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PROPRIETORS

Stone Hill Winery

& RESTAURANT

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PRESS RELEASE

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Stone Hill Winery's Blanc de Blancs to Christen USS Missouri

(HERMANN, Mo.)—It's official! A bottle of Stone Hill Winery's 2001 Blanc de Blancs sparkling wine will christen the Navy's newest Virginia-class nuclear attack submarine December 5, 2009.

For the past several months, Stone Hill Winery has been working closely with members of the USS Missouri Commissioning Committee as well as with officials at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Conn., where the USS Missouri was built and also will be christened. The winery received the final approval shortly after the Thanksgiving holiday that its 2001 Blanc de Blancs definitely would be used.

"It's an honor to have our wine chosen for such a historic event," says Jim Held, co-owner of Stone Hill Winery with his wife Betty since 1965. "It's a great tradition that we're proud to take part in. It's not only a privilege for Stone Hill Winery; it's a great way to showcase Missouri and our thriving wine industry as well."

Because the christening ceremony called for a sparkling wine bottle with a particular size and shape, Stone Hill's winemakers were pressed into service to produce three special-order bottles: one for the christening, one for a backup in case the first bottle doesn't break and a third for testing purposes prior to the event. Passing the "fizz test" as one shipyard official called it was the last hurdle prior to Stone Hill's Blanc de Blancs earning its christening honors.

The 2001 Blanc de Blancs is a Brut-style sparkling wine made from Vidal grapes. The wine is naturally fermented in the bottle and carefully riddled by hand in the traditional French method, *Methode Champenoise*.

For Stone Hill Winery christening a Navy vessel named for Missouri is more than just historic; it's a matter of history repeating itself. A bottle of Stone Hill Winery's "Pearl of Missouri" sparkling wine was used to christen the first USS Missouri battleship in December 1901. "That's why we chose our 2001 Blanc de Blancs for this christening," says Held. "It was a good year, and it also seemed fitting to use a sparkling wine produced exactly a century later." There's also a personal Navy connection for Held. He proudly served aboard the destroyer USS Johnston in the machinery repair division from 1955 to 1957.

The christening will take place at the Navy base in Groton, Conn., at 11 a.m. EST, December 5, 2009. A representative from Stone Hill Winery will attend along with members of the USS Missouri Commissioning Committee and several other key Missouri personnel. A commissioning ceremony, where the submarine will be officially entered into the Navy's service, is tentatively scheduled for summer 2010.

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