

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

Bar #191:

Conch Flyer

3491 South Roosevelt Boulevard
Tuesday, 10 September, 3:00 PM

Sam Adams (draft, small) \$6.95

I needed two tries to hop the Flyer, the largest of the three bars at Key West International Airport. I got here too late yesterday. They were rolling down the big steel door when I showed up ... *at 5:30 PM!* Fi-fucking-turtee. WTF? Now, yeah, my store closes at 5:30 also, but we're a *store*; this is *abar and restaurant*. Damn, it's almost supper time, better close up!



The departing barkeep affably informed me of their hours, and it was clear that there would be no use trying the "but I only want a quick beer, and I'll pay cash" ploy. Usually, the "pay cash" part is a good in. Both I and they know where that cash would go, and neither I nor they have any qualms about. Specifying "draught" is even better; it avoids any need to sidestep a bottle count, and shows the savvy that could be the difference between denial and, "sure, come on in."

This place, though, *nuh-uh*. That big rolling gate was coming down and there was no stopping it. Gravity, and all that.

So, OK. You wanna close at 5:30, FINE, I'll just come earlier. That'll fix your wagon.

Ha. Malt, the MacBarley clan patriarch, use to say that to little Hops in moments of exasperation. (Yeah, I know, exasperated at *me?*) It was his threat. *Clean that up, or I'll fix your wagon. Get down here right now, or I'll fix your wagon.* One day, my classic red Radio Flyer wagon was broken. But, despite my best misbehavings, I couldn't get him to say it.

Rooster Cogburn (John Wayne) said it, in *True Grit*, so maybe that's where Malt got it.



So, anyway, today I slipped out of work for my mid-afternoon break and zoomed over to KWIA. There were no other customers in the Flyer: nobody at the bar, and nobody at any of the dozen or so tables. This is a surprisingly big place. Much bigger than necessary, it would seem.

I settled onto one of the many well-padded, backless bar stools, and admired the well-varnished wood bar. The front panel of it was Stone Wall. I assume it was faux stone, but I never took a second to check. It was a good look, though.

The young woman barkeep came over to see what I wanted. Nice of her. I ordered up my Sam draft. She asked, with a hint of a tease in her tone, "A big one or a small one?" I gave her a sly grin in reply, assuming that she was referring to the beer. Many snappy replies, each laced with innuendo, raced across my mind, but decorum won out. "One small draught Sammy, please. I have to get back to work."

She nodded knowingly, and went off to do her duty. When she returned with my cold glass o' Sam, and set it down, she asked, "Weren't you here yesterday? Right at closing?"

At that point, I figured an explanation of the Tour would be a good idea. This is a freaking *airport*; how many people (other than employees) would even be there more than one day in a row? You fly out and that's that. You're not back at the bar again the *next day*. OK, maybe if I missed my



flight. Or if I have a job in Miami that requires frequent shuttling. I didn't say it was *impossible*. It's just *unlikely*. And I doubt that many locals come here on their lunch breaks.

The keeper's name was Share -- kinda like Cher, but only kinda (one o' them ho-mo-nym things). I told her about the *Peace, Love & IPA Tour* and the on-going *Second Century Tour*. As I spun my yarn, the other server -- named Tancy, kinda like Nancy, but only kinda -- came back from straightening out some tables across the room and listened in. They both became Tour fans on the spot. I was even able to click their photo standing next to the big fan. I guess they have that fan in case the AC goes out or something.



I commented on the size of the room, especially given its location outside the security area, and the smallness of KWIA in general. It is huge. It reminded me of a basketball court, with its wood floor and high ceilings. The dozen four-top tables had plenty of space, and a few two-tops lined the wall inside the entrance -- for overflow, I guess. Share told me that they actually host quite a few functions there.

But, for the moment, they had not a thing to do except entertain me, so we chatted quite a bit as I took my time with my beer. If I couldn't get a good money-per-ounce deal, I could at least try for a decent minutes-per-ounce rate.

Tancy was the chattier of the two. She asked, "What's the worst bar so far? I used to work at Coyote Ugly." I had to laugh about that, and responded, "it sounds like you just answered your own question."

To her credit, she didn't rip the place, but she did say it "just wasn't for me," and she abandoned it after only a couple of weeks. I could picture her, though, tall and slim and flexible, prancin' and struttin' with that uh-HUH look on her face. But the shouting and bellowing that is my lingering recollection of Ugly just didn't seem like her. She seemed too nice for that.

She also seemed too lively for the museum atmosphere that was going on here. I had to wonder just how many customers these two young ladies were going to have today. Hey, maybe they were slammed at lunch and I

arrived during the catch-your-breath time of the day. Doubt it, though. I also had to doubt there would be much dinner business with a 5:30 closing time. When's last call? 5?? Weird.

Share and Tancy would have been good to hang with for a while, but Work Duty called, which meant Hop Duty was done for the time being.

Nine to go!! What the hell is left???

