

An Oral History of Ed Scalzo

4th Street | Prater Way History Project

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Interviewer: Edan Strekal

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Interviewed on April 25, 2012
Edan Strekal, Interviewer

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Photo by Patrick Cummings

Strekal: I'm here with Ed Scalzo, owner of Forever Yours Fine Furniture. We're here at the business, at 701 East Fourth Street in Reno. The date is April 25, 2012. Mr. Scalzo, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Scalzo: I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 9, 1951.

Strekal: What did your folks do?

Scalzo: My dad worked for the government. He worked for the arsenal. That was his job his whole life, pretty much, and he was also a musician in the evening. He was in a rock and roll band.

Strekal: Is there an arsenal in Philadelphia?

Scalzo: It's a famous arsenal, Frankfort Arsenal, yes.

Strekal: What kind of rock band, a contemporary rock band?

Scalzo: A fifties rock band, fifties, early sixties rock band.

Strekal: Did they do cover songs?

Scalzo: Covered some originals, you know, early days of Dick Clark and rock and roll.

Strekal: What about your mom?

Scalzo: My mom was born in Philadelphia as well. She was a work-at-home mom and she volunteered a lot. She was an inspiring lady, and had high expectations of her children.

Strekal: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Scalzo: Two sisters and one brother, and I'm the oldest.

Strekal: Can you tell me about your schooling and from there also your higher education?

Scalzo: I was raised initially in Bucks County, around Bristol, Pennsylvania. I went to a small parochial school from first grade to seventh grade, and in seventh grade my family moved back to Philadelphia to be closer to my dad's work, so the rest of my education took place in Philadelphia. I was again in Catholic school, and I went into a Catholic high school. Then I graduated and went to Penn State University—Ogontz was a branch campus, then the main campus at State College, Pennsylvania, for the last couple of years.

Strekal: What did you study?

Scalzo: I studied marketing. I was a business and marketing major.

Strekal: What year did you finish up with school?

Scalzo: I think I graduated in the summer of '73.

Strekal: Was your parochial school a Catholic school?

Scalzo: It was a Catholic school. Boys were separated from the girls, but they shared a building.

Strekal: Could you tell me what your wife's name is and how you guys met?

Scalzo: My wife is Susan. I met her after my first year at college, or maybe it was my second year of college. I met her at a friend's house. I was moving up to Penn State, and coincidentally, she was starting Penn State in the fall as well, so we made a point of being friendly. We were friends for the next four or five years and became more than that after that.

Strekal: And you guys got married soon after that?

Scalzo: We married out west. We moved out west together. I moved out first, actually, and then Susan moved out a couple of years later. She moved down about '75, '76, and I moved down right after college in '73.

Strekal: What initially brought you to this area?

Scalzo: Like a lot of people, I felt Penn State was the Gateway to the West, and the West was happening. Everybody wanted to go west, just like the old days: "Go west, young man."

Strekal: What was going on that was so exciting?

Scalzo: The music scene, the freedom of a new place without asking Johnny's dad for a job, just the opportunities that seemed to be available out there.

Strekal: More self-determination rather than relying on your lifelong connections?

Scalzo: Yes. A big change in my life was that my parents had moved away. They moved to Germany, so I really didn't have the roots to stay behind. My brothers and sisters went as well.

Strekal: Did you ever leave the States for any extended amount of time?

Scalzo: I have over my lifetime, yes. But how I first started getting into furniture, was going to visit my folks in Germany. They would take me all over to the second-hand shops to see all the old German stuff. My mom was an early picker, as far as going to junk shops, so it kind of inspired me as well. It was just a fun thing to do and once in a while you got a bargain out of it. It's kind of like a search that ends up with a reward.

Strekal: So when you visited your folks, that's when you really started to get interested in antique dealing?

Scalzo: I saw some opportunities. I would buy a butter churner, a hundred-year-old butter churner in Germany, and eventually it made its way back to the States with my folks and it was mine. And seeing the history of Europe, and how short on history we were, really was stimulating.

Strekal: So you initially just started buying antiques. How would you deal antiques in those days, with no Internet?

Scalzo: I moved west and I was looking for my next step. I actually answered an ad in the newspaper that said put yourself in business for a hundred bucks. I called the number and happened to hook up with somebody who had an antique collective. That was an opportunity for me to get into business for a very small amount of money, and that's kind of how it started.

Strekal: What did they provide you with for \$100?

Scalzo: A ten-by-twenty space in a collective.

Strekal: Like a stall, essentially.

Scalzo: Multiple antique dealers, yes.

Strekal: Like the Antique Mall downtown?

Scalzo: Like the Antique Mall or something. Right. We used to call them collectives, but I guess that's a communist word, right? [laughs]

Strekal: How long has Forever Yours Fine Furniture been in business? Has it always been by that name?

Scalzo: At that point I lived in Marin County, which was a great area to live, of course, north of San Francisco. And I answered another ad in the newspaper, and that ad led me to a six-week journey through South America. When I came back from that, I wanted to live at high altitude, so I took a week break and went to Tahoe and fell in love with Tahoe. I'd been there before, but had a new perspective. There was an old hardware store. The hardware store had moved to a new location and it was sitting empty, so I inquired on it. The fellow who owned the collective wanted to get the people out. He wanted the whole building for himself, so it was time for a change, and that was the change.

I moved to Tahoe. Susan moved out and joined me, and we started Forever Yours Furniture, mostly geared toward antiques, initially.

Strekal: So it was mostly an antique shop, and it was located in what part of Tahoe?

Scalzo: In the North Shore, in Kings Beach, in the old hardware store right on the corner of Coon and North Lake Boulevard. We could close up and walk out and go for a swim. It was right on the beach. Beautiful.

Strekal: What year was that in?

Scalzo: That was in 1976. In the early spring. We started there and then proceeded to sell antiques. We used to buy the antiques on the East Coast, and then we started—through our connections from a previous collective store, we had connections into England—so we used to go to England and buy antiques in England.

Strekal: I noticed that a lot of stuff that you have in the store now is from China and India.

Scalzo: Well, today I have stuff that comes from India, Katmandu, and it's just a small facet of what we do. Our claim to fame is our American gear, our American case goods that we sell, which offer choice and quality that kind of differentiate us from any other stores in town. We really do have top quality here, so that's what we evolved into. But we still have a little of our roots in antique and funk.

Strekal: I saw some folk stuff. I wasn't sure if a lot of the stuff out of Asia came from your England connection.

Scalzo: No, that's just another person I met in the early days of San Francisco. I've kept my business connections over the years. I haven't burned any bridges.

Strekal: It seems it opens you up to a wide array of different businesses. Also on the website it says that you have Amish furniture.

Scalzo: We sell Amish furniture, American-made Amish furniture from the Midwest, and that's very beautiful stuff. A company out of California that's all handcrafted, high quality, called Stuart David, that's also an exclusive line, as well as the Amish. Those kinds of things, that's our niche, really. That's what pays the bills, these things.

Strekal: I wasn't sure if the Amish furniture was a connection to your East Coast roots.

Scalzo: No, that came about later. This has been an evolving business. It started with very little money, so it was a grassroots startup, basically.

Strekal: Can you describe for me the progression that brought you from your Kings Beach store to this current location here at 701 East Fourth Street, the old Flanigan Warehouse?

Scalzo: Well, after a few years in King Beach, we had a friend who we brought in on the business, and then we realized there was not enough business for all these people, three people to exist, so we started looking toward Reno as a market opportunity. We came down to Reno, and right downtown was an old Ford dealership with a big showroom facing the main drag, on Virginia and Fourth Street, facing the Eldorado Casino, and it was for rent. Somebody had the rest of the building, but was looking to sublease the showroom. So we stepped up and signed a lease and rented the showroom and went for it.

Strekal: What year was that?

Scalzo: That was April 1980.

Strekal: And those windows of the showroom—I've seen a picture of the Barlett Ford building—they faced right out to Fourth Street.

Scalzo: They faced right out to Fourth Street. Right.

Strekal: How long were you in that location?

Scalzo: That started to go pretty good, and about 1982 I rented another building down the street, on Fourth Street, 601 East Fourth, which was an old Laundromat warehouse. It was pretty rundown. We rented that just for storage for the containers we were bringing in from England and from the East Coast, because there was still a fairly large percentage of antiques in those days. We were doing new stuff, but not to the degree we do today. So it was maybe 50-50, 50 percent antique, 50 percent new stuff. We rented a warehouse for storage, basically, and it was on Fourth Street as well.

Strekal: So you never actually ran your business out of 601.

Scalzo: No, we did.

Strekal: Oh, you did.

Scalzo: There was a progression. The fellow who owned the Ford building kept raising the rent, and I had this other building secured, so we got an SBA [Small Business Administration] loan to remodel the building, got a long-term lease, and we remodeled the old Laundromat building, cut out big windows so we had some showcase windows, and just redid the whole building. It was fun, exciting, something different, and we opened up at 601 East Fourth in 1986.

Strekal: What was Fourth Street like when you arrived?

Scalzo: The further you went east down Fourth Street, the more funky and derelict-y it got, without a doubt. There were some little businesses just barely holding on. There were several bars that were pretty shady. There was a little bit of darkness down there. There were hookers on the street. So it was definitely not in the zenith.

Strekal: Where you were, though, closer toward downtown, was that a little less that way?

Scalzo: Yes, downtown we were right there in the hub of it, so that was fine. There were never any problems there. That was the main tourist area, so it was fine.

Strekal: What's there now? The Reno Ballroom, right?

Scalzo: The Ballroom.

Strekal: So, in 1980 you got to your first location. In 1986, you moved into the old Laundromat.

Scalzo: Right, 601. There we stayed for the next twelve years. In 1995 or so, another really beautiful unusual building came up for sale right next to us at 701 East Fourth. That was this building, the Flanigan Building. We had successfully used SBA several times to grow our business, so we had that ace in the hole. We were approached by the building's owner. We didn't really consider it much, originally. Then it just bounced around. They couldn't sell it. Nobody could figure out what to do with the building, the property was so big, and then the city bought it before us. The city was going to make a homeless center, but that fell through. The building couldn't pass code for the homeless center.

Also at this point, the street businesses joined together and started the Reno-Sparks Business Corridor Association (RSBCA) to stop the progression of the homeless thing taking over Fourth Street, and so we formed a business association and basically were able to stop the Fourth Street homeless concept, and had it written into the city code that it wouldn't come here.

Then at some point, about 1997, early 1998, we decided we wanted to get the

business, the Flanigan Building, that we would step up and take that business on, and we did that through an SBA loan, purchased it as an owner-occupied, and that grew into what we have today as Forever Yours Fine Furniture, which is a unique business and a unique store in an ever-changing part of the downtown.

Strekal: Because it is such a unique building, can you describe this Flanigan Warehouse for me a little bit?

Scalzo: The firemen have a special training class because this building is all wood, so they actually come in here, the firemen, and run the firemen classes through here, to show them this type of structure. It's big old timber. It's old virgin timber from the turn of the century, the 19th century to the 20th century, I'm talking about, big timber from there. The timber starts in the basement and goes through the first floor, up to the second floor, and all through the ceiling. It's huge one-foot-by-one-foot chunks of wood, just big timber everywhere you look. It's a wooden structure, basically, a wooden and brick structure.

Strekal: It's very old too?

Scalzo: Yes. In fact, it's the second oldest standing commercial business at this point in the city's history, and it's also the oldest functioning commercial building, because the older business in town down on Commercial Row is nonfunctioning. It's the old Masonic building.

Strekal: So this one was built in 1902.

Scalzo: Right.

Strekal: I read, again, the basement was dug in 1904, so not initially. But how many square feet is this building?

Scalzo: I'm told it's 35,000. When we bought it, it was advertised as 35,000. So that's what I say it is.

Strekal: What was the condition of the business when you got in here in 1998?

Scalzo: The core of the business was in good shape. The cosmetics were poor and it needed work. As I said, we bought it with an SBA loan. We got some extra money to remodel, to get it up to where we could use it. Luckily, our use was easy to approve as a retail furniture outlet, so it was a good fit, and we closed the building up and worked on it for about eight months, mostly just gutting it and opening it up, making it as roomy as it possibly could be.

And then in June of 1999, we opened. We bought the business in October of 1998 and we opened in June of 1999. We got the CO and we opened. For a while we had two stores. We still had the 601 business, since I couldn't get out of the lease, and then eventually we sold the lease for a token amount of money to Anchor Auctions, who took over the business and has been there ever since.

Strekal: Do you have a relationship with any of the other business owners here on Fourth Street?

Scalzo: Sure. I was in the business organization, and still am. It's not functioning today as it was. You know, this is a community of small business people, Fourth Street. There are no huge corporations on this street; it's all family-oriented businesses. I know pretty much everybody at this point, having been on the street for thirty-plus years, so I pretty much know everybody in a good friendly way.

Strekal: The Reno-Sparks Business Corridor Association, that's part of what a lot of these other business owners were in?

Scalzo: Yes. We definitely had a high point of joining together to stop the homeless shelter back in the mid-nineties. We were trying to stop the homeless thing from overrunning the street, with people working, trying to make a living. It's not that we're against the homeless people; it's just where they were going to locate it, where there are businesses that pay taxes.

Strekal: How has Fourth Street changed since you've been here? What kinds of improvements have been made since you've been on the street?

Scalzo: Fourth Street has come a long way. It still has some of the most unique spots to shop or eat in all of Reno, and it's progressed. There are a lot more young people coming into the Fourth Street corridor in these big old warehouses, doing creative things. There's the Bike Project that came into town. There's a guy doing iron work. There have been a lot of nice things going on.

There are a couple of businesses that still need to come up to spoof. The old Salvation Army business has been sitting empty for six years. That's kind of sad, as it's a big 35,000-square-foot business. If it had some kind of dynamics to it, it would help the street immensely.

Then the ballpark came in, the bus station moved further east, young people took over Louis' Basque restaurant, and did a good job. You've got young people taking over the Lincoln Lounge. So there's fresh blood and there's a good direction for Fourth Street. It just needs to hopefully come to fruition.

Strekal: There's a lot of unique architecture on this street too.

Scalzo: Yes, it is the old U.S. 40, so it is the Lincoln Highway, which is an historical highway. If you want to talk about the history of Reno, this is the core of the history of Reno, so that's what makes the area also unique. Plus we're a couple streets down from a major university. So we are a shopping street that parallels Route 80, just a block or two away. We should be utilized more than we are as an asset.

Strekal: That's true, I think maybe the construction of U.S. 80 really cut off the university from this area.

Scalzo: You could think that way, but there are connections. The university's growing so much, it might even cross over U.S. 80.

Strekal: That's possible.

Scalzo: It's right at the brim of it right now. And the people at the university would easily come down to Fourth Street if the character takes it up a couple more notches. It's going to become a shopping street. You can see it, just like Fourth Street in Berkeley, just like Old Town in Auburn. That's what you do with old parts of town that parallel the freeway; make them into shopping districts.

Strekal: Lincoln Lounge attracts a very young crowd of people all from the university. I could see people, rather than going from the university to downtown, which is dominated by casinos, perhaps coming to small establishments on Fourth Street.

Scalzo: We do, actually, business with the university. We've done several offices. When they remodeled the English Department, we did it in an arts and crafts mode with office furniture. So we've had a lot of contact and business dealings with the university, which has been a big plus for us.

Strekal: I hear that you used to be able to walk from the university, using alleyways all the way, down to First Street, but now that I-80's there, it disrupts the flow a little bit.

Scalzo: Well, old Reno has alleyways. Alleyways are a functioning part of the old part of town.

Strekal: What are some noticeable changes that have occurred in Reno itself since 1980?

Scalzo: In about 1976 they expanded with about a half a dozen new casinos, and that's what first caught my attention. Then by 1980, I said, well, there's enough action down there, we should go down there. Then it pretty much grew at a rapid pace through the nineties, and then it really took off, from the end of the nineties into the year 2000. The town just really, really grew. Business was outstanding. We were doing a couple million bucks a year in business. It was really a good time, and a lot of people thought it would never end, but as we know today, there was an ending to it.

Strekal: This region is prone to boom and bust cycles. We know that. But was it because a lot of people were moving into the area in the late nineties and early 2000s?

Scalzo: People were moving here. It was a fresh area, had a lot of potential. It is adjacent to California, with more conservative, easier tax rules, and it's connected by Interstate 80 and airports. It's just a real good distribution center for the whole West. So Reno seemed like a hot spot.

Strekal: There are no floor costs in the warehouses here either, which is another thing.

Scalzo: Yes, that's part of the stimulation to bring people here for distribution and logistics.

The history of this business when it started was commercial warehousing. People could warehouse here until, say, wool got to be a certain price, then they would sell it. That's all part of the history of this property. This property was more than the Flanigan Building. There were other buildings. There was a hide house; there was a slaughterhouse; there was an ice house. It was all here on the old Highway 40, and the trains came in. It was quite a commercial area.

Today, you know, with the remnants, every building you see had some history, being an old firehouse, an old drugstore. Every building has something, an old Laundromat has some kind of background like that to it, which makes the area unique to this town.

Strekal: How about the building directly behind the warehouse, that big multi-story brick building?

Scalzo: We call it the Resco Building. Believe it or not, I think it was the slaughterhouse years ago, and then it was a paint shop, and then it was the Resco. It's been a bunch of things. It's an unbelievable building. If history tells it out, there may be expansion of Forever Yours into that building. We'll see.

Strekal: It's currently unoccupied?

Scalzo: No, it's occupied by Davis Construction and it's also for sale by Davis Construction right now. Davis Construction really doesn't need the building, so we're actually in negotiation with Davis Construction for that building.

Strekal: That would be interesting.

Scalzo: Me and a partner of mine. We're thinking of a design center. We're thinking of expanding here. If we get it, it'll be utilized for its core attributes, the bricks and the openness and the lines. It'll be aesthetically pleasing when we're done with it, but it'll still have its old reference to the past. Much like this building.

Strekal: Has zoning changed at all since you've had the business?

Scalzo: That was the Catch 22. We had changed the zoning to keep any homeless shelters from coming into the corridor and affecting negatively the business area, and then the city and the City Council blew out our zoning and rezoned it and brought in the homeless facility and built a huge homeless center adjacent to the downtown in the Fourth Street corridor, which has come back to bite them, in my opinion, because after that, they invested in a beautiful ballpark downtown, and the homeless center is right next to it and creates problems for sure. It's created a lot of problems for downtown because that's where all the homeless people go, directly downtown, and for us it actually was a godsend because they focused everything in the downtown corridor, and it's hurt the

downtown quite a bit.

Strekal: It directs people west rather than east, I guess.

Scalzo: Right. There's nothing at East Fourth, so downtown is west of it. All the asking for money takes place down there.

Strekal: So what is the area zoned for now?

Scalzo: Well, they still can't put a homeless facility on Fourth Street itself. Fourth Street itself is still supposedly not capable of having a homeless drop-in center, but right off Fourth Street on Record Street is the huge facility, so that's created problems for people in that part of town because it just flows over and it's stopped any real investment right in front of it. That's a flat part of the street.

Strekal: And Alpine Glass is out of business, right?

Scalzo: Yes, they're gone, so we've got a derelict Alpine Glass building and a derelict old Barengo building that's a beautiful building but is overrun with people sleeping behind it and things like that.

St. Vincent's took over the old Commercial Hardware. That was after the new zoning. St. Vincent's came in, took over the old Commercial Hardware building in the 1990s or something, I'm not sure when, and then they refused to move, and that's what brought the rest of the homeless center to them instead of going somewhere else that maybe would have been better for the town.

Commercial Hardware was kind of a competitor or another business like the Flanigan Hardware that was in here, a place where you could buy individual nuts and bolts. It was old-time, before Lowe's and Home Depot type hardware stores on a big scale. It was a unique, very unique business.

Strekal: What type of customers do you get in here? Are there a lot of curious passersby? Do you get people coming from out of town?

Scalzo: We get a lot of repeat business. Our customers are older at this point in this business because we've kind of gone upscale a little bit, but when we first started, with just antiques, they were people of all ages. Nowadays you have to be a little more economically situated to shop here than you did in the past, and that's the progression we went and were happy to go, and that's where we're at. I'm trying to have more stuff for younger people who are just starting out—a little more affordable—on the second floor, but the high quality of goods we're trying to keep kind of dictates somebody who is fairly successful in life to purchase.

Strekal: So you get a lot of people who are redecorating their homes or moving into new homes?

Scalzo: Moving, leaving, decorating, remodels, everything to do with the home. We've

been around a long time, so our name's been in this area for thirty-plus years, with millions and millions of turnover in products, so we get people, lots of people. And we have a unique building that people want to come in, so it's kind of a win-win situation. People are still surprised what's in here today, but a lot of people know about us.

The core of our business today is when you come in, you buy a bedroom set. You don't just buy the bed; you buy the bed, the nightstands. That's the progression the business has taken. This business is quite different than it was twenty-five years, twenty years ago. It's been a learning process and a maturing process.

Repeat business leads to more purchases, like a bedroom or dining set and a hutch. You want to get the whole room if you can. You want to get the whole ball of wax. You want to sell them everything that fits that room if you can.

Strekal: Has the train trench affected your business at all, as far as you can tell? Was the construction disrupted at all?

Scalzo: No, the train trench, to me, was a positive. Some people didn't like it in the Fourth Street Business Association, but I thought it was a positive. It's made the town quieter. In the long run, maybe it doesn't make that much difference, but it seems to give the downtown its own personality more, rather than a personality with a train. The train was part of the personality of downtown for a long time. Now it's not because it's sunken. The construction of the trench didn't seem to spread out all over the town. It was kind of centered where it was.

Strekal: So have the additions of the ballpark and the new bus depot, as far as you can tell, done anything to improve the area?

Scalzo: Yes, and the Events Center they built, and the bowling alley. There's a whole bunch of new beautiful stuff down there. I myself believe that Reno will have another uplift here just as people keep producing the graduates from the university. It's a town that has a great personality. It's unique. It's got a good climate. It's got access to I-80 and the California market, near the great city of San Francisco. It's a great place to live, as far as I'm concerned.

Strekal: In your opinion, has the reputation of Fourth Street changed recently? What might further change the reputation of this street?

Scalzo: Fourth Street's leaving behind its old reputation of prostitution and nothing but derelictness. What's changed that is the ballpark, the Events Center, and the younger people moving in, and that's a trend that's going to keep going. Fourth Street's going to slowly but surely get better and better. There's no two ways about it. And like I said, it's really accessible from Route 80. It has several on and off exits to Route 80, so it makes it very accessible and historical, so it's going places. I still think Fourth Street's going places.

Strekal: What is your hope for the future of the Fourth Street corridor?

Scalzo: I just hope it becomes more of an economically progressive area. I'd like to see a café on the street. I think it's real doable. The building I look at is the old firehouse with the parking. That would make a fantastic café. I'd like to see that, a coffee shop to back up the café. There are plenty of nice people doing art things and stuff. The Reno Bike Project is a great addition. It's just got a lot of uniqueness.

What will happen to the Flanigan building itself, I don't know. I'm hoping it maybe stays in the furniture trade as a place where people can walk in, just browse and shop. It's a big building, so it has limited purposes. We'll see what happens. It's always going to be a unique building to Reno. The future is just going to make it more unique. It's a great building, has a great history, and I think the town will appreciate it more and more as the years go on.

Strekal: It certainly is in nice shape for as old as it is.

Scalzo: Yes, thank you. I might add we won the Preservation Award in the year 2007, recognized with that award from the city of Reno, my wife Susan and me. It's pretty much in original condition.

Strekal: Do transportation issues play a big role in the health of the Fourth Street corridor?

Scalzo: Well, I think they can. I think people are going to use public transportation more and more, and Fourth Street used to have an old trolley that went down Fourth Street from Reno to Sparks.

Strekal: Right. And then to Plumas Springs.

Scalzo: Right. With Fourth Street right now, they're talking about changing the dynamics of it and making it more bike-friendly, so that's all good stuff. I think public transportation represents a sort of maturity in a lot of cities, to have good public transportation, and I think that will be the case for Reno as well.

Strekal: What do you think the greatest transportation needs are for the corridor as it stands?

Scalzo: I don't know. Maybe to get the people to take the buses more, maybe a free day, maybe like every Wednesday it's free or something. In Portland they have the downtown cores for their trams, and they're free. You just jump on and off. It makes it so easily accessible and useful, that you almost have to be an idiot not to use them. That's what could make a big difference down here, just make it a no-brainer to use public transportation. It's starting. I mean, they have the buses going down Virginia Street, the Express that goes down. They've got those new ports with digital signs. It looks very European. They're like a kiosk for sitting there waiting for the fast bus that comes down. The accordion bus goes down Virginia Street every twenty minutes or something like that.

Strekal: Are you aware of any transportation safety issues in the corridor?

Scalzo: No, I don't know of any safety issues.

Strekal: Do you think the lanes should be modified to have fewer than two lanes or a center turning lane or should the buses have their own lanes? Do you think that would make the flow of traffic a little bit better?

Scalzo: I think definitely things should be studied first—the streets, not just Fourth Street, but Sixth Street and the middle street should all be studied to see the flow around all these new things, the Events Center, the ballpark, the new bus center. There should be an optimum approach to that. I think you should try to maybe run around Fourth Street a little more rather than using Fourth Street for all the traffic. That's my personal opinion. I think Fourth Street should be developed more commercially for bikes and walking, to make it more pedestrian-friendly, and let Mill Street and Sixth Street carry the burden, or the bulk of the public transportation vehicles.

Strekal: Do you think bike lanes would be a good idea or maybe wider, newer sidewalks?

Scalzo: Wider, newer sidewalks are good. Bike lanes. Just get it so you could have cafés. If you made wider sidewalks, you could have cafés with dining in front or seating in front. Just make it user-friendly, not just bus-friendly and car-friendly, but user-friendly. Make it more pedestrian-oriented and use as an alternative Sixth Street and Mills Street, and take what Fourth Street offers and highlight it instead of battling it.

Strekal: With wider sidewalks you could have more trees, perhaps.

Scalzo: You could have trees, you could have cafés, you could have people outside. Like I said, the proximity to the university makes that dynamic possible. The history of the area is here. If you drive up I-80, think about it. You get off in Auburn, you've got old town Auburn. You get off in Truckee, you've got old town Truckee. Why couldn't you get off in downtown Reno and have an historic Fourth Street? What does that do? That brings people into your town. It's a marketing strategy, but it's a common-sense strategy. It's already a win-situation for Auburn. It's already a big win situation for Truckee. And Reno has ignored its assets so far, and now, unfortunately, it seems like they're emphasizing the buses going to a baseball game over taking Fourth Street and developing it to be more user-friendly. I'm disappointed in that, to be honest.

Strekal: I know in Auburn, too, there's a lot of emphasis with plaques and markers of what's what. And that could easily be done on Fourth Street also.

Scalzo: Right. Right. Definitely on the core part of downtown Fourth Street, and even stretching into on the other side of it a little bit towards Sparks. But we'll see. Is it all about the buses or is it all about having a commercial street that is dynamic?

Strekal: I know you have a plaque on your building that says Flanigan Square established

1902.

Scalzo: Yeah, we did that. We also named it Flanigan Square. We added that. It was always considered the Flanigan building, but since we own the whole block, we decided to call it Flanigan Square.

Strekal: Not to be mistaken with Hobson Square.

Scalzo: Well, he's a latecomer. [laughter] He's a wannabe there. No, I like Mr. Hobson.

Strekal: How is parking on the street?

Scalzo: We have our own parking, so parking's not an issue for us. If they want parking, all they have to do is create a public lot somewhere on the street. People will park and walk a few blocks if the blocks are interesting and dynamic. That's not a problem. So there are ways to deal with the parking.

Strekal: There's plenty of lighting on the street now.

Scalzo: The street is lit up. The street has all the ingredients. It's just a matter of who wins—the buses and cars, or pedestrians and bicycles and commercial activity.

Strekal: I saw recently that they're using the old bus depot for events every Friday, and that's on Fourth Street.

Scalzo: That's a fantastic thing, the food trucks. That's something that's gone on in many cities across the country. Portland is a leader in that. It's time to learn from other people.

Strekal: There are a lot of things to be done, like you say, a user-friendly dynamic area, with cafés, maybe even a grocery store.

Scalzo: There are buildings on this block. I could see the old Salvation Army building being a Whole Foods or a Trader Joe's. It's got parking. It's got all the assets and then it could service the whole university area, this whole north area of town.

It's the same old dilemma for America. Does the car win out over everything? Is everything about the car or are we going to get more people-friendly and pedestrian-friendly? Fourth Street offers it if they take it that way.

Strekal: It's easy to walk down Fourth Street. It's easily walkable, but the sidewalks are narrow.

Scalzo: Why walk down the street when you have to breathe the vehicle fumes? Minimize the vehicles, two lanes, one each way. That's all you need.

Strekal: Is there a lot of residential around here? I don't know.

Scalzo: There isn't much residential, but there's the potential for residential. There are big lots available off of Sixth. In the past they've talked about student housing and things like that. There is some senior housing in the corridor. You can live above your business if you want in this corridor, which is a neat factor, and I believe the guys at the Lincoln Lounge are doing that.

Strekal: And also above Abbey's Highway 40.

Scalzo: Isn't that the Morris Hotel there?

Strekal: I think that's the same building, but I think people live above those also.

Scalzo: They live in the Morris Hotel. Abbey's doesn't have a building over it.

Strekal: Oh, it doesn't. Okay. And there's also that housing right down the street now, right? On the next block.

Scalzo: There's housing over there. That's subsidized housing, which is good. It's not a problem. Everybody needs a hand.

Strekal: Is the El Rancho still open next door?

Scalzo: That's subsidized housing as well. Both the next two housing facilities, the El Rancho and the newer one are housing-subsidized.

Strekal: The El Rancho used to be a very nice place. And then the Wells overpass there—

Scalzo: Killed it.

Strekal: —kind of killed it a little bit, from what I understand. Thanks a lot for your time on this, Ed. I think we got some good information here that should be useful.

Scalzo: Thanks for your interest, Edan.

Strekal: Absolutely.

Scalzo: May the future be blessed.

Strekal: I hope so. Thank you.