

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

Bar #142:

**Island House**

1129 Fleming Street  
Monday, 8 July, 10:00 PM

*Yuengling (can) \$4.50*

I have seen ads that carry the claim that Island House is the "best gay resort in the world." In the *world*. The **world!** That is a damn serious claim. I've never been to many gay resorts around the world -- actually, I've never been to many resorts of *any* kind around the world, since I've never been out of North America -- so

I can't pass much judgement, but it does seem a cut above New Orleans House in terms of lodging and dining, so WTF, it **must** be the finest on the damn planet, right?

And if it's the best on Earth, is it much of a stretch to boast of being the best in the Solar System? Ya think there are any resorts -- gay or otherwise --

on Neptune? Jupiter? Or, haha, Uranus? Maybe Uranus provides some good gay entertainment. I don't know much about Uranus, and -- no offense -- I don't care to.



I've dined here before. George and I would hit up some dinner here once in a blue moon. He used to rave about the food here -- well, maybe not rave, that would be scary -- and, man, he was right. I-House would be right in the hunt for Best Burger in Key West. [Insert your favorite meat joke here.]

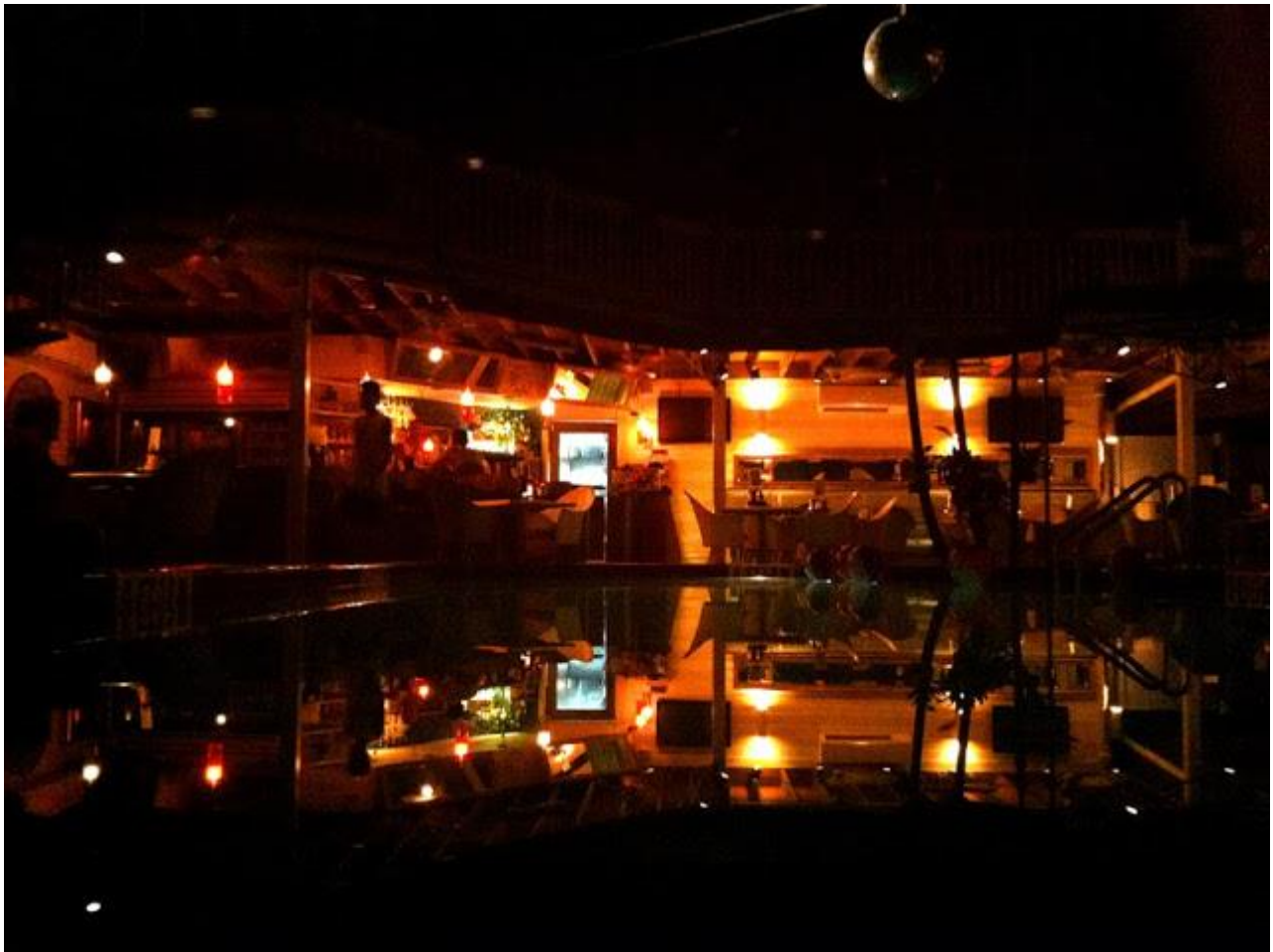
And, no, we were not surrounded by naked men doing salacious acts. That may well have been going on upstairs in the video room, but the dinner hour crowd was nicely



dressed and well-behaved. No one will accuse I-House of being an inexpensive guest house, so when it's time to be a little classy, everybody knows how.

The bar is right there amid the dining tables, overlooking the pool. It's all surrounded by tall palm trees and lush green shrubs and orchids hanging here and there. Freaking *nice* place. If you're not a phobe, check it out sometime.

This particular night, though, for Hop 142, was as quiet as this place ever gets, I bet: a Monday night after a four-day holiday weekend, in July, in the tropics. Yeah, big crowd. I was the only one there besides Billy, the keeper of the bar. He was quite bored, but I think he had had a pretty busy and lucrative weekend, so he was fine with a night of doing nada.



I ordered a Yuengling, and, like any good gay barkeep, he was happy to give it to me in the can -- no bottles allowed poolside, of course. I also ordered some chicken tenders and told Billy to give me a hey when they were



ready. The pool looked just too good to pass up. I kicked off the Nikes, and stepped in for a leisurely float-around. I curled one foam noodle under my arms and up behind my head, and another under the knees. My can o' brew was held lightly on the abdomen, and not a muscle was moving. I felt weightless. Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

One time, about a decade ago, when I was managing a resort on Sugarloaf Key, I did the same thing after work. I was your typical overworked manager -- too many hours, too much dishwashing -- but once closing time came, I had the bar and the pool all to myself. I'd pour

myself a half-pitcher of Key West Sunset Ale and go for a late-night swim. On this particular night, the pool water was 90, the air temp was 90, and I just floated my weary ass off to sleep.

When I opened my eyes, the sky was considerably brighter. Sunrise was still a bit away, but night was fleeing fast. There was no wind at all, no sound at all. The pool was as still as glass. My toes stood above the surface and reflected like little sausages in the mirrory water. I really didn't want to move. I doubt I had ever been so comfortable. Every muscle was totally reeeeeeeelaxed.

My cup of beer was still safely in hand -- those instincts were intact -- but it had a good five or six hours' worth of Warm in it. It would not have been a good Good Morning beverage.

So, I did a similar float here in the cement pond at Island House, but without the sleep and without the warm beer. So nice. Whoever invented those noodles should get the Nobel Prize for Relaxation. I'm pretty sure there is one.

Billy gave me the chicken shout so I de-pooled, chowed a couple of tenders (excellent, by the way) while Itoweled off, took the rest to go, and biked off back home.

