

100 Bars in 100 Days

Hops MacBarley's 2012 Key West Bar
Boondoggle

"The Peace, Love, and I.P.A. Tour"

BAR 39:

Antonia's

www.antoniaskeywest.com

615 Duval Street

Monday 8/27, 8:00 pm

Peroni (bottle) \$4.50

So it's Antonia's, not Antonio's. I never knew that. This was turning out to be an educational Tour, as well. The script font on the sign does not make that very clear, but assumption is part of the problem. Knowing the name, now, I clearly see the final A, but up until this moment of revelation, my assumption was that the more common name, Antonio, was on the banner. I'm glad I now know the truth.



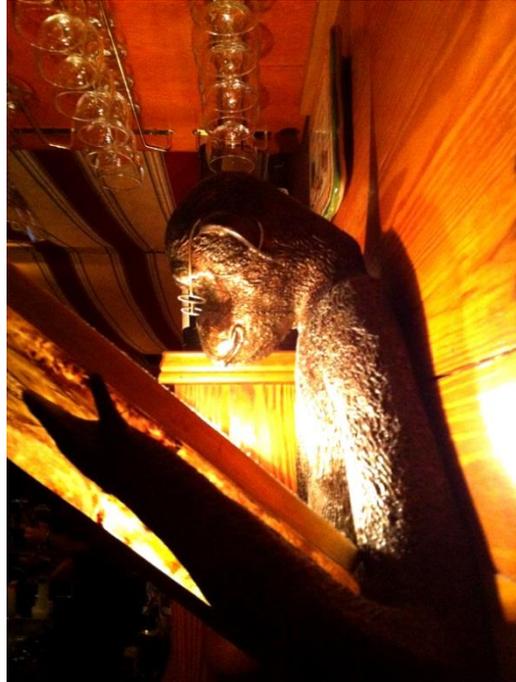
I had never been inside Antonia's, even when JB worked there as a server for a winter a few years ago. JB was the first State Champion I ever coached back in Massachusetts high school track. A light-framed kid with legs like coiled springs -- and balls of pure brass -- I entered him in the State Meet 600, then watched a few days before when he ran the fastest time *in the USA* in the 300. Duh, nice move, coach. JB bailed me out, though, but totally destroying the 600 field at States.

That was all wayyyyyyyyyy in the past when I saw him on Duval one night. After the mutual *WTF are you doing here's*, he told me he was between jobs and thought that winter in KW might be a kick. JB always did know a thing or two about getting kicks. Somehow, he talked himself into a job here. I should have come in terrorize him, but I never got around to it.

The inside of Antonia's immediately struck me as comfortably dark and dammmmn fine. The dining area was all but empty, but the small bar off to right was full, except for the corner seat by the window. I squeezed behind the couple who were laughing with the bartender and unobtrusively took my seat.

The first thing I noticed was the lamp on the wall. It was a monkey. Wearing glasses. Reading a newspaper. The Newspaper was the lampshade. Cooool lamp.

The bar crowd was interacting well, with the barkeep being a good conduit. That happens often when you're behind the bar. All conversation flows through you. Your bar guests will toss out comments, facts, fictions, opinions, and punch lines all directed at you, but actually aimed at their bar neighbors. It's like they can't yet presume to be friends, or are maybe wary of accepting strangers that readily, so everything filters through you. You walk away and they go quiet, or back to low conversation with the spouse or mistress that they came in with.



Chaz was the barkeep, a very friendly sort. He seemed to be sincerely enjoying his crowd. I'm guessing that a few of them were regulars. I told him about *The Peace, Love and IPA Tour* and he was all thumbs-up about it. Apparently, he also barkeeps at Outback because he insisted that I had to get there for *a real bar with a real Happy Hour*. Another keeper who saw right through my dressed-up façade.

Tracy, the woman sitting next to me, was very enthusiastic about the Tour as well. Actually, I think she was more enthusiastic about someone who would concoct such an idea more than the idea itself. She was fun to talk with. She looks quite young for my age (or older): blonde, fit, well-dressed, clearly well-to-do. She has had (or had) a renovation business in KW since 1974. She and her hub still own a house that she just cannot part with – she said she absolutely needs to have a place in KW to come to and visit. Fortune and family, I guess, drifted her away, but I could tell that she relishes her time back here.

Tracy also loves storms like Isaac because they shoo the tourists away. She had stories of some great dinners during Hurricane Georges aftermath in 1998, when many of the finer restaurants had to clear out their refrigerated foods and fed their regulars like royalty.

She is a money-motivated woman, I could tell that for sure. She almost immediately projected her aspirations onto the Tour idea, asking what I hoped to make from it, and how I was planning to market it. Her son is a successful writer, so she just wasn't accepting that I'm just writing this for the pure enjoyment of trickling words through my fingertips. I smiled at her



in my friendliest way, and tried to let her know that what she was thinking about was just not me.

We don't all have the same ambitions and approaches to life. Money is nice, it makes daily survival much easier. But it never ever has been all that friendly to me and it never will be. Money likes some people, loves others, and couldn't be bothered with some. Like me, for instance. And that is fine. I still play Powerball, but a small part of me is terrified of winning it.

We discussed what would be the 100th bar, since it the 100th day would be the climactic day of Fantasy Fest. She wholeheartedly suggested the Rooftop Café, speaking glowingly about their outstanding parade view.

But she almost seemed to hesitate at the end, maybe realizing that old Hopsy might not be all that good a fit up there among her esteemed ilk. It's OK; I was already thinking that, myself.

She was a sweet kid. I think she has had a purdy dang good life. I told her I would mention her in the blog, and she insisted that it was not necessary, so I guess I won't. I don't want to irk her.

I really thought she was going to offer to pay for my beer... :]