

Noms de Felt: Names in Gambling

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Professions, occupations, and quasi-professions use cohesive vocabularies which allow the members of each group to communicate with one another more rapidly and easily. For example, speaking with golfers, we expect to hear terms like tee, putt, birdie, niblick and spoon. Concepts with a high frequency of occurrence often are expressed with abbreviations, clipped forms, word blends, and so on. In addition, members of these groups will use names in ways that are not immediately apparent to outsiders. Usage aids communication, lends individual identity to the occupation or profession, and serves as a union card for the members to recognize one another.

Professional gamblers are no different from other groups in the way they use names and specialized vocabulary. Names are important for group identity and individuation within the group. The difficulty of decoding messages by the uninitiated can sometimes be useful. It is a side effect of the specialized terminology of any group and is sometimes used to keep outsiders or novices puzzled.

This article examines a number of ways names are used among professional gamblers, from monikers and nicknames to names for particular events which occur regularly in card and dice games. The two major sections of the article are divided into "Naming of Gamblers" and "Naming Used in the Games." Subcategories in the first section deal with a special study of names in a poker tournament, names of professional gamblers generally, and pseudonyms of people writing about gambling. The second section contains observations about categorizing gambler types and using names for particular events in playing cards and dice.

I. Naming of Gamblers

Alternate names for individuals include aliases, monikers, and nicknames. Aliases are temporary and often changed by the individual. Their function is to avoid personal identification [Goffman, 59]. The distinction between monikers and nicknames has been well-described [Maurer and Futrell, 243]: nicknames are usually childhood acquisitions, given as terms of affection and often are descriptive (Red, Happy, Sweetpea). The obvious exceptions are nicknames given in adulthood to sports stars, politicians, and other public figures. Monikers, on the other hand, derive from criminal activity and have a subjective bearing on the individual who carries one and an external, public bearing on others who associate with that individual. Because professional gamblers sometimes have been on the fringes of the law (since the type of gambling they do is illegal in many states), it would be difficult to require that all monikers derive from criminal activity. I would modify the Maurer and Futrell definition to make the moniker's assignment through some activity or action relative to the profession. For example, in the analysis of names used for the first study below, nicknames would be extant from childhood or background (Chip, Pug, Chicago Mike, Akron John), while monikers would be names derived from the professional life (Wizard, Owl, Suitcase Murphy, Door Card Charlie).

Names in a Poker Tournament

The World Series of Poker, held at Binion's Horseshoe Club each year, is the oldest of the large tournaments. The fourteenth annual tournament, 1983, featured thirteen separate events, including everything from Mixed Doubles Seven Card High to No-Limit Hold-'Em. 807 players participated in the tournament, representing every state in the U.S. except Delaware and West Virginia. Even Washington, D.C., was represented. Eight states had only one representative, while twenty-one other states had fewer than six representatives. Nevada, Texas, and California (in that order) had the largest contingents of players. The reasons for this are obvious. Most Nevadans, especially poker players, are transplanted from other, less-friendly climes. Texas is the home of Hold-'Em poker, and it sometimes seems as if every newborn in Texas is given a deck of cards as a natal present from the obstetrician. California is Las Vegas' closest neighbor, and card rooms are plentiful in certain townships around Los Angeles, where legalized poker parlors are a local option. In fact, more than half (443) of the participants in the World Series of Poker came from those three states. In addition, 39

of the players were from 18 other countries. Canada and Ireland led the pack with seven players each. Surprisingly, Belgium was next with five players.

Half of these players are not professional gamblers, in the sense that they earn their living in some other way than playing poker. About 50 percent of the participants earn their livings as professional gamblers, according to the tournament director. I collected the names of these players from the tournament registration roll, then checked my sources among the professional gambling fraternity to learn about nicknames any of the participants might have. Many had used their nicknames or monikers in the registration; some had not. In nearly all cases, it appears that those whose nicknames are self-designated used them, while those whose nicknames or monickers had been assigned by someone else did not.

Aliases are not unknown among the gambling fraternity, though not so extensively used as in clearly illegal activities, such as kiting or passing bad checks. Reasons for "cover" are not always related to criminal activities. Sometimes aliases are selected for reasons of euphony or simplicity [Broom, Beem, and Harris, 39]. Only one alias turned up among the tournament players (that could be identified by those within the group) and the initials of the alias were the same as the player's real name. Retention of one's initials while selecting an alias is common practice [Hartman, 54]. An alias detaches the individual from a personal identity, but retention of the initials indulges a sense of ego identity.

Only a few players whose nicknames and monickers are recorded here asked that their real names not be used. In many cases, only a few people know the real names of these players, and the anonymity is precious to them. Different reasons were given for preserving anonymity, but the most frequent reason was that they wanted to be known by their nickname or moniker and the best way to do that was to keep their real names secret. Only one person, not well-known in Las Vegas, admitted he used other names in other cities.

The uniqueness of an individual identity within a group is important. Erving Goffman reports [56ff] that a nickname or moniker serves as an "identity peg," much like fingerprints or a name badge. At the same time, associates can assume that what is notable about this individual relates to them, also. Though the person with a moniker is part of the group, the individual identification is a mark of distinction, a rank which marks that individual as someone with special talents or expertise.

Among all the players in the tournament, only fifty-eight akas surfaced, a shade over seven percent of the total. The bulk of these could

be catalogued in the following fashion:

Nicknames derived from place of origin or national background comprise twenty-six percent of the fifty-eight akas:

Akron John	Frenchy Levelle	Tahoe
Chicago Mike	Irish Don	Texas Dolly
Cincinnati Jay	Jersey	Tex Sheahan
Dakota	Kansas City Kid	The Man from Alaska
Frenchie LeRoux	Oklahoma Johnny	Tucson Don

Only two nicknames are derived from place of origin and feature or attribute: Amarillo Slim and Austin Squatty.

Nicknames derived from physical attributes make up twenty-one percent of the total akas:

- Big Doyle (same as "Texas Dolly" but is sensitive about weight)
- Bones Berland (skinny)
- Deacon Smith (from Kentucky; looks like a deacon--gaunt)
- Ironman (short and powerful)
- The Kid (looks much younger than he is)
- Moose Hampton (large)
- Owl (wears round eyeglasses, giving him an owlish look)
- Pug Pearson (pug nose from childhood injury)
- Red Duke (redhead)
- Slim Ken (aka Kansas City Kid)
- Treetop Strauss (six feet, six inches tall)
- Tuna (very large man)

Nicknames which have some phonological or semantic relationship to the given name account for under ten percent of the total: Blackey Blackburn, Buffalo Butch, Buster Brown, Woodchopper (William Cutter), and Zee Zolotow.

Finally, the nicknames which could be more purely considered monikers come from various gambling activities. These account for just under twenty percent of the total of akas. More importantly, they total less than two percent of the total number of players registered in the tournament. Needless to say, they are among the most colorful players on the circuit, the most sought after for association by hangers-on, and the most widely known (although old-timers like Johnny Moss, Pug Pearson, Texas Dolly and a few others reign as the "Grand Old Men" at any large gathering of poker players):

- Banzai (crazy player, will bet on anything)
- Buster (can deal seconds, thirds, jump-cuts, and so on; card manipulator)
- Crazy Kid (will bet large amounts, seemingly without reason, crazy chatter)
- Crying Jonesy (complains of losses, incessantly)
- The Edge (high percentage of picking winners in sports events)
- Fortune (wins, loses large amounts)
- Owl (wears hornrimmed dark glasses at the table)
- Sky Hawk (self-imposed name. Some use it in his presence out of deference)
- Suitcase Murphy (ready to travel anywhere for a game)

T Bone (no one knows anything else and he won't tell)

The Wizard (once accused of making giant stacks of black chips disappear)

The paucity of monikers in a large tournament like that held annually at Binion's Horseshoe gives us only a partial picture of nicknames and monikers among professional gamblers. Such tournaments attract many casual, or "kitchen table" players who look forward to rubbing elbows with a fairly elite group of people who make their living at the table. The lure of "association with" [Goffman, 56] lends a patina of excitement to being in the company of professional gamblers, not unlike the associations sought by gangsters and famous entertainers for each other.

Other Professional Gamblers

Not all professional gamblers who visit Las Vegas regularly play in the World Series of Poker [Peters]. A number of other professional gamblers with nicknames or monikers are to be found at the tables irregularly [Hopkins, 1978, 1983]. Cadillac Jack looks well-heeled, drives fancy cars and wears expensive shoes. He is what used to be described as a "sportsman with no visible means of support." Charlie Chan looks Oriental, but more importantly, has no "tells," those little tics and habits that allow other players to "read" him when he has a particularly good hand. The Dunce looks dumb, but he isn't. Door Card Charlie pounds the first card dealt (called the "door card" in seven-card stud). Long John is very tall and The Rabbit is a very quiet player. Some names relate to other referents: Pioneer Tom owns the Pioneer Club in Las Vegas. No one really knows how Miner or Pots-and-Pans got their handles.

Pejorative names are not often appreciated by those who bear them. The Louse is an example. Yet he now wears the sobriquet with a degree of acceptance, if not with pride. Such a name can be a "stigma symbol" rather than a "prestige symbol" [Goffman, 44], but it is nonetheless a status symbol and may even be envied by those who have been around for years, but who have not been given an "identity peg" of their own. Any nickname or moniker increases the prestige of the bearer, helps to mark the individual from the rest of the crowd. In earlier days, The Galloper tried to outrun his moniker. Bill Harrah [1978] has said of him, "he was around in the 1930's. He was a crossroader, a cheater who moved rapidly from one casino to another."

Most self-designated names fail to "take." I know of no one who refers to David Sklansky, a fine professional player and a fine author of gambling books, as Resident Wizard, the name listed on his business card.

Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder inherited his name by analogy with Nick the Greek (whose full name was Nicholas Andrea Dandolos). Snyder came along after Nick the Greek was gone, but seemed to have the same uncanny knack for making big money.

Employees in casinos, particularly craps dealers, often use descriptive names for degenerates (habitual players who rarely play for large amounts of money). These identifiers are often pejorative in nature, but are tolerated by the players, even enjoyed, because the nicknames separate them from the rest of the crowd; the names afford a degree of notability, perhaps notoriety to persons who would otherwise be considered only eccentrics. Sweet Marie is such an habitual player. Her nickname is facetious, because she is noted for her vulgar talk. She is also called Dirty Marie or Dirty Mary. The Gallstone Cowboy is a dishwasher at one downtown Las Vegas casino who affects fancy cowboy costumes. The reference is to a reversal of Rhinestone Cowboy. Chainsaw, known also as The Chainsaw Manicurist, bites his nails constantly while placing bets. Benny the Bite would actually bite the wooden rail on the table if he was losing consistently. The Quarter Pounder, a reference to the hamburger, is applied to a player who would tap the bet (usually twenty-five cents) he left on the table after a win.

Behavioral changes have resulted from the regular use of nicknames by dealers. The Coatrack is a regular in one casino who hung sweaters from his belt while at the table. After a few months of being referred to by this name, he began to use coathangers dangling from his belt to carry more articles of clothing. He was initially noted for his eccentric behavior, but soon capitalized on the notoriety. He was being noticed, and was pleased to extend that notice.

Generally, dealers use the same naming processes again and again. Names are assigned by appearance (Elmer Fudd, Stubby, Pig Pen, Mr. and Mrs. Hog Jowls), by activity (Mad Hopper jumps from table to table making hop bets, that is, single-roll bets; Chips Ahoy moves from table to table carrying a large stack of low-denomination chips in one hand), or by a single event (Crash Cadillac drove his car off the third floor of the parking garage at one casino). One entire family has been stigmatized, but at least noted. A married couple and their two daughters who frequent downtown casinos are collectively known as Mr. and Mrs. Puke and the Pukettes. They have no notion that they are referred to by the unflattering names.

Some older appellatives are understandable only in the context of the times. William Crockford, founder of Crockford's Club on St. James Street in London, around 1828, was called "Father of Hell and Hazard." Early gambling dens in the United States were called "gam-

bling hells” or “hells.” Hazard was a popular dice game.

Occasionally we are given a well-annotated explanation of a moniker. John Phillip Quinn records one St. Louis sport from the end of the nineteenth century:

Sugar Bob received this singular cognomen from the oily manner in which he used to sympathize with “suckers” after they had been fleeced. If his honeyed words failed to console them for their losses, it was universally conceded that there was no further use for attempting to employ the influence of kindness. [415]

Sometimes a pseudonym undergoes a number of shifts [Morehead]. Henry Jones was an English author who adopted the name of a club in London, writing under the pseudonym Cavendish. The name was later adopted by other clubs, whether because of the influence of Jones or the original Cavendish Club no one knows. One well-known club for bridge experts in New York adopted the name. Since that time, other authors have used the name Cavendish to write about bridge and whist.

Noms de Plume

Many authors have used pseudonyms to write on a variety of topics. And their reasons for using pen names have been as varied as culture and custom demanded. Sometimes pen names have been used by women writing in a man’s world (George Sand), or by men who create a persona as an author (Samuel Clemens writing as both Carl Byng and Mark Twain, A.A. Fair, better known as Erle Stanley Gardner, and Charles Dodgson as Lewis Carrol, of course). Occasionally a name like Hoyle may become nearly generic, as Webster’s name did among dictionary makers.

Authors of works on gambling sometimes use names reflecting the area of gambling under discussion, sometimes use plain-sounding names that would not be thought unusual. Many of these are found in Jack Gardner’s bibliography.

First are the pseudonyms of authors relating to a particular area of gambling. Ace Jacks is the author of a 1976 work on playing Black-jack. Jack King is the nom de plume of Allen Nicholas Dowling, who has published no fewer than five separate books on the mysteries of poker. Rex King is listed as the author of a short tome on betting systems. More creative was the author of a 1970 book, *Casino Holiday*, who wrote as Jacques Noir (Jack Black, or Blackjack). With a small spelling variant, Jack Hart wrote *Gamble and Win* in 1971.

Ranging a bit further afield, we learn that a dice player calling himself Nick Gambola wrote *The Happy Crapper* in 1974. Nick is a com-

mon term used for a would-be gambler in Las Vegas (rather a generic, like Paddy for any Irishman or José for a Mexican). Gambola = “gambler.” Johnny Moss, before becoming rich and famous as a jackpot winner, wrote a book under the name of Jack Potter. In the same vein, the author of a 1972 book on Canadian racetracks used the name A. Punter (punter is the generic British name for a bettor).

A bit more difficult is the name Turwin. In 1975, two pamphlets appeared, one dealing with dice and roulette, the other with horse-race betting. Whether the name is based on analogy with “to-win” or “turf-win” is difficult to say. A similar problem arises with a book on dice tables. John Savage and Scott Merideth are names used by the same author. I have not learned which is the pseudonym.

Names that one might not think unusual at first glance become suspicious upon closer examination. John T. Casey was listed as the author of an undated turf handicapping book. But the publication was only thirty-one pages long and listed *three* editors: King Hanson, Boots Baker, and Delbert Downs. The name King (horse racing is “the sport of kings”) has already been seen. Hanson sounds suspiciously like a handsome cab, though we may be grasping at straws. Boots are worn by jockeys, and the word “Downs” is found in the names of many racetracks. Given the shortness of the book and the incredible coincidence of names, I am suspicious.

Confirmation of such suspicions is usually happenstance. An 1898 book of anecdotes about the pitfalls of gambling describes a Victorian, cynical view of the efficacy of gambling in England. *The Gambling World: Anecdotic Memories and Stories of Personal Experience in the Temples of Hazard and Speculation* is written in the breathless style designed to appeal to those gentlemen who might like “to have been there.” The authors are listed as Charles William Heckethorn and Henry Vizetelly, as pseudonyms of Rouge et Noir, which today is the name of a thriving publishing concern. The first author listed has a nice, proper British name. Vizetelly sounds slightly jaded and continental. Heckethorn tells Vizetelly’s story of excesses, scandal, and bouds in exruciating detail before announcing the miscreant has seen the error of his ways. Sometimes the relationship between author and subject is more transparent. It was Sam Christian who exposes *God, Satan, Gamblers, and Howard Hughes in Las Vegas* in a 1974 publication by the Las Vegas-based Christian Corporation.

Some pseudonyms, on the other hand, sound eminently plausible. Lawrence Revere was the pen name of one anonymous author of at least three sophisticated and respected books on blackjack systems. One of the titles carried a price tag of two hundred dollars when it

was published in 1972. And Frank R. Wallace used the alliterating name Wally Ward for his book with the encouraging title *Poker: A Guaranteed Income for Life*. Irving Rottenberg clipped his name to Irv Roddy to publish a breezy, colorful book on kitchen-table poker. The delightfully ambiguous subtitle of his book is *Penny Poker for Millions*, though he never says whether the millions are people or dollars. One publisher in Las Vegas has an entire series of forty-eight-page pamphlets sold in casino shops dealing with "The Facts of..." blackjack, craps, keno, roulette, baccarat, bingo, slot machines. Walter I. Nolan is the name selected as author of the in-house written booklets.

Sometimes authors use a pseudonym to separate areas in which they publish. Lancelot Humble and Igor Kusyszyn are the same person. Lance Humble publishes a newsletter at irregular intervals in which he updates subscribers on places to play or avoid, new systems of betting and such things. As Igor Kusyszyn, he reads papers at learned conferences and has edited a scholarly book, *Studies in the Psychology of Gambling*, Simon and Schuster, 1972.

An author may find it useful to have a collaborator, whether real or imagined. E.S. Andrews is an anagram of S. Erdnase who wrote a book on manipulating cards. He created a Professor Hoffman in order to give credit to his own tricks. Yet, it seems there really was a Professor Hoffman who used the pseudonym Angelo Joken Lewis to warn young men of the dangers of playing baccarat in a book dating from 1891. The professor especially warned novices about cardsharps who deal seconds or "manipulate cards." In like manner, Jeff Hand created a character, The Colonel, listed as co-author on his horse-betting book. The Colonel is a common enough appellation around the track. Still another author, Edwin Reid, offers a betting system he inherited from "Uncle Jim."

Some pseudonyms are a bit more difficult to fathom and invite conjecture. Effemar, with no first name (F.M.R.?), authored a dice book. Lightnin Rod wrote "Hustler's Convention," a one hundred and twenty-five page narrative poem. Mike Barron is a contemporary author who calls himself "Pitcher." Billikin is the pseudonym listed on a 1924 book on British gaming. Rigel Spica is the exotic cognomen for Richard Carter, who published a book on using astrology to pick horses. Pittsburgh Phil is the name used by George E. Smith, who described himself in the title to his 1908 book as "the most successful speculator in the history of the American turf." Poker Alice was the sobriquet of "a gentlelady of English origin" who dealt and managed faro and poker games in western boom towns before the turn of the century. Her full name was Alice Ivers Duffield Tubbs Huckert. Before her death in 1930, she went by Alice Ivers, having outlived and outlasted her suitors

and husbands.

The use of first names is apparently non-threatening to potential buyers. One such pamphlet with no publisher, author, or date is "Aunt Sally's Policy Player's Dream Book and Wheel of Fortune." Another, dated 1965, is "Policy Pete's Mutuel Number Dream Book," indicating that Aunt Sally and Policy Pete have a contemporary following.

In conducting my search for pen names of people writing about gambling, I had some unexpected success and some equally surprising failures. Some names I would have expected to be pen names: Golden, Goldman, Goodfriend, or Goodman. I finally hit paydirt with John Goodwin, pseudonym of an English writer telling punters how to win at soccer pari-mutuels. Richard D. Duke is the legitimate name of a gestalt psychologist who wrote a book on the theoretical nature of games as communication behavior. But Dick DaDuke was an enticing possibility. Dean Wiley was another author I hoped to expose. His book is a serious, high-minded work on systems and odds. But in gambling parlance, "Dean" is a nickname, like "Perfessor," given to anyone who understands and can use true odds. Wiley would be an appropriate adjective for describing such a person. Alas, it was not the case. Dean Wiley is his real name.

My favorite name in the search for noms de plume of gamblers turned out to be a real name. A famous figure in Louisiana history who got his start as a Mississippi gambler was Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback. James Haskins published the biography in 1973.

II. Names of Player Types, Card and Dice Combinations

The frequency of certain events and phenomena eventually leads people to personify those events or phenomena. For example, Chicago is often swept by a chilling wind blowing in from the lake. Because of its regularity and particular bitterness at some times of the year, some residents call the wind "Hawk." If the wind is especially cold or bitter, a native might say, "Mr. Hawk has come to town tonight," thereby imbuing a note of respect for an act of nature. In like fashion, people in the Pacific Northwest refer to a warm winter wind as a "Chinook," though I have never heard anyone personify the phenomena as we do "Ole Man Winter" or "Mother Nature."

Gamblers also utilize this language device to classify types of players and inanimate objects such as cards and dice, even to giving names to particular combinations of these phenomena.

Names of Player Types

Although players are as varied in their actions as people engaged in

any activity, certain repeated characteristics allow dealers and professional players to typify other players.

Buster Brown is usually given as an oral signal to a crooked dice confederate to put gaffed dice (called "busters," from their ability to bust a player's bankroll) into the game. It might also tell a cardsharp that a crooked deal is in progress.

C-Note Charlie is a reference to a player who plays hundred-dollar chips. I have heard it used in reference to a player who plays hundred-dollar bills only, spurning the house chips.

George is a big tipper, or in the parlance of dealers, "a top toker." This name may reflect an earlier use (dating at least to 1927 on the Eastern seaboard) in the sense of "wise to the lore of the underworld" [Kane, 438]. By extension it could refer to one who "knows how to get along" among professional gamblers.

Georgette is the female version of George, but normally plays a hand at Blackjack for the dealer. If the dealer wins, the bet and the win go into the "toke box," a box in the twenty-one pit. At the end of the shift, dealers split the tokes into equal shares.

Hemingway is sometimes, "Mr. Hemingway." This is an oral code which tells another player, "I recognize you as a fellow cheater." The two players might then act in concert to "whipsaw" a player between them by raising the amount of bets.

John is any honest player, often a sucker, pigeon, mark, lamb, or "Square John." The use is not restricted to gambling. Prostitutes use the term in referring to "tricks."

Jonah is a player who is unlucky or brings bad luck to a player. It is not restricted to gambling, but used with tremendous regularity.

Jones is a degenerate player. Members of the gambling fraternity refer to anyone who plays regularly but does not play in high-stakes games as a "degenerate." This is not a pejorative name within the profession, but most novices think it is.

Larry is the last player to make a bet or to get into a poker pot. Some professional players remember using the term as youngsters in reference to the last person chosen for a pick-up game of stickball. Forms of the name are traced to West Yorkshire and Wright in 1892 [English Dialect Dictionary]. The term is found in reference to the last shooter in a marble game, usually the fourth player [Harder, 24, 29].

Old Bill, or any reference to Old Bill made with palms upward is an oral code asking, "Are you a cheater?"

Stonewall Jackson refers to a person who does not tip, but demands favors at the tables, such as free drinks or cigarettes. This player gener-

ally is considered worse than a tightwad, since a tightwad does not tip nor ask for favors.

Tom is a close relative of Stonewall Jackson. This person plays at a table for a long period of time, usually for small stakes only, but accepts free drinks whenever offered by a cocktail waitress.

Tony is an oral code in a dice game where a cheater is asking a confederate whether or not loaded dice are being used in the game.

The use of names of player types in this fashion serves as communication particularly among dealers in casinos who deal regularly with the general public. The referents allow one dealer who is being relieved at a table to tell the new dealer how to behave and what to expect. At the same time, the code creates the group identity among dealers who see themselves always in an adversary relationship to the players. This adversarial position does not result from a fear of losing money (although a dealer who consistently loses may jeopardize the job), since the dealer is playing with house money. It is closer to what Maurer calls "a compensatory tendency to establish superiority" [179]. The stigma symbols attached to the suckers vitiates the stigmas attached to being a lowly dealer in a shady occupation [Goffman, 44]. While most dealers who work for casinos make a comfortable living financially, they perceive themselves as being excluded from the mainstream of community life.

It is not surprising that the oral code can be used not only among the members of the profession, but parts of it are shared with the general public.

Names of Hold'em Combinations

Poker players depend on a degree of camaraderie around the table to make playing conditions pleasant for all the players, particularly the losers. The talk is often light and lively, except in the highest stakes games, and a part of the oral code allows the casual player to share in the camaraderie without being included in the circles of "serious" players.

Hold'em is a popular game among poker players. It is fast-moving, generates large pots quickly and each hand takes only a few seconds to play, so that anyone who drops from the hand during the betting does not have long to wait for more action.

The game is a variant of seven-card stud. Two cards are dealt face down to each player, then the first round of bets is made. The dealer then deals the next five cards face up in the middle of the table. Players who remain in the pot through the betting rounds then use their two down cards in conjunction with the five community cards face up

on the table to make the best five card hand they can for the show-down. The two cards held in the hand are consequently very important. Many combinations of these two cards have special names which will be recognized by professional hold'em players and "tourists" alike. Many of these references change from time to time, but some have an amazing life-span.

- Ajax—ace and jack. Also called *Foamy Cleanser* (see below).
- American Airlines—two red aces.
- Barbara Hutton—five and ten. Commemorates the dime-store heiress. Also called "nickles and dimes."
- Baskin-Robbins—three and ace. Reference to thirty-one flavors of ice cream.
- Beer Hand—seven and two.
- Big Slick—ace and king. Considered a better hand than a pair of aces or a pair of kings by professional players, and likely to win more pots. Yet the novice will bet more heavily with a pair in the hole, and the professional will "slicker" the tourist. Also called *Santa Barbara* (see below).
- Broderick Crawford—ten and four. From police (and CB) code for "okay."
- Canine—king and nine. A blend.
- Columbia River—king and seven.
- Computer Hand—queen and seven.
- Crabs—pair of threes. Three in dice is "craps," formerly "crabs."
- Dead Man's Hand—ace and eight. A reference to bad luck associated with the hand held by Wild Bill Hickock when he was killed by Jack McCall during a poker game in Deadwood, South Dakota, in 1876 [Adams, 90].
- Doyle Brunson—two and ten. Doyle Brunson won the World Series of Poker two years in a row, 1976 and 1977, holding this combination. From earlier years, and still, in parts of Texas, a Doyle Brunson (always called such, though his nickname is "Texas Dolly") is an ace-queen, because he *never* plays this hand, usually throwing it face-up on the table [Brunson, 519].
- Eyes of Texas—a pair of aces. Also called "needles."
- Finky Dink—eight and five.
- Foamy Cleanser—ace and jack. From the slogan for Ajax cleanser.
- Grand Jury—three fours (usually the three community cards dealt face-up after each player is dealt two cards face-down).
- Jack Benny—three and nine.
- Jesse James—four and five.
- King Crab—king and three. A three in dice is "craps," formerly "crabs."
- Kojack—king and jack. From the name of a television series.
- Kokomo—king and eight.
- Kotch—three sixes, usually on the flop (first three cards dealt face-up in the center of the table after two cards are dealt to each player).
- Little Oldsmobile—pair of eights. From the car model.
- Lumberman's Hand—two and four. From 2 x 4 lumber.
- Marriage—king and queen.
- Maverick—queen and jack.
- Motown Hand—jack and five. Reportedly from a singing group, the Jackson Five, but one source reports it to be older than that group. Possibly from

- extending hand, palm up, and saying, "Gimme five, Jack."
 Oldsmobile—nine and eight. From the car model.
 Pickle Man—five and seven. From Heinz fifty-seven varieties.
 Pinochle—queen of spades and jack of diamonds. From the game, pinochle.
 Quinine—queen and nine. A blend.
 Railroad Hand—jack and six.
 Railroad Tracks—pair of tens. From the rows of fives on each card.
 Raquel Welch—three and eight. From her breast measurement.
 Santa Barbara—ace and king. Usually called "Big Slick," but a large oil slick from a tanker near Santa Barbara accounts for the newer term.
 Twiggy—two and nine. From the breast measurement of a fashion model.
 Union Oil—seven and six.
 Visine—two red aces. The term is usual around Lake Tahoe. In most card-rooms in Nevada and California, two red aces are called American Airlines.
 Woolworths—five and ten. Also called a "Barbara Hutton," after the dime-store heiress, or "nickels and dimes."

A number of names commemorate particular players because of a notable win or because some event related to the card combination happened to that player. This is essentially what happened with Dead Man's Hand. Whether or not the Doyle Brunson will have such a long life is difficult to say. Some other current names referring to (fairly) famous players are often remembered, though the circumstances of their creation just as often are not recalled.

- Ainsworth—six and two
 Blocky—six and three
 Bully Johnson—three and five
 Goolsby—queen and ten
 Joe Bernstein—six and nine
 Johnny Moss—ace and ten
 Rod Peate—king and jack of diamonds. This is a powerful hand in Hold'em, but Rod Peate lost the 1983 World Series of Poker with these cards.
 Tony Green—king and eight. This term is used mainly at Circus Casino and commemorates a professional player who plays in Nevada, California, and Texas.
 Weinberg—ten and three

As can be seen from this list, many of the names for card combinations refer to recent events, notable people, or commercial brands. Allusion plays a larger role than oral language devices like alliteration or rhyming in the use of these names. The processes are strikingly different with names relating to other kinds of poker games. Hold'em terms often refer to specific well-known players, that is, hold'em players known regionally or nationally. This may stem from the fact that hold'em (also known as "hold-me-darling") appealed to a fairly specif-

ic group of players from Texas and Oklahoma, and to people from around the country who enjoyed high stakes games with these players.

Other Names in Poker

Some names are peculiar to particular cards for poker hands. Others have the name of a city or state attached to them. In this listing, however, names of cities and states associated with types of card games are not listed. Only those cities and states with reference to a particular combination of cards are catalogued. Names of persons, even though they may be variations of card games rather than card combinations, have been recorded. As with the names of hold'em combinations, many of the sources have not been recovered yet. Etymological research in a lexicon which has existed mainly in an oral tradition is difficult. While words and terms are passed along through the years, rarely are stories recorded about the circumstances which gave rise to the terms in the first place.

Arkansas Flush—a four-card flush in a hand requiring five cards. The term “fourflusher” derives from the attempt to pretend an Arkansas Flush can win a hand.

Betty Hutton—a variation of seven-card stud with fives and nines wild. Broadway—an ace-high straight in poker.

Cecil—a one hundred-dollar bill (from Century, or C-note).

Curse of Mexico—two of spades.

Curse of Scotland—nine of diamonds. From Webster's *Third*, we learn, “so called from its similarity to the coat of arms of Sir John Dalrymple, First Earl of Stair, d. 1707. Scots lawyer, as lord advocate partly responsible for the massacre of the MacDonald clan at Glencoe, Scotland, in 1692.” How or why the card came to an association with a curse, however, is unrecorded.

Dead Man's Hand—two pair, aces and eights, from the hand held by Wild Bill Hickock when he was shot during a game in Deadwood, South Dakota in 1876. Different authors have argued in vain that the fifth card was another eight, a ten, or a queen. See *hold'em hands*, above.

Devil's Bedposts—the four of clubs.

Doctor Pepper—seven-card stud with twos, fours, and tens wild.

Elk River—three tens in a poker hand. Also known as Thirty Miles, Thirty Dirty Miles, and Thirty Dirty Miles of Railroad Track.

Judge Duffy—three tens in poker (from “thirty days”).

Ku Klux Klan (also Klu Klux Klan)—three kings in poker.

Mop Squeezers—queens in poker.

Office Hours—a nine-to-five or eight-to-four straight in poker.

Typewriter—a queen in poker.

Some names are used more generally. Black Maria is the name given to the queen of spades in the game of Hearts. A particularly important card in a game may be known by different names. Calamity Jane

and Slippery Anne both refer to the queen of spades in the game Black Lady. Blue Peter is a signal used in Whist to tell a partner to lead trump. And some names encompass entire areas, while demonstrating an attitude sometimes humorous, sometimes cynical, toward people who come from those areas. Thus, a California C-Note is a ten dollar bill, and a California Prayer Book is a deck of cards. Reno uses a self-designation, "The Biggest Little City in the World," while Las Vegas is sometimes called, especially by long-haul truck drivers, "Lost Wages." Names for Las Vegas Boulevard include The Strip and Broadway of the Sagebrush, depending on whether the speaker is referring to the local designation or speaking pejoratively.

Wherever the action is fast, and a crowd can gather, names of combinations are likely to surface. Most people learn these names by hearing others use them. Nowhere is this more common than around the craps table.

Names in Dice

Craps players are a more vociferous group than are poker players. Craps dealers must keep the chatter going, must entice the players crowded around a craps table to keep the action lively. Players are less inhibited about shouting names of dice combinations as they are rolled. Names can refer to some well-known person or thing. Often, the names rhyme with the number or another craps phrase. So many terms in the following list are rhymes or off-rhymes that they are left unmarked, unless especially vague. Contemporary events and personalities often surface in the names of dice combinations for a time, then fall into disuse, except among old-timers. Whether E.T. as a proposition bet, taken from the name of the popular movie, or the reference to Dolly Parton will last, only time can tell. Some of the terms are quite old, but still in regular use, such as Gary Cooper. Other names probably owe their longevity to rhyming devices, or to vulgar references, like Big Dick.

Ada from Decatur—the point eight.

Big Dick—a vulgar reference to the point ten, perhaps from *dix*, "ten."

Big Dick from Boston—the point ten in craps.

Big Joe from Boston—the point ten in craps.

Carolina—short for "Nina from Carolina," the point nine.

Dolly Parton—a roll of the point two (also "snake eyes").

E.T.—a proposition bet in craps on the points eleven or twelve (movie).

Easy on the Tennessee—roll of ten "the easy way," a six and a four.

El Paso—said when a player passes the dice, refuses to take a turn; facetious Spanish inf. on "the pass" and on the city.

Gary Cooper—roll of twelve ("boxcars") from *High Noon*.

Jimmy Hicks—the point six.
 Johnny Hicks—the point six.
 Little Dick—the point four (opposite Big Dick, a ten, on the layout).
 Little Joe—the point four.
 Little Joe from Baltimore—the point four.
 Little Joe from Kokomo—the point four.
 Little Phoebe—the point five (also “Fever,” slant rhyme for “fiver”).
 Manna from Heaven—a roll of eleven.
 Nina from Argentina—the point nine.
 Nina Ross—the point nine (also, “Nina Ross, the stable hoss”).
 Phoebe—the point five (also “Fever”).
 Sister Hix—the point six.
 Sixie from Dixie—the point six.
 Skinny Dugan, or Dugan—a roll of seven, a “crapout.”
 Tennessee Tom—the point ten.
 Texas Sunflowers— a roll of “hard ten,” two fives.

The difference between names used in hold'em or other poker games and craps reflects the distinctive manner of patter around the two types of tables. Craps lends itself to rapid patter and the oral device of rhyming phrases is well-evidenced. The use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance is more common to craps than to cards. Occasionally, clipping takes place, as noted with Nina Ross and Phoebe, above. But the vowel correspondence to the number referents (nine and “fever,” for five) remains.

III. Conclusion

Any attempt to catalogue the cohesive vocabulary of a specialized group has drawbacks. This attempt presents two interesting problems. It is not comprehensive in that it treats only naming practices observed in the group, not other aspects of the cohesive vocabulary. A more comprehensive treatment is underway in a larger project called the *Dictionary of Gaming and Gambling*, only now nearing the completion of raw data sheets and citation sources. Writing and editing of definitions will begin when the citations collected become repetitious enough to indicate most discrete terms are in the master file.

A second problem, and a thornier one, derives from the fact that much of the material exists only in the oral tradition. Consequently, many of the names listed here merely posit the existence of the terms. As time goes by, written citations will be found for some. We can only regret that etymological information for many will remain unrecorded or only conjectural. Needless to say, any information that readers of this article can supply will be most helpful. All of the volunteer readers on the project miss important references from time to time, and there

is no opportunity, at this stage, to indulge in the luxury of multiple readings.

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Names of particular card or dice games which refer to cities or states are not included in this study—names like California Lowball, Omaha, Carolina, Michigan, Charleston, Boston, Chicago Razz, Klondike, Tennessee Stud. These games are the subject of a separate study now underway.

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