

50 Questions With Frank Hawkins, Jr. '81

Frank Hawkins, Jr. '81 (criminal justice) is the executive director of Community Development Programs Center of Nevada and president of the Las Vegas chapter of the NAACP. A former Las Vegas city councilman, he played seven years for the Oakland Raiders following four years with the Wolf Pack. During his college football career, he gained 5,333 yards by rushing and is still the Wolf Pack career rushing leader. When he finished his career in 1980, this was the third highest rushing total of all time. Frank lives in Las Vegas with his wife, Cheryl (Tasker) '84 (journalism), and daughter, Pierlys, 8.

Nevada Silver & Blue: With your long history working for affordable housing and economic development in Nevada, how has the economic downturn affected Nevadans' ability to obtain affordable housing as well as make a living, and do you see an upswing in the market?

Frank Hawkins: The economic downturn has been devastating to the economy. Nevadans will continue to lose their jobs and homes. Nevada is number one in the nation in home foreclosures. Our affordable rental apartment homes are in more demand than ever before because of the lack of modification/refinancing by the banks. Additionally, Nevada is experiencing huge commercial real estate and credit card defaults.

Three of our top five industries are no longer in a vertical growth mode: gaming, construction and housing. Nevadans will start to recover their jobs when these industries



Frank and Cheryl Hawkins and their 8-year-old daughter, Pierlys, in their Las Vegas home.

start to heal and the banks start to lend: mid year 2010.

NSB: As the current president of the Las Vegas branch of the NAACP, what is the role of NAACP and higher education in helping promote economic and social equality for minority group citizens?

FH: Since the inception of the NAACP 100 years ago, the organization has been diligent about civil rights and achieving equality between blacks and whites. As our organization moves into its next century of activism, our vision has been expanded to focus on human rights for all people.

Higher education should lead by example in promoting diversity, as well as economic and social equality, along with nurturing and protecting our youth. Higher education should be diverse in its tenured professors, poised to respond to student needs, willing to discuss tough issues such as racism and social injustice within its own system, and foster a sense of community and inclusion within the larger community.

I invite readers to join the NAACP. Visit our web site at naacplv.org.

NSB: As a generous donor to the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, why did you feel it was important to support the University?

FH: During my college experience at the University, many people were kind to my family and me: Luther Mack, Bernice Martin-Mathews '70 (nursing), '75M.Ed. (educational administration/higher education), Bob and Nancy Cashell '90 (doctor of humane letters), Frank and Marge Meyers, the Reviglios,

Caranos, Alstons, Quilicis, Capurros and many others. I want to be like them. I grew into a young man with the assistance of the Reno family. God has blessed me all my life. I am obligated to give back. The older I get the more I appreciate the positive experience I had at the University. Besides, I met my wife, Cheryl, at the University in 1978.

NSB: How did your education at the University help you in your life and do you stay connected with friends you made here?

FH: I have always believed once you get the knowledge in your head, no one can take that away from you. I majored in criminal justice and apply many of the concepts I learned on a daily basis. I am more solicitous in my actions because of the conservative Reno culture, which I appreciate. I am in contact with a few classmates and teammates. If I see them once every 10 years or talk to them by telephone, we always talk about how great our college experience was: the good old days.

NSB: What was it like to win Super Bowl XVIII?

FH: Playing in the Super Bowl, without question, was one of the greatest days of my life. As a professional athlete the ultimate goal is to be the best in the world. In the season of 1983 and the Super Bowl of 1984 we proved we were the best football team in the world. All of the little hairs on the back of my neck were standing up when I walked out onto the field and a hundred thousand screaming fans were awaiting the start of the game and millions more watching on television around the world.