

An Oral History of Sally Loux

4th Street | Prater Way History Project

Interviewed: March 19, 2012

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Interviewer: Matthew Fearon

A Reno native, Sally Loux has worked for twenty years at the Coney Island Bar, located at the Reno-Sparks border where Fourth Street becomes Prater Way. She describes the longstanding establishment's welcoming environment and some of its regular customers, and explains what has made it such a popular gathering place for the entire community for so many decades.

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SALLY LOUX

Interviewed on March 19, 2012
Matthew Fearon, Interviewer

A Reno native, Sally Loux has worked for twenty years at the Coney Island Bar, located at the Reno-Sparks border where Fourth Street becomes Prater Way. She describes the longstanding establishment's welcoming environment and some of its regular customers, and explains what has made it such a popular gathering place for the entire community for so many decades.

Photo by Patrick Cummings

Fearon: It's March 19, 2012. I'm here with Sally Loux in Reno. I'm going to ask Sally as many questions as she'll tolerate. I'll start with biographical questions and then ask a few questions about Fourth Street.

Loux: Okay. Perfect.

Fearon: The first one I have for you is, can you tell me when and where you were born?

Loux: I was born in Reno in August of 1953. My dad was born in Reno, so I'm a definite native Nevadan, native Renoite. In fact, my maternal grandparents were some of the first pioneer settlers to the Truckee Meadows.

Fearon: What was your maiden name?

Loux: Biglieri or "Bilieri," properly pronounced. It's Italian.

Fearon: You just talked about your dad. Can you tell me a little bit about him?

Loux: Oh, my dad's an awesome man. My dad served on the Reno City Council for two terms. He was a vice mayor here, and that was in the seventies. He's a true Reno lover, just loves Nevada and loves Reno. He is eighty-three now, almost eighty-four, very active.

He went to Reno High School and met my mother there. They were high-school sweethearts and were married for fifty-one years when my mom passed away. He keeps really active. He'll see some injustice in the paper and get on it. Just recently he thought something was going on with the animal control situation, and I think they had closed meetings and were supposed to have open meetings. So he was addressing that.

He was the lead councilman in creating the Citifare, currently the RTC. They revamped it, I guess. He's done a lot of good for the community.

Fearon: *When you say he's active, do you mean just politically or in all kinds of ways?*

Loux: Yes, all kinds of ways. He's politically active. He's politically interested, I should say, very interested. Nothing goes by him. He's so aware for an eighty-four-year-old person, of not only the city, but the state and the country and the world. He'll mention things I can't even imagine he's aware of or that I even know are happening. So, yes, and his mind is going a hundred miles an hour all the time. He's a great man.

He dances every Friday. He and my mom were phenomenal dancers, and after she passed, he waited a while, and then he went back to dancing. There's a senior dance club here. He does that every Friday night, he dances. It's at the Senior Center on Ninth Street. They have a really nice dance every Friday night. My dad's not a drinker, so he goes there and dances. When you're an eighty-four-year-old man, there are certainly a lot of women available because a lot of men seem to die sooner than the women. So he goes there and he's quite a good dancer, so he can dance all he wants. In fact, sometimes he doesn't go because it's a lot of dancing.

He's a great man. He's probably the most honest and moral man I've ever known in my life. He wrote a book recently called *With Malice Toward One*, which is the story of some injustice served to him when he was on the City Council. That's a whole 'nother story. We can get into that.

Fearon: It sounds like you have a really good relationship with him.

Loux: I have a great relationship with my dad. I love him. I have three sisters. Well, one passed away from MS about six years ago.

Fearon: I'm sorry to hear that.

Loux: Yes, we're all real close, and everybody is here in town. Two of my sisters live in Sparks, but we're all right here.

Fearon: Do you live in Sparks?

Loux: I live in Reno.

Fearon: You mentioned you have three sisters. You mentioned what your dad did for work. What about your mom when she was alive?

Loux: She was a homemaker. My dad opened a window business when some of us were in college, and so my mom worked for him a little bit. They had an older home that they created a store out of—I think there's a pawn shop there now. What was the name of the street? It's kind of the corner of Rock and Glendale, and then they built a warehouse there. They had the window business there, and my mom worked for my dad a little bit there.

My dad's a realtor. In fact, he just got a forty-five-year recognition for the National Association of Board of Realtors. He's a realtor and he works. He continues to work. He told me about two months ago, "I'm thinking about retiring."

And I said, "Well, you know, you deserve it." He started selling newspapers at

eight years old, and has worked straight since then. He told me that, and I said, “Yes, I think you’ve earned it.” That was two months ago and he hasn’t stopped going in yet. He does property sales, basically. So he keeps busy. He goes into his office whenever he wants, and he goes every day. He works out at Sports West three days a week, and he’s just great.

Fearon: You mentioned your family had a long history in Reno, even before your dad.

Loux: Yes.

Fearon: Do you know what brought your family?

Loux: I do. In fact, just last weekend I was on Ellis Island doing some research there. My great-aunt on my dad’s side came to Reno. I don’t know if it was kind of a mail-order-bride situation, but she came to Reno and married, and they had a farm in Pine Valley in Eureka County, Nevada.

Then my grandmother—that was her sister—my grandmother’s mother got very sick in Italy. So the uncle, the great-uncle, sent for all of the remaining children. My grandmother was eight. I researched this this weekend. There was a three-year-old, an eight-year-old, a ten-year-old, and a twelve-year-old that the husband of her older sister’s oldest sister, I think, came and got because the mother in Italy was sick. They came across the ocean in the steerage compartment of a ship and went to Pine Valley. My grandmother started cooking at eight years old because my uncle had a contract with the railroad workers, so my grandmother helped cook for the railroad workers in Pine Valley from the time she was a little girl. So you can imagine coming from Italy. She was a phenomenal cook.

Then she met my grandfather and they married when she was seventeen. They settled for a while in a little place called Palisade, which is now a ghost town. Then they moved to Reno when there was no more work there. They grew up very poor, and my dad grew up very poor, but he’s made a really good life for himself, hard worker. Then on my mother’s side, my mother’s great-great-grandfather was in the Revolutionary War. I think they settled in Kentucky and then came out from there. The home that they lived in is still off of old Spanish Springs Road in Sparks. My mother’s maiden name was Van Meter. So her family were longtime Truckee Meadows residents.

Fearon: *Do you know what brought them out here?*

Loux: I should know that. What did bring them out here? I think ranching—ranching and property. They homesteaded, actually. I think it was just the westward movement. I don’t think they were miners or anything like that. I think it was just the opportunity to have land and farm out here.

Fearon: You said you grew up in Reno. Where did you go to school?

Loux: I was born here in Reno. When I was a year old, my dad got a transfer to California. I lived there for eight or nine years, and then my family moved back here

when I was ten. I went to Rita Cannan Elementary and Traner Middle School and Wooster High School and the University of Nevada, Reno.

Fearon: What did you do at the University of Nevada?

Loux: I got a degree in child development, which I never actively used except in raising my own children. I love kids.

Fearon: How many kids do you have?

Loux: I have two. I have a son who's twenty-five, he's a geological engineer in Portland, and I have a daughter who's twenty-three and she's a teacher.

Fearon: Is she in Reno?

Loux: She's in Reno.

Fearon: What was it like growing up in Reno?

Loux: Awesome.

Fearon: Do you have any fond memories?

Loux: Oh, yes.

Fearon: What was the most interesting memory you have?

Loux: I have so many good memories of growing up in Reno, because I had an incredibly secure childhood, you know. I can't think of a bad memory, really.

But when my dad became involved in politics, it was fun, and the fact that my parents grew up here. In those days you didn't go anywhere where you didn't know someone. We'd go out to dinner, we knew someone. It was obvious before, but when my dad got into politics it was even more obvious—you couldn't go anywhere. So you had to be good. [laughs]

We had a really nice, close, happy family and good friends. We didn't have a ton when I was a child, but I never knew that, never knew that I didn't have as much as some people, because we're all very secure in what we did have. We had everything we needed. We just didn't have a lot of surplus. I didn't really realize that until I talked to my parents later.

I remember moving up here and the snow, because we lived in Fresno when we were in California, and that was just so much fun. Then just the neighborhood, tons of kids and cousins here. I have lots of my cousins here. The family holidays became much more exciting because my grandparents were here and my cousins were here. We'd all get together. My cousins were all boy cousins, and so the four of us girls plopped into this bunch of guy cousins, but we still had a great time and it was really fun to have family all around. Those were probably some of my fondest memories.

Then I was really, really active in high school, so that was fun. I was a cheerleader and I guess I would say I was an athlete, although then they didn't really have girls' sports—they had GAA [Girls Athletic Association]. I did gymnastics and whatever was available. I was pretty involved in high school, and class offices.

A lot of people have bad high school memories. I have wonderful high school memories. I had great times, great friends. I have lifelong friends now. In fact, two of the girls who I work with at the Coney are old friends—Lorri Galletti's family owns it, and she and I were friends through boyfriends in high school. So I've known her since I was fifteen years old. Our boyfriends were really good friends.

Fearon: Are those boyfriends your husbands?

Loux: No. Her boyfriend became her husband but not mine. My husband and I met later—he was up here from Boulder City, Nevada, where he grew up. He was up here going to school when I met him.

Fearon: Do you remember the first job that you might have had in high school or afterwards?

Loux: Yes. Oh, very well. In fact, I haven't had very many jobs. I've had a lot of long-term jobs. My first job was at Shim's, which was an army-navy surplus store, and it was located at 325 North Sierra Street. I took the job when I think I was fifteen and my sister was seventeen. She was a senior in high school, and she was going to go away for the weekend and she needed someone to cover her. So I went down there, and I ended up filling in for her quite a bit. I ended up working there all through high school and through college.

When I finished college, I was offered the first management position there by anyone other than family. I worked there for quite a few years, and then quit there. I should tell you more about that job, though. It was located where the Eldorado parking garage is now. The owner there was named Fred Shimkovsky, and that also was a family-owned business. His grandfather opened that business as an army surplus store, probably fifty years before I worked there. Then his dad worked it for a while, and then the gentleman who I worked for, Fred Shimkovsky, who was my first boss and perfect first boss, just such an incredible businessman, taught me so much about customer service and how to treat people, generally, if you want to have a successful business. He just was a great guy. He's still living and I still am in contact with him regularly.

Then I quit there and worked at Sassi Lassi, which is where I met Sue [Sue Ashby – a Reno native and a mutual friend of the interviewer and the interviewee]. I hired Sue. It was a really, really popular junior clothing store. Sue was a senior in high school and she came in for a job. I hired Sue and we've been friends since she was a senior in high school. One of the girls who I met at Shim's—so that was a long time ago, too—she and I are still friends, and Sue and she are friends too. When you live in one town forever, it's a whole different story.

Fearon: When did you start working at Coney?

Loux: When I got married, my husband was going to school in Phoenix, so I quit Sassi Lassi and went to live in Phoenix. When we got married, I moved to Phoenix and we lived there for about two and a half years while he finished school. Then we came back here.

I actually went back to Shim's for a little bit, and then I got pregnant and I didn't want to work at Shim's anymore. Downtown had totally changed. I called my boss at Sassi Lassi and said, "You know, I'm pregnant and I'm not going to be there long, but if you can use me I'd like to come back." She put me back into a management position, which was really nice for me, but probably not so good for the girls that I worked with. I think there was a little resentment there. I worked there till my son was born, and then I was pretty much a stay-at-home mom until he was probably five.

Then my friend Lorri Galletti started doing Wednesday-night dinners at the Coney Island, and that was twenty years ago. She said, "Sally, I'm thinking of doing Wednesday-night dinners at the Coney. Want to come help?"

I said, "Sure."

I remember the first night we did it, we were pretty busy. Her family life is pretty much like mine. She grew up here, and the Coney is very popular with local people, so we had a lot of local people there, and they built up. They're still doing Wednesday-night dinners.

Then shortly after that, a couple years, maybe, no, not even that, a year and a half later, one of the waitresses there, Nettie Galletti, who is Lorri's aunt, stopped waitressing. She had waitressed there her whole life. She was probably in her late seventies or early eighties when she quit. They said, "Do you want to waitress?"

I said, "I've never waitressed in my life, but sure." It worked out really well because the hours were ten to two. My kids were in school. It's such a comfortable place to work. Friends come in. In fact, when I quit working Wednesdays about a year ago, it was, of course, a loss to me financially and with my friends, but the loss was that so many of the customers become such good friends. So that was hard. I've been there almost twenty years.

Fearon: When you said you had a lot of local people, just people you knew from school or anyone? People who knew your dad?

Loux: Every facet of local people that you can imagine. Because most of the people who work at the Coney are local native Nevadans or native Renoites, friends of all of us come in. Bill Raggio was in there the week before he died. His daughter, Leslie, and I were at different high schools at the same time together, and she was in shortly after her dad died, and I said, "You know, your dad was in here last week."

She said, "I know. This was his favorite place." She bought some food or ordered some food to go for a family thing they were going to have prior to the service. John Ascuaga is in there at least twice a month. Every imaginable politician comes in, especially during campaign years, because it is a spot for native Nevadans and people who are interested in what's going on in Reno.

I was talking to Gerald Galletti, who is the only survivor of that middle generation of the Coney. I was talking to him before I came today, and said, "Tell me who are some of the most prestigious people that have been here."

He said, “Walter Baring was here, Alan Bible,” these are all senators, “and Barron Hilton.”

I’ve served Barron Hilton. He and a gentleman named Bill Shea, who owned a nice hotel in L.A. or Beverly Hills, were friends, and Bill Shea was a good friend of John Galletti—John’s son, Greg Galletti, is the owner now of the Coney Island. Bill Shea and John Galletti used to hunt together. The Sheas used to come in, and then consequently Barron Hilton came in. We do a lot of game feeds, where people go out and hunt and bring their game in for us to prepare. So the Sheas started doing that.

Gerald told me an interesting story today. He told me that Bill Shea and his family—he’s deceased now, but he had five sons and a daughter— would have dinner parties there. They’d have the sons valet park the cars. Well, if you know the parking lot at the Coney, it’s very small. I said, “Was that just so the kids could make money?”

“No, it’s just so that people could be dropped off right at the door.” I don’t know where they parked the cars. All around town, I guess. But he said when the kids became teenagers, they would do valet parking for the Coney. That was kind of a funny story.

Brian Krolicki’s been in there, [Brian] Sandoval’s been in there, governors. We see the mayors of Sparks and Reno frequently. Many, many attorneys eat in the Coney for lunch regularly, as well as a lot of local contractors or construction workers, people who work for the Department of Transportation, because it’s right there. NDOT [Nevada Department of Transportation] is right on Galletti Way. We also get a lot of people who come in from the DMV. With its backlog, they’ll pick a number and come over and have lunch and then go back to the DMV, and they’ll be right in line. A lot of our friends come in and a lot of everyone’s friends come in.

We have a serious repeating clientele. When we get new people, we’re really happy, because a lot of our clients are getting older. We lose a lot of clients every year, so we try to generate and cultivate some young people. A lot of that happens because people do parties. One night a week we do serve to the public, but the rest of the week, often, every night of the week, we’re serving private parties, whether it’s birthday parties, rehearsal dinners, retirement parties, family gatherings, the game feeds. When they invite other people in, then we’re exposing them to our food, which is phenomenal, as you know.

Last night we had a party, and several of the people were new and were just saying, “Oh, the food is so good.” We serve family style at those parties, and one lady asked for a straw so she could just suck the spaghetti sauce out of the bowl. [laughter] It’s fun to work for a place where you know it’s good quality, good food.

I think my whole life history has been that way in my work. All my jobs have been that way, but it seems to be the kind of work I like to do, where it’s just like family.

Fearon: It seems like you’ve gotten along fairly well with the owners of the places you’ve worked.

Loux: Yes, I have. I’m still in contact with all of them. I’ve been blessed that way.

Fearon: Can you describe the relationship between local businesses on Fourth Street and the Coney—it sounds like there’s interaction because a lot of people come in there for lunch and such.

Loux: Right. There is. In fact, I was talking to Gerald [Galletti] about that earlier, too. You know, Fourth Street used to be the Lincoln Highway. It was the main run through town. Then when the freeway opened, I think in the early seventies. He said it was late sixties, and he has a mind like a steel trap, so he's probably right. In my recollection, I don't remember driving on the freeway in high school. But he said that as the freeway was being built, it made such a huge impact on their business because there was so much foot traffic prior to that. Because of the freeway, the Department of Transportation bought up all the property around to build the freeway, so thereby they took away a lot of homes. At the time, he said people would just walk over.

Across the street from the Coney there used to be a park called Coney Island Park, in the early 1900s or late 1800s, and that's how the Coney got their name. Then after that park, there was a motel there that had weekly rentals, and behind it was a trailer court that had sixty or seventy mobile homes where people would just walk over—more so for drinking, when the bar first opened, than for eating. He said the foot traffic was phenomenal, and people would just walk up and down and hop in the bar, probably like it is downtown or even more than that.

Then on the other side, north of the freeway, people would walk from north there, like on Field Street. They no longer have access to do that. I think it definitely affected the Coney's business at that time. Since then, they've put in the restaurant and cultivated it a lot more. But we do still have people, people who work very close. People from NDOT come over there, like I say.

A lot of people drive, though, from downtown Reno. All the attorneys drive from downtown Reno. We were concerned because they're closing the freeway exit for us now. It's supposed to be today. It didn't close, but the sign is up that it's going to be closed. Greg called the Department of Transportation, and it's going to be closed for five months. The way it is now, you get off on that exit and it's just a circle and you're in our parking lot. I think people will have to go down to Rock Boulevard and loop back. We were concerned about that, but we've been talking to people who come from downtown, and they just come down Fourth Street anyway. So hopefully it won't be a huge hit for us in our business.

I think that there was a lot more walking and nearby traffic in the past among our patrons than now. People mostly drive. In fact, we have had issues lately where people say, "I came by, and there was nowhere to park, but you're not that busy." Well, we'll have a table of eight men, and they've all come in their own cars because they're meeting there, and our parking lot isn't huge. So a lot of times when it looks like it's busy at the Coney, it really isn't that busy. It's just there's nowhere to park.

Gerald also told me that in the front it looks like there are doors on Fourth Street that go into the Coney. I asked him about that, and he said originally there were picture windows there and then they put doors in. People who would walk in that would just kind of stagger in the front door. It was busy on Fourth Street and they didn't want people walking out inebriated and falling into the road with the traffic, and they always had the side door to the parking lot. So they boarded up the Fourth Street door and it eliminated the people just happening in who really didn't want to be there.

Anyway, there was a lot more foot traffic, I think, than there is now. There were a lot of weekly motels around. I said, "Well, was that people from divorces?"

He said, “Not necessarily. Just people who lived in those situations at that time,” like after the war.

But now it’s not so much foot traffic; it’s mostly people driving. You can often go into the Coney and there won’t be a woman in there as a patron. It’s often just men. In fact, a couple weeks ago, these three women walked in, looked around, turned around and walked out. You want to say, “Hey, come in. You’ll be fine.” If I hadn’t been busy, I would have, but it’s kind of old boys. It’s getting to be a little bit old girls too.

Fearon: Is it just because it’s kind of an old boys’ place that they feel like they’re not welcome?

Loux: I don’t know. That isn’t the case at all. In fact, it surprised me that these women walked out. I think they probably had never been there, because we have a lot of women who come in there now. But there are days that you’ll come and there won’t be any women. I don’t even notice it really, anymore. But there are days that there will be, not for the full day, but times during the day at lunch that it’s just all men, businessmen, politicians, attorneys, construction people, car salesmen, every walk of life. It definitely is a little more male-dominant.

We used to have these groups of women who came in. They kind of had a falling-out amongst themselves so they don’t meet there anymore. But we still have a lot of women who meet there regularly. We had this one group of women that came in, we called them the “Sex and the City girls,” but this was about two years ago, because they were always just dolled to the max. In fact, I think they were interior designers. So they’d come in and looked beautiful, striking. Boy, the heads would turn, and it was kind of fun. I think my daughter was busing tables there at that time. Both my kids have actually worked there. My daughter named them the “Sex and the City girls.” But we do have a lot of women who come in, and they’re always really comfortable and welcome.

We have a group of men who play pinochle every day of the week, bar none.

Fearon: Do they live around Fourth Street?

Loux: No, they all drive. There isn’t much housing anymore around there.

Fearon: Yes, it’s mostly businesses, I guess.

It’s mostly businesses, yes. No, they all drive, and they play pinochle from lunchtime till four o’clock or three or something. I was asking Gerald that today, too, I said, “Have there always been pinochle players here?”

He said they used to play a game called Solo, and I have no idea what that is. His dad, the original owner, they would play Solo. Then when Gerald’s brother, John, who is Greg’s dad, came back from the war and opened the restaurant, he started playing pinochle.

So, every day, any day you in the Coney, Monday through Saturday, there’ll be a group—there’s probably about twelve of them. They rotate and they play pinochle. Some of them are retired, some of them are stockbrokers. What else? Business owners. I’m trying to think of the blend. We have an ex-University of Nevada basketball coach who

plays regularly. It's a funny group.

Sometimes when you're listening to them play, you think, why do they come play with each other every day? Because if they're not winning, they're angry sometimes. You think, whoa, why would you come here and have somebody yell at you like that? But they love each other. Yes, it's funny.

Fearon: So they eat and drink while they play?

Loux: I would say half of them eat lunch prior to when they play. Most of them don't drink alcohol. Some of them will once in a while, but most of them will have a soda. Some of them drink a little bit. But they're just a group of friends who meet together. Some of the past players have passed away and moved on. But I think, short of death, I don't think anyone's just quit playing. They're pretty diligent about it.

Fearon: That's neat.

Loux: Yes, it is neat. The bus doesn't really bring us any—there's a bus stop right outside the Coney, but we don't have customers who come on that, unless perhaps they're going to the DMV and then pop in. We love people from the DMV.

Fearon: Is there a bus station right on Fourth Street, too?

Loux: Not that end. There are just bus stops. I think the only real bus station is downtown.

Fearon: The Reno Transportation Commission wants to know about the street, such as your thoughts about the bike lanes, the sidewalks, whether they should widen the street, the traffic, is there too much speed. Just your general thoughts about that.

Loux: We do get some people walking in, but it's very little. Very few people walk in that area. It's become kind of a dingy area. In fact, sometimes when you tell people where it is, they say, "Really?" In fact, I've had people come in for dinner parties from out of town, say there's a rehearsal dinner for a wedding or something, and they'll come in from out of town, and I've had a couple tell me, "When we pulled up, we thought, oh, my gosh. Where are they taking us?" Because it's in a pretty rundown part of town. I'd love to see it renovated. I'd love to see it more upbeat. But then they say, "But, oh, my gosh, the food is so great. It's a good atmosphere. It's happy in there." It's just so low-key.

I think the traffic is okay there. We have kind of a weird situation where we're at because people get off that freeway [Interstate 80] and make that loop into the parking lot, and some people turn out of the Coney and turn left, which really is an illegal turn, because just to the right of you when you're coming out of the Coney is a streetlight. So you're turning left across lanes of traffic really where there's a left-turn lane to go down Galletti Way. It's probably not the best thing we should do, but people do it all day long. I hope nobody gets a ticket thanks to me.

It's not necessarily very clean. The sidewalks are not kept up. But I don't think

there's really that much foot traffic there. I'd love to see more foot traffic, but I don't know where people would walk from. There is a motel on the corner of El Rancho and Prater that is a weekly motel, and people do walk there because maybe a lot of them don't have vehicles. We do see a lot of bicyclists go up and down.

Fearon: Is that with the Reno Bike Project at all?

Loux: No, I think it's people who don't have cars. But I think for what they need, they mostly go north, where there are grocery stores. There's no grocery store near us. The gas station is there and they have little incidentals you might need, but there is really no grocery store on Fourth Street that I can think of or really anything that a person would need for their daily life, other than the gas station, if you need gas.

It's funny for me because I drive. Now because the on-ramp to the freeway is closed, I have to go down Fourth Street to get home, and sometimes I'll drive all the way down Fourth Street. I live off of West McCarran, up by McQueen High School. Sometimes I'll drive all the way down Fourth Street. Sometimes I feel like maybe I shouldn't because I'm not sure how safe it is. Other times, I love to drive down Sixth Street especially because of the old architecture there. It's just phenomenal. They're the most beautiful old huge homes that were one time just the center of all that was happening in Reno, and the homes are now broken up into weekly rentals. It makes me sad, because they're just beautiful. The architecture in this—have you ever noticed that when you drive down?

Fearon: I haven't been to that part of Sixth. I've been on the western part of Sixth. Is that over by St. Mary's, that area?

Loux: Yes. Well, in that area, even if you head east from St. Mary's, right below the University of Nevada, the homes there are beautiful. You don't really notice it because it's kind of a rundown area.

I think of different cities that have really developed their old downtowns, like Sacramento or Portland, where my son is. I don't know if they've kept them nice or they renovated the areas.

But, gosh, we have such history up there that is so beautiful. Take a drive down Sixth Street and look at the homes on the right side as you're heading west, beautiful brick homes, actually huge homes that have just incredible architecture, incredible woodworking and inlaid brick in a pattern that's just beautiful. It makes me sad to have all that probably bulldozed away someday and made a parking lot.

Fearon: *How old do you think those places are?*

Loux: Oh, I'll bet they're from the early 1900s. Yes, probably from when the university was built. Yes, I would guess that.

When I was on the history page the other day on Ellis Island, I was looking up my grandparents. I looked up my grandfather also, who came from Italy in 1912. I was really interested that his brother was here prior, and his brother was his sponsor. You had to have a sponsor. As you came through Ellis Island, they asked you where you came from,

your age, and if you had a sponsor.

My grandfather, whose name was Serafino, his brother was Ernesto and his address was listed and it was 710 Winter Street. As soon as I found that out, I'm in the car looking up 710 Winter Street. Winter Street now, I think, only runs as far north as Fourth Street, and then to the river, and there is no longer a 700 block of Winter Street. But I thought, wow, isn't that amazing that in 1912 when my grandfather came, Winter Street was where people lived.

So as I drove up and looked again, such beautiful homes, I'm sure they're not practical to renovate, but they're just so beautiful, and the history of them is just fascinating to me. I'm sure there's great history. I'm sure if the Coney could talk, you'd have some phenomenal stories at the Coney, because people have been coming there forever.

We have one gentleman—I think it's going to be his seventieth birthday. They were having a party. Maybe his seventy-fifth. In May he is having a party there. They just asked me to work it the other day. He has been coming into the Coney on Tuesdays since he was four years old. He used to come in with his dad. So for seventy-one years this gentleman has been coming into the Coney on Tuesdays for our spaghetti. That's amazing. How many places have that?

Fearon: Do you know this person's name?

Loux: Oh, yes. Yes, his name is Bill Tessler. His kids come in, and he has grandkids now and they've been in there. They're little babies now, maybe five.

We have so many generations of people that come. In fact, today I served Kyle Landa. He has a business on Fourth Street. Well, his dad was a classmate of mine. There's Landa Muffler on Fourth Street. It's on the corner of Fourth and Wells. Kyle's father, Larry (who was my classmate), has passed away. He died not long ago of brain cancer. But Kyle was in today with his wife. They're young, probably late twenties, and their baby, Sparo, who's just two, has been coming in there since she was in an infant seat. They come in, and today he brought his grandmother, Larry's mom. There's four generations of people who come to the Coney regularly. So it's pretty interesting. A lot of that is our business at the Coney, more than people that just happen by.

Fearon: Do you think there are any other businesses like the Coney, where you get generations of people, on Fourth Street?

Loux: There is Casale's. Casale's opened about the same time as the Coney, and the lady who owns it, her name is Inez Stempeck. I think her family was probably Casale, but I'm not sure about that. But they've had an Italian restaurant down on Fourth Street for as long as the Coney. In fact, when her husband died, everybody kind of stepped in together to help. She's eighty-five. She works there every day, makes ravioli, and they have, I'm sure, the same generational people come in there also.

Let's see. There's the mattress store on Fourth Street. They've had a hundred years in business, and Mike comes in the Coney for lunch all the time. So there's someone whose business is down the street that comes in for lunch regularly. We call him "Mattress Mike." He comes in regularly for lunch. He's there several times a week for

lunch.

Fearon: How close is the other Italian restaurant to you?

Loux: It's probably not a mile, maybe a half a mile. In fact, if people come in, like today a girl came in who was at the DMV and we had just stopped serving lunch, so we'll say, "Try Casale's down the street." Because they're open, I think, all the time, from lunch and through dinner every day. She said, "Well, I need somewhere close because I got a number at the DMV."

We said, "Oh, you can get in and out down there too." That's another good thing about the Coney. You know you can have an hour for lunch and come from downtown and get your lunch and get back to work. Hopefully, it will be that way once the freeway closes.

Fearon: You said a lot of people drive rather than walk, unless they're coming from the DMV.

Loux: Right. Even then, I think most of them drive. Most people drive to the Coney. There isn't much foot traffic really. The foot traffic that is on Fourth Street, at least our end, are not generally people who will come into a restaurant to eat.

We have people who will come by to the back of the Coney and ask if there's work they can do to earn a sandwich. I would say that's pretty much more of the foot traffic at our end at the Coney. Now, it certainly wasn't always that way. I would say, though, that since I've worked there, in the twenty years it's probably pretty much been that way. But in speaking with Gerald today, he said everyone walked. That was what he said exactly. Everyone walked when this was the heart of the town, and people walked here for lunch. Why would you drive if you could walk? Go have a cocktail and walk home.

Fearon: Do you think fewer people walk because the neighborhood is more run down or because the sidewalk isn't in good shape?

Loux: I think two things. I think that less people walk because there are very few homes around there. And also, people just don't walk as much. We've had some people who ride their bike regularly. We used to have a trailer court right by us that a turf company has bought now and taken over. But again, those people who lived in that trailer park were not our customers.

Generally speaking, the people who come into the Coney are people who are either stopping in to have a beer after work, and the people who come to lunch are people who have been brought in there by someone else or met there, and they drive and meet there on their lunch hour, or groups of women come. We've had the Red Hat Society women come in. We've had groups of Bunco women who skip Bunco, and instead come to the Coney for lunch as well as often for dinner. A lot of family people come.

Fearon: Is the age group older or is it mixed?

Loux: Older, yes. The bar crowd can be a little bit younger. Well, the bar crowds anywhere generally are younger. But the food patrons are generally older, although we're hoping to get more and more young people. Yes, a lot of retired people.

We've been talking about this, because sometimes we'll be slow and we'll laugh that they're all dying. They're all dying. We need to cultivate some new people. Greg is forty-nine and he is such an incredible man. He's just a really good, kind, generous man, a great family man. He does a lot of donations. I probably shouldn't say this because it's hard for people to do donations now. He's had to cut back because his kids, his oldest son now is in high school, so he'll gear toward their needs now in donations. But he's a huge supporter of the Boys and Girls Club. We get a lot of clients who also are involved in the Boys and Girls Club, because they want to honor people who support their charities. He'll donate to the Juvenile Diabetes or American Cancer. So we'll get people in that way. He'll donate a dinner, say for twenty people, and then hope that they will spend money at the bar so it'll be kind of a wash. As he does that, we always get new people who are exposed to the Coney. Honestly, I've never had anyone say anything but wonderful things about the food.

I think the Coney continues to be successful for two reasons, or more than that, several reasons: Greg and his incredible sense of business and being such a good community member; the people who work at the Coney are like family, family to each other and family to the customers that come in; then the families that come in, generations of people who come into the Coney. I don't think the Coney exists because it's on Fourth Street. I think the Coney exists for those other things. I think it probably got its start because it was on Fourth Street, but it continues because of the food, the people, Greg, and generations of people.

Fearon: If for some reason all of a sudden it moved somewhere else, a lot of those same people would go, regardless of it being on Fourth Street?

Loux: Well, you know, that's a really good question. I don't know if the Coney would continue if it moved. I don't think it would continue if it moved into a strip center or a place where it wasn't convenient—the parking is at the door. You park and you walk twenty feet and you're in the Coney. It's not like you have to park in a parking garage and go up.

I think the Coney would continue to exist. I think it would probably lose some customers and gain others. But it will never move. I'm sure it will never move. If they were to kick us out for some type of high-rise thing, I doubt that they would move. I think they would close.

Fearon: At least when I went in there, it seemed like it's a nice kind of home environment.

Loux: Definitely. Yes, there's no frills. It's just an old, warm, happy place. Bartenders will know people who are walking through the door, see them in the parking lot, and have their drink on the bar before they get there. On Tuesdays, especially, we have customers who come in, they sit at the same table, they order the same thing. There are many people who we just go up to their table and say, "You want the same?"

“Yep.”

Today there was a gentleman, his name is Jim Henry, he’s an old farmer and really a nice man. He’s been coming in there for a long time. He was joining some people. Usually he eats by himself. I came to his table and just brought his coffee, because that’s what he has. His other friends ordered, and I said, “So you want the usual?”

He says, “Yeah. What’s the soup today?”

I told him, and I said, “Okay.” He tells me what he wants, and I said, “I already wrote yours.” Because it’s that way. I mean, there are many people who have lunch at the Coney five days a week. Not many places can say that, unless it’s part of a boarding home and it’s a free meal or something.

But on Tuesdays we laugh that it almost becomes boring because they’ll order the same thing every single week. But it’s what they like and it’s dependable. You know it’s going to be good. Greg uses all fresh stuff. I think the only can they use is tomatoes. There are people who my dad told me about who would really know a lot about Fourth Street. My dad’s best friend from the time—or one of his best friends—there are three or four he’s still friends with—Coe Swobe, who was a state senator here, he married a woman named Janet Quilici. Her uncle was Forest Lovelock and they owned the Ford Agency.

Fearon: Whereabouts?

Loux: I might have this wrong. The Ford Agency was on the corner of Center and Fourth Street. Rissoni had a gas station there. It was Rissoni’s.

I think that my dad said that Pete Cladianos, who owns The Sands, would be a wealth of information. Bob Ferrari, who also comes into the Coney—his daughter-in-law, or daughter, Marlene Cate is her name, she would have a lot of information. Jay Atwood, I forget what business they had—the gas station on Ralston and Fourth.

But those were people my dad said, “Oh, my gosh. He’s got to talk to Coe Swobe,” who is an attorney here in town, and you can reach him on the phone for sure. I think he married Janet Quilici, and that was the Ford Agency. I’m not sure who it was. I’ll get back with you on that if you want. My dad could give you a phenomenal wealth of information. I know Gerald [Galletti] is incredibly interesting, very sharp man, really intelligent. You know how some people in their eighties lose it?

Not Gerald, not my dad. They both have memories that you cannot even imagine. I’m trying to see if I covered all the things that Gerald talked to me about.

Fearon: You dad’s first name is Clyde?

Loux: Clyde, yes. I think that you could really get a lot talking with Gerald, and those people that I gave you as far as Fourth Street, or my dad. I’m sure he’d be a wealth of information too.

You know what? I think that people who grew up here, probably as it is with any town, they love it. My dad’s such a lover of Reno and so interested in the history and in the forwardness of it. He’s just passionate about this town. It’s been his home his whole life. He went to the old Reno High School, which is where the Sundowner Hotel is. He

and my mom were boyfriend and girlfriend then.

He went to the old Billingham Middle School. Then they made a new one up in the north. It was downtown. He went to Southside Elementary School. Just old Reno, where they used to just all be downtown, all in those neat old homes.

I remember shortly before my mom died—you may not want to record this, I don't care if you do, but shortly before my mom died, and she knew she was dying, I asked her to take me on a little tour of where she had lived in Reno. She took me to this little house on the corner of Sinclair and Liberty, I think. Yes. There's a building there now—well, it's some city building. I don't know, but it used to be an elementary school [the Southside Annex].

She told me that she would walk out the house, walk down the street, look back and wave to her mom on the porch when she was about, six, and walk to school. One day the phone had rung, and her mom was not on the porch. She's six years old and she comes running back because she was sure her mom had died. She could see the school from the porch, so my grandmother would watch her walk to the school. It was all just right there.

I'm pretty sure in those days everything walked to everything. In fact, I have the buggy that my mom used to push my sister, older sister, and I in. She didn't have a car till I was about ten. And to take us to the grocery store, she'd just walk downtown and walk to the grocery store. Everybody walked.

Fearon: Do you know where the grocery stores were? Were they right downtown?

Loux: Yes. I think it might be still there. It was called Lander Street Grocery. I think they had an apartment on Forrest, and she would just load us up in the buggy. It's a huge buggy. I mean, you don't see things like this anymore. Why I have it, I don't know. Just because it's one of those things you can't part with. There was room for the groceries and both my sister and I. My mom would have to strap me in because I'd climb out. It was a whole different time, I think, when they grew up.

Fearon: It sounds like you had a really good relationship not only with your dad but your mom.

Loux: Oh, yes. My mom was my best friend. Yes, in fact, I miss her so much. She's been gone almost eleven years. Some days it seems like yesterday. And my parents had such a good relationship, you know. It's not like they never argued. They argued. They were passionate at both ends, good and bad. They loved each other so much. I think that gives kids a great sense of security.

Fearon: Yes. That's great. It sounds like you had such an interesting, fun life.

Loux: Yes. I've been blessed. And to live in a town like this. For some people—and it's true—you gain a lot when you move. You definitely gain a lot. I'm happy my son's in Portland. You expand your horizons. When Tom and I first lived in Phoenix when we were first married, that was really good for our marriage. But when you have friends from high school that you still see regularly, it's rich. It's good. I don't know. I guess it

has good and bad. I mean, there are no secrets, and maybe it helps you to maintain a better sense of what's right and wrong because those people know you all along. I don't know.

You go back home and you're home. It doesn't matter where your home is. When you go back home, it's home. When my husband graduated from high school in Boulder City and left immediately, because you leave Boulder City when you graduate, you just leave. We would go back home and it was the same thing; it was just home.

Actually, Boulder City is such a phenomenal community. Just like Mayberry. We'd go back home, and actually it became that way for the kids and I. We'd be there, it was like, "Okay, we're home." His parents lived in the home he grew up in. There were a few friends who stayed there, but most of them left. It was just home.

Then his dad moved away the last couple of years. It's like you lost that. There's nothing drawing us back down there, and it's like you lost your childhood home. Even my parents moved from the home that I grew up in to be closer to my sister, who died of MS. So they're closer to me. They moved closer to me probably four years before my mom passed away. Even though they were closer in area to me, it wasn't like going home, because it was never my home. The home that we lived in as children, I still think of as my home. But it's weird.

You know it's such a small world. Sue's father-in-law, when Jim [Ashby, Sue's husband – mutual friends of the interviewer and interviewee] took his dad to his high school reunion in Etna [California]—

Fearon: Etna, yes. I remember you telling me about that.

Loux: Yes, so funny. My niece, Stacey, is married to a man whose family lives in Etna now, and her grandfather-in-law, I guess, her husband's grandfather, was the janitor of the school in Etna where Jim's dad went to high school. I mean, what a small world. She says, "Oh, Jim's taking his dad to Etna."

I said, "Etna?" Then I told Stace, my niece, I said, "Did they go to school there? Did your in-laws go to school there?"

"Yeah, and his grandfather was the janitor." Her in-laws live in a hundred-year-old house that was the family house. Such a small world. Totally off your subject, but interesting.

Fearon: What would you say your general thoughts are about Fourth Street in relation to how it fits into Reno?

Loux: I think that, at least at our end, at the east end of Fourth Street, it's just gone downhill pretty badly. I think that even downtown Fourth Street has seen some serious changes. I think that it'd be nice if it would be cleaned up. There are a lot of shoddy motels on Fourth Street. There are a lot of people who are essentially homeless who live around Fourth Street. It's not an area that is attractive to people at this time.

I think that the Coney, like I say, succeeds not because it's part of Fourth Street. I think it has established itself because it was on Fourth Street. I would say the Coney is probably one of the most successful businesses on Fourth Street at that end. The Coney, Casale's, Mike the mattress company—and his business has suffered, too, because what

he does a lot of is custom-sized mattresses for motorhomes or people building fancy sitting areas. With the economy, people aren't traveling as much, not buying motorhomes, not renovating, so his business has suffered.

But, yes, I would love to see Fourth Street pick up and look good again. Basically, I never really thought about what you said about the sidewalks. The sidewalks are dirty. They're not maintained. There are no pretty trees on the sides. It's concrete to concrete. It's not attractive. It really isn't attractive. It'd be nice if it could be. Does that answer your question?

Fearon: It definitely does, yes.

Loux: I wish it would be cleaner, but it's not.

Fearon: Is there anything else that I didn't ask you or that you might want to talk about that I didn't bring up?

Loux: I think I've pretty much talked about the things I know, when downtown Reno was everything. You know what I do remember? I do remember really well when they opened Park Lane Mall, which is now torn down, which was at Plumb and Virginia Street. I don't know how old I was, but they opened Park Lane Mall, and I remember we didn't have a mall at that time. There was Sears downtown and Penney's downtown and Woolworth's.

Fearon: Right on Virginia Street?

Loux: Yes, right by where the theaters were. There was Parker's Western Store. Right next to it was Sears, and that's where you shopped. That was where people shopped. My mom worked at a little store called the Wonder Store downtown, when she was in high school, and then there was Gray Reid's [Gray, Reid & Wright Department Store]. That was a big—what's where Gray Reid's was? I think Circus Circus now.

But I remember when Park Lane Mall opened and Sears moved out to Park Lane Mall. I remember my family having this huge conversation about how no one will drive that far to shop. Now we have the Summit Mall, which is doing well, I think, probably not as well as maybe they'd like, with the economy turndown. Prior to that was Meadowood Mall, which is very successful, and both so much further out. So the town, as it grows, it just grows further and further and further out. I'd love to see the renovation of downtown Reno like they did by the river, and it's beautiful.

I probably shouldn't say this, but we have a homeless problem here. I'm sorry for those people. I'm very sorry for them. Except for the grace of God, I could be there, too, or the grace of my wonderful parents, I guess. I think that that's a problem we have to deal with before we're going to get a lot of people milling around downtown. I'd love to see it. I'd love to see it like it was.

When you think about my family thinking, "Oh, nobody's going to drive to Park Lane Mall," and now that mall has come and gone, and we're going further out. Well, and the homes. The homes aren't in this area of town anymore. People don't live in the center of town anymore. Very few people live in the center of town. People get out and

move away. My son lived in the Riverwalk Condominiums. That used to be a hotel, the Comstock Hotel.

In fact, one of my really good friends and Sue's good friend Erin was a realtor for the Riverwalk. She bought a condominium there and lived there from the time it opened until just recently. She's transitioning to a condo they have in Scottsdale. But moving downtown was exciting to her. They lived on acres of land in Spanish Springs, and they moved downtown. Even the homeless situation got to her, and she got to where she didn't like it. She didn't want to walk around that. You have this real expensive home—but I think that is the way it is probably in any downtown situation.

I know that for my son, in Portland, that was the same situation for him. They lived in that Riverwalk, they rented it, and then they moved up to Portland. So they liked it well enough to try it again in Portland. Now they have just in the last month moved further out into a suburb, and like not only not having that around, but also space. But really, there are so few homes in downtown Reno now. I guess on California Avenue and that area, which is a beautiful area, it's probably the closest—Marsh Avenue and that area there. Think we'll ever return to that? I don't know. I'd love to see—I mean, it's funny that you ask me about this, because I'm sure people think I'm crazy when I say that, and I've said this for years, I just love to drive and look at the old homes and think of what happened there. Center Street, Sixth Street, up by the university, all around that area, homes that you just drive by, you don't really notice because they're kind of rundown and shoddy, but if you stop and take a walk or just look at the architecture of these incredible homes that were built with such love, it's just amazing. There's a home on the corner of Ralston and I think it's University Terrace.

Fearon: Oh, I know which house you're talking about.

Loux: With the round porch.

Fearon: Right by Whitaker Park there?

Loux: Exactly.

Fearon: Yes, I know right where that is.

Loux: What a beautiful home. All those homes around there, they're just gorgeous. Some of the homes that have been made into fraternities and sororities, they're just beautiful homes.

Fearon: Yes, they're nice.

Loux: All the sororities on Sierra Street were homes at one time, big estates. It's kind of interesting to me. I don't know. I kind of like old history like that. I never liked history when I was a kid. [laughter] But now I'm intrigued. I think that's part of who your history teacher is. If you have a history teacher who just makes you read and they put nothing into it.... My nephew is a history teacher at Mendive, and he's gotten some phenomenal letters from kids saying, "You make history come alive for us." I think, boy,

what a gift if you can do that to kids. Because we are what we came from, and if we don't know the past we're losing a lot.

Fearon: Well, thanks very much, Sally.

Loux: You're welcome.