

Ed has been a busy guy. *vbg* Six more chips he has given us information and or "Club" names for. If you collect illegal chips you can't ask for more. But I will ask. I still have roughly 1000 chips without a "Club" name. *vbg*

IOTD – Texas – Miscellaneous

Today's IOTD is another clean-up of "Not Quite Right for Prime Time" chips. They are corrections to old attributions and ones which don't quite have enough for a full IOTD write-up. Today we take a tour of my home (and favorite) state of Texas!



BBB1att2

(chip also known in red)

Sent to:

E.G. Bass

Capital Club

San Antonio, TX

1935

My note: I need the yellow chip. Cough it up if you have a trader. *vbg*

There is some good information on that card, but I'm a stickler for completeness and I only see one of the B's from the chip on that card. I'm going to have to do a little more digging.

The first B is obvious – E.G. Bass, who ordered the chips. Everett Glenn Bass was indeed part owner in the Capital Club and a known gambler. Later, in 1940, he would be arrested for having gambling equipment at the Kit Kat Klub in San Antonio.

The second B belonged to his older brother Howard Bass. In September 1935, Howard would take the booking when the Capital Club, now identified as being on Soledad St near Houston Av, was raided and open gambling found to be on the premises.

WEST ARRESTS 15 IN RAID UPON CLUB

Fifteen men were arrested in a raid by Sheriff Albert West Jr. and deputies on the Capital Club, on Soledad Street near Houston, Wednesday night. West said he found dice and card games in progress.

Howard Bass was booked for operating and maintaining a place for gaming and released on \$200 bond. The others were booked for gaming and released on \$50 bond each. Deputies Howard Dickens and Tom Cook assisted West.

BBB2att2

I discovered the third B in a write-up about a December 1935 Committee to investigate illegal gambling in San Antonio. Sheriff Albert West Jr (same one as above) was brought in to answer questions about corruption in the police department. The hearing was quite the spectacle as it started off with the Chief Texas Ranger Captain slugging the Bexar County Deputy Sheriff. It seems there was bad blood between the two and after the sheriff was heard bad-mouthing the current governor, the Ranger captain took it upon himself to defend the honor of his boss. The main issue of the investigation was payoffs and corruption sparked by the failed attempt on a raid at the Top O' The Hill Club outside of Fort Worth. It seems that the club was tipped off and the Rangers wanted to know by whom. They know gambling was going on there, as one of the police witnesses said "he knew crowds didn't gather there for a knitting bee."

During the Committee hearings a few witnesses were called to the stand including some of the city's club owners. Among them was Ben Ruby, proprietor of the Texas Club and part owner of the Olmos Club, as well as Al Bliss of the Capital Club.

Chips from Ben Ruby's clubs:



BBB3att2

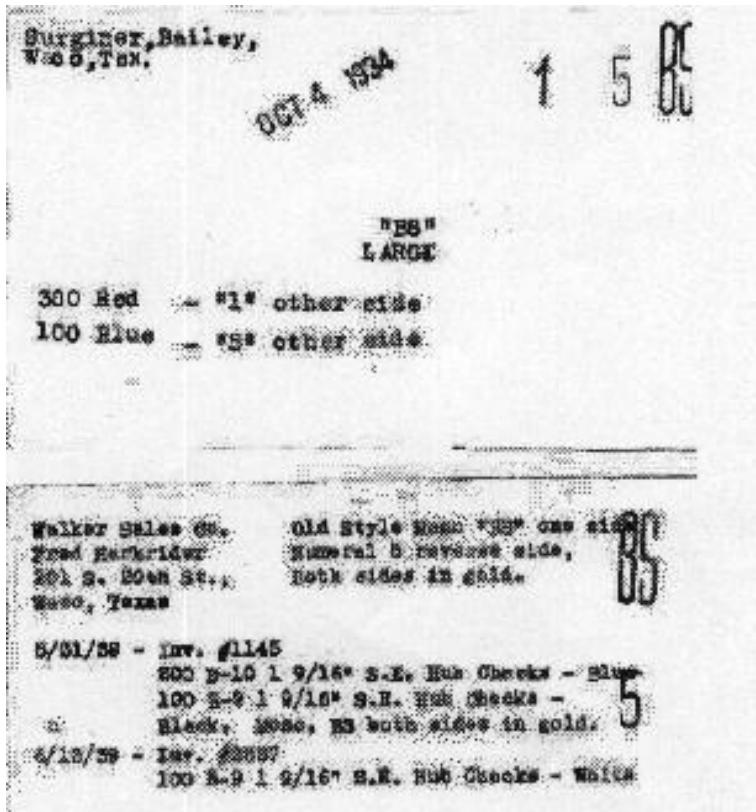
My note: I need the Olmos Club chip. Cough it up if you have traders.

Although the committee would not ultimately stop gambling, it was successful in ferretting out my last B from the chips. So for the Capital Club we have the three owners; E.G. Bass, Howard Bass and Al Bliss.



BBB4att2

Sent to:
Bailey Surginer
Waco, TX
1934-1939
After research: Bailey's Place



BBB5att2

At the time the chips were ordered, Bailey Surginer was living in a local hotel and had a domino parlor at 199 South 4th Street called "Bailey's Place". (Real original.)

The number on the back of the chip is "1" and probably stood for a dollar amount. I have a hard time believing this, but I was once told that the reason clubs didn't put denominations on their chips is so in the event they were raided they could claim they weren't playing for real stakes. I'm not sure that would hold much weight in the court of law.



BBB6att2

For years this has been in my Galveston books as the Gay Kat. It wasn't particularly troublesome and for years I never questioned it. Recently however I have started doubling back and looking into some of the

more suspect attributions. To understand my concern, you need to go back in time about ten years when chip market for illegals was booming. It seems hard to believe now, but there was a time when finding a few dozen chips was not enough to fill demand. It was during these times when we started seeing new chips being attributed to clubs on the flimsiest of evidence. Chip monograms were forced into working with clubs and owners names (even if the middle initial didn't work!) and chips sold with a good story about being found in the club owner's attic. This was a time of greed and misinformation which shadow still darkens the truth to this day.

Luckily, for some of these chips, we are able to double back and show conclusively where these chips belong.

Sent to:

Garland Kerr

Crown Bar

Fort Worth, TX

Orders for 1934, 1936, 1937 and 1938

Clearly the "GK" originally stood for Garland Kerr, owner of the Crown Bar. The Gay Kat in Galveston did indeed have gambling (and no identified chips), but it wouldn't exist for 20 years after the chips were ordered and the owner was not Kerr, but a husband and wife named Goolsby. As always, it's impossible to prove a negative, but there is no need to implement special pleading to get these chips to the Gay Kat.

It is unfortunate because the history of the Gay Kat has proved more fruitful than the Crown Bar in Fort Worth. I have confirmed that Garland Kerr did indeed own the Crown Bar for that period, but nothing else. He ordered chips four times which indicates he was either using them a lot, growing, or losing them (usually in raids). There is probably a story there; I just haven't found it yet.



BBB7att2

(also comes in a dark blue \$25 chip)

My note: I need both colors of this chip. Cough them up if you have traders. *vbg*

Sent to:
N.D. Bolen
908 Greer
Fort Worth, TX
1974

I can hear Gene now... "1974 is not the Era of Illegals!" and yes I would agree. When I bought the chips back in 2006 they were claimed to be from a place called the "B&B Club" in Fort Worth. They were modern(ish) chips for sure, but they were Texas and I can't help loving my home state and its history. It wasn't until very recently that I actually looked to see if I could turn anything up.

My note: Just because what I call the "Era Of The Illegals" was over does not mean that gambling stopped. *vbg* Gambling has gone on since the beginning of time and I expect it to go until the end of time. Was Eve the first gambler when she took a bite from the apple? *vbg* Was the serpent the first Illegal Club Owner? *vbg*

Think about it:
The Garden of Eden = The casino
Adam= The Mark
Eve= The B-girl hustling the "Mark"
The Serpent = Club Owner
God = The Texas Rangers

Our first run in with a Mr. Neil Douglas Bolen goes way back, almost two decades before the B&B chips, to 1956 when he found himself in a little situation in Reno:

Slot Machine Spooner Lands Behind Bars

Television Repair Man From Texas Is in Trouble

Spooning slot machines in a fashionable downtown casino landed Neil Douglas Bolen, a 38-year-old television repairman from Fort Worth, Tex., behind bars yesterday morning.

Police were called to the casino where a pit boss and the floor manager had the "spooner" in custody. Both said Bolen was observed in the act but nabbed before he had realized any profit from his illegal operation.

Investigating officers found a spooning device in Bolen's coat sleeve and a pair of pliers in his pocket when the arrest was made. Bolen told officers the pliers were used to make minor adjustments in his spooning device.

Bolen was released after posting \$500 cash bail to guarantee his appearance in municipal court to face the charges of cheating a gambling device.

BBB8aat

Spooning is a technique where the cheater inserts an object into the slot machine's coin counting mechanism prohibiting the machine from being able to count how many coins it pays out. A good spooner can empty a slot machine with the smallest of wins. It's not surprising that Bolen decided to forfeit his bail and beat it out of town before his hearing. (I hear those Nevada boys in the 1950s didn't take kindly to cheats.)

Fast forward to 1976 (two years after the B&B chips) and Neil Bolen, now 59 years old, is again found on the wrong side of the law. Police raided his home and found it chocked full of gambling equipment. It seems Mr. Bolen, claiming to be a "retired gambler", was loaning his equipment to a charity for a Las Vegas Night event. Seems innocent enough. The problem is, owning gambling equipment in Texas is a felony.

One thing you should know about Texas is that they are tough on gambling. We'll fight to the death to keep our rights to carry machine guns and drink hard liquor... and heaven help you if you tell us to slow our driving down. But gambling... no sir. That is just one things God loving Texans will not stand for!

I joke (sort of), but Texas has always been ultra conservative when it comes to legalizing gambling and here in 1970s Fort Worth, Bolen was finding himself on the business end of a very gray area of the law. But before we say "Poor Bolen" let's look at a few facts. Neil Bolen did have a reputation for some shady things going back twenty years. Also, there were other people who rented out gambling equipment and when asked if those others would get the same treatment, the police chief said they wouldn't move on anyone else without a complaint. Although he wouldn't admit they raided Bolen because of a complaint, it's probably the case.

So why would someone complain about Bolen in particular? Maybe it had something to do with the equipment that was seized: "12 blackjack tables, two chuck-a-luck tables, a roulette wheel, one large crap table, four small craps tables and a hundred boxes of chips, playing cards and dice." But then the rest raises an eyebrow... "two large electromagnets and an electromagnet control box."

There you go. What charity-renting straight shooter has large electromagnets mixed in with his gambling equipment? No doubt the complaint he received was from someone noticing the roulette balls were rolling funny.

The article goes on to say:

When the seizure was made, police said Bolen's equipment was rigged in addition to be being illegal. Police said the gaming wheels were rigged with electromagnets and other electronic devices and said poker cards were marked.

BBB9att2

Bolen denied the allegations, but it's tough to refute. His equipment was gone and his reputation took a shot.

I suppose the two chips I have are just a couple from the 100 boxes (10,000 chips) seized. I wonder where the rest are hiding? An article at the time tells of \$1, \$5 and \$25 chips, so somewhere out there is a \$1 chip I haven't seen.

Who the other "B" on the chips was I do not know, but whether you believe they are "illegals" is not in question according to the Fort Worth police.

My note: I have other chips I suspect was used in so called charity gambling in Arlington, Texas in 1983. Keep up the good work Ed. You are doing a great service for our hobby.

