



Dick Ponzi

Founder

Born the third son of an Italian immigrant couple in 1934, Dick Ponzi was raised in Michigan. Typical to most Italian families, meals were considered sacred. Wine was always served and made at home. The flavors, sensations and values of Dick's family traditions follow him throughout his life and professional ambitions.

Following high school graduation, Dick worked a variety of jobs, including employment with the Ford Motor Company, to support himself through college. He graduated from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, with a Mechanical Engineering degree in 1959. He immediately moved to California and took a position in the aerospace industry as a structural design engineer. Later, he founded Seroc Corporation in Los Gatos, California, and designed a start up producing recycled, light-weight, high strength building materials. Although wine was quickly becoming his obsession, Dick also held the sole position of project engineer for a firm that designed and fabricated theme park rides for Disneyland and Disney World.

In 1969, he moved to Portland, Oregon and founded Ponzi Vineyards one year later, one of the first few wineries in the state. From the inaugural vintage in 1974, Dick set the standards for enological and viticultural innovation. His mechanical engineering background has proven a great asset through his many years of winemaking. He fabricated machinery and winemaking techniques in his cellar that are now commonplace in many wineries across the globe. He planted some of the first Pinot noir in the Willamette Valley in the late '60's, and some of the first commercial plantings of Pinot gris in 1978. He has guided plantings of cool-climate varieties throughout the valley since the early 1970s, encouraging others to join him in planting and building a quality wine industry in Oregon.

Dick was a founding member and first president of the Oregon Winegrowers Association. In 1987, he served as a founding Director of the Oregon Wine Advisory Board (now Oregon Wine Board). In the early years in Oregon, he taught Engineering at Portland Community College to support the growing winery business and family.

In 1984, he and his wife, Nancy, founded Oregon's first craftbrewery, BridgePort Brewing Company. Ponzi designed and fabricated the first craftbrewing system in the state, a system which has since been duplicated numerous times over by craftbreweries across the country. In 1998, Dick and Nancy founded a culinary center in Dundee—encompassing the Ponzi Wine Bar, a regional wine tasting room, and The Dundee Bistro, a local restaurant featuring fresh Willamette Valley cuisine and wine.

Constantly innovating, designing, constructing and crafting, Dick's latest pursuit satisfies a 40-year-old dream of creating a state-of-the-art, sustainable winemaking facility. The new winery was complete in 2008. Outside the family business, Dick devotes a large part of his time to a multitude of other interests—one he most treasures is time spent with his eight grandchildren.