



Eric Jackson

Capsoul Brewing Collective

* * *

Date: March 13, 2023

Location: Richmond Public Library, Main Branch, Richmond, VA

Interviewer: Sarah I. Rodriguez

Transcription: Sharp Copy Transcription, LLC

Length: 46 minutes 51 seconds

Project: Tapping Into Richmond Beer

0:00:00

Sarah Rodriguez: This is Sarah Rodriguez with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is March 13th, 2023. I'm here in Richmond, Virginia. Do you mind introducing yourself for the tape?

Eric Jackson: Yes. My name's Eric Jackson. I'm the president, founder of Capsoul Brewing Collective.

Sarah Rodriguez: Perfect. And would you mind sharing your birthdate for the record?

Eric Jackson: June 16, 1985.

Sarah Rodriguez: Cool. Now, take me back to where you were born and kind of where you grew up, what that was like.

Eric Jackson: Sure. I was born in Portsmouth, Virginia. Moved away to Nashville probably when I was in the seventh or eighth grade, so I kind of grew up in Nashville. That's where I used to call home since before I moved back to Virginia. But I reside now in Richmond, so this is where I'm at.

Sarah Rodriguez: Cool. Who'd you grow up with? What was home like? Who were the people you were living with?

Eric Jackson: Sure.

0:00:59

Let's see. Grew up with a family of five, both my parents, me; I'm the oldest. I have a younger sister.

Sarah Rodriguez: I can relate, yeah.

Eric Jackson: I have a younger sister named Erica [sp]. I'm Eric. My parents didn't have very much creativity when they came up with the names. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Keep it simple. [Laughter]

Eric Jackson: And then I had another sister that—she passed away when I was younger. She passed away of cancer. So that was our home dynamic growing up. The family was in church all the time. I was in church all the time. Alcohol wasn't really big in my house at all.

Sarah Rodriguez: Really?

Eric Jackson: Not at all. I never had it. I never desired it.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sounds like people in your family weren't drinking.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. Well, not in my immediate family.

Sarah Rodriguez: Right. Right.

Eric Jackson: So that was kind of the dynamic there of growing up. Played a lot of basketball, played sports.

0:02:01

Was very much into drawing, music, played drums, piano, creative. What else did I do? Did music, rapping. I think what people see now with Capsoul is just really still the same kid that found something he loved and is creating with it. I think with the brewery there's so many avenues that I can hit all of those at the same time and be able to create.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's awesome. And what was food like in your family growing up?

Eric Jackson: Food. Man, that's a good question. What was food like?

Sarah Rodriguez: Whether it's the type of food or the environment and community around food.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. Yeah. There was a lot of my mother cooking, just big meals. I always remember big Sunday meals. If we weren't at the house we were at church eating after church, so I always have a heart for, like, southern cooking and just homecooked meals, which is why I cook all the time now.

0:03:05

Sarah Rodriguez: Really?

Eric Jackson: And everything I do from scratch. It's just back to being able to create and being able to control the output of what you're doing.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. Any particular dishes that your mom made that were some of your favorites?

Eric Jackson: Liver and onions.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay.

Eric Jackson: Haven't had that in years.

Sarah Rodriguez: Really?

Eric Jackson: Yeah. Biscuits and gravy, hands-down favorite. Oh, I remember when she first showed me how to make that. After she showed me that I was, like, okay, I'm gonna make this even better. And nowadays everyone wants my biscuits and gravy. She doesn't make it anymore.

She’s, like, “E.J.”—she calls me E.J —“you’ve taken this up to another notch.” I was, like, “Thank you. Thank you.”

Sarah Rodriguez: That’s high praise from mom.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So I bring it to different family gatherings. When we have a reunion it’s usually gone. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow, that’s great.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, and fun.

0:04:01

Sarah Rodriguez: Did you know—you had this kind of creative talent and habit—did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up?

Eric Jackson: Nope, I didn’t. Now that I’m in the middle ages of thirty I think you don’t figure it out till then. [Laughter] I think as a kid I wanted to be in church ‘cause that’s what I was around all the time. I wanted to do graphics and design so in college I studied a lot of that, doing graphics, design, Photoshop, the whole nine, videos, editing, production. So that was more the lane that I wanted to do once I got to college and kind of figured out who I was. But prior to that I didn’t really have any real dreams or aspirations for what I wanted to do.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure. Sure. Where did you end up going to college and what was that like?

Eric Jackson: So I went to school in Kentucky. I went to Berea College.

0:05:01

Graduated with a technology and industrial arts major. But yeah, that was cool. It was a really cool and different experience. Berea, middle of nowhere. There wasn't any big cities around. The biggest city was probably forty-five minutes away in Lexington. It was a small college, about 1,500 people.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow.

Eric Jackson: Very small, right?

Sarah Rodriguez: Um-hm.

Eric Jackson: I ended up getting a scholarship there. And the school was special because they focused on integration. Berea at that time back before civil rights and things like that they were one of the first schools to integrate black and white students. And so Carter G. Woodson was somebody that went there, came up with the Black History Month. So for me as a black student at a—it was a predominantly white school, so it was really an interesting dynamic.

0:06:04

I think I was very seasoned by the diversity that was there then that I think we're now starting to see a little more of in society. 'Cause it wasn't just race diversity, it was a lot of different things that I wasn't accustomed to from my background.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Eric Jackson: So I think it opened my eyes to just people in general and how awesome everyone is as long as they're not doing nothing bad. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure. Sure. And so you go through college. What's happening after that?

Eric Jackson: So yeah, after school I ended up working at the school as a catering manager. So this kind of goes into my hospitality career which is probably the bulk of my work experience. So I did that for, like, a year, got bored with it.

0:07:00

I was, like, all right, I'm done, ready to do something. Definitely get off the campus. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: I can imagine.

Eric Jackson: So I moved to Nashville, and I ended up working for—at the time it was Radisson and then Marriott ended up purchasing it. So I worked for Marriott for about eight years from that point.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow.

Eric Jackson: Started as a server, moved up to supervisor, assistant general manager, and then I moved to Georgia and worked as the restaurant manager for the Ritz-Carlton on Lake Oconee. Did that for two years.

Sarah Rodriguez: What part of Georgia?

Eric Jackson: Eatonton.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. It's about forty minutes outside of Atlanta. It's not far but it's a super small town and the only great thing there is the Ritz-Carlton. It sits on a lake with a golf course. It's away from everything.

Sarah Rodriguez: I see.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. So I worked there for about two years, got promoted to director of restaurants, moved to Atlanta.

0:08:02

Worked at a hotel there called the W. Worked there for a while. Then I ended up—what'd I do after that? Oh, after that then I moved here to Richmond.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. I had some things going on and I needed to move so I moved here.

Sarah Rodriguez: Around what year was that?

Eric Jackson: We're in [20]23 so, man, 2019.

Sarah Rodriguez: 2019? Okay.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, I think so. 2018, 2019, somewhere around there.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Eric Jackson: So I moved back to Richmond, started working at Champion Brewing Company. And I did that because, at that time, 2019, 2018, I really wanted to get into beer. Prior to moving to Richmond I started blogging about beer, probably in—it had to be before 2019. Maybe 2017, I think it is, when I created Uncap Everything.

0:08:59

So basically I just went around interviewing people, like, brewers about their beer, tasting beer, writing reviews on it. For me it was just about having fun and learning a new experience again.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Eric Jackson: And so when I moved to Richmond I was, like, I want to get into beer. I've already made a pretty decent name in Atlanta, which is weird to make a name out of beer; you don't brew it, but you write about it, and you learn about it. But moved here and kinda had that same idea and just went headfirst into the Richmond beer scene. And yeah, here we are.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow. And what about beer specifically got you interested in that?

Eric Jackson: So going back to my Marriott experience, my manager took us out to a brewery for an outing. And I was, like, oh, never been to a brewery before. Okay. We'll see what this is about. [Laughter] And at the time I wrote that I wasn't drinking beer, I didn't like beer, I was sticking to the basic Long Island iced teas, the stuff you have when you're in college and you don't really know too much about the good stuff that's out there.

0:10:04

Sarah Rodriguez: Of course.

Eric Jackson: So drinking a lot of those, lots of sugar, but after that time my manager took us out and he's, like, "Get a beer." I was, like, "All right. I don't know what to get." So I got a smoked porter is what I ended up getting. I knew I didn't like the light beer or just the light beer that I'd had in stores, Budweisers, your Miller Lite, all that. So I had a smoked porter, and I was, like, wow! This is very good! It was, like, chocolatey and little smokey, tobacco flavor. So at that point I was kind of convinced and I think I was on the road to discovery about new beer and that there is good beer out there. And that's kind of where the whole idea of Uncap Everything came from. And that kinda started the road for the blogging.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. And so you come here to Richmond.

0:11:00

What are those early days like in Richmond as you're getting to know the beer scene here?

Eric Jackson: Sure. Yeah. The first place I went to was The Veil.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, yeah.

Eric Jackson: At the time The Veil was super popular. I was trying to trade for Veil beers when I was living in Atlanta and so I went to The Veil, Triple Crossing. Those are my two top-tier breweries here in Richmond. They're kind of the ones I look to for beer styles, their marketing, how they do business, all of that. So those two places were pivotal in me learning about the beer scene. After that I think I kinda just visited other breweries, got the Richmond Beer Trail map, learned about that, and kinda crossed the breweries off as I went there.

Sarah Rodriguez: What was it like kind of getting to know the beer community, the brewery community? 'Cause it sounds like you came from a unique way of getting into it.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, um-hm.

0:12:03

So when I moved here obviously I didn't know anybody, so I felt a little bit of an outsider.

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

Eric Jackson: Which I do take into account when I have new experiences there are other reasons why you might feel a outsider than other reasons.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Eric Jackson: But I think when I went to some of the breweries I just didn't see a lot of people that looked like me. When I was in Atlanta there were Black people and just diverse people in a lot of different breweries, I think partly because—not that the percentage of Black people in Atlanta is higher per se than Richmond but I think there was more community efforts led by people of color that pursued beer.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Eric Jackson: I know for a fact because I was involved in those groups. So when I moved here I didn't see them. Not that they didn't exist.

0:13:01

Now that I'm looking back, and I know what's going on in Richmond we might be one of the few. There are other groups, but I don't think those groups were doing it the way that I have become to do it or doing it now.

Sarah Rodriguez: And I imagine the way you experienced it in Atlanta.

Eric Jackson: Sure. Sure, sure. Atlanta is a whole different beast. So when I moved here I was, like, hmm, this is a little different. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: I lived nearby Atlanta for a couple of years. I know what you mean.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, it's a little different. And I'm, like, man, this is beer mecca for this side of the States. And where is everyone at? Where is everybody? Not just Black—like, where is everyone?

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Eric Jackson: Where is everyone? Everyone I see in here, they all look the same. Where is the diversity? So after a couple months I had some friends that were doing some things in the beer community in Florida. They go by the name of Beer Kulture with a K. And one of the owners had just released a book.

0:14:02

I can't remember the name of the book off the top of my head, but it was really cool. And so that inspired me. I was, like, man it's cool that I'm reviewing beers and have all this stuff on social media, 'cause at that time it was, like, get your stuff on social media. Instagram was really growing and that's where I really found my lane. But at the time I was, like, okay, again, I'm bored of this. [Laughter] And I want to do more, I want to see something more. I want people to feel something more tangible. So at the time—this might've been 2019—came up with this idea to create a craft beer magazine and that turned into a podcast, turned into collaborations, turned into beer crawls. So that's what I was doing with Capsoul.

0:14:58

So this is that transition from Uncap blogger to Capsoul as a social medial company that I would say showcases the beer in Richmond to everyone.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Eric Jackson: So yeah, that's where I kinda landed.

Sarah Rodriguez: So that was kind of the evolution of it towards that.

Eric Jackson: Um-hm, for sure. Absolutely.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay. And who were the kind of people you were working with? What was those early collabs like?

Eric Jackson: Yeah. So even before the collabs, the people that I was working with was Tye Murdaugh. He's my current business partner and he kinda helped co-found Capsoul Collective. Who else did I work with? I would put Champion Brewing in that mix 'cause they allotted us the space to record our podcasts. The first few we recorded upstairs. And then Triple Crossing. We recorded probably most of our second season in one of their rooms. So in saying that, the beer community in Richmond at large has been very supportive of our mission, so it's been pretty cool to see that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah, for sure.

0:16:03

Eric Jackson: Väsen. Let me talk about Väsen.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Eric Jackson: Let me not miss them. That was our first, I would say, major collaboration where we produced—I don't remember how many cases of beer, but we released it out. It was distroed. We had a party at the brewery. We had a preparty at, like, a local Urban Shop clothing store, which was really fun. Had a DJ. We were pouring beer. There was nothing else for anybody to drink. Sorry, you gotta drink beer. This is my show. [Laughter] So everyone's coming in, like, you ready to party? Where's the liquor? I ain't got it. I have a beer for you. Please try it.

Sarah Rodriguez: What was the beer called and what kind was it?

Eric Jackson: Cohesion. It was called Cohesion. It was a double IPA, and it was really good. It was around the time—they came out in 2020 around the time where a lot of civil unrest was going on in Richmond. Statues were being spraypainted, torn down. There was a lot of division. And so we wanted to create something called Cohesion and highlight how we have witnessed Richmond come together through the riots.

0:17:06

There was a lot going on in Richmond at that time. So we did Cohesion to kind of bring everyone together. Had a party and just had a good time to remind ourselves that there are still people in the world that love you no matter what, that are open to who you are, and can have a good time over a great beer. So that was really the idea behind Cohesion.

Sarah Rodriguez: So that was during the summer of 2020?

Eric Jackson: Um-hm, yep. That was, I think, June, July maybe. Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: Speaking of that, can you talk about how the pandemic and the racial reckoning, and everything's affected your work and kind of your lifestyle or your life in general?

Eric Jackson: Yeah. So we're in March now, right? St. Patrick's Day is next week. So three years ago, that's when—I remember I was at Triple Crossing 'cause I was working there at the time and I think we got the call, like, uh, just shut it all down.

0:18:04

We're, like, excuse me? I was, like, what? What is really going on? I remember being at Bingo Beer Co. that night and this was the night before, I think, the governor shut everything down. And everyone was just in there, no mask, we were just—wow, had no idea, right? [Laughter]

And I remember that happening and things switching completely. ‘Cause we had an event happening at Starr Hill. We were going to give away some sneakers. It was called Capsoul Happy Hour and had to cancel that. And so that whole year with us being an event social company it was, like, well, what do we do? So we focused a lot on our podcast, so we did a lot more podcasts. We did a couple collaborations.

0:19:02

I think Cohesion was part of that. Yeah, it was part of it during that time. So we was, like, being careful even during that time. I was, like, should we do this ‘cause I still don’t know what’s going on with this COVID thing?

Sarah Rodriguez: And I guess the breweries were still producing beer?

Eric Jackson: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: Just not opened up in that channel.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, um-hm. Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: I see.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. We were still able to do a little bit of stuff, but we weren’t doing a lot. We were doing beer tastings, as well. You’re making me think about a lot of stuff. This was a long time ago. [Laughter] But we did beer tastings as well. We collabed with Urban Hang Suite, local coffee shop, Black-owned coffee shop. And so I went in there. I would curate their beer menu every week. I think I was doing it every week, doing beer tastings there. So we just have music, I taste people on different beers. People come out and they always hit me with the, “I don’t really like beer.”

0:20:01

I was, like, yeah, yeah. Whatever.

Sarah Rodriguez: Just wait.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, let me figure out your taste buds. And that was really what I did for a probably good six months or more. It was fun. It was fun. We got to see people's eyes lighting up when they tasted something that they thought they didn't like. So that same mentality of uncap everything, try everything. Just try it, uncap it. You'll never know if you like it. We took that to Capsoul. We took that to the beer tasting. And we do that even now with the events that we have.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah.

Eric Jackson: I had somebody come in this past Saturday, first thing he said—what'd he say? "I don't like beer."

Sarah Rodriguez: Right.

Eric Jackson: I said, anyway . . . He kept talking and he was, like, "My friend just brought me." And one of my other—I guess it was a volunteer—was trying to ask him questions about what type of beer they like. And I said, "Don't ask them no questions. Just give them the chocolate lager."

0:21:02

I just feel in my opinion the chocolate lager is something that doesn't taste like beer. It's not super hoppy. It's rich, it's chocolate-y, it's kinda creamy. The one we have is not thin like

Guinness. And he took a sip of it. He tried to contain his smile and then he looked at the menu, he's, like, "Which one is this?" And I was, like, "Uh-huh, see. You like it, don't you?" He's, like, "Yeah, it's not bad." I was, like, "I know!" There's so much beer out there. There's so many different styles. So when someone hits me with the "I don't like beer," my response is, like, "Okay, so if you eat one style of food now are you not a fan of food at all 'cause you had one style of beer?" They're, like, "Uh, I guess that makes sense." I'm, like, "It does." Unless you have a gluten intolerance or something, other than that, there's a beer out there for you. Of if you don't drink, I get that. But if you're just saying you don't like it I'll find something, or we'll make it.

0:21:59

Sarah Rodriguez: And now the nonalcoholic beers, you know, that's opened up all kinds of stuff.

Eric Jackson: Um-hm, yeah, it is. I'm never gonna do that, though. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: That's fair. That's fair. This is your party; you do what you want.

Eric Jackson: One of our business partners, he drinks nonalcoholic beer all the time. He's, like, we need to do it, man. It's getting popular. I was, like, I don't want to, though. I wouldn't drink it. [Laughter] Maybe when we get bigger we'll dive into that lane but . . .

Sarah Rodriguez: For now, though, yeah.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. Yeah. We gotta make ourselves known as producing beer first before we take the alcohol out of it. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: That's fair. That is fair. So you're doing all these tastings and you're kind of collabing with people. What is it like going into—you mentioned—and I was here for a hot second—whenever the chaos and racial reckoning happened in the summer.

Eric Jackson: Um-hm.

Sarah Rodriguez: What was that like in terms of your work?

0:23:00

Eric Jackson: With Capsoul?

Sarah Rodriguez: Um-hm. Or just for you personally?

Eric Jackson: So I use a lot of my connections in the beer world so at the time I worked with Triple Crossing to get Falcon Smash into Urban Hang Suite. Triple Crossing doesn't distribute their cans anywhere, so it was a big ask for them to do that. And they ended up donating that plus donating money towards Urban Hang Suite during that time. So again, we were able to show that community during the time of some unrest in the city.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow. That's important.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, it was good. So we did a beer tasting there. The brewers came out and talked about the beer. The community came out, learned about the beer and learned about us.

Sarah Rodriguez: Could you talk about working through the pandemic? How has Capsoul been changing since then, especially as things are starting to open up a whole lot more now?

0:24:00

Eric Jackson: Yeah. I think the major part—I'm glad the pandemic happened for Capsoul because it slowed us down from a lane that probably didn't have an end to it possibly because—it would've had an end. It would've had a success but at the time we were just focused on podcasts trying to get the magazine off the ground. We at the time had only done two magazines. We were doing merch, too. But we were just doing a lot of different things. So I think the pandemic slowed us down and it slowed us down so much that we didn't know where we were going because we weren't doing what we were typically doing if that makes sense. We were just doing podcasts, and, like, we don't know what to talk about 'cause we're not doing anything. And it was just becoming repetitive. It was becoming just stagnate.

0:25:00

And so my business partner, Tye, the one that kind of helped me start Capsoul, it was me, him, and our creative director, Chris [Smart], we were eating breakfast somewhere talking about the podcast and, like, what the hell are we gonna do next, 'cause no one knows. We have no idea. And at that time we was, like, we wanted to start bringing money in, we wanted this to be legit, and we didn't really know how to do that with what we had.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Eric Jackson: And Tye asked me a question, he was, like, "Where is the intersection of crafting and culture for us?" Where craft meets culture was one of our slogans. It was about bringing the craft to the culture and the culture to the craft. And his question to me was, where does that intersection—what is it? And I was, like, I don't know. What are you asking this silly question for? I'm trying to eat. Like, how are we asking this question now? And I think a couple days

later I just was thinking about it, and I was, like, oh, beer. That's the intersection. That's what brings people together.

0:26:01

Oh, great. We gotta open a brewery. [Laughter] So that's where we are now. I think the pandemic really slowed us down, made us stagnate. We thought we were doing what we should be doing, purposed to be doing, but I think what we were made to do is a little bit bigger than that. I think everything we did before is absolutely gonna be involved in the brewery and it makes more sense. Magazine will absolutely be back. Magazine, once we get there. We're still doing our merch. Collabs obviously. So now we're just figuring out how to open up a brewery. And we already have a lot of people on our team that is helping us do that. So yeah, I think that's where COVID and the pandemic kind of made us hit that detour, take a different route.

0:27:00

Sarah Rodriguez: And it sounds like it's, especially with the working that you had been doing before heading in the brewery direction, it sounds like a lot of that is building up to it.

Eric Jackson: For sure. Absolutely. And I've noticed that now. I'm thirty-seven now and I've been in hospitality prior to being here almost eight, nine years. And so being able to direct and to lead and to come up with a plan, all that stuff that I was doing in hotels I'm doing now. I'm leading a team. And for me it's, like, man, I guess this was all meant to be. This is the first time I think in my life where I feel like everything in my past kind of led me to here. You asked me, you was, like, what did you want to do and all that? I didn't know but now I know. And I know because of everything that happened and kind of just where I want to go now.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. Yeah.

0:27:58

Could you talk a bit broadly—and I know you’ve got a lot of things moving right now which sounds so exciting—in your experience with Uncap and Capsoul, what are some unexpected challenges or successes that you’ve had that you didn’t anticipate when you started blogging and everything?

Eric Jackson: Sure. I don't know if I have any—say it again—challenges?

Sarah Rodriguez: Unexpected challenges that have come up or also unexpected successes you couldn’t anticipate initially.

Eric Jackson: I would say my unexpected successes were—I’ll speak on it with Uncap Everything. Getting sponsorship from Wicked Weed, doing videos for Guinness. I remember when they first hit me up 2021, maybe it was, and it was, like, hey, we heard about you. We like what you do. We’d love to do some stuff with you. I’m, like, Guinness wants to do stuff with me? Okay. Cool.

0:29:00

And that was, like, a year-long partnership. I ended up able to go to Baltimore to tour the facility with my friends. Got a hotel, was able to record it, and I produced the whole thing so that was fun for me. Another great relationship that I find as a success with Uncap is Allagash. Allagash has been—they have been amazing. Just very friendly. They just have been very friendly. Me and my partner went up there last year, two years ago. I met them for the first time, met the head brewer and just had a really good time. So those successes that were unexpected were the ones

that Uncap had me traveling, Uncap and my blogging had breweries paying for me to do XYZ. And I think that's what started helping me realize my value.

0:30:01

And I think in some portions of it I really started to believe it and I wouldn't let anyone tell me otherwise. And I think that's why Capsoul is where it's going because, yeah, we don't have it all right now but I'm doing it. I know what I know. I have great connections. I've worked on the beer side and so I'm very confident in that and I think those successes kind of was the fuel for Capsoul to be where we are now.

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

Eric Jackson: Now, I think the unexpected—not failures. What did you say?

Sarah Rodriguez: Challenges.

Eric Jackson: —challenges is the fact that I haven't been in the beer industry that long, especially in the capacity that I believe that we can do it. Learning about the different permits, learning about just business, learning about trademark names. We recently went through a cease and desist already. It's not public but I'm gonna say it now, 'cause it was crazy.

0:31:04

It was wild. There's this brewery, I'm not going to say—it was up north, and they called—well, first they messaged us and then I ended up calling them to kind of like, let's figure out what's going on. My name's Eric from Capsoul, and they went off on me on the phone.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh, no.

Eric Jackson: They went off. [Laughter] I'm a good guy because I definitely could put that information out there but I'm not, but I'm saying that to say those are some of the challenges that we are dealing with already. And it amazes me —

Sarah Rodriguez: And you haven't even opened.

Eric Jackson: Y'all are worried about us already? Okay. Cool. And you're yelling and cussing me out. All right. Cool. If it was face to face it might've been a different story.

0:32:00

But I say that to say there are things that we are still learning and there are absolutely people in other breweries out there that are very aware of what we're doing, even at this level. And I'm, like, yep, I know we're going on the right route.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah, that's not a bad sign.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, it's not. I was pissed off earlier but . . . [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Eric Jackson: That guy made me so angry.

Sarah Rodriguez: I can imagine.

Eric Jackson: Whew, it was rough. What else? Unexpected challenges. That, the trademarks, getting our permits in line. There are things, for instance, like learning the laws about how we can produce beer, where we can produce beer. I think that's, like, one of the major parts of our learning is understanding the law as it relates to brewing alcoholic beverages.

Sarah Rodriguez: Um-hm. That's a lot.

Eric Jackson: It is a lot. And there's a lot of loopholes, too, though. [Laughter]

0:32:59

And it's crazy once you just read the laws it's, like, oh, that's how some of these people get away with stuff.

Sarah Rodriguez: Right. Right.

Eric Jackson: So that's where we are right now, really learning the law and reading.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. And so more, on, I guess, the brewing side. Could you talk to me a bit more about the process, working with recipes?

Eric Jackson: Yep.

Sarah Rodriguez: What has been your role on the specific, like, the brewing side? What has that been like?

Eric Jackson: Sure. So Darryl [Puller] is our head brewer. He brews all the beer. Most times I'm there helping 'cause I told him, I was, like, I'm gonna learn this too. I've brewed before but not at the extent that he does.

Sarah Rodriguez: Like home brewing or smaller batch?

Eric Jackson: Home brew, um-hm. For sure. Him and I, our dynamic is really one of influenced by me, I think, in just talking about the beer and how different beers resonant or how different styles resonate with us. Or what message we want to bring.

0:34:01

So it almost doesn't start with the beer, it starts up here and then kind of converts into the product that we put out that we hope people will get what we had up here when they drink it. So as far as recipes are concerned Darryl writes the recipes. We kind of go back and forth. I'll ask questions, like, okay, why are we using this yeast as opposed to this yeast or this hop as opposed to that hop? I know the differences in the types of yeast and hops and the flavor profiles and the byproducts of the yeast, so we kind of go back and forth. Even this morning we were talking about a 420 beer that we're doing and we're gonna be using—what are we using? Terpenes? So I've been doing research just on and on, all right, how can I get terpenes in the beer? Which is the best way? Do we put it in the whirlpool? Do we dry hop it? All this stuff. So more so I'm kind of helping him as far as research what we want to brew.

0:35:00

I taste a lot of the beer. He knows I'm gonna be honest. That's what I was doing with Uncap, reviewing beer, so I've drank a lot. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: I hear you.

Eric Jackson: But even things that I've skipped over is classes that I've taken. Man, I'm drawing a blank right now. Cicerone, studying with Cicerone. Taking all flavor courses at Hardywood. So I have the background and some education on where beer should be at the final process so we kind of work together in that aspect.

Sarah Rodriguez: Nice. And I imagine you can't get out of at least learning some of it when you're involved in it so much.

Eric Jackson: Absolutely, um-hm.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. That makes sense. Could you talk a bit more about, I guess, particularly at your events that you've done how you engage with community? What have been your experiences like building community and to know the community that's already there, that type of thing?

0:36:00

Eric Jackson: Yeah. It's collaboration. Collaboration for me is intentionality. So it's inviting specific vendors out. [Indistinct] back at Sprout which we did—I can't remember—oh, last year we did Sprout and Sprout was a witbier. The can design had a sprout. It was all about nature and earth.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. Who'd you do that in collaboration with?

Eric Jackson: Rotate.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, Rotate, which is a sneaker shop. So we collaborated with them, and we invited out Green Vibes RVA, which is, like, a plant shop. So she came in, brought all of her plants—well, most of them—set up around the shop, and she had a—when you clip plants, and you make new ones out of the . . .

Sarah Rodriguez: Propagate?

Eric Jackson: Thank you so much. [Laughter]

0:37:02

Sarah Rodriguez: I gotcha.

Eric Jackson: We had a propagation plant table so during the event people were able to purchase a plant for five dollars and she showed them how to propagate. Very easy.

Sarah Rodriguez: Cool.

Eric Jackson: Any time we have an event I always want to find ways to make it interactive because community is nothing without interaction. It's about finding those vendors, finding those partners that will complement what you're doing and your mission. Because at the end of the day it'll bring everyone else together and they'll see that silver lining in everything that we do.

Sarah Rodriguez: Um-hm. I imagine that means you get to work with a real diversity of businesses and groups in Richmond which is cool.

Eric Jackson: Sure. Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's awesome.

Eric Jackson: Yep.

0:37:59

Sarah Rodriguez: I guess, where do you typically—this is more on the logistic side of where are you guys brewing? Whose equipment? Your equipment? What is that setup like?

Eric Jackson: Sure. Right now we're still home brewing. So we brew at Darryl's place, fifteen gallon set up. Got, like, seven fermenters. I think we're about to buy a thirteen-gallon fermenter 'cause we need more beer. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. That's a good sign.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. So yeah, we're brewing at his house.

Sarah Rodriguez: Cool. What are those brew sessions like or is it mostly him?

Eric Jackson: No. He usually brews on Friday so if I can make it out there I will. And they're usually fun. We're out there in his garage, driveway. He brings the whole rig out so I'm boiling the water. I usually mill the grain or grind the grain, pour it in. It's a fun time. We drink beer. He's a big whiskey person. So it's a nice day. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Does whiskey complement beer, or does it depend?

0:39:00

Eric Jackson: No. No, I don't think so. [Laughter] Someone else might disagree with me but I don't think so.

Sarah Rodriguez: It's just extra fun.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, for sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure. Are there any specific beers that you guys have worked on creating that you particularly like? Any favorite ones?

Eric Jackson: Oh, yeah, for sure. The chocolate lager. It's called Night is Dark. It's a crowd favorite. It's one that we have fallen in love with. We're about to brew it for a third time this upcoming Friday. But yeah, that one's been one that a lot of people were talking about.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. And what do you think it is about that?

Eric Jackson: Again, remember I told you, it's very drinkable. It doesn't taste like your typical beer or even your typical dark beer, 'cause most people think, oh, it's dark beer. It's gonna be bitter and roasty.

0:40:01

It's nothing like that. It's just very drinkable. I think it was at 6 percent. Very smooth, very chocolatey. Yeah. It's just one that people enjoy drinking.

Sarah Rodriguez: It sounds super accessible, especially if you're trying to bring folks into craft beer.

Eric Jackson: Um-hm.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's awesome.

Eric Jackson: Yep.

Sarah Rodriguez: You've mentioned it a little bit but any other thoughts on the future, kind of where things are going? Progress on getting a place —

Eric Jackson: For Capsoul?

Sarah Rodriguez: For Capsoul.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, for sure. Our next step is securing our TTB and getting registered with VDACS and ABC. So we've already started that process and we're hoping to have that done by July, August.

Sarah Rodriguez: Cool.

Eric Jackson: So what you'll see come July and August is we won't be brewing in the garage anymore.

0:41:00

This last event I told the team, I was, like, this might be the last one that we do like this because a lot of attention is on us, so people are going to be making sure we're doing stuff right just to maybe cause a issue. So I understand that eyes are on Capsoul, so we have to do everything by the book. So moving forward come July or August our TTB will be in place. We'll be set up—currently we're set up at Black Heath Meadery, so we subleased some space there. We got a brewing rig that we use from Ardent. Tom let us use it. And what's gonna happen is they'll come out, check the brewing space out, and say, okay, this is where you're brewing, we see the tape, everything. You're good. Once that happens we'll be able to go and brew at Ardent as a contract brew.

Sarah Rodriguez: 'Cause you'll have the certification.

0:42:00

Eric Jackson: Exactly. Basically what happens is we pay them X amount of dollars to brew our beer and then we'll distribute it through more than likely Reverie, so it'll be all over Virginia at that point. It can be in stores; you'll get it anywhere.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's exciting.

Eric Jackson: And while we're doing that we'll be building up our investments.

Sarah Rodriguez: Do you have—maybe this is just kind of talking about imagining—what would you like to see in terms of a physical space? Do you have an idea of a neighborhood, what kind of vibe you're looking for?

Eric Jackson: Yeah. Neighborhood, we've been looking at Manchester.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay.

Eric Jackson: We're very attracted to the areas that are not attractive because I want to get into a Scott's Addition before it becomes a Scott's Addition. [Laughter] I want to get into a place before it becomes a big thing or before they disperse a lot of people in gentrification.

0:43:01

Especially in Richmond, a lot of the breweries—and that's nothing to them—but a lot of it is gentrified areas that are —

Sarah Rodriguez: It's part of the process.

Eric Jackson: It is. So if anything, I would love to be in those spots before anybody else to make sure that the community is taken care of. We want to have gardens there. We're going to have a retail shop, not just a wall that has shirts on it. But this is our thinking, it's about fully dreaming and exposing what's in here out there.

Sarah Rodriguez: Absolutely.

Eric Jackson: So a retail shop, lots of greenery, lots of open windows for sun, podcast room. What else did we talk about? Event space for sure. It will definitely have food, so we've been thinking about food concepts. You can't open a brewery nowadays without having food already be a part of it.

0:44:02

Yep, that's what we have so far.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's awesome. So it sounds like very much a headquarters almost for all the different things you're doing.

Eric Jackson: Yeah, everything. Everything, yeah. For sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's awesome. 'Cause they each support each other in some kind of way.

Eric Jackson: Um-hm, yeah. 'Cause Tye is a podcast producer, so if we can get somebody in to record podcasts they might get a beer too.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Eric Jackson: It's all about how can we—again, collaboration. And we're just collaborating within ourselves, it's a collective, and every person on the team has a specific duty and will have a specific department once the brewery opens.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. Good. Could you talk a bit about what your team is right now?

Eric Jackson: Yeah. So myself, there's Tye, talked about him earlier, Darryl is head brewer.

Chris Smart, he is our creative director, so he manages pictures.

0:45:03

Him and I kind of tag team with pictures 'cause I do photography too and I like what I like.

[Laughter] We kind of tag team but he produces the label art, most of the fliers, any of the video that you see. He's working on a website right now. But he does anything that deals with the creative side and visuals. And then we have C.M. Bryant. He is our merchandise director as well as a co-owner, but he just makes sure—he orders the shirts, glassware—we're getting the best pricing.

Sarah Rodriguez: Nice. Sounds like a team.

Eric Jackson: It's a team of five owners but then we also have Selam, and we are chiseling at her role right now so we're trying to figure out exactly what that is.

0:45:58

But we kind of settled it on people officer, so any event that happens, anytime that we need to communicate with our volunteers or making sure we're focused on community that's what she's going to be for. And she's been monumental in helping me write the mission statement and things like that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Nice. That's important.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. So we've got a team of six and then we have volunteers that always show up. It's a growing team for sure.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah. That's exciting.

Eric Jackson: Yeah.

Sarah Rodriguez: Awesome. Well, I think that's most of the questions I have. Is there any favorite memories, stories, or anything I didn't ask about that you want to talk about?

Eric Jackson: I don't think so. There probably is but nothing off the top of my head. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: That's okay. Well, thank you so much.

Eric Jackson: Yeah. Thank you. That was fun.

[End]