

Guide to the Jay Sarno Photograph Collection

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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, and 3 CDs)
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.

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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
- Grandissimo hotel and casino
- Hotels -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Casinos
- Straus, Heidi Sarno
- Sarno, Freddie
- Sarno, September

- Circus Circus Hotel-Casino (Las Vegas, Nev.)
- Caesars Palace (Casino)
- Mallin, Stanley
- Circus Circus Enterprises

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
Portrait of Jay Sarno, undated	item 01
Portrait of Jay Sarno, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno standing by a car, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno in costume for a James Bond film, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno in costume for a James Bond film, undated	item 01
Portrait of Heidi Sarno, one of Jay Sarno's daughters, 1969	item 01
Man wearing tuxedo, 1977	item 01
Jay Sarno at a golf event, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno at a golf event, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno at the Circus Circus "Saints and Sinners" event, 1968	item 01
Jay Sarno seated at desk, 1968	item 01
Jay Sarno at Caesars Palace opening, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno dressed as a ringmaster in a circus with unidentified woman, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno at Caesars "toga party", 1983 August 20	item 01
Jay Sarno, possibly on his birthday, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno, 1971	item 01
Group of people, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno seated, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno at a microphone, making a toast, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno as a young man, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno and friends, undated	item 01
Musician Nat Brandwynne, Jay Sarno, Puggy Pearson at 2nd annual Las Vegas Country Club Member-Guest Golf Tournament, 1972	item 01
Jay Sarno in a golf cart, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno and David Janssen, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno with Harris Cashman, undated	item 01

Steve Lawrence, Jay Sarno, Eydie Gorme at the opening of the Tony B. Restaurant, 1966 August 25	item 01
Frank Sinatra, Jay Sarno, and Line Renaud at Frank Sinatra's birthday party, 1968 November	item 01
Sarno Family portrait, undated	item 01
Sarno Family at a birthday party, 1969	item 01
Temmy's (September's) 9th birthday, undated	item 01
Sarno Family, undated	item 01
September, Joyce, and Jay Sarno, 1969	item 01
Jay Sarno and wife Joyce at opening night for Don Rickles and Bobby Vinton, 1969 February 03	item 01
Jennifer Mullin, Heidi Sarno, September Sarno, Joyce Sarno, Virginia Mullin, Bertha Cooper, Jay C. Sarno, Freddie Sarno, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno, Heidi, Joyce, Jay C., Freddie, September, Rodney Dangerfield at Palace Court in Caesars Palace, 1976 April 14	item 01
September, Jay C., Jay, Freddie, Heidi Sarno, undated	item 01
Sarno Family, undated	item 01
Jay Sarno Family with Rodgers Brothers of Beaumont, Texas, undated	item 01
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Jay Sarno with daughter Heidi, 1983	item 01
Sarno Family, undated	item 01
Sarno Family at Caesars Palace, 1966 August	item 01
Sarno children, undated	item 01
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Heidi Sarno and friend, 1980-1989	item 01
Heidi Sarno and Jay Sarno, 1982	item 01
Jay Sarno and others, 1947 February 12	item 01
Steve Wynn with Heidi Sarno, undated	item 01
Heidi Sarno, undated	item 01
Steve Wynn at the podium at Caesars Palace, Heidi Sarno at far right, undated	item 01
Steve Wynn at the podium at Caesars Palace, Heidi Sarno at far right, undated	item 01
Heidi Sarno at right, undated	item 01

Heidi Sarno holding a baby, undated	item 01
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Joyce and Jay Sarno pose in formal wear, 1966 August 05	item 01
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Joyce Sarno in formal wear, 1966 October	item 01
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Circus Circus Hotel during construction, 1967	item 02
Bertha Cooper, Tanya the Elephant, Joyce Sarno and daughter Heidi at Circus Circus, 1971 February	item 02
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Joyce and daughter Heidi Sarno with Tanya the Elephant at Circus Circus Hotel, 1971 February	item 02
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Caesars Palace pool area, 1964-1966	flat file 01
Caesars Palace fountain entryway, 1964-1966	flat file 01
Caesars Palace fountain entryway with the statue of the Winged Victory of Samothrace, 1964-1966	flat file 01
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Interior view of Jay Sarno's Slots A Fun Casino, 1970-1973	flat file 01
Interior view of Jay Sarno's Slots A Fun Casino, 1970-1973	flat file 01
Exterior view of Jay Sarno's Slots A Fun Casino, 1970-1973	flat file 01
Exterior view of Jay Sarno's Slots A Fun Casino, 1970-1973	flat file 01
Exterior view of Jay Sarno's Slots A Fun Casino, 1970-1973	flat file 01
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Jay Sarno, 1960-1969	flat file 01
Jay Sarno, 1970 December 16	

	flat file 01
Sarno Family, 1974-1976	flat file 01
Jay Sarno having dinner with executives at a Japanese restaurant, 1972 May	flat file 01
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Construction, 1965 May 09	folder 01
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Looking west from the street, 1965 May 02	folder 01
Construction, 1965 May 09	folder 01
Looking northwest from the offices, 1965 May 02	folder 01
Theater basement and elevator pits, 1965 May 09	folder 01
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Tower foundation back-filled, 1965 May 09	folder 01
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