

George "Bud" Albright

December 6, 1909—November 8, 1996

Served on the Clark County Commission, 1952-1959 (resigned)

County Commissioner George Albright pioneered the use of room-tax revenue to build the Las Vegas Convention Center and helped transform Las Vegas into an international destination for conventions. Albright served on the Clark County Commission from 1952 until 1959, when resigned to take over as head of the new convention center.



George Albright was born in 1909 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. In 1920, he and his family moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico seeking a better climate for his father's tuberculosis. When Albright was seventeen years old, his father died, and George left high school to help take over breadwinning duties for his family.

George Albright moved to Nevada in 1930 and lived in Reno for one year before making Las Vegas his permanent home. Following his move to southern Nevada, Albright went into business with his brother, Jack, and started an electronics company, Albright's Business Machines. The new firm won a lucrative contract with Six Companies to supply all the typewriters and business machines for the offices at the Boulder Dam site.

The firm's connection to the dam went beyond supplying typewriters. In 1933, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce commissioned the brothers to create a replica of the dam and the surrounding area for display at fairs. The model received a great deal of attention in both local and national press and helped drum up interest in Clark County. Following the completion of the dam in 1935, the brothers built a second model measuring eighteen feet long by eight feet wide, and eight feet high. The second version took two years and \$25,000 to complete. It went on display at the 1939 World's Fair in San Francisco.

Albright continued working in electronics; in 1940 he purchased an interest in a local electrical contractor's firm, Luce and Goodfellow, Inc. While working with them, George Albright became a master electrician and helped wire the El Rancho Vegas, the first casino resort to open on the Strip. In 1950 he started his own company, Albright's Courtesy Electric Company in 1950.

Albright also was active in civic matters in Las Vegas. He was appointed to the Clark County Juvenile Home Committee in 1945 and worked to have a new home opened for juveniles in Clark County. He was a member of the Las Vegas Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Commerce, the Kiwanis club, and the Elks lodge.

In 1952, Albright combined his business sense and his commitment to Las Vegas and ran for Clark County Commission. While serving on the county commission, he worked for funding for and the construction of a new county courthouse and lobbied for a consolidated sanitation district. Albright's real passion while serving on the County Commission, however, was the development of Las Vegas as a convention destination. He recognized the danger in relying solely on gaming for revenue. In order to fund the project, Albright realized that a small tax levied on the rental of hotel and motel rooms in the county could raise a huge sum of money. In 1957, Albright announced the construction of a new convention center costing 4.5 million dollars funded by money generated by the new room tax. Completed just two years later in 1959, the new Las Vegas Convention Center aimed to make Las Vegas a premier convention destination.

Convention Center authorities and casino interests realized that the new convention center lacked the leadership needed to transform their dream into reality. In 1959, the Clark County Fair and Recreation Board, the body in charge of the convention center, appointed Albright the head of the convention center. He did not hesitate to accept the appointment. He promptly resigned from the County Commission and sold his electronics business to take over the administration of the convention center. At the time, Albright's \$25,000 per year salary made him the highest paid public official in the state of Nevada.

The years immediately after the convention center opened were tense as it took time to bring a steady number of conventions to Las Vegas. Albright took a beating in the press for his leadership. By the 1960s, however, it seemed that he had gained the respect of the local press and business,

and was named, "Convention Man of the Year."

Albright's tenure as head of the Las Vegas Convention Center came to an abrupt end in 1967, when the Convention and Visitor's Authority voted to remove him from his position. The exact reason for Albright's dismissal was never released, but several factors contributed to it, including his large salary, personality conflicts with other board members, and constant negative press about his leadership in the local newspapers.

Following Albright's removal, Clark County hired him as director of special projects. He oversaw the construction of parks, swimming pools, and other recreational facilities using funds generated by the room tax. Albright retired from the position in 1979.

George Albright resided in Las Vegas until his death in 1996 at the age of 87. Albright left behind a legacy born of his foresight in transforming Las Vegas into a world-class destination for conventions. He was remembered as the "Father of the Convention Center."