



### **What is that hidden ingredient?**

Teri Orr, Park Record, Park City, Utah, December 9, 2005

The fact the Napa Valley is now a world-class destination, written about in the finest publications for its beautiful scenery, fabulous food and of course, the finest wines, makes this old California native smile. But I suppose I feel a bit the same about Park City's similar "overnight" world-class reputation. It wasn't always so. Both areas have always had the natural-beauty thing going for them. Good bones, as my grandmother used to say. The weather is different but stunning in each location. A low hanging fog in the Napa Valley can occasionally give it the mysterious quality of an Irish countryside. Rather like a foggy mountain morning here. Because of the nature of the foliage, we both enjoy a patchwork quilt of colors each fall. Bright blue skies and dappled sunlight through leafy trees are the perfect way to spend a summer afternoon. There are a number of parallels. I've been visiting the Napa Valley all my life. My grandfather, who was a major league baseball player in the '20s, retired to Calistoga to a hotel on the main street there sometime in the early '50s. Son of a San Francisco Irish cop, after his years as shortstop for the Philadelphia As, Bill managed the Sacramento Senators and then became a sheriff in Contra Costa County before retiring to the warm healing waters and sleepy community life in the Napa Valley. When Grandpa Bill died in 1967, I stopped going to the valley for a while. Through I had fond memories there was no longer a family reason to visit. In the days when I lived at Tahoe, Napa was great little get away. I dated a lawyer from Santa Rosa for a while and made frequent trips back to the valley. It was still quaint when I moved to Park City in the late '70s. But then so was Park City. The silver mines were still running the first three months I lived in town. As a single parent with two young children, I found the community welcoming and uncomplicated. Mike and Toni, with a young boy and girl of their own, made certain to include us in all kinds of gatherings. When Mike was one of the partners a few years later of the old Silver Wheel Theater, my new husband and I convinced him not to turn the historic building into condominiums. He (and his partners, Mike Barnes and Randy Fields) agreed and set about to pour a ton of money into renovating the old theater. It was renamed and reopened as The Egyptian in 1981. At that opening night, a couple who had recently moved to town, showed up with great enthusiasm. Mac and Ann would spend the next several years not only supporting the theater but, on occasion, acting on its stage. Mike and Toni, always generous about sharing their toys, invited numerous Parkites to stay at their renovated Spreckles Mansion in Coronado. Steve and Val were busy working in real estate and in the schools. They were committed to making a difference here after their move from the Sacramento area. Another couple with historic ties to town, Paula and Joe, took the death of Paula's father and channeled their sadness into the creation of a foundation to save the open space he so loved. Three of these couples had children who

grew up together, skied together, vacationed together. One couple became friends through shared interests a bit later. They have all been married more than 25 years. They have lived complementary and parallel lives. In the mid-'90s, I returned to Napa for my daughter's wedding. She and her husband had vacationed there often and loved the scenery. We stayed in a little bed and breakfast in Calistoga. The Mount View Hotel, where Grandpa Bill had lived, was now a four-star, swanky spa/hotel and had no vacancy. My friends, Mac and Ann, traveled out for the wedding. Which was to have been in a gazebo in the park and instead, because of the downpour, was moved to a winery. The day after the wedding, a group of us toured wineries, walking into cool caves and inhaling the scent of oak casks. That was the first time I remember Mac and Ann saying they would love to own a tiny winery one day. And we toasted the possibility. Mike and Toni moved to the Napa Valley in the late '90s. Mac and Ann and Steve and Val went to visit and collectively fell in love with the idea of owning a small vineyard. They bought land that had never been planted on with a tiny house on the property by a creek. And then, the three couples set about to ferment their dream. We, their friends, wished them well but worried. The success rate of new vineyards is comically low. The challenge of combining business with friendship doesn't have such a great success rate, either. Paula and Joe were invited into the proposition soon thereafter. And the group started the arduous process of learning the business of making wine. Early on, they connected with a young, smart winemaker, named Philippe. He told them their grapes had promise and he would work with them to create a small amount of fine wine. Last week up at the Empire Lodge in Deer Valley, a resort that didn't exist when any of us first moved to town, those four couples unveiled their first release (just 1,100 cases) of fine red wine that had been decades in the making. The relationships that had grown together over the years were much like those grape vines. They had grown strong in all they had weathered. And that young winemaker they had trusted, Philippe Melka, was just this year, named by Food and Wine magazine, winemaker of the year. The elegant event was perfect, from Julie Wilson's carefully selected menu to complement the wine, to the understated decorations by Judy Jackson. There were toasts with the beautifully etched glasses and a few quietly shed tears. Years ago a friend had told me there are two kinds of people -- dreamers and doers -- and then, there are the dreamers who do. The Swaner Memorial Park, The Egyptian Theater, The Norwegian Outdoor Exploration Center, The Park City School District, the Chinese student exchange, The Eccles Center are all direct beneficiaries of the hard work and support these couples have given to this community. And now to add to that list is Parallel Wines -- a company owned and operated by four couples who have worked hard at their dreams. Restaurant owners who were in attendance last week placed orders right away to carry the Cabernet/Merlot blend because, as Blind Dog owner Chappie Lehman told me, "The wine is delicious and the Park City story is charming." The winemaker has a long list of tastes and smells associated with the flavor of this full-bodied wine. Blackberries and licorice and a hint of oak and smoke. We know the secret ingredient, blended in during the crushes, the plantings, the financing, the tastings, the bottling, was the friendship forged over decades. Their determination, along with their powerful dreams, are sealed in every bottle. To celebrate this Park City dream come true, we who have observed the long process are honored to raise our glass to our friends -- not just today but on so many Sundays still to come, in the Park...