

Esquire

Parkway Tavern – Tacoma, WA

By Joe Oestreich



You're Having: Sculler's I.P.A. drawn through "The Randall," a bonglike cylinder packed with whole hops

Tacoma is now undergoing the nip and tuck of urban redevelopment. Cranes swing over the skyline, and century-old buildings are bandaged with Tyvek -- courtesy of a massive gentrification campaign designed to buff the saltwater stains from this port town. But the Tacoma renewal works because it preserves the best parts of the city's tracks-and-timber origins. To see this success in the form of a bar, head to the Parkway, a neighborhood beer joint tucked among rehabbed Craftsmans and Victorians. A couple years back, two carpenter-regulars pulled down the drop tiles and unveiled a vaulted mahogany ceiling. They installed a working fireplace, cut cherry wood tables, and built a new bar top to replace the worn, white counter. And they did all this after-hours, so the bar never had to close. Not for one day. Everybody brushed the sawdust from their fleece and kept right on sipping cask ale and barleywine.

The renovation is now complete, and a bundle of fresh, local hops hangs over the doorway, a testament to the bartenders' encyclopedic knowledge of all things pulled from a tap. Black and white prints from the Northwest Photography Archives are framed on the walls. And on the street out front, cars sport the popular bumper sticker, "Admit it, Tacoma. You're beautiful." After a few hours lifting pint glasses at the Parkway, you'll get it. Tacoma may never be waxed and polished like Seattle, but this salty old broad cleans up well.