

Two Western Mass Parrotheads



Barefootin' in Key West

It's Halloween and we are "Off to see the Lizard" in Key West. We have heard lots of stories about how much fun was to be had at the MOTM convention, but to be honest we we're skeptical. Scotch had never been to Key West before and Babs spent one day there as a cruise excursion.

Day 1 (Oct 31, 2007): It's 6:30am and we are off to Bradley to catch our plane. We are flying to Key West though Miami. We arrive in Miami on schedule and have a 1 ½ hr wait for our flight to Key West. As we approach the final escalator to our gate and simultaneously notice a kiosk selling Mojito's. We stop figuring that it's 5 o'clock somewhere and order 2 double Mojito's with Bacardi



Select Rum. Drinks in hand we head for the gate, sit down and await our boarding call. There are lots of Parrotheads around and Barbara strikes up a conversation with the gentleman in the seat next to her. Turns out he is from Indiana. This sparks up more conversation as Barbara's mom grew up in a nearby town. Oddly, we have probably found the one person on our flight who is not heading to MOTM. He is meeting some business associates for an annual meeting of funeral home directors. We tell him about the convention and what to expect if he decides to venture out on Duval street in the evening. Of course, we don't really know what to expect ourselves, but we figured we wouldn't be far off. Finally, they call for us to board and we are on our way. The flight

is short and uneventful. This is somewhat unexpected as we thought we were going to get hit by the outskirts of Hurricane Noel which would not be kind to the small turboprop we were traveling in.

We arrive in Key West and the sun is shining, it's hot and humid, but there is a nice breeze keeping it comfortable. We catch the shuttle to the Casa Marina and officially declare ourselves on Island time.

We check in and head to our room to change into Island clothes and then head to the Pool area for appetizers, boat drinks and music. With the official start of MOTM coming the next day, we decide

that it was time to head to town and have a look around prior to heading to Hogsbreath to see Jim Morris and the Big Bamboo band at 8 pm. There is a shuttle running continually, so we hop on and head to town. We share the shuttle with a couple from the Sarasota Parrot head club. Ironically, they hail from West Springfield and again we have run into someone with whom one of us has a connection (Scott grew up in WS). Our first stop is Hogsbreath, we stop in and take a trip around the bar taking in the ambience while continuing our conversation with our van-mates over a beer. We part ways with our Sarasota brethren and start our first of many tours on Duval street. It wasn't long until we run into the Sarasota couple again in a T-shirt store offering everything for \$5. This seems to happen a few more times over the next half hour or so. We eventually end up at Margaritaville where we decide to have our obligatory Cheeseburger in Paradise which we wash down with a couple of Landsharks. We asked if Jimmy has been in recently, he hasn't, but informs us that his sister Lilly stopped in the night before.

After our dinner we head back to Hogsbreath. It's around 7:30pm and the crowd is starting to grow in anticipation of the Jim Morris show. We get a couple more Landsharks and stake out a spot in front of the stage. The crowd continues to grow. There is a strange mix of people today as it is also the last night of Frightfest. By 8:15 Jim is onstage getting ready, he announces that he is recording this show and wants to warm up the crowd and jumps right into "Navigator Afternoon". Turns out the show doesn't start till 9, so after Navigator, we wait another 45 minutes for the show to start. As usual Jim puts on a great show. The only downside is the crowd, the stage takes up 1/3rd of the Hogsbreath parking lot and we are about 5 people deep from the stage in a crowd of what seems like thousands. By 10:30 our feet are starting to get tired of being stood on and we decide its time to call it a night. We head to Simonton St to catch the shuttle. Since this is basically our first time here (yes we are Virgins in paradise), we are not sure where we are supposed to meet up with the shuttle so we start walking. It wasn't long before we run into another couple waiting for the shuttle. We decide to wait with them, but after 20 minutes we decide to hail a cab and share the fare. A few minutes later we are back at the Casa. It's is a good start. Registration is in the morning so we call it a night planning on getting up early to register.

Day 2 (Nov 1, 2007): We get up later than expected, but we are on Island time, so no worries there. Off to registration where we pick up our MOTM badges which will be the staple of our wardrobe for the next 3 days. After checking out the raffles and the vendor booths, we head to lunch. We decided that lunch today would be Cuban food. Barbara loves Cuban cuisine, so we ask the concierge for a recommendation. He suggests El Sibone, which he says is the best Cuban restaurant on the island. It's not far so we decide to walk.

El Sibone is not much more than a small family style restaurant. However, the food was excellent, the portions huge and the price extremely reasonable. As it turns out, this is a rare combination in Key West.

After lunch we're off to Duval street. We are heading to Rick's Upstairs to spend the afternoon listening to Sunny Jim, John Frenzy and Jim Morris. On the way we stop at one of the moped rental shops to ask about the rental prices. We end up renting an electric car for 2 days. We decide that it will be easier than waiting for a shuttle that may or may not show when needed and also save our feet. Now that we have wheels we make a slight adjustment to our plans and take a quick spin around the island. On our rounds we stop at a package store and pick up a cooler, a six pack of Key West Ale, plastic cups and ice. Neat thing about the cars is that they have a huge storage trunk on the back. In goes the booty, and off we go again on our way to Ricks. We have a new plan in a futile attempt to save a few bucks on drinks. We buy our first round and head over to the balcony and grab our "salty piece of land" for the show. Sunny Jim is on stage and has the crowd roaring. At this point we

don't know anyone here but that will change soon enough. After the first beer, I head to the "car", Ricks cup in hand, to refill. On the way, I am stopped by Murphy, the keyboard player in Jim Morris's Big Bamboo Band who comments "nice shirt". It took me a couple of seconds to realize that I'm not wearing a JM shirt, but a Landshark lager shirt identical to the one he's wearing. I introduced myself, mentioned seeing them at the Southwick Inn and the Metro and Morris show, etc. and went on my way.

Back with Barbara, fresh beer in hand, Barbara notices someone she thought we met at the NEPHC in March. So I stop him to ask. Turns out he hadn't been there, he's from the Old Dominion club, his name is Hunter. We tell Hunter that we're virgins and Hunter takes it on himself to introduce us to a number of people sitting in our vicinity. Most of these people are from the Metro club, and a few of them we recognize. It's not long before Barbara and I decide it's time to buy a round of Tequila for our new friends. So off I go to the bar to order ten (yes, 10) shots of Petron' Silver. Now, I have never ordered that many shots at one time before, but this got a lot of attention from the crowd at the bar. The bartender stripped the top off the fruit tray, loaded on the shots, some limes and salt and I started on back to deliver the round. On the way, Steve one of the guys we were introduced to "stole" one of the shots and downed it. He didn't know it at the time but one had his name on it anyway. Back at the table, we pass out the shots and all down them together. Let me see if I can remember the crowd. Hunter, Dave and Ed and one other from Metro, two brothers from Parrotheads in Amish Paradise, Barb and myself. If you're counting, that left one shot unaccounted for, which I gave to Steve so he could join us our toast. Steve is an executive for ABC in New York though you'd never know it. We hang around with this group for the next couple of hours. Through the John Frenzy show, a couple more rounds of tequila the rest of the six pack and into the first set of the Jim Morris show before heading off to dinner. Sometime during that period, Steve got carried out of Rick's not to be seen again till the next day.

On the way back to the car, we are stopped by a local shop owner and asked if we would like to try the best Key Lime pie on the island which we did. The owner also pointed us down the street to a restaurant where we enjoyed a good dinner before heading back to the Casa Marina to catch the evenings shows.

Back at the Casa, we go back to the room intending to catch a short nap before heading to the beach to catch the evening entertainment. We wake up around 8:30 and head down to the beach stage to catch last couple of hours of the show. No sooner do we arrive and the show ends and they start getting ready for the next show. They announce 2 for 1 Margaritas. We're thirsty, so we get a couple and then go for a walk to the pier. There is only one other couple on the pier. We strike up a conversation with them, turns out they are from the Eastern Mass club, we discuss the Patriots/Indy game which we both will miss due to return travel arrangements. A short while later the band starts playing so we head back to the beach side stage to watch the Landsharks. At the show, we run into our friends from the Parrotheads in Amish country. They are with a larger group now. Turns out they had 40 members at the convention this year. We meet the Captain (Steve) and first mate (Bill), their version of President and VP. We hang around with them for a while, but we are getting tired and by 10:30 we decide to call it a night.

Day 3 (Nov. 2 2007): Friday morning is the director meeting. We head down to the Hotel entrance to catch the Conch Train to the Conch Republic Seafood Restaurant for breakfast. We find a table near the stage and the start of the buffet table and sit down. There is one couple at the table already, they are from the Las Vegas club. The crowd fills in and pretty soon our table is filled. The last people to join us are Steve and Bill from the night before. Also sharing our table are a couple from the Sarasota club and someone else I can't remember. I admit, I'm terrible with names, faces I

remember , but unless I meet someone more than once, I will usually forget their name. They start up the meeting by playing a short video from JB. JB apologizes for not making it to the trip and thanks us all for our efforts. Closing with “Fins Up!”. The buffet is opened and the lines start, luckily our table is so close to the buffet, we don’t have to wait long. The Calypso Nuts, a husband and wife steel drum duo, start playing. They are very good, we make note to see them again. Around 11 the “official” meeting starts. There is a representative from Margaritaville who tells us of a new program they are offering to the clubs. The details escape me, but Barb took notes. Then a short video greeting from Jimmy apologizing for not being able to make an appearance and thanking all Parrotheads for their generosity and support. He signed off with the traditional “Fins Up!”. There was a treasury report for the convention and other stuff. The rep from Margaritaville asked us all to look under our chairs. She had placed her business card under one of the chairs and the person sitting there won a Margarita machine. More reports and introductions and thank you’s for the organizers. The meeting broke up and everyone started to leave. On the way out Barb and I noticed many of the various club reps swapping t-shirts and other club related stuff. This was not just one shirt for another, the clubs brought boxes of stuff to trade. It was interesting to watch all the controlled chaos the t-shirt swap generated. Barb and I jumped back on the Conch train and rode back to the Casa to pick up our E-Car grab some lunch, and head to Duval Street for the Street festival.

Day 3 - Street Fest

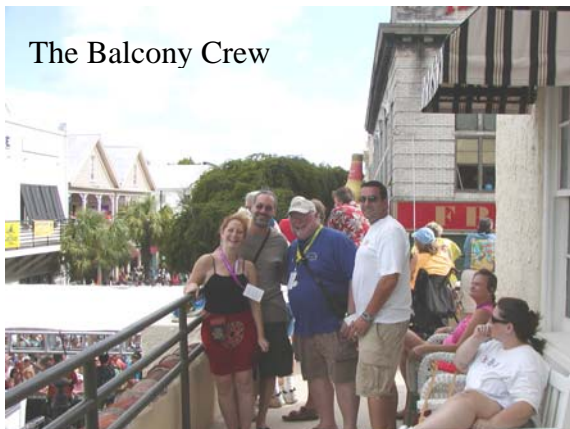
If you only had one day to spend at MOTM, make sure you catch street fest. Duval street is closed down and a stage fills the intersection of Duval and Flemming. There are street vendors set up on the side of both sides of the street selling beer and margaritas and all kinds of other stuff. The first band up is Tropical Soul. They are from Pennsylvania and are the “club band” of the Parrotheads in Amish Country. Steve the “first mate” of the Amish club is walking through the crowd handing out buttons and “BEER” signs. Steve tells us the signs are for a song that Tropical Soul will be playing during their set. The core of Tropical Soul is the duo of Dennis and Rand(y). They are joined today by John Patti and T.C. Mitchell. This is another great group and we pick up a Tropical Soul CD, it is to become one of our favorites. They have a great sound and fun lyrics.



It didn’t take us long to locate our new friend Hunter at the street fest. He was up on the Balcony next to the stage. He invited us up and of course we took him up on it. This is an interesting Hotel, as you need to enter through the Starbucks on Duval Street. It makes us wonder how anyone would ever find this place. We enter the room and Hunter introduces us to Mike. This is Mike’s room, he’s

not a parrothead (yet!), and Hunter only met him today, but his room has been turned into “THE” place to be. This is where Babs and I spend the rest of our day. I went out and picked up a bottle of Petron’ to share with our host and anyone else that was so inclined. As each band completes there stint on stage at least some of the members make it up to the room. We met Dennis and Randy of Tropical Soul, T.C. Mitchell, Murphy (from Jim Morris’s Big Bamboo Band) and a few others I can no longer recall.

The Balcony Crew



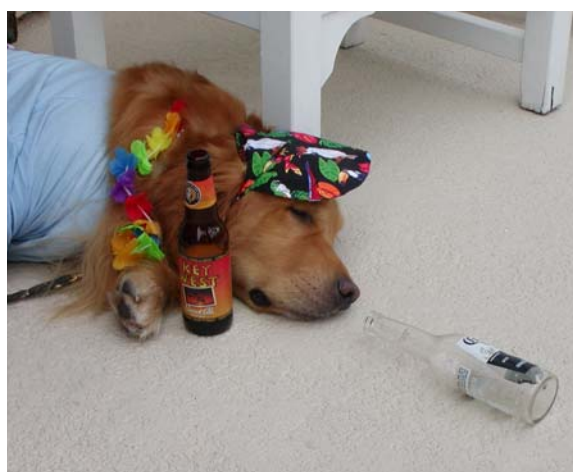
Dennis, Babs and Murphy



Babs & Hunter



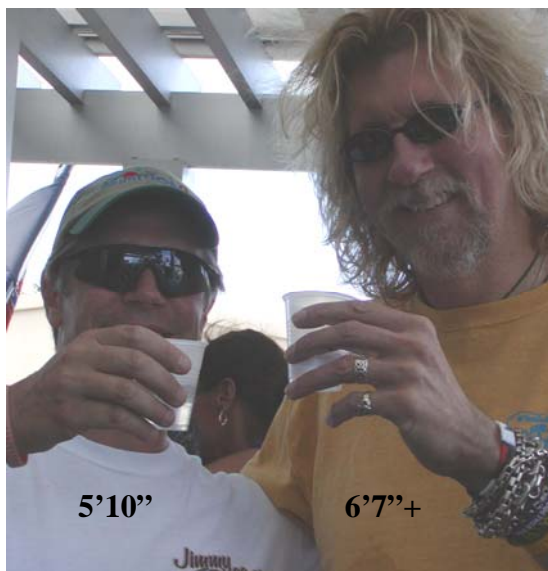
View from Above



After street fest we went out for Dinner. Then back to the Casa to “rest” prior to the evening festivities. We woke around 10 pm, we head to the beach to see what’s going on, but we are still recovering from Street Fest and decide to call it a night.

Day 4 (Saturday Nov. 3rd)

Well we wake up bright and early (around 10:30 AM). By the time we are out the door of the Hotel it's approaching lunch time and we head to Duval Street to find a place to eat. On the way a while at a stop light two parrotheads jump into the back of our electric car and ask for a ride to the Rum Barrel for a rooftop concert featuring Talldaddy (Tall Paul and Crowdaddy). We drop them off and drive around for about a half an hour looking for a place to eat, then decide that we should check out the Rum Barrel and Tall Daddy so back we go. We get there early enough that there are a couple of seats at the bar. As it turns out, we end up being there the rest of the afternoon. The show starts around 1pm and leads off with the Calypso Nuts. They are even more fun than the day before. We ordered lunch and Mojitos and settle in for the afternoon. Around 2:30, Tall Paul shows up. We didn't know who he was at the time point but when you see him you can't miss him. He stops by and says hi. We actually talk to him for a while. He is one of the nicest people we meet on the trip. We do shots of Patron' prior to his show. When his show starts, T.C. Mitchell joins him and Crowdaddy on stage. They put on a great show. At the end, Babs and I pick up a copy of the TallDaddy Cd.



We make a point to see them again next opportunity.

LAST NIGHT OF MOTM.

Saturday night we head to the beach around 7 pm. This is the closing bash for MOTM. The featured bands are Jimmy and the Parrots playing from 7:30 – 9:30 and Jim Morris and the Big Bamboo Band from 10-1am. Babs and I grab a drink and find a spot right in front of the stage to watch tonight's shows. For the rest of the evening, this is our "spot". Jimmy and the Parrots are great. They have one of the most energetic shows we can ever recall seeing. As their show goes on, musicians from other bands join them on stage to JAM. This becomes the standard for the rest of the night. Jimmy and the Parrots are from New Jersey. The two main members are Jimmy and his son Jimmy Jr., they are having a blast on stage. Halfway through the show, Jimmy Jr. asks for a camera. I lend him mine, he jokingly says thanks, turns around and starts off stage, ha ha. Then comes back and takes pictures of the "BEST" audience ever.



The show continues and more and more people join the show, including the Lola's. The Lola's are actually Christy (Tall Pauls wife) and Linley from Calypso Nuts.



Jimmy & the Parrots
(with Crowdaddy)



Jimmy & the Shark



Jimmy & the Parrots
(with the Lola's)



The Lola's
(Christy and Linley)

Now I would have thought that the entertainment couldn't get better. But, alas, I am wrong. Up next was Jim Morris and the Big Bamboo Band. Those of you who know us, probably know that Babs

and I really like Jim Morris and his music. This is the 3rd time we have caught him this week. We have a great spot, except for one exceptionally rude woman who kept trying to squeeze us out. She eventually moves much to our delight as I again have elbow room. I wouldn't have thought it possible, but the party just kept getting better. During "Sangria Wine", someone in the crowd started passing around two one gallon jugs of Sangria. Eventually, one of them made it up to Jim on stage. But not before I got a swig. (One of the problems with being up front in a crowd is that you can't leave for anything without losing your spot. This means no refills.)



Of course, there were other things to see in the crowd. Now, I missed this, but I Babs told me the woman that was crowding me out was flashing Jimmy. (sorry no pics... only hearsay). Also, there was a woman walking around with her (I assume) prize winning hat.

This is the one and only night we actually made it till the show was over. Before heading back to the room we go sit by the pool and soak our tired, sore feet. Then head to bed around 1:30am.

Day 5 – Last Day in KEY WEST ☺

This is our last day here. We still have the electric car until 2pm and our flight doesn't leave until 5, so we make the best of it. For breakfast we head to Sarabeths. Not only because we've heard they have the best breakfast on the island but the name is close to us. Babs daughter's name is Sarah and her middle name is Elisabeth. While there Babs calls Sarah to tell her where we are and to ask if she

wanted a T-shirt. Babs has the waitress pose for a picture (using her Cell Phone) and sends it to Sarah for approval.



After breakfast we head to Duval street to shop for trinkets. Believe it or not, we had not really done this other than the first day, when we went into a couple of T-shirt shops. We entered an alley with a number of small kiosk like shops. We started talking to the proprietor and picked out a few things. When we entered his T-shirt shop, he told us everything was \$10. Spotting an opportunity for a bargain I looked around the room and found a ceramic parrot hanging on the wall (obviously just a decoration) and told him I take that. He didn't miss a beat and said okay. (Unfortunately, the parrot didn't survive the flight back).

Then we went off in search of the sign to everywhere. We started at Mallory Square and walked around there for a while. The cruise ships we in so it was extremely crowded. But no sign of the sign....ha ha.. Eventually, we asked and were told how to get there. It took us a while but we found it. Eventually, we drop off the electric car, hitch a ride back to the Casa and grab some lunch and listen to Jim Morris finish off his acoustic show. We hang out and read for a while. Visit with Hunter one last time before we have to head to the Airport and go home.

It was a great time. Would recommend this as a must do for Parrotheads everywhere. We are already planning for next year. We have met made many new friends and hope to see some of them before the next MOTM. Till then though, FINS UP!