

tion gambling at all. We stress sunshine, good entertainment, and swimming. That's what gets the people we want, the bluenoses from Kansas, out here. Then when they see how open gambling is and see other bluenoses playing, they'll fall into line easy enough."

To the Las Vegas gambling industry as to the steel or oil industry, public relations includes political activity and lobbying as well as publicity programs. On the city and county level, sizable campaign contributions have been sufficient to maintain a sympathetic local government. On the state level the problem is somewhat complicated by the legislative majority from rural northern Nevada, which sees the gambling industry as the prime source of increased state tax revenues.

This spring, for example, a bill was introduced in the Nevada assembly to increase the state tax on gross winnings from two to five per cent. Soon afterward, Frogley, acting for Lieutenant Governor Jones, invited fifty-odd legislators from north-

ern Nevada to Las Vegas for a long weekend, to investigate local problems. Practically all the lawmakers accepted the invitation, and found themselves quartered luxuriously in various Strip hotels. Several hours were spent touring Las Vegas schools and other points of civic interest, after which the legislators relaxed to enjoy a weekend of free sunshine, free drinks, free food, and free lodging. The regular evening tour included two free floor shows each night except Saturday, when there were three. An influential member of the state senate finance committee said later, "I definitely learned a lot about the problems of southern Nevada."

**M**EMBERS of the Federal government have also required some attention, as in 1951, when a bill in Congress proposed a ten per cent tax on all gambling devices. Lieutenant Governor Clifford Jones of the Golden Nugget, Marion Hicks of the Thunderbird, and several representatives of the Reno gambling interests descended upon the Mayflower

Hotel in Washington. There they conferred with, among others, Senator Pat McCarran, an old friend.

The result of the Washington trip was a revised Congressional bill, which taxed slot machines, race books, punch boards, etc., but neglected to mention roulette, "21," and craps.

**T**HE LAS VEGAS gambling business has thus evolved into a full-blown industry, with all the specialized problems, the complex financial structure, and all the tax, public-relations, and competitive worries of any other large industry. Whether it can be morally defended as a useful industry must be left for others to debate. This writer, having applied the gamblers' system on craps by betting on every number, taking the single odds each time, and then praying a seven wouldn't come up, and having won \$590 in a forty-minute session, is in no mood to be objective—especially since the same system, at a later and only slightly longer session, cost him eight hundred dollars.



Wide World

## I Battled McCarran's Machine

**TOM MECHLING**

**P**EOPLE called me "Don Quixote in a Trailer" when I started out to take the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senator away from Senator Pat McCarran's Nevada political machine. Eight months later my wife and I—and the thousands of supporters we had acquired—defeated that machine in a primary election.

But in the November general election McCarran, a nominal Democrat, won a Republican victory. Beaten in the primary, he threw his support to the Republican nominee, and that, on top of the Eisenhower landslide, which swept a normally Dem-

ocratic state almost 2 to 1, was too much for us. But we had proved that the people can beat a political machine.

**N**O CANDIDATE was ever less experienced in politics than I when I quit the Washington press corps to enter Nevada politics. I was nothing but another private citizen who had gotten mad at the way our government was being kicked around and wanted to do something about it. From my close-up view as a newsman I was disgusted that neither Nevada Senator was representing the people of Nevada—only the big

gamblers, the big landowners, and the big mining interests.

No candidate in Nevada within the past decade had ever run for high office with even a hope of making a creditable showing unless he had behind him the McCarran political machine, a good deal of millionaire gambling money, and Nevada birth. I had none of these.

My wife Margaret and I knew the obstacles before we started. We knew that in a state of such sparse population—three people to two square miles—opposition to the machine immediately made one a target of merciless political crossfire. We knew

that we would have to take the campaign directly to the people, for the press of Nevada was almost completely machine-controlled. That was the key to the machine's strength: keeping the facts from the people.

We knew that sooner or later we would be running against McCarran himself, for he was, in effect, the candidate for every major office (and many minor ones) in Nevada.



In Washington, McCarran was in the habit of referring to Nevada as "my empire"—and not without reason.

### Up with the Milkman

We conducted our campaign on our own, out of our own savings, making each campaign dollar go as far as possible. We decided to campaign in a trailer and cook our own meals. That way we could live as decently and inexpensively in the rough, isolated mining towns as in the larger communities. We were to canvass every town, large and small, street by street, house to house, knocking on virtually every door in Nevada.

We budgeted seven thousand dollars for the eight-month campaign before the primary election in September, and another three thousand dollars for the remaining two months before the general election in November—if we got that far. (The entire campaign actually cost twelve thousand dollars.)

Our door-to-door campaign started on February 1, after we had made a quick swing across the state over snowbound roads in the north to make a formal announcement of my candidacy to the newspapers and schedule a modest series of small political ads. We began the canvass of southern Nevada while waiting for the northern winter to break.

A telephone was installed in our

trailer and Margaret began scheduling speaking engagements for me. Luncheon clubs, bridge clubs, garden clubs—groups that had never before been interested in politics—received calls from her asking them to hear me for just five minutes. I was willing to talk before any group, from well-attended union meetings to two tables of bridge.

The usual campaign day started about six with breakfast in the trail-

er. I was out after that to meet the early-morning workers — milkmen, bus drivers, and employees of other service trades. I met them on the job, introduced myself, presented my card, and answered any questions. Because I tried to answer all questions, the campaign was soon tagged the "open-book" campaign.

About nine I would begin ringing doorbells of private homes and calling on storekeepers. I kept a large street map of each town at hand and blocked out each street as I covered it.

Margaret had usually arranged one or two luncheon engagements at clubs during the noon hour. After that, back to ringing doorbells until dark. On many evenings there were dinner and speaking invitations. Afterward a heavy evening schedule began.

Margaret arranged for my appearance at different clubs and groups that were meeting at night. There were from three to six of these engagements almost every evening, a half hour to an hour apart. I made it a practice to speak for only five minutes and then answer questions. That way I got the feel of what people were thinking about and worrying about, and what they expected from Washington.

If I finished the night's schedule early, I would continue the personal campaigning until midnight throughout the downtown area, gen-

erally ending the day by having a snack with the employees in the kitchen of a restaurant.

That was the pattern of each eighteen-hour day, six days a week, for most of eight months.

I would note the name and address of every person I met and possibly what we discussed, and the next day I would send him a follow-up postcard. Margaret typed about five hundred cards a night, and our mailing list grew to over sixty thousand Nevada voters whom we had met personally. (About eighty-two thousand voted in the November election.)

In two months we had covered the Las Vegas area street by street and house to house. Then we hooked up our campaign trailer and moved north. En route we covered every house in Tonopah, a bleak mining town. The six-inch snow and the ten-degree temperature at Tonopah's six-thousand-foot altitude prompted us to work fast and move on to warmer places. But winter seemed reluctant to leave.

The day after we pulled the trailer into Reno, Margaret rushed me to the hospital for an emergency appendicitis operation. I was unable to do anything for ten days, and in the meantime she carried the whole burden of the campaign—writing press releases, making speeches, and keeping up the door-to-door canvassing. We couldn't afford to lose even a week.

SO FAR, it was a discouraging campaign. It was hard to tell how we were doing. But here and there we had detected an undercurrent of discontent with machine rule in the state. We were beginning to receive unsigned letters of encouragement. Most names were withheld because the writers were in business and felt they could not afford to mix openly in politics—particularly if they were against the machine.

Just meeting people at their doors, I could sense this discontent. Many asked me to come back at night because they didn't want to be seen talking with me. They explained that they were unable to support me openly, but that I could be assured of help among their friends and relatives. Some asked me not to appear

too friendly with them if we met at gatherings or on the street.

There was the little redheaded repairman who fixed our oilstove. "Forget it," he said when I tried to pay him. "That's my campaign contribution." There was the service-station owner where I left my car for a quick lubrication job. "You can't pay me," he said. "That's my bit to keep your campaign trailer rolling." There was the garage mechanic who worked until two in the morning overhauling the engine so that there would be no risk of a breakdown during our last hectic tour of the state. And in Las Vegas, in August, with the temperature 110 outside and 125 inside our metal trailer, one of the owners of the trailer court hooked an air conditioner onto our window without a word. We discovered later that it came off his own window.

How could we thank people like that? The boilermaker in the railroad shop at Sparks gave me the answer: "Just represent us little guys as well as the big shots when you get in."

### Victory in September

Six weeks before the primary election, when it became apparent that this was a machine vs. anti-machine fight, the machine's orders to its newspapers were to stop ignoring and start smearing. It was then I first felt the campaign beginning to bite.

We used the radio to answer their charges. I put the "open-book" campaign on the air and answered over the radio any question phoned in. Margaret and I broadcast atop a

truck parked in a busy downtown thoroughfare, first in Las Vegas and then in Reno. Margaret took the questions over special phone lines, typed them on cards, and passed them on to me.

WE AWAITED the primary election returns alone in a motel room outside Reno. First reports showed me trailing badly, and there was no improvement during the evening. But early in the morning the tide turned. The final result was a victory over the machine by a 475-vote margin.

Suddenly our campaign was national news. Phone calls and mail from all over the country swamped us. We had no staff, no headquarters, no office to handle them.

The big question was: What would McCarran do? He had found it necessary a few days before the primary election to endorse his candidate, Alan Bible, in a long statement and radio broadcast. That was unprecedented for McCarran, whose machine generally made such nominations without fanfare or contest. But even with McCarran's full-throated backing, his man had lost.

For several days McCarran refused to talk. He hinted that he would not support me and would even cross party lines to beat me. But a few days later his representatives approached me. They brought with them his price, the price I was expected to pay for a unified party that would assure my election in November. With such support, I was an odds-on choice to win.

But the price was ridiculous for anyone who prized his independence.

McCarran wanted me to clear every political decision with him, just as if I were one of his errand boys. In short, I was to help him rebuild the machine we had wrecked in the primary. With McCarran it was either rule or ruin.

At first I couldn't believe the Senator had that much gall. I suspected his spokesmen of double-talking. But repeatedly I was informed that was it—take it or leave it.

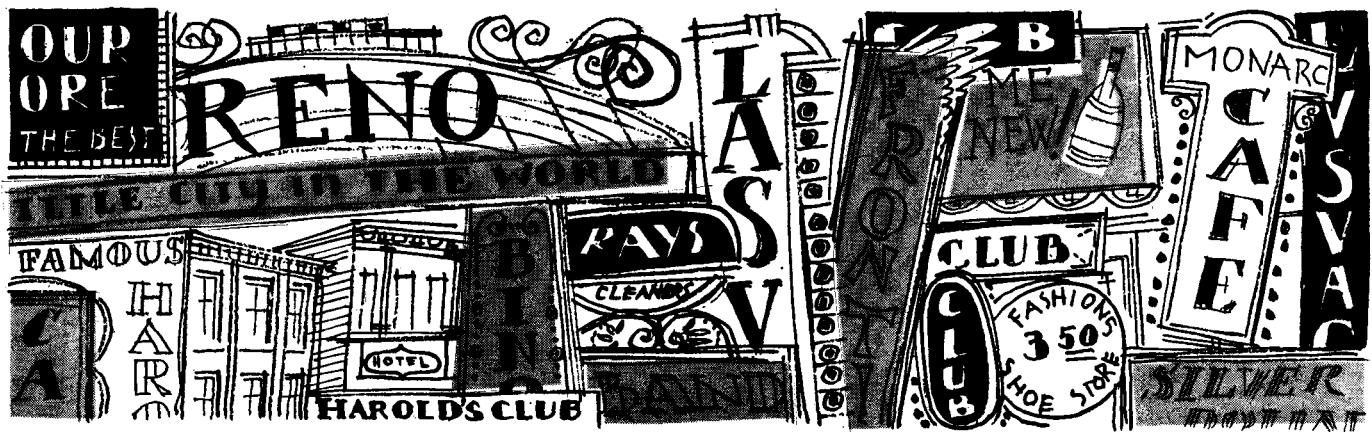
At the urging of those who felt there was some chance still left for party harmony, I made one last call on McCarran's spokesmen to see if the ridiculous price still held. It did. I told them I would have no part of it.

### The Hidden Microphone

After that, McCarran went out to beat me—first furtively, then, after I had exposed him, openly.

He had quite an organization of young lawyers that he had built up throughout the years. Virtually any young Nevadan who wanted to go to law school in Washington had only to write McCarran's office and his wish was granted. All the Senator demanded from him in return was loyalty—absolute loyalty and an understanding that he would never consider running for any political office without his express permission. My unforgivable mistake was that I had never asked McCarran whether it was all right to run for United States Senator. The young lawyers were asked to work against me.

With all this activity going on against me in my own party, I felt it was high time to publicize the deal that had been offered me in return





for McCarran's support. I decided to make it an issue in the campaign. I went to the radio to explain why McCarran was backing the Republican nominee instead of his own party's candidate.

At least this brought McCarran out in the open. He stormed back at me in a state-wide radio broadcast, calling me an "unmitigated liar" and "untrustworthy and unfit to serve in the United States Senate," and asking his friends the length and breadth of Nevada to vote against me. In many respects that was my best endorsement.

From then on his machine stopped at nothing. The press opened up with both barrels. The Reno newspapers closed their advertising columns three days before election and then proceeded to print highly biased anti-Mechling stories in the news columns. We couldn't even buy a paid political ad in reply.

My second conversation with McCarran's spokesman had been secretly recorded. That tape recording could have been played in its entirety and nothing damaging would have resulted. It would have confirmed McCarran's price for his support, which he later so vehemently denied.

Instead the tape was carefully edited, my remarks taken out of context and completely changed around; a week before the election it was brought forward as "proof" that I had sought a deal with McCarran. The "proof" was then produced in the Reno newspapers in the form of a news story. Two reporters from those papers—the only ones allowed to hear the recording at the time—wrote their "exposés" on the basis of what they had heard. My challenge that the opposition play even the edited version of the recording over the radio was never accepted.

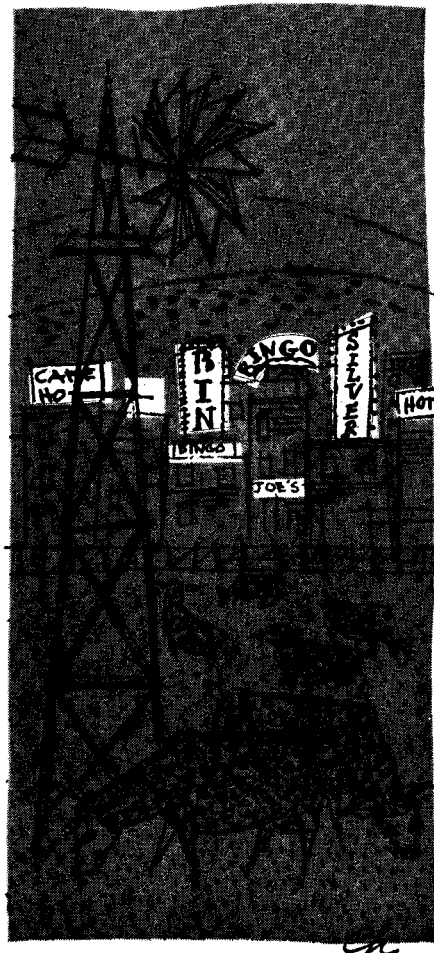
ASIDE from Hank Greenspun's Las Vegas *Sun*, Nevada newspapers are a key part of the political machine. Editors are not newspapermen; they are political propagandists. Newspapers are not designed to print news impartially and fairly; their duty is to peddle a political point of view carefully designed to protect the machine.

The editor of both noncompeti-

tive Reno newspapers was high up in the echelons of the machine, since his *Gazette* and *Nevada State Journal* had large circulations and covered more than half the state. One of his sons was directly employed by McCarran, and the other owed his appointment as Assistant U.S. Attorney to our senior Senator.

During the final weeks of the campaign we learned that our phone was being tapped. When we had to talk about campaign plans on the phone, we would use public phones or those of friends.

Practically every letter which passed through the Reno post office from Democratic National Headquarters was opened before delivery and then stamped "Opened by Mistake." Nearly every package was broken open by "rough handling." We tried to channel our mail, whenever possible, through our small home-town post office where we knew the postmaster personally; for a while we drove to a community outside Reno to receive our mail.



ALL DURING the campaign I decried the fact that many hoodlums with criminal records and associations had been given licenses to operate as gamblers in Nevada through the largess of the controlling politicians. I took pains to make a sharp distinction between the hoodlum gamblers and those whose records were above reproach and who had always operated legitimately. But in reports of my views that distinction was purposely obscured in order to make it appear that I was against legalized gambling—a major industry in Nevada. The owners passed the word to their employees that they would lose their jobs if I were elected.

I made a special trip to see most of the operators to refute to their faces the interpretation that was being placed on my stand. They had fearful visions of "another Kefauver." But they were glad to see me, their almost uniform reaction being "Maybe we could do business."

One of the owners of a plush resort hotel in Las Vegas, who is part of the nation-wide crime syndicate and has a prison record, pleaded with me not to put him out of business. He protested that he had no interest in politics. All he wanted was to be left alone, to make the money the natural odds afforded him in the gambling business.

### 'Anything, Anything at All'

He insisted that he had to talk with me privately. So he pulled me into the men's room, where he took out a roll of hundred-dollar bills. He counted out fifty of them without hesitating and thrust them into my hand. He urged that I take them for my campaign fund "as a starter," and if I needed "anything, anything at all," to let him know. No one was to find out about his gift. It was all cash. And certainly the machine politicians weren't to know that he had spotted the potential winner on the other side of the street.

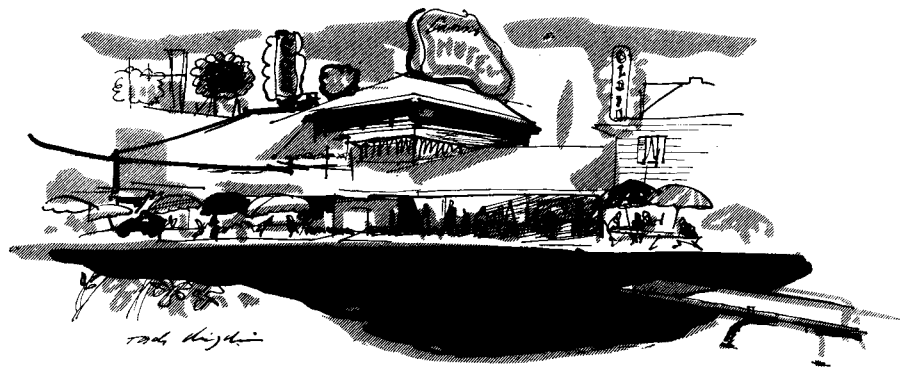
I thanked him but refused the money, explaining that I wasn't accepting contributions and that my personal campaign wasn't costing a great deal. Not that I was against him, I explained. I just didn't want to be obligated.

He couldn't understand. He in-

sisted. He tried to put the roll of bills in my pocket. But when I wouldn't accept it, I lost any support he might have wanted to give. In his world of payoffs, my behavior was incomprehensible. Not being able to understand my motives, he decided I must be against him.

**J**UST BEFORE the November election, the machine began putting on economic pressure much more openly. The owner of a small shoestore had placed my placard in his window one day. The next day it was gone. Reason: The owner had been informed that his lease was in jeopardy because of his support of an anti-machine candidate. He had seen such things happen in Nevada enough times to induce him to remove the placard.

One of the big casino operators, whose civic background included a prison term, spent a day before election in the poorer section of Las Vegas distributing ten- and twenty-dollar bills for votes against Mech-



ling—until photographers appeared to record the gambler's civic zeal. The county sheriff under whose jurisdiction this had taken place spent part of Election Day within an illegal radius of a polling place passing out ballots marked against Mechling.

#### Defeat in November

Once again we faced the tortures of an election night. But this time we were bucking a national trend as well as fighting an uphill battle within our own state. It was too

much, and I lost the election for U.S. Senator from Nevada to Republican incumbent George Malone by 2,722 votes. (Governor Stevenson lost to Mr. Eisenhower by 18,814 votes.)

We had started out alone, Margaret and I. We had started out on the difficult road toward a political ideal—better and more equal representation for all the people of Nevada. We had started alone, but we did not travel that road alone. Sometimes it is difficult to see how many people are traveling on such a road. But they are there.

# Of Gamblers, a Senator, And a *Sun* that Wouldn't Set

**RICHARD DONOVAN and DOUGLASS CATER**

**W**HEN Hank Greenspun, owner, editor, and front-page columnist of the Las Vegas *Sun* (daily circulation, 8,000) began his editorial campaign against Nevada's Senator Pat McCarran, people in those parts hardly believed their eyes. Then, in the spring of 1952, when he sued the Senator, his administrative assistant, and fifty-six Las Vegas gamblers and gambling houses for conspiring to drive him out of business by withholding advertising, the residents were deeply shocked. Greenspun, a relative newcomer to Nevada, was challenging two of the bedrock institutions of the state, Pat McCarran and the gambling interests. What's more, he was taking the challenge

into the courts, where McCarran reputedly has considerable influence.

In February, 1953, everybody learned that the case had been settled out of court, and wire services carried McCarran's statement that he considered this "an open admission by the plaintiff that the charges which he brought against me during the recent political campaign were entirely unfounded."

However, news—even when it is not carried by wire services—travels fast in Nevada. People soon learned that there was more to the Greenspun affair than had met the eye. Hadn't McCarran's lawyers failed to get the case thrown out of court after trying every conceivable legal

maneuver? Hadn't Greenspun's lawyers succeeded in putting the Senator under oath, and hadn't McCarran been forced to say a lot of things that would be pretty embarrassing next time he tried to seek votes for himself or his protégés? Finally, hadn't the settlement suddenly been rushed through, after only two days of the trial, when the Greenspun lawyers produced a mystery witness who formerly worked for Marion Hicks, manager of the Thunderbird—the man Greenspun accused in his complaint of transmitting an order from McCarran to cancel all advertising in the *Sun*?

Contrary to any open admission of making unfounded charges, the