

This is “Illegal Of The Day” #317. Ed Hertel found the M in Circle chips, did the research, and wrote the article.

Today is another first for an IOTD in that part of the story happens even before the territory was a state. Today we travel to the far north and visit Alaska.



Chips sent to:  
W.T. Malcolm  
Anchorage, AK  
1953

Alaska had been a part of the United States since 1867 when America purchased it from Russia (for the price of \$0.02/acre) but would remain an untamed territory until 1959 when it would be voted in as our 49<sup>th</sup> state. Before statehood, the terrain wasn't the only thing that was wild as gamblers flocked to the great north to take advantage of what was believed to be soft regulation that mimicked the Old West of yesteryear.

One of these men, William T. Malcolm, thought Anchorage would be the perfect place to start his post-war career. Born in 1918, Malcolm was raised in New Mexico where he was an exceptional athlete at a local military institute. He served in Hawaii during World War II and moved to Alaska as soon as he was released from action.

A geologist by trade, William Malcolm thought the wide open Alaska lands, with its immense deposits of minerals, would be the perfect fit for his expertise. Little did he know that something else would catch his fancy and determine his profession for decades – night clubs.

Right from the start, William Malcolm was in the thick of it in Anchorage. When the chips were ordered, he owned the New Reno Club and was at the forefront of controversy in Anchorage. The use of so called “B-girls” in Anchorage clubs was widespread and the local politicians were growing weary of the increasing complaints. “B-girls”, or bargirls, were commissioned by the bars to “entertain” customers in all sorts of ways. Their main goal was to get the lonely men to buy them expensive drinks (usually with little to no actual alcohol in them) and run up a large bar tab. Stories of “other” services were also common.



Typical B-girl mugshot

I'm sure Gene is well acquainted with the B-girl scene from his days as a Newport club owner!

My note:

When I had the Mustang in Newport, KY, 1970's we had B-girls. The Mustang was a red neck, go-go girl joint. We had at least 1 fight a night. \*vbg\* The "bouncers" earned their pay. \*vbg\* Go-Go girls doubled as B-girls. B-girls job was to get customers to buy them drinks at inflated prices usually double or triple the regular price and most had little or no alcohol. Sometimes the "mark" would pay as much as \$100 for a drink. B-girls got 50% of what they sold. No sex was allowed but what a girl did after work was her own business.

A new bill passed in 1957 was the setting for a battle that would last years and the first salvo was fired at Malcolm and his New Reno Club. With two complaints from soldiers at a nearby base, the licensing board denied the New Reno Club its liquor license on the grounds that the club was using B-girls to bilk its customers. A fight ensued until finally the soldiers, for some reason, changed their minds. When the appeal was finally heard, William Malcolm submitted a new affidavit from the complainant saying he "acted foolishly" and that "during my stay at the New Reno Club the conduct of the management was not out of place." What caused this change of attitude can only be guessed.

Malcolm's next venture in the Anchorage nightclub scene was at the Pink Garter Club on Seward Highway in early 1959. The club was very popular and, even before William took over, had quite a colorful past.

The Pink Garter Club was originally owned by Dominic Ianniti who, in addition to having a long police record, was also known around town as being a gambler and a purveyor of shady deals. One person

who didn't appreciate how he operated was a local sportsman named Frank Marrone. Frank purchased a San Francisco bar from Ianniti with the guarantee of police protection for all its illegal activities. When Marrone arrived in California, his bar was immediately closed and himself arrested. The protection never existed.

Soon after Marrone returned to Alaska, Dominic Ianniti was shot dead and it didn't take long before the police made an arrest. The six-day trial was full of stories, excuses and weak alibis, but in the end Marrone was found guilty of second-degree murder and handed a twenty-year sentence.

Marrone's appeal is actually pretty interesting and his case has been the subject of much legal debate. Since the case started prior to statehood, he was tried under the US District Court. However, his conviction in April 1959 was three months after Alaska became the 49<sup>th</sup> state. Therefore, Marrone claimed that he should have instead been tried by an Alaskan state court and the US District Court did not have the authority. As the legal minds worked it out, Marrone was freed on bond.

And what does a convicted murderer do while out on bond? If you guessed travel to California and kidnap a Mexican gambling czar, you would be right! Marrone's mark was the owner of the Tijuana's Agua Caliente race track, and after receiving the \$200,000 ransom, Marrone and his crew were immediately identified and arrested. He would add another lengthy sentence to his Alaska one that had since been affirmed on appeal.



Agua Caliente Race Track, Tijuana, Mexico

All that was kind of long aside from our man William Malcolm, but getting back to him now, we find him as owner of the Pink Garter and back in the sights of the local law. In July 1959, Anchorage decided to test the teeth in its new anti B-girl law by raiding four of the city's popular clubs. The Pink Garter, along with the Open House, Guys and Dolls and the Last Chance Club were all raided and 26 women and 10 men arrested.

If the lack of gambling is a problem from you, then the September 1959 raid on the Pink Garter Club should put your mind at ease. In it, Malcolm and his partner Harley Poole were booked and their craps table confiscated.



William Malcolm would continue to own clubs in the Anchorage area, including the Idle Hour, the Alibi Club and the Stars.

In his later life, he would give up the night club business and go back to his roots as a geologist. He became an oil lease broker and shareholder in a coal mining company. He would pass away in 1984 at the age of 66. Although not a native of Anchorage, William Malcolm became a fixture and a pioneer in its underworld.