

conclusion that wine drinkers' much vaunted taste buds are not all they are cracked up to be, even in the rarified circles in which Kurniawan moved. Of course, even if somebody had suspicions, it would take some nerve to accuse a well-known owner/dealer/wine expert of chicanery, but the situation is curious nevertheless.

The last question of "why we care" is perhaps the most interesting, for it is the same question that arises in the case of fake art. Imagine an art forger who is so good that his fakery is totally undetectable. Or, better yet, imagine a combination of software and hardware that can reproduce a painting with real, authentic paint on a pixel level. (That technique presumably could be used to reproduce an existing painting by a painter but not to produce a new painting "in the style of" a particular painter.) Certainly the average art lover would not be able to distinguish the fake painting from the real one, and possibly not even experts could do so. But what the fake painting would miss is *authenticity*. Whether we buy art or wine, we are paying, among other things, for authenticity. You get bragging rights if you have cases of Veuve's Musigny or a Romanée Conti in your cellar, but you get no bragging rights from having fake bottles of those wines. And although the real thing is clearly delicious, the bragging-rights aspect of ownership may be at least as important if you are a serious collector.

This is a wonderful book, well written and carefully researched, and it paints an illuminating picture of a segment of wine drinkers among whom most of us do not belong. Peter Hellman has done a superb job, and the fact that we know from the beginning "who done it" does not diminish one bit the enjoyment one gets from the tale. The only thing I would have done differently is to include an index, but that is my hobby-horse: I think that all nonfiction books should have one.

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doi:10.1017/jwe.2017.35

PETER M. F. SICHEL: *The Secrets of My Life: Vintner, Prisoner, Soldier, Spy*. Archway Publishing, Bloomington, IN, 2017, 418 pp., ISBN 978-1-4808-2406-5 (paperback), \$23.99.

In the eighties and nineties, when there were no bike lanes, Peter Sichel could be seen, alone in full business attire, pedaling from an Upper West Side apartment to his offices in midtown Manhattan. Before he braved the city's hazardous traffic, Sichel wore an army uniform in World War II, serving later as an OSS (Office of Strategic Services) and CIA agent in Europe and the Far East. In civilian life, he reorganized the family's wine business in Mainz, Germany, which had been overrun by the Nazis. He became a successful American wine merchant and Bordeaux entrepreneur and attained certain renown as the man who gave the world *Blue Nun*.

The Sichel saga began in 1935. With danger looming, his parents interrupted his German schooling and sent him to continue his education at St. Cyprian's and Stowe School in England. While he was away, the family escaped from Nazi Germany in 1935 on a ruse and settled in France. Sichel was working in the firm's Bordeaux office when he was interned as a Jew by the Nazis, but he escaped to the United States and joined the American Army one week after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

He led troops into Mainz, where he took possession of the family winery, not revealing his identity until he could be assured that the contents of those cellars were safe from sabotage.

He later was the leader of an OSS unit in Heidelberg, charged with ferreting out key Nazis who had gone underground and recruiting scientists specializing in advanced weaponry. He later became the head of the CIA office in Berlin, where he fought against Russian agents recruiting those same specialists.

Other assignments as a "spook" took him to Washington and then Hong Kong. This book underwent severe vetting for security by CIA officials, but they did allow Sichel the freedom to discuss his three years in Hong Kong. He recalls living a glorious life in which "[l]iquor flowed freely, the more we enjoyed a generous living allowance to be able to afford our life with great joy."

After seventeen years in the army, military intelligence, and the CIA, he returned to civilian life, saying, "I left because the CIA did things I didn't like, such as sending people into the Ukraine to work in fabricated resistance groups. They were potentially being sent to their deaths."

It would be interesting to know what was not revealed in this book. I would like to have learned more details about Sichel's experiences as an agent of the OSS and the CIA. He had great difficulty gaining permission to publish his story. Sichel explains, "It took more than a year to get clearance and some hard bargaining. The bone of contention were: cover used by me, methodology of operations, and finally details on Political Action, where the CIA was either not willing to admit having mounted the operation, or did not want me to mention the big sums spent on what should have been perceived as useless operations, playing into the hands of internal security services in such places as China, the Ukraine and Albania" (email from Peter M.F. Sichel from Oct 10, 2017).

He returned to civilian life to take control of the family wine-importing business in New York, which he later dissolved in favor of linkage with Schieffelin, then a major wine and spirits company. In those midcentury years, wine had just begun its ascent to popularity, and fortified wine was soon to be eclipsed. He advertised an obscure German wine, *Blue Nun*, as the wine you can drink "right through the meal," and it skyrocketed to record sales. In what may have been his only marketing disappointment, he tried to do the same with a Chinese-styled brand, but that effort never took off.

In 1984, he became the chairman of the German parent company, selling it to another German company, Langguth. He also arranged a partial sale of Schieffelin to LVMH, the giant luxury-goods conglomerate. Until 2006, he owned the Bordeaux Chateau Fourcas-Listrac, which he then sold to Hermes.

In dealing with German winemakers, Sichel recalls that he tried not to dwell on the past. “I experienced the same embarrassing problems that I had experienced in Berlin after the war. People were anxious to tell me how well they had behaved during the Nazi period. I adopted the same policy I’d had in Berlin. The minute the subject came up, I made it plain that I did not want to hear about their behavior during the Nazi period. I pointed out that it involved their conscience, and if they had really behaved poorly, they, hopefully, would have ended up in jail by now. This usually ended that conversation.”

Sichel has appeared often on American television as a wine authority and in Germany as a witness to the immediate postwar years in Berlin, where he directed the CIA office. He has been a member of several New York wine societies and a frequent judge in wine competitions.

Blue Nun can still be found on store shelves and referenced in the Beastie Boys album *Check Your Head*, which includes a musical interlude in which a narrator tells of a party held in Peter Sichel’s New York dwelling, where guests praise the wines. The record includes excerpts from Sichel’s audio recording “On Wine: How to Select and Serve.”

His memoir contains a chapter titled “Some Advice on Wine” that could easily become the basis for an authoritative book. I would suggest one addition to the long title of this book: add the phrase *bon vivant*. In military and civilian form, Sichel has created an enviable lifestyle for himself, although I have not seen him lately on his bicycle.

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 doi:10.1017/jwe.2017.36

JAMIE GOODE: *I Taste Red: The Science of Tasting Wine*. University of California Press, Oakland CA, 2016, 224 pp., ISBN 978-0-520-29224-6 (hardcover), \$29.95.

By stating that color has taste, Dr. Jamie Goode’s title alludes to the wine consumer’s challenges that he explores. He alerts readers to coming surprises through his discussion of our evolving understanding of wine tasting that goes far beyond the mouth. Goode introduces and explains the “multimodal” nature of wine flavor, leading to larger issues, such as “the nature of conscious experience” (p. 89).