



ODD FELLOWS INSTALLING TEAM

The installing team above recently officiated at the installation of Maple Leaf Lodge No. 57 in Orangeville. Front row, seated, left to right: Aubrey Grant, P.G.; Walter Thompson, Marshal; Russell Gill, DDGW; James McLennan, District Deputy Grand Master; Wm. Hunter, PDDGM; John MacDonald, DDG Sec.; James Collier, PDDGM. Standing: Alf Waldie, DDG Treas.; Gerald Fendley, Warden; Mel Tamblin, Chaplain; Bruce Fendley, I.G.; John Holden, R.S.S.; Don Mercer, LSNG; Bert Dixon, LSVG; Roy Weiland, Concl.; Frank Adams, RSVG; Art Atkinson, OG.

CHATTING with MARY BIEHN

AFTER OUR STAY in Los Angeles, we were Las Vegas bound by bus. Just outside the city, we drove thru fertile land, the broad highway climbing steadily past fruit and vegetable farms, till we reached the mountains. The road wound up and around the rounded peaks, which were part of the Calico mountain range. Covered with parched-looking brown grass and sparse shrubs, they formed a fitting portal to the fict desert which lay just beyond.

WE HAD TRAVELLED thru desert before, en route to the coast, but it was at night. Now we had a good chance to see it in bright sunshine. Strange-looking cacti grew by the roadside. Sometimes the monotony of the terrain was broken by twisted, stunted-looking trees that seemed like a species of pine. They were Joshua trees. This is the only area in the world, outside the Holy Land, where they will grow. There was no sign of human habitation visible, and no wonder. In the distance, like clay-coloured cardboard cut-outs against the cloudless sky, were the jagged Soda and Shado' mountain ranges. The desert highway passed between their barren peaks — still no signs of life of any kind. There was so much of the wilderness, such a width and a breadth — and at times, height, that it had a sort of magnificence. It all looked so alien to my eyes, that I couldn't stop peering out the window. However by the time we arrived at Las Vegas, we had been on the road four hours, and I was glad of the change.

AND WHAT A CHANGE it was. Almost like a desert mirage, a mile-long strip of fabulous hotels rose up from the sand. This was the suburbs of Las Vegas.

We stayed at The Dunes, quite opulent enough for anyone — but a new hotel just down the road had reached for a new peak of glamour, by modelling its entrance on the Taj Mahal, complete with long pool, reflecting its marble pillars, statues and cypress trees.

THE LOBBIES of Las Vegas hotels are different from any others in the world. Most of them don't waste space on comfortable lounge chairs, etc. Every available inch is taken up with slot machines of all varieties, from five centers, up. In one hotel, they couldn't even bear to leave room for a front door. You just walked in thru a wall of heated air. In addition to the slot machines, were the gaming tables — poker, roulette, and the big stakes game, baccarat.

There is always a 'house man' in charge of the game. All players in the game section sit around the tables tense and unsmiling. In the ceilings are mirrors, and for a triple check, there are formidable looking men in uniform, toting guns on their hips, posted at strategic places throughout the emporiums. At first I thought they were policemen, but later I learned they were hired by the hotel owners to encourage recalcitrant losers to pay their debts. Many of them are former bodyguards for underworld characters, and have criminal records.

THE CASINOS are open all night every night. And visitors just can't leave the slot machines alone. Even couldn't. And I thought I wasn't a gambler! After a visit to Las Vegas, I can see why we have to have gambling laws to keep us protected from ourselves. People get into a real lather over those machines. It's

really not a pretty sight. No matter how many jackpots they get, they keep feeding the money back in, until time or money runs out.

There's a surface air of gaiety about Las Vegas, generated by the richly dressed crowds, excitement of night clubs with big name entertainers, good restaurants, bright lights and noise of the crackling slot machines. But there's something sad and sinister about it too. Occasionally this surfaces . . . like when I saw a woman weeping as her husband led her away from the gaming tables . . . a man's hand shaking so badly he could hardly light a cigarette as he played baccarat . . . and an elderly man sitting on the steps at the entrance of the plush 'Taj Mahal' — the picture of despair, with his head in his hands.

IT WAS A GOOD THING for our pocket books that the tour had arranged some other diversions for us while we were there, such as a trip out to the gigantic Hoover Dam. How the poor parched country needs that dam. A stunning sight and an engineering feat, 726 feet high, it creates 116-mile long Lake Mead. It is situated in the midst of the Sunset mountains, so named because of the beautiful hues the setting sun gives their jagged, multi-coloured clay peaks. I could hardly believe they were hard rock until I went up and actually poked at them. They're hard all right. Actually the tail-end of the High Sierras, they lead into Death Valley.

En route to the dam, a dried up lake bed was pointed out to us. When they have one of their infrequent rainstorms, the

empty bed fills up, and is populated with tiny prehistoric fish that have never been seen anywhere else in the world. Scientists have tried keeping specimens alive in labs and museums, but to no avail. When the lake dries up again, the fish disappear into the earth with the water — until the next big rain.

HONESTLY, THAT COUNTRY is so wildly desolate to our eyes we couldn't imagine anyone liking to live there. We chatted about this to a security officer at the dam. He lives in Las Vegas and loves it. He says, and we believe it, there is no in between emotion about living there. If you don't love it you hate it.

What do you do for recreation, we asked — tactfully not mentioning gambling, which I don't imagine many are able to resist . . . He told us that a great hobby out there is to go riding all over the desert and into the mountains, looking for animals and strange rock formations, in a stripped-down Volkswagen. When just the floor, wheels and engine remain, the car is light enough, and the motor set high enough, to allow them to travel anywhere off the beaten track whether there are roads or not. Horseback riding is very popular for the same reason.

The sky there is an intense, clear blue. The air is one of their big advantages — pure and very low in humidity. While we were there, the temperature was pleasant, in the high 80's. But more often than not, it soars way over the 100 mark and the heat is so dry that it is like sticking your head in an oven.

Waiting for our train to take us back east from Las Vegas, we had a look at the town proper, and an hour or so to explore what is really their Main Street. I don't know where their food and clothing stores

were, because what we saw was a solid three blocks of gambling casinos, filled with slot machines and with overhead flashing neon signs which make Broadway look like Dullsville.

HOMEWARD BOUND, the next day — through hundreds of miles of desert, and the range country of 'Bonanza' and 'My Friend Flicka' fame. — Aha — finally saw herds of antelope and some cowboys rounding up hundreds of fat black cattle. That dried up grass must be more nourishing than it looks.

Next morning, we had breakfast while crossing the Mississippi. How I sh the level farmland looked! How prosperous and comfortable the farmhouses — And after a flight home from Chicago, how lucky we felt to be back in our own little corner of the world!

Wedding Couple. Attendants Repeat 25 Year Wedding Vows

A family dinner was held in honour of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Sammit who celebrated their Silver Wedding anniversary on Tuesday, Nov. 25. Prior to the dinner, Joe and May and their attendants of 25 years ago, Emmanuel and Rita Sammit went through the same wedding vows in the same church, St. Paul The Apostle Church on Dundas St. in Toronto. Father Laurance performed the ceremony which included a new set of wedding bands. The bride of 25 years ago was dressed in mauve gown with matching coat and orchid corsage. Her attendant, Rita Sammit, was dressed in a pink gown and matching orchid corsage. On the following Sat., Nov. 28, a hot dinner and reception was held at the legion hall in Bronte, when 104 relatives and friends gathered to extend their congratulations to the radiant couple. The head table was decorated with vases of red roses and a large wedding cake which was made by Mrs. Frank Martin and decorated by Mrs. Emanuel Sammit. The bride was dressed in a floor length gown of Silver Metallic with matching slippers. Her attendant Mrs. E. Sammit was dressed in a floor length gown of green metallic. Mrs. G. Calver, mother of Mrs. Sammit, was dressed in a pale green gown trimmed with sequins and braid embroidery and she wore corsage of orchids. Mrs. Millie Boorman of Barrie, a sister-in-law, was dressed in a mushroom floor length embossed gown. Following the dinner dancing was enjoyed by all. Guests attended from Flint, Michigan, Toronto, Barrie, Cooksville, Nashville, Streetsville, Milton, Georgetown, Oakville and Hornby.

The Eden United Church Sunday School will be holding their Christmas Concert on Friday evening Dec. 9. The children are looking forward to seeing dear old Santa Claus.

— Mrs. Jim Hamilton

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