

An Oral History of Cari Lockett

4th Street | Prater Way History Project

Interviewed: May 14, 2012

Published: 2014

Interviewer: Will von Tagen

Born in Reno in 1960, Cari Lockett became a regional contact for Burning Man in 2007. She talks about the range of Burning Man-related activities that occur in Reno throughout the year, including Decompression, traditionally held on East Fourth Street each October. Lockett shares her thoughts about Reno's status as a gateway to the playa and the city's potential to become a year-round destination for those interested in Burning Man and its ten principles.

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CARI LOCKETT

Interviewed on May 14, 2012
Will von Tagen, Interviewer

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Photo by Patrick Cummings

von Tagen: Today is May 14, 2012. I'm here with Cari Lockett.
Cari, can you tell me where and when were you born?

Lockett: I was born here in Reno, Nevada, June 19, 1960, St. Mary's Hospital.

von Tagen: And you've spent a great deal of your life here in this town?

Lockett: Yes, born and raised. I've done a little bit of traveling here and there, but mostly I've always come back to Reno.

von Tagen: Are your parents natives of the area?

Lockett: Yes, they are, so I consider myself third generation. My grandparents actually came here in the early thirties, and both my mom and dad were born here in Reno.

von Tagen: How does your Nevada heritage seem to play a part in your life?

Lockett: I think it's quite significant. I think that it's a rarity that you find natives. There aren't that many left, and so it gives me a perspective of knowing what the history of the area has been. I feel really close to this basin and knowing what the history has been like, not only from Nevada in general, but Reno specifically, within my lifetime, anyway.

von Tagen: What part of town did you grow up in?

Lockett: Early on, I was in east Sparks—the old downtown Sparks area. Then we moved out to the North Valleys for a little while, and that was prior to the freeway coming in. The only way to get in and out of the North Valleys was on Old Virginia Street going up past the old Bonanza. So it was kind of rough getting in to school on snowy days.

I also was pretty much raised at my grandmother's house over in old Southwest Reno, over by the Reno High School area, and then later, during high school time, we

moved over into Sparks. My mom bought a house over there in 1971, so I graduated from Reed High in 1978.

von Tagen: In your childhood, you mentioned that you had to come to town to go to school. What other occasions would bring you into town?

Lockett: Well, we went pretty much every day. My mom worked in town. She was a single mom with three kids. I was the oldest of three. And it was just a matter of getting us into town to school and then over to my grandmother's, where we would spend our afternoons after school until my mom got off work and then would take us back home. So pretty much it was between home and grandparents and school.

von Tagen: What sort of work did your mom do?

Lockett: She was an executive secretary. She worked for an accountant at one point and then she worked for a civil engineer here locally for about thirty-five years.

von Tagen: When you spent your days after school with your grandmother, would you stay at her house or would she take you into town, or what did you do?

Lockett: Well, at that point, back in those days, let's say 1967 to about '71, we had free reign. My grandmother lived down near Idlewild Park and I went to school at Mt. Rose Elementary School on Arlington and Lander, and I had a lot of friends, of course, in the neighborhood. We basically could ride our bikes from my grandmother's to my friend's house. We used to ride our bikes out to Park Lane Mall. In those days, it wasn't an issue. Traffic wasn't a big issue. Abductions weren't an issue, and so kids really had a lot more leeway, as did we.

von Tagen: Park Lane Mall is interesting. It no longer stands there anymore. What do you remember about Park Lane Mall?

Lockett: I remember when it first went in. It was the first mall in town. Now, from my grandfather's perspective, that corner of Plumb and Virginia, that was originally a turkey ranch, apparently, and then it turned into the Park Lane Mall. And that had to have been late sixties, maybe early seventies. There was nothing south of Park Lane. It just didn't exist. Maybe the Convention Center was down there, but there wasn't a whole lot in between. And it was the first open-air mall. They later covered it, when closed malls became more popular. But that was *the* place to shop in my day, in the seventies and early eighties.

von Tagen: What sort of stores do you remember going to?

Lockett: Sears, Weinstock's, Woolworth's was in there. Those were the three main solid places, and then there were little shops, like Anita's was a clothing store we used to get school clothes from. Sneed-Hearn is an interesting one, because that was run by a friend

of the family, and it was kind of one of the first hippie-dippy-trippy stores in town, and it was at Park Lane. I can't remember what the other ones were. If I do, I'll come back to it.

von Tagen: Do you remember at all what your grandparents' perspective was when they watched that area of Reno develop and grow?

Lockett: Oh, they couldn't believe that it had gotten that far. From their perspective, when they first came in the thirties, Reno was only about eight thousand people, and there was a good ten miles of open space in between Reno and Sparks. And Sparks would have been maybe three or four thousand people.

When I was born in 1960, Reno was only about fifty thousand people, so in my lifetime it's now grown to about three hundred and fifty thousand in terms of the whole area. From my grandparents' perspective, they never thought it would get that big and go out that far. In fact, my grandfather used to get on the bus and go for a ride just to see what was out there and how far the city had grown. He didn't like to drive, but he'd sure get on the bus and go for a ride.

von Tagen: Did they seem happy with the expansion?

Lockett: As old-timers, not so much. I think they were resigned to the fact that growth happens over time, but for them, they liked the small-town atmosphere of early Reno. That's what attracted them here in the first place.

von Tagen: Were they still living here when the bigger projects came up, such as the building of the MGM Grand?

Lockett: Yes, that would have been 1976, and they were both still here. My grandfather had just retired from Flanigan Warehouse, which was on Fourth Street. He was the warehouse manager there from the early forties to about 1978, somewhere in there. Maybe '74 to '78 is when he retired.

von Tagen: What were their thoughts when they saw such big projects come to this little town where they spent their lives?

Lockett: "Oh, it'll never be the same," kind of standard old-timer remark. "Never be the same. What are they thinking? How can they do that? How can we support that many people, that big of a casino? How's that going to bring people in?" That was the kind of comments.

von Tagen: What do you remember of that time?

Lockett: I remember that that was a significant change in this valley because it was the first large-scale casino that was outside of the Virginia Street corridor and not in Sparks, where the only big casino in Sparks, of course, was the Nugget.

When it came in, it changed the face of the valley because it brought in so many construction workers. And the thing that I remember the most was that there wasn't

enough housing at the time to support all the construction people coming in, so people were living in trailers and little trailer parks or at the rest stops, going east out of Sparks and even going west out of Reno.

That caused a successive boom in construction, so then there were all these houses built from, say, about '76 to '80, and that filled some of the need with these construction workers who stayed on, but then there ended up being a glut of houses. So it was kind of one of those things where the ebb and flow just didn't quite mesh. But ultimately it started bringing a lot of people into Reno and more big buildings started coming in.

von Tagen: Did you go to the MGM Grand much when you were growing up?

Lockett: Only for special occasions. Being a local, you don't necessarily go to the casinos. We're not into gambling, but we'll occasionally go for meals. There are always the family buffets for special occasions and that sort of thing.

As far as the MGM goes, because it was such a novelty item when it first opened up, we would go over there. And they had this one special feature that we really liked, and it was a spiral staircase that went from the main floor down to the basement where all the little shops were, and in particular it was really cool because it had all these glass panels. So when you walked down the stairway, you would see multiple reflections of yourself down that stairwell, and it was just one of those things that was really flashy and unusual and glitzy and glamour-y and something that we really weren't used to around here.

von Tagen: What else do you remember occupying your time with when you were growing up?

Lockett: A lot of outdoor play. In those days, like I say, we could ride our bikes pretty much all over town, because it was only about five or six miles in diameter from my grandmother's house to, say, Park Lane or over to our school or to downtown. Or we used to go west out towards Mayberry where there was the Mayberry Bridge, and we'd go fishing out there and we'd ride our bikes and we'd float down the river and that sort of thing.

I can remember—this is a little side story about Reno—but when the Mayberry Bridge collapsed, it was one of these single-span iron bridges. There's only one left, which I believe is out in Verdi. But at the Mayberry Bridge, an overweight strawberry truck went on the bridge and collapsed the bridge, and the strawberries floated down the river. And I can remember my grandfather going down and collecting strawberries as the little baskets fell out and bringing home these strawberries. That was just a local legend when the bridge went down.

von Tagen: Did it seem to be a pretty big deal to the town?

Lockett: Oh, absolutely, because that was kind of a local landmark. It was one of the old ranches out on the east end of Mayberry, and, of course, now it's all grown up. Mayberry Park is out there. It used to be wild in our days. Now it's all pretty much developed, and

there are parking lots and picnic tables and that sort of thing. But in our day it was just wild river, and the old ranch was still operational at that time. I don't believe it is anymore. The old barn is still out there, and I'm not sure who owns the property, but pretty much it's not a working ranch anymore.

von Tagen: At this time, did there seem to be a pretty strong distinction between the folks who lived in Reno in the city and the ranching folks?

Lockett: I don't really know, per se. I think that a lot of the old ranches are owned by old Italians, and my grandfather was Italian. That was one of the things that brought him to this area, because in those days in the thirties, if you were an Italian or Irish or anything that was unusual, they oftentimes weren't welcome in places. But because Reno had quite an extensive Italian heritage, a lot of the old-timers had come and settled and taken up land and started either growing things like garlic and onions and potatoes or raising cattle, so you'll notice that a lot of the old ranches that are still operational are old Italian ranches.

To me, there was a different feel back then. Because the town was so small, people really knew each other and respected each other. And as it's grown, we've lost a lot of that connection with the old-timers, because they're dying off, and because the population has grown so much, there aren't very many locals, if you will, that have been here for a long time.

I think now you could talk to the old ranchers and I'm sure that would be a whole 'nother interview in terms of how they feel about all the new people who have come in. But back then, I think it was fairly symbiotic. Everybody worked together, and there wasn't an issue between being a rancher or being a city person, because everybody had to work together one way or another. Ranchers needed products out of the city, and the people in the city got products from the ranches.

von Tagen: You talked about your grandfather working at Flanigan's Warehouse on Fourth Street. Do you remember anything special about those times?

Lockett: I do. That was, again, prior to the freeway coming in, and I remember when the freeway came in and demolished a lot of the old houses that would have been just below Whitaker Park and below the university and right before getting into downtown where current I-80 goes through. Fourth Street was the main thoroughfare, so all the time as I was growing up, that was the only way in and out of town—no freeway.

There were still little businesses that were open up along there, a lot of the auto courts. There are still remnant auto courts that now are just the seedy motels on Fourth Street. But in their heyday, they were quite sophisticated and it was very much new in the 1950s and sixties to have these auto courts where people could stop at and stay. It had a real flavor, a historic flavor.

Flanigan Warehouse itself, this beautiful old building, deep, dark, and cavernous, had a great elevator that we used to get to play on. And the thing that was so special about it was it was a freight elevator, so it didn't have any rails around it. It was just open, so as a little kid, five, six years old, being on this elevator, you'd stand in the middle and hope you didn't fall off.

Grandfather was there for all those years. He used to talk about a lot of the old-timers who he knew and worked with—Dick Record from Record Supply, who, in fact, owned one of the other buildings on Fourth Street. I don't remember which one, but the old warehouse was right there on one of the spurs, because back then, of course, the railroad came through and the spurs would come off into the warehousing district. That was the only warehouse district there was. The Sparks warehouse district didn't exist yet. And so that's how they got their freight.

I just remember that it was a neat old building. It was one of the only places where people could go for supplies. Another one that was down there, kind of similar, was Copeland Lumber, which you don't see anymore. I think there's still one down in Gardnerville. But it was also a materials supply place. It was on Sixth Street, which would have been two blocks north of Fourth, but still on those railroad spurs, because that was the primary mode of transportation back then.

von Tagen: Are there any businesses on Fourth Street that you remember from when you were a kid growing up that are still standing and in operation today? What's been your perspective as far as seeing them change or develop over the years?

Lockett: Louis' Basque Corner has always been there. So have the old motels like the Morris Hotel, and there's another one there maybe by the Alturas. I can't remember its name, but they were all there and active at that point. And I remember the Sierra, not the brewing company itself, but there's a building there that was dedicated to wine and spirits [the historic Nevada-California-Oregon Railroad Depot, at one point the home of Sierra Wine & Liquor]. I believe it's got a historical marker in front of it now. But in my time it was a brewery building. So I do remember that.

And then I remember a lot about traveling. When we'd go out of town heading towards San Francisco, we'd take West Fourth Street all out along the river to where Mayberry would come in to West Fourth, and then we'd go past what was called the River Inn, which was operational back then. It's been closed down now since the seventies. I don't know what the issue is. I think it had something to do with taxes. But that was the site of an original hot springs. In its heyday, prior to my time, when it was being renovated as the River Inn, I believe it was called Laughton [or Lawton] Hot Springs, if I'm not mistaken. And that would have been functional during my grandmother and grandfather's time, say, back in the forties and fifties.

Taking Fourth Street west to get over to California, there was no freeway, it just was the old original Lincoln Highway, and there were lots of little old-fashioned motor courts going west also. And as we would get out, the last stop before you went up the mountain through the canyon where Boomtown is now was called Bill & Effie's. And we'd always stop there for breakfast prior to heading over the mountain to go visit family.

von Tagen: Before the freeway opened up, did people seem to have a good idea of what the impact would be when that opened up, or was it sort of a surprise?

Lockett: I think it was a bit of a surprise. I was a little bit young to have been involved in any of the political understandings of what was going on. If it had come in during my

high school years, I would have been much more cognizant, but it came in when I was in grade school. So I don't really recall except that it was a big deal and the construction was huge and it took down a lot of the old neighborhoods, like I say, just south of the university. And there were upset people who didn't like change. Reno's kind of like that. A lot of people don't like change; they want it to stay small...and change happens.

von Tagen: In grade school do you remember going on any field trips?

Lockett: I think we would come up to the university and go to the planetarium. I remember that. Maybe up to Virginia City, Model Dairy Milk, the University Ag Station out towards the east side of the valley, the museum down in Carson City. We had a Museum of Art here, I believe, back to 1904, but as a kid I don't remember them taking us to that museum. The Historical Society was here then. I can remember going up to the Historical Society. The two-headed calf was particularly entertaining.

von Tagen: What were your experiences like on those field trips, do you remember?

Lockett: You know, I think just being an excited little kid, seeing all these new things that you wouldn't be exposed to in the classroom. I particularly liked the Nevada State Museum down in Carson, which is the old Mint Building. There were some great displays there. We always liked to go down into the basement where the old mineshaft display was. And then one of my favorite exhibits upstairs was the historic clothing collection—all this beautiful vintage clothing going back to Civil War times when Nevada became a state and all the way up into the turn of the century and up into the twenties and the thirties. They've since modified that display, and now it's really modern, and I can remember actually being disappointed when they did that, because it changed the whole feeling of being an old-fashioned kind of a museum to a modern display, and it was very disconcerting.

von Tagen: Did you feel a pretty strong connection to the Nevada history?

Lockett: Absolutely. I'm a born-and-raised, dyed-in-the-wool Nevadan, proud of it. I believe, for me personally, this is the Great Basin. This is the land that nobody else wanted. And so the people who came here and settled here are hearty folks, and they love it. They love the wide-open space, they love the independence. It definitely is the wild, wild West.

von Tagen: Do you feel that a lot of people still hold onto that belief?

Lockett: I think the people who are true Nevadans at their core or who came here earlier do. I like to say that the people who came here before '76 when the MGM came in, they're almost natives. They kind of qualify. After the MGM, it was just catch as catch can and people coming in for a quick buck. A lot of them stayed after the construction, but they didn't have those kinds of roots and the appreciation.

And then you get into the nineties and you've got people selling out in California, getting big bucks and coming over here and investing in McMansions. Then you've got

the developments down on the flanks of the mountain like Caughlin Ranch and Arrowcreek and Somerset and all those high-end sorts of places, which are basically California transplants, and it's changed the face of the valley a lot.

In my opinion, you get a lot of people who say, "Oh, we left California to get away from it," but then they come over here and they're doing the same dang thing in terms of building strip malls. They've got to have their strip malls and McMansions, and it's just not the same kind of people.

von Tagen: In Reno, it seems, they used to really capitalize on the wild, wild West feel.

Lockett: Absolutely.

von Tagen: Harolds Club and that whole Western motif, but it all kind of went away when the new, bigger casinos kind of came in.

Lockett: Mm-hmm.

von Tagen: Do you remember when that was all taking place?

Lockett: I would say in the early eighties, because really the death knell, if you will, for downtown was when the Mapes closed, and that was the early eighties, followed by the implosion in about 2000. It was a Super Bowl Sunday. And so that property was fallow for about twenty years. Nobody could seem to get it together to renovate it. It was a hot item of discussion amongst the City Council and the city fathers and the local people. There were extreme movements to try and save the Mapes. There was a real dichotomy between those who wanted to put everything we could into saving it and those who just wanted to get rid of it and build something new and thought that it was too cost-prohibitive, even to save the shell, to take out the asbestos, to retrofit it so it would be earthquake-safe, etc., etc.

But when that building went down, it really was the heart of Reno because it represented all that history. It had been there since the thirties. It had had the big entertainers come through in the sixties, like Sammy Davis, Jr., and the other Rat Pack people, and Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable had stayed there. And it was just the centerpiece of town, and when it went away, the whole spirit just kind of went away.

And at the same time you also had Las Vegas growing up, so Las Vegas was coming into its own in the eighties and started building, building, building on the strip and making this bigger strip. Not the Old Frontier strip, but the huge strip with the Luxor and the Stratosphere and the this and the that, all these big ones that came in. And so that began to then draw people away from Reno into the more Disneyland environment, the adult Disneyland of Vegas versus the old-fashioned retro Western experience of old Reno.

von Tagen: What are your thoughts on what's happened to the site where the Mapes once stood?

Lockett: I think it's not bad. I'd like to see a nice sculpture there. I've always thought something like a nice heart that shows that this was at one time the heart of Reno, maybe with a picture of what the Mapes looked like and a little bit of the history. A lot of us refer to it as the Mapes Plaza, versus the Downtown City Center Plaza, just because that's historically what it was. I think now it's being utilized in a good way. There are a lot of nice events that happen down there. They do the roller derby, they bring in the ice rink during the wintertime, lots of special events happen, so it's at least a nice community area, if you will.

von Tagen: I hear a lot about the day when the Mapes was coming down, but something I don't hear a lot about was when Harolds Club became Harrah's Plaza. Was there the same kind of uproar around that time?

Lockett: I think people had maybe just given up by then. I think the fact that the Harolds building was not that historic, if you will, made a difference. Architecturally it wasn't really special. One thing is that the mural that was on the front of Harolds was salvaged. Thank god. Somebody had the foresight to take that down, and it's now been re-erected over at the Fairgrounds, so people can still see it. It's not as visible. You can't see it from the street off of Wells Avenue, but if you get back to where the Arena is, you'll see the nice big display, which basically commemorates the pioneers coming over the mountain, whether it was the Donner Party or other wagon train people, coming over to the West.

von Tagen: Do you feel that it's significant, taking even a portion of that structure and preserving it?

Lockett: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I wish there was more of a sense of preservation. Any more, it almost seems like city fathers don't have either the wherewithal or the budget or the long-term planning or maybe they just don't even have the desire. I'm not sure where it comes from. A lot of the preservation efforts have actually been done on an individual level.

I understand that there's a man locally [Will Durham] who has started in the recent past collecting a lot of the old neon. I know they've done that in Vegas. Well, now they're doing it up here in Reno, and, hopefully, there'll be a Neon Museum display. It's disappointing to me as a local, as a native, that there isn't more attention paid to maintaining our historical integrity.

von Tagen: What are some ways that you feel that they could improve upon that?

Lockett: Perhaps by developing a more devout Historic Preservation subcommittee. I'm not in directly on what the City Council is doing, and that may already be in place, so I may be talking out of turn. But for Fourth Street, that being the historic, or one of our last Historic Districts, I know that there is movement to try and raise the level of interest in Fourth Street and preserve some of those buildings. How far that's going to go, I don't know. I think it's going to depend on individual participation rather than city participation, and we'll just have to hope for the best.

A lot of times what happens is that you don't get the information delivered publicly until it's almost too late. You hear things, and things will be happening behind the scenes, and pretty soon you hear, "Oh, they're going to be demolishing such-and-such a building," and then there's an uproar about why didn't we know and how can we all get together and scramble right quick to get this thing saved. And if there was just a better mechanism of communication, we would know and could get more involved.

von Tagen: It's sort of a common theme around town—renovation versus demolition.

Lockett: Mm-hmm.

von Tagen: Do you feel that one or the other is more beneficial as far as economics? I guess what I'm trying to say is what sort of relationship between the two do you think would be required to kind of get that boom back in Reno?

Lockett: Well, when you look at a lot of the other towns in this country, Main Street sort of towns who have decided to invest in their Main Street Historic Districts and create shopping districts, it goes really well. Look at Boise, look at downtown Boulder, downtown Fort Collins, downtown San Diego. There's an area in downtown Oakland. Of course downtown San Francisco, not the Financial District, but some of the other historical areas. So it works. It brings people in. People love it. They want to see these old buildings. They want to feel connection with their history or to know the history of an area that they're visiting.

Personally, I think it's a win-win situation. I think it's much more positive to invest in preserving a history of an area, cultural and architectural and historical, versus just knocking things down and putting in something new that has no real value. And face it, a lot of the current architecture just really doesn't have much to say for itself.

von Tagen: Now, you're very involved with the Burning Man scene, are you not?

Lockett: I am indeed.

von Tagen: Can you talk a little bit about that?

Lockett: Well, I first went to Burning Man in 1999. This will be my fourteenth year. I was picked up as a Burning Man regional contact in 2007—I think it was 2007—because of my interest, because of the fact that I am a native of Nevada, because my background is in anthropology, and because I'm just one of these people who really believes in art and culture and intelligence.

That's what Burning Man represents to me, so I'm happy to be an ambassador for the project. I like to be able to tell people about what Burning Man is and what it isn't. A lot of people have preconceived notions about what goes on out there, and I like to let them know that it's more than what they think. It isn't just a bunch of crazy people out in the desert having a rave. This is about super intelligent people, the best minds on the planet, that are coming together for self-expression, for creative ideas, and inspiration

that they then put together and bring out in terms of art cars and art projects, to share and create just for the sake of doing it.

It's really quite amazing, and we've come a long way here in the Reno area, because at first, Burning Man had that reputation, "Oh, it's just those crazy, wild hippies in the desert," and we've actually come to have a good working relationship with the city.

We have brought playa art from Burning Man to be temporary installments in downtown Reno. We've had fire shows associated with the grand openings, and what we've done is really created a niche here in Reno that the community has been able to get behind, and they really like what Burning Man is doing. We're a very civic-minded organization. Our goal is to put art in public places and to influence culture based on the ten principles of Burning Man.

von Tagen: And those ten principles are?

Lockett: Oh, my goodness, I knew you were going to ask me that. I may have to look them up and get back to you on that. But the primary one is de-commodification, so there is no selling at Burning Man. It's not about advertising and putting McDonald's on the banner as a sponsor. This is a self-sponsored event, if you will. The people who go to Burning Man are what make Burning Man. There are no corporate sponsorships.

Another one is radical self-expression, so everyone is encouraged to come and be what they are at their best through costumery, through acting, through performance art, through physical art, radical self-reliance, radical self-expression. Yes, radical inclusion. Everyone is welcome. There are no prerequisites.

Oh, my heavens, I only got four out of ten. I should know this better. I'll have to get back to you on it. [laughs]

von Tagen: Burning Man happens once a year, but there are certain elements that are present year-round. Can you tell me little bit about some of those activities?

Lockett: You bet. Over the years we have developed quite a community so that there are regular events. We usually have some sort of a Burning Man function about once a month, whether it's a costume party, get dressed up, come out and play, kind of share your spirit of enthusiasm and artistic-ness with the outside world. In March we do a Brides of March event, which is an old Cacophony Society event, if you will, and people dress up in brides' dresses, boys and girls, and we'll go on a little pub crawl and we'll just show up at places and we'll go get our picture taken on the front steps of one of the chapels, and we're just out having fun. And people love it. They honk as we're walking down the street. We're like an impromptu parade, and it's wonderful to engage people. They don't see these things every day, and it makes their day. The pleasure of seeing people having fun and responding to people having fun is an amazing magical moment that breaks down a lot of barriers and invites people to come out of their shells and to participate in a larger community. So that's one event that we do.

And then we do a Yuri's Night in the spring, which is kind of a pre-Compression. It's like gearing up towards the new year of Burning Man coming up this summer, and that happens in April. That's a celebration of the first astronaut in space, Yuri Gagarin,

and it's always a Burner-attended event, even though it's the kind of event that goes on all over the world on that particular night.

Then in the summertime, Controlled Burn has developed themselves as a wonderful fire arts performing group, and they are a part of Artown, and they put on Compression about midsummer in July and that's a wonderful thing that occurs down at the Mapes Plaza, the Civic Center Plaza, with huge fire art, a fire performance, very well attended. And the beauty of that is that it introduces people who have never experienced fire arts to what fire arts are all about, and probably one of the hallmarks of Burning Man is that we've introduced this fire art form into the world.

Now, granted, fire performing actually goes way back to tribal times, particularly in Polynesia, in Micronesia, Melanesia, and Maori culture, Hawaiian culture. Early poi spinning is what they call it, the poi on the end of the ropes and spinning fire. It's just something that's been adopted by Burners and this new culture.

Then, finally, last but not least, in October after we all get back from the playa, we put on the Decompression, which is on Fourth Street. We use the Underground as a little bar venue, and we tend to close off Elko Street and the alley behind The Underground, and we set up what basically is like a mini-esplanade. It kind of replicates the environment at Burning Man along the main city center where we have art cars, participatory art. Individual theme camps come and represent. We usually have a theme of some sort. People come in costume. It tends to be an all-night event with live music and DJ music, art inside the venue, art outside the venue. It's just a way to kind of wrap up the year, and everybody gets to come together and share their stories about Burning Man, dust themselves off and come and say, "Wow, we had a great year."

Now, the monies that are raised from that project we—the Reno Burners LLC, of which I'm a big part of—we then turn around and re-gift that money back into the community. So it's not that we're there to make money for our own coffers; we're there to make money to put back out into the community. And that's one of the ethics of Burning Man.

von Tagen: How did it come to be at that place on Fourth Street?

Lockett: I think because it's an available venue that works. Remi Jourdan, who manages the Underground, has been very kind to Burners and worked with us for several years. He allows us to use the venue. We have a good shared ethic in terms of how the events happen, and it's a good venue. It's off the beaten path, so to speak. There aren't too many venues in town that could host a large gathering of people where we could have outdoor art and outdoor fire performance and outdoor art cars and such. So that's the primary reason that we've done it on Fourth Street.

And I'd really like to see more happen. I have this vision that down the road we might be able to, for a weekend or for a day, maybe a Saturday, close off just a small stretch of Fourth Street, maybe from Valley Road to the Wells Avenue overpass, and have kinetic sculpture races, do something really fun like they do in Seattle and Portland, and bring some of these kinetic-powered art pieces down to Reno and have a wonderful event, call it the Fourth Street Garden Party. We could even have some stationary art and sculptural art and maybe even find a way to work with the city to have these things

placed permanently on Fourth Street as a part of a revitalization effort and making it a more attractive place.

von Tagen: I believe Spencer Hobson, at some of the properties he's got down there, like the Reno Brewery bottling plant, he's opened up for portions of Artown that deal with the Burning Man, so people can come down and use it as a place to begin crafting some of their artist sculptures. Are you familiar with any of that?

Lockett: Absolutely. I was down there last year when he was kind enough to open up the building to the temple, the International Arts Mega Crew, i.e., the temple crew, and they built our giant temple which goes out to Burning Man. That's one of the hallmarks of Burning Man is on Saturday we burn the man. On Sunday there's a temple, and the temple is a place of reverence where people can leave their offerings and their remembrances of people lost, pets lost, their life changes that have happened, and it becomes a very sacred space. It's a totally different environment from the rest of what's going on out on the playa.

The temple that was built last year was quite magnificent, and it was the first time that it was built in Reno. We're very proud of that, and we also feel that Reno, being so close to Burning Man and the playa—we call ourselves the Backyard Burners—this is the gateway community that most everyone comes through to get out to the playa. So we'd really like to see more development going towards recognition of Reno as a backyard community that can be a support system to people and artists coming in from all over the world. There's a lot of potential with Spencer's place and other places along Fourth Street, some of the large-scale open lot areas that could be turned into building zones where some of this public art could be built. It would also create an attraction where people might want to come down and visit and look and learn more about Burning Man and art and public sculpture and all those good things that can dovetail to make a city more viable and more interesting artistically.

von Tagen: If all that did come to take place, do you feel Fourth Street is ready for that surge of attention?

Lockett: I think, absolutely. Absolutely. Reno's always been a little bit behind the times in terms of stepping up to the plate of modern evolution, if you will, in terms of taking lessons from other historic cities like Boise, San Diego, etc., who have developed their downtown Historic Districts. And for the life of me, I don't quite get it. Reno is just a little bit slow to come around.

But I think the energy is there and I really think that Burning Man has created an impetus to make that happen, because there's enough of a community here, and we've got a good relationship with the City Council, several individuals on the City Council who know what we can do as Burners, how community-oriented we are, that we do get things done, and that we're here for the benefit of the people. And I think that it's a win-win situation. It's just a question of growing into it, and I'd like to think that we're ready. It just remains to be seen.

von Tagen: Do you think that's a mindset of mostly just the Backyard Burners who are here locally, or do you think it could be something that other portions of Burning Man can come to embody?

Lockett: I think that we represent Burning Man because we're so committed to going to Burning Man every year and being a part of that and bringing our projects and helping to build and the volunteerism that goes with it. I think Reno still, honestly, needs a little bit more education. The more we can do publicly by putting ourselves out there as, quote, unquote, "the Burner community," and showing people what Burning Man is and what it isn't, the more viability we get and the more interest, and people will come away saying, "I had no idea that Burning Man was all of this, and it wasn't just a bunch of drug-crazed hippies in the desert." And it gives a much more favorable impression, and I think the more we can expose ourselves and then influence people in the everyday—we call it "default"—world, the more likely they are to get on board and to want to support some of the Burner activities and interests in terms of putting Reno on the map as an art location.

The potential here is phenomenal. We live in a really small valley with a couple of good old-fashioned north-south streets that could be total bikeways. You can get across town. There's no reason that we can't turn this into a model environmental city. I would love to see that. I've been thinking about that since I was in my early teens, and the potential is there. It's just a question of growing into it and getting people on board.

von Tagen: It seems like there are sort of three main powers in the town that really dictate what happens. There's the city, there are the casinos, and there's the university. How do you feel that the three of those can best work together for the betterment of the city and the Fourth Street corridor?

Lockett: I think everybody needs to realize that there's enough for everybody. It's not just about the casinos and keeping people in the casinos to get their money. If only the casino people would realize the advantage of having people out on the street at outdoor events, which they've gotten much better at from, say, the eighties, mid-eighties, nineties on. They've closed down Virginia Street on occasion and done these outdoor things, like the Rib Cook-off and the Blues Festival and Street Vibrations and Hot August Nights and things like that, so they're already on board to some degree, and I just think that everyone needs to realize that there's enough to go around for everybody.

The university could participate in terms of being down along Fourth Street, maybe some of the engineering students or just students in general. The environmental studies people could come down and work on Fourth Street, and we could create something, maybe some community gardens.

And then the city fathers have to realize, and I think they do, that historic districts make a city. They're not something to shy away from. They're something to support. I think it's imminently doable. It's just a question of having people work together and, again, embrace that whole ethic that there's enough to go around. We can work. We can make this happen for everybody's benefit.

von Tagen: You mentioned a few moments ago about bike lanes through the corridor. How would you like to see those implemented?

Lockett: The more the better. Perhaps, say, along Fourth Street, if there were bike lanes on either side and then only two lanes instead of four lanes of traffic and maybe a median in a middle or maybe a trolley that might take people. I believe in the old days—it was before my time—but I believe there was a trolley that went along Fourth Street. And something like that would be awesome, because you could turn it into something kind of like the San Francisco cable car. If you were to get a replica of the old trolley that used to run on Fourth Street, make it run on diesel or organic fuel oil or whatever, you could have it be a part of the historic district that could take people on tours and point out different buildings and what that history was and how it related to the Lincoln Highway and when Highway 40 first came through town and was the first interstate, basically, or the first highway that went from east to west.

I think the potential is phenomenal. Fourth Street is not as heavily traveled now because of the freeway, since it bypasses it, so you could get away with a more pedestrian element, a bike element, and, again, just two lanes of traffic with maybe that little median or, like I say, the trolley. That's what I envision.

von Tagen: How far do you see this historic district stretching out? What would it encompass?

Lockett: Boy, that's interesting. I would say certainly from Center Street east all the way to the split at B Street and Prater. I think that would be appropriate. Then maybe a little bit from Center Street west to about Keystone Avenue, and then definitely another stretch from Keystone west all the way to Mayberry, because there are some individual motor courts. Unfortunately, a couple of them have been destroyed, so that area is really not, in my opinion, as viable as part of the historic district, and there aren't really many businesses out there that would be conducive to a historic district. So I think you're really looking at Center Street east.

von Tagen: We've already got some existing businesses in there that are doing well. What do you feel could best fill in the gaps between the already existing businesses?

Lockett: I think perhaps more little cafes with little outdoor seating areas, some more art spaces, whether it be built spaces or art galleries, little boutique-y sorts of things, just anything that would be conducive toward a tourist historic district area.

von Tagen: I don't know if you've seen around town these newer and much more enclosed and nicer bus stops around town. Have you seen any of those?

Lockett: Yes.

von Tagen: So one of the thoughts are possibly using those as a way of presenting historic information, kind of making each one of these bus stops almost a little attraction in itself.

Lockett: I think that's a fabulous idea.

von Tagen: How do you feel that could be best executed?

Lockett: Well, I think with some good historic photos, with some subtext, maybe with a map so that as you're standing in this bus stop and you're looking out one way, you've got a map that says what this building used to be, and what this building was, and what this building is and just a little history blurb about that particular area. It would be an excellent educational area.

von Tagen: It's interesting with historic markers. There's sort of a fine line, and if you make them too artsy, they risk being overlooked. In fact, we've got six markers where the Mapes used to be that talk about the history of that site. They're a little hidden because of the art surrounding it. But in other places, you've got a cement cylinder with a plaque on it that really doesn't do much of anything. Coming from an artist's viewpoint, what do you think is the best way to combine those two so that you can really use the art to grab the attention of the person going by, but it doesn't really detract from the historic relevance of the site?

Lockett: Well, I think that could be easily done with some sort of a sculpture. You get an odd-looking modern sort of sculpture and then you have a placard right smack in the middle of it or maybe at the bottom at the base, so that a person would be attracted to the art in the first place and then have the opportunity to look at this placard that either gave some information about the historic relevance of the piece or of that area what this spot used to be, and then, of course, something to recognize the artist and what their perspective was on that particular piece.

We're starting to see a lot of pieces show up around Reno. For example, a few years ago I believe it was the museum that did a project painting the sheep, bighorn sheep, which is the state animal of Nevada. And so you'll see these painted bighorns, they're bronze sculptures, all over town in various places.

We've even had a couple of permanent exhibits. We've got one Burning Man sculpture that was permanently installed in Whitaker Park up by the university off of Ralston. The big lotus that's in front of the Nevada Museum of Art is actually a Burning Man piece that the museum bought, and I understand that they're interested in purchasing additional pieces. So there's art out there, and there's a guy who does the kinetic wind sculptures, and a lot of those are downtown. There are just pieces here and there. I think if we looked deeper, we'd see a lot more than what we're really aware of.

And murals are another excellent opportunity. I think that there ought to be a mural on the Wells Avenue overpass, because it's a total eyesore at this point, and it would be wonderful to have something that was reflective of the community, on both sides of that overpass so that you'd see something pretty as you're coming in and out underneath Fourth Street.

von Tagen: Do you think the public cares about this issue or that they might just not clearly know about the issue?

Lockett: I think they don't know. I think they would care. I think if they were given the options of knowing that, hey, here's a plan that we're thinking about and we want community input—this is what, say, for example, RTC is planning on doing along Fourth Street and which city fathers are backing them up and what they want to do along Fourth Street, and we're looking for community input. Absolutely necessary, you know.

And I know that there are channels where that happens, like neighborhood advisory committees and that sort of thing. Unfortunately, that information doesn't get out to the general public, and I think we need the news people to be more proactive in terms of reporting on what's happening at City Council meetings or what to be on the lookout for. And I realize that's a big job, but we really do need an advocate, a public advocate, who can be that liaison between what's happening with the various political entities that are making these decisions and letting the public know so that they can participate. Radical participation, that's another one of Burning Man principles.

von Tagen: It's a good one. Are there any events or activities that you remember that almost mirror what's going on now, where the community really did come together and make a difference?

Lockett: You know, in my day, the State Fair was a big deal, and it's unfortunate to see that this year they couldn't even have a State Fair because there weren't enough funds. I don't know what it is, if it's just a changing of the times, changing of the guard, people are not so much interested in hometown fairs anymore and 4-H and what the original fair was all about, not just the carnival rides, but the actual fair which showcased community endeavors, arts, and 4-H and animal husbandry and that sort of thing. It just, for whatever reason, it just wasn't able to happen this year, and I don't know if it was a management issue or if people are just not interested. Face it, the culture is changing. People are not so much interested anymore in a lot of the old stuff. That's the downside.

The upside is that I think you could get them interested if you continue to teach them. A lot of young people these days don't have that connection because they haven't been raised up and been taught that there was a life before cell phones and computers, etc. I mean, it's just a mindset, and I think we just have to work with it.

von Tagen: What do you remember being fun about the fair?

Lockett: I loved to see all of the displays, the artwork that people did, the blue ribbons and the red ribbons and the animals, and who got the best ribbon for the best prized bull and that sort of thing. And then, of course, there was the rodeo, and there was a segment of the rodeo that happened with the fair. And the rodeo was another event that's big. Now, Reno's rodeo still is. It's the highest purse in the western U.S., I believe. It's one of the biggest rodeos in the West, so it still gets a great turnout and a lot of community support behind it.

I don't know. You get a lot of new people coming in and they just don't have that same sense of the history of the area, and I think that we need to educate them and get them involved and teach them about how Reno got to be on the map in the first place, how Nevada became a state in 1864, as a result of the Comstock Lode and as a result of supporting San Francisco and supporting the Union with funds that basically ended up

winning the Civil War. There aren't many people who know that. And those are important things. That's how we got to be.

von Tagen: There's so much history, but at times it can almost feel like it's spread out too much. You've got Virginia City and Carson. Do you think was the fair something that unifying piece?

Lockett: Well, yes, for northern Nevada because it was the Nevada State Fair. I'm not even sure if they had such a thing in southern Nevada. I really don't think so, because Las Vegas came on the scene a good hundred years after Reno was established. That might be exaggerating, but close. Reno was established in—let's see. Myron Lake, about 1856 or something like that, built Lake's Crossing. I should know that. That was a toll road and basically people were coming through with wagon trains, going up to V.C., going over to California, and the V&T Railroad was established.

And, hmm. I lost my train of thought.

von Tagen: You were talking about how the fair kind of unified all that.

Lockett: Yeah, I think so in some ways. And also the Nevada Day Parade, that's a huge event in Carson City on October 31st, or whatever weekend is close enough. They've changed it to the weekend. It brings people from all over, and huge community support. True Nevadans come out for that. There's nothing like a true Nevadan. They will wear their colors and their Nevada flags and their Nevada shirts, and we're proud of it. This is the land that nobody else wanted and, by golly, we're proud of it, wide open space.

von Tagen: Tell me a little bit about your days here at the university.

Lockett: Well, let's see. I graduated in '78, I started up here in '79, and I got my degree in '85. So it took me about six years, putting myself through college, working part-time. And, you know, back then it was a lot cheaper; it cost me about \$500 a semester, and it was doable. I tried to go out of state, but couldn't afford it, and as it turned out, staying here was probably the best thing I could have done. I ended up with a degree in anthropology. I worked with the best in terms of Great Basin anthropologists and archaeologists, Don and Kay Fowler, Warren D'Azevedo. I ended up working at Desert Research Institute for ten years, doing field archaeology in southern Nevada, and so basically I'm a Great Basin anthropologist/archaeologist.

von Tagen: Did you live on campus at the time?

Lockett: No, no. Being local, during that time I was either at my mother's house and for a while I had my own apartment, and then I was at my grandmother's house for the last few years while I was finishing up, because that helped me, of course, to save money to not have to work as much. Besides that, I was in the field a lot. There was one semester that I took off so that I could go work. We were on the Yucca Mountain project, as a matter of fact. I'm proud to say I walked one of the first roads on Yucca Mountain before there was

any heavy construction going on. We documented all of the archaeological sites in the whole area prior to them doing any construction. So it was a pretty fascinating project.

von Tagen: In your free time, did you spend much of it on campus at all, or were you off doing something else?

Lockett: Not so much. I was on campus strictly for schoolwork sorts of things, and then I was up at Desert Research and out in the field and pretty much all over the place. Being a local girl, out camping here and there, we'd spend a lot of time at Pyramid and Lahontan and a little bit up at Tahoe and just all over. I had relatives who came from northern California, so we'd go visit up there during the summer, and just a lot of local events around here.

von Tagen: How do you feel your experience in anthropology shaped who you are today?

Lockett: Oh, significantly. I think I've always been cognizant of culture and that it is evolving as we speak. We are all a part of it, and I can see it happening. I can see those milestones. When you get a collective consciousness that all of a sudden makes a difference and everybody is on the same page, you've heard it referred to as the hundredth monkey. If a hundred people start doing something, then it becomes exponential and spreads out into the culture.

So, for me, this ties in with Burning Man and with finally seeing the evolution of culture to the point of the mixture of art and intelligence and how that makes a difference in our cultural evolution, and I really see Burning Man as leading-edge culture. And that's why I'm really, really proud to be a part of it, because I think it can do so much for the evolution of the world and for humanity in general, because it relies so much on volunteerism and people working together and not being invested in monetary gain and not being invested in advertising benefit, etc. It's all about the human component, one-on-one, creativity and play and artistic expression. And I really just think it's the new wave.

And so, for me as an anthropologist seeing this, watching this, it's all played into my life. What can I say? To me there's nothing better than being an anthropologist because it's just about being human nature, studying human nature.

von Tagen: Well, I guess it's probably a little bit of both, people affect culture and culture affects people?

Lockett: Correct, yes, absolutely.

von Tagen: How have you seen Burning Man change from the first time you did it to where it is now? Has it kind of stayed or the same?

Lockett: Oh, no, it changes every time. It's like anything. You start to add population growth and it changes the effect. Like we were discussing earlier, when the population started growing here in Reno, it changed people's orientation. You had the old-timers who knew what the basic constructs of the area were, or, say, the old-timers at Burning

Man, who have a real deep understanding of what Burning Man is and what it isn't and how we're shaping culture and what we believe in and the ten principles.

And as you start to get bigger and bigger and more people become interested and more people come in, it can get diluted a bit, and we're back to this issue of having to educate people about the original premise or the original history, so there's an appreciation for what we're out there doing or why here in Reno that we want to preserve Fourth Street, because it's part of our historic tradition.

And it's the same with Burning Man, so, yes, it has changed, always. You can't go from 25,000 people, or when I first got there, to now 55,000 people and not have it change. One thing that's real significant is the infrastructure. We've gotten a lot more organized and things flow a lot better. There's a lot more volunteerism. The city doesn't happen without people volunteering. It's strictly a self-made city. It's not like Coachella, where they pay people to come in and set up stages and put on music events. This is something that people just bring. We make it happen. The Burning Man organization sets up the infrastructure, they provide the blank canvas, and then we provide the art.

So I think that a similar thing, there's a similar analogy there with Reno and history and newbies and educating newbies and helping them to understand this environment that we live in, whether it's Reno proper or the playa specific.

von Tagen: From what I understand, Burning Man is a town that builds itself out of the desert. What does that mean for Nevada and for that whole culture?

Lockett: Well, I've often made the analogy that the Black Rock Desert, this big empty playa, is a blank canvas, and when we go out there, here's this beautiful blank canvas, and from it the man rises and the city rises. And we create this event and all this energy is happening, and then we burn those structures and release them into the ethos, into the cosmos. And so when the man burns and the temple burns and then everything goes back into the dust and it disperses, we leave that blank canvas again to come back the next time. So we rise out of the dust. We go back to the dust. It's really an analogy of birth and death and resurrection.

And I think, too, because it's our desert, it's the backyard, and so many of our local people, we go out there and play in that desert all the time when it's not Burning Man. People go out there to go hunting, to go to the hot springs, to go exploring into the Black Rock high rock, in the Immigrant Trail area, and just Nevada in general. You'll never find more outdoor rugged individuals than you will in Nevada.

von Tagen: Does it still seem that you get a different feeling each time you go out, or does it kind of start being the same?

Lockett: It's funny, because it's the same yet it's always different. I mean, there are certain elements about it, like just coming off of the highway and getting onto the playa and the first dust that gets into your nose, and you're just loving it. It's like you're back to this place. And then you've got the camaraderie with the other people in line and everybody's just so happy and excited to be there, and you make it fun. You make whatever the experience is, because sometimes it can be frustrating sitting in a line and waiting to get in, but you make it happy, you know, and you share with your neighbors.

So the event is everything from pre-planning to getting there, to being there, to getting out, to winding it up at Decompression. So it's really not just that week in the desert. It's everything leading up to and beyond, and we like to say, too, from the Burning Man perspective, it's not just a week in the desert; it's about the other fifty-one weeks a year, because we're out bringing Burning Man culture to the world on a regular basis, and it's not just here in Reno. It's in every community out there in the world that has a Burning Man region established. It could be Portland; Seattle; San Francisco; L.A.; San Diego; Chicago; Utah; New York; Florida; Southeast. They're everywhere. Plus they're all over—they're international too. We've got burns happening all over the world. It's really gotten quite big.

von Tagen: Do you feel the city fathers could learn something from Burning Man?

Lockett: Absolutely, particularly about organizing and creating a volunteer spirit and utilizing creative energy, because people are looking for a place to put their creative energy. People want that so much, and they want community and collaboration and a family, being able to work with somebody to make a difference. That, I think, speaks to every human being in our hearts. We want to be a part of something bigger and we want to make a difference. And instead of being isolated, Burning Man helps you become part of that community, and then when you bring it back out into the world, you connect with other people and you bring them into the community. And so that's what's happening, in leaps and bounds. It's like this growth spurt, this amoeba that's just oozing out and bringing people in. And, yeah, the city fathers could learn a lot, particularly about organization.

von Tagen: Best-case scenario, what do you think Reno could look like in ten years?

Lockett: I think it needs twenty. [laughs]

von Tagen: Okay.

Lockett: Oh, gosh. Best-case scenario, downtown Reno, Virginia Street would be a pedestrian mall where there could be regular events, and Center Street and Sierra Street would be the north-south corridors, and Second Street and Fourth Street would be the east-west.

Fourth Street would be developed as a historic district with all the little shops and art and such that we've talked about earlier, bike lanes, etc., that that could be a real corridor, maybe with a nice archway. We've had three different Reno arches. Why not have another archway, something like, "Reno Backyard Burners: Welcome to Reno, the Gateway to the Playa."

We really want to capitalize on what Burning Man has created and how popular it is in modern culture and what it can deliver to the default world, to cities out here, by being able to bring that art and that experiential artwork, if you will. Another one of our principles is experiential, immediate experience. So I see that.

I see a lot more bike paths, a lot more carlessness, if you will. There are certain areas like the main area of downtown, that could be certainly a lot more pedestrian versus

car traffic. I see a lot of potential. I see art everywhere. I see a lot more murals, a lot more outdoor cafes, performing art locations. Artown doesn't just have to be a month. Reno is Artown, great. Let's make it all twelve.

von Tagen: Now, what might the worst-case scenario look like? What do you think?

Lockett: Worst-case scenario? That nothing gets done and things get stalled and we get another twenty years behind and we're not really living up to the potential of what can be done in a metropolitan area with their historic resources, their community resources, their artistic resources. A lot more can be done a lot more quickly if we just get the people on board.

And I really don't know where the issue is. I don't know if it's, per se, funding because a lot of what we do is volunteer. Maybe it would cost a little bit to buy a piece of art, but we'll put it in. There are ways to partner with the Burning Man community and the city fathers and the default community, who wants to participate and make our city better.

Look at Wingfield Park and look at the whole river corridor, how beautiful that's come along in just the last few years. It's gorgeous, and there's so much potential of keeping it going, more art, more sculpture, art tours, bike tours, maybe little safari cars like they have in San Francisco that take you around and actually point out certain historic things.

The university here is a land-grant institution that's got a lot of history. Mackay School of Mines, the building we're sitting in right now, is a beautiful building. People should know about it. They should see it.

von Tagen: Anything else you want to add?

Lockett: Bring it on. [laughs] Nope, that'll do it. [laughs]

von Tagen: Well, thanks so much for sitting down with me today.

Lockett: You're very welcome. It was a pleasure.