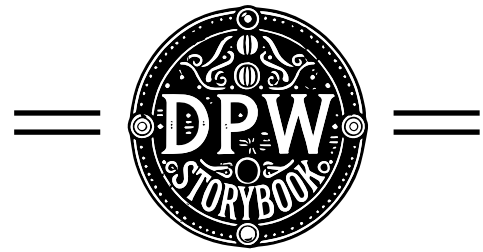


COACH

Coach, hailing from Eugene, Oregon, has been a committed mechanic with the Department of Public Works since 2014. Alongside his work as a bartender and server, he's developed deep skills in both construction and mechanics. Beginning as a fuel attendant, Coach quickly moved up to become the lead mechanic of the fuel team. A dedicated musician, he finds real peace in playing drums with his band.

This interview was conducted in 2018 by "Flo", Flore Muguet a French anthropologist. Most of Flo's questions have been omitted to improve reading flow.



“I love the way I’ve blossomed and flourished with DPW...”

My name is Coach. I'm from Eugene, Oregon. I'm a bartender now. I've been there bartending since 2011, working as a bartender and a server. I do construction on the side. I lived in a house with a couple of different people. I lived in their place and remodeled. I did that for 2 ½ years. Living inside and remodeling.

I just love playing music. It's a relief and it's a release. You know? I'm glad I have... it's a relief to me when I come home and I just... I had a bad day,

you know, and I can release. But, it's a relief that I'll be playing my drums in an hour, if I can just get through this. You know? I'm gonna be with my bandmates later tonight. My whole life is worth everything I do, but it's a relief that I have something that is going to make it better.

It's the first time I've come here since 2014! I brought my drum. This drum! I brought this drum, and this drum has gone everywhere with me for the last ten years. No! Fifteen years! Since 2003 we've been kicking it.

[In] 2014, I came here working as a fuel attendant. Just pumping gas for three weeks. Then the next year, they offered me a six week contract. Then, I became the fuel team mechanic. Then, in 2016, I was a fuel mechanic lead. You know, charging pumps and everything. Last year, I really kind of created, or just kind of took over what we needed to do, what we needed to be.

I did a lot of research on my own off season. You know, I did a lot of research on gasoline, pumps, and petroleum. You know? I researched on nozzles: how could I be a better fuel mechanic? And it is where it is today.

I worked at a Fuel station when I came home from service. I pumped gas at a gas station. Then, I worked at a truck stop for a couple of years. Then, I got on with working with the guys who were coming in. They were changing filters. Doing updates. Doing changes. You know? One guy didn't show up one day, and I was there helping him, and then the next day, you know, I became an assistant. But, that was in 1988; I'm 54.

I love the way that I've blossomed and flourished in DPW. I've been at a lot of festivals, and a lot of events. It's

“I’m allowed to do what I want to do, in the best way I can, how I see fit...”

been a long time. I've been wanting to come to Burning Man for a long time. I had a friend who was trying to get me to come here in 2003. He said, “whenever you're ready, you're gonna work for me.” He had this hoodie on with this little thing on it, and it was a Burning Man thing. I wanted to do it, but I couldn't.

Then my son, my youngest son, he graduated in 2014. So, it came up and I've been here ever since. As for my oldest daughter: this is her third burn. This is my first burn. Next year, my son wants to come here for his first burn.

What I did at first [with the DPW] is that I was a gas attendant. People pulled up and I put gas in their car. You know? That was a lot of fun. You get to meet a lot of people.

That was different. When we first started it, we'd just write everything down. It was all paper. It was all analogue. Then, we would give it to them, and they would type it in. Submit all the forms and everything.

Then, that year also, when I first came on the team, Wrecker recruited me. She knew that I know how to build things. Ok. So, I come

down here. She's like, “well come on down.” So, Vavoom, who was her assistant, said, “yeah, and bring your hand tools. We got some things for you to build.” Alright, cool. So, I brought my tools down.

I build my shop. You know, I got the box and I put the shelves in storage and everything. Then, I built the office box. So, I got to meet a lot of people on special projects. I get to meet a lot of people at the shop. In 2000, as I was at the shop, I knew Barfight and Fyreboi, because I would come down there and spend four or five hours a day making things and taking it back to assemble there. So, that's how I got to know them: spending '14 and '15 doing all the construction.

I mean, I only had this little space. But, they had table saws and chop

saws and everything I need. And I know how to use it, you know? And... yeah. Scumbag was the manager there. I said, “can I?” He said, “you do anything you wanna do here, man. You know what you're doing.”

So, that was a great rapport I developed with that in 2014 and 2015. Then, in 2016, this all changed when Hotspot came in. It brought a whole new regime. New change. You know?

I had, in the last two years, made some good connections and good contacts with the commissary shop and with plumbing. With different people and different aspects: trying to put together things that we needed. You know. I was really an asset to her in 2016 when she was taking over, and I understood a lot of how DPW



Photo credit : Flore Muguet, 2018.



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worked. She didn't: she was new to DPW. But, I understood the DPW mentality. I think I was able to help her be a liaison. To lead her into the DPW mentality. You still be yourself, you know? But, you do better when you recognize that you are DPW and that you go by DPW standards. It works.

I'm allowed to do what I want to do, in the best way I can, how I see fit.. I feel encouraged to do my best and to bring my best. My freakiest is applauded. You know? As long as it works and its safe, yeah. I can do that wearing a pink minidress! Or

a miniskirt! Or wearing my sarong. Oh, yeah. That's how I got the mechanic job.

I was working in 2015. Wrecker said, "you need to get a radio." So, I got a radio. I didn't really want it. I didn't want it. I just wanted to pump gas, I just wanted to build things, I just wanted to make things: I'm at Burning Man. I wanna build and make things and pump gas. This is great.

I'm listening to the radio, and they're talking about problems that they're having with the trucks. You know?

We got two trucks that don't work, and we got all these things we need to fuel, but two trucks aren't working. One truck isn't working because its leaking fuel all over the ground. So, I walk over there and look at it, and I see what's leaking, and I figure out, "well, I got my tools, and I'm not really doing anything. So, I'll take it apart and see what's wrong with it."

I saw what's wrong with it. I call on the radio and say, "hey, this is what's wrong with it." "How do you know?" "Well, it's in my hand." And it happened that Hamburgler is at the depot. He comes over and goes, "You fixed that?? In that pink minidress?? That little pink skirt??" I go, "yeah." "You're the fuel team mechanic!!!"

So, he brought me some more parts and I put it all back together and fixed it, and the problem was gone. Then, there was another problem with the meters. I took the meter off, and I took it all apart, and put it all together. I found the manual. "oh!" So, I read the manual, and did all this stuff, and took it all apart, and it took me a couple of hours, but I figured it all out. Cool. I try to put it all back together, and test it out, and it worked. I go, "hey, this meter is working too." And that's how I got the job.

I just know how to do mechanical things. I know how wrenches work, I know how gears turn, and I know why and understand. I just kind of create it. I started pumping gas and now I'm OPPs. I get fuel out of the containers and into the assets. [...] I'm a lead. I don't have any subordinates. I work independently. I'm ahead of the problem. I try to put out what... I try to make sure the equipment is available, and the equipment is working and functioning properly. I try to anticipate that and be ahead of the need for it.

This year, I walked in and I really felt that I was a part of this. You know what I mean? That is the biggest thing for me. I mean, I really wanna be back here. I really wanna come back. I think about it every day I'm at home. All year long.

I am DPW and I am proud of it. You can see it in my home, and you can see it outside my home. I have stickers. I have my DPW flag in my window. I have DPW, and I have a big sticker, my car sticker, hanging in my window. I have a chime hanging that's got a ranger token that a ranger gave me. That's hanging on a charm out in front of my window.

I stole a magnet off of one of the trucks. I took it home and put it on my refrigerator. And I have posters from 2014, 2015, and 2016 in my

“People love me when I’m home again. They want to hear my stories and everything...”

house. I have two big maps of the city. One is going down the hallway. The other one is rolled up somewhere. I'll put it in my shop maybe. But, yeah. I put DPW throughout my house. I have a sign, a fluffer sticker, on my refrigerator. It says, "drink water." Yeah. It's in my life. I'm DPW. I like being like this.

I come back here, and its not easy, but it doesn't kill me. It brings me back up and makes me new. I go back home again and my people love me when I'm home again. They want to hear my stories and everything. Then, in June, "leave me alone! I gotta go to the desert!" I gotta get back here. Even if it's just for seven weeks, I love to stay here.



DPW Fuel Patch, 2018.