

## Real Ale Brewing Company – How Brad Farbstein Turned his Passion into a Successful Business

**Real Ale**  
Brewing Company  
BLANCO, TEXAS

*Handcrafted Ales from the Texas Hill Country*

Everyone loves a true American success story. Brad Farbstein and his wife Gabriel Gregerman deliver just that with their successful brewing business. Rightfully so, Brad and Gabriel are proud of their handcrafted ales, available only in Texas. Real Ale Brewing Company is one of the many great small businesses that we at Patti Engineering are proud to serve, and we thought our readers would enjoy hearing their story, so here it is.

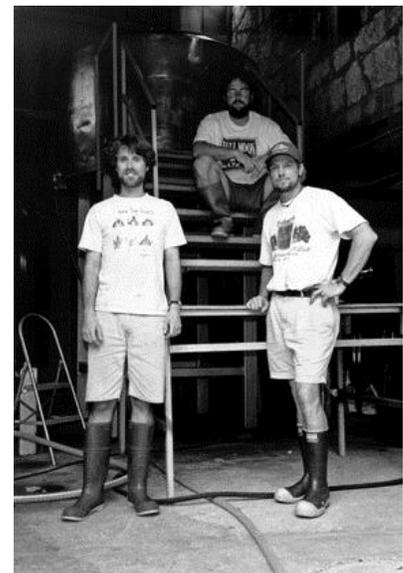


It all began for Brad back in college at the University of Texas (UT) in Austin where he played for the lacrosse team. It was a fellow lacrosse teammate who invited Brad over to his apartment to brew a batch of beer that started it all. From there, Brad was hooked concocting his own homebrew recipes throughout his college years. Upon graduation from UT with his economics degree, Brad approached his father telling him he wanted to open his own brewery. His father promptly told him he was crazy, and then gave him some very good advice. His Dad told him he needed to start on the road to his dream business by working for, and learning from, someone else - an established brewery.

Brad took his Dad's advice to heart, and set his sights on working for a Houston based brewery. For the next six months he repeatedly approached them to hire him. His persistence paid off and Brad was hired. After working for the brewery for several years, a local Austin beer distributor offered Brad a job in sales and marketing. Realizing the opportunity to learn the business from another angle, Brad seized the opportunity.

It was in 1998, while working for the distributor, Brad's golden opportunity presented itself. Brad had become friends with one of his customers, the owners of a small brewery, Real Ale Brewing Company, located in Blanco - a small town in Texas' Hill Country. Phillip & Diane Conner along with their son, Charles, had set up shop in the basement of an antiques store on the Blanco town square. Brad would spend his weekends helping them brew, in exchange for a couple of beers – enjoying their company, as well as learning more about the brewing business.

In business for just two years, the Conner's were struggling financially and wanted to sell the business. Phillip asked Brad if he knew of anyone who might be interested. Recognizing a rare opportunity to turn a dream into reality – even though he had no idea how he was going to pull it off – Brad said, "I'm your man."



Fortunately, Brad had a nest egg from a small inheritance he received when he was just 11 years old when his grandmother died. At the advice of a family friend, Brad's \$13,000 inheritance had been invested in the stock of a small Austin based grocery store chain – Whole Foods Market! The stock had escalated to \$80,000, giving Brad the opportunity to pay down the brewery's debt and slowly buy the Conner's out.

As is the case with many small businesses, Real Ale Brewing Company struggled to survive. Brad did not take a paycheck for the first 5 years, and the business took over 8 years to even turn a profit. Brad credits his wife Gabriel for keeping the "ship afloat"; supporting Brad's run at his passion and dream business by paying the mortgage and covering the bills.

The struggle paid off. Real Ale Brewing Company just celebrated 18 years in business! When Brad purchased the business in 1998 the company produced 300 barrels of beer a year, now the business produces 60,000 barrels of beer, has 42 employees, 12 million in annual sales, and is nationally ranked as the 54<sup>th</sup> largest regional brewery. Quite a feat for a company which only sells in Texas and has no future plans to expand beyond the Texas border.



Brad gave us his perspective on keeping his business local, "for us it is not about moving boxes or units, instead it is about enjoying our passion and focusing on brewing quality beer." Brad also made it clear that his passionate and dedicated team of employees make Real Ale Brewing Company the success that it is today.

Gabriel works in the business now, running the office and managing human resource responsibilities. Brad, Gabriel and their team strive to create high quality ales and lagers as diverse as the passionate group of people who produce them. Real Ale Brewing's flagship ales include Firemans #4, Devil's Backbone, and bold seasonals such as Phoenixx Double ESB and Coffee Porter. While they honor the brewing traditions of the past, they are not bound by them. They continue to brew traditional beer styles, but always keep an eye towards innovation.



Gabriel and Brad's family expanded 2 ½ years ago with the birth of their daughter, Sadie Jane. The family also has an important four legged member, a 4 ½ years old German Short Haired Pointer named Hans. Or, around the office, you may hear Hans referred to as 'Manchego' – a nick name he acquired after sneaking an entire block of Manchego cheese off the family table leaving behind only the rind!

We at Patti Engineering love the Real Ale Brewing Company's story and we are proud to be part of the network of local resources they count on to keep their business moving forward. And by the way, we love their beer as well!