

Las Vegas Media Revolving Door

Assembled by Glenn Campbell, campbell@ufomind.com

In Las Vegas, there appears to be a long tradition, especially in local television, of journalists taking comfortable jobs with the same industries and government offices they once reported on. There is nothing illegal about this, but it certainly suggests a shift in personal philosophy. The responsibility of a journalist is to report the truth; the responsibility of a public relations officer or media consultant is to report whatever truth his employer pays him for.

It is the duty of a free press to keep an eye on industry and government. If the same industry and government also promises jobs to reporters, one wonders if it does not dampen a reporter's zeal. In Las Vegas, the big-money industries are nuclear interests seeking a repository at Yucca Mountain and, of course, the casinos. There is little economic diversity here, so these two industries carry inordinate power. If a journalist reports critically on either of them or on the local government, he has to be aware that it could dim his later job prospects.

The Yucca Mountain Project has ignited strong feelings in Las Vegas. The overwhelming popular reaction is "Not in My Backyard," and the local media seems to follow that lead. The big money, however, comes with the pro-nuclear forces, which see Yucca as their best hope for disposal of their growing waste stockpiles. Through contractors, the nuclear industry has attracted TV journalists Bryan Gresh, George Knapp, Doug Bradford and Dan Burns. Darwin Morgan now represents DOE interests.

9/28/96: The *Las Vegas Sun* reports on similar issues in an article, "[Tainted influence: Taking pro-nuke money hasn't hurt careers](#)"* (Also mentioned in [9/30/96 What's New](#).)

Like the tobacco industry in the southeast, gambling is sacred in Nevada. Every new casino opening is met with unquestioning media enthusiasm, and local journalists reporting on these events seem to take most of their information from casino press releases. With a few exceptions (like a 7/7/96 R-J report) the negative social impacts of gambling are rarely reported. Former TV reporter Sarah Hoveller now works for Circus-Circus, and many other former journalists (not yet listed here) now work for ad agencies serving the casino industry. One wonders if they would have these positions if they had aggressively pursued the casinos during their journalistic days.

Below are the connections we have found so far, from news clippings and industry sources. We encourage corrections and additions to this list. Items marked "(unc)" are unconfirmed at present.

Journalist	Current Position	Previous Position (Latest First)
Richard Urey	Press Secretary for Gov. Miller (1993)	News Director, KNTV-TV Ch.13
		Reportedly started at Ch.8 (unc)

Darwin Morgan	P.R. Director for Dept. of Energy/NV (1989)	Reporter & Editor, KVBC-TV Ch.3
Tom Warden	Asst. Clark County Manager (1996)	Reporter for KLAS-TV Ch.8
George Knapp	Reporter for KLAS-TV Ch.8 Note#3	Media Consultant to Nuclear Industry (1991) Note#1 Note#2
		Reporter/News Anchor for Ch. 8
Bryan Gresh	(Unknown)	Media Consultant to Nuclear Industry (1991) Note#1
		Reporter for Ch. 8
Doug Bradford	Science Applications Int'l Corp. (P.R. for nuclear industry & Air Force)	KVBC-TV Ch.3
		Ran for Clark County School Board, lost primary by 6 votes (1996)
Cathy Hanson	Director of Communications for City of Las Vegas	Reporter for KNTV-TV Ch.13
Sarah (Hoveller) Ralston	Director of Public Relations for Circus-Circus Enterprises	Directed Rep. John Ensign's election campaign
	Wife of Jon Ralston, Review-Journal columnist	Reporter for KVBC-TV Ch.3
		KNTV-TV Ch.13 (1986-89)
David Riggleman	LV Water District, Conservation (Director?) (1995)	Reporter, KVBC-TV Ch.3
Dan Burns	KNTV-TV Ch.13 (1996)	KSL-TV, Salt Lake City
		Rep. Ensign's Congressional Staff
		Science Applications International
		Managing Editor, KVBC-TV Ch.3

Notes

Note #1: In May 1992, Knapp & Gresh caused a local scandal when they told nuclear industry officials in Washington that they were preparing "dossiers" on Yucca opponents. A war of words then ensued between Knapp and the local newspapers. (See Sun: 5/6/92, 5/10/92, 5/19/92.)

Note #2: Knapp continued to produce segments and commentaries for Channels 13 and 8 while working for Altamira Communications on behalf of the nuclear industry. In [a 9/4/94 column](#), Las Vegas Sun publisher Brian Greespun accused Knapp of using Ch. 8 airwaves to further the nuclear agenda.

Note #3: On April 18, Knapp reported for Channel 8 on the ["Extraterrestrial Highway" unveiling](#). At the same event, he was a paid speaker for the Fox Film Corp., the sponsor of the event. Coincidentally, Knapp's Ch. 8 report contained no reference to the local opposition to the highway renaming, which would have been detrimental to Fox.

We heard that a former Nevada governor (List?) is now an executive of a casino corporation. Anyone know the company?

Las Vegas Media Links

- **Media:** [Las Vegas Media List](#)
 - **Newspapers**
 - [Las Vegas Sun](#)
 - [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)
 - [Las Vegas New Times](#)
 - [In Light Times](#) (New Age)
 - **TV Stations** (with local newscasts)
 - [KLAS-8](#) | [News Scripts](#)
 - [KVBC-3](#) | [Top News](#)
 - [KTNV-13](#) | [Top News](#) | [Weather](#)
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Responses

A Las Vegas newspaper reporter responds....

Sun, 28 Jul 1996

Glenn:

Thanks so much for letting me know about the "media revolving door" web page you've set up. It was great! I couldn't agree with you more: The media in this town are timid enough without switching jobs to "the dark side" as it were.

Interesting to note, I personally have been offered jobs on the dark side not once, but twice, and the other day a hint of a third came along -- all at a substantial raise from my newspaper salary. I turned both jobs down, basically on the grounds that I am a journalist, not a flak. (Frankly, I don't think I'd be good at PR; I'm too used to telling nothing less than the *whole* truth.)

Ironically, a city councilman once told me that he'd give me five years in Las Vegas before I decided to do PR for somebody or something. I brushed it off, but I can see his obvious point: Journalism pays next to nothing (even TV journalism, save for the anchors) and PR provides a good living. Casino spokesmen edge up to the 80s to the low six figures, from what I hear. But what the councilman's analysis doesn't take into account is that there are certain people (myself included) who cannot -- simply cannot -- reconcile themselves to telling less than the entire truth. Riding that moral high horse is costly, and don't think I don't think about that every month when it's time to pay the rent, but there's no way I could flak a casino, a city, even heroic firefighters. No, I've cast my lot and I'll stick with this until I don't think I can do it anymore.

Keep up the great work! I'll let you know about any "revolving door" situations that I learn about.

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