



## 46th Annual Tasting

### Napa Valley's Other Treasures: White Varietals by Appellation Sunday, August 24

Harvest was already underway in Napa Valley the day of the Annual Tasting. Picking bins of Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc had already made their way out of the vineyard when NVWLA members gathered to taste white wines of Napa Valley in the Grove at Silverado Resort.

The Tasting was chaired by Bob Long, vice president of NVWLA, assisted by Kevin Alfaro, president, and fellow board members Allen Price, Julie Dickson and Bret Blyth—with his corps of able volunteers. If the wine glass count is accurate, 780 Wine Library members and 200 winery assistants took part in the Tasting. Most gratifying was the large number of winery principals who poured, a fifth of the 83 participating wineries.

Charles Sullivan, author of *Napa Wine: A History from Mission Days to Present*, published by the Wine Appreciation Guild in cooperation with NVWLA, signed copies

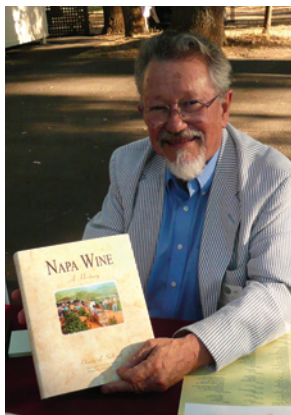
of the just-published second edition of his book. Publisher Elliott Mackey of the Guild and Charles's editor Bryan Imelli said they were very pleased to have been at the Tasting and that it had been a great venue. St. Helena Public Library also had a table at the Tasting with director Jennifer Baker overseeing sales of five different books inspired by wine, Napa Valley and California.

Another innovation was the addition of Oxbow Market. Bob worked with Steve Carlin to bring Oxbow Cheese Merchant, Big Ranch Farms and Model Bakery to the Tasting. Lassa Skinner, general manager of Oxbow Cheese Merchant, coordinated provisioning and presentation of a glorious tumble of excellent cheeses carefully chosen to match the wines poured, along with perfectly-ripened hand fruit, melons and vegetables locally grown on Big Ranch Road, and dozens of loaves of freshly baked bread donated by Model Bakery. For many years Crystal Geyser has donated still and sparkling water for the Tasting and we are indebted to them for supplying this important component.

Eighty-three wineries from twelve appellations (two pending) poured fifteen different varieties of wine as well



Bob Long, Tasting Chairman



Charles L. Sullivan, Author



Hugh Davies, Schramsberg Vineyards



Rafael Rios III, Rios Wine Company



Lassa Skinner, Oxbow Cheese Market

as nine Proprietary Blends. Nearly half the wineries (36) poured Chardonnay; almost one third (26) poured Sauvignon Blanc; four poured Riesling or Viognier; two poured Chenin Blanc, Gewürztraminer or Roussanne; one each poured a Marsanne, Moscato Canelli, Moscato Azul, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Pinot Gris, or Vermentino; and nine poured Proprietary Blends.

In 1963, at the very first wine tasting offered by NVWLA, Cabernet Sauvignon and White Riesling were poured by “various wineries” at the St. Helena Lumber Company on Hunt Street in St. Helena, now the location of Safeway. No tasting was offered in 1964. However, since 1965 a tasting has been offered each year. In 1968 a tasting of Pinot

Chardonnay, as Chardonnay was then called, was held at Spottswoode with just eight wineries pouring. Our 2008 tasting represents a ten-fold increase in the number of Napa Valley wineries pouring white wine.

Keeping white wines cool is always a challenge on an August afternoon. As it set up, Schramsberg called out for ice, ice and more ice. Fortunately, double the amount was ready for them, and picking bins of Napa Ice Company ice were soon in place everywhere. The bins were donated by Long Vineyards, Robert Pecota Winery and Wood Ranch, thanks to Jane Burger.

New winery signs designed and delivered by NVWLA board member Morgan

Morgan added an attractive element to each table as did a handsome arrangement of flowers by Hedgerow at Stags’ Leap Winery, banners flying at Robert Pecota, and bright pots of flowers and pins at Madonna Estate. The cloudy contents of a glass half-gallon jug at O’Brien also caught the eye. O’Brien had sold out of its 2006 Chardonnay was offering a 2007 barrel sample from the jug.

Oh, the simple pleasures of tasting good wine on a perfect summer afternoon of gentle breezes and dappled shade. To everyone who took part, thank you for making it such a felicitous occasion. ■