

Name of Interviewee: Rolando Herrera
Date of Interview: January 25th, 2017
Name of Interviewer: Steve Velazquez
Length of Interview: 118 minutes

Transcript audited by Velazquez on May 8, 2020. False starts and repetitive verbalizations ("um") have been removed for overall clarity.

SV: So, today is January 25th, 2017. My name is Steve Velazquez. I'm here at the *Mi Sueño* winery with Rolando Herrera to do an interview for the Mexican winemakers project. Good afternoon. How are you doing?

RH: I'm doing well, Steve. Thank you.

SV: So, for the record, can you please state your name?

RH: Yes, my name is Rolando Herrera.

SV: And Rolando, can you tell us when and where you were born.

RH: I was born in June 20th, 1967 in a small town or small village in the state of Michoacán, named El Llano. Back then, it was El Municipio Zamora, Zamora, Michoacán.

SV: Zamora, Michoacán. Like [1:00] a lot of the prominent makers in México.

RH: Yes, lots of people came from Michoacán. Prior to being a town, I was born... it was first an *hacienda*, you know, belonged, you know, to one family. And then, I believe, you know, in the 40s, you know, when the land was divided with the president Lazaro Cardenas, then there the land were divided became a town, became El Llano, which it stan[ds], it means el llano, you know, the plain.

SV: The plain, yeah.

RH: You know, and you know it's literally thousands and thousands of hectares of just looks like a pool table. It's beautiful, what makes it beautiful is there's mountain right next to it. I mean, literally, it takes you from the plaza of our little town El Llano, you can go to the mountain in ten-minute [2:00] walk, in twenty-minute, thirty-minute walk, you can get up to over called *La Santa Cruz*. In Mexico, most, I mean, you see cruxes, you know, it's in every, in every hillside or mountain close to a village, and so from the plaza to the

Santa Cruz, you know, probably thirty minutes, which is a very common walk and very popular, especially during Easter, *Semana Santa*.

SV: *Semana Santa*, yeah. You've done that walk many time?

RH: Many times, yes. Yeah. As a kid, as a kid also, I remember good memories, but when I go back to visit my town, I try to do it at least once. You know, it's like a tradition, you know. But, it's getting harder and harder, you know, the older get, the harder it gets and the longer it takes, you know.

SV: And the longer it takes. Yes. So, tell me a little bit about your family, your father and your mother.

RH: Well, my, my parents [3:00] ... I still have both my parents, you know, named Jose Luis Herrera; my father's name. and my mom is Maria de Jesus Herrera. They're both born, born in Mexico. My mother was born in El Llano in the 1940s. my father was born in a small town next to El Llano, will probably say ten-minute, fifteen-minute drive called La Soledad. La Soledad knows as *la chole*. And that's where my Herrera ancestors come from, La Soledad, which prior to La Soledad it's Pajacuaran. It's a city, you know, Pajacuaran probably thirty-minute drive *la chole*. As far as we know, that's where the [4:00] Herrerass, from my ancestors, going back to my great-great-grandparents.

SV: So, it's 1700s?

RH: Yes, yeah. They're from Pajacuaran. They started like, my grandfather, my father's dad, moved to La Soledad, so that's how my father was born in La Soledad, in *la chole*.

SV: Were they, did they work in agriculture your parents?

RH: Yes, 100%. I mean, we're from, it's, well, Michoacan in general. It's very rich in agriculture. So, that's we do. So, my father grew up, yes, picking strawberries, and tomatoes, and cactus, corn, you know, just 100% agriculture.

SV: And so, that's, did they have land or was he working different?

RH: My [5:00] father side, they did have land. My dad did not acquire any land because he lost, my dad lost his father when he was just one-year old. So, that, you know, changed my dad's, you know, life for forever. So, my dad was literally raised by uncles in both La Soledad and El Llano. My mother, she, her parents, my grandparents, they did have property, you know. They had, back then when the lands were divided, every family back then, there was so much land. What they needed was people. They needed more people to, to take on more land and put it to work. So, every family got two hectares, [6:00] in what they called it with irrigation, all year round. And four hectares dry, dry form. So, on the dry farm, four hectares, you can only get one crop per year, you know, based on the

rain. Mother nature is so, that's a risky one, and it depends. Some years you get a crop, good crops, some years you get a very bad crop, or no crop. And in the two hectares, it was guaranteed, two crops a year. But that's why there wasn't as much land, not a lot of land that could be, that had access to water from the rivers. So, you had that option, or some families got a total of ten hectares, which is like, what? Twenty-two acres, but it was dry, you know, so, [7:00] it was pretty neat. I mean, I think that puts good thought into it, and, you know, that's how the families acquired their land. My grandparents acquired the land from my mom's side. But, my father worked in, you know, he was raised by his uncles in both sides of the family and worked in their parcels in their land.

SV: Just out of curiosity, were your uncles or his uncles, I guess your great-uncles, or even your father, were they part of the Bracero program?

RH: Yes.

SV: Your uncles and your father?

RH: My uncles and my father. They were part of the Braceros program, so that's how my dad, I mean, came here through the Braceros program, and he got his passport, you know, signing up, you know, he told me the story. He came to Tijuana first, and his stop [??] was there, when he was what? Sixteen and a half, seventeen, very young. So, he was [8:00] an orphan with no father, you know, he's got some pretty amazing stories and sad stories, you know, what it was like, to grow up and being raised without a father, and, you know, it's amazing, you know, back then, I mean, okay. Even today, never, I would imagine is never easy to raise, be brought up, or grow up without having both your parents. So, that's why he left Michoacan, you know, so young to Tijuana. And started, just, you know, exploring the world and trying to get ahead. And he signed up for the Braceros program and start coming in. Eventually, he's got his passport that way.

SV: Do you recall how long he was doing that before he got his paper?

RH: Not exactly, I mean, talking to him, [9:00] took him like two years, two years to get his passport. My father, everyone who knows my father, whether is back home or here, anybody says how great of a hard-working, great worker he was, and hard worker he was, and how smart he was. So, my father says that wherever he landed, they always wanted to make him a permanent, and got him up to the front of the line, kept him as a steady worker, right. Yeah. For him, being raised without a father, I think it comes from being raised without a father and just trying to please. You know, he would work really hard and try to please, you know, his supervisors, their boss with his work ethic and doing a great job. So, you know, it didn't take him as long other people because of his work ethic and he really earned it. [10:00]

SV: He was young and healthy.

RH: He was young.

SV: Did he, did he work his way up to Napa?

RH: Yes, they he mentioned he made into, with passport, he came to Madera, you know, Madera, Fresno, Lodi, he was in and... cotton. He was pick cotton in a both in Mexico. Are they also here in Southern California? So, he just worked himself up, start coming, and what's the town here where they do a lot of garlic?

SV: Gilroy

RH: Gilroy. You know, but in, in a friend... he didn't know Napa existed, but a friend of his, from the same hometown, stopped by where he was working, and he told him: "Why don't you come with me? We're going to Napa." And my dad was like: "Aaahhh."
[11:00] He wasn't so sure about. And his friend convinced him: "So, yeah. Check it out. It's work. I'm going to go." Back then, there was very little work in the vineyards but there was a lot of people were employed by the chicken.

SV: Oh, the chicken plants.

RH: Plants.

SV: That was in Napa, or that was in...

RH: In Saint Helena.

SV: Saint Helena.

RH: They say that right now is a winery. Can't think of the name. So, you know, eventually...I'm sorry.

SV: What year was this?

RH: This was 1960. I want to say 1960, between '62 and '64 I want to say.

SV: Yeah, because the chickens hasn't been around for a long time.

RH: They're not being a long no, so. So, that's how he made Napa, and you know, he loved it ever since.

SV: So he was working in chickens?

RH: He worked in a, we called a *granja*, [12:00] the chicken cup, you know, where they, you know, eggs, and raise chicken, and just clean, cleaning them up.

SV: And he did that for several years?

RH: He did that for, he did that for a few years, and then, from there, he worked actually at Schramsberg 19, was it 1967, I think, the year I was born, he worked 1967 harvest, I believe at Schramsberg. so, he's proud to say: "No, I am not the first one in the family who worked in the wine business, you know. That he did." And you know, I'm following his footsteps, you know, which for me I didn't know. I didn't know that up until, Gosh, I mean, probably, I've known it for about ten years, but for the...I've been doing this for 30 years myself, so when I found out I was pretty happy, pretty excited. I said: "Yes." You know, so, I can, I guess my dad did work in work in the wine business in Schramsberg, [13:00] which is funny because one of favorite. I mean, it's my favorite sparkling wine here in California. I mean, there's a lot of good ones, but I've always been a fan of their product and the property. So, my father worked one harvest there and then, Mr. Schramsberg did not have work for him full time. So, my dad says and he called Jack Chandler, a friend of his, a friend of his, who's name Jack Chandler, very well known landscape architect in Napa valley and he was the owner-founder of Napa valley nursery back then. In the 70s or 60s, I don't know, I don't know exactly when Jack Chandler started the nursery, but, you know, it was, it was early. Mr. Schramsberg called Jack Chandler and said: "Hey, I got this worker here [14:00] that I can't. I don't have work for him full time, but he's a great worker, you know. You should, you know, you need to meet him and see if you have any work for him." So, he was taken to meet Jack Chandler and start working there, and Jack Chandler fell in love with him. And, you know, he never left. And, you know, he stayed employed ever since. And I want to say what year. That was '68, '68. That's '70. I mean, in the late 60s. And, you know, that's where he grew. That's where he grew as a worker and Jack Chandler always had, you know, cows and hogs, and sheep, [15:00] you know, his nursery, I think he was doing plants, but not, it wasn't the main, the main, main task. He was pretty much doing a little bit of everything.

SV: Okay, so he worked for, for Chandler in the nursery from '68 to '80, '90? 30 years? Or was it that long?

RH: No, no. it wasn't that long. It was...because he left actually 1980.

SV: 1980 right. That's right. And he left to go back to Mexico? Is that...

RH: Yes. My father 1980, he decided to go back to Mexico. He was very, he worked really hard, and he had already finished his home in Mexico. And also, he bought a piece of property from one of his uncles, whom pretty much raised him since he was, you know, two, three years old, [16:00] as a teenager. So, to him, he was like his father. You know, my uncle Luis. And, my uncle Luis sold my dad a piece of lot, out of his lot. And my father built a house there. So, he teared down his house of adobe, you know, and paper and carton. So, he was really excited, you know, he wanted to go, and see it and live it, and so 1980, he says: "You know, we're going back to Mexico. I'm tired. I want to, I

want a break. And you guys, you know, we're all going. You do school, you continue your education over there." So, for us, that was like: "What?" It was devastating. I mean, we were excited to go back to Mexico, happy to see our grandparents and our families. But we didn't like the idea that we were going to live [17:00] in Mexico because we were already, I mean, we already felt comfortable speaking the language, you know, I was in sixth grade at the time. And it was, you know, twelve and a half, almost thirteen. But, you know, that's what we wanted to do.

SV: So, you were actually born in Saint Helena? Is that where you guys were leaving?

RH: No, I was born in, also, in Mexico in El Llano, 1967.

SV: Okay.

RH: Yeah, my father didn't bring us here till 1975, December of 1975.

SV: So, you guys were about 5 years, yeah about 5 years? 5 years living in Saint Helena. And took everybody...was your mother working or was she more a stay at home...?

RH: No, she was working. She was working also. You know, my parents are very hard working. Mi mom, get up early, do the lunch, [18:00] and get everything ready, and, you know, I went away to school, catch the bus, you know, 8 o'clock, 8:30, she was out there working with my dad in the nursery.

SV: In the nursery, okay. So then, you went back to Mexico. You were in sixth grade. Correct?

RH: Yes, 1980.

SV: Yeah, 1980. And you went to school there. So, how long were you in Mexico before you came back?

RH: So, I came back in June, in December of 1982. So, it was about, you know, couple years, year and a half. It was really hard, really hard transition for me. I didn't like for the first, you know, couple months. And, you know, after that, I realized that wow. I missed Napa. I missed my friends. I missed [19:00] the culture here, the system, you know, all the opportunities, and just the system that we have here. Compared to Mexico is, you know, I knew right away. I mean, my appreciation grew, you know, tenfold and hundredfold, and so I'm like wow, you know. I could've gotten to school, but it was just so much harder. So, 1982 I talked to my dad, and I said: "Listen, you know. I want to go back Napa. I want to back to Napa. And get a job, and enroll myself in school, and I want to move back. And make my life over there," I said. And he understood, you know. My older brother, Jose, was already here.

SV: He didn't go back?

RH: He went back, back he was, he's about [20:00] two years, two and a half years older than me. So, I was like thirteen years old, thirteen and a half years old. He was what? Almost sixteen, fifteen, fifteen and a half. So, he only lasted there six months. But because he was already older, and in Mexico, sure you've heard, but at least back then, you know, you're fifteen, you're adult. You know, you're fifteen, you're treated like here eighteen or twenty-one. So, he six months after, we got there in 1980. My older brother told my dad: "You know, this is not for me. I want to go back." But I couldn't come with him. I wanted to come with him, but I was too young. So, when I turned fifteen and I told my dad I wanted to come back, and be with my brother, and go to school and start, and have a career, he's like: "Okay." My mom wasn't so convinced, you know. It was hard for here to see me leave that young. She [21:00] didn't want me to come, but I was ready, you know. I knew that, you know, I wanted to come back here, you know, and take, and get myself back in school and take advantage of all the great things that this country, you know, provided.

SV: So did, do you moved in with your brother, so you and brother were living together when you came?

RH: Yes, so, came here. Memo's my brother, and we were living, he was living in an apartment with, you know, some friends and cousins. So, one-bedroom apartment, so I, you know, I lived there. And for maybe six months, and we just kept moving around. So, back then was only like twelve, fourteen people. You know, one-bedroom and is this...so yeah. So, we, you know, so, I got in here [22:00] December, enrolled myself in Napa High School. And, you know, he was working at a Auberge du Sole back then with Masa, so he, you know, he got me a job there with me, washing dishes, you know, where *Mi Sueño* story begins. You know, coming back here 1982, my first dish was washing dishes out of Auberge du Sole for Masa.

SV: Yeah. So, did your cousins...did you have any uncles living that were living here at the time or other family?

RH: I did. I had...yeah. I had lots of cousins, lots of cousins, lots of uncles, but we... I mean, they didn't have a room. They didn't have a place for us, none of our uncles or aunts, they didn't have a place for us. And we were...it was probably, I mean, way back then it would've been nice because it was big transition for me. It was, it was, it was harder than I thought, you know, when I left Mexico. [23:00] I was ready to leave, but I knew it was going to be challenging, but the reality was more challen[ging], more difficult than I thought. You know, trying to be an adult, independent, of course, you know, missing your parents and all those things, but it was better that way.

SV: Yeah, especially at age fifteen.

RH: At age fifteen. Yes.

SV: So, then you enrolled as a freshman?

RH: I did, yes.

SV: Okay. Now, I know you're a sports fan. Is that when...were you playing sports? I mean, I know you had to work to make a living, but did you play sports at all in high school?

RH: I did it on recess. You know, I love sports, but my schedule you do not. I mean, the fact that I needed to provide for myself, so schedule you was only in school, only could take five classes, not six classes. My sixth period class was work experience. [24:00] So, at 2 o'clock, 2:30, I was done with school. You know, go to my locker, get my stuff, and I'd go to work. We had to be at the Auberge du Sole by 3 o'clock. So, we didn't have much time. So, you know, my working hours was from 3 o'clock till 10:30, 11 o'clock at night.

SV: Wow.

RH: That was my schedule. So, you know, it was really hard. It was really hard. I cant tell you, you know, how many times, you know, it was hard to see all my friends, you know, start to school, you know, socialize, and all play, go to practice for soccer, for football, for baseball, you know, and as kid, when you fifteen, sixteen, you want to be that, right? But for me it was, I needed to go to work. But I did get to enjoy it sometimes. Sometimes, I would get like a Tuesday off or a Wednesday off to work [25:00] on the weekends. And that's when I realized got to see how much I was missing, you know. But it was interesting because my own, my counselors, I had a lot of support in my counselors. And I remember going the first sign up the school myself, and the counselor was: "Where are your parents?" so, I constantly had to explain, well, you know, my parents are not here. I'm self-dependent. I'm by myself. My brother and I, you know, he's like, he's my guardian, I was his guardian. You know, and it took a while for them to really believe us. At the beginning, they probably thought that we were denying our parents. But I said: "No, seriously. You know, we are by ourselves. So, really need, you know, I need work experience to be sixth period all year long."

SV: So, they must've been supportive because they saw you wanting to go to school and still...

RH: Very supportive, I mean, I loved my counselors and the teachers, you know. [26:00] And to certain degree, I mean, looking back I can see I had a good relationship with them, but also, I think they noticed the difference in me and other kids because you are forced to grow up very quick. You know, when you're by yourself, and you have to, you know, pay for your own rent and feed yourself and laundry, and the responsibility, the independence, I mean, you have the freedom which is good, but, you know, it's not as, it's a...at least for me I'm thankful that I did, I knew that freedom would be dangerous if I didn't, you know, because...

SV: It could go bad.

RH: It could go bad because now, I'm coming from being with my parents where I had to be home by 8 o'clock, you know, where here, it was like I can go wherever I want with whomever I want. I can come home at 1 o'clock in the morning, 2 o'clock in the morning, but I think...I'm thankful the good advice [27:00] with my parents. I would just keep the routine, you know, coming home, coming home, so that was good. That was very helpful, but one of the hardest things was not being able to be, to enjoy being a kid. I mean, there's, you know.

SV: That's tough.

RH: Yeah. It's tough. You know, I knew I was doing the right thing, I mean, I never regretted it. It's hard because you're human, you know, but there was many, many days, you know, you go to work with tears, you know, with tears in your eyes because you want, you know, you want to play sports so bad. And for me, soccer was my thing. And I knew that I, if I could play soccer, I could've helped my team win. And all the teachers wanted me because I would play sports in the recess, and my teachers would see, "wow, you know, you're good. You want to join the team in basketball and in soccer?" but, you know, I needed to stay focus and go to work.

SV: I do another project with Cubans [28:00] who came when they're teenagers without their parents in the 1960s, and so some of them say same stories of issues of coming and so, as a child who grew up in Napa, how did you, at that point, did you consider yourself like American now? were you always thought, you know, I'm Mexican? Do you remember back then, as a teenager, feeling either American or Mexican?

RH: Yeah, I mean, I've always considered myself Mexican. I'm Mexican. I am Mexican, so I always consider myself Mexican. And it's so hard not to consider yourself Mexican with all your prejudices, you know, [29:00] that you ran into, you know.

SV: Have you did as a teenager?

RH: I did. I did from the beginning, you know, whether was, whether my friends would tease me, you know, one way to really, my friends to get my trouble, that was the second grade, third grade, you know, which is funny know, they called my Mexican, you know, and I would just, but in the way they said and the tone they said it, but it's kids, you know, back then second, third graders. Now, I mean, I love it when they call me a Mexican, you know. That's great. That's so beautiful because that's what I am. That's where I'm from. That's my country, but I didn't lived it as much as other friends of mine, Mexican, and I think because of my color, you see how white, I mean. And see my veins. [30:00] A lot of people, and still today, they don't think I'm Mexican, you know, because the color of my skin. But, I, and of course, I'll always, I mean, I think as you get older, I

mean, when I, sure when I became a citizen, from that moment or even applied, I started to feel proudly American.

SV: What year was that you became?

RH: That was what? 1992, 1994. It was after the amnesty, I mean, that's how.

SV: Oh, okay.

RH: Because my father, when he came here, we were here legally. We came through a passport, brought us through the Silva, permit or passport back...[31:00] so that's how we were here legally, and we would come, but, my father because he doesn't, he didn't read or write English or Spanish, never went to school. When all the letter from immigration would come to get a residential card, he didn't know what to do. Back then, there was no support. So, we always had the Silva passport and when we came back here, it was a lot easier for us to get our citizenship through the Ronald Reagan amnesty than to try and go back and, you know, find the records of 1975, and Silva, my parents, so, you know, we didn't have to go that. Plus, my parents were already in Mexico, we all needed to be together [32:00] and go to the embassy and here, and there.

SV: So, it was just easier.

RH: It was easier to just do it through.

SV: So, okay. So, you're at the restaurant and you work how long in the restaurant?

RH: So, '82, I work in the Aberde Solis with Masa, then masa opened in San Francisco, 1984. Yeah, 1984. And I go and work with him at Masa. He has, my brother and I were interested, we had a job there. And you know, at we didn't want to go, we're like: "we like it here." You know, we were going to school in Napa, working here, but, you know, when the new chef came in nice person, but we missed him [33:00]. We're like: "Oh." You know, we're used to working with Masa, so my brother say: "You know what? We should go." We had to travel every, commute every day. But, we were going to be happier, so we did that for, we did that for half a year. We did it for half a year, and then it was just so hard because we, at that point, we were living in Saint Helena in Whithall lane in the same place where we were pretty much raised, Jack Chandler, but, instead of living in the house we were raised, now we were living in the farmer's, worker farmer's house because the house that my parents, that we lived in as a kid, it was already being occupied by another family that Jack Chandler had there working. So let me tell that was so hard, walking into what I called my house, my property, you know, and [34:00] being now on the other side of the fence, you know, sleeping, in, you know, hard beds, and in floors because, you know, at some point, you know, there were time that we couldn't afford an apartment, you know, so, especially in the summer, we had to always sleep in

the car. So, we went up to talk to Jack Chandler in 19, that was 1984, and we told him if he could let us sleep there, you know, and he said: "Sure." You know, for one year, half a year, he lent us a trailer, you know, a trailer but with no power, just to sleep, but it was so cold, you know, ran in for the house, and then, eventually he knew the trailer, and then we slept in a room, you know, with no power. We just needed a place to sleep. We were hardly ever there. We would get up in the morning, but it was hard. It was hard and great humbling experience [35:00] to just see how quickly life turns because I remember standing there saying: "Wow. Two years ago, I was there inside that house with my room, and everything, my clothes, and now, look at me. Now, I'm over here, you know, fighting to survive, you know, make a living with the same men that were working with my dad." It was very humbling experience, really hard to, you know, to accept, you know, because you're like wow, you know, but, so we did that. We did that. We lived in Saint Helena, went to Napa high, and got off at 2:30, 2 o'clock, 2:30, and had to be in San Francisco by 3:30. Masa allowed us to be at work at 3:30, get there before 4, you know, depending on traffic, so yeah. You know, we had a 1970 Volkswagen, old Volkswagen, and go away, we're going, [36:00] every day, every day, every day. And we worked Tuesday through Saturday, and on Fridays, we would spend the night. We would stay there. But we'd sleep in the car. And that was hard, I mean, we would find a street or find a parking lot, and some of those street were so very inclined, so it's so hard to sleep in a seat. But for us, it was 11, it was midnight on Friday, at midnight or 12:30 is one of the busiest days, we just didn't want to drive, you know, back Saint Helena, and come back, so we stayed, we slept most of the Fridays on, in our car. And sometimes, we would sneak back into the restaurant and sleep under the tables. You know, so things you do to survive, you know. But that was really hard, it was too hard. So [37:00] after 6 months, few months of doing that, my brother and I decided to move to San Francisco. You know, this is too hard. So, the second semester, eleventh grade, not the first, the first semester of eleventh grade, I didn't, got out of school. So, we moved to San Francisco and there we rented an apartment, tinier than a condo, I mean, it was like, my gosh, maybe what, 300 square foot, but, you know, the good thing was right in front of Masa's, so we would just walk the street, so that was nice. So, I did that for about half a year, and boy, talk about growing up. You know, I thought was, I'd already grown up living in Saint Helena, but in Napa by myself and going to school, but when we moved up to the city, and I was things I never saw and seen in my life, so from that aspect was great because, you know, [38:00] you really living in a city and having all the freedom and you learn, you see everything. You see the real world, you know, good and bad and ugly, but that really helped me grow up and appreciate, feel comfortable and more independent. But I wasn't comfortable, I told my brother: "You know what? I'm, this is not for me, you know, I miss Napa." So, I went back to Napa, all by myself, back in high school, and got a job in Mustard's Grill was in the posit. So, I remember walking in, what was in January, walking in to Mustard's Grill, and Cindy was there, and I just filled up my

application, and you know, she looked at it really quick and sweetheart, so she started asking me questions: "Oh my. Boom." So, she had my resume, worked in Masa, Aber de Solis, Masa, San Francisco. She asked me a couple questions. She's like: "Okay. When do you want to start?" You know, [39:00] so she hired me on the spot, and I'm like: "Oh my God." So, I did that for a few months, and you know, it was great working, working with her there, but back then, I love cooking now. I love the kitchen now. Back then, I did not like it, it was really hard. I felt like top, you know, I was young and lot of energy, it's hard to work, for a teenager, you know, in a kitchen for 8, 9 hours everyday. So, I just did it because I had to, you know, I want to keep my promise to myself and my mom that I would go to school and that I would graduate from Napa high, and then I would, of course, have to provide. So, that's why I did it. So, in June of 1985, I left Mustard's after my eleventh year, and, you know, I went, I told Cindy [40:00] that I just, you know, I wanted a change. I wanted to do something outside, so I went and worked with my cousins in the vineyards. You know, I talked to my cousins, say: "Hey. You know, I left the restaurant because it was summer. So I figured, you know, I want a job during the day." And my cousin say: "Oh really? Well, you can come and work with us." And I said: "Yeah, I'd love to, you know, for summer job." So my plan was just to work in the summer out doing something, and then once school started again, my senior year school, I could get back into kitchen and do that. So, you know, I went to work with my cousins, and there the wine supervisor, you know, called my name, they day before he said: "Tomorrow, I'm going to need a couple of you guys, 2 or 3 of you guys to come and help me in the winery." And I'm like: "Wow, [41:00] winery." I go: "That sounds pretty neat." But there was like 30 of us working out there, and I was like the newest kid on the block.

SV: So you were just the pruning.

RH: Actually, we were, we were developing a new vineyard. In developing a new vineyard at a Silverado Trail, and we were just digging, picking, shovel, digging, and pipes, and I was just like: "I didn't know nothing." I was just, you know, there helping my cousins, and move around, but, you know, two weeks into it, I was starting to get the hang of it. I was starting to like it. I'm like: "Oh, that's pretty neat, you know." We're going to do this. We're going to do that. And connect the PBC and moving stuff. I was starting to enjoy in getting connected with the project. But, the supervisor as I mentioned, he's going to need people in the winery, that gets my attention, but then I'm like: "Aahh." There so many with more seniority. They're going to go. So, the next day, you know, he calls my name. He says: "Rolando, [42:00] and Salvador, and you know, Jesus. You guys come with me." So, I get in my, you know, 1970 rusted Volkswagen, and we follow him up to Silverado Trail. And that's how I landed in Stag's Leap. You know, so I was really excited. I'm like: "Yes. I get to see the wine. A wine for the first time." So we went to Stag's Leap and he starts going up the hill, up to Warren's house, and I got this funny

feeling, I'm like: "Oh, oh. The wine is down here. Why are we going up here? What's going on?" So, we all followed the supervisor up there, and we get up to the top of the mountain where you would see, you know, rocks and buckts and scenery, and people, and that's when Warren Winiarski was remodeling his home. So, the supervisor says: "Okay, here you go." He hands us a pair of glasses, goggles, a pair of gloves, [43:00] and a hammer. He says: "Okay. There's a big pile of rocks. You see these rocks? So, what you guys need to do is take every rock, and you know, give it a face, give it a face or two, and make another pile, and you guys want to be handing to the masonaries. You know, that Warren was building a beautiful rock wall along, around his home. So, I'm like: "Oh, my God." At that point, I'm like: "Sucks." I regret, I wanted to run back to the vineyard project, but, you know, I was young, and I'm like: "Okay, well, you know, we got to work." So, took my goggles, gloves and I went to work. We went. And I spent all summer there in 1985 summer, working up Warren's house, not only breaking rock, but you know, digging ditches and trenches, and mixing concrete, you know, I was taught [44:00] to no matter what work you're doing, my grandparents and my parents, that you should be thankful, thankful and do it with pride, do it with *ganás*. So, that's something that we have in us. So, quickly I started enjoying, you know, breaking the rock, and doing my thing, and mixing concrete, and that's what Warren let me know, saw me, got to know me, and I think, you know, looking back he liked my work ethic. And prior to...

SV: Were you the youngest one in that group, you think?

RH: Yes. I was the youngest one. I was 17, 16 and a half, 17 years old. I was by far the youngest one in that group. So, a week before school starts, I'm getting ready, end of August, September, so [45:00] I would believe it was like a Wednesday. A Wednesday I talked to Warren, juts thanked him, I just went up to him and said: "*Señor*, thank you. I just wanted you to know that, you know, I want to thank you for allowing me, for giving me a job, and to let you know that this Friday will be my last day." You know, just give him the thanks and appreciate and I had a good time, I mean, it was fun working out there because I learned so much, you know, and then, he, I told him Friday was my Friday because I was going to go back to school on Monday. Warren asked me: "well, okay." He's like: "what university are you going to?" you know, and I'm like: "Oops." I wasn't expecting that for him to ask me what school I was going to, what university. So, I looked at him and I'm like: "Actually, I'm finishing my high school here in Napa high." And he, [46:00] he was, I could see a little surprise: "Oh, really?" and asked me something like: "well, what are you going to do next?" And I told him: "Well, I'm going to go to school during the day, and I'll get a job at night in a restaurant." And I told him: "I have a lot of good experience in restaurants." You know with Masa, so I can pretty much walk in any restaurant and good chance they're going to hire me. And then he's: "You want to, you want to work here." And I'm like: "I can't. I need a job at night." And you know, I try to explain to him, but he was trying to explain to me that I could also work. And I'm

like: "I can't." and now he says, and I said: "I need to work in night." And he's like: "But you can also do that here." You know, so it was okay. "You know, it's harvest." And I'm like: "What's harvest?" I knew nothing, so he was explaining to me that okay it's harvest, and it's picking grapes, [47:00] and he's got a night crew, and a day crew down in the winery. And if I'm interest, I could go to school and get out school and come and work the night shift. So, I'm like: "Oh. Okay." I mean, you know, sounded good, just needed a job. I'm like: "Sure." You know, I had no idea. I'm just: "Okay, sure." I accepted the job, so, you know, the first day in school in senior, you know, got out of my first day, and, you know, looking back, well,. I should've given myself at least a day off or a week. You know, it's always so exciting when you go back to school and you see your friends and all this. So, again, here I go, these feeling again, like: "Agh. You know, got to go back to work." So, I arrived to Stag's Leap and my first day, and you know, they guide through: "Okay. Come on. You got to fill out your time card and this and that." [48:00] And there's a building we called building 2 in Stag's Leap one of the main buildings, big doors, beautiful doors, and you know, just remember walking the stairs and seeing this platform, just seeing these big doors. You know, I've never seen a door that big, only in the movies, you know. And I'm like: "Oh my God. And the tall buildings, big walls." And the guy who I'm with opens the door and I still remember as if it was yesterday, you know, just the smell, you know, the smell, and I see these big tanks, wood tanks, beautiful, barrels, and I was like: "Oh, my God." It's like walking into, you know, a new world that you've never seen. And I loved it. I'm just like: "Wow." I mean, the whole depression or sadness of not being in school just went away. And I was like, you know, it is a little dark, and then: "This is so neat, you know. What is this?" and you know, loved it. [49:00] That's why I like to say that. You know, thanks to Warren and God, you know, that guided me to an industry that, you know, it's be home for me since day one.

SV: Yeah, since 17.

RH: 17, yeah.

SV: 17 years old. So, just quickly, what were the first kinds of jobs that Warren, or that you were doing?

RH: Cleaning. Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning. Yes. And I didn't mind it one bit. My job was to clean, wash tanks, wash hoses, wash the drains, clean the drains, scrub the drains, barrels, clean the press, you know, its considered the dirty work, but I loved it. I mean, you know, I think took it after my mom and my grandma. I'm a neat person. You know, I like things clean and organized in a way, so for me, I loved it. And yeah, [50:00] come from a dishwasher, gosh, this fits right in. and for me, I think cleaning I loved because I got to see things from a different angle, I got to put things away, and disassemble things, you know, when you're washing things, you got to, you know, break them down: "Oh this is

pretty neat.” So for me, it was just, I was like a kid in candy store. And I didn’t mind it. I did that for a good 2 years.

SV: After school?

RH: He had my whole year in senior, so I did that. So, harvest was done, over. And I was, I had such a good time doing harvest, and I knew was going to end. And I was like getting a little sad. I’m like: “Oh man. Now what am I going to do? I love this job, but I cant leave school. You know, I cant work. I’m not going to leave school to come here work during the day.” Because I knew I had a job if I wanted to because everybody loved me. I was the youngest kid, but everybody loved me because, you know, I would just cleaning after them and I was so happy, you know. I would go up to them and: “Okay. [51:00] How can I help you?” “Okay. Clean that up. Pick that up.” “Okay, good.” I would get the hose and, you know.

SV: What was it like working in there? Was there music playing or just people sing or was it all work?

RH: It was fun. It was everything. But, serious passion, you know, people had fun. Music, yes. Music, you know, having dinner together every night, and Warren, at least once or twice a week would buy us dinner or send us dinner, so it was fun. It was a lot of fun, but I knew, I sensed that it was serious. You know, you can have fun, but you got to do things like right, you know. And that’s one thing, attention to detail, and the repetition, so, you know, that’s why it took me a long time. I did cleaning for a long time because I need to learn the experience, and they didn’t let [52:00] me touch the wine until I was ready. You know, the actual racking. And, warren had great solo workers, and a lot of these solo workers were very educated. UC Davis’ graduates, so they, not only were they good solo workers, but they had a wine making degree, so I knew it. But it was fun, everything. I mean, it wasn’t too serious, and it wasn’t all play. You know, we could play but when it come to work in the wine, taking care of things, it had to be done, the Stag’s Leap Way, the Winiarski way, you know. The Warren Winiarski way. So I loved that, you know.

SV: Did he over see a lot? Would he come down and check on things or did he leave those person who must another supervisor and who was that?

RH: No, he had his...when I got in there he ad his associate wine maker, Bob Roman [??] and he had cellar master, and had an assistant cellar master, so he had a great team. So, but [53:00] he would come, oh yeah, we would. I mean, one you wouldn’t last there if you didn’t have the passion to do things right because you never knew when Warren was going to show up. You know, because he was const[antly], every day he was there, I mean, not in the cellar, but he was there. Sometimes, he’d come down and taste the tanks, or just wonder around or walk around, you know, doing his thing, so he was always around, so we knew that. But, yeah, you know, better not catch you doing something, you know, that you shouldn’t be doing or handling the wine in a certain way that you

shouldn't, but everybody was very professional. Very professional, and trying to do things the best way.

SV: So how did, how did you move from washing to the next step? What was the next step?

RH: Well, I mean, actually, going back the harvest, 1985 harvest, like I said 1985 that was my first harvest there, [54:00] so when harvest was over, I met with Warren, and like I said I was going to, I was sad that my job was going to end, and I need to go back to a restaurant. But something great happen, my conversation with Warren, he offered me, I told him that I didn't want to leave school that I want to continue working there, and he's like: "Well, you can continue working here if you want, you know." And he offered me the keys, like: "You can have a key to lock up the doors and you can come here after school. I work here almost everyday, everyday." And he did, he has his office there. I worked here everyday till 9 o'clock, 9:30, so: "When I leave, you leave." You know, so 9 o'clock, so: "You can come from 3 o'clock to 9 o'clock, you know." So, but I'm like: "No, but I need to work my 40 hours," I said, "I need my 40 hours to pay my bills." [55:00] And he's like: "Well, come in the weekends and make up your 40 hours." So it was great. I was so happy. And I'm like, I was like so surprised. I'm like: "Oh my God." You know, so that's what I did. I kept going there, but I get off at 9, and then I come in in Saturdays and to make up my 38, 40 hours, everyday Saturday. And sometimes on Sunday, you know. I loved what I did back then so much that I told his associate wine makers: "You know, whenever you guys need anything, just call me. Anytime." So there were times that, this wine maker would tell me: "Okay, I need I tank by, this tank washed by Monday." Alright, and depending on how busy we were, I didn't mind going there at 9 or 10 o'clock washing the tank, making sure that tank was ready for them on Monday, you know, so I continued. [56:00] So, Warren offered me a job and that's what I did. So, I enrolled myself in Napa Valley College, and back then I loved my job, but I wasn't, I didn't know I was going to be wine making. I was still pursuing what I thought I wanted to do as a little kid. I always pictured myself with a suit, you know, and briefcase, and I love numbers, I like fixing things, so remember, you know, I want to be an electronic engineer. So, my first course was based on that. But, then I only did that one semester, and then I realized, you know, I really like this. And start, educating myself, and hearing more a wine making career, so I changed my classes to wine making. And I saw that there was opportunity for me to grow, so I went to, I changed my school to go [57:00] at night to college, and work during the day. And that was great, you know, because I was there and talking to the cellar workers, and cellar masters, assistant wine makers there. And Warren also there advised, you know: "If you can, come here to work. We're here." So, I remember making that decision and everybody being all happy, like yeah, I get to be part of a team, but I still went to school at night in Napa College. And after that, I really grew, I really grew and that's when I start getting more involved and more advanced cellar, cellar to master projects. And what was in 1988, '87, '88, the cellar master left Stag's Leap, and Warren and associate wine maker surprised me, I mean, I had no idea, they surprised me by offering me, asking [58:00] me if I wanted, you know, offered me the job as a cellar master. So, I was like: "Wow." And then, what 3 years there, 3, 3 and half years...

SV: You're 20.

RH: I was 20, 20, 21, and for me, I was just, you know, shocked. I literally needed to think about for a week or two. I was such a big responsibility. For me, I'm like: "Wow." And finally, you know, thanks to, I had a lot of support there. We were really, really close team, from Warren to the cellar crew, and me being the youngest, I was, I asked for advice or thoughts on my co-workers, which they're still today some of my best friends. And they're like: "Rolando, you know," everybody support me, "You can do it. You can do this. I mean, we see you, and it's a great opportunity, and you should consider it. You should really take advantage [59:00] of it." So anyhow, long story short, okay. Sit down with the associate wine maker and told them: "Okay. Thank you, I will give this a try." You know, I accept the position, and it was, it was the best decision, you know. I loved that challenge and proud to say, you know, I wasn't a true, true cellar master when Warren gave that opportunity, but I feel that I did become I true, true cellar master, you know, a year or two years later. Because for me, that's a beautiful, I love that word, I love the meaning in talking to people and hearing Warren talk, and what that means, you know, and also hear some of the story Warren, he started as a cellar master, he was a cellar master in Mondovi, and then the wine maker, [1:00:00] and the importance, just hearing Warren talking about the importance of every detail task, cleanliness, wine making, so I really took it heart, cellar. I mean, the word says it all, cellar master. You have be a master, means you need to know everything, understand everything in the cellar, not just know how to do it, but be a good a teacher. So, I took it to heart. And I worked really hard in learning and to become that, to become, you know.

SV: Did he do it like formally, he gather people around and explained something or was it he would be watching and then he'd make a suggestion how? How did you learn from him?

RH: I learned from him a lot. I learned a lot from him or just hearing other people talk about him, and his accomplishments, [1:01] about his accomplishments, and what he's done and stories, just stories. You know, stories of other people working. Because I remember, you know, Warren, you know, how great wine maker he was, but also very difficult to work with, challenging, and this and that, but I didn't experience none of that. I didn't understand that, what do you mean? Well, because he has really high standards, you know, and if you didn't the ability, the work ethic or the passion to do things to his standard, then you're not going to last, you know. So, I learned a lot by listening to that and capturing, and say: "Okay." You know, I'm a great listener, and I like to learn from other people's victories and failures, so I learned a lot that way [1:02] to try to do everything that I did was to the standard, so that was other ways, but him just walking in the cellar. He would come in the cellar depending on what you see. He would see me washing the tank, or waxing a door, or the barrels, you know, stop and just talk to you like: "What are you doing?" you know, or if you said: "Good morning," or "Hi, how are you? What are you doing? Which wine?" and he would just give a little phrase here and there, and for me that was enough to just, you know, energize me and like: "Wow," you know. And in events, you know, when we had a company tasting, just hearing him talk. For me, I just love the man hear talk, and every time, he said anything, for me, there was always something to learn from that.

SV: So, you were a cellar master for how long?

RH: I left there in '94, [1:03] summer of '94.

SV: So, quite a bit of time.

RH: So I did ten harvest there. I did harvest to '85 to harvest to '94. So, that's ten harvest, so almost ten full years. So 7 years, yes, 6 or 7 out of my 10 years, I was the cellar master.

SV: So, what happened after that, and for the record, what happened after that ten harvest? What happened?

RH: Well, you know, my passion continue to grow for the industry and wine making, and my confidence continue to grow, and Warren, you know, continue to give me opportunities to do, to do more things, but I quickly realized, well not quickly realized, it took me a while. [1:04] Because for the longest time, up until 1993, '92, there was no way in my mind I was going to leave Stag's Leap. I'm like, as long as Warren has work for me, I'm staying here. This is my home. I feel like I was born here, raised here. This is my home. I love this place. I love the family and I'm treated well with respect. You know, I feel appreciated, all those things, so I thought, I see myself working there till I retire. I was so content, so happy. But, you know, going to school and hearing and listening and my friends challenging me and complementing me, you know, I was just growing up. I realized that I, through my friends' support, that I had a palate that I could taste wine, [1:05] describe wine, and the more I learned about wine, the more I wanted to know about wine, and then, you know, I start, my confidence start growing that you know what? I can be more than a cellar master. I don't have to be a cellar master all my life. So, yeah. Let me pursue to be an assistant winemaker, and maybe more. But it became...so, I left because I wanted to grow when there was no... I had no credentials. I wasn't ready. There was no other promotion for me because I didn't have the degree, I didn't have the experience, the knowledge, and you know, even if there was an opening. There were openings at times for assistant winemakers or associate winemakers for Hawk Crest [?] or Stag's Leap, but where was interviewing great wine makers, people with 10, 15, 20 years of experience, and you see, Davis graduates, and masters degrees and all this stuff, so I had to make a really, [1:06] really tough and you know, listening, really hard to just... and one of my friends one told me: "Rolando, you know, there's a lot of potential. There's a lot of opportunity for people like you out there. You see, there's plenty fish in the sea. This is great, Warren loves you. You like it here, but there's more than Stag's Leap in the world. So, you have to make that decision." But just know, it was just hard for me to, you know, but I said to myself: "I need to." I was 27 at the time. I had a great job, but I feel like I was too young and I didn't want to get complacent, I didn't want to get comfortable, so I knew that you know what if I'm going to do it, I got to do it now before, I'll be 30 pretty soon. And I just, I made my decision again, with tears, [1:07] you know, crying, to make that, I had to it. And it was one of the hardest things, you know, talk, you know, talking to Warren, and Julia, and you know, it was... I don't even say that right now. I don't even want to go back, you know, and relive those feelings because

it was really, really hard, but looking back it was the right decision. It was the right thing to do. And I put a lot of thought into it where I wanted to work because there were some wineries. It was opportunity, but I didn't want to go to work just for another winery. I didn't want to go back to another successful winery that had everything in place, you know, because at Stag's Leap, you know, we had everything, you know, great pumps with technology, and you know, Warren's, you know, standards was everything top notch. I wanted to go somewhere where I could find [1:08] everything that I was looking, which I wanted to prove to myself to see if I really was wanted to do this the rest of my life. And if I was really as passionate and loving it, so I wanted to be more hands on. You know, I wanted to be in the vineyards, the work in the dirt, you know, in the cellar. I still wanted to do the grinding, the washing, the racking, the crushing. I wanted, you know, put myself through that test, you know, I wanted to work for winery, small winery, that I could do everything. You know, be part of the picking decision, or help pick grapes, and just wanted to do it all, you know. And, you know, be careful what you ask for, you know, because there's an ad in the paper that says: "We're looking for a, you know, cellar master assistant wine maker with experience, blah, blah, blah that can help us get to the next level." And that time, I was with [1:09] my wife, my girlfriend back then, my wife now, Lorena. We were together. We were having lunch or ice cream, and look into the news paper and read sarcastically, I read this ad. I'm like: "Hey. Hon. Check this out. Look at this. These people are looking for me." I was being funny. I was being sarcastic with her. And she laughs. And I read it closer, and I'm like: "Hey, wow. Look. I feel like that ad was written for me. That's how I feel like. Lets go check it out." So it was Chateau Potelle, you know. So, they have the address. It didn't have the name. it had the address, called and gave me the address. So, I went and interviewed. Interviewed at Chateau Potelle, and, you know, Chateau Potelle used to be, it's no longer in existence, way on top on Mount Veeder. And for me, it's like I don't know if I was half way there yet, but I was already [1:10]: "No way I'm working here." I'm like: "There's no way I'm working here. This is crazy." So, anyways, I finally got there and it seemed like it took me an hour to get there, or an hour and a half, but it really when I looked at the time, it took me like 20 minutes, 25 minutes to get up there. And I'm like: "No, no, no. I'm not working. I'm not working." And I did my interview and I liked it, you know, interesting, you know. When Marketta and Jean-Noel interviewed me, it was different because they're French. And I liked that. I was like: "This is different." You know, the way they talked about the wine, and the vines, and it was the old world, you know, the nature, and respecting nature, respecting, you know, the wines and all this. It was intriguing, so they didn't show me the winery. I wanted to see the winery. I wanted a tour, but they didn't give me a tour. They're just like: "Okay, first interview." And I, well, you know, we, you know, they told me that [1:11] they felt that I was the right person, but they're talking to other people, and they want to have me back for a second interview. So, I went for a second interview. You know, the said enough things to capture my attention. "Oh, man. I have to explore this." So, I don't know, a few days, a week later, I went. They called me up in second interview. So, here I go up again. And this time, we meet at the tasting room, had a very nice cute little tasting room there. And Marketta takes to the wines. She's like: "Okay, I want to, you know, taste you through the wines, and get your thoughts, and show you what here what's we're making." And I'm like: "Oh, oh." You know, they were, you know, like challenging me. I'm like: "Wow." So, the taste, took me

through the wines and was Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, white blend called it a piece, Zinfandel, [1:12] and a Cabernet.

SV: No Pinot, no...?

RH: No, no Pinot.

SV: That wasn't...

RH: No, they were well known, very well know, some of the top in the country for VGS. The VGS Chardonnay, the VGS Zinfandel. So, you know, we taste the Sauvignon Blanc, and we taste the piece, the blend, and then we taste the Chardonnay, and the Zinfandel, and the Cabernet. And I was like: "Oh my God." I was like blown away. I'm like: "I love the wines. These wines smell so good. They taste so good." Just hearing Marketta talk about her philosophy in wine making. And you know, when we got to like the Chardonnay, I'm like: "I want to work here." You know, I said to myself: "I want to work here. I need to work here." So, just changed right away because I need to know how these wines are made. So, I was really excited and finished [1:13] the tasting, the Cabernet was the only, my least favorite. It was beautiful nice Cabernet, but it was my least favorite of all, but then I was coming from house of great Cabernets, the best in the world, Cask 23. So, it certainly didn't stand up to that SLV or other Cabs, so it was normal. But, all the other wines. It's like oh my God. So tasted the wines. We talked about the wines. I told them what I thought, and I think she could see the excitement in me. You know, I was trying to very discreet, and you know, and then she's like: "Okay." Maybe because she saw the excitement, she says: "Okay. Now, lets go walk the winery." That was the last thing they did. And like oh my God. She opens the door, and to me like 'uuuhhhh'. I mean, it's like going back a 100 years.

SV: Oh, wow.

RH: You know, it was beautiful in that way, but also it needed that much work, that much work. And [1:14] I'm like: "Oh my God." The bottling line, beautiful bottle ling line, must've been like 30, 40 years old, you know, ran with duct tape here and there, and these little Mickey Mouses, and the cellar, it was an old, old building, you know, very challenging, and real old wood, and drains, old drains, and old tanks, and you know, it was dirty. It was disorganized. But, I'm like: "Okay." So, like be careful what you ask for. So, everything that I ask for was, I found it there. You know, I went to work, you know, my first was getting a brush and scrubbing the mold off of everything that I saw, you know. I was, I'm going to make this winery, you know, clean, shining. And that's what Jean-Noel had told me. He wanted somebody that could, you know, help Marketta, really keep the place up, and clean, and be part, all that stuff. And for me, it's like: "I love cleaning. No problem." So, yeah, [1:15] that was great. And then, I hired two people to help me. They had people there, but they left. They left, so Market said: "Okay, well, put your own team together." So, I called some friends, mine that were bugging me. They wanted me to get them a job at Stag's Leap, but there was no opening. So, I called them up, and said: "Hey, you want an opportunity in a winery. I got it for you." And you know,

put a great team together, and I spent three years there. And you know, the best decision I've ever made. I like to say, you know, I learned so much at Stag's Leap, but really in Chateau Potelle, I learned. I learned, I was exposed to the old world philosophy. And I was so close to it. I mean, there I was with Marketta's assistant wine maker, right hand man, you know, I was involved in everything from the vineyards to the bottling, the blending, the tasting, the everything, everything. I mean, [1:16] there were days in doing harvest that, you know, I wouldn't go home. I would work 24/7, 24 hours, you know, but because I wanted to. Marketta never asked me to do that. She was like: "No, no. Go home." I go: "No." because there were piles of work, you know, and I just wanted to be, I wanted to get it done. And I wanted to be there and give the wine the attention to the wine they needed, so it was great. It was great. In 3 years, I learned, when I left Chateau Potelle in 1997, my last harvest was 1997. I really felt like: "Okay. I'm ready." You know, I could go anywhere, any winery in the world, and I felt like, I'm good, you know. Not only am I a great cellar worker, great cellar master, but I'm ready to make wine. I'm ready to assume an assistant role, assistant wine maker role. So, that's huge and from there I [1:17] went to, to Vine Cliff, so I had already connec[tions], yeah, relationship, you know, friendly relationship with Rob, the owners of Vine Cliff, who I hoped worked...

SV: And that's Rob...

RH: Rob Sweeney, or Chuck Sweeney really, I feel more like I worked for Chuck Sweeney. He was my relation, with him, the father though, old man. Nice man, always treated me nice, and gave me the opportunity to work on weekends when I was working at Stag's Leap to help them out.

SV: So you worked with them [inaudible].

RH: Yes, so when I left Chateau Potelle, you know, they were looking to add someone to the team, and you know, they approached me. They called me, talked to me, and said if, you know, I was interested. And they were looking for a new wine maker, and a wine maker [1:18] if I was interested. I'm like: "Wow." And I said: "Sure, absolutely." They didn't take long to make the decision. And you know, because I didn't think it was going to come that quick. I thought I would start first an assistant wine maker, and then, but in 1998, that was my first job - position as a wine maker, head wine maker for a program, with Paul Hobbs consulting. As part of the interview, Chuck asked me how I felt about working or having a consultant to support me, to back me up if I had any questions. And I'm like: "Sure." I said: "Just, just get a good one. You know, get a great one. You know, get me a great one." I go: "That's all I ask, you know, give the best." And he said: "Okay, you have anybody in mind?" and [1:19] I said: "I sure do. Paul Hobbs because I already knew Paul Hobbs from Stag's Leap, and I also did some consulting with him in South America. When I left Stag's Leap, Paul gave me opportunity to help him in South America for couple years, '95 and '96. So I would go two or three times a year to help him in production because I saw in the production side, not the wine making. Everything that had to do from logistics, procedures, protocols, from sanitary to, you know, managing oxygen and all that thing, it was great. So, I gave him their name and then a

few other people. At the end, they hired Paul Hobbs. So, that was great, another great opportunity. So I ended up spending three year there. In [1:20] 2001 was my last 19- '99, 2000 was my last harvest. And then, but I had already started, my wife and I, so 1997 was my last harvest, '95 to '97 it was my last harvest in Chateau Potelle. I got married in 1997. My wife and I got married in '97. We bought out first grapes in '97.

SV: From...?

RH: We bought our first grapes from my father in law, from Reynaldo Robledo. In 1996 was a very difficult year for me. I was frustrated. It's funny, you know, how I went through this frustration, moment, that I was like, [1:21] it was my second year there and I'm like: "Do I really want to be in this industry? Do I want to do this?" And I left like a big block, a big wall, I big monster wall in front of me that there was no way I was going to be more than just a cellar master, production manager, or the assistant wine makers at the Potelle for the longest time. I just, how do I get to the next level? How do I, you know, I want to run a winery. I want to be the wine maker. I want... I had so many ideas and some things and questions that I wanted to try, but I'm like: "I don't have an education? Who? Nobody is going to trust me?" I mean, I wouldn't trust someone, you know, with my million dollar investment or, you know, because it's very big responsibility financially. I mean, one ton of grapes, the cheapest grapes in Napa could be chardonnay cost you, or some of the cheapest three, four, five thousand dollars, juts one ton. So, even a small winery, I know fifteen tons, or twenty tons, you're talking lot of money, so I'm like: "Nobody is going to hire me. How am I going to do it? How am I going to break the barriers?" So, I'm like, I really was starting to thinking: "Well, hey with what I'm making. I was already married. How am I going to raise a family? You know, how am I going to provide. I can live. But I'm really not." So it was really frustrating for me. I'm like, so then I...from there, occurred an idea, I said: "You know what? What I need to do..." And I came home and talked to my wife. I said: "Honey, here's what I want to do." So, I shared with her my frustration. I said: "If I really want to do this. I think I need to go out there and buy my own grapes. I need to go out there and give me that opportunity to make wine. To see, to prove to myself if I can truly make wine, and if I like it, if I can do it. And if it works, then we'll see what comes out of it. And if not, [1:23] then maybe I should find a job in another industry that can pay me more and provide for our family." So, I went up to my father in law, and I explained to him my frustration and told him and this and this. And I asked him, you know: "Can you sell me, you know, could you sell me 4 tons of Chardonnay?" so, after we talked, he said: "Sure. I'll sell you 4 tons of Chardonnay." So, those were the first grapes and I went up to Marketta and I told her that I was going to buy grapes, you know, this year I just wanted to let her know, and I wanted her support. You know, I wanted her to know. And she's like: "Sure, sure. No problem." She's like: "You know, I just can't let you crush them here." And I said: "No problem. I understand. I get it." So I found another, another small winery to crush, actually in Vine Cliff. I called Vine Cliff, Rob. And I said: "Hey, Rob, [1:24] you know, blah, blah, blah. I bought a few tons, four tons of grapes. Can I press them there? You know, how much would you charge me, and this." And I had a relationship. And I helped them. So, they're like: "Yeah, sure. You know, you can. No problem." So, that's where I crushed my first grapes, and I did my '97 harvest at Chateau

Potelle and then after that, that's when Vine Cliff hired me. So, I did those two things at once. And in 2000, I was, I feel like okay, I was ready. I wanted to spend more time in *Mi Sueño*. We already had the brand, the plans. Okay, I need a job that I can, that can give me a little more freedom because it didn't feel good. And my own winery, I felt I was very, very thankful, very appreciative, the fact that Vine Cliff...Chuck had given me the support to crush my first grapes there. And I could work my wine there. You know, [1:25] this is good, but I want my own independency. I want no conflict of interest. So, I shared that with Paul, and you know, it took him a few months and finally, he didn't have anything. I just said: "You know, I'm ready to, you know, take the next step. If you know of anybody, see anything there." He didn't have any room. But like in a month later, a couple months later things changed. You know, some of his associate wine makers or wine makers left, so then, you know, I approached him again and he's like: "Hey. Let's talk." So we spoke, we talked. And you know, my first harvest with him, that was 2001. So I came in as a, you know, director wine making, and it was wonderful. It was great. It was a perfect fit because I told him about, he already knew about my brand. And, you know, I just told him: "Listen, I'm [1:26] going to give you me 100%. I will make sure I take care of your stuff first, your wines, your clients, everything. I just ask you for one thing that, you know, when you see me working on my wine, that you give me that freedom, that trust that it's because everything, I did everything on your side." He's like: "Of course, Rolando. Absolutely, I understand. That's how I came." You know, because he started, you know, that's how he started. Similarly with his brand. He knows what we go through. And, you know, great experience, great support. And then, at that point, I was working at Laird. I spent most of my time at Laird, making wine, Paul's wine, you know, managing or helping Paul manage his wine. And his wines are at Laird. And also, most of his clients were at Laird. Laird Wines and other clients, and *Mi Sueño* Wine. Also, I had the support of Laird. Rebecca and Kent Laird offered me their support and that I could [1:27] crush the grapes there. So, it was great. I mean, it's like, you know, but it was just...so, I did that for three years. And it just became too much, too much, too much. You know, managing, you know, Paul Hobbs grand by itself was a full time job. Even though he wasn't making a lot of wines, but the attention to detail, and focus, and you know, given Paul everything that he needed. In addition, I was managing six clients or seven clients of his, and *Mi Sueño*. I mean, I was loving it. I loved it and for three years, but it came in 2002, Great Harvest. Great Harvest we made beautiful wines that year. But, I realized that it was too much. I wasn't giving Paul Hobbs my 100%, nor *Mi Sueño*, nothing. And I didn't [1:28] like it. So, I went through 2003 harvest with him, you know, and I said I was already observing it. And Paul was seeing it. I mean, started to have your own label, and this, but I was working like 16, 18 hour days. You know, every day, every day, every day. So finally, in 2003, I sat down with Paul, and I told him: "Listen, I'm sorry. But, you know, it's not working. I'm not giving you a 100% and this." And he understood. You know, he didn't want to see me leave because, you know, not only do I love working him and, you know, after, and we still do. Good friends, you know, he's one of my role models, you know, in wine making. So, but I don't want to disappoint me. I didn't want to come to point that to disappointment him or not do the job to my standards or his standards. So, it was another big decision because at that point, [1:29] when I gave him my notice and that we needed to transition and hire somebody else, it was scary because at that point I was going go on my own, 100%. You know, not having

a paycheck. I was entering that stage in life where, you know, okay, no more steady check, now you got to. So, it was, it was scary, but I felt it was the right thing to do. You know, to, I already had a couple clients on my own, you know, because my first client was...actually, my first, first client, antes de *Mi Sueño*. I was already working, my wife and I, in starting up Robledo, you know, because my wife and I, we, you know, she's the oldest, all her siblings were younger, so I remember filling out the application for Robledo Family Winery. You know, and going with my father in law and my mother in law to Calistoga and apply for the ABC and TTB, so we did all that. So, pretty much, [1:30] I felt like I was starting two wineries at the same time, *Mi Sueño* and Robledo. *Mi Sueño*, I bonded in '97. Robledo, I bonded in '98. You know, and always had a great relationship with my father in law from day one. And he also, that's when he also went like: "Yeah, I'm interested in doing my own wine also and label." And I'm like: "Sure, I'll start it for you." And, so really, I was the, you know, I was starting two wineries. And I did Robledo for ten years, you know, '98, '99, 2007 was my last harvest that I crushed here for him. So, I had that. And then, I had two other clients. So with him that was three and *Mi Sueño*, four. So, I had that going on and I felt that okay, you know, it's going to be tough. It might be hard. But, I want to look for another client, even though I was already getting... I had my plan, my business plan in *Mi Sueño*, renting the warehouse, and doing this, and then, you know, [1:31] one thing after another.

SV: So, then was your philosophy for those, you know, that '97 crush? I mean, how did that come about?

RH: The harvest itself or just for *Mi Sueño*?

SV: Yeah, for *Mi Sueño*. Yeah, I mean, is it, you had an idea. What was that idea and has it changed?

RH: No, my idea was really, you know, buying grapes, putting...what do you say? What's the saying that say: "Putting your, putting the money where your mouth is?" you know, like for me, it was like okay if I truly believe that I want to be a wine maker, I need to go and invest in myself, you know, buy the grapes, so for me it was just to break the barrier, to have grapes 100% of my own. That [1:32] I had no one to watch, to advise me, to help, I either want to make good wine or I'm going to make vinegar. You know, I needed to break that. And so, that was the main purpose for me, and then after, you know, so I did that. We crushed the grapes, ended up with 16 barrels of Chardonnay, every single barrel was different. Every idea, every yeast, every technique that I was reserving, or holding, banked for 12 years, 10 years, I just let it out there. You know, with different, you know, techniques and styles. And I chose Chardonnay for two reasons. One that's one of the cheapest grapes, all we can afford. Back then, my father in law, you know, it was a good deal, but I was 2000, 2000 a ton, that was still a lot of money, you know. But, so that...and then also, I wanted it to be Chardonnay because [1:33] I didn't have enough appreciation or I didn't appreciate the wines. I didn't like the wines we were making back then in the 80s and 90s of Chardonnay, most of them. You know, lot of oak, lot of ml, really soupy, really heavy, viscous. It would capture my attention when I tasted a burgundy wine or white wine from Europe. It was different. It was crisp and refreshing.

And I just didn't understand. I'm like: "Why is so different grapes are grapes?" you know, I understand it's different parts of the world, but, you know, but they shouldn't be this different. And, my experience at Chateau Potelle, how I saw Marketta did it, and some curiosities that I had that I wanted to try. I wanted to try experiments that I couldn't do with Chateau Potelle because it's not my grapes, and I'm not the wine maker. But, I wanted, I wanted to put this to practice, so I did. You know, and, you know, [1:34] ten months into it, I had some friends and people taste my wine out of the barrel and nobody could believe it was *Carneros* Chardonnay from Napa Valley. It was like it was burgundy. And I'm like: "No." And then, from there came the idea. I'm like: "Wow, you know. We can't sell this in the bulk market." Now, came like: "Well, we should start our own, you know, bottle it, label it." My friends are like: "You should label it." And that was another can of worms, like oh my God. What do you mean label it? I mean, I just did this to break the barriers, see if you could make wine because I just wanted to be a wine maker somewhere else, not a vintner. That was an impossibility to even think and imagine. You know, when you have a barrel cost more than you paycheck, you know. How are you going to do it? You don't have a property, no vineyards, no money. So, that was a whole another, you know, hurricane. My wife and I, you know, thought about it, put a lot of thought into it. It's like, no, no, no, no. that's for the rich. That's for the rich and the [1:35] wealthy. And we have nothing. But, you know, I remember getting the book for my ABC, you know, compliance. And just read it, and I'm like: "Oh my God. What is this? Chinese?" You know, but I must've read that thing like ten times, you know, throughout the four, five month period, and the more we start talking about it, the more we start thinking about it. It becomes easier to digest the idea. And just, finally one day, you know, woke up in a weekend and told my wife: "You know what? We're going to bottle this wine." You know, and then ten months later, I mean, ten minutes later, I'm like: "And it's going to be *Mi Sueño*." My dream, you know, so accepting the fact, and taking the, making the decision to bottle that wine, took us, you know, a few months, several months. The name 10 minutes, you know, 10 minutes. *Mi Sueño*, you know, which is a whole other [1:36] experience because when I made that decision... and my wife's like: "Okay. Sounds great. Let's do it." You know, but that meant put everything out there, everything we had, and even things we didn't have, debt. And then I shared that with my friends, my closest friends, really close, close friends. A lot of respect for them, they're smart, they're successful in their field, about the name. And they're like, everyone, not one single one told me they liked that name. Every told me: "Rolando. *Estas loco*. You're crazy." I go: "What do you... you know, *Mi Sueño*, really?" You're making your life, you know, very, very difficult. You haven't even started. You're failing before you start. You have already failed the basics 101 of marketing. Alright. You're picking a name that most people don't know what it is. [1:37] They're not going to pronounce it. They can't spell it, you know. And it has a letter that's not part of our alphabet, la ñ. And I... they were right. I mean, these are people that care for me, and they were not going to say anything that didn't believe was to help me. Everybody was right. And I'm like: "Oh my God." I told my wife: "You know what? Everybody is right. They're right." But, you know, for me I'm like...I just kept saying and finally I just, you know, sat down one day and thought about this. And say: "Okay. Well, let's think about this. Worst case scenario. What could happen? It doesn't work. Right. Well, I'll just stop making wine because of the name or whatever. We change the name. I go, but I just felt a

very strong, you know, connection with the name. and it's like, no it's *Mi Sueño*. This is my dream. This is, for me it's a dream come true. I love what I do. I love being a cellar rat [1:38]. I love every aspect, and the fact God has, you know, given me the opportunity to crush this little grapes, a few tons of grapes, and put it in a bottle. I want... it's a dream. And I start talking to myself. It's a dream. I want to do it. If it fails, big deal. No worries. I will accomplish, you know, I have accomplished my goal, my dream, and I have a great story to share with my grandkid and my kids, that if you believe in something, you do it, you know, don't be afraid of failing. For me, I'm like, so I already had all that, that's a great story. I can't wait to share that story, you know, because my friends were right. That chances of this working, I know it's going to be very slim, very, very slim. So stuck to the *sueño*, to the name *Mi Sueño*. And, you know, we printed the labels, and put them in a bottle, so it was so excited, so, so exciting to see, [1:39] you know, your bottles of wine being filled with your baby juice. And it's like a kid. You see a kid being born. You know, you're like oh my God. So we bottle like 200 cases of Chardonnay. And we hired a broker in California, and the wine was received beautifully, amazing, great feedback, and great placements. We were getting, and I'm like: "Yes, yes. It's great." You know, so it was nice to see, but then there was a lot of pressure, debt, you know, financial was really frustrating. To put our first wine in the bottle, I mean, really frustrated. I had all this work with wineries, you know, like Stag's Leap and Vine Cliff and Paul Hobbs, successful, everything that used to state the best cardboard, the best, you know, paper, the best foil, the best glass. But when [1:40] we were getting ready to bottle our wine and start shopping for bottling supplies. I realized that I couldn't afford, you know, the packaging that we wanted. Oh, that was so frustrating. So, I had to compromise in every, you know, in the glass, on the paper, on the foil, the one thing I made really sure that I was not going to compromise on the quality of the wine, and I knew the liquid, the wine itself was beautiful, was a great wine, but I hated that. I hated it to put my wine in a package that's [like that]... so, in that same experience, you know, was the idea, new idea was born because I, you know, was so frustrated. I told myself: "But someday, you know, Diosito, God is going to help me. You know, and I'm going to bottle a wine, another wine, [1:41] another label, and this wine, this is going to be in the best package, best everything. No compromise on quality." And that's the Herrera label. You know, 2003, you know, the vintage, 2, 3, 4 or 5 2003 but bottling in 2005, beautiful wine Cabernet. And, you know, it was small, 50 cases I did of my first vintage, 50, 60 cases. But, I put in a beautiful 3-pack, wood box. You know, with nice letter, nice story, beautiful glass, you know, beautiful label, emboss, everything. And if it was so good, it was like okay, like, you know, I accomplished it. You get that, you check off that bad experience, you know, you heal that wound[fill that void?]. So, yeah, there's been, you know, ups and downs, you know [1:42], but you go through a lot. I mean, lot of challenges to go through.

SV: So, tell me a little bit about this building and when was open. How did that come about?

RH: Well, prior to this building, in 2002, I was still with Paul Hobbs. I rented a place, a warehouse, a 4000 square foot warehouse, like two hundred yards from here, in the same complex because I wanted to do wine out of Laird. I wanted to, you know, get myself independent of everything else. I didn't like the fact that at Laird, I couldn't work on my wine until 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. And, I couldn't work on my wine pass 4 or 5

o'clock because the winery is closed.[1:43]. It didn't like that. And with how busy I was. I needed to work, you know, because I had two, three jobs. And my schedule for *Mi Sueño* wines was from 6 or 7 till midnight, you know, so I tried really hard and I had to do a lot of convincing for the owners of the building, the property, took me like 6 months to convince him that to please rent the smallest building, the office, the space that was four thousand. But once they asked, and I only had twenty barrels. And they said: "Rolando, but how are you going to pay it. We'd love to. But how are you going to pay the rent. We're afraid. We don't want to put you in a position that you're not going to be able to pay the rent." And I was like: "Well, no. Don't worry. I got this, but then I got a client. I got Robledo. And I got Longfellow. And I got Richard. And I want to bring more grapes. And, you know, I'm going to start my business. I'm going to pay you, believe me. I can afford your rent." Because my consulting clients. I talked to them about sharing my story, and they supported me. They said: "Yes, Rolando. We support you." You know, get the building, we rather our make wine in your place, that you control, than paying Laird, or Napa Wine Company or this, so I got their support, but for some reason, they just, I mean, they were skeptical. Because it should be. So, I finally convince them, I get the lease, five-year lease, and boom. You know, I bring all my clients there, and make the wine, and start buying my first tank, my pump, my first hose, and do the plumbing, very old world, you know, I'm cooling my tanks, my fermentations, I'm cooling them with cold water and ice, cold water and ice with the pump over the top, [1:45] you know, I'm heating tanks with a warm water or heating, heaters, and a blanket, old school, old world, but I need to make good wines, and it was 24/7 job. I mean, during the harvest, you know, I had to be there. I would cover the shift from like 11 at night to like 5 o'clock in the morning, you know, monitoring the fermentations, so, but I grew, I grew a lot there with my clients, and then, I was coming up my lease, was coming up my 5-year lease. And then, this building came up. This building came up in 2005, and the owner, it needed a lot of fixing, so it took him like a year to do all the cleaning and fixing, and we finally, and a year to negotiate, we wanted, I didn't want to move here just to move, [1:46] because why move when I already have a place? I wanted to move, we wanted to, I wanted to move a place that I could own. And call it home. And you know, the owner back then, didn't want to sell the building, he's like: "No, no. I love the building. You know, I'll lease to you. You rent it." And I said: "No, no. I'm not interested." So, finally, he had a winery I think that. They want to say a ten-year lease, ten-year lease with him. That's, and that would've been great. But, I don't know what happened, but at the end, the lease didn't come through. And the building was ready, was ready to be occupied. And, you know, he was waiting, waiting, and nobody else came. So, finally, you know, we told him: "we'll move in there, but we want one year with option to purchase, and finally he said: "Okay." You know, we convinced him. So, we moved in here in 2006. And 2007, we exercised our option, [1:47] purchased the building. So, again, tough decisions. You know, you putting yourself out there, all out there, but, you know, you believe, and you know, I knew that was the right decision to make., and back in '98, you know, I was staying true to my promise with myself and to my wife and my kids. Well, my wife didn't agree, but in '98 when I leaving Vine Cliff and *Mi Sueño*, we already had a vintage in *Mi Sueño*. And I was joining Paul Hobbs, I knew the road was going to be very, very steep. I told my wife: "Listen. It's really hard to have a job and start a business. Obviously It's really hard. But I was, we can't have a business without a job.

[1:48]How are going to pay?" We were just living in a tiny little house, 11 square foot home that, you know, we bought, after jumping around from apartment to apartment. And I told her: "So, but I want to do this." I go: "I don't, if we stop *Mi Sueño*, I can work for Paul Hobbs, no problem. But I feel that in three years or four years, I'm going to be frustrated again." You know, because I already experienced that Stag's Leap ten years later, and then in Chateau Potelle, and then in Vine Cliff I will, I think, you know, I want, I want to put all this, I want to put an effort in having our own business. Because I think that's what I want to do. But it's going to be really hard. You know, I'm going to really, really put myself 100%. And I'm willing to do that. I just need you to support me. [1:49] So, I'm going to be working, I have to work seven days a week, you know, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen hours a day to make it happen. I want to try this five years, we'll evaluate and see where we started, where we are. If it's not making sense, it's not worth it, we'll stop, you know, happily get a job, and we'll do that." And my wife: "No, that's too hard. I want you to do this and that. And I said: "No. I really want to do this." And I told her: "I want to do this. I'm 100% committed." I go: "If..." I said something that she really did not like at all. But, at that moment, I felt it. I said: "If God has my time table to live up to whatever that number is 70, or 80 years or 60 years, I'm willing to give 15 years [1:50] of that life to provide for our family to get out of poverty." You know, I don't want to raise my kids, you know, with poverty or limited like I was raised. I want to provide our kids what we were not, what our parents weren't able to provide to us. So, it's worth it. I go: "You know, that's how committed." She hated, she's like, she got mad at me. She's like: "Are you crazy? That's, you know, nothing is more important than life." I go: "I know. You know, that's not going to happen, but I'm just telling you. And that's the commitment that I'm making to myself, you know. That I would happily give 15 years of my life, you know, or shorten my life 15 years in order to make this happen." She's, still today, when I share the story, she doesn't like to hear it. But, literally, [1:51] that's what happens. So, for 5 years, of 90, those 3 years with Paul Hobbs. And you know, it was intense. I mean, there were times, I mean, I didn't see my kids. I didn't see my wife. You know, I would 5 o'clock in the morning, boom, you know, by 6 I'm out. And I'd be back by sometimes 10 o'clock, sometimes a lot at midnight. Come home, have dinner and go back to the computer. And close my door, just work. Back then, I didn't even know what excel was, you know, and I was so hungry for knowledge and with Paul Hobbs and learning, I spent hours in the computer finding, and learning and reading. And I was, 5 years came by, what- '98, '99, 2000, 2001, 2002. And you know, you could see the progress. And, you know, so all that happened before, I mean we see the progress that we got this warehouse. [1:52] But it required, you know, another five or ten years of really grinding, you know, day and night, to make that happen. So, when this warehouse, this building came up, for me, it was like, I was confident that was the right. I had enough going on with my clients that I was making wine and clients that wanted to crush their grapes with me that I had a solid business plan to take this job and support from friends.

SV: I only have a couple questions and it's getting late, but did you find it difficult working for your clients and then keeping their philosophy about their wines different from yours, or is there a natural blending? How does it work in the industry? I mean, how does it work?

RH: It's a great question, you know. There's a, but for me, it's very simple. No, I do not find it difficult at all. My philosophy [1:53] is I'm making Cabernet for *Mi Sueño*, but I also my Cabernet for my clients, but they're different vineyards, different clones. My philosophy is I capture, I give the wines, all the wines the same attention to detail. I treat them the same. But I allow that vineyard, that soil the microclimate to express. So *Mi Sueño* Cabernet, you know, it's going to taste different than Longfellow Cabernet, Robledo Cabernet, and I never make, put the same wine or similar wines in two separate bottles, labels. You know, that's just something I can't do. So, it's really easy for me. You see it and I love it. And you see that in my wines. And that's why I love it when I hear people say: "Wow. Okay. I didn't know you made Noemi." You know, some of them prefer Noemi than *Mi Sueño*. I'm like good, you know, right. So, that's expressing. We all have different styles and vice versa. So, for me, it's very, very simple. Just have to stay true [1:54] to your standards, to your commitment. And we expect the variety in the microclimate in the soil. And the wine will take care of the rest.

SV: Yeah, so, this might seem like an odd question. So, when you're making the wine, do you think about the food that might go with? Or think about you're going to drink it? Or is it always just about the fruit?

RH: Yeah, I know. I'm not thinking at all about the food that's going to go with. Not one bit. It's all about the grapes. It's all about making the best wine that I can possibly make for the vintage. Or I like to say; it's capturing the gift of mother nature. You know, making that... and then, once it's in the bottle and it's ready, then I think about the food. "Oh wow. Okay. What food can this one go with?" you know, that, for me, it comes second. I know some people, some wine makers, they do say: "well, I want a bottle of wine a little more crisp, [1:55] you know, a little more acidity. I want it to go well with pasta or spaghetti, or this." I mean, there's nothing wrong with that, but for me, I can't do that because then, it would go against my philosophy of respecting mother nature, and respecting the terrior and the variety. And it would go against that in reality. I don't consider it a field... I don't consider myself a wine maker. I don't, I like... I have a hard time with the word wine making because this is the only country that we use the word I'm a winemaker. Everywhere else is oenologist, *enologo*. Winemakers, it's like we didn't make this part. It's a gift the mother nature. It's a product that mix itself, right, grapes can be, can fall in a bucket and they can start fermentation by themselves and convert into wine. [1:56] So, I learned a long time ago, it's more about, I feel more like a wine store. I'm my job to guide the wine, you know, understand the... you know, first, you know, I like to consider, look myself as a farmer. You know, first I'm a farmer. I understand my soil, the land, and apply the farming techniques, you know, to grow the best grapes, from pruning to watering, controlling the weeds, all of those little things, you know, a farmer. Second, you know, you grow the best grapes, you harvest them when your palate, when you like the taste of the grapes, you bring it in. then, everything is just not but guiding that, having good techniques to guide that fermentation, to help the fermentation, and understanding the basics of chemistry, and science and yeast, and, you know, so it's really, I really don't feel like I'm making something, you know. I'm guiding

it, you know, I love [1:57] carpentry, also. So when I work on that, I feel like I'm making something. Buy a piece of wood, and I can make a chair. Right?

SV: Yeah, the wood is guiding you almost.

RH: Yeah, so. It's a different way that it works for me, looking at it that way, seeing it that way because every year is different. You know, even though this'll be, this is my 31st harvest, I can't remember ever treating grapes back to back the same way because they're different. Every year we have different challenges.

SV: Yeah, well, okay. We've been here for quite a long a time, but I just want to thanks you. This is...

RH: I hope I didn't bore you Steve.

SV: Oh no. I could be here all day long. So, thanks you very much. And hope to see you in May.

RH: Yeah, my pleasure.

[END OF AUDIO]