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VOLUME 5 | EDITION 4



Legacy Edition
WOMEN OF LAS VEGAS
THE GAME CHANGERS

The advertisement features three models in a sophisticated lounge setting. The background is a dimly lit room with warm, golden light from a chandelier and a large mirror reflecting the interior. A prominent gold pillar stands in the center. The models are wearing leopard print tops and dark trousers. The woman in the center is standing with one hand on her hip, looking towards the camera. The woman on the left is seated, and the woman on the right is seated in the foreground, looking down.

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Joan S. Peck
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

From the Editor

Welcome to the Legacy Edition of Chic Compass Magazine!

Five years is a milestone for any magazine, and there is no better way for Chic Compass to celebrate it than to feature women who have become legacies in their own right.

There is no better example than our founder and co-publisher, Ann Parenti, who set out on her magazine journey without it ever having been a dream of hers, and look at what she has accomplished! She is called the “fairy godmother of jazz” by many old-time and contemporary musicians for all the continuous support she has shown personally and via her non-profit, Forgotten Song Foundation. She is a woman I feel honored to work beside; without her, Chic Compass would not be the exquisite magazine it is today.

By nature, women are the community, the conversationalists, the healers, the teachers, and the caretakers. They are also multi-taskers. In this issue, this is evident in the stories that our talented writers have presented, highlighting many of the women in Las Vegas who represent how much they have given back to our community in so many ways. With their courage to go the next step, they are the mentors and inspiration to those wanting to spread their wings and do more.

Read about our Legacy Ladies: Linda Smith, Kathleen Taylor, Nancy Uscher, Anna Siefert, Maggie Arias-Patrell, Juanny Romero, Lynette Chappell, Anna

ON THE COVER

MODELS:

Back (L to R) Maggie Arias-Petrel, Linda Smith, Kathleen Taylor, Juanny Romero, Lynn Morris, Anna Gomes. Front (L to R) Anna Siefert, Lynette Chappell, Dean Nancy Uscher

PHOTOGRAPHY BY:

Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

HAIR & MAKEUP BY:

Claire Hilscher (Hair)
Sonia Santiago-Jalloh (Makeup)

Gomes and Lynn Morris. These extraordinary ladies have blessed our community with all they have given it.

In this edition, we continue to include articles about travel, food, fashion, music, design, and artists. We take you on a Southeast Kansas journey where you are reminded of good, simple living and beautiful sites to visit. We go from there to Paris to learn about how to become a Parisian in an hour.

Once again, David Tupaz offers us beautiful fashions to remind you of the old romantic movies. We have the opportunity to meet the Miss Filipina International Pageant winner. The Las Vegas Jazz Society is featured along with a fascinating look at bathroom and kitchen design by Infinite Trend. Please don't pass up reading the articles about Unshakeable and St. Jude's Ranch, two women featured for all they are doing for their organizations and giving back to humanity.

We are fortunate to have so many articles about innovative, educational, and talented people in our community. Do you worry about the economy? Read Joe Amato's article about the Fed.

As you read each piece in this issue, I believe you will realize, as I do, how very fortunate we are to live in a world filled with so many inspiring people, events, and opportunities.

We can't wait for you to see what we have waiting for you in this current edition. I hope you enjoy it as much as we did to create it for you.

Jean S. Peck



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Forgotten Song Foundation, Inc., a registered 501c3 organization, is dedicated to recognizing, remembering, and sustaining the visual artists and performance artistry of live music for future generations.

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TRENDING: BIG FINISHES MEET NATE JONES OF INFINITE TREND

By Brian G. Thornton



Nate Jones is the founder and owner of INFINITE TREND, a Las Vegas design studio that assists residential clients in renovating or creating new upscale home improvements. Just one visit to his beautiful showroom, and you'll know you're working with a unique talent that will bring his expertise into your space. He is seasoned in sourcing and procurement of exquisite, exotic, and rare finishes for doors, wall panels, and custom stone finishes. He coordinates with designers and manufacturers to deliver entirely completed spaces. He has been an active member of the interior design community and is a respected husband and father of two teenage girls.

This story is about Nate Jones, Infinite Trend, and how his background has blended into the Las Vegas design community. Collocated in the Las Vegas Design Center, we thought it was important to tell his trending story.

“While the stunning outcomes of our projects come in at a close second, it's the relationships cultivated and the shared passion for design that remain at the forefront of my memories.”

- Owner Nate Jones,
Infinite Trend, Las Vegas

At Left: Photo of Nate Jones by Devin D Robinson



Typically, home improvement spending falls during economic downturns; however, the COVID-19 recession has proven to be an exception to the rule. Higher-income homeowners didn't suffer the same as most but benefited from reassigned spending on home improvement, focusing on kitchens and bathroom makeovers. With many homeowners spending more time at home, they have been eager to create upscale and luxury spaces without reinventing the wheel. Cue Nate Jones and Infinite Trend.

TRENDING INSPIRATION/ DESIGN PHILOSOPHY:

Chic Compass (CC): Will you

share a bit about your journey that led you to establish INFINITE TREND—your unique design studio focusing on custom architectural finishes design?

Nate Jones (NJ): "My journey into the world of custom architectural finishes design and procurement began with a strong foundation in both art and business. I started college as an art major and finished with a bachelor's degree in international business management and a minor in Art from BYU-Hawaii Campus. Those couldn't be more extreme ends of the spectrum, but it worked for me. While living in Kona, Hawaii, I combined my passion for quality and design to establish our business in 2004 and started designing and importing custom wood doors. My initial exposure to the

Jones designed everything custom made for the studio excluding seating, Maitland Smith lamp, and other accessories. Photo by Devin D Robinson

luxury resort homes of Hawaii sparked my fascination with the potential of creating unique spaces that blend aesthetics and functionality. This fascination, coupled with my innate sense of design, led me to specialize in designing and procuring various luxury home finishes, namely Cabinets, millwork, custom stone finishes, lighting, and other bespoke elements for luxury homes."

CC: Were there any specific experiences or moments that influenced your design philosophy and approach?

NJ: "One pivotal moment was the opportunity to collaborate with



“John asked me if we could make a custom wood bathtub for one of the guestrooms. Quickly, I said no! Then John talked me into it.” Bespoke Tub, vanity, millwork, and custom stone and glass mosaic by Infinite Trend. Photo courtesy of Infinite Trend.

John Soderstrom of Soderstrom Construction in 2006. Designing and importing custom wood and stone finishes for a \$9 million home in Hualalai Resort on the Big Island of Hawaii was a turning point. While we initially only bid the job for custom wood

doors and trim, John asked me if we could make a custom wood bathtub for one of the guestrooms. Quickly, I said no! Then John talked me into it, saying it was just five-door slabs put together like a box without a top. I discussed it with our factory craftsmen, and

they agreed with John. Then John said he would need a vanity to go with the beautiful tub I drew up for him, which led to needing cabinets, millwork, and custom stonework for the entire project. This project not only showcased the impact of meticulous craftsmanship but also reinforced the importance of collaboration between design and construction. That experience solidified my design philosophy, focusing on the seamless integration of aesthetics, functionality, and craftsmanship. John was the inspiration that got me doing more than just selling custom doors. I learned quickly that finding ways to procure what the customer needed would help our business to grow. I am still collaborating with John all these years later.

CC: How would you describe the design philosophy that drives INFINITE TREND? What sets your design studio apart from others?

NJ: “INFINITE TREND’s design philosophy is rooted in the belief that every space is an opportunity for artistic expression and practical living. We strive to balance the latest design trends with timeless principles while also offering value to our customers. Our uniqueness lies in the fusion of my art-centric background with my two decades of expertise in International Business Management. This synergy allows us to not only create visually stunning spaces but also manage project procurement efficiently and cohesively.”

CC: Nate, please elaborate on your approach to blending func-

tionality and aesthetics in kitchen and bathroom design.

NJ: "Our approach revolves around harmonizing aesthetics and functionality to craft spaces that elevate daily living. We focus on analyzing the needs and habits of our clients, ensuring that every design element serves a purpose. From ergonomics in kitchen layouts to optimizing storage solutions in bathrooms, we ensure that each aspect of the design enhances the user experience while reflecting a design that fits the client's desires for enhancing the beauty of their space. In one recent project in Las Vegas, we worked together with Interior designer Kylee Dean to create a beautiful custom kitchen for a couple who required ADA access to all areas of the kitchen for the wife, who is in a wheelchair, while also keeping the space functional for the husband who is over six feet tall!"

INFINITE COLLABORATION AND EXPERTISE:

CC: How do collaborations enhance the outcome of your projects?

NJ: "Collaborating with interior designers and then directly with manufacturers allows us to offer our clients an unparalleled range of materials and products. This diversity empowers us to tailor each design to the client's preferences while maintaining the highest quality standards. We started our business working directly with



"I love beautiful woods. They add so much warmth and depth for design." Golden Knights original painting is by Robert Holton of Drizzle Art Studios. Photo by Devin D Robinson

overseas factories to provide bespoke products for our customers, and we still do that today. Of course, some of our projects do not require such a high level of customization, so we may use manufacture-designed elements to complete the desired outcome in those situations."

"Since our inception two decades ago, we've had the privilege of partnering with remarkable individuals and entities. Our journey has brought us to designing and

supplying finishes for celebrities and accomplished business figures. Among the various highlights, what truly shines is the synergy achieved through extraordinary partnerships with other talented individuals.

One cherished memory involves collaborating with Cary Vogel for the inception and realization of the captivating New York Loft kitchen display within the Las Vegas Design Center. What strikes me most in all these instances is



“Macassar ebony veneer is so strikingly beautiful. That’s why I used it in the desk and the sideboard.” Cougar painting, entitled “Cosmo” is an original painting by wildlife artist Chris Hoy. Photo by Devin D Robinson

the invaluable camaraderie fostered and the bond forged with these exceptional talents. The profound friendships that emerged from these collaborations stand as testaments to the remarkable connections that arise in the world of design.”

CC: Please share an example of a project where you resulted in a particularly stunning kitchen or bathroom design.

NJ: “One standout project was a luxury cabin renovation in Aspen. By seamlessly integrating custom cabinetry, a bespoke Raw Urth

range hood, and Sub Zero - Wolf appliances, we transformed the kitchen into a culinary haven that complemented the home’s organic contemporary design. We designed and supplied the project with custom cabinets, millwork, hand-crafted stone elements, and integrated lighting for an under-stairs wine cellar. The collaboration I orchestrated between my company, Soderstrom Construction, the Interior Designers for the home, and various manufacturers resulted in a space that not only catered to the client’s culinary needs but also exuded mountain luxury at its finest.”

TRENDS AND INNOVATION, VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

CC: How do you stay updated with the latest trends and innovations as you incorporate them, ensuring a timeless quality to your designs?

NJ: “Staying informed about trends involves continuous research, attending industry events and trade shows, and collaborating with fellow designers. While we incorporate trends, our focus

is on creating designs with enduring value. We weave trends subtly into our designs, ensuring they complement rather than overshadow the overall aesthetic, thus achieving a harmonious balance between current design trends and timeless elegance”.

CC: Are there any emerging technologies or design concepts that have caught your attention recently?

NJ: “Virtual reality and 3D rendering are revolutionary. They allow clients to immerse themselves in their future spaces, fostering a deeper understanding of the design. Many people do not envision spaces like designers do, so utilizing virtual reality and 3D renderings helps bridge that gap between designer and client. I am also fascinated by the emerging AI tools for creating and exploring spaces for clients. This is an exciting time for technology and design.”

DESIGN AND PROJECTS:

CC: In your extensive experience, what are some common challenges you encounter during upscale renovations, and how do you approach overcoming these challenges?

NJ: “Clear communication with clients, interior designers, and contractors, coupled with a flexible design approach, helps us address unexpected hurdles and find creative solutions that maintain the integrity of the design. I

find clear communication, skilled labor, and flexibility are the best approaches to overcoming such challenges.”

TRENDING BALANCE, LOCAL COMMUNITY, AND IMPACT:

CC: Balancing a successful design studio with family life can be demanding. How do you manage your time and responsibilities to ensure your professional and personal spheres thrive?

NJ: “I love my family, and I love my career. Family will always come first for me as I navigate my journey in life. So, when it comes to my design business, I often involve my family in customer events, community outreach, or other aspects of my business. On the flip side, I also invite many of my business colleagues, customers, and vendors to participate in events organized by my family to help out in our community. One such event is the annual Youth Helping Youth Holiday Concert, the brainchild of our eldest daughter, Roxy, to raise money for youth in our community who are in need. Roxy is now working with her sister, Skai, to create an even bigger impact during the holiday season this year and for years to come.”

“I consider myself fortunate to have been born and raised by exceptional parents. Their positive influence inspired me to strive to become both a dedicated father and a business owner who pri-

oritizes relationships with others, community involvement, and aiding those in need. Instead of trying to balance work and family, I integrate them as much as possible for the best of both worlds.”

CC: As an active member of the interior design community, how do you contribute to the growth and development of the local design scene in Las Vegas?

NJ: “Engaging with the local design community is paramount for our business. I’ve been honored to serve on the Interior Design Society Las Vegas Chapter board, where we organized events, workshops, and discussions to foster knowledge exchange and professional growth. This collaborative spirit elevates the entire design landscape in Las Vegas. I will always cherish the opportunity to have worked in this capacity with Julie Porter, Michele Youell, and the amazing John Eisele, whom we all miss greatly.”

CC: Are there any community projects or collaborations you’ve been a part of that you’re particularly proud of?

NJ: “I have always found it important to give back to the community. We have done this in many ways over the years, whether through donating products to Habitat for Humanity or raising money at a designer soiree that I orchestrated with vendor partners as a benefit for the Forgotten Song Music Foundation. My wife and I also try to teach such philanthropic ideals to our daughters, who are now very involved in raising mon-



Nate Jones with his family. Photo by Gabrielle West

ey and doing projects for homeless youth in Las Vegas.”

Finally, we spoke about any exciting developments or projects on the horizon that he’s looking forward to. Jones assured me, “Our vision for INFINITE TREND is to continue collaborating with interior designers, builders, and customers to bring their ideas from concept to reality. We’re excited about leveraging emerging technologies to enhance client experiences and exploring international

“Instead of trying to balance work and family, I integrate them as much as possible for the best of both worlds.”

design trends to bring new ideas to Las Vegas and our clientele wherever they may be.”

Infinite Trend has been a part of our design community for many years, and getting to know Nate and Infinite Trend has been an

“Infinite” pleasure. Working with Nate was a pleasant experience, as much as conversing with him and his casual and knowledgeable style.

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Pioneering New Pathways to Learning

By Kendall Hardin
Photography courtesy of College of Southern Nevada

Two years ago, the College of Southern Nevada snared Dean Richard Kravchak with the perfect trifecta of talents: world-class musician, dauntless administrator, and impassioned teacher extraordinaire.

As Dean of the School of Arts and Letters, his domain covers the departments of English, Communication (including Journalism), World Languages, and Fine Arts (including Arts and Design, Dance, Music and Theatre).

His academic career spans colleges and universities across the country, from West Virginia, Mississippi, and South Dakota to Iowa, and California, as well as public school stints in Los Angeles.

So why settle here in Las Vegas at the nation's fifth-largest community college with 30,000 learn-



Above: Dean Richard Kravchak

ers enrolled in CSN courses each semester?

"I've always seen education as a way to lift people up," affirmed Dean Kravchak. "Especially for people who may not consider higher learning a stepping stone to a better life."

"I can relate, growing up 'on the other side of the tracks' in rural New Jersey, where my male ancestors were laborers, farmers, and outlaws," he grins. "I was the first man in my family to go to college and complete a degree, so I experienced firsthand what I call the *transformational magic of education.*"

Education as a Passport to the World

Kravchak's virtuosic musical training on the oboe and English horn has taken him literally worldwide as a performer in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. He continues to perform professionally at festivals, in ensembles, and with major symphony orchestras. While he specializes in contemporary music, he also performs period pieces on historic double reed instruments of the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and early 20th Century.

"At the end of third grade, I chose the oboe from a cart of instruments so I could attend summer school," Kravchak reminisces. "By the time I got to high school, my teacher convinced my parents



Above: Student pianist Eddie Fluellen performs onstage at CSN's Nicholas J. Horn Theatre

that I should take private lessons - setting me up with the retired oboist from the New York Philharmonic. The rest is history." (Not to mention, a classic example of how great teachers change students' lives every day.)

Armed with prestigious degrees from the Eastman School of Music, the Juilliard School, and Florida State University, he pioneered and chaired academic accomplishments wherever he landed.

His non-stop enthusiasm, subject mastery, and good humor resulted in glowing evaluations from a legion of students: *Best teacher on campus. Great motivator. A godsend. Always makes it fun*

and interesting. Never leaves anyone behind. Inspirational and interactive. Knows his stuff and works hard for his students. He deserves an A!

Re-Learning How to Teach

"I thought I was a competent teacher at all the various colleges and musical institutions where I'd worked until I landed in the Public School System of Los Angeles," confesses Kravchak. "It was the hardest adjustment of my life."

He found himself in the classroom with an entirely different cadre of students, some of whom

were gang members with ankle bracelets. "I had been teaching the way I was taught - by attending lectures and regurgitating knowledge without engaging in any active learning," confesses Kravchak. "This doesn't work in low-performing schools."

He had to "flip the classroom" by breaking down challenges, forming student teams for participatory learning, and instituting discipline, structure, and accomplishment as points of pride. He also directed the Canoga Park High School Drill Team, and during the seven years he taught there, the group boldly clenched first prize in the Los Angeles competition for five years in a row.

It's no surprise that Dean Kravchak himself was awarded the *Platinum Apple Award* by the United Teachers of Los Angeles and the *Teacher of the Year* accolade by the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Stumbling into Administration

"I received a battlefield promotion to spearhead the department when our chairman suddenly died at California State University at Dominguez Hills," recalled the dean. "Music education tends to be conservative and rigid by way of training. But I had to make the choice to lead rather than defer to move the department forward for our students.

"I've been able to make changes and push the vision for CSN,

with a shout out to the enlightened support of VP of Academic Affairs James McCoy, who has allowed me to make some pretty brazen changes since coming to CSN."

What makes CSN so special and relevant at this moment? The dean cites an impressive array of opportunities for students, most of whom are first-generation college learners. The comparatively low tuition of \$450/class is still a financial challenge for over 75% of the student body who attend college part-time.

CSN offers three major campuses conveniently based in North Las Vegas, Henderson, and West Las Vegas, plus eight Learning Centers outside Las Vegas and general education classes offered at Nellis Air Force Base and four prisons in Southern Nevada.

"Now that the college has celebrated its 50th Anniversary, we're trying to create a smoother path to success for all students.

We're especially looking at ways to overcome bureaucratic red tape to help low-income students stay in school because once they leave, they rarely return.

Work-Ready Students

"While Nevada's universities naturally gravitate toward research, CSN's focus is on producing workforce-ready students," cites Dean Kravchak. "A variety of exceptional programs and resources stand out at CSN."

When students earn a certificate in Theatre Tech, they are automatically enrolled in the entertainment union IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees), qualifying them to work in live theatre, film/TV production, tradeshows, concerts and television broadcasting - where skilled labor is always in high demand on the Strip.

CSN also provides professional music recording technology train-



Above: Working inside the campus broadcasting studio



Above: Mariachi Plata celebrates first-place honors at Vargas Extravaganza competition in Texas for two years straight

Below: Hip Hop is among CSN's many dance offerings

ing inside the college's \$1.5 million recording studio, rivaling the best venues in town. The campus broadcasting studio is amazingly self-funding. Graduates leave confident to meet today's workplace demands.

On the Horizon

"I'm excited because we have so much on the drawing board just around the corner," exclaims the dean. "CSN is one of three colleges in the country being considered by McDonald's Corporation to provide continuing education and specialized training to its employees of all ages across the country. We're working on the proposal right now. This is big!"

In partnership with the Clark County Public Library System and the National Endowment of Humanities, CSN is preparing to offer its Academic & Life Skills 101 class to the public throughout local libraries as a free service to residents who want to hone their skills as a bridge to higher learning (a \$450 value).

Close to his heart is the dean's dream for expanding a three-tiered credentialed Mariachi music program at CSN as the "tip of the spear" for all the exceptional Mariachi activity offered in the Clark County School System throughout the Vegas Valley.

According to the dean, "It not only would honor our local His-

panic culture in Nevada but would also support the highest achievements of CSN's four-year-old *Mariachi Plata (Silver)*, who have earned first place at Festival Vargas in San Antonio for the last two years, bringing the national championship of collegiate Mariachi bands home to the Silver State."





Transforming Education for a New World

The dean, along with his committed team of faculty and staff, are pushing the envelope even more by pursuing innovative partnerships and alliances, along with private and foundation support, to launch new initiatives.

Passionate, persistent and persuasive. Those are the first words Marcus Johnson, CSN Dean of Business, Hospitality and Public Services, uses to describe his fellow dean. "I couldn't ask for a better colleague to sit down together to thrash out the issues of the day. We're constantly exploring ways our departments can collaborate."

"I remain passionate and committed because education is the best way we now have at our fingertips to change the world," insisted Dean Kravchak.

"I firmly believe that all students are hard-wired for success. Our job is to help them find their pathway to success and achieve the life they deserve. Higher learning leverages the breakthroughs that create new solutions and social benefits for all of us."

If the college's motto is "Investing in the Future. Students first." - then CSN found its perfect champion in Dean Richard Kravchak. With a relentless faith in quality learning for all, his tsunami of "magical transformational education" will decidedly enrich our desert landscape throughout Nevada.

Above: CSN's Mariachi Plata performs at home to cheering audiences

"I firmly believe that all students are hard-wired for success. Our job is to help them find their pathway to success and achieve the life they deserve."

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A BEACON OF HOPE St. Jude's Ranch for Children Brings Faith and Healing

By Debbie Hall
Photography courtesy of St. Jude's Ranch for Children

In Boulder City, Nevada, the St. Jude's Ranch for Children campus is a community landmark and an important part of life in Southern Nevada. Since its inception in 1966 and celebrating 57 years, St. Jude's Ranch for Children has provided a safe, nurturing home with therapeutic residential treatment services to abused and neglected children and young people in Nevada. Along with changing so many lives, the Ranch offers campus tours, operates a thrift store, and holds weddings and other religious ceremonies in its beautiful chapel.

The organization's mission has remained the same: to transform the lives of abused and neglected children.

Dr. Christina Vela, DPP, Chief Executive Officer for St. Jude's Ranch for Children, recently celebrated six years as CEO. She first held



Above: Christina Vela, CEO, helps to guide St. Jude's Ranch for Children into the future.

the position of chief program officer at St. Jude's Ranch from 2010 to 2013 and returned when she was offered the CEO position.

"From our perspective, we create pathways for children who are victims of abuse and neglect and for young people experiencing homelessness and exploitation," says Dr. Vela.

The way this work is accomplished has evolved over the years because the needs of children and young people are much more complex.

"We see the complexity and compounding impact of abuse, and the fact is that many of our children have experienced multiple forms of abuse. Add to that poverty, homelessness, and generational cycles of abuse and exploitation," explains Dr. Vela. "We are no longer just dealing with a singular issue such as domestic violence or parental mental health issues. The children, young people, and families we serve deal with mental health, substance abuse, and violence, which compounds the effect of abuse."

Another aspect of their support is keeping siblings together through its Sibling Preservation Program. One option is for the siblings to remain together at the Ranch. If the siblings are placed in the foster care system and separated, St. Jude's Ranch for Children holds monthly sibling reunification events, including activities such as movies and attractions. This program is one-of-a-kind in Nevada, and Dr. Vela is assisting in launch-



Above: Two of the St. Jude's Ranch for Children youth show the love.

ing a consulting aspect for other organizations to incorporate their own sibling preservation program nationwide.

"We realized that sibling care is an afterthought for many people, and they don't realize that brothers and sisters are often separated when children are placed in the foster care system. That is devastating since they are already a victim of abuse or neglect. These children are having a tough time transitioning into foster care since

they are being removed from their home, separated from one or both parents and are not surrounded by the things they love like a favorite pillow," says Dr. Vela. "Even if they are abused, children still love their families. To be separated from their siblings is heart-wrenching."

Camp to Belong was created to keep sibling preservation as a national organization, and St. Jude's Ranch for Children recently brought this national program

into its family of services. They will also support the other Camp to Belong in other states.

St. Jude's Ranch for Children cares for children from birth to age 25. While children in the foster care system and at the Ranch age out its support system at age 18, St. Jude's Ranch for Children is one of the only organizations that continues to offer support after aging out, including homeless youth services, child victims of sex trafficking services, and support services up to age 25.

"For many kids, when they age out of foster care, without a healthy support system, it is hard to navigate the world. Young people aging out without a support system can make one or two poor decisions with devastating, unintended consequences. Whether it is moving in with an abusive partner or living with a partner's family until they are kicked out, homelessness is a big problem," Dr. Vela says.

The St. Jude's Ranch for Children Transitional Housing Program was started in 2011 and provides transitional housing and services for homeless 18 to 25-year-olds, including intensive daily or weekly case management in an apartment-style residential program. Residents work with their mentors as they become stable, self-sufficient, and productive people. They are connected with appropriate community services while developing a strong sense of self-determination. St. Jude's Ranch for Children is the only nonprofit in Southern Nevada and the only

organization in Nevada that provides both child welfare services and youth homeless programs. Other organizations focus on either one or the other.

The housing program assists clients by providing safe housing. They can then focus on developing life skills through education, counseling, and therapy. Financial independence through work is developed through job training, transportation, and support services. Clients receive an individualized plan for independence while working with a case manager.

"We have the unique perspective to serve both because we understand childhood trauma and adversity and since 2011 have served thousands of unhoused individuals and families."

One of the greatest needs in Southern Nevada is assisting and supporting pregnant teens. Nevada has some of the country's highest teen pregnancy rates, and teen mothers are typically not ready to parent independently. St. Jude's Ranch for Children's Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program addresses that need.

Additionally, former or current students of St. Jude's Ranch for Children programs can apply for the Career Opportunity Scholarship Fund.

"We have developed programming for children who have fallen through the cracks. We are able to find young people who are not receiving targeted services," says Dr. Vela. "We research what they need and can help expeditiously improve their lives."



Above: From left, Christina Vela (CEO), Jackie Poole (Foster Home Supervisor - Hope Project), DaShun Jackson (Program Director) and Kimberly Newton (Youth Care Supervisor)



The history of St. Jude's Ranch for Children began with Father Jack Adam, an Episcopalian priest, who wanted to create a place where abused and neglected children could feel loved. He named the place after St. Jude, the Patron Saint of Desperate Causes. Alvin Wartman, an attorney in Boulder City, persuaded local government officials to provide 40 acres of land for the campus. The Sisters of Charity, an order of nuns based in Bristol, England, agreed to care for the children. Builders, contractors, and tradesmen offered to help develop the property.

As for future plans, the campus is being expanded on the far east side. St. Jude's Ranch for Children is developing 10 acres of land at the second entrance to be a Healing Center. This facility will be devoted to children who are victims of sex trafficking, and St. Jude's Ranch for Children has

been holding a capital campaign since construction started.

"This is a one-of-a-kind project that is unique to Nevada and really across the country that will offer housing, an onsite school in partnership with the Clark County School District, a labyrinth, tortoise habitat, wellness activities surrounded by nature, and more," states Dr. Vela.

The people who are part of the Leadership Team at St. Jude's Ranch for Children are committed and passionate about the children. Dedicated professionals—many of whom are licensed and certified in their fields—demonstrate their dedication to the children. They come from various backgrounds, including finance, management consulting, nursing, childcare, compliance, communications, and event planning.

Born and raised in Southern California, Dr. Vela moved to Las Vegas with her husband, children, and parents 20 years ago and loved it. She has been a social worker for 30 years and always worked with children and young people who have been victims of abuse and neglect.

"I was a teen mother myself and had some challenging life experiences as a young mother. I attended college, even though it was harder being a young mother. I want to pay it forward and help other girls understand that anything is possible; their life is not over. I want our community to be as safe as possible for everyone, including the most vulnerable and in pain. I love my job and the opportunity to grow our mission and serve more kids and families."

St. Jude's Ranch for Children's goal is to ensure children recapture lost childhoods and have the opportunity to be kids for the first time.

The thrift store on campus is open Wednesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., selling donations from the community or surplus items from conventions and businesses. The thrift store is also a training location as part of a job-training program for some youth living at the Ranch.

Donations and volunteering are always accepted. For more info, visit stjudesranch.org and follow on social media at: Facebook @ [StJudesRanch](https://www.facebook.com/StJudesRanch) and Instagram @ [stjudesranchforchildren](https://www.instagram.com/stjudesranchforchildren).



Above: In Boulder City, Nevada, the St. Jude's Ranch for Children campus is a community landmark and an important part of life in Southern Nevada.

Help Support St. Jude's Ranch for Children

St. Jude's Ranch for Children will host Badges and Bow Toy Drive in partnership with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and the Nevada Department of Corrections at Walmart Supercenter, 8060 W. Tropical Parkway, and Sam's Club, 8080 W. Tropical Parkway. For two days, Dec 2-3, the community can bring new, unwrapped toys, hygiene products, and new clothing to fill buses. Both law enforcement agencies will have staff collecting the items to support the

kids, youth, and families throughout the year for the holidays and birthdays.

The following Saturday, Dec. 9, is the annual 17th Night of Lights event starting at 5 p.m. at the St. Jude's Ranch for Children Boulder City campus. The nostalgic event brings the community together to celebrate hope and healing during the holidays.

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UNSHAKEABLE

INSPIRE. TEACH. EMPOWER.

UNSHAKEABLE HELPS WOMEN BECOME FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT AFTER ADDICTION AND TRAUMA

By Debbie Hall / Photography courtesy of UNSHAKEABLE

Unshakeable is one of the most powerful and life-changing nonprofits serving women in Nevada. The foundation, founded by Debbie Isaacs in 2016, has created new paths forward for many following its mission of creating balanced foundations and sustainable financial independence for women throughout Clark County—helping them to be Unshakeable.

Its mission is to guide women recovering from various types of trauma—survivors of human trafficking, domestic and sexual violence, addiction, and homelessness. Unshakeable has guided their return to the workforce for seven years to achieve financial independence.

“This means more than a J.O.B. This means participating in our program for a minimum of two



Above: Surrounded by clients, Founder Unshakeable Debbie Isaacs (3rd from the left) demonstrates the love felt by clients.

years working with our clients to achieve a career,” says Isaacs.

More than 200 women have graduated from the I AM Series, taking the next step of career coaching, with a sizeable success

rate in helping them achieve career goals and find employment.

The organization does this in three phases with its “Power To Employ” Career Development Program.

The first phase is the “I Am” Series, a two-day women’s conference comprising eight to ten workshops that teach women the skills they need to return to the workplace. This includes business acculturation, self-esteem-building, and basic life skills for adults.

“I attend every ‘I Am’ and share my story, and by being vulnerable, we represent to the clients that this happens to everyone,” admits Isaacs.

Phase two involves individual career coaching, which includes an intensive, deep-dive assessment of the individual’s skills and passions to help them find a good fit for employment. This includes what would be called “surviving jobs” that pay the bills and “thriving jobs” as part of a career plan. Sometimes, the clients are housed in temporary shelters or housing and need to start earning a paycheck to move into more permanent housing. “Surviving Jobs” would include big box retailers, fast food establishments, and convenience stores. A “Thriving Job” would be employment that would incorporate the client’s skillset and passions. That also gives the women the opportunity to dream again.

“For us, that is one of our more powerful coaching sessions because, for the first time in many years in a woman’s life, she is asked what she would want to do if there was no fear, lack of finances, or other obstacles. For some of them, there is an emotional reaction. For others, they paint a picture of what they want-



Above: Unshakeable continues to Inspire. Teach. Empower.

ed to do if they could,” says Isaacs.

This phase also aims to identify the barriers that hinder clients from finding jobs and encourage growth in those areas. This could include sealing legal records, obtaining I.D.s, receiving professional clothing, and getting food for both people and pets.

Barriers include:

- Emotional—Also known as Imposter Syndrome, where great fear and insecurity exist.
- Criminal background
- Lack of education
- Childcare issues and custody
- Transportation
- Lack of identification and other necessary documentation.

Therapy is offered to clients; its



Above: The Unshakeable swag bag.

coaches are trained to help those recovering from trauma. The team members of Unshakeable work with many partners and receive daily training and support to help women overcome these barriers. For example, a client might be afraid to ride on a bus or take more than one bus to get to a job. A coach will ride on the bus with the client and help them navigate bus routes and schedules.

Phase three is a business alliance partnership. Unshakeable works with Las Vegas employers willing to give these women a chance, offering interviews and consideration if it is a good fit. The partnership includes Unshakeable

mentoring these women in their new jobs and the employer offering schooling or other opportunities for the employees to grow within the workplace.

“The employers we work with understand that we are sending imperfect people. I believe everyone has a desire to help. We work with big and small businesses that offer our clients the opportunity to work and grow within the organization. This could include offering educational programs for business employees,” says Isaacs.

Many of the women have not worked in a job for years due to an addiction. Also, many aspects of the work world have changed,

especially since the pandemic. For example, clients of Unshakeable placed for employment in a partner’s business might not know the process of how to inform their employer they are not coming in due to illness. Unshakeable and the partner businesses work together to help these clients succeed by assisting them to understand aspects of their employment. Coaches will “job shadow” and support clients, even if they relapse into addiction or face other obstacles.

Social Sober Events is a way for the community to volunteer by taking a staff member and clients of Unshakeable to coffee or lunch as a way to engage and talk to each other. Each experience is

individualized for the comfort of everyone for a memorable experience. There are also other ways to volunteer and serve.

Isaac's path started when she moved to Las Vegas in 1994 to work as a meeting planner and fell in love with the city. She would continue her career by adding special events and trade show productions. She would then work for the Levy Production Group, producing corporate videos. She moved into the film business as a producer and would create sizzle reels to pitch shows to networks. Isaacs was filming an emotional court hearing as part of a series she had intended to film to pitch as a reality show.

"My attitude at the time was that this will make a great reality show, and I will become the next Mark Burnett [producer of *Survivor*, *The Apprentice*, *The Voice*, and *Shark Tank*]," explains Isaacs. "It was called Women in Need of Change in the city of Las Vegas Municipal Court. I entered the courtroom and listened to the women share their stories." While listening, Isaacs realized she wanted to do more than tell their stories and help change them. The women expressed how they felt they did not belong and were not worthy. Even working in a career as a successful producer, Isaacs realized she could identify with these women and had felt that same way in the past.

Isaacs started visiting other organizations to learn how they helped women. She witnessed the need for rescue, recovery, and therapy.



In fact, Unshakeable works with several other nonprofits in Las Vegas to achieve their mission, including SafeNest, ShadeTree, Safe House, Foundation For Recovery, and West Care, as well as many more. But as Isaacs researched how she could make a difference, she realized a great need for continuing aftercare. She knew this was where she could offer women in need a life-changing recovery help and training. There is also no charge to the partners who participate in the programs of Unshakeable.

"I learned how nonprofit organizations work, obtain funding, and how to make this a successful organization," says Isaacs. "This has been a part of my heart since Day One."

At Unshakeable, clients are told that "their past doesn't define you," which also applies to Isaacs.

In 2007, Isaacs produced the horror film *Ghosts of Goldfield*,

Above: The clients of Unshakeable demonstrate pride in starting new lives.

filmed near Tonopah, Nevada, 25 miles north of Goldfield, Nevada. The cast would include former wrestler "Rowdy" Roddy Piper. She admits that this movie is the most horrible horror movie ever, but it did begin her career in producing.

Like *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Isaac's friends and clients convinced her to screen the movie as a fundraiser. It has become an annual tradition of an entertaining night of poking fun at the movie, with people screaming at the characters while laughing. The Most Horrible Movie Ever event returned to the Beverly Theater to great crowds.

"The cast was amazing, but it was a terrible script. I have to smile about the movie and how bad it is, but now it gives us a chance to have fun and raise money for Unshakeable."



Above: The first phase for clients is attending the “I Am” Series workshops.

Below: Unshakeable encourages women to dream of a bright future.



The evening included a happy hour, silent auction, and possible Q&A this year.

The Beverly Theater, created by The Rogers Foundation, presents uncommon cinematic, literary, and live experiences in downtown Las Vegas. That includes cinematic connectivity, novel collaborations, and cultural portals in downtown Las Vegas. For more info, visit thebeverlytheater.com.

The name Unshakeable represents that everyone is unshakeable in their foundation. It continues to help women return to the workforce, achieve financial independence, and accomplish some of their goals and dreams.

For more information, visit their website unshakeable.org and follow them on Facebook and Instagram @ WeAreUnshakeable.





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grace

Roots of Jazz

by Kendall Hardin

The Las Vegas Jazz Society (LVJS) - one of Nevada's oldest cultural nonprofits - is celebrating a long, illustrious history while it reinvents itself with two novel projects for the future.

Today's hip-hop and rap generations may not even recognize this 48-year-old organization, conceived during the golden era of live music in Vegas. That was a time when every casino on the Strip hired cadres of the most talented instrumentalists and vocalists in the country to wow guests around the clock with elite house bands and stellar lounge acts.

Monk's Dream

The great jazz bassist and composer Monk Montgomery, the elder brother of jazz guitarist Wes and vibraphonist/pianist Buddy, moved to Las Vegas in 1966. Monk was an early adopter of the Fender Precision Bass invented in 1950.



Above: Painting of Monk Montgomery courtesy of artist Jerry Blank

Upon his arrival, he found the jazz scene sadly lacking, even though the town was teeming with fine musicians lusting to play this kind of music. His dream was to provide more outlets to showcase their music while luring nationally and internationally renowned jazz musicians to major venues on and off the Strip.

By 1975, he had convinced several local musicians, jazz fans, and notable Las Vegas residents to share his dream, and the Las Vegas Jazz Society was formed as a nonprofit cultural organization. That summer, the Society debuted its first concert featuring Joe Williams and the Freddy Hubbard Quintet in the Judy Bayley Theater on the UNLV campus.

In subsequent years, Monk's dream took shape as major hotels such as the Sands, Stardust, Hacienda, Desert Inn, Landmark, Tropicana, and the Dunes began



Above: Jam session at Monk Montgomery's Home in 1980. Photo by Chuck McGuire

to headline legendary luminaries who embraced modern American-born jazz on their properties - immortal stars like Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, Herbie Hancock, Max Roach, Louis Bellson, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Cal Tjader.

Think Jazz!

A ten-member Board of Directors, consisting of a cross-section of musicians and jazz-loving citizens, guided the Jazz Society. A support team of renowned musicians titled "Jazz Ambassadors at Large" was also assembled to spread the word, the music, and the dream far and wide. Included in this group of Ambassadors were Joe Williams, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Marlena Shaw, James Moody, B.B. King, and Carl Fontana.

The Jazz Society became Monk's passion. He not only organized and performed in concerts and clubs but also spearheaded a political movement to designate the month of May as "Jazz Month" in the state of Nevada.

In addition, he chaired LVJS board meetings and wrote "Monk's Corner" feature articles in *Think*



Above: Think Jazz! merchandise in the early days of the Jazz Society

Jazz, the society's monthly newsletter - while hosting parties and jam sessions in his home. He also anchored a late-night jazz radio broadcast where he played recordings of the genre and interviewed jazz celebrities performing in Las Vegas. *Think Jazz* was the show's motto and the model for his life.

During this time, Monk discovered that he had bone cancer. Despite the knowledge of his illness, he never slowed down. He died in Las Vegas on May 20, 1982. Thanks to the Las Vegas Jazz Society, his vision has been kept alive by dedicated individuals and organizations for nearly five decades. Thanks to one dream of one man, America's unique art form has continued to flourish in Sin City.

From Past to Present

Changing times require that the Jazz Society keep reinventing itself, just like the art form itself. However, the organization has suffered from many of its founders and most stalwart supporters "aging out." Just in the last few years, some of Vegas' finest from the Golden Era - icons like Gus Mancuso, Frank Leone, Vince Falcone, and Carl Saunders - have perished.

"Back in the 60s, the whole town was a family," recalled Tom Hall, who worked on the Strip for 45 years, with 25 years as lead alto for the Riviera's House Band. "If you got out of line," he added, "you were soon sucking sand," referring to the Mob's sense of justice in the early days.

The one constant in the Jazz Society's lifeline is its own "jazz angel," Judy Tarte - present at the moment of creation in 1976 and today as president of the LVJS Board.

Like her music teacher father in Detroit, she became an avid big band and jazz fan. "As a single mother teaching in Las Vegas, I sought out the Big Band Jazz concerts in Paradise Park and the picnics that the musicians' wives organized," recalls Judy.

"I soon learned the place to be was at Musicians Local 369 in the after-hours, when Strip musicians gathered to jam in kicks bands (just for kicks) and share amazing stories from the "road." The idea of a jazz society was in the air.

"That's when I met Monk Montgomery, who convinced me to volunteer and join the founding board," Judy continued. "Everyone loved Monk. He devoted his life to jazz, and had a way of convincing people that they could accomplish things they couldn't even imagine."

Judy volunteered to organize hotel reservations for musicians flying in at all hours, as well as advertising sales. "I realized then I was a day person working with night people," she joked.

It was a glorious time when there were gigs galore for everyone. Thanks to Monk's efforts, casino marquees started lighting up headliners like Chuck Mangione, Chic Corea, Herbie Mann, and



Above: LVJS President Judy Tarte with Tony Bennett



Above from left: LVJS Today - Chris and Greg Blando, Tom Hall, Jodi Warman, Cam Usher and Judy Tarte

Jean-Luc Ponty. Jazz had finally found its home on the Strip.

Partnering Up!

Judy Tarte followed Monk Montgomery as president of the LVJS and stepped into the leadership role off and on, including the present. "I have the best active board and advisory team I've ever worked with," she proudly boasts. "We remain community-based to support the local clubs and jazz in all its forms."

New partnerships have shaped today's Jazz Society. On the second Sunday of the month, LVJS presents *Sunday Jazz at the Bootlegger Bistro*, highlighting some of the hottest performers in

town. October marks the organization's annual *Picnic in the Park* at Winchester Cultural Center. The Society counts Lorraine Hunt Bono at the Bootlegger and Irma Varela at Winchester as its many longtime supporters.

Everyone should know about LVJS's website at lvjs.org. In addition to *Jazz Notes* and membership information, the Society compiles the most comprehensive week-by-week guide to jam-packed jazz events throughout the Vegas Valley - the top go-to source for music lovers.

The Sideman Story

Unique initiatives are energizing

the Las Vegas Jazz Society in the coming year.

Working collaboratively with the Nevada State Museum in Las Vegas, LVJS is turning over all its photos, recordings, memorabilia, and documents to professional archivists to preserve the local history of Las Vegas jazz in one location for posterity.

Over time, the Society envisions that this ongoing collection will culminate in a major exhibition entitled "The Sideman Story," featuring scores of extraordinary musicians and their contributions to the unique entertainment culture of Las Vegas.

The exhibition will tell the story of the countless men and women

who settled in the Valley during the 40s, 50s, and 60s - lured by the promise of a steady gig. Here was the opportunity to escape the Big Band touring life: the one-night gigs, endless hotel rooms, living out of a suitcase, and lonely separation from family and loved ones.

The bustling Sin City offered opportunities for abundant work - even a chance to settle down and buy a home where musicians could raise a family. Sidemen were pioneers of a sort, forming the foundation of what became "Las Vegas, the Entertainment Capital of the World."

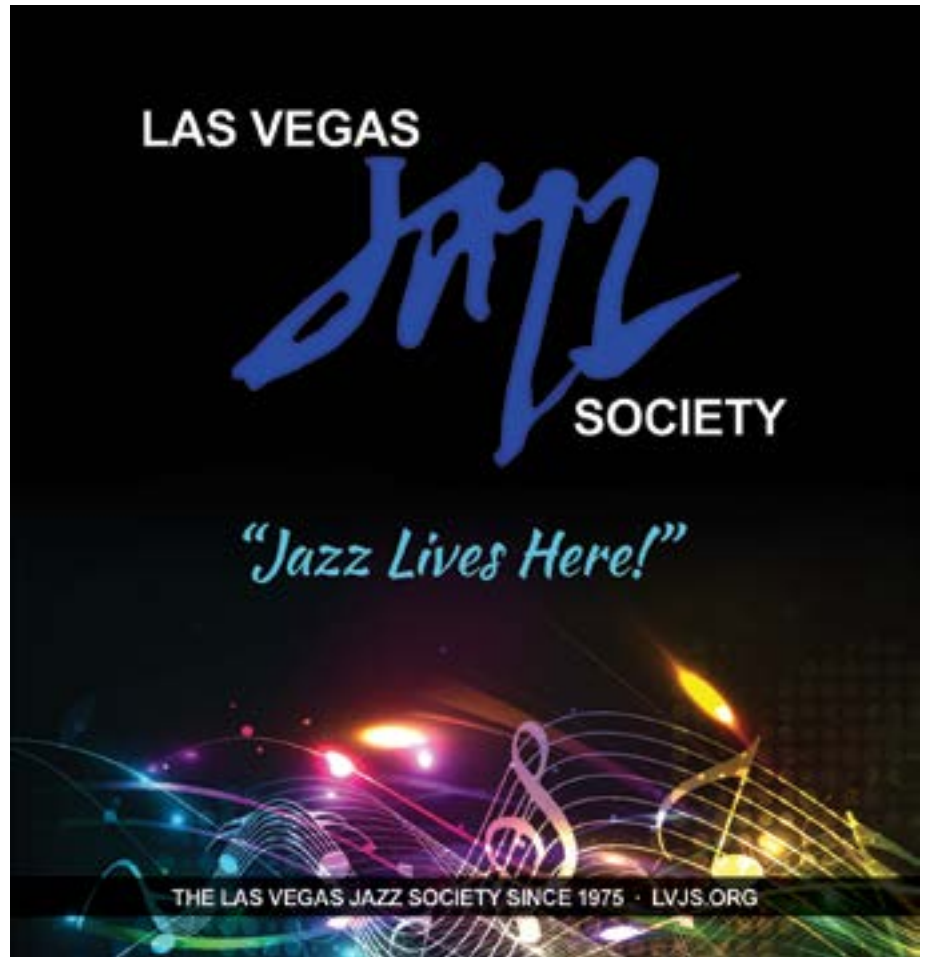
Many of these families are now the bedrock of the Valley, producing a legacy of second and third-generation musicians. Their stories continue.

Music and the Mind

The Society has also connected with the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health as a partner in the Center's "Music and the Mind" program to explore the impact of music on different forms of dementia.

"We've lost so many jazz musicians to Alzheimer's disease," cited Judy Tarte. "Gus Mancuso was a perfect example of how music eased his dementia. His brain forgot everything except the music he continued to perform in his home until his life ended.

"I don't know where this project will take us, but we are all thrilled



to be part of something that may positively impact generations to come."

Lend a Hand!

The Las Vegas Jazz Society exists to SUPPORT and co-sponsor professional jazz artists and performances, to PROMOTE up-and-coming young musicians in the community and schools, and to PROVIDE opportunities to those who appreciate such amazing music. In this way, all of us can share a common interest in this uniquely American, constantly evolving art form we call jazz.

- Don't throw away those vintage photos, programs,

and other jazzy memorabilia. Donate them to the Jazz Archives Project by contacting Judy Tarte via email at jazzsocietylasvegas@gmail.com.

- Become a member online at membership@lvjs.org and enjoy discounts on tickets and merchandise, plus member-only perks, knowing you are investing in the extraordinary Las Vegas jazz of today and tomorrow.
- And, perhaps as the perfect grace note, reintroduce Monk Montgomery's dream to designate the month of May as Jazz Month in Nevada.

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IS THE U.S. FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM WORKING, OR SHOULD IT FACE EXTINCTION?

By Joseph Amato

The U.S. Central Bank, commonly known as the Federal Reserve Bank, has origins extending back to 1791 when the U.S. Congress chartered The First Bank of the United States. It was the country's first attempt at a central bank. But in 1811, the charter for the First Bank was not renewed.

In 1816, The Second Bank of the United States was established. It faced many of the same challenges as The First Bank, includ-

ing concerns over its power and influence over a fragile U.S. economy. In 1836, the charter for the Second Bank was not renewed, and the U.S. went without a central bank for nearly 80 years. But in 1913, after several difficult financial episodes that faced the country, the Federal Reserve Act was passed, establishing the Federal Reserve System, commonly known as the Fed. The Fed has been in control of the U.S. financial markets ever since, but 110

years later, is it still the correct master of our economic system, or is it due a reset?

The Fed has many distinct responsibilities, none more important than the other.

The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meets regularly to set monetary policy, including setting the federal funds rate, which influences interest rates throughout the economy. Decisions here can

impact borrowing costs, consumer spending, and business investments.

The Fed also plays a key role in supervising and regulating the banking industry. The Fed can implement policies that enforce stricter bank regulations or, to a lesser extent, more relaxed banking rules, thereby affecting our financial system's overall health and stability.

In 2008, the Fed began the process of Quantitative Easing in response to the 2008 financial crisis. With this practice, the Fed purchased long-term securities to lower interest rates and increase money supply. This policy was controversial because it was firmly believed that recklessly increasing the money supply would eventually lead to inflation, possibly creating an asset bubble in real estate, stocks, and bonds and reducing the interest rate income for the ordinary "saver." It would create a dependency among the financial markets as they became too reliant on central bank intervention. Most concerning was the fact that there was no clear or concise exit strategy, and this in itself could lead to a financial market catastrophe.

As of 2023, we are facing a U.S. economy dealing with many negative ramifications influenced by the Fed's actions over the last fifteen years alone.

The Fed's long-term mandate has always been to promote maximum employment, curb inflation, and provide a solid platform

for stable prices. Its decisions in achieving these objectives and how it reacts to rising inflation can have broad implications for the economy, affecting voters' sentiments and choices in future elections.

While the Fed plays a significant role in influencing the U.S. economy, other factors, including global events, technological changes, and legislative decisions, can also have a substantial impact.

The central banking philosophy is not exclusive to the U.S and can be traced back to the late 1600s. The Bank of Sweden (1668) and the Bank of England (1694) were among the first to establish a central bank to assist in developing a distinct monetary system. They were established respectively to provide funding to their respective national governments.

Additionally, during the 19th century, many countries around the world used their central banks to adopt the gold standard, which tied the value of their currency to a specific amount of gold. Central banks also played a major role in maintaining this standard until 1971.

The role of central banks evolved mainly in the U.S. and Europe, especially after the Great Depression in the 1930s, and began to take on responsibilities related to monetary stability and bank supervision.

Their importance grew significantly post-WWII as central banks like the Federal Reserve in the U.S.

played a crucial role in rebuilding economies. In 1944, The Bretton Woods Agreement established fixed exchange rates that subsequently led to the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Whether the Fed should continue today or be abolished is extremely complex and depends on one's perspective.

Most individuals who argue in favor of the Fed will often identify its power to play a crucial role in maintaining economic stability by setting monetary policy, adjusting interest rates, and controlling inflation. The Fed is also considered the lender of last resort as it provides emergency funds to troubled banks during times of financial crisis, hopefully preventing bank runs and creating a broader economic collapse. They believe having a central bank allows a quick and flexible response to economic changes and challenges. In addition, the Fed plays a vital role in regulating and supervising banks, ensuring they operate safely and soundly. Finally, the Fed conducts significant economic research and provides critical economic data that helps policymakers and the public understand the state of the economy. That is if you trust the information we are given.

Arguments in favor of abolishing the Fed are based on a lack of true transparency in a 24-hour news cycle where it is believed that the Fed operates with too much secrecy and insufficient oversight from elected officials.



Some believe that the Fed's actions, such as quantitative easing, lead to harmful long-term economic effects, like the current asset bubble and out-of-control long-term inflation. In the last few years, the government has been perceived to be the problem and not the solution, and critics argue that having so much power centralized in one institution can be dangerous, especially if decisions are made that benefit certain financial institutions or industries at the expense of others. The common practice of picking winners and losers in the marketplace has become more than evident lately, and the Fed has its fingerprints in many areas of concern. And finally, there's a concern that banks and financial institutions are tak-

ing unnecessary risks and blurring the lines of honest banking, believing that the new Fed mantra is to bail them out if things go wrong. Too big to fail is no longer a mere concern; it appears to have become an entrenched Fed Policy.

But replacing the Fed would not be an easy task and would probably be as complicated as insisting on establishing Congressional term limits. There would be many profound economic, political, and social considerations in taking on the task of eliminating the Fed.

Some ideas and options that can be considered as reasonable alternatives involve re-establishing the value of a country's currency

to the gold standard. The gold standard was established before the creation of central banks in many countries.

We may also consider establishing a system where banks issue their own currency backed by commodities like gold or silver. The market would determine the currency's value, removing any central monetary authority. There is a school of thought that decentralized digital currencies like Bitcoin could replace the need for a central bank. Many believe the decentralized nature and fixed supply of specific cryptocurrencies can prevent issues like hyperinflation. Many security and oversight problems in the existing cryptocurrency markets need to be addressed before this option can be considered.

There is also the idea of replacing the Fed with its sole responsibility of setting interest rates and conducting open market operations, with a fixed rule that could guide monetary policy automatically. Specific guidelines for adjusting interest rates could be predetermined by setting up thresholds for inflation and employment actual and potential GDP targets.

The state could implement full-reserve banking whereby banks would be required to hold reserves equal to 100% of their customers' deposits, thereby eliminating any future bailouts. It could also limit the ability of banks to extend credit for business and personal usage. Instead of a single central bank, a network of public banks at the local, state, and national

levels could be established in the marketplace. These banks would operate with public welfare as the primary goal rather than profit.

Many other alternate ideas support replacing the Fed, including aligning our currency market to a group of commodities rather than a single one like gold. They also seek to abolish legal tender laws and allow private institutions to issue their currencies. Over time, the most reliable and stable currencies would presumably be the most widely adopted by the public. That is very much in line with what cryptocurrency has done to take a foothold in the U.S. financial market.

Proposals by some U.S. economists involve replacing a large portion of the current tax structure with a tax on unimproved land values and using public credit rather than relying on private banks for money creation.

Finally, instead of targeting inflation or interest rates as the key indicator for economic decisions, a proposed monetary authority, replacing the Fed, would target the nominal GDP, ensuring that the economy grows at a steady rate. It's important to note that each of these proposals has its own advantages, disadvantages, challenges, and trade-offs. Any move to replace or significantly reform the current central banking system

would need careful consideration, rigorous analysis, and broad consensus.

In conclusion, whether the Fed should continue or be abolished depends on one's view of its effectiveness. The current Fed's economic role and influence on financial markets appear to need some level of overhaul and much-needed transparency of what truly goes on behind the curtain. How that will transpire is still up for intense discussion. The debate is multi-faceted, and there are no specific answers, but as the world constantly changes, so should the way we control the most critical aspects of our economy.



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MATEA MAHAL SMITH WINS MISS FILIPINA INTERNATIONAL BECOMES FIRST WINNER OF FILIPINO AND BLACK DESCENT IN PAGEANT'S 10-YEAR HISTORY

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
Photography by Gian Barbarona

Matea Mahal Smith was born in Coral Springs, Florida (with family roots in Pililla, Rizal, Philippines), and recently won the Miss Filipina International 2023 title in a glamorous, top-tier show in the prestigious International Ballroom of The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California.

A Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience student at the University of Florida, Smith hopes to become a trauma surgeon and positively impact people's lives.

The first Afro-Filipino to win the crown in the pageant's 10-year history, Smith (21) is the youngest child and the only daughter of Seitou Smith, a high school math teacher of Jamaican descent born in Staten Island, New York, holding a Master's degree in Education. Her Filipina mom, Mari Pantoja-Smith, was born in Makati with family roots in Rizal. She has a nursing background with a Master's degree and is a



Above: Matea Mahal Smith, who bagged the title of Miss Filipina International 2023, wants to be a trauma surgeon.



Above: Matea Mahal Smith, Miss Filipina International 2023, and Amanda Russo, Mis Filipina International Tourism

digital strategist for the Mayo Clinic Center for Digital Health.

Smith, also a track and field and swim athlete, has two accomplished older brothers – Seitu Smith II, 30, and Semar Smith, 27, both Harvard graduates who majored in Sociology and played football in college.

The winner of the best swimsuit competition, Smith said that she admires her Filipina mother, who taught her that no matter what life throws her way, obstacles are a temporary challenge, not an end,

in her journey. She loves traveling, cooking, exercising, dancing, spending time with her loved ones, and listening to music.

As the top winner of MFI, now owned by Geoffrey Jimenez, who also executive produced the glittering production to be aired by GMA Network, Smith received a BMW 2 Series car and a \$10,000 gift certificate from iSkin Beverly Hills.

Last year’s winner, Blessa Ericha Figueroa, placed the stunning \$75,000 MFI crown, made of Swiss blue topaz, Japanese pearls, and other gems, custom-designed by royalty designer Narcisa Pheres, on the head of Smith. Jimenez presented the crown while Michelle Dee, the

reigning Miss Universe Philippines, placed the sash on Smith.

Amanda Russo, born in Christiana, Delaware, with family roots in Angeles City, Pampanga, bagged the Miss Filipina International Tourism title. The 18-year-old Finance and International Business student at Penn State University also considers her mom her biggest inspiration. She wants to give back to the Filipino community and find ways to better the lives of elders.

Lauren Skeoch, First Runner-up, has family roots in Cagayan de Oro. Born in Sacramento, California, Skeoch has an Education degree from the University of South Florida.



Above (L-R): Rylen Faith Steinbuch, 3rd runner-up, Lauren Skeoch, 1st runner-up, Matea Mahal Smith, Miss Filipina International 2023, MFI Owner and CEO Geoffrey Jimenez, Amanda Russo, Miss Filipina International Tourism, and Patricia Bianca Tapia, 2nd runner-up.

Patricia Bianca Tapia, Second Runner-up, was born in Makati, Philippines, and has family roots in Tanauan, Batangas. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Development from the University of California, Davis, and a Master of Science degree in Management and Leadership from Pepperdine University. As a youth director for Tanauenos USA, she hopes to expand the value of education to empower children and teens to pursue their passions.

Rylen Faith Steinbuch, Third Runner-up, was born in San Diego, California, with family roots in Isabela. An e-commerce model and a student at Temecula Valley High School, Steinbuch loves singing,

volleyball, basketball, track, creative writing, playing the guitar and drums, and volunteering at the Community Mission of Hope (CMOH) and Rancho Damacitas' Empowerment Village for single moms and their children who are experiencing trauma and hardship. She hopes to work in the medical field someday to support CMOH and Rancho Damacitas more to provide the medical and healthcare services they currently lack.

In partnership with Jonas Gaffud's Empire Philippines, three MFI winners will be eligible to compete next year in Miss Universe Philippines, and two MFI winners will vie in The Miss Philippines pageant.

We interviewed Matea via Zoom when she returned to attend school at the University of Florida. Below is our interview.

Chic Compass: Congratulations on winning the Miss Filipina International 2023 title. What is the significance of this win for you?

Smith: It was an honor to be a part of this experience and have this opportunity to win as the first Afro-Filipino. This is big for me and the Filipino community because the Philippines is so rich in diversity, and I reflect many people of Filipino descent. So, I think being onstage as an Afro-Filipino gave insight into what the Philippines has in its culture and what we embody.

Chic Compass: How do you plan to use this platform for your mental health advocacy?

Smith: My advocacy is dismantling the stigma surrounding mental health. I have reached out to many organizations in the Philippines, trying to partner with them and help the youth in the Philippines with their battles. I have already partnered with Maya's Hope in the Philippines, a non-profit organization that helps disabled and impoverished children in the Philippines. My relationship with them would have a positive impact on the youth of the Philippines.

Chic Compass: You are also a full scholar at the University of Florida studying Behavior and Cognitive Neuroscience to fulfill your dream of becoming a trauma surgeon.

Can you tell us more about why you want to become a trauma surgeon?

Smith: My aspiration to become a trauma surgeon stems from having three hip surgeries. I want to reciprocate the care and help I received from the surgeons and physicians who cared for me and help people anywhere in the world.

Chic Compass: You quit track, field, and swimming sports due to a congenital hip disorder. Do you miss those sports?

Smith: Yes, being diagnosed with a congenital hip disorder was quite hard for me because I thought track and field was my future. I miss that often. But I have found a different path, a different door in life. That is what I take

away from overcoming and battling that injury and being victorious.

Chic Compass: Did you replace those sports with your hip-hop jazz dancing?

Smith: I dance with the University of Florida's Filipino Students Association students and dance company. I just love to be active through dancing.

Chic Compass: For your participation in the MFI, you had various coaches for walking, pageant interview, public speaking, and runway. Will you still use the same group to prepare you for the Miss Universe Philippines competition?

Smith: Yes, I would love to have the same group – Kagandahan Flores and Ashley Wright of



Above (L-R): Lauren Skeoch, Matea Mahal Smith, Rylen Faith Steinbuch, Patricia Bianca Tapia, and Rylen Faith Steinbuch

Worthy of the Crown Coaching and Kirsten Regalado. They helped and shaped me so well, which is part of why I stood there with the crown. Yes, I want them in my corner when I compete at the Miss Universe Philippines.

Chic Compass: How about your costumes and gowns? Are you still going to use the same designers?

Smith: There are different designer groups, and I am still in talks with other designers who have reached out to me, so I have not decided yet because I am looking at various options.

Chic Compass: How has winning the MFI title changed your life?

Smith: It's been amazing. It was such an honor. And I would like to thank MFI CEO Geoffrey Jimenez, Miss Filipina International, and the whole MFI team because this wouldn't be an amazing experience for me without them. Having the crown right now, I am still on cloud nine, and I would like to use this platform to forward the youth in the Philippines.

Chic Compass: Now that the MFI is over, how do you relax and prepare for the next round?

Smith: I have been sleeping... finally. (laughs) Sleeping and being around my family and friends keeps me calm, relaxed, and happy.

Chic Compass: You participated as a Reyna Elena in the Santacruzán in Rizal, Philippines. How

was that experience?

Smith: It was a great experience! I was so happy and proud to be the Reyna Elena for Pililla, Rizal, and the Reyna Empeatriz for Barangay Malaya. Being in the gorgeous gowns brings out the community who all watched the procession, and it became

so surreal for me as I saw their commitment and passion for this 200-year-old tradition. It was an honor for me to be picked to be a part of this Santacruzán.

Chic Compass: You have been to the Philippines several times. What was the most memorable experience for you?



Above: Matea Mahal Smith also wins Best in Swimsuit

Smith: Last year, my family and I traveled to Buscalan, and we had the opportunity to be tattooed by Wang-od. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I got tattooed on the upper back by her, and my entire family also got tattooed. I would love to do that again. I am carrying a piece of history with me.

Chic Compass: What is the most memorable experience for you at the MFI besides winning the crown?

Smith: My most memorable experience at the MFI was being with the amazing candidates, my pageant sisters now. Being around them for so long and meeting these smart, intellectual, and beautiful women supporting me and each other in future endeavors was a great experience that I thank MFI for.

Chic Compass: What do you plan to do when you return to the Philippines?

Smith: I plan to see my family and eat excellent food in the Philippines. I will also be preparing for Miss Universe Philippines and am so excited to be there.

Chic Compass: How was your experience going to the Cordilleras?

Smith: Just being there was quite an experience. The grass was so green, the air so crisp, and I woke up and saw clouds I had not seen anywhere else. That is why I loved it so much. It was such a spiritual and serene experience,

and I was so happy to be a part of it.

Chic Compass: During the Q&A portion of the pageant, you mentioned how your mother taught you to be true to yourself. What other lessons did you learn from her?

Smith: One of the important lessons my mother also taught me was that it was essential to know that "no one can make you feel inferior without your consent." Yes, people will judge you, but you don't need to worry about that because, at the end of the day, it is your life, and you should be happy in your life. I try to carry on every day.

Chic Compass: You are the youngest and have two older brothers. So, are you spoiled and the baby in the family?

Smith: I don't think I am spoiled, but yes, I am the baby. I love that they care for me so much. They are very protective.

Chic Compass: Would you consider yourself a "Daddy's Girl?"

Smith: I am both (a Daddy's and Mommy's Girl). I love both of my parents. I love spending time with them separately because they are different.

Chic Compass: After you won the title, did you notice any difference in treatment from your classmates or friends?

Smith: I have true friends, and they knew before me that I would

be a winner. And I love them for that. Many congratulated me, and I appreciate everyone who was happy to see me wearing the crown.

Chic Compass: What would you advise young Fil-Am girls who want to follow in your footsteps?

Smith: I would tell them to go for it. With any experience, I would approach it with an open mind. You should not be losing out on opportunities or missing out on growing yourself through experiences. Please go for it if you want to join a pageant or follow in my footsteps.



Above (L-R): Matea's dad Seitu Smith, a high school math teacher of Jamaican descent who was born in Staten Island, New York and has a Master's degree in Education, Matea Smith, and her Filipina mom who was born in Makati with family roots from Rizal, Mari Pantoja-Smith, a digital strategist for the Mayo Clinic-Center for Digital Health who also has a nursing background and a Master's degree.



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Photo of Maggie Arias-Petrel by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

MAGGIE ARIAS-PETREL

DREAMS BIG AND THEN MAKES IT HAPPEN

By Chanelle Hayes

As a child, Maggie Arias-Petrel had big dreams of becoming a doctor one day. After completing her first semester of medical school, her plans changed. She still wanted to be in the medical field, but more on the administrative side than the clinical side. She switched gears and graduated from the Central University of Ecuador in Quito with a master's degree in business administration and management. She moved to the United States shortly after to begin her professional career.

"When I came to Las Vegas in the early 90s, I saw a need for more qualified bilingual-bicultural medical professionals," Arias-Petrel said. Her first job was as a medical administrator for the Women's Health Center of Southern Nevada. After that, she took numer-

ous positions in medical practice management, operations, marketing, business development, and consulting.

As an advocate for healthcare for the Hispanic market with a strong business mindset, Arias-Petrel launched Global Professional Consulting, Inc. in 2003, which led her to create strategic partnerships with Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara, St. Rose Dominican Hospitals and the Nevada System of Higher Education in efforts to create a pipeline of bilingual-bicultural workforce to serve the minorities and the underserved.

Giving back to the community was just as equally important as her professional career. She served as chairwoman of the board for the Latin Chamber of Com-

merce, Nevada, Inc. For over a decade, she has been helping several Chamber events, such as La Oportunidad Expo, a premier business event for the Latin community in Southern Nevada. "The Latin Chamber of Commerce was one of the first organizations I joined when I moved to Las Vegas," she said. "When I started Global Professional Consulting, Inc., I had tremendous support from Otto Merida, one of the Chamber's founding members."

Arias-Petrel is also involved with Señoras of Excellence and Señores of Distinction, a nonprofit organization founded by the late Sandy Colon-Peltyn that supports the educational growth of young Latinos in the Las Vegas community. "Sandy was like a sister to me," she said. "She taught me about giving back to the com-

munity and philanthropy and the idea of contributing to the betterment of our community because education matters.”

Arias-Petrel continues the work to keep the nonprofit organization and Peltyn’s legacy alive. “The organization continues to do many fundraising events, such as the Señoras of Excellence Señoras of Distinction Awards Gala, which helps benefit the Latin Chamber of Commerce scholarship fund.”

Arias-Petrel is also involved in other organizations. After serving as chairwoman, she currently sits on the board of directors for Dignity Health - St. Rose Dominican Hos-

pital, along with other community and business leaders in the healthcare industry.

Governor Lombardo appointed her as the commissioner for the Nevada State Board of Medical Examiners, and she is the Regional Vice President of Operations for Cano Health, a value-based primary care provider dedicated to improving the health, wellness, and quality of life in underserved communities.

For her contributions to the Las Vegas community, Arias-Petrel has received the Community Service Award and Legacy of Excellence from the Latin Chamber of Com-

merce, the Señoras of Excellence Award, the Excellence in Advocacy Award from The Colors of Lupus Foundation, and the Women in Business Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women.

Arias-Petrel has achieved so much in her career, but perhaps her most significant achievement is her two children. “My son Pierre is becoming a practitioner himself,” she said. “He will be graduating from Touro University as a Medical Provider. My other son, Paul, is an executive in the automobile industry and very involved with the community. I enjoy spending time with my kids.”



“I love to be the voice of the community and help in any way, shape, or form I can to offer something better for future generations.”

Over the next few years, Arias-Petrel plans to spend a little bit more time traveling with her family and, of course, continuing her work in serving the Las Vegas community. “I love to be the voice of the community and help in any way, shape, or form I can to offer something better for future generations,” she said.

“I’m happy to see more movements about empowering women. We’ve seen that women are sometimes not recognized or given the opportunity. I have experienced that on many fronts. Any achievements I have conquered in my career and personal life have been geared to highlight and empower women. We’re nowhere near where we need to be, but we should work together as a sisterhood to change the narrative. I want to see more women as elected officials, I want to see women in decision-making, I want to see more women empowered to follow their dreams, and I want to see a woman president. We are the mothers, daughters, sis-

ters, and professionals who are shaping the future generations. Hopefully, we’ll get there.”

When it comes to inspirations, Arias-Petrel says there are a few women that she looks up to and helped her to get to where she is today. “I come from a strong

group of women in my family,” she said. “My grandmother was just amazing. I learned a lot from her. My mom, who has a doctorate in education, is still an educator to us in many ways. My sisters and I learned so much from her. We follow in her footsteps every day.”





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Photo of Lynette Chappell by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

LYNETTE CHAPPELL

THE MAGICAL EVIL QUEEN

By Joan S. Peck

One must wonder about any woman known as the "Evil Queen," especially since she is a tall, beautiful woman with a commanding appearance and a quick sense of humor. Lynette Chappell, a Las Vegas entertainment royalty member, was so much more than her stage name while performing with Siegfried & Roy, famous Las Vegas illusionists. Lynette was their friend, personal manager, confidant, and partner. But let's start at the beginning....

Lynette was born in Kenya during a period known as the Jomo Kenyatta era. She was christened in a chapel on Mt. Kenya, an ancient extinct volcano nearly 200 kilometers from the capital, Nairobi.

Her father worked throughout Africa as a mining engineer. The family lived with other mining families in a fenced gated compound to protect themselves from the animals and the upheaval sur-

rounding them. It was a turbulent time in Africa, with a rebellion happening. Colonial Africa was becoming divided, and war rumbled at the edges of Kenya.

Seven years later, her sister Dawn was born. As the tale goes, women in labor were kept in the hospital's basement to keep them out of the harsh heat until they were ready to give birth. Lynette's mother was whisked to the proper floor when the time came. After her mother delivered, she opened her eyes to see the sky alight with the beautiful colors and the sun breaking over the magnificent Victoria Falls. "My mother named my sister DAWN." It's a memory that Lynette holds close to her heart.

When it was time for school, Lynette and a dozen other children would be driven from the compound to school on a special bus under armed guards. "I was often late for school because elephants or other animals blocked

the road, and in Africa, animals have the right of way." From an early age, Lynette loved exotic animals, and that love continued to grow and became a part of her life and soul.

As a little girl, Lynette loved to dance, which became an important facet of her life. She was classically trained in dance from age three. She even has a picture of herself at that age in an "emerald green bunny suit." Her first brush with magic and magicians was when John Calvert chose her at age 12 as one of the little girls to appear magically out of a vase on stage. For the next illusion, she assisted him in a Cadillac with him and a cheetah while he drove blindfolded! It was then, in the leather seats of a Cadillac with a predator of the savanna next to her, that Lynette learned a vital lesson. *With magic, anything is possible.* Lynette looks back at her childhood with fondness.

Through the British systems in academics, at the age of 15, Lynette was awarded a scholarship to the Royal Ballet School in London. She desperately wanted to go, and her parents only allowed her to attend because of the war rippling through the country. They felt she would be safer there than staying in Africa.

She had outgrown the gates of the compound.

Living in England was quite an adjustment for Lynette—visualize coming from the movie “Out of Africa” with its open spaces and natural beauty into London’s bustling, crowded metropolis. She studied dance, and at age 17, she became too tall for ballet. However, her talent and discipline caught the eye of the manager of the dance troupe. She became one of the youngest students to be invited by Miss Bluebell to perform at the Lido de Paris show at the Stardust in Las Vegas.

Margaret Kelly, known as “Miss Bluebell,” formed and managed a legendary Parisian dance troupe ...Bluebell Girls dance troupe. Her shows were different from the others. Bluebell had an inventory of the tallest, leggiest, and most beautiful dancers, who towered over everybody on stage with their costumes and high heels. By the end of the 1950s, the Bluebell Girls had become an internationally recognized organization with their base in Paris, supplemented by what had become permanent troupes in Las Vegas.

Eight girls came to the Stardust



Hotel in Vegas in 1966—a time when Las Vegas was still “a jewel in the desert.” All but Lynette had a work visa. Being a minor and under the constant supervision of a chaperone, Lynette wasn’t allowed to enter the casino. She could only be escorted by a chaperone, reaching the stage from the back door. It was classic showgirl fare, the jeweled bodysuits and huge feathered headdresses, which Lynette comments, “They were heavy, weighing up to 10-12 pounds!”

At the Stardust, she met Siegfried & Roy backstage while they performed in the Lido de Paris show as the top act. Neither man spoke English well and needed an interpreter. One day, while the Bluebell Girls were rehears-

ing, Lynette helped clarify something Siegfried and Roy asked the interpreter. A black leopard cub from Africa was with them, and they needed formula to feed it. “Roy and I would go for the formula and feed baby Sabu.”

There was an immediate connection between Lynette and Roy. They were kindred spirits with their shared interest in wild animals. “Watching Roy’s magnetism with the animals was amazing.”

Later on, as a tribute to their friendship, a Nubian Lion was named in honor of her hometown, Mombasa. In turn, Lynette’s good friend, Princess Michael of Kent, would throw a birthday party for Roy at Kensington Palace.

Siegfried & Roy recognized Lynette's natural affinity for exotic animals, and she became their "third arm," assisting them in every area of their on and offstage existence. From her years of performing in their shows, Lynette holds the world record as the most levitated and sawed-in-half performer.

For those who may not know, Siegfried & Roy's entire show at the Mirage was a classic storyline about good versus evil. Lynette was their Evil Queen, giving the duo an enemy to fight and the audience a "bad" guy to taunt.

"The Mirage show was our most significant achievement and, until then, the most complex show ever staged in Las Vegas. The cast was enormous, and it was often technically a nightmare. All of the illusions, the complicated mechanics, the tremendous staging, and the lighting pushed the limits of technology at that time and era."

Asked if they ever took a day off, Lynette quipped, "No, only the Lord took a day off, but He had a different union!"

Her work with Siegfried & Roy fueled Lynette's love for animals. She worked with a menagerie of lions, tigers, (no bears) elephants, horses, eagles, and an 8-foot snake named Sherman. This work brought her back to the country she loves — Africa.

"I've been told that I should have been the one checking in the animals for the Ark," she laughs.

"I've led a remarkable, extremely privileged life with treasured memories."

Yet, Lynette loves the big cats the most of all. The royal white tigers with piercing blue eyes and snow-white fur hold a special place in her heart. She had a hand in raising many litters of cubs during her time with Siegfried & Roy. Lynette helped raise not only white tigers but lions, leopards, and panthers. She adored them. To any creature that needed it, she was their surrogate mother.

"I've led a remarkable, extremely privileged life with treasured memories," Lynette recalls. "I've traveled the world and met incredible people—royalty, presidents, politicians, Elvis Presley, Elizabeth Taylor, and so many more."

When asked if she has a favorite person, Lynette responds, "No, each provided something special." If you ask her if there is a person she hasn't met that she would like to, she will tell you, "Yes! Jane Goodall or Maya Angelo."

"One thing I am most proud of, especially in the early days, is that, although I was a woman in an entertainment industry dominated by men, I was able to break the glass ceiling during a time and an era in history when women were not in the forefront of management. As a strong working woman, I was quickly respected and treated as a person in charge."



Today, three years later, Lynette is still mourning the loss of her nearly lifelong friends, who both passed away in 2020. "It's been a challenging time. I haven't quite got my head around it."

While they are no longer with us, the magic duo lives on in Lynette, who brings her magic everywhere she goes and instills it in everything she touches.

Lynette's home life is now far less exotic but still carries importance.

She works with many non-profits across the valley, using her years of experience to advance causes forward. She is passionate about many things, including advocating for people to rescue dogs rather than buy them. She works closely with Hope for Prisoners and has been instrumental in organizing the Collaboration Center's Night En Blanc gala this fall, honoring her small-in-stature, larger-than-life friend, Robert Dolan, and Cashman Photo.

Loving animals as much as Lynette does, she shares her home across from the Jungle Palace with her two schnauzers, Thelma and Louise, and a cockatoo named Serafina. She relaxes on her patio and watches her dogs romp and play, reaping the harvest of a well-lived life.

Lynette has led an *astounding* life and is a piece of Las Vegas entertainment history. She means so much to many from all walks of life, not only to her friends and family but to magicians, artists, Siegfried & Roy enthusiasts, and the community of Las Vegas as a whole. No one compares. Lynette continues to live each day gracefully, elegantly, and with tremendous passion and gratitude, enriching the lives of all she touches, always bringing a sense of magic and illusion wherever she goes.

You may think of her as the EVIL QUEEN... but she is the EVIL QUEEN with the heart of a lioness.



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Claire's portfolio shines with a diverse range of experiences. She has styled for red carpet events, such as the Latin Grammys, masterminded stunning photoshoots, ignited the stage at drag shows, added elegance to corporate events, and enhanced the beauty of countless brides and stage productions. Most notably, she's had the privilege of styling luminaries like Victoria's Secret model Adrianna Lima and Francine Katsoudas, the Executive Vice President of Cisco.

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Song-Stylist Jonathan Karrant's new album entitled "Eclectic" is just that, a collection of popular songs written from the 1940's through the 2010's. It includes favorites from the Great American Songbook born out of Broadway musicals and Hollywood films, as well as songs not usually found in the jazz genre, cleverly creating new standards out of songs by Smokey Robinson, James Taylor and Macy Gray. A highlight track is a song called Love Dance written by Ivan Lins. Jonathan's recording of the song is a beautifully sensual duet with Grammy nominated singer Jane Monheit. The album also features such artists as; renowned saxophonist Houston Person, Jazz at Lincoln Center trumpeter Kenny Rampton and acclaimed pianist Joe Alterman.

JONATHANKARRANT.COM

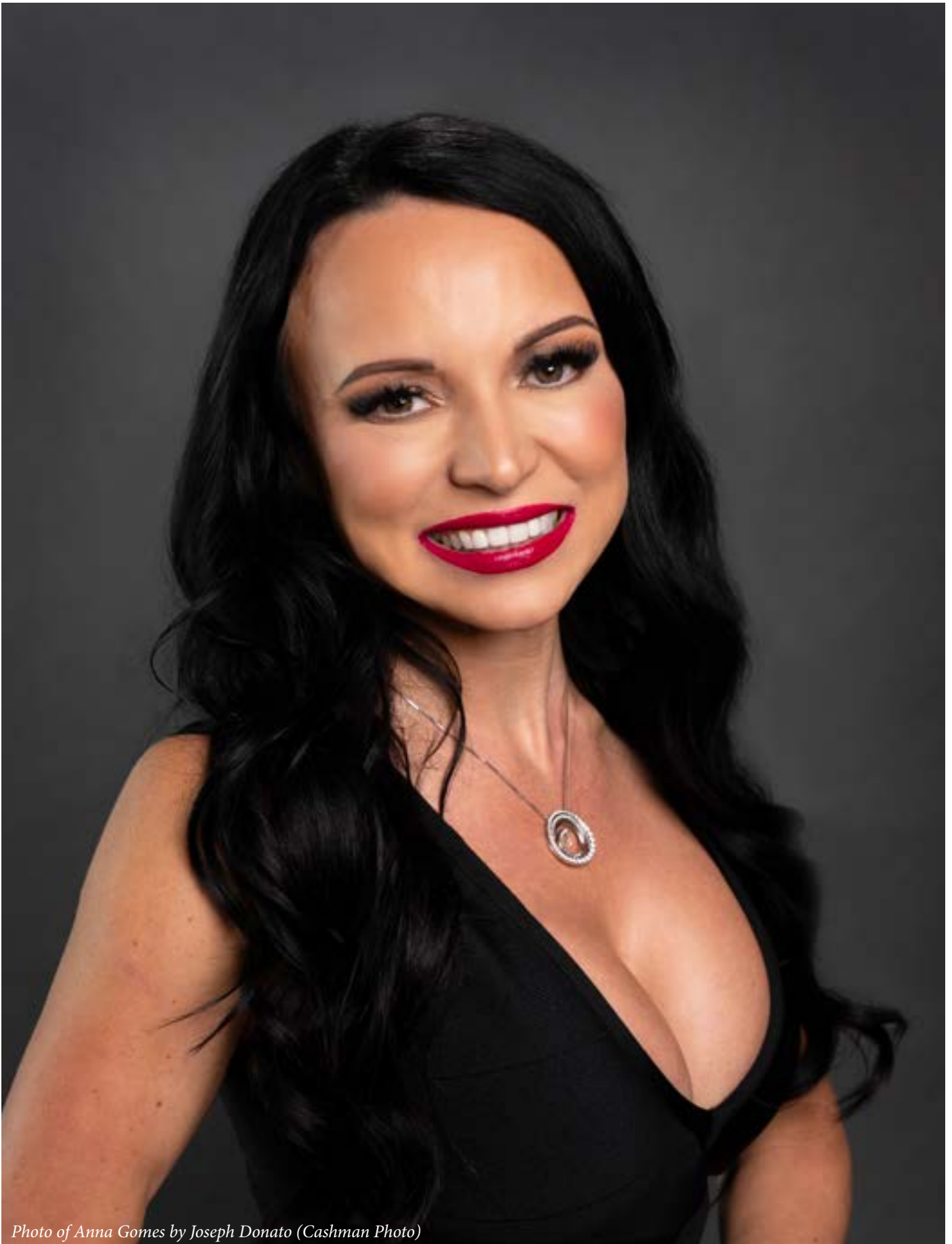


Photo of Anna Gomes by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

ANNA GOMES

LAS VEGAS'S VIA BRASIL STEAKHOUSE OWNER ANNA GOMES WEAVES THE LEGACY OF HOSPITALITY INTO AN ENTREPRENEURIAL OUTLOOK

By Elaine and Scott Harris

A Brazilian steakhouse known as a churrascaria specializes in serving grilled meats, particularly beef, in Brazilian cuisine. In a typical Brazilian steakhouse, there is a salad bar offering a variety of cold salads, vegetables, and appetizers. The main attraction, however, is the "rodizio" service. Often called "gauchos," waiters move around the restaurant with large skewers of various portions of meat, such as beef, pork, lamb, chicken, and sometimes sausages.

The meats are typically seasoned with simple flavors like salt, pepper, and sometimes garlic, all prepared over an open flame grill, which gives the protein a smoky and charred flavor. The cuts of meat can vary but often include popular options like picanha (top sirloin), filet mignon, ribeye, beef ribs, and leg of lamb. It's not all about meat either; beans, fried bananas, mashed potatoes, and traditional Brazilian accompa-

niments such as farofa (toasted cassava flour) and vinaigrette (a type of salsa) are all available as sides, as well as seafood options and a variety of desserts.

Nobody does it better than Anna Gomes at her Via Brazil Steakhouse in affluent Summerlin. Walking into the Via Brasil Steakhouse and its highly rated Rodizio dining experience, one cannot help but notice the luminous smile beaming from co-owner and manager Anna Gomes as she approaches guests, exuding the significance of hospitality.

Warmth, friendliness, and entrepreneurial nature make her beloved guests feel they are here to have the best dining experience in Las Vegas. Her staff also reflects this energy. Anna has made it her eternal mission to train, nurture, and replicate the values she upholds. Her legacy of hospitality started at a young age, influenced by her mother and

grandmother, who aided her in becoming a woman of integrity, caring, and compassion.

We had a few moments to learn more about Anna's mission in creating and maintaining a social hub and a unique dining experience where attention to detail, product, and atmosphere are under her watchful gaze. We spent time learning more about the vision and mission of Anna Gomes as she spoke of her legacy and her desire to create a rewarding work environment for her employees and the community around her.

CHIC: How do you connect with the word legacy?

Anna Gomes: I have to say I would love to leave something behind. When people think of Anna Gomes, they think of excellent food and catering, a great party, and me as a good boss. I hope everyone looks up to me,



Photo of Anna Gomes by Gene Alviso (GA PROSHOTS)

whether they are a doctor or lawyer or the people who work for me. I want to see the best in them, and I want them to bring that to me. I appreciate everything: a restaurant, home, food, and a wonderful husband. I live in the moment to be happy. I am glad every day.

CHIC: Who is the person who

has influenced you to become a dedicated businesswoman?

AG: My grandmother from Poland and my Polish mother-in-law. I called my grandmother, mother-in-law, and mother every day. My grandmother came from a tiny town in Poland but decided to buy land and open a restaurant and a store. She continued

to build and take care of everyone else. She helped me see who good people are, who to work around and surround myself with good people. I once wanted to return to Poland, but I wanted to make something of my life. Because of these strong women making food from scratch sourced from our garden, I knew I wanted to be in the business from a young age. I learned it's all about passion in this industry, and I live and practice it daily. Polish traditions are not for me; they are just too male-dominated. I could not stay home; I am certainly not a housewife.

CHIC: Who are your mentors in the community?

AG: Angela Brooks is excellent and motivated in all she does, and I am impressed by the founder of Angels of Las Vegas, Aynalem Getahun. She is straight to the point and always creating. I am motivated to be around them. I want to keep building and growing, and they inspire me.

CHIC: There are many incredible women entrepreneurs in Las Vegas. How did you learn your business sense?

AG: It has taken me 15 years to learn that I cannot be my employee's best friend but an example and a leader. I can't give my finger and have someone take my arm. I try to lead by being the best I can be as a person and to learn and listen. I keep learning from my husband, Adam, and my Polish mother-in-law, who are excellent in business. Adam worked

with his Brazilian father at his restaurant Via Brasil - New York. His father opened the restaurant in 1979, as well as other restaurants and nightclubs. He learned a great deal about the business from his parents.

I think people fundamentally must be happy, and I never wanted to be in a small town. We started Via Brasil in 2008 with my husband, who is friendly but quieter; I am more straightforward. We were concerned about the economic downturn when we began but continued doing the same during Covid. We did not give up. All my friends always supported me in what I was doing. My friend in New York helped me get the body scanning thermometer during COVID-19. Surrounding yourself with people who will help you improve in everything

you do is important. For instance, I support local artists by placing their work on the walls of my restaurant; for example, I have pieces by Katarzyna Kociomyk and Alexander Franco. I just sold a painting for \$12,000. It helps me to have gorgeous art on my wall, and it allows them a place to display their artwork.

CHIC: You are considered a mentor to many in the industry. You have changed people's lives. How do you do that?

AG: I love to empower and inspire women. I show them how to open their business and share my contacts. I am here to help because people have helped me.

CHIC: What organizations do you support in Las Vegas?

AG: Miracle Flights is an incredible organization. They don't just organize a flight for families, but everything, including meals, hotels, and all the details. Saint Jude's and Angels of Las Vegas are other great organizations I help because they help children and families, which is vital to me. I am always ready and willing to jump in and help. We prepare and donate meals for various charities when needed or different fundraisers to help support people who make our community great.

CHIC: Where does your confidence come from?

AG: I am happy inside. I have found that if you are unhappy, it changes your insides and creates your future. If you don't like something, you can change it. Life is too short to be miserable. I am



Photo of Anna Gomes with Miracle Flights display inside Via Brasil Steakhouse by Gene Alviso (GA PROSHOTS)

very fortunate to have a wonderful husband, and am happy every day. No one is perfect, but I tell him, "I am perfect for you" daily. Every day is a blessing, and happiness is a choice we practice. I love being respectful, and if I feel the same way as you and you need some help, no matter how many years apart, I will try to help you.

CHIC: Via Brazil is a classic Brazilian Steakhouse in every sense. What Polish influences do you bring to the restaurant, if any?

AG: That is a great question. Rather than concentrating on good cooking techniques, we look at the restaurant's daily operations. Polish people are particular about cleanliness and very detailed about table setting and placement, using fresh ingredients daily. The only way to do things is the right way. For our brunch, everything is prepared to order; nothing is made ahead of time.

CHIC: What are some of your distinctive menu items?

AG: The Via Brasil's Rodizio Dinner is the Best Brazilian-style steakhouse in town, where you can experience some of the most beautiful cuts served fresh to your table. Picanha is the best top sirloin cooked perfectly and sliced at your table. We offer a wide selection of meats served by our excellent staff. Our salad bar has the freshest ingredients. The banana dishes are suitable for the next round of proteins that are carried to the table on large skewers to the tables. Our happy

hour is excellent, with wonderful Caipirinhas, mojitos, sangria, and wine.

CHIC: What are some of your guests' favorite dishes?

AG: They love our fresh salad bar, brunch offerings, and traditional Brazilian dishes like Picanha. It is also known as the top sirloin or rump cap, full of rich flavor and tenderness. Seasoned with coarse salt and sometimes other spices, it is cooked the traditional Brazilian way on a skewer or rotisserie over an open flame. The fat cap is left intact during cooking, which imparts flavor to the meat as it renders, prepared medium-rare or medium-sliced against the grain into thin strips, which helps to maximize tenderness.

CHIC: What is an issue concerning you in our community?

AG: I am a strong businesswoman, but I must work twice as hard as a man in the industry. I work hard, am involved in every aspect, and pay attention to everything happening. I am always looking and watching how to improve my business or encourage my employees to do better. It begins with the simple things. I lead by example. I will jump in and do what it takes. Women in the business still struggle to be taken seriously in this industry, so I aim to work with other strong women to help each other.

CHIC: What is the greatest lesson you have learned as a restaurateur?

AG: Respect. Do my employees respect each other and the products? Do I teach by my example? I look to see the treatment of my customers and how my chefs are handling our products. Are they treating the food with respect? The food products cost money. I watch my new cooks cut an onion and see if there is too much waste. My grandmother would tell me to respect the food that was around us. We had fruit trees growing up that we would collect the fruit. She showed me how to pick the fruit without bruising the fruit. She made me responsible for myself, aware of my surroundings, and figure things out. No one drove me to school or had things handed to me. She taught me to be mindful and figure things out for myself.

CHIC: I have a quote from Political Scientist Kalu Ndukwe Kalu, "The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things you do for others remain as your legacy. I think you agree with this.

AG: I agree; I used to be shy and somewhat quiet. But now I know I must be me and be the best person I can be for myself first and for others. I am happier because of it, and I want others to learn from me: to be yourself and keep true to that. By being true to myself, I can do more for others with happiness.

With her passion for her restaurant, Anna Gomes, empowering women as a mentor and giving back to her community makes her a Chic Compass legacy woman.

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Photo of Lynn Morris by James Stanford - 35mm Analog Film Portrait (2015)

‘LITTLE FELLER’ LYNN MORRIS

A LAS VEGAS ART PIONEER

By Dr. Gemma Marmalade

Julia ‘lynn’ Morris is Las Vegas’s answer to the smallest atomic bomb you didn’t see detonate, but everyone felt her impact. In a town that screams to be seen and where fleeting expressions of outrageousness are commonplace, Morris has been a modest yet enduring powerhouse of art business (and funny business) for over forty years.

I’m hardly the one to tell this tale, given that I only rocked up to town for the first time in 2015—and that as a naïve British tourist. Like any visitor fresh off the tarmac at the then McCarran, now Harry Reid Airport, I was aware of some iconographies for my Las Vegas bucket list that I just had to tick off. After an incomprehensibly large, vodka-infused, slushy offering on the Strip, I bounded to Bonanza: The World’s Largest Gift Shop. Its famous kitsch was something I felt I had known indirectly for a very long time. I can’t recall any explicit place or

time I learned about it. Instead, it seemed to firmly pre-exist in my mind’s eye from many informational sources in the United Kingdom. Fashion photographs; references in popular media, films, and TV shows – (notwithstanding it being the bizarrely chosen shopping location by 9/11 terrorists prior to their World Trade Center attack) – Bonanza’s pervasive allure penetrated my awareness, and like a slutty moth to a chintzy flame, I was ready for what ‘tut’ (as the British like to call it) I could swag.

Apart from the haul of funny gifts and brilliant mementos for friends and family back home, including having my photograph taken in front of the store for cheesy posterity, I didn’t anticipate this experience would awaken my own aesthetic and cultural interests in a way that has since significantly informed my professional and creative research as both an artist and academic. I knew Las Vegas was a natural home for my typ-

ically ridiculous performance art spectacles, and Bonanza would become a vital prop supplier. Eventually, and through a complexly magical series of serendipity, I came to learn the boss behind Bonanza, the person who coined “The World’s Largest Gift Shop” in a town built on silver dollars – and so much more – was the petite irrepressibly brilliant and undeniable dark horse: Lynn Morris.

A Las Vegas native, excusing her first six months in Idaho, Morris’ family flourished in the Valley during the 1950s and 60s. Bruce H. Morris worked in and ran a string of hotel gift shops for CT Harris, including The Stardust, The International Hilton, and The Desert Inn, to name a few. Bruce eventually developed his own souvenir businesses with partner John Lonetti around key locations in the heart of the city, Fremont Street, as tourists flooded in. With business booming, L&M In-



corporated needed an ambitious and capable manager to run the show, and a state-wide recruitment search commenced. What they didn't expect was the store's trusted help, who had worked in the warehouses from the tender age of eight to twenty, would step up. In 1971, Bruce came to learn that his daughter's keen observation of business, teamed with her BFA in Art History from UNLV, would become a winning formula that created a zeitgeist of pop culture and a beacon that drew the crowds from across the globe for decades.

"It appealed to my sense of the absurd," says Morris, who also quipped that L&M had no idea the name of their company al-

ready had the initials of their best asset. If this wasn't enough, Morris became yet another female cultural leader of Las Vegas who helped define the iconic 'Glitter Gulch,' not simply as a hugely successful business owner but by what the business did for the grassroots art movement of Las Vegas. Morris was one of the original minds who conceived and instigated the now thriving and ever-expanding Las Vegas Arts District.

In 1984, Morris made a 'souvenir' purchase of her own. One early Sunday August morning at City Hall, both wearing bow ties and with zero guests, Lynn married local artist James Stanford. Even though this irked the Justice

of the Peace performing the ceremony as it interrupted the Dodgers game playing live in Eastern Time, her union with Stanford heralded their status as a power couple on the local arts scene. After assimilating with the then female-led Las Vegas Contemporary Arts Collective, known as 'CAC,' Morris, amongst others, helped create its new future in the early nineties. With the CAC's sole purpose to platform and elevate the talent of Las Vegas creatives to a broader cultural audience, its growth throughout the decade saw it shift locations from its origin on Maryland Parkway to Downtown. On a hunch this could become a fresh and hip off-strip location, the opening event of the CAC at the then-titled Urga

Building on Charleston Boulevard drew crowds in the thousands. The CAC and other pioneers of the area built upon this art audience precedent long before First Friday and any designation of it as an 'Arts District.'

Morris' instinct for both art and business coalesced. The Bonanza Store, by then under exclusive ownership and direction of Morris, was the steadfast financial engine that funded this uptick of home-grown creative industry. Just a year later, CAC made its final relocation to the fledgling Arts Factory, a stone's throw from the Urga, and cemented the multi-organizational creative home of Downtown Las Vegas. After renovating the upper floors to incubate its creative industries, she co-founded Smallworks Gallery, one of the first commercial galleries in the area, with Stanford and



Photo of tentacle from Morris' home by Gemma Marmalade

artist Kathleen Nathan. Directly next door, Morris set about creating her own bespoke concept space, Lost Vegas Gallery. So ahead of its time that even a contemporary Las Vegas might struggle to comprehend its genius, Lost Vegas Gallery deftly straddled a cerebral, experiential art space with a commercial souvenir gift

shop. Not only did this generate a cash lifeline to help sustain Smallworks Gallery, but it was also a remarkably unique location that featured Vegas-derived work by artists, including the 'Elvis Throne,' colloquially known as the 'Elvis Death Toilet' by John deFazio. If a ceramic homage to the bowel-burdened Presley doesn't illustrate the camp eye of Morris, please read on.



Photo of Lynn Morris

Morris was initially informed by the aesthetic (or lack thereof) of being raised in the sobriety of Mormonism. Daniel T. Jenkins describes this condition in relation to art and theology as "not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think." Morris' protest of this faith system embraced the excess, exotic, and indulgence in the artifacts of her colorful world, as was her rejection of patriarchal femininity illustrated in her subtly playful androgynous style of dress. Rebellion from normativity became her business, both literally and figuratively. However, a sliver of Jenkin's point remained true of Morris' psyche –



Photo of Atomic tableau from Morris' home by Gemma Marmalade

lynn made space for the fantastic without demanding that space herself. She was not a monopolizer of the limelight like so many debutants drawn by the glitzy potential of the Valley. She was the brains, the facilitator, the enabler, and the grit that underpinned and expedited unprecedented creative growth in and for Las Vegas through the fiscal foundations she built almost entirely alone.

Today, one might hasten to think that the former owner of Bonan-

za – who, in its heyday, made her the Las Vegas souvenir maven – might be a ball-breaker broad bankrolled by her mobster love conquests. Instead, Morris is an impish, self-effacing ‘tomboy’ juxtaposed by her pistol whip wit, illustrated by her iconic choice of Bonanza Store signage: ‘If it’s in stock, we have it.’ Even whilst retired, Morris continues to be a dynamo of observant and relentless persistence to support emerging creativity. After a dormant period through various other sets

of hands, the CAC entered yet another new era in 2023 with Morris at the helm as President, flanked by an international team of art experts. Its focus is to preserve the CAC’s historical contributions to the Las Vegas art scene made possible by the many artists and curators who exhibited between the 1980s - 2000s, as well as created future arts and culture opportunities for the community.

With wickedly clever brilliance, she maintains her keen eye for visual language and its incisive cultural coding teamed with her unextinguishable imagination. Morris cites American artist Joseph Cornell as a key influence on her personal style of curatorship. Skillfully turning the avant-garde to avant-gauche, her home in the Scotch Eighties is an ever-evolving treasure trove ‘museum’ of carefully staged art and artifacts, where in just a few strides, you’ve likely met an assemblage of a Martini drinking Godzilla feasting on the guts of a Fez-wearing human anatomical model.

Las Vegas and its loyal fans love a brazen tale of audacity, debauchery, and infamy. Indeed, this global fascination is a likely element of what initially drew me in eight years ago, just like it has for the millions of visiting tourists year on year, who fly in and then out, freshly laden with their vacation trinkets and holiday ephemera. However, it was through the good fortune of my staying just long enough to peer beyond the superficial shop front of Vegas and meeting the seminal Lynn

Morris that a very different and more nuanced story emerged. The truly radical extreme is, in my view, best illustrated in Las Vegas's few unsung and unanticipated heroes. Poet Rainer Maria Rilke says, "Go to the limits of your longing," meaning that to fully step into life, it is not through the ego self. Instead, it is through an unapologetic immersion in the plurality of extraordinariness in human nature. From an anthropological perspective, Ernest Becker says, "Society itself is a codified hero system, which means that society everywhere is a living myth of the significance of human life, a defiant creation of meaning." Morris' unpretentious and subversive magic truly resides in the paradox between what is conventionally perceived and its unconventional counterpart.

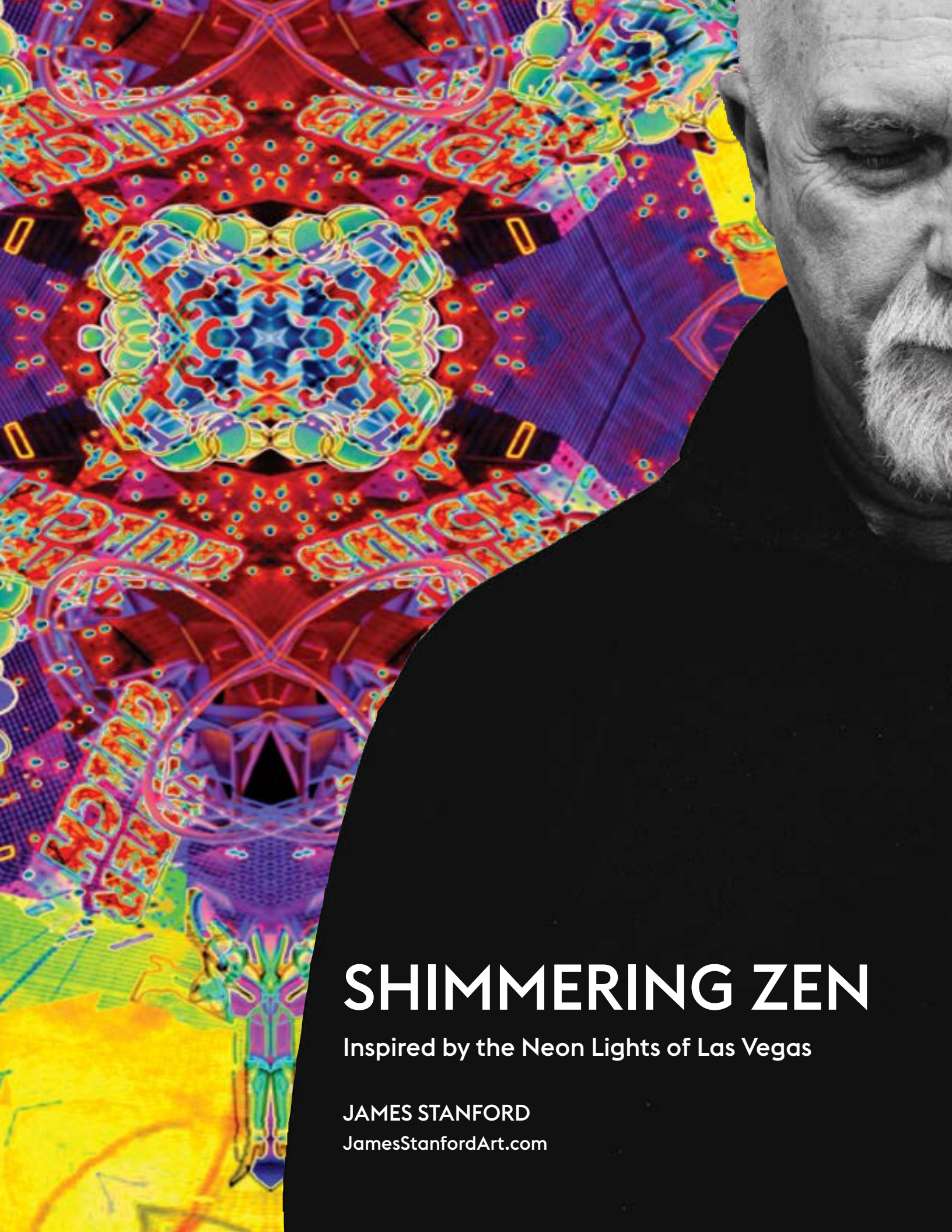


Photo of Neon designed by Morris (1994) by Gemma Marmalade

Once dangerously underestimated after the exponential growth of his businesses, Bruce Morris said to the newly successful Lynn, "You're the son I always wanted," to which she effortlessly replied, "I'm the daughter you always needed." This cool, intelligent hutzpah, combined with her cultural contribution to a city that owes her so much, transforms her into the richest and most formidable example of heroism one might ever be lucky enough to encounter. The trouble is, how conscious one is of such an unassuming yet powerful encounter with Lynn Morris is much like this witness testimony from the 1962 Nevadan nuclear explosion codenamed 'Little Feller'... "Well, you could have easily missed it, but boy, did it kick ass."



Photo of tableau from Morris' home by Gemma Marmalade



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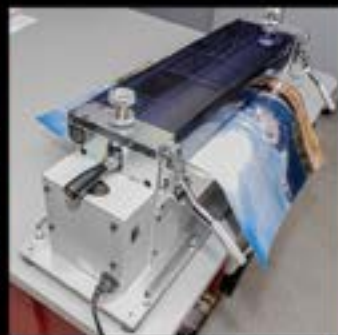
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Photo of Juanny Romero by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

JUANNY ROMERO

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL PIONEER WITHOUT EQUAL

By Joseph Amato and Chantel Blignaut

Juanny Romero was born in Queens, New York, but you would never know it from meeting her. The native roots of this former New Yorker lie deep within her psyche and current dedication to living life to its fullest. Ms. Romero admits to a very challenging childhood, surviving her early years as the middle child of immigrant parents. She immediately adopted a global view that relied on personal growth and continuously searching for new opportunities. Ms. Romero understood the need for a resilient spirit, leading by example and always reflecting a servant's heart with everyone she encountered.

To the outside world, Ms. Romero is a bright, articulate woman. She is bundled with a beautiful smile and unbridled energy that exudes tremendous confidence and a pure vision of community and connectivity that she is willing to share with anyone she meets. She makes her presence known to the Las Vegas community and beyond with her passion for volunteerism and ongoing dedication to multiple non-profit

groups like Hope Village, St. Jude's, SafeNest, and The Center, with its focus on workforce development.

As the Owner/CEO of Mothership Coffee Roasters, Ms. Romero has assembled an ever-expanding group of five specialty coffee shops located in Henderson, Summerlin, and Las Vegas, Nevada. Mothership Coffee is well known for its dedication to quality, ethically sourced beans, and expert roasting.

The Mothership Coffee concept was initially established as Sunrise Coffee in the Las Vegas marketplace in October 2008. Originally, Sunrise Coffee was going to be set up as an artists' enclave serving premium coffee. Ms. Romero wanted to create a comfortable atmosphere for artists to commune and interact regularly. She was also an avid observer of how people interacted and wanted to promote a "community environment" within her business enterprise. So, the original Café artist concept was scrapped and replaced with a more pro-

nounced "incubator" environment. Subsequently, the business operation evolved to become a flexible workspace, a community meeting place, and a dating destination for Las Vegas locals. Ms. Romero understood that women are most comfortable meeting first dates at café locations and men are comfortable meeting over quality coffee at cafés.

In 2012, Mothership Roaster was born out of the initial success of Sunrise Coffee. However, Ms. Romero wanted better control of the coffee quality and to improve the company's vital inventory source. So, she built her own roasting operation for business and retail sales. She also wanted to utilize only coffee beans from woman-owned growers in South and Central America, placing the owners in control, not the coffee brokers. She needed to be absolutely sure that the expanding company had enough ongoing inventory to meet the demands of a growing enterprise currently using as much as 30,000 pounds of coffee beans per year. Her eventual goal is to establish her

own coffee bean farm in Central America and become part of the café feminino community.

In 2015, Mothership Coffee opened its second café location with bakery offerings in Green Valley. That is when she decided Mothership would become a multiple-unit coffee café with a goal of ten units by 2026. Since establishing her first location in 2008, Ms. Romero will open her sixth location by 2024. Her vision includes building the next four units within the Las Vegas community and exploring the possibility of establishing units outside the State of Nevada.

The last few years have been very challenging and exciting for Ms. Romero.

Surviving the Pandemic in a restrictive retail environment was a more extensive test than anyone could have expected or prepared for. Still, she was able to capitalize on the hand she was dealt with in the best way possible. Ms. Romero moved inventory by providing every customer with sales product incentives (buy 1, get 5). She also instituted a barter system between Mothership and other area businesses to offer coffee products to both staff and the community. Finally, Mothership could keep key staff employed during the Pandemic by utilizing the various economic stimulus programs available to small businesses nationwide.

The community and government officials constantly recognize Ms. Romero for her dedication to her

“Business is like surfing, and I want to surf the next biggest wave of my life.”

staff and the community and her ability to survive the Pandemic. In 2022, Ms. Romero was nominated by the Nevada Small Business Administration (“SBA”) as the Nevada Small Business of the Year. But that wasn’t enough for Juanny Romero and Mothership Coffee. She was recognized and justly awarded the Regional Small Business of the Year Award and the National Small Business of the Year First Runner-up from the White House.

Not surprisingly, Ms. Romero has finally realized that her efforts for “showing up” every day were being rewarded beyond her expectations. She was now being seen and accepted throughout the Las Vegas community, and her success was becoming a guiding light for other enterprising young women seeking to find their way in the business world.





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Photo of Anna Siefert by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

ANNA SIEFERT

HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

By Chanelle Hayes

When you support a small business, you support a dream. And that's exactly what Anna Siefert did. It ended up being her passion. She turned her passion into a career of helping others succeed through her work in small business development. However, getting there wasn't easy, as she encountered some challenges and shifted her career focus.

"I grew up in a loving and protected family with education as a top priority," she said. Siefert came to the United States from Vietnam in 1969. "In the Asian culture, every child is expected to grow up and become what their parents want them to become. They always said, 'You'll be this, you'll be that,'" she said. "I was to be a pharmacist." After a few semesters at Washington State University, she realized pharmacy wasn't the right career path for her.

While in Washington, she began her career in the financial industry as a banker. Her husband was in the military, so they soon moved to Nevada, where she accepted

an operations manager position for a Nevada National Bank branch. Still, she felt like something was missing. "I finally realized what I wanted to do," she said. "I wanted to be in business somewhere and help small businesses, especially women-owned businesses, achieve their goals.

She volunteered at the Nevada Microenterprise Initiative (NMI) and felt like she found her dream career. "I fell in love with their mission," she said of the private nonprofit community development financial institution that offers services and programs for micro, small, women, and minority-owned businesses in low-income and disadvantaged communities in Nevada. "I volunteered with the NMI for a while and then moved into a business advisor position."

She continued to grow with the NMI as a loan manager and business technical assistant before becoming the project director for the Nevada Women's Business Center (NWBC), a program offered through the U.S. Small Business Administration, which, at

one point, served 144 centers in the United States. The NWBC, rated in the top 10 for five consecutive years, offers entrepreneurs tools and resources, such as business counseling, workshop training, and seminars with industry experts. "I truly connected with the small business community," she said. "Witnessing our clients' dreams of owning and bringing to fruition a successful business was and continues to be the driving force in my advocacy commitment."

Siefert furthered her business and economic development career as a Nevada community liaison for the Women's Business Enterprise Council-West (WBEC-West). "Together with the leadership and support from Dr. Pamela Williamson, president/CEO, enabled me to grow the Nevada territory," she said. "My role was assisting, advocating, and hosting events for certified women business owners growing their businesses and increasing membership. We went from 50 to more than 200 members, which I am very proud of."

In addition to serving the small



business community through her work, she also served on various committees and boards. “I was the chair of the State of Nevada Commission on Minority Affairs,” she said. “I did that for quite some time. I was also a regional judge for the U.S. Small Business Administration Small Business of the Year Awards.” Siefert also lent her time to the National Judicial College and Salvation Army Southern Nevada Board of Advisory and served on the Nevada Contractor Association Diversity Committee.

Siefert has been honored with numerous awards over the years, including the Women of Distinction Award, Nevada Minority Supplier Development Council

Advocate of the Year Award, the Nevada Small Business Development Center Michael Graham Entrepreneurial Spirit Award, the U.S. Small Business Administration Small Business Lifetime Advocate Award, the Urban Chamber of Commerce Women in Business & Politics Award, and the Women Business Enterprise Council-West Nevada Community Resource Partner of the Year Award.

Siefert retired in 2021 and in

that same year former Governor Steve Sisolak and Mayor Carolyn Goodman proclaimed April 2nd as “Anna Siefert Day” to commemorate her tremendous career and service to the Las Vegas business community. “I was honored and humbled by these proclamations as serving the community and others has always been my passion and what I truly love doing.”

Although she is retired, her need

“I have lived a long life and want always to be remembered for my honesty, integrity, and perseverance.”

to support worthy causes continues. She currently serves on the executive leadership team for the Annual Night en Blanc Gala for the Collaboration Center Foundation. This nonprofit organization is becoming the largest disability resource network in Nevada, with programs and services for individuals, families, and caregivers of all ages with intellectual, developmental, physical, and learning disabilities.

"I have lived a long life and want always to be remembered for my honesty, integrity, and perseverance." One of Siefert's favorite books is *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom. "It's such an inspirational book," she said. "It talks about having a mission and how that will include your family, friends, and community. If you were going to die, think about what your memorial service would be like. What would your family say about you? What would your friends say about you? What would the community say about you? That's how I choose to live and will continue to live my life."

Siefert spends a lot of quality time with family: Her husband, David, of 56 years, two daughters, and grandson, who attends Bishop Gorman High School. "Family is very important to me," she said. "I always admired my parents for their strength, compassion, and love for family and others. They are the reason why I am who I am today."



Above: Anna Siefert with her family.

Below: Anna Siefert with her grandson Paxton.



Above: Anna Siefert with Robert Dolan of Cashman Photo



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Photo of Linda Smith by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

LINDA SMITH

A MOTHER'S LOVE HAS NO LIMITS

By Joan S. Peck

Every city is gifted with people who stand out for what they contribute to their community. Linda Smith goes far beyond most for her accomplishments as a mother, wife, philanthropist, author, fundraiser, public speaker, disability advocate, and storyteller.

Perhaps best known as Chief Fundraiser and Public Ambassador for Opportunity Village for 38 years, Linda is recognized for having raised more than \$1 billion for its non-profit organization. However, there is so much more to Linda Smith than her well-earned fundraising accomplishments. Reading her story may shock you and perhaps shame you, as it takes you on her journey of just how unkind and unfair we humans can be when dealing with others who are different. Some of us refuse to be daunted by the many obstacles holding us back from getting what we are after, and Linda Smith is at the top of the list for never giving up.

Interestingly, as Linda's story deepens, it sets the stage for her many achievements.

Let's begin....

Linda was born in England in the early 1950s. When she was 11, Linda, her 15-year-old sister Jean, and her 10-year-old brother Terry fled from their abusive father with their mother and landed in Canada. The trouble didn't end there because twice their father found them, creating problems and abuse, even putting Jean in the hospital. Although the authorities jailed him, he was soon released and returned to his family. Only when the family reported that he was trying to kill them for the third time did the police arrive to discover him marching toward the house with a gun. He was arrested and deported.

Eventually, the family went their different ways. Linda's younger brother went to live with his father; her older sister landed a job

as an ice dancer with the Ice Follies at 17 and went on to become a successful dancer and actress in several movies in Hollywood and Canada; her mother, always a dancer, continued to teach dance at her own studio for hours away from home, leaving Linda to her own devices most of the time. Bullied at high school, Linda retaliated by punching one of the girls and was suspended from school for three months. That provided the opportunity and time for Linda to seek work and earn more money outside of the many jobs she had done to save money. Linda got a job working at a gym and never returned to high school. She had always danced and soon became a model and dancer at sixteen, and then an actress, moving in an intoxicating circle, traveling on a somewhat regular basis from Toronto to Hollywood between modeling and dancing assignments.

As a lead dancer in "It's Happening," her weekly television show,

Linda became enamored with Glenn Smith, recently named Canadian Entertainer of the Year. Glenn was a child prodigy mastering every instrument and played many in his shows. In the early 1980s, he and his long-time friends Gladys Knight and the Pips released a song titled "Forever Yesterday," written and produced by Glenn, who joined them in performing the vocals.

Glenn's fame expanded, and he performed on the *Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* and the *Merv Griffin Show*. Wayne Newton, a dear friend, played to sold-out crowds with Glenn often as his opening act.

Glenn was already established in Las Vegas when he and Linda married. Their wedding was celebrated and even filmed by Canadian television. Linda began living in "Sin City" with Glenn, where their life was glamorous, befriending and spending time with many local celebrities and, at times, involved in local charities.

Linda and Glenn wanted to expand their family, and three years later, in her eighth month of pregnancy, Linda flew back on a junket plane to Canada to give birth. Later, Glenn would soon join her after finishing his gig at the Flamingo Hotel. The plane had barely lifted for its five-hour journey when Linda went into labor. After a grueling trip of motion sickness and labor pain, an ambulance waited at the Toronto airport to transport her to the hospital to birth her child.

On May 15, 1970, her son was born and quietly scurried away. This being Linda's first birth, she was confused about why the baby hadn't been brought to her but soon fell into an exhausted sleep. The following day, the two other mothers who shared a room with her left for home with their babies. When the room had emptied, the doctor and two expressionless nurses entered and stood still before her, appraising her.

The doctor stepped forward and asked in a cold, matter-of-fact manner, "Do you know anything about mental retardation? A chromosome mutation is a structural abnormality in one or more chromosomes. Trisomy 21. It's the presence of three chromosomes instead of the two matched pairs. Trisomy 21 is also known as Down Syndrome."

The doctor continued, "Have you heard the term Down Syndrome? It is more commonly referred to as mongolism. Your baby has many problems, including a serious heart defect. He has respiratory problems and other related issues. His health is extremely compromised. The good news is that we don't expect him to survive."

Those words stunned Linda.

He also warned, "If you take him home, you will be alienated from your friends and society."

Devastated at the thought of losing their son, Linda and Glenn were in limbo, trying to decide what was best. Christopher's

health improved miraculously, but they were still warned, "It's best to give Christopher to the state. It is the right thing to do. He will need constant 24-hour care."

But Chris had already entered their hearts, and Linda and Glenn took the baby home. The more they read and learned about children with disabilities like Christopher's, the more they wanted to change how those children were treated.

Shortly after Christopher was born, Linda and Glenn participated in a concert in Ontario, Canada, to raise money for a day-care program for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The show essentially was the first Concert of Love, a star-studded extravaganza produced by the couple that was Opportunity's Village's signature fundraiser in Las Vegas for many years. That concert taught Linda about the ways of philanthropy. "The reason people give is that they are asked."

After crossing the border together from Canada into the United States many times, Linda and Glen were stunned when, a few days before Christmas, on their way to a gig in Syracuse, New York, the border guard took one look at 18-month-old Christopher and turned him away for not having a green card. Linda and Glenn had begun the process of U.S. citizenship and were working on getting his immigration status approved. They could not persuade the guard that they should be allowed across the border,

and shocked, they learned their son could not enter the United States.

As far back as 1859, early immigration statutes for Canada and the United States targeted classes of people based on their perceived mental health and were

denied entrance. "Lunatics," "the insane," and the "feeble-minded" were not welcomed. That put Christopher in a unique category. He would need special dispensation.

"Section 212(a) of the Immigration and naturalization act states that

people exempt from entering the United States as permanent residents are, number one - criminals; number two - retarded people."

When Linda and Glenn tried to have their son cross over at another location, charges were read. Christopher was recorded by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Department as an "undesirable alien." Therefore, Christopher was not allowed out of Canada, where he was born. Containing an immigration lawyer, he said, "People exempt from entering Canada as permanent residents are number one: morons, imbeciles, lunatics and idiots, and their families; number two, criminals."

Once Linda and Glenn reached Syracuse after leaving Christopher behind with family, Linda began a frantic search to find someone to help them. She dialed The Syracuse Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) and spoke to Susan Morse, the Public Relations Director. Susan kicked into gear and made the story of Christopher's crossing international news. NBC, CBS, ABC, and The Syracuse Post Standard newspapers came knocking on their door. Douglas Biklen from The Center of Human Policy at Syracuse University stepped in to find a solution to the problem. Eventually, Vice President Hubert Humphrey agreed to be Christopher's sponsor after President Nixon turned them down. That meant for the next five years Humphrey lived, Christopher could renew his green card every six months.



A month after Humphrey died in 1978, they received notice that Christopher, now eight, had to leave the country. Until the laws were changed, it was unlikely he would be allowed to enter the United States without a sponsor. That day, they realized they could never take him back to visit his Canadian family, nor could they take him to England to visit his British family. They were now harboring an illegal alien in the United States.

Christopher's denial to enter the United States began Linda's fierce determination to start a campaign to change some laws and practices for people with disabilities and to help legalize Christopher living in the USA before he turned 18 when he could no longer be considered a child and needed to pass the mandatory requirement of citizenship, which he wouldn't mentally be able to do.

Living permanently in Las Vegas, Christopher attended the Variety School for the Disabled for the first time at five years old. To thank the country that paid their wages and provided an education for their son, Linda and Glenn continued to perform in and produce a fundraiser they started in Canada when Chris was first born, called "The Concert of Love."

Linda was introduced by Joylin Vandenberg, one of its founders, to a small, struggling organization, Opportunity Village, which helped disabled adults and had evolved into an employment training center. It was founded in 1954 and funded by seven fami-

lies. "They didn't have fundraising events or a fundraising staff position."

Linda had volunteered for Opportunity Village as part of a celebrity wives' organization when she was pregnant with Chris. After his birth, seven years later, the volunteer position turned into a staff position and, for Linda, a new career.

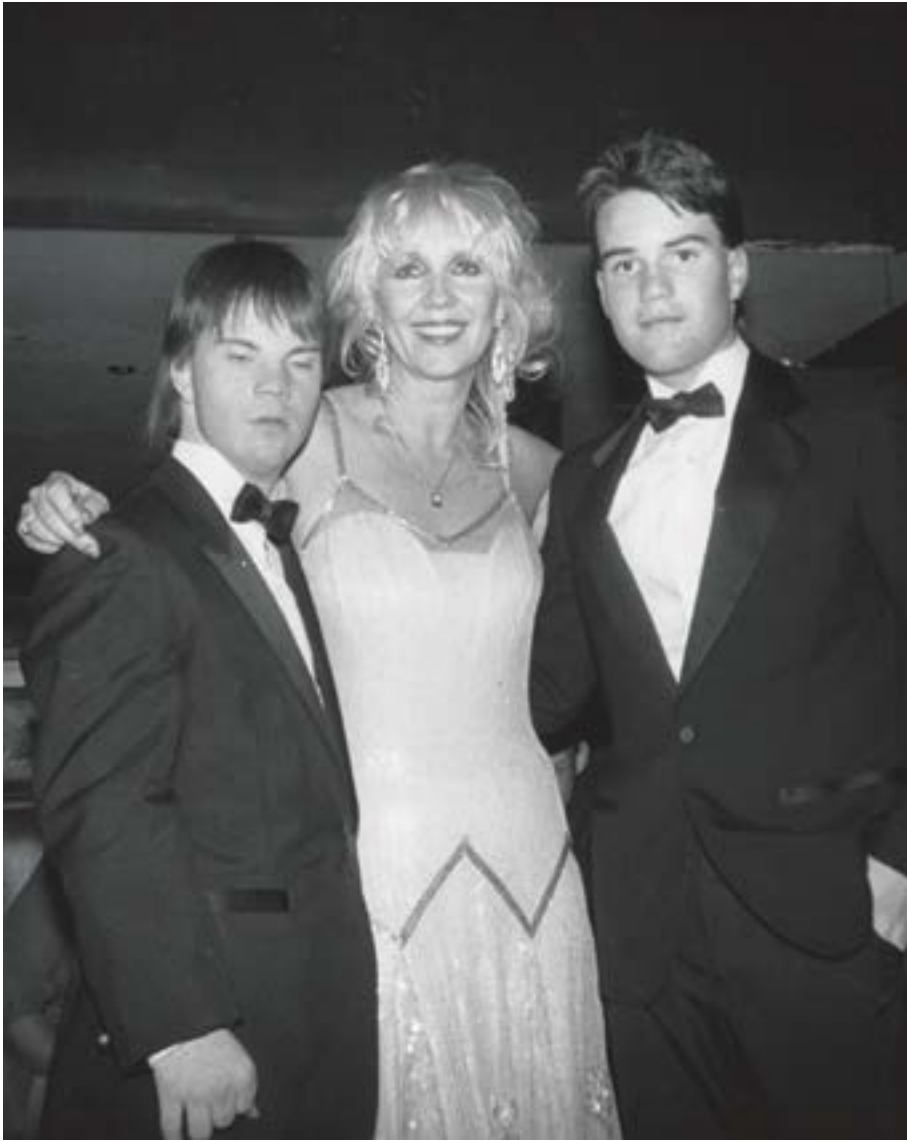
"Fundraising was not my career path. My life as a fundraiser unwittingly began with Chris's birth and an idea born out of desperation."

Linda began to learn about the business and the art of raising money. In her book, "Unwanted," Linda shares stories of meeting

with her contributors for the first time. In her next book, "Confessions of a Sin City Fundraiser," she has even more hilarious and fascinating stories to read.

At seven, Christopher became the adoring, older, doting brother to Jason. He became enamored of his sibling from the moment Jason arrived home. Christopher, an excellent swimmer, taught Jason, by example, how not to drown in the pool. At eighteen months, Jason could paddle, tread water, and occasionally dive in the pool's deep end for a toy. He was amazing and, like his dad, a musical prodigy, playing piano by age three and taking part then and in every Concert of Love fundraiser. Today, Jason is a fascinating mix of disability advocate





and fundraiser like his mom and a talented musician and singer like his dad.

On November 6, 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act was signed into law by President Reagan. This law was designed to deal with illegal immigrants who entered the United States before January 1982. If they could prove they had resided in the U.S. continuously and had paid taxes or were willing to pay a fine and any back taxes owed, they and their families would be welcomed as new citizens.

By chance, at an event she almost missed attending, Linda sat next to Bob Anderson, the Head of USA Immigration and Naturalization, the only seat available in a room of 2,000. Responding to a question, she had shouted to be heard, "It's crazy. I am harboring an illegal alien in my home, and it's my own son. I don't care anymore. Let them try to deport me. I won't go down with a fight!"

Bob Anderson wanted to hear her entire story. Instead of turning her in, after listening to her fight to have Christopher legalized,

Anderson wanted to help and became her champion. Linda sent 17 ½ years of files and paperwork, and Christopher's name was put at the top of the list to become a legal resident. On February 14, 1988, Christopher stepped on stage at the Concert of Love two months and one day before his 18th birthday to receive the American flag during his naturalization ceremony.

Linda's 38 years of successful fundraising has brought \$1 billion to Opportunity Village and \$1.5 billion collectively to other non-profits and fundraising events. As astonishing as that is, even more so, Linda has been integral in getting two government legislature/bills passed—one to change how people with disabilities are treated and another how abused children are protected.

1. In 1980, while performing in Oklahoma City, the couple had a chance meeting with Senator Finis Smith, who, upon hearing their story, put into law the Christopher Smith Act, doing away with the need for a person with a condition like Down syndrome to have a medical team lined up before being allowed entry to the United States.
2. Linda had second thoughts about testifying for the Nevada Child Protection Act at an upcoming legislative session in Carson City, Nevada. Still, she overcame her hesitancy when she thought of her father, who had been acquitted at the last court date. Linda told the truth about

her father—a child molester, a wife beater, and a con man. When called to speak, Linda surprised many legislators who were her friends as they wondered why Linda Smith, a disability activist, was there with a story about child abuse. After telling her sad tale, The Nevada Child Protection Bill passed unanimously in 1989, and Linda was credited with changing laws that would protect Nevada children.



It was a sad day when, at the age of 48, Christopher died in 2018, leaving behind a legacy of how his life brought to the attention of others a different perspective and better treatment of those with disabilities. Linda says, through all the hardships of raising Christopher, “I can’t imagine a life without Chris in it. I took an unforeseen detour, and it became the most unexpected, glorious journey. I am so glad to have taken it.”

Today, Linda is happily married to a wonderful man, John, whom she met because of Christopher. Although she left Opportunity Village in 2016, she is still in the business of fundraising, but now, as a fundraising coach, consultant, and speaker in support of non-profits in need.

Did you know that Linda secured the Golden Knights hockey team before they arrived in Las Vegas, netting \$700k in annual revenue through a \$1 per seat ticket sales in one season?

Linda created the Christopher Smith Endowment, a \$5 million social recreation and arts endowment named after Linda’s son. It is a non-profit dedicated to the well-being and support of caregivers.

Linda’s story leaves the reader almost breathless from all Linda

has accomplished. Linda Smith is a well-earned “Legacy” in her own right, and Chic Compass is proud to feature her in the Legacy edition of our magazine. Thank you, Linda, for all you have done and continue to do.

AWARDS

Active in various professional associations, Linda was named “Fundraising Executive of the Year” by the National Society of Fundraising Executives. She received the prestigious “Woman of Achievement” Award from the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce. The Nevada System of Higher Education conferred the “Distinguished Nevadan” award for exceptional service to the State and Nation. She recently received the “Best Buddies International Super Hero” Award and the “Key to the City of Las Vegas” in November of 2016.

ARE FOUR WOMEN FATED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

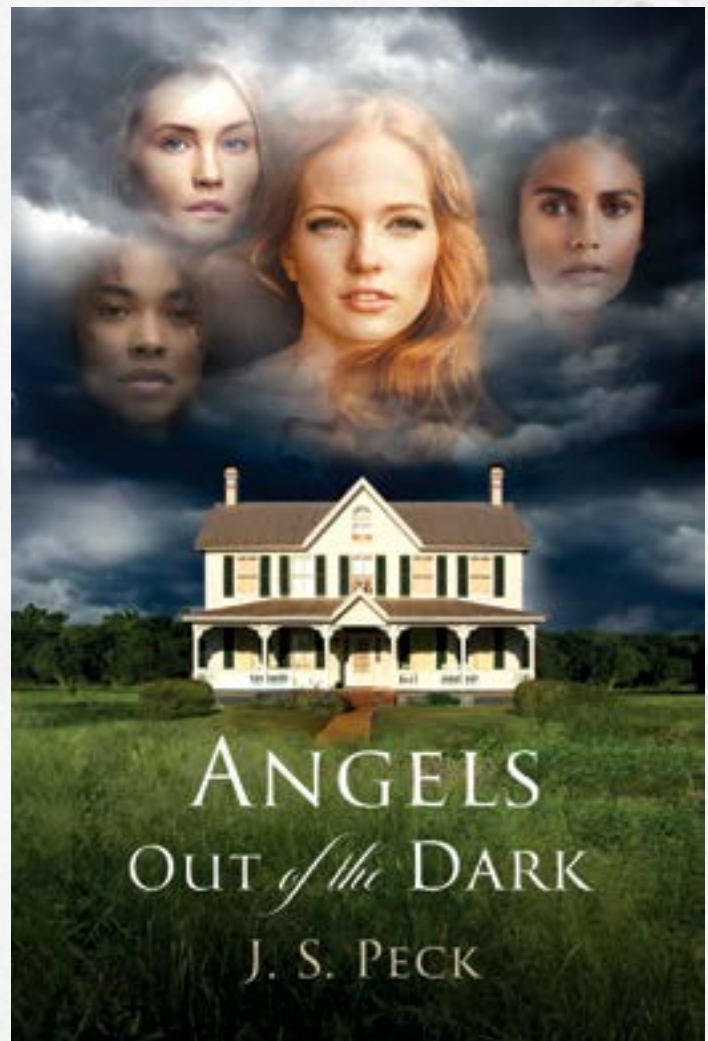
Can fate really change someone's life? Tiffany Darling has her doubts when she's picked up off the street and asked to become one of the Angels out of the Dark. She and the other angels have to bond together to help other women escape their circumstances of working on the streets. Can they do it?

This is an empowering story for every woman who has come to a fork in the road of her life where even a simple choice becomes crucial. You will see yourself in all the angels and rejoice in knowing you are one of them.

Are you aware that four to five people go missing EACH day here in Las Vegas? Do you know that only 60% of murders country-wide ever get solved? Have you thought about the fact that at this time sexual abuse and human trafficking has reached the proportions of another pandemic? Do you know the signs of sexual abuse among children? How can you help?

Angels Out of the Dark is a haunting story about four women who have survived their abusive backgrounds and asked to help others out of their trapped way of living. It is about them pulling together with the aid of their Samaritan benefactors to learn that they have the power to change their lives. It is a story about redemption, hope, and the goodness of healthy love. It is a story everyone should read to become kinder toward others less fortunate.

This book is dedicated to Lena Walther of the Awareness is Prevention (AIP) non-profit and all the other non-profits and people who are doing what they can to make us more aware of human sex trafficking. They demand our attention to insist on better laws to end sex trafficking and to learn the signs of sexual abuse so that we may stop a person from being taken or wooed to become a part of the human sex trafficking schemes so prevalent today. We honor and thank you for your efforts to make a safer, better world for us all ... especially for those who are defenseless.



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Photo of Kathleen Taylor by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

KATHLEEN TAYLOR

INSPIRED COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

By Joseph Amato and Chantel Blignaut

*M*s. Kathleen Taylor was born in Abbeville, Louisiana, and raised in a traditional household where her mother cared for the family while her father provided for them as a successful businessman in the construction and agriculture industries. Her parents instilled the importance of education and a strong work ethic and emphasized a standard of excellence that motivated her and her siblings to succeed in life. Influenced by her father's business acumen and her mother's strategic mindset, Kathleen modeled these examples throughout her career.

Kathleen began her academic journey and earned a BS in Biology at Grambling University, Magna Cum Laude. When the recession hit in 2007, Ms. Taylor was employed with the California Science Center, coordinating science professional development programs. Kathleen experienced the hardship of being laid off

during the recession. Drawing from her parents' motto to strive for excellence, even in moments of uncertainty and despair, she moved forward with a new endeavor to become a start-up business owner.

Kathleen approached a local Small Business Development Center in southern California and used their direct assistance to launch her firm, Business Inquiry Solutions. Kathleen bootstrapped her company entirely on her own. As the business became more successful, other professional development individuals and leadership trainers in her marketplace approached her, seeking to join and help her grow the company. Kathleen deeply felt that her true "business calling" was on the "other side of the table" to provide support and services for start-ups and established businesses. Ultimately, she decided to close the company, moved to the Las Vegas area in 2014, and began

a new journey in southern Nevada's business ecosystem.

Kathleen always believed she had more to offer by consulting with business owners and wanted to get back into teaching and coaching small businesses in Nevada. She became a regular fixture at various business networking events throughout the Vegas Valley. Upon meeting Leanna Jenkins, the Director of the Nevada Woman's Business Center ("NWBC"), she was offered a full-time business consulting position at the Center that would feed

“Success is not final, and failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts.”

her unbridled passion for helping small business owners.

Kathleen has continued her work at the NWBC for over nine years. She then decided she wanted to give back to the Community and partnered with community-based organizations such as the Urban Chamber of Commerce and the Las Vegas Urban League Center for Entrepreneurship, where she could collaborate on developing webinars and workshops for start-up businesses. She also co-hosts the Commerce First radio show for the Urban Chamber of Commerce on Power 88.1FM, where she speaks about area business resources, business growth opportunities, and business development.

Kathleen is a Board member of the National Association of Women Business Owners (“NAWBO”) southern Nevada chapter and was appointed by the Nevada Governor’s office to serve on the Nevada Commission for Women. She also served as the former chairperson for the Nevada Commission on Minority Affairs.

Kathleen wants to advise women entrepreneurs to invest in their own professional development. She also shares advice with them from one of her favorite books: “Don’t Take Anything Personal; Don’t Make Assumptions; Keep Your Word; and Always Do Your Best.”

“People will forget what you said and what you did, but people will never forget how you make them feel.”

Kathleen’s ongoing plan is to focus on continuing to serve others while helping business owners accomplish their goals. She hopes to leave behind a legacy of inspiring women to take control of their lives and destinies.



Kathleen is actively involved with the small business community.



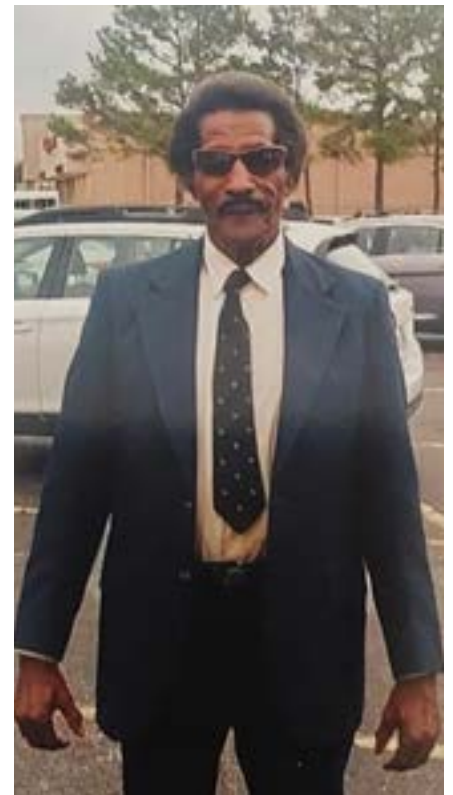
Kathleen and Leanna Jenkins provide programs and services at the Nevada Women's Business Center



Kathleen's Mother, Lizzie Minnick Como, was her role model to be a leader and mentor



Kathleen served as a Commissioner - NV Commission on Minority Affairs - Pictured with Marcel Schaerer - Nevada Department of Business and Industry



Kathleen's Father, Alvin Minnick Sr, was a small business owner in the construction and agriculture industries. He inspired her success in business development industry



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Photo of Dean Nancy Uscher by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)

DEAN NANCY USCHER

TAKE A BOW

By Stacey Gualandi

“Arts are the only tangible proof that mankind was not made for destruction.”

Dr. Nancy Uscher, as the Dean of UNLV’s College of Fine Arts, certainly knows what she speaks of, but she didn’t share that sentiment during her current tenure at the university. She wrote those prescient words in her high school yearbook when she was just 17.

“Today, I would share this sentiment,” said the concert violinist. “The arts are an essential and fundamental component of each person’s life, as well as a meaningful contributor to the health and well-being of society—from a global perspective—for the long years to come on this planet, and perhaps other planets in the universe!”

Many would agree that Dr. Uscher’s career is a work of art. With a decades-long devotion to music—first through performing, then teaching, and now leading—she has created a canvas for the arts to survive and thrive.

In 2016, Dr. Uscher was named Dean of the College of Fine Arts at UNLV (“a privilege”), where she oversees teaching, performing, and exhibiting in seven academic arts and architecture disciplines and schools, as well as the Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art and the UNLV Performing Arts Center.

“I have enormous respect for all of our departments and schools in the College of Fine Arts,” said a proud Dr. Uscher. “I love to see and celebrate student work and the incredible mentorship of our faculty and the heartfelt dedication they have to help students thrive. I am also intrigued by the knowledge created through interdisciplinary activities—and how this fosters innovation.”

In fact, working across disciplines is already paying off.

In August, the UNLV students from the seven academic units in the CFA came together with faculty at this year’s Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland to create the original work “Is It Art?” That was

the only student-oriented project among more than 3,000 at the Festival to receive a five-star review by the newspaper, *The Scotsman*.

Dr. Uscher says it was a rare, transformative experience in tune with the college’s mission.

“We’re about empowering and engaging our community to be visionary change makers through acts of imagination,” said Dr. Uscher. “This was artists, architects, filmmakers, performing and visual artists, entertainment engineering, and design all working together to come up with something that never existed before. We’re very proud that we could support this financially from a \$1 million endowment.”

Under her creative tutelage, Dr. Uscher says she and the college want to keep that momentum going, plan strategically for the future and inspire both students and faculty.

“I feel my deepest responsibility is to serve others,” admits Dr.

“I feel my deepest responsibility is to serve others.”

Uscher. “It is also very important to share a sense of strong optimism about the future. Taking an academic pathway—and my interest in academic leadership—has provided a wonderful balance to my previous and fulfilling life as a performer and teacher.”

Dr. Uscher was only four years old when her parents took her family to a Boston Symphony rehearsal at the Tanglewood Music Festival in the Berkshires. That quickly struck a chord, and soon after, she began sneaking out of bed to listen to La Boheme on her parents’ stereo system.

“That was a thrill, putting my ear next to the loudspeaker (it could not be too loud, or I would have woken my family up),” said Dr. Uscher. “It was a private moment for me to be completely immersed in the sound. I also recognized that Puccini’s music reminded me of popular music of the times, and I realized that all music was somehow connected.”

Eventually, it was her elementary school music teacher who connected a pre-teen Nancy with her first instrument.

“I will always feel enormous gratitude for Ellen Amsterdam, my music teacher, who started me on violin when I was nine years old and opened up for me an incredible life.”

She picked up the viola several years later, especially loving the viola’s role “as an inner voice in a string quartet and other chamber music, as well as exploration of the solo literature for viola.”

As a disciplined performer, she appeared in all-state youth orchestras. Eventually, she played Carnegie Hall in high school as part of an American Airlines-supported national youth orchestra called American Youth Performs and the New York-based Cosmopolitan Young Peoples Orchestra. She went on to earn her Master’s degree at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and a Ph.D. and distinguished alumni award from New York University.

“I will always remember my New

York and London debut solo recitals [in 1981] because doing these concerts were goals I had set for myself among life’s milestones,” said Dr. Uscher. “I took time to do this while living in Jerusalem and playing in an orchestra there. They were both joyous opportunities to share music I loved with family and friends who meant so much to me.”

Since then, Dr. Uscher has performed in likely hundreds of recitals and chamber music concerts. But two performances in particular hit a career-high note.

“[When I] played the musical Showboat at the inauguration of the Cairo Opera House in the late 1980s, Mrs. Saddam Hussein was in the audience, sitting in the President’s box with Egypt’s president and first lady,” said Dr. Uscher. “I also had a long one-on-one conversation with Leonard Bernstein in Jerusalem, Israel, in 1982 [after] he had conducted



an orchestra in which I was playing. That continues to be a very special memory for me.”

With an appreciation for Bach, Brahms, Beethoven (and the Beatles!), as well as contemporary music and a broad and diverse range of music, Dr. Uscher says being a musician opened up a love for all of the arts. Hippocrates once said, “Art is long, life is short,” so she forged a new path, bridging her music talent with teaching.

She went on to give master classes and seminars internationally, write several articles, and author *The Schirmer Guide to Schools of Music and Conservatories Throughout the World and Your Own Way in Music: A Career and Resource Guide*.

After a dozen years at the University of New Mexico as Professor of Music and Associate Provost, seven years as Provost and music faculty member of the California Institute of the Arts, and five years in Seattle as President of Cornish College of the Arts, she and her husband, writer William P. Barrett, landed in Las Vegas in 2016.

“When I was eight, I came to Las Vegas with my family from the East Coast,” said Dr. Uscher. “I remember how exciting it was to see Carol Channing in a show, and my father won \$16 in dimes from a slot machine! I thought Las Vegas was very glamorous.”

But what’s a violist who has worked all over the world doing in Las Vegas?



“Las Vegas is a world center for the arts and entertainment,” said Dr. Uscher. “We can make things happen in Las Vegas that are distinctive, innovative, impactful, and that will lead the arts in the rest of the world. It is a very unique place with huge potential in developing the arts. It is a place of great and exciting possibilities! That is the joy of being here, to explore what is possible!”

Right now, the College of Fine Arts has approximately 2,500 majors, both undergraduate and graduate students, and a number of minors and others who take courses in the college. There are also more than 200 faculty between full-time and part-time colleagues.

When Dr. Uscher first came on board as Dean, it was important for her to craft a “strategic plan and blueprint” to forge a pathway forward.

“We value difference, kindness, discovery, inclusion, empathy, joy, and a sense of generosity,” said Dr. Uscher. “The plan provides us a direction for the future and a common set of goals to celebrate as we create a pathway forward for the years to come.”

During her tenure, she taught that by making art together, students can better understand the goodness they add to society—which she believes is “the health and well-being of society.”

In just seven years, Dr. Uscher has overseen partnerships, such as the Las Vegas Philharmonic and the School of Music but won't stop there.

“We are starting an initiative to bring the arts into Nevada’s women’s prisons and correctional facilities,” added Dr. Uscher. “We have [also] brought art students to teach art classes in a homeless youth shelter, and we are starting a mariachi program in the future,

“What matters most is an individual’s spirit, which transcends chronological age. Spirit has no limits.”

which is a strong way to connect with our community. We want to bring people together, and we can do this in beautiful and rich ways. We should be open to new ideas as a way of life!”

It is no surprise that she has made an incredible impact on the community of Las Vegas, specifically at the university level.

“Community is incredibly important to UNLV, and I feel so committed to this goal and social justice,” said Dean Uscher. “I have tried to look at the future of the arts with excitement, optimism, and a sense of adventure. I want our students to feel empowered, explore possibilities, and feel that they deeply matter and will be a force for good in the world. Their contributions will be significant, and they will succeed in reaching their goals. Our students are truly special, talented, hard-working, discerning about the world, confident and resilient!”

The CFA celebrates luminaries in the arts every year with its Annual Hall of Fame. Last year, they honored Dionne Warwick, while this year’s 19th celebration saluted actor/comedian Brad Garrett and actor/UNLV professor of film and theatre Clarence Gilyard. (I got to attend in 2021 when Ann-Margret was inducted!)

But with so many schools, disciplines, and moving parts, I was curious how she made her role as Dean uniquely Dr. Nancy Uscher.

“I think every leader should authentically build on one’s individual strengths and attributes,” said Dr. Uscher. “There are many ways to be a leader, and that is very exciting...I also think that artists can make fine leaders because of a certain intuitive understanding of the world, a close connection to creativity, and seeing what others don’t necessarily see. I love

to reflect on the authenticity that each of us brings to what we do in life.”

As a future-focused Dean, she is excited to see society’s increasing global awareness about the critical importance of having the arts in our lives. She says it is imperative to continue nurturing and supporting young talent.

“It is absolutely wonderful to nurture young talent and help young people develop their talents,” affirms Dr. Uscher. “It gives them healthy and positive connections to the world and helps them see that hard work leads to a feeling of mastery and accomplishment. Participating in the arts keeps young people busy in such a constructive and collaborative way. It builds their self-esteem and con-



Photo of Dean Nancy Uscher with Khajidsuren Bolormaa the First Lady of Mongolia

fidence and provides opportunities to meet others and form new friendships and bonds.”

The Dean says she has always been a believer in agelessness. She still performs and makes music when an opportunity arises (“I recently played in a music festival in Austria with our UNLV students, and it was just as exciting and meaningful to me now as it has ever been.”), but doesn’t teach at this time—except when invited to guest lecture.

She is also currently President of the International Council of Fine Arts Deans, an organization with Deans from around the world coming together to support and share ideas.

Dr. Uscher also has a daughter following in her footsteps. Dr. Alessandra Barrett Erickson is a violist and violinist who teaches and performs in Seattle and just earned her doctorate at the University of Washington.

Life has NEVER been more of an adventure, says the Dean, so the “R” word (retirement) rarely, if ever, comes up.

“What matters most is an individual’s spirit, which transcends chronological age. Spirit has no limits,” said Dr. Uscher. “Agelessness helps us focus on what really matters: that each individual can make a real difference in this world at any stage of life. That is exhilarating and shows us that there are vast possibilities when it comes to the good we can do



Photo of Dean Nancy Uscher with her daughter Dr. Alessandra Barrett Erickson

and the fresh, original, and enduring contributions we can make throughout our lives.”

Hearing that she was included in this Chic Compass Legacy issue was music to her ears (pun intended!). Dr. Uscher says she is proud to tell people worldwide that she lives and works in Las Vegas and is honored to be recognized in this way.

“I hope that my legacy will be one of service, academic excellence for artists, distinguished scholarship in the College of Fine Arts, and joyous celebration of the arts,” said Dr. Uscher. “I believe that our students have the potential to become leaders in their disciplines and education. I want them to be aware of the possibilities available to them, and I am also there to help however possi-

ble. We must continue to discuss the profound importance of the arts to a healthy society.”

Las Vegas certainly hit the jackpot with this gifted lady. But I had one last question: What would the title be if her devoted husband were to write her biography?

“I try to attend college and community events as much as possible,” said the dedicated Dean. “That means not getting home sometimes until quite late at night. So his title would be *Shall I Leave the Light On For You?*”

Now Dean Uscher, you may take a bow.

LIQUID STAR PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNER: ADOLFO SANCHEZ
MODEL: AISLINN MCINERNEY
PHOTOGRAPHY: JAIME LIM
HAIR & MAKE UP: PAUL MITCHELL
SCHOOL - PASADENA, MAKEUP
DESIGNORY



THE ROMANCE OF HOLLYWOOD NEVER DIES

Article by David Tupaz | Designs by Adolfo Sanchez
Photography by Jaime Lim, Liquid Star Photography

The Romance of Old Hollywood brings designer Adolfo Sanchez to a nostalgic mood. His stunning collection is reminiscent of the days of the Great Hollywood movies we can never get enough of, where the woman's demeanor and her clothes displayed a rare elegance not often seen today.

Adolfo Sanchez's bold colors' impact delivers a rich palette of jewel colors mixed with basic primary hues. Old Hollywood has always been an inspiration for most fashion designers, from the legendary designer Valentino to Maestro Giorgio Armani, both of whom credit Old Hollywood movies as the driving force for their creativity.

Adolfo Sanchez indeed captures the essence of Old Hollywood but with a modern twist as his collection for 2023 graces the fashion pages of Chic Compass.



LIQUID STAR PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNER: ADOLFO SANCHEZ
MODELS: AISLINN MCINERNEY,
ASHLYN LIE, KATARINA HAMMOND
PHOTOGRAPHY: JAIME LIM
HAIR & MAKE UP: PAUL MITCHELL
SCHOOL - PASADENA, MAKEUP
DESIGNORY





LIQUID
STAR
PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNER: ADOLFO SANCHEZ
MODEL: XITLAAALLY
PHOTOGRAPHY: JAIME LIM
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LIQUID
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LIQUID
STAR
PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNER: ADOLFO SANCHEZ
MODEL: STACY PANNETTI
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LIQUID
STAR
PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNER: ADOLFO SANCHEZ
MODEL: ASHLYN LIE
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PHOTOGRAPHY: TOLGA KATAS

WESTGATE LAS VEGAS

A Legacy of Legendary Entertainers

By Samuel Novak

Photography courtesy of Westgate Las Vegas





On July 2nd of this year, Westgate Las Vegas Resort celebrated its fifty-fourth anniversary. Other Las Vegas destinations have come and gone in the past five-plus decades, but Westgate continues to thrive. An entertainment event there this fall captured the attention of fans worldwide, and it's no surprise that Elvis Presley played a role.

The Baz Luhrmann biopic ELVIS (2022) was a worldwide critical and box-office smash. Stylized and surreal, the Tom Hanks-Austin Butler musical drama culminated in what many consider Presley's biggest achievement...a record-setting residency at the iconic International Theater.

Despite a series of ownership and name changes, Westgate Las Vegas continues to honor its history as the former International Hotel. Their grand showroom still carries the name "International Theater," and the ghost of Presley reportedly remains, both literally and figuratively.

There is an additional nod to the casino's origins via the colorful (and cleverly named) I-Bar. Open 24/7 year-round, I-Bar is a 360-degree meeting spot right in the heart of the action. On one side, live vocal-

At Left: Barry Manilow performs at the International Theater.



Barbara Streisand

ists, bands, and deejays electrify the vibe in a space that is simultaneously intimate, exciting, retro, and modern.

The International Hotel rose from the desert as the largest resort in the world. A brainchild of businessman Kirk Kerkorian, it boasted superlatives like “Nevada’s tallest building,” the state’s largest pool, an array of “fabulous foreign restaurants,” and a 24/7 activity center for children.

Considered by most Vegas historians to be the first Sin City “megaresort,” the International Hotel had a unique footprint. Shaped like an enormous letter “Y” lying down,

the structure allows unobstructed sightlines from every window.

Perhaps the International’s most outstanding feature was its entertainment offerings. Determined to outdo neighboring Landmark Hotel (which opened one day earlier), the International exploded on the scene with Barbra Streisand as its first showroom headliner. At the same time, the very popular Peggy Lee was luring guests into the lounge.

Following Streisand as the second headliner would be a significant challenge for almost any performer, but Elvis was no ordinary entertainer. Already a worldwide

phenomenon, the rebel-rousing rocker from Mississippi returned to live performing after an eight-year absence.

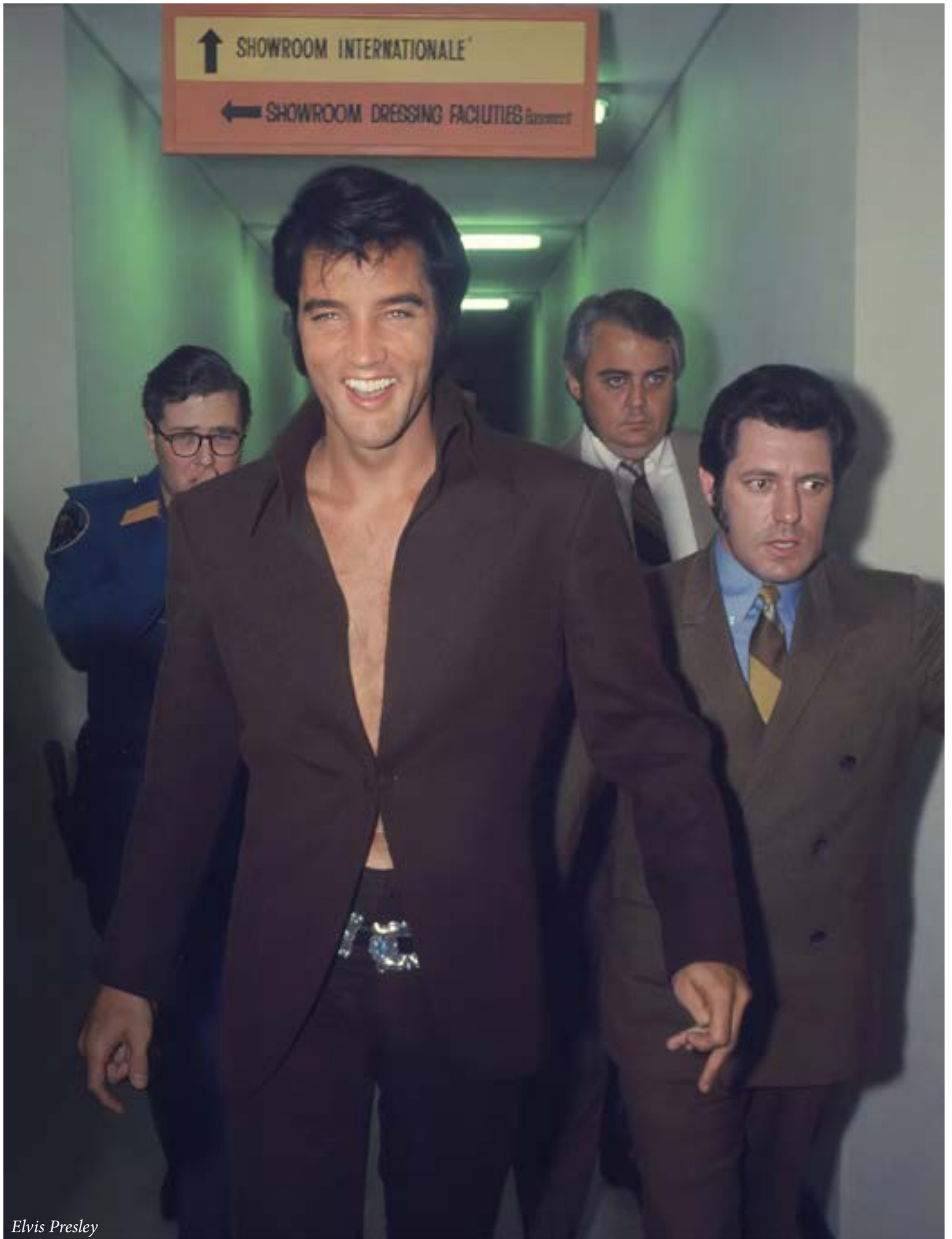
Presley’s first show at the International Hotel was such a resounding success that the hotel’s management quickly locked him into an ongoing residency until his death in the summer of 1977.

In all, Presley sold out an amazing 636 consecutive performances. He took residence on the 30th floor, and his name became synonymous with the newly renamed “Las Vegas Hilton.” Even his manager, the notorious Colonel Tom Parker, lived at the Hilton for several years, at one point serving as “entertainment consultant.”

During the sixties and seventies, Sin City entertainment schedules vastly differed from today’s. Headliners usually performed twice an evening...once around dinner time, then again at midnight. Lounge singers belted out hits and ballads until the sun rose in the east.

As tastes and habits changed, the Hilton hosted several musical legends, including Liberace, Charo, and Wayne Newton. Large productions such as “Bal du Moulin Rouge” and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “Starlight Express” were significant draws during the eighties and nineties. Headliners like Sheena Easton, The Smothers Brothers, and Engelbert Humperdink filled the slate as a new century approached.

During the late nineties, a different



Elvis Presley

type of star rose at the Hilton—STAR TREK: The Experience took flight. Fans from across the globe flocked to Las Vegas to visit the unique attraction, which featured interactive exhibits and rides.

The resort's smaller showroom went through various iterations as "The Nightclub" and "Shimmer Cabaret." Familiar names like David Brenner, Rich Little, and the long-running family group The Scintas played there, along with productions like "Nunsense" and "Menopause - The Musical."

The Hilton brand dissolved its partnership with the hotel at the end of 2011. The property floundered under the name 'LVH' for a few years until Westgate Resorts took over in 2014. A family-operated company out of Orlando,

Florida, Westgate Resorts vowed to restore the hotel to its former glory, albeit with modern amenities.

Westgate's approach to operating the former Hilton would bring personalized sensibilities to the operation. Guests, team members, and entertainers benefitted from the company's service-oriented approach, a stark alternative to increasingly corporate-driven Strip properties.

After taking ownership, Westgate doubled down on its history with Presley. A tribute attraction was opened, tours of what was once his villa became available, and the road leading to the porte-cochere was renamed "Elvis Presley Boulevard."

Earlier this summer, Westgate launched "My Brother Elvis: An Evening with David Stanley." The monthly event is co-hosted by Gordon Prouty, the resort's VP of Public & Community Relations. An intimate and very personal experience, it allows guests the opportunity to retrace the King's steps from backstage areas to the performance space itself.

Throughout the evening, Stanley shares memories of living at Graceland and recollections of his life with Elvis. They include being present for the opening of his stepbrother's record-setting residency. David Stanley currently resides at Westgate Las Vegas.

Westgate founder David Siegel carries his own memories of family stays at the former International.



Kool and the Gang



Barry Manilow



Barry Manilow

Sid's Café is named after his father as a tribute. The restaurant operates with a promise that all customers will be treated like high rollers. That philosophy is echoed throughout the resort.

The Westgate management team often refers to its massive staff as a family. To that end, they managed to lure another longtime resident back. He is none other than iconic performer Barry Manilow, the man who makes the whole world sing.

Barry Manilow had an extended residency during the "Hilton" era that forever linked his name and career to the property. A five-year run began in 2005 and generated more than \$70 million in ticket sales. With the hotel fully restored to its former glory by 2018, bringing the hitmaker back home made sense.



Soul of Motown

Now in the fifth year of his second residency, Barry Manilow is set to achieve what may be the biggest milestone of his career... surpassing Elvis Presley's number of performances at the International Theater. The landmark show will take place as the headliner celebrates fifty years as a recording artist.

Earlier this year, Manilow attended the opening of Westgate Comedy Cabaret. Viewing from the balcony, the "Mandy" singer was impressed by Dennis Blair, a longtime Vegas comedy performer. Manilow invited Blair to be his opening act on this fall's tour, taking a member of the Westgate family on the road.

No less than six resident productions are currently part of the resort's entertainment line-up. They include award-winning Soul of Motown, magician Jen Kramer, and Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons. Top names like Alfie Boe, Firehouse, Little River Band, Kool & The Gang, and Elle King have recurring shows that draw audiences through Westgate's doors.

Manilow's record-breaking performances are scheduled for September 21st through the 23rd of 2023. Proceeds will benefit six charities, including Victoria's Voice, a foundation David Siegel and his wife Jackie established to battle the opioid crisis. It honors their daughter Victoria, who fell

victim to drug addiction.

Another recipient is Barry's own Manilow Music Project, which supports music education and donates thousands of instruments to schools. Recipient students regularly attend Manilow's Westgate shows, fostering a legacy of great entertainment for generations to come.

The city's most enduring resort has expanded and undergone numerous changes throughout its six decades, but one thing remains. Westgate Las Vegas will always be home to legendary entertainers. And the record-setting landmarks will keep on coming.

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RE-VOW LAS VEGAS!!!

RE-KNOTTED, AND IT FEELS SO GOOD

By Stacey Gualandi
Photography by Steve Spatafore

*W*e've all heard the famous phrase "Viva Las Vegas!" But "Re-Vow Las Vegas" might have a better ring to it, considering almost 300 couples from across the globe just did a "re-do of their I do's" on September 3rd at Caesars Palace! (Including me, but I'll get to that shortly.)

Speaking of ring(s)—this lavish and first-ever mass vow renewal was the main event at the 70th anniversary of Las Vegas being declared the "Wedding Capital of the World" in the London Daily Herald on September 23, 1953.

Since then, over 5 million love stories—and counting—have passed through the Marriage License Bureau downtown, making Las Vegas the world's #1 wedding destination.

In honor of that marital milestone, the Clark County Commission even proclaimed September "Wedding Capital of the World Month."



Above: Las Vegas residents Marty Morawski, Stacey Gualandi, JJ Snyder and Bill Scigliano renewed their vows.

"We got the whole community involved, the entertainers, and Caesars Palace donated the space," said Clark County Clerk Lynn Marie Goya. "This is also benefiting the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth. It's amazing the community spirit that came together so we could share the vow renewal with all of you!"

The besotted who re-knotted came from as far away as the Netherlands; one bride I saw was pregnant, while another

brought her infant! Some couples were old, some new; some dresses were borrowed; some wore red, white, and blue.

Self-described first-generation Americans Charles and Diana Printzen (yes, that's what they said) came dressed in the American flag.

"We've been high school sweethearts since 1988," said the couple. "We will love each other for eternity."



Above: Elvis and Priscilla Presley with their 1967 wedding cake and original baker Bjorn Jaeger (background photo). The inspired replica (foreground).

Philip Tolk said he hit the jackpot when he married Rada Katz last year at the Graceland Chapel during quarantine. That sentiment appears to have inspired their matching his-and-her deck of cards wedding ‘fits.

“We love Elvis, and we love Vegas,” said Katz. “We live here and will continue on our love fest in the capital of romance!”

The Tolk-Katz union wasn’t the only pandemic partnership to take place on the Strip. Several couples who met and married while in quarantine saw this as a chance to reseal the deal.

Adriana and Ryan Pardey, who just delivered twins, said they were in denial when they first exchanged vows at the Neon Museum on February 16, 2020.

“The [Pardey wedding] was known as the end of the world party,” laughed Adriana Pardey.

Quite the opposite for Lando and Heather Cardona, who first married alone at the Denny’s chapel on Fremont Street.

“When we eloped, it was just the two of us because it was during Covid,” said Lando Cardona. “We had an audience this time. Ha!”

Of course, no super-sized Strip ceremony would have been complete without a vintage Vegas

lineup of Sin City’s showstoppers—an Elvis wedding cake; Seinfeld’s Patrick Warburton as officiant; and a procession of partners-in-love, led by—you guessed it—showgirls.

You can’t get more Vegas than showgirl Dani Elizabeth and America’s Got Talent-winning magician Murray Sawchuck.

They joined a long list of celebrity couples (think Frank and Mia, Elvis and Priscilla, and Steven Spielberg and Kate Capshaw) two years ago when they threw a spectacular wedding at the Plaza Hotel in Las Vegas.

But the couple who perform regularly in Vegas couldn’t wait to retake a vow.



Above: *The all-star vintage Vegas-style show performers on stage singing "Las Vegas Will You Marry Me?"*

"We haven't been up this early in a long time!" joked Sawchuck. "It's just so nice to worry about looking decent and watch everyone else sweat."

He's referring to the who's who of Las Vegas legends like Clint Holmes, The Bronx Wanderers, Lorena Peril, Bob Anderson, Travis Cloer, Anne Martinez, Zowie Bowie, Earl Turner, and The Righteous Brothers, who took to the stage to sing love songs through the decades.

"It was pretty scary, so I tried to get offstage before I was married again," joked four-time groom Bill Medley.

The show—written, directed, and produced by Dennis and Lorraine Hunt-Bono and co-producer Damian Costa of Pompey Entertainment—was a musical celebration of love and marriage. It even had its own catchy new theme song, "Las Vegas Will You Marry Me," written by composer Dan Slider and sung by Bono.

Now, I've asked my husband Marty to re-marry me many times and we did revisit our vows at Windsor Castle five years ago (right outside the gate :), but this occasion was a full-circle moment for us.

In 1998, we married at Caesars Palace (complete with a Centurion and a wine goddess), so we certainly couldn't pass up an opportunity to mark our 25th at the 70th. In the same wedding dress, no less.

It was very special not only to cover the event for Inside Edition but also to share this day with good friends (Chic Compass publisher Ann Parenti and her husband Curtis McCoy, who were celebrating their 27th three days later on September 6th) and actor Patrick Warburton!

Best known as "Puddy" on *Seinfeld*, *The Tick* and the voice of "Joe Swanson" on *Family Guy*,



Above: *Vow renewal officiant/actor Patrick Warburton with singer Earl Turner.*



Above: The mass vow renewal of 300 couples at Caesars Palace.

Warburton appeared on stage through a thick blue fog, proudly wearing an original Lansky Bros. coat—the same designer who made Elvis Presley’s famous wedding tux.

I told him I couldn’t think of any one more perfectly suited for the “I duty.”

“I was terribly honored, but you can’t think of anyone better?” laughed Warburton.

With equal parts sass and sweetness, he told all of us to “deepen our dedication to one another” and then say, well... you know.

Presiding over 300 couples ready to rinse and repeat was a first for this veteran marriage officiant.

“I’ve married four couples in the past ten years, and they’re all still together,” said Warburton. “So, I’m batting 1000!”

From (Vegas Wedding Chamber’s) Elvis impersonator Brian Mills taking photos with all the

happy couples to an inspirational version of Elvis and Priscilla Presley’s six-tiered 1967 wedding cake, the King was certainly in the building for all the hunk of burning love.

Carlo’s Bakery general manager Christina Nasso took on the 12-hour challenge of recreating that

iconic cake. After the ceremony, couples got to pose with it and have a Champagne toast.

“I know for me I’m going to remember this the rest of my life,” said Nasso, who has two tattoos of her idol Elvis.



Above: Carlo’s Bakery General Manager Christina Nasso and her replica of Elvis Presley’s famous wedding cake.



Above: Travis Cloer, Damian Costa, The Righteous Brothers' Bill Medley, Anne Martinez, Clint Holmes, Earl Turner, The Righteous Brothers' Bucky Heard

Jag Jaeger, the son of the original Elvis cake baker Bjorn, was also on hand to see the marriage license bureau memorialize his father's work.

"I am absolutely honored to be his son, and I know he would be proud of Christina's work," said Jaeger.

After meeting the Millers—Andrew and Tiffany—who first tied the knot at the Little White Wedding Chapel two years ago, it became clear that all the couples on that day love Las Vegas almost as much as they love each other.

"I think it's really great to celebrate all of the history, everything that Las Vegas has meant for weddings and probably the reason people continue to choose, literally every day, to get married in Las Vegas," said Tiffany Miller.

Our close friends JJ Snyder and Bill Scigliano married 14 years ago in Washington State.

"We married on a farm with goats, chickens, dogs, and horses, so this is a little more upscale," joked Scigliano.

They have no regrets, but they always wanted to have a Vegas wedding. Now they are officially re-newlyweds, Sin City-style.

"It's a city about love, but it's also about being spontaneous and having fun," said Snyder. "If you didn't like your first wedding, come do it again here!"

Goya is happy to report there were no Bridezillas, and this unique wedding event went off...

without a hitch. (But also 300 re-hitches.)

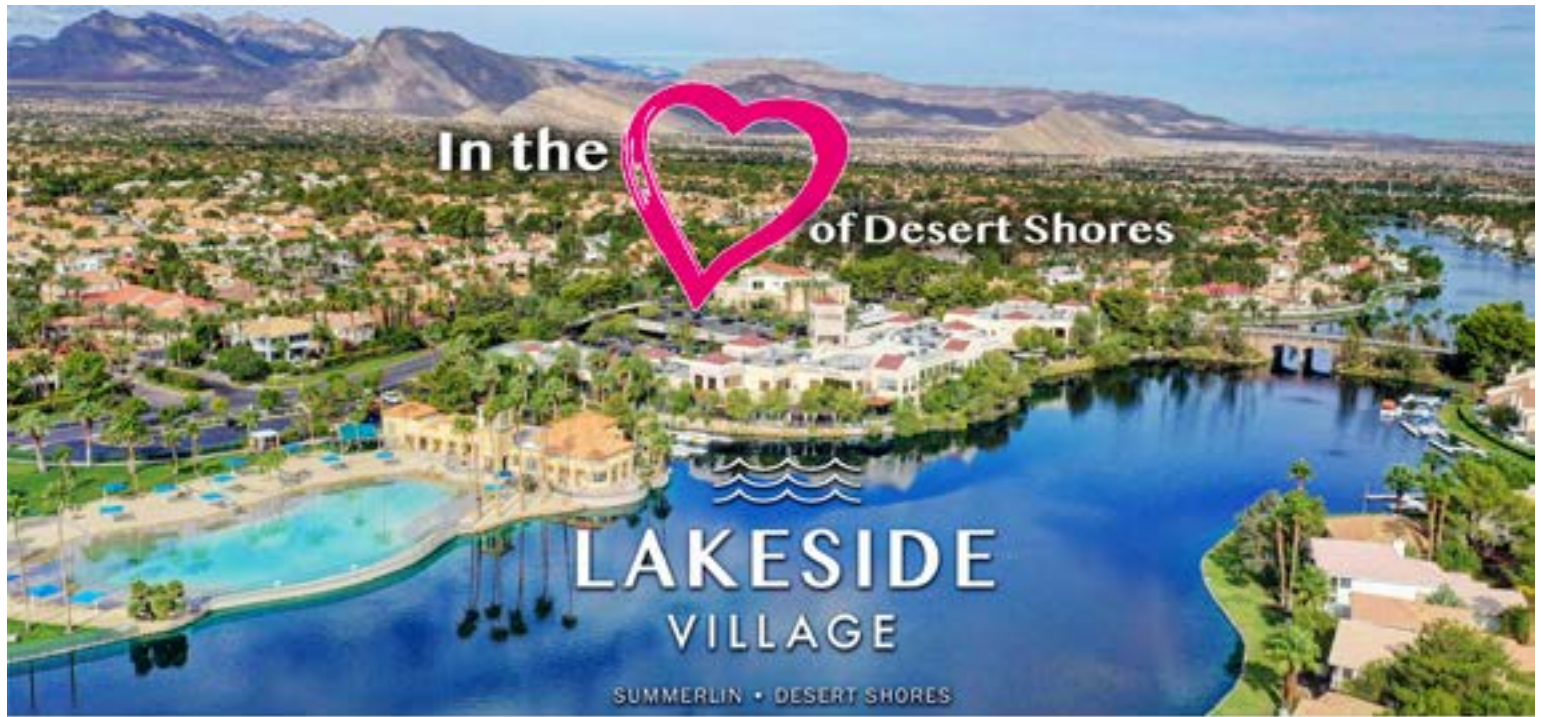
"People from around the world come here just to celebrate their vows," said Goya. "They need to know we are very grateful, and they are very welcome."

So, is this the start of a new Las Vegas tradition?

Goya laughed; "Let me have a drink first."



The Bronx Wanderers



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OLIVIER GIRAUD

HITS THE HALLMARK OF ONE MILLION THEATER GOERS WHO WANT TO LEARN HOW TO BECOME PARISIAN IN ONE HOUR

Article and Photography by
Sheryl Aronson

*M*y career as an Entertainment journalist began in Paris, France, in August of 2014. During my stay, a dear friend treated me to the one-man show - *How to Become Parisian in One Hour*, starring the effervescent and humorous actor/comedian Olivier Giraud. The title intrigued me, the show enchanted me, and an article was published with my review and interview with the charming Oliver Giraud. As soon as I decided to revisit my beloved Paris this June, I contacted his publicist and was granted another interview, plus a ticket to see the updated version of the show!

To my delight, I discovered that Monsieur Giraud had hit the hallmark number of performing for one million theatergoers at the Théâtre des Nouveautés. People worldwide (even Parisians) want to learn from the master himself, "How to Become Parisian in One Hour."



Above: Olivier Giraud



Above: Photo of Sheryl Aronson with Olivier Giraud courtesy of Sheryl Aronson

This was not the case when the artist first introduced his idea fourteen years ago to Parisian theater owners.

In 2009, Olivier Giraud, actor/writer/humorist, dared to debut his one-man comedy show *How to Become Parisian in One Hour* in English despite being warned by multiple Parisian theater owners that the show would bomb – no one in Paris would attend a production spoken only in English!

"I didn't know the show would last this long, but I was determined to succeed back then, so I

formed my own company called, "French Arrogance Productions" to produce the show. Now, 14 years later, which is an unusually long time in Paris for a show to last (most close after six months) – I guess I can say I succeeded."

Giraud had no training in writing, acting, or performing. He left his home in Bordeaux, France, at 18 to become a chef. But he revealed, "When I was eight years old, I told my mother that one day I would become a comedian and promised to buy her a nice dress after I performed onstage." He pauses for a moment ... "I still haven't bought her that dress."

Graduating from the best catering school in France, Olivier left Paris in 2001 to live in the United

States. There, he worked as a waiter, obtained more training in Hotel Promotion, and procured a job as the Manager at The Breakers in Palm Beach, Florida. This venue offered the perfect breeding ground to observe the amusing differences between American and French cultures. Giraud found himself imitating the funny antics of his American customers. Inspired by his newfound passion, he scribbled notes, which, over time, blossomed into the script for *How to Become Parisian in One Hour*. Wanting to pursue his dream of performing onstage as a comic, Olivier Giraud moved back to Paris.

"I think the show's success comes from the aura that the city brings... the romance ... the beauty... the food... the city of love... of light ... and ... (his eyebrow goes up) ... the city of strikes! Everyone wants to be Parisian, and everyone wants to laugh at our eccentricities, too."

Even after fourteen years of performing the show, the comic feels each night's performance is a new experience. He loves his job. He loves his audiences. He plans on performing *How to Become Parisian in One Hour* into Eternity with no end in sight.

"Every day is different for me. I am always improving the show—seeing what jokes work and trying new ones. If the new ideas get a laugh, I immediately put the skit into the script."

When I interviewed Olivier Giraud back in 2014, he told me,



Above: Photo of Olivier Giraud on stage during How to Become Parisian in One Hour

"The show is more famous than me," said the humble but very dashing, magnetic creator, Olivier Giraud. "When I walk the streets of Paris, I'm hardly ever recognized. But occasionally, a Parisian will say to me in *The Metro*, "Vous est le Parisian: One Hour." Translation: You are the Parisian: One Hour!

I guess he was humble because, in 2014, Olivier Giraud was invited by the British Embassy in Paris and introduced to Her Majesty The Queen Of England, Elizabeth II. The invitation was in honor of his "contribution to Franco-British entente."

"I thought it was a joke when I received the invitation, and I called the English embassy to see if it was a mistake. They told me that

I was the best person for the communication between the French and the English. That was one of the most memorable moments in my 14 years of performing the show."

Here are a few other accolades for Olivier Giraud: In March 2017, Olivier Giraud was invited by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to the British Embassy in Paris for a reception for 100 of the most promising French entrepreneurs. In June 2017, Olivier Giraud and his show *How to Become a Parisian in One Hour* were the winners of the Welcome Awards by CIWY in the category 'Cultural Discoveries.' The Welcome Awards reward the places Parisians love and are highly recommended for travelers who want to explore Paris like a Parisian. In January

2020, the show won the Get Your Guide Award as 'Best Authentic Experience.'

In other words, this Frenchman charms the pants off politicians, world leaders, tourists, foreigners who live and work in Paris, expatriots, and the most important but the "tres difficult" audience: Parisians. Ooh la la!

His humor dances with caustic yet gentle observations. His high energy and enthusiasm on-stage match a Zumba instructor. His comedic improvisations and playing off the audience's energy and comments exude Robin Williams—Paris style.

Here are a few tips you will learn at the show: how to interact with snotty French salespeople in

clothing stores, how to order in a café, how to maintain the proper demeanor riding the metro, and how to show disdain and the correct Paris pessimism toward life.

When asked what the major difference between a Parisian person and an American, Giraud smiles broadly with a twinkle in his eye and says:

“Americans are very enthusiastic ... very positive ... and Parisians are very negative. For example, if it’s beautiful weather and tomorrow it’s going to rain ... and you said to a Parisian, ‘It’s good weather today,’ he will tell you, ‘But tomorrow it’s going to rain!’”

Ironically, Olivier Giraud doesn’t fit his description of a Parisian, but it’s obvious how much he loves his

city and fellow countrymen. His performance schedule is grueling, yet Giraud attacks each show with devout enthusiasm and love.

“Many nights, I have five to ten different names during the shows to remember when I call audience members to the stage. But I love talking about Paris and teaching people our ways. Parisians are proud to be very rude, so they don’t care if I make fun of them for that characteristic.”

What’s new on the horizon for Olivier Giraud? Not resting on his laurels with one million theatergoers, he has also written a funny book called “How to Become Parisian in One Hour” and will soon add a new theme, “How to Raise Children in Paris.”

“I’m going to take new paths soon and write again: How Do You Raise a Kid in Paris and give more tips on where to live, where to eat, how to speak to them, etc. Definitely, very different than the show.”

I couldn’t resist the temptation to ask Olivier Giraud to do his impression of an American in Paris. His face transitions to an animated, super enthusiastic young person ... “Oh my God, I love Paris! I’m gonna go to this show *How to Become a Parisian* ... Amazing. Oh my God! I just love it! OMG ... Thank you!”

For more information about Olivier Giraud and *How to Become Parisian in One Hour*, go to: www.oliviergiraud.com



Adventures in Travel & Dining

KANSAS

Southeast Kansas Offers a Variety of Attractions
and Destinations for Travelers

BY ELAINE & SCOTT HARRIS

Southeast Kansas borders Missouri to the east, Oklahoma to the south, and the Flint Hills region to the west. It is known for its rolling hills, lush forests, and abundant wildlife. The area is home to several state parks, including the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, the Flint Hills National Wildlife Refuge, and the Crawford State Park. The region is also rich in history, with several museums and historical sites, such as the Fort Scott National Historic Site and the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes. This part of Kansas is beautiful and vibrant, with much to offer residents and visitors.

A stay at Chateau Avalon, a boutique hotel in Kansas City, Kansas, a few miles west of downtown Kansas City, is a must and makes a very interesting stay. The hotel offers a unique experience with 62 individually themed rooms inspired by different countries and eras. Each room has different decor, furniture, and amenities that transport guests to different times and places.

Some popular room themes at Chateau Avalon include the Roman Dynasty, the Mayan Rainforest, Pirate's Cove, the Venetian Palace, and Camelot. The hotel also features a spa, a restaurant, and a lounge. The spa offers a variety of services, including massages, facials, and body treatments. The restaurant, d'Nile, serves Mediterranean-inspired cuisine. The lounge is exotic and fun! The d'Nile Bar offers a fine selection of cocktails, wines, and



beers. Over the years, the hotel has garnered an outstanding reputation for destination weddings, corporate events, and romantic getaways. Chateau Avalon provides an experience that is unmatched in the Kansas City area. Hitting the road, we head to Fort Scott and travel back in time, staying at The Courtland Hotel and Day Spa, a historic boutique hotel. It was originally built in 1906 and has been restored to its original grandeur. "Boutique" is certainly the correct description, offering 11 luxurious guest rooms, each furnished with period antiques and modern amenities. The day spa offers a variety of services, including massages, facials, body treatments, and more. The spa uses natural and

organic products in its treatments. Courtland also has a restaurant, the Boiler Room Brewhaus, which serves locally sourced food and craft beer. This is a lovely destination for those looking for a luxurious and relaxing getaway in a historic setting.

Fort Scott was established in 1842 as a military fort to protect the border between the United States and Indian Territory. The fort was named after General Winfield Scott, a hero of the Mexican-American War. After the Civil War, the military abandoned the fort, and the land was sold to private individuals. The city of Fort Scott was established on the site of the old fort in 1855 and became an important center

for trade and commerce in southeastern Kansas. Today, Fort Scott is known for its rich history and has been designated a National Historic Site, where one can tour the old fort and learn about its role in the settlement of the American West. The city is also home to several museums, including the Fort Scott National Historic Site Museum, the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes, and the Gordon Parks Museum.

The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes is a must-stop while in Fort Scott. It is an educational non-profit organization located right downtown and provides a one-of-a-kind experience that one would not expect. The center's mission is to "transform classrooms and communities through student-driven projects that discover Unsung Heroes from history and teach the power of one to create positive change."

The center provides resources and support to educators and students to create projects highlighting the stories of individuals who have made a positive impact but may not be well known or celebrated.



Pro Tip: Visit the Bourbon County Courthouse, built in 1906 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The next stop on your Kansas Sojourn is the town of Pittsburg, also in the state's southeastern part. It is located along the Kansas and Frontenac rivers' banks, about 120 miles south of Kansas City. The city is home to Pittsburg State University and is known for its historic downtown area, which features a variety of locally owned shops and restaurants. You will also find the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts, which hosts a variety of performances throughout the year.

Pro Tip: The campus also has a beautiful arboretum and nature trail.

While traveling around this area of Kansas, you may come across some interesting things. Big Brutus is one of them and worth a side trip to experience. Big Brutus is a giant electric shovel in West Mineral and is one of the largest machines ever built. Visit this behemoth of a machine and learn about its history and importance in the mining industry. It was used in strip mining operations in the area from 1962 until 1974. Big is an understatement. At 160 feet tall and weighing over 11 million pounds, Big Brutus is one of the most giant electric shovels ever built. It was used to dig out coal, which was then loaded onto trucks and transported to nearby power plants. Today, one can climb to the top of the shovel, explore the surrounding area, and

learn the history of coal mining in the region and the technology and engineering behind this legendary piece of machinery.

Get your kicks on Route 66! This historic highway originally ran from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California, and was one of the original highways in the U.S. Highway System established in 1926. Route 66 became famous as a symbol of American mobility and freedom, and it played an important role in the development of the American West. Sadly, it



was officially decommissioned as a U.S. Highway in 1985, but many sections of the highway have been preserved and are still drivable today. The route is popular among tourists who want to experience a piece of American history and explore the small towns and landmarks that were once part of the country's main east-west transportation artery.

Go back decades and stop into Nelson's Old Riverton Store, a historic general store located in Riverton, Kansas, on Route 66. It was originally opened in 1925 by H.O. Nelson and remained in operation for over 80 years, serving as a gathering place for locals and travelers alike. In addition to the typical general store offerings, such as groceries, hardware, and clothing, the store also sold gasoline and served as a post office. In more recent times, it gained national attention in the 2000s when it was featured on the television show "American Pickers." The show's hosts, Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz, visited the store and purchased several items, including a 1930s Coke machine and an old Indian motorcycle. The store has been restored to its original condition and features many of the original fixtures and items sold there in the past. It also houses a small museum with artifacts and memorabilia from the store's long history.

Not far from the store, you will find Marsh Arch Bridge. It is a type of arch bridge that J.E. Marsh developed in the early 20th century. It is a reinforced concrete arch bridge with a parabolic shape,



meaning that the arch rises gradually from the abutments to a peak at the center and then descends gradually to the opposite abutment.

This bridge is known for its strength, durability, and aesthetic appeal. The arch's parabolic shape distributes the bridge's weight evenly across the span, allowing it to support heavier loads than other types of arch bridges. Additionally, the streamlined shape of the arch gives the bridge a graceful appearance that complements its surroundings. Marsh arch bridges were widely used in the United States during the early to mid-20th century, and many examples of this type of bridge can still be found in various parts of the country.

Continue to Emporia in east-central Kansas. Emporia is situated at the intersection of Interstate 35 and the Kansas Turnpike, making it a convenient stop for travelers. It is also home to Emporia State University, known for its education programs and teacher training. This small city has a rich history, including its role as a center for the early cattle industry and as the site of the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* court case. The city is known for its annual events, such as the Flint Hills Beef Fest and the Dirty Kanza gravel bike race, attracting thousands of visitors yearly.

While in Emporia, why not get in a round of golf? Disc golf, that is! Dynamic Discs was founded in 2005 by Jeremy Rusco. The com-

pany has grown significantly over the years and is now one of the world's largest manufacturers and retailers of disc golf equipment. In addition to selling discs and other equipment, Dynamic Discs hosts several major golf events each year, including the Glass Blown Open, one of the world's largest disc golf tournaments. The company also operates several retail stores across the United States, as well as an online store.

Visiting small towns is a fun way to explore off-the-beaten-track places and take in their people and culture. Humboldt is a city located in Allen County, Kansas, and is no exception. Its population is approximately 1,800 people and covers an area of 1.36 square miles. How is that





for small? The city is named after the famous German naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt. Where is Humboldt, you may ask? It can be found about 90 miles south of Topeka and about 20 miles north of the Kansas-Oklahoma border and is unique in its own right. In fact, it has only one stop light! Humboldt is known for its small-town charm, historic downtown, and annual events such as the Humboldt Un-

plugged Music Festival and the Allen County Fair. It's a nice respite on a long drive.

Abilene is a city located in the state of Kansas, United States. As of September 2021, Abilene had a population of approximately 6,400 people. It is the county seat of Dickinson County and is situated in the central part of the state.

No visit to Kansas would be complete without a visit to Abilene, known for its rich history and connection to the Old West, located right in the center of the state. In the past, it was a prominent cattle town and served as the endpoint of the Chisholm Trail, which was a major route for cattle drives in the late 19th century. Culture is a big deal in this small town. Abilene is home to several muse-

ums and attractions related to its Western heritage, including the renowned Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum, and Boyhood Home. Eisenhower served as the 34th President of the United States and grew up in Abilene. In addition to its historical significance, Abilene offers a range of recreational activities and events for residents and visitors. The city has parks, trails, and sports facilities for outdoor activities, and it hosts various festivals and events throughout the year.

One last stop on our Southeastern Kansas road trip was Chanute. It is the largest city in Neosho County and has a population of approximately 9,000 people. Historically, Chanute is known for its aviation history, as it was the site of one of the first airports in Kansas and the home of the Chanute Air Force Base, which was used for pilot training during World War II. Today, it is a thriving community with a diverse economy and a solid commitment to education and community development. It is home to several parks, a community college, and a variety of local businesses and organizations.

Kansas is known for its flat prairies, wheat fields, and rich history. With so much to offer, each special region is unique and worth exploring! See you in Kansas!

ABOUT TOWN



Las Vegas NEWH Triple Event Brunch - Scholarships and Top ID Awards and panel discussion at Basilico Ristorante Italiano.

Above: (L to R) Darwin Ochoa, Jacqueline Parker, Samantha Carter, Breanna Gaitor, Kaelie Bauman. Not pictured Boran Kim, Gabriel Bejarano.

Left: (L to R) Beth Campbell (Campbell House), Kim Daoust (Tandem), and Elena Gonova (Cunningham)

Empress Exchange Tea Party at The Cobblestone Cottage

Below: Attendees of the tea party.





Tina! the Musical

Above: (L to R) Jassen Allen, Ann Parenti, Quin Rivers

Right: (L to R) Cast Members: Shari Washington Rhone, Zurin Villaneva, Naomi Rogers



Señoras of Excellence, Señores of Distinction Gala at Westgate Las Vegas

Above: (L to R) Rita Vaswani, Ann Parenti, Anna Stewart Billings, Faith Shari Johnson Ramos, Lela Palsgrove



Liberace Exhibit at Nevada State Museum (Photography by Ann Parenti)
Above and Left: Exhibit Photos

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