

# Will the Genuine Harrah's Pink \$2.50 Please Stand Up!

by Howard W. Herz



Genuine Pink \$2.50



Altered Pink \$2.50



Genuine Yellow \$2.50

Our hobby was recently rocked by the revelation that a number of altered brass core gaming checks had been produced to defraud collectors. After an investigation that sought to find the culprit(s) was released to the hobby over the internet, a heated debate ensued. The substance of that debate, over issues of authenticity, punishment and incriminations, seems to have had more heat than light. Among the various comments that I found to be the most disturbing was the assertion by several individuals that there never was an original Harrah's pink \$2.50 brass core check. The people who made that statement should have known better - and one of them did!

## Sale No. 5

On March 18, 1993, Gaming Archæology conducted its sale No. 5 that featured Harrah's Club checks from the collection of Rome Andriotti, a well known Harrah's executive. Bill Harrah did not collect gaming checks that I know of, but one of his top executives did and a great number of rare Harrah's issues were in his estate. In late 1992, Gaming Archæology received his collection for sale. Among the numerous rarities were a number of brass core items, including four slug cores and ten (10) brass core checks. Among the brass core checks were a number of samples including a black

\$5 with an aluminum core, a white \$25 with brass core and a pink \$2.50 with a brass core. Four original cores without plastic covering were also in the sale; a trimmed brass \$2.50, a \$25 brass core, a \$500 aluminum core and a \$500 Baccarat core.

Prior to the date of the sale, a catalog was sent to Harrah's. Within days of the sale, Gaming Archæology received a call from Harrah's corporate attorneys requesting information on the sample cores that were in the sale. Because these cores represented a possible problem if they were ever released, all of the raw cores were withdrawn from the



sale and remain to this day in the archives of Gaming Archæology. The other Harrah's checks were sold to collectors.

### The Altered Cores

The Harrah's slug core checks were only a few of the many Harrah's rarities that were in the sale and after seven years, I had forgotten about them. During a Las Vegas show I was approached by a collector who asked if Gaming Archæology had ever sold a Harrah's pink \$2.50. I replied that I did not honestly recall, but that I would check our archives and records. A short time after that conversation, I was advised by several people that someone was making altered brass core checks from raw cores that had been released at the time that Reliable Manufacturing Co. had been sold. I was deeply concerned about the alterations and did inquire as to who was altering the raw cores and what was being made.

Several months after the news of the altered "brass core" checks broke, I checked our records and verified that Gaming Archæology had sold a Harrah's pink \$2.50 trial piece. I also contacted the collector who had purchased the piece. Fortunately, he still had the piece in his collection and generously agreed to send the piece to me for inspection. I was also able to inspect two of the altered pink \$2.50 pieces.

The comparison proved to be quite interesting. The altered piece had been produced from the same pink plastic that Reliable had used on a number of genuine samples that we have in the Gaming Archæology archives – a flat pink color that is extremely opaque. I had been advised that the alteration had been

made based on the original formula material that Reliable had used. In comparison, however, the original Harrah's pink \$2.50 from sale No. 5 had been made with a slightly translucent pink plastic. A number of other details were also different. Out of curiosity, I had both the original and the altered examples x-rayed and under the plastic was a telltale flaw in the altered piece.

Although I was grateful that the original Harrah's pink \$2.50 could still be authenticated by its characteristics, I was deeply saddened that members of our club would debase their integrity for satisfaction of their greed. For 5 years in the 1980's I was the director of counterfeit detection seminars for coin collectors. I have always been certain that once gaming check values reached higher levels, the chip hobby would be subject to the same problems that plagued numismatics. I am disappointed, but not surprised. But I am not discouraged, education

and knowledge are still the keys to enjoying our hobby. So for those who wish to know... now the real Harrah's pink \$2.50 can stand up... ❖



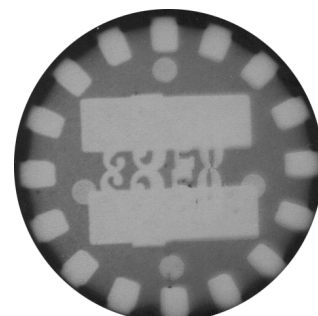
Altered \$2.50



X-Ray



Original \$2.50



X-Ray

