

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Bar #305:

The Abbey

429 Caroline Street
Saturday 11/17/18, 7:30 PM

Tocabago (can) \$5

So, I'm walking down to Duval from my favorite in-the-know parking spot on Fleming (no, I'm not tellin'j, and I'm thinkin', "let's do a damn Hop tonight. The Abbey is *due*."

So, I take out my phone and fire off a text to B: "You out and about?" I know the reply will be the succinct, if not downright terse. They always are.

So, there are times when I text J instead, especially if I have a photo to send, since her phone is more modern than his. Anyone's phone is. He has a flip phone. One of that thought-to-be-extinct species that require 3 taps to type a "c", and "f", an "I", etc. Remember when you used to do that? Yeah, barely, right. We all thought that was the turtle's tits at the time.



So, mind you, B is not the only one I know who has one of those. Malt MacBarley, the clan patriarch, the Mac Daddy his-self, has one. But the Mac Daddy is 94 years old and does not really understand what texting is, and definitely not anything else these devices do (except, well, phone calls).

So, I totally blew the old man's mind one day a few years ago. I pulled out the iPhone to show him his house on Google Earth. That had him shaking his head. Then I showed him Ascencion Island, that tiny dot in the middle of the Atlantic that he used to navigate his bombers to during WWII, and I zoomed in on Wideawake Field, the airstrip there that they used to refuel at on their



Brazil-to-Congo supply line routes. That wowed him. But when I showed him the Great Pyramids, noticed that there is a golf course less than 300 yards from the northernmost one, and within minutes found out the course name and greens fees, lined up a tee time, reserved a room at that resort and booked a plane ticket to Cairo, his brain just melted. I think he actually gets afraid every time I pull my phone out of my pocket now. Some kind of strange magic in that little box.

So, no, I cancelled all those reservations; I had just been showin' off. Ha. I'm not quite that spontaneous.

So, anyway, B sent back a typical 5-letter reply: "Porch". Well, of course, The Porch — which was Hop #1, by the way — is no more. But B has his own nomenclature for bars — The 90 Mile Lounge (#104) was always "Mile Marker 90", for instance — and I chuckled that B&J had had the same notion as me regarding Hop #305, and I ventured thither forthwith.

So, I decided that I had started enough paragraphs with the word "so" and called a moratorium on the word.

So there. :)

Nothing has changed much on the outside of this stately Victorian structure. It's a good look, though. The stairs are always easier to climb than they are to descend, even if you're sober. If you've missed the sober bus and are taking the drunk train down them, they seem damn thin. Gotta rally that focus thang to effect a dignified exit. No such problems on this evening, anyway, being on the start-out phase.



Even though The Porch is gone, the porch itself is still very much here. I've never sat out here, which surprises me. It looks like a dang cool hang.

Same hall, same doorway, but The Abbey brings a new look to the space. Most notably, the bar now extends the length of the double room. It looks a tad awkward on first glance with that wide doorway gapping the width of the room and the bar running right on through from front chamber to rear. Gives it character, I reckon.

It's bright in here, and TVs are prominent on each end of the bar. And the bar stools are nice: tall, with backs, and padded.



B&J sat near the middle of the bar, chatting with the familiar figure of Doug, that longtime mainstay of Jack Flats (#48), who, IMHO, is at the top of the Best Barkeeps In K-Dub list. Both he and his esteemed tending-teammate Matt, who had been JF's A-pairing for 15 years left there on the same week. Quite a watershed moment for Flats. Kinda like the Battle of Hastings in 1066 where French King Merde defeated English Prince Poofter in what every history teacher I ever had tried to insist was a "watershed event."

I don't know what the fugg that means, do you? I know that it meant that the Normans now held the Anglo-Saxons by the privates — so basically France ruled England, which must have pissed off the English a good bit — but what that has to do with shedding water, I have no idea. But it does mean that, to many of us, Jack Flats will never be the same.

But anywayyyyy....

On top of the shelves on the back wall of the bar sit boxes of games, as if daring you to challenge someone to a contest. There are some true classics there too: Parchesi, Battleship, Yahtzee, Othello, Scrabble, Candyland, and the one that cracked me up the most, The Price is Right.



The latter is, I assume, the infamous "home version", that people got as a consolation prize when they blew their chance on the show. That always cracked me up. It was like, "hey, you totally sucked on national TV, so here, take this home and relive your humiliation with your friends". Damn, that's cold. Just give them a six-pack of PBR and be done with it.

If you see me here at the Ab, take me on in a Scrab. I play my iPad a lot and I kick its ass. To be fair, though, I only play the Intermediate level. The Expert level is freaking nuts. It keeps throwing ludicrous letter



combinations at you. Mind you, I was an English major in college and then spent 15 years as a high school English teacher with a passion for vocabulary. My 9th graders knew more freaking words than Merriam and Webster. They knew big words, like *perspicacious* and *antepenultimate*, but I loved teaching the esoteric small words like *irk* and *ilk*. They knew when to use *dearth* instead of *paucity* and *plethora* instead of *preponderance*, so, point being, I know a **lot** of words.

But some of the jumbled collections of characters that Expert tried to play on me just defied reason. And you can't even challenge. The iPad just sits there going, "yeah, of course *tiqab* is a freaking

word. What is ya, ignorant??"

Did you know that "qi" is a word? I didn't either. And spellcheck sure as hell doesn't think so. Same with "xi", which autocorrect tried the change to "Cindy". Annnnd, both "qi" and "xi" can be used in the plural form. WTF?? So, yeah, you bet I use `em!

And "za" is a word too, as in, "Let's go to Papa John's and get a slice o' `za." That comes in handy too.

But, hey, I'm giving away some secret weapons here, so back to the Hop itself.

So, yeah, Doug looks just fine and dandy in his new digs here. That JF bar is a big and very active bar. So much food and soooooo much booze: drafts, bottles, wines, and shots shot shots. That is one big-ass bar there, and it was often just the two of them to cover the whole damn thing. Annnnd all those tables full of thirsty patrons had to be attended to as well via the server station. Doug said there were nights when he walked eight miles in one shift.

Now, in a place like that, a barkeep has to keep the right mindset: a killer workload should, and (fortunately) often does mean a really good tip jar payout at night's end. In my tending days, I could carry that only so far. The nights I made the killer tips were the nights that I ended up feeling



like I lost a slice of my soul. Worth it? Uhh, well, yeah, why not? I mean, it's only my soul, right? Not like my liver or spleen or anything like that.

I cannot begin to imagine how Doug (and Matt and Mark, and their JF colleagues) could handle all those full-house shifts during football season and keep up their unwavering good nature. I mean, almost every night had to have an asshole or two (or more) in the equation. Whenever I was there, I knew there was at least one a-hole in attendance.

Let's face it, not everyone is as a great and wonderful and totally awesome person as all of you, my dear readers, are. The one advantage to a large and busy bar, though, is that you have both room and reason to escape the assholes, leaving them to torment their neighboring patrons while you soldier on with your tending duties.

In the more intimate setting of the smaller establishments, the keeper is held more tightly prisoner by his/her customers. If someone gets on their nerves, there is nothing to do but smile semi-convincingly and try to find some other chore to get you away.

I had to ask Doug about the new name for this establishment. The Porch was obvious, with that big porch outside the window, but there is no Abbey in sight, Westminster or otherwise. His answer surprised me. He smiled semi-convincingly and pointed to the framed photo on the wall near the back of the room. It's a portrait of a white/golden rooster, in profile. The bird was the prized pet of the long-time resident of the upper floor here, and her name was Abbey. Not Abby and not Abbie, mind you: Abbey. Well, Abbey had very recently passed away, so this space was named as a tribute to her.



So, Hop 305 is named after a guy's big beautiful cock, which he treasured.

=)

ADDENDUM: Saturday, 12 January 2019

We – that would be B&J and I -- were hanging out here, playing games of Shut The Box and just generally being a part of Doug's send-off night. I know, he was one of our main reasons for going to that very new bar, but dung occurs and he's jumping ship, as it were, to the Conch Farm (#19). Simple math. You see, if a Hop was in the teens and is *still* operating, it's probably a stable and reliable place. Who knows, the Abbey may thrive and surpass all, its elevated front porch will make it a perfect paddle-up bar when the seas rise. But for now, Conch Farm (#19) is a pretty solid place for a pretty solid income.

Matt and Gretchen, both of Jack Flats (#48) fame, were sending him off as well, and they taught me the dice game Shut The Box. We played several rounds and our scores varied widely. Late in our efforts, I surpassed Matt's leading score of 15 with a 12, and then soon posted another 12 (low score wins, yay, me). When their food arrived, they abandoned the game. I bade them well and joined B&J at the end of the now crowded bar.

My stalwart co-hoppers gave the game a try, swapping the Family Record back and forth for a few rounds. Brian, then, had a frenzy of fortuitous rolls, including a clutch 11 on his final try, and ended up with a 1. Yes, a 1. So much for being smug. He missed that rare feat of Shutting The Box by a single pernt. Doug quickly pointed out that he could roll one die and try for the Shut. He rolled a 4. Game over.

Exciting, yes? You bet it was. We were talking about that for *minutes*. I mean, c'mon, second best score possible! He might get to like this game even more than curling.