

# “Anything Can Be Anywhere”

by Larry Lubliner

The main street of the high desert Arizona town was slick with ice and the rear end of my Ford van had a mind of its own, yet somehow this behemoth slithered into the narrow diagonal parking place without inflicting damage on either car, left or right or upon itself. A sigh of relief escaped but was quickly replaced by an “OUCH” as the icy pavement claimed my rear end. With as much dignity as I could muster I gathered myself together and skated toward the sidewalk (not easy in gym shoes) and from there to a coffee shop several doors down the street.

My appointment was for 9:00 A.M. so I had a half hour to enjoy a hot cup of coffee and try to understand just what it was that brings me to these small towns far from friends and family and keeps me on the road anywhere from four to six months a year. Because I deal in antiques the answer was immediately obvious. THE HUNT! The search for the Holy Grail. That one in a million shot. That’s what keeps the heart pumping and the juices flowing. There is nothing quite as exhilarating as finding that little gem tucked into a dusty nook, sitting on a shelf, or packed in a box lot at an auction or estate sale. Or, for that matter, in any of the thousand and one places anything could be. Thank goodness we all get to have that experience once in a while. It’s what keeps us going. It’s our motivator.

Well, enough day dreaming. I looked down into my empty cup and then at my watch. The big hand was on the twelve and the little hand was on the nine. It was time to head across the street. The mall was tiny as malls go but the quality of the merchandise was excellent. My appointment was not there yet, allowing me time to browse and buy a few items. Sandy arrived about fifteen minutes late with tales of icy streets and slow traffic. She had three decks of cards wrapped in tissue. I unwrapped the first two and they were less than exciting but that third deck. But that third deck! WOW!!!! A killer. The piece that gets the adrenaline pumping. A never before seen, at least to the best of my limited knowledge, deck manufactured by the Continental Card Co., Philadelphia. But get this. A joker or rather a BEST BOWER, which for all practical purposes is the same as a joker, was with the deck. I’m going to have to do quite a bit of research but I believe this to be a very early joker dating from 1870-1885. This is just at the time in the

history of American playing cards when the joker was making its appearance. Could this perhaps be the first one? Stay tuned and I’ll keep you posted. It was certainly a pleasant way to begin the day.

The town was full of antique shops and malls and buying one or two trinkets in each place was the rule rather than the exception. Usually it is a very long time between purchases.

The last mall was pretty junkie and there wasn’t much to look at until the last stall. On the bottom shelf I noticed two plastic poker chip boxes filled with chips. On the lids were the embossed logos of B.C. Wills, a gambling supply company based in Detroit. I opened the first box and flipped through the four rows of chips. Most had the initials E.E.T. with the small Greek key mold and denominations from .50 to \$5.00. In addition, there were a few Wills sample chips which were quite nicely done. A sample chip is one sent by the company to a prospective buyer in hopes that he likes the chip and will order more. The second box contained much of the same with two exceptions: Thirteen \$10.00, red Floridian Casino and one \$50.00, blue Floridian Casino. Eureka!!!! Two fantastic hits in the same day. I knew the chips were good but not until the Akeman & Rodgers Chip Show at Arizona Charlies in Las Vegas was I to find out how good.

The \$10.00 chip was new to the market and stirred up considerable interest. Guesses as to its value ranged from one hundred to fifteen hundred dollars. I guess I’ll just have to wait to find out because a few mean spirited dealers spread rumors and lies about the chip forcing me to take it off the market and place one in the club auction in June. Only there will it realize its true value. The others will then be available on a trade only basis.

This minor incident could in no way put a damper on my ebullient spirits concerning my two wonderful treasures. Larry McMurtry, author of such classics as *Lonesome Dove*, *Last Picture Show*, and *Terms of Endearment*, also wrote a charming and amusing story about an antique scout who scours the countryside in a vintage Cadillac convertible. His name as well as the name of the novel is Cadillac Jack. It should be mandatory reading for every antique dealer. Whenever I get discouraged and need a pick-me-up I read Cadillac Jack. One of the axioms that Jack believes to be gospel and shapes the way in which he conducts his business is “anything can be anywhere”. So, all you scouts out there, don’t get discouraged. Keep digging and prospecting and that treasure you’re seeking will pop up in the most unlikely place. Good Hunting!!!!!!!