A Biography of Louis Lucas:

Originally from the Central Valley of California, Louis Lucas is one of California's premier grape growers. He literally grew up in the business. His father, son of Croatian immigrants, was a leading table grape grower in California for decades. Louis is best described as an innovator and a master at utilizing a variety growing practices and techniques. His vast knowledge and viticulture expertise span over 30 years, making him a sought after speaker, consultant, and advisor. Louis has sold wine grapes to many wineries over the years including: Sebastiani, Korbel, Chateau Montelena, ZD, Wente Brothers, Ridge, Callaway, Bargetto, Kendall-Jackson, Robert Mondavi, Steele, Rusack, Fess Parker, Sunstone, Dan Gehrs, Austin Cellars, Foxen, Sanford, Viansa, Fiddlehead, McKeon-Phillips, Rideau and Bonny Doon.

In 1963, Louis graduated from Notre Dame University with a degree in Finance & Business Economics. Aside from his studies, Louis excelled in track and made his best attempt at Irish football. After four cold Indiana winters, Louis headed back to California to join the family's table grape, wine grape, and almond business. Several years later, he embarked on a new venture, one that would place him as a pioneer in the California Central Coast's wine industry. In 1970, he formed Tepusquet Vineyards with his brother George and partner Alfred Gagnon to become one of the first commercial wine grape growers in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties.

In the early 1970's, he worked with Jack Niven to form Edna Valley Vineyards and expanded Tepusquet to the Shandon region of Paso Robles. It was during these years that Louis tested all of the growing theories of the past and created some of his own. He spent several summers touring the finest wine regions of France, Italy, Spain and Germany studying their methods and systems. His conclusion was simple, as he states, " The best decision I ever made in the early 70's was going against conventional wisdom by planting more vines per acre, adapting trellis systems to fit specific varieties, and instituting suckering, hedging, thinning and leaf removal programs. I had learned this from growing table grapes with my Father, and my travels in Europe confirmed these techniques were essential to growing quality wine grapes."

As the 1980's approached, a shift began to take place in the wine industry as a whole. Johannisburg Riesling had been the primary white, but Chardonnay was well on it's was to replacing it. Louis adjusted to this shift and converted most of his vineyards from Cabernet, Merlot, and Gamay Beaujolais to Chardonnay (only keeping the Pinot Noir). He also planted another vineyard in the Los Alamos Valley of Santa Barbara County. There he instituted the 'Geneva Double Curtain' trellis system for his Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, and Sauvignon Blanc. "This system [Geneva Double Curtain] produces a stronger more massive vine, elevating it off the ground with a large open canopy promoting greater production, quality, and health of the vine in general."

Louis' current venture, Lucas & Lewellen Vineyards (L&L), has once again placed him at the top of his class. In 1996, he joined forces with retired Judge Royce Lewellen, with two of his existing vineyards, and together, they acquired several premium wine producing properties. These vineyards are located in the three principal wine grape growing regions of Santa Barbara County: the Santa Maria Valley, the Los Alamos Valley, and the Santa Ynez Valley, allowing them to utilize the 3 different climate zones that are unique to Santa Barbara County's coastal climate. L&L vineyards experience warm days and cool nights with long, gentle growing seasons for their over 400 acres and 24 varieties of grapes. L&L is now in the process of planning a winery and tasting room facility in the Los Alamos Valley. In Louis's own words: "Growing great wine grapes requires a great deal of work. It is a true labor of caring to find a balance between the soil, the vine and the climate. All of these things must occur at the right time and are critical for vine maturity, resulting in real quality yields."

Never too far away from his vines, Louis, his wife Jill and their two daughters live in Solvang, California overlooking one of their beautiful vineyards.