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PROFILE OF A WINEMAKER

By Robert "Bangkok Bob" Fallon

John Munch is the founder, current partner & winemaker for *Le Cuvier Winery*. He previously established several other expensive and/or failed wineries along California's Central Coast, including *Adelaida Cellars* & *Chat Botte* (French for "Puss 'n Boots"), the latter being a French backed "champagne" winery, now defunct. It would not be totally fair to state that misfortune has plagued each & every Munch related winery, but then the *Flying Dutchman* was clearly a seaworthy vessel when launched, regardless the occasional difficulty encountered on her long voyage. As a means of clarifying the *Dutchman* reference, a short overview of the life & times of our Munch might well be in order. However, it should be noted that the present disposition of past investor capital (if such is the reader's interest) is beyond the scope of this short profile.

It is believed that Munch was born in 1944, but the date is uncertain because he was found living in the company of a small colony of three-toed sloth in the jungles of southeastern Costa Rica. To be specific, he was discovered by a missionary family (the wife actually) in a mosquito infested mangrove swamp at a site not far from the fresh, lapping sounds of Caribbean waves. His estimated age at that time was three or four, but hard to tell because his teeth were worn & extant photos from the period show him to be quite matted with filth. Once washed, it was determined that he was not of indigenous origin, & it is further recorded that he made such loud, rude noises that foster placement proved more than a little difficult. Of consequence, he was reluctantly adopted by his finders, the missionary family of George & Suzanne Munch. Being childless at the time, and after many years of trying to engender children, George & Suzanne were willing to overlook certain profound character defects already being exhibited by the young savage, so he was taken into the family & named after his adoptive mother's brother who had recently drowned on Lake Michigan, which is quite some distance from Costa Rica. It is of some interest that shortly after the foundling entered their lives, George & Suzanne produced children of their own, prodigiously year by year, to a total of twelve. This undeniable fact might be

viewed as a blessing, but including John, that made thirteen children, a number of questionable auspiciousness.

Nonetheless, Munch grew as the family grew, disappearing occasionally into the deeper green of jungle across the Costa Rican border into Panama, but always returning home after a month or two. He was found to be loudly fluent in various native tongues, & learned his English letters well. Indeed, it is told that he took special pleasure in the Old Testament, whence he wandered the depths of jungle reciting both the Old & New Testaments in his own translation to his friends, members of the Chupete Indian tribe. The Chupetes apparently enjoyed the stories immensely, but chose not to convert to Christianity, a fact which troubled the elder George Munch in his ministry, especially since the Chupetes began to forego clothing entirely in favor of brightly painted bodies. Munch dropped out of sight when accused of being responsible for an outbreak of the dreaded Sikatoka plague, a disease which ended up decimating a major portion of the banana plantations in Panama's Chiriqui province, & herein begins a period in the subject's life somewhat lacking full clarity.

From the age of roughly thirteen, roughly because his true age still remains clouded, until the approximate age of twenty-two, little is known about the movements of John Munch. He personally avows that he has little recollection, but believes that he may have returned to the company of his original family, the three-toed sloth. At the time of his reemergence into public light, he was simply found to be living in Provence, France, working as a blender of flower scents & musk within the perfume industry. He has stated that experience working in a perfumery has been invaluable to him when blending wine & making cocktails.

Following a rather specific & public invitation extended by the French government, Munch emigrated to California with all documents in order, including a number of appropriate birth certificates, passports & various Social Security cards. But once again more clouds of uncertainty & another short lapse of unaccountable time ensues. There is some indication from Munch himself that he spent these lost years working with honor at the San Diego Zoo, but more likely (based on an unsuccessful credit check) he was employed as a motorcycle mechanic in St. Charles, Missouri. It is not until 1979 that the trail clears, & it can be determined with reasonable certainty (via the records of various Federal & State licensing agencies) that John Munch was well established as a distinguished consultant & winemaker within the California wine community.

Currently, Munch spreads his time between living within what he calls a work-in-progress-house (some windows or doors affixed; some not) which he began building in 1979, playing loud music in a band called the *Sounds of Gleet*, consulting for the wine industry here and abroad, and of course when he must, lending a hand to the running of *Le Cuvier*. He can be contacted via e-mail at John@lcwine.com, or by post at 3333 Vine Hill Ln., Paso Robles, CA 93446. We have been told that he takes special pleasure in communicating with fellow wine

enthusiasts, except during his brief terms of disappearance. He especially requests that no past business investor trouble themselves with initiating contact because, in his opinion, he has previously stated all there is to state on that “small matter.”

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR: Robert Fallon, AKA “Bangkok Bob”, was born in Detroit, Michigan, moving in his youth to California where he has lived for many years along the Big Sur coast. He spends his productive time writing sensitive poetry & creating engrossed sculptings of heavy metal. He is currently on extended stay in Bangkok, Thailand, researching material for his forthcoming travel guide: *Oriental Excess On \$158 a Day*.