

How did I get here?

My life began some 32 years ago in the small suburban town of Melrose, Massachusetts. The offspring of a computer analyst and an author/entrepreneur, I spent my childhood in school or playing baseball, basketball, or tennis. At the ripe old age of thirteen, I took my first job stacking homemade ice cream scoops at Sunshine Dairy. Hard to imagine that I lasted only a year at that position, which – by the way – paid all of \$2.35 per hour (plus tips). I recall my best 8-hour shift one Saturday, when I made \$0.64 in tips - not quite enough to offset the \$1.00 per hour tip credit my employer received.

I moved to Nevada in 1985. That year, I quit the Clark High School tennis team, and re-started my culinary career at Cangemi's Supper Club (formerly Vince's Steak House) on West Sahara. It was in 1987 that I freed myself from the confines of a single restaurant and expanded my resume. Name the restaurant and I, or someone I knew, worked there – Chin's, Binion's Steakhouse, Venetian Ristorante, Villa Pizza, Domino's, Pizza Hut.

In 1988, this son of a small business owner began his studies to learn the skills necessary to someday work for myself. I completed studies in Business Administration at UNLV in 1992. I promptly took a position with the accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche LLP to further hone my business acumen. It was a few years later that the restaurant industry sought to bring me back into its clutches. I went, not quite kicking and screaming, to work for Celebrity Chef Mark Miller at his Coyote Café restaurant inside the MGM Grand Hotel.

As always, I committed myself to the restaurant as well as the industry, entrenching myself over the years in activities of the Boards of Directors of the Nevada Restaurant Association and the Nevada Restaurant Self-Insured Group. I even managed to eek out a Master of Science Degree in Hotel Administration from UNLV in 2000. It was Mark DiMartino, I believe, that saw my commitment to the industry and the Nevada Restaurant Association and recommended that I assume the role and duties of Secretary / Treasurer of the Association.

Now, a few short years later, in 2003, here I am – Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Nevada Restaurant Association. In the wake of such successful accounting endeavors as Enron, Worldcom and Adelphia, the Nevada Restaurant Association has chosen a bean-counter to run the show. Don't get me wrong – I'm all for the idea of a CPA being Chairman. CPA's are, by training, organized, thorough, careful and accountable (pun intended).

Perhaps more importantly, a CPA is intimately involved in the reluctance of many companies to part with even a single dollar. Therein lies my challenge – to make clear the reasons why every food and beverage establishment should spend hard dollars for its membership in the Nevada Restaurant Association. Sure I have other aspirations, such as to organize the committees and Board to better set and achieve goals, while respecting the time and energy of its members. But make no mistake, establishments must be compelled to become members of the Nevada Restaurant Association. It is good for the association, good for the industry and good for the members. I look forward to making sure you all know, as I do, how important membership is, at all costs.