

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

Bar #157:

The Bar Car (Westin)

246 Front Street

Thursday, 25 July, 7:15 PM

Yuengling (bottle > cup) \$4.75

Not much to say about The Bar Car. Or did he say The Car Bar? I made a point of asking Jimmy, the serious 60-something dude who kept the bar in the car, but I forgot five seconds later which he said.

The Bar Car, which belongs to the Westin Hotel, has a choice location.

It's parked on the upper level of the prime tourist sunset zone, just above the wooden ramp leading up from Mallory Square. I suspect it's not drivable, but would be readily pushable or towable.

This was not our target, to be honest. We were headed further up, but when I saw this contraption right in front of us, I stopped in my tracks. The gleam in my eye must have been pretty obvious.



"Would this count as a bar?"
Jan asked.

I weighed it quickly, presenting myriad bills and resolutions to the Hop Committee in my head. Before us stood a quirky device with but one purpose: the purveyance of alcohol. The general public could walk up to it, speak with the tender, and procure some

potable booze. All bills and resolutions passed unanimously. I stared at it almost lasciviously, undressing it in my mind.

"Hell, yes, it will!" I decreed, and the impromptu Hop was on.

The carkeep barkeep wore a tag with the name Jimmy on it. He didn't look like a Jimmy, just because Jimmy seems like a young man's name, which gives way to Jim, James, or Pops later in life. He was later in life than I am, so ya. I mean, I'm not Little Hopsie any more, just the suitably dignified Hops.



It seemed to us casual and thirsty observers that Jimmy had a fairly decent gig here. Sure, it was probably a bit hot, especially in hotel uniform attire, but otherwise, it didn't seem too tough. Probably just a three-hour shift, with a nice view of the sun setting into the ocean, no food orders to mess around with, cash only, and plenty of customers to make the time sail by. I'm betting an average shift nets him \$100 or more.

But he was a grump. Definitely did not want to be there tonight. You never know what's

going on in a barkeep's life, though, so not fair to judge. Jimmy probably had just murdered his wife and was suddenly wracked with guilt. I could see being grumpy over that. (Though the bitch probably deserved it, all those years of nagging and whining, nagging and whining, while she was secretly shagging and wining with Alfredo, the saucy sous chef. Grump on, Jimmy.)

I ordered my Yingle from the murderin' bastid, and watched as he poured it from the icy cold bottle into the hot-as-hell plastic cup. There was a stack of your typical translucent plastic cups at the far end of the bar that actually looked like they had partially melted from the incessant summer sun. In the shaded part of the bar, Jimmy had about two dozen cups all prepped with Mojito makings. For the most part, he seemed to be able to keep himself in the shade too, but he was still a grump.

He wasn't a grouch, though. A grouch will glare and bark at you; a grump will just avoid your eyes and grunt. I've been a grump before -- quite often, in fact, ask anyone who had ever worked with me -- so I know the drill.

The Bar Car is a Ford Model T truck *circa* 1925, with a modified wooden body. Pretty sweet, when you take the time to appreciate it. The license tag on the back was a black and white 1975 New Hampshire plate, complete with the *Live Free Or Die* motto across the top. The registration number was "XXX", which made me suspect that Jimmy also had a secret porno business going on here too.

Brian got a Coors Light, I think. I was busy snapping some pix and didn't hear. This was, actually, a watershed moment in the Tour. Despite Key West's tolerance of open containers of booze within certain Party Zones, Brian never walks with a beer. He firmly adheres to the philosophy that *You drink 'em at the bar, cuz that's why the bar is here*. Nothing wrong with that approach, but I lean more to the peripatetic school: *I'm taking my drink for a walk because, damn it, I can*. Barhopping is a fine meshing of the two mindsets.

But here at the Bar Car there were no seats, nor was there a building to be "in". Gotta walk with it, big guy! He handled it well, and I photographed the breakthrough moment. I even got Jan to share the breakthrough by holding my beer for the photo. She doesn't walk with her drinks either, nor does she drink beer, so that pic is a true collector's item. (Or it would be if I didn't just post it in a public blog for all to see and copy and steal. I'll probably see someone trying to sell it some night it on *Pawn Stars*.)



Brian's purchase was extra noble considering that our next hop was just a couple hundred feet away. It took a little effort and some stall tactics en route, but we got the job done and headed off to the evening's fourth Hop.

