

Toast OF THE TOWN

Despite setbacks, a **meat industry innovator** relentlessly focused on big goals and small improvements to build a wholesale, retail, and food service business that honors tradition while pushing into the future.

by **Eric B. Hanson**, contributing editor

Jerry Roorda almost lost everything. Twice.

On April Fool's Day in 2011 — after a varied career spanning stints as a police officer, welder, certified arborist, and application specialist at Vermeer Corp. — Roorda bought In't Veld's Meat Market in Pella, Iowa. In't Veld's had a deli and a small state-inspected processing facility that produced a version of local Pella bologna, a coarse ground sausage-like smoked meat. Though he didn't have a lick of experience in the meat industry, Roorda thought the deli might satiate a decades-long dream of owning a restaurant.

“You can have a restaurant, or you can have a different wife,” Roorda's wife of more than 40 years, Shaughn, had told him. “So, this was a compromise.”

Just five months later, disaster struck. Trans-



For more insights on smaller processors, read meatm.ag/usda-support.

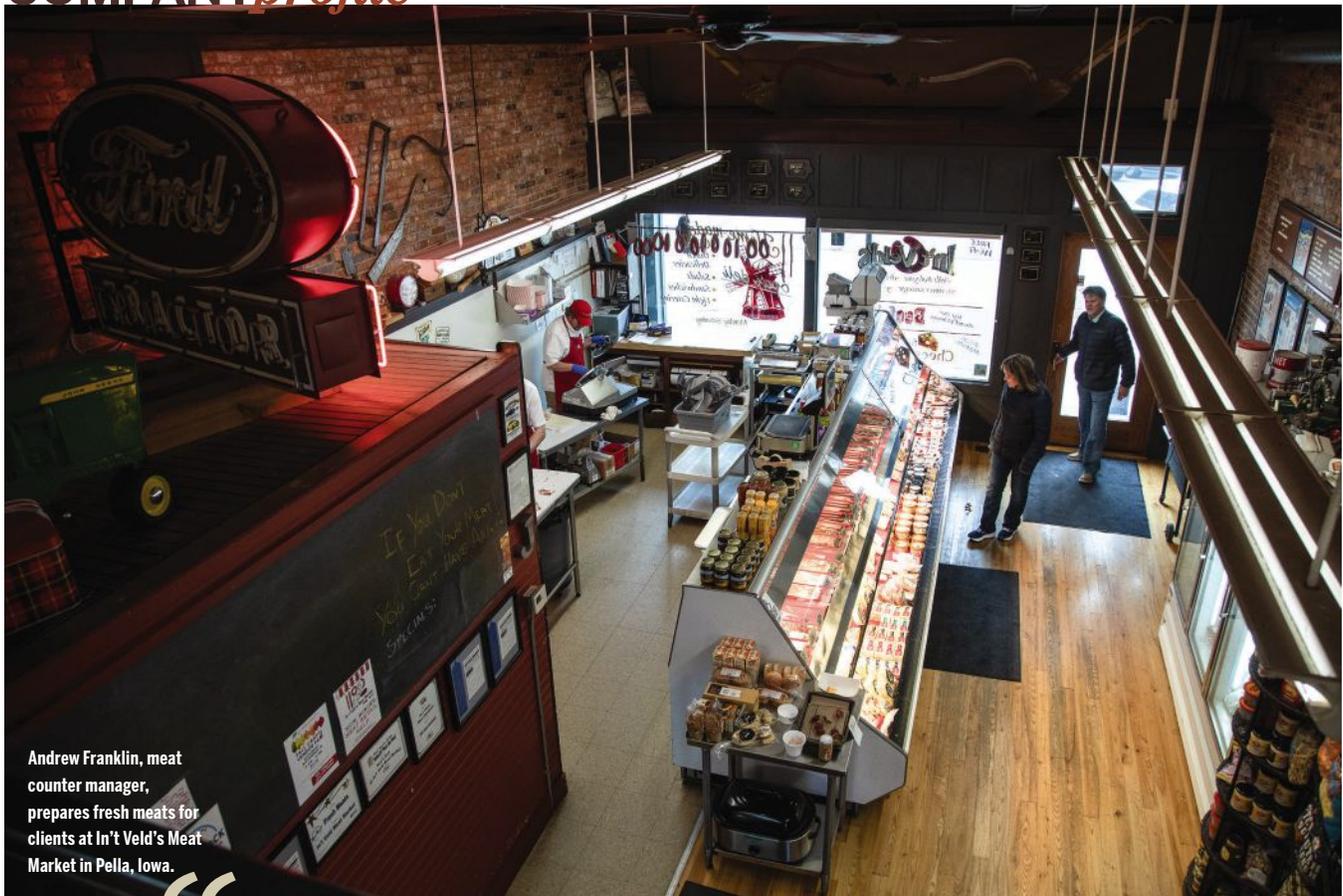
Photos by Eric B. Hanson

Jerry Roorda, the owner of In't Veld's Meat Market in Pella, Iowa, at the Butcher's Asylum Bar that accompanies his processing operations.



in't Veld's
M.E.A.T
MARKET
PELLA, IOWA

BUTCH
BREW



Andrew Franklin, meat counter manager, prepares fresh meats for clients at In't Veld's Meat Market in Pella, Iowa.

“
Our store is something OF A SYMBOL OF PRIDE FOR THE CITY.”

plants from Hurricane Katrina were living in an apartment above the facility. They skipped town, ducked out on the rent, and left water from an unplugged washing machine running, resulting in thousands of gallons leaking below.

“All the plaster was falling off the ceiling,” says Jim DeJooe, In't Veld's production manager, who has been at the company for 27 years. The inspectors shut down the operation.

“I thought it was going to take me out because my insurance wasn't adequate,” Roorda recalls. “My renovation cost me more than what I paid for the business.”

Despite the financial pressure, the flood presented Roorda with an opportunity. The aging deli had been set up with the counter in the middle of the store with seating up front. So, Roorda flipped the script, peeling plaster off the walls to expose local brick, restoring a walk-in cooler from the 1920s, and putting the meat counter right up front with seating in the back. “We changed the way the whole place flowed ... and business increased by tenfold,” he says.

The uptick in business put pressure on the tiny deli, which couldn't turn tickets fast enough.

“People were leaving,” Roorda says. “I was leaving money on the table.”

Sensing an opportunity, in 2019 Roorda bought the building next door and started renovating it. In addition to expanding the deli, Roorda hoped to finally have the restaurant he always wanted. He was on track for a July 2020 opening for Butcher's Brewhuis, a fine dining restaurant and whiskey bar, but the COVID-19 pandemic had other ideas, shutting things down before he could even open the doors.

“There were some grants that were issued, some PPP loans, and without those, COVID would have put me down and out,” Roorda says. “But we're still here.”

FINE DINING AND DESIGN

Opening a full-service restaurant with an emphasis on high-end whiskey as an extension of a meat processing facility seems like a gamble, especially in a small Midwest town whose population barely scratches the 10,000 mark.

Two things drove Roorda to take the chance: his dream of owning a restaurant, and his intimate knowledge of Pella's demographics.

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AT A GLANCE

COMPANY
IN'T VELD'S MEAT MARKET

LEADERSHIP

JERRY ROORDA
PRESIDENT/OWNER

SHAUGHN ROORDA
OFFICE MANAGER/
OWNER

JIM DEJOODE
PRODUCTION MANAGER

TATE STURMSMA
PRODUCTION MANAGER

ANDREW FRANKLIN
MEAT COUNTER
MANAGER

ARI BRADLEY
HR AND NIGHT MANAGER

LACY MAUER
DELI AND KITCHEN
MANAGER

MEGAN CAMPBELL
BAR/SHIFT MANAGER

BUSINESSES
FULL-SERVICE RETAIL
MEAT COUNTER;
PROCESSING FACILITY;
BUTCHER'S BREWHUIS
DELI AND RESTAURANT;
BUTCHER'S
ASYLUM BAR

**NUMBER OF
EMPLOYEES**
32

YEAR FOUNDED
1941

**PURCHASED BY ROORDA
IN 2011**

**ANNUAL
PRODUCTION**
168,000 POUNDS (2021)

PRODUCTS
PELLA BOLOGNA,
BRATWURST, JERKY,
SUMMER SAUSAGE,
SNACK STICKS,
STEAKS, DEER



In't Veld owner Jerry Roorda chats with customers at his Butcher's Brewhuis restaurant, which is located right next to the In't Veld processing building.

“My mission statement is, WE ARE A DESTINATION AND AN EXPERIENCE.”

“Pella is a corporate rich community,” Roorda explains, ticking off global manufacturing companies like Vermeer, Pella Corp., and Precision Pulley & Idler. It also has a large agricultural presence, and is a regional health center. “I don’t know if this would work someplace else.”

In’t Veld’s had already been providing on-site catering for a number of those corporate clients, and they would ask Roorda if he could host events. “We didn’t really have the space for that,” he says.

From his time at Vermeer, Roorda knew that those companies brought employees from around the world to Pella for training and meetings, and they often looked for a place to go out at night. Later, a survey of the Pella community suggested that the town lacked a place with an adult dining atmosphere, as well as a steakhouse.

“We’re a meat processing facility, so a steakhouse seemed like a great fit here,” he says. Some of the menu items include Pella’s famous bologna, including a burger that alternates bologna slices with beef patties.

Roorda acted as the general contractor and designer for the building. In addition to running

much of the back end of the business, Shaughn, a trained graphic designer, constructed the food and drink menus, signage, and helped decorate the space.

Vintage touches dominate Butcher’s Brewhuis, which is composed of a family restaurant and kitchen downstairs, and a 21+ bar and dining area called the Asylum upstairs. Roorda took inspiration from the Century Farm he grew up on, his travels across

the globe, and the history of the building. Chemical names on the original drawer pulls behind the bar hearken its time as a pharmacy, for example.

“When I worked at Vermeer, I traveled the world, and when you travel you go to different restaurants,” Roorda says. “So, I paid attention to design, layout, materials, texture ... Since I have an old building with all this brick, a retro-modern industrial-type design was where my head went.”

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Though the restaurant and bar are the public face of Roorda’s burgeoning enterprise, he put equal effort into expanding the market and modernizing his small processing facility, which was built in the 1950s and had changed little since. Roorda

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had no meat processing experience, but knew he wanted to transform how the facility operated.

“When I worked at Vermeer, I was forced to go to meetings about kaizen [the Japanese concept of continuous improvement and lean manufacturing], and I hated it,” Roorda says. “But once I got here and saw the processes, and how inefficient they were, that all came flooding back.”

Roorda began thinking through all the bottlenecks. He replaced his cooler with a sliding door model because the swing-out door would stick out into the narrow space, backing up other parts of the operation. He also purchased meat buggies and a lift to prevent someone having to manually lift ingredients into the stuffer, and he added lifts in the cooler that would allow him to stack product, saving space.

Along the way, Roorda also decided to become USDA-inspected so he could distribute products



Jerry Roorda and his wife of 40-plus years, Shaughn, who is In't Veld's office manager and co-owner.

[SHE SAID], 'YOU CAN HAVE A RESTAURANT, OR YOU CAN HAVE A DIFFERENT WIFE.'

So, this was a compromise.

COMPANY*profile*

outside of Iowa. Out went three gas-fired smokehouses from the 1950s and in came a computerized smokehouse with humidity control and refrigeration that allowed him to dramatically increase efficiency and ensure USDA compliance.

“There’s not one piece of equipment in our processing area that hasn’t been changed or replaced to increase the productivity or decrease the amount of physical labor,” Roorda says, noting In’t Veld’s can now produce significantly more while decreasing potential liabilities from injuries.

He also added a rollstock machine using grant money for companies transitioning from state to federal inspection. Before, it would take two people about a day to package 720 rings of bologna, Roorda says. Now, the same amount can be done in an hour.

“Our flow and our throughput is just so much more streamlined,” Roorda says. “We’re process-



Production
Manager Tate
Sturmsma inspects
In’t Veld’s Pella
bologna.

“WE’RE MORE THAN A ONE TRICK PONY.”

COMPANY*profile*

ing more than twice as much in the same footprint as what the previous owner was doing. That whole process of just-in-time delivery, it's a real thing.”

Federal inspections began at the start of 2022, and a new distributor allows In't Veld's to sell across the Midwest and West Coast.

CREATING A DESTINATION

The overall goal is to make In't Veld's and Butcher's Brewhuis into spaces customers across Iowa want to return to again and again.

“My mission statement is, we are a destination and an experience,” Roorda says. “And the experience part is the day-to-day thing we have to work on. Every ring of Pella bologna, if you buy one today and you come in three weeks from now, has to be the same consistency — the same quality — that the person expects.”

Especially with the restaurant, Roorda still isn't satisfied with the customer experience. “The world's changed, and finding competent people has been an issue,” he says, noting his initial reluctance to publicize the place on social media.

Over time, however, Roorda has found a stable of employees passionate and willing to learn the complexities of the various aspects of the business, including a high-end restaurant that also offers cocktails and hundreds of bottles of liquor, some that can go for well over \$100 for a pour.

“Who's behind the bar goes a long way with the experience of what you're having,” Roorda says. “With the team I have in place now, I think we're going to start [marketing more], and then it will grow and increasingly get busier.”

Employees see something special in what Roorda is building. “Our store is something

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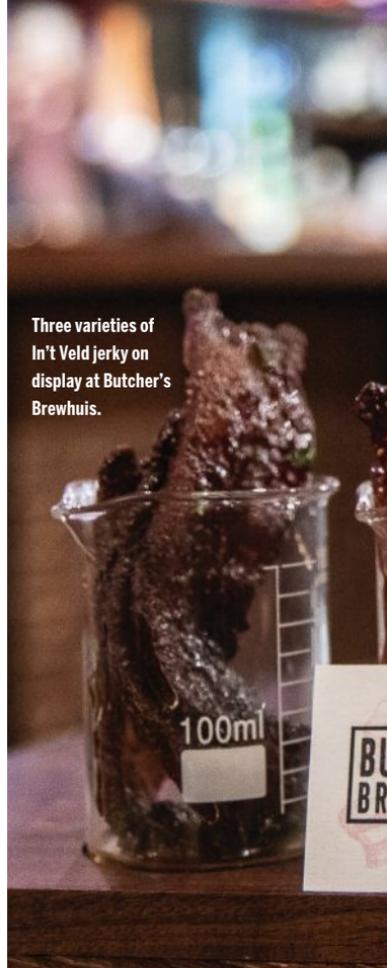
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of a symbol of pride for the city,” says Andrew Franklin, meat market manager. “That also gives us a responsibility. We have standards we need to meet, because people that have lived here for a really long time. [They] grew up with [our product] the same way that we've been making it since 1941.”

Roorda encourages employees to take responsibility for their work. “I tell people that I didn't do any of this for me. It's for the community and everybody that works here,” he says. “When I hire somebody, I say, ‘You'll never work for me, but you will work with me, because I'm in here battling the same battles you're battling.’”

Franklin, who started as a griller on the restaurant side and now runs the retail counter, calls Roorda “a role model.” He works with the meat processing team to introduce new products

Three varieties of In't Veld jerky on display at Butcher's Brewhuis.





at the retail counter, and with distributors of products from Holland and elsewhere to provide unique offerings to customers in the market. “We want to keep it original, but also fresh,” he says.

Part of that innovation is playing out on the processing side, too. As DeJoode approaches semi-retirement, he is mentoring a new production manager, Tate Stursma, who was a chef before starting at In’t Veld’s. Roorda is leaning on Stursma to develop new categories and flavors that can propel In’t Veld’s business to new customers and heights.

“We’re more than a one trick pony,” Roorda says. “A lot of people today don’t know what a ring of bologna is ... But if we get into the snack sticks, if we get into the jerkies, if we get into other things and develop other products, then the company is just going to keep growing.”