An Oral History of

Paolo Cividino

4th Street | Prater Way History Project

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The 4th Street | Prater Way History Project is a collaborative community history project launched by the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County in 2011. The project's website, with full transcripts, photographs, and other historical material about the 4th Street | Prater Way corridor through Reno and Sparks, Nevada, may be found at http://4thprater.onlinenevada.org/.

Photo by Patrick Cummings

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Barber: I'm with Paolo Cividino, the owner of Tutto Ferro, which is located at 616 East 4th Street in Reno. I want to start out asking a couple of biographical questions. Where and when were you born?

Cividino: I was born February 21, 1971 in Lignano, Italy. My mother's name is Dora and my father's name is Frank, or in his dialect it's Ciccio. My father was born in a town called Majano, which is really close to Udine, a big city in northern Italy about fifty miles north of Venice. I was born very close to where my father was from.

My mother's family is from Treviso [phonetic], which is also in northern Italy, but my mother was born in Vancouver, Canada. Both of her parents came over on a boat. My grandmother on my mother's side came over on the very last boat from Italy to America before they shut all shipping off during the Second World War. So my mother was born in Vancouver. She has two sisters.

Both my mother's parents were Italian. They had a pre-arranged marriage. This is pretty old-school. My parents are pretty old: my father's eighty-four, and my mother's seven years younger. My father was part of the Resistance during the Second World War, and fought against Hitler and Mussolini. My father has a really amazing past and my mother has a really amazing past.

My mother's first language was Italian, and she grew up in a really tight Italian community in Vancouver during Prohibition. She's got some pretty good stories. Her father was a logger, and he was gone all the time. She had two sisters, so here you have these four women in this house, and the only way that they could make money was by making wine, so that's what they would do. All the Italians would go over to their house. They'd play Briscola, which is an Italian card game, in the basement, and the cops never swept my grandmother because they knew she was selling wine. They knew she was making grappa and all this stuff, but she had three girls. What are they going to do, right?

My father would go over there to play cards, and that's how he met my mother. The priest who married them got my father work in Daly City, so they moved from Canada to San Francisco. My two older sisters were born there.

My father wanted to move back to Italy and so did my mother, so they moved to Lignano Sabbiadoro, which is a beach town north of Venice on the Adriatic. It's a resort

town in the summertime. All the Germans, Austrians, French, and Swiss would go there. One of my father's sisters, my aunt, was there. She and her husband had a pasticceria, a bakery, and did really, really well.

My parents had a bar, but a bar in Europe is more like a coffee shop. You would serve alcoholic drinks, but it's not like an American-type bar. Then they had a lavanderia, a laundromat. They had a villa there in Italy, and they would rent that out during the Ferragosto, the three months when the Europeans travel. They did really well.

But I think my father had had a taste of what it was like to live in America and be self-employed. In Europe everything is very regimented and it's hard to get ahead, and I think that he felt stifled there. He tasted the American dream, and I guess he and my mother discussed it, and they decided to move back to the States. So I lived in Italy until I was four.

Barber: Do you have any memories of Italy from your youth?

Cividino: Yes, I do, but I was fortunate; my family went back to Italy almost every other year. My parents were really good about getting back there. Looking back on it, it was really special. I have a lot of really vivid memories of Italy all through my childhood, and of all my cousins in Italy.

I moved back to Italy from '96 to '98. I enrolled in a School of Biblical Studies, and I lived there for two years and got to be with my extended family over there, which was really great. I have dual citizenship, so I can work there legally. Part of me wonders why I ever came back. Part of me thinks I should have just stayed there.

Barber: Do you speak Italian?

Cividino: I do speak Italian, yes. I don't speak any dialect. My father speaks dialect, but I don't. My Italian is like anything—if you don't practice it all the time, you start to lose it. Over the holidays I get on the phone with my cousins and my relatives, and my Italian is bad. It bums me out because when I lived there, it was very good. I tend to understand fairly well because it was my first language, but when it comes to speaking, I stumble. I just bought Rosetta Stone because I was upset at how much I've lost. I want to take my son, Enzo, back to Italy this spring if I can. He's going to be six in February, and I think that he'll remember that. I hope it's one of many trips. I have a very good friend who lives in [unclear], Switzerland, and I'll stay with him and also stay with my family and go down south. That would be nice.

Barber: When your family moved back to the United States, where did you live?

Cividino: My father bought a house in Walnut Creek [California]. He went back to Italy to finish working, and was gone for around six months. Then he came back, and we were all together. That's where I grew up. My father had plenty of work in San Francisco. He was super employable. He's a master bricklayer. He would commute into the city, and he worked in the city for thirty-plus years.

Barber: As a bricklayer primarily?

Cividino: No, there really isn't that much work laying brick stateside. In Europe when you're young, thirteen or fourteen, you have to decide what you are going to do. Are you going to go to a technical school, are you going to try and further your education in a non-technical manner, or are you not going to go to school at all?

My father was super good with his hands, and my grandfather's an amazing bricklayer, and he just said, "Look, I need you." My father wanted to be an architect, and my father's brother was an architect, and I think it was a point of contention between them, but my father was just too good with his hands. So he went to technical school to be a bricklayer. When you do that in Europe, you've got to understand—he could build anything with anything. The craftsmanship that those guys come out of school with is mind-boggling.

He ran finish work in the city. He did all the finish in the Transamerica Building and the B of A Building and the Del Monte Building. He's just unbelievable. He's the guy who I was always trying to be like, but always feeling like I was falling short of that. That whole complex.

Barber: Were you aware of his craftsmanship when you were growing up?

Cividino: Absolutely. My father grew up in Italy when Italy was super poor. During the Second World War, if you had a cow and a chicken, you were considered pretty affluent. My grandparents had land with a vineyard and a large garden, and my father grew up a farmer. So it was pretty funny growing up in the Bay Area. We had a big lot with a half acre for a backyard, and we raised rabbits and slaughtered them. All my neighbors thought we were crazy, but to me, it was normal. We had a huge garden. My father had beautiful fruit trees, and he would graft all these amazing apples onto apples, and pears to pears. He's just a super talented guy.

Shortly after we moved to the States, my father bought twenty acres in Grass Valley, which is where my parents live now, and it's beautiful, huge oak trees, horse-type country. We would go up there every weekend and work, building fences, digging trenches, you name it. I was always at my father's side working, and I really enjoyed it. It rubbed off on me, for sure.

I take a lot of pride in being good at what I do. I want to be careful when I say it. I don't want to sound arrogant, but I just think that in this country, being a craftsman is not something that people value as much as they should. I think that when you are dealing with a craftsman, whatever the medium is, it's pretty awesome when someone has that kind of grasp of what they're doing.

My father was amazing. You look at some of the things that my father built. He was young during the war, working in France, in Paris, with my grandfather because they were running from the Nazis. They were working in France, and my grandfather—this is really cool, I've actually seen this—was awarded a key to the City of Paris because he ran the crew that helped rebuild the church at the end of the Champs-Élysées that got bombed by the Nazis during the Second World War. These are really complex, Gaudi-type arches. My grandfather never made it past about second grade in school, but his mathematical skills were mind-boggling, and my father's mathematical ability is unbelievable, too.

My sister's husband has a master's degree from Cal [University of California] Berkeley in mathematics, and my father could fully hang out with him, and they could do the most complex math together. Because of his situation growing up, my father never made it past the equivalent of about tenth grade. So it's pretty amazing. Those guys were smart. Reality happened a lot sooner for them. Adolescence never occurred. My father was a foreman bricklayer running a crew of full-grown men at the age of fourteen. That's how I was raised, with that mentality.

That's just my reality. I know it's a little different than some other people, but I feel really fortunate to have it, and I think that it's served me well in my profession. I'm fortunate, too, because the guys who I have in my shop, to a large degree, although their reality looks different, operate the same way. They're real craftsmen. I'm really lucky. I'm surrounded by super talented guys, and you start to think it's normal. I'll be around other people and I'll think, "What is wrong with you? You can't do anything. You have no common sense." I have a lot of respect for where I come from, because I think I should.

Barber: Let's go back to how you ended up getting to Reno and starting your business. You went to high school in the Bay Area, in Walnut Creek. So what brought you to Reno?

Cividino: My family is super intense, and I wanted to get away from them. I did okay in school; I didn't do great. I had a lot of traumatic stuff happen in my family when I was around fourteen years old, and so I just wanted to get out of there. Getting into UNR wasn't that hard, frankly. I applied to some other schools. I got into a couple, I didn't get into some other ones.

I wanted to get into the mountains. I was really into rock climbing. My sister's boyfriend, who's now her husband, the mathematical wizard, his name is John, great guy. When I graduated from high school, we went to Yosemite Valley and took the rock climbing class, the two-week, ten-day rock climbing class, and I was hooked. So I thought, Reno's perfect, I'm going to move to Reno and live around Tahoe, so I did. I moved to Reno in 1989 to go to the university, and I did a lot better scholastically at UNR than I did in high school. I was really busy doing a lot of stuff. I was in a band and the band was busy, and I was working, but I did well in school because I really enjoyed it.

Barber: Had you spent much time in Reno before moving here for school?

Cividino: I had never been to Reno, and the first time I came over the hill and I saw those casinos I thought, "Oh, my god, what am I doing? This is ridiculous. This is such a small town, such a hick town." Initially I didn't like it. I wasn't used to this kind of arid landscape. I was used to trees and the ocean. But it really grew on me, and it grew on me so much that when I graduated from UNR, I had a degree in biogeography with an emphasis on arid lands, which was kind of ironic because I really grew to love the desert, and I think it is the most mind-boggling environment to live in. It is so amazing and diverse and cool.

Reno's grown on me, and I've tried to leave. I have tried to leave numerous times,

but for some reason I always come back, and I've got to say that I've met the most colorful, wonderful people in Reno. I really have. I think this town is disproportionately blessed with amazing people, and it's weird that the town is so retarded in the midst of that. I don't get it. Reno is a dichotomy to me. I don't understand how there can be so many wonderful, super talented individuals and yet it can still be so dysfunctional. It doesn't have an identity, really, in my opinion. It's trying to figure out what it is. It's kind of a weird place to be. Because you go to some cities and it looks like they have it together, and businesses are thriving. But they're really no different than Reno. It's just that Reno's a mess.

When I arrived, Reno was still a small town. My first job was at Deux Gros Nez and the Pneumatic Diner, so I met really great people right out of the chute—really colorful, creative, energetic people. The Deux was happening. It was the first café in Reno. It was open 24/7, and Tim [Healion] and John [Jesse] were really creative. I felt like it kept me alive, being in that environment. It was something that resonated with me because when we would go back to Italy, I would work in my cousin's pasticceria. I'd make cappuccinos and gelato and stuff like that. It was really nice to be in that environment again, and I really did enjoy that.

And I got a ton of rock climbing in. It was great. And I went to school. I moved here in '89, and Reno has changed a lot since then.

Barber: How would you say it's changed?

Cividino: It's become gentrified in a lot of ways. It's kind of like what happened to San Francisco. When the dot-com thing happened in the city, the city got really gentrified, and everyone who made the city colorful—and I'm not talking about the bums, but the people who made the city colorful—what I would call the working class—they all had to relocate. They all lived in Pittsburg and Antioch or Brentwood or Discovery Bay. The city became totally gentrified.

I remember when I was a kid, you couldn't go to the Mission District. You'd get shot, or if not shot, you'd get mugged. Now you go to the Mission District and it's ridiculous, or Hayes Valley or any of those neighborhoods. The city's just changing. A couple of the really good friends who I grew up with still live in the city and know the city like the back of their hand. They're kind of disgruntled with what's happened there. It's lost its flavor. It's kind of lost its edge. Now you have this disparity between the haves and the have-nots.

Reno in some ways is gentrified as well. You have a bunch of people, dot-commers or whoever, who moved here. They could sell their real estate for whatever they could sell it for, and they were pretty affluent in Nevada terms, so they could buy these enormous homes. You have these huge builders, Lennar and others, come in and build these Tuscan-style developments—you can go anywhere and see them. It's mind-boggling to me, and it's just trash.

Reno's grown out, not up and not in. I get why it happened and how it happened, but it's sad. I don't think that there's a whole lot of soul in what's gone on. There's definitely no quality in what's been put up in the last fifteen, twenty years. I know because I've worked on some of those homes. I've worked on multimillion-dollar homes in Arrowcreek that are just as shitty as the tract down in Damonte Ranch—they're all the

same. It's ridiculous. I don't get that. I don't like that too much.

I live near downtown, and I like that. I live close to where I work. I'm not a huge fan of commuting. My house is small; it's 950 square feet. I just don't get this whole bigger, better bullshit. I'm not into it. I'm not really pleased with the way the city has grown. I'm sick of bad stucco jobs and shitty strip malls.

But I think it's got to be really hard to be an urban planner and get your head around how to do this correctly. I don't think it's an easy job. It's easy to critique it, criticize it, and make fun of it or be disgruntled about it, but I think that it's a hard job to pull off, because you have people who want to invest money, and you've got to do this. I still think Reno is a small town. I think you still have the same kind of guys. At work I still duke it out with the same dudes. It's who you know. It's still that kind of town. There's a handful of guys who are super affluent and they call the shots, at least in my industry. And I get that and that's fine. It's a good-old-boy club, Coney Island on 4th Street, and all that stuff.

Reno has that proximity thing. It's got Tahoe and the mountains and the city and the desert and Pyramid [Lake]. It's nice to live here.

Barber: You had a very specialized major in school. Did you have career aspirations related to your major?

Cividino: I thought I was going to get a master's degree and then maybe try to get into teaching at a higher level, a university level. I really thought that that's what I was going to do. Here's the deal. I didn't go to school and pick my major because I had a job aspiration; I picked my major because that's what I was interested in. I'm not like a guy who went to engineering school and became an engineer, or nursing school and became a nurse or a doctor. I'm just a guy who went to school and studied what he was interested in. I was into plants and rocks.

I didn't give a lot of thought to what I was going to do, which is maybe not that bright, but it is what it is. For some odd reason I ended up not going back to school. I was traveling a lot and I was working. I did that School of Biblical Studies in Europe.

It was a program through Youth With A Mission, YWAM, a Christian nondenominational organization. It was awesome. It was the first kind of bilingual school that they had taught in Italy. They had bases all over the world. I got to interpret and study the Bible, and that was pretty intriguing. I was raised a pretty hardcore Catholic, but I had fallen away from that. At that point of time in my life I was born-again Christian, pretty hardcore.

I was in a ska band called the Mudsharks, and we were traveling all over the States. My dream was to travel all over the world. I had this little rock-star life, if you will. But then I had this spiritual thing happening and I went and did this school. It was good.

I think what I took away from that trip more than anything was something called a Reconciliation Walk, which was commemorating the 900th anniversary of the Crusades. I got together with five other men and women, and we retraced the path of the crusaders from where Pope Urban called out for the Crusades in Cologne, France, all the way to Jerusalem. We walked from Cologne, France, to Istanbul, which was awesome.
We were walking through Croatia and Serbia during the Balkan War. It was a trip. We

couldn't get into Montenegro because they were shelling, so we had to take the ferry from Croatia to Italy and from Italy to Albania. That was really intense. That was three and a half months of just walking every day.

Then I went back to [unclear], Switzerland. I lived there for one more year after the Rec Walk, came back to the States, and the next year I went back and I walked through Syria and Lebanon by myself. That was mind-bending.

John Jesse, who used to own the Pneumatic Diner and was part owner of Deux Gros Nez, was opening what was going to be a new restaurant behind the old Del Mar Station on St. Lawrence right off of Virginia in the old Edco Electronics Building. I worked on that job with him and Ben Wilborn, who now makes guitars. He's an amazing craftsman, runs Wilborn Woodworking. He's a cabinetmaker, but now he makes guitars, and he's just phenomenal.

I was working with John, Ben, and a guy named Tom Casper, who ironically now works for me. We took this building and ripped it apart and did a crazy, super lengthy non-profitable remodel on it. John never ended up opening the restaurant, but he owns the building, and it's got some great office spaces. The building's amazing. I got to do steelwork. I also got to do a lot of stonework, which was wonderful because I grew up doing stonework as a kid with my father, so it was really nice to do stonework and set miles of tile and paint it. We did everything in there. We built the doors, the windows. It was radical.

Even though John Jesse is an oddball, and can be kind of hard to get along with, the guy's brilliant. I learned a lot from him. He was really an important figure in helping me break out into what I did. I had my construction chops, I think, from my father, or at least the ability to think. I didn't have formal training. I didn't grow up framing houses, but I did all that stuff with my father, and he was so particular and critical, so I felt like I had always been able to build things well. I learned a lot with John.

When I was on the Rec Walk, I had this really weird epiphany. This may sound totally hokey, but it's the truth. I was walking one day in Croatia. I'll never forget this. I was with this gal, Liz, who's from England. We were talking and praying, if you will, about love and the characteristics of love, and I had a vision. It was a big piece of Y-flange. A Y-flange, if you don't know, is like the letter "H." It's made out of steel and it's a big structural beam. It's used in big buildings, and it comes in all different sizes. This one that I saw in my mind was massive, and it just went on and on. It was long, maybe 80 or 100 feet long, and it was sitting on these two big limestone pillars, but it was cantilevered for 30 or 40 feet. It was sea-foam green and red and orange and all those great colors that raw steel is when it's tuned and waxed and honed.

I remember in this vision I saw this thing while I was thinking about the properties or characteristics of love, and this beam was so straight. You could walk on it. You could park a car on it. You just knew it was strong. You know when you're around steel, you have this sense that it's unyielding. It's sturdy. It's the real deal. I thought, that's love. That's what love is, man. There it is. Bam, that's it.

It was weird because from that day forward something inside me just knew, you're going to work with steel, dude. That's going to be the medium that you express this deposit that God's put in you into the world. That was it.

I came back to the States. I worked for John. I did some welding. I thought, "Yeah, this is pretty cool." I had never really welded before. Then I took a bunch of

machining classes. I took some welding classes. I did a lot of reading. I was super proactive. I bought some machines. I ran the little shop space. And that's how it all started. [laughs]

Barber: You went into business for yourself.

Cividino: Absolutely. Yes, I went into business for myself. I waited tables for Bill Gilbert, the chef who owns Beaujolais Bistro. Before that, I worked at the Metro, and before that, I was at 4th Street Bistro. I was always waiting tables. I love food, I love the restaurant environment, and I loved working with John. That was when I just decided, "I'm just going to do this." And I was painting a lot, painting bikes, painting motorcycles, painting doors. That's when I started making doors.

This is something I learned when I was in the band. I was the worst musician in my band. Everyone else in my band was formally trained. I was trained. I grew up playing the trumpet, and I was a good classical trumpet player, but I never could play jazz. I could never improvise. I was never schooled in that way. I'm super rigid. If you look around my house, you'll see—it's how I'm wired. So although I loved jazz and I listened to a lot of it, I could never play it, and everyone in my band was really technically on point.

But I'll never forget Miles Davis once said, "Jazz is like America. It's supposed to be free." The point of that was that in this interview with him, he was saying, "Man, so much of what you hear today in jazz is so scripted and so limited. If you know too much, it can limit you. You're bound by knowledge." And I think what made me viable in the band I was in was the fact that musically, really, I was a baby, so anything was possible. Of course you could play five bars instead of six. Why not? Who says you can't? Like Miles said, "Do what you want. Just express yourself."

I felt like I came into my business doing steelwork the same way. I didn't have a bunch of rules or regulations or so much schooling that said you can't do that. I had just enough education from my father and not enough education from anyone else that I was able to impose my creative thumbprint on my work, and that is a total blessing, because I think that if I had known more, I wouldn't be as creative.

We all get caught in ruts. I've done the same thing a couple times, and I try not to do that. That's the beauty of collaboration. The guys who I work with, they're also super creative. And, of course, I have a fingerprint. I have an aesthetic. There is something that I like about certain things and some things just don't resonate with me. But that being said, I think if you can not be bound by knowing too much, that's a real gift, and I just fell right into that. I was lucky.

Barber: Where was your first shop space?

Cividino: The first shop space was in Marvin Grulli's building on Lander and Mt. Rose—the site of the first Bibo's Coffee Shop. Right behind that is a cool upstairs office apartment, and downstairs there was a little shop space. I rented in conjunction with Ben Wilborn. We shared a space for a little while, but it became apparent really quickly that there was not enough room. It was so small for the both of us. I kept that space for a little while, and then all of a sudden I got hired to do a job at the Carson [City] Airport, and I

moved my entire shop down there. I was doing all the finish work on a custom hangar for over a year.

There was a gentleman by the name of Michael Thoben, and he was the CEO of Interlink Electronics. They made laser pointers, infrared pointers. They had this whole technological area cornered. This guy made so much money. He started his business from nothing. He used to be Ansel Adams' assistant. He worked for Kodak and for Polaroid and he taught photography. Really interesting guy, really nice man, super smart, ever since he was a child loved planes. He didn't come from any sort of money. He would fly model planes, but he always wanted to be around planes. He'd go to all the air shows. He started Interlink Electronics, he made a bunch of money, and he bought planes and was just flying. He bought a beautiful WACO biplane from one of the astronauts who was on the moon—not Alan Shepard. An unbelievable plane. When you buy something like that, there are tax implications, so he wanted to keep his plane in Nevada for a while, and he ended up keeping it at this hangar that I was working on.

He was building a home on a private airstrip in Pine Mountain right outside of Yosemite Valley, and he wanted to do all this finished steelwork and he didn't have anyone to do it. He saw the work that I was doing, and he said, "Would you be interested in coming up and looking at this?"

I said, "Absolutely."

So he flew me up there. I had one employee at the time, this part-time kid. Really what he needed was an interior designer because it was a mess, and he needed a steelworker. And I just off-the-cuff played both. It was totally crazy. He rented a house for me, and I lived up there off and on. He would fly me back to Reno on the weekends. I got to fly a lot.

This airstrip is insane. The guys who have planes on this airstrip are mind-boggling. Chuck Yeager would fly in because Clay Lacy, who was Lear's test pilot (as in the Moya Lear Theater downtown), had a house there. He owns Lacy Aviation out of somewhere in Orange County, in L.A. [John] Travolta flew in his DC-3. There were all these beautiful planes. It was amazing.

So here I am, I'm just this guy, and I'm telling him, "Yeah, I think you should do this in your kitchen." [laughs] And I worked there for over a year. So I was without a shop for two years. I was in a state of funky limbo, working on these really specific projects.

Then that ended and I moved back to Reno and I opened up a shop space on Fourth Street two doors down from where I am now. That shop was great. I was there for a while. It was too small. I moved to Dickerson Road. That was good for a while. I liked Dickerson, but it's a bit of a drag, Dickerson Road is.

Barber: Where is that?

Cividino: Dickerson parallels Fourth Street just on the other side of the river. Second turns into Dickerson. It's there at Chism Trailer Park. It's just demoralizing. It's where people go to die, almost. It's just kind of sad.

My shop was a nice shop; it just wasn't big enough. My machine shop room was so full I couldn't even get to my mill, I couldn't get to my lathe. I was storing stuff in there. It was a bit of a mess. The guy that I rented my shop space from on Fourth Street,

Bill Botelho, was a longtime Fourth Street resident. I said, "Bill, you've got to sell me your shop," and he didn't want to do it, but eventually he gave in.

Barber: Was he still operating a business there?

Cividino: Yes, he still was operating Reno Motor Machine, but he was on the tail end of that. He said, "Look, I'm Portuguese. I don't have to sell anything. I rent." [laughs] Bill was like a surrogate father to me. He's been in my life for a long time. He's actually three years younger than my father, but kind of hard-headed and reminds me of my dad a lot, except he's more of a gearhead, where my father's more like a building guy.

Bill was great to me. It was hard for me to make the rent, and he cut me slack. He believed in me. He just said, "You're a hardworking kid, I like you a lot, and we're going to make this work out." He's been a really good friend to me, and he agreed to sell the building. He carried the note and he made it possible for me to buy it. There was no way I could come up with the amount that I needed to buy his old shop, my current shop. It's a big space. It's 6,000 square feet. My parents helped me out, which was wonderful. They said, "You're working hard. We think you can pull it off." And Bill carried the note. So there I was, back on Fourth Street, and I liked Fourth Street a lot. I have a love-hate relationship with Fourth Street, probably like most people who have spots on Fourth Street, because it has a lot of great history, and there are a lot of wonderful businesses and wonderful people on Fourth Street.

Then you have this element that just is so frustrating and it makes you want to shoot people. I have planters out front, and there's always trash in the planters and people sitting on the plants. And I get being down and out. I get it. There are times when I drive to work and I'm so cognizant of the fact that I'm one bad decision away from being down and out. We all like to think that we're in control. Believe me, I get the fact that I'm not in control of much. The wind blows the wrong way and I'm screwed. I am so extended, especially with buying these new machines and this and that, that I cannot fuck up. I don't mean to swear, but I just cannot.

So I understand that that could happen at any given moment, but there's a difference between being down and out and then just being pathetic. I feel like Fourth Street is where the pathetic thing happens in Reno, for whatever reason, and it gets old to be around. I try to have compassion. I try to not lose sight of how fortunate I am, but Jesus, man. You've got to be kidding me. It's the same old shit.

I'm right next to the old HAWC Clinic. They moved to Record Street. I don't really know what went down at the HAWC Clinic, but it seemed like there was always a line in front one day out of the week and I think people got some money, and then they all just went to the gas station across the street and bought White Wolf Vodka and got drunk and then threw their bottles on my door. That's my recollection of the HAWC Clinic. I don't know what the answer is, but I just know what the reality is.

I know there are business guys who are trying to change it, but the city, once again, the urban planning staff or someone, they've got their head up their ass. It's ridiculous. You've got this amazing ballpark, you've got these great businesses, and then you have this homeless shelter. And I get the shelter, but maybe that's not the best positioning. What are we doing, and why don't we regentrify this great historic landmark and make this a really wonderful thoroughfare and get some trees? Why don't we clean it

up?

Barber: What do you think that would take? Do you think it's an aesthetic issue? Are there zoning issues, in particular, that you've been aware of that seem to be impediments?

Cividino: Yes. I used to go to some of the NAB [Neighborhood Advisory Board] meetings. They're really frustrating because it seems like everyone talks and nothing ever happens. That's the part of the political sphere that I don't do well in because I'm a doer. I think, "Hey, look, this thing needs to be fixed. This is broken. This needs to be fixed." Or, "Hey, build me this, okay, I'll build you that."

You want to know how to fix Fourth Street? You've got a bunch of people with a bunch of ideas, but none of those ideas ever get implemented. I don't know why. It's really frustrating. I think that the majority of the business owners on Fourth Street and probably in other areas of town feel the same way. This is ridiculous. This is a waste of time. What are you doing? Are you just trying to justify your job? Why are we here? Really, why are we here? It's really frustrating.

I don't think it would take much to fix Fourth Street. I don't. I think it's an aesthetic thing, absolutely. I think it's moving some stuff around. Having that homeless shelter right downtown is ridiculous. It doesn't make sense. I get the fact that the homeless need somewhere to go. I just don't think it's downtown.

If you want to regentrify this city and make it viable, make it a place where tourists want to go, you should probably move the homeless shelter. You should probably do something with all the beat-down, ridiculous kitschy shops that litter all of downtown and the shitty weekly motels. I'm not saying knock them to the ground, because some of them are cool buildings. I'm just saying do something else with them. That's one thing to say, it's another thing to do it.

You have the university right there. It blows my mind. You've got this amazing historic residential community right there off of Fourth. Isn't it the oldest residential community in Reno, right across from me, between Sixth and the freeway? It's one of the older sections, right? And it's just beat. That's tragic, man. Those homes are amazing. I have a couple of friends who have bought in that neighborhood and tried to do something, just like I bought in this neighborhood [east of Wells Avenue] and I tried to do something. I invested a ton of time and money into this home. It was great to watch the snowball effect of that, because [architect] Jack Hawkins then designed two really modern townhomes on either side of me. When the economy was rolling, this became less of a rental kind of neighborhood and more of an owner-op situation. But since the bottom's fallen out, it's definitely spun the other way.

It's a shame. This neighborhood's just like Fourth Street. It's never going to be the Newlands area [in Old Southwest Reno] because it doesn't have the trees and other aspects, but there's no reason why this neighborhood, which was built in the thirties, couldn't be a whole lot better than it is. You're encouraging people to go out of town and live, as opposed to come into town. Give them an incentive to live in town and buy these older homes and remodel them and tweak them. I don't know what the answer is, but I don't think anyone downtown does either.

Barber: Were there specific issues that drew you to any of those city meetings, or were

you just trying to get involved in general?

Cividino: I think I was just trying to get involved. I just wanted to see what was going on and get involved. But after a while, after you go to ten, twelve of them, you just think, "My god, we're not getting anywhere here. I have no idea what we're doing."

Barber: Have you met with the business Association, the RSCBA?

Cividino: No, I haven't.

Barber: I want to ask you a little bit about your building and the condition you found it in. There was something of a similar kind of industry happening in there, but what was it like and how did you modify the building after you bought it for your business?

Cividino: I bought it from Bill Botelho, who owned Reno Motor Machine, and Bill was a fascinating man. He was one of the leading machinists for Harrah's automobile collection, and he had a great assortment of buddies who would all convene down there. John Scott is another great motor builder. He actually ran a water waste treatment plant for years, but he was an engine builder for Harrah's automobile collection and he worked for Bill, in Bill's shop, Reno Motor Machine. They were buddies with Joe Shepard from Shepard's Metal Magic, which was an old chrome shop here in town. Jim Shepard's passed away, but he was the chromer for Harrah's automobile collection. So there were all these really talented old dudes.

Bill was a midget racer and super into motorcycles. His motorcycle collection will blow your mind. He owned this shop. He's a big flathead guy. When I bought the shop, it was mind-boggling how much stuff was in that building. I don't know how many hundreds of flatheads I moved out of that building.

Barber: What's a flathead?

Cividino: A flathead is a type of motor. He has the coolest, rarest, most unbelievable stuff. He is a collector and he doesn't collect junk, for the most part. He has these beautiful Offenhauser motors, super rare, gorgeous, that he somehow ended up with. Amazing motorcycles, amazing killer flathead intakes and carbs and all this really period-correct cool stuff. He's a cool old guy.

It took me months to move him out of his shop, and he's a control freak and he kept wanting to micromanage me, until I said, "Bill, you can't do this, man. You're not paying me. You've got to let me get you out of here." So much stuff went to scrap, and then so much stuff just went across the street to a storage space. Bill's eighty. It was his birthday last week, and he's got to start getting rid of some stuff soon because if he doesn't, I don't think his family even knows half of what he's got, or if they did, where it would be found. John Scott and I, I think, are the only two guys who know where his stuff is, and he has quite a legacy.

Moving him out was really difficult. It was totally painful. It cost me a ton of money. I wanted to choke him sometimes. But it is what it is. It's on his terms. He's old-school. So I finally got him out of there. He kept his shop very clean. Q&D built that

shop in ’72.

Barber: Is that when the building was constructed?

Cividino: That’s when the building that I’m in was constructed. But even a really clean motor machine shop after that many years is going to be dirty. It took about thirty gallons of primer and thirty or forty gallons of paint and all new, more energy-efficient lights, and fixing the drywall and putting openers on the rollups. Here I was this little business guy, just going, going, going.

My environment has to be a certain way or I cannot be productive. I’m super neurotic. My guys make fun of me, and I get it. In some ways it’s a strength, but in some ways it’s actually a weakness. I can be hamstrung if my couch is a degree out. I vacuum three times a day at my house. I can’t help it. But I think that that’s what we bring to our clients. We bring a neurosis so they get a really killer product. You have to be neurotic, I guess.

But when you’re remodeling a shop and everything has to be a certain way for you to get to work, it’s expensive. I spent a lot of money getting that shop up to speed. Luckily, Bill had tons of power there, so that wasn’t a big deal, but it was routing the power and getting all the 220 in place for all the welders and the three-phase for the machines.

Then I bought a water jet and a high-def plasma, all CAD-driven big machines, maybe six months ago. It cost me 60-grand to get that shop up to speed because I had to remodel it again. I had to build the offices and the kitchenette. Now I never have to leave my shop. I can live there, which I may end up doing, but it cost a lot of money. It’s no joke.

That’s the one thing that makes me envious of my friends who are computer guys. They’ve got their laptop. They do their thing. Their investment is 500 bucks, 1,000 bucks or something. It’s unbelievable. When I think about the amount of money I have wrapped up in tools and my truck and the tools on my truck and my shop, it’s overwhelming. Metalworking is a really expensive profession because it is such a difficult medium to work in. It’s an abusive material. It beats the shit out of your tools. The longevity of even the best tools when it comes to working with metals, even under the best care, is limited when you’re going through stuff. It doesn’t help that everything is kind of built to break anyway. That’s a little frustrating in and of itself.

When you’re spending $5,000 on a welder and you have six of those welders, and then you have a water jet that’s $280,000, and then you have a mill and a lathe and those are all 15 or $20,000 and you have all these consumables, pretty soon you think, wow, I’ve got a million dollars or more, give or take, wrapped up in tools. Then you realize, “I’ve got to charge quite a bit of money per hour to pay for this shit.”

I know I’m totally on a tangent, but this kills me. You’ve got people who have these miniscule jobs: “Can you build me a 3-foot handrail for my house?” And you’re thankful for the work. I don’t want to say no, but I lose money. It costs me more to roll my tools out on a truck than I can charge someone to build a 3-foot handrail. It’s pointless. If a job is under 8-grand, I’m not going to make money.

That’s just how it is, because I have five employees and a bookkeeper, and I’m at that breakpoint where my monthly nut, because of the machinery I bought, is high. My

per-square-footage cost is really high because of my water jet. If that thing's running, it's definitely making me money, but keeping that thing running ten hours a day is not a small task in this town, even though I've got, by far, the best operator here in all of Reno, in all of Nevada. I am so fortunate to have the guys that I have.

But that being said, my nut is mind-bending, and so this year I have to be so diligent. I've been apprenticing, if you will, under Rick Reviglio from Western Nevada Supply. Rick blows my mind. That guy is up at three every morning. He's at work by four. He is a machine. It is no joke. I don't know how many employees he has. He used to have a lot more, but he knows all their names, he knows their birthdays. He's that kind of guy; he goes in the office and he just studies every day.

I've been talking to him quite a bit lately, and he said, "Look, man, you've got to start working on your business because you're at that point where you'll fail if you don't get those accounts." And that's why I had this NDOT [Nevada Department of Transportation] job. We did some sculptures out in Carson. I made some money on that job. I was so thankful for that job.

Barber: Along Highway 395?

Cividino: Yes, along 395. I just had a realization that, if I took that money and I put it in the bank, in ten years it would be gone, not because I'm squandering it, but because I pay it out in wages, and there's just not enough custom work going on to support a shop my size. I realized at that point that I had to break into some sort of production work. That's when I decided to buy the water jet. The learning curve is steep. I've never worked in a production shop in my life. I've only ever done custom work.

Barber: Can you explain the difference a little bit?

Cividino: Custom work is when someone comes up to you and says, "Hey, can you build me a custom one-off front door?" "Can you build me a custom Japanese soaking tub in my bathroom?" "Can you build me a custom table?" "Can you remodel my house and make it look amazing like no one else's?" That's custom work.

Production work is when someone asks, "Can you weld forty of these widgets and give me a really good competitive price on them?" I've never done that, ever, though when you own a water jet, you're cutting, you're blanking stuff out for machine shops, parts that they then machine and turn into whatever they turn them into, and there's a production schedule. If Wolf Machine needs four hundred of these blades for these things that they're building, you have to have them when you say you're going to have them or Wolf Machine is going to go somewhere else. So, too, with Hood Machine or the other, Kappes, Cassiday, a big mining company here in town. They build mines all over the world. We cut a ton of stainless steel for I don't know what, things that they are making. That's production work. You're supplying.

I'm in a potentially powerful spot where I've got machines and men who can run them, so I can supply machine shops or just the average Joe with whatever they need. I can do super high-end custom work, but now I also have the ability to do production work because I've got the skill set from the custom side and I've got the water jet and the welding and the forming capacity.

I just started building coffee roasters for Bill Kennedy. He owns the San Francisco Roaster Company, and he is selling roasters all over the world. He cannot keep up. He has a shop in Fallon [Nevada], and they don't have the machinery to keep up. He needs help. So here we are, and we're building roasters for them. That's a small production; I'm not building thirty roasters a week. I couldn't anyway, even if I tried. But we just did six, and hopefully maybe next month we'll do another group. I'm trying to get in with him and feel that whole thing out.

I'm trying to have three facets to my shop: the custom end, the production end, and then the supply, the water jet, the 2D cutting supply portion of the shop. My reality has changed significantly in just a short period of time.

Rick Reviglio from Western is saying, "Hey, look, you've got to start working on your business. You've got to stop building stuff and you've got to start hustling clients and getting out there, and you can't get discouraged because you're getting shopped," because it's totally cut-throat. It is really bad. There are a lot of unscrupulous people in the construction industry, and it's demoralizing, especially when you try not to operate that way. It's a drag. It's really hard to not get bent out of shape. But he says, "That's not going to get you the next job. You've just got to keep going," and he's right. So you do, you've just got to keep hustling and keep charging and trying to make it happen.

I think when you have that kind of mindset, and someone asks, why aren't you going to the NAB meeting for Fourth Street, I think, "Really?" It's a waste of time, because my work never ends. I sleep it. I live it. I breathe it. I can't get away from it. Sometimes I really, really want to, but I can't because I feel a huge sense of responsibility for the guys I have working with me. They have kids. Kevin, who's my right-hand man, who's one of the most talented individuals I've ever, ever watched with a tool, he's mind-boggling. He has three kids my son's age and younger. What am I going to tell him: "Hey, Kevin, I can't pay you this week because I'm not bringing the work in"? It doesn't work that way. I've got four other guys in similar situations. There are other people who obviously have even more employees than that. I'm just an example, but as an owner, it's a lot. It's a big burden. I think the small business owner really doesn't get support or the help that I think they deserve.

Barber: I wonder if you feel any kind of connection to some of the other businesses on the street that operate in that way. There are a number of family-owned businesses that have been there for a long time. You're not that far from Martin Iron Works.

Cividino: Oh, yes, [Piero] Bullentini is right there, yes. Those guys are awesome. I really like those guys. I respect them. They're really hard workers, and they always try to keep their guys going. Those guys were working weekends, they were working crazy hours, and then all of a sudden it was like a ghost town over there. I was getting worried about what was going on at Martin, but they bounced back, and those guys are on point. I have a lot of respect for them, just like the petroleum maintenance guys. They're totally quirky and weird. They're all into old British motorcycles and cars. They're really unique guys, but they put their heads down and they just do it.

My neighbor, Ed LaCruz, at Dyna Reno, died. He died in the alley behind the shop of a heart attack five months ago. Some homeless dude found him, called or flagged down a cop or something. He was pushing the motorcycles in at the end of the day. A lot

of people would say he was probably the last real motorcycle mechanic in Reno who could work on pretty much anything. He used to be the Ducati shop in town. He wasn't moving any product, and Big Valley Honda got it. Now his son, who's an electrician, is trying to keep the shop open. He's a good guy.

There's Eric from Advanced Auto right down the street. His wife works there. Her son, his stepson, works there. They've got some great mechanics. These guys are amazing, super hard workers. They're super creative. They build amazing rock crawlers and stuff like that. They've got a really neat clientele, really good mechanics, and, man, they're there all the time. They just grind and grind and grind.

And Davis, Davis Frame [phonetic], that metal shop, they're my neighbors. Those guys work. It's a neat group of people. The bike shop guys, the Reno Bike Project, what they're doing is totally cool, and they put their heads down. They just session. Louis' Basque Corner is cool. The street's got Casale's Halfway Club. Shane's daughter is opening up the old Reno Salvage again. That business has been there forever. That's where that famous fight happened on Fourth Street.

Barber: The Johnson-Jeffries fight?

Cividino: Yes, right, on Toano right there. I like the business owners around me, for sure.

Barber: It's interesting because you seem to have a real sense of them and the work that they're doing. How does that develop? Is it just from seeing them on the street, or do you go into these businesses? How do you get to know what they do?

Cividino: Things always break. Advanced Auto will come by once or twice a week with a serious 4-1-1, asking, "Can you weld this water pump?" "Oh, my god, the exhaust is falling off this car. Can you help?" We have a symbiotic relationship. It's like, "Hey, Eric, can you help me slam my old VW bus?" We cut parts for Martin and we cut some stuff for Davis. I know the petroleum guys because I'm into vintage motorcycles. I would weld things for the motorcycles that Ed LaCruz was working on. You just get to know these guys. Plus, Bill Botelho, who I bought my shop from, was really in with these guys, and he always comes down and harasses me. So the guys would always come down and harass me with Bill.

Barber: They'd just stop in?

Cividino: Absolutely, like they own it. It's hilarious. They will stop the show. We'll be working, and Bill will walk up with three or four of the old dudes and everything stops, because they just want your attention. It's pretty funny.

Barber: They tell you a lot of stories?

Cividino: They tell you stories. They talk. They drink their Starbucks lattes and talk at you forever.

Barber: You talked a little bit about the homeless issue. I know there are folks in the back

alley sometimes behind your shop. Do you feel, in general, though, that it's a pretty safe area?

Cividino: Yes, actually Fourth Street is a lot safer than most people perceive it to be. I get why people think Fourth Street is sketchy. It's because it's dirty. There's a lot of trash on the street, and you have the homeless element, but for the most part, the homeless people are pretty harmless. I've got a bunch of really drunk homeless dudes who hang out behind my shop, and I work there late at night and I roll up my rear door. They don't ever mess with me too bad.

It's more during the day when there's some whacked-out individuals on Fourth Street. There is a lot of low-grade drug usage on Fourth Street, and you'll get some pretty weird people. A couple of the guys at my shop carry concealed guns.

John Scott, who used to work for Bill Botelho, welds for me because I make two-stroke exhaust expansion chambers for Italian scooters. He'll weld for me in the morning. He'll come in at four in the morning. The first thing he does is put his nine-millimeter on the table, and then he starts welding, because he's actually had to pull it on a couple of people.

Barber: Will people just walk in the shop?

Cividino: Yes. When it's way early in the morning, we'll keep the door locked, but people will come in. I've had some people get pretty aggressive, just whacked out, just totally cracked out. Nine, ten in the morning they'll come in, eyes massive, getting really intense. It's a trip. And John has pulled that gun on a couple of individuals. It's weird. So that suddenly makes Fourth Street not seem that safe, but really in the scheme of it, it is what it is.

You've got Club Bass, and there's an element of individual who goes there. You have really scantily clad women. I always trip out if I'm working late Wednesday, Thursday, Friday night. That's when Club Bass and The Underground, Remi's joint, are open late. I always see these extremely underdressed women. I'm always blown away. I'm thinking, they must feel pretty damn safe. I mean, shit, they're just rolling in and out. It's no big deal. Young girls, man. It's a trip. So it can't be that bad.

Barber: This is not a good segue, but you do you think there's a prostitution issue along Fourth Street?

Cividino: Not that bad.

Barber: That's not who you were talking about.

Cividino: No, not at all. I'm just talking about girls who are going to shows or clubs. The prostitution's actually moved up closer to the Sands. Prostitution's up on Washington and Fourth.

Barber: On West Fourth?

Cividino: Oh, it's totally gone west. Down by my shop, you'll see it a little farther east, you will a little bit, but it's not that bad. Mostly what you see east is just a bunch of really doped-out dudes. If you go past Ray's Tire, there are some motels by Big Daddy's Bar, and it's totally heart-wrenching because you'll see families living in there. You're just thinking, "Oh, dude, no kid should do that." There's that really depressing element, but that's just more drug-use-type stuff. I see more hookers on my way to Beto's than I do here, and it's all in that Sands Casino area.

Barber: I think we can end by talking a little bit about the street itself. Are there any improvements that you think could be made to the street in terms of transportation issues, lanes, sidewalks, or parking? Is there anything you think would enhance your ability to do business or just enhance the street in general?

Cividino: Parking on Fourth Street is tenuous at best. You have to get three-quarters of your vehicle on the sidewalk to not have your mirrors ripped off, or your car hit by RTC bus drivers or other drivers. Parking on Fourth is tough, but that just is what it is. Would I love a parking lot somewhere? I don't know. Maybe it wouldn't be that cool, when it's all said and done.

For me personally, doing my business, it's tough. I have steel delivery at my shop. PDM rolls up in a giant truck, and I've got to block traffic off, or I have to have the guys park on Elko, and then I've got to drive across Fourth with my forklifts. That can be difficult. Martin Iron Works has got it wired. They've got a huge yard, so it's no problem for them. I don't have that; I'm a storefront. So from that perspective it's difficult to do business.

Fourth Street could use some trees. That's why the first thing I did when I bought that building was put planters outside. Then I put a new roof on the building and I planted some big wisterias up on my roof, and they hang over. They shade the entrance a little bit. I just think that that does something to a human, walking by a little bit of biomass, walking by something that makes you think, "Thank you, God." It's nice, and Fourth Street needs that badly, even if they just put trees into the sidewalk.

I know that there's a pipeline running across or through or down Fourth Street, and I've heard that it's tough digging on Fourth. I don't know if that pipeline was from the airport, an old jet fuel pipeline, or what the deal is, but there's something going on under there.

If they could put in some trees and just slow it down a little bit, it could be great. But it may not make sense to do that if they're not going to do something for the businesses. I think along Fourth Street, you could have some amazing restaurants in some of those cool, edgy buildings. The Alpine Glass building, which is vacant still, is a great building. The Barengo building that the guys, Justin [Owen] and Ryan [Gold], and their friend owned, is another one. I don't know if they're hamstrung, or what's going on there.

On Fourth Street, it's like one thing after the other. That place should be totally thriving. It should be like California Street but cooler, in my opinion, but it's going to take a serious commitment from the city. Once again, what are you going to do with that brand-new building that they built for St. Vincent's? What are you going to do there? How that whole thing pans out, I don't know.

With the ballpark you see a lot more traffic during the summer during the baseball season. A lot of people park on Fourth and they'll walk. There is tons of activity. So you would think that they would try and do something there.

They cleaned up the bus station. I thought that was cool. I think they're trying to really work hard to keep it safe and keep it clean. I've never taken the bus in Reno. I don't really want to, but it seems like a lot of people do. They just built the new bus stops. Those are cool. I think that there are some cool things happening. I always get excited about certain things, but it seems like it's never quite enough, or it's never directed enough.

Barber: Do you feel like your space has the capacity and the space to accommodate what you want to do with your business?

Cividino: I think that if everything goes as planned, I'm going to need more space. I rent some space across the street, in the old Blue Seal Transmission Building, which is a great building, and Tim and Chad from Bootleg Courier, that's kind of their spot. I lease some space in back from the guy who owns that building.

I would love to buy the building that the HAWC used to be in because I would love to expand my business if I could, but I really would have to turn some serious numbers and really be on point to make that happen. But I fully believe that I can do that. I'm vested. I'm doing it because it's fun and because I enjoy it, but I would like to at some point in time in my life make some money. I don't really have a pot to piss in. I'm surrounded by a lot of nice stuff because I was raised in such a way—it's like my mom told me, and I'll never forget this, my mother said, "Paolo, don't be like all these Americans," and I don't think she was trying to be a bitch, but she just said, "Don't be like all these Americans. Don't go out and buy six suits that look like shit just so that you have something different to wear every day. Buy one nice suit and buy five really beautiful ties."

It's better to go through life like that, and I've taken that analogy through my life. I'll save my shekels to buy something that I really value, as opposed to just having a bunch of shit. I restore old Italian scooters and I collect old glass pots and I restore old furniture because, to me, there's this era of pre-planned obsolescence, and I am a fan of that. That's what I like. I like shit that wasn't built to break. And that's how I build the things that I build. So I try to surround myself with stuff like that.

And all of that is to say that I would like to make some money because I work really hard, because I want my guys to be able to have a great life, to have benefits, to have insurance, and to live the American dream. I want that for myself and for the guys who work for me.

My problem is that I'm genuine friends with everyone who works for me. It's really hard to be a boss when you're someone's friend. This is one of the things I'm struggling with. They don't take advantage of that; they're really good guys. But it's probably more difficult for me than it is for them. I want to afford things for them and for myself, and the only way that that's going to happen is if I continue to grow my business, because right now I'm at that spot where it's going to be easier for me to fail, I think, than for me to not.

But I'll do everything. I'll work another job. I don't care. That's one thing that

makes me so happy that I was raised the way I was raised because I'll put my head down and I will just grind till there's nothing left. I don't know how else to do it.

I think that if you've got that and you're surrounded by talent, which I feel like I am, then you can make it, even in today's economy, even in Washoe, even in the state of Nevada and the industry I'm in. There are so many guys out of work. I feel so bad. When you have a man who's fifteen years older than you walk into your shop looking for work, that's brutal. I have such a hard time telling them—and some of these guys are skilled—"I'm sorry, stud. I can't hire you." Something inside me wants to hurl. I seriously feel nauseous every time that happens, and it happens every week, in my industry or the construction industry. It's gnarly in this town.

There are a lot of people who have had to change their whole MOs, and I think what makes our shop really unique is that we're not one-trick ponies. We don't just do one thing; we can do anything. We do custom-finished concrete work. We do custom steelwork. We'll do woodwork. We integrate a lot of glass into what we do. We do a ton of our own design. I paint a lot of automotive-type stuff.

I think you have to be really diverse nowadays to make it happen, at least in my industry, my line of work, and you've got to be consistent. That's my clients' demand. I love my clients, but they're hard because—I get it. They pay a lot of money. We're not cheap, and they pay a lot of money for what they get. They're really particular. I wouldn't want to work for someone who wasn't because I'm the same way, but it's hard when you want to say, "That's good enough. Jesus, just let that be good enough so I can make profit, please." And you think, it's not even close to good enough, and you just grind at it for another twelve hours, and there goes your profit. It's brutal. Fuck. [laughter] It's hard. Having a high standard, I think is so hard.

I know my friend Ben Wilborn can make money making guitars, but give me a break. This guy is so neurotic. He's so talented, but that is so difficult, and everything has to be just so, and if it's not, you won't sell the damn guitar. It's very hard to make money that way. It's not like Taco Bell where it's just good enough. I know this about myself.

Barber: How do you think the information you've given me today could help make better decisions about this area?

Cividino: I think that if the people who were making some of the decisions about this area realized that their decision-making or lack thereof really impacted the lives of the people who make this community what it is—in a good sense—maybe they would make some wiser decisions. Maybe not. I'd like to not be that cynical.

The business owners on Fourth Street, some of us may have different ideas about what needs to happen, but I think we all know that something needs to happen, and I think we all want something to happen and we're willing to do whatever we have to do to make that happen. It's just really frustrating when nothing happens or when you see decisions being made that are so asinine.

It's so easy to just huck a dart at the homeless shelter. It's been beat up. But it's bullshit, and I'm sorry. That is decision-making at its poorest. It is such a shining example of bad decision-making, it's mind-boggling. It's a travesty, it really is. I mean, come on. Give me a break.

Fourth Street is like a diamond in the rough, and you just think, "Come on, man.

It's a little gem for Reno." And if you could get the area from Fourth Street to the freeway dialed in, you really could have a wonderful, interesting, cool part of downtown. But I just don't know if it's in people's best interest. I don't know really how it works downtown. I don't know how the casinos can stay in business, I don't, because I go downtown and just think, man, who's coming down here spending the kind of money you've got to spend to keep these lights on, really? What's really going on down here? I don't really know who's calling the shots. I don't get it.

But it seems to me like downtown Reno—not just Fourth Street—all of downtown Reno needs to revamp itself because it's just a dump. It's a dump, and there's no reason why it couldn't be really amazing. There's no reason why it couldn't be like a bunch of other interesting towns that I've been to, like a Boulder, Colorado, or a Crested Butte or Telluride. Yes, granted, that's different. You have mountains right there, ski resorts right there. Or look at Petaluma. Even old downtown Vallejo is cool, or old downtown Antioch. They just decided, "Hey, let's revamp this. Let's restore this."

I love restoring stuff. I always feel like I'm given a gift when I get the opportunity to restore something, and I think that if Reno would just restore some of what it has, it'd be a more wonderful place to live and it would have a stronger sense of identity. People would be more pumped up to live in Reno than they are. That's my two cents.