

ESSAYS

*Reinvention*

A

CHANGE

*in the*

STORIES

*City of Second*

IS

GONNA

POETRY

COME

*Chances*

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# **Introduction**

## **The Next, Next New Thing**

By Scott Dickensheets

In the spring of 2019, artist and photographer Bryan McCormack exhibited a batch of stereoscopic cameras and photos — stereographic: doubled images that, when looked at through the right lenses, appeared in 3D — in the Las Vegas office of Nevada Humanities. He showed a lot of equipment, from 19<sup>th</sup> century lenses to the View-Masters you remember from childhood, and a lot of images. Relevant to the concerns of this book were a batch taken during John C. Fremont's pioneering explorations of Southern Nevada in the mid-1800s. Let's look at three, all, not coincidentally, depicting Native Americans. One shows a group of native men seated in a loose semicircle. It's titled "The Old Gam-

blers.” In another, a youngish woman is topless. In the third, a man wears buckskins indigenous to a Plains tribe that lives many hundreds of miles away; Fremont had spruced him up this way because he knew the buckskins symbolized “Indians” to the East Coast audience he was very keen on peddling his stereoscopic images to.

Gambling, sexual titillation, imported culture, phony narratives serving commercial interests — Las Vegas was already being reinvented before there was a Las Vegas to reinvent. (Leave it to a colonialist white guy to get *that* ball rolling.)

In the years since, the idea of reinvention has truly become one of the load-bearing beliefs about Las Vegas, this city of second chances. It’s the hot core of gambling’s appeal, of course: upcycling your life with a turn of the cards, a roll of the dice, the spin of a *Downton Abbey* slot machine. Who might you become with a Megabucks win in your money belt? What is a weekend bender in Sin City if not a chance to try on the sorts of personae that won’t fly in Pig’s Knuckle, Nebraska?

And from the Strip, this reinvention mojo has seeped into the wider psychology of the valley. It’s surely some of what brought a guy named Arthur Jones to Las Vegas back in the 1980s, where he worked as a bookie under a different name for some twenty-five years after disappearing and being declared dead in Chicago. Every now and then you’ll

see a headline like that — some embezzler from New Jersey is captured while trying to start a new life in Las Vegas. It never fails to not surprise me. I mean, where else would you go? New Orleans, I suppose, if you can stand the humidity and love jambalaya. But very often it's Vegas.

Of course, most reinvention is neither sinister nor worthy of note; it's just everyday personal growth, as we work to extend or escape our narratives and histories. We all do it to one extent or another. I barely recognize the me of my mid-thirties, so many iterations have I gone through since then. You, too, I'm sure. "I have a nudging voice inside telling me there is something else to be, beyond that which I have been, and beyond that, something else," writes Cecila Dintino in a *Psychology Today* blog post. Or, as onetime Las Vegas Vegan Gregory Crosby put it in his poem "So Long, Erato": "Who are you now if not someone else?"

And yet, thankfully for the sake of this book, some stories do warrant a telling. Maybe because reinvention was dramatically foisted upon someone, as with the subject of Erin Ryan's essay; or because a guy fell both gratefully and ruefully into his new life, as did Steve Bornfeld; or because a life is shaken by someone else's change, as is the protagonist of Amanda Skenandore's short story; or because someone, while appearing to shape-shift in a wildly fluctuating time, is revealed to have not changed at all, as in Steve Sebelius' report; or, as in Oksana Marafioti's short story, someone ...

well, you'll just have to experience that one on your own.

For all of the off-the-wall plotlines, unbelievable characters, tragicomic developments, civic pratfalls, and occasional moments of beauty and epiphany that crowd the picture of Las Vegas, perhaps its true and abiding theme, from the moment Fremont spurred his horse into the valley and right up to the baccarat cards falling as you read this, is *change*. Implacable and relentless, it's most blatantly at work these days in the terraforming of our cityscape, from the Tony Hsieh'd Downtown to the Raiders' stadium. And you'll find some of that in this book, in Jennifer Battisti's poem, for one. But it's our hope that these stories, essays, and poems also reflect that shaping force in the more intimate, human-scaled ways that will resonate in your own life.

As with all books, the one you're holding is the product of more hands than just those of its writers and editors, and we would be remiss not to mention some of them. (And we do hate to be remiss.) As always, the team at Nevada Humanities deserves a Hulk-size fist bump for continuing to support this project, which for ten volumes now has attempted to celebrate the breadth, depth, and quality of literary talent in Las Vegas. Likewise, Anthony Curtis, Deke Castleman, and their Huntington Press crew have been exemplary publishing partners for many of these volumes. Big ups to those who have chipped in in other ways, as detailed on the Acknowledgments page you probably skipped. (Take a moment to go

back.) And a hearty thanks to Christopher Smith, art director of *Desert Companion* magazine, for designing the book's cover.

Across ten anthologies — a milestone hardly imaginable at the outset — Las Vegas Writes has showcased dozens of worthy local writers. And it turns out that one of the great joys of the project has been our realization that no matter how many volumes ultimately comprise the series, Las Vegas will never run out of writers to fill them. ♦



# **The Phoenecian**

By Dayvid Figler  
(Poem)

I.

Frank Lloyd Wright was down on his luck in 1965.

Recently arrived in Las Vegas  
(though having died some years earlier)  
nothing seemed to be going Wright.

Commissioned to build  
the Phoenix Hotel and Casino  
on the cursed site of the original El Rancho Vegas,  
things had already fallen apart.

He put his entire  
upfront

on red, Friday night,  
but the roulette ball landed on  
normal, Saturday morning.

He wagered building after building on  
zero;  
every single time it came up 28,  
Saturday night.

What were the odds?

Frank Lloyd Wright was busted and disgusted.

He was in deeper than he ever thought.  
Suckered by the dreams and schemes  
of a contingent of  
questionable reputations  
from St. Louis, and St. Martin

(patron saint of hairdressers).

Oh, what a comedy team.

Never was there a chance  
the project would fly.

Frank Lloyd Wright slumped low,  
in the oversized booth of the Frontier Hotel's  
Pioneer Cafe,  
elbows on the table,  
Prairie-style.

A stack of dollar-sized pancakes

\$1.25

A large prune juice

\$0.90

One egg (poached)

\$0.70

One hot cup of Postum

\$0.30

All comped.

He cradled his head in his hands  
fingers working into the silvery sheen  
of his hair,  
face down in the menu.

CREAMED CHIPPED BEEF on White Toast ... \$2.65

Over and over, again and again.

The telephone rang  
on the shelf  
behind his booth.

The telephone rang, again and again.

(Pick up. Pick up. It's Beldon Katleman!)

II.

On November 22, 1989,

Georgia O'Keefe was frail  
but thrilled  
to see the Mirage open to the public.

(She, too, had died years earlier).

Soon she was sitting  
in the middle of a volcano,  
waiting for an audience  
with a blind man  
about a plan  
loosely connected  
to vending machines.

The excitement around the totality  
of these circumstances was palpable.

In her left hand,  
held by its remaining fur:  
a Big Horn Sheep's head  
in a state of advanced decay.

In her right:  
a bouquet  
of sagebrush with blooms  
snatched from the inside  
of a dust dervish,  
mere blocks from the Strip.

Georgia O'Keefe fondly remembered  
an evening with Frank Lloyd Wright in 1942  
at the University of Wisconsin.  
The lightness of conversation.  
Presence.  
Coquettishness in subtext, only.  
Later, on a train to Chicago, she would  
unsuccessfully stutter her thoughts  
in written correspondence.

End them by saying, as after and before thought:

“Will you give a very quiet greeting and  
thanks to the beautiful wife

Sincerely,  
Georgia O’Keefe”

How she wished it was Frank  
who was dropping into the volcano this day.

She breathed, heavily.  
Her stomach rumbled.

III.  
Backstage,  
Slim Whitman is gearing up  
for the first night of his residency  
At the Kaos  
(pronounced kā,äs)  
nightclub at the Palms.

It is December 31, 2027.

Slim Whitman is praying,  
as is his ritual.

This will likely be his last opportunity  
to resonate with the young people

(having passed away in 2013 with little fanfare).

His driver's license says he will be 104  
before Capricorn turns to Aquarius.

This is Kaos' last gambit.  
It opened on April Fool's Day 2019  
to great celebration.

Many tweeks and twerks later,  
it is on fumes.

Much is riding on this Slim chance.

The only remaining artifact from Kaos' start is  
Damien Hirst's "Demon With A Bowl."

When it arrived, it was derided as derivative  
by every art critic in Las Vegas.

“Robot ‘David’ with a Bigger Unit.”  
“Treasures from the Bleccch of the Unbelievable.”  
“The Amazing Colossal Man Has His Revenge on Vegas”  
“More Venetian Nonsense Thrust Upon Us.”  
“Headless Man Found in Topless Casino.”  
“Load that Bowl: I’ll Have What He’s Having.”

The people didn’t care.  
Soon Hirst became the toast of the town.

A “Key to the County” from  
Commissioner “Tick” Segerblom.  
A parade on Mel Tormé Way.  
Donny Osmond even wrote and recorded a song called  
“Welcome to Our Fabulous Ashtray.”  
(feat. Dan Reynolds)  
The Golden Tiki bar celebrated by installing  
a pre-shrunken Hirst head atop bamboo ephemera.

Gangly masses of local art lovers  
smashed all rival installations.

Jeff Koons’ “Popeye,”  
Wynn Hotel.  
Toppled.



Henry Moore's "Reclining Connected Forms,"  
Aria Hotel.

Disentangled.

James Turrel's "Akhob,"  
(3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Louis Vuitton, Crystals Mall)  
White Washed.

Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Mirrored Room,"  
Bellagio Hotel.

Hammered.

Ugo Rondinone's "Seven Magic Mountains,"  
somewhere near Primm.  
Fed to Giant Goldfish.

Slim Whitman does his vocal exercises  
in a green room with a star on the door.

Yodel Lay Hee Hoo.

Yodel Lay Hee Hoo.

Yodel Lay Hee Hoo.

Each "hoo" a step on  
a reverberating scale, three octaves high.

He stares into the mirror.

Personal effects, strewn about within reach:

Mustache wax.  
A multitude of kerchiefs.  
Gonzo Natural Magic Suit Stain Remover.  
A “Lucky Rainbow” mini Troll Doll.  
Black & White photos of his beloved,  
                    Alma Geraldine “Jerry” Crist Whitman.  
Five different brands of hairspray.

Slim knows this is a big night.  
Three million locals are outside waiting to  
                    hit the dance floor.  
56 Million tourists are outside waiting to  
                    hit the dance floor.  
He reflects upon his long affair with the City.  
All the records he sold.  
                    (More than the Beatles and the Dave Clark Five,  
                                    combined).  
His on again/off again enmity with Lovelace Watkins.  
That one time he saved the Earth from a  
                    Martian Attack  
by singing “Indian Love Call.”  
  
(He quietly sobs about how he couldn’t protect  
                    the Landmark).  
  
All of the sudden,

a chimpanzee in a red vest  
and a yellow tutu  
bursts into the room,  
breaking the budding tension.

Slim considers the mirror, one last time.

“You are a whore, darlin’,” he says to himself.

IV.  
Vaya Con Dios,  
My Darling.

It is New Year’s Eve  
Day  
welcoming 1968.

I am standing outside Caesars Palace  
with my daddy.

My whole hand is wrapped around his index finger.

I am daddy’s little girl,  
but I am in love with Evel Knievel.

I ride a tricycle with red, white and blue streamers.

This is the moment I feel grown up for the first time.

This is the moment I feel for Las Vegas.

This is the moment of spectacle and spirit.

This is the moment I realize what home means.

The sun was bright.

The air was filled with the smells of liquor.

Wild Turkey, I imagine, or V.O.

The motorcycle revving so loud it's bouncing off  
the marble statues.

I want to scream full throttle, but I just squeeze  
my daddy's finger harder.

When Evel is in the air my heart stops.

Time stops.

Now, it's twenty years later.

I'm in a poker room with an older woman

with red hair named Ceil, who is a shill.

She makes \$6.50 an hour and keeps any money she wins.

(Loses any money she loses.)

We make small talk.  
The topic of people who come and go.  
The singing of Barry Manilow.

Out of the blue, Ceil says,  
    “I once did coke with that daredevil.”

I don't want to hear the story.

Everybody in Las Vegas once did something with someone.  
Everybody in Las Vegas has a plan,  
    once they shed their demons.

I drown her out.  
Fashion chip towers.  
Make magnificent structures on the felt beach.

A guy at the table is telling another guy at the table  
    about history.  
“Before the Flamingo was the ‘El Rancho.’”  
But when he says, “El Rancho,”  
he sounds like Keanu Reeves pretending to speak  
Spanish.  
Making up words.



Now, it is ten years later.  
I am working  
on reinventing  
the “Wheel of Fortune.”

The slot machine technology is astonishing.  
The data is sinister.

I have a virtual Vanna White at my fingertips.  
I’ve programmed her to send you a message,  
letter by letter.

Will you be able to decode it?



Sometimes I drive through the desert,  
past the signs for the Air Force base.

When summer starts to creep in.  
When I’m bored with this town, again.

I love the solitude to regroup.

I want to build a slot machine that pays off in  
self-esteem,  
that's my dream.

I want to pipe soundtracks from underground  
New York movies of the '70s and '80s onto the  
casino floors.

I want to open a coffee house that serves  
Raspberry Mochas. A poetry hub for cowboys,  
engineers.

Do you see the wildflowers along the side  
of the freeway?

Yellow. So much yellow.  
Purple blooms on cactus heads.  
Red spindles with fragrant jasmine.

I'm driving past the mountain tops.  
I don't know if I'm coming or going,  
but I'm driving fast.

I knew an animatronic Samuel Clemens, once.

In retrospect, it was a dumb idea,  
but who knows that in the moment? Who dares call  
any idea “dumb” in Las Vegas?

Robot Sam Clemens sat at the bar  
and told a tall tale  
about being dispatched to Las Vegas  
by the Territorial Enterprise  
to cover the installation of the

## FARO SUICIDE TABLE OF NOBLE GASSES

at the Atomic Number 10 Bar  
on Fremont Street.

Sam’s pre-recorded track, on a loop,  
started and concluded with the phrase,

This story doesn’t end well.



Today, I am a regulator.  
I walk, invisibly, through many crowds.



Middle-aged men in black, sleeveless Slayer T-shirts.  
Pregnant ladies fresh off the Greyhound Bus.  
Professional clowns looking for work.  
Podcasters building a home studio between gigs.  
The soccer complex.  
Bartenders with record deals.  
The meet-up group from the library.  
Starbucks secret shoppers.  
The hockey, adorned.  
Frankie Moreno's fan club.  
2,000 people tabling at a craft fair.  
A busload of Culinary Workers.  
Customs from McCarran International Airport.

Here, we all have the chance to put our ears  
to the ground  
and listen for the sleeping buffalo  
calling out to the weary traveler,

## COME FEEL MY PAIN

I am driving back from the Valley of Fire.  
I am bursting with fireworks.  
I am brimming with all the secrets.

I look in the rear-view mirror and sigh,

“What a way to make a living.”

The radio answers back,

“You think this is bad? My mom thinks I’m a cop in LA.”

I don’t get pulled over.

I buy an Etch-A-Sketch

at a thrift store in Boulder City.

I am home; I shake off the desert dust. The ash.

I watch the last rays of the day

retreat from my door step,

revel in the cooler air coming

through the open window,

and close my eyes for tomorrow. ♦

## ❧ Contributors ❧



**Jennifer Battisti**, a Las Vegas native, studies creative writing at Nevada State College. Her work has been anthologized in *Legs of Tumbleweed*, *Wings of Lace*, *Where We Live*, an anthology of writing and art in response to the October 1 tragedy and is forthcoming in *The Good Fight*. Her work has also appeared in *Desert Companion*, *Minerva Rising*, *The Citron Review*, *FLARE*, *Helen: A Literary Magazine*, *The Red Rock Review*, *300 Days of Summer*, and elsewhere. She is a contributing writer for *Las Vegas Woman* magazine. She is the coordinator and a participating teaching artist for the Alzheimer's Poetry Project in Clark County. In 2018, she was the recipient of the Helen Stewart Poetry Prize, and was voted best local poet or writer by the readers of *Desert Companion*. Her first chapbook, *Echo Bay* was released in 2018 (Tolsun Books).



Originally from the Bronx, **Steve Bornfeld** spent decades working for daily newspapers and magazines in New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and, since 1997, Las Vegas. As an entertainment/feature writer, editor, and columnist, his work has appeared in the *New York Post*, *Boston Herald*, *Hollywood Reporter*, and the Gannett and Hearst newswires, as well as locally in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, *Las Vegas Sun*, *Las Vegas Weekly*, *Vegas Seven*, *Las Vegas Life*, *Desert Companion*, and *Showbiz Weekly*. He has been honored with multiple state, regional, and national journalism awards from the Nevada Press Association, Best of the West journalism contest, and the Society for Features Journalism. In 2018, he was hired as managing editor/principal writer for LasVegasNewswire.com, produced by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. Bornfeld is also a published poet and author of two one-act plays staged at Las Vegas Little Theatre. As a Bronx boy at heart, his only complaint about Las Vegas is he can't take the subway to work.



**Harry R. Fagel** is a lifelong resident of Clark County, and served for twenty-five years in the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, retiring at the rank of captain. He has authored two books of poetry published by Zeitgeist Press and has been published in numerous anthologies. He received the Hildebrand grant from the University of Nevada, Reno and has been commissioned for a range of poetry projects, both private and public. His album *Word-murder*, available from Wood Shampoo Records, featured the late Tommy Marth on saxophone. He is currently writing full time, producing poetry, books, performance art, photography, and more. He loves his wife and kids more than anything.



**Dayvid Figler** is a lifelong Nevadan. He bounces like a manic racquetball ball between the worlds of law (where he's a capital defense attorney) and prose (where he's a professional essayist and storyteller). A two-time Nevada Arts Council Fellow, 2013 Las Vegas Book Festival Crystal Bookmark honoree, and 2019 Medal of Justice recipient from the Nevada State Bar, he finds quirky solace in the third rail of poetry.



**Lon M. Friend** writes about music, culture, and life. His first major recognition came during his stint as editor of the music periodical *RIP Magazine* in the late 1980s and early '90s, where he wrote about most of the major music acts of the day, including Guns N' Roses and Metallica. He told the story of those years in his 2006 memoir *Life on Planet Rock*, following up in 2011 with the rest of the story in *Sweet Demotion: How An Almost Famous Rock Journalist Lost Everything and Found Himself (Almost)*. He has also appeared frequently as a commentator for music shows on VH1 And E! Entertainment, and in rock documentaries. He has written locally for *Las Vegas Life*, *Las Vegas Weekly*, *Vegas Seven*, and *Desert Companion*, and nationally for *HITS*, *Relix*, *Metal Edge*, *In the Loop* and others.



Award-winning journalist and Nevada Newspaper Hall of Famer **A.D. Hopkins** is a native of Stuart, Virginia, and graduated from the University of Richmond. He moved to Las Vegas in 1969, and during his forty-six-year career worked for all three of Las Vegas' daily newspapers, largely as an investigative reporter and editor. He was founding editor of *Las Vegas Today*, one of the first magazines about the casino industry. He edited *Nevadan* and *Cerca*, magazines published by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. He also edited the *Cerca County Guides* series of books, including *Great Hikes*, *Road Trips*, *Mountain Biking*, and *Adventures*. He edited many books for Stephens Press, including *Base Camp Las Vegas*. Hopkins co-authored *The First 100*, a history of Las Vegas, and is an authority on early Nevada gunslingers. *The Boys Who Woke Up Early*, his debut novel, was released in 2019 by Imbrifex Books and reflects realities and people Hopkins met as a reporter in the small towns, police stations, and courthouses of Virginia in the 1960s.





**Veronica Klash** loves living in Las Vegas and writing in her living room. Her fiction work has been published in online literary magazines such as *Cheap Pop* and *Ellipsis Zine*. She is a fiction reader for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas literary magazine *Witness*. Her nonfiction can be found in *Desert Companion*. When she's not writing, Veronica indulges in her other obsessions: food, martinis, and goofy socks. Find more at [veronicaklash.com](http://veronicaklash.com).



**Oksana Marafioti** is an award-winning American writer of Armenian-Romani descent. Her memoir *American Gypsy* was published in 2012 by FSG. She has published essays and stories in *Time*, *Slate*, *The Rumpus*, *Pilgrimage*, *storySouth*, and several anthologies, including *Immigrant Voices* (Penguin Books, 2015). She is a 2013 Library of Congress Kluge Fellow and a guest lecturer at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



**Mike Prevatt** is a Los Angeleno by blood but a Las Vegan at heart. After frequent visits as a teenager and college student, he relocated to the Las Vegas Valley in 1998 and began his professional journalism career at alternative weekly *Las Vegas CityLife*, where he began covering local musicians and became the first local journalist to cover the Strip's DJ and nightlife scene. After a brief hop back to Los Angeles, he returned to Las Vegas and *CityLife* at the dawning of Downtown's Fremont East scene, where Mike immersed himself in its musical and lounge/DJ scene. He moved to *Las Vegas Weekly* in 2013, covering a greater range of topics, and then transitioned to radio producer at KNPR in 2019. Mike is still an avid concertgoer, as well as a fussy cinephile and an unabashed roller-coaster enthusiast. You can follow him on Twitter at @mikeprevatt.



**Elizabeth Quiñones-Zaldaña** earned a B.A. in English from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her poetry has been published in *From Snowcaps to Desert Flats: An Anthology of Latino Writers in Nevada*; *Legs of Tumbleweeds*, *Wings of Lace: An Anthology of Literature by Nevada Women*; *Clark: Poetry from Clark County, Nevada*; and *300 Days of Sun*. Her chapbook, *Bougainvillea*, is forthcoming in August 2019 from Tolsun Books. She lives in Southern Nevada with her husband and three children.



**Vogue Robinson** was named Clark County's second-ever poet laureate in 2017, and she currently serves as executive director of the nonprofit Poetry Promise, Inc. Robinson is a graduate of San Diego State University, where she earned her BA in English. Vogue has been working with the valley's Battle Born Slam team since 2013, and has represented Vegas at four national competitions. She is the author of *Vogue 3:16* and her work has also been published in *Clark*, *Desert Companion*, *Red Rock Review*, and *Legs of Tumbleweeds*, *Wings of Lace: An Anthology of Literature by Nevada Women*.



**Erin Ryan** has seventeen years of clips in her garage, about half wrapped up in Las Vegas. As a writer and editor for newspapers and weekly magazines, she has been recognized by the Society of Professional Journalists, Best of the West, and state press associations in Idaho and Nevada. As a freelancer, she fine-tunes a little of everything and tells stories for outlets ranging from *Travel + Leisure* and Guardian Media Group to *Las Vegas Magazine* and *Desert Companion*. Off the page, she is mom to an ancient dog and a brand-new human.



**Steve Sebelius** has covered government and politics for nearly thirty years in California and Nevada, writing for daily and weekly newspapers and television stations. He's currently the politics and government editor for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, where he writes a weekly column on Nevada politics. He's also the political analyst for 8NewsNow, the Las Vegas CBS affiliate, where he co-hosts the weekly show *PoliticsNOW*. Sebelius graduated from Biola University in La Mirada, California, in 1989. He worked for the *Huntington Beach Independent*, the *Pomona Progress-Bulletin*, the *Sacramento Union*, the *Las Vegas Sun*, the *San Bernardino Sun*, and *Las Vegas CityLife* before being hired to write political columns for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* in 1999. Sebelius also served as the editor of *CityLife* from 2005-2011.



**Amanda Skenandore** is the author of two historical novels, *The Undertaker's Assistant* and *Between Earth & Sky*, winner of the 2019 American Library Association's Reading List award for Best Historical Fiction. She lives in Las Vegas with her husband and their pet turtle, Lenore.





**Scott Dickensheets** is the deputy editor of *Desert Companion*, the magazine of Nevada Public Radio. Before that, he top-edited *Las Vegas CityLife* and the *Las Vegas Weekly*, served as managing editor of *Las Vegas Life*, and worked in a number of positions at the *Las Vegas Sun*. Dickensheets has edited, co-edited, or contributed to eight previous volumes of the Las Vegas Writes series and was an assistant editor of *Nevada: 150 Years in the Silver State*.



**Geoff Schumacher** is the senior director of content for the Mob Museum in Las Vegas, responsible for its exhibits, artifacts and public programs. He earned his bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Nevada, Reno, and his master's degree in history from Arizona State University. He had a twenty-five-year career in journalism, with stops at the *Las Vegas Sun*, *Las Vegas CityLife*, *Las Vegas Mercury*, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and *Ames (Iowa) Tribune*. He is the author of *Sun, Sin & Suburbia: A History of Modern Las Vegas* and served as editor of *Nevada: 150 Years in the Silver State*, the official book commemorating the state's sesquicentennial. He is associate editor of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* and has edited, co-edited or contributed to seven editions of the annual Las Vegas Writes anthology for Nevada Humanities.