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VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 8 | August 2023



Andrew Bell and Jonas Nemura

Photo Courtesy of Radiant Beer Co.

by Daniel Drennon

It has become abundantly clear that the California gold rush era of opening your own brewery because, "hey, how cool would it be if we owned our own brewery!" is now over. From once mighty Anchor Brewing

to a growing number of small neighborhood breweries closing their doors, the once romantic notion of brewing beer, being a local hang out spot and enjoying supposedly spectacular profit margins has been replaced by...reality.

The reality is that opening and operating a small independent craft brewery ain't no joke. It's long hours, hard work and countless challenges. I sat at the lovely tasting room bar at Radiant Beer Co. with co-founders Jonas Nemura, President, and Andrew Bell, Director

of Brewing, to enjoy their world class beers and have this cover story shine a light on their remarkable achievement and stunning success.

Barely out of the proverbial gate, Radiant was named Small Brewery of the Year at the 2021

Great American Beer Festival. In 2022, Andrew Bell was crowned as The Alpha King, a super prestigious national competition at which the winning IPA is proclaimed as "The Best Hoppy Beer in the Nation."

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Drink local

# BEER PAPER

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Beer Paper is dedicated to providing news, commentary and education for the craft beer communities of Los Angeles, Orange County, and Inland Empire.

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The advertisement features a vibrant illustration of a green cartoon gator wearing headphones, sunglasses, and a purple and pink striped tank top. The gator is riding a skateboard on a paved path that runs along a beach with waves and green hills in the background. A boombox sits on the path next to the gator. In the top left corner is the logo for El Segundo Brewing Company, which includes the text 'El Segundo BREWING COMPANY'. In the top right corner is the logo for Pizza Port Brewing Co., which includes the text 'PIZZA PORT CO. BREWING CO. EST. '87'. The central text reads 'GROOVIN' GATOR' in large, stylized, colorful letters, with 'INDIA PALE ALE' written below it. In the bottom right corner, the text 'Available August 18th!' is written in a large, bold, yellow font. The artist's signature 'Steve Nager' is visible at the bottom of the illustration.

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## DRINK YOUR HISTORY

# SAPPORO BLOWS OFF STEAM

## WILL CALIFORNIA'S MOST HISTORIC BREWERY SURVIVE THIS TIME?

by Tomm Carroll

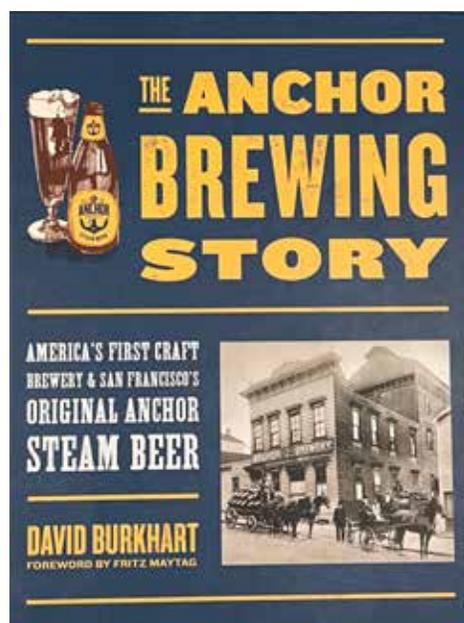
Some three weeks ago, almost everyone in the national beer community, but particularly in California and most especially in the San Francisco Bay Area, was talking about one story: “Sapporo Drops Anchor” (to get that overused punny headline out of the way right now).

It was first reported by *VinePair*'s indefatigable “Hop Takes” beer writer, Dave Infante, on July 12 (and even leaked by him the evening before). The news, that a giant, Japanese macrobrewery conglomerate had just announced the closing and planned sell-off of a small, legendary, influential, historic American brewery (which actually predates it) that it purchased less than six years ago, was shocking but hardly surprising. This is indeed a BIG story in the Beer World, which is why we're — or at least *I'm* — still talking about it.

But it's not only just another high-profile news item relating to the ongoing closures, mergers, acquisitions and consolidations of the current worldwide beer and brewing industry; it's also a story that resonates with the past — specifically the long, storied and not-all-that-well-known tale of Anchor Brewing and its antecedents and precedents throughout its history.

This latter relevance is what struck me when Infante's story broke because I was almost through reading the excellent (and highly recommended) *The Anchor Brewing Story* (2022) by longtime Anchor employee and historian David Burkhart. It's a nearly 300-page chronicle of the brewery and steam beer from the Gold Rush through the controversial rebranding of the packaging of the beers in 2021.

Looking through that historical lens lead me to cringe while reading another



David Burkhart's book

Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll

oft-seen, but misleading headline (by mainstream media such as *The New York Times*, CBS News and the BBC, among others). It's some version of “Oldest Craft Brewery in the US Closes After 127 years.” Well, yes and no.

As for the sobriquet “oldest craft brewery”: NO, because when macrobrewer Sapporo USA purchased Anchor from previous owners Keith Greggor and Tony Foglio in 2017, it was no longer considered a “craft” brewery by the Brewers Association, as it was more than 25% owned by a non-craft brewer. Additionally, when the BA redefined “craft” several years ago to include American breweries that also employ traditional methods, like brewing with adjuncts, then the “craft” club expanded and allowed in D.G. Yuengling, which has been family-owned since 1829, making it the oldest, let alone largest, US craft brewery. In fact, it's the oldest beer brewery of any kind in the country.

However, it's YES if one considers the term “craft” in a more general way to mean brewing all-malt beers using the best raw materials without adjuncts or additives of any kind; then Anchor definitely became “craft” after Fritz Maytag bought the brewery in 1965 and set about improving the beers and the brewing methods. No other brewery was doing that then. This was before the microbrewery movement of the mid-1970s (followed by brewpubs beginning in the 1980s), many of whose founding brewers learned from Anchor. In this sense, Anchor *is* the “oldest craft brewery,” but only dating to the late 1960s.

In fact, Anchor had adopted a slight, but more accurate, variation of that designation for itself in the last several years; it appears in the brewery's packaging and even in the subtitle of *The Anchor Brewing Story: America's First Craft Brewery & San Francisco's Original Anchor Steam Beer*.

Now about that age of the (alleged) deceased: 127 years. That reflects the year that the new owners named the brewery Anchor in 1896. In fact, the brewery is much older, having existed for a quarter century before that with different names and owners.

Which brings me to these little-known historical facts about Anchor that are delineated in Burkhart's book. Many of these, when considered in context with the current situation of the brewery's closing and possible sale, reveal that history sometimes repeats, or at least rhymes, and also illuminates some ironies and coincidences. For instance, Anchor has “died” many times in the past, but has



The original Anchor Brewery (which had also been the Golden City Brewery) on Pacific Street in San Francisco, circa 1906  
Photo Courtesy of Anchor Brewing

always managed to resurrect itself. Can it do so again?

Since there's not much general awareness of Anchor's pre-Maytag history, this article concentrates on that nearly century-long era.

### The Golden Years

Let's start at the beginning — the birth of the first San Francisco brewery that would ultimately become Anchor. Gottlieb Brekle, a German immigrant carpenter-turned-brewer, owned a small grocery store on Mason Street, which he turned into a makeshift saloon/brewery known variously as Brekle's Brewery or Germania Brewery in 1869. Two years later, he sold it to one of his brewers and partnered with an employee of the city's much larger Philadelphia Brewery to buy Grimm's, a nearby beer-and-billiards saloon on Pacific Street between Larkin and Hyde. That was quickly re-christened Golden City Brewery, and advertised its “beste Lagerbier” (actually steam beer) in San Francisco's German-language newspaper, the *California Demokrat*. This was the actual start of Anchor Brewing, in 1871.

By 1873, Brekle was the sole owner, and had only three employees, including his adopted son Frederick — aka “Fritz” (Anchor's first Fritz!) — as one of the brewers. Despite a Wall Street panic and national depression beginning that year and lasting through the 1870s, Golden City and other SF breweries (all making steam beer, as temperatures were too warm to ferment or condition genuine lagers) actually thrived.

The real game changer came in the later part of the decade, as true lager beer came to San Francisco, first from Boca Brewing in Truckee, about 200 miles northeast (where there was seasonal snow and freezing temperatures). Boca Beer was sent to the city by rail as early as 1876. This was soon followed by the advent of artificial refrigeration in breweries, and refrigerated train cars that brought lagers from the Midwest to California in good condition. The larger San Francisco breweries began making the transition to ice-making equipment and refrigeration to compete, but many others continued making the old-fashioned steam beer, and officially started calling it that, since they could no longer get away with referring to it as “lager.”

Golden City, however, could not afford to upgrade its equipment to compete with the increasingly better selling lager, and by 1885, Gottlieb defaulted on the brewery's mortgage, which was foreclosed. Real estate tycoon Alexander Montgomery sued Brekle for accrued interest and costs, causing the brewer to file for insolvency. By 1887, he owned everything.

As Burkhart points out in his book, “... Montgomery was in the business of real estate, not brewing. So he did the shrewd, and compassionate thing: He hung onto the property and leased it back to Gottlieb...”

**FLASH FORWARD** to the present: According to an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Singapore-based 3D Investment Partners, one of Sapporo's largest investors, has criticized the corporation for focusing more on real estate than on its alcohol brands, to

the detriment of its profit margin. So coincidentally, some 136 years later, if Sapporo, like Montgomery, is also more concerned with its property in San Francisco than it is with brewing beer, perhaps some similar arrangement could be worked out to save the Anchor Brewing of 2023? That would be a nice turn of events, and a return to precedence.

**REWIND BACK** to the 19th century: Unfortunately, Gottlieb Brekle died in January 1888. But Golden City kept going, albeit still producing steam beer and not lager, with Frederick “Fritz” Brekle at the helm along with his young son Frederick, Jr. and three other employees. During this time, following the depression, many San Francisco industries were becoming unionized, and brewing was no exception. After myriad labor disputes and skirmishes between the National Union of United Brewery Workmen of the United States and the United States Brewers Association (representing the owners, with the exception of the still financially strapped Golden City), the union used fees assessed from its some 600 members, ostensibly to prepare for another strike, to purchase the Golden City Brewery, with the property still owned by Montgomery, in 1892.

The brewery was renamed Co-operative Brewing, and the new board, mostly all attorneys in organized labor, spent the union’s money on upgrading the brewing equipment. Despite the overwhelming popularity of true lager, the union curiously did not invest in artificial

was unionized, history proves otherwise.

Also, in another possible historical repeat, pursuant to beer writer Infante’s recent reporting for *VinePair*, the Anchor Brewing Union’s recent bid to purchase the brewery from Sapporo USA, and run it as a worker co-op, closely resembles what happened in the late 19th century, when the brewers union did acquire the brewery, even renaming it as a co-op. That would be a great outcome for Anchor’s employees and fans today.

**REWIND BACK** to the past: However, the union-owned brewery unfortunately did not last very long. Not anticipating that boycotts can work both ways, the Co-operative Brewery found itself losing the battle. “[T]hey didn’t plan on the non-union brewery owners denying the saloon-keepers, and thus their parched patrons, any beer at all if they chose to serve Co-operative beer,” according to Burkhart.

This ultimately resulted in the money-losing brewery again being sued, and then purchased — this time by its biggest creditor, Alsatian immigrant Frank A. Lux, a malster, by the end of 1894. Incorporated as the F.A. Lux Brewing Company in April 1895, it was sold again, a mere 9-10 months later. This time the buyers were two German immigrants, Ernst F. Baruth, who had been a co-owner of San Francisco’s California Soda Works and the American (née Lafayette) Brewery, and his son-in-law, Otto Schinkel, Jr., a driver/salesman for



OTTO SCHINKEL



E. F. BARUTH

*The original Anchormen: Ernst F. Baruth, left, and Otto Schinkel, Jr. Photos Courtesy of Kari Schuttty*

brewery in its first 25 years. However, it was still in its original location — but not for long.

While the brewery continued to make steam beer and also porter — now named Anchor Steam Beer and Anchor Porter for the first time — but still no genuine lager, it had 15 employees and was producing 10,000 barrels a year. However, Schinkel’s gambling debts and financial misconduct caused Baruth to incorporate the brewery to ensure accountability in late 1905, early 1906.

That’s about the time the famous photo

was taken of the horse-drawn wagon, and the cart behind it laden with the barrels, in front of the brewery on Pacific Street. Baruth, as well as Schinkel, his father and his daughter, are in the picture.

Baruth died from a heart attack in mid-February 1906. And two months later, so did the Anchor Brewery — and nearly San Francisco itself. The April 18, 1906 earthquake (7.9 magnitude) devastated the city. Though it remained standing after the quake, the wood-framed brewery was completely destroyed the following day

(DRINK YOUR HISTORY continued on page 6)



*Golden City Brewing’s ad, in German-language newspaper The Humorist in 1873 Photo Courtesy of David Burkhart*

refrigeration, but made improvements to produce 100 barrels of steam beer a day, as well as porter.

Interestingly, as Burkhart notes, “There were three kinds of breweries in San Francisco in the summer of 1892: those that refused to employ union men; those owned by San Francisco Breweries, Limited, which employed both union and non-union workers under a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy; and a single union stronghold, the Co-operative Brewery, offering the local union alternative to boycotted beer.”

**FLASH FORWARD** to the present: While much of the media discuss Anchor Brewing’s employees successfully electing to organize in 2019 during Sapporo USA’s reign as if it was the first time the brewery

American; they leased the Pacific Street lot from the Montgomery estate.

(Interestingly, another German immigrant father-and-son-in-law partnership launched a brewery in 1852 that you may have heard of. They were Eberhard Anheuser and his daughter’s husband, Adolphus Busch.)

**The Anchor Era**

Baruth and Schinkel renamed their purchase Anchor Brewery. As Burkhart tells it, “Above its entrance, they hung a handmade sign. It featured an anchor between ANCHOR and BREWERY, as if to highlight the allusion to the port of San Francisco.”

If you are keeping track, this is the fourth name and the fifth owner(s) of this

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T-shirt honoring Golden City Brewery

Photo Credit: Tomm Carroll

**(DRINK YOUR HISTORY continued)**

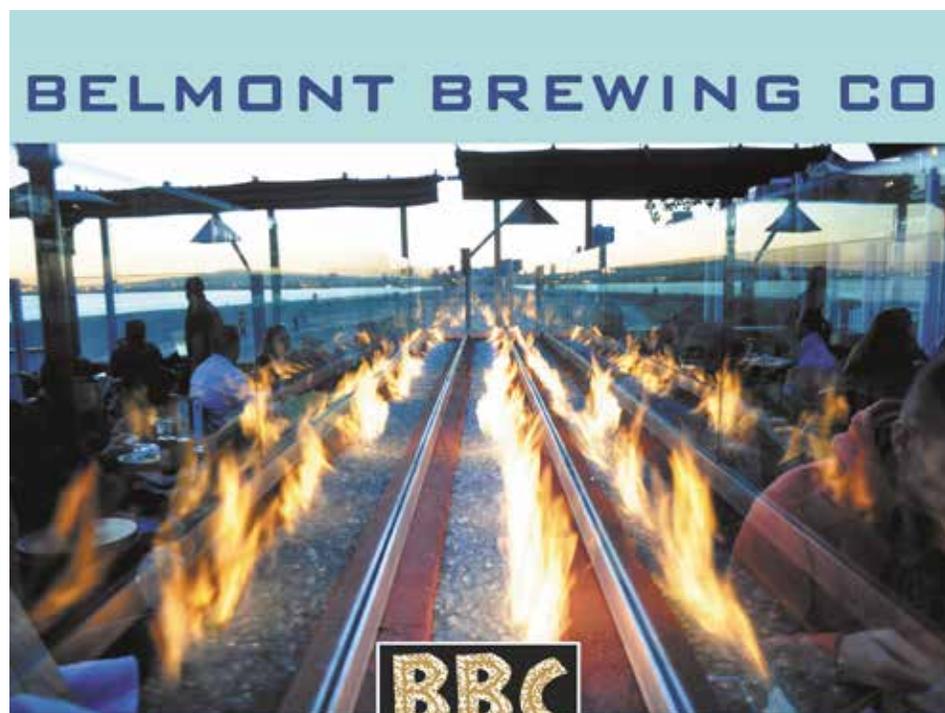
by the resulting fire. Only a brew kettle remained.

Schinkel remained resilient. He found a new partner in Joe Kraus, a German brewer who had worked at several Bay Area breweries, including Oakland's unrelated Anchor Brewing, which was founded two years before San Francisco's Anchor had been christened. And they leased a lot on 18th and Hampshire Streets on which to rebuild the new brewery. But in January 1907, before construction was completed, Schinkel died in a freak streetcar accident.

With no one in Schinkel's family

interested in continuing the brewery, Kraus quickly partnered with two German-Americans, saloon owner Henry Tietjen and brewer August Meyer of Shasta Brewing, which was the first of the burned-out breweries to resume brewing. The new company was briefly called Anchor-Shasta Brewing, but by 1908 was Anchor Brewing Company again. And it continued to brew steam beer and not true lager.

Like other SF breweries, Anchor managed to weather the Temperance Movement, the Anti-Saloon League, the anti-German propaganda during World War I, wartime rationing, and even the Influenza pandemic. But the 18th



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Amendment, ushering in Prohibition from 1920 to 1933, was a different story. Six of the city's dozen breweries at the time switched to making "near beer," five of them closed down, and Anchor's brewery was taken over by a company that made waterproofing products for boats.

**Repeal, Rebirth**

When Anchor Brewing resurfaced after Prohibition was repealed in 1933 — on April 7 for 3.2% abw (4.0% abv) beer — Joe Kraus, remarkably still the owner, not only opened it in a new location, on Harrison between 12th and 13th Streets, but also launched Anchor Bottling Company at Battery and Union. Interestingly, the post-Prohibition era was when beer cans were first introduced back east, but Anchor would always do things the old-school way. Beer was taxed by the barrel then, so it had to be racked to barrels at the brewery and then shipped to another location to be bottled. Steam beer was sold in 11-ounce bottles called "pints."

Tragedy struck again when the new brewery burned to the ground in February 1934, and Kraus bought a new building nearby at Kansas and 17th Streets, reopening in June. But he abandoned the bottling company after the move, and the beer was once again draught-only, sold in pre-Prohibition-style wood kegs. And Anchor's porter, originally seen back in the Co-operative Brewery days, was reintroduced. Though very short-lived in 1933-34, bottled Anchor beer would resume again, but not till almost 40 years later (see "Lying About One's Age" sidebar).

By the late 1930s, Anchor was reportedly the only steam beer brewery in operation, an anachronistic anomaly. Kraus had reincorporated the brewery in July 1935 with a new set of directors, one of whom has was Irishman Joe Allen, himself fortunately a big fan of steam beer. Because when Kraus passed in February 1952, Allen took the reins and became the only steam beer brewer in the world at the age of 63. He hired some extended family members, and his college-educated sister Agnes became Anchor's president and general manager, as well as a partner.

Times were tough for small breweries as mass-produced and -marketed light lagers proliferated. Allen persevered and, according to Burkhart, was selling all the beer he could make — about 100 half-barrels a week — but as the decade was drawing to a close, he couldn't do it alone now that his help had moved on. With no heir apparent, he shipped his final half-barrel of steam beer and closed the brewery on June 28, 1959, as the *San Francisco Chronicle* lamented, "The taps are running dry today on a full-flavored souvenir of San Francisco's past."

Taverns and customers alike were dispirited and distraught over the closing. One of them was a bartender and all-around jack-of-all-trades Lawrence Steese, who, with the help of William Benson Buck of Bolinas, the wealthy son of a US congressman, made a bid for Anchor. Together with Allen, who admired Steese's passion for steam, they

worked out the purchase of the brewery in December 1959. However, there were some unique conditions.

Agnes Allen convinced her brother of the wisdom of maintaining the company name, as well as the brand name. "Anchor Brewing Company" was not for sale. But "Anchor Steam Beer" would be for rent, at a rate of 2 cents on every gallon (62 cents per barrel) of Anchor Steam Beer sold, in perpetuity. Steese had little choice but to accept those terms, and signed Articles of Incorporation for "Steam Beer Brewing," thus initiating the fifth (or sixth if you count the short-lived Anchor-Shasta moniker) name for this brewery.

Yet another new location for the brewery was found in the 500 block of 8th Street, and Steam Beer Brewing opened in October 1960. Allen mentored Steese until March 1962, and then served as an unsalaried ambassador of steam.

But money troubles persisted, and brewing equipment was old and in need of replacement. By 1963-64, according to Burkhart, "...Steese began to cut corners on raw materials — just as Allen had had to do on occasion — compromising the brewery's all-malt legacy by adding malt syrup, corn syrup, sugar or Sweetose." Ultimately, the poor quality and inconsistent beer often was souring in the kegs before taverns could even tap them.

"It Looks Bad for Steam Beer" was the *Chronicles*' story headline on July 28, 1965, echoing its article just over six years prior when Allen shuttered the brewery.

**In Steps Fritz**

This was the sorry state of Steam Beer Brewing on August 2, 1965, when Frederick Louis "Fritz" Maytag III, the 27-year-old Maytag Washing Machine Company heir, and a fan of Anchor Steam Beer, walked in the door of the 8th Street brewery, and walked out later after buying a 51% stake in the company.

That date, as Burkhart aptly describes it, marked "...the birth of craft beer, which ignited a revolution in brewing that would transform the entire industry."

Technically, the brewery Maytag invested in, and ultimately became the sole owner of in 1969, was named Steam Beer Brewing. When Joe Allen passed away in 1976, he phoned Allen's sister with condolences, and managed to convince her to allow him the exclusive right to use Anchor Brewing Company in exchange for \$20,000 (\$99,000 today), plus expenses and taxes, in 1977. However, the royalty to her renamed corporation continued. "After Agnes' death on May 30, 1983, Fritz made several generous efforts to buy out the royalty agreement, but the family declined," reports Burkhart.

So presumably, Sapporo USA has been paying that royalty since 2010. And who knows who — if anyone — will be paying it when the Steam clears...

*Tomm Carroll is a beer writer / judge / educator / historian / collector / traveler / drinker (not always in that order). He can be reached at beerscribe@earthlink.net.*

**MORE ON ANCHOR**

# LYING ABOUT ONE'S AGE – HOW CALIFORNIAN!

by Tomm Carroll

I don't know about anyone else, but I could never figure out why Anchor Brewing, and everyone else including the media, always tout its "born on" date as 1896, when it was obviously much older. Mechanical refrigeration began coming to American breweries nearly 20 years before that, allowing for genuine lager brewing year round — even for California beer makers. If Anchor was actually founded then, why would it bother to brew an old school, no-longer-needed, pseudo-lager steam beer, let alone keep doing it for over a century?

With an actual birthdate of 1871 (as Golden City Brewery), when steam beer was the only "California lager" of its day, it all makes sense. So why not embrace that original date, especially as steam was brewed consistently and continuously by the brewery since then? In this situation, when a brewery is rightfully boasting of its historical longevity, isn't it a case of "the older the better?"

Take Pennsylvania's Yuengling Brewery (as referenced in the main story). It was founded in 1829, originally as the Eagle Brewery. And it didn't change its name to D.G. Yuengling and Son until 1873, but rightfully claims 1829 as its birth year.

I had thought Anchor historian David Burkhart might address this discrepancy in his meticulously researched *The Anchor Brewing Story*, but I didn't see it. The closest possible clue I came up with is a passage toward the end of the "Transformation (1966-1971)" chapter, when he writes about new brewery owner Fritz Maytag designing a label in 1968 for the eventual bottling of his reformulated Anchor Steam Beer ahead of its release in 1971. That year coincidentally — as well as ironically — was the centennial of the founding of Golden City!

"After verifying the year in an old city directory at the San Francisco Library," Burkhart writes, "[Fritz] added the tagline 'Made in San Francisco Since 1896' along the bottom."

Maytag likely researched the first year Anchor Brewing was listed, and used that as the "made since" date, since that's when the name Anchor Steam Beer was first used. But most people assumed that was the brewery's founding date. (If anyone knows differently, please set me straight.)

Also from the "Irony" files, Burkhart explains, "...Fritz began sketching his

ides for [a label]. Back in [19]59 in Japan, he'd enjoyed bottled Sapporo and liked the label's look and oval shape. It's verticality didn't work with the bottle he had in mind, but rotated 90 degrees, more like a Kirin label, it worked great..."

Apparently, 65 years later, Sapporo was still not a good fit for Anchor.

— Tomm Carroll



## OC BEAT

# PIZZA PORT SAN CLEMENTE TURNS 20

by David Mulvihill

Most Southern California craft brewing fans are familiar with Pizza Port, one of the early craft beer pioneers that began in San Diego County's Solana Beach at the pizza place acquired by the sister and brother team, Gina and Vince Marsaglia in 1987. Here, we could dive into Pizza Port's decorated history that began with Vince adding onsite self-crafted beer in 1992. From there we could review the expansion of its brewpub to six locations, its many ground-breaking and award-winning brewers that included Tomme Arthur, Jeff Bagby, Tom Nickel and Kirk McHale, and spinoff ventures and labels (Julian Beer Co, Port, Lost Abbey...).

Today's focus is on Pizza Port's only outside-of-San Diego brewpub, Pizza Port San Clemente, which recently celebrated its 20th Anniversary. On a beautiful coastal Saturday in mid-July, the rooftop parking lot was transformed to accommodate a party that included beer garden, BBQ, and music. Vince, having started his day early with a trek to Julian for BBQ fixings, worked the BBQ station for most of the day, providing folks with some non-pizza alternatives to enjoy.

Special for the Anniversary, San Clemente's brewers Jon and Stefan brewed "20 Cheers to 20 Years," a bold 7.2 ABV West Coast IPA showcasing New Zealand Cascade, Nelson, Nectarone, and Cryo Pop hops.

## A Brewing Heritage

Twenty cheers to the twenty years of talented brewers that this reporter has witnessed on the brew deck at San Clemente since opening day.

Current head brewer, Jon Eckelberger's Pizza Port SC connection actually originated during Ryan Fields tenure (now owns Wild Fields, Atascadero). As an avid homebrewer and fan of Pizza Port, Jon and Ryan would talk beer and brewing, share and critique his homebrew. Ryan invited him to participate in some of his brewing

sessions, sparking and later igniting his aspiration to join Pizza Port's brewing team.

That opportunity would present itself sometime later after Fields departure, during Trevor Walls (now with Brewery X) term as head brewer. As assistant brewer, Eckelberger embarked on seasoning his craft, first with Walls, then with Kane Christensen (now with Trademark). Upon Kane's exit in 2019, it was time for Jon to take up the head-brewing reins.

When this reporter met with Jon shortly after this transition to head brewer, he articulated an intense desire for producing the best beer possible, remarkable beer that would garner his full acceptance in the role, and support by new and longstanding patrons, fellow brewers and industry professionals. He expressed his drive for continued improvement with each successive batch brewed. Assistant brewer Stefan Feldt currently assists him in this effort.

Recent evidence confirms the team's continued embracing of the above noted focus and drive. World Beer Cup recognition came in the form of World Beer Cup 2022 Gold. Jon's version of Dusk 'til Dawn Imperial Coffee Porter bested 112 entries in the Coffee Stout/Porter category.

## Brewers Past

The aforementioned Kane Christensen began working at Pizza Port San Clemente, first in the kitchen, slinging dough and making pizzas, before he ventured onto the brew deck as Ryan Fields assistant. He also spent time with Trevor Walls in advance of his transfer for additional training at Pizza Port Bressi Ranch. He returned to San Clemente as head brewer when Trevor left. Christensen is currently head brewer at Trademark Brewing in Long Beach. Between Pizza Port and Trademark, Kane spent time as



Jon Eckelberger, Gina Marsaglia, Braden Nuxoll (GM), and Vince Marsaglia  
Photo Credit: David Mulvihill

head brewer at Station Craft, TAPS, and Surf City Still Works.

Siebel & Doemens trained Trevor Walls (Brewery X) took his turn as Port SC head brewer, coming via Pizza Port Bressi Ranch prior stints at The Bruery and Ballast Point.

His GABF Silver medal, also for Dusk 'til Dawn, came in 2016, prior to his leave for Anaheim's Brewery X. Brewery X received both World Beer Cup and GABF recognition in 2022.

Ryan Fields preceded Trevor at the San Clemente helm. Ryan was honored with two GABF and three WBC awards in 2012, before his move to Beachwood Blendery, and his ultimate move and opening of Wild Fields Brewhouse in Atascadero with wife Jacque. Wild Fields has received a multitude of GABF & WBC awards.

During Noah Regnery's time as head brewer, he gathered four GABF (2009, 2010, and 2011) and one WBC (2010) honors. He also received the coveted Small Brewpub Brewer/Brewery of the Year GABF award in 2010. He moved up to the Santa Barbara area after leaving Port SC to brew with Eric Rose at Hollister Brewing Company. Reportedly, he parted from brewing for some time to

assist with his sister's restaurant before returning to join the Artisanal Brewers Collective.

Upon San Clemente's opening in 2003, Kirk McHale split brewing duties between his Pizza Port Carlsbad home-base and the new South OC brewery for a few years. Port SC brought home three Great American Beer Festival (GABF) and one World Beer Cup (WBC) medals during that time. Carlsbad also received many GABF/WBC awards during the same time period.

In reminiscing briefly with Gina and Vince during their celebration, we talked a bit about Port SC's early days and the years since. The craft beer climate in the locale was much different in 2003, especially in comparison to neighboring San Diego County forerunners. What may have started slow developed to become the neighborhood gathering place, a respite and destination both families and craft beer lovers continue to thirst for. Cheers to twenty more years.

*David Mulvihill continues his thirst to experience and promote the best of craft beer. He also provides business-side support (reporting, excise tax, compliance & personnel) to local breweries and brewers guilds. david@socalcraftbeer.com.*



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## COVER STORY

## RADIANT RAISES THE BAR IN ANAHEIM

by Daniel Drennon



Billy Robbins, Andrew Bell, Jos Ruffell (Garage Project), Jonas Nemura, Jake Genova, and Greg Zeschuk (Blind Enthusiasm) post-collaboration  
All Photos Courtesy of Radiant Beer Co.

It has become abundantly clear that the California gold rush era of opening your own brewery because, “hey, how cool would it be if we owned our own brewery!” is now over. From once mighty Anchor Brewing to a growing number of small neighborhood breweries closing their doors, the once romantic notion of brewing beer, being a local hang out spot and enjoying supposedly spectacular profit margins has been replaced by...reality.

The reality is that opening and operating a small independent craft brewery ain't no joke. It's long hours, hard work and countless challenges. I sat at the lovely tasting room bar at Radiant Beer Co. with co-founders Jonas Nemura, President, and Andrew Bell, Director of Brewing, to enjoy their world class beers and have this cover story shine a light on their remarkable achievement and stunning success.

Barely out of the proverbial gate, Radiant was named Small Brewery of the Year at the 2021 Great American Beer Festival. In 2022, Andrew Bell was crowned as The Alpha King, a super prestigious national competition at which the winning IPA is proclaimed as “The Best Hoppy Beer in the Nation.” Radiant’s “Dig This Crazy Scene,” a sublime DIPA, ascended to the throne among a sea of spectacular IPAs entered by the best breweries and brewers in the country.

Not even three years old, it hasn't been easy. While Radiant, in the face

of daunting challenges, has already established itself as one of the best breweries in the world, I pointed out the post-pandemic spike in operating costs. Nemura agreed saying that in some categories, such as pilsner malts, they have even doubled. That is the harsh reality and yet breweries can't afford to double the price of your beer in the tasting room nor the price of a keg to a retailer. Nemura, an industry veteran with management stints at The Bruery and at Chapman Crafted, confirmed the obvious. Contrary to what we casual beer drinkers may observe when sipping on a delicious locally-brewed beer, owning a brewery is a tough business. Nemura told me, “We have to operate as a manufacturer, a retailer, provide customer service and hospitality and, on top of all that, we are a wholesale distributor.”

At this point, let me apologize for this somewhat dire, even gloomy opening and flip the script.

Know what the opposite of dire and gloomy is? Radiant. With their mantra of “Sending Out Light,” Radiant is a beacon of hope and positivity in these challenging times. Radiant is what I call a destination brewery, meaning no matter where you live, near or far, you must make the trek if you love beer.

Andrew Bell's beers are exceptional across the board. I started with a sublime Helles Lager and chased that with a series of brilliantly executed pilsners:

American, German, Italian and West Coast styles. Radiant has something for everyone, inclusive of all styles. When I complimented Bell, who brewed at The Bruery for many years (where he and Nemura met, developed a friendship and mutual respect), Jeff Monnig, our bartender, who also worked with them at The Bruery for years, offered, “Andrew is a beverage savant. He could start a lemonade company and it would be the best lemonade ever.”

After being wowed by Radiant's beautiful brews, I can believe that. But I hope Andrew sticks to beer.

**Drennon:** Jonas. You were director of operations at Chapman Crafted and Andrew was Innovation Manager at The Bruery. You had worked together at The Bruery for years. When and how did you decide you would open a brewery together?

NEMURA: Like any organization, The



Kim Edmiston and Chelsea Baloo



**GABF Silver Medalist “So Into You”**

Bruery went through a number of phases in the years that Andrew and I worked together there. Each phase had its own unique challenges, and some of them, frankly, were really difficult. It’s easy to start imagining the grass being greener somewhere else during those times, and I always had a kernel of interest in starting my own brewery (that had been my original dream during my days in New York City; actually performing the work it took to run a brewery had frankly reduced that desire for a while, but never fully extinguished it). I know how to brew beer but never fooled myself into thinking that I was the right person to actually brew; in thinking about who had the talent and temperament to be that person, Andrew came up as a natural fit. He had written more recipes than any brewer I knew, crafting some insane flavor profiles and completely pioneering the use of many ingredients and techniques in beer. He was passionate about flavor and quality and had an uncanny palate. And he was just a really nice guy. We had a couple of casual conversations while at The Bruery; just sort of, “What kind of beers would you want to focus on,” “Where would you



**Germany By Way of Texas, German Chocolate Cake-inspired Barrel-Aged Stout**

want to open up,” etc. When I left The Bruery, I recall saying we should keep in touch should an opportunity arise. When a few opportunities presented themselves, I looped Andrew in; a couple didn’t work out, but this one actually stuck.

**BELL:** I had aspirations of opening a brewery someday all the way back in college. As Jonas mentioned, we spoke about ideas while we were together at The Bruery, but nothing concrete. Jonas’s expertise lies in areas of the brewing business that are not strengths for me - distro, HR, accounting, running retail side of things, etc.

**Drennon:** *How and why did you choose the name Radiant?*

**NEMURA:** Naming the brewery was honestly one of the hardest decisions we made, and took longer than most others. We had a crazy list of 200 or so name ideas; some completely terrible, some that everyone loved but were used or otherwise completely unprotectable, and a lot that were debated over again and again. Over



**Paloma Aroma seltzer**

the course of months, Radiant emerged as the winning candidate. We liked it because it aligned with our desire to create a positive, colorful brand (and wasn’t difficult to pronounce).

**Drennan:** *How did you come up with your mantra of “Sending Out Light?”*

**NEMURA:** One of the definitions of the word radiant is “sending out light; shining or glowing brightly.” Once we saw that, it seemed a natural tagline or mantra. To me, it’s the definition, the brand promise and the goal.

**Drennon:** *Can you cite any mentors or sources of inspiration who helped propel you to where you are today?*

**NEMURA:** Ian Ramsay, brewer at Galbraith’s Alehouse; a true example of work ethic and taking pride in one’s work. Patrick Rue, founder of The Bruery; to date, the most innovative person I’ve met. Sam Calagione of Dogfish Head; his *Brewing Up a Business* book and following Dogfish’s story in my East Coast days were some of the early inspiration that piqued my interest in the craft beer



**There’s a Lassi in My Mango!, a nitrogenated mango lassi-inspired smoothie sour**

industry.

**BELL:** Tyler King and Patrick Rue.

**Drennon:** *You have talked to me about establishing a sense of community and positivity at Radiant. How do you go about achieving that goal?*

**NEMURA:** A good brewery should act as a third space in the community, somewhere for people to gather, socialize, celebrate milestones, etc. We spend a lot of effort on creating fun and engaging weekly “programming” in our tasting room, along with larger monthly and quarterly events, in the hopes of building that community. In addition to trivia Wednesdays, recurring comedy shows and vinyl DJ nights, we offer a weekly program on Tuesdays we call “To-Do Tuesdays” where we focus on that third space environment and try to bring people together around common interests; that ranges from a book club to open mic and board/game nights and even artist

(COVER STORY continued on page 12)

# Beachwood

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The Radiant family gearing up for their second anniversary with a staff brew day All Photos Courtesy of Radiant Beer Co.

*frankly, excellent. What is your process for deciding which beer styles to brew?*

BELL: Most everything that we brew are things we want to drink. Obviously hoppy beers and lagers of all sorts anchor the list. Culinary inspired beers - be them stouts, barrel-aged strong beers or sours - are what I was known for making at The Bruery and we try to keep a few options on tap as often as possible. We fill the rest of the list with less common classic beer styles - that are a fun challenge to brew - as well as some more esoteric beers/ beverages. Constant rotation of the tap list is important for us.

*Drennon: When did you start homebrewing and when did you realize you had a talent for it?*

BELL: I started homebrewing before I was legally allowed to purchase alcohol. I started making ciders and was homebrewing beer by my sophomore year of college. I was already into beer geek culture via RateBeer and had some fairly strong ideas of what I wanted to brew. The first beer came out pretty well, but the second one was completely undrinkable - apparently chocolate malt doesn't taste like chocolate when it is 50% of the mash bill - chalk that up as a learning experience. Overall, they were not all that bad from the get go outside of the chocolate malt mistake batch. Right after graduating college, I started entering my beers in Pro-Am competitions and won one of them and was runner up in two others.

*Drennon: I knew you had become obsessed with beer once you disclosed that you had submitted over 1000 ratings on Ratebeer before you had even turned 21! You add that you quit doing ratings at somewhere between 8000 and 9000. That's gotta be some kind of record. How did all of that evaluation help you become a brewer?*

BELL: Not a record for Ratebeer, but I believe I was in the top 25 in the US when I stopped. That said I think it helped my brewing career quite a bit from a sensory perspective. Being able to pinpoint and put words to aromas and flavors is very valuable. I took the Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) Exam when I was 23 and tested at a National level - I can partially credit that result to the sensory and descriptive ability I developed by rating beers. Also seeking out the highest rated beers in the world opens your eyes as to what world class beer tastes like.

*Drennon: How important is palate and recipe development to ascending to world class brewer status?*

BELL: I think having a good palate and strong sensory abilities are critical to making world class beer. It's not the only thing but it is important. Recipe development is important as well (especially in more complex or esoteric beers), but I'd say secondary to good brewing practices.

*Drennon: As learning curves go, how long did it take for you to evolve into the brewer you are today?*



(COVER STORY continued)

discussions. For bigger events, we're creating four "pillar" events throughout the year; our anniversary (we call it birthday) celebration in early February, a celebration of the summer solstice called Light Week in late June, our Oktoberfest in September (always coincides with the opening weekend of Oktoberfest in Munich, this year September 15-17th) and a winter solstice celebration.

But even with world-class beer and an engaging space, people aren't necessarily going to come back and really become part of that community if they don't feel welcome. And that's where our amazing staff comes in. You may have noticed that Andrew & I aren't the most outgoing of people; we like connecting with regulars and industry friends in the tasting room, but social butterflies we are not. So, from the beginning, we've made certain to hire a fantastic tasting room staff and encourage them to do what they do best. And we try our best to keep them engaged with the business, whether that's offering up beer name suggestions, designing merch and labels, partaking in social media, developing and executing new events, or even painting a sweet ass mural in our tasting room.

We also try to build community with our suppliers. We've been fortunate to make some really excellent relationships with various industry partners over the years, and believe it's important.

*Drennon: Right out of the gate, your tap list was eclectic, extensive and, quite*

BELL: I'm still constantly trying to learn and improve, it is a never ending journey.

**Drennon:** *What advice would you give to homebrewers who aspire to become a professional?*

BELL: Get a job working at a brewery that you respect for at least a couple of years before you attempt to open your own brewery. Start at the bottom and work your way up so that you see all sides of the production process from keg washing and packaging, cellar, brewhouse, lab, brewery management. Learn how to use pumps, chemicals, CO2, etc. There are a lot of brewery [best] practices that cannot be executed at the homebrew scale. And that is just the beer making part of the business...

**Drennon:** *What are the most important skills to make that transition?*

BELL: Work ethic and intellectual curiosity.

**Drennon:** *Collaboration beers, especially among the most elite breweries, seem to be all the rage. How do you decide with whom to collaborate with and why?*

BELL: Collabs are really an opportunity to hang out with industry friends and to hopefully learn something new or see something from a different perspective. There are many factors that go into deciding who to collab with, but having a connection and friendship is the starting block and obviously enjoying the other breweries' beers and philosophy on brewing.

**Drennon:** *Jonas. What inspired you to get into the beer industry?*

NEMURA: I was working in Manhattan as a legal assistant and had determined that I didn't want to attend law school/go the lawyer route. In large part that came from a disillusionment with the idea of spending my life perpetuating

a human construct instead of creating something tangible. I had geeked out heavily into beer history/styles and started homebrewing during that time, and loved the idea of brewing as a true craft; that is, an intersection of art, science and passion. My then girlfriend (now wife, always amazing) and I quit our jobs, got work permits in New Zealand, and I was fortunate to befriend a brewer at a local cask ale brewpub in Auckland, Galbraith's Alehouse.

**Drennon:** *Could you mention a few of your learning curve moments that took you to higher level of confidence and skill, ultimately resulting in your ability to own and run a brewery?*

NEMURA: While I learned the basics of commercial beer production in New Zealand and at Left Coast in San Clemente, The Bruery was 100% where I cut my teeth in the beer industry. Starting as the second full-time employee, I spent just shy of 10 years there, wearing a large number of hats during that time (generally many at once). The first year was a lot of production work, but by early 2009 I was overseeing our rapidly growing distribution model, flying across the country to meet with distributors and open new markets; by 2012, we were selling in 21 states and starting to export to Europe. I learned a ton working with beer distributors, people who had been selling beer for 30 years in some cases. I saw a lot of different markets and the differences between them. I learned the complex tapestry of alcohol laws across the nation. I met savvy retailers and other passionate brewery start-ups. But the biggest learning curves came from seeing a business grow that rapidly. Going from a tasting room in the corner of the brewery with five of us doing everything, to 30 employees between three facilities, to 70 employees operating on two coasts, change was truly the constant. As the business progressed, I shifted from directly managing the distribution sales to a more general business operations and



**Billy Robbins, Brewer**

leadership role; connecting departments, working on new projects, removing roadblocks and attempting to steer the ship. I was fortunate to participate in a business leadership peer organization and learned a lot about small (and some not-so-small) businesses, the shared struggles and pain points pretty much every organization experiences, and got some great guidance on HR and other areas of business operations. My experience at Chapman Crafted was my introduction to the self-distribution model and re-instilled that start-up mentality.

**Drennon:** *How important are each of the following: branding, staffing, training, location, having a clear mission statement and, of course, the quality of the beer and customer service?*

NEMURA: Yes, you nailed it. Seriously, they are all important. I think quality beer is honestly just table stakes now; the threshold has moved up a lot over the past few years. I'm biased, of course, but I think we do better than most in that area; we certainly focus on it more. Location is more important than it ever was; the SoCal industrial park brewery model is losing momentum to a return to the brewpub model with comfortable spaces and reliable food; we're taking steps to meet that demand better with tasting room environment improvements and an in-house food solution. Staffing, training, and customer service are facets of the same thing, and I would throw community into the mix; you need to create a comfortable, fun, safe and engaging environment, or folks are going to move on. Branding is not just what draws new customers into the fold, but also what reinforces that sense of community. With the amount of competition out there from other breweries, restaurants, wine bars, etc., it takes firing on all cylinders to make it work. We're fortunate to have an amazing team that can deliver the promise

that our brand makes.

**Drennon:** *You started selling beer in January 2021, during the second covid lockdown in California. What strategies did you have to employ to survive?*

NEMURA: First and foremost, selling beer in cans. Which was easier said than done, given that the pandemic had thrown a massive wrench in supply chains, especially the aluminum can market. And while the brewery we had taken over did have a canning line, we needed to gut the system as they had run micheladas and lord knows what else through the line; so our initial several releases were actually done via mobile canning (shout out to Andres Borowiak and the crew at Boomhut). Then it was a matter of finding homes for all of this beer. A 30bbbl brewhouse isn't necessarily the ideal start-up size in the best of times, so it was significantly more challenging to get fresh IPAs and lagers to market when that market was less than half of its normal size. Fortunately, we had an experienced and driven sales professional in Aaron Aldoriso, who had worked with Andrew at The Bruery, and we also worked some distributor connections in Oregon and Northern California to spread the beer out and build brand awareness. Our initial "tasting room operations" were literally selling beer out of a roll-up door on the side of the building next to the coldbox. As the restrictions started to ease and we were allowed to begin actual tasting room operations of a sort, we rolled with it like everyone else (which often meant adapting our business model overnight, as the state rarely provided more than 24-hour notice of a change in direction).

It would also be difficult to overstate the importance of industry connections during that time. Whether that was



**Whitney Rodgers, Kim Edmiston, and Chris Kent enjoying a brew together**

(COVER STORY continued on page 14)



Radiant Beer Co. taproom

(COVER STORY continued)

getting some amazing hops before we had our own contracts, finding a new source for cans, borrowing a piece of equipment when ours broke, or just spreading the word about our beer, having close friends in the industry was a major benefit, and frankly a necessity. The word-of-mouth piece was especially useful since we didn't have the usual sampling opportunities of beer festivals (or even on-premise bars/restaurants in the very early stages). And, of course, winning Brewery of the Year at the Great American Beer Festival our first year in business didn't hurt.

**Drennon:** *On the other side of the pandemic (fingers crossed that we are finally on the other side), prices of your ingredients, supplies and, well, just*

*about everything have spiked, even doubled in some cases. Can you address the economics of the beer industry and the challenges it faces?*

NEMURA: Costs go up a whole lot faster than they ever come down, especially in B2B sales. The pandemic threw everything into massive disarray, and since then the war in Ukraine and inflation around the world have served to keep markets on edge and prices high. Minimum wage keeps rising in California, generally pushing all wages higher. But there's only so much room for breweries to increase their prices, whether that be over the bar or at wholesale; beer is ultimately a commodity product, and there's enough competition in craft beer now that makes it hard to get out of line with the "norm" without just being replaced. That leaves



Mark Smolyar, Marketing, overwhelmed by our second anniversary offerings



Jonas sending out light

what always was an industry with tight margins in a very difficult scenario.

**Drennon:** *Much ado has been made over brewery closings and the decline of craft beer consumption in the face of wine, spirits, seltzers, and ciders claiming market share. There are even folks who are choosing to go non-alcoholic. This divvys up the drinker pie. How are independent craft breweries to survive, much less thrive, with this trend?*

NEMURA: It's very true that consumer demand for craft beer is not the same as it was 10-15 years ago. COVID accelerated some trends that were already in the works in beverage alcohol; Doug Veliky (Revolution Brewing, BeerCrunchers/BeerAficionado) pinpointed the "difficult times" for craft beer as starting in 2016,

and I think that's pretty accurate. More generally, COVID just screwed up consumer demand/behavior in so many ways; I still don't think we're in a "new normal" yet, as each year seems to have its own new patterns. Lots of breweries got PPP loans or other grants that helped to float them for a while, but that money is drying up and reality is setting in. I think we still have a lot more closures on the horizon, but that doesn't mean it's all bleak. For one, closures can create opportunities; it did for us. I think that's one of the coolest things about the current era of craft beer; folks who have worked tirelessly in the industry for years are now getting a chance to create their own place. And with that comes more creativity and innovation, which are some of the bedrocks of our industry. So people like drinking wine (me too). Guess what, you can make wine (or at least sell it, if you have a kitchen or get creative like we did). Same for non-alcoholic (and you don't need the kitchen). Even spirits aren't beyond the realm of possibility. Andrew and I had the absolute pleasure of hanging out with Mike Pallen of Mikerphone Brewing outside of Chicago a few months back; Illinois breweries changed the laws so they can sell spirits on their premise. Mike's a bourbon fanatic, so he gets barrel picks from various distilleries and sells them as Mikerphone bourbon. On the same trip we brewed a collab with Toppling Goliath; they had to fight to change the laws in Iowa multiple times to enable them to open a tasting room, self-distribute their beer, open a second tasting room, etc., etc. Breweries need to adapt. That may not be easy. That may not be quick (especially if changing laws are involved). But people are always going to want unique, local, handcrafted products with a story; they are always going to want a space to gather with friends and meet new people; and they always need to eat. I didn't mention beer in any of that, but trust me, our oldest alcoholic beverage - that which made humans adapt to live in static communities in the first place - is not going away, either. There's no shame in providing additional offerings to encompass your entire community.



Billy Robbins, Jake Genova, and Andrew Bell asking, "Can You See Us"

**Drennon:** *Let's get back to a positive, sending out light, outlook. Radiant provides a great space to enjoy world class beer and exceptional hospitality. So even in tough times and a potential darwinistic thinning of the brewery herd, one would hope that you will succeed and thrive. Accepting that premise, where do you see Radiant in five years?*

NEMURA: Fingers crossed (winking emoji). I think we'll continue to push ourselves to make the best beer in our area. I see our rotational model continuing, but narrowing in on some personal and fan favorites to bring into regular rotation, and probably a few year-round beers (I'll stop short of calling them "flagships," though).

We recently received our winemaker license and have started selling draft wine in our tasting room. For the time being we're collaborating with some winemaker friends to produce those wines, but hope to start crushing and fermenting wine on-site in the near future. With that license also comes the ability to produce mead and cider, which we will start imminently. We'll always be a brewery first, but we love the nuances of other alcoholic beverages and like the challenge and creativity that comes with each one. I also think it's increasingly important to offer alternative beverages to beer as the focus on breweries at third spaces continues to grow; a lot of breweries have chosen the seltzer route (due to the common licensing, low cost, and the spike in popularity), and while we also dip our toe in that pool, we find a lot more interest in more traditional beverages.

We want to keep growing and strengthening our community. I mentioned making some tasting room improvements before, and alongside improving the physical space, we're looking to continue to improve and expand on our regular weekly "programming" and special events. We're also working to start a "brewery club" - different from the standard "beer club" model that we know all too well from The Bruery. Rather than creating a model of exclusivity based

around solely rewarding those who can spend the most, we're looking to create a model that rewards participation in the Radiant community. Look for more details on that in the coming months.

And very importantly, we're looking to have multiple tasting room locations around Southern California. Ideally all of the locations would have food on-site, whether operated by us, a partner business, or within a food hall environment (like the Steelcraft model). The hub-and-spoke brewery/taproom model is what works now for breweries in California; less expensive markets may get by with a single small brewery & tasting room, or with a local distribution model, but California needs the higher margin (with a decent amount of volume) to offset higher costs.

**Drennon:** *Give me three desert island beers for each of you please?*

NEMURA: Saison Dupont, Timbo Pils, a really fresh Timothy Taylor Landlord.

BELL: Firestone Walker Pivo Pils, HFS Arthur, and the freshest, well made, clear Southern California IPA.

**Drennon:** *I always like to end every interview by asking each of you two questions: first, which is more important? Work ethic or talent?*

NEMURA: Work ethic. Talent is important and has a place, but it can be easily squandered without an appropriate work ethic. Talent also doesn't necessarily grow and adapt over time, which is an essential skill for anyone.

BELL: Agreed - work ethic. Talent definitely helps, but it isn't a replacement for putting in the work.

**Drennon:** *Secondly, if you had to describe yourself in one word or phrase, what would that be?*

NEMURA: Questioning.

BELL: Serious.



Chris Kent and Kim Edmiston celebrate their artistic accomplishment



Enjoying the Radiant patio

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## DESTINATION BEER BARS

# THE GLENDALE TAP: AN OASIS OF CRAFT BEER

by Sean Inman

**THE GT:** It takes a lot for sleepy suburban Glendale to get noticed amidst the bustle of greater Los Angeles County but a bar on busy San Fernando Road has been recognized as a long-time stalwart of the craft beer scene from both Eater LA and Craft Beer & Brewing magazine.

The Glendale Tap is on the corner and inside the space is a dimly lit garage chic aesthetic. Befitting a space next to a motorcycle shop. It was the owner of that motorcycle shop who recommended that Glyn Samuel look into adding the bar to his past and present roster of bars that included Timmy Nolans, Martini Lounge and Hell's Gate.

For near 27 years the Glendale Tap had a not so savory reputation. You were not going there to have a quiet night on the town and the police citations and shut downs were piling up. Then Samuel took over in 2012. Taking everything out and

stripping it down to make room for over 50 taps of both local and national beers. The goal being to “make it a happy, chill spot, an oasis.”

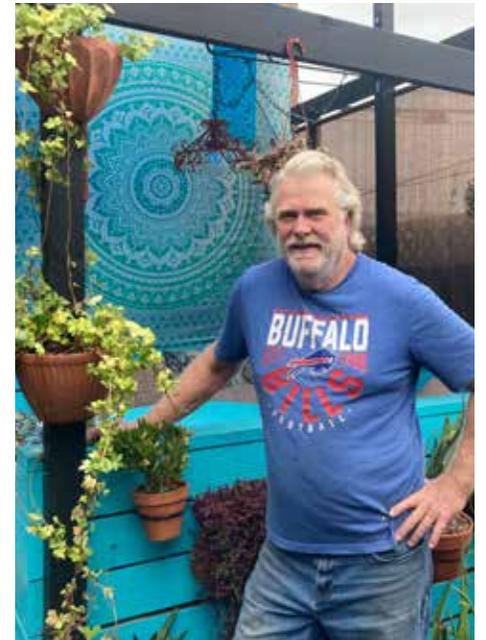
Due to a licensing quirk, The Glendale Tap operates under an old 40 license which allows for beer only either on tap or to-go. So you can buy 4-packs from their deli counter-esque cooler as well as rare bottles. During the pandemic years, the bar morphed into, basically, a bottle shop where you could grab and go. Those years also pushed more seating outside, so you can enjoy your pint on the patio alongside the food pop-up that might be there that night. Burgers Never Say Die which was at the start of the smashburger craze in Los Angeles started as a pop-up that could be found at the Glendale Tap.

But the first thing to do is to pick a seat at the bar and find a clipboard with the organized by style menu that will keep

you flipping pages and trying to make a decision from breweries such as Highland Park Brewery, Green Cheek Brewing or new favorite Everywhere Beer Co. Aside from the kid in a candy store beer list, one of the great things about The Glendale Tap is that the vibe is nowhere near beer snob. Whomever is behind the bar will help lead you to the beer that you can start with before exploring something new.

Eleven years on, The Glendale Tap has seen quite a bit of L.A. craft beer history from tap takeovers to numerous L.A. Beer weeks to breweries opening next door. That history and those stories and that clipboard are what make this place special.

*Sean Inman is the founder of the Beer Search Party blog which has been covering the beer scene in Los Angeles since 2009. He likes to travel for beer, read about beer and listen to podcasts about beer.*



Glyn Samuel, proprietor of The Glendale Tap  
All Photos Credit: Sean Inman

# TONY'S DARTS AWAY: NOW 13

by Sean Inman

**TDA:** Tony's Darts Away was the first brick in the Tony Yanow beer empire that eventually spun off multiple brewpubs across Los Angeles and birthed Golden Road Brewery. But while changes have engulfed those other outposts, Tony's has weathered the storms of the ups and downs of the craft beer industry and the ups and downs of owning a small bar during lockdowns.

The Burbank bar recently celebrated their 13th anniversary and brought back the popular midnight tapping of their Beachwood Brewing brewed Darts Away IPA along with hourly special tappings. I asked Andrew Phillipp, the General Manager / Beer Curator questions about Tony's Darts Away then and now.

**BP:** *What is it like being an elder statesman in the craft beer bar world?*

Phillipp: After being in this industry for almost ten years, I'm stoked to be able to collaborate and do business with the friends I have made throughout the years. Witnessing friends embark on new ventures, such as starting their own breweries, bars, or exploring new distribution opportunities, is incredibly rewarding. I relish the opportunity to support and collaborate with them as they embark on their exciting new paths in the industry.

**BP:** *What can we expect from Tony's in the future?*

Phillipp: We're always striving to provide our guests and regulars with rad new experiences. In the future, you can expect

us to continue curating an extensive and diverse selection of craft beers, exploring new styles, and hosting exciting events that celebrate the craft beer community. Also, I have recently gotten into Yahtzee, so maybe some dice games at the bar as well as all our bar and board games.

**BP:** *How have craft beer consumers changed in the last few years?*

Phillipp: Craft beer consumers have undergone significant changes in recent years, particularly in the post-pandemic era. During the shutdowns, as we all pivoted to packaged beer and products, so now the demand for draft beer experienced a bounce back. While we were confined to our homes, unable to visit bars and breweries, many of us went the extra mile to seek out the beers we

craved and turned them into a journey. However, as we gradually return to our daily routines, we have seen a resurgence in supporting local breweries, bottle shops, and pubs.

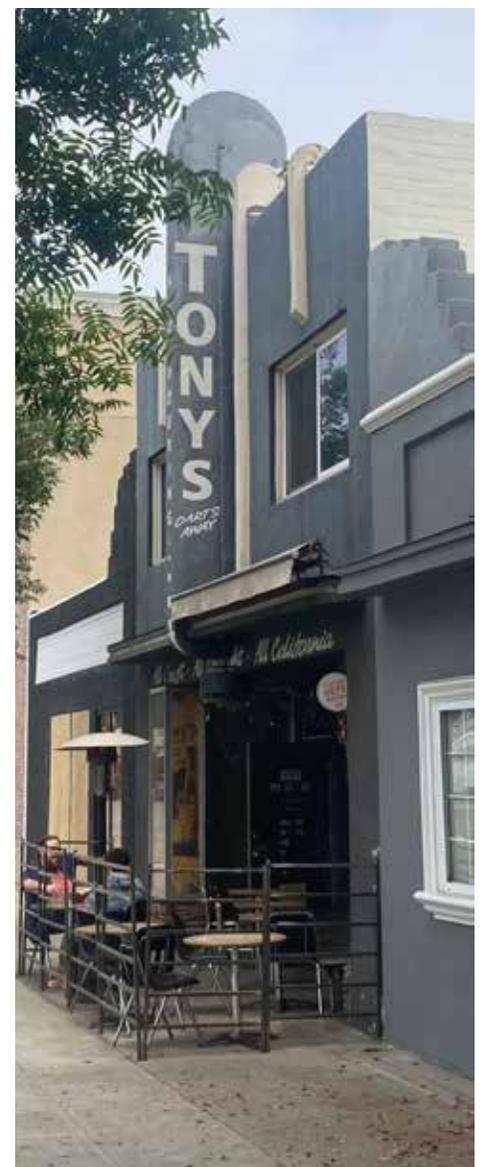
**BP:** *What would you recommend on tap for a newcomer?*

Phillipp: Most people do ask us what we're drinking so the staff will have their go-to's. Mine are Edel Pils – a German-Style Pilsner by Enegren Brewing Co. and Timbo Pils – a West Coast Pilsner by Highland Park Brewery

*Sean Inman is the founder of the Beer Search Party blog which has been covering the beer scene in Los Angeles since 2009. He likes to travel for beer, read about beer and listen to podcasts about beer.*



Taps at Tony's Darts Away



Outside patio of Tony's Darts Away

**NAJA'S PLACE**

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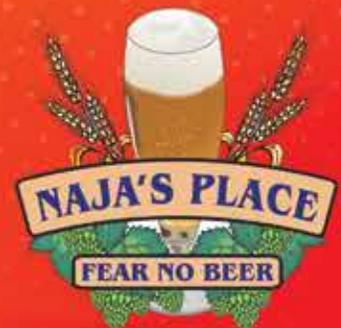
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## BOOK PREVIEW

# THE RISE OF LA BEER...AND THE FALL OF STRAND BREWING

by Joel Peter Elliott

(Editor's Note: What follows is an excerpt from a forthcoming book)

From a window seat, somewhere high above an ocean that touches the horizon in every direction, I could see a vision of something that frightened me. In our wake, were the fresh memories of a hastily planned solo trip. A backpack. A plane ticket. Some cash and fingers crossed. Ahead was a return. A life that had started to define itself without my consent. Cubicle. Consumer credit. Car payment.

That was the moment I became my own. The moment that I realized if I didn't kill it, it was going to kill me.

Flights are dreamy things. Way up there. You're always going forward even though sometimes you're headed back. Disconnected from departure and destination. It's nowhere. And nowhere is an interesting place to think.

That was 1997.

\*\*\*\*

It was just after things started to open up again that I reached out to Jeremy and explained the idea for the book: a big, messy art piece about my experience in LA beer that would be incomplete without Eagle Rock Brewery.

He said something supportive, like he always does. It's his way.

Jeremy and his wife Ting were nearing the finish line of a figurative marathon when we met. They had started building Eagle Rock years before and had been through the wringer. Like Nibble Bit, they were opening a brewery not just in LA County but within the bounds of the city itself. What you should be impressed with here is that this means they were not only under the purview of the County Health Department, they were also being watched by the City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety.



Ting Su's wonderful laugh

Your knees should be shaking right now.

Between the two agencies, their brewery project had been run in circles for ages. Like a ping pong ball. When one office required even a minor change to their plans, guess what, that meant starting over at the back of the line in the other office. It was miserable.

In their defense, if there is one, these offices simply didn't, and still may not, have the necessary systems in place to accommodate anything new. Any independent thought. Their only option was to try to cram the idea of a brewery into one of the holes that was listed in their instruction manuals. Problem is, brewers and breweries don't naturally fit where they should. Like brewers always do, Ting and Jeremy were attempting something different.

\*\*\*\*

I'm not sure why I'm so nervous. It doesn't make sense. These are my friends, but it feels like the first day of a new job. So, I arrive early and sit in my truck. LA traffic. You just never know. The only solution is a large enough margin for error.

Either you end up sitting parked on the freeway or parked at your destination. At least with the latter, you're not also worried about being late.

I feel self-conscious about my camera. It's old. It's big. It's actually two cameras. I made it out of two cameras. I cut one camera in half and mounted it to the back of another. The front camera is all metal and glass. Primarily brass, if I'm not mistaken. The back camera is all plastic. ABS, luckily. Cement is easy to get. Fabricating an adapter plate wasn't too hard. I can't sit still, creatively. I was raised in an alternate universe where all of the adults were too busy to teach me how my mind works. Or to recognize that I probably could have used some help. I see it all as a car hits my truck from behind.

Not especially hard, but certainly hard enough to get my attention. I look in the mirrors as she alternates between forward and reverse, inching her way, toward the curb. She gets out and walks past, toward the brewery, not noticing that I'm sitting there, watching.

I am disappointed that we don't acknowledge each other. In the rom-com version, we would have at least made eye contact. Most likely. And she would have said something snarky too. Yelled at me. Something that would become a plot twist in a little bit.

What am I doing here? What business do I have writing a book? Writing this book? There are plenty of people, plenty of breweries that have come before. Far more well-known. I'm not a writer: I



Ting and Jeremy in the brewhouse

All Photos Credit: Joel Elliott

start chapters with me thinking on an airplane. Christ. For no apparent reason. And anyway I didn't invent breweries. I wasn't the first to start a brewery. Strand was an accident. A stupid dumb miscommunication. It wasn't even my idea. I just ran with it. Ran hard with it.

When I walk in, Jeremy greets me with a big hug and introduces the young lady behind the bar. It's the same girl that crashed into my car a minute ago. So I say something like "yea, we met just a minute ago." Because in the rom-com version, that's funny. And romantic. And comedic. Romance and comedy and charm and romance ensue. And there's a really perfect song that plays just as the credits roll. And you leave the theater feeling good even though you ate too much popcorn and butter sauce during the trailers.

But this isn't actually that, so it actually just confuses her, and I watch as the four feet between us deteriorates into that familiar chasm. I sometimes forget to remember that my thoughts are only in my head. And that my version of things is nothing short of fantastic. It's not actually a rom-com. More like an awkward-drama.

\*\*\*\*

It's the first time I've heard this conversation since it took place almost three years ago. I haven't been able to listen to it. I haven't been able to sort out exactly why, but in large part, under Covid, the re-opening was exponentially more difficult than the closing or the being closed. Service industries found themselves at ground zero in what would devolve into an all-out social cold war over mask mandates and personal freedom. We were not equipped to handle the things that we were being expected to. It got insanely busy. Not in a good way. We were all working twice as hard and losing money. Anything personal that

wasn't also vital to running the business became an afterthought again.

I set the recorder on the table and press play.

We're sitting at a picnic table in the front parking lot that currently doubles as the patio. The sounds of people, conversations, and background music paint the air. Ting is laughing. She's finally learned to drive the forklift. It's only been 14 years. As she tells the story, I can hear the sparkle that she gets in her eyes along with that warm laugh. The forklift thing is ironically funny but it's also important on a larger scale. Ting is her own person. Strong. Intelligent. Independent.

A man walks alongside and remembers aloud to himself that he's forgotten to wear his mask to the restroom. I imagine him feeling the breast pockets of his shirt. Like Columbo used to. The mumbling trails off as he wanders away.

I recognize pain and exhaustion in my voice. Which surprises me. I would have told you I was fine. I fumble my way through questions and unintentionally interrupt trains of thought. To me, I sound broken. What I hear, as I listen, is Ting and Jeremy being gracious and kind to that broken person. Supporting their community. Their friends. And each other. In spite of the strain that a brewery, a restaurant, and a pandemic undoubtedly put on their relationship, they tell me their story as equals.

And she still calls him Jer.

Read more about Eagle Rock Brewing in Joel's forthcoming book *The Rise of LA Beer and The Fall of Strand Brewing Co.* Each month, *BEER PAPER* will feature a new excerpt.

Joel Peter Elliott was the co-founder and brewer at Strand Brewing.

## PROFILE

## YOUR HOP SECRET IS NOT SAFE WITH US

by Brooke Fallon Scheer

So, what is the Hop Secret?

Take two rad guys with an insatiable appetite for adventure, unwavering ambition, and hop-filled dreams to create and live life out loud. Christopher Thomas and Ky Pedulla are two east coast guys whose kindred souls found camaraderie while starting a new adventure - living in LA, playing music, enjoying nerdy culture, and navigating through the cut throat restaurant and bar industry. Today, these award-winning masterminds are best known for their crisp clean beer made up of a panoply of flavors and styles including unbeatable cool vibes.

These burgeoning entrepreneurs bought Hop Secret, located in Monrovia, in January 2020 and quickly executed a full gamut of business moves including the creation of a solid selection of well-developed beer styles, a tap room featuring arcade games, TVs for live sports, board games, free popcorn, including merch and a growing distribution line of canned beer.

At the 2021 California Cup Awards, Hop Secret garnered a gold medal for their delicious Belgium Wit, 8381 and snagged a silver medal for their clean, crisp Close Talker Lager. With an impressive background in hospitality and culinary arts, both Thomas and Pedulla continue to elevate the business through warm hospitality and creative brewing.

Here's their story.

**BP:** How did you get into brewing?

THOMAS: I started brewing a little before Ky, back in 2015. I feel like it's such a cliché story but, one Christmas, my mom bought me one of those full-blown brewing kits - you know, the give a man a fish kind of story. Not knowing what to do with it, I embraced it and with a culinary background. I trusted I could follow some direction (sometimes), which I did - and it came out pretty good. I mean the next one sucked but I kept at it. It was exciting and I decided to move forward with. Ky started brewing a few years later and we both developed a passion for it.

**BP:** What made you guys decide to start this venture together?

THOMAS: As roommates, we were both homebrewing for some years and started feeling confident about our craft - to an extent. We wanted unadulterated feedback on how people felt about our beer, so we decided to hand out one of our styles with some made-up obscure brewery name to see how people really felt about it - lo and behold, it was well received.

One of our friends gave us the advice to buy a brewery instead of creating one from the bottom up and it was some of the most solid advice we received.

PEDULLA: Also, we are in no way trust fund babies. The bar we were running in Venice closed down and about a month or two later, I was dating a casting agent who got us a gig doing a 30-second Chevy commercial. From the ad royalties, over a period of time, we were both able to get a financial jump start on this brewery.

**BP:** How did you end up in Monrovia?

THOMAS and PEDULLA: We didn't really care where the location was situated as we were a bit burnt out from LA and were interested in leaving. So, we looked all over the US for breweries. We came across Hop Secret Brewery which was originally owned by Gary Gates. It was close enough to LA and the beer was already solid and receiving great reviews. We're humble enough to say that we took off from where and what he created but we took the steps to make it our own through rebranding and true hospitality.

**BP:** Is there anyone who has been your biggest influence?

THOMAS: If there's any one person that I want to give a shout out, it's Le Bakofsky (head brewer at Party Beer). He was a mentor for us. We started the formal process of taking over the brewery working with both Gary and Lee. Lee really had his finger on the trigger on everything. We have enough humility that we simply say that we're picking up where they left off.

**BP:** Hop Secret can art is next level - what is the story behind that?

THOMAS: Well, Ky & I are kind of nerdy and we went to WonderCon together and ended up buying a ton of really cool watercolor art pieces created by this artist, Levi Craig. When we bought Hop Secret, we brought all of our pieces to the tap room. We eventually had the idea of commissioning him do our can art (which he had never done before) but was interested in doing it.

**BP:** What roles do you each play in this business?

PEDULLA: Chris is the head brewer. And I focus on packaging and sales.

**BP:** What is your beer philosophy?

THOMAS: We're dedicated to producing clean, tasty beer across a wide spectrum of style and flavors.

*Brooke Fallon Scheer is a single mother | beer nerd | small business owner | sales manager in travel | bartender | world traveler | and avid runner*



Michelle Palfrey, Christopher Thomas, Ky Pedulla, and David Ornelas  
Photo Credit: Brooke Fallon Scheer



# GAMECRAFT

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## BEER FOR PLAY

-  NON-PLAYER CHARACTER - A.I.-GENERATED IPA
-  LAN PARTY - WEST COAST PALE ALE
-  THE HEAVY - RUSSIAN IMPERIAL STOUT



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