

# NAPA VALLEY WINE LIBRARY **REPORT**



SUMMER 2011

# Calendar of Events

Saturday, August 13, 2011 – 21st Winemakers Seminar  
Cool Whites, Hot Pinks and a Bit of Fizz  
Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, St. Helena

Sunday, August 14, 2011 - 49th Annual Tasting  
A Celebration of Napa Valley White Wines  
Silverado Resort and Spa, Napa

Also of interest:

August 3 – 21, 2011

Music in the Vineyards  
[www.musicinthevineyards.org](http://www.musicinthevineyards.org)  
Gorgeous chamber music concerts in matchless winery venues throughout Napa Valley

Saturday, August 27, 2011

Harvest Stomp!  
[www.napagrowers.org/harveststomp/harveststompdetails.html](http://www.napagrowers.org/harveststomp/harveststompdetails.html)  
Harvest honky-tonk, rock-n-roll, chef chow-off fundraiser for Napa Valley Grapegrowers' education programs in the midst of Charlie Hopper's daughter Missouri's home ground

Sunday, August 28, 2011

The Barn Tour–2011  
[www.preservationnapavalley.org](http://www.preservationnapavalley.org)  
A celebration of the agricultural heritage of Napa Valley with barns to visit in Rutherford and Oakville as well as music, art, victuals, and conversation

# Table of Contents

President's Letter.....1

Interviews.....2-16

*The interviews in this REPORT are with Napa Valley winemakers of white, rosé and sparkling wines, the wines to be featured at the 49th Annual Tasting under the oaks at Silverado and in the Winemakers Seminar the day before, when seven winemakers discuss their wines in detail at CIA-Greystone. The candid portraits and cover shot of Los Carneros in May were taken by Priscilla Upton.*

Andrea “Buck” Bartolucci.....2  
Madonna Estate

Richard Grant “Dick” Peterson.....5  
Richard Grant Wines

Jan Krupp.....8  
Krupp Brothers

Rudy von Strasser.....11  
von Strasser Winery

John Williams.....14  
Frog's Leap Winery

Organization and Membership Information    Inside Back Cover

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## Napa Valley Wine Library REPORT

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## President's Letter

Dear Members,

It is not often that a person is given the chance to participate wholeheartedly in an organization whose mission and methods parallel so completely his or her own: wine and books; education and the wine experience; history and the beauty of Napa Valley, my “home town.”

With Internet access to all sorts of information, the roles of libraries are changing. The Napa Valley Wine Library was founded to provide a comprehensive collection of all the fine materials published on wine and the industry. The founders' intention was to provide an exhaustive collection for anyone desiring to research wine, particularly wine of Napa Valley. Not only is this a very expensive undertaking, it is no longer used in a way that would justify the expense—everyone just Googles.

But Google can't bring you a Saturday morning with like-minded people testing their tasters with wonderful wines in black glasses. Or a morning with winemakers expressing their own personal desires and

sharing their treasures. Or an afternoon with 100 wineries, many with their principals pouring, showing off their best, their classics, under classic California oaks.

Napa Valley Wine Library is a window to more than a winery tour. It's a window to the history, the characters and the beauty of the Valley. We hope to bring you glimpses of all of this, not just wineries, but wineries that are their creators' art, not just wine, but winemakers' expressions of their art, their love. And not just the Valley, but the Valley on a misty spring morning, wildflowers dotting the hills and vines wearing their brand new tidy green suits, or later in fall, when the grapes are heavy and lanky canes are turning colors, or in winter, when the vineyards are asleep and the rest of us are celebrating another successful vintage.

Join us then!

Carolyn Martini  
*President*



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY E & J GALLO WINERY

## Interviews



PHOTOGRAPHER: PRISCILLA UPTON

### Andrea “Buck” Bartolucci

*Winemaker and Partner*

Madonna Estate

5400 Old Sonoma Road, Napa

[madonnaestate.com](http://madonnaestate.com)

*12,000-15,000 case production*

“The 1970’s were the beginning of a new regeneration of the Napa Valley wine industry,” Buck Bartolucci states emphatically, and he has a very good vantage point. His family is one of the oldest winemaking families in Napa Valley and as a kid, Buck worked in the family vineyards and winery every week-end and summer until he graduated from Fresno State in 1967. Then Buck went to work for his family full-time. When asked if he grew up with wine on the table, Buck says his family worked six days a week and half a day on Sunday, so, ‘no, they really didn’t drink wine at dinner.’ But he can remember being asked to go bring down a bottle of wine for a barbecue every once in a while.

Buck’s grandfather, Andy (Andrea) came to Napa Valley from Italy via Ellis Island and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco, where he had worked as a brick mason. Andy bought a vineyard and winery in Oakville in 1922, but in 1924, the winery burned down. It took a few years for Andy and Buck’s dad, Louis, to rebuild. Their new Madonna Winery was bonded in 1932. Buck says Louis and Andy also distilled wine in the 1940’s and 1950’s under a Mont St. John Cellars label for Beaulieu Vineyards, Charles Krug and a host of other fortified wines then popular. From 1955 to 1965 the

family bought additional acreage, 275 acres in all.

After college, Buck worked alongside his dad for three years as assistant winemaker, helping to turn 14,000 to 15,000 tons of fruit, their own and purchased from all over Napa Valley, into 250,000 gallons of wine. But, Louis’ generation was getting older and wanted to cut back, so the property was put up for sale. A group of investors bought the winery and vineyards in 1970. Unfortunately, this Oakville Vineyards deal fell apart in 1975 and the Bartoluccis had to find new buyers. Heublein’s Inglenook then bought the vineyard and winery piece at the corner of Oakville Cross and Highway 29, where Napa Wine Company is today. Buck says Markham became the owner of the 88-acre parcel north of Napa Nook and the 110-acre piece in Oak Knoll, west of Laird Family Estates.

When the family first sold its property, Buck looked for acreage of his own. He says the good land on the Valley floor was already taken. There were small parcels for sale, but not of best quality and hillsides were not developed in vineyard yet. Buck bought 160 acres of gently rolling pastureland on Duhig Road in Napa from a Duhig descendant. The land was catty corner to Beaulieu’s Vineyard #5. Confident of its potential, Buck planted his Madonna Vineyard to 30 acres of Chardonnay on St. George rootstock with budwood from Oakville with UC Davis origins and 22 acres of Pinot Noir with a budwood field selection from a vineyard off Oakville Crossroad. When the sale to Oakville Vineyards failed, Buck approached the Federal Land Bank (Farm

Credit Bank, today) for a loan. The bank not only loaned him money, it recommended he run for its Board. Buck's given name is Andrea Louis. He thinks he got elected because the bank's stockholders figured they were getting either his father or his grandfather, but he is most appreciative of the window he got onto the workings of finance.

Buck planted 25 to 30 acres a year for several years, doing all the work himself. Gewürztraminer budwood came from Sterling; the Muscat Canelli planted around the winery came from a former family vineyard, as did later hillside plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Buck also added Dijon, Swan and Pommard clones of Pinot Noir and Dijon clones of Chardonnay. He doesn't believe there is any one "best clone." It's really a mix of clones that makes the best wine. Although Buck now has help maintaining his vineyards, with a vineyard foreman and year-round crew (some a second generation), he figures he's put about every fifth stick in the ground of his vineyards, which now total 146 acres planted to ten varieties. To improve on his farming, Buck joined one of the focus groups Robert Mondavi Winery sponsored among winemakers and growers, went to monthly meetings and took field trips as near as Sonoma and as distant as Burgundy for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir growing techniques. He also took part in a tour his barrel-maker put together to several châteaux in Bordeaux. But most of all, Buck learned from the family.

In 1977, Buck's father Louis had bought four and a half acres on the corner of Old Sonoma Road and Highway 121. The small parcel was cut off

from the rest of a cattle ranch belonging to the Crivelli Brothers when the new highway was put in. The Crivellis had gone to high school with Louis and they were glad to make a deal to rid themselves of the bother of the little bit of hayfield. Louis had carefully chosen the acreage for its location for a winery. He and Buck built Mont St. John Cellars themselves, opening a tasting room in 1981. Buck then undertook to buy out his father and had acquired half the property in 1986. Then Buck's mom wanted to be bought out of her half, so Buck's kids became his partners and Buck changed the name of the winery from Mont St. John to Madonna Estate. The name not only honored his grandfather but also Buck's vineyards, which had an excellent reputation in the Valley. He had sold vineyard designated Pinot Noir to Acacia Winery (until Diageo bought Acacia in 2004) and fruit for a vineyard designated Reserve Chardonnay to Robert Mondavi Winery for its spotlight program.

Since 1922, the Bartoluccis have farmed organically and used water sparingly. Buck's own vineyards were certified organic in 1991, but he says his family's traditional practices were always organic, because there weren't the herbicides and insecticides back then that there are today, and there wasn't any money for them if there had been. Napa Valley viticulture back then was all dry-farming. Vines were planted 8x8, meaning eight feet between each vine in a row and rows eight feet apart, which allows cross-row cultivation. When the Valley changed to trellising and drip irrigation, Buck says it over-watered, and then it went the other way, withholding water to

cause a dramatic stressing of the vines. "A little bit of water is OK," counsels Buck, "but don't dilute flavor. Nature itself is the best monitor." Once Madonna Vineyard vines are up and established they are dry-farmed for concentration of flavor. Buck says soil is like a sponge filled with water and nutrients—you don't want to overload it. He crops his vineyard three tons to an acre for quality. "What I've learned is that style should be set by the vineyard—what it can do."

For Chardonnay, Buck says fruit maturity is key. The fruit is harvested at night, its sugar on the riper side of the pick, crushed and destemmed. The winery uses a programmable Willms press; free-run juice is kept separate. After settling in stainless steel tanks, must is racked off and inoculated with yeast. "Once we know it's fermenting at 50°, it's transferred into French oak barrels of three separate years: new, 1 year-old and 2 year-old," recounts Buck. The new wine is inoculated with a malolactic culture and barrels are stirred and topped-up twice a week. Buck says leaving the wine *sur lies* and stirring give it a creamy and yeasty character, more Montrachet than Chablis. After nine months, the wine is filtered and bottled. Buck wants his Chardonnay to be in balance with no one character overpowering another; he wants the wine to be a food wine with the benefit of oak—softening but not overpowering the wine. Los Carneros Chardonnays tend to be acidic with the regional coolness imparting citrus-y rather than tutti frutti flavors, citrus with a hint of tropical. Buck's first release of Chardonnay was in 1980.

Pinot Grigio has been in production for ten years. Buck describes it as a fruit forward, single-dimension wine, less complex than Chardonnay. It, too, is harvested at night under lights. Berries go into the press seven or eight tons at a time to be crushed and destemmed. After settling for one or two days, must is racked off and its acids balanced. The wine settles and ferments to dry in stainless steel, is racked-off and bottled in early February. If Pinot Grigio is picked on the lower end of the ripeness scale, Buck says the wine will be more like Sauvignon Blanc, with grassy and herbaceous flavors. He prefers to pick on the sweeter side, for a more melon flavor. Gewürztraminer, Muscat and Riesling are all made virtually the same, according to Buck, and are only available at the winery. The fruit is picked cool, crushed and destemmed. After the must is analyzed and balanced, Épernay yeast is added. Buck wants slow fermentations, at 40° for at least four weeks, and then stopped at a sugar level that maintains a little sweetness. Finished wines are filtered twice before bottling in February or March.

Besides Pinot Noir, Buck's first wine released in 1979, Madonna Estate makes several other red wines including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and the newest, Dolcetto. All these and the white wines described above are estate grown and bottled. About 600 cases of each variety are produced. Buck says the winery also gets Barbera from Lincoln, California and two decades ago initiated a national sales program, Premium Brands Marketing Company, which distributes Poppy Hill California Cabernet Sauvignon made



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

from fruit from the Sierra foothills.

Although Madonna Estate produces about a fifth of what the winery in Oakville used to produce, in addition to its own wine, it has custom crush clients and does a little bottling for others. The Bartoluccis have always had their own bottling line. Buck put a lot of the one at Madonna together himself. A bottle sparger whisks out the air, the bottle is filled with a blast of nitrogen, then with wine, corked, encapsulated (by a three-head foiler), and labeled. Buck's line can handle one thousand cases in an eight-hour day with five people. He says it makes all the difference having your own bottling line, "You can bottle when the

wine needs to be, on your own schedule."

What most distinguishes Madonna Estate is its success with groups of visitors from San Francisco who come by bus from their hotels to visit the the winery and the tasting room. Buck says the winery's wine club has thousands of members—mostly from out-of-state, with whom the winery has great relationships and from whom it has great loyalty. For instance, several metal sculptures dotting the winery property are gifts of the artist, a wine club member in Massachusetts who spontaneously ships one out every now and then.

Buck says there are so many facets to his work, outside in the vineyard, inside at the winery, out on the road selling his wine, that it's been a good life. He's been able to enjoy what he does and be relatively successful. He has worked so that his children could get a good education, but the doors to the winery have always been open to them. After college, his daughter Brette joined the winery staff in 1997 and his daughter Taylor, in 2005. His wife Susan, a retired school teacher who lends a hand wherever and whenever it is needed, drew the spiral image used on labels, signs and packaging inspired by the four generations of Bartoluccis in the wine and grape business. When asked what he usually does to relax, Buck chuckles, "Pretty much, work." □

## Richard Grant Peterson

*Owner and Winemaker*

Richard Grant Wines

1120 Darms Lane, Napa

[richardgrantwine.com](http://richardgrantwine.com)

*500 case production*

At the start of his freshman year in 1948 at Iowa State, Dick Peterson decided to make some home wine. His family had a few Concord vines nearby and his mother no longer canned its grape juice to make into jelly the rest of the year. The empty Champagne bottles she once used were hanging around, Dick's father had made wine from grape bricks during Prohibition, and Dick had read the only two books in the whole Des Moines public library on winemaking. The grapes were ripe and he felt ready. Dick vividly recalls two mistakes he made: the wine was bottled before it was dry, so an unplanned second fermentation provided a Concord "Champagne" Dick called gushy and a little sweet, but that the Peterson family certainly all liked; and he left a bottle of it in the sun on the back seat of his second-hand 1937 Ford. The bottle exploded, totally, leaving only pieces of glass and a spot on the seat, but then it was so good smelling and pleasant inside the Ford, Dick was happy every time he got in.

He made wine for a couple more years, graduated in 1952 on an NROTC scholarship with a degree in Chemical Technology, and went off to learn to fly in the Marines. But the Marine Corps assigned Dick to an artillery battalion and sent him to Korea. Truces were signed en route and Dick took part in mopping-up. He was mustered



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

out in 1954 in San Francisco, where he took a friend's advice and went back to college, choosing nearby UC Berkeley to study chemical engineering, biochemistry and food technology. Dick says biochemistry was a terrific field then (his favorite professor was Linus Pauling), as was food technology—salting, freezing, dehydration, canning—with which Dick was already familiar. His mother had preserved far more than grape juice each year.

All the food the family needed had come from 3.34 acres of orchard, vegetable garden, pigpen, and even a cow in pasture alongside the house Dick's Swedish grandfather had built, his father was born and raised in, and Dick and his three siblings grew up in. Dick's father was a coal miner, mining Iowa coal thirty feet underground on his hands and knees, working seams just three feet high. The kids all had regular farm chores, but Dick remembers the taste of fresh buttermilk best.

He got a Masters degree in Food Technology in 1956 and a PhD in Agricultural Chemistry in 1958 under Maynard Joslyn, studying wine but writing his thesis on the chemistry of red pigments in garden beets. Dick and Maynard also studied and wrote on copper cloud (*casse*) in white wines. Their work led to the replacement of brass [also bronze] fittings with stainless steel throughout the wine industry.

E & J Gallo first hired Dick to head up new product development and gave him the chance to make some terrific wines. After ten years, however, Dick was ready for a change and got it:



PHOTOGRAPHER PRISCILLA DIFTON

Beaulieu Vineyards. Beaulieu's winemaker, André Tchelistcheff, told him it had taken a year to decide, but, "Dick, I put my finger on you." They worked closely throughout André's retirement year, 1968-1969. Each day began at six o'clock sharp with a visit to each of Beaulieu's five major vineyards and its crew. André left at Noon and Dick would get on with the winemaking for André to taste the next day (the two remained collegial until André's death in 1994). Dick also found time to teach classes for Napa Valley Wine Library and even serve as a vice

president. In 1969, Heublein bought Beaulieu. It already had a stake in Inglenook and Lancers through its majority position in United Vintners. Dick was put in charge of new product development and, in a joint venture with the Portuguese, created Lancers White Wine that went to the top of the charts. Then Lancers wanted a carbonated red, which is very tricky to do. Dick says you have to make this kind of wine sweet to cover its natural bitterness. The red was never as popular as Lancers White but Dick loved working with the Portuguese and his trips to Portugal.

Although Heublein wanted Dick to oversee all their winemaking operations from their headquarters in Hartford, Connecticut, Dick knew he needed to be making wine in a more direct and hands-on manner. In 1973 he left to head up The Monterey Vineyard in a pioneering project, especially with late harvest wines. As he helped fellow vintners take advantage of south- rather than north-facing slopes he saw the 1,000 acres then planted to vines in Monterey County increase to 24,000 by 1974. That same year Seagram's bought the winery and Dick introduced his laborsaving invention, the steel barrel pallet that allows pairs of barrels to be moved and stacked by forklift, rather than by hand. Because a barrel nestles down in the pallet, it is also more stable in an earthquake. Dick presented his design at the annual Wine Industry Technology Symposium as a gift to the industry. His steel rack simplified and improved moving barrels—exhausting work at Beaulieu, and the pallet or versions of it are now in use throughout the winegrowing world.

While still at Beaulieu, flying to Lisbon via London for Lancers, Dick had gotten to know Anton Massel, the founder of the annual International Wine and Spirit Competition held in England. Anton invited Dick to help judge the competition which he did as a board member for ten years. It was at Anton's suggestion in 1980 that Dick went to visit a 200 year-old grapevine on a cottage wall in Wrotham, Kent. On his return, Anton served him a sparkling wine made from the Wrotham fruit. Its wine, Dick says, was pink, delicate and unusually good. Anton's friend



Ed Hyams had researched the grapevine and in the absence of any formal information determined that the vine came from a wild seedling of Pinot Noir dating back to the Romans. Pinot is the most mutating of wine grapes with more clones than any other variety. Dick got two canes of Wrotham (the English say *Root'em*) Pinot Noir that he packed and took back to Monterey. He budded over the canes and took examples to Harold Olmo at UC Davis for quarantine and to have the DNA identified. After two weeks of research, Carole Meredith confirmed the material as a clone of Pinot Noir. In its fuzzy appearance the Wrotham more closely resembles Pinot Meunier, but it grows differently and ripens earlier.

In 1986, Atlas Peak Vineyards hired Dick to establish vineyards and a winery and make its wines. He was with Atlas Peak until 1990, developing 450 acres of vines including the then largest planting of Sangiovese in the state. Tending a rose garden in his Napa back yard, where he had also planted the Wrotham Pinot Noir, Dick noticed that while his rosebushes got powdery mildew, the grapevines did not. No one had ever noticed this attribute in England, but Harold Olmo agreed it must have been resistance to powdery mildew that contributed to the success of the clone, a most fortuitous mutation—tasty as well as healthy. Little by little, Dick increased his stock to about half an acre accommodated at a colleague's vineyard nursery.

In 1992, contemplating retirement, Dick bought a derelict Christmas tree farm on Darms Lane in

Napa, planted to pine and fir, with a large pond reservoir. Dick pulled out the two acres of pine and doing his own budding and grafting, planted one half acre to Wrotham on SO4 rootstock in 1995. This was the first-ever vineyard planting of the clone in the United States. A more careful analysis of soils suggested a change in budwood as Dick planted another half acre, and then a second and final acre. For the first couple of years he farmed with a green idea—no till, and mowed the resulting lawn between the rows. Alas, Bermuda grass harbors *Xylella fastidiosa*, the bacterium that carries Pierce's Disease. As mower wash blew onto the vines, it felted them with clippings that included Bermuda grass. The Wrotham Pinot Noir proved susceptible to Pierce's Disease, which does not occur in the British Isles.

Over the next few years Dick invented a screw to carry the antibiotic Tetracycline, fatal to *Xylella*, into the vine. He has special screws of cast nylon made for him in the East Bay. Tiny wads of dental cotton, having absorbed the antibiotic and been packed into a slot in the screw's tip, are self-tapped into a vine, as low as possible, even below the graft, just one per grapevine. A fin on the hexagonal head facilitates lining up the slot with the direction of sap flow, so xylem carries the drug right up through the plant; any surplus antibiotic beads up on the leaves' outer margins. (Simply injecting a vine doesn't work; osmotic pressure squirts what's shot in right back out.) Dick's successful method of delivering a 20mg dosage allows bacteria time to feed and succumb, and one treatment lasts years.

The first vintage of Wrotham Pinot for Dick's Richard Grant Blanc de Noir Méthode Champenoise was 2000. It was made at Folie à Deux, a winery Dick acquired with some fellow investors in 1995 and sold in 2004. His next wines were made at Domaine Carneros. Now Dick is intent on making a non-vintage Méthode Champenoise wine, to get the cost down for the consumer. He plans to blend his 2010 with earlier vintages, using a unique transfer process rented from Bronco Wine Company in Ceres, California where Dick regularly consults in winemaking (as well as at numerous other wineries of all sizes). The process does away with the need to riddle each individual bottle while retaining all the desirable qualities a natural fermentation in the bottle with extended yeast aging achieves.

In 2006, Dick made a still Pinot Noir from the Wrotham. The English had never made a still red wine from it because in Southeast England, where the climate is more like Champagne, it is too cold for the fruit to ripen fully. His still wine has a distinctive spice flavor. Dick certainly didn't know what to expect and it has taken time to pin it down. He first thought his Pinot Noir had a holiday spice taste, maybe clove, but a chef in Monterey has set him straight: the taste is *cardamom*. Dick says the wine goes perfectly with Christmas fare—the perfect pairing on a Christmas tree farm.

A chairman of Beaulieu, Leigh Knowles, once said to Dick, "If you stick a pin in someone, you expect blood, but put a pin in you, Dick, and wine comes up." □



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

## Jan Krupp

*Co-Proprietor*

Krupp Brothers LLC

3267 Soda Canyon Road, Napa

[kruppbrothers.com](http://kruppbrothers.com)

*6,500 case production*

When Jan Krupp graduated from Yale he thought he'd have more fun going to medical school out in California than on the East Coast, so he applied to Stanford, got in and says it really was more fun the first couple of years in that sunny and relaxed atmosphere. Once his courses changed from scientific to clinical, though, Stanford Medical School was exhausting. Jan had a professor of oncology, however, who was also a home winemaker and determined to teach Jan how to make really great wine. After his clinical rotation was done, the professor took Jan and his lab partner back to his house and commenced hands-on instruction in winemaking most successfully.

Not only did Jan thoroughly enjoy the process and begin visiting wineries like Mirassou Winery in the Santa Clara Valley and Ridge Vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and tasting well-known wines, with Ridge Monte Bello and Château Margaux as his benchmarks, but he also made home wine for fifteen years as a hobby. Besides establishing a medical practice, Jan pursued various wine-related classes at UC Davis while constantly asking his friends and colleagues about wine. In addition to Cabernet, Jan tried his hand at

Petite Sirah, Zinfandel and Pinot Noir, even a Chardonnay and won several awards along the way. In the mid-1970's he began tasting fruit in Napa Valley after buying grapes from Wine and the People in Berkeley sourced from the Fay vineyard in Napa. He next bought from Teldeschi in Sonoma and then Stag's Leap Wine Cellars in Napa.

Eventually, Jan began looking for a backyard vineyard to call his own. Although he grew up in suburban New Jersey, he loved rural life. Each summer, when he was 8, 9 and 10 years old, Jan took the train down to stay with an uncle who had a farm in Virginia and helped tend crops of vegetables and flowers. Later, Jan went to summer camp in Vermont. He just thought country life was much more pleasant. One day during a grape-sourcing trip, he found himself at lunch at Chateau Souverain overlooking its vineyard and said to himself, "Someday, I want to live like this," thinking it was a most unlikely dream. After looking at properties all over Napa Valley, an ad in the *San Francisco Chronicle* for land on Soda Canyon Road caught Jan's eye. He said it seemed too good to be true, but decided to check it out. He conferred with several consultants who liked the area but had reservations about its access. Water was also an issue. Several prospective buyers had looked at the property and given up. Unfazed, Jan bought 41 acres of brush and rock in 1991. He called in a well driller, and he and the realtor picked a spot for the well. So much water came in, Jan says, that the well driller was knocked off his seat!

There were still traces of old vines on the property. After many consultations with “several really smart farmers,” twenty-three acres of Krupp Vineyard was planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. (Jan’s farmers included Peter Nissen of Nissen Vineyard Services, Armando Ceja with Will Nord of Nord Vineyards and Peter Murphy of Ag Tech Services; initial grape stock came from Sunridge Nursery.) Jan had undertaken the project thinking to sell most of the fruit, but in 1993 there was such a tremendous amount of new Cabernet on the market it took him 50 cold calls to get three offers to buy. He sold it all except what he needed for his annual homemade wine. And when Warren Winiarski came and tasted that, he said it reminded him of Nathan Fay’s, that he was as inspired as he had been by Nathan’s homemade wine. Krupp Vineyards steadily added more grape clients to its roster and started a waiting list.

In 1995, 750 acres of an adjacent untamed wilderness came up for sale. 40 of its acres had been in vines in the 1800’s but the vineyard had been let go during Prohibition and deer had since had the run of the land. Jan says several knowledgeable vintners had already turned down the piece despite its red soil. The lunar landscape was rock strewn, with an apparent dearth of water but, invoking *The Winemaker’s Dance*, Jan says Stagecoach has the same soil as Oakville and that the “all rocks and no water” challenge was equivalent to saving patients—consulting,



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

making a plan and developing strategies. So, Jan together with his father and his brother Bart bought Stagecoach Vineyard. The well sites a geologist selected for Stagecoach gave no water at 300’ down, but a douser found an underground stream at 400’, and when the engineered wells were deepened to 400’ they, too, brought in water. In order to plant the 400-acre heart of the site, Krupp needed 26 mutual easements with abutting properties to build an access road and further maintenance and construction permits necessitated 135

more legal documents. Although the permitting took a year, the road was built in a month, and then hundreds of thousands of tons of volcanic rock were removed.

Jan’s brother Bart handles the financial planning and any supply challenges for Krupp; Jan oversees its wine programs and vineyard development. For five years, Krupp planted almost 100 acres a year. Jan would be out in the field at six, then come in to shower off the red dirt, change, and drive to his practice in



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

Pinole while telephoning Napa with what needed to be done next to develop the vineyards. Evenings he'd go out on the back balcony of his house to check on the progress of the D-9 Caterpillar tractor and confer with his brother in New Jersey. When there were 500 acres of grapes in 1998, Jan retired from his medical practice. The next year, Krupp added an adjacent 50-acre vineyard, Krupp Brothers Vineyard, to its holdings. 1999 was also the year of Krupp's first vintage under its *Veraison* label, a Cabernet Sauvignon made with Joe Cafaro at Miner Family Vineyards. Jan says, "Finally there was light at the end of the tunnel."

Currently, Krupp has sixty clients that buy ninety percent of its fruit from all three vineyards, which stretch from Atlas Peak to Pritchard Hill. Jan says Krupp owes its success today to Dick Peterson who really opened up the region to the south of Stagecoach when he established the reputation of Atlas Peak Vineyard, and to the Chappellets to the north on Pritchard Hill. Because of their altitude, the vineyards are above the fogline. Area days

are generally cooler with less heat but more sunlight than on the Valley floor and, since cold air generally sinks and rolls away, nights are warmer. After the frost of 2001, however, wind machines were installed in both Krupp and Stagecoach Vineyards—in time to dispel severe frosts in 2002 (and 2008). Esteban Llamas is Krupp's vineyard manager with viticulturalist Amy Warnock consulting and the participation of Bob Gallagher of Crop Care Associates, Inc. Krupp farms sustainably, practicing no till, its cover crops a mix of native grasses, fescues and clover. Raptor poles are in place throughout the vineyards as well as owl boxes. Irrigation is by drip and is well fed; there is no reservoir.

Tres Goetting is winemaker with Aaron Pott consulting as well as Jan. The vineyards are planted to 13 wine grape varieties including twenty-two clones of Cabernet Sauvignon that make up slightly more than half the plantings. The other half is devoted to Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Merlot, Petit Verdot; Petite Sirah; Syrah; Chardonnay, Marsanne, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier; Sangiovese; Tempranillo; Zinfandel; and a recent planting of Grenache. Dave Miner is responsible for there being Krupp Chardonnay—he really twisted Jan's arm, and Jan's late son, Joshua, was responsible for its Marsanne and Viognier. Josh had gone to UC Davis and spent three years at Fisher Vineyards as well as interning at M. Chapoutier in the Rhône before joining Krupp. He advised adding another white to the Krupp portfolio when Chapoutier had

said to plant Syrah. "*And Marsanne*," Josh had insisted, as well as Viognier, so 3.8 acres of Merlot vines were grafted over with ENTAV and Tablas Marsanne budwood in 2003 that Jan calls "fabulous." In 2004, Krupp grafted over its Sangiovese to Viognier with budwood from Pride Mountain Vineyards and the former Sonoma Grapevines. Viognier and Marsanne together with Chardonnay go into the blend, "The Bride," a popular white wine unique to Krupp. In addition to its Chardonnay, Marsanne, and The Bride, Krupp also offers a number of single red varieties as well as unique red blends.

Currently, all Krupp wines are made at Laird Family Estate, but the permitting process is underway for a winery of its own in Napa on the Silverado Trail. Jan says Krupp has been very successful, especially with its vineyard. Wine, on the other hand, follows a bumpier road and is a business one really has to work at. In pursuing that road, Jan has studied many of the 'doctors with vines and wineries' and determined that those who have done it right have been both hands-on and informed by their consults—all those "smart farmers." Jan also continues to confer with his Krupp customers and wine and business associates. Like medicine, winegrowing must be practiced. Jan has had to relinquish playing clarinet and saxophone and give up tennis to live his "unlikely dream," full-time, but he couldn't be happier and has even learned to take the occasional sales trip on the road away from Napa in his stride. ▣



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

## Rudy von Strasser

*Owner and Winemaker*

von Strasser Winery

1510 Diamond Mountain Road, Calistoga

[vonstrasser.com](http://vonstrasser.com)

*5,000 case production*

On a clear, warm day in early February on Diamond Mountain, three men were moving through vineyard blocks pruning grapevines during this interview. Napa Valley was in need of more rain, but Rudy von Strasser counseled enjoying the beautiful morning. “Whatever we get, we get, so let’s enjoy the sunshine because it certainly beats cold and uncomfortable,” and Rudy is no stranger to cold and uncomfortable winters. He grew up in New York City, where his parents met after World War II—his father had come from Austria and his mother from Hungary.

Rudy went off to college at University of New Hampshire (UNH) for a degree in Pomology because of his interest in fermented beverages—fruit wines. This was the 1970’s, after all, he dryly observes. Rudy grew up with wine on the table, usually white, and usually rather sweet but called “dry” by his father who knew what he liked and liked being known as someone who drank dry white wine, as he advised his son to always do. After UNH, Rudy came out to UC Davis to learn to make wines so he could go back home and make hard cider. While at Davis he worked at Robert Mondavi Winery in 1980. Then, with his degree in enology, went to Château Lafite Rothschild in Bordeaux as its

first intern from California. He spent the next two years at Trefethen Family Vineyards with Peter Luthi and David Whitehouse, and then two years with John Kongsgaard at Newton Vineyard. After that, Rudy felt ready to go out on his own.

He and his wife, Rita, bought their property on Diamond Mountain in 1990. 2010 was von Strasser Winery’s 21st harvest. As the von Strassers modernized and diversified the all-Cabernet plantings and added to their vineyard land, for a total of fifteen planted acres, Rudy took an active part in the formation of Diamond Mountain District AVA. He came to know a variety of small vineyards on the mountain as he grew to appreciate the specificity of the area and later embarked on leasing or buying fruit from a few neighboring vineyards. Ultimately, Rudy estimates he had ten percent of the appellation, or about 50 acres, under contract in the late 1990’s.

Two of the vineyards were in Chardonnay, the rest were red. In the 1970’s UC Davis had advised against planting red wine grapes on Diamond Mountain and recommended white wine grapes, so a lot of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling got planted. Still in disbelief, Rudy recounts Al Brounstein of Diamond Creek Vineyards being told he was crazy not to plant Riesling. Rudy did make two Chardonnays from grapes under contract, and one of them, a 2004, was *Wine and Spirits Magazine*’s top Chardonnay in California, but that vineyard was pulled because of *phylloxera* and then planted

to Cabernet. One cannot dictate to a grower what to plant if there is a 40% difference in return, Rudy cautions, since a provider wants top dollar. He says the writing was on the wall. Von Strasser production went to single vineyard Zinfandel and Cabernet and the 50 acres under contract to 40.

The von Strasser vineyards are largely no till. A year-round crew practices sustainable agriculture without specific cover crops, *per se*, just what

comes up. Vines are watered sparingly by a well fed drip irrigation system rather than reservoir. An extensive array of solar panels is in its fifth year of operation producing electricity for the property, and the winery caves Rudy drew the footprint for are now ten years old.

Von Strasser has always produced a rosé wine. Rudy is very proud of his “Eye of the Diamond” (its name a play on that ‘eye of the crow, eye of the partridge’ description of a rosé’s

color). He says, “Rosé is so personal: its color, its crispness, alcohol.”

Rudy prefers a light color with crisp fruit for his rosé and is not about to make a *wannabe* wine with big color and alcohol. At first the rosé was composed of juice drained off the red wine musts to increase their ratios of skins to juice. Then the winery decided to ferment a blend of free-run from both red and *white* musts. Eye of the Diamond is predominantly Cabernet, but it is also Sauvignon Blanc as well as Malbec, Petite Verdot, and Merlot. Yeast is added and hydrations and sugar adjusted during its fermentation in the caves at 55° for an optimum 12% to 13% alcohol. Von Strasser makes 100 to 150 cases of Eye of the Diamond. Since Rudy likes to start a tasting at the winery with something crisp and cold, he is quite partial to the rosé and may also enjoy a sip or two while cooking.

Along with continuing improvements to the physical plant, Rudy realized something more than “five Cabernets” was needed for tastings at the winery, for a better progression of wines. Rudy’s choice was to plant alternatives to Cabernet or go outside the appellation, which he wasn’t about to do. The von Strasser wine label is in the shape of a diamond; its background squiggle is the topo-line of the mountain. Rudy *had* to stay within the appellation. He knew there was already plenty of Chardonnay in California. Given his Austrian heritage and his taste in white wines, Rudy decided on Grüner Veltliner.



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

Napa Valley old-timers told him Grüner Veltliner was planted in the Valley way back when, but he could find no documentation. He went to John Caldwell (“Obscurity being John’s forte”) of Caldwell Nursery in Napa for budwood. John just happened to have some from a client in the South Atlantic, about 300 canes that had been deemed too short. This was a great start and Rudy is credited with being the first to formally grow this variety in California (he thinks there may be a dozen today). John had found an acre of Grüner Veltliner at UC Davis that had been successfully propagated from two vines Harold Olmo had brought in from Professor Moog in Germany in 1939. Rudy admits to planting the Grüner Veltliner on less than great rootstock, just what was available from the nursery at the time, *Riparia Gloire*. Another block is on I01-14. Both types are shallow rooted and need weekly waterings. Grüner Veltliner has a fairly big berry and can be a heavy bearer. Rudy prefers to crop it four tons to an acre. It ripens very early, in August, followed by his Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet, Petit Verdot and Zinfandel.

The von Strasser Grüner Veltliner is fermented cold, in the mid-50°s F in stainless steel. After fermentation and fining it is bottled. Rudy wants a taste of fruit, freshness and character. He calls Grüner Veltliner a fun variety, sexy. He says it tastes like a cross of Pinot Grigio with Riesling. It is not as fruity as Riesling, it doesn’t have the same terpene profile and should be drunk young. The first vintage of just two or three cases was in 2006. The 2007 vintage was

still less than 100, but now the winery is up to 270 or 280 cases. When asked what to serve with it, Rudy says he doesn’t believe in all those food-pairing rules, that the wine goes great with salad, with soups, appetizers—especially crab cakes and sushi, even cheese.

Rudy bemoans trying to price domestic Grüner Veltliner, especially from a single vineyard on Diamond Mountain, because there is so much Austrian Grüner Veltliner available on the market for less than twenty dollars a bottle. He definitely does not recommend planting any more of the variety in the state. Rudy says most of the visitors to the winery have never even heard of it. At \$30 to \$40 a bottle, experimentation isn’t going to happen in the marketplace; von Strasser Grüner Veltliner is only available at the winery. Rudy did submit his 2009 to the AWC International Wine Challenge in Vienna (Austria being the fatherland of Grüner Veltliner) and it won the silver medal. He hopes to take gold with the 2010.

During the week, Rudy puts in a long day that includes not only work in the winery but also helping with his kids’ homework and putting them to bed at night. Rudy also likes working out in the gym; weekends and vacations he is apt to snowboard or go hunting or fishing. He also enjoys bow shooting and teaches archery for 4H in Calistoga. Rudy really likes working with kids. He wants his own to grow up knowing how to care for vines and make wine because when they go off to college and someone hears they grew up in a winery, they better have something to say.

In addition to his winemaking for von Strasser, Rudy also derives a great deal of satisfaction from consulting as a winemaker. He says it is wonderful to make something that you don’t have to sell. He believes there is no right or wrong with wine, just choices, choices of sources of fruit or different styles of wine. Each brand has a philosophy, a style and it must have focus. Rudy describes the von Strasser wines as long-lived, not too tannic, elegant—not a blockbuster, easy to understand. □



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON



PHOTOGRAPHE: PRISCILLA UPTON

## John Williams

*Winemaker and Owner*

Frog's Leap Winery

8815 Conn Creek Road

Rutherford

frog leap.com

60,000 case production

When Frog's Leap Winery began to buy grapes from the Rossi family in St. Helena many years ago, among their blocks were two of old vine Valdiguié (once known as Napa Gamay), planted in 1949 and 1955. In the course of his wine-making career, John Williams, Frog's Leap Winery founder, owner and winemaker, spent some time touring in the south of France and a visit to Domaines Ott, known for its rosés, had stuck in his mind. When John saw the veteran head-trained vines of Valdiguié in the Rossi Vineyard, he immediately thought: *rosé*, and a rosé made *intentionally* rather than as an afterthought derived from the making of some other wine.

Frog's Leap thus initiated its rosé, choosing a name and label design to acknowledge John's inspiration for the style of the wine, and a program to fit the vines. "La Grenouille Rougante," the blushing frog, also known as "Pink," is pale salmon in color, low in alcohol, and meant to be enjoyed on a warm summer day. "How delicious," reflects John on the glowering March morning of the interview. He says a great deal of Napa rosé is made saignée: a portion of new wine is drawn off fermenting red grapes that is probably 14 to 14.5 percent alcohol in Napa

Valley. Such a profile doesn't fit John's idea of rosé. The old Valdiguié vines struggle to ripen and are usually picked at 21 to 22° Brix to keep acidity, fermented to dry at 12 percent alcohol in stainless fermenters, with an addition of a little Zinfandel but no additional yeast, filtered and bottled with a polymer cork. John says *Pink* has a little petulance, a bit of sparkle. 400 to 500 cases are made each year.

After Louise Rossi died in 2007 (her family's on-site winery was bonded in 1907; its last vintage was 1949), John bought the Rossi Vineyard, and, in John's words, "its absolutely beautiful vines," from Louise's estate. In addition to its active blocks of Cabernet, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc as well as Valdiguié, a large block that once had been in Riesling was idle. John somewhat mournfully recalls that Frog's Leap had made a Riesling, "Leapfrögmilch" with beautiful acidity, just 11 percent alcohol. But the variety's popularity waned and there were no other buyers for the fruit, so now that Riesling block lay fallow. A smaller one of just a couple of acres planted in 1978 was not going to produce enough for a table wine, but John thought it might make a dessert wine. Riesling is John's favorite white variety, and the small block near the highway ripens late. It was harvested when fully botrytised with sugar in the high 30's, low 40's B, direct pressed (not destemmed), inoculated with special German yeast and fermented in little stainless barrels. John says it is tricky to keep the wine cool yet fermentation going, and stopping fermentation is an art. Frog's Leap "Frogenbeerenauslese" has proven a great success and production from the small vine-



yard block has grown from 80 to 200 cases of 375ml bottles.

How did Riesling come to be John's favorite white variety? John was able to graduate from Cornell University thanks to a work-study program in which he alternated semesters at Cornell with Taylor Wine Company. John grew up on a dairy farm in Upstate New York. His first sip of wine was at Taylor, where he worked in every department and fell in love with wine. Spring Break of 1975, John took a bus to Napa Valley for the wine scene. Bothe State Park was too expensive, so John camped out nearby in what he took to be an abandoned farmhouse and hopped a park fence to shower. The owner of the house turned out to be a long, tall (and compassionate) guy who had just bought the farm from W.W. Lyman. Part of the property had been used for a commercial frog farm and the guy was Dr. Larry Turley. Larry was most supportive of John's intent and lent him a truck to check out UC Davis. John took a bus back to finish Cornell, then hitchhiked out to go to Davis, was introduced by Larry to Warren Winiarski at a Napa Valley Wine Library tasting at Charles Krug in 1975, and worked the bottling line at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars bottling, as it turns out, its 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon that won the Paris Tasting.

That fall, John and Larry managed to make three gallons of Frog Farm Chardonnay from Stags Leap fruit described as "three bins we snuck out." Chardonnay gave way to Zinfandel, which led to Cabernet as John finished his master's degree at Davis, and then became the first wine-



PHOTOGRAPH BY PRISCILLA UPTON

maker for Glenora Wine Cellars in Finger Lakes, New York, where he learned to make Riesling. But California lured him back, and John became head winemaker at Spring Mountain Winery for Mike Robbins in 1980, while he and Larry made more wine. Soon blown away by their success, the pair sold their motorcycles to found Frog's Leap Winery in 1981. They fixed up an old barn on Larry's property, installed tanks in 1984 and by 1994 were producing 30,000 cases of wine with visitors trooping by Larry's front door. It was

time to change things around. Larry founded Turley Wine Cellars and John took Frog's Leap to Rutherford.

In buying grapes all over Napa Valley, John had eyed an old red barn on Rutherford Cross Road that had been an active winery from 1884 to 1896, until *Phylloxera* hit and its acreage let go until a group of owners bought it in the late 1960's. Chuck Carpy was on the board of the Wine Service Cooperative with John and was one of the Red Barn Farm owners. A deal was struck in 1994 and Frog's Leap Winery in Rutherford made the first wine the red barn had made in 99 years: Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, and Zinfandel, just as it does today. Production grew to 50,000 cases and Frog's Leap really began cultivating its vineyards, paying attention to vine health, soil health and root depth.

Since 1988, all Frog's Leap vineyards have been certified organically grown, a first for Napa Valley. Today, in addition to the 40 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Zinfandel surrounding the winery in the old Red Barn, Sauvignon Blanc and Petite Sirah are grown on 50 acres off Galleron Lane in Rutherford in addition to the 52-acre Rossi Vineyard in St. Helena. John thinks the vineyard director for Frog's Leap Winery, Frank Leeds, is probably the best grape grower in Napa Valley. The vineyards he manages are all dry-farmed, a practice that is at least 150 years old in Napa Valley, and involves more than just not adding water. As Frank describes it, cover crops are incorporated into the earth in the spring,

The objective is to achieve and maintain a top layer of earth that is only earth—soft, moisture holding and insulating. In March, after pruning, canes are let fall where they may. “Cultivate, don’t irrigate,” says John. Cover crop and canes, all organic matter is turned back into the soil, and then a “dust mulch” rigorously maintained with “zero tolerance for weeds in the summer.”

Frank learned to farm from his uncle, Roy Chavez, in the family vineyard off Whitehall Lane in St. Helena. Frank, his brother and sister now own the 35-acre Chavez Leeds Vineyard that has been in the family since 1926. John says dry-farming is a big commitment on the part of the winegrower (and requires a certain terrain, water-thrifty rootstock, and sufficient rainfall). But when vines are deeply connected to the soil, John elaborates, their roots explore and vines produce berries with deep flavor at low sugar levels. Since 70 percent of Frog’s Leap production is for restaurants, acidity rules all. A new planting of Charbono in Rossi Vineyard will be head-trained as well as dry-farmed. Frog’s Leap has made very few wines over 14 percent alcohol in 31 years, and never, ever 15 percent. John expostulates, “12 ½ percent used to be full-bodied! The wines at the Paris Tasting? All dry-farmed!”

Frog’s Leap Sauvignon Blanc is 12.5 percent: crisp and minerally, pale, and John says has never been considered to be anything else. Its Chardonnay fruit from Truchard Vineyards in Los Carneros is whole-cluster pressed. Fermentation is started in stainless steel; must is then racked into oak or steel barrels, which allows the wine to



PHOTOGRAPH: PRISCILLA UPTON

ferment at different temperatures and the fevers of fermentation to develop different compounds and flavors. After sitting on its lees *untouched* until Easter (a critical period, John warns, that is otherwise much too tempting for the winemaker), the wine is filtered and bottled.

Unlike cooking, which John loves to do, in wine-making there is no cause to rush into action. If you take time to think about it in cooking, you burn it, John admits rather ruefully, whereas in winemaking, non-action is better than action. He seeks to erase any signature of winemaking.

“We spend so much time thinking about how we grow our grapes,” John reflects. “If I can focus on that rather than imputing a style of wine,” he feels successful.

The winery’s year-round crew not only works in the vineyards and winery but also in its orchards and gardens. John believes cross-training nurtures proficiencies. The house for administration and hospitality was the first in California to be LEED-certified (a green building certification system, LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The winery also takes advantage of geothermal and solar power and recycling. Using lightweight wine bottles saves on materials and shipping costs. Frog’s Leap travels to and sells wine in every state, as well as a few foreign countries. Because it is a relatively small operation, John says Frog’s Leap benefits from observing practices in other markets and countries, traveling and tasting.

When asked about the next generation, John describes his children as finding their own ways. The oldest, with a masters degree in enology from Cornell, has already started his own wine venture. In the fall, the middle child begins business school and the youngest, now with ACLU in Sacramento, starts law school. All three have grown up in the wine business—their mom also owns a winery (Tres Sabores), and John looks forward to their becoming owners of Frog’s Leap, to be part of taking a product all the way from the earth to a winemaker’s dinner in Boston and getting jazzed by the feed back. “It keeps energy up,” he says. “Wine is a pretty wonderful farm product.” □

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