

MARK HELLENDRUNG '90

## "Hi, Neighbor. Have A 'Gansett."

Okay, the Red Sox finally won it all. And now the team's one-time favorite beer is coming back.

"NARRAGANSETT WAS OUR BEER," SAYS ENTREPRENEUR MARK Hellenprung, a native of East Providence. "And we're taking it back." Earlier this year, the former president of Nantucket Nectars bought the rights to this formerly vital local brand and launched a vigorous campaign to revive it.

The Narragansett brand once symbolized New England in the same way that Rainier beer evokes the Pacific Northwest or Lone Star is synonymous with Texas. 'Gansett flowed on tap in local bars, went on family vacations to the Cape, and bobbed along on fishing trips offshore. And you can bet that what Red Sox fans of a certain age remember most about watching a game on TV is the rhythmic crackle of Curt Gowdy's welcoming, "Hi, neighbor. Have a 'Gansett."

Founded in 1888, the Narragansett brewery was later financed and managed by the Haffenreffer family—the same philanthropists who in 1955 gave the Mount Hope Farm estate and the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology to the University. The beer was brewed, bottled, and sold by Rhode Islanders. During its heyday in the mid-20th century, the Cranston brewery employed 850 workers, and Narragansett was the largest selling beer in New England.

But the brewing company was sold in the mid-1960s and by 1982 production had moved to Indiana. The beer's taste changed, its quality declined, and its popularity faded. "I've found that 35-to-40-year-olds don't remember drinking Narragansett," Hellenprung says. Forty-five-to-50-year-olds remember drinking it when the quality wasn't that good. It's really the over-50s who remember: "Hey, that was a damn good beer!"

While a student at Brown, Hellenprung worked for a liquor store delivering kegs to fraternities and off-campus parties. Kegs of Busch, that is. Narragansett "wasn't around much then," he said, but he does remember seeing signs for the beer. Once he had the idea of bringing back 'Gansett, he tracked down Bill Anderson, the last brewmaster from the Cranston brewery. Anderson dug up the old recipe, and together the two men experimented to re-create the original taste and quality. The result "is incredibly close," Hellenprung claims.

But this new beer has an added ingredient that the original lacked and that Hellenprung hopes will be a key to its success: nostalgia. "It evokes all those memories from a day gone by," he says, "which is incredibly powerful." The risk, he says, is that a beer



based on nostalgia could appeal only to older consumers.

After all, what's the attraction for microbrew consumers who never heard of Curt Gowdy and who might even be, well, Yankee fans? Hellenprung is searching for the modern equivalent of the brand's original identity.

"What is today's version of a neighbor?" he muses. "It's not *Leave It to Beaver*. It's condominiums and commuting and traffic, and all the nuances of life today: the pressures of time, the balance of work and life, women working—all those things. So I think [the challenge is] taking a great concept that was very vibrant in the fifties, sixties, and seventies and putting a contemporary spin on it."

"Hey, dude. Have a 'Gansett" doesn't quite have the same ring. Now, maybe if Snoop Dogg fills in for Curt Gowdy ...

—LINDA HEUMAN

with a financial services firm here. I'm active with the 21st Century Fund, which serves Brookline High School. Our eldest son, Sam, is a sophomore there; Ben, 12, and Will, 9, are also in the Brookline public schools. **Susan Hellerstein**, a fellow lit and society concentrator, lives nearby and has been an invaluable friend and guide to the local scene." Amy can be reached at amy@voorhes.net.

## 1982

**Kurt Fleischer** writes: "Nagisa, Lena, and I have moved to Piedmont, Calif., where Lena is in kindergarten at Beach School. All's well and we love hearing from old pals." Kurt can be reached at kurt@pixar.com.

**Joseph Gallo**, Ann, three daughters (Adriane, Phoebe and Francesca), and three

animals all returned from their 3½-year assignment in Milan, Italy. "A great and well-traveled time was had by all. We have settled in the Boston area and Joe splits his time between New York City and Boston (still with Citi-group). We're looking forward to catching up with many friends!" Joseph can be reached at 80 Goodnow Rd., Sudbury, Mass. 01776; josephgallo@mac.com.