



THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB
JANUARY 2017

The Prez Sez

by John Trapp

Happy New Year! For current club members that have joined in the last 10 years, you may not know that I was a past president of the club in 2004 and 2005. I had such a good time then that I just couldn't stay in retirement; I had to jump back into the mix. I'm excited to return in this capacity to serve you members and our fine homebrew club.

First things first, I want to thank the outgoing president - Kevin Sobolesky - for a job well done. He's not really going anywhere, just stepped down from President to Vice President. Regardless, I appreciate the hard work and contributions that our officers and board members make for GNBC. Remember, this is a volunteer organization and I encourage everyone to run for a seat; it's a worthwhile position and a great experience.

Here's the 3 month calendar of events.

AK Beer Week! This year, AK Beer Week runs between January 13 and January 22. I can't list everything but many events are happening, so pay attention. Your best source of information is the AK Beer Week website: akbeerweek.com. Events are created throughout the time frame so visit this site often to find out what's going on.

January GNBC Meeting/Beer Industry Reception: Our monthly meeting in January is scheduled for Thursday, January 19th. This is the GNBC sponsored meeting at 49th State Brewing Company in Anchorage starting at 7:00 p.m. Please read the article on this event and plan on helping out wherever you can.

February GNBC Meeting: This meeting is scheduled for Tuesday February 21st. It will take place at 49th State Brewing Company at 7:00 p.m.

Annual Fur Rendezvous Homebrew Competition: I'm not sure on the date, but I'll get that to you when the event is finalized.

March GNBC Meeting: Our monthly meeting in March will be at 49th State Brewing Company starting at 7:00 p.m.

Talkeetna Beer Tripping Weekend: This epic annual event is slated for the March 24 – 26 weekend. You might want to start thinking about accommodations in Talkeetna; lodging goes quick when the event's announced.

The Prez Sez

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Equinox Mead Competition: This annual competition is sponsored by Celestial Meads and will take place in Talkeetna this year and takes place on March 25. It's conveniently scheduled in the middle of the Talkeetna Beer Tripping Weekend.

Let's talk beer - more specifically, about brewing beer. Most of us GNBC'rs are here because we started out as home brewers and found a common love of great quality beer that's hard to find in other places or venues. This club has some of the best home brewers in the country and we prove that in local and national competitions yearly. In the last six or seven years, a fairly high number of great home brewers have stopped brewing beer. Some of this is because it's become so easy to get great beer at our local breweries and liquor stores. I am just as guilty as everyone else in this tragedy; I take my kegs down to King Street, Midnight Sun, 49th State or the Brewhouse and have them fill it up with my choice. Or, I'll walk into La Bodega or Brown Jug and pick up a bottle of something nice. It's just too easy and convenient, and before you know it, a year or two has gone by and you haven't brewed a thing.

So here's my promise. I promise to brew at least two batches of beer a year. That's right; I'll get back to my beer loving roots and brew a minimum of two batches. I'm throwing out a challenge: I want all the brewers of yesteryear to make a similar promise. Promise the club you'll brew at least one batch a year. That's not a lot to ask and I think it will remind you of how much you loved the activity and miss it. I know that we're all busy - I'm quoting Fermento when I write "the most expensive ingredient in beer is time - but three to six hours a year is not a lot to sacrifice, so make it happen.

I'm introducing a new Newsletter piece called "Meet Your Local". It will feature a few paragraphs on someone in the beer industry that has an impact on our beer drinking pleasure. Hopefully it will introduce, or re-introduce you to the people that help make beer so great in this state. This month's article is featuring John Burket of ODOM Corporation.

I look forward to an awesome 2017 that's filled with great beer and fun activities. Remember, be safe and drink responsibly when out and about and keep those carboys filled. Until next month, Cheers.



Secretary's Corner

by *Jim O'Toole*

I truly hope you all had a great Christmas and a safe and sane New Years Eve/Day. As for the new year, we all know that as a nation, we are looking at unprecedented events in the near future and we'll just have to see how the chips fall.

As brewers and drinkers, we all want to see a continuation of legislation on a federal, state, and local level that encourages the production and safe consumption of great beer so that we can continue to enjoy watching craft beer grow as a national movement. Jimmy Carter's signing of legislation that opened the doors to home brewers was just a first step and we must be vigilant in our efforts to ensure that nothing is allowed to happen that would stymie our craft.

I have been told that the growth of home brewing is beginning to slide here in the US, unlike in Switzerland where it is growing, partly thanks to the encouragement of Switzerland's national government. Allowing home brewers to sell their product to bars is as progressive regarding beer as I've heard since the repeal of Prohibition here. I have no hope of anything like that happening here in the US but using Switzerland as an example when confronting people attempting to reduce our ability to brew or consume good beer might help.

The reason for the slowing interest in brewing at home is obvious: there are just so damn many good beers on the market everywhere you go in the US that, to some people, brewing beer at home is on a par with people who would buy a cow to provide milk for their family.

This may be the mentality of people who may have thought about starting home brewing but didn't. The initial expense and dedication of a space for storing equipment and brewing is another factor that's probably a little intimidating to those who have never done it.

Those of us who brew at home know what the attraction is and it's the same as any craft person or artist; producing something that we like that takes a significant amount of skill, and that we can share with others who are equally as appreciative. I consider people who consistently produce good beer in their home as artistic as



EVENTS

Every First Thursday
Moose's Tooth First Tap

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

13-22.....Alaska Beer Week

19.....GABBF Insustry Meeting
Anchorage 49th State Brewing Co.
7:00 PM

20-21 Great Alaska Beer and Barleywine Festival

21.....GNBC Monthly Meeting
7:00 PM 49th State Brewing Co.
Anchorage

24-26.....Talkeetna Beer Tripping Weekend

25.....Mead Equinox Competition



those who slap paint on a canvas and hang it on a wall for people to ooh and aah over.

The fact that we can't sell our home brew to anyone is a bit of a mockery of what we like to brag is our "free enterprise system," but it's not the only hypocrisy in the world and it is something we just live with.

As we move into this new year, let's resolve to continue producing good beers and encourage others to do so. Bringing non-brewing friends to GNBC meetings so they can see that we are not a bunch of raving alcoholics looking for cheap booze but rather a dedicated bunch of people who know how to make something that is as good or better than what can be purchased commercially will help the movement grow.

Growth in home brewing will also help local businesses providing equipment and supplies to grow which will ensure that we always have them close by when we need something for our next brew.

If anyone figures out how to brew a recent La Bodega Beer Club selection, Lagunitas Brewing's "Night Time" please let me know. You won't believe how obnoxious I can be in wangling an invite to your next party.

Happy New Year.

Calendar Of Upcoming Events

GNBC/ABG "Meeting"
49th State Brewing Company Theater
7:00PM
THURSDAY
January 19 2017



Big Fish 2016

by Peter Hall

Big Fish 2016 has wrapped, and in fantastic order. A total of 54 entries of beer, mead, and cider appeared for the Humpy's Big Fish competition. Midnight Sun brewing company was on hand to help judge and to select a brewer's choice/best of show beer. We were also fortunate to host Brian Joas, North representative for the BJCP.

Mike Cragen and Ted Rosenzweig were the two most represented brewers in the competition, and both had entries that made it to the best of show round. Ultimately the Best of Show (BOS) title was claimed by Alec Venechuk of Juneau with a Munich Dunkel. The number of lighter style beers in the BOS round was high and very well represented. Thanks to all the brewers that put in the effort to master the more nuanced flavors of non-imperial or highly hopped beers. Thank you for making such great beer all together.

I feel that this was one of the best staffed Best of Show rounds I have ever seen. I've heard other legendary panels, but haven't experienced one. For a relatively low number of entries for this competition, the general quality was amazing and the judges had their work cut out to pick the BOS. The task was handled deftly and efficiently. I was happy to have 54 well-judged entries done by about 2:30pm.

Thank you very much to Humpy's and Nick Sawatzky, Midnight Sun Brewing and Darcy and Davey, and to all of the eager judges. There was a great balance of new and experienced judges that made for quality judging and an excellent learning experience. Thank you very much, Brian Joas, for using what resources you have available to make it to Alaska for our competition and lending you judging expertise. Thank you Liz Greer for being an amazing steward! I would have totally lost my head when I had to change plans at 10:05 if I had not had yours and Rick Levinson's help.

Home Brewer of the Year (HOBTY) 2016 is now being tabulated and HBOTY 2017 is being planned. The next home brew competition is Fur Rondy. I'm sure judges would be happy to take IPA's, but keep in mind that the Spring Breakup comp is now the IPA masters competition. Make sure you have some fresh IPA's available for that one. Get to brewing and I hope to see you all at the 2017 competitions.

Great Alaska Beer and Barleywine Festival Industry Meeting

by Jason Ditsworth

Each January marks the return of the Great Alaska Beer and Barleywine Festival (GABBF) and Alaska Beer Week. The GNBC has long been a supporter of the GABBF barley wine competition by supplying BJCP certified judges and beer stewards, and has also been the host for the Thursday night meeting for brewers, brewery owners, special guests and other beer industry workers. The industry meeting will happen again this year and it's scheduled for Thursday January 19, 2017, at 7:00 PM, at 49th State Brewing Co. We owe a huge thank you to 49th State for helping us continue this tradition. Get down there and have a pint and some food. Try the pretzel – trust me!

There will be many more details regarding the format of the Industry Meeting in the January newsletter and future emails or Facebook posts. However, you can plan on it being very similar to last year – homebrew will be welcome and food will be catered by 49th State. There will also be commercial beer available. One notable change is that we will not be having a raffle. The raffle takes too long and we lose people's attention. There may be one or two door prizes, but this is yet to be determined. This year's special guest speaker will be John Maier from Rogue, thanks to GABBF promoter Aurora Productions.

This is a private event so only people that RSVP will be allowed to enter. As a GNBC member you will be allowed to enter, but you must present a valid State or military identification card. There will be no exceptions.

To make this event happen we need sponsorship and volunteers to help setup and cleanup. We will also need people to help check people in at the door. We will need about 4 to 6 people to help setup on January 19 between 5:00 and 6:00 PM. We will also need 6 to 8 people to help with cleanup after the event (10:00 PM). If you are interested in helping please contact me at jditsworth@gci.net. If we don't get sufficient volunteers I will be recruiting starting with board members and officers, then club members. Remember, this is your club and our event so please step up and help out. Cheers!

Our Club Newsletter

by *Fermento*

If you're reading this, you obviously have some interest in our homebrew club. We're the Great Northern Brewers (GNBC). Thanks for being a part of our ongoing homebrewing and craft beer community in Alaska.

By way of introduction, I'm your newsletter editor. I'm reaching out to you because I need some help.

A bit of history is in order before I make my request.

There's a long, sordid history surrounding my introduction to homebrewing, but somewhere along the line, I heard about homebrewing classes in town and in 1987 or 1988, and with a friend in tow, I paid a couple of bucks and showed up at Pat and Randy Oldenburg's house in east Anchorage and watched a guy make beer on a stove. I was rapt, sitting on one of many folding chairs, engrossed in the science and alchemy of brewing.

I learned that Randy Oldenburg was president of a homebrewing club in town, the Great Northern Brewers, and meetings were held at his house. I joined, and carted off my first load of homebrew supplies to make beer on my kitchen stove.

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



At the first meeting I attended, I met an exuberant, buoyant guy named Geoff Larson who'd recently opened a brewery in Juneau. Since then, Geoff and Marcy Larson, owners of Alaskan Brewing Company, have become lifelong friends. Alaskan celebrated its 30th birthday last year.

Like most of us, I fell in love with brewing at first batch. I immersed myself in the kettle and the club. I attended every activity and started judging beer, although it would be years before I became BJCP certified.

I took over publishing the club's newsletter. After 27 years, it's almost as big a chore as it was back then. I became club president in 1992 and 1993 and strived to bring some organization and structure to the mix. I can't boast on being successful, but I met some of my best friends in life stirring the brewkettle.

I quickly graduated from extract brewing to all-grain brewing, learning from others in the club who had been at it a lot longer than I had. I moved from five gallon batches to 10 gallon batches on a borrowed homebrew system fashioned out of converted beer kegs. I bottled and kegged beer. In my heyday, I was cranking out two 10-gallon batches a week.

I made good beer and bad beer. I won awards and poured beer down the drain. In all, the experience was one of the richest in my life. Homebrewers came and went. Good friends lived the good beer life and some of my closest have passed on.

Nineteen years ago, I got a call from the Anchorage Press. They'd seen my newsletter work and wanted to know if I wanted to write the weekly beer column for the paper. The experience was life changing. Five years after that, Celebrator Beer News picked me up and I started writing the Aurora Beerialis bi-monthly column for that paper. I started getting picked up as a free lance writer for various beer publications during the cusp of the craft beer revolution.

One day, it occurred to me that the most expensive ingredient in brewing is time, and with a full time job and my beer chasing and writing gigs, I could either make beer and drink it, or drink beer and write about it. I hung up the paddle and put the Xtra-Tuffs under the counter in the garage. I made my last beer 10 years ago.

Once a brewer, always a brewer, as the saying goes. One thing that connects me to the club is the newsletter. It's the one thing I've never given up. Maybe that's the writer in me. I can live the club vicariously through what people contribute that way. I don't get to the meetings and I don't attend all of the events, but I see you and read you through what I assemble for you every month. It keeps me connected. I can smell the malt and hops from here.

After that long tirade about my past with the club, I'm back to asking for your help. If you feel the same excitement I feel when I think about homebrewing, I need your passion.

Your passion can come in many forms with our club. You participate. You contribute. You can also share these experiences with the others that help grow your passion. You can write something.

Are you freaked out?

You don't have to be a writer to contribute to our monthly newsletter. I'm not looking for a term paper or something you might be judged by. I just want your experiences and passion. You just have to jot something down. Send it to me and I'll make sure our readers gain from it. Hell, a crayon on a grain sack works; I'll come and get it.



What I'm after is material. Tell me about your first experience, or your last; it all matters and it's all relevant. You don't want to write at all, but feel the passion? Call me; I'll interview you.

You've got something to share and our club members need it and will gain from it. Email me at james.roberts@gci.net or call me at (907) 441-7006 and let's connect and share!

Meet Your Local: ODOM Corporation Distributor – John Burket

by John Trapp

This article is the first in a series I intend to write that feature local contributors to homebrewing and craft beer in Alaska. As homebrewers, we often take for granted the contributions that people make to our devotion to the beverage we love – whether we brew it at home or drink it in our community.

John Burket has been with ODOM, one of Alaska's beer distributors, for over 25 years. His devotion to craft beer is one of the main reasons you can buy great suds in Alaska. Burket is in the operations/craft beer department at ODOM. Burket decides which beers are brought in from the lower 48 (and around the world) and become available for purchase in liquor stores and restaurants around the state. He drinks beer for a living. Burket's devotion to beer is legendary and enviable, and I'm proud to feature him in this expose of great contributors to beer up here.

I sat down to have lunch with him last week. He looked over the beer menu at Humpy's and said "I've tasted just about everything on this list". That's a pretty impressive achievement for anyone. Few of us can claim the same devotion to a particular venue, and craft beer as a whole.

Burket is one of the biggest supporters of our club. He received the prestigious Great Northern Brewers Club (GNBC) appreciation plaque a few years ago. You've met him. If you're into craft beer or home brewing, you've see him everywhere we hang out. He attends most of the beer festivals throughout the state. He shows up at most of our GNBC events. Burket's support of great beer and homebrewing is legendary, especially when it comes to our club.

The Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival (GABBF), coming up this month, is one of our state's biggest events. Burket's responsible for all of the beer that ODOM brings up in support of the fest. Burket's relationship with breweries near and far have brought outstanding keynote speakers to our home brew club meeting before GABBF (see the related article) and to the festival itself. Burket breathes a huge amount of life into this annual soiree and the fest itself. He deserves praise.

Wherever great beer can be found, Burket's is close by. His travels around the lower 48 and Europe in search of great beer are fascinating. Sharing his experiences with him, I realize I have more traveling to do and more beer to try. I'm inspired by John, and you should be too.

Besides beer (if there such a thing) Burket is also a musician. He plays the drums. He's a feature in the Rolling Boil Brews Band which punctuates the festival most years. Alas, the band won't be up here this year, but look for him on stage during the festivities, either with drum sticks in hand as part of one of the many bands that liven the festivities, or to accept an award for one of the world class breweries that he brings up here that make this event so diverse and rich.

I'm featuring Burket in the first "Meet Your Local" article is because he's retiring from ODOM on January 27th. Burket deserves great praise for what he does for the beer community, and especially GNBC.

Fear not, Burket's not leaving the industry. You'll see him around. I would like to thank John for all his contributions to GNBC and wish him well in his semi-retirement life. If you see him out and about, be sure to say "hi" and thank him for making the beer scene in Alaska so great.



The 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 \$30.99 to:

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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:

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**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, January 19th 2017 7:00 PM
GNBC Insustry Meeting at 49th State Brewery Anchorage**