

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Bar 232:

Southernmost Inn

525 United Street

Saturday, December 12, 2014, 6 PM

Yuengling (can) \$3 HH

This will be a short one, because it was a short hop. SoMo Inn used to be Pearl's Rainbow, then, when the lesbian business was no longer strong enough to sustain it, just Pearl's Guesthouse. That lasted about what, two years? Then Pearl, like so many others, stopped fighting the tide, took the corporate offer and handed another piece of KW character over to The Machine.

That sounds bitter, and I suppose it is a little bit, but, really, good for Pearl, whoever she/he/they is/are/were. You open a business, pour your heart and soul into it through your prime and well beyond, milk it till you can smell the word "retirement", then, if you're lucky, you might get an offer that'll set you up till death do you part. Take it and run without apology, baby. We should all have it so good.

The "old" Key West, where gay tourism was at its peak, is fadin' away. The "gay" aspect has become more burden than boon to some local establishments, and they have changed their philosophies for fear of steering away the mainstream tourist. The litany of hotels that have gone from local ownership to corporate ownership grows longer by the month. And the trend ain't reversin'. Character be damned, KW is a profitable enterprise. Raise those rack rates and soak 'em for all you can get. Who cares if the average middle class family had to spend a month's income just to get a weekend here. Fukkem, we're after bigger game.

Ahhh, shut up, Hops.





So, B&J and I met up outside the "new" hotel, passed through the same wooden gate, walked past the same swimming pool, and the same hot tub, and up to the same bar. The tables and chairs were the same, everything was the same except the wall art. Those rainbow-striped female mannequin things were gone. That was about the only difference.

The place not jumpin'. It was waaay too cool fo' th' pool, and only four people were at the bar. \

Another difference, I quickly found out, was that there was no food. I was mildly craving one of those chick-sal samiches like last time, but no go, Hoppo.

They also had *noheat*. This was a damn chilly evening, and though open-air bars can be great as the tropical breezes flow through the summer shade, they just lack something when it gets down to jacket weather. Some places, like Willy T's, have those big fire tower thingoes that kick out heat like you read about (assuming you read about heat -- and who doesn't?). Well, this little bar was equipped with exactly none of those. Nor anything else.

After a short while, we called over to the young, cute, and very pregnant barkeep and asked if she would *considerturning off the overhead fans*. She was wrapped up tight her Milwaukee Brewers hoodie and her Green Bay Packers winter hat. Clearly a recently transplanted northerner. And even *she* was cold.

She, too, saw the folly of the fans, but asked for our patience; another customer had asked to smoke, so she had to leave the fans on till he was done.

What? Everyone else in the bar had to freeze because one ducking fouchebag needed to suck on a cancer stick? This really needed to go a vote.



BUT we didn't have time for that balderdash anyway. We were in One-N-Done Mode before we ever came in. Our minds were open, just in case something new would wow us, but it didn't. And, really, how could it? We



picked just about the worst time to Hop this place. Poolside bars are for hot afternoons and sultry evenings, sunburned skin and soft sarongs. We had sweatshirts and long pants. Not clickin'.

I'm sure the new owners are doing a terrific job with the hotel, and that improvements to the bar are in the works. We had another Hop to Hop, though, and we were eager to Hop to it. We bid our preggy

barkeep good night and headed back past the empty hot tub, empty pool, and out the big wooden gate.