

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.

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 404 (5/1): The **Delta Club** chip was originally attributed to an illegal club in Greenville, Mississippi. The state was right, but the town was wrong: the chip's from a club in Hollandale, MS.

UFC 1208 (11/4): Doc Finstuen recognized this **inverted horseshoe** and has taken time to send us a

very complete story about the chip and its owner. The chip was made for Tom Connelly Moore, who used them in high stakes poker games at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, TX in the 1930's. In 1949, Moore moved to San Antonio and opened the Navy Club on Broadway. The chips may well have been used there as well. In the early 1960's, Moore sold the Navy Club property and built the Circle M Ranch on Kings Trail (Hwy. 35N) in San Antonio on the way to Austin.

The Circle M burned down, and Moore moved his "private club" to his large residence at 6701 West Avenue in Castle Hills, a San Antonio suburb. Whether these chips were still in use at that time is unknown. In 1968, Moore moved to Reno, where he bought the Holiday Hotel from Newt Crumley. All that history from what appears to be a "generic" poker chip! Just proves once again: assume nothing!

UFC 1209 (11/4): We're not sure of this attribution, but the **Country Club** chip with a pictograph of a top hat may be from an illegal club in Dickinson, TX.

UFC 1211 (11/4): The Lady Luck Casino (LLC) was a card room in Livermore, CA which closed in 1997.

UFC 1214 (11/4): According to *The Gaming Table*, this **DOC** chip was shipped to W. H. Bartlett in West Yellowstone, MT, in 1947. I'm not sure what the letters stand for.

UFC 1216 (11/4): What I thought might be an illegal club chip, a raised circle mold with a center inlay picturing a **flamenco dancer**, turns out to be considered a poker chip. Allan Myers suggested I look at Dale Seymour's *Old Poker Chips*, and there it was, with the identification code PE-HF.

UFC 1231 (12/1): The April, 1998 issue of *Gaming Times* magazine had a cover photo showing chips used in illegal clubs in the New Orleans area as well as a number of generic poker chips. Several readers pointed out to me that the **544 Club** chip is among them. The article in that issue doesn't mention the 544 Club by name, so for now we'll attribute the chip to the New Orleans area. Perhaps more definite information will surface.

Now for some new UFC's sent in by members for this issue. As always, I use a \$ next to the chip illustration to indicate that there is a denomination on the reverse side. If you see no \$ or other notation, you may safely assume that both sides of the chip are identical.

UFC 1254: The **Pacific Club** was a high stakes private club in Honolulu, Hawaii.

UFC 1255: This **MSC** chip was probably used on the **S.S. Monte Carlo**, the gambling ship off the coast of California in the 1930's. I'm not sure if it will reproduce, but the "B" chip is a photocopy of one of the MSC chips found in this group, with a rubber stamp that says "S.S. Monte Carlo, 1375 W. 7th St., Long Beach."



UFC 1256: Now here's another interesting chip! I'm hoping it copies well. It says **El Rancho, Haiti**. This casino has been known for some time, but its chips have been elusive at best. *The Gaming Table* shows the casino in Petionville, Haiti. That's near the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Oddly, when these chips surfaced, I'd just been rereading Vincent Teresa's *My Life In The Mafia*, written with Thomas Renner.

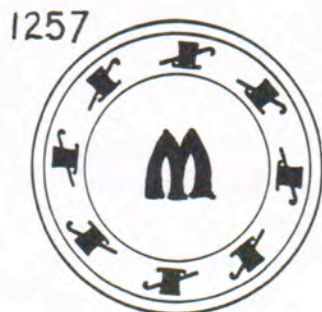
In the chapter entitled "The Mafia in Haiti," Teresa explains that in 1967 there was only one casino in Haiti, the International, run by friends of Meyer Lansky and Joe Bonanno. The New England mafia approached "Papa Doc" Duvalier, the Haitian dictator, with plans to open a casino at El Rancho, and to run gambling junkets to the hotel. The book explains how the Esquire Sportsman's Club was established to run junkets from Boston to El Rancho, how Duvalier got his kickbacks, how mobsters from other U.S. cities got in on the action by running junkets from their cities to El Rancho, and how the games were rigged to counteract a hot run by a junketeer.

It's a fascinating story, and here's the chip that goes with it!

UFC 1257: This copy was sent in asking for confirmation that the chip was used as a roulette chip at the Mapes Hotel in Reno. It seems unlikely. The H&C rim would be a bit out of place for the Mapes, which used many other types of mold designs, most of them earlier than the H&C rim. The **M** (or is it a **W**?) also seems to be the wrong type for the Mapes. Can anyone confirm the origin of this chip?

UFC 1258: Another unlikely—but possible—attribution. Was this **MC** chip used at Las Vegas' Monte Carlo Club in the early days? Someone sold it as such; can anyone confirm?

UFC 1259: Once again, an unknown chip is sold on the basis that it was from early Las Vegas. This one, a crest and seal chip, is said to have come from the Las Vegas Club. If so, it's the only known crest and seal chip used there, the earliest known chips being hostamped large crown chips. Given that the Las Vegas Club opened in 1931, though, it's not impossible that a U.S. Playing Card Co. crest and seal chip was used there. Can anyone give us the real story?



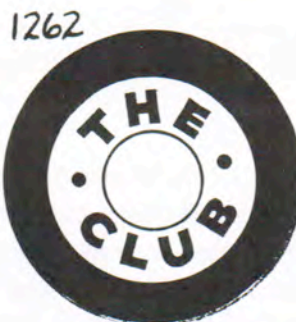
UFC 1260: There are several Log Cabins which are known to collectors (The Gaming Table lists eleven of them!), but chips aren't known for most of them. It seems most likely that this chip was used in the Log Cabin card room in Yreka, CA.

UFC 1261: This chip was made by the U.S. Playing Card Co. The detailed designs on this crest and seal chip are the **Mexican national emblems**. Does anyone have any idea who they were made for or where they were used?

UFC 1262: The Club was an illegal casino in Fairbanks, Alaska. This USPC crest and seal chip is from the 1930's, so **The Club** was in operation quite some time ago.

UFC 1263: Ted Brown says this is a plastic injection-molded diamond rim chip with a paste-on label center. Mexico hasn't had gambling since 1935, so if it's from Acapulco, Mexico, it's not a gaming check. **The Acapulco Bar** could be from the U.S. somewhere though. Does anyone recognize it?

UFC 1264: The rim and age of this chip indicate that it's from a CA card room, but I can't find one listed anywhere with the name **United Cigar**. Was it a card room, or perhaps an advertising chip?



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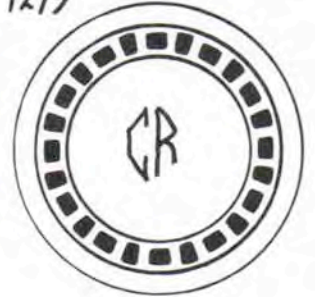
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Thanks to those readers who contributed to this issue's column: Ted Brown, Doc Finstuen, Bob Gabel, Allan Myers, John Rudden.