

Guide to the Jay Sarno Photograph Collection

This finding aid was created by Lindsay Oden, Emily Lapworth, and Karla Irwin. This copy was published on November 12, 2019.

Persistent URL for this finding aid: <http://n2t.net/ark:/62930/f1zk79>

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Sarno, Jay Jackson
Title:	Jay Sarno Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00347
Date [inclusive]:	1947-1983
Physical Description:	1.3 Linear Feet (1 hanging folder, 1 flat file)
Physical Description:	91 Files (0.8 GB) JPG
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Jay Sarno Photograph Collection (1947-1983) contains photographs from hotel and casino developer Jay Sarno. The photographs primarily depict Sarno and his family. The photographs also depict some of Sarno's development projects, including Circus Circus, Caesars Palace, and the Grandissimo. The photographs depict construction of the hotels, events, and famous figures.

Preferred Citation

Jay Sarno Photograph Collection, 1947-1983. PH-00347. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Biographical Note

Jay Sarno (1921-1984) was a hotel and casino developer whose innovations had a major impact on the Las Vegas, Nevada casino hotel industry. In 1966, Sarno opened Caesars Palace, the first truly themed resort on the Las Vegas Strip. Two years later, he opened Circus Circus, the first family-themed casino. In 1969, Sarno and his associates sold Caesars Palace to Lum's, a Florida-based restaurant company that subsequently renamed itself Caesars World. In 1974, while under indictment for allegedly offering a \$75,000 bribe to an IRS agent, Sarno and his partners in Circus Circus leased the casino to Bill Bennett and Bill Pennington. Sarno, who was represented by attorney Oscar Goodman, was acquitted of the bribery charges in a 1975 trial. He then unsuccessfully attempted to develop the Grandissimo, which would have been a 6,000-room hotel casino near the Las Vegas Strip. Although Grandissimo was never fully completed, Sarno began the trend of themed mega-resorts on the Las Vegas Strip, and several opened within a decade of his death.

Born in St. Joseph, Missouri, Sarno served in the armed forces in World War II and earned a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Missouri, where he met lifelong friend and business partner Stanley Mallin. After the war Mallin and Sarno worked together as tile contractors in Miami, Florida, and house builders in Atlanta, Georgia. However, they did not find success until 1958 when they opened the Atlanta Cabana Hotel with the financial help of Jimmy Hoffa, Allen Dorfman, and Doris Day. Sarno built two more Cabanas with Mallin in Palo Alto, California, and Dallas, Texas, before they decided to try their luck in Las Vegas.

Jay Sarno was married to Joyce Sarno Keys, whom he divorced in 1974. He had four children: Jay C. Sarno Jr., September, Heidi, and Freddie.

Source: Schwartz, David G. *Grandissimo: The First Emperor of Las Vegas: How Jay Sarno Won a Casino Empire, Lost It, and Inspired Modern Las Vegas*. Las Vegas, Nevada: Winchester Books, 2013.

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Scope and Contents Note

The Jay Sarno Photograph Collection (1947-1983) contains photographs from hotel and casino developer Jay Sarno. The photographs primarily depict Sarno and his family. The photographs also depict some of Sarno's development projects, including Circus Circus, Caesars Palace, and the Grandissimo. The photographs depict construction of the hotels, events, and famous figures.

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Arrangement

Materials remain in original order.

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Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyrights and other rights. See [Reproductions and Use](#) on the UNLV Special Collections website for more information about reproductions and permissions to publish.

Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 2008 by Jay Sarno; accession number 2009-003.

Processing Note

Materials were processed by Joyce Moore in 2009. In 2015, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Lindsay Oden and Emily Lapworth wrote the collection description in compliance with current professional standards. At an undetermined time, photographs were physically scanned and stored on optical disks. In 2019, Karla Irwin processed digital files on optical disks and updated the finding aid.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

The following resources may provide additional information related to the materials in this collection:
Jay Sarno Collection, 1965-2001. MS-00548. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Jay Sarno. Interview, July 10, 2008. OH-02241. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Jay Sarno. Interview, March 25, 2008. OH-02242. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Names and Subjects

- Photographs
- Hotels -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Casinos
- Straus, Heidi, 1966-
- Sarno, Freddie
- Sarno, September

- Circus Circus Enterprises
- Caesars Palace Las Vegas Hotel and Casino
- Mallin, Stanley, 1923-
- Circus Circus Enterprises

Collection Inventory

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Portrait of Jay Sarno, undated (0347_0002) (view online)	item 01
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