

SPECIAL ISSUE: A COLLECTION OF ORAL HISTORIES FROM NEVADA GAMING FIGURES

FOREWORD

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The Nevada gaming industry is rich with history. Although media attention often focuses on some of the turbulent characters and incidents that peppered the casinos early on in Nevada, the state's current gaming regulatory system has fostered a vibrant and legitimate industry within Nevada and has influenced the expansion of gaming as a source of entertainment, employment, and government revenues throughout the United States and the world.

Nevada's current gaming regulatory system would not be used as a model for other gaming jurisdictions if it were not for the influence of the three distinguished individuals who are featured in this special *oral histories* issue of the *UNLV Gaming Law Journal*. As a relative newcomer to the Nevada gaming industry, and having had the fortunate opportunity to practice gaming law for nearly a decade as an apprentice of Bob Faiss, I became well aware early in my career of each person profiled in this issue. I learned that each of them demonstrates outstanding leadership qualities while maintaining an honest and respected reputation. Believe me, it is a true honor to be able to introduce each of them here.

William S. Boyd is not only the namesake of Nevada's sole law school, which has achieved unprecedented and swift recognition as a top-tier academic institution, he is also responsible for reshaping Nevada gaming into a community enterprise. His company, Boyd Gaming Corporation, has been a leader in the locals gaming market for almost 40 years. In addition, his company has brought credible casino gaming to several other markets in the United States. Mr. Boyd started his career working with his father, Sam Boyd, an industry founder (yes, the stadium has his name). He also had a passion for the law and decided to pursue a law degree. At the time, Nevada didn't have a law school, so he graduated from my alma mater, the University of Utah. With his mind for the law, he elevated Boyd Gaming to a principled and esteemed gaming company. Moreover, his dedication to elevating UNLV's law school into the reputable facility it is today has also been remarkable. He has a great story to share!

Burton Cohen is an industry leader who has set the standard for successful resort hotel casino operations. He began his career in Las Vegas over 40 years ago as the general manager of the Frontier (currently the site of the planned

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Genting mega resort) and later oversaw operations at the Desert Inn for many years (now the Wynn Las Vegas/Encore site). He was instrumental in the opening of Circus Circus and successfully managed operations at many of the Strip's largest properties, including the Flamingo, Caesars Palace, and former resorts, the Thunderbird and the Dunes. Mr. Cohen also had the foresight to recognize Las Vegas as a flourishing market for film and television, having overseen the filming of the TV show Vega\$ during his tenure at the Desert Inn.

Although some of the tumultuous times in early Nevada gaming may receive much of the attention, Mr. Cohen is a testament to the development of gaming as a legitimate business run by honest, reputable professionals. His dedication to the Nevada gaming industry has continued throughout his leadership positions as the former head of the Nevada Resort Association and as a current member of the board of directors of gaming giant MGM Resorts International. Mr. Cohen's knowledge and experience remain unmatched.

Peter Bernhard is the current chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission and has served in that position since 2001. He has been the chairman since I started practicing law, and I have always found him to be extremely fair and well-reasoned, especially in difficult or sensitive cases. Chairman Bernhard has always considered all the factors in determining what is important for the Nevada gaming industry. Beyond that, he treats all who appear before him with respect, even if the underlying matter is contentious. Chairman Bernhard has been practicing law for nearly 38 years and works primarily on real estate and complex commercial transactions, in addition to his dedicated efforts with the Nevada Gaming Commission. Chairman Bernhard has also been a strong supporter to the gaming law program at the Boyd School of Law, having guest lectured on many occasions. He has a lot of humbled wisdom that is evident throughout his oral history.

The Nevada gaming industry has been shaped by the three individuals who have generously shared their stories and experiences in this issue—William S. Boyd, Peter Bernhard, and Burton Cohen. Their personal insight provides an excellent view into the history of gaming in Nevada. While each provides a unique history, their combined influence on Nevada gaming is immeasurable.