

SPOTTSWOODE

Growing a Family Wine Estate

IT is amazing how living in such a remarkable place for over 35 years and being a part of the unique history of this estate has not only rooted my family to Napa Valley, but has allowed me to realize the opportunity we have to create a lasting legacy. Such a prospect is tremendous to consider, and my five children and I are working together to realize our shared vision for the future of the Spottswode Estate.

Being strongly connected to our community carries with it a true sense of belonging, as well as a great responsibility to help ensure its future. We passionately embrace this endeavor, and we are fortunate to be in a position to act on it—we feel that our vineyard, winery and philanthropic activities clearly demonstrate this commitment.

We have been farming our vineyard organically since 1985—far before this method was commonly practiced or even discussed. Since that time we have greatly increased our commitment to the environment—our estate gardens are organic; we have invited bees, birds, chickens and beneficial insects to share our estate with us; we have incorporated the use of solar power and biodiesel into our operations; I have an electric car which I drive here in St. Helena (it makes everyone who sees it smile, and a few more are now seen in town!); and we have begun to introduce some biodynamic practices in our vineyard. This holistic approach to land stewardship is extremely gratifying—and it allows me to know that I will be passing this land on to future generations in even better condition than when we arrived here.

From a community perspective we are actively involved in supporting many local non-profit organizations—education and the environment are our top two priorities. We take on leadership roles, whether by helping to stage local fundraising auctions—for example, my daughter, Beth, and I have agreed

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707/963-0134 • fax 707/963-2886 • www.spottswode.com

to be the Honorary Chairs for [Auction Napa Valley](#) in 2010—or by voluntarily spearheading projects such as the restoration of Spring Creek, which defines the southern boundary of our property and is shared by our many neighbors. We feel that success in these areas strengthens not only our own community, but the greater world community at the same time.

We have long supported the [Land Trust of Napa County](#), and last year I was able to make a meaningful personal gift toward the purchase of a large piece of open property in the eastern hills of Napa Valley. This purchase will connect Angwin to Mt. St. Helena, keeping that magnificent portion of the Napa Valley forever wild. Many congratulations to the Land Trust for having the vision to bring this ambitious project to reality—we are honored to have played a small role in its success.

Also last year, we became a member of [1% For The Planet](#), which is an organization founded by Yvon Chouinard of Patagonia. This designation means that we give 1% of our annual gross revenue to environmental causes sanctioned by this group. Our commitment to organic, sustainable farming—which began twenty-four years ago out of concern for our local environment—has thus grown steadily over time!

Finally, we have been investing in our winery future, as well. We have been actively upgrading our equipment, to allow us to optimize each individual vineyard block and handle our grapes in the gentlest possible manner in the winery. We are committed to taking the same care with our grapes during the winemaking process as we do when they are growing on the vine, and for this we have added a new destemmer and sorting table; a new basket press (which allows for a more gentle pressing of the skins); six new fermentation tanks—three concrete, three stainless steel—which replace three larger tanks; and we continue to take advantage of new technologies by upgrading the equipment by which

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we transfer our grapes and grape must. These ongoing investments in our business allow us to continue to make wines of only the highest quality which is, of course, what we are always striving for.

Will my children, my grandchildren and I be successful in growing a Novak family legacy here at Spottswoode? It is my fervent hope that we will be able to do so—my late husband and I were very fortunate to find and take a chance on this exceptional winegrowing estate, two of my daughters have been working with me for many years now, and all of us share a love of this family property. Our goals are ambitious, yet given our success in achieving many things over the years of which I am justifiably proud, I envision that our chance for establishing such a legacy is great!

—*Mary Novak*

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