



MORGAN BROADLEY OF BROADLEY VINEYARDS

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# Romancing the Vines

Broadley Vineyards prove Monroe can produce a perfect pinot BY LANCE SPARKS

The year was 1981, not really auspicious. The place was Monroe, Ore., population about half a thousand, a village, really, approximately halfway between Eugene and Corvallis.

Experts said it shouldn't be done, *couldn't* be done. Nope, the viticulture expert/consultant scolded Craig and Claudia Broadley, explaining that they wouldn't be able to ripen grapes on this particular slope, this particular hillside in, of all places, Monroe, all the way down at the south end of the Willamette Valley.

Sure, some folks — David Lett at Eyrie, the Eraths, the Ponzis and others — were planting such “cool country” varietals as pinot noir, chardonnay and pinot gris, mostly in the hills at the upper end of the valley, around McMinnville, and getting really good wines.

But not here, not on this northeast-facing slope; it should be facing south, basking in what little sun reaches the soggy, sodden south valley, even though this particular stretch had the reputation of being in the “banana belt.”

But Craig, then 35, and Claudia, 34, had spent ten years searching for just the right hillside, and Craig had carefully studied the slopes of France's Burgundy region, where the world's best pinot noir was grown and vinified. Craig also enrolled in enology and viticulture classes at UC-Davis, and he was convinced that this was the place.

Besides, the Broadleys were deep in the throes of several powerful passions: first, for each other, and they still make each other laugh a lot, still take care of each other and their growing family; second, they were firmly gripped by the back-to-the-land movement launched in the late '60s and '70s; and, lastly, they had become dedicated

pinot-heads, for which there's no known cure, though the treatment — quaffs of good pinot noir — is not so horrible.

Too, they had just about reached the end of another passion — for books. In the early 1980s, Craig and Claudia were the principals in The Subterranean Company, wholesale booksellers. They mainly fronted for City Lights Books, owned and operated the by the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, publishing such luminaries of the era as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, the best of the Beats. Craig and Claudia kept their day jobs, kept moving books — from Monroe, a place where the Beats would be distinctly out of place, even now.

The Broadleys were bold, young city-slickers — urbane, sophisticated foodies hailing from Los Angeles, via Sacramento and, later, San Francisco, then, as now, home to some of the best dining on the West Coast: music, art, fashion, a vortex of the counterculture. Monroe was then, as now, a rather sleepy little burg (current pop. 680) surrounded by grass farms, its hillsides growing Christmas trees. The main restaurant was the Chat 'n Chew.

Of course, there were vineyards not too far south, along Territorial Road: Lee Smith had Forgeron in Elmira (it's now LaVelle and thriving); Doyle Hinman had started Hinman Vineyards (now Hinman/Silvan Ridge, also thriving) in 1979 just south of Veneta. And slightly north, in tiny Alpine, Dan and Christine Jepsen were trying to make Alpine Vineyards (est. 1980) a success, with cabernet sauvignon as their primary grape and wine. Not many folks were figuring that the south Willamette Valley promised a future of gold in wines.

Despite contrary advice, Craig and Claudia Broadley bought the hilly 15 acres just upslope from “downtown”

Monroe. They needed help from Craig's parents, Leighton and Marcile Broadley, nice folks who owned a large company manufacturing glass electrodes in Santa Ana, Calif. With the 'rents' help, C&C began planting their “impossible” vineyard in 1982. Their 12-year-old son, Morgan, labored alongside these slickers-turned-farmers: “That first summer I got to be the water boy,” Morgan says now, recalling the labor of hand-watering each skinny vine.

In those first years, Craig and Claudia had to live in Eugene — Craig: “We couldn't get financing for a home on a vineyard” — and Morgan did his schooling in the city, eventually graduating from South Eugene High School. They made their first harvest in '86, not a great year for Oregon but good for the Broadleys; they sold all their wine and got ready for the 1987 vintage.

Oregon winemakers spent most of 1987 apologizing for over-hyping the vintage, but the Broadleys made good wine, and persisted. In 1996, the widely read and respected *Wine Spectator* listed the Broadley 1994 Claudia's Choice Pinot Noir at #24 in their Top 100 Wines of the World, giving that bottling 94 points on their 100-point scale. And one French expert awarded the wine 97 points, a signal of extraordinary excellence. Success has followed success since then.

Now, 30 years later, “water boy” Morgan, 42, has stretched out to six feet, four inches, and has taken a much stronger role in Broadley Vineyards and wines. In 1996, he married the dynamic Jessica Waldren; lately, some of the Broadleys' best wines carry Jessica's name or the names of their two daughters, Olivia, 11, and Savanna, 9.

Morgan has learned winemaking mainly “from my pappy,” though he's taken enology classes at OSU and