

Devlin Wine Cellars

Charles Devlin (CD) was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1951 while his father was in the U.S. Army. Later the family moved to the Santa Cruz area where Devlin's father practiced medicine as an orthopedic surgeon. Devlin went to public schools in the area and graduated from Soquel High School. Meanwhile his family had purchased the 30 acres of land on which the Devlin winery stands today. He started college at San Jose State University and transferred to the University of California (Davis) where he received his B.S. in fermentation science in 1975. Three years later he bonded his little winery above Soquel. Meanwhile he married his wife Cheryl; they have one child, Thomas.

The winery sits on the hillside above Soquel, looking out on Monterey Bay from above the 300 foot elevation. The boundary line of the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation actually runs through his property.

I interviewed Mr. Devlin in the tasting room below the winery

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February 21, 1994

CS: Let's start out a little differently than I usually do, since your background in wine goes back in a different way than most Santa Cruz vintners. Was there anything in your family that influenced your selection of the path the led you to operating this winery?

CD: Not really. My father was an orthopedic surgeon; he and my mother drank wine, but they weren't involved in wine in any special way.

CS: Did you see it on the table regularly?

CD: Yes. And there was some talk about it, but not much. But they didn't know a lot about wine or buy wine publications, or anything like that.

CS: Was there anything before you went to college that might have affected your path?

CD: I went to San Jose State. I had been on the national high school judo team in my senior year in high school and San Jose State has one of the best places to train for that sport in the entire world. So went to that school to be on the judo team, but in the summers I was working for the Bargetto Winery.

When I went to college first I didn't really have any special ambition. I sort of thought I'd like to be a writer. The writing classes there are mostly taught by failed authors, so I sort of thought I'd spend four years at San Jose State and maybe go back to work at a winery. I didn't see my education at San Jose State being very vocational.

The Bargetto Connection

CS: How did you get on at Bargetto's?

CD: Larry Bargetto had met my father somehow, and I'm not really sure that happened. But he was looking for land to plant grapes on; he was trying to get people interested in planting grapes. We had a lot of acreage here, so that kind of intrigued my father. So one time I was home for the summer

and I asked Larry if he had some kind of job for me in the winery, and he said, "Absolutely!" So I started there actually when I was a senior in high school, and back then at Bargetto's they were producing a lot of fruit wine. So they were making fruit wine all summer long. So I'd be off to school when the grape harvest was on, and they weren't making a lot of grape wine then, anyway.

CS: Let me go off on the business between you dad and Larry Bargetto.

CD: My father, Thomas Devlin, and Larry actually did plant some grapes on a piece of property behind this piece. I'm not really sure what happened, but my dad lost control of that piece of property, but whoever ended up with the property apparently wasn't interested in vineyard and it never got anyplace.

CS: What did they plant?

CD: I'm not sure, exactly. They planted several varieties. That was in the early seventies. Looking back on it I'm not sure they knew what they were doing then. The thing taught me a lesson back then, that planting and growing grapes was a lot more difficult than most people think.

CS: That's sort of the picture I got from the Bargettos, but they don't remember it very well, and Larry is dead.

What was this piece of land back then.

CD: Just a house and thirty acres of land. I ran some cows on it up until I went away to college. It was just a gentleman farmer's place. Years ago the back part of the property was a failed golf course. I don't know how far that went back.

CS: That sounds like something that might have been happening down here in the twenties.

So, you went to San Jose State for two years. You wouldn't have had to declare a major yet. You're taking general education course, and something sends you off to UC Davis. What happened?

CD: It seemed to me a better idea to go to a school and to major in something that would have a job at the end of the line. My father encouraged me. When he graduated from medical school he had a vocation. He wasn't too thrilled about the occupational possibilities leaving school with a degree in English Literature. To him my going to Davis and getting a degree in fermentation science was like his graduating from medical school. So I transferred to Davis in 1973.

CS: That was at the height of the wine mania in those years. Everything was just sizzling then in the wine world.

CD: And I'd already gone up to Davis and taken a couple of their short courses in winemaking. Larry sent us up. He paid for the entire cellar crew to go up there. It was a lot of fun. They would do it on their quarter break. There were several professors who would change every hour, which kept it interesting. Then Maynard Amerine would do the wine tasting. I was working with people like Dawnine Sample¹ and Bill Dyer,² her boyfriend at the time. (They're married now.) We'd go up there together. They were going to school at Cabrillo College here. I think that half of the entire wine industry has once worked at Bargetto's. I used to work with Ernie Fortino³ then; he was working there

¹ Today the winemaker at Domaine Chandon in the Napa Valley.

² Today winemaker at Sterling Vineyards in the Napa Valley.

³ Today the owner of the Fortino Winery in the Hecker Pass area.

as a carpenter. For a while there we were having a winemaker per year. It was a great time working there.

CS: Did you get into wine?

CD: I started drinking wine.

CS: Was it a special deal for you? Some people in the industry, for them it's a job. They could move on to canned beets and it wouldn't matter.

CD: Yes, I think it was.

CS: Anything else about the Bargetto years?

CD: Larry wasn't a great businessman. I recall one time he hired a guy to sell for him, and he could sell. Before long he was making more than anyone else in the place, working on commission. Sales just skyrocketed. So Larry was going to put him on a salary. So he immediately went off to work for a beer distributor. And after they hired the next guy, the sales went right down.

CS: Any problem transferring to Davis?

CD: No. I applied to Fresno State and to Davis and was accepted by both. But I guess my grades were OK. But I did get tired taking science courses all the time, and one quarter I took a Shakespeare course. My friends thought I was crazy, but I thought it couldn't be any easier. Read a few plays and write a couple of papers. It was nothing compared to biochemistry. I had a roommate in college at Davis who was a math major, and for him that was easy. But he couldn't pass Subject A English. I pulled him through, or he wouldn't have graduated. I told him that there was a deal in the making, since I had to take calculus.

Once I made the change into science I enjoyed it a lot. But I had to start from scratch at Davis. My unrestricted electives had been used up by the time I got to Davis, so I had to work my butt off. I was in a state of shock at first. I hadn't taken any kind of science for a long time. I remember getting an A on my first organic chemistry test-- what a thrill. But then I knew I could do it.

CS: You graduated in 1975. What did you do to get ready to do what you were going to do after you graduated.

CD: I was hired before I graduated.

CS: You're not on the cutting edge of the revolution, but you're pretty early. Back around 1970-1 all you had to do was breathe to get a job.

CD: There weren't enough winemakers to go around back then.

I got this job from a fellow down near Santa Maria; they were farming over 5,000 acres down there. They did Firestone and several others.

CS: Why do you, as a guy with a degree in fermentation science, get in with a company planting and managing vineyards?

CD: They wanted to build a winery. This was a really big time operation. It was an international farming company. They were farming vegetables in Jamaica and things like that. They arranged for

me to go work in Arkansas, at the Wiederkehr Winery in Altus.⁴ I was supposed to be there for three months and I ended up there for nine months. It was a large winery; they bottled perhaps 750,000 gallons per year. But they had enormous technical problems, and they just told me to have at it.

Then I came back to California and spent some time with the engineers at Valley Foundry, drawing up plans for this winery in Santa Maria.

CS: Did this become a winery?

CD: No. Looking back on it I think that they were trying to sell somebody a package. I know they tried to sell the Firestones on it, but they went ahead and built their own place. So while they were futzing around down there I got a job at the Louis Martini Winery for the harvest. I guess that was in 1977.

CS: So you're within a year of your own winery. By the way, during this time did you make any wine for yourself as a home winemaker?

CD: No. I was never a home winemaker.

CS: You're the first person I've talked to who started a small winery who didn't start out making homemade wine.

CD: Even when I was at Davis, I had already spent entire summers making wine at Bargetto's. In the production class when they were bringing in the lugs of grapes and all my friends in the class are so thrilled that they were actually making wine now, I had been doing it before for ten, twelve hours a day. I just didn't get the thrill.

CS: What did you do at Martini's?

CD: I ran the white press and worked in the cellar. Then I went to work for Llords & Elwood in San Jose. They were a negociant company who bottled everything at the Weibel plant in Mission San Jose. I needed a job, and I was still waiting on the people in Santa Maria, but by this time they weren't sending me money anymore. But now I wanted something permanent.

CS: Where did the idea of the winery come from?

CD: I had been thinking about it for a while. When I was working at Louis Martini there wasn't one time that I had an idea that they hadn't already tried. The place just ran like a machine. It seemed to me that it would be impossible to compete with people like this.

CS: You mean to work yourself up in that kind of an organization.

CD: Or to be in a winery competing against this sort of thing. But my thinking changed a lot when I got to Llords & Elwood. Richard Elwood didn't have a clue as to how to make wine. He'd taken the job over from his father. My father always said I needed to go to a place like that to get enough self confidence to say that if these guys could do it, then so could I. They never crushed a grape. They did have a rosé of Cabernet that they had made up at Chateau Souverain near Geyserville. I went up there and watched them crush grapes and then come back down here. So I was working for them four days a weeks, and for myself three days a week.

⁴ BW 8, founded in 1880. 1992 capacity was 1,750,000 gallons.

CS: How did you get going on this; we skipped something.

Starting a Winery

CD: Both my parents really encouraged me to start my own winery. And if I could do it up here, that was fine. I remember going out to eat one night and I told them that I was thinking about having my own place, and both went right for it. He was practicing here in Santa Cruz then.

So I was close enough here to be able to keep working for Llords & Elwood and work on this place. I did that for a year.

We took that barn and ran beams through it, jacked it up, poured concrete, and laid it back down.

CS: It doesn't look like an old barn now.

CD: No, it's been well renovated. But it was an existing building, and here in Santa Cruz County it's very difficult to do things like this, as long as it's existing and you aren't going to live in it. It was easy to do.

CS: You have the barn there, and your folks' house here. Did you move in here?

CD: I used to have an apartment down in Capitola, and I would come up here and work. My mother passed away in about 1983, and then my father didn't want to live up here by himself. So he moved out and we moved in. He died last December.

CS: Was he one of the owners?

CD: No. He owned the land, but I owned the business.

CS: Did you pay rent?

CD: He never asked for rent. I was useful enough fixing things up around here. In the early years both my parents would come out in the evening and help crush grapes. They thought it was a lot of fun. They'd help us bottle the wine.

In the first year, 1978, we only crushed maybe 15 tons all together. It was a step up from being a home winemaker, but it was pretty small scale.

CS: Any problems getting a bond?

CD: No. We got it fairly easily. I remember the roughest thing that first year was that the crop was very early. I got grapes from Ruby Hill in Livermore; they were calling themselves Stony Ridge then. I recall meeting Harry Rosangana someplace and his telling me that the harvest would be four or five weeks early. We made a Zinfandel from his grapes, and also a Malvasia Bianca. And we made a Pinot blanc from the St. Charles Vineyard of the Novitiate.

CS: So you made a Santa Cruz Mountain wine your very first year.

CD: We knew some people who knew Dan Gehrs and they introduced us. He was just getting going at Congress Springs himself. He didn't know much about making wine yet and I had a lot of questions on just getting started. So that summer in 1978 we were talking and he had just taken over the Novitiate vineyard. I asked him what he had and he gave me a whole list I wasn't interested in until he got to Pinot blanc. I told him I'd take all he'd sell me, I think he had 15 tons, and I ended up getting maybe three tons.

It was really difficult buying grapes back then. At that moment I didn't have a bonded winery and why should anybody consider doing business with me yet. I didn't have anything to show them. I ordered two stainless steel tanks from Valley Foundry, because back then you couldn't buy used equipment; nobody had any.

CS: You're starting in a different way. The old home winemakers would make their first commercial vintage in plastic tubs and garbage cans and the like.

CD: Right. We bought those two tanks, 1,000 and 1,500 gallons. I bought a brand new crusher with a motor, with a stemmer. But we only used that one year; it had serious design flaws. Next year we bought one from the Complete Winery, Bob Ellsworth, and we're still using it. We bought a small basket press which we used for two seasons, and then Larry Bargetto sold me his old Vaslin horizontal press. It was a piece of equipment I was very familiar with; I'd run it many times when I was a kid at Bargetto's. I also bought a filter from the Bertero Winery in Hecker Pass. I bought a heat exchanger from Pedrizzetti in Morgan Hill. (That was all my cooling equipment that year. The stainless steel wasn't jacketed.)

CS: Were you able to finance this yourself?

CD: Yes. I didn't have to buy a building or land. I got in as cheaply as anyone can get into the wine business.

CS: Usually this part of the story of the origins of a winery is very interesting, but this isn't. It's just straight forward, no sweat.

CD: The Zinfandel was the first wine we made. I told Harry I wanted to be the last to get the grapes from that vineyard. I was still getting things together. The day we picked up those grapes, that was the day the valves came in in San Jose. If they hadn't come in we couldn't have crushed grapes, or we would have had to have done something weird when we got home. And we got the grape boxes on the way; we bought them from a cannery there right off the 280 freeway in San Jose. We rented a truck. We got the Zin in two trips. And then we got the Pinot blanc and the Malvasia in one trip.

I would have made a more main-stream Zinfandel than I did that first year, but we had so much to do to get ready. The fruit was over-ripe, so there was nothing to do but go all out and make a late harvest, dry table wine. There was really no choice.

CS: Somebody told me about that wine in 1981 and I bought a half case. I've been drinking it the last couple of years. Alcohol is 14.9% on the label. It's delicious and has years to go.

How about selling the wines? I figure you're going to be making between 1,800 and 2,000 gallons. So you have about 800-900 cases.

Selling Wine

CD: And that wasn't going to be enough to sustain me. So we bought some main stream Zinfandel off the bulk market, bottled it and sold it-- to stay alive. I think we made about 750 cases of it. I think we got it from Mirassou.

CS: So your idea is to put food on your table with this business from the beginning.

CD: Oh, yes. That's why I wanted lots of tons of the Pinot blanc. It would go out early and I knew I could sell it. Back then it was easy to sell wine. I went out myself. I went out to sell it and everywhere I went, people bought some wine. I just drove around here to the liquor stores. That's the only part of the business I had never done before. I was always in production and the lab.

To this day we sell 95% of our wine in this area. We spend all our time just doing Santa Cruz County.

CS: I guess so. I don't see your wine in Berkeley or Sacramento. Is this also going to be true of the Zinfandel when it comes out?

CD: Right.

CS: Wait. How would I have bought any? I didn't drive over here to buy it.

CD: I don't know. Well, wait a minute. We did sell to places like Gene's Country Liquors in Los Gatos.

CS: Of course. That's where I would have gotten it, from Larry Rugani. He was always pointing me at new interesting wines.

CD: Back in those days we had real wine shops like that. And we sold wine to a place that was in the basement of the old Cooper House in Santa Cruz.

CS: I saw your wines in Pearl Alley Bistro, down from there.

CD: The place in the Cooper House, I think they were my first sale. They had a wine tasting club there. Jason Brandt Lewis was part of that, the wine writer. Lots of people in the wine business started down there at those wine tastings. Randall Grahm used to go there.

CS: Let me jump forward. Does anyone sell wine for you now?

CD: That fellow who just walked through here. He sells for me. He calls on restaurants and such three days a week. Any I have a cellar man, a full time employee, and he does the grocery stores for me. I write the newsletters. And I deal with the big accounts. I used to handle Liquor Barn when there was a Liquor Barn.

CS: Can you get into Safeway around here?

CD: In Santa Cruz County we are in every Safeway.

CS: That's the sign of a good manager, who knows to play on the idea that this is a local producer. Do you sell at Jim Beaugard's store?

CD: Oh, yes.

CS: Yes, I guess so, since you use his grapes. I remember his making a special point of aiming me at one of your wines from his vineyard.

CD: Did anything change about the physical plant as you approached the second vintage?

CD: We added tanks, bought a new crusher, and we made a lot more wine. Probably crushed over 40 tons. We still bought grapes from Dan Gehrs, and also one up in Sonoma County that I discovered. I had worked with Bob Stemmler⁶ in Arkansas; he was a consulting enologist back there. He'd go back there for a week or so. He was just starting up his own winery. I remember driving him to the airport once and he told me that he had just bought this piece of land in Sonoma. Another time I ran into him later and he told me about this fabulous vineyard he knew about. The guy who owned it was Jim Reed, out in Mendocino County. And he farmed other vineyards as well. We bought Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, and I think Zinfandel. But the Cabernet failed in 1979 from all the rain, so we only had the other two the first year.

CS: But I thought you said the vineyard was in Sonoma.

CD: Jim bought about five cases of the wines I made from his grapes every year, and then he'd sit down with a vertical of these wines with people from larger wineries, since he wanted to sell them grapes. Beringer said they'd take them all, and then they wanted to buy it. So when they went out to survey the vineyard they found that part of it was in Mendocino County and part in Sonoma, and they are not interested in Mendocino fruit. And they were upset because they had made wines they'd labeled Sonoma that might actually have been Mendocino. They ended up not buying the vineyard or taking any more of the fruit. We got grapes from him until 1985.

Let me jump up to 1981. I have a story. Larry Bargetto called and asked if I was interested in some grapes. I'm always interested. He had a fellow at the winery who had a vineyard outside of Templeton on the highway. They called themselves Farview Vineyards. Larry had been making Merlot from their grapes for two or three years and was happy with it. He had some grapes and I had an open fermenter. So we made our first Merlot that year. I told him that only three tons would fit into the fermenter and he sent me four tons plus and we barely made it fit. A couple of years later we won the sweepstakes at the Riverside County Fair with that wine. We had blended some of it into the Cabernet and I kicked myself for that. Back then there weren't a lot of Merlots on the market. I think we ended up bottling only about 160 cases.

CS: Right. The craze had not hit yet.⁶

CD: The 1981 Cabernet won the sweepstakes at San Diego. Today we still sell more Merlot than Cabernet because of that one year.

CS: And the Merlot market has gone straight up since then.

CD: By the time we won that Merlot award we only had about 60 cases left and people started calling from all over the country about it.

⁶ Formerly a winemaker at Charles Krug Winery and founder of his own Sonoma winery in 1977, (BW 4846).

⁶ In 1981 the California Merlot crush was 7800 tons. In 1992 it was 37,000 tons.

CS: You don't sell all over the country, right? Unless someone sends you a check.

CD: We sell just about everything in Santa Cruz County, but we have an account in Canada, Devlin's Country Bistro in Ontario. They place a twenty case order now and then.

CS: The Irish stand together.

CD: We also have a distributor in Iowa that we still sell to. He came here one time knocking on my door.

CS: But you don't have someone out there, a distributor, looking out for you, even in San Francisco.

CD: No. But the world has changed a lot. Back then brokers were telling me to just make Merlot. They didn't want me to dabble in things. The nice thing about being small is that you can just decide to go 180 degrees on using distributors, which is what we did. We decided to simply sell the wine ourselves. We opened a tasting room, and we went into the mail-order business for a while.

CS: What do you mean by "a tasting room"?

CD: A few people would come up here, but we opened a tasting room down in the village of Soquel. That was in 1984.

We did the mail-order thing at the same time. Back then we had distributors in Florida and Detroit, and they were doing other states as well. But the market has really changed since those early years.

CS: How many cases do you do a year now?

CD: Between 6,000 and 7,000.

CS: That's very good. Are you also buying wine?

CD: We still play the negociant game a little bit. And people are constantly approaching us for special things. And we do that. Custom bottling. And Aptos Vineyard, that another kind of thing. This fellow has a little vineyard by Cabrillo College.

CS: I know about that place. Pinot noir that rarely gets ripe.

CD: Almost all growers are the same. They want their grapes out of the field and into the winery, as soon as they can. It's difficult to get growers to sit around and wait and watch the birds eat the grapes while they ripen. I think he could get them ripe, but he picks them too soon every year. So we make his wine for him. With that little batch that's as close as I get to being a home winemaker. I make it bottle it and give it back to him, for a fee. And then they go around and sell it. It very unusual for a grape grower to do that. At one time he got three or four tons, and then they changed the pruning system. Last year he didn't get any grapes at all.

As time went on in the mid-eighties we started making a really wide variety of wines. And we still do. We have everything from White Zinfandel to Merlot, Cabernet, a couple of different Chardonnays. I feel we can make just about any kind of wine we want. It's a whole lot more fun in one year to be making some Gamay, and Chenin blanc, and such-- we don't make a lot of it, but it's interesting and when they turn out you get some attention.

CS: How many years did you use Stony Ridge?

CD: I think only two years. They were having their troubles then.

In 1982 we did a completely dry Chenin blanc from a vineyard outside of Paso Robles. We made it just as if it were Chardonnay. Most before then were very sweet. I had a friend in the Los Angeles area back then and he gave a bottle of it to the buyer for Trader Joe's down there. They liked it a lot and they took it, all 700 and some odd cases. So I've been in the business long enough to say that I made money selling wine to Trader Joe's.

CS: These days it's not such a good thing to have your wine seen there. It means you're in trouble. They are always buying from distressed situations.

CD: But back then there weren't many distressed situations.

CS: You don't sell in LA any more?

CD: Not really. We have a guy down there, but I don't think he's sold ten cases in the last year. If he ever got going we'd go with it. The wine business is sort of like turning over every rock; you don't like to turn anyone down who says he thinks he can sell your wine. Now either I or my wife sells it, and we have one salesman who only works for me. That way when he goes out and sells wine I know he's going to sell my wine.

And we sell a lot in grocery stores which means that we have to have range of wines.

CS: But you also have to have enough of an item.

CD: Every Safeway is different. We don't have to satisfy the whole chain in the area. These managers, most of them, really know their stuff. And they can tell how much you're selling and that affects how many feet or inches of shelf space you get. They don't really care what wines we stock. It's our responsibility to give them wines that sell. If we put up wine that doesn't sell, that's how somebody else is going to get our spot. Now we have some experience in selecting the wines. We have some items, like a little white table wine we make specifically for the grocery stores, that we know is going to sell. And we concentrate right here in Santa Cruz County. That's opposite from Randall Gramh at Bonny Doon who wants to sell wine all over the world.

We have to have a good wine and it has to be priced right. We have to understand what the competition is.

CS: It sounds to me that in the eighties you played around with all kinds of ideas and that now you've fallen back on a pretty simplified approach.

CD: The world keeps changing. When Liquor Barn started up we were right there and that was really sweet for us. And when they died we had to replace it. And for a lot of places there was nothing to replace it. When Liquor Barn was riding high a lot of the wine shops got knocked out. Now there aren't very many around.

CS: Of course we're in wine country. This is Santa Cruz and that's Los Gatos and the Peninsula. This isn't the rest of the world.

You talked about mail orders ten years ago, but people your size now are really going to that

kind of thing. They all look at Ridge's ATP program. They want to attract and hold a special group of people. They're your people who identify with your winery.

CD: We're doing mail orders. We're getting back into it in a big way.

One thing that has replaced Liquor Barn and the wine shops are these wine clubs. They sell a lot of wine, and most of them I can't sell to, because I don't make enough of any one thing. These are these operations who buy for their members and they are getting very big. Back with that 1981 Merlot we sold some to Winemasters in San Diego and I think they took 50-60 cases. Now they buy about 1,000 cases if they are going to select you. I don't make 1,000 cases of any one thing.

CS: That is big time. That sounds like Costco or Price Club.

But I understand the winery wine clubs. You don't have a middle man. It's the way to go if you can make it work.

What is the percentage of your sales that go that way now?

CD: Maybe 300-400 cases; it's still a small percentage of the total.

Another marketing plan for this year-- we've already done a mailing to every Devlin in the state of California. Next comes every Devlin in the country. We have the list. We'll have Devlin and the coat of arms on it, and drop the "Wine Cellars."

CS: I see people arriving to the tasting room, so we'll stop here.

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March 7, 1994

Beautiful Labels

CS: Let's start today talking about the very interesting history of your labels.

CD: Our first artist was a brilliant technical illustrator, really good at graphic design. He devised the least successful label we've ever had. It broke up the name Devlin into Dev and Lin among the redwood trees. People couldn't figure out what the Dev-Lin was all about. I left the whole thing in his hands. He did it in a sort of half-tone; it was the first time I'd ever seen a color Xerox. I remember playing with the colors until we had a color I liked and I took it to the printer and he wanted to know what to do with it. He couldn't match what we had done. It turned out to be this muddy green for redwood trees. He also selected the paper and it turned out it was not label stock. We couldn't get them on the bottle. From then on things changed. Since then I've had printers tell me I had a printing background. I can talk about all kinds of things now from what I went through.

CS: How does your son get into this?

CD: We were moving towards doing different kinds of things, changing the artwork but keeping the basic shape and size of the label. One year one of our artists came up at the very end that he didn't have anything for me. But we had to print labels. In this wine tasting group I belonged to i jokingly said that I was thinking about putting my son's art work on it. This guy dared me to. This blue one was the first, but we actually ran it in red. He was about eleven months old at the time. That was in 1983. This was a finger painting type thing. I was getting a new piece of art from him almost every day. The art came apart very quickly since it was edible paint on any kind of paper. So any time he had anything I liked I'd take it down and have a transparency made.

This other one here was made when he was about two and a half years old.

CS: The work of Thomas Charles Devlin II.

CD: We always write about the artist on the left-hand side of the label. We never mention how old he was.

CS: On this one that sort of looks like a Miró to me, or a soft Kandinsky. Did he have any help on that? The composition is really pretty good.

CD: No. I've had many people question the fact that he actually did it himself at that age. The lines are too straight. He had a little toy car that he dipped in paint and ran it across the paper, which is how he got the lines so straight. If you look carefully you can actually see the wheel marks. In a period of about five or six weeks he did about ten or fifteen that looked just like this.

I titled them as we went along. When I was at U.C. Davis there was a professor there, Ann Noble, who had this flavor wheel. So we called this an aroma-flavor ladder.

CS: When do the Jacque Baker labels begin?

CD: She is fairly recent. She came into the tasting room one time and had post cards for sale and I told her that they looked like good wine labels. She was thrilled. I think we were about her first commercial sale, ever. She didn't start painting until she was about 55 years old. She's in her sixties now. She has done these two for us. The Santa Cruz beach and the Cooper House downtown.

We keep adding to our collection. We've been using these flower labels for a while. They are by Phil Haysmeyer. I actually commissioned them. I wanted these colors to be on the White Zinfandel, here with the fuchsia and the hummingbird. And I wanted a white flower label for a white wine. This is a native Santa Cruz wild flower called "Farewell to Spring." When my wife showed me a picture of it they had white flowers, but it turned out that it comes in white, pink, red. . . . So it came back blue and red, not blue and white. The artist just opened the book and copied it.

Then we have the one for our Lily White wine. This is our blended white table wine. Kelley Steele did that painting.

Flowers seem to work well. But we have buildings and abstracts. I don't expect people to buy the wine just because of the label, but it doesn't hurt. Some wineries will have labels that people hate. I recall the Frick Winery, when they were down here, their label really turned some people off. You'd hear people say, "I'd never buy a wine with a label like that." I don't want to be in a position where someone would not want to buy your wine because of the label.

CS: "A good wine needs no bush," but it doesn't hurt.

CD: This was our second label but I knew early that a four color label was the direction I wanted to go. We print them all at the same time. We run an entire year's worth at the same time. You'll notice that on my labels they all say "table wine."

CS: Instead of telling the alcohol content. That's perfectly correct if you stay under 14%.

CD: Sometimes we print labels before we even see the grapes.

CS: Joe Swan used to do that, for years. And he said that just putting the word "alcohol" on the label might be negative for some people.

CD: And you'll have people see, say, 13.3% alcohol and think they like wines under 13%, whether they can tell or not. And that's silly because you're allowed this 1 1/2% variation by the government. But it's not that I don't want the word "alcohol" on it.

CS: Let's talk about the appellation game in the Santa Cruz Mountains.⁷

The Appellation Game

CD: It has a long and stormy history. The appellation was actually drawn up by Dave Bennion and Jan Sherrill. It was one of the early ones granted by government in California. So this was pretty new ground for everybody.⁸ The Santa Cruz Mountain Vintners organization then was pretty much controlled by Dave Bennion and Jan Sherrill. They sat down and drew the line for the petition. There was a lot of discussion as to what should be included and what shouldn't. They excluded, for example, the Novitiate Winery in Los Gatos, since they weren't part of the organization.

CS: But the individual Novitiate vineyards, those up Bear Creek Road, were included.

CD: Yes, but on the other side of Los Gatos Creek, around Lexington Reservoir, the vineyards were not included.

CS: Actually by then those old vineyards were no longer producing. That was by the end of the seventies.

CD: The big disagreement that I had was that on this side they put the line at 400 feet, which excluded Hallcrest, Aptos Vineyard, most of our place. They knew that it would exclude a lot of people and they did nothing about it. They did amend it and came back to let what is now Hallcrest in, Felton-Empire then. Leo McCloskey was at Felton-Empire then and they brought the line down to put that vineyard in. But I can remember Leo standing there looking at the map and saying that "we're still not in." And Dave Bennion just says, "Shut up and sign the thing."

CS: Dave told me that if you had had a vineyard up here they would have drawn you in.

⁷ The appellation was granted by the BATF 1/4/82 after a hearing on the petition on 1/19/81 in Los Gatos. I did the historical research for the petitioners and testified in favor of the petition at that hearing.

⁸ Santa Cruz Mountains was the fifth appellation granted in the United States. Napa Valley was the first in California (3/31/81) and the second in the United States.

CD: Aptos Vineyard had a vineyard, at about the same elevation, and they weren't put in. If Hallcrest wouldn't fit in, why not bring the elevation down to 300 feet to include just about everybody else.

CS: By the time I was involved there was nothing to make me think that there was any anomaly about Hallcrest and the proposed line. My research simply didn't require that I give any close attention to elevations and such things. I think it was amended before I started my work.

CD: Their attitude was that no one would really notice. If you want to call your grapes Santa Cruz Mountain, no one would care. I thought that was a poor attitude. They should have made it right.

CS: Later they did bring it down to include Kathryn Kennedy and the Knight Smith Vineyard across the street on Pierce Road. That was afterwards. They went in and petitioned for an amendment, and no one complained about it and the BATF let them in. I think that if you had a vineyard here you could get in the appellation. Same as Mrs. Kennedy did. I recall at the time of the hearing her vineyard was not inside the line. She was there at the hearing and was pretty grumpy about the fact. I talked to her about it, and I told that I couldn't see any reason why she shouldn't be inside. Bennion told me that she could get in and that no one was going to object to it. So she's in now as the result of whatever she did about it.

Dave told me that he thought the line was going to run right through where you might plant a vineyard.

CD: I attended a meeting of the Vintners, right before they submitted the petition. There was a vote then to redraw the line in Santa Cruz County, so bring the line down on this side to include us, to around 300 feet, so that everybody would be in-- Hallcrest, Devlin, Aptos. We voted on it, but when it was sent in Jan Sherrill had not changed the line. She sent it in the way it was before. She was the secretary, or something, and she raised her hand and said that she'd redraw the line and revise the wording.

CS: It's something to think about. I'm sure there wouldn't be a voice raised against your coming in. Have you been thinking about planting?

CD: No. It's a different field and I'm happy just making wine.

CS: Let's talk now about organizing the county's winegrowers.

CD: After the appellation debacle, perhaps a year or two later, we had that California winegrowers marketing order.⁹ There was a lot of money available on a regional basis and I thought we should become an organization and try to get some of this money.

CS: Before this there was already the Santa Cruz Mountain Vintners Association. Did you have to be in the appellation to be in it?

CD: No. There were several members who had never been in the appellation and had never made wines from appellation grapes who were members.

CS: Right, like the Obesters.

⁹For a history of the order and the activities promoted see: *Wines & Vines* (June 1985):4; (May 1987):16; *Wine Spectator*, 3/1/86, 8/31/87.

CD: I know that Paul Masson asked to join and they told them that they didn't fit the organization.

CS: Really! I never heard that. You never joined the Vintners, did you?

CD: I was a member until the appellation thing. Then I quit. They were a pretty hang-loose organization. I remember one time when they were trying to do a brochure and they spent three hours talking about what the group was and what it should do. They were really paralyzed in indecision about what it was they wanted to do.

CS: So tell me about how the Winegrowers organization got going.

Local Organization

CD: We founded it to get at this money, to have a brochure, maybe a poster. So when we got up to the Wine Institute; actually Cheryl, my wife, did a lot of the work on this, going up to sit on this committee. Right away it was clear they were going to have a huge problem distributing the money. You had a Napa and a Sonoma organization, and then you have Carneros, and they want to be separate, but they are in both Napa and Sonoma. And you have all these appellations inside appellations. So almost from the beginning they said the only way to solve this is to have people apply as a county. So that's how we organized it.

Prior to that we had done a wine competition at the county fair. The fair paid for us to do the very first-ever brochure. It was two-color and had every winery in Santa Cruz County. So we had a focus already. I think that was in 1983. You had to be a county winery or use county grapes. And back then grapes from Aptos Vineyard were going to Thomas Kruse, in Hecker Pass. So we allowed him in the competition.

So we were an organization and we went up there and collected our money and did pretty much what we wanted to do. We are a non-profit corporation with the state. Right from the beginning the Bargettos were active, Roudon-Smith, the Ahlgrens.

We had ten people who were members of the Mountain Vintners and our organization.

We did a spectacular four-color brochure, and there will be a new version of this soon.

Our organization was extremely project oriented. All we ever talked about was things to do. We have a vintners festival every year. That's how we raised enough money to pay for our executive director, full time now.

Every project is designed to make money. The festival and the passport program each makes money. Our first executive director was Mary Liz Cortese. She's Dominic Cortese's daughter. He is the assemblyman and is chairman of the wine committee.

It was at that point that the Mountain Vintners decided to do another brochure, and they were looking at us because we were able to afford an executive director. At first she was half-time. Now we have a man and wife who are sharing the responsibility.

So when they started talking about another brochure, there were ten of their members who were also members of our Winegrowers Association. And they were wondering why they should have paid to be in the county brochure already and then this new one. Bob Mullen was president that year, and almost every project they thought of they talk about getting together with us, particularly with the brochure project. There was a lot of turmoil over on the other side about this. And I knew that Jan Sherrill really didn't want anything to do with me or my organization. And on our side there was some concern that bringing in all these new people would change the organization.

CS: You'll obviously be bringing in everybody in the county. But how about people in the Mountain Vintners who are not in the county, like Mullen at Woodside.

CD: We bent a little bit. We allow anybody in the Mountain Vintners in the organization, even outside the county.

CS: You don't have any restrictive language in your incorporation papers.

CD: What we did, we amended the language, to include everyone in the appellation and use appellation grapes, and in the county, of course, and beyond that there was a little clause that said anybody else who really wants to join. So it's not restrictive at all.

CS: That's like the Society of Wine Educators. It's for people who teach about wine, and anyone else who is interested in wine education.

CD: We really wanted to include as many people as possible.

CS: When does this amalgamation take place.

CD: Between 1989 and 1990.¹⁰

CS: And the official name now?

CD: Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association. It's hard to say, but there is an S at the end of "Mountain" in the appellation title.

CS: Tell me about the festival. We didn't really get that down.

CD: We started that a long time ago, and the first one was an absolute flop. We did it with the restaurant association. But we voted to try it again. Essentially what it was is one weekend when everybody would be open and people can come and try the wines. It's like an open house for the entire association.

We have a lot of wineries that don't have any parking, or they're way out in the boondocks. So they go to a restaurant. For example, several wineries will cluster at a restaurant, and a person can go there and try the wines there.

CS: How do people know about it?

CD: Through the newspaper. It's very important since this is how we pay for the association. We sell glasses for \$10.

CS: This sounds like the genesis of the passport program.

CD: It's a little bit different. Everyone has a passport and you go from winery to winery to get them stamped and there's a prize if you do it. And you can take forever to do it. It doesn't have to be on the one weekend. With passport you have to go to the winery. Since it goes on, the restaurant thing wouldn't work.

CS: I bought a passport just to have a souvenir. I should have brought it to be stamped. What's your stamp?

¹⁰ See Woodside interview for specific information on the process.

CD: It was a coyote, but now it's the Devlin coat of arms.

CS: How about those earthquake wines. Was that an organizational project?

Epicenter Cuvée

CD: The county organization did that, at least the first one. The Epicenter Cuvée was something we had considered doing before, a cooperative wine. It was an intriguing idea. I think Carneros did it once. So after the earthquake we decided that it would be a good idea for raising some money, promote the appellation, and have some fun.

There were six wineries that chipped in one barrel of Chardonnay. Later they did a Pinot noir. It wasn't as successful. The Chardonnay just flew out the door.

CS: How did you make money on this?

CD: Bargetto bottled the first bunch. So all you had to do was take the barrel down to their place. Then you got back your fifty gallons worth of blended wines, bottled. You had to be one of those six, and it had to be Santa Cruz Mountain Chardonnay. Not everybody had any and not everybody wanted to participate anyway. It sold for \$15-20 per bottle. Half went to charity and some went to pay for making the wine.

CS: The the main gain was the public relations.

CD: Good P.R. We raised about \$10,000 for the Santa Cruz County Foundation. It was to go for earthquake relief.

We just did a poster; that's another project. Another project is an attempt to log every wine grape grower in the Santa Cruz Mountains. John Bargetto, and there is also a Viticulture Group working on it. They meet in vineyards and talk about trellises and tractors. They're getting the names of every grower in the Santa Cruz Mountains who sells grapes commercially.

CS: I talked to them up at Ridge in October. What a mob. I'll bet there were 100 people there.

CD: It's a real how-to group. One time they went up to Oakville to the experiment station there.

Local Politics

We also keep track of what's going on in the wine world. We joined the restaurant association here to fight this alcohol ordinance they are trying to pass here in Santa Cruz. They want to reduce the number of ABC licenses in the city of Santa Cruz. If anybody has to move or closes, they wouldn't be replaced. If your place burns down you can't start up again.

CS: Surely that doesn't include wine and beer, restaurants.

CD: It does. It includes everybody, except the big guys. Costco and Long's. It's not fair.

CS: So a mom-and-pop pizza parlor could be screwed.

CD: The people behind this have been saying all along that Santa Cruz has more ABC licenses per capita than any other city in California.

CS: Bull. Los Gatos beats them cold.

CD: Well, finally somebody in the Winegrowers sat down and figured it out. And it is not true. Carmel has three times as many per capita. They were playing very loose with the numbers. The mayor is behind it.

So we are organized behind it and you have to show up at all the miserable meetings, write press releases. Valerie Ahlgren is working on it. She was interested from the very beginning.

CS: She's a good person to have on your side.

CD: We also fought the nickel-a-drink proposition, Prop 134. I was on the local cable channel debating somebody from the mental health alliance.

CS: How are you organized?

CD: We pay the executive director. Then we're broken up in committees to get things done. I'm in charge of the passport program this year.

CS: Is your passport program totally integrated with the mountain wineries?

CD: Yes. In fact, we started doing the passport program with them before we had formally come together. We had enough people who were in both organizations to make it work. So all we needed to do is to agree to come together, to bury the hatchet. We knew that we couldn't go back to what I call the "bad old days," when all the decisions had been made before the meetings were held, in the before-meeting meetings, and sometimes the after-meeting meetings.

CS: It sounds to me that you county guys are sort of the institutional inheritors from the past.

CD: Right. They married us.

CS: Do you have a president and board of directors?

CD: Both.

CS: How do you get to be president?

CD: These days the president almost has to find a successor. I was president for the first five years, and when I would go to places where I had to introduce myself I'd do it as, "Chuck Devlin, President for Life."

CS: Well, if you told me today that you were the president now, I wouldn't have been surprised. When I think there's somebody in charge over here, I think of you. Who is now?

CD: Dexter Ahlgren. Jeff Emery, Ken Burnap's assistant, was the year before. The year before that I was president. I was in for five years, then Steve Storrs, Martin Bargetto, then I came back for one more year. I think it's good for the organization to change presidents frequently. That way people understand that once your in you can get out. And different people have different ideas.

CS: How about the board of directors?

CD: We have seven and you sort of nominate yourself.

CS: It doesn't sound to me as if there are any politics right now.

CD: Not really. We don't really have any strong policy issues that divide us. The problems we have are getting projects done; we're all so busy. We have 38 members who are really good at what they do. People look at what done and they are ready to tell you how it could have been done better.

CS: That's really not political. What's the current project?

CD: The new brochure. They go to the printer this month. It looks as if it is going to be spectacular.

CS: Let's go through your wines today, one by one.

Devlin Wines

CD: We have one white wine without varietal designation. That's our Lily White, currently a blend of Chenin blanc, White Riesling, and Muscat Canelli. The Muscat comes from a vineyard in Monterey County.

We always seem to have more than one Chardonnay. Now we have two 1991s. One is from the Beauregard Ranch in Bonny Doon and the other is from a vineyard in Monterey County. And we are just releasing one from a vineyard over near Calera Winery in San Benito County.

We have a fairly dry Sauvignon blanc from a vineyard outside Paso Robles. And there is a completely dry Chenin blanc from Monterey County. We started doing these in 1982. I like the variety and we are always able to sell it.

CS: How about negociant white wines that you have bought?

CD: I don't have anything right now. We almost always do that as a special project. We've done a California Chardonnay in the past, which gives us room to combine different wines from various areas. And today it's really a buyer's market in the bulk Chardonnay field. It's fun to play with that.

CS: And with the recognition you have for your labels this is probably something you can move in with fairly easily. Good price, good look, good shelf space.

CD: That's what has kept us in business, our reputation. People aren't all that interested in where it comes from. They want a good wine for a fair price. That's how we make our living.

We also make a White Zinfandel. The grapes come from a Paso Robles vineyard. We've been making it for years.

CS: You make it? I thought you bought it.

CD: I make it.

CS: Not including the White Zin, what percentage of your sales is white.

CD: Good question. I'd say about half and half.

CS: What does the White Zin amount to?

CD: We bottle anywhere from 500 to 1,000 cases a year. It's important to us. And that fuchsia label is reserved for the White Zinfandel.

CS: Do you have a non-varietal red wine?

CD: We have a Claret because we make White Zin. One of the things I do comes from the ripeness at which I get my grapes. They are almost at the threshold at which most big wineries would reject them as too ripe.

CS: So yours don't come in at 18.5° Brix like these twelve-ton-to-the-acre Central Valley grapes.

CD: I get mine between 20 and 21°. You know that the riper the grapes are the lesser the yield you can get. That doesn't bother me. We crush and press the grapes and very quickly when we start getting the color I save that juice and save the pomace and stems and make a red wine from it and blend it with whatever else I have in the winery to make a claret.

CS: The old Italian way.

CD: I get better white Zin that way. And we wind up with a very drinkable red wine. People like it, buy it, and we can sell it for a cheap price. We also make a Gamay from that vineyard over near Calera, Circle S Vineyards, which is extremely light in color.

CS: Is that a Napa Gamay?

CD: Yes. But he calls it Gamay Beaujolais. I get a headache when I start talking about "Gamay." Who knows what it is? And it sounds as if they are going to take the "Beaujolais" away from us anyway.

CS: It never made sense to me to call a clone of Pinot noir "Gamay Beaujolais." I smiled and bought it but it never made sense.
So you put the Gamay into the Claret.

CD: Yes. If I could have thought of a clever name like Lily White for the Claret I would have used it.

CS: You are starting to see it more and more. Not much, but it's there. I like it very much.

CD: Then we bottle a Gamay. We use that with a little carbonic maceration. You get that strawberry flavor.

CS: Is that for early release?

CD: Yes. That is, if we have the labels ready.

We make a Zinfandel from the Beauregard Ranch. This is a big mountain Zinfandel. Not for the faint at heart at all.

We have two Cabernets now from Jim's vineyard, a 1989 and a 1990. They are both big nice Cabs.

Last but not least is our Merlot. We sell more Merlot than anything else. The market for it has just gone nuts.

CS: So has the planting.¹¹ In five years you're going to be able to buy bulk Merlot very reasonably.

CD: That's what happened to Chardonnay. The price has fallen off the table. But it doesn't mean you can't sell good Chardonnay. Five years from now I'll be able to sell plenty of Merlot.

CS: And with the approach that you've taken, where you're willing to buy negociant wines, you'll be in a perfect situation.

CD: Another thing you're going to see, people can take a Chardonnay vineyard and make it into a Merlot vineyard in one year-- just graft it over.

CS: It's happening. And I think that Cabernet franc is the one down the line that's going to be in the same situation.

You have to tell me about the sparkling wine.

CD: We have it made at Weibel and we just sell it. At Mission San Jose.

CS: I think it's going to close down. What will you do?

CD: I have no idea. They are attempting to move up to their plant in Mendocino County. But I think they're going to try to keep a warehouse in Fremont.

CS: How long have you been doing this?

CD: About ten years. We sell about 2,000 cases a year.

CS: Wow! That's great! This is an important element of your operation.

CD: It really moves in December. I have it out there on the shelves. It's not just an item for the tasting room.

CS: Let's go through the 1993 vintage.

Vintage 1993

CD: We do about 90% of the same thing that we did the year before.

CS: How do you secure that relationship?

CD: Take the Merlot, which we get from this vineyard outside of Templeton in San Luis Obispo County. That's since 1981. We've gone through three or four different owners. Ken Burnap gets the same grapes, Farview Vineyards.

¹¹ Acreage in California Merlot grew from 5,532 in 1989 to 10,004 in 1992. In 1993 34% of the Merlot acreage in California was still non-bearing.

CS: He says the same things about his Merlot and how important it has become in the last few years.¹²

CD: We haul the grapes up together. He called me up in 1992 and said he didn't think I was going to want that fruit. It was 26-27' out of the crusher. They were selling most of their Merlot to a larger winery down there and they said they wanted them picked on a certain day, and that's when they picked them, way over ripe. So I called them and asked if they couldn't just send our grapes to the larger winery, which they did. Then in 1993 he wouldn't even talk to Ken and me. So you can see, if you don't have an honest, confident grape grower, you've got nothing. That is one of the best Merlot vineyards in the country. So we are out looking for other sources at this point. Now we are getting Merlot from a vineyard that isn't too far away, at French Camp. In fact, the 1991 is half of that vineyard, and we're also lining up other sources in that part of the world.

That had happened before with this vineyard. One year when they changed owners they turned all their grapes over to a grape broker and they wouldn't sell to us because we were too small. I think we lost 1987 that way.

CS: How about your more stable relationships?

CD: We do a lot of business with Ron Siletto. He used to be President of Almaden years ago. Now he's a grape grower.

CS: I knew him when he came out here from National Distillers to take John McClellan's place. I worked for him about a year, I think in 1984. They used to call him "stiletto," the knife.

CD: We do a lot of things with him. Last year we bought stuff we never have done before. He has a grape he calls Trousseau and I know that from this same vineyard it has been bottled as Cabernet Pfeffer. I'm just starting my research finding out what it is and what the BATF will allow me to call it.

CS: Where is the place located?

CD: It's near the Calera winery. He calls it the Circle S Vineyards.

CS: I know the place well. It's doubtful that it is Trousseau and it is a very good chance that it is Cabernet Pfeffer. I did the research for Almaden that convinced the BATF to put it on the approved varietal list.¹³ I'll send it to you.

CD: He also has a Merlot vineyard that is coming on very well. He also has some Pinot St. George. We like that variety.

We also did the Muscat Canelli and Chenin blanc from Monterey. And from the Cienega Valley Vineyards we got some Cabernet franc.¹⁴ We'll do more of that in 1994.

We are starting to go in a direction where we will be making even more varieties than we are now. People are interested in things they don't normally see and never had before. I think that is good for the wine business. And here in America we can do whatever we want. We aren't told by the government we can't have certain varieties in certain areas, like they do in France and Germany.

CS: Now tell me about Judo.

¹² See Burnap interview.

¹³ For my article on that research see *Wine Spectator* 4/1/1982.

¹⁴ Cienega Valley Winery (BW 4143) is the successor to the Almaden plant there. The historic Palmtag Winery's (San Benito Vineyard Company) operations on that land date back to 1858.

CD: I was the national masters champion last year in the 80 kilogram division.

CS: This is where we started, your going to San Jose State to take advantage of the judo program there.

CD: I competed there. I had been on the National High School Team. I had started when I was about 13 years old. When I was a teenager I lived with the middle-weight champion of Japan for two and a half years.

CS: Have you kept it up all these years?

CD: I took time out when I started the winery. In 1977 I won every match at every tournament I competed in. In 1978 I started the winery. Then I started again when my son was old enough to take it up. That was when he was about seven years old. That was in 1989. I'm still training. The age category goes from 40-44, and I'm 42, so I'm getting to the end of that. It's a lot easier when you're young.

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Devlin Wine Cellars

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Winter Newsletter 1993

GREETINGS! The harvest ended just before the rains set in. It looks like '93 will turn out to be a spectacular year. We crushed most of the old standards as well as some very special and unusual varietals this year. We can hardly wait to bottle them.

Orange & Santa Cruz County

Fairs We don't enter a lot of wine competitions because on the whole they've become pretty greedy and the process is now expensive. OCF is free and hires winemakers to judge so we always enter this one. We won ten medals in all.

Wine Society This is our wine club. For \$24 + tax we will UPS to you 3 bottles of wonderful wine 3-5 times a year. We are even starting to make special wines just for our society program. Receive great wine and get an additional 10% off of our other wines. Out of CA addresses slightly more.

MIXED CASE SCREAMING DEAL We will assemble 12 great wines, 6 white and 6 red from our current releases. This is an instant wine cellar and a great introduction to our wines. Just \$55 + tax and UPS charges.

Merlot WE are now sold out of the 90 and we have released the 91. This is a blend of two different vineyards but is almost entirely Merlot and is as good as any. SILVER MEDALS at both Orange and Santa Cruz fairs.

CHARDONNAY We now have three Chards in current release. The 91 Monterey Chard is more in the California style, lots of tropical flavors and balanced with moderate oak. Bronze Medal at Orange County. The 91 Santa Cruz Mtn. Beauregard Ranch is a great classic Chard. SILVER MEDAL at Orange County. Our 92, Central Coast was made differently to produce a very fragrant, elegant Chardonnay.

Zinfandel Our 88 is the oldest wine that we have for sale. It is a massive Zin that has aged gracefully. It is a tasting room favorite. Our 90 is a new release

and is everything that a Zin should be.

Lily White Of all the wines that we make our Lily White is one of the most fun. Imagine walking through the winery and tasting all of the various odd lots. Then we bottle what we like. We have a new bottling in release and we like it a lot. Off dry, fruity and a bargain.

Cabernet Sauvignon

We have two Cabs in release. Both are from the Beauregard Ranch. These are meaty, mountain Cabs. The 89 is a little bigger and the 90 has a better nose. Great with a steak and both will age well.

SAUVIGNON BLANC Wines made from this grape can be very obnoxious animals, but our 92 is a wonderful, elegant food wine. Great wine, great price.

Chenin Blanc We've been talking about this wine for awhile now. It is drier and more complex than most Chenins. We are almost out of the 92 but the 93 is in the wings.

Judo Update Our intrepid winemaker Chuck, is now a national champion. He traveled all of the way to Indianapolis and won the masters division (over 40, 86 Kg.). Wow.

OTHER GOODIES As usual, we have more wines than we have space to talk about them. This is also the bottling season and new wines are always being released. Our Tasting room is open weekends from 12 til 5. 3801 Park Ave. Soquel. Call for directions.

SHIPPING We can UPS ship to CO, ID, IL, NM, MO, OR, WI, and of course CA. Other states are more difficult but not impossible. Ask for details and let us figure it out. CHEERS

