



# THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

DECEMBER 2018

State of the Brewnion

by Mike Cragen

I'm nearing the end of my presidential term, and I'd like to thank you all for the honor and privilege of serving. A special thanks goes out to all of the other officers and board members, whose time effort and input have helped make this a smooth season. Lastly, I'd like to welcome in the newly elected staff. I am beyond excited to see what Mike Fisher (President-elect) and his board can accomplish.



November's meeting wasn't just about elections. We were fortunate to recruit Ted Rosenzweig from Turnagain Brewing for our educational presentation. He led a fascinating discussion on what it takes to start a brewery. That was an eye-opening presentation. In the end, I concluded "no thanks, I'll stick to homebrewing!" Then, he led us down the path of his sours with locally foraged ingredients and let us sample his Rhude, a dry rhubarb/raspberry sour which is on tap now at Turnagain.

Let's talk upcoming GNBC and beer related events, here's our three-month calendar:

December 1st – Xmas party at the Anchorage Zoo from 7:00-11:00pm

December 9th – Humpy's Bigfish Homebrew Competition – 10am at Sub Zero

January 11th – 20th – Alaska Beer Week. See: <https://www.akbeerweek.com/>

January 17th – GNBC/Industry Gathering at 49th State

January 18th & 19th – Great Alaska Beer and Barleywine Festival – Egan Center

February 19th – Monthly meeting from 7:00-10:00 (49th State)

Ed speaker – Clarke Pelz from Cynosure Brewing – All Things Yeast

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**GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB**  
**PMB 1204**  
**3705 ARCTIC BOULEVARD**  
**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503**

**GNBC WEB SITE:**

[WWW.GREATNORTHERNBREWERS.ORG](http://WWW.GREATNORTHERNBREWERS.ORG)

**NEWSLETTER EMAIL** [bushy@alaskan.com](mailto:bushy@alaskan.com)

**PRESIDENT: MIKE CRAGEN**  
[president@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:president@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

**VICE PRESIDENT: ERIC MINOR**  
[vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

**TREASURER: SAM MOORE**  
[treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

**SECRETARY: JIM O'TOOLE**  
[secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

**KAT KARABELNIKOFF**  
[membership@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:membership@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**MIKE FISHER**  
[mikefisher.ak@gmail.com](mailto:mikefisher.ak@gmail.com)

**BRIAN HALL**  
[iheart314@gmail.com](mailto:iheart314@gmail.com)

**RICK LEVINSON**  
[relevins@gci.net](mailto:relevins@gci.net)

**LIZ GREER**  
[eagreer2001@yahoo.com](mailto:eagreer2001@yahoo.com)

**PETER HALL**  
[alaskabrewer@gmail.com](mailto:alaskabrewer@gmail.com)

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**  
**Debbie Grecco**  
[bushy@alaskan.com](mailto:bushy@alaskan.com)

Late Feb/Early March – Fur Rondy Homebrew Competition (details & exact date TBD)

GNBC's highlight event for December is the Bigfish Homebrew Comp sponsored by Humpy's and Midnight Sun. Judging starts at 10:00am on December 9th at Sub Zero. Judges are desperately needed to help out. We are trying something different this comp, if you are willing to judge, please email Peter at: [alaskabrewer@gmail.com](mailto:alaskabrewer@gmail.com) to get on the judging list. No experience necessary, relatively inexperienced judges will be paired accordingly so each table is represented with varying experience levels.

If you haven't yet, mark your calendars for January's GNBC meeting! If you can only make one meeting this year, this would be a solid one to choose. This will be a large gathering on January 17th at 49th State. It's during Alaska Beer Week and will have several notable industry members attending in addition to club members. You must have a current membership to attend, if you need to renew visit: <https://greatnorthernbrewers.org/membership/>

If you are willing to volunteer, we need helpers to make this work! More details on that as the event nears.

In closing, a number of acknowledgements are in order. First and foremost, thank you to my ever-supportive wife Tish for supporting me whole-heartedly on the journey this year. There are a number of behind the scenes people, not technically board or officer members, that have been instrumental in a successful year - thank you Jim Roberts, Debbie Grecco, and Julie McDonald. Once again, the board and officers for 2018 have been spectacular to work with as we attempted to enact changes and modernization to the club, thank you for your hard work and dedication to GNBC.

The Final Wort (the last batch I brewed) is a Belgian Dark Strong (26D). I love this style with its complex mix of Belgian yeast characteristics, malty richness, and unique spiciness. OG rang in at 1.072, but after adding candi sugar four days into the fermentation, the OG adjusted to 1.084. Within 11 days, at 66 degrees, it's already dropped to 1.010, for a whopping 9.7% ABV. As always, I'll have The Final Wort at a future gathering for you to sample and critique.

Cheers, to the lovers of beers, BrewMikester Cragen



# Secretary's Corner

by Jim O'Toole

I'm sorry to all of my fans who didn't get to read anything from me in last month's newsletter. Let's just chalk it up to laziness.

I have been busy, though. Between doctors, physical therapists, house/yard stuff, a week in Mexico, grandkids, etc. I just let the writing slide past our deadline. Maybe I wasn't in the mood to have anything positive to say though so not submitting anything may have been for the best.

If it looks like I was blaming my "grandkids" for anything negative I have to explain; my grandkids are the best therapy anyone could ask for even when you are in the best of moods. Watching eyes light up when they see you or when you tell them a bad "grandpa joke" makes everything else in the world disappear. My goofy dog does the same when I'm home alone. But he thinks my jokes are stupid.

My grandkids recently got me going on a little project that I've tried before and not been good at; making apple cider. I've seen articles about how to make a cider from store bought apple juice and in my early days of GNBC membership someone brought some to a meeting and I was impressed with it.

But I have an apple tree in my yard and I could almost hear it telling me that it will rot its own roots if I brought any "store bought" apple juice into the house so, for the second time since the tree has been producing fruit, I have a batch of homegrown cider in bottles, just waiting for a little fizz to be generated. I threw out the first two gallon batch I tried several years ago as it was simply undrinkable.

The tree is a "State Fair" variety, a late ripening apple and not the best variety for an Alaska growing season especially in that the only space I had in my backyard for it is not the sunniest place back there. So I was happy with the great summer we had this year that produced only the second crop in fifteen years to come close to ripening.

The tree was a gift from my next door neighbor with whom I share a five foot high fence that was plenty high enough to keep my 18 pound Jack Russell Terrier from causing a problem but my neighbor's racing sled dogs liked that five foot height because they could scale it easily and get out into the neighborhood through my yard. This wasn't a problem until I started a garden against the fence with a three foot high fence around it to keep my own dog out of it. What it also did was cause confusion among the neighbor's dogs when they hopped the fence and found themselves enclosed in an easily leaped short fence if they ran a lap or two to get up speed. Of course they tore my garden to shreds and, after it happened again and I added a two foot extension to the top of the five foot fence, the neighbor brought me an apple tree as a peace offering.

The tree did okay for a couple of years but the first real good apple crop came a year after I thought the tree had been destroyed. It was a huge snowfall winter and one day I looked at the four foot high snow pile under the apple tree and noticed something had been tearing it up. It was a moose that had pushed through a back gate and feasted on the apple tree. I don't know when it came and went but the deep snow kept it from getting too close to the tree but, even then, I thought the tree had had it.

Then, in the spring, it had more blossoms on it than ever, a warm spring produced bugs that made the blossoms happy, and it wasn't long before I could see what would become the best apple crop the tree had ever produced. That moose taught me more than I ever thought it was necessary to know about pruning an apple tree and that tree has been putting out a lot of apples ever since.



This year's summer, needless to say, was about as good as it gets for an apple tree so, on one of the last days before it snowed I got my five and three year old grandsons to come over and help me pick this year's crop. We used several containers, including a "Community Laundry Basket" that I need to return to someone one of these days, and picked 105 pounds of fruit.

I still have about 30 pounds of them. I want to try to dry some of them and what is left will go to the zoo. Most of them were pressed into juice on a great day I spent out in Peters Creek at Karl and Deb Morgan's house a couple of weeks ago. Karl and Deb are as "Urban Alaskan" as you can get in my opinion. I won't tell you how much beer/cider/mead they have but the way they use locally sourced products for all kinds of stuff is pretty cool. Karl had offered to press my apples a couple of years ago and I finally took him up on it and the five gallons we pressed that day is what is in bottles in the next room right now. It was kind of appropriate to see a photo of Karl helping Ted Rosenzweig with setting up Ted's Turnagain Brewing Company at the GNBC November meeting in the same week that Karl helped me with my apples. I'm about to ask Karl if he knows anything about making Irish whiskey.

My grandkids won't get any of this cider of course. Even if they were old enough they let me know that the juice was a little too tart for them and, from what I can tell from sampling the cider when I bottled it, the hard stuff is going to be a little tart for everyone.

But what's wrong with that?

I hope you have at least as happy a holiday season as the New Year will be for you throughout.

## 2018 Humpy's Big Fish Competition

by Peter Hall

**T**he Humpy's Big Fish Homebrew Competition is getting older and wiser. Big Fish might not be Anchorage's original competition it's assuredly one of the oldest still running competitions in Alaska.

Midnight Sun Brewing Company has graciously offered brew this year's grand prize-winning beer, within reason. Commercial brewery constraints help us temper what goes forward for commercial brewing. What this means, for example, is that if the competition winner is a five year old, oak aged, smoked gruit, this might be the best beer, but one that might not fit within Midnight Sun's brewing protocols.

Humpy's Great Alaskan Alehouse is once again hosting the judging part of the competition. We are back as Sub Zero this year with it's recent re-opening. The classic spot took a bit of a hiatus, but is back as good as ever. Things could of course change. Humpy's and Midnight Sun have grown into an appreciable complex.

The judging will take place on December 9. Tasting will begin promptly at 10 am.

The Christmas Party had been scheduled for one week earlier, so no issue with arriving bright and early.

We need qualified judges! Please put December 9<sup>th</sup> on your calendar. We all know that Humpy's takes good care of us. This judging event can be one of the best of the year. The quality of the event largely hinges on judge turnout, so help me out! I would like to ask that if you do come, please plan to be there until 2 in the afternoon. The final best of show round will need to be done no later than 3. I know that I am asking a lot here. All are welcome to help judge, even if you've never judged before.

Another thing I want to ask for is a commitment. If you want to be a judge at the Big Fish competition on December 9, please send me an email to let me know. I will plan for you to be there. I can better prepare to have quality panels put together. Please email me at [alaskabrewer@gmail.com](mailto:alaskabrewer@gmail.com) if you would like to make my Competition Organizer job a little easier and can tell me you will be there.

Don't fear if you are new to this; you will be paired with other qualified judges that will walk you through the whole thing in a casual, non-threatening, learning atmosphere. If there is a competition to become acquainted with professionally judging beer, this is one of the best.



The hosts of this competition are generally quite gracious. I work to coordinate prizes for winning beers, and the hosts are happy to oblige.

Humpy's Big Fish Homebrew Competition

Homebrewer of the Yea (HBOTY) Categories:

Imperial (8% & up)

Belgian/French

IPA/Pale

Wild/Sour/Brett

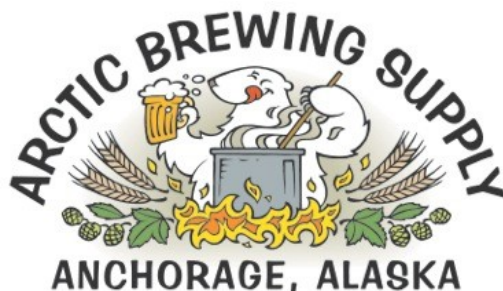
Smoked & wood-aged

SIDE CHALLENGE – **Chocolate - double HBOTY** points (1st – 6 pts;

2nd – 4 pts; 3rd – 2 pts)

Other (any other category may be entered but will not be eligible for HBOTY or BOS).

Please no mead or cider. Have these entries ready for Spring Equinox (and go to Talkeetna to help judge!)



Contact Peter Hall at [alaskabrewer@gmail.com](mailto:alaskabrewer@gmail.com) with any questions.



## The Joy of the First Beer

by Sam Moore

**H**omebrewing is a product of finally knowing that beer can be... good. Like most I went through college with cheap American-style light lagers. This is not an article against them, they have their place. But this is a short story of the epiphany I had when I first tasted a "true" beer.

For me it occurred late in my Junior year of college. While I certainly don't condone underage drinking, I'll admit that I didn't start trying beer just when I turned 21. The place was Patton Alley Pub, the only place in Springfield, Missouri that was seriously pushing the envelope of "craft" beer. To be fair, there was a place around the corner "Springfield Brewing Company" that had legitimate craft beer, however the place was more a showroom of what their parent company could do with stainless steel, as opposed to a small craft brewer.

So, there I was, at Patton Alley Pub in Springfield with a beer list I had no idea what to do with. I'm 21, hanging out with some fraternity friends... I ask my friend Geoff for a recommendation and he says "Brother, you have to order this."

"This" was a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale. Mind you, this was before the IPA craze (that turned into hop-mania, that is now a NE-IPA "juicy" craze) and I was blown away. I can still show you the table we were sitting at. It was... life changing.



For the first time at my tender age of 21 I realized beer could be better than the American-style light lagers I had been given.

Say what you will about Sierra Nevada... I don't really care. But we all have had that moment. We've all had that epiphany. We've all had that coming-to-Jesus moment where we were shocked into liking better beer than we had been given.

Friends and members, I would challenge you to introduce a friend or neighbor into a better beer. (If they legitimately prefer an American-style lager... don't hold that against them. At the end of the day Budweiser et. al. makes them better than we can, or at least more consistently). But homebrewing, a love of fine beer, starts somewhere, and it could just be a friend recommending a new beer.



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Great Northern Brewers Club  
Attn: Treasurer  
PMB 1204, 3705 Arctic Blvd  
Anchorage, AK 99503



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The *Northern Brewer* welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. You can contact the editor, Debbie Grecco at:

*The Great Northern Brewers Club and the American Homebrewers Association remind you to....Savor the Flavor Responsibly*

Online: bushy@alaskan.com  
Phone: 333-8985  
Mail: 6933 Soyuz Circle  
Anchorage, Ak 99504

GNBC Web Site: [www.greatnorthernbrewers.org](http://www.greatnorthernbrewers.org)



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**PMB 1204**

**3705 Arctic Boulevard**

**Anchorage, AK 99503**

**NEXT MEETING: January 17, 2019**

**GABBF GNBC Gathering at 49th State—Time TBD**