

A Three Course Meal—The Wine

By Brian H. Ratcliff



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It's time to talk about one of my favorite subjects—wine. A good wine can bring an entire meal together. When I select a wine I want to know where it is from. I love wine lists at restaurants. You can tell a lot about the quality of a restaurant by looking at the wine list.

In America we name our wine by the grape; i.e., it's a Pinot Noir, or a Cabernet Sauvignon, or a Chardonnay. In Europe wine is named for the region (appellation) and by government regulation a producer must grow only the approved grape(s) for that location. For instance in Burgundy the growers are required to grow Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. I know a little about Italian and French wines, but my knowledge is limited to a few areas like Tuscany (Sangiovese), Cotes de Rhone (Syrah and Grenache), Burgundy (Pinot Noir) and Bordeaux (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petite Verdot, Cabernet Franc, and Malbec).

In my last article I compared the legislative session to a stinky/stout blue cheese and promised to report more to you. This time I want to compare the session to a Zinfandel. This is a wine that can be very different depending upon the winery. Sometimes you can get a fresh and easy drinking wine with light tannins, but you may also get a very complex jam-

my wine with ripe tannins. One of my favorite Zinfandels is from Sonoma's Mauritson Winery. I refer to the current legislative session as a Zinfandel as it was easy going at times and then the next day spicy and full of zest.

The Association had a six-pack package of bills. Four of our six bills have been signed into law.

Act 107 allows one heir to purchase the interest of another heir in real property as opposed to a forced sale at the courthouse steps.

Act 304 creates a criminal offense of unlawful distribution of sexual images, a/k/a revenge porn.

Act 381 provides limited immunity for underage drinkers when the police are called due to a minor needing medical aid.

Act 380 clarifies and reorganizes the venue statutes.

We negotiated agreements on two other bills that were introduced. Insurance Commissioner Alan Kerr agreed to work with us to exempt attorneys from various requirements in the Arkansas Title Insurance Act. We worked with Lexis and the Code Revision Commission to make all the Arkansas Statutes available to the public. This may sound easy, but at times we felt like we were wrestling with a Melchizedek (30 liter) bottle of wine.

There were a number of bills

we opposed and many we supported. I will highlight a few. We joined forces with the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce and just about every licensed industry (accountants, HVAC, contractors) in opposing HB 1158 that made it lawful to engage in a licensed occupation without a license if it could be shown the licensing procedure was a substantial burden. If this was done the onus then shifted to the particular licensing agency to prove that the licensing requirements had not been sufficiently burdensome. Many thanks to Tom Curry who provided research and testified against the bill. We worked with the authors and eventually got attorneys exempted.

The bill still failed to be passed into law as in my opinion it tried to "fix" burdensome licensing procedures with an unnecessary legal process. We then opposed the Chamber of Commerce on two bills that would remove the "made whole" doctrine from workers' compensation and insurance contracts. This bill also failed. We also opposed HB 761 which mandated awarding attorney's fees against the losing side when a motion to dismiss is granted. This bill also failed.

The Legislature can have up to three joint resolutions that are then placed on the general ballot for consideration. We support-

ed SJR 1005. This was a joint resolution filed by our member, Representative Matthew Shepherd. SJR 1005 provided for merit selection of Arkansas Supreme Court Justices. If enacted, an appointed panel would make a recommendation of three to the Governor and the Governor would then select one from the list. This was not one of the three joint resolutions that were recommended by the Legislature.

I want to thank the Legislative Committee and Chair, Teresa Wineland, and our lobbyist, Jack McNulty, for all the work that was put into the session. When they adjourned sine die we all said Amen!

This is my last article as president. I cannot close without thanking the staff at our association for all their hard work this year. Just as a good wine can bring together a meal, a good staff can make our association the best of the best.

I hope you have enjoyed your food and wine tour of the association this year. I appreciate the opportunity to serve as president. Bon Appétit. ■