

# *MONDAVI: THE MAN, THE WINE, THE WORLD*

7 page Movie Treatment

*Margolis and Catanese © 2012*

## ***Scripted and Composed by Tom Catanese***

"You're fired!" Those are the words, spoken to Robert by his own mother, that Robert will probably never forget. He was 52 when it happened, it was 1965, and he had already dedicated almost 30 years of his life to running the Charles Krug Winery in Napa Valley. In fact, Robert was the one who had talked his father, Cesare Mondavi, into buying the Krug winery when it came up for sale in 1943. And it was Robert who had a vision for the Winery, along with the ambition and ego to pull it off.

Fired by his own family, broke and almost homeless, but with his faith in God and himself in tact, Robert will not be defeated. He starts over on his quest to build his own Dream Winery.

In the early years it was not always smooth sailing as the winery always seemed to be in need of something or other. Robert was a spark plug, he was an energizer and a great promoter.

It is true, as some say of him, that Robert has an ego "as high as the Golden Gate," and it's also true that he had a liking for the good life, but Robert is first and foremost a man of integrity and a hard worker. He understood that the future of winemaking in America depended on improving the quality of the wine itself. In the first half of the twentieth century, wine in America was considered the drink of "winos" or lowly immigrants, or, at the other extreme, a fancy drink called Cold Duck for special occasions. Robert believed that improving the quality of wine, and wine making, and promoting the drinking of wine as a part of everyday life, was the key to his future, and he was already, in 1965, working on his dream come true. A trip to France in 1961 with his wife Marjorie had opened his eyes to the possibilities of changing wine making in America forever. But his younger brother, Peter, the shy and conservative one, resented Robert's ambition, energy and his ego. Peter saw Robert as irresponsible and wild free-spending ways.

In 1963 Robert and Marjorie Mondavi had received a beautiful gold embossed invitation to a special White House Dinner for the Italian Ambassador in Washington DC!

Robert realized that his wife did not have a fancy coat for the dinner so he decided to purchase a mink coat for his wife, Marjorie, and charged it to the Charles Krug Winery expense account.

But he did not consult with his brother on the purchase!

Since Robert was the general manager of the winery he does need to tell his brother about the purchase!  
He planned to pay it back but when Peter got the bill it was just too much for Peter to bear, he was very angry.  
Peter's anger simmered over two years and finally came to the boiling point in 1965! He accused Robert of stealing winery money! That was too much for Robert and he asked his brother three times to take the remark back which Peter refused to do!

A fist fight started in the winery warehouse! Peter got the worst of the fight with lots of bruises!

And later, when their mother, Rosa, saw the bruises on her baby son, she went thru the roof!

Rosa turned against Robert. The family board of directors fired Robert as general manger at the Charles Krug Winery, and now that Robert was no longer looking over Peter shoulder!

From 1965 until 1976 Robert had asked his family for his rightful share of 20% of the family business that he help build! But Peter and Rosa refused Robert for ten years!

Finally in 1976 Robert had run out of patients! He then decided to file a law suit against his Brother, Mother, and Sisters claiming his rightful ownership of 20% of the Winery! The law suit stated that his family had wrongly kept him and had kept his children from working at the Krug Winery! The law suit discovered that Peter had hidden a purchase proposal by the Jos. Schultz Brewing Company of an offer of \$32 Million dollars for the Charles Krug Winery from the entire family!

The suit ran for forty days and finally the Judge issued his ruling in favor of Robert, totaling slightly over \$11 Million dollars! During the court trial Robert's Mother sadly has a heart attack and passes away!

The Judge had ruled that the winery had to be sold! Robert did not want that to happen and so he and his brother worked out a agreement where Peter and the family could keep the winery and Robert would get prize vineyard lands in exchange! That made Peter's family a lot happier!

In 1972 Robert meets Baron Phillip de Rothschild the most famous French wine man at a wine distributor's convention in Hawaii!

The Baron has been watching Robert's ascent over the last ten years and see an important opportunity for himself and Robert! Since the Baron can not by law make any more wine at his Chateau he now wants to partner with Robert to make wine in Napa Valley! But Robert tells him he is not ready yet!

Now in 1978, Robert is invited to Bordeaux by Baron Phillip de Rothschild for a week of rest!

The Baron sees the great wine venture as very profitable for both families and wants to partner

with Robert to make French Wine in Napa Valley! Robert is thrilled, the Baron is his hero!

Robert and Marcia his daughter are flying over the city of Bordeaux and he is looking out the window at the French vineyards! He is listening to a song by Frank Sinatra on his head set!

Frank is singing the song, " My Way" His daughter, Marcia, has been watching him. With a smile, she lifts his headset off one ear and asks him what are you thinking of Daddy? He says that he is recalling the day in his Mother's kitchen when she said, ,,,,,,,,you are fired back in 1965!

Before the plane lands Robert is still thinking back about building his own dynasty. Hustling together \$200,000 in start up money, Robert establishes the Robert Mondavi Winery in 1966, with the goal of creating World Class Wines that will rival European tradition. Robert's goal is to make World class wines in the Napa Valley! Like his father before him, Robert sees his new company as a family business, a dynasty that he will pass on to his children. The winery is in Oakville, Napa Valley, on land known as "To Kalon"— "most beautiful." Robert's winery will be the first new winery built in Napa since Prohibition.

Robert wants a unique and beautiful design that speaks to the wine industries California heritage and a building

that does not look like a factory! He said it must have a soul! Cliff May, the LA designer creates a drawing that at once speaks to Robert's design concept! Now Robert's dream is on paper! In years gone by he talked about how difficult it was to get the winery up and off the ground! There were days when I only had \$2 bucks in my pocket! There were days when I doubted myself but I would not let my doubts rule me. I would make this happen no matter what the cost! But with the grace of God and his Providence we were making news all over the industry! Many valley people called him RAPID ROBERT!

Others said that he had created the first test tube winery in California! He said to all within ear shot, don't stand in my way or I will run you over!

Yes, he said, many of his rapid moves were not right but he did not have time to do the research so he had to make those moves quickly on the spot! His wines were winning Gold Medals all over the country!

The wine industry media started to cover his every move! It seemed that he became the voice of the American Wine industry! The Gallo's never talked to anyone and most of the Napa wine people were grape grower's who turned into wine makers and they were shy of the press!

Robert did many things that other Wine Industry people did not do! The one major trade secret that would amaze restaurant owners was to tell the owner his plans for the evening! He wanted a round table of eight seats! He was the only person sitting at the table! Then he would order four bottles of the best French Bordeaux Cabernet Sauvignon wines that would cost lots of money from the restaurant!

Sitting by him self, many well to do businessmen wanted to know what he was up to?

He would go to a table of businessmen and ask any if they had an interest in French wines!

Almost everyone said yes, yes, they did! He would invite them to his table to taste the French

Wines there! They were thrilled to sample bottles costing \$50, \$60 Or \$70 dollars!

Then he would ask them to try his wines! He did not tell them what he was selling them for!

At the end of the tasting he would then say, what did you think of mine Wine?

They would say, they were as good as all the French wines! Then he would tell them what his wine cost!

Their eye brows would rise up! That is how he got the restaurant owners to stock his wines! The owners

would watch the businessmen smile as they drank Mondavi wines! The owners and the chefs would

place an order on the spot! He did that all over the country as he traveled from city to city!

That was just one of his selling points he used!

Back in Napa along with building a winery intended to attract visitors, Robert brings techniques he has learned from the French about wine production, including, most especially, small oak barrels to replace the large redwood vats used at Krug in the 1940's.

Working fast, as is his nature, Robert is able to release wine in his very first year of business, 1966.

In 1968, he bottles a Sauvignon Blanc, then considered an inferior grape, under the name "Fume Blanc"--a great example of Robert's marketing savvy. The wine takes off in popularity. Soon comes the Mondavi Chardonnay, a standard bestseller, and he is able to establish the Woodbridge label, expanding his reach into more affordable wines while keeping his name associated with expensive, premium wines.

Another very important event happened in 1976! Robert achieves a new level of fame with the infamous "Paris Tasting," a blind tasting in Paris by French Wine experts! Steven Spurrier, an English man who own's wine stores in Paris conceives of a Franco-American Wine Tasting in Paris to celebrate Americas 200<sup>th</sup> birthday! His goal is to bring new business to his shops by promoting French wines over American wines!

To his complete surprise, the California and Napa Valley winery's win first prize Gold Medals in the blind tasting in all classes and beat the best of the French wine makers! Only one American media Journalist covers the tasting for Time magazine! The French judges scream scandal, they were tricked, it is an outrage! It was a set up! The reason that Robert was so very happy was that he had educated both winners at his test tube University of Mondavi winery in the 1960's. Warren Winiarski, of Stags Leap Wine Cellars won the Gold for Cabernet Sauvignon and Mike Grgich, of Chateau Montelena won Gold for Chardonnay, both were from Napa Valley and both were tutored by Robert! The Napa Valley did not understand why this event was very important to them at the time!

But once the American wine media told the story to the American wine drinking public the entire country celebrated its GREAT SUCCESS! This single event struck at the heart of the French leadership role in world wide rankings! California had arrived big time! It seems that the Mondavi magic touch is every where! Everything that he touch's becomes a success story.

While he is flourishing in the world of wine, Robert's family life is floundering. Robert had married and started a family early, just as he was expected to. His wife Marjorie was his best partner because she supported him in every detail of his life! Marjorie was the primary family support system for her husband and children! She was called a crush wife!

That was the loyal wife who does everything that is needed to keep the family going during Harvest as the husband works 18 hours a day to bring in the grapes and make the wine!

With Robert on the road traveling four months out of the year to see his wine distributor's across the country Marjorie tries to fill the lonely hours with the spirits of Vodka! It seems that Robert is spending much more time on his Wines than on his wife and children!

Sadly his marriage is now suffering! As he sees himself always seeking perfection in what he does at work he is also very critical of Marjorie cooking, and his children!

In 1966 he meets Margrit Biever. She is already married herself, Margrit comes to work for the Mondavi winery in the tasting room and soon discovers that she and Robert shares the same vision of Mondavi Winery's future. After ten years of a not-well-kept-secret affair, Robert divorces Marjorie and in just a couple of months, marries Margrit in 1980.

His children are hurt because of their Mother's loss!

They are angry with their dad!

As Margit is his new marketing arm. She gives birth to the idea of the Summer Concert series.

Where the Winery invites high profile entertainers to come to the Winery for Sat. evening music concerts on the grass in the rear of the Winery! People bring picnic baskets and drink Mondavi wines under the stars!

The crowds bring lots of traffic to the valley and take lots of Mondavi Wines home with them!

Many of the other Wineries are jealous of the Mondavi's success! Margrit conceives of the Famous French Chefs Program at the winery!

This single program was really responsible for the Top French Chefs to order Roberts wines for their French Restaurants back in France! This was really a first for any American Wine to be on a French Menu on French soil! This single act by these Great Chefs broke the ice for other Famous French Restaurants in Paris and across

the French country side! The talk in France was all about the Mondavi's of Napa Valley and what they were doing at their winery! The Robert Mondavi Winery was the busiest Winery in California!

In 1981 a local society lady from the Valley had an idea to help the Napa Valley Hospitals with Wine Tasting fund raising event for the local Hospitals and asked the advice of Robert and Margrit!

She wanted to do a wine tasting and then Robert and Margrit told her about the Wine Auction in Beane, France! So instead of having a Wine Tasting the concept was changed to a Wine Auction! Many asked the question who will come to a Wine Auction?

They said we will not know until we try it! It all started very small, but today the Napa Valley Wine Auction, has raised over \$50 million for Napa Valley Hospitals over the years. This was created by Robert and Margrit!

In the late 1985s the Mondavi vineyard is infested by the phylloxera bug that divested the entire European vineyards back in 1880's! The Mondavi's are forced to dig up all the vines and replant over 300 acre's in Napa Valley finest acreage which was a very costly value.

In the 1990's Goldman Sachs people from San Francisco want Robert to do an IPO stock offering!

The pitch offer was that he personally could realize about \$40 million dollars from the sale!

His children had mixed feeling but Robert saw this as a move to the real big time!

In 1998, Robert is 85 years old. He's risen to the top, and he wants to step aside from day-to-day operations.

He appoints Michael CEO, and he appoints Tim VP of Winery Operations.

Robert has done it all, he has won it all, he is now a World Wide Wine Icon!

It is now 2000 and he receives a call from Washington DC. It is the French Ambassador to America!

The French Government will like to honor Robert Mondavi with the Famous French Legion of Honor Award! Only given to two Americans over the last 200 years, Charles Lindbergh and Gen. Patton!

The French Ambassador from Washington flew out to Napa to present the award to him!

The Presentation is presented at the Opus One Winery! The VIP event was attended by all of his family and closest industry friends! Wine people from around the world attended! Once the Red Ribbon and French Star was pinned to his jacket the Ambassador said, Congratulations, Robert, I know that you have much to say to family and friends! Robert stood at the microphone for a few seconds looking over the crowd and gathering his thoughts and words! His emotions were running wild!

He first told his children how proud he was of them and all the hard work that they had put in at

Winery! He then looked at Margrit and said that she had a lot to do with his success in business!

My mind was always on making a better bottle of wine! Her mind was always good at making another wine drinker a happy Mondavi wine drinker.

He told his old friends many of which were former employees at the winery that it was their help and faith in him that propelled him to go on when things were not always going right!

He said that all of you are as GOOD AS GOLD!

One of the waiter's came to him with a flute of Mondavi Sparkling Wine! He picked it up and waited until all the guests had their flutes in hand! He raised his flute in a toast!

He said, here is to the CELEBRATION OF ALL OUR LIVES! Here is ,,,,,,,,,, to Love,,,,,,,,,,,,, here is to your Good Health and certainly here is too more MONEY for everyone of you! As very one began to applaud him,

In the back ground you could hear Frank Sinatra singing; It was **a Very Good Year!**

With that everyone cheered him and applauded his Success!