

Name of Interviewee: Brian Faivre  
Date of Interview: August 6, 2019  
Name of Interviewer: Theresa McCulla  
Length of Interview: 00:37:34 minutes

Theresa McCulla: It's August 6, 2019. This is Theresa McCulla of the National Museum of American History. I am interviewing Brian Faivre, Brewmaster at Deschutes Brewing Company. We are meeting at the brewery in Bend, Oregon. 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. Um, so, Brian, when and where were you born?

Brian Faivre: Um, yeah, I was born in 1976 in Minot, North Dakota. Um, it was the Air Force base. My dad was, uh, in the Air Force at the time.

TM: And what were your parents' names?

BF: Uh, uh, they are, uh, Richard Faivre and, uh, Virginia, uh, Faivre. Or we call her May. She was born on May 1st, so. Yeah, she goes by May. Yeah.

TM: And, uh, so, your father was in the Air Force.

BF: Yeah.

TM: What does he do? Or did he do?

BF: Uh, you know, he worked in, in food service. And he did that, um, for just about twenty years. Yeah.

TM: And what did your mom do?

BF: Uh, so, my mom, um, originally was a stay-at-home mom when we were really little. And, uh, when I was five my dad got stationed in, um, Travis Air Force Base in Northern California, near San Francisco. And, I think when I was in third or fourth grade, she went back to school, um, to get her associates in nursing. And, so, pretty big moment I think for her. Um, you know, our family. 'Cause she was the first person to actually go to college. So, it was kind of a big deal. Yeah. [Chuckles]

01:23 TM: And so, in what town did you grow up?

BF: Uh, main, well, yeah. A little bit of everywhere, right? I don't let, or remember a lot about North Dakota. Um, I remember a lot about Travis Air Force Base, and so I spent the age from about five I think 'til twelve there. And, um, gosh. Great place to grow up. One of the things I guess I never realized, um, or, or felt was racism. You know? Because you're, you're surrounded by every race possible on the Air Force base. And so, all the kids I went to school with, um, you know, it was a, a very, uh, ethnic group. Which was a

fun place to grow up. You know, I mean, if your dad's in the Air Force, you're, um, you don't have a very lavish lifestyle. But, um, really enjoyed my, my childhood on the Air Force base. Yeah.

02:07 TM: Um, that's an interesting comment. And I appreciate it because I was going to ask what, um, uh, what, how, how you might say that your, your upbringing on the base shaped you? Or?

BF: Yeah. Um, I think on the base and just, um, you know, a lot from my parents, so, I guess I, I think about, you know, moving forward to, to making beer. So, one of the things that I always remember and loved about, um, my family is, uh, my mom's mom. My mom is half, half Japanese. And so, I guess that makes me roughly a quarter. And then, her mom, a hundred percent. So, my mom was born in Japan. She, my mom's mother met my grandfather in Japan after World War II. They moved, he was also in the Air Force. So. [Chuckles] Long military kind of family. And when she was three, they moved to Las Vegas. And so, grew up there. Um, but shortly after when my grandmother's kids were, were growing up, she went back to work and she was working as a chef. Um, I believe one of the places was the, uh, the Frontier Hotel on the old Strip. And, um, and so just, I always loved going to visit Las Vegas. So, we would, every year my, my dad was from Seattle. My mom from Las Vegas. So, every summer we would do a car trip to one of those places. But, going to Las Vegas was always so much fun because, you know, we'd show up and my grandmother would always just prepare, um, you know, these just beautiful meals. And, and hosting people and hospitality. And preparing a meal for someone with, you know, just so much care and love, was something I think that definitely was passed down, uh, from my grandmother to my mother. And then my mother to me. And so, um, and it felt like that, that's a big part of what we do at Deschutes. Yeah.

03:48 TM: Do you remember some of those specific foods that you enjoyed with your family?

BF: Yeah. And so, like, um, I, I, a big, a big one was just, you know, sushi. My, my grandma would make sushi. Which, you know, for a kid that was under ten, a lot of, a lot of kids probably aren't having sushi. But, you know, so, I always kind of grew up loving that. But then, just beyond that, she was a, a great cook. Whether she was making, you know. And the, I, I, I guess I transition, look at my mom now. Um, I, there, there's one bad meal I remember she made. And so, we always joke about it. She, she made a salmon loaf. And I, you know, we were, I must have been, I don't know, ten on the Air Force base. And so, again, not, you know, not a, not a ton of money in the family. Um, but, you know, it was made from like a can of salmon. I just remember cutting into it and you see, like, the little salmon, like, backbones. [Chuckles] And so, we still joke about it today. But other than that, like, I honestly can say that I've never had, um, my mom's never made anything bad. And it's, it's really, a lot of it's, you know, just comfort. Uh, I guess things I think of as comfort food. You know, just kind of that day to day stuff you grew up on where, you know, my mom, every day I remember all the way, you know, through high school, coming home and them, them making a meal. And it's just, um, you know. So.

05:01 TM: Um, was beer present in your, your?

BF: No. That's a great question. Not at all. [Chuckles] Like, uh, something else we always joke around with, I always say, like, I remember my mom maybe drinking a wine cooler, like, in the eighties. And I never saw my dad drink beer until much later in life. Until I started working at Deschutes, actually. Um, when I was in high school, I remember he started drinking red wine for health. And so, he'd have the smallest little goblet. It was probably like a five ounce goblet. [Chuckles] On the table. You know? So, no, no alcohol, like, growing up in the family. Just is, just something that, that wasn't consumed. And I remember when, like, leaving to college and there was this bottle of Tanqueray Gin in the cupboard that had been there probably since we'd moved to the Air Force base, right? And then we, we moved to a town just north of Sacramento. Went to high school there. And I remember in college, I eventually took that bottle, um, and just, and took it back to where I was going to school. And, uh, my parent's, especially my mom, extremely meticulous, so they knew right away. Right? They called me right away and said, you know, "What did you do with this bottle of gin?" [Chuckles] I said, "Well, you guys have had this for, like, thirteen years." And so. Yeah. So. Not a big, uh, not a lot of alcohol consumption happening growing up. Yeah.

TM: Okay.

BF: [Laughs]

06:16 TM: Um, so, in school then, um, and, where did you go to high school and college? And, and what did you study?

BF: Yeah. So, uh, went to high school in a town called the Woodlands. So, just north of Sacramento. Um, grew up there, as most kids do, you know, played, played sports. Um, you know, kind of year round, um. After I graduated from high school, I was really excited just to, to go someplace new. Right? I was kind of ready for a change. And so, I moved to, uh, a community college, um, in Santa Rosa, California. And, I went there. Mainly I was interested. I played a few years of football there. Um, but really had no idea, I guess, what I wanted to study or what I wanted to do, which I think is pretty common. I think that's a lot of pressure for, you know, somebody that, you know, just turned seventeen or, you know. I was trying to figure that out. And, um, so, I remember being there and, you know, obviously, kids in college, uh, try to get beer. And it was, it was fairly difficult to, to come by that. And.

07:14 TM: And what year was this, by the way?

BF: This was, uh, this had been 1994. 1994 , 1995. And, um, there was a homebrew shop across from where I lived in Santa Rosa. And so, I remember one day, I just, just being intrigued. And kind of looking at it. It was called The Beverage People. And walking in there one day and, um, just being kind of overwhelmed I think with the, the smell of malt and hops and all the equipment and just really having no idea what was going on. Um,

but I eventually bought a homebrew kit and started homebrewing. And so, made this first batch, um, [unintelligible] a stout. And it was fermenting under the sink in the bathroom. [Chuckles] You know? And, uh, then we eventually ended up putting it into some bottles. And, just kind of, I, I think we were all a little leery of it. Um, and just, yeah, you know, because I, I think as a kid you just, I didn't know you could make a beer. And so, I, I wasn't sure if we were gonna get sick or whatever. So, it was kind of. Put it in some bottles. Put it back under the sink. And just kind of forgot about it. And, um, the, you know, a few months, few weeks later we were having a party. And, uh, we, we have a keg. And then the keg ran out. And so, then we remembered, you know, we had this beer. And so we, we broke it out and, uh, a good friend of mine from growing up in high school, he was at this party. And I just remember him always saying, 'cause he had this, this pair of blue jeans, and it was a stout, and he was just, you know, it started gushing everywhere. So, yeah, I think it was partly 'cause it was carbonated. And it was warm. Um, but stained his jeans. Uh, and so that's like very memorable. Um, but I also remember a few people saying that it tasted like beer and they liked it, which was just such a mind shift for me. I think to, to think that you can actually make beer. Um, so I always just pictured it coming from this big factory and, and, you know, and, and that was it. That was where beer came from. So, um, pretty memorable experience for sure. Yeah.

09:06 TM: Did you homebrew on your own? Or, as part of a group?

BF: You know originally, um, a little bit. Kind of my roommates, they kind of lost interest. So, then, um, yeah, I guess going, moving forward, um, I remember going to a counselor, like, later that, like, shortly after the, the homebrewing experience and saying, "I wanna make beer for a living." And, um, I kind of remember her comment and I, I, to her credit, I'm sure she didn't say this, but the message was you can't make a living doing that. And so, I always loved math and science and computers. So, I eventually went to school and studied, uh, got a degree in computer science. Um, and worked as a software engineer. But, that entire time, like, my hobby and my passion was, was homebrewing. And so, mainly I was at this point kind of brewing by myself. Um, it just wasn't as, I would say as popular or mainstream as it is now. You know, there are so many people, um, in the last ten years who are homebrewing. It's really common. But I felt like back then it just wasn't as common. You know?

10:02 TM: How, so how did you learn how to homebrew at the time?

BF: Um, a lot of books. Yeah, so, I would pick up, I felt like that's what would drive my interest. All the books I remember buying, uh, that I would buy were books on homebrewing. And constantly looking on the internet. There wasn't the resources that existed, uh, that there are today. But, that was the way to try to kind of figure it out. Yeah.

10:21 TM: What, and, do you remember what particular books were most helpful for you?

BF: Yeah. And so, I, I mentioned The Beverage People. And so, when I got the homebrew kit from when I purchased it then, that actually came with a starter book. And so, that was my first homebrewing book. And I actually have it on the bookshelf, uh, by my desk. And, um, then, you know, the classic, uh, *Joy of Homebrewing* by Charlie Papazian. That one I think was my second purchase. Um, you know, then I eventually go back to school for brewing science later. Um, and then there are a lot of great books there that, uh, you know, I still reference. Um, but, there's so much material that exists online today that makes it, it's kind of changed that dynamic a little bit. Yeah.

11:01 TM: So, it sounds like for a time you, you worked, but definitely not in beer.

BF: Yeah.

TM: And, uh, and so, at what point did you decide to make a move to?

BF: Yeah. Um, yeah, so, when I was finishing my degree in computer science, I was a senior. And I had to take this career counseling class, um, that I was pretty annoyed by. [Chuckles] And, I remember our counselor saying you gotta read this book, *What Color is Your Parachute?* And I was like, I am not reading this book. There's, you know, I, I already got a job. I know what I'm gonna do. This is ridiculous. So, I, but I saved it. So, I packed it away, um, you know, five years later. I was actually living in Bend working in tech. Not related with Deschutes Brewery. And I was just burnt out and not happy. And so, um, always wanted to live in a big city. And so, I decided to move to San Francisco. So, I was packing my stuff up. And I still had a few weeks in Bend. And I came across the *What Color is Your Parachute?* book. And, so I was like, eh, you know what? I should read this. I've got the time. I'm not working right now. Um, so, every night I would read that book. And, you know, I'd do these exercises and you, you get to your top three things, right? So, my number one was making beer, homebrewing. And then it was, two and three were just working with math, statistics, um, science. You know? So, then the whole goal was, okay, find a job doing that. Which I, you know, I remember getting to the end and thinking, "Oh, this is it? Really?" [Chuckles] And being a little disappointed. Um, and so, moving. I moved to San Francisco. But I think it almost kind of putting that energy out there. So, um, shortly thereafter I was on a first date with, um, my now wife. And we're at a brewpub. And there's a, a posting for an assistant brewer. So, I applied for that. And, uh, ended up getting that job. And it was, it was in San Francisco. Um, you know, it paid ten dollars an hour. And so, this was in, you know, 2002, 2003. So, even back then, right? Ten dol-, ten dollars now are, uh, wasn't going very far. Um, it was kind of a dangerous place to work. But, it was like the first time in my life where every day I was excited to go to work. And, um, the fact that I could see and taste and smell the things, um, that we were doing on a daily basis, um, I think really kind of connected to talking about that childhood piece. Uh, um, with my mom and my grandmother, um.

13:21 TM: And what was the brewpub where you were working at the time?

BF: Yeah, it was, uh, called San Francisco Brewing Company.

TM: Okay.

BF: And so, Paul Allen, uh, who founded it, he hired me, um, and a lot of brewers had come through there. Um, again, you know, the wage, the wage, it's tough to make a brewer's, uh, living in San Francisco. So, I think he saw a lot of brewers come through there, but, I'll always be, you know, grateful for that opportunity. Um, because when I got hired at Deschutes, I remember our Brewmaster saying when he hired me, "If you didn't have that experience, I, I would not have hired you." So, always grateful for that opportunity. Yeah.

13:53 TM: Well, and that gets to this interesting question about pipeline and who is getting into the pipeline. Uh, even now, to, to get jobs in, in breweries. Um, on, on that subject, I wanted to ask one more question.

BF: Yeah.

TM: About homebrewing. Um, there are, in, in recent decades, um, there have always been fewer women than men.

BF: Yes.

TM: Who have been homebrewers.

BF: Yeah.

TM: And I'm wondering if you have any, um, guess as to why that might be?

BF: You know, that's a, I, I don't. Um, it's one of those things, though, at Deschutes, um, and actually, you know, it's pretty interesting timing because, um, we've got some great opportunities and we're seeing, uh, we have a, a great internship program. And our current intern, um, Jessica, has just finished out of UC Davis, the Master Brewers Program. Um, and it was encouraging talking to her where I wanna say it wasn't, if, maybe twenty percent of her class was female. And when I went through that same program fifteen years ago, I think we had one, one female in a group of thirty, thirty men. You know? So, um, I, I don't know. That's, that's a great question. Yeah. I'm just not sure. I, I, um, because I know, I know, I know women, you know, love beer equally as men. So, I don't have a good answer for that. [Chuckles]

15:07 TM: Well, and so, um, so as you were getting into brewing professionally in San Francisco, but then even previously before that when you were living in Bend, what was the beer scene like at the time in those places?

BF: Yeah, so, in, in Bend, I always think about, when I always come back to Deschutes, um, uh, I guess even a little bit before that when I was in Santa Rosa at the junior college. I re-, you know, we would go to parties and they would have the, the first beer, the first

beer I remember that wasn't, you know, mass produced beer, was by Mendocino Brewing Company. And so, I'd go to a party and they had that. That was pretty common. You would see a keg of, of that beer at these events. And, um, it was their Blue Heron Pale Ale. And I remember I was just like [chuckles] really just confused and thrown off where I wasn't sure what I was drinking. And I, I didn't know if I liked it. I wasn't sure if I was offended. Um, but I remember that next day and the days that followed. It was just like stuck in my head where I was like, wow, what, what was that? What was that experience? And I bought some more. And again, like, I felt like I was on the fence. Do I like it? Do I not?

16:07 TM: What did it taste like? What were the [unintelligible]?

BF: Uh, I think it was just, it was so flavorful. [Chuckles] Like, you know? And so, uh, you know, it was hoppy. It was malty. Um, but then I remember living in Bend before working at Deschutes, where Deschutes brewery was kind of the, the big brewery here. And Mirror Pond was extremely popular. And same thing. Uh, I remember having, uh, glass, whenever I'd have a pint of Mirror Pond, I would just think, oh my god, this is so hoppy. The, the hop aroma is just blowing, you know, it's blowing out the water. It's so bitter. Which is just kind of, kind of funny to think now what we see. But, um, and then moving to San Francisco, um, a little more of a, um, you know, you had Anchor there. You had some pubs. But still not the, not the number of places that exist today. So, it was, it was definitely, you could see that growth. And it was there. Um, Marin Brewing Company, uh, always loved. And so, when I was living in Santa Rosa, and then in San Francisco, still that was always, uh, a great place to visit. I just loved the atmosphere there. Yeah.

17:04 TM: So, as you started to work professionally in beer, um, what would you say was the hardest aspect of brewing to learn?

BF: Oh. [Chuckles]

TM: Or working in a brewery.

BF: Yeah. Um, I would just say all of it. Um, I, I always think back, um, 'cause I was a homebrewer and then I started working as a professional at this pub. I really still had no idea what was going on, you know, from a, just a brewing science and, and ingredient, process standpoint. I understood the basics of it. But, boy, I had a lot to learn. And, um, so, and that was one of the things. I did this job for, you know, worked at San Francisco Brewing Company for about two years. Um, and I got to this point where I had some money saved up from my previous career. It was gone. And, uh. [Chuckles] Uh, so I, I ended up taking a second job at a brewpub in Marin called Broken Drum. And so, my, my typical day I would, I would get there at 4 o'clock. And I would brew. Usually leave at ten. Then I drove across, across the Golden Gate Bridge. And I felt like the, uh, toll then was like fifteen dollars. [Chuckles] You know? Um, to, to cross. And then I'd park for maybe another thirty, thirty-five. And so, I remember one day I said, and then go to the San Francisco Brewing Company and work 'til about 7 o'clock. And I think, you know,

making ten dollars an hour. I remember I sat down one day and I was like, I think I'm, after taxes and everything, bringing home like seventeen dollars. So, um, I knew I loved it and I wanted to keep doing it. But I need, knew, I, I had a lot to learn. And so, I made, um, the decision to go to UC Davis. Um, and I did some of my undergrad there for computer science. Knew about the brewing program. So, decided to, to, to start there and go through the brewing program.

18:40 TM: And who did you take classes with there?

BF: Um, yes. That was, uh, Dr. Michael Lewis and Charlie Bamforth. So, uh, and I heard, uh, Dr. Lewis has, um, recently, actually retired. I remember when I started, he said, um, "This is my last year." [Chuckles] And so, I think he probably started every class with that. And I knew Charlie, uh, has moved on to, he's at Sierra Nevada now. But, um, really grateful for having that time with them. Yeah.

19:05 TM: Yeah. Great. And, uh, and so, then what was your, your path like from that point onward? And then to Deschutes?

BF: Yeah. And so, my, my wife, um, also was going through a career change. And so, she was going to school in San Francisco, uh, to become an acupuncturist. And, um, so, I was finishing school at UC Davis to be a brewer. And she's from St. Louis and wanted to move back home to be with her family. No, nobody seems like ever leaves St. Louis. And so, we had this plan. That was, that was gonna be it. I was gonna move, uh, to St. Louis and get a job as a brewer, working at one of the breweries there. Um, and my parents actually had moved up to Bend from finding the area from when I lived here previously. And so, I had finished the, the Davis program. And I came up here to visit. And we had a U-Haul rented for, it was like, a few days later. Right? I was gonna fly back to Davis, pack all my stuff up, and I was driving to St. Louis. And, um, you know, years ago, my previous career, there was this office when I was working in tech, across the hall from one of the jobs that I had. And there were all these women that worked in there. And I'd usually help them with their computers. I had no idea what they did. But, um, so, I was back here visiting my parents during the summer after the Davis program. And, I ran into one of these ladies, Jan Baker, and she said, "Well, what have you been up to?" And I said, "Well, you know, I just finished, uh, the brewing program at UC Davis." And she said, um, "I'm doing the hiring for Deschutes Brewery for a brewer position." And, uh, so, she, yeah, she had a HR company. Um, and so, it was just kind of interesting timing. So, I remember calling, uh, um, my wife [unintelligible] and her being a little, you know, little disappointed. Because we had this plan. She wanted to be with her family. But she said, you know, encouraged me, said, "Well, go ahead and go through with the interview." And so, I remember the day before, I went out fishing at one of the lakes, and there's a photographer out there. And then I come in for the interview the next day, and there's the picture like on the front page. And our Brewmaster at the time at Deschutes is interviewing me. So, a lot of these things just kind of lined up. Right? It was just kind of, of, funny timing. And so, go through the interview and at the end of the day I kinda, he offers me a job. And I kinda explain my situation. He says, "I'll give you, give you two weeks," you know, to make a decision. So, um, fly back. I get in this U-Haul, drive it all



the way to St. Louis, uh, with my wife. Um, and then, you know, have offers. A few opportunities in St. Louis. But, they didn't quite feel right. And there were some other things going on. And so, we actually never unpacked the U-Haul. And then we drove it all the way. And actually, to clarify, it's a Penske, um. [Chuckles] It wasn't, uh, you know, which I'm always grateful for 'cause I remember thinking, "Oh, we're gonna get killed with this return mileage." And it ended up being like an extra \$80. So, I will rent Penske's. Uh, I know we're probably not supposed to give plugs. But, super memorable where I have a, a soft spot in my heart for the Penske.

TM: It's the cost of a life change.

BF: Yes. Yeah. [Chuckles] Exactly. And so, um, yeah. I started at Deschutes as a production brewer. And that was, uh, about fifteen years ago, a few weeks ago. Yeah.

TM: Congratulations.

BF: [Chuckles] Thanks.

22:01 TM: And, so, when you started here, what, what kinds of beers were you brewing?

BF: Yeah. Primarily, I spent my first two and a half years in our original production brew house that we call the JV. It's manufactured by JV Northwest. And, um, brewing a lot of Black Butte Porter. That was probably eighty percent of, uh, what I made for two and a half years. Which, uh, was great because that really carried over. Um, after that, that first two and a half years, um, I started working in our, our new, our main production brew house. It's about three times the size. A lot more automated. Um, and we were in this process of trying to brew things like Black Butte Porter and flavor match 'em on this new brew house, which was, um, again, another great learning experience. Extremely challenging, but I think having all that time, making this beer and knowing how it was made and what people, uh, expected. That made it easier. But, huge, huge learning lesson there in, in how to do that. So.

TM: Sure.

BF: Yeah.

22:55 TM: Great. And so, over the course of the fifteen years, then, how did you progress to, uh, to Brewmaster?

BF: Yeah. You know, and, um, so, I, I moved into this role in the new brew house. And it was kind of, um, in essence like a lead brewer role, I guess you could say. And then, uh, the nice thing was I was able, you know, shortly after starting at Deschutes, um, using that software background. Uh, I remember getting trained, as fully trained and I could work independently. So, I was brewing a, a Cascade Ale at the time. And I was saying, okay, when this gets packaged, so, usually about two weeks later, typically, right? Um, I wanted to get some of those bottles. And so, everything we were recording, um, was just

on paper. And then there's a lot of blending that can ha-, happen in the process. So, I remember trying to look back and actually try to figure out what brew went into what bottle run. Uh, was fairly challenging. So, you know, one of the first projects I worked on was just putting all this information into a database. And, um, so, moving forward. That technical background, um, and the level of automation and data, you know, huge data nerd, um, started to, to pay off. Um, you know. And I always think back about that, you know, parachute book. And the exercise. And it dawned on me, maybe about five or six years ago, where I was like, wow, I'm doing all these things, these, these three passions exist. Which I just didn't think, you know, could exist. So, um, I think there were, you know, there were, I always tell people I feel like I've, I've worked really hard to, to get where I am. But, then I think there was just good fortune and timing. Right? Uh, our Brewmaster at the time, I remember thinking, he's gonna be here fifteen years, if not twenty. And, um, you know, eight years ago he left to start a brewery, Crux in town, and, um, there was an opportunity for his role. So, I applied for that. And, yeah. And that's, and that was eight years ago. Right. Yeah.

TM: Here you are.

BF: [Laughs]

24:47 TM: Um, so, if you had to, from a kind of bigger perspective, if you had to describe the Deschutes brand, uh, how, how might you describe it as a brewery?

BF: Oh, boy. That's a good one. The Deschutes brand. Um, I would, uh, you know, I, I, I think there are so many beers, like, Black Butte Porter and Mirror Pond Pale Ale and, I, I almost think, like, we're. [Sigh] It, it's, it's. [Sigh] Hmm. I think of us, us as that, that company that really showed a lot of people how things, uh, should be done, uh, in the craft world. And so, you know, what, what beer should taste like. Um, how they should look. How they should be perceived. Um, so yeah. I guess those are some things I think about. That's a good question.

25:31 TM: Sure. I, I've also become interested in my, my travels around to ask about, um, regional differences and.

BF: Yeah.

TM: You know, in beer cultures and, you know, maybe that has to do with ingredients.

BF: Yeah.

TM: Or just the, the regional culture of, of enjoying beer.

BF: Yeah.

TM: And, uh, and so, when, when you think about this part of Oregon or the Northwest, um, how, how would you describe that?

BF: Yeah. I think it's just very, um, you know, beer cen-, centric. Where, you know, I think about the last, um, just physical I had with my primary care doctor. She was saying, "Well, you know. How many drinks are you having per day?" I'm like, "Well, you know, I'll be honest. It, I'm probably pushing, you know, around that three mark." And she's like, "Well, it's o-, it's okay 'cause we're in Bend." [Laughs] So, I was laughing, I was like, because, you know, it's part of the culture. And it's like, oh, okay. Well, maybe that works. But, um, I would just say it's, uh, yeah. Especially in central Oregon, it's just really kind of, um, ingrained in a lot of, you know, community and activity. And now, I, I, I feel like everybody, um, including my parents now, um, love craft beer. So, I just, you know.

26:34 TM: Um, you, a moment ago you mentioned the term craft.

BF: Yeah.

TM: Craft beer. And in that, um, Deschutes helps show, in certain forms, what craft beer can be or should be.

BF: Yeah.

TM: Um, and so, would you say you feel like you, you like the adjective of craft? Is it an appropriate way to describe the kinds of beers that are, um, that Deschutes makes? And others?

BF: Yeah. I, I like it. I know it's, it can be highly, uh, debated in regards to, to what it truly means. But it, it just feels like it fits for some reason. It just feels like a natural, a natural term. I guess, necessarily don't wanna get into the politics of it. But, yeah, I, I like it. I think it fits. Yeah.

27:10 TM: Alright. Um, and, uh, you know, on, on the subject, the, the industry, um, it's certainly a very competitive time. Um, and Deschutes is, is, um, certainly been a leader in terms of ex-, expanding in size.

BF: Yeah.

TM: And so, um, from your perspective as a Brewmaster, how, how does your work change as the brewery expands?

BF: Yeah. That's a, that's a great question. Like I, I remember when I started at Deschutes, we were in a little bit of a recession from a craft, um, just, you know, just beer industry. Where, where it was. And so, a lot of our focus was on, you know, efficiency, process improvements. And then we just hit, um, you know, when I started we were about a hundred-twenty-thousand barrels per year. And a few years ago we were just under four hundred. You know. So, we just experienced a ton of growth where my job changed quite a bit where it was, um, designing, you know, new equipment,

commissioning that, installing it, planning for growth. Um, designing a pilot plan to, um. All this work. And we just had, so, the, that was our life. Right? We were just designing new systems, bringing them online, and getting them up and running. And now, where we've seen a, you know, little bit, there, there's, when I started at Deschutes I think there were seventeen-hundred breweries in the U.S. And now we're I think approaching seventy-five-hundred, or if not, eight thousand. So, uh, we're kind of back in the spot where, um, a lot of that capital growth for the, the current time is over. And so, we're refocusing and really looking at quality efficiency. And doing everything we can to be, um, you know, responsible with, with, with the business. So, and I think as a brewer, you get a, it's, it's fun doing both. So, it's actually been a nice change of pace to just really kind of get back to the, the pure, um, process of brewing and what we do. Yeah.

28:51 TM: And, and over this, um, amount of time you've been here, how would you see, how have consumer tastes changed over time?

BF: That's another good question. Um, I think they've just become, you know, I, I was talking about Mirror Pond and how I, I remember thinking, god, this is so intense. I don't think, you know. And now people have that beer and say it's, it's, it's pretty tame. And it's, it's, there's really no hop aroma or bitterness. So, I think we just, you know, hit this spot where, um, there, there's a lot more interest or peop-, it seems like people are more willing to try something different that isn't, doesn't necessarily fit in the box of maybe what they thought beer was. You know.

TM: Sure.

BF: You know. Over the years. Yeah.

29:31 TM: And along those lines, um, what would you say you're most excited about brewing in the moment?

BF: Yeah, I think, um, it, we're, we're doing lots of, big part of it now is just innovation. And so, the consumer for the most part is, um, is seeking a lot of, uh, new, new experiences when it comes to beer. So, that's been a lot of fun. And I think something else that has been of interest to and, and, um, is a, as I'm starting to get older and there's this younger generation of brewers coming in, uh, I think that's been a lot of fun. Is just seeing, you know, kind of, like, uh, trying to learn from them and seeing the experiences they had. And I, I feel like I can start to play a, a bit of a mentor role. But it's also been fun just learning from them. And I think about, gosh, so lucky. Like the experience they kind of grew up with as far as the beer and just all the styles and flavors and, you know, homebrewing equipment and all that stuff that they had available to them. So, um, I've really been enjoying that piece. It's just seeing this, this next generation of brewers come through Deschutes.

TM: And would you say that generation, are they arriving with, um, different, different approaches, approaches to brewing in terms of technique? Or interesting ingredients or styles?

BF: I'd say both. Yeah. Yeah, they're just more, they're definitely more open. They're not as traditional I would say as that, that previous generation of brewers were. You know, they're, they're open to looking at things a little bit differently. Which is, is great. Yeah.

TM: Okay. Great. Alright. Um, I have a, just a few bigger questions.

BF: Yeah.

30:51 TM: To wrap up with. Um. So, uh, you started as a homebrewer, of course. And um, you mentioned that the nature of homebrewing has changed so much over time. Um, with so many amazing craft beers and good beers available on the market, what do you see as the continued reasons to homebrew?

BF: Hmm. Um, yeah. Becau-. Uh, I would say just that that passion and the enjoyment. So, you know, my, when we got our pilot plant here at Deschutes, um, it produces one barrel of beer, roughly. And, I remember at that point I got rid of, I gave away all my homebrewing equipment. [Laughs] It was that kind of, like, pushed it over the edge. And so now, like, my passion hobby outside of work is, um, barbecue and, and cooking with a smoker and trying to figure out how to use, you know, logs. And so, I think about how much, right, like, I think about that constantly. Everyday. I love reading about it. Um, and so I still think that exists for, for homebrewing. Even though you have all these great beers out there. Um, boy, there's something addicting about, about the brewing process. So. Yeah.

31:52 TM: Sure. Um, and, and then another question is about the role of breweries in communities. I mean, certainly taprooms themselves play such an important function. Um, and, and so, how would you describe the relationship between Deschutes and Bend. What is, what is the role that Deschutes plays here in this specific place?

BF: That's a, and, and, yeah, another, hmm. So, Gary Fish, our founder, um, I mean, just the, the, the number of, um, you know, charities and things that we look to, to do from a community giving standpoint. Um, it's always been, just, you know, core part of Deschutes. That's just, uh, it's very important to Gary. And then I think beyond that is just the sheer number of, of people that, um, Deschutes Brewery employs in town. And, and I just feel like it's a fixture. You know? People always, if they know Bend, they always usually talk about Deschutes Brewery. Yeah, it seems like they go hand in hand.

32:50 TM: That's true. Great. Um, okay. And then, uh, just a few final things. Um, what, we've talked a bit about consumer tastes. And where do you see consumer tastes going? And relatedly, what, what do you see for the, the future of, of beer in the next ten years?

BF: Uh. I wish I had a good answer for that one. Um, I real, I, honestly I really don't know. I mean, like, we're kind of seeing this trend potentially towards, um, it seems like either, uh, this really high, high end where it's, you know, high flavor, high alcohol. Or it's this lower end of low alcohol, light beer. Um, so, I, I, I, I wish I knew. You know?

Like, um, I'm hoping, um, I guess I'm somewhat hopeful that things will normalize a little bit and will come back to. I feel like as brewers, it's, it's, it's a little bit of, um, you know, a Catch-22 where we're constantly innovating, developing all these new beers that we love, but also there's a lot of good beers out there that are probably, um, going away because of this turn. And so, uh, I don't know. I mean, I'm torn because as a, as a brewer, I love those legacy brands. But, um, you also always love the opportunity to make something new. So. I don't know where the consumer is going. [Chuckles] I wish I did. [Chuckles]

34:08 TM: Um, and, uh, and part of thinking about the future is of, of, trying to kind of widen the, um, audience for craft beer. Or, you know, um, make beer more inclusive.

BF: Right.

TM: And, um, and so, um, again not to, as it, you know, this is a question that doesn't have an ans-, answer necessarily.

BF: Yeah.

TM: But, um, but, you know, in terms of thinking about how to improve diversity in the brewing industry.

BF: Yeah.

TM: From your perspective as a brewer, um, do you have thoughts on that topic?

BF: Yeah, and so diversity as far as, like, just, just gender? Uh, races?

TM: Gender. Race.

BF: Yeah. I think, you know, I think it's got a, yeah, I think it's a great question. I think it really needs to start, we've, we've talked about that, um, at Deschutes. And I think it really needs to start from the top where, um. And again, and we've seen the benefit here where we have better diversity. We make better ideas. Um, we make better beer from those ideas that surface. And so, it's something that, um, you know, I've thought about and we're, we're, we're trying to act on. But I think, I, I, I think for hiring practices, we need to, to seek out that diversity. And it's just kind of simple as that. Like, if, if, if that's the change we want to see, um, you know, we have the power to work towards that. Yeah.

35:20 TM: Alright. Um, so, I work at the museum, of course. And the museum thinks in objects. We express history through objects.

BF: Yeah.

TM: And so, um, I often like to ask people if, if there are objects that you could name that are so central to your story or your career, what might those be?

BF: Oh, that's a good one. Objects. Um, I guess I, I think, yeah, I think of, like, that, um, I think of that homebrewing book. That first one I got. That homebrewing equipment. Um. I think of the parachute book. I think of, uh, the brewhouse at San Francisco Brewing Company. Um, I think of the kegerator I built, you know? I think of, um, I think of a lot of the equipment. The, here at Deschutes, I guess those are the things like, stand back and look at them. You know? That's, that's a great question. I like that. Yeah. [Chuckles]

36:19 TM: Great. Okay. And, um, last question. Also thinking back on your, your career now. And beer. Or, or not in beer. Um, what might you say you value most about what you do?

BF: Yeah. I think I value, um, hmm. I, I am extremely grateful for every day I come to work. Um, that, uh, e-, I mean, and even in my role I have a bad day. Like, we have bad days when there are things that don't go down the way maybe you hoped. But, every morning I'm excited to come to work. Um, and so I, you know, I go home and I, I think about work. And how to make things better. And think a lot of people talk about that in a burden sense. Um, but it's, it's something I'm, I'm really grateful for. That this is so much of our lives. Um, what we do on a day to day that, I'm, I'm just extremely grateful. Every day I'm at work I'm excited to be here. And work with the people and do what we do. And it, and it really, um, it's almost the context of what we do versus, you know, in my role you do a lot of different things. Um, but when I look at what, what it all brings, it comes around to and what, what, what, the end product is. Um, I guess that's the part I love. Yeah.

TM: Great. Well thanks so much for your time.

BF: Yeah. Thank you.