

St. Josef's Winery: An Oregon pioneer



By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

CANBY, Ore. — Josef and Lilli Fleischmann, founders of St. Josef's Winery near Canby, Ore., can now sit back and enjoy the fruits of their labor. It's been a long haul.

Josef and Lilli met in Germany, where both families landed after fleeing the Eastern Bloc in the wake of World War II.

Though he always wanted to be a winemaker like his Hungarian grandfather, Josef, now 87, was trained in baking and after coming to the U.S. worked in that capacity in Chicago for many years.

It was a dream come true in 1970 when they were able to pur-

chase a 64-acre farm in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

The Fleischmanns worked to build a winery while raising a family and running a string of artisan bakeries for 23 years to fund it, little knowing they were helping pioneer an entire industry.

"They got in on the ground floor before there was a ground floor," son-in-law Carl McKnight says. McKnight, the winemaker, is married to Tara (Fleischmann) McKnight, company president. Brother Kirk runs the 40 acres of vineyards and 22 acres of organic vegetables.

By 1978, Tara and Kirk helped plant the first vines. When the winery was bonded five years later, Oregon had fewer than 30 winer-

ies. The Oregon Wine Board puts the current number at 908.

The family strives for food-friendly wine like their parents grew up with around the dinner table.

"The Willamette Valley is great for that," Carl said. "The nights are cooler and when temperatures drop the acids brighten up so the wine cuts through the fat in food."

"Growing our own lets us dictate how the grapes are grown and the quantities we want," Carl said. "We can also harvest and start crushing the same hour. When it takes five or six hours the grapes start fermenting during transport."

The family, shipping 5,000 to 8,000 cases annually, aims

to make the wine experience approachable and fun for newbies and aficionados alike.

Tara coined a phrase that appears on some labels: "Serious wines for the not so serious."

"...Because it is a fun industry," she said. "It's not brain surgery and we're not going to find a way to save the world, but we can certainly help people enjoy life with a nice glass of wine."

The business is unique in its start-to-finish nature.

"We are growing the product and even with mechanized equipment each vine has to be touched by hands eight times during the year," Carl said. "People don't see how labor intensive it is."

Abacela Winery: Brings unique varietals to Oregon

By **CRAIG REED**
For the Capital Press

WINSTON, Ore. — Dr. Earl Jones enjoys research. His professional career included studying and teaching medicine.

And then his urge to do research and his enjoyment of wine led him to study the wine industry. He discovered that Tempranillo grapes were not being commercially grown for wine in the U.S.

"I visited Europe a lot as a medical researcher and I drank wine there," he

explained. "Nobody had an answer as to why no Tempranillo was being produced in America. That raised the question in me, 'Why doesn't somebody figure out the mystery behind it and grow it?'" Jones found Tempranillo vines need a hot growing season between mid-April and October, cool nights and little rain before being harvested in late October before the first frost.

His research found a match for Spain's climate in southwestern Oregon. In 1992, Jones and his wife, Hilda, purchased property



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Dr. Earl Jones did the research on Tempranillo wine-grapes before deciding to plant a vineyard on rolling hills outside Winston, Ore., in 1995.

just outside Winston, Ore. They planted 12 acres, four of them with Tempranillo.

They named their vineyard Abacela. It means "he/

she/they plant a vine."

Over the next 15 years, the vineyard was expanded four times and now totals 76 acres. Tempranillo vines

cover 25 acres and other varieties such as Albarino, Grenache, Malbec, Syrah and a few others are grown on fewer acres.

After 27 years of being involved in the daily operation of the vineyard and winery, Jones is slowly turning responsibilities over to others. Gavin Joll was named the general manager 18 months ago and then in July, Greg Jones, Earl and Hilda's son, took over as Abacela's CEO.

Greg Jones is an atmospheric scientist and viticultural climatologist. He has

done research and taught at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Ore., and at Linfield University in McMinnville, Ore. His research has connected climate change to biological changes in grapevines.

"This transition fulfills a long-term objective of family succession," Earl Jones said in a statement. "Greg is a dynamic leader with creative energy who understands the local, regional and global wine industries which makes him uniquely suited to carry on our family business."

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