

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 49:

"The Tippy Pelican" Tiki Bar
Marriott Courtyard Hotel
3031-41 North Roosevelt Boulevard
Thursday 9/6, 5:30 pm

Key West Sunset Ale (bottle) \$5.00

I've always liked the style of the Marriott Courtyard. It looks southwestern, with that reddish tint to the walls and the terracotta roof, and I love the southwest. Not sure I'd be into living out there, but Utah, Arizona and all those amazing National Parks are tremendous places to vacation.



So, I was in that mindset somewhat as I wandered on in to find the little bar I had been told about. It made sense that they would have one somewhere, and right near the pool seemed like a good place to check first. That's where I'd put it.



There is an odd aura about hotel bars, though, isn't there? Like it's a *Hotel Guests Only* thing. It makes sense, I reckon. There would be discontent among the guests if every barstool was taken up by scruffy locals: *You mean, I'm paying a week's pay for a night's stay and I can even sit at the fucking bar?!?!*

And, really, who else would it be for, if not the guests? People come to Key West to have fun in Key West; it's not that hotel itself that attracted them. The bar keeps them happy while they do their little stints of hanging about, but if you're just gonna hang out by a hotel pool, you

can do that in Ocala for a lot less money.

When I worked at Key Lime Inn, we did not have a bar. This puzzled some guests, some of whom seemed to believe that even the churches in Key West had bars. We could usually appease them by reminding them that Duval was less than two blocks away, or that sauce could be had for drink-at-home prices just down at the corner at CVS.

So, anyway, why would a *local* go a hotel bar? Surely it's lamer than the other varieties around town, yes? Maybe you live right around the corner? Maybe you're buddies with the barkeep? Maybe you're just sleazing a swim by pretending to be a guest? Good Happy Hour prices? Good food? Valid reasons, all.

Let's ask a question: *Does the hotel want us there?* Let's answer that question with a question: *Are we spending money?* If the answer to that question is *Yes*, then the answer is *Yes*. If *No*, then *No, please get the fuggout*.

There are terms and conditions, though, like: *Are you spending enough money?* And, most important of all, *Are you behaving yourself?* Since it is just not possible for any hotel employee to recognize every guest by sight, if you act like you belong, and you don't raise a ruckus, everyone will just *assume* that you do belong.

So, as long as you don't give anyone a reason to suspect that you're about to strip and go streak the bar mitzvah in the Rhododendron Room, they'll probably leave you be.

Anyhoo, I sauntered through the lobby with a *hi-how-are-ya* nod to the desk damsel. She gave me a friendly reply. She didn't mean it; just doin' her duty. If she saw me anywhere else, she'd probably flip me off with a, *what are you gawking at, you perv?*

After a self-guided tour around the boardwalk out back, I located the pool in, of course, the Courtyard. The fence had one of those top-handle things that you never get right the first try. The bar was in a squat tiki hut, tucked back away from the pool. I had to duck to get under the bottom edge of the thick-fronded roof. Though a minor WTF on a partly cloudy Happy Hour, that thick, low roof must make this hut a nice haven on a hot midday.



The barkeep was a large fella with a graying buzzcut and a blue tropical shirt. His name, I gathered, was Randy. Retired Coast Guard. He wasn't huge, but he was big enough to be jolly. He wasn't jolly, but he not non-jolly neither. Maybe jolly inside, but maintaining a composed demeanor. Straight-faced jolly.



Randy told me that Happy Hour was indeed on, and Buds and Bud Lights were \$2. I ordered a Key West Sunset Ale and willingly paid the finner. So there.

Not much was going on. People were just leaning on the bar, making small talk, occasionally including Randy in the convo.

None of the six customers looked like they were on holiday. I suspect every one of `em was a local. Two-dollar beers will bring out them local folks.

One mid-twenties skater-type dude got up, trotted to the pool, dove in, hopped out ten seconds later, trotted back and ordered another Bud Light. He said it with such matter-of-factness, I bet he does the splash before every beer he orders here. Randy was on the job and had the bottle in hand before the order was officially placed.

An iguana came scuttering around behind the back of the hut. Randy shooed it away, swiping at it with a broom, grumbling about how they sometimes get trapped in there at night and scare the living piss out of the morning barkeeps when they open up.

Iggy scuttered around to my side and did a little pose for me. He sure was green. Or she.

I was about to ask Randy if the bar had a name. I think I saw one sign that said "pool bar" and another mention of "Tiki Bar." But then I saw a drink specials sign on the bar – one of those 6"



tall two-sided clear plastic things with a folded sheet of paper stuck inside.

This yellow page had a list of drinks under a cartoon drawing of a pelican, with spin lines and little starry things around his head, next to the words *The Topsy Pelican*. I wasn't sure if it was referring to a drink or the bar, but I needed a name and that one had a ring to it, so I assumed it referred to the bar. Case closed.

Content now that I knew where I had been, I decided to depart. I thought about charging the beer to my room, but paid up instead. I tipped Randy, wished him well, and headed off towards the Rhododendron Room.