



TASTING NOTES

Wine Garage Newsletter

April 2010

Moon, Stars, and Wind Machines

Ahhh, Spring has sprung here in Napa Valley. I can hear it every morning. The mustard carpets every vineyard in its bright yellow cheeriness. The blossoms are sprouting from every fruit tree. Pears, plums, apples, and peaches are displaying all their future glory in splashes of white, purple, and pink. Down below the house, on the corner of Silverado and Deer Park Road, there is about a 10 acre plot of prime vineyard site that is planted not to wine grapes but to...peaches, of all things. Dr. Baldwin, one of my neighbors owns the land and simply refuses to sell it to a winery and has it planted to 8 different varieties of white and yellow peaches. In July, the first peaches are ready and he puts out a sign that states: "Peaches next Tuesday" (or Thursday). Never on a Saturday since he is a Seventh Day Adventist; a religion that didn't like the fact that Caesar changed the calendar so Sunday was the 1st day of the week. To Adventists, Saturday is considered to be the proper Sabbath; a day of rest and faith. Adventists don't drink alcohol either, so that is probably why he doesn't want his land turned into vineyard (just to make a point). Right now that plot of land is ablaze in bright colors that I can see from the deck - I can almost taste those sweet peaches, dripping juice down my arm as I plunge in for another bite. Most folks don't realize that Napa Valley is super important to Adventists since Ellen White, one of the founders (and Prophet) of the movement lived right up the street in a home called "Elmshaven" - a treasured historical monument of the faith - until her death in 1915. Likewise, if you drive up the hill on Deer Park Road you will come to the town of Angwin, home of Pacific Union College, a major Adventist institution. Angwin's only market doesn't sell meat or alcoholic beverages, and the sole Post Office of the town is the only Post Office in the country that is closed on a Saturday.

Trivia all you wine drinkers out there I'm sure will appreciate, no? If you are in Napa in the summertime on your next vacation, be sure to swing by the corner of Silverado and Deer Park Rd (on a Tuesday or Thursday) for some yummy peaches grown on some of the most expensive farm land in the world.

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Anyway....I sure heard the Spring this morning. This is the time of year when - like peach blossoms - vine blossoms push out their buds; called "bud break". But there is a slight problem because the last day of frost for this agricultural zone isn't until May 15th, so when it gets chilly here in the spring, all those helicopter looking things sprouting up in vineyards get turned on in the wee morning hours to move the cold air around from the lowest spots of the vineyard so those cute little green buds don't get frozen. Sounds like what Vietnam probably did during a major offensive, with all those Huey's coming in for a landing. Freaking LOUD, OK? I live up the hill from one of those Huey things, and it woke me up the last 4 days in a row. This morning though, I was almost glad that I was yanked out of my slumber by a chorus of 'copters - it was the full moon in all its glory, saying "hello", from across my view of the valley.

The stars. Man, can you see the STARS from my deck at night. We live in the country up here and with the closest (big) town 45 minutes away (Santa Rosa), ambient light just isn't around to get in the way of your eyes and the shiniest carpet of sparkling little orbs you ever gazed at. I can stare for hours skyward, sometimes seeing many, many falling stars in a single seating. My New York City big sister was out for one of her visits, this one being in the summer. We were on the deck, probably stealing a smoke, and I wondered out loud how many falling stars we will see sitting here. Kathy looked at me with this "yea, right" smirk on her face and she said, "I have NEVER seen even ONE falling star". "Are you serious, in your entire lifetime?" I asked. I was shocked, being the outdoorsy freak that I am. I've seen thousands of stars falling down from the heavens. From the deck of a sailboat in the Bahamas (the best star gazing imaginable) to seeing that comet, big as a watermelon with a trail of fire five miles long moving in slow motion from one horizon to the other while backpacking in the Trinity Alps, I just couldn't imagine not EVER seeing even one single falling star. Thirty seconds later, she had her first glimpse of a little rock, on fire from its re-entry into our atmosphere, streaking across the Valley.

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One hour later she had bagged four more, now burned into her memory banks forever. Me; grinning ear to ear knowing now that whenever she sees another one, she will think of me, both of us on the deck sneaking a smoke, heads cocked skyward.

But this morning when I was jarred awake by the Huey, thinking Robert Duvall in his blue Calvary hat was probably just out my door sniffing for napalm, there were no stars. The biggest full moon you could imagine, just about to set behind Spring Mountain. Oh my God was it a sight. I stood there in my boxers, freezing ('cause those wine machines were on for a very chilly reason), just before the sky was about to turn wispy pink due to the Sun rising from the opposite horizon behind me. I watched it set, millimeter by millimeter below the apex of the mountain, actually seeing the outline of redwood trees backlit from the moon. Then something in the sky got my attention and I zeroed in on a site I may never see again.

A jetliner was flying probably at thirty thousand feet above, and since it was at that moment right before sunrise, the plane was so high in the sky that the sunlight was hitting the fuselage before the sunlight was shining on the Earth, just perfectly, so it was glowing, its contrail streaking behind in the pink mist of pre-sunrise. It looked like a bullet, on fire, leaking pink smoke set against the pale blue sky. It reminded me of the space shuttle on lift-off. WOW. The Moon setting, the Sun rising, and a rocket high above on fire, and all the while the Huey's were screeching. Thank goodness Robert Duvall didn't show up or I would have just fainted. This is why that Ellen White probably moved to this magical valley in 1900 – never even enjoying a single glass of wine.

The fact that wine grapes grow here is just a coincidence to all of Napa Valley's majesty, inspiring her to write her many books on faith. I discovered something that made me chuckle about Ellen White and the Adventists today. Ellen was inspired to her calling after the "Millerite Great Disappointment".

William Miller (no relation to me, Todd Miller) started a movement in the mid 1800's that preached that Jesus was to come back to Earth on October 22nd, 1844. Somehow he figured that exact day through his deciphering of the Book of Daniel. Thousands of followers gave away all their possessions awaiting His return. When He didn't show up as expected, well, they were pretty disappointed. GREATLY disappointed.....

These wines in the April Wine Club you are about to enjoy will be no disappointment, that I am certain of.

NOTE:

The Wine Garage experienced a sad day when our Wine Club Manager, Linda Wilds Beltz, submitted her resignation to pursue her dream to paint and create more art. Linda had worked for the Garage for half of our entire existence, hired at first as a part-time admin assistant. I saw her talents displayed in many arenas: her creativity in writing (and editing!), brainstorming (she was the one who came up with the name "Joy Ride" for our white blend) with me on many projects, trying to keep me in-line and on time to my many obligations. She was a dedicated employee that took her job very seriously. Trustworthy, honest, and with impeccable standards, she made sure that you, our customer, were always taken care of and that you, our Club members, always came first when it came to customer service. Making this wine club run smoothly is no easy task. She displayed unbelievable attention to detail and was always keeping things organized even when the sky was falling. I miss her dearly and wish her the best on her creative pursuits.