



# THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB  
OCTOBER 2017

## The Prez Sez

by John Trapp

Put September in the record books. It's not that we set any records, but it's behind us now. I - like many other GNBC members - had a fantastic time at the Talkeetna Beer Festival (probably too good of a time for me according to my wife).



Just a few days later we had a great monthly meeting where we welcomed a couple of new members and listened to what Mike Fisher had to say about Saison beers. This was a very interesting and tasty topic. Thanks Mike, for sharing your knowledge on farm house ales with us. Here's the three-month calendar of events.

End of September through mid October – Oktoberfest season starts!

**October 8<sup>th</sup>** – Anchor Town invitational Home Brew Competition

**October 7<sup>th</sup>** – Valdez Oktoberfest Homebrew Competition

**October 14<sup>th</sup>** - Autumn Pour HBC in Juneau

**October 17<sup>th</sup>** – Monthly meeting at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Company, 7:00p.m.

**November 11<sup>th</sup>** – Bodega Fest, not sure where, but sorry for posting wrong date last month.

**November 21<sup>st</sup>** – Monthly Meeting at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Company, 7:00p.m.

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>** – Humpy's Big Fish Home Brew Competition

**December 9<sup>th</sup>** – GNBC Christmas Party once again at the Alaska Zoo!

I hope everyone is getting out and enjoying the Oktoberfest season. It will be over in a couple of short weeks so jump in and do a chicken dance or two while you can. I'll be taking the family to the event in town square on Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> or maybe the 7<sup>th</sup> for some traditional food and bier.

There are three competitions coming up, but the one that's in town is the Anchor Town Invitational! Mike Fisher is running the show, so please see his article on this and plan on judging on Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup> at King Street Brewery. The Valdez Oktoberfest home brew competition is on the 7<sup>th</sup> (in Valdez), and the following week is the Autumn Pour down in Juneau. Both of these are fantastic events for the traveling beer judge.

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

GNBC WEB SITE:

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

NEWSLETTER EMAIL

[bushy@alaskan.com](mailto:bushy@alaskan.com)

PRESIDENT: JOHN TRAPP

[johnctrapp@hotmail.com](mailto:johnctrapp@hotmail.com)

VICE PRESIDENT: KEVIN SOBOLESKY

[vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

TREASURER: SAM MOORE

[treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

SECRETARY: JIM O'TOOLE

[secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MIKE FISHER

[mikefisher.ak@gmail.com](mailto:mikefisher.ak@gmail.com)

BRIAN SMITH

[brian.smith@ymail.com](mailto:brian.smith@ymail.com)

KAT KARABELNIKOFF

[kkarabelnikoff@gmail.com](mailto:kkarabelnikoff@gmail.com)

BRIAN HALL

[iheart314@gmail.com](mailto:iheart314@gmail.com)

PETER HALL

[alaskabrewer@gmail.com](mailto:alaskabrewer@gmail.com)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Debbie Grecco

[bushy@alaskan.com](mailto:bushy@alaskan.com)

Maybe I should have said four competitions. On December 2<sup>nd</sup> is Humpy's Big Fish home brew competition. Peter Hall is organizing this, and I'm sure he'll have more info as the time draws near. Always a good competition to enter and judge.

The GNBC Christmas Party is all set for December 9<sup>th</sup> at the Alaska Zoo; same place we've had it for the last 4 or 5 years. I think we're still working on a theme, but I'm pretty sure it will be "beer" related if you get my drift.

Nominations for all officer positions as well as three board seats have been opened. Please consider running for a position or seat, we're are looking to fill the President, Vice President and three board seats (one of the board seats is only for one year).

I'm adding another feature to the newsletter. After reading Jim O'Toole's piece on what beer he drank growing up, it jogged my memory of the first beer I drank. So, being the creative person that I am, I've named this new section "My First Beer". What I'd like is for everyone to think back to the first beer they had and write down a little bit about it. You can sum it up in t two or three sentences or five paragraphs.

This months "Meet Your Local" article features Denali Brewing Company's founder and owner –Sassan Mossanen.

Remember, be safe and drink responsibly when out and about and keep those carboys filled. Until next month, Cheers.



## Secretary's Corner

*by Jim OToole*

I'm on the road again. This time to Portland, Oregon for five days with a side trip on Saturday to Corvallis to watch the woeful Oregon State Beavers play a football game against the University of Washington. How woeful are the Beavers? I'm writing this two days before the game and you will be reading it after the game ends so just find a sports scores website and check the score.

Oregon State is not a school that I've followed for a long time and, as far as colleges in Oregon go, I should probably be more of a fan of the Oregon Ducks since I lived not too far from their campus for a while many years ago. In fact, I've always rooted for the Ducks when they weren't playing one of my traditional, long-time favorite teams but I've developed this affair with the Beav's due to a long time relationship with someone who has season tickets and nearly always has an extra ticket to all of their home games. She has offered me a standing invitation to attend any game of the season, any season.

Those who follow college football know that the annual Oregon Ducks/Oregon State Beavers game is called "The Civil War" and all college football fans know the importance of this game, even during seasons when the winner stands to gain little more than bragging rights in the state of Oregon for a year. This is a hot ticket, nearly

impossible for the 99% of us who can't afford the scalper prices asked for the game. And I can get in for free any time the game is played in Corvallis, something I would love to do but the Civil War is played on Thanksgiving weekend every year and - for the last 20 plus years - that has always meant "The Great Alaska Shootout" and I refused to miss that.

The Civil War alternates between U of O's home field in Eugene and and USO's Reiser Stadium in Corvallis from year to year and it recently occurred to me that, this being the last year of the Great Alaska Shootout, I will be able to go to the Civil War in Corvallis next year and cross off one of those bucket list items that is kind of on the second page of the list.

So going to an Oregon State game is the reason for making this trip but I also look forward to visiting with this woman who I met in Ketchikan in 1980 and who has lived through and helped me live through every good, bad, and indifferent thing that has happened to both of us since then.

Our lives were intertwined among relationships with others who were also good friends of each of us. We also had pre-teen sons who are the same age, as well as a mutual appreciation for various consumables, some legal, some not, and a willingness and ability to jump into the middle of a wild and crazy party scene in a town known for hard partying. We managed to get through this and maintain a close friendship, even while we watched several of our other relationships wither and die.

The really good thing about this is how we survived the craziness of those days and the way Jan did it was to stop drinking alcohol. She did, twenty-eight years ago. And you know what that means: a really dedicated and indisputably error proof designated driver.

I got here Wednesday morning, it's Thursday evening, I have about 24 hours to get this article to the publisher of the newsletter, and I only have a couple of beer stories to tell. One is simply to say that Portland is what you would think regarding beer as we went to a local sandwich shop, the Bridge City Taproom, and they had 18 beers on tap from 15 different Oregon brewers. I haven't seen anyone sitting on any sidewalks dispensing beer from a keg but it is close. Every place has good beer here.

On Wednesday night we hit Blackwell's - a blues joint in Northeast Portland - and they had about eight on tap but, as I said, I had a designated driver so the notes I took on what I had there are nowhere to be found. I do remember that they had an outstanding Kolsch and the music was outstanding.

Today we decided to take a run out to the Columbia River Gorge on the recently re-opened Interstate 84 to see what was left of the place after the devastating recent fires that people in Portland - 60 miles west - describe as giving them a sense of what Armageddon might be like when blinding smoke and ash falling like a heavy snow were part of their everyday lives for a while.

I need a cold beer just typing that sentence and I am happy to say that Hood River is still a great place for beer lovers and it is getting better. I have been to Full Sail's joint there before and, knowing I can't say much to anyone reading this that they don't already know about Full Sail's beers, I will say that I also like the food there. We drove and walked past a number of promising looking places to get there and enjoyed another great lunch looking at the white caps stirred up on the Columbia River below. Just in case you care, Full Sail's seasonal Session Fest is on tap and in bottles already so it should be hitting markets any time now.

As for fire damage in the gorge, I can say that not much of it is visible from the interstate but there are places - Multnomah Falls for one - that are still closed to the public so I don't imagine you have to get too far off of the highway to see evidence of the main part of the fire. Anyone who has been to this area can only hope that the next time they see it it will not be any less spectacular as a result of the fires.

So, I'm doing okay beerwise on this trip and, if I don't piss her off between now and then, I think I have my friend (my teetotaling friend) into dropping by a beer festival not far from her house on Friday night. It costs 20 bucks for the sample glass and 8 beer samples so, if I can talk Jan into going in and seeing that beer festivals are not just opportunities for people to get drunk (God, I hope this one is not like that) I might get 16 samples out of it and that safe ride home.

I am traveling with just my cell phone this time so don't have access to the calendar I try to keep for the club but I assume that Prez John has it covered above.

Next month I'll be in Sequim, Washington. I'll give a prize to the first person who can give me the proper pronunciation of the name.

# Meet Your Local

*Denali Brewing Company Founder and Owner – Sassan Mossanen*

*by John Trapp*

When you walk up and down Main street in Beautiful Downtown Talkeetna one of the focal points will inevitably be Twister Creek Restaurant and what use to be the home of Denali Brewing Company (DBC). It's hard to imagine the town without it.

But, if you're like me and you've been hanging out in Talkeetna since the early 90's, well, you remember something else. A gas station and laundromat come to mind. Not that those two thing aren't very important, but I think you'll agree with me that there was a better use for that building, and one man had the vison. We're talking about Sassan Mossanen.

Sassan was (is) an avid home brewer and even teaches a brewing class at the Northern Susitna Institute (NSI) in Talkeetna. He inspires local residents to brew beer or brew better beer.

Realizing that Talkeetna needed a brew pub, Sassan set out to make that happen. Sassan will quickly tell you that he didn't do this alone; his friend and business partner Bo Barnette was there to help create what we see today. The two would hammer out a business plan not just for the start-up, but for expansion and side projects that wouldn't become reality for five or six years down the road. That's pretty rare, and Sassan told me it took them many months to get it squared away.

Twister Creek restaurant opened on May 11, 2009, and the first beer was released July 11, two months later. The original brewery - located right next to the restaurant in the same building - was an 8 ½ barrel system.

Like many successful brew pubs in Alaska, the Denali Brewing crew quickly realized they needed to expand. A new brewery was constructed down the Talkeetna Spur Road at mile two, and all brewing activities would then take place there. This also freed up space at the restaurant which I'm sure is greatly appreciated. If you've eaten there during the height of tourist season you know what I mean.

If you haven't been to the brewery or haven't taken the tour, I highly recommend it. Believe it or not, even though I'd been to the tasting room portion of it many times, I'd never toured the facility or seen what they've done since opening it a number of years ago. So when I met Sassan to interview him for this article, he suggested that we meet at the brewery.

At the brewery, Sassan showed me everything they were "dabbling" with and the new equipment they had installed. Now remember, they started off with an 8 ½ barrel system. But when I walked into the brewing area, the first thing you notice are the four 130 barrel fermenters towering over you. The new brewery is just a little expansion to say the least. When I mentioned that I heard Denali Brewing Company was now the second largest producer in the state (only behind Alaskan), Sassan quickly and humbly said others were close behind, naming Midnight Sun, Broken Tooth, and Glacier Brewhouse.



Still, that's something to be damn proud of – and I know he is. He also mentioned that 99 percent of DBC's beer is consumed in Alaska. That's another proud stat.

DBC has also branched out by acquiring Celestial Meads from Mr. Michael Kiker (who's now enjoying retirement) two years ago, and started a distilling operation producing vodka, gin and whiskey. I enjoyed sampling the distilling products while we walked around, and I highly recommend trying their spirits if you get the chance. Good Stuff.

When I finally left after talking with Sassan for almost two hours, I couldn't help but think about the enthusiasm and passion he has for this business. He spoke very highly of all the employees and investors in the operations, even saying how they are offering stock options to become employee owned. Sassan still homebrews - though not as much as he used to - and is a huge supporter of homebrew clubs like ours. So I say thanks Sassan, for bringing Talkeetna what it desperately needed and for supporting the homebrew community. For that I raise a pint to you my friend.

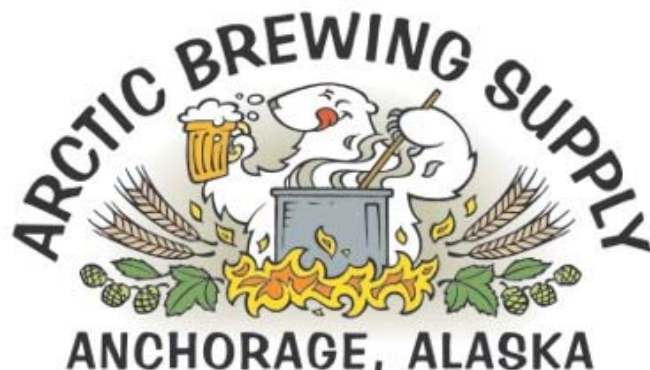


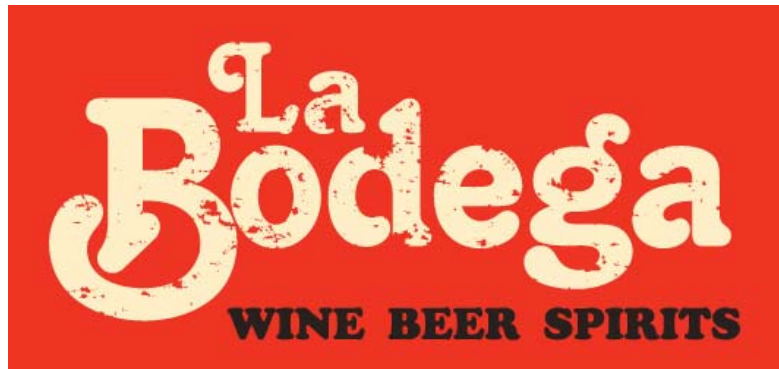
## My First Beer

*by John Trapp*

I've been blessed and cursed to have a really good memory. Let me rephrase that, a phenomenal memory. I can still recall word for word conversations I had with my parents and neighbors when I was 3 years old, as well as describe the house we lived in at the time in great detail. So when I think back on the first beer I drank, it's like it happened yesterday. It was 1976 and I was 6 years old (don't you judge me – it was the 70's after all) and I was with my dad. It was one of those sweltering hot days in the mid-west and my dad had a cooler of beer. I had been running around sweating a lot when he pulled out an ice cold Pabst Blue Ribbon beer for the cooler. He opened and drank some and said "oh is that good". Of course I asked if I can have a sip. The old man said sure and handed me the can. I chugged down 4 or 5 gulps, maybe a ¼ of the can, and thought to myself "this is the best stuff I've ever had"! I've loved beer ever since.

Editor's Note: Here's a writing challenge that will contribute greatly to our monthly newsletter. Why not do what John did in this simple, short piece: Jot down your recollection of your earliest beer drinking experiences. Send them to the newsletter organizer (Peter Hall or John Trapp) and let us all savor in your earliest perceptions of the beverage that defines us.





## Anchor Town is on October 8th, 2017

*by Mike Fisher*

Anchor Town Invitational Homebrew Competition is upon us. Judging will commence at 10am on Sunday, October 8 at King Street Brewing Company located at 7924 King Street. Light foods and pretzels will be provided to cleanse palates and fuel judging.

**WE NEED JUDGES!** A lack of judges is the number one challenge we face in our competitions. More judges means (a) a faster judging day and earlier finishing time, (b) fewer conflicts (you can't judge a flight that includes your entry), (c) less palate fatigue, and (d) less risk of running out of time to judge entries. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE come to help out with judging. Anyone with an interest is welcome to attend, and inexperienced judges will be paired with experienced judges.

**I NEED A STEWARD!** I'll have my hands full tracking beers with our new categories, so I could use help fetching beers and arranging flights during the judging.

If you are around at the end of the judging session, you are encouraged to grab any empty bottles you want to reuse. Any empties I take with me are going straight to recycling. Leftover beers will show up at the October 17 club meeting to be claimed by the entrant, unless otherwise arranged. (After the meeting, it's a free for all unless I hear otherwise.)

Hope to see you on Sunday the 8th!



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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](http://www.greatnorthernbrewers.org)



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

**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday October 17th, 2017  
7:00 PM at 49th State Brewing Company Anchorage**