



## CRAWFORD BECK VINEYARD

### **Musings** **December 26, 2007**

As I sat down to write this reflection, I found myself staring out the window at the vineyard below. It is so very quiet among the vines right now. Earlier, everything -- vines, ground cover, row posts, etc -- was covered by a hard, white frost. The surface of the water-soaked vineyard soil was raised upward by columns of ice crystals beneath. Each step seemed a surprise as the surface crunched and collapsed under my boot when I took the dog out for a walk.

But as I sit here now, I hasten to remind myself that the vineyard is not forlornly dead or abandoned. Not by any means! When we prune the vines, they are green and very much alive inside. We must watch our step in the alleyways, because gopher mounds of soft mud can slip out from under one's stride, landing one butt first in the mud. And in the vine rows, bright green shoots of grass stick a few centimeters above the mud.

On warm days we see an occasional yellow jacket queen out foraging, and ladybugs can be found hunting on the vines. Not today, though. In winter, in the Pacific Northwest, colliding high and low pressure systems often force cold breezes into the Willamette Valley, assuring that the vines rest, and often assuring that Jeanne and I stay inside and write letters.

Nevertheless, it is silent, quiet. Perhaps quiescent is the word for which I am looking. Quiescent has a sort of temporariness to its meaning. No tractors are running the alleyways, and the only footsteps are Jeanne's and mine. The most sound we hear are the double-trailer trucks, loaded with a hundred 1000 pound-bales of hay for the dairy farms along the river, laboring up the 500 feet elevation of the Amity Hill below the vineyard. Quiescence, my mot du jour, has a sort of nakedness about it in the vineyard, but in the olive grove, among the evergreen olive trees (well, twigs really, now), one has a better sense of the temporariness.

When the weather permits, Jeanne and I prune vine samples for bearing wood weights. We love data, and even in the winter, there are data to collect, or lists to make of struggling vines or new replants to guide our spring work. Spring, for the vineyard, is only a few months away. Work begins again in earnest at the beginning of March, and work crews will prune and reshape the vines for the coming season. As soon as the mud gels enough, I will begin the tractor work.

But for now, we must sample the wine from last year every once in a while, and hope that all of our friends will find a way to fit Oregon into their travel plans in the New Year.