

Key West Bar Hops

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

Bar #328:

Heroes Bar & Lounge

506 Southard Street
Friday, 18 January 2020, 6 PM

Crazy Lady (draft) \$6.50?

This, the first hop of 2020, was yet another farewell Hop with my hopping teammates, B&J. You might remember then from 175 of the previous 327 Hops. They are returning to mainland life, *again*. Some people never learn.

Anyway, as so many others are lately, this Hop is on a repeated property. 506 Southard was the site of Hop #3, Krawl Off Duval, way back 2012. I also hopped it as Crafty Kraken (#271): and Irish Oak Barrel (#301), which, ironically, was the Hop that marked the return of B&J from their prior move-away.

We had spent many hours at Krawl and were sad to see it go. I was at Kraken a few times, thought it was OK, but I reckon it just did not have the magnetism to draw me back more often. The Barrel was a one-timer for *moi* — the configuration of the room messed with my mind too much — and B&J lost their initial zest for the place after observing certain, um, behaviors of questionable legality by some of the staff. I'll let you nose that one out on your own.



Heroes dumped the radical bar configuration of Irish Oak Barrel and went back to being a room with a bar instead of a roomful of bar. It is now back there in the back of the room where all sensibility says it should



be, and they have extended it into an L-shape along the left wall. There is also a huge TV over that left wing. It is all SO MUCH better!

Before we even walked in, though, I took a pause to look at the front porch. There was a TV there, which is a nice touch – passers-by can catch the score or whatever as they walk by, and maybe even get lured in for an exciting finish. There are a couple of tables for the outdoor experience, another good touch.

The UFC posters for the upcoming McGregor vs. Cowboy match gave an insight into the bar's character: *don't expect mandolin music and figure skating on TV in here, y'all*. That's all well and good. I like a bar that is right up front about who they are.



What gave me pause, though, was the religious statue a few feet to the right of the stairs. So, we had Connor, Cowboy and Popey Dude juxtaposed. I dunno. Nothing wrong with a little divine endorsement, certainly. He just looked lost.



As soon as we walked in, I saw the face of the barkeep, whom I knew I had seen before, light up. I was like, *Heyyyy!*, **until** I saw that her gaze was not locked precisely in me. She had recognized B&J. Of *course*.

They recognized her from her former stint at Lucy's and they chatted liberally as we ordered and quaffed our libations, but when she walked away to serve another patron, they looked at each other and shrugged. I said, "I can't remember her name." They said in unison, "Neither can we!"

To be honest, though, her face was familiar, but her overall, well, *presence* was very different. At Lucy's, the staff's corporate attire consists of beige

cargo shorts and navy-blue polo shirts. It looks casual and good, fitting for the desired beachside attitude, but it is not exactly flattering.

But Heroes is not corporate. I don't know what their dress code is — probably something like, "just look at least kinda good, ok?" — but, to quote Billy Crystal, she looked *mahvelous*. She was rockin' a black one-piece dress, skintight — might have even been Lycra — had her dark blonde hair tumbling and flowing, and she was an Easter basket full of eye candy.

We found out through another patron — or an off-duty co-worker, I forget which — that her name was (and probably still is) Sam. She had a few other patrons to attend to, but she found time for the usual across-the-bar chat about why she changed jobs, how different it was here, what was so-n-so (remember her?) doing these days ...yada yada foonbag.

There was an entertainer entertaining, so I couldn't hear much of what she was saying, but, hey, she wasn't talking to me anyway. B&J were nodding and laughing, so I figured I'd get the scoop from them later.

I did ask them later and they said they could not hear a damn word she had said; they were just trying read her lips and expressions.

The problem was that entertainer. He was just one guy with just one guitar, but he really should've turned his amps down below 11. He was pretty good, don't get me wrong (though he did become a bit of a screamer on some high notes), but in a room that small — 20' x 20'? — it's really easy to overpower everyone.



Lazy Gecko (#2) had that problem with a dude named Randy Mac. The guy was a solo entertainer, but he had a full back-up band on his laptop (or whatever it was) and he played lead guitar along with them. He freaking BLASTED his music to the point where quite a few people eventually just had to leave. Management talked to him several times, and he always knocked it down a few decibels on his opener, but gradually crept it right back up every time. What he never figured out was that we were all there because we like *the bar* so much; we merely *tolerated* him. In no way were we there just to be his audience.

Guys gotta realize that they are in a *bar*, not a concert hall. I like loud live music, but people come to the bar to socialize, which means *talking with one another*. The tunes are there to give the room some mood and life, and to get ya moving and smiling and loving life enough to order another drink or five. But when the music makes you lean in and shout into one person's ear – with repeats of "What??? Say again???" -- it has gone a step too far.

The entertainer's job is really this: Get People to Stay and Drink **More**. When friends can't even exchange a few words, they're not gonna stay, and that is **not** good for biz.



Sadly, that was the case with us. We finished our one, Brian gave the "we're done here" nod, we waved bye-bye to Sam, and off we went.

And then off *they* went to the mainland, leaving Hops to hop ever onward without them...

... which I certainly **would** have been doing. I fully planned on returning to 506 Southard a week or so later and do Hop #329 upstairs at the Liberty Lounge, but...

... very soon after this Hop, this COVID-19 thing came sweeping across the planet – maybe you heard of it? – and socializing ground to a sad halt.

On March 17th, Key West shut down every bar. Ah, the cruel irony of closing bars on St. Patrick's Day. But at least they went out with a flourish; it would've been beyond cruel to close everything up on the 16th.