

NAPA VALLEY WINE LIBRARY **REPORT**



SUMMER 2005

Calendar of Events

Annual Varietal Seminar,
"The Secret Life of White Wine"
Saturday, August 13, 2005
Copia, Napa

Annual Tasting,
"Napa Valley White Wines"
Sunday, August 14, 2005
Silverado Country Club, Napa

Dinner Co-hosted by Napa Valley Wine Library
In honor of Dr. Robert W. Darter, Trustee of
St. Helena Public Library for 40 Years
Thursday, August 25
St. Helena Public Library

Fall Field Seminar,
"Saint Helena Appellation"
Saturday, October 22, 2005

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President's Letter

Gary Long, our Bob Lamborn Scholar for 2005, is St. Helena born and bred. He graduated from St. Helena High School in 1996, earned his degree in sports broadcasting from Arizona State, and worked in the tasting rooms of Charles Krug, Merryvale, Stonegate, and Sterling while concurrently completing the Wine Business Program at Sonoma State. He is now the Napa Sales Representative for Youngs Markets. He took part in the May 20 meeting of the Wine Librarians Association, will participate in our two seminars, and will assist at the annual tasting August 14.

Gary's parents, Ron and Carolyn (talented musicians who have contributed to countless local productions) are life members of the association and probably have never missed an annual tasting! Congratulations to all the Longs and we welcome Gary to our team.

Those of you who have visited the library and enjoyed the view of our heritage vineyard out the back window will understand that we are watching with concern the process by which the City of St. Helena is opening a contiguous 5.6 acres to development. We have been promised a .3 acre "view corridor" adjacent to our tiny Barney's Backyard vineyard on library property. Wouldn't it be wonderful if one of the interested developers proposed an "open space" approach to the back of the parcel which preserved vineyards, views, and history?

With respect to the wine library collection, thanks to a generous grant, the process of binding and indexing the contents of the twenty-five years' worth of our own REPORTs has begun. This is wonderful original material by and about a broad range of people in the local industry which has not been readily available to scholars and historians. We are also "auditioning" a recommended service to preserve and transcribe the precious oral history tapes of the Heintz collection.

Bob and Haroline Thompson made a fascinating donation to our collection: the original photographs and working papers which resulted in the 1985 poster map published by the Napa Valley Vintners Association which separately designates vineyards owned by wineries and private growers. This map is not only beautiful, but a valuable snapshot of land ownership (Bob did all the research!) at a moment in time. A limited number of these poster maps – in their 20th anniversary year – will be available at the annual tasting for a donation of \$20. Several weeks later, Alan Fowler of Alan's Framing here in St. Helena donated two 1997 maps of French winegrowing regions (Cote de Nuits and Cote de Beaune) in which the parcels are designated by proprietor. We are grateful for these additions to our collection.

Our August weekend brings two changes of note: the Varietal Tasting Saturday, August 13, moves to a new Napa venue – COPIA, and the annual tasting the next day is a "wide open" tasting of all white wines. We hope

you'll give us your reactions to these variations to our long-established pattern.

Our association was a part of the Twenty-fifth Annual Napa Valley Wine Auction thanks to board member Bob Long. He and his wife Pat Perini included a life membership in their lot in the live auction June 4 at Meadowood Resort. The successful bidders were Phil and Monica Rosenthal of Southern California. We welcome them as life members and look forward to seeing them – and all of you – in August!

Julie Dickson, *President*



Gary Long, our 2005 Bob Lamborn Scholar



St. Helena Public Library Directors Larry Hlavsa (current) and Clayla Davis (retired) and archivist Chris Kreiden at the May 20 meeting of the Wine Librarians Association hosted by NVWLA

Michael Drash

Winemaker, Luna Vineyards

Napa

40,000 case production

On Making Pinot Grigio

Although Mike Drash grew up one hour south of Memphis, Tennessee, his family comes from Northern Mississippi. Mike is descended from five generations of cotton farmers—one of his uncles was elected Farmer of the Year for 2004 in Mississippi.

After graduating from college in Tennessee, Mike drove to Key West, Florida. He got a job bartending at Pier House Restaurant pouring a lot of White Zin. Luck brought him a 1987 Jordan Cabernet to try. He promptly decided to head West. His successor at the bar had been at De Loach and she recommended he try there. Mike started as a cellar rat at De Loach and stayed two years. Its main wines were Zinfandel and Chardonnay, with some Gewürtztraminer. Mike next spent a year and a half at Chateau de Baum (bought by Kendall Jackson) working in the cellar and the lab. The next two and a half years were at J Wine Company (Jordan Sparkling Wine), disgorging and bottling. Mike also tasted lots of wines at Jordan and became its sparkling wine production manager. In 1998 he went to Far Niente as assistant winemaker to Dirk Hampson, making Cabernet, Chardonnay

and Dolce. Mike feels lucky to have been part of Far Niente. He says the caliber of wines its small winemaking staff tasted was incredible—all first growths. He was turned on to a high, high level of winemaking. Out in the field there was the same attention to detail: hand sorting, an overall commitment to keeping only the very best of the fruit. Mike realized he wanted to be winemaker at a winery below the radar. He considered going outside Napa, but the timing for Luna was perfect and he joined it in 2003. They make no Chardonnay, no Cabernet, so it's challenging for him, but also lots of fun. Case production is 40,000 to 45,000 cases, two thirds of which are white wines, 30,000 of which are Pinot Grigio.

Luna was started by Michael Moon and George Vare in 1995 at the former St. Andrew Winery. When John Kongsgaard joined them as winemaker it was with the understanding that one day he would leave to make his own wines. When he did, Abe Shoner, assistant winemaker, served as interim winemaker while he gave Mike a crash course in vineyard management—cover crops, row orientation (they are still learning what works well at Luna). When Luna was started, the 22 acres of Chardonnay and Merlot were replanted with Pinot Grigio on I46 and I52 rootstocks. With Pinot Grigio, you expect a lot of fruit, but at Luna they have a hard time getting four tons, not the six or eight or nine people expect. It's hardy, just not as vigorous there as, say, in Oakville.

Winemaking is very much hands-off at Luna. They whole cluster press the Pinot Grigio for 1 1/2 hours, to a little bit of color. They then press it to stainless tanks at 50 degrees, and rack it to barrel the next day. The 60 gallon barrels are all old French oak, two to twelve years old. There is no yeast inoculation; they let native yeasts do the work. Whatever happens, happens. Between day 7 and day 8 you can start to see activity—spritzing. Pinot Grigio spends 2, 3, 4 or 5 weeks in the barrel; some lots are faster, others slower. One lot took 4 or 5 months. Luna lets the wine finish fermenting to as dry as it'll go. They top off and stir every two weeks (battonage) for 4 to 5 months to a month prior to racking, when the wine is left alone. Pinot Grigio has 100% to 50% malolactic fermentation, depending on the year (50% in 2003, 100% in 2004). It is sumped out with N₂ from oak barrels to stainless tanks, one lot per tank, at 50 degrees, settled, and blended. For blending there is a tasting every other day in the lab. It takes 3 to 4 weeks to blend: a week to two weeks to make the blend and a week to cold stabilize at 28 degrees. Luna uses a cross-flow filter, one of a handful in the Valley. Mike feels diatomaceous earth beats up the wine (the cross-flow is popular in Europe because disposal of diatomaceous earth there is so costly). Although a cross-flow costs more than others, it is incredibly gentle. It has filamentous ceramic membranes and regulates itself. There is no loss of wine, and the wine tastes as good or better than in the lab. There is no shock. The wine then goes back into the



PHOTOGRAPH BY PRISCILLA TUFTON

big tanks at 60 degrees and in less than a week is bottled. It spends a month or two in bottle before going to market. Luna is using corks now but is interested in screw tops.

Luna's style of Pinot Grigio is barrel-fermented, native yeast, over 14% alcohol, not your usual Pinot Grigio. One of their models is Radikon Winery of Josko Gravner in Collio, Oslavia, in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of north-eastern Italy. Another, the Alsatian 14 plus alcohol, over the top wines from the domaine of Zind-Humbrecht, which Mike loves. He considers Zind-Humbrecht to be pretty much god of Pinot Grigio and other whites. Asian food works extremely well with this style of wine. Hot, spicy shrimp and crab Pad Thai with Luna Pinot Grigio is just incredible. And oysters. Mike's a fan of oysters

Pinot Grigio is thin-skinned, susceptible to botrytis. Its clusters are so tight, unripened berries (the jacks) get pinched out as bunches mature. When weather conditions permit, Luna makes a Late Harvest Pinot Grigio, "Mille Baci". Their 2003 Late Harvest is still in barrel, but coming around after 18 months—maybe it could have been in the vineyard longer. However, it's developing the thickness, the lusciousness Mike wants. Its Total Acid is a little higher, to bring out some richness, Mike says. It is always difficult to choose when to pick for dessert wines, but that's the way it goes: rain, early or late. You never know.

Sauvignon Blanc, like the Pinot Grigio, is pressed whole cluster (they played around with skins in 2003) and cold fermented. It goes into old oak and is stirred every two weeks. Chardonnay, from a Coombsville vineyard with Nathan Fay budwood, is also whole cluster press, aged 50% in French oak and 50% in stainless steel barrels to keep the wine a little fresher and to balance out the wine. It is skin fermented and stirred every two weeks for eight months. Malolactic goes through 100%. They make 300-400 cases once it is racked and blended, virtually in a week. The Chardonnay is not cold stabilized, and is sold directly at the winery.

The Luna white wine blend, "Freakout", was inspired by wines of northern Italy, and first made in 2001. The 2003 has just been released as a Reserve White. Freakout is a blend of Tocai Friulano, estate Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. Mike handpicked the barrels of wine that went into this new Reserve.

Tocai Friulano is a cousin to Sauvignon Blanc, and comes from a region on the Italian-Slovenian border. Tocai Friulano is super-expressive (editor's note: Stony Hill Winery makes a Tocai Friulano with fruit from Larkmead Vineyard). They do skin fermentation with it in half-ton fermenters. They crush, de-stem, punch down, and ferment to dryness on skins in the tank and pump it over like a red; it is pretty phenolic, an expressive wine. Skin fermentation helps

tame it. It is barrel aged in 60 gallon and "baby" 30 gallon French oak, new and old. 100% malolactic is allowed to go through. The larger barrels of Tocai Friulano may be bottled as a varietal. The babies go into Freakout.

For as long as Mike can remember he has loved eating grapes, and now he loves making wine in the Napa Valley. It opens up a whole new world around a lot of fun, to wines not Chardonnay—from Italy, from France. Mike says 2004 was an awesome year for whites.

Michael Havens

Winegrower

Havens Wine Cellars, Oakville

5,000 case production

On Making Wine, particularly Albariño

On his first trip to Europe in 1969, Michael Havens developed a love for white wines that are light, crisp and especially wonderful with food. Michael was just out of high school when he traveled to Holland, to Paris, and the Swiss canton of Vaud, where he and various fellow students drank carafes of local wine as they sat and talked and ate—mostly simple (and cheap) fondues. The carafes were usually of Chasselas, a wine which goes perfectly with fresh, light meals and is grown on the steep hillsides of southern Switzerland (Michael also met his future wife, Kathryn, in Vaud—she is from Bakersfield, Michael grew up in Wheaton, IL). From Vaud, Michael traveled west and south to Maconnais and eventually to Spain, tasting wine all the way.

That fall he went to Seattle Pacific University in Seattle where, in his junior year, he began homemaking wine from “ye olde English recipes”, with locally grown apples and berries. And he said to himself, ‘You know, I think I might be able to do this. But I’m not so good I think just anybody can do this.’ After graduation he went to Boston

Theological Institute on a Rockefeller grant and continued making wine from local fruit—now beach plums and cranberries. After Boston, Michael spent five years at Syracuse University. Besides wine and a methode champenoise sparkling cider, Michael made bread and beer and found it much more difficult to make good beer than good bread, and easier to make great beer than wine. He bought his wine grapes, Seyval and Riesling, from what became Glenora Wine Cellars in Finger Lakes, NY. John Williams (now of Frog’s Leap) was Glenora’s first winemaker. Mike was learning a lot about winemaking and winegrowing. He almost stayed in New York but that region of the state was still pretty much of a hinterland then.

Michael went to Los Angeles and taught at UCLA for three years, and continued to make wine. He and Kathryn frequently visited John Williams and his wife in the Napa Valley—John had come out to start Frog’s Leap while working at Spring Mountain Winery—and Michael picked Napa Valley grapes wherever he was allowed. He picked into old lugs, crushed into plastic juice transporters and drove 60 gallons of must to Los Angeles, punching down at the rest stops. Their extra bathroom at home was devoted to fermentation and aging. Michael made mostly reds: Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and Carignane, Colombard and a popular big, oaky Chardonnay. Michael says he was making ‘way too much wine.’

He spent his last years in academe at UC Davis where he taught for five and a half years. For the class Michael gave on technical writing for students taking viticulture and enology, he got to work with Professors Cornelius Ough and Ralph Kunke. Meanwhile, winemaking—Michael was pitch forking fruit from gondolas into the crusher at Casseyre Forni Cellars in Rutherford, assisting winemaker Mike Forni any way he could. Casseyre Forni made Chenin Blanc, a type of wine that Michael considers under appreciated, as well as Zinfandel and Cab. In 1984, with friends Russell and Jon Scott and his family as limited partners, Michael started Havens, custom crushing at Casseyre Forni. The Chardonnay fruit came from Tony Truchard in Carneros, Sauvignon Blanc from the southern end of Napa, and Merlot from mid-Valley and Truchard. Kathryn designed and made the Havens label with her image of Chardonnay just leafing out.

When Clarke Swanson bought out Casseyre Forni in 1986, Michael custom crushed at different cellars while he helped Tony Truchard plan and build Truchard Winery. He became its first winemaker and in 1990 custom crushed his Havens there and stored the wine in a former apple juice factory on 8th Street in Napa (now William Hill Winery). In 1995, Havens bought the old Lakespring Winery. Its equipment has been replaced, but the footprint’s the same. They left 7.1 acres in Chardonnay and replanted the rest of its



warm, deep, gravelly soil to Cab and Syrah. Michael thinks you don't really start to learn about the wines and how they get that way until you walk in the vineyards—repeatedly, really paying attention—and begin to associate weather, the windy, cooler days, with wine qualities. And, while it's a good idea to find out what grows best in an area, Michael thinks it's always good to imagine what might grow there: "I think our Valley's [topography and climate] diverse enough, we ought to grow all kinds of wines: Algeria to the Rhine. On the edge of the differences. In Carneros for fresh, aromatic whites. Wine drinking is a lot less fun with few wines."

In 1996, on a trip from France around the Pyrenees Michael and his wife discovered Albariño in Spain. Most Spanish wines are red. The white Albariño was more like those Swiss wines of Vaud—high in acid, aromatic, with light alcohol, no oak, and perfect with seafood. Albariño in Galician means "white Rhine", but that German monks brought this varietal to Santiago de Compostella, Spain on a pilgrimage from Germany Michael calls "purely mythological". He says the wine grape is native to Galicia, that it is grown both there and in Portugal, where it is called Alvarhino, and that Portuguese Alvarhinos are very good and often used as the dominant blend in Vinho Verdes. Albariño is grown in the Minho River valley—the Minho separates northern Spain and Portugal, and in the Rias Baixas region of Galicia.

The Havenses fell in love with Albariño, Kathryn in particular, and as Jancis Robinson has observed, quotes Michael, 'I like drinking wine and I want to find more ways to drink it.' So, what should they do about Albariño? Should they import it, bring in sticks? They found budwood—from the Morgadio Estate in Galicia, from a small nursery in Lompoc, CA at Bryan Babcock's, and possibly from John Alden. They bought buds and persuaded Doug Hill to plant three acres to Albariño on the Stewart Ranch in Napa.

As in Galicia, the Albariño in Napa is planted on 101-14 rootstock. The ranch soil is heavy clay there, which reduces the vigor of the vines so the canopy, on cross arms, is small. The Albariño leaf shape is similar to Riesling's, although smaller, and the fruit looks like Riesling—the clusters are similar in shape and fairly tight, but the berries' skin is slightly thicker. In 1997 the vines were up the stake in Napa and in 1999 Havens made a little wine—15 cases—the very first commercially made American Albariño, which they registered as a variety in 2000.

Havens makes Albariño as simply as they can, respecting the varietal as much as possible. A lower sugar of 21.5 keeps the alcohol low with 12 grams/liter TA (Total Acid). Havens presses whole cluster as cold as possible, at first light right after it's picked; with virtually no settling, the must goes to stainless tanks, is inoculated with a Portuguese yeast, and is fermented to dryness in two weeks at around

50 degrees. It then goes to a 1,000 gallon upright oak tank. Oak allows the wine to breathe, as it is very steely when it's young. Havens blocks malolactic fermentation—there is no lees stirring. It is heat stabilized with bentonite. They sterile filter to the bottle in February, with a release in April of 500 cases. The release coincides with Kathryn's birthday, which they celebrate with Albariño, fresh crab and Hog Island oysters, and then sell any wine that's left over.

Eugene R. Kirkham

Co-owner, founder and general manager
Casa Nuestra Winery, St. Helena
1,500 case production

On Making Chenin Blanc

Gene Kirkham grew up in San Francisco, but he spent weekends and summers in Oakville, trapping and hiking, bombing around in go karts, looking for arrowheads, exploring old buildings, fishing, all the usual, wonderful Napa Valley kid-stuff in the 1950's and the early '60's.

In 1987, when Gene wanted to move with his wife and their two year-old child from the city to the country, they found a place in St. Helena with a ten acre vineyard on the Silverado Trail belonging to Tom Blackburn. Gene was far more interested in the house (a scene in Elvis Presley's "Wild in the Country" had been filmed out its back door) than its vineyard, planted in 1966 to Napa Gamay, Chenin Blanc and Grey Riesling, and under contract to Christian Brothers and Robert Mondavi Winery, or so Gene assumed.

But, when Gene went to Christian Brothers, he learned a change in ownership voided the contract for Grey Riesling (he thinks they had an oversupply of white grapes). Robert Mondavi still wanted his Napa Gamay and Chenin Blanc but not the Grey Riesling and Gene had been advised to sell his grapes to

just one place. In successful grape marketing, he had been told, fruit a winery wanted could be leveraged for fruit they didn't. He then learned the cost of hiring a vineyard contractor would exceed proceeds from the sale of his fruit—this with a fledgling law practice, a mortgage, and a young family to support. Gene felt the vineyard was fast becoming a millstone.

Fortunately, the Napa Valley Coöperative accepted his application. Lots of people had a lot of sympathy for his innocence, for city refugees taking up winemaking and grape growing. When Gene had spoken to his predecessor, Tom Blackburn, an Annapolis-trained former naval officer, about becoming a grape-grower, Tom recalled his own start and said, 'if these knuckleheads can grow grapes, I sure as hell can—so, what kind of knucklehead are you?' Tom had run his vineyard in military fashion, keeping excellent records. Gene could virtually follow Tom's journals (Casa Nuestra's chief winemaker, Allen Price, says, 'Excellent records are vital. Data gets you close, as close as you can to understand rainfall, thermal curve, profiles of the years').

Gene also had help from Winkler's book, General Viticulture, farm advisor Keith Bowers, Dave Perez from the Coöp, his neighbors and old-time grape grower, Elwood Mee. Whenever Gene'd see a farmer doing something, he'd ask and go do it, too—if he had the tool to hitch behind the tractor. It turned out Gene really enjoyed farming; he liked

becoming handy, meeting problems and just simply dealing with them, overcoming the fear of making mistakes. And the things they did back then, Gene shudders to recall—the chemical sprays, clouds of herbicides, no white suits, hardly any regulations.

Gene began to angle away from his partnership in a Napa law firm to farming. But vineyard cost \$5,000 an acre and it took 40 acres, minimum, to support a family as a winegrower. Without prospects to acquire another 30 acres, Gene realized he could add value if he could turn his fruit into wine and have a financially viable operation—the Stony Hill model. Gene had been brought up to wine in college and thereafter, always liking dry rather than sweet wines. He wondered if he really could make wine which would meet the standards and be commercially viable. He talked to Tom Cottrell, a founding partner of Cuvaision and a good friend. Tom said 'Sure, he'd help,' and so did Phil Baxter, a winemaker at Souverain and Rutherford Hill.

White wines were then emerging in the US as a cocktail beverage, so whites seemed like a good bet. Gene already had a utility shed, so, with Tom consulting, Gene worked weekends and with Allen Price's technical support bought and installed two 500 gallon stainless tanks and a chiller fabricated by John York (all still in service) in the shed. They made a few tons of Chenin Blanc and Grey Riesling in 1978. The Grey Riesling proved unstable (fondly remembered as the "Green Torpedo"

for its exits from its Sylvaner-style bottles) but the Chenin Blanc was very, very good—until it oxidized. They hadn't blanketed the tank properly, so they lost the 1979 (Gene called it 'my winemaker's getting a divorce' wine'). By 1980, they were fully licensed. They eventually pulled the Riesling and Gamay, replanting to Merlot, but kept the two acres of Chenin Blanc.

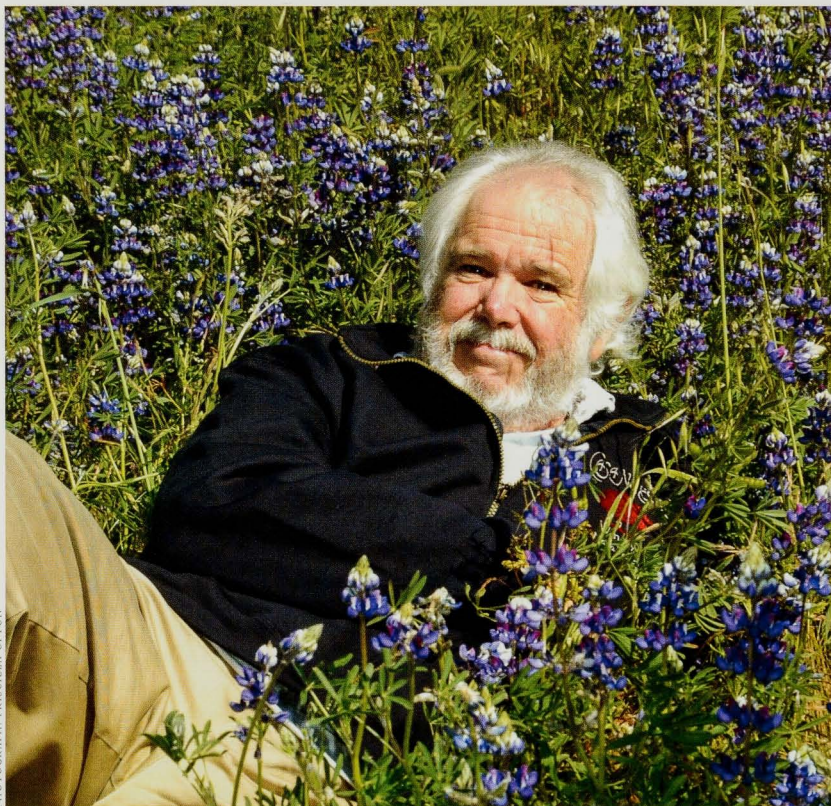
Chenin Blanc is an ancient varietal with vinifera origins in Europe. It is capable of making enormous yields and performs well in warm districts. The 1988 Napa County Crop Report cites 2,019 bearing acres of Chenin Blanc; 7,000 Chardonnay and 3,644 Sauvignon Blanc out of 15,374 white and 13,869 black varietal bearing acres. In 2003 there were only 132 bearing acres of Chenin Blanc; 7,000 Chardonnay and 1,700 Sauvignon Blanc out of 9,962 white and 29,144 red (black) varietal bearing acres. In the 1980's nearly every winery made a Chenin Blanc—a sweet, uncontroversial, low alcohol white wine ('Still the active typing and a cross to bear all these years,' sighs Gene). Most Chenin Blanc was farmed 15 to 17 tons to the acre, picked at 20-21 Brix, fermented to 12%—the rest left as residual sugar—to make an ordinary, neutral, devoid of varietal character jug white wine (most Chablis at the time was probably Chenin Blanc).

Casa Nuestra made Chenin Blanc dry. Gene was a maverick. Actually, it was the easiest way. Stopping fermentation was technically

more difficult. And, at 3 1/2 – 4 tons an acre the character is entirely different. As Gene says, 'If you take care of the fruit and let the wine make itself, it will be as good as it can be—a question of what you do with what you got.' Gene didn't go out and try to get some-

thing else, and his mailing list of friends in San Francisco who were wine collectors were extremely favorable about the wine.

Gene became interested in how much the vintages differed. He remembers the early vin-



PHOTOGRAPH: FRISCELLA LUTTON

tages with great particularity and fondness, the last ten are more of a blur. In 1983, wine writer John Movius and Harvey Steinman of the San Francisco Examiner started a wine tasting competition because there was none in the City (there was one in Los Angeles, but not San Francisco). Gene was urged to submit his 1983 which he did. It took the gold and it still tastes terrific today. Chenin Blanc ages longer and better than any other white variety, if it's made properly. Minerally French ones are steely, flinty, highly structured and pretty hard to find outside the Loire Valley. Gene would have saved more of his '83 in the library if he had known how good it would be after 25 years. There had been so many problems back then—no vacuum corker, low fills. Still, the bottles of the early vintages have held.

1984 was a hot year, the grapes just popped. Crews were hijacked for a dollar more an hour right out of the vineyard. Fruit was riper than expected so they made an off-dry Chenin Blanc. 1985 brought a new problem: botrytis. They left half the crop in the field; the fruit was too sweet and looked just plain moldy to Gene. The wine they did make was off-dry again. They didn't have oceans of wine to blend to and it never occurred to Gene to buy wine. Ron Long, a lifelong wine collector, wanted to pick the botrytis fruit and make a late harvest. He made ten cases by hand with a basket press, with Brix up to 36. In 1986 they duplicated Ron's wine by just leaving the fruit out (Chenin Blanc really wants to get

botrytis. Its fruit grows in tight bunches; as it matures, berries split inside the bunch which botrytis finds congenial). The 1986 Late Harvest Chenin Blanc, quite an original idea in North America at the time, won a Best of Class.

Gene thought American taste was developing toward large, flabby, fruity Chardonnay; like a soft, squishy persimmon versus, say, a loquat. South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Loire Valley in France all have large plantings of Chenin Blanc, where it is taken seriously, has a different character deserving of different winemaking techniques. Over here, it was so hard to sell Chenin Blanc, even at \$50 a case, delivered, that Casa Nuestra took out half of it in the 1990's and replanted to red grapes. In 1989 they made a Johannesburg Riesling from a six-acre vineyard they had bought across the street. All but seven of its rows were later grafted over to Cabernet Sauvignon, which Gene regrets. The popular Riesling they have made is on allocation. They could sell it all day long, if they had it. It is off-dry (they've never offered a dry), aromatic, rather floral in the nose, with a hint of moscato-apricots-character, exotic tropical flavor.

Today, they ripen their Chenin Blanc fruit more. It's evolved from a lean, flinty, highly structured wine in the 80's to one with a bigger, fuller mouthfeel. Besides longer hang time they are also partially barrel fermenting in new and old French oak. Doing whole cluster can be stemmy, but in small amounts it can be

crushed, then pressed right away. Chenin Blanc goes through a wonderful aromatic phase as young wine, just post-fermentation, which had been hard to capture in a bottle. On a trip to Chile, Gene and Allen learned how sensitive the variety is to O₂. Fruit was never left to stand in the open air, nothing left half-empty. With very careful handling and bottling the aromatic phase could be held. In St. Helena the fruit ripens to 21-25 Brix, ideally the high 23's, when it's yellow but before it dries out. They can be patient, wait for melon flavors to be present and then pick in a day. Casa Nuestra inoculates with yeast and ferments the fruit cold at 55 degrees for about two weeks, racks off the lees, and after 30 to 35 days (their battonage is with an old canoe paddle), to keep pace with demand, they bottle. There is no bottle time for the wine, really, before it's out. Because of the demand they couldn't make a 2004 Late Harvest, or a Riesling.

All the wine is made by hand in small lots, each one unique (they offer seven), for a clientele who value their wines. Gene thinks it's important to give the public the chance to trust their own sensory experience. He feels the whole question of tasting wine has been over-hyped. The shape of one's palate, the number of cigars you've smoked in your life, your toothpaste all affect your palate. No one tastes the same thing the same.

Mia Klein

Winemaking Consultant and Owner
Selene Wines, Napa
2,500 to 3000 case production

On Making Sauvignon Blanc

Back in the days when you couldn't take home an unfinished bottle of wine from a restaurant, Mia Klein worked at a fish restaurant in Hermosa Beach. And that is where she began tasting wines—after work, out in back. A year later, when she and her mother moved to San Francisco, Mia got a job at Victorian Wine and Spirits, in Napa Valley. It was tiny, but its owners were dedicated to California wines. They gave really good recommendations to everyone, for any price or occasion. Wine was a part of life, and everyone's relationship with it was comfortable. Mia thinks wine is complicated no matter how far you are in it, so guidance is great (she always asks a sommelier or chef to suggest a wine), because as percent of success in the taste of a bottle goes up, so does the fun. Mia believes every meal around a table is an important occasion. It's about the enjoyment of life, and not just with family. A business meeting is less mechanical, more organic with wine.

Mia studied enology at UC Davis. She worked with Ann Noble with whom sensory was a big focus. In 1983 Mia went to work at Chappellet under winemaker Cathy Corison, whom she thought was wonderful to work

for. When Cathy made Mia assistant winemaker, she urged her to choose the next step carefully. Mia says assistant winemaker is an incredible job. Great attention to detail is a necessity, job change inevitable. Mia had sought out wines to taste two to three times a week while at Chappellet, and tasted a lot of Sauvignon Blanc. She got a chance to make it when she went to Pepi in 1988 as winemaker, with Tony Soter consulting. Tony was making Spottswode there and his Etude. Mia connected with winegrower Larry Hyde in Carneros when they were looking for Merlot budwood for Pepi, and again in 1990 when they found phylloxera at Spottswode. Spottswode had had their own Sauvignon Blanc on the creek, but their Cabernet was making a reputation, so Sauvignon Blanc was the first to go in a replant to Cab.

In 1991, Mia and Tony went to Rombauer where Francoise Peschon was assistant winemaker. There they made Viader, Araujo and Spottswode, Tony made Etude, and Mia made her first Selene. They had purchased Sauvignon fruit from Frediani in Calistoga and Larry Hyde for Spottswode. Spottswode and Selene split the Hyde 50/50. Two years later, Mia and Tony went to his Etude, where she also made Selene (Francoise was now at Araujo, and four years later, in 1997, Rosemary Cakebread was at Spottswode).

Selene first made Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot, adding Cabernet Sauvignon and

Bordeaux blends in 2002. The Sauvignon Blanc fruit from Hyde Vineyards is from cuttings of the musqué clone at Ventana Vineyards on the Central Coast. Mia says the musqué does excellently in cool growing areas. It seems to mature rapidly with flavors of melon, citrus, tropical mango and papaya when ripe (fruit for Cain Musqué came from Ventana), but musqué also performs in warmer regions, e.g. Araujo. It has wonderful viscosity in the mouth. Hyde pH's tend to be low, but the viscosity is still there. Sauvignon Blanc can span temperature differences, not unlike Cab. A sauvage varietal, it can express itself (unlike Pinot Noir) in a variety of circumstances. The chalky, limestone soils of Sancerre are ideal for it. You want the lightest soil you can get, according to Mia. Hyde Vineyards has warmer, lighter soils and less wind in that part of Carneros. The oldest musqué block for Selene at Hyde was planted in the 1980's on its own roots; a second block in the mid-1990's and a brand new block in 2000 are on I103-Paulson, right next to those leased to Spottswode. Depending on yields, Selene makes 1000 to 1800 cases of single vineyard designated Sauvignon Blanc.

Mia believes it's never good to be monochromatic. Nature, the universe will spite you, whether it's the economy, something political, or pricing—so many things. No doubt Cab is king, Chard is, too, but Mia thinks Sauvignon Blanc has gotten pretty darn interesting, interesting enough so it won't disappear off the face of Napa Valley. "Take Beaulieu



Vineyard's four acres of Sauvignon Blanc in Carneros", she says, "there's commitment."

When the Selene and Spottswode fruit is picked into half ton bins at Hyde, it hasn't far to go. Rosemary is waiting at Spottswode and Mia is at Laird Family Estate where she has made Selene since 2001. At harvest, Laird has one or two dozen winemakers all sharing information during their custom crushes, which Mia really likes. She's at the winery ahead of the press. A lot of whites go through Laird—it has two membrane tank presses, two doors. Mia chooses a tank that is smooth inside because she thinks roughness causes a lot of phenolics to come out. Whole cluster (seeds must stay inside the skin) goes to settling tanks for 24 hours at 45 degrees (50 degrees actual). They inoculate with yeast, rack off solids right to the barrel for fermentation—50% in 60 gallon French oak and 50% in 72 gallon stainless steel to avoid over-oaking (an aldehydic flavor can come through from used French oak). Depending on the year and lot, it can take three weeks to two months, or as much as ten to sixteen weeks to finish in the barrel. Mia feels Sauvignon Blanc can oxidize a little more easily than other whites, so they rack it off the oak to tank while the stainless barrels get stirred every week sur lies. The wine goes to bottle in late February or early March, has a couple of months to recover, and is released late May or early June. The most important thing for Selene, stresses Mia, is to be able to do again everything you did.

Since 2000, Selene has been using a two-piece synthetic closure for white wine. It mimics a cork and has a shelf life of three years, which Mia feels is fine for Sauvignon Blanc. She wants zero taint because someone may never taste another bottle of her wine if it's their first and it's corked. For corks Mia makes three sensory tastings and rejects about 50% of what she samples. She says variation is not visual but in what you taste. Selene needs about 40,000 corks a year. Corks come in bales of 8 to 10 thousand corks. For the 4 to 8 bales she needs, Mia will sample over 30 bales; each sample is 30 corks. These are soaked in wine or dilute vodka for 24 hours and then you taste. Taint varies. Mia wants her Sauvignon fresh, the way she enjoys it. French ones are made to age. There are a few Sancerres ready for market, but most white Bordeaux need five years. Mia finds them tart, with a lot of free sulphur dioxide at the outset, and they develop different attributes which she doesn't particularly enjoy. She thinks Selene Sauvignon Blanc is great with shellfish of any flavor, especially barbecued oysters, some lobsters. Her favorite meal? Fresh Hog Island oysters, garlic, pesto BBQ, cheese and a salad. Perfect. Sauvignon Blanc should be served cool, at its cellar temperature of 55 degrees.

Besides Selene, Mia has three consults: She's been with Dalla Valle (1000 cases) since 1996, Fisher Vineyards (6,000 cases) and Bressler (less than 500 cases) since 2000. Dalla Valle and Bressler are all red, Fisher is

red plus a Chardonnay. Most of Mia's clients over the years have had estate vineyards, and their own winery. "Still", she says, "they don't have complete control. They can't. Stuff goes wrong. It's that personal connection that's so important and rewarding—not banks, partners, or money. Are there enough grapes, enough wineries? Yes. So, need isn't why these wines are made. It's about great relationships."

Mia feels the enjoyment of wine is all about sharing information. She loves her customers e-mailing her their reactions — 'It was our anniversary and your wine was so good.' It's that extra layer, that extra glue to a special experience wine provides that really makes Mia's eyes sparkle.

Joseph Phelps

Chairman of the Board

with **Craig Williams**

Winemaker and Executive Vice President

Joseph Phelps Vineyards, St. Helena

60,000 case production

On Making (and Not Making) Riesling

Initially, the focus at Joseph Phelps Vineyards was on Riesling. Phelps was founded in 1973 when sweet white wines had been driving the market: Riesling was hot, a very popular varietal. However, Joe Phelps planned to begin with two whites and two reds. He had made a study of wines for a long time, and had recently built two wineries for Souverain. Joe had grown up in Colorado where he went to college in the dry town of Fort Collins. While there he had a campus job of taking empty schnapps bottles from a fraternity to the nearby [and wet] town of Loveland for refills. Joe found a 79-cent Chilean Riesling there, which made a hit on campus. He happily remembers some 1940's Louis Martini Zinfandels he found as well. Joe became a building contractor, which eventually brought him to California. After building for Souverain, Joe built his own winery. Phelps' first wines were made at Souverain, where Phil Baxter was winemaker, and also at

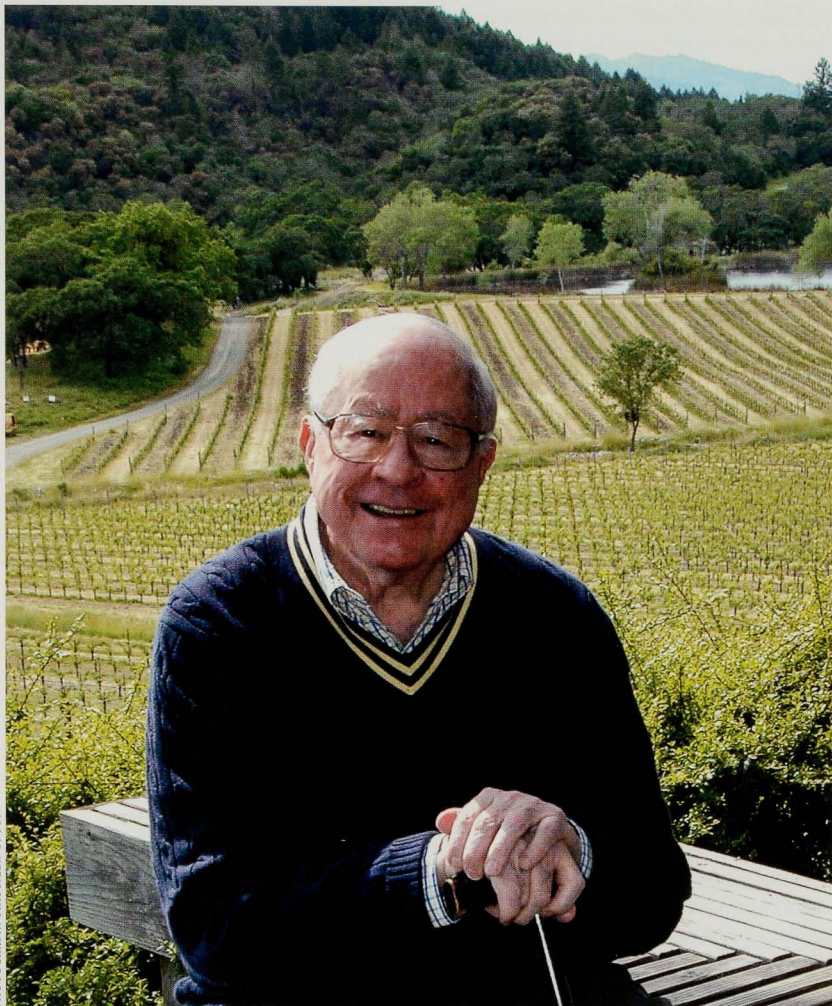
Joe Heitz's winery, just up the road from Phelps. The week after Joe took title to his Spring Valley Ranch in 1973, Walter Schug came to work as winemaker. Joe notes that Walter had grown up on a Pinot Noir estate in a region of the Rhine that focused more on dry rather than sweet wines—what Walter had grown up with was red. Joe says they quickly expanded at Phelps to produce Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir and, in 1976, Zinfandel. They hired Craig Williams to assist Walter in winemaking. Craig became winemaker in 1983.

Phelps made California's first true varietal Syrah with fruit from a vineyard controlled by Christian Brothers outside St. Helena on Zinfandel Lane. Professor Harold Olmo at UC Davis had brought this Rhone varietal to Oakville Viticultural Station in 1936. It didn't have much success with growers—Syrah was confused with Petite Sirah. So, when UC Davis cleaned up the Oakville station in 1959, out went the Syrah. Christian Brothers took and planted it on their Wheeler Ranch, where Walter found it. Christian Brothers had only used it in blending. Craig says this early advocacy of Syrah came from Joe's passion for the Rhône Valley, especially Côte Rôtie and Hermitage.

Phelps Riesling was first made from fruit from the Stanton Vineyard in Yountville, which produced 940 tons of Riesling in 1973, but only 450 tons in 1975 and just

300 tons shortly after that. As Craig puts it, "Climate drove the bus back then." Phelps made what they could, when they could. They made a "regular harvest" Riesling in 1973 and 1974 at 21–23 Brix. In 1975 they were able to make a botrytised Riesling, a Beerenauslese, just a few years after the Edelwein made by Freemark Abbey (Wente did one, too). The 1978 botrytised late harvest was a notch up, so they made a special selection Trockenbeerenauslese, and put a gold border on the label. Their 1977 early harvest Kabinett-style had a green border, the Auslese a yellow border, and the Spatlese label was light brown. Joe recalls making at least four Rieslings with fruit from Stanton as well as from the vineyards they had planted at Spring Valley Ranch.

They picked into five-ton gondolas in those days, which meant the fruit was pre-macerated before it reached the crusher and de-stemmer. It was pumped into 1,000 gallon steel holding bins designed by Walter and built by Ogletree's. They soaked skins to increase sugar back then, and combined free-run with press juice. Phelps had one of the first Westphalia centrifuges in the Valley for removing solids. The must was fermented dry at 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. They bottled 30,000 cases of Riesling and Gewürztraminer, which accounted for 50 to 60 percent of the Phelps production. Joe and Walter, along with Dick Arrowood at Chateau St. Jean set the profile; Craig defines them as the leading winemakers of the time.



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

Phelps acquired the Stanton vineyard in 1979 and in 1983 they bought property in Stag's Leap. Its fruit had been the foundation of Insignia, the innovative Phelps blend of red Bordeaux varietals begun in 1974. Phelps also bought on Manley Lane in Rutherford in 1983 (Barney Rhodes was already there). Acreage in Carneros for Chardonnay came in 1989. They also switched some of Stanton to Chardonnay.

Bruce Neyers joined Phelps in 1975 and introduced Joe to Alice Waters at Chez Panisse. Alice and her team were raising consciousness: a national cuisine of cream, butter and sweet wines was giving way to a healthier kind of cooking, to sautéing, garlic and dryer wines. Joe says the best reason wine is made is to accompany meals. Phelps began their transition out of Riesling in the early 1980's. Their Spatlese was the first to be phased out. 1988 was a tough vintage. It got very, very difficult. The early '90's were so warm there was no botrytis. In some years they could make a Late Harvest Semillon, Sauternes style, and would also blend Semillon into their Sauvignon Blanc. Phelps made a Sauvignon Blanc almost from the beginning, although they initially labeled it Fumé Blanc. It was 85% Sauvignon Blanc and 15% Semillon, its fruit estate and from the Hoxsey (Pelissa) vineyard. They also bought from Christian Brothers, Harris, Chiles Valley. By the 1980's their estate vineyards were planted out—the Riesling pulled from Spring Valley. Towards the end of the program they

got their Riesling and Gewürztraminer from Anderson Valley. Dedicated to consistency, Phelps finally settled on making only one Riesling-style wine, and chose Scheurebe, a cross between Sylvaner and Riesling, first created in 1911. They had made wine from this varietal since 1978 (another American first). They would vinify it in an ice wine style, without botrytis, and call it "Eisrebe". Scheurebe fruit from the St. Helena ranch is frozen whole cluster to minus 25 degrees Fahrenheit and then pressed until the thawing must is at 40 Brix with 23 to 25 residual sugar. It is fermented in steel and bottled quickly. Phelps makes just 300 cases of this delicate confection.

By the late 1990's Phelps began to have more red than white as they acquired more Cabernet properties in their estate program. Joe is an optimistic vintner, but consistency is his by-word when buying fruit or vineyard—he chooses very carefully—and reds present a different set of challenges compared to whites. Craig characterizes Joe as 'ahead of the curve, innovative, willing to take a risk', but methodical and pragmatic, always pursuing 'what would work'. Joe and Craig want all their wines to represent the place, the estate they are from. Recent vintages of Petit Verdot, Joe says, indicate the Spring Valley Ranch is a good place for it. 120 of this ranch's 600 acres are in vines—Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc as well as Petit Verdot, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier and Scheurebe. The Napa vineyard they've had since 2000 they

think has a marvelous Cabernet maturing season, unlike anything farther west in Napa. In the 1990's Phelps leased the Barboza property and in 1996, purchased the Backus vineyard in Oakville from which they have made Cabernet since 1977 (more than 20 of its acres are planted to Cab).

Craig is amazed at the renaissance in the wine industry underway today in the Napa Valley. It is very different from what it was even ten years ago. Phelps has made a long, slow transition from making white to making red. Craig says they have now totally transitioned from an original 60 percent white wine production to one of mostly reds, from making more than twenty wines to less than ten, and a case production from as high as 100,000 in 1989 to 60,000 today. They make a Rhone-style blend, "Le Mistral", Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and the Eisrebe. Craig thinks the Phelps transition to mostly reds helps preserve agriculture in the Napa Valley, that Cabernet Sauvignon is an extension of our culture and the land, that Riesling simply can't support what Cabernet can.

Although they have reinvented Phelps as a red wine facility, with more space and more barrel storage, it is the farming that has changed most of all. Phelps believes there has been qualitative improvement in their winegrowing and is committed to giving great attention to detail. Craig's staff constantly looks for ways to improve vine care. They take occasional field trips to Europe to study its practices.

Rather than thinking and acting solo at Phelps, Joe has confidence in his whole team. They manage the entire growing process with an array of techniques. More light is exposed to the leaves now, with vertical shoot positioning, hedging, shoot and leaf management—intensive hand vine care. Craig says their choice of rootstock is more informed now, as they match appropriate rootstock to soil and site. They also take advantage of weather forecasting, and benefit from better record keeping by the industry in general (when to harvest is improving, but Joe says it's a small record book in comparison to Europe's). Phelps has also become a practitioner of biodynamics, a method of sustainable farming that demands constant evaluation. Joe calls Phelps "just a couple of farms". He says what they do is about the art of growing grapes. "Feed the soil," Joe concludes with emphasis and deep conviction.

Nils Venge

Owner, Winemaker
Saddleback Cellars, Oakville
8,000 case production

On Making Pinot Blanc

In the 1950's Nils Venge's father had started a wine, beer and spirits distribution business in City of Industry. Nils grew up tasting really nice white Burgundies with a beautiful balance. His parents had planned for him to take over the business and Nils had gone to UC Davis and gotten a degree in viticulture and enology. However, his classmates Justin Meyer, Ric Forman, and Dave Cofran told him, 'Don't go back to LA! Come to Napa and do what you studied how to at Davis.'

Nils did come to the Napa Valley, after graduate school and a tour of duty in Viet Nam. He started at Charles Krug, and then went to Sterling for the '72 and '73 harvests. Ric, Peter Newton and Michael Stone introduced him to Jim McWilliams who was just starting Villa Mt. Eden. Jim offered Nils the position of General Manager and Winemaker, which Nils took. He was there ten years before moving over to Groth to become its founding General Manager and Winemaker. After eleven years he left Groth to devote most of the last eleven years to Saddleback. However, he also consults as winemaker for neighboring PlumpJack as well as Robert Keenan and

Bacio Divino and has most recently established Venge Vineyards in St. Helena with his son, Kirk. Kirk does Zinfandel, Sangiovese and Petite Syrah at the new winery because, for the Venges, the warmth of Oakville makes it Cab and Merlot country, and the cooler Carneros is for Chardonnay.

In 1976, Nils and his father-in-law, Bob Call, bought a Cabernet vineyard which is near both Villa Mt. Eden and Groth. Nils could work it evenings and weekends while working full-time. He suffered along with leaf-roll virus, but at least all the vines were on St. George rootstock. Nils built a winery in 1982. In 1983 he grafted some acreage over to Chardonnay with budwood from the Wenté clone. After the major flood of 1986, Nils began a replant in 1988. He now has 9.5 acres Cab, 1.5 acres Merlot, 2.5 Chardonnay, one acre Pinot Blanc and a quarter acre Pinot Grigio.

Nils had wanted to supplement his cash flow while the Cab was aging two years in the oak. He started making Sangiovese, "The Prince, so why not The Princess?" Nils also thought he should make Pinot Grigio and got budwood for it from Robert Pepi. The inspiration to plant Pinot Blanc came from Merry Edwards in Sonoma who made a wonderful Pinot Blanc at Matanzas Creek. UC Davis Experimental Vineyard in Oakville reported Pinot Blanc crops averaging up to five tons to the acre with good quality. Revenue from the fruit was \$800 to \$900 a ton so, in 1981,

Nils planted Pinot Blanc bench grafts on AxRI rootstock. As a side note, Nils observed that Pinot Noir on its own tends to mutate to Grigio, which mutates to Blanc, right in the field. "You'll be walking down the row, testing sugar," he said, "and all of a sudden you'll see a shoot with two white clusters spurting out of the Grigio. Voila!"

Although wind flow in the vineyard and a tractor-driving orientation of North-South are contrary to optimum, they work well for the quad-trellised Pinot Grigio. Nils does most of his own tractor work—the vineyard soil is easy to till, well-drained with a high water table. Only the young vines need irrigation; the rest is dry-farmed. Red tail hawks take care of mice and other small creatures. Whenever coyotes walk through they squeeze the drippers looking for water. Nils did all the pruning until a wild horse threw him. Now he lets one of his crew of three handle it. Starting in 1984, the Pinot harvest was supplemented first by fruit from Jim Fair in Carneros, later harvests from Andy Hoxsey and Pat Garvey, just down the road.

They do whole cluster pressing on whites at Saddleback. The resulting wine is fruitier; there's no abuse of the berries, although with whole cluster press there is a sacrifice in production. They get about 160 gallons per ton. Hand-picked fruit goes from 4x4 bins to the press within an hour. Pinot Blanc can oxidize quickly on the crush pad at the press but during fermentation, Nils says, it will clear up

nically— all the brown pigments drop right out after cold settling. Fermentation starts at 52 degrees, yeast-inoculated, in stainless steel. Nils keeps the SO₂ up so the wine stays crisp. When major fermentation is through at one

and a half weeks, they rack into neutral oak barrels. Because they don't allow malolactic fermentation, all the white wines are filtered. "Why allow malolactic to bring the acids down again?" Nils wonders, shaking his head.



PHOTOGRAPH: FRISCELLA UPTON

They top off with wine bimonthly; battonnage is weekly, "to cream it up," explains Nils. Saddleback once had an evergreen contract with Clarke Swanson for Chardonnay fruit. When Swanson replanted, Nils got budwood, which he said is really good. He also gets fruit from Paul and Pat Garvey in Carneros. Once Chardonnay is fermenting in the barrel it takes 4-5 days to finish out (it's 68 to 70 degrees in the winery in September). Chardonnay is aged in 60% new, 40% used oak. After a couple of years, the old barrels go to the Viognier, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Grigio. Saddleback makes 600 cases each of Pinot Grigio and Pinot Blanc, bottled every March, and 1,000 of Chardonnay bottled in May. Since 1999, 450 cases of Viognier are also bottled in May. To Nils, the Pinot Blanc has a flavor of melons, Grigio more of the pear mixed in with tropical. Chardonnay has a ripe apple character, not pippin but nice, ripe apple. Viognier is perfumed but not real sweet, a honeysuckle character.

Wines Nils likes have a roundness and fullness on the palate with the weight that is so important to him. He has gone to France a couple of times for tastings, which he found really great. He thinks his Chardonnay is wonderful with food while the Pinot Blanc can be enjoyed on its own, or with abalone or oysters (Nils is an avid abalone diver and shells from a few of his dives ring the sycamore trees alongside the winery). And the '04 harvest at Saddleback? "Ah," Nils sighs with pleasure, "Salute!"

Book Reports

*Book reports by Bob Foster,
edited and reprinted with the kind
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Best Wines 2005! Gold Medal Winners from the Top Competitions

*Gail Bradney and Elizabeth Cline
The Print Project, Bearsville, NY; 2005*

The authors have a simple premise: if a wine has won a gold medal at any one of twenty-two selected wine competitions, it's worth drinking; if it's won three or more gold medals, you can buy it by the case without hesitation. Rubbish.

I have and do judge at seven of the authors' twenty-two selected competitions and I disagree with many of their assumptions. First, there is no explanation of the criteria used to select those twenty-two wine competitions. Indiana State Fair (which judges wines from all over the world) and San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (the largest in California) were excluded, while the Oregon State Fair and Northwest Ecological Society competitions, open to only regional wines, were included.

Even assuming the authors had cogent reasons for their selections, I, myself, am absolutely unimpressed by a wine with a single gold medal. At one recent competition, for some

of the judges, including me, the Petite Sirah awarded a gold medal was undrinkable because of very high levels of *brettanomyces*, yet that dog of a wine is in this book. A gold medal is only as good as the panel that judged that wine. However, a string of gold and/or silver medals for a wine entered at several competitions is impressive. I look for consistent high performance, not a single shot to the moon from one panel.

But even with multiple gold medals, a wine buff should never buy a case of wine just on the basis of these results, as the authors recommend. The first obligation of a wine is to taste good to the drinker. Even if a wine has won 22 gold medals, if you try it and don't like it, it's not a good wine for you. I can't say this often enough: *try before you buy*. I would agree that a wine winning three or more gold medals is worth trying, but decide yourself, please, if it's worth buying. You must be your own whole panel of judges.

Recommended with reservations

Chilean Wine: The Heritage

*Rodrigo Alvarado
The Wine Appreciation Guild,
San Francisco, CA; 2005*

First published in Spanish in 2004 in Chile, this book was written by the dean of Chilean wine writers and wine historians, and was designed for a South American readership—one with a basic knowledge of Chile's history

and geography. Now translated into English, it is a difficult read for many North American wine buffs. When the author refers to "political changes that took place in Chile on September 11, 1973", how many of us know that this date is burned into the memories of Chileans? It is the day a democratically elected Marxist leader of Chile was overthrown and killed in a coup that may have had CIA assistance. As I read this book I continuously had to look elsewhere for maps (there is no detailed map) and more historical background.

However, the book provides an excellent overview of the development of major wines and wine making in Chile. The author does not center on Chile alone, but gives the reader a far broader picture by including sections devoted to other major wine making areas of the world in his descriptions of the development of wine in Chile in the 1800's and early 1900's. A sense of what was happening elsewhere at the same time allows the reader to put events in Chile in better perspective.

The author is no apologist for those decades when the wines of Chile were mediocre. He analyzes the reasons (many having to do with import and taxation rules and regulation) and documents recent changes that have allowed the development of an industry that now produces fine wines in Chile.

I was particularly taken by the author's discussion of why phylloxera has never reached

there. Chile had imported most of its European grape varieties before phylloxera struck Europe. Phylloxera later reached South America, especially Argentina, but never Chile. As to why not, theories abound: decades of severe limitations on importations of any soil carrying roots (still in effect today), Chile's geographic isolation, or some kind of unique terroir. The author adds an interesting discussion of how advertising this fact is a two-edged sword. It may be useful now, but if Chile ever does get the louse, it could be a wine and advertising nightmare.

There are no maps or photographs, but a charming set of water colored drawings illustrates the text. For the reader willing to take the time to fill in gaps in history and geography which stem from being raised in the US rather than Chile, there's a wealth of fascinating material here.

Highly Recommended

Great Wine Terroirs

Jacques Farnet

University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 2004

If you read the acclaimed work, *The Winemakers Dance*, reviewed in the Napa Valley Wine Library Report for Winter 2004-2005, you are immediately struck by how narrow the author of this work's view of terroir really is. The authors of *The Winemaker's Dance* recognized that terroir encompasses more than just the soil, that it includes

climate, angle towards the sun, trellising, geology, and a myriad of other factors. Although this work talks of terroir, it's really just about geology and geography.

But the information in this work is very interesting. For every major wine making region of the world (and for some lesser spots, like Brazil or the Canary Islands) the author carefully explains soil composition. And, there are lots of beautiful maps and charts. Of course, as is true for most works on terroir, why a particular vine does well in a particular type of soil is still an unknown factor. There is no question of a special relationship; it is just that the essential causal factor remains undiscovered.

Take note, this work is no quick and easy read. The material is often very technical. For example: "The albarizas were formed by the sedimentation of marine diatoms and radiolarians, microscopic algae with siliceous shells that then mixed with fairly fine grained sand." While there is a glossary of terms at the back, I found myself often having to stop and read elsewhere about the terms used, so I could understand what the author had written.

For the wine buff who really wants to dig into the topic of what soils help make great wine, this book is a must read. For this group,

Highly Recommended

Editor's Letter

Dear Members,

Because the annual tasting this year is of white wines, we thought it made sense to interview white winemakers for the Summer 2005 Report. Since we interviewed five makers of Chardonnay for the Summer 2003 Report, we concentrated on vintners of other white wines.

For the interviews we spend an hour, often two, with each interviewee, preferably at the winery or out in the field. Interviews are not taped. Instead we take notes fast and furiously—shades of college and its Blue Books. The superb portraits of the interviewees for this issue were taken by Priscilla Upton of St. Helena, who is also a part of Three Palms Vineyard. Report layout, design and cover photograph are again thanks to the gifted artistry of Jim Cross, a board member and principal of Design Associates in St. Helena. A third volunteer, Bob Foster in San Diego, provides our book reviews.

Recent acquisitions to the collections are on the website of the St. Helena Public Library, www.shpl.org, Library Links, New Books Received. For questions on Report content or suggestions or even complaints, please direct your e-mail to bamboo@napanet.net

Diana H. Stockton, *editor*

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The Faculty consists primarily of local winemakers, winery principals, restaurateurs and caterers. Instructors for recent years are listed below; new individuals are added each year.

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