

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 16:

Speakeasy Inn Rum Bar
1117 Duval Street
Wednesday 8/1, 9:00 pm

Yuengling Lager (bottle)

OK, why didn't I get rum? I like rum. I mean, I *liike* rum! What was I thinking? I reckon it was the Hops and Barley thing. I don't think those are ingredients in rum. It's not a *beer tour*, as such, but the name does imply brewed malt beverages, not distilled sugar cane.

I arrived at same time as a group of four, who sat on the other wing of the right angle bar. The barkeep gave us both a quick look, recognized that they were worth more tip money, and ignored me to get their order: four freaking mojitos.

I am so glad that I got out of bartending before this drink got popular. The worst orders I ever faced on a regular basis were the slushies. Our bar boasted an array of frozen drinks, mostly to bring in the ladies, so they would bring in the men. Good logic, but it had a ludicrous flaw: the bar had one (1) blender -- none of the big pre-mix machines that you commonly see around town -- just a decent-sized pitcher for ice and mix, and a device to whip, blend, or puree.



If a group ordered more than one of the same flavor, that was fine; the blender held up to four drinks. We had a back-up pitcher, too, so if the order was, say, two Strawberry Daiquiris and three Pina Coladas, I could start mixing the PC's while the SD's churned. Not too bad.



BUT, but, but (I think you can see where this is headed), one Sunday afternoon, a party of six came in and they decided to get six different frozen drinks. Oy. Most barkeeps will tell you: you can only do what you can do, so don't stress about the public's ignorant demands. I was on solo that day, so I 'splained to them that I could only make one at a time, and they gave me the ol' *ahhh, that's fine, we're in no rush* bushwa. So, of course, by the time I was just starting on number four, number one was slurp-guggling the bottom of her drink. When number six was being churned, they were itching to leave, whining that they didn't know blah blah wah wah. That's right, you didn't know. Dumbasses.

I saw Lindsey at the Lazy Gecko get an order one night for 11 Mojitos. Eleven. Ugh. The place was pretty busy, and there were three barkeeps on the front bar, so she did have back-up to cover her other customers for a few minutes, but still, eleven of those labor-intensive drinks. She set out all the glasses, gathered all the ingredients and got to work: leafing, liming, mashing, icing, pouring, shaking, splashing, garnishing. A couple of times, one of the party of 11 tried to reach over and grab one that looked, to the casual eye, to be finished, but Lindsey gave them a killer glare and a *Hey! No touch!* and they backed right off.

She got them all done and was passing them over the bar when I noticed the young dude who had placed the order had a \$100 bill in his hand. Un-ohhh. When the drinks were dispensed, he asked, *How much do I owe ya?*

Ninety-nine dollars.

Ohhh....

Lindsey told me later that they actually ended up tipping her well. Only one of them had ever had a Mojito before so they had no idea what the drinks involved or cost. But they did like them. I had to ask if they ordered a second round. The look I got in response said NFW.

But here at the Rum Bar, four was bad enough. The barman must have had a run on those drinks earlier because there was one delay when he had to go fetch more mint leaves. Then another when he was short on limes.

I waited patiently. No, really, I did. I wasn't overly thirsty since I had just come from the T's Bistro SSDC bash, and that 100-foot walk straight across Duval hadn't taken much of a toll. The delay gave me time to look around the place some. It's a nice little bar if you've never been there. [Actually, it's nice whether you've been there or not. I didn't mean to imply that *your* presence would somehow bespoil the premises. Maybe it would, but that wasn't what I was saying.]

The bar shelves were all lit up in red, giving a kind of fireplace ambiance to the room. It would be a bright red, radioactive fireplace, but for Key West, that's fireplace enough. We don't do a lot of the brick hearth thing here.

The people at the bar were mostly outatowners, judging by the accents and the jibes thrown around: definitely some Europeans, in town to see how typical Americans live. Ha. They were amiable and the room was in good cheer, except for the struggling barkeep, my ignored self, and the shady dude on the corner stool to my left.

This guy was like Strider huddled in the shadows at The Prancing Pony. He radiated barbed-wire, *leave-me-alone* vibes. I didn't even want to look at him. He sat sideways so his back was against the wall, and his feet were on the rungs of the only empty bar stool, on which I was leaning. He was not eager to yield his footrest, but neither was I looking to sit there; I merely wanted to get my bev and sit outside.

But as the wait grew longer – they wanted to pay up right away, and there was some issue with their card -- I decided that I might as well sit. I had not noticed his feet, though. As I eased back the seat, I felt resistance and I heard him grumble. *Excuse me*, I said and put up a hint of a sociable smile. He lifted his feet while I settled in, then heavily plopped them right back on the rungs under me. He didn't seem the least bit interested in turning to face the bar. That, in itself, was fine, but it left me with the impression that he was just staring at the side of my head. (Paranoid much, Hopsy?)

Thankfully, at that moment, Mr. Barkeep came over to take my order. I said in a fairly low voice, *I'd just like a bottle of Yuengling, please*. He did sort of a reflexive shoulder slump, gave me a look that said, *Shit, I'm sorry I made you wait, guy*, and got me my 'Gling forthwith, which I then carried outside to keep me company on my porch sit.

The front porch of the Speakeasy Inn is a cool hang: large and padded white wicker chairs on a red brick veranda, with Christmas-type white lights spiraling up the trunks of the palm trees.



Befitting my location, I took a leisurely approach to my beer. Not a lot was happening on Duval Street at this moment, but I'm sure this can be a purdy dang good seat for some casual people watching – not as extreme as the 200 block, but, then again, *not as extreme as the 200 block* can be a good thing sometimes too.