

TELL TALES  
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the agency in New York was fraught with apparent mis-quotes.

For instance, it had the Rabbi stating he "objected initially to the proposal, when he had been approached about it last summer." Of course, this was not possible so far as a statue of Christ was concerned. The proposal made last summer was by the Jaycees, who planned to put up a shrine with an eternal flame. What Gallup meant to say was that the Rabbi objected to any Peace Memorial. Since a Peace Memorial, without religious connotation, is not a matter of concern to a spokesman for a religious community, we would like to go on record here and now as being much in favor of any monument that beautifies our city.

The syndicated story went on to state: "He (Rabbi) said he had learned that the Jewish owner of a major-Las Vegas Hotel had been induced by the sponsors to underwrite the proposed memorial, but that the hotel owner withdrew his support when he was informed by the synagogue's cantor, an old friend, about the nature of the memorial." Gallup had better get his facts straight, because the above version does not jibe with Bilbray's, given us a day or so ago.

The syndicated story told of the Rabbi planning to call a meeting of the Clark County Ministerial Association, of which he is president, to seek backing for his campaign against the shrine. He said he has also urged against the memorial as one "to a war still going on" in Vietnam which he said was "challenged by many Americans as immoral." Perhaps so, but this member of the Jewish Community of Las Vegas, refuses to allow any religious leader and spokesman to comment for him on matters other than those concerning our Faith. We find nothing immoral in a statue specifically honoring the Nevada dead of all wars.

Gallup's story concluded with an offer from Dr. Leo Pfeffer, American Jewish Congress special counsel. The organization's experience and skills in protecting the church-state separation principle would be put at his (the Rabbi's) disposal if his efforts to stop the "peace Shrine" by voluntary means were not successful. Of course, this portion of the story was instigated by Gallup in New York City. Had Gallup known the information we had gathered, wherein all responsible parties vowed that any shrine design must be acceptable to all Faiths, poor Ben in New York would never have made such an ado about nothing.

Imagine our chagrin as we noted the same story pouring into our office in English-Jewish newspapers all over the country. We estimate some 5,000,000 persons are of the opinion Las Vegas is being torn asunder by a lone Rabbi battling a powerful combine about to thrust a Christian symbol on an unsuspecting Jewish Community. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We believed the matter would gently ease its way out and responsible parties would find the solution of a design that would be acceptable to all Faiths. But nobody explained this to Bilbray, who naively had a sketch drawn featuring symbols of the six major world religions.

This new sketch opened the door for a lengthy, follow-up story in Nov. 9, Review-Journal, that corrected the fallacy of the previous story in the R-J and its counterpart in the Las Vegas Sun. It also proved conclusively that the Las Vegas Israelite had the correct facts from the beginning. The recent R-J story, by Linda Kuntz, said that although the Convention Authority approved a plan for a memorial in the form of a statue of Jesus Christ, spokesman for the Authority later said, "It was incorrectly assumed that plans for the statue itself had been okayed." (Full text of R-J story appears on this page.)

While the "incorrect assumption" correction would have been ample, the story goes much further, and, as to be expected, carried many quotes, or possibly mis-quotes, from the Cantor and Rabbi. After the Rabbi rightly voiced the resolution passed at a special meeting of the Ministerial Association, recommending that "any peace symbol erected on public property should not bear any religious symbols," he added: there was "quite a to-do at the Ministerial Association" about having any kind of peace memorial at all.

"The war is still going on, and boys are still dying," he said. "The sentiment at the Ministerial Association was against any memorial, period." Here, this writer, Jack Teill, takes exception to "sentiment" of the spokesmen for all religions. We'll accept their recommendation concerning religious symbols, but we prefer to make up our own mind on the political subject of a peace memorial. We go on record here and now as being in favor of a Peace Memorial honoring the dead of all wars. In fact, we go on record as being in favor of any legal monument that beautifies our fair city.


From the Cantor we have a quote, which does not reflect the sentiment of the writer of this column and probably others in the Jewish Community: He said, "There are enough churches in this town--" On the contrary, we maintain there should be more churches of every denomination, even at least, one more synagogue.

We have another quote in the R-J story stating "Mr. and Mrs. Gottlieb are quite upset by all the uproar," and "Gottlieb feels he is being used." This is directly contrary to the feeling expressed by Bilbray during our interview.

This writer believes Mr. Bilbray is sincere in his efforts to bring Las Vegas a beautiful monument that will be acceptable to all Faiths. He said Mrs. Gottlieb desired a shrine where persons of all Faiths could pause for a moment's silent prayer. We concur with this blissful thought, and suggested to Bilbray to consider design plans that generally represent America, like an eagle with wide-spread wings, or an eternal flame, without any religious symbols, but with some wording making it appropriate for any visitor to pause in silent devotion.

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FROM THE L. V. REVIEW-JOURNAL

# Statue Battle Flares

By LINDA KUNTZ

R-J Staff Writer

A proposed peace memorial to stand in front of the Convention Center near the Strip has caused minor warfare between the self-styled Peace Memorial Committee and several religious and civic leaders.

The Convention Authority approved a plan introduced by the County Assessor James Bilbray's Las Vegas Peace Memorial Committee for a memorial in the form of a statue of Jesus Christ in front of the ultra-modern Convention Center.

It was incorrectly assumed, spokesman for the Authority later said, that plans for the statue itself had been okayed.

In the meantime, furious objections to the Christ figure had been raised by the Clark County Ministerial Association, and milder objections by some Convention Authority board members.

At a special meeting of the Ministerial Association last week a resolution was passed, recommending that "any peace symbol erected on public property should not bear any religious symbols." The Ministerial Association's main objection was the violation of the traditional separation between church and state.

Rabbi Aaron Gold, president of the Ministerial Association, said his objection was not the Christ figure, but to any religious symbol at all. He said there was "quite a to-do at the Ministerial Association" about having any kind of peace memorial at all.

"The war is still going on, and boys are still dying," he said. "The sentiment at the Ministerial Association was against any memorial, period."

Rabbi Gold said the association thought Las Vegas would become a subject of ridicule if a memorial, and particularly a religious one, were raised so close to the Strip.

"The resolution was passed unanimously," said Rabbi Gold. "The association saw the religious memorial as a violation of the separation of church and state."

Cantor Joseph Kohn, of Temple Beth Shalom, said he protested the memorial from



**EVENTUAL PEACE** — This is a tentative sketch of a proposed peace memorial to stand in front of the Convention Center. Assessor James Bilbray said it was drawn "almost in the dark" by his Peace Memorial Committee, who are attempting to arrive at a compromise design for the controversial peace memorial. The design features symbols of the six major world religions.

the beginning. "I don't believe a figure of Christ belongs on public property," he said. "There are enough churches in this town, and we do not need a religious statue."

"Anyway," he said, "is this thing supposed to be a war memorial or a peace memorial?"

"The Vietnam War is still going on. There is no peace yet."

Cantor Kohn added that Mr. and Mrs. Jake Gottlieb, local hotel owners, are putting up most of the money for the memorial, and "they are quite upset by all the uproar."

"Gottlieb feels he is being used," said Kohn.

Bilbray can't quite buy all the objections. "The committee (Peace Memorial) feels that this statue ought to be a religious one," he said. "We thought the Christ figure was a good idea, not necessarily as a religious figure, but one of a man who was killed by his enemies."

"Didn't Christ die for all of

us?" he asked.

Bilbray explained the controversy and misunderstanding about the Christ statue. "We saw a statue in San Diego," he said, "and people would stop and pray sometimes."

"This was quite impressive, and I thought we in Las Vegas could use something like that," he said. "Las Vegas has a reputation as 'Sin City,' and we think it would be nice to have a peace memorial for all to see."

But since all the objections were raised, said Bilbray, the use of the Christ figure has been discarded.

"What we have now is a plan for a memorial with symbols of the six major world religions," he said.

Objecting to the objections, Bilbray said the church-state argument was not valid. "How far are they going to carry it?" he asked. "The state pays for the land that churches are built on."

"Churches, then, are on tax-

free land," he said. "So why can't we build a religious memorial on public property?"

Bilbray said a peace memorial would be built "whether

the Convention Authority approves it or not."

"If we have to build this on private property, we will," he said. "We have the money."

Wes Howery chairman of the Convention Authority, said the Authority retains the "right to approve the design." He added the Authority was in no way connected with the construction of the memorial.

"All we do is work with the people who are building this, so we won't conflict with anyone's faith, or with the architectural design of the Convention Center," he said.

"Rather than have any misunderstanding," he said, "I appointed two Convention Authority members to work with Bilbray's committee on the design."

They are Edward Dourmian and City Commissioner James Corey.

Corey is somewhat lukewarm about the whole idea. "I never really thought of the whole thing as a religious symbol," he said.

The idea for a peace memorial started several years ago with the Clark County Jaycees, who wanted to build some sort of memorial for the war dead, said Corey. At the time, plans were not clear on whether this would be state-wide, and include all wars.

This new group (headed by Bilbray) came along, and the Jaycees relinquished their plans in favor of Bilbray's committee, who did have the financial backing needed.

"But the Jaycees' plan was more along the lines of Americana," said Corey, "and used the eagle as a symbol."

"I don't really approve of this new design, with the six religious symbols," said Corey. "I really don't want to get into religion."

"These boys are Americans who died for their country, and that is what the memorial should signify," he said.

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