

## 100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 36:

**Caroline's**

[www.carolineskeywest.com](http://www.carolineskeywest.com)

310 Duval Street

Wednesday 8/22, 6:45 pm

Yuengling Lager (bottle)

This is one of the premier Duval Street people-watching spots. The counter that faces outward is about six feet or so above the sidewalk, so you get to scope out everyone who walks by on this side of the street without losing view of the street or the opposite sidewalk.

Fat Tuesday is over there, and they are often good for some nighttime livelies. Hot chicks go to Fat Tuesday – it's the frozen drink thing, I reckon – and where the hot chicks go, guys are sure to follow. Hard Rock Café, right next door, is no slouch either when it comes to attracting the attractive.



Brian – no, not that Brian -- used to host here. Though the job surely had plenty of aggravations – it is the F&B biz, after all – slow times getting paid to stand at the front entrance, watching and even chatting up the odd, cool or sexy people sauntering by, might have taken some of the sting out of it all.

Caroline's bar is on the small side, though, so you gotta be there early to get one of these prime seats. The place is always full when I stroll by in the evenings. I'm sure their kickass food has something to do with that, too.

I got here plenty early this day, like an hour before sunset, when most tourists are veering towards Mallory or The Top, or Sunset Pier, or someplace where, unlike here, you can actually see the sun go down.



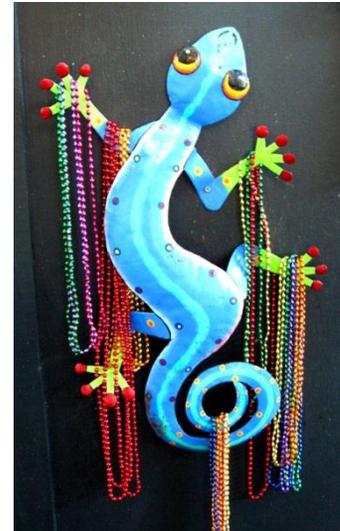
I was still damp around the edges from my post-work swim at Fort Zack when I came in. No, that's not right; you don't come *in* to Caroline's because it's all outdoors.

When the bar is closed up for the night, it looks like a toll booth: just a white wooden box with an ordinary peaked roof. But it opens up like the neck of the Dilophosaurus in *Jurassic Park* – OK, maybe not exactly like that – raising the blank white shutters overhead to provide a makeshift roof and keep rain and droppings off the customers.

The counter, like almost all of the tables, is sheltered by large umbrellas. That's nice if the rain is coming straight down, but it don't always do that, do it? Then again, it don't always rain, neither. So there.

So, there were four other guys at the bar when I arrived. They were having a lively conversation with Randall, the barkeep. Randall would easily qualify for the Tallest Barkeep In Key West Contest, if there was such a dumbass thing. Anyway, he seemed to know all those dudes, so I was just *the other guy* at the corner of the bar. Randall was on the job, though; I was seated for only a few seconds before he paused the convo and attended to my thirst.

Turns out that he came to the Keys from New Hampshire, so we had that New England bond going. Boating was the big lure. He's very much an on-the-water guy, with a few vessels to choose from, apparently. With



ordinances prohibiting Key West residents from parking boats on public rights of way, and most home lots having little space to keep them, Randall maintains that up-da-Keys is the only place to be, living-wise.

I never knew that it had also been illegal to park your boat on your

property, but apparently the new law was going into effect this very day. A brand new law! That seemed like a good reason to hoist a beer. Might as well have a reason, damn it.

Food arrived for the guy sitting on the other side of the bar. I didn't notice it arrive, but when I turned my head that way, the guy was lifting it to eat it. It was a fish sandwich and it was huge. The fish was overhanging the roll on most sides, with lettuce extending out too. The sandwich blocked out his head. I doubt Caroline's gets many complaints about portion size.

I'm sure this has nothing to do with Caroline's, other than it is right next to them, but I've often wondered about that BADD Cobra and Harley raffle thing. They are hot machines, for sure. Bikers Against Drunk Driving, which is based in Daytona, attained the space with assistance from the Hard Rock, and booted out that annoying dude with the big snakes and birds.

That animal guy was not so bad when he was low-tech and you could just take a picture and drop some ching in his bucket, but when he upgraded to the laptop photo ensemble and charged people five a bucks a click, he lost me. Plus, he always always always looks totally pissed off.

When I used to carry my ferret around town on my shoulder, people would occasionally ask to take his picture, or hold him while I took their picture. I would happily oblige; Critter was a great icebreaker. Sometimes, the tourist – especially the Asian ones – would offer me a few dollars as a tip or something. Surprisingly, I always turned it down. Critter was no whore.



Anyway, this BADD raffle started in 2009 as way to raise awareness of this organization that strives to assist motorcyclists (and mopedists, and bicyclists) who were badly injured by drunk drivers and are getting reamed by their insurance companies. A worthy cause, I have to admit.

I guess the initial raffle must have gone well because a few different vehicles have occupied this space in the ensuing years. The people who work the spot sell tickets to passers-by, but I don't think I ever actually have seen anyone buy any.

One night, I paused to get a good look at the latest car to arrive, and the woman came over.

*Buy a ticket?* she asked. I have to admit, her sales pitch was compelling.

*No*, I replied, *I actually have no...*

She tried to finish my sentence for me, *...money?*

*No. Interest*

*Why not? Great bike, hot car!*

*I couldn't afford to win that. You still have to pay sales tax on it even if you win it, and even if you try to just turn it around and sell it, you need to insure it until you do.*



Apparently, there is a cash prize alternative for those, like me, who see that a free car is never really a free car.

Drawings are in March, according to the BADD website, and tickets cost a buck each. I had to laugh, though, when I saw the way they list it on the site:

Tickets are only \$1 each (US Funds)

20 for \$20

40 for \$40

75 for \$75

120 for \$120

200 for \$200

Thanks for doing all that math for us, guys. I wonder how much 100 tickets would cost? It doesn't say!