

ROBERT J. BENZIGER

Robert J. Benziger, Class of 1971, is a founder and General Partner of the Benziger Family Winery, widely respected both for its fine wines and its eco-friendly farming techniques.

After High School Mr. Benziger and his brother Joe opened a successful wine shop in Eastchester, NY. When his brother Mike purchased a vineyard in Sonoma County, CA, Mr. Benziger and Joe sold the shop and headed west to help launch the new family venture. Eventually all seven Benziger siblings and their spouses worked at the winery.

Mr. Benziger became the National Sales Manager for the family's Glen Ellen wine business where he built a far-reaching distribution network east of the Mississippi.

The Glen Ellen brand was sold in 1993 and Mr. Benziger and his family focused on establishing the Benziger Family Winery which pioneered the replacement of traditional farming practices with environmentally conscious methods. They were one of the first vintners to adopt Biodynamic and organic techniques eliminating chemical and artificial inputs and re-instating natural balances. The Benziger wines developed distinctiveness and authenticity that was lacking before.

Today, all Benziger grapes are grown with certified green farming techniques. In 2001 the Winery and its growers implemented a farming sustainability program with the ultimate goal of achieving organic certification.

The Winery has received extensive recognition including the first ever *Sunset* magazine Green Winery Award and was named the 2012 Winery of the Year by *Wine & Spirit Magazine*.

Mr. Benziger, who is now in charge of Customer Relations, has served on numerous industry advisory boards and the California Governor's Council for the Disabled.

Mr. Benziger married his WPHS classmate, the former Kathleen Avery, and has three children all working in the wine industry. A sister and a brother are also graduates of WPHS.