

**"Toad Hollow" Founder, Todd Williams, Passes Away**

The wine business lost a vintner friend and one of the most affable and dynamic personalities in the business today. Todd Williams, aka "Dr. Toad," passed Tuesday, August 14th, 2007 at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital in Sonoma County, a result of heart failure. He was 69. Todd, a native of Versailles, Kentucky, founded Russian River Valley's Toad Hollow Vineyards in 1993 with business partner Rodney Strong.

Todd started in the saloon business, cutting a swath from Oklahoma to San Francisco to Montego Bay, Jamaica. Eventually, his no-holds-barred approach to life led him to discover his passion in California's wine business in the 80's where he built a name for himself as a tireless advocate for small, premium producers. In the late 80's and after several years in wine sales, he served as Shafer Vineyards' National Sales Manager and credits this experience for setting the tone of his nationally recognized, companionable approach to spreading "the gospel according to the Toad."

Todd's winery staff remembers: "Todd's big arms embraced everyone whom he met. His magnanimous nature created instant friends."

In 1993, during a successful stint with his own sales company, Hillside Estates, Todd partnered with Rodney Strong who had just sold his namesake winery. The two found a new project to pursue as their retirement dream - founding Toad Hollow Vineyards. Starting with Rod's Russian River chardonnay vineyard land and Todd's sales expertise, they released 3,000 cases of Toad Hollow wines in May of 1994. Todd's limitless energy, acerbic wit and heady promotional tactics has endeared the brand to a national audience who looks forward to the next Toad Hollow Gazette or a new wine release laced with amphibian innuendo.

The brand has grown to over 100,000 cases in 2007 with consistent critical acclaim for wines that deliver Russian River character with a broader, more easily understood sensibility. The addition of wines like Eye of the Toad, Cacophony, Rod's Pride, and Askew, to name a few, has kept an eager audience waiting for more from Todd Williams.