

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 65:

Blue Mojito, Hyatt
www.keywest.hyatt.com
601 Front Street
Saturday 9/22, 4:30 pm

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (draft) \$2.69

This was just a poolside-at-a-fine-hotel kind of day. You've had those, right? Who hasn't?

But while I could overlook the Atlantic Ocean from #64, #65 came with a sweet view of the Gulf of Mexico. Other side of the freaking world, baybee.



The bike trek from ocean to gulf was just over a mile long. I did it in well under an hour. Well under. I know; I was impressed too.

It had been quite a while since I had lounged in these digs. Back in my van-life winter of 1993-94, I used to frequent this hotel pool quite often. If memory serves, it was actually a Westin back then – but trusting my memory from that winter is a shaky deal. I'm fine on the generals, but a teench fuzzy on some of the details. I can give you about 420 reasons for that.

I do know, though, that there were at least a dozen times when I followed up an evening or afternoon run with a dip in this posh pond. It was that all-about-attitude thing again.

I'd park the van nearby, go for my run, return in sweaty shorts and shoes, and head directly for the pool. It's certainly not unusual for a runner to carry no ID or keys or wallet on a run, so that was fine. As long as I acted like I knew where I was and that I was supposed to be there, all was well. I was clean-shaven, and my running gear leaned towards the pricey side, so there were no red flags in my outward appearance.

Some nights, actually, all I really wanted was the shower, but it seemed a bit weird to just use the poolside shower when I could shower in my room. So I did the rinse, took a leisurely dip, and rinsed off after. Then I'd pick up my shoes and walk off towards my room. Just so happened that my room was parked on Simonton Street.

So, I strolled on in to Bar 65 with some fond memories. There was no security to evade, no gate keeping out the riff raff. I (the quintessential riff raff) just walked on in, seeking nothing more than an affable exchange of money for malt beverage.

The Blue Mojito was in mellow mode as I nestled onto my standard issue wooden, slat-backed, tall bar seat. To be honest, I expected padded seating, given all the living-room-style furniture in the immediate area. But I was OK with it, for sure; the common-man's wooden chairs worked just fine for yours truly. I felt much more welcome and at home planting my posterior on the familiar planks.



I saw Sierra Nevada on draft and felt even more at home. The friendly young woman who served me informed me that it was Happy Hour, and my SNPA was half-priced: only \$2.50. Happy Hops, happy Hops, happy happy happy Hops! Too-fitty for a Sierra. One of life's little victories fo sho.



The bar staff, too, was a pleasant surprise. The young woman had a pleasantly peasant vibe about her. Where I might have expected a "Good afternoon, sir, may I get you a cocktail?", she greeted me with a smile and a "Hi, what can I getcha?"

The guy, maybe about 25 years old or so, sported elaborate body art all over both arms and his neck. He looked more like he'd be tipping taps at Tattoos and Scars instead of mixing martinis at a five-diamond hotel. I was impressed at

management's tolerance. I mean, when I worked at Uno's – a fair few notches down the scale from the Hyatt – my bosses hired a server who had a nice dragon tattoo on his forearm, and they made him wear an ace bandage over it every shift. So, Hyatt's giving this dude such a long leash had me doing my HAN (Hops' Approving Nod).

Things were clickin' here. Better price than I expected, excellent brew to quaff, and casual Hops-class service. Coolo.

The view, though, was the biggest perk of all. The bar itself is nice enough, but you tend to look outward from it, taking in the pool, the palms, the angular architecture, and the Gulf. Damn nice.



It was so nice, in fact, that the bar itself just was not holding my interest. After I dashed off the last of my Sierra suds, I had to do some meandering to take in the lay of the land.

Technically, the BV (bar visit) would be over as soon as I shouldered up my bag and shoved away from the bar. But it's an open air bar, so it can include the open air that surrounds it. Hey, my Tour, my rules.

So, I went walkabout, making myself at home in just about any nook or cranny that was open and accessible. I had a seat at a table in the outdoor restaurant, overlooking the docks. I roamed the upper balconies, surveying



land and sea, and looking down at The Blue Mojito waaaay over there beyond the pool. I wandered off along ground level, checked out a small lounge area with a dazzling sunset image on canvas, and then discovered a turtle pond decked out in orchids. Or maybe, just maybe, it was an orchid pond decked out in turtles.

Well, that about sated my curiosity and I began to put my mind back

on the serious biznizz of barhopping. I shut off the point-n-shoot cam and slid in back in the side pocket of my ... *WTF?? Where's my freaking shoulder bag??* Dumbass me went wandering bagless; I left my bag hanging on the back of my bar seat.



I beat a hasty retreat to the Blue M – it appears that the Official Bar Visit had not been terminated after all – with shaky confidence that it would still be there. It only had my wallet, keys, phone, and uh-huh-uh-huh-wink-wink in it. No big deal.

As I rounded the pool, I could see it hanging faithfully where I had left it. Of course it was. Who would take a canvas shoulder bag that has a bio-hazard symbol on it? I knew there was a method to my madness when I selected that bag.

