

TELL TALES

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sonally, I'd rather read hard news than the gushy stuff, but if I'm going to read hard news I would like to see it have some degree of accuracy.

The first article was written by a John Haase who opens his story by interviewing Tropicana Hotel president J. Kell Houssels. Only Haase spells it Houssel. And it isn't just a typo because Haase manages to spell it wrong through the entire story. Ah, but Haase isn't content just to misspell one name. He also interviews Bonnie Kanellis, a cocktail waitress at the Sands Hotel, only he spells it Kannelis. Now, if the guy can't even get the names straight on the first page of his story I figure he might not be exactly a stickler for the facts. Oh, do you know where he said the movie Ulysses was playing in Las Vegas? I mean you won't believe me, but old accurate Haase said it was playing in the Oyster Bar at the Frontier Hotel.

Now the film Ulysses, as almost everybody but Haase knows, was playing at the Bonanza Hotel, but then Haase might have been a little confused on his spelling. After all, the Frontier and the Bonanza are almost spelled alike. As a matter of fact, I won't even mention that Haase said Sid Caesar was starring at the Frontier when again he meant the Bonanza. After all what's a mile among friends.

Well, Haase's pal, who also wrote about Vegas, uses the pen name of William Murray. I know it can't be his real name. I mean a guy just couldn't write something that bad and use his real name. If they ever hang Murray for being a writer, they will be hanging an innocent man.

Murray seems to be astonished in his story that Las Vegas is loaded with high rollers, leggy girls and guys who once operated bookie joints back East. The whole thing, especially the 24 hour action, amazes him. What did he expect when he strolled into Caesars Palace? Some little old lady to walk up to him and say, "Glad you arrived, sonny, I just whipped up some stew."

Let me show you how sharp Murray is. He states in his story that he took a cab from the Aladdin Hotel to Caesars Palace and it cost him \$1.40. "It was just a mile," he wrote. (It is about two blocks from the Aladdin to Caesars.) Then, Murray, who is positive the cabbies are clipping him, complains because it cost him \$2.25 to go from the Riviera Hotel to downtown Las Vegas. Murray also cunningly insinuates that the Riviera Hotel is nothing like the French Riviera. Something probably very few people in the United States know.

But the thing that causes me to really blink back a tear or two is the fact that both writers are very much disturbed because there isn't enough culture in Las Vegas. And yet, both men write like dropouts from a literary school conducted by Mickey Spillane. All right, if you think I'm exaggerating let me steal a paragraph from Murray's article: "I walk into the lobby and notice there isn't much action here. No convention in session. A tall, splendid-looking redhead with unbelievable legs is playing blackjack by herself against the dealer, a wizened serpent who shuffles the deck with the lightning fingers of a master pickpocket." I rest my case.

And speaking of cases, bartender, I don't know what those two guys from LA were drinking while they were in Vegas, but would you order me a case of it?

Murray Hertz followed with:

HERTZ & FLOWERS: Last Sunday's LA Times stories on Las Vegas that appeared in "West" Magazine has caused considerable moaning and wailing among Las Vegas—and not without some justification. The stories were crudely written and not in very good taste. Of all the comments—and there were many—I think the following letter from a Christopher Crisp is the best retort I have seen. Incidentally, Chris's letter is as crisp as his name—and I have a feeling it's a nom de plume for a prominent Las Vegas who is no stranger to a typewriter.

★ ★ ★
AN OPEN LETTER TO THE
LOS ANGELES TIMES:

Dear Sirs:

The article "Las Vegas, Our Home Town," in a recent edition of West Magazine, gives clear evidence of the Times' advancing state of paranoia in its reportage of Nevada. Could it be the late Lucius Beebe was right when he characterized California as the "national nuthatch?"

Even allowing for artistic license there seems to be something frighteningly irrational about a series of five vignettes being clenched into a fist raised in anger over the supposed Negro problem in Las Vegas, Nevada. Of course, this is not the first non-

sequitur in neon to be fashioned by a writer-tourist. But isn't it rather odd that the place of publication is the city ennobled by the birth of a Watts, where outlanders from Iowa acquire a taste for tacos served up by sons of the Spanish Dons, and where once being Japanese ensured you of a barbed-wire home, California-style.

The author asks: "Don't you ever wake up in the middle of the night and worry about the poor b-----s going home broke?" That's a fair question. Fair enough to put to a clerk at the \$2 window at Hollywood Park. In 1965 the state of California received more than \$48 million in taxes on horse race gambling. That was enough money to operate the entire government of Nevada for a comparable period.

The author asks: "What about cultural events; do you ever miss museums, good plays, libraries, symphonies?" A fair question. It might be fair to ask it of the Times salesman who accepted the movie advertisement (Calendar, Oct. 8, Page 19) which in bold type suggested to the cultured in Los Angeles "leave the children home."

The author asks: "You like living here (Las Vegas)?" Also fair. Fair enough to ask of Times readers who over their morning coffee may apprise themselves of the smog warning and glance at the latest report of freeway auto fatalities. Or perhaps fill themselves in on the overnight raid of another acid-head den.

If the author troubles to make inquiry of Las Vegas again he might start by re-interviewing Mr. Houssels and Mrs. Kanellis. He misspelled their names. Could this have been an unwitting attempt to protect those whose frank, straight-forward replies were kneaded into a story-line mold bearing the imprint: "Made in Hollywood?"

Christopher Crisp
Las Vegas, My Home Town

Let's see if we can add any worthy comments concerning second piece in "Mess" magazine, by William Murray. Unlike Haase of the first "epic" devoted to interviewing local residents, Murray confined himself to childish
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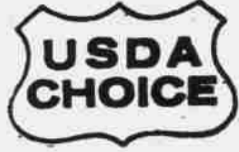
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