

Name of Interviewee: Adam Avery, Andy Parker, Fred Rizzo, Travis Rupp

Date of Interview: May 2, 2017

Name of Interviewer: Theresa McCulla

Length of Interview: 55:06 minutes

SV: Okay.

TM: It's May 2nd, 2017. This is Theresa McCulla, and I'm here with Steve Velazquez of the National Museum of American History. We are interviewing Travis Rupp, Adam Avery, Andy Parker, and Fred Rizzo of Avery Brewing Company. We're meeting at the brewery in Boulder, Colorado and this interview is part of the American Brewing History Initiative, a project to document and collect the history of beer and brewing in America. So, Adam we'll start at the beginning, when and where you were born?

AA: Your voice, you should be on NPR. [Laughter] I mean, it's such a great voice. It's, I'm like, "Am I listening to NPR?"

[cross talk]

AP: I feel soothed.

AA: I'm sorry. What was the question?

TM: When and where were you born?

AA: This is Adam. I was born May 30th, 1966 in Macomb, Illinois.

TM: And did you grow in Macomb?

AA: No, I grew up in Decatur, Illinois, which is, I don't know, like 50 or 60 miles away from there.

TM: And who are your parents?

AA: Larry and Nancy Avery.

TM: And what did they do?

AA: My dad was a chemist at A. E. Staley and my mom is a, she cuts hair. She still does, 54 years later. She should retire. Anyway, we've been trying to get her to do that.

TM: And what was it like growing up where you did?

AA: I grew up, so when I was growing up, Decatur, Illinois was the soybean capital of the world. Literally, I could, and I think there's a town in Russia that took it over, but, you know, total agriculture. But, you know, A. E. Staley, and, and ADM plants, Caterpillar

plant, Firestone plant, so there's a lot of, you know, industry as well. Town of a hundred thousand people, similar size to Boulder, so. Kind of like that size town.

TM: And where did you go to school?

AA: I went to school, college?

TM: High school. College.

AA: High school was Saint Teresa, Catholic school, Jesuit school. And so, actually, and then I went to Regis College, which is now Regis University. Went there from '84 to '88.

TM: And what did you study?

AA: I had a double major in philosophy and political science.

TM: And how did you, at what point, what did you envision for your, your future after college?

AA: Not this. But, oh you mean right after college?

TM: Sure.

AA: I had no idea. I was just rock climbing and skiing and you know being a bum, having a good time, and barely making enough money to get by. And had my mid-twenties crisis, so, turned 27, and got accepted to DU Law School. So that summer, I was talked out of it by a, a couple of my rock climbing partners, who had just finished law school. And they said, "There's no way in hell that you'll ever love this, Adam. So you should try to be something else." And at the time, I'd been homebrewing for a few years. And, so I talked to my dad and another guy out of \$90,000 dollars total. So, I don't know if that can ever be done again, but for \$90,000 dollars, we started a tiny little brewery here in Boulder, Colorado.

TM: Well, just to back up a bit, when did you start homebrewing?

AA: I think it was 1990, I believe. Had, my last boss that I had was a, at Eastern Mountain Sports and he bought a homebrew kit, brought it to a Super Bowl party, tasted it. And I, literally the next day I went out and bought a, a homebrew kit.

TM: What, what was that beer like? Do you remember?

AA: It was a brown beer. It was really full bodied, you know, brown ale, like I'd been drinking good beer my, and I had been drinking pretty good beer. Whatever you want call a good beer back in early 80s, which would consist of like Moosehead and Heineken and St. Pauli Girl, I mean, that's what you could get, but that's what I was drinking in high school, which isn't very PC, but I mean, I was. [Laughter]

TM: Alright. So this experience prompted you to brew yourself?

AA: Correct. Yep.

TM: Okay. And what was your first brewing set-up like?

AA: Oh, it was very simple. It was just a, you know, you know, just a, you know, pot on the stove, and, you know, very simple thing. And I, you know, I remember my first batch was, I over sanitized the bottles because, thinking, you know, more chemicals means better, you know, better result, but I ended up killing the yeast and so it was uncarbonated, it tasted okay, but it was uncarbonated, but lessons learned, you know.

TR: I remember doing that. Did that a couple times.

AA: Yeah. Yep.

TM: And did have a sense, was there was a homebrewing community at the time where you were?

AA: Not really. I mean just Kevin, who was, you know, my boss at the time, you know, he, he still, you know, he homebrewed still occasionally but I kind of just went berserk with it. It was like, it was like something that I was, you know, I was a rock climber, so I was doing a lot of rock climbing, but also, you know, needed another hobby, and so, I had like three or four batches literally going on at a time. And I had like 10 cases of beer in the cellar at all times, so I'd just give my beer to my friends. Take it to rock climbing areas and, you know, one rule was: you have to bring the bottles back because, you know, I need the bottles to refill. [Laughter] People would do that.

TM: And how did you teach yourself how to brew?

AA: School of hard knocks, I mean, you know, like, you know, obviously I had Charlie's book, you know, the, the *Joy of Homebrewing*, and so, I mean, that was really my bible and got me started. And then Jim, you know, when we first started the brewery, Jim Hall, who was working at Boulder Beer at the time, was a rock climbing buddy of mine. He came to the brewery for a couple of weeks in the beginning and like just helped me with, like, pumps and things that, you know, I really, you know, walked in kind of blindly, because I'd never worked in a brewery before. So, he had helped me, you know, on that, but I'm talking about a super tiny system. Obviously, this is, you know, it's a completely different animal, so.

TM: And so, what the, the jump from homebrewing to wanting to start a business, what circumstances led to that?

AA: I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. You know, it's like I was 27 years old and I was like, I, you know, I can't just work at Eastern Mountain Sports my whole life

because that's not what I want to do. So, yeah, it was either, you know, become an attorney or, you know, follow, follow something that obviously has a lot more passion about.

TM: And, can you talk a bit about the conversation with your dad if he was the kind of co-funder of the project?

AA: Yeah. So my Dad, you know, he's, I mean, he worked for, you know A. E. Staley for like 27 years, and then he took an early retirement. The company sold to Lyle, Tate & Lyle which is a, an English firm, so he took his early retirement with the intent of coming out here, to start a running store, so my dad is running like 70 marathons, and I have no idea how many miles in his life, but it's a lot. So his intent, in 1993, was to start that running store. Well, he couldn't find the right spot and so he and his business partner, you know, I had a business plan together and I was shopping it to some friends because I really didn't need that much money to get started. And in the end, they just decided, they said, "Hey, we'll, you know, we'll, we'll fund it and we'll split the company, you know, three ways."

TM: And so, at what point was it that you arrived in Colorado?

AA: 1984.

TM: Okay. And what was Boulder like at the time?

AA: Well, I mean, it was, you could, you could drive at night between Denver and Boulder and there was just dark. Now it's not dark anymore, you know, I mean there's definitely, it's, it's definitely different. City of Boulder, it's, I mean, obviously there's lots of changes in, in Boulder. I mean, it was just, there was a lot, it was a sleepier town for sure. But everybody wants to live here, so, all the buildings going up.

TM: Right, and so you mentioned you'd been reading Charlie Papazian. Were you, was that part of your inspiration to come to Boulder specifically or--?

AA: No, so, so I graduated in '88. And I was rock climbing in El Dorado Springs, like, all the time, so I was like, "Why am I living in Denver? I should be living in Boulder." So I moved in '89. Then, started brewing in, in '90.

TM: And so, at the moment when you opened Avery, what was the American brewing industry like?

AA: Well, I mean, it wasn't a whole, I mean, there weren't a whole lot of breweries. I mean, we, there's a bunch of us that kind of popped up at the same time. You know, New Belgium was already in business, Odell was in business. I was drink-, you know, Sierra Nevada, obviously was, you know, what I was drinking a lot of. But, past that, yeah there were, there wasn't a whole lot, I mean, it was like, you know, imports and so there wasn't

really a, a huge beer scene. But, I mean, it explo--, at that moment, that was like, you know, I mean, that was the moment—'93, '94—was like when most of the breweries in Colorado, you know, all, you know germinated: Left Hand, Great Divide, you know, us.

TM: So, would you say at the moment, you were opening the brewery, did you feel like you were part of a movement of something that was starting or was it still a kind of personal project?

AA: I think, I mean, that's a long time ago, so it's hard to really answer that, but I think it was more of a personal project because, like, where I was in my life was more about, I'm starting this business, I'm going to brew beer that, you know, I want to drink. And then all-, but it, certainly, from that moment, you know, for the next five years, it was like, "Oh, wait. We're on this, we're, we're a part of something." But I don't know if I really necessarily understood that I was a part of that from the very beginning.

TM: Okay. So the early days of the brewery, what were the facilities like?

AA: Yeah, like a shed. [Laughter] No, literally, you know, like, so our first, you know, was 2,000 square feet, you know, it was just a basic warehouse. And Dad and I cut the, you know, cut the concrete, poured the sla-, poured the drains ourselves, and you know, these guys had to have work in, and see our handy work.

AP: That's why those were so bad.

AA: Exactly. They, they weren't done professionally. No, we just grew super organically, and like, we were just very lucky, I guess, we have good karma. It's like, every time we needed, you know, we were bursting at the seams, somebody would leave that complex and we would just like, you know assume, you know, take over that lease, and so, we ended up being in three different buildings, all, you know, within, you know, 4 blocks of, you know, this, this warehouse district. I don't know how those guys got it done but they brewed 50 thousand barrels, you know, in two year-, for two consecutive years until we could afford to build this thing.

TM: And could you describe some of the first, first styles you brewed, the first batches that you produced?

AA: Yeah, so we started with three beers, Redpoint, which was a, an amber ale, which for the time, you know, would've been probably more like a red IPA. It was, it's pretty hop-, I mean, it's definitely hoppy for the time, for 1993, '94. Then Ellie's Brown Ale which we still make. We make it a lot better now. But, one thing about our beers is that it's way better than when I was making it. [Laughter] Twenty-four years ago, there's no doubt about that. And then Out of Bounds Stout, and we still make that one as well. So it was,

those were three that we started with. And then, you know, obviously, we've, we've made a lot of beers through the years.

TM: And how did, how did customers react to the early beers?

AA: Poorly. Poorly. Yeah, it was tough, I mean, it was definitely tough. It was like, you're not only, you know, selling darker beer, more flavorful beer, they, you know, it's not like it is today. You know, and so, it was definitely a push to get people to, to buy it, and so we stayed small for a while. Yeah, so. Started making IPA in 1996, and so that was kind of, you know, that's, for, for the history part of it, that's what I always come back to because in '96 we started making this really hoppy beer. I'm selling it to, literally, taking it to, you know, my, my publicans, you know, who owned, you know, pubs, and like, they're for my friends and they're like, they, you know, they pay me in the check and then they call me, you know, two days later, "Hey, come pick up your beer. It's too bitter. You know, people don't want to drink it." And, and now IPA is, you know, the largest selling style, so in 20-, you know, in less than 20 years that happened, so that's pretty neat.

TM: And then, one more question about the early years, what was the distribution landscape like at the time? Getting your beers to...

AA: Moonlike. [Laughter] It was very. Lunar, I guess is a way to look at it, not without much life. Well, that's not true. I guess, you know, some distributors saw it, you know, and they, they saw, like, maybe this is going to happen. But certainly, it fell mostly on the brewery to, to get the beer sold, for sure. As I said, it was like, you know, it was like hand-selling all the time.

TM: Right, okay. Alright so, getting a little bit more into the contemporary era, so please free to jump in.

AA: The young men amongst us. Right.

TM: Right, yeah. And maybe when...

[cross talk]

TR: By the way in 1990, I was 10 years old.

AA: Thanks, bro!

TR: He was younger than that.

FR: I was. I was six. [Laughter]

TM: And maybe when you speak for the first time, if you could mention how long you've been working here. So, just curious, if you guys could speak to what the creative process is like at Avery.

TR: Yeah, I mean, this is Travis. I've been at Avery for 5 years now, this month. So, yeah, I think the creative process is, is kind of interesting, especially being in charge of that department now. It's, it's very eclectic, which I really like about the way we do things here. One thing that has always been a really, has been interesting, that anybody can come up with a, an idea and we'll make it. Even to the extent that I would say, like, one of the most interesting things we do is the wedding beers, and then a lot of, we, anytime somebody gets married, they get to make their own beer, essentially. And so, that, they can be as creative as that, but also, like, it doesn't matter if you work in production, if you work as a bartender, as a, a server in the restaurant, if you have an idea, we kind of have an open door policy to bring it to us, and we'll play around with it as long as you're willing to play with us, is the idea. You know what I mean? And kind of experiment with it. But also, with the creative process it's, it's, there's a lot more to it than I think a lot of people think. Yes, we've had some instances where we can come up with an idea for a beer and we can create it six months later, but there is a six-month process there where we're playing around with adjuncts, so, you know, fruit or spices, whatever it might be, in growlers, literally, just 64 ounces. But then we have to scale it up. And does it scale to a keg? Maybe it does. How does it scale to a tank? Typically a dozen? And so you have to figure that out. But then we also have beers, like a, a beer we're about to release, Real Peel, which, that was 4 years in the making, probably, something like that. And so, I think from, it's very, it's variable. But also, the, the really cool thing about research and development and, and doing the creativity side is everybody is involved. Like, right before you guys arrived today, we had our R & D meeting, and we have a representative from almost every facet of production that's present. So, yeah.

TM: Could you mention, quickly, just like a couple of the notable successes or, I don't want to say failures, but things that haven't flown so easily out of that program?

TR: You guys can probably speak a lot to that too.

AP: That happens all the time. So, so this is Andy. I'm coming up on my 15th year here. So, I was actually hired at the 9th anniversary party, many, many moons ago, and became the fourth employee, way back in the day. So, and I've been, you know, pretty much everyone in the brewery is working as this giant team. That's, that's kind of the way it works. For, for a long time, I was kind of, like, the only special projects guy doing all the weird stuff and doing fun adjuncts and, and new yeast and all that. But it was never just like, "I'm going to go do whatever I want to do." There are too many talented people here to just, to just go off on your own, to go off on your own and try something. So a lot of times, anyone in the brewery can come up with an idea, so some ideas are mine, some

ideas are Travis's, some are Adam's, some are Fred's, some are anyone's, but the whole goal is to try to use all the resources that we have here, get together, and try to come up with something good. And sometimes it works. In the, in the case of Real Peel, like, yeah, we've been making that for 6 years, maybe, in our taproom, it's this huge seller, and we've, like, refined it over the years. And then, there are other times where we work on, for example, like a, a session milk stout or a session IPA, and we do pilot batches for two years, and sometimes we, sometimes we, we can't pull it off. Sometimes it never works where, like, where everyone in the brewery wants to go in and drink that beer. And that's pretty much our, our touchdowns. It's not like we're, it's not like we're, we come up with a beer and we're like, "Oh man, we better do a bunch of market research and see what the people out there want." It's more like, "Well, what do we want to drink tomorrow? If I go down to the sunny patio right now, with my friends to drink a beer, what do I want to drink?" And then we try to do that. And if it gets to the point where everyone in the brewery is going down and drinking that beer, like we all drank Real Peel in its early iterations, then, then, then we feel like we're onto something. So, you know, it's pretty much, work in a team. Work as a team. Make what you want to drink and wing it from there. If all of us like it, we're going to find an audience for that beer too.

TR: Yeah, I think. This is Travis again. I think even to follow up on what Andy said, you have, like, Coconut Porter, we just released it not that long ago. But that was a grueling process. You would even attest to that. Yes?

FR: 3 years.

TR: Three years.

FR: It wasn't grueling for me.

TR: Oh, I know. [Laughter] For us, yes, it was. Trying to figure out how to make a Coconut Porter that, that tastes really, really good, and holds up to all of our standards, which I think is really cool. I mean, we do, we do, look at what the, the market standards are, and what we think will sell, but also, we hold our, I think we hold our-, ourselves to a really, really high standard. And so, that was where we kept failing, was we weren't crossing, we weren't meeting our own standards. And then we have really funny ones, just to throw out one of our guys, Ross Miner—Ross Miner for the record, Smithsonian—who came up with an idea for a mushroom IPA, what was, which was the most disgusting thing I have ever smelled in my life. [Laughter] And we dumped it down the drain. So those things do happen.

AP: But we tried.

TR: Yes we tried, boy, did we try. But again, that's another testament to it. I mean, all of us were like, "Mushrooms in an IPA. No." He's like, "No, trust me this will work." It was

like, “Alright, man. I’m going to buy four different-, what’s \$400 dollars’ worth of mushrooms? and we’ll see if this works.” Did not work. [Laughter]

AP: No, and we all, and we all tried it, and we all tried it with Ross. And even Ross is like, “Yeah, this isn’t good.” [Laughter] “Alright, as long as you’re cool with us dumping it.” “Yeah, we should dump it.” “Alright!” But it was fun.

TM: So, beyond thinking of, kind of, what you want to drink, where, do you start with an ingredient, or do you start by thinking about, you know, a historical moment, or, where do you begin?

FR: Yeah, again, this is Fred. I’ve been with Avery for just over 10 years now.

AP: Rookie.

FR: Yeah. I think it’s kind of a combination of a few different things. Sometimes we, we do focus on maybe one particular element of, of that beer, say it’s a tequila barrel, and we know that’s going to be the predominant profile of that beer. And then we’ll build a recipe around that. Or we know it’s going into a rum barrel. Or we know it’s going to have cucumber. And, and then we say, “Well, maybe some hibiscus will, will play well with that.” And then we kind of, sometimes it does start as a, a singular ingredient and then builds into a recipe or sometimes we just have a general idea, and come to the table with something that a beer we know what we want it to taste like. And then it becomes an open forum of, of how to get to that particular profile with an, with, with a beer. So, you kind of, it, it can work a few different ways. But it is definitely always, always based on quality and, and something that we’re going to be excited about. And, and we don’t take like a, a catchy name, and then build a recipe around that.

TR: Yeah, yeah. This is Travis again. Really good, really good point from Fred, because I, I think if it doesn’t build around that, that ingredient, because I would say a lot of times when Adam comes to us with, like, when he’ll come back from trips is he wants make something specific and usually that is based on something that’s flavor-driven, either it’s an adjunct in there or it’s a style. And we want to make the best of whatever “X” style it is. And then, with the, I think one thing I’ve thrown a huge curve ball at Fred in particular with lately, is with the historic beers, I don’t necessarily know what it’s going to taste like, and so, we also have the other side of it, where we’re creating a beer that’s purely based on archeology and historical documentation and there’s not necessarily a flavor profile we can build off because we don’t know what that flavor profile is. But I think that’s what makes this a lot of fun. And Fred and I joke that the next beer we’re going to make is a mashed potatoes and gravy beer. [Laughter] We are going to use mashed potatoes.

FR: Yep. Absolutely, yep.

AP: Can we put cranberries in there?

TR: And we'll have water with gravy.

[cross talk]

TR: And we'll throw some cranberries in there.

AP: Yeah, I want some, I want some cranberries.

FR: We're going have dried cranberry in it. Post-fermentation. Yeah.

[cross talk, laughter]

TR: That's what they drank, the pilgrims drank it, I swear to God!

FR: Just flakes of turkey.

AA: Does the gravy come with a side, like the...

[cross talk]

AP: Yeah, and you have different kinds of gravies... White gravy, dark gravy.

TR: Yes.

FR: Yeah, it's, it is, this is Fred again. And I, I do give Travis a lot of flak for his beautiful recipes, for these historic beers, which are, are awesome, but they, it is one of the biggest challenges to produce these beers on a fully automated German brewhouse, which is made for the exact opposite style of beer. And yet, I think just Avery brewers, and, and always kind of finding ways to do things we shouldn't do, we figure out how to make it work, and they've definitely been a challenge in, they, almost every one has caused a major problem [laughter] that we have had to overcome. And, and yeah, so we, it's, amazingly stuck latters like I've never seen before, which is where the mashed potato and gravy thing came from and, and that was a complete failure. And we, I think the testament is we didn't just say, "Okay, well, we tried." We tried it again. And the second time we made it work, and it became an awesome beer. And, that was, that was a pretty cool moment of being able to, once, once it fails, you're not just going to give up, you're going to figure out a way to make it work. And then, that's when the, the whole table of very smart people, figure out how, how to make it work. Yeah, not Andy, but. [Laughter]

TM: Some of these answers are getting to this, but could you all talk a bit about the work culture here? What is it like to be an employee at Avery?

AP: Work hard and play hard. I mean, we're, you know, we're all kind of in it to do the best we can on a daily basis. And make the best beer that we can. Come up with the coolest

ideas and do all the fun things. And then, as soon as work is done, most of our staff goes outside and has beers together after work. You know, it's not like everyone does their job and they just go home. So you, you end up making a lot of friends because you're, you're in close quarters with a lot of really cool people. And I, I love it that, for 15 years, just about every day after work, you go outside, and you have a beer with your friends that you've just worked with all day and you did a good job.

TR: Agreed. This is Travis. Definitely agree with Andy, I mean, a lot of, not even only the, the work hard to play hard, but we get to make whatever, like he, Andy already attested to this, we make what we want to drink. I've never heard Adam tell me I can't make a beer. And he probably should.

AA: I was close on the chicha.

[Laughter]

TR: Yeah. Yes. You know, you know, and then it turned out great!

FR: Yeah, I would've backed you up, too.

TR: Yeah, but, yeah, yeah, Fred wanted to tell me, "No," too. But like, in regards to what, whatever we want to drink, that's what we get to make. And so, obviously we have to, because we're a business, we're an industry, we have to adhere to the market, but I think one of the things that we want to do that we strive for is to drive the market, and drive the market in regards to what it is we're drinking and what we want to drink. So that that later affects the market, I think. And I think that's what's really cool, I mean, back from, even though I haven't been here nearly as long as the other guys, being here for 5 years, it's, it's, that's one of the coolest things, one of the reasons I was drawn to this place and left working at Apple to come work here at a much more lucrative position than, and go into [inaudible 24:17] as a bartender. That's how I started here. It was because that's what drew me here, it was, every, every Friday, I would come in before I started working here, there was always something new on the board, and it was the craziest, most ridiculous thing. And I'm like, "Why the hell are they putting that in beer?" And then I'd try it, and it's really cool. And I think that culture trickles down to our people. I think they realize that creativity is there. I think also one of the things that I got, I've, I've been asked before and, and with, with other people in other interviews is, "How do you handle your core beers?" Since, like, Andy and I work in the, the department that typically is dealing with all of the weird, specialty one-offs. And I said, "You know, I have no problem picking up a can of IPA, and saying "I, I made this, like, I was part of this. You know, Avery is me." You know what I mean? "That's the brewery I work for."

AP: Everyone here has these shirts and I'm wearing it right now. This is Andy again. It says "brewer" on the back, and everyone in packaging, everyone in the warehouse, everyone

in the lab, everyone in every department, is, is effectively a brewer, because we're all doing this together.

TR: Agreed. Agreed.

AP: I mean, it, like, even if, even if it's some idea that I came up with, and we're making this beer, 40, 50 people are going to put their hands on that beer at some point. Whether it's brewing, in the cellar, in packaging, and that, that's kind of a neat feeling, that, that we are all working on it. I also think it's kind of cool, like, just talking about the variety of beers that we make, like, I'm looking at a wall right now with 80 or 90 different beers. And, you know, in any given year, we're probably, you know, putting, I don't know, 25 to 30 in bottles, and then we're probably going to make another 60 to 70 in our taproom alone. Like, every year, all sorts of different things, sometimes we'll repeat things, but frequently, even really good beer is kind of, it's like, "Well, that was really good, but we want to do this new thing." We're going to do this new thing and it's, and there's just crazy beers on tap all the time. And having that freedom is, there aren't a lot of breweries that operate like that, but it, it's a lot more fun than making like, two beers year-round.

TM: And that, so that's prompts the question I guess of, you're brewing so many things and each year you have very diverse offerings, how do you describe the Avery brand? Is there such a thing as an Avery brand?

TR: What do you think Adam? It's your name that's on the logo.

AA: Well, oh, this is Adam. Well, I mean, I think that, everything these guys are saying, is true. It's like we're not, we're not afraid, like that, I think that's what it comes down to. It's like, we're not afraid. We're like, you know when, when we're building beers, the way that we build beers is, like, somebody comes up with an idea, and says, "I want a beer that tastes like this." And that's always the genesis. It's like, you know, like, "I want, you know, this is what I'm looking for. How do we get to that?" And then we round table that whole idea and everybody throws in their, you know, Fred says, "This is the grain bill that we should be using. You know, and, you know, here are the, you know, and the adjuncts that we need. This is the yeast strain that we need to be thinking about using." So, it's all about, like it's all flavor-forward. It's like building a beer to hit a, hit a flavor profile. But, I always like to use the term "tip of the spear" and I feel like, you know, there's, we're out there, there's several other breweries in the country that are out on that tip of the spear, where we're not afraid, you know, to try new things and to, you know, to, you know, make an IPA in '96, and make a double IPA in 2002. And then make, you know, 15-, 18% beer, you know, for the last 10 to 15 years. It's always like, you know, it's like, it's not, we're not worried about what's next, it's more like, just like this exploration of like, what beer can be.

[Cellphone rings]

AA: That must be my Mom. No, it's not. Okay. [Laughter] But, it's, it's a total, it's like a, it's a total beer exploration. And it's, like, I think of this place as almost like a university, it's like, you know like, we all come in here and, and beer is a really hard thing to understand completely, and so, we're all are in this together, and we're, like, kind of going to school. And, it, it's cool, you know? Yeah.

TM: Do you-, how do you communicate with customers? Do you feel like you receive feedback from them and that then drives beers, new styles, or--?

AA: Certainly with, I mean, we do, I mean, yeah we don't live in vacuum. But, but we're not, we're not so conscious about what people quote "want" because if you, like again, you know, I'll go back and just, if you just look at history, you say, "There's, you know, there's no reason to start making an IPA 20 years ago because people would-, weren't drinking it. Well, what's the, you know, in 20 years from now, what's going to be, you know, the next style or whatever that's going to be huge?" You know, like, it's all going to change. And so, I would rather be on the, the beginning of that, you know, the genesis of, you know, whatever that shift in a beer drinker is. And not only be a part of it, but hopefully be a, a driver of that. And so, like, I wasn't the only one that started making an IPA, back in the day, there's other people. And so, you know, collectively, breweries, you know, were starting to say, there was no reason to make these IPAs back then at all, because people were not drinking them. But it was like this constant push of like, this is what I want to drink. You know, Ken Grossman, he wanted to make IPA, you know. There's people making IPAs. So now you look at it and say, "What's that next thing that people want to do? Is it sour beer? Is it barrel-aged beer?" Right now I'm betting that it's barrel-aged beer. And, and that's a huge category and that's what we're doing. It's like, we're really going down that road of, of being able to produce not only what I think are the best barrel-aged beers in the world but also, at a volume that, you know, makes sense, so that, we're not selling unicorn tears, you know, we have, we actually can share what we do here with a, you know, a wide audience of people. And so, that's what I'm into, is like, we've, we've, Andy in particular, has been, I mean, he's been here for 15 years, and we've been honing this barrel-aged part of our business for almost 12 years, and so now I see it as like, kind of coming to fruition. And it's like pe-, and now people are like, "Oh, barrel-aging. We really like that." So, and then there's sour beers, and there's, you know, this gose thing that, you know, people are, you know, all over now. And it's like, "Are goses going to last? Is this going to be flash in the pan? Or is this something that, you know, is long term?" Well, I don't know, but, you know, we, we took our stab at making the best, you know, style of, you know, the best rendition of it and to see what happens. So it's a, yeah, it's about not being afraid. And you know, and, and always kind of following the news kind of thing.

AP: Yeah, it's like, so way, way back in the day, when we first got our, oh yeah. Oh hey, my name is Andy.

[cross talk]

AP: Yeah, way, so way back in the day, when we first started playing with some barrel-aged beers, I, I'm, I'm pretty sure you got the first barrels from Vinnie, right? And we started playing with those. And then...

AA: I think we got one or two from him, yeah.

AP: Yeah, like, way back in the day. And, but, and you know, I was this young beer geek, and I'm like, "Barrels! No one is doing this. This is awesome!" Started playing around, and then a few years later after doing just a bunch of experimentations in house, I actually went to Adam with a written-up proposal, in very, very rudimentary math because it's not my thing, and walked up and said, "Hey, we've been playing around with barrels. I think we're making some solid beer. Here's what it would cost to buy 30 wine barrels. Can we do this 100% Brettanomyces fermented wine barrel-aged beer?" And Adam doesn't even blink, he's like, "Oh yeah, yeah, we should do that." I'm like, "Really? Uh, cool." And so, I kind of like backed out of the room before he could change his mind. [Laughter] But, but I, I thought it was really cool that, that, you know, that the youngest and least experienced person in the brewery, went to Adam, and said, "Hey, what do you think, should we do this?" And there was no hesitation. No fear. And that, you know, those first 30 barrels were the start of, you know, now we have 3,000 oak barrels. And we're putting out a, a bunch of barrel-aged beers. Because we've been doing it longer than almost anyone in the country. And that's, that's kind of neat.

TM: Kind of related to that, how do manage the presence of Brettanomyces in the brewery?

AP: A, a very well stocked lab. Long ago we realized that if you don't have really good quality control, really good QC/QA, you're not going to do very well. So, even back in the alley, when we didn't, when we were, you know, the virus in the industrial area and we were in three different buildings, and, you know, all this different stuff, even at that time, we had three or four full time lab people and that was more than, than breweries five times our size. And so, it's really, it's really keeping track of things and learning all the time, and figuring out what is going out. Doing a lot of testing and making sure that you don't have any cross-contamination.

TM: Fred, I wanted to ask, how has your work here changed over time, kind of day-to-day work in the brewery?

FR: Yeah, a lot. [Laughter] When I started I was, excuse me, 22. So, fresh out of school, and just pretty excited to work around beer for the obvious reasons, right? We have a pretty generous employee beer program, so that was a huge incentive. But, I yeah...

AA: It's the greatest enabling system of all time.

[Laughter]

FR: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. It certainly is, and it worked. Yeah, so, young kid, pretty, pretty eager. So I started in, yeah, at, at the bottom, packaging for well over a year and then transitioned into the brewhouse. So at the time, when I started, there were 13 people in the entire company. So, all of us in production did, had our hands in, in everything, kind of once you got into the brewhouse cellar realm. So yeah, I went from packaging and then brewhouse and cellar, but we also all circulated back into packaging. It was warehouse, it was pulling taproom shifts, it was just, again, a handful of us, so we all kind of had to make it work. And, which was fun, we all got to rotate through all the different departments, and kept it, kept it pretty interesting. And then, just throughout the, the years kind of just slowly worked, snuck my way into different positions for better or worse. And started training brewers, and then started managing the brewhouse, and then I took over the head brewer position, I don't even know, 5 years ago, 4, 4 years ago, something, 3. I have no idea.

AP: Time flies when you have a generous beer program.

[Laughter]

FR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So like I said, we drink a lot of beer here. So yeah, just kind of a slowly but surely now, it's mostly bigger picture type of stuff. And, and the majority of our production meetings. And still ultimately responsible for all of our wort production and the direction of that department, but our brewhouse manager works directly under me, who is directly managing the, the brewers at this point. So, kind of stepped back from a lot of personnel management, and just, yeah, just kind of trying to look into the future of-. I do all of our contracting for raw materials, so, trying to find the next cool hop that you can actually attain in some sort of volume so it works, just kind of like the barrel-aged series, you can find very small amounts of things that no one else can, but then only a handful of people get to experience it, so we're kind of dedicated to creating a barrel-aged beer or a hoppy beer that, that is both unique but also accessible to more people than just the people in our taproom. So, yeah, it's changed a lot. So yeah, it's a lot of computer stuff now. [Laughter] Or a lot of meetings. And yeah, a lot less physical than it used to be. So yeah, it's, it really has changed significantly in, I have the same thing, Andy and I, terrifyingly enough, Andy trained me on the brewhouse at one point.

AP: Which explains why now we need to keep him off of the brew deck because...

[Laughter]

FR: Yeah, so yeah, now I need to stay far, far away from it. So yeah, we worked hand in hand for many, many years together, filtering, brewing, packaging. It was him and I, who ran

our barrel program for a number of years together. Just the two of us. And, so yeah, we've all kind of grown up through the company as we've gotten to this point. So, yeah.

AP: I hate you like a brother.

FR: Exactly, yeah. You're a terrible person.

TM: And I have a couple questions for Travis related to beer and archeology. So, I'm curious how archeology contributes to beer, in terms of flavor in addition to that kind of wow factor of science?

TR: Yeah, that's, that's a good question. This is Travis. I think one of the things that's most, been most interesting for me with the, the process of creating these beers with these guys, is I, when I first came to them with the idea of making, re-creating ancient beers, I didn't expect, one, I expected the reaction I got, especially from Fred of "You're frickin' crazy and no we're not doing this," but then he was like, "No, we will, but I don't know how." And, and so, that, that was kind of interesting, but part of it more for me was just the curiosity, just because since I do a lot of research on, on beer history, and beer archeology, there's this constant presumption out there that ancient beer tasted bad. That it's not going to taste any good because we don't have the modern technology to, to make a beer of quality. And so, diving into it when we did the first one, Nestor's Cup, I don't, I didn't expect it to be as such, as big of a hit, I guess I'd say in terms of just the, the attention it got, but I think a lot of it has, it's kind of what Adam was talking to earlier, of what's he's watched over the last 24 years. Where there were hardly any breweries, and even to put out an amber ale, was like pushing the envelope at that time. Well, now, especially in the state of Colorado, but even in, on a, on a national level, we have a hyper educated population with beer, especially, especially craft beer. I mean, there are certain pockets where it's not there anymore, but I do think that people want to learn more. They're constantly striving to learn more, they want to know where it came from, why it came from there, what it could've potentially been before, what, you know, the, the big companies took over, and made what, what it was for the, you know, post-Prohibition. And I think from the archeological perspective, it's really frickin' cool, because the more that I'm involved with it, the more I'm realizing that they were doing the exact same things we were. They just didn't have all the automation we do, and to Fred's point earlier about, where, and Adam's point as well, where you almost shut me down on one idea, you know, like the-. It's actually, it's really, really hard to re-create ancient beers. And it's because we've come *so* far that the really rudimentary way to make a beer is not possible anymore on a modern system. And so, that's the, kind of the fun of it, to be honest, I mean, as much as Fred gives me a really hard time, I think we had a lot of fun figuring out how we were going to do those things. And sitting, sitting down and doing it, and I think the archeology is bringing it back in because I think, I was just asked this recently, actually, for, for another, another thing I was doing, and they were asking me,

do I think education just in general of our population is, is adhering to it, and I'm like, "Absolutely." Everybody goes to college anymore, and so they all come out with a little bit of analysis. They want to analyze everything, and then, there are that, there is that group of people that wants to start working their way backwards and looking for that answer. And I think that's what we're doing. And I think it's really cool. It's a lot of fun.

TM: Could you describe one of the beers that you've made integrating the perspectives of archeology that feels particularly unusual or interesting?

TR: Yeah, I think, I actually think with all four of them it's been fairly unique and interesting. I would say probably Pachamama, though, has been the most interesting, which was our, our Peruvian beer, the chicha. So, ancient perspective, they would've chewed the corn and spit it out for fermentation. We did try that. Luckily, it didn't work because it got stuck in our lauter and we couldn't actually run it through. But in the process, because of working with other facets and being on deadlines, and trying to get it out, we were kind of pushing the envelope to try to get it down to a certain timeframe, but while we had the downtime to try to re-create it again, figured out that modern science actually benefited us greatly in that regard and that what we secrete in our saliva, alpha-amylase, something you can buy now, you don't need to do that anymore, and it's really cheap because of the corn industry. Corn syrup, in particular, uses it to convert the starches to sugars and make corn syrup. So, we were able to do it that way, and I think we learned a lot, it was really interesting to the extent that we would, if, *if* we were ever to make that beer again, I think we learned enough that we would make it a lot, we could make it a lot easier, and, and cut out the, the process issues.

AP: And we don't have to drink our own spit afterwards.

TR: We do not have to drink our own spit. That is...

AA: I'm not worried about my own spit, I'm worried about your spit.

[Laughter]

TR: Yeah, but I think what, I think with all of them it's been, it's just been an interesting learning experience. And I think with the archeology coming in, and like the, the trials and tribulations we've had, I, I think we have the benefit of having modern equipment when, when we need it. We have all tasted what Viking beer tasted like 1100 years ago. And I guarantee you, that the modern palate does not want that. If you guys all remember, we got it really, really close. And so, if there's way we can tweak it just a little bit, which is what we do in Ragnarsdrápa, I mean, it was so sulfury that people might've really liked the experience but we want them to actually enjoy a pint of it. So, how do we limit that, how do we reduce it? So, I think it, it definitely comes into play, but yeah.

- TM: Alright, I have one final set of kind of big picture questions. These are for anybody and everybody. Why do you think Colorado has such a rich culture of beer and brewing?
- FR: I'll jump on that really quick. This is Fred. Honestly, I think it's just maybe, it's probably not this simple, but I think Colorado attracts a certain type of person who's potentially looking for, not necessarily, doesn't just have to be craft, but just something that's, that's different or maybe a, a little more, not extreme, that's not the word I'm looking for either, but...
- AA: How about adventure?
- FR: Adventure. Yes. Adventurous. Exactly. So, it is like, Adam was saying what, what attracted him to Colorado was just being a climbing bum for a while. So, we all have, are climbers, and skiers, and cyclists, and mountain bikers, and, and whatever it is. And that's not the only type of person who lives in Colorado, obviously. But I think maybe that population gravitates towards craft beer a little more naturally. And I think just with the, with the higher concentration of, of the, a particular, just, type of personality, then I think it definitely could, could attribute to the, the strength of the craft beer industry in, in Colorado, for one angle, at least.
- TR: I totally agree. This is Travis. I mean, I don't know the exact statistics, but they talk about, like how many people in Colorado come, that live here, that are not native Coloradoans, like half the state, isn't it? It's almost. It's like 40 or 50%. I think all of us in the room are a product of that. And that's what, I mean, I came out here for grad school, but also it's the reason I stayed. And they're, you, you get a very eclectic, I feel like Colorado has a very eclectic view of not only the nation but just worldly. Because there are so many different people out here with some many different perspectives, but I think like Fred was speaking to, they come out with that, that, that they're seeking for that something bigger, something different, some... They're, they're more than willing to try different things. And it's pretty limitless out here as long as you're okay not being a beach bum, you know, that's about the only thing we can't do. Everything else is here. And for Denver in particular, as a metro location, it has everything you could want for a, and it is a small city. I mean what? 2.5 million, I think, including all of the, all of the suburbs? That's a small city, but everything's here. You have every sports team you could want. You have every museum you could want. You have every opportunity to do anything you want, you could do here. And I think it harbors that interest, I mean, with craft beer, you know, there is a, I've read many articles that just presume that Colorado bubbled the way it did because we don't have to process our water to brew. And I'm sure there's a factor there, but that's not the reason you moved out here to start a brewery. That's not the reason any small craft brewery starts up, is because, "Oh, I don't have pay to clean my water before it goes through." We only think about that when we're on this scale. We're like, "Thank God we don't have to do that right now." You know what I

mean? And so, I think, I think it's just the creativity, I think, and I also think it's a very educated location, which is really cool. It's really fun to be a part of.

AP: Yeah, I think, I think, kind of going along on that, like, adventure isn't maybe the exact right term, but I mean, people move out here for all sort of reasons, for climbing. I moved out here because I wanted good weather. I wanted to get on a nationally competitive ultimate frisbee team, and I did that for a few years. And I wanted, and I wanted to work in the brewing industry, so I came out here with that mindset. And yeah, the whole goal of coming out here, 'cause I grew up in Ohio, in Cincinnati, the whole goal of coming out here was, I want new experiences, at the very base, I want new experiences. I want new cool stuff. And I remember, way back in the day, like maybe in my mid-20s, I was visiting my parents, and I was, you know, it was before I was at Avery, and I was just getting into craft beer, and I remember going to a store with my Mom. And I go and pick up this six-pack of a beer I've never had. Because I'm like, "I want new experience. I want to try this thing." And I remember her saying to me, "Oh, have you had that before?" I'm like, "No." She's like, "Oh, well, how, how do you know if it's going to be any good? Maybe you shouldn't get it." I'm like, that is the exact opposite of the way I think. [Laughter] I want, I want to try the new thing. And I'd actually forgotten that story until we started talking about that, I haven't thought about that in years. But that's, but and that's just the way it is. And so, her mindset is, is very different and she wants to go to the stuff that she knows. And I just want the new thing. And I think a lot of people move out here, to, to climb, and ski, and do fun stuff and then they're like: "Oh man, a new, there's a new beer on the shelf. I'm just going to buy it. I'm going to wing it, if I don't like it, that's cool. I learned something new."

AA: I agree. This is Adam. I agree with everything they're saying and then I would just add that I think that we're, I mean we're def-, obviously, we're part of history, but as far as, you know, being a part of the brewing history, this state had the largest single brewing facility in the world for many years. And you know, Coors is that brand that I know, there's a lot of guys still around here are drinking yellow bellies, you know, when, when the weather's is hot.

AP: Damn straight. Great beer.

AA: Yeah. And so, I have my Coors stories as well, but I think that that, I think that definitely has a lot of impact, because, yeah I mean, was, I mean when, when you come in here there is that back story and like you know, you couldn't, I'm old enough to remember you couldn't get Coors, you know, on, you know, the east side of the Mississippi and all that sort of stuff. So like, there was definitely, you know, some, you know, a cool, like a mystique around Coors. And so, it was this gigantic brewery, but it really kind of wasn't. And I'm not saying that it was a craft brewery by any means, but I guess what I'm saying is like, it, it was a, it had a different feel to it. It was a family-owned business. You know,

for, for many, many years, obviously is not anymore, but, but also that they made all of their beer in one place. You know, so it was kind of like, you know, they were, that's kind of like the genesis of like, what I think I've done and what, you know, you know, Ken Grossman did or just talking about Colorado. I mean, like all the brewers here, if you think about it, we're just a piece of that history. You know, so like, Coors has done their thing, and you know, now they're owned by a huge conglomerate. And now, we've got, you know, all of us who are, you know, pretty much well, you know family-owned or, you know, very small, you know, ownership groups who are basically doing kind of their own thing, you know. And just, you know, moving, you know, beer history along. And we just get our, whatever, our 15 minutes of fame here, or 45 with you, I guess.

[Laughter]

TM: Building off of that, how would you describe the state of the craft beer industry today?

AA: Very competitive, and you know, in a, in a good and a bad way. I, you know, there's a lot of players and there's a lot of people jumping on the bandwagon. And it's going to, I mean, I've seen a couple cycles like this, people coming in and you know, a lot of them are going to go away because it's not what they had anticipated, which was to become rich, those people will go away pretty fast, and then the people who aren't making great beer, will go away pretty fast as well. And so, I guess the question I, the question I get asked is like, "Do you think, how do, are there too many breweries?" And I'm like, "There's, there's always room in any business for somebody who comes in to it to make a great product." And so, if your intention is to start a brewery a make a great product, I welcome you with open arms. If your intention is to come in to make money, or to do it for some other reason besides making great beer, and continually trying to make better beer every single day, the craft industry doesn't need any of those people. But those people get weeded out, you know, with time.

TM: And so, what, when you think of the next decade of craft, next 15 years, what do you see?

AA: Well, I mean, it's already happening, you're going to see a lot of consolidation. You're going to see a lot of people, you know, buying up one another to get, you know, better efficiencies, better economics, things like that. But I also see, I've always said that, you know, every town that has 5,000 people or maybe even less, should have a brewery. You know, every town should have a place where you go eat really good food and drink really good beer. And that only helps the craft industry as a whole because you're exposing people to, you know, fresh made beer. And, so we can sell our beer there as well, you know, they can take out of the package, but, I see, I see that happening. Like, I see a lot of, you know, that movement towards, the way things used to be, you know, the turn of the century, two centuries ago, where you, you drank at your corner bar, you know, and it serviced four city blocks. But it was enough for that publican, that's, that's all they

needed, you know, and we see that already, you know, especially in Denver now, it's like, man, it seems like every neighborhood has at least one brewery, you know, making beer, maybe two breweries, so. But I think that, I think that's sustainable.

AP: This is Andy. I live in, so I live in Lafayette, about 8 miles east of Boulder, when I moved there 7 years ago, there wasn't a whole lot there. There are now 5 breweries in walking distance of my house, like in, under a mile. That, that's crazy. And I, and it's beautiful. I mean, I'd rather go to my local brewery than go to my local bar. I met the people there, they're working, they're making fun stuff. Like that's, that's awesome. Like Adam is right, we're finally, we are finally getting back to like the time before Prohibition, when you went to your neighborhood bar, well, your neighborhood brewery. That's a great...

FR: Got your pail of beer and went home.

[cross talk]

AP: Get your pail of beer, give it to the dog, it's going to be fine. So, yeah, the, the more small breweries in neighborhoods. Man, bring 'em on. That's, that's, it's just an awesome culture.

TM: And final quick question for each of you. What do you value most about what you do?

AA: I would, this is Adam, I'd say that, that there's no end game. And that I find value in the fact that we are, we're doing something that we will never completely master and yet the process towards getting to that eventual goal of not getting to your goal is a worthy endeavor. And you know you, finding your calling in life is, is I think, important. And, I think that if more people did, the world would be a better place.

FR: This is Fred. Yeah, I would definitely, definitely agree with that. It's definitely a, a pursuit to create something new and exciting and, and that's always fun, to come to work every day and, and try to achieve that. Yeah, just make incredibly high quality beer and, and also the benefit of being able to do it surrounded by good friends. And being able to enjoy the experience as well.

AP: And this Andy. I, I love that, I love the creative process. I love it that, that we get to use that creative process to make something tangible, something that I can truly enjoy at the end of the day. Like, if I work on something, or we worked on something as a brewery and, and we all get to, to share in, in the beer-fueled glory afterwards, that's, that's neat. A lot, a lot of, in, in some businesses and industries, a lot of their research, and a lot of the creative aspect, you know, you don't really have anything at the end of the day. You know, I know a bunch of computer programmers and yeah there's, there's kind of something in the end of the day, there's some code over there. Maybe they made a

videogame, in which case I'm in, but otherwise, but it just seems like, it seems like people don't make things anymore, and this is a, a creative, cool thing that we get to make, and we get to actually enjoy afterwards. Makes me happy.

TR: This is Travis. I agree with everything. Totally agree with Fred in regards to, it is really cool to get to work with your friends, I've never had a job like that, where I worked with the same people I hang out with and drink with, either at the end of the day or on the weekends, which is pretty cool.

AP: Or drink breakfast beers.

TR: Or drink breakfast beers. Yes. The other thing that I really value, I think, is also, the, just, the, like Andy said, the creativity with the learning. I have yet to have day here, in five years, where I don't learn something. This is not a mundane job, which is pretty cool. And, the other thing I also really, really enjoy is educating people and just allowing them to, I just love watching people get super excited about our beer, which I think I, I'm really fortunate to get to see pretty much every day. Every time someone comes in here, you give them a tour, you give them a beer that, that we just came out with. People just get so excited about it. And I think it's really cool, like it's one of the things that, that I really value about beer, is I think beer breaks social boundaries and it also breaks, just, like, historical boundaries. It's something that makes us all human because we've been consuming it for a really long time. And I think that's just really cool, to watch that.

TM: Great. Well, thank you all so much for you time.

AA: Thank you.

TR: Thank you Theresa.

[END OF AUDIO]