



Desperation in Vegas

by **Chris Bassani**

Landed in Vegas, dropped \$100 at the airport where all payouts must be paid by an attendant who was nowhere in sight ... that was probably a hint.

Nevermind, went to the Mirage Casino and paid the taxi driver a lazy \$20 on top of \$2 tip. The US is the land of gratuity which means you tip everyone you meet, until you go broke - then you go home.

But not me. Vegas is the capital of the punt and let's face it there has never been a better punter than yours truly.

A \$9 million pokies jackpot a cinch, but I dropped another \$200 - never really liked pikes anyway.

At this rate I will be home within the hour.

Free drinks if you're playing though you have to tip the waitress - I gave her \$3 - well she was cute and the skimpy uniform didn't hurt.

A meal and tipped the food waitress - you've got to otherwise they jot your name down for the frontline in Baghdad - or want to anyway.

Down more than \$400 - ahh my old friend blackjack - why didn't I think of that before.

Lost four hands and won one. The croupier eyes me off for a tip. I stay solid and pretend not to notice. She turns the conversation to others on the table. Yes I've been given the Khyber. She obviously thought friendly fire in Baghdad would be suitable.

Start progressing and make up \$100 but croupier has nerves of steel and I eventually hand over a tenner.

Next day, a day of sightseeing.

Then back to business. Tipped fellow who opened the Taxi door for me for the fifth time -

nice job that.

Also the bus driver, drinks waitress, food waitress, concierge, bell boy, croupier, the cleaner, the tote/sportsbook operator, barman and then gave a beggar a fiver - after all, he did nothing for me either, so why should he miss out.

By this time, this old dog punter needs a winner! All casinos have a sports book and tote/bookie where you can bet on horses, trots and all sports. I asked if I can bet on the dogs - pretending it was only half an inquiry otherwise that would have cost me a dollar.

"I think a casino bets on them but I'm not sure which one," the fine gentleman said (only giving half an answer and for no money exchange - they can see you coming a mile off).

Not to worry the horses will have to do for now. Started at 9am, bet on 10 different tracks in America, over three time zones and now it was 8pm.

It was also pay-dirt time.

Snagged an exacta at the Lone Star track in Texas which paid \$645 for my \$2 investment.

"Nice win Sir and what's your tax security number," tote lady says.

No I haven't got one, I'm from Australia," I replied.

"Ah that's unfortunate, you'll have to pay tax," "Ahhhh."

"Yes sir 30% because you're from Australia and they don't have a treaty with the US on these things. Now if you were Austrian you would have got the lot."

At this stage I wanted to slap my knees, clap my hands and say something like "hurtie flurgy,

bratworst, Helga”, but it was too late, I’m not Austrian.

Rule is if you back something over 300-1 and your payout is over \$600, you pay tax.

“If it paid \$590 you would have received the lot, but now you owe us \$190 and after such a nice win a bit of gratuity would be appreciated,” the lady said.

Quickly I get to the next casino and ask about the 300-1 rule. They explain it exactly the same way. I was resigned to think that with 30 million visitors a year, did I really think I could catch ‘em out?

Tipped everyone I saw, asked for the casino where I could bet on the pups.

“Ahh, there is one but I can’t remember where.”

Backed France to beat Greece in the European soccer but of course the World and European champions couldn’t get a kick - not today anyway.

Walked into Caesars Palace hoping for a punt on the dogs but went to the toilet on the way - contemplated life, woman, drink, greyhound betting, and gratuity.

Washing my hands, an old bloke runs up to the sink and places a paper towel near my hands searching for a tip.

“Here you go Sir,” as I hand over a dollar.

“And by the way, would you know when the next plane leaves for Baghdad?”