

# **An Evaluation of the Alcohol Consumption Patterns of Tailgaters at Greenland Drive and Walnut Grove, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee**

*Joseph L. Keasler and Thomas Gildemeister*

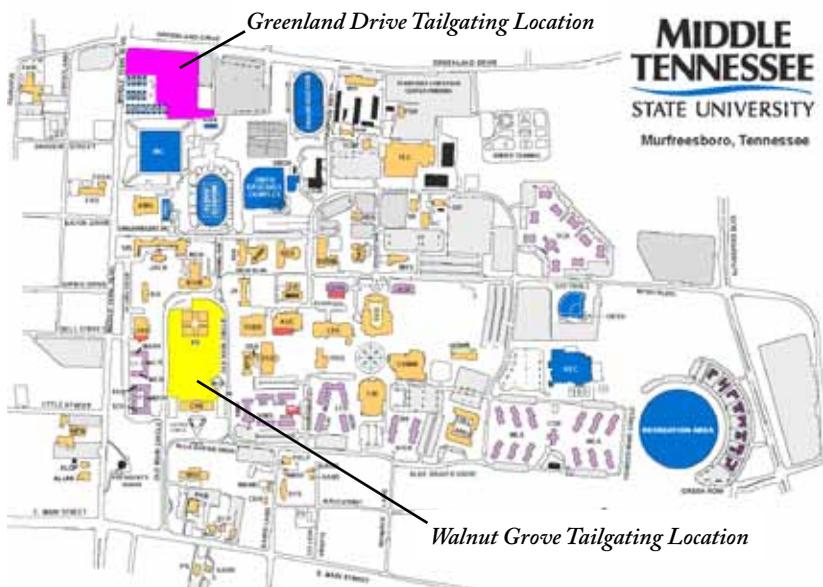
## **Abstract**

*This study was conducted as an exercise in garbageology, which is the study of society through the analysis of its garbage. The researchers looked at differences and similarities between two tailgating locations, Greenland Drive and Walnut Grove, on Middle Tennessee State University's campus. The data showed evidence of large amounts of alcohol use at both sites with one being greater than the other. The data also showed evidence of one group of people being more affluent than the other group. Overall, the interpretation would suggest the two groups of people were using the sites in a ritualistic manner and not as a permanent settlement. The high amounts of alcohol use and small amounts of food waste would indicate the people were more interested in becoming intoxicated than with the event associated with the site use. While this was less evident at Greenland Drive, the numbers there were still high. Observations at Walnut Grove indicate that many of the participants were likely under the legal drinking age. The research indicates a need to re-evaluate the wisdom of sponsoring such events on a college campus.*

## INTRODUCTION

What is it about competition that brings out our aggressive nature? From the Greek Olympians to the Roman gladiators, as spectators we have always craved the shock and awe that these competitive sports bring. With modern day gladiatorial games, our culture has no problem filling a stadium with thousands of screaming fans who would seem, to an outsider, to be out for blood. Since the inception of American football as a sport, people have arrived early to the game to gather with friends and family to show their support for the home team (Tailgating 2005). Football is also a sport enjoyed by a wide diversity of people from different backgrounds and social standings (Falk 2005). It is for these reasons we chose to do our garbology analysis at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), as shown in Figure 1 below, during a home football game using two different tailgating locations.

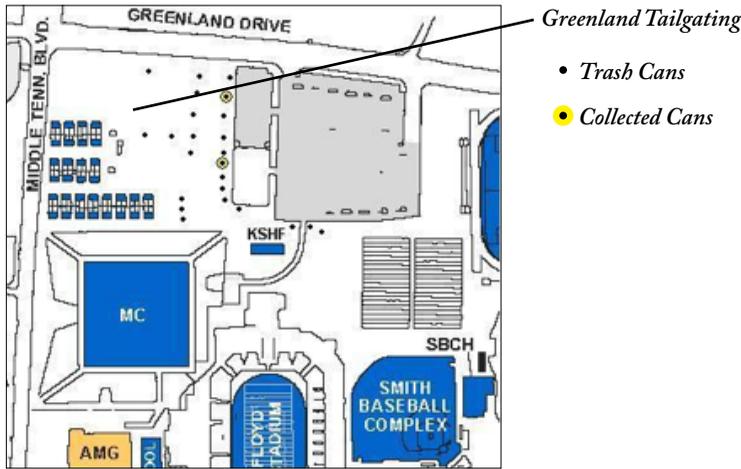
*Figure 1. Map of Middle Tennessee State University ([http://www.mtsu.edu/rootpage\\_files/MTSUCampusMap.pdf](http://www.mtsu.edu/rootpage_files/MTSUCampusMap.pdf), pg. 2)*



The study will attempt to determine if there is a discernable difference in what one group is throwing away compared to the other. Do signs of affluence exist in this environment or do spectator events such as this bring out common human traits with no regard for social ranking? Is one group more prone to drunken debauchery over the other? William Rathje, director of The University of Arizona's Garbage Project, states that "If our garbage, in the eyes of the future, is destined to hold a key to the past, then surely it already holds a key to the present" (Rathje and Murphy 2001: 11). How would future archaeologists view the people from these two sites? These are the questions this study will attempt to answer.

The first location we evaluated was the large grassy area on Greenland Drive, just northwest of Floyd Stadium, which is shown in Figure 2.

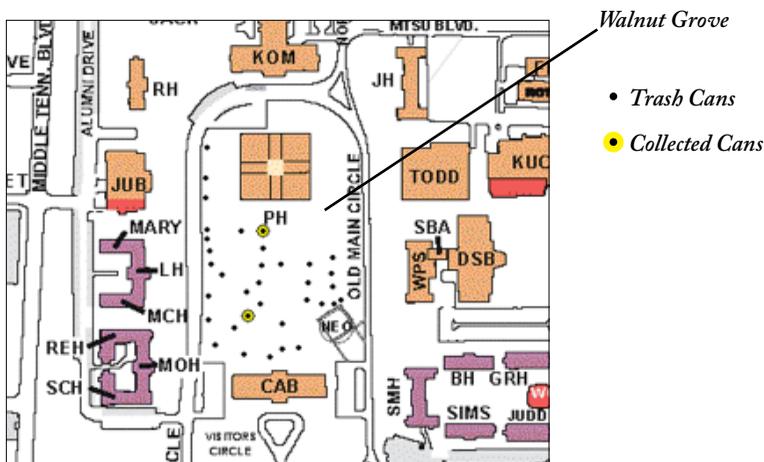
Figure 2. Detail of Greenland Drive collection site ([http://www.mtsu.edu/rootpage\\_files/MTSUCampusMap.pdf](http://www.mtsu.edu/rootpage_files/MTSUCampusMap.pdf), pg. 2, revised by authors)



This area is reserved for members of the Blue Raider Athletic Association. To be a member you must make monetary contributions to the MTSU Athletic Department every year. According to their website, a donation of \$125.00 will allow you to park in the Greenland lot and a donation of \$10,000.00 will give you a “special reserved and personalized” parking space (Blue Raider Athletic Association). From this information it would appear that the people using this site are amongst the more affluent members of the community. They would need to have higher than average incomes to afford the yearly donations required to tailgate in this area. This study proposes that the data will support this assertion.

The second area of interest on campus is Walnut Grove, which is a large tree-filled area south of Floyd Stadium as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Detail of Walnut Grove collection site ([http://www.mtsu.edu/rootpage\\_files/MTSUCampusMap.pdf](http://www.mtsu.edu/rootpage_files/MTSUCampusMap.pdf), pg. 2, revised by authors)



The Walnut Grove area is used as a tailgating location for faculty and fraternities, as well as students and their families. Walnut Grove is most heavily used during a tailgating event. Throughout the year, it is only used a handful of times for other special events. Many students use the area to study or have lunch the remainder of the time. Since this area is so heavily used by students during a tailgating event, as observed from the many fraternity and student organization functions taking place, this study proposes that there will be higher levels of alcohol use and evidence of a lesser quality of alcohol than at the Greenland site.

## **THE SITES**

There are two main areas on campus that are used for tailgating during MTSU home football games. One is the Greenland Drive area and the other is Walnut Grove. The Greenland lot is reserved for donors to the MTSU Athletic Department. The Walnut Grove area is used by members of the general public, MTSU fraternities, academic departments, and students.

The Greenland Drive tailgating area is located in the grass field between the parking lot and the tennis courts at the corner of Greenland Drive and Middle Tennessee Boulevard. The area's approximate dimensions are 550 feet by 350 feet. There were twenty-four 55-gallon drums lined with trash bags for waste collection at the site. The area appeared to be neat and well-kept and there was no noticeable trash on the ground. It was also noted that along the edge of the parking lot and the grass field, there were electrical hook-ups for RV's to connect for power. The weather during collection was clear with a temperature in the 60's and low humidity. There was no sign of recent rainfall as the ground was dry and hard packed.

The Greenland Drive area of MTSU's campus is rarely used for any other activity throughout the year. There are sidewalks that skirt the perimeter of the area, but none that cross through the field itself. There are no trash cans, benches, or picnic tables in the area for students to use at any other time. The only reason a student might cross this field is to use it as a shortcut onto campus or to the tennis courts. Since this area is used by MTSU alumni and donors to the athletic department, we hoped to see a higher quality of waste in the trash collected. We expected to see evidence of alcohol use and large quantities of food related waste, much like a large family reunion. The study hypothesized that the data would show the Greenland Drive tailgating area to be more affluent than the Walnut Grove area.

The second area we collected data from was Walnut Grove. This area of campus is located south of Floyd Stadium between Peck Hall and the Cope Administration Building. The approximate dimensions of this area are 615 feet by 477 feet. The area contained thirty-five 55-gallon drums lined with trash bags for waste disposal. The area appeared to be more chaos than organization with vehicles parked haphazardly and every trash container overflowing with trash. The weather conditions during collection were identical to the Greenland site.

The Walnut Grove site is a moderately used area throughout the rest of the year. During the warmer months, with its location on campus and the shade provided from

the large trees, it is a relatively calm and quiet place for students to sit and study or have lunch. Ordinarily, there are three trash cans, six picnic tables, and three benches spread throughout the area, which were removed for the tailgating event. Walnut Grove is also used for other special events during the year, such as faculty or student organization picnics and gatherings.

With the Walnut Grove site being a conglomeration of people of different ages and backgrounds, we expected to find evidence of higher alcohol use and less food waste at this site compared with the Greenland site. We also believed we would see differences in brands of waste, which would show this site to be less affluent than the Greenland site. The amount of orderliness witnessed at the Greenland area and the complete lack thereof at Walnut Grove, appeared to validate our expectations.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE**

Once we had narrowed down our two site locations, the next task was to map out the area and determine where the samples of trash would be taken. Observations were begun at 4:00 p.m. on October 5, 2010. Each site was walked and trash locations were marked on a printed map of the area. After observing the areas, we decided which cans to collect from and how many samples we would need. At both sites a sample was collected from an outer perimeter trash can and one from the middle of the busiest area. The decision to collect only two samples from each site was based on sampling five percent of the total; and since the cans were so large, it was determined that two samples would more than cover the amount needed.

Collection was not begun until the start of the football game, which was 7:00 p.m., to avoid the large crowds and to ensure full samples. The collections were started at the Greenland site at 7:15 p.m. A wheelbarrow was used to carry the samples from the site to a waiting truck. While making the collections it was noted that the area was relatively deserted except for a few people watching the game on flat-screen televisions mounted to the side of their RV's. We removed the samples, placed them in the wheelbarrow, and put new trash bags into the cans. We then proceeded towards the truck used to haul the samples, which was parked in front of Peck Hall.

After unloading the Greenland samples, we began collecting samples from the sites within Walnut Grove. It was 7:55 p.m. by the time we had finished with the Greenland site and made our way to Walnut Grove. It was evident on arrival that the tailgating event was still going strong at Walnut Grove. Where Greenland had been relatively empty, Walnut Grove was a mass of confusion and drunkenness, with throngs of intoxicated people, loud music, and almost complete darkness. Every 55-gallon drum for trash collection was overflowing and surrounded by mounds of trash. Collections proceeded without much interruption, except for a young lady having a conversation with our wheelbarrow-offering confirmation of our observations of drunkenness amongst the occupants.

We began analyzing the contents of our samples on the morning of October 7, 2010, at 10:00 a.m., to allow a full day for sorting the material. A plastic tarp was spread out on the ground and the contents of the bags were poured out for separating. After separating by groups and brands, the numbers of each was counted. Notes were taken to record quantities, brands, container style, and in the case of liquids, fluid ounces. An attempt was made to weigh the food waste as well; however, the amount was so miniscule that our scales could not register it.

We began our analysis with the Greenland site collections and consequently made our first mistake. Instead of analyzing each bag independently, the contents of both samples were sorted as one unit. In hindsight, this defeated the purpose of collecting from different areas of the site. While similarities were observed between the two samples, those observations could not be attributed definitively to one area of the site. Although this realization came quickly, it was too late to change the method for the Greenland site. We separated the sample by brands and types of alcohol as shown in Table 1 below.

*Table 1. Alcohol contents of Greenland Drive site sample*

<b>Qty</b>	<b>Container</b>	<b>Brand</b>	<b>Oz</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Total Oz</b>
41	Can	Miller Lite	12	Beer	492
47	Can	Bud Light	12	Beer	564
21	Can	Coors Light	12	Beer	252
9	Can	Michelob Ultra	12	Beer	108
2	Can	Busch Light	12	Beer	24
5	Can	Natural Light	12	Beer	60
1	Can	Keystone Light	12	Beer	12
1	Can	Yuengling	12	Beer	12
10	Glass Bottle	Miller Lite	12	Beer	120
6	Glass Bottle	Bud Light	12	Beer	72
3	Glass Bottle	Shiner (Holiday Cheer)	12	Beer	36
3	Glass Bottle	Abita (Restoration)	12	Beer	36
1	Glass Bottle	Killian's (Irish Red)	12	Beer	12
3	Glass Bottle	Sol	12	Beer	36
1	Glass Bottle	St. Pauli Girl	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Land Shark	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Spaten (Oktober Fest)	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Paulaner (Oktober Fest)	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Sweet Water (Motorboat)	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Victory Lager	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Mothership Wit	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Blue Moon	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Mike's Mango Punch	12	Beer	12
1	Glass Bottle	Mike's Mohito	12	Beer	12

For example, there was a pile for cans of Bud Light and a pile for cans of Keystone Light. The alcohol packaging was also separated by container type such as can or bottle. After separating, a list was made of quantities, the type of container, brands, and liquid ounces.

After finishing with the Greenland Drive site, the Walnut Grove samples were examined. Correcting the previous mistake, the samples were analyzed separately. We used the same methods of recording the contents of each bag as was used for the Greenland site. Table 2 displays the alcoholic contents from the Walnut Grove sample.

*Table 2. Alcohol Contents of Walnut Grove Site Samples*

Bag	Qty	Container	Brand	Oz.	Type	Total Oz
1	1	Can	Budweiser	12	Beer	12
1	1	Can	Steel Reserve	12	Beer	12
1	4	Can	Yuengling	12	Beer	48
1	6	Can	Michelob Ultra	12	Beer	72
1	6	Can	Coors Light	12	Beer	72
1	6	Can	Pabst Blue Ribbon	12	Beer	72
1	26	Can	Natural Light	12	Beer	312
1	45	Can	Keystone Light	12	Beer	540
1	12	Can	Miller Light	12	Beer	144
1	8	Can	Miller Genuine Draft	12	Beer	96
1	20	Can	Bud Light	12	Beer	240
1	8	Glass Bottle	Bud Light	12	Beer	96
1	4	Glass Bottle	Coors Light	12	Beer	48
1	4	Glass Bottle	Bud Light (Lime)	12	Beer	48
1	3	Glass Bottle	Miller Light	12	Beer	36
1	2	Glass Bottle	Blue Moon	12	Beer	24
1	1	Glass Bottle	Miller High Life	12	Beer	12
1	1	Glass Bottle	Hornsby's Hard Cider	12	Beer	12
1	1	Glass Bottle	Jim Beam (Bourbon)	25.36	Whiskey	25.36
1	1	Glass Bottle	Wild Turkey (Bourbon)	12.68	Whiskey	12.68
1	2	Glass Bottle	Cookes (Brut)	25.36	Champagne	50.72
2	9	Can	Natural Light	12	Beer	108
2	16	Can	Bud Light	12	Beer	192
2	3	Can	Keystone Light	12	Beer	36
2	2	Can	Miller Light	12	Beer	24
2	2	Can	Stroh's	12	Beer	24
2	2	Glass Bottle	Michelob Ultra	12	Beer	24
2	4	Glass Bottle	Scrimshaw	12	Beer	48
2	1	Glass Bottle	Seagram's Escapes	12	Wine Cooler	12
2	1	Plastic Bottle	Evan Williams	12.68	Whiskey	12.68
2	1	Glass Bottle	Burnett's (Fruit Punch)	25.36	Vodka	25.36

As we began inspecting the second bag from the site, a smaller sealed bag of garbage with completely different contents than everything in the remainder of the larger bag was discovered. The contents of the first bag matched the contents of the second bag perfectly except for what was in the small bag. The small bag was almost exclusively food related waste, food packaging, and disposable dinnerware. The only similarities between the small bag and the two larger bags were an abundance of plastic cups, which were possibly used for alcohol consumption. The contents of the small bag indicate it was brought from an area within Walnut Grove that was hosting an alumni or faculty event.

Since the study investigated differing amounts of alcohol use and evidence of higher affluence of one site over the other, a decision was made to focus more on the alcohol evidence than the other types of information found within the sample. Even if we had not intended to look at alcohol, the sheer amounts of alcohol evidence clearly pointed in this direction. Figures 4 and 5 below show the stark contrast between food and alcohol waste from the two sites.

*Figure 4. Greenland Drive Sample*



*Figure 5. Walnut Grove sample*



In each of these photos the small bag in the center represents the total food waste in our samples from each site and the surrounding bags are all alcohol containers.

The data showed heavy alcohol use at both sites; however, the Walnut Grove site far exceeded the amounts found at Greenland Drive as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Total alcohol consumption in each sites samples



This graph clearly shows the discrepancy between the two sites. There was no evidence of liquor use at the Greenland site, which was not surprising considering the more familial atmosphere of the site; however, the Walnut Grove site did contain liquor and those numbers are included in the total alcohol consumption.

Since the total number of waste containers at each site and the number of alcohol related waste products were known, estimates of the total amount of alcohol consumption at each site were made, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Estimated total alcohol consumption at each site

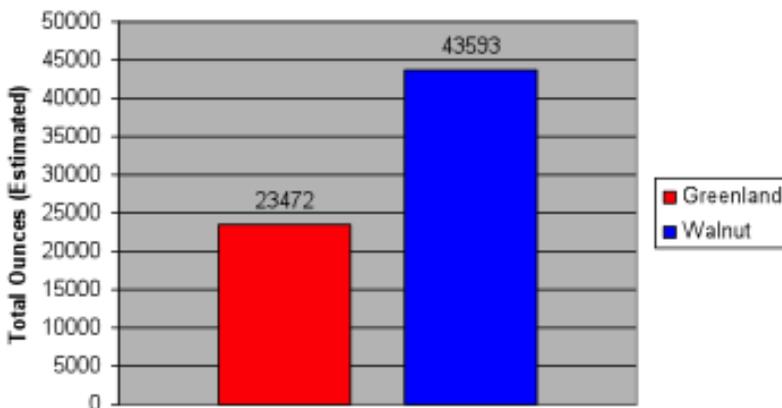


Figure 7 demonstrates that Walnut Grove had substantially higher estimated alcohol consumption than Greenland Drive. The alcohol consumption at Walnut Grove is estimated to be 43,593 ounces or the equivalent of 3,633 beers, which is nearly twice as much as the

estimate for Greenland Drive (23,472 ounces or 1,956 beers). These estimates were created by calculating the mean ounces of alcohol per trash container and multiplying by the total number of containers at each site. If the mean at Walnut Grove had been calculated without using the skewed sample (bag #2), the total estimated alcohol consumption would have been 69,475 ounces or the equivalent of 5,790 beers.

In searching for evidence of differences in the level of affluence between the two sites, the price per ounce of the alcohol consumed and the different brands at each site were analyzed. There were some distinct differences between the brands of alcohol being used at both sites. At Walnut Grove high quantities of inexpensive beer were recorded, such as Keystone Light (24 percent), and only a few moderately priced domestic and import brands as seen in Table 3 below.

*Table 3. Walnut Grove alcohol costs*

Bag #	Qty.	Cont.	Brand	Type	Total Ozs.	Cost Per Oz.	Total Cost
1	1	Can	Budweiser	Beer	12	0.08	0.96
1	1	Can	Steel Reserve	Beer	12	0.05	0.60
1	4	Can	Yuengling	Beer	48	0.08	3.84
1	6	Can	Michelob Ultra	Beer	72	0.08	5.76
1	6	Can	Coors Light	Beer	72	0.08	5.76
1	6	Can	Pabst Blue Ribbon	Beer	72	0.06	4.32
1	26	Can	Natural Light	Beer	312	0.06	18.72
1	45	Can	Keystone Light	Beer	540	0.06	32.40
1	12	Can	Miller Light	Beer	144	0.08	11.52
1	8	Can	Miller Genuine Draft	Beer	96	0.07	6.72
1	20	Can	Bud Light	Beer	240	0.08	19.20
1	8	Bottle	Bud Light	Beer	96	0.09	8.64
1	4	Bottle	Coors Light	Beer	48	0.09	4.32
1	4	Bottle	Bud Light (Lime)	Beer	48	0.10	4.80
1	3	Bottle	Miller Light	Beer	36	0.09	3.24
1	2	Bottle	Blue Moon	Beer	24	0.12	2.88
1	1	Bottle	Miller High Life	Beer	12	0.07	0.84
1	1	Bottle	Hornsby's Hard Cider	Beer	12	0.12	1.44
1	1	Bottle	Jim Beam (Bourbon)	Whiskey	25.36	0.79	20.03
1	1	Bottle	Wild Turkey (Bourbon)	Whiskey	12.68	1.10	13.95
1	2	Bottle	Cookes (Brut)	Champagne	50.72	0.28	14.20
2	9	Can	Natural Light	Beer	108	0.06	6.48
2	16	Can	Bud Light	Beer	192	0.08	15.36

*Continued*

Bag #	Qty.	Cont.	Brand	Type	Total Ozs.	Cost Per Oz.	Total Cost
2	3	Can	Keystone Light	Beer	36	0.06	2.16
2	2	Can	Miller Light	Beer	24	0.08	1.92
2	2	Can	Stroh's	Beer	24	0.06	1.44
2	2	Bottle	Michelob Ultra	Beer	24	0.09	2.16
2	4	Bottle	Scrimshaw	Beer	48	0.15	7.20
2	1	Bottle	Seagram's Escapes	Wine Cooler	12	0.10	1.20
2	1	Bottle	Evan Williams	Whiskey	12.68	1.10	13.95
2	1	Bottle	Burnett's (Fruit Punch)	Vodka	25.36	0.39	9.89
<b>Total</b>						<b>\$245.90</b>	

In the Greenland sample these numbers reversed. There were high quantities of moderately priced domestic brands, such as Miller Light (31 percent) and Bud Light (33 percent), as well as a large assortment of imported and domestic specialty beers as seen in Table 4 below.

*Table 4. Greenland Drive alcohol costs*

Qty.	Container	Brand	Type	Total Ozs.	Cost Per Oz.	Total Cost
41	Can	Miller Lite	Beer	492	0.08	\$39.36
47	Can	Bud Light	Beer	564	0.08	\$45.12
21	Can	Coors Light	Beer	252	0.08	\$20.16
9	Can	Michelob Ultra	Beer	108	0.08	\$8.64
2	Can	Busch Light	Beer	24	0.06	\$1.44
5	Can	Natural Light	Beer	60	0.06	\$3.60
1	Can	Keystone Light	Beer	12	0.06	\$0.72
1	Can	Yuengling	Beer	12	0.08	\$0.96
10	Bottle	Miller Lite	Beer	120	0.09	\$10.80
6	Bottle	Bud Light	Beer	72	0.09	\$6.48
3	Bottle	Shiner (Holiday Cheer)	Beer	36	0.12	\$4.32
3	Bottle	Abita (Restoration)	Beer	36	0.12	\$4.32
1	Bottle	Killian's (Irish Red)	Beer	12	0.11	\$1.32
3	Bottle	Sol	Beer	36	0.12	\$4.32
1	Bottle	St. Pauli Girl	Beer	12	0.12	\$1.44
1	Bottle	Land Shark	Beer	12	0.12	\$1.44
1	Bottle	Spaten (Oktober Fest)	Beer	12	0.13	\$1.56
1	Bottle	Paulaner (Oktober Fest)	Beer	12	0.15	\$1.80

Qty.	Container	Brand	Type	Total Ozs.	Cost Per Oz.	Total Cost
1	Bottle	Sweet Water (Motorboat)	Beer	12	0.12	\$1.44
1	Bottle	Victory Lager	Beer	12	0.15	\$1.80
1	Bottle	Mothership Wit	Beer	12	0.12	\$1.44
1	Bottle	Blue Moon	Beer	12	0.12	\$1.44
1	Bottle	Mike's Mango Punch	Beer	12	0.12	\$1.44
1	Bottle	Mike's Mohito	Beer	12	0.16	\$1.92
<b>Total</b>						<b>\$167.28</b>

The signs of affluence were beginning to show with the more discerning tastes in beer at the Greenland site, but to discover if this was really the case the costs involved were examined. We visited several retail locations and recorded the price of each brand.<sup>1</sup> The total cost at Walnut Grove was higher, but this is a reflection of the larger quantities at the site. To obtain a better sense of how much was being spent on beer at the two sites; we calculated the average cost per ounce and the two sites were compared. At Walnut Grove there was also evidence of liquor in the samples, but none at Greenland Drive, therefore liquor was taken away from the average cost since it was considered an outlier in the total sample. At Walnut Grove the cost per ounce of beer was \$0.07 and at Greenland Drive the cost was \$0.09. While this does not appear to be a large discrepancy, it is actually a difference of 22 percent. These numbers confirm the study's original hypothesis concerning greater affluence at the Greenland Drive site.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE SAMPLE

A number of inferences can be made from our data and observations. From a garbological perspective, the people occupying both the Greenland Drive site and the Walnut Grove site must have done so only temporarily; otherwise they could not have been a functional society with the amounts of alcohol use that was observed and recorded. Both sites were used as a place of gathering, drinking, eating, and communing. In the case of the Walnut Grove site, the main focus of the occupants appeared to be the consumption of alcohol. Although the consumption of alcohol was a priority of the occupants at the Greenland Drive site, it was to a lesser extent. At the Greenland Drive site, the alcohol consumed appeared to be of a more expensive nature than that of the Walnut Grove site, indicating that the people of the former are of a higher socioeconomic group than the latter. While both of these sites seldom see large gatherings of people, this day was different. The college and its administrators invited people to these sites on this day to celebrate before a football game, and the people came. At the Walnut Grove site they came in droves

<sup>1</sup> Prices were obtained at: Exxon, 1118 Mercury Blvd., Murfreesboro, TN 37130; University Center Market, 1156 East Main St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130; Beer Depot, 2002 East Main St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130; Premium Wine & Spirits, 225 N. Rutherford Blvd. # H, Murfreesboro, TN 37130; C N G Wine & Spirits, 2750 S. Rutherford Blvd., Murfreesboro, TN 37130.

of similarly aged people, likely college students. Many of the people who arrived at the Greenland Drive site did so with their families, some in large recreation vehicles. After the football game ended, the people packed up their belongings, less their trash, and abandoned the sites.

The ritualistic celebration of football is what ties these two sites together. Both of these sites were temporary and the occupants were there, at least on some level, to celebrate the football game later in the evening. This pre-game ritual usually includes the drinking of alcohol and the consumption of food. The celebrations at the Walnut Grove and Greenland Drive sites do not stray from this typical conception of the ritual; however, there are a number of key differences in the people inhabiting the respective sites.

Although the people occupying the Walnut Grove site were there to celebrate football, it is not difficult for one to imagine that prior to the game they were consumed by alcohol. Excessive inebriation was observed, and this was reflected in the data. Young-adults of varying ages, as they often do, came together with their friends and peers to take advantage of this opportunity to be intoxicated in public. The amount of alcohol the data suggest they consumed indicates that the word “moderation” seems to be, for many of these people, absent from their vocabulary on this occasion. These people were taking advantage of the opportunity to let go of inhibitions and be foolish and careless. One may even be able to ascertain that the celebration at the Walnut Grove site was a celebration of consumption, or a celebration of alcohol, rather than one primarily of football.

The occupation of the Greenland Drive site stands in stark contrast to that of the Walnut Grove site. Although the exact number of people at either site is not known, observations suggest that there were fewer people at this site. These people gathered together not simply with their friends and peers, but also with their families. Some gathered around televisions watching the pre-game analysis of commentators while others played football with their children. They gathered not to let go of inhibitions or fully embrace the effects of alcohol, but to relax, to contemplate the football to come, and to enjoy the company of their friends and family. These people seemed to enjoy a certain calmness that was absent at the Walnut Grove site. While they did consume alcohol, the amounts they consumed indicate that at least some of them were doing so in moderation.

The second difference between these two groups of people in this study regards social complexity. The fact that the Walnut Grove site occupants consumed primarily inexpensive alcoholic beverages indicates that these people were possibly of a lower socioeconomic class. This conclusion concerning class supports the conventional picture of the “broke” college student. On the other hand, the occupants of the Greenland Drive site not only consumed more expensive alcoholic beverages, but also brought with them large recreation vehicles, televisions, and satellite dishes. We believe that these indicators of personal and familial accumulations of wealth signal that these people are of a higher socioeconomic class than their Walnut Grove counterparts. These are people who likely play a specialized role in the society and have done so with moderate to substantial success. It was also noted

that there were several law enforcement personnel roaming the area of Greenland Drive, whereas none were observed at Walnut Grove, where they were probably needed most.

Despite the fact that alcohol consumption was obvious and significant at the student occupied site, it is prohibited. The Tennessee Board of Regents, the governing board for Middle Tennessee State University, prohibits the consumption of alcohol by students on its campuses. "The use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages on university, community college, and technology center owned or controlled property shall be prohibited except as provided by Policy 1:07:00:00" (Tennessee Board of Regents). The exceptions policy mentioned allows for the President of an institution to make exceptions for foundations and alumni, but specifically prohibits alcohol consumption in "classrooms, labs, faculty or administrative offices, residence halls, student dining halls, *student gathering areas*, *outdoor public areas*, or athletic facilities accessible to the public" and in both policies students are expressly forbidden to consume alcohol on campus (Tennessee Board of Regents, emphasis added). The noted absence of law enforcement personnel in or near Walnut Grove suggests that the policies mentioned above were ignored for this occasion, possibly as a means to bolster support for the MTSU football program.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From our data and observation we conclude that on this particular occasion people came together to eat, drink, and commune in a temporary manner; these sites were occupied in this capacity because of a football game and ceased to be so after the game concluded. It is clear that the consumption of alcohol was a primary focus of the gathering at the Walnut Grove site. Also, observations suggest the people who occupied the Walnut Grove site were of lower socioeconomic class than those at the Greenland Drive site, since they had fewer amenities and less expensive beverages. Occupants of the Greenland Drive site did so to gather with their families and friends, with alcohol consumption being a secondary function of the celebration. Because of the apparent suspension or ignoring of law in regards to alcohol on the premises, it is clear that this aspect of the ritualistic celebration of football is an important one in the eyes of MTSU's administrative officials.

The amount of alcohol consumed, as indicated by the data and observations, is staggering. While it was hypothesized prior to the study that alcohol consumption would be central to this occasion, early expectations were that it would be more veiled. Instead observations showed, especially in the case of the Walnut Grove site, that attempts to veil consumption of alcohol were minimal, while the consumption inferred from our data was immense. Clearly, the findings of this research indicate a potential need to re-evaluate the wisdom of sponsoring such events on a college campus.

Observations at Walnut Grove were of large crowds of college age students having in essence, a large outdoor party. Given that the typical student begins his or her college career at the age of eighteen, it would be reasonable to assume that many of the students were under the legal drinking age. Why is it that they would not be able to purchase alcohol at a convenience store across the street, yet they could drink freely here with no objections?

To add to the irony, an email was received one week after observations were conducted reminding students that October 17-23 marked the observance of National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week at institutions across the country. Is this a case of “see no evil, hear no evil,” or of the left hand not knowing what the right is doing? In the end, even if it is legal to have alcohol at these events, the question remains; is it the morally responsible thing for the university to do?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blue Raider Athletic Association

N.D. *BRAA Membership Benefits*. <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/31336>, accessed October 21, 2010.

Falk, Gerhard

2005 *Football and American Identity*. Haworth Press, New York.

Rathje, William, and Cullen Murphy

2001 *Rubbish!: The Archaeology of Garbage*. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Arizona.

Tailgating: The History

2005 *American Heritage Magazine*. October, Volume 56, Issue 5 [http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/2005/5/2005\\_5\\_11.shtml](http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/2005/5/2005_5_11.shtml).

Tennessee Board of Regents

2009 *Subject: General Policy on Tobacco and Alcoholic Beverages*. <http://www.tbr.state.tn.us/policies/default.aspx?id=4858>, accessed October 6, 2010.