

Name of Interviewee: Jace Marti
Date of Interview: October 19, 2019
Name of Interviewer: Theresa McCulla
Length of Interview: 00:42:46 minutes

Theresa McCulla: It's October 19, 2019. This is Theresa McCulla of the National Museum of American History. I am interviewing Jace Marti, Assistant Brewmaster at August Schell Brewing Company. We are meeting at Surly Brewing Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota. 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 Jace, when and where were you born?

Jace Marti: Uh, I was born in New Ulm, Minnesota, in 1983. So, I'm 36 years old now.

TM: And, uh, did you grow up in New Ulm?

JM: I did. Yup. Born and raised.

TM: And what were your parents' names and what did they do?

JM: Um, my parent's names are Ted and Joni Marti. And my dad, Ted, is the president of August Schell Brewing Company. And my mom would be the special projects coordinator. But, yeah, yeah. Uh, and they both work at Schell.

00:47 TM: And so, uh, what was it like growing up in the neighborhood where you did? But also, more importantly, uh, within the, a brewing family?

JM: Um, yeah. I mean, we, we, we lived just outside of New Ulm. I guess I kind of grew up in the country. But, uh, I basically grew up inside the brewery. Um, I would go there every day after school. That's where my parents worked. And so, um, I spent a lot of time, if you've ever been to the brewery, that, you know we have, uh, woods and gardens. So, I played a lot in there. Um, but also just climbing on malt bags and, and, uh, you know, tracking in all kinds of stuff. So, the, the brewery as a little kid was a, a fun place to kind of grow up on. And a lot of, a lot of places to get in trouble with.

01:25 TM: And, um, what did you learn, um, from you family growing up? Um, whether in terms of, uh, just being in the, a business environment. Or about, um, matters of taste with relation to beer.

JM: Um. [Chuckles] Matters of taste. Uh, well, as a little kid we made 1919 Root Beers. So, that was a, a [chuckles] definitely a bonus to come back after school and have root beer. Um, but I guess from, like, a, you know, and then, you know [unintelligible] high school and afterwards, um, definitely got into beer, uh, at an early age. Um, legally of course. Um, but I think in the business side of things, it was, you know, late eighties, early nineties was a very different time in, in, in beer. Uh, and especially for us as a, an old regional brewery. Um, you know, I would, it was pretty quiet in those times, the

years. Um, in those early years, I guess of my life. You know, it was the transitional period where we were just getting into craft beer. I mean, we launched our first craft beers in 1984. Um, and they were, it was very, you know, we're in a small rural community. And so, it, it was a, a definite departure from the American lagers that, that are, you know, locals were used to. Um, but they, you know, embraced us and, and, and those beers. And so, it, it was, it really helped us get going early on. And then we got into contract brewing. And so, some of my early memories of just working on the bottling line was just seeing all the different boxes going by. And, and you know, like, oh, these are going to California or Missouri or, or, you know, all, all over the country. Uh, Georgia, Florida, all kinds of. So, we did a lot of interesting things. And that was kind of, um, we had a map in our, our breakroom [unintelligible] of all the different contract beers that we were making and where they were going. So, that was always kind of interesting to see that, um, you know, even our small town that we had this kind of national, you know, presence I guess in a way.

03:14 TM: And, um, and so, just to back up a little bit, too. What did you, what did you, um, study in school? What did you feel drawn to study?

JM: Um, so, it, when I graduated high school, I went to the University of Minnesota Duluth. And I studied graphic design. Um, and I was kind of between chemical engineering and graphic design. And I kind of, uh, wanted to get into advertising. Um, I thought that was a way that I could, uh, get started at the brewery. And so, I studied, uh, design and came back. And so, right away I was working, um, a lot of our, like, local marketing and label, packaging design. And then also on the sales side of things. Um, working with distributors and, and creating brand, um, identities and stuff like that, uh, before kind of switching over into the brewing kind of things.

03:55 TM: What, what appealed to you about design?

JM: Um, I, I guess I, think I'm like, kind of, you know, I've always been kind of a creative type. I like making things and creating new things. And so, um, that was a way to, to really contribute right away. Um, you know, we were in need of a, a brand refresh anyway. So, it was kind of my early project before, um, like I said, to kind of switching to the brewing side of things. And that's when I went back to school. Went to the VLB in Berlin. Um, and studied brewing there.

04:25 TM: Um, and so, your, what was your first, first, very first role, uh, in the brewery? Maybe as a teenager or?

JM: Um, I remember one of my first memories. I was, uh, seven. And we were replacing the bottom of our copper kettle. And I remember going in with my dad. It was like two in the morning. And writing my name on the, on the timecard and I clocked in at like 2am. Um, I was very proud of that. And then I immediately went, went and fell asleep in a corner. [Chuckles] While they cut the, the bottom of our copper kettle off and then re-braised the new, uh, copper bottom to it. But, I just remember sitting on the forklift and, and watching those. That was really interesting. Um, and my dad would always give me

and my brothers a lot of odd jobs. You know? Um, crappy jobs he didn't want to give to other employees. So, uh, I remember, um, peeling all the cork off of our lagering caves, 'cause they were pretty, it was pretty terrifying down there. Creepy. Um, but yeah, it was the, the original cork insulation. Uh, he wanted to get rid of that. So, we spent weeks, um, scraping that off brick walls. Uh, I remember peeling labels of mislabeled beers that we'd have to soak in water and then peel them off with our fingers. 'Cause we had, you know, small, nimble fingers as little kids. Um, yeah. So, a lot of, you know, stuff like that. A lot of cleaning, you know. The stuff that builds character, I think.

05:45 TM: Right. And, and despite these, um, character building experiences, you, you clearly wanted to join the family business.

JM: Mmhmm.

TM: And, what, um, what aspect of it, uh, made you want to, to brew and to, to be part of the business?

JM: I mean, it was something that I was just, you know, a lot of my whole life growing up. And so, it was almost like never, there wasn't any other option. I didn't, this is all I wanted to do, because this is all I've done my whole life anyway. Um, and then I, I really appreciate my dad also, you know, making us start at the bottom. Uh, and, and not necessarily forcing us into it. Just, like, letting us kind of, uh, coming to our own, uh, naturally. And so, I think that really helped with, um, you know, kind of gaining respect of employees. And, um, actually just yesterday, um, a guy I, I've known my whole life, worked at the brewery for thirty-one years, uh, retired yesterday. And so, I, we had a beer with him, you know, on his last day of work, was, was kind of a crazy moment, you know, that, the things, the changes he's seen, you know, in his thirty-one years there. You know, and, and myself as well. Um, you know, he was the label operator from when we had these crazy old world tandem labelers, you know. Four of them in a row that were just really, really slow up until we just installed a brand new, uh, Krones labeler that has all this [unknown] technology. And it's, you know, just how things have evolved in the past thirty years.

07:04 TM: Well, and, and, we were spoken, speaking about this in, a moment ago. But, um, Schell's has seen an incredible amount of change in history and in the brewing industry. And so, um, what is the general outline, the history of Schell?

JM: Oh, yeah. General outline in a really quick summary. Um, we were founded by August Schell. He was a German immigrant. He left, uh, when he was eighteen years old. Um, he was originally in Cincinnati and he kind of teamed up, or he got involved with this, uh, Chicago German Land Company that wanted to start new settlements. And he was also part of this, they were called the Turners. Um, and it was a movement that left Germany that, um, they wanted to create new settlements based on, um, educational and physical fitness. They didn't, uh, they felt that in, you know, in Europe at the time that religion had too much power in, in politics. And so, they wanted to create these new settlements in the west kind of based on this different idea of, of thinking. Um, and so he

was part of that. He, um, so, New Ulm was, was founded in 1854. Um, and he was there. He was a miller, uh, early on. Worked at the Eagle Roller Mill. Uh, they cut lumber and, uh, made flour. And then obviously realized quickly that a town full of Germans needs a brewery, uh, as well. So, um, founded a brewery in 1860. Um, he, he grew it, um, you know, very successful from the very beginning. He passed it on to his son. Uh, he got, he got arthritis early on, so he passed it to his son Otto. Um, his, uh, Otto ran it up until 1911. Um, he died suddenly of pneumonia. Um, and that's when it shifted from Schell's to Marti. Um, and so it would've been his brother-in-law, George Marti, um, who had married August's daughter, Theresa. Um, he took over. He ran it through Prohibition. Um, definitely the, the tough time with the brewery. Um, and then after he passed away it went, um, back to his wife, Emma. And she ran it for, up until 1940. And that's, um, seven years. And then that's, um, when Alfred Marti took over. Um, he really kind of ran it through, you know, the post-war kind of glory days of, of, or hey days of, um, the small regional breweries. That's when everyone kind of came back from the war. Things were, you know, you know, starting new families. There was a lot of growth and, um, really before the consolidation period. And that's when my grandpa ran it. Um, seventies and eighties. Um, Warren Marti. Um, and so that was really trying times. Um, you know, I think '78, you could probably speak to it, it was the, it was the, the low point in, in brewing in, in the United States. Um, but we, you know, he was, kept the business running. Um, you know, definitely trying times. I know we at one point cut down trees, um, to sell for veneer to make payroll. Uh, just to keep the lights on. And he, he never took a paycheck for years. So, um, did what we had to do to keep the brewery running. Um, my dad took over in 1984. Um, or, or, sorry, '86. Um, but he was kind of the, he was into brewing. He was the Brewmaster before then. So, he, um, that's when we started doing craft beers. Uh, '84 was the launch of our Pilsner and our Hefeweizen. Um, and then it expanded ever since then. Uh, into the late eighties, early nineties, we started doing a lot of contract brewing in addition to growing our own brands. So, um, we were part of Merchant du Vin and had a national footprint for distribution. Um, and then, you know, into the, the late nineties it was, we'd gotten to a point where we kind of wanted to get out of contract brewing. Um, and that's when, um, you know, our brands were growing and it was getting harder, uh, just to keep up with contracts. And so, um, we made a decision to get out of there. And then we also at the same time purchased the rights to the Grain Belt label. Um, so, and starting in 2002, we started making Grain Belt. And that's a, it was a regional brand. Uh, at one point it was one of the largest brands in the country. But, they had fallen on hard times as well. Um, but we, my dad felt that there was still equity, um, and you know a lot of people still, you know, had some fond memories of the beer and it hadn't really been, you know, it was just bastardized, um, by making it kind of the, the, the cheap beer. So, um, started making that. And that's when we really started experiencing some explosive growth. A lot of new tanks. And that's kind of when I grew up, um, into the brewery, too. Uh, when we could pass the, you know, where we had all these single batch tanks. We went into three, four, five batch tanks. Um, you know, that's when the brewery really changed and we, uh, started to, to grow quite a bit. And, uh, up until today. So, we make all of our own beers. We still, uh, make our, our line of craft beers focusing primarily on, like, German style. Um, mostly lagers. We're an old lager brewery. We have room cooled fermenters. So, that's the

majority of what we do. Um, and then our American lagers with the Grain Belt and, and Schell's [unintelligible].

11:57 TM: Great. Great. Um, and so, when you first started, um, working, perhaps, perhaps on the payroll, perhaps not, as a designer, um, could you design, or, could you describe the logo of Schell's and, and what it's brand aesthetic is?

JM: Yeah. Um, so, one of the cool things with having an old brewery is it has a lot of design history built in. And so, I, my first design was kind of looking at the old, uh, script logos and, and packaging was very different, you know, fifteen years ago than it is now, even. So, um, I wanted to have kind of a nostalgic throwback look to it. Our, our [unintelligible] brand label had some really beautiful artwork in the thirties. So, kind of took elements of that with the, the script logo. Um, and kind of expanded out through our, our whole craft portfolio. Um, and I, and I think it helped kind of bridge that, uh, you know, modern look with a, the traditional element that kind of spoke to our heritage. But obviously as, as the number of breweries expanded, I think the, the shift towards the, the look of packaging now is more towards minimalist, 'cause there's so much noise on the shelves. And so, we just went through another, uh, brand refresh. Um, I just sit in on the, the ad agency meetings and not doing any designing anymore. But, uh, we've kind of gone to a more, um, stripped down look. It, it's a picture of our brewery, um, as you drive in. But it's more of like a, a graphic, um, look on it. Went with the old, um, Schell logo from the sixties. Um, again, kind of a throwback, um, kind of a, a black letter, old German a little bit, um, stylized. So, that's, that's our new look currently.

13:35 TM: Great. Well, and as you mentioned, there, there's, there is history of the name and also of the place, the brewery itself, if not the beer, to draw on for your design. Um, what do you think, how would you describe the, the customer base for Schell's now? Um, the relationship to, um, brands like Schell's [unintelligible], but also Grain Belt?

JM: Yeah, we're, I mean, for our, we do about a hundred-thirty-thousand barrels of beer. And we only sell in five states. And probably ninety percent of our sales is just in the state of Minnesota. So, it's a very loyal, uh, drinker, um, that also, you know, is local as well. Um, New Ulm has been amazing supporters of our, of our brewery through thick and thin. And then they're the, the reason we're still in business today. Um, but obviously we have great support just throughout the state of Minnesota. And then, you know, the greater five state area. Um, yeah. I mean, we make, we, we don't do a lot of the crazy, you know, uh, experimental beers that I think a lot of craft beer today is known for. Um, we stick to more of the traditional styles, kind of session style beers. And so, I think that's, our consumer maybe skews a little older in that demographic. That just wants, you know, a beer that doesn't have to be the conversation. You can just be, you know, part of being with their friends, you know. And, and more of just a social element, I think.

14:50 TM: Right. Well, and, and, so, clearly your brewery is so, um, so identified with Minnesota and with the region. How would you describe the regional culture of beer here?

JM: Um, I think, and you're definitely seeing it now, is, even in the greater national shift towards swinging back to lagers. Um, you know, the upper Midwest. The north has always been a lager centric drinker. Um, you know, even through craft. You know, we've [unintelligible] been making lagers and some of the old other regionals. Uh, even in like Wisconsin, uh, as well. So, there's always been a, a stronger lager presence. And I, I think that still resonates today, uh, in the, in the region. Um, but yeah, I mean, there's obviously, you know, we're sitting in Surly, which is, is, took the market by storm, you know, with hoppy, aggressive beers. And so, there's, there's definitely a mix of the two now. And, and you're just starting to see with some of these newer breweries that are opening up as well, um, that are, that have a huge focus on lager beers. And so, I think that does speak a little bit to the history of, of our area and the consumer preferences.

15:54 TM: Sure. And so, at what point, um, when you were working, um, for the brewery did you decide to switch from design to brewing?

JM: Um, it was right after our hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary. So, I did a couple years of design. And I, you know, was homebrewing a, a ton. And, and, and wanted to get into that side of things. And so, um, I was more than happy to, you know, kind of pass it off. We had a, a good team in place from a marketing standpoint. So, I got into brewing. Um, you know, at the, at the brewery side. And then in 2011, uh, I went to school in Berlin. Um, the VLB. And then I worked at a, a, a small brewery just outside of Bamberg in Bavaria afterwards. And then, uh, a classmate of mine, um, his family owns the Trumer Brewery in Austria. So, I spent a month there. Uh, that was pretty, that whole experience was pretty amazing. Came back, um, really was focused on, on quality improvement. And then trying to, you know, made these, adjust to sales a little bit on, on the brewery. So, um, I've been focused on that ever since. And then, and then also started our sour program, uh, at the same time using our old wooden tanks, our Cyprus lagering tanks. So, that's kind of been my, what I've been doing ever since.

17:04 TM: Well, and your experiences in, in Germany and Austria, what were those like? What did you learn there in particular?

JM: I mean it was so, going from New Ulm, this small, rural community to Berlin, which is like a, the cultural, you know, epicenter of [chuckles] of Germany, uh, was a, was a pretty amazing experience just to get, just to see all that. The, the culture there and, and you know, that, you know, unique history. And, and how it's, uh, you know, a very artist, you know, um, centric kind of city. Um, that was amazing. And then to, you know, the, the beer and beer culture hadn't really caught on there. But there's, you know, there's just so much good beer naturally in Germany. So, it just, uh, drank a lot of lager beers there. Um, but then to go down to Bamberg and Franconia, which is really the brewing capitol of Germany. And, and every day, I mean, I would work during the day, and then I had a bicycle. And every day after work I would go on a bike. I had a little booklet, uh, and I'd go to visit a different brewery. Um, and sort of to get to see all these small, little, um, breweries just dotted throughout the countryside was a really amazing experience. And, and obviously amazing beer as well. And then, and then, uh, after that, um, you know, spent a little time in Munich. But then over into Austria. Um, and again, that, that Trumer

Brewery being over four hundred years old, but, like, extremely technically, you know, advanced. Um, just a beautiful, amazing, open-top fermenters that I was just enamored with. And their fermentation cellar. So, uh, to really see all these different kind of spectrums. And then visiting every brewery I could in between.

18:36 TM: And, and, what is similar to or different about being a brewer in those countries as, as opposed to brewing in America now? The actual work of it?

JM: Uh, I think the, the different part, like, over there is they're very much rooted in tradition in that, you know, they're only gonna make a handful of styles. And that's what they've always made, and they're always gonna continue to make. Where in the United States, it's all about what's new and trying things and being creative. Um, so, I think that was a big, continues to be a big difference in the, the different drinking cultures. So, um, that was probably the most stark difference. You know, we talk about new beers and stuff and they're just kind of like, "We don't do that." [Chuckles]

19:16 TM: Is there, and, and to what extent would you say is there an interest there in, in what Americans are brewing? Or?

JM: They, then they'd kind of, like, you know, brush it off. They go "You, you guys are crazy. Like, that's not how you make beer. Whatever. It's too much hops." And, but, you know, that was ten years ago now. And I think that has definitely changed, even, I was back this summer and, you know, the craft brewing scene in Berlin has exploded. And, and it's popping up, you know, throughout Germany some more. So, you're starting to see that influence. But, it's also kind of interesting, too, how they've just basically, they don't try to innovate within the German styles. It's all, they're just making IPAs and stuff like that. And so I think, I think there's a lot of opportunity probably from, like, the German brewers of innovating within their own, you know, tradition and history and the styles that they have.

20:07 TM: So, as you were learning how to brew, what would you say are the most challenging aspects of learning how to [unintelligible]?

JM: Um, I mean the, the VLB is a, an amazing school. And I, and I, you know, the, thought the education there was, was really incredible. Um, I think from challenges, just with us having an old brewery and, and we have some quirky things with just the way our, our brewery is set up, and room cooled fermenters and horizontal lagering tanks. So the more traditional methods. Um, we're a little bit restricted in what we can do. And as far as, you know, creativity and, and just different styles of beers even. Just making ales, we can't really make a lot of ales. So, um, but our brewhouse is, is a, you know, four vessel German system. We can do anything on that side of things. And we're in the process of installing a pilot system [unintelligible]. So, I think that'll really help us with finetuning recipes and being creative in there. Um, and the, the biggest challenge is, for me, is like the, starting the sour program and then, and that advances. 'Cause that, wild beers, it's, a lot of it's out of, out of your hands. Out of your control. So, um, letting go in the control a little bit, of like you, you create a base, and you pitch the, the yeast and

bacteria, and you, and you hope it goes in a direction that you want it to. But, you also just go along with, on the journey and, um, hope it ends up in some place nice.

21:28 TM: And what, what drew you to want to develop a sour program? Is it a, from the, from the brewing perspective or taste perspective? Or both?

JM: Yeah. Um, yeah. Exactly. Both. Um, I love the, the unknown, you know? And then the possibility of it. Uh, I think is really fascinating for me. I also wanted to combine a, you know, I, I just like sour beers, um, myself. You know, I kinda love gummy worms and, you know, all things sour. Lemonheads. So, um, but a big part of it was that we had these wooden tanks in our cellar that we hadn't been used, hadn't been used for over twenty years. And the beer that got me into sours was Rodenbach. Uh, and, and after doing a little research on them and seeing the pictures of their giant, wooden tanks, I'm like, well we, we have those same things. We can do something like that. And then also, and then trying to kind of [unintelligible], you know, use that process but make a German style sour beer. And that was, for me, was Berliner Weisse. And so, it's very similar production processes and the way we make them where it's this long, drawn out fermentation. Um, but to be able to utilize a piece of our history for something completely new and unique I think is really, uh, special. And that's something I really enjoy doing.

22:40 TM: Right. And so, you, you've alluded to this, um, a few times, but what is the mix of historic and contemporary equipment that you work with at Schell?

JM: Um, so, our, our brewhouse is from the, from the eighties. So, I guess it's not that old. Um, our fermenters are, you know, again, probably from the eighties. Our horizontal lagering tanks are from the fifties and sixties. They're glass lined steel tanks. Um, something I, I love to tell people is our packaging tanks, our Brite beer tanks, are older than Brite beer tanks at a different brewery in New Ulm that closed in 1969. They're four years older. [Chuckles] Um, they're from 1952. Um, you know, the, the lagering cellars where all of our tanks are located is from the late 1880's. Uh, so, we have, just definite mix of old and new. And even in one cellar we have brand new horizontal tanks in a, you know, a hundred year old cellar. So, um, yeah. Bottle house was built in the fifties. Uh, fillers from the seventies. Our can fillers, you know, five years old. So, we have this mix of new and old.

TM: And do you still bottle and can then?

JM: Yes. Yep. Um, it's definitely a, you know, the consumer preference shifting more towards cans. Um, and we, we've been canning since the fifties. And so, it's steadily grown over the years. Um, but this year we made the decision to switch all of our craft beers over to cans. But, American lager is still a mix of bottles and cans.

TM: Do you find that consumer, some consumers want bottles?

JM: Definitely. Yeah. Definitely the, uh, American lagers, drinkers, for sure prefer bottles. Um, I think the younger consumer definitely gravitates towards cans.

24:21 TM: And so, in terms of the process of recipe formulation, when you have an idea, what is the creative process like for developing a new recipe?

JM: Um, so, we always try and, and, and have it rooted somewhere in tradition. Uh, with just who we are as a German style brewery. That's just our history. And, and, and I think that's really important, as with ten thousand breweries, you gotta focus on something. And so, we always try and start there. Um, you know, usually with lagers and trying to be creative with that. Even, like, our malt, um, we like to use a lot of Weyermann or Best. Um, but also Briess Malting in, in Chilton, Wisconsin. Our base malt, uh, we've now started incorporating, um, locally grown barley, uh, into our base malt. So, with that ten percent addition. And all, all of the beer that we made is made with barley grown in, within ten miles of the brewery. Um, so, tradition and, and localism is, is a big part of it. Um, for styles, like I said, we, we gravitate towards the sessionability. I think, uh, it's just what we like to drink. And so, I think a lot of, you know, the beer styles that we, come out of it just naturally kind of fall in that realm. So, um, you know, trying to strike that balance of tradition and, and, and modern, um, even just with hop profiles of, of, a mix of traditional and local varieties with new German, or, uh, new American varieties I think is just, is a, is a nice interesting twist that we like to, to try in beers.

25:49 TM: And as you work with, um, local ingredients, especially, um, the barley, um, to what extent does it change the flavor profile of the beers? Or?

JM: Um, so when we first started, we, we just made it for a single beer. It was a Helles. And that was a hundred percent of the locally grown. And they tried to match the, the flavor profile of a existing, um, malt variety that they had. But it, different barley varieties and different, you know, [unintelligible] everything. So, it came out quite a bit different. Um, but it's the, the barley variety that we're growing is the same as our base malt. And so, actually did, the flavor profile is, is very similar. Um, and we're, we're gonna have the regional differences. We're, we're [unintelligible] more south than the, where the majority of that barley is grown. So, it's a different soil profile. Um, you know, if, there is a, some terroir aspect of it, too. Which I think is interesting to incorporate into all of our beers. Um, and so, that, you know, however subtle it might be, it's, it is a point of difference, I think.

26:50 TM: And so, um, what, what is the, the current lineup of beers that you're brewing at the moment?

JM: Um, yeah. So, our, our flagship is a, our Firebrick, is a Vienna Lager, um, that we've made since, uh, 1998. Um, we have a, a Pilsner. Um, now it's Keller Pils. But, that dates back to our, uh, you know, 1984. It's just kind of evolved over the years with, with the changing consumer preferences. So, this is a little more, uh, hop aromatic. Less, less on the bitterness side of things. Um, but it, again, a lot of using all new German varieties of hops. Uh, we have a dark lager. Um, very, you know, easy drinking. Um, just with a little

bit more malt character to it. Um, and then we have a, a IPL type of a, a hoppier lager, um, that we, uh, you know, obviously you can't. [chuckles] You gotta have 'em, um. So, again, that, it's a mix of American and German hop varieties, uh, very hop forward. And then all of our seasonals tend to, uh, be very traditional styles. So, starting in the winter we have a Bock beer. Um, very malty, uh, mixing of German and American, uh, specialty malts. Um, spring into summertime, we have a Bavarian Hefeweizen. Again, that dates back to the 1984, um, when we brewed the, the first wheat beer in America. Um, that's our wildly popular summer beer. Um, we've done Kolsch's in the past as well. And I, we have a Helles, um, fall, for just getting into the end of our Oktoberfest. Um, and that's, that's our biggest seasonal, um, fest beer I think. Definitely in Minnesota, we have very distinct seasons. That fall season, it's, it goes hand in hand with the drinking time. Um, and then our winter seasonals. Our Snowstorm. That beer, uh, the recipe changes every year. Um, that's something we started in 1991. Um, so it was, you know, back then that was fairly pretty unique to have a different recipe every year. Um, but now it's something that we just, you know, has evolved into something to look forward to in the winter months. Trying to style it towards a, you know, a bigger, bigger beer. Um, and then we do, um, some one-offs. And we do like a sampler, um, seasonal samplers that we make unique styles of beers. And we also have, um, the, a cave aged, barrel aged lager that we do every year. That's gonna come out of the barrels next week, probably. Um, so, those caves that when I first started, had to scrape all the cork off. Said we're gonna use these caves. [Chuckles] So, uh, cleaned them up and, and, and painted some of the walls. And so, um, it holds fifty-five, uh, whiskey barrels down there. And so we do a big, um, kind of a Baltic porter, lager. Um, and then we barrel age for a couple months in the caves. Over the summer months with the natural cooling, uh, of the underground. Um, so, that's a fun one that we release. And then our, our sour program is a whole different line of beers. Uh, everything we do there is based on the Berliner Weisse style of beer. Um, everything ages in our original Cyprus wood lagering tanks from 1936. And, uh, uses all authentic Berliner Weisse strains that I brought back, um, from closed east German breweries.

29:55 TM: And um, one question. So, you mentioned your, your dad started a craft line around 1984. Is that right? And, um, what inspired him to start that? Was he inspired by particular breweries or beers that he had had?

JM: Um, I mean, it, part of it was, was survival and, and seeing, you know, what was happening. Uh, um, he's friends with Ken Grossman and, and so, he would, it was the, uh, pre-dated the Brewer's Association where they had the, the, met every year. And, and so, you, you know, these hippies in California [chuckles] were, were doing some unique things. And, and it was a way, again, of, you know, we're traditionally German. And so, we started with a Pilsner and a Hefeweizen instead of, you know, following kind of the English styles of beers with pale ales and, and IPAs. So, um, he also know, knew, um, Fritz Maytag as well. So, saw that they were, were doing something different. And, and, you know, times were tough. And so, it was worth giving it a try. Um, and, and then we signed with Merchant du Vin. And so, the, had the opportunity to go over to Germany and see some of how these traditional styles were made. Um, went to Ayinger and, and,

um, some, some alt breweries up in the north, Northern Germany, too. So, um, yeah. Got some, some advice and tips from, on how to make those styles and started making them.

31:17 TM: Great. And, um, uh, one question about the employee culture at Schell's. What is it like to be an employee there? A brewer or otherwise?

JM: Yeah. Um, I think, you know, one of the first things that's probably different than most breweries is we're union. Um, and that goes back to, I don't even know how long. [Chuckles] Uh, it's no longer a brewer's union. But, breweries and unions used to be very strong and, um, we're one of the few that still is. Other part of the IBEW, which is, um, quite a bit different. But, uh, no, I think, you know, we have a lot of longevity. Um, little, little turnover. Like I said yesterday, uh, went to the retirement party of guy that had been here thirty-one years. Um, our mechanic has been there over forty years. Um, you know, Cathy in the office has, has been there probably just as long. So, uh, we have a lot of, um, long tenured employees. And so, I think it really helps with stability. Um, you know, is, is a good thing. Maybe change comes a little, little slower. Um, some people like to say, "New hurts." [Chuckles] A little bit. So, um, but yeah. Uh, so, I think there's, now we have a mix of some younger brewers that came from other craft breweries. And so, it's, it's an interesting mix of, you know, long tenured employees and, and younger kind of craft. So, it's an interesting mix in that as well. And we're also, too, pretty rural. Um, you know, maybe insulated a little bit from, uh, like the metro area and, and the hyper, you know, trends that come and go. So, um, I think that, yeah, definitely contributes to us being, having a little different culture.

32:58 TM: And you mentioned, clearly, the brewery has grown a lot while you have been brewing there. Um, from your perspective as a brewer, what do you feel is the optimal scale for a brewery, uh, where you work?

JM: Um, optimal scale. I guess that's, that's hard to really pick. I mean, we have a, a hundred-and-fifty barrel brewhouse. And now we are, are a hundred, hundred-and-fifty hectoliter. Um, but we are installing a fifteen hectoliter pilot system. Um, and so, that for us, uh, is gonna be really helpful in, in scaling. Um, trying new recipes where it's one tenth the size. But then also gives us some more flexibility, obviously. You know, consumers now want what's new. Um, and so, we can, uh, instead of having to make a hundred, hundred-and-fifty barrel batches, um, as an experimental, we can do these small batch things and really pound them out. Um, just in our taproom or just, you know, picking markets or working with specific bars or restaurants. Um, that's some flexibility that we've never had before. And that's, that's really exciting, I think, moving forward.

33:59 TM: And so, how would you, if you had to describe consumer tastes now, and where you see them going in the future, what might you say?

JM: [Chuckles] Um, now, I mean, obviously IPAs are still king. And, I was at, at GABF two weeks ago and it was very interesting to see that the fourth largest category was Pilsner. Um, and they even, um, you know, made a couple comments how big the lager categories had, had grown. Um, where it's, you know, it's almost IPA, IPA, you know,

lager, IPA, you know, sour, or whatever. So, there's definitely the extremes, um, you know. Barrel aged beers and sours are, are very popular as well. But, lagers are definitely making inroads. And so, I guess for us it's encouraging that, um, fits into our wheelhouse. But yeah, I mean, IPAs are, are definitely still huge. Hops, there's so much innovation with hops right now. It's, it's really hard to even keep up with the new ones. And the flavor profiles that we're getting, um, at least here in Minnesota. I've seen some trends, uh, a lot of fruited kettle sours, um, is, is very popular. The, the hazy, hazy beers and milkshake beers. Um, you know, this afternoon is our big fall guild festival. And that's always an interesting snapshot to see what the breweries are gonna bring. What they're doing. Um, so, yeah. To kind of keep up with trends here locally.

35:23 TM: Alright, I have, uh, um, just a few questions to wrap up with. And, um, so, I'm, uh, curious, um, how you think beer, especially, um, amongst smaller producers, can become more diverse among producers and consumers? It's, uh, how to encourage, um, you know, more diverse group of people working in breweries as well as in taprooms?

JM: Um, how to encourage more diverse? Um, I mean I think beer at its heart is part of a social, a social thing. Um, and I think, you know, especially in today's political climate, having conversations that are, don't have to be yelling at each other. Um, where beer can facilitate just having an open conversation with someone that might have different views from you. Uh, I think that's where beer can be, um, helpful. [Chuckles] In today's climate. Um, you know, I think one of the big opportunities, too, in, in kind of the, maybe a, a different context, is the growth of, of craft breweries in small towns. Um, and that's something that, you know, matters a lot to us. And then being in a small rural community and, and seeing rural America really struggle in today's environment. Especially with, with farmers and all the struggles they're going through. Um, seeing breweries open up in small towns that are otherwise, you know, basically dying. And giving people a sense of pride and, and, and, and bringing that community back together. Getting them out of their houses and to get together to come and talk, you know, with the neighbors and stuff they might, you know, never otherwise talk to. So, I think there's, that's also a really, uh, beautiful thing about craft beer as it continues to grow and, and penetrates further into small town America. I think it really gives them a lot of pride. Uh, you know, and also in, in flipside, some tourism of people that would maybe have, you know, again, not to bring up, uh, the political side of things, but different opinions when they can come, you know, to this small town to have a beer and, and have that common element that they can start the conversation with. I think that's really cool.

37:33 TM: Right. Great. And, uh, craft, craft is a term that has meant many things. And so, if you had to suggest a definition for craft or components of that idea of craft, what, what would you say?

JM: [Chuckles] Well, uh, I mean, obviously there's some, some history with that conversation, I'm guessing. Um, and I think where the BA's definition, I get what they're, you know, from several years back, what they were trying to establish. And obviously it's evolved so quickly. Um, you know, they've settled on small and independent. And I think that's, yeah, that's, um, that's a good starting point to, you know. Um, but craft is

something that's, you know, made with, with, with care and with passion. And, um, you know size can, can still be something that's, you know, passionately made even at a, a slightly larger size. But, I do think there's something, um, to being small and, and also being independent. 'Cause I think when your, when your goals are not for shareholder's profit, um, usually have a different outlook on, on what you're trying to accomplish and, and, and what you're trying to make. And, and I can speak from us as a, as a family owned brewery. Like, we make decisions that don't make financial sense. But we know it's gonna make a better beer and, and we have that opportunity and ability to do so because we don't have to, you know. [Chuckles] Uh. That was a loud boop. [Chuckles] Yeah.

TM: Makes sense.

JM: Yeah.

39:05 TM: Alright, so two, two more questions. Um, the, the beer world today is quite competitive. [Unintelligible] Upwards of six thousand breweries. Some counts say seven thousand. Maybe more coming. And so, um, what do you see for the future of beer in the U.S. in the next ten years? Thirty years?

JM: Yeah, I think, um, you know, where it has, went through this such rapid growth and it was all very cordial and friendly and open. You're starting to see a little, you know, sharper elbows. And, and I think the business sense is becoming more and more important. Um, that free pass you were kind of given as you, when you first opened up, that, you know, maybe the beer wasn't great, they'll, they'll figure it out. I think that's, that that tolerance has become less and less, um, with, with consumers. Um, so, I think you'll, I, I do think there'll be a, a certain leveling off period. But, I do think, like you said, that growth through, like, smaller towns, um, I think there's still a ton of potential, uh, from that market there. Um, I, I'm curious to see where the innovation is gonna keep come, keep coming from. Um, you know, just, even been some articles out recently, too, of talking about it, is, is innovation dead in craft brewing? And that everyone's just copying the same trends over and over again. Um, but I, you know, you're seeing a lot from just, like, hop varieties. I think there's a, you know, from the Midwest up here, too, um, there's been some renewed focus on, on malt. And, and where, you know, specific varieties can contribute to flavor and terroir. Um, that'll be interesting to see how that continues to grow and evolve over, over the years in craft beer. Um, and then, you know, as it, I'm curious, too, as it [unintelligible] how craft beer becomes more and more a part of just the social fabric, of, of, of the U.S. So, um, you know, hopefully for the better.

40:52 TM: Yeah. And there's a generation of people now who are loving beer in a different way than maybe our parents did. Or, or in terms of numbers. You know? So, as, as they age and, uh, [unintelligible] age, there'll become, you know, generational swings to things.

JM: Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, you hope that, you know, craft beer was the response of, of, of bland American beers. And that now you have a whole generation growing up with craft beer. If their preferences are gonna be kind of resisting what your parents

drank, you know. Or if, or you're either gonna go, oh, I guess you see it, that it's going back to your grandpa's, you know, grandparents drink where they're gravitating back towards, you know, American lagers and [unintelligible] lagers. So, we'll see.

41:30 TM: Right. Right. Okay. Last question. It's a, a simple one, but a big one. Um, what would you say you value most about what you do?

JM: Uh, what do I value most? Um, I mean, I, I get to work with my family every single day. Um, and that's pretty special. Um, sometimes challenging, but it's, it's still rewarding at the end of the day. Um, I've grown up with a family, you know, that extends beyond, you know, just blood of, you know, like I said, these people, people that work for us that I've known my whole life, um. And just the connections that we, you know, get to create. Um, when people come and say, "Oh yeah, I've heard of you guys." Or, "I've been to the brewery. You know, I know someone that," you know, whatever. Um, just that we can create those memories for other people I think is really special, too. So, I think that's something that, um, you know, makes it, even the challenge, that the, the toughest day is worth it.

TM: Okay. And then, last question. You mentioned that you had a beer with this employee who had worked for the brewery for thirty years recently.

JM: Yeah.

TM: What was the beer that you had?

JM: Steve Gross, uh, was the guy's name. He ran our labeler. Um, and we had Deer Brand. I mean, that's, you know, that's our American lager that we've made for, since 1912.

TM: Great. Alright. Thank you so much for your time.

JM: Thank you.