

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012 Key West Bar Boondoggle
"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 5:

Finnegan's Wake

<http://www.keywestirish.com/>

320 Grinnell Street

Sunday 7/22, 9:00 pm

Smithwick's Irish Red Ale



The majority of my dozen or so sojourns to Finnegan's Wake have been on St. Patrick's Day, or for the Green Party during Fantasy Fest week. Just getting to the bar is an athletic endurance test on those days.



So, it was a good call to choose a quiet Sunday evening to settle in for a beer at K-Dub's long-established Irish pub. The British Open had just wrapped up that morning, and it was be replayed -- maybe even re-replayed -- on ESPN on the big TV, so that lent to the UK pub atmosphere. OK, maybe not, but it was a better fit than NASCAR woulda been.

A line of t-storms had doused the Conch Republic an hour or so before. Finnegan's is a neighborhood bar and gets a

lot of business from people on foot. So with darkness taking over and the rain's good drench, it was a good bet that FW would be pretty empty.

But it was about half full. Half the bar stools were taken and half the tables were occupied. Seemed like half full to me, but maybe it was half empty. I can never tell the difference. It sure was quiet in here, though, so I guess it was half empty.

No band tonight, and the house tunes were almost library-low.

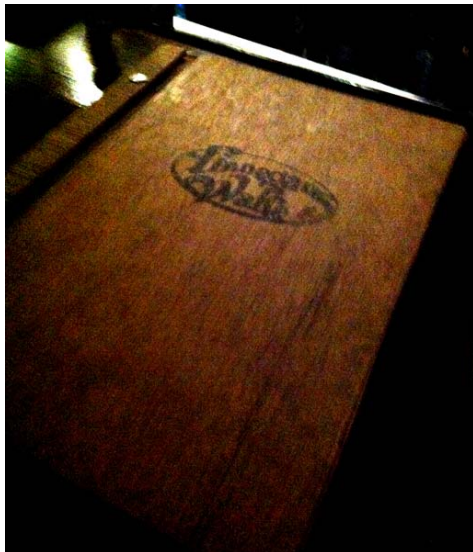
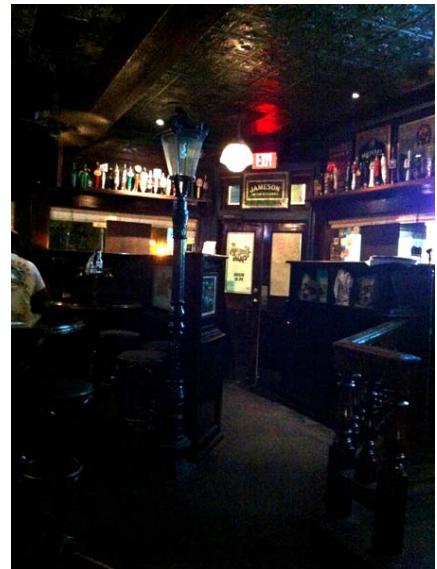
The tall barkeep was in low-gear too, kinda moseying around his bar, tucking this away, putting that back over there, taking his time ringing up someone's tab – no need for rushing on a night like this.



I recognized his gear. Knew it well. In my bartending days, Sunday night was my favorite shift: none of the clamor and rush of Friday or Saturday, people aren't stressing out about their jobs, a few friends might pop by for a very casual drink or two, and I didn't have to split my tips with anyone.

So, I wasn't surprised when Tall Keep didn't seem to notice when I settled in at the bar. His focus was elsewhere, probably well outside the building. When he did see me, I ordered up a Smithwick's (pronounced *Smiddix*), which is often my brew of choice in a British or Irish venue. As I sipped it, a couple of Tall Keep's buddies came in to hang out for a while. Brought back some cool memories, and, no, I'm not going to ramble on about them.

The best thing, to me, about Finnegan's is the dark wood: floor, walls, beams, posts, and ceiling – all dark wood. Door frames and doors, mirror frames, bar, stools – all dark wood. It's got a really good cabin feeling.



Even the menus are wood! It's a simple but clever design: a 1/4" thick panel is used for both covers, but a strap of canvas divides the front down the left side and allows it to open. I was probably way more impressed than I should have been.

I've done FW for dinner a few times and have liked their food. The pizza was a real belly-filler. I don't remember exactly what I got when the family was in town, but it was meaty and soggy and taaasty.

My Smithwick's was several shades of yum, and I could have easily stayed and had another. Not altogether sure why I didn't.