

Former Lake Valley fire chief becomes winemaker in retirement

By Lance Sparks, Eugene Weekly

The Broadleys' home, a dark, beveled-cedar single-story, sits near the top of the hill above their vineyards. From the front deck, the south Willamette Valley is revealed to the east – lush, green with farms, fields and stands of oaks and firs. On clear days, snow-capped peaks of the Cascades gleam in the sunlight, from Mt. Hood in the north to the Three Sisters in the south.

In front of the house, the Broadley Vineyards are just beginning to flush with new growth; especially enticing is the set of north-facing vines that produce the grapes for Claudia's Choice, Broadleys' premier bottling, their prize-winner.

The Broadleys pioneered this area, displacing Christmas-tree farms and goat ranching (Morgan Broadley has brought back goats) and proving that wine grapes, *vinis vinifera*, could thrive here and yield world-class wines. Thirty years of successful growing blazed a trail to Monroe, and others have followed.

Now, just downslope from the Broadley homestead and southerly around the hill along Orchard Tract Road, a handsome wrought-iron gate, painted a shade of celadon, marks the entry to Whybra Vineyards. Nothing here invites visitors, especially not the slinking German shepherd who tracks the car just outside the driver's door. At the end of the steeply sloping crushed-basalt driveway sits a trailer under trees, a few sheds and outbuildings nearby.

Christi Alvarez – in broad-brimmed hat and blue rubber gloves – stays here with her two watchful hounds. She actually lives in Sun River and comes over to carefully tend her 11.5 acres of pinot noir. The vineyard was planted in 1992, but wines wearing the Whybra label didn't appear until 2007. Whybra 2009 Pinot Noir is not widely distributed but can be found at the Longbranch Saloon, just across the highway from the Broadley tasting room in Monroe.

Downslope, around the bend and up another crude driveway, we find the pole building that Brian and Therese Schafer converted to an apartment for themselves and a winery for their newly established TeBri Vineyards. They've just released their 2009 pinot noir, a palpable hit.

Before he retired, Brian had been fire chief in Lake Tahoe but concluded "firefighting at age 60 is not a good idea." How good an idea was it to start a vineyard?

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