



Dan Mouer

James River Homebrewers

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Date: March 16, 2023

Location: Legend Brewing Company, Richmond, VA

Interviewer: Sarah I. Rodriguez

Transcription: Sharp Copy Transcription, LLC

Length: 53 minutes 37 seconds

Project: Tapping Into Richmond Beer

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Sarah Rodriguez: This is Sarah Rodriguez with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm here outside of Legend Brewing in Richmond, Virginia. Do you mind introducing yourself for the recorder?¹

Dan Mouer: Hi, I'm Dan Mouer, and I'm enjoying a beer with Sarah [Laughter] on the deck of Legend Brewing.

Sarah Rodriguez: A beautiful sunny day. Could you tell me about—well, first could you tell me your birth date for record?

Dan Mouer: I was born on December 21st, 1945.

Sarah Rodriguez: All right. And where did you—where were you born? Where'd you grow up? What was your family like?

Dan Mouer: I was conceived in Richmond, I was born in Key West, Florida, and I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay. Tell me about your family. What'd your parents do? Do you have siblings?

Dan Mouer: I'm one of six kids; the second of six kids. My mom and dad met here in Richmond towards the end of World War II.

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¹ There is wind in the background of the audio which makes parts of the interview inaudible.

My dad was in the Navy, based out of Norfolk. My mom worked for the Navy here in Richmond. Somehow, their paths crossed. And I am convinced that I was conceived on the rocks in the river up here, one of the favorite hangout and necking spots of Richmond. [Laughter] And then the war ended shortly after that. In fact, I think I was conceived on or very close to VE day, and might have been part of the celebration. I don't know. But my dad was reassigned down to Key West, and that's where we ended up for a while until he got—until the war was all the way over, and he got out of the Navy.

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And then they moved to his home up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Like I said, I was second of six siblings, and we had three girls and three boys. My dad worked as—he got trained as an accountant after he got outta high school. And then after the service, he went to work for a small family-owned manufacturing firm that made one specific railroad car part [Laughter]—

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh wow.

Dan Mouer: —and worked there for the rest of his career and ended up becoming their chief financial officer. That's a big title for a company that still only had, I think, at most twenty employees or something like that. But it was a good life for him. And my mom was, obviously with six kids, mostly a housewife.

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She always had some kind of job on the side selling Avon or [Laughter] something similar. And about the time I got into high school, my mother then got into local theater. She became, I mean, she was always a singer. I mean, she sang all day, every day in the house, doing whatever. And I

somehow inherited [inaudible]. I think she drove my dad crazy, and I drive my spouse crazy singing constantly. So she got attracted to this neighborhood theater group, and went into doing musicals. And she played roles like Mae [sp] and Dolly, and some of those things like that.

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Now, this was mostly after I had left home to go off to school and whatnot, so they went on to have a whole different kind of life [Laughter] after I was out of it. But that's what I think—that was sort of the result of most of the six kids getting old enough to start going off to college, and things like that.

Sarah Rodriguez: And where did you end up going to school?

Dan Mouer: Well, my first school experience was the University of New Mexico on a Navy scholarship, and I went for a year to University of New Mexico. That's where they sent me. I was a physics major. And then that summer after the first year, I took my first midshipmen's cruise out of San Diego, and then I decided I really didn't want to be in college. I really wanted to be an artist or a musician or something, and I dropped out of school for the next 10 years.

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When I decided to go back, I went to VCU [Virginia Commonwealth University], and I studied anthropology. And after that, I went to Simon Fraser University out in Vancouver, and specialized in archeology at that point. Then I went for my doctorate. I went back to Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh for my PhD. And then I came back to Richmond, and got a job at VCU, and that's where I spent my career, basically.

Sarah Rodriguez: Nice.

Dan Mouer: I did all that thanks to GI Bill money that I got from spending a year in Vietnam back when I was still a pimple-faced kid. But the first thing I had done when I got out of the Army was I used GI Bill money, first of all, to go to film production school in New York.

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And I spent the next three and a half years living in Manhattan, and working as a writer, photographer, filmmaker. But New York was not my style, so I came back to Virginia. This time I went to—I moved to the country outside of Charlottesville. And this was in the—this was like 1971–72. And I met a young lady, who was a school teacher, and she was gonna have a summer vacation, and I had just made a small bundle of money on some freelance writing I had sold [Laughter]. And so we went off together to Europe for the next four months.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh wow.

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Dan Mouer: [Laughter] And we bought a beat-up old 1950s Volkswagen, and drove all over Europe. And this is pertinent because it was doing that that got me just absolutely in love with old world beer. I was never in love [Laughter] with American beer. [Laughter] American beer did nothing for me. Well, I didn't care for it, and it wasn't my thing. But after spending time in England, Ireland, Scotland, The Netherlands, Scandinavia, and Germany, and so forth, I came to like what I still think of as the old, the great old, traditional kinds of beers. Eventually, we got—by the time I was established in my—starting to get established in my career back here in Richmond, I decided I wanted to make that beer.

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It was available. It was very available back then, which is one of the things I kind of don't like about the great craft beer revolution is it's actually moved all the fine, old European beers and British beers pretty much off the shelves.

Sarah Rodriguez: Those European beers were available—

Dan Mouer: They were very available.

Sarah Rodriguez: —here?

Dan Mouer: There were bars that just specialized in European or international beers. I could get beer from New Zealand, beer from Australia, beer from [inaudible] all the great beers from Europe, even including, fairly early on, a lot of the Belgian heavy ales, and things of that nature. But, anyway, I wanted to make those beers. I've always been a cook. I've always done the cooking in my household.

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I still do, at the end of the day. I think I'm basically a fermenter, a fermentologist. I'm gonna use that term because I ferment anything that doesn't get outta my way fast enough. So I make cheese and I make bread, etc. So, anyway, I decided I wanted to try to make good beer. That was my whole instinct. Now, this was about 1979. And I don't know if you know this chronology, but 1978, the Congress passed and the president signed a bill making brewing beer at home legal.

Sarah Rodriguez: Jimmy Carter, right?

Dan Mouer: Yeah, Jimmy Carter is a hero for that. [Laughter] So once that was passed, I started looking for where can I get stuff to make beer?

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And there were not many places. I finally stopped somewhere on an ad for a homebrew shop, a supply shop called Alternative Beverage in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Sarah Rodriguez: Alternative Beverage?

Dan Mouer: And they're still there. They're celebrating 50 years this year, I think.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow.

Dan Mouer: Yeah. And I went to—I started ordering. I found—I started looking for books to learn how to do it 'cause there weren't any that were easy to find, certainly none from the USA. But I finally discovered Dave Line's *Big Book of Brewing*, and that launched me. And I still think it was wonderful that I was lucky to find Dave Line's book, because he was a good brewer.

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He was an English brewer. He was well known and kind of a leader in the homebrewing scene. So they were 10-15 years ahead of us. I mean, actually, there has been a continuity of homebrewing in England forever, but it had come back as a hobby in the '60s. I think Dave wanted to kind of get in the front of that movement, and his book was great because it taught you how to brew using grains and hops; not extracts. I mean, he mentioned them, some of his recipes included 'em, and some of his recipes are hybrids where they use malted grains and then malt extract. But malt extract was, at that point, not available in the United States.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Oh really?

Dan Mouer: You couldn't get it, no, not in the late '70s. Oh, well, I'm sure it was somewhere but not many places. You could go to the grocery store, and buy a bottle of liquid malt syrup that was sold because people use it to make bread, and you could stick a cube of Fleischmann's yeast in it. I don't know if you've ever—you may be too young to remember yeast in cubes of sticky stuff that are wrapped in aluminum foil. But forget about—

Sarah Rodriguez: Kind of like a bouillon cube?

Dan Mouer: Yeah, something like that. A little more crumbly [Laughter] but, yeah, like that. And there was no hops available anywhere.

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So once I discovered Alternative Beverage, I started buying stuff they were bringing in from England mainly, 'cause the hobby had really taken off in England but, as far as I could tell, it didn't exist over here. And by the time it got to 1980, I was [inaudible] brewing regularly, and I decided there must be other people who are interested in doing this. So I printed up a flyer, and I went around to some of the places that sold good beers, import beers, and things like that, and put up flyers saying, "Are you interested brewing at home?" And when I went to one store to put up my flyer, I found another flyer another guy had put up basically saying the same thing.

Sarah Rodriguez: Really?

Dan Mouer: So we were on a path. [Laughter]

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So I contacted him, and we got together, and within a few weeks, we had formed the James River Homebrewers, and we had a—

Sarah Rodriguez: What was his name?

Dan Mouer: His name was Mark Stansbury. Mark no longer drinks, no longer has anything to do with brewing, and I haven't seen or heard from him in probably 10 years now. But he dropped outta the hobby entirely. I think he decided he needed to stop drinking, which is fully understandable to me. [Laughter] So he's not in it anymore. But we had seven or eight people, and the club took off, and has gone on and been—I think we've got 40 years now.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow. Tell me a bit more about the early years of the James River Homebrewers. Where did y'all meet? What were y'all doing?

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Dan Mouer: It depends on where you—when they were—of course, we started meeting mainly in people's house. I think our first meeting was around either mine or Mark's dining room table. That's the kind of thing we did at first. We didn't have a set regular place to meet. We just went from house to house for years, really. Eventually, we started meeting here in that back room. Now, that took a while. We had several years under our belt before we—well, the Legend didn't show up until 1990. I think it's about 1990. So we all obviously had a lot of history of meeting in people's dining rooms. The club was always fairly small, but we had—I think we were an enthusiastic crowd, and we did demonstrations. We did brewing demonstrations to people.

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We had our own kind of internal competitions. Eventually, we kept growing and getting—and we weren't alone after—after 1982 or '83, it was getting more and more common for homebrewing to become a hobby. The American Homebrewers became a big deal, the

association [inaudible], so we started staying in contact with other clubs through that, and having bigger competitions. I guess it's just sort of a normal growth of something that catches on. We've had dry periods. There were periods where the membership went way down, and then there's other times—and I would back off.

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I would be active for five, six, eight, ten years or something, and then I'd back off, and not do it for a while. And then I'd go back, and a group that had been down to maybe twelve or fifteen people [Laughter], all of a sudden, there's forty or fifty people showing up for meetings. Eventually, we left here because we got too big for it. We were filling up this space. I mean, it was getting to where we were almost having—running into competition with the customers who wanted more of the seating space, and we're in there drinking our beer. [Laughter] I have to say, Legend always treated us well. In fact, I think they were very upset and hurt when we pulled out. But then we started meeting up at the restaurant where we are now, up at Mekong.

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I haven't been there in a good while. The food's a lot better out there. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Good food up there.

Dan Mouer: Yeah. But this is still—I'm kind of attached to this place just because [Laughter], like I said, you can sit here and do this, and it's only a mile to my house, at the most.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's pretty nice.

Dan Mouer: Yeah. But I haven't come here since this pandemic started, so it's kind of nice for you to gimme an excuse to do it.

Sarah Rodriguez: Of course, for sure. And could you tell me a bit more about maybe—what are some of the early, if you remember, some of the early recipes that y'all were working on with James River, things that y'all were talking about early on? What were the topics that were interesting to y'all back then?

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Dan Mouer: That's a good question. I will say this. You gotta keep in mind that when we started up, there was no such thing as the craft brewing. It did not exist. So beer was Miller, Budweiser, or it was foreign. And so foreign beer meant English, like Bass or John Courage ales, etc., or it meant Scottish ales, or stouts from Ireland, etc., all of which were readily available in town, or it meant you went over to the continent, and it was German, or it was Dutch, or it was Czech. [Laughter] Beer, pilsners, and ales.

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But early on, I think most people like me had started out making English pale ales. So almost everything was an English pale ale. You did not see other kinds of beers very often. People would make—a stout was fairly common, so that would show up. One of the early developments out of our homebrew experience, and I don't know if this was widely true or if this is something special in Richmond, is we all started making brown ale.

Sarah Rodriguez: Brown ale?

Dan Mouer: Yeah. And when Legend started up, their first beer was a brown ale.

Sarah Rodriguez: Was the brown ale, yeah.

Dan Mouer: And so it's like—and they said up-front, they did it because it's like homebrew that you can go and get at the bar [Laughter] or in at a restaurant. So that was the focus.

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At the time, I remember, the first signs of craft breweries was, really, you would hear about and occasionally see Sierra Nevada pale ale, or we would see Fritz Maytag's beer. What am I trying to say? I'm just blanking on it now. That's the trouble when you got 77-year-old brain cells.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's okay.

Dan Mouer: But, anyway, those were rare. Now, IPA was something I remember from being a teenager because as a teenager, my favorite beer to sneak, if I could get away with it, was Ballantine IPA, made up in New England.

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And I think what was nice about it, it was a little darker than typical pale American pilsner-type ales, and it was very hoppy. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Did you like the hops?

Dan Mouer: I did. [Laughter] Not so much now. But, I mean, I still—IPAs are not my—I think I finally have settled, and my favorite kinds of beer is really one of those European lagers and English beers.

Sarah Rodriguez: I'm impressed that you have an answer to what's your favorite beer.

Dan Mouer: You got me into that. I like them all, but I think I love the creativity that came out of the craft beer revolution. But I still get pissed off when I walk into a local beer shop, and

there's 137 different IPAs on the shelf, if you can tell that's what's in the can, because it's not obvious. [Laughter]

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Then if you want something like a good Munich lager, a Bavarian lager, you can't find it. They don't—they won't even import 'em anymore. You can't get it. So, in that sense, I'm glad I'm a homebrewer. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure.

Dan Mouer: And that's still where I focus. I focus on old world, old style beers, ales, and lagers. I brew it because I can get it, and it's fresh, and it's made the way I like it.

Sarah Rodriguez: It's exactly the way you like it. Speaking of, can you talk me through the homebrew process as you do it?

Dan Mouer: Sure. I think so. I'm still a simplicity nerd.

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I am not a brew techie type. So I learned how to brew in a big graniteware pot.

Sarah Rodriguez: Just a big old pot?

Dan Mouer: A big old, yeah, enameled steel pot, and to keep my batches in a five-gallon. And I still do it that way, mostly. Now I'm using higher-quality stainless steel pots and stuff like that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Nicer pots?

Dan Mouer: And I have a few gizmos, and I have a recirculating pump though, some things like that, so I have a little more control over my process. But I'm still basically interested in the fact that beer-making is and always has been a dirt-simple process.

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It is not—it does not need to be high technical. Teenagers and housewives made all the beer in England for 300 years or, and it was done on the kitchen—I'm not saying that's not still challenging or there's not plenty of things that you have to know how to deal with, but it's—all that kitchen wisdom can be applied to brewing as much as it is to making cheese or bread or whatever. It is basically a cooking process. So my typical method today is I am now using what's called a brew in a bag type method, which I remember the first time I ever saw it, I said, "Oh, that's gonna make crappy beer."

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[Laughter] That's gonna extract all the tannins out of the hulls of—and it doesn't. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: It doesn't?

Dan Mouer: [Laughter] It doesn't.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow.

Dan Mouer: Not if you do it right, not if you keep your pH in your mash water proper, and keep your temperature good, it makes good stuff. But, again, I'm not just gonna make a beer that I can go around the corner, and get it out of a tap or pick up a six-pack. I'm trying to make beer that to me tastes like what I now come to think of as real beer, wheat beer. [inaudible]

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And I've done it so long now that I really [inaudible] not a formula that I've hit on [inaudible]. I do sit down with—I make my recipes up. I use online software too, the high-tech tools to work out my general recipe, but [inaudible] I think it needs a little more of— [Laughter] I mean, it's all—

Sarah Rodriguez: It's never at the end as high-tech as it's gonna be?

Dan Mouer: Right, and I don't want it to be. It's not—it's—again, I think—but I'm the same way with cooking. People say, "Oh, I would love to get your recipe for X, Y, Z," and I go, "Recipe?" [Laughter] Put some of this in it, and add that, and when it gets good, then change it, and do this. [Laughter] That's sort of my way of doing things.

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So, to me, it stays a fun, playful process, and I'm always—I almost always am happy with the results. They may or may not win competitions, but I'm not in it to win competitions. It's my hobby. I make wine too. I've been making wine for almost as long as I've been brewing beer.

Sarah Rodriguez: Really?

Dan Mouer: And I go out every—at harvest time, and I—well, as of the last two years, I no longer pick my own grapes. I have found places that will sell me the grapes [Laughter]—

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure. Oh, that's good.

Dan Mouer: —already picked and, in some cases, already crushed.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh really?

Dan Mouer: But it's a similar thing to me. I don't want to set up an elaborate laboratory in my kitchen. I mean, there are things you do need to measure. There's things you need to control.

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But with brewing and beer making and cooking, I have all the same approach. It should be—I should be relying on what I've learned over the years. I've been brewing for forty years. I've been making wine for thirty-five or thirty-six years. And I don't want to go in and turn it into a lab experiment.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure, keep it homebrewing.

Dan Mouer: Yeah, it is homebrewing. Now, I go over to friends in the brew club who have elaborate breweries, and they make great beer, and they can hit their marks. They set out with a target, and they hit 'em each time because they've got really good control. But then, to me, they're drinking a commercial product.

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Sarah Rodriguez: I see.

Dan Mouer: I mean, you're interested in foodways, historic foodways. And I think about the beer people have drunk for hundreds and hundreds of years, and they did just fine without thermometers. [Laughter] I mean, I don't know if I—I think I probably—I used to love to go and try to reconstruct old recipes from colonial cookery books, and stuff like that. But they had their way of knowing when the water was at the right temperature to put the malt in. They would say if you can see your face in the [Laughter]—when the steam is just starting to cloud your face so

you can't see it in the top of the pot now, then it's time to put your malt in it. It's things of that nature.

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So, I think, part of the joy of an approach like that is that you're not sure what you're gonna get, and you can be surprised, and sometimes the surprises are pretty disappointing. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure. [Laughter]

Dan Mouer: And sometimes you go, "Wow [Laughter], I hit the mark this time." So it just keeps you—to me, it makes it fun. It's play. It makes it more like play, and I don't need go out and buy a bunch of expensive equipment, and try to turn my hobby into a job.

Sarah Rodriguez: Well, it sounds like you really found and, through James River, you created kind of a community from this hobby. Could you talk a bit about your experience engaging with community through homebrewing?

Dan Mouer: Well, through—I have to say I'm a little separated from that community these days 'cause I've got to the place where I brew so much less.

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At my age, it's not quite as easy to haul around five- and six-gallon glass jugs filled with [Laughter] liquids and stuff like that. But it's always been a good bunch of people who come in. There's always a core group of people who come into the club, stay with the club, and they end up kind of taking over the various jobs that need to be done. And there's no—I mean, it's never anything but a fun organization. I mean, they're serious. They're all dead serious about beer. I

mean, that's normal. But it's not filled with rules. It's not filled with [inaudible] and competitions and stuff like that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Yeah, not strict guidelines?

Dan Mouer: No. I mean, it's meant to be fun, people enjoy it, and you get together and you taste each other's beer.

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You give each other hints and tips, and you take tips from other people. So it is all about interacting inside the group. And then we've had good experiences when we were meeting here, for example, and probably to a lesser extent now. But when we were here, the customers are—they're all curious about what we're doing and what we're talking about. So we start giving free-wheeling, on-the-spot lectures about [Laughter] how we made such-and-such a beer, and what went into it. And we all used to go as a group down to the islands, and came for the summer festivals, and do the beer festivals, and stuff like that.

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We would help work the festivals for the festival organizers. Easy to get some free beer out of it.

Sarah Rodriguez: That's very nice.

Dan Mouer: So, I mean, I think as a community, I've been interested in how well it sticks together. Even though the faces come and faces go, a generation, you can sort of have different cohorts that come along for a while. But I'm amazed. I go to a meeting now, and so many people who've been there for 15-20 years—there's one guy there who I just think the world of him. He's

a good brewer. But when we—when the club had its 30th anniversary, we came down here, and took over the—

Sarah Rodriguez: The back room?

Dan Mouer: No, not the back room. We always did that for our meetings.

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We took over the deck out there for our festival, for our 30th year, 30th anniversary. And one of the things I had done was to duplicate a beer from a 1720s or '30s Virginia cookbook. I was an archeologist. I excavated the site of Curles Plantation out in Henrico County, and had students out there working for thirteen or fourteen years on that particular site. And among the things we had to sort of help us interpret the site was the first of the Randolph clans who—the woman there, Jane Randolph, first, who was there from like maybe 1710 to 1730.

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As a woman of the plantation, she kept a cookery book, which was a typical receipt book, they called a recipe book. Her receipt book had a beer recipe called Good Ale per Mrs. Cary. And Mrs. Cary was either her sister or her cousin living right across the river. [coughs] And the recipe is really right out of typical 16th and 17th century English recipes for the beer. But my job was to try to decipher how did they make it here at this plantation in this time? What materials could they get ahold of, and how did, you know, how? And so that was my project. Long story short, I made the beer. I wrote it up and published it in *Zymurgy* Magazine.

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And we ended up making it several times for the club. The club people, the club members loved it. I tried to get some of the emerging new craft brewers here and breweries here in town to try making it to sell it. This is a local Virginia beer from 1730 or so. But nobody did. But when we had our 30th anniversary out here, one of the guys who had been in the club for a long time, he just quietly and secretly made a big keg [Laughter] of Mrs. Cary's Good Ale, which is what I call it. And that was our beer for our party. So that kind of—you asked about comradery or community, and that's the kind of thing that's fairly common: people finding an excuse to enjoy each other's company over a good beer. [Laughter]

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Sarah Rodriguez: Well, that reminds—makes me think about—could you tell me the ways that—maybe some more about how your profession intersected with your interest in homebrewing? That was a great example.

Dan Mouer: Okay. Well, I would stretch it a little bit to see how it intersects with [inaudible] interest in food, because as an anthropologist, there's a lot of ways you can kind of focus or specialize within this [inaudible]. I always was interested in food. I started out [inaudible] focusing on the foodways of the Native Americans that were here at the time in Jamestown Settlement.

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And then once I got involved in doing colonial period archeology, I definitely got into the role of cooking, the role of food, the role of beer, of cider, etc., in the annual round of seasons, and in trying to supply and maintain a colonial settlement. And, of course, the differences between the

early 17th century and getting up towards the time of the Constitution signing are totally different. You have so much difference over time and over space throughout that. My interests in beer and brewing, and the roles that they played, became a part of my research, so sort of what some of the things I wrote about.

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One of my, I think, more interesting tacks in my career was to spend time basically focusing on the contributions of Native Americans, the foods, and their ways of preparing foods and using foods, and how that influenced what we now would think of as American foodways, especially in the South 'cause that's where I studied the most and what I know the most about. So, somehow, beer never quite made quite as a big deal in the colonies as it did back in the old country, back in England.

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I mean, even—and you can see that today. You go and spend much time, go up into the Thames Valley up in Oxford, and every little town has its pubs, and they are all individually proud of their specific versions of real ale. And the whole family shows up there in the afternoons, which makes it culturally very distinct from our drinking habits here [Laughter] in this country. So trying to understand that, trying to explain, to understand myself, and then explain to others how or why that might have happened sort of became a good part of my love of studying food and foodways.

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I know in the article that I did on Jane Randolph's recipe, Mrs. Cary's Good Ale, I ended up with a sort of what might be a bit of a frustrating ending. I said that even though I have gone through all the knowledge I can research, and all my own brewing knowledge that I can put into this, trying to make a beer [Laughter] that somebody on Curles Plantation from the 1730s and '40s would recognize [Laughter], and approve of hopefully, you have to realize that you really can never quite—there's too many things you don't know, you can't answer—too many questions that you can't answer.

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You can get a good sense of it. So I ended up, as someone working in the historical context, especially as an archeologist, I have to constantly remind myself and others we really don't know what things were quite back then.

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure. Well, that makes sense. Are there any favorite memories, favorite events that y'all did with James River Homebrewers that you can think of?

Dan Mouer: Well, the one I just talked about a bit, our 30th anniversary, that was—I just found that a very—it was very special, although I think we all got to a place where we said, "How in the hell did this thing last for thirty years?" And now we've got to forty years. [Laughter]

Sarah Rodriguez: Forty years, yeah.

Dan Mouer: And it's been through so many ups and downs. So that was quite [inaudible] probably rather than a single thing that happened.

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Every year, we run the Dominion Cup competition. It was one of the earliest competitions in eastern market and it's still one of the bigger ones. It's just a heck of an event, getting involved with dozens and dozens of people. And we end up judging and awarding prizes and so forth on hundreds and hundreds of different beers. I think we're up to 500 or so brews now, which is no small thing. It's a big job, and it's a fun job. It's exhausting. I sort of got lazy last year, and didn't do much of it.

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I think I did one judging session, and I still haven't signed up for it this year, but I think I will. Because, again, I like it but my energy level isn't quite up to up to like some of the other guys. The other guys I'm thinking of are now well into their 50s [Laughter] or early 60s.

Sarah Rodriguez: The younger guys?

Dan Mouer: Yeah. [Laughter] [inaudible]

Sarah Rodriguez: Where do you see at this point the future of both the craft of brewing and for James River Homebrewers?

Dan Mouer: I may not be close enough to where they've been recently.

0:45:56

Having stayed kind of shut out through the pandemic, I'm feeling out of touch and not sure. I think what I'd like to see, what I hope to see, and what I think we are seeing to some extent is a starting to downplay a little bit some of the novelty beers, all the IPAs and the fruit beers. They are creative, and some of 'em are just wonderful. I mean, they're a real treat. But I'm kind of hoping—and maybe I'll be [inaudible] [Laughter] without basis, but I'm kinda hoping that we'll

see more of a return to an understanding of the historic importance of beer in human society since the beginning of the Neolithic Revolution, and that it [inaudible] to keep some of those traditions going.

0:47:05

Innovation's cool. Novelty is cool. I love creativity. You can't fault it. But I really don't like it when I go to a meeting, and fifteen guys and women come in with their latest IPA. [Laughter] Now we don't see people competing though to have the hoppiest one in the room anymore, things like that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Might be for the best.

Dan Mouer: [Laughter] And there's a lot of good beer being brewed. But I'd love to see people go back and embrace the traditional beers of the world, which I never let go of. So maybe this is my personal hobby, and I shouldn't try to foist it on anybody else. [Laughter]

0:48:05

To me, when I go to one of the breweries, one of the craft breweries here in town, and they're pushing their latest pilsners, and I drink it, I go...pilsner has a taste like pilsner. [Laughter] And pilsner comes from Plzeň in Czechoslovakia, and it uses certain kinds of malt. You can't find the off-the-shelf stuff from the American supplier that supplies all of those [inaudible]. Every one of them get their stuff from the same person, all American malts. [inaudible]

Sarah Rodriguez: Those traditional European—

0:49:01

Dan Mouer: [inaudible] hops, and making beers that start to approximate [inaudible], and when they do that [inaudible] [coughs] they have a big advantage because the beer is fresh. A beer that was brewed in Ramin, Germany, and then stuck on a ship, and shipped around the North Sea and across the Atlantic, and stuck in warehouses for God knows how long until it finally gets to some [coughs] local beer shop, is old. And it may be good, and it can be very good. But that freshness makes all the difference in the world. And I think that was—that's always been the strength of homebrewing: the freshness. Excuse me. [coughs]

0:50:00

Dan Mouer: I've got a tickle in my throat, probably from talking.

Sarah Rodriguez: Well, I have asked most of the questions I'm interested in. Is there anything I didn't ask about that you wanna mention? Any memories that popped up, any stories?

Dan Mouer: I'll think of them all as I drive away.

Sarah Rodriguez: As soon as I leave. [Laughter]

Dan Mouer: [Laughter] No, I don't have—I don't have a lot of memories of some specific stories. I think if there's any way I could characterize this club is that as much as it has changed and evolved, grown and shrunk over time, it's always felt the same to me. It's always been a bunch of enthusiastic brewers [Laughter] who like to make good beer, like to talk about it, like to learn about it, like to share it.

0:51:00

And that I think to me is the lasting story, the unfading story. So we've had a lot of really, really good brewers in this club. There have been some really tremendous brewers in this club. I'm not

one of them. I'm a good brewer. I brew beer I really like and most people like. [Laughter] I don't know if anybody's [inaudible] my beer. But we have some knock-your-socks-off kind of brewers in this club, and that's good. [inaudible] besides IPA [inaudible] [Laughter]. I'm teasing to some extent. I do think it just—it never ceases to amaze me. In my neighborhood, we have a nice little shop there that special...it's a bicycle store. They sell and they fix bicycles, and so forth.

0:52:01

They sell bicycles. And the other half of the store, they have kind of a little gourmet grocery shop, and a huge wine and beer section, huge. And it's just like every other little beer shop and wine shop in town. You go to the wine shops, they've got hundreds of varieties of wine from all over the world. Then you go over to the beer shelves [Laughter], they've got 150 IPAs.

[Laughter] And I think, why? There's so much good beer from around the world. Why can't we get hold of it? And if I ask them, "Hey, do you have any"—and I give 'em a small list of English pale ales or something, they look at me like, "What's that?" [Laughter] because they don't have it. You can't even—I think, half the time, the wholesalers can't even get them more.

0:53:03

I think the craft beers have outcompeted everything else. That's the way of the market, and I can't complain about that. But that's what people want. But those of us who remember that there's really, really good beers [Laughter] out there in the world that don't taste like orange juice or whatever, so...

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

[End]