Larry Rowe's Reading List

(Last updated: December 2007)

Many people ask what I have done since retiring from U.C. Berkeley in 2003. Besides some consulting, angel investing, and working on my golf game, I have done a lot of reading. I have read books on telecommunications history, investing, american politics, and history. This page lists some of the books along with some comments.

Of course, since I returned to work at the beginning of 2007, I have not been reading as much. I will continue to update this list as other people have expressed an interest in the topics. I have also included books currently on my pile to be read. Watch for future comments about them.

Contact me if you have any other suggestions that I might add to these lists. Enjoy!

Telecommuniations

I read a series of books about A.T.&T. and telecommunications history in the United States. While I was somewhat aware of these events when they happened, I had not put it all together. These books will provide many interesting insights to any student of this era. I strongly recommend them. Many of these books are no longer being published, but you can buy used copies through Amazon - follow the URL's at the end of each discussion.

J. Brooks, "Telephone: The First Hundred Years," Harper & Row Publishers, New York, NY, 1975.

This book tells the early history of A.T.&T. including the founding of the company, early phone system deployments, the consolidation of telephone companies in the early 1900's, anti-trust confrontations with the U.S. Government, technology development, and the cultural impact and growth of telephone use. The book also discusses the founding of Bell Labs and summarizes the wonderful research contributions made by the Labs including some that most readers will not be aware.

This book is a **must read** for anyone interested in telecommunications technology and history. Key highlights for me included:

1. Alexander Graham Bell had very little to do with the company a few years after it was founded.
2. Theodore N. Vail was the true champion of the company who established the culture that survived from the consent decree in 1913, the so-called Kingsbury Commitment, until the break-up in 1982. The Kingsbury Commitment allowed interconnection of competitive phone systems which led to A.T&T. giving up ownership in Western Union. Vail is a model for a modern corporate leader who is willing to compromise for the good of society. In fact, although there were short-term negative consequences, the Kingsbury Commitment lead to the development of the A.T.&T. phone monopoly and the incredible growth of the technology in the following seventy years.
3. A.T.&T. was nationalized in 1918 during WW I. After having to raise rates dramatically, Congress and the public lobbied to return the phone company to private ownership, which was done in August 1919.
4. Bell Labs was created in 1925. Many important discoveries were made by the labs over the next 80 years including the transistor, signal processing, movie sound synchronization, radio astronomy, lasers and fiber optics, and electronic switching. Just shows what a well-managed and well-funded industrial research laboratory can accomplish.
5. Buried at the end of the book is a discussion of a new technology being pushed by a Bell Labs researcher that may come into use: "... a pocket-sized cordless telephone that would make it possible for calls to any number in the world to be made by anyone anywhere ..." The word "cellular phone" had not yet been coined and the treatment in the book is just a small line amongst other possible futures. See discussion below in Leslie Cauley's book on the fall of A.T.&T. of the impact of cellular

phones.

This book is no longer in print, although you can buy used copies through Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0060105402

For more information on A.T.&T. see the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=AT%26T&oldid=54706417.

S. Coll, "The Deal of the Century: The Breakup of AT&T," Simon & Shuster, Inc., New York, NY, 1986.

This book tells the story of the antitrust law suit filed by the U.S. Government in November 1974 that eventually lead to the breakup of A.T.&T. in 1982. The book discusses the various skirmishes over connection of foreign devices to the public telephone network (PTN) (i.e., the 1968 Carterfone FCC decision) and the efforts of William McGown (MCI) to enter the intercity telecommunications business. The role of McGown and MCI in attacking the A.T.&T. monopoly on various fronts, including anti-trust and Congressional lobbying, is covered along with the various personalities in the Justice Department and A.T.&T.

The book describes the trial before Harold Greene, the various attempts to settle the lawsuit, and ultimately the decision and process by which the suit was settled with the outcome being the breakup of A.T.&T.

Of particular interest is the discussion of winners and losers. At the time the book was written (1986), most observers believed that A.T.&T. would be the most successful because they controlled long-lines (i.e., the long-distance network, which produced the most revenue) and the equipment business. The view at the time was that the Regional Bell Operating Companies (RBOCs) would be the least successful because they were still constrained to serve local customers as a regulated monopoly.

Lucent Technologies, formed from Western Electric and Bell Labs, was spun out of A.T.&T. after the Telecommunications Act of 1996. At the time A.T.&T. needed cash and the manufacturing division wanted to be free to sell to companies other than A.T.&T. The expectation was that Lucent would do well because they produced equipment used by the RBOCs and other competitive phone companies, and they owned Bell Labs which would be a source of great new technologies that could be capitalized on in the future.

As we know today (2006), 1) A.T.&T. did well for a while but collapsed after spending horrendous amounts of money trying unsuccessfully to get into the computer business (e.g., American Bell and the NCR acquisition) and a failed attempt to merge cable and telephone services, 2) Lucent soared for several years during the Internet boom, before collapsing when the telecom spending mania ended, and 3) two RBOCs (SBC and Verizon) have re-emerged as a duopoly for telecommunications services in the U.S. SBC acquired A.T.&T. so it could rename itself A.T.&T. and Lucent recently announced a merger with Alcatel.

An interesting point discussed in this book is that in the final negotiations for the settlement, the RBOCs demanded some technology innovation out of Bell Labs to sweeten the deal. Charles Brown A.T.&T. CEO agreed to give the RBOCs rights to what became cellular technology. Neither the RBOCs nor A.T.&T. management believed it was worth that much. I do not know the actual numbers, but I would not be surprised to find that cellular service is the cash cow for Verizon and SBC.

This book is no longer in print, although you can buy used copies through Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0671645927.

For more information on the divestiture of A.T.&T. see the Wikipedia article at URL http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_System_Divestiture.

L. Endlich, "Optical Illusions: Lucent and the Crash of Telecom," Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, NY, 2004.

This book tells the story of the creation in 1996 of Lucent Technologies from the research & development and equipment manufacturing divisions of A.T.&T. (Bell Labs and Western Electric) and the subsequent growth and collapse of the business. For me, the most interesting element of the story is the drive by CEO

Richard McGinn and other company management to compete in the telecom spending boom even as the business was failing. The book tells the story of how a company cuts special deals to maintain revenue growth even as the deals become more and more problematic.

It also explores the story of the Lucent IPO which investors bought even though much of the offering was based on the hype generated by past successes in Bell Labs.

Another interesting thread running through these books is the total misunderstanding of the Internet by management and the opportunities available if they had pursued it aggressively. It is amazing that Cisco created the router market and neither A.T.&T. nor Lucent was able to compete even though some researchers at Bell Labs understood both the opportunity and the technology.

This book is available through Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0743226674.

For more information on Lucent see the Wikipedia article at URL http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucent_Technologies.

L. Cauley, "End of the Line: The Rise and Fall of A.T.&T.," Free Press, New York, NY, 2005.

This book tells the story of A.T.&T. from 1996 when the the world changed for the telecom industry due to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and 2005 when SBC bought the company. As with many business history books, this one too involves poor decisions by corporate managers and some obviously correct and wrong actions when viewed in hindsight.

The book begins in 1996 when the continuing decline in long distance revenue is hurting profitability and the Board is looking for new management with the background and strategy to save the company. Robert Allen, A.T.&T. CEO at the time, could not find an acceptable replacement after several years of trying. So, the board decided to hire Michael Armstrong who had risen through the ranks at IBM from 1961 to 1992. He left IBM to become the CEO of Hughes Aircraft where he oversaw a significant restructuring and the development of Direct TV, which was a very successful technology and business. He was hired by A.T.&T. in 1997 to save the company.

A.T.&T.'s strategic problem was that they did not own a physical connection to their customers. Cable companies owned the coax connection into the home and the RBOCs owned the copper connection into the home. A.T.&T. could not compete with either company since both were pushing to offer a broad selection of communications services including telephone and video products. Moreover, the RBOCs either owned or were acquiring cellular businesses. A.T.&T. could not build a new connection to the home, so the obvious strategy was to buy a telco or cable company. In the end, A.T.&T. bought several cable companies including TCI and MediaOne. They overpayed for both companies, particularly MediaOne. A.T.&T. needed to dramatically increase revenue to cover the debt taken on to purchase the two cable companies. The idea was to offer telephone service over the cable system.

In truth, this strategy was correct - just look at Comcast today. A.T.&T. had two problems. First, the physical cable networks had to be rebuilt. After the consolidation in the cable industry during the 1980's and early 1990's, the physical plant of the cable companies was frought with incompatible technologies most of which were one-way services (i.e., broadcast from headend to customers with no reverse communication). Needless to say, you need two-way communications to offer phone and Internet services. Hence, A.T.&T. needed to rebuild the system. And second, they had taken on too much debt in purchasing the cable companies so they could not finance the rebuilding. In the end, they got the funding but only by promising revenue that would be miraculous if it appeared.

A.T.&T. was also trying to compete with Worldcom which was continuing to show dramatic positive financial results. Analysts within A.T.&T. could not understand how they achieved the results. But sadly, Wall Street didn't care - all that mattered was that A.T.&T. did not do as well. Today we know the Worldcom results were a sham due to financial fraud. It is sad that a great company is brought down in part due to fraud by a competitor.

In the end, A.T.&T. got into a cash squeeze in which they would have to default on their loans. Unless there was another way to cover the expenses, the game was over. Comcast attempted to buy the cable system, and initiated a hostile takeover when A.T.&T. declined the offer. In the end, there was not much Armstrong could do, so he sold the cable system to Comcast and the company retreated to offering long distance and local services.

They were allowed to offer local services because due to the various consent decrees, telecommunications laws, and FCC rules since the breakup, the RBOCs were forced to allow them to connect to customers through their copper landline network. But, the RBOCs had been fighting for years to undo restrictions on their business, namely the right to offer long-distance services and the obligation to open their networks for other competitors. In the end, they won both battles, and the last chance for A.T.&T. to survive was gone.

This book is available through Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0743250257.

For more information on A.T.&T. see the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=AT%26T&oldid=54706417.

J.N. DiStefano, "COMCASTED: How Ralph and Brian Roberts Took Over America's TV, One Deal at a Time," Camino Books, Inc., Philadelphia, PA 2005.

This book tells the story of Ralph Roberts who, along with business partners and banking officials, founded what became the Comcast cable company. It tells about the early history of acquiring municipal licenses to build cable systems and the development and deployment of the systems. Surprisingly, the first system built by Comcast in 1963 was in Tupelo Mississippi, birthplace of Elvis Presley.

The book also tells the story of how Brian Roberts, who assumed leadership of the company when his father reduced his involvement, engineered the acquisition of the A.T.&T. cable assets which lead to the formation of the largest cable company in the U.S.

Comcast is a very large, successful company that is aggressively trying to consolidate it's position in the communciations industry. They are the second largest broadband service provider in the U.S., and they are pursuing various technologies including Video-on-Demand and telephony. Today they appear to have a good position relative to their major competitors, namely satellite service providers and the telcos, because they offer high-speed broadband connections and a very large installed base of consumers.

The telcos, namely the new A.T.&T. (formerly SBC) and Verizon, are aggressively pursing the deployment of Internet Television (IPTV) defined by Microsoft, which will deliver video services over either copper networks (A.T.&T.) or fiber (Verizon). To do this, they must first get legal authority to offer the service, which the cable companies acquired one municipality at a time. This would be too expensive for the telcos, so they are lobbying to allow them to offer services by getting rights through states or possibly Federal regulation or laws. In the end, they will get the opportunity.

The question is whether they can offer a viable service at a competitive price. For example, not withstanding serious technical challenges (e.g., how do you allow multiple people in a home to watch different channels including HDTV channels simultaneously over DSL connections that operate at 15 Mbs), the bigger issue is content. Content producers (e.g., ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, etc.) already sell to over 80% of the homes in America. Why would a network offer a better price to a competitor that would just displace the revenue they get from the cable company? And, to add to the complexity, Comcast like other large cable companies are developing their own content providers (e.g., Comcast Sports Network). This book provides an interesting insight into the family behind the company and the organization and operation of the business.

This book is available through Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0940159821.

For more information on Comcast see the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comcast.

K. Silverman, "Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F.B. Morse," Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 2003.

A detailed biography of Samuel F.B. Morse who is credited with inventing the electric telegraphy. Morse (1791-1872) was born and raised in a strict puritan family, and he struggled throughout his life with a religious world view that dictated what was and was not acceptable. His great love was painting, but although he had some notable successes, he could not support himself as an artist. It was somewhat by accident that he invented Morse Code which is one of the key telegraphy developments. He filed patents and sought funding from the U.S. Government and from private sources to develop and deploy the technology. A long patent fight followed as other entrepreneurs founded companies that used the technology to build telegraph systems across the country.

This book is an excellent example of the difficulty a single inventor has developing and deploying a technology and receiving fair compensation for his or her research. Anyone interested in high technology research and the development of companies to exploit that research will learn much from this story.

The book is available at Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0375401288.

More information on Morse and the electric telegraph is available at the Wikipedia article at URL http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morse_code.

O. Malik, "Broadbandits - Inside the $750 Billion Telecom Heist," John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ, 2003.

To be read.

Television Technology and History

I have long had an interest in video technology and history. These are books I have read since the late 1980's when I first got involved with multimedia systems and applications. The focus here is on television, not general multimedia.

D.E. Fisher and M.J. Fisher, "Tube - The Invention of Television (paperback)," Harvest Books, 1997.

Very interesting discussion of the history of television including research in the late 1800's and early 1900's on mechanical television (Nipkow disks), early experiments around the world in the 1920's and 1930's that helps explain why so many people claim to have invented television, and a detailed discussion of the Sarnoff, Zworykin, and Farnsworth competition.

Several things discussed in the book are noteworthy. The book details the long development cycle involved in creating electronic TV as we know it today. The basic concepts were described as early as 1908, but a working prototype was not completed until 1927 by Philo Farnsworth. But experiments with mechanical TV and hybrid mechanical/electronic TV systems were conducted throughout the 1920's and '30's. The American television standard, called Standard Definition Television (SDTV) to distingusih it from the High Definition standard (HDTV), was defined by the National Television Standards Committee (NTSC) in 1941. That is much earlier than most people realize. In fact, NTSC broadcasts began in May 1941 but were stopped later that year when World War II began. Television broadcasting did not begin again until after the war.

The book also tells the story about the people involved in the development of television including Paul Nipkow, David Sarnoff, Vladimir Zworykin, Philo Farnsworth, and John Logie Baird. Few people realize that the first electronic television prototype was built on Green Street in San Francisco. Even today, you can see an aging monument to this accomplishment in front of the building at 202 Green Street where it was completed. Another small element to the story is that it was a glass blower from the U.C. Berkeley chemistry department who built the actual tubes used to pickup the image (i.e., the camera) and to display the output (CRT).

The book is available at Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0156005360.

More information is available at the Wikipedia article at URL http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SDTV.

A.S. Taylor, "History Between Their Ears: Recollections of Pioneer CATV Engineers," The Cable Center, Denver CO, 2000.

An edited version of oral histories from the early pioneers of cable. Few people know when cable started (late 1940's), why cable started (because of the FCC moratorium on broadcast licenses between 1948-'53 limited customer access to television), and how the technology was developed. This book is a bit dense on people, events, and companies, but it presents a clear picture of how cable got started.

You can buy the book at Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/1891821016. You can also buy it at the Cable Center - see http://cablecenter.org/library/publications/. More information is available at the Wikipedia article at URL http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cable_tv.

J. Brinkley, "Defining Vision: How Broadcasters Lured the Government into Inciting a Revolution in Television, Updated and Expanded (paperback)," Harvest Books, 1998.

This book describes the development of HDTV in the United States. The book begins by explaining why TV stations are so valuable. The short answer is that politicians cannot get elected without money and support from the local media (e.g., newspapers, radio, and TV). Moreover, since spectrum required to broadcast is limited, getting a license for a station is expensive. It does not hurt to have a local politician supporting your station.

The growth of cellular phones and other wireless communication technologies during the 1980's introduced a major new demand for spectrum (i.e., bandwidth). Several facts suggested that TV and radio broadcasters were going to have trouble keeping their current spectrum:

1. Technology improvements reduced the bandwidth needed to broadcast a TV channel. The National Television Standards Committee (NTSC), which defined the standard definition TV system used in North America, specified that a channel would be allocated 6 MHz of bandwidth. Technology improvements could reduce this bandwidth dramatically.
2. Unknown to most people, every TV station was allocated spectrum for two channels, that is 12 MHz of bandwidth, rather than just one channel. In nearly every case, the second channel was not being used.
3. The development of cable and satellite technology in the 1970's and 1980's dramatically reduced the number of people watching TV using the over-the-air broadcast. By the mid-1980's fewer than 30% of the homes watched the over-the-air broadcast.

So, cellular manufacturers and service providers began a major lobbying effort to convince the FCC and Congress to take bandwidth away from the TV station owners and give it to them. Needless to say, the TV stations and their lobbying organization The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) fought back, but they knew they had a problem. The NAB needed a reason for the FCC to turn down the request from the cellular community that would show why the broadcasters needed all the spectrum allocated to them. The solution proposed was the development of High Definition television (HDTV). Clearly, the stations would need more spectrum if they were going to broadcast higher quality images and sound. The NAB organized a demonstration of the Japanese MUSE system, which was an analog HDTV system developed by NHK, in Washington DC in the spring of 1987 that wowed everyone who saw it including representatives from the FCC and various influential politicians. The idea of using the extra bandwidth to develop an American HDTV system was picked up by the head of the FCC at the time and a long and tortureous process to define the standard was started.

This book tells the story of the development of the standard. Any technologist or engineer will read this book and sigh. The politics and lobbying involved to develop the standard by a committed named the Advanced Television Standards Committee (ATSC) was ugly. As the old saying goes, you do not want to see how legislative bills or sausages are created.

For me, some of the interesting points included how the Japanese system was rejected at the insistence of the American TV manufacturers because they feared they could not compete. Of course, they died anyway because they were producing poor quality products. Another interesting point is the way the process eventually lead to a digital standard rather than the analog standard being developed by the Japanese and other TV manufacturers. It took a small team from General Instrument lead by Jerry Heller and Woo Paik to demonstrate that a digital system could be built that met the technical requirements established by the standards committee. But rather than adopt that system, the other competitors lobbied the FCC to allow them time to produce a competitive digital system. Read this book - you will see how ugly it got.

This book is fascinating. It is available at Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0156005972. More information is available at the Wikipedia article at URL http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HDTV.

Wine

My wife Jean and I have been interested in wine for many years. We enjoy tasting various wines, visiting wineries, taking courses, and now, making wine ourselves through Crushpad. We have traveled to several winemaking regions of the world including Bordeaux and Languedoc in France and Tuscany and Piedmonte in Italy. Needless to say, we have also visited many wine growing regions in California including Napa, Sonoma, the Central Coast, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Dry Creek, the Sierra Foothills, and more. We truely appreciate the joy of living in the San Francisco Bay Area, which allows us to travel easily to all of these great wine regions.

I have also been interested to read about the science and art of winemaking and the history of various wine regions around the world. I have listed below a series of books I have read in the past couple of years I think you will find interesting. I have listed them roughly in the order that reflects the importance of the books from my perspective. As before, I include Amazon URL's to purchase the books.

R.M. Parker, Jr., "Bordeaux: A Consumer's Guide to the World's Finest Wines (4th Ed), Simon & Schuster, New York, NY 2003

This book is essential if you are interested in Bordeaux wines. While many people argue whether he is too influential or his ratings are biased, you cannot dispute the impact Parker has had on Bordeaux-style wines throughout the world. Putting that aside, this book provides a wealth of information about the various wine growing areas in Bordeaux and the wineries that are producing today. It also includes interesting histories about wineries, people, and past vintages.

If you are purchasing French Bordeaux wines, the book is indispensible as a reference. Even if you disregard the particular ratings, it provides one perspective on what is happening in the region. You can purchase it through Amazon at the following URL: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0743229460.

G.M. Taber, "Judgment of Paris: California vs. France and the Historic 1976 Paris Tasting That Revolutionized Wine" Scribner, 2005

This book is great! It tells the story of the 1976 blind tasting that put California wines on the map. While this part of the story is interesting, the book also includes well-researched background on everything from the origins of winemaking, to the history of the French Bordeaux region, to the life stories of the California winemakers whose wines shocked the world, and finally, to a tour of modern winemaking regions around the world.

I suspect everyone who drinks California wines knows the story of the 1976 tasting. But, I confess that until I read this book, I never understood the details about the event (e.g., why it was held, who was involved, and what really happened during and after the tasting). I was amazed by several details the book revealed:

1. The person that organized the event (Steven Spurrier) owned a wine shop in Paris and fully

expected the French wines to wine the blind tasting event. He and his co-owner organized the tasting to celebrate the bicentenial anniversary of American Independence. What they did instead is change the future of winemaking throughout the world. By the way, he is English and he was a respected merchant in the French wine industry. Hardly the revolutionary.

2. The Stag's Leap Cabernet that won the red wine tasting, albeit by a very close margin, was the first vintage produced by Warren Winiarski. Imagine that for a moment - a first time product from California is judged better in a blind tasting by French wine critics than four Bordeaux wines including two Premier Grand Cru offerings (e.g., Ch. Haut-Brion and Ch. Mouton Rothschild). *Incredible!*
3. Although Ch. Montelena, which produced the Chardonnay that won the white wine tasting, was founded in 1882, it went bankrupt in the 1930's due to mistakes made by the owners when they tried to rebuild the business after Prohibition. The winery was essentially dormant until 1971 when Jim Barrett entered into a partnership with the owner at the time (Lee Paschich) and a Los Angeles real-estate developer (Ernest Hahn) to resurrect the winery to make world-class bordeaux-style wines. Most wine aficionados know that it takes 3-4 years to produce a quality red wine because it must be aged in oak barrels for 12-24 months after picking and fermentation and aged for another 6-12 months in the bottle before it is released. That's a long time to wait to produce your first product all the while covering the on-going expenses of running the winery. So the winemaker (Mike Grgich) suggested that they buy chardonnay grapes on the open market and make a white wine since it only takes 12-18 months to produce a product. The 1973 Ch. Montelena that won the white wine tasting was made from Chardonnay grapes purchased from Sonoma and Napa. As most people know, Grgich left a few years later to found Grgich-Hill winery.
4. The outcome of this event was shocking throughout the world. It told every winemaker outside of France that they too could produce world-class wine. Sometimes just knowing something is possible enables one to do the seemingly impossible. But, it also sent a message to the French wine industry - your products are no longer preeminent. Although it took a while, winemaking in France dramatically improved over the next three decades. This point is made in the book "Noble Rot" discussed below.
5. The author of this book (George Taber) was the only journalist at the tasting. And in fact, if he had not been present, it would not have had the impact it did. So why was he there? Well, he enjoyed drinking wine and had taken classes and participated in tastings organized by Steven Spurrier at his wine shop and Academie du Vin next door. Spurrier invited all the journalists in France to the event but only Taber came. And, as the book notes, his editor at Time Magazine where he worked, viewed the whole enterprise as a lark to spend the afternoon wine tasting rather than working.

After reading the Mondavi book, discussed below, I asked Taber why a Robert Mondavi wine was not included in the tasting. His response was:

> "Mondavi should indeed have been in the Paris Tasting. No one is quite sure why it didn't make the cut. I asked Spurrier about it, and he didn't really have much of an explanation except to say that he was looking for boutique wineries that represented the new type of California producer. So I think Mondavi may have been a victim of his own success, which was pretty clear by 1976. He was already part of the established wineries, which is not what Spurrier was looking for."

Given the importance of Robert Mondavi in creating the Napa Valley wine industry, it is too bad his wine was not included in the most important tasting of the decade, if not the late 20th century.

I think this is the best book you can read if you want to learn about winemaking, the personalities, and the diversity and breadth of winemaking around the world. The book can be purchased through Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0743247515. I throughly enjoyed reading it.

Christy Campbell, "The Botanist and the Vintner: How Wine Was Saved for the World," Algonquin Books, 2006

Fabulous book about the phylloxera epidemic of the late 1800's that struck the world and nearly destroyed the wine industry. The story is fascinating on several levels. First, it is an interesting scientific detective

story about how scientists tried to understand this deceptive and effective pest. Second, it shows what happens when science and government are at odds when the truth is unknown - in this case the truth about how the pest worked and from where it came. Third, it is a cautionary tale about the consequences of introducing different plant and animal life into an ecosystem. Who would have thought that vines introduced to Europe from North America would nearly destroy the world-wide wine industry? Fourth, the book gives a marvelous picture of what life was like in the late 1800's. And finally, phylloxera is still a problem that the wine industry must deal with today. The book explains why many Napa valley wineries had to replant in the 1980's.

This book can be purchased through Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1565125282.

W. Echikson, "Noble Rot: A Bordeaux Wine Revolution,"
W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY, 2004.

This book discusses the history of winemaking in the Bordeaux region of France. It primarily focusses on winemaking changes, politics, and family dramas during the last 2-3 decades (i.e., 1976 to present).

This book is a **must read** for anyone interested in bordeaux wine. It can be purchased through Amazon - see the following URL http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/0393051625.

J. Conaway, "Napa: The Story of an American Eden"
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA 1990

J. Conaway "The Far Side of Eden: New Money, Old Land and the Battle for Napa Valley"
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA 2002

These two books tell the story of Napa Valley in the nineteenth and twentith centurys. It provides an excellent history of the development of many well-known wineries (e.g., Beringer, Beaulieu Vineyards, Mondavi, Heitz, Stags Leap, etc.), the life stories of the people who made Napa Valley what it is today, and the politics of land use in the valley.

The first book covers the period from the 1800 to 1990. Of particular interest are the discussions about the very first wineries established in California between the 1850's and 1880's. It also discusses the story of the early pioneers who created the vineyards and winemaking industry including Agoston Haraszthy who brought back many wine grape cuttings from Europe in the 1850's and Andre Tchelistcheff a disciple of Louis Pasteur hired as the winemaker at Beaulieu Vineyards in the late 1930's who brought then modern standards of cleanliness to California winemaking.

The second book tells what happened in Napa Valley between 1990 and 2001. The Internet bubble and less restrictive land use policies lead to major changes in the valley. The key highlight is the dramatic growth of tourism in Napa Valley which receives 5-7M visitors per year, and the development of the cult Cabernet producers.

Both books are enjoyable, particularly if you are planning on visiting Napa Valley or you are interested in the history of the people and the industry. They are both available at Amazon:

- American Eden: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0380715996
- Far Side of Eden: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0618067396

J.F. Siler, "The House of Mondavi - The Rise and Fall of an American Wine Dynasty"
Gotham Books, New York, NY, 2007

This book tells the story of the Mondavi family, the wineries they created, and the growth of the Napa Valley wine industry in the late 20th century. Other reviewers have noted that the book is more about the disfunctional family relationships and corporate in-fighting starting with the split between Robert and Peter Mondavi that lead to the founding of the Robert Mondavi Winery.

I agree with this criticism. But, while I had read about some of the events described, this book presented more details about what happened before and after the split that was surprising. For example, I never knew Joe Alioto, who was mayor of San Francisco for many years, was involved as a board member of the Mondavi family business.

But, the most surprising thing in the book related to a wine drinking experience that my wife and I shared back in the mid 1970's. At the time, there was an excellent jug wine, named "Bob Red", bottled in 1.5 liter bottles produced by Mondavi that was exceptional quality at an unbelievably low price. I think originally it was $3 a bottle. A year or two later it was priced at $7 a bottle, but still outstanding. And then, the "Bob Red" declined in value, and we stopped drinking it. No big deal, that happens all the time. You find a great wine at a good price. Eventually it is discovered and the winemakers raise the price. But, here is the unbelievable thing we learn from Siler's book. Turns out the "Bob Red" we were drinking included grapes produced in the To Kalon vineyard in Napa. Well, anyone who follows Napa wine making knows that To Kalon is one of the special vineyards in the valley. It is no surprise that "Bob Red" was an outstanding wine. It is amazing to think that we were drinking a wine for $3 that today would likely sell for more than $75, if not $150, a bottle.

This book is interesting to read, but after a while you get tired of the continuing family dramas. It would have been nice to learn more about the winemakers that Robert Mondavi hired over the years since many have gone on to distinguished careers (e.g., Warren Winarski, Mike Grgch, Zelma Long, etc.) and more about the grape growing and winemaking itself.

D. and P. Kladstrup, "Wine & War"
Broadway Books, New York, NY, 2002

This book tells the story of winemakers in France during World War II. The most interesting part of the story is the picture it presents about being in France when German soldiers arrived in a city and took control of the local government. Many events are described including how some German officers who before the war had been distributers for French wines understood that the war would end and they would return to their jobs as distributers for the very same wineries they had to deal with during the occupation. While the wine stories are fascinating, the book is more important for the understanding it presents of the impact this war had on everyday people.

The book is relatively short (250 pages) and very enjoyable to read. I strongly recommend it. The Amazon URL is: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0767904486.

M.A. Amerine and V.L. Singleton, "Wine: An Introduction, New edition"
U of California Press, 1977

This book is an excellent introduction to the processes used in wine making. The original edition, published in 1965, is still an excellent reference on how various types of wines are made and how different producers work (e.g., small boutique wineries to large factory producers). The book is relatively short and while it does get into the chemistry involved, it is not steeped in formulas. Rather it aims to explain the processes with enough detail that interested readers can find more details if desired.

Excellent book to read if you are only going to read one book about winemaking. It can be purchased at http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0520032020.

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