Name of Interviewee: Andrea DeVries
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Name of Interviewer: Theresa McCulla
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THERESA MCCULLA: It's July 25, 2023. This is Theresa McCulla of the National Museum of American History. I'm interviewing Andrea DeVries, Quality [0:00:08] Assurance Manager at Anchor Brewing Company in San Francisco. [This interview is part of the] American Brewing History Initiative, a project to document and collect the history of beer and brewing in the United States. So, Andrea, when and where were you born?

ANDREA DEVRIES: Oh, I was born in Coupeville, Washington, in 1961 in the San Juan Islands, Pacific Northwest.

TM: What are the names of your parents and any siblings?

AD: My parents' names are, my father was Peter R. DeVries. My mother was Margie Lou DeVries. I had six brothers, Timothy DeVries, [0:00:44] Mark DeVries, Stanley DeVries, Ryan DeVries, Lewis DeVries and Wallace DeVries.

TM: What did your parents do when you were growing up?

AD: My father was a—his father, my grandfather, was an immigrant into the San Juan Islands from Friesland. So, a lot of Dutch came to that part of the country in the Pacific Northwest. He came in as a cabbage farmer and a dairy farmer. We had a high-fat dairy farm, so we produced butter mostly. My mother raised seven children, was a home worker, but she also was a music teacher and was the Music of Ministry at a lot of the churches and [0:01:32] came on to advance her career in music and became—she got an M.A. in voice instruction. [Cell phone rings]

TM: What was it like to grow up on a farm in a large family?

AD: So, youngest of seven, the only girl. My brothers did most of the chores, but we all worked on the farm. It was amazing to grow up in the Pacific Northwest in the 60s. I worked hard. I wanted to outrun my brothers in every way I could, and in doing that I succeeded as being a very successful athlete in my endeavors, in basketball and track. I had a lot of experience just working on the farm. By the time I was in the family, we didn't really live off of the farm. My father at that point started working for the plywood mill and had shares in the plywood mill. So the farm, we were on five acres and we just basically raised feed for our family and had a garden. [0:02:41] There were many farms around us. At age 10, I had a Social Security number and started working, digging bulbs for tulip farmers and cucumbers and whatnot. So I literally have been working since 10.

TM: Where did you go to school, and which subjects did you feel drawn toward?

AD: Up there it was all public education. I went through the La Conner Grade School, La Conner High School. My mother at that point got a Master's degree and she was able to become the music orchestra teacher at a better high school. [0:03:15] So I moved about

60 miles with her. We got an apartment, and it was a unique circumstances for me to go to a better school. I got a better education, a better sports and music background, and that actually triggered me into going to college. I was one in seven that actually went on to get a college education.

TM: Where did you go to college?

AD: I started at Santa Barbara City College and studied art and illustration and came to San Francisco on an art scholarship to study art and do illustration for children's books. [0:03:48] About the same time, I started homebrewing and fell in love with homebrewing and making beer. For me, honestly, a lot of it was label design. I was drawn to the graphics of making beer as much as I was making the beer itself.

TM: What year was that when you started homebrewing?

AD: That was 1993, ’92, ’93 that I started doing homebrewing, and I actually had aspirations of starting my own brewery in the early nineties, as a lot of people did. It was basically the start of the craft brewing industry. I moved to Potrero Hill. I traveled to my job every day and realized I was driving past Anchor Brewing Company every day. I came into Anchor Brewing Company thinking, I'll just get some knowledge. I had no idea what Fritz Maytag meant to the industry. Liberty Ale was my favorite beer. I came in here. My first homebrew recipe I should add was Anchor Steam Beer. Weird coincidence there. And before I knew it, I was working for Fritz full-time and I fell in love with Fritz. I fell in love with the Anchor Brewing Company. I live four blocks up the street, so it just made sense for me to put my aspirations on hold, plus we had our first crash in the craft brewing industry and [0:05:11] I was very lucky to be working for Fritz Maytag ‘cause he clearly, as one of the godfathers of craft brewing, was able to survive that first crash. And I've been here ever since.

TM: When you walked into the brewery for that first time, was it a conversation with him that you had or how you did—

AD: [interposing] So, I walked into the brewery because my parents were visiting and I go, let's take a tour of the brewery down the street. Went on the tour. I knew everything they were talking about. [0:05:42] Sat in the tap room with, at the time, Mark Carpenter who was the assistant brewmaster and said, so how do you go to job here? And they said, well, we're actually just about to hire for Christmas Ale help. Back then in the nineties, they would hire people full-time for three months to do Christmas Ale help. I just jumped on board, had two jobs. Kept my restaurant job and did the Christmas Ale help here. At the end of the three months, if there were opportunities to work for them, they would offer you a job. Fritz interviewed me at that point with the consideration of a full-time job, [0:06:18] and I asked a lot of questions about, could I just observe in the brewhouse? And he saw that as an ambitious person and was very intrigued by me and I feel that maybe that's why I got the position. But needless to say, I was brought on full-time and was just honored to work in this industry under Fritz. All my aspirations about my own brewery at that point was just like, it didn't matter ‘cause I was working for Fritz Maytag.

TM: So when you started to work at Anchor, what have been the different roles that you have had here?

AD: At Christmas help, everybody started in the bottle shop. It was just, that's where you started. You're literally just watching bottles in the production line, hand palletizing, forklift driving, unloading glass trucks that came into the loading dock. Proved myself there and quickly was taken up to the fermentation department just to help with dropping beer from primary fermentation to secondary fermentation. The brewery was really growing at that point, so they saw that I was easily acclimated to watching the process of the conditioning of beer. Taught me how to measure CO2s. Finish the final of the beer, make sure it went from [0:07:38] conditioning to filtering.

When they recognized I could accomplish that, and Fritz saw a *woman* that could do that, I feel like I was allowed the opportunity to take on that responsibility and then started running the fermentation department. And my boss was then moved into sales, which was really good for the brewery. So, he went out and started selling beer. Then I was moved—so, part of that process, I had a lab involved with the fermentation. It wasn't your normal structure. We had the brewhouse, we had fermentation, which involved the cellar fermentation, and the lab was all one unit. [0:08:16] Now, it's split into three departments. So, I kind of ran three departments at the same time. I was sort of the nucleus where I would see what packaging needed, I would schedule the brews, and I would see how the brewhouse needed to achieve that. So I sort of saw all angles coming at me. I loved the chaos of that and making sure everything lined up.

And then it was after Fritz sold the brewery that we had more corporate ownership come in where they said you should be the quality assurance department, where they moved scheduling out of that and I was more involved in just the lab work. [0:08:55] And so I saw an opportunity to build the lab. Then I started working on building the lab to a quality assurance department with all the special lab functions we have today.

TM: You mentioned something a moment ago about showing that you could do a particular job as a woman. What have your experiences been like as a woman in this business but also in the industry?

AD: Well, fortunately, being the only girl of six brothers I think helped me build my foundation for this job, but it has always been challenging. To this day, it is challenging being a woman in this industry. Fritz Maytag was unique in the fact that he saw that I had an ability and did not see my gender. If anything, he was more respectful of me as a woman and I often would go into a bar in his neighborhood and hear like, oh, you're the woman that works for Fritz Maytag. That's the highest honor honestly that I still hold with me today, that he saw I was qualified and had that much respect for me as a woman in the industry, knowing the challenges that I faced in the industry. So It's really Fritz that allowed me to succeed where I am today. And now we have a lot of women in brewing, of course, but, yeah, Fritz, he was [0:10:18] ahead of his time.

TM: In your current role, how would you describe your lab and the kind of work you do there in a typical day?

AD: So, Anchor is unique in that our process is we do open fermentation, we do kräusening. It's a very specific process in the timeframe of the primary fermentation, secondary fermentation, the aging in the cellar, when you introduce that kräusen beer and how long you let it age in the cellar. I was trained in the process that was part of the Gold Rush era because there was no mechanical refrigeration. [0:11:03] I to this day am always going to people saying you can't change this process. This is the process of how steam beer has been made over the years. I do believe that people respect that, but there's always been a little bit of a pullback because industry has changed so much. They've cleaned, excuse me, cleaned things up over the years.

When Sapporo purchased Anchor Brewing Company, even though my lab was already going more towards a quality assurance department, the one thing that Sapporo brought on was their extreme quality requirements and in that, they required specific microbiological testing, [0:11:45] GC, gas chromatography and certain specs for VDK [Vicinal Diketones] or diacetyl. So, I was in a unique opportunity to build my lab to a high-quality assurance lab today that would be recognized anywhere in the world. I really have to thank Sapporo for allowing me that opportunity and the money to bring the lab to that level. I learned so much in that process, and I have to thank the women at Sleeman Brewing Company from Canada, who's also owned by Sapporo, that just brought me on board. One woman in particular, Yvonne, I'm not going to remember, Ivanka, I'm not going to remember her name, I'm sorry. She recognized we'd both been in the industry for the same length of time and were using hand tools and recognized all the technical tools that came on board. But we had respect for each other and we recognized we could both succeed on the same level that Sapporo required of us. I do feel very grateful for that opportunity.

TM: I'm grateful that you have donated several artifacts to the museum. Could you please describe what those things are, how you use them? So, you donated a sample of brewer's yeast. Can you explain about it?

AD: [0:13:05] Yeah, I gave you a little jar of brewer's yeast, Lot 205 I think. I don't know the origin of that, but I will try to find a little more information about that. But that lived in my freezer in the lab for at least 30 years, as long as I've been here. I can only assume when Fritz was here in the early seventies at this location, there were several breweries around here. Even the yeast, Fleischmann's Yeast in the East Bay, he would get samples of yeast and he would make his beer with it. So, my assumption for the sample I gave you is probably—'cause it's such a powdered form, [0:13:44] that he probably got it from one of those locations and put it in a jar. It's been literally in my freezer all these years, so it's kind of a prized possession.

We've had our slurry going for just being able to brew regularly, open fermentation is a fermentation process that doesn't cause a lot of stress on the yeast. Because of that, Joe Owades, who was a big part of the brewing industry, was a big fan of Fritz and a consultant for us, he would often say that you cannot mutate the yeast away from its original strain as long as it's in an unstressed environment. [0:14:22] So the fact that we did open fermentation, we would brew, I would do four batches and then I'd wash the yeast and control it with an acid wash, which is just lowering the pH of the yeast. We

could keep producing it and producing it and producing it in generations. I can't even tell you how many generations we probably are at today, but that was so unique to understand that process and realize that most of the brewing industry today is under a condition where they have to buy yeast that's propagated, stored in stressed environments. They are unfortunately committed to purchasing yeast from a lab, because they can only get ten to twelve generations out of a yeast strain. The uniqueness of Steam Beer is we could go on forever as long as we weren't stressing the yeast out. What was the other question on that?

TM: So, the objects that you donated—

AD: [interposing] Then I had a hemocytometer I gave you. I would do a 24-hour cell count. That's pretty much what I learned was the most important process of the fermentation success was, in 24 hours, how was your yeast growing? Using a hemocytometer, where you're literally looking at the yeast structure and the cell division, you can see the health of the yeast. [0:15:49] If yeast is round and the babies look good and they're small, round babies, you know you have a good healthy yeast propagation in the open fermentation and it's growing in the right multiplication it needs to grow in. If I saw yeast stressed, they would elongate and I would recognize that and I could go back to the brewhouse and say did you change temperatures in the mash temperatures, was there a condition in the cooling rooms? Did something cause this stress because something is stressing the yeast. And we can often pinpoint what it was, make a change, and get back. So the beauty of using a hemocytometer is you're looking at the cells. [0:16:33] You literally see the cells as they're dividing and the health of the cells. Where most breweries would use yeast equipment where you're literally putting yeast on a slide and you're seeing an image of the yeast and the viability of the yeast, but it's all digital. It's just numbers. It's not looking at the individual cells.

[Pause in recording]

Some of the instruments I donated, I didn't directly work with but they were still part of my process. The manual pipette bulbs, when I first started working here, we did everything by hand. We had the glass-blown pipettes. I still to this day, if I'm in doubt, I'll pull out a hand-blown pipette versus a pipetter [0:17:24] any day because there's nothing like liquid going up to a line and making sure you have that measurement. The bulb in the box was literally just an old bulb that was used to push the volume in and out of the pipette. The slides I didn't have a whole lot of direct connection with, but Alan Kornhauser, who ran the lab before me, who started with Fritz, who helped clean up the lab with Fritz. Fritz was very technical about measuring every process and documenting everything, and if he had a cell on a slide he was going to write "7-day fermentation yeast cell." He would document that and put it and reserve it off to the side. That's why I gave them to you. It's literally—I opened a drawer in the lab and go, oh, yeah, those slides that I haven't thrown away, 30 years later, that were probably there 20 years before me. Kind of the beauty of working for an antique, right?

TM: The slides you donated, who wrote the—

AD: I would say Alan Kornhauser probably wrote on those slides, if not Fritz himself.

TM: Thinking about this building that we are sitting in, would you say that you have a favorite place in this building or particularly [0:18:48] strong memories associated with places in this building?

AD: Well, this is a special place, Fritz Maytag's office. But, I mean, the lab obviously is a special place, but my best place was always in the fermenting room: collecting the yeast, filling the yeast brinks, or watching the beer drop into the cellar. So I was the cellar master for many of those years. I grew up on a dairy farm, as I mentioned. I had a clipboard, and every single day I would go through it from tank 1 to 63, 'cause we had 63 tanks at the time, and I thought of it as going and checking the cows every day. [Chuckles] [0:19:30] I know that seems silly, but they were literally dairy tanks that I was checking in on every day. So for me, the smell smelt like dairy, Fritz's background in dairy—it was just a synergy that was hard for me to ignore that I was not where I should be.

I literally would check every single tank pressure every day. Kräusening the beer was like riddling champagne. It was a unique process where you wanted a certain tank pressure. As you got to know the different tank sizes, I knew my percentage of fresh beer and [0:20:05] finished beer was the same. It was just understanding the different volume of tank. I knew each temperature to dial all those tanks into, and during that 7-day conditioning process, kräusening process, I pretty much knew what to expect if my tank pressure was holding. That was it for me. Every day I started my day checking in on those tanks and making sure all the beer was going through the right process. I've since passed that on to other generations who've tried to tweak that process, but there's nothing like checking in on a cellar tank every day.

TM: Thinking about this brewery, which is so longstanding and so longstanding in the city, in San Francisco, how would you define the Anchor brand, its strengths, its aesthetic? In other words, what makes Anchor unique from other breweries?

AD: Well, the number one is open fermentation. Like we've talked about with the yeast strain. Not unique to steam beer at the time, because many breweries in the Bay Area were making steam beer with open fermentation, but clearly, Anchor came back after Prohibition and made steam beer. Part of the steam beer flavor profile is derived from a lager strain of yeast being fermented at more ale-type conditions. [0:21:38] So, ambient air here is around 60 degrees. That keeps more sugars fermenting out because of the lager strain but allows the esters of fruitiness of the ale strain. So, it's unique, often-said hybrid lager. That's unique to steam beer.

In the Area, I think everybody unfortunately took steam beer for granted. When I first started working here, there was not a bar or restaurant you could go into and not see steam beer on tap. Everybody who served it was proud that it had steam beer, but as you know, [0:22:13] time goes on and generations change. People didn't understand the history of steam beer and took it for granted that it was just going to be there. But things change. COVID was a hard hit because a lot of our customers were draft. There's nothing better than steam on draft. Bars and restaurant closed. There's so much competition with a new generation and like, I want to say farm to table, but brewpub to tap maybe is a

better description along those lines. And I could see that in restaurants and bar menus just changing just, as a patron in this city. [0:22:56] It's a little bittersweet, but I guess I always held that hope that steam beer would always have enough of a core following that would keep it alive. It's hard to run a business in San Francisco, especially manufacturing.

TM: Throughout your long career, how would you say that the public's affinities for certain styles of beer, how have you seen that change?

AD: The biggest change I saw was Lagunitas's IPA. Literally, the logo was IPA, which was a good thing for the beer industry. They understood more about beer style, right, IPA? But that went out of control where everything was an IPA and bitterness was going up and to balance bitterness you have to have a higher alcohol. So, I just did not see that trend going very far, because 10% alcohol with 100% IBUs is not drinkable, at least not from a beer standpoint, right? It's something you want to be refreshed by.

I could see the industry changing. I could also see a lot of really fun creativity coming into it. I can't say that I could ignore the cannabis industry's influence, with all the different varietals of cannabis coming online, with all the different styles of beer coming online, you could kind of see the correlation between the two, [0:24:25] and then the public has just changed. The new generation, they want seltzers and different types of products. So it's hard to see this traditional style of beer succeeding. But I do feel that there is a consumer for a style of beer like this. It just can't be large scale like it used to be, but it shouldn't die, right? It's American craft beer. It's a unique beer that was born in America and there's got to be a place for it somewhere.

TM: All right. I'll wrap up with just a few—

AD: [interposing] [0:25:02] Am I saying too much?

TM: No, not at all, no. Just a few big picture questions and this will pertain to the recent events. So, on July 12, 2023, Sapporo USA announced that Anchor Brewing Company would be transferred to a liquidator in August 1. Could you talk about your experience of hearing this news and then of working here during the past week since then?

AD: I mean, heartbroken, right? Twenty-nine years I worked for Anchor Brewing Company, helping keep that flag going. Like I said, keep the process pure as it was from when I started. Living four blocks up the hill, [0:25:47] knowing how it would affect the country, the community, the city, my neighbors, and the outpouring of support from the public is so refreshing, but at the same time, did they need to be educated earlier, right? Now they all know what's here, but maybe there should have been some sort of an education prior to this to let them know this could happen and bring them in and introduce them to this brand and maybe help save it. I understand why it has happened. Sapporo, I was their biggest cheerleader. I thought they had deep pockets and they could save us, but it's difficult that the brewing industry is changing. That's a reality that I accept. For me personally, heartbreaking. I dedicated my life to this company. It's an extension of my home. I literally am four blocks up the street. It feels like family is dying, but I recognize and accept change. Maybe there's a savior to save Steam and

maybe it's not in San Francisco. But I do feel the yeast strain, the process can be replicated somewhere else in America hopefully and that the brand can go on.

TM: What would you say you would like the public to know about Anchor now and in the future? What do you want its, I don't want to say memory, [0:27:20] but the public knowledge of Anchor to be?

AD: I think it's important to recognize the connection to the Gold Rush. There were many breweries during the Gold Rush that made a product they called steam beer. I do believe that all the steam beers at that time were brewed under the similar conditions. There was no mechanical refrigeration, so they all had to have shallow pans, open fermentation with a large surface area, lager yeast, ale-type conditions. I think that can be replicated anywhere. I think just as much as [0:27:56] Budweiser is a pilsner that Anchor as an amber ale could be replicated somewhere else in the country. I do feel the outpouring of the country recognizing that. And if this is what it takes to recognize saving a product that was born in America, no matter where it's made, but recognizing the origins of the Gold Rush. Who doesn't want to recognize the Gold Rush, right? It contributed to the success of so much of this country, especially the west coast. Anchor has always been special to me. I was born and raised on the waters in the Pacific Northwest, literally fishing for smelt on docks, [0:28:37] so water has always been a big part of my life. So the Anchor symbol and the maritime of it I think is very important to the history of it. Maybe the sea air has something to do with it.

TM: Okay. Last question, it's simple but a big one. What would you say you value most about what you do?

AD: What I do?

TM: Your position here, your work, your life here.

AD: Well, in most recent years, my biggest value has been—and I've seen the baton pass down to me literally from Fritz to Mark Carpenter, from Mike Lee to me, who was Fritz, the owner, to the master brewer to the head brewer to the lab tech, who became the quality assurance manager, is making sure the process doesn't change, which again is that 3-day open fermentation, certain temperatures, the kräusening, and the cellar conditioning. I mean, the open fermentation probably is the single most thing that I've always kept that pole in the ground. I'm like, you can't change this process. We have uni tanks outside of the building and I was always like, whatever, it's a trend. Come back to open fermentation inside the brewery.

TM: OK, I'll add one more question, [0:30:03] which is to ask what you are most proud of your time here?

AD: Being able to work for Fritz Maytag, at the end of the day. I'm honored to work for a man that recognized in me, just a homebrewer, artist that came off the street and wanted to make beer, recognizing that if he put me in a position to succeed, that I would succeed and I wanted to succeed for him. And so it was a great synergy between the two of us and

we recognized that in each other and that's my proudest moment, is making Fritz Maytag proud.

TM: All right. [0:30:38] Well, thank you so much for your work here and for sharing these thoughts. I really appreciate your time.

AD: Yeah.

TM: Thank you.