

Wine

Smothers Name Helps But The Wine Must Be Good If It Is Going To Sell

By DENISE SIEBENTHAL
Sentinel Staff Writer

Winemaker William Arnold of Smothers Winery in Scotts Valley said that having the surname of Dick Smothers — one half of the famous Smothers Brothers comedy team — on wines' labels has a "two-edged effect."

"The name does provide a recognition factor, although we do get inquiries now and then asking if we know of the Smothers Brothers as if

the name were a coincidence.

"But anyone in the wine business working with a name with a high recognition factor will tell you that no matter what the name, if the wine is not good, it won't sell," Arnold said.

Dick Smothers, and wife, Linda, have owned and operated the winery and vineyard off Vine Hill Road since 1977. And even though during part of the year, Smothers is off working on his acting career, the winery is his real love, Arnold said.

Arnold was speaking for Smothers,

in fact, since the actor/comedian is now off filming two TV movies and related short episodes with the other half of the comedy team, Tommy Smothers.

"It's fair to say that of all the interests in his life, the winery is Dick's strongest," Arnold commented.

"Acting is so demanding that when he's working on an acting project, has has to devote all his time to it.

"But when he's here, his involvement with the winery is day-to-day.

He has a great deal of input into what's done here."

Linda Smothers explained that her husband got into winemaking not only out of interest, but out of necessity.

When the Smothers bought their Vine Hill Road home six years ago, the purchase didn't include the acres of vineyard surrounding the home.

The vineyard belonged to Ridge Winery in Cupertino and the Ridge owners wanted to sell the vine-covered property because it was too long a distance to bring the grapes to the winery.

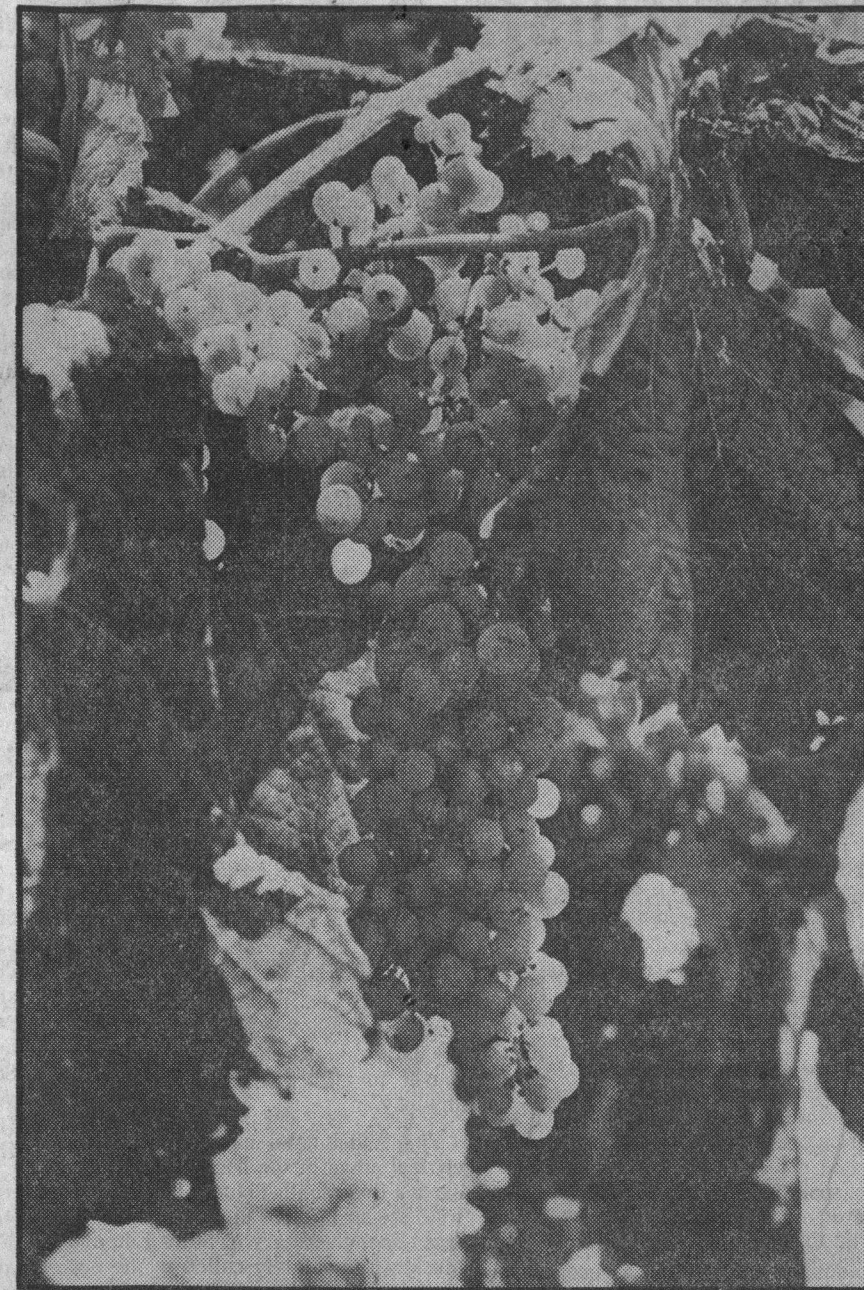
After owning his home for a year, Smothers decided to buy the adjacent vineyard and sell the grapes. Finding out this was a losing proposition financially, he then decided to make his own wine, Linda related.

"He had zero experience in winemaking, but he knew some people at Felton-Empire Vineyards. He got their enologist (one trained in wine science) to help for a year," according to Linda.

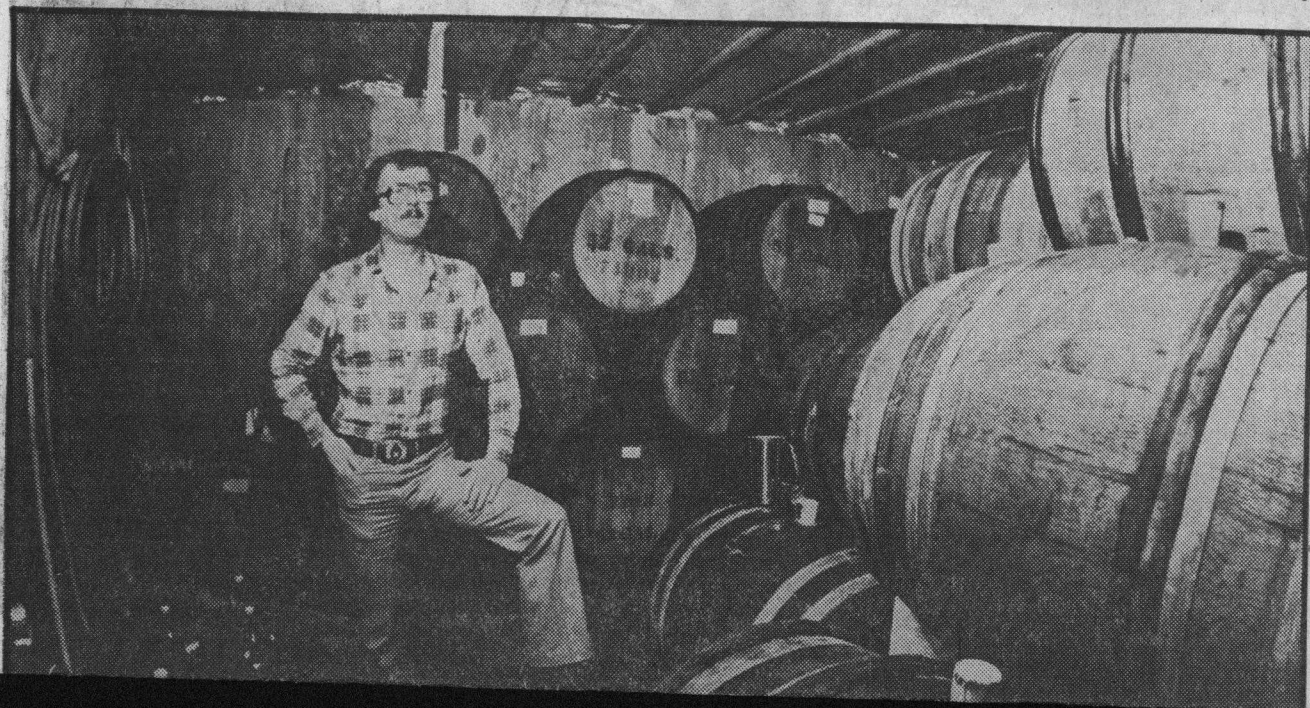
Smothers' gamble to run his own winery paid off better than expected when the young winery released its first wines in 1978.

"Our sweet 1977 Gewurztraminer won the grand prize at the 1978 Los Angeles County Fair," Linda said. "It was the first time in three years that they gave a grand prize. The judging was all done through blind tasting. It gave us such a promotion.

"Everybody was totally shocked that we'd won the grand prize. Even



Above: grapes hang on vines at Dick Smothers' vineyard.





(Sentinel photo by Bill Lovejoy)

Dick Smothers is shown in his winery off Vine Hill Road.

Zoning Board OKs Day Care Nursery

A day care nursery to be operated as a single facility at two back-to-back addresses was approved Thursday by the Santa Cruz City Zoning Board following a 2½ hour public hearing.

The Christian Life Center had previously operated one center at 119 Otis St. and another at 226 Rigg St. and allowed the children at both centers to use a common playyard between them.

However, after stormy neighborhood protests and a City Council hearing last November, the religious organization was given 90 days to cease and desist the operation of two separate facilities under one use permit and to apply, instead, for a new use permit that would permit a combined operation at the two addresses.

A big turnout of opponents again protest the project, commenting about noise, traf-

fic, code violations and other concerns.

The City Council had previously said it wished to review whatever action the Zoning Board takes, hence it will be referred by the board to the City Council.

In another action Thursday the board denied an application for an office building at 704 River St. The board was concerned about traffic and access and recommended that the applicant go to the City Council to get its view on these.

Wildlife Rescue Service Has Big Year

The American Wildlife Rescue Service in Scotts Valley in 1980 cared for hundreds of sick and abused wild animals and birds. Now in its 13th year, the non-profit group receives mostly wildlife found in the wild, but also takes in pets whose owners can no longer keep them.

For example, two female cougars and a male bobcat were brought in by a California zoo which closed down in 1980.

Regular zoos do not accept animals which have been pets or altered in any way. These animals might have been destroyed had AWRS not accepted them.

The refuge already had a male cougar whose owner could not legally keep it in the county.

A wolf, a former family pet whose

epilepsy and a gray fox with brain damage, injured by a dog. Both recovered.

A rhesus monkey was brought in from a California college lab. It had lived eight years in a lab cage.

Many young owls were raised by AWRS volunteers. A group of 15 immature barn owls were hand raised, trained to hunt and released.

During the year a Malaysian otter was accepted. It had been a pet. Gradually she was introduced into the spacious outdoor pen it now shares with other wild animals.

Four large adult boa constrictors were received from private owners, the largest, nine feet in length.

The list goes on, including skunks, herons, ducks, hawks, pigeons, doves,

permanent residents, are those with handicaps such as blindness or crippled, or too tame to rehabilitate to the wild.

AWRS is an all volunteer organization and funds are derived from donations and benefits. A thrift shop at Felton helps raise funds.

For wildlife help call 335-3232.

Toastmasters Winners

Michelle Kibrick was judged best speaker, Dorothy Loughery best evaluator, and Jesus Armas best at table topics at the recent meeting of Downtown Toastmasters. It meets at 7:15 a.m. Fridays at the De Laveaga Golf Lodge.

win even a prize the first year out with wines was big enough, but to win the grand prize was really something."

Despite awards and a famous name, Smothers Winery looks and operates much like the nearly 20 other small bonded wineries in this county.

The barrels containing the 8,000 gallons of wine made annually are stored in what Arnold described as a "garage-like structure" which overlooks the 12 acres of principally White Riesling and Chardonnay vines.

While Smothers Winery made 1,600 cases of wine in its first year, it's now making 3,300 cases and is running out of space, Arnold said.

Rumor has it that Smothers Winery someday will move to Sonoma where brother Tommy, not to be outdone by Dick, has 30 acres of young vines.

Arnold said that this rumor may be true. "We might move the winery to (downtown) Scotts Valley or possibly to Sonoma. We are running out of space. With Tommy having a vineyard there (Sonoma,) we eventually will have our estate vineyard.

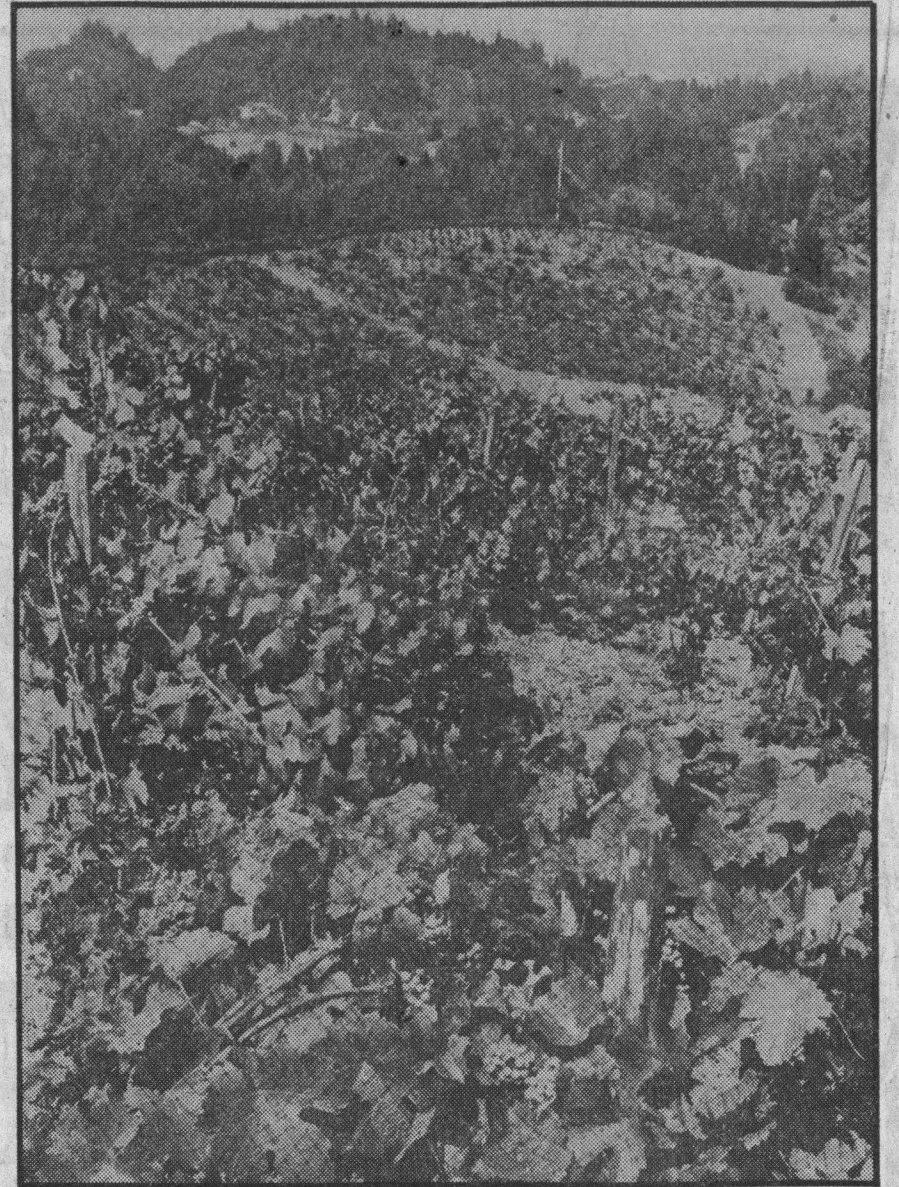
"We still would have to buy enough fruit from elsewhere, however, that it wouldn't be catastrophic to leave the winery here."

While Smothers Winery makes a few of its wines each year from its own grapes, most of the grapes used come from outside the county, Arnold explained.

The vines on the Scotts Valley property are old and, therefore, don't produce as much as younger vines. That's another reason why Dick Smothers is eyeing brother Tommy's vineyard which will be producing wine grapes in a few years, Arnold added.

But even while Smothers Winery still is located in Scotts Valley doesn't mean that locals can rush up there for wine tastings. The winery holds no public tastings, but Smothers wines — with that well-known name on the label — are available in local liquor stores.

Below, the 12 acres of vines at Smothers' winery.



(Sentinel photos)