



CRAWFORD BECK

VINEYARD

Musings **March 22, 2006**

Nearly two months have gone by, and, as new owners, proprietors, caretakers, stewards of a vineyard, or more properly, as farmers, we have barely scratched the surface (pun intended) of all the work that needs to be done.

First and foremost, the vines must be tended: pruned and tied, rows mowed, and sprays applied. Trellis posts must be replaced and fences mended. Blackberries must be cleared, scotch broom cut down, and stones moved. Tractors (3) and an ATV must be maintained (spring overhauls). This litany is not in any way intended as a complaint. Rather, it is a description of a process, with lots of instant gratification and lots of long-term promise. We have learned how to use equipment that we have never seen, even in pictures, used chemistry that we learned only as theory forty years ago, and learning that running a vineyard is every bit as much a business and a science as it is an art.

Two weeks ago, we walked every row, measured the rows and counted all of the vines - 19,055 vines spread over 303 rows over 15 acres. Quite a task, but we now have a detailed map of the vineyard. The crews have been here pruning the vines, pulling the brush out, and tying the two shoots which will produce this year's fruit. It has been great fun to watch all of the activity and to be ready for their arrival each day. We really need to learn Spanish quickly.

We have applied for admission to the local community college for an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Vineyard Management. In April, we will each be taking one course - David will be taking Spring Vineyard Practices and Jeanne will be taking Vineyard Business Management. We are both excited, but we do not relish having to take exams again. One of the courses is "Spanish in the Vineyard," and others are on law and chemistry!

Friends at Coriell gave Jeanne a sophisticated weather station as a going away present. We will expand the station into a system of sensors to track temperature,

humidity, rain, wind, and barometric pressure. There are no limits to what can be done with this weather station and we intend to explore them all. We will be able to monitor leaf wetness and hopefully use this to alert us to mildew. Our vineyard is registered in a USDA conservation program, which encourages the use of such devices in managing spray programs for fungicides. We can also track soil wetness, which should provide data about possible stress in the vines. Our son is going to help us capture all of the data electronically so that we can begin to compare the various sections of the vineyard.

From our hill overlooking the Willamette Valley, we can watch the weather roll in from the west. We can see the showers coming from far away, unless they come around the hill from the south, in which case we are drenched by a fast moving shower that is gone before we can cover our tools! While we are very busy, there is enormous comfort in knowing that all our work is productive, that we will have useful things to do the next day, and we can enjoy the comfort of tired muscles that drop us into a deep sleep before the 10 o'clock news. Most important of all, there is the promise of a vintage in the fall.

We truly wish all of our friends the kind of peace and satisfaction that we have found in this adventure.