

CORONA PRECAUTIONS

I went to the bathroom at a restaurant.

I washed my hands.

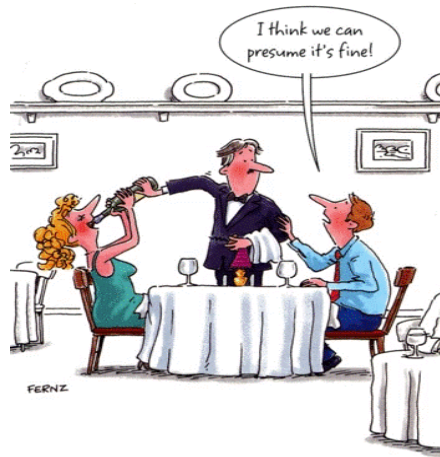
Opened the door with my elbow.

Raised the toilet seat with my foot.

I switched on the water faucet with a tissue.

Opened the bathroom door to leave with my elbow.

And when I returned to my table I realized.... I forgot to pull up my pants!!!'



Sophie liked to be the one who approved the wine.

My Vintage Year

An interview series : Where we interview your fellow EDWG members. And others. Was this their vintage year: by Dave Chambers

Today it is Ken King

Ken needs some nudging he is busy in this Covid crisis, indeed, he is going flat out to keep up. Yes, he says, I can get on to the interview in a couple of days. I have pushed him with emails before this. Gee may be he is, really busy.

When I ring he is in a good space so we talk some more. We discuss his early involvement at the guild. Gushing now and excited to reveal some history, the facts pour out. All the names of those early years now appear on our trophies. Two standouts are Harry Gilham and Joe Ilium. The latter, who encouraged Ken, way back when, to join the EDWG. Harry Gilham lived and still lives just down the road. Scotty was around at the time and gets a mention, of course he means our Graham Scott.

They said you should be treasurer, he did, he was, for 13 long years. He wanted the EDWG to become the Amateur Wine Show had the sponsors lined up for it. The vote didn't go his way. These gems of knowledge fall out in to the conversation as we discuss the old times. I think our active members are low now, when Ken joined they only had 6 active members. It was a bit of a closed shop, says he.

He is a bit of an enigma Ken, I find him engaging, I would like to get to know him better. Yes he is a life member. I am embarrassed to admit I haven't tried Ken Kings wine. Wine grown according to James Halliday in chocolate cake soil at Australia's only Post Office Winery location. I suspect it is very good indeed at his craft. Why. Ken is a passionate person. A passion not un- noticed by the early guild members, the so few. This is confirmed within a few short sentences uttered by him. Interwoven with this passion are the interesting stories of the old guild. The early guild that was populated by just a few individuals. These celebrated and now legendary figures that honour themselves by appearing on The Joe Ilium or the Harry Gilham.

Ken is battling away at keeping the winery going, he is so busy and didn't mean to be so tardy with the return of the Interview. We are a bit pushy, I offer.

I make a mental note to ask him later about the vineyards in the guilds care, Rockwood at Kangaroo Ground, Kingston's in Eltham and another across in Yarrambat, during that time.

He was a Wine Judge coached under the excellent tutelage of the esteemed Bill Christopherson. He speaks fondly of the Montsalvat Wine Show at the time of his presidency a venue at no cost to the guild. This enabled the show to grow at a considerable pace from the original venue where a lean to operation started to flourish in those very early years.

He is so grateful for the early friendships and mentoring provided by Harry Gilham, Neil and Myrna Johannesen, Bill Christopherson, John Graves, Joe Ilium and others, to mention just a few.

Here now at the end of this process it seems we should find a way to engage Ken more with the guild. He still has so much to offer. Indeed the skill he learnt from those old timers led him to the vineyard he now so proudly calls his own. I find him very interesting as a person and a wealth of knowledge about the early guild. Something tells me we should preserve this knowledge somehow.

Ken Offered The Following Extra Details

There were only 6 active members when I was asked if I would like to be nominated as a member. It was a bit of a closed shop.

I was treasurer for c 13 years and President for I cant remember.

Key involvement:

Looking after vineyards in the Guilds care. Rockwood in KG, Kingston's in Eltham and another across in Yarrambat.

I was clubs assistant wine judge under the tutelage of club member and esteemed judge Bill Christopherson.

As president I did a deal with Montsalvat for the club wineshow venue at no cost, that enabled the show to grow.

I did the first website for EDWG

I learnt a lot from the original members in particular Harry Gilham, Neil and Myrna Johannesen, Bill Christopherson, John Graves, Joe Ilium to mention as few.

Cheers Ken

Dave: Ken did you ever drink anything other than wine in your early years.

Ken: Chocolate malted milks from Stony's Milk Bar, Whitehorse Road, Balwyn. Double choc and double malt of course. Still my favorite drink and my benchmark when it comes to judging a good Cabernet Sauvignon.

Dave: Have you ever thought that the path you have been on could have been a different outcome. Or to put it another way, what would you have done differently. Perhaps you would have started the commercial part earlier.

Ken: Yes I'm commercial, but only the next step up from an amateur. 15 tonne crush is hardly commercial but profitable using my business model.

Dave: What is your first experience that you remember that led to an interest in wine.

Ken: Lunch at Johnny's Green Room Carlton. A lasagna and a beer for me. My work colleagues tempted me to taste a 1972 Brown Brothers Cabernet Shiraz Mondeuse.....instantly hooked.

Dave: Did this lead to making your way in the Wine World and eventually lead to the hobby of making wine.

Ken: Being an engineer, I like to know how things work.....had to have a go at making wine in the bathtub.

Dave: What is an interesting unknown fact about you that members of both guilds may find interesting.

Ken: Nillumbik Councillor 2008-2016. Mayor 2010, Deputy Mayor 2011, Chair of the Economic Development Committee, Chair Yarra Plenty Library Board.....oh and I told my boss to "get stuffed" in 1982 and haven't had a boss since. Oh, I operate the Kangaroo Ground Post Office out of the winery.

Dave: Can you tell us about the wildest party you attended. Probably in your youth but maybe not.

Ken: It was the one that I can't remember...sorry.

Dave: What are you making now that is unusual or different to what you have made recently.

Ken: Making "blush" Rose by blending chardonnay with pinot and/or shiraz.

Dave: The EDWG attended to grapes in a few areas in the early days. Can you explain that involvement.

Ken: The Rockwood vineyard in Kangaroo Ground was my training plot that led me to purchase the current estate block in 1988. Graham Scott (Life Member) referred to the Kangaroo Ground black volcanic soil as "chocolate cake". Scotty is to be chastised for committing my life to endless toil of the soil.

Karen Coulston has a Guest Question:

Karen Coulston: Hi Ken, you grow your own Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and buy some fruit to supplement your wine product range. Do you feel a difference in pride / satisfaction / esteem for your home grown and non-estate wines?

Ken: There are three distinct phases in the wine journey, the viticulture, the winemaking, the marketing and sales. I love all the components equally, but strangely it's the enjoyment of the finished product with my clients that is the most satisfying.

Dave: Have you educated yourself with regards to your career in wine. Where did you pick up your wine making skills.

Ken: Primarily the old guild members were my instructors. Harry Gilham, Graham Scott, John Graves, Joe Illian, Neil and Myrna Johannesen and of course Bill Christopherson who trained my palate.....he was a genius. I studied under Graham Morris from Winery Supplies (now Anpros Boronia) who ran a course in Basic Scientific Winemaking and Viticulture at Dandenong TAFE.

Dave: As a commercial wine maker the technical part of wine making is very important in your journey to the finished wine. How do you approach the intellectual part of the discussion about wine. Wine can be so many things to so many people. But what does it bring to you.

Ken: I never forget the winemaking is an artform. The science is important, but needs to be in the background. I don't read books on winemaking, I chase high quality inputs and try as much as possible to let the wine make itself. I now realise that I'm not the winemaker, it's the yeast. I simply control the environment to allow the yeast to do its job.

Dave: This is probably the wrong question to ask but let's go with it anyway. Are you pedantic fussy wine maker or do you prefer to feel your way along steady as she goes. Follow the tried and true methods and it will work out in the end.

Ken: The latter. I'm a bucket winemaker...a bucket of this, a bucket of that, a handful of stalks, a pH meter, aspiration apparatus and a good nose.

Dave: What is wine making to you. It was just another hobby probably, at what point did you consider making the big leap to commercial. Is it a consuming passion that excites you even now.

Ken: I was an amateur that entered a commercial show and won a gold medal, my Kangaroo Ground Pinot. Oops...I better get a license now!

Dave: What are you excited about for the future of boutique wine making.

Ken: Traditional winemaking has stood the test of time, makes the best wines and will do into the future. The iconic wines of the world are still made in the traditional manner....even Grange.

Dave: What inspires you to make better wine. Do you still enter the Eltham or Frankston Wine Show. Is it the Gold medals or the search for knowledge to improve on your wine making skills that motivates you.

Ken: I can't enter amateur shows if wines are made in my "shed", what comes first in the pursuit is high quality inputs (referred to above) and control of the winemaking environment. Get that right and medals follow.

Dave: Who or what has been your biggest influence in wine making.

Ken: Love the natural process. Fruits of the earth converted to wine by the yeast beast.....its magic.

Dave: I think you are a Life Member of the EDWG. How long have you been a member of EDWG.

Ken: Yes Life Member. Off the top of my head, it was c. 1980 when Joe Ilian invited me to a secretive Guild meeting. They saw me coming.....treasurer for 13 years and eventually president.

Dave: As you have explained to me when you were first elected President the Guild only had a handful of members. What have been the positive surprises of your membership of EDWG. Do you still have contact with members from those early days.

Ken: Alluded to previously, I love the hands on traditions that are imbedded in fine wine. Its not a scary technology product, nor should it be!

Dave: What were you drinking in your twenties.

Ken: Beer, wine, chocolate malted milks.

Dave: If you could tell the young Ken about life, what advice would you give.

Ken: Have a crack at it, keep going when others give up.

Dave: Enlighten us with a couple of your favourites wine tweaks.

Ken: A strong coffee followed by a good Cabernet, a piece of licorice followed by a shiraz.

Dave: I have heard in my short time with the guild some complete disasters while making wine. What is your biggest disaster you can share with us.

Ken: A factor of ten error in adding tartaric acid to a barrel of shiraz. Thought my pH meter was lying when it read 2.7. Saved that "sherbert bomb" barrel and used it next vintage to top up barrels. Wont talk about the time I pumped finished wine into new season chardonnay juice!

Dave: Where is your wine available in the wine world. I do like the name "Kings of Kangaroo Ground". I'm sure there have been interesting marketing enquiries from around the world. Can you share a couple of those surprises with us.

Ken: I have shipped wine around the world to private buyers. Yes, lots of enquiries, but, unfortunately they just all want millions of litres at zero to \$2/litre. Go jump! I say, not interested.

And Finally

Dave: You are going to a desert island to spend some chill time. You are taking with you one piece of music, one bottle of wine, a book and food. To be clear, that is a choice of one bottle of wine, one meal and so on. What will be placed in your suitcase.

Ken: Gotta be a big suitcase to fit a Nebuchadnezzar of Kings Pinot 2018. Just 15 litres. No room left for a Johnny's Green Room, Carlton, lasagna. Oh well, so be it.

Looking for his wine thief, nearly done!

