

Brewhaha #4: Federal Jack's Restaurant & Brew Pub, Kennebunkport ME



It was about a 30-mile ride to Brewhaha #5, so Rule #1 was put to the test. Rule #1 was simple: No Drinking While Driving. Now, I know, that's a law too, but that doesn't mean it's always obeyed. If you've ever road-tripped with me, you know I often wet my whistle as the miles roll by – even if that road-trip is just from The Shanty to Duval Street.

But, given the nature of NEPBT, I deemed it wise to include that law on my To Do List. Rule #2 (see Portsmouth) was slanted in that direction too. Given the potentially high alcohol volume of my one (or two) lunchtime and one (or two) mid-afternoon beverages, some adjustments to routine would be necessary to keep below The Limit.

You know The Limit, yes? That Don't Underestimate It (DUI) limit? Tenders of the Bar have to know it, and are taught a formula to help gauge the stability of their bar patrons. When I was first taught it, the line was at 0.10, so a bit o' tweaking is needed to toe the new and improved 0.08 line.

It's all about your liver; you can't run ahead of your liver's pace. For 0.10, the liver can process 4 drinks the first hour, then 1 per hour after that. That covered a 12-ounce ordinary beer (i.e., 4-5% alcohol), a 5-ounce glass o' wine, or a 1-ounce shot o' booze (80 proof-ish).

For an "average male," that would keep you just on the good side of the line, but still keep you happy. If you got impatient and decided to leave your liver behind – "hey, I'm going on ahead, I'll see you in the gutter later" -- then you crossed the line and took your chances.

The formula varies, though, depending on body mass, and digestive malarkey. Bigger guys could handle more. People who just ate a full meal could handle more. Skinny dudes took less to reach the line, as did women, and people who haven't eaten all day. Blah blah blah.

We barkeeps had to know this so we could try to avoid oversloshing people. Barkeeps have been held liable for subsequent inebriated misfortunes of said guests, and that kind of thing will drain your tip jar pretty damn fast.

But for NEPBT, I didn't need to concern myself – nor the State Troopers and Sheriffs of the great states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts – with the "average male" or any of his variations. My only concern was keeping my "slightly bigger than the average male" self immune from their uncomfortable scrutiny.

The 4-then-1-1-1 pace would have to be modified based on the 7% and higher alkie content of these yummo craft brews; hence, my pacing. Rule 2 set the pace, and Rule 1 kept me on it. No anarchy for Hops.

I was surprised, frankly, how easy it was to comply with Rule #1. Years of habit never even seemed to whisper protest. It would have been so easy to just grab a six o' Yeunglings for the ride, but the urge never even tugged at me. I reckon once the mindset got in place, I just locked in on it.

The Tour had come to Kennebunkport, seeking the birthplace of the Shipyard brews. A favorite for many years, Shipyard was among the first of the great Maine craft

beers to make inroads into regional and even national markets. I was eager to explore its roots.

Another typically quaint seaport town, Kennebunkport has a waterfront social zone with restaurants and shops and drinkeries, of which F-Jacks was as prominent as any. It dominated the second floor of a multi-biz strip, with a long outdoor porch overlooking the crowded harbor. It wasn't the old weathered place that I expected. In fact, the whole strip looked like a 21st century rebuild: weathered shingles, but all else looking pretty new.

Shipyard had a lighthouse monument out front, and there was a sign in a walkway that rather modestly made notice of "The Birthplace of Shipyard Ale." They had some kind of office on the ground floor, in that walkway, but no brew sold there. That's where F-Jack's came in handy.

And Jack's was busy. Their free lot was full, so I had to pay \$5 to park in the municipal lot right next to it. That rankled me a bit. I almost tried a "but I'm only here for one beer" plea, but I couldn't bring myself to even try it. I mean, if someone did that to me, I guffaw right in his face. "Just here for **one**? Hahahahahaha! How many times have I said **that!?!**" So I kept my dignity and forked over the finner.

Upstairs was really pleasant. I'd be here a lot if I were a Kennebunkporter. The dining room had a huge bay window section with a great view of the port, and a big coolo F-Jack's sign hanging there with sunshine pouring onto it through the rooftop windows.



I settled onto a sort of middle-ground bar – not in the crowded pub room, and not in the no-bar-in-here dining room – which faced an inspiring row of classic Shipyard taps. Both the backdrop to the taps and the bar itself were this gunstock gray metal that looked both old school and modern at

the same time. It was fitting my mood perfectly.

Trouble was, even though I was told that this bar was open and that a barkeep would be there "any second," there was no service in sight. So, after a few minutes of discreet drooling, I went back to the main bar, found the one empty seat, and ordered up my Shipyard Ale.

I was on the corner of the bar, and I had the misfortune of settling in between two strangers who had struck up a conversation. My arrival did not interrupt them, nor would I have expected it to.

To my chagrin, both Kennebunkporters were huge fans of George Bush (the devious dad, not the moron son). They didn't really talk politics much, though; they were way more interested in his sky diving – "Yeah, he did it again this year! Can ya believe it?" – and what an overall card he actually was.

For some reason, this exchange was scaring the shit out of me, and I deemed it prudent to chug the suds and resume the road rally.

This I now did. The hour was later than my loose schedule anyway, so moving on – after having, yes, just one, thank you – helped me tuck a couple more pubs into my day.

Or so I thought.

There were a couple of disappointments en route to the next pub. My Internet scouting sheet proved to have some holes in it. Two listings in a row – The Whale Tail Pub in the town of Old Orchard Beach (though not on the beach), and Sebago Brewing Company in a small building behind a shopping mall in SoPo (South Portland) – were flat tires. Whale Tail was now Jimmy The Greek's, which appealed to me not at all, and the Sebago building was vacant and unmarked.

This would not do. Time was wasted in the hunt for those places, and to have that be for naught was a waste of quality quaffing time. For now on, I'm calling ahead.

