

## A Story Of An Old Zinfandel Vineyard July 1992

My name is Fred Cecil Scherrer. As my family approaches its second century of farming in Alexander Valley, I have begun to make wine from the oldest Zinfandel vines on the property. I would like to tell you a little about this.

In 1899, Jacob Scherrer, my great-grandfather, moved from Windsor CA to an 80 acre ranch he purchased in the south-eastern bench land of Alexander Valley. His house was originally built in 1853, and some of the land was already planted to hay, hops, and grapes. Jacob died only a few years later leaving the farming to his teenage son, Fred Carl Scherrer, who, between 1911 and 1913 planted vineyards of Zinfandel and Petite Sirah (Durif). During the 1970's and 1980's the family has increased the vineyards to about 30 acres.

The wine I am making comes from about 3.3 acres of my grandfather's Zinfandel planting of the 1910's. Some petite Sirah, Petit Bouschet, and Alicante Bouschet vines have found their way into the old Zin block as replants over the past 80 years. I think this is as significant to the wine's individuality as vine age. The wines are head-trained and spur-pruned in the 8' by 8' spacing popular in that era.

Vineyards of this type are a challenge to farm as my father, Edwin Scherrer, can tell you. It can be very frustrating for a grape grower who works twice as hard to farm old vineyards to be paid the same amount for grapes from his younger vines (10 – 20 years old), which are easier to manage and yield more fruit per acre. Then why not pull out the old vineyards and plant new ones? This is a hard question to answer. The grower should be compensated for better quality fruit, especially when it means lower yields and harder work.

Some of the purposes of this wine project are to reward my father's meticulous efforts in his vineyards, giving credit where it is due (to the farmer and vineyard) rather than solely to wineries who happen to not destroy the fruit. Ultimately, I wish to support myself by making wine from grapes grown on this property.

I am making this wine at Dehlinger Winery, where I work in wine production. Tom Dehlinger's experience with Zinfandel and his business advice have been invaluable. His support and encouragement has been very important to this project.

My family has been very supportive of this also. Judi, my wife agrees that barrel purchases have priority over new clothes – despite my reassurance that we could always wear the barrels if the wine market disappears (strategic mistake #1: Judi's figure in no way resembles a barrel). My parents, besides doing an exemplary job of grape-growing, agreed to let us have the grapes on credit. They later decided to give us the first vintage's fruit. Family.

The style of this first vintage is of ripeness and well extracted fruit with supple tannins and restrained oak, allowing the vineyard personality to express itself. It is somewhat like Dehlinger Winery's 1988 Petite Sirah, also made from my family's vineyard. Pomegranate, coconut, black pepper, and deep blackberry flavors have developed so far, and the wine has rather long persistence of these flavors. I plan to bottle this wine without filtration, so it will undoubtedly throw a sediment with time (better to decant than to filter).

Because the volume of production is only several hundred cases, this project is free from the restrictions of a corporate mass-marketing machine or catering to the tastes of wine writers and wind judgments. I expect to produce a Zinfandel with personality and potential for development, giving as much pleasure as you are willing to experience. This wine has already exceeded my expectations.