

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

Bar #171:

Blue Bar

3841 N Roosevelt Blvd, Key West, FL
Tuesday, 6 August, 1:00 PM

Mile Marker 0 Blonde Ale (16-oz) \$7

Ha, another lunchtime Hop. Such a delinquent. Dwinkin' on the jawwwb. Wuv it.

Now, I could have been a little more responsible and ordered a 12-ounce bottle of Bud Light or some lame-ass thing like that, but when the barkeep offered the craft beer option listed above, with the emphasis on "and it's a full 16-ounces," I folded up like a house of cards. Seven bucks doesn't seem like such a rip when you get an extra four ounces. An extra 33%. Nice. And if you quickly convince yourself that it would have cost \$7 for a 12-ouncer, and that the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th ounces of cold, fresh, flavorful, and oh-so-refreshing brew *are absolutely FREE*, then you just reveeeel in the deal and quaff with zeal, Neil.



Unlike yesterday's Hop, today was not overcast. The sun blazed, the humidity was still high, and there was almost no wind. It was a freaking steam bath. The aroma of sunscreen was strong all around the pool deck. You could almost hear the flesh sizzling.

I surrendered to the moment and went shirtless. Bad enough showing up back at work with beer on my breath, no sense wearing a sweat-soaked shirt too. Plus, this is a pool deck bar; you're more "in the element" if the sun is on your skin. My preliminary walkaround for photos only took a few minutes, but I had a good glisten going by the time I got back to the bar.

Blue Bar itself was an oasis of cool and shade. Wide open on three sides, except for some tied-back drapes on the corners and pillars, it uses misters and fans instead of A/C. I like misters, mister, but I'm not all that sure that they help with the humidity. Maybe *add* to it, hm?



The structure itself is that classical Roman style, kinda like the bar at the Southernmost House (#159), but the pillars were plain square four-by-four-ish posts instead of Ionic columns. Still, it's a damn noble look, like Nero is in there being all Nero. Havin' a beero.

The large pool deck area -- and the sand beach beyond -- has numerous cushioned lounge chairs, tables under wide white umbrellas, and - - most beckoning of all -- tall, curtained cabanas standing here and there among the sawgrass lawns. They looked dang cool in their own right, and they made the bar pavilion look like the Alpha Tent overseeing his flock of grazing tentlets. Kinda.



The inside of this Alpha Tent had a decent amount of blue in it, but when you hear *Blue Bar*, I think you're thinkin' every shade of blue that Crayola ever invented, layered and mixed and juxtaposed in dazzling yet serene design. Cuz you can do that with blue; it's an amazing color. I love blue.

But it wasn't all that blue. The tall and padded bar seats are blue. Very comfortable too, I gotta say. And the bar top tile was a medium shade of that color, but really not much else was blue. The ceiling, posts and curtains are all various shades of off-white, and the floor is brown. There is, however, a large abstract mural that takes up the entire back wall of the bar, and it is predominantly blue. It's certainly not overpoweringly blue, but if somebody asked you what color the mural was, you'd most likely say, "Mural?"



The barkeeps were pretty slammed, so they didn't have much time to chit some chat or exchange pleasantries. They were efficient but definitely busy enough to be out of their comfort zone. I'm sure they were hot in those *shirts*, too. So I wasn't surprised that they weren't flashing big toothy grins around everywhere.

It was a little surprising, though, that nobody *else* was smiling. I took a

long slow look from face to face all around the bar -- and almost every seat was taken -- and *nobody* had a cheerful demeanor. Everybody looked downright grumpy. It was hot and sticky, sure, but they *did* have booze to battle it with. That deserves at least a smirk.

But it also looked as if everybody there was solo. There was nobody talking, so there were no laughs being shared. They all looked lost in whatever issues, worries, or circumstances that they came here to avoid. Nice bar, cold drink, beautiful hotel, gorgeous pool, bright sun, lush greenery -- what more could you *want??* -- but still not allowing themselves to appear happy.

So *I* tried to smile relentlessly. Sometimes I'd catch myself in a neutral expression and have to crank up the happy face again. I probably looked like a silly idiot. And it was an effort! It's amazing how hard it is to keep smiling.

A few years ago, on New Year's Eve, I was out doing my stroll-around thing on Duval. It was about 9 PM and the crowd here was getting to the point where you had to maneuver a little as you walked, but it wasn't at squeeze-through status yet. Just as I was crossing Caroline Street by the Bull & Whistle, a tall, mid-thirties, long-haired blonde woman took a couple of very deliberate steps away from her companion, caught me in mid-stride, and spoke to me. In a level voice and a Swedish accent, she looked me in the eyes as I walked and advised, "Smile. It becomes you." Then she stepped back away. I did smile at her, then looked away when someone bumped

into me. When I looked back a second later, she was nowhere in sight.

I guess I had had a sourpuss going, even though the buzz was fine and I was out among thousands of festive people in beautiful weather on a party-hearty night, with every reason in the world to be cheerful. This apparition's admonition was spot on, and I have remembered it to this day (obviously). Now, in effect, she is saying that to you all, too. How 'bout dat? Smile, y'all!

And I do try to keep that phrase with me, even though it is easy to forget. People (self *definitely* included) can look cold and forbidding sometimes. And cold and forbidding people tend to look like assholes.

But all this smiling must have made me damn thirsty, apparently, because my Blonde Ale -- all 16 ounces of it -- went down way too fast. My busy barkeep was on the spot, though, reaching for the empty as she teased, "Anotherrrrrr...???"

I wanted another one. I really did. Momentum was just dying to build. But I **had** to get back to work. Now, if that concept won't wipe a smile off your face, I don't know what will.

