

## EDITOR'S NOTES



**W**hen we pulled into the young vineyard in the Santa Maria foothills we saw grapevines that showed only the hint of a future crop. Slender canes curled lime-green tendrils out the tall ends of protective yellow grow tubes. Yet as the tubes were removed for our photographer, I felt the old promise of fall harvest.

I was swept back to the San Joaquin Valley, where my husband and I lived for several years on a small family ranch south of Fresno. The grapes there were grown for raisins, not wine, and the vines were decades-old, but the covenant of harvest was the same.

We knew the black stumps would leaf out in a spring surprise, grow lush over the summer, and by late August hang heavy with Thompson Seedless grapes. Then the pickers would come with their curved knives, settling the dusty yellow bunches on flimsy paper trays, and we would play the elemental game with Nature all farmers do: in our case, praying for three weeks of dry weather.

For two of our years there we lived in a small house at the edge of a vineyard. Our living room bordered vine rows running west to where they disappeared in the distance, beyond them the

roofs of other farmhouses and the blue Coast Range where our future hid. We were witnesses to the ebb and flow of Valley life, from the thick winter fogs to the sudden blossoming of peach trees to the reseeding of the fragrant four-o'clocks around our deck.

One morning a coyote came trotting toward us as we ate breakfast, stopping to lift his nose before he turned and melted into the shadows behind our shed. Another day a cottontail moved through the violet shade of a summer vine. Cinnamon teal ducks swam in a pond across the road and bluejays argued in the English walnut trees overarching our yard. One January first a shining pheasant heralded the new year. Daily we saw mother quail and their babies hurry by like pull toys and every evening at sunset we watched a great horned owl fly from a eucalyptus grove to rest on a standpipe before sailing on.

These days I live in town, close to the sea, but I often miss my quiet life in the middle of a vineyard. The Santa Maria trip was a reminder of that time, and of the priceless circle of seasons, not the least of which is the ripe time of fall.

*Vicki Hanson*

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Editor

## FROM OUR READERS

I just received my spring issue of the magazine and noticed that Dean [Milo E.] Whitson had passed away.

I am a 1965 graduate of the Architecture Dept. and now a practicing architect in Anchorage. In the summer of 1964 [four of us] were going through the agony of taking the dreaded calculus and analytic

geometry of Math 203. We had the singular good fortune to have Dean Whitson for this class. He was a person with the ability and passion for teaching. Each day we showed up [during] his office hour to ask questions and get guidance on the day's lessons. He never missed a day during six weeks [and] often stayed long after the hour was up to help us. He

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## ON THE COVER

*Crop and fruit science specialist James Ontiveros and Cal Poly senior agribusiness/marketing major Marta Polley examine a young pinot noir grapevine in their Santa Maria vineyard. The hopes they nurture for a first harvest in 1999 mirror the*

*possibilities of a unique proposed wine marketing minor at Cal Poly that would expand current viticulture classes and give future students an edge in the wine industry (see story on page 4).*  
*(Photo by Doug Allen)*