

# Ross Hodge Remembrances

**Neil Friedman**

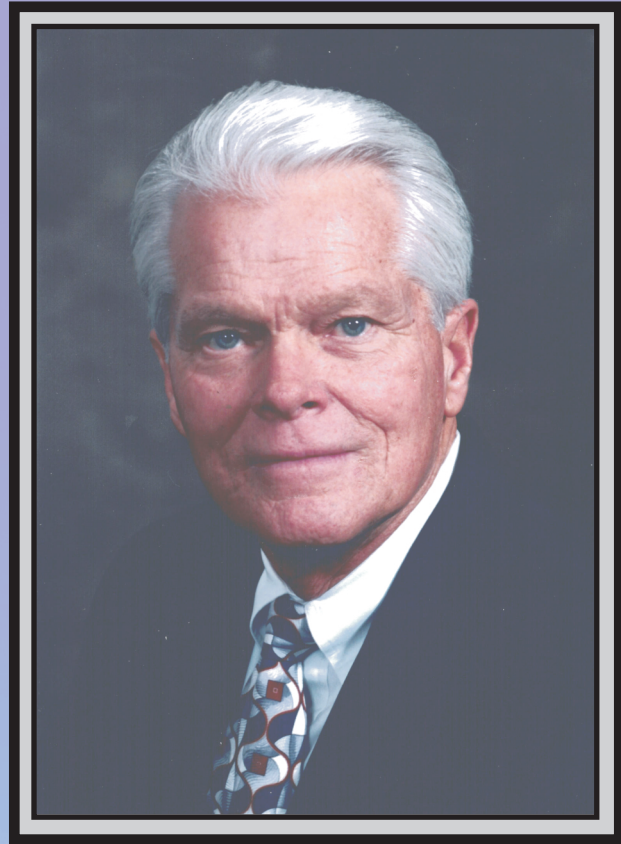
Ross and I first met in the Gaming Division of the Nevada Attorney General's Office. One morning I walked into my office and found a distinguished looking, silver haired man blocking the entrance to my office door. He reached his hand out and offered his name. Unbeknownst to anyone in our office, Ross had been hired as the new Gaming Deputy.

Born in Mississippi, he attended Ole Miss as an undergraduate. Upon graduating, he enlisted in the Air Force and was assigned to sit in a silo and guard a ballistic missile somewhere deep below the State of Montana. Once discharged, Ross enrolled in the University of Florida School of Law. Eventually, he found himself to be the managing partner of a large Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, law firm.

However, his love of the Sierra's beckoned him to Nevada. Initially he practiced with the firm of Belding, Harris and Hodge. Seeking an entre into gaming, he accepted a position as a Nevada deputy attorney general in the Gaming Division. He often told me that his time in the Nevada Attorney General's office was the most enjoyable of his professional career.

While reminiscing of his time in the Gaming Division, he regaled telling the story of investigating a potential disciplinary matter. The investigation involved the issue of whether a Las Vegas men's club (*i.e.* strip joint) was not accessible to the public because it was assessing a cover charge. Ross figured he reached the pinnacle of his legal career when he was "compelled" to visit a topless bar for official purposes.

Ross' interests were mostly limited to politics and cars. He loved his cars. He kept a list of all the vehicles he had ever purchased. Numbering in excess of 110, he was an oracle for everything automotive. While his legal experience was impressive, his knowledge of cars was extensive. At any time, Ross' home had the appearance of a car lot. Typically owning from three to five vehicles, his three-car garage, was rarely adequate.



When the number of cars exceeded the capacity of his garage, they would spill over into his drive way and eventually into a storage unit. Invariably, it would come time for Ross to "simplify his life." This phrase was reserved for a cataclysmic event. The sale of his most treasured belongings. This happened with such frequency that the Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles once questioned whether he should have an automotive dealership license.

Other than cars, Ross' only vice was his steadfast political conservatism. Never to shy away from a political debate, he loudly proclaimed his patriotism and professed his love for Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh. Ross often engaged others in political debate. One of his favorite phrases and one that aptly described his political posture was, "Often wrong, but rarely in doubt."

Just nine days before he succumbed to lung cancer, Ross watched the inauguration of Barack Obama. Standing in front of his television and using what little strength he had left, he excoriated the nation for having elected a Democrat and proclaimed that the election would be the death of us all. To this day, I'm not certain whether the lung cancer was his demise or the election of a Democrat.

Upon Ross' passing there are but three things I am certain: his friendship will be greatly missed, the political debate will be more serene and the resurgence of the auto industry will be greatly delayed.



#### **Scott Scherer**

I remember Ross' love of cars and his absolute loathing for long plane rides.

For instance, at IGT Brian McKay kept trying to convince Ross to go on some overseas trips. I think Brian finally convinced him to go on one (Japan maybe) and he was excited to tackle his phobia head on, but swore he'd never do it again after he returned.

One other thing I remember is the fact that he was very careful about what he took on. Ross wanted to make sure that whatever he did, he did right. He always said that he'd be committing malpractice if he offered advice on securities law and felt it was very important to make sure the company got the appropriate counsel for the situation.

#### **Jack Godfrey**

While I only knew Ross on a casual professional basis, I did buy a car from him. My son and I flew up to Reno in 1998 and drove it back. It was my first and only Mercedes and based on his reputation for keeping his cars up, I bought it sight unseen. I was not disappointed.

#### **Sean McGuinness**

I first met Ross when I was practicing gaming law in Mississippi with the late Champ Terney (Sen. Jim Eastland's son-in-law) circa 1994 -1995. Although Champ and Ross had attended high school together in Greenville, Mississippi, and then gone on to both study at the University of Mississippi, they had lost touch. Champ ran into Ross again in Las Vegas at a gaming show. After that, we did some work with Ross.

After Champ passed away in 1996, I became a partner at Ben Stone's firm. My contact with Ross increased at this time. I recently asked my former partner Scott Andress what he remembered most about Ross from a Mississippi perspective and he replied "his car fetish" and the "conundrum" Ross felt whenever Ole Miss played football against Florida. Ross was a big fan of both teams.

When I moved to Las Vegas in the late 1990s, I often would have lunch with Neil Friedman, Ira Levine, Marc Rubinstein, Joe Rolston and Ross, which was always a lot of fun. I remember Ross always talking about wanting to transfer to IGT's Reno office, since he loved Northern Nevada. Finally, he got his wish.

Ross was always gracious, kind and professional. He will be missed.

#### **Paul Lychuk**

I had the great pleasure of getting to know Ross when we worked together as Deputy Attorneys General assigned to the Gaming Division. Always a gentleman, Ross enjoyed lively and congenial discourse. Whether it was the subject of work, politics, religion, or cars, Ross was sure to have the conversation end on a humorous note. In fact, it was





nearly impossible to take anything too seriously with Ross around.

Over lunch Ross could lament the poor service and slight treatment that he thought that he had received from a Lexus dealership over his complaint of wind noise that he had noticed when driving his new car over 100 mph on the open highway at dawn, or the dire ramifications of a recent Clinton administration decision, always in a way that would leave us in tears of laughter (when Lexus refused to acknowledge that the sunroof on his new car was defective, Ross carried on his fight under Nevada's Lemon Law Buyback provisions, and won). Yet, Ross often protested, concluding our daily lunch conversations over how best to split the bill "evenly," and particularly whose turn it was to pay the difference when the split left an odd dollar, which I thought was funny too. When he left for the private sector he filled my desk drawer with coins and a note, "for lunch."

strong opinions and wasn't shy about sharing them. After sharing such opinions with considerable detail and zeal, he would make some kind of reference like "Now I will get off my 'soap box'". If I had to describe Ross in just a few words, I would say he was a distinguished gentleman. **NGL**

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Ross saw the humor in human fallibility and consistently made light of it. He nevertheless keenly provided a healthy perspective devoid of ego to our group discussions on the challenging legal issues of the day. Until an issue was decided, Ross would fight tenaciously for what he believed to be the right course of action. If the ultimate decision happened to not go his way, Ross did not take it personally. Ross would acknowledge that he had done all that he could do on the matter and move on. I like to think of his passing in the same way.

#### **Charlotte M. Bible**

When I worked with Ross in the Gaming Division of the Attorney General's Office, he and Neil Friedman were quite the team, making the office a fun place to work. I appreciated Ross's experience, his pleasant manner and professionalism. Ross had

