

OK, you got to put up with a fish story. You will see the tie to Baja Mexico in the chip posted below.

If you don't like fish stories, scroll down.

Roughly 1983 through the early 90's, 4 friends got together and went fishing. At least 2-3 times a year to Ensenada and Mazatlan, Mexico. Donny Madgen, rose from poker dealer to VP of Four Queens and back to poker dealer for me at the Palms. <g> Rick Cole rose from poker dealer to GM of The Bicycle Club in Los Angeles, worlds' largest poker room at the time. Rest easy friend. Eddie Miller retired poker manager, one of the best and the man that brought Donny and Rick into poker.

First trip:

Donny went to Caesars Palace and bought a bunch of Mexican pesos. That made our trip half price.

Loaded the Bronco with our own gear, and took off for the San Diego border crossing. We made Rick get out about a mile from the crossing and walk across the border. We did not ask but knew he would have pot stashed somewhere! <g>

At the pier in Ensenada, we met an old Mexican had to be 75, named Manuel and a 20 foot, not so pretty boat. Manuel would take us out from that day on. He also had a young deck hand.

Day one. Not much action until noon. I was nodding off when Manuel yelled "poles up." I looked around and saw nothing. Manuel pointed to the Island where a large pod of seals were launching themselves into the water. All 4 rods screamed within seconds of each other. We were sitting in the middle of a sea of Yellow Tail tuna. Manuel casted a 5th rod in and for close to two hours we took Yellow Tail as fast as we could. All 5 had multiple hook ups at the same time. The deck hand directed traffic as the fish were leading us all around the boat. He would tap one on the back and say "up Pole," another pat and "go under," go over," "pole down," etc. Eddie the old man finally sat down and said "I'm done." The rest of us felt the same way. Ten minutes later it was over as fast as it started. We took over 40 Yellow Tail 8 to 32 pounds. Yellow tail is a fighting fish and don't give up easy. If you let him get his nose down he is gone to the bottom and will scrape the hook out.

Dropped 2 fish off at a local restaurant. One to fix for our dinner, and one for the chef. Showers at the motel and back to eat a meal fit for a king. Sat around outside drinking Dos Equis and telling poker stories. Between us over 100 years in poker. We had either saw or heard of every poker story ever told. Back up at 6:00AM to fish.

Friendship: Doesn't get much better than this. Sort of what chip collectors get out of our hobby.

Here is the chip part. I found an Agua Caliente hub mold at a shop close to the restaurant. See, I told you I could tie the fish story to chips. <g>

Enough of that:

New Mexico:

City Club

Albuquerque

1963

**CITY CLUB
ALBUQUERQUE, NM.**

**1963
MONO City Club ON BOTH SIDES IN GOLD
KNOWN IN BLUE, RED & PINK**



Walter Melrose

c/o Sidney Weil

Albuquerque

1935 & 37

Info from Mason record card. This is the only info we had to work on. I feel certain Mason Co kept a separate customer list with detailed info similar to the Taylor Co list. I have never seen it. We have the Taylor customer list thanks to the Kefauver Commission subpoena of all their records.

One of the more interesting chips I have run across. Started out in New Mexico then ties to The Playa Ensenada Hotel Casino in Baja Mexico, the 139 Club illegal casino Palm Springs CA, Wilbur Clark of Desert Inn fame, and Copy Rix/ North Shore Club, Lake Tahoe, NV. Plus a mystery connection between two guys, that does not seem to exist. Except on one small Mason Company record card! <g>

Answer me one question. Where else in this hobby can you get more history to unravel and try to understand than the world of illegal casino chips? <g>

Special thanks to a "Friend Of The Hobby."



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The two names on the chip card were interesting to look into.

I know who Sidney Weil was; I think I know who Walter Melrose was; I don't know where the chips were used. Further research might find something.

Sidney Marcus Weil was born in Iowa in 1881, raised in Chicago (newspaper reporter/editor and advertising agent) and moved to New Mexico around 1918 where he was involved in all sorts of business enterprises: mining, real estate, railroad construction, newspapers and gambling.

In the 1930's he billed himself as an investment specialist who offered business counsel; his offices were said to take-up an entire floor of the First National Bank Building.

In May 1935 the Ensenada Finance Corporation was created in Albuquerque and Weil was its president. This company purchased the lease for the Playa Ensenada Hotel and Casino in Baja California, Mexico.

This place was on par with its Mexican resort neighbor Agua Caliente.

Weil died in Albuquerque in 1963, a man lauded for his contributions to the development of New Mexico.

I'm not absolutely certain, but I think the Walter Melrose on the chip order was Walter A. Melrose. Born 1899 in Idaho- railroad brakeman who married in Arizona in 1923 and moved to LA by 1930.

Melrose passed the California Bar in Oct. 1937--he was said to have received his law degree through a correspondence course which he took while working in a Baja California casino (perhaps at Playa Ensenada).

In Feb. 1936 Melrose was arrested during a raid of the 139 Club in Palm Springs, CA--arrested with him was a 27 year old Wilbur Clark. Melrose seems to have been associated with the 139 for several years (this place was popular with Hollywood celebs, just like Playa Ensenada). In 1949 Melrose and several guys from Palm Springs purchased Capy Rix at Lake Tahoe and re-opened it as the North Shore Club.

Melrose died in Palm Springs in 1968.

I tried to find a connection of any kind between Weil and Melrose but only found suggestive circumstantial evidence. I never found any evidence of a Walter Melrose in Albuquerque. (But, yet, he was there to receive the M chips.)

The only Walter Melrose I saw with a connection to gambling was the one mentioned above.

The first date on the chip card is 1 July 1935. Weil was at Playa Ensenada in July 1935 preparing the place for its re-opening. He visited Albuquerque in late July for a week before returning. I think there must have been some kind of connection between Weil and Melrose in Mexico.

All of this info raises more questions than it answers. Needs more research.

Ok, what Club name do I put on this chip file? How about 139 Club Palm Springs, IFFY. <g> Boy, I am going to be sorry I typed that. Those CA boys are going keep me busy posting clarifications for the next 5 years! <g>