

I Was Just Horsing Around

by Pam Holmgren

I wanted to be able to write an article to tell how I got started into horse chip collecting, but then I found that it was more than that. I'm more known to all my fellow chip-pers as sportiepam. Why that name? Well, I love sports, all sports. I grew up around sports, as my dad was a PE teacher. I even played golf with the great Arnold Palmer. But what does this have to do with chip collecting? I will be getting to that.

Well, horse racing is a sport. The greatest sport ever. The Sport of Kings as they say. I lived and grew up near Arlington Park Race Track, Arlington Hts, IL. My dad worked at the track during the summers, in the old jockeys club as a lifeguard, before the fire. My dad and I went to the track allot. I got to love horse racing and got to be very good at handicapping. The bad part was gambling was in my blood. How would I know 40 years later, I would know more about race tracks and casinos then ever.

I'm currently retired, after 37 years from United Airlines, where I had the greatest opportunities to go everywhere. So where was my favorite place. LAS VEGAS. I fell in love with it. The first time I went, I was not of age. I had more fun trying to gamble at the crap table and getting away with it. I admit I was kicked out a few times, but that did not stop me. I learned the game early. I think craps and horse racing have allot in common. They both are very

exciting and can really get that adrenal pumping. Just like sports do.

When I became 21 it became a sin. WOW I can come here anytime I want, and I did. 5, 6 and maybe 10 times a year. Now this was before the days that casinos were not everywhere. My favorite place to stay and play was the Hacienda . This is a nice collection that I worked on so I could get it framed. It also became my luckiest place and became my last stop before heading to the airport, or if I drove from LA. . My mom and dad loved it there too. They eventually came here more then me. This is where it all got started. I could never figure out why in the world would my mom bring home a casino chip worth \$5.00 (allot of money to me at that time) and not cash it in. I thought she was nuts. Anyway, she did it and so did my dad. They went everywhere and collected a chip here and there. A few years ago, before I lost my dad, he gave me all their chips. He said, "Pam, you will know what to do with those chips some day". So I took them and they were carefully stored away.

After I retired, I finally had time to look at all I had collected from my years of traveling. I knew I had those chips, but I did not have a clue what to do with them. One day, in early 2004, I started to search the web to see if I could find out anything about chips. The first hit ironically was a gentlemen's website owned by Jeff Buckner. I read all about chip collect-

ing and what he collected. Low and behold there were horse chips!! My eyes lit up and I kept looking through his collection and decided to e-mail him. He was the nicest person and we both had 2 things in common, we loved horse racing and horse chips. I asked him what is a good way of selling some of my parent's chips? He said, "Sell them, you need to keep them!"

Where does one start and how do I get some of those horse chips? He said, "You need to join the CC>CC, a great group of people and collectors and learn about chip collecting". So I went to their website, www.ccgccc.com and joined. I didn't think twice. I wanted to know how to get some of those horse chips. That was the only thing on my mind.

Within a week or so I got e-mailed from Greg Susong, welcoming me to this great chip guide room www.chipguide.com and in the mail a members card. Here again was another great collector who directed me and helped me though all my questions and problems.

Once I joined, it was liked the racetrack and crap table, addictive and exciting all at the same time. I was after those horse chips!!!! I never knew so many people collected chips and all sorts of casino stuff. Boy, if I only knew. I know we've all said this same phrase.

My mom was the collector and

smart one. Jeff was right. I did not sell all the chips I started to learn about the world of chip collecting. It took me awhile to get use to the lingo and what a good chip was versus a bad chip. I'm still learning. I was still looking out for those horse chips.

The next nice person I met online was Andy Hughes and learned about his website. There were my first horse chips. Wow I finally found these chips that Jeff was talking about. Seattle Slew and Secretariat. I have a whole equine art collection of both of them. Now I have some chips of them. Now mind you, I did not buy all the horse chips, only the ones he had.



My next big step was how to I find more chips. Well, that's when the chipboard told me about E-Bay. I knew about it and was a bit fearful at first, but I wanted chips and boy or boy did I find chips.

This is when another great collector came to my aide and his name was Terri Schaffer. I was out there bidding on a chip that was way over priced and he nicely stepped in and told me that he was not selling the chip properly. Terri was great as he watched over me as a mentor and I owe him big thanks.

After this happened many people stepped in and said you need a TCR book. A What??? Actually my first book was the "US Official Casino Chip Guide". Along came another nice person who said, "Send me your address and I will send you an older version of the TCR I have. His name was Sheldon Smith. When I got it, it was like Greek to me. I've learned to read it now. What a nice guy.

Ok, here I am 16 months later, with a grand total of 134 different horse chips These are many of my favorite chips I have collected. I also



had to figure out a way of displaying them. I ran across a nice cabinet to display as many as I could, the rest are in binders.

There are so many nice people out there I don't go looking for the horse chips and/or tokens too, they happen to find me. Since I love the horses and the racetracks I also have many race cards. I did not know how much a collectible they were too. They are part of my horse collection too.



If anyone wants to see my entire collection it can be found on the web-site below, that was kindly built by another collector Brian Watts.

www.collectionlibrary.com/sportiepam

Brian made it possible for not just me, but also others to show off their collections of chips and traders.

What can I say about so many wonderful people I've conversed with over the year and a half? I cannot name them all, but you know who you are. I'm now just a collector of horse chips and over 1200 \$1.00 chips from all over. It took me this long to decide what I wanted to collect, in order to afford my horse chips. Unfortunately there comes a time when you have to make a decision on what you want to collect and how much can you afford, because like anything else it can get quite expensive. I wanted to most of all have fun.



This last horse chip I saved for the end. I knew Debby Meister did chip designs. So I asked her if she would do a personal chip for me. She stepped right in and didn't think twice and asked nothing for her time except of few of my chips. We worked back and forth and she was very patient and knew what I wanted. I thanked her for the help in designing and working with CHIPCO on this great personal chip.

Well, now you know. So when you find the time, take a look at what I've collected in such a short period of time thanks to my parents. This is in Memory of my mom who recently passed away. Thanks mom, for all you did in getting me started in such a great hobby. I will miss you, but your memories are always there.

See you all at the next convention, I promise.