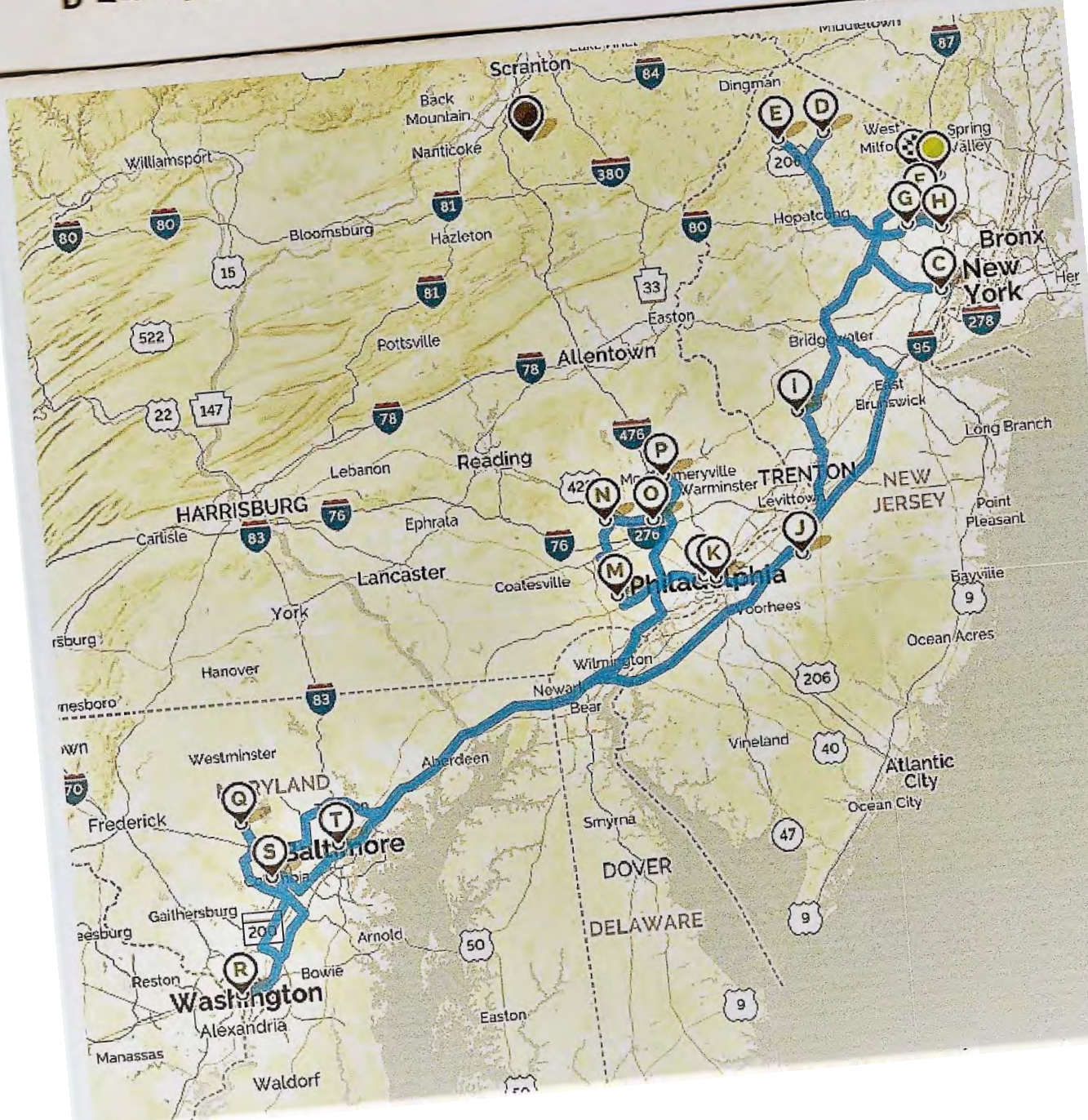


# BILL and RANDY'S EXCELLENT Adventure



## Introduction

Prior to the National Convention of the American Distilling Institute (ADI) in Baltimore, Maryland, Bill Owens, President of ADI, and Randy Pratt, owner and distiller of the Great Notch Distillery, set off on an 863-mile adventure visiting 20 distilleries and 2 distilling support business's covering three states (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland) and the District of Columbia. This story recounts Bill's and my time on the road, at distilleries, and meeting the interesting people along our adventure. Not to be overlooked during our visits were the amazing craft spirits being distilled.

Bill filled a three-ring binder containing an extensive list of distilleries to visit on this trip. Time and distance simply made it impossible to visit everyone listed. Our apologies to those of you we could not visit.

## Tuesday, March 28

My cell phone rings, I say, "Hello?" "Hi Randy", came the unmistakable voice on the other end of the phone. It was Bill Owens, the President of the American Distilling Institute. "My connecting flight has been delayed in Phoenix. Tell the guys who we were supposed to see tonight we won't make it. My flight won't get in until 10:30. I'll take a cab to the hotel and we'll get a fresh start tomorrow morning at another distillery on the list", answered Bill. I responded, "No Bill, I'll still pick you up so there's no need to take an expensive cab ride and maybe we can get a bite to eat. I'll track your flight online and pick you up at the airport later." With that I hang up and go about my business. As I think about the call and the lousy weather we were having in New Jersey causing the flight delay, I'm thinking, "Wow. That's a long delay in Phoenix. Was Bill calculating east coast time or west coast time?" You see, Bill lives in California and maybe he hadn't thought about the time difference. With that call, it started Bill and Randy's excellent adventure.

I contact the guys that would be our first stop on an impressive list of distilleries to visit and apprise them of the situation and not to be disappointed if we couldn't make it. I track Bill's flight on *Flightview* and see that he's only a half hour delayed assuming I have the correct flight number because none of the numbers Bill gave me matched anything coming out of California, much less Phoenix, Arizona. There was a flight coming out of Copenhagen with the numbers he gave me, but that was just ridiculous. I'm sure he said Phoenix.



Newark Airport ahead



## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

I leave my home for the airport at a reasonable time only to find rush hour traffic extending past its rush hour time. Lakes of water rise in the middle of what were passable streets earlier in the day. My windshield wipers can't seem to dispense with the teeming rain quick enough. Things have slowed significantly. Now, if you have had the pleasure of driving in New Jersey during to what could be described as a Nor'easter, you may associate highway driving to the equivalent of a Grand Prix and demolition derby with other drivers, and an occasional Seeing Eye dog, wearing blindfolds. This was no typical night. Driving was slow. Making my way to the airport through a patchwork of highways and side streets with potholes that have blossomed with the accumulating rain water. I pull over to the side of the road to check on the status of the flight. Perfect. It's on final approach. I decide to wait on the roadside for a few minutes until the tracker says the plane has landed. My cell phone rings. It's Bill. He informs me that the plane has landed and that he's packed light and everything is in his carry-on bag. Also, telling me that he's a fast walker. Good to know. No need to park, I'll just meet him at the arrival's doorway.

I don't know about the layout of your city airport but at Newark Liberty International they have three terminals; A, B, and C. Terminal C is typically utilized for international flights. Bill's plane landed at Terminal A at 7:30 p.m. No sweat. It's the first terminal and there's little activity happening. I pull up to the arrivals doorway to the far right of the terminal hoping no one will bother me in a No Standing/No Parking Zone. This will give me the opportunity to easily move forward to another door if Bill happens to come out further down the terminal. Looking through the windshield saturated with rain I hear a "tap, tap, tap" on the passenger side window. "Hey, you can't park here. Keep it moving", a Port Authority police officer notifies me. "But..." I respond, as he says, "Move it, or ticket it". So, I move, VERY slowly. I'm hoping Bill's fast walk can catch up to me before I run out of terminal doorways. He didn't. Hadn't he worn his track shoes on the plane? I begin the loop out of Terminal A thinking I'll take a quick spin around the airport and be right back at the spot I just vacated. That quick spin became bumper to bumper snail mail with the heavy rain and people now trying to reach Terminal C for international flights. Navigating the spaghetti lines of cars and brake lights towards the airport loop was an adventure upon itself. My phone rings several times during the loop around and the caller ID indicates it's Bill. I answer, but he doesn't respond. I think he's butt dialing me. Finally, I get to the outer loop and things start to move and I end up exactly back where I started. I see people coming out of the terminal and a gaggle of cars are now surrounding me. No police officer in sight. Bill calls again. No butt dial this time, it's the real deal. He's outside the doors and finds me in the terminal line hidden behind an oversized Uber vehicle. After exchanging pleasantries, we make our way out of the airport all together.



Bill's plane taxiing at Newark International Airport in the rain

We agree that it's still early enough to make our first stop, albeit more than an hour away, while the rain continues to fall and now a dense fog settling in. We call the guys at our first stop to alert them of our pending arrival time and if they are still willing to wait for us. They are. Bill asked if it was possible to have something light to eat once we arrive. They said they would see what they could do, but truthfully it sounded skeptical. We make our way off the highways, local roads and onto the country roads of New Jersey. If it were during the day you would appreciate seeing the beautiful countryside, rolling hills and charm of the small towns we drove through. Our drive was different. It was pitch black, raining, foggy and miserable driving. Bill would exclaim, "Look at all the new building going on. Isn't it wonderful?" How the hell could he see through the darkness, rain and fog? It beats me.

According to the GPS, "You have arrived at your destination on the left". Really? All we see in the darkness are residential homes. We call. "We're here", I say at, "blah, blah, blah address". "Oh, no.", came the response. "You're at my house". Evidently, Bill's trusty three-ring binder of addresses and locations contained outdated information. No worries. We'll update it later with the new location and numbers. We, however, are an additional twenty-five minutes away. We start heading towards the reprogrammed address in the GPS and start to wonder if this was a good idea to trek out under these conditions after an exceptionally long day for me, and long flight for Bill. Keep in mind that Bill is still on California time and it's not past his bedtime. Sack time was approaching fast for me along with a growling stomach.

We arrive at the **Milk Street Distillery**, which happens to be on Milk Street, and we are greeted on the porch by Mike and Gordon. They could not have been more inviting as we exit the car and are welcomed into their distillery. It felt like home to me - when my wife isn't around. To the delight of our hungry stomachs a platter of cheeses and assorted meats await our consumption, not to mention a sampling of the spirits Mike and Gordon have worked to produce. The front of the distillery has charm and a comforting atmosphere. The inner workings at the back of the distillery where production takes place has character. The first thing you'll notice are the wood planked floors. I did anyway. These planks have been refurbished and run wall to wall from the bar to the distilling area under the two stills. The columns of the stills are taller than the ceiling so a cut-out was needed to go through to the attic. What was particularly creative was a wash-out area. It looked very much like a shower. Because of the wood planked floors this necessitated an area where barrels could be filled, equipment rinsed, and overall cleaning could take place. Even without the planked floors, it's a great idea. As Mike and Gordon point out other interesting aspects of their distillery, Bill and I both agree that we made the right decision of bearing the elements and visiting Milk Street. We hit the road much later than anticipated and head to the hotel through the fog being cautious of deer.

Bill's favorite meal of the day: Cheese and meat platter.

[www.milkstreetdistillery.com](http://www.milkstreetdistillery.com)



Mike (left) Gordon (right) with main still





Homemade 6" column on original still



Wash out ("shower") area



Gordon cleaning



Before I continue with our story, let me say that every distiller and owner we met upon our journey were gracious and accommodating. Each distillery had its own charm, personality, history, and story. When we listened to each story we recognized a harmony that every distiller/owner has for starting their unique distillery and the passion they all have for making great spirits.

### **Wednesday, March 29**

We leave the hotel and head to our first stop of the day. The rain is gone and the day looks like it's going to be sunny and clear. I listen to Bill complain about the horrible coffee they had at the hotel and he suggests stopping at a *Starbucks*. But there are none on the way to our first stop. "How about a diner?", I ask. "Nah, don't want to waste time sitting at a diner," Bill reply's. "We have a lot to accomplish today". Doesn't Bill know Jersey is known for its diners? So, we press on with no coffee. We move onward to the **Jersey Spirits Distillery**. Within moments of entering the distillery we are greeted by John. This is a characteristic of Johns' that within seconds of entering the door into the tasting room you are greeted with a friendly "hello" by John or someone at the distillery. There is a genuine warmth to his greeting that you simply feel welcomed. Before entering the main door leading into the tasting room, Bill noticed an unusual contraption vertical to either side of the doorway. John explained that these are flood gates since the area has been prone to flooding. Thankfully not while he has occupied the space. John enlightens us about his distillery and that Jersey Spirits are named after places in New Jersey and experiences the co-founders, he, Sue and Betty, have had in Jersey. They have a deep respect for New Jersey and its' storied landmarks and look to preserve and honor them by integrating each fond memory into their products. These traditions and homage will continue with each new spirit they announce. We take a walk across the complex to a small luncheonette and have a quick cup of coffee, finally coffee, while Bill also grabs a breakfast sandwich. Interesting to note that their service didn't adhere to John's distinguishing greeting or attentive service.

[www.jerseyspirits.com](http://www.jerseyspirits.com)



John telling us about his still



The bar back at Jersey Spirits





Bill liked the still drawing on the label



Flood gate at front door

We move onward to the **Silk City Distillers** located about twenty minutes away. Fortunately, morning rush hour traffic has eased and makes for a speedy trip.



Missed morning traffic on way to Silk City. NYC in background.

We meet James and his brother John at the distillery. A third co-founder Tim is out on the road like most new distillers taking care of business. Silk City is just getting into the game and has an ambitious plan with multiple whiskeys in the pipe line. A bar and tasting room are under construction while local ordinances are navigated. The nearby city of Paterson nicknamed “Silk City”, which the distillery is named after, was the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. By 1870 nearly fifty-percent of the silk made in the United States was produced in Paterson. “Silk City” has a deep history with the inventions of the Colt Revolver which helped tame the west; and locomotives that moved freight to build a burgeoning nation. If Silk City Distillers can accomplish half of this, they are well on their way of becoming a new industrial giant in New Jersey.

[www.silkcitydistillery.com](http://www.silkcitydistillery.com)





Doorway to Silk City



Brothers John (left) James (right). That's Bill in the middle.

Bill and I settle back into the car in what has turned out to be a beautiful warm sunny day, a far cry from what we had experienced the previous day. We start heading towards our next distillery. After piloting through every red traffic light on a state highway swarming with heavy midday tractor trailer traffic and a couple of detours later, we eventually made it out to the open road and rolling hills of New Jersey. When we came upon an unclear detour at an intersection I asked Bill, "Should I make a left, or a right?" "Go left", Bill says. Well, we've got a fifty-fifty shot at this I'm thinking. Unfortunately, we find ourselves in a loop ending up right back at the unclear detour sign. GPS, you ask? No assistance here in the middle of nowhere with no distinguishable street signs to help. Perhaps we should have asked the four guys leaning on their shovels while one man worked in the hole in the road. Nah. We're men like those guys. We don't ask for directions. We just need a shovel to lean on. After a U-turn, a lucky guess, and a few more turns we end up on a road that delivers us to the **Sourland Mountain Distillery**.

The Sourland Mountains surrounding the distillery has a rich history of farmers, bootleggers and rebels according to Ray, the owner of the distillery, as we tour the facility and property. The distillery itself is located on the Double Brook Farm, separately owned by Robin and Jon McConaughy, along with a micro-brewery and restaurant. A sampling of the rich history of the area can be found in the bar top in the tavern which was milled from a tree that was up-rooted during a storm on the Lindbergh property. For those of who don't know about Charles Lindbergh, he dared to be the first aviator to successfully achieve a solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. A feat which today seems pedestrian. Sadly, Lindbergh's legacy is also known by the 1932 kidnapping of his 20-month-old son, Charles Junior, which ended tragically. Whoa, that's some heavy stuff there Randy. None-the-less, it's a story that supports the history of the area and that of the distillery, if they choose to tell it. The extensively restored 1800 brick colonial farmhouse aptly named, Brick Farm Tavern, sits across the parking lot in front of the distillery. The tavern was not open the day we visited, so we drove down the road to the Brick Farm Market (also owned by Robin and Jon) housed in a refurbished 1930's Chevrolet brick auto repair shop which was quite attractive and produced an array of mouth-watering fresh foods, baked goods and desserts for your pallet. It seems, rightly so, refurbishing old buildings is popular for their charm and historical preservation. Bill and I enjoyed lunch with Ray and his distiller, Cam, who is interested in pursuing his own distillery. As lunch conversation turned to the upcoming ADI conference in Baltimore we discover that Cam owns a kilt and can play the bag pipes. We try to enlist him in providing a processional march for Bill as he opens the conference, but to no avail. Some excuse that his kilt was at the cleaners.

[www.sourlandspirits.com](http://www.sourlandspirits.com)





Lunch at the Brick Farm Market, down the road



Sourland Mountain Spirits distillery building



Still at Sourland Mountain Spirits





Brick Tavern Restaurant on grounds

We're off on the road when Bill realizes that he's lost his phone. When driving with Bill you soon learn the far-reaching grasp this man has in the distilling world. Beyond the standard phone calls to and from the ADI staff concerning the planning and progress of the upcoming conference and Gin Summit, only days away, or sharing additional notes with his staff on the distilleries we visited, Bill receives calls from seemingly everywhere and everyone. And, seemingly he knows everyone. I pull off to the side of the road for Bill to look around if it had fallen out of his pocket. With no phone found Bill climbs back into the car. Sensing, what I perceive as a bit of controlled but subdued distress, we make yet another U-turn and head back to the restaurant to search for the phone. Was it accidentally thrown away in the trash? Did he leave it on the table? Could it have fallen out of his pocket onto the restaurant floor? Is someone now making long distance calls on his phone to the Far East on his dime? The suspense! As Bill hurries back inside to the restaurant on his search and recovery mission, I figured I'd take another look in the car. Viola! There it is, wedged nicely between the seat glider and the floor. It wasn't possible to see it from the passenger side door where Bill got out. But when I opened the rear door and I tucked my head under the seat, it presented itself, giving me a sigh of relief. I run inside to give Bill the good news and we're off on the road again after the short delay.

As we reached our next destination I looked up the meaning of "Train Wreck" in the *Urban Dictionary* on my iPhone. It described the definition in this manner, "a total f---ing disaster... the kind that makes you want to shake your head". Well, let me tell you that on this visit David and his son Aaron are in the process of opening the **Train Wreck Distillery** in an old railway station along a rail line that is now used as a hiking trail. A red caboose at the end of the parking lot rounds out the charm of the train station turned distillery. If all things go as planned for David and Aaron, they'll eventually be able to have people sit out on a lawn area overlooking a river that runs at the base of the property or on the planned patio off the bar as people stroll along the old train path. There's no disaster here. They're on the right track.

[www.trainwreckdistillery.com](http://www.trainwreckdistillery.com)



Train Wreck still from tasting room window





Aaron, Carl and David (l to r)



Future patio location

Our last stop of the day in New Jersey was at the **Cooper River Distillery**. James, the owner and head distiller, was across the river in Philadelphia preparing for an event later that night. We made a quick stop to visit the distillery and an employee was finishing a still run. What we found interesting was that Cooper River had the only open flame still of the twenty distilleries we would visit on this trip. When you visit Cooper River you will find an ample parking lot across the street where the guys may give you a parking fee break if you mention that you are going to the distillery. Or, you can take the chance of parking out front of this previously used car repair shop which still has signage that says Painting, Alignment, and Brakes above its garage doors. No mention of the distillery. Careful though, if you park your car in front of the building and the light-rail train passes, you may be chasing your bumper down the street.

[www.cooperriverdistillers.com](http://www.cooperriverdistillers.com)





Cooper River Distillery still



Direct heat flame at Cooper River



Light rail train in front of distillery





Gift Shop at Copper River

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

We head over the Delaware River into Philadelphia to search for a hotel. As we make our way around the cobble stone streets we pass Independence Hall, Franklin Square Park, Betsy Ross House and the United States Mint. Why didn't we stop at the Mint, you ask? Evidently, they don't give out free money.

Cobble stones are rumbling under the car tires as we drive the narrow streets of Old Philadelphia. Nearly everyone during my lifetime, and everyone I know from Pennsylvania (family and friends) have referred to them as cobble stones. Bill disagreed. With a little research, they are called, setts stones. Bill can see in the dark *and* knows his stones.



Setts Stone, not Cobble Stone



Hotel view looking across to New Jersey. Ben Franklin Bridge in background

After checking into the hotel Bill contacted Robert Cassell owner of Millstone Spirits, President of the Pennsylvania Distilling Guild and spokesman for a modular distilling system to name a few of the multiple spirits bottles he's juggling in the air. We walk over from the hotel to a nearby Tapas restaurant where we enjoyed an array of delectable foods including Spanish Octopus and lamb meatballs. Conversation included a broad discussion on topics such as the upcoming Gin Summit, ADI Conference, proposed legislative action on interstate craft spirits shipping, and the progress of craft distilling in the country. All good stuff here. We top off the night at a local ice cream shop a few blocks away and treat ourselves, to what else, bourbon ice cream.

Bill's favorite meal of the day: This was a toss-up, but the Spanish Octopus wins out by a tentacle.



**Thursday, March 30**

The next morning was cloudy again with a chance of rain. Where's that California weather that Bill was supposed to bring with him? We set out and head to the new location of the **Philadelphia Distilling Company**. The distillery is next to the Fillmore Philadelphia Theater which is an iconic music venue. The Fillmore first opened in San Francisco in 1965 helping to launch the careers of The Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Santana, The Doors, Hot Tuna and many others. This new distillery location will be able to provide cocktails before or after a show at the Fillmore. We make our way walking over the unfinished parking lot to where the outdoor patio is planned and enter through the main doorway leading into a high open space and a very long bar. As you enter you inherently look straight ahead at a large wall painting of a Blue Coat Gin bottle with a 13-star colonial flag behind it. Then, looking to your left over the bar you see through the huge showcasing windows of two impressive stills. Your initial reaction has got to be, "Whoa". If distillers dream, and we all do, this may be what many of us aspire to achieve in our dreams. Bill and I are introduced to a couple members of the distilling and production team as they put the finishing touches on this impressive renovated industrial space complete with original graffiti gracing the inside walls. Upon his arrival, Andrew the managing partner of Philadelphia Distilling, greets us and runs us through the nuances of the renovation and upcoming distillery move over a cup of coffee. Andrew tells us about the improved production space, tanks, piping, equipment, and the several wood fermenters installed. The wood fermenters have gained some popularity amongst distillers and offer a way of fermenting with wood rather than closed stainless steel tanks. These fermenters are seven feet deep and are made in nearby Northeast Philadelphia.

[www.philadelphiadistilling.com](http://www.philadelphiadistilling.com)



The bar back windows



Copper helmets at Philadelphia Distilling





Spirits collection/proofing box



Wood fermenters

Our interest in the fermenters was heightened and Bill and I head to the **Hall-Woolford Wood Tank Company**. The building is pretty much non-descript on the outside. We felt silly sitting in the car looking at a map, Googling the location on our iPhones and calling to get directions, while all this time we had been parked right next to it. The only reason we found it was by circling the block and driving to the end of the street and making a U-turn and catching a glimpse of the lumber yard behind the building.

We meet Jack Hillman, General Manager, and his son Kyle. A proud narrative told by Jack is that this company has been around since 1854, before Abraham Lincoln became President. That's a lot of generations of Hillman's keeping the tradition and hand craftsmanship rolling along in what has become automated times. Jack tells us that many of the water tanks you see on top of skyscrapers in cities have been manufactured by them. One of their tanks is installed at Citi Field where major league baseball's New York Mets play. You'll find hundreds, if not thousands, more on rooftops across New York City and elsewhere around the country. We intently listened to the fascinating history of the business and the specifications designed for each tank. Jack tells us the largest diameter tank they have made was 250 feet across. Tanks are made for specific functions such as the fermenters we saw at Philadelphia Distilling, water storage, containment, a planter, or hot tub – yes, hot tubs. After we munched down some pizza we took a tour through the milling, production, assembly and lumber yard. I certainly gained a greater appreciation and knowledge of the advantages of wood tanks and the various industries, including distilleries, utilizing and benefitting from wood tanks.

[www.woodtank.com](http://www.woodtank.com)





Jack and Bill walking the production floor



Jack explaining an original piece of equipment



Wood staves to be used in a tank



## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

Just as Bill and I are questioning whether to make a left or right at the end of the lot, Jack offers his advice, and we take it. We make a left and we're hustling to our next stop. We visit the **Red Brick Distillery** and you guessed it, it's a red brick building. We meet Brian in what seemed like a labyrinth of hallways in a multiuse building in this partially below ground distillery. Red Brick is on Martha Street, a small side street in Philadelphia. It's one of the many places in the area that has a growing upbeat vibe. Red Brick uses Briess products, "naturally grown, meticulously crafted malt", and we're told by Brian that Red Brick's single malt whiskeys sell out regularly. After tasting a sample, we see why.

[www.redbrickcraftdistillery.com](http://www.redbrickcraftdistillery.com)

[www.briess.com](http://www.briess.com)



Brian inside the aging room



Front door (below) Red Brick Distillery

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure



Briess product



Bill and Brian in production area



## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

On our way through the streets of Philadelphia Bill puts some of his photography skills to work on the fly capturing the essence of this blue collar working man's city.



A working man in pick up truck on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street



A neighborhood street in Northeast Philly

If you look at the photo above you'll notice an E-Z Pass on the windshield. How did we survive without this on the roadways, bridges and tunnels? I remember having to pay for a toll by throwing a quarter into a protruding basket hanging on the side of a toll booth. Heavens forbid if you missed and didn't have another ready at hand to toss in. The horns of every motorist and their extensive vocabulary of swear words would hail down upon you. If you dared get out of your car to look for the poorly tossed quarter you better have an out of state license plate. Only then you may not be sworn at, but given the middle finger salute. Or is that just a Jersey thing?

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

Without incident or being given the “salute” we arrive at **Rowhouse Spirits**. I’m pleasantly pleased that there was ample parking as the local and narrow streets were clogged with cars. Dean is the proprietor and a transplant from Toronto, Canada. He formerly worked for I.B.M which is an acronym for, “I’ve Been Moved”. Dean is a big man with a friendly catching smile. His distillery is located in a building once used as a gas station. The artwork on the outside of the building was commissioned by the city which has hundreds of murals painted throughout Philadelphia. Dean will tell you that he has been fortunate to have traveled in his life and during those trips he has met many interesting people. It was through those people he became interested in creating his own spirits and traditions.

[www.rowhousespirits.com](http://www.rowhousespirits.com)



Dean holding a pump, with a smile





Bottle label of Amaro



Is it just me? Or, does this label look like Dean without the smile? Either way, no messing with this former Canadian



Mural on Rowhouse Spirits building



It's raining again as we drive out to the **Deer Creek Malt House**. Mark and Josh are struggling with a tire that's gone flat on the fork lift with a delivery truck waiting to be loaded. There are pallets filled with grains all around us. Mark and Josh are kind to give us some time and warn us not to get too close to the two docile looking horses in the corral. Evidently, they aren't so docile. The floors where the traditional floor malting takes place are currently empty and swept clean waiting to be sanitized. Bill and the guys talk business as I keep an eye on the horses.

[www.deercreekmalt.com](http://www.deercreekmalt.com)

[www.newlibertydistillery.com](http://www.newlibertydistillery.com)



Malt rake at Deer Creek



Award winning Malt Whiskey from  
New Liberty Distillery using Deer Creek grains

While driving to our next destination Bill starts the conversation saying, "You should never talk to someone about your health problems." He then proceeds to tell me a story about a recent medical condition he has overcome. The story, as Bill tells it, is that while on a prescription medication he had some hallucinations about aliens and passwords. While the aliens were a bit fuzzy in his mind, the password is "5", unless it's sunny - then it's "7". Considering all the rain we've been driving through, I'm guessing five has been the password. Oh, and those aliens. Maybe keep them to yourself.



The **Blue Bird Distillery** is our next stop. Jared, Blue Bird's founder, gives us a tour of the production area and the spirits he's working on. We grab a place at the bar in the tasting room where a few other patrons are just chilling out. I wonder if they know about the aliens. Wherever you look you'll see something to catch your attention in the distillery; like the wall painted murals, the production chart, or the very extensive drink boards written in various colors of chalk. Bill and I enjoy tasting a couple of spirits then a cocktail. The "Livin' in Sin" cocktail with its creative topping design seems to be our deciding choice. You'll enjoy these impressive cocktails which are creative and visually pleasing, not to mention delicious.

[www.bluebirddistilling.com](http://www.bluebirddistilling.com)



Livin' in Sin Cocktail





Jared, the founder of Blue Bird Distilling



Tasting room and bar at Blue Bird Distillery



One of several chalk board drink menus



The last distillery we visit for the day in Pennsylvania is **Five Saints Distilling**. The distillery is in a firehouse built more than 125 years ago. Inside the building remains a ramp the horses would run down to get a running start pulling the water wagon. The fire pole the "firemen" (that's what they were called back in the day) would slide down is still in its original location. On this night, it was open mic night and a singer with a guitar was entertaining us. John, the owner, told his only joke at the mic. The joke was good, his spirits are better. When John took us on a tour of the production area he told us the story of how Five Saints was started. This included why he named each of the pieces of equipment after one of the five fathers (men) that has had an influence his life. His story makes you appreciate the word "family". John and his wife Amy provided wonderful hospitality as Bill and I took advantage of their generosity and bunked in their carriage house for the evening.

A motto in Pennsylvania is, "You've Got a Friend in Pennsylvania". Each of these men and women we visited today upheld that slogan.

[www.fivesaintsdistilling.com](http://www.fivesaintsdistilling.com)



Labels for Five Saints spirits



Sign on product shelf



Firefighter memorabilia on walls



## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

Bill's favorite meal of the day: Not the pizza that we had for lunch or dinner. It was the hard-boiled egg for breakfast he made himself at the hotel.



This is an egg



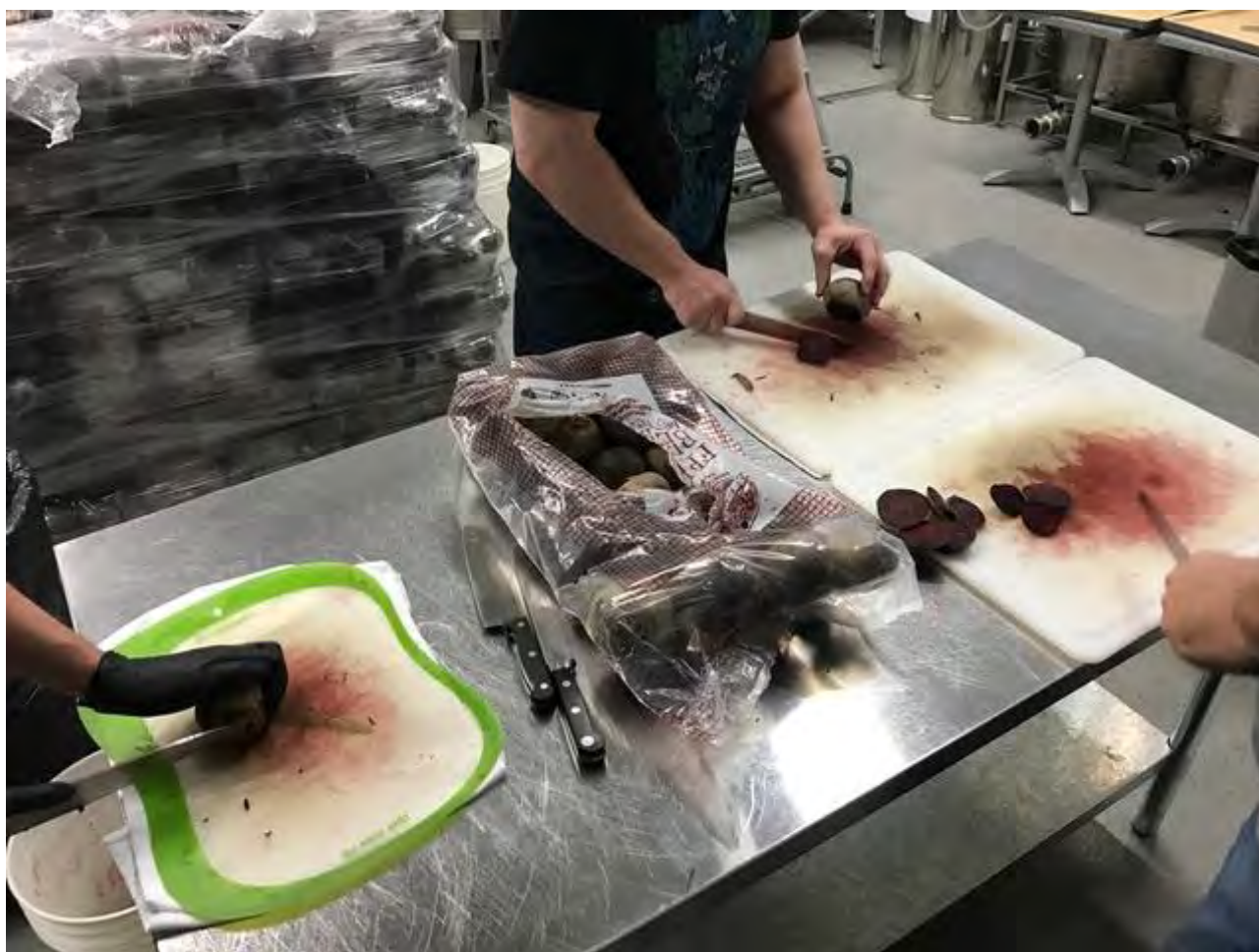
Local pizza shop in Pennsylvania

### Friday, March 31

The following morning Bill and I awake, to you guessed it, more rain. While we prepare to leave the quaint cottage, I take a quick look at the walls to make sure our snoring competition during the night hasn't stripped the walls of its paint. Nope, we're good. Bill was sleeping on the first floor, and I was in the loft. We sawed wood all night. I'm surprised the United National Lumberjack Snoring Association (if there is such a thing) didn't present us with an award the next morning.

We ride on in the rain towards **Boardroom Spirits**. We meet Marat the founder of Boardroom who is of Hungarian descent. Interesting to note that the spirits Marat distills is on a Hungarian built still. If you studied basic chemistry in high school and if you remember the Periodic table you'll recall that C is for Carbon and B is for Boron. At Boardroom Spirits, C is for Carrots and B is for Beets. These two periodic letters adorn their spirits bottles as well. Marat tells us that it takes about 12½ pounds of fermented and distilled carrots for one 375-milliliter bottle. The day we visited they were hard at work prepping a skid of beets for fermentation. These two distilled spirit specialties using carrots and beets as a base are unique not just in Pennsylvania distilling but perhaps the nation.

[www.boardroomsprits.com](http://www.boardroomsprits.com)



The tedious process of slicing beets





Boardroom Spirits Hungarian still





Tasting room at Boardroom Spirits

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

Here's my Periodic table; Ra-Radium, I-Iodine, and N-Nitrogen. What does it spell? R.A.I.N.

I white knuckle it in the heavy downpours on the highway as we head to Maryland. My fingers are numb from gripping the wheel as I feel the car slightly hydroplane. I think Bill may have sensed a little tenseness or tiredness on my part; we did have a competition the night before, and suggested we stop at a highway travel stop. While Bill finally got his Starbucks, I went in search of some throat lozenges. Bill finds me in the store and discovers the Holy Grail of travel bags. As he places it on the counter I ask, "Are you kidding? What are you 90 years old?" Bill begins to explain with all sincerity, "This is a piece of Americana. Look at the artwork. The use of colors, and the landmark representation of each of the States in the illustration," I say, "Okay Bill," as I grin at Bill's wonderful sense of pleasure and joyful heart, even if he isn't ninety.



More rain



Americana travel bag





A patch of trees in Maryland  
(Don't they have trees in California?)

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

Along with Bill's awesome new travel bag we part with some type of chewie organic fruit candies Bill found on the store rack. The label proclaims that the product is "always free" of nine things I personally would want in my candy. It further proclaims, "delicious satisfaction". It was awful, but Bill liked it. Maybe he is ninety.

We hustle back through the parking lot to the car in what amounts to another down-pour and set our sites on what's been voted as the "The Coolest Small Town in America". We don't know who voted for this town but Sykesville, Maryland was very pictureque with historic homes and alluring main street shops. It's also the home of a new distillery called **Patapsco Distilling Company**, aptly named after the nearby Patapsco River. We meet with Scott, the owner, who is working on a fermentation tank when we arrived. There's always something to be fixed or cleaned in a distillery. Scott shows us around the century-plus old building and the structural improvements he was required to complete before occupancy permits were issued. As you can imagine it was a lot of work, but it will be well worth it as Sykesville has another reason to be called "cool".

[www.patapscodistilling.com](http://www.patapscodistilling.com)



Patapsco Distilling Company





Scott shows off refurbished second floor banquet room



Scott checking the spent mash

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure



Patapsco tasting room under construction



Indoor golf at Patapsco Distilling



## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

While in Sykesville we have lunch and a cappucino at one of its appealing little storefronts. This restaurant specializes in crêpes and had a large delicious selection.



Crêpes



Downtown Sykesville, Maryland

Our wheels start rolling again as we head towards Washington, D.C. We navigate the belt-way of Washington and make our first stop at **District Distilling** who lay claim of being D.C.'s first combination distillery, kitchen and bar. It's located in the heart of the city's U Street corridor. We meet with distiller Matt who is responsible for production and the two massive columns each containing 21 plates which rise-up through the flooring to levels well above the street level. The 8000-square foot facility features the distillery production space on the ground floor occupying three conjoined late 19th century row houses. The bar and restaurant on the second floor covers a span of five addresses. An interesting fact that Matt shares with us is that he found his current position on an ADI Forum. While Matt won't boast about his accomplishments it's easy to see why he will be leading District Distilling to greater heights. Perhaps he should consider leading our U.S. Congress while in D.C.

[www.district-distilling.com](http://www.district-distilling.com)





Main still



Soaring column





Smaller still at District Distilling





Columns rising above floor levels



Bill approves of hoses hanging on the wall



**Founding Spirits** may not have been the first to claim being a combination distillery in the District of Columbia but they certainly have found their spirit. Get it? Founding Spirits. Found their spirit. Sorry, I digress. Bill and I walk through the revolving door into an airy space with high ceilings, high windows and a bright colorful bar. We meet Dan the owner, and Jon the VP of beverage operations who is also the distillery director of the Farmers Restaurant. Founding Spirits occupies a small production space near the bar in the restaurant. A viewing window from the bar gives you a peak into the production area as Jon explains the herbs and botanicals that go into their Amaro. While the distilling space and still may be considered small, the flavor is large.

[www.foundingspirits.com](http://www.foundingspirits.com)



Entrance to Farmers Restaurant and Founding Spirits





Jon (left) with assistant



Herbs and botanicals infusing for Amaro



Still at Founding Spirits



## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

Bill's favorite meal of the day: It was a tie. La Grecque Galettes (Greek Savory Crêpes) with a cappuccino for lunch, and the salmon sandwich at the Union Market in D.C. for dinner.

We end our visits for the day and head to Gallaudet University where we would be staying the night before the Gin Summit. This is where we catch up with members of the ADI team and the speakers who arrived from around the globe to make presentations at the Gin Summit. This is an impressive group of people with fascinating stories and experience who are exceptionally committed to craft distilling.

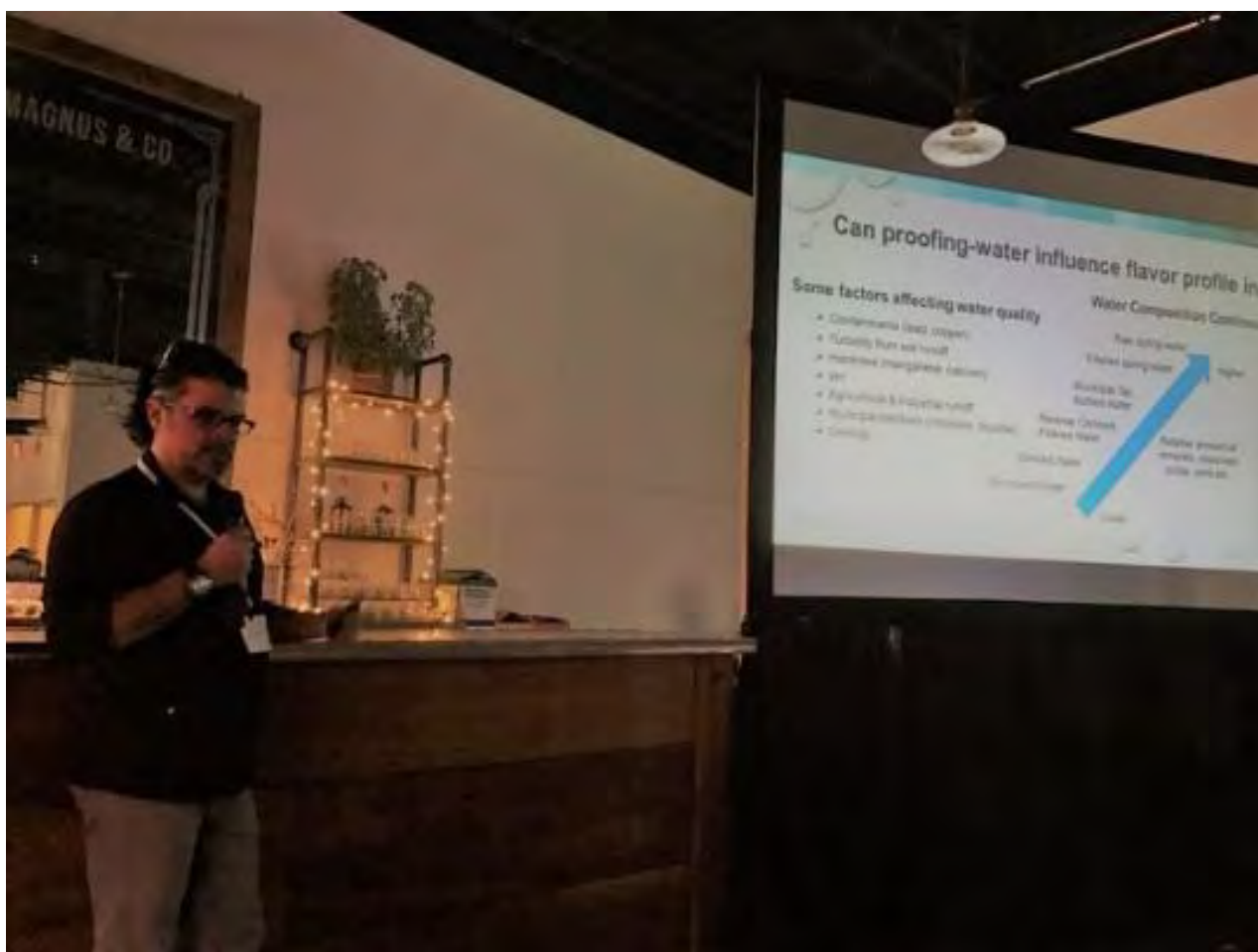


(l-r) David T Smith, Christy Howery, Joe Barber, Eric Zandona, Bill Owens, Julia Nourney, Ann Brock

### Saturday, April 1

There was no April fool's joke here. It was Gin Summit day and all systems were "go". The weather even cooperated and gave us a partly sunny day. Wahoo! The full day summit was held at the **Jos. A. Magnus Distillery** in the Murry Hill section of Washington, D.C. and they were wonderful hosts. Bill made his welcoming remarks and the summit was off and running. Wow, what a morning. The staff of ADI and the presenters were working like perfect botanicals enhancing the aroma of your new make alcohol. Brad Plummer of Coastal Spirits gave an eye opening and thought provoking presentation on various types of water sources. There is a difference among each source you use to proof down your spirit. It *does* matter if you are using distilled, RO, well, city/tap, filtered, bottled, spring, and a couple of other water sources reviewed. Brad's power-point was the basis of a book he is writing pertaining to the influence water has on spirit alcohol.

<http://josephmagnus.com/>



Brad Plummer discussing water significance

Philip Duff is a renowned gin and genever (yes, spelled with a "g") historian. His presentation started with the earliest known origins of the juniper based health-related tonics and medicines in 1269 Europe (yes, 1269), towards a more recent spirit segment. It was in 1689 when Prince William III of the

Dutch House of Orange ascended to become King Willem III of England. It was he who inadvertently encouraged the creation of gin as we know it by encouraging domestic distilling by banning foreign-imports. Philip has traveled far and wide to research and read first edition books dating back hundreds of years to quantify his research. The Library of Congress would be proud of Philip's depth and breadth of gin and genever.

The "Gin Girl", Natasha Bahrami, walked us through classic and contemporary styles of gins with a tasting of what she views as the more stimulating gins. The nuances with of each of the gin samples and their mouth feel, aroma, visual appeal, palate, and distillation methods were explained. If you like gin, this was where to be.



Sample flight of gin

Stephen Gould is a gin distiller and founder of the Golden Moon Distillery in Colorado and is the first American member of The Gin Guild. Stephen detailed gin's arrival in the New World of the Caribbean, and North and South America. Stephen shared with us that he has distilled a gin from an 1870 gin recipe. His spirits are made using the same type of artisan production processes utilized by distillers in the mid-to-late 1800s. Stephen is an interesting historian who, I'm told, has a world-class research library containing hundreds of rare books on distillation and related products and processes, some dating back to the 1500s. Perhaps we have another Library of Congress candidate?

Tommy Haughton of Beacon Commodities described the significance of botanicals and from where they are sourced; such as orange peel from Egypt. His presentation enlightened us of the regions



## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

and countries around the world that help us produce our savory botanic spirit. Obviously, without botanicals there would be no gin. Thank goodness, we don't have to worry about that.



Peels drying on lines



Jos. A. Magnus stillhouse



Jos. A. Magnus entrance

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

ADI (staff) “nose” and consultant Nancy Fraley has the rick barrel room named after her at Jos. A. Magnus. Her blending has helped Jos. A. Magnus win several awards.



Proud Nancy



The Gin Summit afternoon sessions had several more presenters, a panel discussion, an induction ceremony, and a gin and tonic networking reception. Bill and I unfortunately were unable to attend. We needed to press onward and start heading towards Baltimore.

Stop number twenty-one brought us to **Republic Restoratives Distillery** in the Ivy City section of D.C. There was no parking on New York Avenue and I was stopped on a busy street corner. I told Bill to run in while I sat in the car. His advise was to park there and “live dangerously”. The last time he said something similar to that statement to me, I started a distillery. We run into the Republic Restoratives Distillery where you can clearly see the two stills through street level windows. We walk into the tasting room where a polite bartender was preparing the bar. No one was available from the distilling side so we took a couple of quick photos, left a business card and moved on. We were back in the car just as an officer passed in his patrol car. This time there was no tap, tap, tap on my window.

<http://republicrestoratives.com>

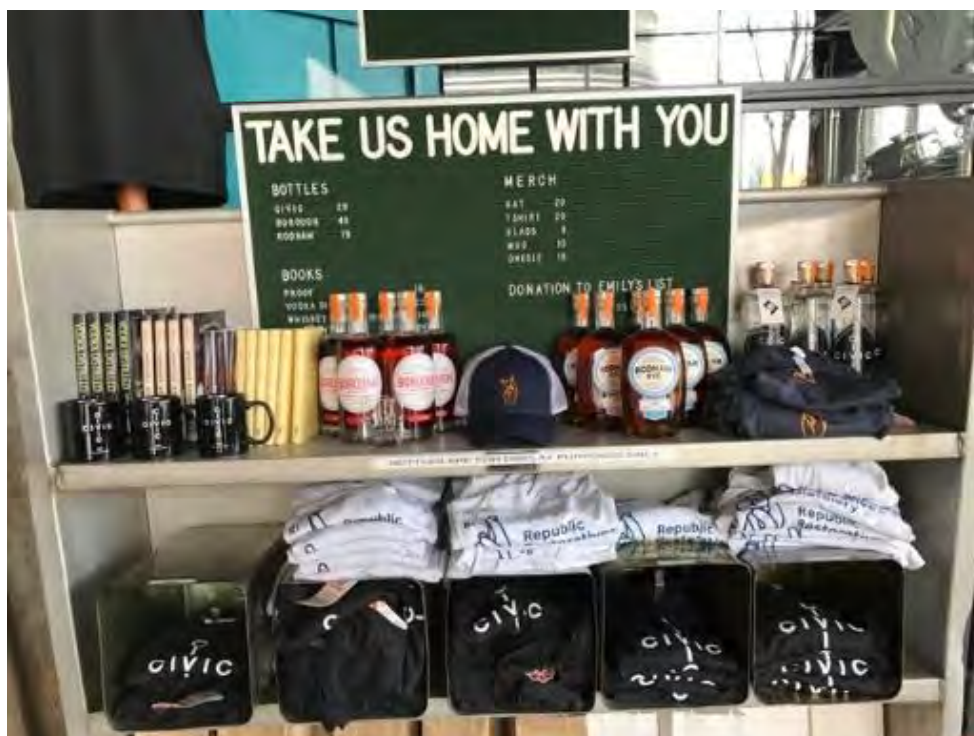


Stills at Republic Restoratives (forward and background)

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure



Bar at Republic Restoratives



Merchandise at Republic Restoratives

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

A few blocks away is the **New Columbia Distillers** and meet John, the owner and distiller, as he is greeting people as they enter. His distillery is busy on this day as people arrive for a tour and tasting. He see's Bill and it was like two long lost friends finding one another again. Smiles all around. I'll drink to that.

<http://greenhatgin.com>



John greeting customers at door





Entrance New Columbia Distillery



Customers enjoying a taste at New Columbia

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure



Bill puckering up to an Amaro bottle





Rye

Whiskey Barrels from New Columbia Distillers

Stop number twenty-two is programmed into the GPS and takes us to our last distillery on this adventure as we leave Washington, D.C. and head towards Baltimore. Once again we utilize the information from the three-ring binder which takes us to a location which use to house the **Lost Ark Distillery**. Bewildered, we circle the building and travel up and down the street thinking perhaps the GPS is wrong. It has to be around here somewhere. Well, it wasn't. Isn't this ironic? We're lost in a car looking for the Lost Ark. We call Andy, co-owner and distiller, and he tells us they have since moved to a new location. We find our way to the distillery and it was in a location of what can be described as an office park. Once you walk through the doors the space is high and bright forgetting any preconception of the building type. We meet John who happily invites us in and gives us a tour of the facility while explaining his equipment, grain and distillation process. Bill and I are satisfied that we found the Ark and they won't be lost too much longer.

[www.lostarkdistilling.com](http://www.lostarkdistilling.com)



Jon at Lost Ark Distillery



Open space at Lost Ark





Lost Ark still



Lost Ark tasting room with Bill and John

## Bill and Randy's Excellent Adventure

We finish our last visit and drive to Baltimore where the conference will be taking place. I can sense that Bill's mind is already thinking ahead to the upcoming event and his responsibilities as we drive to the hotel. I drop Bill off at the hotel and I head back north to my distillery with having the great pleasure of meeting many interesting people creating craft spirits and visiting the eclectic distilleries in, or soon to be in, production.

While I headed back north, Bill continued to photograph his adventure. Enjoy a compilation of photos from the ADI convention in Baltimore. We hope you enjoyed reading about our adventure. Cheers!



Photo of Downtown Baltimore from tallest building





ADI staff relax after a full day of registration



Two hundred shots served in 2 minutes during gala dinner



Some SWAG from vendors





Stillhouse at Sagamore Distilling



Old Fashion from Clock Tower speakeasy



Outside Cotton & Reed entrance





The back bar at Cotton & Reed



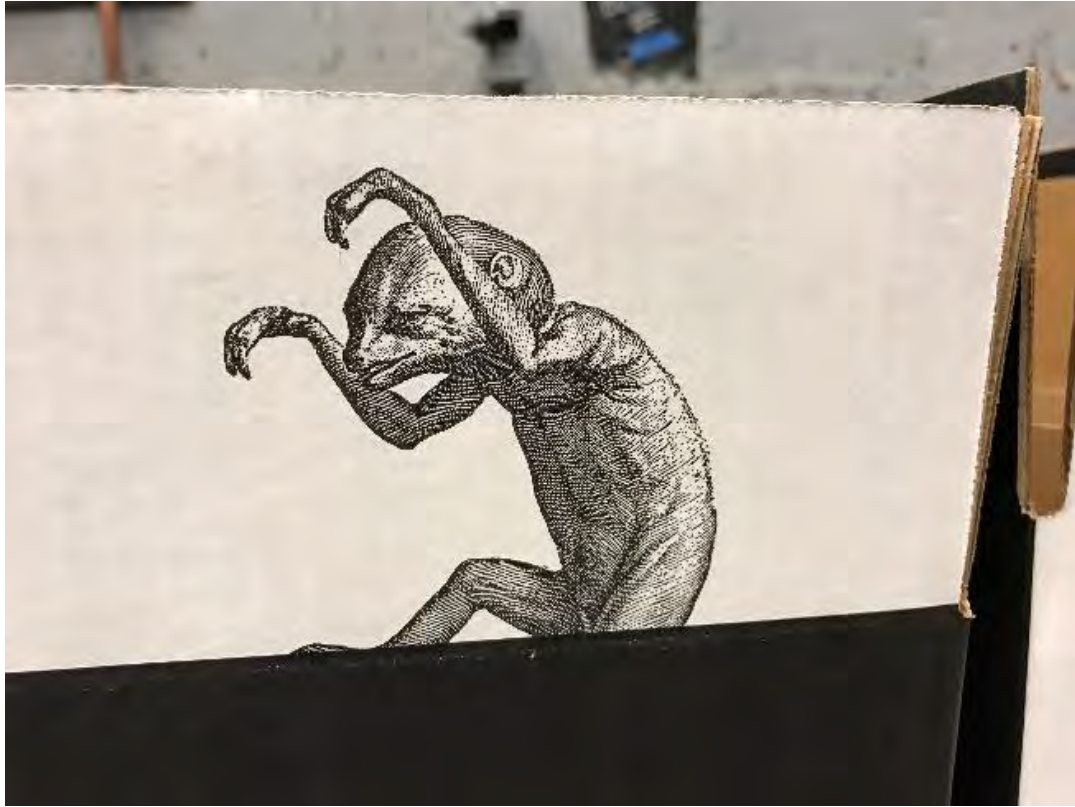
Reed Walker distiller/partner of Cotton & Reed. Notice filtration system





Stillhouse at Cotton & Reed





When you open a carton of Cotton & Reed, this is what you may see





An Amaro





Whiskey Sour





Bill spotted the Capital