

Society of Medical Friends of Wine



A Non-Profit 501(c)(3) Corporation, FEIN 94-6088159

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NEWSLETTER APRIL-MAY 2021

President's Message Jim Gallagher, Ph.D.

At the recent SMFW Executive Board meetings we again discussed the effect the current and anticipated state of the COVID-19 pandemic is having on our activities. We are hopeful that by mid-Summer we will be able to have some in-person events, although it remains likely that there will be lagging constraints. For example, we discussed the requirement of being vaccinated to attend an event and agreed that for the time being, vaccinations will be required for all in-person events. No such requirement will be in effect for Virtual tastings or meetings. As far as masks, spacing and other precautions, we agreed to follow the most current CDC recommendations. We also agreed not to require proof of vaccination, but that would remain the responsibility of members to ensure that they and their guests comply. It was brought to our attention after our meeting that we had not considered those that may not be vaccinated for medial or religious reasons. This will be discussed at our next meeting. Until that time, the vaccination requirement will be in effect.

To better serve our Society, we have added three ex-officio positions to the Executive Board: Finance Manager, Newsletter Editor, and Web Master. We have been very fortunate to have Jack McElroy as our finance manager; he has handled our books since becoming our Treasurer many years ago. Jack has insured that our financial records have been maintained, as well as dealt with our many government regulations and filings. It is a major task, and his

experience and knowledge greatly support our rotating office of Treasurer. Thank you again Jack for your dedication and service to the Society.

Our second appointment was to make official the post of our Newsletter Editor. Bob Blumberg has served the Society in this capacity longer than I have been associated with the Society. Bob's talent, discipline, history of the Society, and magical ability to get members to contribute in a timely fashion is a special talent, beyond his astute copy-editing skill. Again, to have to continue such a contribution with only one year to learn the job would be on the outer level of demanding.

Our third ex officio position is that of a Webmaster. While many of us have managed to stay current with much of the IT advancements, knowledge of building and maintaining websites is far from universal among the membership. We have been blessed with Elizabeth Kass, who was not only willing, but demonstrated a mastery of this constantly changing cyber world. I highly regard the opportunity that the internet provides and feel certain it can be a valuable tool to assist the Society in gaining, sharing, and sustaining a robust, educational enterprise going forward.

Other actions and clarifications include an explicit policy regarding the use of our Executive Secretary and access to the Society's mailing list. The question arose regarding procedure. Historically the Society has had chairs to plan and oversee our events—dinners, tastings, tours. The chair worked closely with the Executive Secretary in selecting venues, discussing finances, and in attention to details. We will continue to have chairs for our events who will continue to work with the Executive Secretary, but each event will be approved by the President and/or the Executive Committee with close attention to minimum attendance requirements and costs; areas that are so important in our era of reduced cash flow.

Once again, I want to thank those loyal members, listed below who have donated since our last newsletter, who have been so very thoughtful and provided generous donations to the Society of Medical Friends of Wine. So far this year we have received \$1,525.00. One significant notation is that Francis Mahoney, who has donated, is not a member, but rather a Vintner who in 2018 generously hosted the Society to a wonderful tasting at his Los Brisas Vineyard in the Napa, Carneros region. Thank you, Francis, for your continued generosity to the Society of Medical Friends of Wine.



Right: Francis Mahoney addresses our members. Above: The tasting at Los Brisas Vineyard

Donors since February 2021

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From the Editor
Memories of Leon Adams
 By Robert Blumberg, M.D.



Leon and his pipe in France Photo by Mort Rivo, D.D.S.

The inspiration for this story came from an e-mail message I recently received from Mort Rivo, D.D.S. Mort was commenting on the passing of Steven Spurrier, the renowned English wine merchant who owned a shop in Paris and introduced the French to the qualities of California wine. Mort's message:

"His death reminds me that Spurrier's wine shop and L'Academie du Vin on the Boulevard de la Madeleine in Paris was the very first stop on the now famous Medical Friends of Wine tour to France and Catalonia led by Leon Adams in 1985.

It was some 10 years after the 'Judgement of Paris', when Napa Valley wines were judged superior to their French counterparts in a blind tasting held at Spurrier's wine shop and school in Paris.

As Californians, and especially as representatives of the California wine community, we were welcomed with open arms by Spurrier and his colleagues. They toasted us as if we ourselves were the vintners who won the tasting some 10 years before.

The visit to Spurrier's store was an exciting introduction to what turned out to be a marvelous wine adventure with Leon Adams, who was greeted enthusiastically at every vineyard and winery we visited. Everyone seemed to know him. Amazing, indeed."

Leon of course was the founding Executive Secretary of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine. As a founder and member of both the Wine Institute and the Wine Advisory Board, Leon realized that coming out of Prohibition the wine industry and the country would benefit from a respected and scholarly group advocating on behalf of wine. He felt physicians were such a group, and in 1939 our Society was founded with **"The object of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine is to stimulate scientific research of wine, develop an understanding of the beneficial effects and encourage an appreciation of the conviviality and good fellowship that are a part of the relaxed and deliberate manner of living that follows its proper use."** The fact that we still exist as a Society some 82 years later is a reflection of the thought and hard work that Leon put into the foundation of our organization.

Mort's words about Leon brought forth my own memories, some of which I will share with you now. I have also asked Mort to expand on his recollection of the Society's European Tour, and our President Jim Gallagher Ph.D., will share with you his experiences of wine tasting with Leon at a number of events.

Leon was a statesman and an advocate for all wine. In all of the years I knew him and at all of the dinners and tastings we attended together, I cannot recall him ever saying anything negative about a wine or publicly stating he preferred one wine over another. In that way he was a wine proponent, not a wine critic, and thus it is not surprising that he was greeted enthusiastically at every vineyard and winery.

I, on the other hand, came at wine from a different approach. When Leon and I first met, I had recently graduated from medical school and had co-authored, with Hurst Hannum, *The Fine Wines of California*, one of the first books to include tasting notes and rankings for California wine, and to serve as a consumer buying guide rather than a historical narrative of California wine. I strongly suspect that privately Leon disagreed with my approach, and thought Hurst and I to be rather brash and irreverent young wine drinkers. But he also recognized a physician with a passion about wine and wasted no time in telling me about the Society of Medical Friends of Wine and encouraging my joining. At that time the Society was flourishing, and membership was capped at 320 individuals, ninety percent physicians and up to ten percent dentists. There was about a five year wait to join, but Leon assured me as Executive Secretary he could "accelerate" the entry of individuals who could bring special attributes to the Society, and I soon found myself a member. And more than just a member, for Leon encouraged my participation in dinner and wine committees, and before long had me chairing events and selecting wines for members to try. We represented different generations and different philosophies, but he accepted me, and I was always appreciative for that and felt that over the years we developed a warm relationship and mutual respect.

Leon ran the Society with a firm hand and a strong fiscal awareness. Probably stemming from growing up during the Depression, he was always worried about our solvency and protecting the future of the Society from "frivolous" doctors. His negotiating prowess with restaurants and clubs that hosted our events was legendary, and he kept tight reins on wine chairs to be sure they stayed within budget for their events. It was well known that if you bought more wine than was needed for a dinner, the chair was responsible for taking the excess bottles home, after making an "appropriate donation to the Society to cover the cost." We may have groused a bit over his "parental" controls, but again I point to the longevity of the Society as a positive result.

Leon appreciated wine. He did not worship wine. Nor did he feel wine should be overly costly. Wine should be a frequent beverage at table, and should not be beyond the reach of the average person in affordability. I remember one story from a member who went with Leon on one of the Society tours that included a Paris visit and meal at a Michelin acclaimed restaurant. Recognizing Leon as the group leader, the wine list was presented to him for his selection for what the group was to drink that day. The member told me Leon selected an

Alsatian Sylvaner over all the acclaimed wines on the list, and when he was later asked why, responded “because it was the cheapest wine on the list.”

Leon set agendas for Board meetings, saw that all events came off according to plans, and used his numerous contacts to help Presidents plan venues for dinners, wine tastings, and vintage tours. For the most part the goals and policies of the Society were felt to be Leon’s doings. One such area was membership.

When I joined the Society nearly 50 years ago, its membership was exclusively male. While it may be stated that such was the case for many clubs and wine and food societies of the time, the overt and covert discrimination against women in the medical profession of the times existed in the Society. When I became a Board member I learned more of the inner dealings of the Society and witnessed Leon’s prowess at organizational skills all the more. The subject of membership and male exclusivity concerned a number of Board members. We did have a biannual dinner where ladies were welcomed as guests, as well as at a biannual wine tasting. But the membership was exclusively male.

I remember well a board meeting where one member stated his concern about this policy. Leon corrected him and stated, “there is no policy preventing women members, no woman has ever chosen to apply”. At that point another board member (I wish I could remember who he was) pointed out to Leon that we actually did have a female member. It turns out he had encouraged a female colleague to apply, and she did so using her initials rather than first name. For the purposes of this article, we’ll call her “C.J.”. I remember Leon taking out his ubiquitous pipe, holding it in hand, while he looked quizzically at the speaker and said, “so C.J. is a woman?”. When told yes, he then began to chuckle, shake his head a bit, and then said “Well I guess we have a woman member. So that’s that. Next agenda item.”

Shortly thereafter more women began to apply, and the rest is history so that today we have as many women members as men, and a significant number of our officers and Board members are women who contribute greatly to the Society. I honestly don’t know how sexist Leon may or may not have been compared to others of his era, but I cannot forget that glint in his eye and the chuckle from his mouth upon learning the news, and his willingness to support the Society as it changed to more modern and appropriate mores.

Leon was a well renowned author. His landmark book, which appeared in a number of editions, was “*The Wines of America*”. He also wrote *The Commonsense Book of Wine*, *The Commonsense Book of Drinking*, and *The Wine Study Course*, as well as a moniker on striped bass fishing in San Francisco Bay. To illustrate his writing prowess, I reached into the bookshelves for my copy of “*The Wines of America*” randomly opened the book, and easily captured a few examples to share with you. Enjoy Leon’s words published in 1973:

“Next on the route is the hamlet of Rutherford, the home of two famous wineries with similar ownership, but contrasting histories and competing managements—Inglenook and Beaulieu.”

“When the Finnish sea captain, Gustave Ferdinand Niebaum (originally Nybom) had made his fortune in the Alaska fur-seal trade, he wanted to build a ship. But his wife did not share his love of the sea, so he adopted winegrowing as a hobby instead. In 1879 he bought a young vineyard named Inglenook, which suggests a pleasant nook by a fireside. Niebaum replanted the place with vines he imported from the best wine districts of Europe. He then built the three-story Gothic winery of stone, now covered with ivy.”

“In 1939, the San Francisco Wine & Food Society held a dinner in tribute to Inglenook, at the Palace Hotel. Among the wines served were four relics from the family cellar: Inglenook Sauterne 1907, Riesling 1910, Pinot Noir 1892, and Napa Valley Red, 1884. Those ancient vintages, though frail and varying from bottle to bottle, gave us proof of the great longevity of Napa Valley wines. It was that dinner which caused me to choose the Cabernet of Inglenook to start my own cellar collection of Napa Valley reds. The Cabernets of the early 1940’s required ten to eleven years of aging in wood and glass to develop great bouquet, and some of them have retained it for almost thirty years. I wasn’t surprised when a case of the 1941 vintage brought twenty dollars a bottle at the 1969 Heublein auction in Chicago.”

And now for memories from Mort and Jim.

1985 Society Wine Tour with Leon Adams

By Mort Rivo, D.D.S.

In the Fall of 1985, Leon Adams led a small group of our members and spouses on a grand three-week harvest-time wine tour of France and Catalonia. I was very fortunate to be part of that group. I will relate for you some vignettes which are still amazingly fresh in my memory. Leon was widely recognized in both America and Europe as a distinguished wine scholar, traveler, and author. Among other accolades, he received the honor of being named ‘The Wine Writer of the Year’.

At the time of our wine tour in 1985, the third edition of his encyclopedic book, 'The Wines of America' had recently been published. It was a remarkable work, an exhaustive compendium of wine growing and wine making in the whole of the North American continent.

It was because of Leon's stature and reputation that the great Wine Houses of France welcomed us of the Society of the Medical Friends of Wine with open arms. We experienced a series of private receptions, tours and tastings, often accompanied by specially prepared elegant luncheons and dinners at the finest wine estates, every day and evening for three weeks. Leon was greeted enthusiastically at every stop. It seemed that every French and Catalonian vigneron knew him personally. It was amazing, indeed.

I want to share with you some of our adventures:

Along the route, and over the course of a memorable three weeks, we were the guests of many grand wine estates. Among them: In Champagne, we were the guests of The Bollinger family and of the directors of Champagne Mumm. We were invited to tour the ancient cellars of Moët et Chandon.

In Burgundy, the proprietors of the Chateau de Beaune opened their house to us. We experienced the long history of the Burgundy Region at the Clos de Vougeot. We were introduced to small producers in the Syndicat d'Initiatives in both Chablis and Gevrey-Chambertin.

In the Loire, we visited wine growers in Vouvray. As we traveled west, downstream along the River, we visited producers of the sparkling wines of the Loire and of the lesser-known wines of Saumur and Savennieres.

In Chinon, a town made famous by Rabelais, we were inducted into the Confrerie des Entonneurs Rabelaisien in a colorful and memorable ceremony.

In Cognac, we were welcomed by the House of Hennessy. In Medoc, we were hosted by the director of renowned House of Mouton Rothschild. We tasted wines at Chateau Margaux. In St. Emilion, our tasting at Chateau Ausone was directed by the regisseur, Pascal Dalbeck.

Our daily schedule read as though we were perusing the labels of the most venerable wines of France at K and L's wine shop.

But it is the memory of a modest experience I want to share with you. It speaks directly to Leon Adam's thinking about wine and of the business of wine. Leon believed strongly that wine is a moderate daily beverage, an article of food, not of luxury. He often said that throughout history, wine had been the only natural meal-time beverage, which he opined cannot be said for water, for coffee, tea, or milk, or for soft drinks.

Adams divided wines into two categories: 'everyday' wines, reasonably priced and within the family budget, and 'Sunday' wines, costlier vintages better saved for special occasions.

He thought little of 'wine snobs', whom he defined as 'those who drink the label and not the wine'.

A vignette:

As we traveled through the Languedoc-Roussillon region in the southwest of France, one of our group cried out to the driver, 'Stop the bus'. And the driver did. At the roadside was a line of people waiting patiently in front of the '*magasin d'alimentation locale*'. Each carried a 'jerry can'. Outside of the store were hoses with handles similar to those used to fill one's gas tank. The dispensers were labeled '*rouge*' et '*blanc*'.

The people were waiting in line to fill their containers with the local wines.

Leon Adams was ecstatic. The common folk understood Leon's philosophy. And so did we.



Inauguration of the SMFW into the Wine Society of Chinon, Loire Valley. Felix O. Kolb, M.D., Mort Rivo D.D.S. and Leon Adams



Did you want red or white?

Photo by Mort Rivo, D.D.S.

Reminiscences of Leon Adams
by Jim Gallagher, Ph.D.

I knew of Leon Adams long before we met. I was a regular attendee at wine tastings sponsored by the trade or various charitable programs. Leon was not. My memory is that he attended local events of California vintners and occasionally functions in which visiting wine writers were discussing new books or regional areas. His general manner was an inconspicuous presence. It often appeared to me, his interest focused more on keeping abreast of wine

culture—what was going on, what were the issues, and what was governing people’s interest in wine, as opposed to being an active participant in wine tasting.

One such event Leon did attend was at Draper’s Wine Shop on Sutter St. Draper’s at the time, besides being one of the major retail shops of both domestic and imported wines in San Francisco, was also where the Vintner’s Club held their tastings. The event Leon attended was a book event, and Alexis Lichine was the guest speaker. Lichine book, *Wine of France*, (fifth edition, revised, 1967) had been a major success, and I and many others were anxious to hear Lichine’s words. Leon entered the room alone, just before Lichine was about to begin, and looked around for a place to locate. I could see that he had not anticipated such a crowd and was a little unsettled, so I approached him, asked if he was looking for a seat.

It was clear, he was happy for the support. So, I ushered him to a seat where we both had reasonable access to the table Lichine was to occupy. Prior to the start of Lichine’s presentation, I did engage in some very brief small talk and introduced Leon to some nearby wine enthusiasts. Most knew of Leon, but I was surprised how many did not know what he looked like.

Lichine, shortly, began his presentation, and I will never know if he was suffering from jet lag or what, but the content was a rambling description of the routes through Bordeaux, the names of chateaux and their owners, a little history of each. At the end, he received a mild applause, and Leon noted that he was a much better writer than speaker. He thanked me for the introductions and got up and left as wine was being poured.

Later, I had been asked to have a wine event at the annual **American Psychological Association** Meeting in San Francisco. I contacted several of my friends such as Bob Blumberg, Hurst Hannum, John Brennan, Tom Eddy, Harvey Steiman, and then asked Leon if he would join a panel at the event, and he responded affirmatively. Later, while preparing introductions for each of the panelists, I discovered a number of Leon’s significant contributions that grew out of his investigative journalism. For one story, as a young reporter, Leon had himself committed to a juvenile reform school for an extended period. During his period of confinement, he uncovered much scandal and mistreatment of juveniles within this “reform school”. His reporting enabled some major reforms regarding the treatment of wards of the State of California. Another interesting story was the tracing of the migratory behavior of striped bass within San Francisco Bay.

Leon later confided that the reason he appeared on the panel was to learn what psychologists were studying with regard to wine consumers and the culture of wine consumption. Leon’s presentation on the panel focused on the enjoyment and benefit of wine at the family dinner table rather than specific reference to quality or preference of a varietal or vintner. One of the inducements I had offered the panelist for their participation was a comparative blind tasting of the 1974 vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon. For most of the panelists at the end of the tasting, their glasses were empty; Leon’s were barely touched.

I don't remember the year, but Randall Graham hosted a group of wine writers at his then Bonny Doon Winery in Bonny Doon, near Santa Cruz. Among others attending were Bob Blumberg, myself and Leon Adams. Randall after a tour of the Winery, had provided a lunch outdoors on a beautiful day. Someone asked Leon, "what wines are you buying these days"? Leon, in his late 80s at the time, quickly replied, "I don't even buy green bananas anymore."



Leon Adams and a youthful version of your editor at Bonny Doon Winery. Photo by Jim Gallagher

From the Scientific Literature Review of a Recent Article

Editor's note: Last newsletter's review on atrial fibrillation and blood alcohol levels caught the attention of a number of readers, probably due to the frequency of atrial fibrillation. Our resident scientist, Dr. Dan Bikle, has followed on with a review of another pertinent article on alcohol consumption and atrial fibrillation.

**Wine may be good for the heart but not for its beat: A review of alcohol consumption, cardiac biomarkers, and risk of atrial fibrillation and adverse outcomes
Dora Csengeri and many others, European Heart Journal 00:1-8, 2021**

By Daniel Bikle, M.D., Ph.D.

Background: The association of heavy alcohol consumption with atrial fibrillation (AF) is well established. The "holiday heart syndrome" in which acute alcohol consumption leads to

autonomic imbalance reflected by sinus tachycardia predisposing to arrhythmia, and long-term heavy alcohol consumption leading to changes in cardiac structure and function including cardiomyopathy, are reasonably well established. But the question is whether more moderate alcohol consumption, and in particular for us wine lovers, whether a glass or two of wine likewise predisposes to atrial fibrillation and heart failure. Here the jury is out with several studies including meta-analyses coming to different conclusions. This is what this most recent study set out to answer.

Methods: The authors selected 100,092 individuals from community based European cohorts (Monica Risk, Genetics, Archiving and Monograph, and Biomarkers for Cardiovascular Risk Assessment across Europe) who at baseline had not reported previous episodes of AF. Baseline examinations ranged over a period from 1982-2010, with median follow-up of 13.9 years. The group was approximately equally divided between men and women, with a mean BMI for each sex around 25 (women), 26 (men). Alcohol consumption was ascertained by food questionnaires. All forms of alcohol were included with beer and wine being most prevalent—beer for men, wine for women. A limitation here is that alcohol consumption was self-reported, and it is not clear whether the patterns of alcohol consumption were constant throughout the study period. The outcome diagnoses of AF and heart failure (HF) were based on questionnaires, national hospital discharge data including ambulatory care records, and death registry data. Biomarkers—NT-proBNP and troponin I were measured in a subgroup of 23,205 participants in stored blood samples from FINRISK and Moli-studies and 31,129 participants from DAN-MONICA, R\FINRISK, and Moli-sani studies, respectively. Covariates included age, BMI, blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, history of HF and MACE (mortality and cardiac events), as well as employment status and education.

Results: Nearly half of both sexes consumed a range of 1-12 g alcohol/day, with a median consumption of 3g/d (mean level 8.7g/d). A 4oz-glass of cabernet with 14% alcohol totals about 16g alcohol. 4.2% men and 13.7% women were listed as never drinkers and served as the reference group. 37% of the men and 46.7% of the women drank less than once/week, whereas another 23.7% men and 15.4% women drank only 1-2d/wk. During the study 5854 participants developed documented AF. The hazard ratio for a drink with only 12g alcohol was 1.16 ($P<0.001$), i.e. a 16% increase in the risk of AF, and the risk increased from there with increased alcohol consumption. Even only 3g alcohol per day had a significant risk of AF. Both sexes had comparable risks. Adjustment for various cardiovascular risk factors did not alter these numbers, nor did the biomarker measurements. On the other hand, 4995 incident HF cases were found in a 69,084 subset. In this case the association with alcohol consumption was J shaped with lowest risk at levels around 20g/d—now about a 5oz pour of 14% cab. That is the good news.

Conclusion: Not until your alcohol consumption is 1g/d or less is your risk of AF indistinguishable from never drinkers. BUT if your worry is heart failure, a nice glass of cab may just be what you are looking for.

Editor's note: The J shaped curve of risk of alcohol consumption and heart failure is interesting. Dr. Bikle and I discussed this and we both feel there may be an association with coronary artery disease. Clinical coronary artery disease and alcohol consumption also seems to follow a J shaped curve, with abstainers and heavy consumers having more incidence than moderate drinkers. Coronary disease can lead to myocardial infarctions (heart attacks) and subsequent cardiac damage. Too much cardiac damage can lead to heart failure. Thus, the J shaped heart failure risk may be tied to the J shaped coronary risk.

Late Winter and Early Spring Wines **by Jim Gallagher Ph.D.**

This month's discussion of older wines will mostly address Pinot Noir, except for the first wine, the Louis Martini, 1970 Cabernet Sauvignon 'Special Selection'. At the time of release, the 1970 vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon was the third successive vintage of beyond "excellent" from the Napa Valley. One distinguishing difference was that wine-grape production in 1970 was considerably less than the much-heralded vintage of 1968, that was bountiful. Due to spring frosts the 1970, by comparison, was much less plentiful, but perhaps the grapes harvested provided greater depth. I certainly hold that view.

Another aside was the fact that Herb Caen reported in his column shortly after the 1970 Cabernet Sauvignon had been released that Louis Martini had confided to him that it was the best vintage he had ever produced. This caused one of the earlier stampedes to wine retail outlets and the Martini 1970 cabernet disappeared from the shelves of many outlets, and rose in price where it remained.



For most wine consumers at that time, the three different bottlings of the Martini Cabernet were distinguishable only in that they sold for different prices at the winery, and the regular bottling for a dollar less seemed the best value. For retailers, the Parrott Distributing company either charged the same price for the Reserve or Special Selection, or offered the Reserve and Special Selections as a bonus to outlets that purchased 50 or more cases of Martini wines of any variety. As a consumer, this was a boon, as the so called "bombers" of the time who received most of these bonuses, did not have a good sense of value, and made them available in the same fashion to regular customers, that is, at the "regular" discounted price.

Now that the background has been set, the wine remains a magnificent example of quality wine produced before 1980. The fruit showed much cherry flavors mixed with roasted nuts, light leather and tar, and an elegant finish and mouth feel—a viscosity level I love in the finish of such a fine wine. All with a modest 12% alcohol.

Okay, now to the Pinot Noirs. I'm going to start with the **Domaine Meo-Camuzet** 1989 Clos de Vougeot 'Grand Cru'. Generally, the Meo-Camuzet Burgundies were comparatively forward to other vintners of this region. The 1989 vintage in Burgundy was well thought of, generally receiving "rich" and "opulent" superlatives for the Grand Crus. This wine was stunning upon release, as many Burgundies can be, unlike the more frequent notation of "backward" for the early arriving wines of Bordeaux. The Meo-Camuzet Clos de Vougeot has continued to develop and now shows a medium-light red hue, with an unmistakably copper edge. The bouquet remains alluring, with whiffs of rose petals rising from more stable scents of strawberry, with baked pie spices and some bacon notes; on the palate, a medium-light body, excellent fruit, balance, and a long, luscious aftertaste. Has this wine had a finer day? The judgement would depend on the character profile that most pleases each individual. For me, there was much attraction in the bouquet, while the mouth had added a velvet quality and a sufficient flavor profile to say it is in a sweet spot. It did not appear ready to fall apart, or even skip a beat.

Next is one of my favorite wines of Burgundy, **Mommessin's** Clos de Tart "Grand Cru", Morey Saint Denis. My first introduction was a tasting at Connoisseur Wine Imports when a 1969 was included. 1969 was one of the really great vintages in Burgundy, and the Clos de Tart was included in a tasting with several **DRC** wines. These Burgundies were not examples of the "ready to serve" Burgundies. This group, while not as astringent as are many young Bordeaux wines, had not come together as a mature choir putting forth angelic sounds—some time in the bottle was needed.



Tastings at Connoisseur Wine Imports were conducted with a bagging of the wines so as not to disclose their identity. For that evening I had two favorites: the DRC La Tache and the Clos de Tart; the latter I could afford even though the La Tache was the cheapest it would ever be. Several years later at a Butterfield & Butterfield auction I was able to buy a case of the 1969 Clos de Tart for an even better price. And I did shout, "yahoo" when hammer sound accompanied the "sold" cry for the lot.

Recently, I did open a 1996 Clos de Tart and enjoyed it immensely, not to the extent that I had enjoyed the 1969, but never-the-less, it was a lovely

wine consistent with the flavor profile of the 1969. The color of the wine was dark red, with a light purple edge, youthful in appearance, and much to my delight similarly scented with freshly crushed strawberry, a whiff of blackberry couched in baking spices, with traces of truffle and toast. It had a medium-light body, with superb fruit, good balance, and an excellent finish; rich and long in aftertaste revealing excellent structure and additional promise of greater complexity to come.



The next two wines will be California Pinot Noirs from the vintner, Rochioli. First, the 2009 Pinot Noir, Rochioli 'Three Corner'. This wine with a dark-red hue with a purple edge emitted lovely, robust, compelling scents from the glass. A few twirls, and a mesmerizing, almost musical, bouquet of red berry and plump fruit lunged forward; once past the lips, it showed a medium body, great balance from such powerful fruit flavors, and a finish worthy of the greatest of Pinot Noir wines. This finish was long, with great



weight, succulent and finely elegant. A profound wine.

Another Pinot Noir from Rochioli tasted recently is the 2008 Little Hill. Again, a remarkable wine showing a dark red hue, with a somewhat lighter shade of purple on the edge. The bouquet was rich, not as intense as the 3 Corner, but possessed just as lovely of aromatics that underscored the dark cherry, plum fragrance combined with flashes of blackberry bathed in a seamless body of baking spices and fresh toast.

Medium big in body with superb fruit, balanced, and a lovely finish, providing flavors extending well beyond a typical aftertaste. A wonderful wine.

Both Rochioli wines were additionally marked by their youthful character despite their (well just barely) double-digit age. I would hesitate presenting either as an example of an older wine, but rather wines aged beyond their release date.

