

SPRING

2006



Dearest Friends,

As I begin to write this message to honor the arrival of spring and the release of our 2002 Pinot Noir I find I must first attend to winery business.

With the unprecedented attention given to Hanzell Vineyards in the past two years, and with our limited production of 2002 Pinot Noir, I am excited and a little bit awed to announce we have sold out of our 2002 Pinot Noir to our Ambassador's Circle prior to releasing the wine! This brings us to the first time in Hanzell Vineyards' history in which we will offer the next vintage for purchase on a pre-release basis. We will release the 2003 Pinot Noir this September and ship the wine during the cooler month of October. Of course, to be assured an allocation, we encourage you to be part of our Ambassador's Circle. Or, if you find yourself living in one of the *direct-shipping challenged* states, please consider pre-ordering and we will happily cellar your wines in our library until your next visit to the property.

I am also very excited to announce another "first" for us at Hanzell Vineyards — a vineyard designated wine from our estate. Although we have thought of doing this for quite some time, it is the quality of the 2003 vintage that dictated we bottle five barrels of the Ambassador's 1953 Vineyard. Planted directly in front of the heritage winery, the Ambassador's 1953 Vineyard is now the oldest Pinot Noir vineyard in California. This bottling of "N53" commemorates the 50th anniversary of this historic vineyard. Although we may produce it again, it will only be when a vintage gives us greatness.

This rare wine has been allocated to our Ambassador's Circle exclusively and a very few cases will be offered to our dearest chef and sommelier friends in some of the finest dining rooms across the country. Again, if you live in an *unsympathetic* state and cannot be an Ambassador, we will try to honor your request and cellar your purchase until you can visit.

Now for a little catching up on what our plans are this year. We have been delighted with the attention from the press as you will see in this mailer's installment of "accolades" on page 4.

We find the reviews are confirming what Hanzell and our great friends have always treasured about our wines. The Chardonnay sits apart from our California cousins with an elegance and ageability that speaks of our distinct terroir and our commitment to great wine. Michael has delved into this subject on the back page with a fascinating piece about how the perception of Hanzell Chardonnay has changed as California winemaking fashions have come and gone.

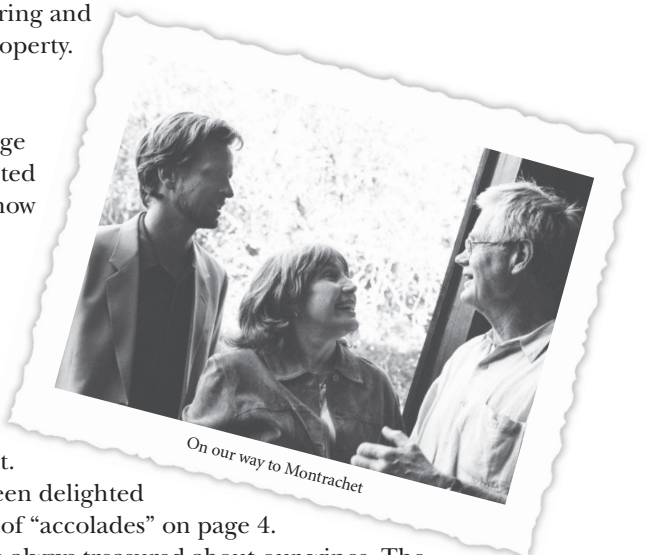
This summer, and I write with tongue firmly in cheek, Bob and I are forced to travel to France to attend The Focus on Chardonnay symposium in Puligny-Montrachet. We will be meeting with some of the greatest winemakers of white Burgundy to share and to learn from each other. We plan to acclimate in Paris for a week prior to taking the train to Dijon where we will meet up with Michael who will present his inquiry into the tremendous ageability of Hanzell Vineyard Chardonnay at this week-long gathering.

Bob and I are very happy to announce that Michael has seamlessly moved into the position of General Manager in addition to his winemaking responsibilities. This allows me to focus more of my time on my passion for telling the story of Hanzell Vineyards, to research the science of what Brad Webb and Bob have intuitively known for decades about our distinctive site, and travel to visit long-time friends in places we have always dreamed to visit.

And now I will sign off with an invitation to visit our new website. We have refined its appearance and stocked it with the full story of mythical Hanzell. Enjoy!

Best regards,

JEAN ARNOLD-SESSIONS



REPASTS

Why journey to South Beach or the Adirondacks in February? This is the question that we ask ourselves. By way of an answer, Jean and Ben preferred the sand and sun, showing our wines at the South Beach Wine and Food Festival. They presented Hanzell Vineyards wines spanning three decades at the Wine Spectator Ageability Seminar and the night before tasted our current release wines at the “Best of the Best” Wine Spectator Grand Tasting. Both wines were paired that evening with the wonderful cuisine of the Wynn Hotel. Tasting the wines this evening were Chef Ferran Adrià and Wine Director Juli Soler from El Bulli. El Bulli, located outside of Barcelona, is touted as the most innovative restaurant in the world. Speaking little English, Sr. Soler gave warm compliments to our wines by blowing a kiss and placing his hand to his heart! The American La Paulée dinner at the Mandarin Oriental’s jewel, Azul, was fantastic especially with the pairing of our 2003 Chardonnay and 2002 Pinot Noir with Michael Mina’s extraordinary creations.

On this same weekend, our Michael visited the Adirondacks — perhaps because he missed the winters of his native Maine. On Lake Saranac ten couples gathered to enjoy the truly sybaritic pleasures of The Point, a most attentive and genial lodge in the deep woods of upstate New York. The highlights of the weekend, besides curling in a blizzard with Mark Stebbings and guests, included the astounding 1984 Pinot Noir and the 1995 Chardonnay. A number of friends were made, but The Point’s discretion prevents us from sharing any names!

In January of this year, Bob and Michael visited the Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant to present a most rare flight of our wines including the 1974 Pinot Noir — a wine with tremendous courage and grace. Steve Riginich, the producer of Pinot Days in San Francisco attended, as did our friend Cheryl Hanes of the eponymous gallery, and Chuck Hayward of The Jug Shop fame. We were honored to come to this wine shop, one of the rare and true Wine

Merchants of the west. Peter Granoff and Debbie Zacharias have great integrity and respect the value of relationships in sharing wine. In fact, it was Peter who interrupted a retrospective tasting late last year at Hanzell, with “STOP! Can you believe this is a 40 year old California Chardonnay?” It was the green-gold and brightly fragrant 1969 Hanzell Chardonnay that caused this unabashed moment of celebration!

Also at the end of last year we found ourselves in New York at BLT Fish for a private luncheon attended by a strong group of Gothams’ best sommeliers. A warm thank you to Fred Dexheimer for hosting us for this great afternoon (as well as the night before!). And back at the winery we were visited by “The Five Great Mountain Sommeliers” of Colorado; Richard, Sean, Jay, Todd and Gary. During this particular evening a monumental ‘first sighting’ of N53, the Ambassador’s 1953 Vineyard Pinot Noir occurred. Also making a cameo appearance was the 1975 Chardonnay and 1976 Pinot Noir.

Moonlight, Magic and Mayhem anyone? Jean’s exclusive auction donation for Sutter Medical Breast Care Center’s Catwalk for a Cure was a hoot (actually more of a howl) as private tasting, dinner, and jovial stories were shared by eight fabulous women under the incredible full moon atop our vineyard in Jack London’s named Valley of the Moon.

Ambassadors Leonard Inch and Susan McHenry have become great and most cherished friends, stopping in whenever we can get them away from very full business schedules. We had a particularly nice visit with them to see our neighbor’s goats at Los Chamisal Vineyards and dinner at Chef Carlo Cavallo’s Sonoma Meritage. Last seen, Bob Sessions had taken their car keys from them for a drive through the steep hillside vineyards. If they do not return by spring, we will be concerned and send the goats to find them!

BOB SESSIONS’ COMMENTS

Tasting the 2002 Pinot Noir on the evening of February 18th, I was quite impressed with the deep flavors of black cherry, sweet plum, earth, and chalky minerality. This wine is full bodied, concentrated, and invitingly deep. Over the next two days of tasting this same bottle, the wine continued to evolve beautifully in my glass with a very full mouth feel and a long, long finish.

HANZELL WILL BE AT THE FOLLOWING EVENTS

April 3:	Winemaker Dinner at The Four Seasons Resort Dallas at Las Colinas, Irving, Texas	May 28:	Sonoma Jazz Festival – Patron’s Night Sonoma, California
May 8:	Heritage Wine Cellars Annual Wine Gala Ritz Carlton Grand Ballroom, Chicago, Illinois <i>Trade Only</i>	July 6-8:	Kapalua Wine Festival, 25 th Anniversary Kapalua, Maui
May 16:	Lauber Imports Grand Annual Tasting 2006 New York Marriott Marquis, New York, New York <i>Trade Only</i>	July 22-28:	Focus on Chardonnay Seminar The Sessions with Michael Terrien Puligny-Montrachet, Burgundy
		October 27-29:	2006 Pinot on the River Festival Russian River, California

HANZELL VINEYARDS

2002 Pinot Noir

WINEMAKER'S COMMENTS

"The minerality of crushed rock puts a boundary around the fruit, which is raspberry, black cherry and strawberry-rhubarb compote. It is a darker-toned wine than a typical Hanzell Pinot with exotic spice: black tea and caraway seed, tobacco, chocolate, and a little bit of black pepper. The tannins have good breadth across the palate and indicate the wine will have great longevity."

THE VINTAGE

"After average winter rains tapered off early, spring started cooler than normal before gradually warming. A final spring rain at bloom naturally thinned the crop. A few heat spells broke the rhythm of an otherwise moderate summer. The rather sparse and small berries benefited from extended hang time on the vines, concentrating the fruit flavor."

- MICHAEL TERRIEN, WINEMAKER

BOB'S BAD AUTEUR CORNER

Indeed there is an overlap between fans of Herman Melville and those who appreciate Hanzell Vineyards wines. I am not sure what this says about you and us, and I'll spare us all the expected jokes on whale steaks pairing well with fine Chardonnay. Or is it Pinot Noir? Anyone?

After much deliberation, we realized we have a clear winner in the good "Bad Melville" challenge presented last fall. Mr. Peter Finie of Camarillo, California has penned a fine piece that, despite its brevity, clearly evokes Ahab's monomaniacal and existential pursuit. And for his effort, he and the rest of the Pequod crew will join us at the Spouter Inn (that would be Hanzell) to hear the tale of . . .

"MOBY, THE GRAPE"

I knew it was there, I could sense it, I could smell it. I gazed over the swirling sea, watching it rise and fall, like a person's chest rising and falling as they breathed. The light reflected off the sea, confined, glimmering and sparkling. The ripples on the surface causing a glow that reflected the light in varied degrees of shadows. My eyes were glazed over from the days of searching, the scorching brightness of the day, the ever changing kaleidoscope of colors; I didn't know how much longer I could keep my sanity. My senses were becoming numb, those around me were getting ready to mutiny, and they felt that I had lost my wits, I had lost control, and my search was going to be the downfall of them all. They didn't know or see what I saw and knew. I knew that it was there, out there, waiting, waiting for me to find it and when I did, all the wealth in the

world would be mine. The search would be over with; I would have found the elusive great white. I sighed and picked up the next glass, peering again at the surface of the wine and smelling that vast sea again, searching.

Peter H. Finie, Camarillo, CA

Congratulations, Peter! We look forward to hearing more as we dip our hardtack in fine-aged Pinot Noir soon at Hanzell. I also wish to acknowledge runner-up Vicky McCormick, Los Angeles, CA.

And on to the next challenge! Have you ever desired to compose a sonnet? Do you remember the rules as you wax eloquent over a fine-aged Chardonnay? Well here they are in case too many decades have divided your memory from your college years:

A poem of 14 lines, usually in iambic pentameter, restricted to a definite rhyme scheme. There are two prominent types: the Italian, or Petrarchan, sonnet, composed of an octave and a sestet (rhyming *abbaabba cdecde*), and the Elizabethan, or Shakespearean sonnet, consisting of three quatrains and a couplet (rhyming *abab cdcd efef gg*).

Got it? Good, because I'm not sure I do. So, take this sonnet challenge, and pick up a pen for your reluctant love, the delicate grape, the fickle wine, Pinot Noir. Do the Bard proud and we will have the honor of your presence for a fine dinner at Hanzell-upon-Avon this fall!

LETTER FROM THE WINEMAKER

Hanzell's winemaking has been remarkably consistent since founding winemaker Brad Webb established the recipe in the late 1950s. Despite the passing fashions, Hanzell has stayed the course with Bob Sessions honoring the legacy with great winemaking acumen.

Most art forms produce more or less a permanent record by which we can interpret the influence one artist has over others. With wine, the record is impermanent as the flavors continue to evolve in the bottle. This changing nature of wine thwarts the effort to trace the effects of influential winemakers, but it still leaves open the possibility of identifying stylistic periods. One of the best yardsticks for measuring the changes in winemaking styles emerged from our historical press file recently: a 1985 Wine Spectator article about Hanzell Chardonnay titled "Ripe and Rich, Framed by Oak."

High in alcohol and pH, ripe and woody, today's Hanzell Vineyards Chardonnays are intensely flavored, complex, powerful wines, just like they've always been. – James Laube, The Wine Spectator. September 16, 1985

This description differs dramatically from the current perception of our Chardonnay where the terms "elegant" and "mineral" often appear in reviews. With regard to Hanzell's winemaking practices, the recipe has not varied much since the first vintage. We still harvest well-ripened grapes, we still allow the wine to undergo only partial malo-lactic fermentation, we still predominantly ferment in tank rather than barrel and we still limit new oak barrels to a third in each vintage.

What has changed is the universe of California Chardonnay. If the wines of the 1970s were flabby, the wines of the 80s were characterized by a leaner style. By the mid-90s the pendulum swung back to the ripeness of the 70s with tropical, fat, buttery and oaky traits ascending in preference over "food friendly" lean wines.

The exuberant flavors of the current period have changed the perception of Hanzell Chardonnay. Previously considered a true exemplar of The California Style, Hanzell is now thought of as Old World for its relatively modest, nuanced and mineral approach to the varietal.

In the context of today's dominant Chardonnay style, Bob Sessions' words spoken to Mr. Laube in 1985 seem ironic: "When [the leaner style] is successful, that's fine, but when it's not I think people are missing what California has to offer and that is ripeness and full-bodied wines." Later in the article Joe Heitz predicts the demise of the then current fashion of leaner wines: "food wine [is] just a passing fancy. One of these days we'll get back to good wines."

Bob and Joe were right, of course; the next generation banished lean wines from California. In fact the Chardonnays of the past decade have out-done themselves in pursuit of hedonism and in so doing Hanzell's Chardonnay has been redefined by the changing context. Called a "deeply concentrated blockbuster Chardonnay" in the 80s, Hanzell Chardonnay today comes off as "elegant" and "mineral" in the context of the blockbusters of recent years. Suppressed malo-lactic, pH of 3.5 and a third new oak no longer qualify a wine for blockbuster status. But full malo-lactic, and 100% new oak, well that might do it . . . you just won't find it in Hanzell's Chardonnay.

Michael Terrien

- MICHAEL TERRIEN

HANZELL VINEYARDS ACCOLADES

2001 Pinot Noir

Wine Enthusiast 95 points
Top 100 Wines of 2005

2002 Chardonnay

Wine Enthusiast 90 points
November 2005 Review

2002 Chardonnay

Wine & Spirits 92 points
Top 10 Chardonnays of 2005

2002 Chardonnay

Food & Wine, April 2006
The Buyer's Guide to 75 of the Best of California
"Hanzell may never have made better wines than it does today."



"THE AMBASSADOR'S CIRCLE"

honoring the founders of Hanzell Vineyards,
Ambassador James & Hana Zellerbach.

PLEASE CALL US TO INQUIRE.

Hanzell Vineyards

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