

# Bruce Landau

CH-#002

1945 - 2002

by Archie Black

The chip-collecting world was stunned early morning on Friday, December 20<sup>th</sup> when they turned on their computers to learn that one of the pillars of the hobby had collapsed the night before while attending a company Christmas party with his co-workers. By the time the para-medicals, after being summoned to the party via a 911 call, had reached the restaurant where the party was being held ... Bruce was already gone.

A mighty Oak has fallen in the heavily wooded forest of chip collectors. This oak tree was so huge that its roots, branches and leaves affected untold numbers of nearby trees of all sizes. Much older trees, younger trees, and even small saplings were dramatically affected by the falling of such a huge dependable mainstay of the forest. The upper branches on this tree were so high above all the trees surrounding it, that it could be seen from as far away as the outer edges of the forest.

This huge tree did not fall unnoticed. The shock waves that trembled the forest floor were felt from coast to coast ... hundreds and thousands of miles away.

During its lifetime, this tree bore many acorns which dropped from its sturdy limbs, from which sprang up



hundreds of smaller trees and provided much nourishment in the way of food for many creatures scurrying about the forest.

Bruce Landau was like that mighty tree. His strong family roots that absorbed nourishment from his wife Eileen and sons Jason and Mike, and daughter, Jodi, supported the rest of the tree from which we as collectors benefited from Bruce's strength, friendship and camaraderie. Bruce was the proverbial tree of knowledge. His sharing of anything and every-

thing he knew about chipping is the standard that we should all try to emulate. Many adjectives have been used to describe Bruce. Caring giving, generous, humorous, affable, gregarious, gentle, smart, enthusiastic, positive, humble, etc.

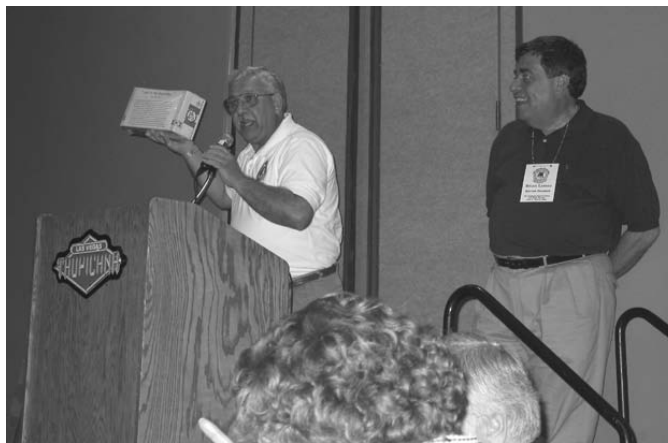
Bruce only got one shot at life after his mother, Edith, gave birth to him in December 1945. Most adults in their middle years usually get a wake up call before they exhaust their final breath. Single; double; triple; even quadruple bypass operations are not uncommon in today's medical miracle world. People recovering from these serious operations usually go on with their activities and resume productive healthy lives.

Unfortunately for Bruce, he never got that second chance. He was instantly taken from us as soon as he fell to the floor during that fateful day on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002 after walking off the dance floor with his ever-present wife of 35 years, Eileen. In spite of a couple of doctors' presence at the company Christmas party Bruce and Eileen were attending, they were unable to revive Bruce's failed heart.

Bruce was the company President of Tamron USA, Inc., one of the leading companies in the photo industry

at the time of his untimely death. He accepted the position of National Sales Manger and Advertising Manager of Bogen Photo Corp. In 1988 (the same year that CC&GTCC was organized) at 43 years of age he was promoted to Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Bogen. He was with Bogen until he went to work at Tamron and assumed the position of Vice President in August 1999. In January of 2000, Bruce was named President of the Tamron USA Company.

Bruce Landau was my inspiration to forming what we know today as the Casino Chips & Gaming Tokens Collectors Club. Bruce, along with Janice O'Neal, Michael Knapp, Earl Donley, Howard Herz, and a small handful of others, were simply a few chip collectors who regularly corresponded with each other during the late 1980's. We thought that we were the only crazy people in the world who would not cash in chips and tokens from our visits to casinos but instead take our treasures back home with us to add to our collections. It wasn't too long afterward that we discovered other people who were as



Chuck Tomarchio presents Bruce with the "Shoe Box"

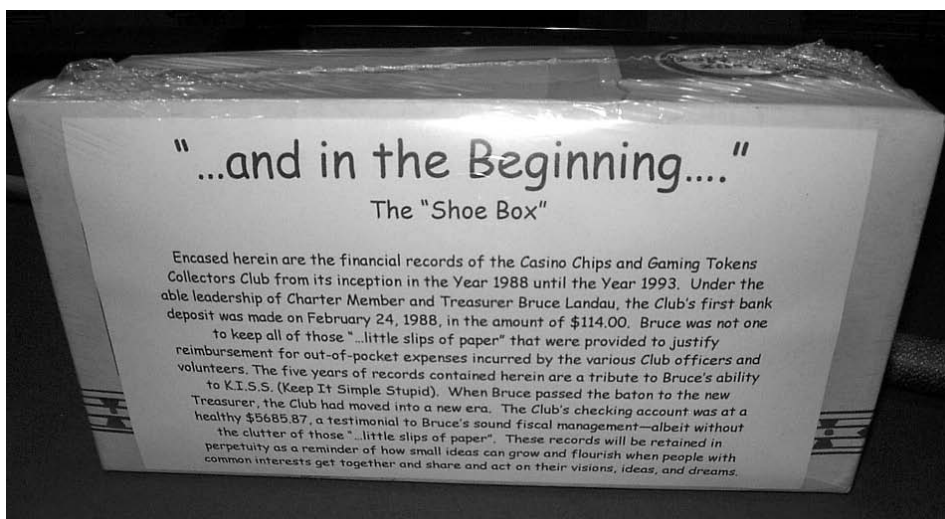
crazy as we were. When it was suggested that a club be formed in 1988, it was no accident that Bruce became Charter Member #002 after agreeing to serve as Treasurer. He was there from day one, ever the optimist, all the time pushing for a nationwide club of chip and token collectors.

Bruce's stories are legendary. Like when Bruce used to trade chips with other collectors simply by measuring up his stacks of chips on the kitchen table against whomever he happened to be trading with. No attention was paid to the denominations... just the evenness of the tops of the stacks. Of course that was a different time and different circum-

stances that we knew back then. Chuck Tomarchio, Bruce's successor as Treasurer, at the club's 2002 convention annual banquet presented Bruce with the very shoe box that Bruce had stored all the receipts and bills and scrap paper from his Treasurer's days for the club. After Bruce's terms of office were over, he continued to be active in the club by serving as the convention's Auction Chairman. His quick-wit and

charming smile would win over the most grumpiest of floor bidders. Bruce had the uncanny ability to predict in advance how much the prices realized for the annual convention sales gross. Usually Bruce's guestimate was within a few hundred dollars. During the break at one of the earliest convention auctions held at the old Aladdin Hotel & Casino, Bruce leaned over to me and said, "*Archie, I can't believe the prices these chips are bringing. We're rich!*" Of course he was referring to the value of chips in our personal collections that few of us had really thought to be overly valuable at the time... and that ended the trading by the stack scenario I described earlier.

From chippers early on, to the most recent chippers just joining the club, virtually all are eager to tell stories about how Bruce was the first person they traded chips with, and how generous he was with them. He truly loved people... not only people in the hobby, but his co-workers have nothing but glowing words to say about Bruce. Bruce was a unique person with a unique personality. Men like Bruce Landau come along only once in a lifetime. He was universally recognized as a man of tremendous integrity and generosity.



The "Shoe Box"

Bruce was a dependable, hard-working, mainstay of the Atlantic City Chapter, where he also served as Auctioneer ... a job he loved to do. Bruce always had time for the newcomers who eagerly solicited his advice ... as did the veteran collectors as well, who would seek out Bruce's opinion on values of rare or seldom seen chips. When I would ask Bruce for a price on one of his chips... Bruce would say something like; "well, I normally would get \$100 bucks, but for you ... make it \$65. I found out later that Bruce did that with almost everybody... that was part of Bruce's congeniality trait. Always the smile, always the laugh, life was just a bunch of fun for Bruce.

His wife Eileen was always at Bruce's side, like they were joined at the hip. Eileen told me at her surprise 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party that Bruce threw for her at Trump Marina, that she and Bruce were soul-mates ... and their deep love for each other was obvious everywhere they went. They were an inseparable couple. Bruce and Eileen celebrated their 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary last month on the same day of their oldest son Jason's wedding. Their other son, Michael, is engaged to be married in

the summer of 2003. Their daughter Jodi is married and has a 1-year old daughter.

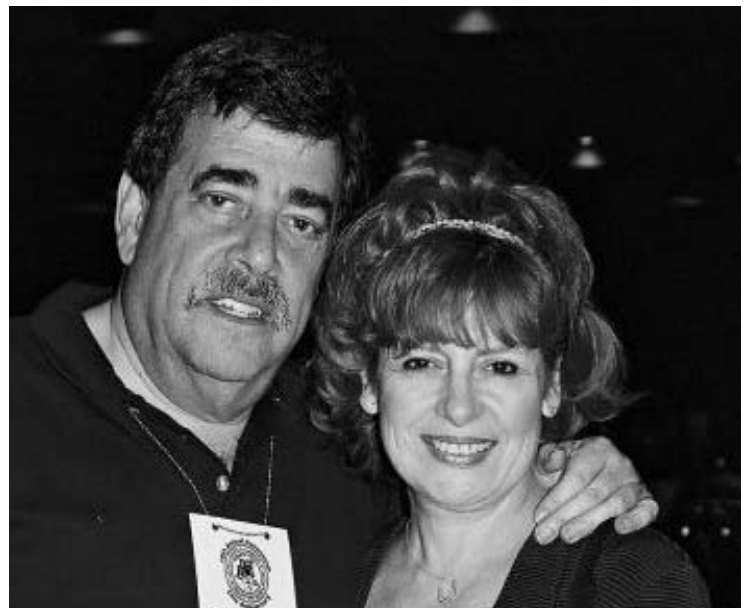
Bruce became involved in several disputes among club members in which he served in the role of peacemaker to resolve differences between members... not in any official club capacity, but simply as one who took it upon himself to make peace among chippers. He had a deep love of the hobby, and did not like anyone taking advantage of anyone else and encouraged everybody to get along with each other.

Bruce and another well-known departed club member, Gene Grossblatt, were the motivating forces behind initiating the CC&GTCC Hall of Fame... without question, the highest honor the club can bestow upon individual members for meritorious service. Gene and Bruce were responsible for setting up and administering the HOF program, and when Gene passed away, it became the sole responsibility of Bruce to continue the program. Bruce Landau; always the un-assuming guy to give recognition to others, would not take any credit for himself. Now Bruce is gone.

Bruce Landau died just a few days short of his 57<sup>th</sup> birthday ... far too young for a man who just became a grandfather a year ago, and unfortunately his new grand daughter, Emily, will not remember him as she grows up. The hobby will never be the same without Bruce. Bruce was robbed of his quality adult years in the prime of his life as he looked forward to a well deserved retirement with his beautiful high school sweetheart, Eileen ... and the hobby was robbed of a man who gave us his all ... and who had so much more to offer.

We are all saddened by the sudden loss of this giant of a man. However, life goes on in the forest. Hopefully, some of the seedlings that Bruce has nurtured and guided will grow to be huge oaks in their own way during their own years growing in the forest.

Rest in peace my good friend. Those of us who were a part of your life will always remember you and your infamous shoebox. There will never be another tree quite like Bruce.



by Howard W. Herz

More than anything else, Bruce Landau was a friend. He was also a friend to a hobby that I have enjoyed for more than 37 years. My first encounter with Bruce was more than twenty year ago when he visited my store in Reno, Nevada. Enthusiastic is almost too limiting a word for Bruce and chips. Fanatical would be better, but only if you delete any negative connotations. Bruce Landau was the world ambassador for the chip hobby. He lived and breathed chips when he was visiting Nevada or any other state on his frequent business trips for his employer, Bogan Photographic. Bruce loved his hobby

and he actively sought out other collectors. He was the original chip hound and would search every nook and cranny in Nevada for his quarry. The passion that Bruce had was not just limited to chips, but to his family and friends. He was a person who gave his hobby the fullest measure of his time, but could be counted on to always have a picture of his children and grand child to show his friends.

For as long as the CC&GTCC has had auction sales, Bruce Landau has helped to organize and conduct those sales. His support of the club

from its founding to the present time is one of the reasons that the CC&GTCC has been a success. As the club's first treasurer, Bruce served the membership faithfully. As the ambassador for chipping to the world, Bruce exceeded anything and anyone I have known in 37 years of collecting.

Bruce Landau will be missed greatly. He will be missed because he contributed far beyond what most of the membership would or could do.

I will miss Bruce.

by Mel Jung

I remember sitting with Bruce just after Gene Grossblatt died. We reflected the same philosophy, that it was more important to celebrate life to the fullest, while alive, than mourn after a death. And that's why the "Brockway Celebration" got its start. Bruce's favorite place "out West" was Lake Tahoe where he and Eileen spent time with us each Spring at Northshore's, Brockway Springs. Gene and Bruce were inseparable as chippers. After Gene's wife, Arlene, passed away, and his bout with cancer was more threatening; Bruce suggested we have a party for him at Brockway. So we planned a week of non-stop chip runs and gaming around northern Nevada, in April 2000. It would end with a Saturday meeting for the Nor-Cal chapter when Bruce would finally speak publicly on his "*Sale of the Century*".

Before that, I want to tell you about one of Bruce's favorite pranks. When we drove down to Reno and met Gene at the airport, he came



"Sale of the Century" Award

through the gate with a 20ish young lady he had met on the plane that wanted to make sure "this nice man was meeting someone who would take care of him". Evidently Gene had conned this "chickie" into taking care of him during the flight. She also needed a ride to the lake. It was during the ride to the lake that Bruce thought it would be fun to fool all our wives and guests waiting to greet Gene at the condo. He asked Gene's

companion to pose as Gene's "girlfriend" from Los Angeles. When they went through the door, she was introduced, and Bruce whispered to everyone that she was staying with Gene; and we could sense their shock. It wasn't until it was time to unpack bags that we told them the truth, and our wives were ready to kill us. That was one of Bruce's finest moments with Gene.

#### The Sale of the Century

The only way I could get Bruce to publicly relate his finest hour in chipping, "The Sale of the Century", was to threaten to write an embellished article....without his editing. To avoid this, he agreed to give a short talk about it before the entire Nor-Cal chapter. On a bright beautiful Saturday afternoon in the Brockway conference center overlooking the lake, a large crowd of chippers heard Bruce speak humbly of his "deal" with Jerry Wall. For years, Jerry had asked to see the renowned "Landau" collection, and stayed overnight with

them to view the collection in Suffern, New York. After many refusals to sell, Jerry demanded Bruce to name a price. Over the years, more than a few of us had asked if he would sell, and he consistently refused. This time, in exasperation, Bruce candidly said, "Half a million bucks!". Surprisingly, Jerry said, "Sold!!" Months later, after some turmoil and numerous mediations, the final amount passed was \$518,000.....for around 5000 chips!!! Not only would this be the highest price paid for a collection, we both agreed that it would stand forever. From then on, when we would sit around, I could just grin at him and say, "a half mil, Bruce!" and we

couldn't stop chuckling. Nothing would ever top the joy we always got out of discussing "chip deals" and the Wall deal was always the most fun. He sincerely felt Jerry "stole 'em" and I would never give him satisfaction and agree.

For years, I kidded chippers that Bruce and I met digging through the same garbage cans in Reno's old Douglas Alley. The only part that was true was that some of those old Reno/Sparks "sawdust joints" were very much like garbage cans. When I would ask casino owners, pawn shops, and old timers in gaming for old chips; the reply often was "some big guy from New York was just here

and got 'em already!".... That had to be Bruce. We shared the same routes scouting for obsolete chips and playing the casinos when new chip racks came out. That was well before 1990 and later days when chips sold out of the "cage". Well before "LE's, slabbing, E-bay, and the net", you just "chipped" and it was fun. And that's the way I'll always celebrate Bruce Landau. Chuckling, ..... "a half-million bucks Bruce...!!!!" Bruce!.....what a guy. With a tear in my eye, I feel he's still chuckling with me. \*



Eileen, Bruce and Lisa Jung