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Mondavi as philanthropist, industry leader, teacher
Sunday

The passing of a legend Mondavi, Napa Valley wine pioneer, 94

L. PIERCE CARSON
Register Staff Writer

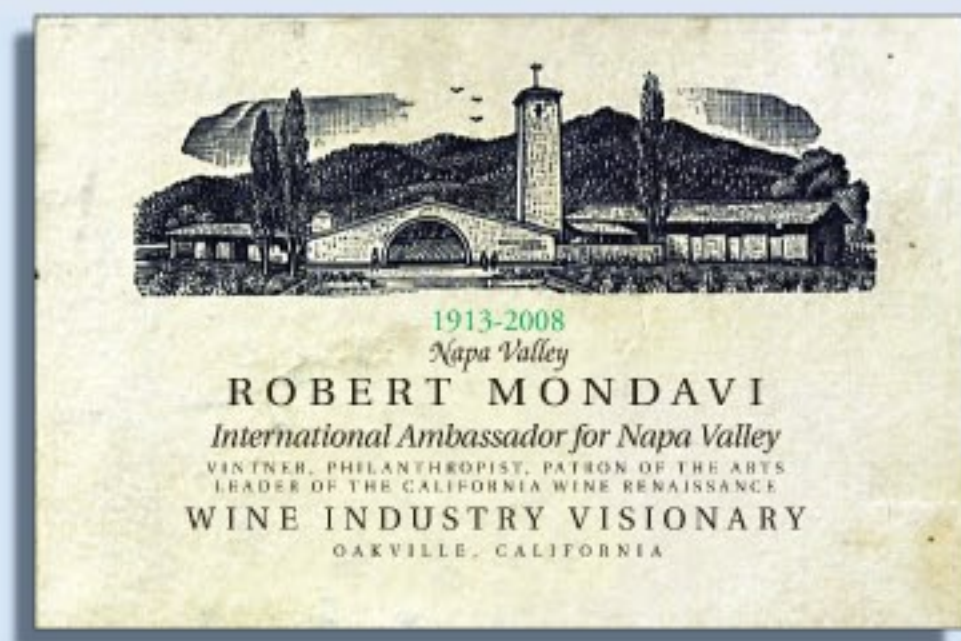
Robert G. Mondavi — the 94-year-old Napa Valley visionary who put California wine on dinner tables around the world — died peacefully at home early Friday morning. Mondavi is widely credited with being the driving force behind Napa Valley's propulsion to the top of the wine world, a place where great grapes are grown and wines made, and where the industry thrives. Prior to Mondavi launching his own winery and brand in 1966, American wines were considered cheap imitations of those produced in Bordeaux, Burgundy and other long-established winegrowing regions of the world.

Aware of the potential of the local sun-splashed terroir, vintner Mondavi was a tireless promoter of the Napa Valley and developed a reputation for consistent, high-quality. Starting Robert Mondavi Winery as a small, premium operation, he and his family built one of the largest, most respected wineries in the United States, producing more than 500,000 cases of quality wine varieties per year.

Even as he slowly walked into a new millennium, Bob Mondavi remained a player on the world stage of wine.

His wine empire sold off to the highest bidder when he was 91, Mondavi vowed "to start over."

Teaming up with son Tim, daughter Mar-



cia and his wife, Margrit, Robert Mondavi did just that — launching the Continuum wine brand, which had its first release in the spring of 2008.

Wine on the world stage

Mondavi earned the respect of the world as a symbol of Napa Valley premium wines, as one of the world's leading innovators, producers and marketers of fine wine.

Driven by his belief that he could produce world-class wines here, Mondavi launched his own wine brand at age 53.

Born June 18, 1913, in Virginia, Minn., to parents who emigrated from the Marche region of Italy, Robert was largely influenced by Old World traditions.

"My passion for bringing wine into the

American culture was motivated by a desire to plant deep into the soil of our young country the same values, traditions and daily pleasures that my mother and father had brought with them from central Italy: good food, good wine and love of family," Mondavi wrote in his 1998 autobiography, "Harvests of Joy."

Mondavi's passion unarguably sparked a revolution in the American food and wine experience.

A 1936 graduate of Stanford University with a degree in economics and business administration, Mondavi understood that marketing was as critical as winemaking expertise in achieving success in the wine

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'We lost our leader'

By Register Staff

Mentor, friend, and above all, ambassador. Those are just a few of the roles Robert Mondavi played as he led a movement that turned a sleepy farming valley north of San Francisco into one of the premiere wine regions of the world.

"His legacy is the Napa Valley," said Clay Gregory, a former general manager at Robert Mondavi Winery. "He was the

one who started the modern era of winemaking in California and Napa Valley. He had the vision and was determined. There were other people who made good wines but he was convinced he was going to make among the best wines the world. ... He aimed at a much higher place than anyone at the time."

Gregory, who worked for Mondavi for 14 years and is now president of Jackson Fam-

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Robert Mondavi, joined at Auction Napa Valley 2004 by several family members. The women in the forefront include, from left to right, Granddaughter Chiara Mondavi, granddaughter Carissa Mondavi and wife Margrit Biever Mondavi.
Register File Photo

ROBERT MONDAVI TIMELINE

1913 Born in Virginia, Minn., to Rosa and Cesare Mondavi on June 18	1947 Daughter Marcia Mondavi born	1969 Mondavi Summer Music Festival is launched	1981 Helps found Napa Valley Wine Auction, now Auction Napa Valley	1998 Publishes biography, "Harvests of Joy"
1921 Family relocates to Lodi, California	1951 Son Tim Mondavi born	1972 Robert sues family over Krug dispute; family later counter-sues	1988 Launches "Mission Program" to educate public about wine consumption	2001 Opening of Copia: The American Center for Food, Wine and the Arts, in Napa, which Robert founded. Long-standing effort to obtain vineyard/winery in Languedoc region of France fails
1936 Robert graduates from Stanford University, works for Sunny Hill Winery in St. Helena	1965 Robert and Peter get in altercation over roles, direction of winery	1976 Introduces Great Chefs of France program. Family lawsuit ends with victory for Robert	1991 Opens Opus One Winery	2003 Steps down from Robert Mondavi Winery board of directors
1940 Marries Marjorie Declusin	1966 Robert Mondavi fired from Krug. In July, Robert Mondavi Winery opens, first new winery in Napa Valley since Prohibition	1979 Divorces Marjorie Declusin Mondavi. Forms partnership with Baron Philippe de Rothschild to launch Opus One Winery. Launches Woodbridge winery in Lodi	1993 Takes Robert Mondavi Winery public, lists on NASDAQ	2004 Mondavi winery sold to Constellation Brands for \$1.36 billion
1943 Son Michael Mondavi born	1967 Sells first Robert Mondavi wine: Chenin Blanc is \$2 a bottle	1980 Marries Margrit Biever	1995 Joint venture with Frescobaldi wine-making family of Italy	May 16, 2008 Mondavi dies quietly at home
1943 Robert's father Cesare buys Charles Krug Winery, instructs sons Peter and Robert to run it together	1968 Introduces 1966 Fumé Blanc		1996 Invests in Chilean wine, vineyards	

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Myanmar confines foreigners

Myanmar's military rulers have thrown a tightening ring of security around Yangon, blocking aid workers, foreign diplomats and journalists.

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Saudis don't give the right answer

Saudi Arabia didn't exactly tell President Bush no. But it sure didn't say yes, either.

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Zimbabwe's presidential showdown set

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