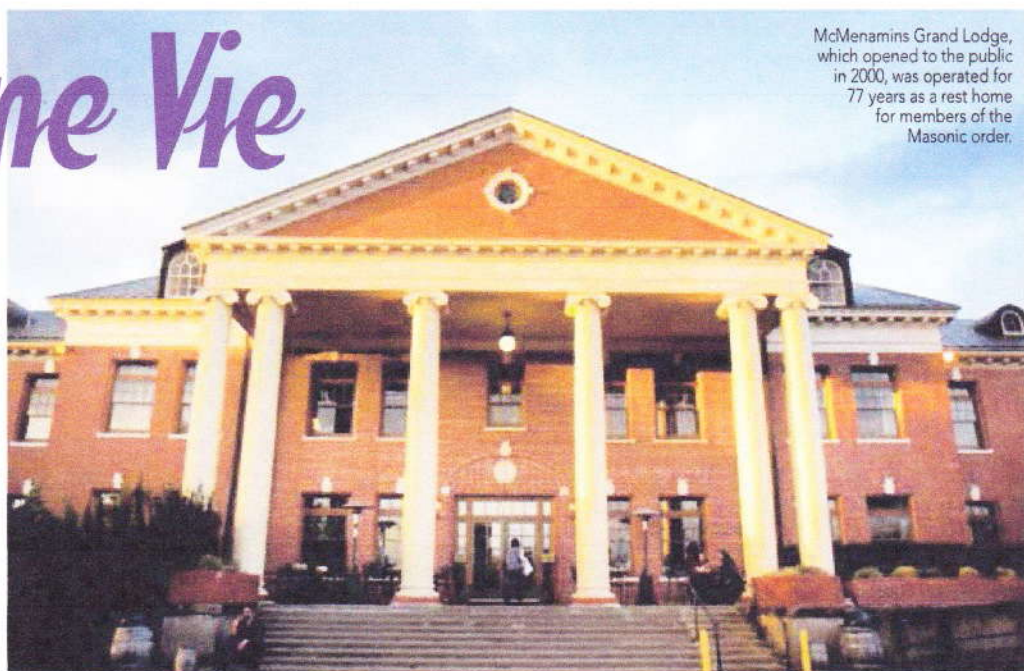
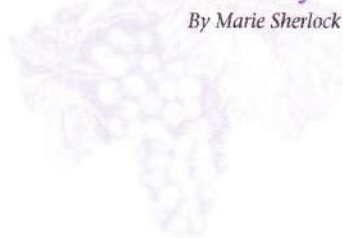


La Bonne Vie

Our McMenamins Mothers' Getaway in Oregon's Wine Country

By Marie Sherlock



McMenamins Grand Lodge, which opened to the public in 2000, was operated for 77 years as a rest home for members of the Masonic order.

If you go

McMenamins opened its first brewpub in 1985 and now boasts 57 locations in Oregon and Washington.

Two of those properties – the Grand Lodge and Hotel Oregon – are perfect jumping off points for a Willamette Valley wine tasting getaway:

The Grand Lodge, 3505 Pacific Ave., Forest Grove; 503-992-3425; mcmenamins.com

Hotel Oregon, 310 N.E. Evans St., McMinnville; 503-472-8427; mcmenamins.com.

The Grand Lodge is the location for a medieval-themed "Faire in the Grove" on May 5 and 6. Visit faireinthegrove.com for more information. Hotel Oregon hosts its annual UFO Fest May 18 and 19, complete with a costume parade and an "alien pet" costume contest. Visit ufofest.com for details.

For a Mobile Wine Tour for your smart phone (with directions and other details for over 180 Willamette Valley wineries) go to WillametteWines.com. You'll also find details on Memorial Day Weekend activities.

We really, truly, TOTALLY wanted to go to France for our Mothers' Getaway this year. My sister (like myself, the mother of two sons) and I have been scheduling these annual moms-only retreats for almost a decade now – and we were ready to get AWAY this year. We imagined ourselves traipsing through the Loire valley, Provence and the Cotes du Rhone, lazily driving from vineyard to vineyard, sipping the Pinot Noirs, Chardonnays and Syrahs in their native land, and living *la bonne vie*.

But we only had two days – not even enough time to tackle the jet lag – and a couple hundred dollars to spend (have you checked airfares to Paris lately? OMG!). So instead of Beaujolais or Bordeaux, we opt for Oregon's very own wine country, which is – quite serendipitously, it seems, considering our time and budget constraints – on an international par with similar regions of France.

The Grand Lodge: Gateway to *la bonne vie*

For our home base, we choose McMenamins Grand Lodge in Forest Grove which promises "European style" accommodations (perfect for our simulated overseas travel) and all of the other amenities required for a moms' getaway: good food and drink, spa services (at the legendary Ruby's Spa) and, as our surrogate French *pension*, proximity to numerous wineries in the North Willamette Valley.

Although we're big McMenamins' fans, neither I nor my getaway buddy had ever been to the Grand Lodge. We fell in love with it within minutes of our arrival. (See 'Oh, if only the walls could speak!' on



The walls of the Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Room tell visitors about Mozart's Masonic involvement and about his last opera, *The Magic Flute*, which has many Masonic references.

page 31 for a bit of history about the lodge.)

The rooms at the Grand Lodge are named for individuals who are somehow connected to this marvelous building – and tell their stories as well. We're staying in the Mozart Room. You may be wondering – as we did – what does Mozart have to do with a Masonic Lodge in Forest Grove, Oregon? The walls of our room provide the explanation: Mozart was a lifelong Mason. His final opera, *The Magic Flute*, is replete with Masonic imagery.

Little extras abound. For example, before our (spa) treatments we're offered mimosas or "Black or White Rabbits" (glasses of McMenamins' red or white wine).

La Bonne Vie continues on page 32

So many little extras

McMenamins does things right. Attention to detail is a hallmark of these amazing establishments. Along with the little extras we discovered at Ruby's Spa, here are a few others we noticed at the Grand Lodge.

Artwork!

Per McMenamins' tradition, the walls are replete with artwork, photography and stories. The Grand Lodge's home page on mcmenamins.com urges visitors to "Look up..." We do and find a labyrinth of whimsically painted pipes, many with faces smiling down at us.

Soaking pool

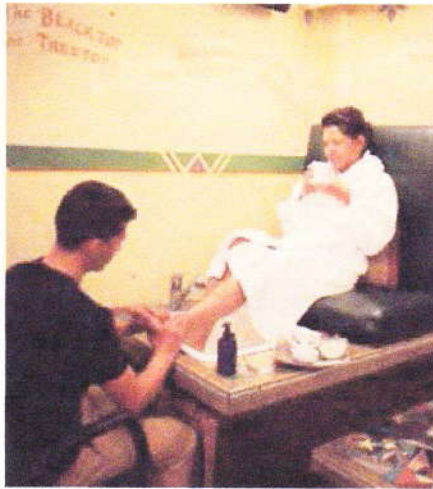
Another delightful extra is the soaking pool (complimentary admission for guests). It's like a humongous hot tub – the temperature is perfect – and it's tucked in behind enough foliage to be totally private for those who may not want to bare all for the masses. (Admission to the Compass Room Theater is also free for guests.)

Affordable indulgence

Room rates are very reasonable (starting at \$45). Spa services are also affordable, with massages starting at \$45 and manicures at \$35. And try the room service! In my world, room service is a rare, pricy luxury, with hotels typically jacking menu prices up. But at The Grand Lodge, this indulgence is affordable. The Eastern Star Breakfast (2 eggs, bacon/sausage, hash browns, toast) goes for \$8.50. Lattes are only \$3.15. A splurge without buyer's remorse!

History

Another McMenamins' tradition is to tell visitors the stories behind their buildings. See 'Oh, if only the walls could speak!' on page 31 for details on the Grand Lodge. Ask for the Walking Tour Guide at the front desk, then roam the halls while you time travel.



Ruby's Spa offers an extensive array of rejuvenating spa services at affordable prices.



The outdoor soaking pool at the Grand Lodge – as soothing as it is beautiful – is one of the Lodge's highly recommended amenities.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MCMENAMINS

La Bonne Vie continued from page 31

Our indolent itinerary

We never schedule many obligations during our getaways – it's planned indolence, truly. We know we want to visit a few wineries and enjoy spa treatments but beyond that our itinerary is blissfully vague and devoid of details. We'll eat, drink, read – and maybe catch a movie at the Compass Room Theater.

As it turns out, it's Oscar night and the Compass Room is hosting the event, from Red Carpet color commentary to the best picture award. We grab beer and popcorn, find comfy couches and join in the festivities – which, thankfully, no ones takes too seriously.

Wine tasting for, er, dummies

The next morning we're off to visit a couple of wineries. Full disclosure here: neither I nor my getaway buddy are oenophiles. We've both drunk our share of wine but we're more inclined to purchase them based on the Cutest Label for the Lowest Cost approach rather than any true knowledge about what makes wine great. An example: En route to Forest Grove, we had already stopped at Helvetia Vineyards (helvetiawinery.com). Applying the Cute Label/Low Cost approach there, we each came home with a bottle of "Grrrr-vertz" – with a weiner dog on the label.

To ensure that we don't completely embarrass ourselves during the tastings, we turned to our research assistant (Google) for some vino etiquette. Ever in search of a mnemonic devise for my lame powers of recall, I came up with "LSD": Look (giving the glass a bit of a swirl), Smell and then Drink (or, rather, taste – but I need a D so drink it is).

We discover quickly that our tasting guides are affable and understanding. As we swirl, sniff and sip,

We decide that – what with our time away, good food and drink, our 45th parallel wine tasting, massages and pedicures – we do, indeed, live *la bonne vie*.

they tell us about each variety we're sampling. Our host at David Hill (davidhillwinery.com) points out that Oregon's Willamette Valley, situated on the 45th parallel like its French counterparts, is world-renowned for its Pinot Noir. We sample some at both David Hill and at Shafer Vineyard (shafervineyardcellars.com) – and conclude that Oregon does, indeed, produce worthy contenders.

There are literally dozens more vineyards and tasting rooms near Forest Grove – but without a designated driver, we figure that two experiences are our limit. Besides, it's time for our spa treatments...

Ruby's Spa

Spa services have become *de rigueur* on these getaways and, to our pleasant surprise, The Grand Lodge is home to a Ruby's Spa (available at only two McMenamins' properties). We schedule massages and pedicures for our second afternoon and we're treated like royalty. Little extras abound. For example, before our treatments we're offered mimosas or "Black or White Rabbits" (glasses of McMenamins' red or white wine). As we wait in the lounge area with our drinks, spa employees bring in neck warmers and make sure we're comfortable. Our spa attendants – Gina and Jessica – are fantastic. Two hours later we leave feeling relaxed and pampered (which is, of course, our goal).

Mission accomplished

After our spa treatments, we circle back to our rooms and then head to the Lodge's Ironwork Grill for dinner. Fueled by chicken curry soup, crab cakes and wine, we talk and talk and talk – in truth, the guts of a girls' getaway. We decide that – what with our time away, good food and drink, our 45th parallel wine tastings, massages and pedicures – we do, indeed, live *la bonne vie*, without the need to shell out a king's ransom for airfare and accommodations.

Based on a cost-benefit analysis, we'll opt for Oregon's wine country any day.

Marie Sherlock is Metro Parent's editor.

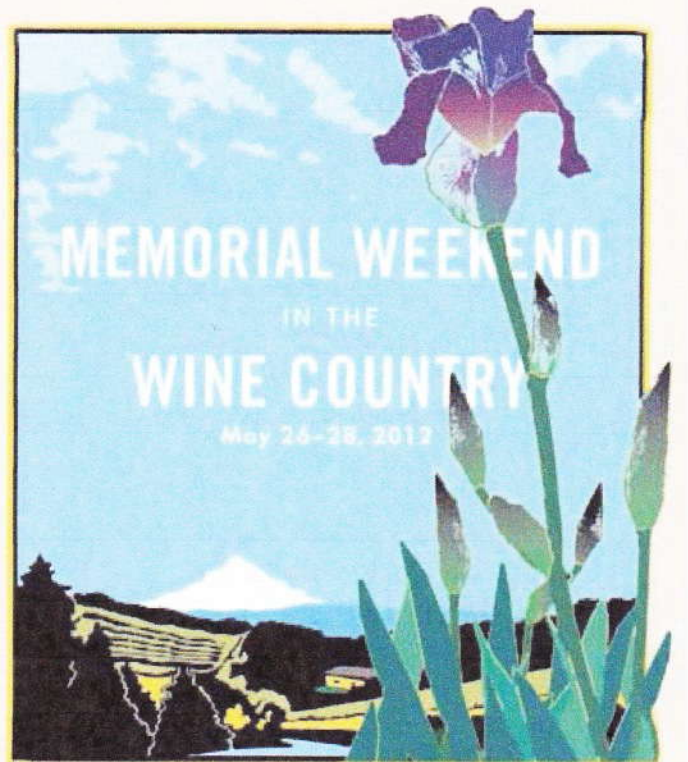
'Oh, if only the walls could speak!'

Thus begins McMenamins' website's history page (mcmenamins.com/history). While McMenamins' properties can claim a host of attributes, it is a dedication to tell the stories behind their locations that make these properties unique and incredibly appealing – and, essentially, destinations in their own right.

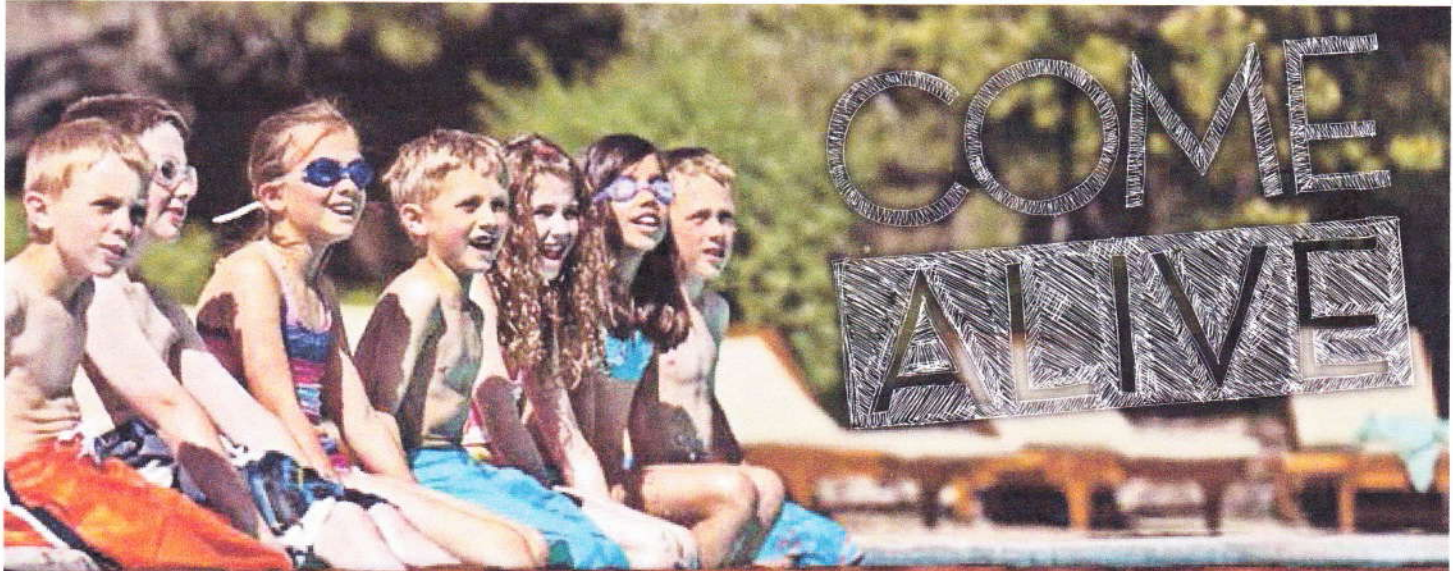
The Grand Lodge is, indeed, a grand example of the McMenamins' storytelling tradition. Enlarged photos depicting the history of the building and its inhabitants grace the hallways – peppered, as usual, with the lovely, original art that McMenamins is renowned for. We learn that the Grand Lodge was built in 1922 by the Masons, as an old folks' home and housed seniors until 1999. An orphanage next door (now called, simply, the Children's Cottage) operated until 1927.

Roaming the corridors, taking in the photography and paintings, and reading the captions is like time traveling. We feel connected to the people who lived and worked here. An instant "sense of place" ensues – an amenity you simply won't experience at a Best Western.

La Bonne Vie continues on page 32



More than 150 wineries and tasting rooms open from 11-5. For a touring map and list of participating wineries visit willamettewines.com



Endless Adventure, at Sunriver Resort

During the month of May, receive **20-25% off** our best available rate for the summer season when you mention our Endless Adventure offer. Rates starting at just **\$139 a night!**

Visit: Sunriver-resort.com or call **1-800-547-3922**

