

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

Bar #185:

White Tarpon Patio Bar
700 Front Street
Saturday, 24 August, 9:30 PM

Sam Adams Boston Lager (bottle) \$4.30

It did not take long to find Hop 185; all we did was walk downstairs. White Tarpon sits on the ground level, just under Berlin's, so passing through it was actually the most expeditious route for B&J and I to take to wherever the hell it was that we were going.



I know you're all clamoring about this Hop being a repeat. Well, clamor away, all you damn clamorers. White Tarpon was indeed a Hop on the acclaimed *Peace, Love and IPA Tour*. Yes, it was #31, in fact. Well remembered.

But we are all about finding new drinking experiences here, and these two WT bars are very, very different. It would be weird to call this an outdoor bar, but it is definitely not indoors. It's an open-air bar, but it never gets any sun. I don't know the history here, so I'll make some up.



White Tarpon also has a deli, a sandwich shop, and the aforementioned indoor bar. They are all tucked out of sight in the recess between The Boathouse (#58) and Alonzo's (#116). Until Jacko landed a short-lived gig at the deli, I never knew the place existed, even though I

had walked or ran by it at least once a week for the last decade. I **must** have seen it, but I reckon it just never registered. Funny how you don't see what you see.

This bar's area, though, is a breezeway: a shortcut from Front Street to the Commodore so you don't have to trek alllll the way around A&B. I suspect (here's where the made-up history comes in) that, when they first opened, this was just an open walk-through space, but the clever owners of WT recognized a chance to grab some of these pedestrians by their wallets instead of having them stroll on by. So, they placed a dozen or so tables out here, put up a ramshackle bar in one corner, a sound station in another, and proclaimed Bar On.

That might not be at all what happened, but it's a decent could-be. The place looks like that kind of add-on rather than part of the original blueprint.

So, anyway, we were just doing the pass-through thing when my Hop-dar started pinging. *Oh yeahhhh, there is another bar riiiiight heeere!* I believe this caught B&J off their guard. They assumed we were done and had shifted out of Hop Mode. There was an *OK, I guess, if you really wanna* response when I urged the Hop. 'Twas good enough for me. I was on the Hop, whether they joined me or not.



They were more in the mindset for the more mellow Solo (Hop #108), though, and Brian is Mr. Inertia when he sets his mind to movin' on, so after about a minute they said they'd meet me there later, or whatever wherever, and went on their way.



I liked the atmosphere here enough to stay for a spell. The walls and pillars are all fairly new red brick, with that fresh ruddy hue and crisp lines. And they are accented by bright blue spotlights shining up each pillar. Very cool look.

And the Tub! This first caught my eye on the *PLIPA* visit. Dozens of bottles, wading neck deep in a heavy ice-and-water mix, all highlighted by a blue spotlights. Looks irresistible. So, I didn't resist. I grabbed Sam by the throat and plucked him from the bin, with the fine crinkle of ice-on-glass punctuating the move.

There was no barkeep at the moment, so this self-serve thing had a cool, at-home, out-of-the-cooler feel to it. The keeper did soon show up and just waved off the self-serve. *Hell, ya, that's what ya sposta do. I'm just glad you stayed around to pay!*

The music was weird, but OK-weird, not bad-weird. It started with a woman in a Pearl Bailey hat playing an acoustic guitar. She plunked away on a couple of folkish tunes, which was not too bad. Then some dude just came walking in, with no kind of introduction, sat down next to her and joined right in on his fiddle, and they steered into a little Bob Dylan. When that finished, yet another dude stepped in with his guitar and the trio hit up some Grateful Dead. A very cool, and unexpected, development.

Like the band, the bar itself also seemed thrown-together. The stools were funky, flimsy bamboo things. I sat warily on one, then ended up standing. I'm not the lightest guy on the planet. (Then again, that distinction probably changes several times a day, depending on which sickly baby is born where. Poor little kiddo.)

While I was hanging out, our barkeep from upstairs at Berlin's came down with one of his colleagues. Their shift must have just ended and they eagerly dashed to the nearest bar to quench their accumulated thirsts. And, ha, he did order a beer. Knew it.

The side opposite the bar, beyond the sound station, seems dark and mysterious. I didn't explore it. Maybe on the next pass-through, which, I'm sure will be soon.

I polished off my Sammy, dropped a grateful buck in Pearl's jar, and moseyed on.



