



### Brewhaha #3: Portsmouth Brewery, Portsmouth NH

Around midday, I saddled up the Mom's Buick Century -- which I immediately nicknamed C-Note -- and rolled on up I-95 into Cow Hampshire. It was a perrrfect summer day: bright sun and mid-80's. They were familiar roads; I'd traveled them many times. NH is barely more than an hour from Boston, and that nub of the Granite State that gets to taste the Atlantic is pretty small. But that nub does have Portsmouth, and Portsmouth had the Portsmouth Brewery (PB).

This was my first visit to Portsmouth, and though that surprised me a little, I soon rationalized that this would be a cool town to hang out in with that special someone, it's definitely not what I'd call a Party Town, and Party Town is generally what I've gravitated to in life. Hence, Key West. Nuff said.

Anyway, it was a classically Nice New England Town, with the obligatory narrow winding streets leading in, the stereotypical (but genuinely impressive) big church with sky-high white steeple, and red brick buildings galore.



People were everywhere. Ideal weather does that to a place like this. And nice people too, you could tell. Too early in the day to be crazy yet. Same rang true for me. I wondered how many of these polite sidewalk strollers would be face down in the toilet in 12 hours.

I punted on any chance of an on-street parking spot and wheeled into a garage. I had already spotted the gleaming golden mug of the PB on my right as I pulled into town, so there was no point in driving any farther away from that establishment than I had to. I chuckled at my meter ticket; I had to be back by 4:20. Okayyy, I guess I can think of a reason to oblige.



PB was crowded. Summer weather was ideal, people were feelin' goood, and biznizz was lively. I squeezed into the only seat left at the bar -- happily it was right in front of the taps -- and ordered up a Bottle Rocket IPA. IPA's were clearly going to be the focus of NEBPT, with Pale Ales a decisive but distant second.

The barkeep was reasonably friendly -- he was busier than he wanted to be, you could tell -- and he asked me about a menu. "Nah," I replied, handing over the first of what would be many 20's out of my wallet, "just the beer." He nodded, "One and done, huh? K", and brought me my change.

I started jotting a few thinkies in my Notbook, and the people next to me, as people next to me often do, asked "Whatcha writin'?"

Part of me wanted to snarl, "Your obituary," but it was too nice a day, and the Bottle Rocket was too damn tasty to be such a grump. So, I lowered my pen, raised my glass, and grinned, "Absolute shit." Only then did I notice what a well-to-do couple they were. Looked like they were straight from their winter home in Boca Raton: stylish, pressed shirt and pants on him, sparkling bling on her. But they were amicable enough, and they laughed at my self-critique, so I settled in for some bar chattin'.

They threw their names at me but they sailed right on by. Retired, white-haired, and looking quite fit, they had it all going on. And they were totally digging the PB. Not surprisingly, the Red Sox came up in conversation. They were Cape Codders, as I recall, and he had some very inside connection on Sox Nation. He still volunteered as a guide for European groups that came to Fenway's luxury boxes. Sounded like a coolo gig to me.

He said that he had been at Fenway just the day before, in fact, for some full organization photo thingo, and that Darnell MacDonald, the Sox outfielder was just about the nicest guy he had ever met: "You know his story, right, career minor leaguer and just thoroughly enjoying every minute of his time in the bigs. What a friendly, happy, nice, nice guy."

Wow. I was glad to learn that Darnell was a nice guy, but when I heard that he was a "nice, nice" guy, I was quite impressed. So I flagged down the barkeep. "So much for one-n-done, eh?" he quipped. Righto, chief. Tour Rule #2 -- having just one at the first stop o' th' day -- was out the window already. Another Portsmouth-brewed product, Smuttynose Shoals Pale Ale, was next up.



Just as songs and smells, etc., will remind you of

certain people or places, so do beers. Harpoon IPA will always remind me of the Uno's Bar in Woburn with its crazy laws and nutty crew. And Smuttynose will always remind me of Thayer. She was a sweet little lady and she was totally in love with the cute seal on the Smuttynose label.

My bar neighbors bottomed-up and skedaddled, and I reckoned that I should do the same. I got back to C-Note jusst in time, and made the appropriate gesture. :)



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