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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vidon Vineyard Doubles Down on PhD Winemakers

Molecular biologist David Bellows, PhD joins NASA physicist Don Hagge, PhD on Vidon's overeducated winemaking team

Newberg, OR, June 26, 2017: How many PhDs does it take to make a bottle of wine? Retired NASA physicist, inventor and Vidon Vineyard winemaker Don Hagge is betting on two. He announced today that molecular biologist David Bellows has joined Vidon as head winemaker, doubling the number of science PhDs in the Vidon cellar. With this boost in brainpower for the winemaking team, 85-year-old Hagge plans to turn over primary winemaking duties to Bellows, and focus his own outsized intellect on winery sales and general business operations. And, maybe, some vacations with his wife.

Hagge earned his B.A. (with highest honors) and PhD in physics at UC Berkeley, working on particle research with Ernest Lawrence before earning his executive MBA from Stanford University. Bellows attended the University of Arizona for his bachelor's degree (also graduating magna cum laude), then went on to earn his PhD from The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Both men went into winemaking after successful careers in science and technology, and met when Bellows helped manage fermentation at Vidon for the 2014 harvest. The two easily hit it off, and when Hagge decided he wanted to step back from full-time winemaking at Vidon, he thought immediately of Bellows.

Bellows had actually found science through wine. He began his career working for famed New York City restaurateur Joseph Baum at Aurora Grille, where he managed the beverage program. After a series of similar restaurant positions, he decided to look into winemaking and enrolled in chemistry classes at the University of Arizona. He felt immediately at home, but found himself seduced away from wine by the shiny toys in the research labs. It took almost 20 years of international research, teaching, and grant writing to bring him back to his original goal: making wine. Bellows began working harvests in the Willamette Valley in 2011, and hasn't looked back since – though he does continue to teach a few wine-related science courses at Chemeketa Community College.

Together, Hagge and Bellows run Vidon's cellar like a science lab, emphasizing quality and predictability of results. "As scientists, we're not constrained by tradition," said Hagge, "We're looking for measurable improvement. If there is evidence that there is a better way to do something, we'll try it."

Because the barrel room at Vidon is small, Hagge began experimenting with more compact Australian plastic tanks and French oak staves for *élevage*. Vidon now stores ten barrels' volume in the space that six regular barrels would require, with no detectible impact on the wine. They also use no corks, preferring sterile glass stoppers to avoid all risk of taint while minimizing variability.

"Corks are living things. No two corks let in the same amount of air, so you effectively relinquish the final winemaking decision to the bark industry," Bellows said. Hagge designed and built a unique bottling line

for glass stoppers as well as a proprietary argon gas wine preservation tap system for the tasting room, which protects the wine from oxygen and extends the usable life of a bottle for up to two weeks.

“Now if we can just find a harvest intern with a PhD in Organic Chemistry, we’ll be set,” Bellows said.

ABOUT VIDON VINEYARD:

Vidon (vee-don) is a small, innovative family-owned vineyard and winery outside Newberg in the Chehalem Mountains AVA of Willamette Valley, Oregon. Named for proprietors Vicki and Don Hagge, Vidon produces 100% estate-grown Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Viognier, Syrah and Tempranillo. Visit www.vidonvineyard.com / [Facebook](#) / [Twitter](#)

Vidon’s estate tasting room is open 11am-4pm on winter weekends and holidays, and Thursday through Monday the rest of the year. Midweek tastings are also available by appointment.

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