

EDITORIAL



Wine, war and hematology

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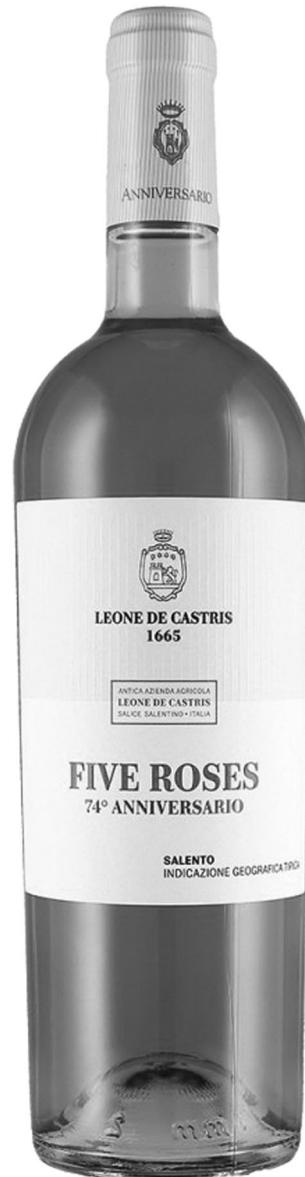
1. A bottle of Cinque Rose

'To be a Frenchman means to fight for your country and its wine'.

Attributed to Monsieur de Villaine at Romanée-Conti in Don Kladstrup's book: Wine and War: The French, the Nazis and the battle for France's treasure.

In 1943 the American army landed in Salento in southern Italy. This marked the beginning of the end of the Nazi occupation of Italy. Charles Poletti, a former Governor of New York and a fluent Italian speaker was the officer in charge of procurement for the invading American army. Apparently he met Piero the owner of Leone de Castris, a famous vineyard in Puglia since the 17th century, who gave him some Rosato (Rosé), Cinque Rose (five roses), to try. It is made from a blend of Malvasia Nera and Negroamaro grapes and General Poletti was so impressed with the wine that he wanted to ship cases of it to America.

There was only one problem: a shortage of bottles (it was 1943). The general had an idea. American soldiers, then and probably now, are not renowned for their wine consumption but drank plenty of beer. Therefore, the general surmised, there would be plenty of empty beer bottles in which to put the rosato. The story goes that the rosato was put into beer bottles and transported to America. As Cinque Rose is still for sale in North America I presume the general was correct! So the beginning of the end of WW II marked the beginning of life for Cinque Rose!



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2. A plastic bag for bone marrow



As a hematologist and a stem cell transplanter, I, like many of you, have ordered blood, platelets, fresh frozen plasma, and sometimes plasma concentrates for my patients. I must honestly say that I rarely gave much thought to the donor of this precious material or the technology and organization behind the supply. Until relatively recently, blood was transfused from glass bottles. Bottles were heavy

and their transport was expensive. Although The Spanish Civil War was associated with modern concepts of blood transfusion, bringing blood to the battlefield (albeit in glass bottles) for transfusion rather than transporting wounded soldiers and civilians to hospital.

In Douglas Starr's book *Blood: an Epic History of Medicine and Commerce* [1], he writes that thousands of units of blood were transported from America to the Pacific campaign, during WW II, while the corresponding paperwork was sent by surface mail. As a result many units of blood deteriorated and could not be transfused.

In the early 1950s, Carl W. Walter, a surgeon at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital at Harvard Medical School, with his colleague William Murphy Jr. designed a polythene blood collection bag with two plastic tubes [2]. This flexible bag was used for the first time during the Korean War when a lot of experience was gained with its use in transfusion of blood to wounded soldiers. In spite of this success it was not until the 1970s that plastic bags were routinely used in the United Kingdom for blood transfusion and storage. Of course we now use plastic bags to collect bone marrow harvests and mobilized peripheral blood stem cells.

Hematology and war are therefore closely intertwined and the development of Cinque Rose was a happy consequence.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

References

1. Douglas S. *Blood: an Epic History of Medicine and Commerce*. New York, NY: Quill; 2000.
2. Walter CW. Invention and development of the blood bag. *Vox Sang*. 1984;47:318–24.