

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012 Key West Bar Boondoggle
"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 2:

The Lazy Gecko

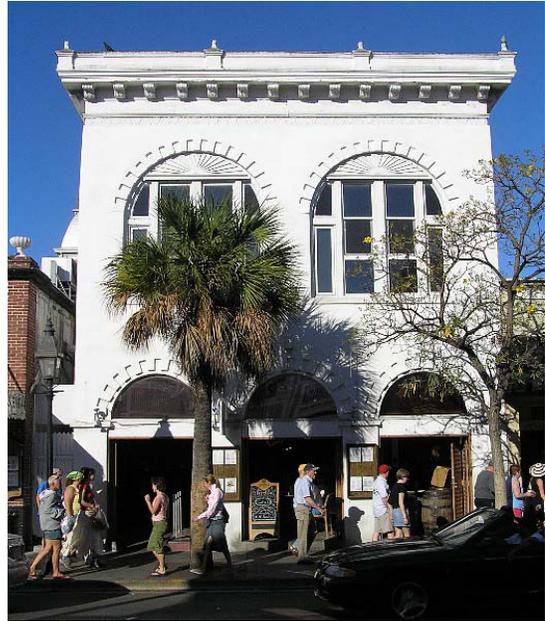
<http://www.thelazygecko.com/>

203 Duval Street

Friday 7/20, 7:00 pm

Harpoon IPA (draft)

The Geck shouldn't even count. Or maybe it should have been saved for #100. Of all the bars in KW, this one – the self-proclaimed Southernmost Red Sox Nation – is easily the one I frequent the most.



The Sox connection – well, Celtics, Bruins, and Patriots too -- was a good catalyst for drawing me in as a regular, but the party feel, the old-time/island décor, a good cast of regulars, enjoyable barkeeps, live music, ample TVage, and the fact that HH runs till 8:00 – latest one in KW that I have found – have kept me coming back.

If I look back on the last 3-4 years, and tried to track the buildings in which I have spent most of my time, tops would be The Shanty (my abode), second would be LA&E (work), and third would have to be the Gecko. What else could it be? It's certainly not church. Fourth place is probably another bar, but there would be a few competing for that spot, and they'd all be well behind the LG. Frequency *and* duration, baybee.

And it's almost all HH's and weekend afternoons. The Geck is a big part of my summer routine, especially: get out of work, bike over to Fort Zack for an ocean swim, and bike down to LG to catch the start of the 7:05 Sox game, along with the final hour of HH. The 2-4-1 thing runs out at 8, but if the game is good and the company is fun, then the Linger Thing happens.

But rarely past 10:00. The Lazy Gecko undergoes a profound change as the night deepens. The HH entertainer dude packs up his digital back-up band, a tall DJ desk gets wheeled into place, and LG becomes KW's preeminent late-night hip-hop club. The transformation is striking: twanging gee-tar music to throbbing dance den.

Now, that doesn't mean I avoid it after 10:00, especially during Spring Break time. One of the Geck's claims to fame is the Hot Girls Dance On The Bar feature. Having drunk college girls gyrating above my eye level, gulping Jagermeister, while I relax with a cold beer is Ohhhh Kaayyyy by me. Some things are just worth braving the crowd for.

Part it might be the auto racing mindset: *watch* the race but be *watching* for the crash. And don't *oh come on* me. What are the biggest TV highlights from a NASCAR race? The wrecks -- and the bigger and fierier the better. Same applies here. You watch the girls shaking their inebriated tatas and booties, just knowing that Gravity is snickering like some evil gnome and playing eeny-meeny-miney-mo with their wobbly legs and precarious heels.

I gotta say, though, that I have yet to see one take the dive, and it amazes me. Several times, I have reflexively started to reach out my arms to (a) protect my beer, and/or (b) catch a falling babe, but they have always righted the ship in time. In the flash of instinct, if I had to do only (a) or only (b), well, that might depend on how full the glass was.

Years ago, when I first got here, the LG quickly jumped to the top of my list because, unlike many bars where Bud and Miller ruled the refrig, and maybe Rolling Rock was the most out-there beer you could find, the Gecko had Sam Adams on tap. It immediately became my "the usual." Whenever I walked in, the barkeeps who saw me regularly went right to the tap, and I'd have a cold Sam parked in front of me before my



carcass had fully settled on the classic wooden no-back bar stool. Most of them didn't know my name yet, but they knew what I drank, and that was more important to me. They even entered my name on the register tab as "Sam".

Now, I do enjoy a good Sammy, but it actually sits pretty far down the Hops' Tops List. So I rejoiced when Harpoon IPA suddenly showed up on the taps. I have a serious history with that beverage, and I welcomed it with open gullet. A fine spread of craft beers have followed in its wake: Whale's Tail, Magic Hat, and even Dogfish Head. I don't know who to credit for this rapid infiltration of crafties -- Ilona's, Porch, someone else -- but I'm glad it has happened. Waaaaaaaaaaaaay overdue!!

Anyhoo, this particular night was extraordinarily typical: lively jumping guitars, good showing of regulars, and a fine turnout of tourists. Unlike its neighbor Sloppy Joe's, the LG's business has a good foundation of locals but also brings in the flow of outatowners that you'd expect on the city's Ground Zero block. Most tourists arrive with Sloppy's or Margaritaville on their must-see lists, and have not necessarily heard of this place. But the Gecko does get some spillover from SJ, and a lot of people are sent here by in-the-know concierges around town.

Tourists are fun. Let's face it, all these bars would be purdy dang quiet if they had to rely on us locals to keep them in business. But, besides their financial contribution, it's just fun to talk to people who are on vacation. They like to hear about life in K-Dub, and I like swapping stories about their own hometowns, especially if I've been there on one of my various roadtrips across North America.



But, to savvy LG locals, tourists also mean chip hunting. During HH, this bar gives a wooden disk (like a poker chip), as a 2-4-1 token. In most cases, the barkeep simply places it on the bar with the drinks and offers no explanation. But even if they do explain what it's for, maybe the tourist isn't listening, or forgets, or is already loaded, or all of the above, and departs without using the chip. We scout them out like Sherlock Freaking Holmes, watching for hints of their intentions.

If your bar neighbor gets up and leaves and that chip stays behind, then the race is on. The barkeep will sweep it back into the chip jar if he/she gets there first, or will demand it back, so we have to be on our game and we have to be sly.

It is definitely cheating to come in and accidentally plopp your hat on top of somebody's straying chip as you sit down, but it has happened. I've seen it. ;]

So, on this typical night, I had my typical Harpoon with Brian, Jan, Jacko and Marty – the typical Sox fan regulars that I typically ally myself with – listened to the typical Friday evening music, and partook of the typical HH revelry for a typical hour or two.

Typical, after all, is why I am typically here.

