



# WOOLWINE WINERY

Box 100  
Woolwine, Va. 24185

January 5, 1980

Chief, Regulation & Procedures Division  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms  
P.O. Box 385  
Washington, N.C. 20044

Ref: Viticultural Area; Wine labeling

Gentlemen,

(a) I am submitting for your consideration a viticultural area which lies in portions of Floyd and Patrick Counties, Virginia.

The name is Rocky Knob. Rocky Knob as a recreation area is well known and illustrated on state maps along with Blue Ridge Parkway identification by the U.S. Park Service.

(b) The name Rocky Knob has been in existence prior to 1770 when Tuggle Gap was named for Reverend Tuggle and Rocky Knob is a topographical description of the area.

(c) The elevation will vary from the north boundary of Widgeon Creek of 1600' to the southern boundary of Hog Mountains 3574'. The Rocky Knob area has a steep drop off in elevation to the southeast thus forming Rock Castle Gorge. To the west there are intermittent plateaus of deep loam soil, comprising 4,000 acres, suitable for viticultural purposes. Wine grapes have been successfully grown on such soil on top of Sugar Loaf Mountain. The area rainfall is 43.10 per year. The average temperature for the growing season is May 61.2, June 67.9, July 71.1, August 70.0, September 63.9, October 54.3. These warm days with cool nights provide excellent growing conditions. High winds afford good drainage which minimizes disease. The growing season is 160 days.

(d) The Rocky Knob SOUTHERN boundary begins with the south end of Black Ridge at the location of Connors Grove on Virginia state road #799. It continues east on #799 intersecting the



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Blue Ridge Parkway. Crossing over to road #758 to Rock Castle Creek there forming the EASTERN boundary through Rock Castle Gorge. Then a northeasterly direction across Highway 8 continuing northeast along the foot of Sugar Loaf Mountain until it joins Widgeon Creek. Here is the beginning of the NORTHERN boundary. It goes northwest up to the headwaters of Widgeon Creek to Thomas Grove Church located on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The south on the Parkway to Tuggle Gap. From Tuggle Gap in a northwest direction it crosses Panthers Knob and Dillons Chapel on to the north end of Black Ridge. This completes the NORTHERN boundary. The WESTERN boundary follows the crest of Black Ridge back to Connors Grove - the original starting point.

(e) The Rocky Knob area is illustrated on topographical maps Woolwine quadrangle, Virginia and Willis quadrangle, Virginia. Both maps 7.5 minute series.

Very truly yours,

W.F. Morrisette

WFM/nm

*Enclosure: Woolwine - Willis Map*



# WOOLWINE WINERY

Box 100  
Woolwine, Va. 24185

July 17, 1981

Mr. James A. Hunt  
Dept. of the Treasury  
Bureau of A.T.&F.  
Chief Regulation & Procedures Division  
P.O. Box 385  
Washington, D.C. 20044

Ref: Viticultural area - Rocky Knob, Va.

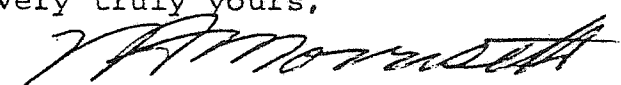
Dear Mr. Hunt,

I am submitting an amended map designating the Rocky Knob area for viticulture designation.

The black ink was the original proposal and the purple ink is the revised area.

The purple starting point at Conners Grove is the intersection of state roads 776 and 799. We continue south on 799 veering east to join the Blue Ridge Parkway and south a short distance on the parkway to state road 758, where we follow 758 east to the intersection of road 726. This is the southern end of Rocky Knob recreation area. Here we begin the southeastern boundary which follows the perimeter of the Rocky Knob recreation area as shown on Woolwine, Virginia map series V834. This boundary will continue in a northeasterly direction to the intersection of the Rocky Knob recreation area and highway 8. We cross highway 8 in a straight line to the intersection of state road 719 at Widgeon Creek. Then north in a straight line to the Blue Ridge Parkway and state road 710. The northwestern boundary begins here and turns south on the Blue Ridge Parkway to the intersection of state road 716, highway 8 and Tuggle Gap, continuing in a straight line to Dillons Chapel. The western boundary begins by turning south from Dillons Chapel in a straight line back to Conners Grove and the original starting point of state roads 776 and 799. This amended designation should be attached to our letter of January 5th and replaces section D of the original request.

Very truly yours,

  
W.F. Morrisette

WFM/nm



# WOOLWINE WINERY

Box 100  
Woolwine, Va. 24185

August 10, 1982

Mr. Jim Hunt  
Dept. of the Treasury  
Bureau of ATF  
Chief Regulation & Procedures Division  
P.O. Box 385  
Washington, D.C. 20044

Ref: Rocky Knob Viticulture area

Dear Mr. Hunt,

I am submitting a revised boundary area for the viticulture area Rocky Knob. We will start at the south at Conners Grove and go east along 799 as presently drawn and intersect the parkway into 758 down the bottom of Rock Castle Gorge continuing northeast to the intersection of Highway 8. Follow Highway 8 to Tuggles Gap which intersects the parkway and turn south on the Blue Ridge Parkway, as the boundary line, until you intersect Highway 726. Here turn southwest until we reach a dirt road at elevation 3308. Draw a straight line back to Conners Grove which is the original starting point.

This area encompasses the Continental Divide water shed. The water to the east of the parkway flows into the James River on into the Atlantic Ocean. The water to the west of the parkway flows into the Ohio River and into the Mississippi River and on to the Gulf of Mexico. This is a distinct water shed area and is the Continental Divide for water flow.

The growing season in the Rocky Knob area is a week later than the area southeast of Highway 8 and west of the the Blue Ridge Parkway. This is due to the elevation and the exposure however this delay in bud ripening is a protection for the grapes as the week delay could mean survival of the bloom under severe conditions. This distinct growing area is also exemplified by the absence of row crops such as beans and corn as they would not produce a satisfactory crop. Grapes this past season on our ten acre planting were subjected to minus 18 degree temperature and survived with

this extreme cold. This was 3-5 degrees lower than surrounding areas. Another distinct weather factor is the high velocity of winds dissipates frost accumulation that is normal for surrounding areas. The additional frost free days assist in the emergence of the new plants as well as preserves the mature crop in October.

The soil conditions to the east of the Rocky Knob viticulture area is a Piedmont clay and a reddish type soil. In the Rocky Knob area you have a silt loam combined with gravel. This is a distinct difference and the combination of loam with loose gravel presents an ideal water drainage situation for grape growth.

I hope that you will accept this revision for our request for the Rocky Knob viticultural area and that we will receive a speedy approval.

Very truly yours,



W.F. Morrisette

WFM/nm

# Grapes in Them Thar Hills

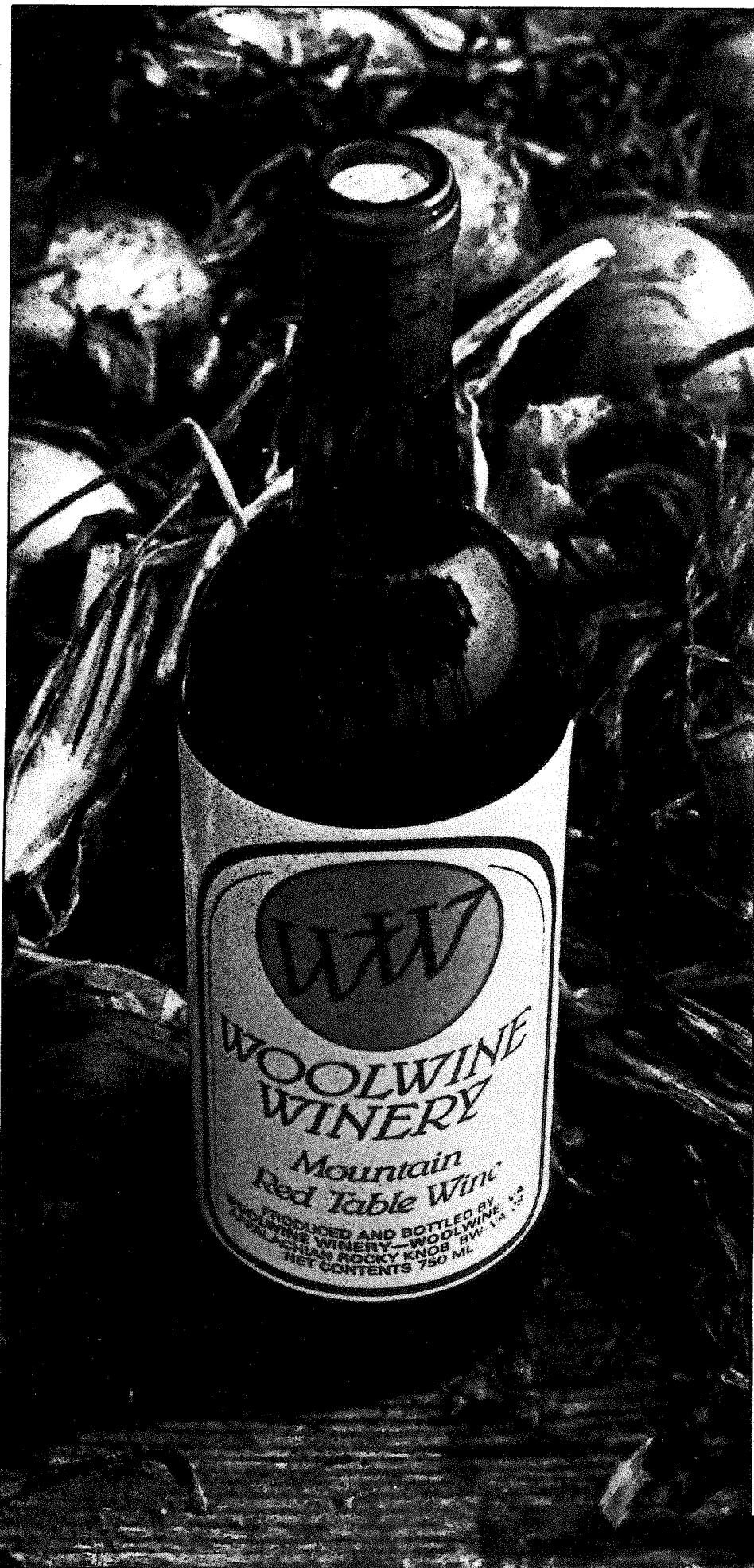
*North Carolina  
industrialist plants  
a winery in  
Floyd County.*

*by Seth Williamson*

When you're driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway admiring the autumn color this month, you may find yourself in the Rocky Knob area. Look off to the north when you're near milepost 172: there, surrounded by the blazing reds and oranges of Appalachian autumn, you'll see hillsides covered with orderly rows of vines, their dark green fading to brown.

What you'll be seeing is Weathervane Vineyards, the home of over 40 acres of French hybrid and vinifera wine grapes. What Bill Morrisette hopes it will be is the beginning of a major new industry for Floyd County: wine.

That's right, wine. Morrisette, a North Carolina industrialist who owns the Morrisette Paper Company of Greensboro, has pumped over \$300,000 so far into the Woolwine Winery of Floyd County. (Never mind that the community of Woolwine is in Patrick County. "I just liked the name," says Morrisette. I may have to give it up some day, but I thought it was a good name for a Winery.") Morrisette is betting a lot of money on the proposition that the same hills and hollows that have produced oceans of moonshine whiskey in years past can also yield a high-quality table wine.



"You see," Morrisette explains, "the state of Virginia has the perfect climate for growing wine grapes. When the first settlers arrived here, they were astounded by the quality and size of the wild grapes that grew here."

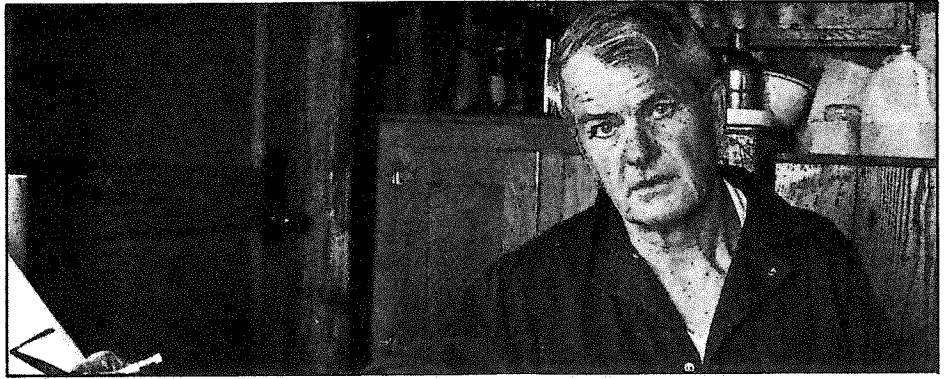
Morrisette believes it was just plain bad luck that Virginia didn't become known for its wine from the very start. Wine from native grapes was too foxy for European palates, so European varieties were planted, and they prospered.

But not for long. The European vines had no immunity to the American root louse, and were soon decimated. Wine growers in New York and California eventually defeated the root louse by splicing European plants to native root stock, but by that time most Virginians were convinced that corn likker was a more dependable product than wine.

But now there are 19 wineries in the Old Dominion, with more on the way. "The time has come," says Morrisette, "to show that Virginia can grow top-notch wine. And I believe we are going to do it."

If looks and manner count for anything, Morrisette is the man to get the job done. "This guy is the closest thing you'll see to Jock Ewing in the flesh," says a friend at Tuggle's Gap Restaurant and Motel, where Morrisette often stops for a meal. The comparison is apt. Morrisette looks like a leaner, trimmer version of the TV tycoon, with silver hair, weathered features and a broad North Carolina accent in place of Jock's Texas drawl. Morrisette wears old clothes when he visits Floyd County, and he is almost indistinguishable from the other good old boys on the row of stools at the restaurant. Morrisette, however, is the only one there who drinks his beer from a custom leather-covered mug.

*Morrisette (right) confers with his vineyard master, Clyde Belcher, in the wine storage cavern blasted from the side of a hill near the Floyd County vineyard.*



*"The time has come to show that Virginia can grow top-notch wine. And I believe we are doing it," says Bill Morrisette, owner and moving force behind Woolwine Winery, shown here at his weekend home near the vineyard in Floyd County.*

Morrisette was bucking the odds when he decided to grow wine grapes in Floyd County's Rocky Knob section. "This is the highest-altitude winery in the entire state, and I think on the entire east coast," says Morrisette. "We're growing vinifera and French hybrid grapes here at 3,400 feet above sea level, and the conventional wisdom is that it can't be done. The growing season is too short, the experts say, and it gets too cold in the winter."

"Well, we got down to 18 below this past winter, and you can see for yourself how the vines did," he says, motioning proudly to his vines. They look extremely healthy, with only a baby vine here and there to mark where a vine didn't survive the cold. Since last winter set records for low temperatures, Morrisette appears to have out-guessed the experts as to the toughness of his grapes.

But what about the brief mountain growing season? Morrisette admits, "We're right on the line there. We need about 165 frost-free days and nights, and I think that's just about what we're going to get." By late summer Morrisette's vineyards looked prosperous, with lush bunches of misty-skinned grapes loading down the vines. Morrisette may have won the growing-season gamble too.

The more you look, the clearer it becomes that Bill Morrisette is dead serious about turning Floyd County into wine country. He has blasted a cellar out of the rocky mountainside near his Floyd County home in order to duplicate the conditions found in French caves. "It was a heck of a job, too," recalls Morrisette. "This slate rock was just like an accordion—we'd blast it with dynamite, and then it would just settle right back down again in layers. Took a lot of dynamite."

Morrisette is actively encouraging local farmers to grow wine grapes. "I'd like to get a local supply system similar to what the Welch's company has a little farther north," he says. "We need to show the local farmers that wine grapes can be a reliable cash crop."

Morrisette also has received an OK from local officials for a half-million dollar tax-free industrial revenue bond, though the issue is hanging fire at the moment. "Interest rates are coming back down and we may go to some other form of financing," Morrisette says.

The most noticeable change will be the restaurant Morrisette is building near milepost 173 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. It is scheduled to open on August 19, 1983, and diners will be able to tour the vineyards as well as sample the local vintage with their meals.

The Woolwine Winery's first vintage will go on sale in the spring of 1983. Marketed regionally will be Boca Noir, Foch, de Chaunac, Vidal Blanc, Seyval-Blanc, Niagara and Riesling. By 1988 Morrisette plans to be turning out 20,000 gallons of wine yearly, with Merlot, Chardonnay, Gamay and Pinot Noir added to the list.

In the meantime, oenophiles will be on the lookout for the first bottles of the Woolwine Winery's 1983 vintage. The printer, evidently convinced that Morrisette couldn't spell, changed the label from the proper "Appellation Rocky Knob" (indicating the official viticultural area) to "Appalachian Rocky Knob," thus inadvertently creating a collector's item. To reserve your own bottle of Floyd County wine, call the Woolwine Winery (at present only on weekends) at 745-3318.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL A. LIKAVEC

2-19-81

# Virginia's ripe for grapes, vintners find

By LOU ANN WHITTON

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Viticulture is thriving in the Shenandoah Valley.

Ensclosed in a green bowl between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains, Shenandoah Vineyards of Edinburg is producing fine French hybrid wines under the direction of a young winemaker from the Tabor Hill Vineyard of Michigan.

Bearded, energetic Alan Kinne manages the winery and seven-acre vineyard for owners James and Emma Randel. Kinne describes his wines as made according to European methods — the reds along the lines of Burgundy and Beaujolais; the whites like French Chablis or German Mosel. His efforts have not gone unrewarded. At the 1980 Wineries Unlimited competition, the largest on the East Coast, Shenandoah Chambourcin (1979) was awarded Best of Category.

But praise has also come from the West Coast. While visiting Virginia during a national food editors conference last June, San Francisco wine critic Harvey Steiman was so impressed with Shenandoah Vidal Blanc that he said he had no idea Virginia was making wine of such caliber. Consequently, he bought a bottle to take back to California.

Why did the Randels, who are from New Jersey, start a vineyard in the Shenandoah Valley? Kinne explained, "Mrs. Randel was originally from this area. Besides, no one had done it before, so it was a challenge."

However, apples, peaches and other fruits have grown in the valley for 150 years, and the rule of thumb is where peaches can grow, so can grapes.

"This is a good in-between area for grape growing because the winters are not as harsh as farther north and the humidity is not as bad as in the south," Kinne said.

He feels Virginia can serve as a model for other states to emulate and should, in fact, emerge as a large winegrowing state in another 10 to 15 years.

As for future plans for Shenandoah Valley, Kinne and the Randels expect to add another 10 acres of mostly Riesling over the next three to four years. By building another addition, they also will triple the floor space of the present winery.

"We want to make a lot more wine," Kinne said.

★ ★

Another Virginia wine pioneer is a poet, an English professor and, in a sense, a movie star. Tom O'Grady's Rose Bower Vineyard near Hampden-Sydney College where he teaches is the subject of many of his poetry readings and recently, a documentary film.

Much of the film's narration is based on a sequence of sonnets penned by O'Grady on establishing a vineyard, entitled "This Land Is A Woman." The title was inspired by something a vintner in the Loire Valley of France told him. "He said that anyone who works the land knows the land is a woman, and I have come to find that is true," O'Grady said.

O'Grady has been working his land for about seven years. He and his wife, Bronwyn, bought the 200-year-old farm in 1973 and a year later set out restoring the house and planting a small vineyard. Her teaching salary goes into the vineyard/winery operation; they live on his salary. They plan to continue this arrangement until Rose Bower can support them as a fulltime business.

There was historical precedence for winegrowing in the Farmville area. O'Grady said a 100-acre vineyard thrived near Hampden-Sydney in the 18th



A.T.F.

visiting the vineyards that O'Grady absorbed much of his winemaking knowledge. He poetically compares Rose Bower to a small Burgundian chateau and describes his wines, like Kinne, as vinted by classic European techniques.

In the fall, he follows another famous French tradition — the celebrated release of the new or Nouveau Beaujolais, made from grapes harvested and crushed in August. This very young, fruity red wine is tasted as a sneak preview of what to expect from that year's vintage of regular Beaujolais, after it has been properly aged.

O'Grady unabashedly claims to have the earliest Nouveau Beaujolais in the world and the only one being made in the South. He releases Nouveau Foch, made from 100 percent Marachal Foch grapes, at Halloween, a jump ahead of the other November releases.

His prognosis for the 1980 vintage? "Very good. The Nouveau has fine glycerine legs, good color and clarity and plenty of acid," he said.

Ironically, the 1980 summer drought, which scorched other Virginia crops, was good for grapes, as dry weather tends to improve their sugar/acid balance.

"I had a textbook Chardonnay come in at 21 percent sugar and .8 acid," O'Grady offered as an example. "The Riesling also came in at 21 and the Cabernet Sauvignon at 21 and 23 at harvest." A good sugar/acid ratio is desirable in winemaking because it reduces the need to add more sugar or dilute the acid.

For those interested in tasting Rose Bower wines, O'Grady plans to expand distribution outside Hampden-Sydney to include Roanoke and Lynchburg. The wines will be available later this year in limited quantities.

★ ★

Another viticulture venture is taking place at Roanoke's back door at MJC Vineyards in Montgomery County. There, Dr. Karl T. Hereford, dean of the College of Education at Virginia Tech, and his wife are making "the finest homemade wine in the world."

The Herefords began planting in 1974 and now have 15 acres of mostly vinifera. They hope MJC can become a bonded farm winery and offer its table wines for sale this year or next. MJC also has a commercial grafting operation with virus-certified rootstock.

Wineries seem to spawn community involvement. As O'Grady does at Rose Bower, the Herefords often hire students at harvest time, as well as housewives and retired people. In addition, Hereford teaches courses in wines and vines, winemaking and small winery development and sensory evaluation at Tech.

Hereford believes Virginia's destiny as an important winegrowing state is "inescapable."

"Not even the threat of a depression could impede the progress, chiefly because of the innate stability of the people in the industry — the upper middle-class professionals," he said.

He predicts Virginia's enological evolution will follow a path similar to California's with family-owned wineries paving the way.

★ ★

There's one more wine pioneer in the Roanoke area, and quite a colorful one, W.F. Morrisette, owner of Woolwine Winery in Floyd County. He planted two acres of French hybrids on Sugar Loaf Mountain in Patrick County as a pilot project in 1976.

"And every stupid mistake you could make, we made twice," Morrisette laughingly admitted.

Despite the mistakes, he made 600 gallons of wine last year. "If it is mature enough, we will release it this fall," he said. For sale locally and at the winery will be his three red varieties — Marechal Foch, Baco Noir and Chancellor.

Please see Wine, Page F-8

START

less inclination to want them. Brushing  
hand with good nutrition. The message  
is to watch out for hidden sweets, ac-  
cording to Joan Ramsey and Loretta  
Bitel, chairman of National Children's  
Dental Health Month activities in the  
Roanoke Valley. They are members of  
the auxiliary to the Roanoke Valley  
Dental Society.

Mrs. Bitel, whose husband Dr.  
David Bitel is chairman of dental  
health for the Roanoke Valley Dental  
Society, said that dental care begins

# Wine

2-19-81

From Page F-1

"But *only* if they're ready," he emphasized.

Buoyed by the success of his pilot project, Morrisette plans to expand his vineyard for the next four years until he has 25 acres. In May he will plant eight acres of Riesling, Seyval and Vidal for the white wines at another vineyard at Rocky Knob. His son is studying enology at Mississippi State University and will bring his expertise into the operation when he graduates.

When Woolwine Winery and Weather-vane Vineyard open to the public — "that's still a good ways off," Morrisette said — they should be picturesque.

"For my wine cellar I've blasted a saddle formation out of rock and put a roof on it. We'll ferment and store the wine here in the coolness, like they do in the caves of Europe," Morrisette said. He also is restoring a log house next to the vineyard.

"In fact, I like this place so much, I may not open it to the public. We're so close to the Parkway, we'll probably have a million tourists flocking in here," he conjectured, but good-naturedly.

If tourists are allowed, and most likely they will be, they will probably learn as much about the lore and legends of the region as about winemaking, if Morrisette is there to regale them with the colorful yarns he weaves so well in his distinctive accent. Like the one about Tuggle's Gap and the Confederate soldier.

"The war had ended and this Confederate soldier was walking back home. He stopped at a farmhouse and, being hospitable, the folks asked him in to eat and rest. When he was fixing to leave, the weather had turned bad — it was wintertime — and the people begged him to stay. They didn't want him to try to cross Tuggle's Gap in the snow.

"But he said no, he was in a hurry to get back to his family. So off he went. Next spring this fella was going over Tuggle's Gap and saw two feet sticking out of this hollow log. He looked inside and there was that Confederate soldier. He'd frozen to death trying to find shelter in the log. So they just boarded up each end of the log and buried him like that.

"Now that's a true story," Morrisette declared.

Owner of a wholesale paper company in Greensboro, N.C., Morrisette said he was looking for something to do with his two acres in Floyd when he decided to try winegrowing. With an altitude of more than 3,000 feet, cool nights and warm days, the conditions of the area have been compared to the wine country of northeastern Pennsylvania. Like others entering the industry, Morrisette was challenged by the fact that no one had grown grapes there before.

"And besides, I like fine wine," Morrisette said.

He had nothing but praise for the help Virginia Tech gave him to get started. "They were encouraging, yet cautioning," he said. "They've been real interested in following my progress, since our operation is establishing what can be done in this area. In fact, I think the state has an excellent attitude toward development of this industry."

Morrisette said he would encourage others to plant grapes because he would be interested in buying their production.

"I know I'm going to need more grapes," he said, echoing the optimism expressed throughout interviews with Virginia winegrowers.

There is no exclusive list of who's who in the Virginia wine industry, but there

must be mention (albeit brief) of others who were there first: Charles Raney who planted Farfelu Vineyard in Flint Hill in 1967; Al Weed's La Abra Farm and Winery in Nelson County; Robert Viehman's The Vineyard in Winchester, to name a few.

Many people have contributed to the tremendous strides made in the past decade . . . people such as the organizers of the new Virginia Grape Growers Association; those who participate in the popular pick-your-own grape program; state officials who sweated over getting Virginia's first farm winery law passed to provide incentive for this new agricultural endeavor; the home winemakers and customers.

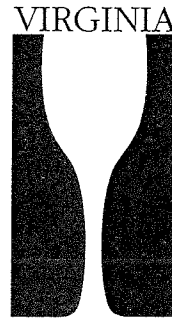
Consumers are, in fact, largely responsible for the wine revolution occurring in this country. Americans are drinking more table wine than liquor, at home and in restaurants, and appreciating wine as a beverage of moderation. In addition, the number of winegrowing states has increased from 20 to 34 and is expected to reach 43 with the passage of more farm winery laws.

## Tour information:

It is advisable to call ahead should you wish to visit any of Virginia's wineries. If you want to purchase wine, check with the winery for what is available since supplies may be limited or the wine may be sold only on a seasonal basis. For information on Shenandoah Vineyards of Edinburg, telephone (703) 984-8699; Rose Bower Vineyard, telephone (804) 223-8209.

continued

# A trip to Virginia's Wine Country blends good times and good taste.



WINES

**VIRGINIA** There are over 40 farm wineries tucked away in valleys or nestled on the slopes of Virginia Wine Country. Each one has its own proud history to tell and its own distinctive product to taste. But in addition to all that good taste, you'll also want to consider visiting some of the most entertaining festivals

to ever dot the landscape of Virginia's beautiful hills and valleys. Festivals are scheduled year-round, but many occur during October, Virginia Wine Month. The festivals feature craft shows, family picnics, swinging music and all the outdoor activities you can imagine (plus some you can't, like grape stomping and wine making).

Virginia's vineyards and wineries are located throughout the state, concentrated in areas such as the Shenandoah Valley, along the Blue Ridge Mountains, Charlottesville hillsides, Northern Virginia and the Eastern Shore.

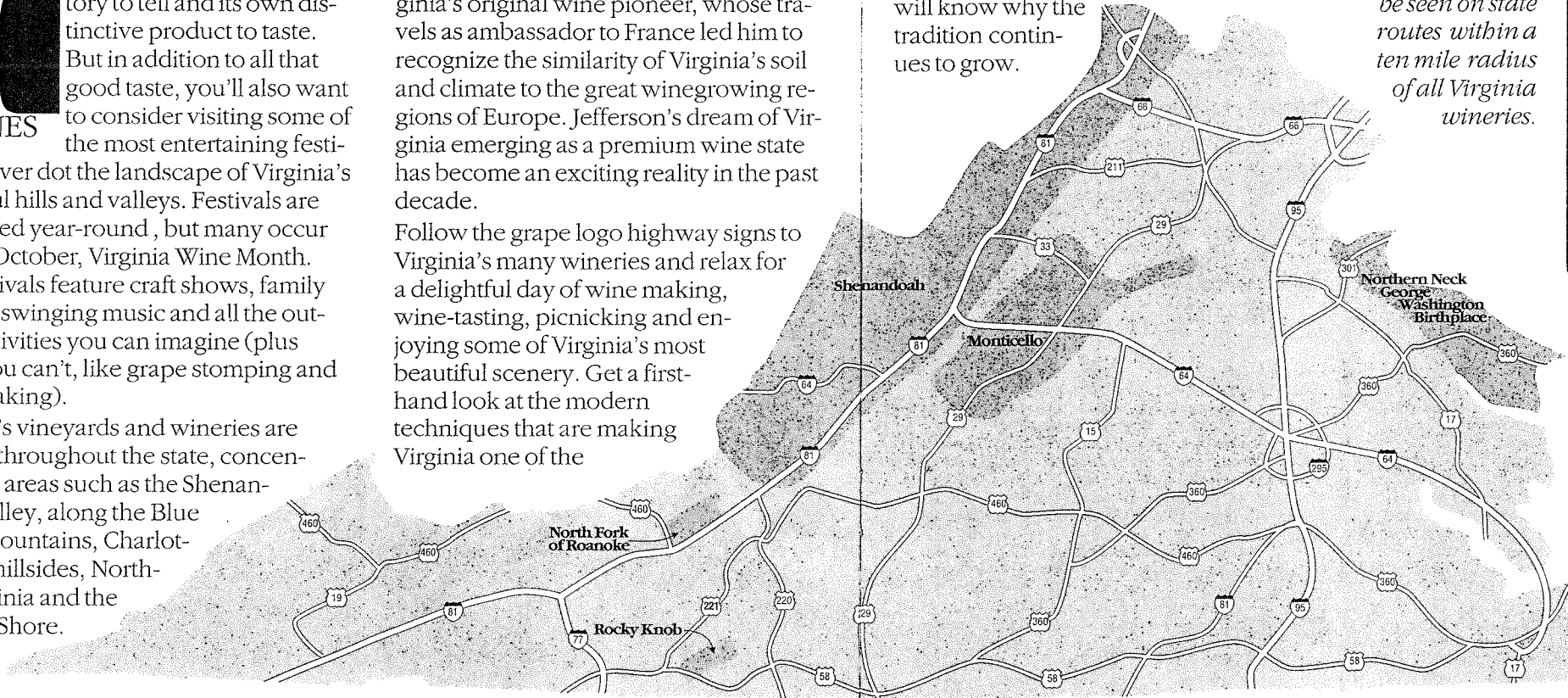
Virginia wines have been a growing tradition since 1607 when the Jamestown settlers fermented native American grapes and made the first wine in the New World. However, it was Thomas Jefferson, Virginia's original wine pioneer, whose travels as ambassador to France led him to recognize the similarity of Virginia's soil and climate to the great winegrowing regions of Europe. Jefferson's dream of Virginia emerging as a premium wine state has become an exciting reality in the past decade.

Follow the grape logo highway signs to Virginia's many wineries and relax for a delightful day of wine making, wine-tasting, picnicking and enjoying some of Virginia's most beautiful scenery. Get a first-hand look at the modern techniques that are making Virginia one of the

finest wine-producing areas in the world, with a growing list of awards to prove it.

After just one tour, you'll want to visit all of Virginia's many wineries. One taste of award-winning Virginia wine, and you will know why the tradition continues to grow.

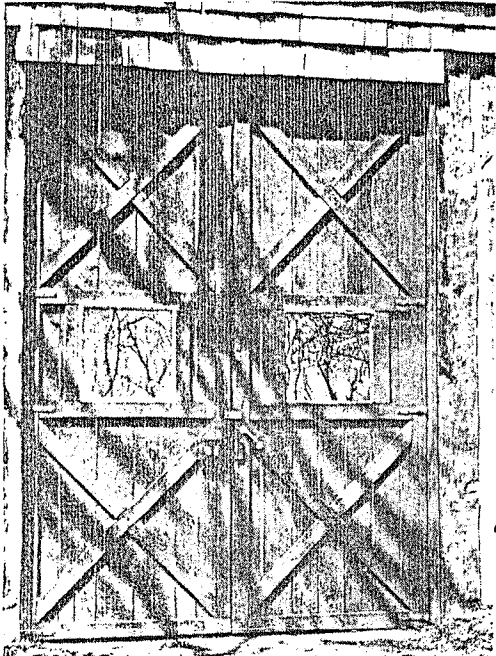
*Look for these grape cluster signs to assist you on your tour. They can be seen on state routes within a ten mile radius of all Virginia wineries.*



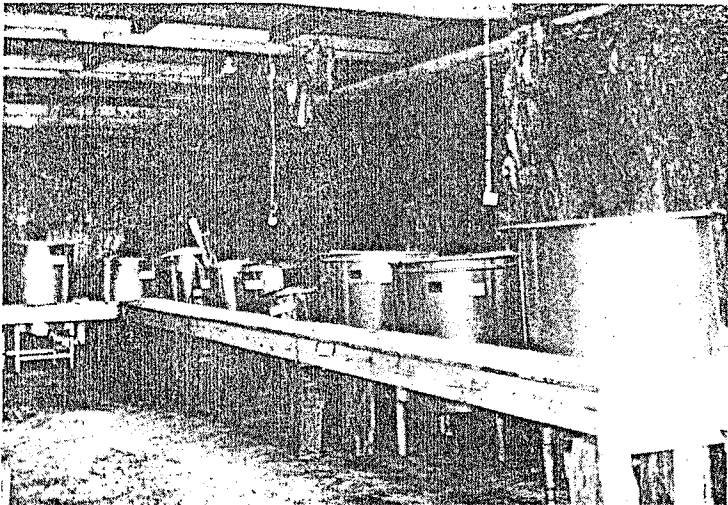
*The shaded areas represent Virginia's six nationally recognized viticultural areas designated for their unique wine growing conditions.*

# Welcome To The Woolwine Winery

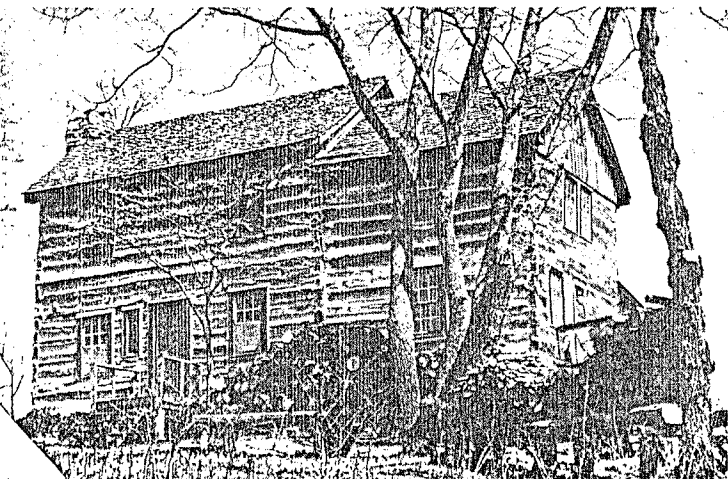
by Rita Shockley



These huge wooden doors open to the wine cellar at The Woolwine Winery.



The tanks in the soon to be completed wine cellar sit alongside the exposed rock walls.



ette's home sits upon a knoll overlooking the grapevines with the wine cellar

Bill Morrisette is crazy. He'll tell you so himself. But somehow "crazy like a fox" comes closer to describing him than just plain crazy.

What makes Morrisette and this reporter believe that he might be crazy, even if we do use different definitions? Well, he thinks he must be crazy because he is undertaking a venture that is costing several thousands of dollars to set up and has no guarantee of being profitable. This reporter thinks he may be crazy like a fox because he has seen a possibility for a profitable venture and has begun work on it himself rather than waiting to see if someone else will try and either succeed or fail.

Morrisette has a dream. His dream is to build and operate Woolwine Winery. He has planted grapes and is in the process of building a cellar for the fermenting and aging of the wine he will produce. At the present it is an experimental venture and he's not sure exactly how

far his undertaking will lead him. If the grapes have a good year, and if the Virginia Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms grants him a license for a commercial winery he will begin operation as Woolwine Winery this fall.

You wouldn't imagine that tucked away in the mountains of Woolwine you'd find a beautiful mountain home overlooking miles upon miles of rolling hills with a nearly complete wine cellar at the side of the yard.

The home itself would be a treat for anyone that has a liking for hand hewn log homes, natural wood interiors, and simple but beautiful wood furnishings. It even has an old-fashioned bathtub, with legs, situated on the top floor sitting in front of a window with the gorgeous view of the land below. If you know the direction to look you can even spot Martinsville and Collinsville while taking your bath.

But the house, though magnificent, is not Morrisette's pride and joy. You'll find that in the side of the yard. At first glance the wine cellar looks like two huge wooden doors placed in the side of a mountain. But by opening the doors you pass into a different world. Different because it is the only facility of its kind in Patrick County and probably the only one of its specific kind in the world.

The interior of the wine cellar has huge rock walls which he plans to leave in their natural state. Where the rock was blasted away he built cinderblock walls lined with styrofoam insulation. To keep the same general feeling as the rock walls present he is having a workman build a wall in front of the insulation which is composed of field rock

and cement. Even though the rock walls are beautiful your eye is caught upon entering by huge metal vats marked with how much they will hold when full and how much each holds per inch full. At approximately half the height of the vats is an elevated wooden walkway built so that necessary inspections of the vats can be done with ease.

At one end of the walkway you'll find a machine that has the capability of crushing two or three tons of grapes per hour. The machine is designed with the use of centrifugal force which while crushing the grapes will remove the stems.

About two thirds of the way around the L-shaped walkway and line of vats sits a wine press built much like an apple press. The press is used to press the fermented grape pulp and allow the juice to run out into a container.

The proper procedure for producing wine is complicated though Morrisette was quite amiable and willing to explain the process it is more complex than most people would want to work with.

After the crushed grapes are allowed to ferment, the natural yeast is killed and a wine yeast is added. After allowing to stand for another period of time the mixture is put through the wine press and then is allowed to ferment until all the yeast has quit working. The wine is then sealed in airtight containers and allowed to age.

The length of time the wine is allowed to age is dependent on a number of factors. One of the factors being the quality of wine you desire, the more it ages the better it becomes.

To produce wine to be sold on a wholesale basis the winery operator must acquire a license from the Virginia Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. These licenses are granted only when certain criteria are met.

Morrisette feels confi-

dent that he will be able to acquire the necessary license and has worked closely with the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in his endeavor.

In addition Morrisette has worked closely with the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. They have aided him not only with the plans for the wine production but also with information on correct planting and maintenance of grapevines.

Although known for its excellent crop of apples Patrick County has not gained fame as a good grape producing area. One reason being that no one has ever attempted to operate a large vineyard here. If the Woolwine Winery operation proves successful Morrisette will probably discuss the possibility of area land being used for the purpose of growing grapes. For information purposes, a ton of grapes will produce approximately 160-190 gallons of wine. An average acre of land can produce four to eight tons of grapes depending on the variety planted.

So for now, Morrisette is working on his wine cellar, cultivating his grape crop and dreaming of operating the Woolwine Winery. To help fill his time he is busy with Morrisette Paper Company in Greensboro, N.C. and with his buffalo. Oh yes, Morrisette, along with Robert Spessard, an attorney in Floyd and Roanoke, has purchased three buffalo cows and placed them on a farm in Floyd County. The buffalo are six to seven years old and hopefully will produce baby buffalo this year. What the future of his buffalo herd will be Morrisette doesn't know yet but the possibilities are endless.

In the future, the Free State of Patrick may also be known as the home of the Woolwine Winery and a crazy man named Bill Morrisette.



Rows upon rows of grapevine patiently wait for their chance to produce the grapes for use at The Woolwine Winery