

Daredevil may set world record on Oasis Skywalk

By **LOVINA K. YOUNG**

Spectrum Correspondent

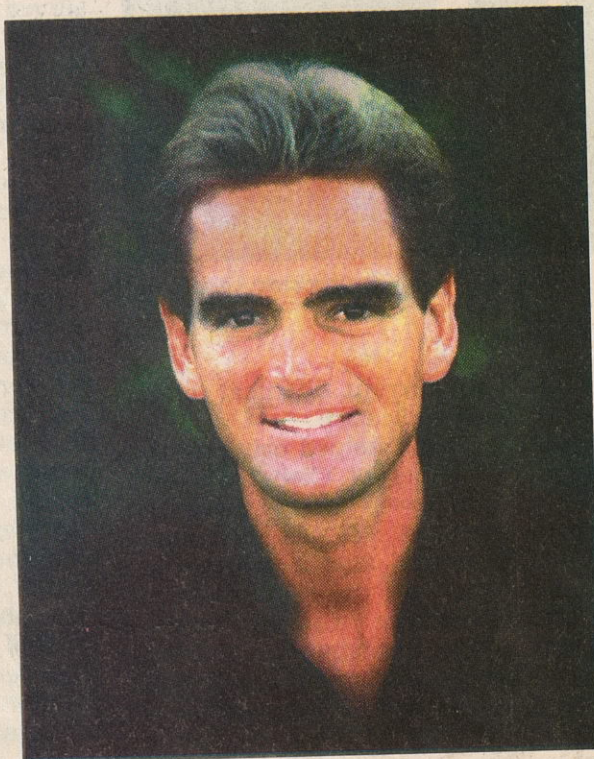
Mark your calendar! On March 10, motorcycle daredevil Butch Laswell will attempt to leap over the Oasis's 38-foot Skywalk Bridge which spans Mesquite Boulevard. This jump could set a new world record for a ramp-to-ramp height jump.

If you would like to meet this stunt rider in person, the Oasis will gladly oblige. The public is invited to an autograph party following the jump to be held in the Oasis Plaza, said Catherine Rourke, Oasis publicist.

The Oasis Plaza, near the Muddy River Pub and Brewery, will be decked out with a motorcycle racing theme. There will be lots of fun and hoopla, Rourke said.

In order to make the jump over the Skywalk Bridge, Laswell will accelerate his Honda CR 500 to a speed of 70 mph, catapulting at least 10 feet over the skywalk to surpass his previous world record of 41 feet, Rourke reported.

Ramps will be set up on each side of the Skywalk and once in the air, the motorcycle stunt rider will have to remain airborne for a distance of 120 feet before descending on the 27 foot high landing



Butch Laswell

ramp in front of the Oasis property, Rourke reported.

If the jump is accomplished as planned, Laswell could set a Guinness World Record for ramp-to-ramp high jumps, wind and weather conditions permitting. Both national and international press will cover the event, including Guinness representatives who have expressed interest in the new world record qualification, Rourke reported.

• Please see **RECORD** on 3

S **FREE
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TAKE ONE**

Thursday, February 15, 1996

Oasis Skywalk Bridge Jump

News Release

On Sunday, March 10 at 3 P.M., Si Redd's Oasis Resort Hotel-Casino will host world record motorcycle stunt driver Butch Laswell in a daring, first-time ramp-to ramp high jump over the resort's 38-ft. tall Skywalk Bridge spanning Mesquite Boulevard.

Laswell will accelerate his Honda CR 500 at a speed of 70 miles per hour, catapulting at least 10 feet over the skywalk to surpass his previous world record of 41 feet. The daredevil motorcyclist will remain airborne for a distance of 120 feet before descending upon a 17 foot high landing ramp in front of the Oasis property. By attempting this startling first-ever stunt, Laswell could set a Guinness World Record for ramp-to-ramp high jumps, wind and weather conditions

permitting. Both national and international press will cover the event, including Guinness representatives who have expressed interest in the new world record qualification.

A Las Vegas native and dedicated professional, Laswell has thrilled audiences worldwide for over 20 years with his innovative, death-defying motorcycle stunts while maintaining a 100 percent safety record. His leaps are renowned for their heart-stopping, midair "no-hands" gestures and spectacular acrobatics.

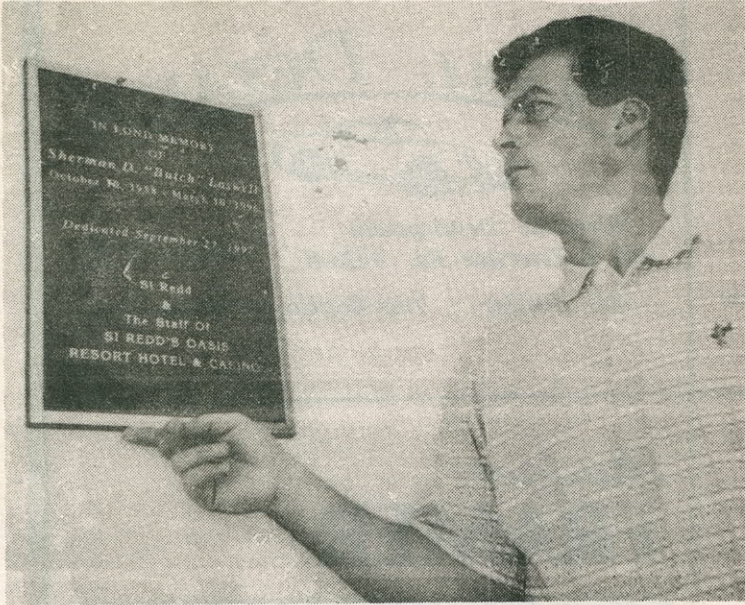
Promoter Douglas Mac Valley noted that Laswell has completed over 5,000 successful jumps. "If you miss a ramp on a high jump it's like falling off a six-story building. He knows what he's doing and he's a wonderful person to work with."

The recently-completed Skywalk Bridge connects the Oasis Resort's new 300 room hotel addition and seven-story parking structure with the main casino property. This expansion reflects the continuing growth of the Oasis and its surrounding environs.

Desert Valley Times



Oasis remembers March 12, 1996



Kirt Lee, Oasis official, adjusts Butch's plaque. Lee planned the commemorative Saturday.

Butch Laswell, who tried to please a crowd by jumping the new skywalk over Mesquite Blvd., and lost his life because the wind threw his motorcycle off course, was honored posthumously Saturday afternoon just feet from where he crashed. More than 100 townspeople were present for the ceremony, in addition to his brothers, sisters and parents, aunts and uncles.

The ceremony in which his parents removed the cover of a commemorative plaque, was solemn and tender as city officials, friends and family remembered the young man who lived to please a crowd with his daredevil stunts. The Editor of the Desert Echo knew the young man for only a few hours, but was deeply rewarded for having met him. He was a God-fearing person. Thank you, Oasis, for giving the community and his family the chance for closure. The plaque will remain on the east outer wall of the Sports/Chamber of Commerce complex where the public may view it.

Laswell Ready to Jump

Press Release

Motorcycle daredevil Butch Laswell jumps at the chance to confront death every day - at least 100 times, in fact, as he diligently prepares for his world-record leap over the Oasis Resort's Skywalk Bridge in Mesquite on March 10.

Laswell defies wind and inclement weather for 10 hours a day in a grueling dawn to dusk regimen at a secret training camp between Las Vegas and Mesquite. "He uses a systematic, scientific approach for every jump and he hasn't missed one yet," explains promoter Douglas McValley.

Laswell has been performing his renowned leaps for over 20 years and currently holds the world record for ramp to ramp height jumps at 41 feet. Inspired to sail through the air on his bicycle as a young boy in Overton, he was already living his dream

by the time he graduated from Moapa Valley High School. From there, he continued to soar new heights on his motorcycle, and on to world fame. Laswell hopes to surpass his current record by over seven (7) feet on Sunday.

Laswell, who maintains a staunch, anti-drug policy is supported by a non-profit group called "Cops Racing Against Violence through Education (CRAVE), will display their motorcycles at the Oasis Resort during this event. CRAVE was formed by a group of Las Vegas policemen who use professional drag racing motorcycles to promote their cause.

On the morning of March 10, the Oasis will present a Media Brunch, where Laswell will highlight various aspects of his incredible, death-defying leaps.

Continued on Page 2

Desert Valley Times Mar 7-1996

further than his reputable career as a neurosurgeon and trauma specialist.

If it were plausible and possible for someone to assume responsibility for the tragic death of Butch Laswell, I'm sure it would be Butch Laswell himself. His courage in the memories of this devastating affair will be embedded in our minds forever. Let us not taint those memories with animosity towards anyone involved in the

2 FRIDAY, MAR. 22, 1996 ■ THE DESERT

Column One

event which was to be the new world record in stunts of this kind. He was not on duty and like nearly every other person there, had hopes of a successful thrilling jump which may explain the absence of a medical bag. It should be noted that none of this in any way detracts from his ability as a medical doctor.

For his attitude during his involvement following the terrible crash, I choose not to speculate. Stories are numerous and contradictory.

Nevertheless, his actions clearly demonstrate at least a desire to impart of his ability to help save a life. We can relate his situation to that of an off-duty police officer who unexpectedly finds himself in a situation where his skills and knowledge could become useful. This officer of the law, possibly in absence of many of his work tools (nightstick, handcuffs, perhaps a medical bag in the case of a doctor) would be expected to assist and yes, maybe take charge of the situation.

We all understand the importance of teamwork. But anyone knows that to be most effective it is beneficial to have

Cont. From Pa

that Dr. Hammargran's medical expertise and experience exceeds that of any of medical personnel involved after the accident, cannot be disputed.

Perhaps it is not coincidental that Dr. Hammargran was preferred above all others present to occupy the ex-seat on Flight For Life. Not coincidental, also, is that pronounced Mr. Laswell de-insinuating that authority was conceded to him in the situation.

All involved with medicine know how crucial the few precious minutes are in saving a life. It is my firm belief that the EMT's and Paramedics exhausted all their efforts attempting to save Mr. Laswell. They should be applauded in those efforts. However, it is imprudent to assume that in his claim that he felt he could have saved Butch Laswell's life, Dr. Hammargran is attempting to arrogate himself or place himself at odds with the EMT's. It is insincere and absurd to propagate that any of his motives in attempting to save

Guinness world record?

Oasis skywalk bridge site of jump by motorcyclist Butch Laswell in March

The Virgin Valley will experience something that many small towns would like to have happen in their back yards, or main street, as is the case in Mesquite.

- The event: A try at a Guinness World Record.

- When: Sunday, March 10 at 3 p.m.

- What: First time ramp-to-ramp high jump more than 10 feet above the Oasis skywalk by a motorcyclist.

- Depends: Weather conditions.

- Special guests: Guinness representatives, national and international press.

- Who: World record motorcycle stunt driver Butch Laswell.

Laswell has thrilled audiences worldwide for over 20 years with his innovative, death-defying motorcycle stunts while maintaining a 100 percent safety record. His leaps are renowned for their heart-stopping, mid-air "no-hands" gestures and spectacular acrobatics, say those who have seen him in other events.

Laswell will accelerate his Honda CR 500 at a speed of 70 mph, catapulting at least 10 feet over the skywalk to surpass his previous world record of 41 feet. The daredevil motorcyclist will remain airborne for a distance of 120 feet before descending upon a 27 foot high landing in front of the Oasis property. By attempting this startling first-ever stunt, Laswell could set a Guinness World Record for ramp-to-ramp high jumps, weather and wind permitting.

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building. He knows what he's doing and he's a wonderful person to work with."

Desert Echo
Feb 9 - 1996

Daredevil

From 1B

Dozens of mourners were forced to stand outside in an intermittent drizzle during the brief service, which was closed to cameras and members of the media.

What was said inside could not be heard outside, but many people unable to hear the formal program traded memories of their own, telling stories, hugging, crying.

After the service, mourners formed a solemn line and walked to where Laswell was buried.

The 37-year-old daredevil died in a helicopter ambulance Sunday on the way to University Medical Center. He had been attempting to set a world record for the highest motorcycle jump, but he missed the landing ramp and plummeted six stories to the asphalt road.

Promoters and authorities said gusty winds may have blown Laswell off course as he sailed over the top of the pedestrian bridge, which crosses Mesquite Boulevard at the Oasis, some 77 miles northeast of Las Vegas. Laswell hit the pavement to the left of the landing ramp.

The Clark County coroner's office said Laswell died of asphyxiation due to a crushed larynx. A spokeswoman for the coroner said other injuries that may have been found during an autopsy would be disclosed only to family members.

Lt. Gov. Lonnie Hammargren, a Las Vegas neurosurgeon and a friend of Laswell's, attended the funeral and repeated again his belief Laswell's injuries should not have been fatal.

or the accident and tried to treat Laswell, but was prevented from doing so by paramedics. Hammargren was not permitted to ride in the ambulance, but boarded the helicopter that took Laswell to Las Vegas.

In a statement issued Wednesday, Hammargren repeated claims that, "I was prevented from giving lifesaving emergency services to Butch Laswell." He said he would review the facts and records and prepare what he called "a comprehensive report for the public and the press."

The neurosurgeon said in an interview if he had to do it over again, he would push the paramedics away to help Laswell.

He said he has been criticized by nurses, including his own wife, who have asked him: "Why didn't you push the paramedics away and do the tracheostomy?"

Mesquite City Manager Bill DaVee said Wednesday he did not agree with Hammargren's account of Sunday's events.

"At no time did this man ever identify himself as being a personal physician of Mr. Laswell," DaVee said. "At no time did he demand control of the scene. At no time did he say he would be responsible for treatment. None of those things were done."

"All he was asking for was a knife, which he didn't have and which we didn't have."

DaVee said he didn't want to continue speculating about whether events might have turned out differently had Hammargren proceeded with what he wanted to do.

"The fact is Dr. Hammargren had no equipment to do any kind of procedure there, especially a tracheotomy, if that's what we're talking about," DaVee said. "Our crews were not equipped for that."

DaVee said he understands the helicopter ambulance had the necessary equipment to perform a tracheotomy, also known as a tracheostomy, which involves making an incision in a person's trachea to open a breathing passage.

"I suppose a person could say, 'well, if we had done this, then...'" DaVee said. "But I don't know, without the right equipment, if that doesn't jeopardize the patient even more."

Review-Journal writer Jane Ann Morrison contributed to this report.

R.V. Journal 3/14/96

Laswell monument brings

By HANS K. MEYER

The Spectrum Oct 1, 1997

Butch Laswell's family hasn't been to Mesquite since the daredevil was killed there during a stunt more than two years ago.

Although it was painful, they returned Sept. 27 for the dedication of a monument in Laswell's honor by Si Redd's Oasis Hotel and Casino.

"I have mixed feelings coming back to the site because I was here when it happened," said Marilyn Laswell, Butch's sister. "But I came because we were very

close, and this provides some type of closure for me."

Laswell died while trying to leap the Oasis Skywalk pedestrian bridge on his motorcycle.

On March 10, 1995, high winds on Mesquite Boulevard blew the motorcyclist off course and he missed his landing ramp.

Oasis owner Si Redd said he decided to dedicate some type of memorial to Laswell the day after the accident.

"I can sincerely say Butch reminded me of myself," Redd said. "I didn't know him too well, but I know he loved life and he

loved his family."

The monument rests on the northeast support of the pedestrian bridge and simply states, "In memory of Butch Laswell."

Laswell was raised in Overton.

Kay Laswell, his mother, said she appreciated the monument. She said the Oasis was always supportive.

"Butch did these things all over the world, and just the way the Oasis behaved toward us was much different than anyone else," she said. "The Oasis could have said, 'Ho, hum, this happens,' but they went out of their

closure

way to help us."

Gary Laswell Jr., Butch's cousin, said he has been trying to find ways to honor Butch's memory since the accident. He has done some small things such as get all the racers in the Great Desert Race in April to wear Butch Laswell stickers.

He hopes to do more, however, and he said this dedication could speed that process along.

"I can't say it's been a tough process, but I've just got busy

• Please see BUTCH on A3



Spectrum photo / Nick Adams

Butch Laswell, a motorcycle stunt performer from Overton, waves to the crowd before he performs his last stunt March 10, 1995. High winds blew Laswell off course, and he missed his landing ramp. He died later that day. A memorial dedicated by Si Redd's Oasis Sept. 27 has helped Laswell's family come to terms with the tragedy.

BUTCH

10/1/97

• Continued from A1

Spectrum

with my own life," he said. "And I've been working on it two years now. I'm just getting to the point where I can talk about it without losing it."

Gary Laswell said he and Butch grew up together riding horses and motorcycles. As they got older, they pursued different directions. He said he'd like to honor Butch with a series of memorial rodeos.

He said he would also like to donate more to the Boys and Girls Club Butch so eagerly supported. Children can learn from Butch's example, he said.

"No matter what your profession is or how good you think you are, there are always risks," he said. "That's what life is all about."



Lt. Gov. Lonnie Hammargren walks past a knot of reporters Wednesday at the funeral for daredevil Butch Laswell.

Hammargren, a neurosurgeon, says he was prevented from saving Laswell's life after the stuntman crashed.

Jim Laurie/Review-Journal

Daredevil Laswell mourned

□ Friends, family and fans remember the motorcyclist, whom Lonnie Hammargren insists he could have saved.

By Shaun McKinnon
Review-Journal

Motorcycle daredevil Butch Laswell was buried Wednesday afternoon without the glare of publicity that followed him through much of his life and his spectacular death.

More than 500 family members, friends and fans gathered at the Davis Paradise Valley Funeral Chapel to remember Laswell, who was killed Sunday trying to jump his motorcycle over a pedestrian bridge at a Mesquite resort.

Please see DAREDEVIL/5B

Paramedic performance at center of tiff over stunt

Apr 5 96
By The Associated Press

One day after Clark County's top health official defended Mesquite, Nev., paramedics regarding their performance the day of motorcycle stuntman Butch Laswell's death, Lt. Gov. Lonnie Hammargren continued to insist he could have saved the stuntman's life.

Hammargren, a neurosurgeon, appeared Wednesday night before a board that advises the Clark County Health District on emergency medical services.

He told the board he could have saved Laswell's life if paramedics in Mesquite, Nev. had allowed him to perform a tracheotomy on the injured rider.

Laswell died of injuries suffered March 10 when his motorcycle missed a landing ramp after soaring approximately 55 feet in the air in a jump over a pedestrian bridge in Mesquite.

Clark County Chief Health Officer Otto Ravenholt said Tuesday he won't let the crew be left hung out to dry with what he called "simplistic accusations."

In a letter to Mesquite City Manager Bill DaVee, Ravenholt wrote, "It would appear that no tracheotomy was immediately needed, and that if it was essential it could have been performed in the succeeding half hour at the transfer scene or in the helicopter."

Ravenholt said when an air ambulance met Laswell half an hour after the accident he was still breathing "with vital signs in a rel

Although the incident has triggered much finger-pointing, Laswell's family isn't looking for someone to blame. "When you're doing what you love, you can't blame anybody when something goes wrong," Gary Laswell, Butch's 26-year-old cousin, told the board.

The medical team in Mesquite included members that Butch Laswell specifically requested, Gary Laswell said, adding that Butch could not afford to pay doctors to be on hand.

Motorcycle rider Gary Wells told the health board how Hammargren performed a similar procedure on him when he was injured in a motorcycle jump at Caesars Palace in 1980. He said the crash crushed his legs and tore his aorta, an injury to the heart that usually proves fatal.

Hammargren has criticized the paramedics in Mesquite for refusing to make him part of the medical team before the jump and then for keeping him at a distance from Laswell after the accident. But doctors on the advisory board suggested the incident was marked by confusion and failed communication.

Dr. Richard Adams said it usually results in a "Twilight Zone-like episode" when doctors coincidentally at the scene of an accident attempt to intervene with paramedics.

Recounting the Mesquite incident, Adams said "A guy in a bright-red jacket runs up, and the first thing he says is 'Give me a knife,'" in reference to Hammargren's call for an instrument to cut an incision in Laswell's trachea to create an airway.

Advisory board members noted that Hammargren did not have his medical bag in hand and that he had not made arrangements before the day of the event to be part of the medical team.

"It hurts more than anything we've ever had to endure"

Butch's Parents Speak Out



those who loved him and are continuing to support his family. I would like to offer a Special Thank You to the E.M.T.'s and Paramedics who were with him the day of the jump, and especially to *the Paramedic*, he knows who he is, and so does everyone else who matters. *He was there at Butch's special request, and had been there during the practice jumps as well.*

We, his family, have remained mostly silent as accusations have been thrown back and forth, and I can tell you, it hurts. It hurts more than anything we have ever had to endure prior to this. So, let's set the record straight.

Butch did not have a personal physician; no doctor traveled to jumps with him or was at

official who used the death of someone, anyone, to get free air time?

His opponent, I am sure, has to buy his time on t.v. to run for office. If, in fact he was Butch's doctor, unknown to his family, his crew, his friends, and he came to the jump with his camera in hand

instead of his medical bag, leaving it locked in his car, who, I ask you, was negligent?

Las Vegas is, and always will be, a show town. There will be more stunts, someone else to take a risk and put on a show.

Please use Butch's death to learn to be better equipped and ready for an emergency, but

don't use it to further someone's political career.

Butch deserved so much more from his State and his Hometown.

Doctor Hammargran, get a life!! Sincerely,

Dwayne and Kay Laswell
Madera, California
Formerly of Las Vegas

Special thanks to the EMTs & Paramedics, and also for an outstanding article...

I was just given this week a copy of your paper dated March 15, '96, in which there was a feature article on our son, Butch Laswell.

I had prepared two letters, one each to be sent to the Las Vegas Sun and the Review Journal, copied here below, but after I read your excellent article, I wanted to send them along to you with a Special Thank You for the way you presented both the facts of that day and his life growing up in the Valley.

Of all the articles and the hype on t.v., yours was outstanding.

We, his family send a Special Thank You also to the E.M.T.'s and Paramedics and to your writer who brought out the facts instead of speculation.

I would like to thank all of Butch's fans, the crew, and all

this one at his request. The same doctor who has been hitting every sleazy talk show bragg-ing about how he could have *salvaged* our son if he had been in control.

This same doctor, who had set up his display of past accidents at the base of Butch's ramps had been asked to remove them *by Butch* shortly before the jump (Ed. Note: the torn riding gear that notable riding heroes had worn).

On the other hand, the Paramedic was hand picked by Butch and was there because he had been asked to be there.

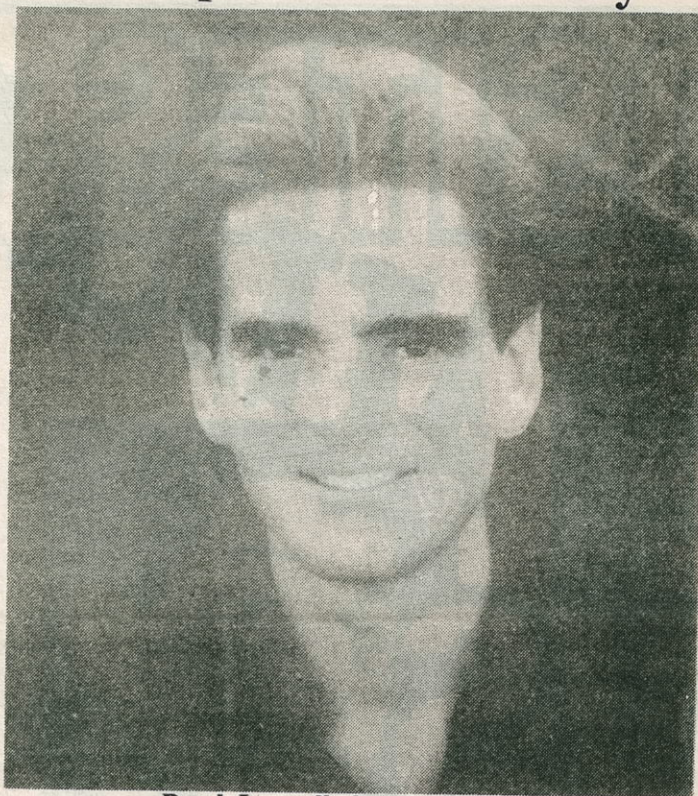
Only those who have lost a child, and yes, that grown man was our *child*, can understand the pain we are going through. To see his plunge to death shown over and over again on t.v. so that a politician can get free name exposure before an election is more than we should have to endure.

I no longer live in Nevada. I did for 25 years, and was proud to call Las Vegas my hometown. But no more!

I hope the voters of Nevada are smart enough to see through all this hype. Why would anyone want a state

Desert Echo
9/12/97

Butch Laswell plaque to be presented to family



Butch Laswell, daredevil

Butch Laswell lived life to the limit and died doing what he loved most. Si Redd's Oasis Resort Hotel and Casino will dedicate a plaque to the memory of the young daredevil who attempted to jump over the Oasis skywalk on March 10, 1996. In spite of the strong winds, Butch was determined not to disappoint his many fans and was blown off course resulting in his tragic death.

Si Redd, Oasis founder, and Alan Green, president, will kick off the dedication ceremony scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 27, 1997 at the Golf Village area of the skywalk on the south side of Mesquite Blvd. The bronze plaque will be unveiled in the presence of Butch's many family and friends.

Butch was raised in Overton, Nevada. He had a fascination for bikes all his life. Gradually, the bikes and stunts kept

getting bigger and better. Karen Hopkins, whose son, Matt, spent a lot of time with Butch, commented that they even planned to drive an old truck off the Mesa until she intervened. In spite of his flair for danger, Butch was well liked by everyone. "He was never mean to anyone and made friends easily," Ms. Hopkins said.

Prior to his fateful jump at the Oasis, Butch starred in "Splash," the motorcycle spectacular "Globe of Death." He left the show to establish himself as a motorcycle stunt star. He performed spectacular stunts throughout the United States, Mexico, Aruba, Japan and Taiwan. He had plans to open a motorcycle jump school. Butch left behind a small group of local stunt enthusiasts like Matt who are hoping to carry on his legacy in their own way.

Counting down



Butch Laswell stands next to a ramp. He will be jumping over the Oasis skywalk bridge on Sunday, and hopefully set a new world record.

By **LOVINA K. YOUNG**

Spectrum Correspondent

Mark your calendars! The big event is approaching. Butch Laswell, famed motorcycle stunt rider, will jump the Oasis Skywalk Bridge on March 10 at 3 p.m.

Laswell is working hard to prepare to set a new world's height record for a ramp to ramp jump. In daily training sessions from sun-up to sundown, he is doing a minimum of 100 jumps per day, reported Catherine Rourke, Oasis publicist.

Laswell will appear at a press conference luncheon in Las

Vegas today at UNLV's Si Redd Room where he will perform a motorcycle demonstration and will answer media questions while showing videos of prior jumps, Rourke reported.

Laswell will arrive in Mesquite early on Friday to set up his ramps. On Sunday, he will meet the press again at an Oasis media brunch before the jump, Rourke said.

This event is free and open to the public who are also welcome to the post-jump autograph signing party in the Oasis Plaza immediately following the jump, Rourke reported.

Laswell dedication to be held at Oasis skywalk

For The Spectrum

Sep 17-'97

Butch Laswell lived life to the fullest and died doing what he loved most.

Si Redd's Oasis Resort Hotel and Casino will dedicate a plaque to the memory of Butch Laswell, the young daredevil who attempted to jump over the Oasis skywalk on March 10, 1996. In spite of the strong winds, Laswell was determined not to disappoint his many fans and was blown off course resulting in his death.

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Oasis Skywalk Bridge Jump

News Release

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The recently-completed Skywalk Bridge connects the Oasis Resort's new 300 room hotel addition and seven-story parking structure with the main casino property. This expansion

Paramedics were wrong

To the editor:

Mar 19 96
Your recent photo shows Dr. Lonnie Hammargren rushing to the aid of Butch Laswell, who had just crashed his motorcycle and lay dying of his injuries. Amazingly, while he was attempting to save Mr. Laswell's life, paramedics told Dr. Hammargren to get out of the way.

With all due respect to paramedics, since when do they outrank a surgeon? Once he offered his professional services, Dr. Hammargren should have been given command of the situation and supplied with whatever equipment necessary.

Mesquite City Manager Bill DaVee defended his paramedics, but on what basis? Jurisdiction? As lieutenant governor of the state of Nevada, Dr. Hammargren certainly wins that argument.

Was Butch Laswell's death preventable? His family has a right to know.

ERNIE DIMARIA

Las Vegas

Taking^{2/22/96} shot at ^{Desert} editorial ^{Echo}

By Devin A. Hughes
Mesquite

We are saddened by the tragic death of motorcycle daredevil Butch Laswell on Sunday, March 10, 1996.

However, what is equally tragic is what seems to be an insatiable desire by many to find something or someone to blame for the mishap, or in the least, have a scapegoat upon whom to vent frustrations. I am disappointed that the Editor of the Desert Echo chose Lt. Governor Lonnie Hammargran, "The Bottom Line" chosen by the Editor was a very shallow one indeed. And the rebuking attacks on the Lt. Governor were uncalled for.

I apologize in advance if any are uneasy by what follows. Please know that no offense is intended, and I alone take responsibility for what is expressed herein.

Lt. Governor Hammargran may have attended the event toting a video camera which makes him no different than a large number of the estimated 10,000 attendees. That he brought memorabilia of other heroes of the motorcycle daredevil genre could hint of his festive enthusiasm for the

Cont. On Pg. 2

Daredevil plummets to his death

□ A Las Vegas man dies in an attempt to break the world record for vertical motorcycle jumping.

By Natalie Patton
Review-Journal

A Las Vegas motorcycle daredevil, performing an acrobatic stunt in front of 10,000 spectators, was killed Sunday after missing a ramp on the other side of a Mesquite resort's 38-foot high pedestrian walkway.

Butch Laswell had cleared the Oasis hotel's walkway and was trying to break the world record for vertical motorcycle jumping when the 38-year-old plummeted to the asphalt.

A nursing supervisor at University

Please see JUMP/2A



John Gurzinski/Review-Journal

Las Vegas daredevil Butch Laswell, 38, touches down well past the ramp that was to cushion his landing after a jump Sunday at the Oasis hotel in Mesquite. The fatal accident took place before a crowd of 10,000 spectators.

Jump

From 1A

Medical Center said physicians pronounced Laswell dead at 4:40 p.m., more than an hour after the accident.

"It all happened so fast," Oasis hotel publicist Catherine Rourke said after witnessing Laswell's fall. "He missed it by such a narrow margin. The crowd was really stunned, silent and obviously very concerned."

A helicopter ambulance met ground ambulance paramedics caring for Laswell en route along Interstate 15. Laswell was transferred to the helicopter and flown to Las Vegas. Mesquite is about 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas.

"Everyone involved recognized something as tragic as this could happen and that's why so many precautions were taken," Mesquite police Chief Mike Murphy said Sunday. "Butch was very careful. He was very confident he could make the jump. We felt this was a viable event."

Police will review video recordings of the crash in a search for answers to what went wrong, he said.

"It does appear that the wind was a factor," Murphy said.

The police chief estimated a crowd of at least 10,000 had gathered for the Oasis Skywalk Bridge Jump. Mesquite Boulevard was closed to traffic for the ramp-to-ramp jump.

Traveling at 70 mph, Laswell had planned to jump 10 feet above the pedestrian walkway to break his previous vertical jump world record of 41 feet.

He planned to remain



Associated Press

Butch Laswell clears the Oasis hotel's pedestrian walkway in Mesquite on Sunday, seconds before missing the landing ramp.

airborne for a distance of 120 feet before landing on a 27-foot high ramp.

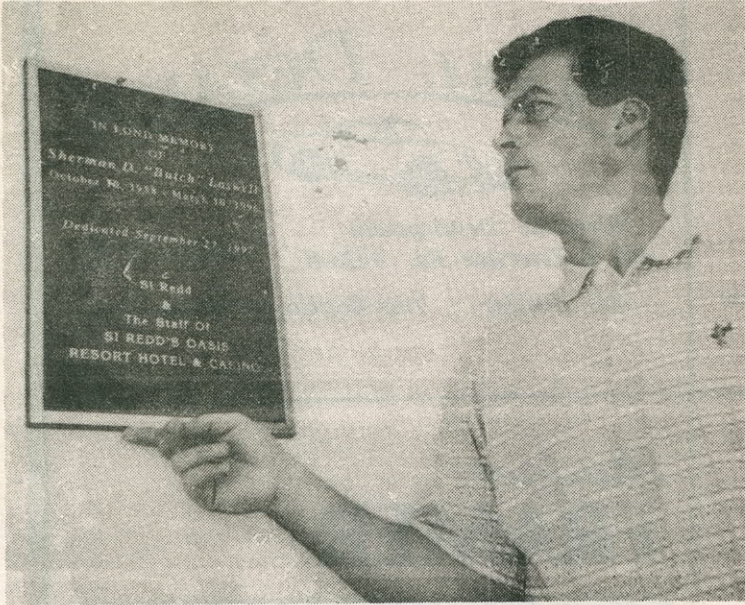
Laswell's promoter said the motorcyclist had successfully completed more than 5,000 jumps.

"If you miss a ramp on a high jump it's like falling off a six-story building," said

Douglas MacValley in a press release last week. "He knows what he's doing."

In a television interview over the weekend, Laswell said, "I feel pretty confident." He said he'd never had a serious accident during his 20 years in the air on his motorcycle.

Oasis remembers March 12, 1996



Kirt Lee, Oasis official, adjusts Butch's plaque. Lee planned the commemorative Saturday.

Butch Laswell, who tried to please a crowd by jumping the new skywalk over Mesquite Blvd., and lost his life because the wind threw his motorcycle off course, was honored posthumously Saturday afternoon just feet from where he crashed. More than 100 townspeople were present for the ceremony, in addition to his brothers, sisters and parents, aunts and uncles.

The ceremony in which his parents removed the cover of a commemorative plaque, was solemn and tender as city officials, friends and family remembered the young man who lived to please a crowd with his daredevil stunts. The Editor of the Desert Echo knew the young man for only a few hours, but was deeply rewarded for having met him. He was a God-fearing person. Thank you, Oasis, for giving the community and his family the chance for closure. The plaque will remain on the east outer wall of the Sports/Chamber of Commerce complex where the public may view it.

Paramedic performance at center of tiff over stunt

Apr 5 96
By The Associated Press

One day after Clark County's top health official defended Mesquite, Nev., paramedics regarding their performance the day of motorcycle stuntman Butch Laswell's death, Lt. Gov. Lonnie Hammargren continued to insist he could have saved the stuntman's life.

Hammargren, a neurosurgeon, appeared Wednesday night before a board that advises the Clark County Health District on emergency medical services.

He told the board he could have saved Laswell's life if paramedics in Mesquite, Nev. had allowed him to perform a tracheotomy on the injured rider.

Laswell died of injuries suffered March 10 when his motorcycle missed a landing ramp after soaring approximately 55 feet in the air in a jump over a pedestrian bridge in Mesquite.

Clark County Chief Health Officer Otto Ravenholt said Tuesday he won't let the crew be left hung out to dry with what he called "simplistic accusations."

In a letter to Mesquite City Manager Bill DaVee, Ravenholt wrote, "It would appear that no tracheotomy was immediately needed, and that if it was essential it could have been performed in the succeeding half hour at the transfer scene or in the helicopter."

Ravenholt said when an air ambulance met Laswell half an hour after the accident he was still breathing "with vital signs in a rel

Although the incident has triggered much finger-pointing, Laswell's family isn't looking for someone to blame. "When you're doing what you love, you can't blame anybody when something goes wrong," Gary Laswell, Butch's 26-year-old cousin, told the board.

The medical team in Mesquite included members that Butch Laswell specifically requested, Gary Laswell said, adding that Butch could not afford to pay doctors to be on hand.

Motorcycle rider Gary Wells told the health board how Hammargren performed a similar procedure on him when he was injured in a motorcycle jump at Caesars Palace in 1980. He said the crash crushed his legs and tore his aorta, an injury to the heart that usually proves fatal.

Hammargren has criticized the paramedics in Mesquite for refusing to make him part of the medical team before the jump and then for keeping him at a distance from Laswell after the accident. But doctors on the advisory board suggested the incident was marked by confusion and failed communication.

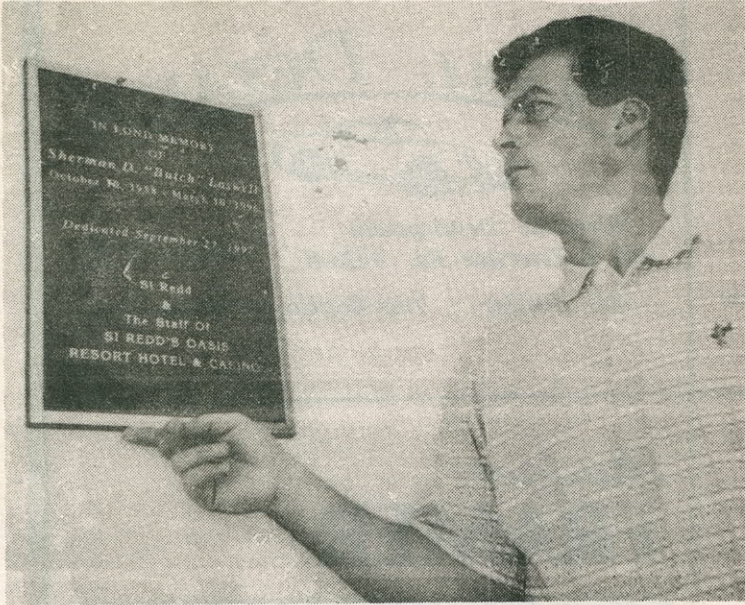
Dr. Richard Adams said it usually results in a "Twilight Zone-like episode" when doctors coincidentally at the scene of an accident attempt to intervene with paramedics.

Recounting the Mesquite incident, Adams said "A guy in a bright-red jacket runs up, and the first thing he says is 'Give me a knife,'" in reference to Hammargren's call for an instrument to cut an incision in Laswell's trachea to create an airway.

Advisory board members noted that Hammargren did not have his medical bag in hand and that he had not made arrangements before the day of the event to be part of the medical team.



Oasis remembers March 12, 1996



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Daredevil plummets to his death

□ A Las Vegas man dies in an attempt to break the world record for vertical motorcycle jumping.

By Natalie Patton
Review-Journal

A Las Vegas motorcycle daredevil, performing an acrobatic stunt in front of 10,000 spectators, was killed Sunday after missing a ramp on the other side of a Mesquite resort's 38-foot high pedestrian walkway.

Butch Laswell had cleared the Oasis hotel's walkway and was trying to break the world record for vertical motorcycle jumping when the 38-year-old plummeted to the asphalt.

A nursing supervisor at University

Please see JUMP/2A



John Gurzinski/Review-Journal

Las Vegas daredevil Butch Laswell, 38, touches down well past the ramp that was to cushion his landing after a jump Sunday at the Oasis hotel in Mesquite. The fatal accident took place before a crowd of 10,000 spectators.

Jump

From 1A

Medical Center said physicians pronounced Laswell dead at 4:40 p.m., more than an hour after the accident.

"It all happened so fast," Oasis hotel publicist Catherine Rourke said after witnessing Laswell's fall. "He missed it by such a narrow margin. The crowd was really stunned, silent and obviously very concerned."

A helicopter ambulance met ground ambulance paramedics caring for Laswell en route along Interstate 15. Laswell was transferred to the helicopter and flown to Las Vegas. Mesquite is about 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas.

"Everyone involved recognized something as tragic as this could happen and that's why so many precautions were taken," Mesquite police Chief Mike Murphy said Sunday. "Butch was very careful. He was very confident he could make the jump. We felt this was a viable event."

Police will review video recordings of the crash in a search for answers to what went wrong, he said.

"It does appear that the wind was a factor," Murphy said.

The police chief estimated a crowd of at least 10,000 had gathered for the Oasis Skywalk Bridge Jump. Mesquite Boulevard was closed to traffic for the ramp-to-ramp jump.

Traveling at 70 mph, Laswell had planned to jump 10 feet above the pedestrian walkway to break his previous vertical jump world record of 41 feet.

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Associated Press

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airborne for a distance of 120 feet before landing on a 27-foot high ramp.

Laswell's promoter said the motorcyclist had successfully completed more than 5,000 jumps.

"If you miss a ramp on a high jump it's like falling off a six-story building," said

Douglas MacValley in a press release last week. "He knows what he's doing."

In a television interview over the weekend, Laswell said, "I feel pretty confident." He said he'd never had a serious accident during his 20 years in the air on his motorcycle.

"It hurts more than anything we've ever had to endure"

Butch's Parents Speak Out



those who loved him and are continuing to support his family. I would like to offer a Special Thank You to the E.M.T.'s and Paramedics who were with him the day of the jump, and especially to *the Paramedic*, he knows who he is, and so does everyone else who matters. *He was there at Butch's special request, and had been there during the practice jumps as well.*

We, his family, have remained mostly silent as accusations have been thrown back and forth, and I can tell you, it hurts. It hurts more than anything we have ever had to endure prior to this. So, let's set the record straight.

Butch did not have a personal physician; no doctor traveled to jumps with him or was at

official who used the death of someone, anyone, to get free air time?

His opponent, I am sure, has to buy his time on t.v. to run for office. If, in fact he was Butch's doctor, unknown to his family, his crew, his friends, and he came to the jump with his camera in hand

instead of his medical bag, leaving it locked in his car, who, I ask you, was negligent?

Las Vegas is, and always will be, a show town. There will be more stunts, someone else to take a risk and put on a show.

Please use Butch's death to learn to be better equipped and ready for an emergency, but

don't use it to further someone's political career.

Butch deserved so much more from his State and his Hometown.

Doctor Hammargran, get a life!! Sincerely,

Dwayne and Kay Laswell
Madera, California
Formerly of Las Vegas

Special thanks to the EMTs & Paramedics, and also for an outstanding article...

I was just given this week a copy of your paper dated March 15, '96, in which there was a feature article on our son, Butch Laswell.

I had prepared two letters, one each to be sent to the Las Vegas Sun and the Review Journal, copied here below, but after I read your excellent article, I wanted to send them along to you with a Special Thank You for the way you presented both the facts of that day and his life growing up in the Valley.

Of all the articles and the hype on t.v., yours was outstanding.

We, his family send a Special Thank You also to the E.M.T.'s and Paramedics and to your writer who brought out the facts instead of speculation.

I would like to thank all of Butch's fans, the crew, and all

this one at his request. The same doctor who has been hitting every sleazy talk show bragg-ing about how he could have *salvaged* our son if he had been in control.

This same doctor, who had set up his display of past accidents at the base of Butch's ramps had been asked to remove them *by Butch* shortly before the jump (Ed. Note: the torn riding gear that notable riding heroes had worn).

On the other hand, the Paramedic was hand picked by Butch and was there because he had been asked to be there.

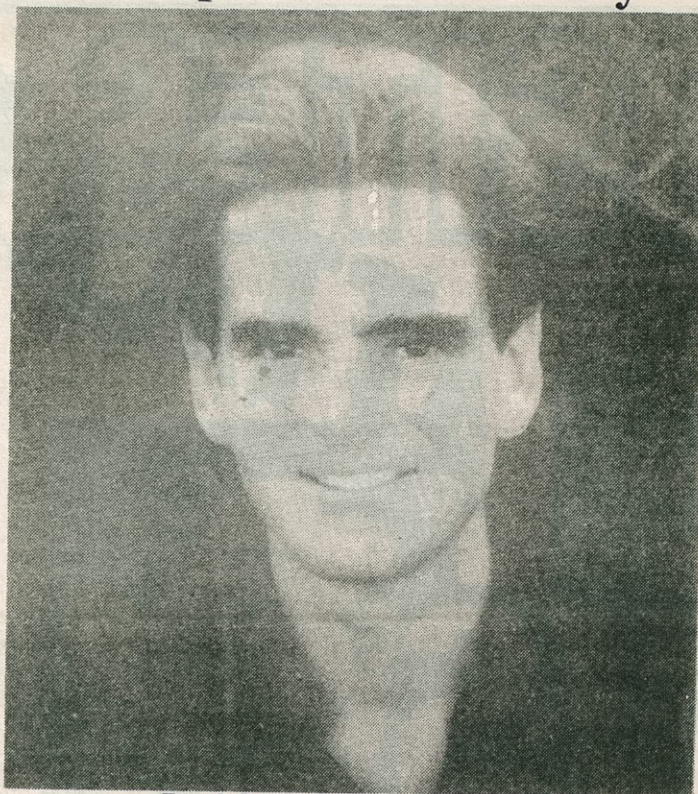
Only those who have lost a child, and yes, that grown man was our *child*, can understand the pain we are going through. To see his plunge to death shown over and over again on t.v. so that a politician can get free name exposure before an election is more than we should have to endure.

I no longer live in Nevada. I did for 25 years, and was proud to call Las Vegas my hometown. But no more!

I hope the voters of Nevada are smart enough to see through all this hype. Why would anyone want a state

Desert Echo
9/12/97

Butch Laswell plaque to be presented to family



Butch Laswell, daredevil

Butch Laswell lived life to the limit and died doing what he loved most. Si Redd's Oasis Resort Hotel and Casino will dedicate a plaque to the memory of the young daredevil who attempted to jump over the Oasis skywalk on March 10, 1996. In spite of the strong winds, Butch was determined not to disappoint his many fans and was blown off course resulting in his tragic death.

Si Redd, Oasis founder, and Alan Green, president, will kick off the dedication ceremony scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 27, 1997 at the Golf Village area of the skywalk on the south side of Mesquite Blvd. The bronze plaque will be unveiled in the presence of Butch's many family and friends.

Butch was raised in Overton, Nevada. He had a fascination for bikes all his life. Gradually, the bikes and stunts kept

getting bigger and better. Karen Hopkins, whose son, Matt, spent a lot of time with Butch, commented that they even planned to drive an old truck off the Mesa until she intervened. In spite of his flair for danger, Butch was well liked by everyone. "He was never mean to anyone and made friends easily," Ms. Hopkins said.

Prior to his fateful jump at the Oasis, Butch starred in "Splash," the motorcycle spectacular "Globe of Death." He left the show to establish himself as a motorcycle stunt star. He performed spectacular stunts throughout the United States, Mexico, Aruba, Japan and Taiwan. He had plans to open a motorcycle jump school. Butch left behind a small group of local stunt enthusiasts like Matt who are hoping to carry on his legacy in their own way.

Laswell dedication to be held at Oasis skywalk

For The Spectrum

Sep 17-'97

Butch Laswell lived life to the fullest and died doing what he loved most.

Si Redd's Oasis Resort Hotel and Casino will dedicate a plaque to the memory of Butch Laswell, the young daredevil who attempted to jump over the Oasis skywalk on March 10, 1996. In spite of the strong winds, Laswell was determined not to disappoint his many fans and was blown off course resulting in his death.

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Oasis Skywalk Bridge Jump

News Release

On Sunday, March 10 at 3 P.M., Si Redd's Oasis Resort Hotel-Casino will host world record motorcycle stunt driver Butch Laswell in a daring, first-time ramp-to ramp high jump over the resort's 38-ft. tall Skywalk Bridge spanning Mesquite Boulevard.

Laswell will accelerate his Honda CR 500 at a speed of 70 miles per hour, catapulting at least 10 feet over the skywalk to surpass his previous world record of 41 feet. The daredevil motorcyclist will remain airborne for a distance of 120 feet before descending upon a 17 foot high landing ramp in front of the Oasis property. By attempting this startling first-ever stunt, Laswell could set a Guinness World Record for ramp-to-ramp high jumps, wind and weather conditions permitting. Both national and international press will cover the event, including Guinness representatives who have expressed interest in the new world record qualification.

A Las Vegas native and dedicated professional, Laswell has thrilled audiences worldwide for over 20 years with his innovative, death-defying motorcycle stunts while maintaining a 100 percent safety record. His leaps are renowned for their heart-stopping, midair "no-hands" gestures and spectacular acrobatics.

Promoter Douglas Mac Valley noted that Laswell has completed over 5,000 successful jumps. "If you miss a ramp on a high jump it's like falling off a six-story building. He knows what he's doing and he's a wonderful person to work with."

The recently-completed Skywalk Bridge connects the Oasis Resort's new 300 room hotel addition and seven-story parking structure with the main casino property. This expansion

Paramedics were wrong

To the editor:

Mar 19 96
Your recent photo shows Dr. Lonnie Hammargren rushing to the aid of Butch Laswell, who had just crashed his motorcycle and lay dying of his injuries. Amazingly, while he was attempting to save Mr. Laswell's life, paramedics told Dr. Hammargren to get out of the way.

With all due respect to paramedics, since when do they outrank a surgeon? Once he offered his professional services, Dr. Hammargren should have been given command of the situation and supplied with whatever equipment necessary.

Mesquite City Manager Bill DaVee defended his paramedics, but on what basis? Jurisdiction? As lieutenant governor of the state of Nevada, Dr. Hammargren certainly wins that argument.

Was Butch Laswell's death preventable? His family has a right to know.

ERNIE DIMARIA

Las Vegas

Taking^{2/22/96} shot at ^{Desert} ^{Echo} editorial

By Devin A. Hughes
Mesquite

We are saddened by the tragic death of motorcycle daredevil Butch Laswell on Sunday, March 10, 1996.

However, what is equally tragic is what seems to be an insatiable desire by many to find something or someone to blame for the mishap, or in the least, have a scapegoat upon whom to vent frustrations. I am disappointed that the Editor of the Desert Echo chose Lt. Governor Lonnie Hammargran, "The Bottom Line" chosen by the Editor was a very shallow one indeed. And the rebuking attacks on the Lt. Governor were uncalled for.

I apologize in advance if any are uneasy by what follows. Please know that no offense is intended, and I alone take responsibility for what is expressed herein.

Lt. Governor Hammargran may have attended the event toting a video camera which makes him no different than a large number of the estimated 10,000 attendees. That he brought memorabilia of other heroes of the motorcycle daredevil genre could hint of his festive enthusiasm for the

Cont. On Pg. 2

Laswell monument brings

By HANS K. MEYER

The Spectrum Oct 1, 1997

Butch Laswell's family hasn't been to Mesquite since the daredevil was killed there during a stunt more than two years ago.

Although it was painful, they returned Sept. 27 for the dedication of a monument in Laswell's honor by Si Redd's Oasis Hotel and Casino.

"I have mixed feelings coming back to the site because I was here when it happened," said Marilyn Laswell, Butch's sister. "But I came because we were very

close, and this provides some type of closure for me."

Laswell died while trying to leap the Oasis Skywalk pedestrian bridge on his motorcycle.

On March 10, 1995, high winds on Mesquite Boulevard blew the motorcyclist off course and he missed his landing ramp.

Oasis owner Si Redd said he decided to dedicate some type of memorial to Laswell the day after the accident.

"I can sincerely say Butch reminded me of myself," Redd said. "I didn't know him too well, but I know he loved life and he

loved his family."

The monument rests on the northeast support of the pedestrian bridge and simply states, "In memory of Butch Laswell."

Laswell was raised in Overton.

Kay Laswell, his mother, said she appreciated the monument. She said the Oasis was always supportive.

"Butch did these things all over the world, and just the way the Oasis behaved toward us was much different than anyone else," she said. "The Oasis could have said, 'Ho, hum, this happens,' but they went out of their

closure

way to help us."

Gary Laswell Jr., Butch's cousin, said he has been trying to find ways to honor Butch's memory since the accident. He has done some small things such as get all the racers in the Great Desert Race in April to wear Butch Laswell stickers.

He hopes to do more, however, and he said this dedication could speed that process along.

"I can't say it's been a tough process, but I've just got busy

• Please see BUTCH on A3



Spectrum photo / Nick Adams

Butch Laswell, a motorcycle stunt performer from Overton, waves to the crowd before he performs his last stunt March 10, 1995. High winds blew Laswell off course, and he missed his landing ramp. He died later that day. A memorial dedicated by Si Redd's Oasis Sept. 27 has helped Laswell's family come to terms with the tragedy.

BUTCH

10/1/97

• Continued from A1

Spectrum

with my own life," he said. "And I've been working on it two years now. I'm just getting to the point where I can talk about it without losing it."

Gary Laswell said he and Butch grew up together riding horses and motorcycles. As they got older, they pursued different directions. He said he'd like to honor Butch with a series of memorial rodeos.

He said he would also like to donate more to the Boys and Girls Club Butch so eagerly supported. Children can learn from Butch's example, he said.

"No matter what your profession is or how good you think you are, there are always risks," he said. "That's what life is all about."

Daredevil

From 1B

Dozens of mourners were forced to stand outside in an intermittent drizzle during the brief service, which was closed to cameras and members of the media.

What was said inside could not be heard outside, but many people unable to hear the formal program traded memories of their own, telling stories, hugging, crying.

After the service, mourners formed a solemn line and walked to where Laswell was buried.

The 37-year-old daredevil died in a helicopter ambulance Sunday on the way to University Medical Center. He had been attempting to set a world record for the highest motorcycle jump, but he missed the landing ramp and plummeted six stories to the asphalt road.

Promoters and authorities said gusty winds may have blown Laswell off course as he sailed over the top of the pedestrian bridge, which crosses Mesquite Boulevard at the Oasis, some 77 miles northeast of Las Vegas. Laswell hit the pavement to the left of the landing ramp.

The Clark County coroner's office said Laswell died of asphyxiation due to a crushed larynx. A spokeswoman for the coroner said other injuries that may have been found during an autopsy would be disclosed only to family members.

Lt. Gov. Lonnie Hammargren, a Las Vegas neurosurgeon and a friend of Laswell's, attended the funeral and repeated again his belief Laswell's injuries should not have been fatal.

or the accident and tried to treat Laswell, but was prevented from doing so by paramedics. Hammargren was not permitted to ride in the ambulance, but boarded the helicopter that took Laswell to Las Vegas.

In a statement issued Wednesday, Hammargren repeated claims that, "I was prevented from giving lifesaving emergency services to Butch Laswell." He said he would review the facts and records and prepare what he called "a comprehensive report for the public and the press."

The neurosurgeon said in an interview if he had to do it over again, he would push the paramedics away to help Laswell.

He said he has been criticized by nurses, including his own wife, who have asked him: "Why didn't you push the paramedics away and do the tracheostomy?"

Mesquite City Manager Bill DaVee said Wednesday he did not agree with Hammargren's account of Sunday's events.

"At no time did this man ever identify himself as being a personal physician of Mr. Laswell," DaVee said. "At no time did he demand control of the scene. At no time did he say he would be responsible for treatment. None of those things were done."

"All he was asking for was a knife, which he didn't have and which we didn't have."

DaVee said he didn't want to continue speculating about whether events might have turned out differently had Hammargren proceeded with what he wanted to do.

"The fact is Dr. Hammargren had no equipment to do any kind of procedure there, especially a tracheotomy, if that's what we're talking about," DaVee said. "Our crews were not equipped for that."

DaVee said he understands the helicopter ambulance had the necessary equipment to perform a tracheotomy, also known as a tracheostomy, which involves making an incision in a person's trachea to open a breathing passage.

"I suppose a person could say, 'well, if we had done this, then...'" DaVee said. "But I don't know, without the right equipment, if that doesn't jeopardize the patient even more."

Review-Journal writer Jane Ann Morrison contributed to this report.

R.V. Journal 3/14/96