



# I LIKE IT!

BY GUEST COLUMNIST CHARLES STAATS #14336

## I Like Openers

"Hello, what nice eyes you have." Oh, not **that** kind of opener. Charlie Staats has an affection for a specific, short-lived bar-top opener. He sure knows a lot about them and is willing to share his knowledge with all of us.

— Alan Paschedag

Thirty years ago, I was at the local flea market and ran across this strange Falstaff bar-mounted can opener. At the time, I was collecting only Pearl beer items, Texas flats and cones. However, to my surprise, the opener was stamped San Marcos, Texas, a small town 15 miles from my folks. Intrigued, I decided to keep it. I was shocked three years later when I found a Pearl Beer one. Several years after that, a fellow published a book on the Galveston-Houston Breweries. In it was a picture of a Southern Select Beer Jay-Cee opener. I contacted the author and found out that he had a spare. In the years that



followed, I collected bits of history and opener variations, including the first version that was patented. Here's some history of these items:

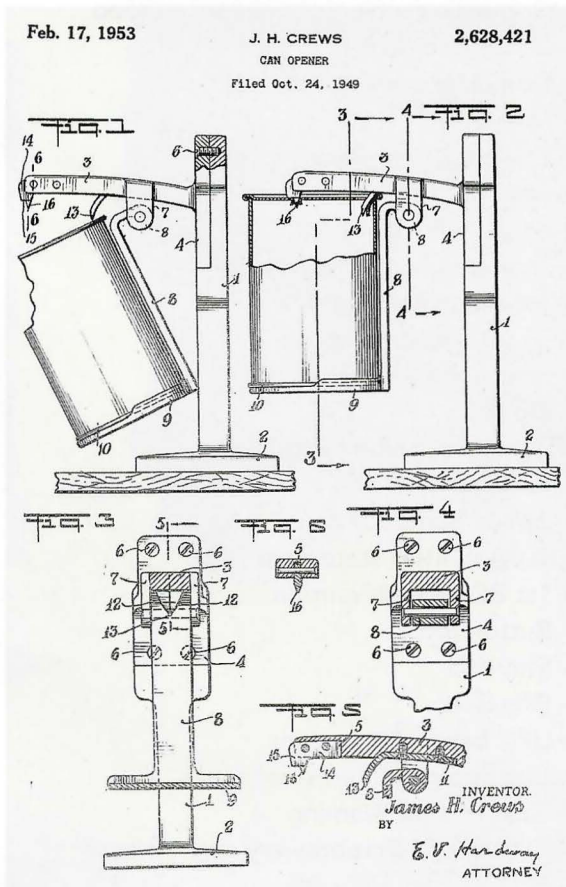
In the mid-1940s, James H. Crews, aka J.C. (Jay-Cee), who lived in the small Texas town of San Marcos, halfway between San Antonio and Austin, devised a new type of bar mount can opener. Early in development he sought out financial backing and found it from the local First National Bank of San Marcos. Originally, his portable opener was designed as several diecast pieces, screwed together and mounted on a wooden base. He applied for a patent for this first model in 1949.

While waiting for the patent approval, he went into production. Riley's Tavern in New Braunfels, Texas—still open today—purchased one of these first versions. By 1950 Crews had placed several newspaper ads throughout Texas, seeking salesmen to market his can opener to bars, liquor stores and distributors.

Potential buyers were not enthusiastic. In 1952, to save on production costs, Crews changed the three-piece cast tower and can opener hook to a simple bent flat steel frame but continued to use the cast swing arm parts. This version now mounted directly to the bar or countertop itself. Truly a bar-mounted can opener and no longer portable.

In 1953, things were finally looking up. Crews received his patent, #2,628,421, and three breweries—Pearl, Southern Select and Falstaff—placed orders. The 1953 version now had a fully formed stamped steel swing arm. The 3 beer brands are the only ones found on this version of the Jay-Cee bar mount can opener.

As far as we know, the only brewery placing a second order was Pearl, but we have no clue how large any of these brewery orders were. Crews' company struggled for a couple more years and appears to have closed by 1955, without



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## Can Openers-Manufacturers

Jay-cee Mfg Co Seguin Hwy ..... EX 2-4454



Here are the four styles of Jay-Cee's openers known to exist.

achieving the success he had hoped for. In a busy bar, his can opener was indeed very quick and easy to use. The motion of pulling the can in the swing arm into the can piercer hook, however, shook the can, creating quite a mess.

Considering Jay-Cee's limited production and aggravated bartenders who threw these messy openers away, they are now extremely rare. Per *Just For Openers'* John Stanley #31414, only 3 to 5 of any of these 3 beer brands are known to exist.



Here's a picture of a Pearl Beer version, the only Jay-Cee still in the wild! It's at Gruene Hall, Gruene, TX, the oldest dancehall in Texas.



Alan Paschedag coordinates "I Like It" for the BCCA. If you would like to share your story, send it with photos to [beachboy34@verizon.net](mailto:beachboy34@verizon.net)