

100 Bars in 100 Days

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

BAR 56:

Joe's Taproom
201 Duval Street
Wednesday 9/12, 10:00 pm

Sierra Nevada Torpedo IPA (draft) \$5.50

When I started the PLIPA Tour, I knew there would be nights where the timing was just wrong. Nobody is in a good mood every night, and no bar is just right every night either. There had to be an occasional clash. This was definitely one. Nothing explosive; just not a good mesh.



I had been eager to add Joe's to the Tour, too. It looked like a cool little place to hang for a few. I had been in there once before the 100 concept was born, but was immediately corralled by a runner friend who was in a

garrulous mood. Before I could even say *Beer, please*, I found myself wrapped in a detailed conversation about the ins and outs of running and training and volunteering and the like. Many times, I've relished such a convo, but on this night, it was about the last topic I felt like rehashing. I never even got to the bar to order a beer. Ashamed as I am to say it, I actually faked the *Oh, crap, I got a text from Larry, I gotta go meet him, catch ya later, babe*. And when I left, it occurred to me that I had no idea whatsoever what the bar itself had been like.



And just a couple of days before this Tour Stop, I had tried to go in at Happy Hour. People were inside, the time of day was right, but when I pulled on the handle, the door stayed shut. I tugged again.

Nada. Two of the people inside looked my way with blank stares, no gestures about *Sorry, we're closed*, or *Private party, douchebag*, or even a wiseass flipoff. Tail between legs, I moved on.

So I was 0-for-2. Third time had to be the charm, yes?

Joe's Taproom is like Sloppy Joe's nephew: much younger, much smaller, and going in its own direction – but with similar heritage. They have a porch to sit on and watch Greene Street go by. There are large plate glass windows to let in light and keep the small room from feeling too closed in. There are some seats and a table or two on the right when you walk in, but the bar itself takes up most of the room. And even that is not that large: about 10 stools, with not much standing room between stools and windows.



There was one stool available when I got here, the third one from the end. The TV over the bar had the Red Sox game on, so I assumed at least one other person in the crowd was a loyal and suffering member of The Nation. What a shit year. Ugh.

Anyway, the stools are the typically tall kind, and they fit the bar just fine, but I had the weird feeling that we were up on a platform or something. Then it dawned on me that it was the ceiling that was the culprit; we were not higher, it was lower. Much lower than any other bar. I'm pretty sure I could've just reached up and touched it. For some reason, it gave it all kind of a railroad car feeling. But more cramped.

The barkeep was neither friendly nor unfriendly when he came to take my order. He was about my age, maybe a bit older, stocky, with a seasoned and somewhat sour look, and wore an old blue t-shirt. He poured me my Torpedo and placed it in front of me without so much as a grunt. No *here ya go*, or *Enjoy* or even a *That'll be five-fifty*. Nope, just set it down and went back to the other end of the bar. No problem, though; I don't crave such amenities, but when they aren't there it seems outa whack.

What was a problem, though, was Smoky Bitch on my left. I'm not going to go on an anti-smoking rant. If you check your notes from Shimp Daddy,

Dons' and their ilk, you recall that I defend smokers' privileges in places where smoking is the norm, like most bars.

But what I *will* rant about is the in-your-face smoker, and I mean literally. This woman – on the slim side, about 27, dark blonde hair, not unattractive (but not especially attractive either) – seemed quite put out when I pulled up the empty stool next to her. I gave it the old *Anyone sitting here?* thing just for politeness sake, and she just glanced my way for a split second and then turned her attention hard left to her buddy.



Apparently, though, her buddy – who was eating – was a non-smoker, because Smoky Bitch was keeping her cigarette as far from her as she could. You've seen the type: ash tray off to the right instead of in front of her, leaves her ciggy between her fingers between drags, and holds that hand high as her elbow rests on the bar off to her side ... i.e., right in my face.

And as if that wasn't bad enough, she was exhaling every lungful out of the right side of her mouth in a Jetstream my way. What an inconsiderate piece of pigeon dung.

I could have gotten belligerent about it; I have in the past, pushing some guy's arm away and giving him a few pieces of my mind. But it just wasn't worth the aggravation. I felt crowded in anyway: elbow room at a minimum, ceiling just millimeters from my head – OK, maybe 1500 millimeters (they're still millimeters, boo) – and smokie-chokie air.

So, I did the manly thing. I got up and moved. But not without a parting shot. As I squeezed out of my seat – Smoky Bitch wouldn't even scooch over an inch – I commented easily loud enough for her to hear, *No wonder nobody wants to sit next to you.* Ooooooh, really torched her, Hopster!

I relocated to the table in the far corner. It felt like freaking Siberia. Instead of too close, everything was now too far (except for the ceiling). And everybody had their backs to me. This just wasn't clicking.

But the beer was good, and the Sox were holding their own for a change, so I hung in there till an inning change brought about cup drainage, then stamped Joe's **#56 DONE**.