



ED VON TOBEL (Class of 1931)

Ed Von Tobel, Jr. is a native Las Vegan, born in Las Vegas on March 11, 1913. He was the third child of Ed and Mary Von Tobel. He was born “at the little hospital there on Second Street”. Ed graduated from Las Vegas High School in 1931.

His father Ed, Sr. came to Las Vegas for the land auction in 1905. He had read an ad in the paper that said you could take the train to Las Vegas for the auction, so Ed and his partner, Jake Beckley decided they needed an adventure and bought round trip tickets for \$22. Those who bought them could brag that they rode the first passenger train on the line. On the day of searing heat, the bidders' enthusiasm wilted. To freshen it up, the railroad announced that the round-trip fare could be deducted from a down payment, which was a fourth of the cost of a lot. Beckley and Von Tobel bought adjoining \$100 lots for a cash outlay of \$3 each, and a ticket stub.

Von Tobel Lumber opened on South Main Street a short time later (near where the Ice House Bar is today). The little frame building was later moved closer to town at 217 South First Street (where the Golden Nugget parking lot is today).

Ed went to the original grammar school which he describes as a “small building about the size of a good size house”. That school burned down and the railroad provided land on South Fifth Street for a new grammar school.

Ed remembers when there was one movie theater (the Majestic Theater, where part of the Golden Nugget is today). In the summer they would have to close it down and put up an outdoor theater at 3rd and Fremont. He also remembers that everyone did all their shopping in the first two blocks of Fremont Street and that there was a big Christmas tree at 2nd and Fremont.

Ed remembers times when it was so hot that his Dad's store wouldn't sell anything for a whole day. Each of the Von Tobel boys worked in the family business from an early age. When the boys reached the age of 9 or 10, they had the job of repackaging turpentine and linseed oil, which came in 50-gallon drums but was sold by the pint. "We would buy empty beer and whiskey bottles from transients for maybe a penny. We filled those, put a cork in it, and a label. We got maybe 25 cents or 50 cents a day for this, which was enough to keep you in candy".

Von Tobel Lumber survived the depression and war years. Ed says "during the war we had no lumber, no critical materials to sell". In 1965, the family business moved to Maryland Parkway and Karen and opened a retail hardware store and home center, with air-conditioning! In the center of the store was a hot dog stand that had not only hot dogs but soft ice cream, sandwiches and ten cent coffee. Ed likes to joke that it was Home Depot before Home Depot was even a thought! As a dedicated businessman, Ed was always the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave at night. He was also known for giving the longest speeches at the annual parties!

Ed was a longtime member of the Las Vegas Country Club, and also contributed to the growth and prosperity of Bishop Gorman High School and the Marion Center at UNLV, among others.

Ed married his high school sweetheart Evelyne in 1939 at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Las Vegas. They celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on May 6, 2009. They built a house in 1940 near Las Vegas High School on 7th Street. They have four daughters, Sharon Schmitt, Katherine Acord, Susan Von Tobel and Gretchen McQuade.

Ed Von Tobel passed away on December 29, 2009 at the age of 96.

These biographies are based on research and could contain discrepancies.
If there are any excerpts you feel should be changed please feel free to contact dave@lvhsaa.com.

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