



Nancy Ponzi

Founder

Nancy was born in Southern California, but grew up all over the world. Her father worked in the oil business, which took her to exotic areas of the globe like the jungles of Venezuela, the San Angel District of Mexico and the Ozarks of Arkansas. She studied at The University of Mexico, Mexico City; El Camino College and West Valley College in California. In Palo Alto, she completed the Association Montessori Internationale Primary Education Course. Her emphasis was in Spanish, English and Primary Education. She married Dick Ponzi in 1961. Their mutual love of food, wine and family made their union “storybook” and naturally lead them down a path overwhelmed with the culinary arts. An overly ambitious woman, she has a steady record of taking on “never before attempted” projects and gracefully turning each of them into great successes.

Before moving to Oregon, she held offices in the Pan (Latin) American Round Table and was a teacher’s assistant at the Villa Montessori School in Cupertino, California. In Oregon, she continued teaching at West Hills Montessori School. At Portland Community College, she taught yoga, wine appreciation, ethnic and basic cooking. Her culinary classes extended to a local cooking school, television shows and a weekly wine show on the radio. Teaching was only one of many activities Nancy pursued after replanting the family in the Willamette Valley. She co-founded The Consumers’ Food Council, which promoted environmental concerns of food, pesticides and agriculture and the then novel concepts of recycling, ingredient labeling and a legal definition of organic. This led to becoming a registered environmental lobbyist at the Oregon Legislature. She wrote a weekly column for the Hillsboro Argus, was President of the Washington County Women’s Federation, held various offices in the Oregon Winegrowers Association and was a founding Director on the Board of Washington County Visitors Association.

Mother of three, Nancy not only raised them, but concurrently managed a small farm complete with garden, chickens, goats, horses, ducks, geese and cows (Scottish Highlanders, no less) while building the family’s wine business and helping to create a foundation for the state’s wine industry.

In addition to being one of the first marketers of Oregon wine in the country, she was a founding Director of the Washington County Wineries Association and was instrumental in establishing the Oregon Wine Advisory Board. Nancy has contributed to the conception and establishment of Oregon’s most successful wine events and continues to play a vital role in promoting the Willamette Valley as a viable wine region. One of the most widely recognized events is the International Pinot Noir Celebration where Nancy held the position of President. This is Oregon’s premiere wine event which brings together international winemakers and aficionados to discuss, taste and appreciate Pinot noir. Nancy also co-founded ¡Salud! The Oregon Pinot Noir Auction, a hugely profitable fundraising event of unique cuvées from Oregon’s most prized vintners. All proceeds provide low cost healthcare for vineyard workers and their families. More recently Nancy helped found and preside over Oregon Pinot Camp, an exclusive event that privately invites the wine trade to the valley for three days to learn “first hand” about Pinot noir. In 1998 the family established the Ponzi Wine Bar in Dundee, showcasing the region’s very finest wines in addition to Ponzi wines. In 1999, The Dundee Bistro, one of the area’s most successful enduring regional restaurants, was born under her direction. Both the wine bar and bistro have become the center of wine country, inviting travelers from around the world and neighboring winegrowers to enjoy the marriage of regional food, wine and good spirit.

In 2009, Nancy released The Ponzi Vineyards Cookbook, a compilation of her most treasured recipes and stories about running a winery and raising a family. Nancy remains active in many Oregon wine industry promotions and is integral to marketing Ponzi and the region. Her current focus, in addition to caring for and nurturing her eight grandchildren, is adapting to quietly encourage and appreciate the second and now third-generation gracefully competently assume leadership of the Ponzi enterprises.