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Center Story #8

American Costumes: It's Dress-Up for Adults!

In this article, Diane treks to American Costumes to learn more about the company from its owners, Marty and Tina.

- *Did Elvis Presley ever marry Marilyn Monroe?*
- *What famous female entertainer used to send singing telegrams to everyone in her Las Vegas shows?*
- *How many costumes does American Costumes have as part of its available inventory?*

***Did you know that Elvis married Marilyn Monroe? That's right! They've done it many times – with costumes supplied by Commercial Center's American Costumes.***

Owner Marty Sadowitz notes that Las Vegas is the Wedding Capital of the World, with couples coming here from all over the globe to tie the knot. Some of the marrying couples want a memorable ceremony...as characters. Elvis marrying Marilyn is **very** popular.

A New Jersey native, Marty majored in math and business in college. He also considered himself an entertainer, so after serving in the Air Force, he decided to stay in Las Vegas and open a singing telegram service.

His first office was in Commercial Center's New Orleans Square. The business grew quickly, and as Marty put it, "We soon had six gorillas everywhere wishing folks Happy Birthday."

Among his favorite recurring clients was entertainer Shirley MacLaine who called on Marty's company to provide singing telegrams to everyone in her Las Vegas shows. Other clients included Frank Sinatra, Paul Anka and Vic Damone. Among Marty's own favorite characters was dressing himself as a Playboy Bunny!

To run a successful singing telegram business, costumes were a requirement. Soon, the business had so many that they decided to rent them out, as well.

Marty's now been in the costume business for 46 years. His business moved back to Commercial Center into a space he now owns from a prior location on the west side of the Strip.

Along the way, a young lady named Clemintine (Tina) Peebles stopped in the store, at first wanting to see “rhinestones”.

“She told me she had a five-octave range, and I said that was impossible – it was probably three octaves at best. She won the argument and started working for us. Tina did singing telegrams better than anybody.” In 2000, the couple married and they are partners in the store. Marty handles most of the male clients; Tina the female.

Incidentally, Marty and Tina are still in the singing telegram business if a client wants much more “mature” gorillas. But, these days, the couple’s business is mostly costumes - for adults, not children. But, Halloween is still a busy time.

How many costumes are available for rent? Some 5,000 Marty estimates. He also sells some and has an array of accessories (some made by Tina) that would fill their own store.

Yes, they have provided costumes for stage plays. Yes, they have convention business. Yes, while this reporter was visiting American Costumes, Marty got a call from a dancer who needed a headdress for an event associated with upcoming Formula One.

So, what does Marty like about the business? “It’s very creative. We have everything: wigs, accessories, hats, uniforms, all kinds of fruit and salad costies, animals, showgirl outfits, you name it.” Though the store is crowded with costumes, it also has two fitting rooms for final costume approval.

“When people come in here, they are in a party mood,” says Marty. “It’s fun to help. Their excitement is contagious.”

American Costumes is open from noon until 6 PM six days a week. Their email address is [lasvegascostumes@cox.net](mailto:lasvegascostumes@cox.net) and they can be reached by phone at 702-671-0116.

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