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## The creation of the Las Vegas image: A case study of Harvey Diederich

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**THE CREATION OF THE LAS VEGAS IMAGE:  
A CASE STUDY OF HARVEY DIEDERICH**

by

**Leta Lafay Ver Hulst**

**Bachelor of Science  
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
1984**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the**

**Master of Arts Degree  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication Studies  
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs**

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M.A. Communication Studies

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**ABSTRACT**

**The Creation of The Las Vegas Image: a Biography of Harvey Diederich**

by

**Leta Lafay Ver Hulst**

**Dr. Barbara L. Cloud, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor, Hank Greenspun School of Communication Studies  
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*The Creation of the Las Vegas Image: A Biography of Harvey Diederich* focuses on the 35-year Las Vegas career of publicist Harvey Diederich, which centers on major hotels, including the Last Frontier, Hacienda, Tropicana, MGM Grand and others. Following Diederich's career provides a unique history of Las Vegas, as well as insights into the fields of promotions, public relations, advertising and marketing.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**With appreciation to Dr. Barbara Cloud, and all the Committee members for their time, experience and patience.**

**Thank you to my husband Ron for his moral and technical support.**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Daniel Boorstin states in his book, *The Image*, that America has created the “thicket of unreality which stands between us and the facts of life.”<sup>1</sup> Boorstin believes that each individual provides the market and demand for illusions and that we want to believe these illusions. Boorstin classifies the extravagant expectations by 1) what the world holds and 2) our power to shape the world: “The making of the illusions which flood our experience has become the business of America, some of its most honest and most necessary and most respectable business.”<sup>2</sup> Boorstin was referring not only to public relations and advertising, but to all activities that “purport to inform and comfort, improve, educate and elevate us.”<sup>3</sup>

Las Vegas lives by the illusions held about it, and it is a city that, at least since the 1930s, has been active in shaping those illusions. This study will document the development of the Las Vegas image by examining the career and contributions of Harvey Diederich, long-time Las Vegas publicist, public relations practitioner, and marketing and advertising executive. Diederich's rationale for, selection of and utilization of the [traditional or nontraditional] tools of communication, including press and media relations provides the focus of study.

### **Las Vegas: Early Growth**

The rapid growth of Las Vegas as both a tourist destination and a community is directly related to the development of the image of Las Vegas. People like Diederich and the communication tools they used provide significant contributions to this end.

Even though Nevada was the last state to outlaw gambling in 1909 and the first state subsequently to legalize gambling in 1931, Las Vegas city fathers were more concerned with the divorce laws than reinstating gambling,<sup>4</sup> and throughout most of the 1930s, gambling remained a sideline for Las Vegas.<sup>5</sup>

But the eighth wonder of the world, as Boulder Dam was then billed, “began to funnel a torrent of tourists”<sup>6</sup> to the Las Vegas Valley. Las Vegas leaders envisioned their town as a Nevada Palm Springs.<sup>7</sup> Alan Hess, in his book *Viva Las Vegas*, observes, “They began to promote their characteristic western identity, the desert scenery, a social mix of laissez-faire government and neighborly hospitality embodied in speedy divorces and easy gambling.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1932, a year after the legalization of gambling, the then-luxurious, three-story Hotel Apache opened in downtown Las Vegas. With a motif of Native American design and an elevator to the supper club on top, the Apache was the most modern for its day.<sup>9</sup>

By 1936, the dam was completed and Las Vegas, with no more big payroll checks from dam workers, was beginning an economic slump. But, between 1938 and 1942 several changes occurred to avert the slump. In 1938, Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Brown had begun enforcing the no gambling laws in California and many California gamblers moved to Las Vegas. Guy McAfee, a police captain and commander of the vice squad, was one of these California gamblers who moved into Las Vegas where he purchased the Pair-O-Dice Club

in 1939. McAfee is credited with naming that part of the Los Angeles Highway which came into Las Vegas as “The Strip” in fond memory of the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles.”<sup>10</sup> It would be several years before “The Strip” would gain its present day fame.

Federal intervention also assisted the Las Vegas economy when President Roosevelt’s administration ordered air bases throughout the country. In 1940 Las Vegas received an air training station on the outskirts of town, and in 1941, Basic Magnesium, Inc. (BMI) was built, which created the city of Henderson.<sup>11</sup> Las Vegas found itself with two new industries--recreation provided by the dam and lake, and defense, provided by the training station and BMI. The recreation (tourism) and defense industries would shape many western cities throughout the rest of the century. Fremont Street, Las Vegas’s main thoroughfare, boomed.<sup>12</sup> As Don Knepp said in *Las Vegas Entertainment Capital*, “There also emerged the image of Las Vegas as the glamorous hub for vacations in the Southwest.”<sup>13</sup>

The city leaders had begun promoting Las Vegas as a tourist Mecca, and the *WPA Guide to Nevada, the Silver State, 1940*, seemed to approve of the methods when it said of Las Vegas, “No cheap and easily parodied slogans have been adopted to publicize the city, no attempt has been made to introduce pseudo-romantic architectural themes, or to give artificial glamour and gaiety.”<sup>14</sup>

1941 saw further growth for the Strip and downtown. The El Rancho opened with a dude ranch theme and atmosphere. Built by Californian Thomas E. Hull, the El Rancho established a pattern of roadside landmarks, vistas and signs that broke with the tradition of downtown Las Vegas hotels and realized a vision that would mold the city’s current form.<sup>15</sup> The El Rancho duplicated the easy accessibility of the roadside motel, but with much more grandeur.

While the downtown Hotel Apache was fancy, the El Rancho was lavish. Downtown, the El Cortez opened. Built by Californians Marion Hicks and John Grayson and although multistory, as most downtown hotels were, the El Cortez also kept to the western or Spanish theme.

After stopping at the El Rancho, William J. Moore and R.E. Griffith, realizing the potential of thousands of gambling customers from the gunnery school and BMI, built the Last Frontier. Opening in October 1942, the Last Frontier also western in theme, was larger and more opulent than the El Rancho.<sup>16</sup>

McAfee, not satisfied with owning just the Pair-O-Dice Club, tried to upstage the El Rancho by building the Pioneer Club at Fremont and First Streets. Also consciously western in style, the Pioneer Club opened in 1942.

Even though western in design, as late as 1947 Las Vegans were amazed that something so lavish as the El Rancho could succeed so far from downtown.<sup>17</sup> The success of the El Rancho, the Pioneer Club and the Last Frontier was impressive enough that the city boosters considered making the western theme mandatory for Fremont Street. Although many downtown casino owners followed suit, the idea was never formally adopted.<sup>18</sup>

As Las Vegas became more savvy about the potential of a tourist economy, it began to exploit its western heritage more consciously.<sup>19</sup> In keeping with the western motif, dude ranches replaced motels to provide divorce seekers a place to stay until their six weeks residency requirements were met. The western influence provided a successful venue for divorce interests and gambling, two of the leading economic factors for Las Vegas.

Close behind McAfee was Bugsy Siegel, who began by taking over the Las Vegas race betting wires, and, as a representative of Al Capone, “muscle out the Continental Press Service and gained part ownership of several Fremont Street Clubs including the Pioneer Club.”<sup>20</sup> Although there was already an obscure element of “gangsters” in Las Vegas, Siegel was publicly known for his ties to organized crime.

Siegel brought with him the negative aspect of the influence of organized crime, but he also brought the positive aspect of establishing a landmark luxury resort with the building of his Flamingo which broke with the western theme. The half-finished Flamingo officially opened with Jimmy Durante as entertainment in 1946; finances forced closure of the resort four weeks later, but the Flamingo reopened in 1948.<sup>21</sup> Knepp credits Siegel with bringing extensive national exposure to Las Vegas; the notoriety attached to “the Fabulous Flamingo” branded Las Vegas as an underworld haven, a reputation that has persisted.<sup>22</sup>

World War II created a shortage of construction materials which also created most of the financial difficulties Siegel experienced while building the Flamingo. But the federal government, including the war and defense spending, contributed greatly to Nevada, especially Las Vegas. Eugene P. Moehring states in his book, *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, that “Defense spending was an obvious by-product of the worldwide conflict. But, like the dam earlier, World War II strengthened the town’s recreational economy.”<sup>23</sup> The war also brought some disadvantages such as curfews, which cut profits by closing casinos from 2 to 10 a.m. and meat rationing, which caused some restaurants to close.<sup>24</sup> “Clearly, the national emergency created many problems for Las Vegas.”<sup>25</sup> Yet, much the same as Hoover Dam before it, World War II represented a bonanza for the small town’s economy.”<sup>26</sup> The war

helped confirm gambling as Las Vegas's main postwar industry; "By partially depriving the city of tourists for almost four years, the war magnified their [tourists] importance in the minds of promoters."<sup>27</sup>

The end of the World War II brought an end to the shortages of construction materials which had plagued Siegel and the 1950s brought the largest growth expansion in American history. This expansion occurred in the western United States, led by the state of Nevada.<sup>28</sup> As 1950 opened, Nevada contained approximately 160,000 residents: by 1955, the population was about 245,000, a rise of more than 53 percent.<sup>29</sup> By the end of the 1950s, Nevada's population had increased 75 percent, to 285,000 residents, making it the fastest-growing state in the country.

During this expansion, Nevada's economy flourished thanks to mining, to the Freeport Law and to the test site in Las Vegas. But, it was gambling that brought about the unprecedented growth.<sup>30</sup>

During the mid 1850s, the Comstock Lode produced hundreds of millions of dollars worth of gold and silver, by the end of 1920 gold and silver accounted for \$206 million; in the next 40 years all mining created about \$922 million; and in the 10 years of the 1950s mining contributed about \$783 million to the state's economy.<sup>31</sup> 1956 was the greatest mining year to that time and, if part of the boom was artificially inspired by federal government regulations, that also was part of Nevada's historical legacy.<sup>32</sup>

Gambling, however was catching up. By 1955, mining still outstripped gambling by just under \$100,000, but as Jane Glass, in her book *Nevada's Turbulent 50's*, asked, "Who noticed?" Well, of course the people who were working the mines noticed and the tax

collectors who pulled in the highest amount on record but, “almost nobody else,”<sup>33</sup> which seems to imply that Nevada, especially Las Vegas, had forgotten the rich economy of mining, preferring instead to credit gambling as the biggest boon the state’s economy.

The Freeport Law was the legacy of Edwin Bender, an administrator for a federal agency in charge of storing strategic war material, when he discovered a shortage of space in which to store the items.<sup>34</sup> Bender “purchased land in Reno accessible to cross-country transportation facilities and independently built some large warehouses.”<sup>35</sup> By the end of the 1940s, Bender found himself with a surplus of space and a shortage of goods. Later, when the county tax assessor evaluated some of the items for tax purposes, Bender felt the taxation to be unfair. He wrote a proposal for what became the Freeport bill and with the help of Nevada Attorney General Alan Bible, who drew up the bill; Reno newspaper publisher Joseph McDonald, who publicized the potential value to the state; Bender’s nephew, Marvin B. Humphrey, a state assemblyman; and the Reno Chamber of Commerce, the bill became law in 1949. “The statute provided that goods ‘in transit’ throughout the state might be warehoused free of personal property taxes. This was a genuine pioneering achievement; at that time, only Wisconsin and the District of Columbia had such statutes and neither had promotional activities for them”<sup>36</sup> By 1955, amendments were made to the original law, which included processing, binding, joining, disassembling, dividing, cutting, breaking in bulk, relabeling and repackaging. Fearing that the legislature might, at some point in the future, repeal the Freeport Law, Frank Bender (Edwin Bender’s son) began a constitutional amendment which culminated in an overwhelming approval by the electorate in 1960.<sup>37</sup> Owners of warehouses and light manufacturing firms found Nevada’s tax climate

substantially to their liking and, the Freeport Law became a significant economic advantage. After twenty-five years, three-quarters of a billion dollars worth of goods were being shipped yearly by truck and rail from the warehouses in the state.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the federal government was having an impact on Nevada (in still another way). By the 1950s, the Atomic Energy Commission recognized that more than 80 percent of Nevada's land was owned by the national government and the largely uninhabited character of the southern counties would lend itself to highly secret activities.<sup>39</sup> The Nevada Test Site, where nuclear bombs were exploded, provided bomb watching as a recreational past-time for Las Vegas residents and tourists alike, as well as income from the test-site payroll.

Boorstin says the word *tourist*, which came into usage in the early nineteenth century provided a clue to the changed character of world travel, especially from the American point of view.<sup>40</sup> Boorstin says, "The traveler, then, was working at something, he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him."<sup>41</sup> Boorstin describes "tourist attractions" as an American self-conscious effort to provide local atmosphere while insulated from the place, or the original. "Out-of-doors the real Turkey surrounds the Istanbul Hilton. But inside it is only an imitation of the Turkish style."<sup>42</sup> Boorstin believed that many of the tourist attractions came into being accidentally, as by-products of democratic revolutions. But soon they were being carefully designed and planned. And he credits Chambers of Commerce, lowered costs of travel, increased organization and improved means of long-distance transportation, which includes the design of automobiles and the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944, which established the National System of Interstate Highways.<sup>43</sup>

Although initially slow to move, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce became deeply involved in designing and planning for tourists as early as 1944. The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce and its boosters, fearing for the postwar economy sponsored a fund raiser to raise \$75,000 as a budget for promoting the city as a tourist destination. During the war, the two largest industries had been the Army Air Base and Basic Magnesium, Inc. Surveys and research led the Chamber to the conclusion that tourism was now the best means to a good economy and the Chamber set out to attract visitors. Before long however, Las Vegas found it had to deal with the underworld image that had grown up thanks to "Bugsy" Siegel and others. The Chamber of Commerce tried several different public relations firms and advertising firms to draw attention away from the negative publicity of gangsters as well as the wild city image previously promoted. When these firms failed to promote the city in what Las Vegas and the Chamber felt was a positive way, the Chamber hired the West Marquis Agency to handle promotion.<sup>44</sup> The West Marquis Agency was subsequently replaced when the Chamber felt it too had failed.

It appears the Chamber need not have worried. Surveys now have shown that during the time of heavy gangster influence, tourists came to Las Vegas in the hopes of actually seeing a gangster. Knepp supports this view, "For most visitors in the 1940s, however, the reputed underworld ties seemed only to highlight the city's wide open appeal."<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, by the 1950s, promoting Las Vegas and creating the acceptable image had become a concerted effort of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, the city and the casinos who hired their own communication specialists, such as Harvey Diederich.

When Diederich first came to Las Vegas, the original El Rancho was still present; the Gaming Board was just beginning to evaluate and change the gaming laws; the 1950s casino

building boom was gaining momentum and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority was in the planning stages. During the next 35 years, Diederich was involved not only directly with major hotel/casinos such as the Tropicana, Sahara, MGM and Dunes, but also participated in numerous civic committees, including work with the Las Vegas News Bureau. Analyzing Diederich's 35-year career provides a look at how not only the images of the hotel/casinos he represented were developed, but also at the image of Las Vegas as one of America's "extravagant expectations," as defined by Boorstin.

The study utilizes interviews and examination of historical text about Las Vegas. Interviews with Diederich himself are the key to this study, with interviews of his contemporaries serving as secondary sources of information. Diederich's contemporaries include, among others, Don Knepp, author of *Las Vegas Entertainment Capital*; Myram Borders, Bureau Chief, Las Vegas News Bureau; J.K. Houssels, Jr., owner of the Showboat Hotel and Casino; Robert Samuels, Las Vegas Visitors and Convention Authority; Lloyd Boothby, national sales director, Las Vegas Hilton and Cam Usher, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

Interviews with Diederich sought information about his contributions, level of responsibility, rationale for communication strategies, selection of communication tools, media relations and resources. Secondary interviews were used to corroborate his accounts and provide additional background. Additional context is provided through incorporation of published sources such as Las Vegas and Nevada histories, newspapers and magazines.

Approval for this study was granted by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Office of Sponsored Programs (X1357), July of 1998.

## Endnotes

## Chapter 1

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## CHAPTER 2

### BOMBS AND BIKINIS

In 1950, after service in World War II, 30-year-old Harvey Diederich graduated from the University of Southern California. The outstanding male graduate of the University of Southern California School of Journalism that year, Diederich worked in the publicity department of the Los Angeles Y.M.C.A. In July 1950 publicist Steve Hannagan's Hollywood office interviewed him for a position with the Sun Valley News Bureau in Sun Valley, Idaho. "Steve Hannagan was probably, at that time, the best press agent, best publicist in the country and may still claim that honor," Diederich remembers. "He was outstanding."<sup>1</sup> Historian Perry Bruce Kaufman described Hannagan as the "foremost resort publicist in America with Sun Valley, Miami Beach and the Indianapolis '500' as his clients."<sup>2</sup>

The Sun Valley News Bureau hired Diederich as the head of the news bureau. He had one secretary, one writing assistant and four photographers. As head of the bureau, Diederich was mainly concerned with covering Sun Valley and the surrounding territory as a news beat, but he also arranged "home town" photographs, i.e. pictures of visitors having fun in Sun Valley, that were sent to the visitors' hometown newspapers. During Diederich's tenure, Sun Valley was known as a celebrity haven both in winter and summer. Diederich recalls one such celebrity: "Judy Garland came up in the summer of 1950 after a suicide attempt and had her daughter with her-- Liza. She said, 'No publicity.' She went fishing and caught a fish, so

I went down and talked to her and left the photographer in the car. I said to her, 'We'll get some pictures just for you.' She said, 'No, you can use them.' Which was a big score for me right after I got to Sun Valley."<sup>3</sup> Diederich attributes Garland's permission to the fact that he believes in being direct and honest with everyone. He basically told her he was willing to do her a favor by providing her a personal photograph and she, in turn, provided Diederich an exclusive photograph of her that he could use for his job responsibilities.

In 1952, Herb McDonald, general manager of the Last Frontier Village and the Silver Slipper, was vacationing in Sun Valley and met Diederich. McDonald was immediately impressed with the young man and after "a few dinners and golf," he invited Diederich to Las Vegas to interview for the position of Director of Publicity and Advertising at the Last Frontier.<sup>4</sup>

Later that year, Diederich accepted the invitation and came to Las Vegas to meet with Bob Cannon (general manager of the Last Frontier), McDonald, Jacob (Jake) Kozloff, president and chief operations officer of the Last Frontier, and his brother, Bill Kozloff. On September 1, 1952, Diederich was hired as Director of Publicity, in charge of publicity for the Last Frontier and the Last Frontier Village, which included the Silver Slipper.<sup>5</sup>

The Last Frontier Village was the main thematic element of the Last Frontier. Conceived by William Moore and added to the Last Frontier in 1947, the Last Frontier Village utilized the collection of Nevada antique collector Robert Caudill, called "Doby Doc."<sup>6</sup> Diederich remembers Caudill as being a "real character" who wore suspender overalls with a big diamond and who was very close to Benny Binion, owner of the Horseshoe Hotel Casino on Fremont Street in Las Vegas.<sup>7</sup>

Caudill's "collection was extensive, consisting not only of wagons, antique firearms, bar

stools, barber's chairs and the like, but also big items, including a Chinese 'Joss House' [ a place of worship], constructed in the 1860s for workers building the Central Pacific Railroad, full-sized mining trains and actual jails from Nevada's smaller mining camps." <sup>8</sup> Diederich believes Caudill later sold a lot of this collection to Roy Rogers and remembers that there was doubt as to ownership of some of the items sold to Rogers. <sup>9</sup>

Moore added to Caudill's collection and recreated a western village complete with entire buildings taken from older towns. These additions complemented the Last Frontier's existing western theme which included stagecoach airport pickup and returns, pack trips and a stable. Diederich remembers that in 1952, The Last Frontier Village also had bumper cars, a merry-go-round and a steam engine. <sup>10</sup> The Last Frontier and the Last Frontier Village offered guests the experience of the old west, ten years before Disneyland's Frontierland or Knott's Berry Farm's ghost town. <sup>11</sup> And, according to Diederich, two old-time westerners, Caudill and Smiley Washburn, a bearded prospector whom Diederich believes Washburn Street in Northwest Las Vegas was named after, added flavor by interfacing with the tourists. <sup>12</sup>

As Director of Publicity and Advertising, Diederich was responsible for promoting the Last Frontier, the Last Frontier Village and the Silver Slipper. Diederich remembers that the Silver Slipper, with Herb McDonald as the vice president and general manager, had a meeting room upstairs. Diederich believes this was probably the first convention facility in Las Vegas. <sup>13</sup> In fact, the first news release from Diederich in his new position was regarding the Utah-Nevada Hotel Association convention held in the Silver Slipper. <sup>14</sup>

Promotions in the 1950s consisted mostly of what Diederich referred to as "Showgirl Art." This type of promotion had been developed by Steve Hannagan in 1948, when he

accepted the City of Las Vegas as a client in 1948 with the stipulation that he had complete control over the entire publicity campaign without outside interference from the Chamber.<sup>15</sup>

At that time Hannagan established the Desert Seas News Bureau as the nucleus of its operation. Diederich believed Hannagan called the service the “Desert Seas” News Bureau rather than the Las Vegas News Bureau because Hannagan was concerned about being associated with the Las Vegas image, which by then was tainted by organized crime .<sup>16</sup>

Hannagan established three major publicity devices: 1.) Photos of visitors having fun sent to hometown newspapers; 2.) Cheesecake photos of beautiful women in swimming suits in front of a resort, at Lake Mead, etc.; 3.) and photos of movie stars/celebrities enjoying scenic Las Vegas.<sup>17</sup> These shots were mailed to the local newspapers and/or Associated Press and the United Press International with the hope that they would be published in national papers, thus promoting both the hotel/casino and Las Vegas .

Diederich, already experienced with home townner photos and movie stars from his Sun Valley days, used this style to promote the Last Frontier. For example, when Edward Arnold, the actor who was known for his portrayal of Diamond Jim Brady during the early 1940s in movies and on stage, was appearing at the Last Frontier, “We had an array of jewelry, diamonds from, I think, Harry Winston in New York. We used a showgirl, Candy Cane, in a black bikini and pinned these jewels all over her and had two security guards on each side of her. The cheesecake thing — and it got major play, major play.”<sup>18</sup>

Diederich utilized the Last Frontier’s underwater room at the swimming pool as a photography location. He also used the stars appearing at the Last Frontier such as Marilyn Maxwell who came on stage with a tiger. He remembers they had some difficulty keeping

the tiger awake because it was so heavily sedated. They also did cheesecake photographs with Maxwell and the tiger swimming in the Frontier's pool. Later, Diederich's 2-year-old daughter, Terre, was also dressed in a tiger-striped bikini and photographed.<sup>19</sup>

Aside from cheesecake photos, Diederich also relied on news events that occurred, especially events that involved the Last Frontier's entertainers. When the Gabor sisters (Zsa Zsa and Eva) were appearing at the Last Frontier, Diederich revealed his method of capitalizing on the romantic affair between Perfirio Rubirosa and Zsa Zsa:

"[Perfirio] Rubirosa was romancing Zsa Zsa. She charged him with punching her in the eye and on stage she wore a jeweled eye-patch. I took Rubirosa to the airport that day, he gave me a letter and flowers to deliver to Zsa Zsa. We capitalized on it every which way. As a matter of fact, Zsa Zsa had a press agent named Russell Birdwell. He would call her and I would have the hotel operator cut me in to the conversation so I could find out what was going on."<sup>20</sup>

They did not know that Diederich was listening.

"Following up on that, Rubirosa married an heiress [Barbara Hutton]. . .we had people at the marriage ceremony wire us a picture of the bride and bridegroom. We blew it up to 11X14 and went to Zsa Zsa and got a picture of her looking at the wedding picture and making her comments."<sup>21</sup>

Diederich recalls that in Las Vegas "in those days Blacks could not stay on the Strip. It was a *Jim Crow* [segregated] town." When Sammy Davis, Jr. was appearing with the Will Mastin Trio, Diederich remembers:

"That among his [Davis] many talents, the most talented man that ever lived, was gun handling. So I thought it would be a great idea to take him out — we had a trap shoot back in those days — take him out and let him display his gun-handling out there. So, I invited him and we had lunch in the only dining room we had there. And, nobody ever said anything to me, but I knew, I had a feeling, that was mistake. But, I took him out to the trap range and you would have thought I walked in with a leper. It was the coldest reception I ever got anywhere."<sup>22</sup>

Publicity and promotions depend largely on the media and Diederich's rapport with the

media began with his first position for the Los Angeles YMCA where he became close and friendly with the Los Angeles print media. According to Diederich, there were only five or six daily newspapers at the time: the *Los Angeles Daily News*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Mirror*, the *Bureau Express*, the *Examiner*. There may have been others, and there were three wire services then: United Press, International News Service and the Associated Press. "I met and talked with those people and they would come to Las Vegas. And, of course, wherever they went, it was comped [complimentary]. There was never any question about room, food and beverage."<sup>23</sup> This practice had been initiated in 1946 when the Chamber of Commerce and the resort hotels adopted the policy of providing free food, lodging, tours, facts, photographs and anything else that journalists needed to make their stay pleasant.<sup>24</sup>

During 1952 and 1954, the *Las Vegas Review Journal* did not report promotional material such as Zsa Zsa's romantic interests. The *Las Vegas Review Journal* consisted mainly of national, state and local news with special sections such as "Ladies Activities;" "Boy's and Girl's Page;" "Sports;" "Outdoor Sports" and "Society." Of course, ads were accepted, but in 1952 there were only a few hotel/casinos that advertised. By 1954, more hotel/casino ads were apparent.

If the *Las Vegas Review Journal* did not cover stories such as Zsa Zsa's romance with Rubirosa, *Life* magazine did. Although the article did not mention the Last Frontier, it did make reference to Las Vegas: "Rubirosa and Miss Hutton had a brief but exciting engagement during which they were heckled from the sidelines (actually from Las Vegas) by Zsa Zsa Gabor the actress."<sup>25</sup>

On January 3, 1954, the *Las Vegas Review Journal* featured a full-page promotional photo

essay entitled, “What Goes on Behind Scenes at Vegas Strip Hotel?” which featured the Last Frontier as the “Strip Hotel.”<sup>26</sup> With exceptions such as this, hotel/casinos were covered as any business in any other city would be covered.

Although each hotel had its own publicity department, each also benefitted from the publicity generated by the city and other hotels. “One of the vehicles the whole town used was the Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn ’cause that brought in a lot of media people.”<sup>27</sup> Don Knepp, in *Las Vegas The Entertainment Capital*, credits Wilbur Clark for “Las Vegas’s major sporting image with the first annual golf Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn.”<sup>28</sup> The Tournament of Champions was limited to winners of championships throughout the year, with the major prize being ten thousand dollars.

Another key vehicle for promoting Las Vegas, which received major media coverage, was atomic bomb testing. “The hotels would try to tie-in with those tests to promote their individual properties as well as the town. We’d get pictures of the mushroom from various points.”<sup>29</sup> Some hotels actually had bomb-watching parties. Diederich remembers being in Sun Valley when the testing began and thought, “Jesus, that’s got to destroy Las Vegas, but, it helped. It became an attraction.”<sup>30</sup> Diederich never created promotions which exploited the bomb testing.

Due, in large part, to the media, the “Atomic Age” was launched. News stories in national publications such as the *New York Times Calendar* section, songs such as *Atomic Bomb Bounce*, television and movies such as *The Atomic City*, *The Atomic Kid* and *The Amazing Colossal Man*, to name a few and the news coverage of bomb tests from “News Nob,” as well as coverage of hotel/casino promotions assisted the atomic phenomena of the 1950s.

News Nob was a small hill approximately 10 miles from ground zero, where the news media covering the atomic test blasts viewed the pre-dawn tests. Journalists who visited News Nob included Walter Cronkite, Dave Galloway, John Cameron Swayze and many others.<sup>31</sup> But nowhere was the “Atomic Age” more evident than Las Vegas. The hotel casinos provided many promotions to attract tourists to the city. The Sands had beauty contests for Miss Atomic Bomb in which the contestants wore puffy white mushroom clouds pinned to their swimming suits.<sup>32</sup> All night parties with predawn viewing of a test blast usually ended with the “dubbing of a chorus girl as ‘*Miss Atomic Blast*’”<sup>33</sup> Women often wore their hair in the “atomic hairdo” originated by GeeGee, hairstylist at the Flamingo and drank the “atomic cocktail” made of equal parts of vodka, brandy and champagne with a dash of sherry.<sup>34</sup>

Las Vegas local merchants capitalized on the atomic theme: “Boob” Jones, car dealer claimed, “Atom Drops on High Prices; Allen and Hanson, placed a barrel of broken glass, outside in front of their store, with a sign which read “Atomic Bomb Souvenirs - Free.” The barrel was empty within an hour.<sup>35</sup> The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce provided tourists with calendars with bomb test dates, road maps to the best observation points for viewing the tests and major hotel/casinos provided box lunches to take to the site.<sup>36</sup>

The atomic blast mushroom cloud was institutionalized as a fixture in the Nevada culture scene when it made its way into printed material: the official Clark county seal featured a mushroom cloud, the cover of the 1953 Las Vegas High School yearbook, the Las Vegas telephone directory depicted a map of Nevada with a mushroom cloud emerging and the best

selling postcard was a color photo of Vegas Vic waving in the foreground with a mushroom cloud in the background.<sup>37</sup>

Today, the bomb watching and promotions surrounding the atomic testing seems frivolous and/or irresponsible. But during the 1950s, the government officials had gone to great lengths to assure the Las Vegas and surrounding communities that there was no danger.

When Diederich came to town, there were only five hotels on the Strip, the Sands and the Sahara opened shortly after. The management of all, according to Diederich, were very close. "There were rivalries, but in a lot of cases, the general philosophy was that anything that helps one hotel, has got to help the entire town and therefore, helps other hotels."<sup>38</sup>

The closeness of the major hotel/casinos was demonstrated in 1952, when Nevada's Senator Pat McCarran orchestrated a boycott against the *Las Vegas Sun* and editor Hank Greenspun. Greenspun had written articles about McCarran's policies and support of Senator Joe McCarthy as well as about McCarran's protégé, Alan Bible, and Bible's senate campaign.<sup>39</sup> During the boycott, "all of the town's chief establishments, with the exception of Benny Binion's Horseshoe Club, pulled their ads from the *Sun*."<sup>40</sup> Greenspun filed suit against McCarran for creating the advertising boycott and eventually broke the boycott and won an \$80,000 settlement in 1953.<sup>41</sup>

"There was also an Resort Association back in those days," Diederich remembers, "which generally was peopled by hotel managers, representing the hotels, and I think probably the most sensitive area of competition was in booking entertainment. Jack Entrotter at the Sands and Bill Miller at the Sahara would try to out-bid each other for key entertainers. Even entertainment directors had meetings and agreed--a gentlemen's agreement--that they would not try to outbid each other. But, then these two guys would go back to the hotels and do it. Hal Braudis, who was entertainment director at the Thunderbird, said, 'There is a gentlemen's agreement, but there can be no agreement if they are not all gentlemen.'"<sup>42</sup>

Although Diederich enjoyed complete autonomy at the Last Frontier and worked in a position that allowed him to be a part of a city that was growing as well as attaining international attention, he left the Last Frontier to become director of the Bahamas News Bureau. During his two-year leave from Las Vegas, the city continued its growth. The Desert Inn, across the highway from the Last Frontier, opened its large pool; the Last Frontier filled in its old roadside pool and built a heated one with subsurface observation room and a deck-side bar.<sup>43</sup> Shortly after, Kozloff and Beldon Katleman modernized the Last Frontier with a major face-lift, changed the name to Hotel New Frontier and re-opened on April 4, 1955.<sup>44</sup> Kozloff and Katleman later sold the Hotel New Frontier and for the next few years a series of leaseholders suffered cash flow problems. The New Frontier was closed until Hacienda owner Warren Bayley acquired it. Bayley operated the hotel until his death in 1964, when Banker's Life Insurance acquired the resort through Bayley's estate. Under this management the resort was razed and replaced with the Frontier, a 500-room hotel and a larger casino which opened on July 20, 1967, but again under new management — Howard Hughes had purchased the Frontier eight days earlier.<sup>45</sup>

One of the things Diederich liked most about working at the Last Frontier was “being part of a city that was growing.”<sup>46</sup> And Las Vegas was growing; in 1953 KLAS Channel 8 television went on the air with test patterns during the July 4 weekend and began broadcasting on July 22. Hank Greenspun, editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*, stated his reasons for creating the first Las Vegas television studio: “My partners were furniture dealers who couldn't sell any televisions because there was no station broadcasting in Las Vegas.”<sup>47</sup> He added, “I got up one day and there was this big headline in the R-J. It said, ‘Don Reynolds

to bring television to southern Nevada.”<sup>48</sup> Donald W. Reynolds was the *Las Vegas Review Journal* publisher, Greenspun’s rival. So, Greenspun filed against Reynolds for the frequency with the Federal Communication Commission and won.

Although Diederich and others did not immediately use the new television medium for advertising, he is certain that the News Bureau did. Diederich does recall using television when visual promotions would best promote the property. Memorable television promotions include the “dream sequence” featuring Al Freeman [Sands’ publicist] with his showgirls in the desert, using Smiley Washburn.<sup>49</sup> Also, Diederich remembers talking the owner of a helicopter service into doing a water scene with Dan Dailey [famous movie star of the time] and Joan Adams [Miss Nevada and popular Las Vegas showgirl] with the helicopter pulling them on water skies at Lake Mead.<sup>50</sup>

Also during Diederich’s absence, the Showboat began as the Desert Showboat Motor-Hotel the first major facility on Boulder Highway in 1954. The Dunes, the Royal Nevada, the Riviera and the Moulin Rouge, the latter created for the African-American public and featuring black entertainers, opened in 1955. In 1955, the Gaming Control Board was created to act as the enforcement and investigative arm of the Tax Commission. The Frontier, the Thunderbird, the Desert Inn and others began remodeling or obtaining new outdoor signs. There was a “rush to keep up.”<sup>51</sup>

## Endnotes

### Chapter Two

1. Harvey Diederich personal interview by author, Las Vegas, NV, 30 May 1997, 102. This was the first of three Diederich interviews: 12 November 1997 and 29 July 1998. They will be cited Diederich interview, with appropriate date. Hereafter, page numbers refer to transcripts in appendix to this thesis.
2. Perry Bruce Kaufman, *The Best City of Them All: A History of Las Vegas, 1930-1960*, dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy in History, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1974, 133.
3. Diederich interview, 30 May, 67.
4. Telephone interview with Herbert McDonald, 7 October 1997, 2:00 p.m.
5. Diederich interview, 30 May, 66.
6. Alan Hess, *Viva Las Vegas, After Hours Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993), 32-33.
7. Diederich interview, 30 May, 66.
8. Hess, 33.
9. Diederich interview, 30 May, 66.
10. Ibid.
11. Hess, 33.
12. Diederich interview, 30 May, 66.
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14. "Hotelmen Learn Tourist Trade Prospects Good," *Las Vegas Review Journal*, 23 September 1952, 3.
15. Kaufman, 133.
16. Diederich interview, 30 May 1997, 67.
17. Kaufman, 134.
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19. Diederich interview, 30 May 1997, 64.
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21. Ibid.
22. Ibid, 69.
23. Ibid., 67.
24. Kaufman, 127.
25. "For Richer or Poorer. . .", *Life Magazine*, January 11, 1954, 24-25.
26. "What Goes on Behind Scenes at Vegas Strip Hotel?", *Las Vegas Review Journal*, 3 January, 1954, 18.
27. Diederich interview 30 May 1997, 67.
28. Knepp, 276.
29. Ibid.
30. Diederich interview, 30 May 1997, 68.
31. A. Constandina Titus, *Bombs in the Backyard, Atomic Testing and American Politics*, University of Nevada Press, Reno & Las Vegas, 1986, 56-57.
32. Ralph J. Roske , *Las Vegas a Desert Paradise, Discover the Diamond, Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce: 75 Years of Growth*, Continental Heritage Press, Inc. Six East Fifth Street, Suite 410, Tulsa, OK 74103, 105.
33. Ibid.
34. Titus, 93.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid, 94.
38. Diederich interview, 30 May 1997, 67.
39. Moehring, 91.
40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.
42. Diederich interview, 30 May 1997, 67.
43. Hess, 50.
44. Moehring, 46.
45. Ibid.
46. Diederich interview, 30 May 1997, 67.
47. Roske, 191.
48. Ibid.
49. Diederich interview, 29 July 1998, Las Vegas, 102.
50. Ibid.
51. Hess, 54.

## CHAPTER 3

### GOLF AND GRAFT

Diederich had left Las Vegas hoping to achieve New York experience. The Bahamas enabled him to move to New York, but only for a brief period of time. When the office he was working for closed, Diederich, who wanted to get back to Las Vegas, “rented a quarter-ton trailer. I had a station wagon I had bought in Florida and I had [a wife] four children, ages five to five months and a parakeet in a cage and a dog with a litter. And we drove back from New York to Las Vegas.”<sup>1</sup>

When Diederich returned to Las Vegas in 1956, he heard that Jake Kozloff had had licensing problems. Diederich remembered Kozloff and his wife as being outstanding civic leaders and very active in charities. “When I got back to town, in ’56, Jake Kozloff was associated with Warren Bayley at the Hacienda, which had not yet opened. And Jake Kozloff, who was going to run the casino, could not get licensed. It was my understanding that he had sold more than 100 percent of the stock in the Frontier.”<sup>2</sup> However, Moehring states that the Gaming Control Board Chairman Robbins Cahill refused to approve Kozloff because of known association with organized crime figures.<sup>3</sup> The Hacienda opened in June 1956 without a casino because of Kozloff’s licensing difficulties.<sup>4</sup> After some debate, Bayley dropped his bid to have Kozloff licensed and the Hacienda opened the casino with a different manager.

On his return, Diederich went to work almost immediately for Jake Kosloff again, at the newly opened Hacienda. When Kosloff left, Diederich stayed with the Hacienda.

Duties pertained mainly to publicity and promotion for the Hacienda; according to Diederich, there was very little advertising, “I don’t think they spent any advertising money.”<sup>5</sup> The major publicity item which received the most media coverage during Diederich’s tenure came from his promotion of the lighted, par-3 golf course with a photo captioned as *Night Tee Time*. “I had a girl in a nightie swinging a golf club at night on the first tee. So, it was a little pun in there.”<sup>6</sup> The photo received major coverage. “In fact, Dick Taylor, who later became general manager of the Hacienda, still talks about it. They really couldn’t believe the space we got without advertising.”<sup>7</sup>

Diederich said both the *Las Vegas Review Journal* and the *Las Vegas Sun* had policies limiting the amount of publicity exposure in the newspapers to the amount spent on advertising. Since the Hacienda did little advertising, this could have posed a problem, but Diederich was able to get promotional space. Diederich said it was easier to get coverage in the *Las Vegas Review Journal* than in the *Las Vegas Sun* which was insistent about advertising accompanying press releases. “Greenspun, you know, was like demanding advertising — Hank needed the money.”<sup>8</sup> Diederich understood the position of both newspapers; advertising provides the money for newspapers. During the boycott, Greenspun’s finances had been depleted and the casinos had not been favorable to him.

Diederich’s success in having news releases printed is attributed, in part, to his rapport and honesty with the media. Diederich states that he never actively suppressed anything. “‘Cause I think that’s a basic error. I don’t think the media will believe you if you try to

withhold information. And so it's my opinion to be as open as you can.'<sup>9</sup> Remembering his days at the Sun Valley Bureau, he noted that when there was an avalanche, he would head up the mountain while instructing his assistant to notify the media about the avalanche and tell them they would be given more information as it became available.

Diederich believes honesty gained him the respect of the Las Vegas media, as well as the other media representatives he knew. This sometimes resulted in increased willingness to help Diederich by publishing -- or not publishing -- stories about his employers. As Diederich says, "I think maybe, at times, [they] were kind, yes. . . I think there was some respect, yes."<sup>10</sup>

While Diederich was at the Hacienda, there was a showroom but no casino, due to the licensing problem with Jake Kosloff. Diederich remembers that "I think much of the sordid history of the Hacienda and its principals developed later. It seems to me that Doc Bayley died of a heart attack in a room at the Dunes, with a hooker."<sup>11</sup>

Freedom of activity was what Diederich liked best while at the Hacienda. "I don't recall ever feeling any pressure."<sup>12</sup> Even so, in February 1957, when the Tropicana offered him a position with an increase in salary, he accepted. The hotel-casino was waiting to receive its license so Diederich spent most of his time writing and preparing a press kit. "I think [it was] the most elaborate press kit ever produced in this town."<sup>13</sup> Diederich remembers arranging photography and that the hotel was "very, very difficult to photograph because it was low. His supervisor showed him a picture of a new hotel in Philadelphia or somewhere and said, 'Why can't you do something like this?' I think we finally took some aerial [shot]."<sup>14</sup> The Tropicana opened as the most expensive Las Vegas hostelry of the day.

The Tropicana was promoted as “The Tiffany of the Strip,” a far cry from the western themes that had dominated the industry heretofore. Diederich has been credited with coining the term but he demurs. “I did not author that. I adapted it,” he says.<sup>15</sup> The Tiffany theme originated from the Tiffany-like leaded glass ceiling vault over the casino. The ceiling was conceived by interior designer Tony Devroude and is a copy of San Francisco’s Hybernian Bank building’s main dome which was destroyed in the Great Earthquake of 1906.

For the opening ceremony of the Tropicana on April 4, 1955, Diederich enlisted Lieutenant Governor Rex Bell to turn the key to open the door and then throw away the key. This was Diederich’s idea and to his knowlege, no one has ever found the key. In addition, singer Eddie Fisher, who was headlining in Monte Proser’s “Tropicana Revue,” arrived unexpectedly as people were lining up to enter the casino and began chatting with the waiting crowd, adding to the publicity value.

Diederich stated that the grand opening of the \$15 million Tropicana did not receive a major media attention, but on April 3, the Tuesday before the opening, the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, carried ten pages of congratulatory ads and articles related to the opening. On page one of the April 4 *Las Vegas Review Journal* was the story of the opening, which praised the Tropicana as “the most lavish and outstanding of any of the 11 resorts which have preceded it.”<sup>16</sup>

Almost immediately, the Tropicana became the subject of controversy. Early in 1957, the players’ winnings exceeded the casino’s cash on hand. As a temporary means of correcting the problem, J.K. Houssels, Sr., rushed several hundred thousand dollars in cash in a shopping bag from his downtown El Cortez hotel to the Tropicana.<sup>17</sup> More controversy

occurred when, on May 2, gangworld leader Frank Costello was killed in New York and the police reported that a note was found in his pocket bearing the figure \$651,284 — the gross profit for the Tropicana's first twenty-four days of business."<sup>18</sup> Moehring states that the Nevada Gaming Control Board quickly traced the Costello link to Phil Kastel, whom Tropicana owner Ben Jaffe had proposed for licensing. To pacify the authorities, Jaffe asked Houssels to manage the property and Houssels agreed. "Because Houssels had played a major role both on Fremont Street and behind the scenes at city hall to build Las Vegas into the nation's foremost casino city, his integrity was never in doubt."<sup>19</sup>

During the early years, the Tropicana management did not hire any of the available outstanding names to appear in the showroom due, in part, to the desire not to get into a bidding war for the major nightclub performers.<sup>20</sup> For headliners, the Tropicana booked movie stars or celebrities not necessarily known for showroom entertainment. The Tropicana booked stars such as Rhonda Fleming and celebrities such as Walter Winchell, who had been a hoofer (dancer) early in his career, but was best known as gossip columnist. "The production show was strong — an excellent show, but without a marquee name. The hotel got to a point of desperation and decided, I think based on the success of the Lido at the Stardust, that they would try something from overseas."<sup>21</sup> The "something from overseas" was the Folies Bergère.

Diederich left the Tropicana in 1957 because of the strained working relationship between him and his supervisor, Mack Millar. Diederich refers to Millar as irresponsible since Millar did not attend the opening ceremonies of the Tropicana. Even though the Tropicana board

of directors asked Diederich to stay, he had already committed to his friend, Herb McDonald, and the Sahara.

The Sahara had its beginning in 1947 as the Club Bingo, a modest gambling den with a 300-seat bingo parlor until Milton Prell remodeled and opened it as the swank Sahara five years later.<sup>22</sup> Its location directly across from the El Rancho Vegas placed the Sahara as the first gambling palace drivers encountered when heading south from the downtown area.<sup>23</sup> “The Jewel of the Desert,” as Prell referred to the Sahara, was a two-story structure and predominately African in theme.<sup>24</sup> Dancer/singer Ray Bolger, the scarecrow from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, was the opening act in the showroom.

While at the Sahara, Diederich recalls organizing a lot of cheesecake photography and promotions. Diederich and others took Lieutenant Governor Rex Bell to Canada on a promotion trip to create business for the Sahara and Las Vegas. Joan Adams, a previous Miss Nevada and second runner-up for Miss Universe, was also on the trip, in keeping with that cheesecake Las Vegas image.<sup>25</sup> Promotions also included the Sahara Invitational Golf Tournament and sponsorship of unlimited hydroplane racing at Lake Mead. The racers and staff stayed at the Sahara, which displayed one of the hydroplanes in front of the hotel.<sup>26</sup>

Other promotional events consisted of trap shooting at Tule Springs Ranch and convention activity. Diederich utilized conventions for publicity whenever possible; the hotel marquee would read, “Welcome such and such convention.” Diederich remembers kidding Alec Shoovey, general manager, in December when business was slow, by asking, “Why don’t we put up something that says, ‘Welcome Anybody?’”<sup>27</sup> Another promotion, which Herb McDonald initiated, was the annual airline Christmas party, which consisted of inviting

all airline employees in for complimentary rooms and special parties. This December event was, according to Diederich, very successful in that it created a loyalty to the Sahara among the airlines and filled the otherwise empty hotel.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike the Tropicana, the Sahara management was not concerned with a bidding war for entertainers, and since they were willing to pay the going prices, the showroom featured substantial name headliners such as Sophie Tucker, Donald O'Connor, Louie Prima and Keely Smith, and Don Rickles made his first Las Vegas appearance at the Sahara.<sup>29</sup> Stan Erwin, the entertainment director, contracted the entertainment and Diederich directed the publicity. As stated earlier, the Hollywood movie system in the late fifties, provided an abundance of celebrities from which Las Vegas showrooms could chose, provided the budget would accommodate the expense.<sup>30</sup>

Although at the Sahara Diederich did not have complete autonomy, having to report to Herb McDonald, he enjoyed the working relationship with McDonald. However, Diederich did not like the manner in which Alec Shwoofey, the comptroller, regulated the expenses. "He was a watchdog. And, I guess basically, not a bad guy, but . . .for expense accounts, he had little slips of paper like this [approximately 3" X 4"] and you had to fill out one for every expense. And, he was difficult."<sup>31</sup>

So, after three and half years with the Sahara, Diederich left to return to the Tropicana. In 1961 when Bob Cannon, who had first hired Diederich for the Last Frontier and had since moved on to the Tropicana, asked Diederich to come back to the "Tiffany of the Strip," Diederich accepted. "In addition to an attractive offer, the Tropicana had under construction a golf course, which had significance for me. The Sahara had not bought its golf course

as yet.”<sup>32</sup> In addition to publicity, promotions and advertising, Diederich also created and promoted golf packages; as an avid golfer, he enjoyed promoting golf.

Golf courses were somewhat controversial because they posed a threat to the water resources of Las Vegas. In 1961, Major Riddle, at the Dunes, teamed with Moe Dalitz of the Desert Inn and J.K. Houssels, with numerous casino and community interests, to pressure Governor Grant Sawyer and state engineer Ed Muth for water for golf courses. The county commissioners argued that the water was needed for housing; Riddle, Dalitz and Houssels argued the value of golf courses to the area’s recreational economy. Moehring summarizes, “In terms of profits for the community, golf courses brought more big spenders to town than low-rent apartments.”<sup>33</sup>

Diederich was with the Tropicana the second time for eleven years. He said, “It was a good job and a good golf course.”<sup>34</sup> This time, as before, Diederich had complete responsibility for publicity, promotions and advertising, including golf. Promotions included Felicia Atkins, according to Diederich, “probably the most publicized showgirl there ever was.”<sup>35</sup> Las Vegas showgirls did not work topless in those days. Topless showgirls were first introduced in 1957 by Major Riddle in the Dunes revue *Minsky goes to Paris*. “In fact, the showgirls in the Folies Bergère wore pasties and it wasn’t until a few years after it opened that they had a nude and it was one nude.”<sup>36</sup> Diederich remembers that nude showgirl as Claudine Longet, who later married singer Andy Williams and had a short singing career of her own.

Tropicana promotions also included tennis tournaments in Phoenix, Arizona, and, since J. Kell Houssels, Sr., had a string of race horses, at racetracks where the Tropicana

sponsored races. Showgirls were photographed with the race winners. In Chicago they placed Atkins on the television show of Chicago columnist Erv Kupcinec who arranged “some sort of covering on her cleavage” because television was very conservative. Of course, this traveling also afforded an opportunity to provide cocktail parties for travel agents.

During his second tenure with the Tropicana, Diederich was promoted to director of marketing, giving him responsibility for sales, in addition to his other duties. As director of marketing, Diederich had a staff of three or four sales people and a publicist, Dick Kanellis, who had replaced Diederich at the Sahara. Diederich recalls that Kanellis was one of the first Sahara staff to adopt the ‘hippie look,’ “with long hair and the broad ties and the funny glasses. So, summarizing some of our hotel executives, ‘we weren’t ready for that’.”<sup>37</sup> With Kanellis’ job performance already in question for leaving town during a hotel strike, the ‘hippie’ look sanctioned his job termination.

During his years at the Tropicana, Diederich believed his position to be very comfortable and enjoyed the position and working relationships. However, he disliked the new owner D.O. Gustafson, whom he refers to as “an evil man. Really evil.”<sup>38</sup> According to Diederich, when Gustafson bought the Tropicana in 1972, he gave instructions that no employees would be able to play the golf course for free, then he took over Diederich’s office for a bedroom for himself and visitors of varying ages and sexes.<sup>39</sup> Gustafson, over a short period of time, fired or forced out most of the Tropicana staff. When one of the owners traveled to Chicago to bury his daughter, he returned to find that he had been terminated while away.<sup>40</sup>

After Diederich left the Tropicana, Gustafson hired James Snyder, known as Jimmy the Greek, to handle his publicity and Diederich believes Snyder did a good job. Snyder was a

gambler and handicapper who was known to associate with Bugsy Siegel.<sup>41</sup> According to Diederich, Gustafson subsequently went to jail for the Kansas City money laundering and skimming.<sup>42</sup> Las Vegas was ripe for these two methods of stealing. Laundering refers to the act of physically replacing monies obtained illegally with “clean” money. In Las Vegas the launderer would use “illegal” money to buy chips and, after playing some of the chips, he would turn in the rest and claim the money as winnings. This method also provided an excellent way of dodging taxes. Skimming was a method of simply taking money and not providing any record. In a casino, where large sums of money are on the tables, it was difficult to keep accurate records, and anyone with access to the counting room could simply pocket any amount.

Even with the strict gaming controls of 1972, Gustafson with his background, was able to acquire a gaming license. Diederich surmises that Gustafson “came in pretty clean.”<sup>43</sup> Evidently, investigators in Minneapolis were never reached by the Las Vegas investigators during the background check.

Gustafson’s alleged unsavory connections never posed a direct problem for Diederich in promoting the hotel, but Diederich did not like being associated with Gustafson.

The Tropicana had several negative organized crime implications in its early history as did many other hotels. Moehring credits organized crime figures as playing a major role in hotel financing by tax skimming and other illegal rackets. He believes they speeded up Strip development in the 1950s, thus for thirty years, organized crime investments exerted a substantial multiplier effect on the Las Vegas economy including payrolls, supply industries,

**the housing market, and school enrollments.<sup>44</sup> Even bank deposits benefitted from these investments.**

## Endnotes

### Chapter 3

1. Diederich interview, 12 November 1997, 74.
2. Ibid.
3. Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt* University of Nevada Press, Reno & Las Vegas, 1995, 81.
4. Ibid.
5. Diederich interview, 12 November 1997, 77.
6. Ibid., 81.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 83.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 80.
12. Ibid., 82.
13. Ibid., 84.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 86.
16. "Vegans Get Preview of Tropicana," *Las Vegas Review Journal*, April 4, 1957, 1.
17. Moehring, 85.
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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SHEIKS AND CHANGES**

After eleven years at the Tropicana, Diederich left in 1972 to promote golf for the Dunes Hotel/Casino. The Dunes sponsored amateur golf tournaments and Diederich's principal duties consisted of coordinating golf tournaments and creating promotions which included junkets. Junkets provided transportation and hotel accommodations which the hotel paid, or partially paid for, participants in the golf tournament. During the seventies, golf tournaments became a very large promotional draw, enticing both participants and viewers. Diederich remembers that the Dunes and the Sahara held tournaments, but the Desert Inn held the largest tournament.<sup>1</sup>

In promoting the golf tournaments, Diederich continued his long-time reliance on distributing cheesecake photos of the golf tournament winners and showgirls. Major Riddle, owner of the Dunes, would often appear in these photos. Although Diederich enjoyed promoting golf, in 1973 he accepted the position of director of publicity and advertising for the original MGM Grand, prior to the opening.

The MGM Grand opened on December 5, 1973, ahead of schedule, with 2,100 rooms, making it, at that time, the largest resort in the world, and costing owner Kirk Kerkorian \$106 million.<sup>2</sup> The groundbreaking ceremonies on April 15, 1972, had attracted world-wide

notice with sex symbol Raquel Welch detonating the first explosive charge before “an army of reporters and cameramen.”<sup>3</sup>

Diederich was responsible for publicizing the opening. His staff consisted of two writers and two secretaries. He proudly remembers the opening. “The formal opening I think was cute, because it was my idea.”<sup>4</sup> To do something different from the standard ribbon cutting and to represent the movies, Diederich substituted a long strip of 35mm film for the ribbon and had movie stars Fred MacMurray and June Haver “cut” it with a movie clapper board (the black and white board used in making movies to document production, director, scene, and date). Diederich’s idea drew so much attention, the Reno MGM used it for that opening as well.

At the MGM, Diederich had complete responsibility for publicity and when Charles Hillinger, a feature writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, was doing an article on the idiosyncracies of gamblers, he contacted Diederich. Believing the subject to be harmless, Diederich arranged a interview with the vice president of the casino operations, Morrie Jaeger. Diederich also believed that Jaeger certainly knew what could and could not be discussed. However, either Jaeger did not know, or he did not care, that what gamblers did or the amounts of money being won or lost was never for publication.

Apparently, during this interview, Jaeger gave Hillinger the story of a sheik who had lost an extremely large sum of money to the hotel. Hillinger’s story ran December 13 on page 4 of the *Review Journal* and stated that a “large work crew took the roof out of one of the elevators and managed to squeeze in the baccarat table and get it up to the Metro Club.”<sup>5</sup>

Hillinger quoted Jaeger as saying that the MGM management was ready to hire a helicopter and throw ropes over the roof to haul up the baccarat table.

Bob Samuels, sales executive for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Bureau, who was there that night, not in his capacity as one of three MGM Vice Presidents, but because he had heard about the sheik and wanted to observe the proceedings and his title allowed him access to the Metro Club.<sup>6</sup> Samuels does not know if Hillinger was there the same night or if Jaeger just gave the story to Hillinger, but Samuels does know, that this incident cost Diederich his job.

Samuels relayed what happened the night the baccarat table was brought upstairs solely for the sheik's enjoyment. According to Samuels, the Metro Club which was on the 26<sup>th</sup> floor and was a very exclusive, membership-only casino for high stakes gamblers. Membership required a \$10,000 dollar credit line with the casino. All personnel were dressed in tuxedos, the restaurant had no menus, whatever was wanted was delivered and the club was only open in the evening.

Hillinger's story, which ran in the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, was picked up by UPI which the *Las Vegas Sun* carried. Both stories stated that the Arabs were staying at the MGM on the 26<sup>th</sup> floor. As Samuels recalls, the sheik was not staying at the MGM, but was staying at either the Dunes or Caesars, and came over to the MGM to check out the facilities.<sup>7</sup> The sheik looked at the Metro club and wanted to play there and, because of his (the sheik's) reputation, the MGM management did move the baccarat table up to the 26<sup>th</sup> floor. Samuels said that the sheik showed up with a bodyguard and a suitcase and they deposited one million dollars cash into the Metro Club's casino cashier.

Although Hillinger had neither the name of the sheik nor photographs, the story was well publicized. Hillinger relays the same story as Samuels, but the lead for the story, from the *Review Journal* read, "Three Saudi Arabian princes lost over \$1 million on roulette and baccarat tables in a five-day gaming spree last week at the MGM Grand Hotel."<sup>8</sup> The headline for Hillinger's story read, "Princes bet millions -- Arabian oil money comes home to Vegas" and was a full page across.<sup>9</sup> The following day, the *Las Vegas Sun* carried a smaller two-column story from UPI on page 3, with the headline, "Rich Arabs Blow Millions In LV."<sup>10</sup> The *Sun's* story varied little from Hillinger's *Review Journal* story.

Samuels is still overwhelmed by how quickly the story became public. He remembers that the very next morning after he had observed the sheik, the local headlines and the East coast television news, carried the story. Samuels was surprised that Diederich was terminated over this because the incident had happened while Diederich was home asleep and the story broke before Diederich could react.<sup>11</sup>

Diederich, who knew nothing about the incident until he read about it in the newspaper, still believes the story "had to basically very, very positive for the hotel, because it made...the hotel hero-like among Jews around the world, because [of] their relationship with the Arabs."<sup>12</sup> Samuels supports Diederich's view, but says that although the publicity it gave to Las Vegas and the MGM was incredible, it was the wrong kind of publicity for the clientele. Samuels and Diederich realize that part of the success of any casino and the city of Las Vegas relies on discretion and privacy. Also, timing may have played an important role to the response from the media. During 1974 America's oil resources were in question and Arabian

oil was in much demand. The oil issue became very political and also provided millions of dollars to Arabia.

The MGM management interpreted the story as unfavorable and Diederich was blamed for embarrassing the company. Al Benedict accused him of leading Jaeger down the primrose path, i.e. that Diederich provided, a tempting but hazardous course for Jaeger, which Diederich says was ridiculous. But, Benedict gave Diederich the choice of being fired or resigning. Diederich still believes Jaeger was “connected” and management did not dare fire him. “Connected” in Las Vegas terms usually means that a person has powerful underworld connections. Diederich says, “So, I took the fall, and to a degree, it was my fault — it happened in my department and happened on my watch. I should have known this idiot wasn’t capable.”<sup>13</sup>

The Arab story was carried by the *Las Vegas Review Journal* on Friday, December 13, and the *Las Vegas Sun* on Saturday, December 14, and three days later on Sunday, December 17, both the *Las Vegas Review Journal* and the *Las Vegas Sun* carried the story of Diederich’s resignation. The *Las Vegas Review Journal* story was a one-column with border and stated that the resignation was immediate and that Bill Bray would assume Diederich’s duties. The *Las Vegas Sun* story was two-columns and stated, “The resignation came as ‘a bit of a surprise’ according to hotel officials. Diederich cited ‘personal reasons’ for leaving.”<sup>14</sup>

Diederich referred to this incident as an example of a publicist being held responsible for something reaching the media, information that was beyond his control.

Public relations and good publicity depends on good damage control and as Diederich says, “The key, I think to a publicity department is — you’ve got to be open with media.

**You've got to be honest with them.”<sup>15</sup> This trust will result in media cooperation “on those questionable, borderline stories that maybe don't deserve attention.”<sup>16</sup>**

**Although Diederich had complete responsibility for publicity and advertising, the MGM management had hired a Los Angeles-based publicity firm to assist Diederich for the opening. A Chicago based advertising agency, noted for resort publicity was also hired; however, with the success of Diederich's opening, the contract with the Chicago agency was canceled. One reason for hiring an advertising agency was for the clipping service. Clipping services provide a copies of news items, published news releases, publicity and advertising relating to the client. Diederich remembers using clipping services throughout his career but does not remember any real practical use for the service other than for personal satisfaction. “In the beginning, you kept a scrapbook. I never saved any of that stuff.”<sup>17</sup>**

**As a consequence, Diederich does not remember all the promotions, publicity and writing he did for all the different properties he worked for. He does remember Lucille Ball taping her television show at the MGM and wanting to put up identifying signs for everything. “I angered Bernie Rothkopf because I wouldn't do it”, said Diederich. However, in today's casinos, signs may be a good idea. “They're [casinos] all so big now, they just completely overwhelm me. You go in and you can't find your way out.”<sup>18</sup>**

**Knepp observes that “Las Vegas' lofty position allowed it to feed off its image-building. A fertile source of free and recurring exposure stemmed from film and television industries.”<sup>19</sup> These industries used the city's fabled glamour and excitement as a backdrop for television shows such as Lucille Ball's, along with talk shows, game shows, and movies.**

Diederich enjoyed his duties and working relationships at the MGM, but after his termination — over the sheik incident — he went to work for the Los Angeles-based public relations firm of Lawrence Laurie Associates, with Silver Lake Golf, a real estate development community, as his principal account. While Diederich was with Laurie, Lee Siteman, president of Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz, a Beverly Hills advertising agency, whom Diederich had met while still at the Tropicana, called and asked Diederich to assist with a presentation to represent the Union Plaza's promotional needs. Diederich agreed, and this brought him back to Las Vegas in 1975 as vice president/account executive for Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz.

The proposal was successful and Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz won the Union Plaza contract. Diederich attributes some of the success of winning the proposal to his friendship with J.K. Houssels, Jr., which had developed during his Tropicana tenure. Houssels was at the time, part owner of the Union Plaza. Other accounts consisted of the Frontier and assisting in the first appearance by Neil Diamond in Las Vegas. On June 17, 1976, singer, composer Diamond was the first star to appear in the Aladdin Theater for the Performing Arts, [owned by the Aladdin Hotel/Casino] which was three times larger than any other showroom in Las Vegas.<sup>20</sup>

Diamond's agency had contacted Diederich after referral from Bill Pierce, who had worked with Diederich at the Tropicana and who was then working for the publicity firm handling Diamond's account. Diederich, in turn, referred the matter to Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz, and an agreement for Diederich to assist the Aladdin's publicist for the Diamond appearance was reached.

Diederich was with Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz from 1975 until 1982 when the Union Plaza terminated the agency's account. When Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz was absorbed by another company and had difficulty contracting enough accounts to keep open the Las Vegas office, Diederich talked to Houssels, who hired him as director of publicity and advertising for the Union Plaza. The downtown Union Plaza was built in 1972 by Sam Boyd "on the very spot where the town of Las Vegas was born,"<sup>21</sup> in 1905, when investors assembled to bid for lots on Fremont Street that formed the townsite of Las Vegas.

When first built, the Union Plaza contained the largest casino in the world — 1½ acres of slot machines and table games. It was the largest downtown hotel with 504 rooms and was complemented by a unique swimming pool. Looking toward the Union Plaza from Fremont Street, the pool was appeared as a large champagne glass. In 1984, the pool was replaced with the glass-domed Centerstage restaurant and a new swimming pool was built on the third floor of the hotel. Since the Union Plaza was built on the original site of the Union Pacific depot, it also contained a railway station inside the hotel.

As director of publicity and advertising for the Union Plaza, Diederich's responsibilities included marketing and promotion for the lounge entertainment and the dinner shows as well as for the hotel/casino in general. The Union Plaza featured Broadway plays in the showroom, and Diederich composed news releases regarding the stars of the shows. Often the entertainment Las Vegas columnists would call Diederich for a story on the show and/or star, and would print the story he provided verbatim.

Another of Diederich's responsibilities was organizing press premiers for the shows. Diederich would coordinate a theme used in everything from the invitations to the after-show

cocktail party. He was also consulted by the management and the entertainment director when the Union Plaza abandoned the play venue for production shows. He was overruled on the name selection for one such production show — Diederich did not like the selected name of “Nudes on Ice” believing it lacked style or class, but still performed his usual duties for the press premier.

Promoting casino events, such as slot tournaments and jackpot winners, was also part of Diederich’s responsibilities. This involved pictures of winners, writing captions and mailing to hometown papers and wire services. The hotel/casinos rarely provided photographers for this type of promotion; instead they depended on the services of the Las Vegas News Bureau. Diederich worked closely with the Bureau on promotional ideas: “The Las Vegas News Bureau and I fed off each other creatively. My ideas were discussed, refined and implemented.”<sup>22</sup> The Las Vegas News Bureau also provided photographs of the hotel/casinos as well as the city of Las Vegas and surrounding sites such as the atomic testing, Mount Charleston and Boulder Dam. This Bureau service was available to any Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce member.

While the Bureau concentrated on the City of Las Vegas, Diederich and other publicists were more involved with the hotel/casino for which they worked. During Diederich’s Las Vegas history, a hotel and casino functioned as one unit, that is, the person in charge of publicity, public relations and/or marketing functions was responsible for both the hotel and the casino. Later because of the enormity of the properties, the large hotels usually developed a casino marketing department to handle promotions and publicity for the casino and a hotel publicity/public relations department to handle all other areas for the property.

Diederich surmises that there is a change in operating philosophies. "Every department has to make money. Every department has to be a profit maker, except publicity and advertising, which is an expense department — that's why they are the first to go."<sup>23</sup> He continues, "in the early days, if the hotel was making money so, too, was the casino. Today each side stands alone. It's a different industry in a lot of ways."<sup>24</sup>

One difference is the growth of Las Vegas and the gaming industry. From the 1940s to the 1980s, when Las Vegas needed capital for growth, American banks withheld funding for construction or expansion because of the city's notorious image, which explains the partial reliance on Teamster and syndicate loans.<sup>25</sup> However, in 1964 the Bank of Las Vegas, founded by Nate Mack, Bob Kaltenborn, Jake Von Tobel, Bruce Beckley, Herb Jones and E. Parry Thomas, plus two Utah bankers, Walter Cosgriff and Ken Sullivan, began to grant small loans to struggling casinos. The bank also funneled the deposits of local Las Vegas residents into a fund which could be used to promote the physical development of Las Vegas, both in the casino core and in the outlying suburbs.<sup>26</sup> Las Vegas thus developed as a community, as well as a tourist destination.

Steve Wynn, local resort owner, applied to Wall Street for financial backing, this in turn resulted in junk bonds and corporations investing, building or buying hotel/casino properties. Junk bonds, also known as high-yield bonds, carry a lower investment rating, but represent a higher interest rate designed to offset the higher risk factor of the investor. Times have changed from the philosophy and activities of the original Las Vegas entrepreneurs. Corporations tend to be driven by profit, with the main goals of paying a stock dividend. Entrepreneurs tend to be more concerned with making a success of the business.

Diederich observes that when he first arrived in Las Vegas, when the hotel/casinos were owned mainly by the entrepreneurs, the higher executive positions had close working relationships with the middle level executives. Today, he believes the executive positions have become more hazardous to those entering middle management. He explains, "Without that close relationship, the high level executives have no knowledge of your contributions and your value."<sup>27</sup> He does not believe he could "operate in a publicity set-up today because the operations are so different."<sup>28</sup> He continues, "I don't think they are as professional. I don't think the knowledge is there — I know the experience is not there."<sup>29</sup>

In recent years Diederich has applied for positions with newly built resorts, but has never received a call back. He attributes this to age, "Although it's never spoken, I think the key thing is age. And they forget, with age . . . comes experience, background information, which should have some value, even today."<sup>30</sup>

In 1988, Diederich was terminated from the Union Plaza, with no explanation other than that the hotel/casino was hiring a young man just out of college to perform Diederich's duties. Obviously, this saved the Union Plaza money from the difference in salary. However, Diederich attributed the termination to age discrimination. He sued the Union Plaza for age discrimination and won. The court awarded him his current salary for one year.

## Endnotes

## Chapter 4

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6. Robert (Bob) Samuels personal interview by author, 27 October 1998, Las Vegas, NV, 1.
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11. Samuels interview, 2.
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21. Ibid., 204.
22. Harvey Diederich personal notes, 1997, 1.
23. Diederich interview, 29 July 1998, 82.
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## CHAPTER 5

### ETHICS AND IMAGES

Although Diederich's 34-year Las Vegas career produced no single memorable event, his paradigm suggests to students of public relations, publicity and the communication field in general that ideal professional goals are obtainable. Diederich's honesty, integrity and diplomacy, as evidenced in his long-lasting respect from peers and media, stand as a standard for others to emulate. Even when Diederich listened in on Zsa Zsa Gabor's phone conversations, he limited the eaves dropping to only those calls relating to Perfirio Rubirosa, and the playboy and the movie star was considered news during that time period.

When Diederich came to Las Vegas in 1952, Steve Hannagan's stratagem of "hometowners" photographs, cheesecake (showgirl art) photographs, and scenic wonders was well-established as a winning combination for publicizing and promoting Las Vegas. When the Union Pacific announced that on January 1, 1950, it was withdrawing its financial support for the Hannagan program, the Chamber of Commerce immediately began outlining plans to retain Hannagan. As Hannagan said, "This Las Vegas account was an interesting challenge. . .and I am more than gratified with the results."<sup>1</sup> Hannagan offered to continue the publicity campaign at the minimum cost because it "would be folly to drop the program which has had such a marvelous start and which has met with such great success throughout the entire United States."<sup>2</sup>

Diederich, having worked with the Hannagan and Associates firm in Sun Valley, utilized Hannagan's principles when promoting all of the properties he represented. Diederich adopted the Hannagan approach, including working closely with the Desert Seas News Bureau, while relating his own rapport with the media and his own ideology. In 1952 the Chamber of Commerce was promoting the city, but each hotel/casino also promoted the city when it promoted itself. The properties, while not necessarily obligated to conform to the Chamber's program, usually worked with the Chamber. However, advertising and promotion of each property was done by the property, and Diederich, as did most of his contemporaries, understood that the image of the city was directly tied to the image of the individual property.

Diederich promoted and publicized his respective properties throughout the differing city images of "western," from the early 1940s to the mid 1950s; "resort," from the mid 1950s to the early 1970s; and "corporate", from the early 1970s to early 1990s. Throughout his career, he emulated Hannagan's successful methods, but also created his own style of creative promotions and never compromised his principles.

Although generally amiable and easy to get along with, Diederich has always defended his position and beliefs. For instance, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority has always been "a sore point"<sup>3</sup> with Diederich, and he has not hesitated to criticize the authority publicly. While most people see the LVCVA as a key player in promoting the city, Diederich believes the LVCVA claims more credit than it deserves. "They [LVCVA] rarely mention the fact that there would be no need for them if these entrepreneurs had not spent billions of dollars in building attractions; spent billions of dollars in buying entertainment; billions of dollars in advertising and promotion on their own. And, the Convention Authority takes

credit for all of this. Once in awhile, they recognize that we've got a great attraction to see. A great destination."<sup>4</sup>

His conviction that Las Vegas is a great destination prompted a letter-to-the-editor challenging an article which gave credit to McCarran International Airport for creating thousands of jobs. Diederich contended that the airport had done nothing. 'Without a destination, airports would be out of business. Las Vegas as a destination had come about partly through the entrepreneurs, promotions and publicity, not the airport.'<sup>5</sup> The airport and the city of Las Vegas were dependent on each other, but Diederich's view was that the city as a destination created the growth, not the airport. Tourists came to see the city, not just because there was an airport to get them there.

Diederich was also not afraid to criticize the LVCVA when, in 1987, he wrote a letter-to-the-editor expressing his discontent over the LVCVA hiring methods. Diederich, and other members of the sub-committee to research candidates for qualifications and make a recommendation to the LVCVA president became upset when Joe Manos, the sub-committee's number-one candidate, was ignored in favor of Cam Usher. According to Diederich and other committee members, LVCVA president Frank Sain acted arbitrarily by giving the position to Usher.

As Lloyd Boothby, national sales director for the Las Vegas Hilton, said, it was not only that Sain had overridden the committee, but, during this period, the hotels and community had been working well together for the good of the city and committee members felt that this action had disrupted that relationship. Boothby said that he and most of the members agreed

with Diederich. "He [Diederich] was absolutely right."<sup>6</sup> Manos said, "I think Harvey [Diederich] was more upset than I was."<sup>7</sup>

Throughout his career, Diederich has managed to be direct and still maintain respect. Although he was not a member of the Public Relation Society of America, Diederich's career serves as a template of the PRSA "Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations." The code's pledge states in part: "To conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public. "<sup>8</sup> Diederich conducted his professional life in accordance with the public interest, and exemplified high standards of honesty and integrity. To this day he rarely speaks in derogative terms of past or present contemporaries, clients or employers. He always gives credit where credit is due and never knowingly makes false statements.<sup>9</sup>

These standards have prompted his peers to refer to him as "the dean of public relations men" in Las Vegas.<sup>10</sup> Diederich's reputation as "one of the best in the business"<sup>11</sup> extends to those who know him only by reputation. Frank Wright of the Nevada Historical Society said of Diederich, "I've never met him, but I respect him through what I've read and heard. I'd like to meet him."<sup>12</sup>

Diederich's success, through flush times and tight budgets hinged on his good rapport with the media. He was able to get his items published as "news" by designing cost-effective promotions such as his "Night Tee" shot and exploiting the gossip which Zsa Zsa Gabor generated.

His ethics, his principles and his belief in the city and/or the properties for which he worked also gained him the respect of his peers and the media. Rich Newman, with the Las Vegas Advertising Federation, remembers Diederich's sincerity: "He always, always was

open to the media and treated the media very well. He would always meet with people, received everyone.”<sup>13</sup>

Newman credits Diederich as being a great asset to gaming and the advertising industry. “He was always very supportive of advertising.”<sup>14</sup> Denny Weddle, of Denny Weddle & Associates Advertising, said “Diederich was a true gentlemen, deserving of respect and tribute.”<sup>15</sup> And one-time *Las Vegas Review Journal* columnist Don Usherson still has “the utmost respect for Harvey.”<sup>16</sup>

Although retired, Diederich continues to follow the changes in the Las Vegas image. Until the creation of the laser light show on the canopy over Fremont Street known as the Fremont Street Experience, the most famous Las Vegas image had been downtown neon, and especially looking west toward the Union Plaza and Vegas Vic. Diederich expressed his discontent with the new image of downtown: “Fremont Street Experience has obviously not paid off. What was the key photograph promoting Las Vegas? Used, probably more than any other? Downtown Fremont Street, shooting up through all the signs. That had to be the impression, this is Las Vegas!”<sup>17</sup> He continued, “Now, they’re going to a mall with theaters.” He is perplexed by the emphasis on shopping malls as opposed to promoting and publicizing entertainment. “For Christ sake, you build a mall down in Primm. For whom? I guess for Las Vegas and I guess they know what they’re doing, I presume they’re going to get some business off the highway. It staggers your imagination to think that anybody would come to Las Vegas to shop.”<sup>18</sup>

Diederich also believes the adult Disneyland image that hotel backers believed to be conducive to the family trade turned out to be less than favorable. The family may spend

money on the attractions, but less at the tables, restaurants and shows. As Diederich observed, “I think that was a mistake. MGM closing down its park except during summer. I think that indicates that that was a mistake. I don’t know about Circus Circus [Grand Slam Canyon], but according to their stock, it’s not doing anything anyway.”<sup>19</sup> Circus Circus stock dropped from \$35¼ in January 1997 to \$15½ in July 1998 and to date has, for the most part, stayed below the industry average.<sup>20</sup>

Diederich personifies Boorstin’s definition of image by having the power to shape the illusions of Las Vegas to conform to the expectations of the tourists. Diederich’s position allowed him to, as Boorstin suggests, inform, educate, and elevate the public. Boorstin believed that many tourist attractions were accidents, i.e. not planned. As noted earlier, Las Vegas seemed more to happen and then be promoted by people such as Hannagan and Diederich with the Chamber of Commerce as a catalyst.

From the 1950s to 1980s, Diederich was successful in promoting his respective properties by use of his skills and his ethical treatment of the media and peers. He remains knowledgeable about the city of Las Vegas and keeps abreast of the latest innovations of the hotel/casinos and the LVCVA. And, true to his style, his candor remains unchanged.

### **Limitations And Suggestions For Further Research**

The study of Diederich’s career gives voice to a person who experienced four decades of the history of Las Vegas. While this is a strength, it must be noted that events as described are the perception of only one person. Individuals usually approach their own stories from a unique perspective, which rarely provides a complete picture.

Also, this is the first in-depth examination of the career of a Las Vegas publicist, and as such, it provides a foundation for future studies of the history of the promotion and development of Las Vegas as a major resort destination. Diederich's career serves as a sound standard by which to compare other publicists, both in Las Vegas and other cities. Students of public relations, communications, and marketing can learn from the uniqueness of Las Vegas. Additional studies of other publicists will provide yet other perspectives of the practice of public relations in Las Vegas.

The history of Las Vegas is only now just beginning to emerge. Frank Wright has said that most of the history is deliberately kept unknown, and a majority of the history is from memories of those who lived it. Those who lived the history of early Las Vegas are growing fewer, and many of those, as Wright suggested, prefer not to discuss their knowledge. The days of mob retaliation may be over, but some still are reluctant to make public all their knowledge. In a city specializing in hotel/casinos, most people tend to circulate within the hotel properties, telling secrets about people of one property tends to discourage a position at another property. Only research and documentation can unveil and record history for future studies.

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7. Joe Manos informal interview by author, Las Vegas, NV, 21 February 1999.
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## **APPENDIX**

### **TAPED INTERVIEW WITH HARVEY DIEDERICH BY LETA VER HULST ON MAY 30, 1997**

**We'll just start off with some background information:**

**Q. When were you born?**

**A. February 1920 in Chicago.**

**Q. And you graduated from USC?**

**A. February 1950.**

**Q. And your major was Journalism?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. Any distinguished honors?**

**A. Outstanding male graduate in the School of Journalism, Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi.**

**Q. What was the first position that you had after graduation?**

**A. "Actually, the first position I had was while I was still in school at the Los Angeles Y.M.C.A. in publicity. I worked there until July of 1950, when I was hired to go to Sun Valley, Idaho as director of the Sun Valley News Bureau. I stayed there a little more two years."**

**Q. Did they approach you?**

**A. "Did who approach me?"**

**Q. The Sun Valley News.**

**A. "I was interviewed in Los Angeles by Steve Hannagan's Hollywood office. Steve Hannagan was probably, at that time, the best press agent, best publicist in the country and may still claim that honor. He was outstanding."**

**Q. What did you do at the News bureau. Did you just do news releases or . . . ?**

**A. "We actually covered Sun Valley Idaho and the surrounding territory as a news beat. We did a lot of home town photographs and as pictures taken in Sun Valley and sent to hometown newspapers. Obviously, there were a lot of celebrities who came to Sun Valley, winter and summer: Gary Cooper, Claudette Colbert, Van Johnson, the list was endless. Judy Garland came up in the summer of '52 after a suicide attempt and had her daughter with her, Liza. She said, 'No publicity.' She went fishing and caught a fish; so, I went down and talked to her, and left the photographer in the car. I said to her, 'we'll get some pictures just for you.' She said, 'No, you can use them.'" Which was a big score for me right after I got to Sun Valley."**

**Q. What was the first position in Las Vegas?**

**A. "I guess director of publicity and advertising at the Last Frontier. I actually was brought to Las Vegas for an interview by Bob Cannon and Herb McDonald. I was hired by Jake Kozloff, and his brother Bill."**

**Q. This was what, 1952.**

**A. "1952, I started Labor Day, 1952."**

**Q. Now, there is the Last Frontier, and then there's the Frontier. Are those/Did the names change, are they same, or are they different?**

**A. "Basically, it was: the Last Frontier, then New Frontier, then Frontier. I believe, I think that was the chronology."**

**Q. Do you know where those names came from or why they were changed. Do you know the reasoning for the change?**

**A. "Not really. It may be/they added a fine showroom, casino and cocktail room adjacent to the Last Frontier. So, it may have been at that time they decided it needed a new image."**

**Q. I'm sorry, you said that you were director of. . .**

**A. "Publicity and advertising."**

**Q. Did you do any really neat promotions or tie-ins?**

A. "I guess the neatest promotions were — what did we call that stuff — showgirl art. We did a lot of gag stuff. We had an underwater room at the swimming pool, and we used that for photography. And, we also worked with performers. Marilyn Maxwell, for example, came in with a tiger, a live tiger, which they had difficulty keeping awake, it was so sedated. We did that on stage and we did a sequence, still in film, with her and the animal swimming in the Frontier pool. And then, subsequently, one of my daughters dressed her in a bikini, a tiger-striped bikini and used that as a cheesecake shot.

Q. Cheesecake was really big.

A. "Yeah, that was strong in those days and it's meaningless these days. (The way girls dress is sometimes more revealing than the cheesecake in the 1950s.) We also capitalized on news events that occurred. I guess mostly it involved the entertainment. The Gabor sisters appeared on stage at the Last Frontier, and Rubirosa was romancing Zsa Zsa in those days, and she charged him with punching her in the eye and on stage wore a jeweled eye-patch. I took Rubirosa to the airport that day, he gave me a letter and flowers to deliver to Zsa Zsa. We capitalized on that every which way. As a matter of fact, Zsa Zsa had a press agent named Russell Birdwell and he would call her and I would have the hotel operator cut me in to the conversation. So I could find out what was going on."

Q. Was that knowing or unknowing.

A. "What?"

Q. Did they know you were. . .

A. "They did not know. Following up on that, Rubirosa married, who was it — the heiress — I don't remember, in any case, right after that, he married this heiress [Barbara Hutton] and we had the people at the marriage ceremony wire us, a picture of the bride and bridegroom. We blew it up to 11 X 14 and went to Zsa Zsa and got a picture of her looking at the wedding picture and making her comments."

Q. Mary Ellen Glass in her book *Nevada, the Turbulent 50s*, states that there was an investigation of the Last Frontier. Is that over, or do you know what that was about?

A. "That very well could have happened, but I think it was after I left. I mentioned Jay Kosloff and he was like the president and chief operation officer of the Frontier. He was out of Pennsylvania and incidentally and aside, Al Benedict's father was one of the investors. Mike and Al Benedict got his start at the Last Frontier, I believe, working in the kitchen with chef Schneider. When I first knew Al Benedict, he was in the plumbing

business. Now, back to where were we. Oh, yes, when I left Las Vegas for the Bahamas in 1954, Jay Kosloff was, and had been for years, an outstanding civic leader. O.K.? Very active in charities along with his wife. And, when I came back to town, in '56, Jay Kozloff was associated with Warren Bailey at the Hacienda, which had not opened. And Jay Kozloff who was going to run the casino. Jay Kozloff could not get licensed. The state turned him down. It was my understanding that he had sold more than 100% of the stock in the Frontier."

Q. That is probably what she is referring to. . .

A. "He was like, you know, a key figure to like nobody. He eventually went to work for Marion Hicks at the Thunderbird. And then went to Aruba."

Q. Do you think it was all over the stock thing or did you every really know because you were not here?

A. "That would be my guess. I never heard anything more derogatory; any charges other than those."

Q. That was probably on the licensing investigation that she was referring to.

A. "Yeah. I was up in Carson City when he got turned down."

Q. I guess that is about the time when they started, I'll have to check the research, but that is sort of the time were they really started tightening up on the licensing and getting really, really aware of who was getting these licenses.

A. "I think there was very growing awareness that they had to assert more control. Yes."

Q. Your responsibilities, we've pretty well covered. How much authority did you actually have in the decision making?

A. "I don't recall that I ever had any counsel, guidance or major suggestions in the way I operated."

Q. What you said, was?

A. "I don't remember ever being questioned about why did you do this, or why don't you do that. Back in those days, the Silver Slipper and the Last Frontier Village were part of the operation."

Q. Oh, O.K. so you had. . .

A. "So, I covered all of that. I think the Silver Slipper had a meeting room upstairs which, basically I guess, was the first convention facility in Las Vegas. Herb McDonald was the director of it."

Q. Herb McDonald?

A. "Yeah. Of the Last Frontier Village."

Q. That would be news releases and campaigns and promotions and publicity?

A. "Yeah. We did a lot of western stuff at the Village."

Q. I was just going to say that in the research they said something about that at one time, the western theme just sort of happened because of the dude ranches and the women staying to get their divorces and then they really starting building on this western theme. And, at that point, downtown was going to make it a mandatory thing. They didn't do it, but they said a lot of people did jump on board.

A. "It might have been. I don't remember."

Q. But you never had anything where it said, keep it western?

A. "No. I think we capitalized on the elements of the western environment that we had with the Last Frontier Village. We had horses there; we had a stagecoach, which we used out in the desert for promotions; we had Smiley Washburn, Smiley Washburn was bearded-like prospector guy, and I think Washburn Street in Northwest Las Vegas was named after him — he lived out there; we had a fellow named Idaho who looked like — who was the guy with the white moustache and goatee?; (later remembered as Dopy Doc Caudill "who wore suspender overalls with a big diamond, who moved all of his memorabilia out south of the Tropicana, and I think he sold a lot of it to Roy Rogers, and I think some of the stuff he sold to Rogers, wasn't his." He was character. He was like a downtown character mostly, I think was very close to Binon.) we had bumper cars and a merry-go-round; and a steam engine and a joss house. Those things belonged to — what was his name.

Q. Describe media rapport and how established. (*Tape lapse. . .this is from notes at the interview*)

A. Steve Hannagan owned The Desert Seas News Bureau (which later became the Las

Vegas News Bureau) and because of my previous contacts with Hannagan, I had a working relationship there. Hannagan, who handled only class clients, was concerned about the being associated with Las Vegas because of the image of that time. "I became close and friendly with the Los Angeles print media; there were only five or six print dailies at the time: *The Daily News*, *The Times*, *The Mirror*, *The Bureau Express*, *The Examiner*, and there might have been others. And, they had three wire services then: United Press International, News Service and Associated Press, and I met and talked with those people and they would come to Las Vegas. And, of course, wherever they went, it was comped. There was never any question about Room Food, and Beverage (RFB). And they were very kind to Las Vegas. I think probably the strongest guy I remember was Jim Bacon, I think he was INS at that time, but went to UPI and Bob Thomas, with Associated Press and one of the vehicles the whole town used was the Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn 'cause that brought in a lot of media people.

Q. The Tournament of Champions?"

A. "A Golf Tournament — a very famous golf tournament back in those days. It was a tournament that was limited to winners of championships through the year. The minimum pay-out was \$1,000, which was a lot of money back then. I think the major prize was \$10,000. Back in those days, when I came to town, there were only five hotels: The Sands and The Sahara opened shortly after. There were seven hotels and the management of all were very close. There were rivalries, but in a lot of cases, the general philosophy was that anything that helps one hotel, has got to help the entire town, and therefore, helps other hotels."

Q. That was just sort of there. I mean, it was sort of a common sense approach?

A. "Right. Right. There was no dictum. They also had a Resort Association back in those days, which generally was peopled by hotel managers, representing the hotels and I think, probably the most sensitive area of competition was in booking entertainment. Jack Entrotter, at the Sands and Bill Miller at the Sahara would try to out-bid each other for key entertainers. Even Entertainment Directors had meetings, and agreed — a gentlemen's agreement that they would not try to outbid each other. But, then these two guys would go back to the hotels and do it. Hal Braudis, who was Entertainment Director at the Thunderbird, said, 'There is a gentlemen's agreement, but there can be no agreement if they are not all gentlemen.'

Q. The design strategy for each, but at that time it was pretty much that everyone was cheesecake, showgirls and celebrities.

A. "Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right. Also, in those days we had atomic bomb testing. That was

a key vehicle for promoting Las Vegas and hotels would try to tie-in with those tests to promote individual properties and to promote the town. We'd get pictures of the mushroom of various points."

- Q. In the research, it said that some of the hotels actually had like bomb-watching parties, by the pool and different things, and it was big.
- A. "Right. I was in Sun Valley when it started and I said, 'Jesus, that's got to destroy Las Vegas,' but, it helped. It became an attraction."
- Q. Las Vegas seems to be resilient. I mean, anything when you think it's going to destroy it.
- A. "Invulnerable."
- Q. It's just really strange. Someone was saying, now with all the family attractions, someone said to me the other day; it's not working, people don't like it. I said, please God, let it go away."
- A. "I think the history of some of those; MGM for example, are complete disasters. Now, maybe that was the fault of the contents of their amusement area. Circus Circus was a disaster. I think it has improved now. . ."
- Q. Oh, you mean Circus Circus Grand Slam.
- A. "Yeah, right."
- Q. Not the property itself?
- A. "On no, that has been the most successful, I think in Las Vegas history."
- Q. I remember your telling me that was the best-run property at the time in Las Vegas. I think too, back then, if you did want to bring the kids, that was about the only place, at that time, were there was anything for children.
- A. "Yeah. Yeah."
- Q. Then the Hilton came up with the babysitter — the kid's hotel, or whatever and then they did away with that.
- A. "Right."

Q. We discussed what conflicts there were. Did you have any innovative ideas during the Frontier days?

A. "Not that I can remember."

Q. I know you had them later. We have covered the other properties' influence. What did you enjoy most about the Frontier position?

A. "I think probably, a good deal of independence. I don't remember any real restrictions. And, being part of a city that was growing. Unfortunate that I did not anticipate the growth. But, not only growing, but catching international attention, because of various events, functions, whatever. And, as indicated, probably was the beginning years of convention business." A fellow named John De Luca, who was one of those persons generating interest in the convention facility and you never hear his name mentioned. He was in the liquor business. (DeLuca) Fine gentleman.

Q. What did you least like about this position?

A. "I can't think of anything that was outstanding. I never felt any social involvement as far as race was concerned. As you were aware, back in those days, the blacks could not stay on the strip. It was a *Jim Crow* town, I guess in those days. Sammy Davis, Jr. was with the Will Mastin Trio at that time, in those days, entertained at the Frontier and among his many talents, the most talented man that ever lived, was gun handling. So, I thought it would be a great idea to take him out — we had trap shoots back in those days — take him out and let him display his gun-handling out there. So, I invited him in and we had lunch in the only dining room we had there. And, nobody ever said anything to me, but I knew, I had a feeling, that was a mistake. But, I took him out to the trap range, and you would have thought I walked in with a leper. It was the coldest reception I ever got, anywhere."

Q. But they didn't say. . .

A. "No. They didn't say, 'get that Nigger out of here.'" No."

Q. And did they speak to you later?

A. "Yeah, they did."

Q. So, . .

- A. "That trap field was really up the D4C Road, which now is Spring Mountain, right. D4C, was coined for Hoot Gibson's divorce ranch. Hoot Gibson, the old western star. He had a ranch out there where those persons coming into town for a divorce would stay."
- Q. The requirement for citizenship/residency, yeah, that's it, residency.
- A. "Six weeks residency. They had to have somebody here confirm that, or swear to it, or whatever."
- Q. It was amazing, when I was doing research, that Vegas was more concerned with the divorce laws and getting those lined up, than they were in re-instating gambling. And that just blew my mind!
- A. "What kind of foresight is this?"
- Q. I was so amazed by this and I was also surprised that there is a lot of information on this, but you really have to hunt. It's not for people who are just kind of interested in Vegas, they'd never find it. I didn't think there was anything on it to speak of.
- A. "Yeah. It was big business. As a matter of fact, I think Reno was bigger in the early days, then Las Vegas caught up. Reno was like the divorce capitol of the West."
- Q. I get tickled when I watch even the old movies when they are talking about Reno and yet they throw in words, and I'm like, "That's Vegas not Reno." And, to this day, they do it a lot. They get them confused, people in Los Angeles should know Vegas from Reno, but they kind of blend the two in there.
- A. "Right."
- Q. Speaking of movies, did you have any movies during the Frontier days. I know there were movies going on before that.
- A. "I don't remember being involved with the production of any movie. Not in those days."
- Q. I know when I worked with you at the Plaza, you were a very strong advocate of movies. I always thought that was the greatest publicity you could get and it didn't cost you anything, really.
- Q. "It's a pain in the ass."
- A. I know, I know.

- Q. “We had, I’m trying to remember — We used movie stars on stage. What was his name? Edward Arnold, Diamond Jim Brady. And, in the casino, we had an array of jewelry, diamonds from, I think, Harry Winston in New York. We used a showgirl, Candy Cane in a black bikini and pinned these jewels all over her and had two security guards on each side of her. The cheesecake thing, and it got major play, major play.”

END

**TAPED INTERVIEW WITH HARVEY DIEDERICH BY LETA VER HULST****ON NOVEMBER 12, 1997**

**I wanted to tighten up on the first chapter:**

**Q. You graduated in 1950?**

**A. "Right."**

**Q. So did you start late, or were you working your way through college?**

**A. "I didn't start until after the war. I was 26 years old when I started. I was thirty when I graduated."**

**Q. So you went into the war?**

**A. "Yeah."**

**Q. Were you married then, too? Or, did you get married after. . .**

**A. "No, I married in Sun Valley, 1950."**

**Q. You made reference to your daughter with Marilyn Maxwell, when she put her in a tiger bikini?**

**A. "Yes."**

**Q. Which daughter?**

**A. "That was Terre. (Spelled T E R R E)"**

**Q. How old was she?**

**A. "Let's see, this would have been. . .she was born in '52. She must have been like two years old."**

**Q. Now you said that you really really liked the Last Frontier and we went over the reasons that you really like it. So, how did you leave to go the Bahamas? It's kind of obvious, but. . .**

- A. "They made an attractive offer and also, I think it was pleasing for my morale to know that they wanted me back after I had worked for them in Sun Valley."
- Q. Oh, so it was the organization?
- A. "Same organization, yes."
- Q. So, they tracked you down and made you an offer?
- A. "It was an intriguing offer, so. . ."
- Q. So then when you left the Bahamas, you went to New York.
- A. "Right."
- Q. Was that with the same organization, too?
- A. "No."
- Q. So how did that come about?
- A. "Well, I had met a New York publicist in the Bahamas, Kay Norton and, among our clients was Andros Island, in the Bahamas. When I was terminated in the Bahamas, she made an offer. As a matter of fact, I was going to New York anyway. I'm not even sure that I had a job. I don't think I was hired until I got to New York."
- Q. Why did you want to go to New York?
- A. "Well, basically, when I left Las Vegas, my goal was to get to New York for that big time experience. So, my plan was speeded up a bit."
- Q. I think now days, you still want to get to New York for that big time experience. When I was still in college, that would be the ideal, that's the place to go. And then again, you think that Las Vegas should be the biggest public relations city in the world, but it is nonexistent, even today, pretty much.
- A. "Oh yeah. I think the craft has been pretty well decimated."
- Q. So, why did you leave New York.

- A. "The woman for whom I worked, closed her office and I really wanted to get back to the west anyway. So, I packed.
- Q. So you just wanted New York for the experience, but you didn't want to really live there or stay there?
- A. "Right, right. I really missed Las Vegas you know, in the Bahamas and New York because of the warm relationships I had there and the work experience I had there. So, I rented a quarter ton trailer. I had a station wagon I had bought in Florida and I had four children, ages five to five months and a parakeet in a cage and a dog with a litter. And we drove back from New York to Las Vegas with a stop in Omaha, where Joan's [wife] family resided. I came back to Las Vegas and again, I was jobless."
- Q. Oh, okay. So you just struck out?
- A. "Yeah. I went to work almost immediately for Jake Kosloff."
- Q. Again, right?
- A. "Yeah. I think we discussed before didn't we?"
- Q. Well, Jay was (corrected to Jake) he was, was he still at the Frontier?
- A. "No."
- Q. He had moved over. . .
- A. "He was associated with Doc Bayley at the Hacienda. He was going to have the casino."
- Q. That's when he ran into the license problem?
- A. "That's right. He could not get a license. But, when he departed, I stayed on at the Hacienda until the job opened at the Tropicana. I think I may have told you, I had interviewed for that job while I was still in New York."
- Q. An interview for the —
- A. "The Tropicana."
- Q. But nothing had been—

A. "No."

Q. I know when I was with you at the Plaza, you were , there was some sort of a Las Vegas News Bureau committee or something — what was that? I don't remember what that was.

A. "There was a News Bureau committee."

Q. And, you served on that didn't you? At one time, or still?

A. "Well, I don't remember that I was ever — I think, yeah, yeah we used to have meetings and I attended them, so I had to be associated with them."

Q. Do you remember when that came about? Was that from the Last Frontier or Trop or later or--?

A. "The News Bureau committee? That must have started in the early fifties."

Q. Since it was from Hannagan, I thought maybe since you had come through the Hannagan thing, that that was how you ended up on the News Bureau committee. Or, did they just ask casino executives--

A. "Yeah. Hannagan, was in Las Vegas for only a year. Okay. So his influence on the News Bureau was, I think, minimal. Back, in his days, it was not the Las Vegas News Bureau, it was the Desert Seas News Bureau."

Q. Yeah, we've got that. Did this committee as far as you know, I'll check with that too, but they just have one executive from each of the existing hotel/casinos?

A. "There were representatives from several hotels, yes."

Q. I remembered that, but I wanted to bring that [information] in because, I guess --did they kind of figure out what should be done for the city or —

A. "I think it was just general counseling, yeah."

Q. If you were going to be in this and you wanted coverage or photos — they were still doing photos back then, right?

A. "Oh yeah, yeah. Photos was a major thing really."

Q. Then they [the News Bureau] got in trouble, which we'll get into later when that happened with their photographers and local photographers. I remember that. That was a big stink. The local photographers were —

A. "concerned that the News Bureau was cutting into their —

Q. Their money/profit and opportunity. We'll cover that when we get into that area, later.

I think that pulls us up to, now you're back in Las Vegas. One thing I did want to ask: Lloyd Boothby mentioned that, I guess when you left in 1956, as he remembers, the Desert Inn and the Last Frontier did some sort of a walk-way between the two hotels and that they were the first two hotels to reciprocate with the chips.

A. "Which hotels are you talking about?"

Q. The Desert Inn and the Frontier I think it was still the Last Frontier.

A. "I don't recall any overpass or any underpass."

Q. Or anyway of getting through from one to the other. Because they are across the street from each other, right?

A. "Right."

Q. He said that he remembers, and I'm thinking, well I'm going to check into it. It didn't last long, if it existed. But, then he said too, that they were the first to take each other's chips.

A. "I think that is erroneous. Actually, hotel chips were like currency in this town. You could go into a grocery store and spend the chips."

Q. But, was that always the case?

A. "I don't know if there was a decision made among the hotels to do this, or if it just developed."

Q. I wonder who would know? That's a good history point.

A. "Herb might know."

Q. Herb who?

A. "Herb McDonald."

Q. I thought, that's a nice history point; when did that actually develop or was it always.

A. "Every hotel would have a chip run. They would take foreign chips that they had and take them back and pick up their chips. If there was a difference, I guess it was in cash."

Q. When I first got here [1985], they were still doing that. I worked for a little company, and they would make their chip run. Go to all the different hotels and get their money. Then they said it's not worth it, because of all of the running around and the traffic was getting worse.

A. "I think there also probably was jealousy involved. I think maybe individual hotels did not want other hotels to know what kind of casino activity was."

Q. Ah, that's a point too. Gotta keep the spies out. Like, their not going to be there anyway.

Okay, we've covered how you got the job and your responsibilities, now at the— we were, at the Hacienda? What did you do at the Hacienda?

A. "Basically, publicity. I don't think they spent any advertising money. I think they did (unintelligible)"

Q. So, they did mainly publicity and promotions?

A. "Yeah, I think the major thing I did there was with the — they had a night-lighted par 3 golf course."

Q. Has golf always been really big in Vegas? Or, at least from the fifties?

A. "I really don't know what the ratio would be population to existing golf courses, but I think Las Vegas had only a nine hole course until the Desert Inn opened with the 18 hole course. And, subsequently, there was 'Muni' (the Municipal golf course). They added the second nine and, I guess maybe the Stardust built the next golf course which was on Sahara, I'm sure it was the Stardust. Wait a minute, there was a golf course built out in the valley, Paradise Valley Country Club, which is Hank Greenspun. So, I don't know the timing on that."

Q. I'll check the timing on that for the history. . .

A. "The Stardust Golf Course was eventually sold to the Sahara."

- Q. Well, the Hilton bought — was that the Sahara, that was on D.I. [Desert Inn]. What was that one that the Hilton bought?
- A. “Well, the Hilton — they did buy the Sahara Golf Course on Desert Inn. And, the Hilton did have a working relationship with the Las Vegas Country Club.”
- Q. They still do. There’s talk of buying the Country Club.
- A. “I heard that they made an offer of \$50,000 to the members and it was turned down by the Board of Directors.”
- Q. Now, with all the ITT, I think it has gone away. How much authority did you have in the decision making at the Hacienda in publicity?
- A. “I think a hundred percent.”
- Q. That must be a really nice way to work. You had also said, and I wanted to ask you, when I was with you at the Plaza, that Vegas at one time, originally did just about all of the artwork, printing and that kind of thing in L.A. [Los Angeles]. And, they were still sort of hanging on to old, I mean something that was being done in the fifties was still being done in the eighties because most of these people didn’t know any better and were afraid to try anything. I remember a conversation we had regarding that — there was nothing innovative.
- A. “Who were the people who were afraid?”
- Q. A lot of them, who were at that time, in positions — not you — because I remember the guys who used to come and loved to try and sell you stuff and would say, “He makes us do our job! I like that!” But, most of it, being — when I came to Vegas for the first time, just out of college taking my P.R. courses and advertising classes, this and that. And, I thought, “what is it with Vegas? It’s a four-color photo and copy. (1985--) It was just so boring. I think I asked you at that time and you had said that so many people, because it had gotten so big, that the President’s grandson was in charge of it [advertising/publicity] and they just didn’t know and they were just going to stay with what they had been doing forever and ever. So, were they doing a lot still, I mean did L.A. start getting a lot of the printing because Vegas was really small. How much printing did they have here as far as print shops.?
- A. “There were not a lot of printers. I think the — I can’t think of his name, the major guy, his son is still active in the printing business and has a big operation now. Allen, Allen — But there were years when a lot of the printing production were done out of Las

Vegas in Los Angeles. And, a lot of printing was done out of Utah. It was Paragon Press. Creel Printing is the one I was thinking about [above]. I don't remember that Creel Printing had four-color process in those days. May have, but I don't remember."

Q. I know it would have been very expensive in those days.

A. "Yeah. Another printer, Wilkenson; Marc Wilkenson. He wouldn't bid on a job. Give me the business or forget it. He did a lot of printing for local businesses."

Q. Sort of like Lloyd said that one of the astronauts said, "Just think, we're sitting in a rocket or space ship built by the lowest bidder."

A. "Yeah, right. Don Rickles used to use that line."

Q. Did you do news releases also?

A. "Yeah. I don't think we had much advertising money. So, much of my activity was publicity."

Q. So, it was one of those shoestring things, find the greatest way to get the news/name out there.

A. "Yeah, I don't think Doc Bailey was an advertising advocate. And, we just didn't have the money. We opened without a casino and, I think it was six months later before Bailey was licensed."

Q. That was due, from my research, he was holding on because he really wanted Kasloff. Apparently, Bailey was told; drop Kasloff and we'll give you your license.

A. "That could have happened."

Q. He backed off anyway because it was costing him money without a casino.

A. "Yeah."

Q. So, basically, you were real creative with the way —

A. "We did have entertainment. We had a showroom, I know that." My memory is hazy there, but I do remember Bill Dana appearing in that showroom. And, later on, burlesques that moved from the Silver Slipper —

Q. We'll find it. How long were you at the Hacienda?

- A. "I returned to town in May and I think I went to work there in May and I left in February."
- Q. May of '56, was it?
- A. "I came back in May of '56, yeah and went to the Trop, I think February of '57."
- Q. So, you probably didn't too much of this other stuff [interview outline]. You didn't have, well, you weren't there that long, nothing would have happened that much to suppress or subdue negative news items at the Hacienda, unless you were working on Kazloff in getting his license.
- A. "I think much of the sordid history of the Hacienda and its principles, developed later. It seems to me that Doc Bailey died of a heart attack in a room at the Dunes, with a hooker."
- Q. Well, that's a Vegas way to go.
- A. "I think they hushed that up. Then, Doc Bailey's wife turned lesbian later on. Maybe she had been lesbian, I don't know."
- Q. Aren't you glad you didn't have to deal with those items? Did you have any really innovative ideas during the Hacienda, because you have to be really creative when there's no money.
- A. "As I said, we used the golf course. I think the tee shot I set up; a thing called *Night Tee Time*. I had a girl in a nightie swinging a golf club at night on the first tee. So, it was a little pun in there. It ran all over. In fact, Dick Taylor was the manager then and later he became general manager, he still talks about it. They really couldn't believe the space we got without advertising."
- Q. That's the name of the game, I think. I think anybody can be creative if they have an unlimited budget, but I think it's really a little harder with no budget.
- A. "I think the *R.J.* was fairly easy. I think the *Sun* was — Greenspun, you know, was like demanding advertising."
- Q. Demanding advertising?
- A. "Yeah. I think the *R.J.* was too, but not as strongly as Hank Greenspun. And Hank needed the money."

- Q. So, the *Sun* would take more advertising or would do more . . .
- A. "I think the publicity exposure depended upon the advertising budget. And, it seems to me, that — I don't know when Forrest Duke came to town, but he wound up with the *RJ*."
- Q. And Forrest Duke
- A. Yeah, two r's in Forrest.
- Q. Was he one of the columnist or . . .
- A. "He was a columnist with the *Review Journal*. And, I think he had a column in the *Daily Variety*."
- Q. And the *Daily Variety* is. . .
- A. "Out of Los Angeles."
- Q. When you went to work at the Hacienda; was it just interim to fill the time until you got the job at the Trop, or did you really plan to work there?
- A. "Well, obviously, I grabbed onto the first thing that happened when I got back to town. I had no real indication that the Tropicana job was going to develop. So, I took the Hacienda job as a permanent thing. And, I think Bob Cannon probably was an influence in getting me the Tropicana job."
- Q. Bob Cannon was?
- A. "We had worked together at the Last Frontier. He was one of the people who had brought me to town originally. He was general manager at the Tropicana, which I probably told you already, was ready to open maybe a year before it did open. So, I think Bob Cannon had worked there for at least a year before it opened."
- Q. So, what did you like most about the Hacienda, if anything?
- A. "I guess maybe, freedom of activity. I don't recall ever feeling any pressure. We did have regular meetings with Doc Bailey in his suite and he would be dressed in his underwear. Seems to me that we put out a brochure, too. I remember a swimming pool shot we used. Hacienda had other Haciendas in California. I don't know how many operations they had in California, but they had one in Fresno, I know that."

Q. Did you have to coordinate with them?

A. "No. It was pretty independent."

Q. Sometimes when there is a chain like that, they do provide some like blanket materials, like matches. . .

A. "That may have happened, but I knew nothing about it."

Q. What did you enjoy least? No money?

A. "You could say that. I don't know that there was anything I enjoyed least. At the time, it was a good job for me."

Q. Did the Trop, I'm assuming, just offer you more money?

A. "Yeah."

Q. That's always a good reason to take another job. You didn't have anything you had to suppress from the media. Right?

A. "No."

Q. You did run into that later at some of the properties didn't you?

A. "I don't know that I ever, actively, suppressed anything. 'Cause I think that's a basic error. I don't think the media will believe you if you try to withhold information. And so, its of my opinion to be as open as you can."

Q. That's the canon they teach anyway.

A. "The key on that was at Sun Valley when we had an avalanche, you know. I pondered on that briefly. I headed up the mountain and told my assistant, phone the media and tell them we've had an avalanche and we'll get back to them. It was the Sun Valley New Bureau, and if it's a news bureau, you gotta act like reporters, right."

Q. Someone had said to me, after you left the Plaza, and even after I left the Plaza, several people have said, If Harvey were here, that would never have hit the newspaper. Or it wouldn't have been as harsh or hard because you had such a rapport with the media that you could say, Hey, guys it happened, here's what happened, but can you just not make

such a big deal of it? We don't want a three ring circus out of this. And, they would kind of say, okay, Harve, we'll do that.

A. "I think maybe, at times, they were kind, yes."

Q. That's why the question of media rapport is on here [interview outline] because I think you did have a really good one. They believed you. They trusted you. And, I think that probably came over the years.

A. "I think there was some respect, yes."

Q. Yes, I think you probably earned that. Now, we're going into the Trop. You were working there before it actually opened?

A. "Right, I started in February."

Q. So, you were doing advertising and publicity, promotions before it opened to try and get people interested or what were your duties?

A. "Most of my time was spent putting together a press kit. I think, the most elaborate press kit ever produced in this town."

Q. Did you keep a copy?

A. "I don't think so."

Q. I'm glad to hear you say that. I keep things for so long and then I chuck them.

A. "I might have kept it through the MGM, then trashed it, I'm not sure. You know, there was not a hellava lot we could do then, because the license was still pending so basically I was writing."

Q. A lot of writing?

A. "My files on the all the key principals and the description of the hotel, general breakdown of facilities. We did some photography. It was a very, very difficult hotel to photograph because it was low; three stories I think. And the guy I working for came in one day with a picture of a new hotel in Philadelphia or somewhere and said, 'Why can't you do something like this'? I think we finally took some aerial or something."

Q. You wouldn't have that problem nowadays.

- A. "We may have used a pool shot — across the pool to the hotel, I don't remember."
- Q. Get creative again. Now, once it opened, your responsibilities grew, I'm assuming?
- A. "Oh yeah. I was involved in all kinds of advertising, publicity and promotion."
- Q. Did you have a staff?
- A. "Staff. I had — isn't that terrible? I remember I worked upstairs in what later became, I think, the President's office. Did my writing up there. I don't think I had a secretary."
- Q. You actually called the media, mailed the releases. You did everything?
- A. "I believe so. And, even after we opened, I'm not sure, but I must have had a secretary and I think we moved our office downstairs near the coffee shop."
- Q. I would think they would give you at least a secretary.
- A. "I think I had a secretary then because I think Monty Krosser had an office next to mine. So, I must have had a secretary. I can't remember her name, it might have been Dorothy."
- Q. I was just wondering. Nowadays when you look at publicity, promotion, P.R., advertising, marketing, whatever, there are usually 18 people doing nothing.
- A. "That's right. Everybody has — it's departmentalized. So, if you are buying outdoor, you have somebody handling outdoor and somebody else doing radio, and somebody else doing television."
- Q. Do you think that's a better way of doing it?
- A. "I think if you have regular meetings with an exchange of ideas, I think that's alright. I think it's probably far more expensive than it should be. I think there are too many persons involved in publicity and advertising."
- Q. I think you also then lose that rapport with the media and your clients, and customers and the people in the hotel itself because — I can't talk to you, not my table.
- A. "Yeah, right. Not my station."
- Q. So then after it opened, you were still doing a lot, I'm sure on news releases. Did you

do anything really great for the opening. Did you come up with this great gala opening or media press party or. . .

- A. "We did nothing outstanding, as far as I can remember. Eddie Fisher was the head liner. And I think, as I recorded somewhere else, on opening night, there was a line of customers waiting to get into the showroom. Opening the hotel, we used Lieutenant Governor, Rex Bell and Mayor C.D. Baker. Rex Bell turned the key to open the door and then threw the key away."

Q. Was that your idea?

- A. "Yeah. It stayed open every since."

Q. Did anybody ever find the key?

- A. "I don't know. Eddy Fisher just accidentally showed up as the people were lining up for the showroom and stood there and chatted with them. I said get a picture, but I don't think it ran anywhere. I don't recall that we got any major break on the opening."

Q. Do you know if there was a reason for that or just so many opening at the time or?

- A. "I really don't know. Maybe we got more than I remember. But there is nothing startling that remains in my memory."

Q. Anything while you were at the Trop that does stay in your memory. Now, I know you came up with the "diamond in the desert" or what was it "diamond of the desert"?

- A. "'Tiffany of the Strip.' I did not author that. I adapted it."

Q. Well, you got the credit for it.

- A. We did get some publicity at the opening in this pamphlet I give you. There is a picture of Eddy [Fisher] and Debbie [Reynolds] and Eddie Cantor. The show was fun. Rosemary Clooney got married."

Q. Recently?

- A. "Yeah. And she married a guy she had been living with for years, I guess. But, he was one of the dancers in the original Tropicana showroom. If I could remember his name. In fact I saw them together when I was working out of Los Angeles, she appeared at the Silver Lakes, California development we were promoting."

**Q. He obviously went on to bigger and better things?**

**A. "No, he didn't. Never, never became a name of any kind. May Dunn probably was the standout from the original casting of the show. She came out and made a semi-name."**

**Q. Did the Follies come originally with the Trop or did that come later.**

**A. "Monty Prozar was the original producer. I think we talked about this before, if not, I think it's in the notes there. But, we could not hire any outstanding name to appear in the showroom. Eddy Fisher was probably the strongest name we had."**

**Q. Was there a reason for that?**

**A. "Well, I think that we did not want to get into a bidding war for the major nightclub performers."**

**Q. I remember the gentlemen's agreement.**

**A. "Yeah, right, right. And, they just were not there. We booked Rhonda Fleming. And, as I told you before and in the notes there, they wound up headlining Walter Winchell, who had been a hoofer early in his career, but now was a gossip columnist. It just got to the point, I can't remember any other names who appeared there. Boreminivist and the Homanicats, I think that was one. The production show was strong. An excellent show, but without marquee name, the hotel got to a point of desperation and decided, I think based on the success of the Lido at the Stardust, that they would try something from overseas. I was not there when the Follies Bergere opened. I think it was 1959 when it opened."**

**Q. It's still there isn't it?**

**A. "Yeah. Lou Walters was the first producer of the Follies Bergere. He was still there when I went back in '61."**

**Q. So you went back to the Trop?**

**A. "I left the Trop to get away from the agony this guy was creating and went to the Sahara for three or four years."**

**Q. Well, I guess what you liked least about this position was this guy?**

- A. "He was impossible. Just a sick, sick man. As I told you, he didn't even show up for the opening. I think he sent his son up. His son became a movie producer of some fame later on."
- Q. Who was this guy, the owner?
- A. "My boss? Mack Millar. And, when I decided to leave, some of the Board of Directors came to me and said, "Stay. We're going to get rid of this other guy." But, I had made a commitment by that time. And, later this guy got knocked on his ass by Charley Baron. He was General Baron, I think. He was out of Chicago and, I think connected. Good guy, really good guy."
- Q. Did he hold a position here, or was just —
- A. "He was like, what you would call, a host."
- Q. A casino host?
- A. "Well, he was not — they didn't have hosts in those days. But, basically it was his responsibility. He had a suite right down — the first suite on the second floor, number two. He used to entertain showgirls and dancers. But, in any case, Mack Millar was talking to him one day, and he was poking him like this [index finger poking the chest]. Charley Baron said, don't do that, and he did again and he wacked him. So, that was the end of Millar. But, he outlasted me. We may have done some cheesecake, back with the original, I don't remember."
- Q. Did any of the other properties or the city influence your decisions at the Trop or did you influence any of their advertising campaigns by what you did?
- A. "Not that I know of. We had a Los Angeles advertising agency in those days. But again, I don't remember exactly what we did."
- Q. How did that work in those days? Did you mail your information, call it in? You didn't have computers to e-mail.
- A. "As I recall, people from the agency would come up periodically. I may have gone there, but I certainly don't remember."
- Q. But, it was actually, physically handed to someone. It wasn't mailed or phoned?
- A. "I think, probably, a mixture."

- Q. Anything else at the Trop that you remember. Or do you want to go into when you came back? When you came back, the Follies was there, right?
- A. "Right."
- Q. Where did you go from the Trop?
- A. "Sahara."
- Q. How long were you at the Sahara?
- A. "Three and half years. Once again, with Herb McDonald. We did a lot of cheesecake at the Sahara and we started, Herb started some promotions. I think the first Sahara invitational golf tournament occurred during my tenure. We were also involved in unlimited hydroplane racing at Lake Mead."
- Q. Does that mean that you sponsored it or did Herb, Herb was racing cars, was he racing hydroplanes, too?
- A. "I don't know how that came about. Probably, Herb was in negotiations for the contract with those people. We were the host hotel and I guess had to be involved with some sponsorship of some kind."
- Q. As the host hotel, I'm assuming that the staff and racers stayed there.
- A. "Right. And, we had at least one of the boats parked in front of the Sahara prior to the race. We also had trap shooting. That was at Tuley Springs."
- Q. Now, is that the same place you took Sammy Davis?
- A. "No."
- Q. This was another one.
- A. "I think we had some convention activity, too."
- Q. With the convention activity, as a promotion, would you sort of do something like, this convention's here or welcome such and such or did you actually promote the convention itself.

- A. "No. The convention was signed and then to me to use as a publicity vehicle as best we could. And, it was always on the marquee, you know, welcome so and so. And, came December, I went to Alec Shoovey, general manager then and I said, On the marquee, why don't we put up something that says, welcome anybody.' He couldn't go for it. Oh, that's another thing Herb promoted, the annual airline Christmas party. Airline employees were invited in, and I think they got comp rooms and special parties, and so forth. Was a very, very successful event."
- Q. So, the Sahara itself give a Christmas party for the airlines?
- A. "Right. For the airline employees. Which, of course, created a lot of loyalty among the airlines. But, it was in December and it meant bodies in the hotel."
- Q. That's important. December and August are a dead time in Vegas, but I think Conventions have taken care of that, except December of course. December is still pretty dead in Vegas. (The National Final Rode does fill hotel rooms, but the occupancy is still lower in December than the rest of the year.)
- A. "And, we had very substantial names head liners; Sophie Tucker, Donald O'Connor, who else? We did have Louie [Prima] and Keely [Smith] in the Lounge, the Casbah Lounge and Don Rickles' first Las Vegas appearance was at the Casbah Lounge."
- Q. Now did you bring these people in or?
- A. "The entertainment director was Stan Erwin. Victor Borgia was there."
- Q. He was big in Vegas, wasn't he? I know when was going through 1952, he was in the ads, I don't remember where he was playing.
- A. "Probably, the Sahara. Dan Dailey."
- Q. Do you think, looking back, of course we still had the studio system in Hollywood, but didn't it seem to you that there were more celebrities, more names that you could pull from than right now?
- A. "Of course."
- Q. Who are you going to get right now to come to Vegas to entertain people. They're not out there.

- A. "I think they're there, but they're off-shoots of Rock 'n' Roll. It's mostly soft rock now. But, the major entertainers, today can make a hellava lot more money with concerts than they can with night club appearances. I think the MGM is bringing in that type of entertainment, now in that big room, what do they call it?"
- Q. The MGM Garden.
- A. "I think so."
- Q. That's where the Las Vegas Sting arena football played and that's a big arena.
- A. "I think they have fights in there too, like Tyson."
- Q. When did you bring, was it Bruce Springfield, I always get Springfield and Springstein confused, which one did you bring him in.
- A. "Rick who?"
- Q. He was sort of a soft rock 'n' roll singer.
- A. "I don't remember being involved with that at all."
- Q. Someone gave you credit for being the first one to get a major rock 'n' roll star in Vegas, other than Elvis, of course.
- A. "At the Sahara, they brought in, what was the biggest group ever,
- Q. The Beatles?
- A. "Yeah."
- Q. At the Sahara?
- A. "Yeah. I think they appeared in the Convention Center. They stayed at the Sahara. I think, Stan Erwin negotiated that."
- Q. Were you there then?
- A. "Yeah. I think I was there then. Maybe not, that may have been after I left. I do remember I got the kids seats for the concert."

- Q. You still had your contacts right. Juice, excuse me juice. The Beatles, I know came out, in this country in '63. So it would have been '63-'66. I don't remember.
- A. "I don't remember being involved in bringing in anybody named Rick."
- Q. I always get those two guys confused. Someone said you, and you got a lot of credit because you got him in here and he didn't do that type of concert. But, I can't remember.
- A. "You're not thinking of Neil Diamond?"
- Q. Yes, thank you, yes.
- A. "He was at the Aladdin."
- Q. Were you at the Aladdin?
- A. "No." I was working for a Beverly Hills advertising agency and I got a call from a Los Angeles press agent, Jim Mahoney, who is still in, and he asked that we help with the advertising and promotion of Neil Diamond."
- Q. So, you didn't really bring him in, but you did the promotion.
- A. "I don't know who signed him."
- Q. But you helped promote the tour of the show or whatever at the Aladdin?
- A. "Yeah, yeah, the Theater of the Performing Arts. Lee Fisher, another press agent, I think is the publicity guy there now, was there at that time, I mean. So, I worked with him."
- Q. So that was when you were in Beverly Hills?
- A. "We had used Jim Mahoney at the opening of the MGM. So the Neil Diamond thing was after I left the MGM."
- Q. Anything else that you really remember at the Sahara?
- A. "No. A lot of cheesecake stuff."
- Q. Getting bigger in those days.
- A. "Yeah. We took the Lt. Governor to Canada on a promotion trip."

**Q. Why would you take him to Canada?**

**A. "Creating business up there. Awareness of the Sahara. And, on that same trip, we took Joan Adams, who had been Miss Nevada and second runner up for Miss Universe or something. Very attractive woman."**

**Q. So that was not only promoting the Sahara, that was promoting Las Vegas too.**

**A. "Yeah, right. And, they let Joan Adams up in the flight deck, and I think she was at the controls for awhile — way off course. That wouldn't happen these days."**

**Q. I'm assuming that while you were at the Sahara, you also were 100% responsible, or did you answer to Herb?**

**A. "Answered to Herb. And, we had a Los Angeles publicity firm. Kay Starr, was another one we used, a performer."**

**Q. So, what did you like best about the Sahara?**

**A. "I think a very comfortable relationship working with Herb."**

**Q. What did you like least?**

**A. "Alec Shwoofey."**

**Q. Shwoofey? Who was he?**

**A. "He was, what do you call it. Not auditor, but above auditor?"**

**Q. Comptroller?**

**A. "Comptroller. He was the money man for the hotel."**

**Q. Beancounter?**

**A. "And, he was difficult."**

**Q. Was he just difficult in pinching the pennies or —**

**A. "Yeah, yeah. He was a watchdog. And, I guess basically, not a bad guy, but he was — for expense accounts, he had little slips of paper like this, and you had to fill out one for**

every expense. Schwoofey, this is apart from my experience, but he went on — he was hired by Corcorian and went into the Flamingo to put together a cadre for the Las Vegas International, which then became the Hilton. And, Alec Schwoofey, was his top guy. Alec Schwoofey, somewhere along the line married Joan Schwoofey (the beauty from the Sahara)."

Q. Wait, the same last name?

A. "Joan Adams. The beauty queen. I don't think they got along too well, 'cause the story goes, as she tells it, prior to their divorce, she put everything, all his clothing and everything in his truck and took it and dumped them at the entrance of the Hilton."

Q. People don't do fun things anymore.

A. "Alec Schwoofey was at that 30 year party."

Q. What 30 year party?

A. "They had a second annual for those persons who have lived in Las Vegas for 30 years or more."

Q. Who puts that on?

A. "I think Jack Cogan and Joe Delaney are the principles. A good concept, but they blew it."

Q. I was going to say, I've never even heard of it. How do you get an invitation, if nobody even knows there's a party going on. That is a nice concept.

A. "I missed the first one; I went to the second one. That's where I saw Herb and he said that you were going to call him."

Q. Did you actively seek employment elsewhere, or did you get another offer?

A. "Bob Cannon came to me and asked me to come back to the Trop. And, I probably never should have gone back to the Trop. I should have stayed with Herb I guess. But, in addition to an attractive offer, the Tropicana had under construction, a golf course, which had significance for me. The Sahara had not bought the golf course yet.

Q. On your resume, you said you did golf packages, where did that fit in?

A. "Golf promotions would be the Tropicana."

- Q. Was that in addition to, or just mainly golf promotions. Did you go back to doing your regularly publicity, promotions, advertising and golf in addition to it?
- A. "Right."
- Q. Someone also told me that I should get you to tell me the story about Connie Francis.
- A. "Connie Francis, I had no involvement at all. She married — she appeared at the Sahara, that was after I had left. She married the publicists who replaced me when I left the Sahara, Dick Kanellis. I had no idea what happened. Her family, was I think mob, and I don't think they really cottoned to their daughter marrying a Greek, so he was, I think, probably, moved out of New York, forcibly. Of course, Connie Francis is not the steadiest person in the world either. She's kind of a radical with a lot of problems in recent years, emotional problems."
- Q. But, you didn't have any problems with her per se. They didn't get you confused with the publicists who replaced you and didn't bother you.
- A. "I really had nothing to do with that at all, except that I knew the bridegroom."
- Q. How long were you at the Trop the second time?
- A. "Eleven years."
- Q. Obviously, you liked it.
- A. "Yeah, it was a good job. And, a good golf course."
- Q. Give you a good golf course and you'll stay anywhere. Right, Harvey?
- A. "The president was a tennis player. And I used to dread hearing from him about playing tennis 'cause I wanted to be across the street at the golf course. But, we played tennis quite often."
- Q. Did you have your 100% control at the Trop?
- A. "Yeah, pretty much. I think probably Bob Cannon was a contact for me."
- Q. And that was another good working relationship?
- A. "Yeah."

- Q. And did you do anything at the second — well, now the Follies were there, so did you do any kind of unusual promotion with the Follies?
- A. “Not really. Again, considerable swimming pool garb and cheesecake. We used Felicia Atkins forever. She probably was the most publicized showgirl there ever was. As showgirls, they did not work topless in those days. In fact, the showgirls in the Follies Bergere, wore pasties and it wasn’t until a few years after it opened that they had a nude, and it was one nude. .
- Q. They had one nude did you say?
- A. “One nude, one nude; the other showgirls wore pasties. What was her name; she married Andy Williams?” French lady, pretty girl. Claudine Longet. She married Andy Williams and they were subsequently divorced. Then there was another one whose name I forgot, she married Sonny King. What the hell was her name?”
- Q. Sinatra married a showgirl, too didn’t he? That seemed to have been the. . .
- A. “Sinatra? I don’t think so, did he?”
- Q. Wasn’t his latest wife a showgirl?
- A. “Oh, yes, right. Barbara was a showgirl at the Riviera.”
- Q. It’s interesting too, because the showgirls of the fifties and sixties were these risque, show it all, reveal it all, wild women, and by today’s standards, they would be nothing.
- A. Laughter — “It’s just like cheesecake in the early days. Now it’s blasé.”
- Q. You can’t sell anything with cheesecake these days.
- A. “We did this, at the Trop, we did a lot of promotions out of town. We went into Phoenix for tennis tournaments and J.K. Houssels, Sr. had a string of thoroughbred horses. So we would go to racetracks where they had a Tropicana race and take a showgirl there and go down to the winner’s circle and so forth.”
- Q. So you supplied all of those lovelies?
- A. “Right.”
- Q. To put the wreath over the horse, and kiss the jockey and . . .

A. "Right. I was probably more directly involved with sales."

Q. In sales?

A. "Yeah. We traveled through the South and I remember going into Chicago with Felicia Atkins and Mr.; I'm getting so bad with names — the leading columnist there; Mr. Chicago — he's still out there too. Erv Kupcinec. He had a T.V. show and Felicia appeared on the T.V. show and they had to use some sort of covering on her cleavage. Television would not accept that, in those days."

Q. I remember watching the Joey Bishop show in the early sixties, and they would always have girls, the women who were on would put something over their knees. I remember the knee was not shown on television, you couldn't show that. So, what sales — you mean getting people to come visit the Trop?

A. "We set up cocktail parties for travel agents."

Q. So you did that all over the country or throughout the South?

A. "And, subsequently, I became the Director of Marketing which involved being sales, advertising and publicity. I had a staff; I guess three or four sales people and a publicists. In fact, Dick Kanellis went to work for me, briefly there."

Q. Dick who?

A. "Kanellis. The same guy who married Connie Francis. Had replaced me. Had worked with me and then replaced me at the Sahara. Good guy. Had cancer of the lungs very, very young. I had to fire him at Tropicana."

Q. You had to fire him?

A. "During a hotel strike, he left town and went up to San Francisco or something. And he did it, and he should have known better. That was part of it, but also involved was Dick Kanellis was among the first Hippies, with long hair and the broad ties and the funny glasses. So, summarizing, some of our hotel executives, we weren't ready for that."

Q. And there were laws against it then. What did you like least, if you did like anything least; why did you leave?

A. "It was very comfortable for me during those eleven years. I became involved, along with Houssels and Maynard Slowta, the producer of the show in those days and

selecting acts for the Blue Room, which was really a second big room, but it was a lounge. A lot of big names. And, I guess the thing I liked least was my departure from there. D.O. Gustafson bought the place. Initially, he gave instructions, that no employees were able to play the golf course for free.

Q. Well, that did it.

A. "Then he took over my office for a super bedroom for himself and visitors of varying ages and sexes. He was an evil man. Really evil. So, those, you know, those were unhappy days prior to my departure."

Q. Were did you go from the Trop?

A. "When I was terminated at the Trop, I went to the Dunes, briefly. I was involved with, I guess, I was hired by Harley Kaufman, and he was involved in promotions and sales. Promotion, mostly, I don't think he was involved too much in sales, specifically, promotion. I think, basically, promoting high-end players 'cause he did ratings and so forth. Then we got involved in golf tournaments. The Dunes, of course, had a golf course at that time."

Q. Were you could play golf?

A. "Yeah. Amateur tournaments. I rarely played golf. I really couldn't; didn't have time."

Q. You said you were terminated [Trop]? Was that just because you just didn't get along with him

A. "He got rid of everybody.

Q. He just did one of those clean house things.

A. "Right, over a period of time, until he eliminated everybody."

Q. The Vegas Syndrome.

A. "I think the first to go was our director of sales. And, eventually, he fired Bob Cannon. One of the meanest things he did happened to one of the owners, a fellow named Preston Fineberg, who went back to Chicago to bury his daughter. When he returned to Las Vegas, there was no pay check and he went to the comptroller and said, what's happened. And she said, you're out of here. He fired the man while he was gone burying his daughter."

- Q. And made it effective during that absence?
- A. "Exactly, exactly." And didn't tell the man. He had to find out from the comptroller. It wasn't too long before she was fired."
- Q. "He hired Jimmy the Greek to handle his publicity. I think Jimmy did a pretty good job for him. But, D.O. Gustafson subsequently went to jail. He was involved in that Kansas City money laundering, skimming . . . And they nailed him on that."
- Q. Is that the same Kansas City money skimming that was in the movie and book *Casino*? Is that the same reference?
- A. "I don't remember."
- Q. They were in Kansas City and in Vegas go to the money counting room, fill the bags and take them back to Kansas City. . .
- A. "I don't know if it was ever that open or that blatant, you know. But, there was considerable skimming going on. Who the hell was the casino guy who also went to jail? I can't remember his name. But D.O. Gustafson subsequently lost one eye from a boating accident. I had heard that he had a wrap sheet in Minneapolis, which was his home, involving sex with minors."
- Q. This was the guy who bought the Trop?
- A. "The Trop had been sold prior to his buying it, to a fellow named Carl Pollag. Pollag also resided in Minnesota. And, Carl Pollag now owns the Minnesota Twins."
- Q. How could this guy buy the casino with that kind of background?
- A. "I don't think anybody knew at that time. He came in pretty clean."
- Q. And, they didn't do the searches they do now?
- A. "Evidently, the investigators in the process was never reached; back there, his history back there. Which, is kind of hard to believe. It could happen."
- Q. Anything you want to add to what we've covered? We've taken you through Hacienda through just about all of them. . .

**A. “The MGM.”**

**Q. We’ll do the MGM later. I think we’re getting a little tired.**

**END**

## TAPED INTERVIEW WITH HARVEY DIEDERICH BY LETA VER HULST

ON JULY 29, 1998

- Q. What were your main responsibilities back in Sun Valley? Were you like the head of it, or did you have a staff...
- A. "I was head of the Sun Valley News Bureau, which basically was like a newspaper. Reported whatever happened. Of course, if it was publicity."
- Q. So you sort of assigned whatever staff you had to cover other stories, or did you kind of do everything?
- A. "I had one writing assistant and I had a secretary and four or five photographers from time to time. And, the basic commodity there was home-town photos. And, a lot of convention coverage during the spring and summer season."
- Q. How did you persuade Judy Garland to take the picture of the fish?
- A. "I had a report that she was fishing. So we got in the car with the photographer, left the camera in the car, and I just went out and talked to her. She had caught a fish, and I said, "Why don't we take a picture just for your own use. And she said, "No, you can use it."
- Q. So you didn't really talk her into it. She just sort of said "No, that's okay."
- A. "I offered to take a picture for herself. As I told you earlier, when she checked in she said, "absolutely nothing, no publicity."
- Q. So, you didn't pressure her.
- A. "I think it at least gave us a an excuse for getting a picture of her."
- Q. Anything else to tell about Doby Doc?
- A. "I think I probably told you everything that I know."
- Q. Visitors having fun for home-town newspapers. Cheesecake photos of beautiful women in swimming suits in front of resorts, Lake Mead, etc. What did they do with them? Did you just send them over the AP and whoever picked them up...
- A. "Yeah, most of them were submitted to the wire services AP, UPI and then there was a mailing photo service which I think was associated with UPI. I think there was like a mat service they had back in those days. Anything that got picked, got photo coverage."
- Q. Do you think it has changed very much? I know Rossi Rolenkotter of the LVCVA, at a Las Vegas town counsel meeting, said that anything with a Vegas byline would be picked up all over the world. That it was almost a given. Do you think that was true back in those days or...

- A. "That's a little strong. That's a little strong. There has to be some substance; some news value; some gimmick to attract international attention. I think that he's right to a degree, that Las Vegas does catch attention and maybe a picture from Las Vegas — same picture from somewhere else, Las Vegas would run and the other one wouldn't. Because of the notoriety and fame of Las Vegas."
- Q. Do you think it true back in the fifties also?
- A. "Oh, yes."
- Q. Probably more back then than now? Because it was growing and there were so many.
- A. "I think so. And, we had so many Hollywood personalities who were anxious to cooperate, and maybe, even forced to cooperate by their studios. So, it's completely, I guess it's completely today because I don't know any of the "names" who these people are — who they are, what they do."
- Q. I was watching a program hosted by Faye Dunaway for MGM called "The Dream Machine" that started in the late thirties, early forties were the studios actually started telling the stars where they would be photographed, with whom and what to wear. The Dream Machine was a publicity machine. This was still going on in the fifties.
- A. "Right."
- Q. I think it's a good tie-in because I think Vegas used them so much, too.
- A. "I think Las Vegas was a unique background in those days. A unique situation."
- Q. I think we're losing that really quickly. I put in here that in 1953, channel 8 went on the air. Did you use any television? Or, do you remember the first time you did any kind of promotion or advertising on television?
- A. "Never did any advertising on television. I'm sure the News Bureau used television. I don't, I really don't remember if, for example, we used TV for any gags or stunts that we did."
- Q. I image it was very expensive, unless they were going to do an interview.
- A. "The only TV I remember is Al Freeman — an Al Freeman sequence where he took his showgirls, in fact it was a dream sequence, out in the desert. He used Smiley Washburn as a miner and the girls. We may have talked about that earlier."
- Q. We talked about Smiley, but. . .
- A. "I'm sure we must have done it, but I don't recall."
- Q. Nothing that — I mean it wasn't like oh, we've got TV, let's go?

- A. "I do remember at the Sahara I talked a guy, who had a helicopter service, into doing a water scene sequence with Dan Dailey and Joan Adams, who became Joan Adams Schofey, with the helicopter pulling them while water skiing. I'm sure there had to be others." We might have done with Florence Chadwick training for her English Channel swim. And we probably did it with Marilyn Maxwell and the swimming pool thing with the tiger."
- Q. But, nothing really stands out that as soon as TV was available to you, you didn't rush in and say "Oh, we've got to do it?"
- A. "No, there was no great compulsion at that time."
- Q. Okay, were did we end up? I think we finished with you at the Trop. Were did you go after the Trop? The last time you left the Trop.
- A. "Well, I went to the Dunes, briefly. And worked in golf promotions."
- Q. I think we did the golf. Did we do the golf? I don't think we did it in any great depth.
- A. "In amateur golf tournaments. They did hire Al Besselink. He won the first Tournament of Champions at the Desert Inn. He was a flake. And he and I got into one of the most vicious shouting matches that ever happened. He was a bully. He never had a large success on the tour."
- Q. I just don't see you shouting. Isn't that weird? I mean you're so — you tend to take somebody off at the knees before they know what's happening. Anything else at the Dunes? I did cover a lot of golf in Chapter Three.
- A. "I can remember the president of the Teamsters Union played in the tournament and we were taking some still pictures of him at the golf course, I can't even remember the name of it, maybe it will come to me, and one of the showgirls suggested he kneel down, you know, for clearer view of the people behind him. He said, "I don't kneel down for anybody. Riddle, Major Riddle.
- Q. Major Riddle was in charge of the Dunes?
- A. "He was the principal owner."
- Q. So when you did the tournaments, did you just then do the same things just to promote the actual tournament and then you had to also coordinate the tournament itself.
- A. "Yeah, to a degree. But, these were strictly invitational to casino types."
- Q. I guess maybe, I'm not in a position to see it, but there are an awful lot of golf tournaments. I see some come across my desk because of Lloyd [Boothby long time associate of Diederich] but it's not like you really hear — it seems to me that if you are

on the list or you're someone of importance, they find you, but they don't do real big promotion that it is going on.

A. "No."

Q. Nowadays, I don't think even the Classic and those just sort of — the locals know about it and I'm sure the people playing in it know all about, but on the whole. . .

A. "There is very little coverage of those kind of tournaments."

Q. Not now, but from what I've see so far and the research, is that they [tournaments] were really big, here, when they first started. They were really a draw.

A. "You talking about professional tournaments?"

Q. Yeah. Like the Dunes, the ones the Dunes was having when they first started.

A. "Yeah. The Desert Inn, I think was probably the largest event. Herb McDonald got involved in the golf promotions. Sahara, there were some pretty big tournaments there. Pro-ams."

Q. So were did you go after your golf?

A. "After the Dunes, I went to the MGM."

Q. I'm glad you said "MGM" and not Bally's, I'm just finally get brainwashed into Ballys instead of MGM. It took me a long time to do that. So, what was your title at the MGM?

A. "Director of Publicity and Advertising."

Q. I have to take notes. . .Do you remember how big a staff you had, or if you had a staff? Was this prior to its opening?

A. "I began prior to its opening. Yes. And, I had one writer, Bill Bray, I hired him a second time. I made two mistakes with him."

Q. You hired him again?

A. "Yeah, he worked for me at the Trop. And there was another writer who had been around town for many, many years, worked for Al Benedict at the hotel which had been on the grounds of the MGM, that western style hotel, I can't even remember the name of it, maybe it will come to me. Any case, Kerkorian owned it. I think Al Benedict was working at that hotel, any case the second writer had been around town for years and Al Benedict asked me to give him a job, and I did. I think we had two secretaries."

Q. That's a lot of secretaries for. . .

A. "Carolyn York was my secretary. She had been working at the Trop. We didn't do a lot of stunts there."

Q. Did or didn't?

A. "Didn't. The formal opening, I think was cute, because it was my idea. Instead of cutting a ribbon, I got a long string of 35mm film and, that became the ribbon. It was cut by Fred McMurray and June Havor with one of those clapper boards, you know? Just to do something different from the scissors and the ribbon cutting. I think Bill Bray stole it and used it up in Reno when they opened there."

Q. Now, when did you meet Bob [Samuels] and Lloyd [Boothby]? You worked with them at the MGM.

A. "Yeah, we were all on the opening staff."

Q. I think Lloyd said he was Vice President of Sales? I'll check with him. I don't know were Bob fit in.

A. "I don't think, he might have become, I don't think he was Vice President of Sales at the opening. My memory tells me it was a fellow named Jim Abraham."

Q. Well, he [Boothby] is very close with Jim Abraham.

A. "I think Lloyd moved up when Abraham left. I'm quite sure he was not the department head."

Q. I think so because I think the way the timing went, he would not have had that much experience to be a vice president. I think he had not been out of Nellis — something tells me this was his being right out of Nellis.

A. "It might have been. Yeah"

Q. I think when he left the MGM, he was Vice President of Sales.

A. "Abraham was retired Air Force."

Q. Now, Bob tells the story of the Sheik and all the garbage that was going on while you were asleep, as Bob tells it. And it was leaked to the press.

A. "Yeah. Here's how it happened. There was good feature writer out of the L.A. Times was scheduled to come into the hotel and he wanted to do—he wanted an interview with the Vice President of the Casino, on gamblers idiosyncracies and things of that nature and so I set it up, instead of setting up in confidence. It was a harmless subject, nothing can happen. Well, the Vice President of the Casino, who more than anyone else in the hotel should know you don't talk about gamblers and what they are doing as far as the amounts of money they are dropping. He gave him [the reporter] the whole story on the Sheik's and the fact that they had moved, that he had beaten them out of a lot of money, and the had moved a baccarat table from the casino up to the top floor. And, the

reporter's name, I think was Bob Hillburn and he just latched on to this as a major story, and it was.

They had no names on the Sheiks and no pictures, but from everything the man told him, he had a major story, which, basically had to be very, very positive for the hotel, because it made these people, the hotel, hero-like among Jews around the world, because their relationship with all Arabs. But, it wasn't interpreted in that manner, and I was blamed. In fact I think Al Benedict said, "You let Morey [Jaeger], trying to remember the name of the casino vice president, it will come to me, anyway that I had led him down the primrose path, which was ridiculous. But, I think the casino vice president was connected and I don't think they could touch him. So, I took the fall, and to a degree, it was my fault, it happened in my department and happened on my watch. I should have known this idiot wasn't capable."

- Q. When we were in P.R. classes, they said that the first department to receive blame would be P.R. The first department in any kind of crisis, the P.R. department was the first to go and they would always tell us that it should be the other way around. The P.R. department is the department that can create your image, salvage what has been done so far. But, they always told us that you're going to get the blame for anything that hits the media whether you had any control over it or not. . .
- A. "Anything unfavorable, yes."
- Q. Do you think that is really true?
- A. "There's no question about it. There have been several instances in this town where inadvertently, information got out which was beyond the control of that department. And, the CEOs or owners would hold that department responsible even though there was absolutely no involvement."
- Q. And nothing you could...
- A. "No. No, control."
- Q. You can't police everybody all the time. Again, if they were to leave that department alone, the department could probably salvage it, and turn a negative to a positive.
- A. "Right."
- Q. But they fire the person capable of doing it, and now they have the negative image and they have to try to recoup, depending on how serious it is.
- A. "The key, I think to a publicity department that is not very, correct me, but you've got to be open with the media. You've got to be honest with them. Because, without that trust, you are not going to get their cooperation on those questionable, borderline stories

that maybe don't deserve attention, but because of your friendship and your relationship and your reputation with the press, they accord you respect."

- Q. They will give you the respect of calling you and asking what is going on before they run out and print the story. We've discussed this before. Because I know that's the way you operate. I think that's getting harder and harder to do. Especially, in this town. They seem to hire people that don't even know what they're supposed to be doing, let alone can operate from any kind of strength.
- A. "Yeah, I think that's true. And paying them big dollars, too."
- Q. Anything else at the MGM that you really liked or didn't like? I'm assuming that you had complete control of your decisions and you didn't have to...
- A. "Yeah. We did hire — a Los Angeles publicity firm that we hired for the opening and we had a Chicago advertising agency, which, I think, Bob Samuels probably brought in."
- Q. I was going to say, it was kind of unusual to have Chicago advertising when L.A. is right there.
- A. "I think that this agency had considerable resort and hotel experience. And, we canceled much of their advertising schedule because of the success of the opening. It was a good working relationship."
- Q. I try to look back, when I was no where near Vegas, like in Texas and try to remember, and the only openings I remember are the MGM and Caesars. I saw it on the news. Those are the only two I remember. Since I have been working on the paper, I try to remember the things I observed back in Texas when Vegas was only in the movies. There is not a lot I remember. I think my image of Vegas was created from bits of movies, references from Dean Martin or Frank Sinatra on their television shows. But, then I wasn't of an age where I would have been looking for it either, so it's hard to tell how much it got away. I've tried to figure out how to research it. It's a nightmare to try and figure out how much of this was picked up in other states, in the fifties or early sixties. I don't have any place to really start. You can't go through all the newspapers of that era. There used to be clipping services. Did you ever really utilize clipping services?
- A. "Yeah."
- Q. Did you really use them once they presented them to you. Did you go back, or was this more of a way of saying this is what I've done for you. I mean what was the reason for the clippings?
- A. "I guess, for personal satisfaction. In the beginning, you kept a scrapbook."
- Q. And what did you do with your scrapbook, Harvey? You don't have those, do you, Harvey?

- A. "No. There was a job that opened for the Community College in North Las Vegas, and it sounded right for me and didn't take a lot of time. They refused to talk to me because I didn't have a portfolio. I never saved any of that stuff."
- Q. It's amazing, isn't it?
- A. "Yeah. You'd think that a man who had been with resort hotels as long as I have, would have to come out and say, 'here's what I did.' That's crazy."
- Q. I've done it too. I've gone out to look for jobs and they want a portfolio, and I don't keep anything I've done. I've tossed most of it.
- A. "I don't remember a whole lot. I do remember that Lucille Ball came in and taped one of her shows at the MGM. I think I angered Bernie Rothkoff; she wanted signs all over the casino for everything. I wouldn't do it. If it looked like a sign should be there, fine. But, to put up signs for absolutely no reason other than identification."
- Q. Blackjack tables this way?
- A. "Right."
- Q. Did she play at the MGM.
- A. "I don't think so."
- Q. Where you also in charge of working with the entertainment department in promoting the people who did come in?
- A. "Yeah. We worked with all of those. With the production show and, with, I can't remember the specifics, but the typical production show publicity. Morey Jaeger was the casino manager. He stole a lot of his ... I'm sure we did a good publicity job, but I don't remember any specifics."
- Q. Nothing that stands out? I know you did a good job, I'm sure of that, because that was a time when you had more resources, more places to put it, more people who were wanting to see it and probably and much bigger budget. I remember the first time I walked into the MGM and the Hilton, the same year and both of those two resorts were elegant, it was class but it was warm and friendly at the same time. Ballys, I don't like it and the Hilton is following that way too.
- A. "They're all so big now, they just completely overwhelm me. You know, you go in and you can't find your way out."
- Q. That's why I really hate that Debbie [Reynolds] is going to loose, because that was small, the friendliest. It had to be more like old Vegas. She still had the Maitre 'D; you walk in, it was "How do you do", "How may I help you" everyone was so friendly and so up, you'd think that you owned the place. Everybody was like that and it was very

quiet, even with the slots going. No kids. Because she catered to an older crowd, people who knew her and grew up with her and they have enough sense not to bring the kids.

A. "Yeah."

Q. The MGM, I'm assuming that you really liked working there, until...the Sheik.

A. "Yeah."

Q. Where did you go after the MGM?

A. "I went to work for a Public Relations firm in Los Angeles. The principal account I worked on was Silver Lakes Golf, which was a real estate community development. It was several miles west of the freeway, near Barstow."

Q. What would you do there?

A. "Principally, it was a McCulloch development. McCulloch chain saws. The family was heavy in real estate development and they took over this particular project from somebody who had started it and wasn't making it go. He had a golf course/hotel. Fine, fine hotel with swimming pool and so forth. And, weekend or Sunday entertainment with like name stars, fairly name stars, Rosemary Clooney for one and we brought in a lot of — we had a tennis tournament for basically professional football and basketball athletes.

You know, guys who were into golf professionally with our touring pro.

Q. Did you have complete say on what was done?

A. "No."

Q. Did you just make suggestions, or...?

A. "I worked for the company and the man who ran the company. . .Lawrence Laurie, I think. He was the brain, the driving force of the organization. Lawrence Laurie. There were other publicity people who worked in the office, too and one of them was Stan Wood. Stan Wood had been the golf coach at USC and was very close with Jim Murray. Jim Murray being probably the most highly respected sports columnist who ever lived."

Q. Now was this time when — I always blank out on his name — when you brought Neil Diamond — where in that area when you brought him to Vegas?

A. "No. That was my next shot." While I was at the Tropicana, I met a fellow named — I'm getting so bad with names — in any case, he had the Beverly Hills Advertising Agency — Lee Siteman — he was president of Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz. He came into my office at the Tropicana with a proposal for a Los Angeles publication and I went along with it. So, I was still working for Lawrence Laurie, he called and said they had a shot at the Union Plaza hotel in Las Vegas and he wanted me to join in the presentation. Which I did and that brought me back to Las Vegas as an account

executive to the Union Plaza. And, of course, I was kinda juiced in there because of Houssels.”

Q. Oh yes, you already knew Houssels.

A. “For many years. So, obviously, we got the account. And, I moved back to Las Vegas and we — I didn’t have a hellava lot of success picking up other accounts. We had the Last Frontier or the Frontier hotel, briefly. We worked on the Neil Diamond appearance, being hired by a Los Angeles publicity firm.”

Q. So, was Neil Diamond — did you approach them, or did your company approach his agent or...?

A. “It seems to me that I was approached directly. One of the fellows I had worked with through the years, at the Tropicana, Bill Pierce, had joined — I’m trying to remember the name of the publicity firm — Jim something or other. Anyway, because of Bill Pierce, his publicity firm got the account of promoting Neil Diamond appearance. They got hold of me and then I directed them back to Siteman, Broadhead, Baltz and they made a deal with the advertising agency for me to handle, in part, the Neil Diamond appearance.:

Q. Now, was that because — it can’t be because he was the first rock ‘n’ roll artist. . . I know that was sort of a feather in your cap, and it was something new for Vegas. ..

A. “I think it was his first appearance in here. Neil Diamond, I don’t think real rock ‘n’ roll.”

Q. I don’t think so either.

A. “He’s pretty, pretty mellow performer. But, it was his first Las Vegas appearance. I think they had to schedule more shows than they originally thought.”

Q. So, it wasn’t like a concert, but more along the lines of the way a concert is handled as opposed to...

A.. “Oh yeah. Basically, it was a concert and it was at the Aladdin Theatre of the Performing Arts. And, I worked, basically worked with the guy at the Aladdin and handled the promotion. We also had a local land developer and we worked for Walt Casey.”

Q. As water?

A. “As water.”

Q. One of the accounts?

A. “Yes.”

Q. Is this how you kind of ended up at the Union Plaza?

- A. "The Union Plaza terminated the agency, which had been absorbed by another agency in Los Angeles. So, we had to close the office here. At that time, I went to Houssels, and he hired me to handle publicity and advertising at the Plaza."
- Q. Now, was your title Director of Publicity and Advertising or wasn't it like Director of Publicity, Advertising, Marketing. . .
- A. "Basically, I did all of those, but I think the title was Director of Publicity. Basically, promotion was all on shows and entertainment."
- Q. Now, in all of the time you've been working for all the different hotel and casinos, how much — how to phrase this — it seems to me that the hotel was the hotel, as an entity and the casino was always the casino as an entity. When you were promoting, did you promote both or did they both just sort of gain . . . Because you said the Tropicana, and you would have the showgirl or whatever, but it seems to me they're getting more and more into the casino has their P.R. people, the hotel has their own P.R. people...
- A. "It was one unit then. It's not like today, where we have casino marketing now. And, I don't know how involved casino marketers are in publicity and advertising. I think, basically is wooing the player like on an individual basis, principally. And, I would guess, a lot of casino marketers have followings."
- Q. I know they do have some like direct mail pieces, like their tournaments, which you did at the Plaza when they had those little slot tournaments.
- A. "Slot tournaments and pan."
- Q. But, now casino marketing is actually, when they have those tournaments — they do it. The main publicity department doesn't do that. So, they have sort of split off. Do think that is because they have just gotten so darned big?
- A. "I think so. And, I guess now, there is a division between the casino and the hotel. And, I think part of that is results from a change in operating philosophies. Now, every department has to make money. Every department has to be profit maker, except publicity and advertising, which is an expense department — that's why they are the first to go."
- Q. If you don't have income, goodbye. They can't see your income. They can't see what you're bring in.
- A. "But, I think that that division, which has probably become wider and wider, results from the fact, that they have to stand alone. It's not like in the old days when OK, the casino is making money, so the hotel is making money."
- Q. You shared the wealth. The casino now says, I'm making this money why should I help you, go get your own rooms. And, I think the Hilton, I still don't understand it, but they

are literally separating the hotel and the casino with management. Like two different companies. Being in the convention area, we're sitting there saying, where does that leave us. We're bring in rooms, but not always, sometimes it's just the actual convention, they stay here and there. And, it used to be they used to rate the convention groups. The casino would give them a rating on how much money they dropped. They stopped doing that; the casino could care less about the conventions. So, I guess that puts us in the hotel part, because we do bring in rooms. It is just sort of out there.

A. "Well, it's a different industry in a lot of ways."

Q. I think the corporations are just destroying this town. What do you see in Las Vegas now? If you were just out of college with some experience and came to Vegas, would you even want to come into Vegas knowing what you know?

A. "Oh, I think that the executive positions have become more hazardous, I believe."

Q. In what way?

A. "I don't think that you can have — you don't have as close a relationship with high level executives as I did. And, therefore, there is only limited knowledge of your contributions and your value. And, as we already suggested, when you're in an expense department, you're subject to high level scrutiny, you know? It's hard to say. I think it's a very attractive business, and a very exciting business, and I would be attracted to it and had that opportunity. But, as we've already suggested, it's a different world. I don't think, now, that I could operate in a publicity set-up because the operations are so different, so different."

I don't think they are as professional as they once were. I don't think the knowledge is there. I know the experience is not there. I've applied for several jobs with new hotels and don't even get a call."

Q. I think the feeling you get is: you know more than I know, you're not going to get the job.

A. "I think that's part of it. I think that's part of it. And, of course, although it's never spoken, I think the key thing is age. And they forget, with age, you know, certainly comes experience, background information, which should have some value, even today."

Q. But, I think also with age, comes the fact that you're not going to walk all over me either.

A. "Yeah."

Q. I've paid my dues, I'm not going to take this off you. And you're not as apt to be the "yes" man and doormat.

A. "I think, there is a feeling, with me, that I feel a lot more independent, now. Because, I don't have the responsibilities that I did back then."

- Q. You tend not to be a "yes" man. Like, that's stupid, I'm not doing that, and walk out, because you do have that independence. You know that if you don't have a job now, you're not any worse off then when you walked in the place.
- A. "That's right."
- Q. Anything you want to add? Have we gone through everybody?
- A. "I can't think of anything."
- Q. What do you think of the town and the direction it's going?
- A. "In relation to what?"
- Q. The direction of the way the town's going.
- A. "Well, I think it's a little frightening. I think, and certainly figures today, give pause for worry. Because, they are not, not meeting previous occupancy standards. Travel is off. There's increased competition in a lot of areas. Some of the competition, I think maybe, generates Las Vegas interests. But, with 20,000 more rooms makes a very, very challenging future."
- Q. Do you think we're finally starting to get there where it says we can't fill any more rooms. We've heard for so long, but there is going to come a point where that is the case.
- A. "And, the key transportation areas. The L.A. highways jam up. Airlines make more money on other routes. So, it's a very expensive."
- Q. Didn't the LVCVA just report that our sales are down; people aren't coming, and I'm thinking, Vegas used to be a place where you could come for a very limited amount of money, you could have one heck of a good time. It cost money to come to Vegas now; it cost big bucks to stay anywhere — and you get nothing for it because the corporation don't give you anything.
- A. "No."
- Q. There's no check into your room and get free this and free that. The restaurants's aren't cheap in the casinos. It's not an inexpensive place to come, I don't think.
- A. "Not anymore."
- Q. Do you think that has some play in it, too?
- A. "I guess so, but at the same time, it is probably a better buy as a resort then many other resort areas. Even though, the prices have gone up dramatically. Compared with others, I think it's probably a good buy. Most recently, the theory is, I think voiced yesterday, is that they've got to expand on the attractions of Las Vegas as opposed to relying on gambling alone, right? Entertainment is the key, and they are also not talking of malls

increasing the emphasis on shopping opportunities here, which doesn't make any sense to me. I guess they know what they're doing. You know, for Christ sake, you build a mall down in Primm, for whom? I guess for Las Vegas and I guess they know what they're doing, I presume they're going to get some business off the highway.

It staggers your imagination to think that anybody would come to Las Vegas to shop."

Q. In the fifties, sixties and seventies, was the advertising really directed to the gambling or was it more fun...

A. "Fun and entertainment."

Q. When, if, did they get away from that and start concentrating or did people just get the image that if I don't gamble, I have no reason to go to Vegas? I thought Vegas was always pretty much advertised and promoted as fun, attractions, entertainment, glamour, glitz, anything goes.

A. "Exactly. Exactly."

Q. Now, we don't have the "anything goes" anymore, that pretty well went. I'm having a little problem with LVCVA saying we've got to emphasis attractions and entertainment when I thought Vegas always did do that. They did start to get into this "family" thing more, maybe they're trying back away from that.

A. "I think that was a mistake. MGM closing down its park except during summer. I think that indicates that that was a mistake. I don't know how Circus Circus [Grand Slam], but according to their stock, it's not doing anything anyway."

Q. But, Mandalay Bay may be causing that the problem there. [before its finish, the building is sinking into the ground]

A. "Oh, Oh. Man, they're pouring so much concrete in there, it will be like Hoover Dam. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority is a sore point with me, anyway. Because they have always taken full credit for everything that happens. And, rarely mention the fact that there would be no need for them, if these entrepreneurs had not spent billions of dollars in building attractions; spent billions of dollars in buying entertainment; billions of dollars in advertising and promotion on their own. And, the Convention Authority takes credit for all of this. Once in awhile, they recognize that we've got a great attraction to sell. A great destination. Now, they're going to have to go to work, apparently. And, we'll see how effective they really are."

Q. I think they destroyed downtown.

A. "They've made so many mistakes downtown."

Q. Remember, I used to say to you, why don't they promote downtown as Las Vegas? Legally, technically, that's Vegas. The Strip is not Las Vegas. But, your answer to me

was, everybody tries to be one, they don't want to start a fraction. The Strip against Downtown. But, I think if they had of promoted themselves as the "real" Las Vegas, I don't know, it may have caused so much trouble. But, that was an international landmark, and they destroyed it.

- A. "What was the key photograph promoting Las Vegas? Used, probably more than any other? Downtown Fremont street, shooting up through all the signs. And that had to be the impression, this is Las Vegas. Must have made that impression to billions of people around the world. This is Las Vegas."
- Q. Right, I may have told you. We took a friend of mine downtown when you could still drive down Fremont. He was absolutely, bowled over, He said, Every time I come here, I can't find that guy [Vegas Vic]; I can't find the landmarks, he'd seen everything, and he'd hunt for them, but could never find them and finally decided Hollywood made them. He never got off the Strip.
- A. "I think, if the expense of cleaning up Downtown and patrolling it and even making a mall, no objection to making a mall. Fremont Experience has obviously, not paid off. Now, they're going into a mall with theaters."
- Q. My daughter works for Fast One Hour Photo and she says, when people come in for their photos, "Been down to the Experience — sorry, you've got to have a filter. All those pink— everything is pink and when you take a photo, everything is pink. You used to go down to Fremont Street at midnight, you didn't need a flash, use a 100 speed film, take pictures. And, now you can't even get a decent picture. And, during the day, it looks like a railroad overpass.
- A. "I guess Las Vegas will continue. Who the hell knows."
- Q. It does bounce.
- A. "They've got to do something to catch up."
- Q. They've got to go back to making it fun to be here. And, as long as they keep building for retirement people, the traffic gets worse and worse, and the tourists don't want to come and fight traffic. People don't want to go to L.A. and fight the traffic.
- A. "There's no help out there for increasing traffic flow, absolutely none. Herb McDonald thinks that one-way streets would be an asset. Perhaps."
- Q. We may be getting there. As long as we don't follow San Francisco - no left turns - no left turns.....

END

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