

# Malted Barley Appreciation Society

June 1999 Newsletter – First Electronic Edition!

## Belgium on the Richelieu

By Andrew Schlein

Joanne Shortell and I recently spent a long weekend in Chambly, Quebec, Canada, during which our current and past Presidents, B.R. Rolya and Bob Weyersberg joined us for a day. Spurred on by the invitation of Laurent-Xavier Gilbert, General Manager of Unibroue USA, we ventured north for a short vacation and to visit the Unibroue brewery in this suburb of Montreal.

We were fortunate to have excellent weather for the drive from New York and arrived in Chambly in the late afternoon. Chambly is a seventeenth century town on the banks of the Richelieu River, known as the Iroquois to those south of the border.

The main historical attraction of the town is Fort Chambly, which was built in 1709 to protect the settlement from marauding savages, or, if you prefer, from the Amerinds who weren't too pleased with being invaded.

After some minor exploring, we settled on Fourquet Forchette for dinner. This restaurant is owned and operated by Unibroue and features an extensive menu specializing in La Cuisine à la Bière. The steak with a sauce of mushrooms, peppercorns, and Unibroue's *Trois Pistoles* was wonderful.

On Saturday afternoon, we connected with B.R. Rolya and Bob Weyersberg for our tour of the brewery. The Unibroue facility is in a modern structure on the outskirts of Chambly. We were guided by one of the staff from Fourquet Fourchette, Matthieu, who was quite knowledgeable about the operations of the brewery.



It is clear from the first view inside the "Private" door that Unibroue has cornered the Canadian market for stainless



steel. From the kettles and fermenters to the controls to the piping to the bottling line, the equipment gleams. What doesn't gleam sparkles and glitters. This is no museum brewery but rather a modern state-of-the-brewer's-art operation. No lambic yeast would last a minute in this atmosphere. The result, as we all know well by now, is a line of clean, crisp tasting beers with remarkable consistency.



We saw the mashing and boiling kettles (see picture at the beginning of the article) and got a layman's explanation of the process. It took a while for Matthieu to get the idea that we all knew the basics and wished to know more about Unibroue.

The next stop was the new fermenters. A huge room added after the initial construction holds ten new fermenting tanks, each twice the size of those in the original group. The tanks disappear through the ceiling and the room is almost eerie –

the only sound is the venting of carbon dioxide resulting in random hisses.

The bottling line was no less impressive. Moving at a rate of 13 inches per second, the line can fill, cap, and label 24,000 bottles (341 ml) per hour. For the larger, 750 ml corked bottles, the rate drops to 9,400 per hour. Twenty-four people working five days a week, 9 to 5, run the entire brewing/bottling operation.

On our way out we saw the storage room packed to the very high ceiling (literally) with pallets of beer destined for export to the US, Europe, and Asia. Our offers to watch the room while Matthieu retrieved a key were declined.



A tasting back at Fourquet Fourchette complemented the formal tour. Among the beers we were able to sample were the new U and U<sup>2</sup> mass-market products. U is a pilsner intended to help Unibroue compete with Molson in Canada. The U<sup>2</sup> is an amber product also available only in Canada for the less-discriminating market. This writer (ANS) preferred the U to the newer follow-on product while the others in our contingent seemed to prefer the amber beer. Also available were *Dom de Dieu*, the seasonal Christmas beer that is warm and spicy, and *St. Hubert* a light pilsner brewed for a local chain of chicken restaurants. Almost in unison, we thought of the idea of a McBrew.

On a side note, many Unibroue souvenirs and condiments are available at the restaurant. We would like to thank Laurent once again for making the tour and tasting possible.

## Notes from Last Month's Meeting

By Lucy Zachman

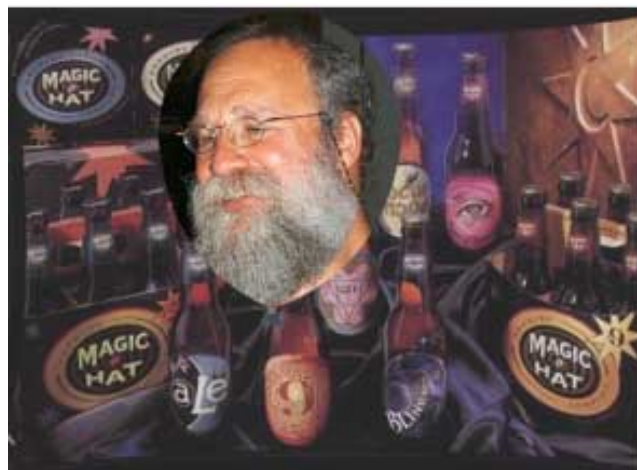
The May meeting was accompanied by pleasant weather and our first opportunity to enjoy Mug's patio! How nice. OK, now to the hard-hitting news events...

Alan Newman entertained us with good beer and interesting stories from the Magic Hat Brewery in Burlington, VT. Alan's partner Bob is the actual brewer, but Alan certainly knows what he likes when it comes to beer, so he often "tweaks" the recipes.

Known for its alluring, artistic labels as well as great tasting beer, the brewery first opened in 1994 with a 15-barrel sys-

tem. Early on, they contracted with Shipyard to brew their packaged products.

By 1997, they had reached draft capacity and built a new 50-barrel system and bottling line. From then on, they brewed all on-site.



For a few years, you had to go skiing to get some of this beer. (I remember when I first discovered their luscious apricot ale during a post-downhill outing!) Expansion took Magic Hat into Rhode Island, Connecticut and even Maryland (only for a short time). And finally, Magic Hat has come to the New York area!

We got a preview of Miss Bliss - a rye beer spiced with coriander and orange peel, and Heart of Darkness Stout, their winter seasonal.

### Next Month's Meeting!

Speaker: **Phil Markowski of the Southampton Publick House**. Meetings are held at Mugs Ale House, Corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn on the second Wednesday of each month (6/9/99 this month). Nearest subway stop is the Bedford Avenue stop on the L train.

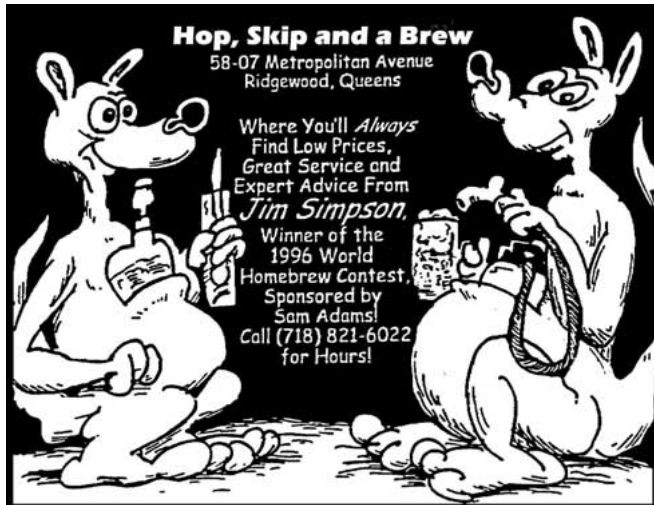
The Rye beer was refreshing, but many (including Alan) noted that it was a bit low in rye flavor. The coriander and orange were there, but not overpowering.

Miss Bliss, interestingly, is named for a Burlington all girls rock band that broke up years ago. They reunited, however, for the beer's debut party for 400 guests. And yes, the band members get free beer as payment for borrowing the name.

Alan noted that Magic Hat is determined to keep the business fun with cool labels and unusual beer names. They've also placed a little philosophy under the bottle cap, so don't miss out on treasures like "Try hard not to lie," and "Make a wish on a three-headed fish." You figure it out?

Other fun brews to watch out for are Bob's First Ale, an Irish-style, deep ruby red ale; Fat Angel, a pale ale that Alan says is a nice session beer; #9, "a sort of dry, crisp, fruity,

refreshing, not-quite-pale ale; and Blind Faith, a pale ale that pays homage to our West coast friends with a nice, dry-hopped finish of cascade hops. Enjoy!



## From the Editors' Disk

**Care for a Few Bytes of Beer?** This is our first edition of the newsletter designed for electronic distribution. All of you for whom we have e-mail addresses are receiving this in PDF format. The advantage to you is that you get to see the newsletter in color. The advantage to the club and editors is that we don't have to fold, stuff, and pay postage for many of the copies of the newsletter. The rest of you will receive a black and white printout of the newsletter. If you didn't get an electronic copy and would like one, please contact [jshortell@dtus.com](mailto:jshortell@dtus.com) or call 212-787-3856.

George De Piro is taking a break from his writing duties in order to open his new brewpub. He hopes to be back with us next month to let us all know how the opening of the brewpub went. Bill Coleman, creator of the Salty Dog cartoon has declined to submit any content.

**Quebec Notes:** Our trip to Chambly was enjoyable for more than just a brewery tour. In addition to this month's articles on that tour and on our visit to George's brewpub, there will be an article on the cideries of the region next month. Also, those of you who might want to take your own trip to Unibroue should consider making it a romantic weekend. We stayed in what was formerly the officers' barracks for Fort Chambly is now a lovely bed & breakfast. Maison Ducharme is situated right next to the park surrounding the fort and was built in 1814. The owners, Danielle Deland and Edouard Bonaldo, are generous, attentive, and meticulous innkeepers. There are four beautiful rooms on the second floor (or first floor if you're not American). At night you can hear the rushing of the rapids on the Richelieu that are just at the end of the back yard. The breakfasts are expansive. None

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*Articles don't have to be long and we'll correct your spelling and grammar. Have you been anywhere interesting? Have you stumbled on a good beer book you can review? Have you had a wonderful or horrible or interesting brewing experience? Give us a call (212-787-3856 evenings and weekends) and we'll help you any way we can*

of that croissant and coffee that you get at so many places. Of course, there are croissants but these are home-baked every morning. At Maison Ducharme, you also get pâté, cheeses, smoked salmon or quiches, fruit, cereal, etc. etc. If you are ever in the region, you couldn't do better than Maison Ducharme (514-447-1220)

**Local Notes:** Reports of the demise of the West Side Brewing Co. (Columbus Ave. at 76<sup>th</sup> Street) are greatly exaggerated. The brewpub is alive and well and serving very good burgers. As of this writing, West Side had on tap: Raspberry Blonde, Blonde, Black and Tan and Stout. The editors also dropped in at David Copperfields to redeem their free draught coupons and have lunch. There were thirty beers on tap (including Leffe Brown, which we've had trouble finding) and a varied (though not exhaustive) selection of bottled beers. The burgers were great and the beers we ordered were in good condition. Because it was a beautiful afternoon in the middle of Memorial Day weekend, there was no one there. This gave us a great opportunity to talk to one of the twin-brother owners and to the bartender, his non-twin brother.

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## Brewpub on the Hudson

By Andrew Schlein

On the way back to the city from Quebec (see this month's lead article) your editors made a side visit to the C.H. Evans Brewing Co. in Albany, New York. Oh, in case you don't recognize the name, this is the State Capital's newest brewpub and the current home of the MBAS's most recent emigrant, George De Piro. The pub's owner is Neil Evans whom some of us have met at meetings or at George's classes. His ancestors ran a commercial brewery in Albany until the Prohibition era. This is the reincarnation of that enterprise.

The first thing you notice when you enter the pub is the vastness of the space itself. What was once a pumping station for Albany's water is now a combination brewery, bar, and restaurant. There are dining tables, a lounge area in front of a massive fireplace, a bar, and more tables. The kitchen, at one end of the building, is open and patrons will be able to watch their meals being



prepared. At this point we must comment on the extensive menu. Since the restaurant was not due to open until the next day, we were not able to sample any of the chef's preparations, but the menu is extensive. Aside from standard pub fare, there are Indian, Mexican, and Italian dishes. We hope that this eclectic variety is not too ambitious. George assured us that the chef is really very good.

The focal point of the bar area, however, are the mashing and boiling kettles, beautiful copper-clad tanks, behind



glass. After a full tour of his new domain, we got to taste the six (!) beers that were to be available on opening day. It isn't often that a brewpub, especially not a brand new one, can offer six first-rate beers from Day 1.

The first that we tasted was his Bavarian wheat, earlier versions of which we've all tasted and loved. My taste memory is not good enough to say if it was as good as the award-winning brew, but it is clearly wonderful. George is also serving a blonde, which is really a Kolsch. Since we're not too experienced with this style, we'll leave it at saying that we hope this beer will appeal to the non-beer drinking customers. We believe that his American wheat will also appeal to those who are beginning their beer adventures.

Next was an amazing Cocoa Brown. The flavor of

the cocoa powder was definite and yet married perfectly with the malt and hop balance. There was a very acceptable ESB, which, as George will tell you, was a failed IPA. We envy George his failures! The stout that he brought with him in April is on tap as well and has benefited from some rest; the roastiness that was so notable seems to have moderated yielding a very accessible beer. We look forward to our next excuse, er, reason to visit Albany so that we can follow what we're sure will be a successful venture. We're sure you'll join us in wishing George and Neil all the best.

