



The Brewer's League Journal



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2007 GEBL CALENDAR

January: Light Hybrid
February: Wine for Beer Geeks
March: Bocks
April: Guest Speaker ~
Meeting at Lazy Boy Brewery
May: Belgums
June: Guest Speaker
July: IPA
August: Fair & Picnic
September: Wheat & Rye
October:
November: English Pales
December: Winter Warmers
January '08: Porters/Stouts
February '08:
March '08: Open Tasting

2007 AHA STYLE CALENDAR

January: Light Hybrid
February: Scottish
March/April: Extract
May/June: Strong Ales
August/September: Bock
October/November: Pilsners

Editor's Corner

First, the fair, the fair, the fair. Eric is taking entries until Wed the 8th, judging for beer is the 11th, contact Shellie if you want to judge/steward on Sunday the 12th.

The picnic was a great success, thanks to our hosts the Albrights and everyone who brought food and potables to share.

Next meeting is Th., the 9.

Thank you for all the contributors to this month's issue! Seems like I've been stuck the last few months pushing things to the "next level." Whether it's photography or beer, I keep tripping over minutiae. I've written a piece on this.

Jeannie went to Alaska and shares with us. Sounds like a good use for our bloated treasury!

I'm finally getting around to submitting Beth Hall's pictures from the last fair.

And Valerie has a very poignant piece on going home. Christian's 2 years in the works promised article is yet to appear. It should be awesome someday!

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Calendar

By Louise Fulgier

Date	Time	Event	Location
Every Tuesday	7:00 PM	Cask Night	Fred's Rivertown Alehouse / Snohomish
Every Thursday 2nd Thursday	7:00 PM	Cask Night	Diamond Knot / Mukilteo At Superior Distributing (unless otherwise announced)
7/26 - 29/07	7:00 PM Thursday - Sat, 12 to 9pm Sun, 12 to 7pm	GEBL Meeting Oregon Brewer's Festival	Tom McCall Waterfront Park, Portland, Oregon
7/1 - 31/07		Christmas in July	Elysian Brewing Company - Tangletown
7/13 - 27/07		Christmas in July	Brower's Café
8/5/07	12 noon - 6 PM	Evergreen State Fair Beverage Entries	ESF / Monroe
8/6/07	4 PM - 8 PM	Evergreen State Fair Beverage Entries	ESF / Monroe
8/6/07	6:00 PM	Lazy Boy Brewer's Dinner	McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurant, Seattle
8/11/07	2 - 7:30 PM	4th Annual Porterhouse Brewfest	DT Mount Vernon
8/11/07	11 AM - 9 PM	ESF Judging - Beer & Soda	ESF / Monroe
8/12/07	11 AM - 9 PM	ESF Judging - Wine & Cordial	ESF / Monroe
9/7/2007 - the beer is gone		Hoptoberfest	Brower's Café
9/8/07	12 noon - 11 PM	Fiery Food Fest	Pasco, WA
		First Annual Oktoberfest presented by the Washington Beer Commission - Brand New Event!!	
9/14 - 15/07	Friday 3-9 / Saturday 1-9	5th Annual Fresh Hop Ale Festival	St. Edward's State Park, Kenmore
10/6/07	6 - 11 PM	Great American Beer Festival	Millennium Arts Plaza, 7 So. 3rd St, Yakima
10/11 - 13/07	5:30 - 10 PM	Great Canadian Beer Festival	Colorado Convention Center / Denver, CO
9/7 - 8/07	Fri 3-8, Sat 12-7	Festival	Royal Athletic Park, Victoria BC
11/10/07	7-9:30 PM	Winter Beer Taste	Phinney Ridge Neighborhood Association (6532 Phinney Ave. N. / Seattle
December	TBA	Winter Beer Festival	TBA

Going Home

By Valerie Oliver

Remember back to your childhood...do you remember those vacation road trips to visit family and see the country...where all the kids and enough stuff to live on for a month (even though you were only going to be gone for two weeks) were crammed into the family vehicle... you fought with your siblings for a window seat and elbow room...and you stopped to see every place of interest that your parents thought was educational between home and your destination?

Well, we decided Emily was old enough to appreciate this experience. So we loaded up the Prius and headed to Grandpa's house in northern California. Now we have been to Grandpa's numerous times since Emily was born (we even moved near there for a year, but that is another story). These trips were always rocket shots to get there as fast as we can. This time we decided to slow down and see the sights. There are many things to see between here and there, so it was difficult to choose. Finally we settled on Mount St. Helens on the way down and Crater Lake on the way back. Without intention we had created a theme: volcanoes. One currently erupting, though it is difficult to tell, especially if there is cloud cover, and one that has been dormant for thousands of years, but definitely hasn't lost its appeal. From Crater Lake we decided to travel up the eastern side of the Cascades through Bend to see a side of the northwest that she hasn't seen before, then finally driving back to I-5 via another sleeping volcano, Mt. Hood. As all good travelers do we tried to keep our schedule flexible in case we saw points of interest along the way. Improvised stops included a tour of a 150 year-old lighthouse in Crescent City, CA and the High Desert Museum near Bend, OR.

Now you may be asking yourself, "What does this have to do with GEBL?" On your trips of yesteryear your family probably ate at diners or fast food joints. Today any vacationing beer connoisseur chooses a different fair thus all our family trips include brewpubs. Would your parents have chosen a tavern for the family evening meal? Life certainly has changed - no doubt for the better. On the morning of the second full-day of our adventure we determined that we would be in Grants Pass, OR at dinner time, so Scot looked up on the hotel's complimentary internet service what we might find there. Wild River Brewing Co. caught his eye. With a Google map printout in hand we started our day. Again, life has changed.

Wild River, <http://www.wildriverbrewing.com/>, has 5 locations in southern Oregon. Cave Junction, the original site; Brookings-Harbor, on the coast; Medford, the newest; and two in Grants Pass. The one on 'F' street is a Pub and the one on 'E' street has family dining. All locations seem to have wood fire pizza among other tasty offerings. They brew out of the 'E' street and Cave Junction locations. Their beers won several medals at the GABF in the mid-90s.

Being a Saturday night we didn't see the brewer, but we tried several of his wares. The two regular taps we tried were the Kölsch – clean, but the noble hops dominated a little too much; and the Nut Brown – nutty, but very mild all the way around. None of their published seasonals were available (the blackberry porter sounded yummy), but there were two unlisted beers, a Red Ale and Saison. The Red Ale was good. It had nice malt sweetness upfront, subdued hop flavor, and a pleasant hop bitterness that wasn't over the top for an American version. We found that the malt and hop characteristics were disjointed and perhaps the beer could be improved if they melded together better. Now the Saison...the Saison was interesting... and different. The aroma was a bit tricky at first. I found a slight clove note, but there was something else that I just

could not put my finger on - it was a bit Celestial Seasons tea like. It also had the spicy pepper of the yeast phenolics and we detected candi sugar in the flavor. After racking my brain it finally came to me – spearmint! I was curious if this was intentional or some yeast experiment gone awry. Our server could not answer the question, as she was what could be called naïve in the art of brewing (she thought it tasted like mouthwash). It was interesting, but we couldn't have much, the spearmint was not way over the top, but still not something you could drink a whole pint of. It seems as though this brewery is not winning (submitting for?) medals anymore, but they still like to experiment.

The food was very good. We had a hand-tossed pizza that had a very delicate crust and yummy toppings. We added a green salad served family-style that could be a meal in itself. Emily even liked her own cheese pizza and that is quite a stamp of approval.

So, if you find yourself crammed into the family vehicle traveling through southern Oregon we strongly suggest you give one of their locations a try...and just a bit off the main highway in Cave Junction are the Oregon Caves, a fascinating place to take the whole family...



A GEBL's Alaskan Adventures

By Jeannie McWilliams

Over Memorial Day Weekend, a group of friends from the Dog and Pony and I went to the Haines Brewfest in Haines, Alaska. It was a great trip. There were 8 of us from Washington, and we met some friends in Haines, so we had a total of 10 for most of the trip. My friend Cheryl Tyler, who is a project manager, and a native of Juneau, Alaska used her project management skills, and organized a great trip for us.

We left Sea-Tac on Thursday, May 24th. We flew on a MD80-Combi which carries cargo in the front and passengers in the rear. We arrived in Juneau around 10:30 and were met by Cheryl's cousin. We rented a 12 passenger van and all piled in to go to Donna's Restaurant, near the airport and one of Cheryl's family's favorites. The majority of the group opted for the fresh grilled halibut sandwich, which was very good.

After lunch, Cheryl drove us around Juneau to show us the sites, including houses she had lived in growing up. At 1:00 pm, we arrived at the Alaskan Brewery for our VIP tour, which was my contribution to the trip. Wow! What a tour we got. We had two tour guides so were split into two groups. The normal tour of the brewery involves looking through glass at all of the equipment, but ours included the goggles and all the nuts and bolts. What surprised me the most was the size of their brew system. They have a 100 bbl system that they use for their day-to-day brewing. They also have a smaller system (a 1 bbl) that is used by employees to brew recipes of their choice. They have a signup sheet in their break room and with the assistance of a brewer make their beer. This is how some of their new recipes are formulated.





Their packaging and distribution center is amazing as well. After our tour of the brewery, we went up to their lab where they had an incredible array of beers for us to taste. As their stand-by beers are all available for tasting down in the public tasting areas, they served us the special beers they make. One thing we learned is that they are about a lot more than Alaskan Amber. Some of the highlights were a Baltic Porter that had some vanilla characteristics and had been aged in wood, a 10 year old Smoked Porter as well as some other vintages. They currently are making a coffee brown and a raspberry wheat that were also very good and available at pubs around Juneau. Big Nugget barleywine was also one of our taste delights and they told us how they age it in an old abandoned mine in Juneau. We could have stayed there and tasted beers all afternoon (and I think they would have continued to feed them to us) however we had some other things on our agenda so it was with sadness we had to pull ourselves away from the lab and stopped off briefly at the merchandise room to purchase our mementos.

After the brewery, we drove to the Mendenhall glacier which was very spectacular and then on to the Shrine of St Terese. We met for dinner with Cheryl's family for their regular Thursday outing at Bullwinkle's Pizza. We stayed at the historic Alaskan Hotel and what an experience that was. The rooms were quaint and unique, and it is above the Alaskan Bar. The noise was intense for the rooms in the front part of the hotel, because not only is the bar below, but when the bar closes the revelry moves to the street.

Friday morning we boarded the fast ferry to Haines. The Alaskan State ferries are very nice (nicer than the Washington ferries.) It was about a 2 hour crossing and we were met by Cheryl's friend Marilyn and her vintage 1969 International Travel-All. She drove us into town with her cooler of Beck's in the back so we downed one on the way. Our first stop was the Fog Cutter where we enjoyed the Alaskan Raspberry Wheat along with some beers from the Haines Brewery. We got checked into our hotel, The Captain's Choice, and headed out for lunch... We ate at the Pioneer Restaurant and Bar (the only non-smoking bar in town) where most of us had the halibut and chips, which was to die for. They too featured beers from Alaskan and Haines Brewery.

As a part of the beer festival, there is a beer dinner on Friday night. It was a 5 or 6 course meal and we had 12 beers. Luckily it was at the American Legion Hall, right across from our hotel. It

was a great event, enjoyed by all. On Saturday, we got our fishing licenses and salmon stamps so we could go fishing on Sunday. Then in the afternoon, the beer festival was held outside town in Dalton City which is an old western town movie set left behind by the movie White Fang and is also the home of Haines Brewery. There were 4 Alaskan breweries represented and included Alaskan Brewing Company, Haines Brewery, Silver Gulch Brewing Company and Kenai River Brewing Company. They then had 4 or 5 distributors there with a bunch of beers. Live music and food rounded out the event.

A homebrew competition was held in conjunction with this and one guy won almost all the medals. This might be something GEBL's might like to consider next year to provide more competition. They actually award medals (gold, silver and bronze) just like the GABF does. After the festival, we all went back to town and visited the local establishments to end the day. We had a fishing boat excursion planned for Sunday, so bright and early 6 of us boarded the boat with Captain Carl and Captain Jennifer for a few hours of salmon fishing. Our day was less than fruitful as we caught a dolly varden and a white king salmon.

There was a fishing derby underway and our friend Gordy Mjelde who landed the salmon won a prize for first fish of the day. It was cold and rainy, but still a fun experience. After the fishing we had a leisurely afternoon, eating, shopping, drinking beer, and resting. Monday we went separate ways. Some of us left Haines for Juneau on Wings of Alaska Airlines on an 8 passenger Cessna Caravan. What a beautiful trip that was! It only took about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour but we flew over mountains and glaciers and it was amazing! Two of us stayed in Juneau and the other two headed back to Seattle.

We rented a car and continued sight seeing in Juneau. We found a nice restaurant Harbor on the Wharf, which was right on the water and had great food and beer. It was probably one of the best beer lineups in town and had windows that overlooked the harbor and the cruise ships. We also hung out right downtown around our hotel and enjoyed the bar scene a lot. The famous Red Dog Saloon provides great entertainment although the beer list is not too impressive. We discovered the boat people (from cruise ships) aren't very popular with the locals although they add a lot to the local economy so we decided next year we'd make pins with a picture of a cruise ship and a line through it so they no we aren't "boat people." We flew home Wednesday with many stories to tell. All in all it was a great trip and I hope to make it an annual event.

Dust to Dust

A story of hubris, variable efficiency, and redemption through the scientific method.

Jon Tobey

As you may or may not know, I brew beer with all-but-GEBL member Bernard Hymmen. Overall, it's a good combination. We both like the same styles, we both have technical backgrounds, and despite a few decades of experience on him, he has really helped me to make better beers (not the least because he is a prodigy recipe formulator).

After pounding our heads against the wall for a while, and replumbing more often than a wallpaper hanger, we finally started to make, at least for our tastes, pretty decent beer. More importantly, we started making consistent beer. I'll admit, there are still a few tweaks we could make to our understanding/implementation of ProMash – I can't tell you how much water is left in our tubing at the end of a brew, and I still eyeball the reduction through boiling to get the amount I need – but through a combination of our technical skills and a little art we were getting our gravities repeatable to within measurable limits. Since that is three decimal places, that is good enough for government work, as my dad often says.

As we meandered through our brewing adventures, we were ultimately drawn to lagers. Just by luck, neither of us is a hop head (well, I'm thankfully reformed) and we seek that pure malt mouthfeel as our loftiest goal of homebrew achievement. No small goal, since darn few domestic commercial brewers have ever achieved it either. The only hiccup here was that the places that sold the true German grains we liked, also had grain mills that ground fine enough they created flour, consistently creating stuck mashes for our system.

This created situations where we would do things like buy the grains for the lagers at one store, and then grind them at another store where we would buy our ale malts. Hey, these guys sponsor us for the Homebrew Fair, I don't mind spreading the wealth around a bit. But sometimes, this became how do you say, a pain in the tookus. Not as much as a stuck mash, but tookus pain nonetheless.

Perchance, I don't even remember how, I ran across a guy who was getting divorced and his wife told him to sell his homebrew equipment or she was throwing it out so I got a grain mill for \$20 bucks (if only he'd had a 'Vette in that garage). Problem solved! Now we could buy our grain wherever and mill it to our own specifications.

I don't know the brand. It is one of those sliding dovetail deals, like at Mt. Homebrew. It came with a cheesy stand that Bernard replaced with one whose pure function as form rivals the Guggenheim. It even has a little screen to pass any flour so that we only capture the grain itself. Beautiful. Soon, we were milling all of our own grain. And noticing our efficiency had dropped by 30%! That only throws our accuracy off by something like 3000 times what it once was.

Because we had a classic case of changing more than one parameter at a time, and because at first we were only grinding partial batches of grain at home, it took a while to convince ourselves that the mill was the culprit. (After all, the mill was supposed to be our savior, see below.) After scientifically eliminating everything else, including seasonal fluctuations in the Kirkland water supply, phase of the moon, and stepping on sidewalk cracks, though, we finally narrowed it down to the mill and only the mill.

No problem, the obvious solution was to go to the local homebrew store, which coincidentally uses the same mill, and measure the gap. Then, just to be sure, we would grind some grain there and grind some at home and compare the yield in a series of 1lb/1qt stovetop mashes, a technique we've used before to great effect to isolate problems.

I bought a feeler gauge, and although I could not get a direct measurement due to a little ladder like device they have to break up the incoming grain, measured the gap to be .023". This jibed well with an answer I got from Jim Dunlap when I put the question to the group of .025". With these two corroborating data points in hand ,we did the control mash with the store-ground grain, set our mill and did a parallel mash. We were off by 25%. We compared the two grinds and decided that despite the measurements the store's mill was grinding finer. So going with the empirical data, we readjusted and mashed again. 15% off. I don't remember the numbers, but it got too late before we ever matched the store grind and I headed home.

Now Bernard is a smart guy, and if I'm not, I can at least fall back on my education as proof that I *should* be able to solve a little math problem. That's one of the reasons I love brewing: because if you follow the numbers, you will get your answers. I kind of love forensically figuring out what went wrong with a batch of beer. Not necessarily my beer, which is why I like the Homebrew Fair. The better the beers are there, really the less fun it is.

I digress. Back to our story. Like the first day we had the gravity problem, we did three batches, a Trippel, an ale of my design (Orcas Killer Ale), and a decocted Oktoberfest. Every single one of them was off. But here's the rub, in thinking about it, I actually figured out that each batch was off for a different reason. The Trippel was off by 10% because we simply didn't boil it enough. The Orcas was off because we had the store grind the recipe and they shorted us by ten pounds. The Oktoberfest we thought was off because decoction is like bumblebee aerodynamics: it's supposed to work, but we just weren't quite sure how. In retrospect, it was probably off because of the grain grind. But you can see how these things can take a while to sort out. It was like a House episode: just because the symptoms appeared related, didn't mean they were. In every instance we had separate problems. It wasn't until we even considered this that we were able to solve it.

Like most problems, I find that I solve brewing problems away from the brewery, where I can separate out what I wish was happening from what actually *is* happening. I thought about the stovetop mash experiment for a while and came to the only obvious conclusion. We were setting the mill correctly when it was static, but it just wasn't holding the settings under the dynamics of milling. Either the rollers were not parallel, or there was some unaccounted slop in the system. Of course, I was still missing the bathwater for the elephant sitting in it. There is figuring out how to solve a problem, and there is figuring out what is causing the problem. These are not the same thing. Sometimes it's fun to figure out what is causing a problem, and it might even lead you to a solution, but it's not always necessary to getting to a solution. It finally struck me as I was fly fishing: *Now that we had a way of separating out the wheat from the chaff, as it were, we didn't need the grinder at all, we could just take the store-bought grain run it through Bernard's handy-dandy screen to separate out the dust, no more stuck mashes, and no more fussing with the mill.* I mean I was willing to cut my losses, if Bernard was.

You know that didn't work. We had to figure out what was causing the problem. Especially when we sifted our 20 pounds of store-ground grain and found out that we lost two pounds (10%) in dust! That just won't do.

We decided to do two batches of Helles, one with store grind, one home ground. We fiddled and we fussed. We fiddled and we farted, eventually getting our gap to .015" before we got it to grind, but now it was way *finer* than the store grind. Like cooks, it seems that sometimes the more engineers involved in a project, the lower the cumulative IQ, and the worse off the final product. Therefore, I set to brewing the first batch while Bernard started going through the scientific method for the second: Rollers parallel? Check. Reassemble and grind. Grind acceptable? No. Disassemble and check.

To make a painfully long story shorter, the mill is assembled using those embedded T-nut things. You know what I'm talking about if you've ever put together anything from Ikea. You have a hole you drop a nut into, and a bolt runs orthogonally (eventually) through that...any way, those were not seated. Since the mill only adjusts through tension, as soon as you put

grain it, it pushed the nuts back into their seats and threw the whole calibration off. Finally through Bernard's diligence, patience, and problem solving skill, we succeeded in rolling back all of our assumptions to finally figure out what the problem was. Once that was done, it was an easy fix and the mill works as advertised.

However, the second 20 lb. batch of grain was reduced by four pounds of flour through this adventure. Obviously we couldn't put it back in the mash without going retrograde on our stuck mash solution, but also we couldn't leave it out without serious consequences. Instead we mashed it by itself, in a Maypo like solution. Then after we had decocted and poured over the main mash we set it on top for sparging.

This worked fine in the first batch where it was only 10% of the mash. In the second batch however, where it was 20% something went awry and it stuck just as I began to sparge. I don't like stuck mashes. You could say large portions of my brewing career have been devoted to conquering them. Had I just dodged this one last bullet I'm sure it would've been my last ever stuck mash. (Riiiight. Next time let me tell you about the unplugged pump adventure.)

When we made the rye wine, I was very concerned about this, and we used copious amounts of rice hulls to prevent the mash. I even bought a ten pound bag of them to Far West when we did it commercially (a 33 lb stuck mash is one thing, an 1100 lb stuck mash I don't even want to think about). So we had the leftover hulls in the brewery. It dawned on me that A) it would've been really smart to put them in before I did the "powder mash" experiment, and B) what difference did it really make when I put them in? So I grabbed three large handfuls of hulls and stirred them into the stuck mash. Low and behold, I turned on the pump, poured over, and ran it off just like I had planned it.

And our gravities? Our target batch gravity was 1.050. Our first double-decoction batch came in at 1.049, our second at 1.050. Good enough for government work.

I did wake up the next morning thinking about the "save." That grind was so fine when we mashed it we couldn't get any liquid out to take gravity readings. Would this pass through to our final beer and make it cloudy now that I stirred up the mash, even though I reset the bed?

Bernard emailed and said the second batch (powder batch) both took off faster and was lighter in color. Because it was lighter he concluded my thoughts on the particulates were unfounded. I thought about it for a bit and disagree. There is a scenario in which the fast start and the light color both support concerns for particulated beer. Can you figure out what it is? I'd tell you, but I'm off to watch House reruns.

2006 Evergreen Fair Pictures

By Beth Hall



















