Name of Interviewee: Charles Finkel, Rose Ann Finkel
Date of Interview: December 6, 2017
Name of Interviewer: Theresa McCulla
Length of Interview: 61:15 minutes

Theresa McCulla: It's December 6, 2017. This is Theresa McCulla of the National Museum of American History. I'm interviewing Charles Finkel and Rose Ann Finkel. Charles is president, founder, and owner of Pike Brewing, and Rose Ann is vice president, founder, and owner of Pike Brewing. We are meeting at the brewery in Seattle, Washington, and this interview is part of the American Brewing History Initiative, which is a project to document and collect the history of beer and brewing in America. So, Rose Ann, I'll start with you. Where and when were you born?

Rose Ann Finkel: Oh, I have to give the date?

[Laughter]

00:00:35 RF: I was born October 20, 1946, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

TM: And who were your parents?

RF: Mack and Dorothy Martin.

TM: And what did they do?

RF: My father was sort of a quasi-inventor in the automotive parts business, and my mother worked alongside him, and was a homemaker as well as an office manager.

TM: Okay.

RF: For his business.

TM: Okay. And Charles, where and when were you born?

00:01:05 CF: I was born in New York City. Or actually, Flushing, New York, in September of 1943. And in 1947, my father accepted a job with, he was with American Airlines at LaGuardia, in New York, but accepted a job with American in Tulsa, Oklahoma. So, my family, my older brother, my mom and dad and I moved to Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and that's where I spent my youth from age four until I graduated from college in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

TM: And what was it like growing up in Broken Arrow?

CF: It was delightful. I, a lot of people would like me to tell, tell them that I was significantly discriminated against, because I, we were the only Jewish family in

town, but the reality was not that at all. People were lovely and continue to be, although I certainly don't agree with the politics of Oklahoma currently. I didn't, didn't agree with them at that time in fact, had I known.

[Chuckles]

00:02:10 TM: And what do you recall about the food and drink culture of growing up there?

CF: Well, the nice thing about Oklahoma is, Will Rogers said it best, he said, people stumble to the polls to vote dry. So, through most of my youth, I was growing up during Prohibition, although it had been ended in 1933, nationally, Oklahoma maintained it until 1959. So, in regard to that, beer was available to anyone that, that wanted to drink it no matter their age. So, I was able to drink beer at quite an early age at a pool hall down the street, and, next to the cotton gin. And, so that's where I was introduced to beers like Griesedieck, you see that clock o'er on the wall, and Stag and Progress. All local beers, and that's what, that's what I always preferred. Though, my preference tended toward whatever was coldest.

TM: And do you remember what those beers tasted like? The flavors?

CF: I sort of do, yeah. I do. And I liked them even though now I know what, what went wrong.

[Laughter]

00:03:21 CF: And what went wrong is that corn syrup became a significant factor in, in production of beer in America, something that had been outlawed in 1516 in Bavaria, but, was used not only in beer but in lots of other consumer food products in the 1950s, cheese and bread and I don't know if they used corn syrup in Wonder Bread, but probably they do. But, luncheon meats, for lack of a, it's a horrible sounding term.

[Chuckles]

CF: And, so, but the essence of it still was a grain-based beverage. And I love bread more than anything. And I love anything that's earthy and of the soil, vegetables, and bread, and of the sea, and of the land. I like food in general, but particularly bread. And beer was, to me, the closest drink that I could drink that had that same earthy, cereal-like quality, and to this day I love that. It's a, to this day, it is a delightful accompaniment to food, with food. So, that was my intro-, so, yeah, yes, I was exposed. And then every year I went to New York, to visit my grandparents, and to San Francisco, to visit my aunt and uncle, and, because my dad worked for American Airlines, so, we were able to take advantage of flying. And at a young age, I became worldly by comparison to my peers. And in New

York, I had Piels and Rheingold and Schaefer and I, my uncles all let me taste their beers. And in San Francisco, I was exposed to Anchor Beer and Burgermeister and Lucky Lager and beers that were typical in that area, also from another uncle, and maybe my aunt, too, I don't recall. And so, I always loved beer. I had this impression that from an early age that that's something that I wanted to learn more about. And I was fascinated as an artist, not only by the taste of the beer which, as a kid growing up in a small town in Oklahoma, was admittedly very limited, but specifically by the package design, what it represented, the history of the beer, the history of the style, the nomenclature, the culture, everything about it was, was and continues to be, really fascinating.

TM: And I want to ask soon about, about your design career. But Rose Ann, I want to ask you quickly, did you grow up in New Orleans?

00:06:09 RF: I, I was in New Orleans until age seven, when my father decided that it wasn't an appropriate place to raise daughters, and moved us to Houston. Actually, took us on a tour through Texas for us to choose and decide, and my sister met two very nice young men around the swimming pool in Austin, Texas. She was thirteen, and decided that Houston, they lived in Houston, and that was where we were going to move.

[Laughter]

RF: I don't think my vote counted for very much.

[Laughter]

00:06:43 RF: But, we were not a food-, foodie family. My mother, may, may she rest in peace, may go down in history as one of the all-time worst cooks.

[Chuckles]

RF: Which only fueled my interest and love of good food.

TM: And, so how did you become interested in good food?

RF: Well, going back to New Orleans, my roots, my DNA, my food DNA is definitely rooted in New Orleans. And I had an aunt that was an amazing cook. And I, to this day I can remember her gumbo and her shrimp etouffee. And that really was what I wanted. That was the taste profile I wanted to learn more about.

TM: And so, how did you become, how did you integrate food into your career?

[Chuckles]

00:07:32 RF: I met Charles. Because my, my early years were not food-oriented. Other than we did go out to dinner on, every Sunday, we went out with friends, and I was exposed to steaks. I mean, it was Texas. So, really great steaks. But he-, I was introduced to my first oyster, and I did like it. First time was a little weird, when it just slid down my throat, but after that I realized that it really was something I was interested in. So, you know, I think those food experiences fueled my future interest in food, but it was really, I owe it all to Charles who, on our fourth date,

CF: Oh shucks, dear, you didn't have to say that.

RF: Well, it.

[Chuckles]

RF: I made dinner for him. It was not an auspicious occasion, and,

CF: Well it was an auspicious occasion, it just wasn't an auspicious dinner.

[Laughter]

RF: Thank you. It was that. And at the end of the evening, he whispered in our-, in my ear, and said, "If our relationship's going to continue, you're gonna have to learn to cook."

[Chuckles]

RF: And I said, "Well, I have no role models." And so, he proceeded to teach me to cook.

TM: And what was the, what were your lessons like? Do you remember what was the, the dish you began with?

CF: Oh, I don't want to reveal those.

RF: There were four dishes.

CF: This is a public interview.

[Laughter]

00:09:02 CF: So, well, I mean, I always loved to cook, and I, I think mainly because I love to eat, so there's a direct correlation between those two in the same way that I do love to get my hands dirty and work in the garden, but my greatest goal was to have a nice garden, so that, there's one, there's a cause and effect. So, in the case of food, long as I, I *did* have good exposure to food growing up, oysters and clams in New York, and Lower East Side, Chinese food in New York, abalone

and Chinese food in San Francisco, Italian food in San Francisco, Italian food in New York, Jewish food. And so, I had a good education in food. And then I went to Europe for the first time in 1964, and it was all about Tuesday afternoon, it must be Brussels, but it was all about *moules* and *pommes frites* and Lambic beer and tasting, tasting a variety of, of different things, so I went everywhere. And then in college I managed a liquor store, and I became, and the reason I did is I dated this woman whose uncle was a real bon vivant, Bob Burman is his name. And he was a bachelor that loved traveling, he was from Oklahoma, but loved traveling all over the world. And he gave me, one Hanukkah, a case of assorted

00:10:35 wines. And my previous discussion about wine that occurred in my hometown was, because my parents didn't drink wine, was, did Jesus drink it? And the conclusion was, of course not, it had alcohol in it. But then as I learned about fermentation [Laughs], I put a little bit of a hole in that theory. But anyway, when I was in college I took a trip out to, I was interested in, I became interested in wine, took a trip out to California and visited wineries and in the Livermore and Napa Valley, and very early, that was where, would have been 1963, '64, and went to Europe. And then, when I finished, my senior year in college I managed a liquor store. And because I loved the wine so much, for the reasons I mentioned earlier, and beer, we had beer, wine, spirits, then it was based on the success I had there, and increasing, particularly the wine volume of that liquor store. Keep in mind that legal alcohol had only been around a few years at that time, and, less than a decade, and, but I succeeded well enough that one of my wholesale distributors recommended that I go to work in the wine business. So, I went to New York, I interviewed with a bunch of companies, and the one that was the most serious about wine, called Monsieur Henri Wines, Ltd., all the big spirit companies were at that time just getting in wine. Wine was the tail of the liquor industry. It was all about bourbon and scotch, and wine was nothing, because the American consumer drank, eighty percent of the wine they drank at that time was fortified wine. But, just about that time with the Boeing jumbo jet especially taking huge numbers of people to Europe, people discovered another lifestyle. In New York or San Francisco, people did drink wine. They have a strong European influence. Maybe Washington, D.C., or, and New Orleans. But, for the most part, Americans did not drink wine with their meals. And so, I moved to New York, my timing was perfect, I went to work at this great company.

TM: What year was this?

00:12:52 CF: That was 1965, '66. '66. And this company, I had the world's best education, in terms of wine, because they handled all the great wines of Bordeaux, Grand Cru Classé, wines of Bordeaux. First growths as well as a huge number of, they sold a lot of restaurants in New York their wine. And they had great Burgundies. We later visited all of these properties, Rose Ann and I, after we got married. But I was at a wine tasting every single night. I was meeting the winemakers themselves that were coming over from Europe. They did have Charles Krug California wine, which I had visited at that time, not in, no relation to them. But most of their wine was French-based, German, a little Italians, Rioja wine. They

excelled in Rioja wine. Port. Sherry. Madeira. And then, when Rose Ann and I got married, by that time I was, I had lived in New York after all, I traveled to New York. The food was phenomenal. And tastings, I gave a lot of tastings. Learned a lot about wine. And then, when Rose Ann and I got married, we went to Europe, and at the recommendation of the wife of my boss, who, themselves were bon vivants, and twenty years our senior, exact same anniversary, and he became my mentor, Frank Feinberg is his name, he passed away a couple years ago, and through, through him, we were able to meet, to have lunch at Château Cheval Blanc and visit the cellars at Petrus and Hosanna and go to all the great, Lafite, Latour, Haut-Brion, Margaux, Château d'Yquem, etcetera, and all the wines that in retrospect are regarded, there's no such thing as the best, but regarded among the best wines. And, in doing so, the nice thing about wine is its, wine-growing regions are food-loving regions. So, we were exposed to great food. As soon as we met, we started going to restaurants in Houston, where I was selling wine. I'd moved with this company by that time to Houston, so every night we were going to another restaurant, and contrary to what you might think, there are a lot of great resources in the, in the Gulf region. Fantastic shrimp and oysters, and a lot of, a lot of good seafood.

RF: And really good Mexican food.

CF: Good Mexican food. And we did get a fly in our Chine-, in our wonton soup once, but we won't talk about that online.

[Chuckles]

00:15:45 TM: And so, at what point did you go into the food business?

CF: Well, it wasn't until, well, you can tell that.

RF: Well, in 1969, we decided to start our own wine importing company. And that was called Bon Vin. And, so Charles was traveling around the country, in Europe, but also at the same time we decided to, that it made sense to represent small growers, independent growers that were just popping up and, because in 1969, Robert Mondavi was the first new winery in California.

CF: Since before Prohibition.

RF: Since before Prohibition. And so, we,

CF: This was about that same time, and just my timing was great. I couldn't afford to fly home to Houston to visit Rose Ann, so instead I had a friend that lived in Sausalito. I stayed at his place, and I would go up to the Napa Valley, Sonoma County, Mendocino. I was the first people to knock, person to knock on their door, say, "Hello, I'm Charles Finkel. I market wine nationally. Would you have an interest in having me represent your brand?" And they all did, because no

one else had asked that question before, mainly because it was just a brand-new industry. And, and, but, all the time I was doing that, I was seeking out the best
00:17:12 beer, because the be-, the biggest beer consumers are winemakers. There's not a winemaker around that I have talked to that when they find out that we're in the beer world, that doesn't say to me, "Well, it takes great beer to make good wine." [Chuckles] Or the vi-, or good beer to make great wine. Depending upon the winemaker. So, so, the, that's what we did. And I put together a great portfolio of what would now be the Grand Cru Classé of American beer. Kenwood, Fetzer, ZD, Nichelini, Sutter Home. And,

RF: Dry Creek.

CF: Dry Creek. And, and then,

RF: Fetzer.

CF: I said Fet-, Fetzer. Yeah.

RF: Okay.

CF: And then, and Ficklin. That's a, was the, at that time, it's still among the best California fortified white ports. And, so, at that time, Ste. Michelle winery, it wasn't called Chateau Ste. Michelle, it was called American Wine Growers. It was a company that made fortified wine, like, like muscatel, and white port, and something you'd, nothing you'd drink. You know, it's wino wines that they drank, you know, for alcohol strictly. No, not for taste. And it was the antithesis of what I was interested in. And in fact, I never, even though I ultimately sold my, sold to that company, I never sold it enough that I would sell that kind of wine.

[Chuckles]

00:18:47 CF: And loganberry wine and Kosher Concord wine and Kosher this, and lots of different things. But they, as an experiment, based on the fact that the laws that protected Washington state wines were changing, they, they made this *vinifera* table wine called Ste. Michelle, named after Mont-Saint-Michel in France. And I became the exclusive agent for the United States for that. That was forty-eight years ago, and that brand has existed for fifty years. So, we just went to a party a month ago, the fiftieth anniversary of the Ste. Michelle brand, and that's where, we're in that book I mentioned that they did for, for the fiftieth anniversary. So, we were the fir-, I was the first to market Washington state wine nationally. Among the first to market small California wines nationally. I called them boutique wines to distinguish them from the big ones. And, we did that. And then in 1974, as a result of the success we had with the Ste. Michelle brand, we sold our company, Bon Vin, to the company that bought Ste. Michelle and that extensively runs it right now. It's a big New York Stock Exchange company. And, they then wanted to build a French chateau in Woodinville. And we did that.

And we opened the chateau, thus, the, changed the name from Ste. Michelle to Chateau Ste. Michelle, in 19-.

RF: 1976.

CF: ’76. And then I worked for that company from ’74 through ’78. But, during that time Rose Ann and two other women started a specialty food store. And it was in *Time* magazine as one of the best specialty food stores. So, that, that was our, in 1977, that was our first foray into restaurants.

00:20:44 TM: And can you tell me more about Truffles? What was it like? What did you sell?

RF: Well, Truffles was, was unique. It was at a time when the grocery stores didn’t have a deli department. And so, we were sort of a delicatessen, -tessen, specialty food store. We made our own corned beef. We made our own pastrami. We made our own cheesecakes which was actually my, my cheesecake recipe, was the Lindy’s cheesecake recipe. And, because my parents used to go to New York, to visit family, and they’d come home with a little pink or blue box from either Lindy’s or Ratner’s, depending on when Lindy’s, when Lindy’s closed and Ratner’s was still there. And, I love cheesecake. And they, it was a classic style of cheesecake. So, we made cheesecakes and my business partner made chocolate cheesecakes. So, we had the cheesecake realm covered. And we flew salami in from Katz’s Delicatessen in New York, because we wanted authentic Jewish salami.

CF: It wasn’t necessarily a Jewish delicatessen. It was just a delicatessen.

RF: No, it wasn’t. It was just a delicatessen.

CF: But it had Jewish, a Jewish component.

00:21:59 RF: And, we had everything from escargot in cans to, but we decided one, the first Christmas, or the first fall harvest, to fly in truffles from Italy. No, from France, I guess it was. They came in.

CF: Per-, Perigord truffle.

RF: From Perigord.

CF: Fra-, France.

RF: And, nobody had ever imported truffle into, onto the west coast, to my knowledge at that time. Customs had no idea what to do with it. So, while we were charging for truffles that were coming in, probably about three inches in diameter, by the time we had them available to sell to our customers, they were

maybe an inch in diameter. But we got a tremendous amount of national publicity for that. And in 1977, *Time* mag-, magazine wrote an article called, "Love in the Kitchen." And it featured five specialty food stores in the country. Zabar's, E.A.T., Macy's Food Hall in San Francisco, Jim Jamail & Sons in Houston, which was, if I was doing a dinner when we lived in Houston, I would order produce from there because they were the only ones that ran refrigerated trucks to Houston, and Truffles in Seattle. So.

00:23:27 TM: Around this time, you know, Julia Child gets a lot of credit for changing how Americans ate and drank.

RF: Without question.

TM: And to what extent did you feel her influence in your career, or were there other kind of tastemakers of the era?

CF: Well, Julia visited Seattle several times during that time. We met her a number of times. But, in fact there was,

RF: Her assistant, Rosie, actually dined at our house for, they called it, the Alliance, the.

CF: Food Alliance, was that the?

RF: No, the culinary. I'm drawing a blank.

CF: But anyway, it was an organization that promoted Julia and cooking. So, our, our clientele, and at Ste. Michelle, too, I can tell you that at the time that I started at Ste. Michelle winery, people in our neighborhood, our first person that, the family that befriended us, was the Langlie family, that, they're, well, my friend was a graduate of Princeton, his dad was a graduate of Princeton, the dad had been twice mayor of Seattle and governor of the state of Washington, Arthur Langlie. And when we first went to their home, which was in our neighborhood, they'd serve cocktails. Not wine. I mean, people didn't drink wine. And then, because of us, and that she was such a kind person, we saw her the other, last Sunday, a kind person, she started buying Ste. Michelle wine and serving it to guests. And I could see, each year we go to a Christmas party, or a, or a, which we proceeded to do over the next fifty years, really,

RF: The shape of the glasses would change. They'd go from a cocktail glass to a wine glass.

CF: Yeah, and then this, these people that we'd meet, avidly, one year, "Whoa, what kind of, what is, what do you do with that wine?" Sort of, you know, never really exposed to wine. A couple years later, "Oh, I tried the Chassagne-Montrachet, Clos des Chanaux, '62 versus '63. And '63 was much better."

[Chuckles]

CF: You know? They became great connoisseurs. But, I'm not saying everyone did, but certain people, they embraced this culture in the same way that Julia Child said to people, food is, food is a wonderful resource. It's a great lifestyle. It's delicious. It's what we have to have to sustain ourselves. And why not make it an art form that, that can enhance your life significantly? And I think Julia,

00:26:00 RF: And you, as a cook in America, can do it yourself. You know, she removed the, I guess the, made it, she just made it approachable.

CF: Yeah.

RF: You could make mistakes. You saw her on T.V., you saw her drop the fish on the floor and pick it up and say, "Oh, it's okay."

[Chuckles]

00:26:24 CF: So, during this time, and when Rose Ann opened Truffles, I was still with, I was the artistic director of Truffles. I designed the logo and I was, I was the wine and beer buyer, etcetera. We had a big, as big a beer selection as we could get our hands on. And I actually bought a beer, but, it's not in my, any of my biographies, I bought a, a wine distributorship here in Washington, and turned out after running it for six months, under the guise that I could buy it if the state allowed my license to go through, they didn't because I owned stock in Ste. Michelle and there was a law here at that time that prohibited vertical integration of the, of alcohol. So, I didn't do it, but when I was doing that I met all of the beer importers. And as I said, all through that time, I wa-, I was seeking out beer wherever I went. And also, not only seeking out the beer, seeking out information about beer, and I have the first two beer books that were in any way distributed. When I lived in New York, I was, I habited Second Avenue south of 14th Street where, which was the book haven. There was one bookstore specializing in—[Eichhorn (?) 27:45]—specializing in food books. And I have a lot of books I keep, I see their little logo in there. And, but I was looking for beer books. And most of them were written by amateurs that were, you know, had traveled and so, someone says, "Hey George, how 'bout doing a beer book?" And they write their reminiscences down and, but there was no academic, it wasn't really until Michael Jackson came along, in English, that a, and that was '77, that an academic treatise on beer as a cultural item became available. But, so, I bought this wholesale company, and it

00:28:25 had all the brands of imported beer and American beer. Anchor was the only American beer at the time, craft American beer. It had every brand and distributed them. And I would ask the suppliers, all of whom had to confirm that I could continue with the, with the business or, if the deal went through, "What makes this beer dark? What, why, what -?" I mean, by that time I knew the difference in

mal-, I'm not a scientist, but in malolactic fermentation versus not in wine. About grape varieties, we did experi-. I worked with the world's most famous winemaker, André Tchelistcheff, at Ste. Michelle, four years, quarterly, two days a quarter. And I learned a tremendous amount about taking the same Chardonnay, aging it in Nevers, Limousin, and Allier oak. And then determining was there a difference in taste. So, malolactic fermentation, fermentation in general, grape varieties, aging it up, oak, using pressed wine, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And then I got over to beer, and I'm curious. Well, why is this beer, why does this beer taste like it does? The reality was, most beers tasted pretty similar. They were all light lager beers, copies of Budweiser. One from Japan, one from China, one from here or one from there. And so, that's what I ultimately set about to change, and did. And from the perspective of a beer lover that wanted to satisfy, that, I felt that if, if I would buy it, then I would encourage, like Samuel Smith Oatmeal Stout, it was extraordinarily expensive by comparison to what else was available at the time. That if I would buy it, and I certainly would jump at that opportunity, there must have been other people, and that was a fact.

00:30:22 TM: And I think these, both of your comments, they get to this question about the role of the food purveyor or the food im-, food or drink importer in, in relation to the consumer. What, what kind of role do you see yourself having as the, not the middle, middle man or middle woman, but, you know, what potential do you have to shape consumer tastes as a purveyor?

RF: Well, not having deep pockets for advertising, as many of the big companies did, the only way we could really market our products was to taste it. And so, we interacted with the consumer on a very basic level. Taste this. Taste this. And when they acknowledged there was a difference, because they always said, "Oh no, it all tastes the same." Well, no, it doesn't taste the same. And I think that's the beginning, and to this day that's what we do. When we go do a beer dinner, it's based on the fact that you're exposing your customer to all the different tastes in beer.

CF: Yeah.

RF: And the possibilities.

CF: Exactly. And there was no tradition of tasting in the trade. If you're selling a Budweiser or Asahi or a Kirin or a Heineken, or a, or any of those brands, they all pretty much taste the same. So, a salesperson going in to sell them, it would have been a sales*man*, by the way, salesperson going in to sell them, he was selling it based on, "It's the biggest selling beer in New Zealand. This is a famous brand in Ireland." But not based on, "Oh, taste this beer." And, "This is what makes it taste the way that it does." So, that's the component that having had a background in wine, I was able to contribute to beer. So, I sought out each of the different taste characteristics, and I was aided and abetted in that effort by Michael Jackson who

taught me what those taste characteristics were. What those brewing styles were. He was the first to identify brewing styles. Top and bottom fermentation.

RF: So, at the, at the very beginning, when we were marketing beer, we tried to have one of each of what we called the twenty-four classic brewing styles. By today's standards, those twenty-four are a drop in the bucket.

[Chuckles]

CF: Yeah, there are a lot more.

RF: There are a whole lot more. But, at that time, that was significant.

00:32:52 CF: But, at the same, that was the same concept we had previously had with wine, is we, we just weren't collecting brands, we were trying to pur-, to purvey the best Chardonnay, the best Sauvignon Blanc, the best Cabernet Franc, the best Cabernet, and it, now you look back at it and you say, well, surely there were all these Sangiovese, and all the Rhône varieties that were extant, that are, that are around now. And big brands. There was no Merlot. There was no Gewürztraminer. There was hardly any Chardonnay in the early days when we were doing it. And so, I learned by experience. I could see people could relate to these increased taste characteristics they can, they can glean by trying these different styles of wine. And then I thought, well, that's exactly what I want to do with beer. I want to have people try the different tastes that, as Rose Ann said, that they would, every time they'd say, "Oh, I can't tell the difference." And I, in fact we.

RF: Or, "I don't like beer."

CF: Yeah.

RF: Well, *why* don't you like beer? I bet we can find a beer you like.

00:33:57 CF: Yeah, and they did. And, and I, and we were interviewed here in Seattle by television station, and, I, we tasted Weizenbier. And the guy made a joke, saying well I could just imagine some logger in Sequim, Washington drinking a Weizenbier. But the reality was that Weizenbier became,

RF: And logger, and that logger in Sequim, Washington *would* drink a Weizen beer. [Chuckles]

CF: Yeah, exactly. That's a L-O, that's an L-O-G-G-E-R, not a L-A-G-E-R.

TM: Right, right, right.

[Chuckles]

TM: And do you, do you recall a particular, a particular beer, a particular consumer, when you presented this kind of new taste to someone?

CF: Oh yeah, we did it with thousands of people. We would go to San Francisco, for example, at KQED, that's the big public television st-, public radio station. Every year they had a public,

RF: They had a beer festival.

CF: Beer festival. And Rose Ann and I tasted, we must have tasted a million people on the Framboise Lambic. So, we were the importers of Lindemans Framboise Lambic, which I was told the other day is our biggest selling imported beer here at Pike. We primarily were marketing our own beer, or other gue-, local guest beers. But we do have some classic imported beer.

RF: And that was so unique, that one person would taste it, and by, yeah, within an, a fifteen, twenty minutes, people were lined up saying, "I wanna taste that raspberry beer." We would tell them we wouldn't serve it to them unless they could pronounce the name.

[Laughter]

CF: Yeah, this,

RF: And so, it was a learning curve. And really, it's no different than today when you look at oyster varieties. Most people think an oyster is an oyster is an oyster. But, we strive to have a, os-.

CF: *Ostrea edulis*.

RF: *Ostrea edulis*.

CF: *Virginica*.

RF: *Ostrea virginica*. And.

CF: *Crassostrea gigas*. That's the.

RF: Yeah. And so, in that way they're learning the variety, they're learning about an oyster rather than, "Oh, I had this great oyster."

CF: It makes it so much more pleasurable if you're, the more knowledgeable you are about any subject, you, whatever it is, that's why academia is so great, that's, the whole concept is learning. And, but to do that in combination with the pleasure of dining, that's even better.

00:36:21 TM: And, so can you speak a bit to how you, how you came to the decision to start the brewery?

CF: Yeah.

TM: And what that was like in the early years?

CF: Sure. You want me to do that, or you want to?

RF: You do that.

CF: Okay. Well, we, in 1978, we started this company called Merchant du Vin, and we had all of these classic styles. And, it wasn't just the Oatmeal Stout that we pioneered, with Samuel Smith, but we went to each of these classic beer producing regions and we quickly realized that just because there was a famous beer producing region, it didn't mean that the people were producing to their maximum. And so, for example, in Bavaria, we, we established a relationship with the Ayinger Brewery. That's a brewery that's been a hotel since 1370. It's been a brewery since 1878 in the same family and it is a phenomenal brewery. And there, so, we weren't, most beers that were imported into America from Bavaria at that time were la-, lager beers. And, which were pioneered in Bavaria only a hundred years prior to that, a hundred and twenty-five years prior to that time. And, but, that's not what, we didn't want one more lager beer, we wanted Doppelbock. So, we sought out the best Doppelbock we could find, and that was Ayinger Doppelbock. And they called it Fortunator. All Doppelbocks end with a suffix A-T-O-R because the first one was Salvator, introduced to the Bavarians by the way from Hanseatic League. And, so they had Optimator Spaten and Ayinger's Fortunator. I sort of was moderate on that name, so I said to him, "Well, I would like to design the package." And, but I'd like to buy, no one had ever come to him before and wanted to buy Doppelbock. That was like the slowest seller, most old-fashioned beer that they, that they brewed. They only did it once a year at Christmas time. We call it *Weihnachtsbock*, Christmasbock. And so, Rose Ann, Michael Jackson, and I sat down with samples of Ayinger Doppelbock and Rose Ann came up with the name,

00:38:49 Celebrator. I designed the label for Celebrator and hung the little holy goat on the neck, and, and originally we sold it only in America, so every time Michael Jackson would write a book, same with the Oatmeal Stout, he would say, "Well, this available, this is not available in England, and the Oatmeal Stout, and in Germany, this For-, this Celebrator Doppelbock is called Fortunator. He had to do it from an academic, you know, honesty perspective. And, but ultimately it became so successful in America we sold more Doppelbock than they sold in Bavaria that the, in Bavaria they changed the name from Fortunator, they abandoned that name, to Celebrator with a little holy goat on there. You know what I'm talking about? That little goat that hangs on the neck? You've had that beer before, right?

TM: Yes.

CF: It's a delicious beer.

TM: Yes.

00:39:40 CF: And so, we did that. We created, I did all the packaging for Pinkus, Smith, Lindemans, bunch of different breweries. And marketing, especially if you, if you were doing an article about Samuel Smith, *Gourmet* magazine, for example, wanted to do an article about Samuel Smith brewery, they contacted the brewery, the brewery would then say you have to contact Charles Finkel in Seattle. And so, I became de facto the public relations department. I did a, I did a film with Michael Jackson at Samuel Smith I wrote, Michael played in, or appeared in. And so, having that experience and the success of building those brands by doing all the things we've talked about, we decided we wanted to do our own brewery. Also by that time, we had, we had encouraged small, local breweries. We started in '78 and '82, both Burt Grant, who I knew quite well, and Paul Shipman, who had worked, we had worked together at Ste. Michelle, he sort of worked for me at Ste. Michelle winery, he was an intern from University of Virginia that had come out, and I was the vice president of marketing, both of them opened breweries in 1982, and I could see immediately the publicity wasn't going to a brewery founded in 1758 in Yorkshire, but rather to a brand new brewery down the street in Ballard, Washington. And so, it didn't take very much longer for me to combine, knowing that I had the marketing capability, and secondly the, I needed to diversify a little bit to include, I, it's not that I didn't try. Originally, I visited every small brewery in America. I was the agent for the west coast for Yuengling, all states west of the Mississippi. I was the Master of Ceremonies and designed two beers for the August Schell Brewery, New Ulm, Minnesota. And I created the first contract beer with Cold Spring Brewery, Reinheitsgebot. Contract beer with Cold Spring Brewery in New Ulm, Minnesota. But, most of those breweries were pretty much asleep at the switch. Their philosophy was, if Budweiser's the most successful brand in the world, making beer with high volume of corn syrup, shouldn't we make beer that same way? So, my, I wasn't, I guess, so convincing, that I was convincing enough that they did it.

00:42:18 But it wasn't until, that, I knew that I could do it better doing it myself. So, in 1989, Rose Ann and I identified where would we like to do it, and where we'd like to do it was a, the most popular food market in America, The Pike Place Market. And there had been no brewery there ever before. There had been a small winery, which gave us hope that we probably could replicate a, do a, do a brewery where that winery was located. And we had last year fourteen million people visit the market, so we thought it was a good place to do it. So, that's what we did. We opened it in 1989. Franz Inselkammer, the Bräu von Aying, of the Ayinger Brewery, that I mentioned earlier, he tapped our first keg, which is Pike Place Ale, you tasted earlier. And the rest is history, as they say.

00:43:11 TM: I, I want to bring up your, bring up design. I want to ask about that. Big question but, what, what is the role of design in interacting, you know, in making a customer understand the food or drink?

CF: It's everything. You know. I mean, your, you said your husband's an architect, or an architectural historian. How do we relate to the, the buildings? Or there's a, there's a practical aspect of flow and function and form but there's also the aesthetic and the pleasure of being in a beautiful place. And the, in the case with the packaging and marketing, I, I, my goal is to speak to people, and to appeal to their inner self in terms of luxury and pleasure and taste and to paint a word picture of, ta-, a graphic picture, rather, of what it is that I'm not able to say to them in, specifically in verbal words. And so, I've done that with all the Samuel Smith beers, just, the Celebrator from Ayinger, Pinkus beers, Lindemans beers, Pike beers, prosciutto from La Quercia, and tons of other things over a period of time. So, people come to me everyday and say, "Oh, you know, you probably don't know, but I choose my beer just based on how, how nice the label is." So, it's like. You know.

[Laughter]

CF: Jesus, you may not know, but, you know, there's this big religion based around you.

[Laughter]

CF: And so, yeah. That's the, that's the reality is, that packaging and mark-, it's marketing in a broad sense. It's.

RF: It's a subliminal experience, too.

CF: It's changed so much.

RF: People don't realize, "Oh, I'm choosing this beer based on the package." But, if they know nothing about any of the products, they're gonna gravitate to what appeals to them.

CF: Yeah.

RF: Packaging.

00:45:18 CF: So, in my case, everything I've ever done, design-wise, is handmade. You know, I do it on the computer now, but I originally did it by hand. But it's, it's handmade. I create my own letter form. I would never use just a, on a label, or a logo, I wouldn't use just a type from the computer. And, that's where people don't, they don't know that liminally, but subliminally they're, they're saying, this must be a high-quality product because this package, this convinces me that it

is. I mean, we have so much competition with all, how many breweries are there, five thousand breweries in America? So, you have five thousand design aesthetics and multiple brands within each of those. So, it is significantly important. And of course, everyone is an expert in that category.

[Chuckles]

CF: So, the one person, the designer, he's got no lack of people criticizing his design. Speaking of me.

[Chuckles]

00:46:19 TM: And, could you describe the aesthetic of Pike Beer now, with?

CF: Yeah, so, Pike specifically, I, I thought about, well, what do I want it to communicate? And what I wanted it to communicate was the place that it comes from, the Pike Place Public Market in, in Seattle. And, if you stand on 1st Avenue and look toward the water from 1st Avenue on Pike Street toward, toward Puget Sound, you'll see a big clock there. And so, essentially, and, in big letter that says Pike Place Market. And more or less, those, that signage, or that design concept, was done by Italian immigrants that came here in the turn of the century through the 1930s. So, I chose to try to make it as much, it's kind of art deco more than anything else. I tried to make it art deco. I tried to replicate that look of that sign that it, that you're looking back there, and.

RF: And with the sunrays coming up behind it.

CF: The sun coming up behind there.

RF: Which is a classic.

CF: And, and then I made it diamond-shaped rather than rectangular or square because it was different. And, at the, previous generations, most labels were not rectangular or square. Most of them were oval, or they may have been occasionally diamonds or die-cut shape. But the printing dictated, printing and labeling machines, dictated what the shape of it was. It's a crime that that happened, in the same way computers dictated that, so easy for anyone to, you know, to do any design they want. Doing a good design, that's another story.

[Chuckles]

00:48:14 CF: But, doing the design, you don't have to go to some design store, design shop, to have a label. You go sit down with your, whatever program it is on your computer, Illustrator, and you create your own label. And so, the printing presses, and printing, not presses so much but, the label machine especially dictated that it would be a square, rectangular label. And I, at the time I started this, I said, well,

gosh, that's boring. And so, I chose that shape, and that's what it's been ever since. I think it works for us.

TM: No, they're, they're beautiful labels.

CF: Yeah.

TM: They're very.

CF: Thanks.

00:48:55 TM: Appealing for sure. I, and I wanted to ask one question, too. Family and business have always intertwined in your, in your history. How have you balanced your various roles in your business ventures, but also as family?

CF: It's easy. She's the boss.

[Chuckles]

CF: And I just take direction.

RF: If you ask our children, they said, "Well, you worked all the time."

[Laughter]

RF: But, our children are also artists, and I think they understand what motivated us, what drove us. And they love, they love the business. They love it peripherally. They're not involved in the day-to-day, but they very much feel a part of the business.

CF: Was that the question or chi-, what our children? Yeah.

TM: And, and how you two have balanced your professional roles.

[Laughter]

CF: Yeah. So, well, we have a nice, we're, we've been married for forty-nine years. And so, we have a.

RF: He designs labels and I choose colors.

[Chuckles]

CF: So, we have a, we're compatible with one another. We enjoy one another's company. And, it just seems natural to work together. We didn't always. Rose

Ann was a dental hygienist when we met. And then when we started a family, she became a homemaker. And then it wasn't until.

RF: 1977.

CF: Yeah, the seventies, that she then started. Our kids were a little bit older. She started.

RF: I worked. Andrew was born in '74, and I was still practicing dental hygiene. And, but when we moved to Seattle in '74, I stayed at home with our daughter and son.

CF: And son.

RF: And then, in '77, when this idea of a specialty food store presented itself, we, I jumped in with both feet and never looked back. So, essentially you could say I just kept it oral.

[Chuckles]

CF: But, we, we have a, we share the business. Sometimes we communicate by email.

[Laughter]

CF: Even though we're in the same office here, here and at home. But, that's been the least of our, the least of our problems, is working together. It's the pleasure of doing it. And it's like we have a tandem bicycle, we, pleasure riding on tandem bicycle. Which is great, yet we meet people every single day, as recently as last evening, "I could never ride a tandem bicycle with John." Well, why not? "He wants to be in control." Well, someone's gotta be in control. We don't have a control issue. We don't, we're not jealous of one another. We're partners. Whatever's good for Rose Ann is, is conversely good for me and vi-, vice versa. And so, a lot of people are compat-, it's great to be competitive. You know, you gotta be competitive, you're, academically unbelievable. But, that doesn't mean that you have to be competitive with your soulmate.

TM: Well, and.

CF: 'Cause your, your goals are the same.

TM: Right, and you, you've clearly have a wonderful, symbiotic business relationship with.

00:52:10 CF: Yeah. And so, we say the same thing to our, our employees. Some of whom are our, like our family, and also owners of the brewery. So, a few years ago,

having been inspired in part by the Association of Brewers seminars, they do these great craft, have you been to Craft Brewers Festival yet?

TM: Yes.

CF: Yeah. So, they do these great seminars on all manner of.

RF: And one was on succession planning.

CF: Several, several were on succession and ownership and value and that sort of thing. And, and we have, here at Pike we have three employees that have been with us collectively forty-seven years. One is gone today. He has an illness in the family. And Patty is one and one is our chef. Gary's been here twenty-something year. And so, we made a decision, five years ago, six years ago, to share ownership with them and increasing-, increasingly share ownership with them and other employees over a period of time. And presuming, though it hasn't been confirmed yet that we won't be here forever, we keep.

[Chuckles]

CF: We keep reading that they're reinventing humans and that, I just heard a thing on NPR that they're going to, that the wealthiest people are gonna be able to afford to clone themselves.

RF: To clone themselves.

CF: I don't know. Or to perpetrate themselves in any of that.

[Chuckles]

CF: We don't necessarily.

RF: Perpetuate.

[Laughter]

CF: Yeah. Perpetuate. We don't particularly want to do that, but we do want this business to be a successful business for the long run, and we felt that sharing it with the key employees was, was the way to go. And I think in retrospect it is. And particularly.

[Sneeze]

CF: Gesundheit. Particularly in regard to what has happened within the beer industry in the interim, and that is, these big brewers coming in and buying the, buying craft beers, and then hiding the fact that they're, we call those crafty beers,

hiding the fact that they're, that they're owned by Budweiser or owned by Miller. And, so, it's, it's the right thing to do, and it's been a good thing to do from a business.

RF: It allows us to remain independent, with no plans ever to sell.

00:54:30 CF: The other side is people presume, because they read all the publicity, that of those 5,000 craft breweries in America, 4,090 are owned by Anheuser-Busch. That of course is not the case. But, the publicity they got suggests to people, oh, they're just right and left, you know, buying these breweries. But they are buying them in significant enough numbers, and they are then getting them into their distribution system that they, I don't wanna minimize the significance that they have, that they're, they're predatory and they're dangerous competitors.

00:55:08 TM: And this is a good segue into a couple concluding questions. Looking to the future, what do you see as the future of American beer?

CF: Well, we're very optimistic about the future of American beer. Beer, and not only American beer, what we see in America is happening in Japan. It's happening in China. It's happening in Scandinavia. In Europe. And it's not just beer. It's all craft alcoholic beverages. And, a new meadery is opening a week in Wa-, in America. And the, the grow-, we have now, I was the first Washington state marketer of wine, outside of the state. There were two in the state, at the time. Now there are over five hundred wineries.

RF: There's over a thousand wineries.

CF: No, in, five hundred in Washington state.

RF: No.

CF: Five hundred in Washington state.

RF: I thought it was a thousand.

CF: No, five, yeah, maybe you're right. Maybe a thousand.

RF: It's a thousand in Washington.

CF: Thousand.

RF: It's five hundred breweries.

CF: Yeah. Five hundred breweries. A thousand wineries. And so, it, it's just happening everywhere. And, but in terms of beer, I think it's the, for me it's the best beverage. There's no such thing as the best, but the one with the greatest

potential, because it's low in alcohol, it's healthful, it's delicious, it goes really well with food, it's fun, and it's not so restricted to geography that, that wine is. So, you can't exactly grow Napa Valley wine in Nebraska, but you can make pretty darn good beer in Nebraska.

RF: And what's really interesting is that when we started the beer business, the vast majority of people had never been exposed to real beer. They had only had mass market beer. This generation has never *not* experienced good beer. Real beer.

CF: Exactly.

RF: And so, it changes the whole trajectory of what will happen in the future.

TM: That's a good point.

RF: It's expected that you're gonna have a good beer.

00:57:18 CF: Yeah. Exactly. And people, what's gonna happen, beer tourism will continue to increase. We see it all the time. People come here, and they're, that's what they do. When they go to another city, one of the things that they would like to do is learn about the beer in that, in that city. So, they go to, not just our brewery, but other breweries as well. And they do samplers, like we had, and they experience the beer. In our case, we try to expose them to the relationship between food and beer. And, because I think that's a really important thing, to integrate the two. And different brewing styles. And I think homebrewing will continue to grow. Though, we heard a demographer speak at that grain gathering that we mentioned earlier, and she said that in the future fewer and fewer people will cook their own meals. That they'd be more, they'll be more dependent upon, I presume if you extrapolate that to beer, they'll be more dependent upon buying commercial beers rather than brew their own. But, having said that I, the statistics are that homebrewing is growing.

RF: But now they can have everything delivered, and so.

CF: Yeah.

RF: Including beer. So, it makes it pretty interesting that they don't have to get out and go to the store and make their choice. They can order it with their food.

CF: Yeah, that's what they, that's what she described as the millennial and the generation that followed the millennials, that they, they will romanticize over food to the light from their cellphone.

[Chuckles]

CF: That they, that they're more, that, but that the quality of the food will be higher quality. It won't be mass-marketed, pasteurized, processed cheese and ersatz bread and things. It will be good quality food, but the rapidity that they, that food won't be as high a priority as that cellphone was, is.

TM: Interesting.

CF: Yeah.

TM: Okay, well.

CF: It was a, discouraging, a little bit.

[Chuckles]

CF: 'Cause we been proselytizing the gospel of food and beer for a long time.

00:59:30 TM: Yes. Well, and you have many, many takers. An eager public. One last question. So, as you know the museum, we often, we communicate with the public through objects, largely. And so, I like to ask people when I travel, if you could think of your career and your business history, you know, is there an object that can tell your story or tell your history? If you had to choose something, what might that thing be?

CF: An object?

TM: An object. Some, some thing that epitomizes your story. It could be a tool, or a book, or.

CF: I'd say it would be Michael Jackson's *World Guide to Beer*. Don't you think? That was the most, it was like being a heathen in the middle of deepest darkest wherever and some missionary comes over and tells you the word of the Lord. Yeah, there it is. Oh, my God. No pun intended.

[Chuckles]

CF: Oh, my Jackson!

[Laughter]

RF: How can I top that?

[Laughter]

RF: If I were choosing books, it would probably be three cookbooks that changed my life. One was, of course, Julia Child, and the *Joy of Cooking*, and probably the Paul Prudhomme New Orleans cookbook. The fiery one.

[Laughter]

RF: Which gave me my roadmap for my New Orleans food. It sort of gave me the ingredients I needed to go in search of what I was looking for.

TM: And that, that's what good books do. Point you elsewhere.

RF: Exactly.

CF: Yeah.

TM: Well, thank you both so much for your time today.

CF: You're welcome.

TM: For your hospitality.

RF: Thank you.

TM: It's been a pleasure.

CF: Our pleasure.