



Brewhaha #18: The Liberal Cup Public House & Brewery, Hallowell (Augusta) ME

Tuesday, August 31st – new month eve! -- was another hot and clear summer day, and there was strong temptation to plunge back into Acadia's scenery and trails and revel in another day of National Park wicked coolo-ness. But discipline discipline discipline prevailed and I road-rallied out of the Wonder View and turned west. ANP's scenery would have been the same as yesterday, and, nice though that was, virgin pubs awaited, eager for my spoiling.

I *had* awakened myself long enough to see the sun crack the horizon from the big window of WV #12, but then went sensibly and smilingly back to bed. One mountaintop sunrise was enough. Well worth it ... once.

The overall goal for the day was Vermont's best lakeside city, Burlington, and there were two state lines to cross before gettin' there. That made me snicker. After almost a decade in Florida's southernmost city, which is an aggressive 10-hour drive to the nearest border, New England's take-an-hour-or-two state crossings were refreshing. You could really feel like you were getting someplace. I can't even leave my *county* in less than 2½ hours.

From my Shanty in Key West to Dad's Domicile northwest of Orlando is 430 miles -- a goodly enough distance to carry you from Fenway Park in Boston, down I-95 through RI and CT, over the George Washington Bridge in NY City, down New Jersey's Turnpike, within sniffing distance of Philadelphia, through the northern nub of Delaware, and right up to Camden Yards in Baltimore (with 18 miles to spare) – 8 states – but *my* 430 miles only takes you halfway up the Sunshine State.

So it was with renewed roadtrippin' zeal and resolute Sense Of Purpose that I lit out west from the Atlantic Ocean towards Lake Champlain.

My first target was compliments of Lovely Jill Of The Divine Cleavage. Perhaps you've heard of her, that delightful barkeep at Jack Russell's. The Atlantic Brewery was on my list anyway, so her tip about that had simply been affirmation. But The Liberal Cup was a never-hearda-ya, so Jill's glowing recommendation was both inspiration and uplifting cleaval memory as the bland eastern Maine miles slid under C-Note.

To reach The Cup, I passed right through the heart of Augusta, the capitol city of the Pine Tree State. And on the way, near Belfast (no, Maine), I got to cross the Passagassawekag River. Gotta hand to those Native American forefathers; they sure did have some catchy names for places.

Still gasping from the breathtaking sight of the Capitol Dome, I navigated south and found my next brewhaha in the mildly urban



section called Hallowell. A colorful hand-carved sign dangled over an ivy-covered frontage. A gray, roughly hewn wooden bear stood at the door, holding a bucket for ciggy-butts and ashes.

It was just a little past opening time when I strolled in. The entrance area was bright from the late-morning summer sunlight streaming through the windows, revealing brick and old unfancy wood throughout. It made a good first impression.

The bar was straight ahead past a couple of standee tables, and that's where I strode. It was not huge, didn't dominate the room. It had about ten swivelly bar seats and a well-varnished top. I was the first customer of the day, and damn proud of it.

The barkeep, Matt (in orange shirt in photo), was from somewhere in Florida – Tampa, or Naples, or some weirdass place like that – and he was heading that way for the weekend, niftily sidestepping Hurricane Earl, ironically, by flying into hurricane country.



On Matt's rec, I ordered up a pint of Old Hallow Pale Ale. I'm an IPA and PA kinda guy anyway, but having an Old Hallow in Hallowell just seemed like good karma.

I made sweet, slow love to my Hallow while Matt went about his opening duties. It's always kinda cool to be there when the keep breaks open the juices and fruit tray, and fills up the ice bins.

At least, it's cool from *this* side of the bar. I never quite felt that way when I was doing the opening shift; I was always muttering to myself, "get the fuck out of my bar till I'm **ready!**" It probably should all be done before the doors even open, but, come on, let's not get crazy.

As this was the first stop of the day, Brew Pub Tour tradition dictated that it would be a one-slurp stop. And I was well-intentioned in that regard.

But music – ahh, sweet inscrutable music – intervened. I was perusing what had to be a very early edition of *The Boston Globe*, bringing back memories of Sox-soaked sports sections, when the side part of my brain started tapping me: *Hey, dumbass, check the tunes!*

So I tuned in (pun intended, yes) and – dammmmn! – it was *And You And I* by Yes, one of the most *goddamn coolest mellow me out till I sigh and collapse because I was so waaaasted late-night cruising on dark empty dirt roads after a night of barbacking at the Harp & Bard with Moonhead and Nickosaurus and Jimlawler and Space Cadet in my old '69 Mustang, which I affectionately named Sally, for her propensity of sneaking so adeptly through alleys, uhh, tunes.*

Then I was seeing The Collage – *the amazing amazing so amazing that I kept it for more than 20 years yellow posterboard glued with cutouts from Yes album books of*

Wakeman, Howe, Anderson, and Squire, draped in their showy robes, and snippets cut word or syllable or even letter-by-letter of lyrics from high profile and esoteric songs alike, and plopped right in the middle of it all was Have a Heineken in a fine tribute to my beer of choice of the mid-70's when that Dutch brew was flowing so freely at the H&B. And in my mind I was hugging Wynnies for the time and effort and LOVE to make that for me because nobody but nobody ever poured so much into a hey-I-got-something for ya for me.

And Boston Gahhden, second balcony, with Jimlawler and his rolling machine basically supplying the whole section while Chris Squire stood atop the middle pillar of the rotating center stage, mesmerizing us with his cacophonous bass solos, and Rick spread his glittering cape and twazzled both keyboards in perfect 2-man-but-only-1-man mesh, and Jonny's soprano voice rose and shone and softly faded "...in endless seasssss..."

Then my glass was empty.

I reached for my wallet. Matt said, "Moving on?"

I paused, the mood too comfortable to abandon right away. "What else you got?" I asked with a sly grin.

He clapped his hands and reached for a large chilled glass. "OK, now how about an Alewife Ale. I hesitated, my momentum tripped up by the odd syllable-play. "It comes in an Imperial Pint."

"Done" I decreed. "An Alewife forthwith, good sir!" He chuckled Britishly, enjoying the medieval moment. I smiled internally, myself, at the 3.2 extra ounces of frothy brew – a cool 20% bonus.

The Imperial Potable – as Skott would call it – felt and tasted good, though my hands felt smaller somehow. Alewife was going down without flashbacks, so I struck up a convo with Matt, apprising him succinctly of my quest. He summoned the owner and master brewer – not difficult, as he was only at the other end of the bar -- and we kabobbed awhile about regional brewhahas and brewskis. He seemed impressed that every place he could think of off the top of his head was either on my Been There List or my On The Way There Next list. We didn't bother with the sides or bottom of his head.

Then my Imperial was empty. Drained to the last delicious drop.

Evil Matt gave me that *I know you want to try everything we have*, cocked-eyebrow, but before he could mutter an offer, I stayed him with a firm but friendly hand and said, "NOPE, me gotta go. Sunday River awaits."

He gave a knowing nod. I tipped well, of course, and sincerely regretted departing.

Jill, baby, GOOD CALL!

And nice cleavage, by the way.

