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# Count Guido Roberto Deiro

## My Varied Careers and Rewarding Life in Las Vegas

An Oral History Conducted by

David G. Schwartz

Transcribed and Edited by Joyce Marshall

2017 Edits by Guido Deiro and David G. Schwartz

Oral History Program

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

2002

Revised edition 2018

# Preface

Count Guido Roberto Deiro, born in Reno, Nevada, in 1938, has had several fascinating careers. The son of vaudeville performer and recording star Count Guido Pietro Deiro, who was the first major piano-accordionist to become popular in the United States, and his teenage wife Yvonne Teresa LeBaron De Forrest, Deiro grew up in and around Las Vegas and Southern California after his parents' 1941 divorce.

After attending 13 grammar schools and five high schools, Deiro graduated from Las Vegas High School in 1955. During his youth, thanks to his stepfather Samuel "Baby Shoes" Prezant, Deiro had an early introduction to the Las Vegas gambling scene.

Following a brief stint in the U.S. Army, Deiro worked a series of jobs, including parking cars, selling shoes, and driving an ambulance. He transitioned from working as a fitness instructor to being a lifeguard at the El Rancho Vegas hotel, all the while becoming interested in aviation. Deiro entered the gaming industry at the age of 19 and a half, when he began working as a dealer, having been taught by his stepfather.

Breaking in at the Nevada Club, Deiro, who became known as "Bobby Blue Eyes," later worked at the New Frontier, Sands, El Cortez, and Holiday casinos. He provides a great deal of detail about the social world of Las Vegas casinos in the 1950s through the 1970s, with insight into many major personalities.

While working in gaming, Deiro continued to pursue a career in aviation, acquiring in the early 1960s a commercial pilot license, instrument rating and instructor's certificate. He began working as a flight instructor and charter pilot at Thunderbird Field, now known as North Las Vegas Air Terminal. Deiro flew around the United States promoting Las Vegas and the airfield. After Howard Hughes purchased the airfield in 1967, Deiro stayed, ultimately becoming Director of Aviation Facilities for the Hughes Tool Company.

Following his marriage to Joan Marlene Calhoun, Deiro moved to California, where he became Vice President and Director of Administration for Air California and Golden West Airlines, before serving with other companies owned by C. Arnholdt Smith. In 1971, Deiro returned to Las Vegas.

Deiro then met artist Michael Heizer, who enlisted Deiro's help in scouting and securing locations for his Earth art installations. This led to Deiro's long involvement with that genre.

In addition to these careers, Deiro was also influential in many key developments in Las Vegas, including the construction of the Las Vegas Motor Speedway and, with his wife Joan, several philanthropic endeavors. In this interview, Deiro shares his perspectives on his times and his impact on Las Vegas.

*This is Dave Schwartz. I am at the home of Count Guido Roberto Deiro and we are going to be doing an oral history of him today for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. It is January 30, 2002. How are you doing today?*

I'm doing fine. How are you professor?

*I'm doing great. Could you tell me a little bit about your father?*

My father was Count Guido Pietro Deiro. He was born in 1886 in Salto Canavese,

Deiro

Superiore, in the Northwest of Italy. It's (located in) the province of Piedmonte, and near Torino. He was musically gifted. His family wanted him to remain there and run the family businesses, which had to do with orchards and cattle. They were agricultural people that owned general stores in small communities throughout that area. That life didn't appeal to him and, also, they wanted to arrange a marriage for him and he didn't like that either. So, he went off to seek his fame and fortune as a musician. Served a stint in the Italian Army in the band and he played several instruments, but one instrument he was particularly good at was the chromatic accordion. The piano accordion had just recently been invented, but had not been popularized and was unknown in this country. He purchased one of those and he began to play professionally in Germany. The German economy, at that time, was fairly good in the early part of the 1900s. He played in a succession of saloons and dancehalls, which were the popular theater at that time prior, of course, to radio and TV. He had great success and was contacted by the manufacturers of the accordion that he was playing, Ronco-Vercelli, and was asked to represent that company at the Alaskan Exposition in Seattle, Washington, which was at the turn of the century,

1908 or 1909. He came to the United States through Seattle and was immediately, after arriving and demonstrating the accordion at the Exposition, hired by a man called Frank Butti to play in the Jackson Saloon in Seattle which was the form of entertainment in the United States at that time. You know, they were still riding horses like cowboys and Indians. He made $40.00 a week, which was quite a sum of money at that time. He stayed there a few months, the accordion broke and nobody to repair it. Nobody had ever seen a piano accordion before, nor was it called a piano accordion. It had no English name yet. It was called a *fizarmonica systema piano* in Italian. So, he came down to San Francisco where there were some chromatic accordion repair people. He went to the Guerrini Accordion factory in San Francisco, they repaired his instrument and they asked him to conduct an outdoor concert in front of the factory. He did, to a crowd of several hundred people and one of the people in that crowd was the father of the man who later built *Grauman's Chinese Theater* in Hollywood, Sid Grauman, and he immediately booked Deiro, as he was known, popularized as Deiro, to the Vaudeville circuit. Dad had a huge Vaudeville career starting in 1910. He appeared all over the United States of America and was a headliner. He played the Palace and another thing that he did that made him very popular was that he was one of the early originators of ragtime music. His *Deiro Rag* was very popular. He was also a proponent of Middle Eastern music, the Oriental music that was just starting a craze at that time created by Princess Fatima who had appeared at the Chicago World's Fair. She was the first one to do a belly dance in this country. Dad liked that form of music and popularized it in a Broadway musical he composed which was a big hit called *"Kismet."* That made Otis Skinner's career in

the musical comedy theater and it made my father famous. That composition is popular to this day. I still receive checks from SESAC, the world copyright organization for that.

That piece was written in 1911. Dad was a womanizer. He was a handsome fellow, very well spoken, very European, very much a nobleman, very talented. He was also kind of a Sean Penn of his day; quick with his fists. His first marriage was to an entertainer and pianist, Julia Tatro; the second marriage was to Mae West. Mae West claimed that he was the love of her live and she was the love of his life. There are a number of books in which he is very prominently mentioned, all biographies and autobiographies concerning Mae West. He was well known for that. ( Access illustrated website guidodeiro.org for history.) So, father discovered Mae West when she was in the burlesque theater, which was sort of the illegitimate theater, Vaudeville being the family entertainment. Mae was precocious and a little risqué at that time, very appealing to my father and they ended up married in 1913. She got pregnant. They either aborted the child or the child was lost because this led to the break-up of their four-year relationship. They were divorced years later in New York (1920) when Dad wanted to marry again. Both of them could have been bigamists as several of her books point out, she was married to a Vaudeville entertainer stage named Wallace, but had never lived with him as man and wife at the time she married my father. My father was previously married to a Spokane pianist, Jewel Pearl Tatro. We know that he was charged with non-support and arrested on the stage in Detroit. It cost him $4,000.00 to settle the matter. In other words, he had a very interesting career with women. After they broke up, Mae had

to work in small time in Chicago's Loop and popularized the *Shimmy Shawobble*, the dance; she became even more notorious for sexual innuendo. In the early 20s, she reached her first stardom when she wrote a play called *"Sex"*, for which she and the cast were arrested. She served a few days on Rikers Island in New York because of its blue nature and this really started her famous career as a dramatist and comedienne.

When she went to Hollywood, she was already 40 years old. So, most people's impression of Mae as a character is a 40-year-old woman. That's why she looks a little plump in those pictures that Americans can see today on Turner Classic Movies. Vaudeville went in the tank about 1930 because of the Depression and even though my father was a Columbia Recording star and had royalties coming in from his musical compositions and his personal appearances, he suffered financially. Motion pictures finally forced him out of live entertainment. It was an interesting thing. First you had a movie showing with the vaudeville acts headlining and then the movie was more important than the vaudeville act, but dad was still able to headline alongside films at that time all the way into the early 30s. He took a second world tour in 1928, played the London Hippodrome and the Palladium and went around the world and that really marked the conclusion of his career as a stage performer. My dad's career was over with so he decided to open musical conservatories and studios across the Western United States. He really liked the American Northwest and he liked to hunt and fish and he particularly enjoyed coming to Northern California, Oregon and Washington. So, he based himself in San Francisco and he married one of the leading soubrettes, a star of burlesque theatre.

Her name was Ruby Lang. They had a short marriage and were divorced in the early 30s. He continued his promotion of his accordion studios, musical conservatories, lived off his record income and whatever personal appearances. Approaching 50 in 1936, he was dating a beautiful French chanteuse, who was my grandmother and her stage name was Helen Cole.

She was a popular singer in San Francisco. She sang at the *Fior di Italia*, which is a popular restaurant to this day. She had an even more beautiful daughter that was only 16 years old. This was to be my mother. Her name was Yvonne Teresa LeBaron De Forrest. My maternal grandfather's family had come from an aristocratic French family that escaped the French Revolution and came to the United States in the late 1700s. My father hired Yvonne to work for him in his main studio and conservatory in San Francisco. It was on the 500 block of Columbus Avenue in the Italian section of North Beach and one thing led to another. She became pregnant. Her sister, my aunt Helene, happened to be a nurse. She suggested they go to Reno where my father had a summer home and conservatories in Reno, Yerington, Dayton and in other small towns in Northern Nevada. The piano-accordion, of course, was a very popular instrument by that time. Incidentally, my father named the piano accordion and was the first to appear on stage with it in motion pictures and to make recordings and on radio. So, he introduced, named and popularized of the piano accordion. They went to Reno and drove down to Yerington where you could get married at her early age, he being 51 and she being 17 at that time. I was actually born when she was just short of 18 years old. So, my birth certificate is from Reno, Nevada. I was born at St. Mary's Hospital on February 18, 1938. When I was old

enough to travel they returned to their digs in San Francisco and lived there in questionable harmony for about a year and a half. My mother was very vivacious, beautiful woman. She also craved excitement. She liked the nightlife. She liked to dance. She had come from that. My parents had entertainment backgrounds, both of them aristocratic, quite arrogant, quite prima donna like. My mother liked to go out on the town and had friends who were into the seedier side of life. They were into gambling and minor racketeering. My father objected to that, of course, and one thing led to another. She went to Hollywood to get into the movies and she obtained a "quickie" divorce in Las Vegas. To get a divorce, she had to come to Las Vegas to establish residency because in those days, divorces weren't granted like they are now. Sometimes it took years to get a divorce. She wanted out now. She stayed for six weeks at Tommy Hull's new hotel on Highway 91 called the El Rancho Vegas. My father and mother were divorced; my father didn't appear here, in 1941. But at the time she established residency, her gambling boyfriends had introduced her to a gentleman named Sam "Baby Shoes" Prezant and Sam was a big Hollywood bookmaker and one of the original percentage owners in what would become the Flamingo Hotel. He was also involved in the Las Vegas Club and The Westerner downtown. He also had a piece of the El Cortez. In fact we lived at one time, in the El Cortez Hotel Townhouse. The El Cortez, at that time, was at its location now, but was a two-story structure with the main building on Fremont Street, but it had an alley to the North and there was a separate two-story townhouse which had rooms in it for rent. My mother and soon to be stepfather and I, whenever I was in town, lived in that townhouse. "Baby Shoes" supervised games as a pit boss and percentage

owner at the Las Vegas Club, The Westerner, and the El Cortez, and the soon to be built Flamingo. I, still in short pants, was going to private schools in Southern California. My real father who was ill had followed my mother to Hollywood to try and reconcile but she was through. They decided it was best for me to go to boarding schools. There were no private academies or schools of higher learning in Las Vegas at that time. So, I went to such schools as Paramount Studio, Page Military and Elsinore Naval & Military Academy where I found other children from Las Vegas notables going to school there. Tiny Biggs' son went there along with several other kids from Vegas. I went to school with Bela Lugosi's, the famous Count Dracula's son who became the District Attorney of L.A. County. I used to have a lot of fun in later years when I met his dad because they were both Counts. (*laughs*) I didn't know it at the time I was in school, as my father sort of glossed over it, didn't much mentioned it. My father passed away in August 1950. I wasn't yet 13. He passed away at Loma Linda Sanitarium in Riverside, California. He died of congestive heart failure. He looked like he was 80 years old, but he was only 63. So, I had very little time with my father after the divorce, most of it being spent in these private schools in California with visits to Las Vegas. Visits to Las Vegas were always an adventure to me. I would be put on a Greyhound Bus, which was the principal form of transportation to Las Vegas, or the train. The train took seven hours to get here and so did the bus in those days. The bus stopped at interesting places like El Cajon and Victorville and Barstow and Baker. Like a stagecoach, actually they called it a stage line. I looked forward to the stop in Baker because it was in the middle of nowhere, the foot of Death Valley, two-lane asphalt road all the way to Las Vegas and in the desert, but I

could buy a cold drink. It was quite a long trip for a kid eight or nine years old to travel alone and I did it for a couple of years. Running back and forth to Southern California with little contact with my father, or my mother. Finally, my mother took me out of private schools. I like to say that I was thrown out of some of the best schools in California. I also went to St. John Bosco Catholic Academy. It's a boarding school for young boys with disciplinary problems in Bellflower, California. Run by priests and nuns. My mother and stepfather lived at 116 Garces Street which was near downtown Las Vegas. It's between Bonneville and Clark. It was a little yellow duplex and everybody that lived around us in those duplexes were either involved in the gambling business or some service trade. The beautiful Johnson girls, Evelyn and her sisters, lived across the street from me. Evelyn later worked for me as a real estate agent. I'm trying to remember people that were in the early gambling business that lived around us. I used to walk downtown in the morning when I got up, when I was just a small boy, probably nine years old and I would walk down to The Westerner where my stepfather worked at that time. He worked in all these gambling joints. He seemed to have an interest, a little piece of everything. The Westerner had big glass doors; some of the first plate glass, swinging doors, in Las Vegas. Years later, I remember when the atomic bomb went off there was a lot of comment in town about how the glass doors wiggled back and forth seven minutes after the white flash of the explosion. Well, I'd go and push my nose up against those doors and wait till my stepfather saw me. When he saw me he would come over and push open the door and give me a silver quarter which was my allowance quite a bit of money for a child in those days. Twenty-five cents, the movie was 14 cents, a bag

of popcorn was a nickel and Cokes were a nickel even out of the machine. So, a quarter a day, I had money to eat lunch and buy things with. I had plenty of money. One morning I came up to those doors and I arrived at the same time that a player, drunken player, had just finished and as he went out the door he knocked me down. Here I was in my little leather jacket on a cold winter morning and he'd knocked me into the gutter and he picked me up and brushed me off and he's stuffing $5 chips in my pockets and, of course, I helped him.

After he reeled off down the street, my stepfather came out and rolled me and took all the $5 chips and gave me my quarter and sent me to school. Everybody knew everybody on Fremont Street. The casinos on Fremont Street were called sawdust joints and they smelled of cigars and whiskey and the stuff you clean floors with. At Farmer Page's Boulder Club, you could bet a quarter on 21, the wheel, or Faro Bank. Ten cent craps. There were no women dealers. In fact, the only women in these casinos were either cocktail waitresses or professional entertainers. Women didn't frequent these places.

So, it was a very masculine oriented society and downtown Las Vegas extended from the train depot which had a big lawn in front of it and a circular tree lined driveway and for about five blocks down to what we called 5th Street which is now Las Vegas Boulevard it had casinos on both sides of the street for about the first three blocks. The only bank in Las Vegas at that time was at the northeast corner of I think 3rd and Fremont Street. Houses of ill repute were just a block and a half off Fremont at that time. Block 16. The Army had ordered them closed but they still operated off the street. There were other whore houses way out east Fremont Street

at Four Mile and Roxie's. The two story wooden barracks building for Roxy's, the madam's name was Roxie Clippinger, is still standing out there in a grove of cottonwood trees. It was one of my great, I knew about these places, of course, hopes that I would get to be age 16 and be able to go to one of these places to see what the mystery was all about. You couldn't drink or gamble at 16 but you could go in the side door of these houses and they had a special living room area for young guys under 21with no liquor. You were supposed to be 18 but they never checked. Unfortunately, they closed them just about the time I made 16 in a huge scandal which Ovid Demaris wrote about in a book called *The Green Felt Jungle.* He described how Sheriff Glen Jones at that time was being bribed to keep them open and he was exposed by the *Las Vegas Sun* and the city fathers closed the bordellos. I could have killed the editor of the *Las Vegas Sun.* Hank Greenspun. I think about 100 other 16-year-old kids would have killed him too. So, Las Vegas to me epitomized a lifestyle that I really liked. I thought, gee, this is great. Wine, women and song...and gambling, how lucky can a young Italian kid get. There was so much money running around and somewhere inside of me, I had the idea that this might be something that I wanted to do. For a while in the fifth grade I went to 5th Street Grammar School which was the only grammar school at that time. It's a county office now. Mrs. Barstow was my teacher. Unfortunately, my mother and my stepfather had a tumultuous relationship and I was constantly moving around. Not only moving around from place to place in the city, but also in and out of the state. I was sent to Southern California to go to school continually. I went to 13 different grammar schools and five high schools in twelve years! So, I had a very chaotic

childhood. I never got to know anybody really well. I didn't have personal contact with anyone in my family other than my mother. My father hadn't done well in movies and was broke and had heart disease. I think he had a broken heart. He had been very popular and that was all gone. I saw him rarely. After my father's death, I no longer heard of my only aunt and had never seen my grandparents. Had no contact with anyone named Deiro. My mother developed a drinking problem and the relationship between her and "Baby Shoes" was not good. So, it was disruptive and emotionally difficult for me in my younger years. I have a half-brother who was born in 1947 to her and "Baby Shoes" who is an accomplished attorney in Reno, Nevada of all places. His name is William Allan Prezant. He is a very successful man. He is nine years my junior and he went to USC, graduated cum laude, and went to Georgetown, so he's a pretty good lawyer. But, unfortunately, we are not close because we are of different backgrounds, different everything. The upset we had in our families between his father and my mother, this was very divisive. He was also sent away to boarding schools at a young age. We never bonded.

Back to early 40s Las Vegas, some of the things I remember were the great Helldorado Days celebrations and, in those times, that was a big deal. It was our major community promotion. Started in the 1930s. Sort of like the *National Finals Rodeo* week on steroids. We had three huge parades that would rival the Rose Parade in Pasadena. Go all the way down Fremont Street from the train depot. There was the Old Timer's parade with silver mounted horses and twenty mule team borax wagon trains, all the buckboards and prairie schooners and Mormon pushcarts and cowboys and Indians, then the Children's parade, with all the schools

represented and finally on a Sunday the Beauty parade with flowered floats and showgirls and big name entertainers. The casinos would sponsor the floats and really try to outdo each other. We had a whiskerino contest for the best beards. Everybody wore western garb and the men all carried six shooters. Because I was one of the privileged I got to stand on the balcony of the El Cortez overlooking Fremont Street, and that balcony still exists, with the people who owned the hotel at that time which I believe may have included the J. K. Houssels family and Davy Berman's young daughter, Susan. But, I don't believe that Jackie Gaughan owned the property at that time. I remember men like Irish Green, Jake Friedman, Joe "Bowser" Rosenberg, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, the Berman brothers, Gus Greenbaum, Isadore "Ice Pick Willie" Alderman, and my stepfather Sam " Baby Shoes" Prezant, mostly members of the Jewish outfit as they were called at that time. I remember Milton Prell, Beldon Katleman and Jake Kozloff. These early pioneers, including some Italians, Pietro "P.O." Silvagni, who I drove for later in my teens, Tony Carnero, "Gamba" Georgetti who either had the casino boats off of Long Beach or gambling dens in Hollywood and San Francisco. Anyway, I went back and forth between Hollywood and Las Vegas during the 1940s and into the early 1950s. between my mother and my retired and ill father. On weekends, before my mother and Sam had permanently moved to Las Vegas, I went to the horse racing tracks with my mom and whoever in the outfit she was dating at the time, I would sit with them in a box at Santa Anita and be asked by the bookmakers what horses I liked. You know some guy would say "Who do you like in the Fifth, Pudge?" My nickname when I was young. Sometimes they gave me serious money which was always taken away by my

mother later. One night I was asleep in my mother's bed in her apartment in Hollywood and Mickey Cohen, Hy Goldbaum, "Baby Shoes" and Benny Siegel woke me up to shoot a hand of dice on the hardwood floor as they didn't trust each other. Back here in Las Vegas, it was a very western atmosphere. I had a cowboy outfit that I would wear. I had an Indian outfit that I would wear. My mother at one time boarded me at a ranch at 15th and Stewart which was in the country and is now under the freeway and we had chickens, horses, cows and rabbits and we're talking about 15 blocks from downtown Las Vegas. The roads were gravel. I remember that I used to go crawdad hunting at the Old Ranch where I learned to swim in the Old Ranch swimming pool which was on North 5th Street which would be Las Vegas Boulevard North where the Mormon Fort is now. That was in the country. There was a flowing stream and big trees, Las Vegas Creek, that came all the way out of where the Water District property is now. The "Meadows." It's where Las Vegas got its name and start, the creek went all the way downhill into North Las Vegas, past the Mormon Fort and out into what we called the Tule Forest which would be North Las Vegas and East Las Vegas. There were no homes out there, just desert. All the way to Frenchman and Sunrise Mountains. North Las Vegas was an entirely separate and distinct community. There was desert between Las Vegas and North Las Vegas. North Las Vegas was known as cowboy town. The gambling in North Las Vegas was interesting. You could have your own gambling game in a bar. So, if you had a bankroll, there was no gaming commission and no control board, you paid a license fee to the city and you could set your own game in one of these bars and deal it yourself. Buy playing chips in and out with the barkeep. Unheard of today. I was

aware of this. I remember all kinds of exciting things happening, shootouts and police chases and I remember I aspired to get old enough to join the Sheriff's Mounted Posse which they had at that time. It later became the Sheriff's Jeep Posse. There was a city police department and a county sheriff's office. Some early promoters of the town were the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the JCs and, boy, did they cut loose. They all wore cowboy duds and big Stetsons and carried Colt 45s and fired them off in casinos and in the street. Shot mostly blanks off. Liability at that time didn't mean anything. They would ride their horses into the downtown sawdust joints and arrest people who hadn't bought a *Helldorad*o badge. Throw them into a metal hoosegow in the middle of Fremont Street till some friend bailed them out with a silver dollar. To sneak downtown during one of these celebrations was something for a young kid to see. There was a dog that used to walk downtown Las Vegas streets with a bag of cigarette tobacco around its neck. Its name was "Pard." It liked to chew on the bags. He had a nicotine habit. Gamblers every once in a while would stop him and he looked like Spot from the Our Gang comedies and they would untie the old bag and give him a new one. The downtown jail was called the Blue Room and it was ½ block off Fremont in the alley between 1st and 2nd behind the Apache hotel and the S.S. Rex where the Horseshoe Casino is now and when I was a young kid I knew that I could score some change if I would go into the alley because they had a high barred window off the drunk tank and if I said, "O.K. I'm out here and I can get you cigarettes or whatever you need," the guys in jail would throw money out the high barred opening because there was no air-conditioning. I'd run off and get them their Lucky Strikes or Pall Malls or Camels and

a book of matches or whatever it was. If they wanted something like a candy bar, you know I'd bring it back and chuck it up there and they could catch it. So, we kids would score some change off whoever was unlucky to be incarcerated in there. The first Chinese restaurant in Las Vegas was Wing Fong's, right near the jail on 2nd Street. He was a very intelligent guy, spoke English but with a really heavy accent and became very wealthy. He really liked my stepfather "Baby Shoes," who would take book from Fong. My stepfather, who was a great horseman, not riding horses but betting on them, used to be a bookmaker in Hollywood when my mother met him and at that time he knew a bunch of the Italian Mafiosi in California. I think the *capo di capi re* was Lou Dragna and his Jewish counterpart, Mickey Cohen. I met Cohen often, he used to slip me a quarter and pinch my cheeks real hard. Sam took book with, I can't think of his name. He ran the card room at the Stardust for years later on. In the sixties. He lived to be 100 years old. I'll think of it in a minute. Yeah! It was "Hy" Goldbaum. He and my stepfather were bookmakers in Hollywood during World War Two when my mother first met them. I remember being in Hy's big black Cadillac sedan in the back seat, with my mother and him in the front seat when some stick up man who was in the dark corner of the back seat. It was in an underground garage. I didn't see him until he put a revolver up to Hy's head and took his bankroll and robbed us. If you ever see a man with his roll of bills held with a rubber band you know he's a gambler. The mug took off with Hy's bankroll.

My single mother lived on Gramercy Place right off Hollywood Boulevard for a while. Anyway, that group, that Hollywood group that was involved with the gaming boats and bookmaking along with the East Coast money guys were the people who

founded some of the earliest gambling joints and casino hotels in Las Vegas. They had to find somewhere to operate as the war shut down the ships that anchored three miles off the coast and you took speedboats out to them. They had everything a land casino had. One was called the SS Rex and the other one, the Lux. Then there was a political shutdown as the administration in Los Angeles got religion. So these wise guys had to go somewhere and found out about this hick town in the desert having legal gaming. The five families in New York had a sit down and agreed everybody, Italians and Jews, had a shot in Las Vegas and it would be an open city. My stepfather Sam " Baby Shoes" Prezant came out of Golden, Colorado, and Casper, Wyoming. His father had been a horse trader, one of the earliest Jews to emigrate from Kiev, Russia in the late 1800s. In fact, that's why they named it Golden, Colorado. My stepfather ran away to join the circus in Denver in the early 1900s, went into gambling, went were the money was, and in the 1930s had a small card room in Casper, Wyoming where they were having an oil boom. He ran a card game called Russian *barbout*, on the sandbar as they called it in Casper. One night he got into a fight with a drunken Greek who stabbed him in the belly. Sam kicked him to death with his size 13 loafers, earning the street name "Baby Shoes" and had to get out of town. He had a substantial bankroll, over $150,000.00, he went to Hollywood because of the horse tracks in California and Tijuana and then came to Las Vegas with the rest of the mob. So, that was his background.

These men from these illegal backgrounds came flocking to Las Vegas because of its legality. They were the real early gaming pioneers. All my life I've been aware that Benny Siegel has been incorrectly touted as the founder of the Strip in Las Vegas and

the developer of the Flamingo Hotel. Now, that history, only recently, has been rewritten. But, I've been telling people for 40 years that Ben Siegel was nothing but a New York Murder, Inc. mobster who worked for Alberto Anastasia and Frank Costello and was sent out here to establish a wire service between California tracks and force Las Vegas bookies to use and pay for it, this guy was handsome, a real ladies man blue eyes great dresser but he was a stone cold killer and a street criminal. He had an opportunity to take the layoff from my stepfather of the loans he had made to a degenerate gambler; that's what we call guys with a betting habit with all due respect, named Billy Wilkerson who my mother knew, my real father knew, I knew him, Wilkerson, because as a child my mother would sometimes take me with her mob boyfriends to beautiful night clubs like Ciro's, Mogambo, The Trocadero, Biltmore, Casa d'Amore, Brown Derby, these different night clubs and fancy restaurants that Wilkerson and others had in Hollywood. The places to be seen if you were in the movies or the mob. Children accompanied by adults were allowed and drank their Shirley Temples and Roy Rogers soft drinks in the booths off the dance floors during the war years. So, I had met Billy Wilkerson Sr. and I knew him as a friend of my father and my mother. He also owned the *Hollywood Reporter* newspaper. He got upside down with Siegel and couldn't pay the vig (interest) on his markers (loans) for horse bets he had lost and he had to give up the partially completed Flamingo to Siegel. Later, I realized that Mr. Siegel, as we called him cause nobody referred to him as Bugsy if you wanted to stay healthy. He and the others from the El Cortez had *"Shabbat"* dinner in our home on occasions and who I knew as a young boy, I mean he slipped me a silver dollar once in a while like most

of the other men. It was kind of like what you did with kids in those days. If you were a gambler or boss and you were in the joints and somebody brought in one of their kids, it was always, "how's this kid, gee, a nice looking kid" and they always gave you money and I loved it because they usually slipped you a silver dollar. It was kind of a courtesy, a professional courtesy that you did giving to other guy's children. A sign of respect. In those times you could go to the grocery store and pay for your purchases using checks. Not bank checks, I'm talking about chips from hotels we called them checks only a square called them chips and use them as cash anywhere in town. You could pay your power bill. You could buy a car. In the mornings you would see armed security guards going with bags of different casino checks to different joints dropping them off in exchange for their own. So, you could cop (take) a few checks off your.....

(End of side one, tape one)

If you could cop a few checks off the dresser at home, you know, that was as good as money. Las Vegas was fascinating. The change I've seen now at age 79, I don't know where I could live, really, on the planet to see such a radical change in culture, size, demographics of all kind, multiculturalism. I don't think I could live just anywhere. This is not Keokuk. This is Las Vegas and it's a real mind bender. I go back to places that I know in California. They haven't really changed much in character. They've grown in size, but the character of the place is about the same. The ambiance is about the same. You go to San Francisco, San Francisco is San Francisco. It's been that way for 100 years. You go to Las Vegas, it morphs. It has this base of gaming and the nightlife and the hedonistic pleasures that it offers this sense of abandonment, a

sense of now and no tomorrow. It's always had that, but it changes in its presentation. Of course, it gets bigger and bigger.

If my stepfather knew that we were going to turn everybody's grandmother into a slot player, he would roll over in his grave. Back in the early gaming, craps was the major game. Dice was the major game. Everybody that came out of WWII knew how to shoot crap. It presented some of the best odds. The wheel was for suckers, because it was an American wheel. It had two zeroes on it and there wasn't any way you could win at that. If you played long enough, you might just as well hand them your money and go to the bar. We dealt what are called bank games. All payoffs are rigged to hold a percentage. I can explain by saying if you and I were flipping quarters at heads and tails and when I won I kept the quarter but when you won I only gave you twenty-three cents. That's holding a percentage. Slots, they might have 25, 50 slot machines in a casino. They were there for somebody's girlfriend or the ladies to play or if you didn't have anything else to do. No serious gambler came within 10 feet of a slot machine. I used to hit them when I went to the grocery store, or a restaurant if I could get off where one was isolated like a hallway. Other ten year old kids told me how to double coin these old mechanical Jennings machines. Twenty-one games, you didn't see that many. Old time Faro Bank was played. It was called the "tiger" or the "bank." I remember casinos that had Faro in them, which is almost a dead up game. Oldest saloon game. Baccarat or the shimmy (*Chemin de Fer*) didn't exist. None of these side games that you see now, other than Chuck-A-Luck or the Big Six were present, but none of these foreign games, none of these Pai Gow poker games. There were standard poker games, but the seven-card stud or

Texas Hold Them, was not a popular game. Five-card draw was the game. You would go into a strip casino and you would see maybe four 21 tables and one wheel but ten crap tables and they made them huge some were 13 feet long.

Casinos were very simple in their marketing presentation and in the games that they offered. No special promotions like slot clubs or drawings or mega jackpots. Unfortunately, or fortunately, whichever side of the table you were on, things were not always honest in early Las Vegas. Even dealing bank games the owners weren't happy, they were used to winning all the money one way or another. It's a fact that gaming casinos went flat on occasions. Flat is a gambler's term meaning that they didn't give you a fair shake. You would be surprised at the hotel casinos that exist today, whose names still exist today, that stole from their customers. Of course, if you hire thieves to steal from people you have to hire thieves to watch the thieves who are stealing from the people.

Or they would steal from you. I can remember in the early days of Las Vegas, there was no such thing as what we used to call the "ass in the glass" or the "eye in the sky." Cameras were not allowed in casinos. No clocks either. Pit bosses had to know what they were doing. Casino managers had to have experience in eyeballing the cheats, or crossroaders and at the same time the capable guys that were dealing the games, to be able to watch gaming was a serious profession not easily learned. You had to know the cheats and past posters by sight. You also had to look out for dealers wearing a sub (a ladies girdle cut down to fit like a sleeve on the forearm under the shirt cuff) stealing checks. A friend of mine named Bob Griffin that now has a gambling joint on the California/Oregon border maintained and distributed

for years a black book that was kept in the pit stand for use by the bosses. It was full of pictures of known crossroaders and cheats.

Organized crime had a heavy influence in all of the casinos. I don't know of any joint that didn't have ownership that was experienced and didn't skim. Why pay? They weren't used to sharing anything. If they could have taken your money without you playing they would have. They wanted all the money. Kind of like politicians. We didn't have much tax in those days, so you contributed to the community in other ways, other than tax base. I can't think of anybody more generous than early gamblers as far as taking care of their and other gambler's families. They stood up for each other. They also looked out for the people in the community who were straight and in need. They got along well with the cops and the politicians of course they spread a lot of money and comps (favors) around. Catholics and Jews, the Catholics donated money for a Synagogue. I remember the first Synagogue that was built which I think was down on Carson Street near 12th, because we also used it for the Boy Scouts of America meetings and other Christian groups. They community built a bigger one, Temple Beth Shalom, in the 1950s a few blocks south on Oakey Boulevard and later I saw Eddie Fischer marry Elizabeth Taylor there, I fell in love with her and later married my second wife Joan Marlene who looked so much like her, could have been her sister. The Catholic church was St. Joan of Arc's downtown and later St. Anne's out on Maryland Parkway, I remember those. I served mass as a young boy. I was raised a Catholic, but then I was brought up by a Jew. We were multidenominational in that extent. Jews and Catholics and Mormons and

Protestants got along very well together. Everybody was very comfortable with each other.

Street crime did not exist mainly because of the seriousness of the enforcement. You didn't have to worry so much about the police as you had to worry about the guys who were running these casinos and lived in town. You didn't want to rob from them. Many a desperado…. Lake Mead is full of people who made that mistake. Bad guys just didn't last very long around here. I used to tell people, you could fall asleep in the middle of Highway 91, which became known as the Strip, with your wallet on your forehead and wake up the next morning with a blanket on you, but your wallet would still be there. There were no hits in Las Vegas until the sixties when the attorney Jack Coulthard got blown through the roof of his Cadillac in the downtown garage. The story went around that he had married Pietro Silvagni's daughter that owned the land the Horseshoe Casino is on and that after Silvagni's death there may have been a disagreement about a lease increase.

Oh yeah there was the alledged hit on Russian Louie Strauss in the early 1950s getting on a private plane with three guys and they got off in Burbank but he didn't. The local gendarmes shot up a guy named Blue in his driveway that I heard had irritated someone important but until the little guy Tony "The Ant" Spilotro and "Fat" Herby Blitzstein and Frank Culotta and the Kansas City mob go it's teeth into the Fremont Hotel and the Stardust there was no street crime attributed to any made people and that would have to be up into the 70s. I remember Ralph Lamb was a police officer and later became a well-known and longtime sheriff of Clark

County and his family was large and very actively involved in politics in the State. He had a six brothers and a sister who came out of Alamo, Nevada.

This brings me to the second phase of my growth here. When I was becoming a teenager, you know puberty, I became a problem because I'd gone to so many schools, been shuttled back and forth between here and California, my mother didn't really know what to do with me and I was getting into fights at school. Some of my classmates were Jack Binion, who later took over the Horseshoe from his father Benny, and Manny Cortez who headed up the Las Vegas Convention Authority, Frank Arambasich became a banker, LeRoy Eide who passed away young, William Shelton who was a war hero, Frank Toti one of the casino owners, just about everybody in town that you could name. Senator Richard Bryan was my class president. Senator Harry Reid from Searchlight, I used to see him at the gym. So, this was a small town and everybody knew everybody and I didn't get along real well in school mainly because I started at Vegas High School, then my mother sent me down to Hollywood High School, then I went to Burbank, then I went to Downey High School and then I came back to Vegas and graduated from Las Vegas High School in 1955. Well, when you are the outsider, you are always challenged and you overcompensate and I was smart and got the reputation as a know-it-all when I was just trying to fit in. I was quick with my fists and easy to anger and so I had some problems. When I was eleven years old I was asked to leave St. Joseph's school in Vegas for bad conduct. Some kids use to wait for me in the desert next to the school on my way home to our apartment on Clark Ave. at 12th street just to pick a fight with me and it was about a year before my father passed away, my mother decided

that she needed to get me out of town. Slick Lamb, Ralph Lamb's brother was a cattle rancher in Alamo, Nevada, which is 110 miles north of here and that, was a long way in those days. To go there you had to go through Moapa. It's a long way. It was about a three hour drive. They had no electricity. They were living in the 1800s up there. So, here I was a city kid, smart ass, gambling background, tough kid and Slick agreed to take me up there with his wife Isabella as he wanted a playmate for his son Jeff. Ralph's uncle Shorty, who was born in the 1800s, ran the ranch. They owned one of the most beautiful spreads. It's now a National Wildlife Preserve, The Pahranagat Wildlife Preserve in Alamo, Nevada. They owned all that land and had grazing rights and they ran about 500 mother cows. This was a real working, western, sometimes wear a six-gun, ride a horse, rope stock, build a cedar and barbed wire fence, grow and mow and bale alfalfa ,dehorn, dip and slaughter a beef, hunt deer and wildfowl ranch. I got dumped into the middle of it. That was an incredible experience. They were all Mormons and I was a Catholic. I ended up going to Mormon Church and attending their rituals and so forth and so on and making friends with the Stewarts and the Frehners and the Whipples and the Bunkers and the Lambs and the Christensens.

They wouldn't leave me near their daughters as I was a son of the great Satan. But their idea of entertainment was to goose somebody's horse with a piece of re-bar and start a rodeo, or have a fist fight between families after church, to this day, some people think I'm Mormon because of the nearly two years I spent up there. An interesting aspect of that is that Jeff and I were the two closest children to the Atomic Weapons Test Site that I know of because if you look at a map and you see

where Yucca Flat and Frenchman Flat is and you see where the old Buckhorn Ranch was at the lower Paranagat Lakes, that's one of the closest habitations to the test site. Now, I was up there when they were blowing the bombs off and I was riding a horse to school in Alamo, eight miles and back to that ranch every day. We were right in the path of the fallout and we had the little government guys in the pickup trucks showing up and we had dosimeters up there and I even wore a dosimeter and I wore a set of plastic dog tags which they gave to every kid in Clark County. We had duck and cover drills. This is in 1949, the early 1950s. I remember the first bomb blast, which was a big surprise. I was in bed when it went off. But, here I am nearly 80. I have five children and 10 grandchildren, all of whom are healthy and yet people who lived 150 miles away claim to have bad effects, ill effects, from the fallout from these blasts. [Deiro now suffers from prostate and colon cancer at age 79]

We lived within a few dozen miles from them. There was fallout on our livestock and buildings. When that thing went off, we used to get up in the morning. They would blow them off at five in the morning whenever we got a warning in the city, in town, when I was in Vegas they had a blue light on top of a one story building on south Main Street, at the A.E.C. office. When that light was on at night we kids knew that we could get up early, climb up on our roofs and watch the bomb go off in the early morning. Later on, in high school, they used to let us sit in the bleachers and watch the bomb go off when they blew one at nine o'clock in the morning. I mention this because at this period of time, in the early 1950s when the program was on, this town was very nuclear oriented. We didn't find anything bad about blowing bombs

off. Hell, we had a bar named the Atomic and the Las Vegas Press Club used the atomic clouds in their promotional ads. I think an A Bomb cloud was on one of the Clark County seals. They had a Civil Defense shot that the AEC hired a bunch of teenagers with licenses to drive cars out on the flats for a test called Operation Crossroads. We weren't overly upset or concerned about nuclear fallout or what the bomb was used for. We had a perfect understanding between the peacetime and wartime use of fissionable isotopes, you know, nuclear material. Whereas today it's a big bug-a-boo. So, we older local guys in our 70s, we don't know why everybody is running around like Chicken Little because we were raised with it. We were taught about it in school. I could accurately, at age 12 or 13, tell you what gamma, beta, and alpha radiation was and what it could do, half lives, what it penetrated and what it didn't. We were taught that in school on a very neutral political basis. To this day I have a couple of contamination detectors in my home. We also were instructed that the bomb was used in WWII to stop the war and save us incurring a million casualties invading Japan. Joan and I have visited Hiroshima and you would never know anything had leveled it once. It looks like San Diego with Broadway thrown in. Anyway, I just want you to know that I had a close association to the test site in my early life and was exposed to things nuclear and was not frightened by them. Later, that turned out to qualify me to serve on the Nevada Nuclear Waste Study Committee.

Finally, got out of school and there were no jobs in Las Vegas for teenagers or young adults or anyone outside of the casinos. There was no work. If you picked up the *Review-Journal* and *Morning Sun* newspapers and you looked you might see two

jobs, laborer, or maybe a porter, there was no work here. So, as I came close to graduating, I didn't know what to do. I didn't have any guidance from my stepfather or my mother. They were having their own problems. What I decided to do was to go ahead and join the Army as a lot of Las Vegas kids did right out of high school. Many died for their country during wartime and some became heroes like Lt. Nellis, the airbase is named after him, and one of my best buddies Col. William Shelton. At that time ROTC was not looked down upon. The Reserve Officers' Training Corps. at Las Vegas High School fielded two companies of uniformed troops amongst those high school students. We're talking about a couple of hundred kids belonged to ROTC in one school. This is going to be a shock. We had a rifle range at the bottom of Frazier Hall. We were issued M-1 rifles, M-2 carbines. We had a Browning Automatic Rifle. Of course, they had all been dewatted. The firing pins had been taken out, but we also had our target arms, which were .22 caliber bolt action rifles, and they were fully operational. We fired live ammunition in the basement of the high school on a regular 50' rifle range, which I know is still there because the building is still there. We had an armory with a vault door to store weapons and ammo and I'll bet it's still there. The military provided a colonel to lead and instruct the unit. Colonel Linton Y. Hartman, regular Army colonel who was our Professor of Military Science and Tactics and we attended classes, drilled and we wore standard Army OD uniforms and helmet liners to school on Wednesdays. We raised the colors on a flag pole in front of Vegas High every morning under arms and with a bugle sounding and lowered them at end of the school day. Anyone within sight stopped came to attention even people in cars during the ceremony, see that today. We presented the

colors at the football and sporting events and conventions and I remember we marched in all the parades. Stress was on tactics and small arms, preparing us for being a combat soldier as we were at war in Korea. Academics were secondary. We were all very patriotic and so was the gambling element. One of the things that I can remember about early Las Vegas was its patriotism and how there was a lot of patriotic music, a lot of military bands and we loved to march and parades were extremely popular. I think this was an outgrowth of WWII and the Korean War. It was a popular option when I was in high school to enlist in a service before graduating. I was a Captain in ROTC and my yearbook, my 1955 Wildcat yearbook, has my picture in there with these units. So, a bunch of us decided to join the Army in 1955. The Army recruiter was a guy named Master Sergeant Archie Jones and he was a Texan and his office was on the third floor of the old Post Office building at Stewart and 3rd Street, which they are trying to figure out now what to do with that building. [It is now the "Mob Museum."] That was the main post office. I liked Archie and I used to go down when I was a senior and play chess with him. Archie influenced me. He wanted me to go in to something called the Army Security Agency. He realized that part of my personality problems was that I had a high intelligence quotient. Later in life I became a *Mensan.* I didn't want any part of a non- combat outfit. I wanted to be a tanker. I wanted to be in the 3rd Armored Division. The Spearhead, Patton's old outfit. I should have listened to Archie because the Army Security Agency became the NSA, which later became a forerunner of the CIA and it might have been a good career if I'd have gone along that path. Instead, I was fascinated by tanks as I had already joined the 40th Armored Division of the

California National Guard when I was a junior at Downey High School in California and under age. Attending the high schools in California I joined and had gone to Army summer camp and I'd already gotten my PFC stripes and I was under age, 16 years old. I came back to Las Vegas High as a senior and studied ROTC and joined the Regular Army before graduation. So, I went off to Fort Ord at age 17 and was in the Army and didn't go anywhere and didn't do anything remarkable. I was stationed at the Armor Center in Fort Knox, Kentucky and there for six months and 10 days it was the peacetime Army at that time and they didn't want any big troop build-up, so if you didn't have any special skills, they weren't going to keep you. I was too young to go to OCS although I qualified through that battery of tests, but the deciding factor was they found out that I had enlisted in the National Guard when I was underage, so now I owed them money. They actually wanted their money back. I had made $89.00 a month as a PFC in the Guard and the Army. I came back to Las Vegas in 1955 with my honorable discharge, my duffle bag full of military fatigues and no job. I didn't know what I was going to do with myself, but I moved in with "Baby Shoes" paid rent and did get a series of jobs. I parked cars, I cleaned dog kennels, installed TV antennas on roofs, sold ladies shoes for C. H. Baker's on Fremont Street at 4th. I worked as an ambulance attendant for Mercy Ambulance, which was owned by a fellow named Bud Bishop and his wife Leah. They were located at 7th and Fremont Street in their house's garage. They had two ambulances; one we called the crash truck, one we called the private. The private ambulance was a Buick made that was for private calls when you went into a residential area. Then we had a GMC crash truck that went to crashes. Just a converted van. Here I was an

18-year-old doing O.J.T. In those days there was no such thing as an E.M.T. You weren't allowed to give any kind of injections or drugs or any kind of medications. The only thing you could do was stop the bleeding, protect the wound and prevent shock. You could administer oxygen. Everybody got oxygen whether they needed it or not. We killed more people than we saved. We wore a white smock like a druggist and you had to provide your own white pants. You worked 24 hours on and 24 hours off. You got paid $52.50 a week, figure that one out. It was a real eye opener to me.

I saw a lot of very, very bad things. I've seen people who were run over by trains, hit on the Strip by cars, freed and transported a man who got his hand caught in a *Review-Journa*l press. I saw people burned in fires. Suicides by all kinds of methods. I helped deliver babies. I went to innumerable fatal incidents and transported the remains to the Palm funeral home on 1st, street. We had no city morgue. I did that for about eight months. Hardened me up a bit.

I was not old enough to work in a gambling casino. I went to work for Jack Tobler's new idea. The first health studio that was established in Las Vegas was at the corner of 10th and Charleston. The building is still there. Tobler named it Globe Health Studio. It had an atomic bomb cloud sign. I worked as what you call today a fitness instructor and manager on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and half a day on Sunday. Those were men's days because it was not co-educational, the other three and a half days a week was run by the last Taffy Hill, a redhead who was the women's manager. She had a terrific figure. So, I started working out and I got into bodybuilding. I entered some contests and won a couple sponsored by Desert Inn.

That led to me being employed by Fred Scharf as the lifeguard at the original El Rancho Hotel on the strip. Now the El Rancho Hotel, at that time, is not the El Rancho one might remember today that's been knocked down on the East side of the strip. The original El Rancho was on the southwest corner of the strip and Sahara. Sahara used to be dirt and called San Francisco Street. The Sahara Hotel location used to be called the Club Bingo. What is now the Tropicana used to be a dirt track called Bond Road there were no houses or development in Paradise Valley from Sahara to Tropicana or from the Strip to the Boulder Highway just sand dunes. The El Rancho Vegas was one of the earliest strip hotels it was owned as I remember by a guy named Tommy Hull. Then, it was later bought by Jake Kozloff and run by a relative Beldon Katleman and some of the Jewish mob guys. That's who I worked for. My stepfather knew Kozloff and Beldon, so I was a good-looking young kid, had a great build and knew how to swim. I had to go get my Red Cross first aid card and a Red Cross lifesaving certificate. I got those in a class at the Flamingo pool. I went out to the Flamingo and learned how to rescue people and so forth and then I got my position at the El Rancho. That was a great job. We had maybe 150 of these redwood lounge chairs and towels. So, as guests who were staying at the hotel would come out after a hard night carousing, I would roll out these lounge chairs and I usually got a silver dollar for every chair. No salary, just tokes; tips were called tokes. You are talking about serious money in 1957, as much as a $100.00 a day on weekends. I lived in what's called now the Naked City. The area near where the Stratosphere Tower is now was an area of beautiful apartments in those days. The apartments were inhabited with all kinds of chorus girls and casino workers and people like me.

My stepfather and I shared a two-bedroom apartment at 111 West Boston Avenue. Now I'm starting to get on in years. I'm 20 years old and I've had all these different jobs, some two at a time, I'm leaving out a lot of jobs that I had, but let's just say that there were all kinds of experiences. I think that during that time I got interested in airplanes because as a war time school kid in Southern California I had been exposed to all the military aircraft being built and flown. I had worked at Alamo Airways for George and Peggy Crocket, one of the pioneers in aviation here who had established the first fixed base operation at what is now McCarran Field that was called Las Vegas Field at that time. I went to work pumping gas, wiping canopies and shoving airplanes around and in return for that I got an odd flying lesson every once in a while. I worked there for a while and I got further interested in airplanes. Also I met, Phil Harris, the famous comedian, at the El Rancho pool. He had a twin engine airplane, he was going to Palm Springs and he let me ride down in the right hand seat with his pilot to Palm Springs and I got my first flying lesson coming back. I met a lot of famous stars when I was at the El Rancho because of being around the swimming pool. I taught Eydie Gorme how to swim. "*Yellow Bird*", a famous show girl that old people will remember around here, her name was Felicia Atkins, I found her floating in a black sheath in the pool early one morning when I came to work to clean it. I taught her how to swim. Shecky Greene, the comedian, was a very popular guy with the mob at that time. He used to do a lot of strange things. One time he drove down the Strip without driving on the street. He just drove from one lawn, from one casino to another because they all had lawns in front of them in those days.

We were talking about Bennie Siegel a little bit and I wanted you to know that Bennie Siegel sold stock in the Flamingo project. What he did was he sold too much stock and he sold it to a lot of capable people. He must have sold 200 percent of the not yet finished hotel. He had muscled Billy Wilkerson out of the project and it wasn't his idea. He didn't invent Las Vegas. He didn't have an inventive idea in his head. He was a mobster and a known murderer. How he ever got the Flamingo reputation? I guess because Hollywood somewhere along the line picked it up and they created much of the history of Las Vegas which now people are realizing is wrong, totally wrong.

If anybody is going to be credited for creating Las Vegas, I think it ought to be that rancher up in Northern Nevada that had the guts to go to the State Legislature and get the gaming law passed in the 1930s. As far as Las Vegas is concerned, I think people like Tommy Hull, Grace Hayes, who opened a place called Grace Hayes' Lodge on the early Strip, Milton Prell, who built the Club Bingo which became the Sahara. These are all people, J. K. Houssells who really developed the El Cortez into the property it was. Bennie Siegel has no place in the pantheon of Las Vegas heroes but he's placed there whether we like it or not. Billy Wilkerson's son has put out a book that corrects this and is very accurate. He has documents and so forth.

So, I finally, after all of these successions of jobs kicking around Las Vegas, got old enough to go into the gambling business. At about 19 and a half, I started. I already knew how to deal 21, Roulette and Craps. Before I went into the military, my stepfather made sure I knew how to do that so I could make a living when I was in the Army. But, when I came back, I used to sit on the floor in front of my stepfather

and learn all of the moves as we called them. These different moves, you had to know the moves to protect the game. In those days, you just couldn't hire somebody from a foreign country that didn't speak English to deal 21. They didn't have automatic shufflers. Everybody dealt single deck out of their duke (their hand) and you had to know how to manipulate cards. You had to know how to count cards to protect the deck not necessarily to steal from a customer, but you learned how to deal and count cards while you dealt so that the deck favored the house. You didn't shuffle up if the deck favored the house. If the deck favored the player, you'd break the deck and shuffle up you would have counted the paints (face cards) and aces. Simple little moves like this, but you had to also know how to cheat in other ways in order to protect the game. It is an example of the greed innate to casinos. They deal bank (percentage) games whose odds rarely favor the player and aren't satisfied to let them win. Sort of makes them look like crooks instead of gamblers. "Shoes" used to say that "There ain't no gamble in gambling," and "These joints weren't built by winners." They didn't rely on the "eye in the sky" or somebody else watching. There were no cameras allowed in the joints. They relied on you to be a loyal to them employee and a journeyman dealer, a 'clerk' we called them. Now guys who couldn't do this, bad dealers, we called them 'lumps' they got and kept jobs through juice (knowing someone) or today, paying some shift manager or something like that. Well, when I was 19 I started learning the inside moves of protecting a gambling casino from my stepfather and his friends. I learned how to detect bad dice, miss spots, shapes, loads, mucking dice in and out of games, all of these different things that you had to know to protect against. People handled the gaming equipment a lot

more than they do now. So, you had to be careful of people mucking cards (concealing), bending, waving, daubing (mark with a smear), shaving and inserting a cold deck (prearranged cards). You had to learn how to deal seconds, how to sneak a peek, how to run up and roll the deck, how to do a straight and crooked shuffle, how bets are capped, how they're dragged (reduced), how they're pressed, how you get past posted (bet after the decision). These are all things that you had to know or you couldn't have a job as a dealer in fact, a good dealer, a good clerk, some of them traveled a circuit annually. Some would work seasonally in Hot Springs, Arkansas other seasonally legal places or in Florida or up at the Lake (Tahoe) or Jackson Hole, Wyoming where my stepfather had an interest and the rest of the time in Vegas. I went up to Jackson Hole and the Wort Brother's casino for a little while. Flat (crooked) as a pancake. Or they worked in Reno maybe in the summer time and came to Vegas in the winter or vice-versa. These clerks would float in and out of a casino. They had jobs anytime they wanted them because of their skill as bust out (able to cheat the player) men. They'd work at one place three months of the year, six months someplace else that's how popular and desirable a good casino clerk was. Now look at the average clerk today, a 21-year-old Thai who doesn't even speak English. She doesn't need to know how to do anything. In fact the cameras watch the game. All she needs to know is how to smile, slide the cards out to a spot and pay a bet. The machine shuffles, you understand, I'm not putting this down, I'm just showing what a change. This is a big change from when I was a dealer. Better for the customer overall. Hard for the joint to rob him. Today, smile, you're on candid camera 24/7.

*Was it more prestigious being a dealer back then?*

Yes, it was and there was a class distinction. Dealers who worked downtown were called break-ins and that was because you first job you were working a sawdust joint and you were paid anywhere from $17.00 to $18.00 a day plus tokes. Dealers who worked on the strip were treated like journeymen in the trades. Back in those days you went for your own money, the tokes (tips) that were put in your pocket, players put them in your shirt pocket, rarely did they make a bet for the dealer. That's common now, but it wasn't common when I first started. Caused mixed emotions. They would lay a check out on the table, or a silver dollar, you'd pick it up, tap it on the tray and put it in your shirt ,or you'd lean over and they'd put it in your shirt pocket. I had custom monogrammed, two pocket, button cuffed, fine linen shirts made for me. Those tokes, you kept, they were yours. You didn't split with your relief or anybody else as they do today. If you were a good looking young man dealing 21 which was the game preferred by the ladies, you could make a lot of money especially from women who thought that you could do something if they flirted with you and you could. You could actually help players in certain circumstances particularly if they were losing. A little bit of this winking and blinking was okay, but when serious money hit, you got serious.

I'll give you an example. First go back to distinctions. Downtown was sawdust joints and dealers were known as break-ins and that's where you learned to deal. If you were a lump, you stayed downtown all of your gaming career. Secondly, all dealers aspired to get a job on the strip. When I started there was quite a few joints, El Rancho, Sahara, Thunderbird, Last Frontier, Desert Inn, Sands, Dunes, Flamingo,

Tropicana, Hacienda. The Riviera, Circus-Circus, Caesars Palace didn't exist yet. Almost all the casinos were controlled by the boys or the different mob outfits from throughout the country and you had to know, you had to have juice because they were such great jobs. I started out working at night underage in North Las Vegas. Remember I told you, that cowboy town. A man named Jimmy Spartan; his wife MaryAnn Spartan had a 21 game. She was one of the few women dealers in Clark County. Women dealers did not work in casinos, but she had her own 21 game in a cowboy bar called Abe and Bob Kroloff's Rustic Inn in North Las Vegas on the main Highway 91. No freeways for some time to come.

Oh, just an aside, there was no speed limit on the highways.

Friday night and Saturday night in North town was a riot. Cowboys, miners, truck drivers, Air Force personnel, construction workers and Indians were all out for a good or bad time. All of Clark County was strictly segregated. Even black entertainers had to stay on the Westside of town. Well, all these mooches as we called the middle and lower class patrons of these joints they had just got paid and were going to get drunk and blow their money. She needed somebody to relieve her. She dealt her own game while smoking a cigarette and sitting on a stool. She did everything known to man to these people and so did I. It was brutal. But we never got burned (caught). We were that good at the moves. We could spot a cross roader or bust out man or cheat before they made a lay down (bet). It was great experience.

(End side 2, tape 1)

So, she paid me whatever she wanted to. I might get $20.00 I might get $10.00 if she was losing. Anyway, that's where I learned to deal 21 jam up (competently). Then

my stepfather put in a bathtub crap game and 21 table in a trap called The Alibi on the Boulder Highway. Now the Boulder Highway was out in the boonies. You had East Las Vegas, then you had some other small towns, I forget, oh yes, Pittman and Whitney. Then you had Henderson that was way the hell out there and we called it Basic. Well, he had the gaming in one of these roadhouses called The Alibi it later became the Branding Iron bar. At night you almost choked on the surplus chlorine gas that the factories across the highway in Henderson released, so as not to get caught by the feds. He had a bathtub crap game in there. In a bathtub crap game, one man deals it. He deals everything. He handles all place bets come bets and do and don't pass line action. He deals the crap game with a stick and stands in the cut out side of it and it looks like a regular sized bathtub. So, I learned craps doing that. That wasn't entirely legal either. We went flat when it was necessary. What happens is that you get spot play. Spot play is say ten people gamble with you that night and nine of them have $50 to lose and you beat all nine of those. You've won $450, right? But, the tenth guy gets lucky and he's the guy that's betting $20 on the pass line and he's the guy that wins the $500. So, you are a loser $50 for the night. Well, that's called spot play. If they were all betting $100 a piece, you'd be okay. You've got to beat the guy whose betting large, so you do something to him like muck in miss spots or loads and they used to, big joints and small, whether we want to hear this or not. It just happens to be a fact and there wasn't anybody around to do anything about it. There was no gaming commission. There was no gaming control board and the cops wouldn't have done anything anyway because they are having coffee and donuts and whatever falls on the floor they get to keep too.

It was a little bit illegal. It's like the old scorpion and the tortoise deal. How do you get these guys to not do what they used to do when they were in Chicago or in New York? So, I graduated. The day I turned 21 I went to work for Robert Van Santen at the Nevada Club downtown Las Vegas dealing the wheel. Bob was horrible disfigured having been shot down in the big war flying for Canada and got burned. Hell of a nice guy. He used to give us lie detector tests once a week because he was inexperienced and couldn't see if we were robbing him. Try that today. I passed it no matter what I did. I had learned to deal the wheel and push checks using the different finger locks. Compute payoffs. I needed a little more cleaning up on craps, so I was dealing the wheel and Van Santen paid me the maximum wage for a dealer anywhere in Las Vegas which was $22.50 a day.

It's not much more today. What is it? Forty years later and it's like $60 a day. Minimum wage. I can't believe how bad they pay dealers. The owners use the public to subsidize the payroll through tokes (tips). I think that's wrong. They now cut everyone in on the tokes sharing them equally no matter who collected them by servicing a player. Tokes are a gift and shouldn't be subject to withholding tax. We never reported them in the old days. So, anyway, I went downtown, worked at the Nevada Club and I used to go across the street on my breaks and play in my dealer apron and in my Nevada Club tie and shirt 10-cent craps in the Boulder Club on my breaks to learn and finish up on two ended big table craps. I was taught how to bark (call for bets with slang) on the pole (stick man position). The guy who taught me had his tongue cut for cheating in a New York bust out (illegal) place. He could really be funny and effective on the pole. I imitated him. In a month or so when my

stepfather was satisfied that I not only knew how to deal all three basic games which was all there were in casinos in those days, craps, 21 and roulette I was a triple threat. Well, a triple threat was a good recommendation. Plus, I was his stepson. I had earned a street moniker. They called me "Bobby Blue Eyes." They didn't call me Guido, my real name, because that was just a little too much even for them. It caused too much ribbing and fights. So, we decided my name was going to be Bob Deiro to the public, Bobby Blue Eyes to the wise guys or Shoe's kid to the big owners or whatever.

The day I turned 21 years of age I went to work legally (well, legal with the state and county laws). T.W. Richardson and Doc Bayley hired me to be a bust out man at the New Frontier Hotel on the Strip. I believe to this day I was the youngest dealer on the strip at that time. What a job. Me and another young capable clerk named Tony Caram would sit in the dealer's room playing cards till they got in trouble out on the floor. A shill would come in and tell us what game to go to and we would see that things got turned around. The pit boss, Nick Galardi, would slip a couple of $25 checks in a back pocket as a bonus. The tokes were more than $100 a day plus anything you wanted to eat, insurance and $22.50 a day in salary. Better than the swimming pool job and it lasted longer. I bought a Ford convertible and some good suits, shoes and ties. There were boosters (street salesmen) who went with their swag to the different casino dealers break rooms and we could buy hot suits, ties, watches and jewelry for a song . If a man had a solitary diamond or blue star sapphire on his right hand pinky finger it was sign he was a wise guy. I got mine from Stony's pawn shop half a block south of Fremont Street on 1st. Street. I bought

all my ladies jewelry, wedding rings, bracelets, necklaces, and watches from the hock shops. Most of it was probably hot but there was no way to trace things so the shops fenced a lot of inventory and nobody brought the subject up. The rest they got cheap from busted players needing get home money or the rent. Because I started carrying around a pretty good sized BR (paper money) like the night's gaming win while working the saloons in North town. "Baby Shoes" and others told me I had better protect myself and their money so I bought a 9mm Luger and used it to target shoot off the end of Paradise Road in the desert and kept it handy.

I still pack heat legally and concealed to this day. I'm still a certificated NRA Instructor. Never had to pull it but it sure makes you less anxious in some surroundings.

Much later, at the El Cortez, I dealt, sat box (supervised dice games) and stood floor (supervised a group of games) with some guys like the Kabush brothers and Frank Toti and Jackie's son came in and broke in, Michael Gaughan. Michael was just a kid and I helped him learn how to deal 21. Now he owns casinos and he and Frank are partners in several successful properties. His father Jackie Gaughan was a bookmaker out of Omaha and one of the toughest men I knew, He was harder on people who broke the rules than "Baby Shoes." But he was the most honest man I ever had the pleasure of working for. He loved locals and understood early the strength of slot machines. He told me once when I asked why he crammed so many into the joint, that they made more money per square foot than table games. Jackie was the casino owner who started the slot machine revolution, using regular promotions catering to locals. Nothing fancy, cheap food friendly help and a fair

shake. He pioneered slot clubs. There was so much slot action that he bought special coin counting and wrapping machines made in Germany to keep up the flow of play. He has owned the El Cortez since the early sixties and he never spent any money on security guards. He was security and when he wasn't in the joint like on graveyard the Kabush brothers and I were security. I still worked out and could muscle average guys. We would get called off a game by the shift boss Tommy Musso or part owner Julius Walker or one of the other bosses and muscle whomever they wanted out. Wes Kabush who also was a bodybuilder and I threw many a troublemaker out onto the white line in the center of Fremont Street after opening the swinging doors with his head right in front of customers going in and out of Sears Roebuck . Hollywood stole that action and used it in a scene in the movie *Casino*. The bulls (police) didn't do anything. They didn't want to deal with it and would have taken too long to get there and argue the point. Best to make an example. It was and is now that every casino has its own police force. Nightlife downtown was more low end. There were some popular lounge acts like Wayne Newton and his brothers and so forth at the Fremont Hotel, but mostly cowboy groups, a lot of Dixieland stuff, no really big entertainers ever played downtown, but nightlife on the strip was fantastic. For the price of a drink in the lounges you could catch Lionel Hampton, Perez Prado, Shecky Greene, The Characters, Don Rickles. Mary Kaye Trio, top entertainment in the lounge and great stars in the main show room. Jack Benny, Mario Lanza, Tony Bennet, Sinatra, Judy Garland, Mae West you name them. Food and beverage and rooms were cheap, or given as comps (gifts) to players . Table games the main generator of income. They gave the rest of the amenities away.

Each hotel casino had their own yacht on Lake Mead for use by TP's (top players) Strip hotels had a very strict dress code. Players didn't run around casinos in shorts and go a heads. Women wore furs to dinner air conditioning allowed that, people always dressed up. In fact, you couldn't get into a casino after 5pm without a coat on. People looked better, took better care of themselves had more respect for themselves and were more courteous. The juice (tipping) was in. In those days, a twenty-dollar bill went a long way from where they parked your car to what seat you got in the showroom. One of the great jobs in Las Vegas was to be a maître d' in a showroom or a pit cocktail waitress. They probably made more money than the guys who owned the casinos. We wise guys all had friends in the pits at the casinos. We could call up and tell them we were sending a TP and they would treat the guy and his party like a king. In fact most showrooms had a row of booths called Kings Row. If I wanted to take in a show I would call someone I knew in the casino and would be escorted around the line after shaking the Maitre d's hand with a folded bill in my palm and the Captain would seat me where ever I wanted. Of course you toked everyone in sight. A man or woman who toked was referred to as George those who didn't were labeled Stiffs.

So, nightlife was terrific. The Moulin Rouge opened in the late 1950s. I'm talking a little bit out of context. By the time they opened the Moulin Rouge, my stepfather had leased the gambling at a place called the Nevada Biltmore. A lot of people don't remember this. Horace Heidt had a program, a national radio program, called the Amateur Hour and Horace Heidt had some dough and he came out here and he bought the Northeast corner of Bonanza and Main Street. Remember that Main

Street was the main highway through town and Bonanza Avenue was a big street and he built a small single story casino hotel with bungalows and a swimming pool in front. It was called the Nevada Biltmore or Horace Heidt's Biltmore. It had a small casino with four table games and a few slots which my stepfather operated. We lived in a bungalow at 711 North 1st Street behind it. At the time that he was operating that casino, some restaurant guys from New York opened the Moulin Rouge up Bonanza a few blocks and on the other side of the railroad underpass, it was the historically segregated part of town and I used to frequent the jazz clubs when I was a teenager over on D and Jackson streets. I could smoke and buy a drink if I wanted, they didn't care and Moon Mullin the big black police officer patrolling the Westside as it was called knew my stepfather and let me get away with anything. He taught me how to shoot pool at the Idle Hour pool hall and bicycle shop on Mesquite and Main. The Moulin Rouge had a short-lived career. It was the first integrated hotel in Las Vegas, but all in the know really didn't give much for its chances from before it opened. We knew it wasn't going to work. I don't know what the common attitude was it wasn't so much that it was integrated, it's just that it was in the wrong place and the people who owned it I don't believe had ever operated a casino before. They got taken off from the inside and the outside. In other words, the people that they had to hire to work in the casino were capable. By capable, meaning they were capable of stealing from you. I'm sure the joint bled out the front door and the back door because it never made a dime. It was popular with the Strip after hour entertainers and show kids. They were white. Colored people weren't allowed in strip or downtown casinos in the fifties. I don't care what you read about in the

paper. I was there. I lived blocks away past the underpass from the joint. As a teenager I had lunch in the coffee shop a number of times and I could tell that the people who owned it didn't know how to operate a business. I could see so many opportunities to do things that wouldn't be in their interests and it died a quick death. It wasn't any kind of boycott or anything to do with integration. It just didn't have a chance. Since then black folks have tried and tried to get something on the order of a casino/hotel built there, but that property sits next to industrial zoning and is off the casino/resort path. I was retained to sell it in the 1980s and had no success. The highest and best use for what remains boarded up, is a fire. That's the story of the Moulin Rouge.

Taking up, again ahead of myself, where I left the Sands and went to the El Cortez I had worked in the gambling business long enough to find out that somewhere inside of me something was going on. Something, either cellular memory or genetic predisposition, as much as I enjoyed this and was excited about it, something inside me told me I was selling myself short. I could do something else. Maybe it was just my propensity to question everything even if things are doing fine. Every day I had questions going on in my mind. Why am I here? Why don't I do this? Why don't they do that? I'm smarter than most of the people supervising me. Why am I working for them? It's what goes through ambitious people's heads. I had no idea what part my breeding or my background or my experience would play in my future, I had nobody encouraging me to do anything but work in the gambling business. I had no personal friends that weren't involved in the gaming business to point me in any direction.

I did know, however, that I had this love for airplanes. That was still there and I fooled around with them on my days off and hadn't taken my pilot's exam yet, but was still kicking around taking lessons. Finally, I got enough of the gambling business and I took a sabbatical. My mother had had enough of my stepfather. She and a lady drinking buddy bought the "Shady Acres" olive ranch in Corning, California. She asked me to foreman it because of my ranching experience in Alamo as a kid. I took off and went down there and tried to run the olive growing operation and found out that I wasn't cut out to be a farmer. We were having trouble with union pickers and processing plants and everything else, so I went to San Francisco. I didn't know what the hell I was going to do. With the only lengthy job experience I'd had in the casino business somehow I could only get a job as a door shaker for a private detective firm. A door shaker is a guy that runs around after the businesses are closed and makes sure that the doors are locked and stick a business card in there to show that you were there. It's like a paper route. Basically, a scam.

I did that for two weeks and the guy that owned the detective agency was William H. Young. He used to be the Sheriff of Santa Clara County. He was featured on *This is Your Life* a TV program at the time. He liked me. He said, you know kid you've got a good background. I'm going to make a detective out of you. So the next thing you know, I moved into his big house out on the Alameda in San Jose and he made a private detective out of me. So, I ended up doing domestic cases to start with and then moved into insurance investigations and missing persons. Then he found out that I had some knowledge of electronics, so I became a wire operator, wire recording operator, finally, a 16mm camera operator. He taught me to make pretext

contacts. I started doing what's called "roping" developing a persona, going undercover and then gaining information.

I was also good at tracing. There were hundreds of young girls that had fallen prey to the siren song of drugs, progressive jazz and Timothy Leary's idea of tuning in and dropping out. They would skip senior class in Duluth and high tail it to Frisco's Haight-Ashbury district. Momma and papa would hire us to find them. I got very successful at this. I worked as a private investigator in San Jose and San Francisco went with another firm called Currie and Associates and opened an office in Seattle, Washington. This went on for period of about three years. It was interesting work but the money was limited and I really didn't think it was what I was going to do permanently. Those questions again.

During that period of time I learned to fly. I got my private pilot's license. I got in trouble again. I was indiscrete with the daughter of an influential client I had found and I was asked to leave Seattle. I wasn't married at the time and I came back down to San Jose and went to work for the original outfit, then came back up to Vegas and went back into gambling business. I sent for my secretary and married her. That was my first wife, Lois Jean Davis. She was a John Robert Powers model and secretary in San Jose. Brilliant woman and she was good to me. She was the daughter of a colonel, retired Virginia type. Her mother hated Italians. The colonel and she were sickened by the fact that their college grad daughter had married a gambler and private detective named Guido and had moved to that den of iniquity Las Vegas. So, they disowned her. This killed the marriage before it ever got started. Lois and I were only married for, oh, we got pregnant the first month into our marriage. When

the boy, our son Guy Robert was 10 months old, we divorced. Irish Green and Baby Shoes stepped up and saw that she and the baby had what they needed and gave her money to leave town as I hadn't got an act together. Vegas and I just weren't right for a lady like Lois. She went back to her family in California and took Guy Robert with her. She married five more times but no more children. We are still friends to this day.

So, here I was now divorced, single and back in the gambling business, a low point in my life. When I came back I had gone to work back at the New Frontier for my old bosses Doc Bailey, T.W. Richardson and Maury Friedman, same owners. Later, Friedman got busted and served federal time for running fixed poker games in the Players Club in Hollywood along with another acquaintance, Johnny Roselli. (Roselli ended up in a fifty-gallon oil drum in Biscayne Bay, Florida) I had my first opportunity to go on the floor as a boss. I became what they now call a casino executive. In those days, we called them pit bosses or shift bosses. The Frontier had problems with everything and I saw the handwriting on the wall. After a couple of months Baby Shoes put the juice in with Momo Giancana and Carl Cohen at the Sands and I was given maybe the top crème de la crème dealing job in the whole state of Nevada. I went to work on day shift for Roy Babich dealing the wheel (roulette) at the Sands. Fat Francis Campau and Frenchy Rabitalle were the wheel bosses. There were two regular wheel dealers and one relief. Two wheels back to back in the card pit near the front door. The two wheel dealers were out of Brady's in Florida.

They were both in their 70s. I forget their names. Here I was a relative kid relieving these two wheels in the best gambling casino in Vegas. I worked 20 minutes on one wheel and 20 on the other wheel and take 20 off. Big action. We routinely had all the colors out and players reaching over each other to place bets with silver dollars. We had to have a shill (house man that helped start games acting like a player, usually retired seniors) help us muck (pick up and stack) checks to keep the action going. The two old wheel dealers had been from an illegal gaming joint in Florida that time at the Sands in the 60s Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford and Sammy Davis were appearing regularly. I used to see them in the daytime around eleven when they got up and about. Dean Martin, who had been 21 dealer in Stubenville, Ohio, would come by the roulette wheel, reach over and grab a stack of silver dollars and say I need some golf balls and go out the door with them and I had to turn around and yell at Fat Francis or Frenchy that he did it again. How much did he take this time? A stack of $20, you know, but I was always worried that they would think that I stole the money.

Frank Sinatra was worse. This is what they called him. Almost all the dealers and help called Sinatra a "shit heel" because he was the worst guy to the help. He was so bad. Everyone talks about what a great guy Frank was. I loved his music. I danced and romanced women to his music, but I knew him as a person and as a person he was a "shit heel" and I want everybody to know that. Why he acted that way, I don't know. He treated the little guy and gal so bad and yet he's got this reputation about being generous and he was generous to some people, but he treated people who worked in the hotel badly and we hated his guts. He was an arrogant little wop and

had a filthy mouth and abused women, his and other guys. He didn't get beat up or whacked because he was a top earner for the mob and had a big gorilla named "Jilly" with him at all the times and he came heavy and so did Frank when he was off stage. Meaning they had a piece (a gun).

Occasionally on day shift I would get elected to deal to him and whoever in the steam room because I looked good in a towel. That was ok as he and the others playing poker would be preoccupied by the showgirl under the table. He'd run into me more often when I got transferred to graveyard. I had got in trouble on day shift, sometimes there was more action in the dealer's room than there was on the floor (casino) because we'd all play Hearts for big money on our breaks. A dollar a point and more. These were all older guys some of them made (mafia). I was the wet behind the ears kid. They had been gangsters and illegal gamblers all their lives, right? Many of them were from New York with Carlo or Frank Costello or Lansky in Florida or Chicago with Momo Giancana who ran the Sands for the outfit. They weren't too happy about being in Vegas and having to work every day on their feet with smoke blown in their faces for a living. I thought I was a wise guy and played strong Hearts. Nobody cheated in those games because you'd have gotten a one way trip to Lake Mead. But, I'd get lucky and say the wrong thing, open my mouth and I got one made guy that didn't like me very much. When I got threatened, finally, to save my life, Roy Babich put in a word for me with Carl Cohen the casino manager and he sent me to the graveyard shift. I went to graveyard, so now I'm exposed to Frank Sinatra which is worse. He'd come up, I'd be dealing 21 and he'd say a curse word and bump me off the game and he'd start dealing the game he'd be smashed on

Jack (Daniels) and making it with the female players no matter who they were with. He'd blow all the money. Sometimes the bosses would see him do this and other times they wouldn't and I was always worried that somebody thought that I was copping checks or that something was going on. I'm sorry I wasn't there when Carl Cohen broke his teeth out because I'm sure a cheer went up on all three shifts.

Myself and some bosses were interviewed a few years ago about our association with Sinatra while at the Sands. The BBC came to Vegas and interviewed me and not only put me on a TV special called "*Dark Star*" but also quoted me in the book *Frank Sinatra, a Life*. It mentions my experiences there including my familiarity with Judith Exber, whom we had on a list of companions for top players. Momo fixed her up to meet Kennedy. Finally, I left the Sands. Actually, I was asked to leave the Sands. Most dealers wouldn't make any moves to whack out players to hold the PC (percentage ) on their table, but I was short of moral compass and started making some moves. I though the joint would appreciate this but, apparently a player nailed me and told Carl Cohen and they let me go, but with their blessing. I went downtown again and worked for Jackie (Gaughan) and his partners down there, the Walker brothers and so forth. I became a pit boss and then I went over and worked for Pete Amanti at the Showboat. I was like a fireman. Having trouble getting robbed in the pit go get Bobbie Blue Eyes.

Meanwhile, while I was doing this, I was using the gambling business to support my flying habit. I acquired a commercial pilot license, instrument rating and instructor's certificate. I decided I was going to become a professional pilot. This was in the early 60s. Finally, I got past all of the necessary tests and I went to work at Desert Air

Service partnering with Lee Husted (who was a pharmacist in his day job) as a flight instructor and charter pilot at Thunderbird Field, now called North Las Vegas Air Terminal. There I did all the things that commercial pilots do. I flew air ambulance; I flew inmates to Salt Lake for the prison up there. I taught people to fly. I flew tourists up to the Grand Canyon. I did Grand Canyon trips with single engine in those days, Hundreds of them. I learned to fly helicopters. I learned to fly seaplanes. We had an amphibious floatplane here. We used to run ads in the L. A. times, three day seaplane ratings. Pilots would come up here and stay in a Sky Rider's motel on the North Las Vegas Airport and we'd teach them using Lake Mead. You could just fly out there and land on the Lake. Now you'd get shot down if you tried to do that. I worked my own operations and other people's operations for several years. I met Ralph Engelstad, who was also a pilot. Ralph had just come to town. He was a builder. He didn't know anything about the gambling business. He and I became drinking buddies. He had an airplane at the Thunderbird Field. The field went bankrupt. Ralph was a terrific businessman. I recognized that the first time I met him almost 40 years ago. He was building low-income housing in North Las Vegas. There is a street named after him. But, we knew each other as pilots and drinking buddies. He said, I'm going to buy this airport and I want you to work for me. What he did was arrange a deal with the City of North Las Vegas through Clay Lynch, the City Manager, to get the City of North Las Vegas to buy the runways and taxiways for enough money to bail the whole package out of bankruptcy and leave Ralph with all the commercial property around the airport. What a deal and that included an unfinished motel, Skyriders Inn, all the fixed base; hangers, tie downs, everything

that made money. The City of North Las Vegas owned the runways and taxiways, but Ralph owned free, almost everything around it, hundreds of acres of land. He changed the name to North Las Vegas Air Terminal. He hired me as a director of sales and promotions. He asked me to live in the motel and I moved into the Sky Riders Inn which I had named and promoted North Las Vegas Airport.

I site located the control tower. I encouraged fix-based aircraft to move there. I traveled all over the western United States in an airplane putting up posters with showgirls on them stating, "Tie down where the action is." I used to run air races from California. The Henry Oye Memorial Air Race I brought in. I also promoted one of the first air races of unlimited airplanes in Las Vegas in the 1965. I flew air races myself. A lot of people don't know that this town has hosted national, you know, unlimited air races at the North Las Vegas Airport and at Boulder City Airport. The pilot Frank Abrams was killed in a race at Boulder City in a P-51 Mustang right in front of me. Reno is not the only place that had unlimited air racing. We had unlimited air racing here before they did. But they have done a wonderful job of making the National Air Races a success in Reno.

I started getting a reputation as an aviator and a promoter. I did everything with airplanes that you could think of to make a buck. The Review-Journal has these stories, you know, you can look them up. Now, a funny thing happens. Ralph and I are drinking in Caesars, having a great time and I'm not married. I remember we'd go out every night and we would do the Las Vegas scene. This is in the 60s now. We'd hang out on the strip. Usually in lounge at Caesars. That's where we romanced the show girls and partied hearty. That's where you went. There weren't many other

venues to be entertained in the city unless you went to the movies. No gentlemen's clubs then. We didn't gamble. We had three or four guys that hung out together in those days. Butch Bouchard, who later ran National Title for years, myself, Ralph Engelstad, John Bangle, Ralph's CPA and a developer named Zane Tucker, we called him Fence cause when he played the first three holes at the Tropicana golf course he invariably sliced his ball over the fence. Zane built the first condominiums in Las Vegas on Desert Inn Road.

They are still there. Ralph, who had taken a couple of the Sky Rider Inn motel units as his offices, was wheeling and dealing. He was buying and selling land and still contracting. I had shown him a little of the strength of the gaming business and he bought the failing Jackpot Motel on the south end of the strip. It had an unlimited license nobody was fully using. He went from a slot parlor to table games and eventually he learned gaming and built and solely owned the Imperial Palace across from Caesars, probably the smartest businessman I ever knew. Comes in one day in 1967 and says, he called me "Lumpy," because he found out that dealers that couldn't deal, you know, that became my nickname, he says Lumpy, I called him Rotten Ralph, some guys are going to show up tomorrow morning at nine o'clock and he said Howard Hughes has bought the airport.

Now, I knew something was up, but I didn't know it was Howard Hughes. In fact, he bought McCarran field, Alamo Airways, which I had also worked in, and he's bought all the fixed base operations before he locked up the Desert Inn from Dalitz and crew. Ralph said, I'm going to take care of you and he did giving me a nice bonus and if you want to work for Hughes, fine, they know about you and they said they'd like

you to stay. Thanks for telling me. That guy could really keep a secret. The next morning at nine o'clock a suit named John Seymour drove up in a black Chevrolet sedan and got out and introduced himself as Mr. Hughes' pilot and a Director at the Hughes Aircraft Company in Santa Monica and that Howard now owned the airport and he was living in the Desert Inn and he knew who I was and they wanted me to go to work for him. Who am I going to work for? He says, well you're going to work for the Hughes Tool Company and take your instructions from me or through Mr. Hughes' aide Howard Eckersley. We want you to stay here and live in this room. So, I did.

They moved in a red phone and I worked for the Hughes Tool Company. Later Mr. Hughes saw that I got one of these little gold Hughes Tool Company tie tacks that key executives wore and I eventually became the Director of Aviation Facilities for the Hughes Tool Company. God, this was heady stuff for a guy who was in his late 20s. Howard Hughes was one of my heroes. He sent me everywhere. I went all over the place doing things that were and were not aviation oriented. One of my main assignments was to site locate an area of land on which he could construct the first SST airport in the United States he wanted las Vegas to be the western terminus for supersonic air travel. I could say a lot more, but I have had to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Hughes had aircraft and interests in property and people all over the world.

This was very exciting for me as I got my first exposure to huge wealth and how mega corporations operate. I later learned what a corporate gunfight meant. They polished me up. I wore a suit every day. I drove a new Thunderbird with special

plates. I got assigned a wide range of duties because they wanted to capitalize on my versatility. I was comfortable around people who had a lot of money or political influence because I'd been exposed to them in the gaming business. I'd been under pressure in the gambling business many times. I wasn't impressed by somebody who had 100 million dollars. I was worldly. I spoke a couple of languages and they picked up on this quickly and by that time I could fly everything but a balloon.

Hughes had me do some things that had nothing to do with aviation like when friends of his would come to town and were disappointed he wouldn't see them. When politicians, celebrities, movie stars and business friends of Hughes like William Randolph Hearst, Jr. came to town, my job was to entertain them.

Hearst was one of the most hedonistic men I ever met in my life. His father who had the actress Marion Davies as a girlfriend must have really been something. We used to play together in the Presidential Suite at the Sands with our pick of show girls you know, I was single. I met a lot of very interesting people that Howard Hughes had contacts with. I went to Mexico to convince a famous actress to come back to Hollywood. I was sent out of the country numerous times on clandestine assignments and I wish I could talk about these adventures as some were humorous and others not so.

About that time, I ran into the girl I had been engaged to and broken up with in 1958, Joan Marlene Calhoun. I said before she was a dead ringer for Liz Taylor and she and I had met when I was 18, when I was managing the Globe Health Studio and being a lifeguard. I'd rubbed suntan oil on her back. She had worked at the Desert Inn in the back offices for the White Fence mob out of Cleveland. The Mayfield Road

gang, Moe Dalitz, and friends. Moe owned the D. I. and knew that Joan and I had fallen in love in the late 5190s but she wouldn't marry me then. She married a professional boxer when I went to run the olive ranch in California. When I was a private detective I'd kept track of her, but never saw her. I take that back, I saw her one time when I was back in Vegas working on the box in a casino and she came in with her husband and brought him over and introduced me to him. Now working for Hughes I found out she was back in town and working at the County Clerk's office downtown in the courthouse building on 3rd. Street and that her marriage was in trouble. She and I began to talk on the phone daily. She helped me out when I had a problem with a girlfriend, but we never had anything going on. I was quite honorable about that. I didn't like to go out with married women. She wasn't fooling around either. She was serious. Lo and behold, Joan got a divorce from her husband and I dated her for the next six months. At the same time she dated one of the most eligible bachelors in town. He was the undersheriff, Lloyd Bell. Lloyd wanted to marry her and I was dragging my feet till I found out that he was getting serious so I beat him to the punch and we got married. He and I stayed friends and he happily married another lovely lady. [Bell passed away after this writing.]

Joan came with two young children and she had a ranch home over on Alfred Drive that she had to sell in the decree. Now, I could not live in the motel and work for Howard Hughes. Joan wouldn't have stood for that. How could we. So, I went to Howard Eckersley, one of Mr. Hughes Mormon retainers who spoke to Mr. Hughes every day. I said tell the old man that I can't work for him anymore because I'm getting married to Joan and I would be restricted in what I could do for him. Is there

any other position that I could fill? Like waving a wand, not three or four days went by and I got a call from a man at Humble Oil which had a connection with the Hughes Tool Company. This fellow was a highly placed executive at Humble Oil and said, listen, we're starting a new airline in California with a friend of Hughes and you come highly recommended and we know that you're going to be a newlywed, the job starts in August and we'll move you to California. The salary was about six times what I was making for the Hughes Tool Company plus I would have an almost unlimited expense account. They were going to move me and pay for everything and make me Vice President and Director of Administration for Air California and Golden West Airlines, which were two major start-up, second and third level air carriers.

So, I married Joan and the kids and moved to Southern California and was down there for three years running airlines and starting airlines in New Guinea the Caribbean, Alaska and other countries and states. I was in charge of dealing with the surplus aircraft they had, how to get rid of dissimilar airplanes and terminate surplus help. The parent firm had bought five different smaller airlines and put them together to make these two larger carriers and I had to get rid of the excess airport gate positions, maintenance and operations facilities, aircraft and personnel. So, I did. I worked myself out of a job. It was a bad time to be in the airline business, so in 1971, I came back to Las Vegas. I left under these circumstances. There was a wealthy billionaire named C. Arnholdt Smith who actually owned the airlines and who was Mr. Republican in California during the Nixon years. While I was down there, because of my association with Hughes I met a lot of important people. At

least they were big people in politics and industry and so forth. So, I moved in those circles and became more like an executive facilitator. I had gone from one billionaire to another.

C. Arnholdt Smith owned Westgate California Corporation, he owned the United States National Bank, he owned the Westgate tuna fleet, he owned a Yellow Cab Company, an insurance company, and he was living in San Diego where he owned the Westgate Towers and the Westgate Office Building and the two airlines I was working at. So, I didn't stay Director of Administration for the airlines long before he appointed me to be a Vice-President of United States National Bank and hold an executive position with Westgate California Corporation and because these corporations were all inter-related it was easy for me to carry out instructions to do some things that were not exactly going to make the Securities Exchange Commission happy if discovered. I talk about it now because the statute of limitations is over with. What happened was...

(End of side 1, tape 2)

...these public corporations, all related, got in trouble financially and C. Arnholdt tried to keep them floating. The idea is to keep them all going. They employ thousands of people. I'm beginning to think this is not really greed. Men who have the capability of a Howard Hughes or a C. Arnholdt Smith have a burning desire to succeed. It's like a huge game to them. It's like they are playing football every day. I don't think the money is the motivator. I think it's the accomplishment. It's the idea that you set out to do something and they want to be excellent at it and they want it to get bigger and bigger and their ambition is what drives them. I think raps are put

on corporate heads that really shouldn't be. Almost every tycoon that I worked for, and I worked for some of the biggest, had this driving ambition. I think if you took all their money away and put them naked in a field, by 10 o'clock the next morning they'd be off and running again. It's just in them. Smith was that way and I worked willingly to help him.

Phil Toft was one of his senior vice-presidents and was mentoring and monitoring me. What they did was, they used me as an executive in these different corporations as a complicitor, you know, I had already worked for gambling corporations and I wasn't surprised when somebody came to me and said, hey, let's do this. I didn't have any problem with the morality of it, if I thought it was to benefit a lot of people. I double encumbered aircraft. I signed documents where we used the same collateral on multiple loans. I knew that was wrong, but to me it was just a way to keep things going in difficult times. I didn't want to see the airlines shut down, so I did it. A lot of unknowing dupes and minor executives still do that today. They are the guys that usually get hung. They are the guys that get hauled before some committee in Washington and probably rightly so. But they were just trying to earn a living, not to hurt anybody, but people do get hurt when things like the current disaster occurs, Enron.

That's a different deal. That was greed. We weren't telling anybody to buy stock in a company and then selling it off. This was a little different deal. This was just trying to get around government regulations to run a corporation to keep it going. Well, the government found out one day. I didn't know they found out until I walked into my office in Newport Beach and discovered that all my file cabinets were gone and

so was my secretary. So, I called up the corporate attorney, Bob Oster and said, hey what's the hell is going on? He said how fast can you get out of the country and somewhere with no extradition agreement? So, I called Joan and said pack a bag, got a Director's pass for first class on UTA French airlines and was at LAX in three hours and on my way to Australia and on to New Guinea. My wife was pregnant and we had three kids by this time and I had to take it on the heel and toe. I had been gone before but usually with planning. I didn't tell her where I was going or why. Joan was smart and had her own intelligence sources and found out as I knew she would. So, I was gone for a month, came back into the country and picked her up and ducked into Mexico with her, pregnant. Things cooled off within a few days and we returned. I got my name in the San Diego Tribune a couple of times, but nobody ever sought me out or indicted me. I was too small a fish, but they buried Smith and Toft, who had copped a plea. I believe they both went to prison. This was a guy that Nixon spent election night with.

Back to Las Vegas and what do we do? I took a short stint as Vice President and General Manager of the growing Scenic Airlines a tour operation. Lasted a few months. Well an interesting thing had happened when I had been working for Hughes I had met an artist named Michael Heizer, a young man whose roots were in Northern Nevada which gave us a little similarity to go on, was living in New York in a loft down in what's now called, you know, down in Houston Street. He was a contemporary artist. He'd gone to Berkeley. His father, Robert Heizer, wrote the definitive study on the Great Basin Indians. He was an archeologist and anthropology professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

Michael was trying to find himself in Art Povera, conceptual art. He ran with Robert Smithson, Walter Di Maria, Dan Flavin, Frank Stella, Charles Ross, the avant garde in the late 1960s, and I liked this guy. He had come to me one day, no, one of his admirers came to me one day in early 1968, a stockbroker from New York, Geoffrey Gates and said, hey, here's a young artist, he's done Nine Nevada Depressions, earth works. I said, Nine Nevada Depressions? Now, my exposure to contemporary art was zip. Probably the most recent modern art I knew of was Dada, you know, something about, maybe the 1940s or 1950s. I knew next to nothing about abstract, minimalist, or conceptual art. Let alone earth art.

So this guy says I want to rent an airplane and go look at something that Michael's done in a dry lake. I had heard him asking to charter a plane at the counter and I came out of my office and that's when I was working for Hughes. I went out and talked to the guy and I liked him and I was interested. I flew the airplane myself. I flew down and saw this earth work that Heizer had done in Jean Dry Lake. He had cut a lightning bolt shaped piece called "Rift." I liked it. I liked the whole idea of it. It just hit me. This artist had something to say and it made sense to me. So, I told Gates and he went back to New York and told Michael hey there's a guy who knows everybody out in Las Vegas and he really likes what you're doing and if you're out there and you need help, see G. Robert. So, Heizer shows up one day. We meet in the Stardust Coffee Shop and he starts drawing on paper napkins all these different works he wants to do. He eventually introduces me to Walter De Maria who is also into the earth art movement. Between these guys, Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer and Walter De Maria, they are starting the earth art movement.

Walter, I guess, had already done his Munich piece where he had filled an art gallery in Munich with dirt and it had made Time Magazine and so I knew who Walter was. Michael hadn't done anything really notable at that time. Smithson was just about ready to get himself killed in an airplane, photographing one of his art works in Texas. So, Smithson wasn't around very long. Anyway, I took up with Heizer and De Maria as a part time facilitator. I did this as an avocation all the while holding down my day job first at Hughes then at the airlines and companies in Newport Beach. Being an executive I controlled my time and had all the company assets at my disposal. I asked what do you guys want to do? I like your working in the earth on this large scale. Michael said what he wanted to do and I said it takes land it takes construction equipment, it takes builders, it takes money and they were young guys and they really didn't understand how to organize these things. To me, I was coming out of a corporate environment and I now understood what they wanted to do and better yet I knew ways to make it happen. The idea of this earth art movement captured me. I liked the art. Michael had explained that he wanted to use his art to open a dialogue with the observer showing that art had no limits. He and De Maria were objecting to art scaled to fit in a rectangle on a gallery wall.

Michael and I became friends and so did Walter and the next thing I know, I'm flying back to New York and I'm meeting people like Virginia Dwan who is the heiress to the 3M fortune. She had a gallery and lived in the Dakota Apartments when John Lennon was there. I started running with some New York society and having a little fun and I liked hanging with the people that were in the art game. I was also getting a good education and I got a chance to meet my first cousin, Pietro, who had

discovered me in Las Vegas in 1965, but I hadn't had a chance to get back to New York to see him.

So, I started to find out a little more about my Italian family through these trips also.

Anyway, I got involved with this art movement and I ended up quitting my job in California and coming back to Las Vegas and after the short stint at Scenic going to work as shift box at the new Holiday Casino, full time and part time for De Maria and Heizer . My job was to make it happen. Walter came up with ideas like a Lightning Field that we built a small version of in Arizona the full scale one was built in New Mexico, which is very famous. I did the initial cost studies for that project and how it could be built and where you could build it. By that time I had picked up a real estate brokers license and I continued acquiring things as far as credentials were concerned. Heizer wanted to do a piece; he didn't know what he was going to call it.

So, I told him, listen guys, what you do is great, but how do you make any money? How do you fund it? You go out and you do something on government land, you do a sculpture on government land and who can you sell it to? You can't do it because you don't have ownership. So from the BLM, I leased Jean Dry Lake for $50 a year and Michael did a series of drawings on the lake using a motorcycle, but we still couldn't sell them.

At this time I met the art photographer Gianfranco Gorgoni and we started a professional friendship that endures to this day. Heizer could sell the photography and his paintings and other small works. Michael is getting some notoriety. He's picking up some sponsorship. He and Virginia start going together. That opened up the world. So, he says, find me dirt that I can do my work in. So, I bought, I took the

airplane, used my skills as a pilot and photographer and I found up on Mormon Mesa some land owned by the guy who owned Foxy's Delicatessen, Abe Fox. So, for $1,750 an acre and Virginia's money I bought twenty acres or so up on Mormon Mesa for Michael and Michael constructed a piece called "Double Negative," that's in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Los Angeles County. It's a seminal piece. There is a book that I have on it and it has my photos in it. I've become a published photographer because I'm taking photographs of artwork. So, he builds a second piece and we make it happen. Now he comes to me and he says "I have a dream. My dream is that I'm not only going to do this, I'm going to make this work," he didn't talk this way, he talked more loquaciously than I'm recounting. He said I need a large parcel of land. I want the most remote area that I can acquire. I'd been traveling all over with Michael and Walter, into Mexico, up all over the United States and they are doing pieces. They become competitors. Now I have to make a choice between Walter and Michael. So, I leave Walter's employ and go to work for Michael and I find 2 ½ sections of land, almost three sections of land in central Nevada, remote, very remote, north of Alamo in Garden Valley.

I capitalized on my experience in Alamo herding cattle. I negotiate it for $32 an acre. There is nothing around it. It's isolated by federal land. It's off the north end of the test site. (As of this writing the area has been set aside as the Basin and Range National Monument.) He's totally isolated. Nobody can screw it up. He can do what he wants to do. The vista will never be changed. Virginia Dwan, the heiress to the 3M fortune, backs the deal and now Michael and I start building the base camp, runway, studio, support facilities, well, generators. I handle that for him. I fly equipment, men

and machinery in. I purchase yellow iron (construction equipment). It's like operating a construction company that builds artwork. It's called Civa Corporation. I get this huge experience with him. His father Robert, a university professor at Berkley, comes in. I end up going into the desert with his dad on digs and looking at Great Basin Indian artifacts. The whole education there was wonderful. He'd bring graduate students up from the university and I'd go in the field with them. It was like going to school again.

In the mean time, I'm helping this artist whose going to become famous, build what he calls "Complex One of the City" It was roughly based on his experiences with his father, all these places that he'd gone with his dad in the world where men had created large monumental sculptures like Karnak, Ushmal, Chichen Itza, and works like that. He was doing that in a contemporary sense on a monumental scale. It was fascinating and wonderful. I'm still doing that to this day. It's an avocation that I have done on the side. Luckily, I have had positions that gave me the freedom to schedule my own time. It's never gone out of my life. We've stayed friends for this 35 some odd years. Michael has come from an obscure, unknown artist to one of the most famous sculptors in the world. He's in everybody's textbooks. He created sculpture for the campanile at MIT, the Seattle Waterfront, the State of Illinois major reclamation project of the Illinois River. He's become one of the greatest sculptors in the world. He lives here in Nevada and nobody knows he's here. People fly in here. Miuccia Prada that owns Prada Clothing is one of his greatest supporters. I fly them in. So, over the years, I've run this string of people into to Nevada to go up to see him. The Nevadans, he doesn't want any publicity on a local level. He doesn't want

anybody to be bothering him. He's very reclusive. He's paranoid. But, that's one of the most rewarding aspect of my life, has been this association with contemporary art, facilitating the introduction of contemporary art into Nevada. I have donated some of his pieces that my wife and I own to the Sierra Museum of Art in Reno. (Now the Nevada Museum of Art, housing the *Deiro Archive*.) So, I feel that that is a neat little thing that I've had the pleasure of being involved in. I get back to where I can work another full time job. I go into the gambling business at the Holiday Casino. I stay there 7 ½ years. I become a shift boss. I'm like a retired king. I have Saturdays and Sundays off. I wear a suit to work. I walk in the joint at 11 AM and some cocktail waitress gives me my coffee with brandy in it. I stand there and watch all day long. Looking for crossroaders and cheats on the inside and the outside. My wife goes in the casino kitchen. She cooks ducks I have hunted up in Alamo for Shelby Williams the owner, the other bosses and me. I mean, it's like being retired, but I'm only in my 30s. I'm doing this other art stuff on the side. I still fool around with the airplanes and this and that knowing that there is still something I haven't done out there. I haven't found my niche. I haven't really used myself efficiently.

***Could you talk a little more about the Holiday and what that was like when you were there?***

The Holiday Casino was owned by Shelby Williams and his wife Claudine Williams. T.W. Richardson, the Las Vegas Attorney, famous "Wildcat" Bill Morris and a group of smaller one-point and two-point players. To this day, I rue the fact that I didn't have the $37,500.00 in cash to buy a point in that joint because it later became Harrah's. But, these guys, T. W. Richardson knew me, so when I needed a job, it was

July first 1972, I went down to see Pete Amanti at the Showboat to see if I could my old job and he said, T.W. and Shelby you know, they're opening the Holiday Casino on Strip tomorrow at two o'clock. Get up there because they are guys that know your capable, now I'd been out of the gambling business for years, I walked in the joint and Little Jimmy Moore was the casino manager. I come in the front door and another guy whose name escapes me right now, oh, yes, Jerry "Shotgun" Brewer, was the day shift boss, and he recognizes me. He says, "Bobby Blue Eyes, man do we need you. Can you start tomorrow at two o'clock? What do you want to do?" Just like that, I said, I don't know. I'll stand floor. I didn't want to be too ambitious. I should have asked for a shift because I ended up with one in a few years, but I said, I'll stand floor. We need someone on dayshift 21. I said, perfect. I'm married, can I have Saturday and Sunday off figuring he was so glad to have me I could get it. So, it took me exactly three hours to get a job. I went to work July 2, 1972 on the floor at the Holiday. The Holiday Casino was right across from Caesars. The Holiday Casino has a reputation to this day of being the highest moneymaker per square foot that ever was constructed or operated. These were real gamblers that owned this trap and they ran it like an old school gambling joint. They didn't give up on the player, on giving the player comp, take care of everybody, hometown feel. It was like they moved neighborhood casinos to the strip. Some of the great casino operators are like the Gaughans and Williams. They just seem to know how to handle people and they attract a local following and they just never fail. Other people do. Shelby Williams and his group knew how to operate. We had a huge local trade. The casino was shaped like a riverboat. Like the Showboat on the Boulder Highway. I've

worked in two boats in the desert. We were right in the middle of everybody. We had the Imperial Palace on one side that Engelstad built and we had the Flamingo on the other, we had Caesars across the street. So, we got a mix of players and it was different. It was like down South, Louisiana kind of Texas gambling. So, it was hugely successful. We gave away the food and we gave away the rooms. We had a deal with the Holiday Inn and it was just a fabulously successful joint.

I worked there and it was like being retired. I called my own shots, but I wasn't making the money that I would if I had ownership and I couldn't seem to get ownership and I had listened to my stepfather, who always said, don't own a small piece of anything, but he used to own small pieces. I made this big mistake. I didn't go out and borrow the money to buy a piece of the Holiday and also I had a chance to buy a point of two in the second joint of Michael Gaughan's, the Gold Coast. They didn't offer that to everybody, but as I was a friend, but instead I bought a piece of three shopping centers and lost two of them. If I had bought a point or two in the Gold Coast, I wouldn't be talking to you today. I probably wouldn't have time. I'd be on my yacht someplace. Those are the two big mistakes I made. So, I worked in the casino and the Holiday was small, it was intimate, it had everything. It had bingo. It had a showroom. It had a buffet. It had all the things that clicked. Its floor plan was impeccably laid out. It could be used as an archetypical example of a casino at the time and it made money hand over fist and because the people they hired to work there all knew what they were doing. We didn't cheat anybody, but nobody stole anything either. We operated on how many hands an hour could you get out. What we wanted was decisions. My philosophy in running a casino and I don't know if

somebody else has put this down somewhere, but my philosophy is the higher the number of decisions you can make per hour when offering bank games, the more money you make. It's based on that. Anything you could do to make the number of decisions per hour, whether it's on a slot machine, the reel speed or on a table game, the play speed, how many hands per minute are dealt, I want decisions, decisions. If I get 10,000 decisions in a shift, I make that p.c. It's all based on p.c. Do you see my thinking? I don't like to book spot play. I'm not interested in trying to go out and trap a whale because a whale will sink you just like it sank Ahab. What I'm looking for is constant, steady; local play is good or middle class play. I like to see that the average bet stays the average bet. I don't like to see spikes. I don't like to see games that are doing an average bet of $100.00 and it gets spikes where bets are $10,000.00. To me, that's dangerous. So, that kind of play I discouraged that in a middle class casino. Why some of these joints fail is the encourage spot play by catering to extremely wealthy players. You can get greedy, but you can't beat basic technique. That joint had basic technique.

***How did it compare with what's there today, Harrah's, the layout and the philosophy in general?***

The major thing that I've seen is that there is just a quantity of people, the number of players has gone up to the point where you're handling masses of people. You are dealing with a city now. It's no longer a hotel, it's a city. Departmentally, each department has to stand on its own because it's too hard for, you see, in the old days, one or two people could control the management decisions in an entire casino. So, they could pass even on credit. You could be a pit boss, pick up the phone and

call the boss, the guy who was the owner of the hotel and ask him, shall I give this guy another marker. Those decisions could be made that way. When you get to critical mass, when you get so large, these things have to be departmentalized and compartmentalized and you spread out the decision-making and maybe even the policy. If you're a genius, it's difficult to implement your genius policy in all of these departments throughout such a large city. You can be the smartest guy in the world and may not be able to manage so that you can make that policy effect all departments. Consequently, all departments start to be run autonomously. They have to start being responsible for their own deal.

Like, you'll lease the restaurant or showroom out instead of running it. They've tried to correct this situation and reduce cost and liability. The casino they have to keep, but they take away most of the decision making and try to computerize and this loses a little something. However, you do get a lot of decisions. What I would say is that casinos are less personal, less friendly, less enticing to the average player, the middle class player and I think that costs the strip joints money. This is proven by the success of neighborhood casinos that haven't lost personal touch, welcoming, you understand what I mean, the warmth? It's not a theory, it's a fact. That's how they work. They work because the personal touch is still there and, you know, when people are losing money and that's what they are doing and that's what you're in business about is taking money from people, is that they need some hand holding. You can hold their hands in a small neighborhood casino operation. You can put your arm around them in those casinos in different ways. The big casinos can't do

that with everybody and they blow a little business that way, but they try to make it off of big money players.

Look, you can't, if you're a good business man and you have a casino license and you're on the strip in Las Vegas, you have to be a moron not to make money, because it's a license to steal. Bank games, these are bank games we're dealing in Nevada. You don't get a fair shake on any bet you make no matter what your system is. You can be a moron. In fact, the less you do, the better off you are. People will lose their money because that's the numbers. So, I'm always astonished when somebody goes in the tank like the Aladdin, the Landmark, The Dunes, Tropicana, Thunderbird. In my business, I picked up the pieces of a lot of casinos. It always surprises me because you can see the mistake that is made.

So, anyway, I went to work in the Holiday and while standing there it finally hit me one day. A friend of mine came up to me, one of my flying students and said you ought to be in the auction business. You've got a big mouth. You know a lot about a lot of things. Why don't you come with me and we'll go down and look at this auctioneer down on Nellis Boulevard. So, I went down and watch this little colonel down there sell his consignment things, used refrigerators and the odd pieces of jewelry and everything, but he had his commission up on the wall. So, I ran a tab on him and I saw in two hours this guy, selling junk, what he sold it for really sold, his commission was something like $2,800 bucks in two hours. I thought, this is strong. This is almost as strong as the gambling business.

So, I went back and decided to go into the auctioneering business part time on weekends. This kid that told me about wanting to be an auctioneer, they were in the

coin business in town, Stan and his dad. His last name was Zurowski. His dad used to work in the cage at the Dunes and they had Nevada Coin Mart and I decided to go into the auction business with them. They were going to build a big auction barn out on the Boulder Highway and I was going to be the auctioneer and be the auction guy. So, in order to do that, I had to go to auction school.

I went upstairs and I told Shelby Williams at the Holiday, you know what, I think I'm going to start an auction business. That's the kind of relationship I had. He said okay. I said, I need a couple of weeks off. I've got to go to school. So, I took two weeks off and went back to Missouri and I went to Missouri Auction School, which still today is the best auction school in the country. My daughter's been there. My son's been there. When I got back there, it was a fortuitous time because when I arrived they were putting their first real estate auction class through and I hadn't even thought about real estate. But, man, when I got there and started listening, I realized, hey, you're a real estate broker, you know about the gambling business, joints are going belly up and according to these people, bankruptcy is a big source of auctions. You're in the wrong racket. Why do you want to be selling used refrigerators on Friday night to a bunch of yeah-hoos in North Las Vegas when you should be talking about selling a casino? So, I go back and tell Stan, hey, I made a mistake. They've already broke ground on the building. You have to hire another auctioneer. I don't want anything from you guys. I don't want any money back.

I don't want anything. Just go and hire an auctioneer. That's all you need. You don't need me. I need to go my own way.

Well, the old man tried to stop my license. He didn't know that I had juice with the Lamb family. By that time, Ralph Lamb was the sheriff. Remember, I was raised by his brother, Slick for a few years, so that didn't work. Auctions were very restricted in this town. They had a bad reputation as the mob had set up jam or phony merchandise auctions on the strip and downtown and so it was tough to get a license, but I managed to get the license, went into the auction business and ran it out of the Holiday Casino for about two years. I'd get calls in the pit. I'd book them on weekends. I had Saturday and Sunday off and I tried to specialize in gaming equipment and business inventories and real estate sales through bankruptcy. Now, I got a lot of trash to start with. Nobody knew about business or real estate auctions here. This was pioneering. I was the first real estate auctioneer, one of the first west of the Mississippi, west of the Rockies, anyway. It wasn't done in this town. Bankruptcy sales, court ordered sales, judiciary foreclosures were the only things that you saw. I got lucky. I used to pray. I used to stand in the pit and say, please God, just give me one casino to sell. I thought, gee, if you sell a rat trap casino for $13,000,000 bucks and you get five per cent, you got all the money you need. Well, I got lucky. I did a lot of small sales out of the Holiday, working out of my house. I had my licenses. I found out that they had a program at Indiana University called the Certified Auctioneer Institute two weeks a year and they monitored you through the rest of the year, so I started into that three-year program at age 37, 38. Finally got lucky and got called by Nevada National Bank to do the River Inn in Reno, a defunct casino and I sold it. I got my first big commission which was $70,000. That was about 1979. $70,000 was a lot of dough.

So, my wife says, you've got some dough, get out of the house and get an office. Why don't you get serious about this? I went up to the office and saw Bill Morris and Claudine Williams, Shelby had died, and I said, this thing is taking off and I'm going to try it. So, I resigned from the Holiday Casino after seven and a half years and took my profit sharing, opened an office in the Atrium Building at 333 North Rancho Road and became a full-time real estate and general auctioneer.

(End of side 2, tape 2)

So, the real estate auctioneering business was not known and I had to break ground. I had to educate businesspeople and politicians in this city and also consumers that auctions could be done on a professional basis; three-piece suit basis and that they were honest. I decided that I was not going to sell my own goods and that I was going to sell the goods of another and charge a commission. I'd be a commission agent and work out of offices. That was the big difference and it made a huge difference because I could say, honestly, to people, look, I don't own these things. So, they knew I wasn't marking things up and that gave me a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, which I capitalized on and encouraged. I was one of the first people to do General Services Administration auctions here. I was a GSA approved auctioneer. I became the first auctioneer in Nevada to be a Small Business Administration Auctioneer. I also cut into the police department and the Treasurer's office. I built a base off of government liquidations. Weapons, I sold pistols, rifles. I did the State of Nevada unclaimed property auctions and the Metropolitan Police auctions. I sold 267 properties in three H.U.D. sales, the largest real estate auctions, to this day, ever held in the State of Nevada. So, I was hugely successful at it. It was something that

was needed here. It also benefitted the rapidly fluctuating casino business because so many projects failed and this was a quick court approved way to get a property back in action and on the tax rolls and employ people.

I started making a considerable amount of money, which I turned around and invested in some parcels of land and a ranch in Pine Valley, Utah. I should have bought a lot more land if I'd have had more confidence. But, today I've been able to live off of the raw land that I bought. I also went national. I got into selling rare coins for a company named Arizona Coin Exchange, a nationwide coin liquidator. For eight years, my company, Robert Deiro & Assoc., was the fourth largest coin auction company in the country. We traveled all over the United States. I got licenses in Arizona, Texas, Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, California, Oregon and Washington State. These were all privileged licenses. It's hard to get a license as an auctioneer anywhere, even here. The bonding requirements were severe and you have to have credentials. If you sell cars, you have to have a dealer's license. If you sell guns, you have to have a Federal Firearms License. If you sell real estate you have to be a real estate broker.

The auction business answered all of those questions I had in my life. I'm selling myself short. I'm not using my talents. I'm not using my experience and education that I got from the early history of my life. I put all of that knowledge to use. I could walk into a hotel or a bank when the attorneys were in there. Jerry Gordon, one of the great bankruptcy attorneys, where the Jerry Gordon's are present and before Judge Clyde Jones or Lloyd George. Walk into a group of men and women like that, who know what they are talking about and you know what you're talking about and

you may know more about the gaming end of this property than they know and they'll be impressed by you. I used that background. The Lockheed Corporation had a number of surplus airliners and I walked in there and they found out I was an airline transport pilot, former executive for Howard Hughes and auctioneer and knew the difference between a fuselage and a horizontal stabilizer, I got the job. All of these art auctions, I could speak with authority about art. I was a published art photographer and I had friends that were artists, major collectors from all over the country. I knew gallery owners here and in Europe.

Well, naturally, I got all of the art auctions. One art auction I did for 15 years straight. Jewelry, because I'd been in the gambling business, I bought and had worn a lot of jewelry, Rolex watches, pinky rings, thing like that. I bought off of gamblers. Everything came into that; all of my background experience, education, training and then my inherited showmanship that I got from my father and from my grandmother came out of me. No, I wasn't a musician, but I could sure sing on the block and I could talk and I wasn't afraid of people. Some people are terrified to stand in front of somebody and speak. Singing is easy compared to auctioneering. Singing, you know the words you are going to sing. In auctioneering you don't know what you're going to say next. The very next instant you don't know what you're going to say. You have to say it and you have to say it rhythmically and know what you are talking about and make descriptions. You have to use vocabulary. You have to be an instant appraiser of all most every item of virtue. It requires a large number of skills. People don't understand how complex the auction business is. Each day you are selling something different, yet you are looked upon to be an expert at what you

are selling or you'll have no credibility. If you can't speak about what you are selling, you can't say two or three sentences that tell a buyer what he needs to know about what you are selling, you fail. Then, if you don't have people skills, if you can't see body language, facial expressions, the way people stand, it's a marvelous business that requires you to have multiple talents. It's very rewarding. You get instant gratification, because each time you say sold, the cash register goes "ca-ching." It's a happy business if it's going well.

Well, I took to it like a duck to water. But, I didn't really like being an auctioneer. There were some aspects of auctioneering that made me think of a used car dealer or a cowboy in the back of a pick-up. I was prejudiced against auctioneers, yet here I was becoming a fairly well known one. I became president of the Nevada State Auctioneers Association. I was a graduate of the Certified Auctioneer Institute, I started being somebody. Successful it was and far more than I would ever think. When I was worried, having come from an environment, my working environment up to that point had been, somebody wrote me a check every two weeks. You could count on that, can't you? You know that your family is not going to be jeopardized. You know you're going to pay the rent. When you step out on your own into business, you don't know when that check is going to come in and it used to panic me a little bit, but a very nice attorney here in town, his son's an attorney now, Peter Koch, once told me, he was a bankruptcy attorney and he gave me some business. I told him, Peter, my teeth are chattering. I don't know where the next buck is coming from. He said, don't worry, Bob, it will be there and he was right.

Somehow, it comes in and it adds up and you pay the rent plus. The only resentment I'd have from this success is how much I have to pay the federal government and how they waste what I work hard to make and for that I resent taxation, the form of taxation we have now. As a man my age who's paid hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes, I think our tax system absolutely stinks. The I.R.S. should be disbanded. We should go to something more fair. I think young people need to know that it is the rich that do pay the taxes because I've been poor and I've been rich and I want you to know, why should my car, why should I pay $500 a year in taxes on my automobile when it has four wheels just like yours and the guy driving the Hyundai only pay $86? Because mine says Lexus or Rolls Royce and yours says Hyundai? That's wrong. Why should people be penalized for being successful? Why should they be penalized? We could get into a whole discussion about our government and how it operates so wastefully today and I'm one of those people who believe you get what you work for and the harder you work, the luckier you get. I have disagreements about who in America is genuinely disadvantaged, or socially deprived. I don't believe in systemic racial prejudice anymore, Not in this country. In fact, if I had it to do all over again, I'd like to be either Black or Hispanic and be 25 years old and don't give me handouts. Give me a basic education, get me through high school, let me be 18 years old again, I'll show you some smoke because I'll show you how to work the system on your own ability and the built in advantages of being a minority and young in this country. There is no limit to where you can go if you have any basic intelligence and a little courage. There is no limit to where you could go. This is probably interesting coming from an old white guy.

Anyway, to make a long story short, the auction business worked and it enabled me to engage in a lot of other pastimes that I enjoy including help make art. What did I finally do? I finally trained one of my sons, worked for me for 14 years and bought the business from me. He's taken it on to higher heights since I retired. I took early retirement at 52. I sold the business in 1992. We were in kind of a downturn at that time. So, it didn't take much prying to turn the business over to my son at that time who was not quite 30 and he paid for it in money and he hired me back as a consultant. So, I'm his auctioneer and have been, but I'm retired. I don't go into the office. I don't have to worry about that stuff. But, you know, it was exactly, and I'm not commiserating about this, but it was exactly the wrong time to sell the business because the huge economic growth of Las Vegas started to occur right about that time.

Guy Robert, my son, was positioned perfectly to take advantage of that. Also, this wonderful life that I've enjoyed in Las Vegas, five children, 10 grandchildren and they all live here. Nobody moved away which says something about the community. The community provided enough opportunity for my children to want to remain here both educationally and employment wise. Interestingly enough, my sons are not employed in the gambling business except on the periphery of it. Whereas my daughters are hard-core, high-stakes baccarat dealers. One of them works at the Mirage and the other one works at Bally's. They handle millions of dollars a night. They wear tuxedoes to work. I never dreamed that would happen. That is a huge change. A huge change to me is to see the people who work in the gambling business look now like barbers used to look when I was young. When I was in the gambling

business, you had to kind of look like a gambler. You had to kind of talk like a gambler. We had our slang and it was a male dominated society just like you see in the old movies. That's how it was.

***Would you talk about that a little bit more?***

The words that we used, like we would corrupt the English language even though we were educated, but when you walked in the casino you took on this persona and you would use, instead of saying he won the money, we'd say he win the money. He was out the money. It's a kind of gambling slang. Who's the moustache on first base means who's the guy with facial hair on the first 21 table chair or rail of a crap game. People with moustaches, to this day, I know four casinos that you can't go to work in if you have facial hair. It's always been a hoodoo, a bad luck. I know casinos where pit bosses still throw dimes and quarters under the table to try to change a player's luck. These people we used to call "burners" or "sweaters," bosses that worried about that, that would sweat a bet. These guys were gamblers and they didn't want to lose money and it killed them that they couldn't steal the money and to stand there and watch a dealer doing a competent job, but losing to a guy, used to just drive them crazy. We called that burning. We had a slang that we used, that we talked and general appearance was ala '50s mobster look, you know, the type of suits and the cars, we all fancied the Cadillacs. Diamond pinky ring was an identification; a right hand pinky ring was the identification of a gambler. Diamond stickpin was an identification of a gambler. A really over the top watch was also. The bankroll on a rubber band, if you ever see a man come into your place of business and take a bankroll out of his pocket and it's on a rubber band, you can bet that he's

had something to do with the gambling business. As an illegal bookie you work out of your pocket.

So, this male dominated sort of wannabe a wise guy even if you weren't was enjoyed by its participants and encouraged and was part of the style. That's gone. You didn't hire people that didn't look like they went. Now I walk into a casino and the shift boss looks like a baker, you know what I mean? They don't look like what they are and this to me is always a little funny. I know they are competent and in many ways their operation is superior to everything that I did. I computed with a pencil and piece of paper and in my head. How much did a player play? The owner would call me up, what's going on? Two o'clock in the morning, we are stretched fifty grand. That's nothing now. Fifty grand in one hand, but in those days, $50,000 could make or break the whole joint for the day, right? People would stay up all night long. Owners would call me and ask what's going on now, did you do this, did you do that, whose dealing? It was so primitive. Now they have computers. They have everybody cased. They can tell you how many hands a guy played. What's his win percentage? In many ways, this is really micromanaging, but they are much smarter than I was, yet, I believe I'm smarter than they are about some things. You understand? That's the huge difference, the shock that I have. I never get used to women crap dealers. How can I be a chauvinist?

I've got daughters who are in the gambling business. I like women. I respect them. Some of the brightest people I know. My CPA is a woman. My lawyer is a woman. Yet, I can't get used to being dealt craps by a woman dealer and to see a woman pit boss still rubs me the wrong way. Isn't that funny? Well, one could say, you old fart,

you're just a male chauvinist, but I'm not. There are just some roles that I, I think the old gambling business reinforced the roles that men and women played and I'm not too sure that it wasn't a good idea. I still don't think that women ought to be combat fighter pilots and I'm a pilot. I believe in the huge difference in women and I don't believe that women and men are the same, nor do I think that they are equal in upper body strength, nor do I they reason in the same way, nor do I think that they are just as predisposed or have the ability to do jobs the same. I don't care what people say. I've been here a long time and I don't believe it. I don't see it in the gambling joints. I just don't like to see women in certain positions. I think it's degrading to them. I think that there are some things that women are doing now that are degrading. I don't like women police officers on patrol duty in a car, doing frontline cop work. I like them as cops handling women and children because I think they are better than men at that. Somehow inside of me my mind sees that, but this doesn't allow for a lesbian cop, does it, a butch police officer, you know, that would kind of be a problem.

Men from my generation have definite role models. We get attacked for our thinking, but I don't really think that liberated women appreciate where we are coming from. We really respect and love women and put them on a pedestal. We are door openers. That's not an insult to a woman. That's obeisance, that's fealty, that's respect, you know what I mean. I think that feminists have a really bad image; they misunderstand a lot of men like me. We would step in and take a punch for a strange woman. I wonder if guys, or gals would do that today?

*Some of them might.*

Some of them might, but all of them would in my generation. We wouldn't stand by and let a woman be on her own and be abused. Without asking, we'd be knights in armor. We'd charge in thinking that we're expected to. I've been given bad looks for doing stuff like that. Anyway in the 60s, in the midst of these fun things that I was doing, I found, one of my girlfriends went to New York and she was walking down the street, she saw my name Deiro on a music publishing company. She went inside and my first cousin owned the company and she introduced herself and, of course, he was surprised to find out that his first cousin was in Las Vegas, working in the gambling business because she worked in a coin counting room in the same casino. So, he wrote me a letter and it was on letterhead and it had the crest of the family which I noticed and he said when I was in New York I should visit him.

Well, years went by before I had the opportunity to go to New York and that was because of my involvement with the airlines and the artists. So, when I was there I went and had dinner with my first cousin who I found to be an elegant, talented, musical genius; high socialite, East Coast liberal, everything that you think an Italian American nobleman ought to look and talk like. He belonged to the finest club, the Tiro a Segno in New York. It's an elitist target-shooting club, started out as, but now it's so restricted that Frank Sinatra couldn't get into it, thank God. So, I met him and he took me to his co-op. He lived right off of 7th on Waverly Place in the Village. They had been there since the turn of the century. Everybody was dead but him and me. I was his first cousin, his closest living relative. Up on the wall were items about Italy, including a family coat of arms. So, I asked him some questions and he suddenly tried to discourage me from going to Italy which I noted. Here I was in a

polyester jacket, Las Vegas style, wide lapel, you know, I looked like a Guido which was my name, so I could think that he was probably embarrassed. Maybe he was worried that I would embarrass the family. I went back and I kept my mouth shut for a few more years, because I felt the same way he did. But, when I went into the auction business, that changed. Now, I was legit. I was a three piece suit guy and I had a family and I had also started to pay my dues to the community with the help of my wife who has always been by my side and supported me in everything and very much responsible for my success. We started doing a lot of charity work. We enjoyed it.

***Talk about that a little bit.***

Well, first of all, I started using my skills as an auctioneer to do charity auctions which I arranged, promoted and conducted for the National Kidney Foundation, American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, Secret Witness, Boys and Girls, Injured Police Officers Fund, you name it, on a continual basis. The YMCA, I conducted auctions with Jim Corey, whose dead now. Like the YMCA, we did their Why Not Night. There is a big committee that works on this, but I was there for 15 years and I had to call 'sold' on the items. We had a big smoker and we generated a huge amount of money, $100,000 annually. Moe Dalitz would be there and all the guys would be there and it was quite interesting. The Henderson Boys and Girls Club, I did that for years and then my son after me. I did literally hundreds of auctions over a period of over nearly 20 years for different charities. I don't know how much money that amounts to, but it's in the millions. We also supported overseas charities.

The City of Las Vegas honored me as Citizen of the Month. There is a street named after me in The Lakes, Count Deiro Drive, a significant and lasting gesture recognizing my contributions to the community. I say this in all modesty. It's the way you pay your dues. You can't just take, take, take. Then, I also, personally sponsored individuals in need. I enjoy reading the paper and if I see where somebody's having a tough time, maybe their house got burned out or I see an innocent victim of a tragedy, I like to step in there anonymously and do that. Now, it's not so anonymous since I put it on tape, but I like to see more people do that and that's a fun way. It makes you feel good to help somebody without them knowing or asking for it. So, I have been doing that. Using my business, the money I have instead of writing a check to a politician, I'd write a check to a good cause. But, the most enjoyment you get is out of doing it yourself.

Art auctions, I did the Mesquite Club art auction for God knows how many years, I don't know. That benefited, each charity was different each year. They would pick a different one. We managed to use our talents and our money to pay back to the community, which also makes me feel better about the money I took from people. You understand what I mean? If I had any guilt, but I don't. You step up to the plate. You are responsible for your own actions. Nobody's holding a gun to your head to make a lay down on a table. So, I don't feel bad about gamblers that lose their money or guys that blow their house or their marriage. You don't belong here and if it wasn't here, you'd do it somewhere else. So, I'm not saying its guilt, but it does make you feel better if you went home every night knowing that you beat everybody today and they all lost this dough, you can let that weigh on your mind. But, if you

say, I'm going to go out there and I'm going to try to help people a little bit, that kind of balances things out. Maybe when you get up there, where ever it is, whatever the big secret is, and they got a scale up there, maybe you come out even.

When I found out about my family heritage, by that time I had some standing in the community and had some reputation and felt good about my reputation and I worked for that reputation. I understood that honesty and reputation is an important thing to have. Coming out of the gambling business, you have to overcome that. I thought that I did. I had this feel good idea about myself and I felt that I wouldn't be an embarrassment to my family because I had a hunch about what was going to happen. I had made foreign trips, but I had never gone to Deiro in Northern Italy yet and I finally decided to go. When I got there, I was welcomed with open arms. Some first cousins were still alive. It's strange to go to Geneva, Switzerland, rent a car, drive through the big tunnel, come out in Italy on the other side, drive down the valley d'Aosta and start seeing your last name on highway signs. So, I started to realize that it was more important than I thought. I got to the village and the village priest and the elders and my family members were there and I was taken on the grand tour and they had to keep pouring Italian brandy into me to keep me standing up because I was crying so much when I saw where my grandfather was buried in the church and all these relatives. They have like, Deiro is the name of general stores. It's like J. C. Penney's. I was going back as a son going back, a son of a man who was born there. They all knew my father and my father's reputation. They didn't know where I was. Nobody knew. There was no way to find out. He died and didn't tell anybody. A series of trips and their encouragement

developed that a title was involved, that this area was named after my family and that my father was a Count by primogenitor, my grandfather Carlo, then to my father, then to me. So, I considered it and thought that, one, it was unique and interesting and, two, that I had an obligation just because I was the first Italian American, first American in my family, then why should this die? Who knows, maybe we'll go back to Italy.

But anyway, to make a long story short, I hired attorneys and heraldic experts to petition the, Italy is a republic now and the king has abdicated and lives in Switzerland, so what happened was, I petitioned the Italian government to take out a declaration to establish who I was, my claim to the title of nobility and to reconstitute the title. It took several years and quite a bit of money and they did it. I had to appear before a Federal Court in Florence and the Attorney General of Italy, Francesco Fleury, represented the Republic of Italy and I pled my case and I was granted my request. I was given a declaration; a document that actually says that I have the right to be Count Deiro in all acts, public and private. I did that for my dad and for my family. Coming back here, I initially didn't want to use it socially out of the idea that I would be criticized. But, I found that it opened a lot of doors, that many people were fascinated by the history of it, enjoyed it, enjoyed my company and people that I knew in England wanted to use my name in association with business because in England it's important to have titled people involved in some endeavors.

So, I realized that there was some value to this besides my family history, the debt of honor that I owe my father and his predecessors. I had a full genealogy done by the

Mormon genealogists in Salt Lake, which took two years. They traced my mother's family back. They traced my fathers, then the heraldic people in Italy conveyed their research and now I know that my name is Syrian. It comes from Syria. In fact, people that live in monasteries in Syria are called Deiros and Deiro defines a point of importance in the Syrian language. They moved into the Sudan. There is actually a village of Deiro in the Sudan. So, it became an Arabic name meaning 'point of'. Then they went to Spain and my wife and I have actually gone to Morocco and traced the Deiros there and then into Spain where there is a San Miguel de Deiro village there in Galicia, Northern Spain and apparently my people came to Italy in about the 1570 AD. About the time that writing became popular and the church records picked up. But, I know every one of my ancestors back to the 15th century. The name has stayed the same and means the same in the Italian vernacular as it does in Spanish, Arabic and Syrian. It was an interesting odyssey.

I supposed I should mention that all my life I had a need for speed. In addition to airplanes I began to race cars as I got the money to afford them I started out in the production classes along with several Las Vegans such as my deceased friend Jim Corey. His family owned Corey's restaurant on Fremont here and he became Vice President of Circus-Circus. A lifelong friend. We hosted "Why Knot Nite," a charity smoker with the great volunteers and contributors to the YMCA for over thirty years. Raised millions of dollars.

Over the years I owned a number of racing cars including actor Paul Newman's Porsche which I raced in an amateur SCCA class. I also competed in the Silver State Classic Challenge with the actress Marsha Mason. I gradually worked my way up to

open wheel Atlantic formula cars and raced at Riverside International Raceway, Sears Point, Laguna Seca and Road Atlanta. Las Vegas at that time did not have a facility to handle national professional racing. We tried to hold some Formula One events in the parking lot of Caesars Palace and the Convention Center. I got the idea that a major motor speedway would work here. I spent several years in the 1980s attempting to interest the community in allocating land for a speedway. I petitioned the BLM and even went to Washington. In desperation I propositioned the Paiute Indians to use their Snow Mountain property, but they decided to build golf courses. In the end the only land available was a small "bull ring" track and a dilapidated road course across from Nellis Air Base. It was leased for a few hundred a month from the City of Las Vegas. Reluctantly, as I wanted the track south of town along the 15 freeway, I managed to get the lease terminated and the land put up for bid. I invested $35,000 of my own money to have a Tri Oval configuration superspeedway and auxiliary tracks, along with a racing industrial park for teams, designed by myself and Scott Wallace, a local architect and civil engineer. I interested Ralph Engelstad and he guaranteed the money and I wrote the winning proposal to buy the land and construct what is now "The Las Vegas International Motor Speedway." Ralph built it and did a great job later selling it to the present owners. It brings in more than a half billion dollars a year and it is the accomplishment I am most proud of. The story of my success in envisioning and getting this project approved and completed was written by the reporter Jeff Wolf as a feature article in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* after another Las Vegas was erroneously identified as doing what I

had envisioned. I raced cars until I was fifty years old and attended many racing schools here and in Europe.

On one trip I ran into a French prince whose Italian forbearers owned the land next to Deiro Superiore, the home of my ancestors, in Northern Italy. It just so happened he was coming to Las Vegas to do something with the governor, Bob Miller, in 1989, and they were going to do a benefit for the American Cancer Society and they were to have a grand ball and investiture ceremony, honor some Americans with knighthoods in the order of Order of St. John. I read about it in the paper. It rang some bells. I wrote a letter to his secretary saying, I'm Count Deiro. I live here. I know Bob Miller very well. I knew his dad, Ross Miller, who was in the gaming business, and Las Vegans don't know much about protocol, but I do and if you need some help here, I'd be happy to help you and I wrote a letter to the hotel, Caesars Palace, to Dan Reichartz saying who I was and volunteered my help. It was a great cause. Well, I got a letter from Prince Henri where he went nuts finding out that I was a Deiro, the missing one, and he knew my dad and he knew the whole thing. I ended up having lunch with him and the Duke of Corinth, a Brit and his right-hand guy at that time who was the Grand Chancellor of the order. The next thing I know, I'm proposed for knighthood. So, in 1989, I was knighted by Prince Henri and that was a huge honor and he and I became friends. Now, I'm in this order of chivalry whose sole existence, all it does, is operate worldwide to conduct and promote benefits and activities and occasions to benefit those less fortunate. So, in 1989, I became an active, participating member of this group. I became a member of the Grand Majesty in 1993. I got promoted over the years. I became the Grand

Hospitaller which is the man who picks the charities that are going to be benefited and directs the activities; in Tokyo, in Madrid, in Rome, on Rhodes, in Paris, in Las Vegas, in Miami, in these places. So, I started traveling with my wife as the Count and Countess Deiro, using my title to benefit people in whatever way I could from delivering potable water to Columbian earthquake victims to taking care of crippled children in Greece by delivering wheelchairs. So, I've been doing that for 10 years. That's a whole different story and finally, last year, I received the ultimate gift from them. I became the Grand Chancellor of the Order of St. John and the first American in the 1,000-year history of that order, and I'm the youngest Grand Chancellor and I direct the activities of over 200 knights and ladies throughout the world. I've gone four times to Tokyo with the members of the Imperial Household and with Dame Dewi Sukarno, the former first lady of Indonesia. We'd do huge benefits to benefit Japanese Red Cross. I've been to Rhodes to conduct a Grand Gala with the Governor General of Rhodes. Ambulances and wheelchairs for crippled children. We were in on sponsoring the Flying Hospital in Africa for International Refugee Relief. So, this is going on out of Las Vegas. We've had four or five events here in Las Vegas and we'll have an event in May 18, 2002, which will benefit the Marlo Thomas, Danny Thomas' daughter, International St. Jude's Charity. This now wouldn't have been possible if Las Vegas hadn't become internationally known. I wouldn't have been acceptable to the world's movers and shakers if this city hadn't gained international importance. No matter if they are barons, dukes, or princes, or just common folks, they love to come to Las Vegas. This made it totally acceptable that the Grand Chancellor lives in Las Vegas. It's like saying that he lives in Paris. That's a change.

That's a huge change from when I was a kid. I knew when women wouldn't let me go out with their daughters because I was a Italian gambler and lived in Las Vegas and look what's happened from that to this.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize my wife of fifty years, the Countess Joan Marlene Deiro (nee) Calhoun, a near-native of Nevada as she came here as a child. Whatever I did in life that was commendable was due to Joan's unremitting love and tolerance. Her contributions in time and labor to needy people in many countries were recognized by her receiving the accolade of a Dame in the Ecumenical Order of St. John. She had a great deal to do with the one avocation that I have engaged in for years that has contributed to the reputation of Nevada being the birthplace of the Earth Art genre. For the past forty years I have acted as an enabler and facilitator for artists who sculpt the earth into massive works of art in need of professional assistance to realize their artistic creations. Not only did I site locate, cost analyze, contract manage, and supervise regulatory compliance on such major earth sculptures as Michael Heizer's "Double Negative" and "The City" as well as Walter DeMaria's "Vegas Piece" and the first iteration of " The Lightning Field" but the works of a number of other contemporary artists, most recently Ugo Rondinone's "Seven Magic Mountains.."

All constructed in Nevada. Several years ago Joan and I donated our remaining art works, memorabilia and ephemera to the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno where the "Deiro Archive" became the founding collection for the internationally recognized Center for Art and the Environment. I consider myself fortunate that I was born in Nevada and raised in Las Vegas. I had the opportunity to observe and participate in

exciting events that led to the city's continued growth and reputation as the entertainment capital of the world. I am also honored that my efforts to help the less fortunate and contribute to the economy of Nevada have been acknowledged. The late Governor Kenny Guinn issued a Proclamation recognizing these contributions as did the City of Las Vegas and Clark County. Any person at the end stage of their life would be pleased to know that their contributions to their fellow citizen's prosperity and enjoyment were appreciated and will be remembered. I am.

***It sounds great. It's been a pleasure to hear it.***

(End of interview)

11/20/2017

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