



THE

# Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

JANUARY 2007



## The Prez Sez

by Steve Schmitt

As usual, we have moved our monthly club meeting from Tuesday the 16th to **THURSDAY** night, the 18th to coincide with the Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival. However, this year we're doing things a little differently since we're hosting an AHA Membership Rally rather than holding our 'standard' meeting.

What does this mean? Well, if you're already a member of the AHA you need to show your membership card at the door and you're 'in'. If you're not a member you can join at the door by paying \$33 - with this membership you get Zymurgy magazine, access to AHA Techtalk (on the internet) plus a bunch of other stuff. I've personally been a member of AHA since 1993 and still think its well worth the money.

During the Rally, we will have Special Release Beers available, which will only be served at the Rally. Food will also be served (light snack-appetizer-type food). There will be three presentations given during the Rally also: Carol Smagalski - the Beer Fox (check her out on the following site): [www.bellaonline.com/site/Beer](http://www.bellaonline.com/site/Beer), George Reisch, Senior Brewmaster from Anheuser Busch, and Geoff Larson from Alaskan Brewing. Breweries participating (and bringing the Special Release Beers) include Midnight Sun, Snowgoose, Silver Gulch, and Alaskan Brewing.

The doors will open at 5pm, Thursday, January 18th, at the Snowgoose Brewpub theatre and the first speaker will start at 6pm and continue till 8pm. At 8pm the doors will open to the general beer-drinking public and Tom Dalldorf's Rolling Boil Blues Band will play till we get kicked out of the Goose.

So, if you're a member of AHA or want to join show up around 5pm. There will be a bunch of door prizes, food, special release beers, and three awesome speakers to enjoy. I've heard rumors of a vertical tasting of Alaskan Smoked Porter involved but don't quote me.

If you're **not** interested in joining the AHA but still wanna hang out with the GNBC crowd - show up around 8pm and join the party. The 'regular' GNBC meeting will continue after 8pm with homebrew, trash-talking, and The Band.

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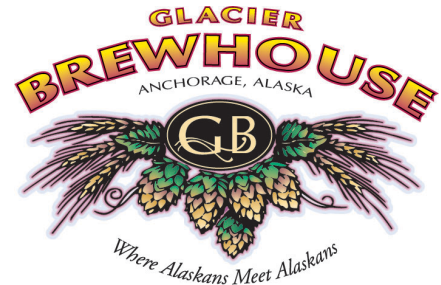
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Continued from the cover...Prez Sez

Also, remember that Aurora Productions and the Festival are always looking for volunteers at the Fest. To pour beer at the Fest you need a TAM Card which certifies that you have had training in alcohol serving. More information regarding TAM is available at: [www.alaskacharr.com](http://www.alaskacharr.com) . Also, remember that the Festival is on Friday and Saturday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.



December DATA

by Steve Schmitt

Lots of stuff happened in December and a bunch of thank-you's must be issued.

First, thanks to everyone who came to the Christmas Party with food and beer and mead and wine. I don't remember a lot about the evening but I know it was fun. Thanks also to Alaska Distributors (Marty Compton), Odom Corporation (John Burkett), Specialty Imports (Rob Weller), The Snowgoose (Gary Klopfer) and Humpy's (Billy O). We had a ton of door prizes and 'cause of these guys – plus a keg of Jubleale... Deb Grecco and Deb and Jim Roberts put together another stellar Pub Trivia Quiz which was killer – thanx.

Another round of thanks to Marty, John and Rob (see above) for donating a bunch of beer to the on-going BJCP classes. As usual, these guys help the club constantly and consistently.

And now for the really big news from December – yeah that's right – the results from the Humpy's Big Fish Side Challenge. The Braggot Challenge. This years winners are: Steve Schmitt – 1<sup>st</sup>, Dena and Dennis Sessler – 2<sup>nd</sup>, Breck Tostevin – 3<sup>rd</sup>, Jason Ditsworth – HM. And now, even more importantly, the announcement of next years Big Fish Side Challenge – THE IMPERIAL CHALLENGE. Yeah that's right – IMPERIAL. But as usual, scoring will be dependent upon two crucial factors: 1) Naming your beverage (innuendo always scores highly) and 2) Technical Complexity (brewing an Imperial Stout or an Imperial IPA is **LAME** . I mean, those are recognized beer styles. Where's the panache in brewing something that has 2 million recipes available on Google. However, brewing an Imperial Mild could be considered technically demanding, an Imperial Gueze could be considered Stallion Style. Let's put it this way: Imperial Stout – 0 style points, no matter how cool the name, Imperial Berliner Weisse – 25 points minimum).

# Secretary's Corner

by *Dena Sessler*

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and safe New Year! I want to thank all of the outgoing Board members and Officers on a job well done! A special thank you to Lisa Urban. She was a great Secretary and will be missed. She has some great ideas for the newsletter, so I am sure we will be hearing from her soon. Thanks for the vote of confidence my friend, I hope I do you proud!

Hats off to our fearless leader and everyone else who had a hand in organizing the annual GNBC Christmas party. It was a blast! There were a lot of great prizes, food, and people. It was the best one I have attended!

A huge round of applause goes out to all of the Big Fish Competition winners. Ira Edwards won Best of Lagers with his Schwarzbier. Ed Kenna swept the Best of Ales, Best of Mixed, and Best of Show Beer categories with his Foreign Extra Stout and Winter Warmer Specialty Beer. Tracey Lewellyn won the Best of Show Mead with an elegant Orange Blossom Sweet Mead. A little known fact about Tracey: she was exposed to home brewing in April, when she and her husband Don took Steve Schmitt's community school course. This was her first EVER batch of Mead and her first GNBC competition. This is an incredible accomplishment for any brewer, much less such a rookie! YOU GO GIRL!

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival held the weekend of the January 19th and the AHA membership rally on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January in the Brewpub Theatre at the Snow Goose, starting at 5pm.

I look forward to serving as your secretary, and am excited about some new ideas to keep all of you informed of upcoming competitions and local beer happenings, if all goes well, so stay tuned!

## Beer in Cans

by *Tim Coahran*

"Not long ago, cans represented all that was wrong with the assembly-line American beer industry." Eric Asimov, New York Times wine critic

I was recently faced with an unexpected and perplexing question: Is it possible to buy good beer in a can? Why would anyone even want to, you might ask! Don't cans taste like Budweiser? It was because we took a three week whitewater rafting trip through Grand Canyon National Park, and all forms of glass are strongly discouraged. As a guy who hardly ever *buys* beer at all (because of preferring my own), I don't know brands well, and felt ill-prepared to face this question. Perhaps I could disregard the recommendation and pack a bunch of homebrew bottles in my checked luggage? Yeah, right.

I love a good stout, but for some reason, Guinness just isn't my brand. The only other can I could think of was Foster's. Happily, in Flagstaff they had a Foster's Bitter! I bought 2 half racks of those big ass cans (plus a 6 of bottles for pre launch) - and merrily headed off for the mighty Colorado River!

Fortunately, we were in very good company of people from several states who cared about quality beer — including one mead brewer! Everybody brought different selections - which is the purpose of this article — in very large quantity — and most of it all went into the same supply boat. From the new depth of her waterline, I'd say we were in for a hellofa trip!

*Continued on page 7*



# EVENTS

*Every First Thursday*

*Moose's Tooth First Tap*

*Every First Friday*

*Firkin Firday at the Goose*

*7:30 PM in the Theater*

*Every Friday*

*Midnight Sun Brewery Tours and*

*Brew Debut: 6:00 PM 344-1179*

*17.....Humpty's Pre-Fest Belgian Dinner*

*17.....Beer Dinner at Marx Brothers*

*Call 278-2133 for more info*

*18.....AHA Rally/GNBC Meeting*

*18.....Beer Dinner at The Whales Tail in*

*the Captain Cook Hotel*

*Call 276-6000 for more info*

*19-20.....Great Alaska Beer and Barleywine Festival*

*26.....La Bodega Grand Opening:*

*10:00 AM - 8:00 PM, then the*

*after-party at Winter Thyme Cafe*

*starting at 8:00 PM*



# The Great American Beer Festival, Denver Colorado 9/28-9/30/06

*by Mr. and Mrs. Foamy*

**M**rs. Foamy: "Now I am not a person given to being speechless, as many of you know. But this event blew me away. I walked in the doors and my jaw dropped, my tongue went dry, and my brain stopped because the input was on overload. Foamy literally had to lead me because I was so overwhelmed I couldn't even think of where to walk. This event is a must. If you haven't been, then make plans to go next year, or the year after, but just go. It will blow you away."

With a befuddled brain and unquenched thirst, Foamy dragged me to the New Glarus table to get a Belgian Red and sort out our plan. We figured that if we tasted 400 beers apiece every day, we could taste all the beers there. It was an impressive but unrealistic goal. Unfortunately we only made it to 77. Better luck next time. The layout is divided by region, so we started in the East Coast and made our way west across a vast expanse of beer.

Our top brewery by far was Port Brewing Company in San Marcos, CA. They had five Abbey beers that were outstanding in every aspect. We spoke with John Burkett, who we shared first class seats with on the flight down. He said he is trying to get some of Port Brewing's beer, but it's a tough sell up here.

The only other brewery that came close was Denver's very own Great Divide. At the brewery we ran headlong into the brewer's party. We had met a few of them on the shuttle from the airport and we were welcomed as old friends. Great Divide's best beer was called Samurai and was only available on tap at the brewery. Their best beer available in bottles is an awesome oak aged Imperial Stout called Yeti. If you can get your hands on it, do it. We made it to several other brewer's parties too, but that's another story.

There were a few surprising gems from some other breweries, and I mention them here so you will buy them if you can: Eel River Brewing Company's Barrel Aged Tripel is one of them. Moon River Brewing from Savannah, GA had an outstanding IPA, and a brewpub from Midvale, UT had a really good 80 Shilling.

Foamy: "Of course, sadly there was the usual schwag from the large breweries. They shall remain nameless but some of them have large horses. Judging by the crowds at these displays they were popular."

Why, I have no idea. It's still a mystery to me why someone would pay good money to drink a crappy beer when they are literally surrounded by very drinkable and (as in the cases mentioned above) outstanding beers. If I were to be kind I would say that they were making a social occasion of it. But as I am not kind, I won't.

Along with the beers, the GABF made for excellent people watching. The varieties of costumes present were entertaining to say the least. There were beer-themed costumes, regional costumes and the costumes worn by those whose wives did not dress them that morning. A good costume is often a conversation starter. Good conversation should go with good beer. Of course, TMI (too much information) rears its ugly head as we were told by one individual participating in a group costume that last year he was so drunk that he crapped himself. In vino veritas (in cervezum veritas?) I suppose. Not really the thing that I'd admit that to a perfect stranger. The Silent Disco was a big hit and luckily, silent.

But no matter your taste in beers, food, snack, people watching or conversation, this is a trip that all serious drinkers or fans of fine beer should take at least once. As a final tip, let me suggest our approach. Get up and have a greasy, professional drinker's breakfast. Walk around and hit all of the available breweries, brew pubs and good bars. Go back to your room to sober up a little. Go to the fest and have a great time.

Editor's Note: Foamy's final paragraph describes the art of preloading. One more classic bit of advice: never forget "3MC", or the "Three Rules of Mass Consumption": 1) Hydrate or die: drink plenty of water because dehydration leads to massive hangovers. 2) Never, and I mean NEVER eat anything bigger than will come out your nose. For example: chick peas = bad; hummus = good. 3) Remember, always drink responsibly...but throw up strategically. Make it count. Extra points are awarded if you throw up on someone, on someone's car or get your ass kicked as a result of throwing up. Sorry Foamys, had to toss it in!



# Alaska's Original Craft Brewery Turns 20

by Jim Roberts

Quietly, and without a lot of pomp and circumstance, Alaskan Brewing Company turned 20 years old in December of 2006. This is quite an achievement anywhere in the craft brewing world, let alone in Alaska, and let alone given the improbable circumstances of brewing in an isolated city like Juneau.

As important as Alaskan's achievements is their steadfast support of homebrewing. My earliest exposure to homebrewing involved Alaskan Brewing Company (then Chinoook Alaskan Brewing) when I was introduced to Geoff Larson, a co-founder of the brewery, at one of the first GNBC meetings I attended. There were only about a dozen of us in attendance and Geoff took time out of his busy schedule to show up and share some of the brewery's flagship Alaskan Amber with the curious and grateful brewers. His passion for his art and for the possibilities for the craft beer industry was boundless and obvious, and he's been a true inspiration for the club ever since.

Alaskan Brewing Company has been particularly supportive of our club over the years. Like a guiding hand on our shoulder, the brewery's influence has been gracious, polite and profound. Juneau's gentle giant has provided innumerable financial, beer and moral support above and beyond what keeps a similar brewing institution at the forefront of our minds not only as brewers but as craft beer lovers. Alaskan just always seems to be there, but unobtrusively and with a warming and caring smile.



much today. Even now I'm honored that I was one of the first to sample something that's become nationally famous within the style.

So, as we move into the big winter beer and barley wine season, let's not forget them. Geoff Larson and some of his crew will be in attendance (as always) at this year's Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival, and it's imperative that we recognize them for their efforts, continued support and for the production of beers that continue to put Alaska on the global beer map. Take my advice and pay a special visit to the Alaskan booth at this year's event and heartily congratulate them for their achievements and thank them for all they continue to do for us.

## 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



## The Significance of TAM

by Jim Roberts

**T**AM stand for Techniques in Alcohol Management and embodies a number of things. Recognizing that the consumption of alcohol is not without significant risk, and recognizing that servers of alcoholic beverages are at increased risk of liability when serving alcoholic beverages to patrons of an establishment or event, the alcoholic beverage industry has banded together to provide training to enhance the safety of both imbibers and servers of our favorite alcoholic beverages. It's required by law. Simply, the law says: "All servers of alcoholic beverages, their supervisors and persons providing security in licensed businesses must receive approved alcohol server training within thirty days of employment. Each server, supervisor or security person must renew their server training certification every three years." If you serve any kind of booze, the "ALL" word applies to you.

Great Northern Brewers is increasingly postured to assist organizations in serving alcoholic beverages to their clientele. This is because as homebrewers, we have enhanced knowledge about the products the organizations are promoting or are using to promote their business. As a club, we're increasingly requested to serve alcoholic beverages and by doing so, we put ourselves at risk.

One way to at least partially indemnify ourselves from some of the risk is to take a TAM class. In fact, it's required by municipal ordinance that anyone serving alcoholic beverages possess a current TAM card which certifies that the server has received the requisite training to do so. The bottom line is that if you want to legally assist in such functions as the golf tournament or the Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival, you must obtain the training and the card. On the up-side of all of this, I can personally testify that taking the TAM class is not boring and is actually enlightening. As a professional beer writer, and having been in the industry for years, I can tell you that I've learned a lot in the two classes I've attended to keep my card current.

The subject matter isn't just a bunch of legal mumbo-jumbo. You'll learn just exactly how alcohol works in the human body. Take a sip of beer. Did you know that five percent of the alcohol in the beer is absorbed in your mouth? Do you know why certain alcoholic beverages, and styles within them have different effects on the body, regardless of their alcohol content? Sacrifice an evening to attend the training and receive certification that's good for three years. Doing so will make you an increasingly important asset to our club and the functions we support.

The last thing in the world you want to do is know that you were responsible for sending someone that's impaired out on to Anchorage's streets to put others at risk. Sure, the risk always remains, but the training better prepares you to make wise and informed decisions about who and how much you serve alcohol to, either in public or even at your own home. In my opinion, as homebrewers who love to share their passion for their favorite drink, having a TAM card is not a luxury, it's a necessity.

The classes are frequent and cost about \$30.00 to attend. Most require cash only for some reason. To obtain a current TAM course schedule, surf out to <http://www.alaskacharr.com> to find the local schedule.



# Get With the “Program” at GABBF

by *Jim Roberts*

**E**ditor’s Note: The following was provided by Dr. Fermento to be used in this year’s event program for the Great Alaskan Beer and Barleywine Festival. This piece not only provides good motivation to attend the event, but provides a glimpse into the Good Doc’s past as well.

Like many of us, I started chasing beer in high school, admittedly a couple of years before it was legal for me to do so. But I took a quick departure from my swill-loving peers. I was fortunate to be exposed to good beer early on because I had a friend who used to swipe us imports and other high end beers from the Euro café he worked at where we grew up in California’s Bay Area. Literally, this quick exposure to the good stuff changed my life in fundamental ways that influence my behavior even today.

Over a quarter of a century later, I look back and realize that part of my love for beer came not from brand loyalty but rather the joy of discovering the seemingly infinite variety of beers that cross my palate on my path to sensory enlightenment. As I learned to appreciate beer and distinguish between all of its subtleties, each new beer I discover is a journey of sorts. Ingredients, climate, process, culture, history and the brewer’s intent in a beer all combine to tell a unique story. Where was the grain grown to make this beer? How does the water of a country’s region influence the mouthfeel in this one? How much sun kissed the hops that spice this beer so sweetly? I wonder if this beer tastes the same as it did when the recipe was formulated over 1,000 years ago?

The Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival is an event, but properly researched, it can be your own journey of discovery when it comes to fascinating beers from all over the world. The event organizers and distributors work hard to bring in the obscure and the unique, and even a well-researched fanatic like me always finds a number of new beers that make my socks go up and down every year.

The centerpiece of the event is the proud showcasing of our local beers and in particular the big, bold and bodacious barley wines that reflect our ruggedness and tenacity as Alaskans. From its humble beginnings in the Lintford Warehouse in the Ship Creek Area, the Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival blossomed into an event that’s attended by beer luminaries and industry giants from all over the world. Each year more and more outside breweries send their barleywines forward to be evaluated against ours. Sometimes they win and sometimes they don’t, but the spoils of the competition make for some mighty tasty treats that we can all enjoy as we wander around the festival with our sampling glasses before us.

The program you are holding is your own treasure map that will guide you on your journey through good beer. The nice thing about it is that there’s no single destination and backtracking can be a blast when the beer you had a couple of booths ago calls your name and you just have to backtrack after another sample. If you have a navigator on board with you, he or she may not agree as to the exact route or stops along the way, but the Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival is a great ride every year, so grab your sampling tokens and glass, look through the program and find something interesting (or just close your eyes, open the book and stab a beer with your finger) and get lost!

Jim Roberts, aka Dr. Fermento, writes a weekly beer column in the Anchorage Press and a bi-monthly Column for the Celebrator Beer News.

## *Continued from page 3...Beer in Cans*

We had Modelo (regular); Heineken; Guinness Stout; Foster’s Bitter; and, of course a couple commercial pilsners. For several of us, 2 IPAs really stood out. Some thought the best was Dale’s Pale Ale, and it was hard to find a brewery name on the can. The label just mentioned a Great American Beer Festival award, and Lyons, Colorado. A quick internet search revealed the Oskar Blues Grill & Brewery. Good job, Oskar! But in my humble opinion, first place by a narrow margin, and truly the treasure that we searched the bottoms of each others’ boats for, was Caldera Pale Ale, brewed in Ashland, Oregon. Their can actually had some benefits of using cans printed right on the side (see link below). I strongly recommend both of these fine beers!

Upon meeting this brew club (GNBC), I was rapidly informed that Dennis’ “Urban Wilderness” (Sleeping Lady Brewery, Anchorage, Alaska) also comes in a can. I will have to try some, ASAP, and tell the river crew about it! There must be others, as well.

With a little chemistry background, I am unable to buy one of Caldera’s many claims, but the rest totally make sense. Particularly the ideas that cans will better protect against the perpetual lighting of the retail fridge, and that they’re easier to backpack out when empty.

Remember that the initial production of Aluminum (from ore) requires a tremendous amount of electrical energy, which makes it a very environmentally un-friendly material — unless you recycle it. Please do!

<http://www.calderabrewing.com/the-aluminum-beer-can.php>  
<http://www.oskarblues.com/brew/>  
<http://joyeur.com/2006/02/16/dales-pale-ale>

The brewery’s name seems easy to find on the can in *this* photo.

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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: Thursday January 18th, 8:00 PM at the Goose**