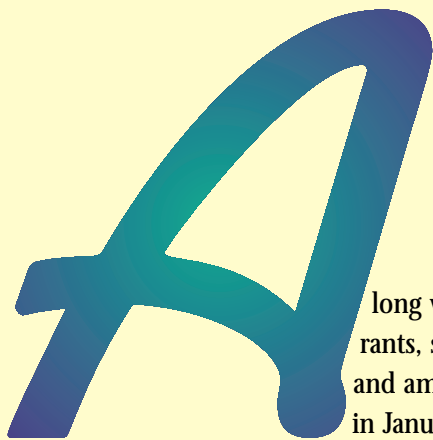


# Viva Las Vegas!

by Bob Hammon, CPF



Along with shows, restaurants, shopping, casinos and amusements, Las Vegas in January will also bring the West Coast Art & Frame Show. This is a great opportunity for frame and gallery staff to attend a trade show and convention while having a good time! And what could be a better backdrop for brainstorming about framing designs for casino chips?

## The Deal

When in Las Vegas you will ultimately brush up against the casino gaming tables, where you'll notice the colorful chips that have created collectors of even the meekest individual. Nationwide, there are over 2,200 members in the Casino Chip & Gaming Token Collectors Club ([www.ccgctcc.com](http://www.ccgctcc.com)), plus many novice collectors. The chips are used at tables for blackjack, roulette and craps, to name a few. Unlike the \$1 brass tokens used in slot machines, the colorful chips are in various denominations from \$1 to \$1,000. The most collectible is the \$1 chip because of its cost.

## The Set-Up

Framing the chips may be a simple project or an elaborate display. Generally the approach to framing these objects is similar to that of coins. The chips have the

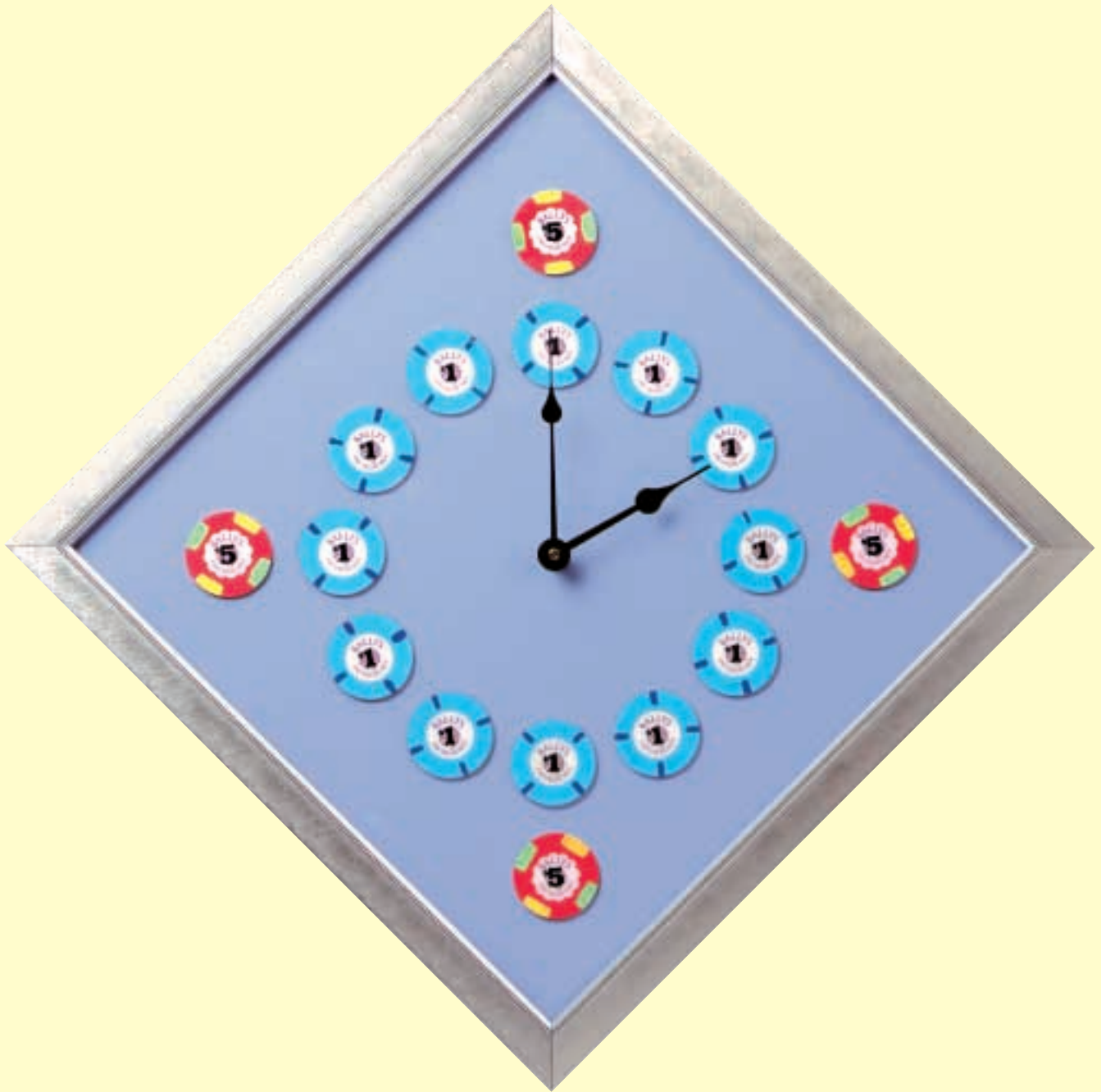


*Although the chips can be held in place with reverse bevel cut mat openings, these were mounted in a sheet of acrylic.*

potential to be quite valuable, so to mount them with glue is not the best option. The  $1\frac{1}{16}$ " chip will not fit in standard plastic clips, so any avenue you choose will have to be a product of your own design and labor.

I wanted to create a framed decorative Las Vegas souvenir that was also functional. It needed to be simple, use scrap materials, and cost little. The idea to design a desk clock came to mind. To make this clock, two pieces of acrylic glazing were used. Acrylic accommodates drilling a center hole for the clock stem. The clock movement was purchased at a craft supply store for under \$5. (If you cannot find movements in your area, call KLOCKIT at (800) 556-2548 for a catalog.) The chips were confined on the lower acrylic sheet by a double line of spacers and sandwiched by the top sheet. The movement was added and all the materials were fitted into a square picture frame with an easel back. The chips look rather

# A Practical Frame Design for Gambling Chip Collectors



*For gambling chip collectors—or anyone who wants a souvenir of Las Vegas—this frame design is both colorful and practical.*

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*This desk clock (with hands removed) has a background made of chips.*



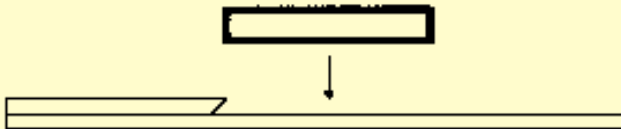
*An earlier version of the wall clock was 12" x 12".*

stunning as a clock.

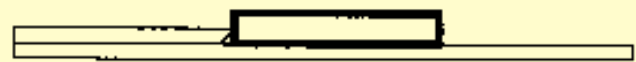
The clock bug must have bitten me, because my second project also turned out to be a clock (see Photo 2). The large wall clock measured 12 ½" square, plus the frame. I designed it to hang as a diamond, and again, I

that hold the chips in place. The third layer is matboard, again with a hole to accommodate the clock stem.

With shop tools in hand, advance planning and patience, I began the job. I first made a jig in wood that helped me make a ¼" thick acrylic template. The tem-



*One technique holds the chips in place with reverse bevel cuts in matboard.*



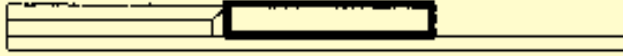
*Experiment to find the exact size that will hold the chip snugly.*

utilized end cuts of acrylic sheet for the glazing and scrap matboard cutouts for the color backing. Rather than a solid layer of chips, I wanted to position the chips so they could serve as numbers on the clock face.

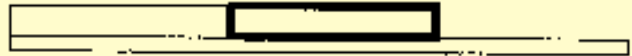
This required two sheets of acrylic and one of matboard. The top sheet of acrylic has only a single centered hole. The second sheet has a centered hole, plus cutouts

plate was secured to the new acrylic sheet for routing by the drilled center hole. The boring and routing were done slowly with a top-piloted plunge bit. The result was a clean-cut acrylic holder. The chips were put in place and all the parts were sandwiched together by the clock stem and the framers point around the edges. The back was left open for battery access.

# Viva Las Vegas!



*A spacer will hold the chip closer to the mat surface.*



*An acrylic holder will also keep the chip in place.*

The standard approach to chip framing uses a multi-opening mat. The technique is to reverse-cut the holes (from behind) to hold the chips (see diagram). By much experimentation, you will find the proper size that will allow the chips to be held snugly. From there on it is just layout and cutting. Spacers between the mat and support will let the chip be held closer to the front of the mat. This helps prevent the glass from bowing by the otherwise protruding chips.



*Holes were cut in the acrylic with a saw.*

## The Payoff

With a pocket full of winnings, your imagination and some usual discards, you can also frame a memento for your gallery or shop. Examples like these just might spur a customer to bring in some items they had no idea how to display. Highlighting your talents in this way will add to your future sales.

A few things in closing. When flying home, the gaming chips will set off the airport x-ray because of the high lead content in the clay, so be prepared for that one! If you cannot come to Las Vegas, casino chips can be bought online from collectors and vendors. ■



*The acrylic mount holds the chips above the matboard surface.*