

89/175

c

89/175
c

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series

Myron S. Nightingale

MAKING WINE IN CALIFORNIA, 1944 - 1987

With an Introduction by
Maynard A. Amerine

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser and Lisa Jacobson
in 1987

Monday, November 28, 1988

Myron Nightingale

Funeral services will be held today for Napa Valley winemaker Myron Nightingale, 73, a dean of California viticulture and enology.

Mr. Nightingale died Friday at St. Helena Hospital.

He was born in McMechen, W.Va., and moved to California in 1929. He was a 1940 graduate of the University of California at Berkeley.

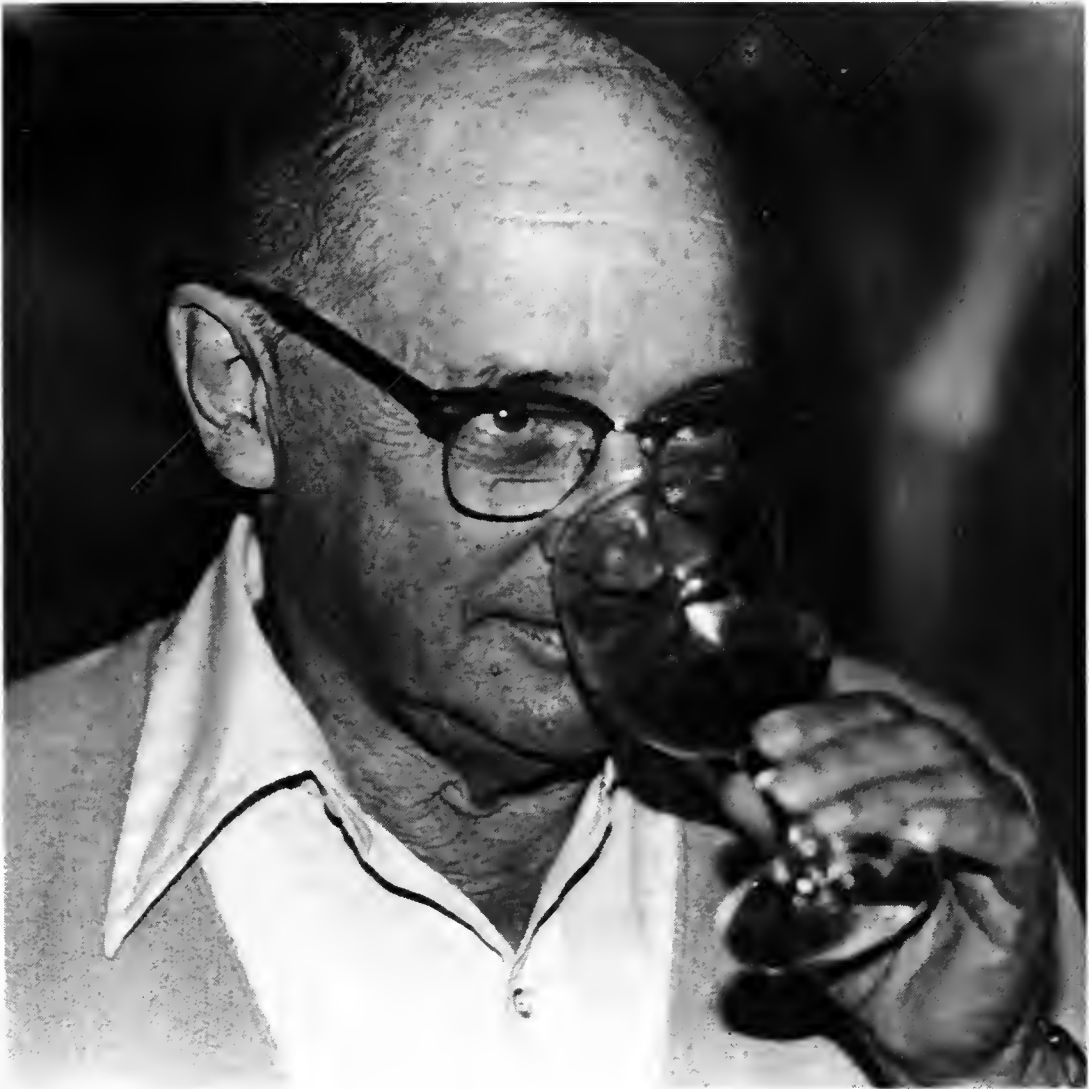
His wine career included jobs with Italian Swiss Colony, Cresta Blanca and Roma before moving to the Napa Valley and becoming winemaster for Beringer Brothers in 1971.

Since 1983, he was winemaster emeritus at the firm's St. Helena winery. He was named a "Living Legend" by the Napa Valley Vintners in 1987.

He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Alice; three sons, Myron Jr. of Red Bluff, Dan of Napa and Barry of Fremont, and two granddaughters.

Today's services are scheduled for 10 a.m. at Morrison Funeral Chapel in St. Helena.

The family prefers donations to the Scholarship Fund of the American Society of Enology and Viticulture, P.O. Box 1855, Davis 95617.



MYRON S. NIGHTINGALE
1985

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a modern research technique involving an interviewee and an informed interviewer in spontaneous conversation. The taped record is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The resulting manuscript is typed in final form, indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley and other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between the University of California and Myron S. Nightingale dated 10 March 1987. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Request for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Regional Oral History Office, 486 Library, University of California, Berkeley 94720, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user. The legal agreement with Myron S. Nightingale requires that he be notified of the request and allowed thirty days in which to respond.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Myron S. Nightingale, "Making Wine in California, 1944 - 1987," an oral history conducted in 1987 by Ruth Teiser and Lisa Jacobson, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1988.

Copy no. 12

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Myron S. Nightingale

PREFACE	i
INTRODUCTION by Maynard A. Amerine	v
INTERVIEW HISTORY	vi
BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES	vii

INTERVIEW WITH MYRON S. NIGHTINGALE

I	MYRON S. NIGHTINGALE	1
	Family Background and Early Education	1
	Work in the C.C.C. Camps	2
	Early Interests	2
	Formative Experiences in the C.C.C. Camps	3
	College Education	4
II	EARLY EXPERIENCE IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY, 1940-1944	5
	V.R. Smith Olive Company	5
	Mission Dry Company	6
	Getting into the Wine Business	7
III	HILGARD HALL, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY	8
	Recollections of Dr. William V. Cruess	8
	The Class of 1940	9
	Recollections of Maynard A. Joslyn	9
	The Food Science Department	10
IV	SHEWAN-JONES, 1944-1949	13
	Recollections of Lee Jones	13
	Brandy Tasting with Mr. Jones	14
	Jones' Leadership in the Wine Institute	15
	Recollections of Elbert M. Brown	15
	Wine, Brandy, and Champagne	16
	Consumer Preferences in Wines	17
	Ownership by National Distillers	19
	National Spirits Companies and the Wine Industry	19
	Marketing Practices during World War II	20
	Responsibilities as Wine Chemist	20
	Educating New Winemakers	21
	The Lodi Wine District	22

V	ITALIAN SWISS COLONY, 1949-53	24
	The Move to Asti	24
	Key Personnel: Paul Heck, Ed Prati, and the Rossis	25
	Wine and Brandy Products	26
	Reflections on National Distillers and the Role of Big Corporations in the Wine Industry	26
	The Potential for Increased Wine Consumption	27
	Bartolomeo Coppo	28
	Enrico Prati's Management Style	29
	Photograph of Ed Rossi, Jr. and Rosalyn Simis	29
	Italian Traditions at Italian Swiss Colony	30
	Underground Tanks	30
VI	SCHENLEY INDUSTRIES, 1953-1971	32
	Joining Cresta Blanca	32
	Schenley's Plans for Cresta Blanca	33
	The Early Days of Schenley's Operations in California	34
	Upgrading the Cresta Blanca Label	35
	Del Loma Plant	35
	Sale of Schenley Properties to Guild	35
VII	BERINGER VINEYARDS, 1971-1983	37
	Decision to Leave Schenley and Join Beringer	37
	Peter Jurgens' Management of Beringer	38
	Bob Brass' Tenure: Acquiring Vineyards for Beringer	39
	Richard L. Maher's Tenure: Capital Improvements	39
	Nestlé's Commitment to Quality	41
	Upgrading Beringer's Cooperage	41
	Vineyard Plantings	42
	Los Hermanos Label	43
	Winemaking in the San Joaquin Valley	44
	Upgrading the Beringer Label	46
	Herman Wente	47
	Innovations in Winemaking	48
	Sulfur Dioxide Theories	49
	Adding Stems during Fermentation	49
	Cold Fermentations	50
	Protein Stabilization Theories	50
	Problems with Ion Exchange Techniques	51
	Problems with Metal Contamination	52
	Grape Varieties	53
	Grafting	54

VIII	DEVELOPMENT OF BOTRYTISED WINE	56
	Necessary Climatic Conditions	57
	Early Laboratory Experiments at Davis	57
	Experiments at Cresta Blanca: Perfecting the Technique	57
	Experiments with Freezing the Spores	59
	<u>Botrytis</u> and Grape Varieties	59
	Natural Incidence of <u>Botrytis</u>	60
	First Volume Production at Cresta Blanca	61
	Grand Cru's Botrytised Gewürtztraminer	62
	Public Relations Efforts	62
IX	THE CALIFORNIA WINE INDUSTRY IN THE 1980s	63
	Nestlé's Involvement in Self-Education about Wines	63
	Nestlé's Investments in Wine Research	63
	Educating Nestlé about California Wines	64
	Knowledge of Winemaking in the Big Corporations	65
	Movement of Wine in Bulk	66
	Maintaining Continuity of Quality	66
	The Wine Industry: A Risky Business	67
X	WORK AS A BERINGER CONSULTANT, 1983-PRESENT	69
	Winemaking Responsibilities	69
	Evaluation of Career with Beringer	70
XI	INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES	72
	Technical Advisory Committee	72
	American Society of Enologists (ASE)	74
	Charter Meeting	74
	Offices Held	75
	Research and Promotional Activities	75
	Name Change to Include Viticulture	76
	ASE Merit Award	77
	Establishing Principles of Quality in Winemaking	77
	TAPE GUIDE	79
APPENDIX --	"Long road for winemaker, but lots of help from wife", article from the <u>Napa Register</u> , April 19, 1984	80
	INDEX	83

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 reinstated as The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series with donations from The Wine Spectator 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; Jack L. Davies, the 1985 chairman of the board of directors of the Wine Institute; Ruth Teiser, series project director; and Marvin R. Shanken, trustee of The Wine Spectator 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

CALIFORNIA WINE INDUSTRY INTERVIEWS

Interviews Completed by 1988

- Leon D. Adams, Revitalizing the California Wine Industry 1974
- Maynard A. Amerine, The University of California and the State's Wine Industry 1971
- Maynard A. Amerine, Wine Bibliographies and Taste Perception Studies 1988
- Philo Biane, Wine Making in Southern California and Recollections of Fruit Industries, Inc. 1972
- John B. Cella, The Cella Family in the California Wine Industry 1986
- Burke H. Critchfield, Carl F. Wente, and Andrew G. Frericks, The California Wine Industry During the Depression 1972
- William V. Cruess, A Half Century of Food and Wine Technology 1967
- William A. Dieppe, Almaden is My Life 1985
- Alfred Fromm, Marketing California Wine and Brandy 1984
- Joseph E. Heitz, Creating a Winery in the Napa Valley 1986
- Maynard A. Joslyn, A Technologist Views the California Wine Industry 1974
- Amandus N. Kasimatis, A Career in California Viticulture 1988
- Horace O. Lanza and Harry Baccigaluppi, California Grape Products and Other Wine Enterprises 1971
- Louis M. Martini and Louis P. Martini, Wine Making in 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
- Norbert C. Mirassou and Edmund A. Mirassou, The Evolution of a Santa Clara Valley Winery 1986
- Robert Mondavi, Creativity in the Wine Industry 1985
- Myron S. Nightingale, Making Wine in California, 1944-1987 1988
- 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
- Arpaxat Setrakian, A. Setrakian, A Leader of the San Joaquin Valley Grape Industry 1977
- Elie C. Skofis, California Wine and Brandy Maker 1988
- André Tchelistcheff, Grapes, Wine, and Ecology 1983
- Brother Timothy, The Christian Brothers as Wine Makers 1974
- Ernest A. Wente, Wine Making in the Livermore Valley 1971
- Albert J. Winkler, Viticultural Research at UC Davis (1921-1971) 1973

INTRODUCTION by Maynard A. Amerine

This interview nicely covers the saga of Myron S. Nightingale from West Virginia to the Napa Valley. The text includes Myron's schooling, life in the C.C.C. camp, college and the University, the food industry and then the wine industry. It ends with his highly successful years at Beringer from 1971 to 1987. There is a chapter on the history of the wines he and his wife, Alice, made from botrytised grapes, which includes details of the technique.

The account indicates that Nightingale has been making a wide variety of types of wines from grapes from Lodi, Asti, Livermore, and the Napa Valley. He is a master of winery organization and administration; he knows what he wants and why.

There are, in addition, some revealing remarks about the men he has been associated with. For example, at his first job in the wine industry he met Lee Jones and Elbert Brown. He paints a sharp picture of Jones, a softer one of Brown. He praises Bartolomeo Coppo, whom he met later at Italian Swiss Colony, and comments wryly on Enrico Prati's management style. He reserves for the boss at Schenley, and for that organization, his most acid comments--undoubtedly fully deserved.

It has a happy ending, though. Nightingale got the job at Beringer and lived happily ever after. In 1987 he was named a "Living Legend" by the Napa Valley Vintners for "his attention to detail, dedication to quality, and vast enological and viticultural experience."

Maynard A. Amerine

December 1987
St. Helena, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY -- Myron S. Nightingale

Myron S. Nightingale has been a well respected and well liked member of the California wine industry since the 1940s. He has worked for large corporate wineries whose influence upon the course of the state's winemaking history has not been fully discussed. As he was a responsible, equable-minded, and observant employee, his account of the experiences in these organizations is of particular value.

Reflected but not spelled out in the interview is the influence Myron Nightingale has had upon many younger people who have worked under him. Ed Sbragia, who succeeded him as winemaker at Beringer, articulated what others have said in other ways: "He didn't just show you, he let you do it. But he was always there to watch and guide ... Myron became my mentor, teacher, and good friend."

The interview sessions were held in Mr. Nightingale's office in the winery at St. Helena on February 24, March 3, and March 10, 1987, with Alice Nightingale participating in that of March 3. Lisa Jacobson joined Ruth Teiser in interviewing.

Ruth Teiser
Interviewer-Editor

13 September 1988
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Myron Stephens Nightingale

Date of birth 5-3-15 Place of birth McMechen, WV.

Father's full name John Daniel Nightingale

Birthplace West Virginia

Occupation Railroad Yardmaster

Mother's full name Eliza Rhea Stephens

Birthplace West Virginia

Occupation House wife

Where did you grow up? West Virginia^(14 yrs) - California

Present community ST. HELENA, CA 94574

Education A. B. Univ. of Calif. Berkeley.

Occupation(s) Plumber
Chemist

Special interests or activities Travel, Fishing

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Alice Adele Nightingale

Date of birth 12/15/19 Place of birth Denison, Texas

Father's full name John Adam Thompson

Birthplace Tennessee

Occupation Cabinet Maker, Grocer

Mother's full name May Adele Alger

Birthplace Grand Rapids, Michigan

Occupation Homemaker

Where did you grow up? Lindsay, California

Present community St. Helena, California

Education High School, Post Graduate

Occupation(s) Homemaker, Microbiologist

Special interests or activities Fishing, traveling, Knitting, Reading,
crossword puzzles.

I MYRON S. NIGHTINGALE

[Interview 1: February 24, 1987] ##

Family Background and Early Education

Teiser: I'd like to begin by asking you where and when you were born.

MSN: I was born back in West Virginia on May 3, 1915, in a little town called McMechen, which is about five or six miles down the river from Wheeling, which at that time was the largest city in West Virginia. It's about sixty miles south of Pittsburgh on the Ohio River. It was a railroad, steel mill, mining area; that was all the industry that was up in the panhandle in the days when I was a kid.

My father worked on the B&O Railroad. He got killed in 1920 working on the railroad, so my mother and I and my sister struggled around for a while. My first trip to California was in 1923 when my mother came out here for a short period of time. In 1925, '26, my mother remarried and in 1929 I came to California with my stepfather and my mother and a half-brother. That's how I got my roots down in California--so I'm almost a native son. [laughter]

We settled in Southern California in Glendale for a very short period of time. Then I went to Venice High School in '29-'30. My stepfather, who had worked in West Virginia for Wheeling Steel Corporation, went to work for the United States Steel Corporation in Torrance. Obviously, that was a job, so we moved to Torrance and that's where I went to high school. Later on, I went to junior college and eventually the University of California.

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

Work in the C.C.C. Camps

MSN: But the Depression days from '29-'36 I really spent in Southern California. I graduated from high school in '33 and in 1934 I went in the government C.C.C. [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps. That was one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's babies and probably one of the best babies he ever had as far as doing something for the country. I was stationed up at Big Bear Lake and Lake Arrowhead and that area for two years.

While I was up there, I got acquainted with a man who was the educational advisor, and he encouraged me to go on to school. Mind you, I got \$30 a month--\$25 a month went home and \$5 I got to keep. But I had a place to sleep and I had something to eat, which in the thirties was a prime concern because it was really right in the middle of the Depression.

When I got out of the C.C.C. camps in 1936, I went to school at Compton Junior College until 1938, then transferred up to Cal at Berkeley in 1938.

Early Interests

Teiser: Did you have any strong interests in your early years--as a young man in high school, say?

MSN: Oh, I guess I was the typical teenager: I was floating all over the block. I don't think I accomplished very much. I didn't know very much what I wanted to do. In fact, at one time, when I first got out of high school, because I had been the editor of a high school newspaper and had helped with advertising on our local paper, I suddenly decided I wanted to be a journalist. So I applied for a scholarship at the University of Southern California. Unfortunately, I guess I wasn't the calibre that they wanted so I gave up on that.

Of course, you have to understand the times. It was really a mixed period. A job was a job, and everybody was competing for jobs. It finally just got to me: there just weren't any jobs. When you get tired of standing in bread lines, well, then, you do the most obvious thing. That's when I jumped into the C.C.C. camps. I thank God I did.

Formative Experiences in the C.C.C. Camps

Teiser: Did your experiences there stand you in good stead in general?

MSN: Oh, I think so. [laughs] In fact, some of the things that happened to me in those camps I put to good use years later. When I went into the camps I worked out on the firebreak for about four or five months. Boy, I thought I was really being persecuted because you got out there behind Lake Arrowhead and out in that desert area toward Barstow and it was pretty, pretty dry and hot. There was a Mexican fellow by the name of Eugene Miranda. I will never forget him. He used to call me "Night." One day he came to me in the barracks. He says, "How'd you like to be a cook?" "Oh," I says, "that's great. That will sure beat that 110° heat out there on that firebreak." Little did I know what I was walking into.

I became an expert at cleaning pots and pans and pretty deep containers and the usual run of stuff. Eventually I worked my way up through the grades in the camps until I became a cook, a mess sergeant. The sequel to the story was that after I got out of camps and went to school I cooked a couple summers for youth camps. I went down to Southern California and cooked at one near Santa Monica, and then I cooked for one year up here. The San Francisco Boy's Club used to have a camp between Willits and Fort Bragg called Camp Marwedel. So I cooked there one summer.

I used that so-called restaurant experience at two or three places when I went to school at Cal. A fry cook didn't make much, but [laughing] I'm telling you, a buck was a buck. I ate at Barrington Hall, which was down on Dwight Way. I think that cost me \$16 a month plus work, and my room was \$10 a month down on Ellsworth, right around the corner. Twenty-six dollars a month, you know, and you really pinch yourself.

Then part of the time when I was in the camps there, I worked as an assistant educational advisor. I think this is one of the things that kept me from getting into a rut. I thought, "Here I am now. When I get out I'll get to do something." I picked up things in the camps that made me become interested in medicine. I thought I would be a great doctor. I thought, "This is what I'm going to do."

College Education

MSN:

I made up my mind when I came back out of the camps. I was going to go to college and I was going to study bacteriology and hopefully get into medicine. As my wife says, I'd have made a heck of a doctor. [laughter] But, anyway, I came back and went into bacteriology and then when I transferred to Cal I continued in that major. With some good advice in my junior year at Cal and with the amount of finances I had available, I was told to forget it in so many words. "Either you may not have brains or you may not have the money--at best it's a big gamble."

Now this is back in the thirties. I really have to thank two men at Cal. One of them was Karl Frederick Meyer, who was the head of the Department of Bacteriology at Berkeley at that time, and also Dr. William Vere Cruess, the late Dr. Cruess, over in the College of Agriculture.

Dr. Meyer, who was probably one of the greatest pathologists there ever was, God bless him, said, "Why don't you consider putting this bacteriology to work in an industrial field?" He said, "That's going to be a big field some day." So I went over and I talked to Dr. Cruess at Hilgard Hall. I don't know how many evenings I talked to Dr. Cruess. And I talked to Dr. [Emil] Mrak over there who was later the chancellor at Davis, and I talked to Dr. Reese Vaughn and Professor George Marsh. All these men were in what was then the Food Science Department at Berkeley. The Food Science Department did everything with foods, including the production of wines.

Finally, in my last year at Cal I thought, "Well, I've got to salvage something out of this thing." I went over and I took all the upper division courses I could find in what was then known as Fruit Products and learned about processing and preservation of all types of fruits and vegetables. Of course, my bacteriology fell right in with that.

II EARLY EXPERIENCE IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY, 1940-1944

V. R. Smith Olive Company

MSN: When I graduated in 1940, I went to work in the gas station for Standard Oil. I graduated in May, and one evening--this was, I guess, about November or December--I got a letter from Dr. Cruess. Dr. Cruess told me that there was an opening for a chemist in the olive plant down in Lindsay.

Teiser: Who headed that plant?

MSN: V. R. Smith of the V. R. Smith Olive Company.

Cruess says, "If you're interested I suggest you get up there." Well, I don't think I had that letter in my hand more than two hours and I was on my way, because this was '40 and jobs were still pretty scarce. That was before the war, of course.

I went up there and got the job at the V. R. Smith Olive Company and I started out at \$110 a month. I won't tell you the hours because they started on Monday morning and when I got through the following Sunday night that's when you got ready to get ready for work on Monday morning. It was one of those fifteen- or sixteen-hour day jobs. When you start processing olives you try to do as much of it in the winter and spring as you can. Then when it gets into the summer, then you really get into problems because of spoilage. My bacteriology really came in handy there. I worked there from 1940 to about '42.

Teiser: Where do olives stand in the war production picture? Where they considered essentials?

MSN: I don't know whether they were essential or not. I know we were putting up an awful lot of government contracts with olives. An awful lot of them. I guess that was one of the reasons.

MSN: I got married in October '41. Maybe the fact that I was married and the fact that I was working on some government contracts kept me out of the draft. I don't know. It caught up with me eventually.

I worked there in the olive plant and, believe me, that was an education in labor. Long hours. More than once I had my shoes figuratively taken off my feet by the lye solutions. [laughs] Once I was so tired I fell into a vat of lye and that was an interesting situation. But that ended pretty well thanks to an ex-Ford mechanic out of Detroit who knew what to do with some acid and water.

I worked there, in the middle of the San Joaquin Valley, until 1942.

Mission Dry Corporation

MSN: Along came 1942 and I got this letter from the Mission Dry Corporation in Los Angeles. They had just built a new plant down on South Soto Street. The Mission Dry Corporation was producing citrus concentrates for the British and American governments in addition to their so-called domestic products: fountain bases for fountain drinks and this sort of stuff. They asked me if I would like a job with the company.

They told me that they had contacted Dr. Cruess at the University of California, who seemed to follow me, thank God. By that time in 1942, I think I was up to \$125 a month at the olive plant.

So, anyway, I went down and I told Alice, my wife, "Boy, you know, if they offer me \$25 or \$50 a month more, I'm going to grab it." Lo and behold, I got down there and there was a woman by the name of Sara Blangsted. She was a Danish pharmacist who was the chief chemist, and she hired me. She says, "Your starting wage will be \$175 a month." Well, I didn't know whether to scrape through the bottom of the floor or tear the chair apart. I was trying to control myself. [laughter]

She says, "However, there's something that you have to understand." I thought, "Well, here we go, Catch 22." She said, "We are on government contracts and it'll be shift work. You, of course, will get paid overtime, but there's going to be a lot of work and you're going to be dealing with a lot of products." I eventually wound up dealing not only with running vitamin assays on concentrates, but I got into essential oils and before it was over I was even fabricating ice creams for the armed services.

MSN: It was good experience because it drew on all this learning that I had picked up at Berkeley in the Fruit Products Division, right down there in the bottom of Hilgard Hall with Professor Cruess and his men. I worked there at Mission Dry for two-and-a-half years until '44. Often, my overtime check there alone was a lot more than my salary, because they were working on this cost-plus business and money was no object. We put in long hours. Sometimes I'd work for 20 hours at a stretch; until you drop off you'd keep going. I had a wife and a baby on the way, so that dollar looked awfully good.

Eventually, Miss Blangsted and I came to a parting of ways. It started over something very, very innocent [laughs] and grew and grew and grew. I just told her that I felt I had to change positions. It all started over whether she had told me I could go to Oregon or not on a trip. I had saved up my money and bought a section in a Pullman car, which was then on the end of the cars. Those were really something. I says, "I'm going to see my father." She says, "Well, something's come up, you can't go." I says, "I asked for this three months ago." Well, being young, I figured to hell with it, I'm going. So I went.

Getting into the Wine Business

MSN: The day before I was supposed to go--and this is a true story--guess who calls me up and wants to know if he can take me to lunch? It was Professor George Marsh, one of my professors at Cal. I says, "Well, sure." (In those days you could get a pretty good lunch in Huntington Park for 60¢.) We went to lunch and right in the middle of the lunch--this is how I got started in the wine business--he says, "I'm down here looking for a couple of food technologists, chemist/bacteriologists. One request came from the Star Fruit Products up in Portland, but the one I'm really looking for is somebody to go to work as a wine chemist up at Lodi." I says, "George, you're looking at him," and that was how I started in the wine business.

Teiser: That's a wonderful story. [laughter] "How to get into the wine business: Start in C.C.C. Camp."

III HILGARD HALL, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Recollections of Dr. William V. Cruess

Teiser: I'd like to ask you to characterize Dr. Cruess.

MSN: Dr. Cruess, to me, was a very quiet individual, a very sincere individual. A very devoted man to the University and to what he was doing with food products. He took a personal interest in everybody. I thought he was a hell of a lecturer. Very few people could ever hear him, though, because every time he started talking he would turn his face to the board and mumble. But he was a really fantastic individual; a very patient individual. He could say little things to you that really made you want to dig in. Lots of times he would have some of his students come back at night if we were processing peaches or something where you just couldn't finish it all at one or two in the afternoon. Such remarks as, "Well, I assume, Nightingale, you're coming back to work this evening, or are you going to sit there and smoke that cigarette?"

It wasn't that he was a caustic individual. He was a very knowledgeable individual when it came to food and the preservation of food. Forty-some years ago, I believe it was, he won the Nicholas Appert award. Appert, of course, was one of the first ones who came up with a method of preserving foods by canning. Dr. Cruess was a recipient of a good many awards and he was really liked by his students. I guess one of the reasons I liked him was he was short, so I could look him straight in the eye when I talked to him.

He was clearly a devoted individual, a stickler for details--at times, repetitious. I can still remember the first time I opened a can of peas and graded them under his inspection, and having him look at me.

He had quite a bit of humor, too. I can remember one time--it maybe wouldn't be very polite in this company, but, anyway--he was talking about some of the wines of France. He was showing us

MSN: some of these wines one afternoon up there in the top of Hilgard Hall on the second or third floor, and he says, "We have some wines here from the Hospice de Beaune." Everybody got very quiet. Here I was a guy out of the C.C.C. camps, two years out of junior college in Compton, who had never seen a bottle of wine. Really, I'd seen a bottle of wine, but didn't know whether the Hospice de Beaune was road or railroad or what it was. In later years, when I visited there, why, I thought about a great many things that Cruess said.

One of the things that happened that afternoon that brought the class down was he says after we'd tasted the wine, "This is supposed to be a very good example of the area." He picked up his glass--and I never will forget it because everybody was so shocked--I can still see him--and he tasted it. He says, "They misnamed it. It is Hospice." [laughter] I don't know whether you get that or not, but anyway I never will forget that. That was something that you didn't expect from Dr. Cruess. I can still see him slamming that glass down on the table.*

The Class of 1940

MSN: For several years a group of us from the fruit products Class of 1940 used to have reunions. There was Charles Crawford, who's the vice-president of Gallo, and, of course, Louis Martini down the road here of Martini winery, myself, and then there was a gentleman by the name of Ze'ev Halperin, and a gentleman by the name of Aram Ohanesian. That was the so-called Class of '40. The last reunion we had was over at El Macero maybe six or seven years ago, at Professor Marsh's house. He still lives over there. Of course, Dr. [Emil] Mrak lives over there also and they're up in their eighties. Dr. [Reese] Vaughn's over there and he's up in his eighties.

Recollections of Maynard A. Joslyn

Teiser: You have had a reunion with Joslyn?

*See also William V. Cruess, A Half Century of Food and Wine Technology, an oral history interview conducted in 1966, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.

MSN: Joslyn, yes, Dr. Maynard Joslyn. In fact, one year we had it at the Silverado Country Club and Alice and I went down and picked up Maynard at the Veterans' Home and brought him back that day.

Teiser: Had he been teaching when you were an undergraduate?

MSN: Yes. My teachers were Maynard Joslyn, Dr. Cruess, Emil Mrak, Professor Marsh, and Dr. Reese Vaughn.

Teiser: Quite a stellar group.

MSN: Oh, yes, indeed. You know the story, of course, of Dr. Joslyn and his work during the war with the Australian government. He did a tremendous amount of work with the armed services. He and Cruess together did an awful lot of work in the formulation of food bars that the soldiers could take in the field and eat at all times. He was very instrumental in that, a very brilliant man. When he used to come into the classroom we used to say, "Here comes Mr. Chem Abstracts," because he could quote Chem Abstracts until you were blue in the face. He was really quite a scholar.

Teiser: I've heard people say that he had the most creative mind in the department and over a period of years was the most original thinker.

MSN: Yes, I would certainly go along with that. The book that he and Maynard Amerine wrote on dessert wine is almost a classic. He was quite a professor. When you got through with his class, you knew you'd been through a class. There weren't any examinations to see how many pine cones there were on the top of a sycamore tree or some stupid thing like that.*

The Food Science Department

MSN: Comparing it with other departments in the university which I had been exposed to on occasion over the years--and that's been a long time now--I really realize now how strong a department that was.

*See also Maynard A. Joslyn, A Technologist Views the California Wine Industry, an oral history interview conducted 1969 and 1973, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1974.

MSN: First of all, it was not only strong in food, but getting back to our own industry and with all due respect to Maynard Amerine and Dr. [Albert J.] Winkler at the University of California at Davis, in my opinion, the rebirthing of the California wine industry after Prohibition occurred right there in Hilgard Hall under the direction of William Vere Cruess.

##

MSN: I mean, he was a man that got in and pulled the heads together and found out problems such as the Fresno mold, which was actually not a mold at all but it was a bacillus that grew in dessert wines because of low sulfur dioxide. Dr. Reese Vaughn worked on that.

Dr. Mrak, for example, selected--I would hesitate to even put a number on it--numerous yeast collections from the vineyards throughout the state. In fact, when I was an undergraduate, a man by the name of Finkelstein from Chicago and I went through and worked with about twenty-five or thirty of these yeasts to see what their alcohol production was, because some of them would produce a little bit of alcohol, some none, and some, like the *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* today, would produce up to twelve or thirteen percent.

These things look like simple things now, but back then we had these spoilage problems, we had fermentation problems. We had cold fermentation and some of the fermentation techniques that were employed in Europe weren't even employed over here. Those had to be brought over and worked in together with ours. Of course, we've developed our own techniques now. But between the spoilage problems and the standardization of wine types in California, we had something to shoot for. A lot of this came right out of the University of California. I'm not saying that there weren't other agencies that didn't contribute, but the heartland--if you'll forgive my A,B,C connotation--came out of the University of California, in Hilgard Hall.

Eventually, in the fifties, that whole department was transferred to Davis.

Teiser: Gradually, I guess?

MSN: Yes. Dr. Cruess never did go up there even though there's a hall named for him up there. Dr. Joslyn never went up there. Of course, Reese Vaughn and George Marsh went to Davis. The expertise that was being developed there at the university is what has propelled the University of California at Davis to its status as one of the finest enology and viticulture schools in the world.

MSN: This all had a budding other than at Davis. I'm sorry that there aren't some Davis people here, because they'd throw me out, but I have to say that because I truly believe it and I think it can be substantiated. I think Charles Crawford would tell you the same. They all worked with Cruess and they all had their wellsprings there, probably.

Cruess, of course, had worked and studied with [Frederic] Bioletti and I don't know who else. My first boss in the wine industry, Elbert Brown, was a student of Cruess's. In fact, he and Cruess and Herman Wente were all classmates at Cal. Cruess eventually became a professor there.

IV SHEWAN-JONES, 1944-1949

Recollections of Lee Jones

Teiser: That brings us to Shewan-Jones.

MSN: Oh, God, yes. That's where I first started out: Shewan-Jones Winery in Lodi.

Lee Jones was the president. I never did meet this Mrs. Shewan. When I went in '44 I think she was completely out of the picture or way in the background. Or maybe she'd passed away by then.

Teiser: She died later.

MSN: Did she? Anyway, Lee Jones had control of it. There was a horse trader if there ever was a horse trader. He was really a sharp individual. He was crippled, a hunchback, had a home in San Francisco. He'd come up to Lodi, had a home up there on Acampo Road, a beautiful place out there. Then he had his own little guest house in which he had a bar underneath. In fact, I stayed there for a few months one time when I was looking for a place. He probably had the largest stockpile of empty Granddad bottles of anybody in the whole United States. [laughter]

I never had much to do with Mr. Jones. He already treated me all right. He'd given me a place to live out there for a while when I was looking for a place and had no place to go. But you never went to Mr. Jones and asked him for a raise. You had to think pretty much what you were going to say and then just go in and blurt it out and then get the hell out as fast as you could. Because if you stood around and talked to him, which I found out, you got talked out of it before you knew what was doing. [laughter]

I told him one time when I went in and I asked for a raise, "Well, you know, I'm not here to trade. I'm no horse trader, but I--". He says, "Well, stop right there. I am a horse trader." I never will forget that.

- Teiser: He had started as a gauger as I understand it.
- MSN: That's right, he was a government gauger. Also, at one time, I understand that he sold rabbits in Lodi from door to door. He was a pretty sharp guy.
- Teiser: Did he know anything about winemaking?
- MSN: I don't think he knew an awful lot about winemaking. Elbert M. Brown, my boss, was the man he depended upon for the wine. Lee liked brandy pretty well; he was a pretty good brandy taster.

Brandy Tasting with Mr. Jones

- MSN: I never will forget my first occasion to sit in on a brandy tasting with Mr. Jones. I didn't sit in; I was running back and forth to the sink, really, while he and Mr. Brown were tasting brandy. It all started out very innocently. Mr. Brown told me one morning, "Mr. Jones is coming to taste brandy. Will you go down the steps"--there were about 25 steps down there--"and bring up that large black rubber mat?" "Well, yes, sure, fine. I'll go down to bring it up." I brought it up--it was rolled around--and I just plunked it in the corner in the lab. Mr. Brown says, "Roll it out there for Mr. Jones." I said, "Where do you want me to lay it down?" Mr. Brown said, "Lay it right down there in front of the bench." So I did. And then Mr. Brown told me, he says, "Now you get about 15 or 20 glasses out here. Here's four or five bottles of brandy. I want you to do some cutting with these in various proofs and set these all up for Mr. Jones."

Well, this was a thrill. I was really going to witness something I'd never seen in my life. So, I did this and Mr. Jones started in with tasting the brandy. I said, "Oh, excuse me, I'll get you a bucket before you spit any." He says, "I don't need any goddamn bucket." [laughter] Why I brought that mat up there was for him to spit on. This mat was about as long as from here to the door [about ten feet]. I'm sorry to tell you these things, but it's a true story. I never will forget that day.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Brown left the lab and they said, "Would you like to join us for lunch?" So I stared at them and I said, "Well, gee--." "Well, don't worry about that, Myron," Mr. Brown says. "You can clean that up when you get back." We got down to get into my car, and I never will forget it because Lee Jones had an old Chrysler New Yorker. That was really the humbug in those days, and I said, "Mr. Brown, I just thought of something. I've got that brandy to cut over there and about forty minutes to get it ready for

MSN: bottling, so I'd better stay here." "Okay, whatever you think's right." I just couldn't face going out to lunch and coming back to clean up that mess. "When we get back." That just killed me right there. But isn't that funny how you think of something like that? [laughter]

Jones' Leadership in the Wine Institute

MSN: Lee Jones was also a powerful political figure in the Wine Institute in those days.

Teiser: So I understand.

MSN: Very powerful.

There was a man, also, in there who was a manager of the Wine Institute at that time by the name of Harry Caddow. He was a very powerful influence, too. I'm not saying they weren't honest people-- don't misunderstand me--I'm just saying that there was a lot of wheeling and dealing going on in those times. Maybe it's very similar to the situation you have today where there's actually a big institute, but probably the power rests in very few hands. Unquote. [laughter]

Lee Jones was very influential and that's the reason he kept his office in San Francisco. He had his home over there and he could be right there in the middle of everybody. The Palace Hotel, as a matter of fact, was practically his second Wine Institute. That's where all the decisions were made.

Recollections of Elbert M. Brown

Teiser: What was Mr. Brown like?

MSN: Brown was a very quiet individual, not one to go screaming or anything like that. He knew how to give you the devil. It took me a long time to understand him. First of all, he was rather shy and one of the reasons he was shy was because he couldn't hear very well. Rather than embarrass himself he just kept back. But he was a very brilliant chemist and a brilliant mathematician. Without a doubt, he was the finest winemaker of his day.

Teiser: Is that right?

MSN: Absolutely, unqualified. He was just terrific and he was respected. You could go up and down the breadth of this state today and ask . about Elbert Brown and they'll tell you about Elbert Brown. Some of the old-timers will remember him. And, of course, he was one of Cruess's favorite boys.

He had a young son, about twenty, twenty-one years old and he was divorced; he lived by himself. He used to come over to Alice's place and mine, where we lived at the winery, and to show you how shy he was, he would walk around our house until we'd see him. He'd never really come up the door and knock unless there was something he really had to get me to do urgently, and then it was never one of those things, you know, where it's a panic. He would come over on Sunday afternoons and it was a big deal for us. "Come on, get your wife and the kids ready. I'll get you out of here and take you for a ride." Well, we'd go up through the Mother Lode country, you know, and he knew it pretty well.

Brown was a man that really taught me champagne production. He taught me brandy production, production of concentrate, production of fine sherries. He had one of the finest sherries there was in the State of California right over there in the yard at Lodi, about 1,500 Spanish butts, which was then quite a chore in the sense of the amount of upkeep that it took to maintain those casks. But it was a pioneering effort. He loved his sherry. He was really a fantastic sherry man. He knew a lot about clarifying. Actually, I almost could say his field was unlimited. He had it by the grassroots.

He did a lot of work with the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearm division of the federal government in those early days. For example, in the addition of caramel in wine, he did an awful lot of work, just tremendous. Probably 90 percent of just the things that he did is forgotten.

Wine, Brandy, and Champagne

Teiser: That was quite a good winery, was it not, physically?

MSN: Yes, it was. It was a good winery. It had a good distillery there, good fermentation facilities for the time. If you look back on it now, though, you'd say, "My God, how did you get by with dirt floors in the fermenting room?"

Teiser: A continuous still?

MSN: Yes, yes. We had a pot still there, too.

Teiser: Oh, you did?

MSN: Oh, yes, we had a big pot still. Brown was a great fan of lees brandy. We put out two brandies, then. We put out one brandy called Lejon, a lees type, and the other one, a straight brandy, was called Hartley Brandy. The Hartley Brandy was named after Lee Jones's son-in-law. Then we also put out a red and a white wine there called Lejon White and Lejon Red. Then there was the Lejon Vermouth. Of course, that eventually went up to Asti and Italian Swiss Colony because the National Distillers, as you know, owned both Asti and Shewan-Jones.

Teiser: What was your champagne label?

MSN: You know, that's been so long ago I don't remember. We put that out under an Italian Swiss Colony label, I think, because it was only in operation down there at Lodi maybe a year or so and then the whole plant was moved to Italian Swiss Colony of Asti. Later on, I think National Distillers took that Chateau Lejon label and put it on a champagne bottle, but it was back east in one of the plants they had up in Ohio. That's where the Hecks [Adolph and Paul Heck] were. They came out here to California, through Italian Swiss Colony, and eventually wound up with their own winery at Korbel.

Consumer Preferences in Wines

Teiser: What about the change in tastes in wine from fortified, sweet wines to table wines: During that period when you were at Shewan-Jones, what were the predominant wines that people drank?

MSN: Port, muscatel, and sherry. That was it. Our biggest production there was the production of sherry, really. We made port, some muscat, but sherry was the big thing there, along with brandy.

Teiser: What residual sugar was it?

MSN: Oh, we had a dry and sweet sherry. If I remember correctly, the dry was around 1 percent. The sweet--I think we had that up around four or five or six Balling. I don't remember exactly. It was standardized for its time at about 19-1/2 percent alcohol, which, of course, was the law then in California. You couldn't make it under 19-1/2 percent. Of course, that was instituted by the pioneers who wanted to make the best use of California Thompson grapes, you know.

Teiser: Thompson Seedless?

MSN: Yes. We finally got the law changed to where we could cut down on the alcohol in sherry and in those dessert wines. But when it happened, and that was years and years and years ago, it was about twenty-five or thirty years too late, because people had gotten tired of those types of wine. Along came the advent of your dry wines in the fifties. That's really when they started catching fire--your dry whites and your dry reds, whether they be a varietal or a non-varietal doesn't matter.

Teiser: Your red and white, what residual sugar were they?

MSN: They were sweet. The so-called red and white we made there--the Chateau Lejon Red and White--were sweet. The white had a residual sugar of 3-1/2 percent. That went primarily into the Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York areas. The clientele demanded that there. The red had some residual sugar in it, but I don't recall right offhand. In fact, I was looking through some of my old notes from Lodi several months ago and I saw where I had made some calculations for the addition of blending wine to bring up the sugar to 3-1/2 percent. I had made some notation that I had overshot it. It was 3.75 instead of 3.50, or something like that.

But we had a good business. In the period '44 through '49, we sold about 350,000 gallons of Chateau Lejon a year--just out of that one plant. That doesn't sound like an awful lot, but it was an awful lot of that type for the winery at that time in history. Because when you went to the store, you bought muscatel and port--that's what you bought. It was primarily a Jewish population in those areas that wanted that sweet wine, Philadelphia and New York. There was a tremendous market. It practically sold itself. There wasn't anybody out there telling you that this wine tastes better than this one, so you'd better buy mine.

Actually, there was very little advertising of wine in those days when you stop to analyze it. I haven't gone back in historical records or anything like that, but I know just from experinece. The only advertising you'd see once in a while might be on a billboard, but as far as really direct advertising on the radio, it was just non-existent.

Teiser: Cresta Blanca, I guess, was the first.

MSN: Yes, they were the ones that came booming out with their C-R-E-S-T-A B-L-A-N-C-A.

The red and the white were sizable pieces of business, but they were very small compared to this sherry and port and muscat.

Teiser: Did you make much concentrate?

MSN: Yes, we didn't have a big modern concentrator like you have today, but we made a lot of concentrate there.

Teiser: Where did it go?

MSN: Primarily in our own products--additional sweetening for the fortified wines like the port, muscatel, the sherries; and it also went in the Chateau Lejon Red and White wines. That's primarily where it went.

Ownership by National Distillers

Teiser: Didn't National Distillers dictate your production?

MSN: As far as actually what had to be produced, I suppose there were policies laid down that I didn't know about, but as far as running a winery was concerned and how we did it, it was all Lee Jones and Brown. I'm sure that National had something [laughs] to say about the economics of it, because they would have their engineers out there. They put in a new distillery while I was there, in '45 or '46. Of course, that all came out of National: they said, "We have to have more facilities, the wine business is going to grow." They didn't know at the time that there were box cars and box cars of wine sitting out there ready to come back that they couldn't shove down people's throats. I never will forget that.

National Spirits Companies and the Wine Industry

Jacobson: Were the national distillers trying to create a demand for any particular kinds of wines by producing them?

MSN: I don't think so, no. You have to understand that what happened was that the National Distillers and Schenley and Seagrams had their alcohol production curtailed quite a bit by the war effort. Ethyl alcohol just wasn't available in the form of hard spirits. They had to have some income, so they went into wines. It was just an outlet for their business, to get something to sell, because they didn't have any whiskey to sell, they didn't have any gin to sell, so they hooked onto wine.

Unfortunately, some of them had to pull back their horns later on and lost their shirts. A lot of that wine came back into the wineries and had to be converted into alcohol. Then we went into all

MSN: these marketing programs following that. The only reason that they ever got into wine was because, "Hey, look, alcohol's going into torpedos and a few other things and you're not going to have it for your whiskey."

Marketing Practices during World War II

Teiser: I remember there was a certain amount of whiskey and gin on the market. Where did it come from? Was it old stocks or was it new production?

MSN: They were limited as to their production. What they did was they came up to you and told you, "Look, if you want a case of whiskey, you're going to have to buy three cases of wine." This is how the market got loaded up. Then there was the backlash of that all into California and into the wineries. It broke a lot of wineries, broke up the economy to beat the devil, but that's what happened. It was all under the table: "You want the whiskey, you've gotta take so many cases of wine." Here's this guy with the warehouse full of cases, regardless of how he was pricing his whiskey, because there was an awful lot of bootlegging going on. I know that for a fact.

In a way it was very damaging to the efforts of the Wine Institute because here, after all these years, we're still not a wine drinking country. You could imagine the effect that that would have trying to get them to drink wine. Wine was associated with one name really in those days in the forties and that was Howard Street. If you read anything about wine, it wasn't anything good about it. "I picked up this wino down on Howard and Such-and-Such and he had an empty bottle of muscatel." This was the kind of "advertising" that we had around the industry.

Responsibilities as Wine Chemist

Teiser: When you were at Shewan-Jones what were your own duties?

MSN: When I was at Shewan-Jones I was a chemist. A chemist not in the sense that I stood in front of a lab desk eight hours a day. A wine chemist had to be out there in the fermenting room when the crush came. He's checking temperatures; he's checking the sugar content of the grapes; he's checking the overall operation of that facility. A wine chemist in the winery where the wine is made was finishing

MSN: that wine: clarifying it, processing--whatever it took to stabilize it so that you would get a bottle at your home or on the shelf that was palatable, that didn't have a bunch of stuff in the bottom; whether it'd be protein or tartrate crystals, which everybody thought was glass at one time--

You're sort of a supervisor, but you had to use your chemical background, because you would get down and supervise things in the plant and you had to run back upstairs and do your analysis. That's how I really learned something about the wine business.

Educating New Winemakers

MSN: I don't think, unfortunately, that some of the students today have had a chance to be exposed to that. The university has tried to promote working-on-the-job programs, but I don't think they have been very effective, so a lot of these people that come out of the universities have good theoretical knowledge but are really handicapped as far as getting any practical knowledge.

For example, we have people out here whose only responsibility with fermentations in the winery is checking the temperatures off the computer morning and night. Well, what do you do when the concentrator runs out of juice at midnight, or the Brix is falling and you want it up higher? What do you do if the grapes are fermenting too hot? You go down there and you take care of it yourself. It's more than telling somebody you'll turn a valve on--that's crazy. So there's a lot of exposure they can get.

##

Some of the students had no conception of what was involved in the addition of wine spirits to grape wine or grape juice for fortifying, although it's a very simple thing. It's just that the poor kids never had a chance for the exposure. I know some of them that have worked for me in the last fifteen or sixteen years--and some other places, too, probably--thought that I was the meanest (pardon me) SOB that God ever created. But I tell you, it almost makes you cry when they leave, or have to leave, for one reason or another and come up to you and say, "Mr. Nighingale, I thank you for everything you've done," because then I really feel that I've accomplished something.

MSN: One of them came up to me, she says, "You were rough. I learned a few words from you, but I'll never forget you." [laughter] One of those gals happens to be Jill Davis who's a winemaker at Buena Vista. I'm very proud of that gal. Doug Davis--he worked with me at Asti--is the executive winemaker now at Sebastiani's. So you get compensated, and I know when those kids went out of here, by God, they knew where the fortifying tank was, and they knew what to do. [laughs] That's what's important. I'm not saying that the ones we have out there don't know anything, because they're all very energetic and most of them in the laboratory today are very interested in what they're doing, for which I thank God. I don't have very much respect for people who come to work at eight and quit at five, because I like to come at nine and quit at three myself. [laughs]

The Lodi Wine District

Teiser: When you were at Shewan-Jones were you drawing mainly upon the Lodi area for your grapes?

MSN: Yes, primarily Lodi.

Teiser: Can you characterize that area at that time?

MSN: I would say that really that area wasn't known for its wine grapes.

Teiser: But didn't it have an old reputation for Zinfandel?

MSN: It had an old reputation for Zinfandel. Some of the finest Zinfandels in the country came out of there and even spread back into the hill country. But what put Lodi on the map was the shipping of Flame Tokay. I can still hear those cars running at night. Some of those grape vines over there--I'm sure you've seen them, I don't think I'm exaggerating--are damn near two feet in diameter. They're huge big things. Have you seen them?

Teiser: No.

MSN: Well, if you're ever over around Lodi and you see some vineyards and the vines look big--big--you can bet those are Tokays.

During the war years, we made an awful lot of wine out of Tokays. Yes, we made concentrate out of them, we made brandy out of them, and we made white wine. When I first asked Mr. Brown, I said, "That isn't a wine grape, Mr. Brown. How do you make wine out of that?" "You just do what I tell you." He told me how much tannin to put in and how much citric acid to put in it and let it go. "It'll come out," he says, "with some alcohol in it."

- MSN: Lodi was always, in my opinion, famous for its Zinfandels. That's probably one of the most outstanding wine varieties of that area. In fact, I'm still buying Lodi Zinfandel there. The first of the White Zinfandels that were produced came from there. But that sleepy little town was primarily a shipping center. There's a lot of packing sheds, you know, along the railroad tracks to Sacramento Street. And the wineries. Roma had a big winery there. Then there was Community [Grape Corporation], which was a co-op, and then East Side [Winery] was a co-op; Bear Creek [Vineyard Association]; Del Rio [Winery]. Those are all now under the Guild [Wineries and Distilleries] who put up that big huge plant over there. I guess that was back in the forties.
- Teiser: The Lodi area must have drawn on a lot of other areas then?
- MSN: Probably a little bit up toward Elk Grove and then down toward Manteca, and out west toward the islands there were grapes, too, of course.

V ITALIAN SWISS COLONY, 1949-1953

The Move to Asti

Teiser: How did you happen to switch to Italian Swiss Colony, or was it switching?

MSN: It was switching all right. In fact, I was told to go. The man who was the chief chemist at Asti unfortunately differed in his opinions with a gentleman who I had always respected very highly and was one of the pioneers of California wine industry. That was Enrico Prati. The chief chemist up there at Asti was relieved of his position by Mr. Prati, who was then supervising both Asti and Shewan-Jones.

It's a very interesting and intriguing story because Enrico Prati and Lee Jones were kind of at loggerheads. When I look back now after all these years, it was really Enrico Prati's desire to close Shewan-Jones down, and he did. In '49 he closed it down, sent everything up to Asti, and that's when I went to Asti.

He came into the plant one day and he called me over in the office, "Mr. Nightingale, you will go to Asti tomorrow." Just like that. So I was on my way to Asti.

Teiser: Did Brown go to Asti?

MSN: No, Brown went to San Francisco.

I went up there the early part of '49. Several months later, Alice moved up there and we lived in Cloverdale. That's how I got started at Asti because, as I said, it was all National Distillers, and Enrico Prati was in power. So I went up there to work on a much bigger winery, with much larger bottling facilities and everything else. I was there until 1953.

Key Personnel: Paul Heck, Ed Prati, and the Rossis

Teiser: Who else was there besides Prati?

MSN: Well, I'll tell you who else was up there. National Distillers also sent up there at that time Paul Heck. Of course, as you know, Paul Heck and his brother [Adolph] bought Korbelt in the fifties. They took over that operation. Ed Prati, that was Enrico's son, was pretty much in charge of Asti when I left there in '53. There was a missing period, I don't know exactly the year, but I know it was somewhere in the early fifties when the Heck brothers went over to Korbelt.* Ed Prati was working at Asti when I went up there in '49. I don't know whether he was a plant superintendent then or just what his title was, but he was one of the bosses. He was in complete charge over Paul Heck when I left. I think that was one of the reasons the Heck brothers left and went out on their own at Korbelt and apparently made a pretty good success out of it.

Teiser: Edmund Rossi was out of it by then?

MSN: Yes, Edmund and Bob.

Teiser: Robert senior had died.

MSN: Ed Rossi, Jr., who still works for the company down at Madera, was working for Mr. Brown in San Francisco in the laboratory. They all had a laboratory down there in the old ISC building with a big red brick front. It was down on Beach Street.

Bob Rossi, Bob Sr.'s son, was down at the Italian Swiss Colony plant at Clovis for a good many years. Of course, he's now with Heublein, San Francisco, I guess. Ed Jr. is still down at Madera. He's getting up there too. He's around sixty.

Yes, the Rossis were a very powerful influence. They still have the old place there at Asti, you know.

Teiser: Yes, I've seen it.

MSN: I used to go up there and listen to the USF basketball games with Ed Rossi, of all the crazy things to do. What do you do in the country, you know?

*1954.

MSN: He's a very sincere, dedicated, religious individual. I always had the highest respect for Ed Rossi, Jr. He's a very clean-cut man, very honest.

Wine and Brandy Products

Teiser: What was Asti doing then at that time?

MSN: Let's put it this way, when the Shewan-Jones plant was divided up in '49, the brandy operation went down to Clovis, Italian Swiss Colony at Clovis.

Teiser: It was Thompson Seedless, I suppose.

MSN: Yes, primarily. Anything in those days that we could get that made wine that we could convert into alcohol. It isn't as sophisticated as now where they actually make special lots of wine for the brandies, which is good, rather than taking all the dregs.

Asti had wines being shipped up there from Clovis, which were the dessert wines, and we did all the bottling up there. All the dry wines were made up there. I don't remember the exact gallonage of those now but they were made up there, bottled up there, and shipped out. They did an awful lot of shipping of wine out of that place to the eastern franchise bottlers. One of them was Gambarelli & Davitto. That was quite a business. Probably four or five cars of wine went out of Asti every other day during the working week, which was pretty good business. I don't know how much money was in it for National Distillers, but a lot of tank cars, as many as ten cars at a crack, went out.

Reflections on National Distillers and the Role of Big Corporations in the Wine Industry

Teiser: Did National Distillers lay a heavy hand on Asti as far as you knew?

MSN: Not as far as the internal operation was concerned. You know, it's funny that you bring that up. This is something that has always upset me because some way, some how, these people out here in the trade, or let's say all of us, got the idea that when these big companies come in, the first thing they do is get their nose in there and it's never going to be the same. "They're going to change things," and it's always for the worse. It's really something that disturbs me, because as far as I'm concerned, the big corporations, with few exceptions, have done nothing but good for the California wine industry.

MSN: I can give you a prime example of a company that came in here that has been very honest, and I thank God that I left the Guild and came to work for Nestlé when the Guild took over Schenley [properties] in '71. It's been a tremendous fortune. We have the finest facilities, we got the finest of equipment, and our business is right on top. We haven't gone through any depressions in our business in this plant. I attribute that to good leadership, good marketing.

I think there's a lot of good that's come out of these big companies. Let me give you another example. It's a family company, but it gets the image of what big can do. Look at Gallo wine company. Probably the leader as far as moderately priced California table wine for years and years and years. Still today putting out a very good product. A company that has probably the largest research department of any winery in the world. A lot of that research has flowed over into the California wine industry. People don't give his boys credit for it.

I'm not saying we're all angels. Don't misunderstand me.

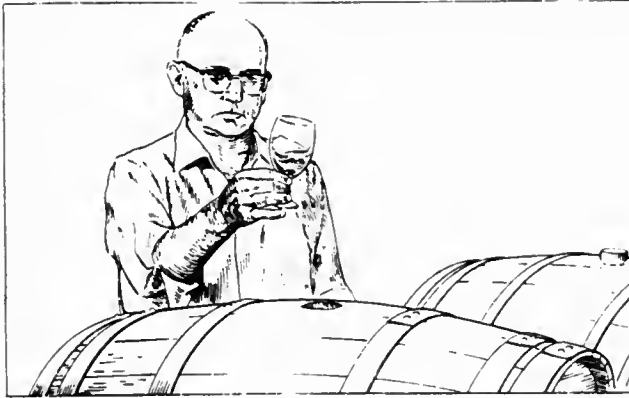
Teiser: What about that great 1946 debacle while you were at Shewan-Jones? Wasn't that caused by Lewis R. Rosenstiel?

MSN: Well, I think a lot of that probably was not only caused by Mr. Rosenstiel, but maybe a few other people in some other places, too. Rosenstiel, of course you know, was the big Schenley guy, and Seton Porter was the big man for National Distillers then. I really couldn't say, but I feel that probably a lot of that deluge of wine that came back was a result of mismanagement by the industry itself, aided and abetted by some of these distillers. If you order two cases of whiskey and I tell you, "Okay, you put 45 cases of wine on that order." You call me up and you say, "What am I supposed to do with this?" "Sell it if you want any more whiskey." So I think he and a few others aided and abetted these things.

The Potential for Increased Wine Consumption

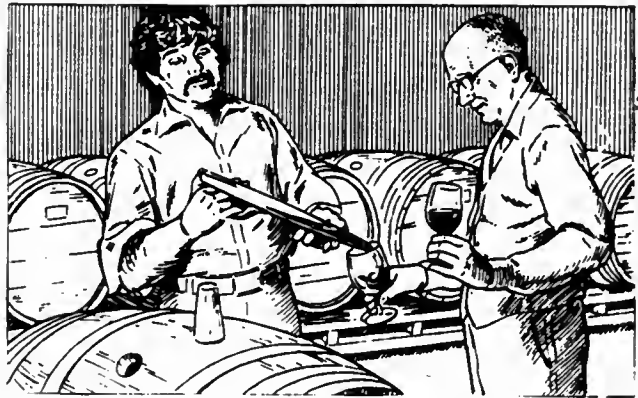
MSN: You know, this industry kind of floats on a cloud in a way. If you've got the money, fine, "Okay, let's buy it." But it's something you don't have to have to live by. Maybe I do because this is my income, but people are going to buy that loaf of bread before they do the wine. You can't choke it down their throats.

People talk about the increase in the use of wine. Well, I'm happy to see people drinking a lot of wine, particularly Beringer. [laughs] I'm very happy about that and I stop to think of the



Winemaster Myron Nightingale evaluates a Fume Blanc sample aged in a French Limousin oak.

Ed Sbragia and Myron sampling Pinot Noir.



Myron and Alice Nightingale hand inspect each cluster of Semillon grapes for the 1980 Nightingale.

MSN: potential that's available out there in the field. Look at the areas in the Bible belt that never have been touched as far as wine is concerned. I wouldn't want to choke it down anybody's throat, don't get me wrong, but as far as wine consumption going up--compare it with the soft drink business. We can say, "Well, about thirty years ago it was about 1.8 and it's now 2.2 gallons per capita."* Then I tell you, "Well, that's fine. Yes, that's right. We have got increased wine consumption." But, let's take out all these wine coolers and a few other things and see what we've got.

I often describe it at seminars--if you'll pardon my language--as the greatest crapshoot in the world. Oh, yes. It takes a lot of guts, a lot of foresight, and a lot of gambles, but it's the most fascinating business, and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

Bartolomeo Coppo

Teiser: There's one other person at Italian Swiss Colony whose name I've seen mentioned: Coppo.

MSN: Oh, B. Coppo, Bartolomeo Coppo. I first got acquainted with Mr. Coppo in 1949, when I went to Asti. He had two sons working for him up there: one in the production department, Louis, and Joe worked over in the bottling part.

I don't know an awful lot about Italian culture, but I can tell you one thing, Mr. B. Coppo--as we call him, Mr. B.--was probably one of the finest gentlemen I ever met in my life. I've met a lot of nice people. He was not only a perfect gentleman, he was a very, very good winemaker. His specialty, of course, was dry wines and, I guess, his real expertise lay in the field of red wine. The things that I picked up on red wines from him, table wines, you won't find in any textbooks because it was hand-to-mouth and you either absorbed it or you didn't absorb it.

I don't know how long he was there. When I went there in '49, Mr. Coppo must have been pretty close to 70. He was very active. You know what they used to do? This came down from Prati. Every morning they used to bring out the books of all the cellar operations--these big ledgers, you know, two-by-three feet--and they'd lay three or four of them out on the production desk in the production department where they run all the cellar movements. Those would come out every morning, and every night here would be Mr. Coppo leading the path back to the safe down the hall to put those books back in. All written in beautiful script, the most beautiful handwriting you ever saw in your life. Some of it some of

*Wine Institute statistics. M.S.N.

MSN: us might not have been able to read, but I think after a little study you could. I can still see that writing: "It goes from this tank to this tank to this tank." It wasn't like a cardex or a computer system.

Mr. Coppo was a hardworking man. He was there day and night. Really, I think some of those people that worked there in those days had the fear of God beat into them, figuratively. Enrico Prati was a fine gentleman, but he was no slouch when it came to giving orders. I think B. Coppo was himself in the original Italian Swiss Colony colony up there. A lot of these Italian immigrants got sent up to Asti, where they have their bunkhouses, work, families.

Enrico Prati's Management Style

Teiser: It must have been an interesting place to work.

MSN: Oh, I'm telling you some of the funniest things in my life happened up there, honest to God, because these people were so used to taking orders. There was only one man around that place who gave orders. That was Enrico Prati. If Mr. Prati says, "Everybody gets down on their knees," everybody got down on their knees. I've seen those guys when he'd stand in front of them and they'd just stand there and shake. I'm not sure if that's good or bad; don't misunderstand me. But it was a hangover from another era, an era that we couldn't even feel.

Teiser: We have an interesting description of it earlier than that, from Antonio Perelli-Minetti when he first came to this country.*

Photograph of Ed Rossi, Jr. and Rosie Simis

Teiser: I think this is a good place to stop today, but let me show you this picture. That was probably later than your time; was it?

*Antonio Perelli-Minetti, A Life in Wine Making, an oral history interview conducted 1969, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1975.

MSN: Yes. That's Ed Rossi, Jr.? Oh, my God, there's Rosie. This gal here [points to picture] was Rosalyn. This girl is Portuguese, Her name was Simis. Whenever I used to get a little bit upset with anything or wanted to kid Rosie, either way, I always gave her her full name, "Rosalyn Alice Silvera Simis." Yes, that's Rosie Simis; that's Ed Rossi, Jr., and those other two, I don't know who they are. Oh, I haven't seen Rosie for about four or five years. I don't think she's changed an awful lot since then. This is a comparatively late photo, up at Asti I'm sure.

Italian Traditions at Italian Swiss Colony

[Interview 2: March 3, 1987]##

Teiser: I'm very glad to have your recollections of Italian Swiss Colony, because they fill in a period of its history that we didn't have on the record.

MSN: Yes, that was quite a place. The Colony, in those days, was almost a world apart. It was its own little settlement. There was still a lot of the real strong Italian tradition there. The old [Andrea] Sbarboro place down over the railroad tracks along the riverhead had what they call a villa. It was a Pompeii villa-type of thing, if you want to call it that. In fact, I stayed in it one night. I felt like that was the first time I had slept in a deep freeze, but I stayed there one night. What a cool place that was! But, anyway, it was a very unique place. I don't know whether it's still standing or not.

Teiser: Yes, it is.

MSN: Is it? I haven't been down in the Colony there in years. I guess I was over there maybe nine years ago, looking for someplace to store wine. We ran out of space. Brought back a lot of memories.

Underground Tanks

Teiser: They weren't using that huge tank when you were there, were they?

MSN: Oh, yes. That was really something. You had to go back through a long tunnel to get back to the tanks. They were underground, insulated by good Mother Earth. There were two or three tanks back



Staff tasting as Asti, early 1960's. Left to right: Edmund A. Rossi, Jr., Peter Swanston, Rosalyn Simis, George Kay, and Minoro Okino.

MSN: there, but I forget what the size was now. I think it was somewhere around a hundred thousand gallons or a hundred and fifty thousand.*

Teiser: It was a single one before the earthquake, I think.

MSN: Yes, that's right. The only way to get to it was through this tunnel. You could go down through the top, but to get wine out of it to clean it, you had to go through this long, windy tunnel. I remember very distinctly the first time I went through that, because they kept it white-washed. Even as short as I am, I had to bend over, and if you weren't careful you hit the sides. I came out of there looking like I'd been hit by a white-wash brush once in a while. The tank was all concrete. It was very difficult to keep clean.

[brief interruption]

Teiser: Ed Rossi, Jr. told me that he and his cousin used to play in that tunnel when they were kids, and they'd scare each other. They'd tell each other about ghosts.

MSN: Yes, Ed did all sorts of things. They even had dances back in those tanks one time.**

Teiser: Yes, I have a picture with a band and everything.

*It held 500,000 gallons when built in 1898, but after the earthquake of 1906 it was rebuilt and divided into three sections with a total capacity of a little more than 300,000 gallons.

**To celebrate the completion of the original tank.

VI SCHENLEY INDUSTRIES, 1953-1971

Joining Cresta Blanca

Teiser: So in '53 you went to Schenley.

MSN: Yes, in 1953 I went down to Schenley. Schenley came to me and told me that they wanted a winemaker down at Cresta Blanca. They wanted to know if I was interested. You better believe I was interested for \$125 more a month, but in addition to that--although it had its advantages and disadvantages--they gave me a nice place on the property, which was furnished. Pretty nice house: all hardwood floors, which was pretty good for that time. I had three sons and had two bedrooms; the company later on even built on another bedroom, a big huge bedroom, and a bathroom. But, anyway, I went down there and went to work in 1953.

Teiser: How did Schenley find you? How do you think they knew about your expertise?

MSN: I don't know. I guess I was quite active on the Wine Institute and Technical Advisory Committee. Maybe I was the only one they could find. I don't know. [laughs]

But anyway, they came to me, and that's a nice position to be in. We were living in Cloverdale in a rented place Alice and I got when I moved up there from Lodi. I hated to leave because we'd put a lot of work into the place that we were renting from an ex-San Francisco business lady by the name of R. H. Jones. She had a notary public office down on Washington Street. From the beginning of the 1900s, her husband, who was much older than her, was in the immigration business. His particular field was the Chinese. I don't know how much of it was legal and how much of it was illegal, but suffice it to say when they did bring in certain parties, Asians, why she would go to the immigration office and make sure they were well provided with things and arrange all the papers. I'm sure they had a lot of connections in Chinatown. So she was a very astute businesswoman.

MSN: She bought this place and her husband passed away in the thirties. Very old place. In fact, I still remember pulling some of the nails out of the boards on it. There were two houses with a lot separating them and they had these old square nails in them, in the wood. But, anyway, she kind of took a liking to Alice and me, so we put a lot of personal effort into the place. There was this lot between the houses and we landscaped it, but she helped us. She put in a little pool so the kids could wade, since it gets awful hot up there. Well, that was pretty nice to have a huge, big yard all in grass, you know, right there in Cloverdale.

But finally we left and we went down to Schenley, money and a chance at a better position as a winemaker at Cresta Blanca [at Livermore]. I stayed there from '53 until '62, when I transferred to Fresno.

Schenley's Plans for Cresta Blanca

Teisier: What plans did Schenley have for Cresta Blanca when you went there?

MSN: It was the same as all the other big distillers: they were looking for a source of income other than pure distilled spirits. National Distillers had long since gone into petrochemicals. So this thing with Schenley, I think, was just a hangover from the war effort, because Schenley had plants up at Elk Grove. At one time they owned this beautiful building up the road here, Greystone.

Teiser: What kind of wines did they want to make at Cresta Blanca?

MSN: I'll tell you, Cresta Blanca at one time had probably the finest reputation for some of the white wines, right alongside of Wente. Through a series of political maneuvers, family maneuvers et cetera, even before Schenley got in there, there was some upheaval in the company. Then Schenley took it over--a whiskey company, in fact. As far as putting out real premium wines, they said they wanted to do it, but I got really very little support from them. Everything was a struggle there, everything was a pair-of-pliers-and-a-piece-of-bailing-wire effort.

Rosenstiel, sitting back there in New York City and maybe justly so because after all it was his money and his business, certainly saw more profit in \$5 Ancient Age going down the bottling line at 140 bottles a minute, than a bottle of wine which was \$1.69 or \$1.70 if it was Cresta Blanca or maybe \$.80 or \$.85 if it was Roma--because they owned Roma also.

MSN: The Schenley organization had a lot of good things about it, but as far as going ahead in the business, particularly the wine business, their heart just wasn't there. I don't think it ever was there because for every dollar that was put out for capital expenditures by Schenley in those days, as far as I'm concerned, probably two cents of that dollar went in the wine business; the rest of it was in the distilled spirits section.

Just to show you their philosophy and their long-term projections, which as far as the wine industry was concerned were practically nil, when they sold out the [wine] business in '71 to Guild, was just when the wine business was starting to go uphill.

The Early Days of Schenley's Operations in California

Teiser: Did you ever know Lucien Johnson, the former owner?

MSN: No, I never did know him. Leon Adams has talked to me about him quite a bit.

The early history there of that operation I don't know.

Teiser: There was, I assume, nothing left of the Wetmore tradition then, or very little, by the time you got there?

MSN: By the time I got there the only thing that was left of the Wetmore was one of the Wetmores was buried out on a hill behind the winery there. I can't remember which of the Wetmores it was now.

I remember because right down on the rock there used to be a little geranium that'd come up every spring; then it didn't get water, so it went right back down.

But to put it mildly, Schenley bastardized that label because, first of all, I understand during the war years they were bringing in wine from Elk Grove, shooting it in one door and bottling it and shooting it out the other door. So there wasn't any long-term planning. I'm not saying that some of the same kind of stuff didn't go on in the wine business, because I'm sure it did, but that was just the way it was.

Upgrading the Cresta Blanca Label

MSN: When I went to Cresta Blanca it was all explained to me, "We're going to have a rebirth of this place." I worked very hard there and I did, I feel, bring the label up, and we got recognition of the label, particularly at the California State Fair. California started to realize, and the Wente Brothers and the Concannon winery that's down there, that, "Hey, Cresta Blanca's coming alive out there in the Arroyo." I can get very enthusiastic about it, but it was always a sort of empty-feeling enthusiasm. In other words, am I riding a bubble here, and when's it going to burst? Well, after 18 years with them it really burst on me, because for my faithful service and the efforts that I put forth, I was given three weeks vacation pay and terminated when the Guild took over in 1971.

That's a very long story. The Guild had offered me a position when they took it over. I was, of course, down at Fresno at Schenley headquarters. I had been transferred down there in 1962 from Cresta Blanca at Livermore. So I worked down there as chief inventory controller of the wines of the Roma plant and, of course, I had [responsibility for] the Cresta Blanca, Livermore winery and the Cresta Blanca down at Delano, plus Kingsburg.

Delano Plant

Teiser: What were they making at Delano?

MSN: When I went down there in '62 we were making dry reds, dry whites, ports, sherries, white port. The dry whites and dry reds were, of course, non-varietal. The whites were made out of anything we got our hands on--if you want to be honest about it, probably 80 or 85 percent Thompson Seedless. They jokingly used to say that the Thompson Seedless was the great Johannisberg Riesling of the San Joaquin Valley. [laughter]

There was a fellow by the name of Chet Steinhauer, though, that ran a good ship. He has since now retired. He went to work for the Guild in his retirement. He was a good man and he really tried to do things down there in Delano as far as the dry wine making was concerned.

Sale of Schenley Properties to Guild

Teiser: Who has that plant now?

MSN: The Guild owns that plant. I think the Guild still owns it. I think they were trying to sell it. I don't know whether they've sold in the last year or two or not, but it's closed down completely now. They put a lot of money in it. The Guild had some ideas about what they were going to do with these plants, but after all they were working on the farmer's money and maybe he had something to say about that, too. Then, I guess, there was some question about the leadership, without going into names. The leader of the Guild at the time resigned or departed that organization several years ago, so they have struggled along. But as far as their relative position to somebody like Gallo, or even Almadén, it is very small. I don't know just what their ranking is now, but they're pretty far down the list. It's a co-op; they were beset by money problems. I just thank God that I made the decision to go to Beringer.

VII BERINGER VINEYARDS, 1971-1983

Decision to Leave Schenley and Join Beringer

MSN: It was probably one of the smartest decisions that I ever made in my life as far as this crazy business is concerned. I just felt from a philosophical standpoint that at age 56, which I was then, I thought to myself, "What is there in this wine business? Do I want to stay in this wine business?" "Yes, I want to stay in it, because I have to stay in it. That's the only thing I really know now." But there I was stewing about what was going to happen, because I was caught by what Schenley was telling me was going to happen if I didn't go to work for the Guild. They didn't tell me that until the last minute, and then they told me, "Well, since you've really decided not to go to work for the Guild, why, we have decided to keep you on here," after they had already released me.

Well, I could see through the great Schenley organization. I'd been with them eighteen years. I figured no way!

Teiser: Would they have put you in the Fresno distillery that they kept?

MSN: Yes, they would have put me in the distillery making wines for the Dubonnet product and maybe wines for some of the special whiskeys for blending. But I figured after they had made good use of me then I would have been out in the street somewhere, probably.

Along that line, that plant subsequently was closed down as an operation. Even Schenley closed it out. They divided Roma up with the Guild and they kept a portion of that operation as their own. That's since been shut down.

They finally called me in after they'd told me this and this and this, and they said, "Well, Mr. Nightingale, if you don't stay with us, why, there'll be no severance pay,"--they'd promised me about \$10,000 severance pay--"and you get your standard three weeks

MSN: vacation! That's it." Just two or three days before that, Harry Serlis--who was the president of the Wine Institute at the time, a very knowledgeable wine man from my book, at least on marketing--called me up in Fresno one afternoon and he said, "Myron, how would you like to go up to the Napa Valley?" Well, it almost took me back to the day that I went to work for Mission Dry when I was shaking so hard in my shoes that I didn't know whether to tell him, "Yes, I'll take that," or what! I said, "Yes, I'm definitely interested."

After about two or three meetings with the Nestlé people at the Clift Hotel in San Francisco, thanks to Harry Serlis, I came to work up here at Beringer.

Peter Jurgens's Management of Beringer

MSN: Peter Jurgens, who was the ex-president of Almadén vineyards, quite a wine promoter, was the president then. He had just come to work for Nestlé.

Teiser: Nestlé had just bought Beringer?

MSN: Yes, they had bought it in '70. I think the sale was actually consummated in January of '71.

Teiser: January 11.

MSN: Is that when it was? Because I came to work here in March. Peter Jurgens is still alive, and I think he lives down in San Francisco, out there in the Marina somewhere.

Teiser: Jurgens is, yes. I've talked to him on the phone in recent years.

MSN: What a guy! God.

I came up here under him as a winemaker and he really gave me a free hand. I guess you could put it that way, because after working with Schenley for 18 years--where you never knew which flag was going to go up and when you were needed whether it was five o'clock at night or seven in the morning or three o'clock in the afternoon or four in the morning when Mr. Rosenstiel rolled out of bed and it was seven o'clock back there and he wanted some answers--it took me a while to get adjusted to this place.

But I think, with all due respect to Peter, most of his objectives here at Beringer were very short range. I feel that Nestlé was looking for a long-term position, particularly when I

MSN: look back now to when Peter resigned and a gentleman by the name of Bob Bras, from Nestlé, came in here as the president. He's now since passed away, but he is the man that put Taster's Choice coffee on the market for Nestlé.

Bob Bras's Tenure: Acquiring Vineyards for Beringer

MSN: He didn't know anything about the wine business, but he was a fairly good marketing man; he had some crazy ideas because he had some money behind him. And he got a few things done. We bought grapes. He was a great guy to buy grapes. Everybody thought he was nuts at the time, but he bought a lot of vineyards. See, this place only had about 600 acres of vineyards when I came here. Bob Bras got in and he says, "We're going to have a winery in the years to come. We're going to need grapes and we're going to have to have a good plant to process them in." So to that extent he was very active in acquiring ground. We acquired ground all over the Napa Valley here. We have Knight's Valley, but we acquired more up there. We started out here with somewhere in the neighborhood of 600 acres. Now you're looking at somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 acres. Now there's a few hundred of that that has been ripped out--it's going to be replanted--so you're looking at, conservatively, 2,400, 2,500 acres that are producing right now. That was quite a capital investment in itself, keeping in mind that the company paid about \$6 or \$9 million for the place when they bought it.

But what they bought here was a label that they thought could be revived and that was primarily it.

Richard L. Maher's Tenure: Capital Improvements

MSN: Getting back to management, after Bob Bras, of course, Dick [Richard L.] Maher came in here. He was an ex-ISC and Gallo man, an extremely sharp marketing man. He really went to bat for me. He went to bat for Beringer, period. He was the man who was responsible for the start of the rebuilding of the Beringer vineyard. All that was here was the buildings across the road. Then they had the plant down at Carneros.

Teiser: When was that built, the Carneros plant?

MSN: Oh, God, I don't know. It was a very old place. Between the two plants, I guess there was probably six, seven hundred thousand gallons of cooperage. It was all old cooperage: old tanks, concrete fermenters. I can tell you, I was a very sick individual for a few weeks after I'd seen it for the first time.

Teiser: All concrete fermenters that late?

MSN: Oh, sure.

Teiser: No stainless steel?

MSN: No, we didn't have any stainless steel fermenters.

Teiser: Well, I'll be darned.

MSN: I'll stand corrected, but I think you'll find concrete fermenters around here in the valley today, right down the road.

Nestlé poured a lot of money in here, that is quite evident. I don't know how many millions they must have in here now, when you start thinking of the purchase of over 2,000 acres in Napa Valley land.

Teiser: At a time when it was high.

MSN: Oh! Just to have the interest for that for two months, you or I could go around the world a few times.

Then the buildings--I don't know how many millions we've got tied into this installation, and they're going to put up a new office building over there near the barn. That warehouse wasn't here. None of this was here when I came here.

Teiser: What's the capacity now?

MSN: You're probably looking at around 2.9 million, I guess. Somewhere close to that. We bought Souverain, too, in the meantime last year. So we have cooperage over there. Of course, that will remain a separate operation as far as we can make it, with separate marketing and that sort of thing.

Dick Maher did a lot of good things here for us. He got Nestlé interested in doing things, and I think how he got them interested was pointing out to them the future of the wine business and what was possible here in this place. Of course, Nestlé didn't get that "mountain of gold" over there in Vevey, Switzerland, by poor business practices. You can imagine that they are rather astute business people.

Nestlé's Commitment to Quality##

MSN: Nestlé has a commitment here, and I think that commitment can be summarized in a sentence or two. It's a long-range program, and riding right on the wave of it is its quality. That's the reason for the equipment that we've been able to get. I mean, you can have equipment and you can make wine, but you've gotta have somebody behind you interested in selling that wine, too. You've gotta move the product. That is the bottom line.

We've been fortunate in that we have moved the wine. We've had strong market support started by Dick Maher, now carried on by a man by the name of James Tonjum, who, as far as I'm concerned, is one of the top marketing men in the United States. Dick Maher really got us airborne, to put it mildly. He was the one who was responsible for the improvement of the grounds all around the Rhine House over there as you see it today. He's the man who was responsible for a lot of different things, including the vineyards. This man that succeeded him three years ago, Mike [F. Michael] Moone, I think is even going to be better, for he is really conscious, for one thing, of employee needs and desires. He's a man that says, "I want everybody on my team," and really backs up those words--and he's backed them up in a good many different ways, I can assure you, at least for me.

I guess you have to understand. Somebody could give you a piece of bailing wire and a pair of pliers and tell you to go out and fix a barrel. But somebody could give you a brand new oak barrel and say, "Just tighten the hoops up and it'll work perfect." There's an awful difference.

Upgrading Beringer's Cooperage

MSN: We have a brand new building we're just putting up out here now. It holds twenty thousand French barrels. To start off with, the barrels alone are about \$300 apiece (but I think the market price is \$350- or \$360 by the time you get the racks and the whole works in position). Then there is the building itself. I don't know what that building costs. It's a modified Butler-type building, but it still costs money.

Teiser: When you ship that many barrels from France, do they send people to assemble them?

MSN: We have got most of them [shipped] assembled. Those that have not been assembled that come in, we've had other cooperage outfits, their agents, assemble them here--depending on who we bought them from. But we brought in an awful lot of them assembled already, at least when we first started.

Teiser: Does it work as well that way as having them put together here?

MSN: Yes, yes. In my opinion it does, yes.

Teiser: Did you specify the oak?

MSN: Yes.

Teiser: What is this last batch, or is it one kind?

MSN: We switch around from Limousin to Nevers oak. We've had Czechoslovakian, yes. Probably right now I would say that maybe it's fifty-fifty Limousin-Nevers. We may be leaning a little more toward the Limousin. We have a few American oak barrels that we have used on red wine, but that is in a very small minority. We've been very cautious about that.

You know, the French oak and the American oak are two different animals. Anybody can put oak in the wine. All you have to do is go down here to the lumber yard and get some oak powder and throw it in. In American oak, in my opinion, you get a stronger oak character. But that isn't really what you want.

Teiser: Do you have any redwood left?

MSN: Yes, we have some redwood left on the other side. We store in that. We have two brands. We have a Beringer brand and a Los Hermanos brand. Most of that redwood, with a few exceptions, is used for the Los Hermanos brand. I cleaned out most of the redwood so there might be in the whole winery now twenty, twenty-five usable redwood tanks, and that's nothing.

Vineyard Plantings

Teiser: That brings us to the subject of your own acreage: it supplies part, but, I suppose, not all of your requirements.

MSN: Our vineyards provide us with most of the grapes we need such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chenin blanc. The one variety that we buy widely is Zinfandel, and this is due

MSN: to the great demand for White Zinfandel. Until this industry development, the demand for Zinfandel was very low. If somebody had said, "Go out and plant Zinfandel" five or six years ago, you would have said, "You're crazier than hell. Why should I plant Zinfandel when everybody's drinking white wine?" And logically so. But here we go from ground zero to a million cases in a couple of years (at Beringer). One never knows what the good old Americans will jump on next.

In the categories of Chardonnay and Cabernet, we buy maybe 20 percent of our grapes. That's just simply been because of a market demand.

Teiser: This is for the Beringer labels?

MSN: Yes. Then for the White Zinfandel, probably 90 percent or better of those are bought, because you have to keep up with the volume. You take a million cases of White Zinfandel, that's two-and-a-half million gallons.

Los Hermanos Label

MSN: The Los Hermanos, that's all San Joaquin Valley grapes. No North Coast wines go in there except those that are just not up to par for Beringer. For example, there may be certain varieties that don't fit into a Chardonnay label because of their quality, but you might use a portion in chablis. Things do happen to wine just like they happen to individual humans. You may have something that isn't going to fit in those two categories, so it goes down another step in the Los Hermanos, which is a jug wine, bulk wine mover. But that percentage is really very small.

In all practical purposes, those grapes--all the Zinfandel, all other reds, and the whites--involve Chenin blanc and French Colombard from the San Joaquin Valley, and--I'll be honest with you--Thompson Seedless. There are probably a lot of people in this state who will tell you, "We never put Seedless grapes in our wine," but that's neither here nor there.

Teiser: You don't believe them?

MSN: Well, I know those Thompsons have to go somewhere. Maybe that man in the valley is telling the truth when he says, "We never use Thompsons in our wine," but that's his business. But the Thompson, as you well know, has been the backbone in this wine business. It's been a business barometer in the wine industry. You've heard all

MSN: about these raisin programs, and look what you've got on TV now with the little raisin boys dancing. I'm sure you've seen that ad. You never saw anything like that years ago. We had surpluses and they could export them into foreign countries. The market's no longer there.

But the grapes for the Los Hermanos label are harvested and crushed in the valley. Delicato Vineyards in Manteca does the work for us. Sierra Wine Company down the valley does business, and so does Bronco Wine Company. The wines are made to specifications that I lay out, and subject to approval before we give them the final check. There's a lot of wine in that market down there for sale.

There are certain things that we do with the fruit. For example, we use arrested fermentation. We stop the fermentation with residual sugar. Some of those wines, like some of the muscats that we use for sweetening, have to be made right during the crush. I mean, you just can't go out after the season and buy that kind of stuff. It's the same way with the White Zinfandel. I specify that those grapes shall be crushed and handled the same as Beringer. In other words, they will be cold-fermented like a white grape to maintain as much of the fruit or the chewing gum, candy-like odor as some people call it. I think the public is entitled to consideration; it's a big mover, and you try to make the best product you can. There's no reason to cheapen a product quality-wise simply because the price is lower by a dollar or so.

All those Los Hermanos wines are made down there and maybe blended down there or blended here. Sometimes I bring them in here, depending on the lot. I might call in Bronco, or I may call in Delicato and make a blend--whatever the situation may be.

Teiser: Delicato is--?

MSN: They're over in Manteca--a very fine operation; very quality-minded people over there trying to do a job.

Winemaking in the San Joaquin Valley

MSN: Over the years there's been a lot of this North Coast theory on fermentations and the handling of grapes that has filtered down into the San Joaquin Valley, so to speak. They have cold fermentations down there now and they have stainless steel. Some of them even have oak barrels, if they want to do that. I'm sure Mr. Gallo has a lot of oak down there.

Teiser: He does, indeed, in the new cellar.

MSN: But, anyway, those practices are put into practice down there, and the public is the recipient of all the benefits. Thank goodness. I mean, it isn't a matter of throwing the grapes in the tank anymore and saying, "Here it is. Drink it," and all because Ruth Teiser knows what she likes and what she does not like. You didn't have that in the forties: wine was wine.

Upgrading the Beringer Label

Teiser: Let me ask you about your part in upgrading the wines and the image of Beringer.

MSN: I'll tell you, when I came here, this place had been allowed to run down for some reason or another. It might have been the people making the wine. I have a hunch a lot of it was due to not having the money to do things; the Beringers were pretty well strapped. I have to say that out of respect for the people. But it was a family business, so it was, in plain words, kind of let go to hell.

When Nestlé bought this place in '71, all they really bought was a label and those six hundred acres of vineyard, because the wines in the cooperage were in pretty sad shape. In fact, in the first six months I was here, I sold over 150,000 gallons of wine for distilling material, because I felt that if you're going to start to rebuild a place, you start from square one. That's where we started. I was not going to start with anybody's troubles, and I told Nestlé that. They said, "You're the winemaker and that's what we've hired. All right, let's go."

I got rid of a lot of stuff. Then we replanted grapes in some of the vineyards. We bought grapes--those varieties that we needed badly. We started refilling the tanks with some wines that I'd made. Then we started thinking about oak barrels and aging. There was no aging program when I came here. They had about three hundred American oak barrels here, and those things had been around so long--I guess they'd come over on the Ark--they were in pretty bad shape, so I got rid of all of them. Then I wanted to get a hold of some French oak, because I felt French oak might have a place in here. That was not original with me, because other people in the industry had tried it.

MSN: I was grabbing for everything I could think of to improve the quality, from the grapes in the field to the winery equipment to handle it, and some support staff to help me do my job. Gradually we started a turnaround of the product. We had to start item by item by item. One man from the University of California once came in here and told me, "You know, Myron, I had not been in this plant in eighteen years and I don't think anybody else has either from the university." It had lost the respect of a lot of people in the Napa Valley.

I know my good friend down the road here, that I went to school with, Louis P. Martini, told me one night when he was over for dinner, "Myron, we're sure glad that somebody came into Beringer and is trying to do something with the wine." I think a lot of the wineries here in the valley felt that Beringer was sort of a dead weight from a quality standpoint, because the image had been down so far.

So I think that is probably the answer to your question: a hell of a lot of work, a lot of hard work. It may not be hard work so much as it is devotion and time, babysitting with the wine. That's what it amounted to. I figured it was my neck, and I'd better start going to work and really doing a job. That's what I've tried to do.

Teiser: I know they have very definitely brought your name forward in the publications that the company puts out, and identified you with the product, published the explanations of what you were doing as winemaker.

MSN: Some of the notoriety I got when I first came here--if I do sound a bit pompous--was due to personal effort. I really worked at Cresta Blanca in trying to produce some wine. We got recognition at the State Fair. Regardless of what you think of judging, the State Fair was, in those days, a good judging. It was a good sounding board. I got my share of medals out of that place in competition with my dear friend Brother Tim down the road [Brother Timothy, cellar master at Christian Brothers]. Then I came here and tried to apply those practices that I'd used at Cresta Blanca, which in turn I had learned from my first boss, Elbert Brown, and my late friend, Herman Wentz. So why not put them to practice?

Herman Wentz

Teiser: Where did you come into contact with Herman Wentz?

- MSN: I had met the man several times going to Wine Institute meetings before I went to Cresta Blanca. But it was after I went to Cresta Blanca and he found out that Elbert Brown was my boss over at Shewan-Jones and discovered the connection with the University of California, that he and I really started getting acquainted.
- Teiser: What connection with the University of California was that?
- MSN: Herman and Brown, I think, were in the class of '14. I think that was the class that Bill Cruess was in, too.*
- Herman was a fine man as far as white wine was concerned. He was tops in his day.
- Teiser: He was said to be a very fine taster.
- MSN: Very good, excellent, excellent. He had a good memory and that's what it takes for a good taster. I don't know whether I'll ever become a good taster or not!

*Dr. Cruess received the B.S. degree in 1911.

VIII CHANGES IN WINEMAKING AND GRAPE PLANTINGS

Innovations in Winemaking

- MSN: A lot of the kids today get exposed to the basic principles of winemaking, but, unfortunately, they're never drilled into them. I think I got a few scars on my back, but some of the basic principles that are in practice today, that I still use, are things that I learned when I first went in the wine business in '44.
- Teiser: I don't know if you've adapted other people's innovations, or if you've made innovations of your own besides the botrytized wine?
- MSN: I'll tell you, I probably have adapted a lot of other peoples'. I'll be honest about that. I would have to do a lot of soul-searching to actually come up with a percentage of some of the ideas that I could say, "Actually, I'm the guy that started this, and I'm the one who did this." I heard a man one time a few years ago get up in San Francisco and attempt to tell a very learned group that he was the first one to practice cold fermentations. Actually, the first true cold fermentations in the state of California were done by Pete [Peter] Mondavi right over here at Charles Krug winery, with the help of Professor Bill Cruess.

You've got to give credit where credit is due. I did a lot of work on sherry with Brown at Shewan-Jones. I did a lot of work on barrel fermentations, and that's pretty widespread in the industry now on whites, particularly on Chardonnays. Just how much of my

MSN: work you could call innovation, I don't know. For the most part I think you'd have to say that it was based just on good application of sound winemaking principles. If I saw a shortcut here or there that I thought was better, why not try it? That goes all the way to exposure of Cabernet skins to the juice after the fermentation for various periods of time, to prolonged periods and short periods of skin contact with whites, of which there are a million different theories, as you know.

Teiser: Do any of these things ever get settled forever?

MSN: No, that's the thing about the wine industry. The wine industry is so intriguing, particularly from a technical point. It's never done, it's never finished, it's never complete. It is never going to be built like this machine here. That'll stand its form for, under the right environmental conditions, forever, but not the wine industry. It changes in taste.

Sulfur Dioxide Theories

MSN: Some of the things that we're doing today in making wine were unheard of even fifteen years ago. The use of sulfur dioxide, for example. The basic theory on sulfur dioxide, of course, is that it is a preservative and an anti-oxidant. Years and years ago, as soon as you crushed the grapes you added SO₂. That was regardless of the condition of the grape. Now we are finding out that maybe you can crush the grapes without the use of SO₂ if they're in perfect condition, and then add the SO₂ to the juice after the juice has been extracted from the skin. By following that procedure you may eliminate chemical damage in the sense of certain bitter and browning compounds, oxidative compounds, which you don't want.

Adding Stems during Fermentation

MSN: When I first went in the wine business there were theories like: you should never crush red grapes and put stems in with them. Well, we had to find out from the French people, and a good many years ago, that with Pinot noir, for example, a certain percentage of the stems thrown into the fermenting tank is desirable. Is this because of flavor or is it because you want to add more tannin to the wine, or what is it? These things are still being studied.

Cold Fermentations

MSN: Let's talk about Chardonnay, or white wines period. Even as late as fifteen or twenty years ago, everybody thought that if you fermented whites, you had to ferment them cold. Well, there's a lot of different theories of cold fermentation. Your cold fermentation might be 45° and mine might be 60° and hers might be 65°. Basically, what we're talking about is somewhere between 55° and 60°. That way, if you have a nice cold fermentation, you'll hopefully preserve all these flavoring compounds in the grape.

Now, through some research which we've done here at Beringer and other people have done at the suggestion of the University of California--I have to plug the University once in a while--we have found that in the fermentation of certain Chardonnays, we might want to elevate that temperature up to 75°. Back in the early days when you were trying to keep must cool, we didn't have the modern refrigeration that we have today. We depended on the well water to run through coils and keep the must cool.

But the thing was that there was no consistency in the operation. In other words, when you first started out in the morning at five o'clock, the water from the well was very, very cold. I can tell you in the middle of the afternoon, particularly in the San Joaquin Valley, that water can get up to 80° and 85°. I've seen it right out of the taps at Fresno.

We have found, not every time but a lot of times, that in these elevated fermentation temperatures on white wines, we get better extraction of flavor. For example, we do a lot of barrel fermentation, same as everybody else, on white wines, Chardonnay. There's a difference in the wines that are fermented in barrels more than just putting the wine into a barrel for aging, particularly in whites. In the fermentation process, a lot more extraction goes on. But the point is you don't have any coils in that barrel so the temperature goes up to 70° and 75°. If you told anybody that fifteen or twenty years ago, they would have said you'd lose the flavor. So who is to say what will happen a few years from now?

Protein Stabilization Theories

Teiser: What about the stabilization for bottling? Have there been advances in that?

MSN: I don't think there have really been too many recent advances in that. We still depend on refrigeration. I think we have to go through that. We still have grapes that have a lot of protein content, which produces a white curtain on the bottom of the bottle. If anybody sees anything in the bottom of the wine bottle, you know it just scares them to death they're going to get poisoned. Tartrate crystals have often been mistaken for glass!

##

Teiser: You said there are a lot of different theories on protein--

MSN: Oh, yes, a lot of theories on protein stabilization. Probably the most prominent agent that's used for protein stabilization in California white wines is bentonite, although there are other compounds that are used, like combinations of gelatine and tannin.

Teiser: Egg whites sometimes too?

MSN: Egg whites. You have to be careful there, too. You can drop from the frying pan right back into the fire again with egg whites sometimes. Cold stabilization, chilling: some wineries even go so far as slushing*, which I don't believe in.

Problems with Ion Exchange Techniques

MSN: Ion exchange was a red hot deal about twenty-five years ago, and there are still ion exchange units in this country. A lot of them are used in the right manner, but the ion exchange system for tartrate stabilization in this country, I think, really led to a very close scrutiny of the salt content of California wines-- particularly one down the road on the Peninsula that had some sodium content of 1200 parts per million, because of the over-exchange in the sodium exchange system. The Wine Institute, of course, stepped onto that hot potato after the physician back in North Carolina or South Carolina put out her famous publication about sodium content of California wines.

Teiser: There was also a study at San Francisco General Hospital.

MSN: Yes. Some of the wineries really just overdid it. In other words, they lowered the potassium content far below what it should have been because potassium, of course, is what hooks onto the tartrate for the precipitation for tartrate. But they lowered it way down to ground zero. If you had seven or eight hundred parts per million, for example, instead of lowering the potassium maybe down to four or five hundred parts, they were lowering it down to a hundred parts. Well, that's the old theory, which is if one pound is good, then two pounds is better.

*Slushing is when they take a wine and half freeze it. M.S.N.

MSN: One of the best wine clarifiers that the California wine industry ever had was taken away because of the one pound-two pound theory: potassium ferrocyanide, "blue fining." Some people got carried away with it and somebody down on Beach Street picked up a bottle of California dessert wine with a blue coloring in the bottom of it and says, "Ho, what is this?" It didn't take Milton P. Duffy [of the California State Department of Public Health] long to figure that one out. That was a man who was a real champion for our industry, too, along with a Food and Drug fellow by the name of McKay McKinnon in San Francisco. But Milton P. Duffy was a real champion for California wines.

Problems with Metal Contamination

MSN: But those were back in the days when we had a lot of copper and iron pipelines to transport wine around wineries. We had copper casse and iron casse problems (clouding). Then we all went to stainless steel.

With stainless steel a lot of the wineries for a while had a lot of hydrogen sulfides in their wines, which they never had when they had redwood tanks with copper valves, because the wine, in going through the copper, would precipitate out copper sulfides, the sulfide ion. Sulfide isn't a big problem. We know how to handle it. What we do now, if you have a sulfide problem, is add in--and this is according to federal regulations--a small amount of copper to precipitate it out. You're talking about parts of a million, which is nothing to worry about health-wise.

But it shows you the contrast. Let's take all the copper valves out now and then let's put in stainless steel. So you go from one condition to another. Louis Martini, that's Louis Sr., used to say, "Okay, you guys take out all these copper valves, you're going to have sulfide problems." By God, lo and behold, we did. But we've overcome that. Today it's overcome by racking the wines fairly early and getting them off of the gross lees. You can age lees--that'll settle out later--but getting them off the gross lees is how you stop all this gaseous formation (hydrogen sulfide).

Grape Varieties

Teiser: About your plantings of your new vineyards here--I should have asked you earlier when you were discussing the vineyards--are you changing your varieties?

MSN: That is the biggest crapshoot in the world: trying to advise somebody about what to plant. Do you eat white bread or brown bread? How many times a week do you have white bread and do I have brown bread? "Well, I'll tell you, Myron, I used to eat a lot of white bread, but I got acquainted with this neighbor friend of mine who had the best brown bread, and I've been eating brown bread now." Maybe that's carrying the point a little bit too far, but this has been the situation with grape planting.

Look at the Zinfandels. How many of them in the past have been cut off and grafted over to whites? Now what do we do? We're coming back to Zinfandels simply because we got the White Zinfandel type.

I used to say French Colombard was a good variety. French Colombard is, I guess, the largest white variety planted in the State of California today.

I think some of these varieties are going to be good pillars, particularly the Chardonnay. Not because it's the nice thing to talk about at the cocktail party or the wine party up on Nob Hill, but because it's a good strong variety. A Cabernet's always going to be a good strong variety. The Cabernet Sauvignon is the strongest red varietal type that we have in this state, probably one of the strongest red varietal types in the world. I'm comparing that, for example, against Pinot noir, which you know you'll find a great many variations of, in contrast to Cabernet Sauvignon. Chenin blanc has been a hot number for years, but why has Chenin blanc been a hot number? We sell a lot of Chenin blanc. Charles Krug over here--Pete Mondavi--got a good reputation for Chenin blanc. I think we make a pretty good Chenin blanc and a few other people do.

Teiser: It was initially very high in residual sugar.

MSN: Yes, well, this is the point I'm trying to make: Was it really the grape or was it the sugar? Because you're a sweet tooth, and so am I. That's our native taste. I don't know whether that's what popularized it, and what we have today is just a carry-over from that, or not. If you ask somebody, "Do you make a sweet Chenin blanc or a dry Chenin blanc?" they'll have to put their thinking cap on to tell you how many wineries make dry Chenin blanc. I think

MSN: one of the things that carried the Chenin blanc into prominence was the sweetness. I really do, because basically the grape per se, compared to something like Sauvignon blanc, is really a very bland type. I'm not saying it can't be fruity, but basically it's a rather bland type.

Grape varieties are really a big question as to what you're going to be drinking 25 years from now. I'll call you up when I look down from the clouds and say, "What are you drinking?" and you'll say, maybe, "Black Chablis." I'll say, "What's Black Chablis?" I mean, this is crazy. First time I heard of White Zinfandel, I have to tell you honestly as a wineman, I said "What in the hell is a White Zinfandel? Either the grape's white or it's red, or black, or whatever you want to call it. A White Zinfandel? Who are you kidding?" [Brief interruption. Alice A. Nightingale, his wife, comes in.]

Oh, good morning. Hi, Alice. This is Ruth Teiser and Lisa Jacobson. [introductions are exchanged] Well, you're right on the dot.

We were talking about grape varieties. We covered a lot of subjects here. I think that would be about all I could say about grape varieties. I think a lot of these things come and go. I can remember when Muscat was a big thing, but now it's more known as a blender than it is a type. It adds fruitiness to certain types. People use maybe two or three percent Muscat in a lot of different varieties to give the wine a fruity taste. People look for something that's different. When you consider the number of labels, for example, Chardonnay or Fumé or Cabernet, that are on the shelf today confusing the consumer, you wonder what separates them, what's the difference.

Grafting

Teiser: Have you done grafting over--T-budding?

MSN: Yes.

Teiser: Does it take in one year?

MSN: Yes, that's right.

Teiser: Does it work well?

MSN: Yes, it works pretty good.

Teiser: How about Callaway's experiment grafting white and black grapes on the same vine?

MSN: No comment.

Teiser: Didn't try it?

MSN: Never tried that.

Teiser: But T-budding does work?

MSN: Yes.

Teiser: Gives you a lot of flexibility in changing your mind?

MSN: Oh, sure. We had a lot of varieties when I first came here that we grafted over. They had varieties planted here, for God's sake, that only should have been planted in the San Joaquin Valley. For example, Palominos. What do you do with a Palomino? You make sherry out of it. Or I guess you could throw it into grape concentrate. It's a very good sherry grape. They used to make sherry here years and years and years ago, and maybe that's the reason they had it, but certainly Palomino didn't have any place in the Napa Valley 15 years ago or even 15 years before then.

IX DEVELOPMENT OF BOTRYTISED SEMILLON WINE

Teiser: Now that Mrs. Nightingale is with us, let's get to the Botrytis.

MSN: [addressing his wife] I'll tell you what. Why don't you sit over here--the microphone's right here. I've got to go out for a couple of minutes. Ruth can question you on the Botrytis and you can give her your side of the story. All right?

AAN: I'll do my best.

MSN: I could talk to these people all night, Alice.

[Mr. Nightingale leaves]

Teiser: How did the idea of the botrytised wine occur? Whose idea was it?

AAN: Dr. Klayton Nelson and Dr. Maynard Amerine over at UC Davis suggested it. They happened to be personal friends of ours. At the time that we started our work on Botrytis there were no naturally sweet Sauterne-type wines like the famous Chateau d'Yquem of France made in California. All of the sweet or medium-sweet Sauterne-types in California at the time were made by using either a sweet blending wine or a grape concentrate. There was no naturally sweet Sauterne-type wine. So they suggested that maybe it (Botrytised) could be done in California.

The first thing we did was go out in the vineyard and spray, hoping that we could accomplish it there.

Teiser: How did you know what to spray? Where did you begin?

AAN: I went up to Davis for about six weeks and worked with Dr. Nelson, whom we lovingly call Hank. He taught me all I needed to know as far as transferring single spores of Botrytis, what to look for, what it looked like--because I didn't have the remotest idea of what Botrytis cinerea looked like.



Alice Nightingale
At time of second interview
March 10, 1987



Myron S. Nightingale
At time of second interview
March 10, 1987

Necessary Climatic Conditions

Teiser: Where do the original spores come from?

AAN: They come from the vineyard.

Teiser: They exist?

AAN: Yes, but only under the right climatic conditions. In California we do not have the right climatic conditions for them to grow to the extent that you can make a true botrytised wine from the vineyard, except in certain areas and when we have a real wet year.

Teiser: Sometimes they get out of hand and cause spoilage, do they not?

AAN: True, if it goes too far. If the Botrytis is in a vineyard and you don't pick those grapes soon enough, then you get what we call bunch rot; the whole bunch just goes to rot and shatters.

Early Laboratory Experiments at Davis

AAN: I got my first culture of the fungus from [UC] Davis because Dr. Nelson had been working with the preservation of table grapes in cold storage. If Botrytis gets started in there, why, you can imagine what happens. They lose everything. So he had been working with it quite some time and that's the reason I went up and worked with him in his lab.

We experimented for about six weeks until we finally came up with the method that I now use. I've improved it over the years and changed a lot of things. But basically it's still the same method that we used in 1956.

Experiments at Cresta Blanca: Perfecting the Technique

AAN: We lived at the Cresta Blanca winery in Livermore when we started this work, and I was in and out of the lab a lot. When they first started the work, I wasn't involved. They were having a big problem. They were trying to grow it on aluminum pizza plates, putting it through an inoculation chamber, where you put your hands in rubber gloves, and covering it with squares of just plain windowpane glass. The only places they had to grow it were shelves in a U shape around the room. The only light was just above.

AAN: They weren't having any luck; it was turning sterile, or mutant stage, just the color of white paper. I don't know where I got the idea, but I suggested to Myron, "Well, maybe it needs more light to grow. Maybe it needs oxygen." So they broke match sticks and propped up the glass plates, and then they got contamination. So that's the reason I went to Davis. Myron called Dr. Nelson up at Davis and said, "Alice has a couple of ideas, what do you think?" He said, "Well, if you can convince your company to send her up here for a few weeks, why, maybe we can work something out." That's how I got started.

Teiser: How did it work in actual winemaking practice? What were the steps?

AAN: I started out, every season, with a single spore transfer into tubes of nutrient media, which I make with grape juice, water, and agar. It takes ten to fourteen days at 65° to 68° Fahrenheit for one spore to fill that test tube completely with growth. It sends out mycelium and spores form on them, and then they send out more mycelium and the little branches, until it fills the tube.

Once those tubes are full, I have one litre offset neck culture bottles that I put the same nutrient media in. The neck is covered with a cotton and gauze filter disk fastened with a rubber band. It keeps out contamination and it also gives me the opportunity to inoculate right through that. It allows in oxygen which the spore needs to grow.

I take about five of those tubes for, say, a hundred bottles that I'm going to inoculate and, under sterile conditions, I wash those spores off of those tubes into a flask of sterile water. Then I have a hypodermic syringe with an uptake that I drop into this flask to inoculate those hundred bottles. It takes another ten to fourteen days for those bottles to become fully mature.

Once those are mature, I don't have to worry too much about contamination. (Up to that point, you really have to worry about contamination.) I just literally pull off those disks over the neck and use a vacuum pump. A lot of this equipment I have to make myself because there's none available. I have a series of three flasks that I use for traps, and I have to spiral the glass tubing so that I get a cyclone action throwing the spores down to the bottom of the flask. Otherwise it's just like talcum powder: they go poof right into the air.

The flasks are connected by tygon tubing to a little vacuum wand, which I make out of glass tubing. I go in and just vacuum the spores off the surface of the bottle. Then I weigh and stopper the dry spores, and put them in the refrigerator at 43°, and hold them until the grapes are picked.

- AAN: Once the grapes are picked, I take the dry spores and mix them with water and a wetting agent to help hold them in suspension--you have to keep stirring it constantly. We then spray the grapes, which are put on trays of 1/4" hardware cloth supported by a frame of 2" X 2"s when they are placed.
- Teiser: Does the timing of your whole operation depend particularly on the ripeness of the grapes?
- AAN: Well, we want the grapes at 23 to 24 degrees Brix when they're picked.
- Teiser: Can you hold your material until they reach that?
- AAN: Yes, I've held it for years.

Experiments with Freezing the Spores

- AAN: I've been experimenting since 1980--since we've been doing it here at Beringer--with freezing the spores on agar. If you freeze the dried spores, they don't seem to come back to life well enough, but if you freeze them in the tubes or in the bottle on the agar, it seems to work very well. I've been using those from year to year, keeping some of the single spore tubes frozen. Then I have those to start my next batch of spores.

[Mr. Nightingale returns]

Botrytis and Grape Varieties

- Teiser: When you started this at Cresta Blanca, what grapes were you using?
- AAN: Semillon, only Semillon.
- Teiser: What are you using here now?
- AAN: We're using Semillon and Sauvignon blanc.
- Teiser: Do you think that makes a better wine?
- AAN: We've kept it separate, I think, until after fermentation. In '81, I guess it was, we started to blend half and half.

- MSN: Eighty-four was all blended, but we lost that. The '85, we blended both varieties.
- Teiser: Do you do that on principle, or because of certain years or certain grapes?
- MSN: It's just a basic arbitrary formula we've come up with. We feel the Semillon and the Sauvignon blanc are very compatible as grape varieties. This is what has been done in some of the famous châteaux in Europe.
- Teiser: Well, it's apparently a great success.

Natural Incidence of Botrytis

- Teiser: Since then, there have been higher incidence of Botrytis occurring naturally at the proper level in the vineyards, have there not?

AAN: Yes.

MSN: Well, I'll tell you what happened, if you pardon me for a second. When we started this work, people were not as conscious, I don't think, about the Botrytis. A mold was a mold and rot was rot. As Dr. [A. Dinsmoor] Webb at the University has said more than once, maybe we didn't look far enough for the true Botrytis in the vineyards. Maybe it took something like this work here that we have done to trigger a better look. We do know that it does not occur every year, the same as it doesn't occur every year in Europe*. We have found it in some very surprising places, even including Argentina.

But we didn't look hard enough. For example, nobody ever probably really took a look at the Central Coast counties, the Monterey area. Some nice botrytised wines have come out of there. There have been some nice ones to come out of this area. Maybe we didn't look hard enough or it was ignored. The only unfortunate thing is that a lot of people have taken advantage of the word "Botrytis" and tacked it onto labels where probably the only Botrytis that the grapes ever saw or felt was that they were in this winery here or somebody's winery, and a truck of grapes went down the highway there that has some Botrytis on it.

That's another extreme: people not knowing about Botrytis, and a lot of them still don't know about it, or what to expect or how it grows, so when they see a shriveled grape they automatically say

*To produce sweet wines.

MSN: "Ah, Botrytis." Well, all you've got there is a raisin.
[laughter] But there's been some very fine botrytised wines made
in this state.

Blowing our own horn on this thing, Alice can pretty much duplicate year in and year out. She has the spores ready which she sprays on the fruit when the fruit's ready. After two weeks, they are pressed and I crush and press the grapes and make the wine out of them. This is the main advantage of it. Of course, it's a very expensive way of going about it. It's been used primarily as a public relations tool because to make enough to supply the fifty states, I'd need another Nestlé mountain of gold, probably, to do it. The cost is prohibitive.

First Volume Produced at Cresta Blanca

Teiser: When you first brought it out, as you mentioned earlier, it got into the Congressional Record.

MSN: Yes.

Teiser: As I remember, there was an event put on around its release at the Ferry Building.

MSN: That's right, at the Trade Center. Senator Kuchel was there. That had to be in 1959, because '59 was the first bottling that we put out.

In fact, that bottle you've got over at the house is a '59, isn't it?

AAN: Yes, it's one of the originals, with your signature on the back label.

MSN: That bottle has to be a '59 because we came out with it and Tony Kahman was our marketing man then. Later, he went to work for the Wine Institute. He is really the guy that helped the most with botrytised wine for Cresta Blanca. He recognized a potential in this thing as a PR tool.

##

MSN: I don't know, when a woman wakes you up at two o'clock in the morning and wants to talk about Botrytis--I don't know--

AAN: You're supposed to have all the answers.

Grand Cru's Botrytised Gewürztraminer

MSN: You might tell her that we use some of the original equipment, Alice.

AAN: Yes, as a matter of fact, we're using the original trays that we sprayed the grapes on at Cresta Blanca. Grand Cru bought them and I went over and helped Bob [Robert L.] Magnani to do it one year. This was before we started it here. In fact, the first year that he decided to try to do it, he did not use the method that I do with single sporing and so forth. He just did what we call a wash: washing the spores off the bottle. And he was using Gewürztraminer, which is the grape that he had mostly and was his favorite grape.

Some people liked it, but it didn't sell too well. The main problem there is that Gewürztraminer is too spicy in contrast to the one and only flavor that you get from Botrytis. I think that was the reason.

But, anyway, after he gave it up we bought the trays from him. This year we're going to get new trays.

Public Relations Efforts

AAN: It's a very expensive process. Like Myron was saying, we've used it mainly here as a PR tool. Up until the flood last February, I had a slide presentation that I used and gave lectures here and there. It showed all of my laboratory work from the beginning, starting with the single spore in the tubes to the picking of the grapes, and so forth. Right on through the process of the infection, how it takes effect during the period of ten to fourteen days, and up to the pressing of the grapes and the juice going into the container. Then, of course, Myron takes over and makes the wine.

Teiser: What happened in the flood?

AAN: Oh, we lost everything.

X THE CALIFORNIA WINE INDUSTRY IN THE 1980S

[Interview 3: March 10, 1987]##

Nestlé's Involvement in Self-Education about Wines

Jacobson: When Nestlé first came in, you said they obviously didn't know much about the wine industry and they gave you lots of room to do as you saw fit. Did they try to educate themselves about the wine industry ever, or did they always just stay out of it?

MSN: I think they were very much interested in educating themselves about it. Three or four of the boys high up in the Nestlé corporation spent time at Davis, not attending classes but doing a lot of auditing and talking to professors in the Department of Viticulture and Enology. Also, in attempting to get better acquainted with wine and to expose me and some of my associates to the wine industry world-wide, they even promoted a trip to Europe. For a week or ten days, we were traveling around Europe, visiting wineries in France and then Germany.

I was there with them and in those areas where they were a little gray, I tried to explain to them actually what was going on to the best of my knowledge. Of course, there were some things that some of the people were doing over there that I didn't understand, also. I knew the general theory of most of it anyway. But they were very much interested in getting in and seeing what really goes on in the winery, from the grape itself out to the front door.

Nestlé's Investments in Wine Research

MSN: Another thing that they did when they came in the wine business was to bring in engineers, chemists, and biochemists who worked with me. One fellow, for example, spent a lot of time on the aging of wines

MSN: in wood. Another one spent a lot of time on centrifuging: the separation of juice from some of the grape solids. This man was right out of the research laboratory at Marysville, Ohio, which was the Central Research Laboratory in the United States for the Nestlé company. They did a lot of work for us regarding use of wood, for example, red oak, white oak, pine, beechwood, etc.

They also helped us out with a lot of things as far as equipment was concerned. I mean, they had the engineers and they had this huge library of information from their food plants all over the world. It's one of the largest producers of food in the universe. So there was a lot of information there which was beneficial to us.

Educating Nestlé about California Wines

MSN: At the same time, we were feeding them information about wines and acquainting these people with different grape varieties. I made several trips east in the formative years of this company after Nestlé took it over to do this very thing, to show them that there were differences in California wine.

You have to remember one thing: the Nestlé corporation is a foreign corporation, very much oriented for the imports, for the French wines and German wines. That was their background. So they were judging by what they did in Europe and the way the wines tasted over there. It took a long time to convince them that we had our product that we made from our grapes, and the French had theirs that they make. However, the pattern is still there to the extent that we still make use of enologists from France which the Nestlé Corporation sends over here to advise us, or help us, in our winemaking.

So you say, "Now that's kind of contradictory." But in a sense it isn't, because it comes back to what I mentioned in an earlier interview. There are so many California labels today, the competition is so rough out there, that if there's just one little thing that we could pick up that would make our wine more desirable than yours, we're going to jump onto that. That's the way the Nestlé people operate.

Teiser: They offer advice, but don't insist?

MSN: That's right.

Knowledge of Winemaking in the Big Corporations

Teiser: It strikes me that there must be a contrast between them and the earlier round of national spirits companies that came into the wine industry, who didn't understand the wine business and wanted to tell rather than learn.

MSN: This is true because they were looking at it from the straight alcohol point of view, as I call it. It was a commodity to sell. Most of them had come out of the spirits field and they thought, "Well, this is the way we sell the spirits, this is the way we make them. We know what the people like." Actually, all it amounted to was a continuation of old-time methods and procedures in wine types: the Sauternes, the burgundy, the ports, the sherries, the muscatels, or whatever you want. Because, as you know, back in those days there was a great preponderance of dessert wines.

Contrast that with somebody like the Nestlé people or other big corporations that have come into this industry since those days. They are more interested in things like, What makes a Chardonnay more appealing to the consumer? What is the difference between a barrel-fermented and a non-barrel-fermented Chardonnay? Forty years ago those people didn't give a hoot.

Teiser: I've heard stories about national companies requesting that a winery send them, say, two thousand cases of a particular vintage, not understanding that wine isn't produced the way spirits are. Is that--?

MSN: I think a lot of that was occurring in the early days of some of these big companies. One I know of was running wine in the back door, and it was going out the front door by the gallons--to such an extent that it was far more than the yield from the grapes or the area from which it was supposed to be coming. I'm talking specifically about Cresta Blanca.

I know and was told when I went to Cresta Blanca in '53 that a lot of wines in the past had come in that winery, not just from the Livermore Valley, but also from around Elk Grove.

I guess there's a lot of people who assume the holier-than-thou attitude on a lot of these things, but there's been a lot of monkeyshines that have gone on in the industry.

Movement of Wine in Bulk

Teiser: I think one thing the public doesn't understand, and maybe the industry doesn't want to explain either, is that as a matter of fact a fair amount of wine passes from winery to winery.

MSN: Yes, that's quite true. There's an awful lot of exchange. I was going to say that it's more prevalent among wineries in the Central Valley, but that isn't true because there's an awful lot of that going on in the North Coast and Central Coast. The reason for it is simply that some wineries don't have a market for their product, or haven't established one, and they can't sell it. There's nobody out there with a big horn screaming at the people.

We've bought an awful lot of White Zinfandel and we've bought an awful lot of Pinot noir from North Coast wineries. We can't put them out in the estate bottle, but we can put it out under a Napa Valley or North Coast label because we process it and handle it.

There's an awful lot of that going on. You can't go down the road and know that each bottle you buy out there is wine representing that individual winery. It may seem that way because of the workings of a winery, but you could not get on the podium and swear that this wine came out of X winery, period. Because if you dug into the records, you may find that some of it came from Beringer and some of it came from Robert Mondavi.

Maintaining Continuity of Quality

Teiser: That's where the blender, or whoever is in control of bottling, comes in, isn't it?

MSN: That's where he comes in. That's where he makes the money, and that's where you'd better have somebody that knows what they're doing. You're into that market so that you can have a continuity of quality--that's the key word, the continuity of quality. That's something that I've always stressed. Some wineries will buy a little quantity of three and four thousand gallons and put them together. I try to shy away from that because you can get into trouble pretty fast. If I'm dealing with your winery and your winery, and making a blend, and I've got five thousand gallons and I need another ten of such a wine, I'd prefer to buy that in maybe a four-and-a-six thousand-gallon quantity because you can get a better representation.

Teiser: Consistency in quality is one of the things that the Gallos have told a lot of their people.

MSN: That's the whole thing.

Teiser: I don't suppose they invented it, but--.

MSN: They've done a good job at it with their dry wines, I'll tell you that. They put out some bummers the same as the rest of us, but I think those people have done a fantastic job. Absolutely fantastic considering the volume of wine that they handle. When you think of the hundreds of millions of gallons.

The Wine Industry: A Risky Business

Teiser: Has it ever occurred to you to have a vineyard of your own, or a winery?

MSN: I never had any desire for that. I guess maybe I didn't have the nerve to do it. I came into the wine business when I saw a lot of growers going to the bank every other day trying to renew their loan. I saw a lot of winery failures, and quite frankly, I just never had the guts to get into that sort of thing. I had a couple opportunities, but I backed out of it.

But some people feel the risk is worth it. That has been said by people that have money and people that don't have money. A lot of people have gone out here and established little wineries and struggled along, and finally made a go of it. They'll never get rich. They might make expenses, some of them. On the other hand, you have people that have come out of the city, or wherever it may be, with a lot of money, and built a big home, built a winery--just to have their name on the place. You know, if you've got it, why not flaunt it. Maybe that's your attitude.

Teiser: Was it André Tchelistcheff who said the way to make a small fortune in the wine industry is to start with a large fortune?

MSN: Yes, and he's 100.1 percent right.

[Mr. Nightingale gets a pamphlet]

Teiser: This is titled "California Wine Outlook." It is a Bank of America September 1973 publication.

MSN: There's some very interesting reading in there.

Teiser: Its over-optimism was one of the factors, however, in the oversupply of wine, wasn't it?

MSN: Yes, that's right. That's exactly right. They made some projections, and Myron Nightingale went down to the bank and he borrowed a hell of a lot of money. Then he went to another expert and asked what kind of grapes he should plant, and he planted the grapes. But the expert he went to, to find out where to plant them, gave him the wrong dope, so he planted them in the wrong place. An awful lot of that's gone on.

This [report] is something I've always kept. When somebody starts yelling at me about wine, I haul that out and throw it at them.

Teiser: Wells Fargo published another in much the same tenor.

MSN: Well, don't misunderstand me. I don't mean to be a pessimist about this business, and I guess that's what I sound like, because it's been my lifeblood for over forty years. I've had a good living on it. I've raised my family, I've done a lot of nice things, I've lived comfortably. I wouldn't trade it for anything. All I'm saying is that it takes a hell of a lot of money and a lot of guts to go into the wine business. If you can do that and suffer through it, maybe you might get there, but I wouldn't want to start in the wine business under-capitalized in today's market. Or even fifteen or twenty years ago!

Teiser: Joe Heitz, I guess, did about that, twenty-five years ago.

MSN: That's right, and he did a lot of personal hype. In all due respect to Mr. Heitz, that's what it takes.

XI WORK AS BERINGER CONSULTANT, 1983-PRESENT

Winemaking Responsibilities

Teiser: I should ask you now to explain a little more about what your activities have been since your so-called retirement.

MSN: I guess they've been pretty much the same as they were before. I don't have the active participation that I once had. My responsibilities are a lot smaller. In fact, I do pretty much as I please. If they need me for something, why, I'm here to help them. If they don't need me, then they don't come to me and I don't go looking for trouble--not at this stage of the game, I don't.

Teiser: Do you taste?

MSN: Yes, I taste regularly. I enjoy doing that, but to me, that isn't work. I taste any amount I want to, when I want to. If they're having a tasting in the back room over there and they invite me to participate in that tasting, then I go. Sometimes I don't go; it depends on the tasting, what they're trying to do or find out. Besides that I oversee some of the brands a little bit and the buying of outside wines, which I look at and have files on and make recommendations on to the company. Of course, they have their own winemaker, Ed Sbragia, and then they have Dave Schlottman, who is his assistant. I confer with them on wines that they're buying or should be buying. They'll bring wines in to me and say, "What do you think of this?" as far as quality is concerned or price or whatever for what we're trying to do.

We have actually three lines now. We have the Beringer line, then we have this Napa Ridge line, and the Los Hermanos. So we can't possible grow all the grapes for that. Los Hermanos, as I've told you, is primarily San Joaquin Valley, and Napa Ridge is all North Coast, but 90 percent of those wines are bought. I participate in that program quite a bit, and the public relations trips once in a while.

Teiser: You didn't go to the Monterey Wine Festival just now, did you?

MSN: No, I did not. But I do pretty much as I please. [laughs] It's a nice set-up.

Teiser: Maybe you earned it.

Evaluation of Career with Beringer

MSN: I feel that I have put in some time. I feel that I have made a few contributions to the company. I get a great deal of satisfaction when I look around me and realize what I had the first day I walked in this place. I was really scared. God, I was scared even at that age. But I was in it, and it's just like you doing something, "Well, I got myself in here and now I've got to work myself out of it." Or you take the easy alternative and say, "Forget it." But I guess I've got enough German blood in me that's stubborn enough to say, "Okay, look, I've accepted this challenge and, by God, I'm going to do it." That's what I tried to do.

Oh, I stubbed my toe a few times; we all do. But what a life it's been here for me! I mean, when I look back at what Beringer has done for me and what the Nestlé people have done for me, and compared to my former employer, there's no comparison. Absolutely no comparison. In fact, I tell you quite honestly, when I first came to Beringer in '71 after working for Schenley for eighteen years, I really didn't know how to act the first six months because I was so used to having ten people on my back and actually working under a cloud of fear all the time. That's what it was. Schenley is probably the greatest high-pressure machine that I ever worked for in my life. You were constantly under vigilance in a sense. Or, at least, you felt that way.

Teiser: But you had big responsibilities?

MSN: Yes, I had some big responsibilities, but I don't think their treatment of a lot of their employees was conducive to growth in the wine industry.

Teiser: Is it your feeling that other large companies today have that same pressure?

MSN: I think that pressure exists in some of those other companies today, particularly a couple of the big distillers. Some of these other companies, regardless of what they are, came in this business during the last twenty years and they're gone now. Some of those

MSN: plants have had two or three owners since. I don't know what we did to the Nestlé people, but they came in here and they stuck with it.

Teiser: Maybe you gave them good wine.

MSN: That might have something to do with it.

XII INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES

Technical Advisory Committee

Teiser: I'd like to ask you about your industry activities. You were chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Wine Institute. That was a very active committee, was it not?

MSN: Oh, yes. The Wine Institute Technical Advisory Committee in its original form forty-some years ago was a sounding board for the industry. They met about every two or three months. Everything from metals in wines to protein to waste disposal to fill heights, you name it, came up in those meetings. Everybody got a chance to sound off. The committee meetings were usually held in the city of San Francisco, till they started moving around in later years.

It was a very influential committee in that it covered so many subjects that were of interest to a young industry. Just think how long Prohibition had been out the window: not too very long. I mean, in the forties we were still having problems with copper and iron in the wineries, how to get rid of those metals in the wine. What was the best method of transferring wine? Was it aluminum pipes, stainless steel, or, if you were rich and had a mountain of gold, pyrex glass? The committee was influential, not that it came down and said, "This is the way it's gotta be, bing, bing, bing." But here was a real source of a lot of information.

I was actually sorry to see the bust-up of the committee in its original form.

Teiser: Let me ask you if the late Hugh Cook was involved in it.

MSN: Oh, yes, very much so.

Teiser: He's kind of forgotten now.

##

MSN: He was a real bird dog when it came to getting things done and getting things into committee. He was a very important man in the Wine Institute. Dan Turrentine, who was later to become chairman of the Wine Advisory Board, was succeeded by Hugh Cook. I don't know how many years Hugh Cook ran the Technical Advisory Committee, because he's the one who organized the programs. He would call people, "Will you give a paper on this and will you do this?" He was the one who held that committee together.

Hugh not only did that. He was involved in a lot of other committees of the Wine Institute, but he was a hell of a good man on the Technical Advisory Committee.

Teiser: Did the Technical Advisory Committee go from informal comments to formal papers?

MSN: No.

Teiser: Was it always papers from the beginning?

MSN: Yes, informal papers. Nothing like the articles that appear in the American Society of Enology journal or anything like that. Just primarily informal comments.

Teiser: As problems came up, people gave papers on them?

MSN: Yes. Maybe I'd call on you to give a paper on tartrate deposition in wines, or on whether you should chill wine and how you should chill it. It may be a two- or three-page paper, but they were a lot of generalities and information that you could take home.

Teiser: Did you discuss them in the meetings?

MSN: Oh, yes. We had some very interesting discussions on occasion. Offshoots of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting in its original form are the regional meetings of various wine chemists' groups, which are still in existence. They have one here in the Napa Valley, and I'm sure there's one at least or two in the San Joaquin Valley. There used to be one in Lodi, one in the Fresno area. A lot of those studies were similar to the discussions that went on in the Technical Advisory Committee. Those were informal meetings, usually preceded by a dinner, and then the chairman would say, "Well, we got so-and-so here to discuss such-and-such for us." It might be somebody from a paper company, Zellerbach, or it might be somebody from a chemical company. Those meetings were good.

Teiser: Were you active in other aspects of the Wine Institute?

MSN: Not an awful lot. TAC was the main thing. In fact, I'm still a member of the TAC in its present form. I was a member of the Exhibits Committee for a long time. I was never chairman of that committee.

American Society of Enologists (ASEV)

Teiser: You were then active in the ASE, now the ASEV, the American Society for Enology and Viticulture?

MSN: I was a member of the Enology Committee or Viticulture Committee, and we tasted new grape varieties being developed by Professor [Harold P.] Olmo over at Davis. I did a lot of that work for several years with committee members. It was very interesting because you had crosses of Cabernet and Grenache, and some other things that Olmo dreamed up. Some of them are in use today, particularly down in San Joaquin Valley.

Charter Meeting

MSN: One thing I've always been sorry about was that I never went to the charter meeting in '49 or '50 at the Hotel Wolf in Stockton. But one thing I have to cling on to is that Charles Holden, who was the founder of the American Society of Enologists, came up to Cloverdale, prior to that meeting, when I was working for Italian Swiss Colony. I remember very distinctly his particular visit, because we went out in my kitchen and we sat there in that kitchen. I don't remember whether we had wine or brandy, or whether we had anything. The important thing to remember is that a lot of the basics that went into the founding of the American Society of Enologists were done right up there in that kitchen in Cloverdale. That's something that I shall never forget.

When Charles Holden left my house, I says, "Well, I'll be there." Unfortunately, the man I was working for at the Italian Swiss Colony the day of that meeting was in Stockton, and he decided that I should stay there and take care of business rather than running around at some crazy meeting. You would know the name if I mentioned it, but for the sake of this discussion I won't mention it.

Offices Held

MSN: Then about 1953-54, I got into the ASE as, among other things, treasurer. I was treasurer for several years. All that amounted to in those days was sending out notices on the annual dues, which I think was \$10 or \$15 a year. Of course, now it's \$45 a year. Everything goes up. Then in '61 or '62, I was president.

Teiser: What was going on when you were president? Anything special?

MSN: I don't remember anything really outstanding. What I do remember about those early ASE meetings was the family atmosphere about them, because they were very small get-togethers. They were really enlarged Technical Advisory Committee meetings. Some of the first ones were held over at Davis, and they had just a few exhibits, maybe a filter and a pump in the hallway of the enology building. Then there were the lectures on the campus. It was a very small operation, but a good operation.

I remember one year we had a convention up at Hoberg's when I was president. We had somewhere between three and five hundred people. Boy, I'm telling you, we thought we had arrived!

Teiser: What's happened since? Does the president go on being active?

MSN: No, what happens is you start through the chairs as a second vice-president. His job primarily is arranging for exhibits. Then the first vice-president's job is arranging for papers. The president's job, of course, is general management of the organization. In those days, and I don't think it's a policy any longer, following your year as president of the organization, many would serve a year as chairman of the policy committee, sort of an advisory board to the president, which had three or four people. I was chairman of that for a year.

Research and Promotional Activities

MSN: After that, my connections with the society were not in official positions. I did a lot of work for the society on a lot of different projects.

Teiser: Research, you mean?

MSN: Some of it was research, but basically it was organizing: attempting to get people to come to the meetings and promoting the society. We have now over two thousand people who come to those conventions. Where before you met people down in the lobby and you knew everybody that was there, today you walk into the lobby and it's a fight over who got what room and why didn't I get that room and that sort of thing. [laughs]

Teiser: You have massive exhibits, don't you?

MSN: Oh, yes. They charge quite a fee for those exhibits, but the money goes for a good cause. The society has come an awful long ways. I mean, we didn't even have a budget to work on when it came to putting on a reception for the president in those early years. We just didn't have the reception. I had a reception up at Hoberg's when I was the president. I threw it myself in a little room. There were twenty-five people. Now the president has a great big suite.

We contribute a lot of money to scholarships and other areas. This American Vineyard Foundation, they contribute money to that.

Teiser: They have an ongoing publication.

MSN: Oh, yes, they have a journal which has gotten world-wide notoriety.

Name Change to Include Viticulture

Teiser: They say they changed the name to include viticulture, but didn't the organization itself always include viticulture?

MSN: In the very early years it was a lot more enology than it was viticulture. There were very few papers on viticulture. Then, as it went on and became older, the tide turned the other way to where there's a preponderance now of viticulture. Some of the viticulturists in this society said, "We want some recognition here, too, and we want a magazine that we can publish our viticulture articles in that's recognized." So, all of a sudden a few years back, they changed the name to the American Society for Enology and Viticulture.

ASEV Merit Award

- MSN: They gave me my plaque last year for which I'm very proud. I waited a long time for that.
- Teiser: It's an award of merit, is it not?
- MSN: Yes, it's a merit award.
- Teiser: They give one a year?
- MSN: Yes. I don't know who won it this year. I haven't seen any announcements on it yet.
- Teiser: I was about to ask you about the changes since you entered the industry. I think you've explained them as you've gone along, so I think I've asked all the questions I can think of. How about you, Lisa?
- MSN: Just ask me why I'm not a millionaire. [laughter]

Establishing Principles of Quality in Winemaking

- Jacobson: How would you assess your major contributions to Beringer?
- MSN: My major contributions to Beringer would be that I established a winery with respect. By that, I mean it was the rebirth of a winery that at one time had a fine name in the Napa Valley. If you go down and look at the wine menus at the Palace Hotel in 1897 or '98, I think you'll find testimony there as to where Beringer has been. I established, hopefully, basic principles of quality, basic principles for continuing the quality. I hate to keep coming back to that, but I feel very strongly about it. I don't think it's enough to make a good wine one year. I don't think it's enough to make a good wine two years, or five years, or ten years. I want to make a good wine as long as I can and as consistent as I can. I think that's not unique to me. A lot of the other younger winemakers have adopted that philosophy.

Because if you are to taste wines today, a block say of white wine, regardless of the type, compared to those same wines 25 years ago, you'd find a tremendous difference. You don't have those peaks and valleys in quality.

MSN: So, summarizing, I would have to say that my strongest contribution has been applying good strong basic winemaking principles that will assure, hopefully, the quality of Beringer wines for a long time to come. I think that's it in a nutshell. I don't think I'll ever make an Opus One, but that's something else again. [laughs]

Teiser: We're about to have more released now.

MSN: You know, we laugh about those things, but let's give the man his just dues. I have the highest respect for Robert Mondavi. I'm sure that he may have some opinions about me, and I'm sure that I have some personal opinions about him, too, but he and I are in the same business along with a lot of other people, and I think he's done a hell of a good job. Not only for the Robert Mondavi people, but he's done a good job for bringing attention to the California wines.

I get a bit irritated with some individuals in this industry for some of their hype, but I'll close by saying what Barnum said: "There's one born every minute." [laughter]

Transcriber: Anne Schofield
Final Typist: L. G. Dunlap

TAPE GUIDE

Interview 1: February 24, 1987	1
tape 1, side A	1
tape 1, side B	11
tape 2, side A	21
Interview 2: March 3, 1987	30
tape 2, side B	30
tape 3, side A	41
tape 3, side B	51
tape 4, side A	61
Interview 3: March 10, 1987	63
tape 5, side A	63
tape 5, side B	73

THE NAPA REGISTER

April 19, 1984

Long road for winemaker, but lots of help from wife

4-19-84

By STAN VAUGHN

Napa Register Staff Writer

ST. HELENA — After 40 years in the business, winemaker Myron Nightingale is finally getting the industry recognition he deserves for producing fine California wines. But to Alice Nightingale, his wife of nearly 43 years, there's never been any doubt about his talent.

The two have been true partners through the years, whether it's been keeping late hours at a winery during harvest time, raising their three sons, experimenting in new winemaking techniques or sitting on a houseboat trying to hook a trout. The Nightingales are a team.

Myron Nightingale took the job as winemaker at Beringer Vineyards in 1971 and, after re-establishing the winery as one of the premier producers in the Napa Valley, he has retired and taken the title of winemaker emeritus. That doesn't mean, however, that he is slowing down.

Myron graduated from UC Berkeley in 1941 with a degree in bacteriology. He and Alice met and married in Lindsay while he was working in an olive plant. From there they moved to Southern California, where Myron worked making citrus concentrates for the British and American governments.

It was in 1944 that he became a winemaker, going to work in Lodi for the Shewan and Jones winery. He moved to Asti in 1949, working as a wine chemist for Italian Swiss Colony, and in 1953 the Nightingales moved to Livermore and the Cresta Bianca Wine Co. Then it was a move to Fresno in the early 1960s and almost back to Lodi when the opportunity at Beringer came along.

"The late Harry Serlis, who was president of Wine Institute at the time, steered me toward Beringer Brothers," Myron recalled one recent afternoon. Nestle, the giant Swiss food products company, had

(Continued on Page 2)



"NIGHTINGALE" is Beringer's name for the botrytised Semillon wine that Winemaker Myron Nightingale and his wife, Alice, have been producing at the St. Helena winery since 1980. The Nightingales have worked hand-in-hand on the project for many years, starting in the 1950s when Myron

worked for the Cresta Bianca winery in Livermore. The wine, made in the style of a French Sauterne, is produced in very limited quantities. One of Nightingale's early efforts with the wine, while at Cresta Bianca, was picked ahead of the famed Chateau d'Yquem. (Register photo by Bob McKenzie)

☆ Rare birds of valley wine industry

(Continued from Page 1)

just purchased Beringer and, after one interview, Myron was hired.

"It was kind of a dream come true for both of us because we always wanted to move up here to the Napa Valley," said Myron. "We had a lot of friends up here."

"The opportunities that have been presented to me here at Beringer over the last 13 years have, in a sense, really been undreamed of. For the first time in all the years I had been in this business, I really got the tools I wanted to work with. Stainless steel, refrigeration, French oak barrels, those sorts of things."

Of course, there was a time when Myron thought he had made a mistake in taking the job.

"When Alice and I first came here, we walked into the lab and I took one look at the setup and thought: 'Nightingale, you really blew it this time, because things had, for one reason or another, gone to pot.'

"Basically, what Nestle bought was a small vineyard, which we have now enlarged considerably, up over 2,000 acres, a beautiful place and a label they felt could be brought back to the prestige it once had," said Myron.

"So, that has been the goal, my goal, these past 13 years, to re-establish again the prestige of Beringer. And, I think we have done it," he said with pride. "I think we have made some inroads in quality and have made some people stand up and take notice."

"I told them when I first came here it would take me about 10 years to turn the corner, really turn the corner, and that's just about what it

took. We had to get rid of a lot of old wine, a lot of old equipment and put in new equipment and a helluva lot of hard work," Myron said.

It was in 1980, he believes, "that our wines had come into full bloom, and we've made improvements in other areas since then."

It was that year that Myron released his first "Private Reserves," a 1977 Lemmon Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon and a 1978 Chardonnay. Both received gold medals at the Orange County Fair that year. A long list of gold medals has been awarded Beringer wines since, and in 1983 Myron was honored with the President's Award by the Los Angeles County Fair. The award reads: "To Myron S. Nightingale for his incalculable contributions to California and her wines."

It was also in 1980 that Myron and Alice were able to revive some research they had started 25 years before while at Cresta Blanca, making a botrytized semillon — a sauternes.

"We started on the work in 1956-57 and the first bottling occurred in 1959. The significance is that, prior to that, California sauternes, so-called sauternes, you don't even see them on the market now, that label has disappeared, was that as far as sweet sauternes in California prior to that time had all been made by taking dry white wine, adding some sort of a concentrate and making them sweet," explained Myron.

The process the Nightingales use is unique in the world. While other winemakers let natural conditions help produce a botrytis, sometimes called "Late Harvest," wine, the Nightingales make theirs by hand.

Botrytis cinerea is a natural mold

on grapes which flourishes in damp weather. The spores pierce the skin of the grapes, allowing the water to escape, while the sugar content and natural flavors concentrate and intensify.

The Nightingales don't wait for Mother Nature. Alice cultivates the spores through the summer months, then when the grapes are harvested in the fall, the spores are mixed with water and the solution is sprayed on the fruit. A plastic covering then creates the proper humidity needed and, 36 hours later, the fruit is infected with what is called in France "the noble mold."

"It's very tedious," Alice said, explaining her lab work. She picks just the right strain of spores, working with a transfer needle with a knife edge and a microscope that enlarges the spores 700 times. It takes several weeks for the spores to grow. They are then harvested from the culture bottles and stored until the grape harvest.

"This occurs in the vineyards, throughout the world," said Myron. "I think one of the nicest ones that has naturally occurred in the vineyards I've seen was made by Chuck Carpy at Freemark Abbey in 1973. He called it Edelwine. But, it's only in certain years that we have these conditions of moisture and relatively cool, dry weather afterwards, that the fruit can become infected like this."

"One reason that we are doing it by this method," explained Alice, "is that we can produce this wine year after year, and we also get 100 percent infection, and you can't get that in the vineyard. Also, the bunches of grapes that we pick are checked to make sure there are no

other infections, molds, not even botrytis, that comes in from the vineyard. So I have perfectly sound fruit when it is sprayed, and by this we can get 100 percent of our perfect strain of botrytis and 100 percent infection."

The wine they made with this method at Cresta Blanca was called Premiere Semillon, and in one tasting it was picked over a Chateau d'Yquem, which is considered one of the finest sauternes producers in France.

"It was really a breakthrough," Myron said of the results of that early experimentation. "What this thing did, even more than making a special wine, was it showed even in that early day, the rest of the world that we really could produce fine wines out of California, that would draw attention to California wines."

Beringer's botrytis semillon is simple called "Nightingale." Alice said after 40 years in the wine industry, "We are very privileged, we feel, that they named it after us."

The wine retails for about \$35 per bottle, "and I'll tell you quite frankly I won't pay \$35 for a bottle of wine," said Myron. "But if you are in the right atmosphere, and you've got the money to do it, you might be tempted to try it."

"Some time, when you get the King of England and the Queen of Spain together, or whoever, and you want to put on an air, you really have, if you'll pardon my saying so, something special there," Myron said of the Nightingale. "It's more than something marked 'private reserve.'"

Now, just as they did in the early

(Continued on Page 3)

(Continued from Page 2)

days of their marriage, Alice and Myron enjoy their time together. The fact that much of that time is wine related doesn't bother either one.

"We've always talked business at home," Alice said. "Unlike a lot of my friends in the wine business, I've never objected to shop talk at home, because to me it's a fascinating business. In fact, I've threatened him with divorce a number of times if he ever got out of the business, because I enjoy it so much," she said with mock threatening sternness.

She has been almost as involved in the business as her husband, but without the formal education. Alice married Myron right after high school, yet her research papers on botrytis are studied by enology students at UC Davis.

"I've always had my nose in around the winery," Alice said, recalling those early days in Lodi when they actually lived in the scale house at the winery.

"We had workers that worked all through the night, and I always was out at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, taking them sandwiches and coffee, and so forth. If we went out for an evening, we didn't dare go to bed before we checked all the open fermenters, and that meant climbing rickety catwalks."

The Nightingales have come a long way since those early days. Myron points to the technological changes that have come, especially in the past 20 years, in the use of fermentation, refrigeration, stainless steel tanks, and the use of French oak barrels. And, he believes Napa Valley vintners are leading the way in the use of technology.

"You have two things going in the Napa Valley. The first thing is the premier grape growing area of America is right here in the Napa Valley. Believe me, I think I can say that with some qualification, because I have worked in Sonoma, have dealt with grapes from Sacramento to Bakersfield, and I have dealt with grapes along the Central Coast — Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, San Luis Obispo — I've dealt with them all.

Because of the reputation the Napa Valley has for fine wine, there has been a concentration of technology, science. There is more emphasis on up-to-date technology here in the Napa Valley than any other part of the state, and I think that's what sets us apart — technology and grapes."

He's not slighting the other wine regions of California when he heaps praise on the Napa Valley. "The white wines the San Joaquin Valley is turning out today for jug wines (Beringer's Los Hermanos jug wines come from grapes grown between Bakersfield and Lodi) are the best in the world."

His work schedule has been cut back somewhat at Beringer, but he hasn't lost his interest.

"The blowtorch is off the back of my head," he said. "I still, for the next two years, will be putting in a pretty full week. I think when I really, really relax will be the day I no longer can go fishing."

"The wine business is my life blood, and I want to keep active in it. But, you have to look at the young people coming along, because you are no better than the man behind you. My role will be as an advisor. We have to give way to youth because they will be the winemakers of the future. That's what my boss told me 40 years ago.

"But, I'll tell you one thing. I've still got a lot of anvils in my right arm and, if I see a mistake, I'm going to drop the damn thing," leaving little doubt that his pride in Beringer will not wane.



FOR 40 YEARS, wines have played an important part in the lives of Alice and Myron Nightingale, above. Myron has been the winemaker all that time — the past 13 years at Beringer — but Alice's interest has been more than just a wifely curiosity. She has worked side-by-side with her husband in developing a botrytised Semillon wine that has been compared favorably to the famed Sauternes of the French Chateau d'Yquem. Retiring earlier this year, Myron is now the "Winemaster Emeritus" at Beringer. The Nightingales are pictured above in the Beringer lab. (Register photo by Bob McKenzie)

INDEX -- Myron S. Nightingale

- Almadén, 36, 38
 American Society of Enologists, 74-76
 American Society for Enology and
 Viticulture, 74, 76-77
 American Vineyard Foundation, 76
 Amerine, Maynard A. 10, 11, 56
 Appert, Nicholas, 8

 Bank of America, 67-68
 Barrington Hall, 3
 Bear Creek Vineyard Association, 23
 Beringer Vineyards, 27, 36, 38-55,
 59-74, 77-78
 Beringer label, 42, 43, 44, 69
 Beringer family, 45
 Bioletti, Frederic, 12
 Blangsted, Sara, 6-7
 "blue fining," 52
 Botrytis, 56-62
 brandy, 14, 16-17, 26
 Bras, Bob, 39
 Bronco Wine Company, 44
 Brown, Elbert M., 14-16, 10, 22, 24,
 25, 46, 47, 48

 Caddow, Harry, 15
 California State Fair, 46
 Camp Marwedel, 3
 caramel, 16
 Civilian Conservation Corps, 2-3
 Community Grape Corporation, 23
 Concannon winery, 35
 concentrate, 18-19
 Cook, Hugh, 72-73
 cooperage, 40, 41-42, 45
 Coppo, Bartolomeo, 28-29
 Coppo, Joe, 28
 Coppo, Louis, 28
 Crawford, Charles, 9, 12
 Cresta Blanca label, 18
 Cresta Blanca winery, 32-35, 46, 47,
 57-58, 61-62, 65
 Cruess, William Vere, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,
 10, 11, 12, 48

 Davis, Doug, 22
 Davis, Jill, 22
 Del Rio Winery, 23
 Delicato Vineyards, 44
 Duffy, Milton P., 52

 East Side Winery, 23

 fermentation techniques, 11, 44, 48,
 49, 50
 French Colombard, 43
 Fresno mold, 11

 Gallo [E. & J. Winery], 27, 36, 39, 44
 Gambarelli & Davitto, 26
 grafting, 54-55
 Grand Cru Vineyards, 62
 Greystone winery, 33
 Guild Wineries & Distilleries, 23, 27,
 34, 35, 36, 37

 Halperin, Ze'ev, 9
 Hartley brandy, 17
 Heck, Adolph, 17, 25
 Heck, Paul, 17, 25
 Heitz, Joseph E., 68
 Heublein, [Inc.], 25
 Holden, Charles, 74
 Hospice de Beaune, 9

 ion exchange, 51
 Italian Swiss Colony (ISC), 17, 24-31,
 39, 74

 Johnson, Lucien, 34
 Jones, Lee, 13-15, 24
 Jones, R. H., 32-33
 Joslyn, Maynard A., 9-10
 Jurgens, Peter, 38

 Kahman, Tony, 61
 Korbel [& Bros.] winery, 17, 25
 Krug, Charles, Winery, 53

 Lejon label, 17, 18
 Lodi area, 22-23
 Los Hermanos label, 42, 43, 44, 69

 Magnani, Robert L., 62
 Maher, Richard L., 39, 40, 41
 Marsh, George, 4, 7, 9, 10
 Martini, Louis M., 52
 Martini, Louis P., 9, 45
 McKinnon, McKay, 52
 Meyer, Karl Frederick, 4
 Miranda, Eugene, 3

- Mission Dry Corporation, 6-7, 38
Mondavi, Peter, 48, 53
Mondavi, Robert, 78
Moone, F. Michael, 41
Mrak, Emil, 4, 9, 10, 11
- Napa Ridge label, 69
National Distillers, 17, 19, 24-27, 33
Nelson, Klayton, 56-58
Nestlé [SA], 27, 38, 63-65, 70-71.
See also Beringer
Vineyards
Nightingale, Alice A., (Mrs. Myron),
56-62 and passim
- Ohanesian, Aram, 9
Olmo, Harold P., 74
- Palace Hotel, 15
Perelli-Minetti, Antonio, 29
Porter, Seton, 27
Prati, Ed, 25
Prati, Enrico, 24, 28, 29
protein stabilization, 50-51
- Roma Wine Company, 23, 33, 35, 3
Rosentsiel, Lewis R., 27, 33, 38
Rossi, Edmund A., 25
Rossi, Edmund A., Jr., 25-26, 30, 31
Rossi, Robert, 25
Rossi, Robert, Jr., 25
- Saccharomyces cerevisiae, 11
Sbarboro, Andrea, 30
Sbragia, Ed, 69
Schenley [Distilleries, Inc.], 19, 27,
32-38, 70, 71
Schlottman, Dave, 69
Seagrams, 19
Serlis, Harry, 38
Shewan, Mrs. [Jessica A.], 13
Shewan-Jones Winery, 13, 16-19, 20-24,
26, 47
Sierra Wine Company, 44
Simis, Rosalyn A. S., 30
Smith, V. R., Olive Company, 5-6
Souverain [Cellars], 40
spoilage problems, 11
Steinhauer, Chet, 35
sulfide problems, 52
sulfur dioxide, 11, 49
- Technical Advisory Committee, 32, 72,
74, 75
tie-in sales, 20
Timothy, Brother, 46
Tonjum, James, 41
Turrentine, Dan, 73
- University of California
Food Sciece Department, 4, 10-12
Fruit Products Division, 4, 7
University of California, Berkeley, 1,
2, 3-5, 7, 8-12, 47
University of California, Davis, 11,
12, 50, 63
- Vaughn, Reese, 4, 9, 10, 11
- Webb, A. Dinsmoor, 60
Wente Bros., 33, 35
Wente, Herman, 17, 46-47
Wetmore family, 34
Wine Institute, 15, 20, 28, 32, 38,
47, 51, 61, 72-74
Wine Advisory Board, 73
Winkler, Albert J., 11
- yeasts, 11
- Grape varieties mentioned in the
interview
- Cabernet Sauvignon, 42, 43, 53, 74
Chardonnay, 42, 43, 53
Chenin blanc, 42, 43, 53
Flame Tokay, 22
French Colombard, 53
Gewürztraminer, 62
Grenache, 74
Johannisberg Riesling, 35
Muacat, 54
Palomino, 55
Pinot noir, 53
Sauvignon blanc, 42, 54, 59
Semillon, 59
Thompson Seedless, 17-18, 26, 35, 43-
44
Zinfandel, 22-23, 42-43, 53, 54
- Wines mentined in the interview
- Botrytized, 59-62
Cabernet Sauvignon, 49
chablis, 43

champagne, 16, 17
Chardonnay, 43, 48, 50, 65
Chateau Lejon Red and White, 17
Chenin Blanc, 53-54
Dubonnet, 37
Gewürztraminer, 62
muscatel, 17, 19, 20
Pinot Noir, 49, 66
port, 17, 19, 35
Sauterne-type, 56
Semillon, 56
sherry, 16, 17-18, 19, 35
vermouth, 17
white port, 35
White Zinfandel, 23, 43, 44, 54, 66

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.

14-1177-T

