

# Another Round: More Words of Wisdom About Beer

By Scott Laird



*"A fine beer may be judged with only one sip, but it's better to be thoroughly sure."--Czech Proverb*

**Where Have You Been?**-- Several *Vernonia's Voice* readers have recently asked me, "What happened to the beer column?" Well, ever since we started publishing twice each month-- well, it's not that I haven't been able to find time to drink beer-- that's not a problem-- but it sure has been hard making time to write about it. Anyway, while talking on the phone to my teetotaling father who lives in Pennsylvania the other day, he brought up that even he noticed that *Another Round* has been MIA; I figured it must be time to get back to writing about beer. So here you go.

**NAOBF, Our Favorite Fest**-- We had a chance to attend the North American Organic Brewers Festival again this year and had a really good time. Held on the last weekend of June every year in North Portland's Overlook Park, this festival just keeps getting better and better with age, like a good cast conditioned stout. Outdoors, with lots of space to spread out, this is my favorite Portland festival to attend. We went late on Saturday afternoon and the lines were a little long, but in general this is still a well-organized and accessible beer fest with some interesting beers to try. There were a bunch of IPA's and Belgians, as was expected, and this year there were a couple of hard ciders that were kind of refreshing because it was a very hot day. And even us dark beer aficionados found some tasty brews to try. A couple of favorites: **People's Porter**, a Coffee Porter from **Santa Cruz Mountain Brewery** was smooth and full-bodied with a very strong coffee nose and flavor. **The Elliot Bay Vanilla Bean Organic Stout** was an Oatmeal Stout that was rich and creamy, well-rounded with, surprise!, a strong vanilla flavor to it. **Black Gold Porter** by **Ambacht Brewing** in Hillsboro was spicy and kind of sour, but interesting. And the **Mud Puddle**, a Chocolate Porter from **Oakshire Brewing** in Eugene, which is quickly becoming one of my favorite breweries, was excellent-- complex, smooth and balanced with a really nice finish.

**Don't Forget**-- The Oregon Brewers Festival is July 22 through the 25th-- The 23rd Annual Oregon Brewers Festival will once again be held at Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland. Always the last full weekend in July, times are: Thursday through Saturday-- noon to 9:00 P.M. and Sunday from noon to 7:00 P.M. One of the nation's longest-running and best-loved craft beer festivals, it is the premier summer event for anyone who loves craft beer, and is the ideal venue to relax with friends and sip some suds.

The Oregon Brewers Festival is a true reflection on the immense popularity of American craft brewing, and the fact that the festival continues to draw vast crowds 23 years after its inception is a strong testament to the public's loyalty

toward craft brews. The purpose of the Oregon Brewers Festival has always been to provide an opportunity to sample and learn about craft beer. The number of breweries participating has more than quadrupled from the first year, now with 81 craft breweries from across the county showcasing a score of beer styles ranging from Amber to Wit. Volunteers (now numbering 2,000) pour the beer, industry exhibitors explain key ingredients, homebrewers visually describe their craft with on-site brewing, and vendors offer beer-related merchandise.

Make sure to mark your calendar, beer lovers, and stop by to support Oregon craft beers.

**My Buddy Brady, Part I**-- I recently met a new couple that moved here to Vernonia in January. It turns out that Brady Romtvedt is a professional beer brewer-- he brews beer at the McMenamans Cornelius Pass Road House. Brady and I have starting hanging out a bit-- We watched some World Cup soccer together, play Ping Pong at his house or sometimes on Sundays at the Cedar Side, went to a Portland Timbers game and I even got to meet his parents when they were in town visiting. (His Mom is a wicked Ping Pong player-- She shows no mercy!) And, occasionally, we drink some beer together. (Actually, we drank beer during all those previous-mentioned activities!)

I sat down recently with Brady and, over a bottle of Deschutes Brewing "Once-A-Decade Ale" (part of their Jubel series), had a little Q & A about brewing and beer. The following is Part I of my conversation with my buddy Brady.

**Vernonia's Voice:**  
**What do think of this "Once-A-Decade Ale?"**

**Brady:** It has a beautiful, deep red, garnet color and a handsome deep tan head. It has a wonderful complexity on the nose, it smells like a beer that has been aged. It has a wonderful malt sweetness and sort of a licorice finish on the tongue. I detect a high level of alcohol without it tasting hot like a young beer would. There is a lot of malt, but the alcohol content is hiding and balancing the sweetness well. It's got a little bit of oak-aged flavor. The mouth feel is wonderful-- it has some nice burnt sugars, like a candied plum. A really delightful beer!

**VV:** So, tell us about how you got into brewing?

**Brady:** I got into brewing mostly because I really liked beer. I'm not necessarily a big beer drinker, but I went to school for a couple of years over in Texas and that was kind of a wake-up call that-- hey, some places don't really have beer like we do here in the northwest. So, coming back, I really set out to understand beer better. So I started going around with my wife and buddies to different breweries and kept a tasting log and talked with different brewers when I could. One of my motorcycle riding buddies was a brewer for McMenamans and he told me that brewing is a pretty tough field to break into, but that McMenamans was a good company that liked to hire from

within. So I ended up waiting tables at a McMenamans in Salem, volunteering in the brewery and starting to brew at home to get more experience. And things lined up and a position opened up at the Roadhouse and I was able to get it. It just all worked out for me.

**VV:** How much do you get to experiment with creating your own recipes?



**Brady:** One of the great things about working at McMenamans, as opposed to another brewery in the state, is the incredible license they give their brewers to come up with their own recipes. For example, me and my brewing partner, Chris Osgood, have eleven taps to fill at the Roadhouse. And we're brewing four company recipes all the time-- so I'm always brewing Ruby, Hammerhead, Terminator and whatever the seasonal is. But even something like IPA, the northwest's most popular beer, they allow each brewer to come up with his or her own India Pale Ale. So, at the Roadhouse, we have

seven taps where the recipe is up to us. So a little more than half the time, I'm brewing something that is my own recipe. And what it does is, it creates a really interesting beer world. Right now, if you look at all the different McMenamans pubs and breweries, there could be a hundred different beers on

tap, because at each one the brewer has that kind of creative control. If I was working at another brewery in Oregon, your only hope would be to work your way up and eventually become the head brewer because everyone brews his recipes. What I love about working at McMenamans is I get to involve creativity in my job on a weekly basis.

**VV:** What else do you like about your job?

**Brady:** Growing up on a ranch, I really liked the physical labor. There's something about working hard, feeling tired at the end of the day and knowing you've accomplished something. But, unfortunately, working on a ranch you don't know if you've accomplished anything by the end of the day; because of the whims of the market or the weather, it could all be for naught. For me, the ideal job involves physical labor, it would involve a tangible product-- a product that makes people happy, and something that involves creativity where I use my mind as well as my body in my work. It just happens that the process of

making beer involves those three things. Beer is great, but being a brewer has really been fulfilling in more ways than I would have guessed.

**VV:** As a brewer you spend a lot of time by yourself, it's kind of a solitary job, right?

**Brady:** It is, and that's another thing that I enjoy. I can have social interaction by going over to the Roadhouse and seeing how my beers are pouring. Each month, we have our Last Wednesday keg release where the brewers hangout and talk to people when they drink our beers and talk to local home brewers, so I get a chance to do that. And I still get the chance to do beer education where I go and talk to the servers in the company about the beer, about how to serve the beer, about how to promote the beer. But ultimately, I have a job where I can arrive as early as I want if it's a hot day in the summer, I can listen to music and I have my own space-- where it's really my brewery.

*Look for Part II of "My Buddy Brady" in the next issue of Vernonia's Voice, July 27th.*

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