

Part II of two-part series

Behind the scenes making of the N.E. Home-brewers Jamboree

By Emily Killinger

Special to The Mountain Ear and member of the Concord Area Homebrewers

Friday, Sept. 11, noon

We are "packed to the gills" as my mother would put it, or at least that is how I felt as we pull out of the driveway. Family camping seems to find me packing way too many comforts of home, packing "way too much stuff," as my husband tells me. Add to that the 200-Liter Allagash Brewery barrel which my husband has to deliver to the Jamboree and we are driving two cars this year.

Our fourth year attending the Jamboree is about to begin and I am filled with excitement for good times ahead and a bit weary of the increased responsibility our small club has to play in this year's event.

1:30 p.m.

Our small two-car caravan pulls into Branchbrook Campground's group campsite greeted by the usual Friday set-up crew, as I like to call it. Each of the past four years of attending and helping at the N.E. Home-Brewers Jamboree we have arrived early, usually to find some usual suspects ready to help get things set and ready for the following day.

4 p.m.

Upon setting up our family campsite and reserving space near us for the remainder of our club members, we head straight over to help set tents. Each year the number of tents to set up seems to increase. Steve Laignon, of the Southern Maine Homebrew Club, rallies the troops and before you know it we have at least a dozen people around to help raise tents. They start going up like wildfire. I've never seen us work like such a well-oiled machine.

6:30 p.m. 'til bedtime

The rain sets in, starting as a small sprinkle, increasing to a medium to light steady stream. Our club settles in to make dinner and congregate under three easy up tents, trying to stay dry.

In true Jamboree spirit we toast a couple and travel out in the rain to other club campsites to greet old friends and see the new faces.

Throughout the night rain falls, heavy at times and all I can think is please don't rain tomorrow.

Saturday, Sept. 12, 6 a.m.

Camping with my two-year-old, who never lets me sleep past 7:30 a.m., means she is clearly awake earlier than usual due to the unfamiliar surroundings. I try to wipe the sleep from my eyes and look at it as a way to get up and start getting my game face on.

As an active member of the Concord Area Homebrewers, our club has to play an increased role behind the scenes. Our club must run the gate from 9 a.m. to noon. Then, throughout the entire event from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., we must have someone on duty to pour our homebrew taps to the paying public. Then there are the kids' games we are in charge of from 1 to 4 p.m.

Due to the full day of work ahead of me, I use my daughter's early wake up as a way to get me motivated and gear up to help make the Jamboree an event people enjoy coming to. An event they tell their friends about and come back to year after year. Because I hope the more people we get



Dana and Debbie Peterson take a turn at running the tap lines and table for the Southern Maine Homebrewers. (Emily Killinger Photo)

there each year the more we will be able to raise for Make-A-Wish kids.

8:40 a.m.

I assume the gate position and start selling admissions, checking IDs, giving out wristbands and door prize tickets, directing cars where to park and showing campers where they can find a space to set up.

10 a.m.

Event organizer Steve Ainsworth gets things kicked off with general announcements, some background music and a call for clubs to bring up additional "swag" they may have to donate. Many of the clubs involved from across New England take time throughout the year to ask local breweries to donate any and all logo items, such as T-shirts, hats and glassware, including Dana Peterson from southern Maine, who collected 'swag' from Portland and Kennebunk.

10 a.m. until end of daytime events

Alongside the six other homebrewers clubs which set up tap lines along Brewers Alley, the White Mountain Fermentors from Whitefield set up a two-tap system which is concealed in a trash can. Separate from their club tap lines, this is a chance for Jamboree attendees to vote for who they think is the "Iron Brewer."

Back on July 26, the White Mountain Fermentors held their first annual Iron Brewer Competition. Two teams were randomly selected from eager participants of varying brew skills. Granite Cask sponsored the event and supplied all ingredients, including the "secret ingredient" which each team much use in their brew. A first-ever for both the White Mountain Fermentors and the N.E. Home-Brewers Jamboree, I think many enjoyed getting to sample and place their vote for the one they liked best.

11 a.m.

I man the tap lines for our club. Most clubs have set up what is called a "jockey box," which has anywhere from two to seven taps running through a chiller plate inside a converted cooler with tap handles attached. Our club, however, has our four

jockey box lines coming out of the side of our club president's work van. Concord Area Homebrewers President Ed Ramshaw runs a tap line service business called Blueline, and for the past two years has made his tap van part of the Jamboree festivities. Needless to say, everyone thinks it is just the coolest thing to see beer pouring out of the side of a van.

Noon

Close of registration for competition entrees, results in 157 entrees this year.

1 p.m.

Ed Ramshaw of the Concord Area Homebrewers gets the competition judging under way as he organizes the stewards. Stewards are the individuals who deliver the entries to each judging table. Stewards then read a description of American Homebrewers Association (AHA) guidelines for the particular brew each table is served. Ed put in many hours of work this year to redesign a more user-friendly score sheet.

3 p.m.

My club gets the kids games under way, starting with the grain sack race, followed by a scavenger hunt, then a balloon kick relay. Moving on to a burping contest where participating kids usually take in some caffeine-free root beer to prep them to perform. Finally, the kids get a chance at the keg toss before prizes are awarded to all kids participating.

4 p.m.

I slip into the judging tent for the cider category, finding many tasty entries this year.

5-6 p.m.

Judging of the seven categories comes to an end and Deb Peterson works hard to calculate the final scores and determine the winners of this year's event.

6 p.m.

The winning raffle ticket for the Allagash barrel my husband got donated is picked, and the winner is Joe Wentworth. The winner of the "People Choice - Club Brew" which participants were asked to vote on is tallied and announced. Third



The White Mountain Fermentors from Whitefield had their Iron Brewer Competition beers on tap for attendee to vote which they thought was the best use of the secret ingredient. (Emily Killinger Photo)



Aiden Ramshaw takes a turn at tossing the keg during the kids games. This was Aiden's sixth year in attendance. (Emily Killinger Photo)

place goes to the White Mountain Fermentors with their Pumpkin Bret. Second place went to the South Shore Club with their Saison. The winner of bragging rights this year for the best club brew on Brewers Alley goes to the Concord Area Homebrewers for "Hop-notiq."

The judging scores are totaled and the awards are announced and medals given out to all seven categories. I see many of the usual winners alongside new first-time winners and old school returning winners from when the event was still called the N.H. Homebrewers Jamboree. All in all, there were many great entries and tons of great tastes to be enjoyed as the day comes to an end and the jockey boxes are packed up and returned to group campsites. Alas, it is time to clean up and head back to make some dinner at our club site.

This year, just as in years past, I enjoy the camaraderie of campfire talk and toasting of glasses as I make my way around to each club visiting the familiar faces and meeting the new faces that have come. I realize that it is these friendly faces that bring me back each year and have made me want to help. Help make the Jamboree and event others come to year after year, bringing together good brews and good times all with the goal of helping those Wish kids. ▲

On the Cover

17th overall Mud Bowl Champs

The Muddas Football Club runner on the left side of our cover shot briefly escaped his pursuers during the World Mud Bowl Championship game in North Conway on Sunday, Sept. 13. The Muddas went on to defeat their opponents, the Nashua Mud Gumbys, who had won this event for the past two years. Photos and story on Page A14

(Dennis Coughlin Photo)

Inside

Minding the Valley's business

The Valley seems to have come through what began as a difficult summer and ended in a blaze of late summer glory with flying colors, for the most part. Page A6

Ever heard of a tricycle race?

Cranmore Resort will be the host on Saturday, Sept. 26, for the first MWV High Performance Tricycle Grand Prix Race. See Page A18

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