

# **An Oral History of John Feroah**

4<sup>th</sup> Street | Prater Way History Project

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Interviewer: Edan Strekal

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## JOHN FEROAH

Interviewed on March 23, 2012

Edan Strekal, Interviewer

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Photo by Patrick Cummings

Strekal: I'm here with UNR's very own Officer John Feroah. We are on the campus of the University of Nevada, Reno, and today is Friday, March 23, 2012. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Feroah: I was born in 1948 in Los Angeles, California.

Strekal: What year did you and your family move to Reno?

Feroah: December 1948.

Strekal: So not long after you were born?

Feroah: Right. Five months later.

Strekal: What brought your family to Reno?

Feroah: Part of it was family. My grandparents had moved here, and my and uncles and aunt. My father wasn't finding work, I guess, down in Los Angeles. He wanted to get into law enforcement, so he moved to Reno to see if he could get on the Reno Police Department, because they wouldn't accept him at Los Angeles PD because he had an astigmatism. His eyes were fine, but because of that, the doctor wouldn't clear him. So they moved to Reno.

Strekal: Did Los Angeles have pretty strict standards for their law enforcement?

Feroah: At that time they had a doctor who was in charge of all their medical for the Los Angeles Police Department, and he thought that if you didn't have perfect vision, that you weren't going to get hired.

Strekal: Your dad wanted to come to Reno for a chance to get on the Reno police force.

Feroah: Right. He started with the Reno Police Department, February 1949.

Strekal: What did your mom do after you moved to Reno?

Feroah: I come from a family of nine kids. So my mom took care of kids. And really back then women didn't work as much outside the home. There were six below me. We moved here in December of '48, and my brother just below me was born in June of '50. Then as we went along, I had a sister born in '51, a brother born in '54, a sister born in '57, a brother born in '60, and another sister born in '63. My mom and my dad loved kids.

Strekal: How old are your older two siblings? How much older are they than you?

Feroah: A little over a year each. Mike last Monday just turned sixty-six, Jim's sixty-five, and I'm sixty-three. I'll be sixty-four in July.

Strekal: So your dad got hired on with the Reno Police Department very quickly after you guys got to Reno.

Feroah: Yes. He worked a couple jobs in between, but then he went to work for Reno Police Department.

Strekal: How big was the Police Department when your dad was on it?

Feroah: It wasn't very big. When he got started he walked the beat for a lot of years. Reno at that time was so small that you had two walking beats downtown and a paddy wagon. The two walking beats were east beat, which was everything on the east side of Virginia Street from Fourth Street down to First Street and in between and over to the lake, in that area. That's east beat. West beat was everything on the other side of Virginia Street, same parameters, over to Arlington. He worked graveyard for a lot of years on the walking beat or swing shift.

Strekal: If you had the walking beat downtown, then would Washoe County Sheriff's Department have taken care of a lot of the stuff outside of the proximity of the city?

Feroah: No. They didn't have that many people at the Sheriff's Office. When I got into law enforcement Reno had about 35,000 people in the area, that was in '69, and Reno PD took care of everything, of course, which they'd always done. Everything inside the city limits belongs to the Police Department. Everything outside the city limits belongs to the county.

That's the way it was. But the Sheriff's Office, I think they only had seventy-some people who worked at the Sheriff's Office. That included Incline, Gerlach, everything in northern Washoe County, which goes all the way up to the border of Oregon.

*Strekal: People don't realize how large Washoe County is.*

Feroah: Right. It's a large area. So the Reno PD was probably—I want to say it was 250 total people at Reno PD. This was '69. I guess when my dad went on, it was probably 100, 150 people, including civilian staff and officers.

Strekal: Reno's population was still a somewhat transient population.

Feroah: Somewhat. My mother-in-law and father-in-law moved here in the forties, also. They worked in the casinos, which were the mainstay of the area and the tourist industry. In the summertime, this was the busiest place you ever saw. In the wintertime, it was quiet.

Strekal: Divorcees mostly coming?

Feroah: Divorcees coming to town, yeah. That was a funny thing to see.

Strekal: In this neighborhood just west of the university, you see a lot of sheds converted into housing, and downtown off Mt. Rose Street and that area you see a lot of apartments and houses out back.

Feroah: But those were for a lot of the casino workers.

Strekal: Oh, that, too.

Feroah: Yeah. They had places around here, in fact, out in Verdi. I laugh because that was one thing that my father-in-law had done when he came to Reno. Before my mother-in-law and father-in-law got married, he moved to Reno. He lived and worked at a ranch; it was out in Verdi out on the river, the Donner Trail Guest Ranch, that's what they were called.

Strekal: Oh, guest ranch.

Feroah: Guest ranch. And he was, as they said, a stud out there. That was his job. He took care of the ladies that needed to be taken care of.

Strekal: They hired handsome cowboy-type men.

Feroah: Yeah, and he was a big man for his age back then. So that was his job. Reno was a small town. When my dad was working, in order get a hold of an officer who was walking the beat, before they had portable radios, they had a streetlight at the corner, right in the middle of the intersection of Second and Virginia, and one on top of the New China Club, which was over on Lake Street and Commercial Row.

They had wires that ran from the Police Department where it is today and went over there. If they needed to get a hold of the officer walking the beat—this is the only way they could find them—they'd turn on a switch and it would turn on a red light, a beacon that would go on. Unless he checked in on the telephone. They had telephones, too.

Strekal: So the Police Department was where it still is today over on Second and Kuenzli?

Feroah: As a kid, the Police Department was in the basement of the original City Hall that I knew of, which was at First and Center. I'm trying to think when they built the police station down on Second. It was actually in the fifties they built it, because the '55 flood did impact that. So it had to be right around '51, '52, '53, somewhere around there.

Strekal: What do you remember about the neighborhood that you grew up in, and where was that?

Feroah: The first house I remember was up on Tenth Street, 39 West Tenth, which is gone. It's where Sierra Hall is now. We lived there up until kindergarten, the last in May of 1954. Then we moved from there to Margrave Drive, which is one street south of Plumb between Kirman and Kietzke. It's four blocks long, and back then it was county. We were out in the county. So that was back in '54. The street was dirt. I remember that well. A lot of kids. Of course, I come from a family with a lot of kids. But it was fun. Reno was a fun town.

Strekal: I know we've talked about this previously, but the airport wasn't there yet? It was all dirt roads?

Feroah: Plumb Lane was a dirt road. They were thinking about building the airport because they'd bid and gotten the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley. So when we moved there in '54, there wasn't anything there. I can remember because in 1956, my dad was promoted to sergeant, and he, for some reason, had to fly out and we had to take him out to the airport terminal, which was where Gentry Way is now. There's a Jet Center out there now. I can remember going out there to the airport, and it was a big Quonset hut, which was the hangar.

Strekal: It's like military.

Feroah: Military, right. Well, a lot of that airport was built because of the Air Guard. Reno Airport wouldn't have been built yet. There were airports around Reno. There was one that was over by Washoe Golf Course. There was one up on Seventh Street. There was one over in Sparks, which is where the Petro station is now. There was an airport over there, and then there was Reno Airport.

I don't even know when they built Reno Airport. The City of Reno at that time owned the airport, and in order for them to get the federal funds, the Air Guard was the reason. Because the Air Guard needed such a standard for their runways and taxiways, the federal government was giving them money to build it up. It wasn't something that most airports got. But the Reno Airport was basically built off of funds from the federal government to keep up the facilities so they could have the the Air Guard.

They had the F-86s. They had those for a long time, and then they went to the RB-57s, which was a reconnaissance bomber, they called it, and that airplane there was a

British design aircraft, and went from that to the 101s—the B models, the C models of those.

Strekal: Oh, the C and B, the Bs are the bombers, the Cs are the cargo planes.

Feroah: Well, no, they weren't cargo. These were versions of the same aircraft which were fighter aircraft. Reconnaissance. RB-57 was a reconnaissance bomber. The British built it with a wood frame. The Americans built it with a metal frame. So that was the design. Then they went from that to the 101s—the 101 was a two-seater aircraft, one- or two-seater, and it was a flying rock was all it was. If you didn't have those engines going, you weren't going anywhere. Very light armament on them. There aren't many. I think there were some machine guns just to be on the safe side. Then they went to the F-4s, and then they went out of the reconnaissance business, and this was a highly decorated unit, to what they have now.

Strekal: Now all they've got out of there is C-130s.

Feroah: 130s, yeah. The 141s aren't flying anymore. You see a C-17 every once in a while

Strekal: How long were you in that neighborhood, south of Plumb?

Feroah: Actually, my sister still lives in the house. She bought the house. They bought the house from my mom after my dad had passed. We've had that house since 1954. They moved there in '82, I want to say, '81, '82. So long time.

Strekal: How long were you there?

Feroah: I moved back in for about a year, but didn't actually move out of that house until '71. I was living at home when I first got into law enforcement and was working downtown. I wasn't married, had no kids.

Strekal: It was in '69, you said, that you got into law enforcement?

Feroah: Yes, in '69 I went to work for Reno PD, part-time.

Strekal: What do you remember about where you attended school in the area, and how did you get to school?

Feroah: The first school I can remember was Orvis Ring, which was down on Evans where the Orvis Ring Apartments are now. That's where the school was. I went to kindergarten there. Then we moved down to Margrave, so from there I went to Veterans Memorial, which, I don't remember, I think we walked back and forth to school, which was quite a distance for kids of five, six years old. I had two older brothers and we'd get a ride with Mom if she had the car that day.

Then we went from Veterans to Anderson, which is down on Berrum, and we

were bused over there. It's over off of Lakeside, around Moana and Lakeside. So you're talking, what, two three miles?

Strekal: It's a good distance from the Plumb area to Moana.

Feroah: Right. So we were bused over to there. We went there for two years, and then from Anderson we went to Southside, which was at Liberty and Sinclair, sitting where the old City Hall was, which is now the Discovery Museum. It was there, and there were two buildings—the one that's still there, the red brick that sits right on the corner of Sinclair, and then another one. I was actually in the other building. We were bused to Southside. We went there for half a year, and then they built Echo Loder, which is down on Apple Street, a block from our house, which we walked to every day.

Then after we finished up at Echo Loder, we went to middle school or junior high school, they called it back then, at Vaughn, and that was seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. Then to Wooster, and I finished up at Wooster.

Strekal: Where is Vaughn Junior High?

Feroah: Vaughn is off of Vassar and Kietzke. Bresson, actually, the street is called.

Strekal: And that was seventh through ninth?

Feroah: Seventh through ninth, and then the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades were at Wooster High School.

Strekal: Was Wooster in the midst of neighborhoods when you went there?

Feroah: Wooster was built in '62. They started building it in '61. My oldest brother was in the first graduating class, then my brother Jim was second, and I was in the third, barely. They built Wooster because they needed a second high school in Reno, of course. So Wooster was built in that area, which was out there. Actually, the only houses that were there are the ones between Kietzke and where Wooster is now. Then there were a few ranch houses. The fields where Sak 'N Save and all that stuff were all fields.

In fact, we had a sheepdog, growing up, and that dog used to go over there and chase those horses and roll in all the manure and whatever, and come home and oh, my god. His nickname was Punky, and he was punky-smelling.

Strekal: I'll bet he stunk. Bet it was great for him.

Feroah: Oh, yeah. He was a happy dog.

Strekal: That's hard to imagine. That area is so commercial now.

Feroah: Oh, yeah. It was all pasture. If you look from Plumb Lane south, there's a car dealership down there, there are some mobile home parks. But over on the east side, that was all fields, and the Margrave family had owned all that property. He was a wealthy

contractor here in town. He built homes. They had a home up here off of Court Street. Mostly the family had ranch land, and then they owned all that property out there. It bordered up against the airport property.

In fact, that was another thing. The airport property, part of that was owned by Matley. You see Matley Lane around Reno. The Matley family owned part of that. So property was taken from different people to build the airport. The Ferrari family had a ranch out on the other side of the airport. They took some of that land for the airport.

*Strekal: Is that Ferrari of the realty company that's in town?*

Feroah: I don't know. I just know part of the family. But they took a lot of different property from different people to get to where they wanted to be. When they built the airport, Rattlesnake Mountain, how it's cut out, part of that went in underneath the airport as fill.

When I was young, before I got into law enforcement, I worked for the city on the survey crews, and they had one project, it was the east-west runway and taxiway that they had to fill it in because it kept sinking. That ground out there was marshland. So they had to fill it in and they were bringing in rock. They had a borrow pit, they called it. A borrow pit is where they go and pick up what they want out of it, and then just backfill with dirt or mud or something like that.

Well, they found a place over by the airport that was filled with rock, and I mean I'm talking rocks of all shapes and sizes. That's what they used, the borrow pit, to fill in that part out there on the east end of the east-west runway and taxiway. I was on the survey crews working out there when they did that. I mean, they were throwing rocks into these holes and filling up green mud and crap out of there like you wouldn't believe.

*Strekal: That's hard to imagine, I guess. You just don't think of a swamp around here.*

Feroah: Yeah, but there was in this end of the valley. The whole southeast side of this valley was all swampland, all wetlands, as they call them now. You notice if you go out around Hidden Valley and that area, you'll see that.

*Strekal: Was that your first job?*

Feroah: Oh, no. It was my first job working for the government. The first job I had growing up was a bagboy. They call them courtesy clerks now.

*Strekal: Where was that at?*

Feroah: The first place was a store I can't even remember the name of. I only worked there for a short time. I hated the place, but it was down off of Grove Street. There's a dance place there now, but it was a cash-and-carry type grocery store, and it wasn't anything nice. It was kind of a grungy place.

Then the next job I had was working for Eagle Thrifty, which was the predecessor to Raley's, and I worked at the one on Wells Avenue, which is now another market. I worked there cleaning up the butcher shop, and you'd have to clean it after the butchers



would go home, clean up all the garbage and saws. That was quite a deal to clean up a saw, the band saw. Oh, I cut the hell out of myself more than once. And it was slippery. They had sawdust on the floor. It was really something.

Then after that I got a job at Sewell's Market, which was over on Virginia Street. This was Arroyo and Virginia, down south, which is Statewide Lighting now, or at least it was. I don't know what it is now. I don't get down there that much. That was where I worked for my junior and part of my senior year.

Then I worked at the Mapes Hotel as a busboy because I was in food management. I originally thought I was going to become a cook or chef. I still like cooking. I finished off till I went in the service. In 1966, after graduating, I joined the Nevada Air Guard. I worked as a busboy at the Mapes Hotel in two different restaurants. I worked there when it was really kind of going downhill, little by little. It was still a good restaurant. It was still a good place to work, a decent place to work, but by that time there were a lot of stories or rumors about Charlie Mapes being such a drunk and he'd come in and fire people or do this or do that. I only saw him a few times.

They had a place in the Mapes—it's a club where people, businessmen can go eat, and you buy a membership. It's like a dining club and they play cards and do whatever, and it's been at Harrah's for years, but it used to be at the Mapes at one time. That was up on the second floor of the Mapes and they had a restaurant.

Strekal: The Sky Room?

Feroah: No, the Sky Room was on the very top. It was on the very top floor. That was another thing. But that was more of a banquet room when I was working there. They had the Coach Room, which was built with red leather seats and was real nice. It was a nice dinner house at night. During the day they had lunches and for some of the old elite of Reno back then, that was a nice place to go.

I'll remember the name of that other place, because it still exists to this day, this club that's down in Harrah's; there's a round circular insignia or decal on their window that says that they're members of that, and people can go down and have lunch. I've had lunch there once or twice with different people, and it's like a social club, businessmen's club-type thing.

Strekal: So you joined the Air Guard in 1966.

Feroah: Sixty-six, and got out in '71, activated in the Air Guard, did all kinds of stuff.

Strekal: And did you leave Reno for any long period of time?

Feroah: I was in Texas, and then I came back from basic and they sent me to Sacramento for two, three months for on-the-job training. I came back and I was home. I got in a car accident in 1967, where I crushed vertebrae in my back, so I didn't work for a few months. Then I finally got a job working for the City of Reno on the survey crews.

Then in January of 1968, January 26<sup>th</sup>, they called up the Air National Guards and the Reserves because of the *Pueblo* crisis. If you go back in history, you'll see the *Pueblo* crisis was the North Koreans. While Vietnam was ramped up, the North Koreans got the

*Pueblo*, which was a spy ship, and they took it, and when they did that—I'm trying to think who the president was then. Johnson activated us. I want to say it was Johnson.

They activated us and we stayed on active duty until June of the following year. We spent six months here, and then I was transferred. Now, the Air Guard at that time had about 720 people out at the Air Guard, and they sent us to seventy-two different bases. The flight-line people, they were all sent to Korea. If you were in supply or the Fire Department—they have a Fire Department out there—or the Security Police, they sent them to seventy-two different bases around the world.

In fact, what happened to me was there were the people of lower rank. I was only an E2, E3 at the time, which is like an Airman II striper. Everybody who was a two-striper, some guys out of the photo lab, somebody else, too, somebody out of supply, I think, I don't remember, but there were a group of us who were sent to Clovis, New Mexico. We were at Cannon Air Force Base down there.

Out of that group, two of us got to go to Germany for two and a half months. Everybody was sent TDY, or temporary duty assignment, different places around the country. So I went to Germany for two and a half months with another guy, to Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany for that two and a half months. Got to see a little bit more of the world.

There were guys who had to go to Korea or Japan. One friend of mine—in fact, the guy used to be the mayor of Sparks, Tony Armstrong—he was a fireman at that time out at the Air Guard, and he was sent to Colorado to go in the missile silos. He was a fireman in that.

I'm trying to think half the people. My brother Mike, who was in the Air Guard at the time, my oldest brother, he was a medic and he was sent to an air base down in Victorville, California. He spent his time plus a little extra so he could get out. He was a staff sergeant at the time. We had guys everywhere. We had cooks who were sent to Korea, Japan. I mean, it was amazing in a way, the way they sent everybody everywhere. You could go anywhere. It was really something.

Strekal: We went through your jobs briefly, and we'll get back to that. When you were growing up in Reno, what did you do for fun? Can you describe some of the places that you used to go?

Feroah: Oh, as a young kid, I could tell you I was six and seven and eight years old and we were walking from Margrave up to my grandparents' house, up on Tenth Street, because they lived there up until '64 or '65, something like that, '64, I think it was. We used to walk up here as little kids.

Strekal: That's a long walk.

Feroah: Yeah, and we had a ball. Nobody bothered us. As a little kid I can remember going with my uncles and we'd walk down the alley. Between Virginia and Sierra was an alley that went all the way from Eleventh Street up here, all the way down to Fourth. It went through Fourth to the tracks.

Strekal: So to Commercial Row?

Feroah: Commercial Row. To Third Street, actually.

Strekal: Seven blocks worth of alleyway, though.

Feroah: Alley all the way down. We used to walk down there. In the summertime the Reno Parks Department would have a program so we could all go to the parks. My wife, in fact, would go to Whitaker Park up here. She was born and raised here in Reno.

Then we would go to Echo Loder or over to Wilkinson Park, right off Taylor and Kietzke. That was our summer thing that we'd do. You played baseball, you played softball, you'd play whatever we wanted to play.

Strekal: Did they have picnics too?

Feroah: Oh, picnics, yeah. My birthday's in July and my mom and dad's anniversary was the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, same day as my birthday. But they were married three years before. Well, they got married in '45 and I was born in '48. Then my dad's birthday was the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July. So every year we would go up to the lake in July, just to have our picnic. It was a yearly tradition we did up until probably just before my dad passed away. I was married and most of us were married. But we still like to do that as a family, go up to Zephyr Cove, and it's been that way years and years. That was an all-day trek to get up there, it seemed like.

Strekal: I was going to ask you. How did you guys get up there when you were younger? What route did you take?

Feroah: We'd leave here from Kietzke to Virginia Street, then take Virginia all the way down to Highway 50, and up Highway 50. It was a very long drive back then. I can remember some of the cars that my parents had. In '57 or '58 my parents bought a '55 Ford Fairlane—I think it was a Fairlane—Ford station wagon. The big one. Red and white.

Strekal: Two-tone with the chrome down the side.

Feroah: Right. Big nine-passenger station wagon. It had to be that many for all of us kids at the time. We rode up there and went back and forth in that.

I had three uncles and an aunt who lived here also, and we were all very close family. My grandfather, who was a professional baseball player in the twenties and early thirties, and then worked in different other things after that, they were here. This is on my mom's side, not my dad. My dad's parents died. He was raised in an orphanage.

We all were very close. My dad felt that my mom's family was his family, that close, and they were. I had an aunt who considered my dad her brother, not just her brother-in-law, but her brother. She was very close to my dad. My uncles were close, too. I mean, we needed something done, oh, call Paul or call Bruce, see if they can come over and help, or Don. Don was my mom's oldest brother.

Strekal: Everybody's here then, it sounds like. Oh, that's nice. It's good to have that.

Feroah: On my mom's side. On my dad's side, his family was all in California. It was funny. They came up to visit all the time, because we had the biggest family. My dad wanted a big family. My uncle and aunt down there had one kid each. So I had two cousins who lived down there. I still do. I have contact with them, and then the rest of the family lives here. Not all, but most of them live here.

Strekal: When you were younger, did you go downtown? Did you do anything downtown at all?

Feroah: Oh, yeah. We would walk down there. As a small kid, I can remember, we'd walk down there all the time with my uncle, and they were in high school when I can first remember, because they were quite a bit younger than my mom. We'd go down and walk wherever we were going to go, to the theaters down there. The Crest Theater up on Second, right off Second and Sierra, was right at the end of the block.

There was the Wigwam restaurant on Sierra there. The northeast corner of Sierra, would've had the Wigwam right on the corner, and then there was a small little jewelry store right next to that, and then there was the Crest Theater and then a shoe store on the other side, which was where you get your Buster Brown shoes.

Then there was something else in there like another jewelry store. That building where that was is completely gone. The Wigwam was where they had the apple pie, and, oh, it was good food. You had the Granada Theater, which was down on First Street, and that was part of the Masonic Temple.

Strekal: On First and Virginia?

Feroah: Yeah. Right between the Masonic Temple there was a building. That was on First, *and* then at First and Center was the Majestic Theater. So you had all three movie theaters there, right within a couple blocks. That was one thing we got to do a lot of. They used to have on the weekends—we'd look forward to it, too—Old Home, which was a dairy, Old Home Dairy and Model Dairy, Crescent Creamery, 7-Up, which was the Chisholm family. They owned 7-Up back then.

Strekal: They also owned a dairy, did they not, the Chisholms?

Feroah: They had Chisholm Ice Cream. There was another one. But they would all sponsor movies on the weekends for us. They'd go year-round, but you always remembered it in the summertime because you'd have your school programs or your park programs during the week, and then on the weekends you got to go to a movie, and, of course, Sunday was with the family and we went to church, the Catholic Church.

Oh, there was another theater. There was a theater called the Tower Theater, which was on the corner of Ryland and Virginia Street. By the court house and post office.

Strekal: It would have been near your one elementary school right there, right?

Feroah: Well, yeah, it was a couple blocks over. In fact, we were talking about car dealerships. Winkel Pontiac and GMC was at the corner of Ryland and Center, and it was in a two-story building. The garage was in the basement and the car dealership floor was up top.

Strekal: Most of them were, like we talked about previously, indoors at that point then, too.

Feroah: Right. And they had the parking lot—what's there now is a US Bank.

Strekal: Was there any public transportation when you were a kid?

Feroah: Oh, yeah. You see, they have a bus now you see that they used to have out—I think you still see it down at the RTC yard, which was kind of a yellow and orange, yellow top with an orange bottom. I think that was the color, and that was the Reno bus lines. It was actually a private company that run the bus service here in town.

Strekal: And it was like a domestic route then?

Feroah: Yeah. They had four or five buses. The school district had their own buses. The public transportation was the other. That was the Reno bus lines. It didn't have anything to do with the city. It was a privately owned bus service.

Strekal: So sort of like Waste Management, I guess, in that it's a private company that provides a city service.

Feroah: Right. That's what I remember very well.

Strekal: So the theaters downtown we talked about, where the dairies and whatnot that would sponsor movies, was that inside the theaters?

Feroah: Yeah. It was in the theaters. Whether that be at the Majestic or the Crest or the Granada, whichever one was doing it that day, that was any one of the theaters there.

Strekal: I know we talked about your wife briefly. She was a lifelong resident and still is of Reno. When did you meet her?

Feroah: Actually, I met her in '71, even though we grew up here in the same part of town, and her parents and my father were friends. Her mother worked for the *Reno Gazette-Journal*.

Strekal: Well, it would have been the *Reno Evening Gazette* probably at that point, right?

Feroah: *Reno Evening Gazette* and the *Nevada State Journal*, and she was on radio and he was on TV. I can remember as a small kid, he was on TV besides being in the gaming

business.

Strekal: Was he a newscaster?

Feroah: He did the sports. He actually had played. When he was young, he played football for the Philadelphia Bumblebees. He played at Penn State, and then he went and was taken on the Bumblebees, which was the original Eagles, Philadelphia Eagles. So he played for them as a professional football player, but this was before the war. He'd be 104 right now if he was alive.

He came to Reno and he loved to play cards, so he started playing cards here and he got into the gaming business. He was very good with numbers, very good at knowing the gaming business. You had to know a lot of those people back then that when they said that they were watching somebody count cards or somebody crimping or doing this and doing that, you had to be good at that in watching them. Most of those people smoked a lot, they drank a lot. It was a rough crowd. I know a lot of them, and those people were tough people, tough people back then.

Strekal: So he was a casino man.

Feroah: He worked in the casinos, yeah. His wife did public relations. She was doing advertising. She had her own advertising agency for a while that she ran out of the house. They lived on Nevada Street right where the freeway went through. They took out their house to put the freeway through.

Strekal: So their house was in that neighborhood that was demolished?

Feroah: Right. The house that my parents told me that we lived in, the first house—we lived in an apartment down on Moana Lane when we first moved to Reno—the house that we lived in later was on Vine Street right where the freeway is. It was a brick home, beautiful home, and they tore it out.

Strekal: For the express purpose of putting I-80 through there?

Feroah: Right, right.

Strekal: Yeah. I know a lot of houses got demolished in that. Could have been that it was considered an undesirable neighborhood?

Feroah: I don't think it was. It was nice. My aunt, who was younger than my mother—she passed away a couple years ago—she was out of school when I can first remember. She worked for Hale's Drugstore, which was a chain of drugstores within Reno. Hale's had the one down at Second and Virginia. There was a Hale's drugstore right where the Cal Neva door comes out there. Right there was their entrance.

Strekal: That terrible tacky brick, fake brick door right there?

Feroah: Right. That was right there, and then they had one down here where the parking garage is now for the Circus Circus at Sixth and Sierra. That was a fairly new building. But there was another one that they had over on the other corner at one time.

Strekal: What's your wife's name?

Feroah: Toni.

Strekal: And you met her in 1971?

Feroah: I met her officially in 1971. She was working at the sheriff's office. She worked in what they called ID, which was the records section. But we didn't go out. She was married before that to a guy who I had known, and we have a daughter that I adopted who was her daughter from the previous marriage. But we started going out in '72, after her dad had passed away. She went to St. Albert's School when it was down here on Artemesia. She is a year younger than me. St. Albert's was the church down here.

Strekal: Next to the new dorms, right?

Feroah: Right. That was St. Albert's Church, and my mom used to work for the priests there as their housekeeper. She'd work over there, cooking lunch and breakfast for them, or lunch and dinner, and then she'd come home to us, since we lived a block away.

We went to church down here at the same place. Then she went to St. Albert's. We went to public schools, because my dad, on a cop's wages, when he started with Reno Police Department he was making \$150 a month, paid once a month. It wasn't a lot of money even for back then, but it was survivable.

He loved the business. You know, this is a business that you get into and either you love it or you hate it. I've been in it so long, I guess I love it. I don't know. There are parts of it.

So Mom worked part-time so they could buy the house on Margrave. They saved up for it, just to put a down payment. He used his VA to get it. By the time we moved in, there were five of us already, five kids. There was my brother Mike, Jim, myself, Tom, and Mary. So there were four boys and a girl. We moved into the Margrave house, and that was a two-bedroom home. But we were all young.

When we moved in there, my dad didn't have a garage put in, so that he could add a room, and little by little he'd start adding a room on. Then it went from a two-bedroom to a three-bedroom. My sister got her room, because by then came along George and Mary and Maggie—Margaret, my younger sister. Then there was another one, and, it went from Maggie to Tony, from Tony to Annie. We had to add rooms as we went along. So the house was a construction project from the get-go.

The funny thing was that my dad paid \$9,000 for that house. It had a third of an acre. Maybe it was a half acre. They were half-acre lots. It was a good-size home when we moved into it, and we thought we were in hog heaven. And it had a floor heater. I mean, that's a long story to get into. But he kept building, and he added a room on in the back which was going to be the kitchen, because it had a small kitchen. It was just a dinky little kitchen. So we added on a kitchen that was almost like a convention kitchen,

and then added a dining room at the same time with a fireplace. It didn't have a fireplace originally, but had room for it and they put it in later, something that was just added, and then made another bedroom out of where the kitchen was. So it was just a work-in-progress for years.

Strekal: When you met your wife, were you working for the county or were you working for the Police Department?

Feroah: I went to work for the Sheriff's Office in '71. She was already there, also, and then we started going out in '72. We both worked for the Sheriff's Office.

Strekal: So you were with Reno Police Department from 1969 part-time, till '71?

Feroah: Seventy-one, and then I went to work for the Sheriff's Office. But a year and a half is what it turned out to be at the Reno Police Department.

Strekal: So when you worked part-time for RPD, what was your job? Were you on the beat?

Feroah: I did everything I could do. It was a job where I didn't get paid. I worked part-time. I was working at the Cal Neva at one time, and I also worked at Wittenberg Hall as a group supervisor, they called it, which meant you were the baby monitor. You monitored all the little kids, who were not little kids, but the kids that were in there, and you were basically their jailer. I did that for about five months. I was asked to leave because I broke a clipboard over a kid's head.

Strekal: That would do it.

Feroah: Yeah, it did. I didn't need it anymore, anyway. I didn't like it. Then I worked at the Cal Neva here in town, then up at the lake. I worked at the Cal Neva Lodge. Then came back down to work here at the Cal Neva downtown until I left in March of '71 when I got an ulcer—I had an ulcer from working in there. I got in more fights, because you had to do your job.

Strekal: You were doing security at Cal Neva?

Feroah: Cal Neva, yeah. That was my full-time job. At the same time, I was at the Reno Police Department part-time.

Strekal: What was the crowd like in the Cal Neva at that point?

Feroah: Well, not too many times you have to fight two people at a time.

Strekal: You hope not, anyway.

Feroah: I did, you know. You get people that were cheats who were in there. I had a guy



hit me in the jaw, pissed me off. It was a different crowd. It was a rough crowd. But at the same time, once they knew you were going to handle whatever came at you, they kind of backed off, the locals did. When you told somebody to leave, they left. When you liked somebody or you had people in there that you could deal with, they behaved themselves, they got to stay. You got to know everybody and everything. It was different. It isn't a high-class place now, by any means. But it wasn't much more then. I even got hit twice when I worked down there.

Strekal: How tall are you?

Feroah: Six-four.

Strekal: How much do you weigh?

Feroah: I'm over three bills now, three hundred and—

Strekal: But you're a big guy.

Feroah: I wasn't as big then. I was a lot thinner.

Strekal: Still tall, though.

Feroah: Yeah, still tall. But the thing was that I was—it sounds goofy—but I'd sit there at night, and I'd go to bed and I'm thinking, something's going to happen. I'd better know what I'm doing. I'd think about, well, if somebody comes up, I'll take them. I'll put him in the wrist lock, and I'll grab their wrist and I'll get it so it's secure, and I'll walk them out the door. We were trained that way. Well, if somebody does this, I do that.

Strekal: I think you'd put me in a wrist lock.

Feroah: Yeah. Right. So you know what that feels like. I used it all the time because it didn't matter if it was a little old lady or big strong guy, bigger and stronger than me, if they were going to hit you, they were going to hit you hard, and they were going to try and beat the hell out of you. They didn't care.

In fact, I guess that was the funniest part. The club that's on Second and on the Center Street side, that side of the Cal Neva, there was one guy working that, except on a weekend where you'd have two guys working. Well, if you could find your partner. They would sit there and something would happen, and you'd better be able to handle it.

The one time that I got it was with a guy that was a retired court reporter, a real idiot. He started getting real mouthy and acting up and everything, and so I put him on the ground, and somebody came up behind me. We used to wear sport coats with our gun underneath the jacket, and I had my handcuffs hanging off the back of my belt on the left side. I felt something go on just after I put this guy down on the ground. I was going to handcuff him, take him to jail. That was all part of it.

But I felt something and I turned around to the left over my shoulder, like this, and this guy raised his foot up—bad thing to put him on his back—and I wore horn-

rimmed glasses, heavy frames—turned around like this to see who it was. It was a friend, one of the guys who worked there. That was your backup. I turned around like this and a foot knocked my glasses off. “Son of a bitch,” I said, and I went “boom” like that, nose, and his glasses broke, just shattered.

I felt bad about it, but he went to court and pled right away. But your backup was the pit boss, your backup was the key man or whoever. That was your backup from down there. So it was different.

Strekal: So that went on for a year, roughly?

Feroah: Yeah. A year and a half.

Strekal: Then you went to Washoe County Sheriff’s Department.

Feroah: Right.

Strekal: We’ll get back to Washoe County. But first, can you describe any memories of traveling on Highway 40, either east towards Sparks or west toward Verdi? Was that the only route to Sparks prior to the construction of the freeway?

Feroah: You could get over to Sparks easy enough, one way or the other. You had some streets that you could take. You could go down Kietzke and get over to Sparks. When the floods came, you had to go around to get to Sparks, and it never affected Sparks like it affected Reno that I can remember. But most of the time, getting to Sparks, you’d go down Fourth or you could go up around Oddie Boulevard, go that way or if you go north, Wedekind Road was another alternate highway, and you could travel Wedekind to get over to Pyramid Way to go north.

Strekal: Can you remember traveling on Highway 40?

Feroah: Yes. Not so much east. I mean, a few times east, but not so much as I do going west one or two times. Oh, more than that. I guess I’m thinking of one or two times. One time, when I was young, they were building I-80 over Donner, and so we’d go up to Squaw Valley or something like that, and you’d get on Highway 40 to go out of Reno, and go along, as we see Fourth Street now, and you’d pick up Highway 40 and be winding around going out in through the canyon out to Verdi and then up the canyon by Truckee.

I remember a lot about Fourth Street. It was like you were coming into the greenbelt area, because you were coming along the river. In the summertime when you’d come in, it was beautiful coming in the valley. The hills would be kind of the desert hills looking to the east, but you’d get to see the green down in the canyon there, going along Mayberry, see Mayberry. It was Tahoe Industrial Park or Tahoe Timber, which was over at Tahoe Industrial, that area. They had a lot of lumber in that area. I remember stacks and stacks of lumber.

We knew a guy who was a forester for them that used to go up and bid all their lumber deals. He was a neighbor over on Margrave. Coming in, the motels that were

there, you'd see—there was nothing for a period—after you left Tahoe Timber you'd go down a ways, and then you'd hit some motels, Jack Pine Motel and another one on Fourth on the left. There was nothing on the right because that was railroad property.

And coming into town, of course, McCarran wasn't there, so there was nothing going over to the right till you came down into where Fourth comes down. There were motels again as you got to where you now see McCarran on the left, and then there was nothing again on the right until you got down to where you make that curve coming over by the trailer park, which has been there for years. The motels up there were nice. There was a restaurant up there.

Washoe Steakhouse used to be, at one time years ago, called the Rusty Scupper No, Rusty Scupper? It's been a couple different names. Where Johnny's Little Italy is now, there were a couple of restaurants. There were a couple of restaurants and bars as you went down. Where Mi Casa Too is used to be the Chinese Pagoda.

Then you go down a little bit farther and on the left there's a motel—there are motels all the way through there, but there was a motel, and Second Street would come in there also, where Stoker is now. They changed that with the trench.

Strekal: Second Street used to dip under the road there, right?

Feroah: Under the tracks. Then Dickerson was on the other side there. So then you'd come down and on the left was the El Tavern Motel. That was the one that had a coffee shop, but it was number one, as they would call it in law enforcement. They called, "I'll be at number one and I'll be at number two," which were the two places they'd always go for coffee, because they're open twenty-four seven, number one being the El Tavern, and number two being the Gold 'N Silver. That wasn't even open until '54, but those were places that I can remember. Then you'd come around just past Keystone and there was a shopping center when I first remember it, left at Vine and Fourth, which is where the Gold Dust is now. They have the whole block.

Then there was the Gold 'N Silver, which is still there, on the opposite corner. The Donner Inn was right here. It's still there, at the corner of Washington and Fourth. Also the Chapel of the Bells. Then there were motels in here.

Strekal: They'd be on the south side of Fourth and Washington, right?

Feroah: Yeah, there were places down in through here. I can't remember all of them. I remember some of them.

Strekal: A lot of them are still there operating.

Feroah: Yeah, but these aren't. This whole block was torn down and then they built the Gold Dust West.

Strekal: So that's the block between Fourth and Fifth, and Vine and Washington.

Feroah: On the corner used to be a motel that was owned by a guy who was a Sparks cop. He got into investing into property, and he's a very wealthy guy now, I guess. I don't

know if he's still even alive. But he had the motel there, and then sold that to John Cavanaugh, Jr. John Cavanaugh, Jr. is the one who owns the Gold Dust property.

Strekal: So the motel was on the north side of Fourth Street, at Fourth and Vine?

Feroah: Right. But that was a later motel. I think there was one there earlier than that.

Strekal: When you would go to the El Tavern, was the Silver State Motor Park still open?

Feroah: Yeah, that was still there, with the cabins.

Strekal: Because that was demolished not too long ago—pretty recently.

Feroah: Not that many years ago.

Strekal: And that was a landmark.

Feroah: It was a landmark. People would go stay there at the cabins, and they'd really have a grand time staying there.

Strekal: It was pretty expensive, that area, wasn't it?

Feroah: Yeah, it was. Oh, on Fourth Street as you came down there past the El Tavern, you'd come down there a little bit farther and then you'd go past the Silver State Motor Lodge, and then you'd come up and there was a skating rink off to the left, where Parr Construction is now. Then on the right there was a warehouse. I want to say it was a liquor warehouse, which is where a glass place is now. Then there were trailers. I don't know what's in there.

Strekal: There's a trailer park there. There's the ice distributor there also now.

Feroah: Right, and before the ice distributor, that ice company's been there for years and years.

Strekal: Looks like an old building.

Feroah: It is, very old. Glacier Mountain, I think it is, or Crystal Ice.

Strekal: Crystal Ice it is.

Feroah: Okay, but right there, just before Crystal Ice was the skating rink, and then there was Crescent Creamery, and it was up on the hill. Basically you can see where there was a little bit of a hill area, and that was the creamery itself. My uncle worked there, and when my uncle worked in there, he worked in the bottling plant.

Then my other uncle went there and started delivering. He was with the police department, then left for a short while, for about a year, and went to drive a truck,

thinking he was going to make more money driving a milk delivery truck, and decided he wanted to get back into law enforcement. I worked up there with him, and I'd ride with him. We'd go up to the Lake and Carson City and delivered Crescent Creamery milk down there.

So I know that place, and then you'd come down and you went by the ice plant, and there was a motel in there, a little one. But then the trailer park, and then you'd go past the trailer park, then you'd come up to your grocery store, which was where Ben's Discount Liquor is, at Keystone and Fourth. I can remember that as the grocery store. It was called Food King Markets.

That's what I remember, and across the street on the right there was a gas station that was back down west, across from where the motel was on Fourth. Then you got to Keystone and there was a gas station on the corner, the southwest corner of Keystone. It was a Regal station.

Strekal: That's where Chevron is now?

Feroah: No. That's where the Terrible's, Jackson—

Strekal: Oh, it's a Texaco now.

Feroah: Texaco or whatever it is. Then you get to where there was a gas station where the Standard station is now. On the corner of Fourth and Keystone there was a Sambo's.

Strekal: Where Jack-in-the-Box is?

Feroah: Where Jack-in-the-Box is, that was Sambo's restaurant, and then you went from Sambo's—let's see. What else? There was a steel yard actually from where the tracks are. There was a gas station and then I don't know if they took it out or what, but that was where the steel company was, between Third and Fourth at Keystone. A lot of the block was Reno Iron, and they were there for years. There was a house in this area between Third and Fourth on Vine—it was a rental yard, like an apartment or roominghouse-type thing. There was an alley and then a building that is owned by the guy who owns Gold 'N Silver now. Then the Donner Motel, and then there's the Chapel of the Bells, at Washington and Fourth. I can remember that because they were always doing weddings there, and they had their limos. It's been there for years and years and years.

Between Washington and Ralston on Fourth, there was a bottle house, a motel and a bottle house, and then there was the Frost Top. It was a restaurant. There were actually three Frost Tops. There was one on Fourth Street in this area here. I can't remember what was on the side, and then the gas station on the corner, which is now Northwest Tires.

That place there, the Frost Top, was one place we used to go to. We were always in there as kids. That's what you did at night on weekends. You went trolling Virginia Street and then you'd come over to the Frost Top, or go around and go back down to the other Frost Top which was on South Virginia, which is now an Indian restaurant.

Strekal: So you would drive around looking for chicks, is that it?

Jack-in-the-Box Pickin' up girls and having fun, yeah.

Strekal: And so Frost Top, was it a drive-in?

Feroah: Drive-in, right, and they had the girls on roller skates, and we'd see if any hot-looking chicks were there, that type of thing. That was funny because my wife was going in and out of there, but being a year younger, you know, it was another story.

In that whole section, I can remember most of it but not all of it. There were motels and all kinds of crap like that, buildings of some type. On the north side of Fourth between Washington and Ralston, they all catered to the traffic going through. On the corner where that floral shop is, on the north side of the street at Ralston and Fourth. And across the street, it's part of the Sands now, but it used to be a three-story apartment building, and they had apartments going up and down, as you went down.

I remember the next section of Fourth, because there was a house that sat back on Chestnut, or Arlington as it's known now, and we used to cut the lawn there, and then this old couple developed part of it into apartments. They paid us. My uncle got the job somehow, then it was handed down to us, and it was nice. You got ten bucks, five bucks a week. Back then, that was a lot.

On the south side of Fourth between Ralston and Arlington was a motel, and right next to it was the car wash.

Strekal: Where the Sands parking lot is was a car wash?

Feroah: Yeah. There was a car wash there. Then they had the gas station, and then later on they built a restaurant, which was a Denny's, right there in the middle of the block, where the Sands parking lot is. That's the Cladianos. They had the El Rancho Motel over at Fourth and Wells, and then they expanded from Fourth and Wells over to there, and put in another motel, and some of the building is still there if you look at the Sands. They turned it into offices and stuff like that.

Strekal: But it is clearly an old two-story motel.

Feroah: Right. They put in the Denny's and the gas station. The gas station they took out of there probably fifteen years ago, the guy that had that gas station. But over on the north side was Cal Vada Jeep. They had the Lincoln Mercury and Jeep dealership at Arlington and Fourth. Again, they were small. All of them were small. Then right next door to it there was an apartment building.

Strekal: Which is still there, I think.

Feroah: No, it's gone. Everything is gone on the north side. That apartment building I knew because I had a girlfriend when I was first working at the Cal Neva who I'd go over and visit all the time, and she lived in that place with another gal. It was an old rooming house is what it was. Big wide halls. The halls were as wide as this room.

Then there was another motel, of course, and I can remember that. There were

motels through this whole area. A little bit farther, between Arlington and West, between Fourth and Fifth was the original Reno High School, then Central Intermediate School, they called it then, between Fourth and Fifth Streets and Arlington and West.

It was around '53, '52, '53—I want to say it was '53—when they took the Reno High School and built the new Reno High School over on Booth Street.

Strekal: Where it is now?

Feroah: Where it is today. My two uncles went to school in the original school. And my aunt, I want to say she went to high school in that building. Then they moved it over there. But the funny thing again was it had two levels of gymnasiums, and it was a multi-story building. Then that turned into Central Middle School or Intermediate School, as they called them. Then across the street was what they called the Green Building, and the Green Building was everything that's down on Ninth Street now. That was the school offices for the district.

Strekal: The ones that are off of Record Street there?

Feroah: Ninth and Record. Actually, Ninth and the tracks. All that was over on West Street. Then there were either motels or apartments until Sierra. Daniel Motor Lodge was there originally, and then they expanded to the south side of Fourth and Sierra.

Shim's Army Surplus Store used to be at Third and Sierra. Shim's. Shimovskis were the people who were here for years. Still are here, the family is, but I knew them, known them for years. Then at Fourth and Sierra on the north side was a mortuary. It was always dark and dim, you know, trees, beautiful scene, really. Then there were auto parts and so forth right up going up Sierra Street. Now it is all the Silver Legacy. It's the whole thing, two blocks.

Sewell's Market was there. There was a furniture store. Later they tore these buildings down. There was an auto parts store. Sewell's Market was there for years and years. Sewell's, that was *the* place to go.

At Fifth and Virginia was the church. Gray Reid's was there, and the bank. Then the original Safeway's was over there, between Fourth and Fifth.

Fifth and Virginia is where the pawn shop is now, and then there's Mexican food and Chinese food or something like that in there. Then you come down, there's other business down through there. Reno Furniture was a place in there. I can't even remember half of them.

Strekal: So all of that is the Circus Circus now, right?

Feroah: No. This is between Fourth and Fifth on Virginia. There was a motel on the corner, and they tore it down. But all kinds of different businesses were up in through there. There's bars, McDonald's and everything now. Fourth and Virginia was the original Wall bar, and, by god, every student who went to school up here was in the Wall, every sports fan. I'm trying to remember what was at Sierra and Fourth. Oh, it was a gas station.

Strekal: A lot of gas stations downtown.

Feroah: Well, Fourth Street was the main thoroughfare. Until you got to Virginia Street, which was 395. So Fourth and Virginia was where everything was. Then there was Welch's Bakery. You'd walk by there and smell fresh bread baked every day. Oh, my god. Then as kids in school, two of the things you got to do around here were you got to go to Welch's Bakery for a tour and get some fresh bread or go to one of the creameries—those were our big trips around here. It was something.

There were hotels, like the Plaza Hotel at Plaza and Virginia. Or Sierra. And then there was another auto parts place. A lot of auto parts places.

Strekal: Yeah, it seems like it. A few big businesses replaced so many smaller businesses there.

Feroah: Right. There were just different stores. There was a parking lot for Sewell's, and a Pythian Hall, plus there was an appliance store at Fourth and Virginia. There was a Standard station. That was where the Pizza Oven was. The Pizza Oven was another big hangout for a lot of people.

Strekal: Sounds like Highway 40 then or Fourth Street has changed quite a bit.

Feroah: Quite a bit. It's changed. Between Keystone they took out quite a bit of the property where Reno Iron was, and at one time there were restaurants back there. Where that Texaco station is now used to be The Regal. It was just all property going down there where the tracks were. Behind that gas station was where Burger King was for years, and then they moved them over to the other side of the street.

Strekal: Where they are now.

Feroah: Yeah, where they are now. Ben's Discount Liquor. Sambo's was taken out of there. Of course, that was empty because there were suits brought against the company because of the name.

Strekal: I was going to ask you about that.

Feroah: Yes. They had one there; at that time, the world was changing for blacks, more that you respected their color. And they had a black Sambo. That was a lion, too.

Strekal: That wasn't Sambo's logo, though, was it?

Feroah: Yeah. Little Black Sambo. That was what they said, and they had little plastic deals above the counter that showed Little Black Sambo.

Strekal: Yeah, I've seen the children's books.

Feroah: Right. So that was why they took that out. They closed Sambo's there. There



was another Sambo's where Jack's is in Sparks. That was another Sambo's restaurant. There was another one down on South Virginia. It's a Chinese place now at Plumb and Virginia. That was a Sambo's restaurant. The one at Fourth and Wells was a Denny's restaurant.

Strekal: So it sounds like it's changed considerably, then.

Feroah: Oh, yeah. Then where the Gold Dust is they had Sprouse Reitz and Washoe Market. Washoe Market was another local grocery store. They had two stores, the one on Fourth Street and the one on South Virginia at Arroyo, I think it is. I'm trying to think of the other ones. I can't remember all of them, but Washoe Market, Nevada Food King. Of course, that was the Gadda and Baldwin family that brought in the Food King. They came out of Idaho to come to Reno. People came to Reno from wherever to start businesses, and they made it pretty well. Harrah wasn't from here originally.

Strekal: Now, where was he from?

Feroah: I want to say California, maybe back east. I'm not sure. I can't remember.

Strekal: I want to say he was from Idaho. I thought he was.

Feroah: Ascuaga, or Dick Graves was from Idaho. Dick Graves was the one who started the Nugget, of course. But Warren Nelson at the Cal Neva, Leon Nightingale, Jack Douglas, everybody came from somewhere else to start businesses in Reno.

Strekal: Were there ever any initiatives to clean up or improve downtown Reno that you can remember?

Feroah: Yeah, every once in a while you hear that.

Strekal: I've heard the term being thrown around. I'm not sure what that involved.

Feroah: At one time you'd hear about cleaning up downtown. It's so dirty, it's so this, it's so that. So they put up these fake facades in front of the buildings. But they really couldn't change, you know. They were trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and you can't make it if you don't have all of the tools to do it with and you can't get people to cooperate.

Now, like a lot of the businesses downtown there's a guy—the business where I said the pawn shop is up on Fifth and Virginia, that whole building in there belongs to a guy by the name of Dr. John Iliescu. Iliescu, a Jewish guy, very prominent plastic surgeon back then. But he bought all this property. He owns property like you wouldn't believe all over this area, and he buys it wherever he can. He's so filthy rich, it's unreal. He owns two floors of the Arlington Towers. He owns property on the south side of the river behind the Park Terrace Apartments. There was a medical building in fact; it's a red brick building right next to the Park Terrace Apartments.

Strekal: With the little awning out front, right?

Feroah: Right. He owns that building.

Strekal: I'm familiar with this man. He owns a lot of property around here.

Feroah: A lot of property around here.

Strekal: He just buys up historic property, too, is that correct?

Feroah: Right. Right. He used to own the Wingfield Mansion, had the place right next door to it, and then one of them, the old one burned, but that's another story.

Strekal: I've heard about that, too.

Feroah: Yeah. He had a lot of antiques. In fact, his nephew's the one who has the pawn shop at Fifth and Virginia there, and every once in a while they come out—they had a Honda Dream motorcycle that was sitting in that pawn shop that he wanted to sell. It's a collector's item, and he's selling it in a pawn shop.

Strekal: That pawn shop's still open. I know one of them closed.

Feroah: Right. Not that one. Well, that's another thing. You get to Fourth and Virginia there, and you can look at it. I'll tell you about some of those other businesses that are in there.

But that property—that guy has bought a lot of property around here, and Iliescu now is worth millions and millions and millions of dollars. He's a funny guy. He likes me for some reason. I don't know why. I had some great contempt for him at one time, for no reason but I didn't like what he was doing. But, you know, that's another story.

Anyway, at Fourth and Virginia there was—later on it was a candy store. Later on it was a candy store, but there was a hotel above there, plus shops down below, and I can remember that. I want to say it was the fifties, forties, maybe it was the forties, Chet and Link Piazza opened a place called the Sportsman's. The Sportsman's corner now over at Fourth and Vine.

Strekal: Oh, the old sporting goods store that closed down recently.

Feroah: Right. But the original store was downtown, and you could come in here and they had stuff. Those guys, who had been born and raised in Reno, I think they were, but they had in their store all kinds of sporting equipment. They had in their store all kinds of hunts. They were on safaris, they did this, they went hunting for that, they had it all in their place there. The Sportsman. They had everything in that place. It was amazing.

Also in that corner there was a place called the Squeeze Inn that they eventually ended up in restaurants. All kinds of different businesses through there. There were pawn shops eventually later. Then that corner, along Plaza Street near the tracks, was wiped out. There were motels and hotels in there.

Center Street used to be University Avenue. Between Fourth and Fifth on Center there was a big car dealership that took in the whole side. But that was also part of the bus barn—for the Reno bus service was in here. Lawton's was at Fourth, and that was bought out by Richardson Lovelock, and they had their dealership in there. Lovelock was the last name. The family came from Lovelock. I guess that was who the family was named after. They lived out in Lovelock and at one time they moved to Reno and took over the dealership. Then Richardson, I don't know how they got into it.

There was a gas station, and then right behind here—I'm trying to think what it was as a kid. It's parking is what it ended up as, and then it was part of the Ford dealership. Their used car sales was over there, and then there was an auto repair shop. Yeah, that was a body shop. That was where the Events Center is now.

Strekal: The ballroom's over on the west side of the street.

Feroah: Right, which took in the whole west side of Center Street.

Strekal: Then on the east side's the Events Center, and then where the bowling stadium is was the Reno Junior High School.

Feroah: Yeah, or Northside, they called it. There were two gyms in town that were the same way. They were gladiator pits. That's what they looked like. Because you had the gym floor here, and then you'd have a wall so you couldn't go onto the court, and you'd watch from behind a little wall that stood about this high.

Strekal: So you were below them?

Feroah: No. You were about the same level as they were, trying to watch the game. It was a gladiator pit, we called it. That was way back. But that was Northside. That's where the bowling stadium is.

The V&T came in at the railway station. That's still the depot. That's where the V&T Railroad came in, and it headed south, towards Carson, on Holcomb.

Strekal: Yeah, so it ran past where the auto museum is.

Feroah: Actually, behind it.

Strekal: Well, that's where the bridge was.

Feroah: Yeah, that's where the bridge was, behind it, and it ran down behind and then down Holcomb, and there was a road that went alongside of it, Holcomb.

Strekal: Starting at First going up to Fourth Street between Lake and Evans, where, say, the baseball stadium is now and the new bus depot is there, can you describe what that area used to be like?

Feroah: It was just old buildings. There were motels over there. It was kind of a dive

place. There was a gas station on the south corner of Fourth and Lake which was a Flying A station.

Strekal: Louis' Basque Corner is right there at Evans and Fourth Street on the north side. There's a motorcycle shop right now on the west side of the street.

Feroah: Right. But then they built the motels and had more motels. But they were all rooming houses, buildings like that. You had businesses in through there. There were garages and stuff like that.

Strekal: There was a bus depot next to the Santa Fe on Lake and Second.

Feroah: Right. That was the Trailways bus station. Then there were all businesses. Those buildings are still there, at Evans.

They took out a lot to build that new bus depot. But it's been down for a long time. There's been nothing there.

Strekal: It was a plaza. It was a parking lot and a plaza.

Feroah: There was a motel over there. The motel that was owned by—can't think of the guy's name. He owned the motel, and he ended up blowing most of his money on hookers. He'd pick up some hooker and that was his lady. He'd take care of her and put her up and set her up and everything, and she'd take care of him, which was fine for him. Then he'd go on from there.

But I worked as a kid in a business called Central Credit—it had telephone lines between all the casinos here locally, then it'd go to Vegas with the telephone lines to all the casinos down there. It was a system set up to notify the others, so if you cashed a bad check up here, they're going to know about it in Vegas.

Strekal: Where was that located?

Feroah: That was over on Evans.

Strekal: Evans between Third and Fourth, or Plaza and Fourth Street?

Feroah: Right.

Strekal: So where there—there's just a couple of little buildings scattered over there right now.

Feroah: Yeah.

Strekal: Then there's the bar, the Lincoln Lounge is over there. And that's still there. That's an old brick building.

Feroah: That's an old brick building. There's a bar downstairs. There was a hotel upstairs

at that time. Now it is just apartments. It went back to the alley.

Strekal: The train trench cuts it off now, I think.

Feroah: Well, yeah, it's up a little bit, because there's a motel in here now. Lindy and Company was where your homeless shelter is—St. Vincent's and the homeless shelter. Then you come down, and over at the corner of Fourth and Evans was a place. A greasy spoon is what it was. Good food, though, greasy spoon, hamburger joint in there. Then Louis' right across the street to the east. Then right behind Louis' was a parking lot. Reno Grocery Company ended up being Monarch Foods, which is now the warehouse for NC Auto Parts. That's their warehouse. But that's still there, that building.

Then you have the NCO depot there. Then Sears, Roebuck had a warehouse back there, which is now a furniture place. They do a lot of cubicles.

Strekal: So that would've been catty-corner to the north of the NCO depot.

Feroah: Right.

Strekal: So it was really, getting past Evans, it really starts to get an industrial over there, huh?

Feroah: Yeah, it turned into that. You had a hotel which is still there. Most of this stuff is still here building-wise. But they took some out. At one time there was a gay bar.

Strekal: Is that the Highway 40 bar?

Feroah: I think it is called that. They turned that into Davo's, which was an Italian restaurant at one time, good food. I think it was run by Davo who was a gay guy, who had that one and another one. Put more up his nose than he should've been.

Then down here you had the Yancy Company, a roofing company, I think that was the building that is now a chemical company, on the north side of Fourth Street. It was all taken out. And now the Fire Department is there, close to Valley.

Commercial Hardware had moved from Sierra and Commercial to Fourth and Valley. That's where they were at. So now that is where St. Vincent's is, part of their parking lots.

Strekal: They have a thrift store over there also.

Feroah: Yeah, and the thrift store.

Strekal: Do you think the construction of I-80 through Reno affected what was going on on Fourth Street?

Feroah: Most assuredly, yes, because before that, it wasn't probably always the prettiest or the nicest, but it wasn't bad, and they kept up their businesses because they wanted people to stop in. You came into Reno, even when they built the freeway—there was

another business called the Cow Palace, which was up on Keystone where the freeway is now. The Cow Palace, that was a place everybody went to because it had good hamburgers. It was the place to be. If you went to Reno High School, you went to the Cow Palace.

Strekal: Was it a big place?

Feroah: No, it wasn't that big. It seemed big at the time, but it wasn't that big. But these places like this, and the homes that were over there were all old stately-looking homes going down the corridor down there, where my wife grew up at her house, and she can remember on Nevada Street there were a lot of nice homes. But all those businesses kind of did die off. When they started to die off, they turned to crap. So it made the Fourth Street corridor look like hell.

They tried building. Between Washington and Ralston there is a building that was three or four stories high, looks like an old hotel, then they made it into timeshares. That was built there because they were going to have a nice little hotel there for people coming to Reno. Well, as soon as they brought in the freeway, everything started dying off there. There's the Travelodge and then there was this place right next to it.

That kind of died out, and they were trying to rebuild it. They were trying to reinvent the wheel, and Reno started dying, because you'd come over and you could stop in Reno and there was a gambling spot, but then they pulled stuff to Reno or to Sparks, then they started pulling stuff to California, the Indian gaming. So it just all started dying downtown.

Strekal: About what year, would you say? Just a rough decade anyway.

Feroah: I'd probably say in the seventies it started dying off because it changed, Reno changed. In my opinion, it started dying off. I think that downtown Reno started losing a lot of its pizzazz. In the early seventies they had Harrah's. Well, back in the sixties they had Harrah's, which was a small club. They had the Golden Hotel, which was a nice place. I mean, it wasn't really fancy, but it was nice. Cal Neva didn't start until the sixties. The Palace Club—they had the Colony Club where the Cal Neva was.

They had the bingo parlor, which was on the corner where Harrah's took over at the corner of Second and Center. The bus depot was over across from the hotel—I'm trying to think. It was on the east side of Center Street, and that's where skid row was, but everybody knew where skid row was, and you stay away from skid row. They had the Overland Hotel there, which is a nice, decent place, decent food. But then on the west side of Center, you had Harrah's. That took over the old Golden property, built that hotel.

Strekal: They took over the New China Club also, basically.

Feroah: I don't know if they bought the land. I think they did.

Strekal: The late 1970s. Late 1977.

Feroah: Right.

Strekal: Bill Fong closed down, and then it was basically demolished really quickly afterward.

Feroah: It was a parking lot for Harrah's.

Strekal: And the parking lot never got fully developed to what it was supposed to be.

Feroah: It got paved and that was it. But that's back when they started letting more blacks into the casinos. You know, there were blacks who worked at the casinos here.

Strekal: Yeah. It was segregated, though.

Feroah: Yeah. But if you worked in it, you could work there but you couldn't eat or—well, you could eat if you were in the back room, but you couldn't gamble in those places. That's when they built the New China. Bill Fong found a niche, and he did. He was quite a character himself. His daughter still lives here. It changed downtown, and then in '78 when they started building the MGM—'77, '78, that changed Reno's atmosphere altogether.

Strekal: Circus Circus was '78 and the Sundowner was '75.

Feroah: Right. But for the Sundowner they just tore down Central High School, because by then they'd built Swope and Clayton. So they didn't have any reason to have that Central.

So it just started changing. People started buying up property. They all were going to build a bigger, fancier toilet—I call them toilets—casinos, and they did. So they kept buying up property and took downtown where the Cal Neva is from the casino on Virginia Street. It was the Hale's Drugstore, and then next door was the Waldorf. It was called the Waldorf, and it was a nice little dinner club and bar, and you get a hell of a meal in there. They had a guy, Jack Joseph, you'll see him advertising on TV now, who was in radio, and he'd do a nightly show from the Waldorf. I was going there before I worked graveyard. You could get a great meal in that place.

Then next door there was the Byington Building, and the Byington Building was a three- or four-story building. Downstairs, I can't remember what kind of shops they were, but I remember there were shops downstairs. Then they had dental offices upstairs and offices, accountants and so forth, in that building. It was great. Great place to go in. Your downtown didn't seem so bad on Virginia Street.

That was in that era when they would leave your downtown core, and they would go out to shopping centers. Woolworth's was there for years, even though they rebuilt that building after one of the floods. That was there for years even afterwards.

That was maybe the '97 flood. I can't remember when exactly, but it was kind of dying out. But there was Lerner's store and there was R. Herz and Brothers. Well, they were all starting to leave, and they went out to wherever. We had a Montgomery Wards, Penney's, Sears, they were all in Reno, and McMahan's, they were all businesses that were in the downtown corridor. Well, McMahan's moved out to Plumb Lane where that

RESCO, the restaurant supply house is. They moved out there and they built that building.

Strekal: Looks like an older sixties-ish building.

Feroah: Sixties building. It was right around the sixties or seventies. Some friends of ours lived behind that, kids we went to school with. But Sears had moved out of their building downtown and out to Park Lane Mall. Penney's had taken the building they were originally in, and moved into that building on the corner of First and Sierra, a several-story building there. But that was back in the fifties that happened, and that was a fairly new building for them.

Let's see. Who else was there? Sears, Penney's, Montgomery Ward's. They were all downtown and they all moved out of the downtown corridor. Penney's was the last one to leave downtown. There was a Menard's store. I told you about Menard's. There was Rick's—I can't remember the name of that store. It was at the corner of Second and Virginia, the northeast corner—was that Menard's? It might have been. There was a clothing store there, Lerner's, that moved out to Park Lane Mall. A lot of these places, they just got up and went.

Strekal: Is that because the freeway displaced the main corridor?

Feroah: The downtown corridor was just kind of closing up then. My dad knew the guy at Lerner's, and every year my mom would go down there and buy stuff for my sisters, for my younger sister, and he always used to give my mom a discount. But it was that kind of an atmosphere downtown that kind of went [flushing sound].

Then they started building the bigger places—the MGM and then the Nugget, and they figured we didn't want a strip like Vegas. So they were kind of stopping. Reno has hurt themselves in what they've done—and I was thinking about this the other night, in fact. If they would've opened up the corridors that they wanted to—when they built the Convention Center out there—they had two places where people could stay if they were going to the Convention Center, going to anything out there, and that was the Golden Road Motel, which is now the Atlantis, and the Holiday Inn, which was the original Holiday Inn we had here in Reno. It's part of the Holiday Inn Corporation, and that was down where that Super 8 Motel is now, on South Virginia. Those were the two places you could stay besides the other dumps that they had down there, the other motels. There weren't that many places to go.

Strekal: I know that they wanted to initially put the Convention Center in the center of downtown.

Feroah: Right. These guys have all these wonderful ideas and they try to reinvent the wheel and they don't look at the long-term process. So what has happened now is even your casinos, the Peppermill and the Atlantis, do fairly well outside of town. Harrah's is like this. That was the original Harrah. The original Circus Circus, of course, was in Vegas, but this Circus Circus up here was Pennington, Pennington Medical. He was the one who had a lot to do with the Circus Circus up here. Carano got into gaming. There



was Cashell, and then down with the Pioneer Inn, which is gone. I don't think he was into the Onslow, which was another casino where Cal Neva has their hotel now.

Downtown, that was the Onslow originally, and that was some of the partners that had gone into the—oh, what do you call that place?

Strekal: The Virginian?

Feroah: No. The Virginian was part of Cal Neva. I don't know if it's still. No, it isn't.

Strekal: No, it's just kind of there. The Comstock was another big casino.

Feroah: The Comstock was started in the seventies. That was Jack Douglass and—who was the other guy in that? Jack Douglass was one of them. But, no, the other place I just told you about. The Pioneer Inn.

Strekal: Where the Wild Orchid is now?

Feroah: No, no. The Wild Orchid was Conrad Priess and some other guys. Conrad Priess was money, and I don't know where he got his money, you know, but they built the Ponderosa.

Strekal: Oh, that's the Ponderosa.

Feroah: Conrad Priess and—oh, I can't even think of half of the guys that were in that—they went in and they built the Onslow, and that was another one. But they were all intermingled here and there and wherever. It was like all these things came together. It was funny because the Pioneer was a good place for a lot of years. They had a place called the Sword Room in there, and everybody and anybody—or Denny's—the people who ran this town met at Denny's in the morning. There was a Denny's in the Pioneer Inn. There was a table in back. Bill Raggio used to go in there. You'd see him in there. A guy by the name of Dyer Jensen.

Strekal: Where was the Pioneer Inn?

Feroah: The Pioneer Inn down at Court and Virginia. There was a bank on the corner.

Strekal: It's still there, isn't it?

Feroah: No, no. It's all gone. It's all parking lot now. But that was the place where the big shots met back in the seventies and eighties when they had Denny's down there. It was something. The Sword Room. The town's changed so much.

I think that by pulling all the casinos out of downtown and the way it was, "Oh, we can't have this here. Oh, we can't have that there," basically ham-stringed everything that was happening in this town. If you would've kept all your gaming, basically the main part of your gaming in the downtown corridor, it would've kept building up nicer and nicer, and then start expanding south, which they did.

Actually, the Ponderosa was the first one south, and I worked there as a kid. Then down where the Peppermill is was a motel. It was called Hill & Sons Motel. Growing up, we used to go there as a kid. The Hill & Sons was a nice motel down south. They had weekly rentals for divorcees who used to come to town.

That was still something that would happen even when I was young, in high school. That was at the Hill & Sons that they would have that going on. But then Peppermill came in. I don't remember when they started, but they came in and they opened up the bar and restaurant in there with a few slot machines, and that's built from there on, to what it is now. If I'm not mistaken, the original Peppermill came out of California.

Strekal: It's a big operation now.

Feroah: It's a big property now. It used to be that down there Century Theaters had the drive-in, had motels and Eugene's was the restaurant that was down there. Eugene's was a fine dining place. If you were going to go out for an outstanding meal, Eugene's was one of them. But that's the way change is in this area.

Strekal: It sounds like the retreat of retail and other businesses downtown, and I guess some of them were displaced by the large casinos, but then the casinos also scattered a little bit.

Feroah: Even some of the casinos kind of died out.

Strekal: And then the highway not running through town anymore, being displaced by I-80.

Feroah: Then they started moving. The Eldorado was the first one that started moving on them. There was nothing on the north side of the tracks until they built the Eldorado, which I want to say was in the late seventies. Everything was south of the tracks, per se.

Strekal: That's the way it had been since the thirties.

Feroah: Right. Kept on the side of the tracks so there was no big problem. Then there was, like I said, the Colony Club. Was the Colony there? There were some places down there, even growing up as a kid I can remember, down where the casinos were they had the Reno Turf Club. The original Turf Club had a deli in there that had amazing sandwiches. Oh, my god. My dad, we'd go when I was in high school. So this was in the early sixties that my dad would take us down there, and after a basketball game, we'd go get sandwiches at the Turf Club and bring them home. We'd sit there at night having pastrami or whatever kind of sandwiches you wanted. Oh, my god, the flavor just—you didn't want to stop eating them, they were so good. It was all your Jewish-style deli-type thing.

They eventually built other buildings. Part of the buildings were where the SP Building, or the train depot is. Part of that is where they built—I'm trying to remember the name of the casino because it was on the tracks side. There was a casino and then

there was—it was a small place. There was a small casino, then Harolds Club—and Harolds Club was like a four- or five-story building. Sam Butera was in there. Oh, what the hell is her name? Used to see some decent acts in there.

Strekal: Yeah, Reno was lauded as like the entertainment capital of the world for a while.

Feroah: Oh, yeah. You got to see Sammy Davis, Dionne Warwick, I got to see her at Harrah's years ago. I'm trying to think who we saw over there. Different people over the years you'd see, they'd come in. But the casinos were right on Virginia Street.

Over to Center and then on Center you'd have places like the Overland Hotel, where the ground floor was all casino. But it was different. Then you had your bus depot, which went from Center Street over and along—they still had that—you know the garage that Harrah's has?

Strekal: Yeah, on the back side is part of the bus depot.

Feroah: That was the original part of the bus depot.

Strekal: You can tell because it doesn't fit with the rest of the building.

Feroah: So Harolds sold out to the Hughes Corporation—Howard Hughes, Summa Corporation, they called it. Then Fitzgerald's, when Lincoln died—Meta Fitzgerald who the student services building is named for—sold all that to the corporation that has Fitzgerald's. I think they went bankrupt in Vegas. They opened up in Vegas. But that was paid for. That building was paid for.

Strekal: Fitzgerald's?

Feroah: Oh, yeah, but he built that building, Lincoln Fitzgerald. It was paid for, lock, stock and barrel. That was the way the man was. He owned the Nevada Club, Nevada Lodge, Nevada Club, and then he built the Fitzgerald's building. So they sold them. It's just that a lot of the gaming has just been a downward spiral—and they were told, people in Reno and Sparks were told years ago, diversify, because gaming wasn't going to help, and their diversification was warehousing. Well, warehousing is for whatever business built in here. One time we were Hush Puppies. With the big Hush Puppies shoe it was the big warehousing site for Hush Puppies, in Sparks.

Hawes valves manufacturing, for your house faucets. I don't know if they're still in Reno or not, but these were different things. They tried to bring in business. Part of it was I-80 would give them help. Part of it wasn't.

Strekal: No, that makes sense—and then you were talking about—you were talking about that area over around Lake Street as being kind of a seedy area. Did you ever go down there for your job with RPD? Did they take you down there?

Feroah: Oh, yes. At that time, back when I started, east beat and west beat was something that they still kept an officer walking down there, and usually two of them at night

because you never knew what you were going to come up against. So I learned walking at night down there, walking east beat and west beat, and I just loved it. Oh, my god, I loved that. I loved it when, not that many years ago, we did it for what they called the part-timers or the reserves.

The Reno reserves was the William units, they called it. That's what the name was. Well, as the William units, we walked a whole area. Back when I started law enforcement, Reno had an east beat or west beat. East beat, you were going up around and the drunks were down, and when I was doing it then, it was against the law to be drunk in public. Then, later on, it changed. You know, they made it civil protective or a civil violation. It wasn't a crime. It was just helping them get sobered up.

Then they had these other programs. But when I used to go down there and you'd see somebody drunk, passed out on a bar at the Aggie's or the Depot or the S.P. bar, you'd go up and wake them up and take them, call the paddy wagon and say, "Got one. Come get 'em." Take them out, put them in back of the paddy wagon, you know, secure them and put them in there. It got to be kind of spooky sometimes because it could be a lot of problems. But it was different.

You know, the seedy area, you got to walk around. Of course, that one that I told you about, that was originally over on Lake Street, never went to it there, didn't go to it until it was over on Virginia Street. That was great food, great, great food, soul food.

Strekal: Yeah, that's what I have read, soul food. That was originally at Lake Street where it was a little more diverse.

Feroah: Yeah, well, on Lake Street, where that was, that was skid row for Reno. That was a bad area, the beat. So there were a lot of different things that happened. The Mizpah was where Lake Street was. The Cosmo was on that same block.

Strekal: Right—and all of that, that kind of stuff kind of consumed the whole block where the bus depot and stadium are now, right?

Feroah: Well, no. The bus depot was from Second to Commercial. Second and Lake was Trailways, and then Benetti's, had Nevada Novelty. They were next door to it. Then you had some other kind of store next to that, and this is going west on Second.

In the alley, there was a place that went down, it was what they called the Cellar, which was a bar. It was kind of a topless bar back then. Then you went across the alley, and I want to say there was another bar. Maybe it wasn't right there. There was something right next to the alley, and then above, you had the Star Hotel. The Star Hotel was basically rooming houses when I walked down there.

Then you had another bar in there and then you went around and there was a clothing store on the corner. Parker's Western Wear used to be in there, and when you went around, you were at Commercial. Then you went up and there was a parking lot and then the Greyhound Bus depot. Then from Greyhound you went up to the alley, east and west alley, and I'm trying to think—that's Douglas alley? I think it's Douglas. I can never remember which one's which.

Strekal: I get confused with the alleys too.

Feroah: I know Lover's Lane's, the alley that goes north and south between Center and Lake. Then the other ones, one was Douglas and one was Lincoln alley. That was Douglas alley that was on the north end, that ran east and west. You went across that, then there was the Overland Hotel.

The Overland Hotel was a two- or three-story old-time hotel. Pick Hobson, at that time, when I was young, was the guy who had that building. Decent food, took care of the cops. Cops were always in there having coffee or eating or whatever. You want to get off your feet, go in there. He didn't care. He was happy to have you in there. He had a pit boss in there, a guy by the name of Bob Davis. He used to be a professional boxer. These drunks would come in and they'd start giving him shit and he'd just box them bad, then throw them out the door and say, "Get out of here." Honest to God. He was an old guy. His son and I went to school together, and even when I worked down there, which was at twenty-one, twenty-two years old when I was working the Cal Neva, I worked part-time up at the Overland one or two nights a week. These cops used to do part-time work elsewhere—moonlighting. You go up there, still a tough bastard. Oh, my god, he was a tough man. Nice guy, nice guy. You just didn't cross him.

So that was a different town. Then you went down and you had your bars, your Aggies, the Depot, the S.P. down to Cosmo. All the drunks hung out there. They sold Goldbell white port, which was the cheapest wine. It was in a bottle so you could sit there. The Indians would hang in there, all your drunks. Indians, there was one guy who would get drunk at the Aggies and Depot, then he'd walk out the front door when he'd run out of money and walk over to Lake on Commercial. Down Lake to Second, from Second he'd go over back up to Center, Center back up. He would walk around that block, stumbling to where he was walking straight, bumming money just to get another bottle of wine.

Strekal: As a sheriff and also a police officer, did you ever get called down to Fourth Street?

Feroah: I can't remember too much on Fourth Street that I had gotten involved in.

Strekal: I mean, with the county I would assume that—

Feroah: West Fourth was the county.

Strekal: West Fourth was county jurisdiction.

Feroah: West Fourth, if you went past Reno Auto Wrecking that was up on the hill, on the right side where it makes that big curve on Fourth Street where the trailer park is. Back down towards those motels there and where the Micasa Too is, from there west was all county.

You'd get calls in there all the time. Not Micasa. Micasa I worked part-time at, Micasa Too, but we'd get calls to go out there. There was an armed robbery just shortly after I joined the Sheriff's Office, back in '71. They took hostages because they knew they were going to do it. They had a snitch on the inside. They knew they were going to

rob this place. It was a gay bar on West Fourth—Visions, I think is what the bar's called now. It used to be a motel called Dave's VIP—and it's probably where I got to be around gays more than I had ever been before in my life.

They had gone into this bar, and this group had been burglarizing and robbing wherever they could do it. They went in there, and there was an undercover officer sitting in there drinking, knowing this was going to happen, and then they had guys outside waiting for this crew to go in. Once they went in, they were spooked in the inside so they held hostages in there. I had to go out there and we had to sit outside. I hadn't been around gays that much.

I was sitting out there and it was in June, and in June, it still gets cool here at night. I had been in the station, getting ready to go home when this went down. They said, "Come on. Everybody's got to go." So we loaded up, had short-sleeve shirts on, and said, "Grab your whatever."

I said, "Okay," and I grabbed my handgun, which was a .38 and I jumped in somebody else's car. We didn't have that many patrol cars. We get in the patrol car and we get out there, and we're sitting out there outside the car waiting. We've got this building surrounded, right? I'm freezing my ass off because it was so cool. All of a sudden, the guys negotiated out one of the guys who was gay and he comes running out and, "Oh, oh, oh," like this and swinging his arms, very gay, you know. He goes up and he hugs him, "Oh, I'm so scared."

I'm going, "What the hell?" You know, I'm not used to seeing that. It was my really first time dealing with the gays. It ended up the situation was fine. The guys gave up. They went to prison and all that.

Strekal: So there was no shooting?

Feroah: No shooting, but it was something, they were ready to kill people in order to do it, and they ended up talking them out.

Strekal: As a Reno police officer, were you ever on East Fourth?

Feroah: I don't remember. I don't remember calls so much down there at that time because in Reno, I was mainly downtown. They only had seven or eight cars on the road at a time here in the area. I worked the traffic car more. With the traffic car, you could be on Fourth Street working. But normally not much happened on Fourth Street. You remember accidents that happened. Accidents were one thing that happened everywhere. I even got in a traffic accident at Fourth and Sierra. A guy drove into me. I didn't get cited, and I should have, probably. But really I think that's about it. Nothing major. I had more stuff that I got involved with at the Sheriff's Office serving civil process, delivering some papers over there. But the most I had ever dealt with was when I used to walk the beat. That was the biggest thing for Reno after I retired from the Sheriff's Office.

Strekal: And this was in the nineties, wasn't it?

Feroah: No, no. This was 2006 to 2009.

Strekal: This was very recently.

Feroah: Two and a half years ago.

Strekal: And so you were back downtown as the reserve.

Feroah: Right. But it wasn't volunteer—you were paid part-time police officer.

Strekal: So this would have been right around the same time then that the homeless shelter was relocated down the street?

Feroah: Yeah, we dealt with the homeless shelter, we dealt with the St. Vincent's Dining Room and all that. It's different now than it was then. A lot of your businesses that were down on Fourth Street have left the area. The El Rancho Motel, which is down there at Fourth and Wells, used to be a fine upstanding motel. It was a nice place to stay, and then they had Denny's there.

Strekal: *El Rancho, that's a really big motel.*

Feroah: Two-story, big corner, right underneath the Wells overpass. That's another joke, but I'll tell you about that later. But that was a fine place to go to. They had a bar and a restaurant there on the property. Pete Cladianos and his brother, the Cladianos family had that place, and it was a nice place. Flanigan's warehouse was Flanigan's Lumber Supply, a nice well-kept area. All of it was well kept down on there. When they brought in the freeway, it went down the tubes, because there was nothing to make it look nice anymore.

Now, where they put the overpass in, they had the overpass and the underpass. You go underneath the eastern tracks on Wells, and even then it would still stay somewhat nice. But then as times have gone by, they put in the trench that blocked off the underpass. Well, what happens when they block off the underpass? It makes that area kind of die. So that's mainly what's happened. A lot of that area has just died off. There's a steel business, Davis Steel, over on Elko. I think it's Elko. That's right behind the gas station. That was a business that came in there after. There were all big warehouses. Nevada Bell used to have a building over between Eureka and Elko. Eureka was where they used to pull in. There's a beer warehouse on Elko, but they took out the tracks. The tracks are gone, have been for some time.

There was a whole area that Martin Iron Works ended up taking over. Commercial Hardware was at Valley and Fourth. And then they had a gas station here, which is still there. That gas station was the Zellerback building. It was a painting contractor. At Elko and Fourth is a gas station. Then there's a small-engine shop. They sell lawnmowers and stuff. It's changed so much. LX Laundry was where the auction place, Anchor Auctions, is now. Anchor Auctions is there and then the gas station. Reno was quite the little town.

At Ray's Tire Exchange, basically what they do now is they recycle tires. That's all they're for. H&N Steel was back in there on North Park Street. There were nice businesses up in there. They've changed a lot of that now. It's just all dumps. People say, "Oh, we can't do this. Oh, we can't do that." There were oil distributors.

There were all kinds of different wild things that were back in there. Most of them have just gone downhill since then because they blocked it off with the trench or they blocked it off with building the overpass. So basically we've shot ourselves in the foot and made that the rundown area it is.

They try every once in a while to put a place in there where they can do something to make it look better, like on the corner of Fourth and Wells they have places or apartments and shops in there. What the hell? Why would you do that?

Strekal: There's also housing behind that, too.

Feroah: Right, right. But why would you do that? Trying to make it look better for what?

Strekal: I think it was part of a revitalization. I don't know what the initiative was.

Feroah: It made it one block and that was it.

Strekal: Do you think that the homeless shelter being down there has any effect on it?

Feroah: The homeless shelter it's not going to make it any better. The thing is, because it doesn't make it any better, it keeps it basically in the slum level. The guys on Fourth Street, they're trying to revitalize that again. Oh, yeah, let's just make it a silk purse again. Well, you can add all you want to it. Until you build something that's going to pull people in, you're not going to build anything.

People come to Louis'. Louis' Basque Corner is still there. Louis has had that place for, I don't know, forty years, fifty years. Louis' family has run that place and they take care of the building and they have people living up above. It's a fire trap to me but, you know, it'll make it. But Louis' is the only thing on Fourth Street there, and the Event Center that they're going to have, and the bowling stadium's actually losing a lot of money.

Strekal: Well, it doesn't actually cater to the public, really.

Feroah: No, it doesn't, and they're not going to cater to the public. Just special events and that's it. That's why they're trying to make that all a convention area down there, at Fourth and Center.

Strekal: What do you think the city could do to improve Fourth Street or do you think there is anything they could do?

Feroah: They'd have to change the whole outlook on it. Because as you go down Fourth Street you look at the motels, the bars that are down there. There's a bar at Fourth and Sutro. It's a bikers' bar owned by some Reno firemen. The place looks decent, but it's nothing much. There's nothing down there that makes you feel safe.

Strekal: Do you like any aspects of Fourth Street? Do you enjoy any aspects of that part of the street?



Feroah: No, not anymore. I like one place down there and that's Los Compadres restaurant, a Mexican restaurant.

Strekal: Where is that at?

Feroah: That's at Fourth, where Fourth and Sixth come together. That used to be a Sizzler. I like that restaurant, because I've known the guys who own it for a long time. But really there's nothing over there. If you want to go over there, over to Twin City Surplus, that's one thing. But really there isn't much in there that you're going to want.

Strekal: There's Casale's Halfway Club. That still operates.

Feroah: That still operates, and when she dies, I think that place will die because she's the cook in there.

Strekal: Coney Island still does okay.

Feroah: Coney Island's still there, barely. You know, most of those places that you get into and you deal with down in there, they've been around a long time. They're going to survive. Casale's, I've eaten their spaghetti sauce. That's the first time I ever had spaghetti sauce that burned your mouth. But it burned your mouth because of the spice not because of the temperature. I mean, you can live with the hot, as long as it's the heat from the oven. Not the heat from the spice in there. They've got very spicy food, and it's good. I mean, don't get me wrong, it's good. Coney Island's very well known for its corn beef and cabbage on Saint Patty's day. So it's going to make it.

It's like Jack's. Have you been into Jack's? Jack's used to be decent before, and then Jack's kind of went downhill.

Strekal: He wasn't paying taxes.

Feroah: Well, that was another guy.

Strekal: Oh, that was the other one?

Feroah: Yeah, that was Jim. In fact, that's a long story, but Jim came to town—he's originally from Hawaii. Jim met his wife, I think, because she worked for Delta Airlines. His wife, she's a half Chinese, half Caucasian gal, very pretty, and he met her. He's this playboy and all that. They were living up in Oregon and they moved down here from Oregon.

The family does, the whole family. Al—I want to say it's Al, the guy that owns Peg's. That's who it was and Jim's working over there part-time for him. The daughter, when she's in town, she's over there. I mean, she was really a pretty gal. Nice and sweet, all of them were. This was her second or third husband, but he had a gambling problem and he had a zipper problem. So the gambling problem is really what got to him. That's what keeled him over. But they went and bought Jack's from Jack Achoch because they

wanted to have their own business. They thought they could make it big. They ran it into the ground, Jim did.

Strekal: I never cared for the food there anyway.

Feroah: Well, when Jack originally had it, it was a decent breakfast. So that was the difference in Jack's back then. The original Jack's was over on 22<sup>nd</sup> and Prater. Good food. It was down there a little, because it was a small little deal in there. That was one place. But you start going down Fourth Street, and Fourth Street's really gone downhill, even in Sparks.

Strekal: Well, it turns into Prater then. You have the Pony Express.

Feroah: The Pony Express used to be owned by Harolds.

Strekal: Harolds Club, yeah. It wasn't in Sparks and it wasn't in Reno, initially.

Feroah: Yeah, and then Sparks took it in and El Rancho. In fact, the building right next to the freeway there, which is now the auto body—McCarran Auto Body—used to be Yellow Deluxe Cab. My uncle went over there. My uncle was the brother-in-law to one of them. It was Baker Drake. Bob Drake was the one who ran it, but my Uncle Pete's brother-in-law was the one that—Baker, Herman and Inez Baker, he'd worked for them for years at Yellow Deluxe Cab. Their place used to be at the corner of where the Circus Circus garage is on Sixth and Sierra. It was on the southwest corner of Sixth and Sierra.

Across the street was Rizoni's gas station and then Rizoni's auto parts, which was eventually changed into Ichiban. He took the building and refurbished it and made it Ichiban.

Strekal: From an auto parts store to an Ichiban's Steakhouse.

Feroah: Yeah. Itchy-buns, we used to call it.

Strekal: How do you think the information that you've provided me with today will help give greater understanding and clarity to Reno's long and varied past, from Fourth Street being the main stretch through town scattered with various business and services, to the current state of freeways and massive hotel casino operations?

Feroah: When they put in the freeway, they were asking to put it closer to downtown and it would've probably taken in part of Fourth Street and possibly taken in part of that area there. But they moved through downtown Reno. If you think about it, looking from the freeway, you can tell where the Legacy is, but you couldn't see the original downtown Reno. That took the business out of Reno.

The freeway got built right over the top of the Nugget, so what do people see? The Nugget. "Oh, we'll go there." You pass right through it. It's like the stupid train trench. I know why they wanted to do it. But you basically cut up Reno and you took an area of ground that was down there. It was very historical. It was down below, but you

basically took this town and split it in half with that train trench. Now you have a baseball field down there. What was in the baseball field? There was a firehouse, it had been warehousing, it had been apartments.

Strekal: Chinatown.

Feroah: Chinatown, yeah. There was nothing really gained by a lot of this construction. It was the original “Give me the money.” Let’s say the Lovelock family—the Richardson Lovelock family—well, those two families that got together—they sold to Bartlett Ford and then Bartlett moved out there and then they sold to Jones West.

So who got the money off that property? It’s who got the money off the property we converted? Where the bowling stadium is, part of that was owned by the Reeves family. The Reeves family, they sold the property. Greg Reeves, after his dad died and his mom was in bad shape and he took over—sold that property, came out with a fortune. Not what he could get today, but a lot of money. They got that parking lot. They also owned a jewelry store, which is where they were going to pull the drugstore downtown here. Not Walgreens. The one that’s on Sierra and Second. Rite Aid, one of them, whatever it was, that was CVS, I think.

Strekal: But they’re all the same father company, I think. Anyway, it was the drugstore down there, which didn’t last very long.

Feroah: Right, yeah. That didn’t open. Because the gaming conflict with, I want to say was Caranos. I don’t know, one of them. It was a big property. But these property guys bought all this property. They’re the only ones who made money. The rest of the businesses, they’ve run out. They have run businesses out of business because of their greed or they want to sell it to this certain guy.

The one person—and I don’t know if he owns that building, Goldilocks, he has done very well for himself, considering, over the years. Goldilocks, which is downtown, is a jewelry store—I think he bought that building, but he has developed and made everything from south down on Center Street to Second Street, Second and between the alley. Right behind that gift store.

And he’s done all right. But it’s the families that have made the money around here that don’t reinvest it back into the community.

The Goodsell family or the Mack family that have Palace Loan and Jewelry, one time they ran two or three different pawn shops. Let’s see, there was Palace, Cannon, and Cameo. Those places there, when Harolds Club bought all that property from the buildings where the original Palace Loan and Jewelry was—they owned all of it, plus where the Pacific Pawnbrokers is, that was part of the Mack family. That was Ron Mack, and the one that’s in Vegas now.

But Joan, I’m pretty sure her family is Goodsell, a good Jewish family, and they built this new building. The old man Goodsell, if you were going into the pawn shops, he was there, plus Dennis Mack, who was the owner and Darren’s dad, and they had that place down there on Commercial and built this new one. I don’t think the building’s that nice, but they had all this money they’ve invested into that place, and I don’t know if they give back to the community. That’s one thing. Most of these businesses don’t.

Strekal: That could have something to do with it.

Feroah: Well, you know, at Thanksgiving they have their big turkey thing that the Eldorado gets involved in—not the Eldorado, the Silver Legacy, and that’s put on by local preacher—and they put it on for the homeless people. They’ve been doing stuff like that for years around here, but that’s once a year. What about the rest of the year?

When businesses started closing down downtown, who do you think got all of the businesses or still was doing well with the money and wouldn’t help with anybody else to keep going? It all benefits each other. That’s the casinos.

When Bill Harrah died, they took the estate they sold to the Promise Corporation, which was Holiday Inns at that time. Then Holiday Inn split from Promise Corporation, and they still have it, I think. Yeah, the Promise Corporation still has it, and that’s the second largest casino operator or one of the larger casino operators in the nation, in the world, I guess, now. The other one is MGM Grand in Vegas, which is Circus Circus and half of the Legacy.

But they don’t really help any other time, and these people are making money and all they can think of is their own pocket. That’s hurt a lot of Reno. In Vegas, you’re going to keep the bums away from downtown if you move them someplace where they’re not going to be out bothering your patrons or you’re going to do better for everybody if you have the people down there watching.

Reno had a good thing. We cleaned up downtown. I say “we.” The guys who were walking the beat down there, we cleaned it up in the period of time we worked down there. There were sixteen of us at one time, or seventeen, I think, at one time, and we would walk down there, have somebody downtown every day of the week. We cleaned up downtown Reno.

Strekal: In what regard?

Feroah: Walking the beat, we cleaned up downtown Reno to the point where the businessman, everything else, people were feeling good about walking downtown. So what happens? You fire all the guys doing the work, and because the RPPA doesn’t like it and the city says, “Oh, we don’t have any money.” Well, you don’t have money because you’re not getting your tax dollars in because you’re cutting off your nose to spite your face, and that’s what these guys have done.

So the casinos aren’t putting money in to help this problem, to fix this problem. They just worry about their little nest egg right here, and they should all be putting into something like this, because they have what they call a tax district down there. Their tax district is paying for guys who work prostitutes and that kind of a thing, which is something they’ve cut back on. Even though the tax district is paying for it for numerous officers, they’ve cut them back to where they can’t work down there because some commander didn’t like that idea.

So the City of Reno, the Police Department, City Hall, the casinos, they’re cutting of their nose to spite their face because of this, “I want my little piece of the world and my piece of the world.” They’re not building up the businesses in this town. That’s my opinion.

Strekal: No, that's why we're here. So do you think that this information could potentially help the city or transportation commission in making any future decisions?

Feroah: It could if they wanted to listen. That sounds so negative, but I think if you are going to really help this area, the only thing I could really say is if you want to keep your business and the doors open and your business prosperous, prospering in here—downtown, Fourth Street or anything else—you've got to clean up by using some of the benefits that you have to help benefit everybody. Yeah, it benefitted me to work down there. I'm not saying that—I'm saying that you have people who are willing to come in and help clean up, not just tear up the street and rebuild the street for you. I'm talking about people who are willing to come in, and the casinos were paying for different people to go down there and sweep up trash and they were cleaning that place up. The City of Reno said, "Oh, we got to cut those guys."

Strekal: That's part of what makes going to a place desirable.

Feroah: Clean streets.

Strekal: Clean streets, nice streets, accessibility.

Feroah: Not being bugged by "street urchins," as I call them, the transient people who come through bumming money, the drunks laying there in the middle of the road. I mean, I got up in the morning—this is just one incident. I was walking, I came out, everything's fine downtown. I'm walking downtown and hit Virginia Street and I start walking north. I get to where one of the pawn shops is down here, here is a drunk woman sitting like this, legs spread, passed out.

Strekal: On the sidewalk?

Feroah: On the sidewalk. Oh, my god. All right. So I call, and we get her up. I call and say, "Hey, I got one."

"Okay," and they come over and they start to pick her up, and I go around the corner and here's another one passed out on Fourth Street on the same block, Fourth and Virginia, passed out. Got his pants down around his ankles. It's Leonard. Leonard is an old-time drunk. Nice guy when he's sober. When he's drunk, he's an ass, complete ass. So Leonard's right there, he's passed out.

Well, it turns out these two drunks got out of the hospital. They'd gone to the hospital for being so drunk, got out, escaped or whatever they did, went over, stole another bottle of booze and they shared it between them. They were blitzed.

I guess they took both of them to the hospital to get checked. It's like, oh, my god. Why do we look at people like this? Why do we have this on our streets? There should be somebody on graveyard. When you have people walking the beat, that's what has helped a lot of New York City, I think. When you have people walking the beat and looking at things, the presence itself is making the difference. The casino owners and business owners downtown, as soon as we left downtown, guess what? The day after we left, all

your bums and panhandlers, everything was downtown, downtown right away. They said, "Get out of here."

"Why? We don't have to. There's no cops down here anymore." Well, they kicked us out of there in 2009.

Strekal: I hadn't been walking downtown recently until this year, and I was kind of surprised.

Feroah: Oh, yeah, and the thing is that I don't put anything past these people, and that's my opinion. I don't put anything past them.

Strekal: I think that's a good way to conclude for now.

Feroah: That's all right. That's good.

Strekal: Thank you for your time on this.

Feroah: No problem.