

# Malted Barley Appreciation Society

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## VICTORY AT HAND



BY ALAN RICE

Photos by Alan Rice and Mike Lovullo

Pleasant weather and the promise of a good time attracted a standing-room-only crowd to the beer garden at Mugs Ale House on the second Wednesday in June. As usual, MBAS President Mike Lovullo started with announcements, followed by the introduction of our guest, **Bill Covaleski**, President and Brewmaster of **Victory Brewing Co.** of Downingtown, PA. Mike visited the brewery last summer and he led off with the first question. Paraphrasing here, "What's the deal with the Teddy Roosevelt quote over the bar?"

"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither VICTORY nor defeat."

— Theodore Roosevelt, 1899

Bill and his partner, **Ron Barchet**, CEO and Brew-



master, were working on their brewery project in 1995. When they wrote their business plan, there were no micros in the Philadelphia area. They were going to name it Independence. But by the time they were ready get going, Yards, Red Bell, and yes, Independence were open. So they needed a new name.

They had rounded up investors and a Small Business of America loan. However, the SBA check was contingent on acquisition of the liquor license. But the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board required them to have all of the equipment in place. So they only had half the money and had to risk all of it, with the hope that they'd get the rest in time.

They had no name, no place, and had to gamble with other people's money. Someone said, "It will be a victory if we pull this off". Within a couple weeks, they found a location in a former Pepperidge Farm bakery and the TR quote. It's an unusual quote to see in a bar. But it means a lot, so they placed it where everyone can see it.

Bill Covaleski and Ron Barchet were boyhood friends in Collegeville, northwest of Philly. Bill went to UCLA and Ron went to Temple. They both got bored

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**Cheers from the editor, Alan Rice**  
**NEXT MEETING:**  
**Wed. July 9, 7:30pm,**  
**Mugs Ale House. Our**  
**guest: Chris Sheehan**  
**of Chelsea Brewing Co.**



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when they were forced to get regular jobs. Bill was a marketing guy and Ron was a numbers guy. These skills were useful later. And they did have a fun hobby - Bill's father had brought home a brewing kit. They got good at it and wanted to go pro.

In 1989, Ron decided to quit his job and attend the Technical University at Weihenstephan, the top brewing school in Germany. But first he had to apprentice. He got in at the Baltimore Brewing Co. When he left for Germany, Bill took his place there, learning the ropes (and hoses) under the Dutch Brewmaster, Theo De Groen.



Bill designed several German-style beers at Baltimore. His Weizenbock and Doppelsebock won silver at the 1994 GABF, and the latter won gold as the best bock of 1995. Meanwhile, Ron was at Old Dominion Brewing Company in Ashburn, VA near DC. With his expertise, production soared from 1,500 annual barrels to nearly 15,000 in four years.



**Victory Brewing sponsored a Women's Professional Cycling Team from 2002 - 2006. The Victory Cycling Team grew from a small operation to one of the finest women's pro teams in the U.S. Today, they sponsor the Tri-State Velo Cycling Team in greater Philadelphia. (Photo by Anthony Gongora)**

They looked around the country when they were ready to open a brewery, and saw that it would be best if they went back home. They decided to sell on quality, not price. They started with a 25 bbl Century system and German-made Technik bottling line, capable of 85 btl/min with minimal air capture. They wanted to sell beer on premises, but they were required to sell food, even though they didn't want to do it. But there are not many entertainment options in Downton, and the pub took off. Sales were triple what they expected. This was a savior when the bottling line took 6 months to get up and running.

The restaurant was recently closed for 2 months for expansion and renovation. Table seating was approximately doubled to around 300. The new, en-

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larged kitchen features a smoker, because there wasn't any real BBQ in Chester County. They're now open early for weekend brunch along with weekday lunch, with food service until midnight all week.

They now have a longer bar with 60 taps pouring 20 beers plus 4 beer engines for cask ales. They even have a counter-pressure filler for growlers. Over the bar are several domed copper kettle tops from a defunct Czech brewery. Collectible items from Pennsylvania breweries such as Rolling Rock, Schmidt's, and Iron City are on display.

Brewing went on uninterrupted while the public area was closed. The brew-house has already been through its expansions. When the electronics store next door closed in 2001, they took over and doubled their space. In 2002, they sold their 15 filling valve bottling line to Four Peaks Brewing in Phoenix, AZ and started up a new one with 40 filling valves. This was at about the same time that Malt Advocate Magazine named them Brewery of the Year, so the extra capacity helped.



In 2004, they sold the original brewing equipment to nearby Weyerbacher Brewing. The system could handle three 8-hour brews per day. It was very quirky. Hours of inaction were broken up by frantic moments of hitting switches and turning valves at just the right moment. A boil-over control float valve would have been nice.

In 2006, they took off the roof so that they could lower in 8 new 200 bbl fermenters. Capacity is now 70,000 barrels per year. Their 2007 production was



*The Victory Beer Garden is now open for its fourth summer. Find it in the southeast corner of Battery Park next to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. Victory Lager, HopDevil, Whirlwind Wit, And Prima Pils are still \$5/pint. Food off the grill from 11:30am until dusk. Seating for 150 people.*

35,500 bbls, so they are set for a while.

Back to the brewery upgrade in 2004 - they went with a 50 bbl system from Rolec. The Germans recommended a 100 bbl system. In fact, the guys from Stone Brewing came out for a look, and that's what they went with. (See last month's newsletter.) But the Victory guys wanted the flexibility to do small batches. They brew 8 batches every 4 hours, instead of 4 batches every 6 hours. They were going to automate, so there really wasn't a lot more work. And a larger system requires larger pumps, boilers, and chillers. So they saved on the equipment and on operating expenses.

There are many interesting aspects to their system. The automation is fantastic. Rolec can monitor systems back in Germany, if necessary, and they can easily send software upgrades. Of the many aspects, Bill zeroed in on the malt handling. They were using Durst, now they're using primarily Weyermann and some Durst. Vienna and Pils are the base malts, and also wheat in their summer seasonals. They push a button, and a chain of discs pulls the selected malt from one of the six silos through a tube.

Then it goes to a wet-milling system. The malt is hydrated in the mill for about 30-45 seconds and then gently crushed between rollers. They malt slides off like a banana with the husks intact. You get shorter lautering times and a reduction in the amount of tannins.

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After it comes out of the rollers it gets mixed with hot mash water and then it goes into the mash kettle. The malt and water are mixed with very little air. This increases the shelf life of the bottled beer. The only negative is that it doesn't work well with dark-kilned malts.

For the second year, Victory brewed three small batch specialty beers at the commission of the Ger-



man Hop Growers Association. Each of these was brewed to showcase the high quality hops produced in Germany to potential American brewing clients at the National Craft Beer Conference.

These filtered beers were a collaboration between Victory and Eric Toft of Landbrauerei Schönram. The GHGA sends Victory the hops, Eric formulates the recipe and Victory brews the beer. Eric is originally from Wyoming. He went to Germany for training. He met a woman and soon there was a wedding in the Alps. He'll be brewing at Schönram for the foreseeable future.

Eric selected two 5.3% Pils and a Belgian-style strong ale, two styles Victory is known for. The Select Pils had Hallertau and Spalt Select hops. The Tettnanger Pils was brewed only with Tettnang Hops. This hop came from German farmer Georg Bentele. Bill Covaleski and Ron Barchet visited his farm in April 2007 when they took 23 Victory groupies on a 10-day brewery tour of Bavaria and nearby Austria and the Czech Republic.

The brewery signed a contract with Georg to buy 10,000 kilos of hops per year, one third of his crop, over the next 6 years. His price went way up, but Vic-



tory is very happy to have the guarantee. They spoke to Georg about brewing wet hop pilsners, which had never been done before in Germany. He tried it and sold out quickly. Victory will be brewing a wet hop beer this fall, with product from Pedersen Farms in Seneca Castle, NY.

The final variety for the GHGA was the **Sapphire Belgian-style Strong Ale**. It was brewed with Safir, a Hallertau grown hop variety. Last year they brewed

Sapphire Bock. This year, a Trappist yeast was used in fermentation to 10.5% abv.

This was the first beer that we tasted. It rarely leaves the brewery, so we got a rare treat. All pilsner malt was used, but it was double concocted to give it a darker, golden orange color. It had nice carbonation but the small head quickly receded. That is a good thing, because some hoppy triples have a head that just sits there like a slimy island. There were plenty of banana, clove, and candy flavors. I didn't notice the alcohol, but I also didn't notice the 29 IBUs, either. I don't feel like I really got to know the single hop. I'd like to try a full sample of this and compare it to Victory Golden Monkey.

Next up was another new beer and one that was

very surprising - **Victory Wild Devil**. It has the same recipe as HopDevil, but with the addition of Brettanomyces, a "wild" yeast. HopDevil was on tap at Mugs, so we had the chance to try them side-by-side. At first you notice that the Wild Devil is lighter in color. That was just by chance in the 25 bbl test batch. They use a lot of Vienna malt in HopDevil, which gives it a dark color and richness not



found in West coast IPAs. They brew four 50bbl batches and blend them to get a uniform color in this, their #1 seller. Wild Devil finished drier with some sourness but nothing funky. There was an unexpected malt sweetness in the middle when the Cas-

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acades mask the Brett. It was very interesting to taste the difference in an identical formula after the addition of Brett. It would be nice to try it again in 6 months when the hops fade and the Brett funkifies. Brave the crowd at the Blind Tiger this Wednesday before the MBAS meeting and check it out. This may be the biggest collection of Victory ever assembled, certainly in NYC.

The last beer that we tasted was **Ten Years Alt**,

which was first brewed two years ago to celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It did very well and deserved a resurrection at the re-opening of the brewpub. It is a mash-up of altbier, which is dry, and doppelbock, which is rich. That doesn't sound possible, but if they can brew a hoppy tripel, why not?

The creamy head slowly fades, leaving a nice lace. It was



*Ron Barchet of Victory Brewing Co., foreground, discusses hops in a field in Germany. To avoid spot-market rates, Victory has agreed to buy thousands of kilos annually from a grower of Tettnang hops at a locked-in price. (Photo by Victory Brewing Co.)*

dark outside and the beer appeared clear and mahogany to me. After the wind shifted and the aroma of Mugs' garbage bin passed, I detected sweet biscuits. Here's where it works. The 8.5% caramel sweetness gets dried out with a nice blast of German Tettnangs, one of their favorite hops. So this beer is really a doppelbock first and an altbier second. Drink it fresh. Try one now.



## MBAS 2008 COMMITTEE

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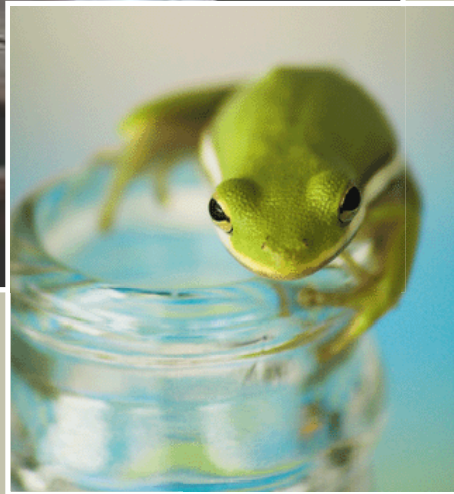
Kevin Winn

Lucy Zachman

**Quark file:** Pamela Rice

<http://hbd.org/mbas>





# Calendar

UNDERLINED TEXT INDICATES HOT LINK

## BEER EVENTS

Wed. July 2, [Italian Beer Night at Blind Tiger](#). List TBA.

Mon. July 14, [The Art of Beer and Cheese Pairing Sail](#), Chelsea Brewing, \$75. Ron Carlson will host a tour of the brewery, then escort you to a schooner for a 2-hour sail around lower Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty while you enjoy 3 Chelsea beers paired with cheeses.

Wed. July 16, [Sly Fox and Arcadia at Blind Tiger](#). Lists TBA.

Fri. July 18 – Sat. July 19, [16th Vermont Brewers Fest, Lake Champlain Waterfront Park](#), Burlington. Three sessions, \$22. Over 30 breweries from VT, NH, ME, NY and QC. Gourmet food, live music, vendors, demonstrations.

Sat. July 19, 2-7pm, [South Shore Real Beer Fest, at the Nutty Irishman](#), Bay Shore, \$50. 20+ breweries, 50+ beers including casks.

Sat. July 19, 2-6pm, [1st Selinsgrove Beer Fest](#), \$40. 17 brew-

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## HOMEBREW EVENTS

AUGUST 2, 2008

### Mead Day

Each year on the first Saturday in August, home brewers around the nation are encouraged to invite non-brewing and brewing friends and family to celebrate by making mead. Click link for the official recipe and to register.  
<http://www.beertown.org/events/meadday/index.html>

SEPTEMBER 28, 2008

### Homebrew & Food Pairing Competition

The Diamond in Greenpoint, Brooklyn  
Homebrewers present their best beer and original recipe combination. Brewer and chef teams are welcome. Winner receives a trip for two to the Stoudt's Brewery for Oktoberfest. Patrons pay (price TBD) to taste and score the entries. Proceeds donated to charity.  
<http://www.thediamondbrooklyn.com/>

Up-to-the-minute event info: <http://hbd.org/mbas/calendar.html>

For the latest draft lists, go to: <http://hbd.org/mbas/new.html>

For area beer bars, go to: <http://hbd.org/mbas/beer.html>



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eries, 4 wineries, food, homebrew demos, and live music.

**Wed. July 23, 7pm, Beer and Cheese at Pacific Standard.**

**Wed. July 23, Christmas in July at Blind Tiger.**

**Thu. July 24, Lagunitas at Standings.** 5 drafts, free pizza.

**Fri. July 25, 7-9pm, Beers and BBQ at The Institute of Culinary Education,** free. Presented by Garrett Oliver. Both the beer and the food will represent diverse styles from a number of regions.

**Mon. July 28, The Art of Beer and Cheese Pairing Sail,** Chelsea Brewing. See July 14.

**Tue. July 29, 7pm, Chocolate and Beer at Bierkraft.** Justine Pringle of Nunu Chocolates will be debuting 6 chocolates flavored with American craft beers.

**Tue. Aug. 6, 7pm, Cookies and Beer at Bierkraft.** With Reid Stratton of Altissima.

**Sat. Aug. 9, 1-6pm, North Fork Spring Craft Beer, BBQ & Wine Fest at Martha Clara Vineyards,** \$75. 50 brew-

eries/120 brews. Outdoors with tents for the attendees, breweries, wineries, special vendors, cooking demos, event programming, live music, and talks by brew masters and industry leaders.

**Mon. Aug. 11, The Art of Beer and Cheese Pairing Sail,** Chelsea Brewing. See July 14.

**Sat. Aug 16, State College, PA MicroBrewers & Importers**



**Exposition.** Two sessions, \$47 or \$77. 60 breweries/150 brews, gourmet buffet, seminars.

