

## BEHIND THE SCENES

*Patti Payne's take on business beyond the headlines*



# Increasingly, Woodinville is wine country

*The Eastside community is now home to nearly 50 wineries and tasting rooms*

Washington wines are getting more noticed than ever. The July issue of Wine Spectator, almost on the stands, will have a tasting report on our state's wines.

And Jay Miller is here. If you read Wine Advocate, you may recognize Miller as a distinguished reviewer of wines for the legendary Robert Parker. Miller touched down in Washington on May 14 and will be here for two weeks sniffing and swirling his way through the state for an upcoming report.

Also here now is Michel Rolland, a Frenchman who is considered the foremost wine consultant in the world and one of several partners of Washington wine pioneer Allen Shoup in Shoup's Long Shadows Vintners in Walla Walla. Rolland, Miller and Shoup will have dinner together at Long Shadows on Memorial Day. Can you imagine the wines served at that repast, with the backdrop of some of the best grape vines in the country?

No doubt that Washington has taken its place nationally and even internationally as an important wine producer. We've all seen the figures — more than 600 wineries. A \$3 billion state industry. Shoup's long illustrious history in wines, including his two decades heading Stimson Lane (Chateau Ste. Michelle, Colum-

passionate about French, Old World-style wines.

She a former senior exec with AT&T, he a former Microsoft data base engineer, they live an idyllic life on acreage planted in pinot noir and chardonnay grapes. Using organic practices, their yield is two tons of grapes a year, and that pencils out to one bottle of wine per vine or 225 cases. And they get another 1,000 cases from other sources of grapes. They both cook for all their tasting events, and Steve gives a grape growing class. They're about to release their estate-grown 2008 pinot noir rosé and another wine from grapes grown elsewhere around Puget Sound.

Interesting how many vintners are techies. The list would surprise you. And Steve Snyder knows about two dozen current Microsofties who want to get into the business, including one who is about to make six barrels of wine in his garage.

Several wineries are going in right next to the Hollywood Schoolhouse: Mark Ryan Winery (handcrafted wines by owner Mark McNeilly, with rockin' names: Dead Horse, Long Haul, The Dissident, Black Love); and Ross Andrew (owner Ross Andrew Mickel was a nine-year assistant winemaker for Master of Wine Bob Betz, at Betz Family Winery).

J. Bookwalter's tasting studio has already opened in the same vicinity.

Betz, DeLille Cellars, Columbia, Chateau Ste. Michelle and others are Woodinville-based wineries most people know already, so we bypassed the more obvious ones to head to the town's "Warehouse District," which houses, unbeknownst to most, 30 boutique wineries. Thirty in one industrial area! We stopped at William Church Winery owned by Rod and Leslie Balsley. Before William Church, he worked in software engineering at Hewlett Packard, and she was at Microsoft.

"Woodinville's tasting area is as big as Prosser," says Rod Balsley, who heads Woodinville Wine Country, an association of 38 of the almost 50 vintners in Woodinville. Balsley points out that the Warehouse District will offer monthly wine walks in the summer months, the oenophile's answer to gallery walks.

He pours an icy, pale Viognier 2008, and in it I taste apricots and pears. On June 13 his winery will release its Viognier and Malbek, both types growing in demand nationwide.

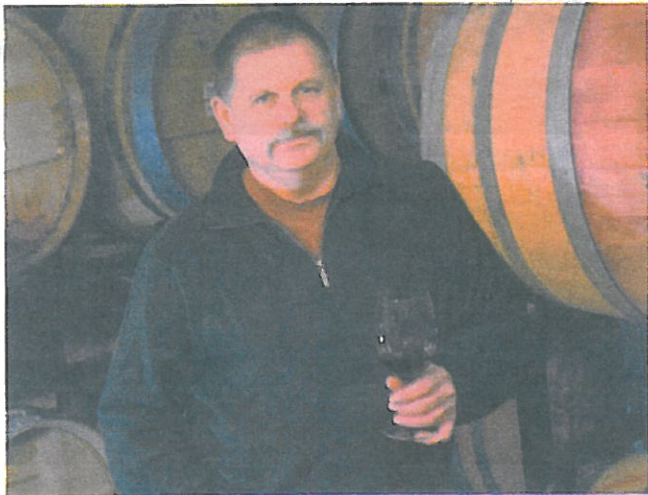
Eventually we head back toward the south Woodinville hills, to JM Cellars, a winery in a home. Giant, heavy copper doors lead into the winemaking facilities. This place, with its trout pond, paths through dozens of varieties of Japanese maples, and intimate fireplace room, is full of romance. "It's the perfect setting for a second wedding," says owner Jon Bigelow, also a techie turned popular winemaker.

Just down the hill stands the imposing Novelty Hill Januik. Dramatic in its modern lines, this mostly concrete structure houses some of the area's finest wines from two acclaimed wineries — Novelty Hill and Januik. They both draw on the talents of long-time winemaker Mike Januik — an award-winning, sought-after, unassuming, brilliant brewer of wines. "I just did my 25th vintage," says this man who looks like an NFL coach. The stately facility is open to the public six hours every day for tastings.

Beyond that, their executive chef Dan Koommoo is booked for private gatherings large and small. In fact, wedding bells will ring at this winery 35 times this summer.

With its water, shade and sun terraces, bocce ball court, indoor high tech meeting facilities and extraordinary food offerings, Novelty Hill Januik is a hot destination for corporate and private gatherings. Microsoft, Boeing, and Starwood are just a few of the larger steady clients.

It's been quite a day in Woodinville, going from the little Hollywood Hill Vineyards where they bottle 1,200 cases a year, to Novelty Hill Januik, where 25,000 cases a year are bottled. Who knew there were so many dozens of great tasting rooms in Woodinville? It's worth spending some weekends out here leisurely sipping, exploring and discovering much about a little area just east of Seattle that turns out 2.7 million cases of wine a year. Much of it highly rated. Taste that, Jay Miller!



MARK B. BAUSCHKE PHOTO

A GOOD YEAR: Mike Januik, winemaker and co-owner of Novelty Hill Januik wineries in Woodinville, just completed his 25th vintage.

bia Crest and more), helped pave the way.

On a smaller scale, I recently did some sniffing and swirling of my own in Woodinville, home to almost 50 wineries and tasting rooms. Only one of those has a producing vineyard in Woodinville: Hollywood Hill Vineyards, with its tasting room in the quaint Apple Farm Village across from Hollywood Schoolhouse. Owners Steve and Becky Snyder are both former techies, both