

Brought to you by

Roots, Shoots & Fruits

Soil Health, Plant Health, **YOUR Health**

FAMILY VINES

Hermann and Agnes Seifried hand grafted and planted their first grapes in the Nelson region back in 1973. By the time the first vintage came along, the couple had one child and another on the way. A third was to come a short time later. While neither of the Seifrieds started their business with the idea of a wine dynasty occurring, that is exactly what has happened, as Tessa Nicholson discovered.

Austrian born Hermann met Agnes on the ski slopes of Mt Robert in the early 70s. Within a year of being married the couple had bought a small block of land in Upper Moutere. A short time later Heidi was born, 13 months later Chris came along and 2 years later Anna.

With Agnes and Hermann very much hands on in terms of caring for the vines, making the wines and then selling it, the three children were bound to be caught up in the industry. But nobody would have predicted that all three would now be running individual aspects of the company a few decades later. Heidi who is a trained dental surgeon, also has a degree in viticulture and oenology. Chris is a trained winemaker and Anna has a degree in sales and marketing with a diploma in wine marketing.

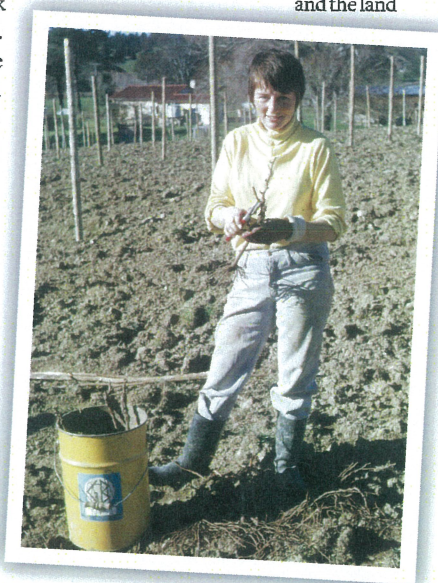
While we could have talked to any of the family about their emerging dynasty, NZWinegrower chose to highlight Agnes and Anna – a mother/daughter relationship that sees both working the marketing and sales side of the business.

Agnes Seifried, 67

Within a year of being married we had bought a block of land in Upper Moutere. I was teaching at Nayland College at the time and Hermann was working for the New Zealand Apple and Pear Board. We hand grafted all the grapes ourselves at night and then planted out seven varieties on the five acre block during 1973 and 74. Heidi was due at the end of 75, and they had asked me to stay on at school until the end of the school year. We had already planted the grapes when I was carrying Heidi, so that winter we were pruning, doing all the hard work. But we were also building equipment for the winery. Hermann is a bit of a handyman, so all those first tanks,

filters and bits and pieces that you need to start, we were building in the evenings – and then building the winery.

Heidi was born before Christmas 1975 and we picked our first vintage in 1976. Hermann was still working full time, so I was in charge of the harvest. We were living in Richmond at the time and the land



Agnes Seifried.

and winery were in Upper Moutere, where Kahurangi is now. I would travel out every morning with Heidi, a nappy bucket, lunch and dinner. A bunch of young mums, many that I am still in contact with, came out from Stoke in two cars and with some Upper Moutere locals we hand-picked all day. I was arranging all the picking, collecting the buckets, putting them on the trailer and moving it around. Then Hermann would come out at 5.30 or six when he finished work and we processed them. We didn't employ any permanent help for the first few years, we did it all ourselves. I had a cot and high chair in the winery and Heidi was put down to sleep there. That is just the way it was. The first wines were sold from Labour weekend in 76 and it all sold out. We had an address book for anybody that wanted to know when the next vintage was available. People would put their

name and address down and we started a mail order programme. At the height of that we had 4500 people on our list. I hand addressed all these letters, three times a year. It was what I would do in the evenings.

Twelve and a half months after Heidi, Chris was born. Then two and a half years later Anna came along so we had three children under the age of three and a half. Was it tough? Probably. But when you are young and energetic you don't think about it, you just do it. It doesn't help to sit back and say poor me.

I think though getting home at 10 or 11 at night with the nappy bucket and having to start washing and packing up lunches and dinners for the next day was hard.

The kids had to be a part of everything we were doing. When we were pruning, or picking or



Agnes and Hermann Seifried.

working in the winery, they were all there.

We moved out (to the property) when Heidi was about six, so Anna would have been three and a half. It

had just become too difficult with schools and day-care and running back and forth between Richmond and the vineyard.

Re Anna – she is the youngest ▶

PROTECT YOUR young vines at planting Call Now for 2016 requirements

Superzyme®



CARBON sequestration

PROVEN EFFACICY

AGRECOVERY



IT'S WORTH IT

Mycormax®

Overcome water stress - Increased plant survival

Disease protection - Improved health & production

Increased root & cane growth - Wire down earlier

Increased nutrient uptake - fertiliser savings

Improved soil structure - Enhance soil ecosystems

Roots, Shoots & Fruits - Innovative Ag products for soil health plant health **YOUR** health

09 3729155 rsf@rd2.co.nz www.rd2.co.nz

and the others say she was spoilt. But she says she was overlooked and there are no photos of her only the others.

She was always there when we set up the little wine shop, a cellar door in the winery. Those days we used what may be described as sherry glasses for samples, for customer tastings. If there were any dregs when the customer had gone and I had my back turned, she was drinking all the dregs. I learned to make sure there weren't any left on the bench!

We never pushed any of the kids to come into the business. They all went away and did their own thing. Anna went to Otago and

did a degree, then went off and did wine business in Adelaide. She worked away for a few years before she came back. She came (into the business) slowly. It's not that she came in and said, 'right I am doing this now.'

When you are dealing with lots of different people with different personalities, you do have to manage that and she has.

Describe Anna?

She has got a great, outgoing, happy and friendly disposition. She can communicate with anybody on any level. In her role she meets a lot of new people and she seems to be able to develop a relationship with them very quickly. In

the office, listening to the one end of the conversation she might be having is interesting. Just the way she talks with people she might not have known for very long. She laughs and jokes a lot!

She is very quick and efficient. I remember my mother saying to me that I was twice as fast and efficient as she was. Well Anna is like that now with me. It would take me a week to do what she gets done in a day. And she is very good at managing her team.

I don't know who she is like, I don't think she is like Hermann. Although she strives to achieve what she wants to achieve and that is a trait of Hermann. I

don't know if she is like me. I think probably she is her own person.

All three of them are. They have quite strong personalities and are all quite assertive in their own ways. They make their own decisions and they lead the company the way they feel it should go in their area. But we all do work together very much as a team.

If the family hadn't been involved, we probably wouldn't be the size we are now. Hermann and I would have probably sat back with the 100 acres we had when Chris came back.

It is special – having them all involved. And we are certainly very proud of them all.

Anna Seifried, 36

My whole life basically has been living on the vineyard. I learned to crawl down between the grape rows. Us three kids were all pretty close in age and would be off building huts, or chasing tadpoles in the creek, making our own fun while Mum would be pruning or picking. I think (how close we were) probably shows in how we work together today. We have always played together and where we grew up in Upper Moutere there were only about 60 kids at the local school.

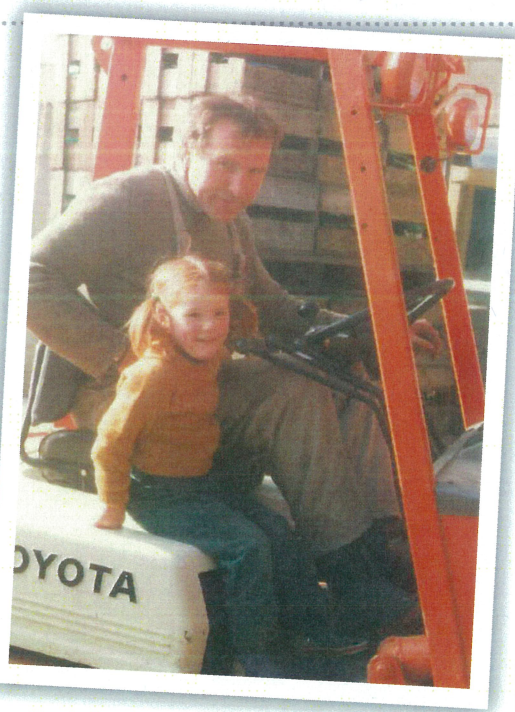
We got to do all sorts of jobs. We have photos of us kids sitting around folding and making up the flat pack dividers before they went to the bottling line, and putting stickers on the outside of the cartons. Mum used to save all the filing in the office for me, and that would be my afterschool job every day – I think it's how I learnt the alphabet. I remember learning to drive a tractor fairly young, as soon as I could reach the pedals. All of us helped where we could.

The one job I didn't like was bird netting. I must have been 12 or 13 and had to spend Satur-

days helping with the bird netting, at the time I thought it was so unfair.

We also did grafting, because we had our own on-site grafting team. After pruning I was always brought in to help as I was quite good at matching the little cuttings of scionwood. I had to bud rub as well, but fortunately wasn't very good at pruning so I didn't last long there. I've picked a lot of grapes though and I guess I've done most jobs that crop up throughout the year.

When we were kids, every night there would be a bottle of wine on the table. We had an everyday cellar and a special cellar. Whoever was setting the table got



think I would end up in the industry. There were three things I thought I wanted to be; a vet, marine biologist or a forensic scientist. But it turned out that I wasn't very good at science. During my 7th form year, I had spent a week of the holidays with Heidi in Dunedin - she was finishing her fourth year of dental school. I thought, 'wow this is pretty neat'. I decided that I didn't really care what I did, but I had to go to Otago University.

I had completed accounting, stats and I liked English at school, so commerce seemed like a good choice. I finished a BCom in marketing and management and then found the Post Grad diploma at Adelaide Uni, so I did wine marketing. A lot of what I learnt there was the theory behind what I'd seen around home for the past 20 years, so it was great to learn that side of it, but the sensory papers were definitely the highlight of that year. We were tasting lot of wines from grape growing regions all over the world, that I'd never had the

to choose the wine for the night. They would sneak it out and put it into a brown bag or sock. We would get to taste it and talk about it. We would be asked if we thought it was a Chardonnay or a Riesling and why we thought that. I'm sure it helped me develop a better palate and start thinking about flavours and textures from an early age.

As a teenager, I definitely didn't



chance to taste.

I had a friend who had moved to Western Australia and I spent a bit of time visiting, and decided Perth was the next big thing. I started with the Coles Myer Group, working in a Vintage Cellars store in Nedlands, and then Cottesloe.

I worked with some super passionate wine people, and really loved selling. It was a great opportunity to again see wines we didn't get in New Zealand, and working with distributors from the retailers side was invaluable. It became very clear to me early on what made a good sales rep, and a lot of what we train in our sales team are things I learn during my time at VC.

I had been working at Vintage Cellars over Christmas and New Year, and had done some massive hours. It was early March, and it was the third week of consecutive 40 plus degree days. Our house didn't have air con, my car didn't have air con, and it was rough. I was feeling pretty sorry for myself and very homesick. Dad rang me and said the business had reached a size where we needed to employ somebody to help with the sales and marketing. He said either we employ someone, which we are happy to do, or if you want it, the job is yours. But there were a few

conditions.

Eleven days after that phone call from Dad, I was on a plane heading home. I got to Nelson just a couple of days before harvest kicked off and one of the conditions from Dad was that I needed to get my hands dirty again. I needed to see what making wine was all about. I don't have a winemaker's degree, but I understand what is going on out there, and that time made me realise I am not cut out to be a winemaker. So I spent six months as part of the cellar crew, dragging hoses, lugging buckets and cleaning, cleaning, cleaning. I could see what the process was though and what Dad was trying to get at. It was great.

After I 'retired' from the winery, I moved into Mum's office. For the next six months we had desks next to each other, so we were eavesdropping on each other's phone calls. I was listening to how she dealt with situations and she was constructively directing how I was doing things. It was great having her next to me and she started to hand things over from then.

Was it hard to step into her shoes?



Anna (left),
Chris and
Heidi.

Mum and Dad are the face of this business and people are used to dealing with them. For forty years we've had some very loyal customers who have only ever known Mum from her many years working the cellar door – they might know me, but often remember me as a four-year-old hanging around the cellar door when they visited, so naturally there has been some hesitation when they are directed to me with enquiries, instead of Agnes. This is why we can't let Mum go. She would love to retire, but she can't, not yet.

In her relationships with people, Mum is much more personal than me. She genuinely wants to know about people and will take time to ask how the kids are

doing, or when the next holiday is coming up. You always have her undivided attention and that's a very real skill.

Mum is always very good at seeing the big picture, making a plan and sticking to it. I can be more like Dad. More headstrong and impulsive. It's nice to work alongside Mum – she balances me.

I think when you are born and raised on a vineyard or winery, it doesn't really feel like work. It's just life. It's just what we do. We all went off and did our own thing, then slowly came home. Nelson was a huge draw card too. There are not many places I could see myself living in New Zealand, but Nelson has a bit of everything. It has its own energy and vibe. tessa.nicholson@me.com ■