

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

Bar #149:

**Bottle Cap Lounge & Liquor**  
1128 Simonton Street  
[www.bottlecapkeywest.com/](http://www.bottlecapkeywest.com/)  
Sunday, 14 July, 8:00 PM

*Stone IPA (bottle) \$4.50*

This Hop was accidental. Really. Our stout quartet -- myself, Big Dog, Brian and (the physically less stout, though I don't think *petite* would be applicable here either, even if diminutive *could* apply) Jan -- were aimed purposefully at Camille's. It was 8 PM on a Summer Sunday -- Bastille Day, fer cryin' out loud -- so we anticipated a happy dinner crowd at a popular Key West eatery.

**Wronnnnnng.** Closed. Closed?? Yeah, *closed*. What do mean, *closed*? Freakin' **CLOSED**, awright? WT-Effin-F?

So, there we stood, staring dumbly at Camille's, like it might suddenly open up if we looked at it long enough. We became dimly aware of a female voice behind us, kind of bleating against the growing dusk. Then our dulled senses recognized that she was bleating at us.

"Hey! Come on in here and see a Real Live Irish Bartender! Come on! Real live Irish Bartender!!"

We were intrigued. At that point, of course, we were easily intrigued. And the lure of seeing a *Real Live Irish Bartender* was just too strong to pass up. What the heck, ya know?

The bleating woman -- would you ever want to be described as "the bleating" anything? -- was from -- have you figured it out yet? -- the -- have you had enough of these hyphenated interruptions yet? -- Bottle Cap.

We were quick to adopt a Screw-Camille-we-gonna-Hop-da-Cap demeanor and crossed Julia Street to enter the multi-purpose world of Bottle Cap Lounge and Liquor.



There is a lot going on here. In fact, the western section of this building had already been Hopped: The Groove Lounge (Hop #106). Some places have



more than one bar area but do not deserve separate consideration. This place, for sure, is like two different worlds. Bottle Cap is the common man's bar. This is not a "lounge" and people do not come here to dance or mingle. They come here to have a drink and maybe play some pool. Much more my style.

The front section is a liquor store and deli. It had other

names a couple of times, I think, and I've had a good sandwich or two here across the years, but not lately.

On the KW visit of the mom and big bro back in 2004 or so, I hooked them up with a room at Santa Maria Suites, a few blocks oceanward from here, and dashed back to my afternoon shift at work. The bro, being a thrifty Scot, chose to walk to the nearest eatery/drinkery instead of cabbing it. Trouble with, of course, is that, instead of getting some in-the-know advice from the local taxi douche, he relied on the MacBarley follow-your-nose method.



This was all fine and good, except that he had 80-year-old Mama MacB in tow. On his own, the lanky dude would have strode all over the island, but, after a few blocks in the Florida sunshine, the matriarch was calling TO's. As it happened, the Bottle Cap was right across the street. Of course, Camille's was right across the street too, but Big Bro, for his own part, was definitely more drawn to the shapes and shades and logo of the Cap over the pink walls and round awning of Camille's. Mama surely would have preferred the pink C, but Big Bro told me later that he thought it was a beauty parlor.



Anyway, they hunkered down in the Bottle Cap for a Bud bottle and a White Zin with three or four ice cubes. You can work out who had which. I hope.

And, as luck would have it, while they were there, a couple of armed officers of KWPD, protecting paradise as always, barged in, grabbed a dude from the bar, cuffed him, and dragged his scruffy self off to the hoosegow. Such was Mama MacB's first impression of her youngest son's new home.

Anywayyyy, the Four Hoppers came in to see the Real Live Irish Bartender. And he was as advertised. All four words. Kinda short, with appropriate accent, he was happy to add us to his evening. If you counted the four of us, the bleating woman, and Irish Joe, there were six of us in the whole building.

"The bleating woman" is an awful description. Time to amend that. She wasn't bleating anymore. And, to be honest, maybe she wasn't really bleating in the first place. I just like the word *bleating*. She was actually a very pretty woman in casual, skimpy, unpretty clothes. She was friendly as all get-out, and, when she was sitting here alone with her friend Irish Joe, and saw the four of us standing like dumbasses staring at a closed restaurant, she did what she could to bring Joe some customers. I'm going to rename her Sally and never mention her again.

Irish Joe had spent some time in South Boston years ago, so we bandied some Beantown banter back and back again.



I noticed that there was a scale model of the Bottle Cap on the shelf behind the bar. There was a red pool table on the other side of the room. There was plenty of room in the room. What better place for it, eh? Odd, though, that a room is called a room no matter how much room there is. Even if there is no room at all, it's still a room. In a building. What are you



building? I'm building a building. Which isn't really a building till they finish building it. Should be a built.

So where was I? At a bar, drinking, of course. Ah, yes, Bottle Cap.

Though it shares the same building and the same patio space as The Groove Lounge -- and is arguably

the same business -- the wall and window between the two separates two different worlds. I already said that, didn't I?

Now, there is nothing especially dazzling about The Groove Lounge, but it is a dance club kinda place. This bar wants nothing to do with DJs or disco balls or tripping the light fandango. This has more of the classic redneck feel to it: no fancy trimmings, simple bar, simple stools, simple high-top rounds.

And it doesn't need any fancies; this is no tourist trap. I'm sure that some come here if they ask where the locals drink, or if they're here for a week and are a bit Duvalled out. Mostly, though, it is a place where the workin' men and women of KW come for a few swigs.

We had our few, so we bid Irish Joe and Bleating Sally a fine good evening. We still had one more Bastille Day Hop to hop.