

# Mayor of The City from Another Universe

by Paul Juser

## Where'dja Pinch tha Hooch?

There was a man laying spread-eagle beneath the exit sign at the edge of the Number 5 parking lot. City Hall was in sight across the river. It was a sunny afternoon. He may have been dead. The police didn't call me back, and I didn't see anything in the paper. So I assume he was only drunk. A few days later, John Boehner canceled reservations at the same restaurant during a stay in Binghamton so secret even the local Republican elite didn't know he was in town until the next morning. A gang of protesters were aware, and assembled to greet him when he came to eat. Boehner dined at Cortese's instead. Allegedly, he tips well. Later last month, President Obama paid us a visit as well.

Did the Speaker see anyone publicly comatose during his stay at the "DoubleTree" (adjust for name-of-the-week) hotel that night, and that's why the President opted to sleep in Auburn instead? When Boehner (not-so-silent "eh") left town early the next morning, was there a man ahead of him buying a case of (George W.) Busch at the gas station? There was for me. It's not an uncommon sight.

A rumor circulated Galaxy Brewing as they prepared to open the evening of the President's visit. Allegedly Obama and Mayor Ryan would enjoy one of the three custom beers at the newest brew pub in Downtown. I'd requested to work as far away from Binghamton as I could, and the POTUS was en route to Scranton by the time I made it home. The Party Mayor did arrive that night, and the party for Galaxy's soft opening was one to be remembered. Every seat was filled when I returned the next day for an invite-only evening to debut the menu.

Seth Weisel moved to Endwell in high school from the Poconos area where his family has been in the beer business for generations. His mother's family were distributors, and home brewing was a hobby for his father, Mike, since Jimmy Carter made it legal in the '70s. Seth graduated from Cornell with a degree in environmental conservation and worked locally as a biology teacher. After returning to college for beer brewing, Seth worked as brewmaster for Roosterfish in Watkins Glen. That's when Seth and Mike Weisel decided to chase their dream.

After purchasing a Court Street storefront, Galaxy had fallen more than a year behind schedule. The historic building once housed the "Red Men Club." The society was originally known as the "Sons of Liberty," claiming descent from the group that threw the Boston Tea Party. The name was changed to "Red Men"—after the disguises used by the Boston Tea Partiers—following the War of 1812, and American presidents from Washington to Nixon were counted among its members. The organization saw its peak in the 1920s when it served as much as a Prohibition-era drinking club as anything else. While the club still exists in diminished size, the theater above Galaxy has been unused for decades and is in a state of disrepair with peeling murals of mounted Red Indian raids.



Roberson Museum & Science Center claims our name, "Parlour City," comes from the uncommon amount of sitting rooms in houses because the people of Binghamton were so affluent. Each year, Roberson's big event is the Wine & Food Fest, where the region's elite pretend they never heard the rule about spitting at a wine tasting. Much of Johnson City and Endicott are blanketed with homes from the IBM and EJ days, when companies could offer not only decent insurance for their workers, but a decent home for the employees to live. A manufacturing job in Binghamton today can barely provide wages to rent a room in these former mansions, but there was a day when the people of Binghamton lived in the lap of luxury, and they celebrated with the Clinton Street Run.

"That was 40 years ago," says Republican candidate Rich David, speaking of the traditional shot and a beer at each of the nearly 50 bars that now house Antique Row's shops, salons, and video arcades. David owns a high-end catering business and previously owned Flashbacks and "Paradigm" (adjust for name of the week). David does not believe there is a problem with alcohol in this city. He is excited by the rise of the brew pub in the Triple Cities, and says he would serve microbrews at his bar.

To the best of my knowledge, Teri Renna does not serve alcohol at Environ, but local drunks are encouraged to take the microphone at televised City Council meetings where she is president. She also does not believe alcohol is a problem in Binghamton. Ed Hickey would also be happy to serve local flavors at the Belmar and Fitzies Irish Pub, which already feature microbrews on tap. At Hickey's first press conference, he spoke openly about his past problems with drinking, and his arrests for marijuana possession are of the public record. It seems again, one of these things is not like the other. Douglas Walter Drazen has even bigger fish to fry—Rich David not the least of them.

Seth Weisel says he is not contributing to the city's notorious history. He is serving a handcrafted beverage for \$6 a pint to be savored, not Coors Light for a dollar a draft. He has spent years crafting recipes that he matches with gourmet cuisine by chef and fellow Maine-Endwell grad Brian Lovesky to provide a quality dining experience. Patrons of both Flashbacks and the Belmar are generally more rowdy. Music plays louder than conversation at both places, and while the Belmar is popular for Wing Night and Taco Tuesday, no one in the kitchen can call themselves "chef." Flashbacks is on State Street by the college bars, though its '70s theme plays more to office secretaries out for a night on the town. The Belmar's clientele varies between hardcore drunks and highly educated grad students, with a healthy mix of arts types between.

This reporter would be a hypocrite to condemn alcohol, and I know what I know about all of these bars from the number of nights that I've closed them. While I'm in favor of drug legalization, I'm not in favor of drug problems, and alcohol most threatens Binghamton. It permeates every level of our society from crime-ridden dives to vomit-soaked college bars, to prominent citizens passed out on tables in establishments passed off as classy. Alcoholism is not the problem in this city, and neither is obesity or pessimism. These are simply symptoms of a hopelessness that sits in our bones. We all want our city to prosper, but few seem willing to stand up and do the work. David and Renna are the front-runners in this campaign, but seem to have eyes shut and ears plugged to the ailments of the city. Maybe it's time we all sat down for a beer and figure out what we've been doing wrong.

## Matt Ryan Tells Us His Pick for Binghamton's Next Mayor

When we asked outgoing Binghamton mayor Matt Ryan whom he would prefer out of the current crop of candidates to be Binghamton's next mayor, his answer was a little surprising. "Anyone but Rich David," was Ryan's response.

When it was pointed out that group would include other Republican candidates such as Douglas Walter Drazen, Ryan repeated "Anyone but Rich David." A dislike for David, then, would seem to be the only thing Ryan and Drazen would agree on. Drazen has been known to literally foam at the mouth when speaking about Rich David.

Asked to elaborate, Mayor Ryan explained he feels David is "a liar" who consistently alters or ignores the truth, and that when David was deputy mayor the administration paid for services through borrowing that left the city in a fiscal crisis Ryan's administration had to clean up.

Mayor Ryan told us he has no plans for when he leaves City Hall. "Play golf," is the only thing he said was definite.

## Police Gazette Book Review: The Salvation Shark

If you like first-person hard-boiled detective novels with a twist, then you'll like Paul Juser's *The Salvation Shark*. Playing with the form of the traditional first-person narration, Juser distributes the story-telling chores among each of his five main characters. Each chapter is told from the point of view of one of them, putting us in the mind of the person as they experience the events. As a result, the same action is viewed and interpreted differently depending on the "author" of a particular chapter.

But the stylistic mash-ups don't end there. The book is not even straight detective fiction; it morphs through the horror, science fiction, and thriller genres as well. So anyone who gets bored with one style, voice, or approach will find things continually moving along.

The basic plot involves a teenage pop star who becomes disillusioned with the grind of fame and seeks an escape. That escape, however, takes her to people and into situations she never dreamed of in her worst nightmares.

*The Salvation Shark* is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and [printisbetter.com](http://printisbetter.com).

## NEW WORLD RECORDS

### Tallest Structure Built with Interlocking Plastic Bricks

The Red Clay Consolidated School District, incorporating Wilmington, DE, harnessed the manpower of 16,000 students to build a LEGO tower 112 feet 11.75 inches high. The district used more than 420,000 individual LEGO bricks with a total weight of over a ton.

### Largest Gathering of People Dressed as Superman

Escapade, a United Kingdom fancy dress maker, organized the superhero event while raising money for charity. The company provided hundreds of free Superman costumes in all shapes and sizes to a group of music fans at the Kendall Calling festival in Cumbria. A total of 867 donned the comic book hero's iconic outfit to set the new record.

### Largest Parade of Pickup Trucks

Rural Media Group promoted its launch of RURAL RADIO by gathering together 386 pickups and parading them around the track at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Courtesy of Guinness World Records  
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