



THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

November 11, 2013

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

Friends –

The harvest has passed here, but it feels like the middle of summer instead of a few weeks before Thanksgiving. Yes, we made a lot of great Cabernet, but at what cost? I'm not fooling myself about the eventual implications of these dry skies. I once had a dream in which I walked through Alexander Valley and the whole place was made of ash. Everything – the vines, the trees, the birds in the sky. There were cars that had been driving out on the road to somewhere and they were ash, too, just sitting there regular as you please, except gray. If you went up and leaned on the hood, the whole thing fell in on top of itself. They were a bit like the old Yugos, if anybody remembers that embarrassing period in human history.

I have been told by doctors that this was a dream about death, but it just bores the heck out of me when other people attempt to unravel my visions. Do I do that to them? When a man comes to me with tales from the travels of his unconscious mind, I listen in rapt silence. When I talk dreams, I expect the same. As far as I'm concerned, bars are the only real sanctum of democracy. That's why I frequent them. I don't need to know if you're a doctor or a garbage man, I'll just listen to your line and draw my own conclusions. Don't wave papers at me.

I have always been a forward thinking man, is the point, even when I am asleep. I saw all this coming. The end, I mean. I still sleep in the house, although I feel more at home on the ground. I don't want to alarm my family unnecessarily. I have started eating dog food just to get used to the taste of it. Iams is not all it's cracked up to be, by the way. I walk most places now, too. That is what the caveman did. Besides, it's safer on the trip home. The human mind is not evolved to process information effectively at highway speed. I'm speaking from personal experience on this one. Plus, there is nothing like catching a sunrise out on hoof on Highway 128, waving at all those poor lost souls, driving off to work in their soon-to-be ash cars.

I tried feeding my wife this caveman bit, as an avenue out of bathing quite so often.

“Did the caveman also drink Schlitz from a fishbowl and chain smoke Pall Malls?”

“Regrettably not,” I said.

“Did caveman eat fried oysters with Sriracha every Monday night? Did he make sangria with Old Spice and Manischewitz? Did he have a favorite polyester shirt that he wore for weeks on end and referred to as “Lice Man?”

“It's Ice Man,” I said, “and I wasn't painting Paleolithic Times as utopia, honey. I was just trying to save a little water.”

“Paleonasty,” she said. “Shove your high dollar education in my face again and see what happens. Now go take a shower or I'll do you with the pressure washer again.”

“Yes, honey,” I said.

I didn't, though. I just turned on the water, then crawled out the window and stood there enjoying a warm can of suds and gazing up at the cosmos.

“We're on the way out,” I said to the stars, “Prove me wrong.”

For a moment, there was nothing but silence. Then, the faint but unmistakable sound of the pressure washer came across the night, followed by the squeak of its wheels as my wife brought it around the corner, nozzle up, looking for me. Let the end come, it won't find me thirsty.

Almost everyone receiving this shipment is getting at least a couple bottles of our **2009 Alexander Valley Cabernet**. This 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon is a blend of fruit from all three of our estate vineyards – 45% from the Pyramid, 30% Stone, and 25% Red Winery. The high percentage of fruit from the Pyramid site – a steep, rugged ranch in the mountains between Chalk Hill and Knights Valley – is reflected in the dark color of the 2009, as well as in its smell and taste: aromas of plums, black cherry, dust, and leather with an almost sweet beginning on the tongue, followed by blackberry and plums on the mid-palate and a long, rather high-tone



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finish. There's ripe fruit here, but there's plenty of acid and tannin too. Do yourself a favor and, even if you drink a bottle or two of this wine over the holidays, hold another couple back for two years and give the tannins a chance to smooth out and let the aromas of spices, dried herbs and tobacco emerge. Best after 2015.

Also in this shipment is our **2010 Red Winery Single Vineyard Cabernet**. I am writing this letter on the heels of our 2013 harvest and it was a particularly interesting vintage for Red Winery. Every year, we make multiple lots of Cabernet from Red Winery and sort through them for our favorite to bottle as the single vineyard designate (the balance going to the three vineyard Alexander Valley blend). This year, we made two lots harvested about two weeks apart from the back hill. The finished lots remind me a bit of 2003, when the early-harvest grapes ended up in the AV blend and the later harvest fruit became the 2003 Red Winery Single Vineyard.

Tasting the two together, I initially found the later, riper grapes made a more appealing wine – dark, rich, and smooth. But, after going back and tasting again, I began to feel that the wine from the first harvest, which was slightly lighter in color and texture, was nonetheless more compelling. The unique quality of this vineyard is not its potential to produce huge, heavy Cabernet, but the fact that it consistently yields wines with amazingly floral, bright, exotic aromas and flavors. These things are not the qualities most winemakers in California shoot for with Cabernet but, to me, they are fascinating.

The 2010 has this same spicy, exotic quality so uncommon in Cabernet. The predominant fruit character is red cherry, mixed with aromas of clove, cinnamon, and nutmeg. The acid and tannin are pronounced at this young age and I recommend aging this wine for at least a year to let these myriad flavors and aromas integrate and to let the tannins soften. Drink starting in 2015.

Some of you are also receiving our **2009 Alexander Valley Estate Merlot**. Every vintage of Merlot we have produced since the inaugural 2002 has come from the same small block of fruit on our Red Winery Vineyard, originally planted by my parents in 1973. The soil at the Red Winery is a jigsaw of various types, and the section where the Merlot grows is mostly clay. It has long been my theory that this dirt, which is similar to the soil found on Bordeaux's Right Bank, is largely responsible for the subtle power of our Merlot — the fruit is bright and intense, cherry-driven, with undertones of baking spice and enough acid and tannin to hold the wine together for years of aging. Drink now through 2020.

For those of you in our Flight Club, this package contains a few precious bottles of our **2012 Home Chardonnay**. We have been growing grapes on the Home ranch since 1972 and producing our own crisp, clean, no-new-oak style of Chardonnay since 2005. When we first made this Chardonnay – perhaps more akin in style to Sauvignon Blanc – it was almost unheard of. These days, it is all the rage. Still, what makes this Chardonnay special is less the process than the site. Although we label it as Alexander Valley, that doesn't accurately represent its actual location. It is, in fact, a few miles south of the main valley, tucked into the matrix of overlapping hills and waterways that separate the relatively warm Alexander Valley from the considerably cooler Russian River Valley. This vineyard lies just on the border, planted in gravel and loam, along a tributary of the Russian River. The 2013 has just completed fermentation and the aromas of citrus and pineapple are phenomenal. After almost a year in the bottle, the 2012 retains a fair measure of this same brilliant, fresh fruit character and combines it with a touch of yeast, golden toast and a slightly flinty finish. Enjoy it while it lasts.

The next time I write this letter, we will have opened the futures offering for our 2012 Single Vineyard Cabernets. 2012 has already developed a reputation as the greatest vintage in recent memory and, having tasted the wines from barrel, I think that is hard to argue with. That said, I think 2013 may prove to be equally fabulous. The last two years have been a great blessing in terms of the wine we have been able to produce. For me, the prospect of sharing these fantastic wines with our small circle of patrons is equally exciting.

Thank you for your support. – Jake