# WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY

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## *HISTORY OF WINE IN AMERICA*
## A REVIEW
**by *Willard Brown***

Thomas Pinney's recently published *A History of Wine in America: From Prohibition to the Present* begins where he left off in his previous *History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition* (U.C. Press, 1989). These two volumes constitute the most comprehensive history of American wine yet written.

The author promises to provide the reader with a good deal of information not generally known or narrated in a connected way. In this, he largely succeeds, within the limits of severe selection enforced by the publisher.

The book's fourteen chapters are in chronological order, each covering a phase or era of the history as it moves forward to the present, which in this case is 2004. The following summary covers only some of the major events in the *History*, which is much richer in its prose and detail.

### In a Nutshell

The first chapter begins with the passage of the Volstead Act in October 1919. Although the Act prohibited the manufacture, transportation and import/export of intoxicating liquors, it was directed at the "traffic" in these liquors. There were no penalties for the purchase, possession, or consumption by individuals. An amendment to the Act allowed the production of up to 200 gallons of "non-intoxicating cider and fruit juices" in homes for use by the family. Although intoxicating was defined for the Volstead Act, in the amendment non-intoxicating was never properly defined. It was interpreted to mean non-intoxicating "in fact," which did not really define anything. The net effect was to consider home winemaking not to be illegal, a chain of events never anticipated by the prohibitionists, but which led to their downfall.

The immediate effect was a great demand for grapes for home winemaking, which led to a series of events including increased grape prices, increased vineyard planting and development of an infrastructure for long-distance grape delivery. The acreage of grapes in California actually doubled by 1927. For purposes of shipping grapes, the buyers favored varieties that withstood a long train trip, thus the planting of lesser wine varieties such as Alicante Bouchet; raisin and table grapes predominated.

Other exceptions to the Volstead Act pertaining to the production of commercial wine allowed some wineries to remain in business producing wine for sacramental, medicinal, or culinary purposes. Some wineries chose to produce and store wine for future use. By the time of Repeal, there was more wine in storage than at the beginning of Prohibition. In the end, Prohibition damaged the wine industry materially but did not destroy it, while actually leading to a doubling of wine consumption in the U.S.

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Prohibition was repealed by the 21st Amendment at the end of 1933. One of the principal arguments for repeal was to allow the states to regulate the trade within their jurisdictions, and this was enabled by the amendment. By the time of Repeal, the federal government wanted little to do with regulating the industry and there was no positive federal policy toward wine. What resulted was an unholy mingling of states' rights and prohibitionist forces leading to an incredible maze of state and local regulations. "This fantastic balkanization of liquor regulations is beyond question the most powerful and enduring effect of Prohibition in America" (p.49). We are still dealing with it today.

"Good American wine was a promise and not a present reality in 1934" (p.54). Degraded facilities and equipment and inexperienced winemakers were the norm. A few older surviving wineries like Beaulieu, Italian Swiss Colony, Beringer and Wente were joined by newcomers, Roma and Gallo. Fifty percent of the grapes vinted in California for wine were raisin and table grapes, and the market wanted sweet fortified wine.

There was very little acreage in premium wine grapes and no incentive to plant them since the wineries would not pay a premium. By the end of the thirties, the California wine industry was dominated by large wineries and co-operatives, and the center of the industry was at Lodi.

In the East the situation was little different. In New York, four wineries dominated production, the Concord grape was in common use, and blending with California wine was a standard practice. Eastern winemaking was in a holding mode.

Standard industrial wines were the norm in the thirties. Wine was often made in concrete tanks, without temperature control, stored in redwood tanks, and pasteurized. Barrel aging was unknown and finished wine was sent in bulk to regional bottlers. European generic names were used but meant nothing since there were no conforming standards for wine types. Marketing these wines required surmounting a maze of local regulations. "There was much wrong with the business" (p.94).

In 1934 the Wine Institute was established in California to oppose adverse legislation, support simplification of regulations, educate the public, and sponsor research. After over seventy years, the Institute has only managed to mitigate the "vexatious and arbitrary regulations on commerce" (p. 98).

Meanwhile, after the hiatus of Prohibition, wine research was resumed at the University of California campuses at Berkeley and Davis, and W.V. Cruess published his *Principles and Practices of Wine Making* in 1934. Maynard Amerine and A.J. Winkler were involved in their research that would lead to a system of regional classification by heat summation. The immediate task of the scientists was to bring American winemaking to a level of technical competence. The high quality wines of the pre- Prohibition era were a distant memory. There was no effective idea of what the fine wines of the country ought to be, and there was no public demand for better wine.

In the late thirties, overproduction of grapes and the Depression led to a crisis as grape prices fell. A marketing order was requested to stabilize the situation. During this crisis, the Wine Advisory Board was conceived to promote California wine and educate the general public. The effects were immediate.

The late thirties may have marked the low point in the history of the wine industry. Industrial wines were being produced from inferior grapes for a public ignorant of good wine and marketed through a maze of restrictive controls and arbitrary taxes.

### A Turnabout

A turnabout of sorts came in the war years. The war in Europe led to a greater exposure of California wine to the American market, particularly the restaurants and hotels in the eastern cities. American wine writer and merchant Frank Schoonmaker led a campaign to label wines with the name of the grape variety and place of origin. At this time, major American distillers entered the wine business and shortly became major players. Price controls fixed the price of wine at the highest allowable levels, lower priced brands disappeared and bottling at the winery became the norm. "The discovery that wineries could successfully sell wine of their own bottling was the major development in the industry during the war" (p.134).

After the war, the industry remained much the same as before. The emergent pattern was of large-scale production of standard blended wines, mostly fortified; and the big got bigger. The cycles of boom and bust repeated themselves and by 1950, the outlook was much like that of the thirties. Almost imperceptively, however, there was a change in one segment of the industry with the appearance of a number of small wineries devoted to the concept of quality. Martin Ray led the way for the likes of Buena Vista, Mayacamas, Freemark Abbey, Hallcrest, Stony Hill and others.

In the East, recovery was slower and less complete as the industry dealt with issues of severe weather, vine diseases and unbalanced musts requiring amelioration. *Labrusca/vinifera* hybrids continued to dominate the market and the wines were blended up to 25% with California wine. The Geneva Experiment Station in New York, however, had been working on cold adaptation of *V. vinifera* as early as 1902.

In other states, Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri, which had had significant pre-Prohibition wine

industries, recovery was slow. In Maryland Philip Wagner began importing "French hybrids," established a nursery, and disseminated cuttings to other eastern growers.

Despite signs of prosperity, "the dominant note in the wine industry through the '50s and into the '60s was one of anxiety and gloom, overproduction and collapse of prices, imbalance of raisin and wine grapes and lack of a broad based market" (p.203). Gallo and United Vintners/Allied Grape Growers were doing well. The former became the largest winery in the U.S. by 1966, and controlled over 40% of the Napa crop. They also led the way in developing new wine-based products, like Thunderbird, and other sweetened carbonated wines.

Interesting demographic changes were taking place as the population of California tripled between 1940 and 1970. In the process some traditional vineyard regions were lost or compromised, notably Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles and Cucamonga. New regions planted in replacement included San Benito, Carneros, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria and Santa Ynez.

A trend toward premium wine continued. Several wineries, Almaden, Paul Masson and Christian Brothers, found a niche between industrial and prestige wine. Hanzell Winery started commercial production in 1957 and had a great impact, far beyond its small production, by using temperature controlled stainless steel tanks and aging in French oak barrels.

By the 1960s, there was a new emphasis on glamorizing California wine with the development of wine tourism, including winery tasting rooms, tours and newsletters. "California style" (p.212) included wine drinking.

In the wineries the introduction of stainless steel tanks was the beginning of the end for redwood.

In 1967 sales of table wines exceeded those of dessert wines for the first time since Repeal. Over the next ten years a huge change in production, grape acreage and wineries took place with a concomitant reduction in dessert wine production.

Many reasons have been cited for this revolution in wine in the U.S. and indeed it was a multifaceted phenomenon. Although much of the increase in wine production was in the category of the sweetened carbonated types, there was a steady increase in table wine, much of which was white.

"The rising prosperity of the wine trade and the growing demand for wines from proper varieties at last established the price differential that was the essential pre-condition for growing better grapes" (p.232). Many newcomers from outside the wine field brought new ideas and skills to the industry.

In 1976 the Steven Spurrier tastings in Paris demonstrated that California wine had attained international stature, and a new consciousness of wine in the U.S. followed.

While most of the attention was focused on the events in California, there was a new awareness of wine in the rest of the country as well. In New York a drastic restructuring of the wine trade was taking place. It is much the story of the rise of the previously unheralded Canandaigua Wine Company which, spurred by the success of its product Richard's Wild Irish Rose, was able, over time, to acquire all of the historic four large wineries of New York. In the meantime the use of French hybrids had taken hold there, and through the efforts of Konstantin Frank and the Geneva Station, *V. vinifera* grapes were increasingly being planted, as it was learned how to deal with the vine diseases that had historically stifled their use. Eastern Long Island became a premium wine district based on those grapes. Pennsylvania and Virginia followed the lead of New York.

While *vinifera* wines were also succeeding in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona, nowhere was their success more complete than in Washington and Oregon.

Washington had been a microcosm of California where industrial wine had prevailed until the availability of irrigation in the eastern desert, and the pioneering efforts of Walter Clore at Washington State University demonstrated conclusively the suitability of Washington for the *vinifera* grape. Washington wines now have achieved international acclaim and the state is second only to California in production.

In Oregon the story was different. Starting virtually from zero, a few farsighted individuals, trained at U.C. Davis, realized there was potential in Oregon for Pinot Noir and Alsatian varieties. Overcoming climatic difficulties and skepticism, a significant industry based mostly on Pinot Noir was established. After showing well in a Paris tasting in 1979, Oregon Pinot Noir achieved an international cachet, and new investment from France, California and Australia followed.

Since the wine revolution, a number of trends have been observed. "The most marked business trend is the increasing acquisition of smaller properties by larger, the process of purchase, merger, consolidation and corporate takeover" (p.345). In the process many historic and esteemed names are gone or have been reduced to labels.

In 1976 the varietal requirement in wines was raised from 51% to 75%, and about this same time the concept of American Viticultural Areas was established. Many advances in the technology of grape and wine production occurred.

In the end "if the U.S. is not yet a wine drinking nation, it is indisputably a country in which good and interesting wine is produced and consumed" (p.369).

## Conclusion

In the most part, the author succeeds in his opening promise. Much of this information was new to me and it is unlikely that it is general knowledge among wine professionals.

There are, however, some omissions. He did not, for example, discuss the role of wine publications like Wine Spectator or of critics such as Robert Parker as arbiters of American taste in wine. Parker's name does not appear in the book at all which ignores the incredible influence he has had on the world of wine. (Although I have not read it, a book on Parker has recently been published: *The Emperor of Wine: The Rise of Robert Parker Jr.* by Elin McCoy).

Pinney says little about the phenomenon of the boutique wineries and the cult of their collectors who have driven prices to record levels, nor does he discuss the emergence of winemakers as superstars. There is little about the international style of winemaking which has resulted largely from technological improvements developed in California, and he says nothing about virtual wineries.

I would like to have seen more on the use of redwood as the storage vessel of choice before the use of French oak changed the aging of red wine and determined the modern wine style. Those of us who remember those redwood-aged wines probably have fond memories of them for they defined the California style into the seventies.

Although White Zinfandel was mentioned as a fad wine, there was no reference to the fact that it most likely spared the old Zinfandel vines from destruction, helping to create the old-vine Zinfandel movement. These omissions are most likely due to editorial constraints.

There is little to compare this book to. The only other recent general history of wine in America is *American Vintage: The Rise of American Wine* by Paul Lukacs published in 2000. His book covers American wine history from the time of Nicholas Longworth up to the present, so there is a good deal of overlap with the Pinney books. Lukacs's book is less comprehensive and emphasizes the rise of American wine since the sixties, including a lengthy section on Robert Parker. Pinney's books are more scholarly; Lukacs's more journalistic as he is a wine columnist. Both men are professors of English. The Lukacs book would be a good supplement to Pinney's two.

Overall I believe that this is the best book on the history of American wine ever written, although I wish it were longer since it is the standard reference on the subject. It is meticulously researched and documented. There are 109 pages of endnotes and 25 pages of sources and works cited, in addition to the 369 pages of text. The endnotes, which are almost as interesting to read as the text, are crammed with information. There are virtually no errors in the material with which I am most knowledgeable. The author relied heavily on original sources, specialty journals, oral histories and archives. His command of his material is complete and he is equally comfortable in the areas of wine technology, historical geography and economics, as he is in history. Although the text is narrative it is consistently supported by the author's insightful analyses.

This book should appeal to anyone interested in wine and ought to be mandatory reading for wine professionals.

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## "A WINE MAN OF THE '60s"
### Will Brown's Story

I arrived in California in 1960 after growing up in a part of Ohio where there was no tradition of wine drinking. In Cincinnati I was introduced to better wine by a medical school professor in 1954, when I was served Almaden Grenache Rosé and Vouvray at a luncheon. If there was a turning point in my life, it was on that day. After reading virtually every book on wine in the Cincinnati Public Library, I made the decision to get to California as soon as possible.

Later, living in the San Francisco Bay Area, I traveled frequently to the wine country at a time when an airplane could have landed on Highway 29 in the Napa Valley without attracting much attention. I became friendly with Leon Brendel, the proprietor of Only One Winery in St. Helena. When Brendel decided to retire, he actually asked me whether I had any interest in buying his eight acres of Grignolino grapes, garage winery, and small house for the sum of twenty-eight thousand dollars. Destitute as I was as a medical resident in training, I was unable to take advantage of his offer. Joe Heitz became the beneficiary of that opportunity.

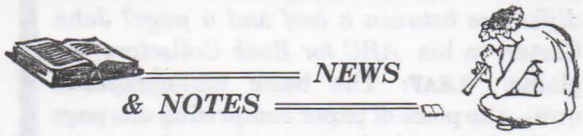
In 1963, I decided to try winemaking at home. When I advertised for equipment, I had a response from Fred McCrea at Stony Hill, where I was treated to lunch accompanied by his Chardonnay, although I did not buy his

equipment. I subsequently found several items at Mayacamas, and a fine press from a woman whose father had made wine during Prohibition. Knowing little about winemaking, I took a class at U.C. Davis where I first met Maynard Amerine, and I remember well his lamenting to the class that dessert wines still dominated California production. Needing a supply of grapes, I called the Charles Krug Winery to inquire about availability. I was told that I would have to talk to Bob (Mondavi). I was able to purchase Zinfandel that year for about $50 / ton, sourced from the ToKalon Vineyard. For several years after that I bought grapes from Bob even after he opened his own winery. During the "wine revolution" of the late 1960s, grapes became so expensive that I stopped making wine after the 1969 vintage.

In 1967 I had met Dick Erath in the Delivery Room at the East Bay hospital I was associated with. That was another turning point, as Dick told me that he was moving to Oregon to grow grapes and make wine. When I rejoined that he couldn't do that in Oregon, he told me about Richard Sommer, David Lett, and Charles Coury. I visited Dick and Charles Coury a few years later and decided to relocate to Oregon myself. About twenty years passed before I took up home winemaking again. By this time Dick Erath had become established as one of Oregon's leading winemakers, and Oregon had become one of the premier Pinot Noir regions of the world.

After retiring from medical practice, I had the time to do some things I had always wanted to do. I took up the study of wine history, and found a job in a winery as a cellar-rat. Now, several years later, I am still working in the winery, although in a more technical capacity. Meanwhile, through distance education and the Internet, I have become a candidate for a Certificate in Winemaking at U.C. Davis—forty years after I took my first class there. As Tom Pinney might say, *plus ca change*. One of these days I hope to get back to working on a history of Oregon wine I started a few years ago that has been on hold while I pursue my long-held dream of actually becoming a real winemaker.

*[Will Brown has been an enthusiastic Tendril since he joined us some five years ago, and has contributed several significant articles to our Quarterly on the subject of Northwest wine books and periodicals. Recently, Will has spearheaded the formation of a wine library at Southern Oregon University, Ashland. His passion for wine, its history, and its literature is deeply appreciated.* — Ed.]



## *NEWS & NOTES*

### *CONGRATULATIONS, TENDRILS!*

With this issue of our Wayward Tendrils Quarterly, we celebrate 15 years of publication! Your editor sends sincerest thanks to all Tendrils for their support and contributions to this, the only journal on the literature of wine. As our late friend and Tendril Bill Dickerson reminded us: "that old French saying 'good Tendrils make good wines' or something like that." Cheers to all!

We **Welcome, new Tendril, David Johnson** (Mill Valley, CA, djcs@sbcglobal.net), who has been collecting English language wine books for some 30 years.

### Resources for Book Conservation

In reply to our notes on book care last issue, Danette Cook Adamson (Cal Poly State University Library, Special Collections) sent us the following note: A website containing excellent information on all aspects of book and paper conservation is "Conservation On Line: Resources for Conservation Professionals." http//palimpsest.stanford.edu.

### The World of Fine Wine

is a fine new publication from London, issued bimonthly, under the direction of Editorial Adviser **Hugh Johnson**, and featuring the world's foremost wine writers. A sample taste: **Erik Skovenborg**'s "Vinexlibris—Bookplates with a Wine Motif" appeared in Issue 4–2005, and in the latest issue (No.7–2005) is "George Saintsbury: The Man and His Glass" by fellow Tendril and London Professor of Rhetoric, **Kathleen Burk**. Check the website for subscription information: www.finewinemag.com.

### John Thorne-Bookseller

is on-line! John's venerable "Books on Wines, Beers & Spirits" has been a mail-order-only business. Check his website at www.liquidliterature.co.uk.

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### Winery ARCHITECTURE Books

When **James Gabler** published the second edition of his *Wine into Words* (2004) and included a Subject Index, "winery architecture books" did not merit a listing as only one volume qualified: Dirk Meyhöfer and Olaf Gollnek produced in 2000 a lavishly illustrated, large-format work, *The Architecture of Wine. Bordeaux and Napa Valley* (eight châteaux and twelve Napa wineries are featured, with the text in English, German, and French–see Gabler, p.255). But in the past year or so winery and wine country architecture has become a very popular subject in the wine book world, with several notable new releases. *Wineries with Style* by Peter Richards (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2004. 192 pp. 11¾" x 9¼". ~$30) See WTQ Vol.15 #3, p.3 for a brief notice. *Wine Country Architecture and Interiors* by Mary Whitesides, with a Foreword by architect Howard Backen (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2004. ~$25), features 18 homes and wineries in the Napa / Sonoma wine country. *Wineries / Bodegas: Architecture and Design* by Hans Hartje & J. Perrier (HK Books, 2005. ~$25) is stunning. *Beautiful Wineries of the Wine Country* [Northern California]—photographs by Chuck O'Rear, text by Thom Elkjer, Jennifer Barry Design (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2005, ~$10). *Adventurous Wine Architecture* by Michael Webb, with spectacular color photography by Erhard Pfeiffer (Images Publishing, 2005. 204 pp. 11¼" x 11¼". ~$40).

### *CALLING ALL TENDRILS!*

**John Danza** is seeking information on the hard bound "annuals" published by the Wine & Food Society. These volumes consisted of the four quarterlies (Wine & Food - A Gastronomic Quarterly) of the organization, all bound in a single volume. He is looking for as much detailed information as possible about each volume including color of binding, style and color of imprint on the covers and spine, color and number of front and rear free end papers, title and index pages, and any other distinguishing information. This will be used to document the history of the volumes and what company(ies) bound them. Please contact John at jdanza@wideopenwest.com.

### FOR BOOK LOVERS

**Fine Books & Collections** is a splendid magazine for "both the professional book collector and the casual bibliophile." Formerly known as OP—Book Culture, Collectors & Commerce, this bi-monthly has added to its prestigious staff of columnists Nicholas Basbanes, acclaimed author of *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books* (New York, 1995) and Joel Silver, Curator of Rare Books at the Lilly Library, who will have a column entitled "Beyond the Basics." Check their website: www.finebooksmagazine.com.

### Bacchus Books Ltd

is a new "dedicated wine book service offering new and (eventually) second-hand books to wine lovers, although probably more for the wine enthusiast than the wine-book enthusiast initially," announced proprietor and Tendril **Richard Pepper**. The infant website is www.bacchusbooks.com. We wish the new venture well. (Please note that Bacchus Books is not connected to Bacchus Press, the publishing house of **James Gabler**.)

### Okanagan Wine Country

Kudos to John Schreiner! On a recent visit to Canada's spectacular Okanagan Valley in British Columbia, Schreiner's books served us well. His *Wineries of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Whitecap, 2004) and *British Columbia Wine Country* (Vancouver: Whitecap, 2004) are highly recommended to anyone wanting to explore this "new" wine scene.

### WTQ *INDEX*

for Volumes 11 – 15 (2001 – 2005) will be ready for mailing with the January 2006 issue.

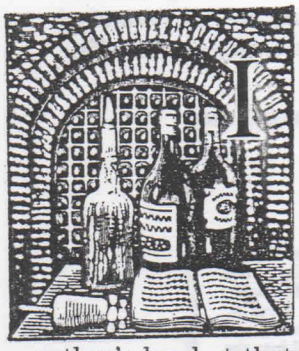
### A LEAF, OR A PAGE?

A fellow Tendril recently asked: *What is the difference between a leaf and a page*? John Carter, in his *ABC for Book Collectors*, explains: "LEAF: The basic bibliographical unit—the piece of paper comprising one page on its front side (recto) and another on its back (verso)." He continues: "The inaccurate and slovenly misuse of *page* for *leaf* (e.g. 'The verso of p.73') appears to be on the increase and should be pilloried when found." Roy Stokes, in his *Bibliographical Companion*, defines PAGE: "A page is one side of a leaf which, in its turn is the basic unit of the body of the book. A leaf consists of two pages, the recto, which is the right-hand one of the pair which are visible at the opening of a book, and the verso, which is the left-hand one of the facing pair at an opening. ... A page cannot be removed from a book, only a leaf; a page cannot be torn but a leaf can."

## THE IMPORTANCE OF EPHEMERA

by ***John Danza***

*"...it's our honor to have a look inside."*



I don't just collect wine books. Sure, that's what they look like sitting on the shelf, organized, with their spines arranged in perfect alignment. But to me, they are not just books. They are pieces of history, both the author's and the previous owner's. The words on the page are the thoughts going through the author's head at that particular moment 50, 60, 80 years ago. No, I don't just collect wine books. I collect pieces of someone's life—and this has led me to collecting ephemera.

Ephemera is that body of written work that was never meant to last—documents that were intended to be discarded after they conveyed their information. Things like letters, pamphlets, and inserts fall into this category. But when I think of wine books as a piece of someone's life, it is the ephemera relating to that book that provides a life-entering window. It allows me to see into that point in time to understand either what the author was thinking at the time or why the subject of the book came to be as it did.

I would like to illustrate how ephemera has made some of my books come to life for me. The four examples involve either something about the volume, something about the subject, or both. All involve André Simon in one way or another, as his works and activities are the focal point of my collection.

***A Concise Encyclopedia of Gastronomy – Section VIII: Wine. Beer. Cider. Spirits.***
(London: The Wine & Food Society, 1946)

This book, one of an eight-volume series published by The Wine & Food Society throughout the 1940s under the editorial guidance of André Simon, addresses all sorts of topics on wine, spirits, and cocktails. In general, the book provides information not only on the beverages themselves but also the origins of the drinks, ingredients, and the like.

Separately from my copy of *Wine*, I acquired (in a manner that escapes me after a number of years) a letter written by André Simon to a Major M. Connolly. Dated 27 September 1945, the letter reads in part: "Dear Major Connolly, Many thanks for your little note of the 22nd, received to-day. I have just received from the printers the final proof of 'WINES' which I enclose as promised in the hopes that you will find time to go through it once more whilst there is time to make corrections."

André goes on to say, "I am anxious not to keep Curwen [Press] waiting too long so that there may be copies out by Christmas. 'VINTAGEWISE' will be out on the 22nd October and a copy will be sent to you which you can give to a friend at Christmas if you wish."

The back of the letter is filled with editing notes, hand-written in pencil by Major Connolly, on the changes he is suggesting to the text of the book. These consist mostly of spelling and grammatical corrections, with a couple of suggestions on the modification of the contents.

What a marvelous find a letter like this is for the understanding of the creation of this book, and also for what was happening in the life of André Simon in the autumn of 1945.

First, we realize that Major Connolly made a significant contribution to the book in that he edited it at least twice ("go through it once more"). Interestingly though, his activity is not acknowledged in the foreword of the final work.

Second, we can see into the workload of André Simon at a point in time when he was very prolific as an author. He notes that *Vintagewise* (London: Michael Joseph, 1945) will be out shortly. This was an important volume to André, in that it tied him back to George Saintsbury, whose work influenced André's life. As a book collector, the letter also tells me that there is a copy, probably signed but almost certainly not inscribed (how could it then be given away?) that went from Simon to Connolly and then possibly a third party. Anyone know of a signed copy with an inscription from Connolly?

***The Saintsbury Club. A Scrapbook by 'The Cellarer'***
(London: The Curwen Press, 1943)

A delightful little book, printed in a limited edition of only 200 copies, recounts the then twelve-year history of The Saintsbury Club. This dining club was founded in 1931 by André Simon and friends as a tribute to literary critic and professor George Saintsbury. It was Saintsbury's only wine book, *Notes on a Cellar-Book* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1920), that influenced the social activity of these men in the 1920s and 1930s. Still in existence today, the Club has always been very exclusive, being limited to a mere fifty members. The membership has typically been composed of literary people, accounting for the occasional publications issued by the Club of their activities. This publication, in particular, gives a description of the Club's founding.

I have always been fascinated by The Saintsbury Club and their activities, particularly because of their

exclusivity. The publications, primarily pamphlets of their "orations"—the speech given by a member at a dinner—are always printed in limited quantities of less than 200. Imagine my excitement when earlier this year I was offered a collection of ephemera relating to the founding of the club! I eagerly accepted the offer.

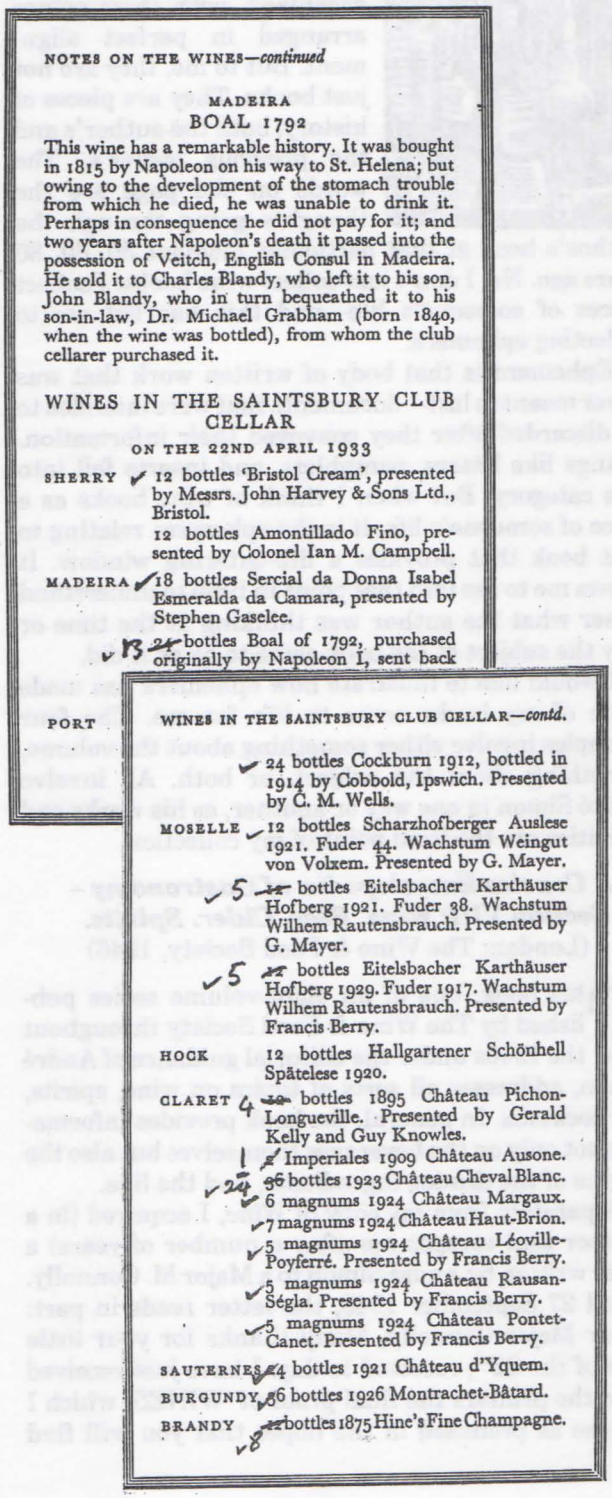
The ephemera I received was truly a treasure trove for me. Included was the personal scrapbook kept by A.J.A. Symons on the founding and early activities of the Club. For those of you not familiar with A.J., he was a close personal friend of André Simon and co-founder of The Saintsbury Club and The Wine & Food Society. He was known to keep scrapbooks of his many interests, as noted in his biography *A.J.A. Symons—His Life and Speculations* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950) written by his brother Julian Symons.

The scrapbook's first page contains the invitation that was sent to a number of men for the tribute dinner planned in Saintsbury's honor on 28 May 1931. This dinner was a precursor to the Club itself. Following the invitation is a one-page clipping from the June 5th 1931 edition of The Wine Trade Review giving details of the dinner with a full quote of the toast given by André Simon. In this toast is the suggestion of a club, which ultimately led to the founding of The Saintsbury Club.

The next few pages of the scrapbook contain clippings from a variety of newspapers throughout the U.K. announcing the formation of the new club. The clippings all date from July 31st 1931, so the founders clearly were using their literary network to get the word out. The London Star accentuated that this was an all-male club: the title of their article is "Wine & Song Club," with a sub-heading, "But Women will not be Admitted."

The most exciting pieces of ephemera in the scrapbook are laid-in between the center pages: original copies of the menu and wine list from the May 1931 tribute dinner; the 1931 "Objects and Rules" pamphlet of the Saintsbury Club with a list of officers (printed by Curwen Press); and menus and wine lists from the first five meetings of the Club. These menus note the date and location of the meeting, who chaired it, the subject and speaker of the evening's toasts; the food and wine served, with detailed notes on the wines written by André Simon; and a list of Club members.

Once again, ephemera has made the topic of a book come alive. In addition to reading about the history of the Saintsbury Club's founding in a book written twelve years later, I can just about watch the creation through A.J.'s scrapbook. I can even glimpse some of his personal activity in the Club operations as the Club secretary. The menu of the fourth meeting, held on 25 April 1933, has the most interesting notations. On the printed list of the contents of the Club cellar, A.J. has checked off and corrected the number of bottles for each of the entries. On the list of members, he has kept a tab of who attended the dinner, who brought guests and how many, how many dinners needed to be paid for, and how many bottles were used from the cellar. You can't get any closer to this affair unless you attended it yourself!



NOTES ON THE WINES—*continued*

MADEIRA
BOAL 1792

This wine has a remarkable history. It was bought in 1815 by Napoleon on his way to St. Helena; but owing to the development of the stomach trouble from which he died, he was unable to drink it. Perhaps in consequence he did not pay for it; and two years after Napoleon's death it passed into the possession of Veitch, English Consul in Madeira. He sold it to Charles Blandy, who left it to his son, John Blandy, who in turn bequeathed it to his son-in-law, Dr. Michael Grabham (born 1840, when the wine was bottled), from whom the club cellarer purchased it.

WINES IN THE SAINTSBURY CLUB CELLAR
ON THE 22ND APRIL 1933

SHERRY ✓ 12 bottles 'Bristol Cream', presented by Messrs. John Harvey & Sons Ltd., Bristol.
12 bottles Amontillado Fino, presented by Colonel Ian M. Campbell.

MADEIRA ✓ 18 bottles Sercial da Donna Isabel Esmeralda da Camara, presented by Stephen Gaselee.
✓ 13 ~~24~~ bottles Boal of 1792, purchased originally by Napoleon I, sent back

PORT

WINES IN THE SAINTSBURY CLUB CELLAR—*contd.*

✓ 24 bottles Cockburn 1912, bottled in 1914 by Cobbold, Ipswich. Presented by C. M. Wells.

MOSELLE ✓ 12 bottles Scharzhofberger Auslese 1921. Fuder 44. Wachstum Weingut von Volxem. Presented by G. Mayer.
✓ 5 ~~12~~ bottles Eitelsbacher Karthäuser Hofberg 1921. Fuder 38. Wachstum Wilhem Rautensbrauch. Presented by G. Mayer.
✓ 5 ~~12~~ bottles Eitelsbacher Karthäuser Hofberg 1929. Fuder 1917. Wachstum Wilhem Rautensbrauch. Presented by Francis Berry.

HOCK 12 bottles Hallgartener Schönhell Spätelese 1920.

CLARET 4 ~~10~~ bottles 1895 Château Pichon-Longueville. Presented by Gerald Kelly and Guy Knowles.
1 ~~2~~ Imperiales 1909 Château Ausone.
✓ 24 ~~36~~ bottles 1923 Château Cheval Blanc.
✓ 6 magnums 1924 Château Margaux.
✓ 7 magnums 1924 Château Haut-Brion.
✓ 5 magnums 1924 Château Léoville-Poyferré. Presented by Francis Berry.
✓ 5 magnums 1924 Château Rausan-Ségla. Presented by Francis Berry.
✓ 5 magnums 1924 Château Pontet-Canet. Presented by Francis Berry.

SAUTERNES ✓ 4 bottles 1921 Château d'Yquem.

BURGUNDY ✓ 6 bottles 1926 Montrachet-Bâtard.

BRANDY ✓ 8 ~~12~~ bottles 1875 Hine's Fine Champagne.

***Wine and Food. A Gastronomical Quarterly***
**Number 8 – Winter 1935**
(London: The Wine & Food Society, 1935)

A regular feature of the Wine and Food quarterlies was a section called "Memorable Meals," where several very interesting private meals were recounted in each issue. In this particular one, there is a September lunch hosted by Dr. & Mrs. George C. Williamson—a celebration of sorts for the recent recoveries from illness by the hosts. It was a rather opulent lunch, with five courses and six wines, along with cognac. Of particular interest is the 1858 Steinberg Cabinet from Germany. Maurice Healy, who wrote the article, spends a couple of paragraphs on the wine. This was certainly a lunch that would cause you to skip dinner, but otherwise that's where the story ends. That is until my wife bought me a birthday gift a couple of years ago.

My gift was a set of six Wine and Food hard-bound annuals dated from 1934 through 1939. They are from the library of the same Dr. Williamson[1], with his bookplate in each one. It turns out that Dr. Williamson kept documentation about the lunch in 1935, and he enclosed it in the 1935 bound annual.

Tipped-in at the back is a series of letters written to Dr. Williamson by the attendees of the lunch. There are letters of acceptance of the invitation to the lunch and letters of gratitude afterwards. There are several letters from Maurice Healy written before and after, including the letter in which Healy talks about submitting the lunch for a "Memorable Meal." He asks for detail about the food and wine, and there are hand-written notes by Williamson listing the courses and wines. There is also a letter from Karl Sichel (with an introductory note from André Simon who solicited the letter from Sichel), relating the fascinating story behind the 1858 Cabinet.

Here the ephemera has laid out how the lunch came together and how it eventually ended up being published in the Wine and Food Quarterly. Clearly, Dr. Williamson planned the lunch around the 1858 Steinberg Cabinet, and all of the attendees viewed it as the "guest of honor." Dr. Williamson was the senior of all these men and was a direct advisor to them during the founding of The Saintsbury Club and The Wine & Food Society. The tone of their letters to him shows they all had a deep admiration of him and were close friends. This was definitely a memorable meal for all of the participants.

***Wine and Food. A Gastronomical Quarterly***
**Number 23 – Autumn 1939**
(London: The Wine & Food Society, 1939)

This last example of how ephemera can put a perspective on a book is about as serious as they come. The fourth number of the 1939 Wine and Food Quarterly is interesting, as always, but contains nothing that makes it any more remarkable than the others. That was my opinion until a little slip of pink paper fell out of it.

The pink insert carries a simple, but chilling message: "This issue of the Quarterly was printed before the outbreak of war, and members of the Society will readily understand that the Autumn programme outlined in the Editorial article has now been cancelled. Members will be advised of the Society's proposed war-time activities as soon as circumstances allow a programme to be drafted; in the meantime they can rest assured that the Quarterly will, if humanly possible, reach them as before."

Sorry if this sounds overly dramatic, but the Quarterly editor (Simon) and the W. & F. Society Advisory Council couldn't have foreseen the six years of war ahead of them, and the danger they would be exposed to in the London bombings throughout the war. The hindsight of 65 years allows the view of post-publication developments and how the concern about the upcoming program of events would ultimately prove to be not particularly important.

These are just a few examples in which ephemera associated with a wine book has given the book a third dimension. The authors and subjects show us the background of their work, and it's our honor to have a look inside. It's important that we collect this information not only for its insight, but also for its preservation for the future.

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1. Dr. George Charles Williamson (1858–1942) was an avid book collector, and author of a number of books on a variety of subjects, including two devoted to wine. In 1923 he wrote *Shakespeare's Wine-Book* [William Turner's *New Boke of the Natures & Properties of all Wines*] in which he contends that Shakespeare used Turner as his reference book on wines. *An Old Monastic Cellar Book*, published in 1930, was done at the request of André Simon, who asked him to interpret a 14th century cellar book from Bavaria—a "document of great historic value." Dr. Williamson was an esteemed member of The First Edition Club, a book collecting club founded by A.J.A. Symons, and of three dining clubs: The Wine & Food Society, The Saintsbury Club, and Ye Sette of Odd Volumes.

## NOTES FROM A DEPLETED LIBRARY
by
***Christopher Fielden***

*[James Gabler, in the 2nd edition of* Wine Into Words (2004), *allots almost a full page to British wine author (and avid wine book collector) Christopher Fielden. In* Is This the Wine You Ordered, Sir? The Dark Side of the Wine Trade (1989), *Fielden admits, "The drinking of wine is only part of the whole pleasure. For me reading about it is another, and the collection of old wine books on the subject yet another." In 2003 Fielden donated his 30-year collection of wine books to the Institute of Masters of Wine.* — Ed.]

Having cleared my shelves of wine books, I now find that they are filling up again. The main difference, however, is that while once it was antiquarian books that dominated, now it is new ones. As a wine writer, I am finding it more and more difficult to find new topics to write about. (It may be that what I have to say is less attractive to publishers.) Nevertheless, wine knowledge is infinite and there are always writers seeking to fill a chink in that infinity.

### *Wines of Lebanon*

One of the most interesting new books to come my way is *Wines of Lebanon* by Michael Karam (London: Saqi Books, £25). This is a beautiful book with the text, written by a Beirut-based journalist, complemented by the wonderful photographs of Norbert Schiller. Apart from a brief transit stop at Beirut, I have never been to Lebanon, and my experience of its wines is limited. However, I will be going there before the end of the year—how useful will this book be to me? On the positive side, the book is strong on the background to the country's wine industry and the companies that make it up. On the negative side, the approach is overly lyrical for my taste. I would have welcomed more facts and statistics. Sadly, the book does not even contain a map of the country to show where the wineries are situated. To sum up, it is an interesting, and attractive, but non-essential addition to anyone's wine library.

### *The Wine Regions of France*

At the other extreme is the new Michelin Green Guide, *The Wine Regions of France* (Michelin Travel Publications, $21.95). This is crammed full of information for the wine tourist; not just information on the individual regions and their wineries, but also on local attractions and where best to eat and stay. Its purchase price can swiftly be recouped by sleeping in the many *chambres d'hôtes* (bed and breakfasts) it recommends, rather than in the hotels proposed by the traditional red Michelin guide. This is the most detailed guide that I have come across to wine tourism in France. I would recommend all to buy it.

### *The Vineyards of England & Wales*

Even though there are now more than three hundred active vineyards in Britain, wine tourism here is in its infancy. A useful introduction is *The Vineyards of England & Wales 2005 Guide* edited by Colin Vaughan, Tim Hazell and Michael Hildesley. (Petworth: Wine Guild of the United Kingdom, £3.99). The guide contains background articles on what we can offer by such as Maggie McNie MW, Richard Bampfield MW, and Professor Andrew Shaw. It has detailed profiles of the more important (or is it more commercial) vineyards, and useful maps to show where they are located. The contents seem, at times, to be somewhat random, but this book represents great value for money.

### *Wine Report 2006*

For the lover of the esoteric, and often trivial, but also the essential in the world of wine, I would strongly recommend *Wine Report 2006* edited by Tom Stevenson (London: Dorling Kindersley, £9.99). This is now in its third year and goes from strength to strength. (I must declare an interest as I am a minor contributor, as is Michael Karam on the wines of Lebanon.) Jancis Robinson has described this wine guide as "absolutely fascinating" and I think that sums it up. Tom has assembled a team of specialists to report not just on the front-line regions of the wine world such as Bordeaux, Burgundy, California, and Australia, but also on such backwaters as Missouri, Ecuador, and Thailand. In the next edition, the aim is to cover the whole world of wine! Tit-bits of news are mixed-in with informed comment and lists of the experts' favourite wines and wineries. There are a thousand and one nights of information within its covers but you have to absorb them within the next 365!

### *Sotheby's Wine Encyclopedia*

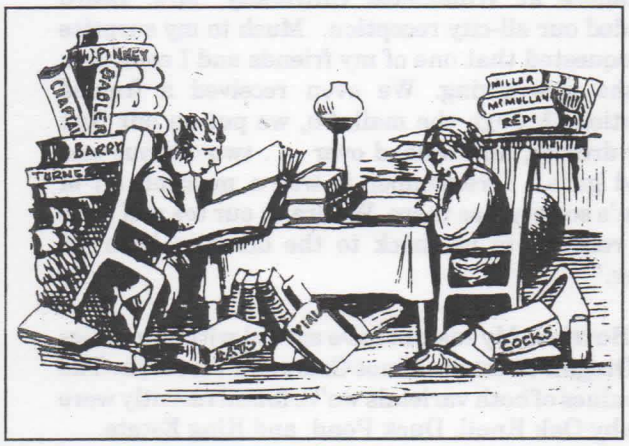
Also from Tom Stevenson this autumn is a new edition (4th) of *Sotheby's Wine Encyclopedia* (London: Dorling Kindersley, £35). This is an invaluable work of reference that I keep by my side. Here the opinions expressed are definitely those of the author and him alone. Overall he is happy that the quality of wine is upwardly mobile. As he says in his Introduction, "Despite deleting hundreds of previously recommended producers there are now in excess of 6,000 wineries recommended over the following pages. I have never upgraded the star ratings of so many producers in any revision than I have for the California chapter in this edition." One of the joys for any reader is to match your appreciation of any winery

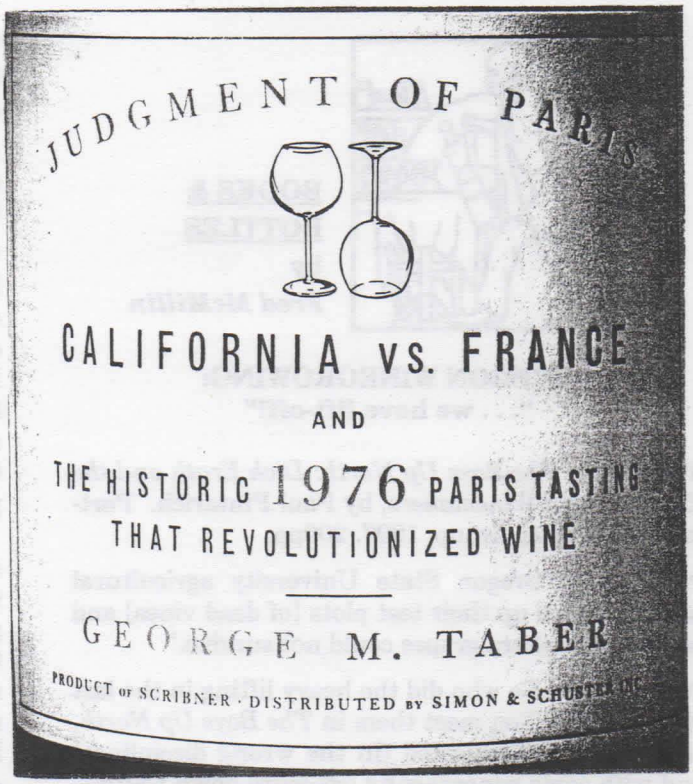
against that of the author. Whilst I do not always agree with what he says, I respect it.

On the other hand, he is damning of organic wine producers. "To be frank, I had no idea how bad the situation was when I first decided to use symbols to identify recommended organic and biodynamic wine producers.... While they may well have a true passion for the environment, the majority of the world's organic producers clearly have no idea how to make a superior quality wine."

### *Les Vins de Bourgogne*

Finally, I would like to recommend the new edition of another longstanding work of reference for me: *Les Vins de Bourgogne* (Beaune: Collection Pierre Poupon, e23). This is the 13th edition of a book that first appeared under the names of Pierre Poupon and Pierre Forgeot in 1952. (There are also non-concurrent editions in English, German and Japanese.) Now it is in the hands of the next generation, Sylvain Pitiot and Jean-Charles Servant. For those interested in statistics and legislation on Burgundian wines, this book is essential. Each edition lists all the different appellations of the region (and it seems that there are now 690 of them) and has detailed maps. I find it fascinating that one of the reasons for the collapse of the French wine industry is confusion in the mind of the consumer, yet in each new edition, new appellations appear. Also of interest is how the area under vines, yields and total production figures have rocketed in the past forty years. This book gives no names of producers and no comments on the quality of individual wines. Notwithstanding this, it lays bare the nature of the regions and its problems, both actual and potential.




***NEW RELEASE — A STUNNING WINNER!!***

***Judgment of Paris: California vs. France and the Historic 1976 Paris Tasting that Revolutionized Wine,*** by George M. Taber. New York: Scribner, 2005. 327 pp. Cloth. $26.

This book came to our attention just as we were going to press, so plan on a full review in our next issue, but for now—find the book and buy it! The author of this fantastic book, George Taber, then Paris correspondent for Time magazine, was the only reporter present at this legendary tasting. In his book, he recounts the "illuminating and deeply satisfying" story of the pioneering Napa Valley winemen—Mike Grgich and Jim Barrett of Chateau Montelena, and Warren Winiarski of Stag's Leap Wine Cellars—and their wines, Chateau Montelena 1973 Chardonnay and Stag's Leap 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon, that soundly defeated France's best. "With unique access to the main players and contagious passion for his subject, Taber renders this historic event and its tremendous aftershocks in captivating prose, bringing to life an eclectic cast and magnificent settings." (dustjacket) It is an incredibly good read!

**BOOKS & BOTTLES**
**by**
***Fred McMillin***

## OREGON WINEGROWING: ". . . we have lift-off!"

**The Book:** *The Boys Up North: Dick Erath and the Early Oregon Winemakers*, by Paul Pintarich. Portland: TheWyatt Group, 1997. 200pp.

PROLOGUE: "Oregon State University agricultural experts pulled up their test plots [of dead vines] and concluded vinifera grapes could not survive."

THE LIFT-OFF: So who did the heavy lifting in the last four decades? You meet them in *The Boys Up North.* Most were well-educated (in the wrong disciplines) and with some winegrowing exposure down south—California. Pioneers Dick Erath, Dave Lett, and the boys had a contagious infection called "pathological optimism" that resulted in the state having the second most wineries in the USA by 1996.

THE BOYS: Here's a look at some of these dedicated leaders ...

▪ DICK ERATH. Dick took some of his Willamette Valley wine to a meeting in France to compare notes with some of their winegrowers—who acted very reserved and stand-offish. Dick had been getting fine advice in Oregon from the legendary André Tchelistcheff—so, somewhat mischievously, Dick began handing out André's business cards. "When they saw the name they smiled and threw their arms around me. They couldn't have been nicer after that."

▪ RICHARD SOMMER (U.C. Davis: Agriculture, not Enology). Richard's pre-Erath winery was located south of the Willamette Valley, in Roseburg. It was he who originated the phrase "the boys up north" as the newcomers did not join him but instead planted near the Willamette River. Richard himself had picked quite a spot for growing grapes. One peer mused: "Imagine Sommer starting in Roseburg—a rough logging town where a carload of drunks might drive up the road to your winery at three in the morning."

▪ DAVID LETT (degrees in Philosophy and pre-Med). "He was hit by a cosmic brick," is the way Lett's son explains his dad's optimism. However, David, a very serious fellow, admits "I suffer fools badly ... [but we] curmudgeons have a way of getting things done" — particularly at his highly-praised Eyrie Vineyards.

▪ BILL FULLER (degrees in Math, Chemistry, Physics). A native Californian, he recalls "I brought in some grapes from Washington State and Dave Lett raised all kinds of hell."

▪ RICHARD PONZI (degree in Mechanical Engineering). Prior to establishing the Willamette Valley vineyard closest to Portland, Richard's main claim to fame was designing the "world's largest merry-go-round for Disneyland ... 100 horses." During Richard's early family days in Detroit, he remembers his father making wine from grapes that arrived by train from California. In an understatement, he says when he planted his first vines in 1970, "I was no farmer."

A PERSONAL ASIDE: I have to add my own Oregon connection. My mother was the first woman to graduate from Willamette University with a degree in Chemistry. (We teased her that she passed only by marrying her Chemistry professor, my dad.) Mother also had a rare experience of gastronomic interest. Many regard James Beard as the "American apostle of cookery." My wife took cooking lessons from him for eight years in his Manhattan townhouse; we even had him for dinner once in our home. And of all things, we discovered there was a tie between his mother and mine. In his *Delights and Prejudices*, Beard wrote that his mother, who ran a hotel-restaurant in Portland, had an uncanny ability to serve dishes with a revolutionary international flavor. He added, "She was ahead of her time socially as well. Instead of being subordinate, Elizabeth Beard swept through a room or down the street with an air of determination and authority." My mother wrote in 1915: "When I was a sophomore at Willamette University, Mrs. Beard attended our all-city reception. Much to my surprise she requested that one of my friends and I come to a tea she was giving. We even received a framed invitation through the mail. So, we put on our best party dresses, and walked over . . . two curious and scared girls. I remember it was a musical; all of Salem's society was there. We drank our tea and were both relieved to get back to the dorm in time for dinner."

**The Bottles:** My tasters have agreed with the critics that Oregon's best are Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir. The best values of both varietals we've found recently were made by Oak Knoll, Duck Pond, and King Estate.

[*Congratulations to our indefatigable wine educator and award-winning columnist, Fred McMillin, on his 15 years of dedicated "Books & Bottles" contributions to our W-TQ! With grateful appreciation.* — Your Editor]

## IN THE WINE LIBRARY

by *Bob Foster*

*"you have to read this book"*

***The Emperor of Wine: The Rise of Robert M. Parker, Jr. and the Reign of American Taste*** by Elin McCoy. New York: HarperCollins, 2005. 342 pp. Cloth. $25.95.

Whether you're a devotee of wine critic Robert Parker or someone who finds his reviews seriously out of line and his influence on the wine world to be more negative than positive, you have to read this book. Elin McCoy has put together a fascinating biography of the most influential wine critic in the world.

But just calling Parker the most influential wine critic understates his influence. As McCoy notes, he truly is the most influential critic in the world today. If a movie comes out and gets two thumbs-down from Ebert and Roeper, it may none the less become a box office smash. Their impact, indeed the impact of most critics, is merely local or national. But Parker's influence is worldwide. A score in the low 80s or the 70s will doom a wine's sales, worldwide, and may mean financial ruin for the producer.

In the interests of full disclosure, I need to note that during the few years that Parker was the resident wine critic on the Prodigy Wine Boards, the two of us spent many months arguing and debating a myriad of topics. I think it's fair to say we will never be on each other's Christmas card lists. (In fact I was interviewed by the author for this book and a small portion of that material is in the book on p.154.) From these long arguments, I came to believe that Parker has the inability to say, "We will have to disagree." What he ends up saying amounts to "We disagree and you're wrong because you are just one of those California palates that adore squeaky clean wine." In my experience he couldn't simply accept disagreement. As McCoy notes, he is "quick to attribute dubious motives to those who don't agree with him and sometimes vindictive if you cross him."

One of the major complaints by Parker critics is that the desire to attain high scores has caused winemakers around the world to alter their styles to make the big, over extracted, soft acid wines that seem to receive amazingly high scores. Although Parker has often expressed scepticism at the existence of this trend, McCoy does a good job of documenting it.

What's in the book is top notch, but I think McCoy omits some critical issues. Again and again she shows Parker tasting wines unblind, often in the presence of the winemaker, the owner and perhaps the sales director. McCoy accompanied Parker on a California trip and documents unblind tasting after unblind tasting under such circumstances. The validity of such unblind tastings is not discussed by McCoy. On Prodigy, when challenged on this point, Parker reasoned that he had trained himself not to be affected by such factors. He stated he could judge a wine blind as well as unblind. He claimed that he had trained himself to filter out any biasing factors. I think that such a claim is unsupported by any empirical data and is highly questionable. I've been a professional wine judge for over 20 years and have yet to meet anyone else who makes such a bold claim. It would have been interesting had McCoy explored this topic.

Similarly, Parker has a higher tolerance than many for odd or off odors such as brettanomyces. I once asked him to name a single California wine he had tasted that he rejected because it had too much brett. He finally admitted he could not name one. His penchant and/or tolerance for these smells would have made an intriguing discussion.

In any event, reading how Parker became such an influential critic and seeing so much of his personality is fascinating. McCoy goes to great efforts to describe the entire field of wine criticism, including the emergence of the Wine Spectator and the disappearance of Robert Finigan's newsletter, as she tells Parker's story. She properly gives Parker credit for causing an upsurge of interest in numerous previously unknown wines from obscure regions. The work is highly readable and a must for all wine lovers. Highly recommended.

[*For more of Bob's wine book reviews, see the* California Grapevine, *published six times a year by Nicholas Ponomareff. Subscription information: (858) 457.4818, or write to P.O. Box 22152, San Diego, CA 92192. The above review appeared in the August-September 2005 issue—our sincere thanks for their always generous permission to reprint.* – Ed.]

# A BRIEF NOTE ON CERTAIN RARE WINE BOOKS

by

***Erik Skovenborg***

*[Retired Danish physician Erik Skovenborg is a vintage Tendril with a long-time interest and knowledge of the literature of wine & health. He also enjoys his collecting passion for bookplates with a wine motif (see his article in W-T, Vol.7 #2.). — Ed.]*

What makes a book rare? According to *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, a rare book is not common, and is therefore interesting and valuable. Or, to be even more bookishly precise, we quote from *Bookman's Glossary* (5th ed, 1975). "Degrees of rarity are... UNIQUE: an item when no other copy is known or recorded. EXTREMELY RARE: Examples turn up in a specialist's hands but once in a lifetime. RARE: Examples turn up in a specialist's hands but once in a decade. SCARCE: Examples turn up in a specialist's hands but once in a year."

### *Dissertatio Inauguralis Medica de Vinis*

So, in every sense of the word the 1767 dissertation on wine and health, *Dissertatio Inauguralis Medica de Vinis* by Johann Michael Schosulan (Vienna: Joann. Thom. Trattnern, 1767) is a rare book. The title page is adorned by a woodcut of a female figure seated in a printer's office, the motto "Labore et Favore" beneath. The small book (13 x 20 cm, 56 pages), decorated with ornate head and tail pieces, is bound in contemporary wraps: a French map of Spitzbergen Islands?! The work is unknown to most compilers. The only copy located in the National Union Catalog is the one at the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

The author practiced medicine in Vienna and wrote his doctoral thesis in Latin—the universal medical language then, as English is now. General observations on the nature of wine fill up the first 15 pages of his *Dissertatio*. Right from the beginning (§II, p.2), Dr. Schosulan declares himself strongly in favour of wine: "We Germans, and most people all over the world, put wine to good use, and that is only what is due to this fluid; next to water wine is the beverage best suited to our nature; wine even has the advantage over water that it not only refreshes and quenches our thirst, it also gives nourishment and strength to the body, if taken in a suitable dose..."

Later on Schosulan reveals a surprisingly detailed knowledge of the many problems of winemaking. In §VII (p.4) he offers several suggestions about what to do with a watery, thin wine. Prevention is better than cure, Schosulan writes, so let the grapes mature in the sun for a longer period with the risk, though, of having the harvest ruined by rain or hail. In §VIII (p.5) he recommends *süssreserve*, the use of concentrated grape juice, as a promising method to increase the alcohol level of a thin wine. In the next chapter, §IX (p.5), he discusses the pros and cons of adding "spiritus vini" to the wine. There is no mention of reverse osmosis, of course, but the method of freeze concentration (in any given solution, the water content will freeze first, leaving alcohol and the other constituents in a concentrated form) is suggested in §X (p.6). "Hic modus casu inventus suit," Schosulan admits—this method was invented by pure chance.

Schosulan devotes §§XXVIII-LV (pp.15-33) to a description of the wines of Hungary, especially Tockajense—the "partus superioris Hungariae" wine; of Italy; France—"De Vinis Galliae" gives credit to famous wine districts like Champagne, Burgundica, vin de Grave, vin d'Ermitage, but vin de Paris is no less celebrated; Spain; Germany —Schosulan draws attention to "Vinum Rhenanum," Rhine wine, as the kind of light, dry wine recommended by Hippocrates in acute illness; and of Austria.

Wine is an inestimable remedy, Schosulan proclaims: in his section on the medical virtues of wine (§§LVI-LXXX, pp.34-47), he refers to renowned medical writers from antiquity like Hippocrates, Galen, Dioscorides and Avicenna. Schosulan then moves on to Paracelsus and Sydenham. He quotes Sydenham's view on wine in the case of podagra: "the gout generally attacks those aged persons who have spent the most part of their lives in ease, voluptuousness, high living, and too free abuse of wine and other spirituous liquors." Schosulan reviews the medical virtues of wine in the treatment of many diseases; in some cases wine diluted with water as recommended by Hippocrates.

The last chapters (§§LXXXI-XCVI pp.47-56) describe the medical virtues of specific wines. Hungarian wines are praised as "cardiaca roborans & nutriens"—nourishing the heart; Vinum Lacryma Christi is a good diuretic; le vin de Champagne "stomacho gratum est"—it does the stomach good; German wines are second to none when it comes to "calculosis & podagricis"—stones and gout. At the end of the dissertation Schosulan warns the reader of several dangers of adulterated wines. He describes for instance the dangerous practice of "vina acida lithargyrio dulcificantur—to sweeten the wine

with lead compounds like litharge—a method that will transform wine from a boon into a bane, "morbos inducunt," inducing disease.

***En Dråbe af USA & Et Nip af USA***

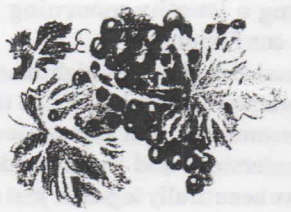
The next two books have much in common with Schosulan's dissertation. The author is a physician (and author of these lines). The books are small (20 x 20 cm), the number of pages is 24. The subjects of the books are wine and spirits, respectively. There is even a medical link: the books were published by the Danish division of Pfizer A/S, a large American medical company. The two books cannot be called uncommon, though. The number printed of *En Dråbe af USA...* (*A Drop of the U.S.A....*), published in 1995, was 11.300; 10.300 copies were printed of *Et Nip af USA...* (*A Sip of the U.S.A....*), published the following year. The two books were favourably commented on as interesting; they are pretty and attractive, but their market value is probably not high. The price of the books is hard to estimate, actually, as they were never offered for sale. Every single book was given away to Danish physicians as a Christmas present from Pfizer. Precisely that fact makes the books "rare"—they are not on the commercial market and thus hard to get.

*En Dråbe af USA...* sets out with the history of "Vinland," the North American wine country, so named by the Viking Leif Erikson around 980 A.D. After a fine start with *Thomas Jefferson's* view on alcohol policy: "No nation is drunken where wine is cheap, and none sober where the dearness of wine substitutes ardent spirits as the common beverage," and his view on enjoyment of wine in moderation: "I have lived temperately...I double the doctor's recommendation of a glass and a half of wine a day and even treble it with a friend" — then Whisky Joe and his friends enter the scene:

He had some faults
And many merits,
He died of drinking
Home brewed spirits.

Drunkenness and abuse led to the experiment of Prohibition with total devastation of the American wine industry as the intended side effect. Now, fortunately, American wine is back in good shape. After a chapter on the grape varieties most often grown in the American viticultural areas, the book makes a journey through the best known wine districts from Napa (CA) to North Fork–Long Island (NY). Ample space is devoted to suggestions for matching American wine with food. No wine-loving physician can resist the temptation of adding a chapter underlining the health benefits of wine enjoyed in moderation and—to be on the safe side—a chapter on "The Wrath of Grapes" (hangovers).

*A Drop* is illustrated with humourous drawings in colour by a Danish artist, Ulla de Frey. So is *Et Nip*, the story of the truly American drink—the cocktail. Since Prohibition-gin wasn't of the best quality, new cocktails were invented to mask the crude taste. First a chapter on the perfect Dry Martini and discussions on how to make the Martini perfect. In the sixties Tom Lehrer sang: "Hearts full of youth, hearts full of truth, six parts gin to one part vermouth." The book's following chapters have a common pattern: a description of a well-known spirit, plus recipes of the popular cocktails using it—Gin and tonic, the Scottish miracle, Whiskey with an e, Black Russian & Bloody Mary, Rum with or without coke, Mexican Margarita, Cognac—the king of spirits—and finally Irish and other coffees. Even if you can't disagree with Mark Twain's remark: "Water, taken in moderation, never hurt anybody," nevertheless *A Sip of the U.S.A...* is more in debt of the deep insight in the following quote by George Bernard Shaw: "Alcohol is the anaesthesia by which we endure the operation of life." Cheers!



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

*[This installment is part of an article in a continuing series about Martin Ray that began in WTQ's April 2003issue (Vol. 13, No. 2). MR was the first vintner to produce and promote pure varietal wines in the period following Repeal, when he owned Paul Masson, and he continued to do so later at his own much smaller winery. The lengthy article portrays the close relationship between this perfectionistic winemaker and wine quality-advocating Maynard A. Amerine, enology professor at UC Davis. This segment is based mainly on their communications between 1952 and 1954, which also include letters from Eleanor Ray, MR's second wife, who had become his alternative "voice" and alter ego. During the latter year, Amerine was in Europe. The author thanks John L. Skarstad and Axel Borg of UC Davis's Shields Library for their research assistance in this project. Above all, she is grateful to editor Gail Unzelman for her dedicated work and patient indulgence in publishing this long-running series. Barbara Marinacci, who is Martin Ray's stepdaughter, depicts him primarily through documents but she also expresses facts and insights based on her and other people's direct observations and experiences over the years.]*

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

Martin Ray's abysmal emotional state during his wife Elsie's terminal illness and after her death in the summer of 1951 had been miraculously soothed, if not entirely cured, when his renewed friendship with Eleanor Williams Kamb led quickly to their wedding in the middle of September. MR's second marriage, undertaken so soon after Elsie's demise, shocked her relatives, and the residents of the town of Saratoga also acted disapprovingly when they learned of it. His good friend Maynard Amerine, though, must have felt greatly relieved that Martin—as he always called him, not using the nickname Rusty—had suddenly and obviously taken out a new lease on life. Amerine and Eleanor got along well from the start.

MR wrote to his soldier-nephew Willis Ray to tell him of the marriage and his sudden turnaround in mood.

> It was not as easy as that, of course. But you know your Uncle Mart! Time always seemed to me something to be made the most of. There was no reason to let it drag along when there was life to be lived.

But he also indicated that the rapid change in wives, without undergoing a lengthy mourning period, had caused inevitable confusions:

> I had a lot of mental disturbance—nightmares of making love to a composite woman, and stuff like that. It took a little time to overcome that. But Eleanor loved Elsie like I did and she understood and we never deceived each other. Now we live beautifully together just as though we had always been married. There have been no adjustments, no compromises, to make. It seems to me we have been together always. [10/18/51]

MR's occasional disorientation was alleviated by the newlyweds' recognition that for the rest of their life together Elsie would always be an unseen presence. Given Rusty's commanding and demanding nature, Eleanor, of course, made most of the adjustments and compromises, despite MR's denial of any need for this in his letter to Will. In the past, as a spirited and independent-minded longtime divorcée, she had often worn slacks—which became movie-star fashionable by the 1940s. ER now deep-sixed them, for her new husband had said that only he, both literally and symbolically, would wear the pants in their coupling. So the new "Madame Pinot," the queen of Rusty's wine mountain, wore skirts except when joining him in tasks such as winter vine pruning and the bottling or labeling of wines down in the cellar.

MR's mental condition at first seemed so fragile that ER avoided upsetting him by challenging outrageous statements he made, as about politics or people, or by telling him he'd already drunk enough wine (as Elsie would have done). He had explained how nerve damage from the "nervous breakdown" (far more likely a stroke) that he had suffered 20 years earlier made verbal discord intolerable. She saw how any argumentation, let alone defiance, from her or any of her children might incite an emotional meltdown or rage. She grew adept at either ignoring his extreme opinionating or else assuming his point of view herself. MR insisted that they present a "united front" in all matters, including his strenuous efforts to reshape aspects of her three nearly grown, semi-fatherless children—two sons and a daughter.

Never having had offspring of his own, like many childless persons MR knew exactly how to conduct childrearing and repair past inadequacies. He took seriously this new if belated role of paterfamilias—

correcting manners, giving career advice, and manipulating these fledglings' personal lives. Above all, he was keen on introducing his charges, along with their mother, to the joys of the winegrowing life. He was thrilled when ER's twin sons, Peter and Barclay, who had asked to be legally adopted by him, took Ray as their new surname after they turned 21 in December of 1952. Moreover, to his great satisfaction, on their revised birth certificates he was even named as their biological father—supplanting his long-estranged friend and business partner, Walter Kamb. Having these previously unexpected heirs now inspired MR to think about establishing both a wine domain and a winegrowing dynasty.

### *Full-time Winegrower Once Again*

By early 1952 MR had bought back the mountain property in Saratoga that he had sold to the Kews during Elsie's terminal illness; he also took over their shares in the Martin Ray, Inc. wine business. The newlyweds moved from the rented house in Saratoga to the rustic redwood cabin that MR had built while developing his new mountaintop vineyard. They now lived 2,000 feet above the wide and fertile Santa Clara Valley. Stretching out dramatically far below them, it was still mostly filled with farmlands—highly productive orchards and fields, with a few towns scattered about and some tall buildings far to the east marking the location of the city of San Jose.

In the first months of their marriage, the re-energized MR busied himself with vineyard care and tending his wines, kept in a small cellar built below the little redwood house and in a garage converted into a small winery building during the three years when Kenneth Kew's parents had been in a partnership arrangement with Martin Ray. They had expected their son to learn all about vineyard and winemaking from MR, who now did all the hands-on work of a true winegrower—as he'd finally done in his last two years at Masson, after the winery fire. He had tried to teach and inspire his phlegmatic protégé by his example. But it was all in vain, he had finally realized, and then Elsie's illness and death had driven him into despair. Thus Eleanor's entry into his life, bringing two hardy and enthusiastic sons, seemed miraculous, and his earlier discouragement and cynicism departed.

MR had once hoped that his nephew Willis, who had sometimes done work at Masson and later helped with planting the new vineyard and building the cabin on the mountain, would join him. But Will had gone off and rejoined the Army. MR had sometimes sent him reports, such as this vignette of springtime work in the vineyard.

> Just finished the first plowing, three times each way. Also just finished sulphuring the first time. The vines look beautiful now. The 7:00 o'clock train still puffs along in the valley below about the time you are getting fully corked from pumping up and down the rows while pumping away with the sulphuring machine. We started out just after 4 o'clock in the morning. [5/11/50]

To reestablish an active presence in wine sales several years after selling Masson, MR had begun selling wines whose labels, with a red-and-black circular logo with a fancy "MR" at the center, now proclaimed his own name—and his location: Saratoga, California. As he had written to Will in 1950, when still in business with the Kews:

> There is enclosed a new price list, which will tell the story pretty well. The Pinot Noir Champagne 1942, the Pinot Noir (still wine) 1941, are wines we kept when we sold the old property [Masson] and we have only very limited quantities. But they serve as window dressing, so to speak, and it is intended that each year we will now make 100 cases of Pinot Noir Champagne. And the 1945, 1947, 1948, 1949, etc. vintages of Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinot Noir will ultimately sell at $72.00 per case when they are as old as the 1941's and 1942's are now. In the mean time, we are starting out the sale of the 1945's at $35.00 per case with the idea of raising this figure as years pass and the wine is older.

In 1952, when MR regained his property and business as sole owner, many of the wines he had made in limited quantities in earlier years were still cellared and either in cask or bottled and waiting to be sold. They mostly had come from grapes grown elsewhere, in small vineyards down in the valley, while MR's own mountain-grown vines were maturing, with Pinot Noir put in first, then Cabernet Sauvignon. He had also selected various Cabernets—previously made locally by Mario Gemello—for his non-vintage Martin Ray La Montaña Woodside Cabernet. Earlier, he undoubtedly had asked Amerine to taste the wines he was selling or preparing to sell, or else considering buying from another winemaker.

Now, additionally, MR had in cask the Pinot Noir cuvée 1951 that Maynard, with 20-year-old son Peter, had vintaged from the first major crop picked from his young vines—while the Rays honeymooned. When they returned and said they might go off to South America for a few months, Maynard even offered to drive down from Davis during their absence to tend the wines.

Soon, though, MR launched a new project that would keep them close to home: designing and building a new house at the very top of his mountain, about a hundred feet up the slope from the north-facing cabin, whose one big room couldn't comfortably contain his new family of five when all assembled during holidays and vacations. He intended the job to be finished before the holiday season of 1952, not long

after the duo's first wedding anniversary. In the summertime hiatus from their colleges, Eleanor's two sons joined in the construction work.

The new house and its surroundings would offer a 360° view of the valley and Diablo Range to the east, the south end of San Francisco Bay, and the tall and cool green curve of the Santa Cruz Mountains as they stretched from the hills above Los Gatos area in the south to run in a northwesterly way up the San Francisco peninsula to Montebello and then Woodside, where Emmett Rixford had produced his marvelous clarets in pre-Prohibition times. (Not only had MR been obtaining Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from the old vineyard there, but also budwood for starting his own ultimately extensive planting.)

This was the special, historic winegrowing region that Eleanor one day, consulting her French dictionary, would dub the *Chaîne d'Or*. She attributed this now-enduring term's origin to that legendary Frenchman, Paul Masson, who had declared, as did his successor, Martin Ray, that in these very foothills and mountains—this now nicely named "chain of gold"—the greatest California wines would eventually be grown and vintaged. The basis for this prediction had come from past triumphs: not just MR's at Paul Masson, of course, but also those of more distant predecessors.

But what could MR call his own particular mountain? Eleanor, always with an eye to publicity, felt that it *had* to have a imposing title. Table Mountain, its official name—shared with the Masson side across a shallow and narrow canyon—simply wouldn't do. She decided that it should be Mount Eden, since the name hadn't been appropriated yet by any other mountain ascending from the westernmost valley-based thoroughfare known as Mt. Eden Road (called so from the long-defunct Mt. Eden Orchard and Vineyard Co., which had adjoined the road).

MR's new life partnership with Eleanor had decidedly reactivated his "holy fire," his zealous crusading on behalf of wine quality, which lately had been hibernating. He now felt an even greater impetus than before to transform the tastes and buying habits of wine consumers, to persuade wine retailers to upgrade both wine offerings and selling tactics, and to browbeat or shame the more enlightened vineyard owners and wineries into altering their winegrowing and wine marketing standards. But before he could do that, other pursuits claimed most of his time and attention. He also had to produce more wine.

### *Eleanor's Introduction to Wines and Wine History*

From the very start of their reconnection, MR was eager for Eleanor to understand and then join in his grand mission: making world-class wines that would prove California's great potential in winegrowing. He talked eloquently about the long history of wines made from grapes, dating back to ancient times, and later to be perfected in France and Germany. He told of the ravages of phylloxera in the vineyards of Europe, then California, in the late 19th century, which meant that *vinifera* vines now should be grafted onto resistant rootstock. He described the incalculable damage done by Prohibition to both the wine industry and wine drinkers' palates, then fervidly decried the abominations committed by post-Repeal and current wineries in California—the state that grew by far the most grapes and produced the most wine in the nation. Their blending and mislabeling tactics were to him near-criminal actions, as they inevitably destroyed the high reputation that the state's best wines held before the 13-year Great Wine Drought.

When Maynard Amerine came up the mountain on one of his frequent visits, or when the Rays visited him in Davis, Eleanor joined the two men in sampling both European and domestic wines. Among the latter the two men judged few acceptable, let alone pleasurable to drink, and they would try to determine which grape varieties had been merged to make these claimed but phony varietals. (MR had an aversion to lush, intensely colored and flavored grapes useful in blending—notably Zinfandel, which often dominated blends; he never would find merit in it and considered it an unpedigreed upstart, far indeed from a "fine" varietal wine.)

Maynard talked about prominent trends and personalities in the industry and shared with the Rays various insights and gossip-tinged revelations about wineries—their owners, winemakers, and wines. And ER listened intently as MA discussed his strategies for improving winegrowing—mainly by trying (as he had for years) to persuade the better wineries, as well as growers who supplied them with winegrapes, to plant more fine varieties so that eventually they could stop blending out wines that should rightly be made into pure varietals. As it was, the premium-rated commercial wines often slid in just above the 51 percent of the named varietal content as required by law—which even then wasn't assured, since no inspection system was in place to impose penalties on violators.

Eleanor appreciated the warm friendship between her winemaker husband and this enology professor, centered as it was upon their deep devotion to improving the quality and reputation of California's premium wines. In their joint campaign, each man would be fighting in his own arena and manner, and she entered this alliance, recognizing how she might best use her intelligence and skills: through writing.

ER had literary leanings (she'd been an English

major at University of Washington, where she and Rusty had originally met), and years of experience in fashion-oriented publicity, sales promotion, and advertising. Moreover, she was now a published author and hoped to continue writing—and publishing. About a year before marrying MR, a venerable New York publishing firm had released *We Kept Mother Single*, her humorous account (making herself a third-person character in it), set during the Depression and WWII years, that celebrated the challenges and joys of single-parenting. But no longer single and with her children leaving the nest, she was primed for a new project. It clearly had to be involved in some way with the subject of wine—and winegrowing.

Her new life orientation, coming when she was 47, meant learning as much as she could, and quickly. Besides listening to Rusty and Maynard, she began reading a number of the wine books lying around the house. A few, such as Mary Frost Mabon's *ABC of American* Wines (1942), had bookmarks in places where her vintner husband was mentioned. (ER heard from Rusty about how Frank Schoonmaker had removed an entire chapter about his extraordinary tenure at the winery in his and Tom Marvel's book, *American Wines,* before it was published in 1941 because MR had refused to finalize their partnership in owning and running Paul Masson when FS failed to come up with the agreed-upon cash.) A half-dozen years later came Robert Lawrence Balzer's *California's Best Wines*, which had come out in 1948. His book was ahead of the flock of publications in the postwar period that began introducing the state's wines and better wineries, and sometimes their vintners too, encouraging people to buy, drink, and even visit the wine sources themselves.

Balzer, as a young, aspiring wine writer (later to become a wine columnist for the Los Angeles Times), had first met MR while he was still proprietor of Paul Masson, probably in 1940. There he saw and heard ample evidence of MR's utter and unquestioning faith in the winegrape-growing potential of his section of the Santa Cruz Mountains region, as well as of his commitment to classic winemaking methods that would produce pure, and "fine"-rated, varietal wines.

"There's the winery. It looks like a chapel," had been Balzer's first comment upon arrival.

> Martin Ray was standing outside waiting for us. I had known from correspondence that he was an idealistic zealot where wines were concerned. He was more than convinced that this was the only spot in California where truly fine wines could exist. It was a legend he had learned as a child and now fully believed. In the next few hours he did not explain how this might be accomplished, but that it existed as a fact. As we walked through the still, dark, fragrant cellars past great oval puncheons and carved oak barrels, he spoke ardently of his accomplishments since the day in 1936 when he acquired the winery from Paul Masson.
>
> "No matter whether it's winemaking, wine-buying, or wine-selling, it's wine we're concerned with. It must be what it is represented to be if we're going to earn the trust and faith of those who look to us for that confidence. There are a number of wineries directing their efforts toward fine winemaking and they deserve the greatest credit, but none of them, so far as I know, goes the whole way to make really great wines."
>
> By the "whole way" he meant, beyond vineyard location and grape varieties, selecting perfect grapes right down to individual berries for pressing, as is done in Germany, following through with guarded fermentation, constant tasting while the wine is aging as it's racked, clarified, bottled, and binned. He had offered his first vintages to the late Julian Street for appraisal. That genial expert pronounced their color "superb," the bouquet "beautiful," and over all, the wine "big, full, ... remarkably fine." After tasting I found myself nodding enthusiastic agreement. Ray's personality was compelling, his sincerity genuine. He wished to prove that he could produce, in addition to champagne, still wines as fine as any from France of Germany. The Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir we tasted gave promise that he might well achieve his goal in a few years. But he was never to know this satisfaction. A disastrous fire broke out in July of 1941. The wines he had made to capture the acclaim of the world trickled down in a red flood over the molten glass and charred oak. His loss was estimated to be more than $100,000.

And then, quite erroneously, Balzer had reported in his book that MR had sold "the charred remains of the stone winery" to the Seagram distillery corporation. In fact, MR had rebuilt the winery as well as the Masson business, and didn't sell for almost two years, in 1943. The next statements, though, were well on target.

> [He] betook himself to an even higher hill. He would start again, this time from the beginning, just as Paul Masson had done. I have been told he intends to carry on his zealous effort for magnificent wines. If so he will succeed. His wines will be expensive beyond any in the country but he won't mind, nor will the most ardent wine lovers. [pp 134-35]

Balzer had been in the vanguard of wine writers and wine devotees who became acquainted with Martin Ray, impressed with his energetic evangelism over varietal purity and honest labeling, which became his battle cry during the late 1930s and early '40s, to remain with him forevermore. His aim to achieve wine perfection in his own wines, as MR amply expressed in many long letters to Julian Street, would show the promise of California in winemaking and by their very existence push the state's better wineries to compete with his Masson wines. From the start, this crusade meant that he concerned himself not only with his own winemaking but also with trying to impose quality principles upon other vintners and wine merchants, while impressing consumers with his own adherence to them. And now his new winery would bear his name.

### *Taking up the Quality Theme*

Early in 1952 Eleanor told Rusty and then Maynard that she was going to write a novel that would personalize and dramatize the current situation in California's wine industry. Immersing herself in serious reading, she began taking notes on articles and books about wine, some of them supplied to her by Amerine. For instance, knowing that it would interest both Rays, Amerine mailed ER an announcement, sent out several years earlier, of "an important meeting of the members of the Dessert Wine Subcommittee" of the Wine Institute's Wine Quality Standards Committee, scheduled to take place on July 20, 1950. With it he sent a carbon copy of the letter that he had written to Harry Bacigalupi, president of California Grape Products Co., with the expectation that he would read it at the meeting. A major matter on the agenda involved debating whether Muscatel should now be classified as a non-varietal wine. If agreed upon, no longer would the producers of that hitherto varietal wine need to use at least 51% of Muscat grapes in their vintages.

MA's letter expressed his extreme irritation over this plan, concocted for the convenience of the wine industry. He recognized that if this outrage were permitted, it could later be applied to other varietal wines made from specific grape varieties, consequently downgrading them. Since ER wanted to have her own copy of his letter, and since photocopiers wouldn't be available for two more decades, she retyped all of it, to keep in her growing files on wine-connected subjects. (It's noteworthy that Amerine, in an interview in 1969 with Ruth Teiser for the Bancroft Library oral histories about the California wine industry, cited this very letter of his as a forceful early statement protective of grape varieties and the varietal wines made from them.)

> As you know I have been away the past two months so it was somewhat of a shock to have your letter regarding a rehearing of the absurd proposal that "muscatel is not a varietal wine." I regret that prior commitments made it impossible to attend the committee meeting tomorrow, your announcement having only arrived yesterday.
>
> Shortly before his death the English novelist, George Orwell, wrote a short satire on the modern world entitled "Nineteen Eighty-four." In this novel Orwell imagines a world ruled by a communistic dictatorship under the slogans "War is peace," "Freedom is slavery," and "Ignorance is strength." It is a world in which truth is what the state says it is; history is rewritten to fit and 2 + 2 = 5. Remembering this dreadful prediction I wonder if someone has not speeded up the process a bit.
>
> To be brief: there is no historical or factual basis for the statement that muscatel is not a varietal wine.

Amerine then quoted from six different respected sources: a word dictionary, a wine guide, a French viticultural and enological dictionary, a winemaking handbook by UC Berkeley's eminent enologist William Cruess, and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Lastly, he quoted from a 1941 article written by himself and Maynard Joslyn:

> "Muscatel is a fortified wine possessing a distinct muscat flavor.... Only muscat grapes should be used to insure that all California muscatels will have the desirable characteristic varietal flavor. The present minimum requirement of 51 per cent muscat grapes is not high enough to yield muscatel with the desired flavor. (Calif. Agr. Experiment Station Bulletin #651)"

Amerine, as Associate Professor of Enology at UC Davis, showed that he wasn't reluctant to take verbal jabs at a collection of winery owners and grape growers who were trying to rewrite wine and viticulture textbooks.

> In my opinion ... the more serious part of this discussion is not on the proposal that "muscatel is not a varietal wine." That is a patent absurdity and as fallacious as it is dangerous. The serious thing is that anyone in the industry could entertain such a ludicrous thought. In Mr. Orwell's book the Ministry of Light rewrites history to suit the convenience of the communistic state. The same type of reasoning is indicated by people who propose legislating varietal names into generic names to satisfy local economic needs. If there are not enough muscats in California to make the required amounts of muscatel wine then plant some, but do not attempt to call "black" "white" and thus make a mockery of right.
>
> I fully agree with Professor Cruess and Joslyn and my own statements. The problem is not how to make muscatel with less muscat grapes but with more. [6/19/50]

Maynard's note to ER closed with this self-satisfied comment: "I was told that after my letter was read the discussion ended."

Eleanor was also attentive to the conviction shared by Rusty and Maynard that in recent times the quality of people's manners generally—the social niceties—had badly declined, along with true connoisseurship. Here was MR's complaint to Amerine after he had shipped two cases of his wine off to New York by air freight for their appearance at a gourmet dinner given by the Lucullus Circle—which, after studying the event's menu, he judged to be an organization catering to wealthy but uncouth gluttons.

> How any one can drink some 17 wines is more than I can understand. Nor can I accept the serving of a Pinot Noir and a Cabernet, one old the other new, with the same course.... I regret selling them the wines. I'd prefer having the Pinot Noir 1941 to the money.... And, we received no comment from anyone about the wines. After the dinners you gave in the past at which our wines were served we always had immediate letters from people like Farnham Griffiths, Harold Price and people who really enjoyed the wines and cared a little that the grower might like to know how his wines were received.... Of course, there is always the possibility none enjoyed the wines, any of the wines, that is, or the food either. I wonder just how that bunch did look before, during and after that dinner? Not happy, not gay, I dare say. [4/10/53]

Maynard then supplied MR with his own variant experience of current social obtuseness.

> My personal opinion is that the art of saying "thank you" is becoming a lost art—and rapidly so. Several months ago I entertained elaborately for "friends" from San Francisco. To date, I have not heard from them and when I met them accidentally at the Segovia concert a month ago they chit-chatted a moment and said nothing. From mutual friends I know that they greatly enjoyed being here and expressed great approval of the wines and foods to their friends in S.F. But to the host—not a word! Is it that they are embarrassed to say "thank you" as if it were somehow a social faux pas to express appreciation? I wish I knew. [April 1953, undated]

ER inevitably picked up from them this belief that quality in most things in American life—in aesthetics, commerce, and behavior, not just wine—was simply going to hell nowadays. Though her interest wasn't as hotly consuming as Rusty's (quality-connected issues hadn't bothered her a bit until she married him), it enabled her to enter actively into discussions the two men had on the subject and its ramifications into other areas of current American culture and its degradation in sleazy consumerism. An undated letter of hers to MA would have been written in 1952 or 1953, when she was first focusing on the wine quality issue so as to cast it into some compelling fictional form. It shows the sort of talks she was often having with Rusty. Grateful for whatever help Maynard might provide, she said:

> Thank you for your Quarterly [Wine & Food Society], which I'm returning to your office. In case you think I'm using wines as a frivolous "decorative" note in my book, let me relieve your mind—I'm not. But I'm using a wine growing family as my central group of characters, and using wine as the most pointed example I know of to illustrate the trend today of "blending out" all quality to a uniform sameness, with nothing left of the original appeal, individuality. Your paragraph in the article about the contribution of southern Europeans [*i.e.*, the Italians in the bulk-wine business, notably in the Central Valley] toward this leveling off process is a keynote for one facet of the picture, for which I'm gleaning particular, sharp incidents.
>
> The whole philosophy of the great distillers that have moved into the industry heightens the theme. [André] Simon's article in the same issue hit a note that's close to center in what I'm trying to present fictionally: "What would be a tragedy, indeed, would be to allow economic efficiency to be the excuse for debasing wine to the level of beer, gin or whisky, pooling the produce of many vines into a brew, or blend, or 'make' of uniform drabness and cost, chemically bright and stable; above all manufactured upon a sufficiently large scale to be advertised in a big way—the only way that 'pays.' That, indeed, would be the greatest tragedy of all." Wine will illustrate freshly and sharply this trend in all the arts, education, business—and in people's lives, it seems to me.
>
> Maybe you'll ponder this idea and we can discuss it when we meet, which I hope will be soon. I know you're a veritable gold mine of incidents that show how this process of "blending out" quality goes out and out in widening circles of destruction.

Amerine generously offered ER access to his home library, which held many books, files of topical subjects, years of Wine and Food Society newsletters, and a large menu collection. Furthermore, the Rays could stay at his house while she went through it all, for as long as they liked.

Eleanor tentatively titled her ambitious novel-in-the-making *This, Be Arrogant*. Its central character would be a sensitive yet forceful winemaker who's associated with an old vintner closely resembling Paul Masson, of course. He fights both natural elements and the wine industry while aiming to make great wine, all the while dealing with the eternal attractions, challenges, complexities, and conflicts in human relationships. She created a hero whose character and wine quality-reforming efforts mirrored, not surprisingly, those of Martin Ray. (And, after all, who else might serve as model? There never was, and no longer ever needs to be, a winegrower quite like him; most of the causes he fought for so long and strenuously in the premium wine industry have been realized.)

ER's novel, as it went through various versions and retitling over some years, would never see publication, though pieces of it did end up in Eleanor's dramatized biography/memoir of MR, *Vineyards in the Sky*. Still, her effort to become well educated about wines and wine matters would serve Martin Ray well over the years. Mostly, the pair was to speak, and to write—whether in correspondence or wine-connected tracts—expressing the same strong opinions, though their styles of delivery differed.

***An Unfortunate Disruption—and Recovery***

One night in early December of 1952 the Rays were subjected to a horrifying event. Their new home on top of the mountain burned down—only a week after they had moved into it with most of their prized possessions. Gale-force winds had blown several unsecured posts supporting the veranda roof into plate glass windows in the huge living room, smashing them. The great rush of incoming air pulled hot coals from the fireplace, setting fires on the carpet, which rapidly spread. Rusty and Eleanor had fought the flames at first but finally gave up and fled for their lives. The experience is recounted by ER in one of the most dramatic chapters in *Vineyards in the Sky*.

After the fire, Amerine had sent off a brief note to them several days later, written on Bohemian Club notepaper:

> Sunday PM
> Dear Eleanor and Martin:
> I have just been told of the fire not having read Friday or Saturday's paper. You know you have my sincere regrets and any help I can give I shall—just let me know.
> —Maynard

He would have realized how for MR it was a ghastly recurrence of the ordeal by fire that he'd undergone in 1941 when the Masson winery, except for its outer shell, burned to the ground before his eyes, destroying all his prized wines in cask and most of his bottled ones.

Now the Rays had, at least, two main consolations. The little redwood cabin had been spared, so they weren't homeless, though shorn of many irreplaceable treasures—such as MR's collection of Julian Street's letters to him. MR had naturally feared that his cache of precious wines in the new cellar had also been destroyed. But protected by thick concrete walls and ceiling, they had stayed safe. After some days of scrubbing down the cellar thoroughly—walls, floor, barrels—and then drying it out, he apprehensively opened a cask and drew off some of its contents with a wine thief. Smelling and tasting smoke contamination in the wine, he was disconsolate, believing now that all his wines in cask were ruined.

Several weeks after the fire, MR, now more rested and objective, again went into the cellar to taste his wines in wood. He was greatly relieved to find them quite sound—and therefore salable when bottled. He'd then recalled how Amerine had once told him that if one anticipated detecting some undesirable taste or odor in a wine, he'd be apt to discern it, even though it might not be there at all. In a while, MR asked MA to come up and taste through the casks, too. For if he—the most adroit wine judge MR would ever know—couldn't detect any smokiness in the wines, they were indeed unimpaired. To his relief, they passed Maynard's deft sensory tests. In this Rusty was more fortunate than his wife, whose manuscript for the wine-centered novel she'd been working on for months had gone up in smoke.

It was not in MR's nature, nor Eleanor's either, to give up and fall apart when some nature- or human-induced calamity occurred. (MR has been called "indomitable" for good reason.) In the very early springtime, ER found a symbolic message in the huge blackened oak tree close to where their new house had stood. For several months it had looked totally dead. Then just as spring arrived she wrote to Peter, now at work on his PhD at Harvard, about the "great miracle this morning!"

> The big oak tree has a sprout of green leaves high at the tiptop about center—so it looks as if it's going to live!! At least we have new hope. Somehow the oak tree was a symbol we all felt—that if it could possibly pull through then we, too, surely could carry on and rebuild. [3/23/53]

The Rays would show Maynard the reviving tree on his next visit. And yes, Rusty told him, they were going to build their home again, and soon. But differently this time, with the house made of solid concrete, the veranda's roof posts securely bolted down, and heavy shutters, devised by himself, to be pulled across the picture windows whenever tempestuous winds began blowing.

Occasionally in those months MR would send off a note to Amerine, as when he asked him to send, from UC Davis, a "pure yeast culture for our champagne bottling." Then he'd add a brief vineyard report:

> Finished our pruning a few days ago, clothed heavily in woolens, double sox and high rubber boots, standing in heavy snow. Some buds had opened but continuous movement of air currents saved us from a killing freeze. Spring has now returned. [4/12/53]

Throughout 1953 Eleanor rewrote her novel while helping Rusty with the ever-abiding vineyard and cellar work. And MR spent time supervising the construction of their new concrete-walled house that would sit above the slab foundation that served as the house's flooring as well as the cellar roof. Meanwhile, he dealt with the usual buildup to the vintage period, including bottling wines to free up casks, then the grape picking and crushing and pressing—sometimes

while the concrete mixing and pouring into forms for the house walls went on. As ER described her battered, multi-tasking husband to Maynard at this time:

> I wish to describe to you Martin Ray, poor chappie, in present condition as of this moment: eyes red, breathing difficult since he's stuffed up from an awful cold due to low resistance due to much overwork, throat sore, back killing him from too much lifting, but he can't sit down on account of his fanny is badly blistered due to sitting on a box in winery from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. twisting constantly back and forth running both corking machine and egraffer for champagne (from Pinot Noir blanc de noir, 110 bottles including 2 magnums), one leg is still very painful from having his shin smashed by a sledge hammer, his feet are sore, poison oak driving him mad on both ankles, one arm aflame from a tetanus shot, which was necessitated by two bad cuts on one hand, and both hands are so stiff from crushing so many grapes for yeast operations that they won't open or shut, and torn grievously by cement he tried to pull off wood forms by hand due to fact that the first pouring crew of Mexicans quit, and right in midst of work, so any cement spilled on upper forms hardened and had to be taken off so as not to ruin the pour, the next day. So you see Popka [ER's frequent nickname for MR] really needs a rest, what? He also has some trouble sleeping, but that does seem incidental....
>
> Don't be too alarmed if we seem to disappear behind the iron curtain of vintage—we might be considered to be there right now, although the big part is still to come. We'll be thinking of you, and hope to see you shortly after all is over—maybe on our "grand tour" we promise ourselves. [10/2/53]

### *Letters Between Friends*

For 15 years, with time out for military service in WWII, Amerine had provided MR with information about technical matters in winemaking and news of what was going on elsewhere in the wine business. Above all, perhaps, he furnished motivation —steady encouragement for him to proceed with the growing of fine variety grapes and the vintaging of pure varietal wines. After all, MR's wine triumphs were proving the points that the frustrated MA failed to impress upon the proprietors of the other, and larger, premium wineries. In the early 1950s this companionable association bolstered MR's determination to get back into the combative mode that had characterized his years at Paul Masson, when his quality-demanding stance—expressed so fully in those long and frequent letters to Julian Street—put him at odds with most people in the high end of the wine industry, which was still struggling to resurrect itself after the repeal of Prohibition in December of 1933. The bulk and jug wine producers dominated the American wine scene, and in the postwar period connoisseurs again could obtain elegant table wines from France and Germany.

Now and then after MA returned to UC Davis from the Army in 1946, letters would have passed between him and Maynard Amerine, but all evidence of their personal correspondence between then and 1952 has probably been destroyed, whether inadvertently by fire (MA's letters) or deliberately by human hand (MR's letters). Also, because they got together fairly often, there was rarely any need for anything more than notes. When ER organized new letter files in 1953, the Rays began saving all correspondence, with their own outgoing letters carbon-copied for possible future reference. As the Amerine files in the Ray Papers—archived in UC Davis Library's Special Collections—reveal, MA addressed his letters and postcards to both Rays, unless he was focusing only on winemaking technicalities. ER often wrote to Maynard herself, usually in a much lighter vein than her husband did.

In his intensive epistolary relationship with Julian Street that began in late 1939 (fortuitously preserved in the Princeton University Library), MR showed that he enjoyed writing letters, when time permitted and he had the need to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and future plans to particular individuals. Some were people he liked and trusted—that rare person, like Street or Amerine, who would either understand and appreciate whatever he had wished to relate, then give him honest but helpful reactions. Others were persons he wanted to cultivate and impress, such as wealthy or influential customers or wine writers. He either dictated letters (to a secretary at Masson, and later to Eleanor) or else handwrote or typed letters on his own to special friends or acquaintances—when he was apt to ramble or rant or ridicule as the spirit moved him while covering recent events or preoccupations. But busy as he was, he was apt to delay some intended communication for weeks on end. Thus Eleanor often wrote in his place, giving their news and expressing their current opinions (sometimes vehement).

When Amerine took a year's sabbatical leave in Europe in 1954, a period of time opened up wherein MR could express himself somewhat as he'd done with Street. Now the Rays' letter file for Maynard grew perceptibly larger. A considerable portion of the written communications between the Rays and MA consists of postcards from the latter along with letter exchanges in 1954, when Maynard was in Europe. These letters reveal a lot about MR not just at that time but overall—and, for that matter, more obliquely, about Amerine, too. They seem fairly complete, though it appears that the Rays sent some of Amerine's letters to other people who would be

interested in something he had said in them, and then they were not returned for safekeeping.

### *Amerine Goes Abroad*

In the fall of 1953, two years after the Rays' marriage, MA began detailed preparations for his upcoming year in Europe, to be largely funded by a Guggenheim Fellowship award. Naturally, almost everywhere he'd go and everything he'd do would be connected in some way with wine and winemaking. His Saratoga friends, when hearing about his plans, couldn't help but feel envious. As ER wrote him:

> We can see how your feet are itching to start on your way—ours would be too. In fact, we are dying for want of a vacation—and hope we can get off in a couple of weeks, after the Cabernet vintage, and the second section of the house is roofed and windowed. [10/2/53]

In early December Maynard sent out to friends and associates a detailed itinerary and schedule in advance of his departure. He would fly to New York on the 20th, board the *Andrea Doria* on the 24th, and land in Lisbon on the 30th. Then, after spending 10 days in Portugal, he'd be off to Spain, where he would stay for a half-year, based in Madrid at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, but collecting samples far afield in other places. (A main interest there involved investigating Spanish techniques in making sherry or *jerez*, in which he'd already conducted research at Davis.) Then, interested in seeing how different areas in Europe grew and processed wine grapes to produce various wines, he'd then travel to southern France, northern Italy, northern Yugoslavia, Austria, and Switzerland. From August to December he would be mostly in Germany, working in the Botanisches Institut at the intensive viticulture and enology research center at Geisenheim-am-Rhine. From there he'd take occasional trips elsewhere in Germany, and to France during its vintage period. On New Year's Eve he would finally head back home. (He would stick fairly close to this original plan, but ended his European jaunt in Britain.)

Several days after he arrived in Portugal, Maynard visited an old college friend of Eleanor's who was now married to a cork grower, and through him met a vineyardist who wanted desperately to secure a few Ruby Cabernet vines. This high-yield, robustly flavored hybrid, successfully developed at UC Davis by Harold Olmo for hot climates, was seemingly impossible to obtain in Europe. So MA said he'd do what he could to help out. He wrote MR, explaining why he was asking him to take care of this request, and how it might be done.

> I dare not write Winkler and ask him to airmail these as he would find all kinds of reasons for not doing it. The first would be that Portugal has an embargo on US cuttings (for reason of virus). However, you can ask him to send you the two rooted cuttings (for a friend of yours) and ask him to be reasonably sure they are virus-free. Then you can air express them to Soares Franes. You can sign that John Doe sent them. [1/4/54]

Three weeks passed, and MA had heard nothing yet from Martin or Eleanor. So he wrote:

> Dear Rays—
> No word from you so assume
> a. Martin has arm trouble
> b. You are shipping lots of wine
> c. You are trying to prevent Tony [Korbel] from selling to Paul Masson (I predicted last July he would sell) [Note: Korbel did indeed sell that year, but not to Masson.]
> d. You have gone on vacation
> e. Or my card and letter never reached you. [1/31/54]

Both the Rays wrote and airmailed letters off to Maynard soon after this message arrived. "There is a little truth in all your suggested explanations for our silence," MR said. He also had let MA know that the delay had been caused by UC Davis's tardiness in getting the vine material to him, not his own malingering.

> As for the Ruby Cabernet cuttings, I acted promptly and, as you will see from the enclosure [a notice from UC Davis], the delay is not mine. I will see it through at the earliest possible date and will be most happy to help in this small way. Anything else I can do, just let me know. [2/6/54]

Toward the end of March MR would write Amerine and assure him that the Ruby Cabernet cuttings had been dispatched, via air parcel post, to the fellow in Portugal who'd so desperately wanted them.

> I sent your friend the vines—four of them.... I had to declare what was in the package. So, upon gazing at it I decided it could be nothing else but a large silver serving spoon. So that is what it was declared as. I even insured it for $25, just to make a good job of it.... Please let me know if they reached their destination. I gave my name as the sender. [3/20/54]

(In a marginal note referring to these clippings sent, written years later, ER said, "Now—big acreage there!" Perhaps many vines on the Iberian peninsula are actual descendants of MR's '54 contraband shipment, following Amerine's instructions.)

### *Postcards, Letters, and Gifts from Europe*

Amerine's year abroad created a bonanza of written communications between him and the Rays. These often took the form of dialogue—one with a lengthy time lapse between statement and comment, or question and answer. The Ray Papers has a file folder that holds a number of picture postcards that Maynard sent to Martin and Eleanor from a variety of places, often signed simply MAA (with a center line through the initials). Most were

written during his yearlong European sojourn, but a number came from other locations, including California ones. In the blank left-side space for a message he managed, often using tiny script to squeeze in news of whatever he was currently seeing, doing, and drinking—and with whom he was spending time. Almost always he inserted little touches of humor or commentary that he was sure would amuse or interest the Rays.

Here are two snippets reporting on his adventures and observations while in Spain:

> Have been going out a lot. Three or four wonderful dance halls here. Of course all prostitutes but not bad looking if you look and choose carefully. Of course, when you've had 10 sherrys that isn't so easy. I never carry much money nor my passport so all I can lose is an already very tarnished virginity (self-contradiction) and perhaps some sleep! [2/12/54]
>
> All goes well with the Spanish front. Senators Bridges & Symington have come & gone—and no Spaniard cares. The US has grandiose ideas about its plan in Europe or in Spain. The French "hate" us passionately. I work a little, play a lot & feel fine. [3/4/54]

And several months and some cards later, this message arrived from Austria:

> My dear Rays—A brief note to say you must drive through Austria some summer. The Salzburg festival is all that anyone could ask. Vienna is trying to be lively. There are lots of wines—all nicely labeled with year, variety, producer, vineyard. None great—a few hi in $SO_2$. Oh yes, many Jugoslavia wines give alcohol & sugar %s. Will be in Geisenheim after Aug 5 or 6. Cold season here is great for tourists. Hell for fruit. MAA [7/27/54]

Amerine's letters were apt to get longer and chattier once he got to Germany (though he still sent postcards, too).

> Now I write to you at a little more length, since, as you can see I have finally bought a typewriter—in Switzerland. I have sent you cards from here and there, and hope that at least a part of them have gotten through. I did not enjoy the south of France as much as I should have because I refuse to believe that the French are honest in charging such prices.... However, the two experiment stations that I visited were most cordial and helpful....
>
> Two experiment stations in Jugoslavia were also most kind. But the country is in a moral and economic stupor.... Austria is western European again but the Soviet occupation of a good portion of the country doesn't permit too much expression of what they are really thinking. And, parenthetically, I have discovered that you never really hear what the people are saying unless you understand their language well enough to talk to them in it. That is more true in Spain than France.... [*Note*: Amerine wanted to increase international exchange of information about enology and viticulture, and a main goal in this European stay was to become conversant in both Spanish and German. In Spain he even wrote his lab notes in Spanish, asking an assistant to correct any errors. A number of MA's technical papers were translated into other languages.]
>
> Vienna was horribly bombed but is repairing the damage. The gay life which it once had is hardly to be seen—though they, and the Germans, do drink huge quantities of dry white wines....
>
> If you won't ever quote me I might say that German wines for steady drinking, and I have them twice a day, are a little too much of the same thing. That does not mean that I don't like them but I don't need them quite so often. Their cigars are poor. And their women, with exceptions, can stay here....

He also had written a more personal paragraph:

> Congrats on your 50th [MR's birthday]—lets make it a 100!! Someone writing in Time recently said that we live about as long as we think we will. Thank God I have always said that I would outlive my grandfather, in age, and he lived to be 94. Nice figure to shoot at anyway.

MR's response to this opinion of Maynard's about German wines was this:

> Interesting, what you report on German wines. I have been drinking up ours, as we lost our 1945 Schloss Johannisberger with oxidization. And I decided if I couldn't count on that wine for more than 9 years I had better drink them all up. The Berncasteler (Thannisch) is still in good shape. But in drinking them more frequently than usual I have lost my taste for them. They are too sweet for me. And when they are not too sweet they are too thin. The taste has turned away from my liking. In the end, nothing pleases me but a French claret, a French Burgundy white or red, a Champagne or one of our own wines. The exception merely illustrates the rule. I have drunk a very great deal of wine these last three years, well over a bottle a day myself, I imagine. These last wines satisfy me. The German wines I have drunk never any longer satisfy me. That is a simple statement of fact. And I don't care what anyone may have to say in contradiction. [8/20/54]

From time to time MR offered his verdict on California wines he had tried out recently, such as a bottle of Italian Swiss Colony champagne: "It was the poorest wine I ever tasted that was not sour or otherwise polluted. It tasted just like a cream soda.... We dumped it in the vineyard." [4/17/54]. He was far kinder to a different California-made wine:

> Among the wines drunk, a bottle of Beaulieu Cabernet-Sauvignon 1940 was very good. It was the best Cabernet of theirs I have ever tasted and it had aged well or, rather, held up very well and [will be] good for some years to come. [6/27/54]

But then he took a jab at another BV wine that was labeled as a varietal: "This reminds me of their so called Pinot Noir which we recently tasted in the

vintages 1944, 1945 and 1946." Since he had already vented plenty about these "fraudulent" Pinot Noirs when writing to his friend Angelo Pellegrini, he was sending Maynard the carbon copy of that letter; unfortunately, it doesn't seem to have been returned for filing away.

During his time abroad Maynard purchased and sent off several gifts to the Rays, including an engraving of an old winery that they soon got framed and hung in their big living room. To Martin he had sent two soft "scarfs" which he'd purchased in Spain, intended to keep his winegrower friend's sensitive back warm while he was outdoors in cold weather, vine pruning, or possibly in the dank cellar. MR wrote:

> First, I must tell you that the two woolen Spanish back protectors have arrived and, this time, in perfect condition. A thing you may have overlooked is that Eleanor might take one of them under protective custody! I was surprised to have her ask me which one I would prefer! They are just the thing for me when the cellar temperatures are pretty well fixed but the outside fluxuates [sic] so widely in seasons. Thank you so much for this last thoughtfulness and generosity. [11/7/54]

Maynard had sent Eleanor a special gift from Spain as well. Unfortunately, it had been smashed in transit. "Hello Maynard!" she wrote at the end of Rusty's letter to him.

> A dire shame about that beautiful tile. I put it all together again like a picture puzzle, and the bowl-of-fruit design was very very lovely, the colors exquisite—so I enjoyed it greatly, anyway, if but temporarily—for the pieces were too tiny to glue together.

Then ER added her own brief commentary about the recent rejection of her novel by Alfred A. Knopf himself, whom Rusty had known from his Masson years. Eleanor's explanation for the rejection, which likened her novel to the manifold tile shards she'd received from Spain, was sensible and moderate.

> Too bad about my book, too, maybe same trouble, a lot of too tiny pieces to hang together. It's probably too much non-fiction for fiction, and too much fiction for a non-fiction book—as with everything intended for the public, it has to be slanted accurately for a particular group, and I've got to think about it and fix it, no doubt. [8/10/54]

MR's reaction, though, was quite otherwise when he previously conveyed news to MA of this disappointing turndown. His letter had several long paragraphs in which he attributed it partly to "Eleanor's reference to the European Jews who have moved into our California wine industry, evidently." Knopf wouldn't have liked that, of course. And in one of his occasional anti-Semitic and paranoid diatribes, MR declared that Jews now controlled the publishing industry. He was also convinced that publishers and editors were under the potent influence of a pretentious breed of snobbish wine sophisticates, epitomized by Alexis Lichine, who wrote columns and books that were considered admirable and authoritative. Thus the novel would be distasteful to them because—

> ... it was about a family of the soil who worked and who believed all these phony self declared "gourmets" are barnacles who need to be shook loose from their attachment to the wine industry and who think of themselves as getting the wines somehow direct from the vines because they can't bear to think of the grower as having had nearly so much to do with the wines as themselves in "discovering" them. [6/27/54]

Maynard sent a sympathetic message to Eleanor and offered suggestions as to some academic publishers she might approach with her rejected manuscript. MR then responded:

> Thanks so much for what you have said about Eleanor's book. It is fiction and it is not a wine book. But she has in it all the problems of a wine growers life and incidentally more authentic stuff on wine than any book yet published as fiction. [11/28/54]

Eventually ER would set fiction writing aside, realizing that Martin Ray's own life and character were more fascinating and potent than anything she might devise in fictional form—and she worked to depicting them in words. It made quite a challenge, for neither on paper nor even in reality could his identity and deportment ever seem quite believable. She also had plenty of other writing to do: promoting her husband's wines, which she herself would "publish" in informative and often spirited home-printed communications that she mailed out to a growing list of people.

### *Report on a Madcap Dinner Party*

In her own first letter to Maynard since his departure, ER had apologized: "So sorry we've been slow in writing—for we firmly intended to have missiles [*sic*] spread all over Portugal and Spain awaiting your arrival!" But they hadn't had a "let down" ever since the beginning of the Christmas holidays and moving into their replacement home. "Your life sounds mighty fine, Maynard," she continued. "How about bringing home some attractive Spanish gal? Seems a mighty sane thought to me, after dining with some squirrelly bachelor friends of yours recently." (ER often chided him about his perennial bachelorhood and tried to set him up with single women.)

Eleanor delighted now in telling Maynard of the eccentric doings at a recent dinner party which took place at the Esquins' home. (John Esquin, whom MA knew, was a respected San Francisco wine merchant in those years, and the Rays frequently socialized with him and his wife, Lilly.) Present that night were Maynard's friend Dr. Salvatore Lucia, a professor at

the University of California School of Medicine and recent author of *Wine as Food and Medicine* (which Amerine had critiqued—also contributing to the first chapter on "The Chemistry of Wine"); Dr. Robert T. Knudsen, a young physician recently arrived in San Francisco, already acquainted with Maynard, and becoming known as an avid wine connoisseur; and Bob's elderly parents, visiting from the Boston area.

Knowing how Maynard relished gossipy tidbits, ER portrayed various wine-enhanced symptoms of dottiness among three of the male guests. (Both the Rays' letters abound in this type of reportage, whether playful or malicious.) Eleanor found Dr. Lucia "attractive in his odd way. But with many a loose screw, what? He's absolutely balmy about his dog Chico." As for the two other weird fellows:

> Even old Dr. Knudsen went into an eerie dissertation—which made me think it was a mighty good thing his wife has had him in tow for many years, or surely he wouldn't have made it safely to his present apparently normal situation. He said a friend of his, also in physics, shot himself because he couldn't keep up with such a big field. But as for himself, he met the problem by narrowing his field. Until by now he has only one interest, acoustics in opera houses. When he goes abroad he consequently is limited to places where there are opera houses. He goes there every day, just sits and listens.... There is no perfection in opera acoustics. It's just a question of getting 6.5 instead of 7.6, or something like this. Sir Christopher Wren made the foul mistake of all time in the great opera house he built in London. It's a whole point or two off, unthinkable. The doctor has spent much time sitting there, listening and shuddering at such a mistake by such an expert. It all went on like this. He is a dear, and I was so relieved to think of what an apparently normal, happy life he leads, despite his chief interest in life.

Having concluded that a sane and loving wife could prove to be an attribute, even a remedy, for brilliant but peculiarly fixated men of any age (listen up, Maynard!), Eleanor then moved on to the younger Knudsen:

> Would that some normal gal would interest Bob, who seems to have taken after his dad in emotional fascinations. Did you know Bob almost became a priest at one stage? He became so fascinated by the Pope, when his father brought him along to be presented, that he almost fainted—and for several years concentrated on studying all about all the popes, became a great authority on the subject, and determined to devote his life to studies in the Order. But what intervened? One day a man's hat blew off on the street ahead of him, he ran and caught it, gave it to the man who was mighty pleased, and upon learning that he was a Boston member of the Wine and Food Society, immediately Bob's interest switched from popes to wine. He went to see the man, he worshipped his every word.
>
> Great God, that evening was fascinating, what with old Dr. Knudsen telling one story after another like this one about Bob, and Dr. Lucia leaping about taking surprise pictures from odd angles, with fiendish grins, then going into a sudden serious, mystic look, and coming forth with a cryptic remark, challenging you to get it—then dropping his chin in hand, and telling you how a piece of music never sounded as wonderful as when Chico had his muzzle in his lap as he listened. John Esquin wasn't telling what he knew. Which underscored it all. Ah—

"Confidentially, they're completely nuts," had been ER's lead-in to her report on that evening and the antics of the three loopy and wine-fixated dinner guests. A rather sinister remark had then followed:

> Wine seems to be the one thing they have for a mutual focal point. But, like the insane, as soon as a pal turns his back they each whisper about how he actually doesn't know a thing about wine. Rusty has been dreadfully upset about what seems to be a concerted effort to belittle you. Were we less tired perhaps we could just laugh hilariously, for it's so ludicrous, it really is. He certainly told them a thing or two the other night. [2/6/54]

Eleanor didn't amplify on that part of the evening's doings because she knew that Rusty, still "dreadfully upset," intended to type up his own report to Maynard about what had become clear to him recently: A conspiracy had obviously been launched to undermine Amerine's reputation, along with those of other members of UC Davis's Viticulture and Enology Department. These rumormongers were spreading tales calculated to break what some wineries and winemakers considered a lock that the Davis faculty had established on the judging of California wines and vintages at state and county fairs and other wine-featuring events—thereby creating rankings that damaged certain wineries' commercial interests.

The Rays' two letters went out on the same day, within the same plump envelope. Amerine could have read Eleanor's and laughed. But he probably didn't find Martin's news quite so entertaining.

[*To be continued in the January 2006 issue*]

229 Strand, W.C.2

Dear Sir,

Professor George Saintsbury will celebrate the 86th anniversary of his birth in the autumn. Some of his friends have long wished to give expression to the admiration which is so widely felt for his ripe scholarship and generous personality; and it has been suggested that the best form which this tribute could take would be that of drinking his health in a selection from the old and rare wines whose excellence he has praised with so much discernment. We had hoped for his presence, but unfortunately the state of his health forbids him to undertake the strain of a journey to London, and his doctor will not allow him to leave his house for any function in Bath. Nevertheless, we feel that the tribute should be offered to him, even in his regrettable absence, and we invite you and any male friends of yours to join with us in drinking to Professor Saintsbury at a public dinner at the Connaught Rooms in Great Queen Street, W.C.2, on Thursday the 28th May, 1931, at 7.30 p.m. for 8 o'clock. Tickets (price 10s. 6d.) can be obtained from this address. Please answer at once.

Yours faithfully,

André Simon
J. C. Squire

[INVITATION TO THE FIRST GEORGE SAINTSBURY TRIBUTE DINNER — *See John Danza article*]