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LOAM Baby

A Wine Culture Journal

THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY ISSUE

INAUGURAL ISSUE

HATERS

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by

Loam Baby

Opening Letter

I love America.

As an immigrant—even after all of these years—I consider it a great privilege and honor to live here.

So imagine my surprise when I first discovered American wines those many years ago. Exploring them has been an intimate undertaking for me—one through which America has informed me in the richest of ways. By letting Her into my body, I learn more about Her voice and the voices of those that work Her lands.

I consider these wines to be emissaries—viticultural and enological messengers that carry within them a multitude of stories, intentions, and mysteries.

Loam Baby, then, is my modest gift back to an industry that has given me much more than I deserve.

Digital copies are free and are available at www.loambaby.com. Hard copies may be purchased at www.loambaby.com and will help support future issues. I won't be accepting advertising or sponsorship of any kind for this journal.

Thank you for taking the time to read this journal. It is the first of a series that will be published throughout the year, as time and resources allow. Our focus will be on the many great growing regions in the United States: New York, Oregon, Washington, California, Texas, Louisiana, Virginia, New Mexico, and others.

Lastly, I offer special thanks to the wonderful producers included within these pages who have allowed me, an amateur writer/editor, to have a go at it. I also would like to acknowledge artist Bear Colvin, without whom this project would never have been possible.

Let's make this trip together.

R. H. Drexel

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" WHO'S GOT TALENT "
ROCKSTAR WINEMAKER
this got 98 points!
VS.
MOTHER NATURE
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Untitled

I impressed even myself with the first draft of this introductory paragraph to my interview with the inimitable Greg Brewer. I made vague references to Derrida and even Deleuze and Guattari to acknowledge his professorial career in French literature. I performed daring feats of mental gymnastics, trying to draw parallels between deconstruction and his winemaking techniques. The grave irony then occurred to me—here I was extending beyond the bounds of my intellectual comfort zone to honor a winemaker who is, essentially, driven by transparency and humility.

After several weeks of letting go of my ego-bound approach to this article, I returned to my desk naked in an editorial sense. I decided to complete this project of writing about Greg in a way that would reflect his own creative process in the cellar: Stripped down. Non-interventionist. Respectful of the materials at hand.

Here, then, is a simple Q & A session with the creator of Diatom, co-creator of Brewer-Clifton, and the winemaker at Melville—three brands that have left an indelible mark on the current enological landscape.

R.H. Drexel: *I've been meaning to ask you this for some time. You've been around now for a while. You're no longer the new kid on the block making wine. How do you stay relevant?*

Greg Brewer: I find myself reflecting a lot on that very question. I'm finding a lot more fulfillment and satisfaction from seeing other people under our wings, if you will. I think at this point, it would be almost narcissistic to put out another wine project or something under my name. I love having impacted, in whatever capacity, others and seeing them prosper, explore, and get recognition. I think that will be the next chapter for me as far as staying relevant as opposed to doing something else—to maybe help mentor someone, guide them.

Forty or fifty years from now, I'm not going to be around—and that's great—but others will, so why not have a positive influence on those instead of holding on or yearning for applause… whatever.

It's so much more fulfilling if it goes to somebody else. I've seen that with Graham [Tatomer, a young up-and-comer who makes his Tatomer wines at Brewer-Clifton]. He's deserved every nod he's received because he works so hard and he's taken huge risks. And so now seeing him succeed is like watching a younger brother. I get choked up sometimes. It's like, "Oh my God, you fucking earned that." It's so killer! It's beautiful.

RH: *In fact, it must be joyous.*

GB: It's kind of like everything's o.k.

RH: *It's continuing.*

GB: Also, I think I'm always trying to render my interpretation of this craft more and more simply. And that's hard. It's really hard to do anything more simply. There are times when I think, "Oh gosh, I'm kind of like banging out another year," or "Here I go again." Instead of being mundane and bored within that landscape, I really try relishing the repetitive nature of it and fine tuning it in ways that others might think are ridiculous. But I find a certain serenity in repetition: in seeing the fermenters lined up a little bit better than they were last year, or the duct tape that we use, you know, making that tear mark a little bit cleaner than it was, or the Sharpie pen mark on the fermenter tags just a little more brushie-delicate-specific-direct. Little things like that. I think what's interesting there is that it puts winemaking in a mindset of being very, very disciplined and very, very succinct in approach and direction.

It's a fascinating thing. After reading Thomas Keller's books and whatnot, I've been thinking a lot about the manner in which that green masking tape is used on all of their counters [at The French Laundry] and how it's perfectly straight and doesn't leave sticky remnants. You don't just slap something on. Because when you do that, it's a slippery slope to compromise. When people come every now and then to help out for a day at the winery if I see someone put something on a barrel or a tank and it's kind of crooked, I gently point it out (hopefully never obnoxiously). I just remind them, if you have the opportunity to do something right, why wouldn't you?

So relevancy for me is also reflecting on that privilege and opportunity, I'm kind of just doing the best I can of fine-tuning and getting quieter and quieter in expression. Hopefully, resultant listeners will be more and more acute and more and more captive to those words and intentions.

RH: *Because it goes back to the intention of the artist and all of those things that you just described: the action between making it crooked and making it straight is intention, right?*

GB: Absolutely.

RH: *And I believe very firmly that intention informs the taste even of this wine. [In reference to the wine we drink during the interview]*

GB: For sure.

RH: *I know a lot of people think I'm "hippy-dippy" for thinking that, but I think even Thomas Keller would say that intention…*

GB: Oh, I think it's everything. And I think you sense it. You sense it! You, me, people who've been around the block in this business.

What I want in my body… With wine, I just want something that shows that someone cares and gives a shit about what they're doing, even if it's an aesthetic to which I don't necessarily subscribe: late picking, early picking, this varietal, that varietal, oak, new oak, no oak... whatever. I don't care. If he or she really has invested care and they want that wine to deliver and that wine means something to them, it will mean something to me. If that person really puts themself into it, that wine is going to be successful.

That's what means more and more to me: people who are taking risks. They've laid themselves out. They're fucking vulnerable. And I've thought about this concept a lot. I don't want to just "polish things up," just copy others, be safe. I think, "How can I be more sincere and how can I be more vulnerable? How can I be more 'inside' of something and at the same time, how do I not impose myself onto that thing?" That's really it for me.

RH: *Oftentimes, though, with great risk comes great criticism if folks just don't "get" what a winemaker or artist or writer is trying to say.*

GB: Over the years, I've gotten more and more comfortable with critique. If people don't understand, I don't take it as personally as I used to. I'd much rather not just keep hitting it right down the middle. No, I'm going to swing really hard and, you know, I'm either going to miss or I'm going to knock it right out of the park. If you don't have all of your shit together, that kind of mindset can be reckless. It's like, "I'm just going to go for it and throw it out of the park." Then again, if you have all of your other systems in place, you know, positive relationships with the people with whom you work, and all of your systems in place at the winery....if all of your intentions are in line and your systems are in place, then you can take great risks.

I'm also always prepared to fail and that's okay. It's good because staying vulnerable keeps you on top of your game. It's like when you meet someone that you find attractive and that first overture of, "Oh, it was great to meet you last night," or, "I hope to maybe see you again." It's risky and you get nervous like when you're a teenager in junior high asking someone out on their first date. But your senses are heightened at that point. It's a good place to be versus just going through the motions.

RH: *Does complacency scare you?*

GB: Yeah…yeah. Because all of us have sacrificed so much for this. Anyone really rolling in food and wine—rolling creatively and emotionally in their field—they've fucked something up in their life, most likely. Not always…

RH: *Most likely, yeah.*

GB: You know they have financial, personal, marital, spousal, parental issues, all of the

above, because it takes a certain mindset, I think, to do this.

RH: *You mean to really focus.*

GB: Yeah, it takes so much sacrifice. You've got to sacrifice for crafts like this or any other, really. For people who are in fashion or music, they've got to be focused. You can't be complacent. Otherwise you're a cover band or you're making generic wine on a grocery store shelf. And that's okay, there's time and place for everything. But if the directive and the goal and the approach is to stand out—without doing it obnoxiously—without, "Oh, look at me, I'm so different," and doing all this weird stuff to just draw attention to yourself. If the goal is to stand out, then you can't be complacent.

If you can just quietly put out something that doesn't resemble anything else, something that takes people somewhere, it's really rewarding…it's really rewarding.

RH: *You're obviously in a reflective mood these days. When you're talking to younger winemakers now and sort of helping them, are you specifically talking to them about some of these philosophies or are you just sort of creating an environment where they can come to you for advice if they need it?*

GB: A little bit of both, I think. You know, there's a kind of a lead-by-example approach that I like. But there's also a yielding. And by that I mean a yielding of the spotlight, if you will, to someone else. There is a nice self-security that comes with that. In that yielding there's a nurturing spirit and the humility that I'd love to instill.

Instilling discipline and everything else, that's great too, but that will come. It's kind of a given when you're trying to make wine at a certain level that you're not going to fuck it up or do something lame.

What I would hope to instill is an appreciation and respect—a humility—for the craft, for one's successes, for how fragile all this is. You know, you can be at the top of your game one year with one bottling and then you can just get slain with the next. It's not about being freaked out and paranoid about success, or whether or not it's fleeting. But just to reflect on the fragility of it all and the sacrifices that are made by everybody else along the way.

When handling fruit, just knowing how carefully tended it has been by some of our growers. It's really touching. You sense the energy off the fruit. And that makes me better. It makes me work harder because I don't want to let them down.

A younger colleague, for example, was sort of bitching about how fruit was delivered late, how they thought the yields would be higher, lower, different, whatever. You know, sure, we could all be specific and ask a lot of ourselves and others but then there comes that point where you realize most people are doing the best that they can, and just being gracious and grateful for what is available to you is a great thing to learn.

RH: *Why is humility important?*

GB: It just is. And for me, it's all relative. I don't like the self-effacing martyrdom that comes out of some: "I'm never good enough. This is never good enough." That it's-nothing-to-do-with-me mentality. Not at all. But I think that this business oftentimes brings out a certain bravado in people, a sort of, "Check-me-out! This-is-what-I-do," kind of attitude. Personally, I don't think that resonates with wine production. When I think of chef friends of mine that I really respect and I see how they handle their products, I value the care that's devoted to them. That type of creativity and tenderness is not flamboyant. It's not like, "Oh, here's this tomato. Check me out while I throw around the Ginsu knives."

It's like Thomas Keller again. In his book he talks about using this really thin blade, a spatula-like tool, to always lift food, and not using tongs. He says something like, "How would you feel being 'tonged' and picked up that way?" And so even that act can be like taking fragile eggs or like taking a baby chick in the palm of your hand instead of picking it up forcefully. This, to me, is a sort of humble stance, a kind of careful lifting and not imposing. And that's a harder approach—to be gentle, mindful.

It's much easier to offer advice, offer suggestion, offer input, offer a thumbprint on that product, and I think it's so much more compelling to erase, erase, erase.

It's important to be as quiet as you can. When I talk about humility, it's in that regard. It's being a humble steward of this product with which I'm attached for a really short period of time. When you think about it, rarely do we ever taste barrels or anything else. It's just what it is, without tweaking or changing. Sure, the wine has to be sound. Yes, it has to taste good. Fine. But then once those directives are accomplished which is, you know, a couple of tiny interventions along the way—for us it's a little bit of acid, some yeast, SO2, to make sure it's clear and stable—and off we go. It essentially makes itself with just a little bit of steering. Above and beyond that, it's viewing the wine as a kind of perfect equation, and knowing that anytime we get involved or touch or handle it, it's most likely going to take away something that is there. I guess that's what I think about when it comes to humility—thinking that I'm a negative influence, not a positive one.

Because those "positive influences," at least in my eyes, oftentimes are not. If it's a question of, "Oh, but the role of a winemaker is to do this, do that, to coerce the best potential out of whatever," my sense is that that coercion can be abused.

RH: *Yeah, because for me, humility is really important as a sort of a personal goal. You know, the number one thing on my bucket list, to be perfectly honest with you, is to obliterate my ego entirely. Now, I am quite cognizant of the fact that I will never achieve this, but I will die trying. I think that to do good work one must be mindful. And as soon as you're very present in whatever you're doing, of mindfully*

picking up something, or
whatever, it's hard to be arrogant, really, because you're engaged in something that is not you or not yourself.

GB: Right. You give yourself to something else.

RH: *Which I think is fantastic and actually so pleasurable. I derive pleasure from feeling very alive and raw and when I'm engaged in meaningful work, that's when I feel most alive. So I think humility is really important. We had Robert Mondavi who was inclusive and generous of spirit and hopefully we'll have others. Right now I don't feel like we're in an especially interesting time with a lot of winemakers.*

GB: I would tend to agree a little bit and I think in general that the business among almost any generation is extremely divisive. I don't know the genesis of that. Perhaps it's insecurity or the challenging market and people are getting stressed, kind of like when you're in an argument with your significant other and you pop off and say something you don't mean just because you're angry. At the end of the day you're like, "Fuck, I shouldn't have said that," but it just came out of that emotive, pissed-off, moody place. Maybe it's kind of a reflection of that—of people being a little freaked out and feeling the need to put down others so as to feel better about themselves. It's a shame.

Also, the lines in the sand that are being drawn around things like high vs. low alcohol, oaked vs. un-oaked, sustainable this, organic that… biodynamic…whatever. These camps are being formed. I've seen it among all generations. I've seen it in some of the old-timers around here. From some I might expect it, and from others I wouldn't. But an interesting really subtle commentary took place with regard to alcohol recently: someone had an appreciation for a wine that had really big alcohol and he said it was cool, "...but you know where I stand on that issue." That's a funny thing to say really. Do you need to stand anywhere? Just the semantics alone kind of implied this Mason-Dixon line—I'm in the North, you're in the South, or I ride the front of the bus, you ride in the back. It's creepy really. There are so many different types of interpretation in this craft that can be successful if people give a shit. Because they can really pull it off because all their systems are harmonious and working. To pick out any one element belittles it all, to be honest. It's like talking about a person and saying, "I don't like people who wear glasses or are short, or brunette, or blond, or no hair, or tattoos." Like, really? It's such a beautiful product if you just let it be and if you don't have all these pre-conceived notions of what it should be—of what anything should be.

RH: *We didn't really have those when I started in the wine business. I was 21 so maybe I don't remember, or maybe I was just naïve. But I don't recall these kinds of divisions and arguments. It just seems so heightened now.*

GB: It does seem heightened. I don't know why. I always look back and think there must be some kind of insecure element. Looking at my personal life, if someone's insecure

about something, it usually manifests itself in a weird way. They come off cocky or something but it's because they are insecure, you know? You go to a mixed company party and you think so-and-so is really full of himself or herself and then you get to know them and you talk to friends and they say, "Oh, no he was really apprehensive about being here, felt out of place," and so he went a certain way. Perhaps it's that. I don't know. Hopefully the wine climate isn't fostering that because of its challenges. It's a bummer.

RH: *It is, definitely.*

GB: Yeah, there is something interesting about it all, and I think ironic, for anyone who is critical or judgmental. Judgement is a creepy thing, in general. You were talking about erasing ego. I talked to a therapist a few years ago and his current directive for himself was to not be judgmental of others. It's a beautiful lesson. Who is anyone to say anything? And sometimes it's wording or even pronoun usage. Instead of saying, "that sucks," or "that's good," or " you shouldn't or should do that." Really? Anyone can feel anything. Anyone can own their own emotions. "I like this." Or, "This took me there." But you start throwing out shit like "Oh, I can't believe he did this," or "He really can't pull that off," or "Wines like that really don't go with whatever." Who is anybody to make those kinds of proclamations? I think that we've all had wines or food combinations or things where's it's like, "Holy shit!" about something totally unexpected and out of one's comfort zone. You know… anything's possible. The best of the best are things that are the good mind fucks: [tasting a meal or drinking a wine] that you didn't think was even possible. From Grant Achatz's food at Alinea, to things that may be really extreme, it's like, "Whoa! It can work!" And for anyone who judges or doesn't get it, it's weird because who should judge?

RH: *Yeah, I mean, I think my own theory is that the cult of celebrity and reality TV have made this phenomenon worse. For some reason, now it's interesting and relevant for a lot of people to be controversial because that garners them attention. Being controversial oftentimes means disparaging one's colleague. This is how I think the wine industry translated the phenomenon that is the cult of personality: be controversial and make fun of somebody or disparage their wines because writers will write about you and they'll think that's really cool. Then you'll get invited to sit on symposiums because you'll say weird shit. (Laughter). Which is all good. That's their shtick. That's o.k. if they have their shtick, but it's this idea that no one else can have theirs, or they need to criticize the shtick of others. It's interesting. But, oh well, it is what it is.*

GB: Yeah, totally. It is what it is. I remember talking to Mike Bonaccorsi [the widely loved sommelier] before he passed away about this. He was talking about regional torch passing, the old-guard kind of thing. He made some references to Henri Jayer—how all the younger people in town kind of sat at his knee, you know, listening and hearing his thoughts. Here is the old-guard who has seen it all, and the new generation is absorbing, reaching to him for inspiration. I think about that a lot. You know this is my 20th year in this appellation. I think I would love it 30 years from now, if I'm still clicking along in some capacity, if people would want to come and hang out, talk or whatever, in that respect-your-elder's way. Like command it, not demand it, not yell for it. I want to be like a graceful and gracious elder. Look at Richard Sanford, when I'm in his presence, it's special because he deserves more and he's never spoken ill of anyone. He's so gracious.

RH: *Isn't that great?*

GB: That's grace. It's humility.

RH: *And that's the teaching by example you were talking about.*

GB: Yeah, he's put 40 years in around here, for crying out loud. And he's rolling as quietly and as supportively and as politely as anyone I know. That is really special, you know? No bravado. No pretense. No, "Don't you know who I am?" or "Don't you know how long I've been here?"

If you met him and didn't know who he was, you would think he's just some cool cat who's making some wine. Not the ONE who had the sack to plant here in the 1970's when no one else gave a shit. It's a big deal! Someday I aspire to be perceived, at least by some, in the same way. I would like people to think I'm a decent person and that I've given my all to promote this place and do the best I can here...knowing that there's someone right now, who's going to take from what we've accomplished, fine-tune it, and grow up with it.

It's very late in the evening when Greg and I finally wrap up our conversation. He's tired after a long day of harvesting Pinot. The photo essay that accompanies this article follows Greg after that long day of work.

The Man in the Arena

Paul Lato is a handful.

He often shows up at dinner parties late and with unanticipated guests in tow. He is a gifted raconteur and can unintentionally hijack an entire dinner conversation. He has an almost super-human confidence, which allows him to be utterly and completely himself around everyone—the rich and famous and regular working humps like me.

He is oftentimes the funniest person at the table...and the one with the most delicious wines. This might open him up to all kinds of envy and any number of evil eye curses. But for whatever reason, Paul remains widely loved by colleagues and fans alike. It might be for his intellect, for his general good-guy affability, or for his ability to make kick-ass wines...all the while making it appear seemingly effortless.

He's a hot ticket item at dinner parties on the Central Coast and often lends to them the kind of sparkling conversation that seems to have gone the way of the typewriter and the rotary dial phone.

A Polish émigré, Paul has worked his way up the ranks: from sommelier, to pouring wines at various tasting rooms, to working harvest for different producers, to finally having his own brand, and more recently, becoming a sought-after consulting winemaker. Through it all, he has remained pleasantly eccentric, well-read, informed, and honest. The casual ease with which he carries himself belies a man of great depth and intelligence, humor, and obsessive dreams.

To wit, here are a few bits and pieces of a dinner conversation with Paul:

On Terroir:

Some people talk about, "Oh, I want to express the terroir," and, "I want to express the vineyard," and, "I want to express my feelings toward this grape." No. I want to make the *vin de plaisir* because I want to make people happy as they drink my wine. I've had pretty good success doing that. So there is the terroir and the question of the vineyard and all that stuff. It all makes sense. But I'd rather make a wine of pleasure, I think, than a wine of terroir that people think is awful. I was actually served a wine like this once a few years ago in the south of France. This guy gave me wine and it was corked and I told the guy, "I think your wine is corked." He said, "No, this is the *cru de terroir*, monsieur." So I said that if this is the taste of your terroir, then you should make the vineyard into a parking lot or a hotel."

On Naming One of His Wines 'Suerte':

I like *suerte*. It's Spanish for 'good luck'. The reason I named the wine 'Suerte' is because I had three accidents within a year in which I could have died. All three times I had my body and my ego bruised. I didn't have health insurance and I didn't even go to a doctor. I just had bruises all over my body and my ego, as I said. The first time, I fell down from three barrels high, you know, onto the concrete floor. I was really like a kite in the air. And it was so fast. I remember my brain thinking, "How bad is this going to be?" The second time was a car accident in the same year. I was driving way too fast on Foxen Canyon Road at midnight. I just went totally off the road between some trees. It was right on a curve so I went in between the trees, through the bushes, and straight into the river. You know, I can still sort of see the bushes going by my windshield [Paul provides a sound effect: zhzhazhabfsh]. Again, I thought, "How bad is this going to be?" I ended up in the river. My old Toyota truck with like 200,000 miles—that old blue and black one— was sitting on its side. I'm totally fine, with no seat belt on, but I'm aching from bruises right away. My windshield is smashed and water is rushing into the cab. I feel like I'm trapped inside a fish tank. The third time someone ran me over with a forklift from behind so I didn't get a chance to think. It was just *boom, boom* and then I heard people screaming, "Stop! Stop! Stop!"

So, one day I'm talking to my friend Manny Berk. He is a good friend and I was down. I was telling him how unlucky I was and about each of the accidents. He said, "No man, let me put something into perspective for you. You don't understand. You are following your dream and three times this year you could have died and all you got were bruises? You're a very lucky son of a bitch! You should name your wine 'Suerte'!"

On Naming One of His Wines 'Duende':

I was traveling in the south of Spain and I wanted to experience flamenco music. So, I asked a friend of mine and he said, "No, no. Not that place. It is for tourists but not people like you. You should go down the street by your hotel. Walk the street at night and there will be several people who gather to play guitar and dance...the locals. You cannot buy tickets. This is just their life." My friend said, "Some will be good and some will be not so good. Some will be potentially great if you're lucky. So as you walk, you have to stop when you feel the *duende*. *Duende* is the spirit and the magical thing which possesses the artist when you give yourself entirely to what you love and what you want to do and you work hard on it." So potentially all of us have duende. Just many people have not discovered it yet. It has a little bit of a darker streak to it also...overall it's a positive thing but it can be like a possession. 'Duende' became the name of my first wine. And I remember showing this wine two or three years later to Aubert de Villaine [Domaine de la Romanee-Conti] when I met him for dinner at Hyde Vineyard [in Carneros, California]. He looked at the label and said "Duende. That's a very special word! I wanted to name my vineyard here in America 'Duende' but my family thought it was too esoteric." So every time I see him in

Napa, usually once a year if I'm lucky, he says, "How's your 'Duende'? Can I taste it?"

On Complacency:

Pursuing a dream carries a certain amount of danger—the danger of not succeeding, of failing. It would be easy to just say, "Oh I had a dream and I achieved it," like what happened to so many of the guys who were part of the Summer of Love. They had their fun and their awakenings, but then they got jobs and they became CEO's of pharmaceutical companies, you know? So I don't think I want to stop here. My dream is an expendable dream, in that everyday you have to tell yourself, "You know, there is something more out there, so let's try that!"

You have to put yourself in situations that are unknown. I remember reading the Charlie Trotter cookbook and on the back cover there was this quote, something like: "If you really want something, you just have to dedicate yourself to it entirely and the whole Universe will align to help you." And this was the moment when I truly believed, "Yes, I can do it." That has always been a guiding principle. And I have experienced that. If you quit your job, no matter what, and go there all the way, I think then you are giving part of your difficult burden to the Universe and He or She has to carry it.

On Wine's Role in Life…or Bible Studies 101 with Paul Lato:

Well, I think it would be hardly possible to think about life without wine. Look at the first miracle of Jesus: He's not even ready to be a preacher, He's not ready to be a master yet, and he goes to a wedding to hang out with his friends and they run out of wine. His mother, the Virgin Mary, asks him to make some wine. So He says, "No, I'm not ready. Please don't bother me." And then His mom insists. She's aware that wine is needed for the celebration. So here is this would be master at a wedding and it's normal...like a baseball game...and they run out of wine. Mary knows the people's lives are so hard that when they have this wedding, it's a special occasion. It's a joyful thing! That tells you something about Mary. She says to her Son, "Can you help out?" She doesn't say, "Make more food." She says, "Hey, can you make some wine here?" At first he just refuses, saying, "My time has not come." And she insists, you know, gently, until he says, "O.k., bring me this barrel of water," and He blesses it and it becomes wine. But there is more to it. I get excited about this because what happens is that an important guy says to the host of the wedding, "Hey buddy, what's wrong with you? You gave us this mediocre wine first, and now you give us this great wine." So not only does Jesus make wine from water but he makes truly quality wine! And that guy—that wine lover that made the comment—recognized that it was really good wine and the host should have served it at the beginning before they all got drunk. So that wine was the first great wine.

On His Approach to Winemaking:

I think that you have to have a vision for your wine. It's like having kids and saying, "I want them to be decent human beings." But it's not saying, "He's three years old and he's

going to be a lawyer," or "I want him to be a football player." Maybe the guy is only going to be 5 feet tall, you know. Give him a chance! So I think a wine just has to grow with you. I accepted the philosophy that the most important thing for me to do, first of all, was taste the great wines of the world, which for a Pinot maker is Henri Jayer. He was a simple peasant with no school who elevated himself to the most famous winemaker of Burgundy. I totally embrace what Jayer was saying. And he was saying, "I want to make *vin de plaisir.*" I love this philosophy. Given the choice between wine or food for survival, every reasonable person would give up wine because you can certainly survive without wine. But if you get cut off from food, over time you will die. So food is the one we need for the nourishment of our bodies but the light—I call it the light intoxication or the little buzz that is going on with wine—that's what heightens our awareness of our existence and makes us better and deeper, and makes us more conscious of everything.

On the Best Meal He's Ever Had:

It was a dinner prepared by Chef Thomas Keller. It was one of the most profound spiritual experiences in my entire life. It took me somewhere. That night I remembered consuming some food with my parents and smoke coming from my grandfather's oven because he would smoke sausages. The whole thing came, not as a physical memory so to speak, but it came as a memory of the wholesomeness of childhood and of the good things, of the positive things, and certain things I'd forgotten...and they were all beautiful.

One of His All-Time Favorite Quotes:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled or how the doer of deeds might have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short time and time again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself a worthy cause; who if he wins knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat."

—Theodore Roosevelt

12 HOURS AND A BAD WINE REVIEW

YOU WAKE UP STUNNED TO LEARN YOUR WINE HAS RECIEVED 72 POINTS FROM A MAJOR PUBLICATION.

ANXIETY SETS IN, AS YOUR DISTRIBUTOR CALLS ABOUT AN HOUR LATER. "IT WAS HARD TO MOVE BEFORE, BUT WHEN THE SALES REPS SEE THIS SCORE..."

YOUR BEST FRIEND, WHOSE WINES JUST GOT A A BUNCH OF HIGH '90'S FROM A MAJOR PUBLICATION STOPS IN TO SAY HELLO. YOU'RE FEELING OFF YOUR GAME. ALL F**KED UP INSIDE.

"LISTEN, BRO, I SAW YOUR SCORE TODAY. THAT GUY IS TOTALLY OFF, MAN. YOUR WINE IS BEAUTIFUL, IT'S SICK. DON'T LET THIS GET TO YOU."

05

A LITTLE ENCOURAGED YOU DECIDE TO SHOW UP AT A PREVIOUSLY PLANNED SYMPOSIUM ABOUT PINOT.

06

AT THE SYMPOSIUM, YOU RUN INTO ANOTHER COLLEAGUE, WHO ALSO OFTEN GETS HIGH SCORES.

07

HUMILIATION AND SELF-DOUBT SET IN AGAIN.

08

YOU RETURN TO THE WINERY AND FINISH UP YOUR DAY, FEELING DEFEATED, MISUNDERSTOOD.

09

YOU GO HOME EARLY AND CRASH IN FRONT OF THE TELEVISION SET.

10

YOUR SON COMES TEARING THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR AFTER SCHOOL.

11

"HEY DADDY, I MADE YOU THIS."

12

YOU START DINNER EARLY, IN ANTICIPATION OF YOUR WIFE GETTING HOME. WHEN SHE DOES FINALLY ARRIVE, SHE TELLS YOU WHAT YOU'VE KNOWN ALL ALONG. "IT MAY NOT BE FOR EVERYBODY, BUT THIS IS AN AMAZING LITTLE BOTTLE OF WINE."

"At least the people I work with are very open. We're all on equal terms. We're colleagues and the male/female thing has nothing to do with it at all. I think the wine business actually helps bring genders together because —just generalizing here—men seem to be more analytical and women are more intuitive and whatnot. So I think it helps a man get in touch with his feminine, intuitive side more, and it helps women develop more of an analytical side. At least that's the case for me."

—Deborah Hall

Deborah Hall is a product of the sixties and early seventies. She still carries within her a fierce streak of idealism and even naïveté. All the warm and fuzzy peace and love hyperbole would be cloying if she weren't so genuine. And after meeting her, you really wouldn't want her to be any other way.

Deborah believes in the fundamental notion that goodness and love trump greed and cruelty any day. She believes that animals are as emotionally evolved, if not more so, than people. She believes that envoys of Mother Nature—actual spirits—guide us when we show Nature the respect she deserves.

On paper, some of these notions might get one laughed out of the Irony Hall of Fame. Out in real life, it's refreshing to meet someone as hopeful and prone to daydreaming as Deborah Hall. I stopped by recently to see her, and noted that even a casual visit to her genteelly appointed barn can turn into a meaningful contemplation on the value of appreciating a single moment.

Before you know it, Deborah has chosen music to accompany your visit, brought out freshly sliced, warm homemade bread, put on a pot of coffee, and decanted her Angelica for later—when surely we'll want to take a few deep breaths, consider a raptor off in the distance, and sit quietly side-by-side, not having to speak.

Over the years, Deborah has become almost superhumanly resilient. She continues to farm an untamed stretch of land tucked back into the canyon lands of the Sta. Rita Hills appellation. She does so mostly alone, with the occasional help of consultants. She originally purchased the property with her husband William. Shortly thereafter, William was diagnosed with a terminal illness and passed away.

R.H. Drexel: *So, when you're calling the pick, how closely do you watch numbers?*

Deborah Hall: You always have to look at the numbers, but I learned early on that you don't make decisions just by the numbers. Not me, anyway. I found that it's a much nicer product when you go out and get a feel for the vineyard and you look around in the environment. You see different things. I know that when my walnut trees start ripening

and dropping their nuts, we're getting closer in the vineyard. You can just feel that fall is in the air and you can feel the change. You absolutely need your numbers, but you also need a bit of intuition. That's the balance, I think.

RH: *This year's harvest was challenging pretty much everywhere in California, though some of the fruit seems really spectacular. During vintages such as these, do you ever ask yourself, "What the hell did I just get myself into?"*

DH: Oh, if I had known what I was getting into, I don't know if I'd be here today.

RH: *Really?*

DH: Oh, yeah. On one hand, you have these big corporate wineries with all of these resources. And then you have all these artisans who grew up in wine families that have been around wine and grape growing their whole life. And here I am, not coming from any of those sides, just simply coming at this as a person to a new love. Basically, wine became a new love in my life. When you first get into it [the business] you don't really know what challenges to expect. And there are many times where you're just lost...

Well, the most recent one was frost. I'm thinking, "This is going to be the year of all years. My vines are older now and this is just going to be a stunning vintage." And I put so much heart and expectation into it. And then we had frost. I go out early in the morning and I see the little shoots and they are still beautiful, bright green, but they're frozen.

RH: *Damn.*

DH: They were frozen in place...they're beautiful. And then two hours later, they're brown and flopped over and gone.

RH: *How did you feel when you saw that?*

DH: I lay down on the vineyard floor and sobbed and said, "What the hell am I doing?" Yeah...that was one of those moments.

RH: *This is going to take some soul-searching but do you regret it? Would you do it again?*

DH: There's something about it [the wine business] that's almost addicting. You've fallen in love with it. And because you get a new chance every single year, it's something you just can't walk away from. It becomes a part of your life, I think. I'd never experienced the frost before. All these years and it had never taken my crop. So once I got over the shock and gained a little bit of control, I called my vineyard consultant and he says, "All is not lost." He explains to me how the next shoot will come out and you'll have one cluster. So you'll have very little fruit, but you will get some crop.

RH: *So that's a low moment. What's a high moment feel like?*

DH: Oh, I think the most exciting part is the Angelica. Nobody knows what it is and when I'm at tastings, I'll say, "After you've had your Pinot and you've finished your dry wines, come back and I want you to try this very special little dessert wine made from ancient vines." They'll say, "Oh, I don't like dessert wines." And I'll say, "Just trust me. Come back for a little sip." So anyway, they'll come back and I'll pour them a little. I just stand back and watch them. It's like their whole mood, their whole expression, everything changes…and it's like, "Wow!" It's just so fun to see. They're surprised and in awe and in shock and like, "Oh, my God, this is just so good!" The joy I get just sharing that with them is probably the highlight. Definitely. It's the joy, you know. Wine just spreads love. I don't want to sound corny...but it does.

RH: *How did the Angelica come about?*

DH: The Angelica is made from Mission grapes. The padres planted the Mission grape all up and down the coast in all their vineyards, at all of their missions. And they made every kind of wine you can imagine from that one grape. When we discovered that the vines planted in Gypsy Canyon were Mission, I thought, "Okay, the padres had the most experience with this varietal. What did they say about it?" So fortunately, in Santa Barbara, they have the Archives Library at the Mission. All of the information, all the books, and the correspondence between the fathers from all of the California missions, is right in Santa Barbara.

RH: *That is so cool.*

DH: Yeah. What a gold mine of information! So I'm going down there and doing a little bit of research with the help of a translator (because everything is in old-world Spanish). We were able to read through some notes and discover their writings on Angelica. I think it was named Angelica at the San Gabriel Mission because they also named Los Angeles the 'City of Angels.' They made a lot of Angelica there because it's a fortified wine. They made a lot of brandy too, and that's what they fortified it with. Reading through all the notes, the padres said that this [the Angelica] was their favorite wine made with that grape. So, I thought, "Okay, if that was the best then that's what we're going to make."

RH: *Take me back to when you first discovered the Mission vines on your property.*

DH: We started cleaning up the hillside where we thought we wanted to plant the Pinot and discovered a vine, and then another, and another, and realized that there was a whole hillside of ancient vines covered in sagebrush. They hadn't been farmed in about 80 years so they were very rough looking. They're not perfect. It's an ancient vineyard. Some of the vines are growing up and over to the side. Each has its own personality. My vineyard developer said at the time, because they were looking pretty rough, "These will never do anything for you. You should just rip them out."

I thought they were a part of the history of the property. I didn't know what they were but they were beautiful in my eyes, so I said, "Plant the Pinot somewhere else!" (She laughs).

And so we brought them into production over a three-year period with very conservative

pruning because they hadn't been pruned in so long.

When the next harvest rolled around, the clusters were huge. They can weigh up to a pound each cluster, and it's a thick, red-skinned grape. And so when you see these old, gnarly vines, oh...it's just laden with all this fruit and it is just beautiful. I just had to do something with them. After DNA testing came back and I knew they were Mission grapes, I discovered the padre's notes at the mission, and I just went from there. So that's how Angelica came about. That's how I became a winemaker, actually. That was my very first wine in 2001.

RH: *So that makes sense that you described your highest point as an Angelica moment because it was your baby.*

DH: Yeah, I guess so. I didn't think of it that way. And, I had contracted out all of my Pinot, but I was able to keep enough in 2003 to make one barrel. So I did that. I found that that was much more rewarding than just farming every year and passing off the fruit afterwards. It's like giving birth and then giving somebody the baby and then never hearing anything. So now I keep all my fruit—all of the Pinot and all of the Mission grapes.

RH: *Can we talk about there being some sort of mythical vine hidden in somewhere in Santa Barbara County?*

DH: The story goes... There was a beautiful young lady, Doña Marcelina Feliz de Dominguez. She met a young man but her parents didn't approve of him. So he said, "I'm going to go off into the world and come back a wealthy man. Then your parents will approve. I will come back and marry you." So, in the meantime, he gave her a vine cutting and asked her to plant it and take care of it while he was gone. And so she did. She poured all her love and heart into it and it grew, and it grew, and it grew into the largest vine in the world—the Para Grande. There's a few missing parts in the story because in the meantime while he was gone, she had fourteen children...

RH: *(laughs loudly)*

DH: And that vine actually grew enough fruit to support her family. It was huge…just huge! They have pictures of it in the museum. She sold the fruit as table fruit and to local winemakers. She was the first woman winegrower in California. So, with that history, I thought that in her honor I should name my old Mission vineyard Doña Marcelina's Vineyard.

RH: *Oh, I love that.*

DH: Yes, but see, she planted the vine cutting in what is now Montecito. The way it got hidden somewhere in the foothills of Santa Barbara is that there was a bandit. This bandit was fleeing the sheriff from Santa Barbara and broke a twig from the Para Grande vine as he fled into the foothills. He broke off that piece so that he'd have a whip for his horse. Apparently, when he got back far enough into the hidden foothills, he put that cutting in the ground and it happened to be by a spring…so it grew. To this day it is still growing.

You can see a Grapevine Trail on one of the Los Padres National Forest maps. My dream is to one day get a group of people together and go try and find it. It's a four day hike to this spot but I'd love to see if that vine is still flourishing and get some cuttings. If it is, it would be the same genetic material as the Para Grande vine, which was cut down to take to the Chicago World's Fair in the 1930's. Apparently it's gone. There's nothing left of it, but possibly this one vine is growing in the foothills of Montecito somewhere.

RH: *So, do you know of anyone who's actually seen it?*

DH: Yes, yes! There is a forest ranger that has seen it. I went to the ranger's office trying to hire an escort to take me back there. He told me that a ranger that clears the trail back there has seen it and says that it grows because there is a spring there—that it's growing like crazy. But it grows all along the ground...disappears and then it pops up… and just goes on forever and ever.

RH: *And there's fruit there?*

DH: I don't know if he has seen the fruit. I'm sure if there is fruit, it gets eaten pretty quickly.

RH: *So on your bucket list is to get a cutting and bring it back here.*

DH: Yes. And to send it to Davis to get DNA testing to see what it is.

RH: *This four day hike...could you take a mule there or do you have to have to hike it by foot or horses?*

DH: You go by horseback, I believe. You have to cross a stream a couple of times. Of course, you'd also have to figure out where to camp.

RH: *Well, I want to go on the record as a volunteer and pack mule when you finally go on that adventure. So far, you've talked about the Doña as the first female winegrower in California. And, you're a woman running a vineyard too.*

I was reading an article the other day about how few women winemakers there are, and how it's a male-dominated industry…yada, yada, yada. I thought it was a bit of sensationalistic journalism. Do you feel that way about the industry?

DH: Not at all. In fact I've had people come to me and say, "Oh, you're a woman. Do you find problems and challenges because you're a female in a male-dominated business?" At least the people I work with are very open. We're all on equal terms. We're colleagues and the male/female thing has nothing to do with it at all. I think the wine business actually helps bring genders together because—just generalizing here—men seem to be more analytical and women are more intuitive and whatnot. So I think it helps a man get in touch with his feminine, intuitive side and it helps women develop more of an analytical side. At least that's the case for me.

RH: *On an on-going basis, hard vintages aside, what's the downside of being in the wine business?*

DH: I think that's different for every person, but for me it's the paperwork. I'm not a paperwork person. I love designing and making and growing. I even love being on a computer and answering emails from customers. But paperwork—the compliance and everything—I just want to make the wine and share it and let someone else worry about the paperwork!

RH: *You mentioned that you also love designing. You're one of the few winemakers who has also designed their own label.*

DH: I chose hand-blown bottles with a hand-applied wax seal and hand-made paper labels—exactly what the padres would have done.

I tried a lot of the commercial waxes to seal the cork and didn't like them at all. Some of them are rubberized and some are plastic. One day, my neighbor's bees swarmed into a post at my gate where a woodpecker had made a hole. The bees just kind of moved in.

And then it occurred to me: the padres used beeswax to seal their bottles!

At the time I didn't know anything about bees so I would just roll up my window when I drove by and let them just be. Sooner or later they moved out and I popped the top off the post. There was a hive with the wax. So that was my first wax!

Now we have our own bee hives. I just have two so far. And so now all of our bottles are sealed with beeswax from our own hives.

RH: *That's awesome.*

DH: We've just had our first honey too.

RH: *So, you're a grower/ winemaker/ beekeeper?*

DH: Absolutely. You get used to that little beekeeper outfit.

The bees are absolutely fascinating. What I've learned so far is the philosophy of the beehive. First of all, they're mostly all girls.

You have the queen bee and you have a few males called drones. The strongest drone that can fly the highest with the queen and mate with her is the winner. The others go off and die.

So then you have your queen, and all your worker bees... and they're all females. The philosophy of the hive is that everyone works together. When everyone has a job, there's no competition. They're all working together as one unit of love, basically.

They go out and they gather the nectar and the pollen in the flowers. It's almost as if the flowers are excited to see the bees coming. They almost bow to them as they give their nectar and pollen up to the bees. It's just a fabulous relationship. And you see the bees coming and going with their little pouches full of pollen, all different colors.

The little worker bee only lives six weeks or so. She'll fly and gather the pollen every day for miles. They have a two- or three-mile radius from their hive, and they'll fly until their little wings just give out. Sometimes they don't even make it back to the hive on their last journey and they just die in the field. So that's where the saying "busy as a bee" comes from.

The average little worker bee produces about 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in her lifetime. When you learn how special they are, how magnificent they are, you fall in love with them. We need to just stop and look and listen and see what's happening...what they're doing and how important they are to all of us.

His Royal Legit-ness

"I'm an aggie and a redneck. I like to be out there with my crews. I like to be in the dirt. It's more my nature. I hate being indoors,"
—Chris Hammell

It takes a certain breed of man to yield to the land. We're all at the mercy of Mother Nature day in and day out, but some of us feel it more than others. When you farm for a living, a sense of abiding respect for the land informs everything you do. You don't get too cocky about anything you've grown because you know it's a bit of a lark—it's your hard work meeting the good graces of Mother Nature.

Vineyard managers are a special breed of farmer. Not only are they at the mercy of conditions often beyond their control, they also have to deal with a different, oftentimes mercurial force—the Winemaker.

If you're a vineyard manager like Chris Hammell at two large vineyards [Bien Nacido Vineyards and Solomon Hills Vineyards] where multiple winemakers source their fruit, then you're not only managing canopies, shoots, and laterals, you're navigating a broad spectrum of expectations, egos, directives, and sensibilities. Each winemaker will want to tell you how to farm his or her particular block—and they should—for after all, they're oftentimes paying a premium for their fruit. They'll have very specific ideas about when to call the pick and how every little detail during harvest should play out. Multiply that by lots of anxious, sleep-deprived winemakers, and you've got a project on your hands.

As in any profession, some vineyard managers are more emotionally invested in the outcome of their efforts. Some phone it in. Chris Hammell is widely respected as a vineyard manager for the simple fact that he wouldn't know how to phone it in if his life depended on it.

"Chris is one of the most cheerful, fun, enthusiastic, yet serious assistant winemakers I know. That's right—assistant winemaker. He has this knack of challenging you to make the best wine off of each individual block year in and year out. He is actually competitive about it and works hard to make it happen," says Bill Wathen, winemaker and co-owner of Foxen Vineyards.

And indeed, ask Chris about one of the vineyard blocks he farms and he'll talk about it like he's talking about one of his kids. He'll know nuances about how certain varietals perform in that particular block, given a certain type of growing season. He'll cite memorable vintages and wines that passed through his hands like some parents quote good report cards.

I recently caught Chris on a rare day when he had some time to spare and we sat down for a chat.

R.H. Drexel: *Work-wise, tell me what gets you out of bed every morning? What's the thing that you love most about what you're doing?*

Chris Hammell: Year by year, trying to make the best wine we can from these sites collectively. That's what's appealing for me as well as client satisfaction. I'm really close with our clients. It's a professional relationship, but it also goes deeper than that because we're all in this together. The goal for all of us is to make the best wines we can make from these sites [in the Santa Maria Valley].

The client does their part. We do our part. The land does its part. What our crew does makes a difference. I'm super interested in the end product even though we may only have 20 or 30% influence on it in the end. I'm the go-between between the land and the winemaker, me and my crew.

Primarily, I think of myself as a farmer. I'm an aggie and a redneck. I like to be out there with my crews. I like to be in the dirt. It's more my nature. I hate being indoors.

"Chris is one of those people whose obsessive-compulsive attention to detail and commitment to having fun while getting there put him in a class entirely his own. Among the many achievements that I've been able to watch him humbly attain is a pleasant, proud, easy rapport with his supporting cast in the vineyard that's nothing short of inspiring and enviable. This particular skill set and his ability to utilize it, cannot be attained by someone with selfish motivation. I consider his friendship one of my greatest assets."

—James Ontiveros, Native 9

RH: *Tell me about working with a crew. What's that like?*

CH: I'm just directing the crew. Since we farm on a fairly large scale, I'm more like a conductor, if you will. It's too big to do by myself, so I have a super-experienced, talented crew and we go out there and execute decisions together. It's different for each client. What's the price point of their wine? What's their ultimate goal? What's their program like? Sometimes we hit it just right. Sometimes the vintage gives us problems. For it to work there has to be foresight—the development of a certain block, the clones, the rootstock, the trellis. All that stuff has to be just right, we have to be just right, the vintage has to be just right, and the winemaker has to be just right…and then sometimes you can do something really special.

RH: *How open are winemakers to direction and advice about farming their block?*

CH: Some of these guys are my mentors. I've learned a lot from some of our clients, not only about wine, but about farming for wine. I'm not talking about pruning, mowing, and things like that. Those are things that I or my crew can do without advice from winemakers. But, when it comes to canopy management, irrigation, fertilization, organic techniques, fruit thinning, and harvest dates and methods, the clients I learn from are very hands-on in their blocks.

And, I have also learned on my own, so now clients are turning to me more, but that's

only recently started to happen. I've really made an effort to increase my knowledge of wine, the winemaking process, and the appreciation of wine. I'm interested in why certain grapes do certain things. I try and have an understanding of what my clients are going through. Even on a very practical level, I want to know about their barrel programs, temperatures during fermentation, every detail I can know.

I care about cleanliness of fruit—these seemingly little things make a big difference in the day-to-day life of a winemaker. I want to know everything so that I can serve them better. I want to pick their brains—not to get into their business—but just so I can do better for them.

Chris Hammell is probably the most knowledgeable and quality-conscious vineyard manager on the Central Coast—and that is the weakest part of him. I say that because he is such an incredibly well-versed, multi-faceted, interesting-yet-always-humble, generous, kind, and all around fun human being, that the MAN himself overshadows his considerable gifts as grape grower. I have worked with Chris now for the better part of a decade and I can say that I have never enjoyed working with anyone more. I am fortunate to be able to call him a friend and I am lucky that he has never whooped my butt...which as a certified black belt-holder he easily could.

— Manfred Krankl, Sine Qua Non

RH: *Is it hard to switch between sustainable farming, organic farming, and Biodynamic farming?*

CH: We farm organically for some clients and Biodynamically for others. Everything else is certified sustainable. What I like to do is take ideas and concepts from organic farming and apply them to sustainable practices. Biodynamics is another topic completely but it tends to get lumped in.

RH: *Talk to me about Biodynamics.*

CH: It tends to get passed over or people only talk about preparations and stuff like that. Some say it's stupid and others say, "Oh, it's so great!" But very few people have, to my knowledge, really dug into the philosophy here to any real degree beyond a superficial level. Biodynamics is first and foremost a whole-farm-unit principle. This is the first thing people forget when they apply Biodynamics to grape growing.

Now, even [Rudolph] Steiner [considered the father of Biodynamics] said that you're never going to get it 100% right. But his first principle was to be a farm unit—have animals that produce manure which is then composted to help grow hay to feed the animals…and so on. That's the spirit behind Biodynamics. You get a few neighbors together and you create a self-sustaining farm, and it becomes this living, breathing organism. That's the one thing that people don't seem to really do. Even in Burgundy, you know, one person might have a few rows farmed Biodynamically next to other blocks or rows farmed in another manner. But the true nature of Biodynamics is to have a polyculture.

Certainly, there are exceptions. You look at somebody like Jim Fetzer [at Ceago]. They have compost piles and they make their own preps. They have animals, a farm, lavender, this and that. To me, that's cool.

And, then there's the spiritual side, the esoteric side that almost no one touches upon. This is the unseen world. This is the real thesis behind Biodynamics—the thing that represents all of the mystery and the theories that Steiner developed from concepts that go back to the Egyptians.

RH: *And that intrigues you?*

CH: Yeah. Back in the day, a lot people believed in unseen beings: little fairies and water spirits. They called them *elemental beings*. Nowadays most people just wouldn't believe in that stuff. You know, I myself have never seen one since I've never been able to see, as Steiner supposedly did, into higher worlds. But I like this idea of cooperating somehow with these *elemental beings.* Maybe I just like the idea of cooperation in relation to farming. You see, Steiner is mostly known for Biodynamics in the wine business, but he was into all kinds of stuff—Paganism and Spiritualism. He was first and foremost a philosopher. He was a spiritual scientist and considered himself initiated into these mysterious traditions.

He was considered a true seer. But who knows? He could have been a fraud and a charlatan. He was one or the other, right? I think that's why a lot of people end up thinking Biodynamics is weird…because of that side of Steiner.

Personally, I think all of that stuff is pretty cool, but I'm probably a superficial Biodynamicist. And that's okay. I say superficial because we are not quite there yet. But we are creating a farm here [at Bien Nacido] in an effort to more closely follow a true Biodynamics model. We have goats. We have lemons and avocados. We do some of our own preps and we adhere to the Biodynamics calendar as it applies to those blocks.

RH: *I have to say that I have a somewhat limited understanding of Biodynamics. But, the wines that I've had that have been farmed that way—whether from Burgundy, Oregon, or from California—just seem to have a very specific brightness to them. I think I do notice a difference. But it could be all in my head.*

CH: And that's okay. If it's a mental sort of state of mind, that's okay too because…that's wine. James [Ontiveros, a Santa Maria farmer and owner of Native 9] got to taste in Burgundy with some real Biodynamics ballers. He's got a great palate and he said it's very clear to him. He can tell a difference in wine quality. That's what really got me started on Biodynamics. He came back from Burgundy pretty excited about all this so I started reading Steiner.

Honestly, I didn't really understand a lot of it but it was still somehow inspirational. It was just the coolest stuff. Maybe I like reading about this stuff because it's just so different. Maybe it's the spiritual side of it. Either way, I just think Biodynamics is great. Who knows, maybe some day Steiner will be exposed once and for all as some kind of fraud. Or maybe we'll discover he was just way ahead of his time. Maybe he really did see into other worlds and maybe some day that will be commonplace for all of us. Who knows?

RH: *I was reading an article in Decanter about an event that was going to take place. It was a lecture of some sort called "The Black Arts in Winemaking." It was going to involve Richard Smart and some Biodynamics guy I'd never heard of before. Anyway, there was this sense from how the event was being marketed, that it was about exposing Biodynamics as some kind of a joke.*

CH: That's the whole thing, you see. If you set up a talk about Biodynamics as if it's some kind of a contest to prove whether or not it's a crazy practice, well, even Steiner himself predicted that people would think it's crazy. But I think Steiner wasn't crazy at all. He was super straight-laced and very smart. He wrote a lot about culture, the humanities, world religions, Shakespeare, St. Paul, Buddha, The Bhagavad Gita. He knew something about everything. He gave lectures about honey bees and how he feared for their endangerment…even back then!

RH: *So, it sounds like you find his writings credible.*

CH: Look, I'm going to go on the record and say that I think this guy was legit—a genius beyond geniuses. That's my personal take. If he were around to debate people today or defend himself, you wonder who would be able to debate him these days. I mean, if he really was some kind of seer, how would we know how to talk to him? How would I know how to talk to him? I'm not a seer.

Maybe in this debate between Richard Smart and the Biodynamics guy, Richard Smart came out on top. Even if he made a really good argument against Biodynamics, it still wouldn't shake my faith in it. Smart's a super bright guy. But I've done my own reading on this and quite frankly, I think if one were to do a lot of the stuff that Steiner suggests, it would make one a better person.

He taught these spiritual lessons. They were highly moral. He talked about the knowledge of higher worlds and its attainment. As a reader, you can go through these very formal exercises. They're not incantations. They're not black magic or anything like that. They're almost like an etiquette course. *When someone's speaking to you, you ought to listen to them.* That kind of thing. Let's say I'm a right-wing radical and you're a left-wing extremist. Steiner would have told us that if I want to develop myself spiritually, then I should listen to you without passing judgment on your soul.

He says that even if you pass judgment with your mouth, you must not pass judgment with your heart. That's what counted for him. And he talked about building one's chakras. He believed you have this wheel inside you—a sixteen-petal lotus. You are born with eight petals and then you have to build the other eight. The first one you would build in this way, the second one you might build through controlling your speech and speaking thoughtfully. That's all the stuff that I don't do.

So when I started to read Steiner, I thought, "That'd be cool to know that." I'm not ready for a lot of those exercises—you almost have to be a saint and I'm not a saint—but it's all good character-building stuff. He said that when a farmer plants his seeds, he should be in a certain mind set. He should be thinking in a particularly thoughtful way. And who wouldn't want that to be true?

RH: *Can you tell when you taste a wine how it was farmed? Do you try and guess?*

CH: It's hard to tell by tasting a wine exactly how it was farmed. But the wines I think are good are rich without being overly heavy. They walk that fine line between balance and being super pleasurable. Everybody has his own palate. Some people want wines that are very light and elegant. I want that too, but I want it all if I can have it.

RH: *How else do you educate your palate?*

CH: I taste a lot of wines: Rhône wines, wines from Burgundy, from Napa, and from Sonoma. I try and learn from these wines and these places. I also read books and watch videos. I like the Sean Thackrey videos. He's a super legendary guy. I love watching those videos. They're just fascinatingly good.

That kind of stuff gives me inspiration. It makes me want to drink wine. It makes me want to be a better farmer. I like guys like Thackrey. They aren't perfect guys and their wines are not perfect. But bits and pieces of them are incredibly cool. They're taking risks. Some pay off and some don't. But they get points for effort…lots of effort.

RH: *Tell me about Santa Maria.*

CH: I love it. It's a great place but there's no question that it's still completely untapped. It simply hasn't been pushed like it should be pushed. There are pockets here and there that are farmed very well. We just need more people who really believe in it to come here. I like the attitude of some of the new up-and-comers that have arrived here. They're in Santa Maria because they want to be here above and beyond anywhere else. That kind of attitude is perfect. I think Tepusquet Canyon, for example, is completely untapped. I mean really, don't get me started…this place is so untapped!

What we need are a few more good restaurants and a few hotels. We're not a destination place like Los Olivos. But we have to do it while focusing on the wine side. I don't think we're ever going to be Napa or even Los Olivos. We have pockets in Santa Maria that are just beautiful. It's just going to take wine producers who believe in this area and push themselves to make exceptionally good wines.

We know from the producers that are already making great wines from this area that the land has what it takes. But people haven't pushed themselves hard enough yet. Collectively, we need to take ourselves even more seriously. We all need to realize what an incredible gift we've been given in Santa Maria. It's very diverse. Really, there ought to be at least five AVAs in Santa Maria.

And the other thing I love about Santa Maria is that it's cowboy country. It's about cowboy hospitality. It's about open doors and hearty meals. We're not braggers here in Santa Maria. We are good people…great people, even. This is our tradition here in Santa Maria: the fusion of cowboy culture and the rich Mexican culture. It's about land grant history, good Mexican food, families that go back nine generations raising beef cattle. That's what we're about and that has its own charms.

We can't offer a lot of things. We don't offer snobbism, for example. Or that sense that snobbery gives you. We're not a sophisticated city by any means. But we're honest, hard-working winemakers, field workers, and farmers trying to make great wines.

RH: *And do you see yourself staying in Santa Maria?*

CH: I hope it's my destiny to be here. It would be my preference, but you never know what happens in life. I like what Chapoutier said: "I'm not a wine chauvinist." He's this Hermitage guy who's gone to Portugal to dabble there and also Australia. So yes, I can see myself farming in other places but this is my epicenter. This is my foundation.

RH: *And what is the future of Santa Maria as an AVA in your mind?*

CH: It's incumbent upon all of us but especially my generation and the younger guys to carry things forward. I mean, you have guys like Jim Clendenen, Rick Longoria, the Foxen guys, Bob Lindquist, and Adam Tolmach that got us here. What are we going to do now? Am I just going to thank Jim Clendenen for travelling the world over to promote Santa Maria and just cruise on his hard work? If we do that, then shame on us. I don't want to sound cliché, but we have to build upon what's been given us by that generation. We don't want to consider the old days as the glory days. We want to keep this going.
We want to be players in The Game.

Notes

JOURNEY OF A BOTTLE

"IF A BOTTLE OF WINE COULD TALK!"

Kicking Ass

The first wine Clarissa Nagy made for someone other than an employer was a Viognier she vinted as a soon-to-be bride. It was intended as a wedding favor for her nuptials to Jonathan Nagy. That barrel of Viognier was so well-received that it led to what is now her C. Nagy Wines portfolio.

The same guileless spirit that informed that first barrel still informs Clarissa's wine company. She tends to make wines only from fruit she covets, for the sheer joy of sharing delicious wines with her expanding base of ardent fans.

I have mad respect for women who balance work and motherhood. In fact, the term "working mother" has always seemed redundant to me. Any mother is constantly working, whether she's at home with her children full-time or divides her time between the workplace and home. So when I rang up Clarissa and arranged for us to meet, it was to talk about that vital maternal role and how one can perform it while still being a top-notch winemaker.

Clarissa and Jonathan Nagy's little one is named Gabriella. She is three years old.

R.H. Drexel: *When you were carrying Gabriella, were you pregnant through harvest?*

Clarissa Nagy: Yes, I was on maternity leave in 2009 and she was born during harvest. It was the first vintage since '95 that I hadn't worked harvest. Typically, my whole life revolves around the harvest season: the planning, the prep, the aftermath. So it was hard at first, having to give up all of that involvement.

RH: *So how did you come out the other end of that harvest?*

CN: I incorporated motherhood into winemaking. I came back [to work] in November. All the fruit was in by then. I would actually bring Gabriella in with me just to get the lay of the land. It was so different. For the first time in years, I had no input as to which blocks came in when. There was no way to track how fruit came in so it was a challenge to figure out all of the different lots and what they were doing.

It took me a couple of weeks to kind of let go and accept the fact that this was just going to be a very interesting transition. And, in fact, after I let go, I was really able to enjoy the fall. It's actually one of my favorite seasons but I'm always working harvest.

RH: *So you really couldn't enjoy it in any leisurely sense because you were always working.*

CN: Right. But with Gabriella, I really learned to love it. She was born in August, so by the time I went back to work that November, she was already a few months old. I would go in for a couple of hours at a time, and then we'd watch the leaves turn colors and sit in front of the fireplace. It was fantastic.

RH: *What was it like having her with you in the cellar?*

CN: It was amazing. She had already been in the cellar with me *in utero*, but to have her there with me after she was born…

RH: *It must have heightened your awareness of what you do in the cellar, right? I mean, you're obviously more careful, more thoughtful, about moving around in a cellar when you've got a baby with you.*

CN: I had her either in a sling or a Bjørn so she was right there with me. And she was completely covered because it's so cold in the cellar. There was more of a separation between me and the barrel. You're just not as hands-on in the traditional sense when you have a baby with you. You try and lean over a barrel to check it, and there's this little baby there with you. I loved hearing her coo. It just made the whole process of winemaking a quieter one for me.

When she was few months older, I started to go into the cellar for longer periods of time. I was a mom during the day and would then go into the cellar in the evening, just to check on things. Jonathan would stay with her in the evenings while I was checking in on the wines. Winemaking became my "moonlighting" job when I first started to get back into the cellar after becoming a mom.

RH: *And now, how have you incorporated motherhood into winemaking and vice-versa?*

CN: She is very much a part of my career. She loves to check the vineyards with me, for example. She just really does. And when we're eating dinner, she'll say, "Mommy and Daddy drink wine and Ella drinks juice and water and milk."

She is very much a part of my work with C. Nagy Wines. She goes with me to the cellar often. That's the nice thing about having one's own brand. There's great flexibility there.

RH: *And do you have a sense motherhood has changed your philosophy of winemaking?*

CN: If anything, it's made me appreciate the differences in each wine more. I know that sounds really weird but it's made me really able to appreciate the subtle differences between vineyards and regions—the subtle differences that make each one unique. I'd say that's one thing that has changed for me.

RH: *Have your priorities shifted?*

CN: Yes. For me, it was healthy because before Gabriella I was consumed with work. So I would be at work all day and then come home and think about work all night. Sometimes I was consumed by work to my detriment.

I think it's very important to be a balanced person. And, it's important to be balanced if one wants to be a great winemaker. I really struggled with that in my career—being out of balance—because I became too focused in my work. And I think whenever I would get out of balance is when I would become more critical of my winemaking. So definitely, having my daughter brought me into balance. When I'm at work, I'm there 100 %. But when I leave, then I'm 100 % at home. Though my husband and I may still talk about wine at home, it's more about the enjoyment of it. We have balance now. Wine is still very much a part of my life, but I'm no longer consumed by it.

RH: *How do you see your husband differently now that he's a father?*

CN: I love the tenderness—the tenderness of his heart. He's just so compassionate. Watching him interact with Ella and just do the things she likes. She'll want to play princess and that whole thing. In her princess story, the princess marries her father. Jonathan plays the prince and I love how he interacts with her. Prior to her being born, he didn't play that way with our nieces and nephews. It's just that difference of, *she's my daughter.* And, I also love seeing his mannerisms turn up in her.

RH: *Do you feel like motherhood has changed your winemaking style?*

CN: Not really. I think my style and approach is really to take the essence of what I have in the vineyard and to try and capture those flavors in my final product. I've never been a pick-by-numbers-only winemaker…or a pick-by-flavors-only winemaker. I look at everything. I walk the vineyard and look at how the fruit looks. I taste it. I look at seed maturity. I look at how the canopy is doing. Every year is different so you have to look at every single aspect of the vineyard.

But I will say that she changed how I look at growing seasons in general. In 2009, growth seemed really slow in the vineyard. The vines weren't that tall. It was interesting. While Gabriella was still in the womb, I was focused on nurturing her and taking care of her. And, in 2009, the vines seems to not focus so much on outer-growth, but seemed instead somehow turned inward. Then, in 2011 there were so many more laterals. The shoots just kept growing. We had water following a drought. Everything was flourishing and here was my daughter also growing, climbing, running, flourishing. So I just have a new, deeper way of appreciating each growing season.

Jenne and Masseto, Sitting In A Tree...

Imagine if you could take your dog to work every day. It'd be kind of like having your therapist or life coach hanging out in the break room, ready to give you a boost whenever a co-worker got you down or your workload felt overwhelming. You'd walk in, get a bit of reassurance, and go back into the wilds of commerce feeling better about how things might turn out.

A steadfast dog can provide the same comfort. And let's admit it, they're far cheaper to maintain than a relationship with a pricey therapist. A dog is present when you're at your worst and your best...and they love you just the same. They see you in the morning, bleary eyed and half-asleep, trying to piece together the coming day, and greet you in the evening with such exuberance that you can't help but feel encouraged.

I have yet to meet a dog who is impressed with someone because they've appeared on the cover of the Wine Spectator or because they hang out with celebrities. My theory is that dogs don't detect age, race, wealth, or gender in humans. To them, we're all just people walking around: some of us are little and like to play all day long and some of us are taller and tire out more easily. Perhaps what they see in us is precisely what we hope everyone sees in us: someone worthy of love and some measure of tenderness.

There are those of us who wish we could be young and healthy forever. Wouldn't it be something if that's how our dogs perceived us? Others of us wish we could be wiser and more mature. Perhaps our dogs sense our aspirations and by virtue of that fact, make us feel like we're already half way there, encouraging us to keep on keeping on towards the image of ourselves that we hope to someday obtain.

I was delighted, then, when I ran into Jenne Bonaccorsi and she told me she'd gotten herself a dog. Not that she needs much encouragement to keep on keeping on. She has a successful wine brand and a bright-eyed Yellow Lab named Masseto.

I've long appreciated Jenne's wines. I'm a foodie and I love wines that go well with a meal. While I wouldn't necessarily describe Jenne's wines as restrained or low-alcohol, two characteristics that people typically associate with food-friendly wines, they possess balance, gorgeous fruit, and a lively strand of acidity that keeps the palate fresh and ready to receive yet another bite of food...and another sip of wine.

She founded Bonaccorsi Wine Company in 1999 with her husband Michael Bonaccorsi, the widely loved Spago sommelier whose untimely death in 2004 shook the wine world. It took Jenne a number of years to pick up the pieces, but she's built her brand into something beyond what Michael perhaps could have ever imagined. A darling of consumers and critics, of sommeliers, retailers and distributors, Bonaccorsi Wine Company is one of the industry's most consistently successful boutique brands.

Naturally, discovering that she added a dog to her life made me feel like she'd somehow found a way back to love again.

R.H. Drexel: *So Jenne, tell me about Masseto. I know she's the first dog you've ever had. How's it different loving a person versus loving a dog?*

Jenne Bonaccorsi: It's very different. In a way, you almost feel more beholden to them than to another adult. I know that sounds terrible to say, but I think that's because it's paternal. It must be like having a child. I don't know…I've never had a child, but I know they are 100% dependent on you and dogs are the same. They're not wild animals. They're domesticated so they depend on you for their survival—for food, water, and shelter. They rely on you to protect them.

RH: *Yes, it's a different level of tenderness.*

JB: Yes, very much so. As human beings, when we love each other, we take everything so personally. It's different because I think with humans there are other elements that go into loving someone. Relationships can fall apart so easily with a friend, a family member, or a lover. But with a dog…well, I know the word gets thrown around a lot, but that kind of love really is unconditional.

Even if you didn't feed them for a day or if you gave them a swat on the butt, they just keep wanting your love so much. And they're so sensitive to one's love. I don't think that people who don't have dogs realize the human characteristics that animals have. Once you have a dog or any intelligent animal, you realize how smart they are and how sensitive they are to your feelings and everything else.

RH: *I find it a very interesting dynamic that they're nonverbal because I feel my dogs know me so well. You almost wonder what would happen if they really could speak. How well would we communicate then?*

JB: That's interesting that you say it's nonverbal

because it's nonverbal from them to us but not from us to them. We use verbal instructions that they follow all the time.

RH: *I actually have full-on conversations with mine! [laughs].*

JB: I do too!

RH: *Sometimes it's a disciplinary kind of a talk. But other times, I'm just filling them in on my day. "Now I'm going to make pasta. Then I'm going to pour myself a glass of wine…"*

JB: It's funny because one of my friends will be hanging out in the kitchen and they'll hear me say, "I'm reacting like this because I don't think you should do that!" They'll rush in, thinking I'm talking to them, and I'll say, "No, I'm just talking to the dog!"

RH: *Do you entertain the idea of having more dogs?*

JB: Absolutely. I think two is probably the max. If I had my choice, I would probably be one of those animal hoarders. I'm going to wait about a year, and then maybe get a Black Lab. I love German Shepherds though. That's the breed that I wanted as a child. When I was six years old I went to the library and took out a German Shepherd book. But in recent years I've fallen in love with Labs so I think the next one will be a Black Lab.

I think Masseto would love a puppy running around the house. She's so smart. For example, she's not allowed on my bed. So, of course, every time the phone rings or something and I leave my room, she'll immediately run in and lay down on the bed. Then, when I walk back in, she'll jump off of the bed because she knows it's wrong. People don't give them enough credit for their intelligence. They're very sly.

As we talk, Masseto circles the Christmas tree in Jenne's living room. She's been told many times not to play with the ornaments. But since Jenne's distracted by my visit, Masseto's sizing up her prey. Soon she's running around the house with a fragile ornament in her slobbery mouth. Indeed, she's the paradigm of a young Yellow Lab. Her tail wags feverishly, she's adorable and she seems to find nearly everything fascinating.

JB: She has A LOT of energy [She laughs].

RH: *How is she when you take her to work?*

JB : Well, she goes everywhere with me. During harvest it can be a problem because I make wine in a co-op situation. There are forklifts, people, and chaos. It's a hectic time of year. That was a challenge for her and the people around because her first instinct is to run up to everyone and say hi. That was her first harvest. She's only about a year old. She'll get better about that.

RH: *And in the vineyards...*

JB: In the vineyards she's fantastic. When I go to check the vineyards, she knows we're having a vineyard day. She's off leash in the vineyards so she just runs and runs. There are rabbits to chase. She goes crazy when she sees a rabbit.

So if we're in the car and she sees vines, she just knows. She goes crazy with anticipation just like she does when we get close to the dog park.

RH: *Do you worry about her getting hurt out there?*

JB: During harvest, she was bitten by a yellow jacket and her face blew up like a cantaloupe. I had to take her to the emergency room and everything but she was fine. Twenty-four hours later she was just fine.

RH: *Is she cuddly at all?*

JB: As friendly as she is with people, she doesn't like to be held too long. If we're sitting on the couch watching TV, she'll determine when she's ready to come up. She'll come up and want to touch me with a paw or her back. But if I try too hard to hold her, she'll run away. She's so sweet but it's not until the end of the day when she's very tired that she feels affectionate.

You know, animals are funny. I think it's part of their personality. I've seen Labs that always want to be hugged and touched. If you're sitting there they'll come to you and keep putting their head underneath your hand. But she's not like that. I think I also tend to overdo the affection, especially when I haven't seen her for a while. So I think she gets tired of it. She's like a teenage kid.

RH: *How has she changed you?*

JB: I think I have a tendency to be selfish. You know, when you don't have children and you have a lot of freedom in your life, you tend to become a little bit more selfish. I've never seen myself having children. It's just never been a goal. It's just so much work. Obviously, children are a lot more work than dogs. But I think that having a dog is a great responsibility… and it makes you less selfish.

She's also given my life a bit more structure. You have to think about how long you will be gone from home. The longest that I ever leave her is maybe 3 or 4 hours. If I'm out of the house, out to dinner, she's always in the back of my mind. I worry about her safety.

RH: *Don't you wonder what you did before Masseto came along? They add so much to one's life that sometimes it's hard to imagine how we ever got on without them.*

JB: There are so many excuses in life. For me, my excuses for a lot of things used to be, "I'm too busy," or "I travel too much," or "I'm too selfish." But as human beings, we're really adaptable. No matter what it is that happens to you, I think that you shape your life accordingly.

This is a small thing, but before I had her, I'd imagine being in my office—I really like being in my office—and I'd imagine this dog sitting at my feet. And she does that. I didn't force her to do that. She just always wants to be by my side and to sleep at my feet. Sure, there are issues. I can't just work eight hours straight and expect that she'll sit there. After a while she'll get bored and start pawing at me because she'll want to play. But those are things that I'm completely willing to take on. They're not sacrifices at all in my mind.

Before her, I never considered myself a soft person in that maternal way—maybe because I was never planning to have kids. My interactions were mostly with adults and I never felt that level of playfulness in my life. I'd never talked in baby voices—that kind of thing. She's introduced me to my goofy side. I can talk to her like a baby, go and scratch her butt. That kind of stuff was never a part of my personality before. I find myself being playful. I'll initiate a chase with her and run around the house like a kid.

I also think she's softened me because she pretty much rules me [laughs]. She owns me! So I'll go to a pet store and I'll end up buying these toys and treats for her. I just want her to have a very happy, stress-free life.

By the time Jenne and I conclude our talk, Masseto is tuckered out but she rallies as Jenne walks me to the front door. And when I drive away, I can't help but think, "There's a lot of love in that house."

Things We Love About Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara County
Wine Country

The first time I visited Santa Barbara, I was in my 20's and all I saw were the beaches, State Street at dusk, and Stearn's Wharf. I was a dreamer then and had my head in the clouds. As someone who grew up on a farm, all I wanted to do was feel those Pacific breezes on my face. I wanted to tie one on. I wanted to listen to live music. I wanted to get some. When I revisited Santa Barbara many years later, I came for the wine.

There's no place like Santa Barbara County for wine. Literally. For about a 50-mile stretch between Point Conception and Rincon Beach, the coastal mountain ranges run due east-west. It's the longest east-west shoreline transverse from Alaska to the southern end of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago—from Alaska to Cape Horn.

This distinctive topographical feature makes all the difference to the wines of Santa Barbara County. The east-west transverse funnels cool Pacific breezes and fog into wine country, providing the vines with a particularly long growing season, during which they can take their time to mature. Combine this feature with all kinds of soil types, micro-, and macro-climates, the wildlife, the people, the pace of life—and you've got a wine country like no other.

The area's wines, when made well, demonstrate great natural acidity, vibrancy, and typicity. Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Syrah seem particularly fond of Santa Barbara, though other varietals like Grenache (cool climate) and Cabernet Sauvignon (warmer climate, i.e. Happy Canyon) seem to be making some headway.

There are several appellations within Santa Barbara County. **Santa Maria Valley,** the **Santa Maria Bench, Sta. Rita Hills, Happy Canyon,** and the **Santa Ynez Valley** are all AVAs (American Viticultural Areas). **The Los Alamos Valley** is not yet an official AVA but also merits attention and exploration.

Santa Barbara County:

Santa Barbara, the town proper, lies on the coast. It is a 45-minute drive from wine country (via San Marcos Pass or Highway 101) and the two are quite different in both looks and affect. The town of Santa Barbara is a jovial place: fun, lively, and casual. It also has its own **Urban Wine Trail** which should not be ignored. A handful of wineries have landed in the industrial zone off of lower State Street.

THE URBAN WINE TRAIL is a great place to start your visit to wine country if you're traveling in from the Southland. Allow yourself a day or so to enjoy the small tasting rooms and wineries there before heading up north to Santa Barbara's official wine country.

Santa Barbara County's wine country is quite diverse. Agricultural row crops often flank vineyards the Santa Maria Valley and certain areas of the Sta. Rita Hills. It's not unusual to come upon an active cattle ranch when you're trying to find one tasting room or another. Note that there are fewer good restaurants and hotels to choose from here than in the town proper, but, the ones that do exist do a fine job and add quite a bit of local flavor and personality to the mix.

If you're coming in from Northern California, Santa Maria is the first recommended stop.

Santa Maria Valley:

For the most part, winegrowers from the Santa Maria Valley refer to themselves as farmers. The uniform of the day for the men is a pair of 501's, ropers, a well-pressed short-sleeved shirt, a well-shorn head of hair (a smidgen of VO5 doesn't hurt), and a baseball cap. It's a working class agricultural community that generally speaking, values loyalty, family, and hospitality above all else.

Their wine trail is somewhat decentralized but merits time and discovery. Both the Santa Maria Valley and the Santa Maria Bench can produce stellar, jaw-droppingly great wines. We are only just now seeing the potential of this great winegrowing region. Varietals to watch: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah, and Grenache. And, make no mistake, while the

people of Santa Maria are exceedingly polite, they are also equally obsessed with making profoundly good wines that can compete on the global landscape. In other words: don't let the ropers fool you. These cats are here to play and play big.

Los Alamos Valley:

This growing region has the township of Los Alamos and more specifically Bell Street at its core. This little street makes a detour off of the 101 well worth the effort. It's a quirky version of Maintown, U.S.A. You almost expect to see tumbleweeds roll across Bell Street as you drive into town. Bell Street is charmingly comprised of a few antiques stores, dive bars, galleries, a hotel, a few tasting rooms, and Full of Life Flatbread, one of the best eateries in the County and a popular hangout for winemakers and farmers.

The esteemed White Hawk Vineyard, which is particularly well-known for its Syrah, can be found in Los Alamos, while other larger vineyards are farmed mostly by larger corporate wineries. Still, it's a wonderful little town and if you want to immerse yourself in the Central Coast when you visit Santa Barbara County, Los Alamos offers all of the flavor.

Sta. Rita Hills:

I enjoy reaching the Sta. Rita Hills via Drum Canyon Road, which you can meet up with near Los Alamos. It's certainly the back way into this storied appellation, and it takes a bit longer than more conventional routes (the 101 South to the

Hwy. 246 / Lompoc exit), but it's worth it for the sheer untamed beauty of the place.

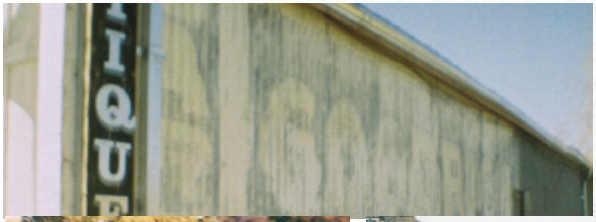
The Sta. Rita Hills appellation burst onto the scene in earnest some 15 or 20 years ago, though it was established back in the 1970's. Within the past decade it has reached new heights of critical acclaim. There are two main arteries through this appellation. Santa Rosa Road is less traveled but home to some great tastings rooms, a lavender farm, amazing vineyards, and stunning vistas. The other artery, Route 246, provides the visitor with a greater selection of tasting rooms to choose from. Both roads are close to one another and both have ample virtues. So check both out when you travel through the Sta. Rita Hills.

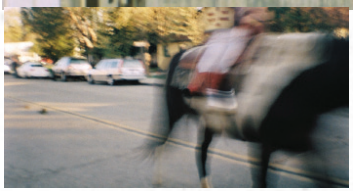
The folks making and growing wine in the Sta. Rita Hills are a focused, obsessive sort. There are a few vineyards in this appellation that are being farmed supremely well, and the resultant, beautiful wines are proof of that. It's yet another appellation in this County with wild, mad potential. The level of seriousness at which growers and winemakers are working in the Sta. Rita Hills is a sight to behold. Like the Santa Maria Valley, this is an appellation to watch.

Pinot Noir and Chardonnay seem to do exceptionally well here, though I've had some cool climate Syrahs and Grenaches from this area that knocked my socks off.

The township most associated with this growing region is Lompoc. There really isn't much to see in Lompoc except for the Lompoc Wine Ghetto, which is one of the best places in the entire County to spend a day wine tasting.

The Lompoc Wine Ghetto is an industrial outcropping of metal warehouse buildings that have become a community of working wineries, most of them with tasting rooms open to the public. It's a real joy to visit the Lompoc Wine Ghetto. You can conceivably spend most of your day there going from one winery to another, oftentimes meeting with the winery owners themselves, or their ardent, engaged employees. There isn't much in the way of food service in the Ghetto, but the kind folks who work there will gladly point you to a local restaurant.





Santa Ynez Valley:

This centralized appellation includes many of Santa Barbara County's best-known wineries and spills into the Sta. Rita Hills a bit. Some of the highlights of the Santa Ynez Valley appellation are its three most popular towns: Los Olivos, Solvang, and Santa Ynez.

Los Olivos:

Los Olivos is a vibrant, small, old-fashioned town that includes many tasting rooms, a great little coffee shop, the Wilding Museum, a few jewelry stores, a great luxurious country inn, and some terrific restaurants. This is the place to stay when you're visiting Santa Barbara's wine country. The few town blocks have a lot to offer.

Locals sometimes complain that there are too many tasting rooms in the town of Los Olivos and not much else to do. But if you're a visitor with good wines on the mind, you'll love Los Olivos…and probably won't want to leave.

Alamo Pintado Road, which is between Solvang and Los Olivos, features a whole host of winery tasting rooms, apple farms, strawberry stands, and even a miniature horse farm. One of the prettiest garden stores in all of Southern California is J. Woeste.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that Los Olivos, though seemingly plucked from an Americana postcard, is a functioning bedroom community of Santa Barbara County. It's full of kids playing in the streets and locals going about their daily business. So please drive slowly and safely through this little destination town.

Solvang:

Solvang is a strange yet endearing little town. It attracts tourists from all over the world that come to enjoy its Danish aesthetic. This little storybook town has a number of restaurants, hotels, gift shops, and tasting rooms. It's not for everyone though. The cute Scandinavian buildings (some in the shape of windmills) can start to numb the mind of the more sophisticated traveler. But others, like my folks who are older and retired, love

visiting Solvang and find that it's an easy and centralized town to navigate. Of the three main towns in the Santa Ynez Valley, Solvang has the greatest number of accommodations to choose from.

The historic Santa Ynez Mission is, for me, the highlight of visiting Solvang. The grounds are beautiful and rugged and the old Mission church is one of the prettiest in all of the Southland.

It should also be said that the locals are friendly and welcoming. The town is clean, it's safe to walk in the evenings, and there's pretty much something to do in Solvang for visitors of every age.

Happy Canyon:

Happy Canyon is the most recent winegrowing region to receive its AVA status. It is a gorgeous, slightly untamed place. For every manicured Arabian horse ranch, there is a corresponding view of the Los Padres National Forest and of raptors flying over head. You might even see wild boars, deer, or bears off in the distance.

There are no hotels or restaurants in Happy Canyon. Nor are there any tasting rooms as of yet. Instead, Happy Canyon offers something else to the visiting wine lover. It offers up some of the most unfettered, startlingly beautiful views of vineyards and wild countryside of almost any appellation in the Golden State. There's nothing formulaic or corporate about this stretch of wine country.

I recommended that you drive through Happy Canyon with the top down—or at least the windows rolled down—so that you can inhale the smell of chaparral, sagebrush, horses, and warm loam. This appellation is best enjoyed behind the wheel with good music on the stereo (see winemaker Rick Longoria's playlist for Happy Canyon on page 60 of this issue) and plenty of time to spend on a relaxing drive.

Foxen Canyon Road:

Foxen Canyon Road lies within both the Santa Ynez Valley appellation and the Santa Maria Valley appellation. In fact, it is a back road that connects both regions. And it's lined with wonderfully hospitable wineries.

It's well worth it to seek out Foxen Canyon Road, but watch for cyclists. This is a popular road for them. So please don't speed.

A visit to Foxen Canyon Road isn't complete without a stop at the old Foxen Winery tasting room. Check out the "Foxen Shack," as locals like to call it. This tasting room is utterly charming and extremely well-staffed. Also, the altar in the corner (featuring a number of blasphemous items) is a must-see.

Ballard Canyon:

Like Foxen Canyon Road, Ballard Canyon Road is also widely loved by cyclists. It's such a stunning country road, that even though there are only one or two tasting rooms to recommend, it's well worth the detour.

Ballard Canyon does not have its own website, but a great resource to use for all of Santa Barbara wine country and its sub-regions is the Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association site:
www.sbcountywines.com

For the Urban Wine Trail, check out:
www.urbanwinetrailsb.com

For Santa Maria Valley, check out:
www.santamariavalleywinecountry.com; www.santamaria.com

For Los Alamos, check out:
www.losalamosvalley.org

For Los Olivos, check out:
www.losolivosca.com

For Solvang, check out:
www.solvangusa.com

Rick's Mixed Tapes



The Richest Man
"Sometimes I come home at night, put on some jazz, and just sit in the backyard and smoke a cigar. Diana'll be inside the house. She's good about letting me put on something I want to listen to. And you know, at times like those, I feel like the richest man in the world."

—Rick Longoria

In modern parlance, Rick Longoria is undoubtedly, "The Shit."

For thirty years, he's been making exceedingly consistent, lovely wines of typicity from Santa Barbara County under his Longoria label, all while raising a couple of great kids with his wife Diana, and assuming the role of grandfather with tenderness and enthusiasm.

Because he's more comfortable out of the spotlight, Rick is not the most famous winemaker from California. However, he's among the most respected by colleagues and the wine trade alike.

But what I really dig about Rick is his mad, mad obsession with music...any kind of music. If his family and wines are his foremost passions, music cannot be far behind, for it informs everything he does. He's constantly listening to music whether he's in the cellar, relaxing at home after a long day, or tooling around in his car checking out vineyards.

So, I rang up Rick to ask him if he'd set aside some time to create for you, dear reader, a collection of playlists to reference during your next trip to Santa Barbara County.

Essentially, I asked Rick to create a playlist for each growing region with songs inspired by the vineyards he visits, the wine routes and country roads he travels daily, and the memories he has collected while making wine in a place for which he has such an easy, familiar love.

Here, in his own words, are Rick's playlists and some of the experiences that inspired them:

SMV Playlist:

Goblin' Girl - Frank Zappa
Sittin' on a Fence - Rolling Stones
Tumblin' Tumbleweeds - Sons of the Pioneers
Prenda del Alma - Los Lobos
Big Balls in Cow Town - Asleep at the Wheel
The Weight - The Band
Spring Wind - Greg Brown
I fall to Pieces - Patsy Cline
Star Witness - Neko Case
The Warmth of the Sun - Beach Boys

The first song I chose for the Santa Maria playlist is by Frank Zappa, which of course, you just have to have. You have to have a Frank Zappa song somewhere along the way. But it's tricky because Frank is so challenging. So I picked a song that actually reminded me of Halloween. In the early days in the industry [in Santa Barbara] we used to have Halloween parties. It rotated from house to house, or winery to winery, because these parties were small. You could invite just about everyone in the industry and have about 60 to 100 people show up in costume! There'd be live music, lots of wine, just a really good time. One of the last years I recall it happening it was out at the ABC / Qupe barn in Santa Maria. It was a very exciting time and "Goblin Girl" is kind of a racy song. Being in a costume as an adult…it gives you permission to be wild.

And I wanted to include a Rolling Stones song. "Sitting on a Fence" is kind of acoustic. It's a mellow song by Stones' standards. I picked that one because Jim Clendenen [owner/winemaker at Au Bon Climat] and I used to be in a band. It was a real casual band. Jim Fiolek [now executive director of the Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association] was on guitar. Chris Whitcraft [owner/winemaker at Whitcraft Cellars] was also on guitar. Partick Will [now President of Ex Cellars] played piano. One of Clendenen's neighbors played drums. Frank Crandall [owner of Renegade Wines] played bass. And I was on rhythm guitar. Of course, Clendenen was on vocals. We used to play the Stones, so this song is actually a tribute…a dedication…to those guys.

With "*Tumblin' Tumbleweeds*," I just hear it in my head every time I round that corner out by the little Sisquoc Chapel.

With "*Prenda Del Alma*" by Los Lobos, it just makes me think of all those *vaqueros*, you know. I imagine that's the kind of music they would have enjoyed. I think of families like the Ontiveros family that have been out in Santa Maria for nine generations.

With Neko Case and Patsy Cline, I just wanted to have music that I've heard on jukebox-

es…music that sounds great on a jukebox in Santa Maria. And Neko is just so beautiful and so emotional

Well, the Beach Boys is really a dedication to Bob Lindquist [of Qupe]. He's just as into music as I am, so back in the day we used to trade mix tapes…you know, of the Beach Boys and stuff like that. We'd name them "*Killer Elevator Music*" [He laughs]. I still have them. One says, "*Killer Elevator Music from Rick to Bob*."

SYV PLAYLIST

Hounds of Love - Kate Bush
La Llorona - Lila Downs
Sail Away - Randy Newman
Double Trouble - Otis Rush
Spoonful - Howlin' Wolf
Jumpin' at Shadows - Peter Green
Central Park West - John Coltrane
My Funny Valentine - Bill Evans
Blue and Sentimental - Ike Quebec
Weekend - Molly Wagger

Santa Ynez Valley:

The Santa Ynez Valley songs remind me of when I was first establishing roots in this area. I had a cottage out by Mattei's Tavern. Solvang is in the valley and that's where I live now, so I feel a very special connection to the Santa Ynez Valley.

This process was tough because part of me wanted to choose contemporary songs so, you know, people might say, "Wow, Rick's really up to date! He's into new music." And I do like new music. But that's not really who I am. I'm not trying to make a statement about how relevant my tastes are. It's not fair to older music—some of which is great, great music.

Well, Kate Bush is just killer. Lila Downs is Mexican-American. She incorporates traditional Mexican music with a contemporary sound. She's saying, "Don't dismiss this music. There's a history and culture behind it." She's making it relevant. She's saying, "Respect this."

I chose Randy Newman because that particular album came out when I was just graduating from Berkeley. It came out in '72 or '73. And you know, around that era I started thinking about being an adult. You're no longer a student, so by default you're all of a sudden an adult. This album made me feel like an adult. Its themes were deeper than I was used to. It was sophisticated music with strings and arrangements. This album marks the point where I felt like I really started to grow up. Then, years later I met Randy Newman while he was performing at Gainey Vineyards in Santa Ynez. I got a photo with him backstage. What a nice guy. So this song comes full circle for me.

SRH PLAYLIST
Wooden Ships - Crosby, Stills & Nash
Sweet Thing - Van Morrison
The Gladdest Thing - Deb Talan
Whiter Shade of Pale - Procol Harum
Ready, Able - Grizzly Bear
Dreamin' - Feldberg
I Talk to the Wind - King Crimson
One Chance - Modest Mouse
Say You'll Go - Janelle Monae
Only You - Miriam Stockley
(Peter Lorimer Remix)

Sta Rita Hills:

I've known Richard Sanford since 1976 when I first came here. At the time I had a wooden boat, a sloop that I kept stored at the Ventura Harbor Marina. When I first got it, I asked Richard to come sailing with me. He knows something about sailing, so I wanted him to make sure the boat was in good shape. So he and Thekla [Richard's wife and business partner] came out and we all went sailing. Thekla still remembers that. I ran into her the other day and she said, "You remember that day we went sailing in your new wooden boat?" And, I go, "Yeah! That was great!"

So "*Wooden Ships*" is kind of dedicated to them. And, of course, David Crosby is a local and has a boat out at Santa Barbara Harbor.

"*The Gladdest Thing*" is based upon a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay. It's just about taking the world in: you look at a flower and you smell it, but you don't touch it. It's about being gentle on the Earth and just enjoying nothing more than watching the clouds go by.

The Lompoc Ghetto, just outside of Sta. Rita Hills, is where I make my wine. There's just a great vibe there. That's where Grizzly Bear and Modest Mouse come in. It's just that cool, alternative vibe. And King Crimson...that song is probably 40 years old or more! They're still so relevant so that also reminds me of the Ghetto.

HC PLAYLIST

Partita in E Major, Prelude - Julian Bream
Manha de Carnaval - Baden Powell
Little Glass of Wine - Jesse Winchester
Sky Blue Sky - Wilco
Feels Like Rain - John Hiatt
Meadowlarks - Fleet Foxes
Once Upon a Time - Ennio Morricone
All the King's Men - Wild Beasts
Lilac Wine - Jeff Buckley
Marcory Gazoil - Soukous Stars

Happy Canyon:

First of all, Happy Canyon is relatively new as a growing region, so it's the one I know the least about. I get some nice Cabernet Sauvignon fruit out there from Grassini.

Looking at this playlist, it's probably the quietest one. And I think that's because it's also one of the quietest growing regions. There are no wineries out there that are open to the public, so there isn't a lot of traffic and certainly no buses of tourists.

Out there it's just expansive and the ranches are bigger. You can really see off into the distance and feel very quiet inside. So that's why I started off with a classical guitar piece by Julian Bream. It's a Bach tune that he does that's just beautiful and sets the tone for enjoying a beautiful bit of countryside.

When I was thinking about Happy Canyon, I thought, "I just have to add African music." I love African music, especially the Soukous Stars. It's so lively! I love everything about them. Once, when Diana and I were in Portland, we happened upon a concert in an amphitheater near the Portland Zoo. We decided to sit on the lawn there and just listen because it was such a beautiful day. The music was very happy and very infectious. We both felt so glad to be alive. And you get that same sense when you're out in Happy Canyon. There's just this amazing natural beauty out there to take in. To observe it makes you happy to be in Santa Barbara County.

Little Red Chill Pill

I was in my early twenties when I began to study Zen Buddhism. I was particularly fascinated, and remain so, by the practice of *zazen* or, "seated meditation."

Zen Buddhists subscribe to the notion that it is in this practice of sitting that we truly understand ourselves. In the present moment the ego dissolves. And *zazen* teaches us that to study the self, is to forget the self. The practice of Zen Buddhism and this sense of being called into the present can translate into many activities. It ultimately teaches us that we can let the ego fall away when we walk, when we eat, when we drive; and that we can transform these seemingly mundane daily occurrences into opportunities for meditative breathing and for simply *being*.

That is something that has always intrigued me. I think you'll agree dear reader, that modern life is hectic. If you get too caught up in the rat race, you run the risk of losing touch with the life that is unfolding around you. If you concern yourself with the same old things: money, self-image, competition, sex, judgment, or status, it's easy to forget that each day is different—in and of itself a gift—and that cool things are happening all around us.

Those of us who want something more meaningful find our own little ways to bring about moments of sheer, unfettered awareness. My mother loves to be in her garden. It's there that she lets go of the aspects of her life that weigh her down: my father's sometimes challenging health issues, her aging brother's Alzheimer's, her three children which she naturally always worries about. But give her a pair of garden gloves and a cheap hand shovel from Walmart, and she's good to go for the next couple of hours. It is in her little garden that she finds herself again.

So I was very intrigued when winemaker Chad Melville first told me about his candy apple red 1972 Volkswagen Transporter or *straight bus.* "It's in control of you, rather than you being in control of it," he said. And I could hear from his voice that he'd found his own *zazen* in driving Little Red around.

Chad Melville's wine brand is called Samsara. And if his last name seems familiar to you Pinot lovers, it could be because he and his family also own Melville Winery, a popular producer from the Sta. Rita Hills appellation. Chad divides his time between both entities and still finds time to be a father of two small children, a husband to wife Mary, and a constant friend to many winemakers and growers in Santa Barbara County and beyond.

"It took me five years to find it," Chad says of the van. "I didn't necessarily want to fix up a Transporter. I pictured a red bus, restored and refurbished. That's what I was looking for."

And he discovered that in a barn in rural Santa Cruz. For 17 years Little Red had sat there—half of its lifetime—before Chad bought it from Little Red's fiercly Christian owner.

"There was a crucifix bumper sticker on my bus when I bought it," Chad recalls. "The guy was pretty intense."

Driving it back home from Santa Cruz proved to be almost monastically severe.

"I woke up early because I had to get back home to Santa Barbara. It was late October or early November and I had to rush back for harvest. There's no heater and no air conditioner. Little Red doesn't offer any of the luxuries we're accustomed to these days. I drove with one hand on the steering wheel and sat on the other hand...and then just rotated them back and forth.

"It was so fucking cold! That's all I could do to keep warm. I was huddled over, bent down, driving. I was praying for the sun to hurry up and rise. I didn't pass a single car… because I couldn't. I still can't. It's interesting to be in that role. You're freezing your ass off, folks are passing you up, and there's nothing you can do about it. It really brings you back down to reality."

I ask Chad, who also owns a luxury BMW SUV, how it felt to be in the slow lane all the way back to Santa Barbara.

"You can mentally fight it. You can whine about going too slow and about being freezing cold or you can embrace it and live in that realism. You can say, 'This is life. This is cool.' It becomes a choice. You're not protected by all of the filters that society provides—especially American society. The bus has that grounding quality about it. When guys pass me when I'm driving the bus, especially young guys, they look at me like I'm a fucking loser—some

hippy they can't be bothered with. But when I'm in my BMW, they look at me like I'm a baller. To witness that was interesting to me. You really can't take yourself too seriously when how people look at you hinges on what kind of car you drive."

Of course, driving the bus home was only the first challenge. Convincing his wife Mary, to let his two small children tool around with him in it proved to be yet another hurdle.

"You know Mary," he says. "She's very caring and very cautious. She has concerns about how safe it is. But she's gotten better about all that. She knows that I'm very aware when I'm inside Little Red. When I get into a driver's seat, I change as a person. I drive very defensively. I have to anticipate everything. I don't have the luxury of antilock brakes or an airbag or the ability to turn on a dime. When it's windy you feel like the wind might blow you over. Little Red is not at all aerodynamic. So with the children, I basically just tool around town. I take slow, little drives here and there with them. They love it. They love the 360 degree views. And they totally dig being up high."

Naturally, I ask Chad which of his cars his children prefer: the Beamer with all the bells and whistles or Little Red.

"When we're in the bus on a nice day, they're all about the bus. Saturdays especially are about going to the park or the grocery store in the bus. And their friends love it too. But when it becomes inconvenient for them—when it's cold in the winter—they get bummed. That's to be expected because they're uncomfortable. I've learned to avoid those scenarios. Look, I'm 41 years old. I've traveled. I spent a year in a third world country. That really helps ground you. I was lucky to have that opportunity when I was about 18 years old. I can't expect my children to have that yet. They're still too young. But I'd like them to have that realization some day—that not everyone experiences the level of luxury that many of us have living in America."

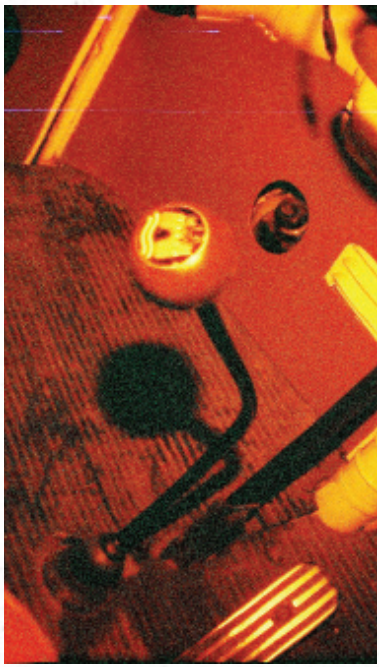
I ask Chad to tell me what the best thing is about having Little Red in his life.

"Well, the greatest thing about Little Red is that I've had to accept that I can't rely on it… for anything. I can't even rely on it to start! I'd never have it as my commuter car because I wouldn't have a guarantee that I'd get to work every day. It's *that* unpredictable. For me, that lack of reliance is like a really cool, healthy mental cleanse. Little Red totally messes with my take on expectations. Since I can't really expect it to react how I want it to, I'm at

its mercy and that frees me up inside. I've learned to just go with it. That's a great lesson."

I've known Chad for some time so I tell him that he's never struck me as a very controlling person. And he responds with the reflective words of someone who has given these life lessons some thought.

"Little Red's been a great reminder about keeping my priorities in order. I remember when I was in high school. My friends and I were surfing in Carmel. I was getting out of the water and this pretty legit surfer was getting out of the water at the same time. I mean, this guy was the real deal. For surfers, things can get territorial but this guy was very relaxed and friendly with us. So here's this really seasoned surfer with mad seniority and he's totally showing me and my friends respect. We're these young kids and he takes time to stop and talk to us. We pegged him as this totally legit hippy at that moment—and I say hippy in the fondest way.



"So we walk with him all the way to the parking lot and then he throws his board on top of this totally sweet ride—a totally tricked out, fat daddy BMW—and drives away. My friends and I just looked at each other like, 'That guy is fucking legit!' He had his priorities straight. He makes time for the stuff that matters. Even though he's got a nice ride, he still surfs, you know? So I guess the greatest lesson that Little Red taught me is to just let go of the things you can't control. And to slow down and pay attention to the things that really matter."

I stopped by Chad's place a few weeks ago to snap some photos of him and Little Red. He was in a relaxed mood so we hung out for a while. I got to sit inside the bus and take in the smell of that warm, old-car interior. I discovered a tangle of exposed wires under the dashboard. There was a tear in the ceiling that someone had stitched back together some time ago. I found us both coasting that afternoon, chilling out with Little Red from one meditative moment to the next.

Inspiration

Wonderful People Whose Work Inspired the First Issue of Loam Baby:

My parents and siblings, for their constant love, support and unflagging humor.

My dear friends, for the sunshine, especially, LJR & RAW, L, M&S, L&J and Master D, S&T. Chez T&T in NYC. Thanks always for the warm glow.

And to J, for the love and encouragement.

Don Lemon, CNN Anchor: for coming out so eloquently and courageously in his memoir, Transparent.

Ruth Gruber, Photojournalist: for being fearless and selfless during such a fevered and dangerous time in history.

Agnes B.: for all she knows about the world, she remains hopeful and keeps her aesthetic joyous. If rose-colored glasses came back into fashion, I'd want mine designed by Agnes B.

- Bill Cunningham at the New York Times: "If you look for beauty, you will find it."
- Tim Gunn: for making decorum and tenderness fashionable again.
- Julia Child: for dignifying the American audience by believing that it could understand gourmet food, and for doing so with moxie and kindness.
- Elaine and Manfred Krankl at SQN: for doing it up right every time.
- Alexander McQueen: for his Savage Beauty.

The City of New Orleans: for saving my life on more than one occasion.

To great wine writers and critics who have helped elevate the perception of California wines on the global enological landscape, especially The Wine Advocate and The International Wine Cellar. Don't hate the player, hate the game.

Karen MacNeil: for all she has done to demystify wine for the American public without ever robbing wine of its inherent mystery...I know...I don't know how she does it either.

Somms and Chefs who roll fiercely every day, especially Grant Achatz and Thomas Keller.

Lastly, this first edition is also dedicated to the modern-day chanteuse Amy Winehouse. "May you rest in Mary's arms tonight."

THANKS

** Loam Baby is printed on FSC-certified, 30% post-consumer waste recycled product.*