

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep Calm and Hop On Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Hop #325

H2O Suites

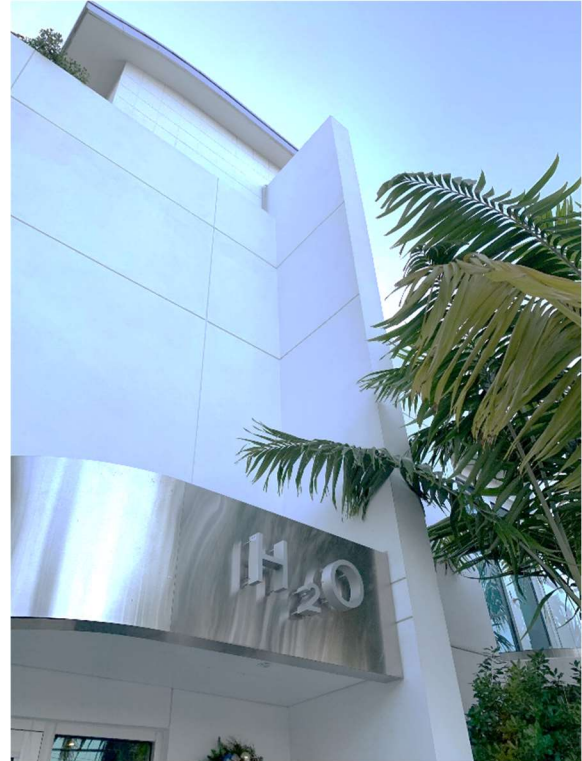
1212 Simonton Street

Saturday, December 14, 2019, 5:00 PM

Bimini Twist IPA (can) \$??

This Hop was a long time in the making. H2O is one of those guests-only bars that was going to require some degree of subterfuge or assistance.

I had concocted several sneaky Plan A's, and even considered the downright bold approach of going to the front desk, asking if it was OK to go up and take a couple of pictures to send my family, who were thinking about staying here on their next visit.



Ya see, the bar is on the roof, where the swimming pool is. I mean, if *I* were on the front desk, *I* probably would have told me to get lost. Or even worse, *I* might have given super service by escorting me up there to show me the way, then escorting me back down. "Grabbing a beer while we're here" didn't seem like that would work.



And once you've been seen and identified as an outsider, rotsa ruck with your second assault.

But, as luck would have it, Max, a college track teammate of mine, had come to town and was staying here. He had sent me an email that he'd be

arriving with family, would not have a lot of free time, but would love to get together for a beer. Ding ding. Jackpot.

He said that they'd all be going out Saturday night, so I suggested meeting him at the pool bar while the ladies began their primping down in their

rooms. His wife wasn't too slap-happy about his meeting up with me; she had heard some of the stories of our college cavorting. But, hey, my wife would not have liked the stories about him either, which is precisely why I never got married.



I hadn't seen Max in decades, and he never would have found me at all except that I still have the same AOL email that I opened up back in, what, 1994? But he's an investments guy, so I think he thought he could make a quick sale before dinner. All I needed was beer,

though, to consummate the Hop, and I really didn't care what I had to say, do, or write to get it – except my signature.

I arrived at the prescribed time, walking in through the parking garage and through the open double-doors, avoiding any contact with the front desk person. There was no real reason to do so, but I just did. The fewer conversations the better sometimes, right?

There was an elevator, but I decided the stairs would more effectively dodge people. Wrong. As I placed my foot on the bottom step, a 20-something, dark-haired, bespectacled and H2O-uniformed woman was coming down. She gave me a cute smile and I gave her one back -- although hers was definitely cuter than mine – and I proceeded upward.



There were four people in the pool, and Max and his wife were on the deck. Max came over (she did not), we shook hands, and walked to the bar. No barkeep was there, so he and I walked around the deck, getting the full

view, and talked a bit, quite superficially, as he let me know how so-very-well his life was going and what investments he thought were especially plucky these days.

As we arrived back at the bar, the elevator door beside it opened and out came cute-smile girl, heading for the bar with a pack of napkins. She looked at me and said, "I *thought* you might be heading here!"



Max bought me a beer (yes!) and charged it to the room. Right then, once beer was in hand, I kinda flatly told him that investments weren't my thing, but that it was good to see him, glad he was killin' it, I hoped he would enjoy his dinner at The Commodore (#183), and thanks for the brew.

The others had gotten out and were wrapped in towels as they passed by on the way to the elevator. His wife cooed out, "Coming, Max? We'll be late," in that wifely *pick-me-or-him* way, as she held the door. Max, a bit chagrined by my disinterest in stocks, shook my hand again, said something insincere about *maybe we can grab a cold one before I head home*, and left, leaving me with a full can of IPA and an even fuller sense of victory.

So, I turned to Zabrina, the barkeep, and struck up some banter with her. She turned out to be a **far** better convo companion than old buddy Max. And yes, Zabrina was the name on her name tag; I did not make it up like I usually do. Not sure that name would have popped into my head.

The Army-Navy football game was on TV and she was clearly pro-Navy. It turns out that she was a four-year USN veteran. She looked like she was all of about 20, so I was impressed.

She told me something about military dogs that I did not know (not that I knew much anyway). All dogs in the military branches are assigned a rank, and they all have to be one rank higher than their handlers, thereby





guaranteeing that the handlers can never abuse the animals. Ha. How `bout that?

Zabby had only arrived in KW a couple of months ago, and said she missed her hometown of Cleveland -- yes, she was sure she would even miss scraping her windshield -- and that it was just too warm in December to suit her fancy. I concurred that it was warmer this week that it typically is at year's end, but that she reserve her judgment till the full depths of winter had descended upon both Cleveland (brrr) and Key West (ahhh).

We had a nice chat. She had nothing else to do, since the pool was empty and would be closing soon anyway. I thought about ordering another beer and charging it to

Max's room, but I was on my way to another Hop just two blocks away and didn't feel like chain-drinking just yet.

Besides, Zabrina probably wanted to close up, so I bottomed-up my Bimini, wished her a "Go Navy!", and pumped my fist victoriously as I hit the steps downwards. Hop #325 accomplished.

That's my story and I'm stickin' to it. ;]