

PETER MOLNAR: Good morning. So can everyone hear me? Welcome, welcome to the mountains, welcome to Lake County, welcome to the first Elevation of Wine Conference, welcome to 2,240 feet, I think, is the exact spot here that we're at. I'm Peter Molnar. I'm the Chair of today's event and General Manager of Obsidian Ridge Vineyard, which is just up the road from here. On behalf of Lake County Wine Commission and the Lake County Growers, I want to welcome everybody here, especially people who came from, literally, all four corners—Argentina, Italy, Australia, some came from Colorado, which is a corner, and, of course, everybody from California, so welcome.

We thought to get together people who talked about mountain viticulture, and no better place than do it right here in the mountains, avoid the stuffy conference room and do it out here at Snows Lake Vineyard. So we'd like to thank Snows Lake Vineyard for hosting us here. Thank you, John. Thank you, George.

A few thoughts. Let's introduce ourselves. Let's talk about the day, what we're going to do while we're here and who's here. Many of us have been growing fruit in the mountains. And I think anybody who lives in the mountains and grows fruit in the mountains realized something is different—the light is different, the air is different, the wine is different, the grapes are different. Let's find out today what is exactly different. Let's find out today what's going on with UV, temperature, sunlight, etc.

Let me just talk a few things about where we are right now. We're in the middle of the Mayacamas. We're on the top here. The Vassar [?] Mountains run into us. We are in the high Mayacamas, essentially. Clear Lake here, is the oldest geological lake in the world... I mean, North America, two-and-a-half million years old. We're at the top of the North Coast Magma Pocket, which is the pocket that formed Napa three million years ago. So this is... Lake County is a very exciting place for us. There's a lot of things going on here in the vineyards that we're just trying to find out. It's a very young geological place. So thank you for helping us find that out.

We're here out of curiosity. We started doing research, talking to people, talking among ourselves, and realized there wasn't much research to be done, or had been done, so we're here to ask people to help lead us in this direction. We're going to form a High Altitude Research Advisory Group for the Elevation of Wine. There's a sheet in your packet with solicitations of your ideas. And, please, fill that out and send it in to us, or leave it here today. And I would like to ask the moderators and the speakers to also start bringing up ideas and topics that we could start funding and start researching.

We want to make this a collaborative effort, and we want to make this not the first time we do it. The Elevation of Wine website will be up. We have a forum on it, and we'll be disseminating information. You'll be able to get this presentation on You Tube. You'll also be able to get the proceedings on PDF files. So please check the website, the ElevationofWine.org for those.

So we're not the first people to talk about hillsides and wine. There's an old Latin saying which is *Bacchus ama colle*, which means that 'Bacchus loved the hills,' so, obviously, the Romans were thinking about it, too. But our next speaker has gone very far from the hills. He's farming up at 9,900 feet in Argentina. Randle Johnson has been farming and making wine from two continents in the mountains since 1977, when he became Vineyard Manager and Cellar Master at Mayacamas Vineyards at 2,500 feet. I can't think of a better person to start us off on this exploration of what high altitude wines are all about.

To continue the Roman theme, now that he's farming at almost 10,000 feet, he's way past the hills, and he's even bested the Roman general, Hannibal, who crossed the Alps at 8,000 with 34 elephants. He ended with seven of them, which I think is probably about the ratio of clusters that make it to harvest up in Argentina. But this is what Dr. Vittorino Novello calls 'heroic viticulture.' When I spoke with Randle last, he had just come off of fruit sampling at his vineyard at 9,000 feet. He was a little bit winded. And he said, 'You know, if the hail doesn't get us, the wasps do.' And, you know,

sitting on the phone in California thinking, 'the hail and the wasps,' it had a kind of a surreal feel to it, and it made me think of a more modern American fable, when Dorothy turns to her dog in *The Wizard of Oz* and says, 'Toto, we're not in Rutherford anymore.' So with that note, I would like to hand over to Randle Johnson.