

Running Scared: The Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn Study Guide

Running Scared: The Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn by John L. Smith

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Plot Summary

The prologue of *Running Scared: the Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn* by John L. Smith begins with the destruction of the Dunes Hotel and Casino. The famous hotel was going to be imploded whenever Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn gave the signal. The destruction of the Dunes would prove to be symbolic in that the old Las Vegas was no more and the new Las Vegas had arrived.

Later, the author would refer to Wynn and his relationship with Michael Milken and the inception of the new Las Vegas. Smith says that Jimmy Hoffa was the face of old Las Vegas, Milken was the face of the new Las Vegas. It didn't seem to matter that Milken had served time.

The author recounts Steve's academic career and also supplies testimonials from people who knew him. Elaine Pascal is introduced as being the daughter of Michael Pascal, a friend of Mike Wynn's. The men developed a scheme to play matchmaker for their children; a scheme that eventually worked.

The real action begins after the death of Mike Wynn. Steve began to take advantage of his father's old contacts. First he met Charlie Meyerson, a man who would become a major player in Wynn's life. Next were a bookie named Herbie Liebert and Maurice Friedman, a mob conduit and con artist. It was due to the relationships with Friedman and Goldman that Wynn was able to purchase his first piece of Las Vegas with a three percent share of the Frontier Hotel for some of \$45,000. Although it took five years, Zelma and Steve continued to pay off Mike's debts.

After Steve's first purchase of stocks in the Frontier, things began to happen. With the help of E. Parry Thomas, Wynn bought his first business, a liquor distributor. After selling the business at a profit, Wynn broke into the casino scene. Wynn was unstoppable. It is no surprise that at age thirty, Wynn was being referred to as a Las Vegas "wunderkind."

Smith discusses Wynn's professional status.

Wynn began to have the majority of his troubles when he had to explain his business to various gaming commissions and licensing boards. Many of the regulatory agencies were new and Wynn would benefit from the inexperience. Licensure, overall, was a joke. It seemed that almost anyone could get a license. There were a few exceptions, but Wynn almost always prevailed. Only the refusal of the license for the London casino would haunt Wynn.

Wynn's business escalated when he was introduced to junk bond king Michael Milken. Over the years in Vegas, Wynn had many multi-million dollar successes and ended up as a billionaire.

The only real issue with the book is that there are an exorbitant number of people involved throughout Wynn's career. All of the main players had to be mentioned, but the number of persons involved makes it somewhat difficult to follow the story.



Prologue - Pirates in the Desert

Prologue - Pirates in the Desert Summary and Analysis

The prologue of *Running Scared: the Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn* by John L. Smith begins with the destruction of the Dunes Hotel and Casino.

On October 27, 1993 more than two hundred thousand spectators crowded the Las Vegas Strip to watch the destruction of the famous Dunes Hotel and Casino. The crowd chanted for the destruction of the building as world media stood by to record the event. At the time, Las Vegas was attempting to become a new more family-oriented site rather than the former infamous Mafia-run city of debauchery and sin. The destruction of the Dunes would also make way for a new hotel - Treasure Island - which would be located next to the Mirage. It would also mark Steve Wynn's entry into the Las Vegas casino industry.

In only seconds, Wynn ordered the destruction of the famous hotel, and with it, supposedly the old image of Las Vegas. Of all the landmarks in Las Vegas, the Dunes seemed to be most representative of the presence of organized crime in Las Vegas. Included in an evening filled with pyrotechnics and destruction, Wynn also organized a one-hour infomercial which would be titled "Treasure Island, The Adventure Begins."

The implosion was quite a sight to behold. "Oh, my God," one breathless spectator gasps. "It's like the end of the world" (prologue, p. 20). Smith makes the comment that Armageddon wouldn't be so well-organized.

The night ended with \$1 million worth of fireworks and the solidifying of Wynn's reputation as a force to be reckoned with, in and out of the gambling capital of the United States.

Smith goes on to discuss Wynn's professional status and recounts Wynn's rise to fame throughout the city.

The prologue ends with a brief discussion of Wynn's foray into the casino industry in Atlantic City.



Part I, Chapters 1-2

Part I, Chapters 1-2 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1: Young Stephen

Chapter one begins with Stephen Wynn's first visit to Las Vegas in 1952. Stephen was only ten years old at the time and was in the company of his father Mike, a bingo hall owner and wannabe gambler. Young Stephen would spend two weeks in the company of his father, who seemed to be more of a pal to his son than a parental figure. Wynn remembers being enchanted by the entire atmosphere of Las Vegas and quickly became enthralled with its image.

"There was magic in this place. It was like stepping back into the Frontier," Steve Wynn would recall years later. "Casino owners were king; they owned the town. They were glamorous; they had beautiful women and lots of money" (p. 27).

Like many, Mike Wynn had grand dreams for opening his own business in Las Vegas. Wynn, who operated bingo parlors throughout the Northeast, decided to leave behind his home in Utica, New York. Wynn was attracted to Las Vegas like a moth to flame. Wynn's dream was to open a bingo hall at the Silver Slipper. Wynn would not be as fortunate as some of the gamblers who would grace the famous Las Vegas Strip. Smith talks about some of the heavy hitters in Vegas at the time, including Sam Boyd and Bill Harrah.

Las Vegas in the 1950s was completely different than it is today. Much of the area was completely undeveloped desert. Wynn recalls going horseback riding in the desert just outside the city limits. At one point, Wynn and his father rode their horses up to the back door of the casino and tied them up as if they were appearing in an old Western. This story also ties into some of the city's residents, including a silent film star known for his appearance in westerns.

Smith refers to the Las Vegas of the 1950s as being as much a state of mind as a location on the map. The author refers to some of Mike Wynn's acquaintances and their parts in Las Vegas. It had become clearer to the US government that there was a great deal of organized crime activity going on in Las Vegas. This was confirmed by the sheer number of illegal gamblers and crime bosses that began to migrate to the great Mojave Desert.

Once again, Smith refers to some of the heavy hitters in 1950s Las Vegas scene. They include Cleveland racketeer Moe Dalitz, Meyer Lansky, Edward Levinson, Benny Binion, Gus Greenbaum, Bugsy Siegel, Frank Sinatra, and others. It was no secret that many of the operations and operators in Vegas were barely above board, just enough so that they could receive necessary licenses to operate their businesses. Despite the behavior of many of the applicants, Mike Wynn was one of the few denied a license.



Even Frank Sinatra and Chicago mob bookie Lou Lederer were granted licenses. Wynn became frustrated at the barriers to his dream and eventually gave up.

The author gives an overview of the history of bingo. Although technically illegal, bingo quickly became related to the church as well as other nonprofit organizations like the Elks Club. Since the gambling was typically used to support charity, cops usually looked the other way.

In 1961, New York Governor Nelson D. Rockefeller supported the Moreland Act Commission. Together with the State Commission of Investigation, Moreland held public hearings regarding the manipulation of the law. It became obvious that there was a great deal of fraud and skimming going on in the business. Licensure was a joke and there were no background checks being performed on the operators. Despite the investigations, people were encouraged to participate and were not kept out of the business. It was also commonplace for officials to take bribes. Of the people mentioned at the hearings, Mike Wynn was one of the people indicted, although he was eventually acquitted. Mike Wynn had become a little giant in the industry. Later that same year, Wynn it moved his base out of Utica to Maryland.

The author discusses Wynn's relationship with Stephen as well as the Wynn marriage. Stephen was the firstborn son to Mike and Zelma Wynn. For ten years, Stephen was the only child, and as such became the golden boy to his parents. Stephen wanted for nothing. Even as Mike was on the verge of being broke, there was always money for gifts for young Stephen.

While Mike Wynn struggled to make his way in the world, it was decided that Steve would receive a top-notch education and become a solid citizen. The Wynns wanted Stephen to become a lawyer, doctor or maybe even a fighter pilot. They wanted Stephen to be a respected citizen. Because Mike Wynn was never home and Zelma was a pussycat, Stephen was often left to his own devices.

The Wynn home is described as being very expressive, with family members often yelling at each other. It did not mean that the couple was arguing; it was simply the way they talked to one another. The author also introduces Frank and Estelle Goldman, a couple that quickly became friends with the Wynns. Wynn would often borrow money from Goldman to pay off debts. Later, Steve Wynn would refer to the relationship between the families as being innocent, although it was rumored that Frank Goldman had an association with the mob.

The author recounts Steve's academic career and also supplies testimonials from people who knew him. Elaine Pascal is introduced as being the daughter of Michael Pascal, a friend of Mike Wynn's. The men developed a scheme to play matchmaker for their children; a scheme that eventually worked.

In 1963, the Wynn family received devastating news when it was learned that Mike would have to have open-heart surgery. In the 1960s, open heart surgery was extremely risky and there were no guarantees. Mike called Steve to his bedside, and while he



attempted to reassure his son that he would be fine, Mike made Steve promised to pay off any gambling debts left behind. Mike Wynn died on the operating table. He was forty-six years old.

Wynn kept his promise and approached some of the people to whom his father owed money. One of the men laughed at Steve's attempts, saying they gamblers debts die with him. The man was Charlie Meyerson, a major bookie in New York. The men became friends. Although Wynn had amassed nearly \$200,000 in debt, he also left his son a long list of acquaintances, friends and gambling contacts.

One of the men introduced to Stephen was a bookie named Herbie Liebert. In 1965, it was Liebert that introduced Wynn to Maurice Friedman, a mob conduit and con artist. It was due to the relationships with Friedman and Goldman that Wynn was able to purchase his first piece of Las Vegas with a three percent share of the Frontier Hotel for some of \$45,000. Although it took five years, Zelma and Steve continued to pay off Mike's debts.

Smith discusses the division of Wayson's corner, one of only five legal bingo operations in the US at the time. Wayson's Amusement Company incorporated after Mike's death. The stock was divided between Zelma, Steve, Ken Wynn, Edward Wayson, and Daniel Wayson. In years to come, Dan Wayson would end up working for Steve Wynn at the Golden Nugget.

Stephen and Elaine were married in 1963 in New York. Their first child, a daughter, was born in 1966. Their second daughter was born in 1969. Steve never forgot his father's advice that if you want to make money in the gambling industry, the only way to do it was to own the casino. At age twenty-one, Steve did just that. Mike Wynn's influence did not die along with him. Decades late, Steve still invokes his father's name and memory. He has claimed that he would give up everything to spend fifteen minutes with his father.

Chapter 2: Frontier Days

Chapter two begins in 1964. The flamboyant Mike Wynn was no longer on the scene. Steve quickly became disillusioned with the bingo hall in Maryland and began to feel restless. Although the company was doing well and was supporting the family, it was not enough for Steve Wynn.

The author reiterates that Mike Wynn left his family with a great deal of debt, but he also supplied his son with a large number of contacts. Steve was eager to use this information. In 1967, Wynn packed up the family and moved to Las Vegas. Wynn continued to benefit from his father's contacts and purchased his first piece of Las Vegas; a three percent stake in the Frontier Hotel. Wynn got a taste of the real estate business and began to realize that real estate was yet another way to make a fortune in the blossoming city. Due to an indictment of an associate, Wynn was unable to buy a piece of real estate before it was sold to famous recluse, Howard Hughes. Steve did manage however to buy an additional two percent in the Frontier Hotel. The second



purchase would raise eyebrows later in the scrutiny of Wynn's career. More suspicions were raised that Wynn's transactions were at least peripherally connected to the mob.

Smith recounts Wynn's relationship with John MacArthur, President of Bankers Life and Casualty. MacArthur also owned the Breakers in Palm Beach. Wynn had approached MacArthur for a large loan to purchase twenty-seven acres just outside the Baltimore Washington International Airport. Although Wynn was turned down, a relationship was formed with MacArthur. MacArthur would be the one who introduced Wynn to Maurice Friedman.

The author discusses Maurice Friedman. Smith writes, "Maurice Friedman, principal player in the Frontier purchase, was an obese fast-buck artist, casino operator, and mob conduit who talked his way into the good graces of some of the toughest organized crime figures of his day" (p. 47).

Some of the people associated with Maurice Friedman included Chicago mob representative Johnny Roselli and Detroit mob representatives Anthony Zerilli and Michael Polizzi. Friedman's contacts would eventually acquire thirty percent of the Frontier Hotel. Smith remarks that it is important to understand Friedman's contacts and the associated Frontier purchase in order to better understand Steve Wynn's rise in the industry.

The official name of the Frontier was the Hotel Last Frontier. It was built on a pre-existing site and predated Bugsy Siegel's infamous Flamingo by four years. The concept of the casino was to create a Frontier theme, in keeping with the former state of the area. The idea was brought about by R.E. Griffith. Two years after the opening of the establishment, Griffith died from a heart attack. Griffith's nephew William J. Moore became the operator. In 1955, Moore's general manager was Jake Kozloff. Kozloff was connected to Meyer Lansky. Before Kozloff disassociated himself from the Frontier, he and two others were accused of money laundering and conspiracy to defraud the owner on record, German actress Vera Krupp. After Kozloff left the Frontier, Friedman signed on as the hotel president and TW Richardson was appointed as vice president and casino manager.

It became obvious that something illegal was going on when the casino was consistently jam packed with gamblers but the profits were staggeringly low. By 1957, the Frontier was in bankruptcy and surrounded by rumors of fraud and hidden ownership. Friedman attempted to keep his hand in the business, and in fact wanted to take it over with his associates from the Detroit mob. Friedman attempted to get a loan from the Teamsters Official State Pension Fund to be able to purchase the Frontier on his behalf as well as his connections in Detroit.

In 1964, Friedman, Zerilli and Polizzi went to Palm Springs to meet with Teamsters president Jimmy Hoffa. The plan was to ask the Detroit czar for a \$6 million loan. Although there was a gentleman's agreement, the deal fell through when Hoffa was indicted for stealing from the Central State Pension Fund. In addition to being the end of

the deal for Friedman, it was the beginning of Hoffa's downfall. In 1975, after a scheduled meeting with Zerilli family capo Tony Giacalone, Jimmy Hoffa disappeared.

In 1967, Friedman and his associates were back on the scene at the Frontier. There was no way Friedman could approach the Nevada Gaming Commission and reveal that the Detroit mob was behind the casino takeover. Friedman openly lied to the Commission. Friedman also lied about his relationship with Johnny Roselli, a lieutenant for the Chicago mob. Friedman went on to assure the commissioners that the mob had no connection to the Frontier. Amazingly enough, members of the Commission overlooked Friedman's attempts at collusion.

Roselli had an impressive number of contacts throughout the country. They included Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana, Howard Hughes business advisor Robert Maheu, CIA operatives, and Frank Sinatra. It was through Roselli that Friedman was introduced to Zerilli, with hopes of getting the necessary money to purchase the Frontier. However, Roselli was called upon to testify in front of the U.S. Senate committee regarding the CIA's failed attempts to assassinate Cuban Pres. Fidel Castro. Rizzoli was murdered.

Roselli and Friedman were among five convicted in the scam. Friedman was ordered to pay a \$100,000 fine and was sentenced to six years in prison. The events occurred shortly after Friedman and his associates received the license for the Frontier. The cartel sold out to Howard Hughes in record time, just before law enforcement closed in on Friedman and his associates. When called to explain his relationship with Roselli, Friedman told the gaming board that he and Roselli had been friends for many years and that there was no business relationship between them.

Smith goes on to recount some of the exploits of Anthony Zerilli and his father Detroit Mafia boss Joseph Zerilli. The senior Zerilli would be implicated in the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa but was never convicted.

Also examined are some of the Friedman's other transactions, ones that took place under the noses of the Gaming Control Board. In 1972, the associates would be convicted on conspiracy charges. Smith discusses the history of Jack Schapiro, a Detroit jeweler who eventually became the casino manager at the Frontier. Smith also reviews the heavy hitters in the mob at that time.

Included are more testimonials, including one from Howard Hughes' business advisor Robert Maheu.

Howard Hughes purchased the Frontier for \$24 million: \$16 million cash and \$8 million in liabilities. The sum was considered to be ridiculous and it was obvious that Hughes did not know the current state of the industry. In 1971, there was a trial designed to indict and convict the lot of the people behind the illegal activity at the Frontier. Friedman became a government informant. Friedman's role as a traitor would not be forgotten and a hit was put out on him by the Detroit mob. The contract was never fulfilled. Meanwhile, Wynn confessed to committing some information because he was

intimidated by the Chicago mob. Wynn was not publicly accused of any wrongdoing in the case.

Wynn seemed to be present at many illegal or tragic incidents including the death of Nancy Mottola, a thirty-one-year-old divorcee that had somehow appeared on a yacht during a party. Mottola ended up overboard and was basically eviscerated by the boat's propeller. Wynn was never questioned. Later it would become an issue that the case was never thoroughly investigated, and one cannot help wonder if the investigators were persuaded to let the case drop.

Overall, Smith gives a fair overview of the Las Vegas scene from 1952 through the 1960s. There are so many players in the story that it is almost impossible to keep them straight. Smith does a good job in weeding out peripheral and minor players, but the reader still needs some type of chart to understand who was involved in what activity. It remains to be seen how some of the people relate to Steve Wynn. Smith also makes a point of discussing the processes and government involvement into the licensure of the casinos and their owners. Also covered are signs of corruption and a growing mob presence.



Part I, Chapters 3-5

Part I, Chapters 3-5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 3: A Bottle of Wine, An Acre of Luck, A Friend for Life

Chapter three begins with the introduction of E. Parry Thomas, a man who would play a very large part in the life of Steve Wynn.

E. Parry Thomas was a paratrooper in World War II. After returning to the US, Thomas earned a business degree at the University of Utah. After graduation, Thomas went to work for Continental Bank. Thomas was relocated to the Las Vegas office, a decision that turned out to be the best one the bank ever made. Thomas was poised to make his mark in the lending industry in Vegas when most banks thought it was foolish, if not ridiculous, to lend money to casino owners, developers, and construction companies. Thomas and Continental Bank disagreed. The move caused the Las Vegas industry to explode, with Thomas always landing on top of the heap. To this day, E. Parry Thomas is one of the best known and well respected businessmen in Las Vegas.

The author goes on to discuss many of Thomas' transactions, including the \$230 million funneled into the city by Jimmy Hoffa and other large players, including La Costa Nostra.

Wynn was getting itchy for more action. Matthew Gregory put Wynn in charge of producing several lounge shows for his company. Wynn was thrilled. There was obviously something else going on in Wynn's life at that time. Wynn cleared \$140 per week with Gregory, but his tax return for the year showed an income of \$70,000.

Smith recounts many of Wynn's deals as well as the fact that Wynn managed to sell his business just days before the IRS swooped in to investigate. Wynn and his partner made a cool million on the deal; Steve's cut was just under \$700,000.

It is no surprise that at age thirty, Wynn was being referred to as a Las Vegas "wunderkind".

Chapter 4: Grabbing the Golden Nugget

Chapter four details Wynn's involvement in the Golden Nugget, one of Las Vegas' casinos that was on the verge of being phased out among the newer fancier locations. Through Continental Connector, Thomas had made a bid to buy the Golden Nugget but was denied. Wynn stepped up and bought the company in a public trade, something that was almost unheard of at the time since nearly all of the casinos were privately owned. Wynn bought the casino fair and square, using Thomas' money.

Smith details the history of the Golden Nugget.



During Wynn's tenure at the Golden Nugget, he brushed up against Jerome Zarowitz, a member of the Genovese family. Zarowitz was attempting to force his way into the gambling scene with his majority share of the Golden Nugget. Unfortunately for Zarowitz, his veneer started to crack before he made a name for himself. Zarowitz was eventually convicted for attempting to fix a football game. Wynn jumped at the chance to buy out Zarowitz's interests.

Wynn began to be known as a man to be reckoned with on the Vegas scene. "Wynn, young and brash, began to exude power. He developed a violent temper, which he unleashed at the slightest provocation" (p. 86).

The author recounts a meeting between Wynn and Milton Stone, during which Stone wanted to collect the \$6,000 owed to him by Wynn. Both men had their bodyguards, all of which happened to be Sicilian. Stone, who seemed to have the upper hand at first, became uncomfortable. In the end, the men had a nice dinner and some conversation. Wynn paid the man and sent him back to New Jersey.

Wynn decided that it was time to sink a large sum of money into renovating the Golden Nugget. It was a risk by all accounts, but Wynn knew it would pay off. The Golden Nugget added a hotel to the casino and lost its old image. It became a sophisticated spot in the downtown.

Smith discusses Wynn's temper, which seemed to be getting worse. Zelma Wynn convinced herself that Steve's mood swings worsened after he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa. "During these heady days, as he was well on his way to becoming known as a visionary with big plans for himself and Las Vegas, Wynn suffered an unexpected body-blow: he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, an inherited and incurable degenerative retinal eye disease" (p. 90). Steve attempted to ignore the disease as much as possible, but there were clear signs of its existence. In the end, Wynn would not let the disease stop him. There was no way to keep Wynn down, as long as he chose his friends wisely.

Chapter 5: Little Louie and the Golden Boy

There are some decisions of Wynn's that make no sense beyond some type of twisted loyalty. A good example of this is Wynn's relationship with Louis Patrick Cappiello. Cappiello, who had no gambling industry experience, was brought into Wynn's world and given a cushy job. The same occurred with Camilo "Neil" Azzinaro, who turned out to be Wynn's hair stylist. Both men were given the opportunity to live in the lap of luxury. They were also given stocks in the company. Investigations into the stock transactions were foiled by a technicality. The stock split and the price of the shares skyrocketed.

The arrangement with Cappiello and Azzinaro was also investigated by the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement when Wynn attempted to open another operation in the blossoming resort town of Atlantic City. There were many allegations of cocaine use by the three men. Witness testimony was flat out denied by Wynn, Cappiello, and



Azzinaro. It was determined, although unofficially, that Wynn was a coke head and Cappiello and Azzinaro were his dealers.

Wynn continued to exhibit more extreme behavior. Wynn's business faltered somewhat, but nothing could keep Wynn down.

Although Cappiello was not convicted of any wrongdoing at the casino, he was indicted for murder. Cappiello shot and killed Joseph Conlan in his home and injured another man. Miraculously, Cappiello was not convicted, claiming self defense.

Cappiello was only one of the suspicious employees hired by Wynn. There was an investigation regarding the presence of men in upper positions although they had no gaming industry experience. Wynn continued to claim that the men were merely consultants. Nothing could be shown to disprove Wynn's claims.

Cappiello wisely quit working for Wynn and faded into the shadows of the Las Vegas night. Cappiello was not gone for good.

Before Cappiello vanished, Wynn tried everything in his power to promote Cappiello through the ranks. Gomes, a Wynn employee, received a tremendous amount of pressure from Wynn to vouch for Cappiello in front of the Commission. Gomes refused and eventually quit.



Part II, Chapters 6-7

Part II, Chapters 6-7 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 6: Into Atlantic City

If Las Vegas was Wynn's dream, Atlantic City was merely an up and coming passion, a beast that could be conquered by the industry giant. In 1977, Atlantic City legalized gambling in its seaside town. At that point, Atlantic City was nothing to behold. It was run down, shabby, and filled with all sorts of unsavory characters, from petty thieves to drug traffickers to the mafia. The hope was that the legalization of gambling would revitalize the city. New Jersey Governor Brendan Byrne expressed grave concern that the newly introduced gaming industry would attract members of the New York and New Jersey crime families. The mob had a good laugh over the fear, since the mob had a longstanding presence in Atlantic City and they weren't going anywhere.

The mafia presence may have increased with actions taken by the major families in the area, including the Gambino and Genovese families as well as the Decavalcante family from New Jersey and the Bruno family from Philadelphia. The mob also had their hand in the construction contracts. Of course, police could find no proof of the connection.

Wynn's first trip to Atlantic City was a disappointment. Smith seems to have a subjective dislike for Donald Trump and it shows here. Wynn went into the new gambling community in shorts and a t-shirt, surprising the players and representing Wynn as one of the guys rather than the "faux royalty" of Donald and Ivana Trump.

The trip turned out to be beneficial for all. Wynn bought the Strand from Manny Soloman for \$8.5 million with \$1 million down payment. Wynn was in the game. After the deal closed, Wynn razed the Strand and built the Golden Nugget Atlantic City. Wynn intended the new hotel, reminiscent of the grandeur of the Las Vegas establishment, to be a shot in the arm for gamblers. Wynn wanted the site to be posh and exciting. Unlike Las Vegas, Wynn could easily take over the Atlantic City scene from day one.

Would-be junk bond king Michael Milken is introduced.

Smith goes on to explain the junk bond racket embraced by Milken and others. More investigations ensued, including accusations of insider trading and drug trafficking. The federal government and the Securities Exchange Commission had taken a bigger interest in Wynn's activities.

Azzinaro and Cappiello were still on the scene, even if they weren't as openly involved. More questions arose from the stock ownership of the men, particularly when the stock split and the men tripled their money.

Wynn's reputation continued to grow and even inspired a type of hero worship from some.



Chapter 7: Uncle Charlie

Charlie Meyerson was still a strong force in Wynn's life. "Uncle Charlie" had become a lifelong friend, and the relationship between Meyerson and Wynn would continue to grow. Meyerson went to work for Wynn. Meyerson's history as a bookie and parking lot mogul is revisited. Although no evidence existed, Meyerson was tied to Genovese family member Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno and a series of payoffs from the parking lot owners to the mob. It was one of those relationships that seemed to be a part of the landscape.

Smith briefly discusses the close relationship between Wynn and people he considered to be his family - Milken, Meyerson and Thomas.

Meyerson's job as a marketing executive was to attract customers. However, it was illegal to grant those customers credit at the casino. Meyerson ignored the latter part of the deal, which was also known by Wynn. The plan was to have Meyerson contact his old list of acquaintances and transport them to Atlantic City via Wynn's new helicopter. Meyerson claimed to have lost touch with many and most of the others were dead or incarcerated. In the end, Meyerson still delivered about six hundred people, and of course, they were given credit.

Meyerson was called to testify about his role at the Gold Nugget. Meyerson could not be convicted and proof could not be established. Wynn decided to send Meyerson to Las Vegas, which seemed to suit the older man just fine.



Part II, Chapters 8-10

Part II, Chapters 8-10 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 8: Boardwalk Blues

The federal government was determined to prove that the Golden Nugget was operating as a money laundromat for the mafia and drug traffickers. The network of those criminals began to open up into a "world-wide puzzle" involving countries from the US to Europe and beyond. "In the early 1980s, Atlantic City gained a reputation as a Mafia laundromat of illicit cash. Dozens of members and associates of La Cosa Nostra were spotted inside casinos playing with large sums of cash and on credit" (p. 141).

Most of the chapter is devoted to the story of Anthony "Tony Cakes" Castelbuono. In 1982, Tony Cakes found himself in a bit of a jam. Castelbuono was a die hard gambler who had recently run afoul of some of his Sicilian contacts. To get back in their good graces, Castelbuono agreed to launder drug money and "street cash" into "less cumbersome" bills, meaning that the 5s, 10s, and 20s, would be turned into larger denominations, particularly hundred dollar bills.

Tony Cakes did just as he was ordered. The story is a bit lengthy, but the gist is that Castelbuono put \$1 million in cash into the Golden Nugget vault. Castelbuono hit an amazingly bad losing streak, losing \$300,000 on his first trip alone. Eventually, according to court testimony, Castelbuono lost \$800,000 of the money and withdrew the rest. Naturally, the feds could not prove otherwise.

Wynn was also called in front of the President's Commission on Organized Crime and gave a plausible explanation for Castelbuono's run of back luck.

Chapter 9: The Trouble with Mel Harris

Mel Harris was a condo developer that went to school with Elaine Pascal Wynn in Miami. Harris also happened to be the son of Allie Harris, a recently deceased bookmaker with the Miami mob. Mel Harris was also the son-in-law of Louis "Uncle Lou" Chesler, a Canadian con artist referred to as "a big fat money machine." Uncle Lou had worked with Meyer Lansky.

In 1984, Mel Harris was named to the board of directors of Wynn's Las Vegas corporation. Harris was also named vice president of marketing at the Golden Nugget Atlantic City. Like many others, Harris had no casino experience. Remarkably, Harris received temporary approval of licensure from the Casino Control Commission pending a background check. Meanwhile, Harris was given a fat paycheck and a ridiculous amount of stock options. It had yet to be discovered that Mel Harris had what Smith refers to as a circle of dubious friends.



The author returns to examining the career of Fat Tony Salerno and his club in Harlem, Palma Boy Social Club. Many people outside the mob were not aware that it was Fat Tony that was the real head of the Genovese family. Salerno, ruler of the Northeast, was worth \$200 million. By all accounts, Salerno was untouchable. Part of Salerno's success came from the fact that he managed to stay out of the headlines, unlike fellow mobster John Gotti.

The author goes into great detail about the downfall of Harris and Salerno. Harris was under surveillance when he visited Salerno, as were other heavy hitters. Wiretaps were put into place, and eventually, Salerno and Harris were connected beyond a social call. Salerno would be convicted of corruption and was sentenced to seventy years in prison. During the court proceedings, the feds actually decided that to order a full out investigation meant to open Pandora's Box. They weren't willing to do that. After Harris was implicated and Wynn's connection was questioned, Wynn cut ties. Unsurprisingly, nothing ever came of the case. Wynn would later refer to his liaison with Harris as being the most embarrassing mistake of his career.

Chapter 10: A Battle with the British

Las Vegas and Atlantic City were still not enough for Wynn. Wynn wanted to go international. London seemed like the most likely location and Wynn jumped the gun by buying a hotel in the city for a hefty price of three million pounds. Wynn should have consulted the Brits before laying out that kind of money.

In 1983, Scotland Yard conducted a lengthy and in depth investigation into Wynn and his corporation. Much of the information had come from previous investigations conducted by the US federal government. Wynn's tenuous relationship with the Genovese family was discovered. Wynn's license was denied.



Part III, Chapters 11-15

Part III, Chapters 11-15 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 11: The Ultimate Insider

Smith reiterates Wynn's relationship with Michael Milken. Where Jimmy Hoffa was the face of old Las Vegas, Milken was the face of the new Las Vegas. Even after paying \$1 billion in fines and serving time in prison, Milken was still on the scene.

The author recounts the meeting between Wynn and Milken. Milken's early advice to Wynn seemed to come to fruition: there would be no home runs, but there would be singles, doubles, and triples. In the end, they would still win the game.

The Mirage is discussed in detail, along with some of its regular celebrities, many of which were often used to beef up Wynn's already stellar marketing campaigns. Among those celebrities were Frank Sinatra, Kenny Rogers, Diana Ross, and Cathy Lee Crosby.

The Mirage was making so much money that it raised the eyebrows of the commissioners. In its best month, the Mirage netted \$40 million in winnings.

By this time, Wynn was beginning to realize that he needed to stop leveraging himself so heavily and began paying out hundreds of millions to settle debts.

The trio of Wynn, Milken and Drexel Burnham is discussed. The author makes it clear that the Mirage was not the only casino to benefit from Milken's junk bonds. Also included were Harrah's, Caesar's Palace, the Sands, Circus Circus, and more.

Chapter 12: Wynn-Moran War

The Mirage continued to be a place that catered to many types of individuals. It was no surprise that members of the Genovese crime family were regular guests. Wynn went to his old friend Sheriff John Moran to discuss the issue of the presence of certain guests that had been under surveillance by local authorities. It was discovered that the man playing host to the mobsters, in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, was Charlie Meyerson. Wynn and Moran ended up getting into a heated debate during which Wynn would not back down from his claims that Meyerson was innocent of any wrongdoing. The case was dropped and Meyerson received licensure by unanimous vote.

Chapter 13: Image is Everything

Wynn was known for his vanity as well as his business acumen. Wynn could not pass a mirror without admiring himself; he is said to have had his first face-lift in his early forties. People thought he was crazy. Wynn's obsessions did not stop there. Wynn's



sexual appetite is a thing of legend. One friend remarked that Wynn probably had sex with about three hundred women per year, right under Elaine's nose.

Image for Wynn, whether it was his own or that of his business, was everything. From using celebrities in ads and shows at his casinos, Wynn was often seen with heavy hitters like long-time friend and gambler Frank Sinatra. That is, until Sinatra had a blow up at the Atlantic City casino and stormed out. Wynn's next image issue was the introduction of Disney and other child-friendly entities gobbling up property on the Strip. There was no way Wynn would go down without a fight. Wynn introduced his new business model.

Chapter 14: A Shadow Over Shadow Creek

Wynn's next big venture was Shadow Creek Golf Club, a 320 acre course set in the desert. Wynn is the only member. Wynn spared no expense in outfitting the course, from shipping in twenty thousand pine trees and pine needles to having water pumped into the property at a constant rate. Industry insiders began to talk about how Wynn's stockholders were not going to like this new acquisition. It turns out that the IRS wasn't too keen on it either.

Chapter 15: The Politics of Dolphins

After a trip to Sea World with Elaine, Wynn became obsessed with owning dolphins. Wynn immediately began to mark off land where giant aquariums could house the Atlantic bottle nosed dolphins that so intrigued Wynn. Wynn would soon learn that one cannot just own dolphins. Regulations had Wynn jumping through hoops until he agreed to have the aquarium operate as an educational facility for children. The dolphin became the new mascot of the Mirage.

Part III, Chapters 16-18

Chapter 16: A Great Friend, An Enemy Who Never Forgets

"Steve Wynn's personalities at times appear to outnumber Elvis impersonators in Las Vegas. Combined, they make up the collective good Wynn and bad Wynn. Whether one encounters a good Wynn or the bad Wynn depends on the circumstances, which can change with dizzying speed" (p. 265). Wynn's mood swings continued to escalate. The "good Wynn" was generous to a fault and lavished money, gifts and perks on all that worked for him. According to Tucky, Wynn's rages were also legendary. Although, Tucky says that the rages were short lived. When asked about his temper, Wynn simply states that he has a bad temper because he has always gotten away with it. Wynn refers to himself a self-made brat.

Wynn's relationship with Trump fell along those lines. Smith refers to the men as being squabbling toddlers. One minute they were friends, the next they were feuding. In the end, the relationship proved to be beneficial to both.

Chapter 17: Expanding the Empire



Thomas Kramer was a wealthy German entrepreneur who made a splash in Miami in the late 1980s. Kramer began to buy up millions of dollars of land in South Beach. It was learned later that Kramer was a new partner to Steve Wynn. Together Kramer and Wynn hoped to turn South Beach into one of the most exciting locations in the world. The plan went awry and in the end Wynn was rebuffed. The rebuffs followed Wynn wherever he went from Foxwoods in Connecticut to Vancouver to a small town in Illinois. Wynn couldn't seem to catch a break. Many people believed that Wynn's reputation as a "casino don" was too scary. Wynn was pure Las Vegas, a slick showman that would put off many of the people Wynn hoped to impress. "Another casino industry executive, who has observed Wynn's road show, said, 'Steve's basic position is, 'Here's what I'm here to sell. If you don't like it, you're an idiot.' That tends to offend some people'" (p. 294).

Chapter 18: The Vegas King

Chapter eighteen brings the reader up to date on Wynn's continued successes. Wynn managed to stay the Casino King not through his bank account alone. Wynn continued to exercise well honed business acumen and to surround himself with high level people on both sides of the law.

Wynn continued to be fodder for the tabloids and kooks in the world. Ray Marion Cuddy kidnapped Kevin Wynn, Steve's eldest daughter. Wynn paid the \$1.45 million ransom and Kevin was released. Cuddy was apprehended when he went to pick up his new red Ferrari Testarosa.

Wynn said he would keep a closer eye on his family and heighten security but that they intended to live their lives.



Epilogue, Postscript

Epilogue, Postscript Summary and Analysis

Epilogue: Running Strong into the Future

In 1994, Wynn made an announcement. He would build a new luxury resort, Beau Rivage, which he promised would be the most extravagant hotel on earth. It was claimed that Beau Rivage was going to be so magnificent that it would make the opulent Golden Nugget look like a service station. Beau Rivage would be renamed as the Bellagio.

Wynn's accomplishments are recapped by many industry bigwigs. The general consensus seems to be that Wynn was an arrogant, ill tempered man with a massive ego. Yet no one faulted Wynn's business sense and still-growing empire. Wynn would always face potential defeat. The Scotland Yard report often resurfaced. There were many investigations of which Wynn always escaped relatively unscathed. When possible, Wynn turned a bad situation into an opportunity.

Postscript

The Postscript was added after the first publication of the book which was allegedly blocked, at least temporarily, by Steve Wynn's attorneys. Although the publisher went bankrupt, the book still sold.

The postscript basically winds up the presence of Steve Wynn in Las Vegas. Wynn seemed to be losing interest in Wall Street and his businesses about the same time he began an art buying frenzy. The Bellagio unexpectedly took receipts away from the Mirage, leaving Wynn in a bit of trouble. In the end, billionaire Kirk Kekorian bought out Steve Wynn for 6.7 billion.

Wynn moved on to continue his dream through the development of real estate.



Characters

Steve Wynn

Steve Wynn is the subject of "Running Scared: the Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn" by John L. Smith.

Young Stephen Wynn's first visit to Las Vegas took place in 1952 when he accompanied his father, Mike. Stephen was only ten years old. Even at that young age, Steve remembers being enchanted by the entire atmosphere of Las Vegas and quickly became enthralled with its image.

Stephen was born on January 7, 1942, the firstborn son to Mike and Zelma Wynn. For ten years Stephen was the only child, and as such became the golden boy to his parents. Stephen wanted for nothing. Mike Wynn wanted a better life for his son and it was decided that Steve would receive a top-notch education and become a solid citizen. The Wynns wanted Stephen to become a lawyer, doctor or maybe even a fighter pilot. They wanted Stephen to be a respected citizen. Wynn did not follow the plan exactly.

Steve received a top notch education beginning at a private school and ended up at the University of Pennsylvania.

In the early 1960s, Steve was introduced to beauty queen Elaine Pascal. The couple would marry in 1963, two months after the death of Mike Wynn. Elaine would stay by Steve's side throughout the bulk of the Las Vegas years.

Wynn took over the responsibility of paying off Mike's debts. In the meantime he began to meet some of his father's old contacts, beginning with New York bookie Charlie Meyerson. From there, Steve fell into his father's shoes, exceeding nearly every goal ever set.

Wynn went on to buy into the Frontier in Las Vegas and from there kept moving up and up in the world. With friends like Parry Thomas and Michael Milken, there was no stopping Wynn from making billions of dollars in real estate transactions, becoming one of the most celebrated celebrities in Las Vegas, and building an empire that would rival any other. Steve Wynn was truly the "casino don" and did everything and anything he had to do to get there.

Mike Wynn

Mike Wynn was Stephen Wynn's father and greatest influence in every aspect of his life. Mike Wynn was born Michael M. Weinberg, the son of a vaudevillian. Wynn was handsome with dark hair and a penchant for custom-made suits. Wynn liked to live on the edge and often managed to do so because he was a smooth talker. Wynn took pride



in being able to give his family everything their hearts desired, even if the money was borrowed from some less-than-reputable characters.

Wynn's mother died when he was an infant. Mike and his younger brother Kenneth were shipped off into foster care. Wynn decided to change his name after taking a job at a soda company. Wynn believed that the owners might be anti-Semitic. Despite Wynn's young age, he continued to care for Kenneth, who was ten years his junior.

Wynn was a quick study in his hometown of Revere, Massachusetts. Wynn noticed that while people were willing to work like dogs for very little pay no one ever seemed to miss their weekend excursions to the synagogue bingo halls. It became clear to Wynn early on that there was money to be made. At age seventeen, Wynn was managing his first bingo hall. Wynn would go on to succeed and fail in various aspects of the gaming industry. Wynn died in 1963, at the age of forty-six, from complications of open heart surgery.

Charlie Meyerson

Charlie Meyerson was a close friend to Wynn. Meyerson, a man with no casino experiences, and yet worked at both of Wynn's resorts, one in Las Vegas and one in Atlantic City. Meyerson was one of the men easily connected to organized crime.

Michael Milken

Michael Milken, convicted on seven accounts regarding the sale of junk bonds in the 1980s, was referred to as Wynn's brother. It was Milken that helped Wynn build his empire through the sale of the worthless bonds.

Mel Harris

Mel Harris was Wynn's biggest embarrassment. A schoolmate of Elaine's, Harris was the son of a recently deceased Miami bookie and the son-in-law of a Canadian money machine. It was Harris that gave the feds the opportunity to connect Wynn's operation to Fat Tony Salerno and the Genovese crime family.

E. Parry Thomas

E. Parry Thomas is the man Steve Wynn credits with helping him to succeed in the gaming industry. Thomas is still considered one of the most important bankers in the history of Las Vegas. While most banks scoffed at lending money to finance the gambling industry, Thomas' Valley Bank lent millions to elite casino operators. Thomas is referred to by some as Mr. Las Vegas and by others as a hoodlum banker.history



Donald Trump

Donald Trump is a world famous entrepreneur and real estate mogul. In the early days of legalized gambling in Atlantic City, Trump went up against Wynn and lost. The men went through their careers enemies one minute and friends the next. They are referred to as acting like squabbling toddlers.

Edward Wayson

Edward Wayson was Mike Wynn's partner in Wayson's Amusement Company. The partners ran several bingo halls throughout the Northeast in the 1950s and 1960s.

La Costa Nostra

La Costa Nostra is another name for the Mafia. In this story it typically refers to the mob in Chicago. La Costa Nostra maintains a very large presence in Las Vegas as well as in the lives of many of its players. The mob was often a "hidden" source of finance for casino owners. La Costa Nostra was also allegedly responsible for making many problems disappear, including Teamsters President Jimmy Hoffa.

Frank Goldman

Frank Goldman was a friend to Mike and Zelma Wynn. Goldman often supplied Wynn with funds to pay off his debts. Goldman would be behind the scenes in several transactions in Wynn's life. Although the relationship between the families was supposedly "innocent", law enforcement had reasons to believe that Goldman was tied to the mob.

Elaine Wynn nee Pascal

Elaine Wynn nee Pascal is the daughter of Michael Pascal, a business associate of Mike Wynn. Elaine was a former beauty queen who had turned her focus toward college. Pascal and Wynn decided to play matchmaker and the plan worked. Elaine and Steve married in 1963. The couple had two children.

Howard Hughes

Howard Hughes is an iconic character from the 1950s. Hughes, known as an extremely eccentric recluse, was wealthy beyond imagination. Hughes bought into the Las Vegas scene for an absurd amount of money just days before Friedman and others were convicted.



Kevin Wynn

Kevin Wynn is the eldest daughter of Steve and Elaine Wynn. Kevin was the target of kidnappers in the 1990s. Wynn paid the ransom; the kidnapper was caught.

Benjamin

Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel is one of the most infamous and notorious characters in Las Vegas history. Siegel, owner of the world famous Flamingo, was closely connected to the mob. Siegel was brutally murdered.

Frank Sinatra

Frank Sinatra was a world famous singer and member of the show business group The Rat Pack. Sinatra was a die hard gambler at one time and bought his way into some of the Vegas action. Sinatra was tied to the mob although many of the connections could not be substantiated.

Kirk Kekorian

Kirk Kekorian is the billionaire that bought out Steve Wynn's interests in Las Vegas.

Lou Cappiello

Lou Cappiello was a good friend and business associate to Steve Wynn. Cappiello became a focus during the investigations of Wynn's business deals since Azzinaro had no gaming industry experience yet seemed to land high level job after high level job within Wynn's corporation. It was rumored that Azzinaro was Wynn's cocaine dealer. Cappiello was under close scrutiny by the law after the murder of Joseph Conlan. Cappiello was acquitted.

Neil Azzinaro

Neil Azzinaro was Wynn's hairdresser. Azzinaro became a focus during the investigations of Wynn's business deals since Azzinaro had no gaming industry experience yet seemed to land high level job after high level job within Wynn's corporation. It was rumored that Azzinaro was Wynn's cocaine dealer.



Objects/Places

Las Vegas, Nevada

Las Vegas, Nevada is the main setting for *Running Scared: the Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn* by John L. Smith. The author discusses Las Vegas from its earliest days as a small area in the Mojave Desert where gamblers traversed to try their hand at legalized gambling. In the beginning, the city was small and not very successful. Smith refers to Las Vegas as being about a state of mind rather than a physical location. Las Vegas went from being a speck on a map to The Entertainment Capital of the World as well as one of the most populated cities in the US.

Las Vegas began to come into its own in the late 1940 and early 1950s. Less than upstanding characters like Bugsy Siegel and his associates saw the potential in the city and began to build hotels and casinos. Even the entrepreneurs in their day could not have imagined what lay in store for Sin City.

Steve Wynn first visited Las Vegas in 1952 at age ten. Wynn was immediately captivated, as was his father, Mike. Steve is referred to as an adult in short pants and seems to take in the atmosphere through the eyes of a grownup. Steve would continue to visit Las Vegas until he eventually moved there in 1967. Wynn's plan was to take Las Vegas by storm. Wynn worked extremely hard to get in on the ground floor of every deal he could. Eventually, Wynn's business acumen and somewhat disreputable associations helped him to become one of the biggest casino kings that ever lived.

Casinos

Casinos are one of the main settings/topics in the book. A casino is an establishment where legalized gambling takes place. In the book, casinos are painted as being virtual money machines that are often patronized by celebrities and less than savory characters as well as the regular Joes from all parts of the world.

Although there are different types of casinos, most offer an exciting atmosphere that operates twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The legalized games typically include roulette, craps, blackjack, and slot machines.

In the early days, there were few casinos in Las Vegas. By the 1950s, that began to change. Today, Las Vegas has more casinos than any other location in the world.

Because casinos are such valuable assets, the ownership of these establishments is the brass ring for many, particularly those in the gaming industry. While the majority of casinos are legitimate operations, many of those featured in the book were anything but, encouraging many illegal activities such as conspiracy, theft, fraud, and hidden ownership of the establishments.



The Bellagio

The Bellagio was Steve Wynn's Vegas swan song. The hotel is referred to as being the single most opulent hotel in the world.

The Dunes

The Dunes was the last icon of the old Las Vegas. In the prologue, Wynn had the Dunes taken down. There were hopes that with the destruction of the Dunes, the corrupt city could begin anew.

The Mirage

The Mirage is one of the most famous hotel/casinos in Las Vegas.

The Strip

The Strip is the section of Las Vegas that houses the majority of the famous hotels and casinos. It is, literally, a strip of land that runs through the center of the city. The roadway is legally known as Las Vegas Boulevard.

Treasure Island

Treasure Island is the name of one of Wynn's operations. The casino, which features a celebrated pirate theme, remains one of the biggest attractions in Las Vegas.

International Gaming Conference

International Gaming Conference is the name of the government appointed group that oversees all of the legalized gambling operations worldwide. The IGC is the entity that denied Wynn a license for a London operation.

Atlantic City, New Jersey

Atlantic City, New Jersey was the first location of legalized gambling in the Northeast. In addition to conquering Las Vegas, Wynn had a desire to own casinos in Atlantic City much to the chagrin of real estate mogul Donald Trump.

The Golden Nugget

The Golden Nugget is one of the most famous hotel/casinos in Las Vegas.

Scotland Yard

Scotland Yard is an international law enforcement agency based in the United Kingdom. Scotland Yard investigated Steve Wynn after he applied for a license to open a casino in London.

Themes

Loyalty

Loyalty is one of the main themes in *Running Scared*. There is a tremendous amount of loyalty to family relationships, friendships, and within the organized crime families. One of the first real examples of loyalty is between Mike and Zelma Wynn and their children, particularly Stephen. No matter what was going on in the family or in Mike Wynn's personal business, the husband and father always stayed loyal to the family structure, ensuring that they had the best of everything. Even after Mike's death, the loyalty continued as Steve tried to pay off Mike's debts and clear the slate of favors and monies owed to various people nationwide.

Another example can be seen when Wynn meets Charlie Meyerson. Meyerson becomes somewhat of a mentor to Wynn, partially out of loyalty to the recently deceased Mike Wynn. Meyerson helps Wynn by introducing him to contacts and later by helping to build the Wynn empire.

Wynn nearly destroyed his own company by insisting on hiring friends with no gaming experience. This applies mostly to Lou Cappiello and Neil Azzinaro, two men that seemed to have permanent tenure in Wynn's life and his corporation. The same can be said of E. Parry Thomas and Michael Milken.

To Wynn, loyalty meant taking care of one's own despite the consequences. If the situation was bad enough, said offender was simply moved to one of Wynn's other locations. This can be seen with Charlie Meyerson. Wynn maintained loyalty for a time with Mel Harris until he nearly destroyed the operation. One must wonder how Wynn's empire would have thrived even more without the presence of these loyalty-based relationships.

Mafia

The Mafia plays a very large presence in the story. Mentioned are major crime families including the Genovese and Gambino families of New York plus the Decavalcante family from New Jersey, the Bruno family from Philadelphia, La Costa Nostra from Chicago and many mob representatives from Detroit.

Many of the mob connections to Wynn's operations, to his friends, colleagues, and even Wynn himself were thinly veiled at best. Even though the feds often made the connections, there was never enough proof to make convictions. If a conviction was made, Wynn usually cut ties. If the majority of Wynn's most obvious ties were cut there were still many alleged criminals and members of organized crime families that remained in Las Vegas, and ostensibly, in Wynn's business and personal life.



One of the most present and influential members of the Genovese crime family was Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno. The author examines the career of Fat Tony Salerno and his club in Harlem, Palma Boy Social Club. Many people outside the mob were not aware that it was Fat Tony that was the real head of the Genovese family. Salerno, ruler of the Northeast, was worth \$200 million. By all accounts, Salerno was untouchable and he knew it. Salerno was a mafia god. Part of Salerno's success came from the fact that he managed to stay out of the headlines, unlike fellow mobster John Gotti.

Gambling

Gambling is the crux of the book *Running Scared*. Before the inception of a speck on the Nevada map known as Las Vegas, gambling was mostly limited to illegal activities on the street. The only "acceptable" form of gambling, even before it was legalized, was bingo. While that seems laughable, when the industry got rolling, it netted \$80 million in one year. Mike Wynn, Steve Wynn's father, was in on the action from day one. The gaming industry exploded when gambling was legalized in Las Vegas. In the early days, there were few casinos in Las Vegas. By the 1950s, that began to change. Today, Las Vegas has more casinos than any other location in the world.

The majority of gambling in Las Vegas takes place in the casinos. A casino is an establishment where legalized gambling takes place. Although there are different types of casinos, most offer an exciting atmosphere that operates twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The legalized games typically include roulette, baccarat, craps, blackjack, and slot machines.

Las Vegas became the Entertainment Capital of the World due to its leniency with gambling. Casinos began to crop up everywhere, and because of the high rate of return, the money machines paved the way for people like Steve Wynn and Donald Trump.

Style

Perspective

Running Scared: the Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn, was written by John L. Smith. Smith is an award winning journalist with the Las Vegas Review-Journal. Smith is well known for his collection of books on Las Vegas, from Sharks in the Desert, No Limit, and Of Rats and Men.

Smith has spent a great deal of his career following the lives of high rollers in Las Vegas, from the gambler to the biggest kingpin. The author has used his wide range of contacts to put together a comprehensive but abbreviated sketch of the life of Casino King Steve Wynn.

It is clear that Smith has a strong grasp on the history of Las Vegas from its earliest days with Bugsy Siegel to the introduction of Bill Harrah, Donald Trump, and Steve Wynn. Smith keeps the text as reader friendly as possible, outlining rather than detailing complicated financial and/or legal proceedings.

The book itself is well written but often confusing, due to the sheer number of players involved as well as the author's need to revisit certain people and situations.

The book's publisher makes note of the fact that John L. Smith's perspective angered and frightened Steve Wynn. The book is as accurate as it can be. Wynn falsely sued Smith for libel. Tangled court proceedings followed. In the end, the publisher, and Smith, won.

Tone

The tone of Running Scared: the Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn by John L. Smith is a combination of subjective and objective opinions. Smith is objective for the majority of the book, although there are times when it is clear that, like the reader, Smith finds some of the tales absurd. This usually applies to mysteriously resolved federal cases involving Wynn and his people.

It may be difficult to remain completely objective in light of the subject matter. Wynn was a player of the highest degree, surrounded by billionaires, celebrities and mobsters. The lifestyle in and of itself is almost impossible for the average reader to grasp. Smith does a good job in making it as simple as possible to give an objective view of Wynn's life and career.

If Smith shows bias in the book it is somewhat veiled. It would seem that some of the interviews, quotes and testimonials used in the book often seem to reflect Smith's underlying opinion.



Structure

Running Scared: the Life and Treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn by John L. Smith is a work of non-fiction. The book is comprised of six parts, eighteen chapters, a prologue and epilogue and a postscript. The total number of pages in the book is 354; 376 with Index and Bibliography.

Prologue: The prologue is comprised of nine pages and works as an introduction to the book.

Part I is comprised of eighty-one pages, separated into five chapters. The shortest chapter is fourteen pages in length; the longest chapter is eighteen pages in length; the average length of the chapters in Part I is sixteen pages.

Part II is comprised of eighty pages, separated into five chapters. The shortest chapter is eighteen pages in length; the longest chapter is twenty pages in length; the average length of the chapters in Part II is sixteen pages.

Part III is comprised of 127 pages, separated into eight chapters. The shortest chapter is twelve pages in length; the longest chapter is sixteen pages in length; the average length of the chapters in Part III is fifteen pages.

The epilogue is comprised of eleven pages and the postscript is comprised of twenty-four pages. Also included in the book are sixteen pages of photographs taken throughout Wynn's career.

Overall, "Running Scared" is comprised of six parts. The shortest part is nine pages in length; the longest part is twenty-four pages in length; the average length of the parts/chapters in on the entire book is seventeen pages.



Quotes

"I'm dying to take as much credit as I can get, just like everybody else. But, honestly, the longer this goes on and the more I get a chance to look at it, the more convinced I am in the overwhelming impact of timing in all our lives."

Introduction, p. 15

"With the Frontier deal blown apart, Steve Wynn was itching to get back into the game. Wynn did not stray far from the action while waiting for his next deal. Then as now, there was more than enough action to keep handsome, glib young hustler busy."

Part I, Chap. 3, p. 65

"Wynn, young and brash, began to exude power. He developed a violent temper, which he unleashed at the slightest provocation."

Part I, Chap. 4, p. 86

"During these heady days, as he was well on his way to becoming known as a visionary with big plans for himself and Las Vegas, Wynn suffered an unexpected body-blow: he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, an inherited and incurable degenerative retinal eye disease."

Part I, Chap. 4, p. 90

"The Capiello-Azzinaro duo brought intense scrutiny of Wynn and the Golden Nugget during the initial 1980 licensing investigation of the corporations Atlantic City casino."

Part I, Chap. 5, p. 95

"If the Golden Nugget success had made Wynn a celebrity and Las Vegas, and making a splash in the nation's newest casino metropolis - Atlantic City - promised to make him a media star to rival New York City tabloid poster-boy Donald Trump in the gaming industry."

Part II Chap. 6, p. 113

"By the fall of 1982, Stephen Wynn was the toast of the gaming industry from Las Vegas to Atlantic City. He affixed a bright, energetic face to an age-old racket."

Part II, Chap. 6, pl 125

"In the early 1980s, Atlantic City gained a reputation as a Mafia laundromat of illicit cash. Dozens of members and associates of La Cosa Nostra were spotted inside casinos playing with large sums of cash and on credit."

Part II, Chap. 8, p. 141



"Even Wynn, rarely one to admit a mistake, has described the botched Harris hire as 'the most embarrassing of my career.'"

Part II, Chap. 9, p. 175

"If only expanding the empire were as simple for Steve Wynn as that staged pirate battle in the man-made lagoon. But crossing swords with the British in reality has been much less kind. After an impressive string of business successes, Wynn ran aground in Great Britain when he attempted to open a casino in London."

Part II, Chap. 10, p. 17

"Michael Milken was not merely a gifted, greedy devil in an ill-fitting toupee. He was a one-man white-collar crime wave."

Part III, Chap. 11, p. 205

"As a 90s unfolded, Steve Wynn faced something of a conundrum in the family-friendly new Las Vegas."

Part III, Chap. 13, p. 238

"Steve Wynn's personalities at times appear to outnumber Elvis impersonators in Las Vegas. Combined, they make up the collective good Wynn and bad Wynn. Whether one encounters a good Wynn or the bad Wynn depends on the circumstances, which can change with dizzying speed."

Part III, Chap. 16, p. 265

"Although such reputed transgressions may not appear serious to newspaper readers and daily viewers of the Trump-Wynn soap opera, if proven true, they established a violation of Wynn's fiduciary responsibility to Golden Nugget stockholders. Such violations were the kinds that could cost a corporate chairman's position or even send him to prison."

Part III, Chap. 16, p. 273

"Another casino industry executive, who has observed Wynn's road show, said, 'Steve's basic position is, 'Here's what I'm here to sell. If you don't like it, you're an idiot.' That tends to offend some people.'"

Part III, Chap. 17, p. 294



Topics for Discussion

Michael and Zelma Wynn wanted nothing more than to raise a son that would become a respected citizen. Discuss Mike Wynn's background, the Wynns' ambitions and plans for Steve and the lengths they went to in order to ensure Steve's success.

Elaine Pascal married Steve Wynn in 1963. By all accounts Elaine remained by Steve's side for nearly thirty years. Examine the marriage of Elaine and Steve Wynn, including their work, goals, infidelity, wealth, divorce and remarriage.

Write a 500 word essay on the structure of the book. Smith tends to reiterate facts in order to add more characters. Explain if this is a smart technique. Examine the way in which Smith introduces the characters and helps the reader to relate despite the extremely large number of people in the book. Also discuss your thoughts on various tangents in the text.

What is your opinion on the relationships between Wynn and his friends? Do you think it was wise to hire them as employees? What are the pros and cons of the situation? Why do you think Wynn went to such lengths to support and protect his friends? How did the hires cause Wynn trouble? What would you do in Wynn's situation? How did Wynn's actions affect the business?

The federal government finally got involved in investigating Wynn's establishment as well as many players involved directly or indirectly. What took so long for the feds to become involved? What sparked their interest? How did the federal agencies work with the statewide agencies like the Gaming Control Board and the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement? Do you think the investigations were properly carried out? What did the agent mean when he wanted to narrow the focus of the investigation for fear of opening Pandora's Box?

Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno was by all accounts the head of the Genovese crime family. Discuss in detail Salerno's activities as a mob boss. How long did Salerno remain the head of the family? How is it possible that many outsiders did not know about Salerno's power? Why was Salerno so powerful? Why was Salerno above the law? How did Salerno compare to John Gotti or other famous mafia figures of the time? How did Wynn become involved, directly or indirectly, with Salerno? What was the outcome of the relationship?

Toward the end of his reign in Las Vegas Wynn began to be careless with his money and also to act very strange. What was happening to Wynn? Do you think Wynn finally cracked under the pressure? Was it simply a relief at getting out of the game? What became Wynn's new passion after the involvement in the casinos began to fade? Who took over Wynn's interests? How did Wynn react? Where did Wynn go after selling off the Mirage and other establishments? Where is Wynn today?



Steve Wynn was known for many character defects including drug use, an insatiable sexual appetite, a violent temper and other things. Discuss how these things affected Wynn's life and career. Did the effects hinder Wynn's success? Explain. How might Wynn's story end differently if Wynn did not indulge in these behaviors? Do you think Wynn was attempting to make up for the shortcomings by being overly generous and accommodating to his family, friends, mafia contacts, colleagues, and guests? Explain.