



THE

# Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

## October 2026

### Contents of This Issue

The Prez Sez

Membership Update

Throw Out The Barrel...

State Fair Results

Denali Wort Share Results

Club Clothes

Kodiak GNBC Beer Trip

**Next Meeting – Oct 20 @ 49th State**

### GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

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Gwen Higgins 2026-2028

Steve Johnson 2026-2028

Lisa Saperstein 2025-2026

Cody Baggett 2025-2026

Scott Clendaniel 2025-2026

*Contact information via our website*

## The Prez Sez

*By Elizabeth "Liz" Greer and Scott Clendaniel*

The October meeting is themed **Brown Ales**, and Jeremiah from Magnetic North has agreed to come and give a talk about a type of ale that isn't seen as often as it was maybe 20 or even 30 years ago.

Craft beer has come a long way since we used to call it "microbrew." But we should all consider the tradition that beer and ales have had since the dawn of civilization. Beer is important, and it is important to remember the beers of the past.

I hope you all come to the meeting at the 49th State Barrel Room. I'll be running the meeting, which is always interesting! Bring your beers to share, "hop"fully everyone has made or found something worth sharing!

See you there!

### Scott Clendaniel

Co-Prez

Upcoming events include:

- October 20 Meeting - Bringing Brown Beer Back
- November 17 Meeting - Wheat Beers
- (Tentative) December - Big Fish Competition

If you have thoughts on some fun activities, please let one of the officers know. More information on the club and events on the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Gnbc1/> & website <https://greatnorthernbrewers.org/>

## Membership Update

*By Steve Johnson*



The **EXPIRED** stamp on my 2025-2026 membership card is the theme of this month's column. GOOD-BYE! to the club benefits that end for all annual members each September 30th. HAPPY BREW YEAR for those who purchase an annual membership valid until September 30, 2027. HAPPY BREW YEAR also to those Life Members who continue to take part in club activities and use the discounts at Arctic Brewing Supply, LaBodega Store, and Matheson Gas.

The cost of annual membership continues to be \$30 for a one member and \$50 for a couple in the same household. PayPal remains a convenient payment method for annual members; a PayPal account is not required. The only requirement is a valid credit card. Although the club pays a small fee for each transaction, the club benefits from PayPal's transaction records. Payments in cash or by check may be made at club meetings. If you pay in cash or by check, ask for a receipt. If the membership person forgot to bring the receipt book... make sure he writes it down in the notebook he always carries.

DO NOT make payments through Venmo. The money does not reach the club's account.

I have printed, but not laminated, membership cards for everyone who was an annual member in 2025-2026. The cards are filed in addressed envelopes. When I learn of a membership payment, through an email from PayPal, or cash or check in hand, I laminate the membership card and place a stamp on the envelope. I can usually send out cards within a day or two of payment. October is a busy month for membership renewals. Occasional travel may delay fulfillment for a few days.

In real life, the **EXPIRED** stamp does not automatically appear on annual membership cards on October 1<sup>st</sup>. An early renewal is the best way to avoid the situation of realizing the membership has expired after one has entered Arctic Brewing Supply, LaBodega Store, or Matheson Gas.

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THE

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## Throw Out The Barrel . . .

*By Rick Levinson*

In this installment, we'll look at another significant moment in beer history: the 1933 Detroit Beer Barrel Drop, and how that initiated a transition that changed the global brewing landscape.

In 1933, when Congress passed the Cullen-Harrison Act, followed by the full repeal of the Volstead Act which ended Prohibition, breweries scrambled to resume immediate mass production. However, the country faced a massive logistical crisis: after 13 years of Prohibition, millions of traditional wooden beer barrels had rotted, dried out, or had been smashed by law enforcement. Coopers could not build wooden barrels fast enough to meet the staggering national thirst.

Recognizing a major business opportunity, Detroit's automotive and steel stamping plants realized their machinery could be retooled to mass-produce welded steel beer kegs. The brewing industry, however, was notoriously conservative and traditional, and it resisted the change. Brewers claimed steel would change the beer's flavor, and more importantly, that metal wouldn't withstand the rugged abuse of draymen and delivery trucks.



To allay brewer's fears and shatter skepticism, two Detroit automotive supplier stamping companies, Borg-Warner Corporation and Buhl Stamping Company devised a John Henry style test of a cooper-crafted wooden barrel versus a welded steel keg that would pit centuries of brewing tradition against a new era of heavy-industry engineering.

They would drop a wooden barrel and a steel keg off the top floor of a prominent downtown Detroit hotel and let them crash into the parking lot below. This demonstration was one of the great moments in beer history and became known as the "1933 Detroit Beer Barrel Drop". It wasn't just a fun publicity stunt; there was actually much at stake. It became a public exhibition of container material strength, engineering design, and future marketability that would fundamentally alter the way beer was packaged, sold, and delivered globally.

At this point, you could probably guess the outcome. So did executives for the automotive supplier stamper companies that wanted only good publicity from the barrel drop. They had known many occurrences of pressurized wooden barrels falling off delivery trucks hitting the ground only to explode and seriously injure workers and nearby pedestrians. And for the demonstration, they expected a large crowd of curious

onlookers, brewery executives, and journalists, whom they did not wish to be injured by a catastrophic cloud of splinters, iron hoops, and high-velocity liquid. The outcome of dropping a wooden barrel was also common knowledge to the engineers as well, who saw no practical need to waste a wooden barrel or clean up the massive mess. So, they changed the experiment. They would drop only the steel keg to demonstrate its strength and structural integrity. The comparison to a wooden barrel would be purely theoretical.



Of course, some things weren't thought out so well. A newly engineered steel beer keg was filled to capacity with beer. Then some of the organizers thought "Wait a minute . . . What if the steel keg actually fails the experiment? That would be a terrible waste of good beer." They decided to "set aside" the keg of beer and asked for another newly engineered steel beer keg. This time they filled it with water to the exact weight and fluid pressure of real beer. Perhaps some of that "set aside" keg was involved, but after hauling that heavy water-filled keg up to the 18<sup>th</sup> floor of the hotel, they thought "Wait a minute . . . We could have hauled up the keg empty and then fill it with water on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor."

Regardless, the keg was rolled to an open window overlooking the parking lot. The huge crowd of onlookers fell silent as the keg was lifted up to the window sill. And then, it was thrown out into space. The steel keg plunged over 200 feet through the air before slamming directly onto a hard-packed gravel parking space below with a loud resonant "bong". The crowd went wild. Upon impact, the steel barrel dented heavily and absorbed the immense kinetic force, but its welded seams held perfectly. The barrel did not rupture, shatter, or turn into shrapnel. And, not a single drop of water leaked out.

The organizers were so confident after the first steel keg survived with only a heavy dent that they immediately took a second steel keg up to the 18th floor, filled it with water, and threw it out the window. According to historical manufacturing reports, this second steel keg survived the 200-foot plunge onto the gravel lot without even a single dent, thus confirming the results. While the crowd was hoping to see an explosive failure that today would be called "YouTube-worthy", they were nonetheless quite impressed with the strength of the new welded steel kegs.

The 1933 Detroit Beer Barrel Drop effectively proved to the brewing, labor, industrial, and medical communities that steel was vastly safer than wood for containment. It demonstrated that if a delivery truck crashed or a barrel fell off a high warehouse platform, workers would not be maimed by exploding wood shards or lacerated or pinned under collapsing, rusty hoops.

The dramatic visual evidence of the drop broke the brewing industry's resistance. Within a few years, major national brands like Stroh's Brewing Company (right in Detroit) and others across the country phased out



THE

# Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

wooden casks entirely in favor of mass-produced metal kegs. The movement to metal kegs eventually went global. Not only did the new steel vessels provide safer containment for beer transportation, they also eliminated other barrel handling injuries from boiling pitch burns, splinters, snapping metal hoops, rot and mold exposure, sepsis, and asphyxiation from CO<sub>2</sub> pooled in the confined containers.

But, the transition from traditional wooden cooperage to metal kegs was not a seamless overnight switch. Individual breweries faced a chaotic logistical and financial quagmire. A brewery could not simply buy one steel keg; they had to buy thousands of them to establish a continuous supply chain. Breweries also had to retrofit their production lines, delivery fleet, and warehousing storage to handle the different shaped and stackable metal kegs. Large, well-capitalized regional shipping breweries (like Stroh's, Anheuser-Busch, and Pabst) immediately partnered with major automotive steel stamping companies to purchase steel barrels in bulk. Smaller local or rural breweries, however, were financially devastated after 13 years of Prohibition. Lacking the cash for fleet replacement, many small operations were forced to continue using whatever patched-up wooden casks they could salvage, or they went out of business entirely.



Brewmasters still feared that direct contact with raw steel or aluminum would ruin the flavor of the beer, causing a metallic tang or cloudiness. Many individual breweries initially lined their new steel and aluminum kegs with traditional brewer's pitch or beeswax. It took several years of metallurgical advancement—such as internal enameling or chemical allodizing treatment—before breweries trusted raw, bare metal to hold their beer without altering its taste.

The rollout was further prolonged by global events. Just as metal kegs were becoming the industry standard in the early 1940's, World War II broke out. The U.S. government strictly rationed steel and aluminum for the war effort, banning the manufacturing of commercial metal beer kegs. As a result, breweries had to manage a messy, hybrid container logistics system involving existing steel kegs, wooden barrels, and expanded use of glass bottles. After the war, steel and aluminum again became available, and by the mid-1950s, the metal keg had completely won the war of beer containment and efficiency, forcing the centuries-old vocation and craft of the brewery cooper into near-extinction.

## Alaska State Fair Craft Beverage Competition Results



### **Class 1: Pale ales**

- 1 \*Pale Ale Mark Coburn
- 2 \*Vienna Pale Ale Andre Koehrer
- 3 \*Pale Ale Patrik Thomaes

### **Class 3: Cream Ale**

- \*Kentucky Common Cream Ale Andre Koehrer

### **Class 5: IPA**

- 1 \*Double IPA Andre Koehrer
- 2 \*IPA Patrik Thomaes
- 3 \*Resting Birch Face Mark Coburn

### **Class 8: Belgian**

- 1 \*Doppel Bock Andre Koehrer
- 2 Belgian Triple Matthew Gredley
- 3 \*Belgian Ale Patrik Thomaes
- 4 Tripel Belgian Ale John Grohol

### **Class 2 :Amber Ales**

- 1 \*Katie's red ale Andre Koehrer

### **Class 4: Hefeweizen**

- 1 \*Hold My Hefs Andre Koehrer
- 2 \*Hefeweizen – Nathaniel Gingery

### **Class 6: Hazy IPA**

- 1 \*Tropic Thunder Hazy IPA Andre Koehrer

### **Class 9: Cream Stout**

- 1 \*Old Man's Stout Andre Koehrer



THE

# Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

## Class 10: Oatmeal Stout

- 1 \*Stout Elizabeth Greer

## Class 13: Pilsner

- 1 \*Pilsner Doughbor Andre Koehrer

## Division 1 - Wines

- \*Best in Division – Dandelion Wine Simone Lang

## Division 3 – Ciders

- \*Best in Division Berry Cider Andre Koehrer

## Division 5 – Meads

### Berry & Fruit

- 1 Blueberry Ginger Mead Grant Stines
- 2 \*Blueberry Mead Jonathan Povelite
- 3 Fey Lure Mead Eric Reynolds
- 4 Blue Raspberry 2 yr Mead Eric Velez

## SWEET MEAD

- 1 Bourbon Vanilla Bouchet Eric Velez
- 2 Bochet Grant Stines
- 3 Sweet Mead Tanner Hughes
- 4 Sweet Mead Clayton Allison

Best in Division Bourbon Vanilla Bochet Eric Velez

## Division 7 Kombucha

Best in Division Blueberry Rhubarb Blend Tom Spoth

## Class 11: Porter

- 1 \*Porter – Steve Johnson
- 2 Coconut Baltic Porter – Frank Reuter
- 3 \*Smoked Porter – Mark Coburn

## Class 14: Other Beers

- 1 Hard Rootbeer Grant Stines
- 2 Irish Stout Clayton Allison
- 3 \*Belgian Ale w/rhubarb Roy Pace
- 4 Vanilla Bourbon Stout John Grahol

## Division 2 – Flavored Spirits & Liqueurs

Best in Division Maroon Magic Kathy Walter

## Division 4 - Beer

\*Best in Division Tropic Thunder Hazy IPA Andre Koehrer

## Dry Mead

- 1 Sunglow Kiwi Mead Eric Velez

## Division 6 - Sodas

\*Best in Division Root Beer Andre Koehrer

\* 2025-2026 GNBC member

Congratulations to all of the winners and thank you to everyone who entered something! There was a great turnout of entries this year.

## Denali Wort Share and Talkeetna Brewfest

Many people showed up for the Denali Wort Share on the Friday before the Talkeetna Beerfest! These were brews from the April beer Tripping Weekend. Denali Brewing provided unhoped wort from the Twister Creek base which club members brewed into many different varieties of beer. All brews were tasty! A total of 11 entries were judged with all of them getting at least some votes.



Congratulations to winners:

- 3rd Jordan Couture – imperial brown
- 2nd Lisa Sapperstein – tamarind/passionfruit
- 1st Liz Greer – summer ale

Thanks to Denali Brewing for their continued support of our club! The Talkeetna Brewfest was, as always, a fun event. Wonderful brews, delicious food, and of course music by Talkeetna's Ukulele Russ is always enjoyable! A little rain didn't seem to bother the attendees, and we were fortunate to have an exceptionally beautiful Sunday!

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## Club Clothes!

You can now order GNBC Hoodies and Tee Shirts online! The Teespring link has been updated and is ready to roll. Nice Looking Blue Recommended, or pink for the Brewbies Run for Women! Here is the link to use:

<https://my-store-59c1d0.creator-spring.com/listing/greatnorthernbrewersclubshirt>





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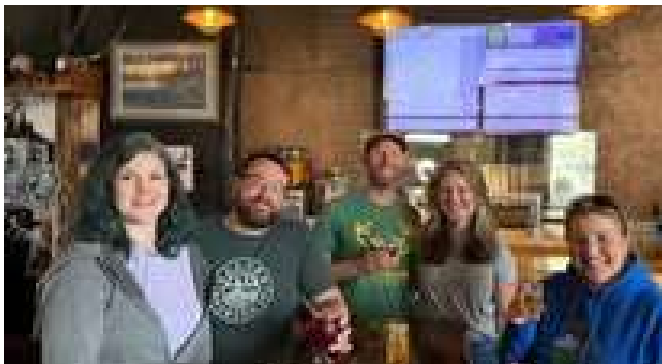
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## Kodiak GNBC Beer Trip

***By Jordan Sullivan, Cody Baggett, & Elizabeth Greer***

Our small but mighty crew had a fun-filled Kodiak excursion which included not 2, nor 4, nor 6 - but 12+ hours of checking out the fine adult beverages Kodiak Island has to offer!

We started this important September Saturday at Double Shovel Cider Kodiak at noon sharp for a flight of tasty ciders each. Owner and head brewer Gideon and wife Siene gave us an in-depth tour and history of the Kodiak cidery and Double Shovel as a whole. From their humble roots of picking yard apples in the early years for Anchorage's location, DSCO now owns several acres of apple



orchards on the Kenai Peninsula. They use most of the same recipes as Anchorage, but all of their malic acid bubbly is brewed on site. With flights of 5 or 6 of the 3oz tasters, we tried ciders ranging from Extra Dry, Pepper Peak (a spicy mouthfeel), Cider Mosa, Tropical Tease, Pineapple Cider, Ridge Runner (a pulpy fruity POG that looked like OJ), and Forget Me Hopped (with the obvious ingredient). An interesting backstory we

learned about the cidery: they have done an amazing job on the decor with warm woods of giant Sitka spruce, a wood stove, and sparkling lights; one would never guess it, but it used to be a Chevron gas station! The old service bay serves the space well for 4 serving tanks and 2 fermenters.

Around 2pm, we wandered all of 300 feet across the busiest intersection in this small town to Kodiak Island Brewery & Still for a few brews, including a delicious stout we all were fanning over, the Shelikof Imperial Stout with brettanomyces at 8%. Another notable taster was the sour Sea Level Kelp Gose, Alaska's first beer from bull-kelp sourced from local kelp farms (a large, long girthy bulbous



sea weed) that fills in for the salt profile in a standard gose. We also quaffed a tasty barleywine style ale called Deadliest Batch coming in at a healthy 13%. Ben and his old canine colleague walked us into the back to check out the brewery and distillery. KIB started from Ben's homebrewing that got enough accolades and requests from friends, that he opened the brewery in 2003, and added on the distillery in 2022. The brewery itself is a living museum of various Kodiak history, with handmade crochet quilts, growlers of long-gone national breweries, glass floats, fishing gear, and a stout wooden column supporting the roof, that was formerly the mast of an old Bristol Bay double ender sailboat, long since decommissioned.

After that we piled into the truck around 4pm for a 45 min cruise out to the Olds River Inn Restaurant &



Brewing; a winding 30 miles of switchbacks that edges along 3 beautiful bays south of town. The views from the cliffs overlooking the ocean were an excellent aperitif before our scrumptious dinner of scallops, prime rib, halibut, burger, and of course, beer, next to a voluptuous green fence of hop tendrils and cones. We sampled a Mango Summer Wheat (5%), a Rockit IPA (6.3%, so named for the nearby rocket launch facility), Dancing Bear Porter (5.4%, probably Kodiak bears and Jerry Garcia), and a Natural Blonde Kolsch (5%). On our drive back into town, we confidently decided we should

patronize the rest of the local drinking establishments around the downtown harbor: Tony's Bar ("The Biggest Navigational Hazard on Kodiak"), Henry's Great Alaskan Restaurant (because we needed French fries by then), The Village, and Bernies, in that order, with progressively less beer and stronger libations. To round out the night, we strolled into The B&B, the oldest licensed liquor establishment in the whole state of Alaska; their framed license from 1906 is proudly displayed on a wall along the bar. By that time some other patron had rang the bell twice, and we sauntered out the door at 2am, supporting the motto that Kodiak is a drinking town with a fishing problem!





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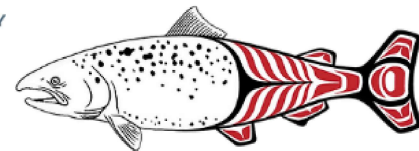
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