



# THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB  
DECEMBER 2008

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## The Prez Sez

by *Ira Edwards*

Heja Noel! Skøl, Heja Ø!  
Merry Christmas! Here's to Cheers and Beers!



With all this white fluff out there in recent weeks, winter has finally set in. That means the holidays are upon us and it is time to start reflecting on the year. I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving with Friends and Family and is looking forward to more of the same with Christmas and New Year's Day fast approaching. With a definite chill in the air, it is sure nice to settle in for the night in a warm place or in front of a fire (fireplace or bonfire in the yard) and hang out with friends sharing some holiday beverages. I have been holding out on my special Beers, Meads and Ciders for this time of year and it is nice to pull them out of the crawlspace for the holidays.

As I am sure you are all aware, we have a couple of big events right off the bat in December. Both of them occur on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. First off, we have the Humpy's Big Fish Homebrew Competition. Entries are accepted on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> and the Judging will take place on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> at SubZero. Look for the announcement from organizer Jason Ditsworth for more details. After the Big Fish, it is time to go home for a few hours and then come back downtown for the Annual GNBC Christmas Party. It will start at 6pm, also on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at the lower level of the Snow Goose. Look further into this newsletter for more detailed information.

The election results were announced right after the monthly meeting in November. Thanks to everyone who voted either in person or via emailed absentee ballot. Even more thanks goes out to all who volunteer their time to be one of the GNBC officers or to be on the GNBC Board of Directors. And then there are all those who help with the special club events like the various Homebrew Competitions, the Beer and Barleywine Festival, and the many other events the club puts on. Even the authors of submissions to the Newsletter are greatly appreciated. Our talented volunteer editors are happy to take your experiences on various trips and activities and put them out for the membership to experience along with you. It is through your participation that this club has become what it is today, and we have gained many new members in the last year as a result of this. The Officers and the Board will be getting together in the next couple of months to figure out ways to make the GNBC a more member serving organization. We will be asking everyone for their thoughts and going forward on what we find to make the club even better than it is today. Keep a lookout for the upcoming changes. Your thoughts are welcomed.

The Prez Sez

Secretary's Corner

GNBC Election Results

GNBC Bigfish Homebrew  
Competition

GNBC 2008 Christmas Party

Tree Thoughts

Blast From the Past

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Remember, there will not be a monthly meeting either in December or January. These two meetings will be replaced by the GNBC Christmas party and the Brewers meeting on the Thursday before the Barleywine festival. Keep an eye out for the exciting details next month.

That is all again from me this month. I'll see you all soon and please remember to enjoy your Beers, Meads and Ciders responsibly. Cheers!



## Secretary's Corner

by Dena Sessler

Great Northern Brewers Homebrew Club Members met at 7 pm in the theatre of the Snow Goose Restaurant on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November. The meeting experienced a big turn out as the main focus of last month's meeting, was the elections of the 2009 GNBC board members and officers. Congratulations to Ira Edwards, re-elected as President, Keri Canepa, re-elected as Vice President, Bruce Mills election to the Secretary position, Breck Tostiven's re-election as Treasurer, and to two new board members Flash Lubish-White and Tim Bisson. Congratulate them all and remember to support them in the year to come.

The annual Humpy's Big Fish Competition, is to be held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December at SubZero. Judging will start at approximately 10:00am. Entries will be taken at Arctic Brewing Supply between the hours of 11 am-6 pm on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of December. If you need early drop off, please make sure that your entry forms are completely filled out for Jason Ditsworth when he arrives. There is no fee for this competition. Don't forget about this year's side challenge, a 3.2 ABV beer. Steve Schmitt says that it must be thin, insipid, yet enjoyable to drink. You just need one bottle to be judged and size does matter. The award for this year's winner is the 'Golden Gnome' so get out those lawn mower beers.

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Jason is also looking for someone to take over the competition next year. If you are interested, please contact Jason Ditsworth at [jditsworth@gci.net](mailto:jditsworth@gci.net).

The GNBC annual Christmas party is also scheduled for the 6<sup>th</sup> of December at the Snow Goose. Yes, it is the same day as the Humpy's Big Fish Competition, but don't let that discourage you from showing up to help judge or steward. Jason is going to get everyone out of there early so they can get all gussied up for the Christmas party that evening.

Coming up the weekend of January 18<sup>th</sup>, is the Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival at the Eagan convention center. All those who wish to work the festival, need to have a TIPS or TAMs card. When you volunteer, it costs you nothing to attend, with the exception of the Connoisseurs Session on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup>. The extra few dollars is well worth it, as you don't have the crowds to fight, wearing the majority of the beverage in hand. If you want to appreciate the special beers that are available at this session only, plus all of the other great beer, mead, and cider, this is the session for you.

February 7<sup>th</sup> is the date that has been set for the annual Fur Rondy Homebrew Competition. Entries are going to be accepted in the basement of the Snow Goose on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February from 11am-6pm. The entry fee has been reduced to \$2.00 per entry this year. If you need to arrange another time to drop off your entries, please contact the competition organizer Dennis Sessler at [sessak@mtaonline.net](mailto:sessak@mtaonline.net) or (907) 317-4766.

Tuesday evening's educational portion of the meeting was an informative talk on apples and cider making by Ira Edwards. He has been making cider in Alaska for the past 8-9 years. People don't think that Alaska has a lot of opportunities to pick apples, but oh how wrong they are! Ira has picked 150-200 bushels of apples in Anchorage alone, with approximately 30 bushels coming off of one tree and Fairbanks has boasted 600-700 bushels sold there. Ira said that he is unable to pick them all. If you are interested in picking, all you have to do is find a tree, go knock on the owner's door, and ask what they do with their apples. You would be amazed at the amount of people that are anxious just to have them gone.

Fruit that grows well in Alaska include apples, pears, and cherries. If you do plant any of these take care to protect them against hungry moose. They love them!!!

The apples that you want to pick should be golf ball size or bigger. Anything smaller doesn't contain much juice. The acid content and tannins contained in crab apples are not good for juice. They are also low in sugar. Due to the cool summer this year, the apples have lower sugar content; still Ira's lowest SG on his ciders has been 1075 in the past 8 years. Long, cool summers are optimum for apples, as this weather will concentrate the sugars and give you 8-10% ABV. Every fruit has some type of yeast naturally in it. All fruits with a core have yeast growing within it.



# EVENTS

*Every First Thursday*

*Moose's Tooth First Tap*

*Every Friday*

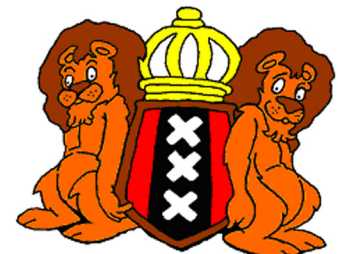
*Midnight Sun Brewery Tours and  
Brew Debut: 6:00 PM 344-1179*

05.....*Humpy's Bigfish Homebrew  
Competition Entries Accepted at  
Arctic Brewing Supply: Noon-6 pm*

06.....*Humpy's Bigfish Homebrew  
Competition Judging at SubZero  
10:00 - ??*

06.....*GNBC Christmas Party at the  
Goose: 6 pm*

## CAFE



## AMSTERDAM

When extracting the juice from the apples, a home juicer like the 'juiceman' isn't going to do the trick as it doesn't have enough pressure. You will wind up with a lot of pulp and debris. Apples need to be pressed to extract the juice. Ira's press delivers 15 tons of pressure and commercial makers use a 50 ton hydraulic jack when pressing their apples.

Cider is fermented juice. Carbonation helps to bring out the aromas, but by no way is it improper as long as it is natural. If you use the ever popular 'Acid Blend' a little goes a long way, as it can be tasted in the finished product. Acid Blend is actually Malic Acid which is found naturally in apples and grapes.

Ciders have been around for ever. The pioneers made beer only to tide them over until the orchards were mature enough to produce fruit for ciders. During prohibition, a lot of cider was made. All of the original orchards were planted for the sole purpose of producing fruit for alcohol. Puts that Johnny Appleseed story to hell! Thank you Ira for a great talk!

This Christmas, get out and support all of the folks that do so much to support us. Arctic Brewing Supply, Café Amsterdam, Glacier Brewhouse, Humpy's, La Bodega, Midnight Sun Brewing, Moose's Tooth, The Snow Goose, and Sub Zero all offer gift cards. Stop in and see Mike Kiker at Celestial Meads for a bottle of your favorite, or pick up a 6 pack or bomber of any of the wonderful brews that Alaskan Brewing Co., Kodiak Brewing Co., or Silver Gulch brewing have to offer. Still at a loss? Go see Natalie Opinski at Natalie's Wellness Center and pamper your loved one with any of her phenomenal spa services or products. Your sweetie will love you for it!

Last but certainly not least, I want to thank all of the members of the GNBC. It has been a pleasure serving as your secretary and keeping you up to date for the past 2 years. I confidently turn over the 'Corner' to Bruce Mills. He is a dedicated and straight forward guy that is going to do a fantastic job for the members of this club. I encourage all of you to get involved in one way or another. Remember IT IS YOUR CLUB! Please not only support your board and officers, but voice your thoughts, concerns, gripes, and ideas. If you don't, they are just that...your thoughts and thoughts that aren't expressed fall on deaf ears! Once again THANK YOU ALL! Until next time, be safe, be gracious, and as always enjoy a homebrew!



## GNBC Election Results

*by Breck Tostevin and Ira Edwards*

**I**n case you have not seen the Club Spam Email that went out the Friday after the November Club Meeting, here is a reprint of the GNBC election results. We counted all the ballots cast at the Monthly meeting, and along with a few absentee ballots that were emailed in came up with the tally.

Congratulations to the new GNBC officers and directors:

Ira Edwards, President

Kerri Canepa, Vice-President

Bruce Mills, Secretary

Breck Tostevin, Treasurer

Tim Bisson, Board Member

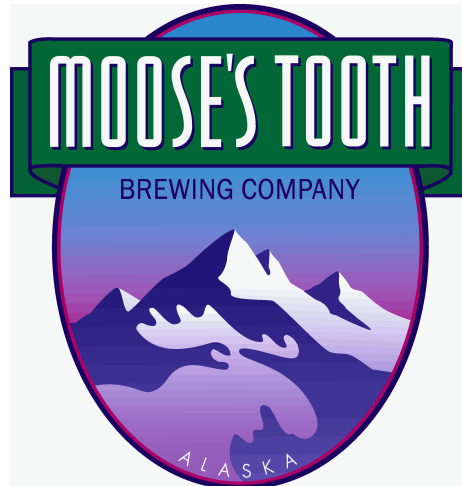
Flash Lubitsh-White, Board Member

The continuing GNBC Board Members are: C. Hall, John Trapp and Don Lewellyn

**Page 4**

A huge round of thanks goes out to the above folks who have volunteered their time to make this club what it is. Remember that you can contribute to the betterment of the Great Northern Brewers without being an officer or director. If you have suggestions on how to improve the club or, better yet, would like to take on a particular project or task, please let one of the officer/directors know.

Thanks to our retiring officers and directors, Dena and Dennis Sessler and Shawn Wendling for their work on behalf of the club.



## **This is Your Last Warning!**

### **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Humpy's Big Fish Homebrew Competition**

**(Entries December 5 and Judging December 6)**

*by Jason Ditsworth*

Calling all brewers and judges...

This is a reminder that the entry day for the Humpy's Big Fish Homebrew Competition is this Friday (December 5) at Arctic Brewing Supply. Entry details are as follows:

Entries will be collected on Friday December 5 from at Arctic Brewing Supply. If you cannot make it to Arctic Brewing Supply on Friday you can still enter the competition, so please give me a call to make other arrangements for entering your beer (you must enter by 6:00 PM on December 5). Bring three bottles (preferably 12 to 14 ounce) and a completed recipe form (available at [www.bjcp.org](http://www.bjcp.org) or I will have forms available at Arctic Brewing Supply on Friday). For non-sparkling mead and cider you may enter one 22-ounce (750 ml) bottle. Entry is FREE.

We also need your help judging on Saturday December 6 from 10:00 AM to about 2:00 or 3:00 PM. The judging is being held at Sub Zero (on F Street, right around the corner from Humpy's). You don't need to have any experience judging to help out with this event. If you are new to judging we will put you on a panel with at least one experienced judge. We need all the help we can get so that we can finish early in the day and still have plenty of time to get home and get ready for the GNBC Christmas party that night.

Hope to see you on Friday for beer entries and Saturday for judging.

Cheers,

Jason Ditsworth  
[jditsworth@gci.net](mailto:jditsworth@gci.net)



## 2008 GNBC Christmas Party

*by Ira Edwards*

Woo Hoo!!! We have SNOW on the ground, and the Holidays are in the air.

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving and I want to remind you that the next big event is right around the corner. That's right; it is time for the Annual Great Northern Brewer's Homebrew Club Christmas Party. The party is this Saturday December 6 at the Snow Goose Restaurant's lower floor, starting at 6 pm.

The theme this year? Homebrew and potluck. Yup, that's pretty basic, but I am always amazed at the creativity of the club membership with their food and beverage choices. As this is a Homebrewing Club, I want to encourage you to bring Homebrew to the event. Commercial beers will not be discouraged, but I am sure many of you have been fermenting a special beverage to bring out for the holidays, and this is the time. Remember, the party starts on the 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

We have a few donations for door prizes of glasses, t-shirts and misc brewery schwag, and we will do a drawing for various items through the night. If you have items you would like to donate as door prizes, we will gladly welcome them. Just bring them along with you to the party and we'll organize the donations at that time. There will be plenty of plates, napkins, silverware, cups, etc. Make sure to label any Utensils or serving dishes you might bring.

Apart from celebrating another year of brewing together and enjoying each other's company and food, there will be some toasts to all the great times we have had in another year together and a remembrance of those no longer with us. If you plan to be there all night, please be responsible and arrange for a safe ride home.

Bring out the holiday cheer and we'll see you all soon!



## Tree Thoughts:

*by Georgy Porgy*

As the Holiday season approaches, there are bright flashy lights and festive music to lighten the holiday season gloom. We remember back to past holidays of our childhood's spent at grandma's house, the tropical vacations, or whatever places you went this time of year. For our family, we spent many Christmas vacations at the grandparents house. Perhaps your memories include going with the church group to the senior care center, providing food and clothing for the needy family, or adopting the puppy or kitten from the animal shelter. I remember one episode of the TV series M.A.S.H. where Charles get's his toboggan cap in the mail and it brings back his memories of his youth. These thoughts trigger his financial generosity to local orphanage. The point so far is that everyone has their memories.

One of my fondest memories of Christmas goes back to the time when my dad brought home a Christmas tree. Although I was only four years old at the time, something like that sticks out in your mind when the tree arrived in a pot and then required a dolly to move it around the house. Ours was short and came in a large pot. We may have needed to remove the door from it's hinges to create the space to haul it inside. Looking back at it, I was likely more unimpressed with that tree because I didn't understand how Santa Claus was going place any large presents under that tree. It was a simply philosophy really, "no big tree" equated to "no big presents". In contrast, this was the Christmas my brother and I got our "big wheels" which were awesome presents for two kids with lots of energy. For us two kids that rode those "Big wheels" down the stairs and everywhere, it was truly a Christmas to remember.

I'm sure you all can understand that many houses just don't have much space to begin with, so after Christmas, that tree just took away some of our play space. Play space is important when you have hot wheels, legos, Lincoln logs, and boundless energy. In the springtime, it was time to plant the tree. A hole was dug and the dolly was employed to maneuver the tree to the yard. And it was finally planted. Over the years, we have had many trees, but that was the last one that was a real live tree. All the rest were the result of going to the woods and harvesting a tree, purchasing a tree from the store, or the boy scout troops. The years have passed and my grandparents have passed away so there is no going to grandma's house anymore. For years, I have set up and lit the ceramic tree that my sister gave me many years ago. But as the years go by, my perspective of a proper Christmas tree has changed. Perhaps it's the result of the "what is better ... real tree or fake tree" environmental movement. The ceramic tree is quite adequate as it is already decorated and doesn't leave a bunch of needles on the carpet. It may not be what others believe to be a real tree but the tradition doesn't stop there. My new tradition includes planting a tree in the spring. I may not go through the same effort as my dad where we dolly the tree to the house in December and feed it till spring. But last year, I bought and planted my apple tree with the original intent of producing some apples for mead making. That may not have been the best choice as the moose have pruned it shorter than when they purchased and it will take some time to harvest it's bounty. In the spring, I will replant the tree (hopefully, in a more moose free environment-aka a coworkers house) and plant this year's tree at a location yet unknown.

# GNBC Blasts from the Past

by *Jason Ditsworth*

A few weeks ago, I was going through some old GNBC newsletters trying to dig up information about a membership survey that the GNBC conducted back in 1997. While searching, I read some classic articles written by some folks that are still members, some that moved out of state or no longer brew beer, and unfortunately a few good friends that have passed on and are now up in beer heaven with an unlimited supply of homebrew.

Reading some of the articles made me realize that some of them have excellent educational content, some provide good club history, and some are just outright hilarious and deserve reprinting. So, each month forward I will try to provide a reprinted article from the old newsletters that will educate you in regards to home brewing or club history, or just give you a good laugh. This month I thought it would be appropriate for a good laugh, brought to us by long time club member John Craig – aka Suds. Enjoy!

P.S. If anyone has newsletter prior to October 1995, please let me know.

## Suds Corner

by *John Craig*

### John Craig Philosophizes on Beer and Retirement From His Cabin Outhouse Near Talkeetna (Reprinted from the October 1995 GNBC Newsletter)

With a heavy burp, I relieve bloated gas from inside my stomach. While enjoying a night out in the Talkeetna outhouse as the kerosene lantern keeps my chin hairs warm, with an "Old 55 Ale" in my hand, I am reading beer graffiti on the walls. These walls are lined with thumb-tacked posters and micro beer stuff to keep me warm from the outside cold. Today we had our first snow fall at the cabin – six inches – I am looking forward to the winter months with lots of new beers to explore.

As the fresh beer nectar touches my lips, it brings back memories from yester-year when I had a lot more hairs. With the harvest season of September-October, we had lots of spicy German style food, music and malt-hoppy beers. I think this is about when my stomach heartburn began.

Or, was it at Humpy's with a Blue Moon Pumpkin Ale, gee, with over 30 micros on tap. I don't know where my taste buds were last night. I would say they have the largest selection on tap for the whole state of Alaska! To celebrate the season, I had a mouth-watering Midnight Sun Maerzen, it hit the spot, with a creamy head and heavy malt, this beer hound was in heaven. Something else on the menu was a local beer from Borealis Brewery as a Nut Brown Ale. It was a wise choice, best Nut Brown I've had in many moons – real fresh; it's half a world closer than England.

Oktoberfest – Oink – Oink – Oink – time to pig out. With a blast, lots of sausages, kraut, spicy foods with hoppy and malty old world brews. Our first start was Glacier Brewhouse at Downtown 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in a brew tent with lots of pork sandwiches including an "apple-in-the-mouth-pig-head" on the serving table. This "oinker" was in pig-out heaven. The in-house beers were Dopperbock and Marezen. They were both outstanding, also a good-tasting IPA. We had a grand old time: Bavarian music with the "Die Anchorage Blaskapelle Band" PROST!! Hold up your glass of beer in mid-air. "CHEERS" – American style. I say Drink Up! Because we are here today and gone tomorrow.

Later, we put our bodies on cruise control and walked over to the Snow Goose Restaurant, as we enter Brewmaster Mike Hartman is behind the glass windows checking out the fermentors. Inside the dining area we see a whole lot of homebrewers from our Great Northern Brewers Club. It was like being home with a whole lot of good friends. Rose and I made the rounds visiting; we will never forget the good times. Lots of German-style sausages and Hartman's autumnfest styled beer was nice and hoppy. This fat and sassy beer hog felt like howling into full moon. With the live music from the "Drunkard Accordion"



musician. I wish I knew his name, he was damned good. A lot of people had a crazy wonderful time – the Chicken Bohemian polka we will never forget. I still see Rose doing the chicken dance to get my attention.

As the north wind blows, I find myself at home in Anchortown at the Jade Street Brewhouse, as I check out the back bedroom under the bed and find a case of smoke brew. With a bag of fat-free pretzels, I once again dream on. This old homestead in Anchorage with homebrew ribbons hanging from the old snow shoes on the all, day old mail and newspapers, running water with hot showers.

I retired from the State of Alaska last February at 55 years old. My sweet girlfriend Rose gave me a share of stock from Bird Creek Brewery as a birthday gift. Best thing that could happen in the mid-life of this beer hound. "Old 55" is me – I am what I am and that's what I am. As a shareholder in Bird, the beer dividends are in kegs and liquid assets. Check it out, it's in your neighborhood; support your local source of fresh brewskies.

Damn, I hate these cold nights in the outhouse, so many things to think about, like warmer places. With the Coleman light burning and no showers in days. Gee, I think I'm weird. Us people with hairy legs and armpits, wood smoke clothes and garlic breath. As we know real Alaskans don't live in Anchorage, I've been told. I have an idea! This one would make someone a million bucks: A wood smoky smelling after-shave for guys. The fellows with the beards, we will have garlic flavor breath mints!

A good friend at Arctic Brewing Supply, Dave Snow, gave me a six-pack of seasonal 1996 Smoked Porter from Alaskan Brewery in Juneau. With a nip to my tongue and a roll in my mouth, I am in smoke heaven, I can't help myself again, smoky fish, cheese, oysters, and yes, yes, yes, Here I Am! O-Oooooo! Forgot the peanut butter and crackers...

Something about being in the outhouse on a full moon night. Too much stink and think, it just doesn't let your brain cells funk-a-late. Damn, I hate these cold nights, blue balls, it's the winter season with us guys, things that some women don't understand. It happens around hollow-o-wee-time.

So many beers, so little time. A lifetime of brews. I think of warmer places like Homer, Alaska. It's always 10 degrees warmer than Talkeetna. We went down that way this October to check out our old 1970's cabin I built in younger days. LOTS of old empty Prinz Brau beer cans under those floorboards, it helped me build a cabin in one summer. While in Homer to the Salty Dawg for a Rainier and a single shot of Duck Fart, I found myself drinking to the low and high tides. Later we head down to Land's End at the Spit. We found one of the best deals in all of Alaska: a half-pound burger with fries plus fresh-on-tap 12 oz. Cook Inlet Ale, brewed at Homer Brewing Company, all for \$5.95! It's not on the menu, gee, we were told that everyone knows about this special; it's not advertised. When traveling, check out for brew deals.

Sometimes I feel like Popeye The Sailor Man, toot toot! I'm the sailor man, even if I'm a real Captain Rat. While in Homer, we went on a tour of Homer Brewery, located just before the Spit. Ask anyone in town where to find it. They were celebrating their one-year anniversary. With a full production of four barrels a day, four days a week, they just can't make enough brew to keep up with demand. They plan on expanding, the personal tour was fun, we brought a couple of half-gallon "growlers" for later around the campfire. The four beers on tap: Old Inlet Pale Ale, a 100 percent organic grain, my favorite was Broken Birch Bitter – a lip smacker brew, a First Anniversary Ale, very light hop, and Odyssey Stout. The favorite with the locals was oatmeal stout from what we were told.

With ice sculptures on my chin, the Coleman gets dimmer. As my knees chatter, I remember good times at the Fairview Inn last night. Lucky Lager in a can; \$1.50 per serving. Damn these beer farts are as good as Mark Ryans'. Keep the seat warm for the next in line - Suds

**T**he Northern Brewer is a monthly newsletter published by the Great Northern Brewers Club for distribution to all club members. Subscriptions are a part of club membership and may be obtained by joining the club. Membership is open to everyone over the age of twenty-one. Please send \$25 to:

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



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**NEXT MEETING: December 6th, 2008  
GNBC Christmas Party at the Goose**