

New Orleans, “Nawlins” to the locals. There is no other place on earth like it. The people are different, they march to their own drummers, the food is different, the air is different. Mardi Gras, if you haven’t been there, you need to experience it at least once before you go on that big chip god in the sky.

I have been there for 2 Mardi Gras and departed at least a dozen poker cruises out of New Orleans. The city and its sights and sounds are amazing. The last time we departed New Orleans was spring 2009. David Spragg, his wife Lori, Teresa cruise tournament director, and I spent a half a day in the Mardi Gras World Museum. Being a history buff, the sights and stories captivated me. I spent the whole cruise riding Spragg about being too cheap to take a cab and I had to walk 5 miles!

Taken in the Mardi Gras World Museum:



Kefauver in 1951 and Kennedy in 1961 both pretty much left the deep-south alone. Maybe they heard the beat from those different drummers. The “Era of The Illegals” went on in New Orleans and Biloxi right up to the bill making riverboats legal there.

PENTHOUSE B – Illegal New Orleans Carpet Joint, Louisiana

The Players.

Carlos "The Little Man" Marcello: **(February 6, 1910 – March 3, 1993)** The “Don” for New Orleans. Nothing went on there without his approval. Over the years he was mentioned in connection with the Kennedy assignation, Cuban Casinos, The Bay of Pigs, Frank Costello, and Meyer Lansky.

Sue : Last name omitted as she still works in the Biloxi casinos and my dear friend.

Wally Taranto: Sue’s husband. Wally was in a wheel chair and dying when I met him. Rest easy, friend.

I started a company called Classic Poker Cruises in 1994.

One day I answered the phone in my office at the Four queens, and a very southern accent, deep woman’s voice said, no introduction-no hello:

“I read in Card Player Magazine, “ya’ll” need a poker shift manager that knows what she’s doing. That’s me!”

I was flying to New Orleans in 2 days to inspect the ship and made arraignments to meet Sue. What a lady! Your hired. A year or so later I was in Biloxi on business and met Wally. The conversation turned to illegal club chips. Big surprise! Wally had been involved with New Orleans/Biloxi illegals for years. He had many stories to tell about the Biloxi and New Orleans illegal clubs. Many overlapped the stories Rip Polous told me in my post about the Red Carpet Club, yesterday.

Wally's story:

Al Iachino was a book maker associated with Carlos Marcello in New Orleans. He took a bust in the early 80's and kept his mouth shut. After he served his time he was given the go ahead to open a joint of his own. He took in Wally Taranto as a partner and opened up The Penthouse B on Severn St in New Orleans.

It had two BJ tables and a baccarat table. Operated from 1986 to 1988. It was a very plush club (Carpet Joint, in local lingo) for invited guests only. The smallest credit line handed out was \$5,000. The only way to get up to it was by a private elevator. I do not know why there is an & between the P and the B on the chip. Wally does not remember either. There were other chips used there also. Wally did not have them.

The chips were distributed on the LgSq mold by Jones Brothers in New Orleans. Jones closed down in 1988. They are LgSq mold, clay compression molded chips made at the Burt Co in Maine. Burt was sold to Chipco in 88. Chipco sold the old molds to Atlantic Standard in 1988 or 99. I am not sure of the date that Louisiana legalized riverboats, so this could have been one of the last of the New Orleans illegal clubs.

