

**Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017**

Interviewed: Jim and Betsy Dolphin of Delaplane Cellars about their business

Interviewed By: Kim D. Stryker

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Time: 11:30 am

Location: Delaplane Cellars, Delaplane, VA

Transcribed By: Gregory Gannon

Subjects covered: (00:00:00 – 00:14:33)

#Boone'sfarm #cheiffinancialofficer #JimLaw #NewYorkStockExchange #UCDavis #palette
#Chile #Enron #FarmWineryAct #nochildren #nogroupsoversix #nobuses #nolimos #livemusic

(00:15:30) #it'saboutthewine
(00:17:55) #BarrelOak
(00:19:57) #spray
(00:21:12) #stinkbug
(00:21:40) #pesticide
(00:22:47) #JoeFiola
(00:22:49) #TonyWolf
(00:23:44) #Linden
(00:24:39) #Davenport
(00:25:11) #raccoon
(00:25:30) #ripe
(00:26:15) & (00:44:32 – 00:46:25) #RdV
(00:28:26) #NiagraFalls
(00:31:46) #graveyardshift
(00:33:51 – 00:34:14) #artisanwine
(00:34:16 – 00:35:25) #barrels #toast #blendingtrials
(00:35:50 – 00:36:09) #Frenchcooper #Napa
(00:36:52 – 00:37:37) #Bordeux
(00:40:52 – 00:41:36) #Californiaisadesert #fungicide
(00:42:49 – 00:44:20) #polarvortex
(00:49:30 – 00:50:22) #teetotaler
(00:50:22 – 00:50:54) #sweetwine
(00:52:09 – 00:53:43) #TTB (Tax & Trade Bureau)
(00:51:06 – 00:51:49) #Zaserealglasses
(00:53:54 – 00:54:08) #Buzzwalls
(00:55:23 – 00:58:00) #slurry
(01:02:00 – 01:06:00) #bottlingtruck
(01:06:00 – 01:08:00) #cider #PaulRedden
(01:22:00 – 01:24:00) #cellars
(01:23:50 – 01:26:00) #corkedvsscrewtop

**Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017**

(01:28:00 – 01:35:00) #Marshall #PeterSchwartz

(01:39:00 – 01:41:00) #barreltasting

(01:42:00 – 01:44:00) #Sweelystates #DavidKostelnick

(01:44:00 – 01:46:00) #DennisHorton

[00:00:30]

KS: So how did you come to open this business?

JD: I started drinking good wine, consuming good wine, I was a wine consumer in my mid 20's maybe early 20's. I drank Boone's Farm and the other stuff that today I would not call wine.

KS: (laughs) It's funny how many people who are in wine now, admit to drinking Boone's Farm in their 20's.

JD: You gotta start someplace and actually what happened is I had a friend who had been an exchange student in France, and he was knowledgeable about at least Bordeaux or at least I thought he was and he turned me on to some of these French wines that I had never heard of, didn't know anything about, had never tried and I tried them and at first I was like, "geez how can you drink this stuff?" but you kind of, it's like Scotch, you know, you develop a taste for it. I had some career success in my later 20's, and started accumulating wines from both France and California and then I started going out to California on vacations and just became a true wino. In the late '90s I started making wine at home. I don't know where I got the idea from but it occurred to me, "gee, I wonder what it's like to make this stuff?" and so I took a couple of classes, went online and took some seminars that Jim Law over in Linden offered.

[00:02:50]

KS: Talked to Jim. Everybody talks about Jim.

(00:02:52)

JD: I developed a relationship with him. I started making wine at home and a couple of the first batches that I made were actually drinkable. A lot of it was not, most of it was not but that's how you learn. I took the UC Davis online winemaking program. I dropped out because it was too much chemistry for me. I'm a so-called palette based wine maker. So during all that time I was gainfully employed and in the job that I had immediately prior to this it's where we met. I had some issues with the way that company was run, it was traded on the New York Stock Exchange and at least in the early part of it I was the Chief Financial Officer. This was the time when Enron and Chief Financial officers were going to jail. Anyway, I lost that job -it was

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

mutual- and I decided I wasn't really ready to go back to the corporate world so I took some time to look at land trying to find land that would be suitable for building a winery.

[00:04:30]

I spent about a year-and-a-half riding around with a realtor who had a vineyard, still has a vineyard now, has a winery. We had a budget, probably it was too small but you've heard this one, you know how to make a small fortune in the wine business? You start with a big one. We started with a small one. So we found this property and we kept coming back to it. It was just kind of in the ballpark pricewise, the land seemed appropriate. It was a very difficult seller to deal with and we have a background in real estate investment. It seemed like every time we made an offer somebody else would come out of the woodwork with a better offer, so they said and then it would fall through. We did this 3 times and on the third time the contract that was submitted didn't give him an out. We were backup contract, we were not the first contract so if the first contract fell through then our contract became first and he couldn't get out of it, we could but he couldn't.

[00:06:04]

When we were still in the due diligence period we had a soil scientist come in and give us a non-thorough soil study. He didn't dig deep pits but he did take soil samples, looked at it, he's a guy who's done a lot of soil work for other vineyards and he knows what to look for and he kind of gave the thumbs up. Jim Law came out and walked it with us, gave us his input. He thought it was okay, that it was a good site.

KS: I mean the slope is really nice.

JD: That's important. It kind of met our criteria and the vineyard was not here, the winery was not here and we developed both in 2008 and 2009.

[00:06:59]

KS: So when the deal went through, when was that?

JD: We submitted the contract that got accepted in November or December of 2006.

BD: We locked in in January and that's when we formed the LLC's.

[00:07:18]

JD: And then we closed June 30th, 2007. The house was a wreck even though it was 20, 22 years old at the time we had to put more than \$100,000 into it just to make it livable so, I would say it was a project.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: They raised Irish Wolfhounds in the basement. Dog runs, the whole thing, and feral cats throughout the house.

JD: And all of the bouquet that came with it.

KS: So it was a little Grey Gardens over there for a bit.

[00:08:02]

BD: We had ServPro in for 6 days cutting floors out and walls.

KS: Yeah, you can't get that out. And you just kept trying to buy it? (laughs)

JD: Well you didn't ask me why I went into this, and my normal answer is because I'm a complete idiot! (laughing)

BD: There's people that have passion and those people that are just driven by doing something and a hobby became very compulsive. We built a house in Maryland and when we locked into this place we had how many different types of wine in the basement Winery at the house?

JD: 26 or 28.

[00:09:02]

BD: We were buying fruit in the spring from Chile just so that we could do 2 crushes and learn more and more about how to do it so we had a lot of wine, we had a big bottling in party before we put everything in storage. Not everybody has a passion, some people buy wineries for egos and they hire a winemaker and that's okay, that's fine, but we didn't want to be 80 some years old and say, "you know, we should have done that." He (Jim) has a great palette and people come in and taste his blends and are just amazed at how balanced and beautiful they are. That's all I have to say on the subject.

JD: Actually, another big factor for me was: once I had the idea that we were going to do this is it occurred to me I didn't want to be 75 or 80 years old and why do not try it?

KS: Well that's great! I do think you found a tribe of like-minded people like Jim and a lot of other people, who are almost obsessive in their devotion to trying to put Virginia wine on the map. A lot of the people I've talked to have almost a compulsion to do it.

[00:10:41]

JD: Then you're talking to the right people, because there is a continuum. At the one end there are people like Jim Law - and I like to put myself in his class, he's in a class by itself, but at

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

least in the terms of the way we think about what we're doing and then there are other people who are in here, I won't mention any, who are more motivated by money. They're so-called event centers you know they host weddings.

BD: They're using the Farm Winery Act to get around building codes and different things and the wine is secondary. And we won't name anybody.

KS: Yeah, but I know what you're talking about. I've definitely been to some of those and some are more entertainment focused. That's a decision you're making for your business model. I've noticed here you don't allow stretch limousines and all that kind of stuff.

[00:11:50]

BD: No Buses, limos, groups over six, children or pets.

KS: Right.

JD: We're the winery of NO [jokingly].

KS: So that limits you to people who are going to be more serious about the wine and are not just looking to get loopy.

[00:12:11]

JD: Our customers appreciate it.

BD: I can't tell you how many times we get, "So glad you don't do adults and large parties and stuff." I had one guy say, "Well why don't you allow large groups?" I said you go to a restaurant, you and your husband, you go to get seated and there's a table that's set for 20 people. You ask to go to a different room, you can't have a conversation and it just becomes very negative.

KS: There's a place for that, if you're having a bachelorette party or if you're having a bridal shower or something like that then there are places to go to do that but if you want it to just be more quiet and serious...

[00:12:55]

BD: We did allow children the first couple years. I try to take notice of how people are reacting in the tasting room, if the music is too loud. Some children, the parents say: "Go play" and the kids are running around and there's a couple sitting there and there's a look on their face. They put the cork in the bottle and they leave cause they're not enjoying themselves. If it's not your kid you don't love them. (laughs)

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: I know. Do you guys have kids?

BD: Yes. They're all adults though.

JD: They're not kids anymore.

[00:13:37]

BD: We have grandkids and we love those too but they're not allowed in the taste room.

KS: I get it, totally, we went out to a very expensive Tasting Room dinner thing it was the chef's thing. There was a man there with a six year old boy, this is something that cost hundreds of dollars and every dish he asks him, "Well Julien, what do you think of your Foie gras Julien?" My husband and I were just cringing the whole time because every single thing Julie and had to comment on. It was so distracting and it just took away from the experience so much because it was just ridiculous and absurd. There are places here that are all about...

[00:14:32]

BD: Family fun.

KS: Exactly, there's cornhole set up, picnic tables, they have loud music, live music... "Do you ever have live music here?"

JD: Yes we do. During the season we have...

BD: Soul...

JD: ...music on Saturdays and Sunday afternoons. When we first opened we had a couple of bands in here and that drove me crazy. There was no percussion these were usually one or two people on guitars I would like it to be more like a coffeehouse kind of background music. We do get musicians who are a little bit loud.

BD: Well, not anymore we only have five musicians that we allow anymore.

JD: We kind of rotate them around.

KS: Yeah but it's your environment that you're trying to shape and reflect who you are.

[00:15:30]

BD: They stand over in the corner and when it gets busy I tell them it's about the wine. When you start singing louder people start talking louder and it keeps going up and up you have to keep

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

it down below. Then everyone will talk a lot normal voice, everyone can hear and it's a nice peaceful feeling. The musicians we have now all know that. Every once in a while there's one guy that gets a little out of control, he could sing without a microphone. He's just big voiced.

KS: So you have some limits on how you do it. We weren't recording before when Jim was explaining. Do you want to say what it is that you do? What each of you do? What are your different roles? You've divided and conquered?

[00:16:38]

BD: There's a joke here. I am the ICOE, "In Charge Of Everything," I run the tasting room experience, make sure everything runs smooth, that everybody's trained properly; oversee the club program. I run analysis on a lot of different things. I try the food out because we buy all local or we try to buy as much local as possible. What else do I do? Tasting notes, update the website, it's pathetic... send out newsletters.

JD: Tell everybody what to do whether it's her area of expertise or not.

BD: I sit in blending trials and give my input in the blends. Labels. Get the stuff through TTB and ABC, all the stuff that Jim doesn't do. Jim does the wine making and bookkeeping.

KS: So you manage the actual vineyard.

[00:17:55]

JD: A year ago we hired another guy who had been the co-winemaker at Barrel Oak. It was time for him to leave over there and he had been chasing me for a couple years to come to work here so we hired him as an assistant winemaker. It's nice to have somebody else who has a clue. It just reinforces things I'm thinking about. He's younger than me, he's not that much younger but I'm now 68 so I've got some physical limitations. So in terms of winemaking it the way that I like to describe it now is that I do the plan, I decide what yeasts go in and all that kind of stuff.

BD: What wine goes in which barrels.

JD: Yeah, all that stuff and he executes and then there's another person and they're the ones that are lugging the hoses, running the power washer, cleaning tanks out I'm doing all that stuff.

[00:19:09]

KS: And what about maintenance in the vineyard? Do you do pruning and stuff yourselves or do you bring somebody in?

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: Yeah, our crew does it.

KS: So you have permanent staff that are on?

JD: We've got a couple. We have a golf cart. I spend a lot of time on the golf cart going around and when the grass is grown I'll also cut the grass and the rows. I don't want anybody else. Well Rick can do it. I do a lot of the cutting between the vines because I don't want anyone running over...

KS: ...anyone accidentally whacking off a vine.

JD: Yeah, if somebody's going to do that it's going to be me.

[00:19:57]

BD: And it's happened. Jim makes all the decisions on when and if pesticides are used in any case. We do spray but we try very hard not to over spray. We try to be very conscious of the fact that, we're trying to do the least damage as possible to the environment.

KS: With Virginia wine, it's hard not to have to use the fungicides with all of the humidity.

JD: I tell customers I see if you go to another Virginia winery and they tell you that they are organic it's complete BS, and there are some wineries that say that.

BD: Unless you're buying the fruit from California.

KS: Then your carbon footprint is pretty intense. We had the same issue in the orchards when people just didn't understand if you try to grow an apple in Virginia without some kind of sprays you'd have an ugly lumpy looking apple.

JD: You'd have no industry.

KS: Nobody would buy it because it looks so funky and have so many bug holes in it.

BD: I recall when stink bugs first made the real impact here the Orchards could not spray something because it was fruit trees. The stink bugs would put a little pic in it and it would break the skin so to speak and they would get mealy. It was a huge issue and they were trying to get the Environmental Protection Agency to lift that ruling so that they could use these specific pesticide to keep the stink bugs out.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

[00:21:45]

KS: It was hard on them for the soft fruit as well because the stink bugs really could the peaches and plums.

JD: At least for apple's, my understanding of the issue was if the stink bugs had poked holes in the skins then those apples were no longer suitable. They could not be sold as apples to eat they had to be sold as apples for cider and that those apples are less, you can't get as much for your apples.

KS: They wouldn't be graded "A". Do the stink bugs cause problems for you or did they not seem to really go after the...

JD: We haven't had as many over the last few years as we had that one year...

BD: 2010.

JD: They've done some studies up in Maryland and if you get a stink bug in the press pan when you're pressing you can actually smell them but it goes away. And they've done studies, a guy up in Maryland, Joe Fiola, who's the Tony Wolf equivalent up in Maryland, he's done a study and the number of stink bugs needed to infest your fruit, to have an impact, is huge.

KS: They definitely seem to have been brought down significantly from that one boom year that it was just everywhere. They were up all the windowsills...

JD: We had people get out of their cars, come up and look at our front door and it would be covered, not just a few I mean thousands.

[00:23:24]

BD: That's the other thing I do. I also do pest control. I would stand out there with a shop-vac so people could get into the..., it was horrible.

KS: I remember it was so, so bad. It was really, really bad especially out here in this region everybody in their houses and everything.

JD: I think Jim had a big problem at Linden.

BD: I think that's why he covered his log house with siding.

KS: To get less of them in?

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: You said you've been over there, you've talked to him? Did you notice his house as you came up the driveway? It was kind of a stucco look now? It used to be a log home.

KS: A lot of things can get in with a log home I guess. So pests are one of our concerns what other kind of pest issues do you have? Do you get a lot of deer, squirrels, birds?

[00:24:19]

JD: Well we have a deer fence that surrounds most of the property so occasionally will get a deer

BD: They'll walk through the gate sometimes.

JD: Yeah, they'll come through the gate or jump over the gate.

BD: No bears (knocks on wood)

JD: We have not had a bear...

[00:24:37]

KS: I know the Davenports get bears up in the fall because they come off the Appalachian Trail area that runs up the back of their farm.

JD: Well there's that Thompson Wildlife Preserve.

KS: And Thompson Wildlife's there and they'll get bears and they'll go bowling in the pumpkin patch. That's a lot of fun, yeah. They'll come in and find just smashed pumpkins.

[00:25:01]

JD: We appreciate what Tom is doing for us...

KS: Keeping the bears over there, keeping them well fed too!

[00:25:10]

JD: We do get raccoons, believe it or not, and they have voracious appetite when it comes to grapes. So there is, down in that far corner of the property is a pond, we own about a third to a half of the pond and that's where they come from this down there. And they tell us when the fruit is almost ripe.

BD: So we have traps we trap them with marshmallows, they love marshmallows. Isn't it marshmallows? They love marshmallows and then we take them Thompson's Wildlife Preserve you have to take them at least 20 miles...

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: You're not supposed to do that, some of that technically illegal...

KS: (talking over Jim) They go into witness protection (laughs)

BD: Oh, well, never mind. we don't kill them. Move them to a new home.

KS: They go somewhere else. I know that's a big issue and it depends on the location of the farm, it's funny some people are like Arrrg!, the biggest problem we have is deer. And then somebody else will say the biggest problem we have is squirrels, the biggest problem we have is birds so it's just funny.

[00:26:15]

JD: We've been lucky with birds. Even RdV over the hill they put bird netting out. We haven't had a need to do that. We think it's because of the Hawks that are in this valley.

KS: I think that's really lucky because that can get extremely cumbersome when you have to let everything and put the sparkly tape up and all the other stuff.

[00:26:41]

BD: Yeah we do have a screecher.

JD: We call it the Wild Kingdom, there's a bird distress call so when birds hear other birds in distress they stay away.

BD: For a while.

JD: It's called "Bird guard", it's got 12 or 13 somewhere around 13 different distress calls. It does go off of a little car battery but what activates it is when the sun comes up.

[00:27:24]

KS: Well there you go, that's pretty cool, I haven't heard of that one before. So why in Virginia? Where you from Virginia originally? Were you both from here?

[00:27:36]

JD: No, we're both from New York. I grew up on Long Island, Betsy's from Niagara Falls. In my case I moved to Richmond from Manhattan at the end of 1978. So I've spent more of my life in Virginia than I have any place else. My first wife would disagree with this statement, I consider myself a Virginian. She considers me a Yankee.

KS: Well if you spent time in Richmond you've probably earned your...

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: Yeah I like Richmond, it's a nice city.

KS: Yeah but they're very into their "Old Virginia."

BD: Culture.

JD: But it's changing. It is becoming more cosmopolitan.

[00:28:24]

BD: And I started in Western New York. I hate to say Niagara Falls, western New York. Moved to Houston. Moved to Maryland. Then move to Ohio. And moved back to Maryland [to Jim] and that's when I met you.

[00:28:40]

JD: So when we met I was working for a company in Baltimore. I had a townhome in Columbia. But I was also renting a home down in Richmond because my son was still in high school. And so I would go down there every Thursday afternoon and hang out with him.

[00:29:02]

KS: So that's where you guys met? Was when you were working at the same company that was in Baltimore?

JD & BD: Yep.

KS: New York is an amazing wine growing region as well. Maryland has really picked up in wine production. Why was it Virginia that appeal to you?

[00:29:21]

JD: Well one, I didn't want to be so far away from Richmond because my family, my grown kids are down that way. Also when I was learning how to make wine I became attach to Virginia and Jim Law, just kind of this region generally. Betsy was still working when we bought this and so I forget what job...

BD: Shady Grove in Maryland. So I would commute from here to there, but I had an apartment as well so sometimes I would stay in the apartment if I had a late night and I had to work late

JD: And then I would go in one night a week and hang out with...

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: Hang out with me. It was a horrible life. That what's a horrible year. It was a horrible year-and-a-half. I mean it's a long commute. And then we started, I lost that job in... I think May of 2009 and Jim had finally gotten all the permits and all of the things to go because we built this to code, we didn't, we did everything the right way. Like we have a commercial septic system. Just leave that as the way it's going to happen in Virginia. There's dangerous wineries that don't have code and they shouldn't have 150 people in them. But anyways, loss of job and then I played, I started, we finally got the permits and everything, started construction in June of 2009 and we open the doors the day after Thanksgiving.

KS: Of 2009?

JD & BD: Um hum, yep.

KS: Wow!

JD: Meanwhile, because we didn't have a facility and we weren't licensed to make wine here, in 2008 and 2009 we made wine at other, well, actually '07,'08 and '09 we made wine at other wineries. And when I say we made it, in 2007 we told them what to do, they wouldn't let us touch their equipment. In '08 and '09 we actually made the wine at these other facilities.

BD: And in 2008 we were on the graveyard shift.

JD: We would go down about 4 in the afternoon and sometimes we wouldn't come home till the sun was coming up.

[00:32:00]

JD: The sun was coming up, you know, it was just for a couple of months during the summer.

BD: It was not fun. Fortunately for Jim his son was here helping and graveyard shift was probably perfect for you... him.

JD: That was the times though, he was 23, he was living with me.

KS: Yeah he was fine for that. Wow. That's great. So the kids have been involved in and out a little bit?

[00:32:25]

JD: No, not really my son was here for maybe something less than a year. And he went to Raleigh, [to Betsy] Didn't he go to Raleigh first? Before, now he's down in Richmond, he's got a

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

food truck business. He's a college graduate with a major in math and a minor in physics and French and he's... a food truck operator.

KS: That's a lot of degrees to have too, wow.

JD: Well you know what, he's following his passion.

KS: Yes. It sounds like he has a lot of interests. Yeah

[00:33:01]

JD: My daughter in Fredericksburg. She has never been a drinker. She's got a full time job for the Department of the Navy and she's got a husband and three daughters. And she teaches dance and she teaches math, she's one of these people that doesn't know how to rest.

KS: Says this guy.

JD: No, I know how to rest, she doesn't so much.

KS: Right. Sounds like you both are a bit of a match for going, going, going. So what do you think is the thing that people don't understand about..., you know, maybe your average customer that comes in and has gone to a couple wineries but...?

[00:33:51]

BD: I think the biggest thing is they don't understand how hard it is to make artisan wine and how expensive it is to make artisan wine that you can buy a \$12 bottle of Gallo but they're making 100,000 cases of it or more.

JD: Million, they do, they're over a million cases.

BD: Yeah, over a million. When I'm talking to them I say well you know we have a selection of different types of barrels. All of them have different toasts. They have different manufacturers, different locations in France and they're done differently and so a decision has to be made because it changes the flavor of the juice or the baby wine in it. I tell them about all the different yeasts that you have to do and all the different palettes and bland isn't just like well, let's throw this, this and this together. It's all about blending trials and doing all this and each barrel is tasted and ranked and so on and so forth. And when people start hearing that then I think they realize that it's not just swishing some grapes together and putting yeast in and making it. There's a lot into it and there's an awful lot of investment and people don't realize down below this, it's not a pretty wine room downstairs but it's functioning and it's not cheap to put it in production area. This wall, this looks prettier, this is less expensive than downstairs.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Technical, big tanks with all the thermostatic controls all these different things.

BD: One barrel costs...

[00:35:33]

JD: Well it depends on where it's from but French barrels,... \$1000 to \$1100 a piece and we have over 300 here.

KS: Right, and was it, somebody was telling me about even when they do American oak they send it to France to have the barrels made and then they come back here or something like that?

[00:35:50]

JD: Well yeah there's different ways they do it, they can have, there are coopers, French coopers in Napa. So what they do is they season the wood in France, the staves and all that and then they send it to Napa and in their Napa facility they actually assemble the barrels and toast them and all that.

KS: Well-traveled pieces of wood.

JD: And there are wineries that will not buy those kind of barrels, they want the ones that have all been in France. I mean the reality is ninety nine point nine percent of your customers can't tell the difference.

KS: Right. Right.

JD: But we can.

KS: But a lot of that a lot is probably tradition as well, isn't it?

[00:36:34]

JD: Some of it, yeah well wine makers can be very perfectionist or they can be depending on who you are and what your mission is, that's so you don't...you don't..., you want the best.

KS: Right, do you guys ever travel to Europe? I know early on you said you did some wine traveling?

JD: I used to go to California quite a bit, we still go to California quite a bit. I have not been to Bordeaux, that's very high on my to do list.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Yeah, that would be fun, huh? But it's a very different... I think it's a very different experience over there. I've only been wine tasting in Italy, but it's nothing like, none of the event type spaces that we have here. It's like serious. You come in... you know, like this is what we do and this is our wine and you know take it or leave it kind of thing. It's a lot less hospitable and ingratiating and whatever.

[00:37:36]

JD: I read quite a bit about in Bordeaux that's all changing. It's becoming more Americanized, they'll actually talk to you.

KS: Wow that is a big change. Yeah we're just ruining everything aren't we? Making people have to talk. So yes, the cost the expense that goes into it. Why do you think that is that people have this perception? What do you think that...?

JD: Well they just see the romance. Look at on the TV screen. That's what it looks like in the summer. And it's just beautiful it is and oh it's so romantic and blah, blah, blah. Well the amount of work that goes into that is just unbelievable.

KS: Right.

JD: Unbelievable.

KS: Especially during the growing season. I was talking to I think it was Tony Wolf? And just talking about one of the challenges with Virginia wines is during the growing season how much canopy management you have to do because it just, we produce really leafy vines here.

[00:38:51]

JD: The soil is generally very fertile...

KS: Right, rich.

JD: And so that makes the vines vigorous.

KS: Right which seems great but you need to get some sun and air and light on those grapes.

[00:39:03]

JD: Most everything about grape growing is counter-intuitive. So what's good for, let's say corn, is not really good for grapes.

KS: Right. Do you think maybe part of it is I wonder since people primarily come out on the weekend and you're not doing the work? There's nobody out there maybe working in the

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

vineyards that they just sort of think that they just grow. And that's all you do. Like you just string 'em up the first time and then they grow and you have grapes.

JD: There you go.

KS: There you go. Do you think that's part of it?

JD: What could be easier than that?

[00:39:35]

BD: I think that a lot of people just don't understand the cost, the amount of work and the expertise in making wine and because you know Grandpa used to make wine down in the basement with balloons on it while it was fermenting, whatever, here's a lot more to it. And I don't think that... I don't know that, that the consumer needs to know that, because to any large extent because I think it takes away from the romance. We know people who are always saying. "God, we'd love to live here, this is just... oh this would be so great to own a winery."

KS: And then you smile...

BD: Yeah. Yeah, I don't think people realize how because as a rule I don't think wineries let people know that. Before we do this when we were out in California nobody ever said "God, this is so hard."

KS: You're right.

BD: All of it's a lot easier in California here, so...

KS: I think what would be the reasons be? Because less spraying? Less maintenance on the California...?

JD: Well, California is a desert. Man controls the water. All the vineyards are irrigated. The problem we have here is really caused the rainfall we get which leads to the different fungi and why we need fungicides and all that kind of stuff.

KS: So you've got more inputs as far as having to spray and manual labor, pruning and trimming and cutting back and so all of that is extra front end cost before you've even crushed anything before anything's even...

[00:41:36]

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: We planted this part of the vineyard, most of the vineyard, this front park over here, in 2008, we took our first graders from 2010 and then we fermented it and we started to sell it in 2012. So we had invested I don't know how much money in that vineyard. And we didn't start to see the return until 2012 fortunately it was a really big year 2010. That's how long... you have a lot of front end investments, it's not like you open up a restaurant and start making money right away.

KS: Right. I think that's definitely something that people don't realize, even if you never wanted to bring in outside grapes you know you've got several years of growing and fertilizing or spraying or pruning, all that work before you even open the doors to be able to sell your first bottle.

[00:42:42]

BD: And you lose 5 percent of your vines each year, right?

JD: Something like that, yeah.

KS: Just aging out or disease?

JD: It depends. What I say is your partner is Mother Nature and she's not always kind. Were we lost quite a bit was a few years ago when we had the really brutally cold...

BD: Two years...

JD: When we all learned what polar vortex meant. It got so brutally cold I think it actually killed grape vines.

KS: How much loss you think you had then?

JD: We probably lost about 20 to 25 percent. We lost 90 percent of our Merlot, we ended up just pulling it out and replanting it.

KS: OK yeah, I remember people saying that everybody started planting Merlot because we were having such mild winters and it seemed like that was going to continue.

[00:43:38]

JD: It's the least cold hardy of the vinifer. The other one that we have, we have maybe 308 vines of Tennat -which is kind of an obscure grape that seems to do well here, but it's not cold hardy so we lost most of that and we pulled that up. We replaced all of that with about two thirds Cabernet Franc and one third Merlot just because we have Merlot.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Were you able to plant Merlot higher up to shield from that a little bit. Yes. Do you get your pretty high. What is your elevation here. Do you know?

JD: At the top of the vineyard it's 650 feet.

KS: Oh, is that all?

JD: Roughly 670, yes.

KS: You FEEL really high up in here, yeah.

JD: Well have you been to RdV and talked to them or tried to talk to them?

KS: No, they won't return my calls.

JD: They won't return your call? They're good guys though, they really are.

KS: They're exclusive. Yeah and they make good wine. I've tried and I'll continue trying.

[00:44:57]

JD: That's too bad because Rutger, Rutger de Vink of RdV, he's a very close, very close friend of Jim Law. So one might ask Jim if he would just let Rutger know that you really... not a bad person.

KS: Right. I actually have a few connections I have a sommelier and a restaurant friend that know him as well. So I was like, well, yeah, can you put a good word? But it just hasn't gone anywhere yet, so we'll see.

JD: That's too bad.

KS: Yeah.

JD: The way a crow flies they are about a mile that way, if you have five extra minutes when you leave, when you're going down towards the interstate, just before the railroad tracks, just go left and just kind of go around the block so to speak and come back up that road two miles maybe and you'll see their vineyard but it's worth seeing because it's a pretty spectacular site.

KS: Is it?

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: Yeah yeah yeah

KS: Yeah I will. I'll go take a look at it and see. Yeah and I know that their wines are really highly esteemed and...

JD: Priced accordingly.

KS: ...and priced accordingly. But yeah they've really kind of elevated the conversation I think a bit because they've been so aggressive about creating this kind of higher profile for Virginia wine.

JD: My inspiration is to have cult wines in Virginia and a lot of people said it'll never happen. Their wines are as good as almost anything you can get out of Bordeaux.

[00:46:42]

BD: Who is that? RdV? Beautiful facility. And wines are good there.

KS: We were just saying, I'm going to try to get in but no one's really responded to any of my inquiries. I'll keep trying. Maybe their fancy, too fancy for me! Too fancy for folklore. So we talked about that. And we've roughly talked about what other hats you wear. You're married to each other so spouses... you have children, you have other grandchildren. What other kind of roles do you have in your life outside of here? Do you have any time for roles outside of here?

BD: Let's see, we are owned by two dogs.

KS: I know how that is, I have two and I'm probably covered with dog hair too.

[00:47:40]

JD: Well we enjoy fine dining and wining. We don't get out to wineries much. When we take vacations we have typically gone to Casa Robles or Sonoma...

BD: Or Cape Cod.

JD: We go to Cape Cod, I have old college buddies, one guy lives on Cape Cod so we go up and spend a week with him.

BD: Sit on the beach and just stare or read.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: Those same people have a place in Bonaire which is, they call it the ABC islands, Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao.

KS: Oh nice.

JD: So we have gone down there a couple of times.

KS: These are good friends to have.

JD: Well... we keep them in wine.

KS: There you go, yeah, that's a good deal!

[00:48:36]

JD: And then we go see my daughter and or grandchildren.

BD: And we go to resort Henley.

JD: Yeah, we have really good friends in Richmond. They live on the river. He's got, probably at its peak was maybe a 3500 bottle wine cellar. So he's my best friend, he and I have been friends since... we worked together at what was then Arthur Young and Company now Ernst and Young. I transferred from the New York office down to Richmond back at the end of '78.

KS: So was that relationship part of your development in becoming a wine person?

JD: I'm probably responsible for introducing him to most of the wines.

KS: You got him wrapped up in it. What about when you were growing up, did people drink wine at home?

[00:49:30]

JD: No I mean I know a lot of people get started that way. My family, my family was almost an anti-alcohol family. My mother's father was an alcoholic and so she was very much against it. They weren't teetotalers but they might have a cocktail before Friday night dinner. My parents were not drinkers at all. My grandfather who lived with me until I was 13 and then moved next door until he died, he enjoyed his beer but he wasn't an alcoholic.

BD: We had sweet wine I'm sure it was at Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's and Easter. My mother would bring out the nice dishes and the nice stemware and she would try to teach us

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

how to not embarrass ourselves at the table and to have a little bit of wine and just to teach these four boys and me how to act right. And my brothers were always trying to con me out of my wine. Because we had little sharing glasses.

KS: Yeah yeah, little tiny tastes.

BD: Yeah, that was my experience with wine. I was drinking dry wine by the time I met Jim.

KS: So you had really classed it up by then?

[00:51:06]

BD: By the time I met Jim I was drinking. The first he came to the house I was so proud of these glasses they were Pottery Barn, the balloon wine glasses, I don't know if you remember them? He took one look at them and I think the next time he brought me a pepper mill, remember that?

JD: Yeah.

BD: He brought me a pepper mill because I didn't have a pepper mill and he brought me real Zase [sp?] real glasses.

JD: If I'm gonna drink wine here...

KS: I need a pepper mill and I need those glasses...

BD: Out of a fish bowl!

[00:51:41]

KS: But there was an era, for a while there, where it was just like they were getting bigger and bigger, they're difficult to drink out of too. Yeah. Totally. Oh my goodness. OK so we touch on a little bit about the training. Did you have to do Betsy? Did you have to do any special training for getting up to speed on how to run the front of the house operation?

BD: Yes I have a couple of things, I was in charge of putting the TTB contract together to get TTB approval.

KS: What's TTB stand for?

[00:52:25]

JD: Tax and Trade Bureau for formerly BATF.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: So, it's a document that's -I don't know how many pages -you have to fill it out, you submit it and then you go to an interview. What they said was don't be nervous about this, we're in the business of getting taxes so we're trying to get you approved by the TTB and they just wanted to talk to us and make sure we had some were with all on how to fill out, how to do accounting, basic accounting. I also do the ABC, I do all the labels, in so far as here, when we first opened up we had one of those little old Royal registers which soon got really outdated. Honest. And so we've got this software package called Wineware. Now we recently have the club program integrated into it but Jim and I had no idea how to run retail. We had no clue. My daughter came and helped that weekend that we opened with the register and she came a couple more times to help us with how we run retailer. Because in her college days she worked retail. So I guess she trained us.

KS: And a lot of it I'm sure was just learning as you go and just saying oops, I guess we have to do this now.

BD: I think running... it's been a while so it seems very simple, but I guess because my background was in property management I had like... Jim an eye out for real estate and for running... I would say Jim was on the clean side, he was in finance and I was in the property management side, that's were I met [unintelligible]. And so I knew about health and safety and what the requirements were, you know, type of shoes, what people should be wearing at work and all that came with it.

KS: So you had some background with that stuff.

BD: Yeah I had some, our first tasting room manager had worked at Narmada, is that how you say that, Narmada?

JD: Narmada, some people say Narmada, I say Narmada.

KS: That's what I said too because it looks "armada."

[00:54:43]

BD: Yeah. Anyways she had worked there and she came to work for us and she kinda taught us about the TR4's tips training, how to spot an alcoholic or a drunk and different pieces of that. So pretty much it was kind of on the job.

KS: Yeah.

BD: I also, during the crush, do work downstairs hours and I do what he tells me to do...

JD: That's not true.

BD: No, no, no, no. I do because Rick and Jim hate to inoculate the wine. So I do the inoculations.

[00:55:21]

KS: And what does that involve?

BD: Well Jim gives me a formula for what he wants the yeast, what yeast strain, how much, how often and how much water to ferment it, to get the yeast going and he gives me the whole formula and then I make the slurry.

KS: So why don't you like to do it?

JD: Because there's a lot of waiting involved, so it's like cooking something. We make these slurries in five gallon plastic food grade plastic buckets and what it involves is, you start with water and 110 degrees Fahrenheit, you put in this yeast nutrient food then you wait for the temperature to go down to...

BD: 104.

JD: 104, then you add your yeast and stir it up. Then you let it sit for 15 or twenty minutes. Then you put in so much...

BD: Juice.

JD: ...of the juice, stir it...

BD: Half of what's in there. So if there's 3 gallons of slurry then you can put a gallon and a half of juice in and then you gotta let it sit.

KS: But it just makes you crazy? Following all those steps and waiting?

[00:57:01]

JD: Well we're busy, I've got other things to do. And it has to acclimate and by that it means, let's say it's a bin of reds, well the temperature of that is cold, it could be like 50, 55 degrees. Well you're starting with 110 degree, then 104 degree, you have to get the temperature of that slurry down to within 15 degrees Fahrenheit of the temperature of the must that you are trying to...

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: To get the right reactions...

JD: Yeah, for the yeast to live. If it's too cold it'll get shocked and then die.

KS: And then your whole batch will be screwed up.

JD: Then you have to start over.

BD: I also do brix testing.

JD: And when you're doing that... that's when bad stuff happens.

KS: Yeah yeah yeah yeah and then you cry. And you do, I'm sorry, the brix is that sugar testing. Sugar levels?

BD: Right. I do that until... Jessica, actually, the club manager, her husband usually takes a couple weeks, he's a airline pilot, he'll work out so he takes a couple weeks so when Jim and I get absolutely fed up with each other Tim usually comes in and takes over for me and I come back up here.

KS: Right. Preservation of the relationship.

JD: The joke is: Betsy usually quits four or five times during the crush.

BD: Three, three or four.

KS: I hear ya, my husband and I run a business together for 15 years and I recently really did quit. And it's been so fun, but, you know, it is, it's tough.

JD: I think I fired her once too.

KS: It's tough on a relationship. It can be very hard to not take something personally when it's just in the heat of the moment it or whatever yeah it's tough. It's tough.

[00:58:53]

BD: Well I'm a bit of a neatnik and I have procedures that need to be followed. And if I'm not there in the morning, I go in and my whole station is a mess because other people have been poking around ripping stuff, leaving things not picked up.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: This is why I don't cook with my husband. Yeah. It's like he thinks it has to be like the TV show where you put everything into a separate dish. You know each measurement has to have its own little dish. Here is your flour. Here's your sugar. Why are you putting it in all of these dishes? Who's going to wash all of these dishes? Yeah. But. Yeah. So I hear you. I feel your pain. What kind of special clothing, gear, tools do you find that you have to have with you for your everyday work? I'm sure at different times of the season it's different things but...

[00:59:46]

JD: You know, it's not a big property, if you're out there and you need something you can always come and get it. I don't know how to answer that. I take pruners with me that I have out in the golf cart. Something's got to be taken care of, or you'll see a cluster that's green and the other ones are starting to turn color so you cut those off, things like that.

KS: Just little tweaks.

JD: So yeah, I'd say in the vineyard you always want to have your pruners with you handy. Downstairs in the cellar, everything's down there.

BD: Well, when I'm down there during the fall before I quit or get fired I have a vest and I have my phone in it so I can do my timing. I have a roll of tape so I can take a barrel and put what I put in it, or on a bin, I can quickly write, I carry a pen. I carry scissors in case I want to stab somebody. And I have a little cart that I wheel around that has my towels, my hydrometers, water pitchers so I can dump water on top of the barrels before I open them up. And all my gauges, my thermometers.

JD: Hydrometers.

BD: No, the temperature gauge the long temperature.

KS: Yeah, so when do you usually do the crush stuff?

JD: It's in the fall, it's when the grapes... It can be different and different years, but it usually starts... Now with Sauvignon Blanc at very end of August or early September and it can go till we pick up into well into October. Fermentations are usually finished and the wine is in barrels by Thanksgiving but not always, this year 2017 was an exception. We went into early December.

[01:02:00]

KS: Well, I feel like a lot of people were running late with the harvest this season.

JD: Well, it was because it was a cool year so...

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Trying to get as much out of...

JD: We were able to let the grapes...

BD: 2017 it's a good lineage.

JD: Should be a good year, yeah.

KS: So, Thanksgiving and then what are you doing after fermentation?

JD: The wine maker rest.

KS: Then you have a rest, a brief rest.

JD: Even now we're not really pushing it, we're getting ready to... Our next, we're at the vineyard pruning. We'll start bottling March 1st.

KS: Oh, okay. So, you're not doing any bottling now?

JD: Not yet. We don't have bottling equipment here, so we rely on an outside mobile bottling service.

KS: Right, you get the truck to trailer thing coming in. Those are so cool.

JD: There are actually to my knowledge, maybe there's only two now. There is an older truck that we used exclusively up until last year, and then we switched to a truck that comes down here out of Canada.

KS: Yeah, I met those guys. Actually, I'm trying to get an interview with them as well but they're so busy.

JD: They're pros compared to the other.

BD: Well, if you show up March 1st you might be able to talk to them a little bit. But they come at 7:30 in the morning and they're done by 1:00.

KS: It's so impressive an operation I could not... So, at Cana which is in Middleburg, they had the same guys come out there and they rely on volunteers to do a lot of stuff.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: So do we.

[01:04:00]

KS: Oh, do you? Okay. So, yeah, let me know if you need help on... I thought it was a blast of course, because I'm a nerd for this stuff, but I did the bottling. They did some early bottling at Cana about a month ago now I think, and those guys were there and just seeing that opera... I was just blown away that everything fits on the back of a tractor trailer and it's so streamlined and perfect and it makes a lot of sense I mean to have a bottling line in your house is...

BD: Were you bottling the...

KS: No, they did all the actual putting. I just was like taking the boxes of empty bottles and stacking them and putting them onto the conveyor, and then the guys were actually doing the filling and stuff.

BD: The first time this bottling truck nobody realized how fast it was going to be compared to the other one. And it was me, and the neighbor Bob, Bob was in there, Bob had never done it before, and they were throwing boxes at us. And I felt like Lucy and Ethel, I knocked the bottles off the line one time I was running back and they still kept coming.

KS: Oh my God. It does, you feel like that you're like I'm going to get sucked into.

BD: Yeah, I tell anybody. I said when you go up there don't think you can think about what's for lunch, or you don't have the music going on in your head. You could pay attention I got bottle [crosstalk].

KS: The time flies. Yeah, it's pretty fun. Lifting the boxes you start to get a sore back after a while, but it was like really, really fun to just see how quickly everything went through and it's so efficient.

BD: It was amazing. We were just like...

KS: Magic.

BD: Oh, it was magic.

KS: I'm sure when you're doing it at home and stuff you said you had bottling parties that you'd just get friends to come over and you had like what, a spigot or something or like how did you...?

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

[01:06:00]

JD: We actually had a small pump that drew the wine out of the carboys or whatever the container was into this... It's very similar in concept to what they had in here. It had a spout on it and you put the bottle up in the spout like that and the wine bottle would go in at the bottle and it would stop by itself, or it was supposed to stop by itself when it was at the right level. And then you take it off the air, give it to the next guy, the next guy put it there as a hand corking machine and we do that, and then we were using shrink wrap capsules. Then we take those over and there was... What's her name from Dave and Candy?

BD: Candy or she's got her different...

JD: [INAUDIBLE 01:06:37]. We had boiling water, and we put the capsule on the thing and dunk it in the water and they'll shrink.

KS: Oh, like little shrinky dinks yeah. Isn't that funny? But yeah, we did a cider bottling down at Paul Redden. Do you know Paul? He lives down across from Upper Manor Estates and his family has been there. His great aunt was a shareholder in the Manor of Leeds Apple Orchard that used to be there back in like the turn of the century a little after that. And when they went under, she kept her share and that's where they built... She had a little cabin that she built up there and that's where his family lives even now today. They have a house, house now, but anyway, he's fascinating and he's been interested in getting into cider making. So, we did a cider pressing but it was all very manual and trying to figure it out as we're going and sort of like, oh, I think that's enough yeast, I don't know. It was not the most, but it turned out some pretty good cider. Have you guys ever experimented with other things during...? No, just your wine true and true. That's it.

JD: [INAUDIBLE 01:08:00]

[01:08:00]

KS: Yeah, just winers. And then what do you think of talking about the bigger picture of Virginia wine? What are the changes that you're seeing, or the trends, or where do you think its heading?

JD: I think what will happen is that there's... I call it bifurcation of the industry that there are people who are interested in making really, really good wine, and there are people are just interested in it for other reasons. So, I think that we use separation of bifurcation that the guys who are making good wine those wine will continue to improve, and then some of these others I think they'll go away. I think a lot of them smaller mom and pops. I think the average sized winery in Virginia now, something like 2,000 cases. You can't really make much of a living off that volume.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: What do you guys produce?

JD: We're producing about 3,500 cases just under.

KS: And is it something that you're thinking you want to increase over time your production or...?

JD: I kind of like it around this level. If you ramp up production it increases...

KS: Do you get into a tier where now it means you have to bring in a lot more people?

JD: Yeah. I think the most I would ever want to do would be 4,000 cases.

BD: Because then you have to... There's only so much you can sell out of a tasting room.

KS: Do you want to deal with distribution?

[01:10:00]

BD: You have to do other things in order to increase the sale. And for us club weeks are crazy, but it's not how many people are coming in the door, it's how much wine goes out the door, it's our motto. So, I think that if we were to increase, we would have to find a distributor and we pretty much have to sell it to the distributor... You would make money on it still, but then it would be a whole other commitment and then doing weddings and all that, then you have to have event coordinators, you need to have all this stuff and we're not interested.

JD: We're busy enough. For us personally, we're trying to have more of a life.

BD: Yeah. We've been working on that for the last six months.

KS: Life's balance.

JD: Well, when you get honest, I'm 68 and you get to be this age and you realize... We just were down in Richmond last weekend for two funerals, one guy was 66 the other guy was 73. [INAUDIBLE 01:10:55] they didn't have a service for him. He passed away the same time. Well, nature realize there's an end, and the end thought it's not that far away. So, do you want to do this every day for the rest of your life, and probably the answer is I don't like doing it lots of days, but I don't want to do every day.

BD: So, that's why we hired Rick.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: Another reason why we hired Rick, it's to take some of the pressure off me that I like to golf.

KS: He's the co-winemaker, Rick?

JD: Yeah, I call him, he's the assistant winemaker here. He was the co-winemaker.

BD: He calls himself the winemaker. It's just Rick.

KS: So, how many people are, you said Jessica's tasting room.

BD: Club manager.

JD: She was a taste room manager, Betsy is really filling that role now, which Jessica essentially the...

[01:12:00]

BD: But she went to part-time because she wants it. She's going for her masters. So, she wanted to take on less responsibility. Very few people could do what Jessica did in five days, because she was a club manager and the tasting room manager. And we have a club that's over a thousand people, a thousand membership's maybe. Yeah, if you count the case clubs as well as the quarterlies and the club [INAUDIBLE 01:12:16] it's 1,200. She was managing that as well as managing the tasting room, and she said she wanted to go part-time and just do the club because tasting room manager it's not as much fun as doing the club. So, we hired a person who didn't work out, we had problems with millennials somewhere.

KS: Again, I'm not day to day in my business anymore, but it's still our primary source of income because shockingly folklore does not pay the bills. So, we had very similar problems. We're trying to do a big ramp-up of hiring and it's a lot of dudes, it's tough.

BD: So, we freed her up and she's working someplace else now. So, I took over those responsibilities in the tasting room as well as my own, but we will have to hire somebody else. Most of our staff, the vast, well, except for two people. Everybody is over the age of 45 here [INAUDIBLE 01:13:30].

[01:14:00]

KS: Yeah, there's a few. I have a young friend he's teaching at... I think he's teaching at American, and his fiancé is teaching at George Mason and they're both also getting their advanced degrees done. And he works at a tasting room because he loves wine and they both really love it so it's just a nice... Yeah, I think there's actually probably a lot of people like that

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

that would like it if they thought about that if that crossed their mind because it is a pretty nice atmosphere to be in.

BD: Yeah, you don't come in until 10 because tasting rooms are...

KS: And you get out. Yeah, you don't have to stay late, like most restaurant or bartending you would have to stay till two in the morning and get home so late.

BD: And I compare it to an ice cream store people are coming in to have a good time, they are coming to enjoy something. They know they're blowing their diet so everybody... Yeah, it's like, okay, we're just going to do it. So, it's a lot of... And I think Jessica is a really intelligent, very interesting person.

JD: She's exceptional.

BD: She's traveled all over the world. She's just exceptional and she loves meeting all these people from all these interesting backgrounds and being able to talk to somebody about when she went to Hong Kong in this met. And Joanne's slide... For us, we want to hire, if you don't know anything about wine we can teach you that, but you can't teach people to be interesting. So, our staff is interested in all these pain needs that [00:15:25] a woman is running around with a [INAUDIBLE 01:15:27] that she painted this. Her collage, her work is in museums in Poland and all the artwork here.

KS: It's amazing.

BD: She is, she has some beautiful pieces. She did some Native American drawings of... Is it [INAUDIBLE 01:15:49] almost that are out in Utah?

JD: I don't know they are out there someplace.

[01:16:00]

BD: Anyway she did, but she sold out its always raw sold for. So yeah, she does some beautiful work. But anyways a lot of other people have traveled a lot. They have interesting lives and so they can engage with the customers that come in because a lot of our customers are well traveled.

KS: Interesting people. I think that's one of the unique things about your location and the kind of customer base that you're drawing from is that you have people who have traveled. They have a little bit more maybe developed pallets, whatever it is that what you find.

BD: We had Cal Ripken here.

JD: Oh yeah, that's pretty cool.

BD: Nobody called Jim.

JD: They didn't call me. I'm a sports aficionado I guess. I'm not a rabid sports fan but I'm a sports fan. I was a pretty good baseball player when I was young. I know baseball. I would have loved to meet...

KS: And he was here and nobody called Jim?

JD: And they didn't say, hey Jim, Cal Ripken is here, nothing said you're fired.

KS: You should at least have the perk of being the boss guy getting to meet the famous people. You've done a lot, we were saying earlier to kind of restrict people that would create an atmosphere here that would not be pleasant for you. But does that kind of stuff ever happen where you get people though who are just maybe they've had too much to drink, or like how do you...?

JD: Occasionally, but not as frequently as it used to be I will say.

[01:18:00]

BD: Now we would have... I think it finally... We put an additional sign out the front of the property, and then we had [INAUDIBLE 01:17:41] here as well to try and get people to not come up in limousines. I think a lot of times they think they can just kind of sneak in, but they don't realize there's a wall of glass here and our customers, well musicians will sing there [song] or people run to the [INAUDIBLE 01:18:02] there's a limo coming in so we can before they get in.

KS: Because you've created a sort of a club feeling they're protective of that as well. That's neat though.

BD: But we've had some ugly... The last ugly incident was a limo pulled up and it was so crowded. We didn't see it a limo coming up. It came in and somebody said there's a limo parked right on the front and we can't get into the building. I wasn't here, Jessica found them and said, you guys are going to have to leave, we don't do limos and blah, blah, blah, the guy was drunk and he took his water glass and threw it down at her feet and called her an effing bee. So, they got him out of there and the friend says I'm really sorry, and she says that's exactly the reason why we don't do limos because people get to come in and they're throwing a party.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Yeah, it's a different atmosphere for sure.

BD: So, that was the last time. It was about two years ago and we haven't...

KS: So, how many of your customers would you say are like... Obviously, that's an aberration. Generally, you have people who are... Is this their place, like your, their, winery?

JD: Of these 11 or 1200 club members they account for about two-thirds of our sales. So, even though it's not a club shipment, they still come and hang out. Like this guy who was here with his fiancé, he's like second or third biggest customer. And looking at him you'd never think he was a winer, but he is a rocket scientist.

[01:20:00]

KS: I love that out here too because you have a lot of people who have moved out here for whatever reasons is beautiful. They want maybe a little more solitude. They love the place, whatever. And then you think, oh, it's just a good old boy and you're just wearing jeans and then you get to know them and it turns out, oh no, I was an astrophysicist, or I retired from the Senate or...

BD: Well, there was one gentleman that came in and Linda was working with him and he had a woman with him. And he wasn't talking and I said, "Jessica, maybe you need to go over and help, Linda's just kind of standing there." She says, no, no, that's him. He is a journalist for terrorist organizations. He writes and goes overseas and writes about the terrorists for the government or something, and she says, no that's how he is. She says he buys a case of winery time comes in and she says he won't talk. And I said, okay, [INAUDIBLE 01:21:10]. He is a little strange.

KS: Well, I grew up in McLean, Virginia so I understand some strange characters who work in foreign affairs or the State Department. We had a lot of that kind of action happening and the kids all joked that you always knew when something was going down at the CIA because their pizza delivery guys would be going delivering pizza all night long. And then they'd be like, oh, something's coming up and that's how we would know. Before the Gulf War, the first Gulf War started, the kids that worked at the pizza place told everyone something's going on and then it hit the news like the next day. So, it's a little bit of a leak situation.

JD: Yeah, that's something you would think of.

[01:22:00]

KS: There's a vulnerability there. The Domino's pizza guy.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: You see they would have a store of frozen pizza.

KS: Or something. I don't know, yeah, it was pretty ridiculous. All right, well, is there anything else that you guys want to add? Oh, one thing I wanted to ask you is, two quick things. Why wine cellars in your name because everybody has like either vineyard or winery. You're one of the few that call yourself cellars?

JD: It came from the fact that most of the ones that are so and so vineyards they grow all their own fruit. We in addition to our fruit, we use fruit from other vineyards. In most cases, they're just growers, not other wineries and a couple of cases there are other wineries. And so because it wasn't exclusively from our property, we use the word cellars. Like Horton who's pretty big name in Virginia wine, he's Horton Cellars, not Horton Vineyards so similar kind of thing. We have two entities. The property owner is Delaplane Vineyards which is us. We own 100 percent of that. Delaplane Vineyards owns 100 percent of Delaplane Cellars. The Delaplane Cellars is the operator of the winery. The reason we did that was as much as it was mostly to separate the liquor liability from our property, so kind of gave us a level of...

BD: I think everybody does. If they aren't, they shouldn't be.

KS: And then the other question I have is corked versus screw tops.

[01:24:00]

JD: That's a never-ending debate within the wine industry. Last year we started using screw tops for our early drinking white launch. I think the public still has the perception that screw tops are for cheaper wines, and corks are for better wines. So, we do all our red and our [INAUDIBLE 01:24:15] with corks. We also switched to a new kind of cork that is guaranteed not to import cork taint to the wine.

KS: So, it's not natural cork, it's like a processed something?

JD: It almost looks like a natural cork...

KS: But it's got more like insulation of air or something?

JD: Yeah.

BD: I'll get one.

JD: There might be one up here that [INAUDIBLE 01:24:43] will look up.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Yeah, or we can look at it later. A lot of back and forth with that and a lot of it is again, tradition and sort of how does something look like appearances to people. Like you say I think people assume the corks in it must be better.

JD: My understanding is there are screw tops available now that will let the wine age. That was one of the knocks on screw tops is there were so tightly sealed that for red wines would not age properly and that requires a little bit oxygen. Corks do allow...

KS: So, the mobile bottling guys, they can do both or...?

JD: Well, guys we're using now?

KS: Yeah.

JD: The older truck only can do corks. We had some issues with them so just wasn't the best.

[01:26:00]

KS: Yeah, I heard some... There was some debate about someone else that ran something and how it was kind of a mess. So, I've heard that, but it sounds like such an amazing... And the life that those guys live going from winery to winery to winery, like gypsies and everyone loves them when they come because they're so good.

JD: The thing I did not like about moving from the older truck because the newer truck is the old truck family business. Although that said they had more business then they know what to do so it shouldn't feel so bad. There were always issues, every time we bottled there was an issue, and they would never accept responsibility it was something they did. And that bothered the hell out of me because I think if something screwed up, it's not always my fault. We go out of our way to try to do... And a lot of times it was their fault and they never, they'd never, not once did they say that was our fault. I heard nothing but great things about the Canadian trucks.

KS: Yeah. And the guys are... I mean it's employing them and their family guys, and it seems like they're just running really a great show. And if anything it seems like there's a lot more business than they could put a few more trucks in circulation and do well.

JD: Going back in the background I'm thinking about, well, what else did I want to... A little bit more I think was going to happen in the industry over time. Just like Sonoma, Sonoma started out as family farms, and it's not today and that'll eventually will happen here. I think as Virginia becomes more established as a wine region or even as a baby wine region. You'll start getting interest from...

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Outside investment or...

JD: Yeah, some of the California winers who... As a hedge against forest fires or whatever that...

KS: Falling off into the ocean.

[01:28:00]

JD: Yeah, exactly. I think there'll be that kind of interest and maybe not in our lifetimes, but that will, I think will happen.

KS: Yeah. Well, I think the thing that's so maybe iconic about Virginia country. I mean this landscape is so beautiful and we already have people who come for the tourism for the historical tourism and whatever, but there wasn't really a whole lot else to do between battlefields and battlefield to Williamsburg to... And I think now having this and then all of the ancillary businesses that benefit from that bed and breakfast and little inns and restaurants and things. That's one of the things I've seen that's been the big increase out here is the developing Marshall which is just down the road from you and how much... Still, it's all quite new, but the thought that you could have fine dining, and an upscale grocery store, and a cute bakery, and all of these things in Marshall just five years ago would have been almost unheard of, but there's enough traffic out here for all of these other things. I feel like they've done it well like they balanced well there's not...

JD: Have you met Peter Schwartz?

KS: He does the extension, right?

[01:30:00]

JD: No. He lives in what we call the Chateau across the street. Peter's probably in his late 50's maybe. He is a past president or chairman of the Piedmont Environmental Council. He is a past supervisor on the board of supervisors here. He's a wealthy guy and his mission has been to... He's been instrumental in the redevelopment of Marshall. It's kind of a side thing from the winery project, but he's the money behind some of these places you mentioned, the new restaurants and the rest. He would be an interesting guy to talk to at least about what's going on over there.

KS: Yeah, I mean it's interesting. So, how many total people work for you would you say?

JD: It depends on the time of year. I write between eight to 14 paychecks depending on the time of the year.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: We started using it for the 15 [INAUDIBLE 01:30:41].

KS: I thought they were cork.

JD: It is, it's cork material it's just not a natural... It's not entirely.

KS: Not naturally like they've amalgamated it somehow.

BD: They grounded up and made it tighter.

KS: Then they wash it and they give it...

KS: Yeah, because it's not like that plastic stuff that you see.

JD: No, that's cork.

KS: So, it's sort of like fiberboard or something where it's like wood, but it's like mixed up into...

JD: Yeah, there are actually other corks that are more like what you're talking about where you can see it, and then on either end, they have a cork disc. This is natural cork but it's not...

KS: I mean it looks really like...

JD: They doctored up like this on the outside so it looks like it's more natural than it is. This is the same cost. You think it might be cheaper, but it's the same cost as a regular natural cork.

KS: So, how much have you noticed a problem with a kind of, like you said, the taint from the cork?

[01:32:00]

JD: I think the industry standard is somewhere depending on who you talk to they say three to five percent. I'm not sure if it's that high, but that said I'm not the one that's opening all the bottles, and I'm not sure that our staff would be picking up every single bottle of this cork. And that said even though these are guaranteed to be taint-free we had one of our tasting room people told me last week said I've had cork wine with these new corks. I just say, well next time you get one, let me know because I want to verify them [INAUDIBLE 01:32:34] cork.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: What's sad is I think most of our staff now can smell it in, and if they can't smell they can taste it, because they have to taste every bottle of wine before they pour it in the taste room, not the wine bar. And to me, it's very distinct, but I think a lot of people don't know the difference. They used to think it doesn't taste very good.

KS: Yeah, but then you're like, oh, that place has bad wine. Yeah, you don't want them to think that. I just wondered how much of an issue I guess that was because it's very rare when you do hit that bottle and you're like, what is going on here. But if you've not tasted someone's wine before and that's your first experience you might not know the difference, yeah.

JD: And once you know what cork wine smells like, you'll never forget it. I've got a pretty good nose for it, she's got a particularly good nose for it.

BD: I can walk down here and know if they've got a cork bottle of wine that they're pouring.

[01:34:00]

JD: We drink wine every day and mostly we drink other wine we don't drink our own wine so much. And you can tell if something is even just this much cork. Once you get an understanding you can recognize what it is. But it's out there.

BD: What's interesting, if it's only slightly corked, you put it in into [INAUDIBLE 01:34:11] and you put some ceramic film in it? And you put it in there and leave it sit, close it up and leave it sit for a little bit, and then pull out the plastic and the wine is good. Only if it's slightly corked. If it's heavily corked...

KS: What is it doing?

BD: I have no idea, but it works.

JD: It's some interaction with the plastic.

KS: That's crazy.

JD: Not heavily corked, but the other thing is if you ever taste, and a lot of people don't know this is if you don't rinse all the soap out of this glass it makes the wine taste horrible. And I've showed people that you can pour that...

KS: I've had that in restaurants and I've been like I can't believe you gave me this glass, and it smells like lemon or something.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: Soapy.

KS: Yeah. That's not a nice taste. Well, I noticed you have that in your bathroom where it says like you have unscented hand soap just because you don't want that corrupting... I think that's a pretty amazing attention to detail to have.

BD: Well, we'll get new people in the tasting room and they think I won't be able to smell that perfume that they have because they're not allowed to wear perfume here in the tasting room. I mean customers can...

KS: I was going to say you put them through a shower before they come in.

JD: That's a good idea.

BD: Another no, no perfume.

KS: Yeah, that might be a step too far.

BD: But every once in a while...

KS: Someone with really strong...

[01:36:00]

BD: Well, the new person that we fired because we tell him you got to wear closed-toed shoes until we get you a shirt, black shirt wear jeans no bellies, all this stuff, and no perfume. But they think that I can't smell it, and I just be like obviously tomorrow you can't come in with perfume.

KS: It's such a habit for me I think I would walk out the door and not realize that I did it.

BD: Well, but it's something that you can smell.

KS: You develop it too. I think that's what both of you are saying in different ways that you've just developed this over time. It's not something you can teach, or learn, or study in a book, but it's just the use and the habit of the senses over time.

JD: I'm going to switch gears. We were talking earlier about what we do here, and maybe one of the things that makes us a little unique is between Jessica, Betsy, and I we know maybe not one name, but we know by face most of these 1,200 club members. So, when they come in and you'd have to be in our shoes with people are, hey Jim, how are you doing. I have no idea who this person is.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: It's a lot easier for them to know you.

JD: But because we give them... They feel like it's a Cheers almost kind of place that there's a relationship and...

BD: Well, and we don't have a lot of turnover in staff, I know it sounded like as a person. But Jessica has been here five years now. Carol Julianne has been with us since the beginning.

JD: Almost.

[01:38:00]

BD: We don't have anybody that's been here less than a year working in the tasting room, and for the most part all of them have been four plus years now. And that also is because we don't take bosses, limos, groups over six they don't have to deal with that. Because if you talk to tasting room people and other places they do it, it's hell, it's absolutely just horrible. And so they have a nice environment people that are mostly interested in the wine. Sometimes you get to people can't look up from their phone. That happens, but they don't have to... It's not stressful. It might be really, really busy on club weeks but it's not a zoo and people aren't yelling at you and woo hooing and all that weird stuff.

JD: It is a zoo but it's not that bad as a zoo.

BD: They're all tamed.

KS: They're tamed animals.

JD: When we have club weekends it can be too deep at the bar.

BD: And we have barrel tasting [crosstalk]

KS: But so they probably all know each other a little bit by now too. The club members probably recognize other club members that they see and...

BD: [01:40:00] Yeah, they have come to dinners and do barrel tasting downstairs, because when we do a barrel tasting we do it a little different I think than a lot of places in that I want people to have a nice experience. I don't want them to feel like there's somebody right behind them with an empty glass trying to get in. So, we scheduled no more than six people every 15 minutes so that you have 15 minutes with this barrel before you go to the next one. And if it does get a little bit backed up, we have the first day she'd come through where you get a glass of

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

palate cleanser, like a glass of Vidal Blanc or something and some cheese and stuff out there before. If so that if it is backed up, no one ever feels they have time to talk to Jim because he's always on the left bank barrel, and they have time to talk to Jim and it gets bottleneck at Jim's station sometimes. But it's a nice experience. It's not crowded. People get to talk to each other and it's a zoo up here, but it's nice and quiet down there.

KS: No, I think that those kinds of things definitely seem to build loyalty as well that they can tell that you're focused on their experience and not just on getting the money.

JD: That's probably the event of the year for a couple reasons. One reason is if you buy wine that you buy on futures is the best price you'll ever see. So, people spend a lot of money. And then number two is we have a very close relationship with the gentleman... He's actually a young man who is the former chef from the [INAUDIBLE 01:40:47], and he's now down in Richmond and he comes up and he does two [INAUDIBLE 01:40:53] for the barrel tasting. Before he was at [INAUDIBLE 01:40:58] he had been the executive sous chef at The Inn at Little Washington. God, he knows how to cook.

BD: And beautiful food.

JD: He does the food. He's personable. His wife is personable. She comes up and helps him. He'll talk to our customers and it's just a...

BD: And explains how he cooks, because he goes to cooking out on the Crush Pad and some of its pre-prepared, but he heats it up and assembles it. So, everybody has... It's a good... It's a lot of fun.

JD: Yeah, and now that we've done it for several years is all your friends.

KS: Yeah, like a big party.

[01:42:00]

BD: Yeah. It's really nice. The nice part people like these parts here and it's fun to talk to them. We've developed relationships. I know Jessica has gone to dinner at a number of club members house and has really built a relationship with them. Jim and I tend not to do that because coming from where I came from I always thought it was a bad idea to socialize with customers.

KS: Yeah, I'd be a little nervous about it too, I guess unless it was a really established long-term relationship or something. But yeah, that you kind of want to separate a little bit. Especially because your house is right here like you can't really get away.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

JD: Yeah, there is no separation. If you haven't tried to approach these people another group you might talk to is Early Mountain, because that was Steve Case who was the founder of AOL and his wife. It's really his wife's project not so much his. But the [INAUDIBLE 01:43:00] they would have an interesting perspective because they bought...

KS: Because they were early on too.

JD: Well now they bought it... That property had been through a couple of iterations, I think it was auto mail for many, many years, and then it was bought by a guy Sweely, it was Sweely Estates and he put a lot of money into it.

BD: Unbelievable, out in the middle of nowhere.

JD: He was real, not the brightest, sharpest pencil in the box. I think he went bankrupt or he got foreclosed on or something and then the cases came in and they've made further improvements. I respect what they're trying to do there.

BD: David is the general manager.

JD: David Kostelnick, K-O-S-T-E-L-N-I-C-K maybe. He's a nice guy.

[01:44:00]

KS: And he's the general manager?

JD: Yeah.

KS: They're down closer to Charlottesville.

JD: Yeah. You could probably do them and Barboursville. I don't even know if Dennis Horton is still alive, but Horton was one of the early pioneers. Like I said [INAUDIBLE 01:44:31] she could probably have lots of ideas.

KS: Hopefully like I was saying to Jim earlier, I would like to see if I could get some kind of a grant or something to continue doing the project, because I think it's cool to just be able to have an archive that really captures everything that's going on in Virginia wine right now and who is in it and what their different perspectives are and to just have that sort of as complete as possible. And also then to bring some attention to the amount of work that goes into what you all do and the challenges that... I think people are fascinated in it. I think people are fascinated in the lifestyle. You hear people saying to you all the time, oh, you've got this magic life that you've lived on a vineyard.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

BD: Now I will tell you though, even though this is really hard work, I would much rather be doing this than being in the corporate world again. Absolutely. Because I don't have to sit in a meeting anymore in here [INAUDIBLE 01:45:38].

KS: I know or meeting after meeting after meeting that's going nowhere. Whereas when you're doing something you're actually producing a product and it's something that people really like.

JD: There's a lot of satisfaction for me if I'm on that side of the bar, I've got customers on this side of the bar and they complement, they say, oh man, this one is really great. I mean that's just...

[01:46:00]

KS: Yeah, it's got to feel great.

BD: Yeah, because no one ever says that was a good contract you put together.

KS: Exactly. Well, now when you create an actual thing, it's so much more satisfying I think than you have even go down in your cellar and look at all the bottles that are on your wall and all the cases that are stacked up and that's very gratifying. I always tell the same thing to my former friends over here just that like, look at your view out your office window like yours where you're reporting for work today. Just remember that like most people are looking at a nasty cubicle.

BD: Did you mentioned [INAUDIBLE 01:46:42]?

KS: Oh, I did talk to him. He was one of the first people I talked to.

BD: Yeah, because she does the art there and she [INAUDIBLE 01:46:49] art.

JD: I don't know what the name...

KS: It's a beautiful space that they've made there, and it feels like a little church the way they built it. It's really beautiful. His wines are quite good. I hope that they're going to be able to make a go of it because he's extremely ambitious for the goals that he had set for himself, and what he wants to try to do is very...

JD: He's a very serious guy, little strange too.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: Yeah, he is very serious. I think he was one of my longer interviews. He had a lot of theories on different things and approaches to stuff. But what I tasted was quite nice and I just hope we can get enough traffic and enough product to make a go of it because that's not retirement for them that's their real income.

BD: Us too.

JD: Same here.

[01:48:00]

KS: Yeah. But they've got little kids and stuff, so that would be a lot. I think having little kids running around at the same time to manage. Alright, is there anything else that you wanted to add? You'll probably think of something in 20 minutes, but...

JD: Yeah, that's all right. I'll put it back on you. If you go back and look at your notes and all this and you want to circle back on anything feel free.

KS: Yeah. Sometimes there's like a name or a term or something that I'll have missed. But generally I found this new trick you can do on Google docs where you can do turn on the microphone on your computer and I put headphones on and listen to the interview and I just speak it like whatever they're saying, I just say it and it types it like it's a transcription. It doesn't know how to yet play it from a recording device and type it, which you can do, but there's a lot of problems with it. But this you just talk like whatever you're hearing in your ear, you just talk and it types it. I just tried it out yesterday and it's a miracle. I'm not a great type. Each hour of recorded interview takes about four hours to type.

BD: Oh wow.

KS: Just a lot.

[01:50:00]

JD: I had a period in 1999 where I was unemployed for a certain period of time before I always had a secretary and I dictated into a Dictaphone and all that kind of stuff. But I bought a voice recognition software on my PC because I was so used to dictating and I didn't really know word. Learned it, and the way you train the thing is they actually had preprinted texts that you could read into the computer I guess with the artificial intelligence it would learn the way you said certain words and it was... This is 20 years ago, and it wasn't very... Back then it could cost a lot of money.

Winery Workers in Virginia
afc2017/017

KS: So, now it's all completely free. As long as you're loading Google Docs in Chrome as a server or as the... And then if you go to tools, it's like voice something, voice whatever. And in your computer whatever the microphone setup is in there. And I'm not talking that loud. I have a dog in the room panting next to me and the accuracy was really amazing. It was really real and it's free. It's all free, it's just crazy. The miracles of modern technology. I'm going to go ahead and stop this now.

JD: What do you think about these two rockets that came back and landed right where they were supposed to? We both went wild.

END