

Arts

WINE FEST

Continued from page 15

wine on the island for wholesale companies and hosted three radio programs about wine on WMVY. Not only did he know his business, he knew the island had many fine restaurants with impressive wine lists, as well as a number of shops carrying quality vintages.

“So to me, it just made a lot of sense,” he said of starting the festival, noting that he received immense support from friends in the wine trade who jumped at the opportunity to participate as well as necessary financial backing from Nantucket Bank.

“Nantucket Bank was our first sponsor,” he said. “They occupy a special place.”

The first event was held at the Sconset Casino and was two days long including limited attendance tastings in stately island homes, a feature that seems to grow in popularity each year.

“We promote intimacy rather than crowds,” said Toner. “Some of the first year homeowners haven’t missed a year.”

This year the festival will last four days and be based at the Nantucket Yacht Club with special celebrations and seminars at The White Elephant.

“It is longer to be more of a benefit to the community by drawing more people. We don’t want to get bigger but we can be longer. It’s better for everybody,” said Toner. “We found a home at Nantucket Yacht Club. It’s an expression of old Nantucket and they are just great to work with. Believe me, that means a lot.”

While imaginative, delicious food has been emphasized at the festival from the start, this year there will be more restaurants and purveyors represented at the Grand Tasting than in any previous year.

“It’s everybody,” Toner said with pride. “You get to learn from the wine-makers and have wines in the context of food, which is really very important to us, and we’ve expanded the Grand Tasting area to make it more comfortable. We’ve got it all worked out now.

It’s about the same amount of wineries with twice the room.”

Also new this year is the Luminary of the Year award named “The Bud Gifford Cup” after the former Straight Wharf Restaurant owner who had an extensive wine cellar. The award will be presented to Jorge Ordonez of Fine Estates in Spain. In addition, a new series called the Luncheon Symposia will highlight three winegrowing locations including Burgundy, Spain and Stag’s Leap District.

The festival begins Wednesday, May 14 with the Opening Reception at The White Elephant at 5:30 p.m. The first food seminar begins after the reception at 7 p.m. featuring Texas game and beef.

Three different food seminars will be held on Thursday beginning at 11 a.m. The Wine Festival Gala starts at 6 p.m. on Thursday at The White Elephant and features 35 restaurants, 35 wineries and a silent auction.

On Friday, three food seminars or cooking demonstrations take place as well as one on entertaining with sparkling cocktails. The first is about American artisanal cheeses and opens at 11 a.m. Later on Friday, a seminar on finding bargain wines will be held, along with oysters as the feature at a presentation by Boarding House proprietors Angela and Seth Raynor. There will also be a seminar on making great Cabernet in Napa Valley and the premiere of Plum TV’s “Coming of Age” with several expert wine-makers and chefs who were filmed in Spain. The movie plays at 5:30 p.m. at The Starlight Theater.

On Saturday and Sunday from noon to 2 p.m. and 3 to 5 p.m. The Grand Tasting will take place at Nantucket Yacht Club.

Also Saturday, there will be seminars on wine glasses, the art of butchery and an architectural tour of harbor shorelines. The Celebrity Chef and Wine Auction Dinner takes place at 7 p.m. at The White Elephant. Topper’s chef David Daniels is the featured celebrity. Featured wines will be from Alex Gambal’s Maison Alex Gambal

of Burgundy. The auction follows dinner.

On Sunday the Wine-Down Brunch will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at The White Elephant with cuisine by David Daniels, a special drink and a fashion show. That day there will also be a seminar on Napa Valley wines and a Tuscan tasting and book signing.

Great Wines in Grand Houses occurs Thursday through Sunday, but seating is very limited and may be sold out.

Though the four-day festival schedule might be intimidating to some, Toner thrives on the activity and attention to one of his favorite things. He writes about wine for *Boston Common* magazine and in 2006 was given the Merite Agricole award by the French

government, an honor granted to 10 foreigners a year who have been outstanding in promotion of the French wine industry.

“It’s a life about wine,” Toner said of his style.

“Come on down and enjoy,” said Toner. “[The festival] is a great reflection on Nantucket — that people come this far. Nantucket is still a key word. It’s still magic. We have a very loyal following, and some great relationships have been spawned by the festival.”

Proceeds from the Nantucket Wine Festival benefit the island’s nonprofit organizations. Last year nearly \$250,000 was raised for local charities. For updated festival information call 228-1128. ■

Identify This

Georgen Gilliam Charnes

The Nantucket Historical Association houses the most complete visual record of Nantucket history in existence. The image here is from our collections, and may be one we cannot identify, wish for more information about or just want to see if people can identify. Many more images are available for viewing and identification at www.nha.org.



If you know where this house is, or if you’d like to see a larger image for closer examination, email: georgen@nha.org or call 508.228.1894, ext. 301, by Friday noon.



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