

The Meaning of Life

Is where you find it

We live in two places—Blacksburg, Virginia and Beaufort, South Carolina—and we love both. Blacksburg is a university town, reasonably cosmopolitan, and rich in opportunities for citizen involvement. It is where we lived, worked, and raised a family. Beaufort is a coastal town, a favorite tourist attraction of the Low Country, and rich in historical and economic significance for the East coast. Here, in the midst of the Sea Islands, is where we're learning that lifestyle is not only a choice we make, but also that the process of "choice making" itself requires a little help. Maybe there's a little story here.

One day, my wife, Elizabeth, noticed an old building located on a side street of downtown Beaufort was under renovation and advertising that it would become *The Old Bull Tavern*. I had no idea of the origin of the name, still don't, and also don't really know how the name relates to the experiences I, and we, have had there, but speculating would just be getting ahead of the story.

We watched the building develop over time, wanted to catch the opening, but were back in Blacksburg when that happened. Curiosity growing, we were soon back in Beaufort to give the place a try.

The first impression of the building was a head-scratcher. No signs outside. Did they not want people to find them? Actually, it turns out that it is the opposite. They want it to be local—a place for friends and neighbors to gather and assume that locals will find it. And find it they do, including us, the new locals of Beaufort!



Walking in, the place is active with staff members really hustling. Right away we found they take the time for a smile and friendly chat. The experience is actually therapeutic. One person said of her visit, "The Old Bull Tavern has made a shrink unnecessary. A visit is akin to mediating, but with great food and drink on hand. *You can find the meaning of life here.*"

An example of you-have-to-know-about-it-to-find-it occurred to me one time when I visited Beaufort alone. (Elizabeth was working in Blacksburg!) I wanted to have dinner downtown and checked to see if The Old Bull Tavern was open. Nope. Closed on Monday. Bummer. I drove downtown to look for another place but my search for a parking place found me driving again by The Old Bull Tavern. Though the windows are dark (tinted?) I could have sworn that I saw people inside.

I decided to check out whether my vision was playing tricks on me and walked from my parking spot to The Old Bull Tavern. The door was unlocked, and I went inside where I was welcomed by bartender Mathew and the owner who is also the chef. I seated myself at the bar and said to Mathew, "I thought that you're closed on Mondays." He replied, "We are." Perplexed, I said, "So, am I in some kind of virtual world? The place looks open to me." "Yes," he said, "We are." Feeling more and more in the twilight zone, I said, "Okay. Give me a Trouble Maker Wine and explain this phenomena to me." Drink in hand, I listened to Mathew explain, "This is the owner's way of giving back to the community. If you know about the place, you know that you always are welcome here, even when we are closed." Then he offered, "The kitchen is closed. That is true. But if you want a bowl of soup, the owner will give it to you free as a way of saying thanks." This was cause for a little reflection as I sipped my wine.

A recent customer offered his judgment of The Old Bull Tavern: "I love this place. Great pub ambiance, knowledgeable and caring staff, great food and drink. Headed back tomorrow for more!!"

So, come on down for a wonderful experience with food, drink, and people who love life!

By the way, the best seat in the house is at the bar where you can enjoy the choreography of two or three bartenders moving in perfect synchrony. Watch out, though. The bartenders may find time to chat with you and learn of your life story. It's nice that they care to listen.