



Romancing the Foam No. 118

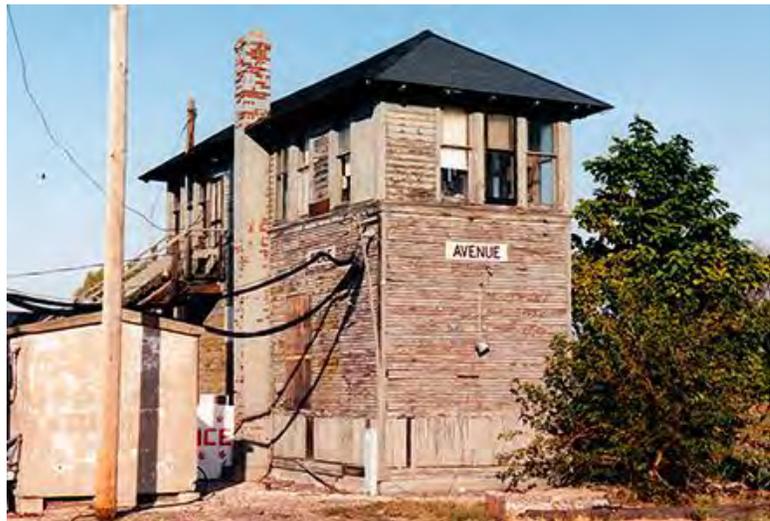


It's the early '70s and I have college worked out to an art-form. I'm pursuing a Bachelor of Individualized Studies degree which is anything I can negotiate with the Honors Department and all of my classes are independent study which is whatever I can talk a prof into agreeing to and I do not have to go to class or be anywhere. Basically, I am getting paid to read books and write reports about them. So I decide to go to Chicago to seek my fame and fortune.

A friend has given me a Corvair which is everything Ralph Nader warned us about and then some – the previous owner rolled it at least once. I stash my books and typewriter with friends and head south. My Wobble friends Bill and Andy live on Fullerton west of DePaul and they have a couch that is mine for the summer if I want it. I am looking to get a job as a railway switchman. To start, they put you on a locomotive pulling a train and after it gets out of Chicago, when the train comes to a switch, they let you off, you flip the switch and then after the train passes the switch, it stops, you flip the switch back and get

on the caboose. Eventually you get left out in the middle of nowhere in a little hut and you wait several hours for a train heading back to Chicago to pick you up. You get paid for waiting around and no one objects to reading while you wait. The quantity of pay to the amount of actual work involved is enormous.

A friend works for the railroad manning one of the last manual interlocking switching towers from midnight to 8 am and often after the bars close we will go hang out and drink beer and help him switch trains through the Chicago yards. He thinks he can get me in and does get me an interview. The interviewer asks to see my draft card – I have a student deferment – and the interviewer explains that with a student deferment, I will either end up back in school or in Nam. I bum around Chicago looking for work without much luck but I do run into a bunch of



August 30, 2018



students from DePaul who feed me in return for playing chess. Then my luck and money run out and my car dies in a mall parking lot.



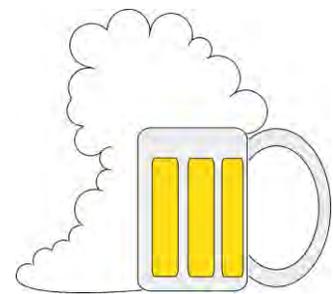
I've been on my own for 4 years or so and haven't received any support from my parents, but this seems like a time to give them a call. I have enough to take the Ravenswood from the mall down to Chicago Union Station to make the call. There is a Western Union nearby, so my dad can send money if he agrees. I put my last quarter in the phone. The phone eats the quarter. I am so frustrated and so mad that I hit the phone as hard as I can. All the money comes out. I stuff all my pockets and my pants are practically falling off but I make it out of Union Station, get on the red line, find one of my DePaul chess buddies. He grabs his tools drives me back to my car. I buy the part, we fix the car, fill it with gas and I have enough money left to make a beef stroganoff dinner for my Chicago friends at Andy and Bill's and then head north the next morning with a couple of pockets full of quarters.

Chicago's Pipeworks Brewing is a few blocks south of where Andy and Bill lived and their beer triggers my memories of Chicago. Pipeworks is a production brewery founded in 2012 at 3912 W. McClean Avenue in Chicago. They do not have a taproom and they do not give tours, but they do have a bottle shop on site. They are known for brewing

interesting, edgy beers with the kinds of bottle and can art that during the 60s and 70s one might have spent an afternoon contemplating. Here are three of my favorites.

Pipeworks Brewing Company 27 Lives (8.5% alcohol by volume) is a hoppy Belgian Tripel. It has spicy Belgian yeast aromas, some earthiness, stone fruit, berry, over ripe fruit, light malt, and mild alcohol. Yeast aromas are medium high, hop aromas are medium low and malt aromas are low. It pours hazy amber permeated by moderately fast streams of bubbles under a 1" off-white to cream colored cap with fair to good retention. Mildly sweet fruit, berry, grapefruit, stone fruit, apricot, light dried fruit, with traces of caramel and sugar flavors roll across the tongue. By mid-palate an assertive bitterness emerges and it finishes moderately dry. The bitterness is herbal with bits of grapefruit rind and is mellowed by the Belgian yeast character. The beer is very creamy with a medium light body and above average very soft carbonation. There is mild alcohol warming but the alcohol is not hot or harsh. I am enjoying this beer because of its rich flavors and texture and how the Belgian yeast transforms the big assertive hops. This beer pairs especially well with oysters. I rate it 85





Pipeworks Brewing Company Electric Rattlesnake (9.0% alcohol by volume) is an American Barleywine. It smells of chocolate, dark dried fruit and alcohol. The aromas are not big. The alcohol, malt and yeast aromas are medium. It pours deep dark brown under a cream to tan cap with a very fine bead and good retention. The beer offers rich flavors of chocolate, dark dried fruit, raisins, figs, a hint of sherry and a light dark sugar sweetness. There are some dark bread and dark dense cake flavors. There are no harsh roast, sharp bitter or hot alcohol flavors. The alcohol provides a gentle warming that grows subtly as you drink it. This is a very big beer with very mellow flavors. Malt flavors are nicely developed. The malt and alcohol are medium high, and the yeast flavors are medium. There are no harsh or burnt roast flavors and no hot or

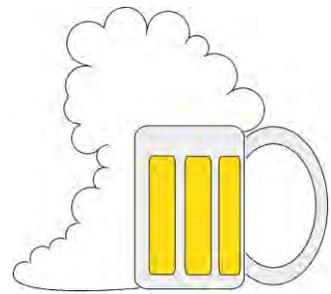
harsh alcohol flavors. For a big beer everything is soft and rounded and very well balanced. The malt is big, but it is not overbearing. Hop bitterness is medium low with the alcohol providing the balance for the malt. The beer is very creamy with a medium full to full body and very fine soft carbonation. This is an excellent beer and is well worth repeating. I rate it 90.

Pipeworks Brewing Company Velocity of Light (7.0% alcohol by volume) is a double dry hopped (Galaxy and Cryo Mosaic Hops) Specialty IPA brewed with oats. You notice the oat aromas right off. They blend well with the floral, tropical fruit and citrus aromas from the hops and I like it so well that I would like a plug-in air freshener scented with this beer. It pours hazy amber gold under a lacy 2" white to cream foam cap with good retention and a very fine bead. The beer has a very fine texture and you immediately feel and taste the oats seasoned with tropical fruit and a mildly sweet citrus rind slightly tart pithy bitter tang. The bitterness shifts the slightly sweet start to semidry. The bitterness is medium high - about the level of unsweetened Texas Ruby Red Grapefruit - but the oats, the light sweetness and the hop flavors knock off the rough edges. The oats play an important role because they help achieve a balance without loading the beer up with sweetness. The beer has an alluring very



August 30, 2018

creamy texture with a medium full body and medium carbonation. You want this beer for oats and the rich texture they provide along with the balance of flavors. The beer is delightful and infinitely repeatable. I rate it 90 and on my next beer run I will buy more.



These are all fine beers and worth repeating. For washing down oysters the 27 Lives is a no brainer. For spending an evening smoking a brisket, watching the grass grow or watching a fire, Electric Rattlesnake is a perfect choice. And for a big, full flavored beer to ease the transition from work to something else, choose the Velocity of light.