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Every parent curious about wine will appreciate the parallel between children and wine vintages. Every vintage is different. Each comes with its challenges and incredible rewards, with its frustrations and pleasant surprises. Each is a miracle.

While reading Antonio Galloni's recent article, "2015 Napa Valley - First Impressions" I couldn't help but recall his last high-level article about a Napa Valley vintage, the 2013. Galloni sanctifies the newborn vintage and describes the Napa 2015 as "stunningly beautiful". Even though we are starting to hear high praise for the 2015, Napa's 2013 is still on every wine lover's mind. When discussing the 2013, Robert Parker said that may turn out to be "the finest vintage [he has] experienced in tasting North Coast varietals in the last 37 years." For Galloni, the Napa 2013 vintage is a modern day classic.

In the shadow these two giants, what happened to 2014 Napa vintage?

If it was a child, the 2014 vintage would probably be suffering from Middle Child Syndrome. First identified by psychoanalyst Alfred Adler, the Middle Child Syndromes is the result of middle children oftentimes feeling excluded as the older sibling receives more privileges and responsibilities while the youngest receives all of the attention. The 2014 Napa vintage curse is being caught between two great years. Wine lovers are still in awe of the 2013 vintage and critics are already starting to admire the new vintage.

Isn't the Napa 2014 vintage too quickly and unjustly forgotten?



In a recent interview with famed winemaker, Celia Welch, she stated that the 2014 growing season had perfect growing conditions and the fruit was in perfect balance. She went on to say that, "As someone who watches vintages become portrayed by the media, sometimes I am concerned about vintages [like the 2014] because there isn't a lot of news about them. These vintages that are so ideal end up becoming like a middle child because there isn't an extreme to talk about. They're not easily summed up, but sometimes those wines become the most exquisite vintages."

After the success of 2012, 2013 and the promise of 2015, it might be easy to forget that, for many wine makers, no news is good news. When the weather is ideal and growth is uneventful, grapes are allowed to reach their full potential and the resulting wine is a reflection of that balance and harmony. Interestingly, both for wine and for people, exuberance rarely leads to greatness.

The 2014 vintage is described by outside observers as a winemaker's vintage. When nature doesn't interfere with the ideal growth of the fruit through abnormal heat or excessive rain, winemakers can fully express themselves and use their experience and talent to create wines that are truly representative of the terroir.

Napa Valley is an extraordinary place benefitting from its unique topography, its exceptional weather patterns, the incredible efforts of generations of vintners to make this small valley one of the top wine growing regions in the world and the exceptional inflow of capital of the last few decades. As a result, over the years, Napa Valley's most valuable commodity has become human capital. To my knowledge no place in the world offers the same concentration of wine talents and such an extraordinary mix of winemakers. Winemakers of all ages come to Napa Valley from across the globe and to share their unique winemaking experiences. With their deep knowledge and understanding of Napa Valley's complexities and potential, they are constantly exploring new frontiers and contributing to the wine world's relentless progress.

Did you know that 53% of all American Presidents are middle children? Additionally, Martin Luther King, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates are all middle children. Probably due in part to the lack of attention leading to the Middle Child Syndrome, it is a proven fact that middle children have a greater than average shot at greatness. Taking a step back, there is no doubt that 2013 and 2015 will be exceptional Napa vintages, but, as Celia Welch said, the middle child is often quietly extraordinary.