

Rachael Bjork interview
with
Vincent J. Tasson

Me: your name please?

Mr. T: Vincent J. Tasson, Rachael's grandfather

Me: when and where were you born?

Mr. T: I was born in Ishpeming Michigan NOV. 23 1929

Me: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. T: ~~LOW~~ ~~ISSIDING~~ brother Frank J. Tasson who lives in
at the age of 67. And I had a
sister that passed away, ah she's been passed
away for 13 years. And that's the sole of my
family.

Me: what were your parents names?

Mr. T: Clara Tasson and Bruno Tasson

Me: when and where were your parents born?

Mr. T: They were both born in Italy.

Me: what were your parents occupations?

Mr. T: well, ah, at the time my dad it Italy that's why
he immigrated here to the United States there
was no work over there so he came over here
to start his life.

Me: why did they immigrate here?

Mr. T: Because there was nothing there for them in Italy,
there was no work available, ah they wanted
to come to the land of the Free. Here the
Great American Country. And make his Fortune

Bar Business in 1957 while I was working in the mine. I use to work in the mine during the day and work in the Bar at night. And then in 1962 I quit the mine and sold my half interest in the Bar and I went into the whole sale Business.

Me: Did you have any children?

MRT: A son and two daughters.

Me: what were their names?

MRT: Michael J. Tasson, Carol Anne Tasson, and Clara Marie Tasson

Me: what did you do to support your family?

MRT: In 1962 I started Tasson Distributing Company and that was the whole support of our family

Me: when was the business turned into Tassons Distributing Company?

MRT: In 1962 when I purchased it, it was a very small whole sale business at the time.

Me: Did you struggle when you were getting into the business?

MRT: yes, I had to struggle to raise a lot

of money, and I had to struggle for quite a few years. Business started off real well then the brand of Beer I had sort of went real bad. Then I had to struggle to get other brands. Well actually I struggled till 1972 till I had the Miller brand given to me. And then in 1973 I bought out another whole sales and inquired two other brands. And then the business started to really expand.

me: when did you retire?

Mrt: well lets see I've been sorta semi retired for the last nine years.

now

me: Do you enjoy being the President of your company?

MRT: very much!

me: And are you happy you reached your goal and success?

MRT: yes, very much the only regret I had is I wish I had more education

me: OK, thank you Grandpa for this interview.

MRT: Your quite welcome Rachael.

me: Grandpa before you owned the business who owned the business before you?

MrT: Well lets see. I bought that company from a man by the name of ah, Mr. Jim Ternstead, and that was in 1962.

me: was the building the same?

MrT: Well when I started out was on Division Street. It was an old wood frame building and very obsolete now the way things have gone but this was back in 1962 when you operated out of a place like that. you loaded every thing by hand ~~and~~ and so forth it was a different operation all together now.

me: what brands did you carry at first?

MrT: Well I started out when I bought out Mr. Ternstead with a brand called Bosh is was brewed up in Houghton Michigan which was actually a local product it was a local beer which was a very popular beer here at one time

me: Papa was ~~the building~~ the same or did you rebuild a new building.

MrT: well since then I bought out another distributor who had a building which

was more modern 60 by 100 all cement floor with a forklift operation loading docks it was all together a different building which times have changes and what you needed.

me: are you there now?

MRT: yes, I'm there now but since then we have added, well when I bought the building it was 60 by 100 now we have a building 18,000 square feet

me: How did you obtain your original financings?

MRT: well it was a long story it was ah, you mean when I first went in?

me: ah ha

MRT: well lets see I was a partner in the bar, the bar business which I sold my half interest to my partner and then my mother mortgaged her house for I forget if it's 5 or 6 thousand dollars which I had to raise somewhere around like 40,000 dollars. And back in 1962 40,000 dollars was a lot of money. And ah that was how I raised the down payment to get in through the mortgage

of my mother's house and the sale
sale of my bar business.

me: Did you go to the local bank and sell
land or anything for it?

MrT: Well, I did later as I later years as I
acquired. you see I had the bash brands
for a few years and it went good
than that brand went right down
the tube. In the beer business if you
don't have ah, television came in and
then the advertising came in and made
a big difference. In the business the
little small bueries got hurt bad by
the big bueries the big bueries had
money to advertise the small bueries
didn't. I was with a small buery and
they adventually went out of business.
So then I had to acquire other brands
I picked up any other brand of beer
that was available just to hang on
Till 1972 I acquired the Miller Franchise
From the Miller brewing company which
changed the whole aspect of my whole
distributorship.

me: OK, why did you go into business
for yourself?

MR T: well I used to work in an underground mine which I quit four times. And I couldn't see myself staying down in a mine the rest of my life. That's why I went into the bar business with another fella and then this distributorship thing came up which I had a chance to get involved in and it was a business at that time I could handle with the very little education I did have and at that time you didn't need education on a whole sale distributorship. But it's a changed ball game now.

Me: During your business how many people were first employed?

MR T: well, when I first started out there was ah myself and two other drivers and my sister worked in the office she was the office girl took care of the books and the deposits and answered phones, so on and so forth.

Me: Do you remember the names of any of your drivers?

MR T: lets see I had a driver John Kirby, Mr Jernstedd for alot of

a lot of years I think John worked a total of 35 years. And I had another driver by the name of Bob Truckey who worked for me for about seven or eight years. Then I had another guy by the name of Art Pulmel then he passed away that worked a few years. I had a few different drivers that have worked and left for different jobs.

Me: Are the Drivers that worked then still alive now?

MRT: yah, I think Mr Truckey is still alive and Bobs my age.

Me: How many ^{of} eople do you have in your business now?

MRT: lets see we have an 4 ~~pre~~ salesmen. I have a general manager three girls in the office we have a total of about eighteen (18) employees now.

Me: How many trucks opperate?

MRT: something like ah, 9 trucks opperate wine trucks and beer truck routes.
~~trucks~~ ~~supporting~~ the pre salesmen pg 9

verticals, and some small vans that we use.

Me: what other products do you sell?

MrT: lets see now the business has changed its like every other business in the country today it's all marketing and we are so diversified now in the business. At one time I sold one I sold one brand of beer from one brewery. now I handle, I'm with three breweries not counting the import beers we sell which Miller is our main say in the business. we have Coors and we have the the Highlaman products I have 3 very good brands. and that is the only way you can survive in the beer business today by having many brands you can't operate under one with one brand a day you just can't make it. so now you have to diversify we're into wines, we're into juices, mineral water just about anything that goes into sides with the distributing company we'll handle.

Me: How far do you distribute?

MrT: we have marquette county and

agee county and part of Baraga
county.

Me: why did you decide to buy a distrib-
uting business?

Mr T: well at the time this guy would call
on me when I had the tavern and he
was working for a the bosh burying
company. And he had got me interested
in becoming a beer distributor.

Me: Do you remember his name?

Mr T: yah, a man by the name of Ted
Belfre he lives in Munising. Ted was
an area manager for the bosh burying
company at the time, so he got me
interested in becoming a beer distributor.

Me: Earlier you said that the times
were slow or bad in 1962-1972, why
were they?

Mr T: well because the brands I had, the
bosh burying company was getting beat
up so bad by the bigger buies, they were
under selling us and pricing their beer
prices cheaper than we could sell for.
and the bigger buies were just
advertising. at the time ^{Pepsi} was a
big seller and they were flooding the
area with advertisement and it ^{was} still

just killed the Boston Buring company
so that's what made it bad I had to
go out and get some other brands just
to survive.

Me: What brands improved your business?

Mr T: well the Miller Buring company when
I got the Miller Franchise, that's the
Franchise that actually made Tasson
Distributing company.

Me: OK, can you explain how you distribute?

Mr T: well we have ah, presalesmen now.
like I said the whole business has
changed we used to load up a truck
in the morning and the driver went out
and sold the beer, well now you have
presalesmen who go out a day ahead
of time and do all the selling. He
comes back at night and brings all
his orders in and the orders are run
through the computers and the computer
makes out the sale slips and the trucks
are loaded that evening and the drivers
deliver the following day, and this is
the way we operate now everything is
pre sold.

Me: Did your business go up and down as the mines flourished?

MRT: Well the mines really don't make a difference in my business is you had the right brand, a hot brand of beer at that time that was highly advertised this is what made the sales, and the mines went through some problems here when the underground mines shut down we lost a lot of young people what hurt the business but ah, basically in my business if you had the brands you were alright, if you had a hot brand at the time you survived if you didn't which I didn't at the time I had what you so called the cats and dogs of the beer brands so I had to really work to survive.

Me: What times of year do you do the best business?

MRT: Well we had different seasonal periods normally ah, you get a nice hot summer a guy enjoys to have a few more beers he'll

cut grass and have a beer and it's a seasonal beverage really the hotter the weather the more you'll drink, and during the holidays the business gets fairly good and through the dear season and when people entertain a little ~~but~~ an sales go up.

Me: what aspect of the business has changed the most?

MRT: Well the whole business has changed my business has changed since ~~five~~ years ago. you can't operate a business today like you did five years ago every thing today ah, with the buisness every thing is computerized the buisness tap into your computer they know your sales they know your inventory. It's just a whole changed ball game ah, today ah, to run a proper distributing ship the buisness require that you have a college education and at least two years of marketing which I don't have and that's why I have to hire people that do to operate these computers and understand every thing that these

business want. It's a whole different ball game today operating a business than it was five years ago ten years ago or twenty years ago thirty years ago you got on a truck and put your beer on the truck and went out and sold it. Well today the whole business is marketing.

Me: Is there an aspect that has changed the least?

MRT: Well no like I say basically you have to have the brands, good people and it's all marketing.

Me: What are the advantages of having your own business?

MRT: Well (laughing) being your boss I'm sure ah, doing what, seeing what you done in a business for the last thirty years. ah, it's rewarding that way, financially it's been rewarding when I think just seeing what I got and what I started out with and what I got now. my operation from 1962 where I started out and the operation we're in now I mean we have

an now I mean we have an, I have 100 and 10,000 dollars now just in a computer that I paid when I bought out the company I paid \$40,000 for the whole company, you bought a route truck for \$6,000 now you pay \$5,000 for a route truck. So you look back at all this and you say "hey your still hanging in there you don a good job"?

Me: Are there disadvantages of having your own business?

MRT: Well when business is good you don't think that but when business gets bad you have alot of disadvantages you have payrolls to meet, you have hospitalization for your people, you have pensions for your people and its all got to come out of the company an sometimes it gets kind of nerve racking. But just hang in there and keep plugging away.

Me: what advice would you give to

young business people today?

MrT: young business people today, well, if they're going to get into any kind of a selling field they better be very well educated, they better get some marketing experience, get all the college they can get, it's a different time now for a young person today if he doesn't have the education the diplomas basically it's what the kid wants in his lifetime if he wants to work for someone and be happy fine be happy, but if he wants to excel with any other company or get into something for himself he better be very very knowledgeable.

Me: thank you very much for this interview.