

VII. Back to Beer

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1991 I was working in Sault Ste. Marie, my home town, for the summer following my first year of Architecture School at a firm called Tossell & Caughill and, after my first ever company golf day, we all went for lunch.

Bruce Caughill was not only a partner in the firm, he was (is) my buddy's dad. His son Adam was (is) a friend of mine against whom I played many hockey games growing up. So after golf, while sitting in a restaurant, Bruce and I talked about an upcoming canoe trip that he and his wife were embarking on the next day. Bruce looked over at me and said, "Anthony, let me buy you lunch. What are you going to drink?" Being a 20-year-old university student, I said, "That sounds great. I'll have a beer." Bruce smiled and said, "Of course you will," and then explained something to me that I still think of almost daily.

"Anthony," he said, "let me explain something to you. You're young, you're in university and you drink beer. You go out to bars with your buddies, you go to keg parties, you have down time and you drink beer. And besides, beer is cheap and you don't have much money these days.

"But eventually, you'll graduate and start working and then you'll start going to dinner parties and over to your friends houses and do you know what you'll bring? Wine. You'll still drink beer, make no mistake about that, but you'll start drinking more and more wine. You'll have a glass of wine at home with your meal, you'll have a of glass wine at a restaurant and you will drink wine.

"And then, you'll get married; you'll have kids; you might start up your own practice and you'll experience some lovely stress levels and then, do you know what you'll drink? Liquor. Like scotch or rye or a martini. You'll still drink wine and beer, but mark my words; you will begin to drink liquor.

"And then, your kids will grow up, they'll go away to university; it will give you more time to spend with your wife. You'll be able go on a canoe trip with just the two of you and do you know what you'll pack the cooler full of? Beer.

"And the moral of the story is: you always come back to beer!"

With that, he also ordered a beer with his lunch and I remember thinking: I want to drink beer for as long as possible to preserve my youth.

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It's 20 years later. I'm 40 and married; I have developed a taste for manhattans, scotch and vodka. At dinner, I prefer a glass of red wine. When we show up to a dinner party, we show up with a bottle of red. After I play hockey or while watching a game on TV, it's beer.

I never intended to, but I ended up following Bruce's alco-guide to life as an architect. And, in time, I really look forward to getting back to beer.

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