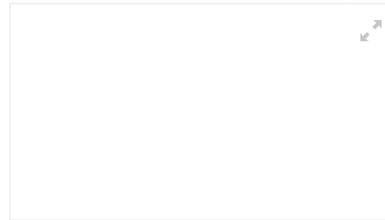


FOOD & LIFESTYLE

David Adelsheim's 'Founders' Stories' celebrates the people who gave rise to Willamette Valley wine



David Adelsheim interviewed 10 fellow founding North Willamette Valley wine families last fall for "Founders' Stories."

COURTESY OF ADELSHEIM VINEYARD



By Pete Danko
Staff Reporter, Portland Business Journal
Mar 2, 2021

The big-round-number anniversary can be an easy foil for businesses looking for press, but what Adelsheim Vineyard undertook for its 50th this year was far from simple.

Just ask [David Adelsheim](#), the winery's co-founder. After conducting interviews with 10 fellow Willamette Valley founding wine families last fall, he realized his toil had just begun.

"The next step was amazingly difficult," Adelsheim said. "Trying to edit that raw video into something that was presentable on its own, that made sense sequentially, that didn't have me going 'Uh, you know, I'm wondering, well, no, I mean, really,' ... I'd never been on that side of the microphone or camera before, and it is a lot of work."

Based on the first installment of the "[Founders' Stories](#)," released this week, the effort was well worth it.

The interview with Diana Lett of The Eyrie Vineyards — available in digest form (17 minutes) or full-length (1 hour and 22 minutes), and as a podcast — is historically rich and invariably delightful as events, people and ideas from the early days come up.

Bottles too.

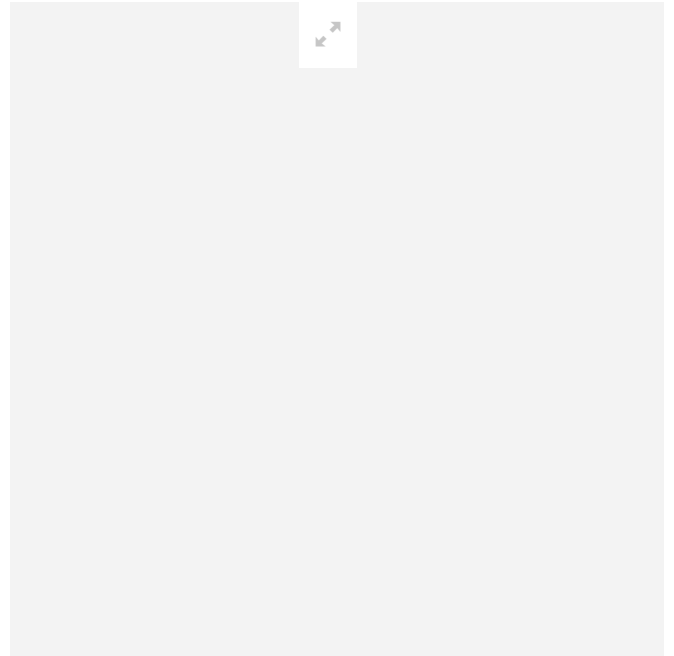
There's the first pinot from Eyrie, from 1970, labeled in second-label fashion as "Oregon Spring Wine" because David Lett, who passed away in 2008, thought it didn't quite measure up.

"Several years later we tasted it and it was fine, it was great, and he said, 'I could kick myself for putting it in that (bottle),' " Diana Lett recalls her husband saying.

Adelsheim also places on the table a 1981 Adelsheim Vineyard Yamhill County pinot noir, with a familiar portrait on it: Diana Lett, depicted by her dear friend Ginny Adelsheim, David's former wife and Adelsheim cofounder. It appeared on the label for 30 years.

"I think that, for the longest time, this is what our winery was known for, was this label, with you on it," Adelsheim says.

That prompts Lett to recall her son, Jason, grouching, "I can't even go in a wine shop without my mom looking at me."

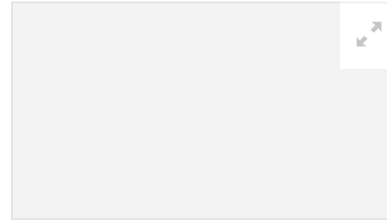


Diana Lett and David Adelsheim at the Lett property last fall for taping of installment 1 of the "Founders Stories."

COURTESY OF ADELSHEIM VINEYARD

Also on the topic of images: Lett tells of a publicity photograph the early Yamhill winegrowers gathered to take. The photographer decided that it should just be the men — “the winemakers,” Lett recounts the photographer saying.

“Here’s this iconic photograph now of you all gathered together, but you can’t hear all the women in the background cat-calling you guys,” Lett said. “We were hooting!”



In “Founders’ Stories,” Diana Lett revealed a secret about the taking of this photograph.

COURTESY OF ADELSHEIM VINEYARD

It’s fascinating to see Adelsheim ponder not just this story of embarrassing sexism, but the fact that what was so indelible to Lett had escaped his memory.

“Obviously, it was a different time, but still, that’s pathetic,” Adelsheim says.

The discussion moves on to what possessed the founders to undertake not just winemaking in a place not known for it, but winemaking bent on greatness, pursued in a spirit of collaboration. It added up to one of the global industry’s notable success stories of the past half-century.

In doing “Founders’ Stories,” David Adelsheim hoped to keep that crucial collaborative flame burning.

“We need to remind people of the importance and why it’s there,” he said. “I think that’s why we chose to go this route in our 50th anniversary. ... Our story was great, but this was really the story of a generation, and that’s what we needed to tell this time.”

The next nine interviews will come month by month throughout the year. The subjects: Charley Coury, Charles

Coury Winery; Susan Sokol Blosser and Bill Blosser, Sokol Blosser Winery; Dick Erath, Erath Vineyards; Bill Fuller, Tualatin Vineyards; Nancy and Dick Ponzi, Ponzi Vineyards; Myron Redford, Amity Vineyards; Marjorie and Ron Vuylsteke, Oak Knoll Winery; Pat and Joe Campbell, Elk Cove Vineyards; and Ginny Adelsheim, Adelsheim Vineyard.

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