



Continuing the seemingly endless and endlessly seamy saga of beer in the wild west.

And So...



.....and there was a bijillion people, 18 beers, lots of food, and live music.

‘Thanks to Tom & Cindy for doing, er, putting on the dog again!

Coming Up!

.....at a new location this year, due to a mid-summer move for the Morandi’s..... the **BYO BBQ Event** will be held at the Reno Homebrewer, OK? If not, then tell Tom.

In any Case, the meeting will begin at 6:00 P.M., requiring that you bring beer if you like, and barbeque-style food. Barbeque space will be provided.

Those of you who can’t bring beer will be allowed to purchase your beverages at the beer cooler, or drink whatever Rob offers on tap (!!!!!???)



The Calendar:

July 17th
the **BYO BBQ Event.....!**
At the Reno Homebrewer
Note New Meeting Place!

August 14th
Tull-a-Roo, with You Know Who!
At the Tull’s

September 11th
Dave Dudley’s Agri-Meeting
At his Homestead....



*7th Annual
Northern California Homebrewers
Festival: October 1-2, 2004*

Oktober 9th
the Annual Washoe Pines
Oktoberfest

November 13th
Doug & Mary’s (?)

WZZ'rs Trek to AHA National Competition

John C. Tull

The day began with our dogs barking and a startled Marlene and myself struggling out of bed to quiet the beasts. Tom was ten minutes early. I had already packed, setting the alarm to give myself about 7 minutes to crawl out of bed, put on some clothes, and meet Tom at the door at 4:00 A.M., but Tom was excited to get to Vegas for the mead judging at noon.

Tom and I piled my stuff into the back of his truck and headed over to Dan's house. Dan was ready for us, but looked no more alive than I felt. We loaded his kegs and clothes and headed for the highway. Our official Reno departure time was 4:30 A.M. We were on time for once! Good thing Tom came by early after all.

Breakfast in Fallon was like all breakfasts in central Nevada: greasy, bland, but filling in a somewhat painful and lasting manner. The "salsa" for my omelet was ketchup with some diced peppers from a can stirred in to liven things up a bit. As usual, Tom was waiting for Dan and I to finish our meals.

The rest of the drive was pretty uneventful. We laughed at our sometimes crude jokes about the usual Nevada oddities: depressed (and depressing) desert towns, mining, whore houses, the people that were visiting the whore houses, bad drivers, military omnipresence, dying lakes...

We made it into Las Vegas and our hotel just around noon. Jamil Zainasheff, a friend of the club that many of you know and the head judge for the NHC, was in phone contact with me. I let him know that we would be checking in and meeting them for lunch prior to the actual 1:00 P.M. mead judging. Food is always a good idea when you have eight meads to work through.

Okay, first off, the Riviera is pretty much a dump for a Vegas casino on the strip. Their service is not any better than the facilities. The check-in was at least an hour away from the end of the line. Also, there were no carts for moving large amounts of luggage (or vast amounts of beer!) from vehicle to room, like every other hotel in the world has available. Tom, Dan and I were forced to park the loaded truck and hope that no one in the parking garage would have an interest in the 16 Corny kegs and four bottles of CO₂ and nitrogen. (Frankly, Dan and I were a little concerned that someone would report us to the Homeland Security Agency as some kind of terrorist threat. But we remembered that Tom was pretty tight with those guys, so we figured we would be alright.)

Now it is 12:30 and I had Jamil on the phone. "Come on up to the buffet," he said. "I'll have the AHA pick up the tab on your lunches." Works for us.

We headed upstairs to the buffet. Each of us scattered to find the delectable items that suited our culinary demands. We quickly found out that this was not possible. Desires and options were not well matched. Simply said, the food was at par with the rest of our experience with the hotel thus far.

Gary Glass works for the American Association of Brewers as Project Coordinator. He is responsible for organizing the NHC every year. The mead judging was in his suite at the Riviera, a much better room than the one the Tom, Dan and I would end up using during our stay. The WZZ'rs were one panel of judges covering the fruit meads that afternoon. Other judges on the panels included Phil Sides, Jr. from Maryland, Gordon Strong from Ohio, Michael Hall from New Mexico, and Susan Ruud from Minnesota. After filtering the great from the good, Dan and I left Tom to represent our panel on the mini-best-of-show while we tried to get ourselves into a room. Luckily the line of early check-in folks had disappeared. Nobody greeted me as I checked myself in at a computer kiosk. I shuffled over to a real person to get a third plastic key for the room. The attendant had the same cold personality that the computer had, but at least we finally had our room.

Great! Tom is upstairs swilling mead, and Dan and I are stuck schlepping 16 kegs and all our bags into the room by ourselves. Well, that settles it. Dan and I get the beds, Tom gets the floor!

We went downstairs to pick up our name tags and registration packets (read that as bag full of junk advertisements) for the conference. We tracked down the SNAFU member from Las Vegas in charge of the hospitality suite to let them know that all of the WZZ members were to be judging when our hosting slot was set to begin on Thursday. It turned out to be no problem; this guy would be getting all the beers out of the cooler for each club anyway. It would be only a matter of half an hour or so that

our beers would be unrepresented on Thursday. Now we just had to get all the beers from the truck and into the cooler, which saved us trying to run them all to the elevator and then the room. A cart was located and Dan and I went to work. Thirty minutes later and a few fancy moves with the cart in the cramped elevator at the parking garage and we were done! Tom still gets the floor!

By now it was 4:30 or more and Jamil was downstairs with us. "Where the hell is Tom?" I asked. "Didn't you tell him to meet us at the conference registration desk?"

"Sure I did," Jamil responded.

A couple beers later, Tom came wandering up looking a bit sheepish. "I thought you meant the hotel registration." We all cracked up at his expense on that one.

At about 5:30 P.M. the AHA Board of Directors meeting was kicking off. Although we managed to get one fill-up off the keg that they stole for themselves from the registration room, they wisely closed their door to keep us and others out of the room and away from the great roggenbier (German style rye beer) from Barley's in Vegas. Apparently their meeting lasted six hours. I can only assume that they ran out of beer at that time and adjourned accordingly.

Meanwhile, we had a desire to eat some good food. Dan and I independently scouted out options that would satisfy our non-carnivorous leanings back in Reno. We looked over the options and all agreed to an Indian restaurant called Gandhi that was highly regarded in reviews. A call to the restaurant indicated that it was not very far from the hotel. I asked for a seating for three in thirty minutes, and we hit the pavement on foot. About 45-minuets and two-and-a-half miles later, we dragged our tired asses into the restaurant with the knowledge that city blocks along the Vegas Strip are much larger than anywhere else in the world. Damn mega-casinos!

Our appetites as well as our thirsts were high. The dishes that we ordered spicy were definitely on the super-hot side, but the food was really quite enjoyable. The beers we tried from India were quaffable mostly because we had sweated out every drop of moisture trekking to the restaurant in the June Mojave heat. Oxidation was fairly severe in the disappointing lagers. But we were full and had eaten a really fine meal.

Across the street was a mega-chain brewpub that I will not mention by name. Our craving for good beer had not been satisfied, so we decided to pop in for a pint. Our craving was still not to be satisfied as it turned out. We all boldly followed Tom's recommendation for the Maibock that he had tried in Arizona once and enjoyed. We got these amber-colored, slightly cloudy beers that smelt much like what an over-the-top homebrewed Oktoberfest that would score 28 points might smell like: nutty with a big bready caramel (so far so good, albeit not really a maibock), but also with a subtle lactic sourness (bummer). I commented to a waitress that these must be the Märzen as they are dark and full of mid-malt aroma. She said, "Oh no, that's the Maibock. You can tell because Maibock's are cloudy." Hmmm, you learn something new every day. Meanwhile, we new better and decided to leave this joint so we could seek out commercial beers at a recommended liquor store. (Where the hell is our waitress? They all look the same, and none of them seem to give a whit about us. We want to pay and escape this showy, over-backed brewpub. Maybe we should just dash. Service was like pulling teeth in this yuppie fad-house. Okay, we'll pay at the bar. What? You can't pay at the bar! Now I'm getting fed up with this.) Tom said he would happily pay for a cab back to the hotel

in lieu of walking the longest mile once more. We all loaded up in the cab and were returned to the Riveria parking garage around 8:00 P.M.

A great fellow named Scott is in charge of the beer stocking for Lee's Discount Liquors in the Las Vegas area. Apparently he cut his teeth on the Lake Mead location, where we headed, putting together a vast cooler to store his fabulous selection of imported and micro brewed beers. We were not disappointed in what we found. A subsequent visit to the Sunset location where he works gave us a chance to talk with him for 30 or more minutes. We were impressed with his knowledge, passion, and candor about the beers he carried. Unfortunately, he was sure that the chain would not be expanding into Reno.

We assorted a collection of lambics, Schlenkerla's smoked wheat, and a few other rare finds and headed back to the room to sample the quality of the products. We shared four or five beers before heading to bed at an early 10:30 P.M. so we would be fresh for the judging at 9:00 A.M. the next day.

We managed to be cleaned up (or as nearly so as possible for this lot) by 7:30 A.M. Hungry, we wandered to the coffeehouse in the casino. Stupid, stupid! Had we not already learned that the food sucked in this place. I won't bore you with any of the details here, except to say that the meal in Fallon was spectacular in comparison. The tomato ketchup salsa wasn't so bad after all, I thought.

Now some of you know that I am a point whore. This is Beer Judge Certification Program vernacular for anyone that is seeking experience points to achieve a higher level of recognition warranted by their exam score. I am currently about eight points short of reaching my next level of recognition. Consequently, I told Jamil, who knows that I am a whore for points, that I would help out with the event for a pittance of staff points. He set me up checking judges and stewards in for the event. Actually, I enjoyed doing this as it allowed me to meet a lot of people that I had met through email correspondence during my participation in the BJCP as an organizer of our competition and as a grader of exams. I did this for all three panels, two this day and one on Friday. It actually allowed Jamil to slightly relax and focus on other important aspects of the judging, although he was still pretty stressed by the demands of the event.

.....Continued next month, so stay tuned, and don't let your membership lapse!



This Month's Meeting:

...at the Reno Homebrewer

2335 Dickerson Rd.

Reno, 329-2537

6:00 P.M.

Saturday, July 17th