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### Lies that ring true

#### Las Vegas is a top destination for those seeking firm's fake alibis

By **Abigail Goldman, Las Vegas Sun**

Las Vegas Sun

Mary is married, and Mary is having an affair. The Chicago wife told her husband she was sightseeing in Los Angeles last August, but that was a lie. Mary and her boyfriend were vacationing in Las Vegas, and Mary paid a professional cover-up company \$350 to ensure her husband would never find out.

He didn't. The Alibi Network, an Illinois company that specializes in its namesake - alibis - armed Mary with a fake airplane itinerary, fake hotel reservations and a fake hotel answering service; when her husband phoned Mary's fake room in Los Angeles, the call was routed to her real cell phone in Las Vegas. Three months later, Mary doesn't want her name printed in the paper. She's planning on using the Alibi Network again.

"I needed to get away," she said. "I set something up."

Mary isn't the only person whose tracks, covered for a cost, lead to Las Vegas. Michael DeMarco, the Alibi Network's vice president of marketing, says Las Vegas is a top destination for company clientele, who come to gamble in secret and "get their groove on."

It's only natural, DeMarco says, in a city where what happens, stays.

"I think the appeal for Vegas is its reputation," he says, trailing off. "It's warm; it's relatively clean."

Costs for cover-ups range anywhere from \$75 for a temporary untraceable phone number to \$1,500 for a "full-blown alibi," DeMarco says. It's not a service you want to scrimp on.

"If I'm going to pay a liar," DeMarco says, "I want the best one."

The Alibi Network doesn't give out business figures, but DeMarco estimates that 20 percent of its clientele who hire the company to stage their attendance at fake work seminars - complete with fake seminar schedules, fake seminar registrations and optional fake certificates of seminar completion - are really just going to Las Vegas.

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The things that lure them here, a certain seediness, a sort of reckless "anything goes" air, are the same attributes Alibi clients want to conceal in themselves.

"They don't want it to be known they're in Vegas," DeMarco says. And yet Las Vegas is, as he puts it, "where people want to be."

Roughly half the Alibi Network's clients use the service to hide an infidelity. Company executives insist it's a healthy deception - if you care enough to craft an expensive alibi, the logic goes, you must have some tender feelings for the deceived. (A company radio commercial explains, "If you're in a situation where you have to stray, why not get away with it? ... Your partner will be spared the hurt. Alibinetwork.com - keeping your affair discreet, keeping your marriage alive.")

Most of the people who want to hide vacations in Las Vegas, however, tend to roll into town with a different tide: the professional sports season. When there's a big tournament, or an important playoff, the company is flooded with clients who sneak off to Las Vegas so they can loaf at the sports book in secret and play cards in privacy.

"Any time there is major sports action, we've got people in Vegas," DeMarco said.

Brian, an Alibi client who also lives in Chicago, explained that while he has long-since gotten over his gambling addiction, his wife of 12 years still wouldn't like the idea of his going to Las Vegas alone. It might, Brian said, "raise a red flag."

So, when the urge arose last April, Brian hired the Alibi Network to stage a three-day Las Vegas seminar on a subject related to his field - finance. The Alibi Network sent Brian a fake seminar invitation, and Brian packed his suitcase. In Las Vegas, he played blackjack and hung out in sports books. During seminar "lunch break," Brian called his wife to check in. Then he went back to gambling. His wife still has no idea.

"If you can't lie, you can only go so far," Brian said. "You can't not be a little nervous, I guess, but (Alibi) sent me all the information I would get normally if I went to the seminar. The invitation was perfect. It was the real thing."

Like Mary, Brian wasn't about to blow his alibi by telling a reporter his last name.

Alibi clients who come to Las Vegas for gambling might stay for a little extramarital entertainment, DeMarco said. Business always picks up around the holidays, he says, when clients call the company screaming "in-laws, in-laws, in-laws." Super Bowl Sunday is big. Super Bowl Monday, the morning after the game, is huge; DeMarco calls it a "notorious hangover day."

For these sort of situations, the company offers a "Rescue Call" service, an "Escape-a-Date" service and a "Call In Sick" service - three variations of the same thing: a fake phone call the client accepts and then uses as an excuse to escape.

A study in the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy suggests that approximately 40 percent of married men and approximately 20 percent of married women will have an extramarital affair in their lifetimes. Other oft-cited statistics put those percentages somewhat lower - typically around a quarter of men and fewer than a fifth of women. Studies on the number of significant others who hide trips to Las Vegas, whether for gambling or cheating or both, aren't readily available. DeMarco can't think of a time his clients have been

caught. The company, however, doesn't offer any guarantees.

Mary was nervous, but only at first. Brian planned on purchasing some added protection in the event his wife got wise; a call from the seminar sponsors to his home afterward, or a bogus certificate of seminar completion. Quickly though, it became clear his wife didn't have any idea. The businessman eased up and has since stopped feeling sort of bad about it.

"Quite honestly, once I came back and realized she didn't know, and there wasn't any problem, I didn't feel guilty," Brian said.

DeMarco doesn't feel guilty either. The Alibi Network, like Las Vegas, only feeds the needs that exist in people.

"If there was no demand, we'd have no company," DeMarco said. "We didn't invent lying. We didn't invent infidelity. We just found a niche in an existing market."

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