

J U D G M E N T  
O F P A R I S



California vs. France and the Historic 1976 Paris Tasting  
That Revolutionized Wine

GEORGE M. TABER

SCRIBNER

*New York London Toronto Sydney*



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## CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY ROBERT G. MONDAVI

vii

PROLOGUE

1

Part One:

### A DRIVING DREAM

Chapter 1. The Little Wine Shop in Cité Berryer	7
Chapter 2. France Ruled the World	17
Chapter 3. The New Eden	29

Part Two:

### THE AWAKENING

Chapter 4. California Dreamer	45
Chapter 5. Starting Over in America	57
Chapter 6. A Revolution Begins	68
Chapter 7. The Swashbuckling Wine Years	73
Chapter 8. In Search of a Simpler Life	83
Chapter 9. An Apprentice Winemaker	91
Chapter 10. The Rise of Robert Mondavi	100
Chapter 11. Launching a New Winery	106
Chapter 12. A Case of Industrial-Strength Burnout	115
Chapter 13. The Rebirth of a Ghost Winery	123
Chapter 14. Making the 1973 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon	131
Chapter 15. Making the 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay	142

## Part Three:

## THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

Chapter 16. Voyages of Discovery	155
Chapter 17. California Wines at the Tasting	165
Chapter 18. French Wines at the Tasting	185
Chapter 19. A Stunning Upset	197

## Part Four:

## THE NEW WORLD OF WINE

Chapter 20. The Buzz Heard Round the World	213
Chapter 21. A Dream Fulfilled	225
Chapter 22. The Globalization of Wine	230
Chapter 23. Dispatches from the International Wine Trade	243
Chapter 24. France Revisited	275
Chapter 25. Napa Valley Revisited	289
EPILOGUE	301
APPENDIX: SCORECARDS FOR THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS	305
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	309
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	311
INDEX	313

## FOREWORD BY ROBERT G. MONDAVI

It was one hundred years ago that my father came to the United States and began to make wine here. And it was just nearly thirty years ago that the Judgment of Paris took place. I like to think about the advances we made over the two generations until that tasting took place and about the progress we've made since.

I always knew we had the soil, the climate, and the grape varieties to make wines in the Napa Valley that could rank with the great wines of the world. When we started, we did not have the knowledge of how to accomplish our goals, but I knew we had to begin.

It was my pleasure to have worked with Mike Grgich and Warren Winiarski, who are the real heroes of this book. They were certainly more adept than I, but I like to think that they grasped my vision of what could be done in the Napa Valley, and I know we worked and planned and dreamed together that a day like that bicentennial event in 1976 could occur.

It was also a pleasure to meet Steven Spurrier and later his associate Patricia Gallagher here at the winery. Believe me . . . there were not a great number of believers in those days and we prized every one. In London we had a few people who knew what we were doing—Hugh Johnson, Michael Broadbent, and Harry Waugh—but until Steven we had no one in France. It was a real treat to go to Cité Berryer and see California wines for sale at the Caves de la Madeleine!

I'm certainly happy to see that George Taber—who was there—decided to write the true story of the momentous event. So much of California wine history has been lost, and as he points out, the dramatic tasting sent shock waves all around the world. Although our wines were not in the tasting, it appeared at the time that we gained quite as much as our colleagues. It truly was a victory for our Napa Valley wines, California wines, and in fact, wine-making in North America. It gave us the confidence to continue what we were doing—confidence in our commitment to excel.

This is a book for every wine lover; it has a history and a very exciting story well told. And we won!

Brane-Mouton in 1830 and sold it in 1853 to Baron Nathaniel de Rothschild, a member of the English branch of the family.

There are many theories about why Château Mouton was classified as a Second Growth, while the other four were ranked First Growths. Perhaps the vineyard's recent purchase by a nefarious Englishman is explanation enough. In its ruling the classification committee cited, perhaps in its own defense, the "pitiful state" of the vineyard's buildings.

When Nathaniel de Rothschild died in 1870, neither his son James nor his grandson Henri was interested in running the winery, and the property gradually fell into decline. By the end of World War I, Mouton was in shambles. In 1922, though, Henri de Rothschild's youngest son, Philippe, took over Mouton on his twentieth birthday, and set out to restore it to more than its former glory. In protest to Mouton being considered second rate, Baron Philippe adopted as his estate's motto a variation of the ancient one used by the princes of Rohan as a sign of their fierce local pride: "*Roi ne puis, prince ne daigne, Rohan suis.*" ("King I cannot be, I do not deign to be Prince, I am Rohan.") Mouton's read: "*Premier ne puis, Second ne daigne, Mouton suis.*" ("First I cannot be, Second I disdain, I am Mouton.") After the 1973 reclassification, Baron Philippe changed the estate's motto to "*Premier je suis, Second je fus, Mouton ne change.*" ("First I am, Second I was, Mouton does not change.")

During his sixty-five-year reign, Baron Philippe made many innovations, including the policy of bottling the wine at the château as a way of guaranteeing authenticity and reducing fraud. This led to the notice *mis en bouteille au château* (bottled at the château) found today on the corks or labels of many French wines.

In 1945 Rothschild had a local artist design a special V for Victory label for that year's wine. Each year thereafter he commissioned renowned artists to design that vintage's label. Among the artists who have painted the Mouton Rothschild label are Picasso, Miró, Braque, Chagall, Dalí, Kandinsky, and Warhol.

Among the white wines, Steven Spurrier expected Burgundy's Bâtard-Montrachet to place first overall in his tasting. He thought that by putting Château Haut-Brion and Château Mouton Rothschild among the red wines, he had guaranteed a French winner among the Cabernet Sauvignons.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### A Stunning Upset

*A bottle of good wine, like a good act, shines ever in the retrospect.*

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



*Patricia Gallagher, Steven Spurrier,  
and Odette Kahn at the Paris Tasting*

May 24, 1976, was a beautiful, sunny day in Paris, and Patricia Gallagher was in good spirits as she packed up the French and California wines for the tasting at the InterContinental Hotel. Organizing the event had been good fun and easy compared with other events she and Steven had dreamed up. The good thing about working for Spurrier, she told friends, was that he was so supportive of her ideas. Many of their conversations began with her saying, "Wouldn't it be fun . . ." To which he always replied, "Great. Let's do it." The two weren't looking for fame or money. They were young people doing things strictly for the love of wine and to have fun.

Gallagher packed the wine and all the paperwork into the back of the Caves de la Madeleine's van and headed off with an American summer

intern to the hotel. After the California wines had arrived on May 7 with members of the Tchelistcheff tour, they were stored in the shop's cellar at a constant 54 degrees alongside the French wines for the event and the rest of Spurrier's stock.

Gallagher and the intern arrived at the hotel about an hour and a half before the 3:00 p.m. tasting was due to start. The event was to be held in a well-appointed room just off a patio bar in the central courtyard. Long, plush velvet curtains decorated the corners of the room. Glass doors opened onto the patio, and a gathering crowd watched the event from the patio. People sitting at small tables under umbrellas became increasingly curious about what was transpiring in the room, and some of them walked over to gaze through the windows much like visitors looking at monkeys in a zoo. The waiters set up a series of plain tables covered with simple white tablecloths, aligning the tables in a long row.

Spurrier and Gallagher had previously decided that this would be a blind tasting, which meant that the judges would not see the labels on the bottles, a common practice in such events. They felt that not allowing the judges to know the nationality or brand of the wines would force them to be more objective. The two did not perceive the tasting as a Franco-American showdown, but it would have been too easy, they believed, for the judges to find fault with the California wines while praising only the French wines, if they were presented with labels.

The hotel staff first opened all the red wines and then poured them into neutral bottles at Gallagher's instructions. California wine bottles are shaped slightly differently from French ones, and this group of knowledgeable judges would have quickly recognized the difference. Gallagher was also giving the wines a chance to breathe a little by opening and decanting them, since the reds, in particular, were still relatively recent vintages. This practice helps young wines, which can sometimes be too aggressive, become more mellow and agreeable.

An hour before the event, the hotel staff opened all the white wines, poured them also into neutral bottles and put them in the hotel's wine cooler. Aeration was less important for the whites than it had been for the reds, but it would do no harm to have them opened in advance. Then a few minutes before the tasting, the waiters put the whites in buckets on ice, just as they would have done for guests in the dining room. The wine would now be at the perfect temperature for the judges.

Only a half-hour before the event was to begin, Spurrier arrived. He wrote the names of the wines on small pieces of paper and asked the summer intern to pull the names out of a hat to determine the order in which

the wines would be served. Then Spurrier and the others put small white labels on the bottles that read in French, for example, Chardonnay Neuf (Chardonnay Nine) or Cabernet Trois (Cabernet Three). With that done, everything was ready.

The judges began appearing shortly before 3:00 p.m. and chatted amiably until all had arrived. Most of them knew each other from many previous encounters on the French wine circuit.

Standing along the wall and acting self-conscious were two young Frenchmen in their mid-twenties. One was Jean-Pierre Leroux, who was head of the dining room at the Paris Sofitel hotel, an elegant rival, although not at the same level as the InterContinental. The other was Gérard Bosseau des Chouad, the sommelier at the Sofitel, who had learned about the tasting while taking a course at the Académie du Vin. Bosseau des Chouad had told Leroux about it, and the two of them had come to the hotel uninvited on a lark. They were quiet in awe of the assembled big names of French wine and cuisine. Since no one asked them to leave, they watched the proceedings in nervous silence.

Shortly after 3:00, Spurrier asked everyone to give him their attention for a minute. Spurrier thanked the judges for coming and explained that he and Patricia Gallagher were staging the event to taste some of the interesting new California wines as part of the bicentennial of American independence and in honor of the role France had played in that historic endeavor. He explained that he and Patricia had recently made separate trips to California, where they had been surprised by the quality of the work being done by some small and unknown wineries. He said he thought the French too would find them interesting. Spurrier then said that although he had invited them to a sampling of California wines, in the tasting that was about to begin he had also included some very similar French wines. He added that he thought it would be better if they all tasted them blind, so as to be totally objective in their judgments. No one demurred, and so judges took their seats behind the long table, and the event began.

The judges wore standard Paris business attire. Odette Kahn of the *Revue du Vin de France* was very elegant in a patterned silk dress accented with a double strand of opera-length pearls. Claude Dubois-Millot was the most casual with no tie or jacket. The other men were all more formally dressed, and Aubert de Villaine, who sat at the far right end of the table, wore a fashionable double-breasted suit. Patricia Gallagher and Steven Spurrier sat in the middle of the judges and participated in the tasting. Spurrier was next to Kahn.

In front of each judge was a scorecard and pencil, two stemmed wine

glasses, and a small roll. Behind them were several Champagne buckets on stands where they could spit the wine after tasting it, a common practice at such events since it would be impossible to drink all the wines without soon feeling the effect of the alcohol.

Spurrier instructed the judges that they were being asked to rank the wines by four criteria—eye, nose, mouth, and harmony—and then to give each a score on the basis of 20 points. Eye meant rating the color and clarity of the wine; nose was the aroma; mouth was the wine's taste and structure as it rolled over the taste buds; harmony meant the combination of all the sensations. This 20-point and four-criteria system was common in France at the time and had already been used by Spurrier and the others in many tastings.

Despite Spurrier's and Gallagher's attempts to get press coverage, it turned out that I was the only journalist who showed up at the event. As a result, I had easy access to the judges and the judging. Patricia gave me a list of the wines with the tasting order so I could follow along. And although the judges didn't know the identity of Chardonnay Neuf, for example, I did and could note their reactions to the various wines as they tasted them.

The waiters first poured a glass of 1974 Chablis to freshen the palates of the judges. Following the tradition of wine tastings, the whites then went first. I looked at my list of wines and saw that the first wine (Chardonnay Un) was the Puligny-Montrachet Les Pucelles Domaine Leflaive, 1972.

The nine judges seemed nervous at the beginning. There was lots of laughing and quick side comments. No one, though, was acting rashly. The judges pondered the wines carefully and made their judgments slowly. Pierre Tari at one moment pushed his nose deep into his glass and held it there for a long time to savor the wine's aroma.

The judge's comments were in the orchidaceous language the French often use to describe wines. As I stood only a few feet from the judges listening to their commentary, I copied into the brown reporter's notebook that I always carried with me such phrases as: "This soars out of the ordinary," and "A good nose, but not too much in the mouth," and "This is nervous and agreeable."

From their comments, though, I soon realized that the judges were becoming totally confused as they tasted the white wines. The panel couldn't tell the difference between the French ones and those from California. The judges then began talking to each other, which is very rare in a tasting. They speculated about a wine's nationality, often disagreeing.

Standing quietly on the side, the young Jean-Pierre Leroux was also surprised as he looked at the faces of the judges. They seemed both bewildered

and shocked, as if they didn't quite know what was happening. Raymond Oliver of the Grand Véfour was one of Leroux's heroes, and the young man couldn't believe that the famous chef couldn't distinguish the nationality of the white wines.

Christian Vannequé, who sat at the far left with Pierre Bréjoux and Pierre Tari at his left, was irritated that those two kept talking to him, asking him what he thought of this or that wine. Vannequé felt like telling them to shut up so he could concentrate, but held his tongue. He thought the other judges seemed tense and were trying too hard to identify which wines were Californian and which were French. Vannequé complained he wanted simply to determine which wines were best.

When tasting the white wines, the judges quickly became flustered. At one point Raymond Oliver was certain he had just sipped a French wine, when in fact it was a California one from Freemark Abbey. Shortly after, Claude Dubois-Millot said he thought a wine was obviously from California because it had no nose, when it was France's famed Bâtard-Montrachet.

The judges were brutal when they found a wine wanting. They completely dismissed the David Bruce Chardonnay. Pierre Bréjoux gave it 0 points out of 20. Odette Kahn gave it just 1 point. The David Bruce was rated last by all the judges, and most of them dumped the remains from their glasses into their Champagne buckets after a cursory taste and in some cases after only smelling it. Robert Finigan had warned Spurrier and Gallagher that he'd found David Bruce wines at that time could be erratic, and this bottle appeared to be erratically bad. It was probably spoiled.

After the white wines had all been tasted, Spurrier called a break and collected the scorecards. Using the normal procedure for wine tastings, he added up the individual scores and then ranked them from highest to lowest.

Meanwhile the waiters began pouring Vittel mineral water for the judges to drink during the break. The judges spoke quietly to each other, and I talked briefly with Dubois-Millot. Even though he did not yet know the results, he told me a bit sheepishly, "We thought we were recognizing French wines, when they were California and vice versa. At times we'd say that a wine would be thin and therefore California, when it wasn't. Our confusion showed how good California wines have become."

Spurrier's original plan had been to announce all the results at the end of the day, but the waiters were slow clearing the tables and getting the red wines together and the program was getting badly behind schedule, so he decided to give the results of the white-wine tasting. He had been personally stunned and began reading them slowly to the group:

1. Chateau Montelena 1973
2. Meursault Charmes 1973
3. Chalone 1974
4. Spring Mountain 1973
5. Beaune Clos des Mouches 1973
6. Freemark Abbey 1972
7. Bâtard-Montrachet 1973
8. Puligny-Montrachet 1972
9. Veedercrest 1972
10. David Bruce 1973

When he finished, Spurrier looked at the judges, whose reaction ranged from shock to horror. No one had expected this, and soon the whole room was abuzz.

After hearing the results, I walked up to Gallagher. The French word in the winning wine's name had momentarily thrown me. "Chateau Montelena is Californian, isn't it?" I asked a bit dumbfoundedly.

"Yes, it is," she replied calmly.

The scores of the individual judges made the results even more astounding. California Chardonnays had overwhelmed their French counterparts. Every single French judge rated a California Chardonnay first. Chateau Montelena was given top rating by six judges; Chalone was rated first by the other three. Three of the top four wines were Californian. Claude Dubois-Millot gave Chateau Montelena 18.5 out of 20 points, while Aubert de Villaine gave it 18. Chateau Montelena scored a total of 132 points, comfortably ahead of second place Meursault Charmes, which got 126.5.

Spurrier and Gallagher, who were also blind tasting the wines although their scores were not counted in the final tally, were tougher on the California wines than the French judges. Spurrier had a tie for first between Freemark Abbey and Bâtard-Montrachet, while Gallagher scored a tie for first between Meursault Charmes and Spring Mountain.

As I watched the reaction of the others to the results, I felt a sense of both awe and pride. Who would have thought it? Chauvinism is a word invented by the French, but I felt some chauvinism that a California white wine had won. But how could this be happening? I was tempted to ask for a taste of the winning California Chardonnay, but decided against it. I still had a reporting job to finish, and I needed to have a clear head.

As the waiters began pouring the reds, Spurrier was certain that the judges would be more careful and would not allow a California wine to come out on top again. One California wine winning was bad enough; two would be

treason. The French judges, he felt, would be very careful to identify the French wines and score them high, while rating those that seemed American low. It would perhaps be easier to taste the differences between the two since the judges knew all the French wines very well. The French reds, with their classic, distinctive and familiar tastes would certainly stand out against the California reds. All the judges, with the possible exception of Dubois-Millot, had probably tasted the French reds hundreds of times.

There was less chatter during the second wave of wines. The judges seemed both more intense and more circumspect. Their comments about the nationality of the wine in their glass were now usually correct. "That's a California, or I don't know what I'm doing here," said Christian Vannequé of La Tour d'Argent. I looked at my card and saw that he was right. It was the Ridge Monte Bello.

Raymond Oliver took one quick sip of a red and proclaimed, "That's a Mouton, without a doubt." He too was right.

Because of delays in the earlier part of the tasting, the hour was getting late and the group had to be out by 6:00 p.m. So Spurrier pushed on quickly after the ballots were collected. He followed the same procedure he had used for the Chardonnay tasting, adding up the individual scores of the nine judges.

The room was hushed as Spurrier read the results without the help of a microphone:

1. Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 1973
2. Château Mouton Rothschild 1970
3. Château Montrose 1970
4. Château Haut-Brion 1970
5. Ridge Monte Bello 1971
6. Château Léoville-Las-Cases 1971
7. Heitz Martha's Vineyard 1970
8. Clos Du Val 1972
9. Mayacamas 1971
10. Freemark Abbey 1969

This time the stir in the room was even more pronounced than before. A California wine had won again! Who would have believed it! The judges sat in disbelief. To confirm that I had heard Spurrier correctly, I walked up to Gallagher again and asked, "A California wine also won the red?"

"Yes," she replied.

The results for the Cabernet wines were much closer than for the

Chardonnays. Château Haut-Brion got the most first place votes of all the reds: three. French wines were rated first, in some cases tied for first, by seven of the nine judges. Stag's Leap was rated highly by most judges, but only Odette Kahn put it first and Raymond Oliver had it in a tie for first. In sharp contrast to the results in the white wines, the French red wines also rated much better overall than the California reds. French wines took three of the top four positions, while California wines were relegated to the last four slots.

Based on the overall scores, the results were very close for the red wines. There was only a five-and-a-half-point difference between the top four finishers. Stag's Leap won by just a point and a half, with a total of 127.5, over second place Château Mouton Rothschild. But as the old saying goes, close only counts in horseshoes. Stag's Leap was the winner that day. It was the judgment of Paris.

Spurrier's suspicion that the judges would attempt to identify the French wines and score them higher while rating the California ones low appears to have taken place. In the Cabernet competition the judges had a significantly wider scoring range than with the Chardonnays. The judges may have honestly felt the quality differences were that great, but they may also have been out to make sure a French wine won. Odette Kahn, for example, gave two wines (Clos Du Val and Heitz Martha's Vineyard) only 2 points out of 20, one (Freemark Abbey) 5 points, and one (Ridge) 7 points. All her other Cabernet scores were double digits. But if she was trying to score California wines low, she didn't succeed. Her first two highest scores went to California: Stag's Leap and Mayacamas. Four other French judges also had the same pattern of rating several California wines in single digits, which is unusual in a fine wine tasting.

The California reds did very well on Spurrier's and Gallagher's scoring cards. Spurrier in a moment of indecision had a four-way tie for first: Château Montrose, Château Mouton-Rothschild, Ridge, and Stag's Leap. Gallagher gave first place to Heitz Martha's Vineyard.

After the final results were announced, Odette Kahn marched up to Spurrier, gathering together all the force of her strong personality, elegant presence, and aristocratic demeanor. As an editor, she realized better than probably anyone else in the room did the importance of what had just happened and the impact this wine tasting might have.

"Monsieur Spurrier, I demand to have my scorecards," she said.

"I'm sorry, Madame Kahn, but you're not going to get them back."

"But they are *my* scores!"

"No, they are not *your* scores. They are *my* scores!"

Spurrier and Kahn continued the sharp exchange over the ownership of

the scorecards, until she finally demurred, realizing there was no way to force him to give them to her. Spurrier then shoved the pieces of paper into the hand of his summer intern and told her to take them immediately back to the Académie du Vin.

The judges lingered for a while longer, sharing a glass of Champagne and talking freely about the results of the tasting. I spoke with five of the nine. Their immediate reactions were candid. They were generally complimentary about the California wines they had just tasted. Most said they had heard that winemakers in California were doing interesting things, but they had little firsthand experience with the wines. Said Aubert de Villaine, "I tasted my first California wines in 1964, and since then there have been more and more good wine houses there."

Pierre Bréjoux told me, "I went to California in July 1974, and I learned a lot—to my surprise. They are now certainly among the top wines in the world. But this Stag's Leap has been a secret. I've never heard of it."

Pierre Tari said, "I was really surprised by the California whites. They are excellent. We clearly saw that the California whites can stand up to the French whites. They are certainly the best—after France. They have come a long way, but they have a long way to go."

Christian Vannequé told me, "The white wines approached the best of France without a doubt. California can almost do as well producing something like a Chassagne-Montrachet. The reds, though, were not as good and don't have the character of a Bordeaux. They are a bit minty, very strong in tannin and lack finesse."

There were also a few sour grapes among the judges. Tari complained, "French wines develop slower than California wines because of the climate, so the test was not completely correct." Added Aubert de Villaine: "In general there is still quite a difference. The French wines are still superior." Snipped Odette Kahn, "It was a false test because California wines are trying to become too much like French wines." Said Michel Dovaz, "In five or ten years, when the wines have properly matured, I'm sure the French red wines will do much better."

The InterContinental staff then hurried the group out of the room so they could get on with preparations for the wedding-party guests who would soon be arriving. As the judges walked out, Spurrier gave Dovaz the extra bottle of the winning Stag's Leap wine, which had not been opened. Dovaz thanked him and took it back to his apartment in Montparnasse on the edge of the student section of Paris. He opened the bottle a few weeks later, when a friend came for dinner. They each had a glass, but then Dovaz went to the kitchen and opened a bottle of French wine to serve with the meal. The



Stag's Leap, he felt, was an admirable wine that had tested well, but it didn't quench his thirst.

After the tasting, Spurrier and Gallagher walked together back to the Académie du Vin. They chatted about the unexpected results, but didn't think much beyond that. From their trips to California, they knew Americans were making some good wines. After spending an hour or so at his business, Spurrier went home for dinner with his wife and two children. He told her about the interesting tasting they had held that afternoon and the unexpected outcome, but soon the conversation moved on to more mundane topics.

The day after the event, I called Gallagher at the Académie du Vin, looking for help in finding some of the Californians whose wines had been in the tasting. She had told me that the group was currently touring French wineries. Among them was the owner of Chateau Montelena, which had come in first among the whites. I asked if she could get a phone number where he could be reached, and a short while later she called back with the number. The Californians that day were supposed to be at the Château Lascombes winery in the Margaux region of Bordeaux. She couldn't guarantee anything, but perhaps I could track him down there.

At that exact moment at Château Lascombes, the California winemakers were having a glass of Champagne as an aperitif before lunch. One of the Château's staff members came up to group leader Joanne Dickenson and said that Monsieur Barrett was wanted on the phone. Dickenson's immediate reaction was that something must have happened at home to one of his children. Why else would anyone be trying to reach Jim Barrett in southern France in the middle of a wine tour? The only person in France who knew the group's itinerary was the travel agent in Paris.

Dickenson spotted Barrett across the room, walked over, and told him that he had a phone call. He also thought it must be bad news. The two Americans then followed the Château Lascombes staff member to another building and into a tiny office. The room was so small that Barrett had to kneel down on the floor to talk. All Dickenson heard was Barrett's end of the conversation, as he said, "No . . . Yes . . . Okay . . ." Barrett finally flashed Dickenson the okay sign and mouthed the words that everything was all right, so she went back to her hosts and the reception.

Once Barrett identified himself, I asked him, "Have you heard that your wine came in first in the tasting that was held on Monday in Paris?"

"No, I haven't. That's great."

"Well, you won in the white wine part of it. And a California red wine

also won. So it was a California sweep. What's your reaction to beating the French at their own game and in Paris?"

Barrett's mind started racing, but the careful lawyer came to the fore. He thought quickly, "If I open my big mouth and say the wrong thing, it's going to seem arrogant, and they won't let me back into the Napa Valley." After a second's hesitation, Barrett said, "Not bad for kids from the sticks." He went on to add, "I guess it's time to be humble and pleased, but I'm not stunned. We've known for a long time that we could put our white Burgundy against anybody's in the world and not take a backseat."

I asked Barrett a few questions about his winery and the price of his wine in California. He said his winery was still a very new venture but that his "balance sheet has gone from a Pommard red to something like a rosé."

Following a few more exchanges, I knew I had a good reaction quote—"kids from the sticks"—and so I ended the conversation.

After talking with Barrett, I turned back to my old, gray manual typewriter to write my report. In those days, *Time* correspondents sent long files that gave the full story of an event, which was much more than ever appeared in the magazine. A report was then cut down to a much shorter piece by the magazine's New York staff. My report went on for eight pages and nearly two thousand words. It started: "Nine of France's top wine experts swirled and sniffed and sipped and spit Monday for over two hours at the Hotel InterContinental in Paris and rolled Bacchus over and awarded top prize in both red and white wines to two noble upstarts from California—Chateau Montelena for the white and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars for the red." I ended my report with a comment from the scorecard of Christian Vannequé about the Chateau Montelena Chardonnay, which he had ranked as the best white. I thought it summed up the attitude of the French judges toward all the California wines: "A very agreeable wine, which will blossom pleasantly and has a good equilibrium. To be followed."

After our conversation ended, Barrett returned to the pre-luncheon reception, which was just ending. He immediately told his wife about the call, so that she wouldn't be thinking the worst, as he had originally. Before sitting down he sidled up to Dickenson and said, "That was *Time* magazine. A reporter told me we won Steven Spurrier's tasting."

Barrett then sat down for lunch. Bob Travers, the owner of the Mayacamas winery, which also had a wine in the Spurrier competition, was sitting across the table and asked, "Is everything okay?" Travers also thought that something was probably wrong at home. Barrett looked at Travers with a smile as wide as a bottle of Chardonnay and said, "Yes, everything's fine."

The results of the Spurrier tasting soon began spreading quietly but quickly from Californian to Californian around the room.

Some ninety people attended the formal lunch, which was done in the best French style. Dickenson was seated to the right of Alexis Lichine, a part owner of Château Lascombes, while André Tchelistcheff was on his left. After lunch Lichine made a gracious, though condescending, speech, saying how nice it was that the Americans had come to learn from the French how to make great wine and how if they worked hard, someday they too might be successful. To Dickenson it was hard to take that speech, all the while knowing that California wines had just beaten some of the best French ones in Spurrier's tasting.

After lunch the California delegation politely thanked their hosts and got back into their bus. Everyone waved good-bye as the vehicle pulled away from Château Lascombes. As soon as it had passed the last pine tree and was safely out of sight of the main building, the group erupted like football fans whose team had just won the Super Bowl. Everyone was screaming; Barrett hugged Tchelistcheff. There were two more wine tastings that afternoon to bring the number of wines the Californians had tried in nearly three weeks in France to more than 250, but the group walked through the event in a dream. They were more excited about what had happened in Paris.

Once they arrived at their next hotel, Barrett sent a telegram to the staff at Chateau Montelena:

STUNNING SUCCESS IN PARIS TASTING ON MAY TWENTY-FOUR STOP TOOK  
FIRST PLACE OVER NINE OTHERS WITH LE PREMIER CRU WINE STOP TOP  
NAMES IN FRANCE WERE THE BLIND TASTERS STOP

When the telegram arrived at Chateau Montelena, the staff wasn't sure what Barrett was referring to. They learned it was something important, when Grgich got a call from *Time* asking to send a photographer to take his picture. After that call, Grgich still didn't know what to do. So he started dancing around the winery shouting in his native Croatian, "I'm born again! I'm born again!" No one could understand a word he said, but who cared? Barrett's son Bo watched Grgich from a second-story window and thought he had gone bonkers.

The next day the Tchelistcheff group flew back to San Francisco. It was near dinnertime when André Tchelistcheff and his wife, Dorothy, reached their home in the city of Napa. Dorothy thought it might be a good moment to call Barbara Winiarski and tell her about the results of the

Spurrier tasting. Barbara and the Winiarski children were already having dinner when the phone rang. When Dorothy Tchelistcheff told her that Stag's Leap had won the competition for the red wine, Barbara wasn't sure exactly which wine tasting that was, but thanked her for the message anyway. The children, though, became excited when they heard they had won something, and Barbara motioned to them to be quiet. Once her mother hung up the phone and told the children, Kasia and her younger sister Julia danced around the table with elation. They couldn't remember ever winning a wine contest before.

After dinner Barbara talked by phone with Warren, who was at his old family home in Chicago wrapping up some matters involving the estate of his mother, who had recently died. Barbara casually mentioned that their wine had won "that wine tasting in Paris." Warren also had a tough time remembering which tasting it was. Without realizing the profound impact the Paris Tasting would have on his life and his winery, he said simply, "That's nice."