

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

Bar #170:

Jimmy's Ocean Blue
(Hyatt Beach House)
5051 Overseas Highway
Monday, 5 August, 1:00 PM

Yuengling (bottle) \$4.00



Yes, that's right, 1 PM on a non-holiday *Monday*. Drinkin' on the job, baybee. Moo-ya.

And another of those "guest only" places where stealth was required. At least, I guessed it was. If I went in through the front door and said, "I want to go spend cash at your pool bar," it's hard to imagine that they would have said, "oh, no, please don't." Still, considering my meager contribution, it certainly wouldn't have crimped their budget to exclude me.

And if they did say no, what then? You can hardly just go ahead in, or even attempt to sneak in once the staff has noted you. Part of their job is to keep out people who don't belong there (i.e., haven't *paid* to be there). I can dig that. I've had the same task at the hotels and guest houses that I've worked at. If some dude came in to me at my desk and asked, "Hey, Chief, mind if I use your pool?" he'd get a simple "Of course I mind, piss off, douche" or something that would have the same gist. So, if I then saw that same dude out by the pool, it would be my duty to remove him by whatever means necessary, grisly or otherwise.

If, however, that dude circumvented the office and desk, and just casually approached the pool and settled in without causing a stir, I would be none the wiser, nor would any of the legitimate guests. You can't possibly know what every guest looks like, so if someone just walks the walk, you assume he's clean. I know I've worked that to my advantage countless times on road trips in my van. Never once was I questioned as I moved about the pool deck, lobby, restrooms, or breakfast area.

Hence, I opted for the I Spy approach here. I had actually stayed in one of these condos about ten years ago -- *very nice*, by the way -- so I did know the lay of the land, sort of. I *paid* for that stay, too, so it could be argued that I *did*, in fact, pay to be here, just a long time ago.



Sunglasses firmly in place, I parked the van out front and walked directly into the parking garage. Honestly, I did not remember there being a bar on premises. I knew of

the large pool deck, and the sand beach beyond, but I had never looked beyond that. And "beyond that" is precisely where Big Dog told me that I would find this property's alcohol dispensary.

I would never doubt The Dog on such matters, so I strode confidently through the garage, opened the tricky gate on the first try, crossed the pool deck with nary a gawk (nothing gawkworthy anyway), and, sure enough, found me a bar!

It is a bit hidden, behind a few palms and thick shrubs and such, but, if you are alert to such things, there is a sign that directs you towards "Tiki Hut". And then, there it is! Ahhhh, bar sighted: Imminent Hoppage.



Almost everything about the structure is reddish wood: the deck, the upright beams, the walls, the picnic tables, and the dock. Even the ropes that hang from post to post are the same reddish tint. Reminded me of Sedona, the Arizona Red Rocks area. It's a good look. The exception is the roof of the hut, with its silver aluminum with white beam edges.

With that, I must cry foul. A "tiki hut" should have a thatched palm roof, yes? Isn't that what makes it tiki? I tried looking it up, but, for once,

Wikipedia was not helpful. M-W had no definition at all, but they did define "tiki bar" as being "of Polynesian design."

When it comes to huts, as far as I understand it, "Polynesian design" refers to a style involving materials that one might find in the beach environment of a tropical island. That does not include aluminum roofing.



Yeah, yeah, I know, maybe a few aluminum panels washed up on shore after a FedEx plane blew up in the air and crashed into the Pacific. Zip it, Hanks.

Google shows hundreds of images of tiki huts, all with thatched roofs. To my surprise, it also lists two reviews on Yelp of this very place, but the first one reads like an owner-sponsored ad. [<http://www.yelp.com/biz/the-tiki-hut-key-west>] It is titled "The Tiki Hut" but I still say bah. Thatch your roof, guys.

About a dozen tall, curved-backed stools surround the square hut, but only two other patrons were opting for lunchtime here. Monday Monday. And an August Monday Monday. Not whatcha call prime time. Which was perfect for me.

My barkeep looked vaguely Middle Eastern, but also looked young and slim and female and quite pretty. Her name was unknown. So was mine. Just the way I liked it.

She asked me my pleasure. Quite a few pleasures sprinted across that twisted terrain that I call my mind, but "Yuengling" was my civil reply.

This is a beer that rose from the freaking dead, yes? In 2004, nobody nor his uncle ever heard of Yingle south of the Mason-Dixon Line, which (surprisingly) is the southern border of Pennsylvania. It is not some Deep South boundary between Stars-n-Stripes and Stars-n-Bars. Plus, that line was drawn in 1763, before the Revolutionary War. So, not only was Mason-Dixon well before the Civil War, so was Yuengling.

The year 1829 is when Yuengling came to be. It is America's oldest brewery. Yes, sir or ma'am, 1829. A lot of people were born that year. I can't name any of them right now, but, trust me, they sure were born. Wow, were they born. Every one of 'em. God bless 'em. They're all dead now, of course, but Yuen-ga-freaking-ling lives on, proving, once again, that beer is stronger than people. (Was there ever any doubt?)

In 2005-ish, you would have been hard pressed to find anyone in Key West who had ever had a Yuengling, or had even heard of Yuengling, let alone find a bottle of it anywhere. Many people thought it was a Chinese beer.



Then it just **arrived**. In the blink of a geological eye, Yuengling was everywhere. Tap, bottle, and can, Stan. All bars seemed to have it, and it was priced the same as the mainstream blue-collar brews like Bud, Bud Light, Coors Light and their ilk -- a very welcome flavorful alternative.



It wasn't long thereafter that the craft beer wave came gushing into the Keys, but Yuengling has held its own. I'll do a Sierra or a Harpoon or a Dogfish on a pretty regular basis, but if I'm in that all-too-familiar two-more-days-to-payday squeeze, and the \$6 brews are feeling just a tad rich for my wallet, well, I have no qualms about quaffing a Gling. It's never good to have queasy quaffing qualms, Quint.

I looked around for some indication of what the name of this tiki hut bar was. I was having trouble accepting Tiki Hut. It's so generic. It's lower case, not an upper case proper name.

Besides, Holiday Isle in Islamorada already has The Tiki Hut, and displays that name proudly to all who drive by at MM 82 of the Overseas Highway.

As I sat suckling my bottle on the west side of the bar hut, I spied a yellow sign with a Polynesian mask design on it. It said *Jimmy's Ocean Blue*. I eagerly adopted that as the name and Facebooked it accordingly.



It occurred to me a few minutes later that I may have been a tad hasty. Further down that yellow sign there was the word "sandwiches", and a menu list underneath. There seemed to be a catering vehicle of sorts parked way over there by the other parking area, and I thought that maybe *Jimmy's Ocean Blue* might actually be the name of their contracted food supplier. Oops.

But there was *no other* indication of any other name, and I really like the sign design, so fukkit, I'm sticking with it. Kinda like The Topsy Pelican (#49); if you don't post a name, you can't complain about the name I give ya.

[Subsequent research -- i.e., a phone call to the front desk -- reveals that the official name **is**, in fact, Jimmy's Ocean Blue. Hops is vindicated! That, as usual, calls for a beverage...]

The sand beach had very few people on it. Like I said, a Monday in August, but it was also a day that was humid as hell with lots of clouds -- one of those milky, dark white skies that look and feel thick. (Dark white??) Not prime for grabbing some rays.



What's also unique about that beach is that it doesn't go all the way to the water. There is a row of mangroves between sand and sea. Strange arrange, Ment.

There was little time for any other revelry here. One and done on this work day. Stealth Hop-eration successful, now it was back to the shop. No need to be the Spy on the way out. If you get

asked to leave, well, that's what I'm doing anyway...