

Father Giovanni Gaja stopped buying grapes in 1961, when Angelo started at the winery. I was 21 years old, just left school. Spent 7 years in the vineyards before winery. Then Gino Alvaro was responsible for the vineyards and taught me. At the same time I went to university for 4 years for viticulture??. I learnt a lot from Gino Alvaro: understood more work needed to be done. Important for artisans to understand what work is being done in the vineyard and what is the right way. We do not work with corporative workers, which many wineries were doing and could do better than ours etc. but believed in our own people we trained to do work our way. This is important for artisans. School was important for me to learn the right way. Then Gino had a sense of humor besides rigor. Sometimes he asked me to spend more time energy dedication that it is indispensable. Three factors in making a great wine: soil, variety, weather. During the life of a vineyard, variety is the same, land/terrior/soil is the same, weather is variable: good leads to good wine, bad with hails and rains the quality isn't there. I started early and realized the importance of weather and it belongs to nature that we can't control. During mid 90s, weather in our region during harvest was often times rainy that damages grapes thus quality was unpredictable. Normally in the 60s, 70s, 80s, the bad vintages were 3 or 4 out of 10, today we have much more dried and hotter summer time and in the autumn it's not raining as much as the past thus much greater opportunity of producing grapes of levels of quality, consistency - predictability of quality, which is good, with climate change. However the less good aspect of climate change is that the parasites are more aggressive, the growing season starts earlier the harvests start earlier and often increased sugar and increased alcohol. We don't like to manipulate wine, so we have to work more in the vineyards and understand more to avoid/limit the increase of alcohol in wine, have more control in our ability to reduce alcohol in grapes. The greatest vintage was my first vintage 1961 - considered one of the greatest of all time. 1962 was very good too but overshadowed by 1961. 1963 was a difficult one. 1964 very good with a large crop whereas 1961 had a small crop. 1964 had high quality grape concentration etc., not the same level as 61 but very good. 1965, 1966 two vintages in a row very difficult - quality wasn't there, lesser than ever. 1967 good not great. 1968, 1969 another two difficult vintages. 1970 another very good vintage. 1971 one of the greatest one. My father was not used to teach me not simply due to curse of knowledge (knows so well not knowing what others don't know or how to teach). I have a totally different approach with my children - two daughters and one boy in the winery working with us as our family work full time in the winery producing and selling - I try to transfer my knowledge as much as possible to them, talk, guide, etc., which my father didn't. I spent 7 years in the vineyard before entering the cellar. Concept of reducing yield to get better grapes was already with my father. Father was the first in Piedmonte to understand the importance of producing quality grapes/wines and to afford sacrifices, which are: first, take care of quantity/yield so he asked his workers to take these steps to reduce the quantity which at that time was unthinkable for workers (because the natural quantity was given by god why reduce when everyone cares about quantity) which was not easy (because the concept of reducing yield to increase quality was rare then) to ask Gino to try using **low vigor rootstocks** of Nebbiolo, and **bunch thinning after flowering** in the vineyard. Second, in bad vintages, he advised to not bottle the wine and selling wine in bulk, which meant loss of 80% money - sometimes 3-4 vintages out of 10. This gave the Gaja consumers confidence in the quality of Gaja wines since we refuse to bottle low quality. Consumers don't know about weather conditions etc. This gave us a big advantage in the long term. Grandmother important as a teacher, born in 1880, died in 1961. I grew up in Barbaresco in a big town in Langhe district, 7 miles from Barbaresco. She taught me to become an artisan by following four steps: (French) fare, sapere fare, sapere far fare, far sapere. She used to study in Chambéry the capital of Savoie/Savoy and understands French. Fare: to do, everyone does something in life to survive. Sapere fare: to know how, this belongs to the artisan. His dedication to make better wines. Sapere far fare: to teach how, to help his family become artisan themselves. Far sapere: to transmit knowledge, to help consumers in the market to understand the project. I was 11 years old and didn't understand what she meant but she repeated and father repeated it to me over and over again. She was a great teacher, rigorous, rarely smiles, special, intimidating. Father died 2002 was active in winery till 1992/1993 distilling his knowledge. He had so many ideas that apply well still today.

Father had when 27 years old in 1935 when he joined the winery this idea to make Barbaresco more important than Barolo. Crazy at that time but it's the artisan's job to the impossible possible. Father was *the first one* to introduce a new label in the winery a new concept *in the region* in 1937: with the brand Gaja written big - 3cm - on top of the label. This was the beginning of the new concept. The reasons: he thinks the consumers have to know who produced the wines so the brand name becomes a quality guarantee, a method/philosophy of a way of making wine. Back then wines were produced by negociants who do not own vines and buy grapes to produce/sell wines. And father was **the first to bottle wines made from exclusively his own grapes**. For him the project started in the vineyard: crop/yield, work in the vineyard to guarantee the quality of grapes to vinify in cellar. Enologist Luis Giama? worked with father, talented, didn't go to school but knew my father's ideas very well, retired in 1997. I only entered cellar end of 1968 beginning of 1969 to work with father and Luis (already 65/66 years old and wanted to retire). We hired a younger winemaker Guido Velo?? from ?? in Barbaresco who joined in 1970 March. For the first 2-3 years he worked beside the old one Luis Giama. He

went to the enology school in Alba I attended. He was responsible for Gaja cellar for 45 years, very talented, the quality of Gaja wine was largely due to his work. He has an assistant Alessandro Albarelo who is now the winemaker because Guido Velo retired 2 years ago but still comes checks the winery from time to time. Now he also has a small winery producing excellent wine, small production. We grew up together, started around the same time in the winery but he is one managing the winery whereas I act as the owner of the company with a different set of responsibilities. He is like a little bro to me. I try to inspire him to do it my way - the artisan way. Sometimes we have a conflict but we work very well very good collaboration. Father only knows Italian no other languages so pushed me in late 60s early 70s to go outside/travel to reach new markets and experiences. So I did. Fantastic experience, eg in 1974 I met Robert Mondavi - talking to him was contagious as he had a lot of experience in increasing the perception of California wines and making better quality wines. In the 70s my travelling experience which father never had broadened my horizon, meeting new people, gaining new knowledge but father had the vision to do so. Then Barolo and Barbaresco were not so well understood in the market, esp markets outside Europe are more difficult to understand it - culture, terrior, indigenous grapes, originality to be maintained/protected. But this originality was unfamiliar to consumers and you need to teach them. In 1974 in Napa I visited Mondavi, Zelma Long was the winemaker there who later on went to Simi winery, very good experience for me. Also visited Hanzell in Somoma, then the owner was James Zellerbach, who was the US ambassador in Paris and they loved Burgundy so much so that he wanted to establish a winery in Sonoma to produce Pinot Noir and Chard in a small winery with tiny equipment. I was surprised by this concept as Pinot was delicate. Back then the interest in Burgundy/Bordeaux was booming, and American consumers learn. So they went to look for cool sites in Carnerous, Mendocino, nearer to the coast. Later discovered Santa Maria, etc. Hanzell opened my mind to international varieties never seen in my area. The dream for producers producing premium red wines is why not have the chance to produce a premium white wine. So I started to cultivate in early 70s after 1974-1975, dream of producing a white wine in a small quantity in Langhe using variteies with proven potential. So we decided to plant a vineyard of Chardonnay in 1979, French barrel aged (which was what Hanzell did). Father was reluctant, as he didn't care for white grapes. I believed it could work despite no exprience because I believed in our land and the versality of Chardonnay since it had been planted everywhere in the world. We were lucky that the wine was a success. We even planted a year before a vineyard of Cabernet Sauv which was more difficult to convince father to give it a chance. We never fought as father taught me the importance of tolerance but he tried to advise - which was right - that we already had the king - Nebbiolo, but still greenlighted me in late 70s. This is imporant parenting: a chance of a project of myself. The idea of planting a small plot of international variety was a marketing strategy to introduce international consumers who are familiar with the grape varieties to our region and then our regional varieties. So made new bottlings named for sentimental aspect, some mystery, belonging etc., thus named after my grandmother "Sori Tildin" as Tildin is the nickname of grandmother Clotilde Rey, so the wine was in some ways dedicated to her, as opposed to the tradition to name after subregion which means nothing to me. Other names belong to our history - our way being there. **Sperss** was the last important purchase in Serralunga in 1988. It was our first step outside Barbaresco area. I was born in Alba, at the time the winery - and today - is in Barbaresco and owned land exclusively for producing Barbaresco wine. Father at 17-19 years old went to school in Turino, far from Barbaresco 30 miles away. During 3rd-5th year, his mother went to school to ask for the chance to have father return for one month - September - to harvest, which they agreed. Grandmother was strict with father: rise before 6, go to bed by 9pm no socializing with girls etc. After 10 days, father was permitted to help grandmother's friend in Serralunga to help with their grape harvest. So he spent 15 days there and it felt like a paradise without restrictions of grandmother there. And he thinks it is a fantastic place - so he started dreaming of a vineyard outside Barbaresco and Serralunga would be his first choice. He had his eyes on this piece of land for a long time, which was cared for by a family for a long time. It was rarely one sale - once it did, we jumped on it. We called the wine **Sperss - nostalgia** for precious things lost with time (It's a Piedmontese dialectal term akin to the Italian perso (lost) from perdere (to lose)) - because it was in his memory where he spent the best time 17-19 years old harvesting. The geological area is **Marenca Rivette**, but Sperss has much more meaning as it was a dream belonged to father and me.

Import business Gaja Distribution as an Italian importer of DRC, Vegas Sicilia. Unusual for Italian wine producer. I had a chance to import DRC in 1977. I was not known then in US market and was embarrassed when I come to the states the wine writers would know me as from Gaja Distribution as a DRC importer rather than Gaja wine. We opened it to import from different countries - DRC, Mondavi, etc. It was an opportunity of learning. When I enter a winery as an importer not a producer and the winery would be more available/open to tell me their strategy because as a producer I could be seen as a competitor. Have different holdings in Barbaresco, Treiso, and Alba, but not in Neive. Differences: in Treiso we own an area called Pajore, not the highest place in Treiso. Barbaresco ~270m, Treiso ~450m, Pajore ~350m and on a small piece of land there higher at 400-420m we planted Chardonnay - Gaia & Rey. In the past, Treiso was considered higher land ~500m not proper for Nebbiolo. But today/future would be possible. So we have this vineyard Pajore in Treiso planted to Nebbiolo and partially Chardonnay, and also in Barbaresco and Alba.

Pajore is the old Sito Moresco vineyard sold to Gaja in 1978 (first 50%, the rest after 7 years), belonged to **Giovannini Moresco**, who made **Barbaresco Podere del Pajorè 1967-1979**. Made the wines for 2 vintages in 1978 and 1979 for him Giovannini. He was a gourmet lover going to best restaurants.

**Bruno Giacosa**: one of the best winemakers in the area, started working at 60 years old in 1946. Started as a grape broker and learnt how to sell/buy grapes for 16 years until 1960s when he decided to start his own winery. He became the best grape taster at that time in the area from his experience as a grape broker visiting different vineyards. I believe in the first few decades 60s 70s 80s such an experience benefited him a lot to keep the best grapes for making wine. But then most grapes were sold to negociants like him so he took the opportunity but now everyone who used to sell him grapes are making their own wines so no such opportunities now. One of the monuments of our area and his daughter is talented, running the winery well now.

**Armando Cordero** was making the wine for Franco Fiorina - negociant never owned land but his winemaker has excellent ability, knowledge, and taste. He worked there for a long time and Franco Fiorina sold the winery and he was a good selector of grape (variety) but not at the level of Bruno Giacosa who had been a broker after all. Cordero entered the committee of Barbaresco/Barolo for judging the wines blind if the quality is up to par. Great guy.

**Giacomo Bologna**: put Barbera on the center stage. Incredible sensibility, able to reach the confidence of poor simple people for their grapes and make wine to establish connections between these people and the wine. Because wine is a cultural beverage, able to reflect the ambassador of the culture of an area. When you taste the wine, you can recognize variety, climate, and people who make the wine, the story, the tradition (or lack of). He was able to socialize people through wine, and create friendship etc. People went crazy for him. Absolutely unique guy. Died in 1990, a loss to the world of wine esp Barbera sometimes misunderstood as low level quality wine. He was the one that raised its profile and helped people to recognize its quality.

**Romano Levi**: Grappa producer, used to make Grappa in an Alembic pot of first generation aka direct fire: the pomace was introduced into the Alembic and the fire was direct. Needs a lot of experiments because Alembic needs lots of water. Grappa producers need experience not to burn with direct fire. I can't say his Grappa is phenomenal in terms of quality but he was phenomenal as all his labels were written by hand - small production. He was able to write on label some aspects of his life: unique, and he started to attract visitors in Neive - there was always a long line on weekend for a chance to talk to him and to buy some bottles since they were rare. He was able to give value to Grappa, which was considered for poor people. He helps promote the understanding of Grappa as a spirit of the place.

**Giovanni Gaja**, father: reserved, loyal, major of Barbaresco for 25 years, available to work for others, vision of being an artisan much appreciated in the area, never heard any bad word about father. Respectful of everyone, even those whose ideas run counter to his.