

BRETT'S TALES FROM THE PAST
NO. 4

"The vineyard is on fire, but I think everything will be ok."

2013 was a strange vintage. The summer was very hot, and I anticipated an early harvest. However, a series of cold fronts came through in early October, delaying the completion of harvest until late October.

One stormy night in October my intern and I had fruit arrive late in the afternoon. We sorted and destemmed the fruit outside, in the dark and a windstorm. That night felt like something out of Exodus.

2013 was the last of my ill-advised attempts to grow Malbec on the property around the winery. Near the vineyard, we had a burn pile of old wood that we would burn on days the County allowed. Unfortunately, my father-in-law did not fully extinguish all the smoldering coals in the pile.

When the biblical winds started howling the fire restarted blowing embers all around. My intern, cleaning up outside, came to me and said, "the vineyard is on fire, but I think everything will be ok."

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I was less calm, rushed back outside saw the potential for a total disaster, and tried to get a water hose to the burn pile. However, I did not have enough hose. I filled a ½ to picking bin with water, drove the water out to the burn pile with my forklift, and rotated the water on the conflagration.

I repeated the filling and dumping two more times and got the fire out. Fortune favors idiots like me and there was no damage to the vines or property. This was a night I will never forget and am grateful for how lucky I was.

