

Bar Hoppin' With Hops
The Second Century Tour
Hops MacBarley's 2013
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #137:

Hot Tin Roof Lounge

0 Duval Street

www.oceankey.com

Saturday, 6 July, 3:30

Stella Artois (bottle) \$5.50

It was a record-setting day. Neither B nor J nor I set any records, but we were witnesses to one. And we came here to celebrate it.

The record -- all legal and certified and submitted to Guinness -- was the World's Largest Key Lime Pie. Eight feet in diameter it was, and the intrepid staff from the Key West Key Lime

Pie Company built it right in the middle of Greene Street. It was a big to-do. The street was closed to traffic and they set up a stage to work on. It took a couple of hours to fill the mold with crust, filling, juice, and whip, and a very good crowd came out to exhort them on throughout the process. We were in that crowd. Yes, we were cheering for a big pie. You wouldn't?

So, they finished it, posed for photos, were praised by public speakers who just had to take the opportunity to speak publicly, and then -- what do you do with Key Lime Pie? -- they began to cut it up and hand out slices! Suh-weeeet! We got to eat World Record Pie. It cost everyone a buck a slice (which went to the Key West Firehouse Museum), but that ain't no big deal -- this was WRKLP!



And after all that hoop-la, it was time for some Hop-la.

Humidity was high on this early July afternoon. Actually, the pie masters got really lucky with the weather. Hot, yeah, but mostly overcast during the building of The Great Pie, so they (and it) were not melting in the blazing sunshine. Rain seemed imminent at times, but never happened. One five-minute downpour would have made a big bowl of Key Lime porridge.



Now, though, Mr. Sun was trying to retake the sky and, as we reached Sunset Pier, we were feeling pretty heated up. So, it was with great anticipation of AC and CB (cold beer) that we climbed the steps into Ocean Key's Hot Tin Roof Lounge, overlooking the famous Sunset Pier (Hop #30 of the 2012 *Peace, Love & IPA Tour* – see photo on final page of this Hopter).

Entering was like slipping into a cool pool. My first thought was, *Niiiiiiiiice*. My second thought was, *Are you open?* The lounge was empty, though there was some very light activity in the dining room to our right. But a slim late-twenties guy, dressed all classy-like, promptly came in, assured us that, yes, the bar was indeed open, and took his position behind it.

Jan ordered wine -- this was too auspicious an occasion for just water -- Brian selected Coors Light as his celebratory libation, and I chose to quaff a Stella Artois. It was from the bottle, though, so I didn't get the full experience of the wicked coolo glass and the spatula swipe across the top. It was sort of a semi-Stella, but good enough for toasting.

Our barkeep's name tag said Jackson, but he told us his name was really Jack and the tag was to avoid some administrative redundancy or something. I thought Jackson made for a cooler name on a tag anyway, though. Turns out that he is a big fan of 90 Mile Lounge too, so he was OK with us.

Empty bars rarely make for exciting blog material. What do you say when nobody is there and nothing happens?

You talk about the ceiling, baby! Hot Tin Roof soared right to the top of the Best Bar Ceilings in Key West list -- and I've seen 137 of 'em so far.

Polished wood beams enclose large square bamboo-bordered panels of painted pineapples and fronds against a sky-blue background, and a square within the square has



within the square has several free floating dark leaves that look almost like lips, or... well, you decide.

The walls are painted colorfully, too, as if you're overlooking Truman Annex. And the seats are tall with nice thick cushions for both back and backside. Nice room.

As it turned out, though, there would be controversy, after all. At

about 2:45, quite a few adults and children showed up. They had a reservation for a party of ten -- at 2:00. Forty-five minutes late might not be that big a deal at some places, being mid-afternoon with a big empty dining room, but HTR does an unusual but sensible thing: they an all-out close at 3:00 so they can do a free-and-easy reset for the dinner hour. By 2:45, all the servers and kitchen staff were already into shut-down mode.

So, what did they do with the Tardy Family, a potential \$500+ tab? They told them to go away. Get lost, ya foolish bastids. They were much nicer about it than that, of course, explaining their policy, and suggesting alternatives nearby -- there are only a million or so eateries within a half-mile.

Mrs. Tardy actually had the nerve to bitch about it. *Why weren't we informed of this when we made our reservation?* Because, if you arrived on time, one hour would have been plenty of time for your meal. *Well, we tried to get a later reservation.* And we told you that we took none after 2:00. Now you see why.

So, Tanya Tardy had gone ahead and made the 2:00 rezzie, said *Screw 'em, we'll just show up late*, and got burrrrrned. That's what ya get for being inconsiderate.

Anyone who has ever worked a lot of closing shifts has had the misfortune of the Last Minute Party. Kitchen closes at 11:00 and they walk in the door at 10:55. There hasn't been a customer since 9:30, and the clean-up is 90% done. We'll all be outa here in time to catch last call across the street. And Travis -- Mr. Pay Ya Back On Friday himself -- said he's buying! Even the bartender has his bottles out of the rack for the final wipe down.

That, by the way, was one of my favorite tasks as a barkeep: wiping down the bottles at the end of the night. I dunno why. I'll bet most keepers hate that task. I know I've worked with a few who must have despised it because I saw many a dirty speed rack when I opened up the next day. There was



just something about it that was kinda cool, giving each of your house boozies their final little rubdown before tucking them into bed after a long night of being slammed and rattled around in that aluminum rack.

But anyway, the Late Party of four arrives just before closing and asks, "Are you still open?" while pointing at the *Serving Dinner Till 11 PM Nightly* sign. The building

groans. You all hold your breath, praying that the Assistant Manager will have a little chutzpah for once in her life, and you watch in horror as she grabs four menus. Something slams in the kitchen. Bottles rattle sharply in the bar. *Not my station not my station not my station **not** my station arrrrrrgggghhhh you smelly bitch I hate you I hate you I **hate** you!!!!*

Friendliness comes hard at a time like this. You do your best insincere smile and suffer through a round of retarded questions. Four different frozen drinks. Great. Barkeep Bucko will bite my head off for this.

Appetizers!?! You people truly suck.

Travis walks by with his stupid smirk, gives a wave and a bottoms-up motion as he saunters out the door. Bite me, you turd.

The entree takes forever. They have the gall to order dessert. Gotta make the freaking crap myself. The cook bolted after their second bite of the entree.

They sit and sip after-dinner coffee. They wanted drinks but Bucko closed up and shut off the lights right after the fourth slushie. Busboy is gone. He quit rather than stay (*got a mad party to go to, dude, I'm history.*) Gonna have to clear and reset the table myself. Even the dishrat went home, so I'll have to clean the goddamn plates too. GAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

They sit there, swapping story after story. They laugh heartily -- at **me!** It must be at me. Travis must have put them up to this, that rat bastard.

Finally, they toss in their napkins, and pay the check. As I bring the slip for them to sign, one of the women rests her hand on my wrist and says with either a slight smile or a sneer -- hard to tell which -- "I hope we didn't keep you."

You want to pour hot coffee down her cleavage, then turn and grab her husband and throttle and shake him till his head falls to the floor with an audible THUMP, then whirl and fling steak knives like ninja stars at their stunned companions' throats ... **but** you know it *might* affect your precious gratuity, that capricious drop in the bucket for which we all debase ourselves.

You feel like a totally sackless piece of donkey dung as you say, "Not at all, ma'am," and walk away.

Interminable minutes later, you lock the door behind them and go to the vacated table. The bill was \$175. Twenty-five dollar tip. Fourteen-point-three per cent. Douchebags.

By the time you clean everything up, cash out your checks with the detested assistant mangler, and **finally** get the hell out of there, the parking lot across the street is almost empty, and the lights are out. Makes you want to wail.

So, ummm, where was I?

Oh yessss, Hot Tin Roof, Hop 137 overall. Nice ceiling. Better be on time, though.



The view of Sunset Pier from Hot Tin Roof.