Whether you clowns were crying for this encore or not, I just assumed you were. In my last round of spouting half-formed ideas and opinions, I talked about an issue I take with a portion of the community. In “Campfire Songs”, I talked about the tendency of some to make others feel less than worthy by indicating that their tastes, perceptions or feelings are less than valuable. It’s a small group of the crowd that participates in this. This go-round, I’d like to address a larger portion of the beer-passionate, a way to help build on this wonderful thing we have going on with craft beer. Because a beer tastes so much better, is so much more memorable and stays with you in memory much longer when shared with others…up until the point where you remember nothing at all.

Whether in the aisles of your favorite retailer, looking over the tap wall of your favorite bar or on some form of internet forum or social media talking about beer, you have an opportunity to make things welcoming to others. It’s as easy as that “nod” you give/get when your order or selection is approved by another. A quick, “That’s great beer” or “I really liked that one” can be the gateway to a conversation with a new face, that could lead to another bottle at your next bottle share, a friend for the next beer dinner or just someone to share a beer with after work. I see this happen in our store all the time. My job is beyond easy, because I’ve got guests helping each other without urging. And the opinion of a fellow consumer is much easier to believe, in comparison to mine, who some view as having something to gain from your purchase.

Keep in mind, an offer of opinion may be met with questions. “What do you like about it?” “Is it more/less bitter than Beer X?” “What is this?” There is any number of things that may be asked and you can better serve yourself, and others, with a bit of education. I took a lot of my thoughts in the last article into scripting my Houston Beer Week class at the store. I’m redoing the format of my classes to focus less on the nerdy history of things that I love and changing things to hopefully offer more useful information. This is not information I’ve come upon on my own. I’ve taken this beer thing to stupid levels where I have a modest library of books on the brewing process, brewery histories, ingredients, etc. That information is valuable to me in my personal journey through beer, and my choices on what to try are much more informed by it, and by past experiences.

I can’t seem to find the quote, but it’s said that you’re paid back for a book by sharing the knowledge you gain from it; that old thinking that you give back what you’ve gotten. None of us got here alone. I’m asking that you open yourselves up to helping someone else along. I’ll continue spouting all of the things I’ve discovered in my “beer nerding” sessions with the attendees of my monthly (hopefully!) classes, and I hope to see you all at least once to share in the nonsense.

This last class, I saw a handful of new faces in my classes. I mention this, because I have my regulars that are in nearly every class. Those chosen few are the ones destined for the most hassling during the class, but everyone gets a good amount of that. But, of these new faces, there are a couple that seemed to really take to what I had to offer. I didn’t realize it that night. It wasn’t until I got an email, this past Sunday, that I got the hint. I won’t use his name here, as I’m unsure of how he’d feel about me sharing that without his consent, but I’ll share the brief discussion.

He and his wife were invited to dinner Saturday night. They made the decision to share with the party a bottle I had offered in class, Buffalo Bayou Vanilla Mocha Sunset. He titled the email “(expensive) egg on my face”, because in their excitement, he felt he oversold the beer to the crowd and it didn’t have the character they had remembered from the night of the class. He went on to ask about glassware and its possible impact. I responded about his glassware concern, but restated from the class that it could have been any number of things, like what food he’d had before, or alongside, the beer. I ended by offering the possibility that it’s just my talking that makes the beer taste better. Humorously, he jokingly replied that I may be on to something and he’d be in touch in the future to get recordings of me to play the next time he goes to share beer like this.

I hope that this anecdote offers more than a grin. We all have the potential to pass along the joy of good beer. We will benefit from sharing with all of the people, and our lives will be populated with those we’ve shared beers with. I found out this last class that I’m some sort of cupid. At a Beer 101 class years ago, two individuals began a relationship out of something like him dropping a bottle (…smooth) that began a conversation. They’re now married, which he showed me by holding up his ring finger like it was that other finger.

At The Flying Saucer in Sugar Land, I met a handful of regulars that I consider family as much as friends. I have “Bar Parents”. They stop into the store to see me on occasion and IT MAKES MY DAY! I’ve gained any number of nicknames, “Beer Rainman”, “Beer Sherpa” or “Beer Yoda” (all, I believe, originated by the same regular). I taught a beer class for the Ladies’ Guild of St. Laurence and still see some of those women out and about. I had women my grandmother’s age asking about my stupid neck tattoo (my words, not theirs) and telling me how much they liked the idea behind it, or telling me how much they didn’t realize they enjoyed beer. Had I not opened myself up to sharing my love of beer with these people in a way that was welcoming, I would be seriously lacking. This isn’t exclusive to beer, but “Beer Buzz” is.

I’d like to clarify that I’m not asking you to become evangelists for beer with a copy of Randy Mosher’s “Tasting Beer” under one arm and a stalk of barley in the other, walking into local bars and retailers talking to all strangers about the glories of your recent favorites. If your enjoyment is passive, I take no issue with that. This is not a call to action. But, if you feel compelled to action, this is a request that you make it constructive. Be the catalyst for another to discover the joys of the liquid.

So, there you have it. The first article was how not to be and this finishes by offering an idea of how to be. Beer isn’t everything…so I’m told, but that’s what I feel comfortable speaking about at the moment. Offer what you can to those looking and you’ll be rewarded time and time again in this community, I’ve been!

If you’d like to attend one of my future classes, and I hope you do! Please get in contact with me via e-mail. jwilliams@specsonline.com