



THE WINERY

THE DAY I SPENT HARVESTING GRAPES WITH MY AUNT NAN

By Andrea Cory (age 14)

Squishing grapes with your feet is an experience most people don't have. When I was standing in the grape barrel I felt the grape seeds in-between my toes, and the juice from the grapes oozing from the skins. I could hear the squishing noise of the grapes being crushed.

The juice is a bright reddish purple and the barrel is very slippery. I had to grip onto something or else I would have fallen. By the time I was done, I stepped out of the barrel and there was grape juice up to my knees. It was a very odd but memorable feeling.

When I arrived at the vineyard, I looked around and saw familiar sights of the sunshine and blue clouds up above long columns, with green grape vines wrapped around the trellis. Before me lay a long gravel area filled with benches, one of them was my Aunt Susan's memorial bench, which had tiles that my cousins, my aunts and uncles, and my family had carved into in memory of her. To the side of the bench park was the bocce ball courts and next to them lay three large stone tables for food to be laid onto. Someone who had never been to Hastings, Minnesota would have never expected all of this beauty, to be in such a rural area. After I was done taking in all of the familiar sights, I grabbed a pair of shears and headed down to the columns of grapes.

I was immediately greeted by my overjoyed Aunt Nan and my Uncle Sam. They introduced me to the other pickers, who were friends and relatives of my Aunt Nan. Picking grapes with all of these people made me think how great

a person my Aunt is, because she had invited all of her friends down to the winery to help pick grapes. And what amazed me about this whole day was the fact that my Aunt didn't need to pay any of these people to work; they all just volunteered because picking grapes is so much fun.

Picking grapes is also a lot of work. There were bees which would sit on the clusters of grapes trying to suck the juice out, I had to use sharp shears which I cut my fingers, I got sticky from the grape juice because sometimes the grapes would get squished and the juice would squirt all over me, and the grapes grew in tight clusters on the trellis, which made them hard to pick. The job was a lot of work but it was also a lot of fun.



My Aunt Nan felt that she needed to thank us in some way for helping her pick grapes, so she made us a huge lunch that included all sorts of French breads, homemade cookies, fresh pesto pasta, salads, chicken and many more items. The smell had tantalized me and made my stomach leap at the sight of all that food. The whole lunch was very delicious and we were very thankful for my Aunt's fantastic cooking. After lunch it was straight back to the fields, this time we were picking a new kind of grape called Foch. Before lunch we had picked Leon Millot, all these grapes were being used into making red wine. In the midst of picking the grapes, we (my brothers, their friend, and I) were called down to where the barrels were kept. My Aunt Nan said, "Hurry I have a surprise for you guys!" We had been called over to help de-stem the grapes. We had to load large boxes of grapes into a big machine that rolled the grapes through a barrel to take off the stems. The big machine was metal, and it had a big silver corkscrew that de-stemmed the grapes. When the stems were gone the grapes were transported into another machine that squished them. But little did we know that we would be squishing the grapes as well, with our feet! Huge barrels filled with grapes were put before our feet. Then we stepped into the barrels and jumped onto the grapes. People were surrounding us and watching us smash the grapes. These people were from the wine tasting that was located in the tasting room of the winery. We didn't know that we would be part of the tour of the winery.





After we finished de-stemming the grapes, picking the grapes and squishing them, we were finally finished. We had sat around for a while lying on the grass after the tiring day, we had talked about the new things that had happened since the last time we saw each other. After a while relaxing became very boring. So my cousin Nick, my brother Iain and I decided to head off to the bocce ball courts to play bocce ball. We played for an hour and I beat both Iain and Nick.

After dinner my Uncle John taught my cousin Jen how to drive the tractor. This had made me very excited and I had wanted to try. After Jen was done it was my turn to learn how to drive the tractor. I got up on the old blue tractor and



my Uncle John told me there was a stick shift and it was very hard to use. It was rusty and so it took a lot of muscle to change gears and it was hard to make it stay in the same gear. Eventually, I got used to driving the tractor and was giving everyone rides. I was very proud of myself for not crashing once.

That Labor Day weekend was one of the best weekends I've ever had. I learned how to drive a tractor, pick grapes, and how to de-stem them. I was really happy at the end of the day at what an accomplishment I had made. Doing all of that hard work made me really excited to maybe come back next year.