

# Tahoe Biltmore. A brief history, and Mary

by Allan Anderson

The history of the Tahoe Biltmore is difficult to trace because the casino industry, in general, kept a low profile of ownership due to past unsavory characters. This is not to say that any of this property's owners were involved in any wrong doing.

The story begins in 1946, when the Tahoe Biltmore was built by Joseph Blumfield.

The Tahoe Biltmore later changed it's name when Sanford "Sandy" Adler bought it in 1951. Adler, who owned the Cal-Neva Lodge at the same time, renamed the Tahoe Biltmore the Cal-Neva Biltmore.

The Cal-Neva Biltmore was sold again to three new owners: David Crow, Eddie Hopple, and Jacki Gonn in 1952. Jacki Gonn now owns three other casino interests in Las Vegas.

In 1956, the Biltmore went through another exciting development, when Joby Lewis built a casino adjacent to the west side of the Cal-Neva Biltmore and called it Lewis' Monte Carlo.

In 1958, after 12 years in the business, the Cal-Neva Biltmore was remodeled and renamed the Nevada Lodge by Meta and Lincoln Fitzgerald. In 1959, the Fitzgeralds purchased Lewis' Monte Carlo and combined it with the Nevada Lodge.

The Fitzgeralds were fascinating owners of the Biltmore. Lincoln

Fitzgerald came to Reno in 1946 from Detroit, MI. Fitzgerald is credited with being the first individual to put a restaurant in a casino in Reno, NV.

Rumors said that Fitzgerald was a former member of the Purple Gang from Detroit. This was never proven, but he was shot twice while in Reno by an unknown assailant. Interestingly, Fitzgerald requested that the police not investigate "the incident".

One last note of interest is the past of the upstairs Nevada Room. Stars like Phyllis Diller (who startled tourists and locals alike with her green hair), Helen O'Connell, Rowan and Martin, and Rudy Vallee, all performed in the Nevada Room. It didn't stop there—Soupy Sales and Regis Philbin also appeared in the Nevada Room.

In 1985, the Nevada Lodge was purchased by Tahoe Crystal Bay, Inc. In 1986, the Nevada Lodge reverted back to its original name, the Tahoe Biltmore.

In addition to the colorful history of the Tahoe Biltmore concerning its owners and performers, the Biltmore boast its very own ghost. Just ask any member of the staff about Mary.....

Mary has been with the Biltmore since the 1960s. She was a cabaret dancer when they used to do full stage shows. She has appeared in

many places throughout the facility including the front desk, the employee breakroom, the laundry room, the lobby bar, the Aspen Cabaret Showroom and as recently as a few weeks ago, in the boiler room. She generally makes her presence known via the electrical system, either by turning lights on or off or with flickering lights. There are several employee reports of hearing footsteps in the dressing room near the stage when there is no one around. She also has made her appearance known by being visible, but when the employee looks they never really get a visual of her face, just her clothing (1960's mini skirt).

The story goes that Mary died in a car accident on Mount Rose Highway. If you ask the staff, many have Mary stories to share.

## Past and Present Chips



When Lincoln Fitzgerald came to Reno and purchased the Nevada Club in Reno and the Nevada Lodge at North Lake Tahoe, he brought with him some chips which had been used at the illegal Chesterfield Club near Detroit. These chips were used as \$1 chips before Fitzgerald had new Nevada Lodge chips made.



Cal-Neva Biltmore



The Nevada Lodge



The Tahoe Biltmore today. The coffee shop at the left was the old Monte Carlo Casino.

