

Boy, 8, inherits Oregon winery

Jamie Colby, host of the new Fox reality show *Strange Inheritance*, interviews Pascal Brooks. Brooks was just 8 when his father died unexpectedly and he inherited Brooks Winery. The show premieres Monday.

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When Portland native [Jimi Brooks](#) died of an apparent heart attack at 38, he owned a thriving winery in the Eola-Amity Hills of the Willamette Valley. And he left some very specific instructions about its future in his will.

The whole business would go to the son who inspired him, Pascal. The wrinkle: Pascal was just 8 when he became the sole owner of Brooks Winery.

It's the kind of unusual bequest that attracted the attention of a new reality series that debuts Monday on Fox Business Network. Hosted by [Jamie Colby](#), a Fox Business reporter with a legal pedigree, the program called *Strange Inheritance* features Pascal Brooks' story in an episode that premieres at 9 p.m. Jan. 26. Because Pascal was just 8 when his father died, his aunt, Janie Brooks Heuck, stepped in to run the family business. But Pascal, now preparing for college, plays a central role in preserving his father's commitment to high quality wines and biodynamic farming. I reached out to Colby to find out what inspired the series and why she decided to investigate the Brooks story.

What was the impetus for this show? Was it inspired by an actual story or did it emerge as a concept?

Colby: It emerged as an issue that we all face at least once in



our lives maybe more and one that viewers could relate to. There are lessons learned in each story we tell no matter if we'll ever inherit a winery or a gator park or a very valuable coin ourselves.

What are the key elements you're looking for in an inheritance to qualify?

All our stories had great families behind them with really interesting tales to tell. Each had a family legacy worthy of telling and preserving. What they inherited was rare, unusual or downright strange. No matter what the inherited items were, each family had decisions to make as well and learning about that part of the process was equally enlightening.

Does your mission include investigating the inheritance and the story behind it?

Absolutely! Going back generations through pictures, stories and archival images as we did for a family that inherited the guns Bonnie and Clyde had with them in the death car included why this family's father collected the guns and what the history was behind them. Hearing that an eight year old boy had so tragically and prematurely lost his father introduced us to the wonderful family members he had that raised him and saved his father's vineyard which is his legacy both highlighting his father's love of winemaking and his family's love for him. He's quite a guy which an amazing inheritance!

Do the inheritors always know the full story or are they trying to figure it out?

Often we go back in time together but they usually have some pieces of their ancestry puzzle that we use to tell their story but there are some episodes that revealed surprises about a family member or the items inherited themselves. It was a fascinating part of the storytelling we did.

What's your approach to disputed inheritances?

For the most part the families we met were able to settle differences and devise a strategy for valuing their inheritance and determine what should be kept and what should be sold. Joining them at an auction and seeing what something was worth was pure adrenaline!

Very exciting and in some cases exceeded their expectations. Viewers will really enjoy meeting these families and cheering them on as they go through the process and share their story.

What more can you tell us about Pascal Brooks' story?

Pascal was only eight when his Dad died unexpectedly. His father loved having Pascal with him at the winery and Pascal is still spending time helping harvest when not in school. He's just starting college now and I asked him "Pascal, what if you decide you want to be an architect for example?" because I was curious if he felt forced to be in the wine business. He's a really sharp young man and even though he wasn't old enough (when we met) to drink the wine at Brooks he realized what an opportunity he's been handed. His response? "If I decide to be an architect, I'll be an architect. An architect that owns a successful winery!"

You're an attorney — what are the legal issues associated with leaving real estate and a working business (especially one that entails the production and consumption of alcohol) to a very minor minor?

Well so long as Pascal didn't drink the wine, he can own the business but his Aunt Janie Heuck really came to the rescue as did the competing vineyards who I was told arrived uninvited the first harvest season to help Janie and Pascal save it. Neighbors helping neighbors. What a wonderful community.

Have you ever practiced estate law?

Not specifically I was a transactional business lawyer but sadly both my father and grandmother had passes shortly before I was asked to host Strange Inheritance and that loss and my ten years as an attorney prepared me to be compassionate and understand what many of these families were dealing with.

Why did you choose the winery story?

Well now that I have visited Oregon I'd like to say because I knew how beautiful it would be but the truth is seeing Brooks and the amazing landscape on which it sits was a breathtaking surprise. I think the story of a boy inheriting a winery is of itself irresistible and the family was very forthcoming and willing to share with us their

hearts, their homes and an amazing story of what it took to keep their family business going.

Is there a public education element to this? Are you promoting the importance of establishing a will, trust, estate plan, etc.?

What I learned from a number of these families is how hard it is to try to make decisions a loved one who passes would approve of. So many of the heirs said they'd wished they'd discussed more specifically what their loved one would have wanted. It did get me to sit down with my attorney to lay out what I would want so that I could spare my family from having to guess in my absence.

What is the premiere episode about?

The premiere consists of two episodes airing back to back on January 26th. The first is about a baseball card collection considered to be one of the most unique and valuable in existence. The implications of that particular inheritance are enormous not only to the family that discovered them in an attic of a family home but to other collectors as well! It's a show you truly have to see to believe. The second episode on our premiere night is about two actors who inherited a very substantial gift from a man they never met. It changes the life of both once they realize the letter they receive about it isn't a scam but for real. It was a really fun episode to shoot and produce and left all of us on my crew thinking what you might after you see it "why not me!"

What has the feedback on the show been so far?

We are all obviously excited that a show we spent eight months shooting is now ready to premiere. Folks who have seen it internally are especially excited about the expanse of the territory we covered countrywide and the variety of heirlooms/inheritances we got to see and learn about. It's definitely a show most agree with me can be enjoyed as a family and my own family will be joining me in NYC to watch it. I notice a lot more people I know are also starting to talk about what they collect or want to!