

## A Tribute to Martin Gold, Co-Founder of Martin-Scott Wines in New York City

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by *Christy Canterbury MW*

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Martin Gold passed away on Monday, February 6, 2017. Martin Gold and Scott Gerber were the founding managing partners of New York's Martin Scott Wines, a fine wine importer and distributor that began trading in January 1990.

The pair grew their fledgling book of 20 wineries into a robust portfolio of 500 wine and artisanal spirit producers. They expanded across New York State and into New Jersey and Connecticut. Twenty-four years after Martin Scott began blazing its trail in The Big Apple, one of the world's toughest wine markets, it joined forces with The Vintner Group, subsequently called The Winebow Group.

It all began at Frederick Wildman & Sons, where Gold began his wine career. One day while in his mid-40s, his passion for wine and cellar full of Frederick Wildman labels led him to knock on Wildman's door. He asked if they would hire him. Promptly turned away, Gold tenaciously returned a few more times before Wildman acquiesced. Gold left his well-paid job as the President of an upscale men's clothing company to sell wine. Like everything he did, Gold did it well. He spent only six or seven years there, but he was the President when he left.

At the dawn of Martin Scott, big liquor companies sold most of the fine wine. However, they had neither the story telling finesse to explain them nor the proper temperature control for their shipping and storage. The duo had lucky timing, being among the first small importer/distributor companies to hit the streets. They also started with top-notch producers, many who followed them from Wildman.

Gerber remembers, "Marty envisioned the assembly of our portfolio as if it were a world class puzzle of fine wines and sought out only the pieces that fit. We didn't have a Chablis for 20 years because he wanted only the best one!" David Milligan, President of David Milligan Selections, worked with the pair at Wildman then at Martin Scott. He said, "Marty had very high standards in all aspects of his operations, so we always felt proud when he added any of our wines to his portfolio."

As President of Martin Scott, Gold had his hands in every decision. He expected the best from his employees, who like the company's wine producers and growers, were part of this family of excellence. Gold fostered this family in many ways. Emanuela Stucchi Prinetti Owner/Manager of Badia a Coltibuono, recalls him as "a trusted source of encouragement, support". Marc Darroze, President/Director General of Bas Armagnac Darroze recalls him saying, "Marty had the same influence that an oldest brother can have." Gerber remarked, "He never interrupted me. He listened to everything then gave me a thoughtful, logical response." Though Marty left the company after The Vintner Group sale, his influence remains with Gerber. In difficult situations, he said, "I often ask myself, 'What would Marty do?'"

Still, Marty was always the businessman, and he dressed the part, too. In all things, Gerber noted, "He was extremely detail oriented." Bartholomew Broadbent, CEO of Broadbent Selections, recalls Gold "...was tough at negotiating, but, unlike so many tough businessmen, Marty was the essence of a gentleman. He could say 'no', and you'd walk away feeling pleased with the answer." Becky Wasserman, of her eponymous company largely focused on Burgundian domaines wrote, "We did an analysis of potential customers for each wine, passetoutgrain through premier cru. This was done by a rigorous study of price and a rare cooperation in sharing costs during the first years." Brian Larky, Chairman/Founder of Dalla Terra Winery Direct, recalls, "I remember Marty never looking at short term opportunities but, like us, always at the long term goal."

Martin Gold was a coach - as well as a cheerleader - who enjoyed the wine, food and camaraderie of the wine industry. And, as everyone who contributed to this tribute commented, he was a gentleman. Gerber said, "If we shook hands with suppliers, we did what we said we would do." For all those who knew him, Gerber said, "Marty will be missed today, tomorrow and for many vintages in our future."