

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

Bar 195:

Fairfield Inn & Suites Pool Bar
2400 North Roosevelt Boulevard
Sunday, 15 September, 2:00 PM

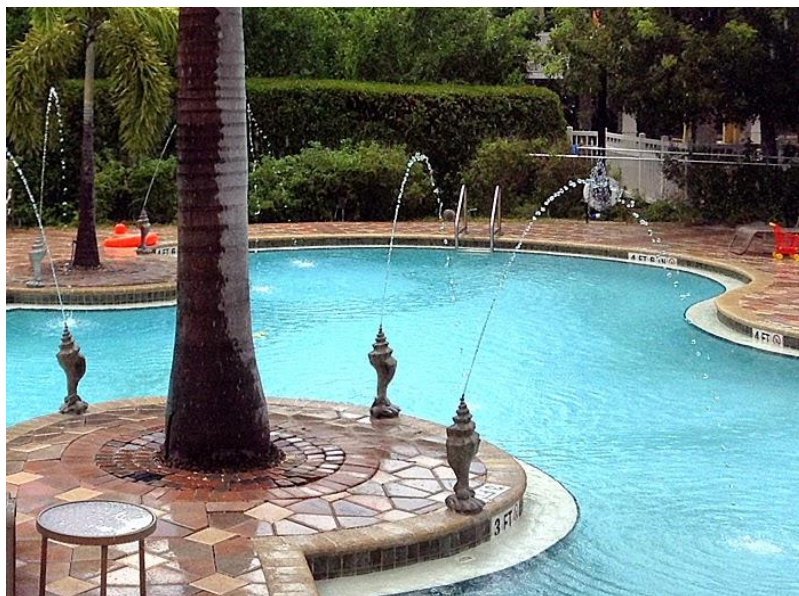
Yuengling (draft) \$4.00

This place had been on the list for a few forevers. I just could never get around to getting out here. It's not like it's far away. And, ha, there are even a lot of people who have lived in KW for decades who have to stop and do the double-think to be sure which one of these North Roosevelt Boulevard hotels is which. *No, wait, that's the Inn At Key West. Oops, crap, that's the Marriott.*



I should have lumped this one in with Topsy Pelican (#49) and Stoned Crab (#50), but it never crossed my mind. You can't see the bar or pool from the street or anything, so it's easy to think that, hey, maybe *this* Key West hotel doesn't have either one. Ludicrous.

So, anyway, this steamy Sunday afternoon seemed like a good time to hop it. I pedaled Trekko The Wonderbike over here -- less than a mile -- and



chained him to the fence (he didn't mind, in fact, he kinda likes that bondage thing). This was pretty much the "back way" in -- a gate under the first floor. There is no ground level to this building; it's on stilts. So, I rolled in from behind, parked underneath, walked through the gate, across the expansive stone deck and up to the bar. That, my friend, is a lot of prepositions.

The pool did have one aspect that caught my eye: conch shell fountains. No, they did not gush out conch shells, dumbass. They were one-cubit-high metal fixtures, maybe a dozen of them (maybe not), shaped like conch shells, from which streams of water arced into the pool. Nice touch. I doubt you'd see these things anywhere else in the world. Why would anyone else have them? Would Best Western in Duluth, Minnesota have them? It would be funny as shit if they did, since I just picked them out of nowhere.



I have a knack of doing stupid shit like that. Once, at a bar in Rochester, I got stuck with a bar neighbor that my jury was still out on. I wasn't sure if he had TD (Terminal Douchebag), or if he was hitting on me, or what. At any rate, it was one of those occasions where giving my real name and my real life info just didn't seem like the best answers to his probing

questions. I became Andy (my middle name), and I worked at the local hospital, Strong Memorial, in the radiology department. Dunno why I pulled that one out of my behind; it just came to me. I liked the sound of it. Sounded intelligent.

TD Dude eyed me with a penetrating look and, after a few awkward seconds, said, "I work in the Radiology Department at Strong Memorial Hospital... and I've never seen you there."

After another weird pause, I just broke out laughing. H(ow)TF could I have picked *this dude's exact job* as my phony life?!? Holy shit, Batman. That was just too odd. I fessed up at that point, and he laughed and admitted doing similar things himself, but never by telling a guy that you



were, basically, him. Anyway, that ended the conversation pretty effectively and I went back to writing in my Notbook.

But anyway, the conch fountains at Fairfield Inn were cool. On with the Hop.

The bar was directly across the pool from my gate, so I did the casual I-belong-here walkaround, checking out the chickies and dudes in their various states of relaxation. There was no one there that warranted a photo or a special description: just ordinary average people. World's full of 'em. Can't miss 'em, really.

I had my pick of the bar stools, pretty much. Hardly anyone was under the overhanging roof. It's an open air bar, but I had the feeling of being in a room with big windows. I think it was the bar, and especially the back bar, that gave that impression. The shelves along the back wall were more like living room style than poolside style: dark wood, like cherry or mahogany, with some nacks in the various cubicles. I didn't see any nicks, just nacks. Ya gotta have your nacks, dude.



The barkeep was very familiar, but I have no idea why. She seemed to recognize me as well, and maybe she had no idea why. I dunno, she didn't say. Neither of us did the *don't I know you from someplace* thing. Not motivated. I wanted to get a beer and drink it; she wanted to serve me my beer, earn her tip, and

get on with her easy-peazy, chill out afternoon. *I* was not worried that I'd end up in a conversation with a douche, but she probably was.

Anyway, as I sat there, leaning back in my tall wicker bar chair, digging the kidney-shaped pool, with its tall palms and clusters of loungers here and there around the deck, I suddenly got a spark of inspiration. The Second Century Tour was just a deep breath and hearty belch from its conclusion, so Let It Happen This Day! Plenty of daylight remained, and I was confident that my hoppin' cronies would gather up the love and join in the mad sprint to the finish line. We would launch one Hellacious Gallop to number 200. I had just ordered my second beer, but what of that?



I tallied up an enthusiastic text and bounced it off a satellite. Big Dog was the first to reply, only two minutes or so later: *Are you fucking nuts?!*

Puzzling. I thought the Dog would be on board for sure.

A moment later, another negatory response came from B&J: *Don't think so! Have you checked the radar?*

Now, I am *Mr. Radar*. I don't pick my nose without checking the NEXRAD first. (Not sure why.) The scope is ground zero on my desktop at work, my laptop, my tablet, and my cell. I have three -- count 'em, three -- radar apps on the iPad. I am never more than a click away from the current precipitation situation.

But you still have to *make* that click, and, on this hot and sunny afternoon, I did not. I had blithely mounted Trekko and pedaled out here without a care in the world about incoming blobs of green, yellow, or red.

So, when I saw Brian's text, I switched over and clicked it.

Holy mother of keg-tapping Christ, W(here)TF did that thing come from? Large, ominous, and heading right for Fairfield Inn, this storm was going to be a soaker. A yellow dragonhead with a huge eye of flaming red was just about on top of us. Okaaaay, scratch the Hellacious Gallop.

Deflated, I picked up my translucent plastic cup, still full of rich Pennsylvania Gling, and resigned myself to sitting here under the eaves, mellowly drinking several beers, and watching the deluge pound the pool to overflowing. A rain storm can be a good show, especially with some bolts and booms -- if you're in a safe place.

It began to sprinkle. Just the green stuff on the radar. I've said it before, but I really do think it would be cool if the rain and clouds changed colors to match the radar. Might get kinda scary in a real soaker, though; it would be like blood gushing from a wound in the sky.

Uhh, yeah, forget that. Rain is bad enough when it's clear.

People responded to the sprinkle as you'd expect them to respond to the sprinkle. They gathered their gadgets and clothes and retreated to the bar to be under the roof. Cool. Common sense. The ones who got out of the pool to get under the roof, though, I just don't get. You're up to your face in water, and you hide from some drops. Yeeesh.

One time, a few years ago, a storm came charging in while I was swimming out at Fort Zack. There didn't seem to be and thunder or lightning with this one, so I played chicken



with it. I held my spot on the windward side of the rock breakwater and dared the rain to dampen me. The storm was not at all daunted by my brave stance and pelted me with big, heavy, high speed, splatting drops. I crouched in the water with only my nose-and-up above the surface. The temperature difference amazed me. My body was cozy in 88-degree ocean water, but my head was soon freezing. I kept dunking to warm up. Through my goggles, I could see the drops

slamming through the surface. It looked greaaaat. And as the storm rained on, I could feel the ocean water cooling off. Soon my neck was getting cold, then my shoulders, then my chest. Makes sense, right? It wasn't like the rain had any place to drain off too. Very unique experience, all in all.

And these pool people at Fairfield would miss out on it. I wanted to shove them all back in the pool and not let them out until the storm was over. I'd block their attempts to climb out, head them off and kick them back into the water. My mobility would be superior; they wouldn't stand a chance.

I *wanted* to do that, but it's generally best for the world if I do not do everything that I *want* to do.

OK, now my nice, quiet, roomy bar was getting crowded. People had taken the seats on both sides of me, and the noise level was rising. It wasn't a din, or even a clamor, but it not the soothing murmur it had been. Annd there were little kids. With their bleating and squealing. Ugh. This storm was really starting to piss me off.

So, I abandoned Plan B, and decided to make a mad dash homeward. The yellow blob was very close, but I felt good about my biking ability. I tucked my goods away, wrapped my bag in a towel (thanks, Fairfield), unfettered Trekkie, climbed into the saddle and zoomed off into the light rain.

The first crack of thunder matched the first crack of beer from my fridge as I watched the hard rain begin. Just five hops to go!!!