

Greed Makes Con Games Possible

IT HAS been said that greed exists to some degree in all men. This trait of human nature is called covetousness in the Bible and one of the Ten Commandments says "Thou shalt not covet."

Nevertheless, there probably are few people who have not at one time or another speculated upon getting rich quickly. Most of those who acted upon their greedy imaginings have been disappointed.

A few got rich. That's the trouble. People tend to look at those who made it, overlooking those who failed.

The current "\$1,000 money clubs" are not new schemes. They are simply made up of rearranged pieces of old con games, playing upon hopes of amateur get-rich-quick investors.

The promoters are not gambling. They get theirs out of the first money that changes hands. It is no use to explain what happens, because chary prospects see through the scam. Others don't look. "Pigeon Drop" schemes have been exposed repeatedly, but still find "pigeons."

Certainly, operators of these or other confidence games are greedy, lazy or sharp — perhaps all three. They look for greedy people, because that kind are easier to cheat.

The telephone caller who says: "Congratulations! Your name has been drawn to receive a . . ." is assuming that you have a certain amount of greed and that you will spend more money in order to get your hands on the prize, the discount, free tickets or whatever.

Another modern play on greed is a set of schemes to outwit inflation, such as investment in African gold coins, Swiss francs, undeveloped oil leases, land in distant locations and uncut diamonds. The new alleged "Offshore Bank Swindle" plays upon need as well as greed.

Assets used in these schemes might have value, but that does not assure investors that plans offered by glib strangers will result in profits.

Records show that people who have been swindled once are good

prospects to be cheated again. They may be too trusting, of course, but sometimes they are just trying to recoup previous losses — and more.

Essentially the same thing is true of gambling, which has been described as another form of greediness. Sports fans who become addicted to gambling tend to lose interest in actual games. Some don't even watch horse races or ball games. Their interests are odds and bets. Oklahoma may be counting on enough people becoming addicted to it that other types of gambling may be legalized in the future. Participants rarely win on a regular basis, but sponsors always win.

Police are baffled, as the saying goes, about how to keep carnival games honest or at least shut down obviously crooked games.

Unless someone discovers a way to eliminate greed from human nature, con games always will be around. People like to match their wits against sharpies, even if they are outwitted and bound to lose.