



NAPA VALLEY WINE LIBRARY **REPORT**

WINTER 2010

# Calendar of Events

Thursday, February 4, 2010

Annual Meeting  
Go Fish, St. Helena

Wednesday, May 19, 2010

3rd Annual Books on Wine Festival  
St. Helena Public Library, St. Helena

Saturday, May 22, 2010

Napa Valley Houses of Cabernet Winery Tour  
Details to be announced

Saturday, August 14, 2010 - 20th Varietal Seminar

“From DNA to Dinner, Everything You Wanted to Know about Cabernet”  
Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, St. Helena

Sunday, August 15, 2010 - 48th Annual Tasting

“Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Varieties and Blends”  
Silverado Resort, Napa

Also of interest:

February 16-19, 2010

“Symposium for Professional Wine Writers”  
directed by Jim Gordon  
Meadowood, St. Helena  
[www.winewriterssymposium.org](http://www.winewriterssymposium.org)

September 12-16, 2010

Symposium for Professional Food Writers”  
directed by Toni Allegra  
The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia  
[www.greenbrier.com/site/foodwriters.aspx](http://www.greenbrier.com/site/foodwriters.aspx)

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## Napa Valley Wine Library REPORT

<i>Editor-in-Chief</i>	Diana H. Stockton
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<i>Design</i>	Marianne Agnew
<i>Printing</i>	MSI Litho

## President's Letter

Dear Members,

This is my first year as president of the Napa Valley Wine Library Association, and I am looking forward to our two events, the Annual Tasting and our Varietal Seminar, in August. Response from the wineries invited to our 47th Annual Tasting, "The Romance of PetiteZinNoir," has been excellent and the 19th Varietal Seminar, "On the Other Hand: Discovering Other Reds," chaired by Carolyn Martini and assisted by Allen Balik, is almost sold out. Please refer to page 19 of this issue of the REPORT for more information about both these events.

Our semi-annual REPORT, compiled and edited by Diana Stockton, is a major part of Napa Valley Wine Library's mission to chronicle the stories and histories of those who grow the grapes and make the wines of Napa Valley. Diana's excellent work assures that this history is preserved. Special thanks go to Priscilla Upton whose photographs beautifully illustrate the interviewees in each REPORT.

Kevin Alfaro, our president for the past three years, deserves thanks and credit for a job well done. Fortunately, he continues to serve on the board of directors and give much

needed guidance. In addition, we welcome new board member Barbara Insel, and thank outgoing board member Morgan Morgan for her work on our website. A very special mention goes to Julie Dickson, guiding light of the Wine Library's memory. Julie developed and manages our relationship with St. Helena Public Library, the repository of the collections of the Wine Library. In addition, she has supervised the Barney's Backyard Petite Sirah vineyard on the grounds of the public library that produces the wine that honors the memory of Belle and Barney Rhodes—truly the patron saints of the Napa Valley wine culture. Please do not hesitate to visit the library in St. Helena and meet its dynamic director, Jennifer Baker.

On Wednesday, May 20, 2009 four authors took part in the 2nd Annual Books on Wine Festival we co-sponsored with St. Helena Public Library. Paranormal investigator Jeff Dwyer, *Ghost Hunter's Guide to California's Wine Country*; UC Davis professor Charlie Banforth, *Grape vs. Grain*; historian Charles Sullivan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Napa Wine*; and photographer Bill Tucker, *Napa Behind the Bottle* held the rapt attention of a large audience with their presentations. Accompanying wines for the event were provided by Appellation St. Helena members as well as NVWLA.

Today, many of us are concerned that with the hundreds of new wineries and vineyards in the Valley, the histories of the men and women and their contributions to our wine community may be lost. We have now begun the process to create a comprehensive listing of all of Napa Valley's wineries, wines and vineyards online. Such an undertaking will require the participation of a vast number of individuals and institutions. Our recent board members were invited to serve with this project in mind. I am hopeful that we can present a plan for this project by the end of the year and, most importantly, on how you can participate!

Thank you for your enthusiastic support. I look forward to seeing you in the Grove of Silverado at the Annual Tasting in August.

Bob Long  
*President*



PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BURGER



## Editor's Letter

Dear Members,

Inspiration for the article on barrels was two-fold. This coming August our Annual Tasting will feature Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet varietals. The role of the wine barrel in making wine in general, Cabernet in particular, and Cabernet at the Paris Tasting of 1976 especially, called for exploration. And last September, on a visit to Benessere, we observed its then winemaker and general manager, Chris Deardon, reading the head of a barrel with the same focus of attention and interest one gives a wine label or title page of a book. We wanted to be able to read a barrel that way, too.

Barrel is understood to mean a wine barrel in Napa Valley. No one says, "wine barrel," just "barrel." Empty, one weighs about one hundred pounds, holds sixty gallons, and can be rolled on its edge, or chime, quite easily from place to place. At rest on its side, the curve of a wine barrel allows collection of clean wine through the bunghole with a thief, leaving lees and leesy wine undisturbed. Traditional French chestnut hoops (chestnut trees are constantly pollarded in order to provide a crop of wands) fastened with willow are thicker than modern galvanized

steel hoops and protect tender barrel ends as barrels are rolled and positioned. These hoops also protect chateaux winery floors from scuffing and scarring.

The wine barrel is in no way interchangeable with other kinds of barrels. It is uniquely fashioned by hand for the express purpose of holding wine, which it does with remarkable and altogether satisfactory consequences. We hope you enjoy a glimpse into its assembly and use in Napa Valley that a handful of interviews provide in the following pages. The kinds of barrels for going over Niagara Falls or clowning around bucking broncs, or to fill with laughs or the body of a late grand uncle are for another article. (We do, however, touch upon whiskey barrels, which we think contained the aforementioned daredevils, comics, and cadaver.) As important as wine barrels are to winemaking in Napa Valley, their widespread use is a recent phenomenon with a history barely twenty-five years old.

Diana H. Stockton  
*Editor*



PHOTOGRAPH: CAROL TROY

## On Wine Barrels

Currently, the United States produces about eight and a half percent of the world's wine. Nearly ninety percent of this comes from California, but only six or seven percent from Napa Valley. Although most of the more than 360 wineries in Napa Valley use small, hand-made oak barrels in producing their wine, only six or seven percent of all wine made in the world has ever been inside one. While the use of wine barrels in making wine may be a small story globally, it is a large story locally. A winery with a case production of 2,000 needs 90 barrels to produce 4,740 gallons of wine. Many barrels are used only once, and most wine barrels only last five years. New barrels are bought each year at a cost of between \$300 and \$1,000 apiece, depending on origin. Today, oak products like chips, powders and chunks of staves are also being offered for flavoring wine, but flavor is only part of the story.

Wooden casks have been used to store and transport liquid and dry goods for centuries. Romans adopted casks for wine as they conquered the Celts in Gaul and abandoned their clay amphorae. Louis XIV had the remaining great oak forests of France mapped and organized into royal sources of supply critical to shipbuilding. During the Napoleonic wars, when a barricade prevented Prussian oak from reaching France, she relied exclusively on her managed forests, especially for barrels. The

government still manages four fifths of the forests of France and its Allier, Bourgogne, Limousin, Nevers, Tronçais and Vosges forests produce most of the barrel stave wood (as well as wood for veneer and paneling, furniture and construction). Hungary and Poland, which share the same species of oak with France, are only now once again becoming an important source of stave wood and a few cooperages have been established locally. Yugoslavia and even Eastern Mongolia have also begun to



INTERVIEW PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

supply stave wood, but most barrels are made in France or with French oak. Cooperages in Australia, Chile, and Spain and the United States all use French oak, although here, of course, in American cooperages, American white oak predominates. Because of limited sources of supply and rates of exchange, a French barrel costs nearly twice as much as any other to buy.

After World War II, very large straight-sided tanks of redwood that had been used to age and store wine in California were replaced by stainless steel and even cement. Until about twenty-five years ago most small American oak barrels were made to age Bourbon whiskey rather than wine. The interiors were charred in order to give whiskey its characteristically smokey taste. These barrels had to be variously adapted for wine. Now new coopering techniques have allowed American cooperages to compete with the French and created a global market for wine barrels of American oak in addition to those for whiskey.

Our native stave wood is sawn from quarter-sawn logs of American white oak, *Quercus alba*, (and a variety, *Quercus gallyana*, in Oregon), whereas in France staves are split by hand from quarter- or sixth-split logs. If the French staves are not split they leak at their ends because French oak (native to

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most of Europe) has a different cellular structure from American white oak and its staves must follow the grain. Our white oak develops numerous fluffy stops or tyloses throughout its vertical columns of cells (think holding your finger over the end of a soda straw) as sapwood becomes supportive heartwood, so these staves can be sawn. Our red oak and the European oaks form few tyloses. The two main types of oak used for barrels in France are Sessile Oak, *Quercus sessilis* (or *petraea*) and *Quercus pedunculata* (or *robur*). All the timber cut from designated stands of these trees, which are at least 120 years old and 50 cm (20") in diameter, is sold at auction. Only heartwood is used, and two thirds may be lost in preparation and splitting. Sawn staves, however, produce about half as much waste. These are sawn from timber cut from trees grown on private lands in stands (or hollows) and average 90 to 95 years old. Most of this wood comes from our Mid-West, with a little from Oregon. The trees generally yield enough wood for two barrels; the larger French oaks give two to four barrels. Both French and American stave wood is dried outdoors for two to three years. How long stave wood is air-dried—the slower the better—contributes mightily to the quality of the barrel. Staves are then made up into barrels nearby and shipped whole, or staves are shipped to a distant cooperage.

The grain of the wood, which is determined

by the age, species and height of the tree, its location in the stand, and the climate of the stand has become more important than a particular forest, but country of origin for oak continues paramount because of differences in grain and tannins. American oak is denser than French and its tannins more robust. Two hundred years ago the tradition of using American oak in making barrels to age Tempranillo in Spain was one result of the Spanish occupation of New Orleans. Forty years ago in California, Paul Draper at Ridge insisted on American oak to age Cabernet as Justin Meyer at Silver Oak would ten years later; Smith-Madrone and ZD currently use only American oak for their Cabernet and Vince Arroyo for his Petite Sirah. Countless



other Napa Valley wineries use barrels from more than one source and cooperage to age their wines.

In the 1960's, French cooperages began to sell small barrels in the United States. A company principal would come over each year to meet with established customers and reach new ones. The practice continues today, although barrel brokers may represent a cooperage rather than an owner. In the 1970's an expanding California market for wine barrels prompted Nadalié, a French cooperage founded in 1902, to open the first French cooperage in Napa Valley in 1980. Demptos of France, founded in 1825, swiftly followed suit, opening its Napa doors in 1982.

Most wine barrels are made in one of two sizes, the *barrique* which originated in Bordeaux and the piece from Burgundy. The Burgundian piece is slightly shorter and fatter than the Bordeaux and holds a dash more wine. Both are called 60 gallon or 220 liter barrels and make about 24 cases of wine; a *barrique* holds 59.4 gallons (225 liters), a piece 60.2 (228 liters). Both come in a thin-staved *chateau-style* (with staves 20-22mm wide) and a thicker-staved transport or export style (25-27mm wide). Rather than six galvanized steel hoops fastened with rivets to hold the staves together, traditionalists can insist on hoops of chestnut (fastened with strips of willow) at

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the barrel ends and even at the bilge (the fat mid-section of a barrel), and may even request the bilges of their barriques be stained red to disguise any drippage at a bung hole. Ric Forman is credited with the innovation with Nadalié of metal hoops to bind traditional chateau barrels, since chestnut does not last longer than the usual 18 months barrels are used in France, and does not stand up to re-use.

In the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's Maynard Amerine was teaching winegrowing and wine-making at UC Davis, André Tchelistcheff was in charge of winemaking at Beaulieu Vineyard with a wine consulting business on the side, and Lee Stewart was at Souverain, which he had founded in 1943. All three were collegial (André had consulted for Lee

early on) and all advocated using small barrels for aging red wine. In 1953, when Jim Zellerbach decided to plant vineyard and build a winery in Sonoma where he and his wife Hanna had their summer place, "Hanzell," Jim invited Maynard, André, Lee, and every other wine great he could think of to advise him on what vines to plant and which winery equipment to buy. For aging the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay he intended to farm, Jim was advised to buy 60 gallon barrels of French oak, the standard unit for wine storage and transport in France since the Age of Napoleon. Hanzell's winemaker, Brad Webb, secured barrels from Sirugue in Burgundy.

Although interest in small barrels and a limited use for their aging wine was then widespread in California, Hanzell was the first winery to use French oak exclusively in winemaking and in 1963 Charles Krug became the first large winery to use small barrels of French oak in aging some of its wines. These barrels came from Demptos in Bordeaux. Both Peter and Bob Mondavi are credited with the innovation at Krug, and when Bob founded Robert Mondavi Winery in 1966, small French cooperage was very much in evidence as were Bob's innovative questions about wood grain, stave thickness, air drying, and toast level. Before Bob, few had inquired how and why a barrel was made the way it was in France. Dick Graff of Chalone Vineyard and Winery and Ric Forman of Forman Vineyards, then

winemaker at Sterling, were among these few. Dick, with support from Peter Newton, began importing French barrels from Sirugue along with other winery equipment in the 1960's. Initially, the barrels came in unassembled. Dick and Ric were able to persuade Nadalié to ship barrels in the round, and other cooperages followed suit. The two also taught how and when to use the barrels—to fill, rack, and ferment. By 1976, at Stephen Spurrier's Paris Tasting, all the California Cabernet at that tasting, from Clos du Val, Freemark Abbey, Heitz, Mayacamas, Ridge, and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, was aged in small oak barrels.





## California Cabernet at the 1976 Paris Tasting

*Brief descriptions of the aging practices follow below:*

- Warren Winiarski worked two harvests with Lee Stewart at Souverain before going to work at the brand-spanking new Robert Mondavi Winery for its 1966 and 1967 harvests. Warren then established Stag's Leap Wine Cellars. He chose French oak barrels from Nevers for cellar-aging his wines, including the 1973 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon.
- Joe Heitz assisted André Tchelistcheff at Beaulieu from 1951 to 1958. He then worked to establish Heitz Wine Cellars in 1961. In 1963, after Jim Zellerbach's sudden death, Joe bought some of Hanzell's new wine and a number of its small barrels. Besides assisting in aging, small barrels simplify the keeping of small lots of wine separate. In 1965 Heitz blended a new source of fruit with its own and in 1966 bottled that lot separately, a practice it continues today. The lot is Martha's Vineyard, aged in Limousin oak as it first was in 1966.
- Paul Draper had worked for Lee Stewart at Souverain in 1967, and traveled and worked in Chile and Bordeaux, when he came to Ridge in 1969 (Ridge was founded in 1962). Paul prefers American oak in which to age the Monte Bello. In 1972 about 10 percent of the barrels were new. Paul has not been the only advocate for American oak for California Cabernet. André used American oak at Beaulieu for its reserve Cabernet.
- While Paul Draper was at Souverain, Bob Travers was working for Joe Heitz. Bob had taken classes at UC Davis and Berkeley while he did investment research for new technology in San Francisco and came to realize winemaking was his true destiny. Bob worked the 1967 harvest at Heitz and then in 1968 bought Mayacamas Vineyards, which he continues to run. He ages his wines in large oak tanks and then small oak barrels, all of French oak, and then in the bottle. His 1971 Cabernet was aged in this manner, but in exactly which French oak Bob couldn't say.
- Clos du Val got underway in 1971 under the guidance of Bernard Portet. Bernard was born in Cognac and educated at institutes of wine in Toulouse and Montpellier, and is descended from many generations of Bordeaux winemakers, vineyardists, and wine brokers. Bernard aged his 1972 Cabernet in French oak from Demptos and the forests of either Nevers or Allier (he's forgotten which).
- In 1967 Freemark Abbey was acquired by Chuck Carpy, Bill Jaeger, Laurie Wood, and Brad Webb. Brad had been winemaker at Hanzell, and insisted Freemark Abbey use small French oak barrels for aging. Bill and his wife, Lila, went to France with an introduction from Brad to Philippe Demptos of Demptos. After visiting several cooperages, the Jaegers pronounced Demptos the best cooperage for Freemark Abbey. Its 1969 Cabernet was aged in Demptos barrels, probably of wood from Limousin.







## Will Jamieson

*Master Cooper and Managing Partner  
Demptos Napa, Napa*

Will Jamieson started with Demptos Napa 27 years ago as one of its four original coopers, however, he has been a barrel maker for 41 years. He is from Keith, Scotland where Chivas Regal is the main employer. Will was 15 when he tried out for a year at a cooperage and was then accepted for a five-year indentureship. Today he is a managing partner not only of

Demptos Napa but also of the cooperage where he began, Isla, which was recently acquired by François Frères. At Demptos, Will oversees 30 coopers who produce 128 barrels a day from finished staves trucked into the cooperage for 900 clients, 200 of whom make Cabernet in Napa and Sonoma County. About 65 percent of the staves are American oak and 35 percent French. At the moment, ten million staves are drying in the lumberyard of McGinnis Wood Products of Cuba, Missouri. As they are deemed dry they are bundled into sets, loaded onto pallets and shipped by container to Demptos Napa.

There are 30 to 32 staves in a barrel: each is 40 inches (95 cm) long. A 100-pound set or shook of staves is carefully set into a circular form and two guiding truss hoops slipped over its upper ends. The nascent barrel is sprayed with water and set over a fire, its free ends held by an iron form in the floor. As the wood warms, the form tightens, bending the staves. Additional truss hoops are slipped down as the bend is made. Now the barrel is ready to toast over another fire that reaches halfway up the barrel's interior. A heat gun measures its inside and outside temperature as the barrel toasts; a barrel master flips the barrel over at the critical moment. After toasting, to caramelize sugars in the oak, a bunghole is drilled and cauterized, and then the barrel is ready for finishing. Will resignedly observes that this requires taking off and putting hoops back on many times. Stave ends are precisely trimmed and a groove or croze is cut inside

both barrel ends, paste piped into the grooves, and the heads, which may also have been toasted at a customer's request, fitted into the grooves (head trimmings feed the fires for bending and toasting barrels). Cattail leaves from upper New York State caulk the seams of the head (heads are 27% of a barrel's interior surface, notes Will), and six to eight riveted hoops cut from miles of galvanized Swedish steel fasten the barrel. The exterior is carefully sanded and the interior tested and corrected for flaws (leaks). All barrels are made to order; this may include burning a logo by laser onto the head or bilge as well as marking its specifications. A travel bung is inserted; each barrel is shrink-wrapped and ready to ship. The cooperage also maintains an inventory of stave wood for repairs, since a barrel may fall or get hit in the course of its useful life (usually between one and five years) in a winery. ■

## Roger Boulton

*Stephen Sinclair Scott Professor of Enology and  
Chemical Engineering*

*Department of Viticulture and Enology  
UC Davis*

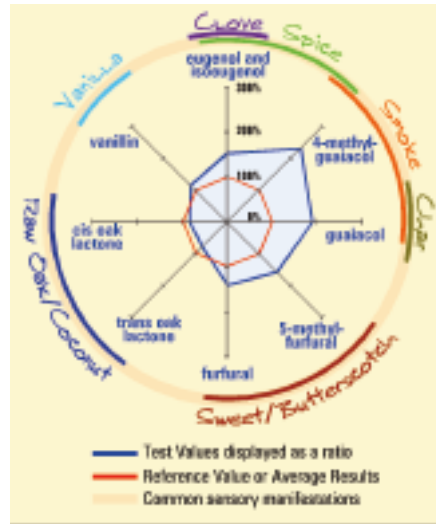
Barrels not only facilitate storage and transport of wine, but Roger Boulton, whom we interviewed by telephone, assures us that oak barrels contribute significantly to the character of the wine inside. The finish of a wine, that sensation at the back of one's tongue after a swallow or spit, comes from wood: the oak, and its flavors

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of caramel, coconut, vanilla, clove or cinnamon, toast, and almond. After twelve months in barrel, oak has affected the aroma, flavor and texture of the wine as well as its color and clarity, yet compounds producing these qualities are but one to five percent of wine. 85 to 90 percent of wine is water and 10 to 14 percent alcohol, with a remainder of tannins, salts and acids.

Changes in wine are brought about by oxidation, and Roger says it is at the bunghole that the most opportunity for oxidation occurs. Much more oxygen enters there when filling, emptying or sampling the barrel than creeps in through the porous staves. True, there is constant evaporation of water and alcohol out through the wood (its rate dependent on temperature and humidity), leaving an ullage or emptiness in the barrel that requires a periodic addition of topping wine, yet for the first three months wine is pretty much the same as when it went into the barrel. Then the phenolics in the oak and wine—large organic molecules of carbon and hydrogen—that contribute to the color, taste, and feel of the wine begin to dissolve off the barrel walls as well as change within the wine inside. Extractions of changing tannins and other compounds diffuse slowly, so the character of the volume of wine along the walls is quite different from that in the middle. As a wine's tannins break down by forming longer chains or sheets and even dropping out of suspension, sediment of the chains (polymers) of compounds and microscopic dead yeast cells settles down into

the curved bilge of the barrel. Racking wine by pumping or siphoning it off this sediment, or lees, and stirring the wine makes it uniform. Any splashing provides an opportunity for oxygen pick-up. After wine goes back into barrel the process repeats until the next racking. Laboratory analysis can provide percentages of the various compounds contributed by barrel aging and a flavor portrait of the wine: Roger says the rate of extraction depends on



the structure of the wood grain—its potential for pore intrusion (wine entering the wood) and capillary action in the barrel (wicking water and alcohol to the outside), although whole wine penetrates only about one quarter of an inch into the staves. The rate of extraction is greatest at the beginning, and then slows with the accumulation and aggregation of

compounds. (Wine barrels are thought to be virtually inert, with respect to extraction, after five years of use.) After twelve months in barrel, wines are said to have softened and become less astringent. Although every harvest, every vintage is different, Roger points out that through constant sampling and assessment the winemaker gets to say “when” for each step that is taken to create a finished wine. The winemaker is in control; how a wine is remembered is a balance of oak, terroir and varietal character. [And, if you have the chance to inhale a freshly toasted barrel, as we did at Demptos Napa, you will immediately understand the excellent, intimate pairing of wine with oak.] ■

## Rosemary Cakebread

*Winemaker and Owner*

*Gallica, St. Helena*

Rosemary Cakebread says barrel-aging affects not just taste but also evolution of that wine in that barrel. One's palate can definitely discern barrel differences in a wine, the effects of a master coopers' magic, the mastery of his craft. Rosemary calls a barrel an agricultural product. The source of its wood is from trees in microclimates of unique soil and rain. A barrel made by Seguin Moreau she calls sweet, Sylvain refined, a Pinot Noir in François Frères elegant. Finesse is required in the choice and use of barrels in making wine to achieve consistency through artisanship. Fortunately, barrel sellers have a lot of knowledge and are willing to work with clients, to taste, to suggest,

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'Let's try this.' Rosemary thinks there are few industries today where you can have a real exchange once a year with an owner or share in the world history of a craft with master craftsmen.

Her own career in wine began on the bottling line of Sebastiani where a friend found her a job. Rosemary had been anxious for something to do when she found herself a freshman in high school in rural Petaluma after growing up in Tokyo. Her dad, a commercial pilot, had relocated and suddenly there were no sidewalks, no rapid transit. While at Sebastiani, Rosemary was introduced to their neighbor Bob Sessions who had succeeded Brad Webb at Hanzell as winemaker. Rosemary thought the scale of Hanzell was "adorable" and seeing her captivation Bob told her about the wine program at UC Davis, that she could actually go to college and study wine. Rosemary went

to Davis where Randall Graham, Doug Shafer, and Heidi Barrett were some of her classmates.

After college, Rosemary spent two years at Inglebrook where she was introduced to Cabernet and to cement and stainless steel fermenters and some use of small barrels. She worked in the lab, at the sugar shack, in tanks, bottling and tasting, tasting, tasting. On one of her more notable trips to France she joined up with Eileen Crane and Roberta Mantell Montero in 1983 to taste wines and visit cooperages—Nadalié, Damy, Billon among them. Sylvain is a cooperage she continues to hold in high regard. She also got to visit Canton Cooperage in Kentucky with its then general manager, Henry Work. Dick Maher then invited Rosemary to help with the start up of Mumm Napa with Guy Devaux. She spent seven years at Mumm where all the blending and tasting that sparkling wine requires was a really great experience.

While Tony Soter (whom she had met at UC Davis) and Mia Klein were consulting winemakers for Spottswoode, Tony suggested Rosemary come talk with Mary and Beth Novak as plans for their own winery were getting underway. Rosemary loves designing things: the Spottswoode project proved irresistible. She calls architect Howard Backen the genius behind winery integration at the site, and really enjoyed working with him while making the 1997 and 1998 Spottswoode vintages at Napa Wine Company. 1999 was the first vintage at the new Spottswoode

winery. Transition complete, Tony retired from Spottswoode. Rosemary was its winemaker until 2005 and still continues to consult on the winery's 3,500 case production. Rosemary credits Tony with Spottswoode's move to organic farming (consistent with the family's own philosophy and the vineyard's location within the town) and really launching the brand.

Spottswoode fostered opportunities for blending, trying different toast levels, and different cooperages. Rosemary took advantage of every opportunity to speak with coopers, make barrel trials and invite coopers for tastings at the winery and in tasting groups. Spottswoode has a unique vineyard and elegant wines, expressive of the vineyard. Rosemary sought oak to compliment that style and to marry vineyard blocks' characteristics with barrels. The Sauvignon Blanc is fermented in both oak and stainless steel, Cabernet in oak. In a perfect world malolactic fermentation goes through in barrel, but it sometimes takes off in tank. Lees help build body and refine tannins, so Rosemary counsels you rack when you have to rack. Each year is different.

Since 2007 Rosemary has been making Gallica, a Cabernet Sauvignon blend, at Failla where she is one of nine vintners. Her Gallica is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, and Cabernet Franc, and she is having a lot of fun making it in the company of other winemakers. A little more fruit goes into the production each year, from St Helena, Oakville,



and now Coombsville. As a winemaker, Rosemary's whole quest has been to improve, to make discoveries so she is doing small lot and barrel fermenting with Gallica and enjoying how hands-on it is, how tactile, how much more oxygen there is in 58 gallons of actively fermenting wine. As oxygen is taken up it builds the wines as it lengthens tannin chains. Malolactic fermentation may not go through before March so you have to judge whether to rack off or let the wine sit on its lees. Aging in barrel is a significant, essential part of raising a wine. For barrels Rosemary is a tight grain fan. Its refinement grabs her. For toast level she prefers medium to medium plus. In her heart of hearts Rosemary is not a fan of heavy toast although there is a place for it in a blend, in small amounts. Gallica is not in all new oak, more like 60 percent new and 40 percent in one and two year-old barrels. It spends 20 months in barrel before it is bottled.

To order barrels before harvest is a challenge. You need to estimate tons of fruit, how much wine, reflect on what you know from previous vintages, assess and refine what you project about the next one, and place an order. Rosemary was in Bordeaux for its 2006 harvest. She says you could just call the fellow who would come in a van and deliver ONE barrel. It is so different in France; here, one must plan way ahead. Fortunately, everyone helps each other. Rosemary is relieved to say there is lateral movement of barrels among winemakers during harvest, when barrel counts may need some adjustment. ■



## Mel Knox

*Barrel Broker and Owner*

Mel Knox Barrel Brokers, San Francisco

Mel Knox has been a barrel broker for almost thirty years and says that in that time barrels have gone from a small thing, cooperages with a small staff to real serious business. Nadalié, Demptos and Sirugue have sold barrels in the U.S. since before Mel can remember. Sirugue was once part of a confederation of cooperages called Tonnelleries de Bourgogne that included Meyer (now defunct), Damy, Billon (now owned by Damy), and Remond, which like Sirugue is no longer part of the group. When Dick Graff and others imported barrels from these cooperages, they found they liked Sirugue best and talked it into going independent. Sirugue came to dominate the aging of California Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and was especially strong south of San Francisco with

wineries like Chalone, David Bruce, Edna Valley, Mount Eden, and Sanford & Benedict. François Frères started selling in the Bay Area around 1975, Taransaud about 1978; Seguin Moreau jumped in around 1981 along with a reorganized Tonnelleries de Bourgogne; Vicard and Dargaud et Jaeglé about 1983. Radoux, now in the same group as Seguin Moreau, followed. In 1985 Philippe Demptos asked why everyone in California was using stave wood from Limousin rather than Nevers (in France Limousin is preferred for Cognac and Brandy). Après that, recounts Mel, came le déluge: "Sylvain, Saury, Treuil, Boutes, Mercurey, Berthomieu (now Ermitage), Sansaud, Mercier, Berger, Darnajeu, and many, many others," about 70 today. When Mel began, François Frères had ten coopers and a daily production of 20 barrels. It grew to 50 coopers producing 100 barrels daily. In 1989 François Frères bought all of Demptos France and half of Demptos Napa. In 1993 it bought the other half and now has barrel works in Australia, Hungary, Spain and Scotland as well and sells worldwide. Known primarily for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, François Frères has a legendary list of clients in Burgundy from its founding in 1910. It went public in 1999.

Mel got into the barrel business quite by chance. He says barrel demand rises and falls with the grape crop. Low yields in Burgundy of 1973, '74 and '75 encouraged Jean François of François Frères to send his American neighbor, Becky Wasserman, to the US for additional custom. Jean François also

## ON WINE BARRELS

introduced Becky to his friend Jean Taransaud as a source for barrels from Bordeaux. Becky came in the winter of 1979-1980 and stayed with the Knoxes. She no sooner arrived than she came down with flu. Mel offered to help, and in one week had three shipping containers' worth of orders. Mel and Becky promptly became partners. A few years later Mel bought her out. Becky is a wine broker, selling wine world-wide from Burgundy and Mel, as Mel Knox Barrel Brokers, represents all the US for François Frères and the Western US, Baja California and Canada for Taransaud.

Mel got to know California wines and wineries during a summer job at a wine and liquor store in Redwood City while at Stanford. This led to working at the Wine and Cheese Center in San Francisco where Mel found being invited to tastings a lot more fun than going to law school as his mother had hoped. He sold wine for eight years, but says it can drive you bats (it gave him migraines) trying to come up with new ways to build excitement. He met lots of people, however, not only Becky but also principals from wineries like Clos du Val, Long, Joseph Phelps, and Stags Leap Wine Cellars.

When Mel began in the business, UC Davis was advising that barrel fermentation was risky, even though Ric Forman and Dick Graff had been long-time advocates of fermenting Chardonnay only in barrel and Cabernet right after primary fermentation. Back then, red wine usually went into barrel after Christmas, even as late as May. Now, of course, it is quite normal for red wine to go

into barrel for malolactic fermentation, a Northern California innovation gaining acceptance in France. Wines also used to be filtered before going into barrel. Mel says we have learned this makes really oaky wines so today some white wines do ferment in barrel. Mel also recalls that empty barrels were stored full of water when they should be stored empty to stay clean and mold-free. Barrels also used to be treated with soda ash but this simply removes their toast and does not purify them. Minimal barrel preparation practices are now the norm.

The most important qualities in selecting a barrel, according to Mel, are species of oak and air-drying. Period. Mel calls stave wood dried in a kiln, like whiskey barrel staves, pretty ghastly for wine because the oak still has lots of astringency. Air-drying for three winters is optimum, with staves spending two and a half years outside "where you cut it." France and the American Mid-West are much more humid than Napa Valley, so enzymes and bacteria have a chance to release phenolics and liberate polysaccharides in the wood drying slowly on racks outdoors. Barrel selection should be based on what the winemaker is trying to achieve. Mel counsels that readier-to-drink wines merit a lower percentage of new oak, air-dried for two years and with prominent grain for flashiness. Wines that can be aged ten to fifteen years, the kind he jokes are made "from one grape per acre," need barrels of three-year wood with a tighter grain and spend eighteen months in barrel. It behooves the barrel broker to work very closely with each client at every vintage. ■



### Jeff Jaeger

*Managing Member*

Jaeger Vineyards, LLC, Napa

*Managing Partner*

Barrel Associates, Intl, Fresno and Napa

Jeff and his wife, Kristen, live on the Jaeger family property on Big Ranch Road in Napa, formerly the Hartley Ranch (where the still widely-planted Hartley walnut variety was developed). Jeff's parents, Bill and Lila, began to spend summers in Napa Valley from the Bay Area when Jeff was eight. In 1963, after a trip to Mexico, Bill came down with a walloping case of hepatitis and was advised to switch from whiskey to wine upon recovery. He did, and Jeff says wine was always on the table after that. The Jaegers bought a place on Inglewood Avenue in St. Helena in 1965 and the family spent 5 or 6 hours every Saturday putting the

property in shape. When Bill and Lila acquired additional acreage in Napa, all the family worked staking and planting vineyard there, too. In 1980 Doug Hill became the vineyard manager.

When Bill became a partner in Freemark Abbey in 1967, the group persuaded Brad Webb, the former winemaker at Hanzell, to get involved. Brad insisted that cooperage be part of the equation. According to Jeff, “Staves are to wine as fruit is to vine. Grapes are from the land as the stave mill relies on trees.” Bill and Lila set out to find the best cooper in France. Their search led to Philippe Demptos, a sixth generation at Demptos in Saint-Caprais-de-Bordeaux, and to declare Demptos the best cooperage. Jeff says, “You are what your staves are.” When Philippe started coming to the United States in the 1970’s to sell barrels, the Jaegers invited him to stay at their house rather than a hotel. Jeff says Philippe was fascinating—just back from Morocco or Spain selling barrels. From Napa Philippe sold six or seven thousand barrels in one month each year. At the end of 1980 Philippe invited Bill Jaeger to be a partner in a new company, Demptos Napa. Jeff joined this company in 1982, after college. Christian Radoux had been involved in its start-up (Jeff calls him a compaignon of the wood business), as well as master cooper Will Jamieson, and two coopers from Portugal.

Christian set the flow of the new cooperage. Since Demptos didn’t want to pay to ship

waste, preliminary work was and is done in France on raw staves coming from the mill. Hand-split stave wood is stacked outside for 18-24-26 months to leach and bleach its tannins and vanillins, then planed and jointed and edges beveled. Staves are bundled into sets and 200 to 250 sets each put into shipping containers. The same is true for the sawn stave wood of American white oak that comes to Demptos from McGinnis in Cuba, Missouri.

Jeff left Demptos in 1992 to involve himself in a number of wood- and barrel-related projects. He built a stave mill in Salem, Indiana which he later sold to Independent Stave Company, a family-owned cooperage that makes thousands of barrels a day for wine and whiskey, the latter for bourbons such as Jim Beam and Maker’s Mark. [Brown-Forman Cooperage (formerly Blue Grass Cooperage) also has several stave mills and makes two thousand barrels a day, most of which it ships to Lynchburg, Tennessee for the aging of Jack Daniels, Woodford Reserve and other Brown-Forman spirits.] Today, Jeff is a managing member of Jaeger Vineyards and a managing partner of Barrel Associates, International (BAI), a cooperage known for its unique “Deep Toast” barrel with staves of water-bent American oak. BAI makes 100 barrels a day in Fresno. These are offered through Dargaud et Jaeglé, a Burgundian cooperage with offices in Napa. Jeff also has a small log link business an hour north of Louisville, Kentucky and deals in white oak, although sassafras, white and red oak, and walnut are also represented. Jeff says

wood for veneer gives the greatest dollar benefit. The first six to eight percent of sawn timber goes to veneer mills, THEN to barrels. The rest goes for furniture, flooring, railroad ties, and even wood chips.

Jeff sees a higher emphasis on quality from every producer of wine today. A winemaker’s involvement reaches across agricultural and productive lines. The winemaker is in the vineyard more. Barrel suppliers, in turn, have become knowledgeable about the trees that create staves, the firing process, bending and barrel finishing. Because a winemaker’s style takes a while to develop and the wood formula for a new wine determined, suppliers work with winemakers throughout the life of the wine to help achieve a particular style. Their consultations keep winemakers informed as winemakers perform barrel trials and hold tastings among their peers and a discerning public. Jeff calls the matrix of shared knowledge substantial and counsels, “Ordinary doesn’t sell; extraordinary does.” ■





### *19th Varietal Seminar*

## On the Other Hand: Discovering Other Reds

*Culinary Institute of America at Greystone*  
St. Helena  
Saturday, August 15

After coffee and registration, the morning schedule of this nineteenth Varietal Seminar was filled with tasting eight Napa Valley red wines contributed by their wineries and paired with canapés from The French Laundry. Four more wines were tasted at lunch. The wines were from nine varieties outside the Cabernet Sauvignon family. The eight that had been paired with small bites were presented in four flights lead by Dr Allen Balik during two sessions. Two white wines were then offered informally before lunch, and two more red wines with lunch.

Allen Balik is a wine enthusiast, well versed in organizing seminars, wine auctions and wine tours. He is also an appraiser of vineyards and a wine shipper. The exquisite small bites accompanying each wine were carefully and thoughtfully selected by The French Laundry Head Sommelier, Dennis Kelly, working with Devin Knell, Executive Sous Chef, and Brandon Rodgers, Chef de Partie. Dennis has spent twenty years working in restaurants and was with Martini House in St. Helena before coming to The French Laundry in Yountville. Although this was his first presentation at a seminar, and he admitted to being nervous, both Dennis and Allen found the Eco-Lab classroom to be a very workable space in which to interpret and share their respect and enthusiasm for what they described as “the constant triangle of food, wine and friends,” and seemed to enjoy the seminar as much as the membership.

At The French Laundry, Dennis picks wines that please his customers and fit the food. Although he enjoys wines from friends all over the Valley, from Calistoga to Carneros, he says The French Laundry likes to serve “mature” wines. Dennis says there is a fruit factor to consider, as well as structure. Elegant food requires elegant wines. He might choose a wine to mimic a food’s structure, its flavors, or offset them with a different approach. Earthy beets might call for something sweet; what grows together goes together. During a meal, there is a progression of flavors and textures that the sommelier mirrors. First, sake or Champagne and caviar: light, refreshing, with acidity (higher acidity, less alcohol); then salad and bigger wines with an herbaceous quality. Sea-food may call for a barrel-fermented Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc; meat pairs with wine with softer tannins and higher acid. Allen defined his seminar choices of Napa Valley red wines other than Cabernet for each flight as the same variety from two different areas or two different wines from the same area.



FIRST FLIGHT	
<b>El Molino</b> 2006 Pinot Noir <i>Rutherford</i> 100% estate Pinot Noir 70% new French oak 903 cases; 14.5% alcohol	<b>Talisman</b> 2006 Pinot Noir <i>Adastra Vineyard, Los Carneros</i> 100% estate Pinot Noir 60% new French oak 321 cases; 14.1% alcohol

Pinot Noir is the most important “other red” at The French Laundry. It grows best on cooler, poorer, chalkier soils and is the most site-specific of the wines tasted in the seminar. Dennis called it meat friendly, elegant and refined. The two Pinot Noirs were paired with a duck foie gras with crème fraiche and a sponge cake with Morello cherry. Allen cautioned that we must rely on our own memory banks for associations. If we read words or hear them, they can influence what we taste. He looks for structure and balance, fruit and acidity. For this flight, he was alert to red fruit flavor, brightness, freshness, and alcohol that was not overpowering. Riper fruit creates darker color; black or plum colors can mean over-ripening.

Allen said the Pinot Noir grape is fragile, thin-skinned, prone to sunburn and rot, and oxidation during fermentation, and that a little bit of new oak goes a long way. He found the Talisman to have more oak, new, and a richer, rounder flavor with the sweetness of cherry. Dennis called it a New World flavor of sweet core fruit. Pinot Noir goes well with duck, squab, veal, lamb, quail, and poularde (salt is a flavor intensifier; a sweet core of fruit will counter-balance saltiness). At the finish, the El Molino was more earth-driven. It had silky tannins and was soft, vibrant, cleansing—Old World. The Talisman finish was deeper, El Molino’s brighter. Both had balance and good

acidity.

SECOND FLIGHT	
<b>Benessere</b> 2006 Sangiovese <i>St. Helena</i> 100% estate Sangiovese 25% new French oak 1,348 cases; 14.4% alcohol	<b>Robert Biale</b> 2007 Barbera <i>Carlit/Somerston Vineyards</i> 100% Barbera; old vine (1920) and new 15% new French oak 247 cases; 15.8% alcohol

Although Sangiovese has been and is widely grown in Italy, Allen said Barbera was originally a blending wine. With these two wines there is both a varietal difference and a site difference. For this flight, Barbera comes from a warmer area with more sunshine than the Sangiovese.



The Benessere Sangiovese was paired with a Vol-au-vent of sweetbreads, the Robert Biale Barbera paired with tiny tomatoes, olives, thyme and parsley. Allen commented that in Tuscany, where there is lots of tomato in the cuisine, wine and food grow up together. Piemonte wines have a more earthy quality, the Sangiovese an herb-dried quality and a classical rhubarb component, one that is sweet-tart. The oak in both wines supported the food and

in the Barbera, moderated its acidity. Dennis noted the importance of compatible versus contradictory character with food and wine.

Allen said Italian varietals in Napa Valley are beginning to catch up with the sophistication of Cabernet and Pinot Noir. There are Old World-New World differences such as percent alcohol and current philosophies of wine-making. He feels the grapes do need to be riper for phenolic maturity—when their seeds are brown and their flavors are no longer grassy or herbal.

THIRD FLIGHT	
<b>Truchard Vineyards</b> 2005 Syrah <i>Los Carneros</i> 100% estate Syrah 90% French oak 10% American oak 2,629 cases; 14.3% alcohol	<b>Outpost</b> 2007 Grenache <i>Howell Mountain</i> 100% estate Grenache 100% used French oak 325 cases; 16.0% alcohol

The northern Rhone is known for Syrah from Hermitage, the south for its Grenache from Château Neuf-du-Pape. In Australia, where Syrah is known as Shiraz, the variety is bold and big. Allen said it is brighter in cooler climates. In Napa Valley, Syrah from the warmer east-side is riper and bolder, more like Australian Shiraz. The United States in general is more northern Rhone—that bacon fat of Mourvèdre (also known as Mataro). Allen called Syrah more site-specific than Grenache, but less so than Pinot Noir or Sangiovese. The ideal site for Grenache is cool but sunny. Allen noted that the state of Washington is good for Rhone varietals.

Grenache is browner in color than other reds. Allen called it animally, gamey in flavor, and

said it is a phenomenally good blending wine. Syrah tastes of black pepper, lavender, and is smoky. It tends to build in the mid- and back palates. Grenache has more elegance. Its fruit is thinner-skinned, and its wine is much more red fruit-driven: soft, raspberries and cherries. In Southern Rhone it tastes of spice. Syrah grapes are bigger, thicker-skinned, with more cyanin. The wine tastes of black fruit: blackberry, currant, and cassis. The French Laundry had paired the wines with a pork belly sandwich bite and a purée of truffle with arugula.

Allen said that with such marked contrasts between the wines, very small amounts make significant differences in a blend of the two: elegant versus big. The class then blended the two wines in a third glass, perhaps succeeding in finding a new balance between the two in their blends.

FOURTH FLIGHT	
<b>Chase Cellars</b> 2006 Zinfandel <i>Hayne Vineyard, St. Helena</i> 100% estate Zinfandel 80% old vine (1903) 15% new French and American oak 1,150 cases; 14.7% alcohol	<b>T-Vine Cellars</b> 2006 Zinfandel <i>Napa Valley</i> 54% Frediani Zinfandel 31% Primitivo 15% Petite Sirah 35% new American oak 645 cases; 14.8% alcohol

Dennis said it was a challenge to include local domestic wines among the international selection at The French Laundry. The staff tends to recommend a blend of local and global favorites—Pinot Noir with duck, foie gras. Roasted or braised meats call for Old World wines in the colder seasons; truffles and tomatoes are very good with Italian wines. The Zinfandels were paired with braised lamb shank and spiced prune compote with

pistachios, to match richness with richness, Dennis said, with an emphasis on the dried fruit component of Zinfandel. The wines' acid, alcohol and structure, their tannin, its strength and mouth feel all contributed to the pairing. Allen noted that Zinfandel is made in so many different styles, that there is great variety among these wines.

AT LUNCH	
<b>Stags' Leap Winery</b> 1993 Petite Syrah <i>Stags Leap</i> 95% estate Petite Syrah 5% estate Syrah <i>Old vine (1939) and newer (1970s)</i> 100% American oak 6,739 cases; 13.6% alcohol	<b>Quixote</b> 2004 Petite Syrah <i>Stags' Leap Ranch, Stags Leap</i> 100% Petite Syrah 100% American oak 950 cases; 14.57% alcohol

After a glass of 2004 Long Vineyards Chardonnay or 2008 Robert Pecota Sauvignon Blanc, lunch was served in the teaching kitchen of CIA Greystone. Lamb loin in a Quixote Petite Syrah reduction followed stuffed heirloom tomatoes, with mignardises for dessert. Just before the lamb, Allen introduced Carl Doumani, founder of Quixote as well as Stags' Leap Winery.

Carl reflected upon Petite Sirah and his many years in Napa Valley. He moved here from Los Angeles in 1971 and said going from the city to live in the country was quite an education. Carl first worked for Souverain (now Burgess). According to its owner, Lee Stewart, wine had to be balanced; acid was important. Stewart set the style with his Souverain vintages of 1972, 1973, and 1974 that Carl said he is still working toward.

He called his Quixote Petite Syrah, which had been enjoyed with the stuffed tomatoes,

incarnate from 35 years ago, with its wood taken from the Stags' Leap Winery vineyards planted in 1939 and 1978. The wine has richness, density, and length of finish. Carl finds Petite Sirah better for pairing with food than others—a marriage that you can't best, especially if it is marinated lamb. The wine is also good with game and berries in a berry marinade, big Italian fare like lamb shanks or even short ribs. He said Petite Sirah is site specific; other varietals are not needed for blending. The wine enters the mouth softly, then blankets it with a smooth richness in the middle palate, and lasts well beyond expectations.



For Carl, making wine is a personal journey, not a destination. It is about taking chances, learning and working, farming not just a single vineyard selfishly, but making a contribution to what should be thought of as everyone's vineyard. When Carl first came to Napa Valley, the flow of information was unrestricted. He said it stopped flowing with lawsuits, with wineries acquired by publicly traded companies, although during the month of harvest it didn't matter. Now, however, information flows again on a rising tide of Napa Valley winemaking. After the main course and mignardises, the seminar concluded with an optional tour of CIA at Greystone. ■



## 47th Annual Tasting

# The Romance of PetiteZinNoir

Silverado Resort, Napa

Saturday, August 15, 2009

Very warm weather, well above 100°, was predicted the day of the Annual Tasting, but the temperature stayed in the low nineties, which felt cool in comparison. The natural oaks of The Grove and many strategically placed umbrellas afforded plenty of shade for the 75 wineries that poured ten varietal red wines other than Cabernet, fairly evenly distributed among four, with the rest in ones and two's: 26 Syrah, 25 Pinot Noir, 21 Zinfandel, 20 Petite Syrah, two Sangiovese, and one each of Charbono, Dolcetto, Grignolino, Primitivo, and Tempranillo, as well as eight proprietary blends, two rosés, two ports from Prager Winery and Port Works, and one sparkling wine, a Brut Rosé, from Schramsberg that did need lots and lots of ice. We noted that Vin Roc decanted its proprietary blend; otherwise pours were directly

from the bottle. The Schramsberg and a Zinfandel from Green & Red were among the most popular wines poured for the 700 to 800 members who attended the Tasting. A banner above Whitehall Lane, a big sign at Biale, fresh flowers on the tables of Cuvaison, Guffy Farm and Prager, and dried flowers on the table of Clos du Val added to the afternoon's ambiance. Chiarello Family featured a recent cookbook of Michael's; Rombauer also offered a cookbook in celebration of Koerner's great aunt's *The Joy of Cooking* (published just over 75 years ago). Silverado nimbly provided plates of assorted cheeses and crackers at one station as well as carafes of still water throughout The Grove.

A number of wine clubs come to the tasting each year, as they have for more than a decade. Wine Tasters II drives up from San Mateo; another club's members are from Burlingame and Hillsborough. Many NVWLA members have also joined the wine clubs of their favorite wineries in the Valley—one couple belongs to seven. After the Varietal Seminar or before the Annual Tasting, our members visit “their wineries,”



as they have for years during the weekend of the Tasting. This year our board members also recommended five restaurants in the area that they have found to be particularly knowledgeable about and supportive of Napa Valley wines and wineries. We hope you took advantage of the recommendations and found the restaurants helpful in pairing the kinds of wines you enjoyed during the weekend with their superlative dishes.

Bob Long  
*President and Chair*  
47th Annual Tasting



PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BURGER, DIANA STOCKTON

# Napa Valley Wine Library Association

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The Faculty consists primarily of local wine-makers, winery principals, restaurateurs and caterers. Instructors in recent years are listed below, with new individuals are added each year.

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We invite you to join the Napa Valley Wine Library Association. Your membership dues support the collections at the St. Helena Public Library. You will also receive the Wine Library Report, information about our courses and seminars, and admission to our ever-popular Annual Tasting, for members only. Individual membership is \$60.00 per year; lifetime membership is \$1,000.00.

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