

Winemaking siblings Angela, Nicholas and Eliza Brown. **FACING PAGE** Antique vines were planted at All Saints Estate, in north-eastern Victoria, more than 85 years ago.



growth mindset

FOR FOURTH-GENERATION WINEMAKERS ELIZA, ANGELA AND NICHOLAS BROWN, THE SUDDEN DEATH OF THEIR FATHER GALVANISED THEIR RESOLVE TO SUCCEED.

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MANY GROWERS HOPE that at least one of their kids will follow in their footsteps. For viticulturalist Peter Brown, whose grandfather established the first Brown Brothers vineyard in 1889, all three of his children did so. And when Peter died suddenly at age 60, they truly had to step up. Grief-stricken but determined, Eliza, Angela and Nicholas Brown rallied, and they didn't just keep the lights on. They made Peter's big dreams a reality.

Over the next two decades, the siblings expanded upon Peter's wineries, All Saints Estate and St Leonards Vineyard in the Rutherglen-Milawa region, to acquire Mount Ophir Estate and set up boutique accommodation. They opened a restaurant, Kin, in a 19th-century castle at All Saints, and created a sophisticated wine bar, Thousand Pound, on Rutherglen's main street. Eliza, Angela and Nicholas, whom wine critic James Halliday has dubbed 'The Three Musketeers', are quietly unstoppable and quixotic – much like their visionary father.

"I worked with Dad for four years, which was nice and crazy at the same time," says Eliza, director of All Saints Estate. "We called him a 'man of dreams'; he was always conjuring up new ideas. He had a gentle personality but was driven and wouldn't stop until he got something done. My brother, sister and I are very similar."

She adds that Peter wasn't pushy. "If I stuffed something up, he'd say, 'Well, you only make that mistake once; if you do it twice, you're an idiot!'" Eliza says, laughing.

The trio's involvement in the family business was never set in stone. After leaving school, Nicholas, 43, globetrotted as a scuba instructor, ski instructor and boat deckhand. He worked in wineries in Europe and studied hospitality management. Both Eliza, 50, and Angela, 47, lived and worked in Melbourne. Angela ran a graphic design business, of which All Saints was a client, while Eliza navigated the "cutthroat" advertising world for more than 10 years.

It was all part of Peter's plan. "Mum and Dad wanted us to follow our own path and see what we enjoyed doing before joining the business," explains Angela, who runs the sales and marketing team from All Saints' Melbourne office. "But Dad secretly wanted us all to come back at some stage." The plan ultimately paid off. In 2001, Eliza took a maternity leave cover role in the cellar door and never left. "I love being in the wine industry, it's in my blood," she says. "There's also a lovely community up here."

Nicholas eventually enrolled in a winemaking degree in Adelaide. But during Nicholas's third year of the four-year course, in 2005, his father died in a motorcycle accident. "The three of us sat together the next day and said, 'We've got three options. We can sell [the winery], someone else can run it or we can do it ourselves,'" recalls Eliza. "We decided to give it a crack. I was 31, my sister was 28, and my brother was 25... we had a lot of youthful ignorance!"

Despite the occasional quarrel, constant communication and a sense of humour have helped the Brown siblings >

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CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE Peter was determined to make wine by hand at All Saints, using a 150-year-old French wooden basket press for all their red varietals. "It's part of the furniture at All Saints and I treat it like an antique – gently and with respect," says Nicholas; All Saints' cellar door is housed inside the heritage-listed castle; 'The Three Musketeers'; visitors can tour the winery grounds; fruit on the vine. **FACING PAGE** The picturesque property.



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"Dad completely reinvigorated the garden and thank God, because it's spectacular," says Eliza. "He planted trees every year, saying that if you must leave anything on a property it should be trees, since they last a lifetime. I always remember that."

grow Peter's legacy. "If we have a problem, we open a wine and hopefully solve it by the end of the bottle," says Eliza. "Usually a crisp riesling," adds Angela. Nicholas playfully refers to his sisters as "the most annoying best friends".

He cites the purchase of the sprawling Mount Ophir Estate in 2016 as the family's biggest challenge. "It was a crazy project that I kind of tricked my sisters into," says Nicholas. "We'd discussed branching into accommodation, and I stumbled across this insane, dilapidated property that ticked all the boxes." They set about restoring Mount Ophir's winemaking facilities, which date back to 1891, and transforming its heritage buildings into boutique lodgings. "It was daunting and beautifully fulfilling," says Nicholas.

Eliza and Nicholas reside locally with their own families, while Angela lives in Melbourne with her brood, not far

from mum Jan – All Saints' unofficial "chief quality officer". (Jan and Peter divorced when their kids were teenagers.) They're all frequent visitors. "I get a bit antsy [in the city], but then driving up the elm-lined driveway and seeing the horizon again gives me a sense of peace," says Angela.

Nicholas's wife, Lucy, with whom he has four children, manages the accommodation while working as a PE teacher. With eight children between the Brown siblings, there's no shortage of helpers. Eliza's 17-year-old daughter works weekends in the estate's pizza restaurant, Bonnie, and her 10-year-old daughter is a content-creating dynamo. Meanwhile, Angela's 11- and 14-year-old sons help in the kitchen. "They'll happily collect eggs or pick oranges for the chef."

Perhaps All Saints will be passed down to a fifth generation of Browns. "Hopefully... but I also hope the kids pursue other dreams and interests first," muses Nicholas. Which is exactly what Peter would have wanted. *CS*
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