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### All about Hook

Hook's first introduction to his beloved Te Henga was as a school boy from New Plymouth in the early 1940's when he was invited, together with his mate Roger Church, to our cottage, Otawewe, with our family. I guess the main attraction then was sister Bobby - nearly 70 years ago no less! This of course, was to become a lifelong friendship. Our family always had nick names for everyone - Hook was "Bobbysox", Roger was "Roger the Lodger". He and Roger, still school boys, had hitch hiked from New Plymouth, caught the train to Waitakere, and walked, with large suitcases, to Te Henga. Hook's fate was sealed - the boys slept in Pa Bethell's little old caravan at Otawewe, down towards the spring, their feet sticking out the door. Folklore has it that on their first evening, whilst rounding the duck pond in the dark, young Hook fell in, and later turned up at the cottage like a drowned rat. But he was a very good looking - tanned, blonde, and well built. He was Head Boy of NPBHS, captain of the 1st XV and an awesome loose forward. Some years later when I was at New Plymouth Boys High School, I used to admire his head boys' photo, hung with others in the assembly hall.

In New Plymouth we often saw the Hooker family, and our gatherings would often end up around the piano with lots of singing and music and laughter. As we all know, this love of music, this love

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of laughter, this sociability, lasted throughout Hook's life, and helped make him the loveable person that he always was.

Much much later, Jill and I, during our courting days, would come up to the Boarding House in the evening, and after helping with a million dishwashings, Hook would put on records of classical music, and talk about the problems of the world. He was always widely read and right to the end, was an entertaining and intelligent conversationalist.

That will be one of the things about him that many of us will miss.

My mother always remembered the early Boarding House times, attracting interesting and intellectual people. In his own way, Hook continued this tradition.

But I digress.

After a stint at Auckland University, he set off for his OE - with a difference. He could not, would not, and did not ever fly anywhere - so he took a job as a deck hand on a less than salubrious freighter, leaving from New Plymouth, bound for the UK. We all trooped down to the Port to see him off - it was a wild day, and the ship pitched and rolled as it rounded the breakwater and faced the ocean. But he made it to the UK - worked in London, travelled Europe with others in a black London Taxi, and visited my brother John, who lived in Geneva.

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Extraordinarily, or maybe by divine intervention?, he met up with Nan Bethell in Geneva - she had also travelled to England separately, and had also been invited by John to Geneva. Hook promptly left his friends in the London Taxi, and finished the European trip with Nan. Once again his fate must have been sealed!

Hook returned home, again as deck hand on another horrible little rust bucket freight ship. London and Geneva had done the trick, because he and Nan married soon after, in 1953. A lovely wedding, with all the trimmings, on a lovely summer's day, right here where we are now, under the old fig tree which commemorated my Mum's birth in 1899, and which only a couple of months ago succumbed to age. Hook and Nan soon took over running the Boarding House - it was a big ask, and Auntie Gert's shoes were hard to fill. Jed, Mary and Kate were born, to the delight of their parents. In fact at that time Te Henga was alive with babies - often called the "whitebait". But after a few years, change was needed.

Hook, along with Pete Worley and Johnny B had all tried chooks and flowers and firewood and other things for another income - It was a very hard time for them all, but they were all utterly dedicated and determined to keep Te Henga in the family. How indebted we are to them now!

So, over time, Hook saw to it that all the cottages were sympathetically preserved, renovated, and became self-contained

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and rented, mostly to the families who had previously treasured their association with the Boarding House. Nan went to work at St Helen's and Hook went to Training College, ending up teaching at Swanson, often with Wheelers, Bethells, Worleys or his own children, being in his classroom. He was well regarded as a teacher. He was a natural, and enjoyed this work. They lived week days in Swanson, weekends at Te Henga. How they managed, no one knows, but thank heavens they did. Hook's great love for his family, his home, and his determined guardianship of Te Henga, got them through these difficult times, and preserved Te Henga for us all.

As things became easier, Nan and Hook began to get away now and again - but never far, and never for long. The Bay of Islands with Jack Taylor, or Taupo Bay with Joe and Peter, were happy times, frequently enjoyed. But Hook was always happy, and often even a little anxious, to get home again. Over generations, the call of the "coast" has always been there.

Life changed again for Hook, when Nan died in 1998. It was a very tough year for Te Henga - Nan's sister Trudy and Peter Worley also died that year. Hook, on his own now, would get wonderful TLC from his family. Mary came to live with him, Jed returned from Australia, and settled at Te Henga, and Kate and Joe were always nearby. Te Henga assumed a new and happy persona with his family returning and growing. But the future of Te Henga pre-occupied him

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Immensely, and, in the face of all the difficulties that Council put in his way, he was steadfast in his determination to see Te Henga through to the next generation.

In spite of increasing ill health, these later years must have been so enjoyable for Hook - his children and grandchildren were around him, his Te Henga infrastructure was working smoothly, handyman Ben was on hand, a few cows in the cow paddock, his garden flourishing, books to read, plenty of movies and concerts, often with Bob, to satisfy his wider interests and his love of music. Friends to spend time with, and a memorable 80th birthday to go down in the family records. Many of you were here to enjoy that great day. For that so recent memory, we will always be thankful.

I hope in your conversations later on, you can fill in some of the many gaps that I have left and share other memories of Hook, that are so special.

Denis Woodward

# Winemakers' perspective of the Corban Family

To present a wine maker's perspective on the Corban family, I am giving an address which is the joint contribution of Alex Corban, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation wine maker and Alwyn Corban, 4<sup>th</sup> generation wine maker.

Alwyn is overseas at present and Dad has asked me to speak on his behalf.

The efforts of an immigrant from Lebanon and his growing family made Corbans an easily recalled household name synonymous with wine in the same way that Watties is with Baked Beans, Edmonds is with Baking, Whittakers is with Chocolate and Rawleighs was with cough syrup and ointments.

In its time the Corban family did many things which created favourable attitudes towards wine in New Zealand. Assid Abraham Corban shrewdly countered Prohibition in the early years of his enterprise and the family overcame the negative attitude of the wine and spirit trade towards the selling and distribution of its wines by buying a redundant wholesale wine and spirit license. Eventually, that license operated under the family name.

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Corbans dominated the wine scene. From the 1920's to the 1970's Corbans were the leading New Zealand wine makers and much of what they did created the platform for the expansion and the current success of the industry.

The business started in 1902 and very early on the family branded itself "CORBANS, THE WINE PEOPLE". That position grew over the next 73 years while the family was involved with making and selling of wine. Then, because of financial problems, the family had to sell. Budgets were not being met because of brewery involvement in the distribution trade by their buying up independent wholesalers and because of a few wine making companies were getting public money invested in them as well a overseas help.

The CORBANS name still exists, however, but now as a major brand of Pernod Ricard N.Z. This branch of this international wine company has not only retained the family name and brand but also many of the label names the family had introduced and developed over the years. The retention of the Corban and label names are enduring tributes to the respect and goodwill that Assid Abraham Corban and his family built in their time, establishing themselves as respected citizens and pioneering winemakers.

Over the generations the family made many other contributions to both the wine industry and to the community.

There was no vine grower's organisation before 1912. Assid Abraham Corban, Khaleel and Wadier did a lot of the groundwork for the Viticultural Association of New Zealand to be formed in 1912. Khaleel was Secretary of it. He and Wadier travelled extensively throughout New Zealand to generate enthusiasm for the Association and in 1915 it had 36 members. But when membership numbers started to dwindle the Association went into

partial recess. It resurrected in 1926 with name changed to the New Zealand Viticultural Association.

When War broke out in 1939 many new-to-the-industry Dalmatian winemakers increased the membership. A lot of business was discussed in Dalmatian, a language which non-Dalmatians members could not understand and there were differences in approaches to quality. So a splinter group broke away in 1943 and formed the New Zealand Wine Council. Khaleel, Wadier and Annis were in that group. Within a few years some of the Wine Council members resigned to form the Hawke's Bay Grape Winemakers Association to further retain their identity.

So, after the War, there were three wine making bodies, each speaking for itself and not for the industry. To bring about necessary industry regulatory changes the three bodies joined forces to become the Wine makes Federation but the Viticultural Association still continued to try convince everyone, that it was the only body that spoke for the industry because it had the most members. The Federation, however, achieved a lot of good in its time but 10 years after the Federation was formed, the Viticultural Association walked away from it and carried on doing its own thing.

The industry then found it difficult to progress but 1960s efforts by the Viticultural Association saw wine being legally sold in New Zealand restaurants. This was followed by a legislative change that allowed wine to be sold by the bottle and not in 2 gallon minima.

When Assid Abraham Corban planted his first 4 acres in 1902 they were 2% of the New Zealand vineyard area at that time. By 1970 it had grown to 850 acres, which was 25% of the then burgeoning vineyard area in the country.

From the 1920s to the 1970s Corbans were the leading New Zealand winemakers. Much of what they did created the platform for the current success of the wine industry.

They persevered in their early shift from fortified wines to table wines and then increased the volumes of table wines made from classic grape varieties. Joe and Najib were the first to plant more Vinifera vines to get those larger quantities of more suitable grapes and the industry followed suit.

They were also the first to plant vineyards in, and source grapes from, other regions, such as Gisborne. They were also the first to get selected grapes from contract growers.

Joe eventually started a successful viticultural grafting and supply business.

Corbans sent Alex to study wine making at Roseworthy Agricultural College in South Australia and, when he returned from those studies with newly acquired knowledge, Corbans introduced new methods and facilities such as lab technology, yeast inoculation, refrigeration, temperature control of the stainless steel tanks used for fermentation and storage and the use of inert gas to fill the airspace in the latter. They also introduced sterile bottling and sparkling wines. Alex was the first New Zealander to go to Roseworthy and the pattern had been set for other New Zealanders to attend and for many Roseworthy trained winemakers to find jobs in New Zealand in the following decades.

Alex, prominent in getting a Wine Industry Steering Committee formed in 1971, was its first and only Chairman. In 1975 the Wine Institute, one of the things it was advocating, became a legislative reality and he was then its first Chairman, remaining so until 1979.

Corbans were among the first to form partnerships with international companies also involved in the wine businesses. In 1965 they formed a co-operative venture with John Harvey & Sons Ltd. of Bristol to make and four fortified wines to its specifications and to market them on Harvey's behalf under its name, but the labels were to identify the wines as being New Zealand made. The venture was outstandingly successful but, when Harvey's bought a winery in Spain nine years later, Corbans could not continue putting Harvey's name on its wines which were not produced in Spain so the agreement was mutually terminated. Alex met John Harvey by chance in Vancouver twenty years later and John told him that he had considered Corban's wines were very advanced for their time and had met Harvey's aim of blending as near as possible to European.

A similar agreement had earlier been made with Cinzano, an Italian firm, to produce Vermouths and to sell them under Cinzano's labels. The wine used was a Corban wine and the herbs were supplied by Cinzano.

In 1964, the year after their Diamond Jubilee, Corbans also spearheaded continuing wine exports. Their first exports were to Canada and the United States. In Vancouver, their New Zealand Sherry was the top selling imported sherry for 30 years. 21 years after the business had been sold, the purchaser of the business at that time discontinued exporting there.

These changes set new standards and new directions for the industry.

Away from the vineyard and winery the family still made its contribution.

David was very active in many things including the Wholesale Wine and Spirit trade. He was General Manager of AA Corban and Sons Ltd., the family's Wholesale Wine and Spirit business and served as Chairman of Corbans Wines Ltd. and related Corban companies as well as serving for many years as Chairman of the Auckland Wholesale Wine and Spirits Merchants Federation. He also held prominent positions and was involved in other activities, did a lot of community work and was a JP.

Assid, originally wine maker with Wadier, also did a lot of Community work and, like Wadier had before him, served in local body politics. He was first a Borough Councillor and eventually became Mayor of Henderson and the first Mayor of Waitakere City. While he was still in the winery he fulfilled many positions including assistant winemaker and grew orchids as a sideline. When he finished at Corbans he concentrated on them and became involved with orchid politics, and with local body affairs. He also turned his late father's residence into a Corban archive.

Alex studied science at Auckland University and then wine making at Roseworthy Agricultural College in South Australia. When he returned from Australia in 1949 he started wine making for the family business. At the same time he took on the Secretaryship of the Wine Council and in 1952 became its President, a position he held for

23 years until he became the first Chairman of the Wine Institute when it was formed and held this position 1975 to 1979 during which time he wrote the Wine 1978-1986 Industry Development plan for the Tariff Board, brought an International Wine Symposium to New Zealand, served on affiliated organisations to help the industry, fought legislative battles for it and helped raise quality standards, to increase the domestic market and the development of export markets. In the years he was Chairman of the Wine Institute he had also made many submissions to help wine makers. They were to Tariff Boards, Select Committees and on many other matters to appropriate MPs.

Family members have received many honours for their contributions to both the Wine Industry and the community. This personal recognition has been well deserved and hard earned. It is also an acknowledgement of the character of the Corban family.

Assid Abraham Corban, the founder of Corbans Wines, was posthumously inducted into the New Zealand Business Hall of Fame and, several years later, was one of the first five inductees into the New Zealand Wine Hall of Fame.

In 1988, Alex and Joe were made the first honorary members of The New Zealand Society of Viticulture and Oenology. Both have had Fellowships of the Wine Institute of New Zealand bestowed on them, and both have been inducted into the New Zealand Wine Hall of Fame.

A number of the family have received Queen's Honours.

Wadier was awarded an MBE for services to the community and the wine industry.

Assid was awarded an OBE for services to local government.

Alex was awarded an OBE for services to the wine industry.

Joe was awarded an MBE for services to viticulture

Brian was awarded a QSO for services to broadcasting.

In addition Alex, Assid and Brian have received several other awards, reflecting their prominence and activities in their field of endeavour.

Looking back, the wine industry was a natural fit for the Corban family even though the country was not then ready for wine and the family's early neighbours were not friendly, regarding them as unwanted foreigners with an unworthy occupation. However, the family progressed and stood out. They were characters and they had a sense of the wider community. They had integrity and a strong work ethic. They persevered. They branded themselves as CORBANS, THE WINE PEOPLE and they walked the talk.

And what of the future?

In the Wine Industry, Brian and Alwyn are making wine at Ngatarawa, Jeremy is making wine in Martinborough and Joe has left his legacy at Corbans Viticulture.

But the family is not just about the Wine Industry. Dr Corban in medicine and Brian, with his law and other doings are leading examples. The family traits – integrity, hard work, sense of community, perseverance – have served them well in their careers and the family traits will continue to ensure the success of others in their fields of endeavour. But it would be dangerous to make a list here for fear of omission.

So in closing, we should be proud of our place in the history of New Zealand wine. The Wine Industry has been good to the Corban family and in turn the family has been good for the industry.

But we should acknowledge and cherish the characteristics that made us so successful.