

ZIGGIE

Ziggie is the assistant manager of the DPW Auto Shop. Each year, he and his team work with the DPW for a six-month period. Named after David Bowie's iconic character, Ziggie joined the Auto Shop in 2013 during Strike. Since then, he has played a crucial role in managing and customizing the fleet vehicles, contributing to the unique culture of the DPW by ensuring that each vehicle reflects the personality of its crew while remaining fully functional.

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



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I got the Playa name Ziggie from working Strike in 2013. I was wearing this little cowboy hat while smoking, I was completely exhausted: Some of the strike crew thought I looked like David Bowie and started calling me Ziggy Stardust. Next year I was working on the Auto shop and had a radio



Photo credit: unknown, year unknown.

at the time. I went by my last name Springer, however, there was a Stinger on another crew, and it was getting confusing. So I started going by Ziggie. Honestly, I didn't like that name at first. But it grew on me. Now I love it, it suits my personality.

I [joined Auto shop] from Resto because I was seeing someone whose roommate was a mechanic, and we hit it off. Unfortunately, the next year, there had been 6 helicopter flights to the hospital, and out of 6 flights 4 of them had been from the Auto shop alone. The old Auto shop manager had been fired, and the person I had hit it off with the year prior became the new Auto shop manager. He put out an ad on Facebook looking for mechanics to fill the vacancies. So, I texted him and I got the job. It was insane. We were completely understaffed and way behind. It's a lot more laid-back [now]. We have a lot more days off and we have a fully staffed crew. All the tools we need. Back then we were just jerry-rigging it to make it work.

This year [2018] has been kind of nice because prior we had never tracked any of our information before. So, we didn't know what vehicles we had worked on or how much. So, this year we are tracking everything. We know when we worked on it, how much money is getting spent on it, and who's worked on it. With this information, we will be able to demonstrate that it is cheaper and safer to get rid of some of these vehicles and buy newer used ones instead of just throwing a bunch of parts and labor at them. So, it's been really good.

This [role] is the assistant shop manager. So, say the shop manager needs me to do stuff, I'll grab a crew and we will work on whatever vehicles need to get done. Answering the radio, dispatching. The other half

is the fleet tracking. So, crews will come up and ask what vehicles are available. We decide what resources get allocated to whom.

I'm here for six months. At the beginning of the season, a lot of it is researching vehicles and then buying them: like calling on Craigslist. But right now, mostly it has been just taking in calls, dispatching a crew to work on those calls, and then talking to people about what vehicles they need and seeing if we can get a vehicle from somebody or how to allocate vehicle needs. I still do a little mechanic work.

I want each crew to have their fleet because I notice they will decorate them and give them names and get attached to the vehicles. They take care of them but, on top of that, they all grow a little personality of their own. For example, the fluffer vehicles wouldn't be the same if they were issued to different people every year.

Besides maintenance, we customize things. That's how all those monstrous-looking vehicles evolved into what they are. Lisa Marie—it used to be a forestry bus, but we cut the back off and modified it a little bit.

I think it's an important cultural thing that they customize their vehicles, and it reflects their crew. Just as long as they don't impede the vehicle's performance, and it isn't a pain in our ass. Or, if it's a vehicle that might go to Reno, something that's not offensive. I felt bad for Bobcat: we gave her a truck, and somebody put a sticker on it that said 'gutter-cunt.' She took it into Reno and kept getting dirty looks, so we cut the letters off so it said "glitter-clit." While other stickers, some people just love, like "Moose Knuckle." Everybody laughs when they see that in Reno.

Fleet vehicles are the different types of vehicles people use to complete their jobs. So, we have A's and basically, those are people movers: cars, vans, SUVs. B's are tiny little quarter-ton pickup trucks, like a Toyota T-100. C's are half-tons, D's are three-quarter tons, and E's are one-tons. Then we've got the heavies, which are like Priscilla and Elvis: they haul people and a bunch of equipment. Mostly trucks. We manage 124 fleet vehicles [with 7 people].

It's nice having a good family [though DPW]. No matter where you go in the world, I always know somebody at least in every town. It's been a beautiful experience. I embrace whenever everybody shows up. It is nice when you have those moments at the ranch when we're by ourselves, but it is amazing when everybody shows up and you see all the different types of crews; all your friends and stuff.

I do love the parade and 4:20 Spire. It sets up unity as a group when you do the parade. The first time we tossed that car it was AMAZING watching it flying through the air and then smashing into a building. You're just like, "Oh, my God!" I remember the first year we did it, it was hard to get everybody out of the way. Then the second year, the second that Heister fired up, man, it all just parted like the Red Sea. That hive mind took place and everybody knew what was going on. And that year, they didn't toss it: they rolled it into place. We don't do that anymore for obvious safety reasons.

The beauty of an auto shop is that you get to meet almost everybody because they all have fleet vehicles. You get around, you talk. It's kind of like the Fluffers because they see everybody as well. I love my crew and I believe in what we do.