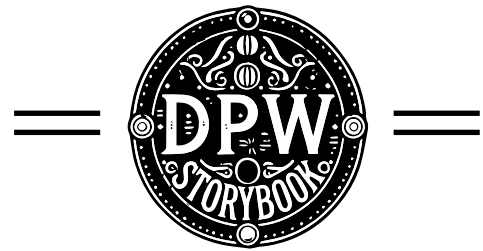


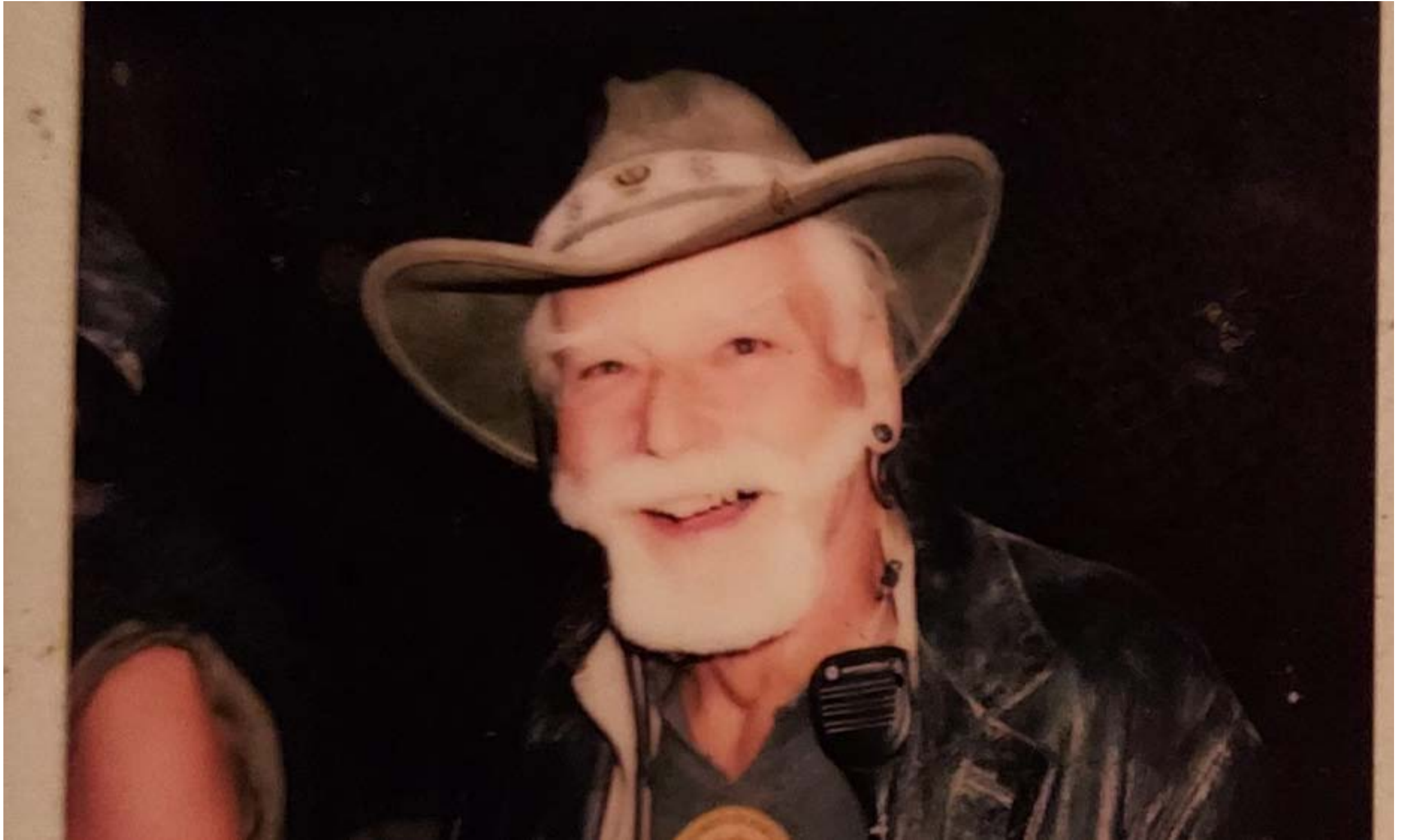
JYNX

Jynx first attended Burning Man in 1996. As a pioneer, he initially served as a Black Rock Ranger, focusing on community care, which he describes as non-violent conflict resolution (instead of the official term “non-confrontational mediation”), and mentoring. Later, he joined the Department of Public Works (DPW), contributing to the construction of various structures on the Playa, including Arctica. Eventually, Jynx combined his roles and became a dedicated DPW Ranger, continuing his efforts in rangership and supporting the well-being of the DPW team, often by breaking up fights in the early days. With a background in bartending, Jynx played a key role in setting up the Black Rock Saloon, helping clean, paint, and establish the bar according to health standards. He also initiated the early collection of supplies from burners, later known as Collexodus, to ensure they were usable for the DPW community.

This interview was conducted by “Flo,” Flore Muguet, a French anthropologist, in front of Jynx’s house in Gerlach in 2018. Flo’s questions have been omitted to improve the reading flow.



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Jynx. Photo credit: unknown. Year: unknown.

Well, '96 was my first intro into [Burning Man]. I committed to the Cyber Bus Kids to come out with them and help do some work on their bus and whatnot. Then my van craps out. It was just a little overwhelming, so I went home that year. In '97, a friend of mine was coming out too. I sent my oldest son with him to volunteer for the Black Rock Gazette. He came out about

a week early and spent—well, they never did finish their project. They got to partying too much, but he had the time of his life.

I showed up a day or two before and hooked up with him. He was volunteering with Tony and the crew at that time. Fat Mandy drove me up to the old Fly Ranch, which they were using as kind of a

feeding headquarters for everybody. I peeled a few potatoes, hung out, and let a few people cry on my shoulder. When I got back down to the playa—with about 10 or 15 kids in my camp, along with my son and his girlfriend—they hadn’t brought food or anything. So, I’m feeding and watering all these kids, and also keeping an eye on how much they’re taking care of themselves.

I mean, there were a lot of things like mushrooms going around then. So, I was just keeping an eye on them. Being available to them. So, I noticed that there were some other people: maybe 3 or 4 dressed with khaki shirts. I noticed them individually around doing different errands here and there. Well, I hear Danger Ranger going into one of his rant stories about the Black Rock

Rangers: this was his vision at the time. He wasn’t telling anyone it was a vision, but it’s what he wanted folks to do. I’m listening in and I’m going, alright he seems pretty cool. I notice somebody calling them Rangers. Some were biking around. I said, “Yeah, this is a good idea. You know, get out here and take care of people.” I love the event. I love the art and all that. But what I really like



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is in the old days when there was need. When people are needy, they reach out. They make connections that they just wouldn’t otherwise. Need built community. That’s what I was noticing right away. I saw a real sense of purpose in taking care of these people that were having so much fun and going to the edge, so to speak, in a lot of ways. Just being the responsible adult for them. You know? Feeling a sense of responsibility for that. I have ever since. I’ve never gotten too wasted out there. I don’t use it for sexual gratification—although I’m entertained by it immensely. Totally want to facilitate people having their trips, and getting through things, because that is what I see it as useful for. But I kind of personally don’t go out on that sort of thing.

I was playing ranger but didn’t really know what one was yet. Then I figured out that’s what these people were trying to do. I followed

them into that whole concept of wearing khaki, biking around, and being available for people. So, I volunteered. Joseph Pred—probably another name that people are losing now that is so important to the Rangers and EMT and everything—ran most of it and did design most of the department. We needed to have a responsible adult like Joseph. We’re playing responsible adults to other people, in other ways, but we also have to accept the instruction. That’s been an ethos in the Rangers forever: you get mentored from above and below. Everyone gets a little full of themselves as soon as they start to have success in this kind of thing. Luckily, with our attitude of self-deprecation and such, it knocks you back down and you can get back to work on more important things than just yourself. 2000 was the first time we actually got a little bit of money. Then, after that, we usually got some travel expenses and whatnot. Gas to get places. To do regionals and things like that, because we were starting to do stuff like that. Go to Flipside, Toast, and Dark Skies. All those.

Then I ended up getting paid both for DPW and the Rangers. Some years I did regular work like helping build containers and offices. I help build the camp Arctica: the dome. So, I actually was helping build that, and actually designed a particular one that we had for 6 or 7 years. Construction is not difficult unless it’s large-scale. Then you have safety concerns. That’s actually how I ended up doing Arctica. We had a design that was not safe. They weren’t really considering the winds and the stress on the laminated materials they were going to use for it. So, I drew up something to substitute for that, and presented it to Will and Garrett. He approved it, and he did agree with the other structure being dangerous. They

actually used it for about 5 to 6 years. Only, I didn’t participate anymore. I bounced to something else.

So, I did do work for DPW those years, and I was paid. And, I was paid later, to actually ranger for DPW. Rangering was starting to take up more of our time. We were up until 4 or 5 in the morning. It’s hard to wake up 3 hours later and start slinging a hammer. What we do is watch out for the crew. We break up fights, for one thing; that was a major thing in the old days. Break up fights, watch the bar. Doesn’t mean I won’t have a drink once in a while—or a smoke—but you gotta stay sober. You gotta be able to control that. If you can’t, then you shouldn’t step up. Therefore, sometimes we would have to do evictions. Somebody who had to leave, we would have to evict them. Sometimes somebody would just go crazy, and we have to spend the night hugging them. You know?

Always trying to do it with a good attitude for service. Yeah, there was a little bluff having to go with those early days, so they would give you a little respect—because this was a tough crowd. But, at the same time, you gotta go at it with love. You know, if you have somebody who’s about to go to fists with you, and just about the time they’re about to hit you, you reach up and hug ‘em, and call to them, “baby, please don’t do this,” it works. Because you do love them, and you don’t want it to get ugly. So, that’s what rangering is.

They used to call it non-confrontational mediation. I was always objecting to that. It was used over, and over again. I said no because we are confronting. We’re just doing it without violence. We’re doing it with love: but you have to trick them into that sometimes. You know? It really disarms someone.



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They’re posturing because they’re really being insecure. That’s what’s really going on. If you can break through that with love, it’s a really cool thing. You can feel good about yourself. You kind of get hooked on just being of service. It’s something that’s talked a lot about in our culture, but not a lot of people really practice it. One of the things I love about being with the Rangers is that it has blossomed into that. Not just a handful of us, but thousands who have this clue—so to speak—of a better way of policing a situation. A better way of community engagement and resolving conflict.

I do actually have this deep seated political bias about all of that. That does drive my some of my service as a ranger. I would like to see policing done different in this country—completely. We’ve all seen the headlines these past ten years. All those terrible things. But we do a

hell of a job out here. With 80,000 people, and a couple hundred Rangers on duty during the event: Black Rock City is the safest place in America to be during those days.

Before we had the saloon—and when we were still living at what we used to call the 80 acres—at the end of the event, people just dropped stuff off at Ranger HQ or the Ghetto. There would just be this pile of stuff, with nobody [to sort it]. People would go through it. Then it would just end up getting scooped up into the dumpsters because it was all dirty and muddy, and everything. So, I was watching that happen, and I was helping collect stuff so that we could feed the crew up at the ranch. Burning Man bought the Black Rock Saloon. I was rangering, and at that time I was on payroll: I was trailer park ranger. They started gutting it out and turning everything out of it. I was getting a little concerned because I like some of these places out here. I wasn’t sure I wanted to change it too much, you know? I decided to throw in and give a hand in cleaning it up, painting it, and decorating it. I painted it red and black with Quinn, my brother-in-law.

I’m a bartender of about 12 years of my life by trade—while doing other things, because I usually have two or three jobs. So, I set the bar up. Quinn was tearing stuff out of the bar that we need there to really be a legal bar. You know, for sanitation, health, and everything else. He didn’t have a clue about that, so I took responsibility for that. Then I started scrounging up liquor so that I could feed the kids, and whatever stuff we could find in containers to just get stuff working.

So that year we did the event. Collection started. Nobody quite knew what to do, so a few times they

threw everything into dumpsters and brought the dumpsters. We open the doors to the dumpsters, right, and there’s all these piles and piles of stuff covered with mud and playa. I say, here’s what we gotta do: we set up these tables. I had learned a few things about cleaning stuff. If you don’t clean these cans and bottles completely—and get every bit of playa off them—the playa will creep in and destroy the food. So, next year you got a bunch of rotten food.

Ok. I set up some shelves. I said, “Nothing comes into this room until it goes through this process.” I said, “It’s really important, guys, and the rewards are at the end of this, believe me.” Because otherwise they wouldn’t take any of this stuff covered with crap. They just wouldn’t. So now I had the pantry area and a couple of other rooms just covered with shiny, clean cans of food and beautiful boxes and envelopes. No dirt. All of them stashed in the same places: macaroni here, tomato sauce here.

Then I made a policy to make sure, and pay attention, to all the kids—especially the Perimeter kids—that they knew they were welcome to come and see me. We would put the packages together of what they want, not just a bunch of stuff thrown at them. So, all those little things like that. I did those for two or three years. Then Nipps and a couple of other people caught onto it.

So that was how that happened. It just got better. I lived there for about five years. It was the fall of 2004, but the spring of 2005, that Super Dave moved me in there. I just started taking care of the place, checking the maintenance items.