

## Mission Hill Buys 646-Acre Okanagan Valley Ranch

### Excellent Potential for White Grape Varietals

**Westbank, British Columbia**— September 3, 2002: Mission Hill Family Estate Proprietor Anthony von Mandl and Winemaker John Simes today confirmed the winery has purchased a 646-acre parcel of land near Naramata, in BC's central Okanagan Valley, formerly known as Paradise Ranch.

I've always believed in the Okanagan and its potential to produce remarkable and unique wines that could be considered among the best in the world," says proprietor Anthony von Mandl. "This acquisition was a natural for us. The Ranch adds a new dimension to our grape growing potential."

Mission Hill had been buying grapes from the previous owners since 1992, the first harvest for winemaker Simes in British Columbia, but now with the land in the winery's possession, he admits to a tremendous sense of responsibility. "This is the largest single purchase of my career," he says. "The Ranch is a place of spectacular natural beauty. It's one of the most amazing landscapes in the BC interior and I'm so proud we've been able to add it to our estate holdings."

Simes and von Mandl say it will take several years to realize the full extent of the property. Within the Ranch, there are approximately 100 acres currently planted with varieties that include Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling and Vidal,



MISSION HILL FAMILY ESTATE'S NEW OKANAGAN VALLEY RANCH. PHOTO BY BRIAN SPROUT

which is used in the production of Icewine. Because of the slightly cooler temperatures in the Naramata area, compared to those in the south Okanagan where the majority of the winery's vineyards are located, this site is especially well suited to white varietals. The vineyard's proximity to Lake Okanagan provides a moderating effect, allowing for an extended ripening period through to the end of October. "We have made some outstanding wines, notably Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Icewines, from this vineyard in the past," says John Simes. "I'm very excited that we now own the property."

#### From Kiwi to Canuck

John Simes likes to say that he's a Kiwi by birth and a Canuck by choice. The dual-citizen first came to the Okanagan a decade ago after proprietor von Mandl invited him to spend a week working at the winery. The New Zealand born winemaker admits that he had to adapt to

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the radically different growing conditions of his adopted region. He came from a relatively wet, cool climate with a long growing season to one that was quite hot, quite dry and much shorter.

As he reflected on the past ten years, he spoke of momentum. When Simes first came to Mission Hill, the winery had no land of its own. Today, the von Mandl family has 850 acres of its own vineyards and contracts another 150 acres from long-term growers. Now fully 85% of the grapes come from the winery's own estate vineyards. "With every improvement in quality, sales improved," Simes recalled. "With that revenue, we invested in more vineyards, new barrels and new equipment in the winery, leading to still more improvements in the bottle."

In Simes' mind, this cycle has only just begun. The next decade will determine what the Valley does best, but for now he continues to marvel at how much the Okanagan has to offer to winemaking. Microclimates enable a unique field mix that allow him to grow varietals from Burgundy, Bordeaux and the Rhône side by side. He insists the ability to control the grape growing cycle in its entirety is one of a winemaker's biggest assets.

Simes believes that winemaking in the Okanagan is still very much in its infancy. It's almost a frontier mentality and it's one he shares with proprietor von Mandl.



MISSION HILL FAMILY ESTATE WINEMAKER, JOHN SIMES  
PHOTO BY BRIAN SPROUT

With the winery continuing to solidify its vineyard holdings, both men truly believe that the best is yet to come.

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