

People & Places

Vineyard, winery work in progress

John Komes constantly experiments with new techniques

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

NAPA VALLEY, Calif. — John Komes can tell you a lot about viticulture and the changes he's witnessed; he's been at it for 41 years.

"My 'first' career was as a contractor, and I worked on construction projects all over the Bay Area," he said. "But in the early 1970s I took a wine appreciation course and my fascination with wine just took off. When my parents bought the Flora Springs property in 1977, I convinced them to let me start making wine from the vines there.

"Part of my motivation was that I wanted to move my family to Napa Valley. It was so unspoiled, so bucolic, and it seemed like a good place to raise children. And I loved the idea of having the whole family involved in the winery. Today I work closely with my son, my brother-in-law and my nephew, which is very satisfying."

Komes said there have been many changes in viticulture since he got started, and he's learned much over the years. At Flora Springs he is constantly experimenting, both in the vineyard and the winery. They were one of the first wineries to try barrel fermentation with Chardonnay.

"Our flagship wine, Trilog, which we introduced in 1984, was one of Napa Valley's first proprietary red



John Komes and his son, Nat, sort grapes at Flora Springs Winery in the Napa Valley of California.

Bordeaux-style blends," he said.

"Because we've owned our vineyards for so long we've had several opportunities to replant, and every time we do, we experiment with different spacing, rootstocks, clones, trellis systems, you name it," he said. "It's all about fine tuning as you go along, and I can tell you that the wines we make today are more compelling than ever because of the experimenting we've done over the years."

Napa Valley is a superb place to grow grapes, but over time Komes admits he has learned a lot about which varieties grow best here. This is a region where Cabernet Sauvignon thrives, and the Sauvignon Blanc also grows well.

"I guess to answer the question, the hardest grapes to

grow are the varieties that are planted in the wrong place," he said.

The family has 500 acres throughout the Napa Valley, 300 of which are planted to vineyard.

"We have estate properties in Carneros, Oakville, Ruthford and St. Helena, and we produce varietal wines ranging from Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay to Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and other red Bordeaux varieties," he said. "All of our vineyards are sustainably farmed, and many are farmed organically."

Wine tastes are changing, and Komes sees more people gravitating to reds these days, but that's not to say there aren't a lot of white wine lovers out there.

"In fact, we happened to notice recently that there is

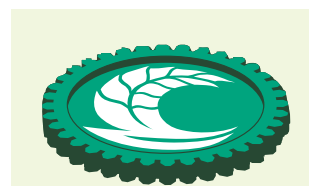
no white wine emoji, just a red one! So Flora Springs launched a 'Where's the #WhiteWineEmoji' campaign, and we're inviting people to sign a petition to have one created," Komes said. "People can go our website at www.florasprings.com to learn more."

In spite of the excellent weather and high-quality grapes, Komes said two challenges stand out.

"The two that stand out to me are climate change and labor," he said. "But the wine industry has faced a lot of challenges, and when we work together we usually find solutions."

One more thing: What about the big wineries in Napa?

"People often ask me if I think there are too many win-



Western Innovator

John Komes

Residence: Napa Valley

Occupation: Founder, president and proprietor of Flora Springs Vineyards and Winery

Years in Business: 41

Family: Married to Carrie Komes. Son is Nat Komes. Sister and brother-in-law are Julie Komes Garvey and Pat Garvey.

eries in Napa Valley. I don't think there are too many wineries; I just think there are too many big wineries," he said. "In the last couple of decades the wine industry has experienced what many American industries have undergone: conglomeration. A few big guys buying up the little guys.

"But the little guy is the genius of this industry. The one who discovers new techniques in the vineyards and wineries, who finds and develops small plots of land that produce outstanding grapes, who innovates and creates. I like to think we still have that spirit at Flora Springs, and I certainly think it shows in our wines and hospitality. I also think there will always be little guys, people willing to risk everything to pursue their life's passion. And to them, I raise my glass!"

Idaho shags' stamina, livestock handling spur surge in popularity

By DIANNA TROYER
For the Capital Press

Curious about a new comical-looking breed of cow dog she had heard about, Susie Morton bought her first Idaho shag three decades ago.

Judging from their appearance, it was hard to take them seriously. With their frazzled hair coat, they looked like they had a mishap with an electric fence. Their origins sounded like an accident, too.

"They're a cross of Aire-dale, border collie and Australian shepherd and usually weigh about 40 pounds," said Morton, 55, one of the first breeders in central Idaho. "Whatever people think about their appearance, they're really faithful and tough. If they get kicked or beat up, they go right back at it."

After buying her first Idaho shag from a breeder in southern Idaho and working cattle, she was impressed.

"When she had pups, I kept some and started breeding," Morton said. "They're becoming really popular, so more people have started breeding them."

For decades she relied on her Idaho shags while working for livestock associations in the Challis, Pahsimeroi and



Sam Clark with his 6-month-old Idaho shag, Buddy. The pup is known for his stamina in handling livestock.

Lost River Valley areas.

"They can go all day," said Morton, who lives south of Mackay and manages a ranch. "They can be hard-headed, so you just learn to deal with it. Early on, you have to make sure they know who the boss is. They really have a lot of personality."

Whenever she checks cattle, her shags, Monte, Henry, Mary, and Shorty, accompany her.

Although rancher Sam Clark grew up in the Lost River Valley, he never worked cattle with an Idaho shag until six months ago.

"I bought my first one from a friend in Malta and wouldn't have any other breed now," said Clark, who moved to the Raft River Valley in southeastern Idaho several years ago.

Working cattle, he said

his six-month-old shag, Buddy, "goes all day, won't back down, and rides on the back of my horse. At home, he's protective of our daughter Payzlee."

In eastern Idaho, Bill Fuchs, who owns the Henry's Fork Ranch, a cattle and guest ranch near Chester, became a convert about seven years ago.

He and his son Tanner, 24,

bought one and liked how she worked livestock so much they began breeding shags.

Their small size may cause livestock not to take them seriously at first.

"If a cow doesn't respect Marley or looks at her the wrong way, she lets them inch closer to her for a sniff, then she grabs their nose," Bill said. "It's her way of telling a cow to respect her space."

"It's amazing how many people are looking for that specific breed," Bill said.

At a recent branding in the Leadore area, most cowboys had an Idaho shag.

"That's the breed they prefer there," Bill said.

Dr. Andy Clifton, a veterinarian in nearby Salmon, said the scruffy dogs in her area are known as the Pahsimeroi fuzzy. She said the dogs are intelligent, protective of family, have stamina, and want to please their owner.

"They're tough and have an instinct to work cows all day, yet they can come home and play ball with the kids in the evening," she said.

Cowboys are loyal to the breed, Clifton said.

"Once they start seeing how they work, that's the only breed of dog they want."

Calendar

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301 or emailed to newsroom@capitalpress.com. Write "Calendar" in the subject line.

Through July 29

California State Fair. 11 a.m.-10 p.m. California Expo Center, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento, Calif. California's state fair brings out the best in the state's agriculture. Website: <http://www.castatefair.org>

Saturday-Sunday

July 28-29, Aug. 4-5
The Great Oregon Steam-Up. 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Powerland Heritage Park, 3995 Brooklake Road NE, Brooks, Ore. Foreign and garden tractors are featured in this year's event, which also includes a steam-powered sawmill and thresh-

ing and hundreds of displays and museums. The Parade of Power is each day at 1:30 p.m. Cost: \$12. Website: <http://antiquepowerland.com/>

Thursday, Aug. 2

WSU Eggert Family Organic Farm Field Day. 8 a.m.-noon. Washington State University Eggert Family Organic Farm, Animal Science Road, Pullman, Wash. Learn about organic herbicide trials, orchard planning and the Food Safety Modernization Act. There also will be a guided tour of the fruit and vegetable growing areas. A garlic braiding workshop will be offered by Kate Jaeckel starting at 12:30 p.m. at the farm. Bring a sack lunch. The workshop will be limited to 10 participants, tickets sold through the farm's website or at the farm. Website: <http://css.wsu.edu/organicfarm/>

Sunday, Aug. 5

Raised Country Music Festival. 1-6 p.m. Antelope Church Lawn, Antelope, Ore. Steve and RonaLee Campbell, a Chuckwag-

on Barbecue by Paradise Rose Ranch, a petting zoo and face painting; the Mud Springs Gospel Band and Joni Harms are featured. Cost: Free

Tuesday, Aug. 7

Rice Production Workshop. 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Lundberg Family Farms, 5311 Midway, Richvale, Calif. Topics include rice growth, water management, tillage, variety selection, fertility and weeds. Enrollment is limited to 75 people. Cost: \$100. Website: <http://ucanr.edu/rice2018>

Friday, Aug. 10

Stream Restoration Workshop. 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. University of Idaho Extension Office, 1808 N. Third St., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The workshop will include a classroom session and a field trip showing stream restoration projects. Space is limited. For more information, call 208-446-1680. Cost: \$20 Website: <http://uidaho.edu/extension/forestry>

Wednesday, Aug. 15

Organic Hazelnuts Second Annual Summer Farm Tour. 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Cold Springs Farm, 35541 Cold Springs Road, Lebanon, Ore. Join the Organic Hazelnut Growers Association's summer tour at one certified organic farm and one transitioning farm. Cost: \$18 for members of Organic Hazelnut Growers Association. \$45 for non-members. Website: <http://www.pesticide.org/organic hazelnuts>

Friday-Sunday

Aug. 17-26
Western Idaho Fair. Western Idaho Fairgrounds, 5610 Glenwood St., Boise, Idaho. Website: www.idahofair.com

Thursday, Aug. 23

Inaugural Washington FFA Foundation Golf Tournament. 1:30-6 p.m. Apple Tree Golf Course, 8804 Occidental Road, Yakima, Wash. To take part, contact FFA Foundation Executive Director Jesse Taylor at jesse@washingtonffa.org or 253-208-9071. A dinner and auction will follow the tournament.

Friday-Monday

Aug. 24-Sept. 3
Oregon State Fair. Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. <https://oregonstatefair.org/>

Friday-Saturday

Aug. 31-Sept. 8
Eastern Idaho State Fair. Eastern Idaho State Fairgrounds, 97 Park St., Blackfoot, Idaho. Website: <https://funatthefair.com/>

Friday-Sunday

Aug. 31-Sept. 23
Washington State Fair. 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. www.thefair.com/

Tuesday, Sept. 18

Oregon Farm Bureau Classic Golf Tourney. 1 p.m. Stone Creek Golf Club, 14603 S. Stoneridge Drive, Oregon City, Ore. Contact: tiffany@oregonfb.org

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To Reach Us

Circulation 800-882-6789
Email Circulation@capitalpress.com
Main line 503-364-4431
Fax 503-370-4383
Advertising Fax 503-364-2692

News Staff

Idaho
Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise
Brad Carlson 208-914-8264

Cent. Washington
Dan Wheat 509-699-9099

W. Washington
Don Jenkins 360-722-6975

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Correction

An article on page 4 of the July 20 edition of the Capital Press should have stated that Alexis Taylor, director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, intends to put forth a candidate for the Oregon Board of Agriculture from Southeast Oregon, not necessarily the Klamath basin specifically. The Capital Press regrets the error.

Correction policy

Accuracy is important to Capital Press staff and to our readers.

If you see a misstatement, omission or factual error in a headline, story or photo caption, please call the Capital Press news department at 503-364-4431, or send email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.