

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

California Wine Industry Oral History Project
in conjunction with
The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series

André Tchelistcheff

GRAPES, WINE, AND ECOLOGY

With an Introduction by
Maynard A. Amerine

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser and Catherine Harroun
in 1979

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Andre Tchelistcheff — He Helped Build State Wine Industry

A memorial service will be held Monday for Andre Tchelistcheff, 92, an internationally respected vintner and leader in the California wine industry for more than half a century.

Mr. Tchelistcheff died Tuesday at Queen of the Valley Hospital in Napa. He had recently undergone surgery at the hospital for the removal of a stomach tumor, according to a hospital official.

Widely considered the dean of American winemakers, Mr. Tchelistcheff was a mentor to wine industry giants such as Robert Mondavi and Louis Martini.

He was vice president of Beaulieu Vineyards in Napa for 35 years until his retirement in 1973, four years after sale of Beaulieu to Heublein Inc. He also assembled a fabled library of wine literature.

Besides managing Beaulieu, Mr. Tchelistcheff operated a private wine laboratory in St. Helena for 15 years. Later, he continued to share his expertise as a consultant for Beaulieu and dozens of other Napa and Sonoma wineries.

Mr. Tchelistcheff created the first world-class California cabernets at Beaulieu Vineyards after the end of the Prohibition era, and developed the winery's "private reserve" appellation. There, he also pioneered the cold-fermenta-

tion process now used widely in producing white and rose wines. He developed frost-prevention techniques and helped curb vine disease in Napa Valley.

Among the most influential winemakers in the country, Mr. Tchelistcheff spoke candidly about the mass marketing and commercialism that crept into the industry over the years.

In 1991, Chronicle writer Sam Whiting wrote of him, "His palate was so refined he could tell by taste whether a wine came from Rutherford dust, Oakville dirt or a furrow in between."

At that time, Mr. Tchelistcheff commented, "Money is the dust of life. I don't have a wine cellar, I don't have a vineyard. I don't have nothing. I only have my head."

His continuing preeminence was demonstrated in 1992 when he blended red wine donated by 105 wineries of Napa, into a special barrel or "unity lot."

A Russian native, Mr. Tchelistcheff served in the anti-Communist White Army during the Russian civil war of 1918-21, and was left for dead on the battlefield after his unit was machine-gunned during a snowstorm. His father held a funeral for him.

However, he and his family eventually fled to France, where he studied agronomy before meeting Beaulieu owner Georges de Latour, who recruited him to come to the United States in 1938.

In 1954, the French government honored him for bringing French quality winemaking to

America. In 1990, he was named Wine Man of the Year at the Wine Industry Technical Symposium in Rohnert Park.

The memorial service will be held Monday at 11 a.m. at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 1917 Third Street, Napa. Burial will be private.

CALIFORNIA WINE INDUSTRY INTERVIEWS

Interviews Completed by 1984

- Leon D. Adams *Revitalizing the California Wine Industry* 1974
- Maynard A. Amerine *The University of California and the State's Wine Industry* 1971
- Philo Biane *Wine Making in Southern California and Recollections of Fruit Industries, Inc.* 1972
- Burke H. Critchfield, Carl F. Wenté, and Andrew G. Frericks *The California Wine Industry During the Depression* 1972
- William V. Cruess *A Half Century of Food and Wine Technology* 1967
- Alfred Fromm *Marketing California Wine and Brandy* 1984
- Maynard A. Joslyn *A Technologist Views the California Wine Industry* 1974
- Horace O. Lanza and Harry Baccigaluppi *California Grape Products and Other Wine Enterprises* 1971
- Louis M. Martini and Louis P. Martini *Winemakers of the Napa Valley* 1973
- Louis P. Martini *A Family Winery and the California Wine Industry* 1984
- Otto E. Meyer *California Premium Wines and Brandy* 1973
- Harold P. Olmo *Plant Genetics and New Grape Varieties* 1976
- Antonio Perelli-Minetti *A Life in Wine Making* 1975
- Louis A. Petri *The Petri Family in the Wine Industry* 1971
- Jefferson E. Peyser *The Law and the California Wine Industry* 1974
- Lucius Powers *The Fresno Area and the California Wine Industry* 1974
- Victor Repetto and Sydney J. Block *Perspectives on California Wines* 1976
- Edmund A. Rossi *Italian Swiss Colony and the Wine Industry* 1971
- A. Setrakian *A Leader of the San Joaquin Valley Grape Industry* 1977
- André Tchelistcheff *Grapes, Wine, and Ecology* 1983
- Brother Timothy *The Christian Brothers as Winemakers* 1974
- Ernest A. Wenté *Wine Making in the Livermore Valley* 1971
- Albert J. Winkler *Viticultural Research at UC Davis (1921 - 1971)* 1973

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Chalone Vineyard
Soledad, California

Rene di Rosa
Napa, California

Firestone Vineyard
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Schramsberg Vineyards and Cellars
Calistoga, California

Grgich Hills Cellar
Rutherford, California

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Sonoma, California

Catherine Harroun
San Francisco, California

Simi Winery, Inc.
Healdsburg, California

Heitz Wine Cellars
St. Helena, California

Stony Hill Vineyard
St. Helena, California

Hoffman Mountain Ranch Vineyards
Paso Robles, California

United Vintners, Inc.
San Francisco, California

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San Francisco, California

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PREFACE

The California wine industry oral history series, a project of the Regional Oral History Office, was initiated in 1969 through the action and with the financing of the Wine Advisory Board, a state marketing order organization which ceased operation in 1975. In 1983 it was reinstituted as The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series with donations from The Wine Spectator California Scholarship Foundation. The selection of those to be interviewed is made by a committee consisting of James D. Hart, director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; John A. De Luca, president of the Wine Institute, the statewide winery organization; Maynard A. Amerine, Emeritus Professor of Viticulture and Enology, University of California, Davis; the chairman of the board of directors of the Wine Institute, who is elected annually; Ruth Teiser, series project director, and Marvin R. Shanken, trustee of The Wine Spectator California Scholarship Foundation.

The purpose of the series is to record and preserve information on California grape growing and wine making that has existed only in the memories of wine men. In some cases their recollections go back to the early years of this century, before Prohibition. These recollections are of particular value because the Prohibition period saw the disruption of not only the industry itself but also the orderly recording and preservation of records of its activities. Little has been written about the industry from late in the last century until Repeal. There is a real paucity of information on the Prohibition years (1920-1933), although some commercial wine making did continue under supervision of the Prohibition Department. The material in this series on that period, as well as the discussion of the remarkable development of the wine industry in subsequent years (as yet treated analytically in few writings) will be of aid to historians. Of particular value is the fact that frequently several individuals have discussed the same subjects and events or expressed opinions on the same ideas, each from his own point of view.

Research underlying the interviews has been conducted principally in the University libraries at Berkeley and Davis, the California State Library, and in the library of the Wine Institute, which has made its collection of in many cases unique materials readily available for the purpose.

Three master indices for the entire series are being prepared, one of general subjects, one of wines, one of grapes by variety. These will be available to researchers at the conclusion of the series in the Regional Oral History Office and at the library of the Wine Institute.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to recent California history. The office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Ruth Teiser
Project Director
The Wine Spectator California
Winemen Oral History Series

10 September 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

INTRODUCTION by Maynard A. Amerine

André Tchelistcheff has been a friend of mine since he arrived in California over forty years ago. It has been a rewarding friendship, as it has for all of the many friends he has in California.

As this report of conversations amply reveals, André is a philosopher. He has been, I think, most comfortable with people who have a well-defined basic philosophy of life and of wine quality. He is at the same time a missionary and again most compatible with those who accept his missionary goals. But he is also a pragmatist, accepting most of what is in the wine industry even though it sometimes violates his principles. He is thus a most complex person.

For those reading this oral history, I believe the record of technological progress that has occurred in the California grape and wine industry since Repeal is the most significant part. André participated in much of this, as did many other people, which he is careful to point out. His specific contributions were sanitation, fermentation temperature, malo-lactic fermentation, aging and clarification, and bottling. In all of these he was a pioneer and a master. Laboratory control of winery operations was not uncommon in the late 1930s, but André brought the laboratory closer to actual critical winery operational problems than almost anyone else. This also explains why his own laboratory and his consulting have been so valuable to the industry.

I cannot refrain from telling of André as a translator of Russian. Several years ago I had to entertain some high officials in the Soviet wine industry. André acted in San Francisco and St. Helena as the California translator. Before the week was out André so outshone the official translator that the Russian translator was only translating André's Russian into English!

In a way, this is André Tchelistcheff--a translator of philosophies of life and of wine quality from many countries. To which he has added his own deeply-felt ideas.

Maynard A. Amerine

December 1983
St. Helena, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The interview with André Tchelistcheff was taped in six sessions between March 22 and May 22, 1979, and two more, following his return from one of his frequent trips to Europe, on July 26 and August 7 of that year. The following May a short segment was taped to replace a section inadvertently lost from the original.

The taping took place at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Tchelistcheff, a cheerful, hospitable, flower-surrounded home in a small residential area on the northern edge of the city of Napa. Prior to each session a list of suggested subjects was sent to Mr. Tchelistcheff. With always good grace, he discussed them and frequently added ideas of interest.

The completed transcript, edited by the interviewers mainly to correct errors in orthography and punctuation, was sent to Mr. Tchelistcheff on October 27, 1980. He and Mrs. Tchelistcheff read it, made a few corrections and, at the interviewers' request, supplied some additional details. Mrs. Tchelistcheff very kindly supplied certain dates and names during the taping and in the editing.

As André Tchelistcheff noted in the interview, "I still keep my very strong Franco-Russian accent," and his phraseology is sometimes unusual. Only in those few places where it was unclear was it changed in the editing of the transcript prior to his reading.

We are grateful to the librarian of the Wine Institute for supplying biographical material for our preliminary research, and to several friends of André Tchelistcheff for suggesting questions concerning his activities that might otherwise have gone unrecorded. For permission to quote from his interview with André Tchelistcheff, we thank Richard G. Peterson and the Napa Valley Wine Library Association.

Ruth Teiser
Interviewer-Editor

5 September 1983
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

I EARLY LIFE IN RUSSIA AND EUROPE

[Interview 1: March 22, 1979]##

The Tchelistcheff Name and Family

AT: --You have, very probably, several questions to guide me.

RT: I have a number of questions, yes. First let me ask you to pronounce your name.

AT: Well, look, my Russian pronunciation is entirely different than any other pronunciation. As a matter of fact, my spelling of my name is not corresponding, neither for my present French spelling, neither for a more, let's say, analytical spelling in English, for one single reason: because our Russian alphabet, phonetically, is not corresponding to any other alphabet. So if I have to reproduce phonetically my name in English, it would be impossible. I think even my wife has a hard time. Spelling is very easy, although I have thirteen letters. It's artificial spelling--but phonetic expression of Russian is entirely different than Anglo-Saxon languages or Latin languages. Actually, I am André Viktorovich Tchelistcheff. [Pronounces it An-drā' Vĕk'-tā-rā-vĕtch Tchĕ-lĕsh'-chĕf]

Now, in my cosmopolitan life in Europe, I have been using entirely different pronunciation because in every language I have to adjust my Russian to foreign spelling. So during my academic years in Europe, where I started to work in German and shifted to Czechoslovakian, I used to be [pronounces it] Tchĕ-lĕs-chĕff', and the spelling was different because the language is different.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 221.

AT: Then, moving to France, I became [pronounced] Tchě-lī-sheff. And now everybody remembers me as André T., rather than Tchelistcheff [laughter], or Uncle T. or Mr. T.

RT: [laughs] I see.

AT: As a matter of fact, our family spells our name entirely differently in several subsections of Europe, or let's say in the cosmopolitan expression. Now, my well-known cousin, Pavel Tchelistcheff, who is a great modern artist, he spells exactly as I, but mine ends with two "f's." He decided for a while when he was working in an atelier in Paris to spell it with two "f's," and then he shifted to "w"--Tchelitchew. So he became a Tchelitchew, although all the spellings say exactly the same. So the family is part Tchelitchew and part Tchelistcheff, but we are all from one single, original group. So that I think answers your question.

RT: Let us then go back to the beginning: When and where you were born?

AT.: Well, I was born years and years ago, and very probably I can easily compete with you ladies and can be called the senior in our company. I was born on the twenty-fourth of November of 1901 in Moscow.

RT: Would you tell a little bit about your father and your family?

AT: Well, we have very old roots. As a matter of fact, historically--I just went through the history of our family, in publication of the book dealing with the history of my cousin, The Divine Comedy of Pavel Tchelitchew by Parker Tyler.

Actually, the history of our genetic line, or genetic tree root, starts in the thirteenth century. Strange to be, my ancestor, the man who moved to Russia, was a German. So therefore, genetically, the first man representing our line was definitely German. He was the youngest son of one of the kurfürsts of Germany, the local kings. Germany then was divided by its several feudal structures. It happens to be there are two versions. One version is saying that in the year of 1340, during the so-called Battle of the Ice, which in Russian history is a very important battle, the knights had been moving throughout Russia from the Scandivavian country. The then existing Russian authority was the prince, Alexander Nevsky, and Alexander Nevsky defeated the knights in the battle of Neva, which is almost on the borderline with Finland and Norway.

So one version is saying that one of the officers and this young son of the kurfürst--I think his name was Willi--was observed by the Prince Alexander Nevsky for his tremendous courage in the battle, and after picking him up, wounded, offered him a service under the Russian crown. That's one version.

AT: The other version is saying that the same person moved and voluntarily joined Prince Alexander Nevsky of the feudal days of Russia. So that's the way it starts, and the most interesting thing--since he was definitely Catholic, there was a necessity for him to change the jurisdiction--so he was baptized to the Russian Orthodox church by the name Leonti, and it happens to be that he had a very large forehead. Well, there's my father, you see, with a large forehead. See the picture of my father?

RT: Oh, yes.

AT: Very large forehead, very high forehead. The forehead in Russian means "tchelo." So the Russian officers gave him a nickname "Tchelo," and his son had even a higher forehead. In Russian expression, anything that's bigger has a different formulation in phonetic expression. From "Tchelo," he became a "Tchelishchij," the "Great Forehead," and from Tchelishchij became the name of Tchelistsheff. That's the way it goes.

So we are divided by several lines, of course, and our basic central reproduction--geographical center, or appellation of origin if you insist [laughter]--is the central region of Russia, the department of Kaluga and Tula. In other words, in the outskirts of Moscow. I have been raised on the estate. By the time it was time for me to move to further education, I had been moved to Moscow. By this time, my father was already a well-known jurist in Russia, and he was already an assistant professor at the University of Moscow. Then he became eventually chief of justice of the court of appeal in Russia. Then he became a president of the Imperial Jurists Association of Russia. So you see, he was the smartness that's in all of us.

RT: Were you indicating that you had spent most of your youth outside of the actual city of Moscow?

AT: Yes. Except that I started to really live Moskovian life starting at the age of eleven, and I spent only vacations--Christmas vacation, Easter vacation and summer vacation--at the estate.

RT: Was the estate in the Kaluga district?

AT: Yes. South and west of Moscow, a hundred miles.

RT: So you had essentially a country background?

AT: Agricultural background. In other words, all the families were settled in their own estates.

RT: On your estate, on the estate in which you grew up--

AT: I grew up in the estate that belongs to my family, my line of family, an estate of general agriculture. As a matter of fact, my rememberings are rather limited. I go only to my great grandfather, you know. My great grandfather was an owner of the estate in the Kaluga region. It represented then about 1500 hectares, and it partially was general agriculture and partially was a dairy industry and orchards. All the raw materials were delivered to Moscow, on the Moscow market. The trains didn't exist then, of course, and it was just every week there was transportation by the horse and buggies to the central market, and women delivering cream, butter, milk to a dairy house in Moscow, and so on and so forth.

But agriculture started to change rapidly during the end of the previous century and the beginning of this century. Russia started to be far more progressive in technology, agricultural technology. Ukraine, as the most productive part of Russia, and Siberia, with the very new movement of the so-called agricultural cooperatives of Siberia, really economically choked us in our poor-, non-productive land in the central Russia. Our lands are very poor. I remember, for instance, early-maturing cherries near the house, and I remember the years that the cost of harvesting was already prohibitive to the point that the cherries were left to the birds. The same thing happened to dairy products, and life became very difficult on the property. All these families of the--I hate to say aristocratic origin because it's not true--but all the families of old origins have all kinds of privileges. They raise horses, they raise hounds, and the horses and the hunting dogs consume a tremendous amount of money. So the family, managing their dairy, house, and the property alone, was not able to support the family average standard of living. So the family started to shift toward professional lives.

My grandfather, who was a father of four sons and one daughter, stayed on the property and kept the youngest son as a manager of the property, and the rest of my uncles, also my father, went to the university. One graduated as jurist, one graduated as an M.D. doctor, one graduated as a mathematician. The other graduated also as jurist. So therefore, the family intermarried to [owners of] the new estates, and the family estates started to grow.

So that's the background. It's a classical Russian background. There is nothing strange to it.

The Beginning of the Russian Revolution

AT: Then of course, the revolution came. My father was a very liberal man, and rather opposed against the absolute regime of autocracy of Russia. That was the generation of liberal intellectuals of Russia, who actually

AT: promoted the idea of the 1917 revolution, the first revolution, without being practically prepared for such a revolution. It was some sort of dreams of Tolstoi, dreams of Dostoyevsky, dreams all the literary intellectuals had, without a body, without a physical basis.

That's the tragedy of Russia, you see. We grew up culturally very high. Culturally, intellectually, we have been very ahead. We created great authors and great musicians, but in the average life, we were very retrograde. So therefore, the revolutionary intellectual movement took the power, after military fatigue during the first war, because the ground was prepared. Actually, liberal intelligentsia had never been prepared to take the power from absolute monarchy and create a regime of strong support. That was a tragedy.

RT: Alexander Kerensky tried.

AT: But Kerensky was a politician, he was not a statesman. That was the tragedy of the revolution. Of course, my father, being in the liberal line of politics, became really a very high authority during the revolution. But, as you know, Kerensky lasted only twelve months, and the October Revolution put all of us under a very difficult financial, physical situation.

RT: If Kerensky had stayed, what would your father's position have been?

AT: He was already offered a very important position in the department of justice during the first cabinet--that was a cabinet created not by Kerensky but Paul N. Miliukov, professor of history of Moscow University. Miliukov was a very close friend of my father because they graduated about the same epoque from the University of Moscow.

The University of Moscow was one of the oldest and one of the most liberal universities who prepared the intelligentsia, because they been far away from ultra-aristocratic Saint Petersburg, where the top aristocratic families created their own cultural surrounding.

RT: If the Kerensky regime had lasted, would your father have been part of the government then?

AT: No question. No question. Because you see, then--let me be logical and proceed through this conversation. Now when the revolution came, my father was then chief of justice, court of appeal in Moscow, and surrounded by a very liberal group of judges and still leading the progressive line of internal politics.

Now, as soon as the October Revolution started, it happens to be that he was the worst enemy of the regime, so the first government of Lenin proclaimed him as an outlaw, and during two months after the

AT: October Revolution he never was able to spend one single night with the family. He was constantly spending every night in a different place, underground.

RT: Where did the family stay?

AT: Partially in Moscow, and partially at the estate of my uncle during these days.

RT: Where was that?

AT: That was in Kaluga, in the Kaluga region, near Obninski, but anyhow in the central section, not far away from our estate, because our estate was already destroyed.

RT: Oh, it was?

AT: It was destroyed. During the revolution, it was destroyed. Our house was burned, the library was burned. My great-grandfather used to have an outstanding library in five different languages. That was destroyed by fire. The first thing they did, they put the fire in the library, because the library was the enemy--I mean intellect. The second thing they did, they hanged all the hunting dogs.

RT: Ah, yes.

AT: You see, as a symbol of privileges. So by this time, we have been living in the little estate of my uncle. These were awful days, days of fires and destruction, terror and blood. One day, the political commissar from the nearest town or post came to my mother and said, "Now, Tovarishch Alexandra Tchelishcheva, I give you twenty-four hours, and you have to move your family out, and this estate is confiscated by the government. You have a right to take only a change for two days." Two shirts, two pants, etc. So we packed everything in little packages.

The next day we moved to the railroad station, and that was the last day that I saw everything that was so close to my heart, and I haven't been able to return. We moved to Moscow, to our house in Moscow, and Moscow was still boiling, but we were still living in our apartment. There was a home political committee elected--as a community, you see. So therefore, nobody took our property yet. We were governed by the committee in every individual apartment house, and we had our night guards to protect our security--security guards that were members of the tenants. Meanwhile the civil war started in the south of Russia.

RT: Nineteen seventeen?

AT: Yes, it was in the end of 1917, beginning of 1918. So my father, having all these connections, decided to move to the south to join the White Army, and the White Army was just a little cell, a little tiny, tiny

AT: nucleus, under the command of General [L.G.] Kornilov, the hero of Russia during the First World War, a very progressive man of the Siberian Kazak origin.

To go there it was a necessity to have an official permit from the present government, and you've got to remember that it was not too easy to do for one reason, because Russia by this time was divided in three parts. German army occupied all Ukraine, and approached almost the boundaries of Central Russia. Therefore we have a possibility to travel from Moscow about 250 miles south. Then there was already a boundary of German occupation army. All Ukraine was under German occupation. Ukrainian regime became a strict Ukrainian regime, under the domination of Ukraine, with the Ukrainian language. In other words, separatism immediately flourished, and Ukraine declared the independent state of Ukraine. The head of the Ukrainian government was the getman [P.] Skoropadsky, a well-known czarist general authority, but definitely of the Ukrainian origin, and they elected this getman as the governor of the Ukraine.

So we have a German borderline, and we have to have a passport delivered by the Soviet government, and we have to have a permit to go to the border, the German line, to permit us to enter the Ukraine from the Soviet Union, or central Russia. It happens to be that in every situation there are all kinds of possibilities to organize the life and manage to secure funding. It happens that during the first revolution of Russia, in 1905, my father saved the life of a very aggressive revolutionary who became a high authority after the revolution of 1917. He was also loyal, and he was very close to Trotsky. So we were able to move as a family--not under own name, under a fictitious name, and the passport was a fictitious passport--but the problem started, how to go over the frontier, because we had been assigned to go to Ukraine, but there was a boundary, German lines that were completely closed.

So we arrive at the little town of Unecha and we spent four days looking for the guide to be able to move us. We were sitting there waiting for the possibility to hire a guide who will guide us during the night to the borderline separating the Soviet Union boundary and German boundary. Both of the frontiers were guarded by military guards. So we waited three or four days, and it was an awful thing. By this time my uncle, with his family, joined us, and by this time two friends of my father joined us. There was a continuous political immigration towards the south. Finally, for a great amount of money, my father secured this guide, and we started our march around eleven o'clock in the evening.

It was October. It was not too warm, and my youngest brother was just a kid of two years old. So my mother and my sisters carried my brother Nick, and we marched slowly through the forest, stopping every three or four minutes and listening, and finally we passed the cordons

AT: of the Red Army. The guide said, "Now look, I accomplished what I promised you to do, but right there within the next three miles are the German cordons. I am not able to go there. Now, I passed you through. Now you have to go straight through and be facing the German cordons."

So we moved there, and yes, we immediately saw the German cordons, and they immediately approached us, and they said, "Your documents." Our documents are Soviet documents, but some of us, under our shoes, have our identities, and my father has his own identities.

RT: True identity?

AT: True identities. Fortunately, my mother spoke very fluently German. Fortunately, my uncle spoke very fluent German, and fortunately, a friend of my father, Mr. Meingard, was of German origin, too. We are all German origin, more or less--speak German--and my uncle and mother and the friend explained the situation, and the guards asked what is the purpose and do we have jewelry--you know. Well, we didn't have any jewelry, except my aunt, and my aunt took the diamonds and the rubies and swallowed them before we passed the frontier, you see. So we didn't have anything. So they allowed us to proceed. It [the detention] lasted about two hours.

Please remember that in this particular time Central Russia was absolutely living under starvation. Starvation, complete starvation. So we moved to the Ukraine, and the nearest town, Gomel. The town of Gomel was a Jewish settlement, originally, because as you know, in old Russia, the boundaries of Jewish population had been very strict. Business there was flourishing under German occupation. All stores were open, bread, meat, sausages--everything was just unbelievable. For almost three years we had been dreaming about the bread and candies and sugar. In our dreams, we were seeing only one thing--only food.

So after such a period of starvation, of course, we really enjoyed our stay in Gomel. Gomel is a town located on the Dnieper River. So then we took the boat from Gomel to Kiev, by the Dnieper. It was a very comfortable boat, and we enjoyed ourselves, although we were full of the insects and louse and everything, you know.

So we arrived to Kiev, and in Kiev we had all kinds of political connections through my father, and everything was all right. My father moved and had a permit. I still have that permit, by the way, as a historical document. My sister brought it to me from San Francisco, and I thought, "I'll remember to show you that permit." It's interesting to see something that was delivered in 1918, during the days of revolution. [tape interrupted while AT searches for permit]

RT: [reads] "November 2, 1918."

AT: That's it. [reads] "Permit to travel from Ukrainia--" see that's Ukrainian.

RT: The seal is Ukrainian.

AT: Ukrainian seal, and everything in Ukrainian. So it said, "Permit to move south," for my father.

RT: His family, too?

AT: To take the family, yes.

RT: Where did your sister have it?

AT: In San Francisco. My father passed away here, in San Francisco.

RT: Oh, that's right. I think I read that he had come here.

AT: That's right. He had come here. So that's it. So you see, I was seventeen years of age, already a young man, and my dream, of course, was immediately to join the White Army.

Early Education and Army Service

RT: Let me go back to your own education. May I take you back from here on this point?

AT: Yes.

RT: You had been on the family estate until, you said, you were about eleven?

AT: Well, I'd been traveling between the estate and Moscow, but basically, I'd been attached to the estate.

RT: Did you have tutors, or did you go to school--

AT: No, I was prepared by the private tutor. It was a lady who was assigned--because, you see, in the situation such as--the preparatory schools, they were almost not existing. Parochial schools, they were very limited and not giving sufficient amount of training to enter the high schools. High schools were partly grammar schools and high schools. We prepared ourselves and passed the examination to enter the high schools. We came into high school with our examination.

RT: I see. So you were prepared at home for that.

AT: So my father has a teacher who two years worked with me to prepare me for examination. I remember the day that I came to the examination hall, and all the parents and their mothers and kids seated there, about age ten, you know, then called one by one for examination. So there was a very severe examination in front of the committee of the school, and I was doing pretty good. I had been well prepared because my father always paid a tremendous amount of attention to my education.

For instance, right from childhood, when I started to read, early in the morning my father always asked me to read the newspaper for him. When he was taking his breakfast, I was sitting there reading the news, and then he explained to me all the terms, political terminology, constitutional terminology, meanings of the words, meanings of problems. He paid a tremendous amount of attention to me for one single reason, because I was the oldest son, and they say that my life was kind of a miracle in the family.

You see, I was in bed for about four years in my childhood. I caught a TB of, I think, peritoneal origin, and then peritonitis with a TB base. So I was not able to sleep, I was not able to eat, and by the way, that corresponds to my memories of the first revolution because my mother was carrying me, and my father and the nurse were carrying me always--I was able to sleep only in the arms of somebody. So I remember that my mother was standing in front of the window looking for my uncle who was supposed to deliver the provisions to us in Moscow from the estate, and it was very dangerous to travel in Moscow in 1905. So as she looked on, there was a shot from the street and the bullet passed right close to her head, into our apartment. But anyhow, I survived, and my father was really paying a tremendous amount of attention to me. As a matter of fact, he always dreamed that I would become a lawyer or a jurist rather than anything else.

So I passed the examination to this lycee, which is a high school class. I started my education right there. Then I ended up, almost, my education--there was only one year left before I had my high school degree. So when we arrived in the south--

RT: You had been to school, though, six years?

AT: Yes, all these years, until 1917.

RT: In Moscow?

AT: In Moscow.

RT: Studying a general course in high school?

AT: General high school, yes. So normally, very probably, I would graduate-- if there was no October Revolution--I would graduate from the high school the next spring, and I very probably would join the University of Moscow in medical profession, because after all, that was my dream. Very probably I would be an old doctor in Russia now. [laughter] Or professor of medicine, something like that.

But then life changed, and I changed my mind, too. Because you see, then as I said, my father joined the White Army. By this time, already the front advanced fifty, a hundred miles a day towards Moscow, and the central government of Southern Russia was located in Ekaterinodar--Krasnodar today--in the Kuban region, on the Kuban river.

So my father became a secretary of justice in the White Government of Russia. He was secretary of justice for three years, during the civil war. So I was living in Novorossisk with my family on the Black Sea. My family was there. My father lived there with my oldest sister, who was his secretary. My sister Olga* was constantly with my father, taking care of the father and being his private secretary. She was older than I.

We were living in Novorossisk, and I was insistently pushing my father with the idea to give me permission to join the army. So finally my father talked to General [A.I.] Denikin and said, "What am I going to do with my son André?"

He said, "Well, we are just opening a new section of the Military Academy of Kiev. We moved from Kiev to Ekaterinodar, to the White Russian Army, and I recommend him to join the officer's course." So I joined the officer's course, the cadet school, in the military academy.

RT: Where was the school?

AT: In Ekaterinodar, which is Krasnodar now. So that's the way my career started, military career. My military career ended up, and I had degree of the second lieutenant and then joined the army in the Crimean Peninsula, when the first movement already liquidated, and all Southern Russia was already dominated by the Russian Red Army except Crimean Peninsula. Crimean Peninsula still lived another two years as an independent White Russian state, because geographically there was a possibility to defend Crimea from the intrusion by the Red Army. The Allies supported this movement. The British, Americans, and French, they were financing us, they were sending ammunition. Our uniforms were all British or French, and we were under jurisdiction of the Allies, who kept us as a military political power with the idea to use us, because the Russian communism was very dangerous, even then, for them. So that's the way it happened.

*Later Olga Victorovna Tchelistcheff Nikitorov.

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AT: I think in the normal life it was a normal physiological reaction. But since then--look, we changed the world, and we changed the world to the point that the children, individuals, became the adult sufferers. You know how many people suffered during the first war, during the second war, and are still suffering?

[tape interrupted]

RT: I'm sorry I lost what you said. You said that physical pain is the foundation of--

AT: Of intellect. Let's see where we are--

RT: You are with the army on the Crimean Peninsula.

AT: Yes.

RT: How long, then, did you serve with the army?

AT: I joined the army in 1919; two and a half years.

RT: Always on the Crimean Peninsula?

AT: Always on the Crimean Peninsula, although we made our invasion parties to Russia exploring the possibility of expansion. By this time, several regions became revolutionary against the Red Army. The idea was to join the south with the north, because by this time there were three White Armies--one army of [A.V.] Kolchak in Siberia, who was moving to Moscow, Third Army of Mueller, moving from Finland towards Moscow, and our army from the south. So therefore, we were always trying to expand our territory. So I was involved in several physical battles and tragedies the last year, because then we were called all on the front line. All reserves had been used.

RT: How did it end, then?

AT: It ended up in total evacuation from the Crimea. Now, fortunately, all our Black Sea Navy was controlled by the White Army--because we had been always occupying the south, the Black Navy in the Black Sea. The Imperial Navy still existed under our own domination. All international or local transportation in the Black Sea was controlled by our White Army. So we managed in retreat to reach the borderline behind the Russian border. We managed to be evacuated by our own navy and the commercial navy, outside of the Black Sea. So where to go? The Allies, the English and French and Americans, gave us permission to use the Bosphorus--you know the Bosphorus, which is a channel connecting the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea?

RT: The Straits of Bosphorus.

AT: Yes, and in front you have Constantinople--Istanbul now. So 250 ships [strikes table for emphasis] were anchored right there in front of Constantinople. That was the most tragical days of our life, because we didn't have any supplies, and to organize the supplies for, all of a sudden, a foreign army of 275,000 on the ships, it was a tragedy. These were days of starvation on the ships, before they decided what to do with us.

RT: Was it just the troops, or was it civilians, too?

AT: Troops, troops. Civilians had been evacuated before, if they had a chance. My family was evacuated before.

RT: I see. So you were held on the ships while they decided?

AT: On the ships. The starvation was awful, and the supply of food was limited to the point--so we were making our bread ourselves by using the steam lines--you know, making some sort of tortillas, and there was no way to bake but on hot steam lines on the ship, just to dry them up. In other words, we were eating that food.

Now people who had some jewelry, people who got the wristwatches, you know, wedding rings, they were exchanging them for the food because the Turks and Greeks, the little tiny merchants, were coming constantly. Our flotilla was surrounded by thousands of little tiny boats of Greeks and Turks--merchants who tried to make fortunes with us. So some people, if you got a ring, or you got a bracelet, or you got a wristwatch, or you got anything precious, then you put the wedding ring on the little string, and the string goes right to the little boat, down below. When gold goes there, what's coming out? It's coming little tiny bread and maybe ten dry figs attached together. Wristwatches, they been going for a pack of dry figs on the straw and little bigger bread. Oh, God, I mean it was just tragic days.

Finally we got our orders, and the army was divided. All regular regiments of the army were sent to Gallipoli in the Dardanelles, and they assigned to us a camp, right near the town of Gallipoli, and right in front of us we were seeing all these British ships sunk--during the first war, you know. That was our camp, guarded in our case by the Zoaves. That's the French colonials. We were retrained there and kept as a military unit with the idea that the Allies will throw us back to Russia, and they were supplying us. We had courses, we got military trainings, we got our theaters, we build our church and everything. We built a camp.

Now, the irregular troops of the Don Kazaks [Cossacks], Kuban Kazaks, and Terek Kazaks, they were sent to the island Lemnos, in the Aegean Sea. So we were separated, Kazaks on one island, and the regular army on the strait. We were sitting there for fourteen to sixteen months.

RT: In Gallipoli?

AT: In Gallipoli. Finally the Allies decided that the White action of Russia is beaten. There is no way to do anything with the White Russian Army. So the White Russian Army got to be dismounted and sent to the labor camps or used in some other purpose.

Now, our fleet was already in Bizerta. Bizerta is a big port in Algeria. So our fleet already had left us and left them, and that fleet had returned to the Soviet Union. So the navy people were staying in Bizerta. Some of my close friends here in California are from Bizerta. So our regiment was assigned to work in Bulgaria, in the coal mines. In the most beautiful country of Bulgaria, Gorna-Dzhumaya--it's in the mountains of Bulgaria where the central product is the rose oil, aromatic oil. Everything, all fields are roses, only roses. When the roses are in full bloom, all the peasant girls are going to strip the petals, and the manufacturing plant was right there. So that was the center of rose oil production--and coal mines. So we spent there a considerable amount of time working under the ground.

Meanwhile, the revolution started in Bulgaria, and the left wing, under the guidance of a communist, Stambuliski, took the government in Sofia, in the capital of Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian Army was already literally demoralized to the point that there was no way for the Tsar Boris of Bulgaria to count on anybody, but there were Russian units. So they call us back from our labor camps and gave us ammunition, artillery, and we put Tsar Boris back on the throne. So therefore we restored the order and saved Bulgaria from the communist revolution.

Education Resumed

AT: The order was restored, and then the League of Nations created a committee, which was called "Nansen Committee." Nansen was a big philanthrope,* and the Nansen Committee was a committee formed within the League of Nations in Geneva with the idea not only to help not only political refugees, but also to help young refugees from their, let's say, intellectual disintegration to give them a chance to proceed with their further education. So therefore, this was promoted by one of our political leaders, very close to the French government then, Mr. Fyodorov, who was a well-known banker and, incidentally, secretary of finance--

RT: What was his name?

AT: Fyodorov, Michael Fyodorov, who was secretary of finance in the pre-revolutionary government, who was very active--he was president also, of the International Black Sea Navigation Corporation, which was

*Fridtjof Nansen, the arctic explorer, was a tireless worker for the relief of displaced persons following World War I, served as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and in 1922 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

AT: a big passenger line that was going all over the world from the old Russia. So he promoted this idea. We had been all spread in different centers. By this time our regiment was already evacuated from Bulgaria and had been placed on the border of Yugoslavia, between Trieste and Bakar. I mean, right on the border of Yugoslavia and Italy. So we were frontier guards for Yugoslavian King Alexander. So therefore the orders were out, and they said, "All people who have the degree of high school, or who have the degree of universities, or who partially attended such education, not finished, have a right to register for further education." So they were called up regiment by regiment. I didn't have the diploma, and none of us have any documents, just a word, but I did have my military documentation from graduation from Military Academy of Kiev. So that was the only document that I had, and every one of us, who have only military documents.

So we register ourselves and are waiting, and finally one day the representative of the Nansen Committee arrived, and there was a call from headquarters of the regiment. All of us with the legal documentation that we attended schools were lined up, and the man spoke French and English and German but not Russian. Fortunately, I understood very well French, and pretty good German, and they said, "The committee of Nansen decided that all of you people should be given a further education for one single reason, because after the end of this catastrophe of yours, such as Communist Revolution, Russia will be restored by the liberal government under a democratic regime, and the democratic regime of future Russia does not require arms but will require brains. So we decided to give you education so that within the next four, five, or six years, you'll be able to serve your country, not with the arms and with the blood, but with your brains." So everybody applauds.

"But," he said, "unfortunately, we are not in a position to individually ask you of your intentions, because there are thousands and thousands of you, and the scholarships are limited and distributed in the whole world, the scholarships for you." So there you are.

Now, people already with a diploma of the high school and already attending Moscow University, Kiev University, Petrograd University, etc., etc., they were drawn first. Since they already attended the professional training, they were assigned to certain universities. But there was no way for you to say, now, "I would like to go to Paris," or, "I would like to go to New York," or, "I would like to go to San Francisco." The profession was assigned, and you go to professional school.

Now, we, the second group, who had only partial diplomas, were assigned to re-training to pass the examination to pass to colleges. So I was sent to Marish Trübau or Moravska Trebova in Czechoslovakia. It was a German little town in Moravia, and there was a center of education. This territory was German, but the territory was controlled

AT: by Czechoslovakia. So that was the first republic of Czechoslovakia, under Masaryk, great democrat, and Banesch. So we were re-trained right there. It was not too easy for us to be re-trained, because we were all, basically, officers or, let's say, nurses, of the army, and we knew all the bad things and good things in life already. To re-train us and put us under certain discipline of civil life was not too easy. All the trainers had a very hard time with us. But we managed it, and we passed the final examination in Czechoslovakian, but that was a headache, under this Czechoslovakian committee.

Then they did with us exactly the same thing as they did with the other ones. Since we were in Czechoslovakia, they selected for us Czechoslovakian schools, but again, such a great amount of us--so we drew our universities, I say literally, just picked.

RT: You drew lots?

AT: Drew a lot. So I drew my lot, and it was the Agriculture Institute of National Agronomy*--Vysoka Shkola Zemedelska--in Brunn, which was in Moravia. Or Brno now. It's b-r-n-o. Before it was b-r-u-n. But I didn't like it. I did not like it to go there. They said, "Any one of you who are there, you will be able to exchange your assignment there, as long as you are assigned. There will be a possibility for you to change." And I was still dreaming, honestly, to become M.D. doctor. We finally arrived there, and meanwhile people are saying, "Very soon Russia will be liberated." There already were signs of the internal problems in Russia, and the sooner you have your degree, better you will be placed in Russia. Medical training required seven years, because you had to make five years of school and two years of internship, and agricultural engineering requires only four years.

So I went there, and for the first two years of college, I was not too sure if I am going to go to forestry or for agronomy, because the basic instruction was given, and all disciplines are common. So I became engineer agronomist. By this time, my father was already a consultant for Ministry of Justice in Yugoslavia, in Belgrade. He was already acting as consultant. So he worked for the Serbian government in Belgrade. The rest of the family was already scattered all over the world. My one sister, Alexandra, who is here,** went to Paris and entered the Sorbonne and graduated as pharmacist from Sorbonne, and remained for years and years in France. My other oldest sister lived with my father--Olga, who took care of my father, because my mother passed away in Yugoslavia, very young. She was forty-two years of age--died of tuberculosis of the lung. Uncurable.

My younger brother, Victor, graduated from Karlow, University of Praha [Prague]. My youngest brother, Nicolai, was still staying with Father, and finally, after graduation from high school in Belgrade, moved to Praha. My father was in Praha, living with my brother. My

*Or Institute of Agricultural Technology.

**See page 18.

AT: brother Victor became an architect, and my father lived with him. My youngest brother joined him, but since his French was very good, he decided to take his education in Louvain, in Belgium. Louvain had the oldest university of Western Europe, which was in the second World War completely destroyed by Germans, but later rebuilt. So he graduated as a civil engineer and architect from the Louvain. And the whole family was scattered, you know. It's all over the world.

I started my career already as agronomist in 1929, and I worked in the experimental station in Dubrovnik. Later after my marriage I moved to France, having decided to upgrade myself in the field of viticulture, or wine industry. Because France was the best that could give upgrading, I decided to go and work in the wine industry, and eventually went to post graduate course at the Institute of National Agronomy in Paris.

RT: Let me take you back again, if I may, and ask you, did your interest in the wine industry develop when you were studying agronomy?

AT: Only partially.

RT: Where did it come from?

AT: I'm going to tell you. Basically, in my life, I was far more interested in animal production. Basic attention of mine, during agronomy training, was farm husbandry and animal production. I took this as a security. We were always thinking about the securities in our life. European schools give you a chance to prepare--in your section, as you know, here in America, colleges are preparing specialists. Europe is too poor to have specialists in every line. So regional agronomists are assigned to a position by the government in the province or county in the field of agriculture as a farm adviser. For instance, when I came to America it was exactly the same thing. We had only one farm adviser in Napa County, who was in charge of the farm husbandry, horticulture, viticulture, animal production, general agronomy and everything. Now we have a specialist in every section. So you see, even the California university, before, prepared the complete training in agriculture.

RT: Do you feel now that that was valuable to you to have such a broad background?

AT: Tremendous. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. My knowledge of physiology, my knowledge of zoology, my knowledge of general agricultural science, agriculture engineering, my knowledge in the chemistry and physics, was the basis of my success in my career, because I was really well-trained.

RT: Did your interest in wine then start when you were in college, or--there was some mention of--

AT: Look, I have been always connected with wine, of course, in my life.

RT: That's what I wanted to know.

AT: I have been always connected with wine. So in our case, Madeira and port was standing daily and nightly in the living room in the crystal decanters, you know. It was absolutely normal to have a sip of Madeira or sip of port during the day, and it was absolutely normal to have a bottle of Bordeaux or Vouvray or Crimean wine during the dinner.

RT: French wines you drank?

AT: French wines and Crimean wines, Crimean wines of the imperial family, and Crimean wines of the cellar of the Prince Golitzin, and I am intermarried to this family, because my sister married to the late Prince Golitzin, who lived in San Francisco.*

So it was absolutely normal to have wine on the table, and we were trained by our father to understand the wine, and my godfather, Alexander Kotlyarov, prominent lawyer of Moscow, even gave me a property as a present--a vineyard in Crimea.

RT: Had you been there?

AT: Yes. I was there during the Civil War, you see. But it was cultivated by the workers--Tartar workers. All the Crimean viticulture was under labor management of Tartars.

RT: So you had no direct control over it?

AT: No direct control. But I been very well acquainted, you see. As a matter of fact, I think the first time I was drunk in my life--and my sister Anne--it was when I was eleven, and I was drunk, I think, on the Mumm Red Monopole, during the new year's celebration. Because it happens to be that for all of us kids there was sparkling juice given instead of champagne, but I and my sister Anne managed to finish all the glasses that had been delivered back to the kitchen.

So therefore I always have that interest, but it was not my assignment.

RT: Had you ever been around winemaking, had you ever seen anyone making wine?

AT: Winemaking in Yugoslavia, of course--

RT: That was your first experience with winemaking, actually?

AT: Yes. In Hungary and Yugoslavia. Because my first short trip was Hungary, before we moved to Yugoslavia.

RT: After Czechoslovakia?

*Alexandra Victorovna Tchelistcheff married Prince Peter Alexandrovich Golitzin.

AT: After Czechoslovakia. Well, it was a property in the Tokay region of Hungary, and there I spent six months of training in the viticulture and winemaking. That's my first movement to viticulture.

RT: What did you do?

AT: Just a student under training.

RT: I see.

AT: The most interesting thing that happens then, afterwards several things combined together, and I met the chief gardener there, who was in charge of the properties of the count, and it happens to be that twenty-five or twenty years after I met this man, Mr. Baranja-bathy, as the head gardener at Beaulieu, in Napa Valley.

RT: Oh, no! [laughs]

AT: Can you imagine? [laughs] That's right. A Hungarian.

RT: So you did actually have some little experience in Hungary?

AT: Just a little experience.

RT: But you knew by then that that was something that interested you?

AT: Yes. But still my idea--it was a lateral line of mine. I was always dreaming to live on the farm (and by the way, I still have the dream) and raise animals rather than make wines or raise kids. [laughs] So you see, that's the way it happened.

RT: So it wasn't exactly by chance that you became a winemaker?

AT: By necessity I would say--by necessity. Anything that happens to me in my life, it just happens by necessity.

RT: Perhaps.

AT: Look, it's just accidental I'm here. I never should be here. I had an entirely different chance. As a matter of fact, I'm just going to quote you one of the chances. Just recently, last summer, one of the p.r. persons, guide, of Robert Mondavi winery in Napa, she is a Chinese, took a group of Americans to China, and she was visiting the Chi Foo region of China, which is a part of Manchuria, or Manchukuo, under domination of Japanese.

So they visited a viticulture school and viticulture experimental station. There was a professor there who said to her, "By the way, one of my colleagues must be in America, by the name of André Tchelistcheff." And this man offered me a position in Chi Foo when we were working together at experimental station in Paris.

RT: For heaven's sake!

AT: You see? There is an example. I could have gone to Chi Foo as well. I had also, within the same period of time when I was assigned to the experimental station in Paris, other chances. There was a Chilean man who became a professor of viticulture and enology in the Institute of National Agronomy in Santiago de Chile. So he offered me a job. And since I had been working with the Pasteur Institute, they offered me a job in the Pasteur Institute. But I took this [work for Beaulieu] as a challenge for one single reason, because the parents of my wife* had been already in America, and there was a pressure towards America more than towards any other thing, and that's the way it happened. So I took the challenge. But meanwhile--

RT: Yes, let's go back to--

AT: Right. Let's go back.

RT: You were working at an experimental station in Dubrovnik, in viticulture?

AT: Viticulture, yes.

RT: For how long?

AT: For about eight months. Then I returned to Belgrade, and then I moved to France.

Working and Studying in France

RT: It had been your intention then to move toward France all the time?

AT: The family had the intention to move, the whole family. The whole family had already intended to move.

FR: So your father went, too?

AT: My father eventually joined us there, too.

RT: From the time you began working in viticulture, had you aspired to go to France to continue your studies?

*Ekaterina Alexandrovna Perelomoff

AT: To a certain degree. One has a reserve. But I had opportunity to go into general agriculture in France, and I had a partnership with Prince Sergey Troubetskoy, and we had property about a hundred miles southwest of Paris, where I went back to my own field, to my animal husbandry, and I spent two years on the farm in France doing everything that was close to my heart.

RT: When did you go to France?

AT: I went in '29 to Yugoslavia. I left Yugoslavia in '31 and went to France. So '31, '32, '33, I was in general agriculture.

RT: Was it just by chance that you made an association with a partner?

AT: No, it's all close friends, or close families. It happens to be that I graduated from Brünn, and he graduated from Grignon. Grignon is a French institute of agriculture. So we were in together. We formed a group of agronomists, and then I was very much involved in the poultry production. I published two books in France on poultry production.

RT: Poultry production?

AT: That's right.

RT: For heaven's sake!

AT: And then I was teaching preparatory course in agricultural training schools, trade schools, agriculture.

RT: This was in the same area?

AT: Yes, in the same area.

RT: Where was it?

AT: It was in the country, Bouilley les Trous. It doesn't say anything, you know. It's in the Seine-et-Oise region. It's the region called Ile-de-France. It's the largest, richest agricultural area.

RT: That sounds like a successful career.

AT: No, we had a very tragic thing happen to all of us there. A tragic thing happened. We lost everything there in one season. In the second year we lost all our production due to a tremendous, cataclysmic discharge of hail that destroyed all our fields, everything.

RT: Hail?

AT: Yes, of the size of about a pigeon egg, even bigger. So the young animals were killed in the field, and the corn, and wheat--everything was destroyed. We lost everything. We lost money, we lost all our investment, everything. That happens in Europe very often.

So we decided to sell the farm, and the farm was bought, of course, not on the cash money, on the credit, with the bank--Credite Agricole. We liquidated what we could, and we just moved out.

So my partner, having some relatives in America, took a position at McCormick, as agricultural specialist, and became a technical director of McCormick. I decided to go back and re-train myself and go back to viticulture and enology because that was the open field for me. Meanwhile, I already started to hear about California industry, see?

RT: What did you hear, the first thing--

AT: First contact with California, it's 1937.

RT: What did you hear about it? Why would anyone in France be interested in enology and viticulture in California?

AT: You see, as I said, with the interest--I knew very well that it's very hard for me to make any career in France in my field. French people are very conservative. In those particular days, foreigners were looked upon with a very dirty eye by the French people. So I knew that I had to emigrate or stay with the research institution. So that's the chance that I took, and I tasted the first California wines during 1937 international exposition [at Paris].

RT: What did you think of them, the first California wines that you tasted?

AT: They tasted entirely different, of course. They have a considerable amount of originality. The wine that attracted me more than anything else, it was a wine, as I remember, 1934 or 1932 vintage of Wente, and it's called "Sauternes, Valle d'Oro." That was a beautiful wine, and all the Frenchmen, colleagues of mine, were just astounded that such a wonderful type of wine can be produced in California.

But meanwhile, we knew very well about California because all the publications of California had been coming to us, to the station.

RT: But I am surprised that you would have been interested in reading much about it.

AT: Well, I was reading everything, you know. I was reading the Russian professional publication, German publication. That's the European way, as we do now in America. We have all access, through our University of California libraries, to all. We are living in one single world, you know. That's absolutely normal. There was nothing wrong.

AT: And I met, in 1937, Professor [Albert J.] Winkler, from the University of California, when I was at the station.

RT: Let me just take you back again. Would you mind going on talking a little bit longer?

AT: No, that's fine.

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RT: So when you went to Paris, you studied at two different schools. Is that right?

AT: No. The Institute of National Agronomy was connected with the experimental station, just as Davis has the education institution and the research. So within the Institute of National Agronomy, there was-- it does not exist any more--a viticultural-enological research station. It was created in the memory of one of the greatest authorities in the French viticulture. You see these books, right there? This is the Professor Doctor Pierre Viala, the chairman of the Agriculture Academy of France. It happens to be that I took the course of viticulture from him.

RT: I see.

AT: When he passed away, the experimental station was called "Laboratoire Pierre Viala" in his memory, and the experimental station was called "Station Experimental Laboratoire du M. Pierre Viala." And this is the man. So you see, you were taking an academic course, but also doing experimental work, and this experimental station was in charge of all northeastern section of France. In other words, Champagne region, Burgundy region were served right there. So I had opportunity then to meet several people and several friends that are still living, whom I am visiting every time I go to France. So that was my situation.

In between, I was taking other educational courses. I was taking course of fermentation at the Pasteur Institute and worked with the Pasteur Institute in experimental field. My first job in France was at Moët et Chandon in Epernay. So it happens to be that when they moved here* they located me, one of the oldest employees of theirs. [laughter] So my career started in their experimental viticultural project, sponsored by the grandfather of the present Count Chandon.

RT: That was in connection with your studies at the Pasteur--

*To Yountville, California, to establish Domaine Chandon.

AT: In connection with the study at Pasteur, where we applied the--today it's very modern, then it was even far more modern--methods of defense against detriment of insects by using biological methods rather than chemical methods. So the experimentation was done first in the Champagne region, and unfortunately, the Second World War destroyed all this thing.

So then I was exposed to the practical work in laboratories of one of the greatest commercial institutions, Nicolas. Nicolas is one of the biggest houses of France, in commercial wines, common wines. So therefore, I was constantly changing employment but I was trying to make my living, and it was not too easy in those days, living under a very tight regime.

So then we are coming to the last point. In 1938, Georges de Latour, the founder of Beaulieu vineyards, came to see my professor, Paul Marsais. [points to photograph] Right there, standing behind me. That's the professor who took the position of Viala at the experimental station, as director--professor of viticulture.

Now, as I said, this was only a temporary assignment, and it prepared me to go further in the research. I was a very good research man, and Professor Marsais used to say to me always, "André, you will be much better in research than in industry, because you have an ability to penetrate to the problem. You got the systematics and fire that permits you to go underground of the problem, and not many people have the possibility to go right into the depth of the problem." That's today typical for the research people. But research is one thing, industry is another thing, and I thought, am I going to stay with the Pasteur or go to educational research?

California and European Winemaking in the 1930s

AT: But then in 1938, Georges de Latour and his son-in-law, Marquis [Henri Galçerand] de Pins,* then a young man, came to experimental station with the idea to locate a specialist, enologist and viticulturist, to replace their present then viticulturist-enologist, who was nobody else but Leon Bonnet. Bonnet was a professor of viticulture at Davis, who after he retired from Davis and Winkler came to Davis, Bonnet took the position of viticulturist-enologist at Beaulieu. But he became ill, retired from the situation, and they were looking for the replacement.

*The Marquis de Pins was married to the former Hélène de Latour.

AT: They had several problems, awful problems. So as they were discussing all the problems there, they asked Marsais, "We would like to have a specialist on whom we can really depend, because we have several technical problems to solve. We don't need a manager, but we need a research man and manager."

He said to them, "Well, I got several French people, but you know French are very hard to assimilate in a foreign country, but I have a man of a cosmopolitan background, who worked here and there and traveled, and I think he will be the man for you. He is of Russian origin, speaks fluently French, and there'll be no problem for you. Why don't you interview him?" So they called me into the office, and I was not ready to think about this. So they started a discussion about all the problems of the California wine industry, viticultural problems, and so they made me an offer, and they thought that it's not going to be a problem at all. But please remember, in this particular time--that was in the first term of President Roosevelt, and the secretary of agriculture was the first lady--I don't know if you remember the name of the first lady who was secretary of labor in the United States--

RT: Madam Frances Perkins.

AT: It happens to be that the United States ambassador usually served distinguished American people at the embassy for dinner and so on and so forth. Miss Perkins arrived in the same time as de Latour and his family, and both of them were invited for dinner at the embassy. Mr. de Latour was sitting close to Miss Perkins, and she asked him, "What are you doing?" and "Who are you?" and so on and so forth.

He said, "I am viticulturist-winemaker, vintner in Napa Valley, and I am producing outstanding wines of California. Right now I'm in the process of bringing a professional enologist from Paris to my estate."

She said to him, "You will never be able to do it, because I am going to tell you honestly, your industry is a luxury industry." She was very left-wing, you know? Very much so. "We have an unemployment problem right now, as you know very well. It's a depression. We have unemployment, and you have to have a permit from the Department of Labor, and there have got to be affidavits and proofs. You will never be able to do it."

He said, "That's all dreams of this lady." He called me and said, "Tomorrow at 10:00 we'll be at the embassy, and we'll go and see the consul general in charge." So Mr. de Latour came there, with me, innocently, and the vice-consul in charge of the visa was sitting right there in front of us, and he [de Latour] started to present his card, present his bank account and everything and give him a complete economic-financial report, and the man said, "Sorry, Mr. de Latour."

AT: Nothing doing. We just can't do it. This is impossible, immigration now under these conditions--impossible. So you've got to start right from [the United States] and work this way, but not from here there."

So he left for Aix-les-Bains to take his cure, and I was still staying at the experimental station, and I did everything possible to prepare for departure, but no way to have this. I was going there every two weeks, and so Leon Adams [laughs]--there was Leon Adams coming. Leon Adams then was executive secretary of the Wine Institute. Georges de Latour was in Europe, so his manager and vice president of Beaulieu in the office in San Francisco managed to contact the Wine Institute, and they talked to Leon Adams.

Leon Adams said, "Look, there is no other way to do it but to discuss this thing with the University of California, and we have to form a base. Yes, we don't have any enologists. The school is just barely starting, the department is a microscopic department." So he gave me an affidavit as a [practitioner of a] profession that's not covered, the editor of Wines and Vines, [Horatio F.] Stoll gave me an affidavit, and Professor Bill [William V.] Cruess, from Berkeley, gave me an affidavit. But even with the affidavits from the university I was not able to move. So there was a very old friend of Georges de Latour here in San Francisco. He was a senator. Hiram Johnson. He sent a telegram to Hiram Johnson and said, "I am going to send my vice president to talk about the situation, Hiram, and goddammit, I have to solve this! I need him within the next month."

All of a sudden I got a telegram from Hiram Johnson, Washington, D.C. [laughter] "Mr. Tchelistcheff, I am in honor to present you a great news. Your visa number such and such of immigration is granted. Sign it and present this documentation. Meanwhile, we are contacting the embassy in Paris. [strikes table for emphasis] Hiram Johnson."

RT: Good for him. Now you're on your way.

AT: So I'm on my way.

RT: Next time, we'll take you from there. [laughs]

AT: That's right. Next time we will start to work in California.

[Interview 2: March 27, 1979]

RT: You had published at least one paper while you were in Paris, had you not?

AT: That's right.

RT: What was the subject of that?

AT: On malo-lactic fermentation, and lactic fermentation.

RT: I see. Was most of your work done there on fermentation?

AT: Basically, yes. Basically on fermentation--alcoholic fermentation and pathological fermentation.

RT: Which was a fairly unexplored subject at that time, was it not?

AT: It was completely unknown in California, as a matter of fact. It was absolutely foreign to California--I would say scientifically, phonetically, or philosophically, even. The first report that was presented to me during my stay at the experimental station was by a well-known, then, Swiss enologist at the experimental station in Geneva, Switzerland, who published the work after her return from California.*

In her interpretation of, let's say, microbiological problems, she mentions specifically that they [in California] are really fortunate people because the bacteriological problems of Europe are not existing in California; as a matter of fact, malo-lactic fermentation, or lactic spoilages are completely unknown, except a lactic spoilage by one single organism.

It was kind of challenging to me because I always thought that all these problems, as long as we are dealing with the same raw material and we are living under the same sky, managed by one single master, we have mutual problems, as in human physiology or pathology, and as well in organic field of what surrounds us. But anyhow, I came here with the idea that this did not exist in practice.

But in my first conversation with Mr. de Latour at the experimental station, I discovered that California industry is even far more exposed to all sorts of difficulties--chemical breakdowns in the wines, pathological breakdowns of the wines, and there would be a tremendous amount of work to do in California for me as a research chemist, or as I rather would say, enologist.

So this is the key, as a matter of fact. When the job was offered, it was offered with all sorts of negatives, not only positives, and I knew very well that I am going to face some difficult technical problems in California. But as I said before, I just decided to take the challenge, without too much enthusiasm.

*Berthe Porchet of Lausanne

AT: Now, you were asking me recently about my, let's say, European experience in that particular field. Well you got to remember that we are going back almost half a century. So therefore, the half a century in European wine industry, and half century in American wine industry are entirely two different aspects. Our situations were quite different because [American] vineyards just barely, barely started to recover from traumatic damage done by Prohibition. Europe was technically, scientifically, so much ahead of California. So my preparations, as I said before, were rather guided constantly towards a technical research, or under industrial interpretation of research to industrial field. Before I even took the decision, Professor Marsais said to me, "André, you got to remember that once you are in industry, research becomes a past, and you are using the research done by somebody else, and using this raw material prepared for something else, to interpret in the industrial scale." Of course, I never thought that in America I would be forced to guide my own research, because the background was, let's say, very limited in the field of research then.

You've got to remember that at the University of California, outside of Berkeley and the Department of Food Technology, enology was just an embryo of what is today. I don't know if you remember Davis as [only] agricultural college, thirty or forty years ago. Wooden construction. There were few modern stucco buildings before 1936 or 1937. The Department of Enology building, built in 1939, was microscopically small, the size of this house. It was stucco, but most of the rest were still wood. Classical construction of agricultural colleges.

What was in viticulture? Well, there was Professor Winkler and [Harry] Jacob, H.P. Olmo, and a few students. What was in enology? There was Dr. [Maynard A.] Amerine, a few students and Dr. [John G.B.] Castor, and [James F.] Guymon. Enology was microscopically small, viticulture was microscopically small, and limitations were tremendous because then, still, food technology dominated the field of enology. The basic research and basic work was done by Professor William Cruess in his food technology department in Berkeley.

RT.: You mentioned, and this is on this subject, that you had read papers by [Frederic T.] Bioletti.

AT: Yes.

RT: And of course, they had his studies when they started up again.

AT: That's right.

RT: Did they seem very crude to you?

AT: No, no. Not at all. Not at all. Bioletti's work was directly connected, historically, with the work of my professor, Viala. Please remember that Bioletti and Viala actually should be considered as pioneers of restoration of the order in the world wine industry, because Bioletti worked on the root stock resistivity against phylloxera. Please remember, they are two of the most important figures in the history of viticulture, who saved the world from phylloxera.

Bioletti was very important as a factor. So Bioletti's work, as a foundation of the Department of Viticulture, or horticulture, still remains as fundamental work. I am considering Bioletti in the field of American agricultural science, or viticultural science, or horticultural science, as Viala in the field of viticulture of the world, and viticulture of France and Central Europe, or, let's say as a Pasteur in the field of human pathology. They were really academical people with academical minds--great statesmen of the industry, you see. So therefore we inherited from him a great amount of work, and we inherited from him a great amount of information--not in the form of scientific interpretation as we have right now, of course.

Even Louis Pasteur, in his region of research, sounds to us rather primitive, because Louis Pasteur discovered, of course, fermentation, right?--discovered the function of the yeast. Today we are far away from this, not only in genetics of the yeast, but in enzymatic research, etcetera. So we are so far ahead, and we marched at such a speed it's not comparable to us, fifty years ago.

All right. So you asked me* about my practical experience. Practical experience of mine in the field of enology and viticulture was directly connected with the research experimental station, dealing with the industrial problems. See, you got to remember that even now, in France, experimental stations are extension service, serving a regional industrial center of production. So therefore, there are several experimental stations all over the world, and being rather lesser in economical financing, France has been forced by the law of local financing in the research to use the experimental station as industrial research, with the direct application of private industrial investments. So I was working in Champagne, with the Champagne projects, and several legal problems of Champagne. I was working with several microbiological problems with Nicolas, and working in their laboratories. By this time, we were all dealing with the problems of great houses of France, such as the Potin and Nicolas and all these big firms. Nicolas is a big industrial outlet, a big commercial firm. Nicolas even then represented

*In a list of suggested subjects to be discussed, sent to Mr. Tchelistcheff in advance.

AT: a volume of about 30-50,000 cases a day production, for daily delivery, and right now Nicolas is one of the biggest outlets, and apparently right now starting to import California wines.

Now, let's go and proceed to my emigration from Europe to France.

RT: I always have one more question--if you don't mind.

AT: Right.

RT: You mentioned earlier the Wente Sauternes that you had tasted at the 1937 Paris exposition. You also had tasted, I read somewhere else, a Traminer.

AT: Traminer. Traminer of Inglenook.

RT: What did you think of that?

AT: I was very much impressed with the Semillon, "Valle de Oro," of Wente, and not impressed at all with the Traminer of Inglenook, for one single reason, because then Inglenook actually produced not the real spicy Gewürztraminer, but it was a pink Traminer, which was well known then in Napa Valley. It's a sub-variety, or let's say, clonal variation or genetic variation of Traminer, but it has nothing to do with gewürz-, or "spicy," Traminer. It was a pink Traminer. So therefore, the wines out of this variety were very neutral.

RT: So you had tasted a good wine and a poor--

AT: I am not going to say poor, but not representing the line of well-known, to me, Gewürztraminer of Alsace.

RT: I see. Had any of the California wine men gone to that fair? Had you met them there?

AT: I think Dr. Amerine was there, but again, I was so far from any contact, except the researcher. So for me it was just a jump into the world, without knowing where I am jumping.

RT: Now I'll stop asking you questions about that and get onto your emigration.

AT: Right. As I said before, it was a rather long legal procedure to obtain the visa. Immigration visa is not a tourist visa. Mr. de Latour was very generous with all of us, with my family. He left already to go back home to California, but his son-in-law, Marquis de Pins, and Madame, stayed still in France. So Marquis de Pins was in charge to organize my trip and organize my financing. So everything was done the first class, of course, and there was no such a thing as communication by air, as you remember. So therefore, I took the train from Paris, and Ile-de-France--well-known commercial ship of France--and it took us

AT: seven days to arrive to port of New York. We enjoyed our trip considerably. It was a luxury suite in the traveling first class in those days, because traveling was available only for the people with certain financial might. Today, everybody is traveling. Before, only the wealthy Americans were seen in Europe. Now, the regular, let's say, average person, such as I am, and very probably you are, financially [laughs] never had been permitted to dream about--or it required an economy, financial drive, for ten years to save the money because the cost was unbelievably high.

II YEARS WITH BEAULIEU

To New York and California

AT: So, the first thing, I faced American wines in New York. As I arrived in New York, I was greeted then by the manager of the Beaulieu distributing cellar in New York. Georges de Latour owned the Beaulieu distributing cellar in New York. The man who greeted me--I don't think that he is living any more. Well, it will come to me. He was a very interesting man, because he was an ex-tenor singing at La Scala, who more or less lost his voice and emigrated to America and went, of course--all Italians, they went direct to the wine industry, because after all, the industry then in America was controlled strictly by Italians. Ah, yes. He was Mr. Villa, and he was known as "Pancho" Villa. [laughter] Symbolically. He was a great friend of mine--became a very great friend of mine--and the last time I saw him, during the convention of the American Society of Enologists, in Santa Barbara, upon his retirement, he was married to an American lady, and they have a beautiful villa in Santa Barbara, and this man, already in the middle seventies, was able to swim every day, regardless of the season, in the Pacific. But just recently, about five or seven years ago, he left this beautiful world and selected the most beautiful world above us.

So, Pancho Villa. Pancho Villa was assigned to show me New York and taste all the wines in the cellar of New York, because the commerce of Beaulieu Vineyard then was directly connected, basically, with sacramental wines--altar wines--and only a few commercial wines penetrated [outside] the boundaries of California into the interstate markets. The wines were shipped in bulk, in barrels, to the distributing company, or the cellar of Beaulieu Vineyard distributing company in New York, and bottled there and sold directly from there to different sub-sections, as sacramental wines.

The first thing that shocked me is the temperature of the cellar in New York, because you got to remember that all underground cellars in New York had been exposed to the heat of subways. So the temperature

AT: in the cellar was entirely different than I used to be acquainted. The temperature of the cellar was very probably above twenty degrees centigrade, and the average temperature of the cellar that I used to work, in Europe, was twelve, thirteen--at the most, fourteen degrees centigrade. It was really too warm. But I had a privilege right there to taste all the white wines in the barrels, and all the sweet sacramental wines in barrels, because they were aged right there in that cellar, and the cellar was a very important underground cellar.

RT: Did they ship them there to be aged?

AT: Yes, they shipped them with the idea to have an aging stock there, you see. So my first day I spent, actually, going from one barrel to another, taking my notes, because Mr. de Latour gave the direction to Pancho Villa to allow me to taste all wines with the idea to acquaint myself with the standard of quality, and to have definite physical reaction of my first reaction towards his own palate.

I would say I was rather more impressed in the line of dessert wines than in the line of table wines, with one single exception, that I located a few barrels of very good Cabernet. I compared this Cabernet with generic wines such as Burgundies and Clarets--the public didn't know Cabernet then--and selected definitely Cabernet as the best Beaulieu red wine in the cellar, which actually was the master key to all my future career in California, because I said to myself, "This is my first impression, and very probably I have to check my first impression." I said, "I will go to California." That's the master key that became, really, my success.

RT: Did you taste Pinot noir?

AT: Pinot noir then, outside of a few vintages that never were shipped in bulk, was very limited, and stored all in [the] Rutherford cellar, and never was sold as a sacramental wine, because the production was very limited. There was only one block in Pinot noir, which also created [the] background of my success with Beaulieu. That was the block of Pinot noir planted by de Latour in 1905.

RT: Where?

AT: In Rutherford, right at the home estate of Beaulieu.

So my impression was very contradictory, and I located several defects, of course, in the wines, from my European knowledge of wines that I had before, and I kept my logbook of observations with me.*

It took us about three and a half days to travel from New York to San Francisco. I arrived in San Francisco. My brother-in-law then lived in San Francisco, the brother of my first wife.** I established

*See also pages 30 and 62.

**Nikolai Alexandrovich Perelomoff

AT: immediately contact with de Latour by phone, and he said, "Tomorrow morning I am going to see you in my office on Sacramento Street, and we will have a lunch together, and Madame Fernande de Latour will take care of your wife," and so on and so forth.

My English was limited to a few words. My English was not existing at all. In other words, when I arrived to New York, it comes to me that everything that surrounded me was just phonetically foreign things-- I mean, ways of phonetic expressions, and since I have already such a cosmopolitan background, I was very acquainted with this being shipped from one country to another, you know. So I decided to concentrate myself and listen very carefully. It is really strange. I arrived, therefore, in September, 1938.

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RT: How did you ever set about learning English? Did you study, or did you just pick it up?

AT: Just picked it up. You know, it's a very strange thing, because within a year after my arrival, Dr. Amerine asked me to make a presentation at the University of California at Davis for the students, and the subject was--as simple as sounds--the importance of cork selection, and amount of cork in relationship to aging process of the wine. I managed to present this thing [laughs] to the students. It was really strange. In 1939, in the summer. So it was very strange, but that's the way it is.

Of course, to a certain degree, I would say always that if you have two or three foreign languages, it will be much easier for you to learn an extra language, because you are already trained to, but you will never be able to, in that particular age--I was already thirty-seven years of age--to eliminate the accent. It's impossible. So I still keep my very strong Franco-Russian accent.

So the next day, after introduction to the headquarters in the office of Beaulieu Vineyard, to the secretaries--and by the way, the secretary of Mr. de Latour was a Miss [Marie] Hanson of French origin, spoke very fluently French, because Mr. de Latour was a Frenchman [gestures] from here to there, you know.

RT: [laughs] From top to bottom.

AT: He was a naturalized citizen, you know. He applied for the citizenship immediately, as a businessman in America. But despite the fact that he was really a businessman of America, definitely a typical businessman of America, at home there was a rule that the only language that can be spoken around the table was French. So therefore, in the business activities they were using English, but at home they used only French. As a matter of fact, this more or less stayed as a tradition to almost the rest of the days, in the house. Afterwards, Madame Fernande de Latour started to become more liberal, and English started to dominate

AT: in the family already. Except Marquis de Pins never applied for the citizenship and remained a Frenchman right from the day of marrying [an] American girl--of French origin, you see--but to the rest of his days, he always preferred French, although he was completely fluent, with a very typical accent of Maurice Chevalier. I mean, it was a typical, beautiful Maurice Chevalier English, with that French vibration. As a matter of fact, Maurice Chevalier was a very close friend of Marquis de Pins.

So next day, the appointment was set, and the beautiful black Cadillac, with a chauffeur in uniform, picked us up at the office of Beaulieu Vineyard in San Francisco, and I was sitting in the back, with Madame de Latour and Georges de Latour, and we passed the Golden Gate. That was my first view of the Golden Gate. I heard so much about the Golden Gate construction, and so on and so forth. Then he started to introduce me to Northern California as we passed Marin County, and the dairy farms in Marin County. Finally we arrived to lower section of Napa Valley, Carneros Valley, which was all orchards, and we passed through the city of Napa--the freeway did not exist then. The main roads were going through the city of Napa, and we saw that little tiny settlement of Napa, which was about ten percent of the volume of today, and we moved to the upper central section of the Napa Valley, and I started to see a few vineyards.

I was amazed that the vineyards had been set within the Italian philosophy--very low heads and very narrow planting--quite different than I saw in France. Then we came in central section already, past Yountville, when I saw already European training of some varieties, on the wires, and in the higher elevations and so on and so forth, and we arrived finally to Beaulieu residence, Napa Valley, which was then the most unbelievable paradise to me. The gardener then was an English gardener, who was hired in London by Madame de Latour, a Mr. Bartel. He was an old English man, of a classical English traditional training in gardening and landscaping. Madame de Latour landscaped the Beaulieu gardens herself. She never used any consultant in establishing Beaulieu estate in the garden as such.

So first thing we came in, and I saw this old Spanish-style estate at Beaulieu, and they assigned me to a room. I think there was about ten or eleven bathrooms and eleven bedrooms there. I immediately noticed the luxury of finishing and great taste of the family.

After washing up, Mr. de Latour picked me up and said, "Now we are going to have a feast today, and we are going to start with the crawfishes, and then we will go to the trout, and we have a pheasant, and I am going to be able to introduce my best wines today that I have in my cellar from my own vineyard."

AT: What shocked me was--after all, please remember that I was just a Russian immigrant, and I lived with a very tight belt all my life since I left home. Such a proposition was more or less kind of strange to me, to see all these luxuries and all these maids--girls and ladies--in the uniforms on the black base, running around. And the butler. Everything was just classical.

He said, "But, incidentally, I gave the order to pick the crawfishes in my crawfish stream"--because there was a special channel of the creek, which was transferred to the crawfish farm drawing water by pump from the creek, and the crawfish was fed and multiplied in his own property. And he said, "But the trout you are going to select yourself." So we went to the trout farm, in the stream of running water, with a net, and every one of us--I selected a good German brown, about sixteen inches, and he caught his own trout, and one trout for Madame, and several trout for the help, and they came back and they cleaned it there and gave it to the kitchen.

Then we went and he showed me all around the garden. I went to the poultry house production, where they had all kinds of pheasants, partridges, and everything. This was a special project supplying the poultry exclusively serving the house. There was a couple of cows and fresh milk and butter. Everything was still as in a European estate. Behind was stables, with the working horses and a saddle horse for Marquis de Pins, because Marquis de Pins was a cavalry officer, graduated from the Saumur cavalry school, and he was a retired cavalry man. He was actually a career officer.

So we had the dinner--

RT: Let me go back to the crawfish. Were they native American, or were they French--

AT: No, native American. You see, we have plenty of them around here. We are saturated with the crawfish. The Russian River is full of it. But you see, the luxury of permitting such a thing does not exist any more. When Mr. de Latour passed away, the crawfish passed away, and trout passed away, because it was very expensive. The expense was unbelievable. But he loved this life, and he was a great gourmet. Madame was a great chef, with a complete knowledge of international cuisine.

As we came out, they served the aperitif, their Muscat de Frontignan. It was the first time I was drinking bottled Beaulieu wine. It was an old Muscat de Frontignan that they served in the Italian way, as a cocktail on the ice, and with a slice of lemon--as a cocktail, as a Vermouth.

Then we went to the table. Madame de Latour was in this big hat. You see, she never attended the table without a hat. Luncheons, a lunch hat. Dinner in a dinner hat. And Mr. de Latour was in black tie. See,

AT: it was just traditional--regardless, even when they were two together. It was exactly the same way. When you see the May National Geographic, the next month, you are going to see the picture of Madame de Pins, seated on the porch of Beaulieu, in a beautiful hat, and the butler is serving her. You'll see her picture. That's the daughter.

So the class and the tradition still existing, but already in minimized forms. But this great aristocratic tradition was still going there at Beaulieu, and is still going there, in different forms, of course.

So we have our crawfish, and we have a Chablis, vintage 1918, and that was 1938. Mr. de Latour was very proud of this Chablis, although it tasted [more] like a wonderful Graves to me than a Chablis, because it was a product of Semillon, interblended with Ugni blanc. In my mind, Chablis was represented only by one single variety--Chardonnay. But the wine was very pleasant as a dry Graves, and I kept my mouth shut, of course. But then a couple years afterwards, when we tasted this wine with Dr. Amerine, in the discussion about the quality of this wine (which took, incidentally, a gold medal at the Golden Gate International Exposition), this wine was a beautiful Graves-Sauternes, but not a Chablis, because the variety was wrong. But that was an established tradition of Beaulieu. And there was a little interblending of Melon of Burgundy. That's a variety that is known very much in the southern Loire River, and he was a great admirer of this variety.

They been always saying that Melon of Bourgogne in the past, historically, was the variety that dominated in the Côte d'Or, before the Chardonnay moved in. It was a well-known Burgundian variety, but then it moved towards the Loire River and became a well-known variety in the Loire River, in the south, towards Nantes. Muscadet--you heard about Muscadet? Muscadet is the Melon of Burgundy. So the Muscadet wine that is sold here is one of the most popular white wines in France today--Beaujolais is the red, Muscadet is the white--very fresh, young wines. Melon de Bourgogne is the basis of Muscadet, as a variety, and it's in the southern section of Nantes region of the Loire, in the delta of the Loire River.

So we tasted this wine, and I was really pleased with the beautiful straw-gold color--beautiful wine. Then we had a bottle of Sauternes with our fish. That was a, by the way, Bordeaux tradition. In the Bordeaux, they always served fish with sweet type of wine. Strange. It was a Sauternes, and this I have to make a little stop, specifically saying something that sounds to you very foreign.

In these particular days, Mr. de Latour was still cooperating with the Wente family. You heard about that?

RT: Yes.

AT: So therefore, all the Semillon and Sauvignon blanc were coming from Wente, in bulk, because during the Prohibition days, Mr. de Latour bonded Wente with [the] Beaulieu Vineyard bond permit. So all three white wines, Dry Sauternes, Haut Sauternes, and Chateau Beaulieu were produced with Wente and sold by de Latour through the official altar wine channel and distribution. So therefore, it was not a Napa Valley wine. It was a wine produced by Wente Bros. in Livermore--this particular wine I tasted. It was a wine of the late twenties, so it had quite a bit of age. And it was a beautiful Sauternes.

RT: What grapes, do you think?

AT: Semillon and Sauvignon blanc, but basically Semillon. That really shocked me, the greatness of this wine, because it was really honestly comparable with the great, great châteaux of Sauternes, of France.

Since again, I have to shift a little bit towards description of this wine, and since, again, it's so reminiscent--it's just still as yesterday in my memory, or my mental library--I will say that this observation was confirmed in the early forties, only a few years afterwards, by Marquis de Lur Saluces, the owner of Château d'Yquem, who came to California and spent a week at Beaulieu. In the meanwhile, we were traveling together and tasting the wines in all regions of California, and as we came back to Beaulieu after one week in California, he came and said to Georges de Latour, "Georges, I am not afraid of Napa Valley, I am not afraid of Sonoma Valley, I am not afraid of Sacramento Valley, but I am very much afraid of Livermore Valley, because I tasted in Livermore at Wente and Concannon and Cresta Blanca, some of the wines that I am considering even higher in quality than my own Château d'Yquem."*

That was when? That was in the early forties! This wine still remained, for a long, long period of time, as a tradition of Beaulieu, by buying the barrels from Wente, and then in between, Georges de Latour and Madame de Latour started to expand the planting of Semillon in Napa Valley. Then Château Beaulieu appeared, as such, to replace the wines of Livermore, and despite all the characteristics of Château Beaulieu, which is a very good wine, aging very well, the standard of the image of this wine never has been comparable with the standards of the image of Livermore, because Livermore soil, that gravel and stone of Livermore, is the ideal situation for this type of wines. That's a part of ecology.

*See also interview with Ernest A. Wente, Wine Making in the Livermore Valley, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1971.

AT: All right. Then we were enjoying the faisan--the pheasant--and Mr. de Latour, of course, presented his Cabernet. This Cabernet was the Cabernet that the next season was presented at Golden Gate Exposition and also took the gold medal.

RT: What year was it?

AT: It was a 1919. At this particular time, by the way, we tasted parallel, a burgundy of 1918. Burgundy of 1918 was composition of Cabernet and Pinot noir, and I considered this as even much greater wine than Cabernet straight. This burgundy, in the Golden Gate Exposition, took the gold medal and grand prix.

See, Wente took, with the Valle de Oro, a gold medal, and grand prix. In the red wines, Beaulieu took, with this burgundy, grand prix. There was only two grands prix--great prizes--in the Golden Gate Exposition.

RT: Does anyone now blend Cabernet and Pinot noir?

AT: No, not quite. Sporadically, accidentally, yes. Now, we are coming to the days so far ahead of us, because the whole structure will change as we go. The whole image, the whole structure of California wine industry is continually changing.

RT: The age of white wines is no longer--

AT: The age of white wines is not considered right now because--it's another problem--because the consumer prefers to have a freshness, rather than complexity in the white wines, except a few exceptions, and we are going to talk about them.

The Sauternes were produced by Wente, but the reds were produced by de Latour himself, in cooperation with Mr. J. [Joseph J.] Ponti. Now we are going to go back to the history of Beaulieu, almost jumping to the history of it. J. J. Ponti was actually a winemaker, practical winemaker of Beaulieu, starting from before the Prohibition days. He was an Italian, trained in masonry, and being an Italian mason, spent a considerable amount of time in building the hotels in Switzerland.

You know, that's immigrational work. They were going to work always in Switzerland. Switzerland then was one of the most outstanding tourist European countries. So all these great hotels around the lakes in Switzerland were built by Italian masons, and as the history went there, it happens to be that Benito Mussolini was working with him together in one single crew, as a mason. It's interesting, you know. So the dream, of course, of every Italian was the dream of the new world. The new world was America. So he immigrated as a mason, young man, into California--gradually moved to California. Of course, vineyards were all then--this is absolutely natural--trades. They were all trades from the beginning.

AT: He started to work for de Latour just as a viticulturist, field worker, and eventually was promoted to the foreman. Eventually, when de Latour went to winemaking, he became a foreman and eventually became a superintendent--winemaker and superintendent of Beaulieu Vineyard. When I came into Beaulieu, he was still superintendent of all departments of Beaulieu Vineyard of Georges de Latour. He passed away--[to Mrs. Tchelistcheff] Darling, when did he pass away?

T: About two or three years ago.

AT: He passed away about two or three years ago,* at the age of ninety-one, I think. So he was the actual foreman-winemaker. First enologist was Georges de Latour, of course.

RT: How did he know--

AT: He learned that at home, in France. He was a chemist. Enology was not existing then, even when I came in. There was only single enologist known in the wine industry of America. That was Dr. Amerine. The rest were all wine chemists. Enology was [an] unknown word.

RT: They'd come in through food technology?

AT: That's right. Enology was absolutely unknown, foreign name to them. So, de Latour started to work and then gradually hired Bonnet. Bonnet was an ex-professor of viticulture before Winkler. He was a student of Bioletti. He was from a family coming from the South, from Narbonne. He was a Frenchman. He published a great amount of articles in The California Grape Grower and Wines and Vines. All these varietal descriptions, that was a work. If you ever put your hand on these reviews, you will see Bonnet, constantly. In every issue there was an article about varietals and the way of cultivation by Bonnet. He was a continuous correspondent. So that's the way it went.

RT: Ponti, then, was not quite sufficient for their needs.

AT: Ponti was a good, practical winemaker.

RT: But they wanted someone who had broader--

AT: Of course. That's absolutely natural. But the conflict between the science and practical experience was an actual tragedy in every place in the wine world, in Europe as well as in America. Science was definitely placed in a very difficult situation in practical interpretation

*In 1975.

AT: of the science towards the industry, even in the old world, because winemaking was an art, or let's say, trade, inherited by centuries of several generations from each other, or empiric knowledge rather than theoretical research and theoretical knowledge. So therefore, every time in Europe in a commercial-industrial installation a scientific man started to say, "We should change this and this," there was immediate opposition from the practical field of empiric experience, who were opposed against something, and sometimes they were absolutely right by saying such a thing.

In America it was far more pronounced, because America still remained in very primitive, colonial, pioneering shape. This is a strange world, but this is the world of today.

Beaulieu and Georges de Latour: First Impressions

AT: The next morning at Beaulieu, after we finished our dinner very late, I got up very early--around 5:30, 6:00 in the morning. I went direct to the garden and located a little Italian gardener, Louie Rovelli, from Piemonte, who was working there as an assistant gardener in charge of the vegetable garden. His wife was serving as a maid--Margaret Rovelli. So I was very pleased to discover that Louis Rovelli speaks very fluently French.

RT: How do you spell his name?

AT: [spells it out] Luigi Rovelli. So I discovered this man fluently speaking French. It was such a tremendous relaxation for me. Around 7:30, they served me breakfast, American breakfast, with the half a grapefruit, and it was kind of foreign to me because it was the first time I put my spoon in the grapefruit. It was a completely unknown food to me. Since then, for forty years, I have been eating the grapefruit every morning. It sounds very strange.

Then, precisely at 8:30, there was a pickup truck, Model T Ford, stopped in front of the kitchen, and this gentleman of middle age--very probably middle fifties--coming into the kitchen and coming into the dining room, and in a very good French, introduced himself as Mr. Jean Ponti, superintendent of Beaulieu Vineyard. He said, "Well, Mr. Tchelistcheff, I am pleased to meet you and have a long conversation. Would you like to have a cup of coffee with me?" And he said, "Now, the first thing, Mr. de Latour asked me to show you the vineyards."

So I jumped into the car. And the strange thing--being of European origin, please remember, we were students right there in the experimental station, young scientific men, and there was no way for us to get out

AT: of hard collar and smock. There was an official rule that student can't go to college without a necktie, and absolutely a compulsory necessity to have a necktie.

RT: You wore a necktie and a white laboratory jacket?

AT: Oh yes. A long one, yes. It's a compulsory necessity. So when I came into the country, being an enologist in charge, of course I was already in the morning in necktie. Everybody was because Mr. de Latour was. There was no such a thing as the open things [shirts] then. American liberalism was not going so far there.

So I jump in that little pickup truck, and we start to cover the vineyards, and I asked several questions. I was amazed with their way of cultivation, with their way of training the vineyards. I was not able to recognize even the morphology of the vines, because the Cabernet was about triple, quadruple volume as individual vines, against the Cabernets in the Bordeaux. You see, we planted four to six thousand vines per hectare, and they planted 1,200 per hectare. So all the spacing, all the method of cultivation, everything was absolutely foreign to me in the modern planting.

Then we came in on the platform of the Beaulieu Vineyard, which was entirely different than it is now. It was a wooden platform, built for loading the cars, rolling the barrels. In Rutherford then, of course, everybody was around to see the new chemist coming from France, all the employees and all the young ladies working, and secretaries, all the workers--they were looking at this new bird that's coming from the old world to guide the Beaulieu Vineyard. As I went by with Mr. Ponti, introduced to everyone, I was amazed to see the primitiveness of this operation, as the first actual visit to Beaulieu, to such an obsolete system of winemaking, without any sign of scientific-industrial interpretation. I was just shocked.

Then we went to a little tiny laboratory, close to the office. The laboratory was about a quarter of this room in length.

RT: Small laboratory.

AT: Right. I was really shocked. It was a little tiny laboratory. They said, "Well, this is your home. There is where you are going to live, and there is where you are going to direct from. What's available there, it's all that we have, and you have to do your best."

The first thing, I talked to Mr. Ponti, of course, and I said, "Now, I've got to have a complete inventory of wines, and I have to have complete samples, and before that I will run the chemical and microbiological analysis and see what is there," and so on and so forth. Then, of course, it took me about two or three weeks for the physical inventory, and then I discovered all the problems.

RT: Let me stop you, if I may, and get another tape.

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AT: I think I told you about how it happened that de Latour was in Napa Valley.

RT: No. You said he had studied chemistry in France.

AT: Yes, he studied chemistry. He actually graduated from École Centrale. École Centrale is one of the highest caliber technical schools of France. Even now, it's very hard. It's a concours nationale. It's almost impossible, unless you have really good brains and tremendous training.

By the way, he was actually graduated from the Jesuit school, so he had a fantastic training in the classical literature and in Latin and Greek. He was a very brilliant man. I mean high intellect, cultured. He graduated from the lycée--they call it lycée. It was a preparatory school to the college, because junior college did not exist. As you know, the high schools of France are entirely different than the high schools of America. So he graduated from the school and then permitted himself to apply to three highest institutions in education. There was École Centrale, École Polytechnique, and Institute National Agronomy. The basic function of these best schools was training the administrators of the French government. So he graduated from École Centrale.

He came back home. He was originally from Perigord, but his mother had vineyards, and he was only one son. His father passed away very early in his life. When he came back, it was during [the] pyhlloxera period. Phylloxera was still a very active factor in the industry. So he decided to go to the New World and look for the possibilities in the New World.

As my recollection--see, I am speaking about the recollections. As a matter of fact, recollections are directly of the conversations with Georges de Latour that I still keep in my memory. As a matter of fact, Hélène de Pins, being a daughter of Georges de Latour, does not remember these things at all. She has never been exposed to these things, for one single reason, because (strange thing) business problems, business discussions, financial problems, never were discussed between the adults in the presence of the children. It was well-established--it was not a variation. It's a part of European morals. Money was something not properly discussed with children. Money was something very primitive and, let's say, very dirty. To discuss the problem of financial success or defeats, or anything that was connected with money, was not proper in European families.

As a matter of fact, I myself, who was so close to my father, never was acquainted with the financial problems of our family, neither with the problems of the past, their relationship between financial

AT: interests in our own family, between the properties that the family owned. I never was acquainted with the problem of the salaries of my father, and that was exactly the same all over Europe. So therefore, it's absolutely natural that children knew very little about them, and colleagues in the profession knew far more about them than children.

So Georges de Latour came here. He brought two or three thousand of Napoleons d'or. It's in gold, French francs. He was immediately surrounded by the French colony in San Francisco, of course, as a new-comer. The gold rush was still on, and they organized a gold rush expedition to Nevada and he came back the next six or seven months without anything, and he started to look for a job.

Being a chemist and being of French origin with such high educational credentials, he located a job as organic chemist in Franco-American cream of tartar association. It was a big business then. The central manufacturing plant of this Franco-American Cream of Tartar Association, or American Cream of Tartar Association,* was in Healdsburg, in Sonoma County.

Then, as a technician, he was in charge not only of the production or manufacturing of tartaric acid and baking powder, but also in charge of purchasing all raw material, which was nothing else but double cream of tartar argol, which is precipitated in wooden [wine] vats on the [interior] surface. In the old days chemical process of elimination was unknown. Argol, as a raw material, presented great value as a by-product in the winemaking, and the workers, every third or fourth year, climbed into the big redwood tanks on ladders, with a little hatchet, and hatched these big pieces of argol--just beautiful crystals of argol. They are really beautiful, because they are just like a stalactite. They are just crystallization inside of the storage tanks. Then this raw material was stored in sacks.** I remember this thing. It was still continuously going in my days when I came to America. Then in the late fall, when the job was finished and your wines were coming to the first tank, it was all sold in the bulk for the production of tartaric acid.

Today it's not existing for one single reason, because tartaric acid produced in Argentina and Chile or South Africa is coming much cheaper than our own manufacturing for such a raw material. It's all going to the gutters, you know. It's not existing any more, and that's a dead industry.

*American Cream Tartar Company

**See also page 159.

AT: So he was traveling and covering all this territory--horse and buggy--and stopping at all these wineries in Mendocino, Sonoma, and Napa. Please remember that the image of wineries then was entirely different than the image of today. When we are saying that we have eighty bonded wineries today in the Napa Valley, we had almost exactly the same number of wineries, but they were all small, because the basic production of wine was concentrated in the families with their own very primitive process of winemaking, and they were selling these raw materials [wines] to the big manufacturing, franchise bottling, that were in Cleveland, Chicago, in New York, etc. Wine was shipped then in the bulk to franchised bottling operations, all over the United States. So therefore there was a tremendous amount of small wineries, and that's where the argol was coming. Beaulieu was then not existing yet.

But the dream of his, being a viticulturist and chemist, by tradition he wants to establish himself. By the late nineties--I think in 1897--in this province [Napa County] he finally located a spot where Beaulieu is today, which was planted partially in prune orchards and partially in the vineyards already. He bought this estate for a very little amount of money, such as \$3,000--I think 120 acres with some farm buildings and a little estate house and a little winery. That was the beginning of the de Latour career.

Then, of course, the winery was not even installed to produce any wines. So the first product of Beaulieu was a lees wine. He used to buy lees from the wineries, and he leased the Moffitt property in Rutherford, where is today the beautiful chateau, and he manufactured there the first lees wine, a very poor wine, which he used to sell for a very reasonable price, just as a common vin ordinaire, and then gradually started to build his own winery at the estate, which burned--not existing any more--and then as Prohibition went in, that was the time of prosperity of Georges de Latour. He became a well-known authority in the production of sacramental wine, because in Napa County alone only Beringer Brothers and Beaulieu had the permit to produce sacramental wine, and Livermore Valley there was only Concannon in the production. In the central [part of the state], of course, Novitiate of Los Gatos, as well as Christian Brothers, they were just growing, young organizations.

As you remember very well, before the Prohibition law went, there was a date of free liquidation of inventories granted by the federal government. So during this period of liquidation, the cost of table wines from fifteen cents a gallon went to \$2.50, \$3.00 a gallon. Of course, the sweet wines and brandy went to a dramatic price, and during liquidation all the wineries accumulated a tremendous amount of sales in dollars in the process of liquidation alone.

As a matter of fact, I'm going to tell you a very interesting story that I heard from Mr. Ponti, who was then already a superintendent at Beaulieu. That was before Prohibition--a long time ago. He said it

AT: happens to be that our office was existing in San Francisco, but you see, there was a ferry. There was no Golden Gate Bridge. There was a ferry, and our communication was all by telephone with the office. So Mr. de Latour was at Beaulieu, and there was two days left of this period of liquidation, and he got the last order, coming by phone from Chicago, ordering a great amount of barrel wines to be shipped immediately, at once, to Chicago. But you see, in those days, every individual case and every individual barrel used to have federal tax stamps. Now it's not existing any more. The tax stamps used to be purchased from the federal alcohol bureau in San Francisco. As they called, the man went to the bureau, but the bureau was closed, and what amount of stamps that he [de Latour] had he missed bringing because there was no ferry going any more. So they missed the last tremendous order to make, very probably, \$100,000 that particular day. Just for one single reason, because there was not sufficient time, and the ferry was not going, and the office was closed, that they missed that transaction. In those days this transaction amounts to \$1 million today.

So that's the way de Latour--actually, being lucky, and being a Jesuit--put himself in the position to be selected by the Archbishop of San Francisco, the Archbishop of Los Angeles, the Archbishop of New York, to have a so-called bulla, or permit, to produce sacramental wine at his own winery. When the rest of the wineries, except the Beringers, were dying in Napa Valley, or all over the state, Beaulieu continuously was growing up and up. He continuously expanded his planting. So Prohibition was the root of the prosperity of de Latour's family.

RT: Did they make principally sweet wines then?

AT: No, some were dry. Please remember, the priests bought also claret. It's altar wine, and altar wine sold as white wine and dry red wine, also. So even the Cabernet was an altar wine, and Pinot noir was an altar wine, and Riesling was an altar wine, and Moselle, but you got to remember that in these particular days, during the Prohibition, they created a false image of themselves, because God knows how many European [wine] types we had then, and how many European names we were using in the United States.

RT: Yes, I was about to say, what did they put in their claret?

AT: Claret was anything that was red, of only cheapest price, and the vineyards were very poor then. In California, Tannat, Carignane, Alicante Bouschet, Grand noir, Black Muscat, Palomino, Suavignon vert. Very poor whites--Green Hungarian, Ugni blanc, Burger. All the very poor whites were planted. Very productive varieties.

AT: As a matter of fact, I must say--willingly or unwillingly, to a certain degree, I don't want to accuse de Latour, but I have to say--that de Latour, during the Prohibition, being in the wine business, he was always in the business of importation of the root stocks, of the plants from Europe. The quarantine, as such a thing as is existing today, did not exist. All boundaries were open. In those days, the market was open. Competition, bid and offer and demand, that's the only law that existed.

So he was importing all these during Prohibition. There was still an existing market and prosperity in the grape growing, as you remember, because the individual Italian, German, French, Spanish, Austrian, Hungarian families, they started to make their own wine, and it was permitted during Prohibition for home use wine, and actually, speculation was going between the consumer and the homemade wines.* Homemade wines became underground wines, distributed in the cafes and restaurants, and partially, sacramental wines became exactly the same way, because as Beaulieu was granted the permit to produce sacramental wine, Beaulieu was granted also to produce the kosher wine. There was a rabbi assigned to Beaulieu who lived there, to produce the kosher wines. The rabbi himself was in charge of transferring this wine with this little Model T pickup Ford to his own accounts. But the rabbi, being a businessman, the first stop was on the corner of Rutherford, and rolled one barrel into the cafe of Rutherford.

RT: Ah! [laughs]

AT: That's right. So this was the whole strange situation. That was the tragedy of Prohibition, of course. But that's the way Beaulieu operated. When I came in in 1938, believe me or not, all our case good business** was very limited, very limited. As a matter of fact, in 1937 was the first contract that then vice president and general manager of Beaulieu, Nino Fabrini, signed with Park & Tilford. That was the first exposure of Beaulieu Vineyard in the interstate business to a large distribution in the eastern states.

Meanwhile, Georges de Latour has his own distributor in altar wine in New York, BV Distributing Co., Hammer in Cleveland, owned by the Hammer family, and Rechee in Chicago, etc., you see. That was altar wine distribution. But San Francisco and Los Angeles, they had been consuming maybe altogether only three thousand cases a year, commercial wines.

*See also page 59 for further discussion of Prohibition period growing of "shipping grapes" for home winemaking.

**That is, sales of wine for other than liturgical use.

California Wines of the Late 1930s

AT: Most wines of California, in those days, were products acceptable to winos or European families of a low social status, with a low density in their pocketbook. To sell your California wine, even though fine quality, to a fine quality consumer client, there was no way. We were so smeared by Prohibition and by our own misbehavior during the Prohibition period. It was a tragedy to see the average California wines then. This tragedy, by the way, to a certain degree I discovered at Beaulieu when I came.

RT: Had they made angelica?

AT: Yes. Angelica and white port were two selected products. Then, we have a white port, we have a tawny port, we have ruby port, all at once. We have a Malvasia, we have a Madeira, we have a Tokay, we have a cream sherry, we have a pale dry sherry, we have a sweet sherry, we have a dry sherry--we had everything. God, it was just unbelievable! Some of them were already commercial, some of them altar wine. Commercial should have a higher degree in alcohol. It was just a tragedy. In other words, as I said to Mr. de Latour, and as he said to me, "I have fine quality table wines that I am interested in. The rest is only vin de cuisine." It's chemical conceptions.

RT: Had he got a lot of grapes then from the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley for those sweet wines?

AT: Basically, it was all Muscats, all Palominos. They were bought direct in the San Joaquin Valley. They were trucked in the semi trucks, and delivered usually during the night for one single reason: Beaulieu crushed a great amount of grapes, not only their own but from the local growers. So the day was a long crushing, and we ended up the local grapes by ten o'clock in the evening, and from ten o'clock till six o'clock, we crushed the big semis from the south.

This was a big business, because please remember we were supplying not only sacramental wines, but we were supplying industrial wines. You never heard about it? Well, that's something very interesting. The tobacco industry was buying sweet wines for maceration of tobacco. So the Chesterfield, Lucky Strike, etc., etc.--big tobacco corporations--were buying a tremendous amount of old Muscat and angelica, to macerate tobacco. Now, all the aromatic derivatives that you have in this junk that I smoke, it's derivatives of aromatic substances extracted from oil products. Before, it was natural, you see. As the perfumes today are scented with perfume from oil derivatives basically, not from the organic flowers.

AT: Then, carloads of sweet wines were shipped. It was a very prosperous business. So we were producing then at Beaulieu almost two million gallons of wine with microscopic engineering. It was very primitive.

Now everything was foreign to me. Look, I, a European, all of a sudden was put in that messy, industrial situation of America. Now, you ask me my first reaction. First reaction, I was aggressively opposed about everything they had been doing, for one single reason, for me, I was a product of appellation of origin. It happens to be that in 1935, 1936, when I was a young man of research, France started to cure its own sins by establishing the code of appellation of origin. I was a great believer that everything in the winemaking, in the wine industry and wine philosophy and wine morals, is directly connected with the ecology.

Ecology as a word was known to us in Europe, but it was an absolutely foreign word here. Ecology was known for centuries as a base structure of anything in agriculture. I believed that you can't do this thing as they had been doing and still are doing in California, with a block of Cabernet and the next block is Johannisberg Riesling and the next block is Pinot Chardonnay and the next block a Franken Riesling, and so on and so forth. In other words, concentration of all geographical appellation of Europe in one single section such as Napa Valley.

Now, it's very interesting. You are going to ask why they did it. I immediately asked why, what for, and I asked Mr. de Latour, "What for you did such a thing? How could it be?" Because Marquis de Pins himself, or rather a new generation, was already opposed against such a thing. Wentes, who had been specializing in white wines then, never touched red wines. De Pins was always thinking that Beaulieu should concentrate their efforts in the best red wines that can be produced--only. Maybe one or two. Instead, to have a line of twenty-eight products commercially available and double the amount, commercial wine and altar wine, and multiplied by the factor of vintages that you have in the winery, imagine the responsibility of winemaker or technologist-enologist in charge of this thing.

So I was opposed against this thing tremendously, and I was opposed against all this selection of wines and waste of time with all these wines outside of one single sweet wine that I agreed, and I still defend, of Napa Valley. That's Muscat de Canelli, Muscat de Frontignan, which was a product de Latour introduced in Napa Valley, and it still remains as one of the more outstanding sweet wines produced in the valley.

Now we go and say, "What were the requirements?" Requirements were dictated by the physical status, or physical inventory. As I said, I spent several months really thinking about what can be done with this physical inventory, and meanwhile I have a complete image of every wine, and I discovered that, let's say, fifty percent, at least, of the wines

AT: stored at Beaulieu Vineyard--table wines--they were definitely infected by the acetobacter, and they had their volatile acidity approaching the vinegar status rather than wine. Therefore, lack of controlled sanitation, lack of understanding of the problem, was visible to me and was a big problem.

There were several pathological fermentations of a lactic origin that I discovered there, which was denied officially by Mademoiselle Porchet from Geneva. But I discovered then, by looking microscopically through the wine, that the pathology and microbiology are exactly the same as in Europe. They have exactly the same disease as European wines, you see, but they had been neglected. So I made my resume to Mr. de Latour and Madame de Latour, and I was granted the permission to proceed with the reforms.

RT: You said originally that he had a problem.

AT: Yes.

RT: What of this did he conceive as a problem?

AT: The return of the wines from the market.* See, that was the beginning. Look, 1936, 1937, they just managed to start and promote the commercial wines shipped in a bottle. Please remember, the American consumer then was without any understanding of wine. The American consumer was consuming the beverages clear and transparent, right? So the first thing I remember is they go to liquor stores and wine shops--wine shops did not exist, liquor stores--or groceries or drugstores. Drugstores were selling wines and liquor. The first thing the client will do is turn the bottle upside down and see if the wine is transparent. If there is a sediment, return it to the winery--even the natural sediment, of the natural biological precipitation, oxidative origin.

Okay, so I made my report and I said, "Mr. de Latour, fifty percent of your inventory is eligible for sales as a distilling material. To me, they are not commercial." It was a tragedy to all of us. Several sweet wines, they have already also a high amount of volatile acidity.

Meanwhile, Mr. de Latour produced a tremendous inventory of the port altar wine and angelica altar wine, with the idea to shift this wine of a lower degree [of alcohol] to the new market of Canada, because Canada federal laws required lower alcohol than American law. Marquis de Pins went there with the idea of selling, came back with an empty pocket, without any orders. Canada was dominated by the French wine industry, as it is even now. We are slowly moving to Canada.

We had that huge inventory of a low alcohol wine which was going through all kinds of problems. So we started to liquidate this inventory in bulk, selling it to the big houses such as Roma Wine Company. You never hear about Roma Wine Company?

*See also page 62.

RT: Yes, I was going to ask you about Roma.

AT: "Aroma di Roma;" that's very fancy advertising all over the San Francisco--

RT: It was the biggest winemaker in California then.

AT: That's right. "Aroma di Roma." [laughs] That's right. But you know, you have to be a great believer in some laws that are not directed by us, and it happens to be that in 1939 we were already choked with a tremendous surplus of inventory in the industry. By this time, Wine Institute was already a functional organization, under the brilliant management of Leon Adams, and under the administrative management of Mr. [Harry] Caddow, who was an Irishman who became an alcoholic. I don't think that you even heard about Mr. Caddow.

Harry Caddow was the first president* of the Wine Institute. The reason that the Wine Institute selected Mr. Caddow, Mr. Caddow was a politician and had a possibility to lobby in Sacramento, and lobby partially in Washington, D.C. That was the old organization.

The surplus was unbelievable, because please remember, wine varietals represent only a little microscopical section in the wine industry of California. The basic raw material for production of wines in the San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento Valley was still table grapes such as Thompson Seedless and Flame Tokay. The productivity of this acreage was unbelievable, and the dry raisins were passing through a very critical period of readjustment. There was a tremendous amount of surplus of white inventory and red inventory in sweet wines--spoiled inventories--and the market was stubbornly not accepting the California wine, and the Second [World] War had not touched us as yet to the critical situation of cutting our European deliveries to America. So therefore, in 1939--that's the Munich Agreement, Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler and the time of Hindenburg and crazy political days. The Sudeten conflict in Czechoslovakia, this boiling thing--it already started in 1938, occupation of Sudetenland, and the world was boiling. But we were still neutral, and we were still receiving the European wine, and everything was going on.

So the price of grapes, in that particular time in Napa Valley, went to \$10-\$15 a ton. The price of table wine, it's about ten cents, twelve cents a gallon. There were only six thousand acres in the Napa Valley vineyards, and the rest was all prune orchard. Prunes were facing exactly the same situation. We were overcropping and over-producing. Prunes went under a marketing order and they never were harvested. They were left in the field.

*His title was Manager. At that time presidents of the organization were wine industry members.

AT: Finally, the initiative of the Wine Institute and the alarm by the grape industry created the compulsory prorate, compulsory distillation.* It was a life-saver for André Tchelistcheff at Beaulieu, because I liquidated all this wine of the old inventory and sent it to distilling.

RT: Oh, you went into that prorate program.

AT: I cleaned the inventory of Beaulieu, and the wine went to industrial proof, or high proof for storage. It happens to be that Beringer had a functional distillery in St. Helena, and Charles Beringer was then president of the Beringer organization [Beringer Brothers], and the vice president in charge was Fred Abruzzini. Fred Abruzzini had been buying all this wine from the local industry, but what was the local industry then? Inglenook, Beringer, Beaulieu--three big wineries only. Only three big wineries, and they were small wineries. There was no Louis Martini then,** there was no Charles Krug. There was nobody else. And Salmina and Larkmead.*** There were four there. They were actually the guidelines of the quality--Salmina-Larkmead Vineyard. Greystone was in the critical stage in dormancy, in all kinds of speculative transactions.

The rest were all small wineries. We shipped everything. All this junk went out. I think we sold about 300,000 gallons for distillation purposes. Actually, prorate was calling for actual prorating of the production of 1939. So therefore, anything that was produced from the grapes of 1939 in Napa could be selected, and the young wines of the season, for distillation. I think prorate, in 1939, was a general boon, not only for Beaulieu but for general status of the industry.

RT: Then you as a winery were credited with a certain amount of high proof, is that it?

AT: Then we were credited with a certain amount of high proof in the storages, in the federal warehouse, brandy warehouse. Then we were using them afterwards for years and years and years for fortification of our sweet dessert wines.

*See also Burke Critchfield, The California Wine Industry During the Depression, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1972, and other interviews in the California Wine Industry series.

**Louis M. Martini had begun making wine in the Napa Valley by then but was not in full production. See Louis M. Martini, Wine Making in the Napa Valley, Regional Oral History, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1973.

***Larkmead Vineyard was the successor to F. Salmina & Co.; its president was E. J. Salmina.

RT: You could either use it or sell it?

AT: Or sell it. That's right.

RT: Did you sell some of it?

AT: Oh, yes. We sold quite a bit. Far more than we used. Because, you see, the technological tragedy was right from beginning to the end. It happens to be that the high proof was stored in the steel drums--stainless steel was unknown--and rusted containers. So the brandy became saturated with the iron salts. The drums of today, in stainless steel, did not exist, and there was no way to store the brandy. There was no cooperage to store the brandy to avoid evaporation. So you got to have steel tanks. Steel tanks did not exist then--even steel tanks, not only stainless steel. Unknown. It was stored in the black iron drums--rust.

RT: So that went for industrial use?

AT: That was for industrial use. Somebody tried to buy them as high proof, but then there was a tragedy in technology. So I used my brush, as in the new broom sweeping clean. I worked hard--sleepless nights, tremendous responsibility.

Then several other factors bothered me tremendously, technologically, and if I had to go step by step, I would have to lecture you for a month: what I discovered in the wineries and what was the status of the industry. In those days, everything was used very liberally--sulfur, basically. The expression was then, between the French and the Italian winemakers, or wineworkers, "Let's carbide the wine with sulfur. Sulfur compounds, such as a sodium or potassium metabisulfite were used in the buckets, without a dilution. When the superintendent, Mr. Ponti, said to the man in charge--Mr. Harry Tollini--of winemaking in the fermenting room, "Put one bucket of sulfur right there," the man would say, "Oh, one bucket. That's not sufficient. I think it's too small. Let's dump in two." [laughter] You see, that's the way the operation was going. So I had to normalize everything, put everything in a normal shape. And the most interesting thing, everything was secrecy--politics of closed doors. I am going to explain to you two episodes.*

RT: Let me change the tape here.

*I.e.: two discussions of the use of sulphur. See pages 63-64 and 66.

European and American Points of View

[Interview 3: April 5, 1979]##

AR: [Discussing his early life and move to America] Millions of people have been exposed to the same mislocations parallel to me.

RT: Well, not everyone moved through one area to another and to still another.

AT: I guess so, yes.

RT: I'm particularly interested in your perspective. You brought a mature perspective, and an informed perspective, to this country at a time when it was very interesting.

AT: Yes. Of course, that was a critical time. It was a renaissance of the industry. I mean, the country alone just barely started to recover from the damage done by the Prohibition. Everything was entirely different. Everything here was entirely new and not corresponding--neither for my thinking or feelings. See, this specific reaction that I am carrying, just for one single reason, because I am a product of the French viticultural science, and sometime even I today think, "Maybe I was wrong. Maybe my classical approach, genetically set in the classical ground of France, with a history of thousands and thousands of years, since the Roman days of cultivation of grape vine which was regulated by very strict empiric experiments and tradition, carried from one generation to another--but new continents are following entirely different orientation in the same area."

RT: Were you thinking, for instance, of such genetic research as H.P. Olmo's?

AT: That's right, and everything that we are doing entirely differently. But we are not alone, you see. We are not alone, because South Africa, Australia, now to a certain degree even the South America, and the Nordic countries, such as Soviet Union, they have been following the same pattern as we are following in America. We disregarded the classical principles of, let's say, modern ecology. We are still thinking that we are far more powerful than the Mother Nature. Well, we did. We proved that the day before yesterday, a few days ago, when we started to suffer from the creation of our own.

RT: Yes, the Three Mile Island nuclear accident.

AT: The creation of the energy.

RT: However--I'm trying to think of other crops--for instance, haven't wheat varieties been developed and--

AT: Well, look. Again, there is a classical approach to every problem, I think as far as the agriculture industry is concerned, or agricultural technology is concerned. We are changing so many patterns from the original patterns, and I think that it's a process also directly connected with the evolution of our palate and the evolution of our way of living, adjusting entirely new physiological, nutritional norms. And physically we are changing too, ourselves, in the same process of evolution. We are adjusting to the new economical, physical conditions of living.

There were so many things discovered during the last hundred years, they changed completely the cycle of human life. From the days of Louis Pasteur, for instance--look what Louis Pasteur brought and gave to humanity. Professor [Casimir] Funk, with the discovery of vitamins. The first vitamins--A, B, C, D--absolutely unknown factors to the world. The discovery of vitamins brought an entirely new aspect to the world, a new application of our human energy, right?

RT: Yes.

AT: So it's the same thing that happened in our industry. But let me explain my feelings. Now, as I said before, I am a product, basically, of European agricultural science, and European agricultural science, specifically in application to the science in the field of viticulture, or enology, has been continuously exposed to empiric tradition, accumulated within the industry, as one of the most conservative industries for centuries and centuries since Roman days. So therefore, despite the fact that they [Europeans] are as progressive in the field of research and technology, the empiric experience, by centuries, has been forcing them to maintain the base of their originality of thinking, directly connected with the soil's general ecology, the most natural elements of mother nature. Here we are putting science ahead of it, and we are saying, "Yes, soil is very important as a nutritional element, and climate's very important, of course, but we can change." We are paying far more attention to managerial ecology than to the ecology given to us by mother nature. We are trying to manage the ecology given to us by the good Lord, in creation. That's a very important factor, by the way. I am not disregarding the managerial ecology, but we are paying far more attention to managerial ecology than to the basic factors, which are nothing else but the foundation to a managerial ecology.

So as a product of European thinking, and Europe was right in the process of legalization of this ecology into the legal forms of appellation of origin, laws of appellation--it happens to be that in the early thirties, when I was already a grown up man, appellation of origin was the slogan of the European wine industry. For one single reason, because the liberalization of the commercial trend and the cataclysmic reaction of the first war created a temptation to the commercialism in a far more excessive form than, let's say, in the middle centuries or in 17th or

AT: 18th centuries. The standards of living started to change, and people started to reapply the rules of multiplication without limitation, to expand this channel of supply without any legal guarantee of quality. That's what happened, actually, to the French wine industry after the end of the First World War. There was a tremendous prosperity, remember? Prosperity after the war. I mean it was just an unbelievable reconstruction of the world--new science, new horizons, economical life, financial life. I mean, shortening of the territories, beginning of aviation. The boundaries were expanded. Of course, the Russians--and so on and so forth.

Actually, the French government as well as the Italian government under the control and dictatorship of Benito Mussolini, they started to think that to protect the national reputation of the national product, there is a necessity to legalize the product, or the structure of building this product.

Now, do you remember the statement of Adolf Hitler after the occupation of Paris? There was one declaration of his, in one of his speeches. He said, "We are going to control the European continent, and we are going to move the heavy industry from France to Germany, and we are going to allow the French people to express their better ability in the field of making wines, perfumes, and leading the women's fashions to the world."

So, "we'll give them a chance to be French, rather than to be Franco-German." In other words, I'm not going to permit them industrialization, but I'll let them give us the pleasures of life in wines, [laughter] as well in the perfumes and in the ladies' fashion. So you see, this is a very simple, primitive interpretation of what I am trying to say.

Therefore, starting early in the thirties, the French government applied really dictatorial power, their own, by saying, "Appellation of origin is going to go back to the committee of appellation of origin, where the grape grower, winemaker, and representatives of professional organizations (such as county government, state government and federal government) will re-discuss all these boundaries." Since then, they created the Codex of Appellation of Origin.

The most interesting thing is that the Codex of Appellation of Origin (which is very severely criticized today) became also continuously exposed to several practical, emotional let's say, or logical amendments. The Codex changed with the change of economy and the change of the position of France, specifically in the Common Market. So that's why the criticism has come all along. In other words, it's not a static norm, created for centuries to follow, but a static norm that is liberalized now as a result of economical pressure, to something that really is hard to understand.

AT: So let's say I will cover just the basic principles of appellation of origin. Regional wines, with appellation of origin, do not have only political boundaries, but they have geographical boundaries. So therefore, when the section of France was divided in several appellations regionally, the most important factor in this appellation was the limitation by counties and sub-microclimates and sub-geological positions of several small units which have appellation of origin. So let's say Bordeaux--Bordeaux is a region. It's one of the largest regions of France in the production of so-called not fine, but good wines of France. Within the appellation of Bordeaux there are several legal specifications.

You can have appellation of Bordeaux for a very common wine produced in Bordeaux within the specific boundaries. You can have Bordeaux in different sections--St. Emilion and Médoc, etc.--and you can have a legal appellation such as châteaux, and there are four thousand registered châteaux in the appellation of origin of France.

Now, basically the idea was to control the quality, and the quality control was very strict. Since the châteaux had been divided into the first growth, second growth, third growth, sixth growth, seventh growth, there are norms of production which set the quality; the sophistication is known.

We are right now [in the United States] in the process of creating our own geographical appellation of origin. What we have achieved now, between the federal authorities, administrative authorities and the vintners, the Wine Institute, and grape growers, the Association of Grape Growers of California*--it is a very primitive achievement.

For instance, we accepted in Napa Valley, geographical appellation which is directly connected with the watershed of Napa Valley. Well, it's meaningless unless there is some other sophistication, because what of the difference between the vineyards within the same appellation of origin, with the variety of Cabernet producing seven tons per acre or eight tons per acre and the fine Cabernet that's producing only one half ton per acre? In other words, what we are achieving right now, we are just trying to produce similar false norms as they produced years ago in France, without improving them through specifics. But this is a factor that I don't think that we will be able to solve here within the next hundred years, because we hate any federal, state, or county regulation. We hate any additional controls. We are strictly individuals. We are accepting controls by corporations, and there are also very strict controls by corporations, but we do not accept federal controls in production in our particular field, specifically because that's strictly an individual field.

*California Association of Wine Grape Growers

AT: Now, in basic agriculture, production of wheat and corn, as you know, they accept the bank, and they accept the norms and regulations, but we are a little too artistic, we are a little too small, and we are a little too sensitive to accept such a norm.

But I revolted, when I came here, against this liberalism of interpretation of the law of ecology. It was absolutely strange for me to see Napa Valley planted with the varietals from Burgundy, from the Bordeaux, from the Rhine, from the Moselle, from Spain, and from Portugal. I just, even now, can't understand this thing. So therefore, I have been constantly pioneering readjustment within the laws of ecology, and being a pioneer in the Napa Valley and leading the group of youth and some very intellectual people in the industry. We started to shift and uproot several vineyards and move them to an entirely different section of Napa Valley. I am dividing, in my own mind, Napa Valley in sixteen different appellations.* But officially, we have only one appellation of Napa Valley now.

This is the conflict of my own, and I think I am going to carry this conflict within my mind to the rest of my days, because I don't see any possible reforms in the situation. The most tragic thing to me, it's not to see this interplanting as sins of the past, you see, there was a good reason. There was a very strong reason to do such a thing, by the pioneers.

After all, pioneers came here, let's say, a hundred years ago, a hundred fifty years ago, and they located, really, paradise on the earth. They located, really, paradise. I mean the Frenchmen or the Spaniards or Italian or German viticulturists, grape growers, came here, and they located paradise--beautiful rainfall, heavy soil, moderate winters, a beautiful situation. So they thought, "As long as this is paradise on the earth, I can permit myself to do anything." Plus, America was not a wine drinking nation at all. So therefore, the distributor, the marketing agent, never could accept the ideal of fine quality production such as is acceptable today. In other words, if I as a newcomer would say, "I am going to make one type of wine, or two types of wine," I could not because I remember very well the days when there was a necessity to have everything in the line to have a distributor. That is, a distributor would demand that a winery provide him with many types of wines or he would not take any. So those sins are the compulsory sins of the past.

But the newcomers today, rather than to clarify the situation completely, due to the financial, economical pressures of the market, are following the same pattern. The wineries that start with one or two, within the next four or five years start to create five or six, or even create a second line of products. So you see, this is an incurable situation.

*See also page 206.

AT: Now Mr. Francis Gould said, "What we need here, to purify the quality of California, we need the Rothschilds, Rockefellers in the industry." And I think we, to a certain degree, already have it--a certain infiltration of Rothschilds and Rockefellers, but they are also very practical people. Besides that, we have a heavy infiltration of the corporate business such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Heublein, National Distillers, etcetera. Their interests, the commercial aspects, definitely are not corresponding to the dreams of fine quality winemaking. So this is tragedy. It's a sore point in my feelings, and that sort point, by the way, to a certain degree forced me to take a position of free-lance consultant, when I can publicly open my mouth and say what I think about the California wine industry, you see.

Because before, when I was working for a private company, and then the corporation, I never would have a chance to have an interview like this today with you, unless I would have a p.r. man of the corporation sitting right here and controlling my answer, or saying, "Well, this we are not going to discuss." That's right.

Now, I jumped very probably out my program--

RT: Things that you've said bring up a lot of questions. One, of course, is that historically, even before the period you're speaking of, California was so heavily planted in Mission grapes that there was a big effort to bring in everything, try anything, from Europe. So I suppose this is partly the residue of that.

AT: Partially. Please remember that--well, I am going to quote de Latour. De Latour, before he established his reputation as a vintner, de Latour was importing a selection of rootstock from Europe, and he was sending, during the Prohibition, the poorest variety to the grower, who required these varieties to ship the raw material to the central market. Those were Prohibition days. So therefore, the Grand noir and Alicante Bouschet, Aramon, were planted because they were producing a very solid berry with a solid skin, supporting the transport from here in the carloads to New York, Chicago, Cleveland, etcetera. So there you are, you see.

RT: Another idea which seems not to have been entirely followed was the idea of concentrating upon one kind of wine and marketing with another that produced another kind, like Beaulieu and Wente.

AT: It broke down completely. The reason was lack of agreement between Herman Wente and Georges de Latour. The idea was excellent, and this was the orientation, but technology changed. Now technology, viticultural and enological science have changed to such a point that we don't need this thing any more. See, now we are going to cover a territory of forty years, which actually amounts to four hundred years. What we did in forty years, it can be accomplished normally in Europe in four or five

AT: centuries. See, that's what we did [strikes table for emphasis], and what was good then, it is not good any more. It would be a great error today to say, Louis Martini is going to produce only red wines in Napa Valley, and Wente Brothers are going to produce white wines in Livermore Valley, because the wines of today that are produced in the Livermore Valley in several cases are quite different than the white wines produced today with our knowledge in Napa Valley.

RT: It's partly cold fermentation?

AT: Yes, everything, and selection of varietals, etcetera.

RT: Selection of varietals, not development of varieties?

AT: No, no, it's selection. Everything is changed to the extreme. We don't have even the products of popularity as we used to have. Look, during the Prohibition, when we worked together, there was a claret, there was a burgundy, there was a barely-starting Cabernet, and Pinot noir was not even existing then. Basically there were three varieties and chianti--chianti as a generic term. Then there was a chablis and sauternes. What American people drunk then was chablis, Sauternes,* haut Moselle type, and three red wines, such as burgundy, claret, and chianti, period.

The varietal wines were unknown then, just barely started to grow in the little molecules, you know, in embryo in some fine quality wineries such as Inglenook, Schram's, Beaulieu, Beringer, etcetera. But they were really unknown here. It was the beginning of the orientation towards varietals. And the beginning remedy for this tragedy of the California wine industry was that Dr. Winkler and Dr. Amerine, with a tremendous amount of individual effort, without the machinery to proceed with this effort, solved it by pushing and repeating, constantly, "You have [slowly striking table for emphasis] to plant a better variety. You just got to pull your old vineyards. You just got to pull all the vineyards that are not corresponding to the climate, reputation, and possibilities of production of fine quality wines of California."

To a certain degree the problem was corrected, and to a certain degree it still remains uncorrected, because a great amount of wines are still produced from Flame Tokay and Thompson Seedless. They are still functionally physical elements of the industry and never should be. They should be assigned strictly as raisin or food product varieties. But you see, this is our lot. I mean, this is the whole thing.

If you would go into the depth of this problem, you got to go step by step, because all our regulations, all our legal interpretations of our functions of our living with wines and grapes have been dictated by ourselves, in the self defense against the physical structure of our industry that we inherited from the past.

*Spelled "Sauterne" in the United States.

AT: I remember the days and the meetings of the Wine Institute--almost fistfights when the people were defending the rights to use concentrate or sweet alcoholic wines for correction of maturity of the fruit. There was a tremendous conflict, because there was a tremendous surplus of cheap table grapes. The industry created their own laws and regulations, themselves, and sold them to the state and federal authorities. We created all these errors ourselves. Nobody pushed on us and said, "Sweet wines, dessert wines such as sherry, port, muscatel, should have a minimum degree of 19.5. We asked for 19.5 because we have this tremendous amount of high proof to use from raw materials such as Thompson Seedless. We created them.

Now, you see, we're liberating ourselves, and the minimum degree now is 17 already. You see how progress comes. This is the cycle of the elements--just a part. If you have to have a complete understanding, you should statistically, as a historian, go step by step, year by year, to understand this problem. I am just abhorring a weakness of this tragedy, and despite of my critical approach to everything I am still saying what we accomplished during forty years will put California industry on the competitive level of European industry. In other words, what we accomplished in [only] 150 years, disregarding the Prohibition, was accomplished there during hundreds and hundreds of years. But if you go step by step, there is so much to do yet.

RT: We've been interested in Italian wine laws, and you can see that many of them have roots in earlier ones, but many haven't. They're very strict.

AT: They're very strict now, and Germany's new laws, since 1970, are very strict. We should have very strict laws, and I think we eventually are going to have them, but the pocketbook, the tragedy of the green dollar, it's a tremendous obstacle in any reforming, because of economical factors, you see. I mean capital investments, or interest on the capital investment, long-range investments, and changing of marketing orientation within the market is very sensitive. See, we are not traditionalists in anything we are doing. So what is today very popular could be dramatically unpopular within the next five years.

RT: Our market is much more fickle than Europe's has been, is it not?

AT: That's right.

Winery Practices of the Late 1930s

RT: Well, back to 1938.

AT: Back to 1938.

RT: We've listened to the tape of the last interview, which is full of interesting things, and there were a few questions that I wanted to ask related to past things that you've said.

AT: Now, I am going to tell you--let me see. I am entering to the winery of Beaulieu Vineyard. I told you about the first day.

RT: But before that, you mentioned that when you had your initial meeting with Georges de Latour in Paris, and his son-in-law, that they discussed problems of the California wine industry and its viticulture. Do you remember just in general what those problems were that they felt were the pressing ones?

AT: Well, look, to start with, viticultural practice of 1938 already was not specifically corresponding with the viticultural practices of Europe, because you got to remember, the pioneering force in California basically has an Italian background. So the vineyards had been planted on the Italian way, without an understanding of difference of the climate--

RT: Did they feel that was a problem?

AT: That was a big problem. Then, in the wine technology, the catastrophe was uncurable actually, because the wine industry then was so behind European industry and technology.

RT: Just in general.

AT: In general technology. And I never even thought, knowing America as the most progressive technological empire, I never thought that one branch of agricultural industry, such as wine industry, can be so absolutely--negatively absolute in everything that was done in California. Blindly, primitively. Almost similar to that I saw several years ago in Israel, in some little clusters of Catholic monasteries. It was so primitive. That was the tragedy, and you see this tragedy was connected with what? The tremendous amount of returns of the wines from the market back to the winery. Carloads of wines came back to the winery to be dumped as not suitable beverages for human consumption, due to the lack of physical industrial, technological stability. There was a re-fermentation in the bottle, there was a breakdown of mineral salts in the bottle, wines mucky, muddy in the glass, and in the case of de Latour it was a tragedy because in 1937, first time in the history of Beaulieu, they signed a national contract of distribution with a big house, Park & Tilford in New York. Carloads of wine were shipped to the New York market with the tragic results in marketing.

Please remember, in the background of it was the very poor reputation of California wines as a product for wines. That was the white ports, sherries, ports, angelica, muscatels, that were consumed

AT: on the waterfront of San Francisco and New York by the lowest group of our society, by the winos. To rebuild this reputation, and to get to California high quality reputation wines, there was a necessity to really put something new into the industry. So that's why they selected me there to proceed with all these reforms. But reforms are unknown to me, because I still thought that they have a modern industry. I was blind when I signed the agreement with Mr. de Latour. I never thought that what I am going to see within the next three weeks in California would be just an unbelievable to me operation.

RT: You said that some of their wines were very fine and some of them were very poor. Was it just chance that had saved some of them?

AT: Well, of course you know even very primitive methods in small volume can produce a very fine quality.

RT: By chance.

AT: By chance, yes. By chance, by just accidental mutation. Some of the wines produced in the very, let's say, traditional way, when you are going for a limited production of fine quality wines that you are bottling, do not require so much technology as some volumetric production when you are increasing the number of wines, number of types. Please remember the rest of the wines were all moved to the franchised bottlers in the bulk. So therefore, the franchised bottler was taking care of the wines in the barrels or in tank cars that were shipped to the franchised bottlers. Then, when we started to bottle our own we faced the problems, specifically in white wines and the sweet wines. Not as much in the red wines.

So that when I came, then I started to realize what happened, why they have all these problems. Then I came directly and faced these technological problems. Not as much in the vineyards, although in the vineyard I also faced some practices that never were in France or in Europe then.

I will quote you one of the most primitive examples of absolutely criminal misbehavior in the application of sulfur in the vineyards. The sulfuring machines then were unknown in California. The sulfuring was done not even by the hand sulfuring units. Sublimate powder sulfur was packed in the burlap sacks, and thirty or forty men were going in the rows with the burlap sacks, shaking the burlap sacks.

RT: My word!

AT: Look, that's 1938! Nineteen thirty-eight, shaking the burlap sacks! As a result, there was no control of the sulfur volume, and there was a tremendous sulfur burn on the vineyards as a result of combination between the heat and the excessive sulfur. Vineyards, they were covered

AT: with sulfur, just covered with sulfur. So we introduced then the sulfuring machines, with normalization of sulfur--let's say from eight pounds per acre to twelve pounds per acre. Before, it was almost a pound per vine!*

RT: [laughs]

AT: That's right. So you see, this is a typical example. Burning. There was no control of the frost at all, and you know why? Economically, the industry was prosperous, and profits of the industry were much higher than they are today, but agriculture remained still, let's say, as a second economical factor. Raw material remained always a second economical factor. Today raw material is considered as the first economical factor in agricultural enterprise. So therefore, when I presented the problem of defense against the frost, they said, "That's a nuisance, because loss by frost gives us a chance to have a tax shelter against the very high profit that we have in the industry, and we have a balanced inventory. We are not suffering from the frost loss, but it will give us a tremendous shelter in the taxes." As today the shelters exist in different forms.

So eventually, finally, I convinced them to start the frost protection. I was the first who decided to proceed with frost protection, and I was the first who put the rubber tires in the vineyards and started to burn rubber tires as a frost protection.

Meanwhile, Mrs. de Latour, who was the president [of Beaulieu] and honorary member of the advisory committee of Bank of America in St. Helena, went to see the banker during the meeting of the board of directors, and Mr. [Paul] Alexander was the banker--he said, "Madame de Latour, I am going to tell you honestly, this young man that you have from France is going to put you into bankruptcy. You can't do this thing. It's too costly. You just cannot afford to do such a thing, to spend so much money in the frost protection. It will put you in the bankruptcy." [laughs]

So you see, this is the primitiveness. To me it was just primitive to the point of--God, I mean, in the old days in Russia, the orchards in the Ukraine were protected by the pile of manure that was burning in the orchards. There was a protection against the frost all over the world, in the very primitive forms. So this started another movement.

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AT: We underwent the engineering revolution. Right now we are in the process of undergoing scientific revolution. Before it was a machine. Today it's a new machine and new interpretation of the energy now available for us. So I think there is nothing specific in this thing.

*See also pages 53 and 66.

AT: Historically, it is very interesting, but there is nothing specific, because Europe moved to the same channel--except in technology, being the old industry, and already a huge industry, they were far more advanced than we are because we remained static and then we died during the Prohibition.

RT: What about the change in styles of wine? They talk about how, in earlier years in Europe, they made much more tannic wines because people did more physical work, and there was a physiological acceptance of higher tannin content in wine, and so forth. Has there been a shift in types of wines due to the fact that mechanization has decreased physical labor?

AT: In answer to your question directly, I will say this is the evolution of our palate, and if you will go to the history of the world wine industry, you will see that in the cycle of 500 years, for instance, Burgundian wines have been changing rapidly from one extreme to another. Remember, original Burgundy was a very light wine. Then the Burgundy with the next century became one of the heaviest type of wines. Then the Burgundy started to be a medium-body wine. In the Burgundy now we have a tendency to go back to much deeper wines. That's directly connected with you, me, and the consumer evolution of the palate and evolution of our diet. It's [strikes table for emphasis] an evolution of the diet that forces us to accept beverages in entirely new forms, and that's the reason that the food industry is continuously changing. Reforms are exceptions, because we are changing.

Now, of course, physically, even if you put ourselves and compare our present generation against the previous generation, and if you would take even physical measurements of our body, you'll be surprised how limited we are in the physical structures. Now, it was absolutely normal--in my previous generation, my father was a very heavy-built man, and every man in the age of fifty or sixty had already a large watermelon in front, with a golden chain, right? It was absolutely a normal presentation of the man. In the old reviews and pictures, we see all these solidly built men, and of course, the dinners and the suppers and the way of living was entirely different. We almost eliminate even the bread today from the American table. Bread as a function of the energy is not existing any more. Even in a restaurant, very seldom--you have to ask for a bread. They are not serving bread any more. And as long as your meal became very light, you are not in a position to accept a heavy, tannic structured, heavy-built wine.

But these wines, they are still existing, and they are still wines of a great attention by the wine connoisseur, who is able to age this wine in the [wine] library for ten or fifteen years, and the great wines are still--red great wines--are still remaining very heavy wines. But the average consuming wine is entirely different than it used to be. No question.

RT: You said, as we stopped last time, that you had two stories about sulfur. I think maybe you just told one of them, the use in the field.

AT: Yes. And the second story, the use of the sulfur dioxide gas in the industry. I brought the modern technology--today it's not modern technology at all--I brought in the utilization of the solution of sulfur dioxide in the concentration of four or five, six, aqueous solution. This was unknown practice in California. In California, they were using the sulfurous compounds such as potassium metabisulfite, or sodium metabisulfite, and the measurements were very primitive. They were throwing these salts in the fermenting tank empirically by saying, "Well, the chemist recommends to put, let's say, six ounces per ton, but to be sure, put twenty-five or thirty ounces per ton."

So I remember the first year, of 1938, when I faced the production, I saw the winemaster in the cellar who was saying, "Add a full bucket here, a half bucket there," and that solid sulfur was just thrown, without any dissolution, right in the grapes, bleaching everything. A deplorable condition.

So since the atmosphere then in the industry was an atmosphere of secrecy--well, I put in this installation of making this aqueous sulfur solution, with a known density, and the winemaker for Inglenook, George Deuer, heard about that and called the superintendent of Beaulieu, Mr. Ponti, and said, "If you don't mind, I would like to see what this new chemist is doing. I heard that he is making a special sulfur solution to utilize."

And Mr. Ponti, the superintendent, said, "As you know, it's prohibited to show any technology to any neighboring wineries. So therefore, you might come in after five o'clock, when Mr. de Latour never will stop after 5:15, 5:30, and you will be able to talk to André."

So George came in and said, "André, I am very pleased to meet you." And I showed him. He said, "You know, it's a secrecy--I will never be able to show you what I am doing, and you'll never be able, legally, to show me," because everything was secrecy.

Refrigeration, for instance--coil refrigeration in the tank--was the biggest secrecy, and the refrigeration tanks, with the Frigidaire compressor, which was a very modern machinery then in the industry, was placed above, where nobody can see it.

RT: This was at Beaulieu?

AT: At Beaulieu. And it was a taboo--I mean, order, "Do not show anybody. Do not say to anybody that we are using any process such as pasteurization, refrigeration, filtration--it's taboo. Everything should be kept absolutely out."

RT: Were they using pasteurization?

AT: They were using pasteurization, because the sanitation conditions were very dangerous--and very primitive pasteurization then.*

I am going to go to the extent to show you the primitiveness of thinking then. It was in the fall of 1938, very probably November or December--late November. Dr. Amerine was then instructor, University of California. He was not even professor. He was instructor in the field of enology. The department was very limited, and Professor Winkler had only two assistants, one in charge of soil chemistry and one enologist, instructor in enology. Professor of enology not existed then at Davis.

Dr. Amerine heard about my arrival and came to the winery. The winery was not the winery of today, of course. The office and laboratory and the loading platform were just concentrated. So nobody has the right to enter direct to the winery, and everybody was supposed to go to a little office and have the permission to see somebody else, you see--including the clerical authorities, such as bishops, monsignors and priests that are coming to order their altar wine. The basic function was still sacramental wine then, and they were coming with their cars and loading their wine.

Mr. de Latour (that was a very good controlling habit of his) would stop at five o'clock at the winery to see if everybody works till five, so there will be no stop at four-thirty. He would be there at five to see if everything is still going. At five minutes to five, everything is still working.

So it was about five o'clock, and I look on the platform in front, and saw Dr. Amerine standing there. Georges de Latour came to me and said, [whispers] "Who is standing there at the platform?"

I said, "It's Dr. Amerine from the University of California."

[excitedly] "Send him away! Send him away! I don't allow them."

So it was embarrassing situation to send Dr. Amerine out of the winery. Since then, you know, the mellowness started. And since then--Dr. Amerine very probably can tell you--we were invited in 1939, Georges de Latour and myself and Madame de Latour, for a dinner at Dr. Amerine's at Davis. It happened to be that Georges de Latour was then about eighty-four, and Dr. Amerine's grandfather was about the same age. I remember very well that wonderful dinner that Dr. Amerine--he's a great gourmet chef--prepared and served, and these two old men went back to their remberings of their youth. Imagine, a man of eighty-five, forty years ago, how many interesting stories he can tell you about his

*For further discussion of technical problems and solutions, see pages 82-86.

AT: parents, his grandparents. There was almost one century behind, discovered, of the past and present in this conversation. I was just charmed by this conversation with these two gentlemen.

Since then, Dr. Amerine was accepted in the family of Beaulieu as a friend. But you see how difficult it was--that ice of secrecy. It was a tragedy of my own, because I had no right, also, to communicate with anybody else but the university then.

RT: Who did you say was John Daniel's winemaker?

AT: George Deuer. He is still living. He's a very interesting man. He was very capricious. He is a German by origin, but coming from Lichtenstein. He was a very good winemaker, excellent winemaker. But then he became almost blind. His eyes started to give up. He was forced to retire, actually, due to the lack of vision. He has a little house right now between St. Helena and Calistoga. He has a little garden. He drives during the day, but he can't drive during the evening.

He was a very outstanding wine man of a great knowledge, and some of the great Inglenook wines are great wines. I always personally considered Inglenook the first château, not Beaulieu.

RT: Did John Daniel, Jr., have high standards?

AT: John Daniel--exquisite standards. You see, John Daniel was a wealthy man, because the fortune of Captain [Gustave] Niebaum was actually divided not only by the estate and the vineyard of Inglenook, but with the capital investment in South America in silver and gold mines.* So therefore, Inglenook was just strictly a prestigious pleasure of Captain Niebaum. When the nephew inherited this thing together with Pat, his sister, from the uncle, it was a matter of living a very cultural life as a gentleman farmer on the estate, or the château, which was definitely one of the most beautiful châteaux of California.

If the standard of quality of wine, for some particular reason (vintage deficiency, etcetera) was not corresponding ideally to the vintage denomination of Inglenook wines--George Deuer, with John Daniel tasted the wine together, and they said, "We are going to sell everything bulk, to the competitor. There will be no Inglenook label." That was the only wine château of California, due to the wealthy background of the owner, that permitted themselves to do such a thing.

We, Beaulieu, which was fed by the business, never was able to eliminate a vintage. Neither was Wentes or anybody--Concannons, etcetera. So he was the leading man. There was a real château of California.

*Captain Neibaum, the founder of Inglenook, was the great uncle of John Daniel, Jr.

AT: Everything that he produced, he produced from his own vineyard. We were buying grapes left and right from growers, but he was the real vintner-châtelain--vintner with the estate, properly speaking. Now there are many estates, but he was only one.

RT: Who else had very high standards then?

AT: Beringer.

RT: What types of wine were they producing?

AT: Of course, during the Prohibition they also had permit to make sacramental wines. They were producing altar wines, sacramental wines--sweet wines. But they were producing also clarets and Cabernets, etcerta. Their reputation was very high. In other words, their reputation is corresponding to the reputation of Schram and Captain Niebaum. I mean, that's a group of pioneers. They are even older than de Latour, you see, because they came in the eighteen seventies or eighties, and de Latour came in 1900. So that's it.

There were definitely very good wines produced, but in a very limited quantity, in the fine quality selections. The bulk was mediocre.

RT: When you first came here and tasted, did you taste Roma wine?

AT: Of course, of course.

RT: What did you think of it?

AT: Roma wine then--"Aroma di Roma"--was a very popular wine, corresponding to the average palate of American consumer, because [strikes table for emphasis] we did not have fine quality consumers then. The fine quality consumer was buying European wine, with the little exception. Cresta Blanca chateau was known, in Livermore. Wente was known, in Livermore. Inglenook was known, in Napa Valley. Beaulieu known, in Napa Valley, Beringer, and Salmina vineyard.

RT: I didn't realize Salmina--

AT: Larkmead. Larkmead was a fine quality winery.

RT: What kinds of wines did they make?

AT: Zinfandels. Zinfandels of Larkmead, in the past, I considered the best Zinfandel produced in the history of California, because their vineyards were located in the high slopes.

AT: You got to remember that many vineyards of the past, before the Prohibition, were in the mountains. The sanitarium at Angwin, you know, the hospital-college--everything there was planted in the vineyards. You still can see some root stock growing in the forest. All the slopes were planted. But then it became obsolete, because it was economically impossible. See, the Europeans moved in the hills, and the big orchards were planted in the valley. But the vineyards were all located in the hills.

RT: What other wines did Salmina make?

AT: Salmina was making very good Cabernets, very good Zinfandels, very good Semillons. As good as [Chapin] Tubbs. You know the Tubbs property? There's another pioneer. Tubbs winery, the Château Montelena now, was known as the best producer of the Semillon-Sauternes types. It was high very high reputation wines.

So you see, this is the selection of fine quality wines. It was very limited. I think ten, with ten fingers, that's all.

RT: Back to Roma, how did that compare with the vin ordinaire of France?

AT: Vin ordinaire of France then was very poor, too, you know, but entirely different structure. Vin ordinaire of France was a very low degree wine. This wine was fortified and produced by high sugar grapes. But I never enjoyed the Roma wines. Never. They were sweetened, and very artificial wines, actually.

Now the jug of varietal wine of Sebastiani or anybody else, which became a vin ordinaire today, it's not comparable. Today our vin ordinaire of America is far superior to the vin ordinaire of France. No question.

RT: What was Simi doing in '38?

AT: Simi in '38 was active, but slowly moving--very slowly. See, Prohibition killed Simi. Simi was restoring their function, but they lost a great amount of the capital during Prohibition. Simi was in the process of bragging still of the old reputation of their own, pre-Prohibition.

RT: I remember Vivien Haigh said that at Simi, and elsewhere, the banks were urging them to put young wines on the market.

AT: Look, all industry was controlled by the Bank of America, please remember. Except, for instance, de Latour. He never borrowed money from the bank.* Or Louis Martini, or Wentz. All properties were going always--but borrowing money in the bank as a structure of the business was unknown. When we started to borrow, for expansion, the position of

*See footnote page 120.

AT: the family was unbelievable. They said, "Father never borrowed money from the banker." See, borrowing money in the bank was already a proof that you are poor. But then the bank, finally it controlled everything.

I am going to tell you even going farther. In the 1940s, when I had my own laboratory, Bank of America was my best client, because Bank of America had control of all small wineries, and there was a compulsory necessity every month to give a chemical analysis report to Bank of America, because everything was controlled by Bank of America. Bank of America was choking the wine industry. The industry was in the hands of Bank of America.

Actually, the liberation of the industry from the hands of Bank of America was done by one single factor, and one single family in America--by Gallo. Gallo removed the control of banks. Gallo, in expansion of purchasing power, restored the industry. Without Gallo, the industry would never have survived. The greatest compliments should be paid to Gallo. Anything that Gallo was doing, and doing today--without Gallo, the industry never would be able to succeed. I'm positively sure on that.

I saw the crisis after Repeal, compulsory distillation. I saw the crisis when the fine quality grapes were sold for twenty-five, thirty dollars a ton, and the cost of production was about thirty-eight to forty. So Gallo solved all this thing, reviving cooperatives, and took this from the Bank of America and put them under their own wings. It's very important.

To a certain degree, of course, Allied Growers, United Vintners--they are the two organizations that really tried to liberate--but United Vintners was more or less under the control of Bank of America. Look, there was no other way to go any place to borrow because Bank of America was the only one agricultural institution, financing agricultural enterprise. The rest of the banks were industrial banks. So the farmer had to go and borrow the money to cultivate and harvest. Then the small vintners--do you know there were sixty-five small wineries after Prohibition that operated here in the Napa Valley? They were selling directly the raw material to the franchise bottlers. Tiny, tiny wineries. They were under Bank of America control, which supervised the standard of quality of the small producer, before they moved the wine in bulk. That was the bread of my laboratory.

RT: I see. Was it true that the bank tried to force wines on the market?

AT: Well, it's absolutely normal. That's absolutely normal. Look, Bank of America suffered tremendously from their heavy involvement in the wine industry, and I think even now Bank of America is not too secure with the wine investments. It's not too easy to borrow money from Bank of

AT: America today, financing a vineyard, unless you present a contract of sales. I mean, collaterals in the ideas of planting the vineyards are very poor as a security. That's right.

RT: Italian Swiss Colony was another winery that was popular at that period.

AT: Italian Swiss Colony was popular, yes, in the level, let's say, of the Roma Wine Company. Italian Swiss Colony, historically, I think played a very important role in establishing the reputation of the California wine industry, but again, entirely on a different level than the fine quality industry of today, or even the minority of fine quality producers.

See, Italian Swiss was consuming all the raw material from Mendocino, Sonoma, and partially in Napa Valley, because the Napa Valley Cooperative Winery was not existing then. So therefore, Italian Swiss was consuming all the raw materials--that is poor raw material--and what they did, they were selling a great amount of vins ordinaires, in the bottle, or in the gallons, to the open market. Then there was a necessity to them to think about the varietal plantings. So United Vintners bought the varietal vineyard in Napa Valley, the vineyard in Oakville.

The Churchill Property and Martin Stelling

AT: That used to be, historically, a property of [E.W.] Churchill family. See where the Carmelites are above in the mountain, that huge estate? That used to be Churchill estate, a very, very wealthy family in Napa Valley. They owned, I think, about six hundred, seven hundred acres, with the château.

The Churchill family disintegrated completely, and all the vineyards started to be exposed to the liquidation, because during Prohibition they were really weak. The whole property was offered on sale--put on the market. The first offer, of course, went to de Latours, because de Latours then were very wealthy in the valley. I remember this conversation very well, where the property was offered directly, with the château, with this beautiful--you never visited that château? You should. Historically, it's a very interesting building. It's built, you know, in the Victorian times, with the water fountain--beautiful thing. On the hill, on top of this beautiful garden there is a veranda where the orchestra used to play Saturday and Sunday. I mean, just classical European aristocratic way of building the estates. Everything was offered for liquidation for \$200 an acre, including vineyards and the château--all property, \$200. That was 1940. It's not too far away.

RT: My word!

AT: So I, personally, and Mr. Ponti, who was superintendent, and Mr. Nino Fabrini was the vice president and general manager of Beaulieu, we recommended them to purchase the property, but Georges de Latour was already gone. If Georges de Latour was living, I am positively sure this property would be de Latour's property. Madame de Latour was far more cautious, although she was a very good businesswoman, and she was using a little bit of the business reflexes of her husband. She said, "Look, Europe is in war. We are going in the war, and as soon as the war is over, all the prices will go down--this artificial price of \$200 an acre. I am positively sure as soon as the war is over, I am going to be able to buy this for \$150.

RT: Oh! [laughs]

AT: So then a very active businessman by the name of Mr. Martin Stelling--you heard about Martin Stelling? No. Martin Stelling was a businessman of a large American company. So Martin Stelling bought this property, and Martin Stelling decided to build, out of this château, the wine museum, wine library, wine restaurant, and reception center for tourism. That was his dream. He bought it with this dream.

He started to pull the old vineyards and plant the new varieties. He was an outstanding, energetic man. Unbelievable. It was the oxygen to Napa Valley--new oxygen. New businessman came to Napa Valley and started radical reforms. He planted the central section of 400 acres in fine varieties, and there was another section, two hundred, left, and it was still producing very common varieties.

Madame de Latour's business started to climb up during the war, and contracts due to the closed ports. California wines started to move because California wines started to move, very ironically, as co-partners with hard liquors. One case of whiskey and ten cases of wine.* So therefore it was artificial prosperity created. Madame de Latour bought a hundred acres within the next year and paid \$450, from Mr. Martin Stelling.

RT: [laughs] The same property?

AT: Same property. Within a year, the price started to move up, and she started to retreat, but she was not in a position already to think to buy the whole property, because the chateau was already in restoration. So it happens to be that Martin Stelling was a really unbelievable person, but the tragic end of Martin Stelling, after five years of his active duties here, with the beautiful ideas--he was killed in an automobile accident, on the road, coming back home. Night. Just in Yountville. Hit the power pole, instantly killed.**

*This was the ratio of purchases distributors required of retailers.

**In 1950 at the age of 47.

AT: So we lost him, and Mrs. Stelling then inherited the whole thing, not capable to proceed with it, she put everything on sale. So the vineyard was purchased by whom? The vineyard was purchased by Italian Swiss, or United Vintners, because they were very much interested to go and create a fine varietal line. There was no varietal grapes around Italian Swiss at all. So they decided, and they bought this property.

Larry [Bruno C.] Solari was then the president of United Vintners. They tried their luck of management, and after two years, they proved to themselves that they are not built to make fine quality wines. In other words, they can't use this fine quality property because they have neither the technology nor the installation to create a cellar of fine quality.

So the property was sold. Carmelites bought the chateau and built a monastery. One young man with tremendous energy, by the name of Ivan Schoch--you never heard of him? His father was a vice president of Italian Swiss. He's known here in Napa Valley. He's still living--young man. Ivan came to me. Ivan took my course. After the end of the Second World War, there was a trade course sponsored for the veterans of the war, between the jurisdiction of the high schools. In other words, retraining of the military personnel. So I was invited to lecture on the viticulture at the high school in St. Helena. I had this group of young men. Today they are presidents of the company and so on and so on.

Ivan was one of my students who came just from the Second World War, in the army, and he decided to take the course in viticulture. So I give him the course of viticulture. Ivan then took a position of foreman with Martin Stelling. Martin Stelling was dead, the property was sold, and by this time Ivan formed a farming organization--just farming organization, private. Grape growers were contracted by him, and he was doing everything with his movable units.

By this time, Beaulieu Vineyard had expanded very rapidly, and we were not able to supply our demands in varietal grapes, and we didn't have the exposure to the expansion of the varietal planting then. Ivan, being a very smart man, came to the management of Beaulieu and said, "I have 450 acres of varietal grapes, and I know you need varietal grapes. I am not in a position to buy this property unless you give me twenty years' purchasing contract on an established price." So the board of directors of Beaulieu discussed this proposition and said, "Yes, that's the source of our expansion." So they give him a contract. He bought this property. He put \$20,000 or \$30,000 cash, by borrowing money from the members of the family. His father was an accountant. They bought this property for \$250,000, with the twenty years' term contract as a guarantee of Beaulieu, and Beaulieu was the best guarantee, of course, in the Bank of America. No money owed to bank by Georges de Latour, who was a member of the Bank of America Napa

AT: branch advisory board, and Madame de Latour, business prosperous, everything just prosperous. Never suffered from Prohibition. Accumulated millions of dollars in the properties. Beautiful stock. They were buying stock constantly. For instance, Kodak stock they bought for eleven dollars a share, and they [the family] still hold this Kodak stock. Now, imagine. So therefore, that was the best guarantee. Ivan bought the property, and Ivan started to supply the grapes to Beaulieu.

But then a dramatic situation happened. The property started to produce far more than Beaulieu was consuming, and there was a long-term contract on established price, and the price started to go. Then Beaulieu forced Ivan to sell the surplus of the grapes on the higher price and divide the profit between Beaulieu and Ivan Schoch. See, that was a very unfair, smart action from the legal advisor of Beaulieu, and Ivan said, "No, that's a murder. I own the property. I signed the contract, and I got this surplus production, and I have to share fifty percent of my profit to Beaulieu." So Ivan Schoch cut the relationship with Beaulieu, cancelled the contract. Cancelled the contract. And the first buyer was the Charles Krug. Charles Krug then already went to high prosperity as a young organization, and they didn't have any vineyard at all. Not an acre of vineyards, and they bought this property. This property still remains the property of Charles Krug, managed now by Peter Mondavi. See, I give you the whole story of this property.

RT: That's a fascinating story! That's part of the rise of Krug.

AT: That's the rise of Krug.

The de Latour Estate##

RT: The Archbishop of San Francisco owned some property?

AT: I got to jump a couple years back. In 1939, I was constantly traveling in the vineyards with Mr. de Latour. We were thinking about the reforms, changes, because I was a new fresh air from Europe, and Mr. de Latour decided to explore me as much as possible, listening to my advice. So we were constantly traveling. Then we had three ranches, three different sections of production.

RT: All close by?

AT: All close by in Rutherford, yes. The maximum, number three, exposed to the Silverado Trail, was a mile and a half from the winery. The rest of them, they were all within the Rutherford community.

AT: At number three vineyard, that he planted, which was originally a prune orchard--removed this prune orchard. It was two hundred acres in one single piece, a beautiful property. He pulled it out and planted. He planted partially some common varieties then. So we discussed this about the replanting, and in front of us was a permanent pasture, six hundred acres of pasture. Black Angus was there--beautiful sight--registered stock, Black Angus. He said, "André, do you know that I had a chance to buy this property? I had a chance to buy this property, and I missed the chance because I was a little too old to make a decision." This property, when I talked to Mr. de Latour, was already property owned by Napa Milling Company, but Napa Milling Company bought this property on a very bargain price from Father [D.P.] Crowley. It tells you something, right? Father Crowley.

Father Crowley was a manager of this ranch,* which was the property of the Archbishop of San Francisco, or let's say, was a Church property. Father Crowley was director of the trade engineering school in Rutherford, built for boys--boys' school. There was a beautiful chapel there on this property. A church in Rutherford, as such, did not exist then. The family and other Catholics used to go to the chapel of Father Crowley, of this school. What remains from it is the building of the school, which is a labor camp now controlled by the Napa Valley Vineyard Company. Originally a part of Heublein organization. They murderously destroyed the chapel. They just--barbarians--took everything, destroyed the chapel. Today it's the property of Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company.

This property was offered to Mr. de Latour. They had a chance to buy this property then, \$100 an acre. Heublein bought, and paid \$4,000 an acre, within the next thirty years. You see, this is the past history. Father Crowley is still remembered by several old-timers in the community, but there is very few left in the community. Basically, all the old generation of the Italians are already gone, the pioneering Italians.

RT: There was another priest--I can't think of what his name was now--

AT: Oh, yes. That's a different one. He was Irish--wonderful man, with the beautiful stories. I can't remember his name. He was a very wonderful person. I love him so much. But he was just red like a turkey. He was drinking sherry right from the morning to the evening--I mean constantly--but never been drunk, but really heavy drinker. From the morals of the church--everybody knew that he was a drunkard, but he was a very nice priest and loved in the community. But he was a sore spot to [laughs] the Archbishop, I know. I remember him very well.

*St. Joseph's Agricultural Institute

AT: See, the classical thing, which still remains as a tradition of Beaulieu, the local priests of Rutherford, who are saying mass in Rutherford, were constantly received at Beaulieu. See, that's a tradition that they were carrying, because during the Prohibition, at Beaulieu there was an altar at the house, and Mr. de Latour was very close to the Catholic church. Mr. de Latour, as I told you, was educated by Jesuits. He graduated from Jesuit school. That was the key to the [solution of the] problem of Prohibition then.

So there was a permanent headquarters for priests coming from all over the United States, and bishops and monsignors. They were resting at Beaulieu, constant guests of the house. So there was an altar, they were able to say the mass, and that tradition is still existing. They [the de Latour descendants] are always receiving the priests at the estate.*

RT: There's a good deal written about Georges de Latour, but I don't think I've ever seen a physical description of him. What did he look like?

AT: Mr. de Latour was a rather short man, with the typical French features, I mean classical features of--let's say Latin features of the face. By the time I met him, he was already a very rich man, of course, elegantly dressed, with polished nails, attending the beauty parlors in San Francisco twice a week, dressed impeccably--London, of course, I remember the luncheons and dinners. He was changing three times a day. Dinners were official, in the dark suits or bow ties. Madame wore the hat, and everything was so formal, you know. Richard de Latour, who is living, is a picture of his father. If you ever will be able to see Richard, you have de Latour father. Richard is about eighty. So if you see the son of eighty, you will see already a picture of the de Latour father, Georges de Latour.

The most interesting thing in Georges de Latour was the ability to control, manage, with a great amount of discipline and a great warmth. I doubt that de Latour, outside of a few exceptional men, had any enemies in his life. He was always welcomed. He was being a gentleman and being a Frenchman. He was always welcoming everybody that was coming, but with the controls of privacy. So to penetrate that, you have to have a certain permit, but once you're accepted, you're accepted with the open arms. He was a man of an unbelievable culture. His library and his knowledge of music, his knowledge of international literature, his knowledge of philosophy, his knowledge of theology, was unbelievable.

*When the winery and part of the vineyard was sold to Heublein, the family estate and some vineyard land was retained. See pages 118-124.

AT: His classical training in Latin and Greek was, I say, as good as of my father. I have to quote my father, because Father came here, already as an old man, from France after the end of the Second World War, and I introduced him to Mr. Aldo Fabrini in New York, who was our vice president and general manager. Aldo Fabrini, being of general school, classical school, has also a let's say, conversable Latin. So when he met my father in New York, he asked him, "What language we are going to use? I know you are not speaking English."

My father said, "Of course, you don't speak Russian either, but you speak French."

Aldo Fabrini said, "I speak English, I speak Italian, I speak French, and I speak Latin."

My father said, "Well, there is no reason for us not to communicate; we are going to use Latin." They traveled together for three weeks, because in the process of traveling from New York by train Aldo was stopping in the centers of distribution, and their whole conversation was exclusively in Latin. I mean, political--anything. Common language was the Latin language. De Latour had that language just like that. He could quote you by memory the Odyssey, Julius Caesar, by chapters. It's unbelievable. He was an unbelievably cultural man.

For a great amount of time, it was a tradition for him to spend his four months in Europe every year. He was visiting museums of course. He was an opera and symphony attendant--and literature. He was really a cultural gentleman in a European way, in America, with a tremendous amount of charm, tremendous amount of warmth, despite his old age.

Old age was the worst enemy of his, of course, because in the trade of living of his, with the long-lasting dinners, for instance, of three or four hours--by the time the dessert was served, Mr. de Latour was already in his own world of rest.

He was a big political power. He was power behind the power. He was controlling then, as a taxpayer, and one of the largest clients of the bank--[laughs] and there was only one bank--and he had a great amount of interest in the county politics. For instance, the Lake Hennessey, or Conn Dam, never was constructed until Georges de Latour passed away. That's another research, you know. He was protesting against it because his vineyard was located in that particular situation. Now, in the case of a failure of the dam, his vineyard, two hundred acres, would be destroyed immediately. He was still protecting his own investment by prohibiting the dam above, in the upper structure. The first year after Mr. de Latour passed away, we started to construct the dam.

RT: Madame de Latour couldn't stop it.

AT: No, Madame de Latour couldn't. Madame de Latour, to the contrary, understood the necessity of the dam, regulation or irrigation to the release of water, because Conn Creek in summer was dry. You see, there was an agricultural area there where is the Conn Dam. It's farming. So the creek was dry, and since they built the dam now we have this irrigation system, frost protection system, with the water rights. It was an excellent idea to have, but he was really stubborn on that.

I think Madame de Latour had far more aggressive personality as a lady than Georges de Latour.* As you know, she was fifty percent German, fifty percent French. Her history is a very exciting history, too. Her father was a German officer, Prussian guard, who was wounded in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, on the border of the Loire River, and being wounded, he was in a French hospital, and he fell in love with the French nurse in the hospital. But you know what was the regulation rules then, and the antagonism--Franco-German antagonism--was unbelievable. Not a single German officer had the right to marry a French girl. So therefore, when he recovered and married the French girl, there was no other way to solve his own life: take his own life or emigrate. So he emigrated. He became the first executive treasurer-secretary of the first German hospital in San Francisco, for the rest of his life. I don't know if that German hospital is still existing in San Francisco.

RT: It was later called Franklin, and now it's the Ralph K. Davies Medical Center.

AT: Well, he was the first. That hospital was built, and he was the first treasurer, executive secretary to the rest of his days.

RT: What was his name?

AT: Eugene Romer.

RT: Was she born in this country?

AT: She was born in this country. There were three of them, three daughters born in this country. But her mother was French and her father was German.

Mr. de Latour was an exciting person in financial enterprises, because he went through several bankruptcies in America. He went through several bankruptcies, but he was a very energetic man. Do you remember Mlle. Jennie Blair, the old lady Blair? You know the Blair family of San Francisco? That's one of the oldest and most rich family. He fell in love with Jennie Blair, and I think that love existed to the rest of the days of de Latour. She never married, and she became a godmother of the children of de Latour, and the grandchildren. All her fortune and jewelry went to the de Latours, and to the children too.

*He died in 1976, aged 85. Hélène de Latour de Pins died after this interview was recorded, on November 19, 1982.

AT: De Latour was in great love with her, Mlle. Blair, and she said, "You know, Georges, I love you so much, but I can't afford to marry a French gigolo." [laughter] He was just a poor man, you know. "I can't afford to marry a French gigolo with my fortune." [laughter]

She became the nearest friend of the family. Summers she spent always at Beaulieu. Wonderful person. Just a wonderful person.

Oh, the romantic stories of de Latour! He told me so many romantic stories, and they are very interesting because they dealt with different ethnic elements. For instance, one of the romances of his was directly connected with a Russian girl in San Francisco who was a daughter of the first bishop of San Francisco, who was then afterwards Metropolitan of American Orthodox Church--Platon, who became the first patriarch of Russia after the revolution. He was elected to the patriarchy. You know, after the revolution, the synodic structure of the church was changed back to the classical form, patriarchies--Patriarchy of Constantinople and Patriarchy of Moscow. So he became the first elected Patriarch, Platon, of Russia, who was captured after the revolution and died in prison. So you see, that story, but--he used to say, "You know, I almost married a Russian girl, but I learned by experience if I married a Russian girl, I never would be rich because they spend so much money." [laughter]

De Latour was actually a historical factor [in the wine industry]. De Latour introduced not only varietals, he introduced quality thinking in the wine industry. I think he philosophically was as much important as Beringer, as Captain Niebaum, but with a typical classical aristocratic dream to create a classical French wine. See, Niebaum was thinking always to create the German wines and build a German style--as a matter of fact, the German culture was basic--although he was a Finn by origin. But they went in different directions.

Technical Problems and Solutions##

[Interview 4: April 10, 1979]

RT: Before we begin, there's just one question relating to something earlier; did Beaulieu wine that was sent to shippers, to bottlers, always appear under the Beaulieu label?

AT: Wine was sold in barrels to the Beaulieu distributing company and bottled with label saying produced by BV. They had the label of the franchise bottler. Beaulieu never had any foreign labels, or let's say, outside labels, granted commercially for their products.

AT: Now you are asking [in a letter sent after the last interview] about the major technical solutions that I put into effect to solve Beaulieu problems. This requires a month of lecturing.

See, the reason Georges de Latour came to look for a technologist basically was not only the reason to improve the quality, but to solve some technical problems which bothered him financially, economically, and prestige-wise in the American market. After all, you got to remember that was 1938, a few years after the Repeal, and now the inventory accumulated not only in Beaulieu, but in the whole industry. It had partially been controlled during the Prohibition days with lack of technical control.

RT: You mean spoilage had prevented a surplus?

AT: Yes. So then there were problems, basic problems that then sounded to me just primitively childish.

To start with, all the process of crushing, all the process of primary fermentation, was conducted in a very unbelievable, primitive way, without a controlled temperature, depending on ice deliveries from the ice factories. In some particular cases, ice was delivered for a little refrigerator, which was not sufficient to control the fermentation in some cases. Tons of ice were used daily to dilute the wines during the process of fermentation.

RT: Actually dumped into the wine?

AT: That's right. Of course, you've got to remember the climatic conditions then were entirely different than the climatic conditions of today. We are gradually cooling off in the central section. No question of it. I remember the late thirties and early forties, where we had far more hot spells, and the nights without sleep, when the temperature of ninety, ninety-five degrees was a normality in our climate of Northern California. Now it happens maybe once during the summer season, or twice at the most. In other words, climate gradually became cooler and cooler and cooler.

So therefore, excessive maturity and this tremendous amount of concentration of sugar gradually does not present to us any more a tragic technological problem.

RT: Others have spoken of this change of temperature, and I never knew--

AT: I think this is a general microclimatic or climatic pattern. As you remember, in long range of forecasts, in the future (when I am talking about the future I'm jumping 1,000 or 2,000 years ahead of our time) the general projections predict cooling off to the point that we will be exposed to almost North Pole temperatures in this part of the American continent. So therefore, it's a general cooling off, and that's due to the general cooling off of the world and the ocean.

AT: Several other problems are attached to this--migration of the fish, disappearance of some species in their migration, and so on and so forth.

Since we are so close to the ocean, of course the ocean is the basic factor in our temperature, or microclimatic. Cool air from the Bay and fog from the ocean.

Now, what have been the problems? Please remember that all the machinery, mechanical installation, engineering, for us remained still in very primitive shape. The basic materials were cast iron, copper, and brass.

RT: Filters were still using cloth?

AT: Partially, yes. But Seitz--that's the first German filter that appeared in those days in America, was still not built with the stainless steel frame. The foundation was copper. So as a result, and since from the beginning, the crushers were brass or iron crushers, and the must lines were strictly cast iron lines, and the pumps were cast iron lines, the basic problem was the breakdown of wine due to the excess of heavy metals such as the iron and copper.

So the first thing I did, I dislocated the chutes from the must line, went in there with my own hand, and just went around the must line with my hand and discovered that there was very probably a thickness of one-half to one inch of pure iron oxide--rust--in the must line. So furthermore, the wines were coming to the fermenting tank with a concentration of 40, 60, 70, 80 parts per million of pure iron. Of course, this wine was requiring compulsory processing to secure the stability of the wine. The famous blue fining then--you heard about the blue fining process?--was introduced, which was not a legal process. The basic thing that I required immediately was liquidation of must lines. Mr. de Latour accepted this thing because I presented the chemical data to him, and the first thing, during the first season, removed the cast iron must lines. Then, because stainless steel was not available, neither plastic, we coated the interior of the must lines with the glass lining. It's a glass enamel that existed in the steel tanks even before, of the blue color. You can locate them still yet in some wine museums. It was a very expensive process because the glass lining was done in the oven, under severe heat. Melted glass was--

RT: Like enameling?

AT: Like enameling, a very thick glass enamel. So we did this thing first, and we reduced a certain amount of iron content.

RT: What about the couplings?

AT: All couplings were brass couplings, and therefore we faced two basic problems: iron mineral breakdown, which we called the iron casse, and the copper mineral breakdown, which are called copper casse. In this particular time the University of California was very much concerned about these phenomena in the field of chemical stability of the wines. George Marsh, the assistant of Bill Cruess, was really--we owe him a tremendous amount of respect--showing us the importance of these elements and the method of analysis. Dr. Marsh took part of the chemical analysis, and stressed the fact that chemical analysis of iron and copper are a compulsory necessity.*

So the basic problem was the chemical stability, or mineral stability, heavy metal stability, and it took me years and years and years to eliminate this factor. Progressively, I replaced all the communication lines with dangerous elements such as copper and iron, and cast iron specifically--communication lines in the winery--by Pyrex glass. Pyrex glass was available then before the stainless steel. This Pyrex glass communication, by the way, is still existing at Beaulieu, and I was really pioneering this idea of elimination of iron.** There was a chemical process of elimination, which was illegal, and since we were dealing with the production of the sacramental wine, I was not even in a position to think about applying the chemical process of elimination. Blue fining without a too strict analytical control presented a big problem from a point of view of human health and human toxicity. It's a residual toxicity, because with a lack of controls, hydrocyanic acid can be a residual factor, gradually accumulated by our body. So therefore, in sacramental wine, the Encyclopedia Catolica Romanica completely prohibited any utilization of any chemicals except the sulfur dioxide gas. So for us, the blue fining was not the answer. My predecessor, Professor Bonnet, tried this blue fining in commercial wine. Even if blue fining was an answer from a rough treatment, we had to take into consideration that everything in front of us in the bottling room during the process of filtration was again infested by the metals. Well, if you remove the excessive

*Dr. Marsh's work on this subject was published in M.A. Amerine and M.A. Joslyn, Commercial Production of Table Wines, University of California, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 639, 1940; and M.A. Joslyn and M.A. Amerine, Commercial Production of Dessert Wines, University of California, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 651, 1941.

**See also pages 129-130.

AT: iron and bring the iron and copper to the minimum and then expose it to a new exposure to the iron, the new pickup is even much faster than the previous pickup. So we eliminated this completely.

There were several technological methods that we tried, to introduce then to the industry to standardize the iron and copper salts, and we moved to the so-called heating process. Wines were heated in the heat chambers. We built the heat chambers, and little twenty-five-gallon barrels were located in these little chambers, where the temperature was--by dry heat, by the heater--moved up to 120, 130 degrees.

RT: In barrels?

AT: In barrels, yes. In other words, there was a chamber, just like a double room, with the twenty-five-gallon wooden barrels, and there was a heater, just as we use in the house, heating this room, with the idea to bring the temperature of the individual barrels to 120, 130 degrees and expose this wine for coagulation of proteins by heat, which in the process of coagulation trapped the excess of the salts and created the protective colloidal function, which did not permit any further precipitation of the mineral salts. There was a heating process and a cooling process. Then they brought cold air into the chamber rapidly. It was, I would say, a surgery which actually solved some technical problems of stability, but definitely it was not a positive factor as far as the quality was concerned.

But, meanwhile, it was a solution, and I am going to tell you the most interesting thing. This heating process, in the form of heat stabilization, or in the process of bacterial pasteurization, was living with us for years and years and years and years. As a matter of fact, some of the big manufacturing firms in California were using this process for bacterial pasteurization, not with the idea of stabilize the metals but with the idea to produce a microbiological stability, just about until the middle 1960s.

The most amazing thing, just two years ago, when I visited Germany and France, I still saw this process of bacterial pasteurization--German wines and French wines. There is a great amount of discussion. They are studying some of the pros and cons. Several European authorities, are defending this process by saying it's nothing else but acceleration of aging. I do not agree with this.

AT: Since 1960, as you know, we introduced the microbiological filtration, through the microbiological membranes with the openings limited to the maximum limit .45 microns. So therefore, we are really set. Our filtration problems are solved. But I am going a little far away from our early problems.

So we tried the heat process. Then we gradually moved to the replacement of the machinery. We introduced, gradually, stainless steel in the industry, but it took me about, let's say, ten years to defeat all these problems.

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AT: So furthermore, as you see, we were facing all kinds of technological problems dealing with the problem of stability, let's say protein and metal stability of the wine, and also we were facing the problem of microbiology and facing this problem of bacterial infection.

That coincided, by the way, with the well-known infection, lactic infection by lactic bacteria, which California wine industry, specifically in sweet wine, faced in the early thirties and early forties, where actually all these tanks--wooden storage tanks, of course, then--were infected with the Lactobacillus. We called it hair bacteria because under a microscope it looks just like a hair. But it was a typical lactic fermentation, and lactic fermentation alone was a big problem, specifically in the California wine industry, because please remember, California wine industry then basically was a dessert wine industry. Table wines was just a microscopical minority. Our basic consumer was a consumer of port, sherry, angelica, muscatel, etcetera. That was a problem that required a tremendous amount of effort and liquidation.

University and Industry Leaders

AT: Fortunately, we had then an outstanding microbiologist, Professor [Reese H.] Vaughn of the University of California, who worked in Berkeley, too. Of course, we got then Maynard Joslyn. In other words, everything that actually was done, all these pains and troubles and headaches, were solved not by individual effort of the individual winemakers, but I am going to say, very probably to the greatest degree, by fantastic, unbelievable efforts of only a few individuals directly connected with the University of California in the field of viticulture, enology, and even basic agronomy. Because look, in the varietal selection and introduction of necessity to plant the better variety, we had Dr. Winkler and Dr. Amerine, who worked very hard. I mean, the basic problem was the lack of [good] varietals, right?

AT: Now, in the field of alcoholic fermentation, selectivity of yeast, we had Dr. [Emil] Mrak. In the field of the wine technology, we had Professor Bill Cruess, a star of California wine industry, as the next step to Bioletti, right? No question. Then we had two young men in the early thirties, two Maynards--Maynard Joslyn and Maynard Amerine. Then in the field of microbiology, we had Vaughn. In the field of chemistry, George Marsh. That was the team. That was the basic team. In the field of nutrition of vineyards, Dr. [Harry E.] Jacob. You heard about him. He was the first assistant of Dr. Winkler, in the field of nutrition and soil chemistry. That was the whole thing that helped the industry to work harder. To be honest, I will say, in those days, the compensation of the University of California professor, instructor, or assistant professor, was microscopical, and the industry offered far better opportunities than the university.

So this missionary work of theirs is directly connected with our missionary work in the field of industrial application of what they found towards our present success. Today we are a big industry. Today every winery has its own research, own laboratory, etcetera, but then we were all exposed--we didn't have even the experimental station here then.

RT: At Oakville?

AT: At Oakville. We were all just going constantly weekly to the University of California, with the limited resources of the University of California. They were trying to do the teaching and the industrial training. Winkler used to show the pruning to the farmers. I mean, his arm was as strong as the arm today of a Mexican laborer.

So these are the transitions, and a similar transition happened to us in individual firms, in Beaulieu particularly. I am going to tell you, I very probably worked fourteen, sixteen hours a day and had sleepless nights and very difficult dreams in my rest about how to solve all these problems, because the return of wine from the markets, and the catastrophic complaints against the California wines, were the basic factor in wine marketing. So that's the way it started, and that's the way it went.

Now, let us jump to the surrounding personality of that particular time. I mentioned the group of scientists. Now I'd like to mention some really high brains, with a tremendous devotion, tremendous vision, as far as the future within the industry. We have the giants, of course, and you asked about the giants of the past. You talk about [A.R.] Morrow, a man of, let's say, legendary palate. I came already in the time when it was still a memory. He was really very well advanced in the age. The story about his original wine tasting, blind, where he

AT: was able to say, "This particular wine is coming from this particular region, and variety is such, and this particular vineyard within the region"-- Well, it was a legendary thing.

Of course, there was a group of them, a group of founders of Wine Institute, and as I mentioned before, it was not specifically President Caddow of the Wine Institute, but it was the functional brains of Leon Adams and several of his colleagues-- I think Lou Gomberg worked in the same particular time--who are still living and who are still very active, and who are very probably in their early seventies now.

In industry then we have great people such as J.B. Cella, and we have Mr. [L.K.] Marshall, and we have the Petri family, and we have the Gallo family, and we have the Wetmore families, and we have the Beringer families, and we have still the descendants of the Krug families. God, I mean, we have Wentes and Concannons and all this group of the old-timers who created the great reputation of the pre-Prohibition wines of California within the circle of European industry. They were doing an exceptional job, every one of them. They had their own personality, I would say some with a great amount of positiveness, visible to observers, and some of them with a great amount of negativeness, visible to observers. They were all strong men. Even negatively approached men can be very strong and very constructive, because some of the negative personalities are very visible as a frankness of personality.

Some of the sins of the past are still living with us, of course, since Prohibition. Some of them are products of Prohibition, and some of them, let's say, were more or less exposed to some misbehavior during the Prohibition. But that was the third generation. We call it third generation, or the first steps of renaissance after the repeal of Prohibition.

But everything was in a very embryonal form. The industry was small. The industry wasn't popular. The industry had no political lobby, neither in Sacramento, neither in Washington, D.C. The dry states, and the legal barriers between the states, all these problems were of a very great complexity. The Wine Institute, through the legal channels--and some of the outstanding people in that particular situation, of legal advice, legal counsellors--were working very hard to break these barriers. It took us quite a bit of time, and I think we are still continuing to break these barriers, because still wine, even today, is not a national beverage accepted by every average consumer of America.

Now, some of these personalities I knew very well. By the way, I would like to mention also the Bundschu family. Carl Bundschu was one of the most outstanding strong personalities in the industry. He was the manager then of Inglenook. He was guiding John Daniel, a young man,

AT: into the industry. This man was a dramatic personality. It was a strong German family, and the family, by the way, is still existing, and now they have their own winery. That's the grandchildren.

I met him in 1938, by the way, in the first crush. He was very friendly with Georges de Latour. He was a great gourmet and unbelievable great drinker. As a great drinker of those days, he was a great admirer of sherry. As a result, his complexion was as red as your sweater [laughter] with a bluish tinge in the afternoon.

RT: What sherry did he drink?

AT: Drank Inglenook sherry, or any sherry that was available. [laughter] Sherry was then a very popular drink, as you know. As a matter of fact, several of the gaugers and several of the inspectors of the federal government were also exposed to the sherries. [laughter] I remember even one gauger who was coming in the late late thirties to produce the altar wine. That's because then production of all dessert wine was under the presence of the gauger, and the gauger was coming early in the morning, and before the gauger was able to do anything else Mr. Ponti will call me in and say, "Now would you be kind and deliver a bottle of sherry?" and within the next half an hour, the gauger would be able to work.

RT: [laughs] He had the shakes?

AT: Yes, shakes. Shakes, because there was a lack of alcohol in the body. This is a typical form of alcoholism. Dessert wines were a well-known factor, of course.

So Carl Bundschu was a great person. Then Louis [M.] Martini--father--appeared on the horizon of Napa Valley, and it coincided with the appearance of Cesare Mondavi, the father of Peter and Robert Mondavi, and it coincided of course with the appearance of Samuele Sebastiani in Sonoma County, and several other people who represent still the pioneering industry of California.

I don't know if they took me for granted and really trusted my ability or my technological professional training of European origin. I have no idea. But since de Latour was very successful in those days in the progressing in the quality, and since I really managed to put the first Beaulieu Private Reserve on the market, vintage 1936, by the mutual decision of Madame Fernande de Latour and the board of directors and my own, in memory of Georges de Latour--who actually should be considered as the grandfather of California Cabernet Sauvignon of America--

RT: When did you put that on the market?

AT: Nineteen thirty-six was the first, and it was released in 1940. Not produced by me, but produced by Mr. Ponti and Bonnet, who was then enologist at Beaulieu, but I managed since 1938 to guide this wine through the classical European method of aging, by using the small cooperage of French and American origin. Therefore, since then, everybody started to pay a little more attention to what I was saying, or what I was doing at Beaulieu, and I managed to become, let's say, a prophet--I hate to say such a word--a prophet of Napa Valley in Cabernet styling very probably in a very microscopical volume, or in microscopical value even.

Young Men of the 1940s

AT: But a young generation came into the valley, very progressive and very hungry for knowledge and progressive, classical knowledge or improvement, and I started to work with some of the young generation as my assistants.

My first assistant was, in 1939, Gene Seghesio, co-owner of the Seghesio winery, who had just graduated from the University of California and stayed with me for a couple of years. Then I had several young kids that came to me with the idea to learn the trade, and they were passing through and shifting to the industry.

Finally, I located a very outstanding man as assistant, Bard Suverkrop, who graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. Bard Suverkrop was recommended to me by Dr. Marsh and Bill Cruess, and he was doing exceptionally good work as a research assistant of Cruess. That was in the early forties. He was a flyer during the Second World War. Since he was an outstanding microbiologist and chemist, we started to work together on the problem of malo-lactic fermentation. The first report that we presented on malo-lactic fermentation, we presented in the early forties, during the convention of the American Chemical Society in San Francisco, in the fermentation section, which we called "The Approach to Malo-lactic Fermentation in California Red Wines." Anyhow, we started to move toward this malo-lactic fermentation with Bard Suverkrop.* Bard Suverkrop stayed with me several years as an assistant, and then it happens to be that he was called back during the Korean War, and went back to the regular service. Now I think he's retired. He's a retired lieutenant colonel, and he worked for one of the chemical companies in Sacramento. He was attached to atomic research there for a while. But anyhow, he moved himself out of the industry.

Then, of course, I have my colleagues--young colleagues. It coincides with the opening of my laboratory in St. Helena. I opened my laboratory in St. Helena in 1945.** By this time, the group of youth

*See also pages 126-128.

**See also pages 109-110.

AT: became very active in the industry, including Peter Mondavi, Robert Mondavi, Louis Martini, Jr. [i.e., Louis P. Martini], partially John Daniel, partially August Sebastiani, and several others. It coincided with the critical economic situation of the industry, where the industry actually was financially controlled by the Bank of America. So therefore, I opened the laboratory, which I called Napa Valley Enological Research Laboratory, and below that, right in the front door window, I put another sign, "Napa Valley Enological Center."

This Napa Valley Enological Center was nothing else but that little group which was the foundation of the Napa Valley Technical Group. In this particular group then, I had only a few members, such as Lee [J. Leland] Stewart, who was a newcomer and one of my students, from Souverain Cellars; Al Huntsinger, who became a vice president of Almaden; Louis [P.] Martini, who is the president of Louis Martini; and I have Robert Mondavi, who became a president of C. Mondavi winery and now president of the Robert Mondavi winery. And I have a group of little tiny wineries that were forced to come to me as a result of the Bank of America order to present the chemical status, or sanitary status, of wine in monthly reports. So the bread was coming to me from two different directions. Oh yes, I forgot--and Larkmead. Larkmead then existed. And Larry Solari bought the Larkmead winery. Larry Solari was very much interested to establish a varietal line from Larkmead, and Larry Solari gave me a chance to work with him, with the idea to create this. He didn't stay too long, because he sold the winery after a short time and kept only the surrounding vineyards where his present residence is established.

RT: Was that your first, let's say, outside consulting job?

AT: Yes. Well, I opened the laboratory on the recommendation of the vice president of Beaulieu then, who was Aldo Fabrini. See, my wage was very limited, and the war was going on. During the war, as you know, we had a compulsory wage control. The increases been coming to such a point, such as ten or fifteen dollars monthly increase of the wages. Please remember, I started to work at Beaulieu for \$150 a month. It's unbelievable, right? That's right.

I was already thirty-seven, with a degree. Today a person of my caliber then works for \$25,000 a year. So you see, there's quite a difference between \$2,000 a year and \$25,000 a year. So therefore it was, let's say, not my appetite, but just necessity to have a little more income, because by this time I had a young son [Dimitri] who was going to the University of California, who was married to a local girl who went also to the University of California. My son went to the enology, and my ex-daughter-in-law went to floriculture.

It's a very strange thing, you know, when you go to the branching of memory, it happens to be that both persons directly connected with the education of my son and my daughter-in-law, they are still living.

AT: Dr. Winkler was the professor of viticulture for my son, and Mrs. Winkler was the instructor of floriculture, and so [laughs] my daughter-in-law took the course of Mrs. Winkler. So you see how interesting it is.

But anyhow, this was a new effort, and we had our weekly meetings.

RT: What was the function of the Enological Center? Just what did this group of young men do?

AT: We were doing our research.

RT: Just pure research?

AT: Pure research, and exchange of information. We had our weekly meetings with that little group. The group was six or seven, and my laboratory was located in the oldest building in St. Helena that is still existing, on the second floor. That's the Ritchie Building now owned by the Masonic Lodge. I had three rooms in my laboratory, and the first room was a conference room, with these windows facing the street. As a matter of fact, some of the pictures appeared in the early forties in the Los Angeles press, but I don't have them. I think it was in a magazine that's not in existence any more--Los Angeles Observer, or something like that.

This was the most exciting years of my career in St. Helena, in Napa Valley. Because my son was also my student.

RT: Dimitri?

AT: Dimitri. As a matter of fact, when I opened the laboratory, my son was still going to high school, and it coincided with the situation in the University of California where, when the war started, Dr. Winkler happened to be alone. You see, Dr. Amerine had been called, Dr. [John G.B.] Castor, who was the bacteriologist, was called. Dr. James Guymon was already there. He was called up. Who else? Dr. Joslyn went too, right? All of them went.

Dr. Castor then (I shift a little bit, on the side, because it's interesting) had been very much interested in the research of the flor sherry. You heard about the flor sherry, of course. In other words, Spanish process of making the flor sherry. He introduced the culture of flor sherry from Geisenheim Institute in Germany, and he started the flor culture of sherry in a very little volume of ten gallons. These ten gallons were raised in a little tiny barrels at the University of California. So when Dr. Castor disappeared, Dr. Winkler called me and said, "André, I am just going to beg you--give me a hand. Could you take care of this culture? It's very important. As soon as the war will be over, Dr. Castor will be back. I just can't proceed

AT: with this research." So I took this culture from the University of California at Davis, transferred it to Beaulieu, and assigned my son, of fourteen years of age,* for that project. So he was actually a pioneer of this flor sherry. This flor sherry that I created at Beaulieu in the early forties gained three gold medals in international competition at the Sacramento fair.

RT: How did that compare in time--I can't remember. Dr. Cruess did some work in flor sherry.**

AT: Right. So the theory of flor sherry was known, but this particular culture was the baby of Dr. Castor.

RT: Is it still going?

AT: It's still going all over California. So I assigned my son. That's the problem--maybe tragic problem.

My son was taking the course in high school in St. Helena, of chemistry, and was trained by me in my own laboratory. So therefore three years of pre-college training was in my own laboratory in St. Helena for him. But basically, his dream of life was forestry, and when he graduated from high school, I said, "Now listen, Dimitri, I am really begging you to not follow my steps, for several reasons. For one reason, because all your life you are going to be poor, because wine industry is not an industry that's paying for technological help. Secondary, you love the forest, you love the hunt, you love the zoology, you love the animal science and the wilderness, and I don't think it's the proper way for you to follow me just for one single reason, because you are so well acquainted with all the problems of chemical analysis that you are going to do. You know them better than anybody else, than the graduate students, because you have been running my laboratory three years--the most complex analysis, not only basic, primitive analysis, required by the government, but research analysis, which is aldehydes, ethers and esters, etcetera, proteins and so forth"--because I been doing a tremendous amount of research then. Basically I was a research man by the nature, far more than practitioner, but I became practitioner.

But he said, "You know, father, I am practical. I got all the background in an easygoing flow. I am going to college already with half a degree that I have already acquired in working with you for years in laboratory." So he went there. Very strange thing to say, about ten years or fifteen years ago he said to me, in a very friendly conversation, "Father, don't you think that we became very primitive, you and me?"

*Born in Paris April 22, 1930.

**For a resumé of Dr. Cruess' work during the 1930s, see his "Notes on Spanish Sherry Experiments," Wine Review, September 1943, and also William V. Cruess, A Half Century of Food and Wine Technology, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.

AT: I said, "Why you are saying such a thing?"

He said, "You know why? Because all our culture, human culture, been concentrated on one single factor--grapes and wines, and we talk to each other only about grapes and wines. I think we miss a tremendous amount of cultural growth." As a matter of fact, he said, "Do you know, I remember you as a far more cultural man before you came here than you are now."

He was absolutely right, because being grown in a very intellectual family myself, I was exposed to politics, history, art, music--far more than I was able to expose myself to being an industrial man, working in one single industry. So it's very interesting, by the way, and I am still repeating today, right in front of you, in the form of, let's say, a very personal confession of my own knowledge, that I really, even now, despite all my success in the wine industry, I really deplore my primitiveness in the limited field of my knowledge, which does not give me the depth of the culture that this man carried to the rest of his days--my father.

It's a tragic thing to be a professional. If you are very active, you don't have the leisure time to be interested in anything else--if you are really working hard. See, because this is the theory, and theory that I defend with all of them, with the result that we discussed. The basic factor of success--you got to learn to live with the grapes and with the wines--very interesting thing--giving everything of my time to them, to understand their desires, their feelings, their pains, and their demands. Conversation with the individual vine in the field and conversation with the individual barrel, the common knowledge of acquiring a mutual language of understanding between the product and the producer.

See, this is a part of a human artistry. It's a lifeline that you have. For instance, when I am tired, exhaustedly tired--in the past, when I had a great amount of responsibility in the field--I used to go in the evenings alone in the vineyards and just relax by talking to them, to my world. It was a primitive world. See?

I am very proud that in several of these men I was able to create this deep interest in this particular achievement, of living in wine and trying to concentrate all your life to the wine. I have very many successful winemakers today, the products of cooperation with me, such as Robert Mondavi, Joe [Joseph E.] Heitz, who was my assistant for eight years, Mike Grgich--Grgich Hills winery in Rutherford, a Yugoslavian who work with me for seven years. Miljenko Grgich. He founded this little winery [with Austin Hills of] of Hills Brothers Coffee.

AT: I have several young men that I'm creating--that's already a second generation of winemakers. My first generation of my students, now in the middle road--they're, I would say, between forty-five and sixty, my first generation. Some of them are even older.

My new generation, it's the new flowers. It's a new harvest of mine, with whom I am able to make even more progress than with the second generation, because they are open-minded. They have a tremendous prerequisite of the technical science in very large experimental science and academical science that none of my students had before them. I am studying more than anybody else, because I am taking courses of my own and working in the evenings and continuously trying to penetrate to the depths of the problems. It's still an open field. If there is a hundred percent of absolute knowledge, which belongs to the good Lord, I don't think that we have even five percent of the total knowledge in the field of enology or grape growing.

The reason that I said so and I mentioned good Lord, because during my college years in Brünn, I passed a very severe examination in animal anatomy. It was a difficult course of animal anatomy where we had to work with the bodies and so on and so forth. The professor of animal anatomy was a very, very, unbelievably difficult man to please. I was very successful in my college years, and became a great specialist in animal anatomy and pulled out several students, and prepared them for examination. So when I went to the examination, I answered all the questions--with my Latin vocabulary--on the muscles and nerves and arteries and veins and osteology. It was unbelievable. He said, "Mr. Tchelistcheff, you should have an outstanding degree of a full "A+" but you know, only God has a hundred percent of knowledge, and because even I do not have an "A" I give you "B+." [laughter]

Industry Leaders, Continued##

RT: Before you go on to the very young men, I wanted to ask you a little more about the older generation. For instance, you mentioned Carl Bundschu. I suppose he must have been a good enologist--was he?

AT: Not necessarily, not at all.

RT: Not necessarily?

AT: No.

RT: What did he teach John Daniel?

AT: About the marketing. Marketing was one of the most difficult things to learn. We are still learning about that. You know that science is one thing, production is one thing--and I am still saying to the newcomers who are investing millions of dollars, "Now, you secure me the marketing, then I will give you my technical advice in production. But if you don't have any marketing, I am going to waste my time and you are going to waste your money. You got to be competent in the marketing." [Without that competence] several people burned their fingers in California industry just recently.

RT: How about Louis M. Martini?

AT: Louis Martini was outstanding man. I will say Louis Martini, father, was one of the idols of mine. He was very probably ten or fifteen years older than I am. But Louis Martini and Herman Wente, they are two, let's say, apostles of the California wine industry that I will remember to the rest of my days, and I think the scholarships granted to the University of California and Wine Institute in memory of both of them are of great merit.

The third man definitely will be Marshall--L. K. Marshall. These three men, without mentioning some other men, Rossis and--you know--there are a great amount of men. But in inspiration, in beliefs, in the hard work, in the dreams of the achievement of tomorrow, in the beliefs of the principles of ecology, principles of the Mother Nature, they were outstanding men of the past. I think we owe them far more than we owe even to the outstanding academical authorities.

RT: Did Louis Martini have a good knowledge of winemaking?

AT: Of course, because he graduated from technological school, enological school in Italy.* He was a great believer and great research man. Of course, he had his own ways of doing it. Basic foundation of his own winemaking theory was definitely an interblending process, contrary to me, that always sponsored the idea of individuality and individual wines. He was a man believing in assortments. In other words, if I believed in individual flower, he believed in bouquet of flowers. [laughter] You see?

I met him the first year of my arrival. I still remember my first acquaintance with him. My English was limited to a few words or a few phrases, and I was standing in the front of Beaulieu Vineyard waiting for

*According to Louis M. Martini, he did not take the entire course. See interview with Louis M. Martini, The Martinis: Wine Making in the Napa Valley, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1973.

AT: a bus. I didn't have the car, of course. There were only two cars in the whole organization, Mr. de Latour's and the superintendent's. There was public transportation in California then. It's not existing any more. Do you know that we had an electric train going there? And we had three bus companies competing. Every fifteen minutes there was a bus coming, from Calistoga to the [Oakland] ferry or directly to San Francisco via the Golden Gate Bridge. Now it's not existing, you see. We have only Greyhound, and you have to wait and wait an hour. See how progressive we were in public transportation? And today in the [oil] crisis, every one of us, we are driving this huge car around. You see how wrong we went.

So there were no cars. I walked from Rutherford to St. Helena, to the movies. Can you imagine? Then we had bicycles, and everything was by bicycle. Madame de Latour used to come from the estate to the winery on the bicycle. See how simple it was?

So I was standing and waiting for transportation to San Francisco. I was all dressed up. All of a sudden I saw a black Chrysler shifting towards me. There was a well-dressed--he was always well-dressed--gentleman, well dressed in a dark gray suit, with the silver hair then already, with a great diamond ring on his hand sitting on the steering wheel. He opened the door and said to me, "You are Signor Andreas?"

I said, "Yes."

"San Francisco?"

I said, "Yes, San Francisco." So I sat with him in the front, and that was the first acquaintance. Then, strangely enough--you see, Louis Martini has a tremendous past in the south.

RT: In the San Joaquin Valley?

AT: San Joaquin Valley. Louis Martini came here in the thirties and started to plant the vineyards and eventually started to build, but he was not trained in the table wine production of California. He was trained in table wine production in Italy, and he still kept up Italian academic approach to his own wines. I grant him, he created some outstanding wines, with entirely different image, or different personality, different charm--[phone rings, tape interrupted].

RT: You were speaking of Louis Martini and his own methods of winemaking. He made wines that were different--

AT: Oh, yes. Of course. See, Louis Martini preserved, to the rest of his days, Italian technology. I think he was absolutely right by doing such a thing, because in the wines of Louis Martini there was a great amount of personality. Of course, the son, Junior, is shifting gradually,

AT: because I think competition alone, quality, progress, forced Louis to think a little more about American palate of today, in comparison to American palate of the past, but it doesn't mean that the wines were poor.

It is always individuality of the orientation by the winemaker. It's part of the assignment that every one of us have. We have our own training, our own technology, and our own methods of communication with wines, method of nursing the wines, with our own ideas. Of course, unfortunately, sometimes our own ideas are not corresponding to the ideas of marketing authorities, and marketing authorities still are the basic elements controlling the quality of products.

Now, Louis Martini was really a man with a tremendous, strong personality, and they used to call him "Napa Valley Mussolini," [laughter] and he was a Mussolini of his own--hard-working man, and I think he passed every one of us in those days. They even now are considering him as one of the prophets, as one of the leaders of the Napa Valley industry. But in those days he was learning as much California wines as I learned California wines, too, because what I knew about European wines was not corresponding to necessity of adaptation to California wines, because the raw materials, environment and everything was so different.

[Herman] Wente, of course, was a far more interesting person to me, because he was a very cultural man, and he was a man of a great depth in general--as a human, with a tremendous sense of humor and vitality, a vitality that was expressed a little bit in a different way. Louis Martini was also very vital and a great gourmet and great enthusiast of good living. Wente was very probably a little finer in his expressions. He was far more mellow and sweet in his own personality, and in this sweetness of personality, far more people adored him rather than praised him.

Herman was an adorable person, no question of it. The friendship that he created when he was the president of the Wine Institute and in all his life--unfortunately very short life--his departure from the wine industry I think was one of the most tragic losses of the wine industry in these particular days.* Now of course there were several other people, and I think I talked to you--

RT: You mentioned L. K. Marshall.

AT: Marshall was a function of a great amount of the potential improvement in, let's say, the northern section of San Joaquin Valley--Stockton, Lodi. That's where Marshall controlled that particular situation, right there. He formed the agricultural cooperative, Guild. Guild is a product of Marshall, and he was the president of Guild.

*Herman Wente died in 1961, aged 68. Louis M. Martini died in 1974, aged 87.

AT: I worked with Marshall, with Herman Wentz, together. Marshall decided to create a board of appraisals. In other words, Marshall decided that due to the fact that production by cooperatives was a very sensitive human thing, the grapes should be paid for according to their quality in the final products. So he decided to form an appraisal committee of neutral authorities, and I was a member of this committee, and Herman Wentz was a member of this committee. The chemist in charge of preparation of the samples and technology there was nobody else but Joe Heitz.

RT: Was this under the Wine Institute?

AT: No, no, no. As a separate, absolutely independent committee--so that's where I pick up and transferred Joe Heitz to Beaulieu.

RT: This group then, this board, whom did you function for?

AT: Well, for the wineries of the Guild cooperative.

RT: Oh, I see.

AT: There were several wineries in the cooperative. It was for the benefit of the cooperative. So we classified the wines, and according to the classification of the wines, price was established for the grapes.

RT: Each member was paid according to the quality of his own wines?

AT: Yes.

RT: I see.

Marshall, too, died rather early.

AT: Marshall very probably died in the late forties or early fifties.* That's right.

Now, who else? Of course, I have to talk about Sebastiani. Oh, there is another man that we forgot about, and who is still living, by the way. I am thinking if anybody can carry the past, pre-Prohibition days today, only one man in Napa Valley who is still alive and who is able to talk about it. That's Charlie Forni. Charlie Forni is now about, I would say, eighty-five to maybe ninety. His memory is still a very functional memory. I talked recently to one of his grandsons and asked about Charlie, and he said, "Charlie is in good physical shape, and his memory, his head, is very clear yet. He is not functioning

*He died in 1957, aged 70.

AT: any more in public social groups, and he is staying at home because Momma apparently has a very difficult situation with arthritis and so on and so forth.

But Charlie Forni was a product of the pioneering Italian families of Napa Valley, and he was the first president of the Napa Valley Cooperative, when the cooperative was built. That's a living cooperative today. It's Napa Valley Cooperative, directly connected with Gallo. Charlie Forni then formed a new company of his own and bought the Sunny St. Helena Winery, on the right as you go to St. Helena. He formed a group of owners, Martin Stelling, Ed Scheck, and Charlie Forni. That was the three co-partners, and they created Sunny St. Helena. They were doing a very good job, by the way. They were in the production of good quality wines that they were selling in bulk.

Then it happens to be that Martin Stelling was killed, and Ed decided to sell his partnership, and Charlie bought out the two partners and became sole owner, then he sold the winery to Charles Krug--C. Mondavi and Sons. See?

But Charlie still remembers the difficult days of Napa Valley. I am talking about the difficult days of Napa Valley, the days even before the pro-rate, and the days during the Prohibition, where the industry went through several successes and ups and downs. For a while, during the beginning of Prohibition, the grape industry of Napa Valley was one of the most prosperous industries. That coincided with the introduction of poor varietals, etcetera--shipping varietals. So it would be not a bad idea to talk to him. He's a very interesting man. He is a really typical Italian fox. You never know what he thinks about you. He always smiles, and even when he said, during the meeting of Napa Valley Vintners, in the early days--Napa Valley Vintners, by the way is an organization formed by Louis Martini, father, and it was formed not as an administrative, business function. It was a function of epicureans--I mean of gourmets. He decided to have a group who enjoyed the products of the local folklore and the cuisine and wines. Then it became later an administrative function, but the original function of this was nothing else but a good time. Today it's a big administration center.

Charlie would sit there during the meeting and smile and make some very, very touchy remarks with, let's say, the smell of a few drops of vinegar in a cup of honey, but with a smile, and he's a very, very clever man. He will tell you so many interesting things about the past and that section of life of the California wine industry that I am not acquainted with at all. He was a leading personality.

Of course, Salmina brothers, they had been there all along, because they came with the well-known [Felix] Salmina family, a pioneering family again. And the [Alfred L.] Tubbs* family--you know Tubbs, later Chateau Montelena? That's old-timers. When I came here, [the Tubbs winery had] already declined.

*And his grandson Chapin Tubbs.

AT: There were several little tiny families, such as Garibaldi family and all these little tiny vintners. They were making the bulk wine. Gagetta family, well-known family too. First cooper shop was the Gagetta shop of Napa Valley.

RT: You were speaking of August Sebastiani, too.

AT: Sam [Samuele] Sebastiani. The founder of Sebastiani family.

RT: You knew him?

AT: Oh, yes. Very well.

RT: Was he a good wine man?

AT: Well, he was an excellent businessman. As excellent a businessman as his son, August Sebastiani. You see, the Sebastiani family was a pioneering family who belonged to the same generation as Rossis, as Mondavi, as Martini-Prati--all that old generation of the Italians.

Actually, you know where they came from? They all came basically from the coal mines of Minnesota. They were all Italians that immigrated to the coal mines, but with their roots in vineyards from the past, in Italy. These families moved, in the process of immigration, from coal mines to the vineyards, and then from vineyards to their own little wineries, and then very prosperous businesses. It's very interesting, that immigration and upgrading--industrial-social upgrading of the families to the higher levels. So that's all the same group.

Now, Sebastiani--father, Sam--was outstanding man with the common sense and tremendous knowledge in this common, peasant field of knowledge of life and knowledge of business. He was an illiterate man, [draws "X" on table] his checks signed with a cross.

RT: Really?

AT: Oh, yes. But he was the most charming man, with a tremendous personality, tremendous knowledge. I am going to tell you, I have been very close to them, for one single reason, because Mr. de Latour was basically connected with them in his business during the Prohibition, and before the Prohibition and after they repealed Prohibition, with the great amount of production of several types of wines outside of Napa Valley--because as I told you, Napa Valley was only 6,000 acres in the vineyards. So as Wente supplied him with the Sauternes wines, Bisceglia Brothers--you heard about Bisceglia Brothers? That's San Jose and there--you heard about them?

RT: Yes. They supplied him too?

AT: Mr. de Latour was buying there too. And Sebastiani was a basic supplier of the sweet wines.

RT: What did Bisceglia provide him with?

AT: Ports, sherries, etcetera. High proofs.

RT: And Sebastiani?

AT: Sebastiani also, sweet wines--angelica, muscatels, ports, etcetera. That was a very solid market for Sebastiani, Beaulieu Vineyards, with already a large bulk distribution, barrel distribution, of sacramental wines, or commercial wines. Very probably you heard about this episode. Do you have the access to the Napa Valley Wine Library? I think I quote already that conversation, so I am not going to repeat that.

RT: Yes, that's the story about--

AT: August waiting in the Model T.

[The following is from the interview with André Tchelistcheff conducted in 1975 by Richard G. Peterson for the Napa Valley Wine Library Association's interview series, History of Napa Valley, Volume II.]

RGP: André, I had heard you tell a very interesting story which gives a great insight into the ways in which the early California winemakers carried on their business. From your memory, would you describe the activities for us when Sam Sebastiani once came to Rutherford to sell bulk wine to Georges de Latour.

AT: We are now going into the personalities of the wine history. The interviews and the business connections of Georges de Latour in the wine industry alone really clearly expose the personalities active in the wine industry. Georges de Latour was not only a man, as you know, of a very particular personality, but had a sense of humor and had a way of making his deals in his own classical European traditional way. I was really enjoying this thing rather than as a critic. I was a European man of European origin and dealings such as I saw in California were very familiar to me from my old European background. Georges de Latour basically, as you know, rather than being connected with table wines, was connected with sweet wine production with the result that twenty-five percent of his production was in sweet rather than white table wines of Napa Valley. A great tonnage was crushed at home at Beaulieu Vineyard, but we always somehow were facing some commercial shortages. Georges de Latour was not only known in the distribution of sacramental wines, but also sweet commercial wines. These latter wines were not only for

AT: human consumption but also for industrial purposes of tobacco maturation. I remember the years we shipped 120,000-150,000 gallons of rather old muscat for the maturation of tobacco. Due to this exposure, it was always necessary to keep a finger on the open market of dessert wines of California. Georges de Latour, being a very wise man, always kept his own eye properly on the balance of inventory in the cellar to review the inventory on the upper level when the price structure was rather low. 1938 was a very weak year and one could foresee the difficulties we would face commercially with our inventories in the wine industry, and that definitely was the time to purchase the maximum of sweet wines such as angelica and muscat with a low commercial price.

I remember this day I was a complete greenhorn in the California wine industry. I had only been two or three months in California. My knowledge of English was such that I had a very difficult time following the conversation of these two business men. One business man who used fluent English with a severe French accent and another American of Italian origin who had a far stronger Italian accent than American. We had invited him [Samuele Sebastiani] for this particular occasion to deal with the possibility of purchasing an additional 250,000 gallons of sweet wines to fill out our inventory.

Madame de Latour was, as usual, presiding during the lunch time. We enjoyed a tremendous lunch starting about 12:30 with hors d'oeuvres and sparkling wines, French champagnes, which were then served for business attraction. Then we had a protocol lunch which lasted about 3½ hours and finished with a fine quality of Armagnac privately purchased by Mr. de Latour in Gers from the well-known cellars of the Catholic priests. Those Armagnacs had a tremendous organoleptic value and tremendous commercial value. The average age of the private Armagnacs of Mr. de Latour was 35 to 75 years. They were served as nectar of the gods on this business occasion. Cigars and Toscanos were distributed. Toscanos specifically were selected for Mr. Sebastiani. Meanwhile, August Sebastiani, my personal friend, and the present president of Sebastiani winery of Sonoma, was sitting outdoors with his traditional uniform as of today [overalls], as you know very well. He was sitting in the little Model T Ford waiting for Papa. I don't know if they fed August Sebastiani or not, but he was a very patient chap and he was sitting tight there in his Model T Ford. Gently and slowly after several cognacs and beautiful French coffee, the conversation started to shift gradually to a strictly business discussion. Mr. de Latour, in a very gentle and very friendly way, suggested to Sam Sebastiani a possibility of his limited interest in a little amount of wine which Sebastiani under the present unknown commercial situation of the American wine market might sell in the quantity of 25,000, 50,000 to 100,000 gallons from Sonoma to Beaulieu in Rutherford. Sam Sebastiani, a man of fantastically strong personality, a folklore of Toscano, an old Italian generation, was a very smart businessman also. He immediately shifted to the difficulties the industry was facing

AT: because the market was moving slowly and inventories were excessive and exceeding their commercial value. Meanwhile, shrinkage was affecting thirty percent of the volume stored since early Prohibition days. The discussion went on, very rarely disturbed by gentle words of Madame Fernande de Latour, to the end of this upsetting situation. We were already seated in very comfortable furniture outside and away from the table. The table was completely clean. I remember again brandy was presented, and it was a very fine Martell, yet we were moving only very slowly towards the achievement of this transaction. Finally, Sam Sebastiani said, "Now, Mr. de Latour, I would like to continue our business transaction. We have been doing business for several years. I would be the last to break up the continuation of this friendship. Now, I am not going to be in a position to sell you anything, even angelica of 1934 or 1935, without receiving a decent price of 18 cents a gallon."

Well, Dick, you should see the expression on the face of Georges de Latour. Even I, with all my European training, was surprised at the dramatic presentation of Georges de Latour. He jumped out of his chair saying, "Why, Sam, are you going to put me in the poorhouse? I am broke. I am broke." Sam said, "Now, Georges, look, I am giving you my best altar and commercial wine for such a reasonable price and you are jumping on me and telling me I am robbing you by asking such a price." This conversation actually lasted at least two hours. It was normal then to discuss a splitting of the price. It was a classical procedure in America as it was in Europe. If the price asked was 22 or 25 cents, immediately the response was I am offering you 15 cents per gallon. Now, between 15 cents and 25 cents there is quite a bit of margin before you reach any compromise or satisfactory solution between two parties. It takes quite a bit of time. Finally, the price was raised to 18 cents for muscat and 16½ cents for angelica. Sam said, "I am doing everything possible to please you, but you are not a person to be pleased today. Therefore, Madame de Latour, thank you for your wonderful hospitality. I enjoyed my dinner, and I have to go back to Sonoma."

RGP: This was after they had been talking about price for two hours?

AT: This was after two hours and all kinds of combinations and offers and counter offers. So, Sam kissed the hand of Madame de Latour and went directly to the front door. Georges de Latour jumped up, open his arms and said, "Sam, Sam my friend, now look, you are not going to do such a thing to me, Sam. You are my old friend. Come back, and let's have another cigar." Finally, Georges de Latour bought all the gallonage required and preset, by the way, 24 hours before in our business discussion with Mr. Ponti, who was then in charge of the cellar. We bought there 200,000 gallons of wine at a price of 15½ cents for muscat and 12½ cents for angelica. The compromising was done by splitting first by one and then the other party. That was the most dramatic and typical approach of Georges de Latour and Sam Sebastiani and a very rational way of doing business.

[end of insert]

RT: That's a wonderful story.

AT: Since then, of course, I have been very close to them [the Sebastianis], and since the father passed away, I opened my laboratory in St. Helena, and August became a client. I really worked very hard with him, and we have been very close friends.

Meanwhile Frank Bartholomew appeared on the horizon, in the early forties. Frank Bartholomew then was not even yet the president of United Press. He was then correspondent of United Press on the Pacific front. He was there when MacArthur signed the peace agreement with Japan. He bought the Buena Vista vineyard at the auction by the state in the early forties [1943]. I met him in the early forties. He came to my laboratory, maybe already as a president of United Press, and he said, "Mr. Tchelistcheff, I bought a winery from the state, and it's an historic winery of Count [Agoston] Haraszthy--not functioning, both wineries. One was destroyed almost completely, and one was still partially standing, with several injuries of time. Now, the State of California bought this property from the third or fourth generation of Haraszthys. Haraszthy's family are still living, as you know. The state bought it with the idea to build a wine museum, which was a very good intention, but the state didn't have the financial budget to support the--almost illegal--industry, such as wine is.

So the property was sold in Sacramento, on auction, and Frank Bartholomew bought this, I think at a very minimal price. I hate to quote this price, to not injure him--

RT: [laughs] Or to indicate how smart he was.

AT: He was very smart. He came to me and he said, "I have this winery, and I think I would like to restore this winery. I'm coming to you because you're the only one who can help me." Actually, I was then the leading enologist, and my laboratory was the only wine laboratory. There was the Berkeley Yeast Laboratory of [Julius H.] Fessler, and my laboratory in Napa Valley. There was nothing else then. So you go the Fessler way, or you go the Tchelistcheff way.

So he came to me, and we had several conversations--business conferences. He said, "You know, I know nothing about wine, and I hate to spend money on this thing. Would you like to go in partnership with me?"

I said, "Well, Frank, to be honest with you"--I didn't call him Frank, of course. I just say, "Mr. Bartholomew." (I Americanized my manners; I start to call you [Catherine Harroun], for instance, without permission, "Catherine." It never happened to me before. [laughter]) So I said, "Mr. Bartholomew, you know, I have a laboratory as a business, and then I am working with several wineries here, which are my bread and butter, and my capital in the bank is \$2,000."

AT: He said, "Two thousand dollars?" You know, that's a great amount of money. "I'm going to put my \$2,000, and I have a building, and I have a couple of Italian fellows who are working. One of them is a viticulturist, one is a wonderful mason, and I think he can rebuild the winery himself, this Italian mason."

I said, "Look, I will go and stop and see what you have there." I went there and saw this beautiful property, I acquainted myself with the history, and I said, "I guess I will go to partnership. For a while, I have to work on Saturday and Sundays with you there, with your men that you assigned." His vineyard was not producing yet, and we went through Alexander Valley, and there was an old winery--Soda Rock Winery--one of the oldest wineries, by the way, which is on sale now. It used to belong to one of the pioneering family, Ferrari family of Sonoma County. They owned partially a machine shop in Healdsburg in the early days, and now it's a very progressive machine shop. The machine shop was also doing everything--horseshoeing and everything when the horse was a function. They owned that little winery, Soda Rock Winery,* and we went to taste some wines there and I think we bought five hundred gallons of Riesling and five hundred gallons of Pinot noir of Soda Rock. The vineyards aren't producing any more--been pulled out. I really located a great amount of personality in these wines. We transferred them to the old winery, aged them, and Leon Adams gave us the first lift by saying, "That's really the best Riesling produced in the State of California." We had a tremendous offering.

So I went into partnership, worked very hard. The Italian--I don't remember the last name--there were two brothers, Tony and Phillip. Phillip was a hard-working Italian mason. God, he was a winemaker and mason. He rebuilt that corner of the winery, we rejuvenated the first building of the winery, and we started to work there and a great amount of success in the small first years. But Frank, being a very smart businessman, was far more interested in the reds than in the blacks in the reports, because he was already a wealthy man. He had several radio stations and markets there and capital invested in Nevada and all over. I was a partner, but only with annual report showing reds and reds and reds. So finally I said to him, "Frank, I think it's wishful thinking. You are interested in reds, and I am interested in blacks."

He said, "Well, André, I am creating a reputation. Eventually, it will be a great fortune."

I said, "But you know, I am making a living, and now, the Korean War cut all my clients, I came back to Beaulieu and closed the laboratory"--because Bank of America cut all this research expense to the wineries. I kept only Buena Vista as my own investment.

*See also page 162.

AT: He said, "Under this condition, I am going to buy you. You are going to sell your interest, but I am not going to be able to buy you just like that, by giving your \$2,000 back. I am buying you in the contract of employment. You are going to work as my consultant, and I am going to pay you \$100 a month in consultant fees until I pay you. Therefore, twenty months you are going to work with me as a consultant. I will pay you back this damn thing." Meanwhile, I transferred my laboratory there, bene vole, without any compensation. Anyhow, that was Frank Bartholomew. But our relationship was very friendly, and I appreciated my friendship with Tony [Antonia] and Frank Bartholomew. We remained good friends, and eventually he sold his winery. I stayed with them. He sold the winery to Young's Market of Los Angeles. He sold his winery, I think, for one million dollars, from an original capital investment of \$4,000. [laughter] He is a very strange man.

Then my son started his career in Buena Vista--first assignment after he graduated from school. So therefore he was saying that he would will the Buena Vista to my son, in his will. So that was a great attraction to my son to work, with the idea that eventually he's going to be the owner. But he didn't work too long, because the situation was exactly the same as it was with me, and he moved to Schramsberg champagne cellars, which was then property of the [Douglas] Pringle family, not the Jack Davies family. He worked, and he created the first sparkling wines for Pringle at the Schramsberg, and then moved to Gallo.

Meanwhile, the new man, Al Brett, came there to Buena Vista from Louis Stralla. Louis Stralla was a pioneer, too, you know. Louis Stralla was a very strange man. You heard about Louis Stralla's history?

RT: Not much.

AT: He was the mayor of St. Helena. Somebody has to remember that history. During the Prohibition days there was ship standing outside of the territorial waters of the United States in the Pacific, which was a gambling and drinking club. You heard about this? It belongs to Stralla, his brother.* I mean, if you go through this history, it's a known historical fact. United States Coast Guard never was able to touch them, because they were gambling, and the wines and the liquors were delivered from France direct to that ship stationed in the ocean, and people were going there from Los Angeles, San Francisco, to gamble and drink and so on. And the black marketing was delivered from the supply into the market of California from there. Since then, of course, after the end of Prohibition, he built one of the outstanding hotels in Las Vegas--his brother.

*Frank Stralla. The ship was anchored beyond the limits of United States jurisdiction.

AT: This man [Louis Stralla] still stayed here and for a while leased Charles Krug winery. You remember? Then he bought his own winery, which is today the property of Heublein--Oakville winery.* That was Louis Stralla's winery.

Stralla was very active in politics and everything, and became a mayor and pioneer. He was a very smart man. I knew him very well, Louis Stralla. Louis was married to a Mormon, non-drinking, and John Daniel was married to a Mormon, non-drinking. Louis Stralla, being a very clever man, bought a property in Berryessa Valley, because he already had very good information that eventually there will be a lake. So he bought and planted four hundred acres of vineyard and sold it to the state as capital investment, and after six years made a tremendous fortune out of it. See, planted knowing that within the next ten years it would be flooded.

I was going there because there was a general agriculture there. And then the first time we started to apply very drastic application of 2-4-D as a contact spray on all the weeds as a weed-killer, and all surrounding area was grain fields in the Berryessa Valley, and there was a tremendous damage done to Stralla vineyard by spraying the fields. So he contracted me and Heitz as technical experts to appear in Superior Court, Napa Valley, to defend his interest. We were paid here as a technical expert witness for Stralla in the particular case of the damage by 2-4-D sprays. That's right.

Stralla is still living. He's a very handsome man.

RT: You were here for the first round of national companies buying into the wine industry and then retreating. Maybe we shouldn't start that today.

AT: Yes, I have several quotations about that, because I was exposed to the tragedy of Cresta Blanca.**

RT: I think I asked you [in a letter] about Louis Petri, and that would come in with that, wouldn't it?

AT: Yes, more or less.

*Built by Brun & Chaix.

**See pages 111-112.

Wine Industry Financing and Ownership##

[Interview 5: May 8, 1979]

[The interview began with a question about the dates of Mr. Tchelistcheff's laboratory.]

AT: At the time of the fire at Beaulieu I was operating my laboratory, because I was called in my laboratory about the fire at Beaulieu.

RT: So it was operating by 1947?

AT: By 1947. And that was not the first year of my operation. It was the second or third year of my operation. I kept the laboratory till around '50 or '51, when my son went in Korea. He graduated from Davis, you know.

RT: Dimitri had already graduated from Davis?

AT: Dimitri had already graduated from Davis. So therefore he was a reserve officer. He went to college in the age of eighteen. And he started to work in the laboratory two years before graduation from the high school.

RT: At sixteen, so that would put the laboratory beginning in '46--'45, '46.

AT: Yes, that's right. Forty-five, forty-six. So there is no question. And I know that the laboratory was open until 1951 or '52, because the Korean War eliminated my business contract by the request of the Bank of America. See, we are already again [strikes table for emphasis] back to the Bank of America.

RT: Yes.

AT: I would like to explain this.

RT: I think I asked you in a letter just what tests you were making for them.

AT: Now, as you well remember that this was a period of very critical financial or economical relationship between the financing organization and the behavior of California wine industry. In this particular period of time, the industry remained still, let's say, in its own childhood of future prosperity, and the price of grapes was on such a low level that actually the individual grape grower, farmer, had a very hard life to survive. I can even quote you the figures from this particular time. Varietal grapes, such as the Cabernet Sauvignon, for instance, and Semillon, were sold then between thirty and thirty-five dollars a ton. The common grapes were sold then for a price of eighteen to twenty dollars a ton. Since the industry was very limited, and the price structure was controlled not by the state or federal authorities or marketing authorities existing today, it was controlled strictly by the law of

AT: offer and demand. So therefore, actually, the grape grower was a slave of the vintner. What free enterprise of the winemaking existed was represented by the vintner. What he was offering, as far as the price for the raw material, was the law. "I am buying under my price, not in the price that you are asking." So therefore, all industry was in the hand of Bank of America, bank of [A.P.] Giannini, because Giannini actually controlled the agricultural level of California. So every individual grower borrowed the operational money from Bank of America. In Napa County, there existed more than fifty-two individual small wineries supported by growers. They borrowed their money from Bank of America, presenting their, let's say, collaterals in the form of wine produced by them in their own wineries. The collaterals therefore were controlled by the Bank of America. So the Bank of America required a compulsory necessity to control the physical qualitative status of their own inventory as a security for the little wineries of Napa Valley.

RT: Now I see.

AT: Now you can see it. So therefore, all the little analyses were done by laboratories, and it happens to be that there was only two laboratories then--Scott Laboratory in Berkeley,* which was directly dealing with the raw products such as the wine, and my laboratory in St. Helena. So the action was divided between two laboratories, and absolutely normal for me to have little tiny accounts in St. Helena. It was a very important account for me. That was my relationship between the Bank of America and my function of laboratory. Now it's clear in your mind?

RT: Yes, now I see.

AT: Now, fortunately, this thing disappeared, and fortunately the renaissance of the industry and progressive improvement of the industry changed completely the profile of economical structure in the wine industry. Today, in 1979, the same grapes that were sold for thirty dollars are going to be sold very probably for the price of six hundred dollars or seven hundred dollars. See, this is the correlation.

So the farmer was a poor man, a slave of the Bank of America. And who unslaved the slaves of the Bank of America was nobody else but the Gallo brothers. The Gallo brothers actually unslaved the small grower in the state of California from the influence of Bank of America, because they moved in the cooperative business, created the cooperative,** and saved the small grower from the influence of dictatorship of the individual family-owned vintners.

RT: They bought wine from Napa Valley Cooperative--

*Originally the Berkeley Yeast Laboratory.

**i.e. encouraged creation of the cooperatives by giving them contracts.

AT: No. Napa Valley Cooperative was a marketing organization of the Napa agricultural production cooperation. In other words, there was a contract, and the contract is still existing, between the old viticultural or vinicultural cooperatives in California, with the marketing organization such as the Gallo brothers. Now, they [the Gallo brothers] are also controlling the technology, the quality of product. They have their liaison officer attached to the cooperative who is inspecting and purchasing for them the grapes. It's a very sound organization. So all the technology, method of treatments, control of biochemical structure of wines, it's coming directly from Modesto. They have their liaison officer attached to the cooperative in form of technical adviser. They can do nothing without advice from headquarters, the main laboratory in Modesto. It's very, very important.

RT: Gallo has been increasing its own plantings, has it not?

AT: Yes. Gallo increased his own plantings to the extreme of, I think, 6,000 acres right now. But still, with the volume of operation of Gallo today, it represents very probably maybe fivepercent of its own total production. Then Gallo has contracts with the cooperative wineries. So the president of the cooperative, such as Mr. Virgil Galleron, for instance, of the Napa Valley [Cooperative Winery], he is--and the board of the cooperative--representing officially their liaison between the management of Gallo and the St. Helena cooperative. See, that's the structure of today.

Similar situation exists (or did in the past) in the other big organizations such as United Vintners, through the channel of the Allied Grape Growers association of California. That's another structure, you see.

RT: That almost defies understanding, because with Heublein involved--

AT: See, when Heublein migrated, with his enormous capital, into the United Vintners, there was a partnership between the United Vintners and Heublein. Only recently, finally, Heublein bought the United Vintners completely, just recently.

RT: Then the growers, however, are still a cooperative.

AT: The growers are still remaining within the grape growers organization. The grape growers organization is a big legal body, represented very probably by eight hundred or a thousand growers in San Joaquin Valley, basically, and there they have a tremendous political power.

RT: I think when we last talked, I asked you about the earlier round of national companies coming into this area and then withdrawing. I think you said you were in on the "tragedy of Cresta Blanca," after Schenley bought it in 1941.

AR: Yes. Tragedy of Cresta Blanca was a--tragedy, yes. I will say I still insist on the word of "tragedy." See, I was invited to taste the wines of Cresta Blanca, in Livermore, and the vice president in charge of production was an old professor--I hope the name of his will come to my mind--who used to be a professor of viticulture at the University of California. You remember this name? He was a very close friend of Dr. Amerine.

RT: Professor Edmond H. Twight.

AT: Now, he was a man of European training. He graduated himself from Montpellier in France. That was the time when Davis was more or less living under a tremendous academical influence in the field of viticulture from Europe. Professor Bonnet, whom I replaced at Beaulieu, was connected with France, a Montpellier graduate. Twight was about late seventies, eighty. (His son was also in the wine industry.) He called me, and he said, "André, being an agricultural engineer, and you are engineer agronomist from National Institute of Agronomy, I think I would like to have an interview with you and personally review some of my ideas and some of the products that I am controlling at Cresta Blanca."

So I went to Cresta Blanca, and we tasted several wines at Cresta Blanca, going way back to the wines of 1918, etcetera, before the Prohibition, and finally tasting the wines after the Repeal. I was really, really amazed at the greatness of these white wines of Livermore. Unbelievable. We tasted some Semillon, we tasted some Johannisberger Riesling produced at Cresta Blanca and I said, "Now, it's just unbelievable how beautiful they are."

RT: Both from before and after Prohibition?

AT: Right. Tremendous wines. As a matter of fact, I still consider, in my memory, when I am quoting châteaux of the past, I am quoting only three châteaux--Château Inglenook, Château Cresta Blanca, and Château Wente. I am not quoting Beaulieu.

RT: Is that right?

AT: Beaulieu produced excellent wines, but Beaulieu was a commercial organization, where there was compromising. So Cresta Blanca was commercial, but they were far more strict with the quality than Beaulieu. Inglenook was unbelievable, because even after the repeal of Prohibition, when John Daniel inherited from his uncle Inglenook, the position of John Daniel never changed. The philosophical position of Captain Niebaum still remained in the mind of his nephew, because if a vintage not corresponding to the quality of Inglenook, it's sold in bulk--never permitted himself to put on the market wine that he was not pleased with. Beaulieu never did that; it was too commercial.

RT: But Cresta Blanca really was one of the fine ones?

AT: One of the greats. So anyhow, coming back to the discussion with Professor Twilight, when he left I was supposed to take his position at Cresta Blanca. Instead, Professor [Harold W.] Berg, then just enologist, took the position of enologist.

See, the reason that he called me was very simple. We tasted several wines, and finally we tasted the wine of 1938 Riesling, and it was unbelievable wine. He said, "There's a typical example. I produced this outstanding wine, such as 1938 Riesling, and just recently I came back from New York, and they* gave me the orders. The total inventory of this wine was something like 4,000 cases, and they gave me the order to produce next season 40,000 cases of this wine. I didn't have the grapes to produce more than 4,000. So therefore they gave me the order regardless, use other grapes and call it Johannisberger Riesling. You see, I morally can't do it. I just got to run away."

So he said, "Andre, I am going to tell you. Now, I believe that you are the only one right now in the industry who will be able to continue this fine quality production, and I just can't stand it, due to my age." I was a young man then. "You will be able to stand this pressure and guide them properly and fight properly. I just can't afford to do that. These people are going to kill me. To save my life, I got to retire from them. So I recommend you take my position."

It was a great temptation for me, you see, because Schenley was a terrific operation. Schenley had just bought Roma** and Cresta Blanca. He said, well, he'd let me think about it. I was thinking several days and finally called Professor Twilight and said, "Now look. I have a certain moral obligation toward de Latours, and there are still many kinds of technical difficulties. The reason why I am here is to solve these difficulties, and I just don't think that morally I can afford to, just for additional compensation, prestige, jump from my meager position of enologist at Beaulieu to you people and leave them without a promise of repairing the damages done at Beaulieu." So that's the way it ended, you see.

RT: From the stories I have heard, it was typical of a whiskey company to think you can make wine like you make whiskey--you can make 4 million gallons--

AT: That's right. Well, it happens even today, my dear.

*Schenley

**In 1942.

RT: It still does?

AT: It still happens today. If the beer companies are coming, they are thinking it's exactly--it's a cash box. Families are coming and buying the wineries. If the still wineries are buying a champagne cellar, they think, "Well, as long as we are selling still wines, we will sell the champagne as well." It's that childish reflex of the business stupidity, without understanding the soul and the body of the wine industry.

RT: It's difference between manufacturing and--

AT: That's right. There is word of manufacturing. It's a factory or a winery, you see? There is always temptation to call it a "factory" rather than a winery. A winery is a manufacturing plant, but not a factory.

RT: Processing?

AT: That's right. It's a processing plant. But as soon as it's a processing plant, it's already a manufacturing process, and as soon as it's a manufacturing process, there is already, immediately, a temptation to call it an industrial unit.

RT: Professor Berg then--

AT: Professor Berg took that position. He was not professor then. He was just enologist, my colleague. He took it, and he paid a high price for it, too. He guided the Cresta Blanca, by the request of Schenley, to the maximum that he could afford to swallow and digest. But he's a very calm and very controlled personality. Harold Berg is a very well mannered and very well controlled person. So therefore, I think his nervous system was of entirely different nature than my own or Professor Twilight.

So he took it, and finally he was disgusted to the point he accepted the position of instructor at the University of California. He became eventually emeritus professor of University of California. Then Cresta Blanca remained in several hands before, fortunately, Mr. Nightingale went there and restored, qualitatively, the reputation of Cresta Blanca. The reputation of Cresta Blanca was restored by the tremendous effort of Myron Nightingale, who is now the chief enologist at Beringer [Vineyards].

But the Cresta Blanca wines are still very low in the reputation. They have no distribution in this part of the continent, but they do in the eastern section. Once you pollute something, it takes years and years and years to restore this. Cresta Blanca as a winery is not existing any more, as a functional winery. It's a rental place where Bob Mondavi stores his wine.*

*The property was sold to Wente Bros. in 1981.

AT: When Schenley divested from the industry, and the Cresta Blanca was one of the first.*

RT: So Schenley was one that came into the industry--

AT: Schenley and the National Distillers and then Seagrams. It was parallel influx. Except Louis Benoist sold Almaden to National Distillers, but far later in time [1967] than the purchase of Cresta Blanca or Roma Wine Company.

RT: Would you say that Schenley was typical of those that came and went?

AT: Yes. One of the most typical. One of the most typical. Seagram stuck to it, more or less. Seagram still has the Paul Masson.

RT: What about the Louis Petri story? Do you remember how he built up that involved organization?

AT: You are talking about young Louis?

RT: Yes, the present one.**

AT: I think basically I would say that the function of J.B. Cella in the industry was far more important than the function of Petri, and under the wing of J.B. Cella, Petri appeared on the horizon. You got to remember that basically, the bulk industry of California was all in the hands of the Italians. That's then. And the most prosperous, the most active, and the most aggressive family was the family of Cella and Petri. Then the prosperity of the United Vintners.

Who else was there connected with that prosperity? Who was the general manager and vice president in charge?

RT: Ebe Cella was married to him for a time. Burton B. Turner. He's still around. He was general manager of the Cellas' Roma Wine Company.

AT: The promotional deal of United Vintners then, as an organization, was done definitely by several other people, including [Lelio M.] Bianchini. He was another man who was very active in the promotion of United Vintners in a period of twenty-five or thirty years.***

*In 1971 it sold Cresta Blanca to the Guild Wine Company, which continues to use the Cresta Blanca label.

**Louis Petri died in 1980.

***See also interview with Louis A. Petri, The Petri Family in the Wine Industry, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1971.

RT: It grew and grew. It came from California, however, while the others came from the East, wasn't that it?

AT: That's right. So therefore there was two movements.

Of course, when Heublein moved in--Heublein blindly bought this thing, actually blind. I mean, I think Mr. [John] Martin and his clairvoyance-- Mr. Martin was one of the descendants of the Heublein family. He was married to one of the Heublein daughters. He's the only one living of the family, by the way. Mr. Martin is the brains of Heublein.

Mr. Martin has something that only a few businessmen have. They have, let's say, a smell of the business. One of his stories that I knew so well, it's the introduction of Vodka on the American market by Heublein. You heard this story? Well, it happens to be that in my memory I keep that very well because it was directly connected with the history of the Smirnoff Vodka. Smirnoff was a well-known house of fine quality distillers in the royal Russia, before the Revolution. The Smirnoff family managed to escape during the Revolution of Russia and settled down in the outskirts of Paris, and it reproduced the little distillery by the same name, Smirnoff and Fils--and son--in the outskirts of Paris. They had their own commercial patent for production of pure vodka. They started a little distillery with that patent of the charcoal filters, in Billancourt, but the clientele was very limited, because vodka as a beverage was absolutely unknown on the European continent except the eastern European states such as Poland, Romania, and Russia.

He was making a very limited amount--very probably 5,000 cases of vodka a year in Paris, selling them basically to Russian immigrants, and basically for the Russian taxi drivers in the streets of Paris, because in that particular time, after the end of the First World War, ninety percent of the taxi drivers in Paris, or Bordeaux, or in Brussels, were Russian officers of the White Army.

But Martin had the clairvoyance. He thought that the success of the hard liquors of America was directly connected with the standard of living of the American businessman, because cocktails were directly connected with the traditional luncheon in the business corporation, in the fine quality restaurants of San Francisco, New York, Cleveland, Chicago, etcetera. It was, let's say, unethical, or immoral, for the officer in the corporation or in the business to come back to the office smelling of the alcoholic beverage, such as Scotch, Bourbon, or anything else--Martini, on the base of gin, or Old Fashioned, or something.

So he thought the idea, "I think I am going to promote the beverage to permit the possibility of dry martini without smelling alcohol." So he heard about the vodka. He came to Paris and introduced himself to

AT: Mr. Pierre Smirnoff, who owned the little tiny distillery, and he said, "Mr. Smirnoff, I am very much interested in your business." So Mr. Smirnoff, whom I know personally, said, "I have a little business inherited from my parents, well known as Smirnoff Royal Vodka, but to be honest with you, it is a tiny business, and I am serving only the Russian immigrants, who are drinking vodka in the Russian restaurants, and the Russian taxi drivers, and Polish immigrants, and that's all I have."

He said, "Oh, never mind, I am very, very much interested in buying your business."

He said, "What you are going to do with this business?"

"I am buying this business with the idea to buy your patent and introduce this sort of product in America."

He said, "Oh, it's foolish. It's absolutely foolish. I do not recommend you even to think about it, because if I am able, right here, with the concentration of the Russian immigration right here, which are hundreds of thousands of people right here, to produce only five thousand cases of vodka, what you are going to do in America with this?"

He said, "No, I have a feeling. Now, what is the price? I am buying this from you and give you five percent royalties for as long as you live."

So I guess Smirnoff's temptation was fantastic, and Smirnoff sold the patent, and they built the first distillery in Hartford, Connecticut. From this little tiny business of five thousand cases of vodka, they are selling now over one billion barrels a year of vodka in America.

I heard another story from Mr. Martin himself, who was chairman of board of Heublein. He said, "What is the most interesting, André, is that Smirnoff never believed my success. Checks were sent to him in royalty. He became a millionaire in America, and he still couldn't believe--and he came to my accounting office and said, 'Now, I got to check all your accounting. It is impossible. It is impossible for me to understand how you promote my beverage.'" He became a millionaire, and I think he is still living. He has a beautiful property in Connecticut and is just living as a millionaire. That was the story.

So therefore, with the same feelings, Martin said, "Tomorrow, it's not the hard liquors, it's not beer, but it's wine--wine revolution." He smelled that Leon Adams wine revolution before the revolution started. Some people, they have that in the business. So they spent, blindly, \$145 million, by buying United Vintners--just blindly.

RT: Just on the same kind of hunch?

AT: Without any knowledge of industry, without any knowledge of corporation, without any knowledge of quality--without any knowledge. And they bought at the same time [strikes table for emphasis] Beaulieu, without checking the inventory, without talking to me, directly through the lawyer of Madame de Pins, Mr. Theodore Kolb, a very well-known lawyer here, and her son-in-law, Mr. [Walter] Sullivan, Jr., who married Dagmar. They convinced Madame de Pins to sell this business for \$8 million. That was ten years ago.

Apparently the situation was such that they needed a prestigious house outside of United Vintners. One was already under the hand, because Inglenook was already in the hand of Petri. See, Petri owned Inglenook already, so it was very interesting. He was with the United Vintners. So the next step was the next chateau well known in the great Cabernets of America--Beaulieu. I remember I was on the board of directors of Beaulieu then as a vice president. This never was discussed in the open conversation between the board. Neither one of us, neither second vice president or third vice president, knew about this. In the board meeting nothing was discussed. It was discussed strictly between the family--therefore between the president, Madame de Pins, and the first vice president, executive vice president, Marquis de Pins. Neither the manager, the second vice president, neither myself, production vice president, ever knew that. They sold it, and apparently they said, "We are going to request the price." To me, the value of Beaulieu was \$5 million. They sold it for \$8 million. I appraised the property as \$5 million. They sold at an incredible price. It was a tragedy, no question, for the family, but it was the family that decided to liquidate this thing, and there was a very good reason to do it.

RT: Were there family members who could continue it?

AT: There were several family members who--

RT: Would have?

AT: Yes. But then, I have to give you the reason why it was done, if you are interested.

The Sale of Beaulieu##

RT: Why then was it that the family did sell Beaulieu?

AT: Well, I am going to tell you. That's again--since we are in intuition--due to the intuition of Madame de Pins, who has a tremendous amount of intuition, a business lady with a tremendous intuition. And I am going to tell you why, how this intuition was sponsored.

AT: See, Beaulieu Vineyard was a private family owned company, built with a tremendous amount of physical, mental, and moral efforts by the founders--by Georges de Latour and Fernande de Latour--with the sweat and risks and tremendous amount of economy and their intellectual efforts, in the form of even political action due to their own connection with the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church. They created the prosperity of this business during Prohibition. I think I told you already about that. See, when the Prohibition came, he had that authorization.

Now, the principle of the typical French businessman of classic tradition in the business--he operated always with the cash money and never borrowed from the bank. Gain as much as possible from the business, and try to maintain your business on the lower gear, with the idea of your own prosperity and security, but do not go rapidly towards the expansion, technological expansion or any kind. Keep a very tight belt in the operation. And that was all right during the life of Mr. de Latour. Mr. de Latour managed to operate, due to his prosperity and accumulation of capital during Prohibition, to the point that he never borrowed money from the bank, and he became a member of the Bank of America Napa advisory board for that particular reason, being a very independent businessman with the good securities. He bought some of the stocks in the proper time, he secured the life of his, let's say, handicapped son, by buying the stocks for him in the case of his departure from life. He secured the financial stability, and always placed his money in the stock business of prosperous America, partially, and only partially replacing the money into the winery.

He was an old man. He was very cautious and very smart in operation, but the times goes on, and there is no way to stop time and evolution of time in the form of business, marketing, etcetera. The banking organization is only one single function that any American business can function with in the modern days, and we were moving towards the modern days after the Second World War. We were very prosperous after the Second World War, due to the fact that alcoholic beverages had been limited. Beaulieu expanded during the Second World War to the maximum of its own prosperity because its wines were sold directly, by Park & Tilford in New York--importer of several beverages and distributor of several alcoholic beverages. So the wines were sold very easily--one case of Bourbon with ten cases of wine. So there was no problem with distribution or anything else. As a matter of fact, a contract of thirty thousand cases with Park & Tilford of New York was expanded to the maximum possibility within our physical operational structure of Beaulieu.

But this cycle was over, and we were stabilizing on the distribution of 100,000 or 110,000 cases. Since all officers in the upper structure of Beaulieu were family members, well paid, a huge amount of income was going directly to individuals--the president, the vice president, the

AT: secretary--who were members of the family. So the function of capital investment was very limited, and there was a necessity, by the request of Bank of America, to expand the business.* We became far more business minded.

By this time, I insisted that qualitatively we should change our ecological philosophy and should give up some types of wines produced in the central section of Napa Valley and move to the microclimates of different ecological regime in the southern part of Napa Valley, in Carneros. So therefore, I asked for the purchase of new vineyards. That purchase then was rather limited--\$250,000. That was not too much, but \$250,000 in cash money was not available any more. So therefore, there was a necessity to create a loan, borrow the money.

Meanwhile, the union moved to the winery, and there was a necessity to sign the contract. The wage, from microscopical starvation wage, all of a sudden, reached the industrial wage. So therefore there was another pressure. Meanwhile, technology in winery, due to the severe competition after the Second World War, with the appearance of the competitive new firms in Napa Valley such as Charles Krug, such as Louis Martini, such as Christian Brothers, forced us to change completely our philosophy of technology. So there was a necessity to buy new refrigeration units, there was a necessity to buy far more progressive pumps, there was a necessity to create a far more progressive receiving station, there was a necessity to buy a new bottling machinery, and it was choking the family. It was already a shark that was continuously asking for more and more fish to be fed, and wineries are known as the sharks, if you follow the curve of technological progress.

When Georges de Latour passed away, he left everything to his daughter, Hélène de Pins, and Fernande, his wife. De Latour said, "Hélène, I am leaving this property without one penny owed to any bank, without any debts, and all my vineyards in the full production. You have to do nothing about it. It's a healthy vineyard, it's giving very healthy, fine quality grapes, you got your distribution, your business, and that's what I leave in your hands."

That story remained settled, with the deep roots, in the mind of Madame de Pins. Every time I presented my request of replacement, she was saying, "How come, Mr. Tchelistcheff? My father told me that he left me in perfect shape, and now you are asking to pull out the vineyards planted by my father." Pulling down the vineyards coincided with new

*According to a close business associate of Georges de Latour, he was very conservative financially, borrowing money from the Bank of America only for limited land purchases.

AT: technology--necessity of fumigation of the soil, which was unknown in the days of de Latour, necessity to go to root stocks certified by the University of California, which was unknown in the days of de Latour, necessity of securing the grafting of certified roots from the University of California under control of the certification plan. All this, including the labor expense, operation expense, marketing expense, continuous investment, forced the family to borrow the money.

RT: What about the varieties? Did you shift the balance of varieties?

AT: Yes, I shifted the balance of varieties. I shifted already. I created a revolution. I was a revolutionary-minded man in the field of viticulture in Napa Valley. As I came in, I said, "There must be something wrong with you people, because in my European mind, you can't built a reputation of Burgundy in the Bordeaux, and you can't build the reputation of Rhine in the Burgundy, and you are trying to build a reputation of Burgundy and Bordeaux and Sauternes within the same geographical area, within the same soil. There must be something wrong with you people."

Basically, the most interesting thing, only one man understood me, and that was Marquis de Pins, the husband and son-in-law, who said--and he called me "mon petit André," "my little André"--"I agree with you a hundred percent. We are producing the most outstanding Cabernet, and we should have only one type of wine, such as the Cabernet, and sell only one type of Cabernet."

That introduced the idea, why not go and contact Wente Bros., since we have already the business contract during Prohibition, and why don't we incorporate ourselves as a fine quality producer of red wines, and have a parallel line in our corporation producing all white wines in Livermore. Livermore white wines had been established already for years and years and years as top quality white wines of California. That was the idea. So we went in there, and we looked around the property to expand the Wente Bros., and they offered us a beautiful situation, but for some reason that never went through. So you see, that eventually created a cycle of a continuous depression in the mind of Madame de Pins--money, money, money.

RT: Did you in fact, though, shift to more Cabernet Sauvignon?

AT: Yes, I moved all the Burgundy varieties from here--uprooted, just pulled out, and we bought that 160 acres in Carneros, twenty-five miles south, right in the Bay Area, and I planted there to produce the Chardonnays and Pinot noir. I located a Burgundian climate there.

See, I was the first, with Louis Martini. There was another man who understood me very well. He said, "André Tchelistcheff, only two of us who understand what is California winemaking. You know why? Because the

AT: good Lord give us a climate, the good Lord give us a soil, and everything in abundance. We have a beautiful sunshine, we got the beautiful rains, we got the productive land, but we don't know how to select soils to the variety. We are just missing our soils for certain varieties. We got to go and look for these soils for these varieties in connection with microclimate."

So Louis Martini moved there too. Therefore, me and Louis Martini, we pioneered the Carneros region, which was known then from the old days before Prohibition as a fine quality region of Pinot noir and the Chardonnays. Stanly ranch--you never heard about Stanly ranch. Stanly ranch is a huge ranch of three thousand acres that belonged to the [John] Stanly family, a very wealthy family, and they had all planted, right in the neighborhood of Haraszthy* in the southernmost portion, because Haraszthy was partially touching Napa Valley also. It was planted, but during Prohibition it was all killed then. So we moved there.

So you see, in other words it created financial problems and we were showing to the Bank of America a net profit, with such a tremendous capital investment, not exceeding six percent of capital investment. So the Bank of America told Madame de Pins, "Now you don't have a business. Look, four percent or six percent, that's not a business, with such a tremendous capital investment and expense exposed to. Now, you got to do something about it." "Do something about it," means borrow more money and expand, right? [laughter] There is no other way to expand but to borrow the money and expand.

Meanwhile, she was already alone because her mother passed away. She was very probably sixty-five years of age, and there was already a second and third generation, fourth generation, you see. So the son-in-law,** being in a big business, understood that it would create some problems in the future. So from the point of view of security of the family very probably they decided that it's much better to liquidate the business and create a trust or something.

But I am going to tell you, internally, neither Madame de Pins nor Mrs. Sullivan can risk such an action, because actually, if we kept Beaulieu during this renaissance of the fifties and sixties and seventies, very probably Beaulieu would be sold not for \$8 million, but very probably for \$40 or \$60 million. So this is the tragedy of the transaction. And there were tears, tears, and tears. Even now, when I talk to Dagmar, tears are coming out of her eyes. It's not too easy to sell a family property when two generation were working so hard, from nothing to securing them all this prosperity, and all of a sudden you cut the relationship. Fortunately, morally they were pleased because they kept the original estate under their ownership, and they kept the original ranch and the estate, a hundred ten acres of vineyards, in their own name. In other words, they sold it to Heublein, and the same day they bought it back from Heublein, just to save this estate. They sold everything, but the same day they bought that back.

*Buena Vista

**Walter Sullivan

RT: Someone said one of the younger members of the family may again start a winery.

AT: They will have a right to start the winery, but without using the Beaulieu name, and unfortunately there was only one young man who was able to do it. That's the grandson, Walter Sullivan, III, who is about twenty-nine years of age, but he went into the big industrial real estate, and he is now already involved in the industrial international real estate and has his own office in San Francisco, in a partnership with somebody else. So he's already far away from it, and I don't see that anybody in the family--his brother-in-law is in a big business, another big international business in San Francisco, and the two girls are not married. When they are married somebody else comes into the family.

But then the problem starts this way--there is 120 acres of land, there are buildings, and they can produce, very probably, a \$1 million budget, but then they have to divide this \$1 million budget between so many members.

RT: When the sale came, you were vice president in charge of production. When Heublein took over, what did they do? Did they reorganize?

AT: Now, I am going to tell, and I have to be absolutely honest with you, I had been very tired with this lack of funds with Beaulieu. I was very limited with the progressing and upgrading the production in the vineyards and in the wines, due to lack of funds. Mr. Legh Knowles, who is the president of Beaulieu vineyards today, and the manager of the winery, Dr. [Richard] Peterson, who is now the president of the Monterey Vineyard (my assistant then at Beaulieu), we had a mutual discussion with Mr. [Otto] Gramlow, who was also vice president, accountant of Beaulieu Vineyard. We are kind of greeting this thing as the liberation for our business--to start with. When Mr. [Stuart D.] Watson, the president of the Heublein, came here in the company of Mr. W. Andrew Beckstoffer, the president of Vinifera Company, a farming organization right here in Napa, they called the first meeting in San Francisco for the growers of Beaulieu Vineyard, and I presented my introduction, a speech. It was a very enthusiastic speech about the security of the grower in the connection with Heublein organization. I said, "Now we are giving you far better possibilities to upgrade the quality of your fruit, which will give us the possibility to upgrade the quality of our wines, and the future is getting much brighter with the Heublein organization than it was before." And it was absolutely rational thinking.

I was not a young man then, either, and I inherited the position of vice president. Some of the things I am going to say are absolutely right, but maybe even unethical. Now, in the purchase of Beaulieu Vineyard, Beaulieu is supposed to remain as an independent organization, with an independent board of directors. So therefore, theoretically, all of us, we were carrying our titles. Madame de Pins theoretically

AT: was carrying the honorable position of the chairman, honorary, or the board of Beaulieu Vineyard, and Mr. Martin himself, during the first official dinner at Trader Vic in San Francisco, personally publicly addressed Madame de Pins and said, "Beaulieu remains still a family organization because Heublein is a family organization, and I am depending on you, Madame de Pins, if anything that you see is done wrong by my organization to the reputation of your house, you have a direct right to communicate directly with me by telephone, and I will stop all this misbehavior."

And, very unfortunately, we never had our meetings of the board of directors. Madame de Pins never was invited for board of directors since, and Beaulieu Vineyard as an independent organization died off within the next three months. So therefore, it was only beautiful words, only beautiful promises.

For the first three years, Legh Knowles, the vice president of Beaulieu Vineyard, and myself, as a vice president of Beaulieu Vineyard and technical director of Beaulieu Vineyard, we fought against any temptation of expansion, changing of the styles, etcetera. By this time, I was almost reaching seventy years of age, and I knew that the battle was lost. All that I had fought for, I fought for yet very severely. Finally, Mr. Legh Knowles called us three together, and he said, "André and Dick [Peterson], I am going to be honest with you to the point. You are professionals, enologists, and you will be able to adjust yourself, or prove yourself, and create a new situation to practice as professionals. I am strictly a businessman in a marketing organization, putting all my cards in the Heublein organization, because the Heublein organization provides me security for my retirement, etcetera. So from now on, I am not going to fight this organization any more. I am going to take the orders directly from Hartford [i.e. Heublein]. It's up to you to make your decision."

So I said, "Well, Legh, I have been staying with you for so long"-- I was very friendly with Legh Knowles, and I said, "I think it's time for me to retire. I give you a chance to work with Heublein. For three years I have worked for you, despite the fact that the limited age was sixty-five"--I was the only officer in the Heublein that worked longer years than sixty-five--" and I think I decide to go out." Right in the beginning, right on the sale, I was kind of tending to do that, but I stayed with them to give them really a chance to get acquainted with Beaulieu. And the farming management created by Heublein, without any knowledge of farming, I introduced all the managerial authorities to the new organization that they formed as a managerial farming organization of Heublein and called Vinifera. So I introduced all the viticultural problems to the new people, and they hired a new viticulturist after one year. I had at least one or two years to introduce this new viticulturist from the south (from San Joaquin Valley

AT: at Cresta Blanca vineyards) to the situation of Napa Valley; that was Bob [Robert E.] Steinhauer, who is not any more there either. He quit this organization a few months ago and went to Beringer.

Well, I left, and Mr. Chris Carriola then, who was the president of Beaulieu Vineyard, one of the officers of Heublein, said, "Andre Tchelistcheff, I still say that's not the way to do it, and I am going to give you a contract. You are a well-known authority. We are an import business. You know European wines as well as California wines. Why don't you take a position of liaison officer with Beaulieu Vineyard and be free, and you are going to be sent with your wife, and you will travel to Portugal, to Spain, from Spain to France, from France to Italy--taste the wines, select the wines, and take this responsibility. We are going to expand, very probably, in South America, Australia, etcetera." It was very interesting for me as a challenge. But then there was some underlying, very probably, tensions and so forth, and maybe personal jealousy from somebody else in the organization, and they never repeated this offer to me in legal forms. So I decided to retire, with the idea to go and explore my functions, my energy, my dreams of doing a much better job for somebody else, to somebody who is going to listen and at least use my experience. See? That's it. It's as simple as that.

RT: You certainly made that transition fast, and profitably for the California wine industry.

AT: Yes, that's right. As a matter of fact, I even said, "I am very much interested to give my experience to the industry right now rather than to an absolutely foreign to me corporate organization," because right from the beginning I understood the corporate structure and said, "I am an enemy of the corporate business."

The way we were operating there, we were supporting ourselves with the reports like that, we were spending all our time on our desks. We never had any chance to go to the winery any more. There were the big reports, and the reports were all sent to the wastebaskets in San Francisco, from wastebaskets to Hartford, and before the decision was taken took three or four months before the board finally formed a committee who would make a decision. By this time, it's too late to use the decision or recommendation. It's a crazy business!

RT: So while they knew enough to get into the business, they didn't have enough experience in it--

AT: That's right. But they learned, they learned. They lost quite a bit of money. They learned. They reformed the organization now. Now they are a business organization. They have their own ideas [with] which I do not agree. They are very independent. They are even out of the Wine Institute. They don't want anything to do with the Wine Institute. They are independent, big huge organization.

AT: So now--next step--what did I do to Beaulieu, what did I do to Napa Valley. Well, I gave thirty-five years of my life to Napa Valley, and I gave a great amount to Beaulieu, and I gave a great amount to all my students in Napa Valley, who today are very prosperous people and people who are already middle-aged, or above middle age. They are my first generation of students. I helped create the reputation of Souverain. Lee Stewart was one of my students. Bob Mondavi, Peter Mondavi, are both my students. Louis Martini, Jr. was student. Louis, Martini, father, was absolutely new in table production. He was a very close friend of mine, whom I admired, and I regret his departure tremendously. He was one of the giants, one of the men of the tremendous depth of understanding of wine. I gave him on several occasions absolutely free advice. I helped Sebastiani. I have helped several people. I helped Buena Vista, Inglenook.

I helped several people and I am very proud of it. They are very successful, they are very active, they are following my advice, and I am working with the third generation, their sons and young newcomers coming from the University of California. And all my new clients are kids, from the age of twenty-four to thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-seven. I train them, I work with them, and I see in them far more future than I saw in my own colleagues, and I have far more hope for the California industry than I used to have in the beginning, you see?

Major Technological Advances

RT: Let me go back, just take you briefly back to ask you about the main technological advances that you introduced over this period you've just been discussing.

AT: The basic technological projects of mine started with the study of malo-lactic fermentation in California wines.

RT: They had never used induced malo-lactic fermentation?

AT: No. They had never even known a phenomenon as a malo-lactic fermentation in California. They knew the phenomenon of lactic fermentation.

RT: I see.

AT: So therefore, right in the beginning, on my arrival, I was doing a private research and observation of the function of the wines during their primary storage periods in the winery of Beaulieu Vineyard. Then I started to check some wines in the neighborhood, and once I opened a laboratory I had an opening to large observation of wines

AT: produced not only in Napa County, Sonoma County, but Mendocino County, and I definitely came to the conclusion that malo-lactic fermentation as absolutely normal and natural biological phenomenon exists in California as well in the whole world--in South Africa, Australia, Europe, etcetera.

So we made the first presentation, with Bard Suverkrop, who was then one of the most outstanding microbiologists, a student of Professor William Cruess at Berkeley, who worked with me at Beaulieu as my assistant. We started to dig, experiment, run the experimentation, and presented the first official paper of malo-lactic fermentation within the fermentation section of American Chemical Society in San Francisco, in 1948 or 1949, at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society, in the fermentation section.*

Then the University of California started to pay far more attention to it, and Professor Dr. [R.H.] Vaughn from Davis was very much interested in starting work with me together on this subject. So we published an introduction of the first aspects of malo-lactic fermentation from an academical point of view, of biological research, and published this thing together.** This is where I started to be known as the father of malo-lactic fermentation.

Then, meanwhile, the University of California introduced the inoculum of malo-lactic fermentation, such as ML-34, ML-40, and I was first to experiment with this, in 1960. Since 1960 I solved the problem myself, through the compulsory control of malo-lactic fermentation by guiding malo-lactic fermentation in California red wines, by introducing the controlled method of inoculation or induced malo-lactic fermentaion.

Some of the people managed to do this and are doing it right now. We are going farther in our research, which is absolutely normal, and therefore we are now shifting to a new culture. We are borrowing European cultures. We are communicating with Australia, with the Rhone, with Beaune, etcetera. We are making progress, but we still have several problems that remain in suspension, and we are not quite yet

*A report of the presentation appeared in Wines & Vines, July 1949, pp. 19-23 under the title, "Malo-lactic Fermentaiton in California Wines."

**R.H. Vaughn and A. Tchelistcheff, "Studies on the Malic Acid Fermentation of California Table Wines," American Journal of Enology, 8: 74-79, 1957.

AT: pleased with what we accomplished during the last twenty years in playing the game of malo-lactic fermentation. Now we are planning to solve some problems with malo-lactic fermentation in the white wines in some regions where the acidity is so superior, such as Oregon, Washington, or some Central Valley wines that are showing high acidity in white wines. So we are now in the process of learning induced malo-lactic fermentation in white wines, in addition to the red wines.

Several people do not agree with us, including several authorities, including Dr. Amerine, but that's the way we go. And there is always several academical opinions and several theories, and I have been stubbornly going in this direction, and continue going in this direction. I am very proud of it, and I am very proud that I had no guides to introduce this method and to introduce this research, to introduce this way of thinking about the aging of California wines, due to the fact that I have such an experience in my exposure to these problems, in France particularly.

Since then, there were several symposiums on malo-lactic fermentation, and we are still working hard. Dr. [Ralph E.] Kunkee at the University of California, in charge of the microbiological department right now at Davis, is very much involved and published several very outstanding works on malo-lactic fermentation, and it's just still growing and growing and growing and growing. I just started the fire with a little tiny match of mine. Now it's just a big flame that somebody has started, and I am still a student of malo-lactic fermentation. I remain as such to the rest of my days. We always are using the new methods, new cultures, new inoculums, new observations, in guiding malo-lactic fermentation with my new clients in my consulting, who are very capable and very able research people also and doing their individual research within their individual wineries.

See, this is the first thing. Then I was very much interested in the process of the commercial stability of the wine. The commercial stability of the wine was a basic reason that de Latour brought me here, because as de Latour signed the 1937 contract of distribution in the eastern United States with Park & Tilford, he sent a great amount of wines without a technical stability on the New York market. There was a tremendous amount of return as a result of hazing up, clouding up, in the wines in the market. There was a necessity to do several things about it.

Meanwhile, there was the only known process, and that process was directly connected to the work at the University of California. We were all together exposed to the tragedy of the so-called mineral breakdowns of wines, due to our obsolete technology in the winery. We were still using copper, we were still using cast iron, we still were using the bronze. So therefore, when I arrived here, I immediately discovered the first function of cast iron, the function of iron and copper in the wines. It was well known to me.

AT: There was no other treatment but the so-called blue fining for elimination of iron, but the chemical reaction was actually not legalized within this government, and everything was done under severe supervision of the chemists because the over-fining could cause a reaction to toxicity by releasing the free hydrocyanic acid in wine--a very potent toxicity. So I refused to accept the blue fining as such, since blue fining was prohibited in France, and started to work with the idea, how to stabilize all these compounds together by using other physical-chemical methods. So I sponsored directly my research in the protein or nitrogen contents of the grapes of California. By this time, my son was graduated from Davis, and my assistant was Joe Heitz, now owner of the Heitz Cellars. So we sponsored, three together, the research of the protein contents of wine or juice in different grapes and different localities. We published the work in the early fifties, dealing with the problem of proteins and nitrogen in different varieties, placed in different soil in a different nutritional regime.*

Technically, there was nothing that we could do about it before except by a heating process, precipitating the proteins by the heating coagulation, which was a murderous process as far as the quality was concerned. Meanwhile, new fining materials had been circulating already in the industry, just barely moving around. Bentonite, a neutral compound known as "Spanish earth" in Europe, had been already a more or less known product, outside of other fining materials, such as gelatin and ox blood and egg white or isinglass.

Well, we were introducing bentonite. I started the research of bentonite clarification of wines, in a limited dose, in combination with gelatin and isinglass, and finally introduced this method of protein stabilization by using this method.

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AT: Of course this problem eliminated only one portion of the difficulties. There was also a problem of the mineral breakdowns. So then, since the chemical process was absolutely questionable, there was a problem of elimination of iron, or bronze, or copper, or any other heavy elements in wine from contact with the wine. So I said to Mr. de Latour and Madame de Latour, "Look, there is nothing we can do. I can ruin your wine by heating and applying blue fining, which is illegal. I demand a new budget, replacing of all the communication lines by stainless steel"--which was expensive and not even available, but Pyrex glass was available. So I was the first in the United States to introduce the

*See also pages 135-136.

AT: Pyrex glass communication in the winery--everything Pyrex. All communication lines were removed and replaced in Pyrex, and then I started to work in not stainless steel, but steel tanks, with baked glass lining. They still have the baked glass-lined tanks, blue glass-lined tanks.*

Therefore, there was hundreds and hundreds of thousand dollars spent by my own initiative by Beaulieu, which accounts for one of the statements by Madame de Pines. She said once publicly, "Andre Tchelistcheff is my great friend, but the most costly friend I have in my life. He cost me two and a half million dollars of improvements." [laughter] See?

But then there was another problem. Mineral breakdown disappeared, protein breakdown disappeared, but we had another problem--yeast infection and bacterial infection. Lactic bacteria then was an acute problem in sweet wines of California, and was in all sweet wines. Now, fortunately, Dr. Vaughn solved this problem by introduction of heavy dose of sulfur dioxide treatment. So Dr. Vaughn solved the problem of lactic spoilage in the sweet wines of California, and we owe him all the credit for it, because that was his research, combined with the research of Professor Dr. Cruess and Maynard Joslyn and Amerine. That problem was solved there.

And Professor George Marsh, who introduced the methods of mineral analysis, such as iron and copper, in very simple form--the industry owes him as much as anybody else for this analytical method of introduction of simple iron and copper analysis in the current laboratories. We owe him a tremendous amount of credit--unbelievable amount of credit. Unfortunately, the University of California never gave Professor Marsh a doctorate degree for this thing, but it was one of the most important elements. He is emeritus professor in the food technology--still active as a consultant. He is also a winner of the merit award from the American Society of Enologists for his work.

Then there was a problem of yeast infection, by wild yeast. We had an outstanding, then, microbiologist in the University of California, by the name of Dr. [John G.B.] Castor--the late Dr. Castor--who again, unfortunately, left this life very early. So I worked with Dr. Castor, and God, how many things we covered in solving this problem of yeast infection! We introduced several methods of sterile filtration through the pre-coating of tight asbestos filter pads with diatomaceous earth. We tried bacteriological controls from every sample in the laboratory in the winery by taking the petri dish, inoculating the wine. Nothing was satisfactory. So there was always ten, twenty percent wines going with yeast infection in the bottle.

*See also pages 84-85.

AT: So a very brilliant man--I don't remember his name now--introduced a new product for microbiological filtration of blood plasma and pharmaceutical products, a microbiological membrane by the name of Millipore, with the possibility to filter all the products, including blood plasma in purification of blood reserve, blood banks, or any other physiological human solutions, by using these membranes.

The wine industry and beer industry were exposed to similar problems, and the beer industry went to Millipore filtration apparently very successfully, due to a tremendous amount of bulk. I took the first experimental unit in 1960 into the winery of Beaulieu, which was a very little tiny experimental unit, and there started to fool around with Millipore. Meanwhile, Charles Crawford, technical director of Gallo, was in charge of production of Gallo wines. He was very much interested. He introduced at the same time a bigger model to Gallo. I would say this discovery of Millipore--now with several competitive firms dealing with this type filtration--was a lifesaver of California wine industry in table wine production. I am not going to say that I saved the California industry, but I was first who published, in cooperation with my assistant, Mike Grgich, and a representative of Millipore firm, Howard Aaronson, an article dealing with the problem of sterile filtration of wine by using Millipore. It was published in Wines and Vines and some other magazine. So therefore, it's my final achievement in the field.*

Of course, meanwhile, I was very much interested from the early days of the cold fermentation, of the German process--icy cold fermentation. Parallel with Peter Mondavi, very probably, who claims also the pioneering [laughs] job in this--actually, there is no conflict. Peter Mondavi is a great friend of mine. I think we, parallel, started to work with cold fermentation. I don't think I stole the cold fermentation, neither Peter stole from me. We stole the cold fermentation--implications of the method of fermentation were already well known in the industrial process of Germany, and we introduced German technology of icy-cold, lazy-growing fermentation to California. Between Peter Mondavi and the Krug winery and myself, in Napa Valley, we introduced the cold fermentation. Icy fermentation--today it's a very common practice in the production of all white wines in California. It took us several years of work, of course. That's one other achievement.**

*See also page 137.

**See also page 136.

[Interview 6: May 22, 1979]##

RT: You were mentioning innovations that you had participated in, in the winery, and we were wondering about two other developments in recent years that are important here--centrifuge and ion exchange. Have you ever done work on those?

AT: Let's say ion exchange, as a technical procedure. We were all challenged by this possible physical-chemical reaction, and as far as fine quality wines, we experimented then, in the laboratory, strictly, and we came to the conclusion that in the production of fine quality, classical wines, ion exchange columns should be rejected completely, because it completely disturbed the constitutional factors in the wine. We never were able even to approach this thing in the production of generic wines in Napa Valley. So therefore, I am going to tell you honestly, even today, with absolutely modern technology of the California wine industry, ion exchange is not existing in Napa Valley.

Now, as you know, then afterwards there were several complications dealing with the problem of ion exchange, because as we start to exchange potassium ions against sodium, we create some very serious medical problems for the people who are living on the low sodium diet, low salt diet, and there was a tremendous investigation done by the medical researchers at the University of California, and sponsored by the Wine Institute and sponsored by medical societies in the United States. So therefore, ion exchange today--the batch process or column process--from our point of view is not acceptable.

RT: But it is used?

AT: But it's used. It's used, with specific reforms dealing with the different molecular structures in ion exchange--but not in Napa Valley. I can assure you [strikes table for emphasis] the quality industry is not considering ion exchange as an answer to their own problems.

RT: We once innocently asked a winemaker in Italy about it. "Oh," he said, "don't mention it!" Because it's apparently illegal there.

AT: Right. Illegal, yes. So I think if the industry is using right now ion exchange, it is a very limited exclusive situation where there is no other remedy, and I think this was just a hope, a hope to solve several complex problems in the wine stability. Fortunately, this hope disappeared, as such.

Now you know, you are dealing with several physical-chemical reactions of exchange of ions, but we were dealing also with several problems of chemical stabilization. As you remember, in the past and even now we are facing several problems. They are not as amazing or interesting from my point of view, and this is directly connected with

AT: problem of the wine industry by the Food and Drug Administration, dealing with the problem of chemical ingredients used in processing of wine.

As you know, today the Wine Institute is fighting, with all their power, using all their muscles, against the possibility of giving up to the request of the Food and Drug Administration to list on the labels all the ingredients in the processing of wine. I can't understand this question very well for one single reason. We were fighting, for years and years and years, with the idea to achieve a standard of participation in the food industry of the world, by saying, "Wine is a part of our diet. It's a part of our food."

On food products several ingredients, such as calories and elements, vitamins, minerals, certain radioactive elements are listed. So therefore we finally reached that point that we started to believe and live within the status of the food industry of America. All of a sudden, when the food industry of America, in every item that is delivered to the consumer is mentioning all the ingredients used in preparation of this food--except the organic foods, such as vegetables, meat, etcetera--now the wine industry resists.

But even in the organic foods, such as meat, poultry, and fish, we have been discovering some toxicities recently. You remember several cases with tuna, several cases with other ingredients, and several cases of closing the doors to agricultural products of America in European countries. For instance, the European continent today has no legal right any more to import any meat products, beef products, from America.

RT: Is that right?

AT: We lost this right, for one single reason, because we liberally allowed, in the process of fattening of our beef before slaughtering, the utilization of hormone products. Medical research in Europe definitely came to the conclusion that hormones used in such a powerful concentration could be very dangerous for human consumption. So therefore, we lost our rights of importation--not from a point of view of sanitation but from a point of view of the chemical ingredients that industry is still using. There are a great amount of efforts to limit this thing, and normalization of the food industry is getting to the point, but we are a large country, and we have large industries. We are constantly complaining against the bureaucratic controls by the government, but the freedom is an excellent thing--freedom under control of the law--and being absolutely admirers of the freedom, we are exceeding our freedoms in every direction. So very probably we are exceeding our freedom in several directions in the table wine industry.

AT: I have a right to talk openly the way I think. I might be absolutely wrong in my ideas, my conclusions, but since you are asking my opinion, I am going to tell you even far more about it. This problem, you remember, of this "wine Watergate" started in Bordeaux a couple years ago--and presently this wine Watergate is going in Burgundy, as you know. Seven hundred sixty hectoliters of wines of appellation of origin of Burgundy were shipped without any controls of appellation of origin. So there was another wine Watergate.

So in my private, very friendly conversation about the legalities and legal misbehavior of the wine industries of the world, one of my very close friends, in the very high status--within the University of California--mentioned to me, "André, but we very probably have hundreds of Watergates within our own wine industry." I am not going to go deeper, but definitely there are several Watergates that are still permissible. Let's say, not permissible, but done by the wineries.

So I am still very critical about the chemical utilization. I am very critical about everything we are doing. I think we should be under continuous supervision of food industry. Unfortunately, we don't have sufficient supervision in the food industry, even in sanitation--in the restaurants. If you go in the fine quality restaurants of America, you will be surprised what the status of sanitation is in the kitchens. In some kitchens, if you go in the fine quality restaurant, and you go to the kitchen, you will never come back to the restaurant. That's true! Really! That's not proper. That's not proper at all.

Anyhow, we are shifting now to the second question. It's utilization of centrifuge. There is nothing new in centrifuge, of course. Centrifuge has been known in the dairy industry for years and years and years, starting with the hand centrifuge. In microbiology in the food industry, in laboratory, hand centrifuge driven by the arm of the lab technician was a well-known unit. Therefore, as engineering, the centrifuge solved several negatives of oxidation, of breaking down the molecules of the wine. I think modern centrifugation today in the production of wines should be considered as very positive technological progress. I think people who traditionally do not like to see a centrifuge in the cellar are doing a great amount of harm to their quality and using filtration in excess, rather than to use one single process such as centrifugation.

Centrifuge solved several problems. Centrifuge saved a tremendous amount of labor hours in the primary wine processing. In other words, centrifuge, to a great amount, replaced the so-called racking operation upon the finish of alcoholic fermentation, and speeded up the cleaning operation in the wine industry. So therefore, I am specifically in favor of the utilization of the centrifuge in the production of rosé wines and white wines, even those of outstanding fine quality.

AT: So this is my point of view for one single reason, because modern centrifuge eliminates all the negatives that we been so critically considering in the past. Gallo, as a great technological genius, studied centrifuge, let's say, for the last thirty years, and for a while rejected completely centrifuging as a process, and came back to centrifuging after the engineering changes were done in the process of construction, allowing constant work under a blanket of neutral gas such as a nitrogen or CO₂. So therefore, there is no oxidation. There is only one danger. If centrifuging is used too severely, they might break down the protein structure of the wine and might create some other problems, but that's only in the case of the blind utilization of anything. Every machinery should be used very intelligently, but not with blind trust. A thing that we are doing blind eventually brings blind, zero results. Now, that puts us back to what was done blind in the industry before, in the past of the California wine industry or the European wine industry. So I think I answered this question.

There are great amounts of changes that appeared. I think we learned a tremendous amount about the elimination of the heavy metals from wine, replacing the illegal methods such as blue finings and other chemical treatments of the wine. We replaced completely chemical stabilizers, such as benzoic acids and DPC and other problems of chemical structure in stabilization, or in prevention of accidental pathologies occurring in the reinfestation by the yeast, or reinfestation by wild yeasts, cultured yeasts, or occurrence of lactic or accidental other pathological fermentations. [interrupted by telephone call]

RT: We were discussing other advances that you--

AT: That's right. Let's see. We finally found a way to solve some problems of the protein instability, and in this particular, very complex problem, in the past. When I came to California, there were actually no remedies. The classical, traditional methods of stabilization by using the finings and filtration hadn't been doing any help, and the wines had been coming back from the warehouse to the winery to be retreated.

So then we started to go deeper and deeper in the science research of proteins, and we came to the conclusion that heating of the wine--not pasteurization, but heating of the wine--might help us to stabilize to the so-called protective colloids. I divide colloids in two groups, protective and not-protective colloids. Protective colloids are natural colloids that keep the natural proteins, not-protected proteins, in pseudo-solution. They are not in solution. The wine is clear, but the colloids are not visible. They are protected by protective colloids in pseudo-solution, false solution. So by bringing the temperature to 140 degrees, we are breaking the chain of protein colloids, and as we are breaking the chains of protein colloids, we are also permitting the not-protected colloids to coagulate and precipitate. But qualitatively, it

AT: was a very dangerous treatment, because it creates so-called artificial heat treatment or almost artificial maderization of the wine by applying such a temperature. So therefore there was a necessity to use a very high dose of SO_2 to protect, during the heating, against this oxidation.

That was not corresponding with our ideas of quality either, because we were using SO_2 in unlimited quantities before we finally established a standard under the pressure of Pure Food and Health in the state of California to limit, legally, the dose of SO_2 .

But with this technique we were using, we built special maderization chambers in the winery. We were using twenty-five gallon barrels, or fifty gallons, and it was not satisfactory. Wines became very brownish--clear, but brownish, fatigued, not corresponding to the quality at all. So we started to use some other compounds, then unknown, and we started to pay far more attention to the individual requirements by individual, genetic wines and generic wines, in as far as the total nitrogen was concerned and the part of proteins and albumens that are present in individual wines and the individual varietals that are in the vineyards, which is directly correlated with the process of nutrition of the different soils, exposure, etcetera.

So therefore, I participated very strongly with this research, and in cooperation with my son and my assistant Joe Heitz, we covered all the problems of total nitrogen in the varietal wines of Napa and Mendocino and Sonoma Valley. We started to experiment with the neutral finings, such as Bentonite--Spanish earth--playing with the physical reaction of electric charges, rather than with the physical-chemical reaction of the finings. So with the introduction of Bentonite we solved a tremendous problem in stabilization of proteins.

Then we stabilized the process of the fermentation of fine quality rose and white wines by introducing the icy-cold, lazy-going fermentation. That was an unbelievable advantage to the wine industry. That was done in the early fifties. So by doing this--well, I was one of the pioneers working on the cold fermentation. Cold fermentation in my days was already known in Europe--not in France, but in Germany. So therefore, we borrowed the scientific research for Germany, introduced to the wine industry the German research and applied industrial application of German research to California. Since then, all the white wines started to improve tremendously, even in the mass-production.* So that was the next factor.

*See also page 131.

AT: Then, of course, the final progress I recently achieved, which is still going up, up, and up, it's the elimination of pasteurization, elimination of heating in the bottle, and the replacement or elimination of other chemical stabilizers--a preventive or curative, and replacement of them by the so-called sterile membranes, Millipore membranes. We can really put the wine, without doing any harm, through a membrane of 0.45 microns, or going even lower, 0.1 microns, and eliminate all the microbiological factors from the wine. The wine becomes sterile completely, from the point of view of microbiological problems. So this is one of the greatest discoveries, I think, in the process of microbiological stabilization of wine.

Again, I had been participating in this considerably. Since I started this research, and Gallo started research in the same time--about nineteen years ago--since then, it's almost a compulsory, automatic procedure in the wineries.*

RT: There is, however, a little counter-trend. Some small wineries are producing unfiltered wine.

AT: Yes. Let's say it's a philosophical problem, right? And there are two ways to look on that philosophical problem. We know from the past that in the past we were exposed to so-called natural stabilization of wine by having all the time available for such a long-lasting aging process. As a result, let's say, California wines in the early thirties, after the repeal of Prohibition, or before Prohibition, were always showing an excess of heaviness, an excess of color, a brownish reaction, an excess of wood, etcetera, and so I never considered the thing as positive factor or natural. On the contrary, to my point of view, it was a rather medieval approach to the problem of the production of wine. But again, you got to remember that every time we talk about the wine, parallel, we have to follow parallel analytical road dealing with the problem of the consumer preference.

See, this is the problem of all elements of the food industry. There is always palate evolution, and the function of the mass of the food industry. So our palate evolutions, or cycles, are continuously changing. People are saying that every seven years every individual is changing its own cycle of preference, in as far as the daily diet is concerned. That's directly connected with the problem of age and our internal metabolism. I think it's an absolutely natural reaction. I don't think that neither one of us three would be able to consume a great amount of food and the great amount of drink that we used to consume, let's say, in our youth, running and filling the glass and

*See also page 131.

AT: drinking a half a gallon or a gallon of milk a day without doing any harm to our body. I don't think that today neither one of us will permit such a luxury. That's the same thing. It's a parallel.

So I would say, if you permit so, to answer by using the words of Dr. Amerine, who said, "Yes, that's a very good question. Now, I don't think that it is ethical or really honest to charge a high price for a bottle of fine quality wine which is hazy, which has to be decanted, which is not brilliant in the glass, which is neither satisfying your eye or your palate, where you are compromising strictly with the idea that this wine has never been treated by any technological process." And I think that's the whole thing. There is an extreme of technology, and I am the first to oppose against the extremes of technology. You can neutralize the wine, remove all the most important ingredients by using the modern technology, but in moderation modern technology only helps the process of quality. So therefore, even the so-called classical industry tradition of Europe, in the Burgundy or Bordeaux specifically, they have been already using this technology with the idea to correlate their standards of quality with the requirements of present consumers.

Now, originality of thinking, yes--well maybe. I have a very close friend of mine, Joe Swan, who has a little winery in Forestville, who is one of my friends and, let's say, to a certain degree, client, who says, "André, I never go to the University of California to consult. I never attend any meetings of the American Society of Enologists. I am strictly a European winemaker, and I live my own principles and I produce my own wines." Well, he's absolutely right. That's the privilege of every one of us, but when I have to pour fine wines--very fine quality wines--I have to decant and be very cautious with his wine.* Now, I know how to decant the wine, and I know how to explain all this precipitation, but the average consumer, unless he is a really outstanding connoisseur with a great amount of understanding of the wine, won't be able to stop this problem properly. So the average consumer apparently is not going to buy any of these wines with the heavy sedimentation.

So there is nothing wrong to be conservative, if you have time to be conservative, but it's very wrong to be conservative to extreme and to deliver the wine not finished, not properly aged wine just for one reason, because "I refuse the fining, and I refuse the filtering." That's my point of view. I am not advocate of extremism--again, I repeat--of technological progress. As a matter of fact, I am saying that we are now using too much technology, and by the maximum of technology we are ruining our wines. We are going too far with technology. But technology in limited understanding of the life of wine, of the structure of wine, of the metabolism of wine, is a great tool in the hands of the winemaker.

If we are going to say so, we can compare wine as a living organism with the human organism as a living organism. If you are going to remove from a doctor today the stethoscope, and you remove the X-ray, and you

*See also pages 171-172.

AT: remove the modern surgery of today, we are going to be sick exactly as we were sick a hundred years ago, and people are going to be dying at age of forty or fifty from pneumonia or TB or anything else, or let's say infantile paralysis--if there was no research, if there was no medical treatments and progress in the medical science. So as science goes, science helps us to live longer, and wines became far less toxic to our body. As a matter of fact, today we are trying to decrease the alcohol, make wines far more available for youth and being not as toxic in the intoxicated expression in alcoholic implantation towards our body.

This is a big problem, by the way. It's a problem on which you can spend a good day discussing the approach toward the wine and tradition and classicism against the technology, technology as a result of negativeness of classics, etcetera. It's a very interesting subject to discuss. Very often we fight against each other by expressing ourselves in entirely different directions.

Now, of course, you got to remember that all these things are directly connected with the cycle of general progress, and we have shifted from generic wines to the varietal wines, and we have become far more strict with the varietal wines. That's another problem that requires almost two or three hours of discussion, shifting from the past--administratively, or let's say philosophically even--from the past structure of the California wine industry in the production and marketing towards the modern days of today. It's fantastic, really. What we accomplished in thirty years, it's equal to very probably three centuries in Europe.

RT: There's one thing that occurs to me: When you came to California, had you ever seen redwood cooperage?

AT: No, not at all. Not at all.

RT: Has it separated California wines from the other wines of the world--the use of it?

AT: Let's say redwood cooperage, as such, in the modern days started to disappear from the fine quality industry completely, or even the bulk industry completely. Redwood as a construction material for tanks and wine storages--containers, was of course a very individual practice of California wineries, and you are absolutely right to ask such a question, because redwood in the past gave to all California wines their own individual aspect. Furthermore, redwood, saturated with the redwood oils and tars, requires a tremendous amount of attention in pretreating the container before putting in the wine. Actually, extraction by the wine in storage of the redwood chemicals, aromatic compounds, in the form of aromatic aldehydes and oils, can continue as far as ten or fifteen years.

AT: Now, I permit myself to accept the redwood storage, yes, under the condition the redwood tanks are very well seasoned, let's say, from thirty, forty, fifty, or a hundred years, as a container; or if the new containers, after secure chemical pretreatments of the tars and aromatic substances and oils have been twice or three times before used for the wine; or if after treatments the volume of storages are excessively large, such as thirty, fifty, or seventy-five thousand gallons, where the exposure of volume to the surface is equal to a microscopical relationship. In other words, a layer of wine in a fifty thousand gallon tank to the wood is so negligible that you can store your wine in redwood without picking a redwoody character--which gives you a cherry character, by the way. Redwood gives you an English cherry character, a cherryness that always lives in the wine. It's impossible to eliminate. So therefore the old wineries were known for their individual character due to the continuous utilization of this redwood.

RT: What about the size? There was not a lot of wood in the world that big, was there?

AT: Yes, it's the only one. But today, of course, redwood as a big storage was replaced by the stainless steel.

RT: In European wineries, were there tanks as large as ours?

AT: No, except the bulk industry, except the big industry, where the tanks are cement and stainless steel, or glass-lined tanks. They are glass lined. They are concrete tanks, but they were glass lined inside, even before. You see, the glass-lined tiles, it's very old in Europe. They are going away from that because it's very expensive, but it was known for years and years and years.

Glass-lined steel, it was a very hot glass lining of the steel, and the process was known, but it was expensive. You got to remember that the wine industry was very poor. California industry, being young, was a very poor industry, and was controlled by, let's say, speculative influx elements sometimes. Being a young industry, as every young industry, it went through a certain amount of compromising, but still in the past there were wineries that used only American oak or European oak. Inglenook, for instance, never had a redwood tank, right from the beginning. You see? So therefore, redwood was a solution to a beginner, with the amount of money that was available. The oak was available always as a cooperage material, but the money was not available, as the money is not available for oak tanks in Australia or New Zealand, and they are using their gum trees for storage, with certain treatments. So I think it's an absolutely natural element of progressively improving your economical financial status, and in the progress of quality, going to better qualitative elements in the winery.

AT: Again, you might ask me then, redwood against the stainless steel--stainless steel is absolutely modern material--is it good to store the red wine in the stainless steel, or is it as bad to store red wine in stainless steel as in redwood? And I would say, from my point of view, it would be far worse to store a young red wine in fifty gallon stainless steel than to store in fifty thousand gallons of redwood, because as soon as you eliminate completely the action of oxygen, it eliminates--absolutely stops, paralyzes--all natural reaction in the wine, in the process of aging. You see? So redwood in certain cases in several wineries is still usable, but in the big volume. Industry is going definitely towards complete elimination of the small cooperage in redwood. I think within the next fifteen years or twenty years there will be no redwood small tanks any place in the California wine industry, but the big tanks are still going to remain.

RT: Much more oak now, isn't there?

AT: Oak, oak, oak. Oak and stainless steel.

Vineyard Practices and Problems#

RT: We were going to go on to the agricultural practices that you had been involved in, and the new--

AT: Right. Well, let's start from the beginning. When I came to California, and specifically Napa Valley, there were only six thousand acres of vineyards in Napa Valley, and basically these vineyards were planted all before the Prohibition or just started to be planted after the repeal of Prohibition. Then the rest of the Napa Valley was a beautiful fruit orchard, with domination of the prunes, cherries, and partially walnuts. Napa Valley was one of the most beautiful valleys in the spring, when all the orchards were in bloom, as beautiful as Santa Clara used to be with the prune orchards.

Now, of course, the horse was still existing as a traction power, and as I came there was only one tractor existing at Beaulieu. It was a first model Ford tractor, a very solid model, and we still had eight horses on the estate, and the basic work was done by the horses. So therefore, it was a little traditional, rustic, and to me there was nothing strange to it, because as I grew up with Europe, Europe was exactly in the same shape. There were oxen, and there were horses. There were the classical charrettes and even transportation of the beer and other commodities was done in Paris, Prague, Berlin, or anywhere else, with beautiful horses.

AT: So therefore, for me it was absolutely natural to accept such traditional agricultural methods, but several things were very strange to me. It was strange to me that basically the planting was done with orientation towards Italian methods rather than French methods or German methods, and that was explained to me by a very simple theory. Pruning work was done basically by Italian workers. French workers were present, but basically, French workers came from the south of France, where the methods of planting were very similar. Vines were planted with a very low crown, with the idea that the low crown will give you a better frost protection, and low crown will give you a better distribution in crown pruning of fruit.

In vines that were planted then, maybe there was a good reason to proceed with such a planting, because varietal selection of Napa Valley was miserably poor, except some qualitative vineyards such as Beaulieu, Inglenook, and Beringer, and partially Salmina, where we already had introduced the modern plantings. Georges de Latour planted already Cabernets and Pinot noirs, and he used far more modern, Bordeaux technique in bringing the crown up, and using the method of Guyot pruning on the wire. So therefore there was already pioneering ideas of de Latour that were functioning then at Beaulieu.

Now, fertilization as a problem was basically oriented towards organic fertilization by manure, and there was nothing wrong with such a policy, because manure was available in great volumes, and manure was delivered in the huge trucks, basically from feeding grounds in Napa or in Sacramento. I remember very well the colored couple that were year by year connected with the problem of deliveries of thousands of tons of manure from the feeding lots of Sacramento. It was sheep manure, it was cow manure, horse manure, etcetera.

Unfortunately, the composition of manure under climatic conditions of California was entirely different than composition of manure in Europe for one single reason, because manure was stored in the dry piles, accumulated in big volume, and the re-fermentation of manure was going very slowly due to the climatic dryness of the atmosphere. The natural pasture was a basic element in sheep raising, so we introduced a tremendous amount of new to us seeds, wild seeds, to viticulture, which created a considerable amount of problems for us in the future.

So gradually we started to use chemical fertilization, continuously working with the idea. Meanwhile, the knowledge of agri-chemistry was limited, and there was only one answer to the problem in the science of pedology--soil science. The physical-chemical analysis was known to all of us, regardless of whether we are in Europe or here, as orientation towards the productivity of the soil.

Since then, of course, we made a tremendous amount of progress. Sprays as such were known in the primitive forms, borrowed from Europe. Sulfur was applied already in the very primitive forms, by using the

AT: burlap sacks. Individual burlap sacks were given to a worker. I remember fifty or sixty workers at Beaulieu Vineyard, going with burlap sacks--packs of sulfur tied up in burlap sacks--going through the rows and spraying, shaking the burlap sacks, and applying the sulfur.

RT: It came right out through the sacking?

AT: Yes. You put in burlap sack the sulfur, powder, sublimate of sulfur, right? And you start to shake and it creates now--this was a huge problem to me because it creates several negative factors, such as the heavy application of sulfur under very unstable climatic conditions of California, where extreme cold can be reversed in a couple of days to extreme heat, and there was a tremendous amount of burning of the foliage as a result of application. So I insisted to use already modernized methods of using the sulfur machine on the back of the worker, and using the hand sprayer or hand power by using the actual pushing through the nozzle and limiting the amount of the sulfur, only in light powder rather than the heavy pack application, as accidentally occurred.

RT: Pumped by hand?

AT: Pumped by hand--the pumps, by hand, as they are used yet in Germany or in Switzerland or in Austria. At high elevation, you can't go mechanically. Everything is done yet the same. But the machines I improved to the point that you can control the efficiency of application very well. So therefore, we shifted to this way, and finally in the late forties shifted to the mechanized sulfuring units behind the Ford tractors. So it's now in the forties. So you see, this is gradual progress in everything that we were doing.

Of course, pathology of the vineyards, the physical status of the vineyards, was--well, we knew several things. The action of powdery mildew already was known to us. The University of California was working very hard, and the Department of Viticulture, under the research managed by Dr. Winkler, toward solving of this problem of powdery mildew. And Spanish measles and infestation of cutworms--natural elements of life--and leafhoppers and other problems directly connected with the physical status of the vineyard. Cutworms then were controlled by using the baits, individually placed on the vines, and toxic elements, arsenic salts were used, because other chemical substances of little dangerous nature were not available. Since then, we have started to replace the primitive methods to more scientific methods, as the technology and Department of Plant Pathology at the University of California started to go deeper and deeper in the field of viticultural pathology. You got to remember that everything was new, and everything was microscopically small. As I said before, when I went the first time to Davis, in 1938, Davis was just a wooden structure of an agricultural college. Professor Winkler and his limited staff of two or

AT: three assistants, instructors in the field of enology and instructors in the field of viticulture, they were working with limited funds, and the most modern building that they built in 1939 was the Department of Enology.

Since then, of course, all agriculture in the system between the aspect of modern agriculture, as such, of the world and America and California specifically, we discovered new horizons. We opened our eyes on blind things that were known to us before as a fact of Mother Nature, but we discovered the explanation of the reaction of Mother Nature, and we really today stand with a maximum amount of knowledge, but not sufficiently yet to solve our own problems, because every day we learn something new.

So therefore we discovered that we were bothered not only with the inherited pathological factors, but already in Europe, when I graduated, there was a big discussion of a so-called virus infection. Virus infection in the late thirties, in European viticulture, was already a subject of a great fight between academical authorities in the field of viticulture, in Germany as well as in France. There were authorities that were sponsoring the idea of bacterial or virus disease--virus was then not isolated, because we didn't have the electron microscopes then, please remember. We were working with something of definite microbiological origin, but not available for isolation or incubation of a culture. So there was a theory of the virus, and we never were able to put our finger on the virus, and there was still a degeneration. So our position was: "This is a physiological degeneration." All the factors of the new pathological diseases that appeared, such as yellow mosaic, or fanleaf, were nothing else but the factors of degeneration of the vineyard rather than virus disease. And to a certain degree, yes, there is always a problem of degeneration or fatigue rate--as in old age, certain organs start to degenerate, right? So the vineyards were very old, and some vineyards were over a hundred years of age, and they had been degenerating by the physiological fatigue, lack of nutrition, or like lack of vitality in the human cells as existing in us, lack of vitality in the vegetative cells. So there was a big theory of degeneration.

So this fight started there, and was inherited, of course, here from Europe--moved in. Fortunately, we had a very aggressive Department of Plant Pathology then as we started to grow. I think the most important factor in viticulture, in the pathological research of the last century, was the work done by one single person. It was work done by Professor Emeritus Bill [William B.] Hewitt, who retired three years ago from the Department of Plant Pathology and moved to the Central Valley and established a consulting business in Santa Maria Valley. Just now I heard from him that he has finally said, "As a consultant, it happens to be that I started to work very much harder than being a professor and working with the extension service of the

AT: University of California. It's killing me, that consulting job, because everybody is coming to me because I am right here now, available." So he said, "I am quitting, André. I am not going to do anything else if I can." So he sold his house in Santa Maria, and he moved to Oregon, right near Washington, and built a little house in the delta--Columbia River. He said, "I am afraid that the Oregon State and Washington State now will start to bother me, but they are much farther from me, and maybe they don't need me as much because the industry is smaller. So they are not going to fatigue me as much as the huge new acreage planted in the Central Coast."

So Bill Hewitt was really the first man, and then helped by Dr. [A.C.] Goheen of the United States Department of Agriculture, who was assigned as a co-worker with Dr. Hewitt, and who worked in charge of the viticulture and plant pathology. Dr. Goheen was shipped from Washington, D.C., to give him a hand, and I think Dr. Goheen is still sitting in that high situation, leading the viticultural plant pathology.

Anyhow, Hewitt brought us the controls of mildew, Hewitt brought us the controls of Spanish measles, Hewitt brought us the modern way of approaching the virus disease, by introducing this acute research of the virus disease in the experimental laboratory at Davis. But Hewitt was working alone, and his only post graduate student was helping him. Everything that was done then, there was no budget for such a research.

So I was a young man. I was full of energy, and I was very close to the University of California in those days--much closer than I am right now. Since the University of California was a young institution, and I was not a young kid, but I was in the late thirties still coming into the new challenges, I kept my contact very close to activities of the University of California, and I became one of the most loyal students of the University of California. I am still considering myself one--and the people are saying, "You are the dean of California or American wine industry," and so on and so on.

So I said, "The highest title that I am carrying"--and I am very proud of it--"the highest title that I hope will be buried with me and put on my grave, 'a permanent student of the University of California.'" Because you see, I learned so much at the University of California. I brought the background of Europe, but then I grew mentally, intellectually, in my profession in California. What I introduced here was known to them. I shifted all my knowledge to them and permitted them to go and proceed with my knowledge to further research in the field of viticulture as well as in the field of enology.

So we started to work with the virus disease, and Napa Valley was the basic center of research between Hewitt, myself, and some other individuals who were very active then in viticulture, such as the

AT: Mondavi family, Martini family, [Jerome] Draper family, etcetera. But by this time, we have a little group called Napa Valley Vintners, which was not an administrative political group. Louis Martini, Sr. formed this group as a way of having fun together, rather than to proceed with formulation of the political or geographical appellation of origin, or dealing with corporate function, etcetera. It was a little group of vintners, very limited then. I think it was eight members. We had once a month a beautiful luncheon in the old Miramonte Hotel that today is a very modern French restaurant, which is controlled by an Italian family. We had a beautiful lunch that lasted three or four hours, and we had a very friendly wine tasting, beautiful dinners, singing the songs of Italy and France and so on and so forth. Today it's already a powerful administrative organization.

Talking to my superiors at Beaulieu, and to one of the ex-vice presidents of Beaulieu, I said, "I think we should sponsor the idea of financing the Department of Plant Pathology. They don't have anything. They don't have a greenhouse to work in." So I introduced Hewitt to this group, and we started to work on this deal in Sacramento by giving Hewitt and the Department of Plant Pathology a first greenhouse to work with the viruses.

Since then we have been working constantly together, and finally we came to the problem of virus certification. See how it went? I was one of the members supporting the virus certification, and I was the first who established the so-called propagation clean block in Napa Valley, of the released free-of-virus root stocks and selling them in the Napa Valley, and I certified first, within the property of Beaulieu Vineyard, the arrangement of a propagation block for the certified root stocks. It was a scientific breakthrough, basically.*

It was hard for me to do it because it required a tremendous financing. We introduced then the compulsory necessity of soil fumigation. Soil fumigation was unknown in the past. So under the controls of the Department of Plant Pathology and the Department of Agriculture of the State of California, we presented this project of establishing a propagation block in Napa, because experimental station of University of California then was a neglected baby yet, not properly financed. In establishing this thing, I kind of took the position of the leader in the industry.

Unfortunately, in every research there are ups and downs, and unfortunately in those days there was only one root stock available for planting free of virus disease, St. George root stock, Phase I. No other

*See also interview with Harold P. Olmo, Plant Genetics and New Grape Varieties, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1976.

AT: clean root stock, free of virus, was available then. So I planted this experimental block of five acres, planted several varieties but on one single certified root stock, and we were going through the inspection, as any propagation blocks or nurseries are doing, under quarterly inspection by the Department of Agriculture in the State of California and the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of California.

Meanwhile, after four years of existence (and we started to already propagate this stuff from this experimental stock) all of a sudden the Department of Plant Pathology discovered that the first release of all certified root stocks--St. George, Phase I--carried one virus. All virus had been eliminated except one virus. It's a leaf-roll virus. It was a tragic thing, by the way, to all of us.

RT: My word!

AT: It was a very negative reaction to all of us, not only basically in the nurseries, who did exactly the same thing--took this as a clean root stock. So I was forced to spend a great amount of money of the company. The certification was removed from this thing completely. The company spent thousands and thousands of dollars in all this process. So there was a blot in the industry. The nurseries of certification of the University of California, placed at Davis, were too close to the old experimental vineyards at Davis, so the flying insects, or soil insects, were penetrating. You see, the limits then prescribed by the Department of Plant Pathology was twenty feet of fumigated soil. Since then the science of nematology--as a branch of pathology--discovered that nematodes, carrying disease, have a tendency to slow migration in the soil, and the migrations are from two to three or four feet a year. So within four or five years, the distance of sixteen feet was not sufficient to eliminate the nematodes completely--even in continuous fumigation of the border. Then we discovered that since the soils are contaminated with virus-carrying nematodes, every time you go or I go there, my pickup or truck is carrying the nematodes, and we really--it wasted the whole thing.

So that was a tragedy, and I think we are still suffering from this tragedy. We released St. George, Phase II, and discovered the St. George, Phase II, carried another rare virus after four years. Finally we decided on St. George, Phase III, now, which is free of all virus existing, but new viruses are constantly appearing. Can you imagine? The new virus and new reaction. As we go and learn more, we learn more about it, and little tiny things that we attributed to the action of a previous virus, suddenly the new virus is working parallel. So you see? Lack of limitation there. As you grow and grow and grow, you start to learn more. You start to learn more negatively, by seeing how little you know. See, this is the tragedy. You learn, and every time you learn more you know that you know less and less and less, because what you are absolute in learning already has become a zero factor. You have

AT: to forget this, put a cross on ten years of work and start to work under an entirely different direction. This is the challenge of the science, you know, in application to the industry.

It's a tragic thing. It's a tragic thing directly connected with the capital investment, or initiative of capital investment, when people are saying, "There is a Mr. Tchelistcheff, who worked for me twenty-five years. I am presenting him with this watch. He is a close friend of mine. He became not only an employee but really a member of my family, and I give him this as a souvenir of twenty-five years of work, this Swiss watch. But do you know, my friendship, how much it cost me? Mr. Tchelistcheff spent, in twenty-five years, in research and progress at Beaulieu Vineyard, \$2.5 million." [laughter]

See? It's really true, too, because science, and industrial application of science in the field, in the soil, or in the wine, it's a shock that continuously requires far more food, far more dollars--dollars, dollars, and dollars. It's very hard for a proprietary investor--individual, specifically of a certain age--to follow these continuously growing requirements of progress. Technological progress is a very expensive thing.

You see, we know now--the oil crisis right now--we created the standards of oil, and these standards of oil are existing only here and in Hawaii, and the refineries of the surrounding states are not able even to give us the gas that we need because our technological standards are so high.

So therefore, now we are coming to difficulties of today. Well, of course we are far better than we used to be. By tremendous work from the past we eliminated several factors. We very probably would be dead a long time ago, but we are still not in a position to control several elements of the nature. Even with modern methods of soil fumigation, research in the nurseries of the pathological station, we are still not in a position to solve these problems.

I am going to tell you what is the tragedy as we accumulate this progressive knowledge, and this tragedy will live very probably for years and years and years ahead of us unless we are able to finally detect something specifically selected for one individual vine, for every individual pathological reaction, in the vineyards or in the winery.

Dr. [Dewey J.] Raski, who has been chairman of the department of pathology in the section of nematology, with whom I worked for years and years, finally came to the conclusion that regardless of what we do, what our modern methods of soil fumigation are, we can secure, even with the illegal dose of fumigants, a free life of virus for only a maximum of ten years, specifically in deep soils.

AT: See, it happens to be that in deep soils--and we know that again from the research, as we have been pulling the old vineyards--of the depth of fifteen or eighteen or twenty feet of arable soil, roots grow way down in the search of nourishment and water. Now, as we pull them out mechanically, we can't uproot roots in the depth of eighteen feet. There is no way to do it. So we pull maximum roots, but secondary roots are left in that particular section down in the depth of ten, fifteen, or eighteen or twenty feet. Nematodes are feeding constantly on the lively roots, or remaining root cells. As you know, in plants there are little tiny, tiny roots. Actually, the other roots, they are only transportation. They are channels, with every year new roots that are functioning. So nematodes are living on these roots.

As we fumigate the soil to a depth, let's say, of three feet or four feet, for six, seven years we don't see any damage done to us, because the roots are still in that area of complete fumigation or sterilization. But as soon as they start to move deeper, and the nematodes are already ending their reserves in deep soil, they start to move in the upward direction. Root moves vertically down and nematode moves in the search of new food, and finally they establish contact, and they start to infest again. They start, gradually, to reinfest this vine, by lesions and then move to the other one, and the vine becomes infected, and then somebody would take the graft from this vine and graft to another healthy vine. That's the way it goes.

So the parallel research in Europe, in Geisenheim or Montpellier, is coming to the same conclusion. Now, European practices are coming to such a severe conclusion that last season when we went over to Montpellier and discussed it with one of the viticultural authorities, Professor Denis Boubals of Montpellier (a great admirer of California, by the way, great admirer and great friend of Amerine, Winkler, everybody--Olmo, University of California, speaks fluently English), he said, "Look, we have been doing everything that you have been doing in Europe with virus disease, and we are coming to the conclusion that we still got to use fumigation, but we just got to give [strikes table for emphasis] an original approach to the old-timers. We just got to consider empiric parts of the past, forgotten to ourselves, assuming that we are to work here. We have to leave the vineyard, after pulling out, for a maximum of ten years, vacant from the vines, to let the Mother Nature and the nematodes starve to death in purification, and then apply, as a protective method, fumigation. Or, as a compromise, at least give four years of rest in the shallow soils and then go in."

But you see? This is the excess of technology. As we started with Hewitt, we required two years of rest, and then as technological progress moved in, University and technological apparatus were changed, and new chemicals were involved, we started to say, "Pull this thing! [strikes table] Fumigate! [strikes table] Plant the next thing!"

AT: So therefore, they already came to the conclusion, no way of solving this thing but to go back, rectify with the knowledge of the past, and use the modern technology. Very probably we are going to do the same thing. But unfortunately, economically for us, it's a taboo. Although it's far more taboo in the region of Burgundy, but in the region of Burgundy they are replacing every ten or fifteen years new vineyards now, because virus is destroying them, too.

So this is the science, you see, and this is the agriculture. I put all my years into it, in viticulture, and of course I worked in the connection with frost protection, and God, I introduced--I was the pioneer in the Napa Valley in frost protection. I presented the problem of frost protection to the Vintner's Club of Napa and to my own owners. They said, "But André, you are requiring a prohibiting method, and it'll cost so much to protect this thing." You see, there was no protection that was available then, because the knowledge of frost was very limited. Before, people used to believe that heavy smoke, as a blanket, protects. Science said, "Not at all. It's not a help to keep in suspension," and "create your regional climate that is controlling frost protection, not this cold smoke or tar laying on top."

So I said, "We have only one facility now, and there are millions and billions of tires laying in the fields, in Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco. We just got to go there and load them, and the people are going to be very glad that we are going to move all these tires, because they are just--" So we moved to the tires [to burn] and before we moved to the tires, we moved to the hay. We put the compressed eighty-pound haystack right in the vineyard and started to burn compressed hay. We created smoke, but we didn't create heat calories. So we went to tires, which created smoke, unbelievable smoke--today, you can't even think about that--and tremendous heat calories. But with these methods we were just covering with back dust everything around to such a point that people in Napa and Vallejo, and white furniture and white rugs, and the laundry outside were all black. [laughter] So we started to introduce the orchard heaters that were known in the citrus industry. We introduced the heaters, and we progressively worked harder and harder and harder.

Then we introduced the wind machines with the heaters. Then we borrowed from German industry spraying technology, with water, and we have been using helicopters, successfully, unsuccessfully, two helicopters--one helicopter above, one helicopter below. We spent a great amount of energy. I spent twenty years of my nights in the vineyards on protection. Actually, I proved then that capital investment in one single year covered a capital loss of one million dollars in fruit. So expense of \$250,000 in heat protection is actually compulsory insurance in protection. Since then, as we proved this thing to the farmer, I think the California wine industry spent very probably not

AT: millions but already close to a billion dollars in the frost protection, by using these two methods. Now rarely you see the vineyard not protected against the frost--rarely--because of insurance, you see.

Before [in the post Repeal period] the profits of the wine industry were very liberal, giving thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, hundred percent profit. Now the whole economical cycle, economical life in agriculture and viticulture, has changed. Profits went down, down, down, down, down. Every ton of grapes that used to cost fifteen dollars a ton became a cost of thirty dollars a ton, eighty dollars a ton, hundred dollars a ton, hundred fifty dollars a ton, and finally reached the high level of today, from six hundred to one thousand dollars a ton. So even with a production of three tons per acre in the average vineyard of Napa Valley, frost would remove three thousand dollars a year from your vineyard. Plus, frost would remove three tons of fruit from the winery, which is gaining additional capital in the marketing from every bottle of wine. So therefore they start to understand that this is not a prohibitive action of a crazy man such as André Tchelistcheff. The board of directors on the Bank of America called Madame de Latour and said, "You have to eliminate your superintendent Andre Tchelistcheff from the responsibilities of the vineyard. He is going to put you in the bankruptcy because he is spending so much money on frost protection." [laughter] See?

But then, Madame de Pins started to look much closer to my figures and losses and said, "Well, you are right. We should protect ourselves. We are just blowing our money every year by letting the Old Man Frost grab our vineyards. So finally we decided, and we moved in very rapidly, and I was the first to really introduce the great amount of heaters. I finally covered all the properties of Beaulieu Vineyard, and there were 750 acres, with a complete heat protection, and in 1970, when the average loss in the industry in Napa Valley was about fifty to seventy percent--some people lost everything--I never permitted one single acre to be lost, but I burned 250,000 gallons of diesel or stove oil.

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AT: So therefore, finally, as I said, in 1970 I set the system with the idea to have a complete security in protection, parallel to research by Dr. [Herbert B.] Schultz in the Department of Engineering. Again, this problem of mine was directly connected with the University of California research, and that's in the agricultural engineering department at Davis. Dr. Schultz, a German scientist, was very well acquainted with the problem of frost protection in Germany, brought the German theories there, and started to work in the Department of Agricultural Engineering, taking exclusively the project of frost protection, and he established mobile microclimatic stations, learning everything about how the frost acts, and what is the variation of the function of frost. We knew very little about it, see, about the function of frost in the physical structure of air movement, difference of the temperature between the soil

AT: level and the elevation, let's say, one foot above, two, three, four, and going to elevation of the last wire, six feet above the ground. We learned everything about it.

We learned about the temperature above our atmosphere, and correlated inversion, from the temperature above, to the ground level. We learned about inversion. And they gave us the understanding by saying, "In your particular situation, in Napa Valley, you don't have the inversion above. That's the reason you are not successful with your helicopters." Because as I put these two helicopters flying--in Oakville, on the ranch, at two o'clock in the morning--I put my upper helicopter in an elevation of four hundred feet, with the idea to locate additional heat coverage, you see, and he located me two degrees above my temperature on the ground. I said, "Go higher."

He said, "I don't have it. I still have two degrees."

I said, "Stand in two degrees. Bring me to the next helicopter who is flying 150 feet above me. Bring me two degrees. I need two degrees." By the time the second helicopter picked it up, I gained only half a degree. So therefore it was clear we don't have inversion, because the geographical situation of the valley corresponds with the physical function of frost. Frost has exactly the same degree of gravity as water.

So the frost is coming from where? Canada and Alaska, from the Northwest--winds that are blowing this cold, icy air through Canada to the North Coast. Now as soon it passes one ridge of the mountain it settles that temperature, moves up and goes to the second ridge of the mountain, by gravity, and if you got another ridge of the mountain, that valley will freeze, because the frost will stop right there, and the higher temperature will move to the second valley, and eventually in the third valley you have far less frost than in the first valley.

So therefore, gravity is a very important factor, and since you have such a high inversion, there is nothing to borrow for us, because it's only an icy cold air that is blowing there. So we learned about this, see?

So we started to work with idea how to economically use the function of oil, one of the best combustion materials that gives you the maximum of heat, diesel oil. Diesel oil, as heating oil in the stoves, with all the impurities such as sulfur, that we can't use in our cars, but still it is a by-product. Today it's also a very critical heating oil. So we decided to go, and technology was going also, together, manufacturing technology.

Now, some people have the idea that porous sawdust bricks soaked in the diesel oil, with complete saturation, can be packed in the black wax paper, and in the center of this brick, a little tiny element

AT: of firing can be located right as a capsule. Then, as you go and light with a torch, you light this. Rather than use a concentration of very expensive orchard heaters, they use the bricks. But unfortunately, bricks are of very short duration. So instead of using sixty smudge pots that protect absolutely against the frost, we were using 160,240 bricks, with the idea to have security.

So then we shifted to another container, wax container in the carton, again with the same principle, to burn the wax and fuel oil under the wax. Then we gave up with this thing. Finally, we started to shift to the ameliorated form of the orchard heater, which was then primitive smudge pots, to the higher combustion, university-style orchard heater, where you can control the combustion of the oil by controlling access of oxygen in complete combustion, limiting the smoke.

We were still smoking the valley to the point, with this system, that early traffic going to Vallejo or Oakland was just blind in the highways. The valley was all black. Then, of course, all the negatives started to appear, and we started to correct this thing. We started to put in the wind machine, with the idea to put only border heaters, rather than to cover the whole acre area with heaters. The wind machine sucks the heat inside from the perimeter.

Then finally we went to higher machines, covering not only four or eight acres, but covering sixteen acres, and you see them right now, big units. Then we went to the mechanized lighting of the modern heaters without using oil, by using butane gas. Oil lines were permanently set in the field. Let's say you have a standing unit, and you got the light oil burner connected by a plastic line with the main line of oil, which is pumped from the basic tank directly to the whole field, and then we lighted them with the blow torch, or with a hand torch. Then we put the electric line in to create the contact. We lighted them with electric lighters. Everything is really expensive. We are using these very complex methods of frost protection right now, and if you go to Carneros, if you jump from the main highway to the left, to Stag Island, you will see all these fields covered with these systems, and huge diesel oil tanks in the fields.

It's very expensive, but at least you are saving a great amount of labor. I used to have, with my primitive methods before, lighting individual smudge pots with individual lighting torch, I used to have in the field sixty people. This work was very complex work, because you are trying to control your nerves, not calling these people. Sixty people are paid from the time you call them, if they are lighting or not lighting. So therefore, we established the controlled method, by establishing on every ranch a thermostatic system in the vineyard, directly connected with your alarm clock in the foreman's house, and then the foreman started to check the temperature, say, starting from 10 p.m., and reporting directly the temperature to me, by telephone.

AT: So all foremen were reporting the temperature, and then my wife was acting as a secretary of mine, and we were then not yet married. She had all the individual telephone numbers and direct orders from me.

So as I sit on my nerves, with the idea to save money calling the people, I finally release the telephone to my secretary by saying, "General alarm. I am leaving the house. Proceed." So she gives directly [snaps fingers] calls, calls, calls, calls, and everybody goes to their own station. Everything organized just like an army game. Everybody knows where to go. They know their station. They jump out of the bed. Then she came back home, prepared coffee, sandwiches, and everything, and cruised all night as we were burning, giving the hot coffee and sandwiches to the working people, because you are freezing there, and you are working sometimes in the mud. The worst is when you got mud in the field, and you are losing your boots in the lighting. It's just a headache. So finally we gave up and we went to this automatic lighting, and recently we were using automatic lighting only. But some small farmers are still using torches of the type just like a flamethrower.

There was a tremendous amount of research done, tremendous amount of research done.

RT: Fascinating story!

AT: Well, it's a new page, and believe me or not, Europeans borrowed from us this. We went to Champagne, they had their own systems, but burning system also, as we have. In my days that did not exist. They used our system of burning.

Fortunately, this season we ended without a frost. Imagine with the burning, and the fuel crisis today, will they allow us to proceed? Agriculture is protected, but would they allow us to burn the oil to protect our crops? I question it.

RT: After your return from Europe, we'll continue.

AT: After my return, we will continue whatever we have.

CH: You're visiting wineries and vineyards in France?

AT: In France, very little. In France I am going to cover only Bordeaux because I have business there connected with my clients. Then I go to Cognac, and I will go to Monbrun and Burgundy, and one day I will spend in Champagne because I have a special mission. Then I will go to Paris for a couple of days, and from Paris we are going to take a train to Vienna, and eight days we are spending in the vineyards and the wine industry of Austria. The final five days belongs to my wife in Vienna. [laughter]

RT: [to Mrs. Tchelistcheff] Do you think you'll really get all five?

III CONSULTANT TO THE WINE INDUSTRY

[Interview 7: July 26, 1979]##

Beginning a Third Career

[Brief preliminary discussion of Mr. Tchelistcheff's career as divided into three periods, and his work in recent years as an industry consultant.]

AT: It's really hard for me to divide my activities by time cycles, because after all, as I said before, I was consulting for several people years ago, but since I retired from Beaulieu I liberated myself completely and so therefore I kind of choose my own way of building up my second career as a consultant.

RT: This is what I called a pioneering career.

AT: It's a pioneering career, although the basic pioneering career, of course, was the beginning, in the late thirties, restoring the order in California's damaged industry. It was much harder for me then than it was as a pioneer in the third cycle.

The third cycle of pioneering, actually, I started in 1973, the next day after my retirement. I retired on the first of April, and on the second of April I was already at Simi [Winery]. So it was a kind of a short rest between the thirty-five years of service at Beaulieu and a new cycle of pioneering, for one single reason. You see, actually the ground for retirement was already prepared before I retired. As a matter of fact, in the transaction of sale of Beaulieu to Heublein corporation, there was a temptation for me then to retire and go my own way in the new cycle of pioneering. But then, you see, there are several factors that are very important to all of us, I guess, in life. Thirty-five years of service--you just can't take a sharp knife and cut it off. It was then only thirty years of service, and the previous owner, Madame de Pins, in the process of sale of her own Beaulieu Vineyard to Heublein,

AT: theoretically was supposed to be an honorary chairman of the board of Beaulieu. Unfortunately, this just remained in theoretical form, and within the next three months after sale, or even two months after sale, the board of Beaulieu disappeared as such, and she never was called to anything. That was just a strictly theoretical function, and as in any corporation, Beaulieu, as an administrative unit of a business corporation, disappeared in the ocean of Heublein activities.

So therefore I thought, since this is the case, and being loyal to the company, and since the company already suffered from, let's say, a lack of financial investment, I would stay for the time being. As you know, every business requires a completely new influx of capital, because we are not static. We need new machinery, we need new technology, we need new plantings, we need the re-planting of the old vineyards, etcetera. I think that realistically, the family of de Pins-de Latour, they were looking upon this very coldly by saying, "We can continue within the organization, being very conservative, but times are changing to the point that we can't afford to be competitive, being conservative, because the industry has started to grow rapidly." The standards of quality started to move up, up, up, even within such a small geographical region as Napa Valley, because we had already new competitors. Louis Martini, Charles Krug, etcetera, pushed us very hard towards higher standards, and higher standards are directly connected with new ideas, new philosophies, and new capital investment.

So I thought, since Heublein offered us a blue sky and the beautiful sunshine in as far as the financing and reforming and upgrading of the wines, I was enthusiastic in the beginning. As a matter of fact, the first meeting between the new management of Heublein and the group of grape growers for Beaulieu was scheduled immediately, two weeks after the sale, and it was in San Francisco. Mr. [Stuart D.] Watson, who was then president of Heublein, asked me to present my views to the growers, explain the transactions, and outline perspectives of tomorrow of Beaulieu, with the idea that Beaulieu will reach even higher qualitative status in the California wine industry with the help of financing of Heublein. And I really expressed my strong belief that it could be done.

But then, you know, time goes on, and you learn far more about corporate business. Corporations are entirely different than private companies, and I started to gradually think we are not going to be successful (including the executive vice president of Beaulieu then and general manager) in resisting any temptation in jeopardizing this quality. It's time for me to go out.

So I guess it was a smart thing on my part. I decided to go, and I had several propositions from Heublein, several combinations of staying and remaining with them, because actually, I was the only one who remained on the payroll over-age. See, in every corporation, you

AT: got to retire at sixty-five, right? But I was already seventy and still working for the same organization. So I was the only one person granted such a status. It was a great privilege. So I retired then.

Before retirement, I already prepared the ground, more or less, what I am going to do with myself. It's absolutely normal. Simi, under the ownership of Mr. Russ [Russell H.] Green, was already facing a very critical situation in the management and quality, etcetera. I already prepared this first jump.

I selected Simi for one single reason, and again I would like to emphasize this reason: because it was a family business. I had been working for so many years for a family, so I thought Mr. Green, and the family Green, who owned the vineyard and owned the winery, would be the proper place for me to build a second home, as a professional home. So I went to work for him.

Meanwhile, I opened the doors for some other consultings. Actually, it's answered all my philosophical goals. I thought my limited experience--thirty-five years in California--and my general know-how and times of work within the wine industry, not only of California but of the world, should guide me towards the process of building a new generation of winemakers, as I built already one. Loving and admiring the youth, and believing that youth is tomorrow, far more important than today, I thought, "I am going to go and work for the young companies in different regions, with an entirely different ecological regime, which are corresponding to my basic idea in my mind, that in every region there are several regional factors that eventually will guide us to a new success in the California wine industry."

So I went there, and I immediately selected a new winemaker there. It happened to be a young girl by the name Mary Ann Graf, and she was then only about thirty-one. She had very little experience in the fine quality winemaking, but I knew her for years in connection with the mutual attendance of the wine symposiums at Davis and refresher courses of Davis, etcetera, and I had an opportunity to taste several times with her California wines, and I detected a great sensibility of palate. For me, it was very important. So I went there, and we worked together for six years, actually, at Simi.

Meanwhile, there were new opportunities, and again the exposure to a new generation. I was already, more or less since 1966, partially working in Washington state at Ste. Michelle [Vintners]. Ste. Michelle was a very interesting goal for me, because I really put my energy in an entirely different geographical area, in an entirely different state, with entirely different dreams and goals of the achievement that I was not able to achieve within the California ecological conditions.

AT: So I decided to anchor this relationship, and go deeper in the expansion of Ste. Michelle, and that gave me a tremendous amount of satisfaction. But then Ste. Michelle, again, was rather a small company. Ste. Michelle of today, it's a business owned by a powerful corporation, United States Tobacco.

And then new challenges appeared, and several people came to me, by recommendation of Dr. Amerine. Of course, always, anybody will go immediately to see Dr. Amerine. Absolutely normal. They invest money, and they would like to say, who is going to guide them?

Therefore, I started to work for Firestone [Vineyard]. I started to work for Dr. [Stanley] Hoffman. That's the Hoffman Mountain Ranch [Vineyards], Paso Robles. I started to work with little tiny wineries such as Joe Swan [of Joseph Swan Vineyards] in Forestville, and I came back to Buena Vista, which was already before a part of my consulting activities, because in the past I was partner of Frank Bartholomew in establishing Buena Vista. So I came back to it.

So therefore, you see, I accumulated several accounts, and as I was continuously growing in my activities as a consultant, finally I took the last account, which is Jordan [Vineyard and] Winery, the new Jordan winery in Sonoma County. So to what it amounts? It amounts to several accounts. Accounts are very important in budgeting your operation as a consultant; it's a business. But what attracted me was the youth, and in every organization I have young people. [tape interruption for phone call]

This is a man Henri Maire who owns ninety percent of the vineyards in Arbois. Do you know where is Arbois?

RT: No.

AT: In the Jura Mountains, as you go to Neuchâtel, in Switzerland. Arbois is the town where Louis Pasteur was born and worked and discovered the fermentation process. He owns the vineyard of Louis Pasteur, and his wine label is carrying Louis Pasteur, and he bought the house of Louis Pasteur and is making it a national museum. Everything is left as Louis Pasteur worked, every little thing, every little tiny touch--his glasses, his cup, his microscope, the notes. Everything just never touched. Everything was left as if Pasteur just went out.

RT: How fascinating places like that can be.

I think you've outlined your involvements since your so-called retirement. So could we go back and begin with Simi and the story of the--

AT: This combines with the story of de Latour and Simi.

AT: See, before de Latour started his vintner's career, de Latour, being a chemical engineer, located a situation with the American Cream of Tartar Association. So, therefore, Mr. de Latour, being in charge of technological organization of this big business, was also in charge of purchasing of the raw material for cream of tartar and tartaric acid. The raw material was nothing else but argol. Argol is crystallization of double potassium tartrates right in the interior of the wooden tanks. Now in the old days the chemical process was unknown, of removal of argol into the solution. Everything was done by hatchet. Every second or third year, vintners put the men, with a little hatchet, and they hatched these crystals. It's a beautiful thing, by the way. Sometimes it's as thick as one inch, one and a half inches, like stalactites, you know, and the reds are beautiful, with the color of wine. They were sacked and weighed. Mr. de Latour was buying the raw material in sacks, and every sack was a hundred-pound sack.

So he was traveling with horse and buggy, with Mrs. de Latour, covering all northern counties, viticultural area, and buying, and the sacks were shipped direct for the processing to the cream of tartar association in Healdsburg. It happens to be that Simi was the oldest family in Healdsburg, and Mr. and Mrs. de Latour bought the house right in the neighborhood of the [Giuseppe] Simi family, and since Mr. de Latour was far more progressive than Simi in technology or, let's say, engineering dedication, he decided to provide electricity for his house. Since he built electricity for his house (he put in the dynamo), he said, "Mr. Simi, I am going to supply you also with electricity." So in the whole community of Healdsburg there were only two houses with electricity. They became very old friends.

The next step was direction from the technological career to vintner's career. In his travels, he was always looking for opportunity to buy some property that he really liked, and he bought it at Beaulieu estate. Now, what's left from--it's only very sentimental memories of Mrs. [Isabelle Simi] Haigh. She is very probably close to ninety. When I talked to Hélène de Pins--Hélène de Pins is about, oh, seventies--she vaguely remembers her childhood in relationship with Simi. But, strange thing, part of the furniture, when they moved, Simi bought from them. So part of the original furniture of de Latour still remains there.

Again, living in the past, as several people live in the past, Mrs. Haigh sometimes give me little tiny things that used to belong to de Latour and that de Latour gave her for several occasions--just comes out of a sentimental act that gives you so much pleasure. That's actually to what it amounts.

I think then they separated their lives. The de Latours became very successful in their own business, and socially far above Simis' status. I don't think that they even ever revisited Simi. But it's just a sentimental feeling.

RT: Did you know anything about Simi in those years before you made contact with Mr. Green?

AT: Simi, you know, was one of the oldest wineries in Sonoma County, and--strange thing--everything is accidental. When my brother Victor came after the Second World War from Munich, he was a displaced engineer from Praha in Czechoslovakia. So I managed to bring him here. Being an architect and mechanical and construction engineer, he was lost of course without any English, and I said, "Maybe we can do something for you. You got to start again as a carpenter." So the first thing he built, he built a little laboratory house for Simi at the winery. That was a little independent laboratory and a little apartment home for the chemist right there.

Simi was an old, sleeping organization. They faced a great amount of financial difficulties. Actually, outside of these two women, Mrs. Haigh and her daughter [Vivien], their activities were very limited, and they still kept a considerable amount of old inventory from pre-Prohibition days. There was hundreds and hundreds of thousand of red wines kept there in the cellar, which was deficient to a certain degree.

RT: Deficient technically?

AT: Technically. When it was bought, Russ Green sold part of it, liquidated the bulk, partly for the production of vinegar, partly for the blending, to Gallo, etcetera. But Simi was known then as a little dormant, sleepy old building, with the old cast iron machinery and just classical museum setting. So there was a necessity to rebuild everything at Simi, because what Simi had, it was exactly the same thing as I inherited from Georges de Latour, but in 1938 instead of 1970. There was quite a bit of distance [in time], you know.

RT: There had been a man working at Simi, I understand, name Podgorny.

AT: Yes. Alex Podgorny, who graduated from Berkeley. He was very capable. He was a Russian, by the way. He was Russian. He was a very close assistant, and published several professional articles with Professor Cruess. He was a product of Cruess and Berkeley. Alex Podgorny, upon graduation, went to work for Berkeley Yeast Laboratory of Fessler, and he stayed with him for years and years and years. He was working for Fessler as a wine chemist in the laboratory.

Now, Alex Podgorny, very probably after ten or fifteen years of work, finally decided to go on his own. Alex selected an entirely different road than I selected. Alex selected a position of a chemist consultant for a bulk industry, not for quality, but for bulk. So Alex helped Foppiano [L. Foppiano Wine Co.]. Alex helped several other people in that particular field--Sebastiani. Everybody was in bulk then.

AT: Simi basically was bulk, except that he sold the idea to make a sparkling wine at Simi. It was actually carbonated wine, and they used carbonization.

RT: Yes. Sparkling burgundy.

AT: Sparkling burgundy, remember? So Alex Podgorny established his headquarters basically with the friendship of the Simi family. In other words, Mrs. Haigh and the daughter. So Mrs. Haigh said, "As long as I'm going to build a laboratory, I am going to build you a little house together." So my brother and my nephew, they built that little house. That was their first experience, actually, with working the hammer and the nails, and they were amazed the way American buildings are put together, because European buildings are built entirely differently. [laughter] So that was the first experience.

This house is still existing. It's not there any more. Russ Green moved this house, and it became an office of Alexander Valley Vineyard Association. It's still standing. They moved from Simi Winery,* just in the boundaries of Simi Winery, to Alexander Valley grape growers association. So it's existing as the office, and they remodeled it again. So, yes, Simi was just living actually in the memory of the past glory, if there was such a glory. Several people are questioning that.

RT: How did Russell Green happen to find it?

AT: Russell Green spent all his childhood vacationing on the Russian River. He was a Los Angeles man. He was a petroleum engineer.

RT: I'm sure that we happened to be in the winery one day when he came in. A woman--I suppose his wife--came in too--

AT: Yes. He was a tall man. And she was a tall, very good looking brunette.

RT: Yes.

AT: That was Russ Green. So Green finally decided rather than to spend a vacation--and he was a married man--why not invest a certain amount of money in the vineyards? So he started to plant the vineyards in Alexander Valley.

RT: Had they been planted before?

*Before its sale to Russell Green, it was formerly Simi Wineries.

AT: No. Those were orchards. Mr. Alexander used the valley basically as a prune orchard, except there was in the center one very old winery, and it's still standing--Soda Rock Winery.

RT: Oh yes.

AT: It's one of the oldest ones. From the point of view of technology--it's been on sale for several years, but nobody buys it because you have to put everything back, rebuild everything.* Soda Rock Winery belongs to one of the pioneering families of Healdsburg, by the name of Ferrari, and eventually [Abele] Ferrari went to the Healdsburg machine shop, and Healdsburg Machine Company today is owned by one of the nephews of Ferrari.

It was one of the oldest institutions, and they produced beautiful wines there in the past. Small volume, but there was good selection of vines planted there. There were beautiful Pinot noir and Chardonnay there, and Riesling, planted. That vineyard's not existing any more. It was interplanted with the Zinfandel.

RT: Did Mr. Green plant his vineyard before you were associated with him?

AT: Yes, before. A friend of mine, Ivan Schoch, was a very successful vineyardist in Napa Valley who managed also a vineyard managerial organization, Vineyard, Inc. The history of Ivan Schoch is one of the exciting histories of Napa Valley also. So therefore, Mr. Green approached Ivan Schoch and said, "I would like to start and plant." Ivan Schoch planted, and eventually the vineyard started to produce.

By this time, Mr. Russ Green decided to leave the Signal Oil--he was president of Signal Oil--and decided to put everything, all the capital of his own, into buying the winery, with the idea to use his own fruits from his own vineyard in his own winery. So nothing was more logical to him but to buy and rebuild the old Simi, because it was right in the neighborhood of the vineyard.

He bought it, and he started to rebuild, and he spent a great amount of money building the front, office buildings, and slowly started to modernize the old winery. The tragedy of this involvement of Russ Green was lack of organizational ability in the sales. He never was able really to create a sales organization, and so he was driving this winery for about five years and finally exhausted all his free capital

*It was sold shortly after the date of this interview to Charles Tomka, Jr.

AT: and was really forced to sell the winery. He managed to sell at a good profit--again, being a good businessman--to Scottish & Newcastle corporation of England.

RT: He sold you with the winery?

AT: He sold me with the winery. As a matter of fact, I think the winery was sold very blindly, just under confidence of my own name, more or less, because they never took the inventory, they never checked anything. That was a promising thing. We really managed to upgrade, gradually, since 1973. We started to upgrade the wine, together with Mary Ann Graf, trying to reach the higher standards. There was already great visible improvement in the style, and it was attractive for Scottish & Newcastle Vintner company of England. It is a big corporation. It owns, I think it is the second largest brewery in Great Britain, a line of hotel business, etcetera. A very huge thing. They bought it. So we stayed there.

Again, they were distributing in the United States the well-known Scotch, the Cluny Scotch. You see it advertised in San Francisco and Berkeley--Cluny Scotch. So they were in the Cluny business in America, and the acting vice president in charge of marketing, Mr. Michael Dixon, was then the right hand of Scottish & Newcastle in America. As they bought Simi, they really put things in the hands of Michael Dixon, who is still remaining as the president now. But Michael Dixon in the beginning was still active in Cluny, and so therefore he appointed--maybe on a temporary basis, or maybe to be with the purpose to be absolutely free in other activities--a temporary new president, a personal friend. Then it was another fiasco in the sales organization. It is not too easy to sell Scotch whiskey and wine together. They thought it was going to be so easy to sell the wines, but they had a hard time with the wine sales. So within eighteen months they sold the organization. It happens to be that we then entered to that temporary recession in the industry. You remember three or four years ago, when everything was down. So Schieffelin & Company bought from Scottish & Newcastle Simi, and since then, for the last three years they have owned Simi.

RT: That's a classic mistake, isn't it, to think that because you know how to distribute whiskey you know how to distribute wine.

AT: Yes. Or anything else.

RT: Is that when Mary Ann Graf left?

AT: Mary Ann Graf left only six months ago.

RT: How did she happen to do that?

AT: Well, look. You know it's not too easy to work for a corporation, and if it is very hard for a very strong man, it is much harder for a girl with far more sensitive skin, and Mary Ann--I am a very great friend of Mary Ann. I just had a lunch yesterday with her. Mary Ann Graf, as a woman in a man's position, reacted a little more as a woman than a man. I think in every problem, there is a problem of two, rather than one, and the personality of Michael Dixon, and the personality of Mary Ann, and the internal intrigue that exists in every organization, brought this thing to the point that general management, Schieffelin, right there in New York, decided that there is a point that we have to think about the future.

You see, Mary Ann was working very closely with me, and they always thought, "Is it Mary Ann who is carrying the responsibility or André Tchelistcheff?" So they thought, "André Tchelistcheff might go out any time, just remove himself, and maybe it's better to look for somebody else a little more stronger than Mary Ann Graf, despite the fact they really put Mary Ann Graf on the top, to the press and the prestige and everything. We really built the image of Mary Ann Graf--an excellent image.

I think it's conflict that never should be discussed publicly, because it happens in every organization.

RT: You were saying how hard it was for you to work with Heublein. As an independent consultant it's easier, isn't it?

AT: Yes. Of course. As an independent consultant it's entirely different. The privilege of consulting, as I am saying, that's a great moral privilege. I openly say what I think about it, but you, who hired me as a consultant, never should be required to follow my recommendation. You have to think about what I said, but you might go in an entirely different direction. You are hiring a consultant to give you a view, but not a decision--only aspect or view, and several times I do not agree. I do not agree with several people that I am consulting with in management, but when you are not in a position as direct officer in an organization, then you really pay the price for giving advice which can be accepted or rejected, even though you feel you are right.

It's existing all over. It's a very sensitive problem, and really almost I would say I went maybe even a little farther than I should, because nobody can discuss the problems like that of individual sensitivity or any critical situation existing in business.

RT: What direction is Simi taking now, then, under Schieffelin?

AT: Schieffelin, as one of the oldest, if not the oldest distributor of European wines--you know, Schieffelin actually is a family, a third or fourth generation of Schieffelins. They started right then in New York

AT: after the revolution. They were importing, in the beginning, I think Ports and Madeiras and sherries for the New England market. That's one of the oldest.

I met Mr. [William H.] Schieffelin, present chairman of the Schieffelin & Company, and his father [William J.], who is about eighty-seven. They are charming, charming, classical businessmen of the past. In other words, clean--and I think that the father can't even understand the new times, although being eighty-six or eighty-seven, three times a week he is coming to see the organization. He is not active any more, but he is coming still right there in the building, taking the subway rather than take a taxi. [laughter]

I was there about a year and a half ago. It was pouring rain, and I was standing with the president of Simi with the idea to go to the hotel and said to Mr. Schieffelin, "We are going to have a taxi, we are going to--"

"No, no, no, no, no! There is my parapluie, and I am going to go on the subway."

Well, we forced him to go with us in the taxi. [laughter] But that's a typical old businessman who built his reputation and inherited the prestige from the past of his parents, and everything was done by tremendous individual effort and economy. You know, it's very interesting how these two factors, very good intention and cultural level of the man, are not corresponding to the physical action of the person. I told you the story about the quarter laying on the desk of de Latour. Did I tell you this story?

RT: No.

AT: We're jumping from one subject to another, but I would like to illustrate this. Now de Latour was definitely a very wealthy man when he hired me as enologist, and the first morning when I was there at the house, when I was a guest living at the house at Beaulieu, de Latour came in in the morning and noticed a quarter laying on the table. So he called Mrs. de Latour, Fernande, and said, "Fernande!" (in French, of course) "How you can afford to leave a quarter right on the table. Do you know what it means to lay the quarter on the table? I am paying right now twenty-two or twenty-five cents for an hour of hard work in the vineyard. It's one hour of hard work, and what a temptation to somebody if they are servants, to take this quarter." [laughter] You see, this is typical.

He always was saying, "Save every match. Do not burn two matches. We can't afford two. Light your cigar with one." Because by saving the match, you are saving the pennies. By saving the pennies, you are building your prestige. This is how it was. Mr. Schieffelin was the same way.

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AT: So Schieffelin bought the winery. Schieffelin, being a world importer, and being a businessman, and already guiding the big successful import corporation, although it's a family corporation, with the vision of business of tomorrow in the American wine industry, and with the great confidence in the California wine industry, particularly, as a growing phenomenon in the wines of the world--he thought it's about time to invest a certain amount of money in California and become not only a distributor but an owner of a winery. He [had] never distributed one single bottle of California products, only imports, and great imports of great success, such as Moët et Chandon, such as Cinzano.

RT: Ruffino?

AT: Such as Ruffino Chianti, etcetera. So he decided to go and build and upgrade the prestige of Simi. He went there quite spontaneously and decided to limit the line to a minimum with the idea to specialize in this limited selection, and he was very privileged in that particular time in the process of buying, to buy continuity of the contract between Russ Green and Scottish & Newcastle, on these 275 acres of vineyards in Alexander Valley.

So we met the people. We rather were pleased with the people, for one single reason, because the people started to show the activities of sales. See, neither one of the previous owners was ever able to move the merchandise, and the merchandise was staying in the warehouse and aging. But they started with their muscles of distributing and marketing and started to move. That was a very positive factor, of course, from all points of view, but not necessarily we agree with all their philosophies in elimination of some wines that we were so successful with. But again, this is something that neither one of us have a right to touch, because that belongs to the marketing and management. The production people--as I always say, production office is the back office, and the sales office, and managerial office is the front office. There was always a conflict between the back office and the front office, because the back office is trying to build up idealistic profile of the great ideas of great wines, but the front office is supporting this thing, but also has to support these ideas of the back office with the flow of capital. So in supplying this flow of capital they are compromising with some marketing decision, which is a decision realistically suitable for that period of time.

See, this is the conflict that very few young people can accept. You accept this as a reality of life. Willingly or unwillingly, there is no other way to live. So this is the Schieffelin. So far, Schieffelin was successful. Not as successful as I would like him to be, but successful, and right now they just hired this new winemaker, and this winemaker is Zelma Long from Mondavi.

RT: Oh, another woman. She's very good.

AT: Very good. Excellent. Very strong, and very good.

So now we believe, and they believe, that now they are going to open a new page in the Simi history, with the influx of Zelma, and they will go very probably much farther than they been going before, since they know far more about it and since they start to learn that they made several errors, in marketing and in the production end. So all the errors are gradually going--and the hiring of Zelma is the proper time to go to new channels.

RT: Another that you have had long associations with (and you told us about its early years) is Buena Vista.

AT: That's right. Due to the purchase of Beaulieu and myself by Heublein, they stopped my [consulting] activities. Heublein left me only free in Washington state, because I was not competing.

RT: But then you went back to Buena Vista later.

AT: Then I went back to Buena Vista.* Buena Vista, under my direction, had been expanding their business and finally planted ten years ago, gradually, a vineyard of six hundred acres of varietal grapes in the Carneros section of Napa County--partially Napa and partially Sonoma County. Now, four years ago, they built a new winery there, Young's Market people. The old friend of mine, of Chilean origin, Rene Lacasia--a viticulturist whom I met about fifteen years ago at the plant pathology symposium at Davis--he started to work with me as a chemist for Bartholomew. Now he is vice president there, and we have a very capable young enologist there by the name of Richard Williams,** a graduate of Davis, who really upgraded the white wines of Buena Vista, and the red wines, to already as Buena Vista used to be. The new wines of Buena Vista are really delicious wines, and I can hear already, in the tastings and in the press, very good remarks about the new Buena Vista.

So you see, it's challenge, and I love the Carneros. It's a very difficult region, and they are producing right now excellent Pinot noirs and excellent Cabernets there, and they are going to make excellent Chardonnays there. They are planting Rieslings there, too, and Gewürztraminers. As a matter of fact, I will give you one bottle, so you will check my opinion.

*In 1968 Frank Bartholomew had sold it to Young's Market Company. André Tchelistcheff ceased consulting there in 1970, returned in 1973.

**Williams had been succeeded by Don Harrison by the end of 1979.

CH: Where is the new winery?

AT: The new winery is right on Ramal Road off of old Sonoma Road. In other words, it's right on exposure to the Bay. It's a big winery.

RT: Did you take them in this direction? Was this your advice?

AT: It was my blessings, and I am accused right now about such blessings by the management to a certain degree, because when I made my research ten years ago, I was maybe a little more optimistic than I should be, and I projected the average production there for 2½ to 3 tons per acre, but they do not reach this three tons. And every time they are projecting capital investment, they are always quoting, "André Tchelistcheff projected this and this and this." [laughter] "But André Tchelistcheff is not producing this same thing, and he is a consultant and hired authority, and we are producing 1½ to 2 tons only," and that's a big problem.

I personally feel that Buena Vista as such has a tremendous future, but as I heard, and it's not a fact yet, that actually Buena Vista could be sold very soon, to a new capital investment in the industry. It could be.*

RT: Again, an interesting growing concern.

AT: It is an excellent--entirely different image. In other words, what was done at old Buena Vista, and the standards of Buena Vista, were very bad. Now the new standards are coming, and new wines are coming. They are coming already with competition, with very good remarks. They have outstanding raw material, outstanding raw material.

RT: Have they kept some of the vineyard land around the old winery?

AT: The winery belongs to them, you know, and the winery is going to be used just as a reception center, historical reception center. It's going to be only to show. There will be no visitors in the new winery.

RT: Bartholomew kept some of that land?

AT: Bartholomew kept part of the land where the old Haraszthy Park used to be, and the Haraszthy château. The creek separates them. Everything on the south of the creek is the property of Young's Market. Everything that is on the north of the creek is the property of Frank Bartholomew, and Frank Bartholomew built there Hacienda. Recently, Frank Bartholomew sold the Hacienda.

*It was sold late in 1979 to A. Racke Company of West Germany.

RT: Who bought it?

AT: One of the realtors of Sonoma,* a very interesting man, and are doing a very good job there. Hacienda is a high prestige-- There is a great future there again.

RT: Here's another winery. I know you told us that your son had had something to do with it, and I don't know that you had, really. Schramsberg Vineyards.

AT: Schramsberg. Well, look, let's see. Their first vintage was 1965 vintage. So therefore, I met Jack Davies two years ahead of time, in 1963, and we are 1979. That's sixteen years already. It happens to be that I was spending my vacation in Ensenada with my son Dimitri, and Dr. Amerine--again--met Jack Davies, who was then a president of a big corporation dealing with the packaging, actually, in Los Angeles. Being very tired from corporate business, and being partially a partner of Martin Ray--he was a silent partner, but he lost quite a bit of money in the partnership with Martin Ray. But the interest of wine was created actually by Martin Ray, very probably, inside of him.

So he thought, "Where to go?" and started to look for the situation. Of course then Schramsberg was, let's say, also in some sort of a dormancy. Dormancy, because Mr. [Douglas] Pringle had just taken his own life, and Mrs. Pringle was living there yet. The family actually split their investment between Schramsberg and the El Dorado Ranch at Napa, in the lower section--Rutherford--where they built a beautiful house, outstanding house, under guidance of Pringle, who was the interior decorator and a man of tremendous artistic abilities. They built out of the old winery of Dr. [Herbert C.] Moffitt a beautiful chateau, and it's existing yet.

So they decided, the momma and children--and she is very prominent in social activities, as you know--[to his wife] what's her name? Cebrian. [Mrs. Louise de Laveaga Cebrian] The great nose and the great profile. She is a lady about eighty, right now, and she is still very social. Just recently we saw her in the Examiner.

So Mrs. Pringle was in the house. The boys decided to liquidate the Schramsberg. So they were trying to sell this property, and Jack Davies, being the good businessman, formed his own little corporation,

*A. Crawford Cooley, a Sonoma County ranch owner and business investor, bought majority interest in 1977.

AT: between several partners, and bought Schramsberg, with the Schramsberg champagne tunnels, with the great vision that actually the future is right there.

They went to Amerine and said, "Now who is going to help us in guiding towards the champagne production?"

So Dr. Amerine said, "Why don't you talk to father and son?" So the son was in Mexico. Father was in Napa Valley. So we met Jack Davies, and I temporarily started to act as a consultant. Then I finally gave this position to my son, because I was just helping my son consulting. So I was just consulting without a consulting fee and compensation, actually. So I established a great friendship with the family, and they are still my nearest, closest friends in the Napa Valley. I go there, and they come here with the family, and my son actually consults. But the ideas, the philosophy of the winemaking, the emotional interest and the technology I sold them, and I am very proud of them.

See? There you are. So that was my baby to a certain degree, yes. It was my baby and my benediction was there, and they are very successful.

Working With New Wineries

AT: But there are some little tiny babies that are growing now, and I am consulting with them, free of any compensation, because I believe that they are just challenging my mind, rather than my pocketbook. [laughter] I just recently have a little tiny champagne business that just started, by Dr. [Stanley B.] Anderson, who is a well-known dentist in Los Angeles, and he is going to build a champagne cellar in Yountville. He owns right now sixteen acres of Chardonnay, and he is going to start, and he already has a permit to go ahead and proceed with it. We experimented already with the home making of champagne there for the last two years, and finally in this season we are going to start making commercial champagne there.

There are several other people who are going to go through this line, and it's very challenging. So you see these little tiny mushrooms that are coming, and they are infiltrating the body of the California wine industry. I think they are very important factors. Some of them are doing a very poor job, but basically their intentions are excellent, and I think the pioneering job of these mushrooming little organizations, with limited amount of wines, are really, really guiding points in the progress of upgrading the quality more than the industrial, big capital investments such as Coca-Cola or anybody else.

RT: Another winery that you have helped, as you mentioned, is Joseph Swan's.

AT: Right.

RT: We were talking about nature and natural foods and so forth. You mentioned that he was not fining, or not filtering.

AT: He is fining now.

RT: Is he?

AT: He is fining now, and he is filtering now, because he learned that you are dealing again with the factor of the consumer.

RT: Did you help him get started?

AT: I helped him right from the beginning, from planting, selecting, and making my recommendations--again, free of anything. I mean, he was a great friend of mine, and he is still a great friend of mine, and compensation that I have in helping him out, compensation of pleasure of drinking two or three cases of his wine every year and serving them to my best friends.

Unfortunately, he is saying, and he is complaining to everybody, "André is a great friend. I am always giving him my wines, but I don't know how good I am doing for myself. Rather than to give him a pleasure, he is so proud of me he is giving all this wine away." [laughter] And I really have the intention to prove that the finest Pinot noir can be produced under these conditions. Dorothy now locks this up, and I have to have permission of her to give a bottle away, because actually I am giving all the Joe Swan wine. [laughter] That's right.

RT: Did you advise him on planting his vineyard?

AT: On planting and location and everything, yes.

RT: Was that a new vineyard area?

AT: It's an old region. This Forestville region was known in the early days of Sonoma County. See, why I selected this, it's slope, it's a deep gravelly soil, it's a cold region--even maybe a little too cold--and it's a late harvesting. It corresponds really to the ideas of fine quality winemaking. It's a little tiny island, and will remain that little tiny island.

Now several people are very critical about his wines, within the technology groups of California, because he is orthodox and he is too much traditionalist, but he is changing a little bit, and a little tiny, tiny bit approaching the ideas of modern technology. But he is very open

AT: in saying, "I am not an American winemaker. I am a European winemaker. I don't go and ask the opinion of Dr. Amerine, and I don't attend any classes at Davis or any conventions, because I know what I am doing. I am learning." And he is going every year to Europe. "I am a European winemaker and have European philosophy, and I am making French-style wines."

RT: Actually, is he?

AT: Yes. If there are French-style wines. I don't think that you can produce French wines in California, but anyhow--[laughter]

I have to tell you the story of Firestone. It's an exciting story. Now again, Dr. Amerine--always Dr. Amerine, you see? [laughter]

RT: He's a catalyst. How about Hoffman?

AT: They were first before Firestone. Dr. Stanley Hoffman. Now let's see. This is another exciting story. It's a really exciting story to tell, and it is very probably one of the closest to my heart--really close to my heart.

A few years ago--[to his wife] darling, what was the date when we moved first there?

DT: 'Seventy-three, wasn't it?

AT: Oh, no--yes, '73. 'Seventy-three.

RT: I have that as the year you became adviser to them.

AT: That's right, '73. In '73 Dr. Stan Hoffman, a very successful cardiologist from Los Angeles asked Jack Hart, a specialist in agricultural consulting in the Bank of America, and he recommended me as a consultant. One of the beautiful days, we decided to take a trip, Dorothy and I, and we went to a spot 2,000 feet above Paso Robles. Beautiful situation, beautiful location, all surrounded by almond and walnut groves. We stopped our car right in front of a nice garden, beautiful house, all in white, and the first thing that we saw, two big danes just opening their mouths and barking at us. [laughter] I said, "I'm not going to go out."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Hoffman opened the door, and they welcomed us. Dr. Hoffman and Terry Hoffman, his wife. He said, "I retired from my activities in Los Angeles several years ago,* and I have a chance to change my property in the Hollywood area"--which was a ranch within

*He had moved his medical practice to Paso Robles.

AT: the Hollywood area of ten or twelve acres--"against a property of 2,000 acres in Paso Robles. It consisted of hundreds and hundreds of acres of walnuts, and hundreds of acres of almonds. We built our dehydration house for the walnuts and almonds, and we also have planted a vineyard of sixty acres under the direction of Professor Dr. Winkler. So my oldest son, David Hoffman, is working on the ranch, and we started to make little wines for ourselves and actually even bonded a little tiny winery, with four or five barrels of wine. We kind of think that since we are selling all our grapes for really almost a prohibitively low price to Mirassou family, and since we are alone representing this particular island in the mountains, and we are actually not professional viticulturists, I think we are really jeopardizing the status of our grapes in the general great dilutions and blending of Mirassou. I think it's time for us to think about--and that's the decision of the family--our own production."

So I said, "Now look, Doctor, that's a beautiful dream, but to go in the winery and invest the money in the winery, it's a gamble. Nobody knows what kind of wines you are going to make, and nobody knows how you are going to be able to sell these wines. It's wines from a region that's unknown, and I would be rather careful. Let's go and inspect the vineyards and see what kind of vineyards you have. Let me think about it, and then I will send my recommendation."

So I went there. We spent one day there, and I visited the vineyard. I located a beautiful situation, with the lime gravel, similar to Champagne and Burgundy region, with maybe a little excess of heat in that particular elevation, but still breezy in the elevation there. It's quite different--temperature above is far different than in the valley. As you go down, it's a hot spot. Paso Robles is very hot very hot. Smokey hot.

It was planted, and managed with a very poor management, pruned and treated with a very poor management. So I said, "Many things have to be done with the vineyard, because your previous foreman apparently was a man without any knowledge. The varietal selection was very good, with the help of Winkler, but the management was very poor. So let's build David as a viticulturist. I will help to build out of David a viticulturist. I am going to help you to prune and to set the regime of viticulture in your vineyard. Then we will start to think about the wines."

So we started to experiment with a few barrels of wine under my management, with the help of David. Meanwhile, Michael [Hoffman] was a college boy at polytechnical school [California State Polytechnic University] in San Luis Obispo, taking actually photography, not agriculture at all--photography, fine art, and everything. He was a kid with the long hair, and completely out of vision to be connected directly with the positive industry, agriculture industry. He was not involved at all in this game.

AT: So we started to experiment, a few barrels of Chardonnay and a few barrels of Pinot noir, and the response was actually very positive, and I became very close friends with the family. I had been working, of course, these two or three years without any compensation again, just as a friend, and finally as we start to grow--despite all my recommendations not to go in the industrial production--Dr. Hoffman built his winery. [points to picture] There is the winery.

RT: It's a beautiful winery.

AT: Now you see, the winery was actually surrounded by the almonds, right there, and they have removed the almonds. An additional 150 acres are going to be planted, all the vineyard around the winery, and their house is located right here.

RT: The house is below the winery.

AT: Below the winery.

RT: The winery is on a hill.

AT: And so this is going to be a hillside vineyard.

RT: Do they use gravity flow in the winery?

AT: They are using the gravity flow in the winery. See, there is the fermenting room. The grapes are coming in here. And there is the aging department. Right here.

RT: Down below.

AT: It has been built all in redwood. But as I said, "Now you think to build, and you would like to build something with style. Now one thing is to go to a functional winery and build a building without any artistic face, but the technological requirements are part of it."

He said, "No. I'd like to build something really interesting, architecturally interesting, and I have a friend, a Los Angeles architect, who is going to make several drawings, and I would like to go in the rustic style, which corresponds to our ideas." They built this thing, and it's a very modern, organized winery, but this little tiny thing consumed 1¼ million dollars. [laughter] So I said, "Now, Doctor, this could be a tragedy. Instead of having two Mercedes-Benz, we probably are going to finish with a little tiny Toyota or little Ford, because it's a shark that's going to consume everything."

They said, "We are going to go and finance this with banks," and so on and so forth. After all, I have collaterals, a huge ranch and my practice. It's really very good for a cardiologist."

AT: And it happens to be that Paso Robles today is surrounded by the retired Hollywood stars, and the clientele here is a very wealthy clientele. Plus, he's an excellent doctor, outstanding doctor, a doctor that every one of us would like to have. This is a doctor with the philosophy of the old doctor. When you go to him, you are going to tell everything what happened to you in your life--physically. I mean, he will be completely acquainted with the history of your body, and then he will give you a thorough examination. He will touch everything in your body, everything! He never will be pleased with anything. Then he will think about it, and he'll say, "Now, I think we should go this way, and actually, what the other doctor said to you, I think is the wrong approach to the problem. Your problems are of different origin."

He is a man who is actually worrying about the clients, as the old doctors. In other words, he is a missionary doctor, believing that medicine is not only to make dollars, but a way to help people, humans, in their own lives.

RT: That doesn't necessarily make him a good businessman.

AT: He's a good businessman, because even when you start to approach a person this way, people have complete confidence. So he decided to go into winemaking, and they are starting to build a very good reputation. They have already distribution of 20,000 cases of wine. They are expanding now their production to 40,000 cases of wine.

RT: All from their own vineyards?

AT: No, they are buying some. But you see, they need additional financing now. This baby--open land now [to be planted], it's another fortune, very probably double if not triple than the money that they invested now in that little winery. It's extremely expensive today to build an acre of vineyard.

RT: Did you specify their equipment in the winery?

AT: Yes. Everything was worked together, hand to hand, because I had neither enologist, neither viticulturist there. So we managed to move the young brother, Michael--[to his wife] how old is Michael, darling?

DT: Michael's about twenty-six, I think.

AT: Twenty-six, yes. So eventually as we start to grow and start to show a great confidence, and David started to show a confidence in what we are doing there, we attracted the attention of Michael, and Michael removed all this photography dream and artistry dream and moved towards me and became a winemaker. This is entirely different winemaking, because

AT: the man does not have the background. So I started to teach him right from the beginning. He is a product of my own, right from the beginning to the end, without a diploma, without anything.

Michael Hoffman, after several years of work, never missed one single day by calling me. As a matter of fact, last night I have a call. Last night I tasted some of the blends of his. Tonight he is going to call me again. During the vintage he calls me twice a day. I am really proud of him. He is a great success of mine. In other words, that proves the theory that not necessarily theoretical background in the fine quality winemaking is a base element. Still you can open an Amerine book, or Winkler's book,* and you can be acquainted with the theory, from an academical logbook, but the practical approach and step-by-step progress increasing your own knowledge, directly connected with the physical actions and applications, is a very important factor.

That's my second contact and second man that I built out of anything, in as far as the professional preparation is concerned. My first one was Lee Stewart, and Lee Stewart became a great authority. I built exactly the same way Lee Stewart, in the past. Just from an administrative authority in a meat cutting company in San Francisco, I built a fine quality wine man, who became a great authority--exactly the same way.

RT: He's a great perfectionist, is he not?

AT: He's a perfectionist, and ten years from now, very probably, or fifteen years from now, Michael will be a great perfectionist, a great artist in winemaking, because he has sense, he has understanding, he has the good interest, he has the good intellect. But he is a young man. Please remember, he is a young man, and very, very boiling man, with a tremendous personality, tremendous boiling character as a young man. So it takes quite a bit of time, but he is showing great promise, great promise--self critical and absolutely under discipline of André Tchelistcheff, to the point that I permit myself to call him with the dirty words. [laughter]

It's a strange thing how this thing happened. Several people are coming through without any background. Now the third one, in the past actually has a seniority after Lee Stewart is Theo Rosenbrand, who is the winemaker now for Sterling, who took my position as the winemaker at Beaulieu after I quit. He is the winemaker now at Sterling. There is another man who actually graduated from college in business administration, became a wine worker, cellar worker, then foreman, under my right hand, with whom I worked for eighteen years at Beaulieu, and he became a well-known authority in winemaking. I just recently called him two days ago and complimented him for 1974 Private Reserve that I tasted for Los Angeles Times, just recently in a competition of Cabernets, organized by Robert Balzer and the Los Angeles Times Magazine.

*General Viticulture, written with collaborators and issued in several editions by the University of California Press.

AT: So you see, this is the factor, these are my students. That's exciting. They are much younger than I am, and that's the future. What's remaining out of me? Nothing else but a few bottles of wine, but the basic elements are my students.

RT: We met a man in Oregon who worked a little with Lee Stewart, and who gained much from him, and so--

AT: That's right. That's very important.

RT: So that it goes on and on.

AT: That's right, it always goes like, generation with generation.

RT: Has Hoffman planted more now?

AT: Hoffman is going to expand this thing. They got to expand. He pulled all this orchard out, but before planting he has to locate the financing, and financing today, it's a very difficult problem in the wine industry. Banks are not financing any more, you know.

RT: But that's a new wine region.

AT: It's a new wine region. It's a whole new wine region. It's a new wine section--maybe old from the point of the view of the past, because there are pioneering Italians that used to have vineyards there in these mountains.

RT: Did they?

AT: All in the past, oh yes.

CH: Where was [Ignace] Paderewski's--

AT: Paderewski, that's right. Paderewski Zinfandel was right close to them. Paderewski lived in that old mansion that became a restaurant and hotel [Paso Robles Inn]--you know, in Paso Robles. He was occupying the second floor. We lunched there once with Dr. Hoffman's family, and Dr. Hoffman told me the history and said when it was more or less a hacienda, as a club, people were coming from the sport and were having their lunches and dinners, but Paderewski was living above, in his apartment. Paderewski played ten to fourteen hours a day.

RT: My word!

AT: Working, working, regardless, and practicing and playing. People were complaining, saying, "Look, what the hell is going on? I can't sleep with this damn thing. [laughter] I mean, this crazy man, whoever, is playing constantly." [laughter]

AT: So the owner would say, "Do you know who is there? Paderewski."

"Oh, ah. May I be introduced to this master?" [laughs] It's an interesting story, you know.

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AT: Dr. Hoffman was teaching in a department of London University, in the cardiology department. Terry was connected with the--Dorothy [to his wife]. Terry was what?

DT: She had an antique shop.

AT: Antique. So therefore, she was very much interested in antiques of Britain. She had an antique shop in Los Angeles, and she was buying from Europe and Britain.

RT: What was the story of Firestone, then?

AT: The next step was the Firestone, yes. I am going back to Amerine. It happens to be that Firestone, Sr. [Harvey S.], the ambassador and ex-president of Firestone Rubber Company, years ago--about ten years ago--decided to put a certain amount of his money in a section of Santa Ynez Valley. Again, it's a very fashionable region, close to Santa Barbara as you know, where very rich people are basically in the horse business, raising horses and quarter horses and thoroughbred horses. Everything is horse ranches. It's a very wealthy region. It's a beautiful region.

He decided, as a result of his consultation with Dr. Winkler, again, to plant a vineyard there, despite the fact that he was really pioneering in that particular region, but soil and climate were really corresponding to a fine varietal. So the father planted the vineyard. Meanwhile, his son, Brooks Firestone,* was a vice president of Firestone Rubber Company, in charge of the European market, with the headquarters in London. Now, Firestone is an international organization. Their money is all over, and they are producing rubber all over the world, including Asia and Africa and all over. But he was in charge of marketing.

Being there, and being a corporate officer, he was very tired of corporate procedures, and he was married with the prima ballerina with the Royal Ballet of London.** It happens to be that--this is very interesting--I get romantic, you know. Being a vice president in London, he had been a great admirer of ballet and musical theater. He was going to the Royal Ballet and met this young prima ballerina. After two years of romancing, he married this ballerina, and she is Mrs. Firestone now.

*A. Brooks Firestone

**Catherine Boulton (Kate) Firestone

AT: She came from a very interesting English family, very intellectual family--daughter, parents, and specifically father. The father is a retired priest, a missionary. She was born in India. He was a missionary priest in India. He spent, I think, twenty years in India, something like that. Anglican Church, of course. Cultural, extremely, with a tremendous amount of philosophical, theological knowledge and cultural knowledge in everything, in all performance of humans.

So Brooks Firestone decided to quit the rubber industry and to go and manage the property of his father. Immediately going there, he made a research, again, with the idea to go into winemaking. That was during the prosperity, you know, seven years' prosperity of the industry, nine years ago. So he decided to go. I didn't know anything about Firestone [Tire &] Rubber Company, and Firestone for me was just the Firestone Rubber, but there are many Firestones living in America.

So one day, years ago--it was about six years ago--Mr. Firestone is coming to see us, with already built projections of the winery by the architects, and all business projections, being a businessman, and as far as the investment is concerned, he came to me, and without my knowing this thing, he turned to me and said, "I'm Mr. Firestone. Dr. Amerine sent me here, and I have my property in Santa Ynez Valley, and I am projecting business, and it happens to be that we have a hundred and fifty acres of our own, and we have the growing region, and I am very much interested to go in this thing."

I said, "Look, do you realize where you are going? Do you know what risk you are taking? I mean you are projecting already a fancy business with a tremendous amount of capital investment, and I am going to ask you a question. Now let's say you might be successful. It's a new region to me absolutely, and you are asking my help. I can't even guarantee you any help because it's an absolutely new region to me. It takes me quite a bit of time to get acquainted with the region and the ability of the region to produce fine quality wines. It might be a complete flop. It might be just a loss of capital, you know. So I am going to ask you a very plain question. How much physical harm could be done to you if there would be a collapse of capital investment?"

He showed me ten fingers, and he said, "I am going to lose one finger. In other words, I will continue to live with nine fingers." [laughter] He said, "With nine fingers you can be very successful. You can go even with eight. So let's go." [laughter]

He presented all the project, very professional, to me, and I accepted his challenge, and I started to work with him. I put a young man there, Tony [Anthony] Austin. Tony was a young man, graduated from

AT: the University of California, who started to work with Simi, as Mary Ann Graf's assistant, and myself, and I observed Tony, and trained Tony within my philosophy at Simi, with my ideas of winemaking. When he asked me, "Whom are you going to recommend?" I put, in all selections of men that he (Brooks) interviewed, Tony as my recommendation--wrong or right, but I recommended this man.

Tony is a great friend of mine, and his family and so on and so forth, and their girl and everything. I'm very close to them. Tony is an entirely different individual, with whom I have to work entirely differently with than anybody else. Every student of mine is an individual, and I have to approach him as an individual. This is a very sensitive reaction, by the way. Sometimes even my wife is criticizing me with my tenderness, dealing with these tender elements, by saying, "You should be far more aggressive." I know that I can be aggressive with one, and I have to be very tender with another. You see, you are dealing with different elements, and there are positive and negative elements. Negative elements are partially coming from academic training and academical background inherited from the logbook and depth of theoretical knowledge, which I have put in the past, and am trying to interpret each entirely different situation individually. So therefore, this is another element.

But anyhow, we managed to go, and father Firestone managed to interest his very close friend, the president of Suntory [Limited], as a thirty percent partner in this development. So therefore thirty percent of the capital investment belongs to Suntory company and to the president of Suntory, who is a good friend of the ambassador, and they are playing golf together, and they are very close friends.

So far, I am very pleased with the white wines, and I have hopes that partially '76, partially '78, and '78 are going to give us much better wines than we produced in '75 and '76. The first vintage was the '75 vintage. The vineyards are young, the vineyards are very promising, the ecology is there, and we are growing, and there are no problems of financing, and there is no problem of distribution, because they are actually locating their wines on the market. Brooks himself took the sales in his own hands, for one single reason, because originally, in our first conversation, when I said, "One thing is to produce, one thing is to sell," he reciprocated in a very interesting presentation of his ability of sales.

He said, to me, "Mr. Tchelistcheff, for years and years and years, I have seen selling something that looked black, something that stinks, and something that everybody hates to buy. [laughter] It's a rubber tire. When you are buying a rubber tire, you are buying a black, stinky thing, and you hate to buy it, because you have to spend a great

AT: amount of money, you buy it only under the pressure. So I think the pleasure part of such a bottle of wine will be nothing for me to sell." [laughter] And he is selling.

RT: Is he selling in Japan?

AT: No, they just recently introduced two wines in Japan as a trial, but not with the idea of creating a large market--because he is allocating right here. But they put two wines there, and so far, I have never heard what happened. The Japanese market is a very interesting market, and Japanese structure is changing from one way to another, you know. But anyhow, this is my second contact.

Finally, we are coming to my last contact. As long as we are covering all the contacts, I would like to mention Jordan. Now, Jordan came to me as a very recent challenge. It started in 1974. I received a call from the architect in Santa Barbara who said, "I have a very wealthy client, Mr. Thomas Jordan, from Denver, who owns the gas and oil company of Denver, in Colorado. He owns 275 acres of vineyard in Alexander Valley, and he is a very close friend of Baron Elie Rothschild. He is also one of the directors of Banque National de Paris, and he is a Francophile. He drinks the very expensive French wines, and his dream is to build a chateau similar to Lafite, with one single wine, Cabernet, and he is very much interested in your consulting, because you are the Cabernet man of California."

So I went there. I met Mr. Jordan and Mrs. Jordan, a very elegant and wealthy couple, with a great amount of charm--chic, although rich people, with the high dreams. The vineyard was planted early, and located in the lower section of Alexander Valley, that I really honestly did not consider it as one of the best places of Cabernet planting. But Michael Rowan, the viticulturist who planted this vineyard, became already a confident agent of Thomas Jordan, and Michael Rowan, being a viticulturist, graduated from Davis, believed that with the proper ecological management, he would be able to produce the fine quality raw material to make a fine quality Cabernet.

So I was involved as a consultant enologist and viticulturist. We worked together for two years, putting together this unbelievable structure--very expensive winery where there was no refusal of anything. Anything that I wanted, or had to have. Anything that Jordan wanted had to be done; there was no limitation. We just had to build this thing with Thomas' idea to build a great chateau.

The chateau was built in the Austrian style. It's all in a yellow and white color, bright yellow, like the Austrians built, Hapsburgs--and it cost a tremendous amount of money. He is building the chateau now, his own residence there, and I think the total investment is very probably far above \$50 million. The projects were in the beginning--

AT: although I tried to sell some other practical ideas--the projection originally remained as a Cabernet style, only one wine. But even the rich people with the very sense of business, touching the wine industry, start to reform themselves, or unbend themselves. [laughter] So I projected originally production, with the architect, of two types of wines, a Cabernet rosé as a quick response to capital investment, and then a Cabernet as a classical Cabernet-Bordeaux, or let's say, a claret. So I projected an immediate response within six months for the capital investment. He said, "No. I don't want it. I don't want to jeopardize it. It's got to be a great château."

But recently, after three years of experimentation with wines, and going deep into the marketing and research with his own friends in marketing, now he has changed his mind. Now he is going into a parallel line of Chardonnays. So there will be thirty percent of Chardonnays in the business projection of the future. So far, we are just experimenting with Chardonnay, and he grafted some of these Merlot and Cabernet to Chardonnay in his own vineyard.

So right now, we have about seventy acres grafted to Chardonnay, but they are young, and they are still in experimentation, and the wines are still experimental young wines, and it's very hard to say what the Chardonnay will be.

What we built in Cabernet and Merlot is something that is not comparable with one single type of California Cabernet. We tried to build something that's a new dream in my mind, and it corresponds to the dreams of Thomas. I think what André Tchelistcheff built as the image of Cabernet of Napa Valley, in Private Reserve, is something of historical value, and it's something that was built with the ability of the selective consumer to buy and lay down for several years. It's not corresponding to the actual know-how of the present consumer and the rapid expansion of consumption of California wine by the American consumer. In other words, I believe that the wines should be matured, but should be presented in a very artistic, mellow, gentle form to the consumer, rather than with the sharp, bitey form of tannic-y Cabernets, and we built that style.

Now several people are complementing us [the Jordan winery] for such a success, and several people are very critical. But the policy is established. Wines are remaining and aging for two years in the cellar. They are spending eighteen months in the small cooperage, European oak and partially only American oak, in an air-conditioned wine cellar, with the humidity controlled, and then they undergo compulsory two years of bottle aging. Some of them, in the heavy vintages, are going to undergo three years of bottle aging before they are going to be sold. The first vintage of 1976--a first half--is going to be sold in the fall of 1980. The second half will be sold in the spring and summer of 1981. The vintage 1977 will move in late summer or fall of 1981 marketing.

AT: Now this is a dream. It's a very beautiful dream. How this dream is going to be correlated with the capital return, it's unknown to us.

RT: What kind of marketing organization have they?

AT: They don't have to have a marketing organization. See, right now, the first fraction is going to be released out of 36,000 cases of 1976 vintage. Now, there will be a first release of 10,000 or 12,000 or 14,000 cases of wine. One single distributor in Los Angeles came and tasted the wine and said, "I'd like to have everything." But they are not interested to sell. They have an Englishman by the name of Mr. [Melvyn] Master. He is wine merchant. He was working for several organizations as a marketing agent in Denver. He is going to be sales manager. Right now, he is already starting the sponsoring, without release of the wine, by traveling and talking about Jordan and presenting the Jordan image with just tastes of wine. Nothing is available. This is tomorrow. Just taste the wines. Today, for instance, they have a dinner at the chateau right there at the winery, because there is an apartment and beautiful kitchen built in the winery. There is a beautiful dining room. Some day, if you are going to be interested, I am going to introduce you to this thing. It's so exciting, just fascinating. You are sitting in the big dining room, classical dining room, and the big glass-lined door, and you see the tanks right in front of you, oak tanks with the illumination of the specific lights that are showing different aspects of lighting. As you light your candles in the beautiful silver, solid, candelabras, they are dimming the light in the cellar, and the light is showing you the depth of the cellar.

Now, for their little dinette above, or every individual bedroom, they have an opening right in the barrel room. They can go right in the barrel room. Everything is connected to the winery.

Now, this is a dream, and I still would say, "Let's leave it as a dream," because I am not in a position even to answer what will be the success of this thing. We have great hopes, but they could be defeated, from the consumer. But I think the consumer will prefer these wines. The consumer will help sell this wine.

But, as we grow, the vineyards are growing. So if 1976 does not give complete compensation to me, 'seventy-seven gives me far more. 'Seventy-eight gives me far more promise, because the vineyards are aging, and we learn how to deal with them.

There I have a beautiful, wonderful young man from Davis, Rob Davis, a young man of about twenty-eight years of age, with a tremendous head and technological knowledge, and tremendous humanity in himself, and a tremendous confidence in me, who also never does anything without calling me, and I am visiting this winery three times a week. He is not doing anything before he has got my okay.

RT: That's a fascinating story. Again, the future.

AT: So I think we finished all my contacts. I think I covered everything.

RT: I think there are a couple more, Stag's Leap and Callaway.

AT: Stag's Leap and Callaway actually are contacts of the past.

RT: Is there anything to be said about them?

AT: I can say some very good words and I can say some bad words, too.

RT: Next time say a few good and a few bad.

AT: I will be absolutely neutral, and really neutrally cover them. Then we will go to Washington state. And Oregon, too.

[Interview 8: August 7, 1979]##

RT: We have been impressed with your wide knowledge as we have talked with you.

AT: You know, of course, that that coincides with my age. See, once again, we are referring back, we are going back to the same roots of answering several problems of life, negative or positive, but the roots are there, understanding of everything that you are doing, between yourself and emotions and physically, by using that wisdom that you accumulated during your career.

RT: Not everybody achieves that. Some people just grow older and worse.

We wanted to ask you about Stag's Leap and Callaway.

AT: All right. Let's first review my accidental contact with Ely Callaway.

[The following was re-taped on May 12, 1980, to replace tape accidentally lost.]

AT: My acquaintance with Ely Callaway happened to be right here in this county, where my friend, Leon Adams, for no reason, decided to introduce me to Ely Callaway, his very personal friend, with the idea that I may be able to help, rationally or realistically, to solve some of the problems of Ely Callaway when he decided to go to wine production.

It was exciting, yes, it was exciting to see any new personality, specifically a new personality that shows a character, zip, and vitality, and definite philosophy.

RT: So the interview was set in sort of like a country club [the Silverado Country Club Resort], and it was dictated to me by Leon Adams saying, "Now, André, be at the club, and in the lobby at 11 o'clock. Mrs. Callaway, a young, exciting looking lady will meet you there."

So I came there in the proper time, and I saw this beautiful lady, without any imagination that she might be somebody else. So I went to her and said, "Excuse me, madam, but are you Mrs. Callaway?"

She said, "Yes, I'm Nancy Callaway, and my husband and Leon Adams are waiting for you in the cottage."

So I went there, and Mr. Callaway was sitting in some presidential position in that beautiful cottage. On the left hand was Leon Adams, my good friend. As I came into the room, he stood up, and said, "Ah, Mr. Tchelistcheff, pleased to meet you. Will you sit down please. I am Mr. Callaway."

You know, in the early part of my previous career, you know, I had very limited information as far as the industry is concerned, other than the wine industry, and not too much interest in the textile interest or any other problems.*

So he said, "Well, anything that's on you, it's me. Starting from your shirt, from your tie, your jacket; and you're going to sit on the chair, which is me, and the rug is me."

So this is Ely Callaway. So, Ely Callaway projects his own philosophical ideas, great ideas by the way, which he's now trying to transform from dreams to reality, in his specific merchandising of the wine.

So he said, "Well, I am a marketing authority; and so therefore, I am going to use my experience in marketing dealing not with the textiles, but using my authority and my practical experience dealing with such a beautiful thing as wine.

"So, therefore, I will produce my wine under specific conditions, and I'm going to take responsibility by delivering my own wine directly to the consumer, door-to-door.

"And it will be done personally by me, or by Nancy [Mrs. Callaway], or by the winemaker. And it's going to be delivered in air-conditioned trucks, which will carry my name. So therefore I am not going to risk being exposed to shelf-life, or any staff connected difficulties, or atmospheric temperature of the wine shops."

*Ely Callaway had been president of Burlington Industries, Inc., a major American textile corporation.

AT: So, this was the first introduction, and I was very much interested just to see what will happen to this.

"Ely Callaway," I said, "I hope that your dream's a reality, but according to my knowledge, from a man who lived such a long period of time, I doubt that you are going to be able to solve the marketing problem in that manner."

Since then, actually I've been exposed to Ely Callaway twice, involved twice in a direct communication as a consultant. The first time would have been right in the company of Leon Adams and Professor Harold W. Berg, who was then professor in the Department of Viticulture and Enology of the University of California-Davis, and then was even chairman of the department. This tasting was not promoted by Ely Callaway but actually sponsored and promoted by the Bank of America, in the process of further financing of Callaway in the future. In other words, the bank was hesitating to proceed without the expert opinion on the product. With the first production of the Callaway wines, and the first observation after the production, everything was rather promising. You must remember that these were all young wines of 1974 which had not been bottled as yet.

The second time I was exposed to the Callaway line of wines for tasting was six months later when the white wines were either in the bottle or ready for the bottle. At that time everything really sounded so promising, and I was very pleased with the cultural aspect of the Callaway vineyard, which is a beautiful thing; and I sent a very optimistic report.

Since then, due to my busy schedule in consulting and the long distance to the Callaway vineyards, I have not done any more consulting for him. However, we are always keeping our visual friendship, and I really admire him for initiative, and marketing ideas and his marketing philosophy and marketing energy.

RT: Did you indicate that you thought his vineyards were good there at Temecula?

AT: No question of it. The vineyards are properly selected, the general ecological regime is good, topographical exposure with the climatic positive condition of suction from the Pacific into the interior hot valley, which is really strictly a local micro-climatic phenomenon. A little morning fog covers them, and there is a refreshing breeze every afternoon from the ocean.

Importing European Viticulture and Enology

AT: I think everything is there for production of fine quality wines. It's a new trial, and a new region. Therefore, everyone's allowed to have their own ideas; and Karl Werner, graduated from Geisenheim, really tried to apply classical German theories of white winemaking and red winemaking. He tried to introduce German methods of winemaking to the ecological situation such as Callaway property.

It coincides with so many things that I've tried to do, beginning in my career in Napa Valley: to freshen up the early wines, to work step-by-step as Europeans do. It's a very interesting thing that actually it coincides now, since we talked together, with the introduction of new constructive energy in Napa Valley, in the so-called wine pact signed between Robert Mondavi and Baron Philippe Rothschild de Mouton.

In 1979, last season, they started to apply, under the management of winemaker Baron Philippe, exactly similar technology and similar winemaking process as it's done in Bordeaux. So it remains to be seen how long they are going to be able, or what are going to be the results if, step-by-step, they are going to interpret exactly the same technology, same philosophy, to the products of Napa Valley. The idea is to create similar greatness out of products of Napa Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. The big idea is to create a second Mouton-Rothschild in Napa Valley.

I don't believe that this is the way to follow for the particular reason that there is no reason to judge and compare European products, or any other products with American products. I think it's an imitative technology, rather than a creative technology.

I believe that every one of us as technologists, artists, should have our own initiative, our own understanding of the problem of art, of winemaking. Oil painting will be quite different, and every artist has a chance to express the intensity of oil paint in an entirely different way.

But this is interesting. So, coming back to the same problem, Karl Werner tried to do this and had several problems, because what was applicable in Germany with the classical, proper type of classical German red wine, is completely not corresponding to the image of the winemaker, wine merchant and wine consumer of America.

RT: Another notable example of, maybe, transplanting technology is Domaine Chandon. Did they try to do that?

AT: No, I don't think so, no. I think their approach is entirely different. As a matter of fact they're introducing even the Blanc de Noirs with a slight excess of color, a different direction than in the classical

AT: Champagne region. I don't think that their technology's exactly French technology. They're adjusting French technology, as I adjusted my French technology, to American facts of living.

So I really am still considering myself as a French, classically trained winemaker. But cooking with quite different ingredients in American kitchen, rather than the French kitchen with those supplies that I bought at the market of the Boulevard Italiens.

Again I'm referring to the same thing. I think I mentioned to you, in one of my conversations that I asked a similar question of one of the most outstanding chefs of France, about a year ago or two years ago, Jean Troisgros: "You are presenting the culinary class here, and I wonder what you are doing here in comparison with what you are doing within a similar ideology, or let's say, purpose, in France, in your own restaurant?"

And he says, "Well, I'm going to tell you. You know, I'm trying to make a dish, and I'm really trying to present the dish with typical French accent, and I'm making a very interesting dish. But the dish is becoming entirely different than in France although I'm doing everything exactly as I do there.

"But the problem is that the raw material's entirely different. And I'm not buying personally. There, between two of us, my brother and me, we are going to the marche in the morning, and we are buying our own stuff.

"And we smell the produce, we smell the carrots, and we smell the peaches, and the fish, and we select the fish. We say everything is selection, everything starts with the raw material.

"So, outside the facts of different origin, the fish is of Atlantic but not Pacific, and the asparagus is grown in the Loire Valley instead of the rich soils of Sacramento Valley, there also the absence of me as a selector."

So this is exactly the same thing.

RT: Before you continue-- In retrospect now, as of today, do you think Callaway has been going in the right direction?

AT: I think there is a certain improvement; I'm not trying to criticize some products. They have such a personality. But I think they are not corresponding to the times. This is something absurd to you and, you know, I am very unstable as a person. And yes, unstable to the point that I continuously explore tomorrow rather than to stay within today.

AT: So therefore, even if we've been running this interview with you, let's say five years ago, probably what I am saying today will be entirely different than I said yesterday. Because some formulations, you know that wine formulation I'm making, could be contradiction. How André Tchelistcheff prayed in 1940 and built standards of wine, and André Tchelistcheff today is criticizing the standards of wine of 1940 by saying that we are going entirely in a wrong direction. Because André Tchelistcheff is still living and continuously in the process of keeping his fingers on the pulse of the consumer.

And we are all going in a rapid process of evolution, in all forms of our activities, and of forms of our living and expressing, changing the basic standards, basic morals, basic traditions to something new so that we are looking at a new society. The beverage, as a part of our joy of living, is changing its own topography.

So that's what I'm saying: red wines of Callaway should be placed on the American market about twenty years ago and would be appreciated. But they are not corresponding to the image of great wines of today, not only here, but also in Europe. Because even European wines, classical châteaux of Médoc, are changing their structure towards the consumer power.

RT: Which is?

AT: Which is more elegance, more lightness, more drinkability. In other words, you look upon the wine as a companion during the meal, and you don't look upon the wine as a librarian, or, let's say, enthusiastic connoisseur who would like to buy this wine and consume the wine within the next twenty or thirty years.

That's entirely different. There are still librarians, there will be always librarians; but the average consumer is not a librarian. The average consumer drinks wine simply for pleasure, but I think it's sort of normal.

When I went to college, my dear, there was a regulation for every student to have a hard, starched shirt and tie. We did not accept even the idea during the class or during laboratory work, beside the fact that we'd have a white smock on us, to open our collar and release our tie. And the professor was presenting the lesson, the lecture to the students, while he was in a formal outfit.

Now, if you put these forms, visible forms out today, it would just be ridiculous to do this, a circus. So everything is changing.

And so, if we're having any changes this way, well, then in a very traditional industry such as the wine industry, we still have to sell our traditional beverages to a new consumer. A consumer of new

AT: generation, of new school, of new morals, of new habits, and it's a logical reaction to what he's eating and drinking, don't you think so?

That's one of the reasons that new consumers probably are still all living and enjoying the life. I'm always referring to some of my plans, and I'm referring right now to the statement by Madame de Latour, who became the president of Beaulieu vineyard. She was considered then as a queen of the California wine industry. She was a grand lady, a really, patroness of the wine industry.

She said to me, "Well, you know, the secret of my life, André, is the secret to understand the youth." And strangely, in the few of her last years, she always tried to surround herself with the youth, rather than with people of her own generation. In other words, she kept always her mind completely open and youthful by being with the youth. And she was able to understand youth much better than even, very probably, her daughter was able to understand the younger generation. You see how strange it is, strictly individual.

RT: We wanted to ask you a little about Stag's Leap Wine Cellars of Warren Winiarski.

AT: I started with Warren Winiarski years and years ago, when he just moved from academical position into the wine industry, and been directly connected with the Robert Mondavi winery. We were very friendly, and probably my friendship with him was more or less attached to some sort of a similarity in our environmental traditional structure, being two Slavs, one a Russian, one Pole. Although there's quite a bit of difference in the internal structure of Russians and Poles, but still as Slavs.

When I became a freelance consultant, I really volunteered to help him out in this new winery that he built and later became president, Stag's Leap Wine Cellars. And we really worked very close. I really admired him, admired his family, and my admiration still remains but the facts of life sometime for no reason cut the immediate daily relation to the person.

As a student, as a winemaker, as a man who understands the wines, I give him all credits, and I think he's one of the very few winemakers of California who really understands the wines, who lives with the wine daily, who never separates his wine from himself, and who really gives everything that he has, his mind, his energy, his philosophy, his dreams, to his own products.

As a winemaker, as a colleague, I have the greatest respect for Winiarski. I am considering him as one of the best, maybe even best, winemaker of Napa Valley, and I would like to express my feelings towards

AT: him as a winemaker. There is only one man who accepts the philosophy of winemaking as an artist living close to his creation and even theoretical achievement. In other words, he is only one man who is continuously in permanent contact with every barrel in his cellar. He lives with them. He constantly watches every individual barrel, every individual lot, in the process of fermentation, in the process of aging, in the process of preparing wine for the bottling. He is continuously coming up to review the quality, to understand if he can do this, or he can go in the other direction. I mean, he is a real winemaker. He has the ability to understand the wine. He has a common language with the wines, and very few winemakers have that ability, understand the creation, and the raw material in the process of creation.

And Barbara, his charming wife, being a Czech, also another Slav, is also a sweet person, and we've been living in such a close friendship that, even during the very intimate holidays in the family such as Christmas Eve, a very traditional Polish tradition, celebrating the Christmas Eve, and I don't know if you're acquainted this tradition, where the people are sitting as brothers and sisters, and when you share a part of meal, a bread, they're passing from mouth to mouth, I mean exchange.

It's a beautiful tradition, and always touching; and as a matter of fact, I've been so proud of his products and specifically of his Cabernet, that years ago when I was invited by wine/food society meal to present my best selection of Cabernets of California, I included his 1974 Cabernet.

RT: Is there some controversy about the name, "Stag's Leap".

AT: The Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and the Stags' Leap Winery, that's entirely two different things. And still in the court they have never solved this problem.* This litigation that's lasting years and years in the Superior Court of Napa. And it's not too easy to solve. They are living all in the same district [named Stag's Leap], and the vineyards are facing each other, and it's really hard to separate Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Stags' Leap Winery, its being a historical factor.

But this is complicating. Since both of them are commercially registered, with the commercial labels, there is a confusion.

Well, a similar confusion still exists between Charles Krug [of the Mondavi family] and the Robert Mondavi winery. They are trying to separate these phonetically by saying one is "Mondayvee and the other is

*It has been solved since the interview.

AT: "Mondahvee." "Mondayvee" is the youngest brother who is the president of Charles Krug. And Robert "Mondahvee" is the Robert Mondavi winery in Rutherford. But it's ridiculous. They're still Mondavi wineries.

There's nothing wrong with it, except they are trying to build up something else. If I was in Robert Mondavi's case, I would name my winery not the Robert Mondavi winery, but another name and then say, "owned by Robert Mondavi."

RT: Charles Krug himself is so long dead and the winery passed through so many other hands--

AT: Yes, but it still traditionally can be carried. Like the Buena Vista, going from hand to hand but still carrying the name of Buena Vista.

Concepts of Appellation or Origin

RT: Did you testify in the hearings on the Napa Valley designation?

AT: No, because, look, I've been approached to testify in some sort of way on the exclusion of lateral valleys, interior valleys such as the Pope Valley, Wooden Valley, and Chiles Valley. Now I'm going to tell you, yes, I was ready to go, and one of the leading men, René di Rosa, was here, asked me to participate, begged me to participate, asked for my support of their statement. René di Rosa was a hero of Carneros area.

I said, "Now, if I will go and testify, I'll be smashed." Because in every book where they are mentioning my philosophy towards appellation of origin, I'm saying that Napa Valley, as a geographical appellation, represents only insignificant, absolutely meaningless appellation.

In the Bordeaux appellation are 4,000 registered châteaux; and even with Bordeaux appellation or Médoc's great valley, with appellation of Médoc, there are in Bordeaux thousands of châteaux and thousands of wines carrying the appellation of Bordeaux that are very poor--almost undrinkable wines on the French or European internal market. My philosophy of appellation of region is much different than just a marketing philosophy. I believe that, if we are approaching Napa Valley from the point of view of general ecology, dealing with the problem of geology, pedology, exposures, depth of the soil, growing temperature, we are not in a position to say if the wine is going to carry the appellation of Napa Valley officially it's going to be fine quality wine. And for that particular reason, therefore, you are mentioning the Chiles Valley and Pope Valley.

AT: Chiles Valley, really, and Pope Valley, well actually they are representing nothing else, microclimatically, but the region of Calistoga in Napa Valley. Because they have exactly the same extremes. They have a tremendous extreme in summation of temperatures, and they have also very rich soils.

Now, in my philosophy I always divide Napa Valley. I will say Napa Valley appellation as a giantic appellation (and I'd promote the Carneros area as a sub-section of the Napa Valley) and divide the Napa Valley into eight microclimatic regions. And then I will give them privilege to call their valleys also by their own names.

But it's not corresponding at all what they're asking for. As a matter of fact, even in the Napa Valley appellation they are still protecting the vintner with twenty-five percent import of the product from other appellation origins. So therefore, actually you are not depending on appellation origin yet.

If I have legally a right to import twenty-five percent from Sonoma county, or Mendocino County, or Marin County, well, that's not appellation of origin. you remember the wine scandal in Bordeaux, when they imported some wines interblending from the south? That was a wine Watergate. And we are officially doing this Watergate daily, in importing wines, interblending wines with somebody else's, some other county's.

You see, these [Napa County] valleys represent according to statisticians, only five percent out of [the state's] total production. And there is the grandfather's law. Now right in the beginning, look, they've been involved selling their products in Napa Valley, five percent, in the so-called political appellation of Napa County.

That's one of the reasons that Mendocino County, for instance, they don't want to ask for Mendocino valley. They would like to stay with Mendocino County appellation, as a political appellation. That is a great contradiction; because they have also different microclimates. Mendocino County, and all the interior valleys in Mendocino County, have nothing to do with the main large valley. So there will be again fights.

I think it's, though, too premature. I always say that's premature to talk about, because we are not solving the basic elements of appellation, we are not controlling the varietals, are not controlling the maximum production; I mean we are just trying to fool the consumer that we have appellation of origin. Appellation of origin is much deeper than only problem of geographical appellation. It's a problem of controls.

AT: Now, the new amendment of French appellations is forcing them to present their wines of appellation every year to committee on appellation. And the committee on appellation has a right to reject the wine from appellation, or they give them a chance to twice present this wine. This is an effort in the process of technological improvement to finally bring the wine, upgrading the wine, so the wine can go with appellation.

So it would be ridiculous for me to talk about appellation and defend Napa Valley as a region. That's the reason I just stayed away. As a matter of fact, I thought even it would be unethical for me to put my finger in with all the historians and great authorities testifying there, and consumers.

Because, after all, I am living in Napa County. I'm not grower, and I'm not vintner, I'm just a technician. As a technician, yes, I have very probably far more knowledge of the valley than the growers, but I thought it will put me in a very doubtful position of designs towards myself. Because if you take any book where there is a question of appellation of origin, I am really, honestly, cutting the valley in several appellations.

RT: I thank you for explaining that, because I think that gives a whole different aspect to this problem.

[continuing interview of August 7, 1979]

Winemaking in Washington and Oregon

RT: What about your Washington state work? You started going to Washington state before you left Beaulieu?

AT: Oh, yes. My contacts in Washington state I think are very well represented by Leon Adams in his book of American wines [The Wines of America]. There are actual facts there. Really, honestly, when Leon Adams came back [from Washington], in 1966, he came back with definite ideas. He has a great amount of intuition, and he is using that intuitive feelings of his with the idea to understand or project the future in some regions. Sometimes intuitions are misleading you to a certain point, and you have a little too much confidence in yourself, dealing with your intuition, but basically he is always right with his intuition.

That was not the Ste. Michelle [Vintners] then. It was the American Wine Growers wine company, in the state of Washington. It was financed then by the group of local people. Their Pommerelle line

AT: of Washington was basically a line of berry wines, and very poor common wines that had been sold with the Pommerelle label in Washington state. It was domestic wine.

In the past, they had been trying to improve this somehow. As a matter of fact, in the past, before me, several years before, they hired R. Bradford Webb as a winemaker, but there was some sort of a misunderstanding, or the raw material was not available. Anyhow, Webb didn't last there too long and left Washington state and came back to California.

Leon Adams said to Victor Allison, then general manager of the American Wine Growers in Seattle, "I have great hopes, but I think you need a guidance. So therefore, I recommend to you André Tchelistcheff, who is the senior winemaker in California, Napa Valley. I think he will give you a general orientation in the winemaking with the varietal wines, because so far your varietal wines are very poor quality."

So in 1967 I went there and tasted these varietal wines of American Wine Growers, Cabernet, Pinot noir, and Riesling, and I was very disappointed. It was really a very poor product, due very probably to negative climatic conditions or negative technology.

The Associated Winners of Seattle was nothing but, let's say, some sort of very interesting academical kibbutz in Seattle. Several professors of the University of Washington planted a vineyard about the same time as Victor Allison planted his in the Yakima Valley. They were doing this thing just as a relaxation rather than any business, and they were all making wine in their own homes. They were thinking that eventually, with the ideal combination between the people of entirely different academical status, they were going to create their own organization, without any additional expense in as far as the management is concerned, or even labor, by spending their weekends, with their families, together in the vineyards and eventually building up a winery that they are going to be able to manage without hiring anybody, which was a very good idea. The idea was excellent.

So they were very much interested in my opinion about it, and since I was there, I was invited by the professor of climatology, Dr. [Philip] Church of the University of Washington, for a dinner at his own home. I found that he is also a big fisherman, as basically all of them are there, and I remember that dinner very well. There was a steamed salmon, about ten pounds, served in his own home. He said, "Mr. Tchelistcheff, I don't know if I can. I am going to serve my own wines for this, right here, from the grapes that we are growing as a group," and he opened a bottle of Gewürztraminer. It was about vintage 1963 or '64, and I was just shocked by the quality of this wine--just unbelievably shocked. It was one of the best Traminers then that I tasted in America, because Traminers in California were very poor wines, and it was the image of a great, flowery bouquet that this man, being a home winemaker, produced from these grapes grown in the Yakima Valley.

AT: So I changed my opinion. I said, "Now, if this home winemaker, with a Gewürztraminer, can make such a classical wine, there is definitely a tremendous hope in Yakima Valley." So with this idea, I accepted this consulting, and I went there, and with the great support of Victor Allison we really introduced entirely new ideas of utilization of varietals grown in Yakima Valley. We produced a technical revolution in the cellar of American Wine Growers, and nobody within the cellar believed that anything can be done with this thing.

So it took me about two years of hard work buiding their production management towards entirely different philosophy of winemaking. Victor Allison, carrying all the responsibility of financing this thing, carried a tremendous amount of moral obligation towards this board of directors--basically doctors and bankers and so on and so forth, or real estate people--who had been doing very well with the berry wines. Financially it was a very solid organization, with the berry wines and the sweet wines that were sold within the state of Washington.

They took this thing very skeptically, to the point that even Victor Allison said, "André, you know, I am worrying constantly. Now I am spending so much money and doing this thing, and I agree with you that we have hopes, but who is going to buy these wines, varietal Rieslings and varietal Cabernets, or varietal Pinot noirs, or Semillon, produced in the valley known as the apple valley in eastern Washington state?"--where the Concord is grown basically, and the Welch juice is the central production right there. The basic Concord production is controlled by the Welch people, and then the balance is bought as a juice by Gallo people to reinforce their specialty formula wines, such as--great wines of Gallo--Thunderbird and White Ripple and Red Ripple and so on and so forth. It happens to be that I know that very well because by this particular time my son was connected with Gallo as a technical director and quality control man.

So I said, "Now look. Let's not be so pessimistic. Let's see what will be the response in the local market," and the local market was the hardest market to capture, actually. So after two years of work, we presented the first wine, Semillon and Johannisberg Riesling, for tasting of some selective members of the American Society of Enologists during our annual convention in San Diego. Everybody was just shocked by the extreme quality of these two wines. Then several people in the marketing organization, being already exposed to this tasting, decided to run a blind tasting against these wines, including all California wines such as California Semillon, and Ste. Michelle--not then yet Chateau Ste. Michelle--Ste. Michelle Semillon was the winner.

You know, a miracle even happens in the marketing. All of a sudden, rather than a long progress to growing prestige in the interstate market, these white wines of Washington state became a quality item with almost a national distribution. Since then, of course,

AT: several things happened. Expansion. The company was sold to a new group of financiers, real estate people, brokers, and they kept this thing. Then the reputation of Ste. Michelle was going up, and the big corporate capital was interested to place their money in the wine industry.

United States Tobacco was sold with the idea that rather than to go and invest a great amount of money in California, they would promote with their own power a new section, being very realistic of the marketing success of this new product, and no competition at all. Also being very much attracted with the cost of operation in Washington, in the cost of building up one acre of productive fine quality grapes, against the cost in California, because it's so low.

RT: Why? Because of the land?

AT: The land is low. You don't have a process of fumigation. There is no phylloxera. You don't have root stocks; you plant direct. You have available water without spending any money in the irrigation, because of all the irrigation channels, Columba River, in Yakima Valley. So everything was there. So therefore, against \$4,000 an acre, the number was \$800 an acre.

But there was always a danger to be exposed to the severe frost during the winter, and that's a permanent risk that every one of them, are exposed to right there. The cycle of damages is divided by the time factors--five years, ten years, twenty-five years, fifty years, or seventy-five years. Somehow, within this cycle, there will be a year where the frost will be dramatically bad. It happens that was the last year.

For instance, I talked yesterday to the winemaker, who called me, and I asked him the question, "How big are the damages?" They sent me the report before, because I was there about two months ago. But now, since the grapes are far more visible, and the behavior of the damaged vineyards are far more visible, what is the actual damage? Actual damage in fruit, in other words. The production of 1979 is equal to one sixth of production of 1978--one sixth!

As a matter of fact, to 800 tons of Cabernet of last season, there will be 120 tons of Cabernet of this season. Plus several new sections, planted in new regions--300 acres planted last season--completely eliminated, burned completely. It requires a complete replanting. There is from twenty to fifty percent replanting [required] in the existing vineyards. So therefore, dollarwise, damage in the fruit is equal to about \$2.5 million loss. Damage in the vineyard very probably is equal to \$3 or 4 million loss, by one single company.

AT: The cycle of climate of course is the reason. You have to take coldly this damage, because if it happens every twenty-five years it's not bad. If it happens every fifty years, it's acceptable, because the life of the vineyards is already thirty to forty years at the most in that particular situation. But this is the whole thing.

I still have the great hopes, although this is a very shocking news and very bad feelings created right there, and it's a very depressed feeling in the industry, but this is a new region, and this new region I think has a great future. But I take into consideration all the negatives together, and for that particular reason, very probably Oregon shows you far more stability than Washington state, because it happens to be that the internal valleys of Oregon, the coastal valleys, are far more moderate in climate than the eastern part of Washington state. So rarely they have a severe frost that can do any damage there, and the moderate climate is far more promising in Oregon than it is promising in Washington state.

RT: All that rain--

AT: Even that rain. But providing that you are planting varietals, continental varieties, that are grown exactly under the same condition in Europe--all that rain in Europe. As Professor Winkler said, "There is not one single fine quality viticultural area of world which is producing fine quality wine that is not exposed to climatic calamities." In other words, you have a rain, or you have a spring frost, or sometimes you have a deep winter frost. Last season, the Rhine and Moselle suffered for the winter damages, and that region rarely suffers--once in a hundred years! But this happens, you see.

Now, Oregonian wines are entirely different. Oregonian wines, you have an entirely different ecosystem, ecological regime, than Washington state. In Washington state, we have a great amount of positive factors, but we have accumulation of negative factors, too. In Washington state we have positive factors such as long days, long dormancy, and privilege to plant direct. But we have the negatives of very severe variation from minimum to the maximum--and they have a considerable amount of hot spells in the Yakima Valley, which we have in the North Coast. So therefore, negativenss of hot spells, early maturity, and rapid maturity, rapid concentration of sugar, create some negative results in the wines. So some years are positive, some years are negative. Some years our acids are very high, and that will be an ideal year, and some years our acids are very low, because variations are tremendous in the internal desert valley, such as the Yakima Valley. It's surrounded by the desert.

Now in Oregon country, you have a moderate, let's say, slightly negative condition of grape growing, and the best varieties that can be grown there are the varieties of early maturity, which not necessarily every year, as in Europe, are coming to the ideal commercial maturity.

AT: Removal of the risks of the winter frost, it's a great relaxation, because again, it's a capital investment. The rainfall of thirty to forty inches, divided equally between winter, spring, and with the additional rains in summer, creates far more normal physiological growing condition for the vines, without irrigation. We [in California] are replacing this irrigation by sprinkling irrigation or drip system. In other words, they don't need that compensation too much.

Now, their maturities are long-lasting maturities, which is very important from the point of view of the quality of the fruit. Fruit exposed to long maturity has the ability to concentrate maximum aromatic substances in the skin. Quick maturing in the very short cycle has a very little chance to build up the aromatic substance, and to not burn them by the excessive respiration through the skin of the fruit. So therefore, there is a great hope from my point of view. Not everybody agrees with me. If I would be seated, myself, in the region of Oregon, I would limit my activities in two different directions. I would guide a great part of my production towards production of sparkling wines, and I will select the best varieties that are giving me more or less homogeneous quality every year to produce fine quality table wines.

Between the table wines of Oregon, the most outstanding wine, in the outstanding vintages, is the Pinot noir that we have such a hard time to produce in California. Just two days ago we had a bottle of Oregonian Pinot noir, and professionally we were sitting right here, and we said, "How great is the beautiful wine of Oregon in the specific vintage!" I have tasted some very good Gewürztraminers there, too.

RT: We have had conversations with a young man named David Lett of the Eyrie Vineyards.

AT: Right. David is one of the pioneers. A neighbor of his is [Richard C.] Erath. They are both young people. David Lett I visited and tasted his wine twice. He is not a part of my consulting. Dick Erath [of Knudsen-Erath Winery] is very close, because I am partially guiding him and checking once in a while his philosophy.

David--I really admired his activities and activities of his own and activities of the family, even the little kid. The kid spends sometimes nights in the fermenting room with the father. When we came the first time, he was invited--it was during the convention in Yakima Valley, dealing with the problem of Northwest production, and I was there. David brought two samples of wine specifically for me to taste. We tasted two wines, Chardonnay and Pinot noir, and they were very proud of it. We accepted an invitation, on our way from the convention, to visit their winery, and we went there. There is a small winery, rebuilt with the great effort from an old creamery, with ingenious engineering ideas--a proper thing. Small containers, such as stainless steel drums, etcetera, and French barrels. We tasted the wines, and I was very much

AT: impressed, but I always warn him, "Do not be pleased with your wines as such. Do not consider this thing as a final achievement of yours, because that's dangerous. I still see several negatives in your wine. So do not sell yourself as the best winemaker, because you still got a long ways to go."

The little kid was running there, and so they told us a very interesting story about this little kid. The kid was attending the parochial school. It's a very old community there. You are living almost like in the eighteenth century there. And of course, nobody drinks wines there. Wine is prohibited. So the kid was going there and attending Sunday school. The reverend, Methodist father very probably, was taking care of the kids and dividing, during the lunch, sandwiches. With the sandwiches they give them milk or orange juice. The kid stood up and said, "Father, I don't like to have this. I would like to have a glass of wine." [laughter] The kid was about four years of age. [laughter] That was a tremendous shock right in the school, you know. "Father, I don't like this stuff. Give me a glass of wine." [laughter] It's so typical, you know. I still remember that story. Really, they are a wonderful family. They have worked very hard. I have a great respect for them.

The region is growing, and since then, several people moved from California there, as you know. [William L.] Fuller, from Martini, left Martini. He was a winemaker and left there and moved, again, to the same valley. They are all in the same sub-region of the state. They are doing very well, and I think their future is very great if they are going to be cautious, of course, and if they are not going to disregard completely the necessities to be very critical towards themselves. The wines are getting very reputable in the American market--only they are produced in a limited volume--and the tastings that are going every year are creating a great amount of emotional excitement in the Northwest.

The first presentation I went there, that was in the setting of international exhibits there in the Seattle art museum. It was lovely done, and there was 2,000 people attending this. Oh, it's unbelievable. The response of the public--Oregon and Washington are responding right now as a market much better than California towards California wines, to their own wines. Unbelievable interest.

The distribution of California wines has been growing since Oregon and Washington amended their state laws and opened the doors. Also, a tremendous amount of interest has been created within their own products, and they are very proud. They are really patriotic. Then, I have to give them even more credit for it. When I presented my first lecture there, at the convention in Yakima, I managed to be absolutely honest with them. I said, "Now look, you have an opportunity to learn from our own experience in California and to not drag with you our own technological, viticultural, enological sins, as we are dragging yet on

AT: the back of our California wine production, because we inherited them from the past. You are a young generation. You can start right from the beginning, with a clean philosophy of winemaking."

In other words, the response--really, I got to give them credit. Do you know, by their own group of grape growers and winemakers of the state of Oregon, they forced the state legislation to create their state laws prohibiting generic wines [labels] such as a claret, chablis, sauterne, burgundy, and everything. By the state law of Oregon, nobody can produce generic wines with European names. It's a beautiful thing. We [strikes table for emphasis] are still not able to do it, and very probably never will be able to do it in the state of California. Never.

RT: Too late.

AT: Too late, because we have a lobby, and we have the capital, we have corporations, we have the marketing--you see.

So I have the greatest respect to them, to all of them, and their efforts are unbelievable--unbelievable efforts. They are constantly open, not only to further research in the field of technology, but what I give them far more for it--that's including Washington state also. In the almost dry state, under the jurisdiction of the Washington state legislature, they created a department of enology and viticulture for research [under the state university], under the management of such a great authority as Dr. Walter Clore, and Mr. [George H.] Carter, who is the enologist in charge of experimental winemaking and their wine cellar in Prosser, Washington.

In Oregon, even far behind, they managed to finance a research center within the university and the department of agriculture, where they are continuously working in the varietal selections, in the clonal selections, and in the types of technology acceptable for the Oregonian products. They are doing far more research than we are doing right here individually in small groups, in the counties. In a large area of exploitation of the vineyards, such as Napa County, we don't have it. We have private lots, but we don't have the county organization working towards this achievement, you see.

Plus, individuals [in Oregon], being very well educated in their theory of viticulture and enology, are doing their own experimental work in the local cellars and vineyards. For instance, Dick Erath, believing in the clonal selection, created his own experimental clonal selection planting, because the clone is directly connected with the parallel comparison within the same eco-regime, you see, ecosystem. So he is doing much better than can be done at the university, because what he is doing he is doing for himself by applying genetics directly connected with his soil, directly connected with his climate, under ideal conditions. It's a very great thing.

RT: There seems to be a contrast. In Washington, as you mentioned it, it's been large enterprise. In Oregon, they seem very small and probably entirely underfinanced.

AT: Very probably entirely underfinanced, yes, because so far the big capital does not have a confidence to move in. If Washington state was so successful because they have been able to enlarge the selection of wines, even going towards Cabernet--Oregon never will be able to do it, due to limitation of temperature. So therefore, from a point of view of big capital investment, for a corporation that would like to have, let's say, fifteen products, it's a taboo. I don't think that corporations right now are built with the idea to invest their money in something that can produce one or two or three wines, or four wines. For them it's too risky, because they have to sell in the interstate market and even probably in the international market. That's where the corporations are moving today.

RT: Does Washington state have the potential for a very large industry?

AT: Yes. Much larger than Oregon. Although in Oregon also an unlimited amount, because in the valleys there are several horticultural projects that are barely making it. There are several old orchards that are in very poor shape, and they are not making any money with it.

RT: What about the eastern side of the mountains in Oregon? The dry side.

AT: That's risky, too dangerous, because it's too hot, and it's too dry.

RT: Is Corvallis a potential wine area?

AT: No, Corvallis is very wet. But you go from Corvallis right into the center, towards McMinnville, you know. The Willamette Valley--that's the valley that is so promising, basically. Then of course, the lower section, in Washington state, in the basin of Columbia River. You see, partially it's in Washington state, in the basin of Columbia River, and partially the basin is going towards Oregon, right? So therefore, there are several small vineyards right now there, but I didn't see yet any producer there. Vineyards are planted. But again, risks are very great there.

RT: Some of the Oregon winemakers are getting their grapes still, from Washington, until they build up their own vineyards.

AT: Yes, because their vineyards are not producing yet. But they are marketing them under Washington label. They are showing Johannisberg Riesling from Yakima Valley. They are not showing this as grown in Oregon.

AT: Now in the law accepted and sponsored by the California state law, and the federal government, you can take the grapes from Napa Valley or Sonoma Valley, or Mendocino Valley, or Santa Maria Valley, and ship in the carload to the New York state and ferment them right there and produce them right there, and you have a legal right to call them the Napa Valley wines, or Sonoma wines. This is an idea promoted by whom? By ourselves, by the industry.

In other words, appellation of Napa Valley does not necessarily force you to ferment them. Now we are going to this complication. I think this will be removed, but I don't know. It's very difficult. It's the wine industry, the Wine Institute, that promoted these liberal laws under the pressure of big capital and great supply of grapes that are not suitable for our own production. We made so many errors ourselves.

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RT: Another question about the Northwest: are these regions closely similar to any European regions you know?

AT: Yes. I personally feel yes, that they are very close to the regions of central France, for instance. They are very close to the region of the Loire River, very close even to Bourgogne. In the bad years of Burgundy, they might have exactly the same situation as they have in Oregon, but in the good years of Oregon they are very close, too.

You know, under the temperate condition of the late springs and late harvests, you are always exposed to problems, and it happens very often, as you know. For instance, Burgundians sometimes are harvesting their fruit very late in October, and the great Rieslings are harvested in Germany late in October or in the middle of November. So it doesn't mean that German Rieslings are bad wines, right? But this requires an entirely different approach to the image of wines, and the requirement of the images built by the winemaker and accepted by the consumer, you see. This is the whole thing. In other words image--image in styling the wine towards or to acceptance by the market. You can't separate this thing completely. If I will go and make today a Cabernet within the standards of my own in the middle forties, I don't think that I will be ever able to successfully sell these today in America, because wines that we built then were much heavier wines that required far more aging, and even the consumer palate was looking rather for the harder built, horizontally thicker wines than the consumer looks for today, with the change of the diet in our daily routine. See, we are consuming very little bread, and the bread is one of the nearest friends of the glass of wine. Since we are eliminating the bread, we have a very hard time, even between the family of winemakers or winelovers, during the dinner, appreciating the depth of the red wines because the right breads are not even served on the table sometimes. Instead, rarely with cheese, you have a little tiny slice of bread or crackers, and I still

AT: would like to have a good glass of wine and good cheese, with a loaf of French bread. I can make a meal out of it. Basically, in the past, wine was consumed in Europe as well in the old America as a part of their diet, as a meal, by the immigrants of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, etcetera. Now we don't have that clientele any more. We have a new clientele who is looking entirely differently on products, and the wines of a gentleness and elegance today are set as the images for fine wines, more than deep, rustic, heavy-built images.

It's not too easy to accept for the winemakers. It's not too easy to accept even to winemakers very rationally set in their mind, knowing the pulse of the consumer or consumer market. I can quote you just a recent statement by one of the winemakers of Napa Valley, Robert Mondavi, who in a recent tasting of the Cabernets of California downgraded his very delicate beautiful wine for a lack of depth and shoulders that I am talking about. He graded the Private Reserve of Beaulieu, vintage 1974, much higher than his own wine. When judges compared their blind tasting against the denomination of the wines, he came to me and said, "André, it happens to me again! I do not believe in the deeply set, heavy Cabernets, but every time I am exposed, as a judge, to Cabernets, I am always choosing the heavy styles. In my mind, I am built that way."

Now this could be a reaction of already a culture of wine that he created in his own mind and his palate, and his genetic origin as an Italian. It could be. But this is the conflict between the philosophies of winemaking. There is a tremendous conflict, and there are always contradictions, even in the palate of the consumer--dramatic unbelievable contradictions that are existing as a reaction of á la mode, psychological reaction of something that's new, or something that is coming just as a novelty without analyzing if every new product is an excellent product.

In one way, we are going towards what? In one way we are going toward elegance and lightness and fruitiness of the wines. In the other way, we are producing late harvest Zinfandels, late harvest Chardonnays, late harvest Semillons, late harvest Rieslings, late harvest Cabernets, etcetera, where the red wines are presented in the form of the ports made with Zinfandel and Cabernet and Pinot noir, and the white wines, where we have a Semillon and we are trying to go to the Sauternes class, and they are even making Chardonnay late harvest, with seventeen degrees in alcohol. This is stupid.

RT: Someone I suppose is going to eventually come out with a sales gimmick, a wine to go with salads.

AT: Very probably. But you see, under this condition you have to mellow out your salad sauce, because vinegar (and if it's not vinegar then Roquefort), it's the greatest enemy of the palate from the beginning of the meal, unless you're accepting them in the European style, after the

AT: meal. There is a good reason to have a salad after the meal, if you are interested in enjoying the wines, but it's not too easy to change the tradition of American dining, when the salads are right in front of you.

In the average restaurant in California, salad is coming first thing--neutral salad, and they are asking you what dressing you would like to have, French dressing, Italian dressing, Roquefort. There is not even the Roquefort, but it's a bleu.

RT: At Davis recently we had a great big soup, then a salad, and then before the main course, between the salad and the main course, they had a little sherbet.

ATL By the way, in the long-lasting dinners, it is a well-known practice to serve sorbet. For instance, at the Four Seasons, where you got nineteen servings during the dinner, you got to cut a certain proportion of dinner and create a barrier, and then not sweet, but almost like an ice, Champagne sorbet, to clean your mouth, and then start again the second section. Finish your dinner, relax, go and drink a glass of water, mineral water if you like to, everybody going out, and then you are coming to the second tasting. You got to have at least twelve or eighteen settings. You got to spend eight hours dining.

California Wine Regions

RT: Back to California winemaking and growing of grapes, there is a question that we ask everybody--at least we try to remember to. (It's an oversimplified question. I'll apologize for that.) If you had your choice of anywhere in California to plant a vineyard, irrespective of variety, and irrespective of whether it's already filled with houses now, or whatever--do you know of a place where you feel the climate and soil is best, one place in California?

AT: You are asking a very complex question, a very complex question. So therefore, I got to divide myself. Out of one single André Tchelistcheff, I am going to put myself in ten. So I am going to present you André Tchelistcheff number one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. [laughter] Every André, number one, two, three, has a legal right to express his opinion. [laughter] All right?

RT: All right.

AT: It happens to be that in all my professional life, starting from education of boyhood, I have been always admiring the great Burgundian wines. So therefore, although I appreciate and judge very neutrally other

AT: wines, but wines that shock me in all my system to the point that I will always remember this wine to the rest of my days, always have been, right from the beginning of my introduction to the wine industry of world, the great Burgundies, and specifically red Burgundies. It attracts somehow, not only the winemaker, but it attracts also the consumer. I am always considering French wine culture as one of the fundamental cultures for one single reason. Recently I kind of enjoyed the very interesting remark by one of the outstanding winemakers in Germany, who said to me, "We are known for centuries and centuries as the Rhine wines, historically, but if you would take very German winemaker individually, and suspend him, and try to turn him, eventually he will face towards France, not towards Germany." [laughter]

All right. So therefore, the dream of my life was always a Pinot noir. So therefore, André number one is the Pinot noir. André Pinot noir, as number one, coming with his own dreams and possibilities of creating his own business with his own reputation, putting even his own signature on the label, will grow exclusively Pinot noir, and he will go north to the state of Oregon or he will go in the central section of California, going towards Santa Barbara, in the cold, gravelly, limey soils of Santa Barbara County, and in the very cold part of Santa Barbara.

Now, André number two, André Cabernet. André, as a Cabernet man, would very probably, if you have financial possibilities, buy the best vineyard, pay astronomical, triple price, for an acre of fine quality Cabernet in the central limited section of Napa Valley, and the section would be limited to the maximum geographical sub-section of Napa Valley--taking a little island of the middle section of the Silverado Trail, going towards the hill, where Bernard Portet is today, and Warren Winiarski. That's a little tiny island of fine quality Cabernets there. Or preferably will go in the limited sections between the boundary of Oakville and Zinfandel--Oakville as a southern boundary, Zinfandel as a northern boundary.

RT: Zinfandel Lane?

AT: Zinfandel Lane. And then eastern boundary would be Highway 29, and the western boundary Mount St. John. That's it. Because so far, with few exceptions and few hopes, traditionally the best Cabernets in America have been produced in this particular section, and I quote you Robert Mondavi, Joe Heitz, Inglenook, Beaulieu Vineyard, Winiarski, and Bernard Portet. And they are the best Cabernets. There are some very good, excellent Cabernets accidentally coming from one other section, but if you put that specific condition, where I am going to go--because I have some very good Cabernets in the central section, but they do not give me what these wines are giving here. They do not give me artistic sculptures. They give me beautiful photo pictures of Cabernet, but they are photo pictures. So therefore they are a realistic reproduction of photo camera, but they are not individually built sculptures.

AT: Now then, I go as André Tchelistcheff number three [laughter]. André Tchelistcheff number three is selecting the White Riesling as the outstanding variety. André Tchelistcheff number three will stay away from Napa County, he will stay away from Sonoma County, he will stay away from Mendocino County, and he is going to go back to the Santa Barbara County, or he is going to go back to the Oregon, or even Yakima Valley as a third choice. That's again me.

Now we are going to the Gewürztraminer as a class. I am not touching the Chardonnay yet. The Gewürztraminer, I am going back to Sonoma County and the basin of the Russian River. Then I am going to go to Yakima Valley, then I will go--that's in the order of preference--to the central coast, again to the Santa Barbara County. And that's my preference.

RT: Sonoma County, I didn't realize--

AT: Yes, but it's got to be close to the river. It's doing very well there.

Now I will go to the class of Sauvignon blanc, and I am going to stay in Livermore Valley. Nobody will move me out of Livermore Valley.

In Semillon, I am going to except myself. I will split André number four by André number four-A and André number four-B. André number four-A will make a dry Semillon type, and he will go to Washington state and Yakima Valley. André number four-B will make a classical Sauternes. He will go to Livermore Valley.

Now I am going to go to a Chenin. Chenin is a variety that I never considered as a part of my dreams, because the variety with the personality required for Chenin is growing very well even in the central coast, and even in the San Joaquin Valley. Properly handled, properly grown, it can produce very simple wines. So therefore, Chenin blanc as a variety has very little interest to me. I never would put my money in Chenin.

Now I have to make my final decision as a Chardonnay man, with the white Burgundies. It's one of the difficult decisions that I have to make. So far--and I have very probably split myself in three or four numbers, "A," "B," "C," "D," already. Then I have to make a decision, what I am going to do with this Chardonnay. Am I going to go in the Chardonnay of Blanc de Blancs, champagne material, or I am going to go to a light type of fruity Chardonnay, in Mâcon style, or I am going to go in the deep Chardonnay, the deepest structure, in Meursault style, but still very elegant, or shall I go to a depth and a gunsmokiness of Pouilly Fuissé, or shall I go in great Montrachet selections and style myself towards these images? I have to very selectively define a position where I am going to grow my grapes.

AT: I will go in the champagne. I could stand as well the Napa Valley, but the grapes are going to be very expensive to me to grow in Napa Valley, and I very probably will say, "Since I am making such a fine quality here, I will rather stick to Oregon state, where I have a homogeneity, because I don't need sugar. I need only acid and maturity of eighteen to nineteen balling. The surplus of acid that I will have there will be exactly the same surplus of acid as I have in the Champagne region of France. I will reconvert the malic acid to lactic acid through malolactic fermentation which will give a round mellowness to my champagne. Here (Napa Valley) I have very little to deal with. So my preference will be there.

Then I will go to the production of table wines, and in table wines, I still say very probably I would select the Napa Valley in the Carneros region as my first choice, then I will go to Central Coast, again very probably in the specific situation in the limey soils of Santa Barbara County and high elevations. Or I might try and grow Chardonnay in the Dry Creek area of Sonoma County, again in the upper elevation, or I might grow my Chardonnay in between, on the slope of some mountain, where I don't have the excessive heat and breeze from the ocean, and stick where are the Louis Martini vineyards and Mayacamas. That's a beautiful plot. I have to decide the styles according to the vineyards.

I guess we covered quite a bit of selections. Now there is a problem that we are dealing now with varieties such as the [Petite] Sirah in red, and I still say if I will have to grow the Sirah and produce really fine quality Rhone-type wines, without any minute's hesitation I will go to Livermore, because Livermore can produce the most outstanding Rhone wines in the style of Hermitage and Chateauf-du-Pape. Unfortunately, there is only one who tried to introduce this, Concannon.

RT: He's done fairly well, hasn't he?

AT: He was doing fairly well, but he could do much better, because he never interblended this thing with some varieties that got to be interblended. Hermitage is a blend of Sirah with white.

RT: Oh, I didn't realize that.

AT: There are ten to fifteen percent of white grapes in Sirah. That's very important. That gives that tremendous mellowness and richness of the body, and that leathery character. Soilwise, Livermore has exactly the same soil. Temperaturewise, that section, it's very warm there too. They got it. Livermore as the Sauternes region is the most outstanding region of the world to produce the great Sauternes.

RT: Yes.

AT: This is the way I am going to do, if I am a young man and if I have the ability to select. But it doesn't mean that as we grow in future, we are not going to locate some sub-sections with entirely new sub-climatic conditions and excellent soil conditions that will produce better Cabernets and better Chardonnays in entirely new, unknown to us sections, within the United States and within the state of California. I am a great believer in that.

RT: I suppose when you came to California you wouldn't have thought about the Santa Barbara region for any grapes.

AT: No, not at all.

RT: What about Monterey? You haven't mentioned Monterey County.

AT: Well, I am very much disappointed in Monterey County, and I have a reason to be disappointed. There is very probably in the soils of Monterey, and that includes the lower section of Salinas, and Santa Maria even, there is something that we are not in a position to solve yet. Is this a reaction of soil with direct planting, without American root stock, or is there a climatic condition within the direct planting that is creating aggressiveness in the varietal exposure? I have always, and several people agree with me, including people that are there, believed that Cabernet never will be great from the Salinas region. Even Dr. [Richard G.] Peterson, when he moved from Beaulieu to that region and created the first red wine, said to the contrary, "It's a great region, of the greatest peppery reaction of Cabernet." Now he has started to say, "No, we never will be able to produce fine quality Cabernets, although we are correcting this thing by reaching over-maturity or high maturity." Maybe so. But there is something else in the white wines. I like the white wines as they are coming into the bottle and as they are living during the first eight to twelve months. I love them. But after two years of bottle aging, they are starting to show very aggressive grassiness, again. Except one single wine that I really adored in that section, and that was a Dr. Peterson late harvest Sauvignon blanc, with almost one hundred percent botrytis. So very probably, botrytised whites are the answer to their class of winemaking, and very probably the Riesling, under a tremendous attack of botrytis, will eliminate this greenness, this grassiness, completely, and will create a great section. But nobody pays attention to it, and nobody wants to concentrate on this thing. But they should go there, and I hope someday they are going to listen.

AT: I have several proofs from this part, because several of the botrytised Rieslings coming from this region and fermented in some other section have been building up very promising wines under botrytis--late harvest types.*

Now that observation applies as well, but with far less negativeness, to vineyards planted above San Luis Obsipo, and there is a huge section, high plot, on top. It's very good. And I've been admiring a second line of Dick Graff of Chalone, of the Chardonnay coming from that particular region [near San Luis Obispo]--tremendously, unbelievable. I said, "I still believe that there is a great opportunity there in that section."

The other day, we tasted the same Chardonnay, the same vintage, after one year additional aging right here. Of course, our condition of aging are unnormal here at home. The wine started to show a little, little bit of that little tiny grassiness, but maybe this is an accidental bottle. I tasted the same product of San Luis Obispo County--that's the Edna Valley--from the Hoffman Mountain Ranch, produced by Michael, and in the Chalone produced by Dick Graff, and I have been very pleased with these two wines.

The Cabernets from that particular region [San Luis Obispo County] show a great amount of promise, but with a different accent in Cabernet, again, than the Cabernet of Napa Valley or Sonoma. Every county, every soil, is giving its own accent. Now, you might like this accent. I do not particularly like this accent, but it's a classical new accent in the wines. Bernard Portet of château Clos du Val, whom I consider as a very high authority in the Cabernet class, with a real excellent life's training in the Bordeaux region. (As you know, Bernard is the son of André Portet, manager of Lafite for twenty-five years.)

He tasted, just the day before yesterday, the Cabernet produced from the grapes from Edna Valley, and he was very pleased with the structure of this wine. So therefore, there is another answer. It's a very promising answer, and I tasted this wine recently right here, and I was very pleased with this wine. But again, it's an entirely different image.

*Added by André Tchelistcheff in 1980: Recently having tasted several white wines including Chardonnay from some exclusive regions in Monterey County which have gravelly-stoney soils I believe, in these specific areas, that the white wines have a far better promise, especially in Chardonnay.

AT: So really honestly, as a completely cosmopolitan authority in the winemaking, of a large scope of understanding of wine and the vineyard's importance, I will say, "Do not ever compare regional wines against another, or sub-regional wines against some other sub-regional wines, or regional wines from the definite geographical area, such as the California against the Australian wines and French wines. Recently in San Luis, there was a presentation of California wines by California growers, and Edmond Maudiere, technical director of Domaine Chandon, expressed his philosophy in a very sensitive way, and I have always attempted to express my philosophy in judging the relationship of my analytical work with humans towards wines. Now, he presented this Domaine Chandon against Moët et Chandon of France, comparing them with the children of the family. He said, "You have so many children in the family, and every child is different, but you love them, and you should love them equally."

You can read [unfolding clipping]--it's very interesting to read, because there are several contradictions there about the high pricing and the standards of quality and so on and so forth.

RT: This was in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Sunday, July 15, 1979.

AT: I managed to spend forty-one years making wines in California. There is nothing to be proud about. It's a time factor, you know. You spend your professional life. But I just barely touched, actually, with my creative endeavor and explored the possibilities of future progress in California. Unfortunately, limits in the physical life are very severe, and by saying these words, I am always referring the statement of my own father, who was a great philosopher, great thinker, and great lover of life. In all expression of life, within the smiles of life have been tears of life, because the man enjoying the life, during his long life suffered tremendously from the life, too. I agree with his own final statement, that we have to be grateful for the life, but egoistically, as humans, as physical elements of life, which is a part of anything that's physical around us, living and growing on this planet, the unfortunate thing is that your intellect, your mind, is not aging as rapidly as your body. It's a tragic thing in my age (and he was eighty-three) to say that my mind and my ability of understanding life, multiplied by a factor of my years, and what I adore and love so much, in passing by my youth, my years, I never paid any attention.

This is exactly the feelings that I am coming up, dealing with my own professional assignment, because I have pleasure to deal not only with the growing elements of mother nature, such as grape vines and vineyards and wines in the cellar, but with the humans that have been connected together, and I feel that tomorrow in the California wine industry will be much greater than it is today, and very probably, if we will be able to control our rationality in our understanding of wine,

AT: not only as an industrial product or industrial structure in our very complex industrial system of today, if we still carry some sort of admiration of wine as an intellectual beverage, the future is unlimited.

Recent Challenges

[Resuming interview of May 12, 1980.]

RT: I was wondering if you wanted to bring things up to date. We met last on August 7 of last year, 1979. Since then, you've been busy?

AT: Since then several things happened, of course. On November the first, I cut my professional relationship with Simi, for very complex and very serious reasons. Retaining my great feelings of deep respect to Mr. Schieffelin, whom I'm still considering an outstanding person, a gentleman in all interpretations of life. But there was a conflict, interior type, that appeared, in my position as a consultant with the general management; and also with the new assignment of the new winemaker, Mrs. Zelma Long. That created a very uncomfortable situation for me, despite the fact that I still had eighteen months of contract as consultant with Simi.

What bothered me, actually, it's not the legal continuity of the contract. But what bothered me as a human, or as a professional, the formulation of my future eighteen months of continuity in the contract, with some sort of a very false position I was supposed to take, with the appointment of a new winemaker. When the winemaker honestly said that, if I'm going to take such a position, I don't see any reason for you to be physically involved in visiting the winery. Any information, I can always call you at home, and consult by telephone rather than to see you in the winery.

Well, that created a very difficult situation for me, of course, because Simi was very close to my heart for six years, Mary Ann Graf had been working with me and the rest of the people, and it was really hard for me to accept. I sent a very long letter, explained the situation to Mr. Schieffelin, and I just, by my own will, broke the contract and refused to survive for the next eighteen months in the parasitic form of a sucker who is going to suck the dollars, without participating in the physical, constructive life of the winery. So I removed myself from it.

But in the life everything is providential, you know; and sometime without any reason, you are perceiving one situation, which is the externality and another situation appears, and it's taking you in far more challenges than the previous situation that became really fatiguing, and kind of an injurious situation to your internal structure.

AT: So it happens to me that in the next day I have a call from a person whom I met years and years ago, a young Frenchman by the name, Claude Melli, and he was then a "pied noir." You know what they call "pied noir"? All the people that migrate from Algeria, Medoc French people they called "black foot." [laughter]

So therefore, when he was forced to leave the family, then he became agricultural engineer, and a very important position in Algeria, in the agriculture and horticulture business. He had to remove himself from Algeria to continent, France. He thought, well, he might explore the situation with some of his colleagues from Algeria, and might be interested to invest some of their capital in the California wine industry. That was twenty years ago.

Since then, I met him only once, when he had already been connected with very powerful organization, in the citrus production and the phosphate productions in Florida. That was the initiative of the two brothers Gardinier. They are well known in the service of France, connected with their activities in phosphate production in France.

Gardinier being very active, full of enthusiasm and with constructive analytical reason towards the future, decided to put certain amount of their capital into American agriculture, and they bought 5,000 acres in the proper time, for the citrus fruit in Florida.

By purchasing this fruit they discovered that below, there was the largest phosphate investment of the world, in Florida, in the region of Tampa. So when they bought the citrus, they bought also the phosphates.

As you know, phosphates are directly connected with the production of uranium, as a by-product. So they are also putting their initiative in the uranium production. And they are basic suppliers of the atomic research of the United States, in uranium.

So a few years ago, Gardinier brothers became interested in the California wine industry. It was the time when the acute changes happened in California wine industry, three years ago, I remember, when Souverain and Simi and several other wineries were exposed to several financial problems in marketing.

So Claude was absolutely right in saying then, "Now is the time for you to move in the California wine industry." Because, originally, Gardiniers are coming from Champagne region, as their father was a grape grower and vintner in the Champagne region. So they still say, "We are peasants, we always have our foot in the dirt, regardless whether you are in phosphate or into citrus or a vineyard, and we love to be there."

AT: So, by this time, Domaine Chandon had moved into California. And Claude felt that this was the time to rush and invest the French money, to buy some of the wineries that are facing these problems, such as Rutherford Souverain [Souverain of Rutherford], Simi, and the Souverain in Sonoma County, and Sonoma Vineyards, and several other companies. But apparently Gardinier then was not quite ready to make that jump. Since then, Gardinier brothers moved into larger expansion in Florida, and now the Gardinier brothers are thinking of going, in the future, towards the champagne production, or sparkling wine production in California.

For one single reason: because, within the last few years, they approached the controlling interest in two Champagne cellars well-known, Lanson and Pommerey. That's still in the process of research, still with unknown physical forms, still is a partially theory than practice; and I'm acting right now as a consultant, which they call 'conseiller' in France, by making this research [into possible investments].

So therefore, that keeps me quite busy right now, and the energy that I used to give to Simi, I give now to the French wine industry in California. [laughter]

So, as Claude said to me last December, "André, very probably this will be the last really constructive challenge to you, in a sense, in your long-lasting career in California. You've been attached to the production of the sparkling wines." (I created the Beaulieu sparkling wine, champagne.) "So now, maybe you work from your cultural motherland, France, in making this connection between France, and French Champagne industry, and the California sparkling wine industry." So it's exciting.

The rest of the contacts I've kept as such, and so therefore I'm still a consultant with Ste. Michelle, I'm still consulting with Jordan, I'm still consulting with Buena Vista, despite the fact that Buena Vista's been sold. I'm deeper in Buena Vista, and I still have Hoffman, and I still have Firestone.

RT: So you're very busy.

AT: I'm very busy; as a matter of fact, I'm a little too busy. Because, you see, Simi was already established way of making the living and producing; and my relationship as a consultant been already challenged, and I knew everybody in it. Now, I'm dealing with entirely new people, with entirely new philosophy, too.

I know very well the French philosophy, because I worked for so many years with French philosophy in California. And I know the difficulties and complexity of working with people of different philosophy. And so

AT: therefore, it's far more delicate, and very probably far more requiring usage of my nerves. But since every challenge is always a destruction of your own nerves--[laughter]

I don't see the future. I hope that, eventually we will put the ideas into reality. We hope that we are going to be very successful, but nobody guarantees success until you have the proofs.*

Meanwhile, you know that several other people moved in: foreign capital influx is fantastic in California right now, unbelievable.

RT: Buena Vista is owned by a German company.**Are they taking it in a new direction?

AT: Well, they are far more up-to-date than the previous owners. And their new president, Mr. [Hubertus] von Wulffen, is a young man, a lawyer by profession, and typical representative of the young generation of Germans, post-war generation of Germans, realistic, very clean, very aggressive, and very simple, and very up-to-date on what's going on in economics or politics of the world.

I think they are doing a proper thing. It could be that they will open a new challenge, a new window into the export to Europe; because they have a very strong connection in Europe.

RT: Otherwise it's a small operation--

AT: Well, it's not that small, because there it's already 100,000 cases. And might be larger in the future, with that 700 acres of their own-- which is a really outstanding situation, being a chateau surrounded by its own vineyards. You see, they are really, properly saying, an estate.

RT: Do they expect, in the future, to buy out Mr. Bartholomew?

AT: Well, there's nothing to buy from Mr. Bartholomew. Mr. Bartholomew has now just a few acres of the vineyard; and he's sold already his interest in his own Hacienda Winery. So he's keeping very little there, five or ten percent, not controlling interest.

RT: I thought he had more acreage.

*The champagne project for Gardinier was cancelled on July 14, 1980, one month before harvest. A.T.

**A. Racke Company

AT: No, he has acreage, but acreages in the fields, hunting grounds. But I think even Frank Bartholomew has been very pleased in that transaction of sales to the German company. He believed that Buena Vista, under their management, will be far more successful than the previous management of Young's Market, a powerful organization, but involved in so many other activities.

RT: Someday, someone is going to construct a profile of who makes a good winery owner.

AT: That's a very good assignment: who makes a good winery owner. It's a problem that could be approached analytically from entirely different points. Personalities are entirely different, and sometimes opposite.

RT: You certainly have a lot of examples of people who didn't.

AT: Oh God; and in different ways, too. In an absolutely different way. Some people with tying the belt and starving, only with the principal decision to be successful, being very poor. And some people with the tremendous capital behind, and tremendous marketing knowledge. Some people traditionally, with agriculture as a continuity generation from generation. Some absolutely foreign newcomers, or American foreign newcomers into the industry, approaching, and making it successfully unethically, and with the dirty hands. You see how different this is. And some people of very cultural, liberal professions, going into it temporarily as, say, investors, locating the tax shelters, and actually fooling the laws with this tax shelter, and becoming great vintners. It's strange.

So anyway, a complex phenomenon. There's so many personalities, and now specifically with this influx of the new small vintners, where you meet the people who are absolutely different but their goal is exactly the same. They are planning to produce the greatest wines of the world, and that's their goal.

Now, it is some sort of a novelty if you want to. It's a paradox. Some people are doing this thing with this idea, but they are not producing great wines and they are selling them at a very high price, too, and making the error.

Two weeks ago there was a very interesting seminar in Davis dealing with the problem of economics, and the qualities of these few capital investments in a few wineries and vineyards of California. I didn't go there, but I find there was some very good ideas presented there, and some very critical ideas, too.

RT: How did you happen to be in Australia this last year?

AT: My step-daughter is living in Sydney. My wife's youngest daughter, Barbara, immigrated to Australia at the age of nineteen. So therefore it's already years and years ago.

She went, as happens to young girls, falling in love with an Australian young man, interconnected with, let's say, parallel by-products of agri-profession: the wax candles. The Australian young man came here and was interested to learn the professional production, because his father was a very wealthy man and decided to give him a chance to invest his own energy in his own business.

They kind of liked this idea to introduce this into Australia, as a novelty. And Barbara went there as a technician and loved the son. Well, the romance, of course, shifted into a different direction there, but she became eventually a partner in this thing. And now, as a partner, they have three shops, not only candle shops they have a boutique shop, with the soaps, powders, perfumes, etcetera, and they have a cuisine/kitchen appliance shop. And they're enlarging their business. So therefore there was a good reason to visit. And, as a matter of fact, a year ago, even longer than that, she was finally married to the Australian gentleman, who visited last year with Barbara.

So there was a compulsion for my wife to go to Australia and see her. And meanwhile, I was always interested in Australian wine industry, always. I kind of refused several offers to go with groups in Australia.

So I thought, being alone in the company of my step-son and my step-daughter and my wife, I would be able to see much clearer. And I have several friends from the long, long years of academical survival. Dr. Bryce Rankin the professor of enology and viticulture and chairman of the department in Roseworthy College, interested in research in Australia, is a good friend of mine who was always inviting me.

And I have several contacts, including my French contacts, such as Dominique Portet or Bernard Portet of Clos du Val, also a Franco-American institution. There's far more French money in Clos du Val than American money, and they bought part of a property in Australia, and they have 250 acres of vineyards in Australia; and Dominique, the youngest brother, of Bernard [Portet] and the son of Andre [Portet], the ex-superintendent of Chateau-Lafite for twenty-five years, is in charge of this vineyard-winery called Taltarni located near Moonambel in the state of Victoria, Australia. They are all coming from Bordeaux.

So they have Dominique there, and I'm very close to Dominique, so I have several friends there, and we so decided to spend three weeks in the vineyards.

AT: So we traveled with my step-son, four of us together, and he was a very rapid driver; neither one of us was permitted to drive on the left side of the highway. So we covered all the territory, and I'm going to tell you, I really, really was amazed with the tremendous simplicity and hospitality of the industry. Unbelievable hospitality, unbelievable charm.

Of course, I enjoyed far more than anything else a tremendous freedom of territory, where you travel hundreds and hundreds of miles without seeing one single person.

I admired their sheep, and the pastures and the cattle, and the multi-colored parakeets and cockatoos, white cockatoos of size like that, you know, with the beautiful combs.

RT: Two feet?

AT: Yes, sitting right on front of the winery, in a gum-tree, the white color, you know; it's just unbelievable to see these things. Things that here are sold for a thousand dollars apiece, you know, are there in the freedom, and hundreds and hundreds, thousands of them, of different color, flying and singing. And I always have been amazed why parakeets in Australia? Because they're feeding on the fruit of the eucalyptus tree. You know, the eucalyptus tree has a flower cluster, or bloom. There's a fruit from it, eucalyptus, nut, right? And that's what they're eating; they're eating eucalyptus fruit.

There are 180 species of the gum-tree. And they're blooming in different time, and there's always a young fruit, which is just like a little tiny cherry berry, even less. And it's very fragrant, and very pungent, and that's what they're consuming.

RT: So they don't eat the grapes.

AT: No--they don't touch the grapes. What's eating grapes is kangaroos. Oh, you just can't even believe what damage they do to the vineyards! Unbelievable.

RT: Kangaroos!

CH: How do they protect the grapes?

AT: Look; we went to Dominique, in the interior, really interior. From Melbourne you drive about 150 miles; it's interior local section. And we arrived there, it's a beautiful, beautiful situation. Sloping bush, with the rolling hills and lakes created, and so forth.

And Dominique said, now, "You know, last week I killed, in one evening, thirty kangaroos in my vineyard; shot them."

AT: I said, "No; I just can't believe it!"

He said, "Now look, after the dinner, we are going to go, and I'm going to show you. We're going to go with spotlight, and I'm going to show you what they do."

And they have a fence of ten feet; and the kangaroo just wasn't higher than a deer, for instance, in our case. And they are jumping this ten feet without any problem. Their tails have such a muscle structure that they use them as a jumping board, as a trampoline. They give a kick to the muscle, and then, being very delicate in the front, it lifts them, just like that, without any problem; and they are very gracefully jumping this thing over.

So in the evening, after the dinner, it was about 9 p.m., we jumped in his car, and we started to drive. And we drove about the lake. We saw one over by the lake. He said, "Oh, that's nothing. We are going right close to the bush," you know, Australian bush, "and you'll see it. They are all going to be there, right in the first rows in the vineyard, close to the bush."

And as we drove there in the truck I saw them in different sizes, different structures, young ones, old ones, masters, mothers with babies (Joeys) in their pouches, and they had been all this time in the vineyards.

And he said, "There's only one way. We tried everything. We tried the fence, and it cost us a fortune. We tried a spray, special spray, as a dog repellent, repelling them. The only one way to protect ourselves is a gun; only way to stop them. Because the population is 14 million people in Australia, and there are 11 million kangaroos."

And it happens to be now they are in the critical drought, as you know. Even the gum-trees are dying from drought. So they are feeding on the vineyards, on anything that's green.

RT: Well, maybe someday you'll be a consulting enologist in Australia.

AT: No, no. Dr. Rankin said, "Why don't you?" I said, "If I was twenty years younger, believe it or not I would move to Australia." Because the capital investments are so reasonable. You can buy land for \$200 an acre there; it's an unlimited amount of land available.

And you can bring the water with modern technique. You can create a deep irrigation with knowledge of today, modern agricultural technology. There's tremendous opportunity.

AT: He said, "Oh, well, you don't have to do it; you have already established a name. Here in Australia everybody knew you; just move in, and that's it."

RT: Well, you have too much to do here, I think.

AT: Yes, a little too much; and you know, you have to be economical with your physical strength. I'm trying to cut this thing now, as much as possible. As soon as I try to relax, it's not doing me any good to relax; then I slow down, you see. Slowing down is very dangerous; slowing down puts additional calories, right?

You know, several people in the business of ours, are very doubtful, and facing some very critical decisions. Look, wines are still not a compulsory, daily item in the regime of eating and surviving. They are still a luxury. We buy a loaf of bread, which is very expensive now, before buying a bottle of wine.

I am going to present tomorrow to the Board of Regents of the State University of San Francisco a parallel wine-tasting sponsored as a social attraction, opening the door to investments, to the university. I'm presenting the parallel of tasting of European against the California wines, which is not my idea. But I'm trying to present this thing as a little lecture with the slogan, "Wine as a Joy of Life." I would like to see what will be the reaction of the people towards this. Just a psychological contact, I would like to see what will be the reaction of the people there.

RT: Positive, I think.

AT: Well, it could be.

RT: Well, again, we thank you, and I think, taking that theme, we can say that you have contributed a great deal to the joy of life for many, many people.

AT: Very probably; through the voice of wine.

Transcriber: Bob McCargar
Final Typist: Keiko Sugimoto

ADDENDUM

During the period between the last taping session and the completion of work on the interview in the autumn of 1983, André Tchelistcheff extended his consulting services in viticulture and enology to a number of additional enterprises in California and one in Italy. Those in California include Konocti Winery, Field Stone Winery, Los Viñeros Winery, the Niebaum-Coppola Estate, Valfleur winery, and Sequoia Grove Vineyards. In Italy he became consultant to Marchese Lodovico Antinori, who is developing vineyards of Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon blanc and a winery on the coast of Tuscany.

Mention should be made of some of the many honors accorded Mr. Tchelistcheff during his long, influential career. In 1954 the French government named him a Chevalier and in 1980 an Officier of the Merite Agricole. He won the 1970 Merit Award of the American Society of Enologists, and the 1980 Award of Merit of the American Wine Society.

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Catherine Harroun

Born, St. Joseph, Missouri.

Educated in Pasadena, California; Carlsbad, New Mexico; Stanford University, B.A. in English.

In San Francisco since 1930 as advertising copywriter, Wells Fargo Bank; curator and researcher, Wells Fargo History Room.

Newspaper and magazine writer since 1950.

Co-author of Winemaking in California, a history, 1982.

An interviewer-editor in the Regional Oral History Office since 1965.

Ruth Teiser

Born in Portland, Oregon; came to the Bay Area in 1932 and has lived here ever since.

Stanford University, B.A., M.A. in English; further graduate work in Western history.

Newspaper and magazine writer in San Francisco since 1943, writing on local history and business and social life of the Bay Area.

Book reviewer for the San Francisco Chronicle, 1943-1974.

Co-author of Winemaking in California, a history, 1982.

An interviewer-editor in the Regional Oral History Office since 1965.

