

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Bar 231:

Martin's Martini Bar

917 Street Duval

www.martinskeywest.com

Saturday, December 6, 2014, 8:00 PM

Kronenbourg (bottle) \$5.00

Of course, yes, you're right, Martin's *had* been hopped before, back in those innocent days of *The Second Century Tour*, when it was Martin's Martini Lounge (#148). Now, after a major overhaul of that space, it has become truly Martin's Martini Bar. The makeover was all-inclusive; had I been brought in here blind-folded, there's no way I would have recognized it. Thus, it is well worth a new hop.



B&J and I had discussed this one and had loosely planned to attend together. Every now and then -- well, maybe not *every* now and then, but an *occasional* now and then -- Hopportunity knocks and I just hop to it. This was such a time. Whether it was a *now* or a *then* is subject to debate. It was a "now" *then*, but it's a "then" *now*, so I guess it's a *now-and-then*. Only one though.

'Twas the night of Key West's annual Christmas parade. Excuse me, make that *Holiday Parade* (Supreme Being forbid that we would play favorites). Martin's, being on the west side of Truman, lies right on the route. It took a typical Key West mishap, however, to trigger the new

plan and the solo Hop. Leave it to Key West to screw up a Christmas parade.

B&J had a fave spot over at Simonton & Truman, so that's where they were. I was on Duval, hovering around the 600/500 blocks. I rarely stay in one spot for a whole parade. Dunno why. Just need to move around for some reason. I had several cans o' Yingle Bells -- with one of those flexible freezer bags -- in the shoulder bag, so I had my holiday spirit in gear.



The parade was a good one! It seemed larger than other years, with livelier floats and more music. A few years ago, it seemed as if every group was just sitting on a flatbed and had no audio entertainment. Pretty lame. This was much, much better.

Occasionally, a parade pauses. Some group up the road goes into their dance or flag or swordfight routine, and everybody else chills for a bit while they do it. Then everybody slowly moves on.

This one pause, though, began to seem a little lonng. I found myself staring at the same HTA trolley for way too many minutes. Nothing was moving farther down the road either.

A few people had wandered off the sidewalk to chitchat with some paraders, so I did the same, asking the trolley driver if he knew what was up. He smirked, sighed, and told me, "One of our vehicles stalled out and wouldn't start back up. Arnold's Towing is trying to tow it. I sure hope it was a trolley and not a train!" Turns out it was Float #28 out of 58, right smack dab in the middle. No problem getting a bigass tow truck in there, right?

It was becoming a street party. People mingled freely, many (including a few paraders) deciding that this was a good time to duck into any of the nearby bars for a quick one in a plastic cup.

I went walkabout, heading the up the hill towards Truman. The places with the patios, porches, and balconies were all doing a bang-up biznizz. Why not? Dinner and a parade? Nice take.

When I got as far as Martin's, my Hop sense began to ring off the hook. My most recent can was freshly empty, so the need was there. The front tables were taken, but that big brand new bar was mostly empty and calling my name. I proclaimed **Hop On!** and proceeded inside.

What a change! Where couches had been was now a large black-and-white structure. It *seemed* enormous. Sturdy black posts and beams, with a thick white bar top. Tall too. High, black, curve-backed stools. White metal screens overhead, and a crimson back wall showing behind the bottles and shelves. Nice.



Two keepers, one per gender, were staffing the bar. They waited on me simultaneously. They weren't fighting over me, but they both were eager for something to do. The bar had no useful view of the street, so they were feeling a bit ignored. The male bartender seemed to think I was OK, but the woman was wary. Good judge of character, apparently. Part of it was the fact that this was a *martini* bar, and I was asking what kind of beer they had. She immediately got sour on me. No big deal. I'm accustomed to that by now, especially with women.

A Kronenbourg fit my mood, so I chose that French biere (sounds Danish, though, duddunit?) and ordered a basket of bread for \$3.50 more. Hang the expense; it's Christmas -- I mean, it's *Holiday*. Besides, the way the day worked out, this was dinner. Good bargain for Saturday night din-din.

After a few minutes, Charlie and his wife (I forget her name, sorry) came in plunked down onto the front corner stools. It was immediately obvious that they were regulars here. The usual light fare to nibble on, the usual cocktails to wash it down. I knew Charlie just from work, really, so it was good to have some good, clean, social talk across the bar. Everything is better when it's across the bar.

I just had the one beer; I felt that one Kronie was enough Kronies. Had I been here with my cronies, I may well have had another Kronie. But without my cronies, I went without the Kronie.

One thing this bar did not have, it occurred to me, was a TV. Not *a/ways* a bad thing, to be sure, **but** in the late weeks of the College Football Bowl Season, with FSU rolling along at #1 -- and the parade still stagnant -- I bid

Charlie and Mrs. Charlie a fond good evening, and set out in search of someplace with video entertainment.

