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Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Bruce Cakebread

Bruce Cakebread: Advocating for Napa Valley at Home and Abroad

The Napa Valley Vintners Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Martin Meeker
in 2018

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Bruce Cakebread

Photo courtesy of Napa Valley Vintners

Bruce Cakebread is the president and chief operating officer of Cakebread Cellars. Cakebread was born in 1956, raised in Oakland, and was educated at the University of California, Davis. He served as the chairman of the Napa Valley Vintners in 2010 and 2013. In this interview, Cakebread discusses the emphasis on quality for Napa Valley wines; compliance and the Napa Valley Agricultural Preserve; sustainability, Napa Green, and green-certified wineries; cooperation among large and small wineries in Napa Valley; the effect of climate change on winegrowing; Napa Name Protection and China; branding and national and international marketing; and future sustainability projects and goals of the Napa Valley Vintners.

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Napa Valley Vintners Project History

The Napa Valley Vintners (NVV) Oral History Project was initiated in 2018 following a series of conversations between representatives of NVV and UC Berkeley's Oral History Center. In anticipation of the NVV's 75th anniversary year in 2019, the NVV agreed to sponsor an oral history project documenting the contributions of the organization to the growth and improvement of the wine industry in the United States; the establishment and protection of "Napa Valley" as a place known worldwide for the quality of its wines; and the people who made all of this possible.

The oral histories in this project were designed to be rather brief two-hour interviews; in these the narrators were asked about their interest and engagement with the wine business in general before turning the focus to their participation in and observations of the NVV. Interviews in this project are wide-ranging, touching on a number of issues and topics going back to the very beginning of the organization in 1944—in fact, two of the first project narrators were children of NVV founders (Michael Mondavi is the son of Robert Mondavi; Robin Lail is the daughter of John Daniel, Jr.). Narrators describe the growth and transformation of the organization in the 1970s and 1980s; during this time the NVV ceased being a small group of vintners who viewed the organization as a social club as much as an industry group and changed into something much more consequential. Narrators, including Bob Trincherro and John Shafer, tell how the NVV grew into a large and influential organization that impacted the law, policy, trade, and marketing of wine in the United States and abroad. Other narrators describe the organization's emerging and expanding interest in protecting the environment, limiting urban growth, preserving agricultural lands, and advocating for sustainable practices in the vineyards and cellars of Napa Valley. Key people and projects of the organization are touched upon in most interviews, with special attention paid to Auction Napa Valley, the country's premier charitable wine auction that was established in 1981 and now raises millions of dollars a year for community health and education organizations in Napa Valley.

The Napa Valley Vintners Oral History Project builds upon decades of interviews conducted by the Oral History Center that document the history of wine in California and, in some cases, the specific history of the NVV. These oral histories date back to the late 1960s and include interviews with NVV founders Louis M. Martini and Robert Mondavi, as well as Eleanor McCrae, Joseph Heitz, Dan Duckhorn, and several other NVV leaders.

Martin Meeker
Charles B. Faulhaber Director
Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library

Interview 1: December 19, 2018

01-00:00:00

Meeker: Today is the nineteenth of December, 2018. This is Martin Meeker interviewing Bruce Cakebread for the Napa Valley Vintners Oral History Project. This is our first interview session here, and we are in the Pond Room—

01-00:00:28

Cakebread: This is our Pond Building, yeah.

01-00:00:29

Meeker: —the Pond Building at Cakebread Cellars, along Highway Twenty-Nine and Napa. So, we begin the interviews the same for everyone, and that's, tell me your name, and date, and place of birth.

01-00:00:44

Cakebread: So, I'm Bruce Cakebread and I was born May 31, 1956.

01-00:00:49

Meeker: Great, okay, '56. I know that your father, Jack, is the gentleman who started the whole Cakebread Cellars phenomenon, but that wasn't until 1973. So, why don't you walk me through a little bit of those first seventeen years of your life, before Cakebread Cellars becomes a thing in your life, and your father's life?

01-00:01:20

Cakebread: Ah, great. So, we all grew up in Oakland. My grandfather started an auto repair in downtown Oakland back in 1926. My grandfather and father ran a small, twenty-acres almond ranch or, "almond ranch," as he would say, and out in Brentwood, which is suburbs of Bay Area now. And so he came and my grandfather came and started a garage just south of Lake Merritt on East Twelfth and Eighth Avenue, and my father, my grandfather ran that business for almost fifty years.

My grandmother's—I just learned this—my grandmother's best friend was Helen Sturdivant, and the Sturdivant's had moved up to the original twenty acres where the winery is today, back in the fifties, and they always remained good friends. And so, we would come up when her kids come up to Napa Valley, and it wasn't like what you see today, and they had 400 acres up in the hills above Lake Hennessey where they ran cattle up there, and so you'd go up there and hike and ride mini bikes and all that kind of stuff. And so, that's how we knew the Sturdivants, and my father's kind of hobby is black and white photography, so growing up, our trips were mainly going up to Yosemite, backpack and camp out up in Tuolumne Meadows, and he would take classes from Ansel Adams.

And so we're all always outdoors, and so that ties back into, he was taking photographs for a book called *Treasury of American Wines* by Nate Chroman,

who was like the Robert Parker of the day. There was Robert Balzer and Nate Chroman back in the seventies, all lived in LA. And so he's up taking photographs, stopped by the Sturdivants, and kind of casually to say hello, but also said, "If you ever want to sell the place, let me know." This was before cell phones. So by time he'd gotten home, Mrs. Sturdivant called my mother, says, "We'll sell you the place," because they were looking to get out, because in '72, there was a hard freeze. They had old, old vines, varieties that we don't grow anymore here in Napa, and it was red wine or white wine type of varieties, and so, the deal was, as they would live in the house till they both passed on, and my parents would kind of take care of the vineyard.

With that came a guy named Duncan Mackenzie, who has a lot of history to him. He came over from Scotland in the early 1900s, kind of worked his way across, ended up in Monticello, where Lake Berryessa is today, came over and worked for the Gamble. He worked for the Gamble Ranch. He ended up here, and so when parents bought the twenty acres, we also got Duncan Mackenzie. Turns out, he was the last of his clan, and I ended up being his executor and wiring money back to people in Scotland, and you'd just like—pennies from heaven. It's like, "What's this money for?" It's like, "Your great-grandfather funded him to get over here." So anyway, that was kind of fun.

Moving back, we started in '73 with four barrels of Chardonnay from Trefethen, and my father went down and visited with a guy who had Groezinger's Wine Company out Yountville, guy named Phil Faight, and Phil tasted the wines, says, "I'll buy all you have." And so he sold him the wine, and all of a sudden, it's like, geez, we can sell this stuff, as well as drink it, and that's kind of how we started. That is about the time I was getting out of high school in '74.

01-00:04:56

Meeker:

Let me pause there for a second. So you said that your grandfather had an almond ranch out in—

01-00:05:02

Cakebread:

Brentwood.

01-00:05:02

Meeker:

—Brentwood, that's right, which is definitely a suburb now. It's interesting. Did your father have any play in that? Was that something that you had experience with growing up?

01-00:05:11

Cakebread:

Not me. This was before my time, and so, they did it. I know my grandfather had hay fever pretty good, so he wasn't all that interested, but my father would go out, and kind of farm out there, disc and whatever, and what's interesting is, a guy named Tony Baldini, who was running also some almonds out there, ended up with the Trefethens in back in 1968, and so that was kind of the entry there, Trefethens being an Oakland family as well as Tony Baldini. That's how they ended up getting some wine from Trefethen,

and so that's kind of how it all started, because Tony and my father, young guys kind of working out there, on weekends, and then they'd run the garage during the day, or during the week.

01-00:06:02

Meeker:

So, when you were growing up, did you actually come to this property before your father purchased it?

01-00:06:08

Cakebread:

Yeah, because we'd come up where the winery house is, and spend a little bit of time with the Sturdivants, and then everyone would go up to the ranch off of Greenfield Road up in the rolling oak hills, which just seemed like it was out in the middle of nowhere at the time, and we'd kind of go hang out up there. And so it's just a big kind of Oak Hills, and the cows coming through, and all that kind of stuff, and so that's kind of where everyone went, and there's little pond on the back side, and you could go swim or target practice across the canyon there, and that type of stuff.

01-00:06:45

Meeker:

It was like a little summer camp or something.

01-00:06:46

Cakebread:

Yeah, it was really fun, and then my grandparents also had some friends up in Lake County, and so we would go up to Middletown and go out that way, and they had a ranch out there that we'd all go and hang out as well.

01-00:06:59

Meeker:

Did your parents ever go to Inglenook, or any of the old wineries that existed at that time?

01-00:07:04

Cakebread:

So then, about the late sixties, there's kind of this interest in wine, and so you had Belle and Barney Rhodes. You'll come across them if you haven't, but they were very, very passionate about wine, and you had some early—you know, the wine and food was just starting up. You had Narsai David starting up Narsai's in Emeryville, and so you had this kind of movement, and my parents started talking about wine, and they invited the Rhodes to their house and had a tasting. They're still learning about it, and so this was just that kind of beginning of a groundswell of interest in Napa Valley, Napa Valley wines. It was kind of what I always kind of considered that next Renaissance. Starting in the sixties, Napa Valley kind of reinvented itself again.

01-00:07:56

Meeker:

Who were the Rhodes's?

01-00:07:57

Cakebread:

Belle and Barney Rhodes, he was a doctor, ran a hospital down in Oakland, and then, Belle Rhodes was like the best entertainer, just make you feel at home and welcome, and they both loved wine, and so they're pretty much historical figures, I think, in the Valley and in kind of wine and food. Was

interesting, when my wife and I were younger, they would invite us to like a Sunday lunch, and so we're pretty young and pretty green, but she was just kind of showing us, so this is how you entertain, and this is how you kind of enjoy wine, and so it was great education. You got to meet a wide range of people, and so I felt very, very fortunate. The Rhodes, I think, were also early investors in Heitz Winery too, I think. They'd really kind of taught everyone, or a lot of people, how to enjoy wine, way back when, when people were still trying to figure it out.

01-00:09:02

Meeker:

Well, can you walk me through what a Sunday lunch at the Rhodes's would have been like, and how that helped people understand wine?

01-00:09:08

Cakebread:

Well they'd bring a kind of a diverse group of people, and they'd always start out with glass of champagne. It's Sunday, you know. It's about noon, and so it's nice start there, and kind of just easy conversation. The tables would be just decorated beautifully, and then Barney had just an amazing cellar. So, part of it is, you go down and visit the cellar, and there'd be fifteen to twenty people there. So it was kind of a good-sized lunch, and then each course went with a certain wine that they picked out, and there's a history or story, and then, you always ended up with a dessert wine or a port at the end, and so, it's about a three- or four-hour lunch, and they lived on Bella Oaks Lane, which is just a beautiful spot as well right out in the middle of the Valley there. So, that's kind of the memories for it.

01-00:10:05

Meeker:

Did they have old California vintages in their cellar?

01-00:10:09

Cakebread:

Oh yeah, wines from around the world, and so, that's what he was kind of showing, here's what Burgundies taste like, because everyone was learning at the time of just learning about wine, and kind of what's good and what's not good, and how's this compare, and that was it, was an education about wine, education about wine and food, and then just enjoying each other's company.

01-00:10:38

Meeker:

So, take me back to when you were graduating high school.

01-00:10:42

Cakebread:

Youngest of three, and so both my brothers went into business, and went on to business school. I decided to take a different tack and studied, went to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, studied pomology, tree fruits, did that for two years, and then this kind of wine was starting to grow, and so decided to transfer up to UC Davis, and see how many classes I could transfer up there, took bunch of summer classes, and then finished out '76, '77, '78 over at Davis, and kind of went through the vit and enology program there.

01-00:11:22

Meeker:

What was your interest in pomology and tree fruits?

01-00:11:25

Cakebread:

So I enjoy agriculture, and so I enjoy the outdoors, and just kind of figured, this was a one way to get the outdoors. Also, I just enjoy that agriculture is kind of just a different way, because you're kind of dealing with Mother Nature, and it's a poker game, and the cards get reshuffled every year, and I enjoy that aspect because you never know what's going to happen until you get it into the barn, so to speak, and so I enjoy that aspect of farming. I also enjoy kind of working with different people throughout the whole, from growing it to making it to selling it, and you get to work with a wide range of people and I enjoy that a lot, and so, agriculture is just, you get to be outside. You look out today, this is our office, and so it's quite nice to be that way instead of being an office building.

01-00:12:22

Meeker:

Mid to late seventies, so are some of the great names still there, like Maynard Amerine and those folks?

01-00:12:28

Cakebread:

Yeah, and so one professor—he'd recently started there—is Roger Boulton, and so Roger's a genius, and he was young, and we're all pretty young as well. Amerine had recently retired. We had Dinny Webb there. We had Doctor Ough and Ralph Kunkee. He just passed away too, microbiologist.

01-00:12:59

Meeker:

Okay. We can always add that in the transcript.

01-00:13:01

Cakebread:

Yeah. And so you had that whole group going along, and so fortunate, Doctor Cook in the vit side, and so all these guys who did their early research, they're all teaching the classes, so it was pretty exciting to be there, it's kind of understand it, and be able to get that education.

01-00:13:23

Meeker:

Were you taking classes both in enology and viticulture? I understand there was some division during that period of time.

01-00:13:28

Cakebread:

Yeah, you started out as plant science on the viticulture, and food science and fermentation science, and everyone was taking all the classes. You'd kind of, back and forth, and do it that way. I ended up one class short, so I never graduated, just one class short of that. Back in the time, back in the seventies, it's like, I'm not coming back. I want to get to work and kind of get going, and so, that was the trend. We would never tell our kids to do that today.

01-00:13:55

Meeker:

Did you gravitate towards one side or the other, towards viticulture or enology?

01-00:13:59

Cakebread:

What I enjoyed is the different seasons, so when it was really hot, it was great to be in the winery, and then, in the spring, in the fall, it's great to be out in the vineyards, and so, being a really small operation the way we were, you kind of had to do everything, had to have some knowledge in both, and so it was kind of soup to nuts for us.

01-00:14:21

Meeker:

Where were you living when you were going to Davis?

01-00:14:23

Cakebread:

We lived outside of town in, I think it was called the Meadows at the time. It's on the west side of town, and so, now I think it's all part of Davis, but it was a bike ride in, and it seemed like whenever you're at Davis, whatever way you're going, the wind's blowing against you out there. And so, that's where we lived, and there was a guy named Stan Meyer who was also, his family was farming out in Chiles Valley, and a guy who was a nut farmer used to be in San Jose in that area, and so there was three of us living out there.

01-00:14:57

Meeker:

And so, I guess your father was building out this property at that point in time?

01-00:15:02

Cakebread:

Yeah, they were making just a couple barrels, and kind of growing it a little bit, and my brothers would come up on weekends. I'd come over, and so it was kind of weekend work that we were doing kind of that way. Brother Dennis was still involved in the banking business. Steve was kind of on the finance side of tech. He worked for HP for a long, long time. And so, mainly it was just driving over on weekends and doing all our work. We'd do weeknights. Sometimes we would come up, and rack wine and try not get too wet, and then kind of go back, and so, that's kind of how it all kind of first started.

01-00:15:44

Meeker:

One of, I think, the big stories of Napa during that era is the ascendance of Cabernet, and you had said that there were other grape varieties planted in this property when your father purchased it in '73. Can you talk about the decision-making process of planting to Cabernet, and I guess, did you have Chardonnay here?

01-00:16:06

Cakebread:

We had; it was, everything got pulled out, and so they couldn't afford to plant the whole twenty acres, and so he talked to Robert Mondavi, talked with [André] Tchelistcheff, and said, "What should I plant?" Tchelistcheff says, "Plant Cabernet." Mondavi said, "Plant Sauvignon Blanc." And so he was like, okay, well I'll split it, and so he planted the front side in Sauvignon Blanc, which was the heavier ground, and in the back ten acres, he left fallow. And so a guy named Dick Steltzner said, "Don't plant grapes; plant blackberries, because that's the next big market." And so there was a little

debate, “Maybe we should plant blackberries,” and if he did, I think we’d still have blackberries growing everywhere. And so, he didn’t do that and planted the back part to Cabernet, a couple years later, and so that’s how he kind of started out making Sauvignon.

Sauvignon Blanc came into production back in 1976. Our first Cabernet came from Dick Steltzner as well, over in his Stags Leap—right where his old barn was, where the winery is today, and so then I worked with Dick during the fall. I was kind of a dumb intern, and so I was running a picking crew, and I think he gave me the roughest picking crew. I learned more about negotiation during that harvest there, kind of with our picking crew, but anyway, Dick was very, very patient of having this kind of green kid kind of work harvest there, and so that was, it was quite the education.

01-00:17:38

Meeker:

Steltzner was the guy who made that famous home Cabernet, right, that Warren Winiarski tasted—that was Nathan Fay, I think. Well they’re all in that same area, and so Dick had from Silverado Trail going all the way back to hills, just a beautiful piece of property, and turns out, Phil Freese was buying a lot of that Cabernet in there, and then we’re buying the right around the barn, which was kind of really just a great slice of land, and he had one side that he never planted it to rootstock. It was just own rooted, and so it lasted for a couple years, kind of interesting—I’m not sure if it made a heck of a difference—and then the rest was on AXR.

01-00:18:24

Meeker:

Interesting in what way?

01-00:18:26

Cakebread:

We had the south block, and then we had this little north block, own rooted, and so then the question was, do we blend them and make one, or keep them separate? So we decided to keep it separate. One was called Lot One, pretty genius, and the other one was Lot Two. That started out as kind of our reserve wine, because we thought that little patch was different, and we didn’t want to lose it by blending them together.

01-00:18:55

Meeker:

And was there a profile difference in the—

01-00:18:58

Cakebread:

It was subtle, but it was just a little bit more elegant, and had just a little bit more weight than the south side was, just maybe not as much tannins. That’s kind of what you were looking for at the time.

01-00:19:13

Meeker:

Interesting. When your father first establishes Cakebread Cellars and—well, your first release was what year again?

01-00:19:25

Cakebread: First vintage was '73 Chardonnay, and then '74 Cab, and then '76, Sauvignon Blanc.

01-00:19:31

Meeker: So the '73 Chardonnay, did that have a Cakebread Cellars label on that?

01-00:19:35

Cakebread: Yeah.

01-00:19:35

Meeker: When did your father join the Napa Valley Vintners?

01-00:19:40

Cakebread: He started up pretty early, I think. I'm not sure if it was '73, because I think he was still trying to figure out what was going on, but it would have been in the early seventies that he joined the Vintners. He likes to be with groups and kind of share that kind of knowledge and understand, and there, you had Bernard Portet; John Wright; the Davies, Jack Davies; one of the Mondavis; where they'd go out and they'd do kind of what they'd called the flying circus. Everyone had a different variety to talk about, so they weren't competing with trying to promote Napa, promote all their wines, and they kind of also figured out at an early stage that it was just one person going out, you're only going to get like five people. If you go out with five of them, they'll get twenty-five people to show up, and so that was the idea, is to try and get more people to show up to their tastings, and kind of hit one day, one city type of things in the early days of just trying to get their name out, and—

01-00:20:49

Meeker: Where'd they go?

01-00:20:50

Cakebread: All across the US. It's kind of a barnstorm through our first, or my first trip outside of Northern California. My father and I went to Austin, Texas, and there was a PBS tasting, charity tasting, and there was a guy who owned two restaurants, and they were the only establishments in town that would sell wine—everything else was beer and Tex-Mex food—and about that same time is when the savings and loan boom hit down there, and all these guys are building buildings, and see who could build the tallest building, and they had just amazing collections of Bordeaux there, and they're collectors, not drinkers, but they're collectors, and so my father would walk in. It's like, "Let's try one, see how it is," and it's like, "No, no, no." It's like they were collecting pennies or stamps instead of drinking the wine, and so it was kind of getting everyone to enjoy the wine.

Down in Austin, there was a guy who had Dan's Liquors, and so he had a room upstairs that just had all Sauternes in it, so it just kind of glowed gold like in there, but you saw this in Austin, Texas, back in the late seventies. You just wouldn't think of it like that. And so, then the Wine Institute would go

out and we'd do group tastings, just try and get that interest going, so, that was interesting.

01-00:22:12

Meeker: Were these held in liquor stores, or restaurants, or—

01-00:22:15

Cakebread: Yeah, usually you just rent a ballroom in a hotel, or you'd do wine dinners, kind of wherever you could kind of find that wouldn't charge you too much, and some are, you'd do store tastings, and there was kind of, in each town, there'd be someone who was really passionate about wine, kind of an early pioneer for their town, and so you'd try and kind of glom onto them and everyone would kind of grow together on that.

01-00:22:44

Meeker: Was it mostly industry people coming to these tastings, or were there consumers who were showing up?

01-00:22:49

Cakebread: You just started to see people interested in wine, and so, take people like my parents. It's like, "What's wine?" So, my brothers and I and our kids, we've all grown up with wine on the table, so we're different consumers than the way my parents were, of just, "Should I like this? Does it taste good, or why does someone tell me that this is really good?" And so, they went through that whole exploration of learning about wine, and that was just getting people to try it, and then if they—that's where you'd sit there and go, "Well, you can open it," and I like it or I don't, but then that's where kind of the wine and food movement started, so you had the whole Bay Area with California cuisine, and that whole group.

So the wine industry kind of glommed onto that, and said, "Here's a glass of wine, and if you have it with this pasta dish, it's going to taste even better and you're going to enjoy it." And so we're trying to show them how to enjoy that glass of wine instead of, "Here's a sharp instrument and a bottle that's hard to open, you figure it out," and that's where kind of the wine and food movement kind of started, helped to show new customers how to enjoy that wine.

01-00:24:10

Meeker: Well, I know here at Cakebread Cellars, you guys have like a permanent kitchen, and you've had a food and wine education program for a while. How did that come about?

01-00:24:20

Cakebread: Well, it's that idea of showing people how to enjoy wine, and then it evolved in our early days, we used to do all hand bottling, and so I think they'd invite all their friends up, and so everyone who would work in the morning and then sit and have a nice lunch out on that deck out there, and just like, well, this is pretty fun. Then pretty soon, I think they went through their Christmas list, and people didn't show up until like eleven o'clock when the lunch started,

instead of doing all the heavy lifting, but that's kind of just, this is a nice way to enjoy your product, and having that experience and being able to take it out on the road or people come here, this is the best way, and then they understand how to enjoy their wine even more, get more pleasure out of it.

01-00:25:07

Meeker:

When was the first time that you had a meaningful interaction with the vintners association? I guess it would have been called the Napa Valley Vintners Association at that time—

01-00:25:16

Cakebread:

Yeah, I think it was like in the late seventies or early eighties, because there was that whole promotions part. They'd do great Christmas lunches. The lunches were kind of a bigger thing, to be able to get everyone together, and so it'd be the late seventies, early eighties when my father started going up there.

01-00:25:39

Meeker:

Well that's interesting, because I've been becoming interested in this, and also the social dimension. Clearly there's a marketing angle on it, there's a governmental relations facet to it, but I imagine there's also got to be a social dimension to it. Tell me about these Christmas lunches. Where were they held?

01-00:25:59

Cakebread:

So you'd go up to the Lodi Farm Center up there, which, it's on Lodi Lane, an old, old house. They've fixed it up quite nice, but they used to do them up there, because it was kind of a place you could go, and, the social interaction of the vintners, because sometimes, everyone's out traveling and you don't get to see them, and sometimes at those events, at the membership meetings or the lunches, is where everyone kind of gets together, and it kind of reminds you why you got in the wine business, to be able to kind of toast and just share a meal and kind of talk freely at these lunches. We just had their kind of harvest lunch over at Mondavi a couple weeks ago, and so it was David Duncan, myself, Dirk Hampson, and Alex Ryan, all sat down, and it was just fun to catch up, because we hadn't seen each other for a long time, and be able to just sit down and kind of like, "Hey, what's going on?" And so that was, it still continues to this day, seventy-five years later.

01-00:27:04

Meeker:

But it's got to be pretty different now. I imagine in the late seventies, there were what, thirty or forty vintner members, and now there are 500 or something?

01-00:27:14

Cakebread:

Yeah, it's kind of interesting, because you have new wineries, who are these people, and what's really fun is, we were that way back when, and so you know where they're coming from and say—I'm kind of deep empathy. It's like, geez, I don't know anyone here, so you try and reach out, and if someone

you don't know, you try and introduce yourself. When I was chair in the Vintners, I'd try and get someone to stand up, new vintner, and say, "Stand up. Here you've got an audience of sixty to a hundred people. Give your elevator speech about your wine so everyone knows, and then, they can taste and understand, well, here's a new label." And so that's a good way just to kind of break the ice, and everyone could recognize this person when you saw them in the grocery store or something like that. So, that aspect of the Vintners is really important, because the philosophy is kind of rising tide of all boats, to make sure that that doesn't go away. It's important for everyone to kind of get together, so it's pretty neat.

01-00:28:18

Meeker:

Particularly in the founding, and seventy-five years ago, there were still a lot of Italian families in the Valley, and the Martinis and the Mondavis were part of the founding of the Vintners. Was there kind of like a Mediterranean and Italian cultural feel to this, I mean at these big meals, where they were like, spaghetti feeds? What was the food, for instance?

01-00:28:45

Cakebread:

You know, each time the food would change. Some was good. Some, you get the chicken and the rice, and other times, they weren't elaborate; it was more the wines up and down the table that you're kind of enjoying. Everyone is pretty open to welcoming new people. Sometimes you get comments back and forth. It's like, I think my father charged twelve dollars for his '74 Cabernet, and they were just like, "How can this newcomer charge so much?" And so you had that. You had also a group that was fairly opinionated, in a positive way, and they were not shy about voicing their opinions. You had Joe Heitz who has very, very strong opinions and not shy to give them; the Winiarskis. So you had a group out there that were very opinionated, and I don't think there was that, there came earlier or later, but it did take a while to kind of bond together, to kind of know who you are, and it's like, oh, okay, we can trust them, and because you do what you say type of thing, you pay your bills on time.

01-00:30:01

Meeker:

Like you mentioned Heitz and Winiarski, opinionated, are they opinionated about wine, or about issues that might be impacting—

01-00:30:10

Cakebread:

Yes.

01-00:30:10

Meeker:

—or, all of the above? Okay.

01-00:30:12

Cakebread:

All of the above. I remember Joe Heitz was giving a talk, and sometimes he was trying to get everyone quiet, so he just stood up there, about five minutes until you could hear a pin drop, then he would start. And so it was like, wow, that's amazing, so, but that's how these guys were. They had strong opinions,

and were also trying to kind of breakthrough that wall of other winegrowing regions being strong, and we're out here, what are we doing? And so they had to be pretty aggressive to kind of get their point, to kind of get into the marketplace to make an impact.

So, you kind of almost had to be that way, because I always think about things that my father did that, there's no way we could get away with today. We were down in Orlando doing tastings. We had all the food and beverage people come in from all the different hotels. We had about twenty there, and this was back when, is French wine better than Napa wine? So there's kind of a poof, and so everyone had a lot of wine, and the chef comes out at the end of the dinner and everyone claps, and he's a French chef. He goes, "French wines are better." Just nothing. So my father almost got up and was like, "Okay, come on, let's go." You could never do that today. And so, [laughs] you just had those types of things that you kind of had to work through.

01-00:31:40

Meeker:

When you're at, for instance, like the Christmas party you mentioned, are you guys bringing just like a half a case of wine, and then it gets distributed around the tables? Is that sort of how it works, or—

01-00:31:50

Cakebread:

Yeah, everyone brings a bottle, and so, you kind of have your peers there, so you kind of want to bring something that's special, and that other people will appreciate, and so that's been fun. There's also the wine tech group which was a case of wine as dues and a little bit of money to cover the food, and so that was more for the production, and the cellar people, and that's where I spent my early years, with the wine tech group, and we'd have a dinner up at a restaurant, All Seasons, and so they'd have hanging beef, and we'd all have wine up there, and someone would stand up and talk about something technical, and then everyone would go out to the bar and have beer, and you'd learn more about what all these guys were doing. And so Nils Venge kind of introduced me to that group, and so that was my education on that part of kind of in the early days for me.

01-00:32:50

Meeker:

Are there any folks in the Valley, winemakers who you looked up to as a mentor, or who really taught you some things that you might not have learned otherwise?

01-00:32:59

Cakebread:

Yeah, we were fortunate in the early days. We had Larry Wara, who was an enologist over at Robert Mondavi, and Larry was kind of working nights with us, and I think he wanted to get into consulting, because that was kind of growing at the time, and so, Larry kind of helped establish the focus on quality, or focus on our style being a very dry, crisp, white wine. His whole thing was, wine quality is number one. Everything else, don't worry about, and so it was, and so for me, a great education kind of coming out of school to work with Larry for those first three or four years, and kind of tasting, and

understanding what he's seeing, because he'd had like fifteen years ahead of me. So we had Larry; Chuck Ortman, who was the winemaker up at Spring Mountain at the time, he helped out, because Chuck wanted to, kind of bonded with Jack, and they worked well together, and so, those two are some early kind of people that helped kind of get us going, not make too many mistakes.

01-00:34:14

Meeker:

You said that you started going to and participating in Vintner meetings and such, in the late seventies, early eighties. Can you describe the organization at that point in time, like who were the key players and what were the main activities of the group?

01-00:34:29

Cakebread:

Yeah, and so you had all those early pioneers. Robert Mondavi's in there. You had Michael [Mondavi], was kind of also in there. You had the Davies from Schramsberg. You had all the early pioneers were all in. You had John Shafer being kind of an early leader in that. And so that whole group really did a lot of early heavy shoveling to kind of set a great foundation for the rest of us to kind of continue on, and so, they're trying to just get into the market, and make a name for themselves, and kind of compete, whether it's in Texas, or everyone started going to Florida at the time. Then you're working in New York and New York's a tough, tough market to introduce this upstart, small region, because everyone was kind of really looking at its pioneers as center of the universe, and wine was European-focused wines, and it was just trying to say, "Hey, we can be in the same room with us," and at that time, the wines were fairly big, because we had '77, was a drought year, '76, '70, so they made big wines; '78 was a hot vintage, they made big wines; and so we kind of got tagged with, bigger-is-better type of mentality kind of starting up there.

01-00:35:53

Meeker:

One of the things that is interesting, particularly during the seventies and eighties, there's a reputation amongst, say, French winemakers that there are a lot of secrets, that you don't have to have your competitor into your cellar because you don't want to see what's going on, and the way that I've heard about it described here in Napa is, there was a lot more openness, a lot more collaboration. Do you think the Vintners played a role in helping foster that kind of environment?

01-00:36:26

Cakebread:

Yeah, with the Vintners, it brought everything together so they're not just sitting in their own winery or their own house, kind of like, "What's the guy across the road doing"? It kind of made it so everyone had to work together for the common good of Napa Valley, and then you got that discussion of kind of going back and forth, like "Hey, what are you doing?" Or if something broke, you could always rely on someone kind of setting that up. It's like, we had an old press that the gear box broke. Turns out, the Mondavis at Charles Krug had like an old press, and so we went up there and unbolted that motor and put it on ours, and started back up, and so it was that kind of sharing. If Robert Mondavi Winery got too many visitors that they couldn't handle,

they'd send a bus over to us, which, we'd just, you know, fill up our septic system as soon as everyone got off the bus, but it was that kind of sharing, and everyone got to know each other through the Vintners, and be able to work through different issues, whether it's a community issue, whatever, that they're able to kind of work on that together, and that gave them that context to kind of reach out to them again.

01-00:37:40

Meeker:

Something that happens pretty early on in your participation would have been the auction. The first one was in 1981. Did you go to that?

01-00:37:50

Cakebread:

Yeah, the early auctions, they were marathons. They'd last for a while, and you'd kind of go through, because they had several hundred lots to auction off in the afternoon. The big deal at that time was the food for the dinners. Those committees kind of had struggles of what kind of food they're going to serve, who's going to be the chef? The decorations were really important, and part of it was creating an auction to promote Napa Valley, and now it's almost flipped in that the Valley is the beneficiary of the auction, whereas in the beginning, this was a way to kind of promote Napa Valley wines, and beneficiary's the community. And so it's kind of almost flipped over since 1981, and so it was really interesting, and then when the format changed, was this good or not good when they kind of tightened it up?

And so it's been, each auction has its own kind of personality, and I think what I like about it is all the vintners kind of get together and kind of show off. It's a chance for the whole Valley or the wine industry in the Valley to kind of show off what they're doing over those three days, whether it's different events, dinners that they're doing, or the events with the auction. It makes it pretty fun. And, we chaired it in 2006, and that takes all year, and you're just impressed with the volunteers that we're working with, and it really doesn't hit you until the day of the auction. You're kind of like, oh my God, you just see everything kind of go into action, and you just see passionate people kind of really want to do good, and all volunteers. It's impressive, and then when you see the bidding kind of go, it's pretty exciting.

01-00:39:56

Meeker:

What's the job description of auction chair? I know that it's evolved over time. What was it like in 2006?

01-00:40:03

Cakebread:

Yeah and so then Jack and Dolores; and Dennis and myself; and we had a sister-in-law at the time, Karen Cakebread; my wife; and so everyone took a little bit, took a committee, and kind of worked with that. And so, the Vintners also support you so you're not going to fail as well, and so that whole team is going like crazy to kind of shepherd you along and make sure you're on time, stay on budget, and here's how this thing's going to work type of thing, and so it's a good interaction. The family gets to put their footprint on it, but the most nervous I think we were, or that I think I was at, was when you kind of do the

roll out to the rest of the organization on that Wednesday before the auction. You have to kind of explain, “Here’s what’s going on.” You can just see them. When you’re talking to your peers like that, is to me is most nerve-wracking, because you know everyone’s judging, like, “Well I wouldn’t have done it that way,” or it’s like, “Oh, that’s a good idea.” So, that’s what was kind of the exciting time.

01-00:41:11

Meeker:

What committee were you chairing in 2006?

01-00:41:13

Cakebread:

I had this weird idea, is that we should move an event down to Napa, which hadn’t been done, and so like, that’s fine, but you can’t blow the budget on it, and so that’s also when Copia was just starting, and so we did kind of an AVA tasting down there through the garden, so we had tables out. I think there was fourteen AVAs at the time, so each one of them was pouring their wines down there, and so it was, the idea was to kind of bring Napa, because it was not what it is today, and so it was, this would be a way to kind of spread it up and down the Valley. They only did it that one year, [laughs] and so—

01-00:41:54

Meeker:

Well, do you think it was a success, or—

01-00:41:57

Cakebread:

It was different. If they’d kept with it, then people would have kind of like, “Oh, there is something down Valley.” It is interesting, but maybe not something they wanted to continue to do, because it was a lot of work to spread it up and down the Valley.

01-00:42:14

Meeker:

In the early years, there’s some talk of how people would put a lot in, and then all of a sudden, it sells for way more than it would have in retail, and so there’s now this emerging recognition that there’s at least a certain class of consumers who are valuing the wines even more than the producers anticipated. Did that ever happen with Cakebread Cellars?

01-00:42:44

Cakebread:

We’re fortunate. Joy Craft, who came to the auction when Jay Leno was the MC there—and so I was my mother’s date because my father didn’t want to go or whatever, and so we’re sitting at the table, and just right when the lights went down, Joy and her friends sat at our table, and so, Jay Leno did a great job. The whole place was just rocking, and kind of going through the auction, and my mother leans over and goes, “You haven’t bid on anything. Are you going to bid on anything?” She goes, “Well, I’ll bid on something,” and it was the barrel lot between Peter and Robert, the joint barrel lot. So she went like this with her paddle, and so I’m sitting next to her, and the guy’s going back, and they had these little video screens so everyone can see who’s bidding, and Joy’s there, and she goes, “Oh, I know that guy. He doesn’t like to lose.” So she went like this, and so she ended up getting it for like about 500,000 bucks.

And so, all the press comes down, and someone says, “Bruce, what do you think of your wife bidding on this?” And I hadn’t met Joy since—it’s not my wife. You know, usually you get your picture in the paper and all that kind of stuff. So Tim comes over, and kind of goes, “Thank you for bidding on the lot; like to invite you to lunch up at Robert’s house tomorrow, with anyone you want to go.” So Joy looks at me, goes, “You want to go to lunch tomorrow?” So I go, “Sure!” And so Tim’s like, looking at me kind of like, what is going on?

So that was kind of funny, and then we were the last lot. It was us, Silver Oak, and Phelps, and I think Schramsberg, all went together for a joint lot, and you know, and lunches and dinners, and so then Joy went like this and got that for like 450,000 bucks, and so, it was just humbling. And then, also, it’s like, wow, you want to exceed someone’s expectations when they come up for lunch and entertain them, but she turned out to be a great, great supporter of the Vintners, and just amazing to be able to sit next to someone like that and be able to kind of experience it firsthand. It’s like, wow, and so, that was exciting times for the auction.

01-00:45:02
Meeker:

Fascinating. So your father was president of the Vintners in 1990, your brother in 1997, and then you’ve been board president twice: I guess in 2010, 2013. Tell me about that job, and based on your family’s experience of it, has it evolved and changed over the years?

01-00:45:27
Cakebread:

Yeah, in the early days when my father was doing it and my brother, the Winery Definition, Hillside Ordinance, you had all those issues kind of coming up to the front, and so it was pretty contentious and some discussion there with trying to come to agreement within the industry, within the county of what’s going to work, and so those were, all that work went through—

01-00:45:55
Meeker:

So it’s kind of like, if you’re lucky enough to be board president in a year when one of these issues moves to the front burner, then all of a sudden, your job becomes a lot different. You have to help achieve some sort of—

01-00:46:08
Cakebread:

Work through that, yeah. You can look at it two different ways. I looked at it as exciting times to kind of be in the ring. It’s easy to sit up on the stands as a little TR Roosevelt, sit on your hands and shout down, but actually it was a lot more interesting to kind of get bloodied sometimes, and gives a couple swings as well, and so, that, to me, is exciting times. In 2010, the WDO [winery definition ordinance] issue surfaced again, because we had the recession coming through, and maybe it needed to be opened up to allow weddings and allow other events, and so that kind of separated out.

01-00:46:53
Meeker:

The Winery Definition Ordinance?

01-00:46:54

Cakebread:

Yeah, so it kind of got surfaced again, and so we kind of had to work through that, and basically, we came together, because there's kind of extremes of, wineries should be event centers, to, they shouldn't do anything, and so, what we wanted to do is kind of keep the status quo, because it was working, worked before the recession, and it's lucky we did, because the way things are going, it would have just gone too crazy in terms of what wineries should or shouldn't be able to. And so that was kind of 2010 time period, and so it was exciting time to be in the Vintners, be on the board. Everyone had an opinion.

01-00:47:36

Meeker:

So, this is the Winery Definition Ordinance. It's an interesting—and for somebody who's an outsider, like myself, a bit of a mystery. [laughs] I'm not entirely sure. I get what some of the issues are in it, but I'm not entirely sure how it actually stands, and where it's headed, so, and given that this was something that you had to work on during your term as board president, your first term, I'm wondering if you can kind of back up and tell me what the Wine Definition Ordinance was, why it happened, and then maybe tell me a little bit more about when it comes up again in 2010.

01-00:48:19

Cakebread:

So you have, you go all the way back to 1968 with the Ag Preserve, and so the Ag Preserve in Napa Valley, I think it was one of the first in the US to be able to protect agriculture as the best use of the land. What that means is, outside the city limits, you're restricted on what you can and can't do, and so you're growing agricultural products: grapes for making wine. We can sell our product because we grew it, make it, and we can promote it, and so, everything you're doing is kind of educating, but you can't—like we couldn't start a plumbing store here, because that's a commercial operation. You take that same kind of analogy. Is hosting weddings a commercial operation, or are you promoting wine? Depends on what side of the fence you are as how you can argue that case.

And so, the idea was to try and keep to the original intent of protecting the Valley, keeping it an ag preserve and not letting these things get too far out of hand. And so that was kind of the whole discussion, because back in 2009, one of our supervisors said, “The industry's having a tough time. Why don't we open up to weddings?” And that, [laughs] that one comment started about two-to-three-year whole discussion within the industry of what should or shouldn't be allowed, and so it was just having that discussion.

01-00:49:43

Meeker:

Well it goes back to the—you know, in the beginning and even in the agriculture thing, a lot of it's open to interpretation as you said. I can't remember the exact language from the original ordinance, but it's like, agriculture is growing things, but it's also the ancillary activities related to that, whether that's fermentation, whether that's cellaring, or whether that's marketing and selling.

01-00:50:12

Cakebread:

Having wine and food together, and so it was, where do you draw that line, and that's, in each winery, it's a little bit different, so it's hard to do steadfast rules that one thing does for every winery, because it just doesn't work that way. Each property's different, and so you try and give good flexibility, but kind of keep everyone in that box, without letting them leak out too much.

01-00:50:41

Meeker:

There has been some I think criticism in looking about the history of this, by 2015 I think there was a grand jury report that like there're 30 or 40 percent of wineries were out of compliance with this, and so, I imagine it would have been a similar case in 2010. Can you walk me through like what the different opinions were and positions when you were having to adjudicate some of this stuff?

01-00:51:08

Cakebread:

Yeah, and so, one of the programs that the vintners did was winery compliance, like, look, we're all going to be better off if we all sit there and play by the same rules, and if you are playing by the rules and someone isn't, they have a competitive advantage. And so it was like, we shouldn't allow that, make sure everyone's playing by the same rules, and so that was the intent, and so we did a lot of compliance seminars. We had Richard Mendelson come and talk, and we had the county come and talk, and it's like, "Guys, do this," and so then, everyone started. They started surveying, and in the beginning, everyone was kind of compliant. You'd get one or two, and then all of a sudden, it just didn't work anymore. And so that's how we got to where we are today, to Measure C and saying, really, "Work on compliance."

I think the county has done a really good job of saying, "Okay," I think it's by March 30 or 29, 2019, "that's your grace period to kind of get your use permit fixed," because the wineries were scared that if they went in, their use permit might get changed, they're going to lose something, and so that then, it's like, I think I'm better off waiting to get caught, than to kind of go in, and it costs a fortune. It takes a lot of time, and all those issues of why a winery wouldn't want to do it, so you had this. They knew they needed to be compliant, but, it was kind of a crapshoot in the early days of how the planner thought about your project, and it could go south on you quite quickly. And so, we're trying to get the county move forward to say, "We're not going to do that anymore," be able to reply quickly over a certain period of time, but still, it's still to this day is a big, involved process, and you get consultants, engineers, all to be able to say, "Here's how we're going to operate the winery," and I think it's a good thing, personally, so that everyone understands what they can and can't do.

If you want to be a little bit more flexible, more wide open, go to a different place that doesn't have these rules, and it doesn't mean that we should be exclusionary, but it's just like, here's what we've all agreed to as an industry, and the Vintners really help kind of bring that discussion together, to kind of

identify, bring everyone together in a kind of common agreement, because you have, sometimes, the Vintners are like herding cats, because everyone has an opinion, and they can span the limit as, where it's the common ground that we can do, and that's where the Vintners really play that role of saying, "You know what? This is the best thing," and we are trying to bring the people on the edges into this center.

01-00:54:02

Meeker:

You must have had to do some of that work in 2010 then, right?

01-00:54:06

Cakebread:

Yeah, yeah, pretty exciting, so—

01-00:54:08

Meeker:

Well tell me, can you talk me through some of that? I think it's interesting. Sometimes they are cats who need to be herded, and how is that actually done?

01-00:54:18

Cakebread:

Well, we're trying to work with the grape growers, and so at the time, Volker Eisele was alive, and so they had Volker, who's just a master at politics, and he's just very good, and has a very strong opinion where it should be, respect that, and then, Jon-Mark Chappellet, we met with him for lunch, and Volker said, "You know, Bruce, it's going to go the grape growers way, because I've got three votes of supervisor votes in my pocket," and like, "Oh, okay, [laughter] maybe we can't take the hard tack on this."

And so it was not only trying to bring the vintners together, but also bringing the Farm Bureau, the environmental groups, and the grape growers all in so that we can all agree, and then we had the wine growers group. Everyone had to kind of agree this is the best way to go, and each group had their own opinion as well, and so not only within the vintners, but within the industry, all the different groups had sometimes slightly different opinions, and so you just kind of keep talking and as long as you had the votes, you're going to kind of win, and so it was working with the planning commission, working with the supervisors, working with the *Napa Register* to kind of be able to get our point of view out, and so that everyone could kind of read it unfiltered, was kind of important.

We went down to the *Napa Register* right before Christmas and met with the editorial staff as, here's why we think the vintners' perspective is the best, and so that everyone could read it over Christmas, and so we got a lot of feedback on that, and right after New Year's as well, because not again, everybody agreed with kind of keeping the status quo, clarifying some of the gray areas, so that wineries could adapt to what's changed. In the early days, it was everything's by appointment, and you had to call, make an appointment. Now, they have an app for it.

So, when the WDO is written then, didn't think about that, or didn't even know about it, and so, it's trying to adapt to kind of the conditions. Then also with 2008, 2009 downturn, you saw a lot of wineries really focus on DTC, saw a lot of wineries focus on going into the international markets, and that's where the Vintners really help educate the membership about social media, because everyone's making wine there. It's like, "What's this Facebook and what does this social media mean?" and it's like, "Here's the best way to use it." Same way with the international, is like, "US is difficult place to sell wine, I need another market," and so the interest in the international markets kind of grew at that same time, which was exciting.

01-00:57:07

Meeker:

When you say DTC, direct to consumer right? Was that something that you noticed a big change here at Cakebread?

01-00:57:14

Cakebread:

Yeah, we'd always been kind of focused on that customer coming in, always by appointment, and our first employee, a guy named Brady McManus, he came from Asti, worked the cellar there, also is insurance salesman, and so he could sell icicles to Eskimos then. He was just the nicest, nicest person, and so he worked for us for twenty years, but he was our first, someone who's like, you get to handle the visitors, and he'd just have everybody entertained, and he could sell too, and so that, and kind of our location where we are on Highway Twenty-Nine on the right side, no grand plan. We're just lucky to be here. It really helped for us, and so that helped kind of get that private customer business kind of growing, maybe a little bit ahead of everybody else in that regard.

01-00:58:12

Meeker:

So, back to the Winery Definition Ordinance and the things that were going on around 2010, is there anything else about that that is worth discussing before—

01-00:58:24

Cakebread:

Yeah, so you had also in that late two-thousands, you had this: the Vintners started looking at climate change, and so, Rod Smith wrote a great article about how Napa's going to change, because there's people kind of predicting kind of the doom for Napa Valley, and it's like, hey, wait a second, they're talking about us. And so the Vintners got together a committee, a climate change committee, to be able to look at that, and then eventually they came up and hired some researchers out of Scripps to look at all the data; had everyone's supply, their weather station data—I think it was Stony Hill had it—their thing written down on a book, every handwritten note saying, and so, with that climate action taskforce, kind of was able to come out and say, "Well things are changing, but we're not sure how it's going to impact us," and so that was one of the early reports.

Same thing started with Napa Green. We had Napa Green Land. Starting in the early two-thousands, Vintners were really trying to bring everyone

together on that issue, and then in 2008, started up the winery part of it, and so that was, I think, really good to kind of be able to bring everyone, what they're doing and their own sustainability or green practices, and be able to put it under kind of one umbrella, and be able to share those ideas. It kind of gave that vehicle to be able to say, "Hey, I'm doing this, and this is really working well, in terms of recycling," or Shafer put up their first solar panels way back about that same time, and so that was like, "Wow, look at this. We've got these roofs; we can put solar panels on it. This is pretty cool." And so that whole movement, talking about winery kind of limiting their footprint, all kind of started with the Napa Green program, and through the Vintners, and that's been a lot of fun, kind of, watching that grow.

01-01:00:27

Meeker:

So this climate report, "Climate and Phenology in Napa," came out in 2011. Was this something that you ordered when you were board chair?

01-01:00:37

Cakebread:

This was started before me. I think it started in '08 or '09, they started working on that, and Chris Howell was a big—up at Cain. I think Dawnine [Dyer] was also in it, and so you had that group, and it took a long time, because the researchers were sometimes working on it, sometimes not, and so that's why that report took a long time to come out.

01-01:01:01

Meeker:

Well, one of the things that's interesting about it that you alluded to was that it said, "Yeah, the climate is warming, but if you'd look at the detail, microclimates in the Napa, it's not warming evenly, and there might even be some cooling in places." What kind of impact do you think that had when it came out?

01-01:01:22

Cakebread:

Back then, people were still kind of debating climate change. It's changed over these last ten years, and people are still trying to figure out, is this true or not, and I don't think they knew really how to handle it. They'd say, "Oh, there's no change. This year's the same as next year, and there shouldn't be a change," but it was the first time that all that data got looked at, and my takeaway from it is, I think in the report it said night-time low temperatures raised like a degree or a degree and a half in the spring, everything else was the same, and then all of a sudden, we get European grapevine moths, the sharpshooter, vine mealybugs, and it's all of a sudden, we're getting more bugs than we've had in the past. We've lived through phylloxeras, and so we're very—been humbled with bugs, and so you see that, you know that they can wipe you out, and that is, I think, one of the things that will kind of continue on to this day.

01-01:02:25

Meeker:

So, the relationship between climate change and pests.

01-01:02:28

Cakebread: Yeah.

01-01:02:29

Meeker: And also, I mean, it's undeniable, maybe this 2018 harvest not included, but how harvests have been so much earlier.

01-01:02:40

Cakebread: Yeah, when we first started out, we'd always take Labor Day off, and then kind of let's get working after Labor Day. Now, we work through and we've started as early as August 8, and we've just seen a change, and so everything's been moved up a month, and it's different, and so that not so much the highs and the lows, because we've always had that, but it's these extreme events now that are, to me, are the scariest and will be the most challenging as we kind of go forward.

01-01:03:10

Meeker: So, I remember in 2017, we had a huge heat—Phil Freese calls it a “heat storm” or—yeah, around Labor Day.

01-01:03:19

Cakebread: Yeah, those three days. We had some friends down from Seattle, and they said, “Geez, we're going home, it's too hot here,” and it was just amazing, and so we put in misters. We pick at night now, because we had the hot 2004, and so you couldn't pick during the day, and so, we've changed our whole operation to pick at night, to get the fruit in cold, and it's kind of climate change in that, but 2017, Labor Day, heat was just amazing. What's amazing is the vines stopped and you'd think all the alcohols would be pretty high. We're seeing pretty low alcohols in very, very nice wines come out of that, and so it's, I think the vines also said, “We're going to wait this one out and just stop.”

01-01:04:08

Meeker: Or, as long as there's no smoke taint, which was another 2017 problem, right?

01-01:04:13

Cakebread: Yeah.

01-01:04:13

Meeker: Certainly, in a group as big as the Vintners, and there's no surprise that there's some pretty wealthy people involved in it, because wineries are not cheap and often lose money, [laughs] there's probably going to be a pretty wide spectrum of political perspectives, and climate change is highly politicized. When you were president, how did you navigate those minefields whereby there's an industry interest in exploring, and finding out what's happening with the environment? And then, there's probably different opinions about the validity of that research.

01-01:05:01

Cakebread:

Yeah, and so you had that, but I think at least in Napa Valley, they may or may not have believed that, but they also saw that they had this investment in their vineyards, and how the wines came out, and so you could sit there and you could almost tell. No one's going to say, "I don't think we should be spending money or time on that," because they may be right that there's no climate impact, but if they're wrong, they have all these grapevines sitting out there that could be at risk for them. And so no one wanted to really say, "No, let's not do this," and then the group who was kind of running that with Chris Howell and David Graves and that whole group, has a very, very strong opinion about it, and kind of marched that one forward. They had the interest, they put in their time, and they were going to run it, and so, when you see a group or a couple of people who are really passionate about an issue, they volunteer, and then they're going to kind of push it through. You're not going to get someone who says, "Well, let's slow up this train to be on that committee," because why waste your time on that?

01-01:06:12

Meeker:

I know that Cakebread Cellars is one of the Green Certified Wineries in Napa Valley. Did you play any role in the development of that program?

01-01:06:23

Cakebread:

So, with the Vintners, we always have an annual meeting and a speaker, and so, we had Yvon Chouinard from Patagonia come up, and this was back in I think 2007, 2008, and you're talking about businesses being responsible and sustainability, and so they're just rolling out, and we had the Napa Green Land, and they're just starting up with the Napa Green Winery part, and so, he made the comment, "It's like, this is one of the best programs I've seen." One of the things the Vintners did was to make sure it's third-party inspected instead of someone checking the box themselves, like yeah, we're kind of doing that. You had to be—and they teamed up with Fish Friendly Farming, Laurel Marcus, to kind of shadow that, but make it specific for Napa Valley instead of for everybody, and that's what makes the Green program. It's unique for this, and each wine region—Lodi has their Lodi rule, Central Coast, Oregon. What I think is good about those programs is, it brings for our area what's unique about it and we can adapt to it, and so that's what makes it good.

So we had Yvon talk about kind of bang the drum, so that was a boost for it, and then we invited Ken Grossman from Sierra Nevada [Brewery] to come down and talk about what he's doing at his brewery, because the guy's just a god in terms of sustainability. He's one of the early ones in brewing to be able to kind of tackle that, and so, I was fortunate to take him out to dinner the night before the meeting, and kind of talking to him, and hear, understand what he's doing, and it was just, his talk that next day was just inspirational for a movement you see. David Duncan, I think was there, and kind of mentions, "This is why we want Silver Oak to do their new LEEDs Platinum

building.” That whole talk just energized a lot of people to say, “I want to be like Ken, and be able to operate a business that way.”

And so that was really exciting, and we started up in 2008, 2007, to kind of get our business to go green, and so my brother and I, Dennis and I, he dressed up as a bush and I dressed up as Jolly Green Giant. I bought a costume, and so we jump out in front of all our employees and say, “We’re going green,” and they’re kind of like looking at us, like, huh? And so we had a whole PowerPoint walk-through. Here’s what we’re going to do: measure what we do; recycle, is our low-hanging fruit; change our lights out, go through all that; measure our water; and we’re recycling about 48 percent of our total waste, and it’s like, well is this good or not good, and now today, we’re doing about 93 percent. Sierra Nevada is doing like 99.6 percent, and so it’s like, we want to be like them. And so, that general membership meeting where Ken spoke really kind of got everyone saying, “We’re doing good, we need to do better,” and the whole sustainability movement, and now you kind of really see it take off.

So, that’s been just exciting to be a part of, and you have Susan Boswell, a very, very small winery. She was like the first Napa Green Certified Winery, and so, she’s really passionate about it. You have the Trefethens also being very, very involved in Napa Green. So you have a lot of different wineries, large and small—Sutter Homes, Napa Green Certified—and so you saw kind of the whole gambit, and then they’d get the committee meetings, a few people, it’s kind of like, here’s what we’re doing, here’s what we’re doing, and so it’s just kind of spawned this kind of cooperation which is traditional, Napa Valley Vintners type of way to run a program.

01-01:10:14

Meeker:

How is it that the sort of checklist was created, and the threshold that you had to surpass in order to get the certification—

01-01:10:24

Cakebread:

Yeah, so for the winery part, there’s a guy named John Garn over in Sonoma, who’s really worked hard on getting businesses Green Certified, and he would develop the checklist—and kind of stealing it from other, borrowing it from other industries, and then kind of created it—that meets kind of the winery standards, and Vintners committee looked at it and adjusted it from there, but John really helped. We hired John when we started our green kind of certification, and his whole thing is like, “Bruce, you’re just not doing your business. You do that, but what you also want to do is teach your employees how to be Green Certified, and then all of a sudden, you’ll have seventy households being that way, and that’s where you’re going to make a bigger footprint,” and just like, wow, this is pretty cool, and so we incorporated, like in our interview process, “Will you support?”—this is a no-brainer question, but, “Will you support all our green activities and recycling?” All of a sudden, the employee’s supposed to say yes, and then they get hired, but if they say no, it’s like, you’re out, and everyone says yes, but it’s just brings it up and

it's like, "This is what we're doing, and so, everything that you're doing, we're sharing with."

We'd go to do presentations. We went up to Duckhorn and said, "Here's what we're doing," and we had our little PowerPoint slide go to Treasury, and now they do kind of seminars for wineries trying to figure out, kind of to go through that maze of certification. So, we've been one of the early ones on that, and it's been really a lot of fun.

01-01:12:02

Meeker:

Does this have implications for farming practices and that sort of stuff too?

01-01:12:06

Cakebread:

Yeah, with the Napa Green Land, it just not only talks about the vineyard footprint, but the whole property's footprint. So if you have a road that's creating erosion, or a creek that might be kind of getting blown out, you're responsible to fix that as well as just keeping your vineyard footprint, and that's what I like about the Napa Green program, because the whole idea is to prevent erosion down the Napa River, and so that we can get the salmon and steelhead to come back up the stream, and so that's kind of what the Green program—it allows sustainable farming, organic farming, or biodynamic farming, all to work within there. It's not, these guys are over here, and ours is better over there; it's so that everyone can work under that umbrella and have that. Whatever direction they want to go to farm their property, they can do it all under the Napa Green program.

01-01:12:55

Meeker:

What kind of farming does Cakebread Cellars do now?

01-01:12:58

Cakebread:

Yeah, so about 30 percent of our vineyards are organically farmed. We're not certified CCOF, because we don't want that certification, because if we have a bug come up—we've had phylloxera, and we're risking everything on that, and so, we'll farm that way, but we don't particularly care about the certification. All our properties are all Napa Green Certified, and so, we have about 580 acres of vineyards now, and about 1,800 acres of just land, and so that's all that way, and so we're very, very proud of that. Toby Halkovich, our director of vineyard operations at the time, he went through and got each of the properties, so we're all certified.

Turns out, a lot of growers kind of go, "There's nothing I'm changing," and everyone knows those basic things of, this is the way you should farm anyway, and this, just be able to sit there and go, "Yeah, we're doing it the right way," and that, with Fish Friendly Farming certifying it is good; and then for the wineries, the County Department of Environmental Health has really come up with a good third-party inspection; and then, the cool thing about the winery is, every three years, you have to get recertified, and, you just can't do the same thing. You have to do continual improvement. So this is really cool, kind of keeps everyone on their toes, and like, we bought an

electric golf cart, and so this is really neat, instead of getting a truck. And so, you have those types of things to kind of make sure that the operation continues in that green movement.

01-01:14:34

Meeker:

It's pretty remarkable, actually, I mean, the advances in the expansion of, in particular, organic agriculture, in the wine industry, whereas fifteen years ago, if people did it, they wouldn't even talk about it, because it sometimes made people think that they were drinking hippie wine or something. [laughs] Whereas now, I think that there's an expectation for it on high-end wineries, and maybe even larger-scale wineries are beginning to follow too.

01-01:15:07

Cakebread:

What's interesting, the Vintners did a survey of what's important to the consumer when they buy a bottle of wine, and it was obvious that price and taste were the top two, and sustainability and the Green program was like, one of the bottom, and we're kind of like, wow, and so we decided it's important to us as the industry. So it's like, you know what? Our customer might not realize it, but this is important to us, then over the last couple of years, you see sustainability really grow. And so, what I think kind of the great thing about the Vintners is, we started early, and you can all go back and reference the Ag Preserve back in '68. That kind of started everything we're doing to kind of keep it so it's regulated, so that we can keep the golden goose of Napa Valley here, and we're able to protect it, so hopefully we'll be able to give it off to the next generation of winemakers and the community in a better place than what we got when we started fifty years ago.

01-01:16:08

Meeker:

I wonder if you could tell me a little bit more about the prosaic aspects of the board president job. I assume that you work with your fellow board members, but then you also would have pretty direct interaction with the executive director, or I guess the CEO. I can't remember what Linda's title is.

01-01:16:27

Cakebread:

Yeah, she was executive director at the time, and then Linda, when I left and Linda changed her title to CEO president, which is appropriate, but that's kind of, historically, it was how it started out. And so, working with Linda, really fun, because one is, she'll take an idea, so it's like, "We haven't done that before, so, let's try it," and kind of see things that stick, and we do weekly meetings, kind of what's going on, and it's a great way to kind of make sure that we're both on the same path, working with the board. We had board monthly meetings, and working on the agendas for that, what topic's coming up, but working with Linda is really fun, and she runs that team. They'll run through brick walls, so they work late into the night, whether it's for Auction, Premiere Napa Valley, or Tastes of Napa Valley, or Experience Napa Valley.

All those different events, these guys are just going and going and going, so it's just a great group of people there, and she's kind of put her thumbprint on that organization, because Napa Valley Vintners really represent each of the

members when we go out, and so they need to be at the top of their game to be able to reflect well on each of the individual members, and they keep a nice balance of never forgetting how we kind of started out, never forgetting that we all do this as a group, and make sure that we enjoy each other's company when we're out on the road or when we're doing something.

And so, a good example of that, we were doing Taste of New York, and so we're blitzing the whole city in taxicabs. We had Napa Valley Vintners little ad on the back in the screen there. What's it, one of the morning shows, they always have a big blowup bottle, and so we're kind of doing that, and we'd have all the vintners out doing different tastings, and we're staying at this hotel, and so you'd kind of come back in the evening, and you'll see a couple vintners sitting down. You have a glass of wine or beer or a cocktail, and then all of a sudden a couple more, and then all of a sudden, it turns into like an after party of everyone's events that evening, and so everyone's swapping stories, and kind of getting ready to go on to the next day, and so, you had that.

Linda came up with the idea when we were back in New York. The second years, we went and visited Long Island Vintners, because some of the winemakers that are working Mondays are out there, and it's like, well, let's all go out day before and kind of see what they're doing, and they just rolled out the red carpet. They had big lunch, a clam feed. We're doing barrel tastings, and it brought the two wine regions kind of closer together, and so, one of the families there, kind of got to know them, and so when they got written up in the *New York Times*, I sent them a little note, "Hey, I saw your name there, great job," and that, I think, also is kind of the cool thing with the Vintners is, we can do different things, and be able to keep the group together and enjoy each other's company as we're doing it.

You see that when you're on the international side, and you're traveling together and everyone's taking the same train or plane, and all kind of working together doing that. Someone will lose their purse or get sick, and everyone else kind of support them up and kind of keep them going, and you just have that kind of bond when you're out on the road kind of doing things that I think, that was kind of fun doing that, and Linda is kind of the driver of it. It's kind of like, "Hey, we're going to make something that will get everyone together." So, it's really been a true honor, because she is really good at keeping the whole Vintners and working from Auction Napa Valley to Premiere, to all the community issues, and all the other boards that she's on that involve the vintners, is really impressive, and so it's like, wow, and so, it was a joy to kind of work with her on those two times.

01-01:20:56
Meeker:

You had mentioned these international trips, which are interesting and I know that you've been on some of these, and this also relates to the Napa Name Protection program, and particularly, I guess, were you part of this meeting in 2012 in Beijing?

01-01:21:17
Cakebread:

Yeah.

01-01:21:18
Meeker:

What is the Napa Name Protection thing, what's at stake here, and what has the history been around it and then, kind of walk me up to the how that brought you to Beijing.

01-01:21:28
Cakebread:

Yeah, so, with Napa Name Protection, a lot of people can use or would want to use "Napa." You know there's the big Bronco case, and so that has a whole history behind it, and so that's kind of where it started.

01-01:21:43
Meeker:

What was that?

01-01:21:44
Cakebread:

And so, you had Bronco Winery wanting to come up, make wine in Napa, and bring it up from Central Valley, put Napa name on it, that was bottled here, and then be able to sell it, kind of leveraging on all the Vintners hard work up here. It's like, that's not going to happen. And so, Richard Mendelson, Linda, the guy from Phelps, Tom Shelton— all really worked, like Christmas Eve, getting the law changed to be able to protect that. It was like, man, we have to watch everywhere.

So, 2008, 2009, started looking at international markets. We all go to China, and introducing Napa Valley to there, keep coming back, and then the Chinese wine industry starts to use Nappa Valley, Napa spelled N-a-p-p-a, and several different versions of that, and it's like, hey, that's not right, and so, instead of using trademark rule, we used GI [geographical indication] status recognition, and so, started making the case to Chinese trade department, and we'd go into this big building, and they would sit on one side and we'd sit on the other, and it's like, "You know how many files we have of all this GI status recognition of all these different products; what makes you guys special?" and we had an attorney over in Beijing kind of helping us, guide us through how to kind of do this. We're making our case that Napa's different, and then through that, we met a guy, Professor Zhou, Z-h-o-u, and so he was at Beijing University, and so he's running the viticulture and enology program there, and so we're out kind of making our case. He comes to one of our tasting, invites Linda to lunch. It's like, "Linda, I'll go with you, because who knows where you're going in Beijing because it's just huge," and so we both went to university, got a tour of their winemaking facility, and it's really impressive, and we went to a very, very nice lunch and he's pouring wines that his students made, which are very good. It's like, ah.

So we come back the next year, Chris Howell and I are doing a presentation to their students about Napa Valley wines and they're wanting to learn a lot, and so we had that kind of exchange with Beijing University Professor Zhou, and the Vintners, and he got on the trade side for the Chinese government working

with them. We invited them to come and they're out, coming to the US, traveling around. They came out, we had a meeting up at the Vintners office, exchanged gifts, and brought them down here in this room, had them for lunch, and so I got to sit next to the director. And so we're pouring them a lot of wine, and here's more Napa Valley wines, and so he had a great time, and so we went back the next year. He wasn't at that meeting but he kind of does a fly by and says, "Whatever these guys want, it's okay." And so, like, wow!

01-01:25:07

And so that got our file up to the top of the pile, and then we started going back kind of each year, kind of working with them a little bit more, and their whole thing was, what makes Napa different? So we're saying, "It's the soil, the climate," and all this stuff. He says, "Well can we put two glasses of wine out there, and can you tell me which one's Napa and not?" It's like, "No, we can't do that, because every winemaker is making"—and so we're going through the process of making wine, and, on that trip, we invited Richard Mendelson, because he's kind of the guru of wine law. We invited Dave Whitmer, who was our ag commissioner, because they wanted to see someone from the government. So he was our government representative, then Linda and myself, and I think Katheleen Heitz went.

So we all, that was our contingent, and we get there, it's like Sunday night, and we had meeting Monday morning. It was just a meeting and then we're leaving, so a pretty quick turnaround, and so, I said, "Let's go out to dinner," because I had been going to China for a while and there's an interesting restaurant I want to go to, and say, "Well let's take a taxi." It's like, "Can take a taxi anywhere; let's take their metro." And so, it's Sunday night about seven o'clock. I thought it was going to be kind of empty, and they're doing this, packing people in, and so, Dave Whitmer jumps in, and then Linda, myself, and Richard are standing outside the car, and Dave's like this, and the doors start to close, because we can't get in, so kind of pull him back out, and so we almost lost our ag commissioner on night one. And so anyway, we kind of go out to dinner, but that's when we almost lose Dave, kind of made that whole thing memorable. But then, it was kind of trying to explain, it's the Valley, it's our region; not this wine's this way and this wine's this way. That kind of made that case, and so really good questions, and they'd read all our regulations, so they kind of knew what they were talking about, and very good, good questions.

01-01:27:11

So that was exciting, and finally they granted it. Linda got sick when they—it was like a year or two years later that they did the exchange. She got sick and couldn't go, and then I couldn't go, and so it was a little bit disappointing we didn't be able to see that exchange, but kind of all that work kind of getting up to it was truly memorable to be able to be one of the first winegrowing regions to get GI status recognition from the Chinese government, and we celebrated with our Chardonnay and Opus [One] Cabernet with a big round table, with their whole team from their department, so it was really fun and it kind of broke the ice, and it's helped us get our foot in the door in China.

So, with that, couple years before I had been doing slideshows presentations of, “Here’s Napa, here’s Cakebread,” and more talking about Cakebread than Napa Valley, and I got this question of, “Well what part of South America is Napa Valley?” and it’s just like, uh-oh, and then was when Google Maps was just starting to come out, and so then the next year, I got—it’s like, “Here’s Shanghai, and then you can change it, and then, here’s Napa Valley,” and then kind of realize that we need to talk about Napa Valley in these new international markets first, and then talk about your own brand, because they don’t know you from Adam there. It’s like going back to Austin, Texas, back 1979. Going to Shanghai in the two-thousands is kind of the same way: you’re starting from scratch, and nobody knows you.

And so it was kind of humbling, but then, that’s the strength of the Vintners. It’s like, we have to be able to supply this data about Napa first, because perception of California wines is, well, “It’s Two-Buck Chuck, why are you asking?” If it’s all California wine, why are you here, and that’s down there? So we had to make that case of, Napa is just not all of California, but it’s only a small portion of it, and it’s kind of the best portion of it. And so, we’re making that case in the international markets, so that people can understand that it’s a value to pay more for that type of quality wine, and that was the, kind of still is, the exciting thing to kind of explain in the international markets.

01-01:29:33

Meeker: So you said GI, that means geographical indication?

01-01:29:36

Cakebread: Yeah.

01-01:29:37

Meeker: And is the idea then that that’s kind of a first step that maybe later on there’ll be more trademark recognition, or something along those lines?

01-01:29:45

Cakebread: Yeah, and so we’ve, the Napa Name Protection group, Pat Stotesbery’s been a big driver on it. They go and work with all the different countries coming up, and it’s not as contentious as the China one was, because they were using different versions of Napa Valley for their names, and so you get into that whole thing, but they’re really kind of covering the world now with Napa name. I’m not sure of whose would be left out there, but that’s, with Napa Name Protection, they’re doing it for all the members too kind of, or else Napa can kind of go away or kind of get diluted out, and so—

01-01:30:27

Meeker: Do you know if there have been fewer instances of the name being misused in China?

01-01:30:33

Cakebread:

I think it's less, or I know it's less now, because it's hard to tell if you're not over there all the time if you see it come up, but we haven't, I haven't heard that, "Oh, they're doing this again," that you have Penfold's and there's a lot of counterfeiting going on, but haven't heard it happening of a Napa wine. Opus does, a lot of people do bottle protection, especially for their high-end wines, and I think Opus is kind of on the forefront of that. When we were first going over there, the attorneys in Beijing, it's like, "You got to have your name trademarked," and it's like, "Should we get it?" He goes, "Bruce, the Chinese are very smart. They only copy things that make money," and he says, "Don't worry about it." So, my goal in life is to have our Chardonnay be a knockoff in China, and then, we know then that's our bar of being successful.

01-01:31:25

Meeker:

You've never seen your wines fabricated before?

01-01:31:29

Cakebread:

Yeah, I haven't seen that.

01-01:31:32

Meeker:

That must be nice, [laughs] but also something to want to achieve, I guess.

01-01:31:36

Cakebread:

Yeah, that's something; it's a goal.

01-01:31:39

Meeker:

I'm curious, in terms of international marketing, which was a little bit that you were just talking about, I know the Vintners, one of their main goals is to represent Napa in terms of a marketing voice, what roles the Vintners play at, I guess, in helping the industry respond to the Internet, the rise of direct consumer sales, distribution challenges? I know that there are fewer wholesalers out there, I think, since the financial crisis. What's that landscape look like?

01-01:32:38

Cakebread:

So if you think of the membership, I think there are 540 members today, and I think 80 percent of them make 10,000 cases or less. Our membership has a lot of small wineries, so you cater to that as well as not forgetting the larger-sized wineries. Really, the Vintners need both. You need the large volumes, because when Robert Mondavi puts Napa Valley Cabernet out there, and that type of size volume, it's advertising for Napa Valley. Also, you need the small vintner who's making a hundred cases of that special wine to be able to show off uniquenesses there, and so that's what brings it together. What the Vintners did was create a Napa Rocks program, and so the idea was to be able to create all the Vintners members to be ambassadors of Napa Valley, and so we gave them all the same facts.

So I went to a dinner and there was like four or five vintners standing up and talking, and everyone was giving the facts of Napa Valley from their own

place, and nothing was the same. And so it's like, well wait a second. So we kind of created the Napa Rocks, and so it kind of goes through what makes it: the size, the location, the geology, the climate, the history, and so everyone had the same talking points, and so when you go out into the market or you're talking to a customer here, everyone's hearing the same set of facts instead of, "Well wait a second, they said it's 100,000 acres instead of 45,000 acres planted in Napa. Which one's right?" And so that helped get everyone kind of saying the same thing. I think that's really important as we go out in the market, so that when you're talking to someone and you say, "Napa Valley only makes up 4 percent of all California wines," the guy goes, "Yeah, I've heard it before." You know your message is getting in place there, and so that's, I think, one of the things the Vintners did to kind of help market the Valley, and be able to get that same message and so that the consumer knows, when they come to Napa, they're going to buy some of the best wines in the world; they have the information to help support that.

In terms of distribution, when we first started, there were this many wholesalers and this many wineries, and so that whole model's changed upside down, and to be able to educate vintners on how to communicate, because the small vintner is sometimes growing the grapes, buying the grapes, making the wine, selling it, doing all the admin, and doing social media, and so they don't have someone who's going to do that, and that's where that education of, "Here's how to do it, here's how you don't want to make any mistakes and be successful," and then allow that creativity of that vintner to kind of take where it is, but help them give that basics to kind of survive and be able to keep going, whether it's just communicating with your consumer, or—

They're not going to help sell the wine for that vintner, but they're going to be able to create that opportunity to make that connection, and that's like, we're Premiere Napa Valley. We get 400 trade in the middle of February, from how it first started out. It's like maybe a night, and now it's like a whole week-long premier week. That's how it's evolved, and we're the Vintners creating that platform, and then the Vintners kind of taking it and running with it, and so you have that creative competition within the membership thing. You may, "You did a great job," but they're walking away saying, "I'm going to take that, and I'm going to own it next year. I'm going to do it even better." And so that's how it kind of keeps pushing everybody up to be able to do really well, just using some of these platforms. Premiere is a great example of that.

01-01:36:33

Meeker:

Do the Vintners, for example, run seminars teaching people how to find and work with wholesalers, or—

01-01:36:40

Cakebread:

Yeah, you have all those types of questions. There's been a seminar on it. They just did a sales summit a couple weeks ago, talking all different aspects of sales to help educate people on what's working, what's not working, have

vintners kind of share their experiences, and so that's kind of like, geez, I thought that only happened to me. And so everyone can kind of share that, and so that's evolved from how to work with a wholesaler, or how to work with a PR agency, all the way up to kind of a sales summit now that's really strong, and so you see that evolution with the Vintners adapting to the membership's needs, and so that's how it's kind of happened.

01-01:37:25

Meeker:

That's interesting, because to me, it's not surprising there's a lot of sharing around viticulture and winemaking, because when it comes down to it, it's impossible to really replicate what somebody else is doing. You can take a methodology, and it's not going to give you the same results at a different place or with different grapes or whatever, but actually sharing sales strategies, or learnings, that's something entirely different, because you can take that, and that's remarkable there is that kind of dialogue.

01-01:37:58

Cakebread:

My belief in the marketplace, that customer, that account, is going to see all of us anyway. There's no secrets, and so, why not kind of understand what they need, and that's where Premiere kind of allows that to happen, because we're making calls out to the accounts to make sure that they come, and make sure that they feel welcome. When you go into the international market, if it's just one winery selling a Napa Valley wine on that wine list, it's going to be in the back of the list and will never sell a bottle, but if we can get a group of Napa Valley wines, or a group of California wines, on that wine list, we have a better chance of selling wine. And so, especially in the export markets, you open up a wine list, and it starts out with champagne, Burgundy, Bordeaux, Italians, Spanish, New World, and then, US. They never called it American; they always called it US, and so we're always at the back of the book, but as you see your page go higher into the book, you know you're winning, and so if you only have just a few listings in there, it's not going to grow, and so this is where the more the better makes everyone going to be successful.

So, that's kind of the way I believe it, especially in the export markets, because we'll be a small category. It's the same way in the early seventies, when we would—Texas, it was us, Almaden and Paul Masson, and it's like, that's the odd group and we're last listed under domestic wine. It's like, really? And so, and then you just saw it change over these last forty-five years.

01-01:39:39

Meeker:

That's fascinating. We should probably wrap up, and so, it's the Vintners seventy-fifth anniversary in 2019, next month, and kind of looking back on your involvement and engagement since the late seventies, early eighties, do you have any thoughts on the greatest accomplishments?

01-01:40:07

Cakebread:

Accomplishments is to see where Napa Valley is today in the world-wine wine market, because it's perceived in high regard around the world, and so

it's known around the world. You have top collectors looking at these wines. The Valley has learned how to grow grapes and make wine over those years in terms of going from big, wide spacing to what we have today. It's pretty exciting, if it's going to morph again with climate change, and so you have that.

So you have that recognition and the wine quality's up. Over these years, not everyone's going to believe this, but the Valley is still a beautiful place, and it's preserved with a lot of challenges on to it, just growing population, high land prices, but we've been able to kind of keep it together. Is there cracks? Do we have a traffic problem? Yes we do. The droughts created water problems, and so we will fix those. As a community, I think we're on the right track, and so I think that is something that we should be really proud of as Napa Valley Vintners, is to shepherd this through. Sometimes it's sausage making, and what I love about Napa Valley is, everyone has an opinion. No one sits on the side and kind of like, "Meh, I don't care." Everyone has a strong opinion and that, to me, is what makes Napa Valley pretty strong.

The other thing I think as the accomplishment is just the success of Auction Napa Valley, over \$180 million, and be able to see that go to the healthcare, to education, to housing. To see that change is really impressive, and you see the new clinic center going up. That's something that all the vintners should be really proud of, to be able to do that and be able to give back to the community, because I believe if you have a strong community, we'll have strong industry. If people can feel like they can raise a family, that family can stay here, and be able to thrive in the industry, it makes it stronger for us as the industry, and I think it's great for the community as well. And so those are, I think, some of the key things that makes it. You kind of step back and you're kind of like, wow, look what they've all done. So, as a collective group, the membership has done that. So that's pretty neat, and you take the Vintners staff, which is just an amazing group of people, to be able to work with them is just a dynamic that you just don't see too much around the world.

01-01:42:50

Meeker:

What sort of challenges do you see for the organization itself going forward?

01-01:42:54

Cakebread:

It's going to be, how do we deal with our success, how do we keep the Valley pristine, keep it environmentally sound, I think, as so that we can continue to grow grapes here. You're going to see pressures: just urbanization, just more people coming to the Valley. How do we handle that success? And so, with the county's involvement, with the community's involvement, with the industry's involvement, all kind of coming together to share ideas and their perspectives, I think over time, we'll come out with the best success, because we've done it in the past when we were challenged with an issue. Everyone's kind of gone back to, let's go to facts instead of opinions, and then let's make our best decision off the facts, and you do it that way, it keeps everyone kind

of going, and everyone will be successful. Keep the Valley green, the industry will stay strong, the community will stay strong.

And so, all those things, those are a challenge, but it's going to be traffic, it's going to be water, how to deal with winery success, and I think marketplace might change the proliferation of vineyards or winery, because if the market gets tough, you won't see that many here, and so that part I think will kind of take care of itself in that regard.

01-01:44:20

Meeker:

Do you see any interesting ideas for solving those issues? I guess the Vintners is already doing the certification and everything, but what about traffic, for instance?

01-01:44:32

Cakebread:

Yeah, traffic's a good one, and so I think we have to think big, and so, that means it's how do you get visitors? They all come to San Francisco; how do you get them from San Francisco up to Napa easily, with a low footprint? My thought is, you have them take the ferry, which is beautiful. You have them get on light rail that runs on a regular basis, and then they can stop. Then you can have your buses, Jitney buses going around taking people up and out, everyone taking a right-hand turn so there's no waiting, and be able to look at transportation like that. The beauty of it is, not only can our consumers use it, but also people in the community can use it to be able to get around without having to get in a car, because quite frankly, there's more of us here, and that's kind of what's also creating the traffic. We don't want to make it onerous to where people don't want to come here, because that's not good for a lot of people in the Valley, but when they do come here, we want them to see if they can have a low footprint, and be able to enjoy what we enjoy.

01-01:45:43

Meeker:

And is this, do you think, something that the Vintners will take on in the coming years?

01-01:45:46

Cakebread:

Yeah, we have the traffic task force, we have a water task force, and so you have groups of people working on that and meeting with the county. They're working on a rideshare app to get employees up and down the Valley. We've done our version of a Google bus for our employees. Didn't work, but we tried it. Calistoga tried it, and so, that hasn't worked up there as well, but people are trying things, and we'll find something that sticks, if it might be using new technology, whether it's the ridesharing app—it's kind of like a free Uber—or the bringing buses, busing people up from San Francisco who don't want to drive. You have the advent of Uber, so that people can get around the Valley without having to rent a car. And so you have those kind of changes that I think will change, but I do think, to get people off the road, it's going to take a light rail, because you can sit in traffic in a bus, or you can sit in traffic in your car and that's the same.

01-01:46:51

Meeker:

Do you have any final thoughts, anything that you'd like to recollect about the Vintners or about your years here in Napa in general?

01-01:47:00

Cakebread:

Working with the Vintners, it's been a joy to be able to meet people that you might not normally meet. You have your circle of friends, but here you get to meet more people in the membership, and what's really fun about it: everyone has this commonality theme of, we love Napa, and we're happy to be making wine in Napa Valley. Kind of like, you wake up—I rode my bike to work this morning, and kind of riding down the hills are just gorgeous, and it's just like, man, you kind of pinch yourself. It's like, we get to make wine in Napa, so, we're blessed, and so, with the Vintners, it's that common, shared kind of passion for Napa Valley that makes it really fun to go to meetings and hear different ideas and voice your own ideas about different things.

And so, that's been fun, and for our family and the winery, we've kind of paralleled. The Vintners have really helped us get where we are today, because we know if we just have to do it on our own, we're just a small slice, but when you can band together with 500-plus wineries, it makes a bigger impact, and so, it's knowing that we have to work together to promote Napa Valley, and then we can promote ourselves, as kind of the best way to go, and so we've been fortunate to be part of that through my father, my brother, myself, kind of going forward there.

01-01:48:20

Meeker:

Great. Well, thank you very much.

01-01:48:22

Cakebread:

Well great, thank you.

[End of Interview]