

My dear Gardy in heaven, Tatiana, Derrick, Suzan, Sarah, Megan, Joshua and all our friends.

Gardy, my beloved deceased wife, asked me to write the story of my life, because she believed nobody knows more about my life. At first I was reluctant to tell you all my secrets, but then I thought it gives me an opportunity to blow my own trumpet. So here it goes!

I was born on the 20th of November 1926 to Emma, my Mother and Adolf Prass, my father, at Breitscheid close to Bacharach in the beautiful Rheinland/Germany. The area is known as Blucher Valley; after the famous German General, who led his army through this valley in 1815 to support Wellington in his epic struggle against Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo.

I was brought up in a Christian Lutheran family, was baptised on 19th December 1926 and confirmed on the 10th April 1940 in Bielefeld by Pastor Niemoller, the brother of the well known Pastor Martin Niemoller.

Both my Grandparents were mixed farmers and had vineyards planted with Riesling. As it was the custom the farmers made their own wines and sold the bulk parcels to other wineries, mainly sparkling wine companies. During the school holidays we often visited my grandparents and I had my first taste of wine, partly mixed with water. I was not very impressed with the taste at first, but that soon changed.

My father was a winemaker and worked for different companies in Oberwesel, Bingen, Koblenz and Bielefeld. We lived a normal German family life, which was interrupted with outbreak of the second World War in 1939.

Soon after my father was called up to serve in the German Army and I continued my education under difficult circumstances until I was called up to serve in the German Navy in 1944.

My dreams of my future life was to become an officer in the German Merchant Navy and hence my service in the navy. After the bootcamp we cadets joined the heavy cruiser "Lutzow" and fought in the Baltic Sea to safeguard the flight of thousands of women and children from the Bolshevik Armies and to support the retreat of the German Armies.

When the war ended I became a prisoner of the English and American Armies. Under the circumstances we were treated well and at the end of 1945 I was released.

Now, what to do with my life. My dream to serve in the German Merchant Navy had evaporated. Not even a rowing boat was left!

So I thought I might as well follow in the footsteps of my father and start a career in winemaking. Luckily my father was also released from a Czechoslovakian prisoner of war camp and with his support I started my apprenticeship in viticulture and winemaking.

After I got my qualification as a winemaker I entered the Lehranstalt für Weinbau und Oenologie at Oppenheim/Rhein to further my education in viticulture and winemaking.

I got my first job as assistant winemaker at a prestigious wine company at the Mosel. We handled many of the icon rieslings; "Wehlener Sonnenuhr", "Trittenheimer Altarchen" and others.

Mr. Geiss, the well known research scientist at the time, selected the company I was working for, as the first to conduct practical trials with "controlled fermentation" of white wines. In 1950 Mr. Geiss became the Chief of the Winemaking laboratory of Seitzwerke, the major company to supply equipment for the wine industry. The Seitz laboratory served as consultancy for its clients and to support technical advances in winemaking.

I joined Mr. Geiss as his assistant in 1950 and soon was sent to wine companies in Germany and Europe to consult in modern winemaking technics - such as Controlled Fermentation and the production of Pearl Wines and many other winemaking procedures.

Following the experience in Europe I was sent to the winemaking countries in North Africa and the Middle East - Morocco/Algeria/Egypt/Lebanon. In these days these countries were still under European control and had a vibrant viticulture and winemaking industry supplying the European markets.

In addition other equipment of Seitz were introduced, the filtration of olive oil in Tunisia, beer bottling equipment in Tripoli/Lybia, soft

drink equipment in Syria and Iraq. These were exciting times. I learned a lot about winemaking under elevated temperatures and to deal with different cultures.

I was travelling 11 months of the year, little time for personal matters, so when I met Gardy in Berlin at the Green Week Exhibition, I being involved in the presentation of Swiss wines, we clicked and after a while we got engaged. Gardy residing in Berlin and I temporarily in Bad Kreuznach, our future together seemed to be a long way off.

In 1955 Colin Gramp of Orlando Wines here at Rowland Flat visited the Seitzwerke and expressed to Mr Geiss, my boss, his intention to engage a German winemaker to support the introduction of modern winemaking technics at his company in Australia.

Mr Geiss knew of my personal challenges and advised me to consider an advertisement for a winemaker in Australia for a period of 3 years. Such a move would be beneficiary for both parties, we, Gardi and I could get married, starting a normal married life, Seitz would through me gather some information about the Australian wine industry, so I applied, got accepted, we got married and off we went to Australia in September 1955.

We flew across the Atlantic, the Pacific and in Sydney Colin Gramp waited for us. When we arrived in Adelaide the Gramp family took us to the South Australian Hotel for afternoon tea and then to

Rowland Flat to the home of the late Mrs Hugo Gramp where we stayed for a few weeks until our new home, the Bungalow, was ready.

I will, and Gardy did never forget the friendly reception and the support of Colin and all of the Gramp family, to settle in a new environment in addition to the support of all our neighbours.

I started work and trust I contributed to the success of the company during these three years. According to the contract we returned to Germany in 1958. I worked in my fathers company and Gardy was selling Volkswagens.

In 1959 Orlando Wines offered me a contract to work again for them, which was too good to refuse. So in 1959 we returned, settled in our new home and the three years of the original contract with Orlando expanded to 33 years.

We spent many happy years in the Barossa Valley, made many friends and maintained our friendship all over the years up to today.

The highlight of our lives was the arrival of Tatiana, our daughter and Derrick, our son in 1963 and 1967. We experienced a happy family life and Gardy had the main burden to look after the kids.

We visited our parents many times and have lovely memories of our stays in Germany.

In 1964 we were naturalised and became true blue Aussies with a funny accent.

In 1971 Orlando Wines were sold to Reckitt and Colman and I was appointed Production Director, then in 1974 I became Technical Director. My bosses must have thought that something was missing in my education and sent me to the Harvard University Business School in Boston, USA to attend the Advanced Management Course. After completion of the diploma in 1979 I was appointed Managing Director of Orlando Wines and served in that position until 1989.

To recognise the important position of Orlando Wines in the total group operation and its considerable contribution to the profit of the Reckitt and Colman Group in Australia I was appointed to the Board of Reckitt and Colman in Australia.

The parent company in the UK revised its strategy of marketing and decided to return to the core products of the company, namely food, subsequently all other subsidiaries including Pharmaceuticals and their wine business in the USA, UK and Australia were to be sold.

Following the management buy-out of Orlando I was appointed Chairman of the new Board. I wanted to have a more active role

in a wine business and hence started a second career as Trading Director at Hardy's Wines at the end of 1989.

After the amalgamation of Berri Romano Cooperatives with The Hardy Wine Company in 1994 I stayed on as a consultant with various duties, amongst them I was deputised to run the Barossa Valley Cooperative.

When I turned the age of 80 I resigned of all positions and started my life as a retired person.

Over the years I participated in a number of seminars and conferences of the industry, was a member of the committee, which was the catalyst of the wine industry's present organisation. Amongst other matters I was on the steering committee of the Australian Wine Board to negotiate with foreign authorities to foster export of our wines. I also served as the Australian delegate to the OIV, the International Organisation for Vine and Wine, and to international wine tastings.

To come to blowing my own trumpet; I was made a Baron of the Barossa Wine Fraternity of the Barossa Valley, In 1990 was made a member of the General Division of the Order of Australia/AM, In 2003 I received the inaugural Wolf Blass Award of the National Riesling Challenge, was made a Life Member of Winemakers Federation of Australia and in the same year received the McWilliams Maurice O'Shea Award.

As I said many times during my activities in the Australian Wine Industry, I regarded myself as a member of hard working teams and all personal accolades are really a recognition of the success of the teams I was a member of.

As much as I am grateful for my career in the wine industry I had as greater pleasure in our family life. As mentioned Gardy was the boss in that arena and we enjoyed many outings, many trips within Australia and overseas. Tatiana was and is always there when needed and is the "fixer" in our household. Derrick was and is always there when the call comes and when much to our delight Derrick married Suzan and we had a daughter-in-law in our family. Much to the pleasure of Gardy and of course for all of us, we now have three grandchildren; Sarah, Megan and Joshua our sunshine at the evening of our lives. Gardy would have been the proudest Grandma in Adelaide!!

Well, as we all experience, all good things come to an end and it is time for me to say goodbye to all our friends, to Tatiana with my sincerest wishes for the Autumn of your life, to Derrick and Suzan continue to have a happy family life, to Sarah, Megan and Joshua have a rewarding life in front of you. "Shoot for the Moon. Even if you miss you'll land amongst the stars"

So cheerio to all of you, Gardi we will meet again soon and I do hope they serve a decent Red up there!



