



# THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

May 6, 2013

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

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Friends,

I'm getting the band back together. I've been here banging on the drums for my friend Doug's band for the last two years, and I just feel like I'm lost back there, man. People need to hear me sing. Luckily, I knocked down a few walls in my house while my wife was out of the town, and the acoustics in there make me sound like a team of Gregorian monks. I got out a mic and my old threadbare Martin and hooked them both up to this five dollar Crate amplifier that's basically made out of cardboard and epoxy resin that I've kept in the closet since my wilder days. Then I cut loose. I sang all the hits. I sang "The Fur." I sang "Cities of the Plain." I sang "It's Only the World." After a few cocktails, my tone was finding its way back to glory. That old amp is possessed. You touch a string and it sounds like you woke up the ghosts trapped in there and they are screaming to get out. I told it so. The amplifier, I mean. I had a few more cocktails. I didn't spare it any praise. I was conversing with the furniture a bit between numbers, lacking any other company. I got warm and opened the windows to allow the breeze in. I was halfway through a song called "Randolph", which is about my imaginary relationship with the famous media mogul William Randolph Hearst, when I looked over and saw my wife and two daughters standing in the open door.

"Hello, honey," I said. I started across the room to her and pulled the amplifier off its chair with the guitar cable. It filled the room with its horrifying spectral screech. Finally I managed to put down the guitar and approach my family. They had not moved from where they stood in the door. The children's faces were pale and confused. My wife looked slightly annoyed but not too bad, considering.

"You like what I've done with the place?" I said. "How was Florida?"

My wife looked at me – shirtless, shoeless, eyes like the Cheshire cat.

"Frances got attacked by a shark."

"What?" I said, bending down. "Are you all right, honey?"

"It was fun," Franny said.

"No big deal," my wife said. "I choked it out and that was that. Some rednecks barbecued it and fed half of Pensacola."

"That's great," I said, "I want to hear all about it."

My wife stepped inside and breathed deeply, as though assessing the disaster with her sinuses.

"All right," she said, "mothball the Sammy Hagar routine and get this place cleaned up."

"Right away," I said. "It was a just a feeling I –"

"And do some sit-ups."

"Of course," I said.

It is, of course, far too early to draw any conclusions about what sort of growing season this will be, but so far, it has been very exciting. It has been ninety degrees here nearly every day this week, and it was fairly warm in the few weeks running up to this one, as well. The vines are well ahead of where they usually are at this time of year, and everything looks beautiful. The only challenge is in figuring out how to keep up with it all. We have a crew of a dozen guys working just trying to take off the new shoots we don't want and leave the ones we do. They'll be at it from now until June. In light of all this hard, anonymous work, I feel compelled to mention that my job consists largely of taking credit for things somebody else does. Good winemaking, as far as I'm concerned, consists mostly of not screwing up good grapes. The work of delivering those grapes is done almost entirely by people your average wine drinker will never meet, much less congratulate. So, with your hearts, at least, thank them.



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Before I get to the wines in this shipment, I've got a short list of new developments to announce. First of all, we just finished building the prettiest horseshoe pits you'll ever see out in back of the garden at our tasting room in Alexander Valley. So, I invite you all to come out this summer and chuck things around. While you're here, have a glass of our 2012 Vin Gris. It's the best rosé I've ever made, and we'll be serving it all summer, on the house, to wine club members who show up for our Summer Nights events. Those start July 7th, with music by The Easy Leaves and food by Boffo Cart, and run every Saturday through September. They're great parties, and they're for wine club members.

Now, about the wine in this shipment:

Everybody is getting a few bottles of **2008 Alexander Valley Estate Cabernet** in this shipment. It is, as usual, one hundred percent Cabernet Sauvignon and contains fruit from all three of our vineyards – Red Winery, Stone, and Pyramid. Of late, I have been fooling around with a Bordeaux blend that includes Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc and, while it is delicious, it does not have the kind of grit and backbone of pure Cabernet. 2008 was the smallest yield we've had in forty years of farming and the the kind of intensity we look for in our fruit is right out front in this wine – it will age! If you have a few bottles in your cellar, crack one now, but do yourself a favor and save a few for another five years. To get an idea of what that wine will be like then, come taste our 2002.

Everyone is also receiving a bottle of **2009 Red Winery Cabernet** in this shipment. That's it for this wine; it's gone. So, if you're looking to hold on to some, save what you're getting in this shipment. I would describe Red Winery as the most mild-mannered of our three vineyards – while the Pyramid is dark and super intense and the Stone is consistently tannic and closed when young, single-vineyard Cabernets from Red Winery have an elegance and floral aroma that the other two lack. The fruit is bright red cherry and, with age, these wines are silky and long in the finish and show that unique aromatic hallmark of aged Bordeaux – fresh tobacco. Soft as it is when it's young, this wine sticks around in the cellar.

Also in this shipment is our **2008 Merlot**. Just as with every vintage of our Merlot, the 2008 is one hundred percent Merlot from our Red Winery Vineyard, planted by my dad in 1973. I think this vineyard is magic for Merlot. We grow Merlot on the Stone Vineyard as well, but there is no comparison between the quality of the wines produced from these two vineyards. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about our Merlot from our Red Winery Vineyard is its smell – dried cherries mixed with nutmeg and clove, a touch of earth, a touch of leather. These things are there now, but in a few years they will only become more pronounced. The thing that stands out to me in the 2008 vintage of this wine is the mouthfeel – full and round and coating, without being sweet or jammy. The 2008 Stone Cabernet had that same, full mouthfeel, and I marvelled at it every time I tasted the wine. Honestly, I don't know where these things come from, but I'm glad they're there.

For many of you, our **2012 Home Chardonnay** is also included here. This wine is way too good to be this cheap. It is a single-vineyard from our ranch on Chalk Hill Road that my dad planted in 1972, and we make about 500 cases of it a year. The site is a spectacular one for Chardonnay – a little hollow all the way down at the southern tip of Alexander Valley where it joins with Russian River Valley. The fruit it produces is some of the best of both those worlds. It gets a touch of tropical fruit from Alexander Valley (pineapple, slight banana) and plenty of citrus and green apple from the cooling effect of the nearby Russian River. It is aged on the lees in neutral barrels for about six months and comes out fresh and bright. I only wish there was more of it.

In closing, I'd like to thank you all again for your support. We started this business to make wine the way we like it. If you didn't like it too, that wouldn't be possible. So thank you and happy drinking.

- Jake