

## Spring-Summer 2004

### MILESTONES

This year marks a number of significant milestones for the Robert Keenan Winery. The oldest milestone is that this is 100th anniversary of our winery building. In 1904 the Conradi family from northern Italy (the Spring Mountain District reminded them of home) built a traditional Italian hillside cellar. Digging into the hill to use the earth's natural cooling system, and using the abundantly available local stone stock, they constructed a building that not only looks timeless but has indeed endured the test of time.

This year also marks the 30th anniversary of the "Robert Keenan Winery." When my father, Robert, bought the property thirty years ago some of his friends, who had already bought land down in the valley, laughed at him. "You can't even drive a tractor up there, Robert," they chided, "you should be down here in the valley with us where the living is easy!" I think time will validate my father's instincts, i.e., mountain fruit is more complex and can have more profound characteristics thus meriting higher recognition. The 2001 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon is a fabulous example of these qualities and is just, I believe, a hint of what our vineyards have in store for us.

Another milestone is this year marks the tenth year that Nils Venge, Randy Kewel, and, Matt Gardener have worked together making the wine, making them, by far, the longest tenured team in our history.

People frequently ask me, "Who's your winemaker?" I usually reply, half jokingly, "No one, the vineyard does all the work, and the wines really make themselves." This is partially a nod to the European concept that indeed there is actually no exact word for winemaker in most European languages and the term winemaker is of American origin. But more importantly, this response is an acknowledgement of the seamless workings of our current team, and of how naturally the illusion of effortless is accomplished.

These milestones were beautifully celebrated last Thursday evening with a dinner in the cellar. A singular, long table for 24 was set (Italian style!) by my wife Jennifer, using colors that matched those in the cellar. The dishes that were picked were foods that grew or were hunted on the mountain, candles provided the illumination, and of course the vineyards that we could see through the stone arched cellar doors provided the refreshment. Never have I seen a more perfect setting for a celebration. I couldn't help but wonder if the Conradi's had ever had a night like this. Let's all hope that all of us have many more nights and moments like this one!

Cheers!

--Michael Keenan

