

Goodbye to an Old Friend

by Howard W. Herz & Gregg L. Herz



Last Light on the Aladdin

It was kind of like making arrangements for a trip out of town to attend a funeral. We were looking forward to being there when a page in the annals of gaming history was being written. After months of speculation on the final date for the implosion of the Aladdin Hotel, Monday, April 27 was confirmed. We had arranged to document the event and with the helpful assistance of Gina Cunningham of Bally's Las Vegas, we would witness the event from the top floor of Bally's.



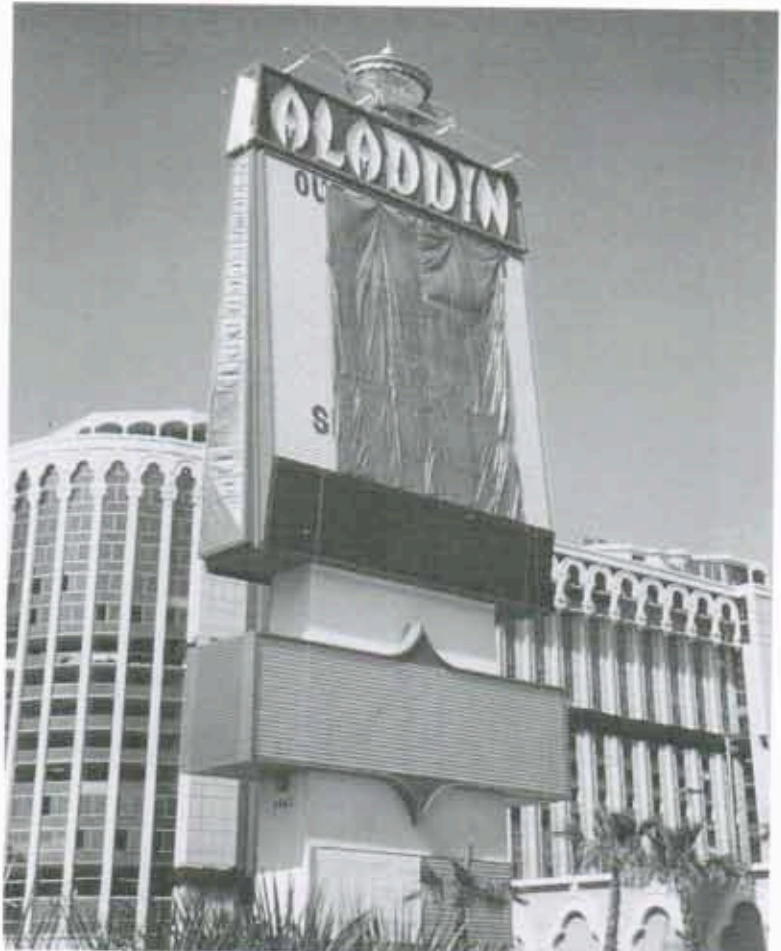
We arrived in Las Vegas in the early afternoon and checked into Bally's. A press room was established on the top floor and security had removed the window blocks for a clear view of the event scheduled at sunset. We were joined by several television camera crews and reporters.

Early in the afternoon I had walked along Las Vegas Blvd, and looked at the hotel - a lonely monument about to descend into the history books in a cloud of dust. The fence in front of the Aladdin was crowded with signs from the demolition companies and the hotel had an air of impending doom. A black band of material circled the tower and pre-demolition had cleared most of the casino area behind the Arabic arched facade that fronts on the boulevard. I could see through the front doors and daylight was visible. The massive sign was draped to conceal a message that would be revealed just before the implosion.

I returned to Bally's and found that the marketing department had supplied a tray of fruits (the strawberries were great) for the starving journalists. Mr. and Mrs. Matthews joined us in the top floor suite and we awaited sunset.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Pollack also joined us and helped with the photography. Kregg kept track of events on a video recorder while I took still pictures. As the sun put its final rays of light on the Aladdin, the street below filled with people.

The evening was calm and only a slight breeze ruffled the palm trees on the strip. All of the people in the room were aware of the many enjoyable times that the Aladdin had provided. There was always the possibility that the weather would not cooperate, but a calm descended on the scene.



It was shortly after sunset - dusk to be exact - when a series of explosions reverberated from the area of the Aladdin. Slowly the hotel began to buckle and then the tower plunged into a massive cloud of dust. It was a dramatic ending for one of the legendary hotels of the strip.



We watched as the cloud of dust slowly drifted over Las Vegas boulevard and the thousands of people dispersed in a run to escape the dust. Shortly after, Bally's security came in and secured the windows to avoid what one of the housekeepers described as the ultimate nightmare. "Art Anderson will miss the Spam sushi" quipped Gregg. - Now it was history.

