



## **Meet Gene Pierce owner of Glenora Wine Cellars, Knapp Winery, and Chateau LaFayette Reneau**

### **1. Describe Your Business:**

Glenora Wine Cellars was started in 1977 by Eastman Beers, Ed Dalrymple, Howard Kimball, and me, and at the time, it was the first and the only winery on Seneca Lake. In 1998, Scott Welliver joined Ed Dalrymple and me, and we constructed the Inn at Glenora. In 2000, we purchased Knapp Winery & Vineyard Restaurant, followed by the purchase of Chateau LaFayette by Scott and myself in 2013. Today, the three wineries produce 75,000-80,000 cases of wine; we have 120 acres of vineyards that we care for, restaurants at both Glenora and Knapp, and lodging facilities of different types at all three wineries.

### **2. Tell us your story:**

I grew up on a farm just north of Glenora outside of Dundee. My dad had a typical assortment of things that you would have on a small farm in the 50s and 60s and eventually he started planting some grapes. I can remember helping plant his first grapevine in 1958. Later on, I went to school at Cornell with the intention of working in cooperative extension to become an extension agent for 4H. I found out after being in that program for a couple of years it really wasn't something that intrigued me. After college, I worked with my father for a short period of time and then joined the folks at Spring Ledge Farms. Spring Ledge was a fruit growing farm with 200 acres consisting of grapes, apples, cherries, all those sorts of things. During that time in the late 60s-early 70s, the grape and wine industry was changing quite significantly and consequently that's when the four founders of Glenora got together and decided that, as grape growers, we needed to look for alternative markets, hence the establishment of Glenora.

### **3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?**

What has helped Glenora, Knapp, and Chateau, and consequently myself, succeed have been the people that I've been able to work and surround myself with. I'm a great believer in teams and I think what's made me, and I'm always hesitant to say me, but what's made our businesses so successful is having a great group of individuals to work with.

### **4. What inspires you?**

I like challenges. I like people. I like to create things and I believe that's what the grape and wine industry does. It gives me the opportunity to take something literally from planting a grapevine all the way through growing and making a wine, marketing it, and then presenting it to people. So it's just a lot of fun.

### **5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?**

There's not too much that keeps me up at night because I generally don't get too concerned about things that I can't really influence. If I needed something to worry about, I would say it might be the weather and if it's going to be too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, which is kind of an old farmer's thing, and also how the weather impacts visitation to our area.

I think the challenges today would be the same for our business as any other business. It's getting more and more complicated due to government regulations, rules, restrictions, and that sort of thing. Those are the challenges that I've seen.

### **6. What is your favorite local activity?**

I really enjoy working with various organizations, serving on boards, meeting people and discussing ideas with them...and sailing when I have time.

### **7. Is there anything else we should know about you?**

I have very much enjoyed watching the Finger Lakes area grow over the past 40 years and I've been glad to be able to be a very, very small part of it and really I'm wondering what it's going to look like in the next 40 years. When you look back 50 years ago to the 60s, it's amazing all of the things that have happened since then. If things happen as quickly in the next 50 years as they did in the last 50 years, the world's going to be a very interesting and intriguing place.