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Vol. 16, Issue 10

FREE ~ GRATIS

December 2018/January 2019

Finding our way with the Chatham Beverage District

by Lyle Estill

I've been involved with local foods from the beginning of the movement. And I am well known as a local economy freak.

But how I arrived in the food and beverage industry is a great mystery to me. I've never waited tables. Or tended bar. I've never been a busboy. Or a dishwasher. Now I am all of those things.

About a year ago I took the corner office job at the Fair Game Beverage Company.

Fair Game is a winery and a distillery on the east side of Pittsboro—tucked in behind State Employees Credit Union at the Plant, where I have worked for many years.

The former home of Piedmont Biofuels, the Plant was once a place of great rumbling trucks, and massive pumps, with millions of gallons of liquids coming and going. We all wore uniforms, since the work ruined our clothes.

Now it has become a place for adult beverages. It is the home of Fair Game, and Chatham Cider Works, and it is the new home of Starrlight Mead. It is becoming the Chatham Beverage District.

Stiletto heels have replaced steel-toed boots. Forklifts carrying totes of acid have been replaced by folks carrying bags of bottles. My brain has been retooled from 7500 gallons to 750ml.

It appears I was created to move liquids around.

As the new guy in food and beverage I found Fair Game had a lot of spinning plates. We were in business with Whole Foods. And with ABC. We have a tasting room. A barrel aging operation. Constant tours.

We are in business with hundreds of bars, restaurants, and wine stores. To say nothing of events.

As I shone a flashlight into the dark corners of the business, I decided to focus on our Pittsboro Tasting Room, and came out with The Bloody Local—a gift crate packed entirely with NC specialty food products wrapped around our Flying Pepper vodka. It was obvious to many that Fair Game Flying



Pepper makes the best Bloody Mary in town.

For the past year I have been doing what all new execs do: learn the business, and apply force where it will show the most promise.

Since we are a small business, I also became the art department, the janitor, and the tasting room operator.

As I approach my one-year anniversary of not knowing what I am doing in food and beverage, I am pleased to report that our tasting room has grown nicely. We have curated a solid collection of NC wines, are carrying dozens of NC specialty food items, and have a wide variety of NC craft beers on tap.

Mix that in with our small batch barrel-aged spirits, and hard cider from Chatham Cider Works next door, throw in a stop at the new Starrlight Mean on the hill and you



have the recipe for an excellent customer experience.

As a nascent Beverage District we are

BEVERAGE CONTINUED, PAGE 2

Love and Nature, going through life hand-in-hand

by Joe Jacob

What do love and nature have to do with it? For me, they are everything. You know the ole saying, "it is what makes the world go around". It certainly makes my world go around. I cannot imagine life without either. Perhaps I should state that differently. I do not want to imagine life without either.

When I look back to a time when I fell in love, really fell in love, not puppy love, my connection between love and Nature becomes very clear to me. I had been dating someone in Florida when I went to an environmental conference in Colorado and met someone-else. It was love at first sight. One evening after the conference ended, we met in a parking lot to talk. I remember it being very cold. I know I was cold and I am not sure she had on a coat. When we hugged to say goodbye for the evening, we just kept hugging for a very long time. Nothing was said. We just kept hugging. I would like to say it was to get warm, but the real truth was it felt wonderful to just hug. Here I was in the Colorado mountains hugging someone I hardly knew, and it felt so natural. When it came time to leave after the conference and fly back to North Carolina, I remember conflicting feelings. I felt both elated and empty at the same time. Sometimes love does that to you. My internal conflict at the time was because I wanted to stay with someone I fell in love with, but it was time to get back to work saving as much of Nature as I could as an employee of The Nature Conservancy, an international conservation organization known for buying land to protect it.

When I tried to convince my Florida friend that we needed to change our relationship, she tried to convince me that I was just having a Rocky Mountain high, and how I was feeling had nothing to do with the person I had met. Actually, for a while, I wondered if she was right. Was I in love with this new person or was it the feeling of being surrounded by the beautiful Colorado landscape with hundreds of other environmentalists passionately devoting their time, effort and treasure to protecting as much of Nature as possible? I decided it was both, and that was the end of the Florida relationship.

Months went by and my new love and I wrote to each other often. Occasionally we spoke by phone. I went back to Colorado to visit her at Easter, and she came to North Carolina to spend a few days during fall colors to hike with me in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. After another trip back to Colorado to meet her parents and a trip to Washington, DC with me to lobby for wilderness protection, we decided that maybe we should try living together for six months. That was over 34 years ago.

A lot happens to a person over a period of 34 years. Your life gets turned upside down when you least expect it. Family members die. You have to deal with unexpected medical problems that kick you when you are down. Friends move to other locations leaving you missing them. If you are lucky like we are, that long hug in a Rocky Mountain parking lot becomes a bond that has only gotten stronger as time has gone by. The bond strengthens as you see the other person as your hero after observing the way they have weathered life's storms.

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PHOTO BY LESLEY LANDIS

The Monument, Part 3: *Symbol*

As far as I know, the person who put blackface on Chatham's Confederate monument a week after its unveiling never was caught. To be honest, I can't say that it was blackface. It's just a hunch; for one thing, Henry A. London rarely if ever shrank from itemizing the lurid deeds of humankind for the Chatham RECORD, but his report of September 5, 1907, titled "Monument Defaced," pulls up curiously terse:

"On last Monday night was perpetrated one of the most disgraceful acts of vandalism ever known in a civilized community. On that night some person or persons defaced the monument recently erected in front of our courthouse in memory of Chatham's Confederate soldiers. The defacement was made with black shoe polish (a bottle of which was found near the monument next morning) and with grease. After several hours of hard scrubbing most of the shoe polish was removed, but still

a few streaks remain on the monument.

Of course such an outrage aroused great indignation when discovered next day, and the county commissioners as soon as they met promptly offered a reward for the arrest and conviction of the guilty person or persons. Such an outrage is a misdemeanor and is punishable by fine and imprisonment, and every effort will be made to detect and punish the guilty party as he deserves. We regret to know that our county is disgraced with the presence of any human being mean enough to commit such a despicable act."

There followed a reward notice issued by the county commissioners, offering \$25 for the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators.

A search of the RECORD for the 15 months following turns up no report on the capture of the perpetrator. The likelihood of a

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