

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep On Hoppin' Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar 209:

Key West Pub

1114 Duval Street

www.facebook.com/KeyWestPUB

Saturday, 3 May, 6:00 PM

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (bottle) \$6.00

This was the second Hop in this building. T's Bistro & Bar was Hop #15, way back in the early days of the *Peace, Love and IPA Tour*. T's last a few months after that night and had been shuttered up for more than a year. Key West Pub would be trying to breathe new life into 1114 Duval.



B&J & I planned to meet here around 6:00 and watch the Kentucky Derby while we had a drink and a bite. I pedaled Trekkie down and looked for a hitching post to tie up my worthy steed. None were handy. Maybe fewer people ride bikes 'round these parts. Bike racks are all over the northern end of Duval. What does that tell ya? Damn right: nuthin'.



So I did what city authorities grumble about and locked the two-wheeler to a post, and headed into the Pub.

I liked the sign over the door. Fonts are the "tone of voice" of the written word. At work, even if I'm nose-deep in the weeds, I'll spend half-a-forever scrolling through my 3000 fonts, trying to find the perfect style that fits the giver, the receiver, and the occasion. I have worked with someone who would immediately slap Arial Black on a business card order just to punch out the job and move on. Arial Black. Arial fucking Black. That font is the stylistic

equivalent of a boxing glove to the nose. It is blunt and thick and says, *You are a dumb fuck, so I used a dumb fuck font.* Have some styyyyyyyle, y'all. Give your readers a treat. You want to sell me something? Sell it with a cool font and I'm buying.

So, yeah, I really like the way Key West pub did their name over the front door. I was curious about the choice of the word "pub", though. That word conjures up certain images and feelings in my mind. Having been in this building when it was T's Bistro, I had trouble assigning the word "pub" to it. But, maybe they've changed things up some and it will be more, um, pubbish. Pubular?



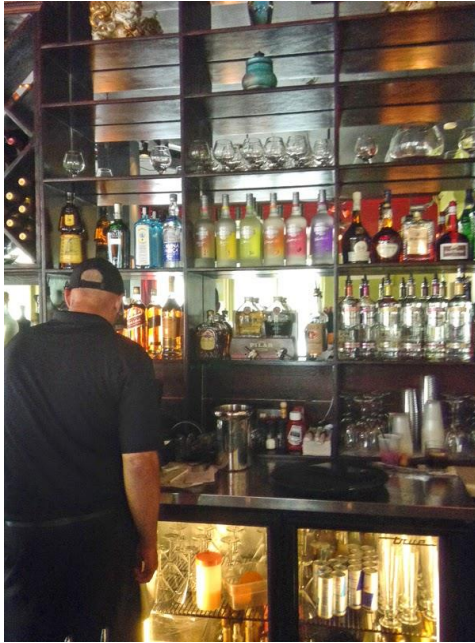
There weren't a lot of obvious changes that I noticed. It was still the same much-bigger-than-you-expect place, with the long hallway, pool table, and very cool back patio area.

Most importantly, the bar and its half-dozen stools were still in the same corner in the middle of the room -- if that makes any sense. I went directly there and saddled up one of the middle seats, about seven feet from the only TV in the place (a very modest-sized one at that). It would be *the* prime horse racing seat

The barkeep had his back to me as I settled in. He was organizing something or other on the shelves of the back bar. The previous night had been their soft opening and there was probably a good bit of straightening up to do. When he turned around, I was surprised to see Patrick. Hey, Patrick! I last saw him at Fat City Monroe Parish (#127), trying to get that place in order. Of course, I first knew him from Krawl Off Duval (#3), way back even before *The Peace, Love & IPA Tour* was conceived. He insisted that he was "not really managing" here, whatever that means. As i sipped my beer and observed over the next several minutes, it sure looked to me like he was doing the stuff a manager would be doing.

B&J showed up right around then and another happy reunion ensued. There were only three other customers in the place when I arrived (I think they had just opened for the evening), but several more arrived as Post Time neared. I was a bit peckish, so I grabbed a menu and selected the N.Y. Stripe [sic] Sliders. I wanted to see if they really had a stripe on them.

They arrived remarkably quickly. Sliders are always a hard meal to balance in my head. I get them because I want something "light" to eat, then I bitch to myself about how small they are. They tasted good, though steak is more of a bite challenge than burger is when bunned, so it took a little extra jaw power. (I didn't see any Stripe, but if there was one, I ate it.) Tater Tots were a-w-e-some too!



Patrick was very inquisitive about my meal. *How is it? How does it taste? Is it spicy? Too hot?* It seemed a tad excessive, but it was a brand new place with a brand new item, so I guess I was being a good test market.

It was Kentucky Derby Day. Nobody I know gives a penguin's pud about horse racing until the Triple Crown races come around. It's a good show, though. For one thing, I dig watching any kind of race: run, swim, walk, drive; human, horse, dog, or turtle. I love watching leaders fade (or hang on) and chasers charge to the lead (or fall agonizingly short). I love that strategy and the all-out *uhhhhhnnnn* that comes with an impassioned race.

For another thing, it's cool the way the drama builds as the KD winner heads into the Preakness. And if he wins that one, ohhhhh lorrdy.

Funny story. [I think so, anyway.] I was in the Lazy Gecko (#2) a few years ago, about an hour before the Preakness was set to start. Only a few other people were there, and one of them was this tall, late-40's, mid-level-executive-on-vacation kinda guy. He sidled over to my stool and made some comment about "the big race", and I gave a throw-off reply like -- and I forget the name of the horse here, so I'm going to make one up, not that you'd notice -- "Yeah, it will be interesting to see if *Peace, Love & IPA* can win again."



The dude actually said, "From what I hear, he's one of the horses that might be able to pull off the Triple Crown." He was trying to sound knowledgeable, but failed horribly. Had he said that same thing three weeks earlier, it would have come across much better.



I gave him my best *Are you shitting me, you dumbass?* look, paused for a second or two, then said, "Right now, he's the **only** horse that has a chance, iddint he?"

He nodded pensively, processing my reply. I turned to look at the TV screen for a moment, and when I looked back, he was gone. Twit.

Oh, come on, that was kinda funny.

Anyway, then there is the pageantry of the Kentucky Derby: especially the ridiculous hats that all the women wear. It's as if every

wealthy woman in the world is given carte blanche to put the most bizarre shit on their heads. Some are freaking *beautiful*, for sure, but others are just plain stupid, or obnoxious, or leave you wondering, *Does she really think that looks **good**?! I also have to wonder how hard the designer is laughing when he thinks, my God, somebody actually bought that, and is **wearing** it!*

Well, one thing about this year's Derby that I'm still scratching my head over, is the tag team pair of announcers, fresh from their dazzling display of fabulosity at the Winter Olympics, Johnny Weir and Tara Lipinski. Are you serious?? A pair of *figure skaters* brought in for a *horse racing* broadcast??

It didn't bother *me*; I get a boot out of Johnny, and he and Tara together are fun. But, to a serious horse racing fan, would you rather be hearing about the race from Neumie, or from those darlings of Sochi, the Glitter Twins? I'd be wondering what direction my sport was heading.

Our horse, of course, of course, was Wicked Strong. Still downright giddy from 2013's Red Sox romp -- and still seething deep inside from that year's

Marathon tragedy -- we had to root for the horse that paid such tribute to Boston. WS ran the race of an overmatched horse; his fourth place finish was the closest he was to the front the whole race. Oh well. It was still pissah.

With the food and race done, we were ready to make tracks. Check, please.

Mine seemed quite cheap. Not wanting take advantage of a friend, I called Patrick's attention to it. Turns out that my Stripers were comped because they were, um, pre-owned. One of the other guests had ordered them, took one whiff of them, and *without even touching them* (I was told), he rejected them for being too spicy. Pretty sensitive olfactories there, chief. The spurned samiches were on their way back to the kitchen when I happened to order the very same thing, so they found their way to me in that short span of time that I alluded to. No wonder Patrick was asking if they were too spicy. Haha. No worries here; I'll take a pre-owned (though not "used") meal for no charge, thank you.

B&J had a different issue. Their check included a "rounding adjustment." Yah, money was just added on to what they really owed, just to make it a round number. We all raised our eyebrows over that and, once again, called Patrick over. Even he did a WTF about it, and went to ask the real manager. Turns out that that little cipher had been installed for the sake of easy change-making in last night's soft opening and nobody remembered to squash it afterwards.

All in all, it was an adventurous hour or so. A pub? I'm not so sure, though I can't blame them for taking the name while it was available. Although, now that I think about it. I don't think the name Key West Bar is taken either....