



Volume 3, Number 1 January, 1985

REVIEW of the NOVEMBER MEETING

The October 15 meeting of the Foam Rangers was "Black Beer Night", featuring the tasting of black beers such as stouts and porters. Several such commercial beers of this type were available for sampling, along with the usual assortment of home brews. Naturally, the home brew was better!

In the Porter category were the Sierra Nevada and Samual Smith Tadcaster porters. Representing the Stout category were Sierra Nevada, Guinness (goodness!), Dragon, Cooper, and Tooth sheaf. While the Samual Smith Tadcaster Porter, Sierra Nevada Stout, and (of course) Guinness were generally rated the best of the brews, the only real consensus concerned the Dragon Stout; unfortunately, that consensus opinion cannot be printed even in a sleazy publication like this --- something about reduced atmospheric pressure and its effect on a certain portion of the anatomy of a particular farm animal, but only if it is green! Maybe it was actually good that I was, as usual, unable to attend this meeting!

The highlight (?) of the evening was the formal (cough!) presentation of the ribbons from the recent Dixie Cup competition, and a review of the score sheets from the same. A complete list of the winners was published in the previous (November) issue of the Foam Rangers' Newsletter. Even though I was not there, I can hear the moaning and groaning about how inconsistent the judges were, and about how we have just got to improve the caliber of both the judges and the stewards (who obviously shook up my beer before pouring), and how the whole thing could have been better organized, and just when are we going to do something about this and that!!! I mean, I simply cannot STAND it when someone thinks they have some sort of complaint, and they go ON and ON

and ON about something that no one cares at all to hear about! And there is always some group in the back who have had just a few too many bleeding Watney's Red Barrel and start singing "Ave Maria" in some off key version of the theme from some movie that no one has even heard of! Man! How I hate people who do that! You will never catch me ranting and raving on and on about something so unimportant that no one cares about anyway...

What was I talking about? Oh, yes! Anyway, the November meeting of the Foam Rangers was certainly an auspicious occasion. I only wish I could have attended.

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REVIEW of the DECEMBER MEETING

Did we have a meeting in December? I was unaware that the month of December even had a third thursday; I thought December went straight from the 15th to Christmas! Reportedly, this year the month of December had a Thursday, December 20! How strange.

According to my sources, the Foam Rangers did meet on that date, and the beer of the month was "Christmas Beers" and strong home brews. As I understand it (not that I believe a word of it, you understand), there were some quite outstanding brews on hand at this meeting. If you can believe it, there was (supposedly) a very good beer made by Dos Equis called "Noche Buena" (which means "good night"), especially good for those of you who like a rich malty brew. Aledgedly, there was a Sierra Nevada Celebration Ale, especially good for those who like hops! Another (supposed) good beer was made by Carta Blanca called "Navidad" (which means, of course, "Christmas"). On top of this, I am supposed to believe that there were plenty of samples of Bill Watts' now famous barley wine, Tom Dietz strong brew (which won that category in the Dixie Cup), as well as beers made by Scott Birdwell, Bill Lacewell, Steve Roberts, "Uncle John's Stout", and a beer made by Randy Brown supposedly appeared in the fancy "Chimay" bottles, complete with wire wrapped corks!

Now, REALLY! Do you think I would actually miss something like that?

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PREVIEW of the JANUARY MEETING

The beer for the month for the January 17 meeting of the Foam Rangers will be British Bitters and Pale Ales. Do not even think of missing the excitement at DeFalco's, our usual meeting place. We really need to do something about that, you know; its nice to realize that the Foam Ranger meetings are getting to be quite popular. Just think how crowded it will be whenever I actually get to attend a meeting! I just might make this one!

Just to get back into the swing of it, and to practice our skills for the upcoming club competition (not to mention the nationals), we are going to be scoring these beers! This means that we need the enlist judges and stewards to help us get through this one more time! It is are getting very close to the time for the club competition, you know, so you had better be getting prepared!

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SNEAK PREVIEW of the FEBRUARY MEETING

The beer for the month for February will be "Sneak Previews" of the beers entered into the club competition! Now here is an interesting opportunity! Not only can you sample some of the better (and worse) beers that the Foam Rangers make, but you can get a clear insight as to whose beer is going to beat you in the competition! How could you ask for anything more?

This meeting will take place on February 21, just three days (count them) prior to the club competition on the following Sunday, February 24.

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MAKING BEER by Bill Mares

--- by Scott Birdwell

MAKING BEER by Bill Mares (Knopf Publishing, 1984; 178 pages; paperback; \$7.95) is more "home brew lore" than "home brew know-how". If you are tired of dry "how-to" home brew texts, this latest paperback is a refreshing change of pace. You do not reach the chapter on ingredients until page 57, equipment until page 72, and so forth. What you get instead are stories about learning to play the bagpipes while being exposed to home brew for the first time, or about that first yeasty, cidery, barely drinkable concoction from straight out of Prohibition. You get a quick history of beer and home brewing.

The author, Bill Mares, is a local (Alvin, I believe), but much of the book is written in Vermont, his adopted home. Bill relates how the first Vermont state-wide competition came about early in the stages of the local home brew club, complete with hassles from the local liquor control authorities (sound familiar, Foam Rangers?).

Basically, this is a fun home brew book. You can tell that simply by reading the subtitle - "How to produce excellent home brew lagers, ales, and stouts, with notes and comments on the pleasures and pitfalls of this venturesome art. And how to avoid the temptation of starting up your own brewery." Whew! Now that just about covers it all!

I guess what it boils down to is this: if you are looking for a technical book to enlarge your knowledge of the fine art of home brewing, this may (or may not) be what you are looking for. On the other hand, if you are looking for something out of the ordinary, like a truly enjoyable home brew book, this one is highly recommended.

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Classified

Classified???

Don Wilson (a fellow FR) has two extra 20 pound CO₂ tanks which he would like to trade for 2-3 syrup canisters. Contact DeFalco's for further information.

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NATIONAL COMPETITION

Now that the "Dixie Cup" is complete, it is time to begin the planning for the National competition which will be held in Houston on Friday and Saturday, March 8-9, 1985. That is right, beer fans, the nationals are in Houston next year!

The Foam Rangers will hold a club competition at the February meeting. The purpose of this competition is to select the entries which will be sent into the national event. The winning entries from the fourteen categories at the club competition will be forwarded into the National competition, so it is time to get brewing! The categories are the same as those for the Dixie Cup:

- American Light Lager
- Continental Light Lager
- Continental Dark Lager
- Pale Ale
- Steam Beer
- Oktoberfest/Vienna
- Brown Ale
- Porter
- Dry Stout
- Sweet Stout
- Novelty Beer
- Strong Beer
- Ale Mead
- Wheat Beer

We will need judges, stewards, and volunteers of all sorts, not only for the Foam Rangers' Club Competition, but for the National Competition as well. Please volunteer your time to help out in these important events.

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NUTS and BOLTS

- 1) The upcoming Foam Rangers club competition is scheduled for Sunday, February 24. Tentatively, this event will be conducted at Munchies Cafe, Bissonnet at Morningside.
- 2) Those of you (naturally not me!) who were able to attend the home brew party by John Adams had a real treat! Three kegs of home brew, and plenty of miscellaneous commercial brews!
- 3) It is time to start planning the Third Annual Foam Rangers' PUB CRAWL (Oh, God)!!! So far, plans are to have this disaster some week-end in May. I am currently taking bets as to where the bus will break down; the best choices (before it arrives, Cleveland, and 5 minutes before Armegaden) have already been taken, so you had better act fast!
- 4) As has already been mentioned, the Foam Rangers need to secure more spacious quarters to hold their meetings. With 20-30 attendees showing up each month, it is getting a little crowded at DeFalco's. Anybody got any suggestions? I think Scott should buy the Pilgrim Cleaners next door!
- 5) This summer, the Foam Rangers are going to send a "care package" full of entries into the AHA competition. This will make it much easier for club members to submit entries into this illustrious event.
- 6) Kerry and Scott are discussing the feasibility of making a "how to home brew" video cassette; ideas, anyone?

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From the Editor

Eleven down and just one to go!!! All right, I know what some of you are thinking --- "But there have only been ten! I never got a December issue!". But what you do not understand is that the December issue when out in the mail normally! I cannot help it if the Post Office has confiscated the entire lot! That was such a juicy issue!! I don't think the color photos of those sunbathers did them justice, however. Of course, I think it was all of those risqué articles submitted by all of you that got us into trouble! Thanks for the effort, but I guess you had better "tone down" the next one just a bit.

As I sit here in my luxurious "home office", surrounded by all the comforts of home (except for the noticeable lack of home brew; I never seem to have time for that anymore), I wonder about the next publisher of this, this, this, "periodical". I know who it is, now! It is the first person who asks me, "What happened to the December issue?".

Seriously, this task has been reasonably enjoyable, and I only wish that I physically had the time to do it for another year. It comes down to this, however - I have either enough time to do the Newsletter, or to make a batch of home brew once in a while. Guess which one I choose!

One more issue! Until then, "Relax! Don't worry! Have a home brew!" (You may quote me on that; I wish I could think up a nice catchy phrase before my tenure is up!)