

Society of Medical Friends of Wine



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NEWSLETTER MARCH 2023

Outgoing 2022 President's Salute to Members By David Schwartz, M.D.

Dear Friends,

For the past two months I've been working with your Executive Committee on the orderly transition from my year of serving as your 2022 President to my new role as Immediate Past-President. I've had regular contact with incoming President Maynard Johnston and I look forward to working with Maynard and the energy and enthusiasm he brings to his new position. For those of you who are relatively new members, the Society has a deliberate process for Executive Committee officers to serve a minimum of three years before assuming the President's role. In recent years and with a smaller membership, specific Executive Committee members have served in an "Ex-Officio" specialized capacity while we weathered the Covid-19 pandemic era and focused on rebuilding our membership. I would like to focus my comments on a salute to all of our members and on introducing our new members. I want to emphasize

that it isn't necessary to be in the medical profession to join the Society of Medical Friends of Wine, but rather to share an interest in our education mission and the relationship between wine and health.

Since January 2022, I've had the distinct pleasure of welcoming *nine new members*, introducing these individuals to long-standing members at our events, and celebrating the varied perspectives that each of our new members bring to the Society. Some of the new members with wine industry linkage have already enriched our educational discussions. At our recent annual dinner at Piperade, new member Ron Fenolio, proprietor of Veedercrest Vineyards, gave a fascinating talk on the history of Napa Valley wine production with a specific insight into the Paris Wine Tasting of 1976 - known as the "*Judgement of Paris*" competition - that resulted in several Napa Valley wines evaluated as some of the world's best! Thanks to Ron for his generous contribution to our Piperade discourse, for which yet another member, Past-President Dr. Richard Geist, had arranged for an anonymous donation of the 1970 Chateau Mouton Rothschild that we all enjoyed.

I share this story as one example of the many connections between our member's interests in the Society. Additional new members in 2022 include: Gianna Fugazi, winemaker of Wander Must Wines; Pepper Karansky who has managed National Parks events; Henry Kim, a former healthcare administrator with a passion for fine wine and cuisine; Erin Lamson, Proprietor of Adventures in Wine, importer of fine and rare wines; Russel Lamson, a trained chef and the current electrician for a Bay Area school district; Giulia Murray who brings her interests in fine wine, food and travel; Dr. Dennis Noss who practiced podiatry prior to a finance career, and Jay Paxton, a real estate attorney with an interest in wine collecting. Geographically our new members reside in several Bay Area counties, similar to our overall membership profile. I believe that there is an excitement in the air with respect to current members getting acquainted with the newer members.

I'll briefly mention our 2022 wine education events that provided a participatory forum. Our Executive Committee worked diligently to present these experiences:

- an Italian themed wine dinner at Poggio Sausalito in March
- a virtual (Zoom) tasting of Rhone-style California and French wines in May
- a summer tour of the Petaluma Gap AVA in July
- a special wine dinner at The French Club in October, and
- a holiday season wine & cheese tasting with Janet Fletcher in December

Supporting each of these events, the Chair worked to plan the food and wine pairings, coordinate with the venue, communicate with our members, and manage all of the necessary event details, including the budget. Please join me in thanking: Dr. Jim Gallagher who chaired both the Poggio and French Club dinners; Dr. Gallagher and Dr. Bob Blumberg who planned and presented the virtual Rhone-style wine tasting with me; Susan Schwartz who co-chaired the Petaluma Gap wineries tour with me, and Dr. Bob Blumberg and Janet Fletcher who presented the annual Wine & Cheese tasting at the Mill Valley Community Center. Additionally, Claire Keiser helped with each of these events. Although the Piperade annual dinner took place in February 2023, Dr. Elizabeth Kass, Event Chair, undertook the planning in 2022. Thank you, Elizabeth!

During the February Piperade dinner, I had the honor of bidding farewell to Claire Bloomberg Keiser, our Executive Secretary from 2019-2023. Claire is a very special individual who has welcomed members and guests, worked with our Board of Directors, and applied her many talents to help our programs run smoothly. Claire has been an organized administrator, a good communicator, a skilled photographer, a creative problem solver and a committed team player who has been described as “the glue that has held the organization together.” At Piperade, we presented Claire with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Society, and a gift to express our profound gratitude for her many contributions. Claire plans to stay in touch, and we all look forward to seeing her at a future event.



Claire Keiser describes her years of serving as the Society's Executive Secretary as a wonderful experience and looks forward to her continued relationship

I'd like to thank our Executive Committee who apply their time and talents to the Society's "wellbeing" in these areas: financial management – Dr. Jack McElroy; website content management – Dr. Elizabeth Kass; Cellar Master and Newsletter Editor – Dr. Bob Blumberg;

Events Management – Dr. Jim Gallagher; Secretary – Susan Schwartz and 2023 President – Dr. Maynard Johnston. We are fortunate to have a Board of Directors that includes four past presidents: Dr. Dan Bikle who contributes newsletter scientific reviews; and Dr. Marion Blumberg, Dr. Richard Geist, and Dr. Morton Rivo, all who advise the Executive Committee. One additional Board member, James Seff, J.D., previously served as our Counsel and now brings a legal perspective to the Board of our nonprofit organization. The entire Board of Directors meets at least annually to guide the year's agenda.

Speaking of our non-profit status that the Society has maintained since 2016, I'd also like to express my deepest appreciation to those members who have made financial donations to the society, beyond their annual dues, and to members and friends who have donated wine to the society's cellar to be used at our events. Each donation makes a difference to every aspect of the Society's operations.

I've learned a lot from each of you during my year as 2022 President. I'm very confident that our "small but mighty" Society will benefit from each member's unique interests and contributions, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue whether in-person or by e-mail to: societyofmedicalfriendsof wine@gmail.com. We do monitor and respond to e-mails! Please let your Executive Committee know about your interests and suggestions for wine education events and how you would like to get involved in our all-volunteer organization.

I invite you to join me in supporting our new President Dr. Maynard Johnston, whom I've known for several years. Maynard is a retired pediatrician who travels from the Sacramento area to attend our meetings and events. He brings a wide breadth of experience in wine education and as a wine competition judge. He has a deep knowledge of European, California and Sacramento region wines and wineries that he will readily share. Please introduce yourself to Maynard soon.

It's my honor to conclude my final president's letter with a Cheers to all!

David

Claire Keiser's Comments to Attendees

I will begin with a huge thank you to each of the four Presidents I've worked with. I learned so much from each of your styles of leadership. I also gleaned a respect and true reverence for wine from our wine chairs. Their knowledge of wine is inspiring, as well as their passion for it.

The Society's members are our foundation. I have truly enjoyed interacting with you all, from start to finish, on each of our events. Your appreciation of my work and the events themselves have made my job extremely rewarding. Thank you!



A Letter from your Incoming President

By Maynard Johnston, M.D.

Hello everyone,

I'm honored to be your new President for the term 2023-2024. I am lucky to have been preceded by David Schwartz, who accomplished much during some pretty challenging times and in doing so, in my opinion, elevated the Society up to another level. This past year we had some very special events and increased our membership as well. Many of our new members are younger and eager to participate in making this upcoming year even more memorable. David has already summed up the highlights of this past year so I won't repeat what he has so eloquently stated except that we plan on continuing events that represent what our society stands for: memorable events in memorable settings; wine, food and health education; comradeliness; and promoting an appreciation of the 'good life'.

We have already firmed up two events for this coming year, with two or three others nearing their final planning stages. There is interest in even more events, some of a local interest and others with more general interest. We are lucky to have a plethora of wineries, wine regions, fine restaurants and dazzling geography on our palette. We are looking to the general membership for ideas and help in planning these and other events. We have an energetic and talented Board of Directors and an equally talented Executive Committee to help run and plan events but we need every member's participation to make our organization thrive, prosper and achieve its potential.

The Society has become an all-volunteer organization beginning this year with the resignation of our energetic and talented Executive Secretary. With our current governance structure, the

importance of the whole membership becomes much more important to make the Society a thriving entity.

Some of my ideas for this year include: an event in Amador's Shenandoah Valley, returning to the Piperade restaurant in November before it closes for good on November 30, working with UC Davis to set up a tour of their winery, working again with UC Davis to put together a wine and health event, trying to formally expand the involvement of the wine industry (wineries, restaurants, publications, other wine societies, etc.) in cooperative efforts. There are other ideas as well. Again, we want to encourage the membership to come forward with ideas and thoughts. Please do not hesitate to contact any Board or Executive Committee member with any thoughts you might have; there is no thought or idea too existential to be considered. Please come forward!

At little about me in closing. I'm a retired Pediatrician from Indiana/Michigan who did his undergraduate and medical school work in Indiana. I came to San Francisco to do my pediatric training and then I spent three years in the U.S. Army at Ft. Ord in Monterey. It was in Monterey that my passion in wine started and then exploded. This literally happened at a life changing event. This was in 1976. I made wine for 25 years; I've taught wine classes; I've grown grapes and planted vineyards; I've built up a too great wine collection; I've visited wineries in over 25 California counties, 17 states and 12 countries; I'm a certified wine judge; I'm part owner of an Amador County winery; and I helped design and continue to consult with a winery in Northern Michigan; I have a huge and unfortunately still growing collection of wine themed items including books, corkscrews (500+), carafes, funnels, aerators, etc; and I have a large wine art collection. I'm a member and have been a member of many other wine organizations. I started a wine tasting/appreciation group when I came to the Sacramento area in 1978; we just had an event last weekend. I retired from the full-time practice of pediatrics in 2014 after 37 years of working at Kaiser Permanente in Sacramento. This will be my 50th year working in Child Abuse prevention.

Again, I want to thank the Board and Executive Committee for the opportunity to be your current President. With David's experience as well as the Board's and Executive Committee's help I'm prepared to lead us in planning for a memorable year but I and the organization will need everyone's help to make this happen. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the governance including myself regarding ideas, thoughts, or concerns.
Humbly yours,

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Piperade 2023

Text and Photos by Jim Gallagher, Ph.d.

Our dinners at Piperade have been some of the Society's most enjoyable and successful events of the past several years. **Gerald Hirigoyen**, chef and proprietor has been among my favorite chefs for years. Gerald began his career at the young age of 13 in Biarritz in the Basque region of France. Later, while still a teen, he moved to Paris and was mentored by Jan Millet and Denis Ruffel. I first met Gerald after his arrival in San Francisco when he began work at **Le Castel** on Sacramento Street and later, I followed him to **Le St-Tropez** on Clement Street, the neighborhood of my youth. At Le Castel he worked with famed chef Roland Passat who later opened **La Follie** on Polk Street in San Francisco. So, indeed, Gerald had a very impressive resume. Sadly, none of the aforementioned restaurants remain open.



Gerald's earliest proprietorship was the French bistro, **Fringale**, a fun and wonderful restaurant on 4th Street near Folsom. He subsequently opened Piperade, and sold Fringale, where he reigned in the kitchen for many years. Sadly, this year's event may well be our last visit to this establishment; Gerald's lease is up at the end of November, and he is looking towards retirement. While trained in the classic French style

on top of his Basque roots, during his 30 plus years in the SF Bay Area, Gerald adapted his recipes with local foods with great success to the pleasure of California appetites.

As all of you who have helped planned meetings and events know, the experience ranges from delight to sheer terror. We were joyfully bouncing along in our preparation for this one, with invitations in the mail, when the restaurant event coordinator discovered a most unfortunate double booking for the evening, with the other group having reserved many months ago to celebrate a family milestone. Our original date of Saturday, February 18, 2023 could not be held in the private room, but thanks to the careful negotiations of our dinner chair and Executive Committee member, Elizabeth Kass, MD, we were able access the same private room, on Friday, February 17, 2023, a day earlier. This compromise was not completely satisfactory as there were members who had registered for the Saturday date that were unavailable to attend on the Friday date. Our super apology to them and to all who had to change their plans.

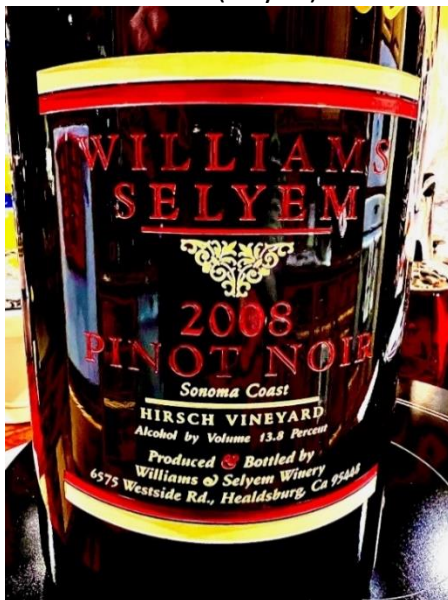


With the drama about the date resolved, we turned our attention back to the wine selection and preparation. Several of wines we enjoyed were donated by Board members and one grand donation was facilitated from a friend of the Society who wishes to be anonymous, by Board Director, Richard Geist, MD., namely the four bottles of **1970 Chateau Mouton Rothschild, Pauliac**. This was served with the Fourth Course, consisting of Lamb Chop, Merguez (lamb sausage), Fennel, Roasted Bread, Pecan Cumin with a Date Relish which was created by chef Hirigoyen to compliment the 1970 Chateau Mouton Rothschild, and well it succeeded.

Bob Blumberg, MD and I planned decanting the wines at his home prior to the transportation of the wine to the restaurant, to ensure maximum quality at the point of serving, and the opportunity to taste the wine for soundness. The wines had stood up for greater than a 72-hour period and decanting began several hours prior to the serving.



Bob extracted all the corks (See photo above). As can be observed, all four corks were troubled (frayed) to some extent, as is not unusual for corks of this age. Despite



the condition of the corks, he successfully extracted all four with minimal damage and with the use of a wine funnel, strainer and lighted candle he successfully decanted the wines without incurring the impurities left by the cork debris. The value of the four bottles of Mouton Rothschild is estimated to be Two Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-Six dollars (\$2,856.00) per Wine-Searcher—what a unique and valuable tasting experience for members and guests present..

Another great donation was provided by incoming President, Maynard Johnston who donated a three-liter bottle of 2008 Williams Selyem Pinot Noir from Hirsch Vineyard, located in the Sonoma Coast near

Fort Ross. Maynard's donation was also decanted prior to travel from Folsom, California to mitigate adverse effects sediment in the wine might have. Thank you, Maynard, for your donation and care to properly prepare the wine for serving at our dinner. The Pinot Noir was served with our third course of Braised pork Cheeks, Iroulegy, Plums, Cipollini Onions, Fingerling Potato, and Carrots. The Pinot Noir proved to be a delightful companion for this course—mature and delicious, yet still filled with fruit to balance the sauce.



Finally, David and Susan Schwartz provided six bottles of our aperitif wine, the Cremant D'Alsace **Pierre Sparr** Brut Reserve, non-vintage. It's a blend of Pinot Blanc 80%, and Pinot Auxerrois 20%. What a way to start the evening! Fresh, fragrant, and tart with a refreshing and appetizing mousse. Different in style than Champagne, but with more minerality and complexity than seen in most non-Champagne sparkling wines.

Once again, thank you, David, Susan, Maynard and Richard for your generous donations which were excellent choices for our dinner, and also contributed to our ability to provide a great educational experience for our members and stay within our dinner budget.

On the evening of Friday, February 17, 2023, our members and guests gathered shortly before 6pm at Piperade enjoying appetizers and a sparkling wine aperitif. Shortly before 6:30, all were seated, Dinner Chair, Elizabeth Kass, formerly began our event by outlining the evening plan which included our traditional passing of the gavel from outgoing President David Schwartz to our 2023 president, Maynard Johnston, MD.

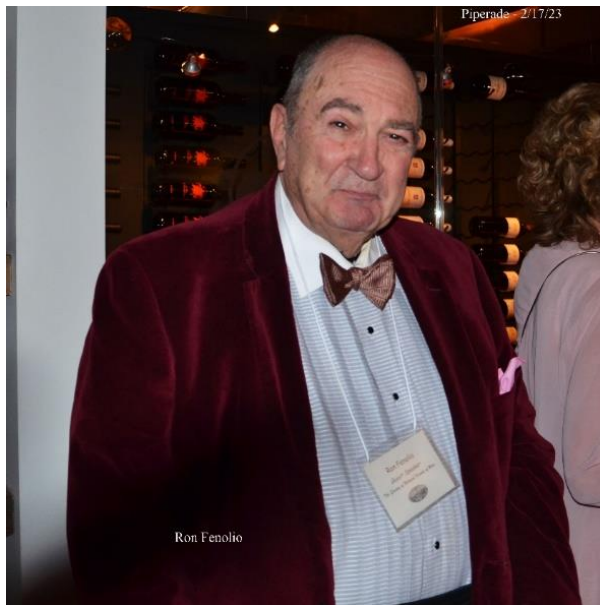
Elizabeth and David then pivoted to our honoree, Claire Keiser, to acknowledge her and to present her with a gift and award her a certificate of appreciation from the Executive Committee for her years of service as the Executive Secretary of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine. At that point, Elizabeth handed the platform to our Master of Ceremony for the evening, outgoing president David Schwartz.

David provided a brief summary of the activities of the past year and then welcomed our new members to the Society. He then formally passed the SMFW's gavel to our incoming 2023 President Maynard Johnston M.D.

After a brief acceptance speech by Maynard that included reference to several items he hopes to add to our year-long agenda, including more regional disparity in winery and restaurant visitation, Maynard handed the floor back to David to introduce our speaker of the evening, a new member to the Society, Ron Fenolio.

Ron was a guest of Jack McElroy at last year's French Club dinner, and at that event, I had a brief conversation with Ron. It was immediately apparent that his great family history in the wine industry would be a grand source information for our members. Ron, for this dinner, agreed

to speak about the 1976 Paris Tasting in which his wine, 1972 **Veedercrest** Chardonnay, was one of the six California Chardonnays that were judged with four White Burgundies in a “blind” comparative tasting. Our 1970 Chateau Mouton Rothschild was one of the reds tasted against California Cabernet Sauvignons at this historic event. Thank you, Ron, for sharing so much personal insight to such an important segment of wine history.



Pepper Karansky and Marion Blumberg (above) looking forward to the SMFW dinner prepared by famed Piperade Chef Gerald Hirigoyen and designed to be enjoyed with an outstanding array of wines. Harrison and Henry Kim, both



enjoying the Cremant and the later wines to be served with the exciting menu. Both agreed this was to be a special evening and experience with great food and wine. Richard Geist and Llyod Karger discuss the Cremant D’Alsace and future events of the Society, as well as a parcel of other worldly interests.

Vicky and Marshall Berol smiling with anticipation of the experience with classic wines that have been matched with the creative food prepared by chef Gerald Hirigoyen at Piperade.



Richard Nusser, MD, a guest of Roger Ecker, MD is engaged in a serious discernment of the Cremant D'Alsace while James Pfeifer, MD observes.



Ron Fenolio and Giulia Murray

California Chardonnay and White Burgundy Can You Tell the Difference?

By Robert Blumberg, M.D., Cellar Master and Editor

My monthly Friday night wine tasting group visited 2020 California Chardonnay in February. The wines were collected by Jim Gallagher and included Aubert Sugar Shack and Park Avenue, Rochioli Little Hill and River Block, as well as Kanzler Walker Station, Talbot Sleepy Hollow, Scar of the Sea Bassi, and Three Sticks Durell. Growing areas represented included Russian River Valley, Santa Lucia Highlands, San Luis Obispo Coast, Napa, and Sonoma Coast.

Sometimes I will play a little game with my tasters, both to get them thinking and to help me learn their thoughts. This time, before unveiling the wines from their bags, I posed the possibility that I had substituted for one of the named wines with a French white Burgundy. I asked if they thought, based on their tastings, this were possible, and if so, which wine might be the imposter.

Eight of the 12 tasters thought this was possible, and among these eight, five different wines received votes as the “possible” intruder. I thought this was fun and interesting (especially since I was not the one being put on the spot) and led me to reflect on my own years of tasting experience with California Chardonnay.

It was in the late 1960’s, having returned from a year of studying abroad in Bordeaux, that I began my exploration of California wines. Filled with newly found enthusiasm for wine, and now 21 so visits to wineries could be legally made, Hurst Hannum and I set out to taste California wine and compare and contrast them with the French wines we enjoyed while living in France. This led to our collaboration on our first book, ***The Fine Wines of California***, published in 1971 and to our teaching a number of wine courses over the years to diversify us from the intense studies of medicine and law.

As I reread portions of that book to prepare this article, I am reminded that while Chardonnay (then called Pinot Chardonnay in California) was recognized as a potential high-quality grape, a sparse yielder, and thus much more expensive than other white varietals, for the most part California vintners had not yet succeeded in producing signature wines.

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To directly quote what we wrote “Unfortunately it is not that often that a California Chardonnay measures up to the greatness of its name. Much of what is labeled Pinot Chardonnay has been blended with other grapes. When this happens, or when the Chardonnay grapes have, for one reason or another, not achieved their peak, the result may be a lighter bodied, fairly neutral wine that lacks a great Chardonnay’s character yet still manages to maintain a higher price tag”.

In that era, I remember thinking that if there were one California varietal I was least likely to confuse with its European counterpart, it was Chardonnay. For years I prided myself on my ability to distinguish a California wine from a white Burgundy.

So, what happened to change everything? Certainly, the findings at the tasting I just described are the antithesis of this.

In a global answer, much happened. The amount of Chardonnay being grown increased, and attention was focused on those climates where the grape would favor quality over quantity. With more high-end fruit available, the need for blending declined. Some vintners took on the passion and challenge for Chardonnay, and explored clonal selections and introduced French techniques such as barrel fermentation and oak aging and aging on the lees.

The driving factor most often was a dedicated vintner on a mission. Wineries such as Stony Hill and Hanzell are famous pieces of history focused on Chardonnay. While distinctive from most other winery’s Chardonnays of their era, to our palate their wines still had more of a California fruit forward style than a white Burgundian one.

My epiphany for the potential of California to produce a “white Burgundy style wine” came with Chalone Vineyard. Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, and Chenin Blanc vines had grown in the Pinnacles Mountains east of Soledad since the early 1900’s, but it took until the 1960’s for Dick Graff to discover these ancient, dry farmed, deep-rooted vines and set out to make world class wine from them. All of his whites received time in oak, with the Chardonnay being aged for one year in new French Limousin barrels. Hurst and I were blown away by the complexity, individuality, and flavor profile of these wines.

This leads to an opportunity for me to retell one of my favorite stories along my wine journey. In the early 1970’s, as we were working on the revised edition of our book, we taught wine appreciation classes through the Committee on Arts and Lectures at the U.C. San Francisco Medical Center campus and at the University of California Extension.

One such class was called “Great Wines of the World”. It was an eight-part class, featuring lectures and blind tastings of California Cabernet and Bordeaux, including first growths. We had Pinot Noir and Burgundy, including bottles from the Domaine de la Romanee Conti. Sweet wines were represented by Chateau d’Yquem and German Trockenbeerenauslese. I believe we charged \$50 for the series, which included tastings of these great wines. This was an era when you did not have to be a multimillionaire to taste and enjoy the world’s greatest wines.

The class was quite popular and easily oversubscribed. Now the story. One attendee was a physician of middle age, in the prime of his celebrated career of research, teaching, and clinical care. He brought along his new wife to introduce her to his passion for wine and so she could appreciate his fund of knowledge.

The class consisted of an hour's lecture, a brief break, and then the wine tasting itself. After a few sessions he started arriving after the break—the clear message being “I already know everything, I'm just here to taste the wines”.

This is what he did for our “White Burgundy vs. California Chardonnay” class. We offered pours of a Montrachet, the most prestigious and most expensive of white Burgundy, and the Chalone Chardonnay that had so enchanted us, wondering what our audience might think. We had explained the background of these wines in our lecture before the tasting, along with the general discussion of how white Burgundy usually differs from California Chardonnay.

Our celebrated friend and mentor arrived just as we were pouring the wines from bagged bottles. Upon learning what we were tasting, and taking a few moments to sniff and taste, when I asked for comments, he proclaimed one wine a superb example of Montrachet, a wine Alexander Dumas said should be drunk on one's knees with head bared, and the other a pedestrian California wine.

The unveiled bottles however revealed the exact opposite.

Many of us present that evening gained new respect for the potential of California Chardonnay. For our mentor friend however, if I remember correctly, this was the last class he attended—probably choosing to avoid potential future embarrassment. Such a shame. A little humility on his part would have afforded him the opportunity to explore and learn new things about wine, a most enjoyable task.

Only a few years later came the celebrated Judgement of Paris put on by Steven Spurrier in 1976. The white wine flight of that tasting featured ten wines—six from California and four from France. From California were Chardonnays from Chateau Montelena, Chalone, Spring Mountain, Freemark Abbey, Veedercrest, and David Bruce. French selections included a Meursault Charmes, Beaune Clos des Mouches, Batard Montrachet, and Puligny Montrachet Les Pucelles.

The judges were all French and the wines all tasted blind. The Chateau Montelena finished in first place, the Meursault Charmes in second, and the Chalone in third. The most highly priced wine, the Batard Montrachet, placed seventh. A comeuppance, if not an epiphany, for them, and an experience not unlike that many of us had several years earlier thanks to our UCSF Committee on Arts and Lectures wine appreciation course.

At our 84th annual dinner at Piperade, we served another wine that was part of the Judgment of Paris tasting, the 1970 Chateau Mouton Rothschild. Our new member, Ron Fenolio, an owner of Veedercrest gave a delightful talk about this famous tasting. He recounted Steve Spurrier visiting California to find wines to include and was able to share with us his unique memories of the effect the tasting had on California wineries, especially those participating.

What a great month February has been for tickling those little gray cells and bringing out memories of our journey along the wine road.

SERVING AND APPRECIATING OLD WINES

By Robert Blumberg, M.D., Cellar Master and Editor

Since this newsletter seems to be a time for doing some reminiscence, I thought it might be appropriate to reflect on the rewards and challenges of serving old wines. Older wines present the opportunity to remember what we were doing when the wines were made. If the wine you open is from your cellar, you can share memories of what it was like when you first tasted it, why you bought it, how much you paid for it, and why you decided to age it rather than drinking it up long ago.

Imagine my delight when I learned a kind benefactor was planning on gifting the Society with some bottles of very well aged wines, including four bottles of 1970 Chateau Mouton Rothschild, enough to serve at our 85th annual dinner. Many Bordeaux reds are known to age well, particularly wines from the Pauillac district of the Medoc north and west of the city. And of those long-lived Bordeaux, Mouton has the reputation of being one of the longest. I wondered how many members have had the opportunity to taste a 53-year-old first growth. Certainly, an adventure awaited us.

I referred to Chateau Mouton Rothschild as a first growth, and the purist among our readers will correctly point out the Chateau did not receive this official classification until 1973, three years after our wine was made. Although not included in 1855 as an original first growth, for many years Mouton carried a very similar reputation and price tag, leading its owners to successfully lobby for a rare change to the original classification and its elevation to first growth status in 1973.

1970 Chateau Mouton Rothschild was also one of the French red wines selected by wine merchant Steven Spurrier for inclusion in the 1976 Judgment of Paris. 1973 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon won that tasting, sending shock waves around the wine world, especially in France, but it should also be remembered that the Mouton finished a very close second, just 1.5 points behind. Amazing when you think that the wines are so very different in style.

Yes, a piece of history awaited us. Now we just needed to successfully get the corks out of the bottles—not the easiest of feats for a 53-year-old wine. Old wines throw sediment, which

collects along the side and bottom of the bottle. They require careful handling and decanting to avoid fine sediment being mixed into the wine resulting in a grainy or powdery taste in the mouth. You can't just grab a bottle from the cellar, transport it to a restaurant, and then open and decant at your destination.

For our annual dinner, we elected to stand the wines upright a week ahead, and then to open the bottles and carefully decant into a clean and dry bottle, close the new bottle with a rubber stopper, and then transport the wine.

This solved the sediment issue, but still left the challenge of extracting a 50-year-old cork. Age worthy wines usually outlive their corks, so the extraction process is not a simple one. If you use a conventional screw, it must be long enough to reach the bottom of the cork, otherwise you will certainly leave behind the lowest layer of cork. All too often a corkscrew alone will drill through the center of the old cork easy enough, but then the screw brings with it only the central portion of the soft old cork, leaving behind a "donut" cork.

An alternate cork extractor is the two-pronged Ah-So device, where the flat prongs slide along the outside of the cork and the cork is removed by slowly twisting and pulling on the device. With old corks however, this device may just push the cork into the bottle, or the fragile cork all too often breaks into pieces during the extraction.

The Durand cork extractor is a combination of a conventional screw and the pronged Ah-So device. Once you have some experience, this device does a much better job of keeping the cork mostly intact during extraction, and this is what we used to prepare our Mouton.



Cork extractors: standard corkscrew, Durand device, Ah-so device

Regardless of what device you use, there is usually a small amount of cork debris that may still be left behind or fall into the bottle, so decanting through a funnel that has a fine mesh screen in it helps keep those pesky small pieces with their musty flavors out of the decanted wine.

For our dinner we were fortunate in getting all four corks extracted and the wine decanted through a filter into new bottles and recorked about an hour before the dinner. When poured at Piperade all four bottles, despite the considerable variation in fill levels, were in excellent condition with complex and delightful aromas and palates. The wines still had a firm tannic background, but the tannins had softened leaving a smooth finish to accompany the mature mahogany color, the cedar, pine forest, and mushroom aromas, and the amazingly still vibrant fruit. More than a few guests kept commenting how youthful the wine seemed for its age, while at the same time all felt it was very much drinkable and enjoyable. While it certainly should remain so a bit longer, since it held up for more than an hour in the glass, there was no reason to age the wine further.

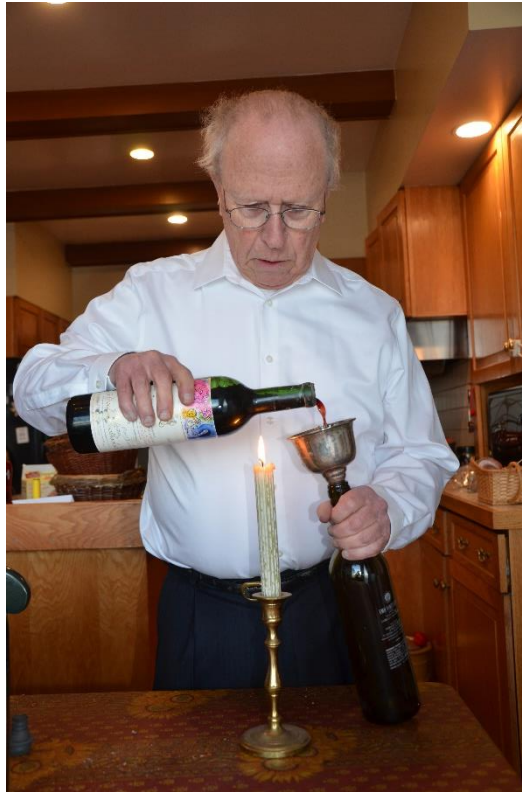
Our wines were a success. Older wines are not always so. Some turn out to be past their prime, with noses of wood or varnish affected by oxidation and palates that have lost their fruit and any semblance of vibrancy.

And then there's the matter of personal preference. Older wines may still be very attractive to some people, but not so to others. I distinctly remember a Society tasting of 1974 California Cabernet Sauvignons a half-dozen years or so ago. I particularly enjoyed the elegance of one of the wines, and after spending a bit of time pontificating to the group about the lovely old Madeira like nose and flavors graced by a bit of cedar chest smells and a lingering wisp of fruit, one of our members said to me "Bob, if I want to drink a Madeira, I'll buy a Madeira. When I'm drinking a Cabernet, I expect it to taste like a Cabernet". Point well taken.

Many wine drinkers of today are captivated by the richness, ripeness, and heady fruit qualities of contemporary young Cabernets. They want wines that fill their mouths with alcohol and flavor, have a backbone of tannins, and lingering finishes that leave no doubt they are drinking flavorful and powerful wines. Older wines in comparison, for them, can be thin and leave their palate wanting.

Recognizing this, and not knowing how our Mouton would turn out, we paired the Mouton with a 2014 Chateau Barde Haut, a rich Merlot based Saint Emilion to serve with the dinner's fourth course. This course featured a lamb chop, along with Merguez sausage, fennel, Roasted Bread, Pecan Cumin and date relish. We hoped the lamb chop would be a perfect foil for the Mouton, which it was, while the spicy North African Merguez lamb sausage would pair better with the younger and rich Saint Emilion, which it did.

The world of wine is so vast, that there is something for all wine drinkers, even if there cannot be one thing for all. And what a world it is. Wines young and old. Wines that are big, full, and rich. Others that are beautifully balanced and oh, so elegant. And for those of us prone to reminiscence, thank you to those who had the foresight and patience to buy great wines and slowly age them, which they will hopefully do gracefully, right alongside us.



Review of a Scientific Article

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

Good news: mild to moderate drinking is associated with reduced risk of dementia, but not if you quit.

Keun Hye Jeon et al. **Changes in alcohol consumption and risk of dementia in a nationwide cohort in South Korea.** JAMA Network Open, 2023 doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.54771

In this study the authors used data from the Korea National Health Insurance Service data base, obtaining data of individuals 40yrs and older from 2 health examinations at 2009 and 2011 with follow-up through 2018. They collected data on self-reported alcohol consumption (did not distinguish between beverages) and physician determined dementia. After excluding individuals with preexisting dementia, cancer, or cardiovascular disease or the occurrence of such between and for one year after the second examination, the study had 3,933,382 participants of whom 51.8% were men. A subgroup of 2,977,137 participants were evaluated after the 3rd examination in 2013. Mean (average) age was 55 with a mean follow up period of 6.3yrs.

Alcohol consumption was divided into none, mild (<15g), moderate (15-29.9g), and heavy (\geq 30g). For reference a 4oz glass of 14% alcohol Cabernet is about 15g alcohol. They further categorized their participants as sustainers (maintained the same level of consumption throughout the study), quitters, reducers, and increasers. 54.8% were nondrinkers, 26.7% were mild drinkers, 11% were moderate drinkers, and 7.5% were heavy drinkers at the start of the study. During the study 24.2% of the mild drinkers, 8.4% of the moderate drinkers, and 7.6% of the heavy drinkers quit, whereas 13.9% of the nondrinkers, 16.1% of the mild drinkers and 17.4% of the moderate drinkers increased their consumption. The data were adjusted for age, sex, smoking status, regular exercise, area of residence, income (model 1) plus comorbidities including hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemias BMI (model 2). So, what did they find?

During the follow up period there were 100,282 cases of all cause dementia (2.5%) of which the bulk were Alzheimer's disease. Compared with the sustained nondrinkers sustained mild and moderate drinkers had a 21% and 17% reduced risk of developing dementia, whereas sustained heavy drinkers had an 8% increase in risk. Previous nondrinkers who started drinking at the mild or moderate level also reduced their risk as did heavy drinkers who reduced their drinking to the mild or moderate level. But those who quit drinking or increased their drinking increased their risk of dementia compared to the sustainers. Note, however, that the reasons for quitting were not obtained.

This of course is an association study with many limitations which the authors enumerate at some length. Moreover, it is not clear whether the Korean experience translates 1:1 to the American situation. Although the models attempted to adjust for the many variables that could influence the results one can always worry about variables that were not part of the adjustment. That said it is somewhat reassuring that one or two glasses of good wine does not rot the brain. So, let's drink to that.

Respectfully submitted

Daniel Bikle, MD, PhD

From our Secretary, Susan Schwartz

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Society extends a hearty *Welcome* to the following new members who joined in 2022:

Family Members Ron Fenolio and Giulia Murray

Gianna Fugazi

Pepper Karansky

Henry Kim

Family Members Erin Lamson and Russel Lamson

Dennis Noss

Jay Paxton

Please see David Schwartz's article in this newsletter issue welcoming these new members.

THANK YOU DONORS

From November 2022 to March 2023, several members have recently gifted cash donations to the Society. *Thanks to the following individuals for your generosity:*

Dr. Daniel Bikle, Edward Bloomberg, Barry and Joan Boothe, Gianna Fugazi Dr. James Gallagher, Dr. Jack Gilliland, Dr. Elizabeth Kass, Harrison Kim, Dr. David Schwartz and Susan Schwartz.

Additional thanks to those members who have donated or purchased wines for 2022 SFMW events: Marshall Berol, Dr. Richard Geist, Dr. Norman Panting and Executive Committee members Dr. Maynard Johnston, Dr. Bob Blumberg, Dr. Elizabeth Kass, Dr. Jim Gallagher, Dr. Jack McElroy, Dr. David Schwartz, Susan Schwartz and an Anonymous Donor.

Donations of cash or securities help to support the Society's costs of operating our non-profit organization at a point in time when our membership dues do not cover all of our budget costs. Your donations *do help* to close the gap between income and operating expense. Checks may be sent to the Society of Medical Friends of Wine or you may pay by Zelle. There are several tax-related options for issuing contributions to a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization such as SMFW; please consult with your tax advisor. *Please send checks to this address: SMFW, 4460 Redwood Highway, Suite 16-110, San Rafael, CA 94903.* Please remember the Susan Guerguy Memorial Fund as you consider your donation. We ask members to contact Secretary Susan Schwartz through: societyofmedicalfriendsofwine@gmail.com, for further information. All donations will be acknowledged for donor records and in a future newsletter.

Donations of wine in excellent condition from a member's cellar are always appreciated and can be used for future wine education events, thereby reducing the overall cost to attendees.

These *gifts in kind* will be acknowledged with a Donor Form for your records. Contact Cellarmaster Dr. Bob Blumberg for details.

SAVE THE DATES

September 22, 2023: Dinner at the French Club—Our annual gastronomic highlight and opportunity for members to share wines from their cellars with fellow members and guests.

December 3, 2023: Our annual Cheese and Wine event with Janet Fletcher at the Mill Valley Community Center.

Incoming President Maynard Johnston and your Executive Committee are also planning winery visits and tasting events in Sonoma County and possibly Amador County. If you have ideas for these events or would like to help with their organization, please contact Dr. Johnston through the Society's e mail address: societyofmedicalfriendsofwine@gmail.com.

In Memoriam

William Ellis, M.D.



The Society has learned of the passing of our former member, Dr. William Ellis. Dr. Ellis was a prominent Bay Area ophthalmologist who trained at Stanford and was highly regarded in his field of ophthalmologic surgery for vision correction. For many years Dr. Ellis was an active and

loyal member of the Society, attending most of our events, and willingly sharing his thoughts and oenological knowledge with fellow members and guests. His contributions are missed and we extend our condolences to his family and close friends.

