

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep Calm and Hop On Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Hop #318

Top o' th' Tale (Rooster Tale Upstairs)

211 Duval Street

Friday, June 14, 8:00 PM

Jai Alai (draft) \$6

We almost didn't make this one. I had to lure B&J here with the promise of free beverages. We had been to Lucy's Lineup Bar (#303) and The Abbey (#305) and had done an odd walk-through of Smokin' Tuna (#33) before choosing this venue.

We departed Abbey with the notion of Having One More, with Tuna as the target. We miscalculated, though. It was still light out. The summer had not yet begun, but it was only about a week away and the sun was still very much up. Usually, Happy Hour will usher you from late afternoon into evening, but around here and around now, it's more like afternoon into, well, more afternoon.

At any rate (even 4.5% — tip of the hat to George Carlin), Tuna was not yet in Nightlife Mode. No music was playing, the bar was barely occupied, servers ambled about attending to dinner guests, and everything was just too ... visible. You know how it is when you're someplace where usually you can only see the things that are artificially illuminated, and then you go there when it's light enough to see *everything*. It's unnerving. Unpainted ceilings, pipes, power cords, trash barrels, mysterious spaces under the bar, the floor — all typically masked in shadow — are now In Your Face. We had to flee.

When we got back to Duval, B&J were leaning towards calling off the jam, but I was not. I tried to convince them that one more was still in order. We hawed. I wouldn't say we *hemmed and hawed*; I don't recall hemming. I'm pretty sure we hawed, though.



If you look up “hem and haw”, you find out that the “hem” part refers to making a sound like a clearing of the throat: the classic “ahem”. The “haw” refers to a hesitant pause. So, yeah, we did *haw*, but *hem*, dun tink so.



After our penultimate haw, I pulled out my ace of hearts, pointing over here: “We could get another Hop on the books if we go upstairs.” They hawed once more. I was going to need my ace of spades: “I’ll buy a round.”

So, here we were. Brian is not one to refuse such magnanimity. Somehow, he seemed to know the employee schedule as well, because when we got to the front door of The Rooster

Tale (#317), he asked the hostess, “Is Rob working upstairs?” She nodded. He nodded. And up we went.

As we climbed the steps, we caught up with two women who were about our age. We followed them – though we weren’t really “following them”; we just happened to be walking along the same route behind them -- through the large and unoccupied upstairs room. It was a nice room, well-decorated, but definitely lacking in humans. There was no sign of a bar yet.

Once through the room, we turned right, then looked even farther right. There is was!



Eureka! [Did you know that “Eureka!” is the Official State Motto of California? Ya do now.] Dark wood abounded, and the column in the middle was elaborately carved with vines and grapes. Nicely done indeed!



It’s a five-seat bar, which was just enough because the two women were headed there too. In just a couple of seconds, the bar went from empty to full.

Rob was indeed bartending. He looked quite familiar, but I don’t know from where. That’s not

uncommon in the KW F&B scene. I would come to find out that he had been a person of some significance at Keyviche (#245) back in 2015, but that was not where I recognized him from.

The women definitely knew him. They were Rob's Mom and Rob's Mom's Best Friend (at least, I think those were their names) and they were both in town, visiting from Idaho. Greetings were gushed and mirth flowed.

Somehow, I ended up in the middle seat, with B&J to my right, and RM&RMBF to my left.

Rob's night went from snoozefest to Lively Convo Time and he was on stage, reveling in it. Many tales were told about his upbringing in a family of food-and-beverage workers, how he was a dishrat while in elementary school, and so on. RM



would tell a story, and Rob would come back with a topper. Having a background with plenty of F&B in it, I could relate to a good bit of it.



We hung out for a good hour, spending most of it laughing. No other customers ever came in, so it was a very private party indeed.

At one point, I had to answer Nature's call. (I couldn't just let it go to voice mail.) I found my way to the men's room and was wowed by the sink! What a great sink!

Shortly thereafter, B&J and I effected our departure, and I think RM and RMBF were going to be close behind. 9:00, I guess was closing time up here. There was no reason that I could see to stay open.

ADDENDUM: June 15, 2019 (yes, next day)

Apparently there was no reason to keep the whole place open either. Brian said he went there around suppertime on Saturday to thank Rob for a fun time and found the doors locked. I guess you'll never get to see that sink.