

David Spragg got the OGJ chips off ebay. The 1st order of business was to figure out the initials. My guess would have been OGT or OJT. Wrong! It is not a standard TR King font and is considered a "Special Die." Special Dies in the old manufactures records are not listed the same as standard fonts and can be tough to find.

David asked for the research and made the calls to French Lick, IN to confirm the story.

Enough of that:

Georgia:



OGJ

7/18/56 – 1000 chips shipped to
W J Morris
114 East 62nd St.
Savannah, Georgia.
300 white, 300 red, 300 blue, 100 yellow

My note: After the research the attribution comes back as:

Order of Georgian Jews.

Enter our "Friend of the hobby."

The chips were delivered to a residential address located in the Abercorn Terrace apartments. At the time of the delivery the address was occupied by William J. Morris and his wife Betty. Morris was a non-commissioned officer in the United States Air Force and most likely was stationed at Hunter Air Force Base which was located about a mile from his residence (the Abercorn was apparently popular with Air Force personnel as an off-base residential facility).

Sometime around 1957-58, while still in the USAF, Morris and his wife moved to a house at 140 E 60th, a few blocks away from the Abercorn. I'm not sure what Morris was doing with the chips or what OGJ stands for. There was plenty of illegal gambling in Savannah at the time, primarily at Savannah Beach (Tybee Island)—a place which in the late 1950's and early 1960's some people said resembled Phenix City, Alabama. Maybe there was a place on base where they were used.

My note: I mentioned in a prior "Illegal Of the Day" post on Phenix City, Alabama that I had shipped out of Savannah to Germany in late 1959. I had no clue or have never heard of Savannah having illegal gaming coming close to the Phenix City operations. Hopefully someday we will find more chips from Tybee Island.

I know I've seen numerous chip orders sent to military personnel for the "open mess." I think that the W. J. Morris who got the chips was William Jacob Morris who was born near French Lick, Indiana in 1928 (I think this guy is the same one in Savannah but I'm not 100% sure). He enlisted in the US military immediately upon graduating from high school in 1946 and retired as a Senior Master Sergeant in the USAF. By the early 1970's he and his wife had moved back to French Lick where he died in 2002. Morris' wife Betty Louise Mahan was also a native of the French Lick area. She's still living, age 82, at French Lick and might be able to shed some light on the chips.

My note: When the research fails to put a Club name to the initials get on the phone. <g> The problem is we are asking for info ranging from 50 to 80 years old. The old timers are going to the "Big" gambling "God" in the sky daily. Soon even the sons and daughters will be gone. IMO we are reaching the final limits on the research of the old illegal chips if we have to talk to somebody.

David called Betty Morris – info from her:

I know the family had been involved in illegal gambling in French Lick back in the early 1950's before I met Bill. The move to Savannah was a military posting. At the time Savannah was a strong Jewish area, and while the rules permitted them to gamble (albeit illegally) they were not permitted to organise the game themselves nor mix with non-Jewish gamblers. None of the local games would run a game for Jews only, so somehow Bill talked himself into running the game for them. The OGJ must have stood for Order of Georgian Jews.

The games were held wherever Bill could arrange space for his table, although never on the military property.

Order of Georgian Jews was the name of the area organisation/lodge/club or whatever the Jewish community refer to it as.

When I googled Georgian Jews I got a number of pages like this:
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Savannah.html>
so the story sounds legit to me.

My note: Georgian Jews have a rich history in Savannah and I guess we can now add gambling to that history dating from 1773. <g>

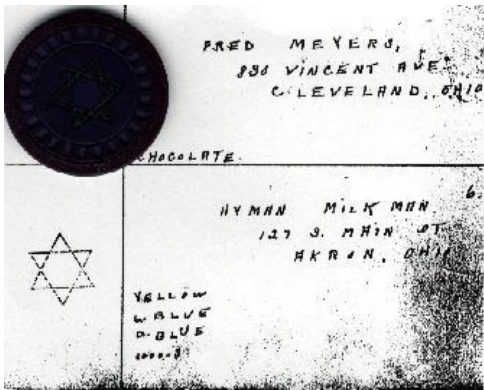
Congregation Mickve Israel was founded by 42 Jews who arrived in Savannah, in the new colony of Georgia, on July 11, 1733. Having left London, England five months earlier, the brave band of mostly Portuguese Jews and two German Jewish families sought freedom and opportunity in the New World.

My note: The OGJ chips are not the 1st Jewish related chips we are aware of. I got 3 colors of these back in 2000, Never did do any research on them.



OGJ2att2

Delivered to Fred Meyers-830 Vincent Ave- Cleveland, OH and Hyman Milkman-129 S. Main-Akron, OH. Had to be an illegal in 1940's. The only Mason record that could be found at the time was the "Die Tag" as it is another "Special Die."



OGJ3att2