



Elinor Reina

The Veil Brewing Co.

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Interviewer: Sarah I. Rodriguez

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Sarah Rodriguez: This is Sarah Rodriguez with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm here in Richmond, Virginia. It is March 13th, 2023, is that correct? Probably? [Laughter]

Elinor Reina: Yes. Yes.

Sarah Rodriguez: Do you mind introducing yourself and tell me who you are and what you do?

Elinor Reina: My name is Elinor Reina. I am thirty-two years old. I'm the tasting room manager for The Veil Brewing Company's flagship brewery location in Scott's Addition in Richmond.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sweet. And could you share your birthdate for the record?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. February 26th, 1991.

Sarah Rodriguez: Fabulous. Could you tell me where you were born and a bit about your childhood growing up?

Elinor Reina: Sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: Who'd you grow up with? Where?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. So I was born in Port Chester, New York, which is on the Long Island Sound about fifteen minutes northeast of The Bronx.

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And we weren't living there when I was born. My parents were living on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and so we were there for the first six months or so after I was born and then we

moved to Brooklyn Heights for another six months or so. And I'm an only child so it was just me, my mom, and my dad. And I think at that point—they have a fairly closeknit group of friends that they have all known since, I think, at the very least college. And they were all living in New York City together at the time and gradually their other friends that had kids had moved up out of the city again to Port Chester.

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And one of the reasons for that is they're all theatrically inclined humans so they were looking for places that were a little bit more on the affordable side. [Laughter] And Port Chester is a very working-class town kind of sandwiched in between two really, really affluent cities that, to this day, have a lot of wealthy human beings that are either famous or play sports or are really rich businesspeople. So Port Chester was a little bit on the easier end of the spectrum for my folks and their friends to afford a place in. So right before I turned one my parents moved up to Port Chester and I was there until I was seventeen and left for school.

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And it was really cool 'cause my parents' best friends had kids pretty much all around the same time as they did so I really grew up with a very closeknit crew of adults that were like second parents to me and their kids who were like my siblings. And we're all still really close to this day. I was really fortunate, I think, especially since my parents got divorced when I was eight or nine—I think they separated when I was nine—it's hard to remember the exact timeline of that stuff 'cause when you're that age and you have these difficult emotional things happening you're, like . . . [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: It's hard to keep track of the logistics.

Elinor Reina: Yeah. I don't know who I am or what year it is. Yeah.

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So I think especially 'cause that happened when I was so young it was really helpful for me to have this really strong support system with three or four other houses that I could go to full of human beings that I loved that were able to just be there for me. And that was insanely important.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's really cool.

Elinor Reina: Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: What did your or do your parents do in terms of work and stuff?

Elinor Reina: My parents initially met when they were both living in Manhattan trying to be actors. They were waiting tables at a restaurant that is no longer in Manhattan called Teacher's. So I think for the first few years that was kinda their gig. They were restaurant humans that were trying to make it in the theater world. And I think after a while of being broke and that not happening very successfully my mom started to work in copyrighting at an ad agency.

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And Dad was still trying for a while, and they got married and mom eventually just kinda had a tough discussion with my dad about, like, you need to figure your shit out. [Laughter] And he went back to school at Columbia and went back to law school.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's a shift.

Elinor Reina: That was a huge shift for sure, but my dad is one of the smartest people that I know and he, I think, just really buckled down. And once he graduated from law school it was right about when—I think just before I was born.

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So for the first bunch of years of my life my dad was working entry-level legal jobs that meant that he was at work in the city from eight o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock at night just grinding with it. And my mom had taken the first few years of my life off and so I think that there was a lot of times where dad was just working his ass off and mom was really the one that was spending a lot of time at home with me. But once I got into elementary school Mom was working in PR and so she—I don't remember what firm she was with at the time, but Mom was working in PR and marketing in the city and Dad was working for various different law firms and they were both commuting in from Westchester.

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So that was pretty much my whole life from elementary school all the way through high school was having both my parents working long hours in the city. And so mom was working in marketing as a VP for a couple different firms for a long time. And Dad was doing corporate litigation which I don't think he was super stoked about 'cause it's a little soul sucking.

[Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Elinor Reina: But I always appreciated that he made the decision to do something that he wasn't necessarily super stoked on because he knew that it would be financially beneficial to having a family and being able to provide for me in that way.

Sarah Rodriguez: Um-hm.

Elinor Reina: Especially, again, once they were going through all the divorce proceedings and trying to figure out those mechanics, I think it was probably helpful to have a little bit of extra change.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah, for sure.

Elinor Reina: But yeah, that was pretty much my entire life. My entire life growing up was my parents working pretty long hours in the city and I had live-in nannies when I was a kid that were wonderful and they're still a part of our lives now.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, really?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. They're awesome. Yeah, so parents didn't get home till late when I was growing up.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's tricky. Well, with that, what was food like at home? What are your memories related to food growing up?

Elinor Reina: My mom is a really fabulous cook, and she always has been.

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She started teaching me how to make things when I was pretty young. I would never profess to be, like, a great chef but I can definitely cook and that's because my mom started teaching me how to make just basic things when I was young.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, really?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. So I remember she taught me how to make a grilled cheese when I was, like, nine. And it was, like, yeah, heating up tomato soup for a grilled cheese and tomato soup. That's just an easy meal that you can make yourself if you need a snack or something. Or just teaching me how to scramble eggs or fry bacon or just little things like that that would kinda just get me by if I needed to make something in a pinch.

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So that was always kind of fun. I remember learning how to make myself breakfast was really fun for me. But I never really needed to 'cause in the years when I was young enough to still need that attention they were either home or I was over at my best friend, Olivia's [sp], house with her parents. Or I was with one of the nannies, Tonya [sp] or Lori [sp] or Evie [sp] or Jen [sp]. They were all really great about being there for me. But Mom always was really good about teaching me how to do things that were going to be, like, basic skills that I would need one day. [Cat meowing] Yeah. She was, like, oh, you guys weren't paying attention to me for long enough.

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Sarah Rodriguez: I know. I'm so sorry. [Laughter]

Elinor Reina: Yeah, but I remember Mom always made really healthy food, too, whenever she was home. I wasn't really allowed to eat sugary cereal or anything. I wasn't a Lunchables kid. I couldn't drink soda. I wasn't allowed to drink soda.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, wow.

Elinor Reina: They were very picky about the stuff that I was ingesting, which I appreciate now. And they were very picky about my dental hygiene and stuff in that regard, too. But yeah, they were very careful about what food I was eating. So I think especially when I went away to school I was, like, I can eat anything I want now! This is amazing!

Sarah Rodriguez: That was your rebellion.

Elinor Reina: Yeah. Oh, yeah, for sure.

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But no, it was cool. And my father actually met my stepmother when I was, like, ten or eleven or so. And when I was in high school Maria [sp] career transitioned. She went back to culinary school, so my stepmom has been a chef since I was, like, sixteen.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, wow.

Elinor Reina: Yeah. She's got a really successful catering company in the area, too. So there's always been a cool relationship with food between all three of my parents.

Sarah Rodriguez: How cool. And—'cause it's a lot of what we'll be talking about—how did beer figure at all as you were growing up?

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Elinor Reina: It's funny 'cause I remember it was sort of an omnipresent thing. At all of our gatherings our parents'—I say "our" parents, I'm thinking about my best friend and her older sister and all of the . . .

Sarah Rodriguez: That group of friends.

Elinor Reina: Yeah. They're all very social. There was always the Fourth of July party with fifty, sixty people. There was the Christmas party every year at my best friend's house that was, like, a hundred and fifty people. They're just very social human beings and they were always doing shows. There was always celebrations happening I felt like.

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There was always Rolling Rock or Sam Adams. There was always beer around so to me that was just—seeing that as a kid understanding, okay, this is the celebration drink. This is the thing that our parents are drinking when they're having fun. And I remember one time when I was, like, wicked young, I was probably, like, seven—I don't even think my mom knows this—but when I was, like, seven they were hanging out on the back porch at my house. There was, I don't know, ten or eleven adults, and I saw the pretty green Rolling Rock bottle hanging out on the railing and I just, like, ooh, and I took a sip of it. I don't think anybody noticed but I really didn't hate it and I was, like, this is tasty. [Laughter]

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And I was, like, oh, crap. Thinking back on that now, I was, like, well, that was the beginning of the end. [Laughter] But yeah, I just feel like it was kind of an omnipresent thing in the lives of so many human beings that I grew up around where everyone was always really excited to be

around each other, and I feel like beer was the thing that was there when they were excited to be around each other.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah, that makes sense.

Elinor Reina: So that was definitely, I think, the beginning of it for me for sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure. Sure. And so take me through to—you get through high school, you go off to school.

Elinor Reina: Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: What was that like? What were you studying?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. Basically, my parents were theater people, my best friend's parents were theater people.

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None of them were working in it professionally at the time. They had all kind of moved into different areas but had still stayed very involved in it and very passionate about it. And there was a large community theater focus in my hometown so I just kind of started doing that when I was really young. I think I did my first summer play when I was, like, five and we started doing theater in our school systems when I was in, like, third grade. So I was, like, seven and sort of from seven throughout high school I was doing a school play and a summer play every year.

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So when it came time for me to think about what I wanted to do I was, like, well, that kinda just seems like the natural progression of things and people seem to think that I'm okay at this, so

let's give it a try. And I had kind of a tough last few years of high school just with a really crappy relationship that I was in, and I was just going through a lot emotionally and needed something that was going to be the complete opposite of my current surroundings. I was, like, I just don't know—I want to get the fuck out of New York, frankly. And so I was at a college fair, and I saw the booth for the University of Vermont.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, okay.

Elinor Reina: And I saw a picture of Burlington and the lake and the mountains and the beautiful buildings.

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And I picked up the pamphlet and was reading through just all the cool things and it was just talking about the list of the cool downtown businesses and the musical acts that come through Burlington. And I was, like, this sounds awesome! And I saw that the acceptance rate was, like, 70 percent and I was, like, not gonna have to try that hard to get in. [Laughter] This is . . .

Sarah Rodriguez: Perfect.

Elinor Reina: 'Cause my grades were not that great at that point. And I was, like, okay, I feel like with my extracurriculars I can do this. And I got in and so I went to college in Vermont for four years and it was awesome. And the theater program at UVM was really fabulous and a hidden gem definitely, I think, that has since gotten writeups in various different magazines.

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I'm so glad it's gotten more attention. But it was really wonderful the work that these professors were having us pay attention to and do. But because it's Burlington, Vermont, in 2008, which

was I think sort of the start of when people were really paying attention to IPAs and things were really starting to get off the ground with the acclaim that the Vermont beer scene has come to have, it was almost like I was getting indoctrinated into this without even really knowing.

Sarah Rodriguez: ‘Cause that’s what was available?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. One hundred percent.

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And nowadays there’s all these big names that have so much international respect like Hill Farmstead and Heady Topper from The Alchemist. These are things that I think a lot of Vermonters and people that were living in Burlington in the early 2000s and mid-2000s, these are things that were just kind of starting to crop up in little ways that weren’t really super evident. And I could go to the corner store and get a four pack of Heady Topper and then three or four years later when I was out of college and coming back to visit I was having people ask me to grab them some while I was there.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, wow.

Elinor Reina: Yeah. It was just so interesting how quickly that transition happened.

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But yeah, definitely spending my formative years and turning twenty-one in Burlington when craft beer was really just starting to get off the ground up there was—I feel like it made me super spoiled for sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: Once you get to that level it’s hard to go back.

Elinor Reina: Yeah, definitely. But yeah, that kind of exposure when I was a young person that was still cultivating my palate was—I was insanely lucky.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Elinor Reina: And it was just by pure happenstance.

Sarah Rodriguez: Now, that transitions into how did you—so you're studying theater in college.

Elinor Reina: Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: What happened after college and how did you end up getting into beer as an industry?

Elinor Reina: Yeah.

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After college I moved around a lot, but I was always really—when I was still living in Vermont I really loved going to the breweries and appreciating the beginning of the craft beer boom right there for me. And I felt like I had to give the theater thing a try at least. But I, instead of moving right to New York or moving to LA or something like a lot of humans did, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do but I didn't want to go back to New York just yet. And I have a lot of family in LA but that's never really felt like somewhere that I wanted to be, so I moved out to Colorado and moved in with one of my cousins who was also a theater person who was working at a small comedy theater in the east side of Downtown Denver.

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And she asked me to come out and work with her when I told her that I wasn't really doing anything in particular after graduating. So I moved out to Denver, but Denver is also an incredible hotspot for beer. [Laughter] So I was working at the theater, and I got a performing gig, and I was also working at a salad shop.

Sarah Rodriguez: Just making it work.

Elinor Reina: Yeah. You're twenty-one and you're just kind of doing whatever the hell you have to do.

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

Elinor Reina: But I moved out to Colorado and was working in theater but also realizing, like, oh, shit, I'm in another hotbed of really cool craft beer.

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So my boyfriend and the time and I would go to the different breweries around Denver. Like, I had my birthday party at one. I had my twenty-third birthday party at one. So yeah, between twenty-one and twenty-three living in Denver I was just really indulging in the craft beer scene in my spare time, and I really liked it a lot. I think that I was finding human beings that I felt like I could relate to on a personal level, and I just really enjoyed the environment of being in a brewery and being around the people that also wanted to be in the brewery. And just the DIY aspect of it a lot of times felt really impressive to me. So yeah, it was something that I was doing in my spare time a lot but also still trying to make my career in the arts work.

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‘Cause it’s like you go to school for something for so long and you’re involved in something for so long it feels kind of weird to try to give it up easily.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Elinor Reina: So we eventually—Pete [sp] was actually also from where I grew up and so we decided that we wanted to move back to New York from Colorado in 2014.

Sarah Rodriguez: This is your boyfriend at the time?

Elinor Reina: Yes, um-hm. Yeah. And so we moved back home. I was working for an Off-Broadway theater.

Sarah Rodriguez: You were living in New York?

Elinor Reina: We moved back to Westchester County, and I was working in Manhattan for an Off-Broadway theater company, and I was commuting in every day.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay.

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Elinor Reina: And that was, I think, one of the first times where I was, like, oh, man, this is what my parents were doing every day. This is tough. [Laughter] It’s a lot. So I got kind of burnt out on that pretty quickly. And I really loved the people I was working with, and I loved working at the theater but at that point I was working in the box office there and doing more like ticket services stuff and wasn’t really performing much anymore. And working in Manhattan in professional theater I saw what a lot of my coworkers and friends in the industry were putting themselves through on a day-to-day basis which was really difficult.

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And I commend them one hundred and fifty thousand percent because going through the constant process of auditioning and doing background work and doing walk on roles and doing small parts and commercials and voiceover work, and constantly trying to make sure that you still look like your headshot or that you have enough material prepared to be able to kind of just jump at an audition on the fly, it was just grueling. And I just saw how exhausting it was for some of my friends and I felt like I was always just watching them put themselves through the wringer and have some success, but at what cost?

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

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Elinor Reina: And someone once said to me, if you can imagine yourself doing anything else then do that instead. And I thought to myself, okay, I definitely feel like I can imagine myself doing something other than performing for sure. I would love to still be involved in the arts, but I don't want to put myself through that. I want to still have a life. I want to have time to do all the other things that I really like doing like going to breweries, like going to live music shows, like spending time with my friends and family, going camping, spending time in the outdoors. Like, I can do something different.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Elinor Reina: So I kind of just put the idea of acting to bed for that point in time.

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And my partner and I split up and at that point I was also kind of like, okay, I'm still living at home with my parents and I'm —

Sarah Rodriguez: I've been there. [Laughter]

Elinor Reina: Yeah. And I'm twenty-four. And after living in multiple different states at that point I was kind of like, well, I guess I can kind of check out a new place now. And I had done some grant writing for the theater that I was working for in Colorado. My cousin and their executive director had really kind of helped me to hone that a little bit and do a little bit of grant research and preliminary drafting.

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So I thought, okay, working in grant writing for a nonprofit theater is something that I could probably do for a little while and it's a little more of a nine to five and I would still feel like I'm involved in this environment, which I really love, but I'm not sacrificing all of my time and all of my evenings. So I applied for a job in Portland, Maine, where one of our family friends was the executive director of the regional theater there and they were hiring for a development assistant. And I applied for that job, and they hired me. So in 2015 I moved up to Portland, Maine, to start working for the regional professional theater there as a development assistant.

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And Portland, Maine, is also another insane craft beer destination. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

Elinor Reina: So at this point I was kind of joking with my friend's family that I was just following where the good beer was. And so working and living in Portland, which is also a place

that I have family, was really cool. And I got to spend time in this beautiful city by the ocean and walk around a lot and walk to all of these places that have gorgeous architecture and really beautiful views and scenery and fabulous beer on tap and I felt so spoiled.

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But because I was working for a nonprofit theater company in an entry level position I wasn't making a ton of money and at that point I was, like, okay, well, what's the natural progression of somebody that's not making a ton of money that's working in the arts? I guess I'll just get a job waiting tables on the side just like my parents did. [Laughter] So I started working at this really awesome little—they're a chain. They're a chain in the state of Maine but they don't feel like a chain, and they weren't necessarily as much of a chain when I started working there, but Portland Pie Company was awesome, and they were a pizza place. I don't want to call it a sports bar, but they had TVs; they had their own little separate area. And they had amazing beer on draft.

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And they had all local beers, and it was so cool to get to talk to the human beings from those different breweries that would come in and check in and say hey to our manager and hey to whoever was behind the bar and check in about how things were going and what kegs we needed. We had a really close relationship with a lot of the different people that worked in the different craft breweries around Portland because of that and I got to chat with them more. And I remember one of my close friends at the time leaving Portland Pie to go work in a brewery fulltime because she had developed such a rapport with one of the owners that she had basically asked them if they had anything available and he was, like, hell, yeah. Come on over.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Cool.

Elinor Reina: And I remember thinking at the time, like, fuck, that would be so cool. I would love to do that. I think that would be so much fun. Because working behind the scenes in theater was something I really liked but working in the front of house capacity in a restaurant, even if it was just a couple days a week, I got to kind of flex that muscle of talking to customers and talking to people that I enjoy and being on my feet and staying active, and talking to them about the beers that we have on draft that I really loved and talking to them about all the pizzas that I had that we really loved. The pizza was good, and I'm saying that as a New Yorker.

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The pizza was good.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's high praise.

Elinor Reina: Yeah, for sure. So it's really easy to sell things that you like. It's easy to represent something that you love. So that was a muscle that I feel like I really got to flex at Portland Pie. And when my friend left to go work in the industry fulltime, I was jealous, and I was thinking about how cool that would be. And so, again, I had met someone that I was seeing, and we were living together and when we ended up splitting up my mom was living in Boston at the time. She had sold my childhood home that she and my dad had first moved into right before I turned one and she had taken a job with a marketing firm in Boston.

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So she was living in Boston at the time and the firm that she was working with in Boston had a lot of hospitality clients. And when my ex and I broke up and I was on the phone with my mom just kind of verbalizing to her how I didn't really know what I was gonna do and Portland at that point was becoming much more expensive than even two years prior and I definitely couldn't afford to live on my own, but I didn't really have anybody that I wanted to live with. And at the end of the day it's a very small city. The peninsula is very tiny. Like, you can walk from one end of it to the other in, like, forty-five minutes.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's small.

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Elinor Reina: So I was kind of feeling the pressure of the breakup too, so I had said to my mom, "I kinda feel like I need another change. I need to be somewhere different with a little bit more opportunity for me." And so it was my mom's suggestion that I move down to Boston and apply to work at one of the insane amount of craft breweries that are there. And she specifically was the person who had recommended Trillium Brewing Company. Which I had had Trillium cans, I think, one time before because one of my ex's friends was a big beer person and regularly made trips to their tasting room to get their cans.

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So he had shared with us one time and I was, like, oh, my God! This is amazing! So my mom had suggested that I apply there 'cause she had heard insane things about their brewery, and she had had their beer before, and she loved it and she knew I loved their beer too. So we kind of came up with a plan together where I would apply there and apply to a couple other places and

see what shook down. But either way she had a spare room in her apartment in Quincy, Mass, and I was just gonna move down and move in with her while I got my feet underneath me. And one of my childhood best friends had just gotten into grad school at Brandeis University so she and I came up with a plan that we would get an apartment together once she was moving up to move in for grad school.

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So in the interim three months I was living with my mom. And, yeah, that was I guess June of 2017 I moved down to Massachusetts and Trillium hired me, and I was so insanely stoked.

Sarah Rodriguez: What were you doing for them at the time?

Elinor Reina: So it was literally just a front house beertender position. But yeah, at that point I had a phone interview with their GM when I was still living in Portland and just chatting with him about my time in Vermont and my time working at the spot in Portland.

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And when I was working for the theater in New York, too, I was also working for a restaurant because, of course. And that restaurant had a really close relationship with a couple other local breweries, so I was able to just take all these little bits and pieces of my involvement in craft beer over the years and take it into this job interview with Trillium. And so, yeah, they hired me in June of 2017 to be on the floor front of house for them. So I was working forty hours a week Wednesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and it was awesome.

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It was so much fun. It's so funny thinking that that was almost six years ago now. Holy shit!

Sarah Rodriguez: [Laughter]

Elinor Reina: So I was working behind the bar for them for forty hours a week for two years. In the last six months that I was there I actually took on—

Sarah Rodriguez: Doing that position still full-time?

Elinor Reina: Yes. Yeah. But I actually had taken on an additional position where, like, half of my week I was the merchandise coordinator. So I was dealing with their warehouse full of different T-shirts, hoodies, glassware, all that stuff, shipping out everything that was purchased on their merch store, keeping track of inventory. It was definitely a promotion for me, and I was really excited about it.

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So I had taken on that additional level of responsibility with them, too, and that was really cool. They had grown a lot in the two years that I was there. It was kind of insane. They had opened up a new location in Seaport, Boston, and the company had really done a lot of shifting. And I think that's one of the overarching themes of craft beer is it's kind of insane how quickly things change and how quickly the trends change and how fast a lot of these places move to try to keep up with a lot of that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Um-hm.

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Elinor Reina: So yeah, in those two years I was working with them they had opened up a new location in Seaport, South Boston, and they had their sights set on a bigger facility in the same

town that I was working in in Massachusetts which is now their huge kind of campus that they're currently in today.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, okay.

Elinor Reina: But they were talking about doing that in 2018. And they opened up a farm in Connecticut.

Sarah Rodriguez: Man.

Elinor Reina: They made a lot of moves really quickly. And I think now they have six locations in the Boston area when they only had two when I started in 2017.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow, that's impressive.

Elinor Reina: It's crazy. Yeah.

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So kudos to them for really just pushing forward with a lot of innovative shit because they hit the ground running and it seems to be working really well for them. But yeah, so that was my foray into the industry.

Sarah Rodriguez: And how did you end up down south in Richmond and when was that?

Elinor Reina: I was living in Boston with my best friend, Ana [sp], and that was 2017, and in 2018 I came to Virginia for a visit 'cause one of my friends was living in Fredericksburg at the time.

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And I started dating his roommate. [Laughter] So he and I kind of started doing a long-distance thing and it really wouldn't have been able to happen without my schedule at Trillium 'cause I was there Wednesday through Saturday, so I had Sunday, Monday, Tuesday off.

Sarah Rodriguez: Right.

Elinor Reina: So we were kind of flip-flopping, taking turns coming to visit each other. And at that point I had spent some time in Virginia 'cause I have some family friends that live in Williamsburg. So I really liked it down here, I just hadn't really spent any time in Richmond. So we were taking little trips down here when I would come to visit 'cause I really wanted to come to The Veil because Trillium and The Veil collaborate very frequently.

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There's five breweries that work together a lot, Trillium, The Veil, Monkish, Cloudwater, and Other Half. So it's funny 'cause it's, like, Trillium's in Boston and The Veil's in Richmond, Monkish is in California, Cloudwater is in England, and Other Half is in Brooklyn. So you have the five points of a star that make up this insane craft brewing alliance. But it was really cool working at one of those 'cause you get so much exposure to the other four. And when I started spending time in Virginia I was, like, saying to my partner at the time and my friends, "I have to go to The Veil. I gotta go check out their space. I gotta go get the beer from the source."

Sarah Rodriguez: [Laughter]

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Elinor Reina: So we came down to the tasting room a couple times over here in Scott's Addition and the vibe was just so different than the vibe in the Trillium tasting room. The people behind

the counter, it was just very different, and I felt like I identified with it so much more, I think. And I was just so stoked on it. And so every time I came to Virginia there would always be this little thing in the back of my brain where I was, like, I could live here, and I want to work for The Veil if I live here. So eventually that discussion had to come up because my best friend graduated from Brandeis, she got an incredible job ironically enough out in Denver with Rocky Mountain Cancer Center.

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She's a genetic counselor. So she was super stoked to go out there and take that job, but she had to cut our lease short and that didn't really leave us a lot of time to figure out living situation options, so I decided to just kinda say fuck it, and I moved down here. [Laughter] My partner owns the house that we were living in, so I just moved into his house.

Sarah Rodriguez: Was that here in Richmond?

Elinor Reina: That's in Fredericksburg.

Sarah Rodriguez: In Fredericksburg.

Elinor Reina: So I moved to Fredericksburg and found a really cool community of humans, a lot of whom I'm still really close with.

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But I was commuting to Richmond every day once I actually got this job with The Veil.

Sarah Rodriguez: So you were able to go ahead and get that done?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. So I moved to Fredericksburg and immediately was just, like, I want to work at The Veil. I already know this. And I was fortunate enough to have left on really good terms from Trillium and so one of the owners—the owners are a married couple—and Esther is such a fabulous human and she actually reached out to Matt Tarpey, who’s the owner and head brewer of The Veil, and put in a really good word for me.

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And then I had another friend, Brienne Allan, who was a brewer at Notch Brewing who now has garnered a lot of international acclaim for her role in reshaping the craft beer scene over the last couple of years with Brave Noise and things of that nature. Brienne also texted Matt ‘cause she and I were heavily involved in The Pink Boots Society together.

Sarah Rodriguez: By that point you were already involved?

Elinor Reina: Yeah, um-hm. So I got involved in 2017 pretty much within my first year of working there.

Sarah Rodriguez: Cool.

Elinor Reina: So Brienne texted Matt and put in a good word for me, too. So when I moved down here I had an interview with the front of house manager, and he didn’t really have a ton available for me at the time, but he was so great and really just encouraged me to pick up shifts wherever I could get them.

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So he basically just got me on the schedule one day a week and I was, like, I’ll pick up wherever else, if anybody wants the night off or . . .

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

Elinor Reina: And they came at me pretty quickly with the offer to help out the packaging team 'cause they needed additional hands. And I was thrilled. I was, like, yep, of course. I don't care what time I have to be there. I don't care when I have to be there. I don't care how long you need me to be there. I will be there, and I will do it for as long as you need me to do it.

Sarah Rodriguez: So I quickly started working six days a week at The Veil. Half of my week was spent helping the packaging team in the back and then I had one shift up front which turned into two which turned into three.

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So yeah, Thursdays were my only day off for seven months or so.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow.

Elinor Reina: But it was okay. I was just commuting from Fredericksburg and working for the brewery that I really wanted to work for and every single one of my coworkers was awesome. And that always makes it easy.

Sarah Rodriguez: It does.

Elinor Reina: So I was happy, and I didn't really know where things were gonna go but I was happy to be doing what I was doing. And then the pandemic hit. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, while you were in the middle of this commuting situation?

Elinor Reina: Yep.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow. What was that like?

Elinor Reina: It was tough, dude.

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By March of 2020, I had worked—I guess I had been there for, oh, my God, nine months at that point.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, wow.

Elinor Reina: Yeah, by March of 2020, I was the manager on Sundays, so I had a couple nights where I was the closing manager, and I had Sundays where I was the manager. And I remember when we first were starting to hear about this shit and about things getting more serious I was working on the canning line.

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It was a Wednesday. I was working on the canning line and the atmosphere was just really tense. And we heard about different places shutting down and we were all getting updates from people and different news sources on our phones. So I remember trying to work that week and trying to can that week was so draining because everyone's brain was elsewhere but it's a fairly physically demanding job, so it was just exhausting. And then we had to go into the weekend where we were very busy. We were always very busy, though.

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The Veil team has been fortunate, I think, since day one to be a really popular brewery in Richmond, to make really good product that a lot of people turn out a lot for. So our weekends were, like, insane. [Laughter] It was a lot. So our front of house team was really skilled at multitasking and time management and being efficient and also getting shit done really quickly.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Elinor Reina: But I remember that weekend being so removed, and, like, I just don't want to talk to anybody two feet away. Like, should we even be doing this right now? Should we be reusing glassware? What do we do?

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And I think that we kind of tried to wear gloves for a few days and we started to use plastic cups, but nobody was wearing masks because we still didn't know. And it was just so stressful, and the atmosphere was so tense that entire week. And I think by that Sunday, there was four of us on Sundays, and it was really depressing. And I was texting my boss at the time just, like, dude, other places in the city are shutting down. What are we doing about service? Are we gonna be open next week?

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Everybody's asking us. No one's really here today. Like, what are we doing? And I remember there was a moment where we were all kind of scared and my friend and I went into the walk-in and cried for a minute 'cause we were so stressed out. And we had no idea what was gonna happen.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Elinor Reina: I think we all remember that point where we didn't know if this was going to be the kind of thing where everyone we knew was gonna get sick and everyone we knew was gonna be affected horribly for the rest of their life. We had no idea.

Sarah Rodriguez: Right.

Elinor Reina: So we were just kind of scared.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

0:57:59

Elinor Reina: And we had no idea how long we were gonna be open for or how long we were gonna be shut down for. It was, like, 5:30 that day. We closed at 6:00, and we got the message that that was going to be our last day of taproom service for a while.

Sarah Rodriguez: That Sunday?

Elinor Reina: Um-hm, that day. We had no idea until that moment.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow.

Elinor Reina: So we all just kinda closed it down at 6:00 and somberly had a beer and we were just, like, okay, well, figure it out from here. But to the credit of literally everyone that was in a decision-making position at The Veil, they gave people the space to kind of wrap their brains around it for a few days and pretty quickly figured out a way to just be open for to-go.

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And they made really quick changes really fast. The adaptability of every single human being in that situation in the spring of 2020 was just so cool to witness ‘cause we went from being a fully operational taproom to having one little desk with our merch on display and one person manning that and then two of us delivering beer around town and then shipping beer. We went from one end of the spectrum to the other end of the spectrum in, like, two weeks.

Sarah Rodriguez: Um-hm. And y’all were canning onsite to send out to go?

Elinor Reina: Yeah, um-hm. We have a fully operational canning line that's in our brewery.

Sarah Rodriguez: Nice.

1:00:00

Elinor Reina: So we have our brewing and cellaring team and then we have our packaging team and our warehouse team, and we tried to do things by the book as much as possible and everybody masked up and tried to stay distanced and we didn't have to let anybody go.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's huge.

Elinor Reina: It was huge. The only people that we weren't really able to keep on for obvious reasons were the people that were our part-time help on the weekends, like on Saturdays, but they all had full-time jobs, thankfully, that they were able to rely on. And for those of us that were able to still be there during the week our roles changed a lot, but they had to and that was okay.

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I never thought I would be delivering beer with a mask on, texting people, hey, if you want to just tell me where to leave this? I'll just ditch it on your porch for you and you can show me your ID through your screen door or whatever. It was a really weird few months of my life. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

Elinor Reina: But yeah, upper management made a lot of really quick and important decisions in that time period to make sure that people were able to keep their jobs and have their livelihood be as monetarily unaffected as possible.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

1:02:00

Elinor Reina: So I think we were all really grateful for that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. Wow. As we're wrapping up, 'cause I want to be respectful of your time —

Elinor Reina: Oh, sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: —could you talk a bit—and you can talk about during the pandemic as we're kind of coming out of the worst of the pandemic, how you see yours and The Veil's connection in the community through the brewery over that time?

Elinor Reina: Yeah, definitely. Oh, man. There's so many things I could say about this.

1:02:53

I think that one of the reasons why I love craft beer as a whole is because there are so many different avenues that you can go down as a craft beverage maker to collaborate with and support your direct community. So for us that would be not even just Scott's Addition, which has over eleven different breweries, cideries, and distilleries—it's crazy—but Richmond as a whole as a craft beverage maker there's so many ways that you can support your neighborhood, your city, your state, et cetera. But in craft beer as a whole there's so many cool ways that you can support other human beings in the industry.

1:04:00

Even within other initiatives that are related to social justice or awareness of fairly political things there's—I'm trying to think of a way to succinctly say this. I love that on a micro scale The Veil regularly works with and is in communication with other representatives from different places in Scott's Addition.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay.

Elinor Reina: We have the Scott's Addition Beverage District Association which meets regularly.

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Everyone's on an email chain. Everybody is able to chat about neighborhood goings on, collaborate on different neighborhood bar crawls. We all know each other so we're able to reach out if we have questions or if we need to borrow something from someone, or if we want to give each other a heads-up about some gnarly, difficult customer that's coming through. On a micro scale there is neighborhood involvement that everyone prioritizes because we all know that we're all in the same boat together. And I think that that's really evident through the way that we all relate to each other in Scott's Addition but also how a lot of the breweries relate to each other through Pink Boots Society in Richmond in general.

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'Cause there are a bunch of places that aren't in Scott's Addition but that are still in Richmond in the surroundings areas. And on a macro scale I really appreciate that The Veil and a lot of other breweries that I respect have participated in nationwide and also, I guess, international initiatives like brewing the Brave Noise beer, brewing Black is Beautiful, brewing All Together Now,

which was the COVID collab beer to raise money for hospitality workers. And also participating in national conferences and all kind of making sure that we show up in some way, whether it's by participating in the collab, showing up in person, making a statement online.

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There are so many ways that people that I've seen in the craft beer industry have prioritized showing up for one another that I don't know that I've seen in other industries.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Elinor Reina: And I've really appreciated that The Veil has been so willing to participate in initiatives like that. And they are very supportive of our Pink Boots chapter. All three of us that manage all three of The Veil's tasting rooms, we're all women so there's an important component of leadership at The Veil that is female that is invested in Pink Boots.

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And that's something that I personally celebrate 'cause at the time when I first started working in the industry we didn't have any female leadership and there was only a few of us—I think I was the only one during the week that was a woman that worked front of house during the week. So it's just really cool to see how the industry has changed in that regard to be a little bit more diverse and The Veil has been very supportive of initiatives to diversify our patron base, also our staff, and support the community in that way too.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Cool. That's special.

Elinor Reina: Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: As we're wrapping up is there anything that popped into your mind that I didn't ask about or any last-minute thing you want to mention? That could be, like, a million things, of course, but . . .

Elinor Reina: I don't know. No, I guess not really. I feel really fortunate to be in the position that I'm in in a city like Richmond that has such a complex history, not just with everything, the obvious notwithstanding, but they have such a storied history with beer in Virginia in general.

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

1:10:01

So I just feel really fortunate to be in the position I'm in and representing a brand that I really care about. And I think that working extensively with our Pink Boots chapter is one of the most important things for me about being in this industry.

Sarah Rodriguez: 'Cause you're the treasurer for this chapter, right?

Elinor Reina: Yeah. Which isn't a very important job, but . . . [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: I don't know.

Elinor Reina: It's not a very important job, but mostly I just like to say that I do whatever I can to support our chapter co-leaders. But that's also kinda how I feel about my role at The Veil in general is, like, I do whatever I can to make sure that my staff are feeling supported, my coworkers are feeling supported.

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And I think that that's something that I learned to do from being in this industry. I think a lot of us wouldn't be anywhere without the support of our fellow craft beer folk.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's very cool.

Elinor Reina: Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: Well, thank you so much for this conversation.

Elinor Reina: Yeah.

[End]