Geoffrey Roberts Awards 2001 - the results

23 Nov 2004 by JR

This year we were by no means deluged by applications for this annual travel bursary of £3000, but they covered a good spread both in terms of geography and purpose. This year's judges were James Herrick of the Languedoc, David Brown of La Potinière near Edinburgh (on sabbatical currently) and John Mariani of New York who sent in his comment by email - as well as committee members Sally Clarke, Willie Lebus and me.

The winner is Dru Reschke, a 26-year-old whose family have farmed in Coonawarra for several generations and now make their own wine. He is obviously a very live wire. He had already set up an attractive and successful web site www.winelink.com.au so that small-scale Australian wine producers could benefit from joint marketing while still being eligible for the Wine Equalisation Tax rebate (a loophole the authorities have done their best to close). He is also experienced in event management, especially for charity. He has an exciting and potentially extremely valuable scheme for processing winery effluent (which is toxic) using enzyme research. He wants to travel to the US to see how winery effluent is managed by the big California companies and to survey wine tourism there with a view to improving wine tourism back home in Coonawarra. He also wants to take a look at US microbreweries with a view to importing this concept to South Australia. Oh, and then he plans to come back via Bordeaux to look at effluent treatments there. He has budgeted in some detail and thinks he can manage this thanks to our bursary. News of his Award reached him on his father's 60th birthday, so it was announced to all and sundry at the celebrations at Coonawarra Town Hall that night. You can contact him on dru@winelink.com.au but as the person charged with public relations for this Award, I'd be really grateful if you'd copy your email to me at GeoffreyRobertsA@aol.com if by any chance you contact any of these winners or runners-up.

Although our funds for this registered charity to commemorate the pioneer importer of Californian wine into the UK are extremely limited, we do try to give as many people as possible a helping hand, even though they may not have won the actual cash. This year's runners-up included a very lively 20 year old Singaporean who wants to broaden the range of wines imported into Singapore to include the wines of Germany and the Loire that he's crazy about. We were most struck by his writing style and are trying to get him a writing platform. You can contact him on fatmonky@mac.com.

We were also impressed by Fiona Bird, Scottish mother of six who is very keen to encourage more children to cook. She has already made contact with the Waitrose Cooking Bus which travels Britain encouraging children to get practically interested in food, and seems well set on the way to make a difference by holding cookery classes for local children called Stirrin Stuff. Her email address fiona@cookingonline-scotland.com.

Another candidate we thought we might be able to help, without actually donating cash, was Patrick Farrell, MD MW. This wine-loving doctor based in Newport Beach, California, would very much like to write a book about wine and health. We have offered to help him with publishing contacts and possibly placement of a regular column on wine and health. He is currently working on a book proposal. Contact him at the followin rather alluring email address: winedoctor@surfcity.net.

Our final also-ran is Arnold Vorster who is working as a *sommelier* at the Cape Grace Hotel in Cape Town. He is well embarked on the well established Cape Wine Academy courses and hopes to tackle the Cape Wine Master qualification before long but has highlighted a lacuna in South African wine education. There is currently no mechanism for wine-waiting staff to learn about wine. Employers are loth to invest because of staff mobility and many of those so employed have nothing like the funds required to embark on a Cape Wine Academy qualification. Fellow Master of Wine Lynne Sherriff is a South African specialist and plans to meet up with Arnold and suggest what might be done. He is keen to travel in Europe, but of course would need considerable financial help (perhaps from some generic body?), not least because the rand is so weak. His address, should you have lots of money to invest in upgrading wine knowledge in South Africa, is arnold@hotmail.com or wine@capegrace.com.

Your comments and suggestions would, as always, be most gratefully received - not least on how we might more effectively publicise next year's awards at the end of this year. Please send these, or any requests for more information on the Awards, to GeoffreyRobertsA@aol.com.