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FALL 2007





Owl Ridge 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon made with grapes from the Brigden family's vineyards.

Two veterans of the '60s rock scene find peace and happiness in the hills overlooking Santa Rosa

Change of Pace

STORY BY MEG McCONAHEY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLIE GESELL

Can two inveterate rockers — alumni of the '60s Bay Area counterculture and psychedelic music scene — find happiness living the quiet farm life in Wine Country?

Without a moment's pause to parse her words, Julia Brigden emphatically responds, "Life right now? It's very good."

With her pencil-sleek designer jeans and Italian heels, the carefree hippie once known as "Girl Freiberg" back in the days when she was the teenage bride of bass guitarist David Freiberg (Jefferson Airplane and Quicksilver Messenger Service), Julia Brigden now looks every inch the cool, classy, Sonoma Academy volunteer mom that she has matured into since that long-ago Summer of Love.



Jack Brigden, 17, relaxes with his father, Mick, in their home library, where books, albums and memorabilia from Mick's career as a rock music promoter and manager are kept.



"Maybe I was deprived when I was young. I love the idea of abundance everywhere."

JULIA BRIGDEN



Mick relaxes with his wife, Julia Brigden, known as "Girl Freiberg" during her hippie days as the teen wife of a Jefferson Airplane and Quicksilver Messenger Service guitarist, in their living room, which flows into the kitchen and dining room.

And yet, it's a radically different life she and current husband, Mick, former right-hand man for the late rock impresario Bill Graham, forged six years ago when they decided to move north from Marin County.

Santa Rosa was a place Julia, whose world had always radiated south from Marin, concedes was never on her radar. Wine Country to the couple was Napa Valley, where they'd escape for weekends of wine tasting and bike riding.

But Mick had spent decades traveling as manager for performers like Van Morrison, Taj Mahal, Carlos Santana and The Neville Brothers among others. He also directed tours for The Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, and was ready to amp down into the country and try his hand at growing premium grapes.

The 33-acre parcel they found near the summit of Calistoga Road overlooking Santa Rosa proved to have everything they were looking for. A great south-facing hillside for cabernet, both meadows and canyons dotted with pine and oak for a sense of privacy, and yet it's only a seven-minute drive down to stores, schools and services in Rincon Valley. With teenage son Jack still at home, Julia was clear that she didn't want to spend half her life on the road, especially gnarly, windy ones in the middle of nowhere.

"It feels like you're way out of town,

but you're really only 10 minutes down to Highway 12," says Mick, a Brit who drifted to California by way of Toronto back in the late '60s and like many artists, writers and musicians at the time, got swept up into the pulse of Bay Area rock 'n' roll.

The classic California/Mediterranean style home the couple built near the summit of Calistoga Road has proven to be a great place to raise a child while pursuing burgeoning interests in everything horticultural.

Mick oversees 150 olive trees and five acres of cabernet while Julia applies her green thumb to everything from orchard fruit to heirloom vegetables. She also designed, with the help of friends, the interior courtyard garden around which their single-story hacienda wraps.

It is a serenely restrained vision of fountain grass, iceberg roses, yarrow, bird of paradise and plumeria. Italian loggias extend the indoors out into this inviting space, in the center of which shimmers the stuff of California dreams — a classic rectangular swimming pool.

"Maybe I was deprived when I was young. I love the idea of abundance everywhere," says Julia, who was born in South Africa but grew up mainly in Sausalito. "I didn't know I was going to like growing things, but my little farmer gene has woken up here."





Left, the kitchen has two separate sinks so that two cooks can work at once.

Above, the picturesque yard and pool area of the Brigden home shows the mix of Mediterranean influences.

Left, Julia in her windowed dining room that allows in light from three sides.

**FILL THE TRAY.
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After a long day of taking care of the kids, all-day meetings at the office or just doing things for everyone else, what could be more relaxing than a hot bath, a glass of wine and the warm dancing flames of the Lopi Looking Glass fireplace?

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The couple loves the sense of sustainability they get from the fruits of their own labor and land, whether it's for eating or decorating. Fresh eggs come from five chickens housed in a chicken coop Julia built herself with the help of her brother. Edibles are everywhere. Cherries, pears, apricots, nectarines, quince. The reclaimed-timber columns that are part of a covered porch in back are rocking out with kiwi vines.

"We can cook homegrown products, eat homegrown products and have homegrown ambiance created by what's going on," says Mick. He's seated in their open living room, cheered by twin sunflowers from the garden popping out from vases on either side of the mantle.

The house, designed by San Francisco architect Michael Bauschke, is a meld of Italian and Spanish Colonial characteristics. Thick stucco walls, loggias and archways are reminiscent of Italy but inside the house is light and airy with glass-paneled doors everywhere. In fact, the house has more doors than windows. The master bedroom has no windows at all, just six patio doors.

From the main living area, with its dark, Sydney Blue Gum floors and white-slip-covered wrap-around sofa tossed with silken pillows, you would never guess at the Brigdens' many years at the vanguard of Bay Area rock 'n' roll and the idealistic counterculture born in the '60s. The white-washed walls are adorned with only a few selected art pieces, each with a story.

Their massive CD collection and Julia's computer and "office" are all neatly hidden in a wall of cabinets custom made by friend

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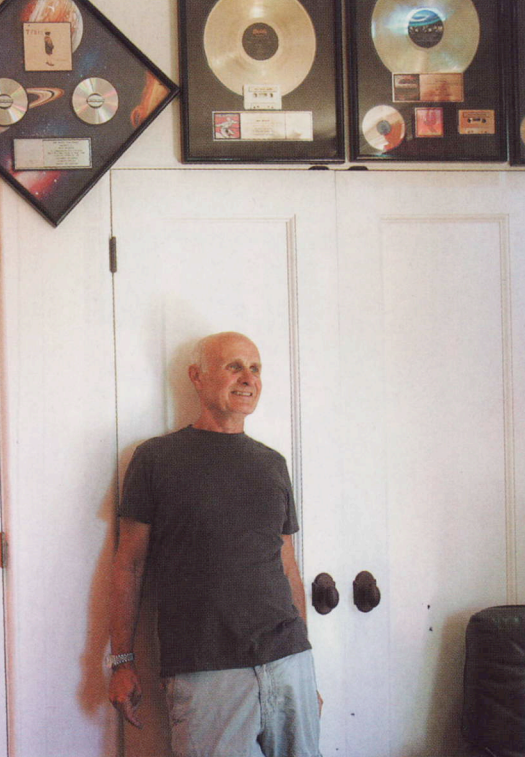
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Gold records from Mick's career as a music promoter and manager line his office wall.

and master carpenter Peter Dale.

It's in the library and Mick's office where you finally get a hint that these are people with an interesting story.

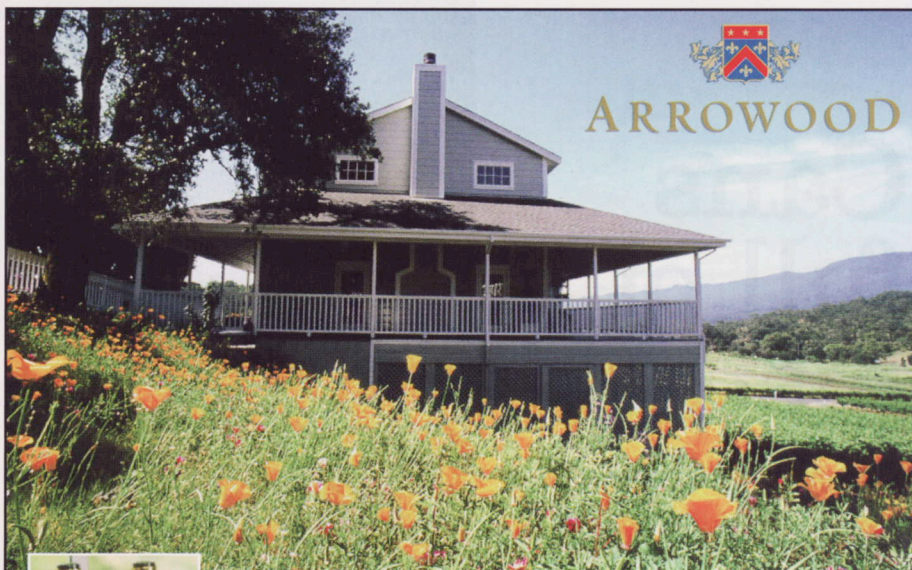
In the tower-like library are neatly framed posters of concerts he had a hand in, like 1985's powerful Live Aid For African Famine Relief, as well as platinum albums of performers Mick has managed: Santana, Eddie Money, Joe Satriani (his only remaining client).

There's memorabilia, like a burned Rolodex stored under glass, that he retrieved from the rubble of a 1985 arson fire that hit the offices of Bill Graham Presents. And there's the poster from a July 1969 Fillmore West concert that proved pivotal in both their lives.

"That's where I met Bill (Graham) for the first time," Mick reminisces. "That's where Julia and I met. And I fell in love with San Francisco."

Now the couple is slowly bonding with Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. Mick's grapes are now making their way into bottles of Owl Ridge cabernet. The couple also contributes their promotional skills to fund-raising and events for Sonoma Academy, where Jack is a senior; this year they're in charge of planning the big grad night party. Both are serious cyclists and have found much to explore between the Mayacamas, the ocean and the Russian River in between.

"Napa seems like the heart of the Wine Country," Mick allows. "It has its values. But Sonoma has got so much more."



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