

LISTEN

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GOOD NEWS FOR LOVERS OF REAL BEER

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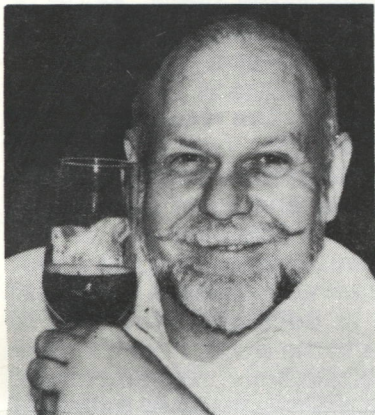


Photo by David Bjorkman

a Fred Eckhardt Publication — dedicated to the improvement of American Beer and the enjoyment of Real Beer from all over the world

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OUR BEER RATINGS

In the first and second issues we listed our beer selections in a box on the front or back of the issue. We listed the beer and the importer (if it was an import beer). Starting with this issue we are also going to rate the beers. Our ratings will be my ratings only. I don't presume to speak for anyone else's taste buds, nor do I submit the results of any particular panel. I can't tell you how the beer will taste. At best I convey impressions. I do not plan to speak badly about any particular beer. If I can't say something nice I will ignore the beer, if possible. Thus it is unlikely that you will hear me bad-mouth *Millers*. If I don't care for *Millers High Life* I will simply ignore that beer. After all, the product should speak for itself. My ratings are based on the University of California-Davis wine rating system, twenty-points possible. Four on appearance, three on aroma (beer/bouquet (hops), and ten in the mouth. After all that, I consider the entire impression the beer has created in me and award a further zero to three-points, for a total of 20-points possible. Incidentally, I usually rate each beer five times over a period of several weeks, sometimes in blind tastings, some not. Then I discard my high and low scores and average the middle three.

The listings will show (or not show) several dots. Other beer critics have used beer mugs, stars, and asterisks, so I can't repeat their style, now can I? When I was young and serving in the U.S. Marines, I and my compatriots had wondrous times with the *Olympia* beer labels, because when you tore the label off the bottle, there was a series of dots on the back (*Oly's* bottle date code). We used those dots as a sort of fortune telling scheme to foretell the future. A one dotter meant that you would not find a lady for your evening, two-dotters meant that you might find her, but she would not be at all cooperative, while three and four-dotters were a pre-cognition of your success possibilities for that evening. And five-dotters, well, you can see the game had endless possibilities. *Oly* labels still do that, incidentally, but the game is not nearly as much fun when their beer must be consumed along with the dots. I offer you a better "dotter" program:

••••• Great-ideal-world champion class in the glass (19-20 points), gold if you will. Five dotters are rare, but they do exist, and you can find them.

- Superior beer, silver medal class to be sure. (17-18)
- Fine beer, bronze medal, a beer of distinction. (15-16)
- Good beer, *Budweiser*, for example, I rate 12% (a borderline case). (13-14)
- Fair, commercial beer. I rate generic *Beer* 11% (11-12)
- no dot: Poor beer, 8-10. *Millers*, for example, *Oly Gold* another. Most *Litas* fit this category.
- NL NL means that I haven't formed an opinion (no listing), usually because I haven't made enough tastings.

If I can't give a beer 8-points, it is fairly bad and, to my way of thinking, should be left off your list. I don't plan to list such beers unless to warn you against them if that seems necessary. ■

THIS MONTH'S BEERS

- Grant's Scottish Ale (USA)
- Grant's Russian Imperial Stout (USA)
- Bay Ale (Canada)
- Belhaven Scottish Ale (Scotland) (Boles & Co., Foster City CA)
- Orval Trappist Ale (Belgium) (Merchant Du Vin, Seattle)
- Red Hook Ale (USA)
- Hellman's Rainier Ale (USA)
- Grant's India Pale Ale (USA)
- Grant's Lite Stout (USA)

A TALE OF TWO ALES

In England Springtime is special Ale time and special ales are brewed for Easter and weddings and childbirths. People always ask me about the difference between Ales and Lager Beers. There are many differences, of course, but the one most frequently cited is the use of different yeasts. Lager beer is cold fermented by yeast that finally settles to the bottom of the fermentor, while Ale beer is cool fermented by yeasts that rise to the top of the fermentor and must be skimmed off

before aging the beer. Lager beer is aged for up to six months under refrigeration. Ale beer is often consumed quickly. The truth, in this day and age, is that taste is the difference. Ales can be fermented by the lager method, and at least one American beer - **Anchor Steam** - is produced by a modified ale style, using bottom fermenting yeast. American and Canadian Lager beers follow a certain taste profile, European beers another. Ale, as we know it, has an even different pattern that these.

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Nevertheless, there are many many beers which do not follow any of the expected taste profiles, and our two ales this month are examples of that difference. These days ales are expected to be a little stronger in alcohol, but one of our beers is not strong at all. Ales are expected to be darker, but not dark, (but remember Stout is a dark ale too) and again we don't follow cue. One is almost dark, and the other almost light in color. Ales as we know them are an English style of beer, but neither of these beers is from England. I first read about one in the **Nippon Times** (Tokyo) in 1973, but I had never even heard of the other until it was introduced in the U.S. a year ago.

Give up? One comes from a brewery in Scotland, while the other is made by monks in the lower corner of Belgium. I am speaking, of course, of **Belhaven Scottish Ale** from Dunbar, near Edinburgh in Scotland, and **Orval Trappist Ale** from Villesdevant-Orval, Belgium.

Belhaven is a fine beer that really grows on you. It has a splendid dry finish giving it a rich, distinctive and memorable flavor reminiscent of fine old Scotch Whiskey. The faintest hint of smoked malt comes from the Scottish grown East Moravian two-rowed barley which is malted on the brewery premises in the traditional manner, something one rarely sees in this age of specialization. (Only a handful of U.S. Breweries do their own malting these days.) As you know, the malting process is essential to producing beer because it is there that the grain starches are converted into fermentable sugars. The dried barley grains are steeped in cold well water until they are ready to germinate. Next, the water is drained and the moist barley is allowed to germinate until roots and shoots almost appear. The germination process activates certain enzymes which, in turn, convert the starches to malt sugars. The process is halted by transferring the barley to a kiln, where direct fired hot air is circulated through grains to stop the process, and yet preserve the enzymes. The finished product is barley malt, and it has that delicious malt milk taste we all remember from our childhood. The malting towers at **Belhaven**



are the brewery's most distinctive landmark, although they are no longer used as kilns. **Belhaven** started brewing in 1719 and is a small brewery by American standards, employing only 60 people.

Belhaven Ale is brewed from 10° fermentables (1041) in 4300-gallon batches, using well water from deep Dunbar wells. Traditional English **East Kent Golding** hops are added in the boil and a batch is boiled in two segments and the brew copper (the English call the brew kettle a "copper") which can only hold 2600-gallons (USgallons) at a time. The beer is fermented initially in 40-hours at 58F, followed by four more days of slow ferment at 52F. The result is a rather mild alcohol content of 3.3% (wt) with no additives or adjuncts. A true Real Beer with only malted barley, hops water and yeast used in the process. In England and Scotland the ale is available as Real Ale in wooden casks at about 170 selected pubs including **Buckstone Lounge** at the **Braid Hills Hotel** in Edinburgh. The beer is called **80-shilling bitter** in the wood, from the days when a whole cask (43-USgallons) cost that much. In Scotland the bottled product is called **Belhaven Export Prize Ale**.

I first heard of **Orval Abbey Trappist Ale** in 1973, from a newspaper clipping in the **Nippon Times** of Tokyo, which called it "...the most delicious (beer) ever to have flattered the human palate." When I read that, I vowed to visit Belgium to partake, but these days I need only travel to the nearest good beer store. **Orval Trappist Ale** is one of only five beers allowed the **Trappist** appellation on the label, and is certified by the Brussels School of Brewing to be a totally natural beer with no artificial ingredients or flavorings. Three separate yeast strains are used in the triple ferment along with Belgian grown and malted barley and hops, and water from the famous Matilda Fountain inside the monastery. The usual original (or primary) ferment is followed by a second ferment during the two-month aging process at 59F and finally a third ferment in the distinctive baroque bottle after the addition of a champagne-style dosage. When bottled, the beer is allowed to age for at least three months. Each label has a Roman numeral indicating the month of bottling. I've tried it both before and after the aging cycle, and the beer definitely does improve in the bottle. That's what yeast does for you, but the beer tends to cloud if not decanted carefully to avoid disturbing the yeast sediment on the bottom of the bottle. As for me, I don't mind if a beer is not perfectly clear, and I know the yeast is good for me. I view cloudy beer as a blessing, a very natural product which has not had all of the good stuff filtered or centrifuged out.

This distinctive beer, when opened does nothing until decanted, then it forms a thick creamy head, which holds up remarkably well. You can lean over and listen for the friendly snap-crackle-pop sound which adds another dimension to your enjoyment. The beer is rich, pleasant and mildly tart with a pleasing and aromatic hop bouquet. It is recommended that you drink the beer at about 54-58F, but I prefer it a bit colder at about 48F. Don't ever put warm beer in the freezer to

chill, but rather chill it in the refrigerator, and then take it out about 30-minutes before opening, to allow it to warm some. **Orval Trappist Ale** has 5.3% alcohol (wt) and is not available in states (such as Washington) that outlaw yeast in the beer. It is not available in Oregon and many states because it has been refused distribution by wholesalers. Nevertheless it is available in most major metropolitan areas and well worth the search. **Orval** is one of the most expensive beers you can buy. ■

Back issues, **Listen**, \$1.50 each.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Is a beer event coming soon near you? Perhaps one sponsored by your organization? Let us know, send all the details in time for us to publish them.

Aug 28-Sept 2, 1983. U. California Davis Annual Intensive Brewing Science for Practical Brewing \$650, Univ. Extension, Univ. Calif., Davis CA 95616 (916) 752-0880.

Sept 7-10, 1983, Great British Beer Festival, Birmingham, England. For information on an American tour, contact: David Orbeton, 86 Morning St., Portland ME 04101.

Oct 23-26, 1983, Master Brewer's Assn. 96th Annual Convention, Town & Country Hotel, San Diego, CA. ■

NORTHWEST MICROBREWS ON DRAUGHT

by Vince Cottone of Seattle Washington © 1983

Fortune has smiled upon beer lovers on the Northwest coast of North America, and particularly those of Seattle and Portland. In the past year an unprecedented choice of excellent draught brews from adventurous microbreweries has become available. Their success may be causing the big brewers to take a look at what's brewing. Here is a rundown on those breweries producing draught beers and their products as are available from the taps of the region's Good Beer pubs. Pacific Northwest drinkers consume more draught beer per capita than any other U.S. region.

Bay Brewery (and Troller Pub)

6422 Bay St Horseshoe Bay, British Columbia
West Vancouver, BC, V7W 2H1 Canada
(604) 921-8310

Owner/Brewmaster: John Mitchell

Brands: Bay Ale, Christmas Ale (season), Black Mountain Porter (projected). Available only at the Troller Pub.

Capacity: 22,000 US gal (833-hl) draught only

The Troller began pouring **Bay Ale** last June, and if interest is any indicator, Canada may never be the same. No less than a dozen (probably more) micros and brewpubs are planned or in the works in BC and Alberta. John Mitchell, creator of **Bay Brewery** and **Bay Ale**, toured brewpubs in Britain and, disgusted with Canadian beer strikes and dishwasher lager, decided to do something. **Bay Ale**, the result, is dry, nutty and tawny, and seems the perfect North American version of English "bitter". With 11° (1044) extract, 4% alcohol/wt. this hoppy beer is made from Canadian Klages two row barley malt from Calgary, and Caramel malt from Winnipeg. Hops are BC fresh *Clusters* and *Golding* fresh hops. The beer most resembles **Fuller's** London Pride but, being fresh and unpasteurized, is light-years ahead of the bottled import. I could happily drown in it. "Bayle", as the regulars call it, is reddish copper in color, and well hopped. Lately, Mitchell has been experimenting with dry-hopping. That should make a good encore. The Troller Pub is the only outlet for **Bay Ale**, and the beer is not available on Monday or Tuesday due to low supplies and high demand. The pub is closed on Sunday (BC law). Definitely worth a trip to Canada.

Independent Ale Brewery, Inc (Redhook Ale Brewery).

4620 Leary Way NW (Ballard)

Seattle WA 98107

(206) 784-0800

President: Paul Shipman, Brewmaster: Charles McElvey

Brand: **Red Hook Ale**

Capacity: 124,000 gallons (4700 hl), draught only.

Red Hook, one of two new Washington State Micros, has been hard at work expanding distribution and refining its only (as yet) product, **Red Hook Ale**. **Red Hook** is different from "Bayle" and its Washington State competitor **Grant Scottish Ale** as **Guinness** is from **Pilsner Urquell**, and no less distinctive than its competitors. **Red Hook** is on the sweetish side with an estery quality that has been variously described as fruity, floral, or even perfumy. Early samples were almost cloying in their sweetness, but the product has continued to improve. The taste now begins with some malty sweetness followed by a dryish and short but hoppy finish. Color is a brilliant coppery gold and the alcohol is about 5%/wt (extract 13°—1053). **Red Hook** has fresh whole Washington *Cluster* and *Cascade* hop cones, rather than the pellets used by many brewers. **Red Hook** is a good example of an ale-style usually found only in strong English pub ales, very distinctive in its class.

YAKIMA BREWING AND MALTING Co, Inc.

25 N Front St

Yakima WA 98901

(509) 575-1900

President/Brewmaster: Herbert L. "Bert" Grant

Brewmaster: Rick Desmarais

Brands: **Grant's Scottish Ale**, **Light American Stout**, **Grant's Christmas Ale** (season), **Russian Imperial Stout**, **Grant's India Pale**, and a host of others as yet unborn, (all draught only).

Capacity: 31,000-gals (1175-hl).

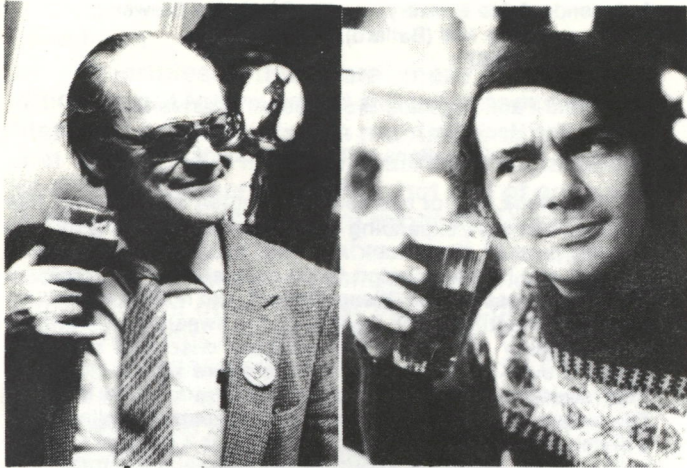
Bert Grant, long in the brewing and hop industries, launched this micro early last summer and now, less than a year later, the brewery can't keep up with the demand for its products. **Grant's Scottish Ale**, the principal brew, is a deep reddish, full bodied ale. It is spicy and aromatic, owing to a high hopping rate of 45 bitterness units with *Cascade* hop pellets (that's more than 6/10-oz per USgallons, which is well over twice that of *Bud*). Hoppy it is, but there is plenty of malt in the middle, and the finish is clean and dryish but not at all bitter on the palate. Alcohol is about 4.5%/wt, extract 13.5° (1055).

The **Scottish Ale** has been my usual quaffing beer since last summer, but **Grant's India Pale Ale**, introduced in April may soon supplant it. The IPA is more golden in color, lower in alcohol (about 4%/w, extract 12°—1048). The addition of Washington *Galena* hop pellets, at 9/10-oz per USgallon, provides a sharp clinging bitterness (55 b.u.) and a long, dry finish that begs for another swallow (and another pint). I find I can drink IPA in substantial quantity without tiring of it, and if you think beer can have too many hops you are wrong. IPA is *living* proof of that.

Grant's Russian Imperial Stout, introduced last winter, is a bulldozer of a brew: black and opaque, rich and roasty, sweetish (from honey) and alcoholic. At 7%/w, this is one of the strongest draught beers in the world (extract 19.5°—1081). The hop rate is typically high (70 b.u. from *Galena* pellets, one full ounce per gallon), but the massive body of the beer obscures this.

The author recalls an evening spent quaffing **Scottish Ale**, **Russian Stout** and, finally, wine with Mr. Grant at a Seattle pub. The resulting hangover (mine) was at least 8.7 on the Richter Scale; no statistics were available on Bert's, but he did suffer the impounding of his car for improper parking, and was forced to taxi to his hotel. Yakima Brewing produces draught beers only. The Stout and IPA are only available in a couple outlets in Seattle and Portland but in Bert's Yakima pub you can buy it to take-out if you bring your own container (9¢ the ounce). There is also a **Light American Stout** (3½%/w, 10.5°—1042) made for Thanksgiving, but held over by popular demand. American's only palatable Lite beer!

Seattle and Yakima are served side by side in some houses and Northwest aleophiles are forever comparing the two brews. Each has its own following, but it makes having a pint around here very interesting. ■



Bert Grant listens to his beer. Vince Cottone listens to his beer.

HEILMAN BLINKS

by Vince Cottone, Seattle, ©1983

Seattle's **Rainier Brewing Co.**, part of the giant **G. Heilman Brewing Co.**, of Lacrosse, WI, may be the first big brewer to respond directly to micro-brewery products. **Rainier Ale**, long known as the "Green Death" due to its alcohol content, (5.8%/w, 15°—1061), green bottle and label, has been quietly introduced on draught in Washington State, having been available only in cans and bottles for many years now. Officially, the brewery says this is a "test marketing" at the "request of our distributors who wanted the draught product." It is certainly interesting, however, that the product comes on the market in the wake of good sales and promotion of Red Hook and Grant's Ales. One wonders if Rainier has targeted the micro market, now that its existence is proven, or if it is just coincidence.

The **Rainier** people say that their ale doesn't compete with the micro brewed products since it is priced much lower (\$34/15½-gallon keg vs \$60 and up for the micros). Sources at the brewery privately allow that Red Hook and Grant's success certainly are a factor. While it is probably true that the microbrews are consumed by more sophisticated drinkers, the Green Death's draught debut may hurt them, particularly if Rainier decides to mass advertise. Certainly the Rainier distributor organization is far superior to that of any micro. **Rainier Ale** has had its share of praise and good reviews over the years since 1934. Some years ago one writer said **Rainier Ale** and **Anchor Steam** were the only two American beers worth drinking. Perhaps he was right at the time, but now all of that has changed and mentioning those two beers in the same breath is a little like saying a Buick and a Maserati are the only two cars worth driving.

Rainier Ale is far more interesting than any of the company's other products. Heilman has long been content to spend almost nothing promoting its ale and now says only point-of-sale (table tents, coasters, etc.) advertising is being planned. Draught **Rainier Ale** will no doubt find a following. Its alcohol content alone will insure that, but the Green Death is not a true ale. Brewed with 70% malt only, half 2-row *Oregon Klages* and *Peroline* barley malt and half midwestern *Larker* and *Beacon* 6-row barley malt, along with 30% corn grits and some caramel malts and Yakima *Cluster* hop pellets, this beer is definitely not an all-malt beer as is brewed in the micros. More than that, the beer is fermented with bottom fermenting lager yeast starting at a warm 70°F ale temperature down to a larger style 32°F aging for 30-days. Such an ale, like most U.S. large brewery ales, is called a "Bastard Ale".

Perhaps the best thing the green death's appearance may do is to raise the public consciousness about ales and induce more people to try them. A large media campaign, if successful, could trigger some dramatic changes in the industry—with ominous implications for small brewers. I would rather see the brewer spend his money on ingredients than on advertising, and produce an all-malt true ale, than to promote the present product at the possible expense of genuine ale products. ■

Vince Cottone is a Seattle homebrewer. He writes occasionally for the **Amateur Brewer**, **Zymurgy** and the **Seattle Weekly**. Although he earns his living as a contractor most of what he constructs these days seems to be for his beermaking and drinking to augment his occasional hangover at 8.4 on the Richter Scale. ■

GOOD BEER PUBS

We are still in dire need of more watering holes for our list, especially if the end result is to be a national guide. I can't believe that with all you drinkers out there that we've got a complete list. There isn't even a complete list of Portland, OR pubs, and I don't need extensions on MY subscription. THIS list, however, is rather short from lack of space. Folks have asked me to put more information about each pub, and I am working on a way to do that. We have accepted two more places with NO tap beers: Shelby Meyer sent us his Tucson *Shanty* and Don Crenshaw sent *Sir Benedict's* of Duluth, and we are also grateful to Jim Shere, Petaluma CA, Robert Bischoff, Milltown NJ, Louis Bernhardt, Staten Is, NY, Rich Lancaster, Portland OR and Matt Clark of Washington DC, even though space doesn't permit the full list of pubs - we'll get to 'em, just hang in there and keep those pubs coming. Remember, we extend your subscription one issue even if we don't print your pub immediately. ■

GOOD BEER PUB GUIDE

ARIZONA

The Shanty, 2 domestic taps, 213 imports named by country & city! 5-litre tappers available for "draught" beer.

401 East 9th St, Tucson AZ 85701

(602) 622-9210, 623-2664

Bill Nugent, owner

CALIFORNIA

The English Rose, 6 imports on tap
2074 Armory Dr, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

(707) 544-7673

no owner listed

MINNESOTA

Sir Benedict's Pub, no taps, 41 bottled imports

805 E Superior St, Duluth MN 55802

(218) 728-1192

Barbara Arnold, owner

NEW JERSEY

Gra-Le Tavern, 9 taps, 8 imports

43 S Main St, Milltown, NJ 08850

(201) 828-0960

Lee Forrest, owner

NEW YORK

Schaffer's Tavern, 5 taps, 4 imports

2003 Victory Bv at Bradley Av

Staten Is, NY 10314

(212) 494-9696

Wink Schaffer, owner

WASHINGTON, DC

Colonel Brooks Tavern, 13 taps, 5 imports (rotated)

901 Monroe St NE, Washington DC 20064

(202) 529-4002

Jim Stiegman, owner

WASHINGTON

Murphy's Harp, 7 taps, 2 imports

209 W McLaughlin Bv, Vancouver, WA 98666

(206) 693-9895

Christine Deans, owner