February 27, 1967

Mr. Walter A. Raich
Customer Service Manager
Paul Masson Vineyards
P.O. Box #97
Saratoga, California

My dear Mr. Raich:

You may well have been surprised, and, perhaps, concerned, when I spoke to you a few days ago, at your Company's Champagne Cellars at Saratoga, about the use of lead foil as a covering for the cork and neck of wine bottles. However, the opportunity presented to me, when finding myself in such an installation as yours, to raise a question that has been in my mind for many years, was too tempting to be missed.

I can best present my interest in the matter, and my reason for making it my professional business to inquire into it, by giving you a bit of my background and that of the Kettering Laboratory in this Medical School and University. I retired from the Directorship of this Laboratory, and of the Department of the Medical School of which it is a part, in 1965, but have continued, at the wish of my successor, to look after the experimental work on the "trace metals," especially lead, until we should find a suitable member of the Staff to take it over.

The Laboratory was founded in 1930 through the gifts to the University of funds by a group of industrial organizations. It was supported by these and other industries in its growth, by the addition of two wings (completed in 1949 and 1961, respectively) and by the expansion of the activities to include a much larger experimental program and by the development of graduate professional training in industrial medicine and hygiene. At the time of the origin of this Laboratory there were only the most rudimentary facilities for research into the problems of industrial health in the United States, and for this reason, industrial organizations with troublesome problems brought them to us for investigation and for the development of applications for the protection of the health of employees and consumers. One of these problems was that of the hazards of the usage of lead-containing products within industry and the community. For over thirty years we have been investigating these problems on a fairly large scale. Lead in the food and beverages of the nation came early to our attention, and has been under investigation throughout the existence of the Laboratory. For this reason any contribution made by the processing and handling of these materials has long been a matter of concern to us. My attention was attracted to the various means for the contamination of wine with lead years ago, both by the medical history of the industry, and through a variety of experiences in this country and abroad. I have long had in mind discussing the matter of the use of lead as the covering of the bottles, at an appropriate time and under suitable circumstances, in the feeling that this was (and is) an unnecessary source of contamination of the wine. I have hoped

that any change in this procedure might be brought about within the industry, rather than to be compelled by governmental action, and that it should occur as the result of technological progress, rather than through compulsion. (This comports with our associations within industry, in which we have found a fairly general willingness to solve its own problems.)

The principle involved in this and many other situations, which is now recognized in law, is that the minor contaminations of many articles of food and drink may combine to yield an appreciable risk to the public, and that every effort should be made to eliminate such sources of minor contamination. The most recent laws concerning food and beverages involved in industrial (rather than unorganized or household) processing, designate as "adulteration" any introduction of lead in the course of the processing. (Thus you can see that by the application of the Food and Drugs laws to your industry, it could be held that the use of lead foil in the manner referred to above, is illegal. No one has proposed this as yet, for the reason, I believe, that attention has not been directed toward a procedure that has been sanctioned, so to speak, by such long use.)

I have little doubt, although I could be mistaken, of course, that aluminum or a suitable alloy as foil could be substituted, successfully, for lead. In my view this would be well worth doing, and I should be pleased to see this done by an American company or group of companies. It would seem to me that your Company may be in a position of influence within the industry so as to initiate this procedure and to encourage its adoption, hopefully, throughout the American wine-producing industry, as a contribution to the public welfare.

If this should strike you and your associates as a thing worth looking into, in whole or in part, and if any of your people should wish to discuss any aspect of the matter with me, I should be pleased to make myself available. I shall be in San Francisco until March 14 at the address indicated below. I am sure that you need no advice from me in this matter, but as to the technology involved I (a physician and physiologist) could hardly be expected to offer much help (except perhaps to interest one of the producers of aluminum and aluminum alloys in the problem). I hardly think I need say that I am not seeking any consulting relationship in this, but some previous experience in proffering advice leads me to suggest that I have "no axe to grind" other than my broad interest in this general subject. If you should choose to do so, you can establish my "bona fides" to your own satisfaction, by an inquiry in local medical circles.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M.D.
Professor Emeritus of
Occupational Medicine

RAK:wp

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P.S. In order not to burden you with my handwriting, I am sending the handwritten letter to my secretary in Cincinnati, who will mail it to you. I can be reached more promptly, however, at the San Francisco address.
RAK