

SPOTTSWOODE

Mary Weber Novak

Founder

TO MANY, Mary was the kind, energetic woman who zipped around St. Helena in her little electric red car, smiling at passersby. For those more familiar with the modern history of the valley and its wine industry, Mary also represented the spirit, graciousness, and vision that helped to build Napa Valley. As the founder of Spottswode Estate Vineyard & Winery and one of the first women to run a major Napa Valley winegrowing estate, Mary was a vital part of the fabric of the valley and its wine community since 1972. Her intelligence, sense of humor, humility, and vivacious personality will continue to inspire us all at the winery.

Through hard work, insight and perseverance, Mary was quietly instrumental in establishing Spottswode as one of the valley's great family-owned wineries and a first growth-caliber property. While doing so, she also helped to pioneer organic viticulture when she began farming the vineyard organically in 1985 (an approach that current Vineyard Manager and Winemaker Aron Weinkauff passionately embraces). Mary also played an integral role in championing women in the wine industry, in the example she set as a successful winery owner, by encouraging two of her daughters to work alongside her, and through supporting the hiring of several women winemakers throughout Spottswode's storied four-decade history, including Mia Klein, Pam Starr, Rosemary Cakebread, and Jennifer Williams.

Originally from Los Angeles, Mary earned a degree in education from Stanford before settling in North San Diego County with her husband, Dr. Jack Novak. On a trip to Napa Valley with their five children in 1970, Mary and Jack fell in love with the rural beauty and relaxed pace of the valley. There, they discovered Spottswode, an idyllic 31-acre property in St. Helena with already long-established vineyards and exquisite gardens. "I've always been a person who loves the land," said Mary. "Walking in the gardens and through the vineyards, I knew we could make our home here."

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A Family Wine Estate



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In 1972, the Novaks sold Jack's medical practice and moved to Napa Valley. They immediately acquired an adjacent 15-acre parcel of land and began to replant their vineyard, which had originally been established in 1882. Sadly, on November 14, 1977, Jack, then just 44, suffered a major heart attack and passed away. Recognizing that the best future for her family lay in following through on their shared vision for Spottswoode, Mary took over management of the Estate and successfully completed her first harvest, selling grapes to local vintners, including the Shafer and Duckhorn families.

In 1982, after earning Spottswoode's reputation as a source for some of Napa Valley's most sought-after grapes, Mary hired Winemaker Tony Soter, founded Spottswoode Winery, and made Spottswoode's debut 1982 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon. Three years later, on Soter's recommendation, Mary began farming the Spottswoode Estate Vineyard organically at a time when the notion of organic farming was just in its infancy. After numerous highly acclaimed vintages in the mid-to-late 1980s, including three consecutive years with wines on *Wine Spectator's* coveted Top 100 list, Mary stopped selling grapes to other wineries in order to focus exclusively on Spottswoode's own wines—a decision that helped to establish Spottswoode as a benchmark of quality for over three decades.

Along the way, Mary was joined at Spottswoode by her daughters, Beth, in 1987, and Lindy, in 1992. Working together, they realized Mary's vision of establishing Spottswoode as one of Napa Valley's most esteemed multigenerational family estates, with a reputation for making some of the finest Cabernets in the world. In a recent, historic tasting of all the Spottswoode Cabernets since 1982, Robert Parker of *The Wine Advocate* named Spottswoode "one of Napa Valley's First-Growth Wines and Vineyards"—an amazing testament to Mary's deep love of Spottswoode. Over the years, she succeeded in passing this love, and her indomitable spirit, to her five children and to her grandchildren.

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“I had the honor of working alongside my mom for 29 years, and helping her to build Spottswode into the incredible estate vineyard and winery that it is today,” says Beth Weber Novak. “She had immense inner strength, an amazing spirit and love of life, and a dream that Spottswode would continue through generations. This has become a part of me, and of my family, and together we embrace carrying her legacy forward by continuing to nurture this wonderful estate property, which we are so fortunate to be a part of. We are honored to continue the work which she and our dad started when we moved here in 1972.”

Mary and her daughters have made an enduring commitment to stewardship at Spottswode, adopting solar energy, spearheading the restoration of Spring Creek, annually contributing 1% of winery profits to environmental causes through 1% for the Planet, and making notable contributions to the Land Trust of Napa County, Garden Conservancy, Yosemite Conservancy, and the Trust for Public Land. In addition, in 2010, Mary and Beth served as Honorary Chairs of Auction Napa Valley, which supports Napa Valley non-profits, including many that focus on healthcare and education.

When Mary stepped back from daily winery operations, she continued to tend to the estate’s historic gardens, as she had since 1972, and to walk in the vineyard every day with her black lab, Riley. Visitors to the legendary Spottswode garden parties, held at Mary’s home, always received a warm welcome as she poured each a glass of her favorite Sauvignon Blanc. Her hospitable spirit, love of wine, land, and family will continue to guide her children and grandchildren in the most special legacy called Spottswode.

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