

Ed Hertel found the Anchor Inn chips and did the research.

Let's face it; most of the histories of illegal gambling are focused on men, who, for the most part, are "manly men" swimming in bravado and self-confidence (as well as a little stupidity at times). I assumed when I got a new set of chips that I would find the same cavemen-type guy attached to them. Instead, what I found was yet another IOTD first. Today's IOTD takes a look into the gambling lives of our first same-sex couple.

Well, the times, they are a changin'.

I was excited when I found the below chips. Unlike so many illegals, these didn't have the boring hot stamped initials, but lots of information and great designs.



Anchor Inn1att2

They were shipped to:  
Norman Swain  
c/o First National Bank  
Bonita Springs, Florida  
(no date)

Bonita Springs is a small town on the southwestern tip of Florida (just south of Fort Myers). It was here in 1963 that Norm Swain came to town and became a director and president of the local First National Bank. He wasn't alone however. With him came his longtime friend, Robert Franklin Taylor.

The two had met while serving in the navy and later lived together in Amboy, Illinois. In the 1960s, they decided to head south for both warmer climates and better opportunities. In Bonita Springs, Swain found a job at the First National Bank and ran the branch for five years.



Anchor Inn2

(Is it just me, or does the bank look a lot like Fred Flintstone's house?)

Robert Taylor, on the other hand, decided to find work more in line with his hobby of gambling. Whereas both men enjoyed playing poker (both at home and in their frequent trips to Las Vegas), only Robert decided to make an early career out of it. In the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, Robert was the general manager of the local greyhound track called the Naples-Ft. Meyers Kennel Club.



Anchor Inn3

Swain's time at the bank did not last long as he left abruptly in 1968. He claimed it was for "health issues", but an odd 1968 bank robbery around the same time as his retirement might raise some questions.

## Bank burglars get \$87,172

BONITA SPRINGS, Fla. (AP) — The FBI said today that burglars who entered through the roof, then drilled through 14 inches of concrete robbed the First National Bank of Bonita Springs of \$87,172 Friday night. A dozen FBI agents fanned out looking for clues after an officer of the bank discovered the break-in Saturday morning. Special Agent Joseph Santoliana, in charge of the Tampa FBI office, said evidence indicated the intruders visited the bank some days before the robbery and cut through the roof. They then patched the hole, he said, to keep out tell-tale rain, and returned Friday night. Santoliana said over \$1,000 worth of burglary tools were found scattered inside the bank. The stolen money, all in cash, consisted largely of \$10 and \$20 bills, he reported. He described the intruders as "very professional" and said indications were they communicated by walkie-talkie radio with an outside lookout while drilling into the bank vault. Santoliana said it is believed at least three men were involved not including the lookout. Three pairs of gloves were left at the scene. Bank president Norman E. Swain said the loss was fully insured. Bonita Springs is a small southwest Florida community about 20 miles south of Fort Myers.

Anchor Inn4

The sophisticated robbery that was many days in the making must have been an embarrassment. Whether or not this played a role in Swain leaving the job, and the town of Bonita Springs, is not clear.

After leaving the bank, Norm Swain and Robert Taylor moved from Bonita Springs to nearby Estero Island. There they rented a beach house, settled in and opened the Anchor Inn at 414 Crescent St (today's Matanzas Inn). The chips, with the anchor on the reverse, match nicely with restaurant's motif. The boys spared no expense and not only put the name of the club on the chips, but also their own names — Norm and Bob.



Anchor Inn5

(Picture of the Anchor Inn from unknown date)

After forty years together, the couple would finally split, at least temporarily, in 2005 when Swain passed away. Robert would live another nine years before dying in 2014. The two men are interred side-by-side in the Saratoga National Cemetery with markers engraved "Together Forever."

My note: Best we can tell the Anchor Inn chips were purchased roughly 1968. I am taking a guess that they were used in a back room poker game. They are well after what I call the "Era Of The Illegals" which ended in 1961. Many joints had poker games in the 1960's and 70's including The Mustang in Newport KY, which I owned. The games were illegal due to having a liquor license and because of the house rake.