



Feb. 2025 President's Message

In Case You Missed It – A LOT of Vineyard Info from Cindy Fake

At our January meeting, Cindy Fake, UC Farm Advisor Emeritus, presented an extensive program on Vineyard Health. She covered topics such as: Winter Freeze & Drought, Heat & Water Stress, Soil & Vineyard Floor Practices, Mulching, Irrigation & Pest Management.

Since it's winter and we just went a month without rain before these recent storms, consider:

- Insufficient winter rain increases freeze risk and slows early growth
- Dry soil in fall/winter reduces root mass, which can cause Delayed Spring Growth (DSG)
- Consider irrigating if soil is dry after 3 weeks of no rain (depending on soil type)
- Winter Drought-induced Boron deficiency
 - Affects new growth: short, zigzag internodes, crinkled fan-shaped leaves
 - Fruit set - shot berries: round to somewhat flattened; uniform size
 - Reduced cluster size & Potassium (K) deficiency symptoms mid-season
 - Winter drought exacerbates diseases, e.g. Eutypa

In addition, she provided a wealth of additional handouts on topics such as:

- [Vineyard Trunk Diseases](#)
- [Gophers](#)
- [Soil Moisture by Feel](#)

We will post all of these documents and more on the SWGGA website: <https://swgga.com/#> and will notify you via an email blast when loaded.

Cheers, Diane

(Editor's note: You should be able to download the presentation using the *click here* link in Bernie Zimmerman's meeting recap on page 3. The presentation will be posted later on the SWGGA website.)

Events Calendar - Upcoming Meetings

Next Meeting, Thursday, February 20, Ponderosa Hall - **In The Cellar** - See Page 2

Thursday March 20, Ponderosa Hall **Great Cuts** - See Page 2

Thursday April 17, Ponderosa Hall **What Should You Do Next?** - See Page 2

Social Hour begins at 6:30. Meeting begins at 7:00

February Meeting, Thursday, February 20th at Ponderosa Hall

In The Cellar In The Winter What's Going On?

At the next meeting Dave Elliott will take us down to the cellar for a look at what winemaking tasks are at hand during these winter months. We'll take a look at the best practices to get from post-fermentation to first racking. ML, is it worth it? SO₂, do you need it? How soon is too soon to figure out what you've got and what you need to do next? If you have a problem, what is it likely to be and how would you fix it?

Which brings us to bench trials and fining. Is fining something you should consider? Does it make a difference and is it worth the effort? Turn to page 5 for excerpts and a link to Bench Trials 101 by winemaker Larry Brooks, published in Wine Business Monthly. See how the big boys do it.

But, more importantly, for our purposes Dave has put together a little fining test where we will be able to taste wine before and after fining the wine. Does it improve the wine? Does it make any difference at all? And as Larry Brooks points out in his article, how would you know it you don't ever try it?

Join us for a dive into the cellar as we explore Part I of "What Should You Do Next?"

Upcoming Meetings As Long As We're On The Topic Of What's Going On

March Meeting, Thursday, March 20th at Ponderosa Hall

Great Cuts Pruning Talk

It's one thing to talk about pruning, but unless you are in a vineyard actually watching someone doing it as they speak, it is very easy to get confused. Pruning is confusing enough at the best of times. To that end we are going to bring in some actual grapevines to talk about pruning while we prune them.

You know how they always say, ask five different winegrowers the same question and you will get five different answers? Well, we have some pretty experienced winegrowers among us. Let's see what they say. Let's prune some vines. We will also take a look at how to prune if you have eutypa.

April Meeting, Thursday, April 17th at Ponderosa Hall

What Should You Do Next? Part II

Following up from February's "In The Cellar" meeting, we will attempt to answer that question for your wine. That means we need your wines. Once again we will assemble a panel of commercial and expert winemakers asking them for advice about what should you do next?

Typically we have time to evaluate about six to eight wines. We are especially looking for wines from newer

winemakers. They could be from the recent 2024 harvest or they could be from 2023 as long as they are still in tank, un-bottled. But we are also looking for experiments from more veteran winemakers: someone who might be trying something new and wants evaluation and feedback? Maybe it's a blending question, or maybe an oak or acidity question, or maybe even a fining question. If you are interested, contact me at rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com and get your wine on the list. It requires two bottles of each wine.



We had a spectacular display of member-made wines at the last meeting. Keep them coming.

News From The Clubhouse

In Case You Missed It

The January Meeting with Cindy Fake, by Bernie Zimmerman

A large gathering welcomed Farm Advisor Emeritus Cindy Fake's return visit at our January meeting. She spoke about a variety of problems which grape growers currently have, including those identified by members in a survey she recently circulated. Her slides and handouts are available at this link so I will not go into great detail. [Click here.](#)

Among the points I found meaningful are the following: 1] the need to water during a dry winter, such as we are currently experiencing, to encourage root growth 2] the importance of maintaining soil moisture at the level at which roots grow, for example, 15% soil moisture at 2 feet 3] the need to correct boron and potassium deficiencies 4] several strategies for freeze protections and 5] a variety of treatments and protections for pests and diseases. A wine exchange engineered by Peter Willcox closed the meeting.



Passing The Torch

In addition to being SWGGA's Event Co-ordinator and now Secretary, Al Schafer (L.) has been arriving at Ponderosa Hall early before meetings to set up the tables and chairs, and put out the snacks table, after having purchased the snacks in the first place. You're right. That is a lot of effort. Thank-you Al.

Starting this year Victor Estrada-Hildebrand (R.) is taking over the pre-meeting set up. Thanks Victor for stepping up and thanks Al for all you do.

Trade You Mickey Mantle for Joe DiMaggio



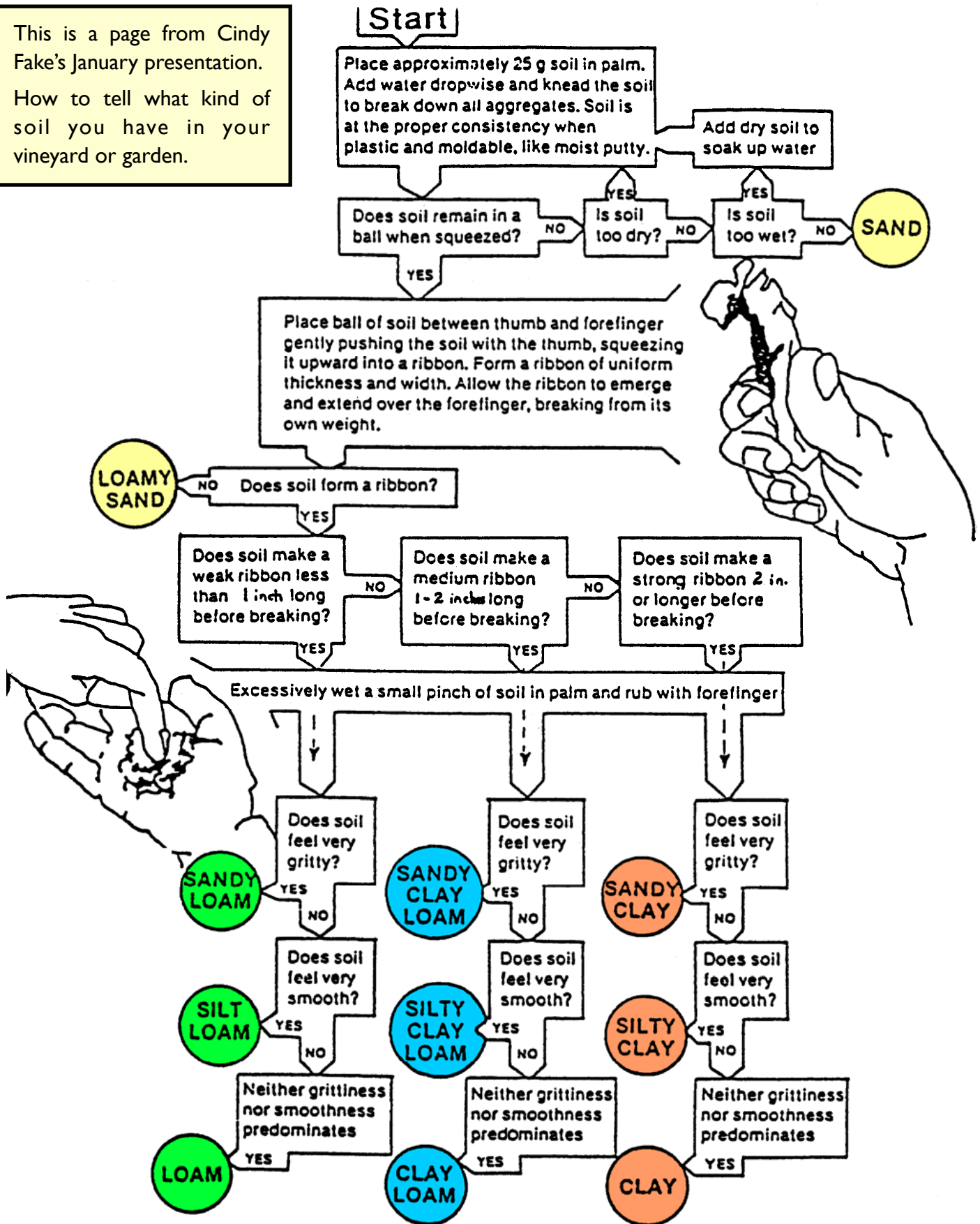
The Wine Exchange



Bring one. Take one. Where you gonna get a deal like that? And you missed it.

Silty Clay or Sandy Loam? What About Silty Clay Loam? And How Would You Know?

This is a page from Cindy Fake's January presentation. How to tell what kind of soil you have in your vineyard or garden.



Bench Trials 101: Best Practices and Tips to Maximize Your Trials

Larry Brooks has spent more than four decades producing fine wine. He is known among his peers as a winemaker's winemaker. He has taught sensory evaluation of wine at both Cal Poly and Fresno State Universities. He has published in peer reviewed scientific journals as well as in trade magazines including his book, *Liquid Geography on Substack*.

written by Larry Brooks, excerpted from an article published in *Wine Business Monthly*. You can see the entire article [here](#).

A bench trial is set up at lab scale for the purpose of testing an addition to, or the amelioration of, a wine and is commonly employed to evaluate modifications to a wine's structure, such as changing the level of acidity or a wine's phenolic architecture.



All winemakers do bench trials when they perceive obvious problems. One of our wines may have some flaw or a gross imbalance of structure, so we begin working to fix it. We set up trials to correct the problem. Yet with most of our wines, we never trial them. This is based on the commonly held belief that if a wine tastes good, everything's fine. We make the wine, we like it, we're familiar with the way it tastes, and that's that.

It would be better to get in the mental habit of thinking, "This wine is good, but can it be improved?" There is no downside to performing and tasting the trial: if you don't like the change, you simply don't have to make it. However, if you never perform the trial, you won't really know if the wine could have been better in the end.

The earlier you can make a change to a wine, the better. The greater the change you make to the wine, the longer the wine will take to equilibrate back to flavor, balance and harmony. By 60 to 90 days post-fermentation, most wines will have stabilized sufficiently to trust your trial tasting results. In general, white wines tend to take a little longer to reach this stable flavor plateau than reds do.

With tank sampling, unless the tank has been recently mixed, you should assume that stratification has occurred. Barrels, as well as tanks, will stratify over time. The wine at the bottom in proximity to the lees is different than the top 10 inches. For the most accurate sampling, barrels should have been stirred recently. It's also important to ensure that the sample is not oxidized during handling, especially if the wine has low or minimal free SO₂. A small amount of SO₂ (10ppm or so) should be added to the sample container and/or purge the container with an inert gas, such as Argon.

A well-trained group of four to six tasters produces the most reliable results. A similar result can be obtained by tasting the trial multiple times, though a solo taster would need to taste a trial four to six times. A single tasting by one person does not constitute a valid result.

If a wine has a serious tannin imbalance and your trials indicate a heavy fining is needed to correct this, it is better to overfine a portion of the wine and then blend it back with the unfined portion to achieve your goal instead of fining the entire lot. On the other hand, if your bench trials show a preference for the lowest end of the average range for a material—in the case of gelatin, for example, in the range of 20mg/L or less, you may wish to forgo the fining entirely. Small structural imbalances will resolve themselves over time, and some flavor-ants are invariably lost with fining.



Pipette filler

A Hypothetical Bench Trial

Let's now consider a hypothetical bench trial. Our wine is a Cabernet Sauvignon with tannins which are too astringent to resolve over the normal course of aging. The plan is to bottle it as a single vineyard wine, and no blenders are available to ameliorate this imbalance. A fining trial is called for which will be set up at bench trial scale initially. When modifying a wine's flavor or structure, there is frequently more than one material which can be used. In this case the initial bench trial will determine which material works best with the wine's flavor. For example, vegetable proteins, egg whites, gelatin, casein and isinglass are all commonly used as red wine fining agents.

All should be trialed at a moderate level to determine which works best, and then the optimum amount can be determined with subsequent trials. The basic tools and equipment needed to perform the trial are a balance accurate in the 0-1gr. range, a 0-100 microliter pipette, and graduated cylinders or volumetric flasks in the 50-100ml range.

We'll use granulated gelatin, as our example, because it requires making a stock solution. Liquid fining agent additions can be more simply calculated based on the manufacturer's recommended range of additions in mL/hL. The typical stock solution is made at 5%, but there are exceptions so check with the supplier before preparing.

We begin by adding 2.5g of gelatin to 50mL of water. This stock solution should be given several hours of time to fully swell and dissolve the gelatin. The range of gelatin fining per the AWI is 15-120 ppm. We will use a 70ppm addition as the rough mid-point of this range. To fine a 375mL sample bottle, we will add 525 microliters of the stock solution to achieve this, according to a chart from Laffort. The arithmetic calculations are not complicated, but it is usually quicker to use one of the published charts. The sample then needs to be settled for two to four days before being decanted clear and tasted. Similar mid-level fining samples need to be prepared for the other agents under consideration.

Let's say that this Cabernet responded best to the casein compared to the other agents at a similar medium level. The next step is to trial casein over its full range which is 50-250ppm. It is important to use a wide range of additions in a trial because results are rarely linear. This stage is used to find the rough range. Once this is determined, a second trial over a narrower range is recommended. For example, in the first stage the set of 50, 100, 150 and 250ppm of casein might be trialed. Let's say that this first trial resulted in 150ppm as the preferred treatment. The follow up trial would look at a range of 125, 150 and 175ppm to determine the ideal. When tasting small differences, such as this final trial, close adherence to proper sensory evaluation protocols becomes even more crucial. WBM

Tasting Tips and Best Practices

The sample itself should be settled or centrifuged to reasonable clarity. Suspended solids will interfere with your perceptions.

Trials should always be tasted "blind" and against a control.

When prepping your samples, be sure to treat the control the same as the samples. For example, if you are adding a treatment dissolved in water, add the same amount of plain water to the control as you did to the treated sample.

When you mix the treated sample, mix the control as well.

Observe standard good tasting practice by pouring the exact same amount of wine in each glass.

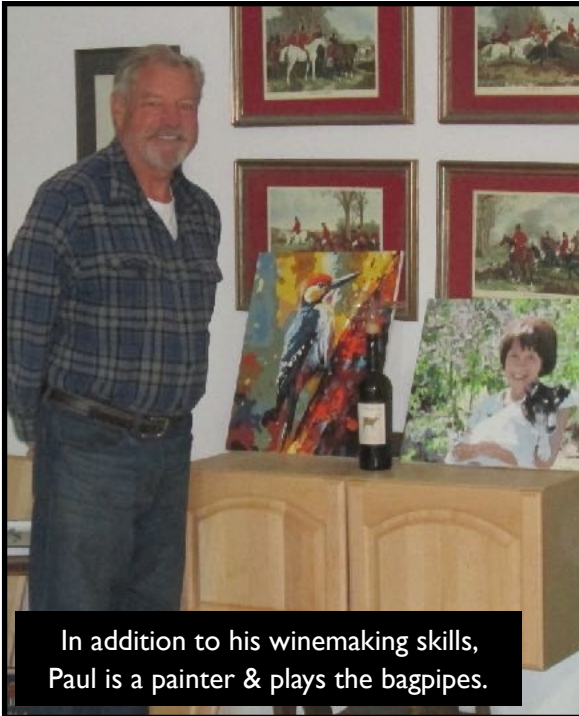
Accurate tasting takes a great deal of concentration. Someone who is not part of the tasting group should code the samples.

If you are working alone, label the bottom of the glasses and have someone else mix them before you taste. If you have the resources to taste with a group, the fewer tasters that know what is being tested the better.

The best part about doing a SWGGA member profile is discovering the stories surrounding that person.

And there's just no telling what those stories might be.

Meet the Members ... Paul McKim



In addition to his winemaking skills, Paul is a painter & plays the bagpipes.

I met Paul for the first time last fall at one of our monthly meetings. He had been a SWGGA member a decade earlier but had since dropped out. I was curious what made him come back. I was even more intrigued when the first thing he did was offer up his stemmer crusher, for free, for anyone who might want it. Wasn't he going to need that if he was back as an active member? Not only did he donate his stemmer crusher, he brought in a pile of miscellaneous equipment items that he put on the table for anyone to take home for free. Wasn't he going to need that stuff as well?

I headed out to the south county to see Paul, curious to hear why he joined SWGGA in the first place, why he quit, and now, why was he back as a new, old SWGGA member?

As it turns out winemaking runs in Paul's blood. His grandfather, Giovanni Guglielmino, was born in Italy's Piemonte region where his family produced Barbaresco from the classic Nebbiolo grape. Giovanni had learned from his father, who in turn had learned winemaking from his father. Paul explained that his grandfather had a unique technique of holding back some of the unfermented must at harvest, then adding it back to the newly fermented wine to achieve just the right balance of tannins, acidity and flavors. "It blended the science and artistry of winemaking in a way that always inspired me," Paul explained. "That legacy stayed with me, and although I have worked in other fields, my curiosity in viticulture never faded."

Grandfather Giovanni moved to Los Angeles in the 1920s, during prohibition, and like a good Italian immigrant, undaunted, continued to make wine in his basement. Giovanni purchased Merlot, Petite Sirah and Cabernet Sauvignon from a guy named Joe Carrari who has quite a reputation in California winemaking lore. Joe Carrari is also Paul's first cousin once removed. All in the family.

Fast forward to the 1970s and the very beginning of the modern California wine renaissance. Joe Carrari was growing grapes in Santa Barbara County. At the time Gallo was constantly sucking up all available grapes for their Hearty Red Burgundy program. Carrari was friends with Julio Gallo who approached him, offering him 90 cents a gallon for several of his wines. Carrari refused to sell, saying, "I told him I would drain it down the sink before I would sell it for 90 cents a gallon, and then I hung up on him."

"I'll bottle it myself," he declared. He intended to call it Diego Red. The printer made a typo when they produced the label printing it as

Dago Red. That's even better, Joe thought, and the name stuck. Carrari priced it at \$1.99 a fifth. The reaction was extraordinary. Dago Red became a best seller, with cases being shipped throughout the nation, including several cases ordered by the House of Representatives and President Ronald Reagan. Look it up.



All in the family

Paul's mother picking grapes

Paul McKim *Continued from previous page*

I digress, but as you can see, wine does run in Paul's blood. Paul himself has had a remarkable career although not in the wine business. After graduating from Chico State Paul has worked as a Director of the Federal Drug Administration, a Vice President for a global pharmaceutical company, a spokesperson for NASA and head of External Affairs for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Just saying.

Paul, and wife Andie, moved to Grass Valley in 2003; to rural horse property in the south county. It didn't take long. "Wouldn't it be fun to grow some grapes, maybe make a little wine," he remembered thinking. "It was part of my family lore, it was a connection to the past."

In 2005 he went down to Isley's Nursery in Auburn returning with enough zinfandel, merlot, cabernet sauvignon and muscat vines to plant a very small vineyard. He had never made wine and waited patiently until 2008 to attempt his first-ever batch. With a well-worn copy of *Vines To Wines* in hand he destemmed, berry by berry. He used a potato masher to squish the grapes and produced a gallon of muscat. As he recalled, there may have been a bit of residual sugar left in wine saying "but the bottles that didn't explode, the few that survived tasted like sweet champagne."



As it turns out, Paul's wife Andie was a big horse person with a barn, a corral, and horses. Linda Foshagen, Dave Elliott's wife, was also a huge horse person. Andie and Linda connected over horses and Paul and Dave connected over vineyards, grapes and wine. Among other things, Dave showed Paul how to calculate SO₂ levels and make additions. No exploding bottles since. In fact as a direct result of their connection Paul joined SWGGA. What better place locally to learn more about grape growing and winemaking.

Some of Paul's best memories were about working in the vineyard with his 90-year-old mother. She was a reliable picker every fall. It's all part of that family connection thing. Ultimately Paul fell prey to one of home winemakers worst problems: producing more wine than you are consuming or able to give away. It starts to pile up everywhere. In 2021



he took out the vineyard. He also dropped out of SWGGA.

I wondered then, why had he rejoined SWGGA in 2024? No more vineyard. No more winemaking. "I miss being in the vineyard, communing with the grapes. But more than that," he said, "I miss the camaraderie of participating in a wine community."

While I was there that afternoon Paul and I drank one of his last remaining bottles. He wasn't totally sure exactly what it was, a label with no designation. Whatever. It was really good, fresh and delicious, and maybe a little nostalgic.



The Want Ads

Have something you want to mention, trade, buy, sell, or give away? Send the details to: rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com.

If I Only Had A Vineyard

This comes from Scott Melamed.

“I own the vineyard at what used to be the Woolwine's place. (Friendly Valley Pl) in Mustang Valley. This is a bit south of the transfer station, off McCourtney. I am trying to find someone who would be interested in taking care of the vineyard in exchange for all of the fruit harvest.

I have 200 vines, representing three varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon Zinfandel and Barbera, The vines are 8 years old. The harvest is typically one and a half to two tons. I provide water



and make sure it is done on the schedule I am provided. I also do the ground maintenance in the vineyard. All other vine work needs to be done.” Contact Scott at smelamed99@gmail.com 805-415-3721

Dues Are Due

Meeting Schedule For 2025

February 20,	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
March 20,	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
April 17,	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
May	Field Trip	TBD
June	Picnic	TBD
July 17,	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
August 21,	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
September 11,	Ponderosa Hall	2nd Thursday
October	Field Trip	TBD
November 20,	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
December 11,	Ponderosa Hall	2nd Thursday

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SWGGA SWAG

Check the website, www.swgga.org for product descriptions. Contact Susan Clarabut at sclarabut@gmail.com if you have questions, wish to check pricing, or, best of all, would like to make an order.

Vineyard Sign	\$57
Woman's Long Sleeve Shirt	\$35
Men's Short Sleeve Shirt	\$35
Cap	\$18
Corkscrew	\$13
Wine Glass	\$3



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