

Mugshot: Dick Cantwell, Elysian Brewing Company



By Jeannie McWilliams

When I was given the task of interviewing Dick Cantwell for this edition of NWBN, my first thought was "am I worthy?" Cantwell, who is the owner and brewer of **The Elysian Brewery** and the new **Tangletown** in Seattle, is well renowned and has received numerous awards during his career in the brewing industry. My first question is probably the first question in any brewer's interview.

JM: How and when did you get started in brewing?

DC: I began homebrewing when I lived in Boston. I had been a writer and when I had my children, who are now 15 and 10, I found homebrewing to be a good pastime. I homebrewed for about 15 years. We then moved to Seattle and I decided to pursue brewing as a career. My first job was at the **Duwamps Café** on Queen Anne where I brewed for 1 1/2 years. I then moved to the **Pike Place Brewery** (this was

the old brewery, not the existing one) where I brewed from 1991 through 1994, when I moved to **The Big Time Brewery**, where I brewed for 2 1/2 years. In 1996, we opened The Elysian Brewery.

JM: Tell me about the awards you have won.

DC: We have won numerous awards at the Great American Beer Festival in Denver, including Large Brewpub of the Year and Brewmaster of the Year twice, in 1999 and 2003. We recently won a medal for the *Bête Blanche* at the World Beer Cup in San Diego, and I also won the Russell Scherer award, which is named for a former brewer at the **Wynkoop Brewery**.

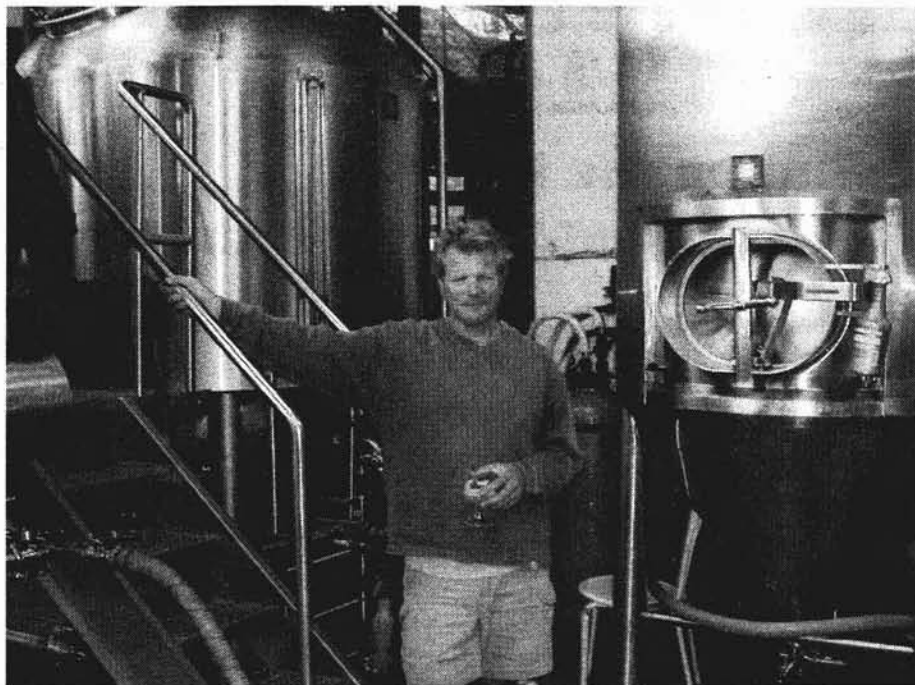
JM: What are your favorite beer styles?

DC: There are a number of beer styles that I like, but I think my favorites are the Belgians, in particular the sour red and brown ales.

JM: Who is your favorite brewer?

DC: I really admire Tomme Arthur of **Pizza Port**, Dan Carey at **New Glarus** and Garrett Oliver from the **Brooklyn Brewery**. I also have enjoyed meeting brewers in Europe such as Chris from **De Dolle** in Belgium and Herm Hegger from **De Hemel** in Holland.

JM: How did the barley wine book come about? (A Brewer's Publications work co-authored with Fal Allen in 1999)



Elysian Brewery's Dick Cantwell enjoying a *Bête Blanche* at the source.

PHOTO: JEANNIE MCWILLIAMS

DC: Fal Allen — who I worked with at Pike Place Brewery — and I always wanted to work on a writing project and decided on the barley wine stylebook. This enabled us to travel to England for research. It was amazing to spend time in the **Bass Brewery** Library to research the book.

JM: What's next for the Elysian/Tangletown? Do you have any new beers planned?

DC: I've always wanted to make Belgian sour red ale. Now that we have the small brewery at Tangletown, I will make it. I also have a number of other ideas planned for Tangletown, such as a number of oak barrels I plan to use and the ability to experiment with some cellaring techniques. I also plan to make Scottish Ale at Tangletown. I met a plumber in

Anchorage who came down and plumbed the whole place for me in exchange for beer. He was a homebrewer who had won awards with a Scottish Ale recipe, so now I plan to brew it. We are making a *Jasmine IPA* for the Oregon Brewers Festival. I plan to experiment with different hop varieties. I also plan to brew a beer this summer with Peter Bouckear from **New Belgium Brewery** in Fort Collins, CO.

Once the interview was complete, Dick was off to coach his ten-year-old son's baseball game, and I stayed at the Elysian to enjoy their Belgian beer tasting. Life is good!

Jeannie McWilliams writes about Washington beer for NWBN.