

# The gambling junkie who plays for high stakes – but lost everything in one-night spree in Jakarta casino

By Benny Ong



I was once a gambling junkie – a compulsive, persistent gambler.

One fateful night in a casino in Jakarta I betted big and lost everything. I returned home and sold my apartment and my portfolio of stocks to honour my debts. I sold my 2,000 sq ft apartment for just \$210,000 – only to see it appreciate to \$800,000 within the next one and a half years



But in July 1990, I broke my bondage in gambling when I surrendered my life to Jesus and accepted him as my Lord and Saviour.

I had been reared in a gambling environment. My family lived in the Rochor Road area when I was born. Gangster fights were prevalent during those days. Many households indulged in all forms of gambling, particularly "Chap Jee Kee (Hokkien for 12 sticks) and illegal 4D.

The government for some reason or other, could not wipe out the illegal 4D syndicate. And so the game became legalised although illegal 4D was still thriving. When I was 10 I was first taught "Chap Jee Kee" by my aunt who gave me \$5 to buy a certain number. Out of curiosity I put 10 cents on the same number.

As "luck" would have it, the winning combination was announced the next day and my

aunt received \$250 and I got \$5 for my stake of 10 cents. I regretted not betting 20 cents as I had 20 cents in my pocket that night.

The next day, I upped my stake to 20 cents and I won again, pocketing \$10 this time. With a bold sweep, I raised my stake to 50 cents the next round and later to \$1.00. Nothing came out of that and I didn't realise it. I was hooked. Within 2 weeks I lost all my winnings of \$15.

When one of my uncles found out I was betting on chap jee kee, he scolded me, saying: "This is a fool's game. You can never win. The people running it are cheating the players. Before they declare the winning numbers, they would tally up all the bets and pick the combination with the least stakes on them. You are better off playing 4D".

So at the age of eleven I started

