

THE INFORMATION BOOTH

Michael Knapp

Welcome to another installment of "The Information Booth." For those of you who are reading the column for the first time, I try to provide some information about unidentified flying chips (UFC's) submitted by members for identification, and to answer questions about casino history, chip history, or related subjects.

As I always do, I'll begin with some answers to previous UFC questions. Also, I repeat my request for participation by club members. This column is only of value if you take time to write to me with identifications of chips you recognize here in the column, and if you send *legible* photocopies (full size is a must; black and white is preferred, and please *do not send enlarged copies or color copies*) or samples of chips you'd like identified. Please don't assume that if you recognize a chip, someone else will. Don't assume that "everyone knows what that chip is." If you have information which may be of help to other members, please share it through this column.

There are always far more unidentified chips than there are members who write to me with answers. The purpose of this column is to try to identify chips that our members ask about. It's important to share your knowledge of chips that your fellow members may not know about. Come on, collectors: help!

You will notice that very few of the chips which appear in the column are simply photocopied. That's because many older chips do not have enough contrast to photocopy well, and if they will not photocopy once, they certainly will not photocopy a second time when the magazine is published. As a result, I hand-illustrate most of the chips pictured here. It's a painstaking process, because I make every effort to make sure that each chip illustration is as close as possible to its original version. That way, recognition and identification may be possible.

Please follow the following simple rules when submitting chips or copies for inclusion in "The Information Booth":

☞ If you have a chip that will not photocopy well,

please send it, packed carefully. *If you'd like me to return it, please enclose return postage.*

☞ Black and white photocopies only, please! Believe it or not, it's actually more difficult to work with color photocopies than with black and white, even though they look prettier when you copy them!

☞ No electronic scans, please! Scans are virtually impossible to work with, because they're almost never actual size. If you have a scanner, I know you like to show off the results, and electronic transmission is certainly faster and easier than (gasp!) taking pen in hand and writing a note, but please, *if you want your UFC to appear in this column, don't send me scans!*

☞ Legibility is the key: *Please realize that if you cannot read what is printed on a chip clearly after you photocopy it for the column, neither can I, and illustrating it will be impossible.* In such a case, you may send the chip to me, *with return postage* if you would like the chip sent back to you.

Also, please realize that if you recognize a chip published here as a UFC, you have information that your fellow collectors do not have. Please share. That's the whole point of this column. What is common knowledge in one area of collecting is completely unknown in others. For those of you with answers or questions, please share your information by writing to me at P. O. Box 340345, Columbus, Ohio 43234.

This issue's column is chock full of great information, and a tip of the Information Booth hat goes to those members who took time to send us the details about the chips they'd seen here. Typically, there are more questions than answers in the column, but that's to be expected!

As usual, we'll begin with some identifications of previously-published UFC's. The volume and issue number of the magazine where the chip first appeared is shown in parentheses so you can see the illustration if you wish.

UFC 212 (4/1): Here's one that's been unidentified for quite a long time! Thanks to Russ McDermott's information about illegal clubs in the Ft. Worth, TX area, we may have an identification. It seems likely that this chip, which bears only the number **3939**, was used at the 3939 Club on Jacksboro Hwy., Ft. Worth. Interestingly, Russ tells us that one of the owners of the 3939 Club was Phil Long. Sound familiar? It should: he owned the California Club in downtown Las Vegas for some years.

UFC 505 (5/4): Chez Paree was identified many moons ago—or at least so we thought! Seems that we were close, but not quite right with the location. Chez Paree was an illegal club in Carter Lake, NE. I'd originally identified it as Carter Lake, IA. According to *The Players: The Men Who Made Las Vegas* (1997), Jack Sheehan, ed., the club was run by the uncle of Las Vegas gaming pioneer Jackie Gaughan.

UFC 645-2 (7/2): Jerry Birl, "Mr. Roulette," believes that the **Plantation** chip was likely used at the Plantation in Hallandale, FL. The old "C" mold (actually a C in the center of the chip, rather than around the edge) certainly fits with the Florida Gold Coast era.

UFC 1168 (11/3): Another identification from Jerry Birl: the initials **JP** in on the harp mold chip shown in this column was used by Jack Pincus at an illegal club in Hot Springs, AR.

UFC 1187 (11/4): Jim Myers brought this **BC** chip back from a trip to Alaska, and was told that it had been used in an illegal club in Anchorage. That might be true, but Rick Meyer tells us that he knows that it was used in the early 1970's at the **Boulevard Club** in San Diego. In fact, he tells us that it was the club's first issue. This may be one of those chips that found its way (or down) the Pacific Coast!

UFC 1211 (11/4): This chip, which bears the initials **LLC**, was used in the early 1970's (another first issue chip) at the **Lucky Lady Cardroom** in San Diego. The club's still open, and *The Gaming Table* also shows it in San Diego. It appears that the Livermore, CA attribution is wrong.

UFC 1231 (12/1): I mentioned that several members had pointed out that this chip, bearing the name **544 Club**, appeared in a montage of New Orleans area chips on the cover of a Gaming Times magazine issue. Delta Nights: N.O.L.A., the new book by Finstuen,

Kleindeinst, Marshall and Marshall, indicates that the chip was used at an illegal club in the New Orleans French Quarter.

UFC 1255 (12/3): In the last issue, I illustrated a chip with the initials **MSC** (which might well be **MCS**; in a monogram, the larger center initial is usually last) alongside a photocopy of the same chip over stamped **S. S. Monte Carlo**, the gambling ship off the coast of California in the 1930's. Gene Trimble has tracked the chip down through Howard Herz's Mason Co. files, and has found some odd information he shares with us. It seems that the MSC chip was originally delivered to L. A. Miller at the **Muskogee Social Club** in Manhattan, NY.

That order consisted of a total of 1,000 chips in 1930, which as Gene points out, is certainly not enough for a casino, but would be enough for a private poker game. Interestingly, although four colors were sent to Miller, green was not among them.

To further confuse the issue, in 1938, 500 brown chips bearing the same hotstamp were delivered to Jake Katleman (a relative of Beldon Katleman, who owned El Rancho Vegas?) in Los Angeles. Still no green chips accounted for! And there doesn't seem to be a connection between Katelman in Los Angeles and Miller in New York City.

Gene says doubts any connection between the chips and the Monte Carlo gambling ship, partly because of the two different orders, but also because "the MSC would have to stand for 'Monte Ship Carlo.' Or maybe M.S. Carlo."

Maybe. But several other explanations are possible as well. Initials on chips are often initials of the owners or operators of clubs, rather than the names of the clubs themselves. Sometimes the initials are those of several people, not just one. And the connection between NY and CA? I'm certainly not suggesting that I know, but illegal club chips have been known to show up in places other than where they were originally shipped. Chips from Northern Kentucky, for example, were used in Florida clubs in the off-season and are now often found in Las Vegas; the Chesterfield Club chip from Detroit was used at the Nevada Lodge, Lake Tahoe, when Lincoln Fitzgerald first purchased the Nevada Lodge. Those chips bear the initials CC, which have no relationship to the initials of the Nevada Lodge or Lincoln Fitzgerald.

Sometimes the more we know, the more confused we get!

UFC 1260 (12/3): After seeing the **Log Cabin** chip in

last issue's column, Gene Trimble contacted T. R. King, which told him that they have no record of the chip. Gene says T. R. King has records back to 1936, so the chip could be earlier than that, or the record may have been lost. No one else has recognized the chip. *The Gaming Table* lists eleven different Log Cabin clubs, bars, or cardrooms, of which ten are possibilities for this chip.

UFC 1261 (12/3): This is a crest and seal chip, with beautiful lithograph inlays bearing the Mexican national symbols. They were delivered to a distributor in El Paso, TX in 1917, but we still have no firm information on where the chips were used or for whom they might have been made.

UFC 1262 (12/3): Here's another chip that may have been used in two different places. I'd originally purchased **The Club** chip from a woman in Alaska who specializes in collecting tokens (in the coin world, that term includes casino chips) from Alaska. Steve Goodrich, Mr. Pacific NW, wrote immediately to say that he had pretty solid evidence that the chip was used in a club in Libby, Montana. (One of the attributions in *The Gaming Table* as well.) I followed up with the lady I purchased the chip from, and she tells us that she obtained the chip from a long-time collector of Alaska material, and that there was little doubt in her mind that the chip was used at The Club in Anchorage (not Fairbanks, as indicated in last issue's column). She also referred me to a book published by TAMS (Token and Medal Society) entitled *Alaska Tokens*, written by someone named Benice in 1994, which confirms the use of the chip at The Club in Anchorage. She says that The Club had been open since 1936, and only recently closed.

Both identifications sound pretty authentic to me! This may be one of those chips that was shuffled back and forth between Alaska and the lower 48!

UFC 1264 (12/3): Gene Trimble passed on the information he obtained from T. R. King—the **United Cigar** chip wasn't an advertising chip, it was a California cardroom. The chips were delivered to J. B. Nicely in Delano, CA in 1945 and in 1947. Al Bernstein also says that there was a chain of United Cigar stores in the Chicago area, but apparently there's no relation.

Now for some new submissions! As usual, a small "\$" next to the chip illustration indicates that a

denomination appears on the reverse. If there is no such notation, or if both sides of a chip are not shown, the obverse and reverse are, so far as I know, identical.

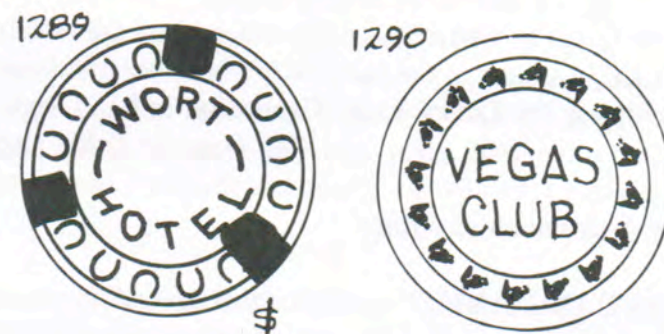


UFC 1285: According to *The Gaming Table*, this chip is from the **Shanty** Cardroom in Ukiah, CA. It's closed, but we're not sure of its dates of operation.

UFC 1286: The **Antler's Club** was a cardroom in Santa Cruz, CA, and *The Gaming Table* tells us that it was open from 1948-1969.

UFC 1287: **Vets Club** was an illegal casino in Toledo, OH.

UFC 1288: This **CC** chip is reportedly from Club C in Kemah, TX, near Galveston. Frank Chalfont's Galveston book shows a different type of **CC** chip with a hub rim. Can anyone confirm whether the chip shown here was in fact used at the Club C?



UFC 1289: *The Gaming Table* tells us that Jackson Hole, WY was the location of the **Wort Hotel**, which ran unlicensed games from early in the 1900's through the mid-1950's. I don't know whether these chips

were used in a poker game or in more casino-type house-banked games.

UFC 1290: The **Vegas Club** was a cardroom in Chula Vista, CA, open from 1982-1997. The known chips from the Vegas Club, however, are hat and cane mold chips. Can someone tell us whether this chip is from the Chula Vista club or another location?



UFC 1291: Here's another possibility but no confirmation. There was an **Arcade** cardroom in San Diego from 1955-1959, but so far as we know, their chips were small crown T. R. King chips. Is this chip another from the San Diego club, or from another club?

UFC 1292: This L mold chip is identified. According to *The Gaming Table*, **Rick's Club** was located in Fargo, ND. We're not sure whether it's still open.



UFC 1293 and UFC 1294: There is no truth to the rumor that 1293 was made for the authors of *The Gaming Table*, nor was 1294 made for the high stakes poker game run by Ernie Wheelden. Does anyone recognize these chips?



UFC 1295: This monogrammed chip, made for someone whose initials are **M.S.R.**, appears to be made of an early acrylic or plastic. It's not a casino chip, but is an interesting poker chip.

UFC 1296: The reversed of this **Star** chip says **PAN**, indicating that it was used for that game. Pan is most often played in CA, and to a lesser degree in NV. Does anyone recognize the chip?

The remaining chips on this page and the next are more new UFC's for identification. Please let me know if any is familiar to you.



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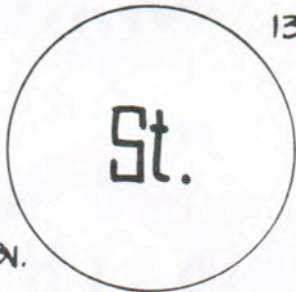
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OBV.

REV.

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Thanks to those readers who contributed to this issue's column. In addition to those mentioned above, Dick Covington, Ken Craig, Jim Episale, Bob Hoadley, Jim Gaito, Ed Hertel, Allan Myers, Chris Phillips, and Ernie Wheelden.