



We lost an amazing friend and partner a few weeks ago. Carole McCrone passed away peacefully in her sleep.

I met Carole and Don at my first Open House in 1987. They were Seattleites at the time. He was chair of the Political Science department at the University of Washington and Carole was doing catering for Boeing among other things. They loved Pinot noir from the Willamette Valley and were looking for property in Yamhill County to create a vineyard. They landed on a 10 acre parcel northeast of Carlton that was a southwest slope at an elevation of 350 to 400 feet. Perfect. Planting began in 1991 with a half acre of 115 clone Pinot noir. Over the next several years the vineyard was expanded to 7.5 acres. We began purchasing fruit from the vineyard in 1995. In the year 2000 (remember how all computers were forecasted to implode?) we entered into a 15 year lease agreement and began farming the site.

Don and Carole enjoyed the relationship so much they decided to duplicate it in Martinborough, New Zealand. There, they found a partner in Ata Rangi Winery. They purchased roughly 10 acres and planted 7.5 to Pinot noir. Over quite a few years the McCrones led a bi-hemispheric existence, in Oregon during our harvest season and in New Zealand for theirs.

Carole was many things. She was a master gardener. She won a number of contests for original food recipes. She beautifully catered our major events for many years. Those talents, however, are not what I think of when I think of Carole.

She had a wonderfully wry sense of humor. She immediately understood the character level of every person in the room with her. She had an inner core of steel that was not evident until it was required. She was incredibly personable and completely unselfish. She didn't need to be complemented to be happy. More than anything else, she made everyone she met feel that with people like her in this world civility had a chance. I always loved her for that and always will. That chance for civility is needed now more than ever.

"All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent"...Thomas Jefferson.

Normally I don't broach current events when writing this annual missive. Our community of growing world class grapes and making wine is all consuming on its own and provides more stories than I can possibly capture. But, with the developments of this last month it is impossible to ignore what is happening on the world stage.

The October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre in Gaza is hard to fathom. It was not an act of war. It was barbarism the likes of which I have never seen or heard of in my lifetime. There can be no justification for the burning and beheading of infants, of innocents. There can be no argument that supports the surprise attack of a civilian population. It was a massive and insane fit of monumental cruelty.

A cease fire at this time would solve nothing. It is plainly clear that Israel must remove the threat of Hamas for their people to live without constant fear of another treacherous ambush. On October 6<sup>th</sup> there was a cease fire and the next day one group decided to break the peace.

It is shocking to see the number of protests in this country supporting Hamas. Most of them are occurring on college campuses of course. So many young students who look for any way to express their anger at not having a direction in life. The last number of years have shown how easily people can be convinced to ignore facts, to suspend all critical thinking. Some of the blame may be that when you aren't the victim of an atrocity it remains a news item only. You have not been touched by the suffering. Where is the sense of empathy?

It is as if all knowledge of hateful crimes in history has been erased. People of good conscience stood up to the Nazis and removed the threat. People of good conscience stood up to the perpetrators of 9/11 and removed the threat. We need brave souls now to stand tall and confront the tyranny. Enough...for now.

How does wine find its purpose in this life? It brings family and friends together over a meal. Wine can provide the oil for conversation. Wine provides warmth and human connectivity. It enhances the human experience. As my oldest daughter Josie says "wine is like a gentle hug".

2023 was a banner year for us. We had very good crop levels and plenty of heat to ripen properly AND had a long season with extended hang time. Hang time (the length of time the fruit is on the vine) equals complexity. A short season equals simple unevolved wine. Long growing seasons allow for the development of deeply complex aroma and flavor.

The weather of 2023 was very mild avoiding extremes of cold or heat. There were no frost scares at the start of the year and we had only two days at 100 degrees in the entire growing season. Being thin skinned Pinot noir is not as tough as other varieties so balmy conditions are exactly what we wish for and what we received. All great wine is about balance. This year the beautiful array of aromatics, plush texture and the frame of acidity are seriously compelling.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at our annual barrel tasting, November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> at Ken Wright Cellars.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'KW' or similar, written in a cursive style.