



# CRISTAL BLUE CARRIAGE

## *Boutique Transportation to Boutique Wineries*

by Danae Blythe Rubenstein

One will pause undoubtedly in one's life and (re)evaluate their own career. There are books and seminars, a surfeit of evaluation tools and surveys designed to assist one in such a task. For Chris Rodriquez, there was a song. "Crystal Blue Persuasion" by Tommy James and the Shondells, written in 1969. Driving across the Bay Bridge, whilst pondering perhaps this shift in careers himself, though the radio sang Crystal Blue Persuasion, a different song blanketed Chris as the apex of years in the restaurant, wine and PR industries all harmonized in a suspended state over the Bay. Next to The Shondells, it could only be Edvard Grieg's piece entitled "Morning" that could have ever rendered the condition of illumination cast upon Chris that morning. It was truly the start of a new day. And a new career. And a new lifestyle entirely.

This moment of enlightenment for business partner Bill Kane was nothing softer in profundity than Chris'. Though perhaps less "spiritual," Bill's sudden awareness – his refined palate and viscous industry friendships no doubt catalysts – besieged Bill as he isolated several key points while at work one fine day. The first was that his and Chris' profits were quite decent when paired, and second, that this figure was lacking the profit margin earned (by his boss) largely off that



**Bill Kane & Chris Rodriquez**

information Chris and Bill held exclusively of their employer – every secret boutique winery, winemaker and the most precise way to get to them. And thus they were on their own. A road map resonates on both tips of their tongues, a map of convoluted winding Wine Country roads, winemaker particulars, and gourmet picnic sanctuaries. Chris and Bill however, are barrels more than a regurgitating visitor's bureau bearing maps with stars and "do not miss!" arrows.

Maybe it is the romantic and chivalrous feel of the crystal blue carriage that make both Chris and Bill simply quixotic to any a novice or expansive wine devotee, though they would only admit that the goal of Cristal Blue Carriage is to never forget about the client. Being forgotten is surely the last concern on anyone's mind when in the presence of either of these tour guides. Cristal Blue Carriage has revamped the term "wine tour." The experience with Cristal Blue Carriage is better revealed as being escorted by dear friends to their favorite boutique Napa Valley wineries. Both men have such profound relationships

with these Napa Valley vintners that if by the end of a day with Cristal Blue Carriage, one is treated and received the way in which Chris and Bill are, then they have done their job. Though you'll never hear the word "job" even whispered out of their mouths. Taking guests through the back roads of Napa Valley to their own intimate boutique hideaways is a pleasure they could but only hope to continue into retirement. Retirement isn't likely any time soon though with standards as high as theirs. It is an eclectic background they both possess, riddled with customer service, wine and an inventory of friends-who-just-happen-to-be-winemakers that you can not find in the wine aisle of your local grocery store.

Maker's Mark, Dom Perignon or whatever it is you prefer, can be waiting for you upon your arrival. Remember the last time you were in a limo? This is nothing like it. Add a layer of royalty, a wise taste of experience, a Brit and a San Jose native and you'll find the luxury and class that Cristal Blue Carriage has to offer. Sounds too extravagant? As Bill Kane puts it, he and Chris plainly take their guests to "make new friends and to meet their old friends, who just happen to make damn good wine"

To go visit Chris and Bill and their friends in Napa, call (925) 459-TOUR, or visit them on the web at [www.cristalbluecarriage.com](http://www.cristalbluecarriage.com). Be sure to check out the website scrapbook.