

**New Paltz Times, December 5, 2008**

I have long been a fan of Rivendell and what the winery, under the dedicated stewardship and vision of Bob Ransom and Susan Wine, has done for Hudson Valley agriculture -- from actual 'vineyarding' to co-sponsoring charitable events that highlight local produce. Rivendell was my introduction to it and remains, to my mind, a terrific advertisement, model, for a preservation of community lifestyle.

Rivendell is *not* a stereotypical Big Agri-Business riding roughshod over/decimating the quality of lifestyle and/or livelihood of local folks. Indeed, every time I have been at the winery or at a Hudson on the Bounty event, I have noted the care taken to insure the event does not 'overload' the bucolic peace and beauty of the Hudson Valley/New Paltz/Shawangunk area.

Certainly, no one should turn a blind eye toward something environmentally destructive or harmful to the physical or emotional well-being of the community at large, or even just the most immediate of neighbors. But isn't it, particularly in this topsy-turvey world where too many people don't know how they are going to make ends meet, in the community's interest to support businesses that have proved themselves viable, responsible, respectful, enhancing, I am sure, the prosperity of the greater community?

While I must admit that I have not read all the Rivendell/Opposition filings and articles, what comes across is that some of basis for opposition is a 'stretch' (farmers are not permitted to live on their farms? Did I read that correctly?) Some seems to be 'cherry-picking' certain laws that are not applicable or were crafted for very specific purposes and are not germane or are in contravention of decisions that do seem applicable (the Farm Protection Board decision). And some of the more personal opposition ignores that permanence is not a guaranteed right -- nor even necessarily desirable or beneficial. (A traffic light might be a jarring note in a photo trying to capture rural peace and solitude, or an annoyance driving home after a long day, but maybe it saves the lives of kids riding bikes or catching a school bus.)

I believe what is important is the thoughtful and responsible planning and execution of change. And respect given to the community into which change is proposed. It seems to me that Bob Ransom and Susan Wine believe the same -- or they would not have withdrawn the 2007 bid for Agricultural District inclusion in order to work with the representatives of the local community.

I do not currently live in New Paltz or its environ, but I have been inquiring about local real estate opportunities and look forward, sometime in the not too distant future, to speaking as a neighbor and not as a visitor. If I should be so lucky, it will partly be because the folks at Rivendell have me convinced that I could do far worse (and not much better) than making the move to an area that has a strong sense of the value of its history and natural resources, an area that clearly fosters the artistic impulse (a pottery trail? where else outside Japan could one find a pottery trail!), an area I had come to see as a place that is marching through the centuries in a measured, grounded, respectful way -- changing slowly, and not for change's sake, *but in its change, proving its vitality.*

So I hope, in the end, Rivendell will be permitted to move to its new location where it will continue playing its part in the economy and community of New Paltz (et al).

R. J. Leopold