

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 83:

Fraternal Order of Orioles Nest 328

www.facebook.com/FOObar328

106 Simonton Street

Friday 10/5, 11:30 pm

Yeungling (bottle) \$2.75

I dunno. Maybe there is something here of merit. Maybe. If so, I just didn't see it. I remember looking up the Fraternal Order of Orioles on the web and reading about a fairly noble organization, not unlike Elks or their ilk. [Elks' ilk. Ha. Just had to write that. Good bet nobody else ever has. Ha.]



But, yeah, they seemed like a party-for-a-cause kinda group. Check out their web site; it gives you a good impression, yes?

But the KW nest had been through some rough go's that had given the place a less-than-philanthropic reputation. They shut down for many months after their initial stint. Might've been liquor license problems -- accidentally selling to minors, something like that (hey, it happens) -- might have been something more powdery, depends on what rumors you listen to.

Whatever it was, it was all in the rearview mirror now, because they were actually having a membership drive. The opaque glass doors that were usually closed so securely were now propped open, and a podium adorned with, well, adornments stood next to it. No one was at the podium, of course, but that was fine with me. A sign said something about a \$5 cover, but that included a drink.

With a here-goes-nothing shrug, I ventured in. The room was large and bare. High ceiling. Big empty floor, curved-shape bar towards the back of the room. Plenty of room for, uhhh, dancing? Up to my left, there was a staircase and a balcony. I couldn't tell what else was up there, though. Private rooms, maybe. Or maybe it was nothing but a look-down-on-the-room kind of balcony.

I had a seat at the bar. There was one other customer, several stools away. The lights over the bar seemed awfully bright. The dude behind the bar did not. He was tall and young and fairly fit, but I don't think his heart was in his job. When I asked about the what-ups of an Orioles Nest membership, he said he thought it was \$35 or so. As for the benefits, he said, "uhhh, you get drinks at really low prices, and you get a cool place to drink 'em." I almost



asked, "Oh ya? Where's that?" but then I realized he meant this room here. It was not the most compelling sales pitch.

He got me my Yuengling, asked for \$2.75, then left me alone so he could go do nothing. Some 50-year-old manager dude emerged from out back and came behind the bar. He was less-than-average height, greater-than-average weight, with less than average hair, and copious bling. Necklaces were draped around his neck like Rick Ross. It looked a tad ridiculous in this setting.

There was a TV up on the wall behind the bar, and the MLB playoffs were on: Baltimore versus the Yank-Me's. It was the seventh inning. The barkeep spoke up to no one in particular, "Hey, look! The Orioles are playing!" Dude, it's the seventh inning and you're just noticing that now??

The manager climbed the stairs and stood on the balcony. What the heck he thought he was accomplishing up there, I have no idea.

My fellow patron, a bony-looking guy around 60, had barely moved since I came in. If he hadn't pushed his empty cup a foot or so forward and pulled its replacement back, I might have thought he was a mannequin.

The place just wasn't singing to me. Nobody ever asked me for my \$5 cover, nor did they seem inclined to urge me to join. So, before they could, I glugged my Gling, left \$3.75 on the bar and bee lined for the exit.

ADDENDUM: July 2013

Subsequent to this Hop, I've been told by two credible sources that The Oriole Club is right at the top of their favorite bars lists because of their laaaaate night activity. The OC is, apparently, the place to go for those who work till the bars close. I can certainly dig that.

And, being a private club, with memberships, they are not subject to the exact same laws -- hours of operation, for example -- as public victualers. I guess I should have gone at 4:20 AM instead of 11:30 PM and I would've been singing a different tune.