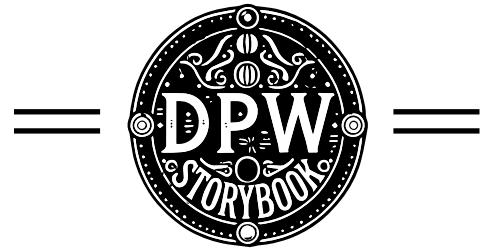


DISCO

Disco has been involved with the Ranch since 2014 and served as assistant manager from 2016 to 2019, playing a key role in improving its operations and infrastructure. Located near Gerlach, Nevada, the Ranch is Burning Man's main site for the storage, maintenance, and renovation of the event's infrastructure, habitats, and vehicles. Some workers hold multi-month contracts to support these extensive year-round efforts.

Previously, he volunteered with Burning Man's Lamplighters from 2002 to 2008 and also managed the Blue Oasis Theme Camp. Since 2021, Disco has been the facility manager at the Generator in Reno, a creative and collaborative space. With his extensive experience and leadership, he continues to make significant contributions to the Burning Man community, fostering artistic projects and supporting local initiatives.

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



“In 2002, I volunteered with the Lamplighters. They brought a new lounge out that year. I had some access to a lighting rig [...] and I brought a disco ball.”



Disco at Fly Ranch (which is not the working Ranch). Photo credit: unknown. Year: unknown.

Way back then, in 2002, I volunteered with the Lamplighters. They brought a new lounge out that year. I had some access to a lighting rig, so I brought the whole lighting rig out to the lounge, and I brought a disco ball. They were like, “Oh you brought the disco!” and thought it was so cool. I hated that name and—because I reacted against it, like you do—they were like, “nope, that’s it.” For years people tried to change my name and then, eventually, it got embroidered on a jacket. Now it’s just there. It is. So, it’s been a very long time.

I was with the Lamplighters until 2008. I ran them in 2006 and 2007. Then in 2008, I moved on to the Blue Oasis and Accounting B. It’s a theme camp, but it’s also a staff camp as part of the accounting department. In 2010, I became the camp manager for Blue Oasis, and we set up a really lovely movie theater. That was cool for a couple of years. It’s a lot of work. Anything out here is. Then I moved on and joined the Ranch in 2014: I report directly to Cheap Tequila and Fireball.

I came onto the Ranch as a ranch-hand as part of box build. When

they hired Cheap Tequila, he knew me from Blue Oasis and asked if I would like to come out and work an insanely Long Burning Man season. I said, “Yeah, sure! That sounds like a good time.” It was incredibly challenging and a lot of hard work, but it was great. It’s fun. I was on box-build, but back then it was called “Container build” because we mainly did OCs—office containers and living containers.

Well, [now] I manage a crew of 10 to 12 people from the beginning of April all the way to November. Our main function is to improve

the infrastructure of the production facilities of Burning Man. We also are in charge of maintaining and improving all the properties in Gerlach. That includes the saloon, the trailer park, the office, the theater building, the showers property, and a couple other properties.

I am also in charge of all the transportation going into the Ranch and out. So, organizing and moving all the containers, staging them, getting them ready, and pulling things out. We operate all the heavy equipment on the Ranch. We’re constantly moving for Box build,



“I think that DPW works harder and parties harder [than the Lamplighters] for sure.”



Disco in a box. Photo credit: unknown. Year: unknown.

Special Projects, Metal shop, and any group that comes in to use the production facility. We're there to help facilitate their work with our heavy equipment use, and we're in charge of making sure that the tools and stuff are ready and available for use.

Every year at least it seems we do one major project to improve the water systems at the Ranch. They built the facility over a decade ago, and they had a really great vision for it back then. But we've outstripped what they could even imagine. So, we're trying to play catchup with the facilities and make sure that we can accommodate the work that they want out of the production facility.

When I first came out to Burning Man, I was 19. I had just graduated high school and my friend was like, "Hey, there's this thing out in the desert. It's cool. We're doing this big project, you should come." And I did. So, yeah, I've definitely changed and grown quite a bit. This is my 18th year out here.

I think that DPW works harder and parties harder [than the Lamplighters] for sure. Because there's only a brief window that you go out and enjoy yourselves. And, you know, DPW is a marathon and Lamplighters isn't. It's more of a sprint for them. DPW can really go out and party but then we're like, "Oh, we have to get back to work." Honestly there are some similarities between the crews. But at Lamplighters you

have the people who are only out here for a week: they do their thing, that's all they do, and then they leave. They don't see the vast amount of work that goes into doing the thing that they're doing. They're just like, "Oh! This happens." There are similarities but there are definitely differences. One of the things that I enjoy is that we always do a Last Supper on the Ranch. I know everybody does a last supper these days. We have one at the very end of the season in October that we try to go all out for. Everybody dresses up. It's just like Last supper here, but it's a smaller, more intimate, fancy thing. That's a really fun thing.

The other thing we do that I really enjoy, and that I didn't think I would

“We go shooting a lot! We try to go once a week, and that’s why we call it Church.”

enjoy, is that we go to “Church.” And that is, we go out and go shooting. We go shooting a lot! We try to go once a week, and that’s why we call it Church. We take propane cans, and we have a lot of empty paint cans. To take them to the scrapper, they have to be punctured: it’s a lot more fun to shoot the cans than it is to just puncture them. Honestly, it’s safer because you’re doing it from far away. So pretty much every weekend we gather up our weapons and go out and go shooting and have a good

time. Then we clean up and do a “leave no trace” kind of thing, which isn’t the case at the local shooting ranges. Then we come back to the ranch, hang out by the fire, drink, and have a good time. It’s really the nicest part of being at the Ranch.

One of the things on the Ranch is getting up at your job. So, this person didn’t wake up; this was kind of at the beginning of our tenure. We didn’t draw on his face: we locked the doors of the container [he was sleeping in], then we picked up the container with a forklift. Then we shook it with a forklift. Then we took sledgehammers and beat on the walls of the container. Then we set it back down. He comes out and is like, “Ah, fuck you guys!! WRRRAAGGHH!!!” And we’re like, “Well, morning!” That was a kind of funny thing we did. I mean, we don’t do that much jackassery since we’re out here for so long and we work constantly.



Disco with Cowboy Carl and friends on playa. Photo credit: unknown. Year: unknown.

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