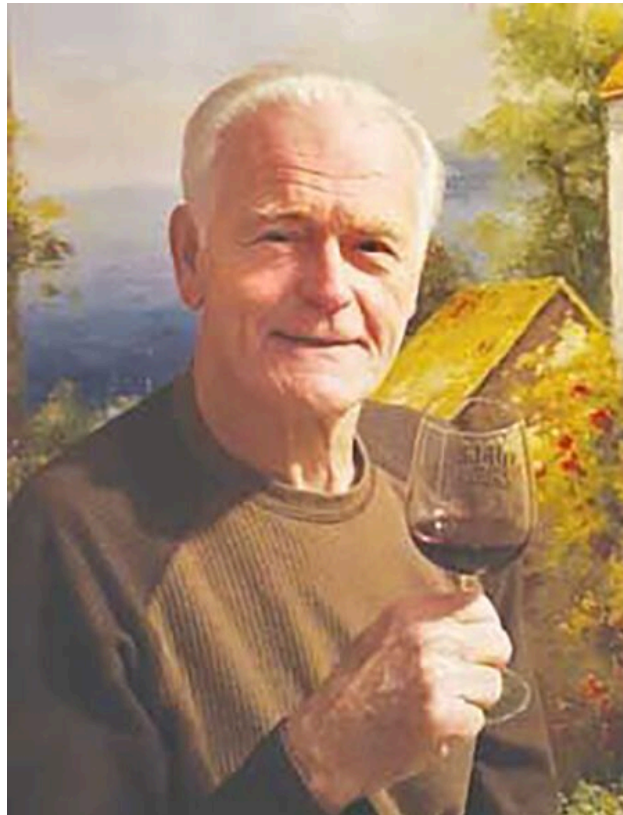

Drinking wine can be educational

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Drinking wine is not only pleasing to the senses of sight, smell and taste, but it can also be educational. I'm reporting on an Oregon Pinot noir that was new to me: Six Stones, 2021 Rogue Valley Pinot noir. Though not outstanding, it presented pleasant red fruit flavors (raspberry, strawberry), enough acidity and hints of oak and forest vegetation on the palate and nose.

But the name of the wine brings a lesson in history and language. Six Stones Cellar sources their grapes from the Rogue Valley, which is the location of the Siskyou Mountain Range. I had always believed the name "Siskyou" was another Native American name, but no. Early French trappers forded a local river by hopping on six stones (six caillieux) the pronunciation of which to English-speaking ears became, "Sis-ki-you."

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A classic wine for drinking or gift giving in this holiday season is Port, or Porto. The name derives from Portugal's city Oporto, a port on the Douro River through which all true Portuguese Port has been shipped out into the world ever since it was "invented" there in the north of the country over 300 years ago. Many of

the leading Port houses, or shippers as they are known, have British names, i.e. Graham, Sandeman, Taylor, etc., since it was the English who founded, promoted, and consumed this wine that they added grape brandies to in order to stabilize the barrels as they made the voyage to England.

Over the years, more brandy was added until the lovely sweet (c:a 10 percent sugar), high-alcohol (c:a 20 percent) dessert wine evolved. It probably became the most sexist drink on Earth as Port and cigars were only brought out by gentlemen when the ladies left the room. But that no longer applies: the ladies don't leave the room anymore.

The best Ports are vintage-dated and are rare and expensive. There are other styles of Port that vary in quality and price that are still worth exploring. The simplest and least expensive is Ruby Port. Locally you can find Vintage Ports such as my personal favorite, Quinta do Noval, at The Wine Cellar in Nye Beach for over \$60 a bottle. This shop and McKay's Market can also supply you with other bottles such as a half bottle of Warre' Warrior for \$11.99 and Fonseca Ports ranging in price from \$16.49 to about \$20. Fred Meyer has a Dow's Ruby for \$14.99. And at McKay's there are still vestiges of the late Jim Vickers great Vintage Port collection from his J C Market before it became McKay's.

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Recently, with a glass of port in my hand, I found myself gazing at the flames dancing in my living room wood stove. This was the perfect formula for banishing the early winter chill and letting memory take me safely back in time and distance from the ravages of war and societal unrest that attack our sanity every day today. At the holiday seasonal concert of our marvelous Newport Symphony Orchestra the other night, a few bars of the carol, "O Holy Night," rose up out of a medley and took me back to my high school, where a teenaged Joseph was sitting in a physical education class. Yes, that was a long trip.

We were a rowdy bunch of boys in a classroom in the basement of the gym where we begrudgingly awaited a health, hygiene and sex education lecture that was required. Our teacher was a popular coach — we even had a secret cheer for him: "Meatballs and spaghetti!, Coach Reno Continetti!" So when he walked in that day and announced there would be no academics since it was almost Christmas break — "Today we're going to sing Christmas Carols" — we almost gave the cheer.

Then one of the rowdies shouted, "Hey! Get Patrick to do a solo!" Others joined in the clamor for the shy Patrick to stand up so they could make fun of him again as they so often did. Coach C held up his hand said, "All right, guys, knock it off! It's OK, Patrick, if you don't want to do this..." But Patrick signaled that it was OK and slowly got to his feet.

The room grew quieter. Then when Patrick opened his mouth and brought forth the first phrases of "O Holy Night" in a soaring, bell-clear, boy-soprano voice, every one of us in that room froze. With rising power in his voice, he hit the high notes and held them — "O Night Devine." With the last note, silence hung in the air for a beat. Then the applause was deafening.

Yeah, Patrick nailed it. And that macho gang of wise guys gained a lesson: To be different is not always negative. Patrick also gained something, too. Respect.

Holiday Cheers!

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