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University of California
Berkeley, California

Geraldine Mosby
Mosby Winery - Santa Ynez Valley of Santa Barbara County

Interviews conducted by
Susan Goldstein
in 1994

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Interview with Geraldine Mosby

Interview 1:January 28, 1994

Begin Audio File 1 mosby_geraldine1 01-28-1994.wav

1-00:00:00

Goldstein: It's January 28, 1994 and I'm talking to Geri Mosby at Mosby Winery.

1-00:00:05

Mosby: [Tape interrupts]—You may want to take that and use it, it's the one that we give out to people about the winery, how we got started and everything, it kind of lays everything out for you.

1-00:00:18

Goldstein: Yes, I have a folder on you guys so any information that you have, I'll just stick in the folder. That's good, I have, you know, old articles from the news press and stuff.

1-00:00:26

Mosby: Mm-hmm.

1-00:00:26

Goldstein: Okay. So let's just start from the beginning, who founded the winery and the vineyard and when?

1-00:00:32

Mosby: Well, Bill Mosby founded it, and, Bill and I, but everything is in his name, the winery. And it was in 1971 that we planted our first grapes and the winery was founded in 1979.

1-00:00:45

Goldstein: Okay.

1-00:00:47

Mosby: And the early projections were,—we meant to sell grapes, that's what we started off by just planting grapes in another site across the river, and we had a lot of little insignificant little problems and just couldn't sell grapes, per se, so we decided to have a winery.

1-00:01:13

Goldstein: Okay. But do you sell grapes now?

1-00:01:17

Mosby: No. We use all of our own grapes.

1-00:01:19

Goldstein: You do use your own? Okay.

1-00:01:21

Mosby: But we have sold some in the past but today we use all of our own grapes.

1-00:01:24
Goldstein: Okay. And now I know I asked you this when I walked in but now the tape's on—so, it was originally called “Vega Vineyards”?

1-00:01:30
Mosby: Yes.

1-00:01:30
Goldstein: And then, when did you change the name?

1-00:01:29
Mosby: 1986. The ranch site here is the site of the original land [grant] called the “Rancho de la Vega.”

1-00:01:38
Goldstein: Okay.

1-00:01:39
Mosby: Vega Vineyards seemed like a good name for a winery.

1-00:01:42
Goldstein: Yes.

1-00:01:42
Mosby: Well, it appeared not to be a great name.

1-00:01:42
Goldstein: It wasn't, okay. The house is original to the family?

1-00:01:48
Mosby: It's—yes, it's adobe that was built in 1853, and right now mud houses don't handle too well in earthquakes and rain, so we're doing a lot of bolstering the walls for it.

1-00:02:01
Goldstein: It's a great old house!

1-00:02:04
Mosby: It's good.

1-00:02:06
Goldstein: Why did you decide to start the winery?

1-00:02:08
Mosby: Well—

1-00:02:11
Goldstein: Did you have an image of what kind of wine you wanted to make or what you wanted it to be like?

1-00:02:15
Mosby: Actually, just—a gamble, you know, it was like other people were planting grapes at the time and like I said, we planted grapes first and then as we went

along it was like, “We can do better making wine,” so we bought this site specifically for that. For the winery, and we planted the first grapes here. And it just sort of like grabbed our fancy at the time, and my husband is very bright and likes new projects and everything and just sort of took off on it. We didn’t really understand the business when we got started but we’ve hung in there and I think that we’re quite knowledgeable today. It went very well.

1-00:03:08

Goldstein: Okay.

1-00:03:11

Mosby: And we were also talking to other people in the area who were growing grapes, and so we knew it could be done. And our first Woodstock came from Bob Gallo who was a fraternity brother of my dad, so—and he had said that they were planting grapes over here and it was a good area to get started in.

1-00:03:28

Goldstein: Okay, because you were one of the first—you were one of the early people to get in on the industry here.

1-00:03:33

Mosby: Right, right.

1-00:03:33

Goldstein: And then, your sons are both involved, but was this before or after?

1-00:03:37

Mosby: No, well, our son Gary went off to school, we had already planted the first grapes, but he went off to school, we had already planted the first grapes, but he went off to school as a Food Science major, went to Davis. And he was up there like, one year and he’s like, “I want to be a winemaker.” I was like, “Well go be a winemaker, then.” So he went four more years and so he has a degree in Food Science and in Enology. But he now has his own little winery project, so he’s making wine in Santa Maria on his own. And, umm, our other son, Michael went to Cal Poly and actually, he was in agriculture business, but more animal science, he’s much more of an animal person—today he still [shows] horses and trains horses, that’s really what his love is, but him and his wife just acquired some property and have just put in their first vineyard.

1-00:04:24

Goldstein: Oh, they did? [Laughs]

1-00:04:23

Mosby: So, that’s what he kind of likes to do, he’s not really into winemaking, per se, but he likes growing the grapes and he’s doing some different things. He lives up in the Paso Robles area, actually lives in Monterey County, above Paso Robles. But some different grapes he’s planting over there, I’m not going to say anything about what he’s doing because that’s his project, but yeah they’re involved in it, too.

1-00:04:45

Goldstein: That's funny, the whole family.

1-00:04:45

Mosby: Well, we like wine and we like food a lot and it just all sort of goes together.

1-00:04:51

Goldstein: Yes. Wow, that's great. Okay, some of the details—how large is the winery or vineyard in terms of acreage? How much wine do you produce?

1-00:05:01

Mosby: Okay, the planted acres of grapes, there's 35 acres, and we make 5,000 cases of wine a year. Let's see, has it grown or expanded? Yes, we started off with eight acres of grapes and somewhere between 500 and 1,000 cases, I don't remember exactly the very first wines we made, how much we made. And it, and it, yeah. the future look of things has changed totally. We started off with Riesling and Gewertztraminer, which are very good grapes for the area, they do not command a high price, they're not real challenging or anything like that. So now we have basically no Riesling, and a little bit of Gewertztraminer, we grafted it—probably the best grafters in the county [laughs] maybe in the state, we've grafted so many of our grapes over to different varieties, and we're still doing that today.

1-00:05:56

Goldstein: Okay. I know when we met Bill out in the vineyard, he was excited about the Brunello and the Italian varieties.

1-00:06:03

Mosby: Yes, yes. The wonderful thing is that although we've been making them since 1989, from grapes that we purchased from other vineyards, from another vineyard, last year in '93 we got our first grapes of our own, and they are so wonderful. There's a real conflict of interest between growers and winemakers, you know, a grower wants to get as much product as he can from his acreage. Tonnage is very important to him. To a winemaker, tonnage is not all that important but the quality of the grapes is important.

1-00:06:35

Goldstein: Mm-hmm.

1-00:06:36

Mosby: And so when you have both, like we do, we can make up our own wine how we want to do it. But it is a one-shot chance every year, so if you over-cropped, then the next year you have to change that pruning, you change that, and fining and everything.

1-00:06:51

Goldstein: Do you now use grapes mostly from your own vineyard, or—

1-00:06:55
Mosby: Yes. Yes. The only thing! Well, it's almost 100% from our vineyard, in fact in 1993 we purchased one grape from somebody else.

1-00:07:05
Goldstein: Oh, okay.

1-00:07:07
Mosby: Everything else was, was estate.

1-00:07:09
Goldstein: Okay.

1-00:07:09
Mosby: And we'll have more grapes going into production every year because we've been planting over all these years, too.

1-00:07:14
Goldstein: Now when you start, when you introduce a new grape, how much do you give over to that, I mean how long is it experimental? Do you have a certain plan for that?

1-00:07:25
Mosby: Actually, Bill's really cognizant of those kinds of things. All I ever look at is the dollars and cents, kind of bottom line sort of things. One of our vineyards are real, real large, one of our plantings, are real large, five, maybe 10 acres.

1-00:07:38
Goldstein: Mm-hmm.

1-00:07:40
Mosby: And, he would probably put in, like a row or two and see what happens. But because we've been in the business so long now, we also have a good idea from just seeing what everybody else is doing, what's going to work well for us.

1-00:07:52
Goldstein: You know, in this history we're interested in what kind of grapes people started with, and then what didn't work. You know, and then people said, I mean besides wine tastes changing, I think a lot of people here started with very sweet wines and now are switching over. But also, which grapes?

1-00:08:07
Mosby: Well we started with Riesling and Gewürztraminer, which traditionally in the United States are sweet wines. They're not necessarily sweet in other places in other places in the world, but here they're sweet. And um, the price is kept at a minimum for those grapes, also—not the grapes, for the wines. So you also have, as you go along, you have to look at the bottom dollar line, too, you know? It takes exactly the same amount of ground and pruning and picking and bottle costs and all that stuff, for a six or seven dollar bottle wine as it does for a 15 or 20 dollar bottle of wine. And, we've been really fortunate that

we've had really good grapes and Bill's a very fine winemaker and we now are at the forefront with the Italian varietals which have just really taken off and are really, really good for our business. But I really hope that not everybody else jumps on the bandwagon and does that, which is what farmers always do, you know? One farmer gets a good crop of tomatoes so everybody plants tomatoes.

1-00:09:09

Goldstein: Right, see what works, I mean you want to do that!

1-00:09:11

Mosby: [Laughs] but then it doesn't work anymore!

1-00:09:12

Goldstein: Right, right. Well that's—it's good and it's bad to be first. Did you have grapes that didn't work? That weren't right for wines?

1-00:09:23

Mosby: Actually no because we never did plant Sauvignon Blanc or Cabernet or Zinfandel, these are not good grapes for this area except in very small, vineyards, I mean very selective places to grow them. They just do not do real well in the area. We did not have any of those planted.

1-00:09:46

Goldstein: Do you sell your grapes to other people?

1-00:09:48

Mosby: We have, we don't today. We use everything today.

1-00:09:52

Goldstein: Okay, so you used to but not anymore. Do people from Napa buy grapes from people down here?

1-00:09:58

Mosby: Yes. In fact, they also buy wineries. They bought Byron, and they—Kendall-Jackson put Cambria in down here.

1-00:10:06

Goldstein: Oh, I just read about that. Okay, so that's happening more.

1-00:10:10

Mosby: Yes, they're probably 75-85% of the grapes grown in Santa Barbara County are sold outside the County.

1-00:10:17

Goldstein: What about diseases, you know phylloxera, or this sharp shooter coming through, you don't have any of these?

1-00:10:25

Mosby: We—we are not bothered by any of those kinds of things today.

1-00:10:27

Goldstein: And you're not worried about it happening down here?

1-00:10:31

Mosby: No, no. I think everybody's—you know those things are spread a lot of times by your shoes and your machinery going from one vineyard to another, and if you're real careful and keep everything real clean—you know Bill's a doctor so he's really cognizant of cleanliness and everything, so it does carry through into the winery, too.

1-00:10:49

Goldstein: That's interesting, sterilizing your equipment.

1-00:10:52

Mosby: Not sterilizing but you just wash it off, you don't let some—like our laborers don't go from one vineyard to another, they just work here.

1-00:10:59

Goldstein: That's something I was going to ask about, the people working for you.

1-00:11:02

Mosby: Well we really only—we have one full time person that works in the vineyard and when we're pruning, like now, we take like day labor that comes around.

1-00:11:11

Goldstein: Okay, so the one full time person kind of supervises the field work?

1-00:11:17

Mosby: Uh, no—Bill supervises the field work, he does all the—if we use any insecticides, pesticides or any chemicals of any kind in the vineyard, he does it himself because that way it's just, you can be more careful and you know exactly what's happening. And we only have, like 35 acres of vineyards, it's not like it's a—in fact, he's a “do-er” anyway, rather than a manager. He likes to have hands-on.

1-00:11:42

Goldstein: Get out there with his boots on.

1-00:11:44

Mosby: Yes.

1-00:11:44

Goldstein: When you're in the busy season, how many people are working for you?

1-00:11:49

Mosby: It would probably be the same amount. If we were going to bottle for any length of time we would maybe bring in three people. A lot of times three women, because bottling is really easy.

1-00:12:01

Goldstein: Okay. And then in the fields picking?

1-00:12:03

Mosby:

Picking, we use a harvester a lot, which works out good for a us and we have not seen any difference in handpicking or harvest picking. Except for Pinot Noir, you know that's handpicked. But sometimes we'll all go out there and pick, too. You know, you just have to do what you have to do. But you can usually pick up a crew.

1-00:12:23

Goldstein:

In your experience did most of the crews, stay in this area or do they rotate up and down the state?

1-00:12:32

Mosby:

Well I don't think they go up and down the state but they—I mean they might use a three-county area. Maybe they work in Ventura or Santa Barbara and San Luis. But we have a—we have a lot of agricultural industry and so we have a lot of people who are in the area. A lot of them don't like to be tied down to a regular job all the time. I've had many, many that did not want full time jobs. Every once in a while you run across somebody who's, you know who's a real good worker and it's like, "Oh I'd like to have him be on all the time—" but he's like, "No, I don't want to be tied down to a job."

1-00:13:10

Goldstein:

And Bill's the winemaker, right?

1-00:13:13

Mosby:

Yes. And his helper is another [of our sons], Rick. Rick kind of [unintelligible] so he doesn't do a lot of things on his own but he follows orders pretty good.

1-00:13:25

Goldstein:

And do you bottle here, or is there a collective—

1-00:13:28

Mosby:

Yes.

1-00:13:28

Goldstein:

Oh, you have your own bottling operation.

1-00:13:30

Mosby:

Yes, in fact we do—that's one of the ways we stayed in business is that we have a pretty sophisticated fast-operating bottling line and we do a lot of private bottling for other people, too.

1-00:13:41

Goldstein:

Oh, okay. So technology that you use to grow and process the grapes—so, you do use pesticides? Bill talked about this a little.

1-00:13:53

Mosby:

Um, yes—when necessary, to control mildew and weeds, that's the only thing we use it for. We may use a—what do they call that stuff that they put down

the rows to keep the weeds from growing in the rows? Like once every five years, you use it, you don't have to use it very often.

1-00:14:13

Goldstein: Because some of these people are moving towards organic, it's interesting, although very small areas, it's just new, I wonder how many people down here are doing it?

1-00:14:21

Mosby: Well yes, it's small. You'd have to have—like I could see if I had two acres in my backyard, it'd be no problem, we have a lot of these little vineyards in the area, two to five acres over in Santa Ynez Valley over there y'know. And so they can do that real easy. We've never had any pest problems, or bugs or any of those kinds of things. Never.

1-00:14:48

Goldstein: Hand or machine pick?

1-00:14:51

Mosby: He said—this is what decided, the holistic approach using modern technology when possible, we use stainless processing as little as possible, we use stainless steel because it's easier to keep clean, everything is stainless. And we sometimes filter the wines, not always. Depending on which wine it is. You know, it's interesting if you go to Europe, you frequently find—I just came back from Italy, and you frequently find stuff in the bottom of the bottles because they don't filter it a great deal. But in America they do not want to find—

1-00:15:29

Goldstein: They don't want that sediment.

1-00:15:30

Mosby: That's right [laughs].

1-00:15:32

Goldstein: Well, that's what we heard, that Sanford doesn't filter as much, so we were wondering if people—

1-00:15:35

Mosby: We don't filter, we probably filter less than Sanford.

1-00:15:37

Goldstein: Really? Okay.

1-00:15:37

Mosby: Hardly at all. In fact, we don't even own a filter pump, we always just rent one when we need to filter.

1-00:15:42

Goldstein: So do you have some wines with sediment in it or not really, it gets most of it out?

- 1-00:15:47
Mosby: Uh, yeah the way that they're treated you get things out of it, and if I'm going to make a small amount of, like, one barrel or something like that, I'd probably sell it in the tasting room so you can explain. But we have a really good mailing list of customers, a lot of our business is mail order and—
- 1-00:16:06
Goldstein: Well, here, I'll ask you that question: where do you sell most of the wine? How is most of it distributed?
- 1-00:16:15
Mosby: Well, we have national distribution. But um—we do some export, very little. And I sell a great deal of it in the tasting room.
- 1-00:16:26
Goldstein: You do? Okay.
- 1-00:16:27
Mosby: And we have a taste club, you know where you send out wines to people and they buy it that way.
- 1-00:16:34
Goldstein: Where do you export to?
- 1-00:16:37
Mosby: Korea and Japan.
- 1-00:16:40
Goldstein: That's interesting. So how big is tourism for the business?
- 1-00:16:45
Mosby: Well it's very important. It's very important to this whole area up here, and I mean, it's like Solvang has died since [the first of the year.] Really bad, but we have good customers that come in. We had a lot of—this time of the year we have a lot of people from British Columbia and they come down here for golf and sunshine—
- 1-00:17:04
Goldstein: Earthquakes! [Laughs]
- 1-00:17:06
Mosby: — and then they always end up coming in for the wines. They're not really upset about the earthquakes, I always found that kind of interesting. They always thought earthquakes was a thing where this gaping hole opens up and swallows you—
- 1-00:17:14
Goldstein: Right, like in the movies.
- 1-00:17:15
Mosby: Yes, yes. That's everybody's concept of earthquakes.

1-00:17:18
Goldstein: Wow.

1-00:17:19
Mosby: And, but they were like surprised, “Oh, it jiggles around a little bit, huh?” You know, doesn’t bother you. If you build your house right it doesn’t knock your house down either.

1-00:17:29
Goldstein: Well, what percentage do you sell from here, then, a majority would you say?

1-00:17:33
Mosby: Well, probably 50%.

1-00:17:34
Goldstein: Okay.

1-00:17:35
Mosby: And the rest of it is, like I say we have accounts in the United States and everything.

1-00:17:40
Goldstein: Okay. Looking back at question number seven, government regulations. [Laughs], you mentioned it when I walked in the door. What—are we looking at county, state, federal? What kinds of things are you dealing with?

1-00:17:55
Mosby: The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The Alcoholic Beverage Control, the county, which is the RMD and the EPA and all the worker’s health and safety things. You know, all these things are—

1-00:18:09
Goldstein: What’s the RMD?

1-00:18:10
Mosby: Uh—Resource Management Division of Santa Barbara County

1-00:18:14
Goldstein: Okay.

1-00:18:14
Mosby: We would have right now—we make spirits, too, but we take them to another place at the licensed distillery. Now we could, we could have a still very easily because we have the capability of doing it but the county is not receptive to it.

1-00:18:35
Goldstein: Okay, so there aren’t distilleries here?

1-00:18:37
Mosby: There are no distilleries in the county, right. Well, you know Maison Deutz Winery, the champagne house is in San Luis County because they couldn’t

get—it was too much of a hassle to get into Santa Barbara County. So they—it's like right across the border. You know, they're within half a mile of the border of Santa Barbara county.

1-00:18:57

Goldstein: Now, are these regulations you know, burdensome or are they helpful in controlling the growth of the industry? I mean, is it good or is it bad?

1-00:19:04

Mosby: They don't control the growth of the industry. They just make it impossible for some people to get into the business. Or to expand.

1-00:19:11

Goldstein: I mean, do you think that's helpful for people that are already here or it's not?

1-00:19:16

Mosby: Well I don't think that kind of thing is ever helpful. I mean, you know the business is the survival of the fittest.

1-00:19:23

Goldstein: Right. I'm just looking back at some of the earlier articles about zoning fights, this is in the 70s, you know, opening up agricultural preserves to change the zoning so wineries could first come in.

1-00:19:33

Mosby: Uh-uh. This is an agricultural business and it was always permitted here.

1-00:19:38

Goldstein: Huh, okay.

1-00:19:39

Mosby: They're selling our own product.

1-00:19:41

Goldstein: Did they have to change it to have wineries?

1-00:19:44

Mosby: No, no. But they did, they did do some kinds of—like they, what did they, what's that called? We had to have a conditional use permit to use our grapes which are across the river, our own grapes that we grow, and as long as we own the winery and that property, we can use them. But since that time, the law's been changed.

1-00:20:08

Goldstein: Oh it has? I thought they wanted local people to use their own grapes, and use the local grapes.

1-00:20:13

Mosby: Well you can't do that unless you can have big wineries. You have to have large wineries to use as many grapes as there are in the county. They don't care if they ship it out but they didn't want—you couldn't bring anything in.

1-00:20:23

Goldstein: Okay. And that's still true, right?

1-00:20:26

Mosby: Um—I don't bring any grapes in from outside.

1-00:20:33

Goldstein: So is that law still there about bringing grapes in?

1-00:20:38

Mosby: I have no idea.

1-00:20:39

Goldstein: And then, do you lobby, I mean we've talked to the Vintner's Association some about that—you know, do you lobby the federal government or state government? I mean, the wine industry is a very prosperous industry, it's good for California. You know, how much involvement is there in lobbying? Or in doing any kind of political or governmental work, I mean maybe you're not involved, I don't know, some people are more involved than others, I don't know.

1-00:21:08

Mosby: I don't know that we go out specifically and lobby for changes, what you do is you watch to make sure that they're not coming, that, what's, the opposite is not happening, that you're not being regulated out of business. See, you have to watch that kind of thing, you don't go and try to—I mean, changing regulations is very difficult. But you, you watch what's happening. Like for instance, when they had 134 which is the tax that they wanted—see, at that time we paid one cent a gallon for the wine that went off the [bonded] premises in the state of California, to the state of California. Well they wanted to pass that law which raised the, the amount of money that they were going to collect from taxes, you know, from the wineries, and the money was to go to specific funds. Well, the wine industry got behind it and defeated it because it was—it was very bad, those funds that they wanted it to go to. Because the law was badly written.

1-00:22:16

Goldstein: When was this?

1-00:22:17

Mosby: Three or four years ago? Four years ago. So what happened, immediately after that the legislature got back into session and passed the law and changed our taxes to 20 cents a gallon anyway. At the same time the federal government went from 17 cents a gallon to a dollar and seven cents a gallon. Now that's not helping wine industry to stay in California or to stay in business in the United States. Those taxes are conspitory and are detrimental because that just takes that much more money out of my budget. I either have to raise the price of a bottle of wine, and if you do that then people don't buy it. See, wine is one of the—that's a, it's like, it's like, taking a vacation, you take it if you have the money, if you don't have money then you don't take it. You buy a

bottle of wine if you have the money, if you don't have money you don't buy it. And especially the kinds of wines that we have in Santa Barbara County which are all premium.

1-00:23:13

Goldstein: That's interesting about the regulations. Are there any other—let's see, this is what we're just learning about are the kind of regulations involved in the industry, is there anything else?

1-00:23:26

Mosby: Well, you asked here what levels of government are involved, and it's like most levels of government are involved. Because, because, of all the—I mean like, agriculture is one issue, and then alcoholic beverages is another issue. Taxes is another issue, yeah, so everywhere you look along the line, the government would be involved. Actually, wine should not be under the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, it ought to be under the, the Agricultural Department because it is an agricultural business.

1-00:24:00

Goldstein: Have people worked to change that?

1-00:24:02

Mosby: Yeah. But you don't get bureaucracies to give up their—

1-00:24:05

Goldstein: Fiefdom. [Laughs].

1-00:24:07

Mosby: [Laughs], right. "This is my kingdom."

1-00:24:11

Goldstein: Right.

1-00:24:12

Mosby: It changes, everything changes. So, it will some day change.

1-00:24:18

Goldstein: Yes. I mean I would assume your Vintner's Association, I just talked to Pam about this more, but they must work on some of these issues.

1-00:24:24

Mosby: Well actually, we have the Wine Institute, which is a national organization, and it does work on these kinds of things, but—there's not that—although wine is an important industry for California because it is part of agriculture, it's not *that* important. Tourism beats us off all the time, you know it's a bigger industry. And so, uhh—

1-00:24:46

Goldstein: Like these international trade agreements, you know, the GAD agreement, I mean, are more Chilean wines coming in? Are you guys aware of that, is it affecting you?

1-00:24:56

Mosby:

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I mean we get no government help, in fact we're penalized by the taxes, whereas in those countries they get government help and labor is less expensive, you know, everything is less expensive so they could put it on the market at a less expensive price.

1-00:25:16

Goldstein:

So you would follow, you would tend to follow these international trade agreements just to see what's going to happen with wine.

1-00:25:21

Mosby:

Yes, I mean it's just—I'm really interested to see what's going to happen in Mexico because we tried to go to Mexico, and we spent a lot of time with someone who had an inside track to do this, not just for us but for a lot of wineries. And after two years, it just, it just dropped. Somehow or other you've got to get the right pond to cross and it's just so far and that's as far as you can go. You know, you just can't get past that hurdle.

1-00:25:48

Goldstein:

Is the industry expanding down there?

1-00:25:50

Mosby:

Well they don't have good—they're never going to have good grapes because it's too hot, it's not a good climate for it. See, that's the nice thing about California, it's like the perfect climate for it.

1-00:26:00

Goldstein:

Yes, yes.

1-00:26:01

Mosby:

And the perfect topography and geography, all those things—it's wonderful.

1-00:26:07

Goldstein:

Soil.

1-00:26:08

Mosby:

Yes, everything, you go to Europe and look at what's over there and what they've been doing for centuries, you know. Then you come back and you look at this and it's like, "Oh yeah, this is it, this is it!"

1-00:26:16

Goldstein:

Uh-huh. Well that's great. Okay, let's see, number ten: what do you think about claims about personal health and wine?

1-00:26:26

Mosby:

Mm. Well I feel very strongly that it's real good for you. And I drank—not so much wine until I was probably 30, but we drink wine every day. I'm 63 years old, I am in excellent health, absolutely wonderful health, so is Bill. And Bill's father is 94 and is absolutely in wonderful health. And, but I think that you should drink anything responsibly. I'm adamantly against driving when you've been drinking, and in fact, we don't ever just sit and drink, there's

always food involved. I look at wine as a food. For me a meal is not a meal unless I have some wine with it, and even at lunchtime frequently we'll have a little glass of wine, just because it's a thing that we do.

1-00:27:16

Goldstein: Right, you know in some ways—I'm looking at these questions, we're changing these questions as we're doing this—but this is really, I think it's more a cultural question because, you know you look how wine is used in Italy, and you look at certain parts of our heritage here affecting how people think about alcohol and wine, I think that's really more the question we're trying to get at. Cultural differences and wineries.

1-00:27:40

Mosby: Well, yes but that's because this is a very, umm, puritanical—you're Jewish, right?

1-00:27:46

Goldstein: Yes.

1-00:27:46

Mosby: Now, see that's a very important part of your heritage is the fact that you have wine. I look at wine as a gift from God, I'm Christian, but I look at it as a gift from God. But you know, Stroke Alley, which is the central part of America, basically drinks no wine, and they eat a lot of fat and milk and all those kinds of things, and I don't think we have a good attitude towards alcohol in this country. You're either for, or, you're either a drunk or you're totally against it, there's no, umm, middle ground kind of thing. Yeah, I was just over in Italy and let me tell you something—[laughs] you know, go in to any restaurant and sitting down, if they don't bring you a pitcher of wine and set it on your table— here you get either a glass of ice water or coffee. [Laughs].

1-00:28:29

Goldstein: No, it's really a big cultural difference. And I think how people look at it as "sinful," which is, you know left over from prohibition and way before. I mean—

1-00:28:41

Mosby: They tried to get prohibition through, you know, for a hundred years before they finally accomplished it.

1-00:28:45

Goldstein: Oh, yeah. Huge temperance movement.

1-00:28:47

Mosby: Yes, right. I mean they did gross things, you know?

1-00:28:51

Goldstein: Well do you find yourself involved in education or educating people about wine?

1-00:28:55

Mosby:

Oh yes. See I—at the tasting room here which I have to work three days a week in the tasting room, I work Wednesday, Thursday and Friday—the main thing that we do here is not give tours. [Laughs] And the reason is is that when you get a tour, you walk around and you look at a piece of machinery, and you're not going to see in the tank or anything like that, somebody can tell you about it, you know, whatever. But what we pride ourselves on is—and everyone who works here is educated in this—is to give a good wine tasting so that you understand the wine. You can ask questions from almost anybody that's ever worked here, and they've worked in this, they understand it, they sit and talk with Bill and they know about wine, they know about growing grapes, they know, you know—all the things, and the foods that we all cook, the foods that go with wines and why you would pair certain things together and—yeah, I think education is a really important thing. The other thing I like seeing today is that generally when people come in they have a designated driver.

1-00:29:53

Goldstein:

How knowledgeable are people about wine who come in?

1-00:29:57

Mosby:

Not very knowledgeable. Not very.

1-00:29:57

Goldstein:

That's what I wondered, okay.

1-00:29:58

Mosby:

You get maybe 10% that—I had a lady yesterday, I spent two hours with her. And that's what she does—

1-00:30:05

Goldstein:

Wow, that's a long time!

1-00:30:05

Mosby:

I know! I know, so we had a good conversation and she was very knowledgeable, she had a few real, umm, real special wineries that she liked to go to and I happen to know the people that are involved in, I knew some of the wines that she had talked about and discussed. And, it's fun to talk to somebody like that because you learn something also. But most people, they aren't really that interested, but they come back to our winery a lot because they always—I make it my business every time to try to teach somebody *something* about the winery.

1-00:30:37

Goldstein:

Mm-hmm.

1-00:30:37

Mosby:

I hope you got a new little sliver of knowledge today about wine.

- 1-00:30:43
Goldstein: Well that's important, especially if you want to change attitudes about wine. Umm, okay, what makes Mosby distinctive? How do you define your niche here or in the wine industry in general?
- 1-00:30:56
Mosby: Well, the wines—the fact that we have Italian wines—which is very, very different, and they are different, and spirits, we also make spirits. The spirits are grappas, by the way. And, and, I don't drink much spirits or anything, but I learned about—we had already made the spirit but I learned about grappa in Italy. [Laughs]
- 1-00:31:18
Goldstein: Oh, you did?
- 1-00:31:19
Mosby: Yes and what it's used for and everything, so it's—that's a part of their life too. Every winery over there makes grappas.
- 1-00:31:26
Goldstein: Grappas is very strong, right?
- 1-00:31:28
Mosby: It's alcohol.
- 1-00:31:29
Goldstein: Okay.
- 1-00:31:29
Mosby: That's what it is. But they use the pumice, the leftover skins and stuff like that, that's what you make it from, and you add water and yeast and sugar and then you referment it and then you distill. But every one is different. Every different grape skin that you use makes it a little different.
- 1-00:31:47
Goldstein: So what do you make grappas out of?
- 1-00:31:48
Mosby: We make ours out of gewurtztraminer which is very different, and then we also make a special [tape interrupts] pacific wild plum is what it's called really—
- 1-00:32:10
Goldstein: Wait is that a grape or it's actually a wild plum?
- 1-00:32:13
Mosby: No, it's a plum, yeah. It's a wild plum.
- 1-00:32:14
Goldstein: That's so interesting.

1-00:32:14
Mosby: Well, have you ever had Mirabelle Eau de Vie, French?

1-00:32:19
Goldstein: No, no.

1-00:32:19
Mosby: Well, that's where the idea came to do this because Bill was born in Klamath Falls, Oregon. And when they were—in the 1930s, when they were, you know, we had, we had,—we put our—you know, the—

1-00:32:35
Goldstein: Prohibition?

1-00:32:36
Mosby: No, not prohibition, the—oh, never mind! Anyway, we didn't have very much money, so you've got a lot of—

1-00:32:43
Goldstein: Oh, the Depression!

1-00:32:44
Mosby: Yes, you've got a lot of uh, things free if you could get them, see. And so they used to go out and pick these things when they were kids and their mother would make jam out of them, you know, so you had jam. And he remembered that taste, and he's—when he was having this Mirabelle Eau de Vie when he was over in France, it was like, “Oh, I really like this”—you know? Comes back, gets in touch with somebody, because this is not really a domesticated thing, there happens to be a small orchard of them but it's not very domesticated, anyway, he got the product and it's wonderful. It's really good. Not sweet, not, it's alcohol, but it's something that's just real distinctive.

1-00:33:21
Goldstein: When do you drink it? After dinner?

1-00:33:23
Mosby: After dinner, yes. It's used kind of like a digestive aid. You know, grappa is much more of a social experience than a drink. And it's very strong, but it is really, in the middle of the afternoon in Italy, it's not at all uncommon—you know they have it like a siesta time over there where everything closes down—it's not at all uncommon for people to run into a little trattoria and get a little cup of espresso and shot of grappa. And it kind of lifts you up, kind of gets everything going again and wakes you up and gets you back so you can go back to work and stuff.

1-00:33:57
Goldstein: Yes, a little biscotti, too.

1-00:33:58
Mosby: Yes.

- 1-00:33:58
Goldstein: It seems like people are doing more creative things here like using the plums or using—I mean it just seems like a very creative part of the wine industry down here, I don't know because it's smaller or newer or—
- 1-00:34:12
Mosby: Well all of those things, but I think the quality of the people that are involved in the wine industry is pretty high here, too.
- 1-00:34:20
Goldstein: Is it, is it? Umm.
- 1-00:34:21
Mosby: And well educated. They're world travelers, most of the people who are involved really don't have to make tonight's dinner out of what they sell in the tasting room today, you know what I mean?
- 1-00:34:33
Goldstein: Yes.
- 1-00:34:33
Mosby: You do have to make a viable business out of it, but you're not going to starve to death if something goes wrong.
- 1-00:34:40
Goldstein: Is it a close community?
- 1-00:34:43
Mosby: Mm-hmm. Everybody's very friendly.
- 1-00:34:44
Goldstein: I mean because there's—we were trying to figure out how to ask this of people—you know there's competition obviously but, also it seems like a very tight-knit group.
- 1-00:34:51
Mosby: Yes, but everybody does—their market is different or what they're doing is real different so it's not like you're—you're only competing when you're all doing the same thing. Probably in a Pinot Noir tasting there would be competition, you know because everybody makes Pinot Noir. But everybody's doing other different things, too. And appealing to a different section of the market.
- 1-00:35:11
Goldstein: Now is there more competition between this market and Napa? Is that more of a competitive thing?
- 1-00:35:14
Mosby: Yes. . . yes it would probably be more of a competitive thing. See, Napa has a longer life reputation and that helps them a lot. But this is such a new area and

a new industry for this area. You know wine, it has to be centuries. It's not something that you do—I don't know if our kids are going to take over.

1-00:35:37

Goldstein: But you have kids that are interested in wine which is more than a lot of people.

1-00:35:42

Mosby: Yes but they're very—Americans are very, "I can do it myself!" They don't, they don't, you don't have generational kinds of carrying on of things.

1-00:35:51

Goldstein: Right.

1-00:35:51

Mosby: In any culture in the United States—maybe in farming in the Midwest you kind of do but, not, even that is not the same thing. And you have families like the Mondavis and the Gallos that have carried on. But then, I don't know what's going to happen with this next generation, do they have kids that are going to come along and want to stay in the business?

1-00:36:11

Goldstein: I don't know.

1-00:36:12

Mosby: Because you know in Italy it's like, you know in France and Germany it's like forever they've been doing it.

1-00:36:16

Goldstein: It's like your destiny [laughs].

1-00:36:17

Mosby: Yes! Yes! Yes! And the people in the community where the winery is, if you can't find laborers to pick, everybody in the town goes out and picks and helps them, you know?

1-00:36:27

Goldstein: Yes. What are your plans here, do you have plans to change anything or do anything differently?

1-00:36:36

Mosby: Um—15,000 cases would be max.

1-00:36:40

Goldstein: Wow. You know, I read that Cork Milner interview that you guys did and you said, "Well we hope one day this is a dream, we would like to be doing 5,000 cases." [Laughs] so when you just said that at the beginning it just cracked me up, I just read it this morning. So, 15,000, that's—

- 1-00:36:56
Mosby: But that's as big as—see there's also economic things, like you go—15,000 is the dividing line, then you have to go up to 35,000.
- 1-00:37:04
Goldstein: Oh, I see, so you get these economies of scale or—
- 1-00:37:06
Mosby: Yes, yes. And I don't want to be that big because that means you have to travel all the time, you have to be out there selling all the time about be on the road and we don't really want to do that. I mean we're getting into retirement time, you know, so you don't want to have to do that. We only want to travel to those places that you really like and have fun at [laughs].
- 1-00:37:24
Goldstein: Yes, like Italy. What do you have to do different from 5,000 to 15? I mean, how much—what does that mean in terms of expansion—
- 1-00:37:30
Mosby: I've got to expand my market. I have to get, you know, get my name out there more or have more demand, that's why you should expand.
- 1-00:37:38
Goldstein: So you're going to have to concentrate on marketing.
- 1-00:37:40
Mosby: Mm-hmm.
- 1-00:37:40
Goldstein: I mean you have like, the equipment and the bottling all set up to do that, and the—
- 1-00:37:45
Mosby: We'd have to buy a little bit more uh—equipment, you know, a few more tanks. But that's not a big thing because you can buy those quite easily. The vineyard would probably not—either a bigger vineyard or buy grapes, but there's lots of grapes in Santa Barbara county, good grapes for sale, too, so we could always go that route. A lot of other wineries don't grow any grapes at all.
- 1-00:38:02
Goldstein: Like, there's a new vineyard, I think someone from our group is interviewing them. So that's, okay, that's how expansion would look.
- 1-00:38:13
Mosby: And I would like to have [unintelligible] stills and just deal with spirits because that's an interesting sideline kind of thing, too. It's—it won't ever be a really big part of our production but it's a really nice, interesting—
- 1-00:38:27
Goldstein: Is anyone else wanting to do that in the valley?

- 1-00:38:31
Mosby: I don't think so.
- 1-00:38:31
Goldstein: Okay.
- 1-00:38:32
Mosby: Bill has been distilling things since he was in the seventh grade [laughs].
- 1-00:38:37
Goldstein: Oh, really? [Laughs]
- 1-00:38:38
Mosby: His family did not drink when they were young, you know, they all drink now because of us being involved in the industry, but he started distilling things when he was in grade school.
- 1-00:38:51
Goldstein: Wow, okay. Anything else that I didn't ask you about that you want to talk about?
- 1-00:38:58
Mosby: Not really. I gave you that little form thing there which kind of gives you an overview of how we got started, what we—our background history and stuff like that, so—
- 1-00:39:09
Goldstein: Okay, do you have any other articles or documents or, I don't know, anything that would be helpful to the project?
- 1-00:39:17
Mosby: I don't think so, I don't think there's anything that you wouldn't—
- 1-00:39:21
[Tape interrupts, Bill Mosby is now the interviewee]
- Mosby: There's a big difference between wine writers and wine critics a lot of times, some of the critics will have newsletters that actually grade the wines, some of them will have scores from 1-100, some of them have puffs, you get no puffs, or one puff, two, three, four puffs. Some of them give stars, like the restaurant one gives stars, uh—all different rating, the way they rate wines. And then there are wine writers that don't critique the wines as much, they just talk about, "Oh this is a nice wine, this is a neat winery to go to," or this type of thing where they don't really come out and say, "Oh, I give Gainey four stars and someone else three stars, or one puff." You know, there's differences. Some wine writers request samples, some of them don't want samples, they want to come in themselves and taste them. Anyway, most wineries do send out a lot of samples all year long to various writers and critics.

1-00:40:31

Goldstein: I kind of asked you this before but I just wanted to come back to it again, what do you think is distinctive about the area here, I asked you about your winery but I guess I wanted to—

1-00:40:43

Mosby: The area? What do you mean?

1-00:40:45

Goldstein: Well, it's smaller than Napa and it's, more, easier to get around, I mean do you feel like people are trying to make different wines here or are people more creative here?

1-00:40:55

Mosby: Okay, okay. Our area is distinct in three or four degrees and number one is distinct because of its climate and soils. Okay, that's probably the other—uh—it's also distinct in the fact that it's very small and quaint compared to Napa, okay. You know, we hear people all the time, "Oh gee, this is, this is fantastic, we can drive all around this wine country here and not be in crowds at wineries, it's not bumper to bumper traffic." So that makes it very unique. Getting down to winemaking, there's been a lot of critics that have written articles saying that it seems like—I think it's because we're all small wineries—that the winemakers don't get lost, there are all these individual personalities, and you know [unintelligible] there are times you can come here to the valley and [we'll] do a picnic and all 25 wineries will be there, you can actually talk to 25 of them. You go to Napa, there'd be 400 of them, it'd be like a convention. They all have their personalities, there was even a band here, I think the guys may have disbanded recently but it was Rick Longoria, [Chris Witcraft], [Adam], [Jim Clendenam], ABC and [Jim Follett] and [Zach Mason], they had their own band.

1-00:42:11

Goldstein: Were they any good?

1-00:42:12

Mosby: They played wine country. Eh, you know.

1-00:42:14

Goldstein: [Laughs] Uh-huh.

1-00:42:16

Mosby: The fact that they're all small winemakers with a lot of individuality but a lot of camaraderie, you know there's—Lot's of times we read about a lot of vicious stories about competition up in Napa and things like that, and that's so far never happened down here. I don't know if I've answered what you want.

1-00:42:39

Goldstein: No, no that's it, really.

1-00:42:41

Mosby:

Far as varieties, you know still Cabernet, Chardonnay and Pinot and Merlot are the kings and queens. A lot of wineries are starting with the Italian varieties, you know, [San Dorizo] and I can't even pronounce half of them.

1-00:42:59

Goldstein:

Well, [Mosby] and the [Brunello] and the grappa.

1-00:43:03

Mosby:

Yes, yes, uh huh, sure. Lots of that but I think that comes up again because we're a bunch of small little independent guys having fun, doing neat things. Where if you're a million-case facility, all you're worried about is cranking out y'know 300,000 cases of Chardonnay, you don't have the time to fool with a couple of acres of a new varietal. So a lot of experimenting and not only experimenting with the new varieties but [finding] ways of making new varieties.

1-00:43:33

Goldstein:

I can't think of anything else, anything you want to add?

1-00:43:37

Mosby:

I think we're doing pretty good. No, I don't know, I'm all talked out. You were asking how does tourism affect your business, it's obvious for us that it's everything. It's very, very important to us.

1-00:43:51

Goldstein:

Yes, yes. Do you have other historical material?

1-00:44:02

Mosby:

No, I'll tell you about that, I was going to—[tape cuts off]

[end of interview]