THE BATTLE FOR LAS VEGAS

THE LAW VS. THE MOB

DENNIS N. GRIFFIN

"As a long-time Las Vegas resident and retired Senior Agent of the Nevada Gaming Control Board, I can state that Dennis Griffin has put together the real story of the Spilotro years in Vegas."

—Jack Miller

❖

"Wow … Dennis Griffin has really captured the Las Vegas I knew; it's an amazing book. If you want to know about Las Vegas in the mob days, this book says it all. It's a great read."

—Tru Hawkins
Long-time Las Vegan and host of the "Tru Hawkins Show" on KDWN Radio

❖

"There has been a lot written and filmed about the days when the mob reigned in Las Vegas, mostly from the point of view of the mobsters and their attorneys. In The Battle for Las Vegas, *Dennis Griffin has added balance by including the law-enforcement side of things. If you want to know the true story of what it was really like back then, you need to read this book."*

—Lt. Gene Smith (retired)
Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

❖

"Finally, a book about the mob in Las Vegas from the law-enforcement perspective. Dennis Griffin has thoroughly researched and accurately written the story about how law enforcement fought and won the battle to rid Las Vegas of the influence and control of organized crime. It was a pleasure to live through those times again in the pages of this book."

—Dennis Arnoldy (retired)
FBI case agent for the Spilotro investigations in Las Vegas

The Battle for Las Vegas

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The Battle for Las Vegas

The Law vs. The Mob

Dennis N. Griffin

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The Battle for Las Vegas
The Law vs. The Mob

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the men and women of law enforcement, sworn and civilian, whose diligence and professionalism make us all more safe and secure. The battles they fight on our behalf—often at great personal risk—warrant our sincerest gratitude.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those current and former law-enforcement personnel who shared their experiences, insights, photos, and time in helping me write this book. They include, but are not limited to, former Clark County Sheriff John McCarthy, Commander Kent Clifford, Detective David Groover and Lt. Gene Smith, former Deputy District Attorney Jim Erbeck, former Strike Force Special Attorney Stanley Hunterton, and former FBI agents Joe Yablonsky, Charlie Parsons, Emmett Michaels, Dennis Arnoldy, Lynn Ferrin, and Gary Magnesen.

The newspaper archives of the Las Vegas–Clark County Library District held stories from the *Las Vegas Sun*, *The Valley Times,* and *Las Vegas Review-Journal* that provided key information regarding events and incidents of the era I was researching. A series of 1983 articles by Michael Goodman of the *Los Angeles Times* proved to be equally beneficial.

The well-researched books *The Green Felt Jungle* (Reid and Demaris), *Of Rats and Men* (John L. Smith), and *The First 100* (A.D. Hopkins and K.J. Evans) provided crucial background information into the history of organized crime's influence in Las Vegas. I also watched the movie *Casino*—in which actors Joe Pesci and Robert De Niro portrayed characters based on Tony Spilotro and Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal—numerous times.

Three former casino insiders, whom I call Sammy, Mario, and Mickey, gave me a feel for what it was like in the gaming establishments and on the Strip during the Spilotro years. A woman, "Connie," who was employed by the Argent Corporation at that time and worked directly for Frank Rosenthal, shared her memories with me. Tru Hawkins of KDWN Radio and a life-long resident of Las Vegas offered his perceptions of those days, as well.

A bartender, "Joe," who worked in several Las Vegas clubs and casinos during Spilotro's reign, offered further insights into the atmosphere of Las Vegas during the days of mob control. "Harry," a veteran Sin City bail bondsman, provided ideas of how information of law-enforcement activities made its way to the bad guys.

Veteran newsman Bob Stoldal of KLAS-TV, Gwen Castaldi, former KLAS reporter, Andrea Boggs, former KVBC-TV anchor and reporter, and Jane Ann Morrison of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* provided a look at the Spilotro years from the media perspective.

I also extend my thanks to Nancy and Vincent Spilotro, Tony's widow and son, for helping out with personal insights about their husband and father.

There are many others who deserve mention, but for various legitimate reasons desire to be anonymous. Respecting their wishes, they will remain nameless, but not unappreciated.

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Introduction

Las Vegas and its ties to organized crime are well-known, the subject of many books, TV documentaries, and movies. In my previous book, *Policing Las Vegas—A History of Law Enforcement in Southern Nevada*, I wrote a section called "The Mob's Man," concerning the Las Vegas reign of Tony Spilotro, a made man of the Chicago crime family.

Tony and his wife Nancy, both 33 years old at the time, and their five-year-old son Vincent moved to Las Vegas in 1971. Known as a tough and ruthless gangland enforcer, Spilotro allegedly used intimidation, and sometimes murder, to protect Chicago's criminal interests in Vegas until his own death in 1986. When he wasn't acting directly on the Chicago family's behalf, law enforcement believed that Tony ran a gang that committed lucrative street crimes, including loan sharking, robbery, burglary, and fencing stolen goods. Eventually his status required that he be paid a "street tax"—a kickback—from other criminal groups wanting to operate their own illegal enterprises. The word was that nothing happened in Vegas—from loan sharking to contract killings—without Tony's knowledge and blessing.

The deeper I dug, the more intrigued I became with Tony Spilotro and the battle the law waged against him and his gang. It was a fight with tough men on both sides. I gathered

enough information to complete that section of the book, but knew I'd only scratched the surface of the story.

Another area that captured my attention while writing *Policing Las Vegas* was the term of Sheriff John McCarthy. He won election as a reform candidate in 1978, defeating 17-year incumbent Ralph Lamb. However, his term in office was controversial and chaotic. Even before assuming office in January 1979, Sheriff McCarthy was sued by a group of Metro officers for announcing the promotions of several detectives and patrolmen to upper-management positions, over others with more rank, service time, and experience. That rocky start set the stage for what were the most divisive four years in Metro's brief history.

A review of newspaper articles, records, and interviews with those who knew and worked for McCarthy revealed to me the almost daily turmoil that dogged his term. There were major problems with the jail, an attempt to deconsolidate Metro, and allegations of discrimination, abuse of power by his officers, and corruption within the department. All this was followed by a nasty election campaign in which the incumbent was challenged by his former undersheriff, whom he'd once fired. For Sheriff McCarthy and Metro, these were indeed turbulent times.

What particularly intrigued me about those four years, however, was the juxtaposition of the McCarthy era and the Spilotro reign. One of the first things McCarthy did after being sworn in was to declare war on organized crime. He wanted Tony Spilotro and his kind run out of town, making it one of his priorities. At the same time, the FBI and a Department of Justice Strike Force were increasing the pressure on Spilotro and his men. The battle was joined; the law was after the bad guys.

It was a tale I wanted to tell. But would I be able to make it interesting and informative, rather than simply regurgitate the same stories written over the years? I decided that if I could

locate the local and federal lawmen who had actually fought the battles, as well as others in the know, and get them to participate, I'd be able to produce a book that would be satisfying to the reader, perhaps plowing some new ground in the process.

After a few initial disappointments in my search for sources, my luck changed. The list of those willing to cooperate began to grow. In a relatively short time, I was satisfied that I'd find sufficient material to move forward with the project.

I decided early on to concentrate on Spilotro's alleged street-crime activities, with the well-publicized casino skimming operations receiving somewhat less attention. Then, near the beginning of my research, I learned that Tony had no direct involvement in the skim—except in enforcement matters—and probably didn't even know the identities of the couriers who delivered the purloined cash to Chicago. Therefore, the discussion of those financial crimes is primarily limited to one section of this book.

The secondary focus of this endeavor is on the term of Sheriff McCarthy and the many wars he fought in addition to the one against organized crime. It's my hope that the stories go hand in hand and meld together well.

Our journey starts with a brief history of Las Vegas. We then explore organized-crime's early involvement there, starting with Ben "Bugsy" Siegel and the Flamingo Hotel and Casino. After that is some background on the key figures of the Chicago La Cosa Nostra (LCN) of Tony's days, the men who sent him to Las Vegas. Next I look at the early lives of Spilotro and his erstwhile pal, Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal. From there we move on to Tony's era in Las Vegas and the law's efforts to remove him.

Denny Griffin

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The Early Years

In 1829, an 18-year-old Mexican scout for the Antonio Armijo Trading Caravan was tasked with finding a new trade route from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Los Angeles. In his search he came upon an oasis in the desert. With abundant wild grasses and an ample water supply, it was a perfect place for the traders to stop and rest during their arduous journey. His discovery was named Las Vegas, which means The Meadows, but knowledge of its existence remained primarily limited to the Mexicans and the indigenous Paiute population until explorer John Frémont put it on the map in 1844.

In 1855, Brigham Young ordered 30 missionaries to Las Vegas Valley to build a fort and teach the Paiutes farming techniques. The Paiutes rejected the Mormon's offerings and the fort was abandoned in 1858. The area remained sparsely settled until the arrival of the railroad.

In the summer of 1904, work on the first railroad grade into Las Vegas began. Thanks to the water supply, a town sprouted, consisting of saloons, stores, and boarding houses to accommodate the railroad workers. On May 15, 1905, the railroad auctioned off 1,200 lots in a 40-block area surround-

ing downtown and Las Vegas was established as an unincorporated city. In 1909, it became the county seat for the new Clark County.

Railroaders were a hard drinking rough-and-tumble lot. The main problem the lawmen in those early days had to confront was dealing with the drunks and their drinking-related fights.

In 1910, Nevada passed an anti-gambling law so strict that it was illegal to even follow the western custom of flipping a coin for the price of a drink. Within weeks, however, underground gambling began to flourish.

On March 16, 1911, Las Vegas incorporated, covering an area of approximately twenty square miles. The city's population was about 800. At the same time, Clark County had 3,321 residents.

By 1930, the population of Las Vegas had reached 5,165. Shortly thereafter, three events occurred that permanently altered the face of Las Vegas, Clark County, and Nevada. As a side effect, they also led to the initiation of Las Vegas Valley as a cash cow for organized-crime families across the country.

First, on March 19, 1931, gambling was legalized in Nevada. A month later, six gaming licenses were issued in Las Vegas, the first going to Stocker's Northern Club on Fremont Street.

Second, state divorce laws were liberalized. With easier residency requirements, "quickie" divorces could be attained in only six weeks. Short-term residents flocked to Nevada. In Las Vegas, many of them stayed at dude ranches, the forerunners of the sprawling Strip hotels of today.

And third, construction began on Hoover Dam, generating a population boom and boosting the Valley's economy, which was in the grip of the Great Depression.

Small-town Las Vegas would soon be on its way to becoming the entertainment and gambling capital of the world.

But the influx of people and money would later earn Vegas another name: Sin City.

Benjamin Siegel

Ten years later, the first Strip casino appeared when the El Rancho Vegas opened on April 3, 1941. The Last Frontier followed on October 30, 1942. The next Strip property to arrive on the scene, in 1946, was the one that is acknowledged as the first of those backed substantially by mob money: Bugsy Siegel's Flamingo.

Benjamin Siegel was born in Brooklyn in 1905. While growing up he developed a reputation for having a vicious temper, which earned him the nickname of "Bugsy." As a teenager in New York, Siegel befriended Meyer Lansky and, with a group of other young tough guys, operated the Bug and Meyer Mob. Eventually, they teamed up with future New York City crime boss Charlie "Lucky" Luciano. In spite of alleged involvement in crimes ranging from bootlegging to murder, Siegel was able to avoid being convicted of any serious charges.

Bugsy had the looks of a Hollywood leading man and made frequent trips from New York to Los Angeles. He enjoyed the company of famous entertainers, many of whom liked the idea of socializing with the increasingly powerful gangster. His infatuation with Hollywood led him to move west to help establish the mob-controlled Trans-America wire service to compete with the Continental Press Service, which provided bookmakers with the results of horse races from across the country.

In pursuit of this objective, Siegel made an appearance in Las Vegas in 1942. His enterprise was legal in Nevada, where all potential clients held county licenses. He signed up a number of subscribers to the service, each paying a hefty fee. It's estimated that Siegel's income from the Las Vegas bookies

was about $25,000 per month. During this brief visit, Siegel came to appreciate the tremendous earning potential of the Las Vegas casinos.

In early 1946 Siegel saw an opportunity to establish himself in the Las Vegas gambling business. A Hollywood nightclub owner named Billy Wilkerson had attempted to build a casino in Vegas called the Flamingo. The effort faltered and the partially completed resort was sitting idle. Bugsy packed his clothes and money and headed back to Vegas to take over the Flamingo project. He was confident that if his personal finances weren't enough to finish the job, his hoodlum friends could be convinced to invest in his dream: building the first truly posh hotel and casino in the Las Vegas desert.

Bugsy hired the Del Webb Construction Company of Phoenix to complete the Flamingo. According to the book *The Green Felt Jungle*, the cost, initially estimated at $1.5 million, ballooned to $6 million. The many reasons cited for the huge cost overrun included Siegel's insistence that the Flamingo be built like a fortress, constructed of steel and concrete where less expensive materials would have sufficed. He also wanted the best in furnishings, importing wood and marble at exorbitant costs. Each guest room even had its own sewer line, adding $1 million to the bill.

So soon after the end of World War II, not all of the supplies Siegel ordered Webb to use were readily available; such circumstances proved to be only minor annoyances to Bugsy, who simply turned to the black market for his needs. He got whatever he wanted, but had to pay outrageous prices. To make matters worse, the illegal suppliers sometimes delivered a load of expensive merchandise during the day, then returned at night to steal it back. Finally, they showed up at the site the next morning to sell Siegel the same items all over again.

The black marketeers weren't deterred from their larcenous actions by Bugsy's fearsome reputation, and Las Vegas

police officer Hiram Powell was equally unimpressed with the gangster. The bronco buster from Texas arrived in Vegas in 1941 to compete in a rodeo and never left. He was hired as a cop in 1942 and recalled his first encounter with Siegel in a 2002 interview.

"It was a winter morning in the mid-1940s. I pulled Siegel over for a traffic violation at East Charleston and Fifth Street [now Las Vegas Boulevard]. When he handed me his license, there was a hundred dollar bill folded up with it. That was a lot of money at the time, but I let the bill drop to the ground. The last I saw of it, it was blowing down Charleston. I gave Siegel his ticket and let him go. Back then he had a reputation as a tough guy, but as far as I was concerned he was just another punk."

Bugsy may have been just another thug to Powell, but the cop soon learned he was a well-connected one.

"About an hour after I stopped Siegel, I got a radio message to return to the station. The chief asked me what had happened between Siegel and me. I told him the story and then he fired me," Powell recalled. The officer was reinstated a day later, but Siegel was never one of his favorite people.

Bugsy's political clout, however, wasn't able to help him when it came to his financial woes at the Flamingo. Quickly running out of his own estimated $1 million, he made numerous trips back to the Midwest and East Coast in search of additional funding. Over time, he was able to get his gangland associates to invest $3 million, but that still left him a couple million in the hole. Seeing the Flamingo project as a bottomless pit, Bugsy's hoodlum friends cut off their largesse. Some even began to wonder if Siegel was just an incompetent businessman or if something more sinister was behind the burgeoning cost of the Flamingo. Was it possible that Bugsy had sticky fingers and was stealing from his friends? Coming under that type of suspicion from his investment partners

didn't bode well for the would-be gambling tycoon, neither financially nor physically.

In June of that year, an incident took place that convinced Siegel's New York pals that his ego was growing as fast as the Flamingo's debt. James Ragan, the owner of Continental Press Service, was gunned down in Chicago in an attempted hit. Surprisingly, the man survived the attack and was recovering in a hospital six weeks later when he suddenly died. An autopsy revealed that Ragan had enough mercury in his body to kill him twice over. In spite of an around-the-clock police guard, the Chicago Outfit had apparently found a way to spike the dead man's soft drinks with the poison. The Chicago people quickly took over Continental Press, eliminating the need for the mob-owned Trans-America. Still, Bugsy needed his income from the wire service and figured his colleagues liked the extra cash, too. He also needed more money for the Flamingo. He flew to New York to discuss the situation with the board of directors of the Combination.

In a stunning presentation, Siegel told some of the most dangerous men in America that if they wanted Trans-America to stay in business, they'd have to give him $2 million, which happened to be the amount he owed Del Webb. That was the deal, take it or leave it. With that he walked out, leaving a room full of gangsters looking at each other in open-mouthed amazement.

Back in Las Vegas, Siegel was like a man possessed in trying to get the Flamingo ready for opening. He ordered everyone on twelve-hour shifts and seven-day work weeks. With the Vegas valley's population at around a meager 40,000, additional craftsmen were flown in from Los Angeles, Denver, San Francisco, and Salt Lake City to supplement the local labor pool. Construction continued to be plagued by design flaws and poor workmanship.

Trouble was also brewing in Los Angeles, where the bookies were looking for relief from being forced to pay fees to both

Chicago's Continental Press Service and the still-operating Trans-America. They didn't like it, but knew it was dangerous to cease doing business with either one. Siegel told them to go to hell. As the dissatisfaction grew, his attitude placed the local people running Trans-America in an increasingly tough spot.

Though unfinished, the Flamingo opened on December 26, 1946. The casino, lounge, theater, and restaurant were ready to go, and that was enough for Bugsy. Dressed in a white tie and swallowtail coat, his Beverly Hills girlfriend Virginia Hill by his side, the handsome gangster was ready for his big night. Unfortunately, it proved to be a disaster, a flop that was not well-received back east.

The day started out bad when planes Siegel had hired to bring in specially invited guests from Los Angeles were grounded due to poor flying weather in California. Even so, some entertainers and celebrities did make it to the Flamingo that night. They included Jimmy Durante, performing the leadoff act, followed later by the Xavier Cugat Band. Actors George Sanders and George Raft also appeared.

Siegel's run of bad luck continued in the casino: It lost money. As word of the losses made their way to Bugsy during the evening, he became irate. He reportedly took his anger out on some of the guests, becoming verbally abusive and throwing out at least one family.

Two weeks later, as the losing streak continued, Bugsy closed the Flamingo's doors. He decided to wait for the hotel to be finished to reopen, hopefully with better results.

As Siegel cooled his heels waiting for his next chance at gambling stardom, he received disturbing news from New York. Lucky Luciano, who had been exiled to Italy as part of a deal he made with the government to get out of prison after a racketeering conviction, had convened a meeting of the Combination in Havana and Bugsy wasn't on the list of invitees. In Siegel's world, a snub like that often boded ill for the one being excluded.

Sensing that he might be in trouble, Bugsy flew to Havana on his own to see Luciano. Meeting in the headman's hotel suite, the talk eventually turned to the Flamingo. Siegel sang its praises, but Lucky was unimpressed with his underling's descriptive phrases of glitz and glamour. He was more interested in where his partner's $3 million investment stood. Siegel pleaded for more time, a year, to get the Flamingo open again and turn it into the revenue producer he was sure it could be.

Luciano dismissed Siegel with the admonishment that he should go back to Vegas and behave himself. The boss also ordered him to give up the wire service and let the Chicago Mob have the operation to itself. With that, the famous Siegel temper kicked into high gear. In no uncertain terms, Bugsy told Lucky what he could do with his orders, then stormed out of the meeting.

Few if any men talked to Lucky Luciano the way Siegel had and lived very long to tell about it. Bugsy would be no exception.

The Flamingo reopened on March 27, 1947. For the first three weeks it continued to operate in the red, and then things began to turn around. In May it was $300,000 in the black. Bugsy had been apprehensive after his return from Havana, but the positive financial reports calmed him down. His vision was finally being realized. The Flamingo was on its way to becoming the gold mine he'd predicted. He was sure Lucky and the others would be pleased they had listened to him. However, the Flamingo's success was a case of too little, too late for Siegel.

On the night of June 20, a now-confident Siegel was relaxing in the living room of Virginia Hill's mansion in Beverly Hills. Conveniently for her, she was away on vacation in Paris, but his trusted friend Al Smiley was with him. Suddenly, rifle shots rang out from outside the living-room window. Two slugs struck Siegel in the face. One of them ejected his left eye, which was found on the floor some 15 feet away from his

body. Benjamin Siegel had been murdered at the age of 41. Bugsy was dead, but Las Vegas was just coming to life.

Morris Dalitz

Not long after Bugsy's permanent departure from the Las Vegas scene, another key player arrived in town.

Morris "Moe" Dalitz was born in Boston in 1899. His father, Barney, operated a laundry and taught Moe the business as he was growing up. The family moved to Michigan where Barney opened Varsity Laundry in Ann Arbor, catering to University of Michigan students.

As time went by, Moe opened a string of his own laundries in Michigan before branching out to Cleveland in the 1930s. Once there, he expanded his earning potential by getting involved in the bootlegging business and becoming associated with the Mayfield Road Gang. By the time prohibition ended, Dalitz had opened several illegal gambling joints. His two careers—legitimate business owner and criminal bootlegger and casino operator—would combine to lead him to Las Vegas.

In the first instance, Moe's laundry business resulted in his developing a close relationship with a very important man: Jimmy Hoffa. This happened in 1949, when the Detroit Teamsters local demanded a five-day work week for laundry drivers. Laundry owners, including Dalitz, strongly opposed the union's position. Negotiations reached an impasse, with each side unwilling to budge.

Dalitz, the shrewd businessman, saw a way around the issue. He had the owner representatives bypass the local's negotiator, Isaac Litwak, and reach out directly to its former business agent and current leader of the Detroit Teamsters, Jimmy Hoffa. Agents of the laundry owners asked what it would take for Hoffa to intervene on behalf of the owners. Hoffa's man said $25,000 would do the trick. The owners agreed. Neither side bothered to inform Litwak of the developments.

During a subsequent bargaining session, Litwak was confident he had the owners on the ropes. Late in that meeting the door opened and in walked Jimmy Hoffa. He told the group there would be no strike and he wanted the contract signed on the owners' terms, with no five-day work-week provision. The stunned Litwak had no choice but to comply.

In the great scheme of things, this transaction wasn't a particularly big deal. But it did open the door for something much bigger ten years later: multi-million-dollar loans from the Teamster Pension Fund to finance the mob-controlled casinos of Las Vegas.

Also in 1949, Moe Dalitz found a business opportunity in Vegas similar to Bugsy Siegel's Flamingo experience. Another Strip hotel and casino construction project had been abandoned and was available to anyone who could come up with the right money. Dalitz, casino-savvy from running his own illegal businesses, and three of his cronies from Cleveland raised the funds and purchased the Desert Inn. The Strip's fourth resort opened on April 24, 1950.

The 1950s saw seven more casinos added to the Strip, all allegedly backed by mob money from the Midwest and East Coast. The Sands and Sahara opened in 1952, the Riviera and Dunes in 1955, the Hacienda in 1956, the Tropicana in 1957, and the Stardust in 1958. One existing property changed names when the Last Frontier became the New Frontier in 1955. During that same time period the population of the Valley grew from 45,000 to 124,000.

The '50s also saw an increase in the number of celebrity weddings held in Las Vegas. Among the more notable, Rita Hayworth and Dick Haymes were wed in 1953, Kirk Douglas and Ann Buydens in 1954, Joan Crawford and Alfred Steele in 1955, Carol Channing and Charles Lowe in 1956, Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme in 1957, and Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward, and David Janssen and Ellie Graham exchanged vows in 1958.

Moe Dalitz and Jimmy Hoffa combined to bring the first installment of Teamster Pension Fund money into Las Vegas in 1959. But the $1 million loan didn't help to build a hotel and casino. It financed the Dalitz-controlled Sunrise Hospital.

To help assure that the new medical facility would have some business, Hoffa worked out a deal between his union members, their employers, and Sunrise for the provision of medical treatment. The employers agreed to pay $6.50 per month for each union employee into a fund that paid the provider of the medical services, Sunrise Hospital. In turn, the hospital promised to set five beds aside specifically for union members and provide basic medical care.

After this successful beginning, more Teamster money found its way to Vegas in the 1960s and beyond. The millions of dollars in loans were used to build or expand casinos, shopping malls, and golf courses. This was at a time when most lending institutions wanted nothing to do with entrepreneurs from notorious Sin City.

In 1966, the Aladdin and Caesars Palace joined the growing number of Strip resorts. The Teamster-financed Circus Circus opened in 1968.

More big-name celebrity weddings took place in Vegas in the '60s. Mary Tyler Moore and Grant Tinker were married at the Dunes in 1962 and Betty White and Allen Ludden said their vows at the Sands in 1963. The Dunes hosted its second big marriage of the decade when Jane Fonda and Roger Vadim tied the knot in 1965. The next year, Xavier Cugat and Charo were hitched at Caesars Palace. Two mega-nuptials occurred in 1967, between Elvis Presley and Priscilla Beaulieu at the Aladdin, and Ann Margret and Roger Smith at the Riviera. Wayne Newton and Elaine Okamura were wed at the Flamingo in 1968. By the end of the decade, the valley's population had reached 273,000, more than doubling in ten years.

As the years passed, Moe Dalitz continued to use his friendship with Jimmy Hoffa to facilitate loans sought by

Las Vegas businesses. In spite of his power, Dalitz kept a low profile, remaining an intensely private man. He became heavily involved in charity work and in 1976 was named Humanitarian of the Year by the American Cancer Research Center and Hospital. In 1982 he received the Torch of Liberty Award by the Anti-Defamation League. Moe Dalitz died in 1989 of natural causes.

As the ’60s came to a close, Las Vegas was booming. It was an “open town” for organized-crime families nationwide, many of which had already established their presence. But one of them held a position of dominance—Chicago.