

Rev. Hults

Editorial Now & Then



"Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to have fun." Benjamin Franklin



Big Mc's (or the Kingdom of the Fat Boys)

Most of our readers know that your beloved rev. is a musician of sorts, and some even have noticed that he has been playing gigs lately. Well, some of those gigs were at taverns owned and operated by the Brothers McMenemy, so your intrepid editor decided to call 'the fat boys' as their employees call them. (Sorry, but true.) Mike returned the call and said he would be at Duffy's in St. Johns. We consulted the bus schedule, grabbed a couple of Bud's and a cheap tablet & pen, and set off to do interview. We had been taught that it's not what you say, but it's what you do that counts, and how you do what you do is what is all about. So we wanted to know how these guys do what they do.

For our readers who have never heard of these guys, they build taverns and Brewpubs here in the Northwest, and they seem to be very good at it.

Well, Mike was at Duffy's which used to be the National Cash Register Building at the Lewis & Clark Exposition, back in ought whatever, and then was a church and then an American Legion Hall and finally a tavern. We had a nice talk while all around us a bunch of guys with long hair were using power tools and various implements of mass construction. Questions needing answers, and decisions needing to be made by the boss, were handled quickly and quietly by Mike as we sat amid the rubble that was to be a fully functioning tavern in four days. People from the neighborhood wandered in the open front door. Mike greeted them with, "Come on in take a look around, we'll be open Wednesday." No one seemed to believe him. One woman lived down the block and used to be president of the PTA at the Kennedy School, which is now a McMenemy's Tavern/Theatre/Restaurant/Bed & Breakfast and something of a community center. She went on and on about what a wonderful job they had done and what a grand addition to the neighborhood it is.

Later, Mike explained that they hadn't started out with saving historic buildings in mind. The purchase of the old poor house, 'Edgefield Manor', the 'Kennedy Grade School', 'Boon's Treasury' in Salem and to your beloved editor, most importantly 'The Crystal Ballroom', seemed to be a 'just how we did it', sort of thing. He said they finally had to put a full time 'historian' on the payroll, just to keep up with what they bought. We reminisced about when he opened his first tavern "Produce Row" as your beloved editor was struggling to open his first tavern, Euphoria, just around the corner. And the efforts of the McMenemy brothers and the Widmere brothers and the Lawrence brothers and the whole Ponzi family to get the Brewpub law through the Oregon Legislature.

But we were not to be denied, this was our chance to do 'interview' and 'journalism' demanded we ask the tough questions. "So, how many places do you have now?" we asked. "Forty four, I think," he said. "How do you keep track of 'the kingdom'?", we questioned. "We have a lot of good people that do that," he replied.

"How many?", we pressed. "Around a thousand, maybe," he said vaguely. "Why does every one that works for you look, well, like hippies?", we probed. "You work well with people that have the same attitude as you," he said evasively.

"Where do you get the money to buy all these places?", we demanded. "The bank," he stated blatantly. "They actually loan old hippies money to start taverns these days?", we asked incredulously. "Well, I didn't say it was easy, we had to borrow \$4.3 million to do the Kennedy School, and they were not too sure we knew what we were doing. We hadn't done a Bed & Breakfast at that time. They wanted us to make all the places the same like a Big Mac franchise, or something, so they could use the same numbers over and over. But that's no fun," he confessed.

"People seem to like working for you guys, do you pay better than other places?", we wondered aloud, hoping to butter him up. "We are competitive on salaries and, of course, we offer health, and dental, and profit sharing, 401K's and bonuses. And we try to treat folks that work

with us fair, no one has to pee in a bottle or anything," he finally admitted.

"Speaking of jobs" your beloved editor cuts to the chase, "Have you heard about our new band The Shoreheads?" "We sure would like to play at the Crystal."

Mike was called suddenly away. "Well, what about taking an ad out in our paper?" we pleaded as he ran screaming from the building.

We didn't even get a chance to offer him a Bud, which we have heard is what he really drinks, and makes us think we might be able to get that gig, sooner or later.

So, we wandered around St. John's until we found a house that looked familiar, and went in drank the Bud's in good company, watched a little baseball and called it a day.

Any way we suggest you check out the Big Mc's in a neighborhood near you, or you can get a complete listing of their activities on their web sit www.mcmemamins.com.

They seem to be unique to what we call the upper left edge of America and thus should be celebrated.

So if you find your self in one of their taverns, order a beer, smile and think of your beloved rev., and remember Uncle Mike says, "If it doesn't fold, it's not a tip!"

"I'm more like I am now than when I came in here." graffiti in McMenemy's

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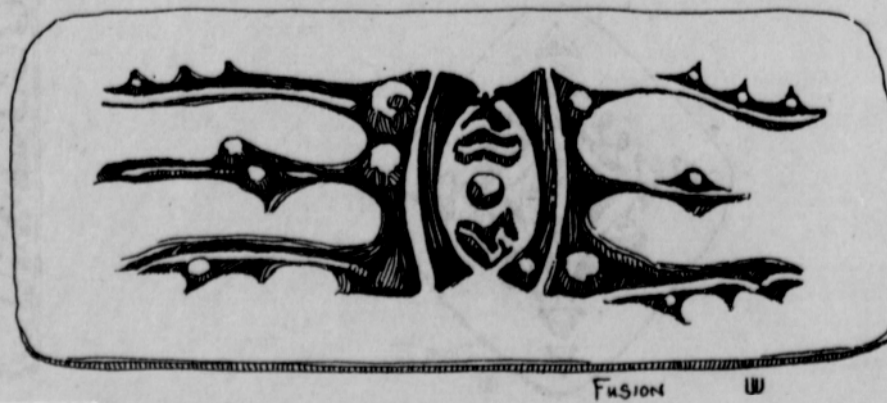
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A computer once beat me a chess, but it was no match for me at kick boxing. Emo Phillips

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