

**Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013**

1 [Interviewer requests and receives permission to record the interview and to use the
2 information gathered]

3

4 00:00:00

5

6 **NIKO TONKS:** **Alright. My name is Niko Tonks; I'm here in Conroe, Texas. We're at**
7 **BT's Bar and Grill. I'm here with Dave Fougeron and Jeff Hamm, from Southern Star Brewing.**
8 **And Dave, if you wouldn't mind, just saying your name, and your position at the Brewery, and**
9 **also your - - your birthdate, just for the record.**

10

11 **DAVE FOUGERON:** **Okay. My name is Dave Fougeron, I am the President and CEO of**
12 **Southern Star Brewing Company. And I was born on July twenty first [21st], nineteen seventy**
13 **three [1973].**

14

15 **NIKO TONKS:** **Alright. And - - and Jeff, just for the record, same thing.**

16

17 **JEFF HAMM:** **My name is Jeff Hamm, I'm a Brewer at Southern Star Brewing**
18 **Company, and I was born April eleventh [11th], nineteen eighty six [1986].**

19

20 **NIKO TONKS:** **Alright. Well, so, my first [1st] question, is - - it's a two [2] part thing.**
21 **First [1st] of all, I just - - I want to know a little about your personal history, and - - and the**
22 **history of the business. So, so, first [1st] of all, why Brewing?**

23

24 **DAVE FOUGERON:** **That's always a difficult question to answer. No matter how many**
25 **times somebody asks - - asks me that. I didn't really expect to get into this profession. I had**
26 **brewed beer in college, I really enjoyed it. Found out very quickly, that I had a taste for good**
27 **beer. And really, because I'm a "cheap skate", started to make it, instead of buying it,**
28 **because it was more cost effective, I guess, when you're starving to death, and you've got**
29 **your food. You know, but any way, that's how I started. Cause happened to be a home**
30 **supply store, in College Station, I just inherited sort of a - - a "Home Brew System", and**

31

**Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013**

32 00:01:38

33

34 started Brewing there. When I got out of college, I realized pretty quickly that nobody was
35 hiring "Wildlife Fish and Science" Majors. So, I began desperately looking for jobs, anywhere
36 and everywhere. And I saw, an advertisement for a job opening at "Saint Arnold Brewing", in
37 Houston. And I thought, "Oh, what the hell, that might be fun. That would be kind of cool."
38 So, I applied, and much to my surprise, I got the job. And, thus began a "life long" love affair
39 with Craft Beer. Well, making Craft Beer.

40

41 NIKO TONKS: So, it seems like, so, first [1st] of all, you were - - you were at A&M,
42 and this, and what year was it that you started at Saint Arnold?

43

44 DAVE FOUGERON: I started at Saint Arnold in ninety seven [1997], in August of ninety
45 seven [1997].

46

47 NIKO TONKS: Okay. And so, it seems like most of the people I talk to, in - - in the
48 Beer World, have in their mind, have some sort of - - some sort of beer epiphany moment, like
49 when - - when it hit them, that beer was the thing. Or, that, you know, if they had a certain
50 beer that they really loved? Do - - is there - - is there a moment, in your mind, that's kind of
51 like that?

52

53 DAVE FOUGERON: I had a lot of moments in my mind like that. The first [1st] time that I
54 realized that beer didn't taste like horse piss was, when - - when I was over at my friends
55 house, and the guy who actually, he does our web design now, but the guy that gave me his
56 "Home Brew System", and this was the background with Scott, I was only at seventeen [17],
57 or so. He had home brewed a batch of beer, and he cracked open a bottle of it, and, you
58 know, I wasn't a very big drinker in high school anyway. So, but I tasted this beer, I remember
59 it tasting like, you know, malt, and ground up oak tree, or something. And I thought, "You
60 know what, I don't really like this too terribly much. But, this is better than the beer that I've
61 had." So, I was intrigued. My first [1st], my true epiphany came, in college, when a friend of
62

62

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

63 00:03:30

64

65 mine went to a liquor store, he said, "You know they make more than one [1] kind of beer?" I
66 was, like, "Yeah, sure, they make Coors, and Shiner, and, you know, and Miller, and." He
67 goes, "No, I'm not talking about that." And he went to the liquor store, and brought back
68 several bottles of beer. And I cracked open a "Hacker Short Dovelvison [sp]," and - - and
69 tasted it. And I thought, "My God, that is good." And I let him have a little sip of it, and he
70 bought it. But, I hoarded it, and drank it all. And that was pretty much my "Beer Epiphany".
71 And then, I think everybody remembers when they first [1st] had their [Inaudible] and a lot of
72 pale, for the first [1st] time. You know, when they're sitting in a bar, and they get an S and P.
73 And I remember - - remember exactly, you know, it was like a flat, like a photo - -
74 photography, from my memory of my first [1st] S and P. And I was just like, "Wow", you
75 know, so. I guess that's my first [1st] American Craft Beer that I had, that I - - that kind of
76 changed, and rocked my world. And, it was on, [Inaudible].

77

78 NIKO TONKS: And Jeff, I'm always curious about this question. I love these answers.
79 Do you - - do you have a moment in mind? I mean, you probably have multiples of these, just
80 like Dave does. But, can you think of one [1]?

81

82 JEFF HAMM: I can think of, I can't really think of the epiphany when I started
83 gravitating towards Craft Beer. But I know it had to do with a certain amount of Pale Ale. But
84 the epiphany, when I realized the importance of - - of Brewing, and the Culture of Brewing,
85 and - - and Craft Brewing, in particular, to me, was when, I believe it was, my after my senior
86 in college, or high school, before I went to college. I went on a trip with my parents to, my
87 family to England, and Germany actually. And my Dad and I took a trip to Leads Castle in
88 Kent. And there just so happen, right next to Leads Castle, was a little restaurant, and it
89 happened to be a Brew Pub. And we had some of the - - the Pale Ale, what. I don't even
90 remember what kind of beer it was, because I was so initiated. But, it was, I - - I can assume it
91 was Pale Ale there. And there were easting goldenings growing on the wall, of this Brew Pub.
92 And I had this Pale Ale, and my Dad and I both thought it was amazing. And that - - that's kind

93

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

94 00:05:50

95

96 of the point, when I just had the epiphany that beer is -- is more than just something that
97 comes in a keg, that I found to do a stand off of, so.

98

99 [Laughter]

100

101 DAVE FOUGERON: Have monkey, have monkey.

102

103 JEFF HAMM: No, it had historical, Cultural, and more importance than I had
104 imagined before.

105

106 NIKO TONKS: Moving beyond kid monkeys. That's -- that's an important step.
107 Okay. So, so, Dave, back to you. So, you're -- you're at Saint Arnolds, in the -- in the mid, late
108 nineties [90's]. How -- how do you make it from there, just starting your own place in Conroe,
109 starting from the start?

110

111 DAVE FOUGERON: That was a long road. You know, in the mid nineties [90's], I got to
112 Saint Arnold, the Market was crashing, and gross was flat. And I didn't know anything about
113 the whole Market, or really anything about Craft Beer, other than I just landed this job, that I
114 got paid incredibly little, and I did a whole lot of work. And I loved like no other thing that I
115 had ever done. And, I knew almost immediately that this is what I wanted to do. I wanted to
116 wear the rubber boots, and get after it. And I had to work seventy [70] hours a week, and I
117 was making eighteen thousand dollars [\$18,000] a year, I didn't care. It was just, that was
118 part of it. You know, you work your ass off, and you get home, and you're tired, and you
119 know you've got to wake up in six [6] hours, and do it again. And, you know, and sometimes
120 you think, "Why do I do this?" And almost immediately it comes, "Because you make beer.
121 You know, that's what you want to do." And so, I think in Texas, I'm kind of getting off here,
122 which what your question was. But I think that it kind of, it, you have to have a certain
123 passion, you know, to do the job. So, let's get back to your, what you're talking about. I guess

124

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

125 00:07:32

126

127 it is kind of what you're talking about. That's how I knew. And it just, I had to get the
128 experience. And you can't jump into, well, actually you can. But, I didn't feel like you could
129 jump into this. I didn't even entertain having my own Brewery, until, God, probably two
130 thousand and, [2000], late two thousand and six [2006]. And we didn't really start working on
131 it, until, you know, maybe March, two thousand and seven [2007]. So, I mean, it was, once I
132 had the idea, it kind of happened. I mean, you kind of entertain, once you do this, what do
133 you do? But I didn't get serious about it, until four [4] months, before we actually started
134 working on it. And, doing the - - doing the,

135

136 [Talking Over Each Other]

137

138 DAVE FOUGERON: It's hot, the fries, and the nachos, I'm sorry. I didn't really, said, it was
139 a lot of - - it was a lot of learning. Is just how you get to a place like that? You have to learn,
140 and when I started the Brewery, I realized I didn't know anything about running a business. I
141 knew how to make beer; I knew the industry a little bit. But, I had no idea. So, it's been a
142 giant learning curve. And still is, you know, half [1/2] the time, I just like I know what I'm
143 doing, I don't know what the hell I'm doing, I'm running around in circles. And, but I think that
144 I feel, you know, I've got a good, I've got my finger on the Post Market, and - - and not only
145 the Market, persea, but just the crappier - - the crappier Market. And a lot of the decisions
146 that I make are based on kind of "gut instincts." And it seems to be working, so. And I'm
147 learning how to run a business. You know, every day I learn more things. But what's cool
148 about Brewing is every day I learn something new about Brewing. And you think, you know,
149 "you can't teach an old dog new tricks", but I learn every day.

150

151 NIKO TONKS: So, was Craft Beer a tough sell in Conroe? Or, did it just kind of pick up
152 naturally?

153

154

155

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

156 00:09:27

157

158 DAVE FOUGERON: It was a tough sell in Conroe. It was an easy sell in Houston. I mean,
159 Saint Arnold obviously paved the way for Craft Beer in Texas, but more so in Houston. But it
160 amazed me, even when I was working at Saint Arnold, in two thousand and seven [2007],
161 you'd still meet people that wouldn't. You know, "We have a [Inaudible] Brewery in Houston.
162 Who are these guys?" And you still do to this day, there's still people that don't have any idea
163 that there's any, you know, that - - that beer exists beyond the big guys. And it just amazed
164 me. In Conroe, Conroe is strange. Conroe's got this perception that, and I'm not saying
165 everybody does. But, my only hate meal has come from Conroe. And it's like crazy, you
166 know. You know, the people are straight up in a bar, and says, "Your beer sucks, it's the worst
167 thing that I've ever had." You know, I'm like, "Okay. You know, I don't come to your job, and
168 tell you that your work sucks. But, I guess, you know, it's the nature of the beast." But, yeah,
169 Conroe has been, it's starting to embrace us, a little bit. But Conroe is sort of a - - a back
170 woods, and beer drinking, for sure. But I think that expresses a lot of East Texas. And I think
171 there's just, you know, they're a little behind the - - the curve. And once the people taste the
172 beer, and can get past their - - their barriers of, and their stigmas of what beer is, a lot of them
173 like it, you know. And a lot of them are very receptive. I'm not saying that - - that, you know,
174 we get a lot of hate mail from the people in Conroe. I'm just saying that, you know, we get a
175 lot of people in that have no idea the beer is there. And they go, "Wow", and a lot of them
176 embrace it. And it's still changing, and there's a lot of people now, in Conroe, when you go in
177 places, that know that there's a Brewery in Conroe. And it's starting, we're starting to become
178 some sort of a community, if not focused point, it's kind of a. And we're on The Board of
179 Tourism, and, you know, now, and we've got, you know. I think it's a good thing for the
180 community. And - - and The City has always been very well receptive to what we were doing.
181 And, you just have to win the hearts of the people.

182

183 JEFF HAMM: It's not as cozy for that "Blond Bombshell". But there's an amazing
184 amount of people that you go in with. Looking at it like this. "What's in this [Inaudible] our
185 shirt on?" And ask you if you work at the Brewery? And they say that they love [Inaudible]
186 out in Conroe." That they can't get enough of "Buried Hatchet Stout", and that's - - that's kind

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

187 00:11:47

188

189 of cool. Cause it's definitely a -- a small town. And it would be cool to do to Conroe, what
190 Oscar Blues did to Lyons, Colorado. You know, kind of be -- kind of open -- open people's
191 eyes to Craft Beer. You know, and be -- be Conroe -- Conroe be the town that Southern Star
192 is in.

193

194 [Talking Over Each Other]

195

196 DAVE FOUGERON: And I think that that's gonna happen. I do. I do, I'm excited about
197 that, as well, I'm glad that you brought that up. Cause I think it's gonna be very cool to where,
198 you know, and there's still gonna be people in Conroe that don't know that we're there. But,
199 you know, as we grow, and get bigger, and hopefully start making a name for ourselves, that
200 people think, you know. When, especially with Craft Beer drinkers, you know, here in Conroe,
201 even if they live in, you know, Nebraska, or California, or whatever. They hear Conroe, they
202 think, oh, that's where Southern Star is at. You know, and that's, I think it would be. I -- I
203 would like our Brewery to become a point of pride in, you know, in the community. And, and
204 I think it will get that way. I mean, the Markets tend to be that way anyway, especially, you
205 know, the people that care about that sort of thing. So, you want to break, and order food,
206 and?

207

208 NIKO TONKS: So, so, continuing on that theme, Jeff, you made some of off hand
209 remark about, people embracing "Bombshell Blond". And, you know, I'm just, I'm curious
210 about your line up, and I -- I know, I don't know what percentage "Blond" is of -- of your
211 sales, and this can go to either of you. But, I know -- I know it's a significant percentage. So,
212 where do you? I mean, do you see the "Blond", as kind of like an education tool? Or, is it
213 something that you need to sell? Or, -- or,?

214

215 JEFF HAMM: I can actually see Blond, I think we use it kind of as the Introductory
216 Beer, and Dave will say that our "Crossover Beer." Or,

217

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

218 00:13:35

219

220 DAVE FOUGERON: It's our "Batch of Crossover Beer."

221

222 JEFF HAMM: It's actually our "Crossover Beer."

223

224 DAVE FOUGERON: That's not saying we're not proud of it. Not that it's -- it's a beer that,
225 that mystifies me, the Beer that, the history of that beer is -- is really actually funny. But, we
226 won't get into that right now.

227

228 NIKO TONKS: Oh, please do, please do.

229

230 DAVE FOUGERON: Is that the kind of juicy stuff you're looking for? We were contracted,
231 hang on. We were contracted, not contracted, but we were approached by Tommy Bahamas
232 to make this -- to make Bahama Blond, whatever the hell they called it. And, actually Bayogg
233 [sp] Brewing in California approached me first [1st]. They said, "Here, we've got this, we're --
234 they were gonna pull out of Texas. So, they were wanting us to "Contract Brew." And I told
235 them, I said, "Well, you can't -- we can't "Contract Brew" in Texas. It's against the law now,
236 unless your grandfather, you know, people that have been doing what not, and there's lots of
237 -- lots of complicated things." But, I said, "What we can do, you know, cause there's no laws
238 that say we can make this, and you, you know, you can put whatever "Tap Ale" you want on
239 it. You know, the law is pretty obscure." They don't go in, and we thought of that, so. So,
240 you could do that. You can make somebody's "House Beer", sort of. But it has to be your own
241 beer. So, I thought, I said, "Okay, well". So, I approached them, I said, "I will make the beer
242 for you". But, I explained we've got to make it ourselves. And we -- we can sell it ourselves.
243 They said, "Whatever, that's fine." So, I got the recipe from Bayhock [sp], and I looked at it.
244 And I thought, "Man, that beer is gonna taste like shit."

245

246 [Laughter]

247

248

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

249 00:15:09

250

251 So, I'm sorry. So, I - - I just knew from looking at it, that that wasn't something that, you
252 know, this is not beer that I was gonna be happy with. So, I - - I told the guy, I said, "Look, give
253 me two [2] weeks, I will go back to the Brewery right now, whip up something, make it, sell it.
254 You know, or bring it back to you in a couple of weeks, in a bottle, and see what you think."
255 So, I did, a real quick recipe, just kind of "off the cuff", of course, it wasn't just made up. I
256 even used the Bible, just like any other time. I always use the Bible when I make beer.

257

258 NIKO TONKS: Wait a minute, what's the Bible?

259

260 DAVE FOUGERON: The Bible is "Ray Daniel's Designing Great Beer". That is something
261 that we always use. And I'm, I'm "Old School", when it comes to that. I like, I think that's a
262 certain magic in writing your recipes down, and having a calculator, and a pencil. You know, a
263 pencil and a piece of paper. And thinking through what you're doing. And thinking about
264 what you're doing. And it becomes, you know, yes; you can just throw in the ingredients
265 together, and make beer. But, especially when you're designing a beer, and that's what the - -
266 the title of that book is perfect. "Designing Great Beer." When you're designing a beer, you
267 have to have numbers, because you have to, when you tweak it, you've got to tweak those
268 numbers back and forth. And sometimes it can be really small. Sometimes it can be really big.
269 But you've got to have those numbers down. So, all our beer starts out as math. And, anyway
270 I used, I did use them, I will be expecting my commission, Mr. Daniels.

271 Anyway, so, we made that beer, and the "Blond", and sold it as, you know, "Southern Star
272 Blond". It wouldn't even "Bombshell Blond" then. And it was Draught only, and actually the
273 establishment that we're sitting at, got wind that we did that. And they said, "Hey, we want
274 some." I said, "Okay." So, we sold them - - we sold them some. And it started selling like
275 crazy. And, soon "Molly" wanted some. And all these other bars started wanting some. And
276 then it started leaking down into the downtown. And before we knew it, we were making a
277 crap load of it. We're like, "This beer doesn't really even have a name." You know, so, so, I
278 mean, "Southern Star Blond" sounds pretty generic. So, we - - we hunted around, and looked
279 for a name, and finally decided on "Bombshell Blond", and - - and got a spiffy, nifty, looking

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

280 00:17:21

281

282 can that's got a - - a little hot cartoon chick riding a bomb. And, it's - - it's turned out to be
283 perfect. I mean, it's our "Work Horse". We - - it's seventy percent [70%] of our production.
284 But I guess what I was really getting to is, we're proud, I'm still very proud of that beer. I don't
285 drink it a whole lot, because it's not as complex as I like my beers. But, that's what, it's a nice,
286 you know, "Crossover Beer." And I think what I like about the most is that beer is, this is a
287 little bit cliché, but that beer is more than some of its parts. I mean, it's - - it's two [2] row,
288 you know, two [2] row Pale Ale Malt, and Vienna [sp] Malt, different kinds of hops, and they
289 are very neutrally used. And, you would think that it would be a very boring beer. But it's
290 not, especially to somebody that's just getting into "Craft Beer" drinking. And people drink it,
291 and I think the perception is, they drink it, and they go, "Oh, my God, I can taste this beer.
292 And I like the taste of this beer." Cause they're not used to tasting their beer. They're used to
293 tasting, you know, they're used to drinking it ice cold out of - - out of, you know, the horse
294 trough filled with ice, or whatever. And it's freezing, and by the time that you get, and you try
295 to drink it as fast as you can, cause you don't want to get down to that half [1/2] of inch of
296 beer left in your bottle, cause it tastes like crap, you know. And I would think that the last
297 little bit of the "Bombshell" tastes pretty good. You know, and it should, so. Now I've
298 rambled on for like an hour and a half [1/2], and.

299

300 NIKO TONKS: That's - - that's your job. I just wanted to say, for the record, that I
301 saw the - - the "Bombshell Blonde" can on a "Top Ten [10] List of Sexiest Beer Cans". Or,
302 "Sexiest Beer Packaging", in general, on the Internet. So, so, speaking of cans though, I
303 wanted to talk to you about - - about cans, cause you - - you put all your beer in cans. And
304 that's one [1] of the defining aspects of "Southern Star." And I was just wondering what
305 prompted you to pick cans over bottles? And what your thoughts are about cans versus
306 bottles? And the image of cans in sort of the - - the popular imagination?

307

308 DAVE FOUGERON: Cans have been challenging, in some ways, and just beautiful in other
309 ways. And I think the beauty outweighs the challenging. I'm a Crafter, so, the cans have made

310

311 00:19:29

312

313 me focus on Package, more than anything. And that's one [1] thing that I don't like about
314 beer. Beer right now is all about Package. And, well, maybe not right now, but, I mean,
315 traditionally, you know, in the last four [4] years, or so, it's been like, "I mean, look you've got
316 one [1] brand that - - that their can turns blue when it's cold. And it's just, you know, this
317 whole Package, this whole Advertising crap. And they lose sight of what the beer is about, I
318 think. There's no slam to the - - to the Brewers, their beer is perfect inside. But it's just really
319 bland. I think people look more, you know, for flavor. But, I guess, out of necessity, I've had
320 to focus on Package, because we are the only ones, you know, we're the first [1st] ones, we're
321 not the only ones anymore with cans in Texas. And, we're kind of not the first [1st], by any
322 means, but kind of got on the - - the "Train of Thought", that cans. Hey, these - - these cans
323 that were so maligned by, you know, "The Craft Beer Drinkers", there might be something to
324 it. And there is. We've been very happy with our cans. I mean, they're a really good Package.
325 They don't impart any flavor to the, you know, I saw a very interesting study on; I wish I could
326 quote where it came from. But apparently there's more perceived metallic taste from bottles,
327 than there is from cans, just because of the crown. If you especially drink it out of - - out of
328 the bottle. I very rarely drink our beer straight out of the can. It's just a Package, a vessel, you
329 pour it in a glass, you know, enjoy it. It's is, it remains about the beer. But, since you asked
330 about cans, the - - the obvious reasons are, you know, they're intangible light, they will never
331 skunk. They're lightweight, you know, but you can take them with you various different
332 places. One [1] bonus thing, I've been, you know, messing around in - - in Package Air. And In
333 Package Air is - - is sort of, maybe I'm doing it wrong. I don't know, but it is just ridiculously
334 low. And, if you think about it, I mean, that kind of makes sense. There's, you know, an inch
335 and a half [1/2] gap in the neck of a bottle. And nothing, we're putting our cap down on top
336 of the top of foam, in, you know, our [Inaudible] beer in the cans. So, you know, theoretically,
337 our beer stays better longer. We haven't had to test too much, cause beer sells so damn fast
338 right now, so. I don't want to jinx ourselves, but, but, I mean, getting "In Bottle Air Tests", to
339 where there's just. Or, "In Can Air - - In Package Air Test", to where's it's just negligably low.
340 I'm used to seeing, for a typical bottle, a good run on bottle is point three [3]. And I think

341

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

342 00:22:08

343

344 that's milliliters of air in the package. And ours are coming at, as far as I can, it can only go,
345 the scale doesn't go that low. Looks like point zero [0] two [2], or something. It's just
346 ridiculously, like a little air line of air in there, so. I'm pretty excited about that. I'm also very
347 excited about, in the spirit of, what, I think, Craft Beer Brewing is sort of all about is, we get all
348 of our materials right down the street. Which is really cool, I mean, that's, instead of having a
349 truck have to drive across the country, it drives two [2] miles. It not only saves on -- saves on
350 shipping costs, but it cuts down on -- on, you know, gas consumption, and -- and whatnot.
351 And, and it, most importantly, I think, it -- it puts money back in to the local economy. And,
352 employees, people, local -- local people. And, I mean, we're ridiculously small amount of
353 their business. But, at least we're an amount of their business. And that's -- that's my
354 biggest, and I didn't even think about when we started putting it in cans.

355

356 NIKO TONKS: So, one [1] question. Well, first [1st] -- first [1st] of all, what -- what
357 was your inspiration to put it in cans? Cause it's, I mean, it's better for the beer obviously.
358 We've demonstrated that. But it's -- it's a fairly unorthodox way to do it, just in the Craft
359 Beer Industry. So, what prompted you to -- to pick cans?

360

361 DAVE FOUGERON: I got rocked, well, I saw, the first [1st] time I saw beer cans, I was, or,
362 Craft Beer Cans, I was flying to or from the ABF, The American Beer Festival in Denver. And I
363 was on the Frontier Airlines, and I said, "What kind of beer you got?" And they were like, "Oh,
364 we have blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and Dale's Pale Ale." I'm thinking, "I've never heard of
365 that, I will get that. They have Pale Ale in a can, sweet." And so, I got it, and I opened it, and I
366 was like, "Man, that's really good, you know. That's -- that's really good." And then I kind of
367 forgot about it for awhile. And I went to The Craft Brewers Conference, I don't remember
368 what year it was, I believe it was two thousand six [2006]. And, I was there, and somebody, I
369 don't even know who, I ended up, I looked down, and I've got a "Tall Boy" of "Surly Furious"
370 in my hand. And I looked at it, and I was like, "What?" You know, I mean, it was just a bold,
371 rude design on the front of it. And I cracked it open, and took a swig, and it blew my mind. I

372

373 00:24:21

374

375 was like, "Holy crap, a beer that tastes like that come in cans?" You know, revisiting it, you
376 know, Surly and Oscar Blues, both great beers. But that was what did it for me. And it
377 shocked me. And it was in a "Tall Boy". And I thought, "You know what", well, I didn't think
378 that at the time. But, in the future when I started thinking my - - my own, you know, put it in
379 my own Brewery, that had made such an impression on my mind, that I - - I remember that I
380 was like, "I didn't want a "Tall Boy". You know, so, that's the way it rolled. And, now we've
381 got "Pine Belt" in Tall Boys. And hopefully we're blowing people's minds one [1] can at a time,
382 as well, so.

383

384 NIKO TONKS: It was definitely, it only blew my mind more than once. The other
385 question that I had, it arose from what you were saying, was talking about local. And I feel
386 like that's - - that's a term that gets thrown around a lot. You know, "We're local, we do this,
387 we do that local." What is - - what is "Being Local" mean to you? Why is it important? And,
388 what does beer have in particular to add to that sort of "Local" equation?

389

390 DAVE FOUGERON: Well, it's - - that's, it does, the term "Local" does get thrown around a
391 lot. Local, to me, just means there's people that live in your community that are making a
392 living doing something. You know, beer has, especially a Crafter has this big focus of "Local"
393 this, "Local" that. I think that it has kind of a - - a rebellion against the giant conglomerate,
394 you know, Breweries that are, at least, the giant Breweries that - - that are viewed in kind of, a
395 space with multi national entities. Really there's not a whole hell of a lot about, you know,
396 our Brewing that's Local. You can't grow barley in Texas. You can't grow Hops in Texas. Our
397 water's, you know, from the ground. And, I mean, nobody imports their waters, everybody's
398 water is Local. But it is a Local Business. And I think that that's what, you know, that's what it
399 really comes to. And, I mean, that's just - - that's just on the Manufacturing side. I think,
400 really when you get, when you say the word, "Local", it - - it pertains to, pertaining to Craft
401 Beer. Especially away from the, you know, the Regional areas, you know, that, well, there's
402 really no regional areas. If you go to, to the Malting places, they get their hops from

403

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

404 00:26:30

405

406 someplace. If you go to the Hop Region, they get their Malt from someplace else. What I
407 think is meant by "Local", in the Craft Brew circles, is that our Breweries collectively tend to
408 pull people together, to a community. And give your community a sense of "Local Pride." I
409 think is what it is. You know, the beer has always been like that, to where, you know, for the,
410 throughout human history, pretty much has been a very, you know, you make it in one [1]
411 location, and people right around you drink it pretty much. And, that's, I think that carries
412 through. I know that, in our Brewery, when we open it to Tours and Tastings, it's - - it's cool to
413 see people drinking our beer. And, have a good time, and what not. But I really like the fact
414 that people come together there, and hang out with each other, and talk. And there's people
415 that, and - - and these people wouldn't know each other, but for that. But they've come, and
416 made this course with each other, over a pint, in the "Tradition of Humanity". Which always
417 has, you know, I call beer, "A Social Lubricant", cause it is. You - - you bring together in public
418 houses, you know, and talk. And whether it makes any difference, or not, you at least have
419 discourse with another human being, which is a rare thing, in this day and age, you know. For
420 - - for doing it.

421

422 NIKO TONKS: So, communities are a really interesting topic. And - - and one [1]
423 thing that pops out at me is, we're - - we're sort of slowing running through all the beers that -
424 - that you guys make. But one [1] of the - - one [1] of the most interesting things, to me, is the
425 Pro Am Competition that you do every year. Which is just, FYI, a competition where people
426 submit beers. And in a competition, the person who wins the competition gets their beer
427 produced by the Brewery. So, can you tell me what prompted you to - - to get into that? And
428 what Value you think it brings to the business? And also to the community?

429

430 DAVE FOUGERON: Honestly, Niko, I can't remember why I did, started doing that. It's a - -
431 that's what happens when you have a Brewery, you forget a lot of the stuff. No, I - - I thought
432 maybe, you know, that would be a good idea, let's do that. And I don't, so, I don't remember
433 what the inspiration was. I'm sure, in the back of my head, Samuel Adam's was done, and
434 there was a lot of people that did it. You know, and - - and do it. And, but I think really,

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

435 00:28:54

436

437 you know, I - - I helped form a "Home Brew Club" here, a "Local Home Brew Club" here, and
438 have always been fairly active in "The Home Brew Community". And I realized that, you
439 know, Houston, and especially, or maybe just because I live here. I noticed that Houston has
440 got a very rich, and a lot of very, very talented Brewers. And I've tasted some very unusual
441 beers, and some very pleasant beers, that, you know, that nobody, no commercial Brewery is
442 gonna - - is gonna make all the time. You know, or it might, but I don't know. I mean, it's just,
443 I wouldn't have thought of some of the beers that we had. I mean, I would have never
444 thought that. You know, is that we were having "Smoked Porter [sp]". I love Smoked Beers, I
445 love Porters, but it just never crossed my mind. "Hey, I want to make Smoked Porter, and do
446 it." You know, and we have the "Smoked Porter", and it's great. You know, this year's - - this
447 year's beers, "Double Cascade" is Dark Ale, which is an interesting beer. And, I'm happy to
448 have that too. It's just a - - it's a lot of fun, and I think that it - - it helps connect us with the
449 Home Brewers. It's strange; not very many businesses have a group of enthusiasts, that do
450 their business at home. Can you imagine if, you know, you know, I can't think of any other
451 manufacturing, you know, places that do that. Can you imagine, you know, if the.

452

453 NIKO TONKS: Nobody built a Hondo at home.

454

455 DAVE FOUGERON: Right. Right. That's something they just don't, so. But the people that
456 make beer at home, are very enthusiastic about it. And they're kind of our "Core Supporters".
457 And I thought, "Wouldn't it be cool, you know." I mean, it wasn't an - - it wasn't original idea,
458 by any means. But I thought, "You know, I want to do that. You know, I mean, hell, Saint
459 Arnold's has been doing that for a long time, with their "Big Batch". But I wanted to take it a
460 little bit beyond the "Big Batch". But the "Big Batch" is one [1] style, and everybody brews
461 that style. I thought. "Hell, let's just have a "Best of Show Competition", without the actual
462 show. And that's pretty much what the "Pro Am" is. We don't really judge the beers so much;
463 as we just kind of pick what we think is the best ones. And, it's completely arbitrary, and I'm
464 saying, you know, the ones it's - - it's sanction. But, I wouldn't be able to do what we did, so.

465

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

466 00:31:12

467

468 [Laughter]

469

470 NIKO TONKS: Do those beers go to GABF every year, and they compete, or?

471

472 DAVE FOUGERON: Yeah, they do, they go to GABF every year, and compete. And most of
473 my [Inaudible], well, not really. But, a lot of our beers don't pass the first [1st] round. Pro
474 Am's always pass the first [1st] round, and go on to the second [2nd] round. Every since - - the
475 two [2] beers that we've done before have. So, at least, we do some right. Haven't won
476 anything yet, but GABF is a stiff competition, so.

477

478 NIKO TONKS: Home Brews tend to be "true to style", I think so. They might add to
479 it. So, just getting back to "community", in general. I know that you've also done things like,
480 "National Home Brewers Day", where you - - you invite people in, and you do a - - you do a
481 "Brew Day". And - - and I've heard you say that - - that, or maybe I heard Jeff, you say. "That
482 the Core Demographic is [Inaudible] and home brewers." And I just wondered if you could - -
483 you could talk - - talk a little bit about how? How you ended up with both of those segments,
484 in - - in particular? Either one [1] of you.

485

486 DAVE FOUGERON: You forgot hot girls in that.

487

488 [Laughter]

489

490 DAVE FOUGERON: I'm just.

491

492 NIKO TONKS: My bad person.

493

494 DAVE FOUGERON: Yeah, no, The Home Brewers, I think, were a [Inaudible], just golfers.
495 Our - - our company is very strange, that we kind of "self started" on the Disc golf

496

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

497 00:32:23

498

499 course. We all met each other, I met all the guys that, you know, I met, well, not all the guys
500 that I work with. But I met a lot of "The Core Guys", of the company in one [1] day, at the Disc
501 Golf Course. But they all knew each other, and I just kind of came into them, and on an
502 accident. And, I enjoy playing, it's kind of a tradition, at - - at The Brewery that we go play
503 Disc Golf. And the people that started working at the Brewery, they learn how to play Disc
504 golf, or, or, you know.

505

506 JEFF HAMM: Later.

507

508 [Laughter]

509

510 DAVE FOUGERON: No, not later. You got fired, but, you know, like okay, you know, so.

511

512 [Laughter]

513

514 DAVE FOUGERON: So, I don't know, we enjoy doing that. And I think the Home Brewer
515 thing is just kind of a natural thing, so. Jeff, do you have anything to add to that?

516

517 NIKO TONKS: Or, just about community, and beer, in general.

518

519 DAVE FOUGERON: [Inaudible] like you know too much.

520

521 [Laughter]

522

523 JEFF HAMM: Oh, I just think it's, it's kind of cool that, there's just like "Common
524 Ground", because when we go play Disc golf, and we try to, as often as we can, take an
525 "Employee Day", and go play Disc golf. And we're constantly looking in the trash cans, to see
526 what everyone is drinking. And you can, there's definitely, at a Disc Golf Course, there's more

527

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

528 00:33:38

529

530 than Miller, of course, you see your Saint Arnold's in there, and your Real Ales in there. It's
531 just kind of cool, because you reach out to one [1] group, and it kind of bleeds into other
532 groups.

533

534 NIKO TONKS: So, "After Dinner Break", one [1] thing I wanted to ask about, in
535 particular, is - - is related to 'Community', was, I just. I know from hanging out in the
536 neighborhood for a while, and full disclosure, kind of an insider on this interview. A lot of
537 people come through "Southern Star", that have aspirations to start their own places. They're
538 trying to learn how to do things, that are starting Breweries in the area. And it - - it seems like
539 unnatural, in a Marketing Economy, to help those people out. But it also seems like kind of
540 the thing that happens all the time, in the Craft Beer Community. So, I was wondering, if you
541 could talk about meeting people that want to start their own business? And - - and what it
542 takes for you to help them out? And what you get out of that?

543

544 DAVE FOUGERON: I think, in a certain reverse, what I get out of it is, of course, it's kind of
545 self satisfaction, self satisfaction, that - - that Texas will be enriched with more Micro
546 Breweries. I mean, other than that, there's no monetary Value. I mean, sometimes you get,
547 you know, some people come in, and - - and volunteer their time and labor. And, usually
548 though, it takes about a week for that to start paying off. And, you know, that you volunteer
549 for, you know, for a month, and for the first [1st] week, you're following them around. You're
550 more in the way than anything. And then you start going, "Okay, I'm gonna do this." And a
551 lot of people that come in, only stay for a day or two [2]. One [1] more. So, I - - I guess that's
552 really, so getting out of it, like I said, is just the satisfaction that there's gonna be potentially
553 more Craft Beer in Texas. And it is a very strange thing that we're helping potential
554 competitors, that we're not really competitors, so. Jeff has got something to say, as well.

555

556 JEFF HAMM: I mean, as far as the Market Share goes in Texas, especially when we
557 have like.

558

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

559 00:35:48

560

561 [Talking Over Each Other]

562

563 DAVE FOUGERON: They really jack with us.

564

565 JEFF HAMM: That's alright. We have like four percent [4%] Market Share, as Craft
566 Brewers. So, at this point and time, I mean, we all benefit from good beer being produced.
567 Good Craft Beer being produced. And, kind of, you know, lassoing a Market, and Good
568 Market Share. Because, usually what happens, what - - what I tend to see is, people buy good
569 Craft Beer, and - - and they like that Craft Beer. They might, made by that every third [3rd]
570 time, every fourth [4th] time. But they're gonna try other new stuff. They're gonna try
571 everything. So, it seems like it's good for the whole, it's good for all of us, to have good beer
572 being produced in Texas. Because we're only trying to chip away from Miller, Coors, and
573 ABM, to, at this point. Cause there's just so much Market Share to go around. So, you just,
574 the more Breweries scrappers making good beer, the better. There's - - there's so many
575 people, I like to use an example, of the amount of Breweries there are in Portland, compared
576 to Houston. Houston has, yeah, Houston has two [2] for all [Inaudible] purposes right now.
577 Two [2] Breweries, and that's the Fourth [4th], fourth [4th] legacy in the United States? Third
578 [3rd] biggest City in the United States. I mean, think of how many Breweries you can support,
579 so. I just wanted to, I know.

580

581 DAVE FOUGERON: In Portland there are like,

582

583 JEFF HAMM: There's like thirty [30] or something.

584

585 DAVE FOUGERON: Some ridiculous number for - - for the Brew Pubs here, it's like seventy
586 [70].

587

588 JEFF HAMM: Within the City Limits. So, I mean, there's - - there's more than
589 enough Market Share to go around, at this point and time.

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

590 00:37:32

591

592 DAVE FOUGERON: Along - - along that note, I - - I have, my Business Plan, and I was a
593 little naïve, but I didn't know any better. But, I - - I wanted; I based my Business Plan on ten
594 percent [10%] of ten percent [10%], which I thought. "Okay, eventually, you know, that will
595 be sustainable. There's not ten percent [10%] of people, we don't have ten percent [10%] of
596 the Market yet. We still have a long way to go. But, if the ten percent [10%] of the people
597 that drink my beer, just one [1] in ten [10] times, then I did the math on that. And I was like,
598 "You know, we can still do pretty good." What my main kind of mantra for starting "Southern
599 Star" was, is that I've never met an Ex-Craft Beer drinker. Once you have somebody that gets
600 enlightened to actually flavors of beer, they just never go back. They might periodically buy
601 something else. But, I mean, how many ever times? How many times have you ever met
602 anybody that said, "I just, all I used to drink was [Inaudible] Light Pale, but now I drink Ninety
603 Light."? I just, it never happens.

604

605 [Talking Over Each Other]

606

607 DAVE FOUGERON: So, I looked around, and I thought, "There is so many people here",
608 like Jeff said. Four percent [4%] of the Market Share, so many people here, that have never
609 had Craft Beer. There are people, one [1] of my favorite things is when people come in, and
610 they say, "I don't like beer." And I say, "Well, then try this." "Or, I only drink wine." "Well,
611 here have a Stout." That's my go to. Little old ladies, everybody, you know, "I don't really like
612 beer." "Here, have a Stout." And I can't tell you how many, like ninety [90] year old ladies,
613 that I give a Stout to, and they come back, and they say, "That's really good. I want another
614 one [1]."

615

616 JEFF HAMM: Everybody likes coffee and chocolate.

617

618 [Laughter]

619

620 DAVE FOUGERON: Yeah.

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

621 00:39:07

622

623 [Laughter]

624

625 NIKO TONKS: Can you? Can you tell me a little bit about "Buried Hatchet", cause I --
626 I feel like, you know, people that have had it, love it? But it's -- it's a little bit of, maybe a
627 little bit of a sleeper, I -- I don't know.

628

629 DAVE FOUGERON: Well, it's -- it's, I think it's a sleeper, by necessity, in Texas. It's a black
630 beer, that's pushing ninety percent [90%] alcohol by volume. And it's not real, it's not -- it's
631 not -- it's not what you would call refreshing on a hot summer day. It's, you know, it's big, it's
632 dark, it's chewy, it's great for winter time. And some people say it's good for summertime
633 too. I don't drink "Buried Hatchet", a whole lot, because it's got eight and a half [1/2], nine
634 percent [9%] alcohol by volume. And it tastes really good. And it's got some little switch in it,
635 that says, "Oh, one [1] is good. Two [2] must be better." So, I mean, it's a self control issue, I
636 think. I love the beer, that was another kind of -- that wasn't a fluke at all. I went out to
637 design that beer, and just happened to hit that one [1] "straight on the head", within a couple
638 of test batches. And, and I'm really happy with the results. I just -- I think that it's cool as
639 cover, Retro Beer, as far, I mean, when I say Retro, I'm talking nineteen seventy [1970], I'm
640 talking like eighteen seventy [1870], or seventeen seventy [1770]. It's -- it's kind of a Retro
641 Beer, just by the raw ingredients that we use. It's -- it's an unusual beer, it doesn't taste like a
642 lot of other Stouts out there. So, digging on -- digging on "The Hatchet", and it's seems like
643 serious Craft Beer Drinkers, and Giant Beer Nerds, just love it. And, that's saying something,
644 and the fact that we still sell it in the summertime, for, you know, and we're, it's an expensive
645 beer to make. And it retails for ten dollars [\$10.00] a, you know, a four [4] pack. And, in
646 twenty eleven [2011] currency. So, it's, which is rather expensive. So, but people dig it, and, I
647 mean, it's expensive to make it, it's expensive to drink. But, you have four [4] of them, and
648 you're good. You know, and so, you know, you don't even have to have that, you have two
649 [2] of them, and you're fine. So, I look at this way, if you pay, you know, good money for a
650 bottle of wine. Cause it takes a while, it takes a little bit longer to make. It takes, you know, a

651

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

652 00:41:10

653

654 little bit more, you know, raw material costs, or whatnot. And, that's kind of how I feel about
655 "The Hatchet".

656

657 NIKO TONKS: So, moving back to talking about Craft Beer in Texas. It seems like
658 Texas was a - - was a little bit slow to come to the Craft Beer Market, in terms of number of
659 Breweries, and also Market Share, that we were just talking about. But it's growing pretty
660 quickly now, and you guys, you're right on the - - on the vanguard of that growing quickly,
661 with - - with the Craft Beer scene. Do you have any - - any intuition, as to - - as to why now?
662 Why - - why is now, or the last couple of years, the time that Craft Beer just sort of took off in
663 Texas?

664

665 DAVE FOUGERON: I think Texas is a good ten [10] years behind The West Coast. We're a
666 good five [5] years ahead of The Deep South. And, I think part of it too is just the trend of, just
667 the Market Trends right now, Craft Beer is hot everywhere. So, we were due for the growth,
668 because, like I said, we're ten [10] years behind. So, naturally there would be, you know,
669 some people, more people entering the Marketplace. But, if you look around right now, how
670 many Breweries have opened up? God, I don't even know, in Texas. In the last year, you
671 know, it's just like. How many opened up in two thousand and seven [7]? One [1]. How
672 many opened up in two thousand and nine [2009]? I don't know, fifteen [15]. There's a
673 bunch of them, which is cool. You know, I'm glad that we got a little bit ahead of the curve,
674 starting off, cause we had a little chance to kind of flex, you know, stretch a little bit. Flex a
675 little bit of muscle, grow really aggressively, and we continue to grow very aggressively. And I
676 think everybody is growing really aggressively right now. There's a good thing today. It's - -
677 it's happening, I think that beer is one [1] of those things, if you get back to really old school
678 way of thinking, if you go to, you know, Germany. Every town's got two [2], every little bitty
679 town has got two [2] or three [3] Breweries. And if you right down the street, from say,
680 Nuremburg, [sp], or Swinford [sp], to Forest burgh [sp], or something, and you ask for, you
681 know, a [Inaudible] Beer, which is a - - a Brewery in Swinford. In Nuremburg [sp], they're
682

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

683 00:43:15

684

685 gonna look at you like you're insane. They're gonna say, "You're in the wrong town. You
686 know, go down to, you know, to Swinford [sp]." And that's because they have got a beer
687 tradition that's thousands of years old. And that's the way that it is. And that's what, I think,
688 makes Germany so cool. That I think that America is also cool, in different - - in a different
689 respect, because there's so many Breweries opening up. And we're all trying all kinds of weird
690 stuff. I mean, the Rahr [sp] Brewery has got three [3] beers. Whereas, you know, look at
691 LaGavita's, how many beers do they have? And they're putting out all kinds of different
692 beers, and Flying Goggin [sp], you know, and "Dog Fish Head". And all these Breweries are
693 just; you've got a lot more variety. And I think that's really cool, and I think that's part of "The
694 American Spirit", and I think it's definitely part of "The American Craft Beer Spirit."

695

696 NIKO TONKS: Do you? Do you have any, and this goes to both of you? Do you have
697 any - - any sense of where Craft Beer in Texas is going? Where you'd like it to go? Any - - any
698 fears that you have, at this - - at this juncture about the industry, in the State?

699

700 [Talking Over Each Other]

701

702 JEFF HAMM: I - - I think that potential Texas is - - is huge. There's a lot of Food
703 Culture in Texas. Yeah. There's a lot of different areas, there's a lot of different centers that
704 are very unique, lots of different universities. So, I think the potential is great for - - for the
705 Craft Beer Boom, and I think we will soon be equal to California, and Colorado, Oregon, to the
706 Big Craft Beer States. I just, I can't see how we wouldn't be. It's just - - it's just gonna take, it's
707 just gonna be about education right now. And that just takes time. And I think it's happening
708 exponentially already, since the - - this new wave of frontier - - frontier has opened. And, I
709 think that it's obvious that people have seen that, and people from the outside world have
710 seen that. Obviously we've got new Brewery - - - Carbot [sp] Brewing opening up in Houston.
711 Opening by Eric Warner, who was kind of an old name in the Craft Brewing industry, and was
712 the Ex CEO and head brewer, or Brew Master at "Flying Dog", has chosen in Houston, to come,

713

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

714 00:45:37

715

716 and start a Brewery. He obviously sees potential. So, one [1] thing that I do see that's cool.
717 What's cool about this interview is, is what's gonna be important for the growth? The Healthy
718 Growth of Craft Beer in Texas? And the United States, in general, is it's - - it's - - it being
719 thought of in the same sense as food. Because beer is food, and beer should be prepared with
720 food. And that's how we are gonna grow. That's how the industry should - - should grow.
721 Because beer, it's still kind of thought in a different light, as wine, even though they're both of
722 the same artistic caliber, and scientific caliber. And, the artist is - - is very similar. And, it's
723 gonna be important to kind of work with - - with the food, and, you know, be thought of in the
724 same light, and so.

725

726 NIKO TONKS: One [1] thing, that occurs to me talking about a Craft Beer in Texas, is
727 the - - the various Legislative efforts that happened in this Past Session in Texas. And - - and
728 none of them were successful. But I was wondering if you guys have any thoughts about the
729 potential going forward, for further actions? Or, you thoughts about the state - - the state of
730 the "Three [3] Tier System"? And - - and where we're at with distribution right now?

731

732 [Laughter]

733

734 NIKO TONKS: And, and feel free to be, in politic about this one [1].

735

736 DAVE FOUGERON: Okay. Well, I just want to open up the "Can of Worms". I think that,
737 you know, and now we're talking politics and beer. And you're not supposed to do that, but
738 we might touch on religion later.

739

740 [Laughter]

741

742 DAVE FOUGERON: I - - I think that, I'm pretty, I'm kind of a renegade politically. I sway
743 from them, I'm - - I'm socially liberal as hell, and financially conservative, and just all points in

744

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

745 00:47:34

746

747 between. But, I think what happened last time was just a - - it was - - it was politics, as usual.
748 It was fool the public, and there's just so many of the professional politicians, it's the way the
749 System works. The reason why that House Bill didn't get passed, is because Anheisuer Bush,
750 and he - - and the National Wholesalers Group paid, over the past ten [10] years, and have in
751 their pocket, John Whitmire [sp], and Lieutenant Governor David Duhurst [sp], of Texas. And
752 it's time that we stand up, and call these people out. And it's their fault, and it's not their
753 fault, but - - but, I mean, they have, David Duhurst [sp] has received, you know, three hundred
754 thousand dollars [\$300,000] over the past ten [10] years from - - from their Lobby Groups. So,
755 they're buying votes. And - - and, from their, they're buying the vote that counts, which is
756 from The Lieutenant Governor. He killed that Bill. John Whitmire [sp] of Texas, of Houston,
757 killed that Bill. And they did so, and make no mistake about it, they did so, because they are
758 bought and paid for, by Anheiser Bush, and by the National Wholesalers. And that makes me,
759 maybe unpopular with The National Wholesalers. But you know what, call it out. That's what
760 happened, the facts are there. And, I mean, you look at the Ethics Commission, it's right
761 there. They gave him the money, and follow the trail. And they would have you believe that
762 there was all kinds of rig-a-marrow [sp], that was all orchestrated. And they pulled the wool
763 over everybody's eyes for two [2] more years, until Legislation happens again. And they will
764 figure out how to do it next time. And that's just the way that it works. And, until there's a
765 huge community out pouring, saying, "Hey, stop this crap." Then it's not gonna happen. And,
766 you know, I told everybody on my tour, "Look, you know, every time I stand up on - - on the
767 Brew House, and it doesn't make much sense, you know, difference, it's only a hundred and
768 fifty [150] people. But I say, "You know what, if you want to buy beer here, then don't vote - -
769 then vote for whoever runs against David Duhurst. You know, or - - or, John Whitmire.
770 Because they are the people, and support the people that supported us, for ours. And, you
771 know, and support the people that support small business."
772 But what is going to happen, and it always happens, is people will forget about it. And the
773 next time they run, there's a reason why Election and - - and Session are so far apart. The next
774 time they run, David Duhurst is gonna be standing up there with an American Flag flying
775

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

776 00:50:08

777

778 behind his back, patting the puppy, you know, holding the kitten, saying. "Look, I'm America,
779 I love you, you love me, vote for me." You know, and you're, you know, why wouldn't you
780 vote for me? You know, and - - and sadly enough, people are gonna vote for him, cause they
781 don't know, because nobody calls them out. So, sorry. I got a little angry.

782

783 [Laughter]

784

785 NIKO TONKS: No, no, no. That's - - that's totally fine. I think - - I think this is - - this
786 is something that is sort of "under the surface", every Craft Brewery in Texas. And I'm
787 interested in - - in hearing people's views on it. If - - if you were given cart blanche, what would
788 the Craft Beer? What would - - what would "Alcohol Beer Laws" look like in Texas? What
789 would the industry look like, if it was up to you?

790

791 DAVE FOUGERON: I kind of like the Three [3] Tier System. In some respects, I think that it
792 brings healthy competition, it keeps. The Three [3] - - if The Three [3] Tier System wasn't in
793 place, every bar would be a Budweiser Bar. I like The Three [3] Tier System. I - - I don't think
794 it's necessarily a bad thing. In - - in the State that we're in right now, they don't have The
795 Three [3] Tier System, in England. You go to England, you have Fullers House, and Young's
796 House, and whatnot. The Selection isn't as great. In Germany, their "Beer Culture" is even
797 older, so, like I said, but you still, you go. There's very little potential for somebody to open
798 up a new Brewery, in a German, you know, in a German town. So, I like that aspect. Jeff and I
799 both were enlightened by the former head of the T.A.B.C., Lou Bright [sp], last - - last
800 weekend. And he just explained to us why they Texas Laws are so screwed up. Cause they
801 were written in nineteen thirty [1930], for nineteen thirty [1930] policies. And the only
802 people that can change them are these, is The House, and they're bought and paid for by the -
803 - the, you know, the people that have the money. You know, if I had my druthers, I'd like to
804 have three hundred thousand dollars [\$300,000], so I could buy David Duhurst's vote. I mean,
805 if that's the way that you play it, that's the way that you play it. It sucks, but that's the

806

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

807 00:51:57

808

809 way it is. I'm just venting. That's not really way that I would like to do it. But that's the only
810 way it's gonna get done.

811

812 [Laughter]

813

814 Pretty much. Jeff, I'm gonna shut my mouth.

815

816 [Laughter]

817

818 JEFF HAMM: I mean, I think the best thing that - - that happened, like Dave said,
819 "The Three [3] Tier System." "The Three [3] Tier System", because, I mean, it would be
820 ridiculous. We can already - - already we should be up to fourteen thousand [14,000] barrels
821 of beer. But it's ridiculous to do that, because we'd have to start a Distributing Company, in - -
822 in addition to a Brewery, which would cost about the same. So, it's just, it's unreasonable to
823 think that. The thing that we would like to do is, be able to sell our product, just like any
824 other business, at the place where it's manufactured. Like, like you can do in Colorado, or like
825 you were saying earlier. In - - in North Carolina, and not have these Regulations on - - on
826 being, having a designation between being a Craft Brewery or a Brew Pub issues, you know.
827 Have one [1] license, or, and be a Brewery, and be able to start selling to whoever wants you
828 beer, whoever wants to buy your beer. I mean, I think that's the most Capitalist thing to do.
829 So, that - - that's the only - - that's the biggest problem I see with - - with what's going on in
830 Texas. That, as well as the, the labeling issues are really confusing. As far as having two [2],
831 or two [2] licenses for - - for Brewing beer. There's the Brewer's License, and the
832 Manufacturers License.

833

834 [Talking Over Each Other]

835

836

837

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

838 00:53:37

839

840 DAVE FOUGERON: And there's the Brewers Permit, and Manufacturer's License. And a
841 Permit and License mean something completely different to T.A.B.C., as well. And I think it's
842 even more confusing. Cause we can't put beer on our beer.

843

844 [Laughter]

845

846 DAVE FOUGERON: It is ridiculous.

847

848 JEFF HAMM: Yeah.

849

850 DAVE FOUGERON: We can't call our beer "Beer." They call it, Ale or Malt Liquor.

851

852 JEFF HAMM: Yeah.

853

854 DAVE FOUGERON: You know, which is okay. Whatever, you know, it's still beer. But, no,
855 but the labeling is. But it - - it keeps, in a way, you know, in a way, it's kind of good for us. If
856 you, you know, on a - - on a strange level that is kind of superfluous, because it keeps
857 potential competition out of Texas, because they can't get in. But, that's not in the spirit of
858 what we're trying to do. I would love to have some of these beers, that we can't get beer in.
859 Again, it's - - it's not the big three [3]. You know, and if I wanted to [Inaudible], the Ralph Beer
860 [sp], I could go buy one [1]. You can every place else, in the world. You know, but you can't
861 here. So, yeah, I think "The Labeling Laws" are - - are ridiculous. They are ridiculous laws.
862 And that's just the way. But the way that it's set up, like I said, they have to get changed
863 through the - - The Texas House. You know, and - - and, if they don't, you know, and then
864 that's the only way you can do it. It's like these Laws are made, the T.A.B.C. doesn't make
865 Laws, they just enforce the Laws. And may admit, not just Lou [sp], but, I mean, even our, you
866 know, some of our outposts. They're just like, "These Laws don't make any sense, but that's
867 the Law." You know, and we have to enforce them, because if you don't have the Laws, then,
868 you know, you have to have a "Set of Rules." So, that's just the way it happens.

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

869 00:55:20

870

871 NIKO TONKS: And yet, in spite - -in spite of all that, here - - here you are growing
872 quickly, and - - and being, like you said, "An Anchor in the Community". So, I mean, I, you
873 know, it's - - it's definitely an interesting topic. One [1] final question I have for you. And this
874 is something I've observed over the last few years. What's the connection between Brewing,
875 Metal Music, and - - and Prog Rock? Can you - - can you pontificate on that? For, - - for a Final
876 Five [5]?

877

878 DAVE FOUGERON: I'm pretty sure, Jeff, can't.

879

880 [Laughter]

881

882 DAVE FOUGERON: I'm sure Jeff can, he can tell the, yeah, he's gonna get some water.

883

884 [Laughter]

885

886 DAVE FOUGERON: I think that's just inside joke. Most - - most Brewers are nerds, so,
887 Prog Rock comes natural to [Inaudible], and the little bit darker nerds than others, so. That's
888 where the Metal comes in. I think, I mean, honestly, I think that there is a connection. I think
889 there's no coincidence that Brewers like Metal and Prog Rock, because they're extreme,
890 they're out there, especially American Brewers. They're extreme, and they're out there,
891 they're experimental. And that Music kind of sings to our collective souls, of, you know, of
892 how we - - how we make beer. Is we want to make beer that - -that reflects our, we're artists,
893 and scientists, at the same time. So, we want to make beer that reflects our "Inner Visions".
894 And our "Inner Visions" happen to be sort of extreme and weird. And that's pretty much how
895 - - how it happens. And sometimes they can be traditional, as well. I mean, that's, you know,
896 I'm - - I'm a big fan of traditional beers, as well. You know, and "Southern Star" is definitely
897 not, we will definitely not be thought of, in the future, as a - - as a Pioneer in Extreme
898 Brewing. That's for sure. I think we will be thought of - - of, as a Pioneer of Traditional

899

Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013

900 00:57:07

901

902 Brewing. Which I - - which I really like. Jeff's philosophy and my philosophy are - - are a lot
903 alike, as far as, taking, and making interpretations of European, and American Masters. And
904 putting our - - our signature on them. And sometimes being inventive, and - - and, you know,
905 and making different styles. But, but always kind of paying homage to human history, as far
906 as, you know, Brewing Tradition. I mean, Humanity in Brewing of - - of people started
907 Brewing, as soon as they figured out how to. You know, and that's - - that was a long time
908 ago. And.

909

910 JEFF HAMM: Before they figured out how to.

911

912 [Laughter]

913

914 DAVE FOUGERON: Yeah, exactly right. Before they figured out how to, it was like. So, I
915 mean, and that - - and that's what's so cool. You know, and in a way, again I think that's
916 what's so cool about - - about Brewing is the connection to the past. And I think that that's
917 kind of "Southern Star's" thing is, you know, we would like to be connected to the past. Of
918 course, the future, and that sounds so Corporate cheesy, but it kind of, you know, but that's
919 really what - - what it is. Is trying to do - - trying to make Great Traditional Beers, and, you
920 know, sort of Experimental Beers, sometimes with the past influence, sometimes just out of
921 the blue. But trying to make the best beer that we possibly can. And make a living in doing it.
922 And grow our Company a little bit. And, keep employed making beer. And do what we love,
923 and that's what it really comes down to, is doing what we - - we love.

924

925 NIKO TONKS: Alright. Well, and that's - - that's it for the questions I have. Do you
926 guys have any final thoughts? Things that I didn't address? I mean, I.

927

928 [Talking Over Each Other]

929

930 JEFF HAMM: This Interview is over.

**Foodways Texas Craft Brewery Oral History Project
Interview Southern Star Brewing Company
Interview with Dave Fougeron & Jeff Hamm
Date of Transcript: 2.9.2013**

931 **00:58:56**

932

933 **[Laughter]**

934

935 **DAVE FOUGERON: Good.**

936

937 **[Laughter]**

938

939 **DAVE FOUGERON: Drop the mike. Drop the mike, Jeff.**

940

941 **JEFF HAMM: I just want to say, "Keep it at Real". After Dave said, "Make a living".**

942

943 **[Laughter]**

944

945 **NIKO TONKS: I would say that is a no.**

946 **Alright. Well, thanks very much guys. I really appreciate it. And - - and "Keep on Keeping it**

947 **Real."**

948

949 **00:59:12 End of Audio File**

950

951 **00:59:12 End of Recording File**