



THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB
MAY 2018

State of the Brewnion

by *Mike Cragen*

Hey everyone, it's time for your favorite eMay! What's your preferred beer to craft for summer imbibing . . . a clean German Pils, a pleasantly sour Berliner Weisse, perhaps a refreshing Hefeweizen? These are all winners, especially if they're your own creations.

The Spring Breakup Open Homebrew Competition was GNBC's highlight event in April. Through no fault of their own, we were unable to hold the competition at Resolution Brewing Co this year. Thankfully a few quick thinkers helped to find a new venue and we had a very successful competition!

Thank you to Eric Minor for running the competition, Brian Hall for his tremendous support, and of course all of our fantastic judges. Congratulations to the following brewers for their terrific showing:

BOS – Brian Hall - Triple

Brewers choice – Brian Hall - Triple

2nd overall – Dan and Geno Hanseath - Pilsner

3rd overall – Brian Hall - East Coast/West Coast Hybrid IPA

4th overall - Brian Hall - Barrel Aged Lambic

5th overall - Christophe Venot - Funky Tropical Brettlinerweisse

6th overall - Brian Hall - Funky Sour - Mixed Fermentation Beer

Current HBOTY race results can be found at: <https://greatnorthernbrewers.org/hboty/>

April's monthly meeting was well attended and educational. Thanks to Dennis and Lisa Urban for their generous donation of beer-related paraphernalia, which was raffled off to numerous lucky winners. The NEIPA czar, Brian Hall, shared his immense knowledge of the style with club members. He is truly the guru of NEIPA's, so if you're looking to brew this popular style and have questions, he should be at the top of your contact list.

In the next 3 months, we have a great lineup of GNBC and community brewing/craft events. The highlights include:

May 5th – Brew-a-thon (hosted by Kevin Sobelesky) setup at 8:00am, kick-off at 9:00am (details below)



State of the Brewnion

Secretary's Corner

ET Barnette Homebrew Competition Announced!

Anchortown Invitational

2018 Alaska Run for Women Brewbabies, Baby!

Brewathon This Weekend

Fermento's Lament on Missing Homebrewing

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

GNBC WEB SITE:

WWW.GREATNORTHERNBREWERS.ORG

NEWSLETTER EMAIL

bushy@alaskan.com

PRESIDENT: MIKE CRAGEN

president@greatnorthernbrewers.org

VICE PRESIDENT: ERIC MINOR

vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org

TREASURER: SAM MOORE

treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org

SECRETARY: JIM O'TOOLE

secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org

KAT KARABELNIKOFF

membership@greatnorthernbrewers.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MIKE FISHER

mikefisher.ak@gmail.com

BRIAN HALL

iheart314@gmail.com

RICK LEVINSON

relebins@gci.net

LIZ GREER

eagreer2001@yahoo.com

PETER HALL

alaskabrewer@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Debbie Grecco

bushy@alaskan.com

May 15th – Monthly Meeting from 7:00-10:00 at the **South Coffee House at 11124 Old Seward Highway** – Denali Brewing Co. will join us (details below). This is a change in venue for May.

May 16th – Haines Homebrew Competition entry due date (entries to Arctic Brewing)

May 25-26th – Haines Beer Festival and Homebrew Competition

June 9th – AK Run for women, GNBC Team Brewbies (contact Liz at: eagreer2001@yahoo.com)

June 15-17th – Camping at Trail River (Moose Pass)

July 10th – Summer BBQ at the Loughery's house

July 10 - Beer in the Garden at the Alaska Botanical Garden

Brewathon is a few days away. Are you ready to take your mash tuns on the road? Kevin Sobolesky and his parents are generous enough to host this event once again. Brewathon is a day to celebrate homebrew mebrew, make a batch, learn from others, and enjoy GNBC comradery. In their generosity, King Street is providing a neutral British ale yeast, so it'll even save you a few bucks to brew at Kevin's. The address is 9551 Emerald Street, contact Kevin for more details at metkonig@gmail.com.

May's monthly meeting location will be at the **South Coffee House at 11124 Old Seward Highway**. This is a one-time arrangement. Although the venue is changing, this is, perhaps, my most highly anticipated gathering. Denali Brewing Company gave GNBC members up to 10 gallons of their Grove IPA wort during Beer Trippin' in late March. It's time to taste and share! DBC is coming to this meeting with their Grove IPA to sample our creations side-by-side with theirs. Instead of a dedicated educational presentation, we'll be analyzing and discussing this style with short explanations from our brewers about their processes. Remember, if you received wort from DBC, it's highly encouraged to bring a growler (or equivalent volume) to the May meeting.

The Final Wort (the last batch I brewed) is a German Leichbier (5A). No idea what style this is? Me neither! In a conversation with fellow brewers, we were looking at the styles Fairbanks is taking this year for the ET Barnett Homebrew Competition. We realized that none of us even knew what that style was, so naturally a challenge ensued. A Leichbier is a very light, low alcohol, highly-attenuated, clean lager. Mine rang in at 1.033. This is the lowest OG beer I've ever made, so that took me out of my brewing wheelhouse. As always, I'll have The Final Wort at a future meeting for you to sample and critique.

Don't be disMayed, summer brews are on their way,
Mike EmCee Cragen

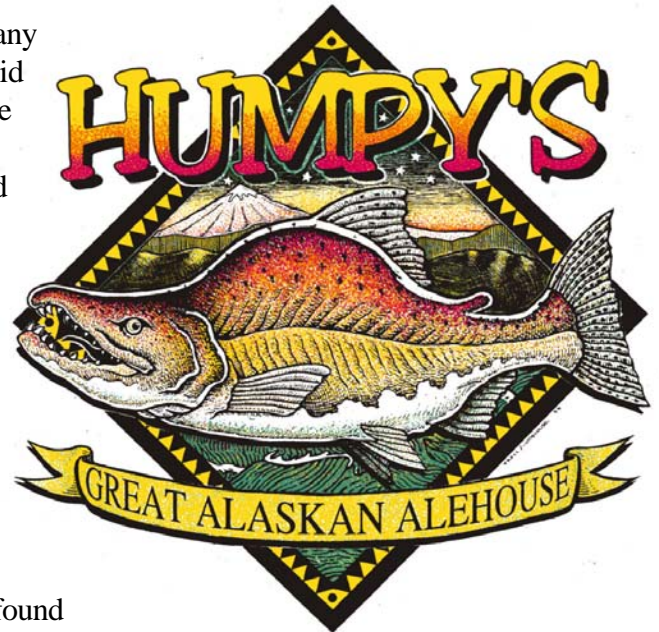


Secretary's Corner May 2018

by: *Jim O'Toole*

I'm cheating a little with this Secretary's Corner as I'm writing it in early April so I'll be sure to hit the end of the month deadline. I'm leaving for Hawaii in a couple of days and won't have access to a keyboard that fits my stubby fingers for anything more than a short email while I'm there.

When I first saw people with mini-keyboards on their phones many years ago I knew I was in trouble as I've known since I was a kid that my hands were not designed for them. I can't play piano due to the short fingers and they weren't designed for intricate work due to their girth. I struggled with a guitar for 50 years or so and finally gave up when people I wanted to play with demanded that I know how to play more chords than my fingers allowed me to play. After the Hawaii trip last year I bought a ukulele and, even though I have to stuff my fat fingers onto a tiny fretboard, with only four strings I've found it a much easier instrument to play. By the time you read this I expect that I will have picked up my third uke at a shop in Kailua-Kona where the shop owner inspired me to try it a year ago.

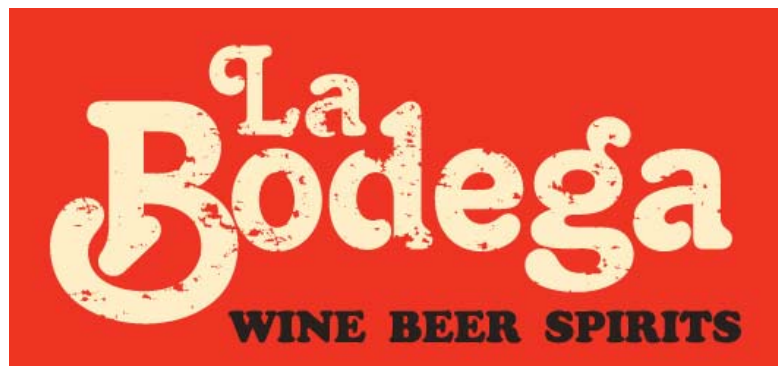


So what does this have to do with beer? Nothing really. I was thinking about what to write for next month's newsletter when I found myself at King Street Brewing tonight with nothing else to do but read some of the magazines they have lying on the windowsills. I ran through a Beer Advocate and then spotted the January/February 2018 issue of Zymurgy and realized I hadn't read anything of theirs in quite a while so started in on it.

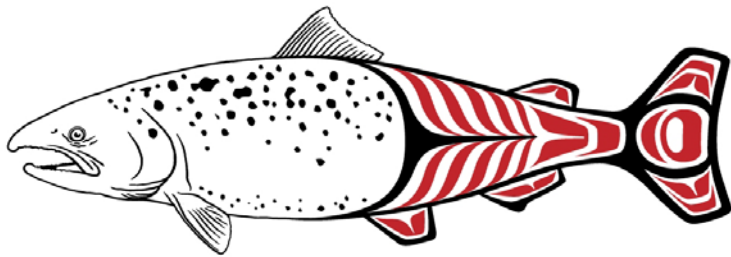
The thing that piqued my interest the most was an article written by a beer writer from Asheville, NC and, as I had had a great time hitting beer joints there last November, I wondered what she had to say.

It turned out that hers was the least interesting article in the issue; beginning with Green Flash of San Diego closing their attempt at brewing on the east coast with the sudden shutdown of their 36 employee brewery in Virginia and moving on to the successful expansion of many small brewers who have kept their additional facilities in the neighborhoods of the originals.

What was much more interesting to me were some statistics regarding home brewers. Did you know that, in a 2017 American Homebrewer's Association survey showed that there are 1.1 million home brewers in the U.S.? That those brewers produce about 1.4 million barrels of beer per year and that, if you combined all of those beers into one production line, it would constitute the third largest source of craft beer in the U.S. behind just Boston Brewing and Sierra Nevada?



Forty percent of home brewers are relatively new at it, beginning within the last four years, and we brew an average of 8.3 batches per year. Man, am I behind the curve on that one.



TURNAGAIN BREWING

OLD WORLD TRADITION... THE ALASKAN WAY

The top reason people give for brewing is the “creative, artistic aspect of the hobby” according to the Zymurgy poll and the average age of home brewers is 42 although those of us over 60 are the fastest growing age group. Wow.....how many batches do you think Mike Cragen will brew once he retires and can REALLY get into it?

One of the most surprising revelations in the survey results was geographical but, after thinking about it, it made sense. The largest percentage of

home brewers in the U.S. live in the south, 31% of us. After that it is the Midwest(25%), the northeast (24%), followed by the western U.S. (19%). Although I have written several times about the improvement in the craft beer scene in various parts of the U.S., I think it is obvious to anyone who knows anything about beer in the U.S. over the last 30 years that the western U.S. has led the way and it would only stand to reason that people elsewhere would want to try to brew the beers we’ve been drinking in our bars for all that time. Or something.

In that Zymurgy issue I read that they sponsor a “National Learn To Homebrew Day” on the 1st Saturday of November every year and that in 2017 they had 295 registered sites and 4783 people showed up to learn how to brew. The 2018 NLTHD will be on November 3.

I learned, once again, that we have to be diligent when faced with barriers people might throw at us. In North Carolina, a legislator wrote a bill that would have limited the amount of home brew that could be served at events. There was no rationale for this given in the article and I’m pretty certain whatever it was was pretty lame but the point is that home brewers organized, pointed out that the law would severely limit the entries in the home brew competitions they hold around the state, and the law was squashed. Imagine what something like that would do to our January meeting.



And, finally, I learned, once again, that there are home brewers who are so far advanced beyond anything I could ever hope to be in the Zymurgy Q&A section where people write in and ask for advice with a problem they have encountered in brewing. There were a couple about substitutions in recipes but this one guy wanted to know why the color of his beer was more than a few points off of the suggested parameter in a recipe he got from an earlier edition. He said that he added more of one type of malt that he thought would get him there but he wanted to know what he did wrong. It turned out that the author of the recipe gave wrong numbers for the color and the guy was actually right on the money with his. I’m not saying that people get anal about this stuff but I don’t even remember him mentioning how the beer tasted. I imagine it was pretty good. If not all that pretty.



The final thing in that issue is something that has bugged me for a while and it is almost exclusively a problem in beer periodicals. As usual, in this one, there were a lot of mouth watering ads for brew pubs or bars or breweries with tap rooms but hardly any of them tell you where they are. Is there a place for someone with the tiniest bit of advertising savvy to make a bunch of money re-designing these things for these people? It won’t be me. I’ll be in Hawaii. Aloha.

Announcing the 22nd Annual E.T. Barnett Homebrew Competition!

by *Scott Stihler*

This is a AHA/BJCP sanctioned competition.

The grand prize for Best of Show is \$500!!!

Great prizes and custom medals will also be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners of each of the seven judged categories.

The seven judged categories will be: Pale Bitter European Lager (5A-D), British Bitter (11A-C), Dark British Beer (16A-D), Pale American Ale (18A-B), Amber and Brown American Beer (19A-C), Belgian Ale (24A-C), Fruit/Spice/Herb/Vegetable Beer (29A-B and 30A).

Entries will be accepted: June 18 - July 11, 2017

Entry fees: Submit three 12-16 oz brown or green crown capped bottles and a check or money order for \$5.00 in U.S. funds per entry.

Judging: Judging will take place on Saturday, July 14th.

Location: Fox, Alaska (a small mining community ~10 miles north of Fairbanks)

More information as well as Entry and Bottle ID forms may be found at: <http://www.mosquitobytes.com/Den/Beer/Events/Events.html#ETB>

Should you have any questions or are interesting in judging contact Scott Stihler at stihlerunits@mosquitobytes.com or (907) 474-2138.

2018 E.T. Barnette Homebrew Competition Call for Judges

E.T. BARNETTE HOMEBREW COMPETITION CALL FOR JUDGES:

Beer Judges we need You!!

We need BJCP judges and/or experienced brewers to help judge this year's E.T. Barnette Homebrew Competition!!!

We also need an intrepid steward to help make things run smoothly!

Judging will take place on Saturday, July 14 at Silver Gulch Brewing and Bottling Company located in Fox, Alaska (a small community ~11 miles north of Fairbanks).

The seven judged categories will be: Pale Bitter European Lager (5A-D), British Bitter (11A-C), Dark British Beer (16A-D), Pale American Ale (18A-B), Amber and Brown American Beer (19A-C), Belgian Ale (24A-C), Fruit/Spice/Herb/Vegetable Beer (29A-B and 30A).

Once again out of town judges can pre-register and hand carry their entries thereby saving on shipping costs.

All they need to do is fill out the Entry forms and mail it to us along with the corresponding fee payment. On the day of the competition the judges simply show up with their chilled

MEETING SETUP

A - J Food
K - P Setup
R - Z Cleanup

A - J Setup
K - P Cleanup
R - Z Food

A - J Cleanup
K - P Food
R - Z Setup



entries in hand. Be sure to attach Bottle IDs to each of the bottles with rubber bands so we can distinguish which entry is which.

Please mail your pre-registration materials to:

Chérie Stihler
P.O. Box 84988
Fairbanks, AK 99708

Please mail in the pre-registration information etc. early enough so that it is received no later than the entry deadline (i.e. July 11). This will allow us to register those entries along with all the others and we'll be ready when you show up with beers in hand.

This year's E.T. Barnette Homebrew Competition will once again take on that same day as the Golden Days Beer Fest. Since the beer fest takes place 3:00-10:00 p.m. there should be plenty of time to judge beer AND enjoy the festivities associated beer festival.

If you are interested in helping out please contact Scott Stihler at stihlerunits@mosquitobytes.com or (907) 474-2138.



Anchor Town Invitational Homebrew Competition

by *Mike Fisher*

The 2018 Anchor Town Invitational Homebrew Competition will take place on Sunday, October 7, starting at 10:00am, at King Street Brewing Company's new location. Entries will be accepted on September 29 at Arctic Brewing Supply, from 11:00am to 3:00pm. (I will leave at 3:00pm sharp.) If you are not able to be there during that 4-hour window on the 29th, please label your entries, drop them off ahead of time, and ask to have them held in the refrigerator. I will do a last-chance collection at 5:00pm on Friday, October 5. Each entry needs three 12oz. bottles (only two is fine if it's not eligible for Best of Show) and a completed BJCP entry form.

We will judge entries according to the 2015 BJCP Style Guidelines. All beer styles will be accepted at the competition, but style groups eligible for HBOTY points and the BOS round are listed below. Entrants should review the Anchor Town 2018 Scoring Guide on the GNBC website at <http://greatnorthernbrewers.org/competitions/> for all the details, including style groups and how points and places will be awarded.

Styles eligible for HBOTY and BOS:

Wild/Sour/Brett
IPA/Pale
Light Lager
Amber/Dark Lager
Stout/Porter
Fruit and Spice/Herb/Vegetable
Side Challenge (see below)

Styles eligible for BOS:

Belgian/French
Imperial (8% and up)



The side challenge is called "Funky Fermentables." Brewers are invited to use non-standard sources of sugar for fermentation. All entries will be entered in the side challenge group, generally understood to mean BJCP 2015 style category 31 (alternative fermentables beer). It's up to you how far you want to go with the concept. Some fun but certainly not groundbreaking examples include using gummy bears, Swedish fish, or other candies in place of Belgian candi sugar, or brewing a beer that uses breakfast cereals.

Please stay tuned for more details in the coming months. If you have any questions, send me an e-mail at AnchorTown@fisherak.com.

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Happy brewing!

2018 Alaska Run for Women: GNBC Team Brewbies

by Julie McDonald

Registration is open now, for The Great Northern Brewears Club walk/run team, The Brewbies, in the 256th Annual Alaska Run for Women slated for June 9, 2018. See our Facebook events page here: www.facebook.com/events/1829578647335675??ti=ia

The Alaska Run for Women is Alaska's premier women's running event that raises money for breast cancer research and support, detection and awareness programs. Although it's women who are doing the walking and running, men are encouraged to participate as volunteers, cheerleaders or phantom donors.

If you haven't participated in the event in the past, this is the year to get involved! You don't have to run, you can walk, or you can run some and walk some, you can stroll leisurely with your friends. Check out this info for more detail:



2018 START TIMES

We start in waves to help decrease congestion along the course.

- 8:30 a.m. 1-mile run/walk start / Corral at 8:10 a.m. (walking or running with small children or don't want to commit to 5 miles)
- * 8:45 a.m. 5-mile TIMED run/walk start / Corral at 8:15 a.m. (competitive either with others or yourself, looking to break that 5 mile PR, working towards your Triple Finisher Patch)
- * 9:05 a.m. 5-mile untimed run/walk start / Corral at 8:35 a.m. (not competitive by a little more serious about your effort than the Party Wave accounts for)
- * 9:20 a.m. 5-mile untimed PARTY WAVE & STROLLERS / Corral at 8:50 a.m. (leisurely walking/strolling/jogging with friends or anyone that is pushing a stroller...strollers are not permitted in any of the other categories)



To register: www.akrfw.org, click "Register". *Be sure to indicate The Great Northern Brewers Club Brewbies under the team selection.

*YOUR ENTRY FEE IS A DONATION!

Your Entry Fee is a donation only. In order to include all women regardless of economic circumstances, there is no set registration fee. There are also no participant processing fees, so more of your donation can continue to be used to help all women and men in the fight against breast cancer. We encourage you to consider a donation at any level to help in the fight against this disease. The recommended registration donation is \$25

****NOTE: While men may not register to race, they are certainly welcome to come as observers and support their racers on course or at the stadium, they can also volunteer (see the link below)!

****NOTE: DONATIONS from non-racers are accepted by going here: <https://www.akrfwregistration.org/donate/> and when you get to the "support a team" section, find Great Northern Brewers Club Brewbies in the drop down menu.

For anyone that cannot run/walk but would like to volunteer, here is the link to volunteer sign up: <https://www.akrfwregistration.org/volunteer.php>. Please check out the race website, especially the race day information. It has info for shuttles and other things you may want to know.

If interested, contact Liz Greer at EAGREER2001@YAHOO.COM for more information.

Brewathon 2018 (reprint from April newsletter)

By *Kevin Sobolesky*

Hello Brewers!

This year's Brewathon will take place on Saturday May 5th. As some of you know, and others might not, Brewathon is where homebrewers gather to brew beer outdoors, share their skills, knowledge, and even a homebrew or two.

Anyone who is interested in bringing their gear and brewing a batch is welcome! Anyone who wants to observe and learn about beer making is welcome! Random passers by and stray pets are welcome!

As is tradition, we will be grilling up many savory treats and food items. We encourage attendees to contribute to the potluck with a side dish for your fellow brewers.

Free yeast will be available for people to use (It will be a neutral Ale yeast).

The event is being held at 9551 Emerald Street. This is at the very west end of Dimond Blvd in South Anchorage between Jewel Lake Road and Sand Lake Road. Turn onto Emerald Street heading south (left turn if you're heading west coming from Jewel Lake) and it's the one-story split level where Emerald Street ends at Jade Street. We will have some extension cords for pumps as well as a network of garden hoses for cleaning and filling. Note that we will have a carbon filter on the hose bib but separate hoses for cleaning, so if in doubt, please ask "is this water dechlorinated?" We have no desire to produce any chlorophenols if we can help it.



We will start setting up at 8AM, with the invocation and kick-off at 9AM, and tear down and clean up at 5PM.

If you are interested in teaching or partnering with a new brewer or a couple of brewers, please email me at metkonig@gmail.com with the style of beer you are making, whether it's All-Grain or extract, and how many people you would be interested in hosting. It's fun to share our hobby with new people, and there are people out there who don't even know they want to brew their own beer yet! Let's give them the chance.

Likewise, if you are looking to be taught how to brew and/or have no gear, please email me at metkonig@gmail.com and I will do my best to set you up with a brewer and/or gear.

This is also a great place to get feedback on your homebrew (or commercial brew for that matter). We will have numerous beer experts and ranked beer judges to give you careful, thoughtful, and most of all, thorough, examinations of your brews. If you don't know what went wrong, or what hard-to-articulate character should be there, someone here might.

Please be considerate to the neighbors when parking! That includes blocking mailboxes and driveways. There should be plenty of spots along Jade, Emerald and Byrd lane. There will room to pull up in the driveway to offload as well.

Also if you wish to volunteer to help set up or clean up, please let me know! We can't have the event without some helping hands. metkonig@gmail.com

If you have any questions, shoot me an email at metkonig@gmail.com

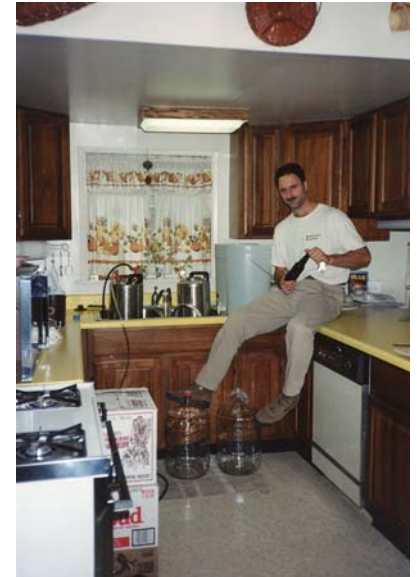
I Miss Homebrewing

by *Fermento*

It's probably been 10 years or so since I've brewed a batch of beer. I miss it. I remember first getting involved with the hobby when a long time friend of mine started brewing and invited me over to help him bottle his latest batch.

I recall pulling the sterilized 12 ounce brown bottles out of his dishwasher and meticulously putting the proper amount of corn sugar into each one, then assisting with the bottle filling and capping process. I'm sure that sounds archaic by modern standards. Don't forget, I'm 60 years old and that was probably back in 1991 or 1992 and homebrewing was still evolving then. It all seemed okay to me.

It wasn't the beer that enchanted me at first and pulled me into the dreamy world of brewing. Believe it or not, it was the process, and especially that squeaky clean glass that was still warm to the touch during the bottling session. This is not the first time I've been accused of having a glass fetish.

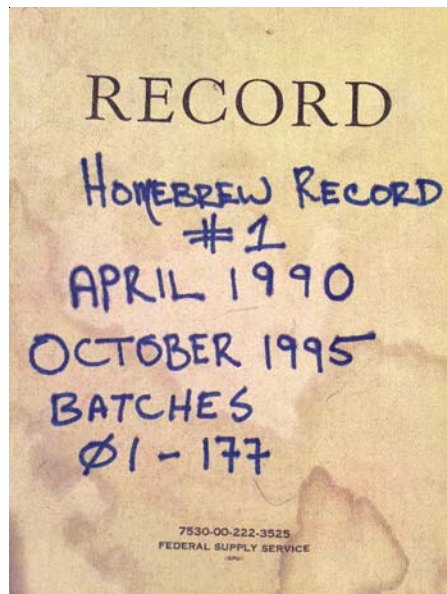


I'm the one that does the windows at my house. I do them frequently. I use a professional squeegee to get the job done. I owned a motorhome for a number of years. The first thing I'd do when I'd pull into a campground is get my little ladder out, my bottle of Windex and my motorhome-only squeegee out and go around and do all of the windows.

When I started homebrewing I couldn't wait to mess with the glass carboys and of course, bottle the beer when it was ready. I remember the amount of pride when I got my first glass wine thief, then my first glass hydrometer tube. Does anyone still use a hydrometer? My understanding is that there's a digital gadget for these these days.

When liquid yeast in smack packs came along, I sourced one of my biggest sources of pride, 1,000 ml and 2,000 ml Erlenmer flasks. I was in heaven. Enough about the glass fetish, right?

When I started homebrew, I attended a course from the Club's first presidents: Pat and Randy Oldenberg. A friend and I - beer is communal, after all - got together and decided to learn how to brew and get



a homebrew kit. We sat in metal chairs in the Oldenberg's converted garage-come-brewery and learned how to make beer on a stove. I brewed my first batch of beer in April of 1990. On August 29, 1995, five years later, I brewed batch #177. I wasn't done yet, I'd just run out of page in my homebrew club record book. I started the next book that same week.

From there, it became a treasure hunt to find all of the equipment needed to make beer. Arctic Brewing Supply wasn't even a dream. We sourced equipment from Alaska Mill, Feed and Garden and ordered from Williams Homebrew Supply in California. The variety at Williams was more extensive and even with shipping, it was still cheaper than sourcing stuff in Alaska.

I remember when Arctic Brewing Supply came along. I met the original owner, Dave Snow, at a homebrew club meeting. He invited me down to the original location that he was building out on Lake Otis Parkway just north of Dowling. I found myself spending weekend afternoons and evenings helping him build shelving and eventually stocking the shelves. After Arctic Brewing opened, I actually worked there on and off part time on weekends for a while to help give Dave a break. I was okay at talking homebrewing and selling supplies, but I always screwed up the cash register by hitting the wrong keys. Dave laughed at this amicably enough. He and I - and many





other "insiders" would sit behind the false wall in the back of the shop and drink homebrew on long summer afternoons and everyone would go dead silent when the front of the store door ringer announced a customer. One of us would walk out, peddle the wares and when the customer left, the party would resume.

Dave came up with a unique recipe that he called HAC, or "high alcohol content" beer that was comprised of Alexander's Pale Malt Extract, fireweed honey, corn sugar and -back then - California Common yeast. At 8 percent alcohol by content (ABV) this beer was a sleeper. It was one of the easiest drinking beers homebrewers had chanced across, but that defied responsibility. A couple of pints of this had devastating effects, even for neophyte drinkers. Sweet, light and crisp - with ample hop character for balance - and with a dry finish, it was a hard beer to put down and it quickly became a cult beer in the homebrewing community that trashed friends and foes alike. I made this beer with abandon.

I studied beer and homebrewing. I bought equipment wherever I could find it. I replaced the archaic electric stove with a gas stove in my house. There wasn't anything wrong with the electric stove; it worked fine. The electric rings had a tendency to scorch the bottom of my five gallon stainless steel brewkettle. At the same time, the brewkettle didn't fit properly under the stupid integral hood on the stove. Well, it wasn't stupid until I started brewing.

I upgraded over the years. Long time club member Ed Harrington got dispatched from Anchorage to Nome for a couple of years and I was the proud recipient (loan) of his three stage brewing system that had a stair-stepped hot liquor tank (converted keg) on top, the mash tun on the middle tier (another converted keg complete with a false bottom) and the brewkettle (yup, another keg) on the bottom. I loved the glass sight glass on the hot liquor tank the most, I think. Ms. Fermento liked the operation moving to the garage the most. She got her stove back.

I brewed in the garage for years. In the summer, I'd brew with the garage door open and in the winter I'd crack it about a foot high and crack the back door. I loved how the steam would roll out both doors. I felt like a mad scientist. After a couple of years, one day in the summer, for some odd reason, my neighbor walked around the corner - probably to borrow something (there are herbivores, carnivores and negi-bores) - to discover me stirring the kettle and drinking beer with five or so brewing friends.

He looked around pie-eyed while surveying the scene in front of him. "What are you doing?," he asked. "Homebrewing," I replied. He thought about this for a minute then blurted out "so THAT'S what that smell is!" Oh, the little discoveries in life, right?

I graduated to kegging beer. Cornelius Kegs were at a premium back then (I suspect they still are) and on a trip to Arizona, I hit the mother lode by doing some research and finding about 20 of them at a metal recycling place in the desert. This was at the time when the beverage industry was converting from the "figals" to the syrup in the box system, and the kegs started to get a little more abundant. I spent a lot of money sending my treasure home.

Back in Anchorage, I traded a pair of cross country skis for a couple of corney kegs with a local distributor guy that had a few he didn't know what to do with.



In my heyday, I brewed about two 10 gallon batches of beer a week. I'd always have friends over to brew and drink with me. Homebrewing's communal, after all.

Despite getting a refrigerator for my homebrew and not one, but two kegerators (a dual tap system in the garage and a triple tower system downstairs), I still bottled half of every batch of beer I made. I just couldn't get away from that brown glass, you know? Bottled beer afforded more variety than kegs did. Instead of brining a single keg of beer to parties or my out of town destinations, I could bring a bunch of different bottled styles along.

I miss the cereal-like smell of the malt. I miss the tangy smell of the hops. Ms. Fermento doesn't miss any of this, but that's her loss; not mine. I miss my friends that came over when I homebrewed.

I started writing about beer for the Anchorage Press 21 years ago. I got involved in running a gold mine down on the Kenai Peninsula. I got overwhelmingly busy at work. These are all excuses - I know - but it got to the point where I could either brew beer and drink it, or drink beer and write about it. I wrote my 1,000th weekly column for the Press two years ago in September, but I haven't made any homebrew since then.

I miss GNBC too, although time and other commitments prevent me from attending regularly. I still contribute by producing the monthly newsletter; something I think I've done now for the last 26 years.

When I retire, I'll homebrew again. I'll never give it up. I look forward to it. I'll still be a member of Great Northern Brewers - of course - and some of you younger folks will have to walk me through homebrewing again and introduce me to all of the new ingredients, processes and gadgetry that makes homebrewing the magical mix of art, science and alchemy that forever sucks us in.

Just for fun, I'm providing the recipe for my very first batch of beer. I called it "Jim and Troy's Grand Experiment." I don't suggest trying to re-create it: I entered it in the 1991 Fur Rendezvous Homebrew Competition and it didn't place.

3.3 lbs John Bull Hopped Stout Malt Extract
3.3 lbs John Bull Unhopped Amber Malt Extract
3/4 oz Hallertauer hop pellets @ 17.5 minutes (70 minutes total boil)
1/4 oz Hallertauer hop pellets @ 52.5 minutes
1/2 cup maple syrup at 52 minutes

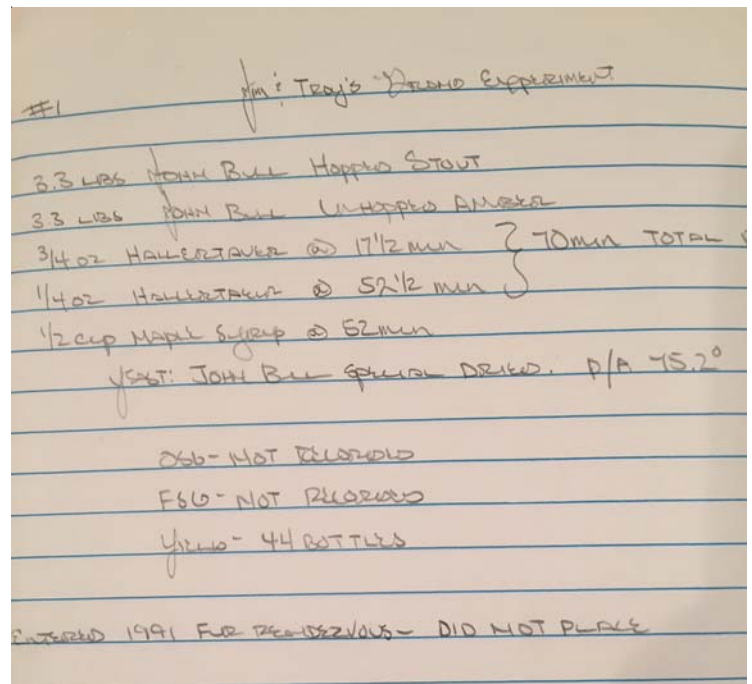
Yeast: John Bull Special Dried pitched at 75.2 degrees

OSG: Not Recorded

FSG: Not Recorded

Yeild: 44 glorious 12 ounce brown bottles of beer.

The last beer I made was a complicated sour brown ale. I made it with a friend of mine at his daughter's house where we used to brew a lot when that family was big into brewing and we'd evolved into bolder styles. It was his expertise that brought me along with that beer. Our brew - we didn't know it would be our last - went into two seven gallon carboys with great expectations.



It sat. Seven years later, I pulled my coveted glass wine thief and sampled the brew. The vinegar flavor was as sour as my loss of my beloved hobby. He'd moved away from homebrewing in the interim, and so had I. We're still fast friends, but I've never brought up the beer we made and my painful pouring it down the drain.

Once homebrewing's in your blood, you're hooked. Homebrewing courses in our veins. Keep brewing the good stuff; I haven't forgotten about it. Every time I attend a homebrew club function, I'm reminded of my roots. Keep the homebrewing life alive; I'm still in it and coming back in a big way, just not now. I'm going to need your help when I find my way back, and I'll find you at the Great Northern Brewer's Club.

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



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

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

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

GNBC Web Site: www.greatnorthernbrewers.org



Great Northern Brewers Club
PMB 1204
3705 Arctic Boulevard
Anchorage, AK 99503

**NEXT MEETING: May 15th 2018
7 pm at SOUTH COFFEE HOUSE: 11124 Old Seward Highway, Anchorage**