

Savoring the Pride

Our own college, our own wines

This year, after decades as a teacher of writing and literature at Lane Community College, I'm finally retiring, takin' off my chaps, hangin' up my spurs, drapin' my guns over the bedpost, kickin' off my boots and slouchin' to the rockin' chair. And lest some tax-dodgin' right-wingnut works up a froth about my becoming a PERS burden, I'd like to point out that I've paid my dues: I'm 69, started paying taxes when I was 16, taught my first college-level class at UO in 1966, did 10 years at UO, five years at PSU, taught my first class for LCC in 1981. I've never had a summer off. So I'm not much inclined to listen to the whining of some stingy shill who got rich by gambling with other people's money then, win or lose, charging fees for the privilege. I'm pretty clear here on who's the host and who's the parasite.

But I'm not sure I really know how to stop. Lately, I've often found myself stopped, staring, especially at the gardens and grounds of LCC, at the hordes of students bustling to and from classes, at the dozens of staff and faculty who daily work in the minds. And I've wondered: Do the citizens of Lane County who make this place possible really get enough chances to savor the pride they so rightly deserve to feel?

Public education at all levels has been under relentless attack, especially in the last 20 years. Budgets have been slashed repeatedly; then, when classes have swollen in size and days cut in number to the degree that teachers can no longer teach effectively, then the critics want teachers to carry the blame for schools' decline. Some anti-tax twit pipes up: "Those kids aren't learning, 'cause the teachers aren't teaching. Cut their damn budgets and maybe they'll start." That kind of thinking, if it continues, will lead public education into a black hole.

For now, LCC is holding its own, despite a decade of budget-cutting and soaring enrollments. Only rational



cooperation between the college and the staff and faculty unions have prevented a group-melting disaster. Citizens of Lane County who seek a measure of civic sense should visit LCC — they're always welcome — stroll the campus, see what their support has built: the beautifully tended flowers and shrubs, many of them serving as laboratories for biology and botany classes; the state-of-the-art Health Sciences building, essential to developing — and employing — the next generation of nurses, medical office assistants, lab techs and others; the newly completed Longhouse, a giant step toward restoring pride and recognition of Oregon's Native peoples; the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management program, a lean operation that nevertheless trains our future chefs, cooks, events planners and others; diesel tech, computer sciences, foreign languages, the Lane Aviation Academy. I can't list them all, but the people of Lane County have together made this fine college possible and they deserve a little buzz of community pride, especially now when nasty negativists have tried to make "community" a dirty word.

And when you get home, pull a cork on a nice little wine, also a product of our own community and neighbors. Try, for example, **Territorial Vineyards 2011 Riesling** (\$12), such a pretty little white, just off-dry, its delicate touch of natural sweetness accenting the flavors that mimic the essence of fresh pears. Whip up a stir-fry of our farmers' spring veggies; make some music with this charming riesling.

Or taste the pink in **Stanton 2011 Pinot Noir Rosé** (\$13). This is no cloying, schlocky "blush"; flavors trip across the palate — strawberries, rose petals, cherries, rhubarb — and just cry for another sip.

Lane County's own college, Lane County's tasty wines: My heart swells with gratitude for being a part of you, and having you a large part of me. Thanks. **EW**

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Offers good while supplies last

These wines available for sampling – drop in and have a taste!

Fridays: Mario's picks!

6/08 Mario's picks
6/15 Mario's picks
6/22 Mario's picks
6/29 Cow Horn, OR (Winery)

Free Tastings 5 to 7 pm

Saturdays: Wineries!

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