

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Second Century Tour
Hops MacBarley's 2013
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #141:

KWest Liquors

705 Duval Street
Thursday, 4 July, 11:00 PM

Harpoon IPA (bottle) \$4.00

It was a short walk here from Hop 140 -- just across Duval and a block south. B&J were a tad puzzled about where we were headed. I had given them my best Axel Foley "Trust me" look, and led the way. Brian might have been getting a little antsy as we closed in on Aqua, but that changed to befuddlement when I stopped to snap the pic of the liquor store's sign and said, "we're here!"



705 Duval has been a few things since I first saw it in 2001. In those days, it was called Dudes, as a partner bar to Divas, the drag club that morphed into Aqua. As the name suggests, Dudes was all about men -- and not men dressed as ladies, more like professionally *friendly* men dressed in almost nothing, or undressing to almost nothing, or less. Yesss, *that* kind of bar. If that was your thing, then Dudes was your place, Ace.

After a couple/few years, Divas became KWest and Dudes became KWest Men. Nothing besides the name really changed, though. Not long after that, KWest begat Aqua, but KWest Men stayed. Their business faded badly, though, especially after a rival night club put a big move on the male dancer market.

KWest Men soon ceased to be, and, after a little construction, the modified space reopened -- larger and much more brightly lit -- as a liquor store and quick mart (that also serves kickass fried chicken). BUT, they maintained their liquor service right, and kept three stools at the back end of the counter where a full-service bar remains. And *that* was exactly where we headed.



We had to weave a bit as we navigated the racks of snacks, but were soon seated on three quite comfortable bar seats. Our barkeep was a thin dude named Jeremy. He seemed a bit surprised by our savvy about this little-known bar area. In turn, we were surprised by the extent of the selection. He even had Harpoon IPA in the bottle, which, sadly, has become more of a rarity these days. And Jan got her coveted Bailey's on the rocks. Brian had a very cold Coors Light. We were one happy bunch o' hoppers.

It was pretty cool, sittin' back there among the cheese curls and pretzels, like we had a private clubhouse or something. Like we knew something nobody else knew.

We were talking about the establishment's storied past, and Jeremy informed us that they still kept their Nudity License active. Obviously, it wasn't as pertinent now as it would have been for Dudes, but if ever they got the notion to hire someone for some sexy service -- say, during Fantasy Fest, for instance -- they could do it. The old *Better To Have And Not Need Than To Need And Not Have* approach. Sage.

"Besides," he claimed, "it only costs like ten bucks a year to keep it."

That seemed a bit low, and we didn't hide our skepticism. He insisted, found the permit on the wall, and began to read it to find proof. After a moment, he shrugged and said dismissively, "Well, \$189. But that's still not bad!" We agreed wholeheartedly.

Jeremy was very into the Tour Concept and immediately began sifting through his brain files for



something he could add to our list. He tossed out a few, but they were BTDT's, but we were digging his effort. Soon, though, he had to go back into the office to get going on his nightly paperwork, so he left us in the other dude's hands and wished us good luck.

We were just about finishing up our round when Jeremy came bursting out of the office. "Southernmost House!" he exclaimed.

"They *do* have a bar? I wondered."

"Hell, yeah! Nice bar too!" He enthusiastically told us of the deal at SoMoHouse and felt damn proud that he had made his Contribution. It warranted a big Thank Ya from Sir Hops.

The other dude -- we didn't catch his name, and he wasn't particularly sociable, so I won't even assign him one -- brought us our tab. \$14. Are you shittin' me? That's all? For two beers and a Bailey's? Farking A, baybee.

Happy Independence Day, y'all! 141 bars hopped. At least 59 to go. Two more months of quality hopping. Good way to spend a summer...