

Historical Review Las Vegas (Part 10)

(rs) Kirk Kerkorian, about whom we already have reported, was not yet at the end with his projects. The International, then the MGM Grand (I), and later it should become still much larger and more spectacular.

After he had been selling his shares and rights of the origin MGM Grand to the Bally's Corporation, he took on a new project. At the most southward point of the Las Vegas Boulevard he has bought in the early 90ies larger land-lots nearby the Tropicana Hotel, which there already stood. He took over the Tropicana Golf yard and a smaller hotel – the „Marina“.



1992 the construction work began for a hotel-project, which is considered even for Las Vegas Standards as „giant“. Just before Christmas in 1993, on 17.th December the MGM Grand Hotel, Casino and Theme-park opened. The construction cost were estimated to one Billion US Dollar, the largest part has been financed by Kirk Kerkorian himself. Until today this hotel ranges among the 10 largest hotels in the world. It has since his completion the unimaginable amount of 5.005 hotel-rooms and a Casinos' ground area of about 60.000 Square-meters, which couldn't have been topped for a long time. It has been built with a huge parking garage for 6.000 cars and uncountable restaurants, a food-court, which couldn't have been larger even in a shopping-centre. Additionally there is a separate entrance-gate only for busses and suppliers, a taxi-starting-street of several hundreds of meters and an entertainment-complex of the superlative.

Furthermore there has been built in the following-up to the Casino, a theme-park of the Metro Goldwyn Meyer Film Studios with attractions for children and adults, where one could amuse their self. At the beginning the entrance fee was just a little more than 10 Dollar for a day in the theme-park, so it is something like a bonus-fun for each visitor. In the MGM Grand there have been employed at that time 7.500 employees, a safe working position. The casino was equipped at the beginning with 3.500 Slot-machines and 170 table-games, on 4 different gambling areas, which are run by different proprietors and societies. For the cheering up of the European visitors there has even been offered the French Roulette. Nevertheless this game did never really make it in Las Vegas. To slowly game-manner, to tradition-oriented, to „stuck-up“, if anything or one could be bothered, and soon the tables have been taken away and replaced by Baccarat tables. The 4 Casinos within the Casinos was built after different themes and decorated. There has been the Emerald City Casino, with scenes form „The Whizard of Oz“, then the Hollywood Casino, with pictures and figures of Hollywood actors, next to the Monte Carlo Casino, where just French Roulette has been offered, so fully in the style of the French Riviera, and at last there has been still the Sports Casino, with a betting office, Poker Room, etc.. One particular High Limit Area has been created for gamblers from Overseas, who were willing, to risk amounts between 150.000 up to 1 Million Dollars in only one game. The astonishing statistic has shown that due to less of such High Limit Gamblers up to 20 % of the total turnover of a Casino could have been assured, in spite of Thousands of Slot-machines and uncountable Black Jack Tables. The whole thing has of course also something of a Kick-back, which could have brought sometimes also the Vegas Hilton in serious problems: A Casino, which attracts High Limit Gamblers, must have a extremely high money deposit at its disposal. It could be that an enterprise writes fantastical digits within the first 20 days of the month and is just in line with the Business Plan objectives. Then the unexpected happens to be, 2 or 3 risk-

fans High Rollers from Japan arrive and play Baccarat with bids of several hundred thousand Dollar each Hand! When it happens that such Gamblers got a lucky day and they bid for 2 – 3 hours long more on the winning chances, than on the loosing one, some massive losses are brought though about. That actually has caused the Vegas Hilton also many problems. Other Casinos renounced because of that reason to High Limit Players. Only extremely financially sound Casinos could sustain fluctuations like these. The MGM Grand was one of these hotels with nearly unlimited money deposits.

The MGM Grand distinguished itself also by means of having always again the Superstars from Hollywood invited or box matches arranged for the mass of fans, who were arriving from all over the world. The Box-Arena could fill more over 15.000 visitors and besides there are 2 Showrooms for 1.000 visitors each Show. Stars like Barbara Streisand, Elton John and others got their Shows in the MGM Grand and were bringing huge-turnovers to the company. The MGM Grand, which originally was built with a lion-alike gate, where the visitor could walk through in order to get in the temple of game of chance, had to be refurbished later. According to the opinion of many Asian visitors it meant however bad luck to walk through the mouth of a lion. So many Asians kept away of the Casino, who were not encouraged to go in the MGM. Marketing Strategic found it very soon out and analysed the problem. Of short notice the entrance gate was changed for the refurbishing costs of several Million Dollars. The landmark of Metro Goldwyn Meyer poses as a lion directly in front of the Casino still today, but the entrance doors are built slightly different now. The visitors, who are coming from the other side of the Strip over the bridge toward the MGM Grand are driven by escalators down to the Casino-Level.



Totally at the end of the Strip, where experts say that the Strip is ending here on the opposite side of the Sahara Avenue, there is another complex, which is almost impossible to miss: Stratosphere Tower. A project of a gambler, whose greatest art has ever been to get him self

promoted. Built in an environment that is generally noticed by analysts as a rather dangerous area and insecure investments landscape, there Robert "Bobby" Stupak risked with his project either to write history or to go down.

The Hotel and Casino was Bob Stupak's childhood's dream. In order to be writing once in his life the history in the city of game of chance and of the entertainment. As a son of a proprietor of illegal Bingo- and Dice-games at the East-coast, Bob Stupak has already been in contact with the game of chance-scene as a child and should build up his entire life on. He proofed it to the world that it is possible, due to his sound positive attitude and with the apt courage for risk, even in a city where the keenest competition is on the agenda, to reach the success however. Even in a residential area that is named by natives as „Naked City“, an area where the crime ratio is remarkably higher than anywhere else in Las Vegas, and where the cultures, who were bouncing against each another, couldn't be any more different at all, Bob Stupak was building a 370 Meters high tower, who would in future time be a orientating assistance to visitors in the Multi-Millions Metropole.

Into being came Bob Stupak's project Stratosphere Tower out from a much smaller version called Vegas World – a Casino, which originally had not got any hotel-rooms, but just some few slot-machines. The permission for to running a Casino he was getting only after not measurable efforts and by the help

of additional investors. So there stood on that place, where today the Stratosphere Tower stands, a little Gambling Museum, in where the visitors can admire authentic Slot-machines, Chips, photographs from the origins of Las Vegas, as well as a authentic 100.000 Dollar Bank-note. To the big misfortune the Museum was burnt down in a tragedian night and only few goods could be rescued. Even Bob Stupak was attending at certain hopeless extinguishing action and had tears in his eyes. Should his childhood's dream be failing now and would be doomed?

No! Bob Stupak was always of a fighter nature. He survived this crisis as well as the tragic accident with his motorbike a short time later, when he was together with his son bouncing on a high speed in a correctly driving Subaru and he were getting into a skid about several meters high in the air. He survived also this fatal hit by lying for 2 month in coma and his project Stratosphere Tower should hence been built. From a Mini-hotel named Vegas World with a over-dimensioned wheel of fortune within the gambling area became a Hotel-Casino with over 1.000 hotel-rooms and a Casino, which should be generating over 100 Million Dollars a year.

The concept to be „demonstrating greatness“, was developing permanently by time. Bob Stupak's idea has not been originally to be constructing a huge tower. He only wanted to surpass the monumental illuminated advertising display of the Stardust, in order to draw the attention to his Vegas World Casino. He succeeded of course with that. His adverts display has been 4 times as big as the neon-sign in front of the Stardust. The other construction looked somehow alike a restaurant that has been arranged above the neon-sign. This „Sign-and-Dine“-construction was finally the



origin of Stupak's idea for his project „Stratosphere Tower“, a giant tower, the highest tower westwards the Mississippi, with a restaurant that is spinning in 360 degrees around its axis at the top of the tower, equipped with different attractions, as a survey-platform, a souvenir stand, and a Roller Coaster as well as another train, which is catapulting the visitors up at a high speed and lets them than fall back down again. The construction work for the Stratosphere Tower Casino began in 1991, the completion took 4 years and in the meantime the old Vegas World Casino was knocked down and replaced by a new building with 1.500 hotel-rooms. The long construction time is, comparing to other casino projects of similar size, reasoned by the financial shortage, in that Bob Stupak was in 1993. Stupak's sole possibility was to sell additional shares and to agree on a co-operation. Together with the help of his friend Lyle Berman, a Poker gambler and casino proprietor from Minneapolis the casino has been eventually rest-financed and completed. With the partnership of Grand Casinos, a Casino-society with several interests in Mississippi, Minnesota and Louisiana, Bob Stupak could lower a bit his own partnerships and was also not any longer the sole manager of this project.

His original idea, to build the highest tower in world, meant a further restriction in the decision-making freedom of Stupak. A man, who wanted all and who was to be grasping for the stars, a self-promoter, as there it happens seldom to be any on earth, suddenly to him the rules should have to be dictated??? From the side of the flight-authorities safety reasons have been mentioned, which could impede or endanger the approaches at McCarran International Airport and so Bob Stupak must have followed suit to this gaming rules. Nevertheless the Stratosphere Tower is still a sensational place in order to regard oneself the landscape of Las Vegas from the stars' perspective. It is very recommendable for every Las Vegas Visitor. The tower is reached by 4 high-speed elevators that are bringing the visitors within of only just

30 Seconds to the survey platform. The Restaurant can completely spin within 20 Minutes and offers the guests an excellent survey over the city and the dessert that lay surrounding it. The Big Shot, the catapult built alike train, brings the visitor with a speed to the top of the tower that pits the body against a driving force of 4-Gs that is similar to those of a astronaut by the start of the rocket.

Critics or historians have always mentioned the facts about how humans let build things that should be in future's time representing a mile stone. As for instance in Rome the Battle's Arena, or the Empire State Building in New York, or maybe also the Eiffel-Tower in Paris. So regarded one can say that the Stratosphere Tower has become the landmark to Las Vegas. At the Landing-approach he is to see first and stands up on the tower won't be able forgetting the moment when there below one self Las Vegas stretches to the end of the horizon. Even if the Stratosphere Tower Hotel and Casino should be permanently plagued by financial problems, hence it is a Casino that no one would like thinking it away.

After an interruption in construction work of approximately 2 years time, at the Strip should new casinos be opened, as for example the Monte Carlo Casino, New York New York and others. You can read more about it the next time.

See also:

- New reports: Gambling in Las Vegas
- Historical Review Las Vegas (Part 1)
- Historical Review Las Vegas (Part 2)
- Historical Review Las Vegas (Part 3)
- Historical Review Las Vegas (Part 4)
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Walk through Las Vegas