

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 29:

Margaritaville

<http://www.margaritavillekeywest.com>

500 Duval Street

Wednesday 8/15, 8:15 pm

Key West Sunset Ale (bottle)



Wastin' away, I am not. But I am a rare sight: a local at Margaritaville. Buffett and Margaritaville really are iconic. I don't have any numbers on this – I'm a fan of presumptive research, where you just presume something to be true and wait for facts to the contrary to assail you – but this place has to be in the top two on the average tourist's Must-Visit list. The whole Jimmy Buffett thing and having a Margarita there, yada, yada.

In my hotel days, I gave directions to here as much as anywhere: Sloppy Joe's, Hemingway House, "The Beach", and "a good restaurant" were other frequent requests. I'd never try to talk them out of those places, but I'd usually try to give them a little inside info on The Gecko, The Parrot, Jack Flats, Kelly's, etc.

When the Parrotheads filled the hotel, though, nobody needed directions. That is quite a group. They fill the hotels and restaurants, but they don't have a rep as very good tipplers. Just sayin'.

The Key West populace, though, generally eschews this venue. It's a nice enough place; pretty cool, actually when you sit in here and look around and dig the



entertainment. But there are more, ohhh, *local-friendly prices* to be found elsewhere. \$5.25 for a bottle of Yuengling, for instance, is just ridiculous. None of us care if the outatowners have to cough up a finner-plus for a Yeung – we often get a good chortle out of hearing that ching -- but we sure as hell don't want to pay it.

Prices aside, locals typically do shun tourist-oriented places. I lived in Boston for almost 40 years, but never once went to the

Cheers Bar until I went back on vacation a few years ago.

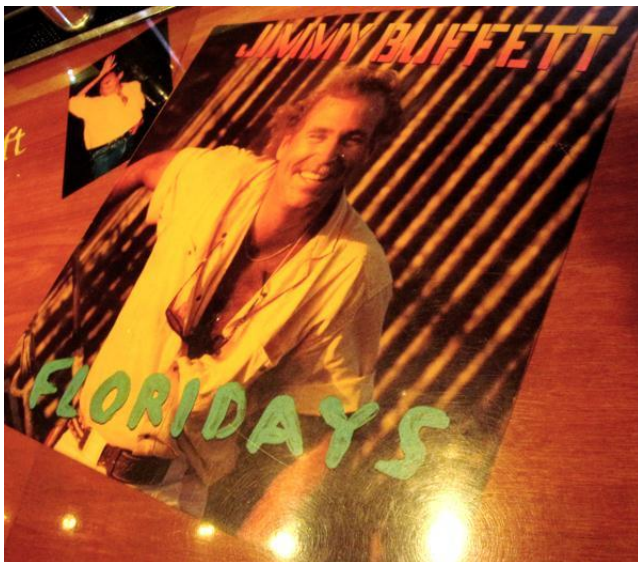
Freedom Trail? Old North Church? Bunker Hill Monument? Lexington and Concord? All that Revolutionary War / Birth Of Our Nation stuff? Bah, couldn't be bothered. If it weren't for school field trips, I'd barely have known they existed. Nobody I knew in Boston ever did those things. None of my friends ever said, *Hey, let's walk the Freedom Trail this weekend*, or *Let's ride to Minuteman National Historical Park and walk around those empty fields and think about people bleeding to death in cold frosty grass 200 years ago in the name of throwing off oppression*.



All of that tourist bushwa had some honest value, I reckon, but I still never went. Unless it meant getting out of school for a day. Then my historical interest spiked.

Now, there is some very cool historical touristy stuff in K-Dub too. Not that I've been to a whole lot of it – or paid to go. I went to Hemingway House once on a pass that I won in a 5K race. I did the Lighthouse on one of those free-to-locals days that Jan keeps me abreast of. I fast-catted out to Fort Jefferson on a GC that I won in an SSDC raffle. The Wreckers Museum I did mainly because I wanted to climb the tower and test out the killer zoom on my new camera by spying on people eating at Hot Tin Roof. And I did the Flagler Railroad Museum when my railroad fan brother was visiting.

But if I were a tourist from New England, beaches and bars would be my priorities. If I were a tourist from mainland Florida, bars would be my priority (their beaches are better, come on, admit it). Maybe, if it rained, I might get talked into checking out the



Mel Fisher Museum, **but** I could get Pan Am history *and* home-made beer across the street at Kelly's. Which do you think I'm pickin'?

So, Jimmy Buffett. Yeah. Capture the mood of the Keys/Tropics? Hell yeah. No bout adoubt it. But here's Hops' theory on the critical key to Jimmy's success: the ring-pull can.

If you weren't snoozin' through the Shanna Key essay, you caught the reference to the Schlitz can. That was one that you actually had to cut open with the triangular opener, making a 3-

sided cut in both sides of the can: one for drinking and one for venting. You could, of course, swap off. I wonder how many did. I would have. Just cuz.

That kind of opener had hazards of its own. It had to have a sharp enough point to puncture metal, so you **know** if you had that weapon in your pocket and forgot about it when you sat down... yeah, that's what I mean, guys, not fun. It was an easy thing to dangle off your ciggy lighter in your car – just as the combination paintcan/bottle opener was – but a decidedly impractical pocket accessory.

The next step in beer can evolution, though, was a big one – the one that vaulted J. Buffett to stardom . It was the ring-pull – or pop-top – can, where you flicked the dang thang open, then pulllllled the little aluminum strip *right off* the can. Once that insignificant little curl of metal was loose, only the most conscientious and environmentally-aware people (of which there were fewer in the 60's and early 70's) would go out of their way to see that it ended up in a respectable receptacle.



From 1959 (when the first non-detachable tab opener was introduced) to 1975, the ring-pull ruled the roost. And what an advance that was! Those curly strips of aluminum created tons more litter, and exponentially increased your chances of slicing your foot at the beach. Those little fukkars were ubiquitous; almost as bad as cigarette butts.

Hence, hence, hence (love that word), the lyrics: *I blew out my flipflop / Stepped on a pop top*. Thanks to that oft-discarded item, tossed so carelessly on the sand, Jimmy cut his fucking foot. If there was no pop top, there'd be no cut, no platinum song, no meteoric rise to stardom, no touristy restaurant and bar in K-Dub. Let's face it, *Blew out my sandal, stepped on a candle* just doesn't click as well. *Kicked off my sneaker, stepped on a beaker* might work in the chem lab, but not at a beach in the Keys.

So maybe there is history here after all. Dig it.

No such worries here at Bar #29, though. I got my KWSA in a cold bottle and settled down to soak in the atmosphere.

At this time of day, the big screen was pulled down and a Buffett concert video was showing. I thought that was appropriate; people come here for the Buffett vibe. I stroll by here at night a lot, though, and the bands are usually firing out hard-edged rock, not kick-back island tunes. I often wonder why that is. You can get rock anywhere on this island; I would think some steel-drum, easy-sunshine music would be a good draw for the tourists that they are after. But WTF do I know? Ya know? I dunno. Who knows?

Everybody knows the song *Margaritaville*. It must be cool to write a song that everybody knows. And to make millions from it, that would be cool too.

When I first moved down here to stay, in 2001, I was at the Christmas Parade, watching the floats come by the reviewing stand. There was a flatbed truck that came rolling along carrying the Keys Kids Steel Drum Band – or something like that: cute 9-13 year-olds, dressed alike, with various percussion things to bang and clang and clap and click while they sang along. As they approached the stand, they launched into an enthusiastic version of *Margaritaville*. The head honcho at the podium did a frantic search of her notes, then looked up and asked, *Aren't you supposed to be playing a Christmas song??* The Kids were undeterred, though, and rolled off, chanting, *Salt! Salt! Salt!* I was loving it.



Abby has done a really cool painting of Margaritaville. A little while ago, she hit upon the notion of painting iconic Key West places merged with big conch shells. It's a very cool concept. She's also done Blue Heaven, La Te Dah, Hemingway House, Louie's Back Yard, and many more. The original oils will blow you away. You can see her work around town, and specifically at Joy Gallery. Mention this blog and they'll say, *Huhh? Hops Who?? The guy's name is Hops???*

A few years ago, I had a dude that I used to coach come down for a visit. At some point, I mentioned the phrase *Duval Crawl* and he jumped on it. *Let's do that!* No, Andy, bad idea. But he insisted on at least a modified version of it. Being only a year or two removed from college, I know he aimed to drink me under the table, but he underestimated my resolve. Experience counts for a lot in certain circles.

We had already had quite a few during the day, but officially started our Crawl at Sunset Pier and walked our way along. When our cups were empty, we stopped wherever we were and got another. It was aggressive, but not insane. Still, I'm sure we had eight or more each by the time we reached Eaton Street.

The 400 block gave us a breather, but when he saw the Margaritaville sign, he got excited. *A margarita in Margaritaville!* Ha. Youth. You can if you want, Andy, I'm sticking with beer. He did the Marg and it hit him right between the eyes. He insisted he was still all game and go, but we went across the street to Willy T's and he was done and gone by mid-beer. I dragged him home and threw him on sofa where the Z's swarmed all over him.

I do give him credit, though; he woke me up in mid-morning to thank me for a good visit, said he'd already done a 5-mile run out by the beach shortly after sunrise and he envied the hell out of me for being able to do that whenever I want. I didn't have the heart to tell him that I never *ever* do that.

The bar itself at M'ville has Jimmy Buffett photos and album cover images spread around the topside. It also has a few lyrics and saying and titles and such. I happened to sit at one that I thought was a good one to store in my head. You can see also see my phone (with a tail??), and the 75¢ tip that I left. \$5.25 indeed.

