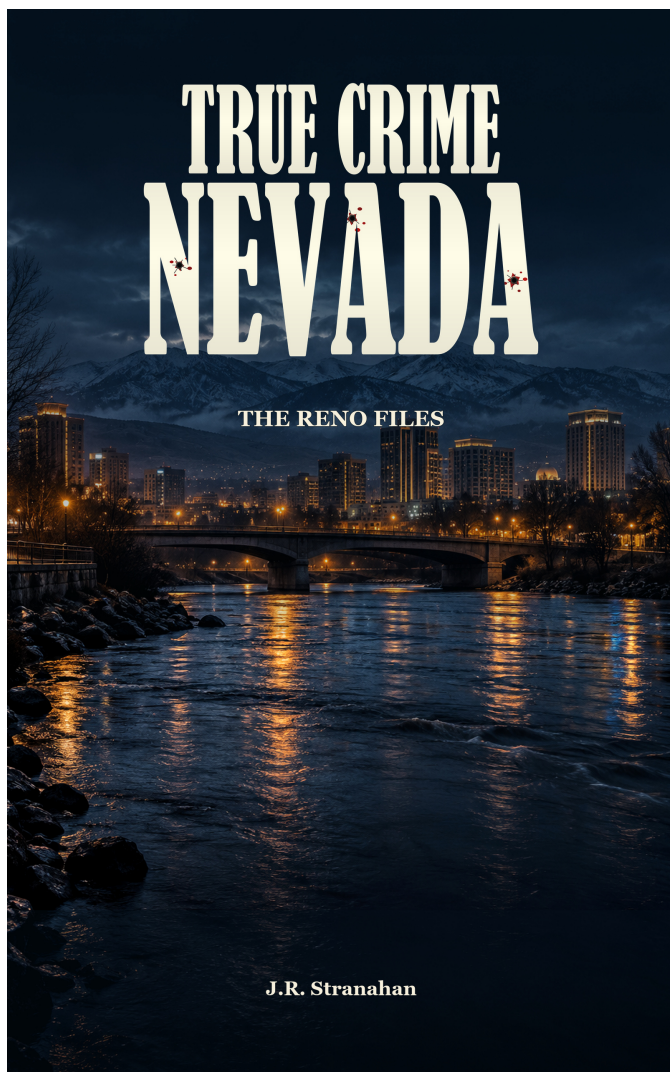




True Crime Nevada: The Reno Files

J.R. Stranahan

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The Thanksgiving Day Sidewalk Killings

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File 1: The Thanksgiving Day Sidewalk Killings

Place and period: downtown Reno, 1980-1995

Present legal status: Priscilla Ford was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder and twenty-three counts of attempted murder. The Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the convictions and sentences; Ford died in custody in 2005.

This file belongs first to the people killed and injured, their families, witnesses, and downtown Reno. The public record is necessarily organized around investigation and adjudication, but a criminal case is not the measure of a life. The account uses the available record to describe what happened and how institutions responded, while avoiding invented biography where sources are silent.

The human scale

Ford drove a Lincoln Continental onto a crowded Reno sidewalk on Thanksgiving Day 1980. That fact is the fixed point for this portion of The Thanksgiving Day Sidewalk Killings. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. In downtown Reno, later retellings sometimes collapse the investigation and the judgment into one continuous story. The public record does not. It preserves the order in which information appeared and the forum in which it was tested. The present legal posture is stated separately: Priscilla Ford was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder and twenty-three counts of attempted murder. The Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the convictions and sentences; Ford died in custody in 2005.

For the people killed and injured, their families, witnesses, and downtown Reno, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse

consequence. The trial record described six charged murder victims and twenty-three attempted-murder victims. The detail belongs here because it changes the chronology, not because it supplies atmosphere. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. Keeping that boundary visible lets the reader understand both the institutional response and the loss that made the response necessary.

The 1980-1995 record from downtown Reno contains a point that resists shorthand: Ford's competency and mental condition became major pretrial and trial questions. The present legal posture is equally specific: Priscilla Ford was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder and twenty-three counts of attempted murder. The Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the convictions and sentences; Ford died in custody in 2005. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. One proposition may be established while a neighboring proposition remains disputed. Treating them separately is not hesitation; it is accurate reporting.

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. A jury convicted her after a lengthy capital trial. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what the people killed and injured, their families, witnesses, and downtown Reno privately thought.

Location matters in this file. downtown Reno determined which agencies, courts, and communities carried the case, while 1980-1995 marks the span over which the public learned it. The state supreme court reviewed competency, evidentiary, jury, and sentencing claims before affirming. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. The result is a chronology with identifiable custodians rather than a collection of free-floating claims.

This part of the account begins with a modest question: what did the cited source actually establish? Its answer is plain: Ford drove a Lincoln Continental onto a crowded Reno sidewalk on Thanksgiving Day 1980. The answer does not automatically prove motive, identity, or every charge in the case. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. The remaining status is stated without embellishment: Priscilla Ford was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder and twenty-three counts of attempted murder. The Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the convictions and sentences; Ford died in custody in 2005.

The case file gives different kinds of information different weight. The trial record described six charged murder victims and twenty-three attempted-murder victims. A contemporaneous observation, a laboratory result, a charging allegation, and an appellate finding do not perform the same job. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. Describing those jobs plainly is especially important when the story concerns the people killed and injured, their families, witnesses, and downtown Reno.

The first account

By the time *The Thanksgiving Day Sidewalk Killings* reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. A jury convicted her after a lengthy capital trial. Restoring sequence shows what investigators knew, what prosecutors alleged, what the defense contested, and what a court or jury ultimately resolved. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. An older headline cannot replace the current status: Priscilla Ford was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder and twenty-three counts of attempted murder. The Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the convictions and sentences; Ford died in custody in 2005.

There is no need to enlarge the evidence to make this file serious. The state supreme court reviewed competency, evidentiary, jury, and sentencing claims before affirming. That proposition is consequential on

its own. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. The account therefore avoids borrowing certainty from unrelated defendants, other jurisdictions, or later cases that happen to resemble events in downtown Reno.

The public record speaks most reliably when attribution travels with the claim. Here is the supported proposition: Ford drove a Lincoln Continental onto a crowded Reno sidewalk on Thanksgiving Day 1980. The source may recount an allegation, summarize trial proof, or state a judgment, and the language must match that function. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. That practice protects the accuracy of the case and the dignity of the people killed and injured, their families, witnesses, and downtown Reno at the same time.

At this stage of the file, absence is also information. The available materials establish this much: The trial record described six charged murder victims and twenty-three attempted-murder victims. They do not establish every rumor that accumulated during 1980-1995. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. Refusing to bridge those gaps with speculation keeps the unresolved portions visible instead of disguising them as narrative momentum.

Consider the detail in its proper scale: Ford's competency and mental condition became major pretrial and trial questions. It is neither disposable nor self-executing. Its force depends on where it sits among the other records from downtown Reno. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. A measured account can explain that relationship without turning legal caution into a repetitive disclaimer.

The language of this chapter changes when the legal posture changes. A jury convicted her after a lengthy capital trial. If the proposition came from an accusation, it remains attributed; if it survived adjudication, the judgment is named; if review altered the result, the alteration is carried

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Building a chronology

The most useful context is the context that changes interpretation. The trial record described six charged murder victims and twenty-three attempted-murder victims. In the downtown Reno record, that detail helps explain why a particular investigative or legal step followed. Dates and sequence preserve the difference between early uncertainty and later knowledge. General crime lore would add volume but not understanding, so it is left outside the account.

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Physical evidence

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Witness evidence

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Digital and documentary trails

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Charging choices

By the time The Thanksgiving Day Sidewalk Killings reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. A jury convicted her after a lengthy capital trial. Restoring sequence shows what investigators knew, what prosecutors alleged, what the defense contested, and what a court or jury ultimately resolved. An indictment states allegations, while a plea or verdict resolves only the counts and defendants actually adjudicated. An older headline cannot replace the current status: Priscilla Ford was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder and twenty-three counts of attempted murder. The Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the convictions and sentences; Ford died in custody in 2005.

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The courtroom

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Appeal and review

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. The state supreme court reviewed competency, evidentiary, jury, and sentencing claims before affirming. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. Appellate review addresses claimed legal error on a fixed record rather than conducting a second trial. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what the people killed and injured, their families, witnesses, and downtown Reno privately thought.

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Institutions

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Status at manuscript lock

The controlling status for this account is: Priscilla Ford was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder and twenty-three counts of attempted murder. The Nevada Supreme Court affirmed the convictions and sentences; Ford died in custody in 2005. That sentence is deliberately narrower than a television summary. It does not merge co-defendants, convert accusations into findings, or imply that an appeal erased a human death. Later proceedings may change the legal posture, but they should not be projected backward onto the record described here.

Sources from the edition

The Thanksgiving Day Sidewalk Killings

- Supreme Court of Nevada, Ford v. State:

<https://law.justia.com/cases/nevada/supreme-court/1986/14057-1.html>

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