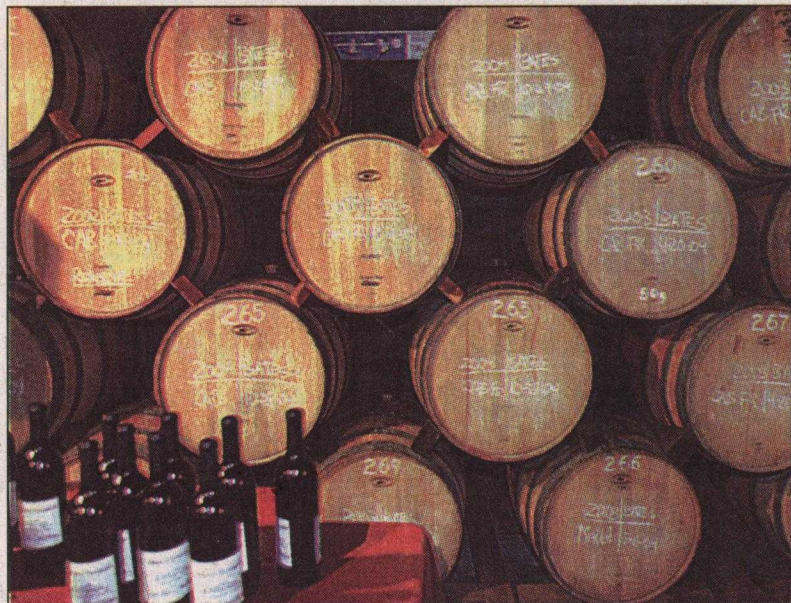


Selling the Cellar



Founders of venerable vineyard ready to move on



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

Val and Dexter Ahlgren's 2,300-square-foot home was built from a neighbor's redwood trees, milled on the property.

Ahlgrens have many future plans, including making wine

Wineries
'We just simply can't stay here until we croak and run the business. We figure now is the time, we're in relatively good shape.'

DEXTER AHLGREN

By **GWEN MICKELSON**
Sentinel staff writer

BOULDER CREEK

Dexter and Val Ahlgren don't plan to stop making wine just because they're selling their winery.

"We'll take our little crusher and

the wine press that we used when we started," said Val with a characteristic grin.

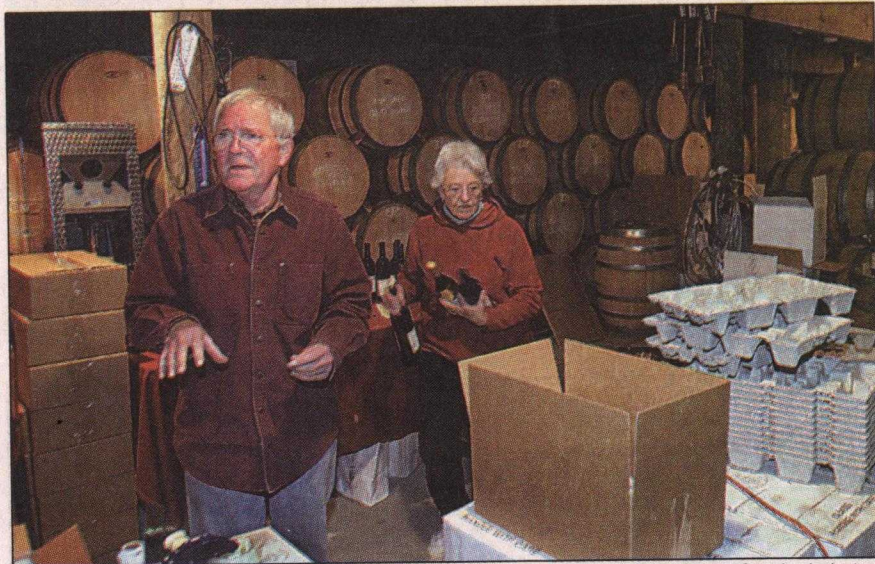
But the Ahlgrens will not be bringing commercial winemaking gear when they sell the 2,300-square-foot house they helped build in the mid-1970s, the 1,300-square-foot winery below it, the winemaking equipment, wine inventory, the Ahlgren Vineyard business and 9 acres of Santa Cruz Mountains land.

1-10-05
Dexter, 76, and Val, 72, are ready to retire.

"We just simply can't stay here until we croak and run the business," said Dexter. "We figure now is the time, we're in relatively good shape."

Also, the wine industry is healthy, said Val, and "someone else deserves

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

Dexter and Val Ahlgren prepare wines to ship to their club members.

Ahlgrens

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to have the opportunity we did.”

The asking price is \$3.8 million, according to real estate agent Anina Van Alstine of David Lyng Real Estate.

Labor of love

The Ahlgrens bought the property 7 miles north of Boulder Creek along Highway 9 in 1972 for \$18,000. Marin architect Sim Van der Ryn designed the house, and the Ahlgrens hand-milled redwood logs they bought from a neighbor for construction of the two-bedroom home. The house, with high ceilings, exposed beams and a belt of large windows overlooking forested valleys, was a labor of love, the couple said.

“It took about 30 years to build,” joked Dexter.

The house is made almost entirely of wood, with just one Sheetrock wall.

The winery below the house, in operation since 1976, produces 2,500 to 3,000 cases of wine each vintage — tiny in comparison to midsize domestic wineries, which produce 50,000 to 60,000 cases.

Ahlgren wines are sold in local restaurants and stores, the San Francisco Bay Area, the Northeast, the East Coast and Europe.

The Ahlgrens say their small production that focuses on high quality supports the couple comfortably, but they recently obtained a permit and had plans drawn up for a new structure that would double the winery’s production capacity. The two-story building plan, also designed by Van der Ryn, would include offices, a lab and barrel storage.

Silver hair and spectacles notwithstanding, the Ahlgrens are as energetic as ever, and will continue to run the business until it sells. In late December, they were in the midst of packaging Ahlgren Vineyard wine club members’ shipments.

What’s in a name

With the business for sale, the Ahlgren name is for sale, too. Though the new owner is under no obligation to produce Ahlgren wines, “we assume they’ll continue the brand,” said Dexter.

“It’s valuable because it has a reputation,” said Val. But the new owner could start their own label, she said.

The Ahlgrens plan to make themselves



Dexter and Val have their landmark winery and property in the Santa Cruz Mountains listed for sale at \$3.8 million.

available for consultation with the new owner. Ken Gallegos, their assistant winemaker, also would be interested in staying on, they said. Other employees of the business are seasonal and likely will have the opportunity to continue working at the winery.

As for the Ahlgrens, they’ll look for a new house in Santa Cruz County once the house and business sell, but they’ll keep a couple acres of their property just to garden, plant grapes or an orchard or build a small structure.

They plan to put together a history of their family, travel, do photography and enjoy the local area. And, Dexter said he’s considered working part-time at a vineyard. Val would like to help out at a stable for retired horses.

Parting with their home and business

Ahlgren Vineyard

WHAT: Sale of the small family winery, started in 1976 by Dexter and Valerie Ahlgren. Included in the sale is the Ahlgrens’ 2,300-square-foot house, the winemaking equipment, wine inventory, the Ahlgren Vineyard business and 9 acres of land.

ASKING PRICE: \$3.8 million.

AGENT: Anina Van Alstine, David Lyng Real Estate.

FEATURES: Made with hand-milled local redwood logs. Two-bedroom home has high

ceilings, exposed beams and large windows. Winery holds nearly 200 barrels and produces 2,500 to 3,000 cases annually. One acre of the property is planted with grapevines.

PLANS: The Ahlgrens have plans and active permit to build a structure on the property that would double the winery’s production capacity. The two-story building plan would include offices, a lab and barrel storage.

OPEN HOUSE: 1 to 4 p.m. today.

LOCATION: 20320 Highway 9, Boulder Creek.

INFORMATION: 464-4439.

of three decades will be bittersweet, the couple admits.

“In a way, it’s sad,” said Val, “but the other way to look at it is, we’ve had a

great time.”

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