

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 19:

Conch Republic Seafood Company
www.conchrepublicseafood.com

631 Greene Street
Friday 8/3, 6:30 pm

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (draft)
Yeungling (draft)

Ahh, yes, The Conch Farm. I had no idea where they were referring to when my friends first said to meet them at The Conch Farm. That's the locals' in-the-know name for this place, I'm told, because of a noble effort in 2003 to fight the depletion of the species by raising baby conch in tanks there.



Nobility is fine; I was here for Happy Hour and Happy Birthday to the Bossman. Being a company of locals, when we gather, we gather at the places that locals gather. We've done lunches here, dinner, happy hours, and well-into-the-evening drinking.



CRSC is one place where **big** is not bad. Maybe it's the big fish tanks, or the dividers and old-time nautical decorations, but it doesn't feel or look totally vacant when it's not full of people. And it *should*, that's the funny thing. From both outside and inside, you look at the building itself and it screams WAREHOUSE. The site has serious history back into the heyday of the sponging industry, and this was pretty much ground zero of it all, so it makes sense.

But I look at those huge roll-up doors/windows, and all the exposed pipes and vents that angle across the girdered ceiling and I'm thinking *factory*, not *bar*. But, despite all that – or maybe because of all that – the place has a good atmosphere. Breezes off the water help a lot in the open-walled main area, and the cool view of the boats in the harbor, or the sunset cruise vessels coming-going/loading-unloading, make this a much more easy place than a Duval Street bar.

Today's good mood was very easy. Bossman Steve had hit the half-century mark, and his wife Diedre wanted to celebrate it with zeal. I did my best to comply. Beers were



flowing, HH chips were flying, and we all got silly accessories to wear: bright leis, a shotglass-n-beads necklace, and, best of all, totally ridiculous sunglasses. Mine were shaped like pineapples. Others got the shapes of martini glasses or birthday cakes. So, if you thought you'd just show up and have a semi-serious sip, you were sorely mistaken. We were a crazed-looking bunch.

There were maybe 20 or so of us in all, but we didn't do the table thing. We claimed a couple of the only available bar stools – Friday HH is a popular time here – and forged an anchor spot through which we could order and dispense beverages. And we just kind of spread out from there. We carved ourselves some space and planted our flag. We didn't do an Amoeba, like my Boston cronies liked to do.

The Amoeba was a popular feint that we deployed when parties got really crowded. There would be, say, five of us standing in a crowded kitchen. In turn, we would each back up in small increments – like an inch or less – nothing that anyone would note. Body contact was inevitable in the crowd anyway, so nobody thought anything of a bump or a nudge. With each cycle, our space would subtly widen just a few inches at a time, and as it did, we all adopted wider stances, and broader arm positions – hands on hips, or holding onto a friend's shoulder – to conceal any pass-through gaps. When we



did it right, we'd end up several feet of open space in our midst, and the rest of the room would have their noses crammed up against the cubboards.

It seems that every time we come here, the place is elbow-to-elbow, so maybe we'll give the Amoeba its first KW test ride sometime.

Steve's daughter Dawn had just gotten back from a trip that I envied the hell out of: a 3-month roadtrip

across the USA. There were four of them in a converted school bus. Her boyfriend fixed up the bus all hippie-like, and they run a service in Tallyhally, ferrying drunk college kids and real people to their neighborhoods from the biggest party zones.



Not much call for that in summer, obviously, so they hit the road. As a veteran of several ocean-to-ocean trips in my various vans, I got my brain a-spinnin' listening about which National Parks they went to, and looking at some of the very cool photos from those parks – especially very specific places that I had also been to, like Vernal Fall (photo, left). The pic of Dawn hanging over the top of Yosemite Falls really blew me away the most.

There's always pretty good music here; lively enough for a party mood, but – unless you're standing right in front of the speakers like we did last time – still conversational. And it helps that the music can spill outside.

The crowd can too. Our group definitely needed that. We were about half-in and half-out, I guess, depending on who had beer, who was getting beer, and who was running out of beer.

The Olympics were on the TVs – wasn't that just a freaking **great** fortnight?? – and we were all watching swimming and gymnastics and suchlike shtuff. Just as I was getting homesick for a roadtrip, Kimball was getting homesick for London. Having lived there for years, and only recently returning stateside, you could just see him kicking himself about it. He filled us in on certain areas where certain events were held, and you could just his mind going, *fuccckkkk I wanna beeee therrrrr.*

Steve, I dare say, had a fun birthday party. Dierdre was at her zesty best to make sure of it. But it wasn't intended as an all-night bash, so not too long after Happy Hour ran out, a few of us started to be on our ways to whatever lay next.

Hops had a little more bar-hoppin' to do on this Friday night...



