



13 November 2007

Dear Friends:

As we prepare our Thanksgiving letter, I enjoy being one of the crew that applies the mailing labels. If the letter you've received has a label that is wrinkled or slightly off level, blame me as my eye-hand coordination leaves something to be desired. But I enjoy doing this because as I recognize names of those who have supported us through so many years and allowed us to continue doing what we love, it brings back a rush of memories that span twenty-two vintages and a lot of life.

2007 is the vintage we have been waiting for. Over the last 22 years, we have made vast advances in the way we farm our vineyards. Beginning with acreage contracts in the mid-80's that allowed us to control crop level, the industry as a whole began a new era of quality. We followed with vineyard trials that began in 1995 and extended over nine years, which showed that early thinning of the immature clusters as soon as a few days following set hastened the onset of true physiological ripeness. This work belied the industry lore that claimed early thinning would result in bloating of the fruit (dilution).

Shoot positioning, which guaranteed that all available leaf surface was photosynthetically active, turbo-powered our vines in their ability to bring the fruit to true ripeness far ahead of past vintages. Our understanding of how we need to feed the microbiological population at the root zone to enable the uptake of key minerals from the mother rock has shown immense benefits as well. Would these and the many other techniques we now employ make a difference in a difficult year?

There is no escaping that we had a wet and challenging Harvest in 2007. None of the sites we work with showed maturity before the pattern of rainfall began. It made no sense to harvest fruit that would have no chance of creating wine of substance. So we waited. And waited. We knew that waiting would eventually mean a percentage of disease. We knew that waiting would result in dilution of character from rainfall. Not a problem.

Our sorting line, led by Father 'T' for the last fourteen years, pored over the fruit at a snail's pace, ensuring that we only accepted clean and healthy clusters. Peg and Jerry Fenton, who we have known since 1987, continually stopped the line to remove stinkbugs and all other creatures that should never see their way to a fermenter. Our family of volunteers is our most impressive résumé – please see the list of their names at the end of this letter. All of these dedicated volunteers made their mark on this vintage by removing anything that you or I would find untrustworthy. They were merciless and their work allowed us to keep only clean, fully ripe fruit. Our tools in the winery gave us the ability to remove the diluting effects of rainfall, and deliver the best of what Mother Nature and a year's worth of work could produce.

As the fermentations reached their end and pressing began, we were anxious to see the results of our work. Though we fully expected that our efforts would result in very good wine, what poured from the press to the drain pan was, in a word, amazing. One lot after another showed deep and expansive aromatic profiles, rich flavors, lush textures, and dense colors. We were, and continue to be, blown away by the quality. These are not wines that are very good for a difficult vintage – these are some of the best wines we have had the pleasure of producing, period.

The cool weather kept disease from becoming a major issue. The same cool weather, which prolonged the season and extended our “hang time” well past the traditional 100 days, certainly played a role in giving us this happy ending. What we do know is that the year-long work of Mark and Cody in the vineyard gave us the opportunity to work with fully-flavored fruit. We also know that the cellar staff of Alberto, Tim, Taylor and our Kiwi intern Jannine worked tirelessly and selflessly to make sure that what was needed to be done got done, every day. Brooke and Carol managed to run our office while simultaneously sorting fruit; Katie and Ivory joined in to help as their afterschool schedules allowed. Asa dropped his in-state sales duties to play grape truck driver for several weeks, and Seth actually came back from a six-month sabbatical in Hawaii to help us in the final push in the vineyard. Donna, Carrie, Kori and Meridith joined in sorting while Dale held court at The Depot. In short, it was all hands on deck this Harvest - and all hands with the single purpose of supporting the perfecting of fruit we received.

Each weekday during Harvest as I drove my daughter Josie to school, we talked about the weather and how it was affecting our approach to picking decisions. The conversation often turned to the issue of whether it was smarter to take down (harvest) a vineyard that was close to being ready, or wait through the forecasted rain. To wait meant crop would be lost, and that the mechanics of getting fruit out of the vineyards would be more difficult and sorting in the winery would be far more tedious. “Wait ‘til the grapes taste good. Don’t make sour wine, Papa.” Sage advice from a six-year old. In this vintage, patience and trusting your judgment were requirements for success.

Speaking of children, as I write this, Karen is in Vietnam with our newly-adopted daughter, Evy (rhymes with Chevy). She has a supportive entourage with her that includes her sister Susi, my son Carson, and friends Carolyn Dietz, Katie Evers and Karen Brock. Our version of it takes a village. Josie, Cody and I are very anxious to greet them all when they arrive back in Portland tonight, and Evy will be making several “appearances” over the Thanksgiving weekend.

Our annual Thanksgiving Open House will take place on Friday and Saturday, November 23rd and 24th, and hours will be 10am-4pm both days. We look forward to seeing you, and sharing the exciting results of the 2007 vintage.

Best,

Ken

Thanks to our 2007 Harvest Volunteers!

Rita Anderson – Scott and Janice Ankenbrand – Stacey Baker – Susan Barksdale – Julia Baumann – Susan Baumann – David Boal – Cody Boal – Steve Caldwell – Nancy Campion – Ashley Campion – Jack & Kathleen Carter – Roger Collins – Eric Emtow – Peg & Jerry Fenton – John Forsen – Jeff Gros – Dale Hall – Robert Harriet – Susan Hebert – Gabe Hill – Diane Hunt – Gwen Jernstedt – Sky Kauer – Jack & Lorrie Lewis – Lila Martin – Carol & Don McCrone – John McCrone – Mac McLaren – John & Angela Merritt – Buzz & Kelly Nielson – Leslie Sarver – Jack & Katie Schwab – Richard Simonson – Bob Stecker – Todd Steele – Father “T” Trenbella – Rob & Pam Varuska – Tasha Winkler – Ron Wolf – Carson Wright – John Zaccone