



THE HAWKES WINE CLUB

May 22, 2023

A LETTER TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

I finally got to space. I mean, I guess not like, outer space. But, nonetheless, mark it down: I have exited the Earth's atmosphere. I'm a little sheepish about bringing it up. It feels more like the kind of thing you'd mention over a fishing pole than an event that warrants written record. Like the beach in Croatia or cathartic realizations about childhood that lead to a more fulfilling relationship with the ones we love: what was once aspirational has become old hat.

I did it for my wife, really. She's always stretching the limits of my willingness to see new things. As far as I'm concerned, it's hard to beat right here. I'm a simple man. By which I mean I'm dense and unsophisticated. I like Little Richard. I like quesadillas. I like the smell of diesel fuel.

But, as some hippy said, it's not about the destination, it's about the journey. Even if everybody's been everywhere, *you* still have to go. And, as I'm sure you're aware, opportunities for space travel abound. You've got your luxury liners and slug bugs and everything in between. The Warriors are in the playoffs right now and I can't get through a quarter without Draymond Green getting called for a technical and the broadcast cutting away to some slicko with cap teeth pitching me on "The ease and comfort of space travel in America's Gulf Coast." Apologies to my many relatives there, but I'd rather give biodynamic Spätburgunder another shot than blow my vacation time in that armpit. I don't care if you've got lamb's wool toilet seats and "all the cocaine you can snort," my tourist dollars are staying in Northern California.

It was my wife, Laura, who finally got me signed up. She was a modern woman when we met and has done her best to stay that way, even as I moved her to the country and come home every night with pucky on my boots and say something like, "Who doesn't love a corn dog?"

"Look at you," she said, "you're so far behind that if you don't get going, you'll never catch up. You'll just become a walking artifact."

"Exactly," I said. "I start fooling around with rocket ships, the next thing you know I'll understand what people in the grocery are yammering about. Nightmare scenario."

We went back and forth like that for years. When we weren't sparring verbally she was working on a low-key propaganda campaign – leaving space travel brochures on the seat of my tractor, in the beer section of the refrigerator, in the jackets of my Sturgill Simpson albums.

"Look," she finally said, "I think I found a space travel company you're really going to like. It's up in Shelter Cove. Started by a local guy named Eddie Parsec. I guess he was a diesel mechanic before he got into spaceships. You like diesel, right?"

"Eddie Parsec?" I said "Isn't that the name of an 80's music guy?"

"I think you're thinking of Eddie Money," Laura said.

"Nope," I said.

"Eddie Rabbit?" she said.

"Nope," I said.



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“Eddy Grant?”

“Nope.”

“Eddie Vedder?”

“Vedder was more like the 90’s,” I said. “In fact, an argument could be made that he didn’t do his best work until after the turn of the millennium.”

It’s a long drive up to Shelter Cove. We brought our dog, Charles, along. He’s a young pitbull and kept the windshield fogged with enthusiasm the whole way. It makes you wonder what happened to your own sense of wonder. It is beautiful country around here. But could it not be said that all country is beautiful country? Or, by the same token, that there is no beautiful country, that all views are simply a reflection of our own state of mind? Happiness can be found anywhere, likewise, despair.

“I’m Eddie Parsec,” Eddie Parsec said, reaching out to shake my hand. He was a little guy. People of diminutive stature usually put me at ease, but Eddie intimidated me. He had a mullet and broken front tooth, yet he exuded the sort of smartass charisma I know my wife goes for. There is no aphrodisiac like confidence, even if that confidence is founded on goose crap.

This is what I used to be, I thought, shaking Eddie’s hand, *what am I now?*

“Space travel doesn’t have to be all froo froo,” Eddie said. “That was me and Logan’s idea. Logan is my little brother. He’s a wiz with a soldering iron. What we’ve put together here is a space travel experience for folks who are more comfortable on a jet ski than a yacht, you feel me?”

Laura poked me in the ribs and winked.

“We feel you,” she said.

“Not me,” I said. “I don’t feel a thing.”

I looked down at Charles. I couldn’t tell if he felt anything or not.

“Let me show you around the place,” Eddie Parsec said.

We went around the back of the office where there was a giant barn out on a bluff. It actually turned out there was no barn, just the façade. Behind that was a rocket ship about sixty feet tall.

“Don’t be fooled by her rustic façade,” Eddie Parsec was saying, “The nose cone is made of over three hundred layers of atomized bentonite gauze treated with a patented patina we developed right here. It’s called Farm Charm. Cozy looking, huh?”

“What do you think?” Laura said.

“I guess it looks alright,” I said.

As we were standing there, the engines fired up and the ground began to rumble.

“Oooh,” Laura said. “Exciting.”

She looked at me.

“Yeah,” I said, “Exciting.”



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"I tell you what," Eddie said. "If you folks are game, we can head out this afternoon. It's perfect flying weather and the forecast for the entire middle band of the solar system is nothing but blue skies. Mars, Venus. Heck, if we shake a leg we can get you to Jupiter in time to catch the sunset."

"What do you say, honey?" Laura said.

I looked out at the ocean.

"I'll go if Charles can go," I said.

We settled on Mars. Laura acted like she was doing it to please me but I think she always wanted to go herself. She'll vibe you like her idea of the perfect vacation is lying around on Venus all day but she likes roughing it, too. As for the trip itself, I have no complaints. It's just over fourteen hours from Shelter Cove to Mars. I was worried about Charles – where he would go to the bathroom, etc. but they had that worked out.

We were pretty bushed when we got in. I could have just gone up to the room, flopped down on the bed, and watched TV but Laura was all excited. She had read about this cute little Martian Bistro that "did incredible things with halibut." So we went down there. It was only a few blocks from the hotel, so we walked. I guess the temperature on Mars used to be a major impediment to outdoor tourism but that's apparently been remedied. Magnesium is involved somehow, I can't remember exactly. We left Charles back in the room. I put on Charlie's Angels and let him get on the bed.

"You look happy," I said to Laura.

"I am," she said. "How about you?"

"Yeah," I said. "I'm good."

"It reminds me of when you first brought me to Healdsburg," she said. "It made me kind of nervous, but I loved it."

"What made you nervous about it?" I said.

"It was so far from what I knew. No people, no buildings. Nothing familiar. To be honest, I think I worried I might not know who I was without that stuff."

"Huh," I said. "Well, did you?"

"I did, yeah," Laura said. "It's just stuff, after all. It's not who we are."

"I guess that's true of everything," I said. "I mean I guess that's true of our house, too. The kitchen table my dad made. The bed we sleep in."

"That's right," Laura said. "That's just stuff."

"I guess it's true of the ranch, too," I said. "The dirt and the vines and the trees. The river. All of it is just stuff."

"That's right," she said. "Stuff."

"I guess it's true of the planet, even," I said. "I guess the earth is just one big ball of stuff."

"You tell me," Laura said. "How do you feel, here on Mars? Do you feel like you've changed in some



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fundamental capacity?” I looked around – at the other customers in the restaurant, at the red sky outside the window. I held out my arm and turned it back and forth and looked at it.

“I guess I feel pretty much like myself.”

“Me, too,” Laura said.

We had a nice walk home. Or, back to the hotel, I mean. When we got there, Charles had eaten the TV remote and was chewing on the batteries. I thought maybe his mouth was full of battery acid, but I couldn't tell. He was panting, but he usually is. I took him into the bathroom and splashed water in his mouth and he shook battery acid slobber all over the place and ran out and jumped on the bed and stayed up there spinning donuts.

A solar day on Mars is almost the same as it is on Earth, only 29 minutes longer. But the sunsets are incredible. There's a ton of atmospheric dust up there and, although it's not something you can detect in the near-sky (like smog) it makes for incredible sunsets – green and purple and blue. After Charles settled down, Laura and I sat on the edge of the bed and looked out the window. Our hands found each other and we held on.

Many of you have just received a bottle (or three) of our **2018 Pyramid Vineyard Cabernet**. Of the three vineyards we own and farm, I think of the Pyramid as the most no-fail. 2011 was undoubtedly the most challenging vintage of my career and, even then, this vineyard produced half a dozen great lots of Cabernet. What's more, the aspect and soil vary enough at Pyramid that every part of the field produces a substantially different wine, all of them good. What all wines in every vintage of Pyramid have in common is darkness and intensity. The challenge here isn't extraction or concentration, it's balance.

The signature aroma and flavor of Santa Rosa plum are immediately apparent in the 2018 Pyramid but so are other non-fruit elements: coffee, baking chocolate, a touch of fennel and coriander. Great acid for wine with so much extraction. It somehow manages to feel both dense and bright on the palate. It's a pleasure to drink the 2018 right now but it also feels like a bit of shame. It needs time to smooth out and open up. Drink 2024 through 2030.

I'd like to think that our **2020 Estate Merlot** is a reminder of why this much overlooked varietal has a place in the pantheon of great wines. Our 2020 Merlot comes from the same few acres of vines we have been farming in the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains since 1972. Too much American Merlot is made as poor man's Cabernet. Not this time. What a lovely, floral expression of the varietal. Violets and blueberries and allspice. Not exactly soft, but an easy and pleasing texture. Very drinkable now, but will improve with another few years of aging. Try not to guzzle.

The **2019 Alexander Valley Estate Cabernet** is always one hundred percent varietal and always a blend of fruit from all three of the vineyards we farm. We don't aim to make the same wine every year, we aim to make the best wine possible every year. The through line is balance. The 2019 shows loads of dark fruit both in the aroma and on the palate; I get black cherry and plum and blackberry. But this is not a ponderous, top-heavy wine. The acid is bright and the tannins are long and lean. Complex but very, very drinkable (now through 2030).



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The **2021 Home Vineyard Chardonnay**, as with every vintage of Hawkes Chardonnay, comes from the ranch on Chalk Hill Road and I think there may be more magic in this vineyard than in any other I have come across in my winemaking life. A lot of it is the soil – an ancient creek bed in a bowl of volcanic ash. The 2021 is a surprisingly rich version of this typically lean wine. Citrus dominates the aroma and the flavor: Meyer lemon, mandarin, grapefruit. But there's definitely a tropical layer here, too. Is that guava or passionfruit? Wowzers.

Thank you for your support.

- Jake