

VIVIAN PERRY and JOHN VINCENT: *Winemakers of the Willamette Valley: Pioneering Vintners from Oregon's Wine Country*. American Palate, Charleston, South Carolina, 2013, 160 pp., ISBN: 978-1609496760 (paperback), \$19.99.

CILA WARNCKE: *Oregon Wine Pioneers*. Vine Lives Publishing, Portland, Oregon, 2015, 234 pp., ISBN: 978-1943090761 (paperback), \$19.99.

Admittedly, it was hard to write a dispassionate review of books that so lovingly describe the region in which I live and so admiringly profile many of my acquaintances in the Oregon wine industry. Therefore, I used as measures of merit how well each echoed my impressions of this most beautiful area and its people, and whether each accomplished its objectives.

Perry's and Vincent's *Winemakers of the Willamette Valley* (WWV) "is meant to showcase the stories of a handful of Oregon's many Willamette Valley winemakers" (WWV, p. 11). A foreword by Chehalem founder Harry Peterson-Nedry sets the personal tone that pervades those stories. Next, in a mere eight pages of text, the first chapter, "History of the Willamette Valley Wine Region," covers the climate, soil, grape selection, craftsmanship, industry structure and early success in sufficient detail to provide valuable context. The authors then share intimate interviews with eighteen vintners and vigneron. Within each chapter named for one or two winemakers are brief descriptions of the wineries that each is affiliated with. These include year founded, ownership, varietals, tasting room location, hours and contacts. Sustainability features, a point of pride in the Oregon wine industry, are also listed. The epilogue memorializes the late Willamette Valley Vineyards winemaker Forrest Glenn Klaffke. Wine Tasting Routes and a list of wineries by town provided by the Willamette Valley Wineries Association comprise the appendix.

In contrast, Warncke's "*Oregon Wine Pioneers* (OWP) aims to tell a good story and inspire you to take part in that story. We hope you take it along when you head out to visit..." (OWP, p. 9). Although the fifteen chapters are named for wineries, they contain much biographical information about the principals. Each concludes with tasting notes of wines made at the facility and a lined page for the reader's own comments. Six Trail Guides for Portland, Forest Grove, Newberg, McMinnville, Salem and Southern Oregon follow. These give driving directions, contact information for the featured wineries, and restaurant recommendations.

"By definition, there can only be one group of pioneers" (OWP, p. 29), Warncke tells us. From a strict point of view, then, only the first wave of a dozen producers who began coming to Oregon about a half century ago should be regarded as pioneers. Wisely though, the two books de facto adopt a broader perspective. Warncke presents vignettes about winemakers who became part of the Oregon wine industry well after the 1960s and 1970s. For example, she interviews Earl Jones who pioneered high quality Tempranillo in the United States at Abacela in the 1990s. And WWV, which includes "Pioneering Vintners" in its subtitle, profiles folks like Steve Doerner, winemaker at Cristom Vineyards since 1992, who "is a

thirty-five year practitioner of whole-cluster, native yeast fermentations” (WWV, p. 51).

Both volumes cover Adelsheim, Elk Cove, A to Z/Rex Hill, and Ponzi with some overlap but enough differences to make each worth reading. While winemaker David Paige is the focus in WWV’s chapter on Adelsheim (WWV, Chapter 6), founder David Adelsheim is highlighted in OWP (OWP, pp. 22-33). Both concentrate on Elk Cove’s second generation winemaker Adam Campbell but OWP also introduces his sister, Anna (WWV, Chapter 8; OWP, pp. 34-45). WWV (WWV, Chapter 12) features Anna Matzinger and Michael Davies, the latter, the executive winemaker at A to Z/Rex Hill, whereas OWP (OWP, pp. 46-59) takes us on a tour of that winery with the direct sales manager that includes a cameo appearance by cofounder Deb Hatcher, but no mention of Davies. The greatest degree of overlap is in the chapters on Ponzi (WWV, Chapter 7; OWP, pp. 60-71) wherein Luisa Ponzi, who took over as winemaker from her father, Dick, in 1993, is the center of attention.

WWV concentrates on producers who get their grapes primarily from the six American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) that partially overlap the northwest portion of the Willamette Valley AVA. OWP ventures further south with profiles of Illahe Vineyards in Dallas, Left Coast Cellars in Rickreall, and Abacela in the Umpqua Valley near Roseburg.

The trail guides in OWP are much more valuable resources for the prospective tourist than what is given in WWV. In particular, I can vouch for many of the restaurants included. While the tasting room information in each chapter of WWV might be useful, it should be confirmed as things do change. The appendix, however, seems like an afterthought.

While none of the authors are established wine writers, all have published extensively so both books read very well and very quickly. Journalistic WWV relies more on quotations and less on descriptions of the land, the processes and the writers’ personal reactions. The writing in OWP struck me as more literary, impressionistic and passionate. We share moments of realization with Warncke: “Voila. The missing piece. The link. The glue. I should have guessed. The clue is in the name: A to Z. You can say anything with 26 letters and this is a winery dedicated to expression. Climate, soil, elevation, varietals, and water, are the winemaker’s alphabet” (OWP, p. 56). I also enjoyed the clever analogies Warncke draws. In describing the career path of Tom Symonette of Whistling Dog Cellars, she writes “...a picture emerges of a man whose life – like the vines he tends with such intense affection – had three buds. Two of which, removed, left one strong shoot” (OWP, p. 100).

WWV edges out self-published OWP for production value with sharper photographs and affectionate sketches of the winemakers by Sarah Schlesinger. Still, the latter skillfully weaves uncaptioned snapshots into text from which they derive their significance. Both successfully give the reader a sense of what it is like to visit a winery in the Beaver State.

There are some minor quibbles. I didn't find the tasting notes in OWP particularly useful and even a bit bizarre: petrol notes in Pinot (OWP, pp. 20, 58, 96, 108)?! Also, many of the wines mentioned are likely no longer available. Inadvertently, no doubt, punk artist Don Letts is referred to as an Oregon wine legend (OWP, p. 86), dislodging "Papa Pinot," David Lett. The number of vineyards and wineries in Oregon is woefully underreported as 400+ (OWP, p. 9). The 2014 Oregon Vineyard and Winery Census Report published by the Southern Oregon University Research Center in August 2015 reports an increase of 8% to 1,027 vineyard operations and from 605 to 676 bonded wineries. There is some unnecessary repetition in WWV, for example, regarding The Carlton Winemakers Studio location, fee, and contact information (WWV, pp. 83 and 85).

Books of this sort do have a limited shelf life since they report on a fluid industry. Much has changed even in the short time since WWV was released. Scott Wright sold his interest in Scott Paul Wines and Kelley Fox (WWV, Chapter 11) no longer makes wine for that label. Anthony King (WWV, Chapter 13) is now General Manager of The Carlton Winemakers Studio (WWV, Chapter 9). Don Crank III (WWV, Chapter 16) left Willamette Valley Vineyards and is now at Rex Hill (OWP, pp. 46–59). Eric Hamacher (WWV, Chapter 9) was just named winemaker at Ghost Hill Cellars (OWP, pp. 84–97).

Before I became a full time resident of Oregon, I spent part of the year in Virginia and would invariably miss McMinnville. I would devour each issue of the Oregon Wine Press when it arrived so that I could be transported back to where I wanted to be. As I read these two adoring accounts of an industry of which I am now a part, I was reminded of how lucky I am to be here and to experience daily this extraordinary place and its people. For those less fortunate, reading both Perry and Vincent, and Warncke can give a satisfying vicarious experience. The two accounts dovetail nicely with the resulting binocular view more complete than any one of them would provide. For the price of a good bottle of Oregon Pinot noir, these two slim attractive volumes will make you want to visit, if the wine hasn't already convinced you to do so.

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