

Bargetto

The Bargetto Winery in Soquel has been producing wines from Santa Cruz Mountain grapes longer than any other California winery. The history of the the family's wine connection dates back much farther than the winery's official founding in 1933.

Guiseppe Bargetto, father of the winery's founders, came to the United States from Italy for a short time (1890-92) and his brother John came later, setting up a San Francisco winery in 1909 at Kearney and Columbus Streets. Guiseppe's son Philip came to California in 1891 at the age of seventeen and was a partner with his uncle John in the San Francisco enterprise, which they sold in 1913. Philip also worked at the famed Casa Delmas Winery¹ in Mountain View on two occasions before World War I.

Guiseppe's youngest son, John, came to California in 1909 and worked in the famed Fly Trap Restaurant in San Francisco, before moving to Soquel in 1911, where he started a small produce business. Two years later his brother came down to join him in this venture, after having sold the winery in San Francisco. In 1918 they bought the Brown property (3 acres) on Soquel's Main Street, the site of today's winery and in 1923 purchased a ranch site (52 acres) nearby. This property acted as the basis for their expanding produce business, and they had a few grape vines there as well.

Both families lived together; Philip and his wife had two daughters, Sylvia and Adeline; John and his wife had two sons, Lawrence and Ralph. During Prohibition the family made wine, which was legal, and sold some to their neighbors, which was not. In fact, the Santa Cruz Mountains was an important source of good homemade wine during Prohibition, produced by local people who did not accept the idea that wine for the family table should be an illegal commodity.

When Prohibition ended in December, 1933 the Bargetto brothers began selling their wine legally to their neighbors. The next year they received their bond (3859).

The Bargetto interviews took place with several family members. The first was with *Beverly* (BB) and *John Bargetto* (JB). She is John's mother and the widow of Lawrence Bargetto, who operated the family enterprise from the 1960s until his death in 1982. John is a graduate of UC Davis and is active today in the winery's operations. The first interview took place in the family home, now offices, at the winery.

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December 4, 1992

CS: Let's begin in 1933 when the winery was founded. How does family history deal with these earliest days?

BB: That was a very exciting time. Sylvia and Adeline remembered that very well. The first days when they came home from their regular jobs in Santa Cruz and they had to wash and fill bottles. That place here was around for many years. My children used the same wooden tub that they used to wash the bottles in. Right here in the winery. All the family went to work filling up those bottles. The customers were waiting. That was after December 5, when Prohibition ended.

¹ See Charles L. Sullivan. *Like Modern Edens* (Cupertino, 1982): 53.

Repeal

CS: John and Philip didn't have a bond on the winery at that moment did they?

BB: I don't believe so.

They then opened a retail store down in Santa Cruz. Sylvia ran that for quite a few years.

CS: Where were they getting their grapes then?

BB: They were primarily red wine grapes. Those were the grapes they were most comfortable with then. And with the equipment they had you could make a better red wine.

There was the Quistorff vineyard near Bonny Doon, the Vincent Locatelli vineyard above the Ben Lomand area, the De Lucchi vineyard near Santa Cruz, Bertolli was also near Bonny Doon, and down near Corralitos there were the Cordoza and McGrath vineyards. There was also the Iacopetti vineyard, but I'm not sure where that was.²

JB: These were sources for our grapes from the 1930s through the 1950s. Uncle Ralph will have more exact information on them.

CS: What grape varieties were the most common from these sources?

BB: Riesling was an important one that Grandpa used. He made a generic Burgundy; so that would be mostly Zinfandel.

JB: He also got some Beclan, which is a variety I never heard until recently.³ He got this variety out in Corralitos, and he said it made a big, rich red wine.

CS: Beclan in Corralitos would be far out!

JB: I wanted to say something about the founding of the winery. I think it must have been very exciting for these two immigrant Italian brothers. They had made the transition to California life, coming from a mountainous area in the Piedmont. They had made wine in Italy. In fact their mother had deeded the little vineyard and winery to them, back in this little town of Castelnuovo, in the Piedmont. And to be able to come here and have that little winery up in San Francisco and ten to be able to buy land and to build a winery here and to get into the wine business. It must have been a wonderful thing for them.

Bargetto Land in 1933

CS: What was the physical setup here on the property at that time in 1933?

BB: There was the old home here of the Brown family. And there was a large barn, which had been used as storage for the horses and equipment. And that is where they started making wine. That barn is still here in its original state.

² See item #2 on the maps accompanying the Spezia interview.

³ The Petite Beclan is grown in the French Jura and makes a good red wine. There were about 100 acres in California at the end of the 1970s, but is no longer counted in state statistics. On the other hand the Gros Beclan is a synonym for the Peloursin, which is rarely seen in France today. But the Duriff was developed as a seedling of the Peloursin in 1880, and that variety is often identified as the Petite Sirah in California today. See Pierre Galet. *A Practical Ampelography* (Ithaca, 1979): 59, 68, 82.

JB: I used to give a tour of the winery and I would tell about the dirt floor the old winery had back in those days.

BB: That was the winery until 1948.

CS: There were no grapes here?

JB: They had some grapes up the road at the ranch, but it was largely fruit there, cherries and plums.

CS: I wonder if they were table grapes. This area had the best reputation for table grapes in all of California in the early days.

Let's get the business started. We have to remember that when Repeal came was the bottom of the Depression and prices were down for everything, including wine, which to many people was a luxury.

JB: Well first there's a family story that when Prohibition was repealed most people here thought it was a cause for celebration. Grandpa was pleased about it, but when people would ask him about it legend has it he'd answer, "Hell no! It's the worst thing that ever happened to the wine business."

BB: They started with the barrel store down in Santa Cruz. People would come in there with their jugs. Sylvia was in charge. There were three levels of wine. And she would let you try them before you bought any. The wine sold for 25-50 cents per gallon.

They also brought wine to restaurants. They would take whole barrels to a restaurant. They took them as far away as the Carmel Valley down near Monterey. They would deliver the barrel and pick up the empty one.

JB: Back then they used the generic terms to describe the wines, mostly Burgundy and Claret. But the Bargetto name on a label was always reserved for the premium wine that went into the fifths.

CS: I can see the label here. It reads "select mountain vineyard." I guess that shows an early understanding of the quality in those mountain grapes.

JB: Yes. Grandpa knew that these mountains yielded good premium grapes that would make premium wines.

BB: You can tell that this is an old label because it reads "Bargetto Bros." indicating that Philip was still alive. He died in 1936.

JB: And also note that this is a Riesling, which was pretty rare back in the 1930s as a varietal.

CS: Yes, but Riesling was the one great exception. Lots of wineries sold Riesling, because Riesling, is in fact legally a generic term in California since the 1930s. You can make a wine from Grey Riesling and/or Sylvaner and label it Riesling, even though neither is a true Riesling varietal. This might have been the true White Riesling, a blend, or none at all. You can't really tell.

But this early Riesling is fairly remarkable anyway in the early 1930s. There simply weren't very many acres of good white grapes in the state in 1933, anywhere. Just about everything was Muscat Alexandria. So it is a good sign that John and Philip were able to find grapes and sell the wine at that early date.

I wonder if they bought wine already made by anyone.

JB: I never heard of that.

CS: How about selling wine in bulk to other wineries?

JB: I imagine there was some of that, but I'm not sure how much. We'll have to ask Aunt Sylvia.

BB: That was not anything we ever heard anything about, I do know that.

JB: Speaking of labels, you can tell that Grandpa had a pretty sound marketing sense, having three different labels for the different quality levels of his wine. Bargetto was saved for the top end. The least expensive was the "J. B." brand. In the middle was the "Winemaster" brand.

CS: I wonder when that approach began.

BB: I know they had them in the 1950s.

CS: My wife and I would come over and go to the beach with the kids and drop by here and buy Winemaster Zinfandel in half gallon jugs in the late fifties and early sixties.

By the mid-thirties Lawrence and Ralph are pretty big fellows and working at the winery?

BB: That's right. All the time.

CS: What was the family perception of the profitability of the winery in the early years?

BB: This was a trying time for them. The general economic situation was terrible, and then in 1936 Philip died. So Grandpa is now in charge of balancing things for the two families. Actually, it was all one family anyway. In fact most people in Santa Cruz thought that Lawrence, Ralph, Sylvia and Adeline were brothers and sisters. Same name, same address.

JB: We do have to remember that the family made a very important purchase during the 1920s. That was the 52 acre ranch up the road. They sold it in 1948 for \$20,000, but we don't know what they paid for it. I'm sure that the revenue from the ranch helped carry them along in the 1930s.

CS: What interests me is the fact that the wine business simply was not very profitable in the thirties, and they stuck with it, even though they had the ranch to carry them along. I think they must have had a very positive attitude toward winegrowing as a way of life.

BB: That's true. winemaking was built into their life-style, in their daily habits. Sylvia and Adeline, even though they had outside jobs, each had jobs at the winery. Adeline kept the books and Sylvia ran the barrel store. And they both did a lot of physical work around here when they came home.

World War II

CS: What was the impact of World War II on the family and the business?

BB: Grandpa with his produce saw a rise in his income. He helped supply the Navy ships that would pull in to Santa Cruz harbor. They were invited out for a special tour of the ships one time.

JB: The war was a shock to Grandpa. He was opposed to it. The prospect of having to send his sons overseas to fight his own countrymen was very distasteful to him. Ralph ended up going to war,

but Grandpa did everything he could to keep him out. Ralph tells a story of how Grandpa told the military inspectors that he was absolutely needed on the ranch to help raise pigs. I guess there were stories about how some families got out of sending sons if they were producing pigs. So he went out and bought a few pigs and built a little pen for them. But Ralph did get called up and shipped overseas.

CS: The winery kept right on going during the War?

BB: Right. Lawrence had gone away to college before the war broke out. That helped get him a deferment. He went to Santa Clara University.

CS: What happened at the end of the war?

BB: Ralph came home and they both finished up at Santa Clara. Then came the decision of what to do.

Lawrence definitely had a scientific bent. He was interested in that part of the wine business. Ralph was a natural salesperson. So you had the two perfect elements for the wine business.

CS: The outside man and the inside man, just like the Mondavis.

You also said something about the expansion that came after the war.

BB: After the selling of the ranch in 1948, this house was built. Then came the first big expansion of the winery.

JB: Now it is the fermentation room, our ageing room, and our barrel room.

CS: How did they swing it?

BB: They had the cash, from the war and from selling the ranch.

CS: Yes, there were a lot of good sized bank accounts at that time, and all those savings bonds.

JB: There was a great surge of optimism at that time. The boys were back from the University; build a new house; expand the winery. It was natural.

BB: And Sylvia and Adeline always were participating financially by putting money in that they earned on the outside.

JB: They illustrate the closeness of this family.

CS: We'll stop this here and take off with the post-war years.

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January 5, 1993

Post-War Years

CS: Let's start off with the end of the war and the changes that had taken place. What were the main effects of these changes?

BB: The most important historical point is that both the sons, Lawrence and Ralph, decided to return home from college and apply their interests to the wine business. Ralph was a natural born salesperson and so he took that area and went out and sold our wine to retailers. Larry, who had a very strong scientific bent, concentrated on wine making. He was interested in updating things in relationship to the steps that had been made to improve the chemistry of winemaking, and one of the first things he did was to build the lab here. He also built some of the equipment himself. He had gone up to UC-Davis and took extra courses in that area. He also wanted to go into specific varieties, to re-enforce the varietal approach his father had taken in earlier years. At that time we were mostly into a generic approach to wine production.

CS: Other than Zinfandel and Riesling what varietals was he interested in?

BB: Chardonnay and Cabernet. He also made a Malvasia, which was a red wine, by the way.

CS: Did he make it sweet?

BB: No.

CS: You know what that grape really is? It's the Cinsaut of southern France. Here it was often called Malvoisie and Italians here called it the Malvasia nera, the Black Malvasia. It's usually used for blending. Today it's become a hot grape, because of this passion for Rhone varieties. So people like Randall Graham at Bonny Doon have been rushing around finding these old vineyards that still have these old vines. Mataro is another one (Mourvèdre).

JB: The major symbol of their optimism at that time was the big expansion they went through. They came in and poured concrete floors and hired a professional architect who came in and built the new buildings. They were really serious now. It wasn't just Grandpa hammering in a few nails. And they brought in some important cooperage as well. They constructed redwood tanks, the same ones we use today, but not for our varietal wines. We now use them for the fruit wines. We also brought in some large German oak casks. They were being used then, when we bought them, and we still use them now.

About twenty years ago, when I was giving tours, I told people they were over 100 years old then.

BB: We understood they came around the Horn.

JB: But I'm not sure who we bought them from.

CS: It's certainly possible. Inglenook is still using casks like that that came around in the 1890s.

JB: We still use them today, particularly for our reds for malo-lactic.

BB: Grandpa bought some of our redwood tanks from the Petri Winery in San Francisco.

CS: How did the capacity of the winery change in those years?

JB: I'd say it went from about 10,000 gallons pre-war to about 75,000. We have one large tank that holds 14,000 alone.

CS: Did they buy wine from other wineries in those days, other than what they made themselves?

JB: There was some purchasing of bulk wine, particularly for the generics.

CS: With those capacity numbers and knowing how few the vineyards were around here, I wouldn't be surprised if they had to buy wine from other producers.

JB: Yes, particularly since they kept up the three levels of merchandising. There was the JB Brand, the Winemaster and the varietals under the Bargetto Brand.

CS: I can see here that in 1955 you crushed 12 tons of Santa Cruz Mountain grapes. That's going to make a little less than 2,000 gallons. So they were buying quite a few grapes from outside this area.

BB: Yes. At this period a lot of the grapes came from the Morgan Hill area.

CS: Did they truck them over Hecker Pass or through Los Gatos?

BB: Mostly over Hecker Pass. Tony Bonino was an important grower for us over there in those days.

JB: And I'm not even sure whether these stats I have here are complete for the Santa Cruz Mountain grapes. That's just what I was able to find.

Grape Sources

CS: At this point I'm going to put in that chart you made up showing a typical year in each decade, indicating your grape sources in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

1955	V. Locatelli	4 tons	Zinfandel
	Bertolli	5 tons	Zinfandel
	J. Beauregard	3 tons	Zinfandel
1962	Vine Hill/ Schermerhorn	8 tons	White Riesling
		4 tons	Sylvaner
		4 tons	Chardonnay
		1 ton	Cabernet Sauvignon
1974	Vine Hill/ Schermerhorn	6.5 tons	Chardonnay
		7.5 tons	Sylvaner
		3.5 tons	White Riesling

1989	Trout Gulch (Aptos)	20 tons	Chardonnay
	Meyley (Bonny Doon)	4 tons	Chardonnay
	Trout Gulch	6 tons	Pinot noir
	Jack Bates Ranch	14 tons	Cab. Sauvignon
1991	Vanumarutagi (Hecker Pass)		
		5 tons	Chardonnay
	Christie (Corralitos)	1 ton	Chardonnay
	Trout Gulch	36 tons	Chardonnay
	Trout Gulch	6 tons	Pinot noir
	Bates Ranch	21 tons	Cab. Sauvignon
	Bates Ranch	1 ton	Merlot

CS: Let's talk about your other sources in the Santa Clara Valley. You mentioned Tony Bonino near Morgan Hill.

JB: John Anzalone was one, in the Almaden Valley. And across the street, John Calcaterra. We got grapes from them in 1966.

CS: I made my first wine from Zinfandel I bought from Calcaterra in 1968. And I had the Anzalone son in school. He was an outstanding student and graduated from Berkeley with a degree in history.

JB: Virginio Pappani, on the Hecker Pass Road, just west of Gilroy.

CS: Right, he'd had a little winery there after Repeal.

JB: Bonino was a very important source; he came here for years.

CS: There were so many vineyards over there, I guess you had a tremendous range to choose from. This was mostly for your red wines.

BB: That's right.

JB: Uncle Ralph will tell you what it was like making wine back there in the fifties. I've heard him say that he doesn't like to go by the winery at crushing time because it made him sick. To think about how much work they had to do. I can remember from the seventies, and there has been a great change since then, so far as physical labor is concerned. Back then we had to move the crushing machine from one open-top fermenter to another. And then there was the shoveling of pomace. I can tell you about that.

BB: During the crushing season they would be out there until three o'clock in the morning and they'd be out there at seven again when another load would come in.

JB: We had pumps by that time, thank heavens. We have the original hand pump from Grandpa's time.

CS: That's why you almost had to have a gravity-flow winery in the days before electrification.

Selling Wine

Well, I guess production in those years must have been 50,000 gallons plus. How were they selling it?

BB: Ralph was our one main contact with the outside.

JB: He was the marketing department, and delivery , also. We had no distributors.

BB: Mostly his territory was the Santa Cruz area. Later he went up the Peninsula. He went right up El Camino Real, to Redwood City, San Mateo.

JB: All the way to San Francisco. Not too long ago I came across an account who remembered Uncle Ralph back in the fifties.

CS: I know you were in the Santa Clara Valley in the late fifties because I saw the label there then. I read Melville, saw the label here and there, and we came over and bought some wine.

JB: Our retail room came in a little later. But we did have the liquor store in Santa Cruz.

CS: Is that the evolution of the old barrel-store at Repeal?

BB: Yes. Later we got a liquor license. It was a real liquor store. They went the whole route.

CS: How about restaurants?

BB: A little. In the earlier period Ralph would deliver barrels to restaurants down in Carmel. That was in the forties.

JB: That would be their house wine.

CS: I suspect that changed after World War II. Barrels in restaurants were just not seen any more.

BB: This is where a good part of the jug business comes in. Gallons and half-gallons. That's what the restaurants wanted now. It's much more efficient and it's cleaner.

CS: How about industry matters back then.

BB: We were a charter member of the Wine Institute. Larry began going to the meetings in the early fifties. They'd be down at Asilomar. That was very convenient.

CS: Did you ever go to the Santa Clara Winegrowers meetings ?

BB: We'd send a representative sometimes. Larry may have gone once or twice in the sixties.

CS: I took my wife to one of those meetings in the early sixties, and I didn't know you weren't supposed to take your wife. It caused a little commotion. But a few years later Phyllis Pedrizzetti was the president.⁴

⁴ The Pedrizzetti Winery is in Morgan Hill, owned by Ed and Phyllis Pedrizzetti (BW 4031). She was president of the Santa Clara Valley Winegrowers Association in 1976.

How about around here? Was there anything that hinted of a local organization?

BB: No. In the fifties, except for Dan Wheeler, we were the only winery operating.

Natural Disasters

CS: How did the big 1955-56 flood affect things here?

BB: Fortunately we rose above it. But it was very close. The water came up and lapped at the floor of the winery. That's Soquel Creek. The whole area was affected. The tide came in and the water was coming down and the two caused a lot of trouble. These huge trees were floating down the creek like toothpicks. It was a raging water that came up suddenly. The rain had come very gently for a couple of days. Then it came in sheets and the creek went up. And all along the creek the logs came down and jammed up and that forced the water over the top. Down in our store in Santa Cruz it was all silt. All the bottle goods were covered.

JB: During the summer time Soquel Creek is just a little trickle. Sometimes it just dries up. In the winter time it can come up very quickly. I remember Dad saying that there was a part of the winery that sort of sits out over the creek a bit. He said that the water was actually coming up between the boards. They had barrels in there full of wine and Grandpa was in there trying to save this wine. Dad thought the whole thing was going to wash away.

CS: Any other natural disasters come to mind.

BB: In 1982 it was a similar situation. It really came up. We were out there at midnight.

CS: I want you to put together a little map of the buildings on the property here and the dates they were built. That's something we rarely get. People just don't think of it.

JB: I did something historical recently. I got UC-Davis to send us copies of the original bond from the BATF. I tried to get them ten years ago for our fiftieth anniversary, but they weren't available.

CS: Right, the BATF gave the Shields Library at Davis all those old records. They have crates piled to the ceiling.

JB: Anyway, the original bond had an original map of the winery then. June 18, 1934.

CS: We'll need a copy of that right here in the interview.
How about the big 1989 earthquake? Anything happen here?

BB: I should say. Fortunately the World Series was about to start. For that very reason people left a little early that day. I was standing in the little office, a wooden structure. It started shaking. Three of us were in there having a conference. We just shot out the front door into the parking lot. Our car was bouncing up and down. I looked into the tasting room first and it was a total disaster. Food and wine had come off all the shelves and were intermingled on the floor. You could hardly get into the place because of the broken glass.

Then we opened the door to the winery and we could hear what sounded like water rushing.

Then we had to find the key to open the big door. There were no lights. On one of our stainless steel fermentation tanks the door at the bottom had been knocked open. It was impossible to close it and the wine just poured out. That wine went down the drain.

CS: What was it?

BB: It was Chenin blanc. Thank heavens it wasn't Chardonnay.

JB: In addition we had lost some barrels that had bounced off from the highest row in the barrel rack. They came crashing down onto the concrete floor and split. That was Nebbiolo, and if we had had to choose the two we'd probably been most willing to lose, they were the two, white and red. We'd been doing some experimentation with the Italian variety and it wasn't very good.

CS: Where did you get the grapes?

BB: I think it was from Martin Brothers, near Paso Robles.

CS: How much did you lose?

BB: We lost 1600 gallon of the Chenin blanc. And then there were several barrels of Nebbiolo, and one of Chardonnay.

JB: We were fortunate compared to Silver Mountain.⁶ And David Bruce lost a lot of barrels. But compared to the general destruction on this side we got off lightly.

CS: Were you involved with the wine produced, the Epicenter Cuvée?

BB: Yes, we certainly were. Wineries that had some Chardonnay which they had just made, the 1989, decided to get together and make a blend.

CS: Who got that going?

BB: The Santa Cruz County Winegrowers. Those who had a barrel could present it and the group would select a blend. We came up with a blend and put it on the market. That was a year later. And of course it was national history then.

CS: Who is the legal producer of that wine?

JB: It was blended and bottled at our winery.

CS: Whose wine went into it?

BB: Roudon-Smith,⁶ Devlin,⁷ Storrs,⁸ Bargetto, Bonny Doon,⁹ and David Bruce. There may have been others. We'll have to check.

CS: Was there a red later?

⁶ Jerold O'Brien's Silver Mountain Winery, in the hills behind Los Gatos (BW 4940), was destroyed by a fire the resulted from the Loma Prieta earthquake of October 19, 1989.

⁶ BW 4587 on Bean Creek Road near Scott Valley.

⁷ Devlin Wine Cellars in Soquel, BW 4843.

⁸ BW 5477 in Santa Cruz.

⁹ BW 5167 on Pine Flat Road.

BB: Yes.

JB: That wasn't as great a success. By then it was the second anniversary and not so hot an item. The memory was a little more dim. We're still selling that Pinot noir.

The 1960s

CS: Let's go back to the sixties. What's going on leading up to 1963?

BB: There is an important economic factor here. The two families are trying to raise thirteen children. There is an economic problem here. The wine market was very slow. The "revolution" had not yet started. Grandpa was getting along in years. The two boys, Larry and Ralph, were now making all the decisions. Ralph decided he needed to find another means of livelihood. So he left the winery and Larry told his father that he would like about six months to see if he could put it on firm ground economically. So the family said OK, go ahead and try it.

JB: At that time the debt on the winery was even greater than the value. Things just hadn't paid off as they had hoped.

CS: What was the key to the problem?

JB: Sales were the chief factor. We needed to sell more wine. It wasn't an insurmountable problem and my dad was willing to give it a go. And this was against the recommendations of the family. They were concerned that he could lose the winery and his home as well.

BB: This was definitely a low point in the winery's history.

CS: How do you separate? Your grandfather is still alive for another year. Does Ralph just walk away? Do you do shares? What was the deal?

BB: Grandpa walked away. Larry took over all the debt. And Ralph walks away as well.

CS: Where are you in 1963 so far as production is concerned?

BB: It's still the basic operation. There hadn't been any important changes yet. The picture we've developed here is still a fact.

CS: So, what did Lawrence Bargetto have in mind? You're giving up your marketing man.

Lawrence Bargetto at the Helm

BB: He wanted to push the idea of selling at the winery. We had put in the tasting room in 1960. That was here as a potential. There wasn't really a marketing plan yet. We had to depend on word of mouth. He worked in the winery and I spent a lot of time in the tasting room. There were the two of us, and there was a woman who lived up the road and she would come and help us bottle, and she worked in the tasting room.

CS: Your kids aren't big enough to do much yet.

BB: No. We had just started having children. He also had a part time worker in the winery. Sylvia

was now removed from the operation because she had gotten married. Adeline was still living here. But she had her own job.

JB: The operation became a more production oriented thing. Dad was a production man with his scientific background.

CS: But that doesn't generate money.

JB: But he wanted to make better wine, to improve quality and boost sales that way.

CS: I see your point. That is not such a big factor today. Good wine is almost taken for granted today. You can't survive at this level making mediocre wine. Now everything depends on marketing that good wine.

JB: Today you find out what the market wants and move in that direction. Back then he wanted to create a better market by attracting people to a better product.

CS: What did he do to kick up quality?

BB: More time in the lab. And we bought a hydraulic press from Valley Foundry. And later was the introduction of stainless steel for fermenting whites. But that was in the seventies.

CS: You were still thinking red wine in the late sixties.

BB: Yes, but we also began making a Moscato Amabile. Louis Martini was the only other winery doing it. That wine became very popular in our tasting room.

JB: That wine was still our best seller, even up into the late seventies.

CS: What grapes, Muscat of Alexandria?

BB: And Moscato Canelli.¹⁰

CS: That makes a difference. That's a much better grape.

BB: We also made a good Barbera. Here is where Larry went into a broader base of varieties. We also made a Petite Sirah.

CS: I can see on your chart of sample years 16 tons in the sixties of top varietals from Vine Hill and all white. White Riesling, Sylvaner and Chardonnay. That's going to give you 2,500 gallons on premium varietal white wine from the Santa Cruz Mountains. And I note that sample year is 1962, so the change in production has just started before the changeover in 1963.

BB: That's what Larry wanted to push. This was his hope. This was an addition to the line, not a switch.

CS: But if stainless didn't come in until 1974, that means these early whites were made in wood.

BB: That's right.

JB: They were fermented in those open top redwood tanks, but we did have some refrigeration by then. We had a heat exchange system to keep fermentation temperatures down.

¹⁰ Also termed Muscat Frontignan and Muscat blanc.

CS: How are the generics doing?

BB: By then people are coming more and more to the winery to buy jug wine for the table. And we had started to do grocery stores in the area.

CS: When did you know you had made it through?

BB: At the end of the sixties. The tasting room was doing very well. And we sold our Winemaster label. That also gave us some cash. We sold that to Guild.¹¹

Larry asked me one day whether we should sell the label, and I said no. I didn't think that he would go for what I thought we should get for it. This was in 1966. I was set on getting a good price, or not selling it at all. We had this dear friend who was a marketing person. He teaches at the University of San Francisco. He came in to advise us and we sold it to them.

JB: Interestingly, I ran into Mr. Cribari a couple of years ago. He says, "You know, John, that was the worst deal we ever made. We paid far too much for it and we never used it."

CS: Well, there was a Guild Winemaster brand for a while. And they used to call their hospitality center the "Winemaster Hospitality House."¹²

BB: But I don't think they ever pushed it. But that was an important amount of money for us back then. \$10,000.

CS: I'll tell you exactly what that would be worth in 1993 dollars, today. (Consults a chart in his wallet.) That's almost \$45,000 today.

BB: Another thing that helped out back then-- we started to do some bottling for the Cribari brand. Their sacramental wines for export. We were going around the clock on that at times. They actually brought in those huge containers they put on ships.

JB: We got a bottling line out of the deal.

Fruit Wines

BB: Another factor that helped out was the development of our line of fruit wines. We had Santa Rosa plums growing on our property here. Government regulations had made it very difficult for us to market our plums. They changed the regulations. It was the new grading rules. So we decided that was no longer for us. So we asked ourselves what we could do with the plums and recalled that the Japanese made plum wine. We thought we had nothing to lose. We have the plums and a winery, why not?

CS: How many trees are we talking about?

BB: About an acre.

So we tried it and it was a hit.

¹¹ A grower-owned cooperative with various premises, with headquarters in Woodbridge.

¹² See Leon Adams. *The Wines of America* (3rd edition, 1985): 410-411. Guild actually used the Winemaster brand from 1967 to 1987. Kenneth Cribari was in charge of sales at Guild in the later sixties.

CS: How did he make it? Was it pasteurized? How did he stabilize it with that sugar.

BB: He filtered it. I think that was when he started buying those Italian filters. They had the alcohol of a table wine.

Then we branched out into many other fruit wines. Strawberry, peach, pear.

CS: Were you making them all here?

BB: Absolutely. We always made it from the fruit itself, with no additives. No additional flavoring. We still make them.

JB: Another good point was that they could be made during the off season. That equipment is going to be just sitting there in June and July, and now we were able to put it to work. The Santa Rosas would come in in July.

CS: In Los Gatos they come in in June, at least mine do.

JB: And we got apricots from Hollister. Raspberries, strawberries, from down around Watsonville.

CS: So you concentrated on using local fruit.

BB: Absolutely.

CS: That makes sense. Historically the Santa Cruz Mountain area was supposed to have the best flavored fruit in Northern California. The table grapes were also supposed to be the best.

JB: I'd bet that the same thing that gives the Chardonnay grown here that rich flavor has something to do with the flavor we get from our Santa Rosa plums.

CS: Do you ferment with the pits and stems and everything?

JB: We just dump in those 40 pound lugs.

CS: These do well in the tasting room?

BB: Oh, yes. The tasting room is really doing well back then. The whole idea of wine tasting has taken off by the end of the sixties.

The 1970s

JB: And dad wasn't too keen on distributors. He wanted to have as much control as he could. And sales at the tasting room give you the maximum margin. And we could still keep our wines affordable.

Later he decided to go down to Cannery Row in Monterey in the late sixties and opened up a retail sales/tasting room there. I can remember that place when I was a kid, and at first that place was a ghost town. There were a couple of restaurants.

CS: I didn't realize it was that early. That was a pioneering venture back then.

BB: What happened was a doctor who was very interested in wine came to us with the idea of having this tasting room down there. He was from down there.

CS: Had you grown much by the early seventies, in capacity?

BB: Not yet, not until later in the seventies. I'd say about 1973 is when we started growing. After that we start putting in stainless steel.

CS: What have these early years in the wine boom done to you view of the future in the early seventies?

BB: We were very optimistic now. We knew we could make it go from an economic standpoint.

CS: Were you selling outside the state yet?

JB: No, not yet. We don't start spreading out in the state until the mid-seventies.

CS: Can a person buy a bottle of Bargetto wine in Sacramento in 1970? Los Angeles?

BB: No, not yet. It's still pretty much the Santa Cruz area.

CS: Other than word-of-mouth is there anything putting Bargetto in the public eye? Do any wine writers help you out much?

BB: Very few. We did do a little bit of advertising in the local newspaper, maybe once a year. Wine writers? Sometimes one of them would stumble into here. But we didn't go out and solicit them.

CS: But you were in John Melville's book from day one.

JB: Looking back I can tell from the awards we won that 1974 was a very good year for us. Robert Balzer did a very nice write-up on us in one of his big wine books with the beautiful pictures. He said we had one of the finest Chardonnays in California.

CS: It was the 1973 Chardonnay from Vine Hill that made me blink.

JB: Another thing starts happening in the early 1970s. We have groups visiting us, local groups, for tastings. And at that time we were the only winery in the area. Lots of local organizations, like the Rotary Club, had group tours here.

CS: That's right. There were a few other wineries then, but not operating retail rooms.

JB: We had a big billboard on Highway One. It was about a half mile north of the Soquel turn-off. But when the county changed its regulation some years ago we had to take it down. That helped pull people in.

Dad always wanted to have a vineyard in the area himself. In 1973 a doctor in Los Angeles put together a deal whereby they would go together and buy land and plant a vineyard in Corralitos. It was a 47 acre ranch and the deal was looking good. So we bought the vines, about 10,000 cuttings. But at the very last minute the doctor's lawyer in New York told him not to go through with it unless he was able to get 51% of the winery.

CS: So he was going to be buying into the winery as well.

JB: Right. But Dad said that there was no way we were going to give him control of the winery. So the vines had been ordered, and the whole deal fell through. We had to put them into a nursery here. And my dad also planted vines for another doctor, about a half mile from here. It was about five acres. But it's gone now.

CS: Too close to the water?

BB: Divorce.

JB: And then Charley Devlin's father had a nice piece of land on top of Monterey Heights. The was more than five acres. They even put an electrical deer fence around it.

CS: How can that be? There aren't five acres of vines up there.

JB: That was lost too, bankruptcy.

CS: Devlin?

JB: It was his father. There's a problem planting vines on another person's land when you don't own it.

And we planted a little Pinot noir vineyard here. But it didn't work out. It was about an acre. That one we lost to nematodes.

CS: We'll start up next time about 1975 when you start winning all those medals.

* * * * *

February 2, 1993

CS: Let's start with those awards you won in 1975.

JB: That was a significant year. That was the year when we won 19 medals at the Los Angeles County Fair, which was the one main competition.¹³ That was more than any other winery that year and that included the largest number of gold medals for a winery, as well. In terms of Santa Cruz Mountain wines there were the 1974 Vine Hill Chardonnay, White Riesling, and Sylvaner. These all won silver medals.

CS: What are the chief features of the Bargetto operation now between 1975 and when Larry dies in 1982?

BB: Larry had become very interested in the varietals, particularly varietals from the Santa Cruz Mountains. He also wanted to have a vineyard there himself. That's what initiated that move when we bought all those cuttings for the deal in Corralitos that fell through.

JB: We looked up some more information on that. There were actually 15,000 cuttings involved. Also, in terms of those other small vineyards we had been talking about, they had already been planted when we got involved with those cuttings. Those were the two up on Monterey Heights. Some of the Pinot noir that we planted up at the Devlin place came from David Bruce's estate vineyard. Those are now gone.

So later he was more confident to set on this larger venture. That was the anticipated purchase of that 47 acre ranch out near Corralitos. The plan was to plant the vines here at the winery

¹³ The California State Fair competition had not recovered yet from its decline in the 1960s after the pullout of the major premium producers after 1957. Since the late 1970s the LA Competition has become only one of dozens all of the United States.

in a nursery situation to give them one year of growth and to plant them the next winter. But in the meantime the deal collapsed. Meanwhile the nematodes here destroyed two-thirds of the vines.

CS: What happened to the ones that survived?

JB: They were sold to customers who came to the retail room. They'd buy a bottle of Chardonnay and we'd sell them a Chardonnay vine.

Also during the seventies was the first time we had hired UC Davis graduate to work here, although Dad had gone to Davis and taken courses. Kevin Tamake was our first UC Davis graduate enologist. That was a big step forward.

CS: So he's your enologist, but you dad is still the winemaker. Let's go through your personnel over the next years. Larry was the winemaker until he died, wasn't he?

BB: That's right.

CS: How long was Tamake here?

JB: For four years, from 1976 to 1980. Then he was replaced by another Davis graduate, Jeff Fischer. He was here until 1984.

BB: Then we had another Davis trained enologist named John Bargetto.

CS: You are still doing that, are you?

BB: No. In 1986 I was replaced by a Fresno State graduate, Paul Wofford. He is the winemaker today. Before that he had spent some time at the Martin Ray Winery.¹⁴

JB: In the mid-seventies we also brought in our new stainless steel tanks and a new refrigeration system, which allowed us for the first time to really do cold fermentation on our white wines. We had had a crude system up to that time, but this really made a difference.

BB: We also got a good automatic bottling line. That was in 1980.

CS: That replaced the one you got for doing the Cribari line?

JB: That had been nothing but problems.

CS: Any changes in marketing yet?

BB: Not really. We were still concentrated in California, in the Bay Area and the Santa Cruz area.

JB: But one thing that was different was our retail sales here at the winery. It was really hopping in those days. We sold a tremendous amount of wine right here. It was packed on the weekends and busy during the week. But, of course, we were then one of the only tasting rooms in the entire area.

CS: Now you're just part of the Passport Program.¹⁵ I bought a Passport this year.

¹⁴ Martin Ray died in 1976, but the winery operation continued under Wofford and Kenton E. Brooks. Brooks still controls the bond, BW 4399, but there has been no wine made for several years.

¹⁵ See Woodside interview.

Any changes in grape sources?

JB: We still got Vine Hill grapes in the mid-seventies. And then there was a period in the early eighties when we didn't have access to Santa Cruz Mountain grapes. So my dad had to go out of the area for almost all of our grapes. We went to Napa Valley for Cabernet Sauvignon. Our Chardonnay was coming from Tepusquet Vineyard, down near Santa Maria in Santa Barbara County.

CS: Monterey?

JB: Not until later on. And we were getting Zinfandel from the Templeton area, near San Luis Obispo County, south of Paso Robles.¹⁶ The Napa Cabernet came from the St. Regis vineyard of Trefethen, and from the Komes vineyard.¹⁷

The 1981 that came from St. Regis eventually became our "Dedication" Cabernet, for our father, after he had passed away. It was released in 1984. That was probably one of the best red wines we've ever made. Wine Spectator had it in its top ten.

We were also doing more things with oak. Not just oak ageing but we were also doing barrel fermentation.

CS: Any "sur lie" ageing in the barrel?

JB: That came later. I think that I was the first to do that, with our 1985 Chardonnay.

CS: Do you put you Chardonnays through a malo-lactic fermentation.

JB: Yes, our Santa Cruz Mountain Chardonnays. That gets the acid down and adds to the complexity. Our "Cypress" Chardonnay is a lower priced wine and we avoid Malo-lactic with it.

1982

CS: This brings us up to 1982. Larry was 60, which, I think, is pretty young. What happened?

BB: We had just returned from the Monterey Wine Festival and he had a stroke.

JB: It was totally unexpected. Otherwise he was very healthy.¹⁸

CS: I noticed in the industry directory that Ralph Bargetto is still listed as a member of the Board of Directors. Does he still have an active role in the winery?

BB: No. It's kind of honorary.

CS: What time of the year did this happen?

BB: December.

CS: So you had some time to decide what to do.

¹⁶ The Templeton area has been noted for its Zinfandel since the 1890s. It was here that Ignace Paderewski planted a Zinfandel vineyard in the 1920s. See *Wines & Vines*, 2/1/1922, 7/1/1922, 7/1/1941; *Redwood Rancher* 40:4, 12.

¹⁷ Trefethen is at Oak Knoll; the Komes estate is west of Highway 29 off Zinfandel Lane, the Flora Springs Winery and vineyards today.

¹⁸ *Wine Spectator*, 7/12/1983.

BB: The children were still pretty young at that point. Martin was the only one who had finished college.

CS: Tell me about the children. We haven't done that.

BB: All the children as they grew up worked around the winery, since we lived right on the property, just a few feet from the door. They were always involved in some labor here.

Martin had gone to UC Davis. He was born in 1957. But he didn't want to go into enology; he wanted to go into viticulture.

CS: Right, to handle all the family vineyards. (Everyone laughs heartily.)

BB: He had asked if he might go to France to study more, and we said sure. But he wanted to come home for a few months first. He wanted to be home for the 1982 crush. Meanwhile Larry died, and Martin decided not to pursue his adventures in Europe.

Next year Loretta graduated. (Born in 1960) She decided she would like to work in the office here for a while. She went to the University of San Francisco. She continued to work here until just a few months ago, when she had her second child.

Next comes John. He was born in 1961. He went to UC Davis and graduated in enology. He came back and worked at the winery after graduation. That was in 1984.

Next is Richard, born in 1963. He went into the legal profession, from USF to University of San Diego Law School.

Donna was born in 1968 went to USF and is back at John Carroll University working on her master's in history. When she comes back at vacation time she helps working here at the winery. There's always room for more help in the sales room.

JB: There have always been little jobs around for the kids. I can remember picking up cigarette butts in the parking lot for a penny apiece.

CS: That's pretty good pay. Back then there were a lot more smokers.

BB: And there was always washing bottles in those wooden tubs.

CS: Were there any important changes after 1983?

BB: No. We kept up doing things as before. Everyone wanted to stay. And we had the Monterey tasting room to take care of.

National Sales

CS: But in this ten years you've gone to selling nationally. So we should talk about that.

BB: My sons decided that they should have some formal business training, so John went back to Notre Dame, after two years as winemaker, and took a degree in business administration. Then he came back and Martin went to the University of San Francisco and got his MBA. The two of them have put together a national program for marketing throughout the United States.

CS: Has anything happened to the line of Bargetto wines in the last ten years?

BB: We were making a large number of fruit wines and we decided to narrow that down and concentrate on those that were more popular.

JB: We went from making eleven down to five.

CS: You still make them here with local fruit?

BB: Yes. We have raspberry, ollalieberry, apricot, plum and, of course, our mead. That's our favorite now. John is particularly interested in that.

Mead

The boys' new marketing strategy was to separate the varietals from the fruit wines. We struggled for a number of years to decide what name to put on the fruit wines. We never were able to come up with anything we thought was appropriate. Larry had always called the mead Chaucer's Mead, and that had a label all of its own. So we decided to call them all Chaucer's. But it still says Bargetto down at the bottom. That was our compromise.

I'd say the fruit wines reached a peak of about 20% of our production, and it isn't far from that today.

Recently John has come up with the "Hot Spiced Mead." We're introducing it throughout the country in areas that are pretty cold at winter. Skiing areas are good.

JB: We don't put the spices into the wine. The bottle comes with a little spice package attached. That made it possible for us to take a somewhat esoteric beverage, that maybe only historians would drink, and make it a much more main-stream product. It really does well at ski resorts and these Renaissance fairs. We've really had a surge of interest across the country.

CS: Where do you get the honey for the mead?

BB: From the man right up the street. Wall's Honey Farm.

CS: You mean it's right here on Main Street?

JB: That's right.

CS: How much honey do you use a year.

JB: I'm not sure, but we're producing about 10,000 gallons. We laugh about it, since it was surely our most funky product in years past.

CS: Let's go to the vinifera side of the operation.

JB: Earlier we had been making some generic wines under the Santa Cruz Cellars label. But we discontinued those. We also had been making generic wines under the Bargetto label, such as Chablis and Burgundy. We decided that it was time to eliminate those.

CS: Were you making those wines here or buying them elsewhere?

JB: We were producing and ageing them here.

We also decided to really get back to our roots and to emphasize the Santa Cruz Mountain as a source for our grapes. In 1985 we started making the Bates Cabernet Sauvignon from Jack Bates' ranch near the Hecker Pass.

CS: Bates is in the Santa Cruz appellation.

JB: Yes. He's about 800 feet.

We also found a vineyard in the Aptos area for our Chardonnay. It's owned by Bernie Turgeon.¹⁹ We've been making very fine Chardonnay from that vineyard since 1987. He calls it the Trout Gulch Vineyard. It had earlier been called the Miller Ranch. And you can see that name for a vineyard designation on our 1987 Chardonnay.

CS: Yes, we have Trout Gulch on our list of sample years from various decades that I put in earlier.

JB: Our first year there was really a good one. We had a big, rich Chardonnay and it was just at that time that we were starting to ship our wines out of state. And we got this big writeup from Robert Parker in his *Wine Advocate*. We got a 93. We had never previously experienced the benefits of a positive press as we did then, that year with that wine. We had distributors calling us from all over the country.

We also wanted to start making Pinot noir. In 1985 my brother and I convinced our mother that we should stop making Zinfandel and to move to Pinot noir. So we went to Carneros and got grapes from the Madonna Vineyard there. We made a Pinot noir in the old traditional style. The Madonna Vineyard is owned by the Bartolucci family that owns the Mount St. John Winery in the Carneros.

Later we started making Pinot noir from the Trout Gulch Vineyard. Turgeon has a great spot there, with a cool climate, surrounded by redwood trees. It's a beautiful spot.

CS: What about that Vanumanutagi Vineyard on your list?

BB: It's a Hawaiian word. It's off the Hecker Pass road. It's fairly close to the Bates Ranch on Redwood Retreat Road. Leo Ware owns that vineyard.

CS: What is the Christie Vineyard?

JB: Dr. Christie's place is on Day Valley Road, above Freedom Boulevard. And there is another vineyard out on Eureka Canyon Road, also. Eventually we'll have all these in our directory with a map.

CS: Do you have anything to do with the Soquel Vineyards Winery?

BB: They are my nephews, Ralph Bargetto's twin sons, Peter and Paul. And there is also Jon Morgan, who also works for us²⁰.

CS: So they are the ones who have gotten those Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from Peter Martin Ray.

JB: They are making some big, powerful red wines.

CS: I had one in one of my class tastings last year and it was very successful.

Is Ralph Bargetto involved in the operation?

¹⁹ Turgeon was one of the founders in 1974 of the Turgeon & Lohr Winery in San Jose (BW 4670). His partner, Jerome J. Lohr, now operates that venture as the J.Lohr Winery.

²⁰ On February 3, 1993, the day after this interview, an article appeared in the *San Jose Mercury* on the Soquel Vineyards Winery with an evaluation of their wines.

JB: No. Both of them have worked here and their partner, Jon Morgan still does. They decided they wanted to operate their own winery.

CS: Do they operate out of another winery?

BB: They got the Grover Gulch Winery place.²¹ The winery was started by Dennis Bassano and the boys got its bond from him. He had previously closed up.

JB: Also in the mid-eighties we started to really upgrade our cooperage. We started buying more French oak barrels and started getting rid of the old redwood tanks. Those open-top redwood fermenters were the dread of every cellarman. They meant that you had to shovel out the pomace at the end of fermentation, which was very hard on the back.

Then we brought in brand-new stainless tanks from Santa Rosa. Then we started getting rid of the old redwood tanks that Grandpa had bought, and we poured more concrete slabs.

CS: What's production now.

JB: We're at about 30,000 cases. We're aiming at about 60,000. The next generation is coming along with families to support. That's why we're going into all these new markets.

Corralitos

CS: Let's talk about your new Santa Cruz Mountain vineyard near Corralitos.

JB: We just planted the first ten acre section last spring. Two weeks from now we'll plant the second ten acre section to Merlot, and a little bit of Chardonnay. The third planting, two years from now, will be the Pinot noir. It will be close to forty acres when we are finished. I think we should eventually get about 160 tons of grapes. We're even thinking about growing a little Gewürztraminer out there.

CS: That should give you over 10,000 cases of wine.

JB: Ridge will be the only vineyard in the appellation larger than our place.

CS: We really should finish with how you have put together this national marketing campaign that is getting under way.

BB: When the boys returned with their MBAs in 1988 and 1989 they started working up this strategy for a national distribution program. We had four people working on it: Martin, John, Tom (my nephew), and Jim. They divided the country up into four areas and each one had an area. John has the Midwest. Martin has the East.

Tom and the Southeast. Jim has the Northwest.

CS: But how do you do it?

JB: We are responsible for finding distributors in each of these markets. There may be one wholesaler in each major market, and sometimes there are more. We have four distributors in Tennessee.

We've done it in a sort of gradual basis. Up to that point we simply hadn't thought much about selling outside the state. My dad had shipped some wine to Ohio and Texas, and a few other

²¹ This small winery on Glen Haven Road (BW 4912) was started in 1979.

places. But before then we concentrated on California. We simply weren't aware of the rest of the country as a market. Before I went to school in the east, I had never traveled east of Reno before. Until you go there you don't really know how vast it is.

Each year we try to enter about nine new states. We have then listed according to our own priorities from one to fifty. The first year we went for Illinois, Florida, etc. Right now we are in about 46 states.

Another advantage in entering more states is that you can get more attention from the national press. *Wine Spectator* won't look at you unless you're in eight or nine major markets.

There hasn't been a great effect on production yet, but we're gearing up.

CS: So it will be in the nineties when you can translate this into those 60,000 cases and use those new grapes out at Corralitos.

JB: Right. And when we travel around the country the four of us are always trying to teach people about the Santa Cruz Mountains and the wines from here. But we have a long way to go. They've heard about Napa and Sonoma, so we tell them about mountain grown wines.

* * * * *

My next set of interviews was with *Ralph Bargetto*, who was part of the Bargetto Winery operation until 1963. He was born here in 1924 and graduated from Santa Cruz High School in 1942. He then went to Santa Clara University for one year before going into the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. He returned to Santa Clara after the war and finished his work in business administration, graduating in 1949. He was married in 1950 and has lived on the Bargetto family property ever since.

He left the winery in 1963, entering the real estate business, in which he is still engaged. He is still listed as vice president of the winery, which he says is something of an honorific. But three of his ten children are actively engaged in the wine industry here. His son Tom is employed in sales at the Bargetto Winery. And his twin sons, Peter and Paul, along with partner Jon Morgan, own the Soquel Vineyards Winery, formerly the Grover Gulch Winery, above the main winery on Glen Haven Road.

I interviewed Mr. Bargetto in his office on Water Street in Santa Cruz, just a few steps from the spot where the family operated their barrel shop and liquor store after Repeal, the first in Santa Cruz County.

* * * * *

February 8, 1993

CS: Let's begin by going way back into the twenties, without special reference to the winery. What was it like here when you were a little boy?

RB: It was a colorful life in some respects. My brother and I grew up on the same property on which I still live, which is part of the winery property. It used to be mostly in orchard, and in a little truck garden. There were cherry trees, plums trees and a few peach trees.

CS: How big is that property.

RB: A little less than three acres.

CS: It's always had the same shape?

The Old Winery Building

RB: Yes. We've done a lot of building here but it hasn't changed in size and shape.

The original winery building was where the winery is now, but it was a little bit smaller. I remember adding on to the winery every two, three years. My father would say we need more room, so we'd make an addition to the north or the south. And to the east. That was in the thirties. The bottling area today used to have a dirt floor. It wasn't until the mid-thirties when we put a cement floor there.

The original winery wasn't used just for wine purposes. My father and uncle had a wholesale produce house, which was located on Water Street in Santa Cruz. They used to use that building for storage. We converted that into the winery in 1933.

And we had a fifty-two acres ranch three miles up the road here, on Glen Haven Road. That was mostly in Santa Rosa plums, cherries, apples, and peaches. Plums and cherries were the two main crops.

CS: Glen Haven Road is where your sons have the Soquel Vineyard today.

RB: Correct. Our old place was just before you get to the Soquel Vineyards property. That place used to be called the Pinelli property. But that has been cut up since Steve Pinelli's demise. That's where the twins are now, their winery with Jon Morgan.

CS: When you were a child back then do you have any sense that you were living on a winemaking property?

RB: I don't start remembering grapes and wine until just before Repeal. Before that it was a small family orchard and produce business.

CS: Your parents and your uncle made wine during Prohibition. Did you later hear any stories about that?

RB: They made wine and made more than they actually consumed. So they sold wine to their friends and community people. And they also had dinners and food served at the main house, particularly on Sundays. There was a cellar underneath the house where they stored wine during Prohibition days. And they also stored wine at the neighbors' house.

Back then the main house, the Bargetto residence, was a house where Beverly's home is today, right in the front of the winery. But it was a old house which was torn down and my brother and Beverly built their house there after they got married. In fact part of Beverly's house was built with lumber which we tore down from the old house. It was still in good shape and my dad wouldn't throw that lumber away.

CS: So you have a cellar there where you kept a couple of barrels.

RB: There were more like fifteen or twenty barrels. And we kept other thing you'd normally find in

a basement, like canned goods.

And we had some puncheons of about 175 or 200 gallons which we had stored on the old Gafvert property, just north of our place. That was a Swedish family. They had a barn on the creek bank on the back of their property and they barrels and puncheons there. And we also had barrels and puncheons in the barn on the Bennett property next door on the south, which now belongs to Beverly and me. We had wine stored in both those places.

CS: This is before Repeal. It sounds as if they were making maybe a thousand gallons.

RB: I don't know exactly, but that may be approximately correct.

CS: So this was a sort of increment to their produce business.

RB: The stories I have heard, and of course I was just a child, indicate that there were quite a few wineries in the area, all small. For some reason the number seventeen sticks in my mind.

CS: That sounds about right, if you mean the county.

Grape Sources

RB: I remember some of the vineyards that we used to get grapes from after Prohibition. I am not absolutely sure of their grape sources before Repeal. But I wouldn't be surprised if they were the same. There was the Quistorf Ranch, between Bonny Doon and Ben Lomond. The Bertolli Ranch was on Pine Flat Road. And the Beauregard Ranch was on the corner of Pine Flat and Bonny Doon Roads.

CS: Does the old Beauregard Ranch go back into the thirties?

RB: Yes, it does. That's almost across the street from where Dr. Dean McHenry has his vineyard today.

Another important vineyard to us was the J. S. P. Cardoza vineyard in Corralitos, an old Portuguese gentleman. My father bought grapes from him year after year. But he bought even more grapes from the McGrath vineyard, also near Corralitos, on Casserly Road. The Cordozo Ranch wasn't far from there, on Pioneers Road.

There were other small vineyards. There was one on Branciforte Drive, owned by the de Lucchi family.

CS: Would that be up near where the old Jarvis²² place was?

RB: Yes, not far from it. It was right next door to the firehouse on Branciforte Drive. The owner used to be in the garbage collecting business, but I can't recall their name.

There were also small vineyards around old Holy City.²³ And there were also a few over off of Stetson Road, below Summit Road, near Skyland.

CS: That's not far from Wright's Station.

RB: That's right. There were several small vineyards around there. I remember going on what my father would call picnics up there. On Sunday afternoons we'd go up there and pick grapes at some of these small vineyard. Maybe we'd only get a couple of tons of grapes, total. He'd say that we'd all go up and have a picnic, and we'd pick the grapes while we were there. He would buy the grapes on the

²² See Sullivan. *Like Modern Edens*. 34-35, 64-68, 172.

²³ East of the Old Santa Cruz Highway, below Mt. Umunhum.

vines and we'd pick them ourselves.

CS: Does the Emil Meyer family ring a bell?

RB: It sure does. I used to know the grandson. They had a little winery.

CS: That's right. They called it Mare Vista, because up there around Skyland you can look right out on Monterey Bay.²⁴

RB: And there was Joe Locatelli's place where we used to get grapes.

CS: That's Ken Burnap's place today. Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyards.

Were there any vineyards up on Mountain Charley Road, or near there?

RB: There could have been, but I don't remember any distinctly. But I do remember a little place above Los Gatos, on the way to Saratoga. My dad used to get grapes there.

CS: Do you recall any grapes up on Montevina Road, next to Lexington?

RB: No. My recollection is of small patches of grapes farther up in the Holy City area. We used to pick those grapes and I remember the vineyards, but not individually.

CS: Let's talk about the grapes themselves.

RB: Zinfandel and Carignane were the two most popular ones. Two others we used for reds were Mission and Mataro.²⁵ And we'd hear names like Grey Riesling. Also for white, Sauvignon blanc.

CS: Did you hear about Sauvignon vert?

RB: Just Sauvignon blanc. But they could have been Sauvignon vert.

CS: For the grower they would have been worth more money as Sauvignon blanc. But historically there was a lot of Sauvignon vert and Grey Riesling grown up in the hills there before Prohibition. How about Burger?

RB: I've heard the name, but I don't recall our ever using any. Also, there would be a little bit of muscat once in a while.

CS: Sylvaner?

RB: Yes, but that would be later at Vine Hill with Schermerhorn. And his White Riesling and Chardonnay.

CS: I am really coming to appreciate the importance of that vineyard in the early years. I think that more than any other vineyard after World War II that place made people realize how good the grapes in the Santa Cruz Mountains could be.

²⁴ See Sullivan, 65, 136.

²⁵ Mourvèdre.

RB: Absolutely.

CS: I'm happy to hear you mention Grey Riesling first among the whites you thought of. As early as the late 1880s people were talking about this area as the new home of California "Chablis," using Grey Riesling.²⁶ They called it Chauché gris, but they were mistaken.

RB: Those are about all the vineyards I remember, and I'm a little vague on some of those. But our basic standbys in the old days were the Beauregard, the McGrath, the Bertolli, and the Cardoza.

There was another large vineyard back then, where the Christmas tree ranch is today up on Empire Grade Road. The old family name sounded like LaRau, or LeRoi, I'm not sure how you spelled it. It was a French name, maybe "the king." That was rather a large piece as you went from the coast up Empire Grade.²⁷

CS: That was going up to the Vince Locatelli place?

RB: Right. It was on the right hand side and it was probably the largest single vineyard in the Santa Cruz area, at least that I remember. Later on in years Paul Masson Vineyards planted grapes on there and they did not do well, for some reason.

CS: I'll bet they were supposed to be for Champagne.

RB: I heard that they were supposed to be fancy grapes for their own winery.

CS: When would that be, in the fifties.

RB: Yes, I would say in the fifties. There was a friend of our family named Charlie Saroglia who was the caretaker and manager of that vineyard. Carlo Saroglia.

CS: I wonder how many grapes the Locatellis actually had at their place.

RB: They had quite a few grapes, I think, but I personally only went up there a couple of times when I was just a youngster. I do think my dad did get their grapes later on, after the winery was not active. They had a few vines left.

CS: I'll bet they also bought grapes from that big place down the road you were talking about. They had to have a fairly large supply after Repeal to make sense of the size of the big concrete fermenters Ron Stortz told me about finding there when they started up Sunrise Winery there in the 1970s.²⁸

²⁶ "Here the Ben Lomond Company make a wine of (the Chablis) type which is unrivaled by any other product in the State, and is the only wine in California which has the thin, delicate, flinty dryness of a true Chablis." Frona Eunice Wait. *Wines and Vines of California*. San Francisco, 1889): 195.

²⁷ See maps accompanying Spezia interview.

²⁸ See Sunrise interview.

Prohibition Days

Let's go back and finish up with the bootlegging in wine around here during Prohibition.

RB: Of course, what I know comes from stories other people later told me. I do remember that there were stories of people in the neighborhood who belonged to the WCTU and I understand that on an occasion or two they reported to the police that my folks were selling wine. And this caused some of the so-called "raids" we had here.

CS: John showed me a clipping he got from Sylvia about that, but it didn't have a date.

RB: Those were colorful years. Sylvia and Adeline were in school and it could be awful embarrassing for them.

CS: People don't really understand this. Even though we generally laugh about old-time Italian families making some extra wine and selling it to their friends, and we understand it, back then there was this stereotype of the "lawless Italian mobster" and Italian families were often quite embarrassed about being involved in this rather harmless activity. I certainly understand the embarrassment your cousins would have had in high school at that time. Mario Gemello told me the same thing about his father making wine in Mountain View when he was in school. They used to kid him about it and he didn't like it at all.

RB: I mentioned earlier about our neighbors north and south of the winery property. Both of these families had barns at the back of their properties and they let my parents and uncle to store wine there. One time, because somebody got wind of the fact that wine was stored on the Bennett property, the federal "revenooers" did make a raid there and did find four or six puncheons there, and they found that the wine belonged to the Bargettos. So they put a seal on the barrels, over the bungs of the puncheons with melted wax. They said they be back later to dispose of the wine.

The story goes that my uncle suggested to my dad that this was all good wine and that it would be a shame to lose it. So they drilled a hole in the bottom and took the wine out.

CS: That's the way. And fill it with vinegar and water.

RB: They even knocked the hoops a little bit loose and made the holes where the hoop was and covered the hole with the hoop after the refilled it.

CS: Wonderful!

RB: They emptied all but about five or ten gallons from each barrel. It was all red wine. And then they filled them with water. When the federals came to dispose of the wine, they knocked the bungs off and when the contents gurgled out, one of them supposedly commented that this wine was certainly light. And my father said that that's why they had it over here; it was such a bad year. And for all they knew about wine in those days, that story did the job.

CS: I guarantee you that someday that story will be in a history book.

RB: Victor Zoppi, who was our ranch foreman- he worked for my father for about 35 years- he was one of the helpers in pumping that wine out with those old hand pumps. They did it all night long and connected it to our property with a series of water hoses. And that was a long stretch. They were pumping that through several hundred feet of hoses.

My mother used to tell about the people who would come here and eat their salami sandwiches and buy wine here. Many of them were city and civic leaders around here. It was a busy

time.

My uncle died in 1936 and during the early thirties they not only had the wine business but also the produce business, and the orchards and the barrel store in town.

CS: What was Sunday dinner like here back when you were a little boy?

RB: There were the two families together. There were eight of us, the two daughters and the two sons. The girls, of course, were older. It was one big farm-style house that we lived in. Sylvia and Adeline were actually double first cousins, because the two brothers had married two sisters. We were all very close. I used to look up to Sylvia and Adeline and we used to ask a lot of advice how to dress, how to go to school. They knew more than my mother did about American ways. Sylvia was the first person in our family to graduate from high school.

Sunday dinner was always around one o'clock in the afternoon. Everybody ate together. If someone were late we'd wait. There would be a eight of us, but very often there would be guests or other relatives over.

We would always have spaghetti on a Sunday. That was a once a week thing. And there would be a meat dish, chicken, veal, or a roast. Vegetable. Wine with dinner. Salad. And Sunday evening there would just be a light supper. Maybe a little broth and a salad. A little cup of coffee after dinner, but not during dinner.

CS: That's an American thing. Dessert?

RB: Once in a while my mother would bake cookies and cakes. Sylvia and Adeline also did some of that. But we were not heavy on desserts. We ate more cheese and fruit.

On Sunday before dinner my dad would go outside and work around the yard, on his garden, with his vegetables. He'd come in around noon and take his bath and get ready for dinner.

CS: How did you eat on a weekday?

RB: I can remember Monday the best. Monday was always soup-meat day, because it was washday. My mother used to wash by hand, later with a washing machine, but it was a big washday. So she didn't have much time to be cooking on Monday. So she would cook soup meat, something like brisket, drop it in the water with potatoes and carrots, and that would make the meal for that day, but it would also give her the broth for the rest of the week to make soup. During the week we'd eat in the evening, a six or seven o'clock. We also had good lunches.

CS: Did you pack lunch to school.

RB: Yes, and later to the cafeteria. I can remember that some kids from Italian families would actually bring little bottles of wine to school with their lunches.

Repeal

CS: So, when Repeal came you were nine years old. Tell me about what you remember. December, 1933.

RB: I remember helping bottle the wine by hand with a hose, siphoning out of the barrels. Cleaning bottles. Getting ready for the grand opening in December of the liquor store the folks were opening on Water Street in Santa Cruz. It would be right across the street from where we are sitting today. Now it's a parking lot. The phone number was 396 and the address was 119 Water Street.

We had some wines in bottles and gallons there.

CS: So this wine you had to sell was from earlier years.

RB: I always laughed that on the day Repeal started and we started up the store, we also started up with vintage wines.

CS: So, you had the 1933 wine, because the vintage was just finished.

RB: That's right, but we had older wines as well.

CS: Do you remember any talk about the bond you got and an controversy over it?

RB: I don't recall anything.

CS: There was some real tension between wineries that were already bonded, since their wine was all under inventory, but places that hadn't had a bond could come in with wines from any time and any place. I know there was a lot of griping about it over in the Santa Clara Valley at the time. You guys would be able to say that you made any wine you had in December in the previous vintage, and nobody would know better, or care, unless they were another winery. But you were it in this area.

RB: At the barrel store we had these big racks in the center of the store. Most of them were 50 gallon barrels and we would hoist them up on the racks. And we'd open up the bung a little so that when you opened the spigot below it would run freely.

That was really heavy work for a youngster.

CS: How did you get them up there? Did you have a pulley?

RB: No. We had to do it by hand. We had a thing like a sack that we'd use as a sort of wedge or fulcrum to tilt the barrel on top of that and lift it up from there. Then we would have something to grab onto.

CS: What wines did you sell?

RB: We did buy some wines from other people, but the wines we made were all table wines. Then the popular nomenclature was Burgundy, Claret, and once in a while a Zinfandel. If it was lighter we'd call it claret; if it was heavier we'd call it Burgundy. The Carignane would give it a Burgundy flavor.

The white was Sauterne, and sometimes Chablis. But Sauterne was a more popular term. For that we'd use Sauvignon blanc or vert.

CS: Did you ever see any Palomino around here?

RB: Yes, some.

CS: Sometimes people would use the Palomino to give them volume and the Sauvignon for flavor.

RB: We also had sweet wines we'd buy elsewhere. Port, Sherry, Tokay, White Port, Muscatels. At first we got them from the old Livermore Winery. I remember going over there with a truck with my dad. I don't remember the owner.

CS: Was it right in town.

RB: Right in town.

CS: That would be the old Carlo Ferrario Winery on 2nd Street. It was also called the Livermore Winery. His brother Ernesto later ran the Ruby Hill Winery.²⁹

RB: Later on we started getting more and more of our sweet wines from the Central Valley at Cutler, from the California Growers Winery.³⁰ At first we'd bring the sweet wines over in barrels, then we got them bottled for us. We eventually did away with the barrels at the store.

CS: How long did the barrel store last?

RB: We had a liquor license, as well. We called it the Bargetto Liquor Store. The barrel part of it lasted, but I'd only be able to guess, maybe ten years, up until the war. We took back bottles from people, and took deposits. And we'd fill their own gallons and half-gallons. Even small demijons and barrels. Downstairs in the basement of the store we had storage and washing equipment for barrels and bottles. We would do that after school.

CS: How did you and Larry get back and forth from school.

RB: By bus. If it was bottle washing day I'd just walk over from the school to here. Then Sylvia would drive me home.

CS: Who else was buying Bargetto wine?

Selling Wine

RB: My father sold wine locally in Santa Cruz to liquor stores, grocery stores, bars, both in barrels, and later on in bottles. But in the beginning it was a lot in barrels. Even the stores used to buy barrels and sell it from the barrel the way we did at our barrel store. Also, when I was just a youngster I used to go to Monterey with my dad. He had customers down there just as he did in Santa Cruz. But he also had farm customers down that way as well. Particularly around Castroville.

There were little farms down there, like the Tottino farm. And there were big ones, as well. Some had hundreds of acres, mostly in artichokes. We sold the wine to the cookhouse, for the workers' meals. They might buy as many as ten barrels at a time. And there was a ranch on the south side of Carmel, which we always referred to as the Big Ranch. It was owned by the Odello Brothers. One of them was a president of a bank in Carmel at the same time. They had about 300 acres in artichokes and they had several Italian families who worked for them. They always had us bring the wine in around one o'clock, since that's when they came in to at lunch. If we came in earlier only the cooks would be there and they wouldn't be able to help us unload the wine. And we'd have lunch with them. And they'd give us a check right then, cash on the barrel-head, so to speak. They would buy four or six fifty gallon barrels of wine about every six weeks. That was a very good account.

CS: It's obvious that this farm custom was a very important part of your business.

RB: And they were very nice people to work with. Hard workers. They'd pay us maybe 30-35 cents per gallon.

CS: But you bring them six barrels and they write a check for over \$100. That's a big check back then. A \$100 check back in 1940 is the same as about \$6-700 today.

RB: That's right. That was real money. We'd pick up the old barrels to take back and clean, and

²⁹ *Livermore Herald*, 10/8/1937.

³⁰ Often referred to as the Calgro Winery. See *Wines & Vines*, 2/1/46, 1/1/53, 8/1/87.

set up the new barrels. We had several farm accounts like that.

CS: Always red wine.

RB: Always. Once in a while they'd buy maybe a case of white wine or sweet wine.

CS: So that wine was all coming off these old Prohibition vineyards up here, mostly Carignane and Zinfandel.

RB: Later a lot of that wine was coming from grapes we got around Gilroy and San Martin.

CS: Are we talking about doing this during the war?

RB: It was before the war and during the war. That style of operation was cut back in later years. In the early years the wines were mostly from local grapes here. Later more and more from the Santa Clara Valley.

Of course these old vineyards' yields here are going to be dropping as the years go on. Some weren't tended to very well and some were just dying out.

CS: And during the war farm labor was hard to come by and nobody went without a job. It wouldn't have been economical to spend a lot of money keeping these old vineyards going, given the otherwise fat times around here during the war. I think this is when we say goodbye to a large number of the old Santa Cruz Mountain vineyards.

These places probably weren't giving much more than a ton or two per acre.

RB: And Gilroy was going great guns then.

CS: Do you know of any old vineyards around today, at all? Did anything survive?

RB: The Beauregard ranch has all been replanted. Bertolli grapes are all gone. I just don't know of any old ones still alive.

CS: You find a few of the old ones up in Sonoma, and over in Contra Costa County, but not around here.

RB: How about the old Joe Locatelli place?

CS: David Bruce made some Zinfandel from those old vines. but he pulled them and planted Pinot noir.

How about restaurant sales?

RB: That was not a large part of our early business, since we didn't have a well-established brand. In the early days they didn't really sell much wine, anyway.

CS: How about Italian, family style restaurants?

RB: There were some of those. We sold wine to Adolf's down here on Front Street. And we sold a little that way in Monterey. But that was not a large part of our business. You have to remember that the average restaurant, unless it was a true, Italian style place, didn't sell much wine.

CS: Why don't you take us through a Bargetto vintage when you were in, say the seventh grade.

Vintage Time

RB: There was a lot of hard work getting ready for the grapes. We'd wash the fermenters. My dad was very fussy about cleanliness. The old open redwood fermenters had been allowed to dry to we'd have to soak them, starting with a little water in the bottom and moving up. Then we'd go in and scrub with hand brushes. We'd use what we used to call soda ash. And then we had to dry them really well, even with a chamois cloth at the end, to avoid mildew and mold. We had to clean the crushers, as well. We had an old hand turned crusher that my dad had put a motor on. But we had to carry the crusher from one fermenter to the other. In 1939 he bought a crusher which had a stemmer from the old Rebizzo Wine Supply Company in San Francisco. It was meant to stand on the ground level when you dumped the grapes in. But when we first had it we didn't have the system of pumping up to the fermenting tank, so we had to move that crusher from the top of one tank to another. That was a back breaking job.

The grapes would come in in boxes, on a flat-bed truck. Sometimes I would do a lot of that hauling myself, when I got old enough to drive. Some of these boxes were 50 pounds gross, but others were about 60 pounds gross, and they were heavy. We used to lift about 200 boxes per truckload. You had to take them off the truck and then lift them up and dump the grapes in the crusher. That was really a tough job. When the crusher was on top of the tank we had to hand them up chain-style to someone up there to dump them.

When the wine was fermenting we had to punch it down. And when it came time to press, we'd get in the fermenter in our boots and draw the wine off the bottom of the tank. And we'd shovel out the pomace into a trough against the fermenter. When the wine was fermented we'd draw the wine off from the bottom, and leave the pomace cap on, which would go down. Then we'd go in with pitchforks and shovel it out. Then the pomace had to be shoveled into the hand basket presses. The first one we had you would just keep pressing, round and round. Later we got one that had a ratchet on it. Before we got that we used to tie a horse to the thing to help pull it around. But we got a little more mechanized as time went on.

CS: How did your dad deal with the growers in the early days. Just a handshake?

RB: Sometimes, but later on he would draw up a very simple contract. So many tons from you at so much per ton.

CS: Did you ever butt heads with Vince Locatelli buying grapes around here?

RB: I don't recall that at all. The bulk of our grapes came from the same producers every year. The McGrath vineyard was quite large. I'd guess they had 20 acres. And Cordozo was big to. He had a grape he called Beclan that had a lot of color we liked.

CS: Beclan is related to what we call California Petite Sirah. They are like first cousins, maybe half-brothers. Both are related to the French Peloursin, and the Duriff is a seedling of that grape. The French call the Petite Peloursin the Beclan.

RB: We treated it like we would a Petite Sirah. We'd use it for color. My father used to mix it with other grapes for more body and color.

CS: I can imagine putting that with Carignane for a country Burgundy.

RB: That's right, to give it a little more substance.

CS: So those vineyards just give out over the years.

RB: Bill Mc Grath finally quit the ranch and went into the real estate business. I think I read someplace not too long ago that he had passed away. The McGrath Ranch was a really large place, not just in vines. It had walnuts and apples.

CS: There's a lot of land down there around Corralitos that would be good for vineyards.

RB: Particularly if it's above that 400 foot line and inside the Santa Cruz Mountain appellation.

That crushing season for us was really very hard. My brother and I hated the thought of it. And when we started growing in size and making more wine, and we were doing it according to the old-fashioned system at first. It won't be until after the war that we really modernize.

CS: That's where we'll start next time.

* * * * *

February 17, 1993

Post-War Years

CS: Let's start after the war and get the place modernized.

RB: My brother and I both graduated from college at Santa Clara University in 1949. We had started earlier and then came back after an absence during the war to finish college. That's why we graduated the same year in 1949. At that time we decided to come home and join forces with my dad in operating the winery, rather than go out and get jobs elsewhere.

CS: I have a question about you and your brother. You majored in business administration and Larry majored in chemistry. I've heard others chuckle about this, how perfect that was. You were the one who would be a salesman for the winery, and Larry is the one inside with the hydrometer and test tube. Was that part of your conception of yourselves as you grew up?

RB: It was. My brother had more of a technical mentality and he liked chemistry and biology. As a matter of fact he was considering going into pre-med at one time. He became our winemaker and went up to UC Davis and took special classes in enology after Santa Clara, in order to get more in tune with modern winemaking techniques. I was more the "outside man." But both of us did the physical work inside the winery. But I spent most of my time outside the winery calling on clientele. I preferred to deal with the public.

CS: You can't get away from the fact that in 1963 you left and he stayed, even though it was a tenuous situation for the winery and its future then.

RB: Sure. And this was by common agreement, of course. But my brother had this tenacity to hold the winery together. He really did. My feelings at that time were more that we should sell it, pay off all the debt, and start fresh with something new. But my brother said we had too much going here. It was worth too much to him. And he really liked it. And I had more immediate needs at that time. I

had either seven or eight children by then. I needed my money this week, not next year.

CS: That's what Beverly said. There were just too many kids.

RB: And the winery just wasn't producing enough business for both families.

CS: It's interesting how you two, you and Larry and your wives, who are second, or more like 2.5, generation, you produce a first generation bunch of kids. And your father and uncle each had the two.

RB: That's true. But part of that was due to our wives. I think our philosophies all coincided.

CS: When you two decided to come here after college, was there any question about it?

RB: No, there was no question at all. We went into it with all four feet. At that time my father had realized that we were not particularly interested in continuing with the ranch, the orchard that they owned on Glen Haven Road, about three miles north of the winery. That was a 52 acre orchard. My father had many other endeavors he was taking care of at the same time and that was one thing that he decided he didn't need, if we weren't interested in it. So we sold the orchard in 1946, and I'm sure that the sales price was \$37,500. That was for 52 acres of producing orchard and an old farm house.

CS: (Long pause as CS takes out his inflation chart and calculator.) \$255,000 in today's dollars, approximately.

RB: I don't think you could buy it for that today.

CS: No way. It would be more like a half million today. Even though you can relate a lot of things logically against the change in CPI over the years, one thing you can't is greater San Francisco Bay Area real estate--- and medical care.

RB: There was a funny anecdote about that sale. He had the offer brought in by a gentleman who was a realtor from Boulder Creek. About three weeks after he received the offer my father still hadn't given an answer on it. Finally he brought the subject up one day during dinner. He thought that if we were going to sell that ranch we had better make up our minds. So at that time the family decided to sell the ranch. The buyers were Mr. and Mrs. Peterson. They had an ice cream business in San Luis Obispo. Very nice people. They went to the title company to close escrow, and the papers were signed and the escrow officer said, "all we need now is the money." And Mr. Peterson says, "Oh my gosh, I left it in the back of the car." The car was about two blocks down the street, so he ran down to the car, the door was unlocked, and he got this shoe box and brought it back and counted out \$37,500 in cash bills.

CS: Those were the days when we didn't lock our doors.

RB: Either late 1946 or early 1947 about \$12,000 of that money went for the enlargement of the winery. That's the existing large storage room today. Also, at about the same time, my father bought a whole bunch of storage and fermenting tanks from the old Petri bottling plant, which was in San Francisco across from the docks on Battery Street. They were closing that down and decided to do their bottling at the main plant in the Central Valley. They were mostly from 2,000 to 12,000 gallons in size. So my father, brother, a couple of workers and I went up there and loaded those tanks on railroad cars, with the help of a lift truck, which we had rented from the docks. Then they were shipped down to Capitola by rail. We then rolled them off onto a flatbed truck, one by one, and set them in place at the new winery building.

CS: So you didn't disassemble them.

RB: The only one we didn't disassemble was the 12,000 gallon tank, the largest one, because it was too wide and wouldn't fit on the railroad car.

CS: So that was the line that came down and comes across to Watsonville and up to Capitola. My wife used to take that to the Santa Cruz beach when she was in college.

RB: It took us approximately a week to get those tanks off and up to the winery.

CS: Did you pay for those tanks with that \$12,000?

RB: No, that was extra.

CS: Do you remember how much Petri charged for those tanks?

RB: I don't remember the price, but I know that we thought they were a good buy. They sold them at almost give-away prices. They were mostly redwood, but there were also a few oak casks included. I believe there were possibly ten of them.

CS: Are they still around?

RB: Some of them are. It seems to me that there are two or three left.

CS: What kind of capacity are we now talking about?

RB: It went from the 30,000-40,000 gallon range to about 100,000 total, in round figures. The completion of the new building, and the creation of a new fermenting area adjacent to the storage room, and the buying and moving of the tanks, all happened during the month of September and early October. The grapes were coming in and we were still putting up tanks. This was really a difficult time, and a very anxious time, because my father kept pushing to get these tanks in place, and we were doing it one by one.

CS: But had you kicked up your crushing capacity?

RB: Yes, we had. We were going to use that extra volume, then. We moved them in one week and filled them the next.

CS: So, this means that in the meantime you have gotten a lot more grape sources.

RB: A lot more. Now we were buying a lot more grapes from the Gilroy and San Martin areas. Tony Bonino was one of our main suppliers from the Gilroy area. And there were several others there too.

CS: Mostly reds. The regular varieties.

RB: Yes. A few whites. At that time reds were far more popular for our clientele.

Selling Wine

CS: Did this change your approach to marketing? What were you going to do with all this wine?

RB: We needed more sales. I mentioned earlier that we had gone with my father on sales trips, some locally around Santa Cruz, but also to Monterey and Carmel, which were more interesting for me. That would be about every week or two. It would vary with the time of the year. When I myself went into sales I spent most of the week selling in areas like Monterey. . . .

CS: How did you all decide you'd be doing this?

RB: That the way it went. Ralph went out and sold and Larry took care of filtration and making the blends.

Most of this was retail. Mostly grocery stores and package stores. Gallon jugs were very big. There used to be a lot of Italian grocery stores in Monterey. They used to sell to the fishermen there. Also there was the cannery trade. Some of the bars there used to buy ten and fifteen gallon kegs of wine, with spigots in them. So we were selling both barrel and bottle goods.

CS: How old was this red wine you were selling?

RB: This varied. Normally two years. Some would stay in the cask for three or four. We had a two year old jug wine. The older wines were aged in puncheons and 50 gallon barrels, which we kept for our top label, which was the Bargetto label. Below that was Winemaster and J.B.

We developed in several areas. We started selling in Salinas and in other areas down there, around Aromas and Watsonville. The next big push was selling to retailers in the San Jose area.

CS: When would that have been?

RB: In the early fifties. My brother did a lot of selling there. In fact, at one time he took care of the San Jose territory and I had Santa Cruz, Monterey and Salinas. Later on I took on the opening up of the Peninsula area, going up to Sunnyvale, Mountain View and Palo Alto. Then to Redwood City, and eventually we reached the first regions of San Francisco, in the Mission District, and also Daly City.

But in those years the winery was still small in comparison to some of the wineries we were competing against. These were the days of Gallo, Roma, Cribari, Petri, Santa Fe, Mission Bell. And the premium wines were such as Almaden, Paul Masson, San Martin. Then we were a sort of a nobody, to be perfectly honest about it.

CS: But you had a good position for the Santa Cruz-Monterey-Salinas markets.

RB: Yes. Except it got to be very difficult to compete against the major brands. It was tough to fight Gallo and Italian Swiss Colony.

CS: How did you do it? Did you go in and work on your shelf look?

RB: Yes, we had shelf riders, streamers. Salesmen used to stack the wine on the retail shelves back then, particularly in grocery stores. Gallo really took a command in that area.

CS: They're famous for that.

RB: I was married in 1950. My brother was married in 1954. We were having children. Our families grew and our needs grew. My wife and I had a new home built in 1955. Larry had built his just before that. Expenses were growing and net income was really getting tight. So my brother said

that he would be glad to stay with the winery and I was talking about going into the real estate business.

CS: Is it correct to say that the business you built up between 1947 and the early fifties stayed pretty steady up into the early sixties?

RB: Yes. We had got away from barrels. But we had the three levels of wine we were marketing. There were no revolutionary changes in these years. The big production and sales were in the gallons for us. We used to sell four gallon cases for between \$4.00 and \$4.50 per case. There was not a whole lot of profit to be made.

Hard Times in the Wine Business

CS: So how did you work out this severing in 1963? How did you work toward it?

RB: In the late fifties we built a tasting room at the winery. It was small but it was a profitable little sales addition. Later, of course, it was enlarged. But when we first started with it, it was ring the bell if you want service. We'd run from the winery to take care of people. Things were continuing in about the same direction until 1963 when I finally pulled out.

CS: The picture I get is that it looked pretty grim.

RB: It was. It was a problem to support two families. But little by little, with a lot of determination Larry stayed with it and pulled it out.

CS: In 1963 the "wine revolution" really hasn't begun. But in five years it was well under way.

RB: That's right. In five years he was able to turn things around.

CS: Did you have any business relationship with the winery?

RB: I was no longer active, but I still lived there on the same property. We were still a close family.

CS: How did it work, the split?

RB: My brother took over all the debt, and the winery.

CS: You got your house and freedom.

RB: And a new way of life.

CS: One thing I don't understand. Your sales work was very important. You had an important role in keeping this winery from the brink. How do they survive from 1963 to 1967 when the head salesman is gone.

RB: Larry was able to hold on to the major customers, calling on them less frequently perhaps, but dropping off customers we weren't really making money off of. Instead of trying to grow he was trying to cut down on expenses and to retain the most profitable outlets.

CS: So in modern parlance, he was "downsizing" some and production actually dropped in the next few years.

RB: Yes, for the immediate next few years. And the growth of the tasting room at the winery also helped a lot. That was very profitable. And it was shortly thereafter that they opened the tasting room in Monterey. Then Larry started a working arrangement with Cribari, bottling for them. That was in the late sixties.

CS: We started coming here to the tasting room in the sixties. We'd come over the hill with the kids and come back here and buy our jug wine. I remember buying a lot of Winemaster Zinfandel in half-gallon jugs.

RB: You know who came up with that name "Winemaster?" We were looking for a second label when we came up with it. It was actually a cousin of ours, who lives here in Santa Cruz, Norma Reynard. She used to live in San Francisco. She came up with that name.

CS: Well, I wonder if maybe we're done.

RB: This takes us up to when I get out of the business. I guess you'll want to talk to Sylvia next.

CS: Right. That will finish our little book on Bargetto.

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My last interview in this series was with *Sylvia Bargetto Nolan (SN)*, who is Ralph and Lawrence Bargetto's double-first cousin. She was born in San Francisco in 1905 and grew up on the Bargetto ranch. For many years she ran the family wine and liquor retail store in Santa Cruz and was the bookkeeper for the entire family business operation. I interviewed her, along with Ralph Bargetto, at her home in Santa Cruz.

April 23, 1993

CS: First I'd like to talk to you about life here and at the family's Soquel property in the early years.

SN: First I remember San Francisco. My uncle worked at the Fly Trap Restaurant in San Francisco. He wasn't really well and the doctor told him he had to get out of the City and get some fresh air. So in Soquel I had an aunt, my father's sister. She told him to come down here. There were some gardens down below where they raised vegetables. There was this man here who had this land and people would go there and work for him. He had five wagons. He told my uncle he could get a wagon from him and go peddling, and he said, "you give me a commission because I supply the wagon and the horse. You buy your vegetables from me." Then my father decided that he would move to Soquel also. At the time my father and great-uncle had their own little winery, The Columbo Winery on Columbus Street in San Francisco. .

CS: I remember now. There is a picture of his place over at the winery, on the wall.

SN: My father and my great-uncle had the winery.

CS: How do you first remember the family winery here, in Soquel?

SN: My very first memory of what the winery was, it was really a barn. But later we added on a little more and a little bit more, and before long we were tearing down the old and building the new.

CS: Did you work there?

SN: Yes. Even when I was going to school. And for a long time I was the bookkeeper. And I figured the taxes for the winery, which back then we had to pay every month. I also had to keep track and report on our inventory and the gallonage. It was very complicated. This was after Repeal, of course.

CS: Do you remember the winemaking here before Repeal?

SN: Yes, I remember my father and uncle making wine there. But I don't remember how much. Then we didn't have to keep any records, of course. We sold it at the winery by the gallon.

When I was in high school we were living in Soquel. My father and uncle were peddlers. I was a peddler on Saturdays. My uncle used to go up to Mt. Herman every Saturday, and I would go with him. My father had two horses and a wagon. In the early days he would go from door to door. But he would go up past Ben Lomond, clear up to Boulder Creek. He'd take up a load of vegetables and he stayed in Boulder Creek to sleep overnight. And he sold to individuals on the way. We became very well known with the people up there. They'd tell him what they needed and he'd put it down in his book; they wouldn't even sign for it. Then at the end of the month he gave them a bill and they paid it. My uncle went up there on Saturdays, and I was going to school at the time and I'd go along. I thought it was fun. My uncle had a real truck and he'd park it under a tree across from the cafeteria up there. The people up there were very religious.

CS: Right, that was an area with lots of religious retreats in those days.

SN: After services they came with their bags and their baskets and we would wait on them. He had boards down from the wagon, like a counter. The truck was full of green vegetables and potatoes and such. I helped sell to them and they'd put the produce in their baskets. It was fun. This was before I was in high school.

After grammar school I started high school, for three months, and then my mother was run over by a car. She had a broken arm and a bad shoulder and had to stay in bed. She was in bed for almost two months. So I had just started my freshman year and then I had to stay home and take care of her. We also had a boarder and I had to cook for him. In all I stayed home for two years. It took about a year for my mother to get well. And then she wanted to go to Europe to see her folks. And when she got back she got sick and passed away. Then I went back to school. That was hard for me, because my friends were two years ahead of me. Then I graduated from high school and they didn't know what to do with me, so my folks decided to send me to business college. I didn't learn so much in business college, to tell you the truth. But I took bookkeeping and typing again and all those business courses. That's why I ended up keeping the books for the winery. But first I worked for the local newspaper, the Sentinel. I worked there for a year, and then the whole family went to Europe. Then when we came back, after Repeal, we opened the store and they decided I should take care of it. So, that's how it started.

RB: That was when the "gang of thirteen" went back to Europe.

SN: That was in 1927.

RB: I can barely remember it.

SN: It was fun. I was 22 years old.

CS: Those were happy times, before the Great Depression.

RB: Didn't you make dinners too on the weekends and sell wine with them?

SN: We had the nicest clientele for these dinners. There were judges, bankers, lawyers, doctors, dentists. My mother and my aunt would put on these dinners there at the old house. They'd be on Saturdays and Sundays. My mother was the leader and my aunt was in the kitchen. I served as the waitress. My sister also helped in the kitchen.

They would let us know in advance that they were coming. On Saturdays it was mostly professional men, and when they brought their wives it was usually on Sunday. They would make their reservations for one o'clock on Saturday. One time we got a reservation late, for eight men. So my mother said all right and went outside and killed the chickens and we cleaned them, with my sister. My aunt made the salad and my sister took care of the dessert. I would set the table.

CS: How much did they pay for dinner?

SN: It was \$2.50 and that gave them a bottle of wine for every four people. That was part of the dinner. And then they would buy any more bottles that they wanted. It would be another \$2.50 per bottle. The men in the family took care of that. They'd go down stairs and get another bottle. If was a fifth, and I'd bring it to the table. Those were nice days.

CS: Everybody I've talked to remembers about the dinners out at the Bargetto place, whether they were there or not. It's a family tradition.

SN: They'd tip me at the end of dinner. The biggest tip I ever got was \$5.00 from a banker.

CS: When did you have them, throughout the year?

SN: It went on pretty steady. We had a steady clientele. There was also a group from Watsonville who would drive over on Saturday afternoon, and then had dinner.

RB: The old house had a large dining room; it was the old Brown house. It was torn down when Lawrence got married and they built the house where Beverly lives now.

CS: Talk me through the dinner.

SN: When they came in they came in to eat. They'd sit right down at the table. First there was an antipasto. There was a salad and an assortment of salami and prosciutto. Olives. We didn't make our own.

Then pasta, and if it was a special occasion we'd have ravioli. We made them ourselves. Usually it would be macaroni. We always made our own ravioli; we never bought them.

CS: How many times a month would you have one of these dinners?

SN: Once a month for sure, sometimes twice. But not every week.

CS: What did your father and uncle do?

SN: If people came to drink they came in the house. If they came to buy wine, my father took care of that. My uncle took care of the parking. He would have a flashlight and direct them where to park. It was all without lights. If they just wanted wine they'd stay in the car.

CS: What happened at the winery when Repeal took place?

SN: It happened at midnight and I can remember that night, after dinner, we went over to our so-called winery, which was really just a barn, and we started bottling wine. One put the wine in the

bottles with the little hose, and another would put the corks in. And another put a label on it. There were six of us and we worked until about two or three o'clock in the morning. Then we took it to different places downtown and sold it.

CS: When did the family barrel store get started in Santa Cruz?

SN: We were the first store in town, because we had the wine all ready. We already had our produce store in town and right next door was a separate room. And we made a door so we could connect the two together. So we started this wine store there. We had a produce store on one side and the wine store on the other. They were both part of the same building. There was a basement downstairs, also. The building was built for us and then we leased it for fifteen years. Actually there had been other things going on next door before we put in the wine store. We rented it to a man with an insurance office for a while. The building had been built for us. We had made the plans and they built it for us. I think the building was built two years before we started the wine store.

RB: That's right across from my real estate office today.

SN: The building is gone now, of course, and the land now belongs to the post office, a parking lot. So we got the store started. There were three racks in the middle. And we had the barrels on them with the different grades of wine. It was all dry wine, four grades, Claret, Burgundy, Zinfandel and Sauterne. These were 25 gallon barrels (smaller ones). They started with the 50 gallon barrels, but they were too hard to handle.

CS: Did you drink wine yourself, before you opened the store?

SN: I didn't really care much about drinking wine then. But my father would insist, because it was good for you. Today, I drink a glass of wine with dinner.

CS: How did people find out about the place at first?

SN: We were the first store. We opened the door and they came in. We didn't have to put ads in the newspaper. We got business right away, evidently by word-of-mouth.

Of course we had to prepare the place first. We didn't open it the day after Repeal. I'd say it was about three months afterwards that we opened the store.

CS: What happened when a new customer came in?

SN: Well, I'd tell him we had the four grades of wine. He could taste them. We had little liquor glasses, and sometimes paper cups. He could taste them all. The least expensive, at first, was fifty cents a gallon, and the most expensive was \$1.25 per gallon. My folks told me how to do it. Give them a sample of the cheapest wine first. Then the next priced wine and so on. If they were looking for quality, that would work.

Sometimes they'd bring their own gallon jugs in. But we wouldn't use it. We'd exchange it for a clean one. If they didn't have one we'd charge them ten cents deposit. We had them in half-gallon and fifth bottles too, but we sold mostly in gallon jugs at first. We washed the bottles down stairs; we had a man down there who did the washing.

RB: I did some washing myself, after school.

CS: Would people ever come up and buy a whole barrel of wine?

SN: No, not there. If anyone was interested in a barrel they'd go down to the winery. I remember one customer who regularly bought by the barrel, and we'd get it all ready for her.

CS: What were your hours?

SN: We opened at eight o'clock and closed at midnight eventually, but I don't remember how late it was the first few weeks. I left at five o'clock and we hired a man who would work after that.

CS: How much business would you do in a day?

SN: I remember the first day was \$10. But it got a lot better after that. But at \$1.25 a gallon back then, that was fairly expensive.

CS: Well, that's not too bad. \$10 then is almost \$100 today. But I can remember buying wine at the winery for \$1.25 a gallon back in the fifties.

RB: Well, later we sold it for a lot less.

SN: Oh, it went down later. We started at those prices. It went down as low as 25 cents a gallon. That was when we had some competition later on with another wine store in town. He opened a place a few blocks away from us. We had been selling for 50 cents and he put it down to 35 cents.

CS: Was he getting his wine around here.

SN: I don't know where he got it, but it wasn't around here.

RB: Probably Gilroy or San Martin.

SN: I was just a young girl then and it was all Greek to me, where the wine would come from.

CS: How did you get the job? Why did they pick you?

SN: Why hire somebody else? But I knew about the winery. And I was keeping the books for the winery as well.

CS: What was a good day like? Did you ever take in \$100?

SN: Oh, yes. It was good. You couldn't get wealthy, but we did all right. For us it was just something extra since we had a lease on the whole building.
At first it was wine only. Later it was a liquor store. At first it was difficult to get the hard liquor. You'd put in an order with the salesman, but you'd only get a few bottles.

RB: Of course we kept the barrels in the liquor store for several years.

SN: The shelves were mostly empty on both sides. There was some bottled wine, but not very much. It was cheaper to buy by the gallon.

CS: In the early days were there any inspectors around?

SN: Yes, and some funny ones, too.

CS: With their hands out?

SN: No, none of that. But we had investigators come into the wine store, at any time. There were some funny rules they were looking at. If you had a barrel you had the stamps on it. After the barrel

was empty you had to scratch them off. If you had cases of wine the stamps would go on the outside of the case. So at the store we had some barrels downstairs; there was a man who would be bottling the wine there and washing bottles.

So, we had an inspector who, for some reason or another, thought we were cheating. I don't know why. He was a funny creature. He was always in the store trying to catch me neglecting to take the stamps off the cases, on the liquor and the wine. He would go outside and stand there looking in the store. And we had a banner across the parking area in front of the store. We investigated and found out we could put it there but he came along and said it couldn't be there. It just said "Wine, Liquor and Beer." So I called up the Board of Equalization and I told them he was always snooping around and they told me they'd take care of it, and I never saw him again.

CS: Did you ever advertise in the paper?

SN: No, hardly at all. But we did when we got our first case of whiskey. One full case of fifths. So we decided we'd put an ad in to see what would happen. We would have sold them anyway.

The store opened at eight and I got there about a quarter to eight, and there was a line outside from the store to the post office. Twelve got their fifth and the rest went home.

CS: I wonder how long the barrels lasted, until it was all wines in bottles.

RB: Up through the thirties, but by the time of the war, I think that the barrels were gone.

CS: And you kept working there all the time.

SN: All the time.

CS: How long was the store there?

SN: It was the year of the flood. I remember one day that we had three feet of water in the store. It was 1955.

CS: That's over twenty years. I think you sold a lot of wine.

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