

Wine tasting rates high with the guests

The weekend's party round was more than just a good time: It was a testament to Miami's diverse nature.

Wine experts and aficionados from Europe, the United States and South Florida converged on lawyer Bob

Paul's Coral Ga-

bles home Friday night to kick off a weekend of wine tasting. It was one of the most enjoyable evenings of the winter.

A party such as this is relatively rare; only once every two or three years would they be invited to a major wine weekend, the guests said. And the task was a

serious one: to compare and rate 63 Bordeaux wines, all vintage 1978.

But all that began on Saturday, and Friday was reserved for a casual get-together. The wine world is small, and for most of the 50 or so guests, it was an evening for renewing friendships and reviewing memories. There were stories of a trip to South America a few years ago, packed tightly in a small car, and evaluations from more recent visits to taste the wines of Australia. Most were wine professionals — chateau owners, consultants, writers, merchants — though a few, such as Paul, were simply enthusiasts.

The crowd quickly dispelled the notion that wine is a snooty business. With rare exception, the people were friendly and down-to-earth, without pretension. After all, it's hard to hold a



JANE WOOLDRIDGE

PARTY LINE



DEZSO SZURI / Miami Herald

Host Bob Paul, left, with British wine expert Michael Broadbent.

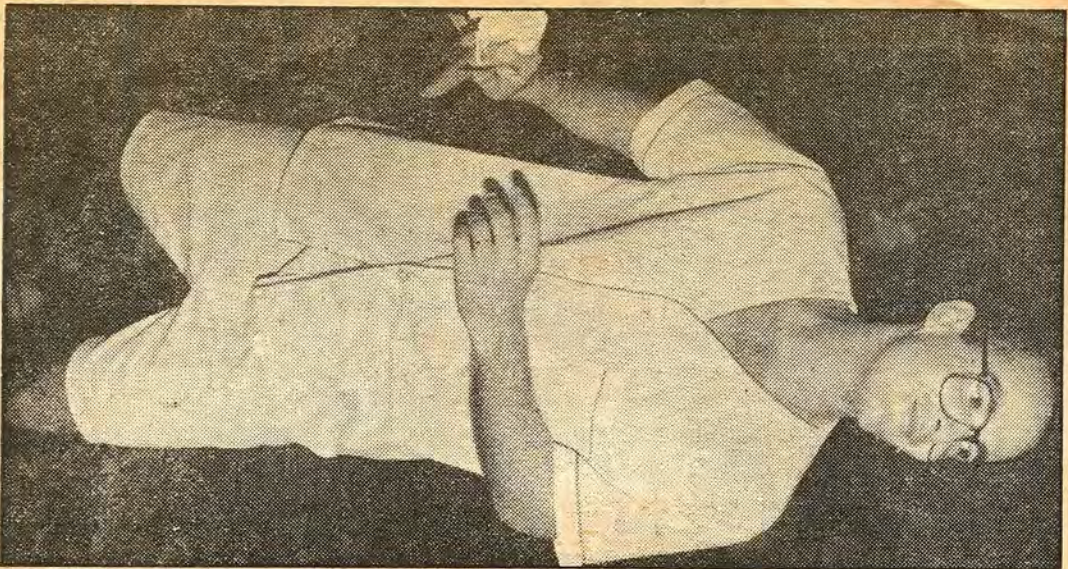
pose when the topics are crops and weather.

Guest after guest said the best part of the wine world is the people.

"We've made friends all over the world," Paul said. This weekend, the friends included Bruno Prats of Chateau Cos d'Estournel; Tim Mondavi of Mondavi Winery in California; Mel Dick of locally based Southern Wine and Spirits, and wine critics Terry Robards, Frank Prial, Eunice Fried and Craig Goldwyn.

The guests headed straight for the champagne — Perrier Jouet, poured from magnums. Later, with dinner prepared by Paul's wife, Chris, the crowd drank from a selection of red wines from regions other than Bordeaux. The dessert table was an excess of calories, and, on the healthy side, strawberries as big as golf balls. Partygoers wandered and chatted, sat by the pool languishing in the still

Please turn to **PARTY LINE** / 3D



Pajama-clad Juan Sanchez at the Film Fest party.

tropical night and toured Paul's wine cellar, stocked with 13,000 bottles collected over 15 years. The weejeend was Paul's private project born of love for the grape.

May de Lencquesaing of Chateau Pichon Longueville — "My mother was Irish," hence the first name — said her days are 16 hours long, full of meetings, tastings, trips to the vineyards. A comtesse, she was born into the business. "How do the men treat women in the wine world? I think they take us seriously if we are serious."

Dr. Steven Mandy, a local dermatologist, said he learned about wine from **Louis Skinner**, another local dermatologist, who left Mandy in charge of his patients during a vacation nearly 20 years ago. "I knew nothing about red wine," Mandy said. But Skinner brought him a bottle from his vacation, and Mandy was hooked. "He said, 'You'll spend the rest of your life chasing this taste.'"

Skinner was there, too, the dapper white-haired local dean of wine lovers, just retired from his medical practice. "Now I can devote my life to debauchery, wine drinking and wine meetings."

Although **Serena Sutcliffe** was with her husband, wine author **David Peppercorn**, she was invited because of her own expertise. An international wine consultant, Sutcliffe is one of the few women holding the English award of wine master. She described the process of testing for the degree: "The tests take a week. There are theoretical papers. Then you have three days of blind tastings, with a sheet of questions on the wines: 'Wines One to Three come from one area. Tell us where.' There's a terrible initial tendency to panic."

The most famous guest of the evening was **Michael Broadbent**, chief of the wine section at Christie's auction house in London, who comes to the States seven or eight times a year. Though he was acting as commentator for the weekend, it was like a holiday, he said. "They're not paying me to do this. This is a unique opportunity to taste an important vintage. It's important for me to know how these wines are developing."

The trick to tasting so many wines without getting carried



Louis Skinner and Madame May de Lencquesaing at the wine-tasting.

away is pacing, he said. And, "we spit. We all have a spittoon. It's the only way."