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Vdara visitor: 'Death ray' scorched hair

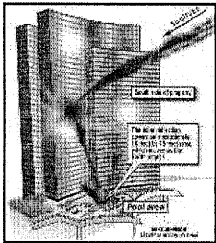
Chicago lawyer says bag also melted

By JOAN WHITELY

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL



The Vdara Hotel swimming pool was a crowded place on a recent Sunday afternoon. DUANE PROKOP/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL



MIKE JOHNSON/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL



Bill Pintas, a Chicago lawyer and businessman, took this photo of his melted plastic bag after he was caught unexpectedly at the Vdara pool deck in a "hot spot" of reflected sunlight. COURTESY OF BILL PINTAS

The tall, sleek, curving Vdara Hotel at CityCenter on the Strip is a thing of beauty.

But the south-facing tower is also a collector and bouncer of sun rays, which -- if you're at the hotel's swimming pool at the wrong time of day and season -- can singe your hair and melt your plastic drink cups and shopping bags.

Hotel pool employees call the phenomenon the "Vdara death ray."

A spokesman for MGM Resorts International, which owns Vdara, said he prefers the term "hot spot" or "solar convergence" to describe it. He went on to say that designers are already working with resort staff to come up with solutions.

Designers foresaw the issue, and thought they had solved it by installing a high-tech film on the south-facing glass panes, according to Gordon Absher, the MGM spokesman. The film scatters more than 70 percent of reflected rays. But that's not enough, Absher acknowledged, as some pool guests are still uncomfortable.

Chicago visitor Bill Pintas experienced Vdara's "death ray" recently. A lawyer, he was here on business for Preferred Capital Lending, which he co-owns. He also co-owns a Vdara condo.

Pintas told the Review-Journal that at midday Sept. 16, after a brief dip in the hotel pool, he was sunning on a recliner. He was on his stomach, relaxed, eyes closed.

But suddenly, the lawyer became so uncomfortably hot that he leaped up to move. He tried to put on his flip-flop sandals but, inexplicably, they were too hot to touch. So he ran barefoot to the

shade.

"I was effectively being cooked," Pintas said. "I started running as fast as I could without looking like a lunatic."

Then he smelled an odor, and realized it was coming from his head, where a bit of hair had been scorched. It was about 12:20 p.m., as best Pintas can recall.

Taking brief refuge at the pool's bar area, Pintas chatted with employees. He said they chuckled when he described what had happened. "Yes, we call it the death ray," he says they told him. Sometimes it causes disposable drink glasses to melt, a cocktail waitress added.

After the intense reflection had passed, Pintas returned to his lounge chair. He remembered that a patron nearby laughed, and said something like, It got you, too?

Then he noticed something more -- a flimsy plastic bag holding his newspaper had partially melted. The portion of bag bearing the name Vdara had entirely melted away. Holes marked where the letters, in black ink, had absorbed the heat. Pintas snapped a photo of the bag, which he shared with the newspaper.

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After Pintas' experience, a Review-Journal reporter went to the Vdara pool twice. Employees did not know they were talking to a reporter.

The "hot spot" was visible during one of the visits, but no guests were in its reach. An employee pointed out the zone and said it was "like a magnifying glass that shines down" over a space about 10 feet by 15 feet, which moves as the Earth rotates. At this time of year, the bright reflection is present for about an hour and a half, both before noon and after, according to the young man.

The Review-Journal's other visit was well past noon, so the phenomenon was gone. But several employees recognized the "Vdara death ray" nickname, and readily spoke about the effect.

"It's basically a glare," said one.

"It's like 20 degrees hotter" wherever the reflection is hitting, another one said.

Pintas disagrees strongly with the "glare" terminology. Does glare "painfully heat your hair (and scalp)?" he asked in an e-mail after he returned to Chicago. "Glare sounds like what a politician or insurance attorney would call it. ...

"This is a real risk to pool guests and pool employees," Pintas concludes. Plastic shopping bags are often made of polyethylene, which melts at between 120 and 130 degrees. Many disposable plastic cups are made of polypropylene, which melts at about 160 degrees.

Pintas' theory is that Vdara's curved southern wall acts as a parabola to collect and intensify the afternoon rays, which it then reflects.

Viewed from above, the Vdara tower resembles a crescent. The crescent's southern-facing side is concave. There is no tall building farther south to block the sun's hot afternoon rays, so Vdara receives the full brunt. Its pool lies at the center of this southern-facing wall, on top of a low-rise building that is three stories tall.

A concave reflective surface can act "as a lens," according to Kerry Haglund at the Center for Sustainable Building Research, which is at the University of Minnesota. But she declined to speculate on whether the Vdara's wall is acting as one. Sophisticated computer modeling can determine whether its "facade configuration" and "reflective surface" interact in a way that creates a hazard for pool users, Haglund said via e-mail.

The Vdara -- and five other CityCenter buildings -- are LEED-certified, a prestigious designation that means the buildings are designed, built and operated to conserve resources and to reduce impacts on the environment. Rafael Vinoly Architects designed Vdara.

Pintas said he doesn't intend to sue Vdara over the reflection issue. But as a condo owner, he worries about the health consequences and expects the hotel to fix the problem.

A new building's first season of operation always uncovers glitches, Absher also said. Vdara solutions under review include adding more foliage to the pool deck, offering larger sun umbrellas and building a shade structure. But the challenge of constructing shade is that the sun, and the reflection, are moving targets.

CityCenter's Vdara isn't the first high-profile structure to reflect brightly. In Las Vegas, both the AdventureDome at Circus Circus and the Mandalay Bay have reflection issues, Absher noted. In early spring, he added, some pool guests at Mandalay Bay even seek out the hot spots, because they are more comfortable for sunning.

In Los Angeles, the Disney Concert Hall -- by noted architect Frank Gehry -- had to tone down its reflectivity by sanding some of its curving exterior metal surfaces.

Initially, its reflections were raising temperatures in nearby buildings and impairing the vision of passers-by. In 2004, the Los Angeles Times ran a story about the hall, below the headline, "Disney venue reflects badly on downtown."

Reporter Alan Maimon contributed to this article. Contact reporter Joan Whitely at jwhitely@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0268. Contact Alan Maimon at amaimon@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0404.



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'Death Ray' heats up Vdara guests, residents

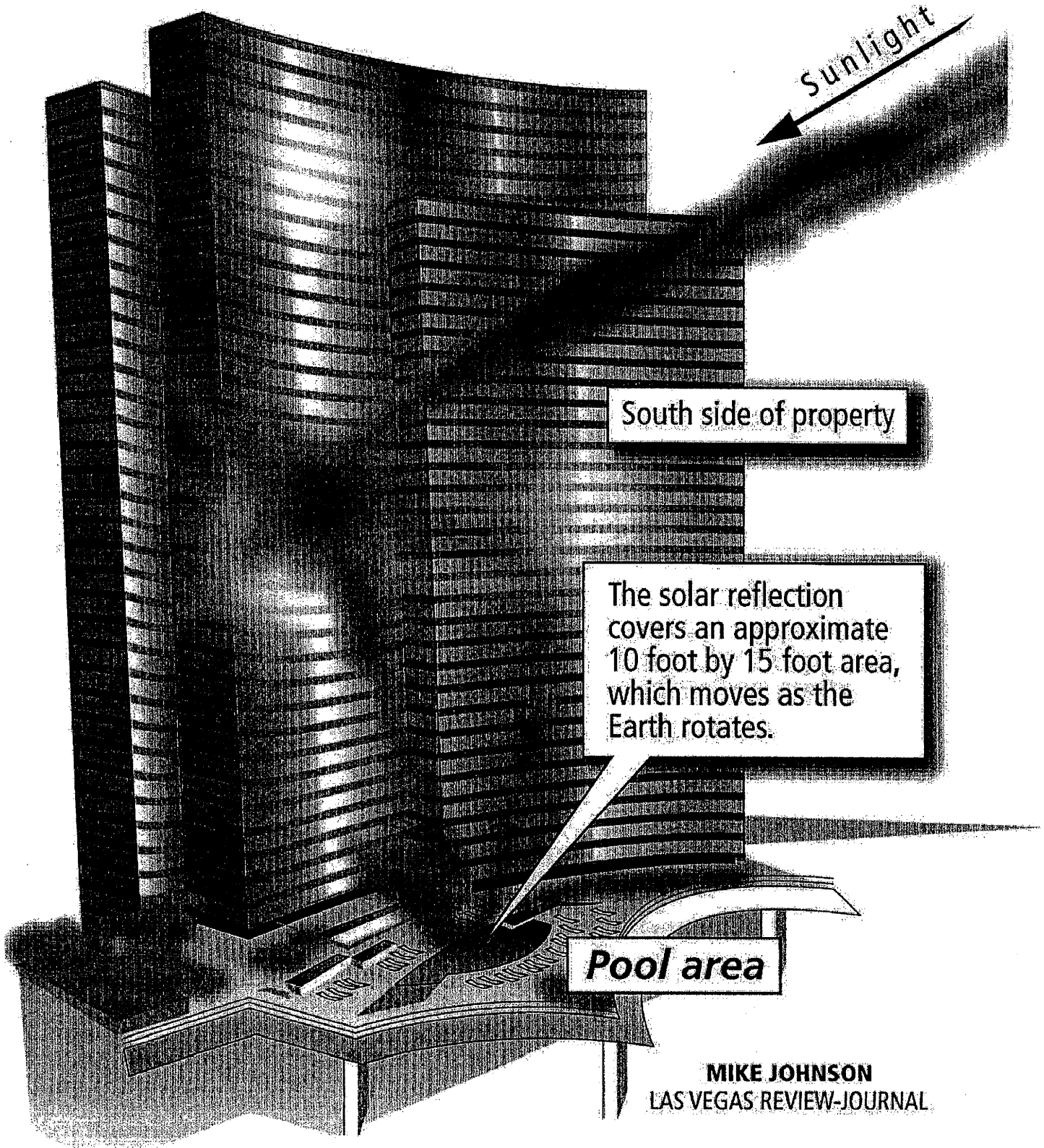


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EXHIBIT 2

The Post-Human Condition

Musings from the intersection of energy, nature and the built environment.

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Posted by: [mayosten](#) | October 26, 2010

Navajos Move Away From Coal in Favor of Sun and Wind – NYTimes.com

Just rebroadcasting a story that, as a Four Corners resident, is music to my ears. It is wonderful to see the Navajo taking some positive steps with regards to their own abundant, renewable resources.

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Posted by: [mayosten](#) | October 7, 2010

No Progress on Per Capita Energy Use in 40 Years

The [Washington Post](#) is reporting that U.S. per capita energy use in homes has basically stayed where it was since the 1970s. Although home appliances and construction have become dramatically more efficient, consumers have managed to counteract that by purchasing larger homes and filling those homes with more energy-using products.

To those of us who have worked on energy efficiency, these are daunting and depressing figures because they tell us that consumers really haven't changed their energy using habits at all, despite educational campaigns, the threat of global warming, even fuel price increases. If you look at the record, the best way to instigate energy reductions on a broad scale would be to have planned economic slumps, and um, no one is advocating for that.

So what do we do? In the near term, we need to generate more energy awareness by providing consumers with better forms of feedback on their energy use, including enhanced billing, web portals, home energy management systems, and a host of other emerging smart grid-related tools.

But long term we need a paradigm shift. Rather than describe the kind of shift we need, I'll just insert this excellent TED Talk by Tim Jackson that provides at least a glimpse at a direction forward or, perhaps, a direction away from the problems of the conspicuous consumption economy and all of its environmental devastation.

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Posted by: [mayosten](#) | October 3, 2010

Cut Calories and Double-Count Your Energy Savings

I've heard America referred to as the Saudi Arabia of body fat. It was actually a joke delivered to an audience of runners, bikers and climbers at a Boulder enviro-love-in just last year. But when you stop and think about it, fat is energy, and it really is quite appropriate to view overeating as energy waste.

But even less controversial is all the food that Americans simply *waste*. This is food that you paid good money for – both to purchase and refrigerate – and just toss in the trash. Sure, it's easier to make one big weekly trip to the grocery store rather than those wimpy basket-carrying trips the Europeans make in their Smart Cars, but maybe there's something to buying food fresh, only purchasing what you need for a couple days, and using more all of what you purchase.

To wit, a new study has examined the problem of wasted food and found that it accounts for 2% of U.S. energy use! And these guys weren't even considering all of the greenhouse gases that are emitted by those foods once they're thrown into landfills and allowed to anaerobically decompose. Holy methane, Batman.

I swear, half of our eco problems could be solved if we just followed the conventional wisdom of our thrifty Depression-era grandparents and just cut the waste.

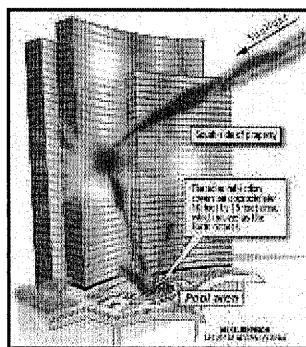
via [A painless way to achieve huge energy savings: Stop wasting food](#) | [Science Blog](#).

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Posted by: [mayosten](#) | September 29, 2010

The Vegas Death Ray



The Vdara Hotel in Las Vegas is the only structure in Sin City that can truly burn its visitors, at least according to a [report in the Las Vegas Review Journal](#). The so-called “death ray” recently singed a guest’s hair while lounging at the pool:

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Wow, and all this even given the protective film the hotel's designers installed on the glazing to scatter sunlight! I say they should scrap the pool and use the "lens" to heat the water for the hotel's restaurants and guest rooms.

via [Vdara visitor: 'Death ray' scorched hair – News – ReviewJournal.com](#).

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Posted by: [mayosten](#) | September 16, 2010

EXHIBIT 3

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-APPLICATION-

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Title of Work: Vdara death-ray

Completion/Publication _____

Year of Completion: 2010

Date of 1st Publication: September 25, 2010

Nation of 1st Publication: United States

Author _____

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Author Created: text

Work made for hire: Yes

Citizen of: United States

Domiciled in: United States

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Copyright Claimant: Righthaven LLC

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Organization Name: Righthaven LLC

Name: Chief Executive Officer

Email: sgibson@righthaven.com

Telephone: 702-527-5900

Address: 9960 West Cheyenne Avenue

Suite 210

Las Vegas, NV 89129-7701 United States

Certification _____

Name: Steven A. Gibson

Date: November 24, 2010

Applicant's Tracking Number: 0002160

Registration #:

Service Request #: 1-524088592

Application Date: 11-24-2010 12:55:02

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Organization Name: Righthaven LLC

Name: Steven A. Gibson

Address: 9960 West Cheyenne Avenue
Suite 210
Las Vegas, NV 89129-7701 United States

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Righthaven LLC
Steven A. Gibson
9960 West Cheyenne Avenue
Suite 210
Las Vegas, NV 89129-7701 United States