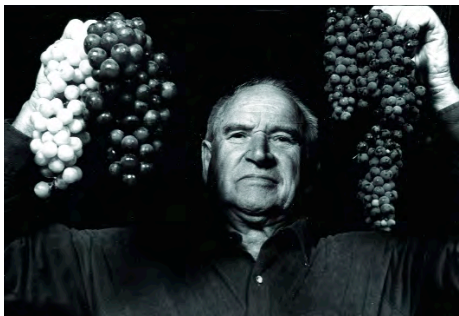


In Memoriam

Dr. Harold P. Olmo

Napa Valley Wine Library Association remembers Dr. Harold P. Olmo, who died in Davis, California on June 30, 2006, just one month shy of his 97th birthday. Dr. Olmo is credited with extraordinary innovations in the growing of wine, table and raisin grapes in California and throughout the world. He created 30 new varieties himself, and was responsible for either the discovery here or abroad of numerous other varieties central to commercial grape growing.



Dr. Harold P. Olmo, 1978

Photo UC Davis

Dr. Olmo was born in San Francisco in 1909. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in horticulture from the University of California, Berkeley in 1931 and a doctorate in genetics in 1934. Dr. Olmo's forty-year career at UC Davis began in 1938 in the Department of Viticulture

and Enology, from which he retired in 1977.

Dr. Olmo traveled the world searching for and acquiring various grape species for use in grape-breeding programs. He made his first varietal crosses in 1931 and, during the 1930's and 1940's, set up a clonal station for study at Larkmead Vineyards, St. Helena. The Cabernet clones there became foundation stock for this variety at the UC Davis clonal station in Oakville. Dr. Olmo is credited with 30 varieties of grapes, 29 released at UC Davis, including the widely planted seedless variety, Redglobe, as well as Perlette, Ruby Seedless, and Rubired, a wine grape used in blending for color. Dr. Olmo also created the wine grape varieties Ruby Cabernet, Emerald Riesling, Symphony, Flora and Carmine. The royalties from his varieties help fund the Department of Viticulture and Enology. Dr. Olmo's clonal research is responsible for several key clones planted in Napa Valley. Among these is the Pinot Noir Pommard clone he brought back from France in 1951; and, from the 1970's, the Cabernet Sauvignon clones Concannon 07 and Concannon 08 from Concannon Vineyards; and the Chardonnay clone, FPMS Seleccion 04 from Wente Vineyards. In fact, Dr. Olmo is credited with the current popularity of Chardonnay, thanks to his successful search for vines with superior Chardonnay characteristics. From just 300 acres plant-

ed to this variety in California when Dr. Olmo began his research, Chardonnay has become the most planted white wine varietal in the state.

In pursuit of new cultivars, Dr. Olmo contributed knowledge to every aspect of grape growing, including new trellising and harvesting methods, and the establishment of the grapevine certification program, Foundation Plant Material Service (FPMS), to insure clean, select budwood and rootstock. Seeds of grapes Dr. Olmo grew from samples collected in Mexico in 1988 are being used in on-going research at UC Davis by Dr. Andy Walker, in an effort to find grape varieties resistant to Pierce's Disease and the so-called "dagger" nematode (*Xiphinema index*). Dr. Olmo was also the authority on grape variety identification.

He received numerous professional awards throughout his academic life and in retirement. Vintners statewide praise Dr. Olmo for his open, down-to-earth style, his accessibility whether you had been a student of his or not, and his keen interest in the success of the California wine industry. He is viewed in the research and development of wine, raisin and table grapes as a giant. A forthcoming wine grape clone is to be named in honor of Dr. Olmo by UC Davis.