

## LISTEN

GOOD NEWS FOR LOVERS OF REAL BEER

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## to your BEER

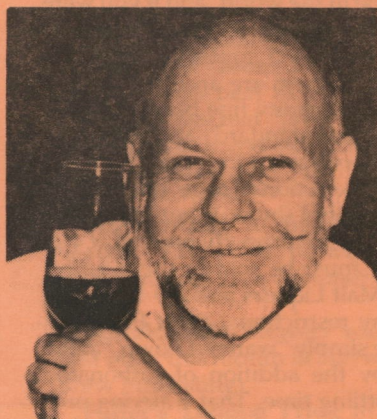


photo by David Bjorkman

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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## I DRINK A LOT OF BAD BEER FOR YOU

In the last issue I explained to you how I go about tasting beer for my ratings. I made a mistake: it's 3 points on visual (color, head, etc.), and 4 points on nose (aroma & bouquet), rather than the reverse as I wrote.

In case you thought being a beer critic is very glamorous, I'm here to tell you that I drink a lot of bad beer to find the few gems I offer you. My ratings may seem to be all 4- & 5- dotters but it's the no-dotters that repel me. I have this thing about beer: when I open a bottle or a can of beer I have to drink it — I rarely ever throw it away (sacreligious!). I even drink *Miller's* and *Oly Gold* on occasion. Put a bottle of beer in my hand and I'll drink it. And when you ration yourself to two beers a day (most days), a bad one makes life rather dismal for that day!

Almost all of the beers I taste are well-made flawless beers, but frequently they are tasteless. Unless a beer has manufacturing, bacterial, or storage defects it will taste OK, but unless it is a beer with *taste* I'm always disappointed. For example, the bock beers I

tasted last spring: one particular sample had absolutely no dark beer flavor whatever. Finally I did a blind-folded tasting between the bock and that company's regular product. Without being able to see the beer I couldn't tell the difference. Now that's depressing! To make matters worse, those two turkeys were my beer ration for that day. Oh, woe!

What is really irritating is when some manufacturer/importer tells me/you how great his "new" product really is, and you rush out to buy a bottle or two (I hope you don't buy 6-packs of such beers), and you open the bottle and you look at the beer in your glass and it's a real beauty. You listen to the head and it sounds great. You drool. Then, you sniff. Nothing. Or maybe standard North American corn-brew aroma. You taste — well — you get the picture. There's a lot of lemons out there, and they don't even have the good grace to taste lemony. Pity the poor beer critic. ■

## THE ORIGINAL

One of the world's oldest breweries is located in Plzen, Czechoslovakia. The brewery is said to have been established in 1280 by the Holy Roman Emperor Wenceslas and, if you believe the importer's press agent, they have made the very same beer since that time! The beer, of course, is **PILSEN URQUEL**. *Urquel* means "original". The *Original Pilsner*. The Pilsen style beer has been copied in all parts of the world, in most countries, and by most breweries. Pilsener-style lager beer is very pale, almost straw colored, medium alcohol (around 4%/wt — 5%/volume), with a dry crisp taste, mellow bitterness, and a highly aromatic hop bouquet. When you crack a bottle of *Pilsen Urquel* the hop bouquet is nearly overwhelming and the delicate flavor very intriguing. The beer has

continued

## TWENTY CLASSIC BOHEMIAN LAGERS

(alphabetically in class)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ●●●●● Pilsner Urquell, (Czechoslovakia)<br>(All Brands, New York)              | ●●●● Kronenbourg, France<br>(D. Baker-Jacobs, N.Y.)                       |
| ●●●● Aass Norwegian Beer, Norway<br>(Merchant Du Vin, Seattle)                 | ●●●● Kulmbacher-Schwiezerhofbrau,, W. Ger.<br>(HDT Imports, Portland, OR) |
| ●●●● Augsburger Light, U.S.A.  | ●●●● Maisel Bayrisch, W. Ger.<br>(Morandel Imports, San Francisco)        |
| ●●●● Bitburger Pils, W. Ger.<br>(Morandel Imports, San Francisco)              | ●●●● Paulaner Pils, W. Ger.<br>(Morandel Imports, San Francisco)          |
| ●●●● Carlsberg Lager Beer, Denmark<br>(All Brands, New York)                   | ●●●● Pinkus Pils,<br>(Merchant Du Vin, Seattle)                           |
| ●●●● D.A.B. German Beer, W. Ger.<br>(Beer Import Co., Union NJ)                | ●●●● Becks, W. Ger.<br>(Dribeck, Greenwich, CT)                           |
| ●●●● Die Kirch Pilsner Beer, Luxemburg<br>(Merchant Du Vin, Seattle)           | ●●●● Grolsch Lager Beer, Netherlands<br>(Grolsch Imports, Atlanta)        |
| ●●●● Fischer La Belle Strasbourgeoise, France<br>(Advanced Brands, Waltham MA) | ●●●● Henninger Bier, W. Ger.<br>(Kern Imports, Elk Grove Village, IL)     |
| ●●●● Freydenlund Pilsner Beer, Norway<br>(Famous Brands, Seattle)              | ●●●● River City Gold, U.S.A.  |
| ●●●● Heinekens Holland Beer, Netherlands<br>(Van Munching, N.Y.)               | ●●●● "33" Extra Dry, France<br>(Neal W. Kay, Harahan, LA)                 |

## The Original Continued from page 1

been brewed in almost identical fashion for well over a hundred years, but only an ad writer would imagine that this is the very same beer that Good King Wenceslas had brewed up in 1280.

In 13th century Bohemia (now part of Czechoslovakia) householders were granted the Royal privilege of brewing beer for their own use. In 1842 a number of such householders united to form a "Citizen's Brewery". They produced 96,000-gallons that year, and the beer, by then, WAS unique. Very much like the present day product, thanks to malting methods developed in the latter part of the eighteenth century, that had made very pale barley malt a possibility. Until then most beers had been relatively dark in color, even when called pale. Most important was a new yeast strain purloined from Munich, in Bavaria (W. Germ.), and brought to Plzen in 1840 by a monk. This special yeast had a unique ability to ferment beer at very low temperatures, down to about 33°F. At that time Munich, or Bavarian, beer was brewed dark and strong. The unique cold ferment was carried on in deep caves, and the sub-40°F (4.5°C) temperatures were made possible by using ice harvested from the lakes in winter. (Winter ice was an important economic asset in those days before the advent of refrigeration.) The beer was made in winter and aged or stored until summer. Such beer was called "lagered" or stored beer, from the German *Lagern*, to store.

The cold temperature allowed an infection-free ferment and low alcohol content with no souring bacterial contamination to ruin the taste. This cold ferment was much slower than was the norm for that era, and the result was a much smoother product. The combination of very pale Bohemian malts, lovely Czech hops and cold ferment brought about a revolution in the brewing industry. With the possible exception of mechanical refrigeration (1880s) this was the most important development in Brewing history.

## INGREDIENTS

In keeping with the ancient purity law there are only three ingredients (yeast not considered an ingredient). The Czechoslovakian Zatec region produces *Saazer* hops which are among the world's finest. (Good King Wennie had set a death penalty on smugglers of cuttings.) The malts are from native barleys grown in the Moravian region. The water of Plzen is softer than most famous brewing waters and this necessitates a three times longer mashing cycle. The ferment of beer must be carried out in a slightly acidic environment. The malt barley mash achieves this naturally in hard water (most brew waters are 500-1500

ppm hardness) but in soft water the mash must be held for a long acidification rest where bacterial acidification can be encouraged. Most modern breweries avoid this by means of chemical additions, but not at Plzen. There are no other ingredients in this beer.

## BREWING METHOD

The beer is brewed with equipment and methods almost identical to those of the mid-nineteenth century, despite the fact that the brewery had to be rebuilt after WW II. Production is now 34,000,000-gallons annually, (half draught, and a third exported in bottles). The new brewery does have some modern space and time saving innovations, but for the most part tradition is everything. When you have the "best" how can you improve on that? The beer is brewed in twenty small copper brew kettles, 47000-gallons each, (in the U.S., beer is often brewed in 25,000-gallon stainless steel kettles) that are direct-fired by gas flame, ("fire-brewed", whereas Beerzak is done in steam jacketed kettles). The Plzen brew has 12% (12° — Br 1048°) fermentable sugars and three times the hops used by your friendly Beerzak brewer. The initial or "primary" ferment is carried out in 775-gallon open wooden fermentors, 1500 of them. (Those at the typical U.S. Brewery are closed stainless steel tanks 10-15 times that size.) The 12- to 14-day ferment is followed by three weeks of "secondary" ferment in 1000- to 1500-gallon wooden tanks in miles of underground storage, no longer cooled with ice from Plzen lakes, but rather by means of modern refrigeration. Finally the casks are bunged (closed) and the beer is aged a further nine weeks for a total of 3-months aging. Production takes about 14 weeks. Beerzak in 20 days or so where filtration take the place of time. Oh yes, at Plzen the ingredients are malted barley, hops, yeast and water only, while Beerzak needs at least one more: corn — 33% of the total, plus a choice selection of Government approved chemical and enzyme additives.



The Plzen brewery produces its five-dotter beer by a unique method of blending four different batches brewed with four different yeast strains. Lager beers are

produced using "pure" yeasts and blending is necessary to match a particular taste profile, whereas ale beer is not fermented by pure yeasts and therefore blending is not so important to that beer.

Bohemian or "Pilsener" beer is the most popular style in the world, and if you were to lay bottles of beer labeled "Pilsener" end on end, they'd probably circle the earth. Most of them are an insult to that great name, yet many fine beers do come up to that great standard, and many are available in your town for your "Summer Lager". My selections (page one) are all under 4% alcohol (by wt), but many fine European Pils' are properly brewed at 4.2-4.5%. They must be sold in this country labeled as Malt Liquors and are thus subject to many restrictions. Most European Imports are simply "watered down" to the 4% level by the addition of carbonated water at bottling time. That watering process is not as destructive as it sounds, but the end product just naturally has lower hop aroma and less bitterness and is therefore more appealing to Americans because we are used to that style of beer. The beers I've rated are ALL under 4% alcohol and some of them have obviously been watered because their malt liquor alter-egos are so much more delightful to drink. I will review Pilsener ML's at another time. For now these — they are *not* all made in the Rheinheitsgebot purity law tradition as is **Pilsener Urquell** and I've limited my selection to 20 beers only, leaving out a number of other good beers (Chinese *Tsing Tao* for example). Twenty Classic Bohemian style lager beers alphabetically in class. ■

## ABOUT THIS MONTH'S BEER LIST

You'll find a lot of familiar names missing from this list, and only one 5-dotted. Some other 5-dotters weren't included because they are over 4% alcohol — we'll review these ML Bohemians at another date.

There are some real gems here. **Augsburger** for example. This is the finest American example of this beer type and, along with **River City Gold**, the ONLY two such beers made in the U.S. What about **Michelob**, **Lowenbrau**, **San Miguel** or **Moosehead**, you ask? I classify those as North American lagers. Well then, how about **Kirin** and **Steinlager**? What can I say — there's only room for 20!

**Beck's**, **Grolsch**, & **Henninger** are included for name familiarity, but **Henninger's** has always been three dot with me, while **Beck's** and **Grolsch** have gone down from my 4-dot list of five years ago. Either my preference has changed or these beers have gotten blander. Incidentally, five years ago I listed **Augsburger** as a one-dotted! That beer has very definitely improved!

As mentioned earlier these are not all REAL beers, because the French, Danish  
(continued)

& Dutch beers and **Augsburger** all use grain adjuncts, and it is possible the W. German beers exported to the U.S. use them as well, but Norway and Luxembourg follow the Rheinheitsgebot. ■

### NEW BEERS

**Adelscott** Smoked Malt Liquor, a French all-malt beer brewed with barley malt smoked with peat as in Scotch Whisky. The beer has that flavor with a slightly sweet finish. If you like scotch you should give this beer a try. Global Trading, Butler WI.

**Black Hook**, a draught Porter from Seattle's Red Hook Brewery (L1:3). The beer promises to be a winner. We'll review it in #6.

**Buffalo Bill's** Brewery will produce its first brew this month in Hayward, CA (see Brew Pub listing).

**Fuller's London Pride** in 75-oz cans. Fresher and cheaper than a six-pack of that beer which we'll list in our next issue. Thames America Trading Co., San Francisco.

**Kronenbourg** Lager, a 4-dotter selection, will soon be available fresh on draught at your local pub. D. Baker-Jacobs, N.Y., N.Y.

The fabled **River City** (micro-brewed) **Bock** beer will finally become a reality this month as River City (Sacramento) brewmaster Jim Schleuter announced belatedly on my telephone answering device this week. RC Bock will be available on the west coast. ■

### THE GREAT AMERICAN BEER FESTIVAL '83

When the doors of Boulder's **Hilton Harvest House Hotel** opened at 2 pm, June 4th, a mob of 3000 young people swarmed into the Hotel's large courtyard. Despite rain, thunder and lightning and tornado warnings and only 22 "sani-kans" they went about the business of sampling 44 of America's finest beers, serenaded by the *Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra* & the strains of the *1812 Overture*.

The really remarkable part of the whole affair was that (as near as I could tell — amidst blurred vision in later stages), no one passed out, there were no fights and few if any of the "scenes" which one might have expected from a gathering of 3000 young people, mostly college age, who continued drinking from 2 pm until 11:30 closing. What is even more remarkable was that the voting of "best beer" awarded that honor to one of America's smallest breweries. In fact the five top beers were all ales or ale variations, amber or dark, and two were bottled conditioned. This from the heartland of **COORS** (which wasn't invited along with **Budweiser**, **Miller's**, **Pabst** and **Heilman** to name a few of the non-invitees). (**Coors** WAS represented by **George Killians Irish** and Heilman by

**Henry's**, **Rainier Ale**, and **Special Export**.) More important, none of the Big Five's look/taste alike such as Schells, Black Horse Ale, (Champale's AND Koch's), McSorley's, Yuenglings, Matt's, Genesee, Rrankenmuth, Hudepohl, Leinenkugel, Rolling Rock, Point or Straub's were able to get into the top selection. More than that, the American look/taste alike were left to be consumed at the end when the "good" beer had long gone.

What were those good beers selected by this predominantly collegiate electorate? Classic beers with TASTE: 1), **Sierra Nevada Pale Ale** (Chico, CA), 2), **S-N Porter**, 3) **Anchor Porter** (San Francisco), 4), **New Amsterdam Amber** (New York), and 5) **Red Hook** (Seattle, Draught only — see L1:3). All of Budweiser's Horses and all of Miller's Men couldn't have dented that crowd! ■

### KQED INTERNATIONAL BEER FESTIVAL

Meanwhile in San Francisco, July 9, Public TV Station **KQED** held an **International Beer Festival** as a fund raiser. There were 130 beers from 25 countries around the world, and including the products of three U.S. Micros. Over 4000 sampled the beers, with beers in the German section being most popular. We were unable to attend but we won't miss next year's bash. July 7, 1984, mark your calendar now. ■

Back issues Listen \$1.50 each.

### THE STRANGE TALE OF THE BEER KING AND THREE DOLLAR DEWEY'S

In the town of Portland and the state of Maine there's an interesting pub called *Three Dollar Dewey's* (L1:2 listing). When I sent a copy of #2 issue to the address I had, I received a quick and enthusiastic reply with information and a package with two small bottles of *Traquair House Ale*, and a small beer mug bearing the likeness of the Lairds Castle Traquair. The accompanying literature proclaimed the beer (a barleywine ale) to be one of the strongest (8.8%/wt), and the most expensive in the U.S. It was indeed expensive at \$125 the case/24 x 9.3-oz. bottles. Since I plan to discuss barleywine ales in a future issue, I will defer that 'til then. The gift prompted me to call the man long distance Portland to Portland, as it were.

Alan Eames, proprietor and Beer King, told me he had been selling beer for twelve years since becoming disenchanted with the sad state of American brewing. He told me how he bootlegged beer into Massachusetts for his store where he had 600 brands of beer when only 100 were legal in that state.

"How did you go about marketing that many beers?" I asked. No self service, he told me, we simply set a bottle of each on

display, and were knowledgeable about them so that the customer could be educated to try some of the more exotic styles and beers. The system was very successful, featuring innovative marketing and a high level of customer service. Don't you wish YOUR beer merchant could tell you which beers were worth trying instead of parroting the distributor's nonsense about Meese (Meese — plural of Moose). As Eames became more and more interested in beer he developed an extensive beer library (over 600 volumes), and this knowledge earned him the title "Beer King" in the media. When he had decided to cast his fortunes in Maine, he found a reference to the tokens used in Houses of Prostitution from that bygone era when every town had such an establishment of its very own. The tokens were in three denominations:

*One Dollar Lookee.*

*Two Dollar Feelee.*

*Three Dollar Dooee.*

He changed the name of the last to reflect a "fabulous character" — who never existed — to differentiate his establishment from such pedestrian bars as "Fred's Place."

No mundane establishment is Three Dollar Dewey's Ale House. Well lit and bright, with large windows, rather than the dingy interiors presented in most such establishments, TDD features no entertainment of any kind, and European Cafe-style long tables made of 3" thick 20-ft. mahogany planks and seating up to 45 people. Parlor games and daily newspapers from around the world abound, but no electronic games or TV, and no live music whatsoever. "I've never seen a bar quite like it," he told me. He went on to tell me that the main bar is made of brick featuring enormous gothic brick arches. Draft beers (no beerzak) include the horse dark: **Pickwick Dark Ale** from Narragansett, plus **Guinness**, **Harp Lager** and **Bass Ale**. **Watney's** and **Whitbread** are being added. The draft beers are geared to move people toward the better bottled beers. Of Domestic beers only **Ballantine's Ale** and **IPA** plus Minnesota's **Cold Spring** beer and 90 imports are available. "We have people from all walks of life here, a totally eclectic group with families, older people, children, dogs, lawyers, doctors and fishermen." A place for conversation, reading, or eating and drinking. "We have popcorn and serious, carefully made chile and we sell tons and tons of that." He went on to tell me that the chile recipe has been carefully researched to reflect the seriousness of high quality pub fare. The menu also features a simple but delicious stew. Let's hear it for Portland Maine. **Three Dollar Dewey's**, 446 Fore St., Portland, ME 04101, (207) 772-3310. ■

### THIS MONTH'S PUB LISTING

The San Andreas Malts told us about **Buffalo Bill's** opening this month (August), Pat Baker, who writes a nice column in *All About Beer* sent us **Graves End**,



Photo Paul Luise

### Alan Eames Listens to His Beer

continued

Rich Lancaster sent us **Rubin's Gulch** and Joe Korteum sent us the information on the two Wisconsin pubs. **Gasthaus Zur Krone** has a drinking club, with membership cards, mugs and a ranking system: 1 beer — *Stift* (Apprentice), 51 beers — *Geselle* (Journeyman), and 101 beers rates a 1-liter *Meister's Stein*, and his name engraved on the Meister Bier Schmecker's wall plaque. Club meets every afternoon plus T-W-Th nights. Club name is *Meister Bier Schmecker's Verein*. They're the ones sponsoring the Tour of all the breweries in Bavaria (Calendar) next April. ■

### GOOD BEER PUB GUIDE

#### CALIFORNIA

**Buffalo Bill's Brewery**, 6 taps  
1082 B St., Hayward, CA 94541  
(415) 886-9823  
Bill Owens, Brewmaster-owner  
(Brew-Pub)

#### CONNECTICUT

**Graves End Restaurant**, 3 taps (no imports, but 40 bottled imports)  
137 Selleck St., Stamford, CT 06902  
(203) 325-0561  
Bill Graves, owner

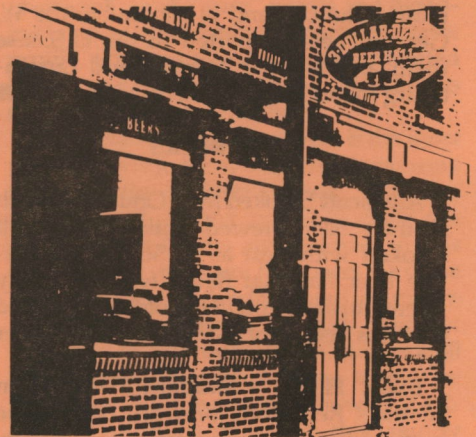
#### OREGON

**Rubin's Gulch Cafe & Bottle Shop**, 12 taps including 8 imports & Micros  
4495 SW Scholls Ferry Rd., Portland, OR 97225  
(503) 292-1723  
Alan Karpinski, John DeWitt, owners

#### WASHINGTON

**The Mark Tobey**, 5 taps, 4 imports & micros  
90 Madison St., Seattle, WA 98104  
(206) 682-1333  
Paul Bulson, Manager

#### WISCONSIN



### 3-Dollar Dewey's Ale House

**Gasthaus Zur Krone**, 2 taps, 159 import bottles  
839 N 2nd, Milwaukee, WI 53204  
(414) 647-1910  
W.F. Neumann, Innkeeper

**Port of Europe**, 17 taps, 15 imports, 95 bottles  
1338 W Scott St., Milwaukee, WI 53204  
(414) 383-0480  
Matju Matev, owner. ■

#### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Is there 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.

Sept. 6-10, 1983, Great British Beer Festival, Birmingham, England. For information on an American tour, contact David Orbeton, 86 Morning St., Portland, ME 04101.

April 1, 1984 through Sept. 1984, First Annual Tour of All the Existing Breweries in Bavaria, limit 18, \$29,500. Gasthaus Zur Krone, 839 N 2nd St., Milwaukee, WI 53204, (414) 647-1910. ■

#### CLASSIFIEDS

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