

Once again Ed Hertel takes us to Texas and puts ID's to previously thought to be UFC's. I've more than likely seen these chips in trader books or junk boxes over the years and passed on them as I had enough UFC's. *vbg* I now need them. Cough them up if you have traders. *vbg*

Take it away, Ed.

The below chips were found around fifteen years ago in Galveston, Texas, along with other known chips from the area. That they were probably local to Galveston was obvious. Unfortunately, without a lead or a chip manufacturer record, finding a good match was probably going to be a long shot.



It just so happens that a fellow illegal collector, John Winslow, had ties in Galveston and some of his older friends had firsthand knowledge about the historical gambling action. One day, while showing his buddy some of his chips, John's friend spotted the "JBJ" chip and said, "Hey, look at that. One of Jo Jo's chips." He didn't have much more to say, but added that the full name was Jo Jo Balch and he used to be a pimp in Galveston.

For some reason, I put that information in my notes and completely forgot about it. Fast forward to December last year and the passing of Frank Chalfant here in Houston. As an avid Galveston collector, Frank had a set of these chips in his unknowns. Doug Smith was asked by Frank's relatives to sell his collection and reached out to me for some history on the clubs. When the unknown JBJ chips came up, I decided to dust off the information and see if I could discover anything new about this Jo Jo Balch character.

Jo Jo Balch's time in Galveston was not long, but it was certainly memorable. Right off the bat I was able to verify that Balch was indeed involved in the sex trade and the city was none too proud of it. Galveston had always been a city of vice – prostitution, gambling, liquor, you name it – but by the 1950s, city officials were starting to tire of their seedy reputation. In May 1953, an effort was made to clean up one very specific corner of the city's smut that resulted in the round-up of the city's "male madams." Jo Jo Balch was arrested, along with two other of the city's bigger pimps, at one of his establishments located at 2709 Postoffice Street. The famous Postoffice Street was Galveston's red light district which was lined with casinos and brothels that catered to the roughest patrons. This particular address was for the uninspiring named "Twenty Seven O Nine Club" (between the "Twenty Seven O Five Club" and the "Twenty Seven Ten Club" – think I'm kidding?)

AVENUE E OR POST-
OFFICE—Contd
2705△Twenty Seven-O-
Five Club
2709△Twenty Seven-O-
Nine Club
2710△Twenty-Seven-Ten
Club

Evidence that this raid was a targeted attack on male pimps was obvious. Despite Postoffice Street having brothels up and down it, only the three places owned by men were raided. The women in town were free to carry on with business as usual.

The newly elected Police Commissioner and mayor both made it their aim to drive Balch out of town, and it would be their focus for the next few years. In August 1953, Jo Jo Balch was indicted in a suit against the Rialto Club at 416 25th St. The Rialto Club had been around since the 1940s and had a reputation for skewing the law whenever possible. During the 1950s, Balch used the upstairs of the club as his brothel and casino while his partners Omar and Helen Coates ran the illegal bar on the ground floor.

The harassment would continue and the animosity would rise. In 1956, tempers finally flared between Balch and a Galveston detective that resulted in a fight. Although nobody was hurt, the detective was given a short suspension and Balch walked free. This was the final slap in the face to Mayor George Clough who took it upon himself to bring down Balch once and for all.

In April 1956, Mayor Clough issued a “pick-up” order for Jo Jo with explicit instruction that he should be scooped up, driven out of town and banished from ever entering Galveston again. Clough’s statement, “I don’t think we have any room here for a white slave trafficker” resonated with the law abiding citizens, but not with the city attorney. Fearing that the banishment would violate Balch’s civil right, he refused to sign the order and told the mayor he would have to find another way.

And so he did indeed. One month later, Mayor Clough took the unprecedented action of not only ordering a raid on Balch’s Rialto Club, but actually participating in it. (He even went so far as to offer the arrested ladies a ride to the court house in his limousine!)

Mayor Directs, Participates In Mid-Afternoon 'House' Raid

A surprise mid-afternoon raid by Mayor George Roy Clough on a suspected bawdy house Tuesday resulted in nine arrested women.

The mayor said he personally ordered, supervised, and participated in the raiding party, and brought several of the arrested women to police headquarters in his limousine. His name was listed among the arresting officers on the police books.

Almost immediately after reaching police headquarters Mayor Clough ordered a sergeant-of-police and a detective to find and arrest two men he identified as Jo-Jo Balch and T. J. Parker.

Run Out of Town

Clough said both men had been "run out of town" in the past, and they had returned here, and reportedly were operating a brothel.

He said Parker reportedly was seen in town Monday in "questionable company."

When asked how he knew Balch was in town, he replied, "Balch is

the questionable company" Parker was seen with.

Clough said he "forgot" to mention to Police and Fire Commissioner Walter Johnson or Police Chief W. J. Burns he planned "a little surprise" for the suspected prostitutes.

Bonds of \$250

Eight women, including two maids, were released from custody after posting \$250 bonds, and one other, Ann Thomas, paid a \$100 fine.

Clough's party, consisting of Police Sgt. Russell McManus, and Patrolmen Jimmy Brooks and Tony Cifu, also arrested Mickey Davis at the Rainbow Rooms, 116½ 20th street, who was fined \$100.

The fines for the women were set at \$50 rather than the customary \$25. The mayor explained, "It's summertime, raiding's hotter work."

A slot machine was seized during the raid, and a man identified by police as Jesse Lopez was charged with permitting intermittent gambling on his premises. He paid a \$100 fine.

The tide had definitely turned for both Jo Jo Balch and Galveston as a whole. Within a few years, the entire city would be shut down in a crushing series of raids in 1957. Pretty soon, characters like Jo Jo Balch migrated elsewhere to ply their trade, leaving Galveston a quieter, and some would say a less exciting, town.

Ed has done a "great" job researching UFC's for the illegal chip collectors in our hobby. Everyone owes him a big "ATTA Boy" or "Way To Go Ed." *vbg*