

Former UCSC Chancellor, Family To Market Own Wines

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About 20 years ago when he bought his Bonny Doon property, Dean McHenry surveyed the acreage with a desire to produce something from the land.

That desire has been transformed today into a family-run commercial winery known as McHenry Vineyards at 6821 Bonny Doon Road.

While the McHenrys have been making wine for their own consumption from their four acres of grapes for the last five years, the winery only was bonded as a commercial venture in August.

The operation actually is a two-generation effort. Dean — now retired as the first chancellor of UCSC — and his wife, Jane, run the day-to-day operation. Son, Henry, and daughter-in-law, Linda, come down on weekends from their home in Davis to help out.

Henry, an anthropology professor at UC Davis, explained recently about the almost coincidental way in which his family got into the winemaking business.

When his father first bought the land, the family toyed with the idea of planting some kind of crop. One day, some people from Stanford University came by with an offer to lease the land for grape-growing because they'd scientifically determined that the spot was perfect for growing Pinot Noir grapes, Henry explained.

The family decided, instead, to plant their own crop. In the meantime, Linda took viticulture courses at UC Davis so there'd be someone who is an expert on grape growing in the family.

"When the grapes came in, we just couldn't believe the quality," Henry said. "Our Pinot Noir grapes were above the quality scale in terms of the

sugar/acid ratio that had been established."

"This is what makes the grapes so good, that they're so high in both sugar and acid," Linda explained. "Normally, when the sugar is high, the acid drops off and you get a flat wine."

The McHenry house today is bordered by four acres of mostly Pinot Noir grapes. However, the family also has planted some Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc grapes and experimental plots of Riesling and Cabernet grapes.

While most small, commercial wineries in this county make their wines from grapes purchased from outside the area, the McHenrys plan to make all their wines from their own grapes.

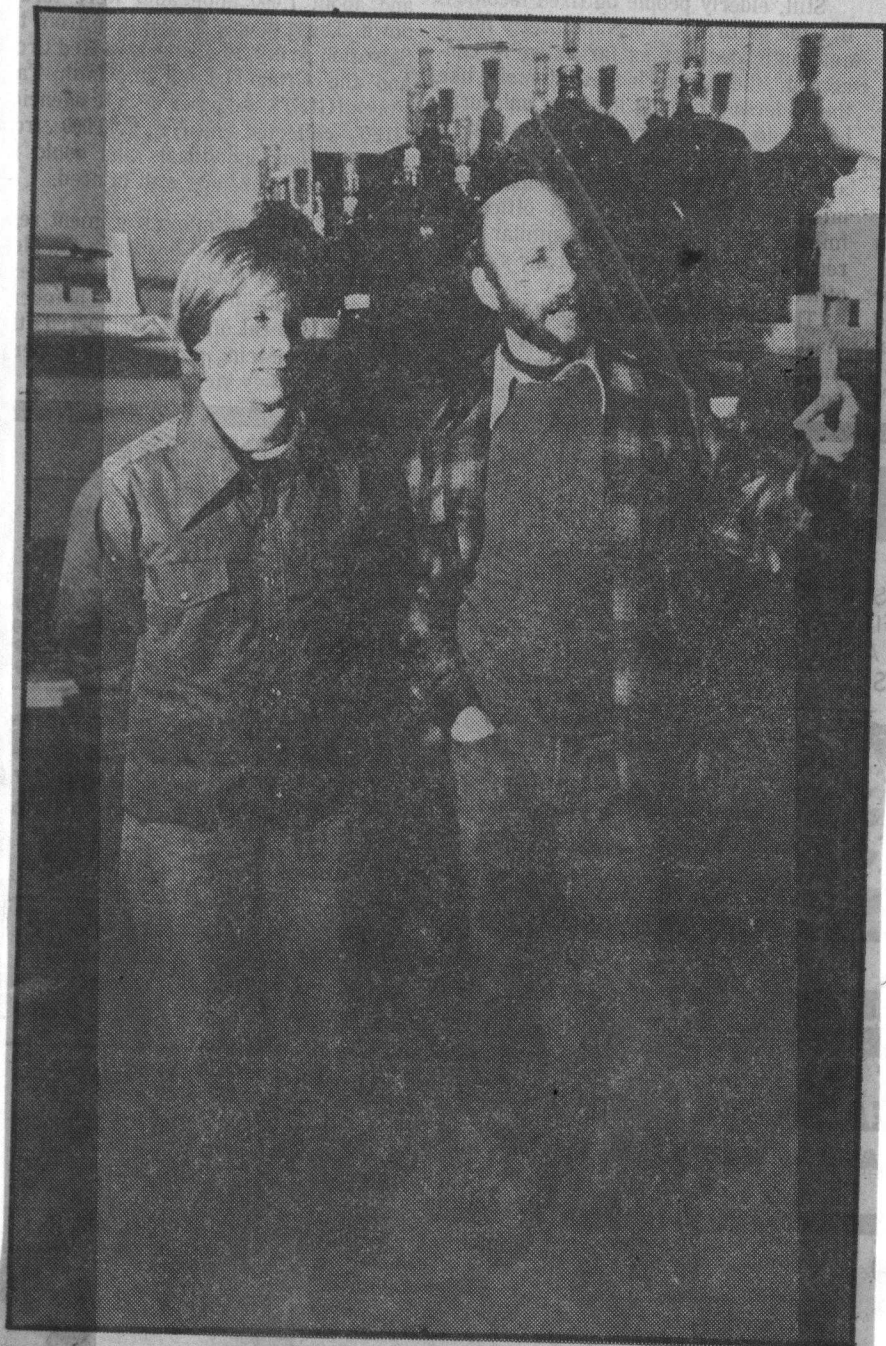
Since they were only bonded in August, the family just made a small amount of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines commercially this fall. The wines will be released in 1982.

The McHenrys sold the rest of their grapes this year to other winemakers as they have done in the past. Next year, however, they will use all their grapes to make their wine.

Eventually, they hope to make 1,200 gallons a year from their vineyard. Their wines will be sold in stores and possibly restaurants, but no public winetastings will take place at the McHenry home.

Establishing a vineyard on the Bonny Doon acreage was no picnic, the McHenrys related.

"It was a difficult place to get a vineyard established because of the



Linda and Henry McHenry discuss the problems and joys of growing grapes and making wine in Bonny Doon.

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Three generations of McHenrys, a winemaking family in Bonny Doon, take a stroll through their vineyard. They are, from right to left, Dean, wife Jane, granddaughter Lindsay, son Henry and daughter-in-law Linda.

many deer and gophers in the area," Linda explained.

"Even when a vine matures, a gopher can come in and destroy it. We lost a quarter of a block of Pinot Blanc vines in one year from gophers, she added.

A fence to keep out the deer and a constant battle between Dean and Jane and the gophers has kept the

animal problem under control, but the McHenrys also have another enemy to contend with — the weather. A spring frost can kill the young vines.

"In the first spring, we planted 500 Chardonnay vines and only 18 survived due to a spring frost," Henry related.

Despite all the problems in growing grapes, the McHenrys feel the effort

has been well worth it. They are convinced, due to the high quality of their grapes and because they have won county fair prizes for their wine made for home consumption, that soon they will have fine wines on the market.

"We can't wait to sell some, just so people get an idea of the quality of the stuff," Henry smiled.