

Episode #8 Shep Rouse/Rockbridge Winery

SPEAKERS

Fred Reno, Shep

Fred Reno

Shep it is a Pleasure to meet you, and I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to do this interview.

Shep

Fred, I appreciate your patronage. It's great to have somebody come and help you one on one promote one's business. Indeed, he's correct. I'm probably the third longest tenured Virginia winemaker following Gabriele Rausse. Who started in 1976 with the inception of Barboursville and then Jim Law, who started in 1981? I didn't get here and start making wine until 1986.

Fred Reno

But your love for wine and how you got into this business really predates all that. So, take me through the evolution of how you got excited about wine. How you ended up here in Virginia.

Shep

Yeah, that's it's an interesting story. Ostensibly, I got into it as a college student, you know, drinking alcohol was fun, legal. Well, maybe at some point, not legal, but we won't talk about that. I went to Germany in the spring of 1974, with a German language class from Washington and Lee, where I attended college and was exposed to the great connection between culture and wine, doing a wine tasting in a beautiful historic cellar beneath the city of Wurzburg, Germany. I was

lucky to have tasted the 1971 vintage which was one of the greatest of the 20th century in Germany. Then I went back to Germany in 1976. After graduating from Washington and Lee with a Fulbright Scholarship, studying environmental science. Well, I quickly switch that over to studying wine, became a wine connoisseur, traveled to different wine regions of Germany, learned a lot about wine. Interestingly, when I came back to the US after that, everything I knew about wine was in German.

Fred Reno

Oh, wow.

Shep

I had to relearn it in English. the crazy part is when I was nine, growing up in Williamsburg, I was looking for artifacts of the colonial times in a plowed cotton field, on Colonial Williamsburg property and found a wine bottle sealed dated 1718, which was the second oldest one that has been unearthed to date. It was probably a Madeira, a fortified wine of some sort, because back then, yeah, they didn't have refrigerated shipping containers.

Fred Reno

What happened to that bottle? Where is that bottle?

Shep

Well, when Colonial Williamsburg, Auburn Kume their chief archaeologist found out that I had it. They were like, well, we're glad you found it. But we it really belongs to us. They gave me a plaster cast, unfortunately, it is something that I have no longer any idea where it is. I think that's the that's the little spark that sort of got the

whole thing going. But I was interested in environmental science. And my career goal was to do something that's artistic related to the land. I had a strong chemistry background. I was pre-med, for a while a geology major and wine was the natural answer and also finding this property in Raphine, Rockbridge County right off of I 81, & I 64 gave me the opportunity to have a viable business, but not live in the city or Northern Virginia, which I looked at but decided I couldn't live there.

Fred Reno

I want to back up to the early part of your career. But you just said something that leads me to a question I have. So, did you have a consultant you worked with when you here? Or did you just find this property on your own?

Shep

I studied climatology and vineyard site selection for 15 years before I bought this. I had a very good understanding mainly from looking at the sites in Germany where the great wines grow, how exposure, slope, the relation to the bottom of the drainage and frost all related to the viability of vineyards. I also looked at apple orchards and peach orchards in Virginia. And those people knew because they had many, many, many years of time to evaluate sites. What kind of sites were good, and this property has a beautiful SE exposure. It's high elevation. At the time I bought it I had a little trepidation about 2000 feet because that was higher than most vineyards in Virginia. I lived in Charlottesville we'd come over here and it would be t shirt weather in Charlottesville. but freeze your tail off here. But anyway, I learned that. It was self- taught.

Fred Reno

Okay. So, I saw where you got your degree in Enology at UC Davis. How did you end up there? You went to California. Tell me about that time in your career.

Shep

Yeah, I came back from Germany in November of 1977. worked through into the summer of 1978. I was living at my parents' house in Williamsburg and made enough money to buy a car. Good friends of mine who owned the Trellis restaurant in Williamsburg, convinced me that I had to get a Davis degree in winemaking. So, I moved to California, established state residency and then working at two harvests before I went to Davis, I worked the '78 harvest at a crazy winery called Veedercrest.

Fred Reno

Oh, Veedercrest!

Yea, Al Baxter had bought grapes from some of the grape growers, Brice Jones in Sonoma County, and he bought grapes from the guy that own Winery Lake vineyard before it was sold Rene Di Rossa, and there were a couple others in Napa Valley. Anyway, I made wine there for the crush of '78. Then I worked in Forestville for Mark West vineyards during the '79 crush, and that job was the first job I'd had in my life that I hated. And that sealed, you know, sealed the wax that I had to not try to work my way up to get to a winemaking position, but that I had to go to Davis and get a degree. So, I started in the fall of 1980 at Davis, and then I got out of Davis and worked as an enologist for Francis Mahoney at Carneros Creek for two years. Then I left to work the crush at Chateau St. Jean under Dick Arrowood and Don van

Staaveren actually Dick was backing out because he was starting his own winery. And Don Van Staaveren who is a great guy to work for. His wife I think it's still the winemaker. Well, he's got some other stuff and then I work then I work the '85 crush at Schramsberg again, one of the iconic California wineries and I learned a lot about a whole cluster pressing for not just making sparkling wine but also pressing grapes to extract as little tannin as possible and color as possible. Then I made the move. We moved back here in the summer, late spring of '86. I took the job as winemaker for Montdomaine cellars south of Charlottesville. The facility is still used by Michael Shaps for his production.

Fred Reno

Hey, can I stop you there? Because I'm curious as this is a history lesson for me as much as it is for my audience. What was it like in the early days at Montdomaine here in Virginia, what was going on and what was the Virginia wine scene like?

Shep

It was a great opportunity because the guys that invested in Montdomaine, Michael Bowles actually started the company and planted his original vineyard in '78, overlooking route 20, just south of Carter's bridge, with Chardonnay and Merlot. He was a Pan Am airline pilot. He talked some upper middle-class friends of his to invest and have their own vineyards. At that time, there was a good tax break for people in that income bracket to have that agricultural write off, right? So, they all invested and in 1984 Montdomaine went from Mike Bowles sole proprietorship business to a I can't remember if it was a C Corp or a S Corp, but it was incorporated. They hired a winemaker, they hired a general manager, and they hired a vineyard manager. Needless to

say, that's a lot of payroll. Yeah, and that didn't work. But they hired me as a second winemaker, and I started there at the end of June of '86. Eventually, the bank came knocking on the door. And Dennis Horton leased the facility in 92, excuse me, started in 91. Alan Kinne was his consultant. We made his '91 wines at Montdomaine and then he ramped it up in '92. Actually, Alan and I made the first Virginia Viognier, his '92 and he continued leasing it. I left in the summer of 93.

Fred Reno

But you had founded this place by then.

Shep

Yeah, I was. And that was one of the issues that he used to give me a hard time because he goes, Yeah, you're working here, but you're thinking about your own business. I'm like, I'm sorry. Dream police can't control me. Not my ideal employer. So anyway, I worked for Felicia Rogan for six years as her winemaking consultant. And she was a delight to work for. She was gracious. She gave me a beautiful print from the seventh century England of a wine Crier or who knows? Oakencroft on Barracks road.

Fred Reno

Yeah, okay.

Shep

But in 99, I just decided that this was a full-time job. And at that point, we had lived hand to mouth long enough. My wife was a nurse and that we could start paying ourselves from our own business.

Fred Reno

So, I know you picked this site because of variety of reasons. But I'm curious about the difference in why you chose Shenandoah Valley AVA as opposed to some of the others that you would have been looking at? I'm sure like Central, what's called the Monticello AVA now or Middleburg or anything of that nature. And then what's different about Shenandoah Valley in this AVA compared to some of the others here in Virginia,

Shep

There's a number of differences, elevation is the principal and most significant one. The lowest sites in the Shenandoah Valley are up near Winchester, and they're pretty low 900 feet, Charlottesville, Monticello, mostly in the 500-foot range, which tends to lead to milder winters. But some of the sites on that side of the Blue Ridge get cold air pooling that can make the temperatures colder than we even get here. To cite an example February 5/6th 1996 Scottsville Virginia which is down near the James off route 20, south of Montdomaine, Michael Shaps Wineworks and Rapidan vineyards, which was started in 78 by Dr. Gerhard Guth, who employed the Joachim Hollerith from Geisenheim. Both of those vineyard sites had 20 below zero, which killed the vines. Yeah, flat out killed them. Oakencroft in Charlottesville at 550 feet, 17 below. We only got to 5 below that night even though we're at 1950 feet because the cold air doesn't pool here. Anyway, getting back to that, but we can't grow Merlot here it's too cold. This past spring, we had everybody get zapped by a frost the likes of which nobody's ever seen. It wasn't an inversion frost where the cold air settles over the night, displacing the warm air from the low areas. And you can mix that warm air with a helicopter or wind machines to mitigate frost damage. With that event, everything was cold. It was probably the single most devastating frost we've seen in Virginia. In the spring, I got frosted at

the top of my vineyard which had never happened before. But we didn't lose much. We lost our Chardonnay, and we lost a little tiny bit of our Chambourcin but much else did well. Anyway, getting back to that elevation one, soils two we are in this area which was called the breadbasket of the Confederacy. And it's because the soil is derived from limestone and it's a much richer and deeper soil. And it's very productive. As a matter of fact, the productivity of it makes it difficult to grow grapes because weed and vine growth are very strong. We have to deal with management of vigor much more than many of the soils on those in the Monticello appellation much of that is derived from Catocin Greenstone which is well I won't get into too much tech

Fred Reno

I'm glad you brought that up because I'm wondering what that rock is in my backyard and now you just told me what it is.

Shep

There are two rock formations that soils are derived from over in Charlottesville. The rocks in the ragged mountains are called Lynchburg formation This is a deep ocean sandstone deposit that is pretty hard. That's why the ragged mountains are there because it hadn't weathered away. And the green stone which you see going up Afton Mountain on 64 that's an ocean floor basalt stuck rock Okay, and it's rich but both of those produce heavy clay soils and that's heavy clay is a big part. The difference in the calcium and this soil, which is limestone based, this once was all a sedimentary basin. We're all a bit shallow. So, you had coral reefs, lots of limestone. It made for much richer soil. The other is like I said elevation and soil.

Fred Reno what about Climate?

Shep

There is the breeze also. Actually ,the eastern side of my property was picked as the best site for a wind machine for electrical generation in the county. And we get lots of wind, which in the summer, when you're growing grapes is a wonderful thing, because we get rain, we get lots of rain, then we get dew. And the wind helps dry that stuff out. I had a guy playing music in late August, called me from Richmond. He said the heat index in Richmond today is going to be 105. Should I even come up there to play and I said, hey, it's going to be much cooler. It was 88 degrees with breeze here.

Fred Reno

That's the mountains of Virginia. I'm fascinated by another thing here. You work with Vinifera, French American-hybrids and native grape. So, you have the salad bowl here, if you will, of grape varieties. Talk to me about the differences in what you like about certain aspects of those different grape varieties

Shep

Right well Fred, First off, I don't grow any American grapes other than a few Concord related varieties that just happen to get mixed in with the initial Vidal planting.

Fred Reno

I thought Norton was considered a native grape variety.

Shep

It is but I don't grow it. I purchased the grapes, okay. And I consider Norton to be the kind of grape you really need to grow at lower and much hotter temperatures that we have. It is great in Missouri. I mean, they made it famous, as well as the Monticello Wine Company in Charlottesville during the 1880s and 90s. And Norton is totally different from the hybrids, I'll give you a good reason. You grow a ton. You get a ton of Norton grapes, and you ferment it on the skins and then you press it off, you get 140 gallons to the ton at best, generally 135. Chambourcin, a red hybrid, which I grow, and I love, you get 180 gallons to a ton, so the economics are significantly different. Norton produces a very Jamy and strong wine, which I and many Bordeaux probably initiated connoisseurs find a little too, just too intense, too strong. Two things mitigate that; one age, a 10 year old Norton turns the corner and starts tasting like a delightful old red Bordeaux (interesting) The other thing that I do is I consider Norton to be more like making fruit wine than making grape wine. So, I add, usually ameliorate with about 15% water, because it's so strong and the acid is so severe that the amelioration solves both problems. Of course, you still need the sugar to have the alcohol and of course, if you're adding a lot of water, you got to add more sugar. And of course, you can carry that to a point that it is consumer fraud. But you know this is one of the great things about my Davis education. It taught me to think outside the box gave me the basic science to understand the process. And then you know, you ad lib from there.

Fred Reno

Well, the Chambourcin to me. If you can take that sort of heavier spicy edge off the back end. It could be like a really nice Cru Beaujolais

Shep

Exactly. It and like a true Beaujolais, Chambourcin is a high acid variety. Early pick Pinot Noir but more Napa, I guess it's Napa Gamay or what is the grape in Beaujolais?

Fred Reno

It's Gamay.

Shep

Yeah, you know, if it's picked early, it's got a good bit of acid and that part of France is cool. And yeah, so that's part of the spiel. I mean, to me, structure and wine is created by a combination of alcohol, acid and the tannins on the palate. If you got too much tannin you don't want a lot of acid, it just is too intense.

Fred Reno

Yeah, the intensity,

Shep

but it's sort of like a Gewurztraminer. A good example of a wine that needs some tannin. Gewurztraminer is not a high acid variety. It's a low acid variety so much like an IPA beer. Bitterness from the fruit, adds body and fullness to it to fill out the palette and keep it interesting. Well, hops do that in an IPA.

Fred Reno

If you have one, what's your favorite varietal to grow and work with here and produce wine?

Shep

I have to stick with my roots, Riesling. I grow Riesling here and it's actually the most successful vinifera. I grow Pinot Noir and Chardonnay also, the Chardonnay got pretty zapped by the frost this spring and the Pinot got hit by it. But Pinot Noir is very difficult to grow and ripen in Virginia.

Fred Reno

Oh, I would think so. Yeah,

Shep

I've made three vintages in 20 years that the grapes actually got, ripe? Otherwise, you have to pick it because of rot. So, you do because what do you want, I let them just rot away and have nothing or you think outside the box and you make something that's good, but it's not red, Pinot Noir,

Fred Reno

Pinot Noir Blanc?

Shep

Oh, yeah, that that can be one of the most spectacular wines. Every wine deserves attention. And, I mean, I remember at Mount Veeder, once in the 70s, we made a Chenin Blanc. That was absolutely one of the best white wines I've ever had. It was fantastic. And you know that of course, the Vouvray's are pretty famous. It's not made as real serious wine in from California much, but a little bit. I think that the Sacramento Delta area is where they grow a lot of Chenin Blanc.

Fred Reno

So, you have this under vine right now here Rockbridge Winery, 17, 18 acres,

Shep

18 acres, and the original planting in '89 was Vidal, five acres. The next was three acres of Chambourcin in '94, followed by an acre of Pinot Noir in '95, an acre and a half of Vignoles in 97 and two acres of Traminette in 97. Then I planted one to two acres of Pinot Noir and an acre of Riesling in '99. I also planted a little bit of DE Chaunac, which is a red hybrid variety. I really planted that to be a tintaia, a variety coloring grape to put in Pinot Noir when it was too light. But after I did it and tried blends, I just said I'm not adulterating Pinot Noir with this stuff, because it changes the character too much.

Fred Reno

The Riesling you planted. Do you still have old vines out there? 20 plus year old that you're making wine from?

Shep

Yeah, well yeah so, they were planted in 1999 so they're 21 years old.

Fred Reno

So, you must have seen some interesting evolution in the wine character as the vines got older and older, I would say.

Shep

Yeah, but we don't see it as much as California because we have to replant a lot because of winter injury. And in California ironically, you know the 73 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars that won the Bordeaux side of the Paris tasting, which Steve Spurrier did was from only three-year-

old vines. And the French, well that just blew their whole theory of old wines. And there are different conditions out there with growing in that Mediterranean climate that completely changed all the rules, which is again You know why? You have to sort of think outside the box but until he did that tasting, you know, it's like nobody had a clue.

Fred Reno

Well, you also, you do a lot of events here. I see you have a whole music venue than you do here. That must be kind of fun.

Shep

It's a lot of fun. It's a little trying with COVID because of course, we were absolutely critical on making it be safe. And it's ironic that we had our best festival ever on Saturday, pre COVID and it didn't hurt that we opened the tap room and sold 200 pints of beer which was our initial soft opening for our brewery. It brings people who are desperate to go have stuff to do that they feel that they can do safely. And an outdoor venue like at a winery or brewery is great. We will have to see what happens when it gets cold, but we've got more space because this space we're in now is was just created this past winter.

Fred Reno

Well, it looks like you've been kind enough to bring a couple of bottles of wine here. Why don't we taste something?

Shep

Let's do. We, let me go get a couple of wines from our current lineup. Okay, bring them in and then I'll open. Actually, I'll open these first. Okay Fred.

Fred Reno

Shep is going over to the bar right now and he's going to open up a couple bottles. I saw he brought a vintage Norton, which I think is 2002 vintage, which should be fascinating because I don't know Norton very well. And having well aged wine from Virginia, something I've been wanting to taste for some time, it's going to be very educational.

Well, we just got done doing a quite a tasting here with Shep at his tasting bar. This 2002 Norton was a hell of a treat. The wine is just beautiful. And gorgeous, gorgeous dessert wines here. Getting an education here today, folks. Well, Shep, I got a quick question for you. That sort of ties into all this. You've been here, producing wine here in Virginia for over 35 years. So, you're a veteran, you've watched this wine scene here in Virginia grow. Part of what I'm trying to do with the Podcast is get this message that I have about what's happening in Virginia, Nationally, to the audience that I have, and the people and the reach I have. Every time I've talked to people, I know in the wine business over the last two or three years who know everything about wine that's in air quotes, I start talking about Virginia wine. And they looked at me kind of crazy, like, What are you talking about? And if I was in a situation with them where I could I would taste them on some of these Virginia wines, they go, Wow, I had no idea of the quality that's going on here in Virginia, But what is it? What's been the impediment to Virginia, getting this message out on a national basis that hey, what's happening here in Virginia, because what I see here reminds me what I saw in Oregon, 30 years ago. At that time Oregon was right at that cusp; they were now making better quality wine and getting some volume. And they managed to break through that barrier and get this really incredible presence for what they're doing. What is the impediment to Virginia wine that's holding them back to getting this

national recognition? Your opinion, your experience? What do you think?

Shep

That's a hard question, Fred, we've seen since I got in the industry, as you said Oregon blossom. And Washington State as well. My daughter went to Whitman College in Walla Walla, which you know, that region is wow, they get a lot of high scores on their wines. Yet we haven't followed that trend. Part of it, I think, is climate control. We do have a maritime well continental climate. So, we have winter injury issues here that limit where one can successfully grow grapes, year to year. The summer climate mandates, a lot of hand labor in the vineyard to produce healthy fruit. The bottom line is the production costs of grapes here are high and you know when you look at California, a lot of really high-end wineries are limiting their crops so much they are able to produce wine and grapes of the highest caliber. We have a hard time just getting healthy fruit to harvest and we don't get the kind of sugars and the concentration because we don't have a Mediterranean type of climate. Now Oregon doesn't either. Why the difference between Oregon and Virginia? Well, Oregon really got, I guess Sideways came out after Oregon got rolling, but that didn't hurt them. Pinot Noir has enjoyed a lot of growth and popularity. I tried it, I planted it in '95 but I've struggled with it because it more than almost any other variety is rot susceptible. Just is hell to get really ripe.

Fred Reno

So, Virginia needs a signature grape is what I'm hearing here a little bit. Whereas Oregon had the Pinot Noir, Napa Valley had the Cabernet Sauvignon. I'm big on Petit Manseng, I know you don't produce any.

Shep

It does well under our climate conditions. As a matter of fact this year has been hell to get any sugar and the Petit Mansengs have been about the only thing that I've been able to get over 22 brix. None of the Bordeaux reds. I mean, most of them, I don't think most of them are going to get picked at 20 brix this year that excessive amount of rain we had in August was tough.

Fred Reno

One of the things a vintner said to me some time ago that stuck with me all this time. He said, Fred listen, some of the best potential vineyards in Virginia, probably haven't even been planted yet. What do you think about that comment?

Shep

It's true. I mean, it's true. I think, only 20% of vineyards in this state where the sites were picked because of ideal fit or cultural parameters being met, at least early on in the industry, what would happen is somebody who has money had a farm and they said, I want to grow grapes and start a winery. they didn't pick the site to do that. Dennis Horton, however, did and he leased property in Orange County, from another guy who had a turkey business, but their relationship went south. They ended up dissolving it and he lost the vineyard. However, Hona Lee vineyards, some of the parts of that site that Dennis picked were based on ideal qualities for viticulture.

Fred Reno

Well, it does produce some incredible high-quality grape. Yeah, exactly. Petit Manseng being one of them.

Shep

Right, Well I made Norton from that vineyard in '05 as a matter of fact, and Touriga Nacional which is an interesting variety in Virginia. However, it doesn't seem to have really taken hold. I think that Tannat has done a lot better. Really the question that you are asking, the answer is not in yet on the whole issue, Fred because we can we see such vintage-to-vintage variation. It's like Europe, although with climate change, hot is more often the norm in viticultural areas in Europe now than then too cold and wet. I mean, you know, the Champagne houses have all bought big holdings in England, because the climate is changing and they can grow Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay there and get the right parameters to make good quality sparkling. I wouldn't call it champagne, but you know, I call it Methode Champenoise, some people call it method natural, I like champenoise better. But again, back to Virginia. I honestly think for the growing conditions we have that the hybrids are the best suited grapes to grow here, but they aren't the best suited to sell expensive wine. That's the double-edged sword here. I've done it both ways. You know, I've done lots of hybrids. Hybrids have been a big part of my business from the get-go. My original planting was five acres of Vidal. Vinifera, I just pulled my hair out trying to grow it. You know, this year vinifera was what got frosted, the hybrids, barely, but then again, in 18, I lost all five acres of my Vidal to rot. We had nine days of wet grapes, because there was a hurricane that set in over North Carolina, and I wasn't going to pick the vintage. Green, green, green, and oh well I had to eat it. But I still haven't answered your question. There have been some fantastic Bordeaux reds produced in Virginia. There have been some really nice Viognier, very nice. Chardonnays have fallen in disfavor. If you look at the Governor's Cup results for the last five years, there may have been 10 Chardonnays that got gold medals. I don't know whether

that is because the judges have extensive tasting experience with Chardonnay from cooler California Coastal vineyards, from Chablis, from Burgundy, New Zealand, even Australia, because Australia has a lot of cooler growing regions. Not just the hotter ones. And then South Africa, as you mentioned. I have had German Chardonnay that was great. The Germans, well not the current generation German vintners don't have the chip on their shoulder that the older guys did that anything French was distasteful. I remember with going with a German vintner who was like 70, and this was in the 70s. And he showed me the Bismarck Statue up on the banks of the Rhine and told me I hate the French. But the younger vintners have gotten over that, and they'll grow Pinot Noir now, and they'll grow Chardonnay. They also make some hell of great, dry Rieslings. They've changed that But anyway, that I'm going way too far off the path.

Fred Reno

I guess maybe the question doesn't have an answer right now. It's just a matter of time.

Shep

And the other thing that scares me is one of the predictions for climate change in the central Atlantic region is wetter weather.

Fred Reno

Well, again, you described a scenario here of growing seasons that is similar to what Europe used to experience, this variability and you know California's got variability now but it's not the kind they want.

Shep

They're getting fire.

Fred Reno

Three years in a row you know, and counting, it's hard to say

Shep

And one other vintage that I want to point out was my '86. Great as well as hot and everything looked beautiful. Then we got a hurricane with three days of rain at the end of August. We salvaged the vintage and it was my first vintage back here. '87 was totally a Mediterranean summer. It did not rain in any of the vineyards, but Redlands which Tim Rausse, Gabriele's son now manages, which I got that '01 Meritage you tasted was from Bordeaux reds growing there. They picked the Chardonnay on the 12th of August. I was done with harvest by the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, my God at Montdomaine with Riesling. It was hot, dry, but then it started raining. I remember a week and a half later Fifth Street, where it drops down where the stoplight is, and you now go into go into Wegmans the water was this deep. Northern Virginia hadn't ripened yet. And they didn't pick, and they had a disastrous vintage in '87 where Southern Virginia was hotter, and we could get good grapes. stuff. Then in '89, the year I planted my Vidal Blanc I couldn't ask for a better year to plant a vineyard because it rained all summer. Needless to say, we ended up buying some stuff from California. We bought this stuff called Express. I don't know if you've ever heard of Richard Carey. He owned a business in California. They concentrated red phenolics and color with his reverse osmosis process. And they sold us Express that you can put in your wine and darken it up. We bought that and put it in the 89 Merlot. Yeah, it salvaged it, but it wasn't anything to write home about.

Fred Reno

Well, we're deep in the weeds in chemistry here, folks. This is fascinating.

Shep

Anyway, you know, Jim Law and I talked about getting together, collaborating and writing a book about the vintages of Virginia. We haven't done it yet. But I have also pretty good memory so I can remember

Fred Reno

I see that.

Shep

I have spent a lot of your time on these topics.

Fred Reno

No, thank you for your time. You kidding me? This just continues to be educational and instructional. I'm impressed with the wines I tasted here today. And this whole place is a wonderful story. All I can say is thank you for your time

Shep

I should have gotten April to come up because our first beers have been just outstanding. And we realize as competitive as the beer market is and the wine business, if you don't come out from the starting gate with high quality product in this market, not good.

Fred Reno

Well, the way I say it is you only get a chance to be new once. And that's all right. Yep. Thank you.

Shep

Fred thank you.