

BY KARL KLOOSTER

## A Date with Doon

*America's most outspoken winemaker writes irreverent, insightful and immensely entertaining book*

especially to hear him read passages from the new book.

It's not that the man who has been tagged with the well-deserved sobriquet "the Rhone Ranger"—for his extraordinary examples of wines whose origins are in that famed French valley—harbors any phobias about being in public.

In fact, he can be quite personable, even charming and witty.

As an individual who possesses an obviously elevated intellect, however, one could imagine that he'd rather be reading, writing or making wine than engaged in banal social banter, even if primarily wine-centric.

In the book, Graham speaks to his obsession for

ble-to-reach destination.

Still, Graham persists and says he will continue to do so now that he has freed himself from the "large" winery mentality that enveloped his energies for years to concentrate on a project designed to bring forth no more than 30,000 cases annually.

Speaking of impossible, let's get back to the book.

Puns, parodies and plays on words abound throughout. It's apparent that the writer loves language and revels in such an expansive medium of self-expression.

And it is because of this propensity, trying to capture, much less encapsulate, the essence of the book's zany, free-form style and wide-ranging format within the confines of a so-called critical review is a fool's errand.

In other words, read it for yourself.



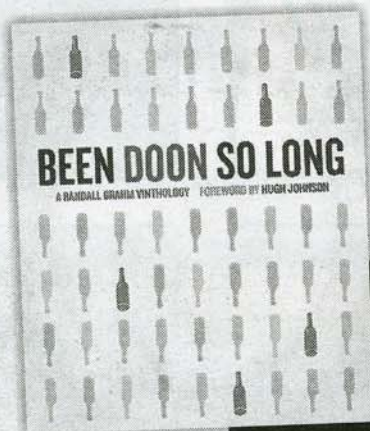
There's probably not a person involved in the U.S. wine industry who hasn't heard of Randall Graham. The founder of Bonny Doon Vineyard has cut a wide swath over the course of his more-than-a-quarter century in the business.

From the relative obscurity of California's north central coast, he initially burst onto the scene with the label *Le Cigare Volant*—designed so it could be read looking through the white and rosé wines in the bottle—and an iconoclastic attitude unlike anything anyone had seen.

Graham's latest endeavor, "Been Doon So Long: A Randall Graham Vinthology," a 318-page hardbound book that masterfully indulges every fantasy he ever conjured up in regards to wine, has him hitting the road on that most prosaic of endeavors an author must endure: the obligatory book tour.

Breaking free from the comforting retreat that his reclusive Santa Cruz Mountains enclave affords may in some ways be rejuvenating. But for one who does not suffer fools gladly, it can also be difficult.

Still, Graham knew he had to do it and he also knew, whether he liked it or not, that a lot of people out there wanted to meet him or at least be in his presence,



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making great Pinot Noir—which has remained unfulfilled—and his never-ending and never self-satisfactory efforts to make great wines. Period.

Most Doonophiles would disagree with him on that point, but when one seeks perfection, it may be as much about the joys of the journey as any almost-impossi-

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Recently, I relished the opportunity to spend dinner seated across from the man, himself, at the Dundee Bistro. I enjoyed some of his wines paired with creative courses prepared by Chef Jason Stoller Smith.

Nearby, an entire table occupied by Doonies—former Bonny Doon employees now working in the Oregon industry—were here to honor their mentor. He went over to talk with them on more than one occasion during the evening.

In person, Graham has a rumpled naturalness about him. He is tall and lanky. His hair is long, very long, stringy and reddish brown. His demeanor is modest, almost

self-effacing, while at the same time thoughtful and analytical.

He seems to be among that indeterminate but unquestionably small group of rather special human beings whose left and right brains work at a high level, simultaneously and in tandem.

What else could account for a winery that has come up with intuitively imaginative labels like *Clos de Gilroy*, *Old Telegraph*, *Cardinal Zin* and *Le Sophiste*, much less *Le Cigare Volante*, with its flying saucer-shaped stogie?

Emphasizing that it's well worth the \$34.95 to pick up a copy for yourself, I'll close with some typically atypical chapter titles and other oddments therein.

Firstly, the book's forward was written by legendary British wine writer Hugh Johnson. Secondly, it is dedicated to 17th century physician and philosopher John Locke.

As for all the succeeding "lys," here's an unfiltered but definitely fine sampling:

"A Clockwork Orange Muscat." "Why French Wines No Longer Matter, or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned How to Love Long Chain Tannins." "The Rimeshot of the Ancient Marsanner." "Da Vino Commedia: The Vinferno." "Born to Rhone." "Doon to Earth." "Trotanoy's Complaint." "Great Wine in the Postmodernistic World." "How I Overcame My UC Davis Education." "The Heartbreak of Winegeekdom: Ten Ways You Know When You've Met a Real Wine Geek." ☺

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