

"AN INTERESTING STORY OF PUERTO RICO CHIPS.....GREED IN OUR HOBBY?"

By Miguel Carlo CH-075

Our story begins many years ago when the old El Conquistador Hotel and Club closed down. The hotel was located near the town of Fajardo on the extreme north-eastern corner of the island. The hotel complex was quite large, especially since it was near a small town and a considerable distance from San Juan, the capital. Due to this fact, many tourists chose instead to stay at hotels in or near the capital. As a result, the El Conquistador was forced to close down due to financial problems. To date, the El Conquistador has not reopened, but rumors persist that it will in the future.

About a year after the hotel closed, the chips from the casino started to be destroyed by being thrown into the Puerto Rico Trench, "second deepest body of water in the world." After more than half the chips had been destroyed, the government gave permission for the remaining chips to be sold to a man by the name of Walter DeAmbrogio who used to work with the gaming company. Walter later opened a small shop dedicated to the sale of casino supplies to the casinos themselves.... and not to the general public. Walter also worked in the casinos as a roulette croupier and later as Pit Boss.

When the Mayaguez Hilton first decided to open a small casino, Walter got permission to use some of the old El Conquistador chips until they could get new chips later on. The El Conquistador chips had their center inlays removed and new inlays with "International Casino Management, P.R." and the denomination affixed to the old El Conquistador clay chip bodies. These chips were used for about six months and new ones with a "M H" logo were brought in. The old chips were then taken to the town trash dump and destroyed by incineration. Known chips from the International Casino Management are as follows:

\$1.00 Biege	five	1/4 purple with H&C edge mold
\$1.00 Black	three	1/2 turquoise with H&C edge mold
\$5.00 Reddish brown	three	1/2 pink with H&C edge mold
\$25.00 Light green	four	1/2 white with Dice and Cards edge mold
\$100 Black	eight	1/4 yellow with H&C edge mold

Known varieties for these chips are as follows:

\$1.00	Comma below "N" of "CASINO"	(control mark)
\$5.00	Dot under second "A" of "MANAGEMENT"	(control mark)
\$25.00	Dot above first "T" of "INTERNATIONAL"	(control mark)
\$100.00	Dot above "O" of "CASINO"	(control mark)
\$100.00	Comma below "N" of "CASINO"	(control mark)
\$100.00	Various lines _ / I - due to "bad printing"	

At about the same time, some additional El Conquistador chips were used by Walter to make chips for the Hotel Casino Lina in Santo Domingo "Dominican Republic". Since I don't know all of the types used, I will not list them here at the present time, but I do want you to know where other chips were used.

During the later part of 1985, the Dutch Inn Hotel recieved permission from the Puerto Rico govenment for the opening of a casino. Due to time

limitations, Walter supplied not only the tables but the chips as well. Again the old El Conquistador chips were used with new center inlays which said, "Dutch Inn San Juan, P.R." and the value. This process used up most of the remaining El Conquistador chips in Walter's possession, but not all of them. The Dutch Inn opened their casino on December 19, 1985. The chips themselves have many varieties due to control marks, double lettering, etc.

About the middle of 1985 I met Walter for the first time and had purchased the remaining El Conquistador chips in his inventory. At the end of 1986 and beginning of 1987, Walter introduced three more old chips in the Dutch Inn. They were as follows:

\$1.00	Beige	three 1/4 brown inserts, large key mold... made from old La Gente \$1.00 chips.
\$1.00	Beige	three 1/4 grey inserts, same mold as above.
\$1.00	Grey	three 3/8 blue inserts, H-H-H mold from New Palace.

All of the previous chips were used until April, 1988 when they were completely replaced by Bud Jones chips with metal centers. The old chips were stored at the casino and partly at Walter's shop. Chips that were under inventory could not be sold and ones in real bad condition were destroyed. I had some that I had gotten at the casino which I saved for myself. In 1981 Walter received permission to decommission some of the Dutch Inn chips and he re-purchased them from the casino. He sold a few to me for my own collection and promised to sell me more at a later date when he could clear the sale. In 1992 I again bought another small lot of chips from Walter.

In all the years Walter and I have done business, we have never had any kind of problems, and there has never been a problem with the chips themselves, or with any of the persons who bought them. Now, at the beginning of 1993, all that has changed and this is where our story of greed begins.

I first became aware of the "problem" when past customers and friends began writing to ask me about Dutch Inn - International Casino Management chips, in many cases listing chips I know do not exist..... or perhaps I should say, were never used for that casino. Also, high values, \$100 & \$500 Dutch Inn chips started to turn up. I went to Walter and talked to him. Walter explained that he had sold some low value chips, (\$25 & under) but that someone had stolen some of the high value chips that were still under inventory. Whoever that person is, also took center inserts from one chip and used it on others. If you have an International Casino chip different from the ones I had described, it is NOT genuine! If you have any doubts about any Dutch Inn chips you have that were not purchased from me, you are invited to write to the following address: Miguel Carlo, Calle Isolina #48, Urb. La Concepcion, Cabo Rojo, PR 00623. I will try to answer any and all questions.

The primary reason for doing this article is to clear up the rumors that I am counterfeiting chips. I do not counterfeit chips. I study and try to learn as much as possible about them! I believe, as Archie Black our President believes, that the more information we have, the less a person with greed can cheat you. I am a collector first of all and a

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dealer of Puerto Rican chips, secondly. I do not sell a chip today at \$300 and say it is the "only one" in existence, and tomorrow sell one to someone else at \$25 and to another for \$100, and to another for \$50, etc. It's the wheeler-dealers out there who want to make a quick-killing that are hurting our hobby and a lot of other hobbies.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this article and may all your chips be good ones!!

Miguel Carlo