

Book Reviews

By Betty McNeal

Gaming Regulation and Gaming Law in Nevada

Robert D. Faiss

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ISBN: 1-56475-399-9

Paperback. 128 pages. Indexed.

Gaming Regulation and Gaming Law in Nevada captures the reminiscences of one of Nevada's most eminent gaming attorneys, Robert Dean Faiss. An important oral history, this book is derived from interviews with Attorney Faiss—interviews that are first tape recorded, then transcribed to print and edited to improve clarification. Oral historian Dwayne Kling conducted the interviews; veteran historian and emeritus professor Tom (R.T.) King did the editing. Kling and King engineer a masterful summation of Faiss's work with the gaming industry to improve its integrity and profitability.

We follow Faiss over a thirty year period and watch him evolve from a journalist to an executive assistant for the late Governor of Nevada, Grant Sawyer, to graduation from American University Law School in Washington, DC, to assistant to President Lyndon Johnson, then back to Nevada for significant interaction and impact with the Nevada Gaming Commission and the Nevada Gaming Control Board.

With the coming in 1968 of the then radical idea of allowing corporations to own and operate casinos, Faiss started his climb to the top serving as corporate counsel with Nevada's largest law firm, Lionel Sawyer and Collins.

The interviews cover a wide range of topics: internal auditing controls, problem gambling, taxation of credit play, the Bank Secrecy Act, Nevada authorization for Internet gambling, Nevada casino ownership by a resident of another country, and participation in the work of the National Gambling Impact Study Commission. Other highlights include the establishment of gaming law as a legal specialty and Faiss' teaching of gaming law to lawyers in training at UNLV's Boyd School of Law.

Famous names pop up all the time. Faiss was both proud of and loyal to his mentor, Grant Sawyer. Readers will also recognize gaming and government personalities, such as Frank Fahrenkopf, Jr., President of the American Gaming Association, Richard Bryan, former Governor of Nevada and former U.S. Senator, Allen Bible, Sheldon Adelson, Stanley and Pansy Ho, Becky Binion Behnen, Bobby Baldwin, George Maloof and many others.

This book is important for the observations of a prime player and eye witness to the gigantic growth period in Nevada's largest industry. Through it all Faiss comes off as more than an astute gaming advocate and scholar. Many testify to his spirit of public service and his amiable personality. The text is sprinkled with photos of Faiss in various settings with family, friends, and business associates from boyhood to today. Though largely anecdotal, the book adds a personal touch to the sterile world of slots and wagers, jackpots and revenue.

The Casino's Most Valuable Chip: How Technology Transformed the Gaming Industry

Saverio Scheri

© 2005

The Institute for the History of Technology
Palo Alto, CA

ISBN: 0-0640217-8-2

Hardcover

176 Pages, Indexed.

One would expect technology to empower casinos to streamline their operations just as it empowered and streamlined business in general. Somewhat surprising is the author's claim that technology was the main factor in ridding casinos of mob/underworld influence.

More than laws, regulations, inspections, crackdowns, arrests and prison sentences, technology, according to Scheri, turned out to be the industry's savior. For only sophisticated machines and computers could record, videotape, monitor, digitize, add biometrics and facial recognition capabilities, and spy on every inch of the gambling floor as well as the secluded count rooms and extensive public areas. Crooked players and skimming employees could now be caught in the act.

Basically this is a chronological treatment of gaming technology from the old days to modern times. We get a quick tour of developments from mechanical devices matching pictures of fruit, to ticketing systems that bypass actual money, and modern laboratories that test slot machine functions and certify factors not detectible with the human eye. Software is everywhere tracking millions of daily transactions.

A special chapter deals with how technology impacted Indian casinos. Other chapters show how technology and marketing linked up to cover casino comps and loyalty card clubs, on up to the current controversy over gambling on the Internet. A peek at the future brings up server-based slot machines and the impact of mega mergers on gaming technology.

This is an informal book, full of color photographs and illustrations. It is not an academic volume and some of its claims need to be documented before quoting its contents. But it includes a few things not often published, such as computer screen shots that show actual monitoring reports of gaming operations. It's a rather brief pick up/put down coffee table edition but an excellent starting point for more scientific, in-depth work on technology and gambling.