

# Basin Brewers

*February 2010 Newsletter*

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*Responsibly promoting craft beer since 1994*



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## Brew Days are Upon Us!!!

Well it's the beginning of the brewing competition season and I still haven't even ordered grains! The kegs are empty, the mash tun neglected and fermenters gathering dust! What the hell??? Between projects at work, I have been doing quite a bit of research on nano-breweries and I will have to admit that my curiosity has been piqued! If you have time to surf the web someday, check out Bavarian Brewery Technologies pilot brewing system...drool!

Jeff had a little time on his hands the other day and so I filled it with suggestions of meaningful research on TABC and state brewing laws; \$2,000 here, \$500 there and approximately 75 grand for a 5 bbl set up! You can market your own beer "if" you brew less 75,000 bbls (over 2 million gallons). You would need two licenses in the state of Texas if you planned on brewing beer at 4% ABW and less, and then another for anything over 4%!?!?! Of course the law makers consider an "ale" anything over the 4%!?!?! So why bother with anything less than four! Man, if anyone ever needed an edjumacation it would be our elected officials I believe. Come on lotto!

Well good luck to you and your brews if you are entering upcoming competitions...and I promise to get mine cranked and pouring out some more nectar of the gods!

## January Meeting Highlights

What a great turn out! A little over twenty folks turned out at Gil and Joni's house for some delicious brisket and lots of great beer; commercial and home brew alike!

I would like to make a special shout out to K.C. and the two lovely brews that she brought! Woman, you rock! Folks if you get the chance you need to visit with her about her beer travels...truly fascinating.

Future dates were talked about and later firmed up so here's what we're looking at:

- February 20<sup>th</sup> (Gary's house)
- March 17<sup>th</sup> (St. Patty's Day)
- April 24<sup>th</sup> (Hops and Props)
- May 1st (National Homebrew Day)

Aaron's house.

The Pale Off winner will be announced during May's gathering, with the entries tentatively being submitted and judged in early to mid April. So start planning your brews accordingly. We will have only one category to hopefully eliminate confusion on various styles and what have you. More to come as we start firming it up.

## February Meeting

The next meeting will be February 20th at 7:00 p.m. at Gary's house located at 410 East County Road 135 in Midland. Be forewarned, I had a bumper crop of grass burs this past summer so watch your step! Keep an eye out for the E-Vites!

## Hops, Grenades and Landmines!

By Gary W. Turner

I would guess that if I could credit any one thing in my life for introducing me to the wonderful world of beer, it would be when I raised my hand at the reception station in Dallas Texas on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1980! Private E-1 Gary W. Turner had joined the ranks of the United States Army Reserve....well Hoo-ah! Up to that point Coors Light and Bud Light were my beers of choice. Well I take that back, Coors would occasionally introduce their Christmas beer, but other than that....that was pretty much the extent of my beer world!

Then it happened, REFORGER 1983, Return of Forces to Germany! An old annual cold war exercise to see how quickly we could mass the troops in Europe to beat back the Red Horde! Fortunately for me my company arrived a week early, so to find some warmth from our cold un-lined general purpose medium tents, we quickly located a local Gästehaus. In February Germany's winters are wet and cold so it only made sense to stay lubed up and warm rather than shaking our asses off in those tents sober! Stuttgarter Pils, Export and Heffeweissen awaited us and my taste buds were awakened by this wonderful liquid that warmed me to my very core. What's that bitter taste from? Hops!?!?! Hmmm, I think I like hops! Why is this beer so hazy? Wheat!?!?! Man, it's damned good even if it takes them five minutes to pour one! From then on my coolers always included a fine Deutscher Bier along with the swill to keep my friends at bay. "But Gary, you're out of the bullets!" they would whine. "There's better beer in there mijo!" "We don't like that kind, it's too dark!" Dark???? "Poor unlearned swine!" I would mutter under my breath.

Fast forward thirteen years to February 1996! Joint Endeavor, Implementation Forces or IFOR through the auspice of NATO under American Command! Our mission was to break up the ethnic fighting in the former Republic of Yugoslavia, or to use boxing terminology, put the fighters back in their corners. Badges!?! We didn't need no stinking badges! As IFOR soldiers we went where we pleased, no borders, no closed doors, if there was suspicion of a weapons caches or illegal activity....say ethnic cleansing, we were Johnny on the spot! We are "Son of IFOR!" Oh, by the way did I mention there was an estimated 2,000 landmines for every American GI in country! Never leave the hard ball man.



**Entering the Zone of Separation between the Republic of Serbska and Bosnia. This was the front lines.**

Dear God, never had I seen such destruction, devastation and despair. Towns the size of downtown Midland or Odessa totally destroyed and deserted! Bullet holes, RPG, mortar and tank rounds covered practically every square foot of almost every building, walk way and cratered road. Our tire treads on the Hummers were literally full of spent bullet casings in some of the heavily disputed areas! Shattered pines skirted the jagged battle lines, making the zone between resemble a hastily plowed field totally void of any vegetation say that of the poor bastard that lay dead between the lines fertilizing his immediate area. Trench

warfare, with modern weapons! Mmm mmm mmm, we've come along way as humans.



**Suburban area right outside the city of Brčko.**

In the cities and villages the smell of smoke, filth, and death filled the eerily silent air! Not even a bird could be heard...just our heavy foot steps, or the loud crash of debris when someone accidentally kicked something or stumbled on the trash laden walk ways. Thank God for the snow, it at least muffled our movement. On the corner of some of the buildings are spray painted the word "SNIPERA" in large black letters on the white buildings graced with a skull and cross bones and an arrow pointed towards their general direction! Why take a chance? We hit the corner of the building; one high, one low and sprint across and cover the others as they hastily cross the hazard area! Momma Turner wants her boy back home in one piece...and I damn sure want to oblige her wishes!



**This building was taken over by US Forces in the city of Odžak. Prior to the war it was a department store!**

It was rumored that the Serbs had more artillery rounds than bullets and used them freely to conserve ammunition for house to house engagements. Many houses that I carefully entered in and around the Posavina Corridor remained as the Bosniaks or Croats had hastily left them. Tables set, with half eaten food rotting on the plates. A child's doll in a stroller tipped over on the front porch, clothes scattered as if only to find the necessary things they needed to haul ass before the grim reaper came for a visit! Now the area is mined to keep interlopers out as well as the homeowners who may return for a visit. Grenades with pins removed placed in glass jars precariously balancing on the doorknob so if one opened the door it would come crashing down breaking the glass releasing the spoon and detonating it! What's another dead Bosnian? That means only one less to kill in the future, right? Plus if it happens to take out an American soldier, so what? What towns where people remained behind were composed mainly of women, children, elderly and the injured soldier who could no longer fight, or anything else for that matter! I can't begin to tell you how many maimed children we saw on our patrols...too damned many that's for sure. The children's eyes dark vacuous, sunken with dark bags under them...they've seen more suffering in three years of war than almost anyone back home in a life time. In situations like these it is easy for the average American to take for granted that they are going to have the simple things in life like electricity, running water, heat or sewage. I'm from the country and know what a night sky looks like, but at night here, with no electricity available there was zero light pollution and the stars in the heavens twinkled bright over this God forsaken country negating the need for our night vision goggles.



**A T-37 Tank on the edge of the village Bok! The motor had been taken out but the turret and tube were still functional, guarding a vital crossroad not far from the area.**

My main mission in life while there was organizing mounted patrols and their security. Planning routes and training my troops in reaction drills to ambushes and mine strikes. Once a week we had to schedule a patrol to Tuzla for meetings with the UN and other non-governmental organizations (NGO's) in order to get much needed supplies to the needy in the hinter lands! In short...the NGO's hated us...unless they needed to get to an occupied or contested area. Then we were the best of friends...only to be talked down to at the next meeting! Tree huggers (spit)...daddy thought it would look good on their life's resume; dead weight I thought! However, they were clean and smelled good, I guess that's worth something. I made sure to take these jokers down the roughest, dustiest, nastiest routes this country had to offer. I'll probably die of hemorrhoids or silicosis of the lungs sometime in the future because of it...but it sure was worth seeing them miserable. I'm smiling even now.....

While at Tuzla, we would recon the general areas to make sure the roads and routes coordinated with our old Soviet maps! Yep, not one word in English on some of them! Cyrillic script to boot! Well now...aren't we the world travelers! One day while on the



**A destroyed mosque in the city of Odzak. It was only fair, the Orthodox church across the way had been destroyed as well! Tit for tat.**

edge of town reconing possible routes for escape and evasion or just to break up the patrols as to not get into a rut that the booger man may be watching, I caught the scent of something in the air! "Captain Welch!" "You smell that?" "Yeah...smells like a chocolate malt or something!" he replied. "That sir is the smell of beer brewing!" I said with a wide grin on my dusty and gritty face! I pulled the patrol over as we didn't have communication between the vehicles and visited quickly with Majors Karas and Bean. Needless to say this brightened their day! "Turner, you're crazy!" "A brewery sure does sound like a nice excursion though!" Maj. Bean chuckled. Sure enough with the assistance of our translator we found it! "Pivara Tuzla!" The Tuzla brewery! What the hell? Wasn't Tuzla predominantly Muslim? Well come to find out, they aren't that devout in their practice! I guess beer will do that to a man.

I could not believe it! It was a three story yellowish tan colored building of Austro-Hungarian architecture with red trim on the building and windows and the typical red clay shingles on the roof! Directly behind it was the brew house which towered over the beautiful building. The lawn was well maintained and beautiful full pines graced the entry way. Somehow this was the only place in the immediate area unscathed by the

war! We drove through the wrought iron gate and parked our four Hummers in their parking lot, and gradually got out in our helmets, flak jackets and M-16's! I'm sure we scared the hell out of them. As the translator and I walked up the brew house steps we were cheerfully greeted by one of the assistant brewers! I had Smiley (our Croat translator) explain to him that I brewed my own beer back home and was interested in seeing how and what all they brewed at the facility. He informed me that he could show me the mashing area but preferred to wait until the master brewer was on the grounds to give me a full tour! I was elated! However there was one small problem....General Order Number One! The dreaded general order basically stated; no booze, no gambling, and no sex...and as we liked to say, no self gratification either IF you catch the drift! I thought it rude to turn down a sample of their pilsner and sallied forth! My mouth watering, and wide eyes glistened in anticipation of tasting this fine brew! Ahhh, nice crisp, great mouthfeel for my first beer in over three months, what's that taste....butterscotch, diacetyl??? That Kind of shocked me, but hell, after all there was a war going on! I'm sure if there hadn't been bad men running amuck and the occasional firing squad, and oh yeah, the ethnic cleansing thing going on they might have had a little more time to fix that small problem.

I graciously thanked the gentleman and he informed me if I came back next week the head brewer would more than be grateful to give me a full tour. I thanked my comrades in arms for pulling security while I was off living the high life and told them where we were going next week! They laughed and said they would love to join me. A week passed and we came back to the brewery and parked out of the way and started to head to the brewery...when all of a sudden we were met by this stern, grouchy looking heifer from hell. She was wearing black panty

hose, a grey skirt to right below her knees a jacket of the same color and a white blouse with some type of black bow tie, with her auburn hair in a bun! How can I remember that to this day? I usually remember people who have that murderous look about them! It may have been the brew master's brewery, but this facility was her territory! I explained through our translator the same thing I had told the assistant the previous week, and that old bitty's eyes locked onto mine! Yep, the dreaded stink eye! She basically told us request denied and the sooner we left the property the better! She forgot though, we were "Son of IFOR," my M-16 and ill disposition gives me the right to go where I please....however on this day, I wasn't up for a scrap. I shook the master brewer's hands as he shrugged his shoulders. "No tour today guys!" I yelled as I walked back to the Hummers. The guys were slightly miffed. "Okay troops, let's head back to Camp Kime and call it a day!" "Don't forget it's a long road so you'd better relieve yourself here before we go!" As we started back through the wrought iron gates to the main road I saw the river of piss the guys and I had left behind in the side mirror and grinned to myself. Sour grapes I thought...sour grapes

## Rate that Brew! Or, Beer Snob of the Month!

By Gil Van Deventer



Dear Basin Brewers, I, Gil Sbeerisgone, have been given the great honor of being beer snob of the

month! This month's beer is Rahr & Son Brewery's **Iron Thistle**, a "Scottish Style Ale" that is their latest offering. It is Rahr's first National Grand Champion, but I don't know in what competition they claim that to be.

**Appearance (0-3):** Deep amber to dark brown. Clear with quickly dissipating head but with a wee bit o' lacing still left on me pint. **3 points**

**Aroma/Bouquet (0-4):** Moderate malt aroma with a slight whisky-ish & vanilla aroma wafting up me nostrils. No hop aroma to speak of. **3 points**

**Taste:**

*Hop/malt balance (0-4):* Smooth maltiness, not so roasty, and not really complex. Hops seem to play a very small role. **2 points**

*Aftertaste (0-3):* Starts sweet & finishes dry - could that be the alcohol? **2 points**

*Mouthfeel (0-3):* Medium-full body as in a bit thick & some chewiness. Ahh, there's a bit o' alcoholic warmth creeping in ag'in, balances the early sweetness. **3 points**

**Overall Impression (0-3):** Malty but not so complex, starts sweet & finishes with dry slight whiskey taste on the finish. Would rather see more malt complexity, a taint more hops. I heard the ABV is about 8.5% and believe it to be true. **2 points**

**Total: 15 points**

Rahr & Son's Brewery is located at 701 Galveston Avenue, in Fort Worth. They have brewery tours on Wednesday and Saturday where \$7.00 and your ID will get you in with a pint glass and tasting after the tour. Check out their website at [www.rahrbrewery.com](http://www.rahrbrewery.com) and see what's happening if you happen to be in the area.

## Membership Information

MEMBERSHIP is open to anybody who enjoys quality craft beer and can come up with \$24 per year. If you're interested contact one of the officers listed above!

Perks include sampling homebrew and

micro brews, club mugs and t-shirts, discounts on grain & hops, free copies of Southwest Brewing News, and a friendly atmosphere.

### Basin Brewer Officers

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