

Pinot Pioneer: Susan Sokol Blosser



Susan Sokol Blosser grew up in Wisconsin. She studied at Stanford University where she met Bill Blosser. After Bill received his Master's Degree they decided their next project would be wine. *"We had more guts than brains"* (Susan Sokol Blosser, July 2012). In 1970, their first child, Nik, was born. That same year they also bought their first plot of land for their vineyard. Bill and Susan both worked other jobs, so the vineyard work had to be done at night and on weekends. She worked the tractors because she could keep Nik on her back. In 1974, their second son, Alex, was born and in 1979 their daughter, Allison.

In the earlier years, the vineyard and winery was more Bill's project. Susan said in a 2001 interview with Gail Dana of the Portland Business Journal, *"The winery was something he [Bill] was totally occupied with. It got to the point where I realized I had to be involved or I would be left behind,"* so Susan became manager of the vineyards in 1980. Vineyard manager ended up being a perfect job for her. Working in the field in the morning allowed her to be home with her children in the afternoon. It also connected Susan to the land and as Bill's interest in the business started to dwindle, Susan's grew. In 1991, Bill stepped back and Susan took control.



As president, Susan led the winery towards more sustainable practices. In 1996, Sokol Blosser became the 1st vineyard to be certified "Salmon-Safe." In 2002, Sokol Blosser became the 1st U.S. winery to receive LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification. The estate vineyards received full USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) organic certification in 2005, and they are a member of L.I.V.E (Low Input Viticulture and Enology).



Alex and Alison Sokol Blosser.
Image courtesy of Sokol Blosser.

In 2008, Susan handed the presidency to her children, Alison and Alex, and now has the title of Founder. Since retirement, she has written two books, *At Home in the Vineyard: Cultivating a Winery, an Industry, and a Life* and *Gracious and Ruthless: Surprising Strategies for Business Success*. In January 2011, Susan founded the Yamhill Enrichment Society, an organization that works on projects supporting education and the arts, food and agriculture, and history and community. *"I am firm believer that you should try to have it all"* (Susan Sokol Blosser, July 2012).