



UNIVERSITY OF  
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**University of Nebraska Viticulture Program**

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### **2021 – A YEAR TO REMEMBER!**

Not only was 2021 a highly variable growing year and a marketing year stressed by the Covid 19 pandemic, but it was memorable for the loss of two of Nebraska's grape and wine industry icons, pioneers that left a lasting impact on our growing and successful industry, Jim Danielson and Jim Jeffers.

**Jim Danielson** was a faculty member in UNL's Journalism Department for many years and is known for inspiring Jim Ballard to go into the grape and wine industry, ultimately encouraging the beginnings of James Arthur Vineyards. He had a passion for growing grapes and his popular almost 5-acre vineyard near Rock Bluff, Nebraska was a popular site for amateur winemakers. Jim worked with Senator Sandy Schofield, lobbying hard for the grape industry in Nebraska, eventually leading to passage of the Nebraska Farm Wineries Act in 1985. This enabling legislation provided the spark, a "jump-start" to Nebraska's fledgling grape and wine industry. For his contributions to the Nebraska grape and wine industry, Jim Danielson was awarded the Nebraska Winery and Grape Growers Association's Pioneer Award. Jim was also known for his enthusiasm for British cars (he owned 18 of them) and tragically died in a multi-car crash on September 15<sup>th</sup> while returning from an all-British car show in Vermont driving one of his favorites, a 1969 MG convertible. Jim's signature handlebar moustache, dry sense of humor and ongoing enthusiasm for supporting Nebraska's industry will be sorely missed, but we all should be appreciative of his dogged determination to get the Legislature to pass the Farm Wineries Act that gave impetus to our now highly successful industry. Coincidentally I met Jim about a week before his death at the Lincoln Farmers Market where he,

Sandy Schofield and I reminisced about the battles they had in surmounting the roadblocks that had to be hurdled to obtain legislative passage of the Nebraska Farm Wineries Act.

**James Arthur Jeffers** is well-known for establishing James Arthur Vineyards (JAV), now Nebraska's largest winery, but many in our industry are not aware of the tremendous impact he had on the industry as a whole. It was through his leadership that the Nebraska Winery and Grape Growers Association (NWGGA) was established. His business acumen and connections in the legal and business world enabled him to facilitate the steps necessary to initiate the NWGGA's establishment. Jim also realized that without grape growers, a winery wouldn't be able to flourish, so he invited a large number of people to consider growing grapes for James Arthur Vineyards and initially over 20 became contract growers for JAV. In addition, he purchased the above mentioned Rock Bluff Vineyard from Jim Danielson, which provided JAV with an immediate supply of already producing grapes while waiting for the newly-planted vines at JAV and from contract growers to begin production. Also realizing that expertise was needed for JAV to begin production, Jim hired Tim Moore, a University of California-Davis Viticulture and Enology graduate to assist in planning the enterprise, planting the grapevines and serving as the first winemaker for JAV. After the first several years with JAV, Tim moved on to a viticulture position with Constellation Brands in New York's Finger Lakes region. Jim Ballard, JAV's current winemaker and co-owner gained insights that have enabled James Arthur Vineyards to rise to become one of the Midwest's pre-eminent wineries. Unfortunately, James Arthur Jeffers passed away in 2021, but his legacy lives on as

Nebraska's grape and wine industry continues to grow in importance and quality. Thanks, Jim!

### **Research Highlights from Around the Region**

**Wisconsin's** Amaya Atucha published interesting results for a multi-year study of bud hardiness of cold climate interspecific hybrid grapevines (CCIHG) in which key observations were made. Their study involved predicted cold hardiness of Brianna, Frontenac, La Crescent, Marquette and Petite Pearl. The Atucha group's conclusions regarding bud hardiness pointed out that the time of greatest risk of bud damage to CCIHG grapevines is in the spring "because of the rapid deacclimation response once air temperatures rise above freezing". They suggest that selection of CCIHG cultivars for cold climate regions should take timing of budbreak into consideration when evaluating future cultivar selection and releases.

**Pennsylvania:** Research on delaying bud break was the focus of Centenari's research group where they compared Amigo oil applications with late pruning in Riesling and Lemberger vines over a two-year period. Both Amigo oil applications and late pruning tended to delay bud break in both years, but late pruning provided more consistent delay of bud break. Less bud damage in Lemberger was observed in

the late-pruned vines following a year that had a serious freeze event. They also produced a higher yield than control (non-treated) vines. These researchers noted that there were several problems with both Amigo oil application and late pruning related to cultivar. They suggest that late pruning applied shortly after budbreak (E-L stage 7) "may be a more reliable method to delay bud break for cordon-trained vines". Testing Amigo oil on a small sample of vines to determine efficacy may also be appropriate and may save money. (Editor's note, earlier research by UNVP students, Qrunfleh and Loseke also confirmed positive impact of such treatments.)

### **Wine Business Monthly's 2021 Grape Growing Year in Review**

Nebraska's report by Paul Read suggested that the 2021 vintage was variable, but several vineyards reported a positive growing season, especially in terms of quality. Itasca results were especially encouraging and Dr. Read anticipated that more of this cultivar will be planted in the future. He also pointed out that what often is thought to be "winter damage" in some years is really "autumn damage" because of lack of hardening in the fall prior to the onset of severely cold winter temperatures. (WBM December issue, p 55)

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### **Calendar**

March 22-24 – Eastern Wine Exposition, Oncenter, Syracuse New York

May 13-14 - TOAST NEBRASKA, Omaha, Nebraska – for more information contact NWGGA



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