

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep On Hoppin' Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar 219:

Lagerheads Beach Bar & Watersports

1 Simonton Street
Sunday, July 6, 3:30 PM

Yuengling (draft) \$3.00

A hot, hot, hot July afternoon in the Southernmost City. Whodathunkit? A good day for some beach and some cold beer. One trouble with Key West is that our beaches -- which truly are no bargain anyway with all the seaweed, rocks, and lord-knows-what-else -- do not allow alcohol. In sharp contrast to some of Florida's great beaches, there are no big bars looming behind the wide expanse of sand, or just across the street, boldly beckoning the hot, wet, and sandy to come in for a cold one. The more private beaches of KW hotels like the Casa Marina or the Reach do have a watering hole nearby, but the public beaches have nothing.



EXCEPT, that is, for Lagerheads. Not long ago, this structure was the bathroom building for the tiny and neglected patch of sand at the north end of Simonton. There's a small parking lot, and an also-small dock, but the beach was mostly known as a haven for the homeless. Shaggy men could always be found hanging about, which pretty much kept other people from hanging about.

But someone had a vision of reviving the whole thing. The building was overhauled, and the beach was cleaned up. When they opened, word quickly spread that the sandwiches were really good, and that it was well worth checking out. Nobody that I

talked to ever mentioned it in terms of it being a bar, though, and a hurried fly-by on Trekko the Wonder Bike didn't yield a satisfactory answer either.



So, here, today, under hot sun, and brandishing an appropriate thirst, I came for the Hop.

The first item of business was to determine whether or not L-heads could qualify as a bar and not just a sandwich shack that sold beer. That was resolved right away. The beer taps were prominent, just about the first thing you'd see once you walked up the side ramp or the front stairs. And, though there

were no seats right there, there was ample shaded area to bring your beer and stand or lean while you quaffed it down, all with a nice view of the sparkling water. So, just like the Mr. Z Precedent, it was clear that one could definitely show up and have just beer without being a weirdo. Perfect.

The beach area is pretty small. If you come here to have a good swim, you're gonna be disappointed, unless you like swimming the same 80-foot stretch back and forth over and over and over again. But it's large enough to refresh you once you get off your overheated ass, plop down with a splash, float around some and get back out, probably with a renewed thirst.



There are lots of lounge chairs available for your sunbathing pleasure, and some watersports things for rent over there by the dock. The tall wall of the Pier House looms over the south side of the property, providing a little more shade as the afternoon sun descends. A solo musician was beginning to set up his equipment on a small stage in that shadowed area for some Happy Hour tunes.

What occupied my mind the most, though, was the dog. A young Irish Setter was full of play and would not be denied. Her master was sitting up in the deck having a bite and a swig. Several times, he took the sloppy-wet



tennis ball from the eager pup and threw it back out into the water. Little Red would sprint and splash gleefully to retrieve it. Master eventually tired of the game and turned his attention more fully to his victuals. It looked like Game Over for Little Red.

But, no, this was one clever pooch. Undaunted, she waited patiently for him to pick it up and throw it back out. When that clearly wasn't going to happen for a while, she picked the ball up from his feet and trotted out to the water's edge. Key West doesn't have much for waves and surf, but there is usually a small rolling splash that licks the

shore. Little Red was sharp enough to use it as her playmate.

She dropped the ball up on the very top edge of the wet part of the sand, then walked about fifteen feet away, out into the water, and crouched as if in ambush. Several splashes came rolling in, lapping up close to the ball while she stayed tensed and poised. Finally, one splash washed up far enough to lift the ball up and start to carry it back out to sea. The trap was sprung, and the hunter pounced, grabbing the ball and thrashing it about.



Satisfied with that kill, she then carefully placed the ball in a similar spot and repeated the game. This went on for

my entire beer. When Master was done eating, he gave her a whistle, she swooped up her ball, dashed to him, and they walked off to parts unknown (at least to me -- they probably knew).

With that entertainment done, and the music still a ways away, I took my leave. The summertime beach thing was good, but at this particular time, I was craving some AC.

