# An Interview with Cindy Funkhouser

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee White

Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood

Oral History Research Center at UNLV University Libraries University of Nevada Las Vegas © Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood University of Nevada Las Vegas Libraries 2010

#### Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries, Director: Claytee D. White

Project Creators: Patrick Jackson and Dr. Deborah Boehm

Transcriber and Editor: Laurie Boetcher

Editor and Production Manager: Barbara Tabach

Interviewers: Suzanne Becker, Barbara Tabach, Claytee D. White

Recorded interviews, transcripts, bound copies and a website comprising the *Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood Oral History Project* have been made possible through a grant from the City of Las Vegas Centennial Committee. Special Collections in Lied Library, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided a wide variety of administrative services, support and archival expertise. We are so grateful.

This project was the brainchild of Deborah Boehm, Ph.D. and Patrick Jackson who taught at UNLV and resided in the John S. Park Neighborhood. As they walked their community, they realized it was a special place that intersected themes of gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gentrification. Patrick and Deborah learned that John S. Park had been listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and that original homeowners, local politicians, members of the gay community, Latino immigrants, artists and gallery owners and an enclave of UNLV staff all lived in the neighborhood. Therefore, they decided that the history of this special place had to be preserved, joined with the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries and wrote a grant that was funded by the Centennial Committee.

The transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the narrative. These interviews have been catalogued and can be found as non-circulating documents in Special Collections at UNLV's Lied Library.

Deborah A. Boehm, Ph.D. Fulbright-García Robles Scholar 2009-2010 Assistant Professor, Anthropology & Women's Studies

> Patrick Jackson, Professor John S. Park Oral History Project Manager

Claytee D. White, Director Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries

# **Interview with Cindy Funkhouser**

January 14, 2010 in Las Vegas, Nevada Conducted by Claytee White

#### **Table of Contents**

Introduction: grew up in Nebraska and Iowa. Father worked for electronics and electrical companies, had his own business, and worked for the Electricians' Union. Mother mostly stay-at-home mom, but had worked in banking and office jobs before and after marriage. Attended kindergarten in Whiting, IA; grade school and middle school in South Sioux City, NE; high school in Sioux City, IA.	1
Interest in art and collecting entiques lave of "all at 60".	
Interest in art and collecting antiques: love of "old stuff" since childhood, collects vintage and contemporary art, enjoys going to museums and art shows. Self-education and experience in antiques and art.	2
Postsecondary education: classes here and there, real estate. Marriage and move to Chicago, IL and San Diego, CA. Son Jason born 1977. Divorced and moved back to Midwest. Parents moved to Las Vegas, NV (1978-79). Lived in Kansas City and worked as cocktail waitress and bartender.	3
Move to Las Vegas (ca. 1980s): worked as cocktail waitress and bartender, eventually moved to the Four Queens (14 years) where second husband worked. Lived with parents, later in a condo, and then purchased a home.	4
Interest in yard sales: looked for "interesting antique or vintage things." Began to expand antique business from small space in antique mall to a couple of stores in Las Vegas. Attended art shows, mother volunteered at Lorenzi Park art museum, opened first antique store downtown, started working on eBay.	5
Involvement with arts movement and First Friday in Las Vegas: opened antique shop downtown, friendship with Julie Brewer (owner of Enigma Garden Café), showing work by local artists in her store, meeting people in local arts scene, attending art events.	7
Creation of First Friday: initiation of idea, creation of Whirlygig, Inc. board, involvement of City of Las Vegas Office of Cultural Affairs.	8
Connection between John S. Park Neighborhood and First Friday: appreciation of and attendance at event by residents, moral support.	10
Downtown Las Vegas and artists: has lived above The Funk House since 2001. Downtown business area and how it has changed: drug activity has lessened; many new businesses have opened; influence of property boom and bust on local artists. What artists do for the inner-city area: fix up older buildings, open businesses, participate in First Friday, paint public murals, help bring business to "blighted" areas.	11
Businesses in the downtown area since 2001: antique and vintage stores, furniture businesses, restaurants. Problems with opening a coffee shop: not dense enough demographic for majors, and very difficult for independents due to finances and building permit requirements.	12

Relationship between City of Las Vegas Office of Cultural Affairs and the Arts District.	13
Growing the downtown area and what that means for the Arts District: Mayor Oscar Goodman as a "huge supporter" for First Friday.	14
Impact of the casino industry on downtown and the Arts District: El Cortez Hotel and Casino sponsors First Friday; Barrick Gaming sponsored an event.  Development of Fremont Street East and its influence on First Friday events.	15
First Friday: how it is done: fundraising; different curators plan the event; event coordinator handles logistics of artists, acts, and vendors; husband Rick is volunteer coordinator for stage set-up and tear-down. First Friday is an everyday job. Largest First Friday. Future of First Friday: would like to see it continue, with more funding, and to expand with guest artists and juried shows. Complement between First Friday and other Las Vegas events.	16
Conclusion: living and working within a mile radius downtown, "being green and keeping your circle small."	18



#### Preface

Cindy Funkhouser grew up in the Midwest where she developed an early interest in "old stuff" as she refers to it. Her self-education in antiques spawned her business, Funk House, which she opened in 2001. Cindy is one of the forces behind the Downtown's arts movement and the development of First Friday, which was inspired by her observations of a similar event in Portland, OR.

Cindy moved to Las Vegas around 1980. Her parents had moved to the valley in the late 1970s. When not working as a cocktail waitress at the Four Queens—a downtown casino where she was employed for 14 years—she pursued her interest in vintage items as a part-time business. Today others look to Cindy as a motivator for First Friday and the Las Vegas art movement that is deeply rooted in the John S. Park Neighborhood's sense of community.

# Voices of the Historic John S. Park Neighborhood



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator:

Name of Interviewer:

Signature of Narrator

Signature of Interviewer

# Interview with Cindy Funkhouser

January 14, 2010 in Las Vegas, Nevada Conducted by Claytee White

This is Claytee White. It is January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010, and I am downtown at The Funk House, at the corner of Casino Center [Boulevard] and Colorado [Avenue]. So how are you today?

I'm well, thank you.

Wonderful. Cindy, would you give me your full name and spell your last name for me?

Cindy Funkhouser, F-u-n-k-h-o-u-s-e-r.

Wonderful. Thank you. Where is that last name from?

It's German.

Oh, OK. I should've known that. I want to just start by having you talk a little about your early life, your childhood, where you grew up, what your parents did for a living.

Well, I grew up in Nebraska and Iowa, and my dad was always in electronics or electrical business of some sort. He worked for a few companies and then had his own business after a while and then eventually worked for the Electricians' Union. My mom was mostly a stay-at-home mom, but she had worked at a bank and done some different things before they got married, and then had a few office jobs intermittently while we were kids, but for the most part, stay-at-home mom.

OK. So where did you go to school?

Actually my first grade school was in Whiting, Iowa. That was before my dad married my mom, who is actually my stepmom but raised me, so considered, to me, my parent. I went to Whiting School, which was kindergarten through high school. It was a town of five hundred. But I only went to kindergarten there and then, when my mom and dad got married, we moved to South Sioux [City], Nebraska and I went to grade school at Harney [Elementary School], and then the junior high, I think it was just South Sioux [City] Junior High. There was only one. And then we moved over to Sioux City, Iowa and I went to East High School.

#### OK. So how did you get interested in art and collecting antiques?

Well, antiques are an illness. [Laughter] There is no question about it. I've liked old stuff since I was a little kid. I only had one great-aunt that I rarely saw whose house I loved even when I was like five, and I just, you know, always loved old stuff, and she didn't have a new thing in the place. And I've just collected for years. And I always collected vintage art and enjoyed going to museums and art shows and such but I've really only collected contemporary for about the last ten years.

#### OK. So how did you educate yourself in the antiques and the art?

There's about a hundred books in there, and basically twenty-three years of experience. I mean you just, you know, you see enough things. I've certainly learned from other dealers, a couple of people I've partnered with, you know.

So tell me about the history of it. After high school, what happened? After high school, what did you do?

I just took basic classes. I did not care for high school. I was dating my son's father at the time, and I tried to get out of school as much as possible. I mean it wasn't hard. I was

supposed to graduate early but I ended up dropping out of the first semester of my senior year for a couple of months, so I ended up having to finish up in May. But yeah, for the most part I didn't particularly care for high school.

OK, so any college?

A few classes here and there, some real estate things.

But no art classes.

No art classes. No.

Wow! And no antiquing or any of that.

No.

Oh, so this is just a natural talent. So when you left home, where did you move?

Well, I got married to Rick Oscarby who was my son's father. We didn't have the baby first. We actually followed what was considered to be the traditional plan when we got married. He was in the [United States] Navy, so we lived outside Chicago [Illinois] first and then San Diego [California]. Then when we found out I was pregnant, he was going overseas. We weren't at war at the time but, you know, he was on a ship.

So what are we talking about? Which year is this approximately?

Let's see, I had my son in '77, so he went in '77, yeah. And I went back home and stayed with my family for ten months and had my baby.

OK. And then, after going back home, how did you get to Las Vegas, eventually?

Well, I got divorced shortly after my husband got back home because I realized how easy it was to live without him. (I'm just being frank. I've been married four times.) So I moved back to the Midwest—my sister lived in Kansas City—and the idea was to be closer to my family. I took Jason and moved back there. And then my dad just simply

couldn't find work close to home. He would have to go like to a town three hundred miles away to get work as an electrician. So a job came up in Las Vegas [Nevada] and we already had an aunt and uncle here (my mom's brother), and so my parents decided [to move to Las Vegas]. My mom was forty, so you know, it was kind of that, Let's do something different. We've been doing this. So they actually bought a school bus and packed everything possible into it and sold a lot of stuff, and they moved to Las Vegas. They came out here in '78-'79, somewhere around there.

#### And you came with them.

No. I was living in Kansas City where it was, you know, still not as cold as where we lived in Iowa (because it was so close to the north border), but still very cold in the winter, and I kept talking about moving out here, and one of my friends I was working with said, Let's just go. So we just moved out here one January. She went back home within two weeks [laughing] because she had a boyfriend. That was funny. And I stayed here of course because my family was here, and I've been here, I don't know, twenty, however many years that is.

#### So what kind of employment did you get in the beginning?

Well, I was a cocktail waitress and bartender. That's what I had been doing in Kansas City. It's really the only thing you can do as a single parent, or at least then, and make enough money to take care of your child. So when I got out here, God, I worked at a couple of little places, some cocktails, some bartending, and then eventually ended up at the Four Queens [Hotel and Casino] bartending for fourteen years.

#### So why downtown and not the Strip?

My second husband worked at the Four Queens. I actually went in there when they were non-union, because otherwise I would've had to be a bar back first, which is very hard work actually. A bar back, like they bring all the beer, they haul all the ice, they do all the cleaning. It's very hard work, especially in a casino. I had worked in small bars where you did all that yourself but, you know, the scale was like this instead of like the whole block, essentially. So anyway I got in there at a time when I didn't have to do that, and that would be one of the reasons [that I worked] downtown. I'm glad though that that's the way it worked out. I'm not a Strip person. I'm not much of a casino person but certainly, obviously, being right here, the proximity works for me.

#### So where did you live when you first moved here?

I stayed with my parents for a while.

#### What area of the city?

Oh, I'm sorry, they lived off of I-15 and Jones [Boulevard]. And so then I got a condo that was like Rainbow [Boulevard] and I-15, not too far from them, and then a few years later I bought a house off of Vegas Drive and Decatur [Boulevard], which is where I raised my son and he went to school (and I don't remember the name of his school).

# That's OK. Well, you were at the Four Queens, so did you begin then to learn the area downtown in this vicinity?

I won't say for the most part. My early years there I was mostly taking care of my son, working. That was a little bit of traveling, but that was pretty much what my life consisted of at that time. It was family and that was it. Still, I always went yard-sale-ing. It didn't really matter where, you know, I still always drove around town.

OK, good. At the yard sales, what kind of things did you look for?

Interesting antique or vintage things. At that time it was strictly for personal [use].

OK. So when did you really start collecting, to acquire a collection like this?

Well, I got my first little antique mall space—I think it was five by six feet actually—on Losee Road and that's when I started buying stuff and just kept expanding and, you know, had spaces in a variety of malls in town, and eventually a couple of different stores.

Tell me about the arts movement in Las Vegas and tie it into First Fridays. Were you sort of at the beginning of that movement?

I really wasn't at the beginning of it. I can't even think of the group and you probably have the information somewhere. I did go to the art shows. They had a building right down here. They're not in existence anymore but they were like the first nonprofit, I think. (I want to say it's NACA, but I'm not sure about that. I'm sure that information is available.) And then the CAC [Contemporary Arts Center] came along close in there somewhere. My mom volunteered at the art museum in Lorenzi Park, in the little motel, so we used to do down there, of course. You know, we always went to art fairs and stuff, even in Iowa.

When I started getting involved down here, I rented my house out and I rented a building about four blocks from here, and I converted the upstairs into an apartment, and worked downstairs. I was still working at the Four Queens, so I was only open on the weekends at the store and that's when like eBay was coming into existence and I started doing that as well. So pretty much two full-time jobs, and with the malls as well. For about ten years I did both.

Wow! That was a lot.

It was. My third husband didn't care for that, so we split up. [Laughing]

OK. I can see that that was a lot of time. So tell me about coming to this location [and] being involved in First Fridays.

Well, I had the other building about four blocks from here and I became very good friends with Julie Brewer. She has passed away but I'm sure you will hear about her with whoever you talk to, that she opened the Enigma [Garden] Café. In fact there's a Facebook<sup>TM</sup> page for it. It was one of the first little meccas for artists and poets and it was this wonderful little place and, you know, it warms my heart every time I think about it.

And people say that when that closed, it should have been reopened because there was no place else to go.

Well, the Arts Factory was already in existence but it wasn't the same. There was a café and a little restaurant. There was all the elements in one little area. So that was the only thing that was really happening.

But Julie and I became very good friends, and we started talking, even when I was in the other building, about creating a small space. You know, I was looking at different buildings at the time because that owner wouldn't sell his building, and I wanted to buy one. I didn't necessarily want a bigger one but I ended up with a bigger one. And so we had been talking for some time about just clearing like one wall to show art for local artists. And I moved into this building about a year after we started that discussion. I still show local artists back here. It'll be nine years on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

So that's how I really started getting involved and met the people that were in the arts scene. Unless they collected antiques, before that I didn't know them so much. And then, just started getting involved with more stuff. You know, there weren't a lot of art

events down here but I went to some of them, probably not all of them. I was obviously still very heavily involved in the antiques.

#### How did First Friday come about?

My son was living in Portland, Oregon--which I love, by the way.

#### That seems like your kind of place.

I love it there.—And I went to visit him, and we went to First Thursday. And we were already doing our art shows back here. We had been doing them, I'm going to say for more than a year, I think. And I said, Two million people. Two million people. Why aren't we doing this? I don't understand why we're not doing it. Having not been part of a lot of other things people had tried and failed at, plus I don't think that way, so, you know, I didn't understand and I actually considered it for six months without discussing it with anyone, and then I talked to Julie and Naomi Arin about it. —Naomi Arin had one of the finest galleries here [Arin Contemporary Art]. She's now in Laguna [Beach, California]. She's opened a gallery in Laguna. But she's still on our Whirlygig board, which manages First Friday, and she still has a home here as well.

But I started talking to them. They absolutely were adamant. They're like, It's not going to work, it's not going to work; we want you to be prepared for it to fail, you know, just over and over, and Julie goes, Well clearly, you're going to do this whether I help you or not. And she wasn't working at the time. Her husband owns the Double Down Bar and Frankie's Tiki Room, which are wonderful cultural additions to the city. And so she was going to do whatever needed to be [done], you know, she goes, I'll do whatever you ask me, as long as it's fun.

So she did. She helped. Naomi did. Naomi had been involved in the arts and nonprofit arts for years, including in Boston [Massachusetts], and she was also an attorney, so she did all of that legal, the nonprofit papers, all that kind of stuff. And we planned it for six months, you know, we worked at it, we tried to contact everybody. Started it October of '02 [seven years ago]. And we had about three hundred people [attend]. We're like, Wow! This is awesome. And I'm sure now, you know, it's thousands so it just kept growing and growing. And the Cultural Department of the City [of Las Vegas] has been a huge influence on that growth as well.

#### Tell me about your board.

Well, for a very long time it was Naomi, Julie, and I, and part of our by-laws were that were going to be made. Since we were such a small board, you know, we didn't want to go two-to-one. That just didn't seem like that would work.

So we did that for a very long time. Eventually the City had a consultant come in that had consulted on other events and been involved in other events, and she was a very smart woman (I can't remember her name). So they did a study of the area, talked to different business owners, gallery owners and such in the area, and determined that it was time for Whirlygig Inc. to grow and the City to be a little bit less involved. So then we invited more people to join the board, mostly people that have something to do with the downtown, predominantly, and that is still true. We did have about twelve members at one time; I think we might even have had fourteen. Now we're down to like seven solid members.

#### More manageable?

Yes. And five advisory members. So that works really well for us.

Can you tell me who is on your board?

Sure. It's listed on our website. Susan Hackett Morgan, Brett Wesley Sperry, Dick Geyer, Sam Cherry, Kristin Bartolo, Naomi Arin, and myself.

So how often is Naomi in the city?

Well, her husband actually lives here, and she's a partner with a gallery owner here, so she's here probably twice a month, for a few days. She's here now, in fact.

Does she have time in her schedule for an interview?

Probably not.

OK. But if I talk to her now, maybe the next time she could spare an hour? Possibly.

OK, good. I would love to do that. As you know, the project that we're working on is really John S. Park [Neighborhood], but the John S. Park community has a large concentration of artsy [people].

Absolutely.

So is there any concrete connection at all between First Fridays, what you do, and John S. Park?

Well, in the sense that they all appreciate the event, attend the event. A lot of the artists that live over there don't necessarily show [their work] at First Friday because they're at a bit higher level than what we typically show outside, and some of them have their own studios, show in galleries, you know, in other parts of the country, even the world.

So, that's our basic connection. I mean they're a moral support [of the event].

That is wonderful. You live here now, don't you?

I live upstairs.

Yes, because I heard about how wonderful your upstairs is.

Well, I think it is. I'm happy there.

Good. So now you've lived there for the nine years that you've been at this location? Yes. Yes.

Wonderful. Tell me about this downtown area, the business area, at night, during the day, and how it has changed.

Well, when I initially moved down here, there seemed to be a lot more drug addicts and such. There was a heavy concentration of drug activity going in that direction [south] on Casino Center. I won't say there's none—there's no question there still is—but it's definitely lessened. We still have drug activity down there: sales and consumers both. Putting those two things together, that's what they need, right?

During the day, you know, I get twenty-five, thirty people a day [in the store] but that's not necessarily because of being in the area because I'm still kind of not, you know, really on the grid, and a lot of that is just from being in business for so many years and advertising and Internet presence and things like that.

The area during the day—obviously Main Street and Charleston [Boulevard]—are very busy. A lot of new businesses have opened up, certainly in the last nine years. A few have come and gone, and you know definitely when the property values escalated, that kind of left a lot of the artists out of the picture because they couldn't pay three dollars a square foot. But now they're kind of coming back, which is great. And they're not clearing so much land to build high-rises.

If you go to New York City or you go to L.A. [Los Angeles, California] or you go to any major [city], San Francisco [California] or wherever, you know, they all have their

areas where the artists went in, warehousing and such, where it was really cheap rental, and of course they're always chased out. Now in New York City, they have many places to go and they've been almost everywhere already. But here we do things ass-backwards, and we're always in such a hurry. Vegas, you know, it's like everything has got to be done quickly, so as soon as it looked good down here, it's like, Oh, let's get in there and start buying property, you know, let's build forty-story buildings and all that. Well, that part left the artists out, so you know, as much as I hate to see anyone go out of business or lose their opportunity to do their building or whatever, it was a benefit to the artists. We just went from A to Z. We did not go through the rest of the alphabet. And you really need all that to make things happen properly in an arts district.

#### What do artists do for the inner-city area, when they move in?

Well, they open up their own spaces. Typically they're in older buildings. They fix them up. Some of them are open full-time. They participate in First Friday. They do murals. They do a variety of things.

So would you say that they help bring business to areas that are kind of depressed? Yeah, I do believe they do. Definitely. Yeah, we still definitely fall under the "blighted" heading.

What kind of businesses have you see open in this area since you've been here in the nine years?

Well, there are antique stores in all these little cottages over here. Now there are some different things but a few antique malls, vintage stores over on Main Street, some furniture businesses. I'm trying to think what else. A couple of restaurants.

What about restaurants [and] coffee shops?

We're still trying to get a coffee shop.

### Why do you think that's such a problem?

Well, there's a couple of reasons. The major like Starbucks<sup>™</sup> has not chosen to come in here because they don't feel it's their demographic or at least not densely enough at this point. And the person who would do the small coffee shop typically does not have the money to do it, and it's very difficult to get permitting from the Building Department. Very, very difficult to do any kind of remodeling in old buildings down here. Let me just say, the stress, very difficult.

Oh. Because I was thinking, a coffee shop where artists meet, where poetry is read, that's the kind of place I was thinking about.

You told me about the City support that you had.

The Cultural Department of the City, uh huh.

#### Can you expound on that a little more?

Well, in the beginning, somewhere in the first year, they wanted to provide a trolley. This whole new streetscape is just that; it's new. We only had two streetlights out here. So, you know, the comfort zone of people was not necessarily what it is at this point. So they wanted to provide a trolley for us, and we went through a lot of conversations before we figured out a way for them to do it that worked for them legally, and for us to be comfortable with it and not to be, you know, too much controlled by the City because we were just a beginning project. And it just kept growing. They kept offering more support. I believe it was in '05, [during] our [Las Vegas] Centennial, we closed the streets off here and did actually a two-day event. Whew, that was a lot of work. We had a hundred artists' tents in the street. And we just found that once we had closed the streets off—I

think we had already started doing it a little bit before that, but that was a major event—people started walking in the street. And then there were cars in the street. So it was either call this whole thing off, or we have to barricade the streets off for pedestrian traffic. And so we did that. The City didn't give us money directly, but they paid for services. So they paid for the barricading and the things and, you know, that kept growing. They were spending more and more money. I think a lot of times City entities don't get the best deal from companies, in my opinion, so they were spending an awful lot of money, and then that was at the same time when they had the meeting with the consultant and we did all that and started talking about them spending less money and us stepping up more and taking over and doing more.

The mayor [Oscar Goodman] has been adamant about growing downtown:

Fremont Street East, the area over by the railroad track, all of that land over there.

What does that mean for the arts area?

He's been a huge supporter for us. He's definitely been instrumental in a lot of the support that we received. When the funding became less and less from the City, he even donated ten thousand dollars to help support the event, and still supports us, you know, still does whatever he can for us. His enthusiasm has been infectious for people. So, I think he's made a big difference all the way around.

Oh, that's amazing. Thank you.

What about the casino industry? It's our largest industry. Any impact at all on this area of the city?

You know, we have a relationship with the El Cortez [Hotel and Casino]. They're a sponsor. We have a trolley that goes directly from here to there on First Fridays. And we

did have Barrick Gaming [Corporation] when they owned the Union Plaza [Hotel and Casino]. That was a while back. But other than that, not a lot of, you know, working with them.

You would think with the number of people in this area, it's a natural overflow; once you finish what you're going to do for First Friday, it seems that it would be natural for you to go to Fremont Street.

Well, they go to East Fremont district, afterwards. A lot of people go to the bars that are down there. I don't know about the casinos so much. And everybody did, and they still do, you know, everybody kind of tries to piggyback off of the First Friday event. The Horseshoe [Hotel and Casino] did one for a while and this place did one and that place did one, but I think they've kind of settled into the East Fremont district, for the most part.

## What else would you like to see on East Fremont?

To be honest, I'm so busy trying to make sure that First Friday stays afloat, most of the time. You know, I really wish that they got more support from the City, that the people that own the properties down there had not thought, Oh, what a great idea, let's charge a lot of rent, because there could be more places. And I would like it if there was actual real like jazz and blues.

# Tell me what's involved in putting together a First Friday.

Oh my. Well, let me see, where do I start? Fundraising is the most important aspect: getting money together to do an event, and it is on a monthly basis, for the most part. You know, there's the logistical part of it: how is it going to be laid out? How many artists are

we going to have? Artists have to apply every month to set up here. And we have food vendors, beverage vendors, bands, stage [shows]. I don't know.

#### So who does all that work?

Well, we do have an event coordinator. Either I take care of the artists' portion or I try to get somebody else to curate it. Ideally I would like to have somebody else curating it every single month, but that doesn't happen all the time, so we have a coordinator. She used to work for the City and First Friday was part of what she did at the time when they did all the licensing and sales tax permitting and all that type of stuff for us. And then she retired, so she now works for us part-time. Every single artist, every band, every vendor has to be licensed for that night, every month. It's a lot of paperwork. And every single one of them has to have a sales tax permit for that night. It's a lot. Once you're on the radar, you've got to follow all the rules. So, she does all of that paperwork, logistical stuff. I couldn't possibly do that and do the rest of the stuff that I do. And then actually my husband Rick is the volunteer programmer for the stage, and he handles all the set-up, tear-down, all that stuff for the night. It's a huge job. He's usually exhausted for days. That's amazing. So how do you gear up every month for this, or is it constant? It's constant. I work on First Friday every single day. There's never a day that I don't have forty or fifty e-mails to answer. There's never a day I'm not doing some kind of networking, fundraising.

And now everybody comes to you. You don't have to go look for artists or food vendors or anything; they come to you.

They pretty much contact us, yes. Part of the idea of having the different curators is, for instance, we do have one for February, he's bringing in a different group of artists, so,

you know, not to pull from the same pool all the time by having them. We would like to diversify that a bit.

OK. Wow. I think I have probably covered everything I wanted to cover about First Friday. Oh, what was your largest one?

You mean audience-wise? Well, we've estimated as many as eight to ten thousand people. You know, it's kind of hard to guesstimate, but we feel that we've had them where there's around eight or ten thousand. October is usually the biggest. It's our anniversary month and we usually try to do some special things that month. And May. Plus October and May are like the ideal weather months as well.

#### Tell me what the future is for First Fridays.

We were just discussing that at a board meeting last night. I would like to see it continue, whether I am part of it or not. I think it should go on. I mean, Portland has been doing it like twenty-five years. And if you Google<sup>TM</sup> First Friday or First Thursday or Second Wednesday, whatever they call it, everybody is doing these art walk/festivals all over the country because it creates interest in the arts district areas. And I see no reason why it shouldn't continue. Obviously we would hope at some point that there's enough funds that that part is not always a struggle, where we could do more things like, you know, bring in a guest artist from another city or do some things like that, do some juried shows where there would be an actual cash prize for the artist. We would love to do that.

Oh, that would be wonderful. The last question I have for you: is there competition from places like Town Square?

No. I mean, I have like a mile radius. I don't like to leave my little mile radius. I literally deliberately try to do all my business down here. And then it's an issue to me of being

green and keeping your circle small so that you're not driving all over town to do everything. So I don't even go to those places. Is Town Square the one that's way out on Las Vegas Boulevard?

#### That's correct.

Yeah, I've been there and I honestly don't know. I mean we drove in there to go to an event one night and it was so difficult to navigate. I can't imagine if you had a few cocktails how you would ever get out of there. Yeah, it's a totally different environment. I mean they get a lot of people and they're doing well, and probably some of those people come to First Friday, but yeah, it's a completely different experience.

That's correct. So they probably can complement each other.

Sure.

That's wonderful. And my very last question is, I'm going to lunch when I leave here, and I want to go down here. Where can I go to lunch?

I would try Lola's if I were you. It's in Holsum Lofts, which is the old building they converted. I haven't eaten there but I've heard it's really good.

Wonderful. Fantastic. That's what I'm going to try. Thank you so much. I really appreciate all of this information.

Absolutely. Sure.

#### **INDEX**

A P Arts Parks Arts District Lorenzi Park, 6 Arts Factory, 7 Personalities CAC, 6 Arin, Naomi, 8, 9, 10 First Friday, 6, 7, 8-10, 12, 15-18 Bartolo, Kristin, 10 Whirlygig, Inc., 8, 9-10 Brewer, Julie, 7, 8, 9 Cherry, Sam, 10 B Geyer, Dick, 10 Goodman, Oscar, 14 Businesses Morgan, Susan Hackett, 10 Arin Contemporary Art, 8 Sperry, Brent Wesley, 10 Double Down Saloon, 8 Portland, OR, 8 eBay, 6 Arts Enigma Garden Café, 7 First Thursday, 8, 17 Frankie's Tiki Room, 8 Funk House, The, 1 S Holsum Lofts Lola's, 18 San Diego, CA, 3 Town Square, 18 Sioux City, IA, 2 South Sioux City, NE, 2 C Streets Casino Center Boulevard, 1, 11 Chicago, IL, 3 Charleston Boulevard, 11 Colorado Avenue, 1 Decatur Boulevard, 5 H Fremont Street, 14, 15 Hotels/Casinos Interstate 15, 5 Barrick Gaming Corp., 15 Jones Boulevard, 5 Binion's Horseshoe, 15 Las Vegas Boulevard, 18 El Cortez, 15 Losee Road, 6 Four Queens, 4, 5, 6 Main Street, 11, 13 Plaza, The, 15 Rainbow Boulevard, 5 Vegas Drive, 5 L W Laguna Beach, CA, 8

Las Vegas, City of Centennial, 14

Office of Cultural Affairs, 9, 13-14

Whiting, IA, 2