



Fess Parker Q&A

Fess Parker, 82, is the patriarch of a winemaking family that wasn't taken seriously when he first began planting in the Santa Ynez Valley near Santa Barbara in 1989. The industry considered Parker, who Walt Disney turned into a national icon with the studio's 1950s TV series Davy Crockett, too Hollywood to harvest grapes. Today, with his winery receiving acclaim from critics and public alike, Parker is enjoying the last laugh while his son, daughter and son-in-law lead the winery on an unending quest for excellence.

Who is most underrated by historians: Davy Crockett or Daniel Boone?

They're apples and oranges. Crockett was not a shy man. He was more flamboyant, he loved the limelight. Daniel Boone always seemed to be more up to the task of the age [settling and exploring the wilderness].

You're a native Texan. What traits of Davy Crockett, an adopted Texan, corresponded with your own?

Texans are up for a challenge.

You live in California. What Texas attribute is missing there?

A sense of space. There's more space in Texas than anybody can imagine.

What's your favorite white?

Viognier, but Riesling for breakfast with bacon and eggs. You go out to greet the world with a big smile on your face.

Your favorite red?

A well-made Syrah. It doesn't act in my system with quite the insistence of a Pinot Noir.

Where's your favorite island?

Santa Cruz off the coast of Santa Barbara.

Did you have a favorite pet as a child? What was it?

A bulldog my father found on the side of the road.

What is your favorite TV show now?

Weekend sports. I attended the University of Texas, University of Southern California and Texas A&M. I am a fan of all three so I usually have a great Saturday.

What book are you reading now?

Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination, a biography by Neal Gabler.

Do you believe in lucky charms?

No, but I believe in luck.

For instance?

If Walt Disney had leaned over to answer a phone call in his screening room, he would have missed my two minute appearance in *Them*, a 1953 movie about giant ants. I got the part of Davy Crockett after Disney saw that.

Which is harder: growing grapes or acting in television?

With a TV series, it's heavy labor, but shooting it becomes like working in a factory. Grapes are not so predictable. Farming isn't for the faint hearted.

You also have a hotel next to your vineyards. What's running a hotel like?

A hotel is like Hollywood. You have the crew, the cast and the guest stars. You have to have a great team.

You have nine grandchildren. What are they like?

They're a lot more observant and understanding of the world than my generation. And Blackberries and Tivos are duck soup to them.

Any advice on raising them?

Take your time to talk to them. Wait for a moment you're both comfortable.