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Who is Helena Lockridge?



Nevada Commission on Ethics
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In the heat of a Vegas summer in 1996, Helena Lockridge made her way home from work. She cruised down Eastern Avenue, turned down Flamingo and into her Paradise neighborhood. There were a couple of kids splashing around in the community pool as she passed by and made her final turn on Whippoorwill Lane. At work that day she learned some information that a County Commissioner was up to no good and she thought about it the entire drive home, getting angrier and angrier with each passing block. Now as she pulled into her driveway she was certain that her only option was to submit a complaint with the Nevada Ethics Commission.

She walked through her front gate, into her front door, and set down her purse in the entryway. At a desk in the corner of her living room her personal computer was waiting for her. One of those clunky mid-90s box monitors with the computer unit itself on the floor and a printer to the side. She poured a glass of lemonade, checked her mail, and then sat down and began to

type up her complaint. She started "I WANT TO FILE TWO ETHICS COMPLAINTS AGAINST PAUL J. CHRISTENSEN..." She typed down all the information she had that riled her up all day long. The complaint and the lemonade were finished at the same time. She proofread the document, made her final critical edits, clicked "print" and started making dinner to the familiar hum of her printer. "Tomorrow will be a day for justice" she thought.

The next morning she got ready for work, grabbed the crisp complaint off the printer tray and made her way into the office. In the already-too-hot morning air she turned out on to Flamingo, down Eastern, and finally rolling into her work parking lot. The ink dried quick on her fax cover sheet as she walked down the hallway to the fax machine. Carefully placing the complaint and cover sheet into the fax machine, the dial tone sounded and she entered the Ethics Commission's fax number; her perfect ethics complaint was on its way.

There was a big problem with Ms. Lockridge's ethics complaint. Ms. Lockridge never existed.

Helena Lockridge was the creation of a cohort of political operatives - a made-up person designed to obscure the political source of an ethics complaint against a public servant eleven days before a primary election. The elaborate ploy included one individual printing "Helena Lockridge Fan Club" signs for a UNLV Rebels basketball game and threatening to reveal the "resting place" of Ms. Lockridge. There is no resting place for a woman who never was awake.

The Ethics Commission was not fooled. Mr. Daily, Mr. Compton, Ms. Compton-Smith, and Mr. Smith all were revealed in the end. Their undoing was a set of uncanny similarities between the Lockridge letter and letters authored by the others. Same printer. Same fax header. Same document format with unusual margins. Same stylistic word choices. Same P.O. Box number. Ms. Lockridge's Frankensteins were revealed.

It was and remains against the Nevada Ethics Law to "prevent, interfere with, or attempt to prevent or interfere with any investigation or proceedings" pursuant to the Nevada Ethics Law. The law permits the Commission to impose a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000. In 1999 under the old NRS 281.252 and 281.551(2) the Commission found the four schemers had done just that and fined three of them \$5,000 each and the fourth a penalty of \$2,500.

Learn more about the Helena Lockridge story and read the entire Commission opinion here: https://nvethics.pdi.online/cm/pubdocs/Opinions/1996/Opinion_96-47.pdf