



# THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

September 16, 2013

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

Friends,

2013 has already proven to be a fairly remarkable vintage. First, the weather was good all summer. Then, the other night, a comet landed near the town of Healdsburg. I guess most of you have already read about this and seen pictures on the news and so forth. It was a fairly dramatic event, even for Healdsburg. Right away it got people talking about back when Count Basie and his band played the roller rink on the back side of Fitch Mountain and then, in the same year, Bart Summerton took the Northwestern regionals in the over 50 horsepower tractor pull national open. Culturally speaking, it has pretty much been downhill since then. That was until the comet.

My friend Jody and I were out in the garden admiring my corn plants when the comet hit. Don't get any ideas, by the way, Jody is a man's name sometimes, too. The corn itself is a phenomenon – it is regular old Silver Queen over twelve feet tall. There has been speculation by some local farming experts that perhaps this inordinate size is due to radioactive influence of some kind. Rumors have circulated for years that early tests of the hydrogen bomb were performed in a hundred thousand square foot vault beneath the Jimtown Store but, other than exceptional produce, there is very little to support this claim.

At any rate, there we were when the comet flew by. It wasn't yellow, as I always thought the light of a comet would be, but more of a blue. The sky was dark and then, suddenly, it was there. Everything – the fields, the mountains, the high valley oak in Mary Kelly's yard were briefly awash in this brilliant blue light. Then there was a considerable boom, heard off in the direction of town, and the ground shook a little bit.

“You ever take Mylanta?” Jody said, “You know, for your intestinal discontents?”

“Why?”

“I swear I just saw a giant blue light rush across the sky.”

“I don't believe it was the Mylanta,” I said.

So we got in the truck and drove over there. The crater was maybe a few acres in size. It was not much to look at – more or less just a big gravel pit. The comet had landed right on top of Darrel Drew's house, an old real estate man we refer to as The Owl. There was no sign of the house. I guess it had been what they call “vaporized.” Well, so much for The Owl, we thought. Suddenly this whole comet thing did not seem so grand. As any farmer can tell, good luck does not exist.

There were a few other townspeople there. Like Jody and me, they had brought beer, and we all sat there with our feet dangling over the rim of the crater, swapping stories about The Owl. In life, he had his enemies, but after a few hours of drinking beer and sharing remembrances, it felt as though the community would be a shell of its former self in his absence. Encounters with the cosmos are funny that way.

It turned out, of course, that The Owl was not dead at all, but had fallen asleep in the parking lot of the Dairy Queen and snored through the whole thing. We were mostly asleep ourselves when he arrived home and began swatting us with his cane, telling us to get off his land and calling us “dust bowl morons.” Death hadn't softened him a bit – he was still the same old son of a buck he's always been. Still, as we drove back to work with the sun just coming up, we knew that we would never see him the same way again. He was our friend now, whether he liked it or not.

That's one of the things I love about this farming life – you start out every day with an idea of where it's going but the hours just have a mind of their own.



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This is the first shipment of our **2009 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**. It is one hundred percent Cabernet Sauvignon and is sourced from all three of our estate vineyards here in the valley – 45% from the Pyramid, 30% from Stone, and 25% from Red Winery. What strikes me most about this wine is the combination of generous fruit it shows coupled with a fairly tannic, almost tart finish. A relatively high percentage of the blend is accounted by grapes from the Pyramid, and this is reflected both in the dark color of the 2009 and in the character of its fruit, which runs toward plum and black cherry and then seems to brighten at the finish. My notes also include cocoa, leather, and blackberries. There is a lot of complexity here and while this wine is pretty abundant now, I think a bit more aging is in order for it to drink at its best. Open starting in 2014.

The other Cabernet in this shipment is our **2009 Pyramid**. The Pyramid is the youngest of our three vineyards – we bought it as a 115-acre abandoned cattle ranch in 1995 and planted about 20 acres of grapes. It lies in the mountains between Chalk Hill and Knights Valley and the relatively small vineyard is composed entirely of steep hills, slopes that include every possible aspect, and a soil type called Sonoma Volcanics, which is a blend of ancient sedimentary soils as old as two million years, together with modern volcanic soils like obsidian and compressed volcanic ash. There is very little top soil here, and that lack of available food, combined with the rather extreme mountain exposure tends to make very dark, intense Cabernet. Right now, the nose shows fresh plums along with a touch of leather and dust. The flavor combines dark fruits with a certain salty, tangy flavor unique to young Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink starting in 2015.

Also in some shipments is our **2008 Merlot**. Every vintage for this wine since the first one we made in 2002 has come from the same block in our Red Winery Road Vineyard, originally planted in 1973. The soil here is mostly clay, which is usually considered very undesirable for growing grapes. However, it has long been my theory that this dirt, which is similar to the soil found in Bordeaux's Right Bank, is largely responsible for the subtle grace of this 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. That aging, I think, is where the real strength of this Merlot emerges. Drink now with grilled meats; drink starting in 2017 to discover something new in wine.

Finally, some of you are lucky enough to be receiving some of our **2012 Home Chardonnay**. We just crushed the 2013 Vintage for this wine earlier in the week and it already reminds me a good deal of the 2012. The fruit is harvested at relatively low brix and the wine is fermented in stainless steel and then sent to barrel in old cooperage of various origins. It stays on the lees for about six months, stirred once a week, and then goes in the bottle. The result is a light, fresh Chardonnay with a great citrus and green apple character. I made my first wine from this vineyard when I was in high school and, while our methods of winemaking are a bit different than they were then, the vineyard is the same, and I think that's where the magic of this wine comes from. What a lucky thing to call it our own.

Thanks for your support and please come visit us any time.

- Jake