

Don and Marea Gazzard

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The Gazzards are a talented couple. He is a brilliant architect, she is one of Australia's most creative potters. Here they talk to Margo Williamson about their work and their busy life together.



We first met Donald and Marea Gazzard on the sand at a quiet beach north of Sydney, where they were enjoying a well earned respite: Marea from completing work for her latest successful exhibition of bronzes, stoneware and porcelain at Gallery A in Paddington, and Donald from his architectural firm, Clarke, Gazzard and Partners.

As one of the chief organisers of the exhibition *Australian Outrage* in 1966, which pinpointed the deformities of Australian urban and suburban architecture and environment, Donald was remarkably sanguine about the rows of fibro houses—pink ones and blue ones and yellow ones—which crowded the cliffs behind the pretty beach.

"No, this sort of stuff doesn't worry me too much," he said equably. "It's inexpensive, makeshift and easy to pull down. In a few years it will be quite feasible to think of putting something better in its place. It's the solid rush of red brick and tile—practically and economically indestructible—which upsets me more."

He settled back more comfortably in the sand and watched Marea, who was idly playing with some pieces of seaweed, pebbles and driftwood, turning them into a composition which looked worth preserving.

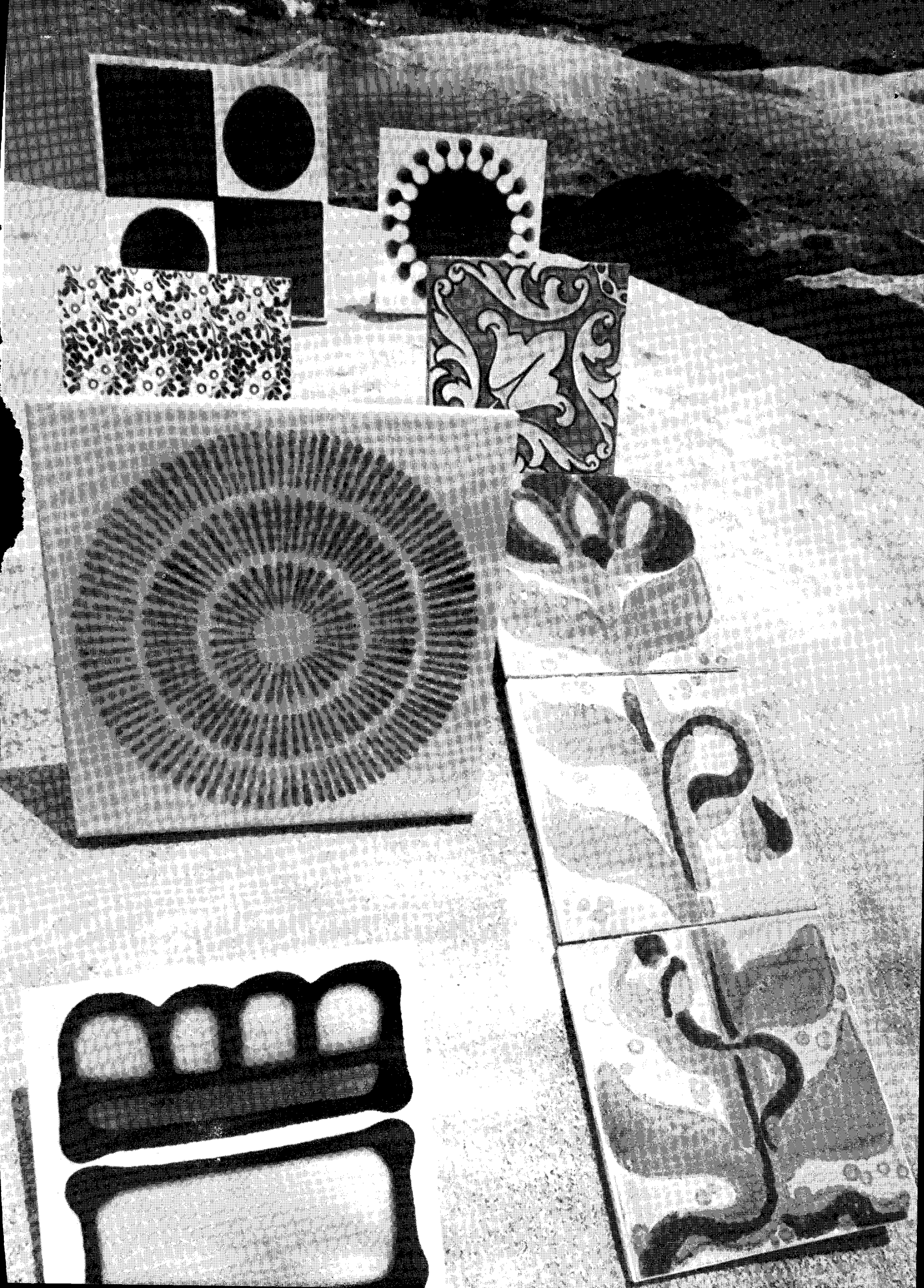
"We don't do anything on holiday," he continued. "I don't

own a holiday house—we'd much rather stay at a place where we don't have to cook and keep house. I don't have a boat—I hate fussing with sails and knots, and I don't play any sport. All I want to do is lie in the sun and let my mind go blank."

At 40, lean, with brown eyes which grow instantly alert and warm when he speaks of his favourite subject, architecture and its relationship with environment, Donald Gazzard has devoted a staggering amount of time and expense in putting into practice his ideas on the reformation of city and suburban development in Australia. His firm is at present working on the second stage of the reclamation of Church of England land at Edgecliff. This is Goodwin Village, which consists of 200 courtesy flats for elderly people. The first stage consisted of two blocks of one-bedroom studio flats, the third stage will be a commercial block with two floors of parking space, one floor of shops and five blocks of offices. A bus stop and Edgecliff railway station (part of the Eastern Suburbs railway line) will be included in the development.

"We are trying to create an environment, not just buildings," said Donald. "I hope that in a hundred years' time people will be forming committees to protest against pulling down what we are putting up now."

In 1960 Donald Gazzard won the first Wilkinson Award given for a private house. He designed the house for his brother-in-law





in Hunter's Hill, Sydney, using natural timber, bagged bricks and with a private courtyard—and thereby provoked a rash of similar designs which have enhanced the suburban landscape considerably in the past few years.

A project house for the Lend Lease village at Carlingford followed. "I'd love to design another project house now," he added, "but no-one has asked me."

His firm has offices in Melbourne and Perth as well as Sydney, and there is an office in Southport, Queensland, where the firm is drawing up plans for the redesigning (should one say reclamation?) of the city of the Gold Coast.

Four years ago his office designed a township in Rockingham Park, Western Australia—a perfect example of town-planning, with houses with open commons at the back for play areas, shopping areas and working areas placed away from living areas, bypasses for pedestrians so that children can bicycle safely to school without crossing main traffic areas. There was only one disappointment—he was refused permission to put electricity cables underground. Why? He shrugged.

"No good reason, just petty bureaucracy. We had expert opinion in our favour, and a stack of overseas precedents you could jump over, but in the end we had to put the offending telegraph poles as inconspicuously as possible down the back of the houses."

The Wentworth Memorial Church at Vaucluse is a Gazzard design, as are the group of Housing Commission patio houses at Villawood, Sydney. Donald is also completing a book on vernacular Australian architecture, with photographs taken by Harry Sowden, which should be published this year.

"I don't believe there is any specifically Australian modern architecture yet. There is an interesting trend towards a somewhat backward look in this rediscovery of natural materials—exposed timber, untreated brick and stone walls and so on. That is why I wanted to produce this book, showing the only authentic Australian buildings—wool sheds, storage barns—which are functional, goodlooking and use natural materials."

While her husband has been doing his best to make Australian urban development something less than Outrageous, Marea has been just as busy. Tranquil and tanned, with a warm smile, and a calm, slow voice, she manages her professional life so that the two children, Nicholas, aged nine, and Clea, seven, have first priority. This must take some juggling, as she has had nine exhibitions since 1960. Her first exhibition was in Montreal, Canada; she was guest exhibitor with Milton Moon in Auckland; her work is in almost every state gallery in Australia, the National Gallery in Canberra and in California, Hong Kong and various private galleries in Australia and abroad. She won the Richey Invitational Ceramic Prize in 1969, and is the Australian representative to the World Crafts Council. In this capacity she was sent to the 1968 World Crafts Council in Lima, Peru, and, sponsored by a private foundation in America, has just been to New Delhi where she attended a meeting of Asian country representatives of the Council. Quite an achievement for someone who first took up ceramics by accident.

"I was working as a secretarial assistant in the social welfare department when Don and I were married nineteen years ago. I wanted to do a course in dress design, but there were vacancies only in the pottery class, so I took that."

As soon as they could afford it, the young Gazzards went to London, where Marea went to the Central School of Arts and Crafts. This was tremendously exciting for her, and after travelling through Europe and America, she was able to give her first exhibition in Canada.

"We've been very lucky, really," Marea said, "in all sorts of ways. When we decided it was time to come home in 1960, Don was able to start his partnership immediately. We'd put off having children for ten years, and then when we decided to have a child we had Nicholas—one month after we got here—just like that. Not everyone has that sort of good fortune. Then we were able to buy this house, and we'd never thought of living anywhere except Paddington."

Their white painted terrace house is cool and comfortable, with luxurious leather chairs and sofa downstairs, an Elwyn Lynn painting as focal point in the living room, and a view from the back balcony of the whole of Paddo, looking gay and Mediterranean. The streamlined kitchen has rows of carefully chosen pieces of pottery on open shelves.

"We use them all, of course," said Marea as she showed superb salad and soup bowls by Col Levy, a Hughan teapot, plates by Les Lakra of the Sturt Workshop at Mittagong, N.S.W.

*"there are plenty of people with good ideas,
but the successful ones perhaps just don't give up"*



On the previous page, Marea Gazzard photographed under a canopy of printed cotton she bought on her recent trip to New Delhi as Australia's representative at the meeting of the Asian branch of the World Crafts Council. Donald Gazzard is seen at the site of the Church of England glebe at Edgecliff, N.S.W., he is rebuilding. Above, The Wentworth Memorial Church he built at Vacluse in Sydney. The Gazzard family, opposite: Don and Marea, with Nicholas, nine, and Clea, seven.

Far right, Marea Gazzard in the courtyard of their Paddington house; its cool and simple living room shown right below.

Behind the kitchen is the laundry, with Marea's prized new kiln sharing room with the washing machine and the gardening tools. "It's all very untidy," said Marea placidly, surveying the shelves stacked with soap powder, paint and other household paraphernalia. "But it functions."

Behind the charming courtyard is her studio, where we found Nicholas deeply absorbed in his own painting while listening to Noel Coward, a current favourite, on the radio. This is where Marea designs and shapes all her pieces ready for firing. With her new kiln she has been experimenting successfully with porcelain and stoneware techniques.

In 1968 she started a lost wax technique for bronze sculpture, which she finds very satisfying. She has never been a functional potter—she sculpts more than pots, is very conscious of form, and doesn't use glazes.

How do she and her husband manage to dovetail their busy lives together so successfully? Marea must be as calm and organised all the time as she appears to be? This caused much laughter. "We have great frantic scenes when I'm finishing things in a rush for an exhibition," said Marea. "And I rely on my mother and Don's mother, who have always been marvellous helping with the children."

"Marea's professional life is geared to term time," explained Don. "When the children are at school, she works, has an exhibition towards the end of the year, then is free for the children when they are on holidays. When she is very busy, we help out."

"We're not very interested in social things," said Marea. "We like people to come for lunch on Saturdays, very informally. We entertain in fits and starts . . . our favourite evening out is a quiet dinner somewhere and maybe a film."

She thinks exciting things are happening artistically in Australia. "We are waking up, thinking creatively. Perhaps not so much in pottery, but definitely in crafts."

She recalled an article in an international magazine which praised an Australian wall hanging in an important international exhibition.

"This is the sort of thing which is happening now. We would like government support for the Australian Craft Association so that we can take part in international conferences and competitions every year. This is the only way we will reach world standards."

Marea showed me half a dozen beautifully woven, brightly coloured bags hanging from a hook in the living room.

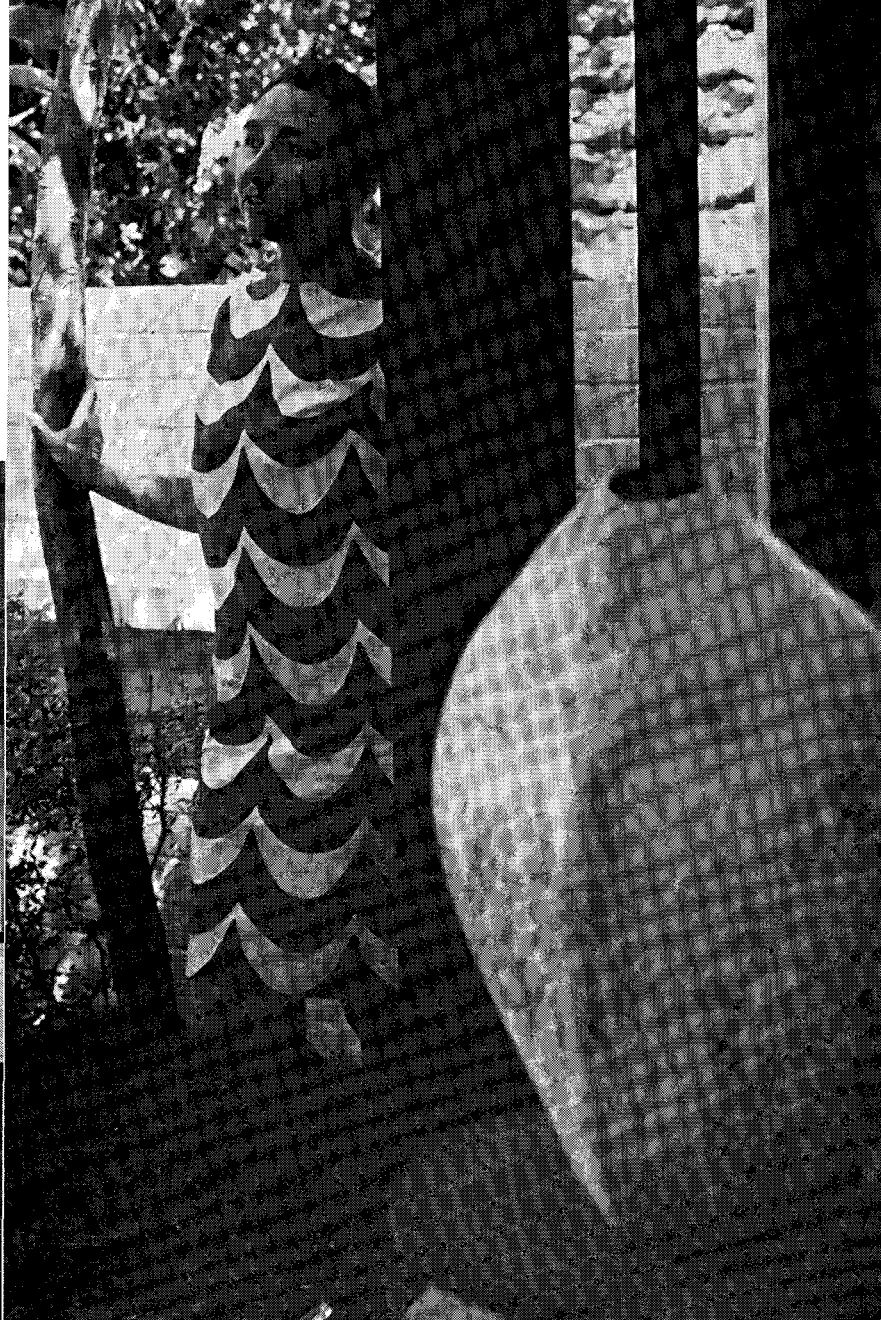
"This one was woven by a cousin of mine we visited in a little Greek island called Andikythra. Weaving there is a natural part of life. That was an onion bag! We have to learn how to weave like that here. That's why we want to start a weaving school. In countries like India and Greece, crafts are indigenous. Here they have never been part of our lives."

Both the Gazzards feel it is very important for them to get away from Australia, as often as once a year.

"It's easy to think one is pretty good here," said Don with a smile. "It takes only a few days in a place like Japan to see how marvellous modern architecture can be."

What is next for him?

"Turning Martin Place into a pedestrian square. We start



work soon. Once people see how delightful a pedestrian square in a city can be, all sorts of things might happen. There could be five more city squares in ten years."

Does he see much future for Australia, architecturally?

"Not until government departments learn to co-ordinate with each other," he answered promptly.

"That's what *Australian Outrage* was all about really. A road is put down by one department, lighting is put up by another, then the police decide where the traffic lights should go, all quite indiscriminately. That's how you get ugly, inadequate bus shelters, badly designed phone booths, trees hacked into grotesque shapes, a rubbish chute chundering volumes of garbage over a cliff face into the sea at a local beach."

Does he think *Australian Outrage* did much good?

"No, not really . . . perhaps a little. Anyway," brightening, "we did finally sell the *Australian Outrage* book—all four and a half thousand copies."

Both the Gazzards laughed.

"Oh well, you have to keep trying," said Marea.

"Perhaps that's the difference between successful people and unsuccessful ones," added Don. "There are plenty of people with good ideas, but the successful ones perhaps just don't give up."

Perhaps it's just as well for Australia that there are people around with that philosophy.



Appreciation of Australian Wines

In Europe, where it all began, they have to learn their lesson only once. In Burgundy, for instance, the wine drinker barely recognises the existence of Bordeaux (where the claret comes from) and he certainly doesn't drink such a "foreign" drink. In Bordeaux they drink their clarets and scorn the Burgundies. In Italy they drink the wine of the region. It is a red wine region, then they drink red wine all the time. If it is a white wine region, they drink the whites, and the local cuisine develops along the "white" lines.

So it is, all over the older wine drinking countries of the world. But it is different in Australia.

Our industry decided long ago in its wisdom to make all the styles of wine there are. Why not? The country could grow the grapes to make all the styles, the winemakers knew how to make a sherry as well as a dry red, in either the Burgundy or the claret style. So why not make them and sell them? The result is that you and I have to get to know sherry in three or four different styles, port in three styles, Champagne in at least three, vermouth in four, rosé in one, dry red in two, dry white in three.

And that will give you only the basic knowledge, the ability to pick one style from another. The finer differences between two reds, or two whites, is a long way down the road. It isn't any wonder that the top wine experts in this country have spent their lifetime in the study of wine, and admit freely that they are still learning, every day.

Yet not one of these experts would change a moment of his life in wine, not one regrets for even a second that he became involved in the grape and all that comes from it. Appreciating wine is one of the most beautiful and pleasure-filled things you can do.

Appreciation of wine. How much is involved in that phrase. It means more than the comment I often hear: "I appreciate wine, I think it is a lovely drink and I drink it as often as I can". It means a lot more than that, though there are times when I am a little jealous of such an uncomplicated fun-only approach.

But if you are aware of wine for more reasons than the one—that it is just a drink—then there is a lot of pleasure in store. You can fairly quickly get to know a style of wine well enough to be able to decide that it will go superbly with one dish and rather badly with another. You can try it out and listen to the guests remarking on how the food is made so much better because the wine blends so perfectly with it. And then you start to feel the wonder that is in wine. Your kitchen and your dining table take on a new interest for you.

While most of the wine emphasis today is placed on table wine (dry red and dry white) there are really four main groups of wines in Australia and they are appetiser wines, table wines, sparkling wines and dessert wines.

Appetiser or aperitif wines: As their name suggests, they are wines to be taken before the meal, to freshen up the palate for the food to come and they include sherry and the vermouth styles, in dry, medium and sweet. You should aim to serve these wines in the dry style, though you might have your work cut out switching your maiden aunt off the sweet sherry. But sugar depresses the palate and a sweet drink before a meal kills hunger and so might be a good idea for a dieter, but not for a gourmet.

Dry vermouth—two ounces in a whisky tumbler over ice—is an excellent "starter", inexpensive and more generally appreciated in Australia than is sherry, even though our dry, fino and flor style sherries are in world class.

The best appetiser and "starter" of them all, though, is Champagne, which is not "officially" listed in the appetiser group, but which for dryness, palate sharpening and that instant lift to the spirits, is far and away the best drink to take *before* a splendid meal. The widely accepted practice of having Champagne at the end of the meal is to me sheer barbarism. Pouring all the carbon dioxide gas that makes the bubble in Champagne, on to a stomach full of rich food, is inviting serious indigestion.

Sparkling wines: This group includes Champagne, sparkling Burgundy, sparkling Moselle, sparkling hock and all the pearl wines. In the group Champagne is king and the remainder of the drinks are the peasants. Good Champagne is one of those absolute experiences. But the other sparkling wines do have their uses. A beginner in wine who is not sure whether the taste of a glass will be acceptable or not, can easily be attracted to the grape with a sparkling or a pearl wine. The pearls in Australia are generally a little sweet, fairly cheap and have the big advantage that they can be served right through a meal, with any and all courses, since their acid and bubble merely cleans the mouth and doesn't complicate the palate with subtle flavours of the kind to be found in a good dry red or white.

Dessert wines: This group includes port, both vintage and tawny, muscat, Marsala, Madeira and to my taste, good-quality sweet sherry. It is a most misunderstood and neglected wine group in Australia, still suffering a little from its very low image of twenty years ago when cheap fortified wines flooded the market and gave those with a drink problem the cheapest available form of alcohol outside of methylated spirit. But port and muscat and Madeira are noble drinks with some wonderful uses at the end of the meal. Some of the ports and muscats available in Australia are among the best wine drinks in the world and I wonder why people spend so much money on Drambuie and curaçao and so on when a Rutherglen muscat is a better, kinder, finish to a meal at a fraction of the price of the imported, high-alcohol nostrums.

Table wines: This is what it is all about. It is the table wine group where most of the fun lies, where you can develop your interest to the point of obsession, if you like. In this group are the familiar wine names, Riesling, Rhine Riesling, hock, Chablis, white Burgundy and Moselle in the dry whites, claret and Burgundy in the dry reds and rosé in another little group by itself.

Things being as they are in this rushed world, none of us have a load of time on our hands. Few of us have the kind of time it would take to do even a crash course in the full wine field. But everybody has time to learn about table wines, because it only takes a second or two every time you open a bottle, or somebody opens a bottle for you.

Whenver you sit at a table and there is a glass of wine in front of you, don't be a bore about it, but take a second or two to learn a few things about the drink in your glass. Let's say it is a dry red wine. What can you tell about that wine before you as much as take a sip of it? A surprising amount.