I recently had the pleasure of sitting down with both Scott Avellino and Don Avellino Jr. from the local distillery in PA named, Brandywine Branch Distillers. I cold-called them one Wednesday morning in late September 2020 and Don Jr. answered the phone - it’s always a good sign when one of the owners is manning the phones, among other things. I introduced myself as the Director of SJU IFBE and Don was very excited to talk with me. He said that my timing was great as they were just in the midst of rebranding not only their website but also their complete suite of bottle labels. After a brief conversation, he and Scott invited me to the distillery the next day. Road Trip!

Driving up Rt 401 to Elverson was an incredibly fun drive with the Fall season just starting to turn. After a few curves and bends, you end up at a grand old red barn with a beautiful backdrop and spacious campus.

As I opened the door to the bistro bar space, there was a flurry of activity inside that included packing bottles for carry out and shipment. Scott was on the phone taking orders and Don greeted me at the door. Don stated that due to Covid-19 they had converted the bar space into a temporary shipping station to meet the current demand. As soon as I walked in, I was reminded of my past, working with my mom at the Soapberry Shop, filling soap boxes for UPs orders. You knew just by walking in that you were in a friend and family workspace. After introductions, Scott and Don invited me to sit outside and have a friendly conversation.

My first question was; you are brothers but what is the birth order? Scott said that out of 10 kids, Don was number two and Scott was number nine (7 girls and 3 boys total). Not only did they come
from a large family, they also grew up in a family business. Some may remember Avellino Tires, which was both car service and wholesale. As the story goes, in 1923 three brothers were sitting on their front sidewalk down by South and Bainbridge Street. The brothers saw a businessperson get out of his car in a heated self-rant about his flat tire that had brought his car to a standstill. The brothers walked up to this man and told him to go down the street to the local diner for a cup of coffee and by the time he got back, they would have him all fixed up. The gentleman agreed. Vince was asked by his other brother, "what are we doing, we don't know how to fix this!" Vince said I know we don't but Tony down the street does, so let's bring it to him. The brothers disassembled the tire and wheel, took it down that street, and brought it back all repaired and ready to go. The gentleman returned to the car pleasantly surprised and paid Vince and his brothers for a job well done. After the man drove away happy, all three turned to each other and said, WE CAN DO THIS!

_Being an entrepreneur is “taking the fear and anxiety and turning it from a negative emotion into fuel that pushes you forward.”_  
_Don Avellino Jr._

Two generations later, Scott and Don still tell the story like it happened yesterday. In studying family businesses, I come to find that most of them share a common element of providing a service or product to help solve an issue or current problem. This is the first step to becoming an entrepreneur! The next step is having the courage and emotional fortitude to take action and do it. As Don stated, being an entrepreneur is “taking the fear and anxiety and turning it from a negative emotion into fuel that pushes you forward.”

**So why now gin and distilled spirits?** Don and Scott worked with their father for many years in the tire business and even created a supply aggregator software consulting business after getting out. Their main thought was to offer a product or service that people wanted to buy vs. had to fix. After realizing that the craft beer industry was close to being saturated, their research pointed to craft distilleries. Their market research included many months of training from the nation’s best distillers, and a lot of “sipping.” What they found was a void in the market around botanicals and top quality ingredients for traditional old world gins and other spirits.

_All was well until March 17, 2020 when the reality of Covid-19 hit the PA liquor control board._ Scott and Don were instructed to hold off on orders to be delivered because Wine and Spirit stores were to close. Just three and a half years into their venture, Scott and Don turned to their staff on that evening and said we are not sure how revenue will be coming in tomorrow or the days ahead. At this moment when the brothers thought things were at their worst, their entire staff turned to them and said collectively that they were all there for the duration, regardless of pay, and asked, “what can we do?” Energized by the support of their staff, the team worked endlessly for the next 24 hours straight. By the next day, they made the PIVOT! They revamped the website for local pickup and delivery. They had come up with national and community outreach ideas to supply hand sanitizers to the Navajo nation in New Mexico (via their network), as well as to local first responders, Police, Doctors and Nurses.
One of the local TV news stations got wind of the movement and did a highlight piece on the company and the great products and service they were suppling to the community. In turn, people started to order online and request local delivery of the spirits. They had made a way forward!

The family’s passed down traditional values of “find a way, make a way” emerged from not only the brothers but from their staff as well. We come to find that this resilience is the essence of most family businesses that are long term successful.

As Angela Duckworth addresses in her book, “Grit”, this resilience is what I have found to be one of the ingredients to a family’s secret sauce. The Avellino brothers have a good supply of it.

With a new plan of attack for the distillery, Scott and Don Jr were able to not only survive Covid-19’s initial hit but also thrive in this unpredictable environment. I have studied Behavioral Finance for most of my professional career and believe it plays a big part in family dynamics within business. Without knowing it, Scott and Don shared with me a behavioral concept, which they used to lighten the stress and keep them engaged. They kept saying to each other, “In ten years we will be laughing about this!” This is called the empathy gap in behavioral circles. To project yourself in the future and sit with the decision, good or bad. This will help make today’s decisions and actions more clear, which increases engagement and commitment.

So, as Don and Scott move into OND (October, November, December) their busy season, I left them with the sense that they will be just fine. In fact, I felt better than fine. The love and dedication that is distilled down and permeates throughout the barn and team leaves you will a warm feeling.

So, if you’re not a big gin person, don’t worry, this is not your grandfather’s gin.

It’s a must order online, must visit special kind of distillery.

You must make it a point to take a ride and make a weekend afternoon of it at the Barn!

Brandywine Branch Distillers is a small-batch distillery in Elverson, a little town located in historic Chester County, PA. Founders Don and Scott Avellino grew up locally, helping their father run the family tire and auto company. After the business sold, Don and Scott continued working together, finding their own success as business owners. Driven by their entrepreneurial upbringing and love for craftsmanship, the brothers teamed up again in 2014 to start their second venture together as The Revivalists.

Today, homed in a century-old stone barn they affectionately call “The Hippie Barn" for its radical past, the Avellino brothers and their master distillers handcraft The Revivalist Botanical Gin and Resurgent Whiskey. Their portfolio of undoubtedly different, undeniably delicious spirits has garnered recognition on both local and international stages.

https://revivalistgins.com/home

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