



Harvey J. Fuller

1919-2004

by Howard W. Herz

Harvey J. Fuller - a member of the CCGTCC Hall of Fame died December 28, 2004 . At the time of his passing, Harvey was living with his nephew Woodrow Wilson in Antioch, California. His passing has saddened many who knew him, but he leaves a legacy of historical research that will continue to be recognized in the years to come. For those who collect gaming checks and tokens, Harvey J. Fuller's research has influenced our hobby in many ways that are both subtle and direct.

Harvey J. Fuller was raised and educated in Southern California. His original ambition was to be a rancher, but without financing in the 1930's depression he declined to become a ranch hand. Harvey had a chance to go to college and majored in speech with the intention of becoming a radio announcer. Before he could begin an announcing career, World War II interrupted and he joined the army air corps.

After returning from the war, Harvey joined the Los Angeles police department. From 1946 until his retirement in 1977, he served on the police force gaining a respect for, and the knowledge of a good investigator.

Where to go and what to ask became second nature to Harvey.

As a child he collected street car transfers, a hobby that illustrated his nature as a collector. His intellect pushed him beyond just accumulating collections and he thrived on discovering what was behind the things he collected. During a vacation to the Lake Tahoe area, Harvey and his wife Eleanor visited Harvey's Resort Hotel. While standing in line at the coffee shop they noted a display of a collection of gaming tokens owned by the casino. Eleanor had several tokens in her purse that were not redeemable and on the spot, Harvey Fuller began collecting gaming tokens.

As his pursuit of gaming tokens and later gaming chips continued Fuller found that there was a lack of information on where they came from or anything about the clubs that produced them. His natural instincts as a



collector and his training as an investigator drove him to find the information that was lacking. Initially beginning with Nevada casinos that issued tokens he had accumulated, he expanded his research in 1970 to finding information on all Nevada clubs that had live gaming.

In a chance encounter at the Senator Hotel in Reno, Harvey Fuller met Howard Herz, curator of the collection kept by Harvey's Resort Hotel that had sparked Fuller's initial interest. After a continuing correspondence concerning the casinos of the south shore of Tahoe, Harvey's Resort Hotel's curator asked Mr. Fuller to complete a study of the Lake Tahoe casinos. This initial research request eventually evolved into a project to document the casinos of Nevada from their legalization in 1931 to 1981, the 50th anniversary of Nevada gaming.

Working directly for Harvey's

Resort Hotel under the direction of their numismatic collections curator, Fuller set out to document every Nevada gaming establishment that had live table games. Spending vacations in Las Vegas most of the year and venturing into northern Nevada during the warmer summers,



Harvey Fuller and his wife Eleanor traveled most of Nevada's back roads. Besides seeking out the official license records, Fuller pursued much of the less official records that ranged from newspaper advertising to conversations with the local barbershop owners, bartenders and retired residents. Putting his experience from the LAPD to full use, Fuller would pursue interviews with dogged determination. He kept notes and would track down interviewees on his next trip if they had eluded him previously. For three weeks of each month Harvey and Eleanor would stay at the Todd Motel in Las Vegas and venture home for a week to pick up his pension check and check on his house.

As the Nevada gaming operations documentation project continued, Fuller's methods of note taking had to be revised. Fuller's preferred method for taking notes on the back of keno tickets had to be upgraded. For the sake of consistency and storage, Fuller transcribed his keno ticket notes to 8-1/2 x 11 sheets of binder paper. Harvey's notes rapidly expanded beyond his first binder and eventually evolved into a set of binders dedicated to each Nevada county.

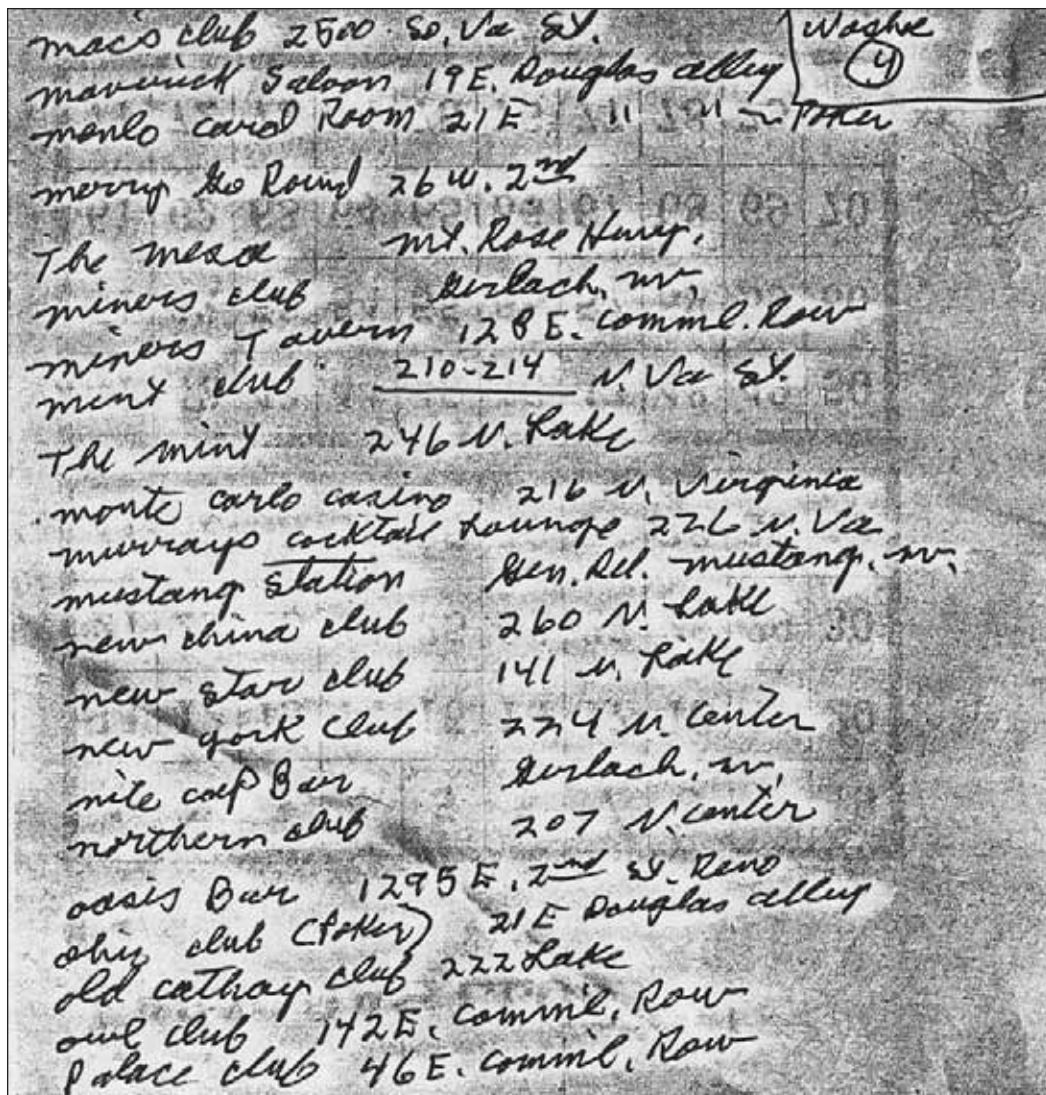
By the end of the documentation project, Fuller had documented around 2400 operations that would qualify as live gaming operations. Although Fuller's notes were exhaustive in their content, they were neither edited nor entered in chronological order. In many instances he had included multiple ownerships of a single club on a single page. In an effort to separate the different ownerships over time, the notes required careful review

to determine individual club ownership histories. Fuller's careful documentation provided most of the clues as to who and when multiple ownerships occurred, but separating them was a chore.

The initial editing of the notes resulted in the publication of Harvey J. Fuller's Index of Nevada Gambling Establishments - 1991. The line listing of the individual ownerships was edited from Fuller's notes and gave address, dates of operation, and notes on the games licensed. To date, this is the only publication from Fuller's extensive research. Fuller's Index has had a great impact on gaming collectors by giving them not only names and dates of operations, but

has provided the starting point for additional gaming history research.

In addition to Harvey Fuller's research, his personality left an impression on all those who knew him. His personal knowledge of gaming history in Nevada was encyclopedic and a short question to Harvey could unleash a history lecture. During the days of his research, Fuller would "park" Eleanor at her favorite slot machine in a casino and would then hit the streets looking for garage sales or seeking a person to be interviewed. He frequently would bring home a few chips gleaned from a swap meet wrapped in the cellophane of a used cigarette pack along with a note on the chips written on a



Harvey's notes on a Keno ticket

Fol H, H

June 1990
NYE - Esmeralda Co's.
Mineral Co.

6/1-3 Las Vegas

6/4/90 - left L.V. 11:00AM to Hwy 95,

at Lathrop Wells - state Hwy 373 drove 16 miles south to
Stateline Saloon - no info. - still has 1-21 game - 16 mi. back,
on to Beatty - made several interviews to find location of
St. Peters Bar. - Glenn St. Peter, a bootlegger during
prohibition went legit in 1931 - Already had gaming lic
in 1931, obtained liquor lic. in 1933. - on Hwy 95,
opp. Exchange Club - 3rd business on so. side st. ① gas
station, ② Beatty Club Bar ③ Pot shop. (Bobbie's Pot shop)
this had been St. Peters Bar. Bobby Adrian, P.O. box 56
Beatty, Nev. 89003.

on to Tonopah - 5:15 PM. Rm B - Silver Strike Motel,
Silver Strike casino now has very good Buesque food. 238 mi.
Days mi.

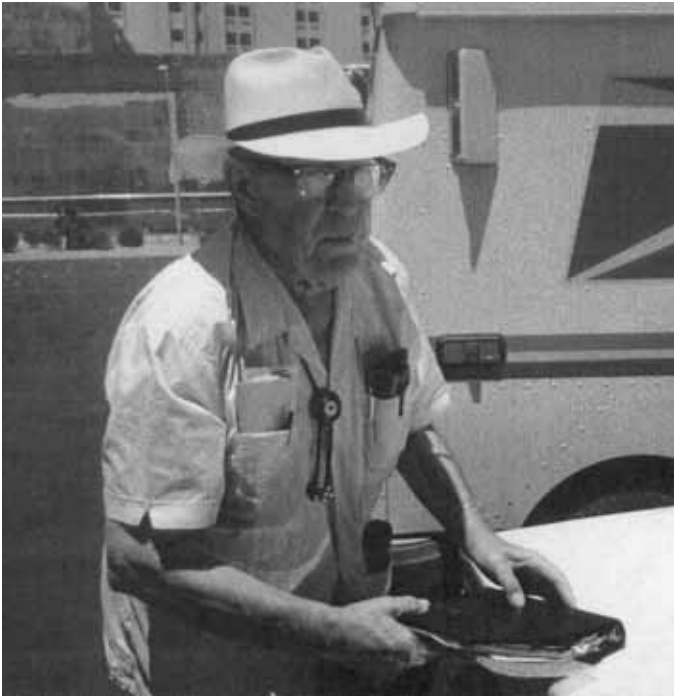
6/5/90 left Tonopah 11:00 AM. arrived Hawthorne 1 PM. ^{238 mi.} ^{100 miles}
checked for info at Mineral Co. Sheriff's office - no info -
they referred me to Martha G. BARLOW in assessor's
office - met in - my 6/7/90.

to newspaper office of "Independent News" and
Editor Jack McCHASKEY gave me same info - &
come back 6/7/90.

Days mileage 109.0

6/6/90 to newspaper MINERAL COUNTY INDEPENDENT &
checked 2 books ① 3/29/40 thru 2/19/41 and
② 2/26/41 thru 2/18/42.

6/7/90 interviewed Joe Janti - Joe's club. interviewed owner of
the hog cabin bar.
to newspaper office - checked papers 4/25/42 - Nov. 42.
interviewed Pete Coletti at Hawthorne club



Harvey and his notes



Harvey Fuller and Carey Burke

keno ticket. His gaming history information always documented the source whether it was from the Las Vegas Review Journal or “Joe the barber” in the shop down the street from the El Capitan in Hawthorne.

The trunk of his car was a chip collector’s bazaar with bags marked for distribution to his friends and associates along with gaming memorabilia or other items for a friend in LA.

Harvey Fuller treasured his friendships with other collectors. Carey Burke and Bill Watson were always mentioned in his conversations. Fellow LAPD officer Cliff Ruff was bitten by the collecting bug. He could also relate stories that he had heard from others that would give color and interest to the gaming operations and operators that he researched. His knowledge was wide ranging and his interests seem to be unlimited, but by a strange quirk of fate, he would become one of the earlier and most prolific historians of Nevada’s gambling operations.



Harvey always told me that he wanted to live until the Aztec calendar ended. I asked him why and he replied that he was just curious to know if the Aztecs knew something that we did not.

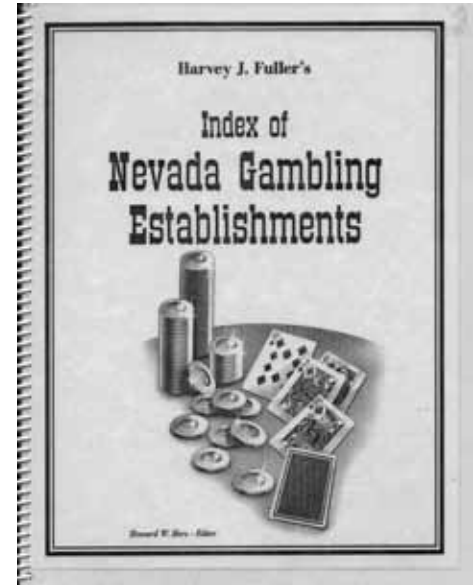
In 2004 Carey Burke in coordination with Woody and Loretta Wilson brought Harvey to the CC>CC convention. Despite the infirmities of age, Fuller fully enjoyed meeting

many of the collectors who attended the show. It was an opportunity for many of them to meet a man they had heard of, a man who had somehow influenced the hobby and even their collecting. Harvey received a standing ovation from the crowd attending the auction sale. He was amazed to see the prices that chips were bringing and recalled that many were pieces that he had sold years before for a pittance compared to today's market.

The next generation of collectors will not have the privilege of knowing Harvey Fuller in person but the hobby will continue to benefit from his research and the knowledge he shared. Those of us who had the pleasure of his acquaintance will fondly recall his character and generosity. Our hobby will continue to be stronger from his fundamental contributions.



Dale Seymour, Phil Jensen, Howard Herz and Harvey Fuller



Janice O'Neal and Harvey Fuller



Ernie Wheelden, Allan Myers, Michael Knapp and Harvey Fuller