

Congratulations! It's a tree

By Carolyn Younger

STAFF WRITER

A forked snag, all that remained of a diseased valley oak in the middle of a block of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, was replaced May 26 by a robust 6-ton, 40-foot tall, 13-inch-diameter oak of like heritage trailered from Gilroy.

Grape grower Andy Beckstoffer, who brought it all about, was ready to hand out cigars, he was so proud.

"We had to pull out a whole row of vines, a quarter acre, right in the middle of important block of Cabernet Sauvignon," Beckstoffer said. "People said, 'Hey, you guys must be nuts.'"

Beckstoffer won't be planting there again for at least three years in order to have room for a watering truck. He replaced the tree because it stood on the site of a farm made famous in the 1940 film, "They Knew What They Wanted," with Carole Lombard and Charles Laughton.

The house, Beckstoffer learned well after the fact, was where a friend's parents spent their first year of married life. And where Rock Hudson once had a publicity shot taken.

"It seemed it needed to be marked," said Beckstoffer, "I feel like I've put back what was there."

So he and the Beckstoffer family, staff and crew stood solemnly as pastor Gordon Kalil blessed the tree, then raised glasses of sparkling wine in a toast to the tree's longevity.

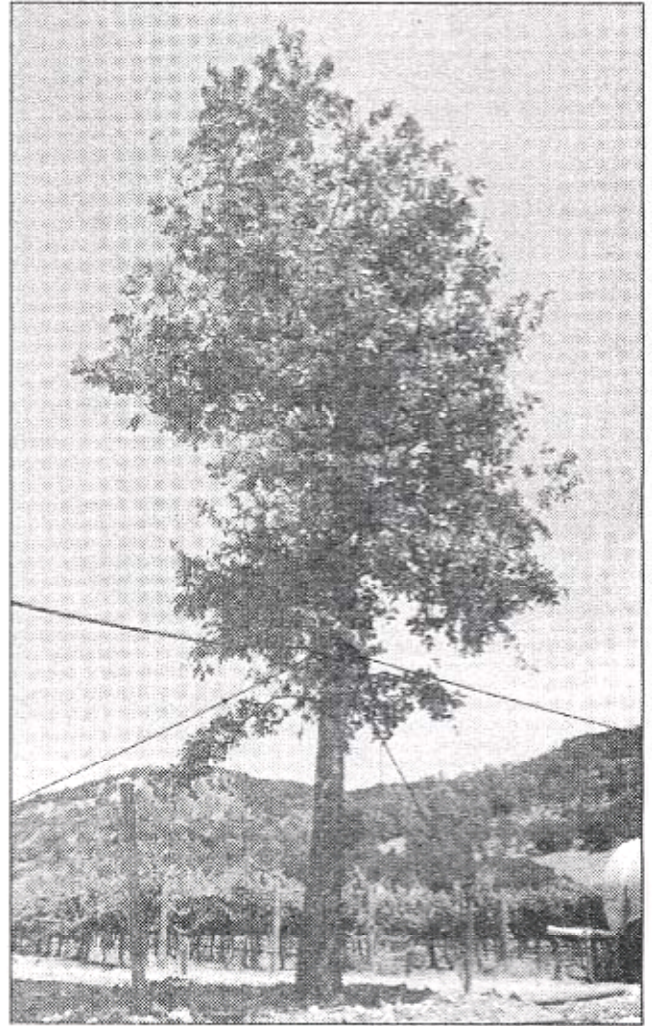


Photo by Carolyn Younger

A young valley oak replaces a longtime, but diseased, Silverado Trail landmark.