

## The Great Key West Adventure ~ May, 2015

(59,018 steps in Old Town)

Ed & Cindy Crane, Rob & Donna Reiley



Tuesday, 5/5/15 ~ We left Marco Island at 8:45am to begin our journey. Our ride across the Everglades with Eddie driving was smooth and uneventful, although a little rainy. We are all concerned because the weather forecasts are bleak...100% chance of rain today and 80% chance tomorrow. We stopped at Gilbert's Resort (under the bridge at Key Largo) to check it out for a possible stay on Saturday night. Eddie thinks that he and Cindy have been here before, but Cindy doesn't recognize it at all. As we are driving in, Donna finds it on Google and oh boy, it looks bad. There were really bad reviews on Trip Advisor and a photo of a bed with HUGE bedbugs...nasty! Obviously, we are



not staying here. But the bar area was really great with the largest chickee hut bar we have ever seen right along the water. We stopped at the bar and had our first breakfast beer, Sunset Ale, a first for Donna. It was a little cool here but no rain. Donna is worried that she has not brought any long sleeved clothes. After our beers we next stopped at the cute little bar called Caribbean Club where they filmed one



or Bogart's movies. Next we stopped a little further down the road at Lorelei's for lunch. This is a great place with multiple bars, both indoor and outdoor, seating along the beach, and some really cool boats. Loved the pink Nautilimo! We had fish sandwiches and patty melts with lots of beer to wash it all down. We next stopped at World Wide Sportsman to see the Pilar (just like Papa Hemingway's boat in Havana, which Eddie saw while he was sailing in Cuba) and the Zane Gray Lounge. Still no rain! The drive on down to Key West was uneventful and we arrived at the Banyan around 5pm.



We had a few beers and checked out all of the improvements at the Banyan. First of all, there are now pavers throughout the garden instead of the small rocks and it was much easier and quieter getting all



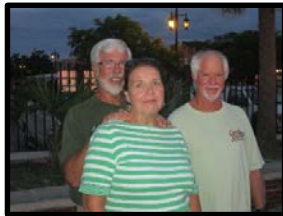
of our stuff into the condo. They had completely redone the condo since the last time we were here with new flooring, newly done bathroom, all new appliances, furniture and bedding. After getting settled and having a few welcome home beers we walked around town a bit. We showed Rob & Donna all of our shortcuts and good bathroom spots (a good thing to know in Key West!).

We made our way down to Mallory Square for the sunset celebration and saw Dominique with his cats and the crazy guy





who jumps through the hoop over the bicycle. The sunset was fabulous!! We enjoyed some of the music along the dock and also enjoyed a little of Caribe as we walked through Caso Cayo Hueso. (Both Cindy & Rob have their CD!) We ended up



down at Schooner Wharf for their Cinco de Mayo party with music by The Pat De Leon Band. The guitar player looked like a Cuban Keith Richards and they were a great band. Our waitress was Melissa and she took good care of us with "Skinny Pirates" and Nachos, Guacamole, and all things Mexican. We stayed for the Hot Pepper Eating Contest...both the women's and the men's. After a very fun filled day and evening we walked back to our little Tree House in Paradise and got home at 1am. (Today we walked 9,308 steps or 4.16 miles)

**Wednesday, 5/6/15** ~ After a great night's sleep, we got up at 9am and had coffee on the deck

(courtesy of the Banyan) and fresh mango. We all got cleaned up and then walked to Fausto's on Fleming Street for provisions. Eddie gave a walking tour as we went along showing Rob & Donna some of the places we had been including his old house at Mile Marker 0 on the corner of Fleming and Whitehead. It is now a bank. We enjoyed a lunch of sandwiches and salads from Fausto's deli on the deck. We next went down Front Street to the Conch Train where we had an excellent tour by Mark on the original car #97 that was built in 1958. This train was based on a Willy's jeep. Mark was lots of fun and he sounded just like Joe Pesci! After the trolley tour, Cindy & Donna did a little shopping for



Kino's sandals and a visor for Donna while the guys enjoyed some \$2 beers. Our next stop was the Little White House where we enjoyed a great tour with George. As we were leaving, another guide was chatting with us and asking us some trivia questions. Eddie said he had a trivia question...who delivered newspapers to the Admiral who lived here in Quarters A? It was Eddie! The guides were very impressed and asked Eddie to write a little in their special tourist book. It has entries from people like Colin Powell, the daughters of some past presidents, etc. We were impressed!



Our next stop was Kelly's Caribbean Grill where we enjoyed happy hour drinks and wings (Thai and Jerk) and Cheese & beer dip. Yummy!! Happy Hour is 4-7pm. We stopped back by the condo to change clothes and then walked down to Blue Heaven to see and hear Keith Ricks. He is now playing with Chris and they are called the Bahama Boys. (Bob is now playing with CRZZBs) Great music! Keith came over to chat with us during his break. Rob & Donna both liked Blue Heaven very much. We did a little shopping in the Blue Heaven gift shop then stopped by the Green Parrot to hear a little of the Ukulele Contest...it was fabulous music! Who knew!! Our next stop was back to Schooner Wharf to catch Raven's last set...she was in rare form tonight and everyone there was having a blast. What a great show! Rob & Donna enjoyed her very much. After closing down the music



at Schooner Wharf, we walked back up to Duval and stopped at Angelina's for pizza and beers around midnight. Angelina's has the best piece in town! The place was packed and Donna found one of the bad bathroom spots there. Good pizza-bad bathrooms! We got home at 1am. (Today we walked 14,184 steps or 6.34 miles)

**Thursday, 5/7/15 ~** We got up around 9am and it is another beautiful day! The weatherman was



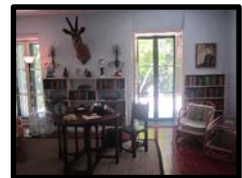
certainly wrong in the forecast! We had coffee and fruit on the deck then we went down to the Tiki Bar called "Cocktails & Foodledeo" for breakfast. Bridget is an excellent bartender and cook. We took a long walk through Truman Annex and then on to the Green Parrot for a beers. We next walked down Whitehead St. to the Hemingway House for our tour. There is a cruise ship in town and the streets are pretty crowded, so we were worried that it would



be a zoo at Hemingway House, but we had a good and funny tour with Bob Smith from Boston as our



guide. At first we were a little skeptical that he might not be good as he looked down at the floor as he talked, but he soon got into it as we started talking with him and he turned out to be really funny. Cindy took lots of photos of the many Hemingway cats. After the tour, we walked



back down Duval Street to the condo where we stopped in for some snacks and then we walked down to Schooner Wharf to hear a little of Michael McCloud's set.

Luckily, we all really enjoy music, so we are sort of following the good musicians around town as much as we can. After Michael's set, we walked along the waterfront and admired all of the beautiful boats there.

America 2.0 is in Key West for just a few more days before she goes back up north for the summer. The guy from America 2.0 told us all lots about her construction...what a beautiful boat...105 feet and the fastest sailboat here, just like the original America which Cindy & Eddie have sailed on before.



Unfortunately, the original boat was destroyed in a fire!



We admired Wyland's wall on the outside of the old waterfront market. The inside of the old market is under construction and it looks like it will be a restaurant or bar with an upper deck...can't wait to see it when it is done! Next we went up to the Tower Bar at Turtle Kraal's for drinks while we watched the big sailboats go out for sunset cruises. We met a very nice couple at the bar who shared their freshly caught fish with us...delicious! Next we went down to the Half Shell Raw Bar for some oysters and beer...tasty but the smallest oysters ever! We strolled down to Dante's and then back along the waterfront docks enjoying the boats. We stopped at Conch Republic Seafood Company for some Skinny Pirates and to enjoy the music. We got home and to bed around 1am. (Today we walked 14,109 steps or 6.32 miles)



**Friday, 5/8/15 ~** We were up at 9am to another beautiful day in paradise. It has been a great trip and we will be sorry to have to leave tomorrow. The original plan was that we would find a place to stay overnight on Saturday up in Key Largo and Al Musico would drive down Sunday morning to go diving with Eddie and Rob while Cindy & Donna drove home. Rob has been checking Priceline on his computer and found that the prices are too high, so we have made a change in plans and we will check out Saturday morning, enjoy Key West till about 3pm, then drive up Key Largo for dinner and home that night.



We had a very pleasant breakfast on the deck then went for a little walk to see more of the sights. We stopped in the Episcopal Church to see their gorgeous stained glass windows. We tried to go up to The Top at the La Concha Hotel to see the views of Key West like we have been doing for over 25 years. When the elevator opened, we were tossed out by a very pompous guy at their new Spa, who told us that they just had to stop letting the riff raff come up here bringing their own drinks and giving "his" hotel a bad reputation. (Of course during his whole little tirade, both Eddie and Rob were holding their beers!) We went to CVS (formerly Fast Buck Freddie's) and then to the Margaritaville Store for some shopping. We went back to the Banyan for some R&R by the pool and on our deck. We had a great lunch by Bridgett at the Cocktails & Foodleedoo, the Banyan's Tiki Bar...great burgers.



After we recuperated a while, we walked down Whitehead St. towards the Green Parrot, stopping to read about the Kapok tree. We pushed our way into the packed Green Parrot for the 5:30 "sound check" concert by the Dylan Altman Band. This was an excellent blues band and the crowd went wild! The lead singer was hammering down double shots of bourbon during the whole set, just like they were water! They were to do another concert at midnight and we all wondered if he was going to make it. We stepped out to go next door to Charlie Mac's for drinks...half price, but uninspiring! Back to the Parrot for the end of the set by the blues band. Then we strolled up Duval Street towards our dinner destination. We stopped at Wyland's gallery and chatted with Chris for a while. The small gallery in the 100 block has closed and everyone is now in this gallery. Stephen Muldoon was not there today but will be back next week. Of course, Wyland wasn't there either, but we all enjoyed looking at all the beautiful art. Chris told Eddie that Wyland is opening up a gallery in Cuba and Chris is going down very soon to check out the area and he may move there.

Next we stopped into a great new little bar called Little Room Jazz Bar...very classy place and we had ½ price delicious Mojitos. The singer was getting ready to start her set at 8pm, but we had to go to dinner before our restaurant closed. (This week Key West is hosting the Songwriters Festival and there are lots



of great song writers in town doing concerts all over town. What a great week to be here!) We continued walking to El Siboney for our Cuban dinner. We enjoyed delicious snapper, pork, black beans, yellow rice, plantains, and a pitcher of Sangria. We had so much that we took home leftovers. We walked home in a food coma and arrived home around 11pm. (Today we walked 9,535 steps or 4.26 miles)

**Saturday, 5/9/15 ~** We awoke to another beautiful morning. We packed up and checked out of our room before 10am. After we put everything into our car, we began our morning adventures. We stopped back by the Little White House so that Eddie could add something more into the special book. He wanted to put in that he once lived at Mile Marker 0. Only two people had entries in the book so far this year, so I guess it really is pretty special!



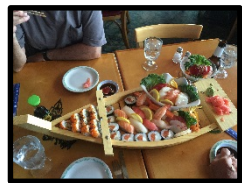
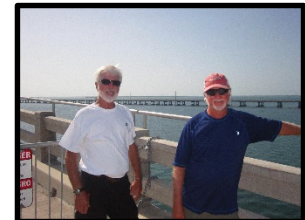
We walked along the waterfront again down to Harpoon Harry's for a huge delicious breakfast. We did a little shopping and then went to visit the Oldest House. It is situated on Duval Street, but we overlook the back courtyard from the front balcony of our condo. From the back courtyard we could see into the Saint Hotel a little at the pool area. Donna and Cindy have been fascinated by the two huge Buddha-like statues that we can see from our front deck and



by the blue lights that are everywhere in the resort. It looks very soothing and Zen-like. We went back to the Tiki Bar at the Banyan for a little R&R and beers. We had one more thing on our list to do while in Key West so we walked back down Duval Street to the Conch Shack to get some of the best conch in town. Meanwhile, they have closed off Duval and Green Streets and have set up a huge stage for a big free outdoor concert by some of the Songwriters. Chris Young is doing a very loud "sound check".



Well satiated and tired, we got in the car and started our trek back up the keys. We stopped at Bahia Honda State Park to walk up the bridge, but we were disappointed that they have closed it off and you can no longer walk all the way to the end where it is cut off. Probably some fool jumped off and killed himself and ruined it for everyone else! We were disappointed, but oh well...



We continued up the keys and stopped at Num Thai Restaurant for our delicious dinner of sushi and Thai food. It was just as delicious as both Rob & Eddie have said. Our trip home through the Everglades did have one scary moment when we came upon a huge alligator in the middle of the road. We were afraid he would be hit by a car, so we flashed the lights, blew the horn, and he finally stalked off of the road. (Today we walked 11,882 steps or 5.31 miles.)

We arrived back in Marco Island and dropped off Rob & Donna around 10pm. The boys will just have enough time to get a few hours of sleep and hop into the car with Al Musico at 7:45am to drive back to Key Largo all over again and go diving tomorrow.



It has been an excellent trip with great weather, good food and drink and even better friends. We all enjoyed many fun adventures and were able to hear some really good music. Eddie and Cindy really enjoyed showing Rob & Donna some of the things that we love so much about Key West. We look forward to a repeat visit very soon.

