

THE INFORMATION BOOTH

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Yes, you're right: you haven't seen *The Information Booth* in a while. The pressures of business travel, and the few days we were able to spend at home over the past few months simply didn't leave time for us to write the column. As you may suspect, it's a time-consuming task. And although we'd love to be able to earn our living researching and writing about chips and casinos, it doesn't seem likely that it will support us in the style in which we'd like to become accustomed!

Hopefully, we'll be able to write the column on a more regular basis again. Assuming, of course, that we receive the input of members who have not only questions, but answers as well. This time, there are plenty of both, and we think you'll find more answers in this column than you've seen in the past several.

Remember, *The Information Booth* is a place for *you* to exchange questions and answers with other members. It's a clearinghouse of information, not merely a research job on the part of your columnist. In order for the column to work, all members must participate. If you have questions or if you recognize chips you see here, please write to us at P. O. Box 340345, Columbus, Ohio 43234.

For those of you who have submitted material, we will publish as much as we can each time. On occasion the questions greatly outnumber the answers, and we try to balance the column by saving some questions for the next issue. So long as the photocopies or chips we receive for publication are legible enough for us to illustrate, be assured that they will find their way into the column at some point.

Let's start with some answers to previous UFC's (Unidentified Flying Chips) published in past issues of Casino Chip and Token News. This time, we go all the way back to our second column, in Vol. 2, No. 2! As

has been our custom, we will show the original UFC numbers in boldface type, and will describe the chip briefly for those of you who may not recall it.

Q. 15: This chip bears the hotstamped numeral **181** on a cord-rim chip. Northern Kentucky expert Larry Trapp has found that it was used at The Avenue Club, an illegal casino in Newport, KY.

Q. 55: Hotstamped **T/M**, this chip was used at the County Line Club, Lancaster, CA.

Q. 75: Another hotstamped chip, bearing the initials **TED**. They were ordered in 1956 by Theodore Gray in Gardena, CA, but we're not sure at which club they were used. It is possible that they were private-issue chips.

Q. 76: The **JB** hotstamped on this chip probably were the initials of the owner of the Del Monte Club, Seaside, CA.

Q. 79: **DJG** was used at the Gold Coast Bar, Antigo, WI. The initials stand for Donald J. Griffith, who ordered the chips in 1941. Because there has never been legalized gambling (except for the recent Indian reservation casinos) in Wisconsin, we suspect that the Gold Coast had illegal games operating at the time.

Q. 85: There was originally speculation that the **Lucky Club** hotstamped on these chips might have been the club in Reno or Henderson or Searchlight, Nevada. All are wrong. This Lucky Club was located in San Jose, CA.

Q. 104 and 105: 104 is hotstamped **Marv's**, and 105 is hotstamped with the initials **MR**. Both were used at Marv's Club, Madera, CA.

Q. 117: The **Dixie Club** at which these large crown mould chips were used was located in San Jose, CA, not in Henderson or Reno, NV, as some first suspected.

Q. 126: A hub-mould chip with a **P** appearing within a **semicircle**, this chip was made for the Premier Club in Kansas City, MO. We do not know whether the

Premier Club was an illegal club or a businessmen's club. Perhaps someone from the Show Me state can tell us.

Q. 182: We do not know whether this chip was made for an illegal club, but we suspect it was. Hotstamped **Marcell's**, the chip was ordered by H.N. Weaver of Beverly Hills, CA, in the 1930's.

Q. 195: This chip shows a drawing of a **wheel**, with the letters **CLUB** within the spokes of the wheel at the bottom. It was shipped in 1951 to the Mizpah Bar, Tonopah, NV.

Q. 204: The initials **WR** appear within a circle on this hub-mould chip. They were shipped to Billy Reams in Tucson, AZ, in 1936. Although we do not know where they were used, it seems unlikely that they were made for home use, because the order consisted of 1200 chips. We suspect an illegal club.

Q. 205: One of several different varieties of **Turf Club** chips. This one is hotstamped with an art-deco style of lettering, and was used in Jeffersonville, IN in the 1930's, perhaps into the 1940's.

Q. 239: The **EPI** on this chip stands for Elbert's Pass Inn, in Arnold, CA.

Q. 242: This chip says **Arizona Club**. There was speculation originally that it might have been used at the Las Vegas Arizona Club, one of the early casinos in downtown Las Vegas. We now have authoritative information that it was made for the Arizona Club in Phoenix in 1946. Again, we suspect an illegal club.

Q. 243 and 244: Bearing three initials, we did not know in which order the initials should appear. It was clear, however, from the monetary denomination, that the chips were made for a club in England or a British Crown Colony. We now have the real story, from member Ian Sutton, forwarded by John Benedict. The initials are **NBT**, which stand for New Brighton Tower, the company which opened the Golden Nugget in London in 1965. The same company also owned the Victoria Sporting Club, which later became the London Playboy Club, and which is now the Victoria Casino.

Q. 288: This chip is hotstamped with a **clover** inside the initial **C**. It was made for the Colony Club, an illegal casino in Chicago, in 1938.

Q. 310: This chip is hotstamped with a **TT** on one side, and the numeral **47** on the other. We do not know the significance of the letters or the number, but the chip was made for the Improved Order of Redmen in Houston, TX. We have no idea what the Order of Redmen may have been, nor how it may have been improved, and perhaps one of our members from Texas can enlighten us!

Q. 312: Jack Boberg, who first sent us this chip, hotstamped with an **X** over a **C**, suggested, with his tongue planted firmly in his cheek, that the chips were probably made for Xavier Cugat, the bandleader (and husband of Charo, who needs only one name). Sorry, Jack. The real answer is a bit more pedestrian. The chips were made for the Exchange Club, San Clemente, CA.

Q. 331: This chip is hotstamped **YOC**. It turns out that it was made for an Officers' Open Mess in San Francisco, but we have no other information: we don't know which branch of the service, or at what base the chips may have been used. Perhaps our resident expert, Al Zaika, can help us with some research on this one!

Q. 385: Club 620 Almont was a card room located in Los Angeles. We suspect that 620 Almont was the address.

Q. 390: The initials **JC** are stamped on this chip, manufactured for J.C. Clark in Boise, Idaho.

Q. 398: The **RVD** hotstamped on this large crown mould chip are the initials of Raymond V. Dorsey, to whom the chips were shipped in Stockton, CA in 1962. Perhaps someone from California can tell us who Raymond Dorsey is, and where the chips may have been used.

Q. 414: We don't know what the initials **JML** stand for, but these chips were sent to the Hawaiian Club in Chicago in 1938. We suspect it was an illegal club.

Q. 415: If you read Archie Black's article in the last issue of the magazine, you will now know that the **Tuna Club** was an illegal club in Atlantic City.

Q. 424: These chips, hotstamped with only the word **Poker**, were used at the Poker Palace in Ridgecrest, CA.

Q. 469: This **Chief** chip is from Bakersfield, CA, not from Ely, NV as first speculated.

We have more answers to previous UFC's, but it's time to publish some new questions and UFC's. More answers will appear in the next issue of the magazine.

Q. 654: A member has asked when CHIPCO first started manufacturing casino chips, and what was the first CHIPCO actually to be used in a casino. It's a question we thought other members might be interested in as well.

CHIPCO is one of two companies that grew out of The Burt Company, which manufactured the majority of casino chips for many years. In fact, at one time, both Paul-Son Dice & Card Co. and Bud Jones Co., now manufacturers themselves, were Burt Company distributors.

Part of The Burt Company was purchased by CHIPCO in 1985, the other part becoming Atlantic Standard Molding, which is also still in the casino chip business. Two years later, El San Juan in Puerto Rico became the first casino to use CHIPCO's then-new full graphic design chips. Their appearance on the tables there in 1987 has resulted in an explosion of innovation in casino chip design, as well as tremendously increased interest in the hobby of casino chip and check collecting.

Q. 655: Laughlin, Nevada is an extremely interesting area, historically, and a discussion at the 1994 club convention has brought us some information we thought we should share through this column. Member Bob Kubach has done substantial research into the history of succession of Laughlin casinos, and was kind enough to send it for publication.

Of the existing Laughlin (originally, South Point, NV) casinos, five remain as they were built. The oldest, the Riverside Resort, opened in 1966, and eventually owner Don Laughlin put in the first post office in the area. When he did, he was given the option of naming the town because South Point was an unincorporated, customary name although no town actually existed. Mr. Laughlin must be an extremely humble person—the name he chose for the town was...well, Laughlin!

The Regency Casino (1980), the Edgewater Hotel (1981), Ramada Express (1988) and the Flamingo Hilton (1990) are the other four original casinos. All

others had predecessors. The second casino in what was then called South Point, NV was the Bobcat Bar, which opened in 1967. In 1969 it was purchased and became Odie Lopp's Nevada Club, which was open from 1970-1976. For the next two years, the club was known as the South Point Nevada Club. In 1978, the Del Webb Corporation bought the club and it became Del Webb's Nevada Club, which lasted until 1988 when it was purchased and became the Golden Nugget.

The present Colorado Belle opened in 1987, but the original Colorado Belle was open from 1980-1984. The Pioneer Hotel (1982) was built on the site of the Colorado Hotel (1979-1980). Gold River Resort (1991) was originally Sam's Town Gold River (1984-1991), and Harrah's (1992) was originally Harrah's Del Rio (1988-1991). Apparently Harrah's is the only one of the casinos which changed its name without changing its ownership.

There are two casinos missing from the list: the Crystal Palace (1977-1985), which was originally the Monte Carlo Casino (1968-1977). The Monte Carlo/Crystal Palace is not open currently under any name, having closed for good in 1985.

Those who have tried to track the history of Las Vegas casinos (especially those downtown) or Lake Tahoe casinos can appreciate the relative simplicity of tracing the ancestry of current Laughlin casinos!

We begin our chip illustrations in this issue with some identified chips. As is our custom, we rarely show both sides of the chips we illustrate. Most are identical on both sides. Those that have only a denomination on the reverse side are denoted with a \$ beside the illustration. The first two chips were submitted by Steve Roy, and No. 656 illustrates, as do some of the other chips in this column, the difficulty of deciphering initials on chips!



Despite the AC, it's from the Westward Ho card room at the Best Western Hotel in Grand Forks, ND. We have no explanation for the initials! We assume that 657, which is used at the Ramsby Lounge in Grand Forks, ND, is from a card room operated by a company called Boxing, Inc.



No. 658 was sent in by Bob Bickford, who says that he purchased the illustrated chip from an elderly gentleman who said that he believed the chip had been used at an illegal casino called "Two Brothers" in Cottage Hills, IL. The initials may be those of the brothers. Ken Hair sent No. 659, which we have been able to identify as being used on Oceanic Cruise Line ships. The jockey mould design is European in origin.

although the closing date is unknown. Originally it had been the Arrow Club, also an illegal casino, which opened in 1938 and closed in 1942.

The mistaken attribution to Northern Kentucky is somewhat understandable, since illegal casinos in both the Cleveland and Newport/Covington areas were operated by the same group.



No. 662, Packer's Club, is from a card room in Bell, CA. No. 663, we believe, is also from a CA card room, although we do not know which one. Ralph Pollack tells us that he has the chip in 5¢, 25¢, 50¢, \$1, \$5, and \$50 denominations, which tend to indicate their use in a card room rather than in a casino. Does anyone recognize the Chinese character?



Charlie Sandes sent us a copy of 660, which he believes was used at Harold's Gun Club outside Reno. Certainly the initials seem to bear out his speculation. Is anyone familiar with this particular chip? Bill Penn sends us the information that we had previously misidentified No. 661 as having come from the Primrose Club in Newport, KY. Actually, it was used at the Pettibone Club, which operated in the late 1940's near Cleveland, next to the Bainbridge Race Track. It opened in 1946 and was only open for a short time,



There were many "Turf Clubs" throughout the country, and although some were legal, most were illegal clubs. John Benedict may have determined the origin of one set of Turf Club chips, which appear as Nos. 664, 665, and 666. He has found that there was a Turf Club at the Hialeah Race Track in Florida. Originally built in 1925, Hialeah fell on hard times during the depression and was purchased and refurbished by Joe Widener, a millionaire and art

collector. The grand opening of the remodelled race track was held at the Turf Club in January, 1932, and included guests of financial, social and artistic fame, such as the Vanderbilts, the Whitneys, Lily Pons and Barbara Hutton.

Widener owed a favor to longtime Florida gambling figure Col. Edward Bradley (owner of the Beach Club casino in Palm Beach), and granted Bradley the concession to operate the casino at the Hialeah Turf Club. John Benedict believes that these chips, all of which were found together, came from that club.



As for the remaining chips illustrated, we have been unable to identify them adequately, and if you recognize any of them, we would appreciate your letting us know!

