

In Memoriam

Reginald Back Oliver

March 30, 1939 – June 24, 2005

Reg Oliver, long-time board member and past president of the Napa Valley Wine Library Association died at home in St. Helena of melanoma. He was 66. A financial advisor, Reg was also the owner and winemaker for El Molino Winery in St. Helena. Those Wine Library members who took a Fall Field Seminar in the late 1990's may remember their visit to El Molino where Reg explained his Pinot Noir winemaking practices in detail while punching down Pinot must in his bathing trunks, his son Jack checked tank temperatures and his daughter Lily moved wine cases with a forklift. Lily is now general manager at El Molino and her husband, Jon Berlin, is its winemaker.

Reg was born in Berkeley. After taking a Master's Degree from Stern School of Business at NYU, Reg went to work in the mailroom of Pershing & Company in New York. When he retired from Pershing in 1992, Reg had been one of its partners for many years. In 1981, he and his family moved from New York City to St. Helena following the death of his aunt, Nancy Haven. Reg had loved St. Helena ever since he spent the Christmas of 1939 at



the Havens. After he and his family moved to the Valley, Reg continued to pursue his many interests as he became a well-respected vintner. He rode horseback throughout the Valley, was a fierce competitor in tennis and involved in many local efforts for preservation. He was on the Tree Committee for St. Helena, a member and past president of Napa Valley Landmarks. He also successfully restored El Molino Winery, originally founded in 1871. More recently Reg had become a partner in two New Zealand wineries, Te Awa on South Island and Dry River on North Island.

Reg gave unstintingly of his time and energy to our Napa Valley Wine Library Association that his aunt, Nancy Haven, helped found. He managed and oversaw its investments, shepherded many signal additions to the collections, was constantly fund-raising on its behalf, helped deter-

minedly with the Annual Tasting, served three terms as president of the organization, coordinated the making of wine from “Barney’s Backyard” by Turley Wine Cellars, consulted on the Report and helped plan the seminars, organizing the Fall Field Seminar in the St. Helena appellation shortly before he died. Reg’s guideposts for the organization of history, clarity, integrity and loyalty remain.