

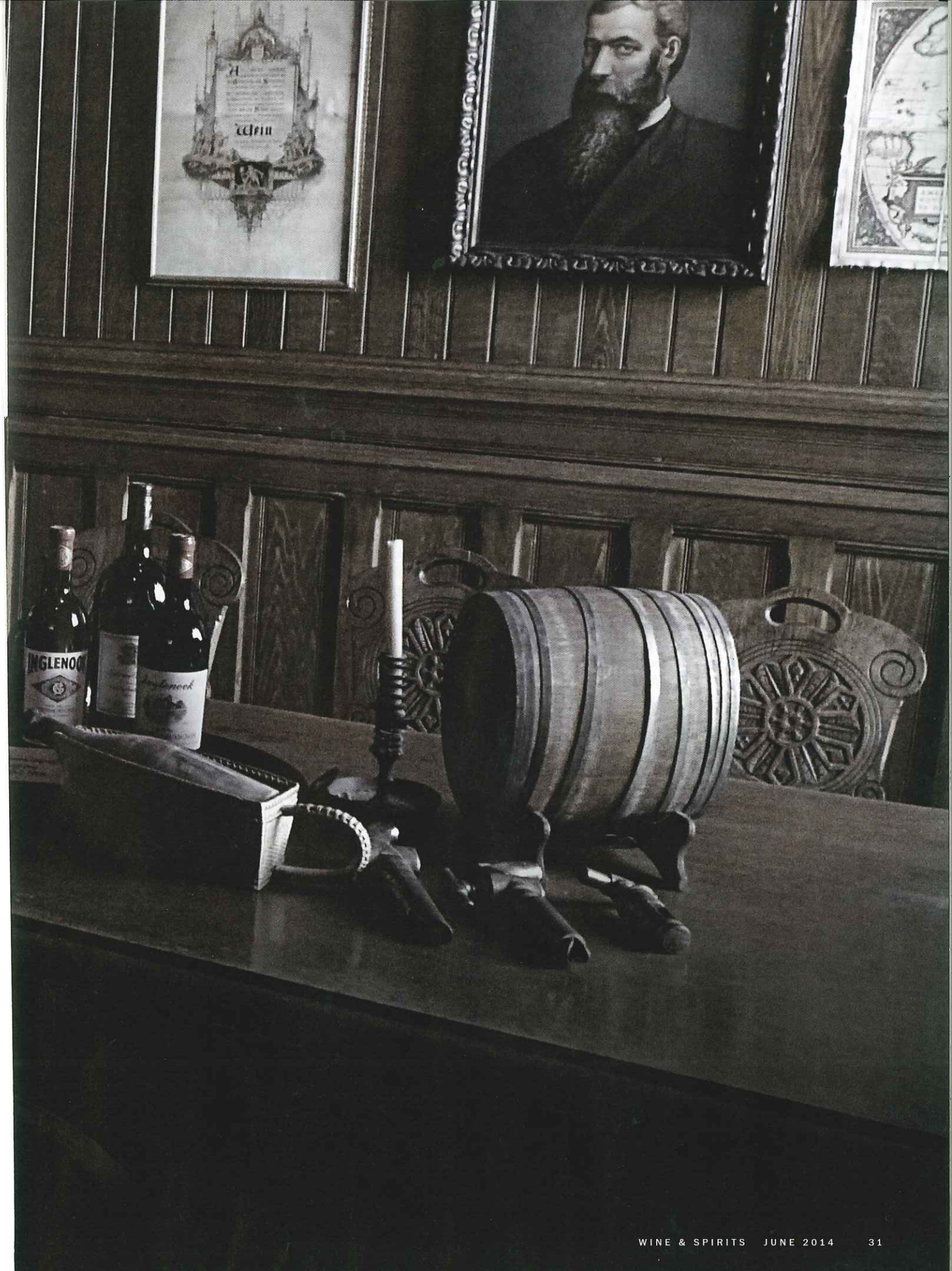
Napa's New Old School

*Story and photos by
David Darlington*

Inglenook and Mayacamas Look Back to the Future

"I was confused," says Francis Ford Coppola.

Coppola, the noted filmmaker and owner of Napa Valley's most historically important vineyard, is describing his state of mind circa 2006. The 130-year-old Niebaum estate had once brought fame to Napa Valley; after it was split up and sold to a jug-wine purveyor in the 1960s, it took Coppola three decades to reassemble it. He'd hired a crack team of professionals to manage it, but for all the exertion and outlay, the 21st-century results still failed to meet his expectations.



"I just felt that somehow we should do better," Coppola says. "So I tried to educate myself and pin down what I wanted. I had wines from the John Daniel era"—the property's post-World War II glory days, when it produced beautifully balanced, ageable cabernet sauvignons exuding finesse and varietal character—"trying to figure out what was different. I only drink wine with food, and I decided I wanted to find a style that's more elegant and classical. If you want, you can call it more feminine."

By 2011, Coppola would implement changes to overhaul not only the winery's operation but its image. He would hire a winemaker from one of Bordeaux's First Growths; he would move the mass-market part of his business to Alexander Valley (under the label "Francis Ford Coppola Presents"); and in a symbolic but decidedly expensive gesture, he would reacquire the brand name of Inglenook, under which the estate had achieved its greatest renown.

Though Coppola says he wasn't aware of it, the old-fashioned qualities he sought are now coming back into fashion, as the industry—the sommelier community especially—is expressing enthusiasm for more restrained, lower-alcohol wines than those that have set the stylistic pace over the past 15 years. Does all of this indicate a new embrace of old-school Napa cabernet?

That's a thorny question. While some stubborn producers (Smith-Madrone, Corison and Frog's Leap come to mind) have cleaved to a more classical style all along, today's Napa Valley—the lavish, luxurious, lip-smacking world

of Bryant Family, Colgin Cellars, Grace Family Vineyards, Harlan Estate, Screaming Eagle et al.—bears scant resemblance to the 1970s renaissance that included Heitz, Mayacamas and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, much less the post-World War II heyday of Inglenook, when (according to Stu Smith of Smith-Madrone) "finesse, balance, varietal character, ageability and modest alcohol" ruled the day. Currently, though lip service is widely paid to those things in the Napa Valley, evidence of them is elusive.

Smith's neighbor in the Mayacamas range, Chris Howell of Cain Cellars—another independent-minded proponent of lean and long-lived cabernet—says, "To me, 'old school' means wine that was generously but not extravagantly ripe. It began in the vineyard and almost ended in the vineyard—the cellar was an afterthought. It was made with low manipulation; it was *not* about getting the chemistry right. It was effortless—it never thought about comparative tastings or looking for the 'wow' factor."

In other words, says Darrell Corti, the redoubtable Sacramento merchant and wine historian, "It probably doesn't still exist. Viticulture and enology have changed too much. In 1960, not a lot of vineyards had irrigation; in 1964, no one thought about pulling leaves. In 1966, when you walked through the head-trained vines at Beaulieu just before harvest, you could smell cabernet sauvignon. Vineyards don't smell like that any more. Since then, most cabernet sauvignon vineyards have probably been replanted twice. We put in closer spacing to get more concentrated fla-

vor, but with head pruning, the vine auto-regulates—it knows it can't support that amount of fruit, and only produces what it *can* support. 'California sprawl' may not have been such a bad idea."

Corti is referring not to rampant suburbanization, but to the traditional two-wire trellising system that allows a vine's leaf canopy to cover and shade the fruit. Vertical trellising, now the predominant mode worldwide, contributes to higher ripeness levels by exposing grapes to more sunlight. Corti has a 1976 analysis (compiled by Mark Bixler of Kistler Vineyards) that includes many high-profile cabernets of the 1960s; only one—the '68 Heitz Martha's Vineyard—exceeded 13 percent alcohol. Most were in the 12 percent range, while the '65 Chateau Souverain weighed in 11.9, the '64 Louis M. Martini at 11.8, and the '65 Mayacamas at 11.4. "Lower in alcohol, higher in tannin," Corti sums up. "And not particularly high scores" from Bixler's tasting group at Fresno.

Among the few exceptions was a wine that, then as now, qualifies as legendary: the 1970 Mayacamas (13.4 percent alcohol; 18.3 points out of 20 on the traditional 20-point system that was in vogue at the time).

"Mayacamas are very nice wines," concedes Corti, who is currently selling the 1997 vintage for \$150 (and who, in 2007, notoriously stopped selling wines higher than 14.5 percent alcohol). "They have the specific character of mountain wine—more strength, more of a wild scent."

In that light, Mayacamas might soon test the authenticity of the New/Old School Napa



Philippe Bascaules (left) and Francis Ford Coppola at Inglenook

"I just felt that somehow we should do better," Francis Ford Coppola says. "So I tried to educate myself and pin down what I wanted. I had wines from the John Daniel era, trying to figure out what was different. I only drink wine with food, and I decided I wanted to find a style that's more elegant and classical. If you want, you can call it more feminine."

ethos—because, as of last year, that seemingly timeless estate is being run by veterans of Screaming Eagle.

Although Mayacamas was a participant in the 1976 Judgment of Paris tasting, its history goes back much further. Built in 1889 at 2,000 feet on Mount Veeder by German pickle canner John Henry Fisher, it was acquired in 1941 by Englishman Jack Taylor (who renamed it Mayacamas). In 1968, Taylor sold the 465-acre property to Bob Travers, an ex-stockbroker who brought it renown in the 1970s. Even then, Mayacamas was the oldest-school practitioner of the California revival, fermenting its wine in concrete and aging it in ovals and old barrels, with no filtration or fining to soften its mountainous tannins and acids. So needful were these wines of aging that Travers held cabernet for five years before release, measuring its maturity in decades.

Mayacamas maintained this approach for 45 years, even while the world around (and below) it was transformed into a high-dollar jamboree of flavor-packed showpieces, painstakingly crafted to seduce at first sip (in Howell's estimation, "the first ten to fifteen seconds of the experience"). As both Bordeaux and Napa grew ever more immediately gratifying, Mayacamas seemed increasingly outmoded—a dinosaur from the days when wine was meant to complement food, and young cabernet connoted pain.

"I didn't even think about modernizing," Travers admits today. "It would have been very expensive, and I thought what we were doing was satisfactory. The wines took longer to be at their best, but I liked the way they turned out. To my taste, the newer cabernets

are disappointing when they get to be fifteen or twenty years old."

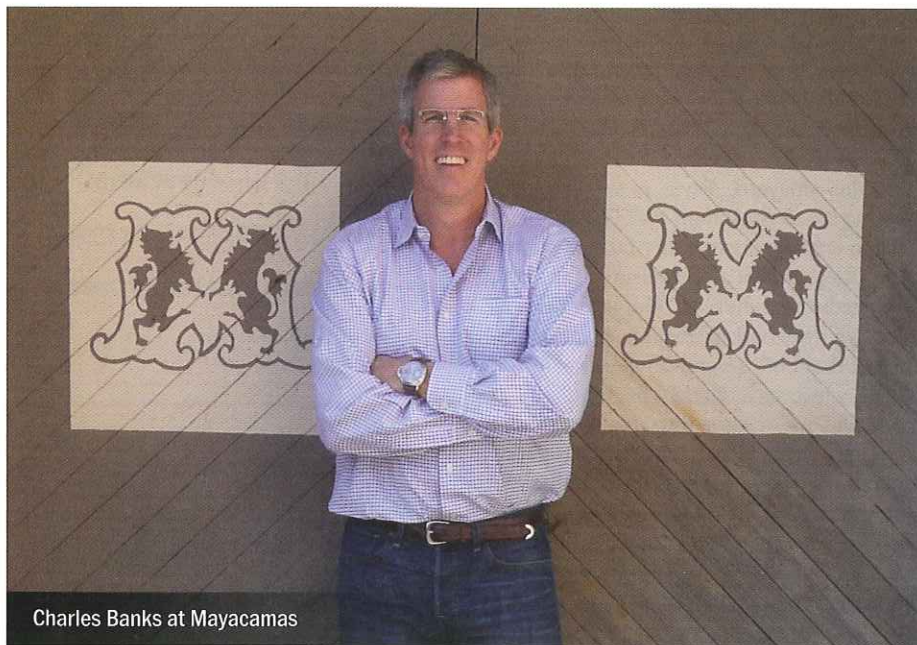
As Travers entered his own seventies, he began to entertain interest from prospective buyers (the owners of Château Latour among them). "Some said, 'This isn't a winery—it's a museum,'" he chuckles. "Quite a few people looked, but they wanted a lot of contingencies about permits and expansions. I would have had to hire an attorney and spend a lot of time tackling rules and regulations, so I said no."

Cue Bill Harlan and Charles Banks—co-owners of Napa Valley's Meadowood Resort and, respectively, the owner and a former partner in two of Napa's most expensive cult cabernets, Harlan Estate and Screaming Eagle. "Bill thought it would be a cool idea if we [bought Mayacamas] together," says Banks. "But after we spent time with Bob, he said, 'This is a twenty-year project—I'm too old. You should just do it.'"

Those last three words served as apt motivation for the 47-year-old Banks, an investment manager who'd made a bundle by, among other things, handling money for pro athletes. A wine buff since the early 90s, Banks entered the industry in 2000 while negotiating a shoe-endorsement contract for NBA star Kevin Garnett; Garnett signed with Adidas, but one of the financial principals in Puma—billionaire film producer Arnon Milchan—invited Banks to invest in a Santa Ynez winery startup, Jonata.

"I never imagined I would come home with a vineyard and no shoe deal," laughs Banks, who, with another Jonata partner—Walmart heir-by-marriage and Denver Nuggets/St. Louis Rams/Colorado Avalanche owner Stan Kroenke—went on to buy Screaming Eagle from its founder, Jean Phillips, in 2006.

After replanting most of that vineyard, excavating caves and building a new winery,



Charles Banks at Mayacamas

"We want to embrace the right kind of technology," Charles Banks says. "Originally we thought we'd be old school in our thinking but rebuild and modernize [the operation]. Now it's the opposite. Will we replant with bush vines? Maybe; maybe not. We're not just going to do what's current in Napa, but we won't ignore it either."

Banks bowed out of both Screaming Eagle and Jonata. (“My partner decided he’d rather not have a partner,” he explains.) Subsequently disinterested in Napa Valley, whose high-end business model he felt had gotten “out of control” (“Who in their right mind would buy a bottle for \$850, wait two years to get it and then, once you get it, not to be able to get what you paid for it?”), Banks founded Terroir Selections, investing in wineries that, as of this writing, include Burgundy’s Maison L’Orée, South Africa’s Mulderbosch, Oregon’s Evening Land and California’s Qupé, Sandhi, Wind Gap and Leviathan—a portfolio that qualifies more as New Wave than either Cult or Old School. “I’d rather have a case of Arnot-Roberts than a bottle of Harlan, or Cheval Blanc, or Screaming Eagle,” Banks says.

As for Mayacamas, in 1997 Banks had given himself a bottle of the ’70 cabernet for his 30th birthday. “It was one of the most perfect wine experiences I’ve ever had,” he says. “It delivered the whole package: power, structure and finesse all in one.” Apparently this was enough to overcome any doubts he may have had about the difficulties of taking over the antiquated estate, whose infrastructure he describes as “not in any sense a turnkey operation.”

“Bob was kind of like MacGyver,” Banks says. “If he’d had more capital, he might have done things differently, but there’s a discipline that comes from that. When everything is done by hand, you’re required to be more in touch with the wines.” On another hand, “Bottling took three months, and the wine was evolving over those three months. Now we do it in four hours.” Similarly, “the process for the fruit to come in will be more streamlined—better cooling, better pumps, better sorting equipment.

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Andy Erickson of Mayacamas Vineyards

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“I do think that had Bob embraced change a little more and focused on execution, the wines might not have fallen out of favor,” Banks says. “He made the same kind of wine in the 70s, 80s and 90s, and as the industry changed, he tried to accommodate it by releasing wines later. I don’t think all wines should age 40 years, but we feel there’s a void in the market for wines like this, which can be laid down for 20 years.

“We believe deeply in what Bob did here,” Banks reasserts. “He deserves his place in history. But if Aubert de Villaine [of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti] and Frédéric Engerer [of Château Latour] are working every day to get better, we have plenty of room for improvement without insulting Bob.”

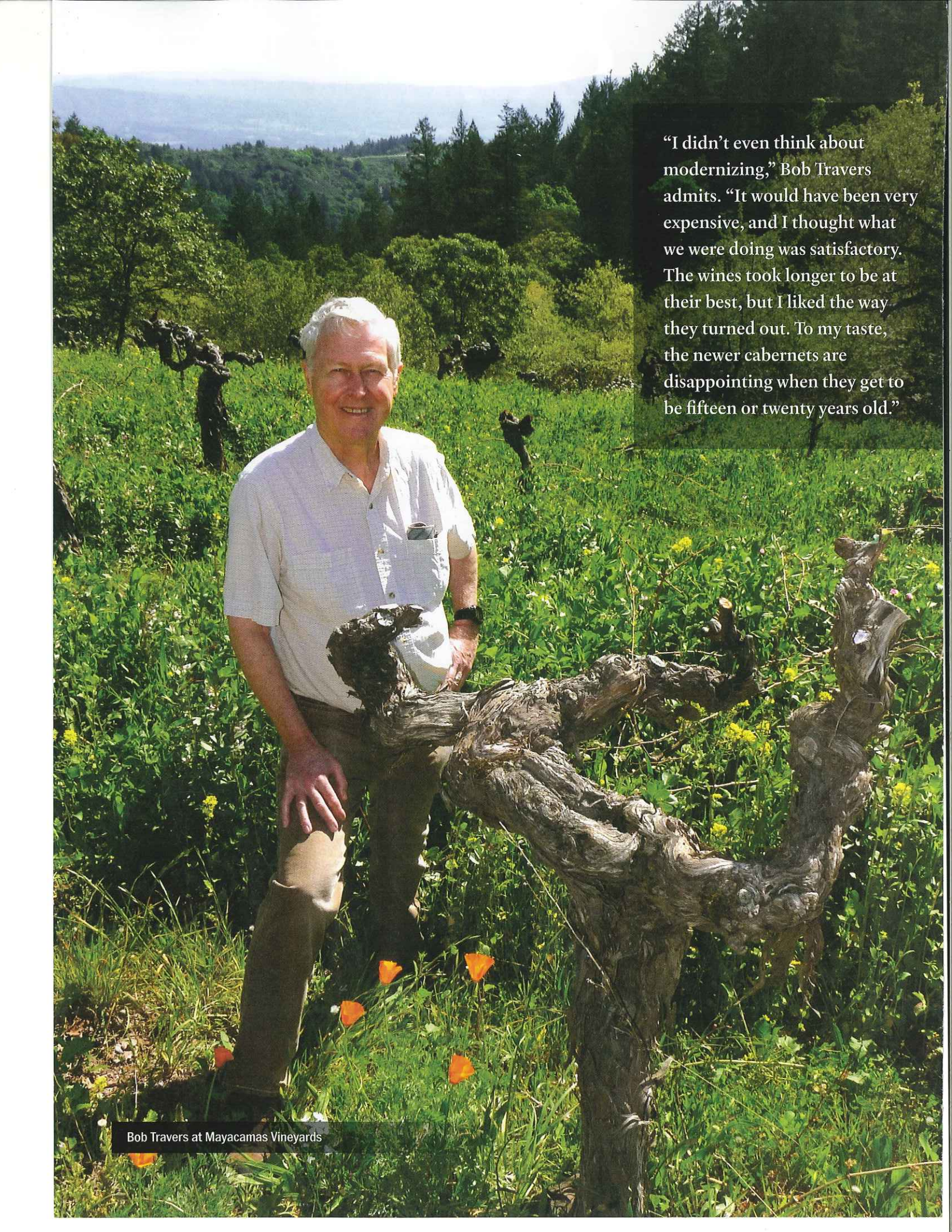
Toward that end, Banks brought in Andy Erickson and Annie Favia, a couple he had employed at Screaming Eagle, to handle winemaking and viticulture respectively. Both worked with John Kongsgaard at Newton before moving on to (in Erickson’s case) Harlan, Staglin, Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars, Ovid, Arietta, Dancing Hare and Dalla Valle, and (in Favia’s) Corison and a 12-year stint with high-profile vineyardist David Abreu. They also have their own labels: Favia and Leviathan.

Shedding light on the new regime’s preserve-but-update program, Erickson is retaining Travers’s ancient concrete tanks, but has installed cooling plates inside them, replacing the plywood-and-fiberglass bin that Travers filled with dry ice during harvest and connected to the tanks with copper tubes. He also inserted doors in the fermenter walls to avoid bucketing grape residue out by hand, and cut the tops off the oak uprights that Travers used for aging whites, converting them into wood fermenters. Machinewise, the crew has a new destemmer but is still using a 1940s-era forklift—“to remind them,” Banks says, “that we’re old school.”

In the vineyard, Favia is working with Sonoma-based consultant Phil Coturri to initiate an entirely organic, dry-farmed regime. “Any vineyard that’s been farmed for a long time needs care,” she says. “Our job is to revive this place—put back in what’s been taken out.” Toward that end, several phylloxera-afflicted blocks, which have already been pulled out, will lay fallow for some time, planted to peas, vetch and clover. Eventually, Favia says, most replantings will be more vertical with closer vine spacing (3’ x 6’ or 4’ x 7’)—though on southwest-facing “Golden Hill” (where “the wine is incredible”), California sprawl will remain in place, and another block near the estate entrance might be replanted with head-

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Bob Travers at Mayacamas Vineyards



Mayacamas Vineyards on Mount Veeder

trained vines.

"This property already has a personality," Favia says. "If you taste the wines over the years, they all have a real sense of place—a common thread that's very rugged and direct. We want to improve that thread, but not make it something it isn't."

"Our inspiration is the wines that are here," Erickson agrees. "There's no other winery with this string of vintages—forty-five years of wines made by one person, on one property, in one style. The key with Bob is harvesting earlier for acidity. I want to be able to pick grapes—not too early or too late—and ferment them to completion without adding anything or adjusting the wine or alcohol."

Asked if he's had to do that elsewhere, Erickson demurs: "I don't want to get into that—it's too technical. But even before I came here, I was trying to rein in picking for better balance."

And what of the dreaded H word—herbaceousness, that "green-pepper" phenolic characteristic of less-ripe Bordeaux varieties, that has been roundly banished from modern commercial wine?

"I'm as opposed to prune, stemmy wine as others are to herbaceousness," says Banks. "At the same time, I don't want green, harsh, underripe tannins."

One thing about which all parties agree:

They don't plan to make Screaming Eagle on Mount Veeder. "We will never make as lush and elegant a wine as Screaming Eagle here," says Banks. "We've stayed true to the style of both. We're not going to try to change one to be the other. We're not going to listen to anything except the place."

"Terroir is created by human beings," says Philippe Bascaules, the Bordelais winemaker now overseeing Inglenook. "Philosophy is part of the place. Gustav Niebaum created terroir here—it first existed in his mind. Someone else might have chosen sangiovese, but Niebaum wanted to compete with Bordeaux."

Niebaum was a 19th-century native of Finland who, after amassing a shipping and trading empire worth \$10 million in 1870s dollars, bought a 78-acre vineyard in Rutherford, California called Inglenook ("cozy corner," so named by its Scottish founder, William Watson). Niebaum augmented it with another thousand acres stretching from the valley floor onto Mount St. John, and in an effort "to equal and excel the most famous vintages of Europe," proceeded to build a chateau, buy vine cuttings from Bordeaux, establish the first gravity-flow winery in Napa Valley and install the first ster-

ile bottling line. Unlike most of its neighbors at the time, Inglenook produced only estate-bottled wines—which, soon enough, were judged the best in California and served at the White House to President Grover Cleveland.

Like Cleveland, Niebaum died of heart disease in 1908. The winery, after being shut down, was reopened, and then closed again during Prohibition. Eventually it came under the control of Niebaum's great-nephew, John Daniel, Jr. Inheriting not only the estate but his great-uncle's meticulous character, Daniel guided Inglenook through its golden age, with winemakers John Gross and George Deuer producing some of Napa's most historic wines, including such stuff of legend as the '41 (which was sold for \$24,000 at auction in 2004) and '59 cabernets. Still, Daniel's ambitions were out of step with the nascent fine-wine market of the day—the winery motto was "Pride, Not Profit"—and in 1964 he threw in the towel, selling the front part of the property and the brand name, which began an inexorable slide toward Sweet Red and Sunset Blush. When Daniel died in 1970, his wife—a Mormon who considered wine an unsuitable calling for her daughters—placed the remainder of the estate on the market.

Enter Francis Ford Coppola, fresh off the critical and commercial success of *The Godfather*. In 1972, while constructing a media

complex (American Zoetrope) in San Francisco, Coppola and his wife, Eleanor, hatched the notion of obtaining a “summer cottage” in the country—and although the Daniels’ Victorian mansion hardly met that definition, the Coppolas were “struck by the beauty of it.” They were outbid by a consortium of developers, who wanted to build 60 houses and a golf course—a plan that was ultimately nixed by the Napa County Land Trust, at which point Coppola bought the estate with profits from *The Godfather Part II*. Only after moving in did he begin to discern the importance of the place, which Robert Mondavi defined for him (as they tasted the 1890 vintage together) as the crown jewel of Napa Valley.

Coppola tried his own hand at winemaking in 1977, and the following year hired André Tchelistcheff to create a Bordeaux-varietal blend, released as Rubicon under the Niebaum-Coppola label. This coincided, however, with the most tumultuous phase of the director’s career: the *Apocalypse Now/One from the Heart* period, which put him into Chapter 11 bankruptcy, allowing him nevertheless to keep the Niebaum/Daniel property. In his effort to regain solvency, Coppola proceeded to make one commercial studio film (*Peggy Sue Got Married*, etc.) per year and, in 1995, when Canandaigua—latest in the line of conglomerates to own the front property (though not the Inglenook name)—put it on the market again, Coppola bought it for \$10 million with profits from *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, reuniting the original estate.

In 2002, Coppola annexed the adjacent 140-acre J.J. Cohn vineyard to the Niebaum property, which in 2006 he renamed Rubicon Estate. Finally, in 2011, he approached the Wine Group—latest purveyor of the Inglenook brand—about buying back the name. Though terms of the sale were not disclosed, Coppola paid more for it (“After all, they had to take all their existing wine off the market”) than he did for the front and back parts of the Niebaum estate combined—a move, he said, intended “to achieve my goal of restoring this property into America’s greatest wine estate.”

During this time, Coppola’s flagship product, Rubicon, had followed a frustrating path. Characteristically, Coppola had spared no expense in his effort to make something momentous, hiring Tony Soter and later Scott McLeod to establish it in the first rank of contemporary cabernets. For a while, McLeod worked with Enologix, the chemical-profiling consultancy that targets the critical palate, but despite scoring consistently in the 90s, Rubicon somehow failed to keep pace with Napa’s most prestigious labels.

“I had the impression that the wines were

talked about well, but that we wouldn’t be considered a First Growth,” Coppola says, expanding on the internal process that led to Inglenook’s overhaul. “I was told that the style wasn’t what the important critics were liking. I didn’t mind; my movies were like that. With the exception of *The Godfather*, the ones that are considered classics today were not liked when they were first released. I’d grown to distrust the point system, which is kind of a rolling average—like four-star movies, you get pegged at making 92-point wine.”

Still, “People had always told me that, 50 to 100 years ago, this property was the ‘Queen of Napa Valley.’ And I said, Gee, if this has been under me all this time and we’re still not making the best wines, something needs to be improved. Maybe I should be fired—it’s happened at First Growths before.

“I’m a person who has made his fortune on his instincts, but my knowledge of the process necessary to get great wines was limited. I didn’t feel I had the chops to put my judgment over someone who’s a professional. But I get to meet a lot of important people, like owners of First Growths—so I asked *them* how our wine measured up. One French colleague told me he thought it lacked freshness, which I’d never heard before—my only word for wine is ‘delicious.’ But that started me thinking.”

At that point, Coppola says, he “started to intervene a little more. I started asking questions, which I’d never done. It started with the irrigation issue. This property is very blessed with water; in the old days they didn’t irrigate, but I could tell just from the water bill [that considerable irrigation was taking place]. Scott’s team pulled out a lot of the old vines, and I loved those old vines. There was also a fanaticism about the clone—they had propagated the Niebaum clone and planted all our new vineyards with it, but when I asked people in the business, I was told that that wasn’t necessarily the best one for the estate. It’s a big vineyard, and what’s good for this part might not be good for this part.”

As for wine style, Coppola says, “I wanted more elegance. I felt we were too reliant on lab work—I was very upset that our wines were being sent to Enologix, because I immediately distrust anything with numbers. I was outraged when the *New York Times* started publishing figures for film grosses—which don’t take into account, for example, how much was spent on promotion. The idea that wines are considered great by numbers is like saying that [any actress] with the same body fat as Marilyn Monroe is just as sexy.”

Obviously, questions of navigation were beginning to affect the course of the Niebaum craft. “The winemaker is the captain of the ship,” the director acknowledges. “But you can bring in a consultant to discuss things with an independent voice. People kept insisting that

I should get Michel Rolland, but I thought, he’s the consultant of all our neighbors, which might just mean that he likes a style less elegant than the wines I enjoy with food.”

Coppola ended up tapping the biodynamically inclined Bordelais consultant Stéphane Derenoncourt, who suggested adjustments in the vineyard including dry farming. Eventually McLeod resigned, and in seeking a full-time replacement, Coppola found that “in America you can’t hire one full-time winemaker—the great ones are stars who work for several wineries.” He proceeded to interview candidates from France, Spain and Italy.

“I would spend a few days with them, taking them all over the property. One of the things I’d asked each candidate was if they cooked. All of them said yes, so I would take them to the market, shop with them and cook a meal with them. In the course of that, I learned a lot about their approach and philosophy of winemaking, along with a sense of their personality and the way they collaborated.” In that light, the 51-year-old Bascaules (who had spent the previous 21 years at Château Margaux) impressed Coppola with his “sweet disposition and modesty. I felt he’d approach winemaking at Inglenook slowly, carefully, and with a wish to understand the natural qualities that were here.”

When Bascaules arrived in Rutherford in 2011, he “didn’t know Inglenook—it was just a vineyard, and Francis was just its owner. But he’s very direct and easy to communicate with—he didn’t say he wanted to make money, or to get 100 points in two years. His goal is simple: to make Inglenook as it was, the legacy of Gustav Niebaum and John Daniel. I had tasted the ’59, so I was confident that the terroir had the potential to make wonderful wines.”

Bascaules and Coppola saw eye to eye on the style they preferred. “Before I came, Francis told me that he wanted me to make wines that I like. In France, we have a word—*désaltère*, which is having liquid to clean your palate. We drink wine instead of water to give pleasure, but if it doesn’t allow you to keep eating your meal, it’s a mistake. To me, many times California wines taste like Port—something you have at the end of a meal. I like lower alcohol because it’s more enjoyable with food.”

One of Bascaules’s challenges in coming to Napa was the fact that he had “no data.” When Daniel sold Inglenook in 1964, his vintner, George Deuer—apparently outraged, even though he was on the verge of retirement—burned all his winemaking records. Still, it’s common knowledge that grapes at that time were picked at 23 degrees Brix, which translates into 12.5 percent alcohol. Thus, when Bas-

caules embarked on his mission, he expected to pick at about that same sugar level.

"But it's not so simple," he soon found out. "When I tasted the grapes, I said, No, I cannot do that. This is not the same vineyard as John Daniel had. Fifty years ago, the vines were all head-trained, the rootstock was St. George and the density was much lower. Now we have different rootstocks, higher density and many [trellising] systems—some head-trained, some vertical, some cross-armed [i.e., California sprawl]. If I have to say something now, I would say that cross-arms are a little better than vertical."

"Philippe likes a system that's not exposing grapes to sun damage," says Enrique Herrera, the vineyard manager. "In the past, we were more afraid of green than ripe. Philippe's fear of green is less."



Philippe Bascaules

"Shrivelled grapes are the beginning of the death," Bascaules explains. "It's when they lose all their acidity and freshness. I am convinced that the best wines are made when the grapes are just ripe. I check to see if the vessels are green; if they're red, they're [ready to pick]. I also agree that the seeds should be brown, but in the old days, they might have been brown at 23 Brix. The most sugar you can get is 24.5—any more than that is from dehydration, which is not interesting. This year we tasted over-ripe berries from zinfandel, cabernet sauvignon and syrah just before harvest, and they all tasted the same. You can get these flavors all over the world if you wait for picking, but you've lost the sense of place."

In contrast to McLeod, who considered October "a gift" to winegrapes (often accessible because of irrigation), Bascaules is experimenting with off-season pruning in the hope of harvesting earlier. "Everybody here prunes in February and March to avoid risk of frost and disease," he says. "I wanted [some vines]

pruned in December so that they might have earlier flowering and veraison. If I find that it's better, I can accept the risk of spring frost—and I will convince Francis because estates like Inglenook have to take this kind of risk.

"I don't want to do exactly what Inglenook did in the 40s and 50s," Bascaules reiterates. "My goal is to reduce alcohol levels, but if we can reach 24.5 with just-ripe grapes, I will be happy. If we can achieve 14 percent alcohol, then maybe we can do better. I'm very curious."

Bascaules's three vintages of Rubicon reflect this direction—all hover around 14 percent. (They also exhibit substantial oak.) Of Bascaules's Inglenook wines, only one—the winery's second-tier bottling, Cask, from the notoriously cool 2011 vintage—exhibits herbaceousness. "People say it's Bordeaux style," Bascaules says. "But I put it in a flight with 2011 Bordeaux, and it was so Californian. Here we have intense grapes—they're like a wild horse. I would like to tame the grapes of California a little more, polish them and make them more approachable."

Is that really "old school?"

"In Napa Valley, the old schoolhouse has a 'closed' sign on it," says Chris Howell of Cain. "The question is, can you get back in?" Bascaules seems to have concluded not to try, but rather to modulate a middle course between Inglenook's glory days and more modern ways. By contrast, his counterparts at Mayacamas are pledging allegiance to the flag that estate has always flown—and while it may strain credulity to believe that alumni of Screaming Eagle, a quintessential no-warts Napa Valley product, will adhere to a tough-ass tradition of tongue-stripping tannin and acidity, considering the resources at their disposal it will be fascinating to see. Still, if they keep their promise about continuing to hold wines back for half a decade, we won't know the results for years to come.

"We're not doing this for short-term gain," Charles Banks asserts. "We're doing it for my kids and my partners' kids—to continue Bob Travers's legacy, and to show what can be done and should be done."

"I don't necessarily expect to give full blossom to Inglenook in my lifetime," Francis Coppola concurs. "It's been a work in progress for 40 years—and in America, 100 is old. But I want my custodianship to repair the damage that was done. When I said I want it to be Inglenook again, I meant that I want it to live up to its heritage and achieve the greatness it once had."

"If greatness is at the top of a mountain, California is climbing the south face and France is climbing the north face," Philippe Bascaules suggests. "The question is, do we want to be at the top of the same mountain?"

Or in the same school. ■

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