

# WINERY: Force Majeure is growing several varieties of grapes

Continued from 1A

the winery, clearing away a structure that had been heavily vandalized since the building was vacated, Alexander said.

The construction is weeks behind schedule as Force Majeure waits for approval from the state. But when it's fully operational, Alexander expects it to produce and store 5,000 cases of wine.

Currently, Force Majeure's production facility is located in Woodinville, Washington, about 20 miles northeast of Seattle, while their vineyards are located in the Red Mountain AVA near the Tri-Cities.

Alexander said Force Majeure was looking to open a new winery in the Walla Walla Valley, but weren't initially targeting Milton-Freewater.

"It was a very serendipitous circumstance," he said.

The Pleasant View property not only provided them space for a winery, but the seller was also offering eight acres of vineyards adjacent to the property.

Around the same time, Force Majeure bought another 100 acres on the North Fork Walla Walla River near Harris Park.

Force Majeure intends to funnel the fruit from all three vineyards through Milton-Freewater, which is starting to see some growth in the wine industry after years of living in Walla Walla's shadow.

Alexander said the boundaries of the The Rocks



Winemaker Todd Alexander, of Force Majeure Vineyards, stands among grape vines near the winery's building site in Milton-Freewater.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

AVA comes straight through the company's Pleasant View vineyard, meaning Force Majeure can take advantage of the stony soil that allows grapes to ripen later in the season and gives the AVA its name.

Alexander worked in the Napa Valley, but given the

high cost of land and California's recent penchant for drought, Alexander thinks The Rocks has a better potential for growth.

The district covers 5.9 square miles and dozens of vineyards, and in recent years has seen wineries from as far as Spain purchase land

in the area.

The winery's three vineyards, which Alexander said are at elevations ranging from 842 feet to 2,100 feet, should produce unique wine flavors.

Alexander said Force Majeure is growing several varieties of wine grapes,

including syrah, Bordeaux, and cabernet sauvignon

Alexander has tasted wines from all around the world and is confident in his ability to sell Force Majeure's wines as unique products.

"We tend to attract the wine geek end of the wine

drinker (spectrum)," he said.

Force Majeure wants to eventually make the old Pleasant View property a destination in it of itself, but in order to do that, they'll have to renovate the crumbling schoolhouse into an attractive tasting room.

At various points operated as a middle school and an alternative high school, Milton-Freewater Unified School District Superintendent Rob Clark said the school is likely about 100 years old.

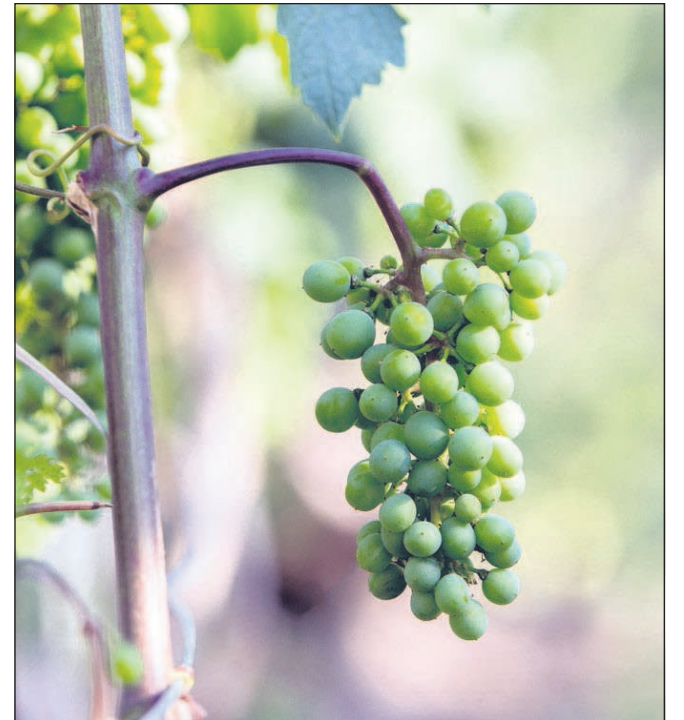
After the building transitioned into an alternative school, the Milton-Freewater Unified School District eventually relinquished control to the InterMountain Education Service District, which provided the same service.

IMESD Superintendent Mark Mulvihill said the district decided to close the school down when the Milton-Freewater school system showed interest in integrating Pleasant View's student body into McLoughlin High School.

Alexander moved from Seattle to Milton-Freewater to launch the new winery and said he is already starting to feel a sense of community responsibility for Force Majeure's new facility and land.

When he mentions the project, some of his neighbors tell him that's where they went to school.

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Above: A bunch of immature syrah grapes hang on a grapevine near the winery's building site in Milton-Freewater. Left: The Force Majeure Vineyards will incorporate this old school in Milton-Freewater into the structure of its newest winemaking facility.

## Judge rejects blanket delay to reunite children at border

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A judge on Friday refused to grant the Trump administration a blanket extension of the deadline to reunite children separated from their parents at the border, instead acknowledging that more time may be justified only in specific cases.

The administration said it needed more time to reunite 101 children under 5 years old to ensure the children's safety and to confirm their parental relationships. U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw ordered the administration to share a list of the 101 children with the American

Civil Liberties Union, which successfully sued to force the reunions, by Saturday afternoon.

The two sides will try to determine over the weekend which cases merit a delay in an effort to present a unified front in court on Monday morning. The administration has matched 86 parents to 83 children and 16 are not yet matched, Fabian said.

The deadline is July 10 for parents with children under 5 and July 26 for everyone else.

## Trump's ex-lawyer hires Clinton ally

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's longtime personal lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen

could be sending the White House yet another warning shot by adding a close friend of Bill and Hillary Clinton to his legal team.

Lanny Davis confirmed his hiring Thursday, saying in a statement that he and Cohen had talked "many times in the last two weeks" and that the former Trump confidant "deserves to tell his side of the story."

Cohen, who once boasted he would "take a bullet" for Trump, told ABC's George Stephanopoulos last weekend that he now puts "family and country first" and that protecting the president is not his priority.

Cohen, 51, even took his change of heart to Twitter, scrubbing mentions and photos from a profile that previously identified him as

"Personal attorney to President Donald J. Trump."

## Mexico town known for fireworks disasters mourns 24 deaths

TULTEPEC, Mexico (AP) — Grieving emergency personnel in the Mexico City suburb of Tultepec

carried the caskets of four comrades through the town's streets Friday as authorities investigated whether an attempt to douse burning fireworks with water may have triggered further blasts that killed a total of 24 people.

The four were among seven firefighters, police officers and civil defense workers killed when they

rushed to the scene of a first blast, only to be felled by three subsequent explosions. Fifty-four people were injured, 41 of whom remain hospitalized.

The town of Tultepec, just north of the capital in Mexico State, is a place notorious for deadly fireworks accidents, with at least 70 people killed there in less than two years.

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