

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 7:

Hog's Breath Saloon

<http://www.hogsbreath.com/key-west>

400 Front Street

Tuesday 7/24, 7:00 pm

Red Stripe (bottle)

At one time, Hog's Breath Saloon was my Sunday afternoon hangout. I'd sip a couple of cold Red Stripes while lazing at the bar under the tropical canopy and jotting my ramblings in my Notbook. This was back in my first Key West winter, a five-month vangabonding (that would be: vagabonding in a van) experience from November '93 to April '94.

I didn't bother getting a home, just slept various places in the van. I did get a job, though: forty hours a week at a T-shirt shop called Wings on the 100 block of Duval for all of five bucks an hour.

I spent my best nights at Barefoot Bob's drinking Rolling Rocks and dancing like a cat on fire to the most excellent Deadhead vibes of Crisspy Critters. Those were often



Saturday nights, so by Sunday afternoon, I was still in slowww-mo, and the Red Stripes were hair of the dawg. I loved the breeze and the shade, the name plates on the bar poles, and the relaxing afternoon live music. I sat at the bar here and wrote pages and pages in my Notbook, chronicling that crazy Key West winter – and those crazy Saturday nights (the best I could piece them together) -- for all my friends back in the frosty north.

Now, almost two decades later, this Tour Stop was dedicated to that winter, so I got me a Red Stripe. The price had gone up! WTF??

A few years ago, I used to come here fairly regularly for a good cheeseburger. Honestly, I thought they had the best burger on the island. It wasn't the biggest burger, but it was the tastiest. And it also wasn't the most



expensive. You didn't get fries with it, but you got chips, and that was OK. And you didn't get all that garnish crap; if you wanted lettuce on your burger, you asked for it up front. Good deal, fewer tomatoes in the garbage; that's the way it should be. On occasion, I even ordered me a second burger.

But one dark and stormy night, the burger arrived with a mash of crushed chips piled next to it. You know how the bottom of that bag o' Lays looks, with nothing larger than a penny left intact? It was that crap. So, I mentioned it to my barkeep, fully expecting a *Hey sorry about that, let me get ya some fresh ones*. But instead, he muttered something about the kitchen must've been running out, and walked away.

When he came near again, I hailed him over and said, *Seriously, can I get some better chips?* He gave me this look that said, *Damn, you're a pain in the ass*, nodded and walked away. I watched him get intercepted by another customer, get that guy's drink, and start chatting with a server at the end of the bar. The bastard never even tried. I stiffed him, which I felt his service warranted, and the Hog's Breath burger fell out of my routine. Probably not fair to HB, just because this dude was a douche, but that's what happens sometimes.



I've also partied here as part of the annual Hog's Breath Hog Trot 5K Race on Thanksgiving weekend. They put on a good gig. More than 300 people show up, get a colorful race T-shirt, run or walk from Front Street to the far end of Fort Zack and back, then gather round a keg or two for raffle prizes and special HB Mug awards. (There are non-alky bevs there too -- so I hear.) HB donates generously to the KWHS running programs, and everyone is happy. Good time.

To those new to the activity, there is a moment of pause as you pick up that first post-race beer and realize that it's barely 8 AM. But, WTF, you just ran your ass off and got the daily workout out of the way. Plus you burned off all these carbs, and you need to replace those, doncha? Doncha?? Guilt alleviated. Bottoms up.

They have scaled back the party a tad over the years, and it's probably a good thing. Several years ago, T-Dub and I got on a roll after the race and stayed until the last drop was squeezed out of the fourth or fifth keg. *Then*, we went to Irish Kevin's to

catch Taz as the opening act of the day. *Then*, after a few tall-colds there, we decided that food would be a good thing, so we rippled on down to Sloppy Joe's for a beer and a Joe. By that time, with double-figure brews already in the belly, it was time to head home ... **at noon**.

Nappy-time was the obvious result, and when I re-awoke at about 6 pm, I had not a clue what day it was, or if the race had even happened yet. Tough to be hungover from Saturday when it's not even Saturday night yet. Those race things sure are healthy. I don't blame HB for cutting back on the kegs. In fact, I'm grateful.



Here on Day 5 of the PLIPAT, overindulgence would not be a concern. One-and-done once again, baby. The place was full, but not crammed. Probably every table, seat, and stool were occupied, but there was no crush of standees. Servers were busy, but not rushed. My barkeep was leisurely munching on a burger when I pulled up a stool. I gave him the whenever-you-are-ready gesture, which he appreciated, and he attended to my thirst between bites. I forget to see if he got good chips with it.

There was no thought of staying for a second brew. The place was nice and the people were cool, and I even toyed with ordering a burger (the barkeep's looked purdy dang delly-ishus), but the music was **awful**. There was no band at this time, so they were piping in some cable radio station that had grating ads, loud announcers, and, worst of all, bubble gum music from the 60's, 70s and 80s. My God, I had to flee.

The bands there at night are good, to the point where the crowd overflows into the parking lot (you can often get a better view of the band from there anyway) and the musicians they had on those Sunday afternoons were very cool, especially for my mood, but that radio gotta go.

Hooray, beer!