



Farmers' Vignettes

Farmer Lee Jr.'s Memories of our Ranches



Lee Jr., Madeleine and Pamela Martinelli

Zio Tony Ranch Chardonnay & Pinot Noir Vineyard:

I remember working on this ranch when it still had old apple orchards. I had to water the young trees and paint their trunks white to protect them from the sun. My friends from school would work with me, as it was a great way for young kids to make money for fun weekend toys, like hotrods & dune buggies. I remember dad saying, "Don't bring that one friend of yours back unless he works!" I was used to working hard, not to mention expected to. As a kid I would drive tractors roadside from this ranch to a nearby mechanic. One afternoon I was returning a John Deere tractor, just completely rebuilt. I went through a drainage area that was wetter than expected and I got the tractor stuck solid in the mud. This was all before it even had its first hour of work!

Bondi Home Ranch Pinot Noir:

This Ranch was once a Gravenstein apple orchard purchased by my great grandfather, Paulo Bondi, in 1910, when the trees were only 17 years old. By the time I was 16, I had hauled many loads of apples from this Ranch to the local co-op processing plant

in an old 1947 Chevy flatbed truck. This truck was originally a hop hauler from our River Road Ranch, where our historic Hop Barn now houses our tasting room. Our family has always been big believers in repurposing what we had on the Ranches, including us kids. When I was in 7th grade during harvest my father was so busy, he had me stay home from school for two or three days to run the tractor and loader for the grape pickers. It was so much easier getting up in the morning knowing that I wasn't going to school!

One fond memory when I was 12, my little brother George and I were hoeing around the young apple trees that were inter planted between the big, 100-plus year old ones, when we heard a crack and crash! The young tree that I had just hoed around a minute before suddenly had an old tree limb fall on top of it! We were lucky we weren't any slower at hoeing. This was 1976 and my dad was slowly replanting these old trees with new ones, without a thought of the vineyards to come on this Ranch. When the apple market hit bottom, apples were \$30/ton, my dad decided to change crops to vineyards in 1997, to ensure this land would stay in agriculture and in our family.

Jackass Vineyard Zinfandel:

My father taught me how to operate a tractor at a young age and I think I know why – he wanted me to be experienced so that I could navigate the side hills through the 8'x8' vineyard. In the steep side hill sections of Jackass Vineyard, when the ground was wet, you had to set the tractor disc so that it would not cut too much otherwise the heavy pull of the disc could cause the John Deere Crawler to slide down a row and knock out a vine or two. I remember my Nono, Leno Martinelli, watching me and working in his garden below with a laugh on his breath. I think about it now and I think he was glad to be off of that tractor as he had ran it from age 12 to 86. I wonder how many vines he knocked out.

Lee Martinelli

Lee Martinelli, Jr.



Gianna, Maddie Lu & Lee Jr. Martinelli

