

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Bar #264:

Sand Bar Sports Grill

511 Greene Street
Friday, 27 May 2016, 9:30 PM

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (draft) \$5.75

It astounds me that World of Beer (#101) – the prior tenant of 511 Greene – did not make it in such a vibrant drinking community as Key West. They did a fine job on the layout and décor, though, which made it easy for the next bar – this one – to move right in and open up.

It also made it easy for me to walk right in and know right where I wanted to sit: back room, mid-bar, where I could see maximum TVs. The front room is damn fine room, don't get me wrong. Plenty of video screens, and, on many nights (like tonight), a live entertainer. It's a festive room.



But the back room feels more like a private club. It's not like you have to knock four times on the door or give a password – in fact, there is no door at all – but you just feel kind of “in the know” by being back there.

I took my seat and ordered my SNPA. That was always my “usual” here when it was WOB. I was probably one of the very few who had a “usual” as opposed to touring the taps as part of the Loyalty Club.

The taps are still many and varied. One of the pleasures of this particular seat is the close-up view of the full array. Tap handles can be so cool. I've laser-engraved a few that you can see around town (like the fourth one from the right, for example), but the carved and colorful ones are tremendous. I always like the goose for Goose Island.



And, I figured I'd make it damn thorough Hop by getting some food. An order of Chicken Tenders, my good man, thank you.

OK, all set. Nobody sitting next to me to saddle me with unwanted conversation, cold beer in hand, good food on the way, nice. I settled in to watch some NBA playoff basketball.

Then the phone rang.

I am not a slave to my phone. I've never been big on talkin' on the dang thang, and I certainly do not drop what I am doing and pounce on it when it rings. Now that smartphones are here, I do carry mine everywhere, but vocal communication is well down the list of priority functions.

In order of usage, here's my take on mobile communication:

1. Music. Far and away, the top cat. Having my entire music library available wherever I go, sounding good in those little ear buds, is fantastic. Music makes my day. I gotta have some on at work, especially on a busy day. It keeps me even-keeled and less likely to bite someone's head off.

2. Internet. In this Information Age, there is no good excuse to Not Know. Being too lazy to Google a name or a phrase is not a good excuse. Enjoy your ignorance, you lazy dunghead. Entertainment is big too. Waiting in line at the Post Office is much more palatable when you have YouTube to keep your mind occupied.

3. Writing. You think I've written these 700+ pages sitting at my desk? Ha. A vast majority has been done on my iPad Mini or iPhone using apps like Pages, Blogger, Word, or Notes, while sitting at a bar enjoying an IPA or PA. *None* of this would have ever happened without the convenience of my Mini. From day one, that device has been the catalyst for the resuscitation of my passion for writing. I have years' worth of notebooks at home *filled* with great stuff that I've jotted down on roadtrips, often while having a beer at a bar. Trouble is, though, that great stuff all needs to be transcribed through a keyboard to be publishable in any way, and that takes *much* more time than the original writing did. With the pad instead of the pen, it's plipped out in a sitting or two. Copy, paste, post. Clickety click, Nick.

4. Texting. I prefer composing a good sentence over speaking off the top of my head. I'm a serious phone phobe anyway. Seems dumb to those not thus afflicted, but making a call is a stressful thing, so texting is a great way around it. Plus, if I don't need an immediate answer, I'll send a text which the recipient can read at his/her convenience rather than cause an interruption with a phone call. Also, you always have a written record of what you both said, too. That can be a plus or a minus, depending on how reckless you are.

5. Camera. This has climbed up the list as the quality has improved more and more. I love snapping pics, and I always carried a compact camera for that purpose. Now I don't need to. Good quality photos and videos, day or night -- with editing apps -- are in the palm of my hand. Amazing. I have a really good digital SLR camera for when I want to do photography, but if I'm just "taking pictures", or posting something on Facebook, my phonecam does a tremendous job.

6. Telephone comes next, I guess, and that's only because I don't play games. And I won't answer my phone if I don't recognize the number. Too many Shit Calls these days. That's the technical term for them, not sure if you knew that. If they leave a voicemail, and I know them, I'll call back. It's a stupid extra step for such a "convenience" but the a-holes of the world have made it necessary.

But, anywaaaay, this call was from Justin, a sometime adjunct professor of Creative Writing at NYU, and former professional soccer goalkeeper in the English leagues, who was once in my employ at Sugarloaf Sports & Leisure Club. His resume is even crazier than mine. I had not heard from him for a while. He's always good for clever insights and good golf talk, so I took the call.

Forty-five minutes later, my tenders were all gone (yum), my second SNPA was drained (yum), my tab was paid, and I was leaving Sand Bar. Once outside, with call disconnected -- we really don't "hang" anything "up" anymore, do we? -- it occurred to me that the integrity of the Hop had been compromised. Once engrossed in the call, I paid no attention at all to my surroundings, and that was unfair.

I could have gone right back in, and maybe sat in the front room, but that would have been stupid, even for me. So, Sand Bar, owe you a re-hop. I'll get around to it someday...