

W. Alston Hayne

*Co-Owner and Manager
Hayne Vineyards
1832 Sulphur Springs Avenue,
St. Helena*

Alston “Otty” Hayne and his wife, Lisa, moved to the Napa Valley in 1980 after Otty retired from the American Foreign Service. Otty’s dad, Alston, had been overseeing vineyard operations on the family vineyard at Sulphur Springs and South Crane Avenues in St. Helena for a very long time; he died in 1983. Otty worked out a period of transition with vineyard manager Bob March and took over as manager in 1986. Bob’s father, Vernon, had managed the vineyards for Otty’s father and his uncle, Bourn, who had inherited them from Otty’s grandmother and her sisters. Today, the vineyards are owned by Otty, his brother Elliot, and two first cousins.

“How old are its Zinfandel blocks? Who knows, exactly?” shrugs Otty. Most of the vines date from 1905. Otty recalls seeing a map drawn in 1881, a copy of which is in the St. Helena Public Library, showing his great grandfather William Bowers Bourn’s vineyards and a winery. The family vineyards are all along Zinfandel Lane, as well as Sulphur Springs Avenue, and across from Bale Mill. Hayne Vineyards

today total 52 acres, planted to Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Otty helped his father plant the existing Petite Sirah in 1953 and 1954. Green Hungarian and Napa Gamay were also being grown when Otty took over as manager in 1986. Somewhat disconcertingly for Otty, that same year Louis P. Martini said Gamay was just a loss to him. With his concurrence, Otty pulled it out. At the same time Sebastiani chose not to renew its contract for Green Hungarian. Otty pulled it out as well, and replaced both with Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cabernet was field budded very successfully; more than 95% of the buds took on AXR-I rootstock. Irrigation was put in, and the new vines trellised on four wires, rather than head-trained with single redwood grape stakes as the 100 year-old Zinfandel and 50 year-old Petite Sirah had been. The new vines did beautifully, Otty recalls, wistfully. They had gotten up to 50 tons of Cab when Phylloxera hit. The Cab was replaced, over a period of years, on a vertical trellis system with no cross arms Otty copied from Joseph Phelps. Although the system provides optimal exposure of fruit to sunlight, it makes pruning harder—canes’ tendrils grab all the wires, although everything else is easier—picking, spraying, leaf removal. The Cabernet vines spaced 8’ x10’ at first, were spaced 9’x6’ in the replant, yielding 1/3 more vines within the same acreage.

Because the vines are trellised straight up, Otty found their same equipment fit the narrower rows. Initial replanting of the Cab was actually by inter-planting, cutting off one cordon and planting a new vine a third of the distance from the older vine, thus leaving more vines in production. Later, Otty ripped out vines and replanted to 9’x6’. These newer vines are on 110-R. The Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and inter-planted Cabernet are on St. George. Otty considers the vineyard to be very convenient in size. Although it used to be a hobby for his uncle and father, it is very much a family business now.

“What was his preparation for vineyard management? Being a good diplomat,” Otty smiles. Fortunately, he’s found everyone in the vineyard business in Napa Valley to be very helpful, open: “You go to buy ten dollars worth of material at Lampson Tractor and you come away with one hundred dollars worth of good advice.” Otty grew up on a farm in Marysville, “Hayne, Hogs and Hay.” Besides pigs, they raised alfalfa, beans and pears. His father had moved there in 1922; in 1935 he moved his family south to the Peninsula in order to run the Bourn family’s Spring Valley Water Company as well as Filoli, Inc. After service in the Navy, Otty finished Stanford Business School, and went to work for Spice Islands Company. During his third year with them, he managed their herb farm in

Escalon; then came two-year stint selling precision machinery while Otty successfully studied for, and took both parts of the Foreign Service exam. And, for two summers, in 1953 and 1954, he stood on a lug box with a sledgehammer, pounding in end posts in Hayne Vineyards. Otty felt exhausted after just three posts, he said, but stayed with it. He and his father had managed to plant 18 or so acres of Petite Sirah before Otty went into the Foreign Service.

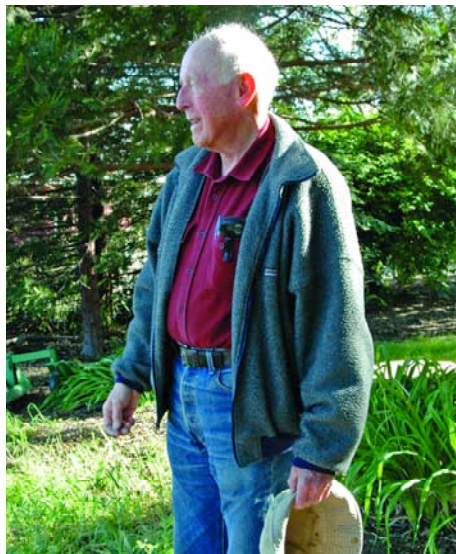
Fifty years ago Otty and his dad laid out vines the same way they would today. Long wires with nodules welded at intervals were crisscrossed at the nodules, or “spots.” Otty thinks they borrowed the wires from Laurie Wood. You’d start at the edge of the vineyard road at an end post and pull a wire to the other side. You do all one side and then the other at right angles to it. Really good guys can even do it by sighting. Today, you’ll see plastic knives stuck in at the intervals after the field’s been crisscrossed, unless it’s been done by sight. In principal, vineyards are laid out in a certain way so sun will hit the vines in a certain way; in practice, Otty and his father followed existing vines in the vineyard. Otty remembers laying out almost a whole block with his wife, and then stepping back and realizing the whole thing, initially off by a few inches, was now off by several feet, and had to be completely redone.



Otty Hayne

When Bob March was vineyard manager and the vines weren't trellised, Bob could cross-cultivate the vineyards with a small tractor. Today, Hayne Vineyards uses an L&H hoe plow. Eight to ten years ago they were band-spraying with herbicide. No longer. Some parts of the vineyard looked sterile, Otty says. Grass wouldn't even grow—"at least grass puts something back." Now they plant a cover crop mixture rich in legumes. Controversy over till or no-till still continues, of course. Otty says if you don't clear off vegetation in the rows, vineyards dry off five to seven times faster than bare rows because of transpiration (water and oxygen given off by plants as they photosynthesize). Risk of freezing is also greater, as shaded soil stays cool, although Otty says frost has never been a problem in Hayne Vineyards, and they have never needed frost protection. The soil is deep, gravelly. 95% of the time they can get a tractor in the day after it rains. During the growing season they mow, hoe plow, and then disc three or four times. Otty used to do all the tractoring. Now he employs one man full-time and another for about nine months of the year. About a dozen workers help with suckering and picking. Most of them return each year to help.

Hayne Vineyards terroir, its soil and climate are distinctive. Over the years, Otty has shared budwood with several vineyards in the Valley. The resulting product, however,



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is different in each vineyard. Otty won't sell budwood; it is only given to those with whom Hayne Vineyards has personal ties, but recipients find Otty a generous friend and colleague.

Hayne Vineyards has had contracts with many vintners, including Beringer and Round Hill, as well as selling fruit to the Coöp. For some years before 1993, Louis M. Martini bought most of its fruit, but in 1992, Martini gave notice of non-renewal of their contract. At the time, Otty's daughter-in-law, Adrian, was working in the wine business. She researched and recommended the current clients. Turley Wine Cellars buys most of the Petite

Sirah; Joseph Phelps buys some; and so does Elyse. Turley also buys Zinfandel, as does Chase Family Cellars (an enterprise begun in 1998 by Otty's cousin, Andy Simpson, and his wife, Pam). Joseph Phelps buys almost all the Cabernet Sauvignon, except for the portion reserved for Corison.

Each client has particular preferences for how fruit is grown and harvested, however, no pesticides are used on any of the blocks, and Otty makes substantial use of composted manures. Calcium nitrate is spread under emitters as needed—it is broadcast on non-irrigated blocks. Hoe plowing has proven less expensive than spraying for weed-control. Even under head-trained Zin with canes headed out about a foot off the ground, in the European style, it is still slightly cheaper to remove weeds with the hoe plow. And an L&H device with whirling heads Otty finds is just excellent on low growth after rain.

However, it is the winemakers who call the shots in Hayne Vineyards. For Turley they don't irrigate the old vines. Yet, for Phelps they irrigate up to the moment of picking. For all the clients the clusters should hang free. For Phelps and Corison, if a cane doesn't reach the first trellis wire, Otty has to drop the fruit; if the cane reaches the second wire, he may take one cluster and leave one. If a cane reaches beyond the last wire, he can harvest all the clusters. Phelps and Corison feel this puts energy, character into the main

clusters. Elyse defers to Otty, and is always happier with more rather than less fruit. Cabernet has a loose cluster. While Zinfandel and Petite Sirah are equally robust, their bunches are much tighter, making them, in certain conditions, more susceptible to bunch rot or mildew. Last year, 2005, as in many vineyards, they had to drop fruit to avoid powdery mildew. "Money, just lying on the ground," Otty recalls, ruefully. The age of the vine determines the quality of its yield. Turley pays substantially more for old vines' fruit than new. New vines, interplanted in the blocks, are picked separately. And while Otty watches over everything, when to pick is invariably the winemaker's say.

1993 was Hayne Vineyard's first vintage with Turley, when Helen Turley was consulting winemaker, assisted by Ehren Jordan. Since 1995, Ehren has been winemaker. Otty says with considerable pride that *Wine Enthusiast* declared 1994 Turley Hayne Vineyard Zinfandel the second best red wine in the world, that this Zinfandel has always been high on the Wine Spectator list, and that both it and the Petit Sirah are high on Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate* list

When asked who will carry on in the family, Otty readily answers that his son, Auty, and his granddaughter, Victoria, are both interested, although, in the long-run, Otty thinks the future of agricultural land

within city limits is uncertain. Hedges used to keep out deer, but now, observes Otty, it's more developed on the other side of the avenue and the deer have been gone for a long time. There were wild pigs a few years ago--it looked like the hoe plow had been through both Hayne and neighboring vineyards, and there used to be jackrabbits, but now they, too, are less.

Vineyard improvements to the property have been few: A well and water storage tank have been installed and, in 1991, they built a tractor shed. Donald Clark of St. Helena was its architect, and the white painted trusses are a landmark on South Crane. In the 1990's Otty and his son developed an herb farm on the property, which Auty now oversees in a much-reduced form. (At its height, Herbs of the Napa Valley also leased land from the city and the White Barn.)

Otty says the vineyard is in balance today. From his house he can see the whole vineyard—which he walks out in every day. He is most hospitable to his friends and immediate neighbors, encouraging them with their dogs or horses, anything non-motorized, to walk the vineyard service roads. Otty considers the vineyard a handsome addition to the city and says, musingly, "With the mountains, vines and mustard, it is a beautiful sight."