



NATION & WORLD/ B1
Not so fast
 A federal judge stepped into the fight over Arizona's immigration law at the last minute Wednesday, blocking the heart of the measure



FOOD/ D1
Through the camera
 Portraits of local vintners, grape growers and other influential people in the wine trade appear in a new book debuting Aug. 14.

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



THURSDAY, JULY 29, 2010

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

Food

SECTION **D**

life@newspress.com

FILM DEBUT

FRENCH FIRST LADY CARLA BRUNI-SARKOZY IS PART OF WOODY ALLEN MOVIE

ENTERTAINMENT | **D3**

Dear Abby **D2** Crossword **D2** Comics **D4**
 Codeword **D2** Entertainment **D3** Television **D5**

THURSDAY, JULY 29, 2010



MARK ROBERT HALPER PHOTOS

Among the portraits in Mark Robert Halper's "Sunlight and Water" are, from left, Paul Lato of Paul Lato Wines, Bill and Roswitha Craig of Shoestring Vineyard & Winery in Solvang, and Iris Rideau of Rideau Winery & Vineyards in Solvang.

Alchemical arts

"Sunlight and Water" showcases area winemakers

By **KARNA HUGHES**
 NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Los Angeles-based commercial photographer Mark Robert Halper is an old hand at landing corporate accounts. He's worked with clients like FedEx, Forbes, PF Chang's and Prudential, shooting everything from canisters of powdered creamer to executive head shots. He's also snapped his share of celebrity portraits, from Mr. T to Tori Spelling. But when it came time for a personal project, the 44-year-old set his sights on points north, turning a lens on an earthier and uncommon subject: the winemakers of Santa Barbara County.

"Sunlight and Water: Celebrating the Winemakers of Santa Barbara County," his first self-published book of fine art photography, will be released Aug. 14.

The title references a quote attributed to Galileo: "Wine is sunlight, held together by water."

The book features 110 black-and-white portraits of local vintners, grape growers and other influential people in the wine trade, from young entrepreneurs to seasoned veterans to couples united by their passion for the vine.

Anthony Dias Blue, a wine industry expert and former wine and spirits editor for Bon Appétit, contributed the foreword.

Many of Mr. Halper's subjects gaze unflinchingly into the camera, with a raw honesty reminiscent of Frank Ockenfels 3, blended with the whimsical and surreal touches of Keith Carter; both are photographer heroes of his. The artist's main instruction: "Just relax and look at the camera."

"We've all kind of got our face that we put on for the world," he told the News-Press, while sitting on a leather banquette at Oreana Winery and Tasting Room in the Funk Zone, sipping a 2007 pinot noir. (Oreana vintner Christian Garvin is featured in a portrait.) "I wanted to go deeper. I wanted to go to the parts of this that



THOMAS KELSEY / NEWS-PRESS

LA photographer Mark Robert Halper, pictured here at Oreana Winery's tasting room, made portraits of more than 100 Santa Barbara County winemakers for "Sunlight and Water," a new book and exhibition.

I see as more romantic, which is the work, which is the struggle, the more quiet moments."

Here, the viewer doesn't find big, toothy smiles or hackneyed images of wine glasses raised in toast. The mood is introspective, and many of the photos evoke a sense of transience — fitting in an industry so reliant on the seasons — as well as a rugged spiritedness and pride.

Tom Stolpman, co-owner of Stolpman Vineyards & Winery, looks out over a field, his son Peter sitting by his side, in a pastoral scene that might have been set a hundred years ago. Thekla and Richard Sanford, founders of Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards, peer affectionately at each other. And sporting his trademark pith helmet, Frank Ostini of Hitching Post Wines bemusedly

props his chin up on a hand. From Aug. 14 till next February, selected images will be on display in the Los Olivos Meandering Gallery, a circuit of 10 destinations along the streets of Los Olivos, from Fess Parker Wine Country Inn & Spa to the tasting room of Blair Fox Cellars.

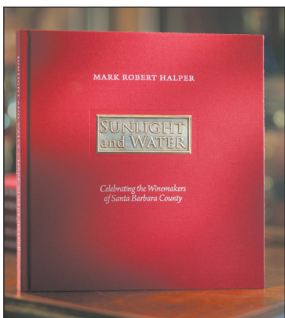
In the coming weeks, a series of events will fete Mr. Halper's ambitious project, with plenty of libations being poured by the subjects themselves. Among them: an exhibition preview and wine tasting Saturday at The Wine Cask, a winemaker dinner Aug. 13 at Root 246 in Solvang prepared by chef Bradley Ogden, and photography workshops in the fall in the Santa Ynez Valley. Formally kicking it all off is a gala reception and silent auction Aug. 14

at Avant Tapas and Wine in Buellton, with proceeds going to The Valley Foundation, which distributes funds to area charities helping the poor, seniors, youth and others in the community.

All this from a fellow who only started visiting the wine country a few years ago. A San Fernando Valley native ("it's not my fault!" he says), Mr. Halper first ventured up to Santa Ynez Valley in 2007 on a lark. He and his wife Jennifer passed through Los Olivos en route from Sycamore Springs, where they'd spent two nights (a wedding present from a group of photographers).

"I kind of wondered why anyone would want to come to this little two-street town," he said. "And then

Please see **SUNLIGHT on D8**



MARK ROBERT HALPER PHOTO

"Sunlight and Water: Celebrating the Winemakers of Santa Barbara County" by LA photographer Mark Robert Halper is due out Aug. 14.

Los Olivos Meandering Gallery

Portraits from Mark Robert Halper's "Sunlight and Water: Celebrating the Winemakers of Santa Barbara County" will be on display throughout Los Olivos from Aug. 14 to Feb. 15, 2011.

Included in the Los Olivos Meandering Gallery are: Fess Parker Wine Country Inn & Spa, 2860 Grand Ave.; Los Olivos Café, 2879 Grand Ave.; and the tasting rooms of Coquelicot, 2884 Grand Ave.; Andrew Murray Vineyards, 2901-A Grand Ave.; Tre Anelli, 923 Grand Ave.; Daniel Gehrs, 2939 Grand Ave.; Qupé/Ethan/Verdad, 2963 Grand Ave., Suite B; Stolpman Vineyards, 2434 Alamo Pintado Ave.; Scott Cellars, 2933 San Marcos Ave., Suite 101; and Blair Fox Cellars, 2902 San Marcos Ave., Suite B.

For a map with the locations, visit <http://sunlightandwater.com>.

D8

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS **LIFE** THURSDAY, JULY 29, 2010

A trip to Los Olivos was the start of it all

SUNLIGHT

Continued from Page D1

we had lunch and we really enjoyed it. And I walked around a bit. I started getting a better idea of why people might come to this little town."

Following a wine-tasting excursion about a year later, last fall he decided to investigate the region — and its vintages — further, bringing along his trusty Hasselblad digital camera, his wife, an assistant (slash "designated driver") and the vague notion it could well turn into a book.

"This started out as, 'It would be fun to photograph winemakers and do a trip at the same time.' It was kind of my vacation and a creative stretch. I wanted to make myself a better photographer and this is a good way to do it."

The resulting images were shot on five trips up the coast, during which he photographed an average of five people a day, from Santa Barbara to the Santa Ynez Valley and Lompoc to Santa Maria.

He shot the portraits in and around the winemakers' terroir — their tasting rooms, vineyards, farmhouses and other haunts — and sent each a print as his thanks.

Sometimes the backgrounds, edges and peripheral imagery in his work are artfully distorted so that the luminous faces leap forward. The technique results in a timeless quality that evokes early photography. (He won't disclose just how he does it, though he says the photographs were only minimally retouched.)

"It's designed to be reminiscent of the photos from the '20s, '30s, '40s and before," he said. "I love what old optics did. I love the way that you get a bright spot of light and it would flare and the optics couldn't handle it... I wanted to reach back to that. I just found that to be particularly beautiful."

While he confesses he's still an amateur when it comes to wines ("we were kind of going from the nicer wines at Trader Joe's and opening up and starting to appreciate more of what was out there"), he can appreciate the toil and care winemakers put into their craft.

"The winemaking process and the



MARK ROBERT HALPER PHOTO

Norman Beko of Cottonwood Canyon Vineyard & Winery in Santa Maria, as pictured in "Sunlight and Water."

photography process share a lot," he said. "With winemakers, you're kind of beginning with the grapes. You've got to listen to them. If you try to coerce them into being something that they aren't, you don't get a very good wine..."

"With photography, I love the fact that I come somewhere and I've got the person I've got and the location I've got, and I've got to make that work. I've got to find a way to make that thing beautiful and interesting and see what is beautiful and interesting within it, as opposed to trying make it something else."

And while he calls winemaking an art form, the similarities end there. "I don't think I can manage their patience," he said of his subjects. "I love the quick turnaround you can get (with photography)... Wine sits in a barrel longer than this book took."

e-mail: khughes@newspress.com

IF YOU GO

The following events will be held to kick off the "Sunlight and Water" exhibition in the weeks ahead:

● **Exhibition preview and wine tasting:** 3 to 6 p.m. Saturday, The Wine Cask, 813 Anacapa St. Photographer will be joined by winemakers from Margerum Wine Company, Happy Canyon Vineyards and Cimarone, who will pour their wines. A selection of portraits will be on display. Admission free. \$15 wine tasting.

● **Winemaker dinner:** 7 p.m. Aug. 13, Root 246, 420 Alisal Road, Solvang. Features winemaker Kirby Anderson, Mr. Halper, and a menu prepared by chef Bradley Ogden. \$195 per person, plus tax. Seating limited to 18 guests.

● **Opening gala reception and silent auction:** 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 14, Avant Tapas and Wine, 35 Industrial Way, Buellton. Frank Ostini of Hitching Post Wines will be the master of ceremonies. Meet many of the winemakers featured in Mr. Halper's book, who will pour their wines. Hors d'oeuvres will be served. Advance reservations required. \$47 per person, plus tax. Proceeds will benefit The Valley Foundation. For more information, reservations and details about upcoming photography workshops in Solvang, visit <http://sunlightandwater.com> or call 888-273-2838. Copies of the book, which retails for \$40, as well as fine art prints are available on the Sunlight and Water website. The book also will be sold at exhibition venues and on www.amazon.com.