

Romancing the Foam No. 106



Grandma Dewey. She was born on this date 117 years ago and passed 40 years and one month ago. I picked my college because she lived in the town. My first trip home from college my Dad told me "I like your beard, just don't wear it in the house." Things sort of went downhill from there. Grandma didn't care. I'd visit every couple of weeks or so and then after Grandpa died, I stopped by more frequently.

My friends and I watched the Watergate Hearings on her couch. She would make us little triangle

shaped sandwiches with the crusts trimmed off. My Grandpa's cousin was Thomas E. Dewey, the New York City DA who put Charles "Lucky" Luciano away for 30 years and apprehended Dutch Schultz. Thomas Dewey later became governor of New York and ran for President against FDR and Truman. With that kind of pedigree, I always figured Grandma was a Republican, but during the Watergate hearings we got it out of her that she always voted the opposite of Grandpa to cancel out his vote because she thought he didn't know anything.

After Grandpa died, she took over his seat on the Township Board and took over his job running the County Fair. They gave the job to Grandpa because he was a salesman and could fill the spaces at the fair. Every year Grandma did the fair, she sold more space than Grandpa. Every now and then I would run her down to the fair grounds and help her out and listen to her sell space. She was good.

Grandma never learned how to drive. Sometime in the late 60's the town brought in Dial-A-Ride and drove the Taxi out of business. In the mid-70's the town decided to significantly cut back on Dial-A-Ride. She went to her first protest. My friends and I offered to show up with a couple hundred people but she thought she could handle it. She did. Dial-A-Ride was saved.

My uncle Bud taught me how to fix Grandma's kitchen drain (a yearly chore involving disassembling some pipes and flushing them out with a garden hose) and I believe that it was Uncle Bob who cautioned me about taking her to the bank. Taking her to the bank took the better part of a day. I would take her to the bank in Mt. Pleasant, the bank in St. Louis, the bank in Alma, the bank in Edmore, and I believe two or three other little banks before the day was over. I did this more than once. My Dad

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explained that it was because of the depression and the bank failures. She made sure to keep the amount of money in each bank well under the amount that the bank insured its accounts for.

Painting houses helped pay for college and she helped find painting jobs. While painting her neighbor's house, the neighbor took me aside and asked if I could do something about Grandma's lawnmowing. Evidently when she couldn't sleep she would get up at 4 or 5 in the morning and mow her lawn with her loud gas-fired power mower. She had a big yard and mowing her lawn took about an hour. I gave the neighbor my phone number and had the neighbor call whenever Grandma's lawn looked like it needed mowing.

When she was 75 or 76 she took a trip to Andalusia, Spain and Morocco with a friend. I don't think she had ever left the country and I know she did not know Spanish. Grandma was disappointed in her friend because her friend never left the hotel room so Grandma just went off and wandered around on her own.

June 20, 1977 in the afternoon I got a call from Uncle Bob. He had the kind of voice and demeanor to deliver sad news and leave you knowing it was bad but that you would be OK. Grandma died. Heart attack while playing bridge.

For years I had a picture of Grandma taped to my office wall. Now on her 117th birthday I am drinking some beer to reflect on all she gave me. The big thing was acceptance – accept people for who and what they are. She also told me that if you wanted a marriage to work, each of you had to give at least 60% - good advice. She showed me the importance of being yourself and staying involved with life. She also taught me how to be a Grandparent. So, although I never saw her drink anything, Grandma, these beers are for you.



Insight Brewing Phantom Taxi came to mind due to Grandma's issues with Dial-A-Ride. It is a spring seasonal release. Insight packs it with 9% alcohol by volume and 84 International Bittering Units. Popping the can releases resinous hop aromas featuring citrus and tropical fruit and traces of fresh mowed grass and a hint of biscuit. The hop aromas are medium high and the malt aromas are medium low. This is a beautiful beer filling the glass with a bright copper liquid topped with a 2" off-white blanket of foam that has good retention and provides good lace. Phantom Taxi starts big and herbal with a citrus rind and tannin bitterness supported by light malt and an initial trace of sweetness. Hop flavors feature citrus and tropical fruit with a faint berry presence. Phantom Taxi dries out by the finish with a light

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touch of hop astringency and leads to a long lingering bitterness. It has an almost elixir-like quality that will send confirmed Bud Light drinkers running to mommy, while hopheads will hoard Phantom Taxi while it is available and drink only it before it goes stale. I rate Phantom Taxi 87.



Unibroue 17 Grande Réserve (10.0% alcohol by volume) is a class beer sold at a reasonable price. It is aged with French Oak. The beer features rich malt and yeast aromas including prune, plum, fruit, molasses, brown sugar and a hint of tobacco. It pours dark copper brown filled with very fine bubbles that lazily rise to the surface and replenish a 2" light tan foam cap with a very fine bead. It has a mildly sweet, rich malty palate featuring stone fruit, dark dried fruit, fig, molasses, alcohol, spice, a hint of cola and some oaky dryness on the finish. Malt and yeast flavors are high. Hop bitterness and flavors are low. The body is medium and the carbonation is above average. The alcohol is mildly warming but not hot or harsh. This is a good beer for savoring slowly while sifting through old memories. Like Grandma, it is subtle, yet full of charm and character. I get my exercise with this beer. I like it so well that soon after I finish one, I hop on my bike and buy another bottle. I rate it 95.

My memories of Grandma's plumbing problems sent me after a bottle of Bent Paddle Brewing Company Valve Jockey #2 Imperial Kvass. Grandma's kitchen was on the west side of her house and the sewage drain was on the east side. A 30' horizontal pipe running the width of the house connected her sink drain to the sewer drain. Because the pipe was horizontal, it would pretty much seize up once a year, so every May I would have to take the pipe apart, take it outside and blast the gunk out with the garden hose. I would wear old clothes because I often got covered in the contents of the pipe. I did this about 9 times which gives me an affinity with valve jockeys. The uniqueness and character of the beer also draws me to drinking this in Grandma's memory. Bent Paddle Brewing Company Valve Jockey #2 Imperial Kvass packs 6.5% alcohol by volume and 10 International Bittering Units. Kvass is an Eastern European beer made with fermented rye, barley or wheat bread and may be



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flavored with berries, raisins, fruit or tree sap. The alcohol by volume in many Eastern European varieties of Kvass ranges from 0.5% to 1.5% and people drink it as we do soda pop. Valve Jockey #2 Imperial Kvass has over 4 times the alcohol of a traditional Kvass. Bent Paddle has brewed it with rye, wheat, oats, raisin juice concentrate, lemon peel, and spearmint. It smells like rye bread, lemon, spices, herbs and faint fruit. One sniff and you want to make it into a jam and slather it on rye bread. Valve Jockey #2 Imperial Kvass pours somewhere between ripe peach and the color of Wonderbread crust or iced tea. It is filled with rapidly rising bubbles and kicks up a 1" light cream collar with moderate retention. On the tongue, it is mildly sweet with a balancing tartness. The flavors have rye spice, rye bread, lemon, raisins, and fruit with a mild bitterness emerging on the finish. It leaves a lingering, herbal bitter aftertaste with traces of lemon rind. The body is medium and the carbonation is above average but very fine and creamy. This is an interesting and different beer with elements of Kvass but the lemon and mint change it up a bit and the raisin plays off the rye in interesting ways. The beer is refreshing and flavorful and unique. I give it an 85.



The last beer I am drinking today in memory of my Grandma is Hanssens Artisanal Oude Gueuze (6.0% alcohol by volume). This beer, like Grandma, is a true classic and is world class. It pours effervescent bright gold under a 1" off-white foam cap with moderate retention as streams of bubbles rise from the bottom. The aroma starts with fruit mixed with barnyard or perhaps old socks. The fruit aromas are a blend of stone fruit, berry, a touch of sour, traces of wet leather and hints of honey. Tart berries lead the palate balanced by a moderate unsweetened lemon sour. The beer is bone dry with medium to medium low barnyard and fruit balancing the tartness. The beer ends with long lingering tart fruit aftertastes. The texture is incredibly mousse-like, light and elegant. The flavors in this beer are complex and layered making it a real treat. I rate it 100.

These four beers are great for savoring while cherishing old memories of loved ones long past. Cheers Grandma, these are for you!