



Next Meeting – March 11

We will be back in Durty Nellies upper room for our next meeting. The AHA Porter contest will be contested for those who have or can bottle their brew. All others bring 4 bottles of homebrew or your \$5 donation for some of Nellies finest. See you at 7:30 PM.

Upcoming Club Events

Saturday, March 22 – Club Wort Imperial Stout Brew-In. See Elliot Hamilton for details.

Tuesday, April 8 – Monthly Meeting, Durty Nellies. AHA Any Extract Beer Contest. 7:30 PM.

Running the Club

Randy has already been mentioning in the meetings about the upcoming (April) elections. It may be that he is hoping that some else would want to take their turn at running the Club. Or may be he just wants to make sure that everyone who wants to run has enough notice so they show up at the April meeting. Whatever the case, everybody should consider doing their share. And this includes not only the 3 elected posts, but also the volunteer ones. After 10 years, I would have no problem reading someone else's newsletter, and I'm sure Elliot would like just attending the brew-ins, and Paul Lange would want to let loose on a pub crawl.

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Feb. 2008 Meeting Highlights

Wow! On a dark and snowy night, when most people were trying to get home in a reasonable amount of time, 13 members and two guest made it all the way out to West Dundee for our road trip to M.T. Barrels.

The meeting started a little late due to the snow delays (Elliot Hamilton drove both Rich Sieben and I using an interesting route.), but it allowed me to eat their 25¢ wings for dinner and get a start on their beer. Frank Simai, owner and head brewer, took us down into the catacombs of the building. It had been built in 1872, and over the various years had been a hardware store (owned by M.T. Barrel), a tavern with a bowling alley, and most prior, a Gino's East Pizzeria. Frank had bought the building and spent 2 years remodeling, including digging out the basement for the brewery.

He brews on a 7-barrel, electric steam boiler system he got from a closed brewpub in Florida. It has triple infusion potential. He has no mill for the present, brews 1 ½ times a week, and either reuses his own yeast or swaps them with other small brewers. His recipes are all homebrew ones he has tried, scaled up to the 7-barrel size. If the first batch doesn't taste like the homebrew variety, he changes 1 thing every batch until he gets the taste right.

Frank always wanted to open a brewpub, and so decided to put it all on the line and open this place. He wisely has realized that beer is only 25% of the equation, and devotes the majority of his time to running the restaurant. This has required him to hire a brewing assistant, but mostly for the schlep work. The overwhelming sentiment among the

Club members is that he succeeded in both the beer and the food areas.

The regular meeting took place in the Cigar bar on the 3rd floor. He treated us to a pitcher of beer that had just been brewed. Some members bought cigars and took advantage of the quasi-legal ability to smoke them in the room.

Randy Drumtra said that he had not heard from Dolezal about the Nellies April fest, but was trying to email him. Roy Hill, the St. Louis brewer who wanted to talk to us, also hadn't responded. The Equipment Committee was still working on a proposal. Sieben's had sold a total of only 27 cases in December. The next brew-in would be either an Imperial IPA or Barley wine. Finally, one of our guests, Greg Principato, joined the Club.

AHA Beer Contests

April 2008 – Any beer that had extracts comprising at least 50% of fermentables

July 2008 – Meads (24, 25, 26)

September 2008 – Imperialized versions of any style

November 2008 – IPA (14)

January 2009 – Belgian & French Ale (16)

Note the style guideline numbers and letters after each beer. You can check at www.beertown.org to get the style info.

Classified Section

Nothing for sale at this time.

Feb 16 Mich/Indy Pub Crawl

Right in the middle of the worst winter in 30 years, God looked with favor at Club Wort and blessed the Midwest with a sunny, snowless day for the crawl.

The bus left with 49 members and guests aboard, and despite two mishaps with non-functioning I-passes on the Skyway and Indiana toll way, arrived

at New Holland pretty much on time. Everyone took advantage of the good food and a wide beer selection, and a friend of a friend of Phil's joined the group to even the numbers out to 50.

Next on the trip was Founders Brewery in Grand Rapids. Once again, the Club Wort drinkers were faced with a wide beer selection, but those who chose Devil Dancer Triple IPA were rewarded for their intelligence with a great beer.

Bell's was a different experience altogether, as it featured a store that sold souvenirs, beer, and even homebrew supplies, and the Eccentric Café with stained glass. Larry Bell gave the Club 20 minutes and talked about his distributor problems, how he's tried to get back into Illinois with Kalamazoo Beer (look for an IPA this spring), and the irony that the Kalamazoo distributor is being sold to the former Bell's distributor that caused him to quit the market. In one of those amazing coincidences, the head brewer from Livery in Benton Harbor (a stop that almost was part of the crawl) was also at Bell's. The beer selection, although only Bell's products, was very extensive, at least 25 beers either on tap or in bottles.

The last stop, Shoreline in Michigan City, started a little late. At the same time Club Wort was there, other large groups arrived, and so their kitchen was overwhelmed. This caused some crawlers to have to take their food to go on the bus. Arrival time in Northbrook and Woodfield were later than expected, so the Club gave the driver an extra \$50. That and the \$5 rebate brought the profit on the crawl to \$60, so it was successful monetary-wise.

Thanks to Paul Lange for another successful organizing and leading effort. And thanks to Paul again and Phil for those great friends that fill up the bus so we members can have these great outings.

Sieben's Gives Beer Lovers a Classic Taste

Lake Zurich Courier February 8, 2008

Island Lake resident Rich Sieben, brewer of Sieben's Beer, expects to sell his classic American pilsner in 5 and 15-gallon kegs, because of customer demands. He will also provide keg spigots.

"I got some (Carbon Dioxide) chargers and you need tapping equipment to use it," he said. "If you keep it cold, it will keep quite a long time, as long as you use (Carbon Dioxide) and not air. I'm going to sell those to the stores at my cost and they (retailers) use it as a rental item."

Sieben has the beer brewed in Wisconsin and contracts the business from his home.

The beer is sold all over the area, including at Binny's Beverage Depot in Lake Zurich, Julio's Latin Cafe in Lake Zurich and The Grape Vine Restaurant in Island Lake.

"There used to be over 100 breweries in Chicago," he said, adding that beer was a local product made of original recipes and Sieben's Beer was one. "This is the flagship product. I have a bock that's ready to go on a seasonal basis."

He said small changes to beer processing over time led to changes in original recipes and ultimately aroma, flavor and taste. Prohibition in the 1920s was one change.

Also breweries substituted hops flowers from the hops plant with hops extracts to make it cheaper to handle. And to increase sales, breweries decreased beer's bitter flavor. As a result, Sieben believes the original taste of the local beers has led the way to the success of today's local breweries.

Sieben said his great-grandfather, Michael, was a brewer in Germany before coming to the United States in 1863. By 1865 he had a brewery in Chicago, and then he opened at two other Chicago

spots, Sieben explained. Theodore Sieben, a cousin, was the brewery's president until 1963. Sieben's father, Francis, was the brewery brew master until it shut down in 1967, Sieben said.

Sieben started home brewing in 1995 when he began studying for his Masters of Business Administration in marketing at IIT. He was assigned to resurrect the family business, because one of his teachers hung out at Sieben's brewery beer stoup and knew the name. Before the course was over, Sieben made his first home brew.

Sieben said he experimented with the brew, reviewing his father's notes on the brewing process. But once he got the yeast in 2000, he had the complete recipe. According to the company Web site, the family got back in the business in 2006. Sieben said he enjoys making the beer and is Sieben's current brew master among other things like a contract brewer. "There's an art to it, but it's backed by a lot of science," he said. "It's food science."

Go to www.siebensbrewing.com for more information.

Feb. 16 MI/IN Crawl Pictures

Pictures by Phil Piotrowski

