

Pody Poe: From Tinhorn Gambler to Kingpin of Organized Crime

Written by Administrator

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By Catherine Johnson, Grant Books, 2005, in print.

Review: What can be said about Oklahoma City retired gambler Tracy Coy "Pody" Poe? That he is colorful cannot be disputed; that he has been a warm friend to many people cannot be denied, either.

Actually, we don't have to say anything. He's said it all in his newly published book, "Pody Poe: From Tinhorn Gambler to Kingpin of Organized Crime" (Grant Books, \$29.95). It's one of those "as told to" books. Poe related his life story to Catherine Johnson, and she did much of the writing.

Poe, born in Oklahoma City in 1932, was the frequent subject of newspaper stories for many years because of his gambling activities. He keeps tongue far back in cheek when he uses the phrase "kingpin of organized crime." It's "tinhorn gambler" that he embraces, because most of his activity took place in the garage of his Nichols Hills home. He's greatly puzzled that so much was made of his low key gambling operation when the Justice Department could have been in pursuit of real criminals. Nevertheless, he finally wound up spending a few years in a federal prison, getting out just a few years ago. The government spent millions putting him behind bars.

A former state debate champion, Poe traveled in the entertainment business and worked in the insurance business before beginning a 35 year career as a professional gambler. However, it's his time in prison that makes some of the most interesting reading in the book. A recovering alcoholic and a cancer survivor, he was given medical treatment in prison. He lives in an Oklahoma City apartment.

The book's co-author, Catherine Katey Johnson, studied writing at the University of Central Oklahoma and also studied film and the arts through the University of Oklahoma as well as in Los Angeles, Dallas and Maui, Hawaii.

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A careful editor could have enhanced the book by eliminating some of the repetition. Poe marvels all too often at how the government eyed him when there were bigger fish in the sea. He cites other gambling operations that garner no attention at all. Here's the way he puts it: "People have always gambled. Even the Ancient Greeks wagered on many types of games. But gambling is a billion-dollar industry today. They gamble inside and outside the system. They always have and always will. To this day, I don't understand why it is legal in Oklahoma for Indians to have slot machines on their land, but it's not okay for you to play Twenty-one or poker with your friends in your garage."

- Dennie Hall, The Oklahoman, January, 2005

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