

A Tribute to Warren Winiarski;
Friend, Environmental Champion,
Lover of His Treasured Napa Valley

Warren Winiarski is broadly celebrated for prominently placing Napa Valley on the world map of great wine regions. Yet, his commitment to protecting Napa's natural resources may be the accomplishment that out lives us all. Through the 1968 Ag Preserve, the 1991 Hillside Ordinance, and more recent political efforts (including Measure C) to protect the Valley's oak and water resources, Warren was unmatched.

Warren began his environmental advocacy after only four years in Napa Valley. In 1968, while in his thirties, Warren's 1968 entry into the fray began by going door-to-door in Angwin to support of the Ag Preserve. It was then he became an ally of Jack Davies and later joined Volker Eisele as a friend and ally. Their work focused on environmental campaigns designed to elect officials who supported their pro-conservation views and defeating those who did not. Warren's last environmental partner was Mike Hackett and the [Save Napa Valley Foundation](#).

Speaking at the memorial, Hackett said, "I don't think many people know that he went door to door canvassing for the Ag Preserve—he covered all of Angwin himself. And because of that, when the vote came down, Angwin had the highest percentage of pro-Ag Preserve votes."

When Hackett and supporters began the campaign for the Water, Forest and Woodland protection initiative Warren and his daughter Julia Winiarski jumped on. Then, on Measure C, Warren stepped up again stating, "I'm Warren Winiarski. And I've been in the wine industry since 1964. Water is needed in the valley. It gets recharged to the valley floor from the oak woodlands. The citizens are dealing with a limited resource. Agriculture is part of that equation, but not the whole story. I urge my fellow citizens to vote for Measure C."

Yet, most of the wine industry saw Measure C as a threat to their autonomy. Consequently, after opponents raised \$1M to fight against it, the measure lost by a mere 1%. Given Warren's tremendous efforts and financial support, most of us would have given up at that point—not Warren. That was not him at all.

Rather, Warren's courageous activism didn't go un-noticed. For an industry leader, heralded in the highest levels of grape growing and wine making to stand up against the industry said more than any campaign could. In essence, Warren was planting the seeds that would slowly grow into a new movement including not only environmental activists, but also grape growers, winemakers and community members. Together we continue to be inspired by Warren Winiarski.

The Trees They Call “The Lovers”

Stephen Winiarski's Words at Warren's Memorial.

“It's with great gratitude that I see so many friends and family and those that had a connection with our family. And I'm sure I speak for my sisters, as well for that gratitude, and feeling humbled to see and hear from so many of you. And all the achievements that my parents did in this valley have been spoken of. But I'd like to speak a little bit about trees.

Towards the end, as I was sitting with my father, I had come back from a walk. And I had seen so many of the trees that he had cared for over the years on the property—majestic oaks...and I remarked to him my gratitude and my recognition of the care that he had taken of those trees, propping up a precarious trunk, careful pruning of excessive foliage to reduce the wind...and he looked at me and he smiled. And he said, ‘they're my friends.’

And I think about that, and I think about all his friends, and all of those who touched with his life, and who he gave a kind word...or words of encouragement, or some way to prop you up and support you and give you love.”

“There's two trees at the winery, a coast live oak and a valley oak, that grew up next to each other. And they were some of the first trees that he protected. Two different trees. I don't know what their roots are doing. But I know that their branches grew together in ways that you cannot tell where one tree ends, and the other one starts. And we call those trees ‘The Lovers.’”

“And those two trees stretch their canopy to the sky—beautiful branches and foliage—and I'm sure their roots have grown together over these years. And I think of those two trees and I think of my parents, and how their spirit lives on in those trees.”

“And so I want you all to think about that, and think about the care that he took for those trees. And that my parents took care for so many people and gave to so many people...share that and spread that.”

Those mighty oaks—Sir Warren, Lady Barbara—rest in peace.”