

Beauregard Ranch

Located in the Bonny Doon area of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Beauregard Ranch has been the source of high quality wine grapes since long before the early days of the "wine revolution" in California in the 1960s. Originally it was settled by the Quistorf family in the 1860s and purchased by Dwight Amos Beauregard in 1945. Beauregard was born in nearby Boulder Creek in 1889 and lived on the ranch with his wife Cecilia until he died in 1971. She died in Santa Cruz in 1992 at the age of 105. His father, Napoleon Bonaparte Beauregard, was a native of Quebec and came to California in the 1870s, eventually settling at Boulder Creek.

Emmett "Bud" Beauregard bought the ranch from his father in 1961. His son, James Beauregard, now owns the ranch and manages the vineyard there. Bud was born here in 1917 and in 1940, with partner Vincent Williams, bought the Shoppers' Corner Market on Soquel Boulevard in Santa Cruz. (From 1942 to 1945 he served in the Army Air Corps.) He still works at the market, arriving daily to operations at 3 AM. He lives but a few hundred yards from the market, which has a huge wine department, a large part of which is given over to the wines of the Santa Cruz Mountains. I can think of no place in the country that has a wider selection from this famous winegrowing district.

My first interview was with Bud Beauregard (EB) at his home in Santa Cruz. The next interview was with **Jim Beauregard (JB)**, Bud's son, at his home in Bonny Doon. His home is located on the old Quistorf ranch and is surrounded by his new vineyards there. Jim's house is a large and modern structure, apparently, but is, in fact, the Quistorf home remodeled and enlarged.

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March 3, 1993

CS: Let's start with your Dad, Dwight Beauregard, and his purchase of land in the Santa Cruz Mountains in 1945. First, why did he buy this land at that time?

EB: It's a historic fact that the family was an outdoor, French people. I guess being out in the country was just in his blood. He was an avid fisherman and hunter. He just loved these mountains, so when the chance came for him to buy the Quistorf ranch up there, he jumped at it. He bought it in 1945 and he lived there until the day he passed on.

CS: He was in law enforcement before this.

EB: Right. In the forties there was a change in administration in the Sheriff's Office, so he was out. Years earlier he had worked for the Fire Department and Chief Lewis knew he had a motorcycle and asked him if he'd like to be a law enforcement officer. So, he said it sounded good, and the Board of Supervisors appointed him and he went on to be the first highway patrolman in Santa Cruz County. Later he went into the Sheriff's Office.

CS: I've run into mention of the Quistorf vineyard before. The Bargettos mentioned buying grapes there in the 1930s and 1940s. Do you know how far back that vineyard goes in time?

EB: They came there with the Homestead Act after the Civil War.

CS: Were they German? It's an unusual name.¹

EB: I think they were German.

CS: How big a piece of land was it?

EB: It was about 120 acres. It was on both sides of Pine Flat Road there. Back then I think it was what they called the Ocean View Road, which was at the head of a ranch there. It was near where the McHenry place is today.²

CS: So the place was much bigger than it is today.

EB: We only have 20 some acres now.

CS: What was on that land when your dad bought it?

EB: There were all kinds of fruit trees. And there was a 45 acre vineyard.

CS: There was a home on the place, I guess. Is that the same one your son Jim lives in now?

EB: Yes, but it has been remodeled. That's where my parents lived until 1971.

CS: Do you recall what kind of vines were on the place when he bought it?

EB: We had the Grey Riesling, and there was White Riesling, or the Johannisberg. And there was Sauvignon blanc. And we had grapes that most people don't know very well, the Charbono. Across the road the University of California had put in a test plot of Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. Professor Amerine was involved with that.³ And, of course, there was Zinfandel. There was a lot of that.

There's an interesting story about Maynard Amerine and my father. He arrived there one day and my dad had the tractor and was getting ready to take out a chestnut tree which had been split by the wind. So Maynard says, "Just a minute. Do you have a zinc bolt and a couple of plates, and some cable? Take that block and tackle and pull that damn tree back together and we'll seal it up and you'll have a better tree than ever." Well, that tree is still there and it covers half of the back yard now.

CS: I'll have to get Jim to show it to me. Maybe I can take a picture of it. Getting back to the old vines, how about some of the Prohibition varieties other than Zinfandel, like Grenache, Alicante Bouschet or Carignane?

EB: As far as I know there weren't any of those. Just the Zinfandel.

CS: I wonder if they replanted it after Repeal. Those are very high class varieties to have survived Prohibition.

EB: I think they were the original vines. And they were on Rupestris St. George rootstock. I took them out much later. They aren't on St. George now.

CS: What did you use?

¹ Actually, the name is Danish but the family came from that part of northern Germany today, Schleswig-Holstein, which was for many years a gray area between Denmark and the German states in the 19th century.

² Mc Henry Vineyard (1980), BW 4968, on Bonny Doon Road.

³ Professor Emeritus Maynard Amerine, University of California (Davis).

EB: Nothing. They're on their own roots.

CS: If they had been planted at Repeal they would have only been twelve years old when your father bought the place. So they must go back much further.

EB: Yes, the original vines go back much farther.

CS: This is kind of important historically. It is no big deal that there was old Zinfandel or Grey Riesling there. But Sauvignon blanc, and White Riesling, that's a different matter.

EB: There was another rare one. Dr. Lawrence Blinks was a biologist who surveyed the vineyard years ago. He came here from Stanford. Dean Mc Henry brought him here.⁴ He found Furmint vines planted here.

CS: Remarkable. That's the Hungarian vine they make the great Tokajs from.

EB: It was supposed to have been brought to California by Agoston Haraszthy. Anyway, Dr. Blinks could identify vines. And he could taste a wine and tell you where it was from and how old it was.

CS: I'll have to ask Dean Mc Henry about this.

Getting back to those Quistorf vines, I wonder how they were used before your father bought the place. I know they sold grapes to Bargetto.

EB: I don't know.

CS: They didn't make wine there?

EB: No.

CS: So they must have sold most of them. Grapes from 45 acres, that could be easily 150 tons or more. This is a tantalizing piece of information. I'll work on this when I follow up with some of the other names you've given me.

What happened to the property in subsequent years?

EB: He sold off 80 acres later, on the opposite from where the house is. He practically gave it away, like most oldtimers. Where the house sits now is in the remaining twenty odd acres.

CS: So he sold off a part of the vineyard.

EB: Yes, a good portion of it was sold. Today, there are about 12-13 acres of vineyard left.

CS: What happened to that vineyard across the road?

EB: It's all gone.

CS: Did anybody keep it up for a while?

⁴ Mc Henry is one of the founders of the Mc Henry Vineyard. He came to this area from Southern California to help set up the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California in the 1960s. Before that time he was a professor in the Political Science Department at UCLA.

EB: No. It's all gone.

CS: Where did the grapes go after 1945?

EB: He sold them to lots of people. He sold grapes to Beringer. He'd haul them up to Napa in his old Dodge truck. And he sold grapes to Bargetto. At one time grapes got down as low as \$15 a ton and he said, "that's it."

CS: When would you say that he quit working that vineyard commercially?

EB: Around 1955.

CS: I'm interested that he sold to Beringer. They had a reputation in the early years after Repeal for being able to get good white grapes. I can see why they would want them from what you told me.

So, by the end of the fifties that is not a commercially producing vineyard. When did the old vines come out?

EB: He didn't want them taken out when he was alive, so I left them alone.

CS: Did he keep some of them up to make wine for himself?

EB: Yes. He always made wine. There was enough production there in the later years for him, and his friends would come up and they could get grapes. But there were no sales to wineries.

CS: Was he doing that up until the end, 1971?

EB: Maybe, but the vines were still there. Of course, there were lots of vines missing. The deer came in and hit them. But I don't think he did much after he was in his mid seventies.

CS: Did anyone ever come around and take cuttings?

EB: Later on, yes. Ron Duarte from Pescadero; he had a restaurant up there. He took Zinfandel and White Riesling cuttings, or maybe Sauvignon blanc. I'm not sure which. He planted them on his ranch up there near Pescadero.

CS: It's difficult to ripen grapes up there. The Obesters told me they couldn't get grapes ripe at their place in Half Moon Bay unless they were growing them right up against a barn.⁵

Did you plant the new vineyard on the ranch?

EB: I put most of the new vineyard in.

CS: When did you start that?

EB: About 1972, after my dad died. We took out the old vines.

CS: That's over twenty years ago, so you are kind of a pioneer, so far as the modern wine revolution up here is concerned.

EB: I didn't know how to do it. We just used long sticks, went end over end to spot where the vines would go.

⁵ Obester Winery (1977), BW 4817. See Gemello interview.

CS: Right, like the old surveyor's rod.

EB: And we dug the holes by hand. We watered the first vines by hand.

CS: How many acres did you start out with?

EB: The upper part was about eight acres, in Cabernet Sauvignon.

CS: Why did you go for Cabernet, with the problem there is ripening that grape in this area?

EB: It ripens really well up there. It came in about the same time as the Chardonnay.

CS: Down at Hallcrest there was usually a problem. Maybe one year in three was satisfactory. So, what kind of sugar are you talking about?

EB: I'd say 23°.

CS: That's fine. I can remember tasting Beauregard Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon from the Felton Empire Winery.⁶ It was good. So that was it.

EB: It was good and heavy. Hallcrest was down below and didn't get as much sun.

CS: But people coming in now are more nervous; they tend to plant Pinot noir.

How much Cabernet did you put in?

EB: About five or six acres.

CS: Where did you get the wood?

EB: From Ernest Wente, from their Monterey vineyard near Greenfield. I went up to Livermore to see him.

CS: What rootstock did you use?

EB: None. They are on their own roots.

CS: Are they OK?

EB: Fine. The only thing that has happened in the last year or so here is that leaf hopper that carries Pierce's disease. Dean Mc Henry is having a real problem.

CS: Well, you can't stop that with rootstock.

What else did you put in?

EB: Chardonnay. That was about four acres. We also got that from Wente, but it didn't do well on our land and I think it was our way of pruning. On the back of the property I planted some against a fence and they grew high and free and they gave nice big bunches of beautiful berries. The ones we put in the vineyard we had lower and the bunches were small and full of shot berries. Anyway, we grafted over. We got the wood from Rich Kunde in Sonoma. They were from the Alexander Valley. We lost a couple of years, but they are OK.

⁶ See Hallcrest interview. Felton Empire was the successor winery to Hallcrest.

And I replanted the Zinfandel.

CS: Your 1990 Zinfandel that Storrs made was an outstanding wine.

EB: He does a very good job with that Zinfandel.⁷

CS: I thought it was definitely in the same class as the Ravenswood 1990 Dickerson Vineyard.

EB: The Zinfandel that Felton Empire made off of our old vines was also very good. Those were the original vines. It could be fantastic.

CS: Ah! So those wines came from the old Quistorf vines. How long did they last?

EB: We didn't tear them right out. I left them until the early eighties.

CS: So, your dad was probably using them to make wine in the sixties. That accounts for why they were in better shape.

EB: Yes, I think so. When we took them out we replaced them with Zinfandel.

CS: Where did you get the wood for them?

EB: That was also from Kunde.

CS: He has old Zinfandel vines on their property⁸ he claims date back to the 1880s.

Whom do you sell grapes to now?

EB: Storrs, Ahlgren, Roudon-Smith, Devlin.

CS: That's a pretty elite group. Well, I guess I go on to Jim now for the story since the early 1970s.

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April 13, 1993

CS: Tell me about your personal history in this part of the country.

JB: I was born in Santa Cruz in 1947 and grew up there. I went to Holy Cross grade school, then Santa Cruz High School, like my father, and I worked at his grocery store, Shoppers' Corner, all through high school. In grade school I spent most of my summers here on this ranch when my grandfather owned it. After high school I went to college for about six or seven years, studying just about everything. I went to University of Nevada, University of San Francisco, Palomar College, Chapman College, Orange Coast College, and Cabrillo. They may be a couple of more in there.

I studied everything, lots of natural science, particularly botanical science, some oceanography, psychology, physiology. Originally I wanted to be a dentist, but I got disinterested in that program after a couple of years. And I was in the service for a while.

⁷ Storrs Winery in Santa Cruz, BW 5477.

⁸ The Kunde family operates their Kunde Estate Winery and their Wildwood Vineyard near Kenwood. Rich Kunde also operates a large and successful wine grape nursery near there.

CS: When you were taking these botanical science courses were you thinking about their having any kind of vocational relationship to your future.?

JB: I was just taking classes in things that were of interest to me. But I did end up taking just about nothing but botanical sciences, morphology, insects. I have a good academic background and then after school I worked at a nursery up at Half Moon Bay called California Evergreen, to get the practical side of it.

CS: When you were a boy your grandfather owned this place.

JB: Yes, and it was a pretty large working ranch. Right here in this pool area where we are right now used to be a corn field. He had two old horses named Molly and Peggy and we used to ride them around. There were chickens, and about 100 acres of fruit, mostly apples, which is that area across the street, which is now a subdivision called Westdale.

When I was growing up my grandfather was always making wine, and my father was always helping him. We'd crush wine in the old cellar underneath the old Quistorf house. We always have had about 5,000 gallons underneath the kitchen. We should have been Italians. And lots of the Italians in the area would be up here. Dante Locatelli and Gina Avidano. The Seroglios. We'd pick grapes and have these great feasts with everybody drinking wine and having a great time. These meals would go on forever up there underneath that huge chestnut tree.

CS: That's the tree that Maynard Amerine saved years ago.

JB: Right. But those harvests would go on for days. And we'd keep back a couple hundred boxes of grapes and let them sit until the sugar got way up. Sometimes we'd jump in the vats with boots on. We always made more than we were supposed to so we had lots of red wine for people. I grew right into this love for wine. And I was always very much involved when it was being made.

The road coming up here was dirt, Bonny Doon Road.

CS: How about Ice Cream Grade? That's the way I get here from Felton.

JB: I don't know when it was built, but it was funded by a lady who had an ice cream parlor down in Felton. A bunch of people got together and raised the money to build that road, to connect Empire Grade to Bonny Doon. There used to be a grocery man who came up here to deliver groceries to everybody, in an old green truck.

Right here where the guest house is where the old bunk house where the field hands would stay. There was a manager who used to take care of the ranch.

CS: You are pointing to an obviously older structure than the newer house next to it. Is that the Quistorf House?

JB: No, that was the bunk house. The Quistorf house was next to it, and over there was the blacksmith shop.

CS: I see, the big house where you live is the Quistorf house remodeled.

JB: Yes. When I remodeled it the wall paper inside was backed by the Santa Cruz News from the 1890s. That was a couple of years ago. There was also a lot of wine storage in the bunk house. And I've kept all the old barns.

CS: So this is during the fifties when you were up here as a boy. Was the vineyard going?

JB: Yes. But there were no fences up here and there was an awful lot of deer damage in the vineyard. It was really going down when my father bought the property. Then we renovated the orchard and after a while, with no money in apples, we got more interested in grapes. So we tore the orchards out and put in vineyards. That was in the early sixties.

CS: When you talk about replacing your vines in the early eighties, it was those vines.

JB: Yes. The Cabernet Sauvignon went where the orchard had been.

CS: So what was here in the sixties?

JB: There was the beat-up Zinfandel vineyard and the Furmint.

CS: The Furmint really mystifies me. Is there any doubt in your mind about it being Furmint?⁹

JB: No, I am sure that it was. When we were operating the Felton-Empire Winery, in 1976 when we first opened the it, it rained a lot before we harvested our crop, and the crop rotted on the vine and I thought we were going to go broke. But it got heavily botrytized and we got a double gold medal for it. It was a late harvest White Riesling. Up here it didn't get botrytis since the vines were head pruned.

CS: Then you actually made a bottle of Furmint wine with that term on the label.

JB: Right. We still have a few bottles. It was delicious. I'll give you a bottle.

CS: I never knew. No one ever made anything of it. I don't think it ever got into the press.

JB: We never really marketed it, since there was just a little bit and there was no market for it. People had been saying that our white grapes up here were White Riesling, but you could clearly see that it wasn't. We took the leaves from the vines and checked the veination patterns and we knew it was Furmint. But we never had more than fifty cases.

CS: No one at Davis ever picked up on it?

JB: No.

CS: You say there were about three acres of it. Do you have any idea what it was doing here?

JB: No. The big white wine up here was the Grey Riesling, what the Italians around here called the Grey Dutch. It was mixed in with the Furmint, like a field blend.

When I started Felton Empire in 1976, that's when we started taking all the grapes from here. Before then we sold white grapes to Dan Wheeler. He also bought Zinfandel. My grandfather had sold them to Bargetto.

CS: The Quistorf name comes up in Bargetto records very early. After your grandfather bought it they still called it the Quistorf vineyard.

JB: One time Lawrence Bargetto's father had negotiated a price for grapes with my grandfather

⁹ Furmint is a Hungarian grape famous for producing the rich sweet Tokaj wines, Eszencia and Aszu, and the drier Szamorodni.

and then just prior to harvest they offered him a lower price and my grandfather got pretty angry, and the grapes just hung on the vine and rotted. So there was a feud between the Bargettos and the Beauregards for years.

CS: Ralph Bargetto remembered the feud, but couldn't remember the details.

JB: Everybody was mad for a long time. Until I dropped in. Then I started selling to them.

CS: Felton-Empire begins in 1976. When do you personally take a leading role here on the ranch?

JB: That was in 1972. I started working on this vineyard here, and I was working at the store. We both decided the apples had to come out. Then we replanted the vineyards. Then I started taking care of the Hallcrest Vineyard. It was really going to hell. Then I leased the place in about 1975. And I also leased Vine Hill from Smothers in 1975.¹⁰ So then I had these three vineyards under my control and I decided I ought to have a winery, but I didn't know how to make wine. I had sold a lot of the grapes to Bargetto in 1975. I'm not sure about the rest. I'd have to look back at my records.

CS: How old do you think those vines were on Vine Hill when you took them over?

JB: I'm sure they were at least fifty years old.

CS: I know that the place was planted before Prohibition, but I'm not sure about the vines. I also know there was some planting there in the forties and fifties, so there should have been some vines that looked as if they were twenty to thirty years old.

JB: When I took it over it had been overgrown and let go, so it was hard to tell. It was really a renovation project in 1975. Then Felton-Empire was buying the Smothers-Vine Hill grapes. Dick Smothers wanted to start his own winery, so we started producing wines at Felton-Empire for him. He started buying tanks and equipment, and Leo McCloskey helped him get going on his own.

CS: Did you have any connection with Smothers after he started on his own?

JB: I did custom farming, so I did about everything in his vineyard that had to be done. I did that until the time they left. They moved up to Sonoma.¹¹

CS: Did anyone do anything with the vineyard after they left?

JB: Dick let the place go because he wanted to sell it for housing. But since it was a vineyard he would have to abandon the vineyard so that eventually it wouldn't be designated prime agricultural land. So he just let it go for a few years. I'm not sure who he sold it to.

CS: It sure is a mess today. You can hardly tell it was a vineyard.

Let's go back to the foundation of Felton-Empire. Is the germination of this thing is the fact that you are leasing the old Hallcrest property?

¹⁰ R. R. Smothers had bought the Vine Hill vineyard property from Dave Bennion and began a small winery there in 1977. The winemaking there ended in 1984. Today the Vine Hill Vineyard has been allowed to return to nature. See: *Vintage* (July, 1979):40; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5/11/77; 5/5/89; *Wine State* (June, 1984): 19; *San Jose News*, 12/2/81.

¹¹ T.B. Smothers III bought vineyard land in Sonoma in 1978. Wine was produced in Sonoma for several years at various places and a tasting room operated near Kenwood. In 1983 the brothers came close to buying the old Speas apple brandy distillery in Sebastopol for a winery, but backed out. The 1992 industry directory listed Smothers Bros. Wines under T. Smothers, with 28 acres and bonded premises "pending." See: *Los Angeles Times*, 5/4/89; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11/15/84, 6/20/85.

JB: I was the seed, since I had all the grapes. I had more grapes than anyone else in the county. There were friends who shopped in the store, a pilot who made wine at home, and he had a masters in business. So we decided we'd start a winery. That was John Pollard. He's in Colorado or Utah now, flying with Western Airlines.

We looked at what we had and we had all these white wine grapes. We both know how to make red wine; we'd been doing it at home. But we didn't know how to make white wine. Then we ran into Leo McCloskey. He was at Ridge then and had a reputation as a good winemaker. And he was doing some consulting for other people. He really knew a lot about White Riesling. That became our flagship grape. That was because that was what we had.

CS: So you had three properties, Vine Hill, Hallcrest and this ranch.

JB: We kept some lots separate, and some we mixed and called Santa Cruz White Riesling. And we had vineyard designations too for Vine Hill and Hallcrest.

CS: What did you do with the Cabernet at Hallcrest?

JB: We tried to keep that separate. At least when we could. It's a really cold area down there to be growing Cabernet. Some years it wouldn't ripen and we'd mix it with the Beauregard Cabernet here. We don't have trouble getting those grapes ripe.

CS: I've never been able to get anybody to explain to me why they planted Cabernet down there.

JB: You lose the sun at three or four in the afternoon. We actually have picked that in December. Then we had to let the grapes go through dehydration to get the sugar up.

CS: You should have dumped in a couple of bags of sugar. People do it in California today, on a small scale of course, since it's illegal. But it's mainly to get the grapes in with the flavor they want at about 21.5% sugar, and then kick the Brix up so that you can get 12.5% alcohol. I know people do it; they tell me on the Q.T. And I've seen it done.

JB: They do it in Europe to get those great Pinot noirs.

CS: The Chardonnay came from Vine Hill?

JB: Right. The Pinot blanc went under the Smothers label. We did sell it under Felton-Empire maybe once or twice.

CS: I've seen Hallcrest vineyard designation Cabernet under the Felton-Empire label. What was "up high enough" so far as that vineyard is concerned?

JB: 22'. But you could never get it over that. Up here we have had it up to 25'.

CS: Tell me how Felton-Empire got started.

JB: John and I were all for it. We re-banded it as Felton-Empire. Then we brought in Leo McCloskey as a one-third partner, to be the winemaker. I was the grape-grower and John was the business manager. It was started with my own family's money. My father and my aunt contributed most of the money to buy the equipment and get us started. Then, after a few years, we sold some stock and brought in some investors that way. Then a few years later we sold about half the winery to another group. That was in 1982. So then we actually tripled our production. And we were buying grapes out of Santa Maria from the Tepusquet vineyards there. And we were buying a lot of grapes

from Larry Thornton up in Mendocino County, in the Potter Valley.

CS: Let's look at the size of the operation over the years. You had your bond in 1976.

JB: Right. I'd say we made 3,000-4,000 cases at first. It stayed at that level for about two years. Then we borrowed some money from the bank and expanded production, up to about 10,000 cases. But there just weren't enough grapes here to survive on, even though we had most of them.

We came out with our Maritime Series of wines when we started getting grapes down in the Central Coast. Chardonnay, White Riesling and others. We labeled it "California" and called it the Maritime Series.

CS: Actually, there wasn't a Central Coast appellation yet. In fact there wasn't a Santa Cruz Mountains appellation until 1981, but people were using it before then.

JB: I worked with Bennion putting that petition together.

CS: I did the historical research for it.

JB: Then after 1982 we jumped up to 50,000 cases. We were also producing a lot of grape juice then.

CS: Leo came to my place for dinner back then and walked in with a bottle of the White Riesling juice, "for dessert" he said. Everybody loved it, but we'd had plenty to drink by the time we got to dessert, but no one hit on the fact there was no alcohol in it.

JB: We also had a whole series of Santa Cruz Mountain wines. We had a Cabernet and a Zinfandel. Chardonnay from this vineyard, after we pulled out the Furmint. And we had White Riesling and Cabernet in Felton. There was the Maritime Series: Chardonnay, Pinot noir, Gamay Beaujolais.

CS: Were you getting any Pinot noir around here at all.

JB: There was none. You'll have to ask Leo where all our other fruit was coming from.

CS: Whose idea was the grape juice?

JB: Leo's. We worked with Al Gagnon, who was one of the principals in the Tepusquet Vineyard near Santa Maria. He was really interested in the grape juice business.

CS: How were you selling the wine?

JB: We were throughout California and in about twenty-five states. We had a general sale manager and he canvassed the different states. He spent a whole lot of time on the road. And Bill Gibbs, he was a sales person also. He had been working at Ridge in their sales. He acted as a sales manager, also.

CS: When did Felton-Empire go out of business?

JB: 1987.

CS: What happens in that five years that put you out of business?

JB: Primarily I think it was the grape juice thing. There was a verbal commitment with Safeway

to produce X number of cases for them. We invested heavily in that and they backed out of the deal. But that was just part of it. There were also problems among the partners. It was kind of personal.

CS: Were you in it to the end?

JB: Yes.

CS: How much wine did you make in 1986 and then how do you end it?

JB: We sold the property to John Schumacher, the new Hallcrest operation.

CS: There's an article on his operation this week in *Wine Spectator*.

JB: A lot of the inventory was sold, but Leo can give the the data on that. John was now sort of out of the picture. We sold the Felton-Empire name to Bill Gibbs, the sales manager. He still is operating the label as a DBA, but there isn't a winery. He lives in San Francisco, but he's buys a lot of Monterey fruit.

CS: Let's trace this vineyard now, from 1972.

JB: There was Zinfandel here from my grandfather's time. And the Furmint. There were perhaps six acres of vines, but many were run down, or just dead. Then we pulled the apples in the early seventies. We put Cabernet there. We put in five acres of Cab. We also put in two acres of Chardonnay where the apples were. But we kept the Zinfandel for a while. This was in about 1983, and we weren't even getting a half ton per acre at the end. So we put in the three acres of Zin. And we put in Chardonnay to take the place of the Furmint.

CS: Where did you get the vines?

JB: I've done it about every way you can. We got cuttings up at Robert Young's place in the Alexander Valley. We did that the Slovenian way. Dug a seven foot pit and put them in upside down in the sand for three months. When the sand on top gets hot the roots start growing. So in March or April you have a plant that's all rooted out and you dig them up and plant them. It works great.

We bought vines from Rich Kunde in Sonoma. You know all this business about AxR-1.

CS: Oh, yes. But you don't have any phylloxera problem up here yet.

JB: No, not in Bonny Doon, but David Bruce has some. But phylloxera doesn't migrate very well in sandy soils such as we have. The new vineyard I put in on Bald Mountain is on its own roots. It's really isolated. It's forty acres right in the middle of nowhere. I paid 48 cents per plant, compared to \$4.50 per plant if I'd used rootstock and field grafted them. When you're buying 27,000 plants, that makes a big difference.

Up here Pierce Disease is what's taking things down.

CS: Did you do this vineyard up here yourself?

JB: Yes, I did this vineyard. I jumped right into it. I bought myself a transit. But I had done a lot of reading before. I was up there with Robert Young in the Alexander Valley in his vineyards.

CS: What was the Alexander Valley connection?

JB: We used to buy fruit up there for Felton-Empire. I watched them to see how they did it. I knew Steve Mirassou very well. I used to go water-skiing with him all the time. He was a powerful influence

on my getting into wine. We used to go up to Lake Berryessa, and he'd always bring along his wines and Champagne. I liked it. That was back in the early seventies. And I used to hang out with Roy Hereford, who took care of the Paul Masson vineyards. He was like a grandfather figure for me. Vince Locatelli was like another grandfather. I used to prune for him.

I got ideas about planting spaces from Robert Young, and the stakes and materials. I ended up with 10x6 foot spacing. This gives you closer spacing, but you can get in and do your farming easily. If they are close spaced both ways it can be very difficult with equipment. With 10x6 you can actually drive a truck between the rows, if you wanted to. And I'm getting five tons per acre on that spacing. I've also been learning that you can grow them taller. On Bald Mountain we put them on seven foot stakes. Up in Casadero I put in a vineyard that was a meter by a meter.

CS: What kind of equipment do they use?

JB: Rototillers.

CS: How big is the vineyard?

JB: Three or four acres.

CS: That is absolutely terrible.

JB: Ridiculous! They do that in Germany, so this guy wanted to try it.

CS: He'll change his mind.

JB: Casadero is just like Bonny Doon in relation to the ocean. A fellow here bought a thousand acres up there and he had me come up to help put in some vineyards.

A lot of it I sub-contract now. Each time you put in a vineyard you learn something else.

CS: Do you have to have drip-irrigation up here?

JB: The drip line helps you put the fertilizer in. If you have a really hot summer here, you end up picking your grapes in early September. But just by adding a little water you might push your grapes back into October. You could pick up another ton of good grapes, and if you're getting \$1500 per ton, that makes a difference. That can come from putting a little water on at the right time. And all it costs you is a little electricity. It doesn't hurt the quality of the fruit. What you get is a longer growing season.

CS: Tell me about your Ben Lomond Wine Company.

JB: You know the big winery up there on the Empire Grade in the 19th century. Well, I set up my company with that name. I use their old logo. It was established in 1887 and operated up to Prohibition. Before Prohibition, at its height, there were 2,000 acres of grapes on Ben Lomond Mt. They won all kinds of awards in international expositions around the turn of the century. I think this area is the best in California for winegrowing. I think it will be the next Carneros. Once there is enough fruit up here, we can prove it. Lots of people want grapes now. Calera, Byington, Ridge, among others. In three or four years I'll be able to supply them from the new Bald Mountain place.

CS: When did you get the Ben Lomond appellation?

JB: About 1983. I did this with Mike Holland. I was going for an appellation for Bonny Doon and Ben Lomond. The ATF said I should go for one or the other. So I chose the larger of the two.

CS: Bonny Doon is inside Ben Lomond, so it could still be its own appellation in the future, and still be Ben Lomond.

JB: I have access to over 300 acres more to develop in the Ben Lomond appellation. That will be in the next six or eight years. I actually set up the company in 1987 when I went out of Felton-Empire. I had some investors back then but when I lost all those law suits, all the financing went away. So I went after smaller projects. Some of them are owner financed. The last vineyard, Bald Mountain, was financed 50-50 by myself and my father. The next one will be financed through syndication from people who have passive income, mostly retired, but who have an interest in the wine industry. And banks.

CS: Who owns the company?

JB: It's a sole proprietorship.

CS: And right now what you do, primarily, is develop vineyards.

JB: Right. And for the next five or ten years it's going to develop until it has as much vineyard as it can get its hands on, and then it's going to get into the wine business.

My lifetime goal is sort of a hobby that has gotten out of hand. Down the line I want to have a winery.

CS: The Ben Lomond Wine Company revived. You could even build it up on the Empire Grade where the old one was.

JB: I plan on it. But it's long range and it's too much to handle to try and do that and develop vineyards.

CS: It's astonishing to drive up there. I've been up to Locatelli's at Eagle Rock before, but I didn't realize all that open space up there was vineyards. I couldn't believe it. I drove up there with John Spezia the other day. I said, "Come on, John, you mean way out there too, all vineyards?" He says, "Oh, yeh."

JB: That's one of the places I'll be going after. Right now I'm working on the Felice Ranch, down the Grade some. It used to be called the Warren-Nella Ranch. I've already cleared it.

I think eventually we'll be producing the best quality wine in the state. That's just an opinion, but I think I know what I'm talking about. I think I'll be in the wine business in another five years.
