



PHOTOS BY TRASK BEDORTHA

BLITZKRIEG BOOZING

Knocking back Eugene's happy hours at lightning speed BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST

"Happiness is an inside job." -William Arthur Ward

I was given a mission, a stipend, a photographer and a designated driver. The objective: Attend a continuous series of happy hours between the times of 3 pm and 9 pm. Six hours of "happiness." And no beer (*EW*'s "Suds" issue comes out later), only hard liquor. I knew I was the man for the job.

If you will permit me a moment of personal disclosure: The men of my family are known to possess stomachs of iron. Whether seafood or Sauza, we hold it down. I had no fear.

Started off at High Street McMenamins. The afternoon was young but I felt the sinew of happy hour upon me. A nomenclature that embodies the essence of Orwellian double-speak, it's safe to say that "happy hour" isn't about happiness at all. It is about the working day really sucking, getting a bad case of the "drunchies," or obliterating the fact that you may not have a job to drink yourself away from.

Three in the afternoon, rum and coke, skeletal men approach the bar chewing their lips. They take one look at me and elect to drink in the solitude of a nearby booth. I don't blame them.

I'm not supposed to meet up with my DD until 4:45 pm, but the next happy hour on my list is Agate Alley and it

ends at 5 pm. I am on foot. One man, one drink in the hole, one moleskin journal to record the mission. I also carry a digital recorder, should the events of the evening render me physically incapable of putting pen to page.

I cruise to the next nav-point, cutting through alleys and hopping across one-way streets. Four thirty, late afternoon, tequila sunrise. Contacted by the DD, who retrieves me promptly. The next happy hour ends at 6 pm, so we swing by the *EW* office to collect the photographer. The Davis, 5:30 pm, vodka and cranberry. Water.

I prepared for this assignment like a sport, drinking glass after glass of H₂O and saturating my body with vitamins and miso soup the night before.

Drink finished, back to the vehicle. Next stop Turtles. We slide in just in time and the bartender is kind. I unholster the moleskin and begin to pen my surroundings. Working moms enjoying a moment of quiet before heading home to the hellions, lone college boys eating sandwiches, staring into the flat-screened dumb boxes. Time passes, I am still not "happy," although the spirits are beginning to take effect.

Hours, time-yarn, grandfather clock ticking with chisel and hammer. Where the hell is my photographer? "Sorry man, I forgot to take pictures back there, I was too busy drinking." Night stretches. Starlight. Horsehead. More bars — "What do you mean you don't make vodka gimlets?"

What the hell did I do with my wallet? "This place smells like leather and crotch fungus!" Can I quote you on that? Gin and tonic. What time is it? Light blurs. Images sharpen and fade. "What's your story man?" That's awful. Inside thoughts spilled outward. Clarity. It could be worse. Thank God I'm not drinking this heavily for a reason, I'm on the job. No, really I am.

Happy hour? These people don't look happy — they look like animals trapped in pretty suburban houses as some natural disaster approaches. Who knows what the hell I look like by now. Car again. "How you feeling?" I don't know. *Happy?* Is The Wetlands on Garfield or Chambers? Make a right here. Don't return that smile, she isn't worth it. Your girlfriend is drop-dead gorgeous. Pineapple and Hennessy. Your photographer has been drinking double shots and is "happier" than you are. Ali could fight moving backwards, which is hard to do. That's why he was the greatest fighter ever. Hell of a jab. Let's flee this place. I'm not happy yet. Shut up. Whiskey. "If you take one more picture of me tonight I am going to punch you." Where is my digital recorder? What do you mean you guys are leaving? Long Island ice tea. No, seriously, where is it? *Happy?* Somewhere between here and 13th Avenue, maybe. Still searching. I don't know. It's like that?

Yeah man, it is. ■

\$5
Tapas Happy Hour at
Nib
Modern Eatery

Clam Sofrito
clams steamed in white wine with caramelized onions, and tomato.

Salmon Collar
with sea scallop, brussels sprouts and pineapple.

Country Pate
pork, pistachios served with onion marmalade.

\$5 wine pours / mixed drink
Fri. & Sat. 4:30-6:30 & 10pm-midnight
Monroe between 7th and 8th

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