



THE FINE WINE CONFIDENTIAL PODCAST:

HOW AND WHY, I JOINED THE RANKS OF PODCASTERS.

The following excerpt is from a Chapter in my upcoming book describing the Virginia wine industry adventure that started when my wife and I moved to Charlottesville in January of 2019. As it turned out we were here for just over a year when COVID turned everyone's world upside down. While this was disruptive to say the least it did lead me to an unplanned route of starting a Podcast. Something I had no idea about as you will read in this excerpt. However, I believe I played the hand dealt to me as good as anyone could. You be the Judge. Read on.

PREFACE

To provide some context and set the stage for what follows I took a position as COO for Broadbent Imports,

headquartered in Richmond, Virginia in November of 2019. After providing Executive Level consulting advice for six months to Bartholomew Broadbent I was enjoying being at a top-quality import company thinking it was my last rodeo before I finally finished my book and had it published. Then COVID happened and became a bad reality movie, I immediately went to work drawing up a mitigation plan for the company. As a result of the plan, I designed, how do I say this politely, I was a victim of my own plan. (More of the back story on that and Bartholomew Broadbent in the full chapter).

The podcast begins.

So, there I am without a job in the beginning days of COVID. I just moved to Virginia and have been here for less than a year and I'm thinking, well, I am not going to get any clients in this environment if I go back to consulting. What should I do? I decided I would get back to finishing my book, something I had wanted to do all along anyway as I had been working on it for over a decade. I contacted my brother, Bill in Toronto, who was a ghostwriter of some note and had collaborated with me on this book previously when I was working to get the manuscript ready to solicit a publisher. Then one day, my oldest brother Ted asked had I ever thought about producing a podcast. I say to myself, a podcast, what the hell is that? I didn't even know what a podcast was, nor had I ever listened to one. (My oldest brother Ted, who I had always considered growing up as the

“smartest man in the world” that is an inside family joke however in some ways he can back it up). So, I said, if Ted's suggesting it, I'm going to look into it. I did some research and realized that this could be really interesting, but how could my podcast possibly be different than the other 5 million that are out there? The one thing I didn't find attractive when I was listening to other podcasts was, they were always trying to sell you something. I thought, “Well, I don't need to monetize this. It's going to be self-funded. I will not have any sponsors. No one is going to tell or influence me about what to do or talk about.” Secondly, it's going to be 100% focused on Virginia Wine. But I won't just do random interviews. I want to tell a story that I think needs to be told, which is the history of modern-day Virginia wine growing and its amazing progress producing world class wine. It was easy to stick my stake in the ground. In my opinion the beginning of that progress for wine quality began in 1976 when the Italian wine family Zonin came to Virginia, brought Gabriele Rausse with them, and established Barboursville Vineyards. As a result of his impact on Virginia winegrowing Gabriele Rausse was declared the Father of the modern-day Virginia Wine Industry by the New York Times, and for good reason. So of course, he was my first interview, and from there, I just started contacting the wine producers and personalities that I believed made a difference here in the Virginia Wine Industry. But all along the goal was to donate these audio recordings as an Oral History, to the University of Virginia. My model for this was simple. If you go to the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, they

have an Oral History of the California wine business up through Robert Mondavi on file and available to anyone around the world. But nothing like that exists in Virginia. So, I thought, here's my cause. Beginning in the fall of November 2020 I took to the air with my first Podcast episode and ended the series in December of 2023. I interviewed and published these Episodes in the words of the vintners. Essentially, everybody I thought had made a significant difference in the industry. Unfortunately, there were some I never got a chance to interview because they had passed away before I started the project. In addition, COVID got in the way of some other interviews that I would have liked to have included. (Apologies to anyone I overlooked). But I do feel I captured the majority of those that mattered, and sure enough, the University of Virginia accepted my donation at the end of 2023. They have recently reopened their newly renovated Alderman Library on the campus of UVA, which has been renamed the Edgar Shannon Library, after UVA's fourth President who served in that capacity from 1959 until 1974. Now I am in their queue to get on the priority calendar and begin the process to have the Audio Recording archived and available for research to anyone anywhere in the world. Mission accomplished!

Then something happened along the way to the party that I never anticipated. In November of 2023, The Virginia Wineries Association awarded me the honor as their Virginia Wine Person of the Year for 2023. I was totally taken by surprise and equally as surprising to me was at the end of

2023 The Fine Wine Confidential Podcast had listeners in 33 states, the District of Columbia, and 24 different countries. Using the metrics that the major Podcast platforms use I was able to ascertain that the Fine Wine Confidential Podcast (www.finewineconfidential.com) ranked in the top 15% of the over 5 Million Podcasts in the world. I thought, “What the Hell.” How is that even possible? However, given the scope of my audience I had somehow filled a niche and wanted to continue to build on it. In 2024 I pivoted to a new theme, but in keeping with my focus on Virginia wine I named it the “All About Virginia Norton” podcast. The wines produced from the Norton grape and the mysterious story that surrounds the grapes’ origin has captivated me during the past several years to the point that the last glass of red wine I have before going to bed every night is a glass of Norton. I know this sounds a bit crazy but, Norton is a serious wine. By that I mean, people Quaff wine these days. (Nothing wrong with quaffing wine). But you do not quaff Norton. You sip it, ponder it, and continue to go back slowly to the glass as it takes you on a journey into intellectual corridors that you never expected. Said more directly, Norton is an Intellectual wine. Try it, you will be astounded.