

# Bailey's back 2 help revive local vineyard

By Nechama Bakst  
staff writer

A fox roams tranquilly through rows of newly-tended grape vines along Adams Road. The brisk September wind stirs the tall grass, rattling a few lone wine barrels and vibrating the makeshift sign that pertly advises visitors to "Hook Horn."

It's the harvest season - and Bailey's Vineyard is back in business. True, the vineyard is operating only at 50 percent capacity. And, some of the crops died last year, the tractor is old and the management new.

But, after all, a lawyer and an architect, who have never been on a farm before, are lovingly tending the vines and nurturing the grapes. They're even crushing and pressing and selling some of the juice to winemakers.

The tradition of well-known horticulturist Karl Bailey - who grew some of the first and finest wine grapes in Michigan - is being carried on nearly 10 years after his death.

Here in the fields, with no electricity, no water, no gas and no telephone, it seems a

million lightyears away from the long lines of cars impatiently honking their horns on nearby Big Beaver Road.

**THE DEVELOPERS** In this high-priced, well-manicured section of Troy are howling at Elizabeth Bailey's back door across the road in Bloomfield Township, luring her with promises of cash. Elizabeth Bailey and her husband, Karl, bought the vineyard in the 1940's.

"I said 'What'll I do with cash,'" Bailey chuckled.

That took care of the developers for a while.

Bailey said she won't sell. Not unless she's desperate.

And she's not desperate now. Not since Jim Lemire, 32, the architect and George Corsetti, 46, the lawyer "fell from heaven" to mow her grass and trim her trees.

"Mostly we try to grow grapes," said Corsetti, who lives and works in Detroit. These aren't just any grapes they're growing, although some are sold for table use.

These are wine grapes. They may not be as good as the famed California variety,

**'We're home winemakers. We came out here looking for grapes last September.'**

— Jim Lemire

Lemire said, but they're as good as any grown in Michigan.

Lemire and Corsetti grow 15 varieties of French hybrid grapes for red wines like Cascade, Baco, Foch and DeChaunac and white wine grapes like Aureole, Seyval, Vignole and Vesta - just like Karl Bailey did.

**LIKE BAILEY**, who died at 84 in 1981, the two are trying to get by with less insecticides and less herbicides.

"We wanted to see if we could just not spray them to death," Corsetti said.

"We're home winemakers," said Lemire, who lives in Ferndale and works for the JTI Group in Farmington Hills.

"We came out here looking for grapes last September. Mrs. Bailey and Francis Shell, a mechanic who hangs around here, convinced us that we could do it (make the vineyard work) - it didn't matter that we'd never done anything like that before."

Lemire and Corsetti, who met "in the back of a paddy wagon" in 1980 while the two were demonstrating in Poland, had talked about having their own vineyard one day, Lemire said.

They liked the idea of "being thrown into it without investing a lot of money and experience."

The first year hasn't been easy, the two admit, laughing.

At first, "there were weeds up to our shoulders," Corsetti said.

**THE VINEYARD** had been partly tended since Bailey's death, but was completely neglected in the last year.

"The amount of time we spent was phenomenal," Lemire said.

But, what they accomplished last year, including major pruning, replacement of posts and re-stringing wire, will not have to be repeated.

"The second year is bound to be better," Corsetti said.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Architect Jim Lemire, 32, scrupulously tends his grapes at Bailey's Vineyard.

After experimenting with corn and peaches, Bailey started growing grapes in 1966.

"This was always an educational vineyard," Corsetti said. "At some point, most people in Michigan came through here to see what could and couldn't grow in the area."

Elizabeth Bailey enthusiastically cheers on her two proteges who own the grapes they grow in exchange for maintaining the property.

During the sudden cold spell recently, she became concerned for the crop.

"I will remember the peaches freezing

on the 21st of September one year," she said.

She talked about the equipment that has changed drastically since the 1960's and the threat of thieves.

Mostly she's happy the field is taken care of.

"It would make Karl happy," she said.

Bailey's Vineyard is open to pick-your-own grapes from 12 to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays in September and October or by appointment. Call 545-5786 for prices and more information.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

George Corsetti, 46, (right) and Jim Lemire, 32, work on a wine press at Bailey's Vineyard on Adams Road.

## Library site announced

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The new Farmington Hills site has many trees and some wetlands area. The proposed site cost is \$1.5 million, or about \$79,000 per acre. In the bond issue, library officials budgeted \$1.72 million, Papal said. They have been negotiating for the property since June.

**THIRTEEN SITES** were evaluated as possible ones for the new building. Papal said the library officials want the new site to be owned by the library board, be located north of I-696 in a location with improved traffic patterns, have frontage on a major road for high visibility, have accessibility, need minimum site improvements, be in area of community growth, and be in close proximity to both residential and business patrons.

The Farmington Hills master land use plan allows the library to be in either a commercial or residential district, but the library board did not pursue commercial sites, Papal said. The expense of commercial property would have made it prohibitive, and use of commercial property would have reduced the city's tax base.

According to a release from the library, the architectural firm of Minoru Yamasaki Associates has worked on renderings for the building and its placement on the 19 acres.

Plans call for a parking area for 423 vehicles closest to 12 Mile, with a 1½- to 2-story building nestled into



An artist's rendering by Minoru Yamasaki Associates shows a proposed new library to be a two-story building, viewed through the woods from the north. If approved by voters, the new library will be on the north side of 12 Mile, just east of Halsted.

trees to the rear of the property without disturbing any wetland areas. The rendering shows a building of limestone, brick and glass.

**DETAILS** WILL likely not be firm until after the election, Papal said. "Planning is still really fluid."

The Nov. 7 ballot will offer voters two issues relating to the library.

The first will ask for \$5 million to build the new library building. Officials say they are running out of space, and that usage has substantially increased.

The second will ask for 1.5 mills for 20 years to operate the two-

branch library system, which has always used general fund monies from Farmington and Farmington Hills. Both city councils have agreed to roll back millage for the amount levied by the library. If the issue passes.

The current 12 Mile Road building will either be deeded to Farmington and Farmington Hills for a community use, or sold and the money used to pay the debt for the new library early. According to information from the library, the building has been appraised at between \$1.9 million and \$3.2 million, depending on how much renovation would be required.

## Football backers worried

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athletic director for the district, met with the group.

At the recent school board meeting, parents requested:

- More coaches who teach at the school. Currently, all the coaches are part time and none hold teaching positions. Five of seven coaches from last year did not return, and one coaching position remains open, they said.

- A contact person at the district who is responsible for the football program. Parents said they had been bounced between school principal Jerry Potter and athletic director John Holland. School board members told them their contact should be Potter.

- Details on future plans for the open enrollment policy. Officials told them it would be reviewed at the end of the school year before deciding whether the policy should be continued.

- A competitive game schedule. Parents said the schedule pitted the team against some teams against which they have little chance of winning.

**ACTING SUPERINTENDENT** Michael Flanagan said the parent concerns are "largely valid," but that the district had been working toward solving the coaching dilemma since becoming aware of the problem last spring.

"I agree with the comments made tonight," Flanagan said. "There is documented evidence a lot of things happen when you don't involve kids in sports, band and other activities. But our expectation was not that we were going to solve it (the problem) by the fall."

"We've never talked about abandoning the program," he said. Complicating the issue is the teachers' union contract through the Farmington Education Association, which allows for seniority transfers

within the district before someone from the outside can be hired.

And anyone hired for a teaching job cannot be forced to coach as a requirement of the job, according to the district's personnel director, Robert Coleman.

**COLEMAN SAID** he is looking for coaching experience as he does new hiring, but he stressed "the most important thing we look for first in the best teacher for the position."

"Trust us that we are trying to do the best we can," he told the parents. "We have made an extra effort since last spring."

**FEA president Jim Miner** said that the school is going through a staff renewal, and the problem will correct itself.

"I don't doubt next year you'll have some new blood and a teacher coach," he said.

Potter is scheduled to meet with the parent group Tuesday to discuss their concerns.

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