



ST. HELENA STAR

Published in the Heart of the Premium Wine Producing Section of the World

VOL. XCVII

ST. HELENA, CALIFORNIA

TEN CENTS THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1972

NO. 21

February 17, 1972

St. Helena Star, front page

Open Letter from Stuart Smith

Mr. Edward D. Freeland

3844 Silverado Trail

Calistoga

Dear Mr. Freeland:

I hope that by writing this letter it will be possible to correct certain misconceptions about the nature of the operation I am directing and to assure all interested parties that the goal of this endeavor will enhance both the environment and economy of Napa County. It is the objective of our partnership to develop well planned, disease free vineyards, and to follow this with the establishment of a small premium quality winery.

In preparing for my responsibilities as manager of our proposed vineyard, I spent the last two years as a graduate student in the Department of Viticulture and Enology at the University of California, Davis. My course work has included the entire range of both Viticulture and Enology courses in order to most thoroughly incorporate sound scientific and cultural practices in our planning.

The property that my partnership bought had been on the market for over a year and a half. I understand that the State Park's Department had looked at the land but that no further action was taken. I had the land inspected by Mr. Jim Lider, Napa County Farm Advisor; the soil was analyzed for parasitic Nematodes, and samples were inspected for Oak Root Fungus. Dr. Loyd Lider, Professor of Viticulture, University of California, Davis, upon inspection of the property, stated that the vineyard potential was excellent and that grape quality could be among the best in Napa County.

Besides the afore-mentioned inspections, the property was inspected and approved by a California State Biologist to be an increase block under the California State

Department of Agriculture's Foundation Plant Material Service program. We are increase block No. 91 and have received shipment of 6,500 heat-treated mother vines of Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, White Riesling and AXR No. 1. This is the only Napa County certified planting of heat-treated vines that I know of. I am sure you are well aware of the dire need of virus free certified propagating material in the Napa Valley.

The land was once in vineyards during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In the interim a small stand of trees and brush regrew, most of which was logged or cleared this summer. All the land that was logged was cleared, the soil was ripped and cross ripped, and an oat-barley cover crop was then sown to prevent soil erosion. To date there has been no erosion. As far as our actual logging operation and permits are concerned. I originally met with Mr. Gary Todd in the Napa-Lake Forestry Headquarters in St. Helena over a year and a half ago. I was informed of all necessary permits and legalities. I then had the State Service Forester of our area, Mr. Warren Shaw from the Santa Rosa Forestry Headquarters inspect the lumber and make suggestions on the overall operations of logging and prevention of fire hazards and soil erosion prevention.

For the actual operation a consulting Forester, Mr. Charles Swanson of Santa Rosa, was employed to retain reputable and reliable loggers, firewood cutters and a lumber company to buy the wood and to initiate suitable contracts with these individuals. Anyone who has seen our operation would recognize the proficiency with which our foresters have performed. All hardwood including oak, tan oak and madrone are cut into firewood, while all Douglas fir not large enough for saw logs or straight enough for poles are cut into firewood. We are utilizing everything possible that is on the proposed vineyard site. The remaining material is then piled together and burned. I obtained on June 9, 1971 the permit of Timberland Conversion Certificate No. 97 from the State Division of Forestry which is good until December 31, 1973. It was under this permit that I fulfilled requirements to begin and continue the clearing of the land. We are logging and clearing only that land to which we wish to plant vineyards; there has not been random cutting of trees.

It has come to my attention that there has been some concern for the safety of the Ritchie Creek headwaters in Bothe Napa Valley State Park. Our land runs parallel and adjacent to the Park for three forty acre parcels. From the edge of our property to the Creek is over three hundred yards at the nearest point; it is not quite half a mile from the edge of our vineyard clearing and an elevation descent of 500 feet. There are no streams that flow from our property to the Creek as there is no means for us to even get near the Park's boundary let alone hamper its existence or in any way upset the ecology or nature of that Creek. It is very steep mountainous relief that separates our vineyard site from the stream that runs through the State Park.

I am very upset and chagrined to have my sincerity and single purposeness of mind doubted. I would think the County of Napa would welcome educated scientifically oriented men to their wine industry and that the County would enjoy the broadening of the tax base, and most of all, the people who know and understand the danger and

tragedy of forest fires would welcome and even encourage clearings such as this, particularly next to the virtually inaccessible State Park grounds. The western hills have not burned in years but when and if a fire does begin it will only be the clearings and local non-County-maintained roads such as mine that will offer any hope for containment without vast damage to the land. In reviewing the nature of past emotional reactions to logging operations I cannot object to the well intentioned motives that initiated the logging moratorium, however, I must strongly object to the blind nature of the act and the manner in which it was passed.

I have gone to great expense to insure an efficient smooth running and successful operation of clearing my land. I consider it almost a model system. However, of late I have run into clogs that are trying to jam those wheels. I simply cannot understand the objections to well-intentioned and highly successful operations of land clearing and vineyard development. I encourage and invite anyone so interested to allow me to personally show them my operation and would be delighted to speak personally to anyone or any group that would be interested in the operation that I am directing.

Sincerely,

Stuart A. Smith

General Partner

Smith-Madrone