

# Ten Years After

by Joe Shaw

In my high school days, that would have conjured up visions of Alvin Lee and what was one of the first concerts that I went to. (Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention was the first concert that I ever went to, but that's a totally different story for another time ...)

In chip collecting, it meant that I became a proud 10-year member of the CCGT&CC club. I realized that I had reached that milestone when I received my 10-year pin last year.

In looking back, I would like to share some chip and non-chip related memories during the past 10 plus years of chip collecting. I look forward to another 10 years of memories.

**CONVENTIONS** - I only missed 2 out of the 10 Conventions since I became a member. I missed Convention 2006, but I'm ready for 2007. Already have my room reserved and my bags are packed. I am also glad to have served as the Exhibits Chairperson for the past 5 Conventions.

**MY FIRST CONVENTION** - It was at the Aladdin and I still remember my newby eye candy experience going to my first Convention. Chips and Silver Strikes everywhere. A newby's dream. Embarrassing moment #1 was that I went though all the cash that I brought after 10 minutes of frenzied buying. Cash that was budgeted for collecting and gambling. Worse part was that I was still planning on staying 3 more nights. Funny how as the years progressed, I kept on bringing more and more cash (and still had to resort to check writing).

**CONVENTION AT THE ORLEANS** - It was the year that Jerry Wall was selling his collection/inventory. I remember jostling 3 deep at his table looking at the endless binders of chips that he had for sale. I spent hours looking and eventually bought so many chips that it (again) depleted all the cash that I brought and eventually resorted to check writing.

**STUCK IN LAS VEGAS #1** - Sounds like a dream come true to most, but it was not. I don't recall the year, but I was there on business. I stayed an extra night for some chip collecting and was leaving for home on Friday

night on the last flight from Las Vegas to San Jose. I had checked in early, got my Southwest boarding pass and was just waiting for my flight. With time to kill, I walked around the airport. While walking around, unknown to me, they had changed the boarding gate. I did not find out that my flight had already departed until I noticed that everyone waiting in line had different colored boarding passes. Unable to find a room at the last minute on a Friday night, I spent the night at the airport. The unpleasantness of sleeping at the airport was nothing compared to having to deal with the wrath of the wife who had been circling around San Jose airport expecting to pick me up. This was before cell phone days, so there was no way of contacting her. I think I was banned from going to Las Vegas for 3 months after that.

**STUCK IN LAS VEGAS #2** - I was in Las Vegas on business. Arrived on a Sunday night and was supposed to depart Wednesday night. The video poker gods were very kind to me on this trip as I hit 5 Royal Flushes within 24 hours. The joy of hitting the Royals was overshadowed by the news that I heard when I woke up the next morning. It was September 11th 2001. I was again stuck in Las Vegas because of the FAA's suspension of all flights. My memorable stay in Las Vegas ended when I managed to get a flight back home late Friday night, 2 days later than planned. Glad I left when I did too. Cell phone battery was near dead and clean underwear was non existent.

**MAIN STREET STATION** - 1997, when Main Street Station first opened, I went there for chips. Went to the cage and picked up their new house chips. They also had a \$5 commemorative chip (the first one in the Mucha series) of which they would only sell one. I decided to stay and play for a half-hour then went back to the cage (other side of cage) in hopes of picking up another one. The original teller recognized me and yelled out across the cage "He already got one! Get out!" I think that was the last time I stepped foot into Main Street.

**CHIP HUNTING IN RENO** - One of my most memorable chip hunting memories happened back in October 1999. I was in Reno for the sole purpose of seeing what chips I could get. What I came back with even amazed myself. And the best part was that all was at face.

116 \$7 Silver Strikes (Harrahs, Circus Circus, Fitzgeralds & Flamingo Hilton)  
100 Fitzgerald's 25¢  
100 Fitzgerald's 50¢  
30 different \$5 Reno commemorative chips  
20 assorted Harrahs brass cores  
plus an unknown number of current house chips.

Also envision myself with all of the above trying to make it back to my hotel room at the Flamingo Hilton. Lesson #1 learned in chip collecting - casinos do not furnish you with shopping bags when you buy chips and silver strikes from the cage.

DALE SEYMOUR - I was extremely fortunate to visit the home of Hall of Famer Dale Seymour. I recall seeing an amazing collection of different types of chips, slot machines and other antique gaming paraphernalia. Even more amazing was his home, which was featured on Home & Garden's TV show Extreme Homes.

CHIP HUNTING IN ELKO - Summer of 1998. The family had gone somewhere and I was left alone with nothing to do. I decided to take the 4-hour drive up to Reno, stay overnight for some chip collecting and video poker, then drive back. Not finding much in way of chips that I needed in Reno, I decided on the spur of the moment that it might be fun to try looking for chips in Elko. Thinking that Elko was only about an hour's drive from Reno, I decided to make that east bound trip. Before leaving Reno, I stopped and got gas for the car and ask directions on how to get to Elko. It was a good thing I did because I found out at that Elko was NOT an hour away. It was more than a 4-hour drive away (about 300 miles). Sanity set in at that point and I drove home instead. To this day, I still have not been to Elko.

SILVER STRIKE MACHINE - I remember sitting down to a 25-cent Silver Strike machine at the now closed Riverboat in Reno. I fed in a \$10 bill. To my surprise it gave me 80 credits. Thinking that I put in a \$20 instead of a \$10, I put in another \$10 bill. Again it gave me 80

credits. I happily played for awhile on the machine (until I ran out of \$10 bills), then decided to leave with my winnings before they found out about the machine malfunction. When I went back there the next morning, I was saddened to see a "Out of Order" sign on the machine.

SIGHTSEEING & FINE DINING IN RENO - It was early in my chip collecting days. I was in Reno and met up with Hall of Famer Doug Saito. Doug took me on a newby tour of casinos in downtown Reno. He also introduced me to "Awful Awfuls". A huge messy heart stopping burger that comes with a large unfinishable basket of fries offered at the restaurant (if you can call it that) in the back of the Nugget. I have since passed on the knowledge of this culinary extravaganza to my son, who has made Awful Awfuls a mandatory stopover every time we visit Reno. (I also highly recommend the fried calamari sandwich)

WRESTLING IN RENO - My son did wrestling in all 4 years of high school. One of the perks that I got out of it was that he wrestled in 2 tournaments in Reno every year. One in December and one in April. Chip collecting and video poker came to mind when I first saw his wrestling schedule. It was December 2004. We made the 4-hour drive to Reno without any problems. Our drive back a few days later was another story. A storm had come in and they were expecting heavy snow. It took 6 hours to reach the California border (an 8-mile drive), only to be told that we had to head back to Reno because the highway was closed. Luckily we managed to get a room at the Golden Phoenix. Dinner that night, of course, was Awful Awfuls at the Nugget.

The past 10 plus years of chip collecting has been great. What I collect have changed over the years. The chips that I need to fill the holes in my collection have become harder and harder to find. I look forward to the upcoming Convention. Seeing collectors from previous years and meeting new ones. Maybe this will be the year that I find the chips that I need. See you all in August.