

## Bar Hoppin' With Hops

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

Hop #326

### **Four Marlins (Reach)**

1435 Simonton Street

Saturday, December 14, 2019, 5:45 PM

*Jai Alai IPA (can > glass) \$6.45*

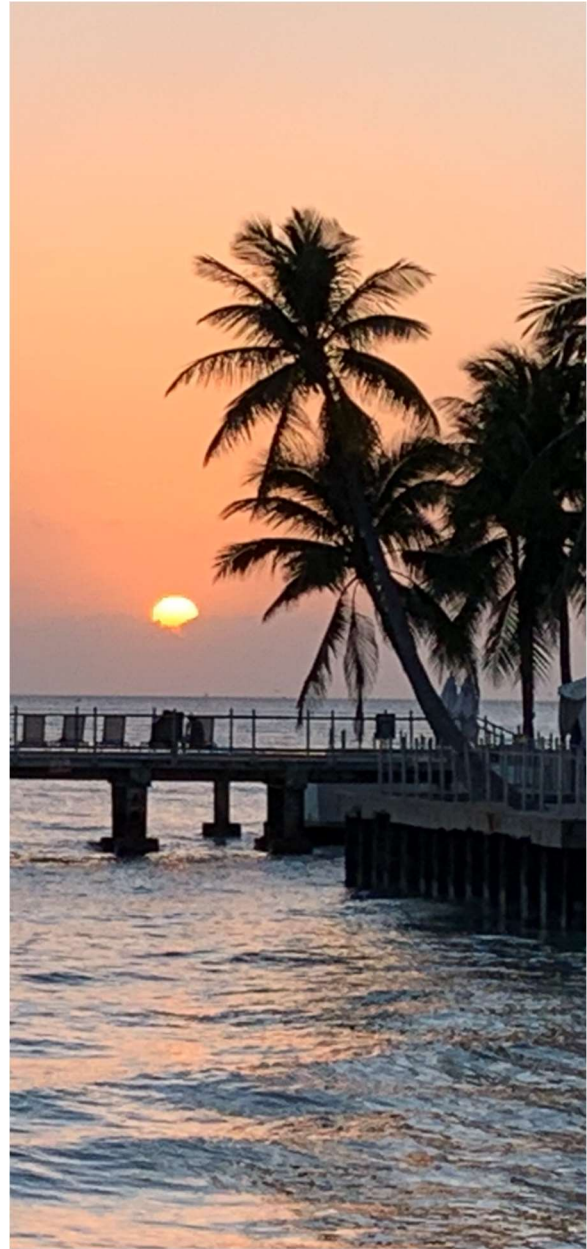
I guess the south end of Simonton is just too far. B&J and I had been mentioning for months and months that there were some bars down this-away that were ripe for the hopping. We were slackin' and we knew it.

It was July of 2013 the last time we strolled all the way down here to hop The Reach's Strip Bar (#160), Ambrosia (#161), Abbondanza (#162) and Camille's (#163) – six freaking years ago! Back then, B&J were more peripatetically inclined, and when I mentioned the other night that I might finally hit those Simonton bars on Saturday, they basically said, "have at it, Hops!"

So, I rode my bike down here and parked it at SoMo Beach Café (#99), where I'd be using a gift certificate towards my dinner, and did the very short strolls to H2O (#325) and here.

[Speaking of SoMoBC, my tortillas and cheese dip, ten naked wings, and 20-ounce Jai Alai – in a plastic cup, no less – cost \$30. Yup, \$10 each. My \$25 GC didn't even cover one beer and a couple of Bar Bites. Yikes.]

We had heard long ago that The Strip Bar had been redone and was now Spencer's By The Sea. So, I was a bit taken aback when I walked through





the hotel's hallways and came upon a sign saying, "Four Marlins Oceanside Dining." Oh well, sorry, Spencer, I guess we missed ya.

The outdoor route seemed more inviting than the indoor walk, so I veered left and followed the path. The bronze poker players were still out there, frozen in mid-play, and looking totally realistic. Once they passed from view, though, the bar appeared. And, whoaaaa, what a change!!

The Strip Bar had been an enclosed room, with dark wood and rich, deep red furnishings. Four Marlins was wide open, bright and modern. I bellied up to the empty east side of the bar and settled onto the comfortable wicker basket seat.



A few people were sitting on the south side, with their backs to the water. I didn't have a great ocean view from my seat, but I could see the sea, see? They could see me. Lucky them, yes?

The barkeep broke off from his convo with them so he could attend to my thirsty needs. It was Billy, a long-time fixture at Island House (#142). I greeted him heartily and commented, "I thought you left the island."



"No, I just left the *Island House*," he replied with a smile. The change seemed to do him good. He was looking quite classy in his all-black duds. "Welcome to the brand new Four Marlins. We've been open for about a week."

He had had several weeks off while they deleted Spencer's and uploaded Four Marlins, and he seemed rested, relaxed, and happy in his new digs. "Like night and day," he said.



My beer came in a tall, sleek, chilled glass, the kind that you can really tilt up and pouuuur from. I love those. It's way too easy to knock down a brew in two, though, so I showed restraint and did some dignified quaffing.

I noticed as I set down my glass and took yet another pinch of munchies, that the south-side patrons had left, heading out to the famous gazebo.

"Aha!" I thought, "Sunset!" And went out to snap a few photos.

I had never been "inside" this iconic wooden structure. It is BIG in there! At our Strip Bar hop, a wedding was being held out here. I remember thinking that it must be pretty crowded. But, seeing it now, I think that had plennnty of room.

The weathered wooden plankway changes to hard tile as you reach the wide part, though, and the Slippery Quotient changes dramatically. I did a yard-long, one-foot skid but did a recovery that even I did not believe and avoided some bigtime embarrassment (and pain).

The sun went down, as it often does, and it had a pillow of clouds on the horizon to cushion its fall. Temperature about 76, light tropical breeze, really nice sunset over the Gulf of Mexico. Welcome to December in Key West... Zabrina.

The high sky was clear, so there would be no afterglow this evening. I walked much more slowly across the puddled tiles on my way back.



