

## 100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012

Key West Bar Boondoggle

*"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"*

BAR 88:

Turtle Kraals Restaurant and Bar

1 Lands End Village

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

Thursday 10/18, 7:15 pm

*Terrapin Rye Pale Ale (draft) \$2.75?*

A man can work up a mighty powerful thirsty hiking from bar to bar in this town. Maybe not in this case, since I could probably throw a cat or a small dog from Half Shell to Turtle Kraals. Not that I would, but I think I could. Probably nothing bigger than a Cocker Spaniel, though, and they'd be tough because of the wind resistance from all that floppy fur.

But, yeah, you trick him into giving you both front paws -- he's all smiley and playful -- and then you start to whirl around like a hammer thrower, and on the third spin, when his body is straight out on a flat plane away from you, you just let goooooo, and off he flies. They love that!



It works better with dogs because cats have an inherent distrust of humans and would never willingly let you take both paws like that. You'd get bit.

But anyway....

Jacko and I walked past the big bronze mariner, and were detoured by a beautiful, colorful sunset

afterglow, both above and below, reflected in the old turtle corral. It was a stop and smell the roses moment, and a perfect-for-Facebook photo.

But we were quickly back on task and headed inside to resume the Tour. Ahh, how beautiful. Let's go drink.

They really did corral turtles here in the past. It's not like the bar belongs to someone named Turtle Kraal. Key West was bigtime in the turtle cannery industry for turtle soup and such back in the late 1800s. Personally, I don't feel the lure. I'm betting that it was one of those meals that you didn't really like; you just ate it to seem cool. Heyy, i really dug that turtle soup. By the way, where is your bathroom?



On Fridays and Mondays at 6 PM they still have turtle races. I've never seen them. I keep meaning to, but I just keep forgetting. Maybe I should get one of those fancy smart phones that remind me of such things.

Ahhh, but you have to remember to set the reminders on those things, and if you don't remember to set the reminders, they don't remind you. So they ain't that fukken smart, is they? You have to be smart enough to set their smarts, so they are really just an extension of how smart you are. So if I can't remember to set the reminders, no phone on the world is gonna get me to the damn turtle races, damn it. Is there a Get Hops To The Turtle Races app? There should be. Gragsie, can we can that cooking?

So, yeah, Jacko and I grabbed a couple of bar stools and made ourselves at

home. The place was pretty empty. Surprisingly empty, really. Two people sat at the bar, and nobody was at any of the tables. The dining room was a bit better: a decent-sized family, a few couples, and a couple of fews.

The young woman barkeep -- she looked like an Elaine -- emerged from the kitchen and looked quite surprised to see us. We acted surprised to see her. After a quick study of the taps, I decided to try the Terrapin Rye Pale Ale. Very appropriate to go with the turtle theme. Jacko got his usual Bud Light.

TK had gotten an overhaul a couple of years back. I guess some structural issues had to be addressed or something, but they also modernized the place some. Not a real lot; the walls and beams and ceilings and tables and



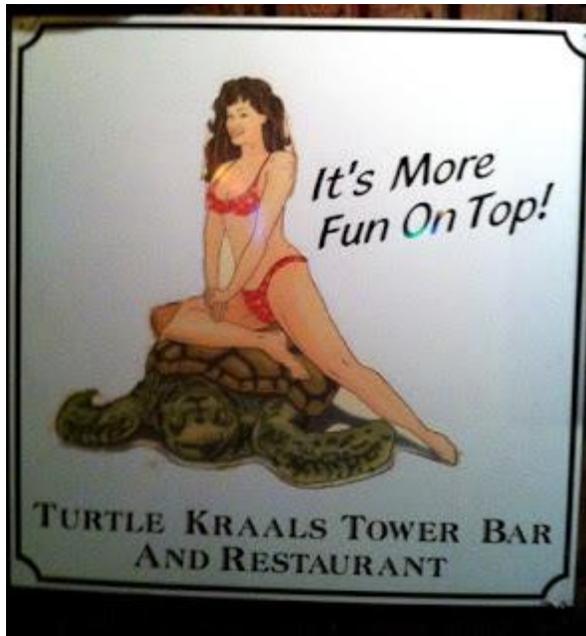
chairs are all still old wood, but what really seemed out of place for an "old time seaport" bar was the gleaming wall of stainless steel and glass refrigerators behind the bar. Man, is that sucker bright!

I mean, yeah, it is one sharp piece, and I'm sure it's functional as all get-out, but as you sit at the bar, it's all you can see. Well, that and the big TVs. If you're at a table, it's not an issue; you still get all the woodiness and quaints of the room, and the taller bar actually blocks the view of the fridges from the lower tables. As a bar customer, though, that atmosphere is just gone.

Is that a bad thing? I dunno. It just knocked me off kilter a bit. In another place, that wall would dazzle. Right now, all I could think was that TK had swapped woody harbor character for steel gleam.

The TV was showing a concert. I didn't recognize the band, but they looked

and sounded great. Definitely a thumbs-up for that upgrade. So, I guess it was already starting to grow on me. Next time in, I probably won't even notice.



A woman came out from the kitchen carrying a large plate of oysters in front of her. She looked right at us, "Oysters?"

"Oh yeah," we both said, with a put-em-right-here gesture. As she was about to do so, I asked, "Are they free?"

She quickly pulled them back, looking a tad horrified. "No!"

The man to our left spoke up, "I think that's my order." She shot us a venomous look and hurried to deliver him his meal. I think Jacko was a little disappointed, but I didn't care. I think oysters are vile.

My original plan -- if the PLIPAT can be said to have an actual plan -- was to hit up the Tower Bar here, either as an "and" or as an "or". It's great up there on a nice evening, enjoying the breeze and the overview of the harbor and the Happy Hour vibe. Ah we'll, didn't happen. Maybe on the next tour: Hops II, The Next Century.

The dining room here is great too. When kin come to town, this seems to be first-night dinner venue of choice. Food is good, breeze through the big open windows is great; they all dig the boats and envy the hell out of me for living here. Visitors are always good for reminding us to enjoy and relish our island life.

So, Jacko and I were just about done with our beers when I made a hit-the-head run. I had to double-check the door sign as I entered because there were two slim teenage girls in there. They were maybe 13 and 14, looked like sisters, and kinda fussing in the mirror. They were speaking Dutch or

something similar and didn't care at all when I walked in. I proceeded unfazed as well. When I was done and went to use the sink, they deferred and got out of my way, then resumed their mirror thing when I left. No giggling or anything; they seemed to be enjoying themselves, but not being silly about it. It's just, well, WTF were they doing in the freaking men's room?!?

So, now the Tour enters the home stretch. We're diving eagerly into K-Dub's craziest week. Goombay kicks it off tomorrow night. The final dozen bars will be funnnnnnnn.



#### Addendum (5 months later):

Finally went to turtle races. It was a kick. Everyone gets a slip of paper, numbered 1, 2, 3, or 4. I had #1. Four turtles were placed on a ten-foot long table and on a signal, they... did nothing. Nada. Just sat there. Oh, the drama.

#1 and #4 shifted a bit. #1 craned his neck and looked around. The crowd exhorted them on. #3 kinda shuffled to his left, pushing #2 against the wall. #2 had no response. I think he was dead.

#1 moved slowly left to block out #3, and as soon as he got a half-shell lead. #4 just bolted. Mannn, he just saw daylight and zoomed. The crowd roared. It was no contest. He won by nine feet. The others, quite frankly, didn't even try. Stupid turtles.

And, to my great satisfaction, TK had remodeled their bar! The fridges were low and under the counter, the TV's were on the back wall, and the whole

back side of the bar was now seating. Cool! Might be a little awkward for those folks back there to watch TV, but that's their problem.

