

State of California

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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 21, 2019

To: Board of Directors
California Exposition & State Fair

Via: Rick K. Pickering, Chief Executive Officer

From: Jay Carlson, AG Program Director

Subject: Recommendations for Approval of 2019 Wine Industry Awards

BACKGROUND

The California State Fair annually recognizes the accomplishments and service of key individuals or organization through a series of prestigious awards. The recipients below will be publically recognized and honored at the annual Wine Judges Dinner on Wednesday, May 29, 2019. They will also be acknowledged at the Friends of the California State Fair Gala on Thursday, June 27, 2019.

Included here is the process for selection of each award, and background of 2019 award honorees as recommend.

AWARDS SUMMARY

Wine Lifetime Achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a person, family or institutions who are pioneers in the wine industry based on their lifetime contributions to the California wine industry. Each year, the California State Fair Wine Advisory Task Force puts forth recommendations and selects a final honoree through an open meeting process.

Wine Advisory Task Force respectively recommends **Joel Peterson and Merry Edwards** as the 2019 Wine Lifetime Achievement Award.

Joel Peterson

Began his winemaking career in 1976 making small lots of intensely flavored Zinfandel from old vineyards a plows pass away from extinction. He had grown up sampling wines at his father's knee, who ran the San Francisco Wine Sampling Club, and apprenticed with the legendary Joseph Swan of Sonoma. His vineyard designated wines transformed Zinfandel into a serious wine, and created a following for his "No Wimpy

Wine” style. As the Ravenswood brand soared, he earned the moniker “The Godfather of Zin”. Zin fans linked him in with pinnacle producers like Ridge and Rosenblum, who became known as the “3 R’s of Zinfandel”. Peterson and his partners sold the winery to Constellation Brands in 2001, but Joel stayed on faithfully as Chief Winemaker until 2016. He has since returned to his roots with “Once and Future Wines” with his son Morgan Twain Peterson, making muscled wines in small batches.

Merry Edwards

An early pioneering female winemaker freshly minted out of UC Davis in 1975. Under the tutelage of Dr. Maynard Amerine her Master’s thesis tested lead residues in wine, which resulted in the banning of lead capsules in the interest of public health. In the mid-70’s she focused on Pinot Noir clones to the extent one selection out of Davis is called the Merry Edwards clone. In the early 1980’s she continued her clonal work on Chardonnay in Russian River Valley, which led to new vistas of opportunity for the variety and the region. All the while making these contributions to the industry, she was also making stellar wines for numerous producers, including Matanzas Creek, which rose to national acclaim. With the launch of her own Merry Edwards Winery in the Russian River Valley in 2006, she is not only famous for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, but also for an elegant barrel fermented Sauvignon Blanc. After 20 years elevating her winery to global status she has recently entered into an acquisition agreement with Roederer, to which all parties, including the wine trade, see as a match made in heaven.

Vineyard of the Year Award

The Vineyard of the Year recognizes the California vineyard that consistently, over several growing seasons, produced grapes, which have contributed directly to wine of superior quality and marketability within commercial sales systems and among fine wine. Each year, the California State Fair Wine Advisory Task Force puts forth recommendations and selects a final honoree through an open meeting process.

Wine Advisory Task Force respectively recommends **Dick Cooper Ranch** as the 2019 Vineyard of the Year.

Dick Cooper Ranch

The Cooper Ranch has been around since the 1800's but did not plant grapes until 1970. Dick asked Darrell Corti what grapes he should plant, and lacking a piece of paper, Darrell wrote the varieties Barbera and Dolcetto on a dollar bill and gave it to Dick. Dick looked around and could not find Dolcetto, but got enough cuttings from neighbor Cary Gott (Montevina) to plant 5 acres of Barbera. The vines did well and Dick sold the grapes to winemakers like Scott Harvey, Jeff Runquist and Bill Easton, all of whom have garnered dozens of awards at the CA State Fair, Los Angeles International and the San Francisco Chronicle wine competitions. Since then the Cooper Ranch Vineyards have grown to 100 acres, mostly Barbera, with a total of 17 varieties on the property. Dick has helped at least a dozen other growers plant Barbera, and in addition to Zinfandel, Amador County is well known for the variety. In 2013 a Barbera Festival was born, which today some 80 producers pour there, including some from Italy. In

chatting with the family, Mr. Cooper wants the committee to know that "this is a family operation, we have many good long time employees, we have good soil and good luck, and we are proud of what we have accomplished." Darrell Corti's dollar bill is on display in the tasting room.

California All Stars

California All Stars - is a posthumous award given in recognition of exemplary service and contributions to innovators, educators and/or leaders in the world of wine, based on their contributions to the California wine industry.

Kent Rosenblum - 1944 - 2018

A veterinarian by trade, Kent Rosenblum was Founder and Winemaker of Rosenblum Cellars, building the winery from a 400-case to a 250,000-case producer over a span of three decades from 1978 to 2008. Rosenblum was famous for his big, bold Zinfandel wines. For Kent, making wine was always about a willingness to explore viticultural regions and experiment with winemaking techniques. Kent had no intention of selling the winery, however, in 2008, he was approached by Diageo, and as he put it, "they came with too much money to say no." He then started up Rock Wall Wines, with daughter Shauna as winemaker. Rock Wall continues to be about having fun, while making the best wines from the best regions and sharing the experience with others. Kent was always fond of saying, "Never underestimate the value of a little fun."

Robert Haas - 1927-2018

Robert Haas began his career in wine as a buyer for his family's fine wine retail shop in New York City. He was prescient establishing relationships with top wine houses in France. Later he established his own company, Vineyard Brands, which flourished by expanding its selection from France to include Italy, Chile, California and Oregon. Robert had a love for Rhone wines, and with the Perrin Family of Chateau Beaucastel, sought out the perfect location to produce Rhone style wines in California. Their search brought them to Paso Robles and the establishment of Tablas Creek Vineyards in 1985. There they broke tradition and imported vines from France, some of which had never been seen in California, passed them through the rigorous 3-year quarantine system, and then propagated them for use on their own property. Ultimately, their nursery made millions of vines available for planting by other wineries throughout California, Washington, Texas and Virginia. Robert was also ahead of the curve in making wine blends, as opposed to the varietal penchant of the day.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Agricultural Advisory Council and Staff respectfully request the Board approve the following awards:

- I. Accept the Wine Advisory Task Force's recommendation to honor **Joel Peterson and Merry Edwards** with the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award.
- II. Accept the Wine Advisory Task Force's recommendation to honor **Dick Cooper Ranch** with the 2019 Vineyard of the Year Award.
- III. Accept the Wine Advisory Task Force's recommendation to honor **Kent Rosenblum and Robert Haas** with the 2019 California All Stars award.