

Entry 09

Subject: Sterling Vineyards

Every year, thousands of visitors travel to Napa Valley to either admire the vineyards alongside Silverado Road or across Highway 29, take photos in front of the iconic Napa Valley sign, or visit the luxurious wineries. They see the scenery, do the wine tastings, and take in the famous views. But when I look at those same vineyards, I see something different. I see the years of hard work happening behind the scenes, and most importantly, I see my dad and the place that has shaped who I am today.

Sterling Vineyards is one of the most beloved and even recognizable places in Napa County. Its vineyards stretch across the hills near Calistoga, representing the wine culture Napa Valley is known for around the world. But beyond tourism, these vineyards reflect generations of hard agricultural work of the people who dedicate their livelihoods to caring for the land. My dad, who has spent over thirty-four years working as a vineyard worker at Sterling Vineyards, built his life through sacrifice and resilience. His job though, has never been easy.

Vineyard work means long days outside, early mornings, and physical labor under the sun. He would often leave before sunrise and return home exhausted, with his hands worn and calloused. Even now, when I compare his hands to mine, I'm reminded of everything he's done for our family, because no matter how tired he is, he still shows up every day and gives his best work.

Growing up, Sterling Vineyards was always more than just a landmark to me. It was the place that reflected my dad's dedication and showed me what is possible through hard work and determination. I remember being as young as nine, watching closely behind him as he carefully worked on each vine, taking his time using his tools and wrapping wire with so much focus that it fascinated me. In that moment, I looked out at the valley hills covered in vineyards, and began to understand that their beauty didn't happen by chance. Instead, I realized how every row requires patience, effort, and attention from workers like my dad, whose work often goes unseen.

For me, my dad's decades of hard work and commitment to this landmark remind me that success doesn't happen overnight. It grows slowly over time through patience, effort, and determination, just like the vines he helps take care of every day. Witnessing his hard work firsthand and hearing his stories about arriving in a new country with nothing but the motivation to work have shaped how I see my own future. As I prepare for college and pursue a career as a teacher, I know there will be challenges along the way, but because of him, I've learned to keep going even when things feel difficult and to take pride in how far I've come.

Looking toward the future, places like Sterling Vineyards must continue to be preserved,

not only because they are beautiful vineyards but because of the stories they hold. They symbolize the hard work and history of the people who built Napa Valley into what it is today. That is why with pride, I will continue to share my dad's story and the stories of other workers like him.