Nowadays he periodically wooed, counseled, or harangued Eleanor's twin sons with long letters. In that peak year

of MR's activism, both John Melville and Burgess Meredith (among others) also received lots of mail from MR. But during May, Amerine was the chief letter recipient.

MR, in his most fulsome letter-writing barrage yet, frequently now sat down to furiously compose a missive aimed at Amerine. (Carbon copies of his letters show well the difference between those he himself typed and ones he'd dictated to his wife.) One after another he sped them off. In the UC Davis archive there are carbon copies of six letters he wrote to Maynard in May of 1955 yielding a total of 16 single-spaced pages. (Four more long ones would go off in June.) MA responded, if at all, with brief postal notes, but mostly by just silence—though of course there were also phone talks, when almost inevitably arguments went on, as both MR's letters and MA's sparse, mostly undated notes indicate.

Never before had their strong wine-centered bond of almost 20 years seemed imperiled like this, after MR criticized something the younger Maynard had said or done, done imperfectly, or failed to do. But now it seemed precarious. And MR hoped that his intensive letter campaign would ultimately repair the unraveling connection, even though justifying his own actions might sometimes involve censuring Maynard's inaction. This wouldn't be the only time he (and sometimes ER too) would use typewriter or pen to get someone—a son or other relative, a friend or business associate—back into line, to rejoin their righteous wine mission. (MR's minister father may have passed on to him some gene for fundamentalist-style preaching.)

In a postcard dated 5/20 Maynard advised MR, "Sell your wines & forget the others," signing it with his characteristic "m" with a slash through it. This succinct advice must have served as a comment on the excessively long (5-page) letter, containing few paragraph indentations, that he'd just received from MR. Only a few portions will be replicated here.

MR started out by telling what he'd learned, or re-learned, from his recent wine-selling trips in face-to-face encounters.

There is a world you know nothing about. And none of the growers with which I am presently involved know anything about it either. It is the world of the retailer. Whatever else I know, I know this world. And it is the retailer that sells your wines. Did you know, for example, that there is at this time a statewide practice—and likely it is nationwide—on the part of these retailers to buy a case of any wine or spirits that is pressed upon them and just put it under the shelf and never offer it to any customer. When the salesman comes around they tell him,



"Well, you can see for yourself, your product never sells. People don't know about it or they don't like it. I'd be glad to buy it but it doesn't move." These retailers, I understand. They tell me what they think of others. They tell others, often enough, what they think of me, too, no doubt. But the idea is, they do sell our wines in most places and they do respect them even where they do not move rapidly. If they do not move at all, I take them out. This has happened so far in but one place. But they speak ever so openly about all the other California wines. They will tell me, "I know this Inglenook Pinot is no good" or "Hell, their labels at Wente don't mean a damned thing" or "What the hell do I care about the fact it is or isn't made of what it says—labels don't mean a damned thing to any of them." You simply don't realize how low in respect they have all fallen. Now, if Wente, John Daniel, the Marquis[e] at Beaulieu, Louis Benoist [at Almaden], the Mondavis [at Krug] and other growers would do something by way of honest wines and maintaining contacts with their customers, they would not need to worry about the shippers wines. They have simply adopted the methods of the distillers and of Petri and Roma and all the others. They sell through big organizations and they not only don't know the salesmen who sell their wines, they don't even know the bosses. I know, I ask the salesmen. Why do you think Paul Masson is able to outsell all of this group? It is because Fromm and Sichel, their brothers and various families, are out maintaining contact.

Martin Ray, the former ace at selling stocks and bonds, concluded: "It is basic in selling to establish and maintain contact with your market." One of the main things he could do was to promote his wines in retail outlets (albeit because his operation was so small it couldn't afford to hire sales reps). Because his competitors had failed to make direct, personal connections with the retail market itself, where most of their wines were to be sold to the public, they could not know what store managers and customers actually said about them. Hence MR felt confident in summoning a whole legion of retailers to back his attacks upon the integrity of those so-called Premium Wine Producers.

MR wrote four and a half more pages, mostly consisting of ranting, specific attacks upon respected vintners and their wines (e.g., "After all, their old man was a criminal and they grew up as a criminal family. You cannot overlook these things"). Then he suddenly remembered the man he was writing to, and strove to make his friend understand that, despite his resistance, he too was known to favor the imposition of wine quality standards and controls.

No, Maynard, these people like you no more than they like me. Wherever I go I hear it, and increasingly so. I hope you continue to strike out for what you think is right and not soften as you get older. You once encouraged me. Now you tell me I am hurting myself. It is unrelated to our friendship but you must not grow accustomed to what every day you see. Usage alone does not make custom right. [5/18/55]

Not everything that MR wrote to Amerine in May and afterwards would pertain to his Wine Quality Fight, for there was the usual trade gossip, the long description of the grotesque party cruise of San Francisco Bay taken at night with two dozen drunken guests of actors Burgess Meredith and Scott McKay (told in #8, July 2006)—as well as limning the social whirl in star-lit Hollywood that the Rays were setting up, with Burgess Meredith's help, to entertain the niece of the esteemed Burgundian winemaker Louis Latour, Christiane, who would be visiting there from France. (She would also stay for a while in the Ray household on Mt. Eden and be taken on visits to a few California winegrowers—including ones that MR was currently deriding.)

Martin wouldn't easily abandon his strenuous efforts to rouse Maynard's interest and approval, if not actual participation, in his big battle with the wine industry. Certainly he didn't intend to terminate their long friendship. Still, some of his harsh statements began crossing the line. It was as if MR reverted back to that period in the late 1930s and early '40s when he considered himself the younger man's mentor and could scold him at will.

[To be continued in the April 2007 issue]

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*"The book is selling like mad, simply astounding for a wine book."* [Eleanor Ray, 6/21/1955]

MELVILLE'S GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA WINES  
A Review by MAYNARD A. AMERINE  
(*Wine & Food*, No.87, Autumn 1955)

When the non-technical writer strays into technical subjects the results are not always happy, as the following too amply demonstrates. Melville's book represents the broadest survey since Mrs. Mabon's *ABC of America's Wines* of 1942. It is filled with interesting facts concerning many California wineries and wine makers—their history, owners' idiosyncrasies, grapes, and wines. These are mainly based on the premise that the way to write history is to interview the participants or their descendants. In



some cases, at least, the discussion reads as if it had been written by the winery. Surely the opinion and memory of the participants is a factor, but these do not always conform to the considered judgement of historians. The general tone of the book is thus to praise almost every winery. Wineries are credited with producing "superior quality" (this seems to cover almost anything), "remarkably successful, first-class, excellent, finest, select, top-quality, one of the best of its kind, very fine indeed, a character all their own, higher quality, standard quality, fine quality, fine table", &c wines.

Even more serious is the use of history to glorify or at least support the present reputation of various firms. A winery which got a prize in 1890 and which has since undergone two changes in ownership and a 100% increase in size of vineyard is not certain to produce wines reflecting the quality they had in 1890. Wineries which continue to put prize-winning medals on their labels, whether California or French, are among the worst offenders in this respect. The author should have warned his readers that changes in ownership and policy occur rapidly in the California wine industry.

One is intrigued to learn more about the Philery wine which is produced in the same manner as retsina but without the resin flavor. When we learn further that it is "somewhat similar to a Rhine wine" our confusion is confounded. There is again a confusion about the influence of irrigation on the quality grapes. And should California brandy be served in a balloon-shaped glass of the snifter type? There is much useful information in this book and one hopes that in future editions the edges will be polished a bit more carefully. The most valuable feature is perhaps the recommended wines. One doesn't have to agree with all of his selections to appreciate their general validity. It is too bad, however, that more notation of specific vintages was not made.

#### A BRIEF NOTE ON THE AUTHOR & HIS BOOK

Baron John Robert Melville Van-Carnbee (1903-1962) was born in The Hague, Netherlands, the son of a Dutch diplomat who had a keen interest in wine, and a fine cellar. Melville came to learn and appreciate the pleasures of wine at an early age. His education was directed toward law, and he graduated a Doctor of International Law. During World War II, he fought in the Free Netherlands Army, rising to lieutenant colonel, and was posted to Washington, DC, between 1945 and 1950. He later settled in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, at his Casa Carnbee, where he began to

write his *Guide to California Wines*, published in 1955. The Introduction to his book was written by Joseph Henry Jackson (1894-1955), a noted California literary critic and author of numerous books about California. As a book reviewer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* for some 25 years, Jackson was recognized for his longstanding encouragement of young local writers. Melville revised and updated his *Guide to California Wines* in 1960, and dedicated it "To the memory of Joseph Henry Jackson who first made this book possible." Subsequent editions published in 1968, 1972, and 1976 were revised by Jefferson Morgan.



#### Martin Ray, Inc., Saratoga

The Martin Ray wines include the following champagnes and table wines, which are available in the vintages indicated, to be succeeded by later vintages:

*Champagnes* (bottle-fermented): Madame Pinot Champagne (Blanc de noir), made entirely from the free-run juice of the Pinot noir grape, vintage 1950; Sang-de-Pinot Champagne (Rosé de noir), a coral-pink champagne, made from the first light pressing of the Pinot noir grape, vintage 1949.

*Table wines* (all marketed in champagne bottles with champagne corks for better aging, a Martin Ray trademark since 1936):

**RED:** Pinot Noir, vintage 1941, one of California's greatest wines, produced from Martin Ray's old vineyards, available only in limited quantities and easily the costliest California table wine; Pinot Noir, vintage 1951, the first great Pinot Noir vintage from his present domain; Cabernet Sauvignon, vintage 1947, his finest Cabernet Sauvignon to date; Cabernet Sauvignon, vintage 1946, a great full-bodied wine, is available in very limited quantities for laying-down purposes; Cabernet Sauvignon, vintage 1948 and similar in character to the 1947, is developing well.

*Note:* A small amount of La Montana Woodside Cabernet is still available. This is a non-vintage Cabernet Sauvignon (marketed in the traditional claret-type bottle), produced from Woodside vineyards in San Mateo County, which Martin Ray used to farm.

**WHITE:** Chardonnay, vintage 1952, a true Mountain Chardonnay produced from Pinot Chardonnay grapes only.

**ROSÉ:** Pinot Noir Rosé, vintage 1952, coral pink, and the only rosé produced in California from the Pinot noir grape.



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