

TRAVEL

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Orpheum



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For Whom the Man Burns. . .

THE SET UP

Anyone remember my grouching over failed attempts to hit [Burning Man](#) and subsequent scratching the event from my bucket list may be no less surprised than I to appear under the sun and deep in dust of the Playa here at Burning Man this year!

Although I deemed the deed over and done, I remained fascinated by the burning phenomenon and watched the live daily webcam from the event and found cool photos on the web and sent them to friends who appreciate the artistic, creativity or just plain wackiness of it all. It appears where fandom let it's original Goshwowboyohboy languish, it not only exists, but exudes here.

Having sent out pics from the 2013 burning I received all kinds of replies, mostly "Love to go but can't take the dust / heat / crazy people, etc!" But I received an excited call from Joe Viskocil, "Yeh, yeh, we gotta go next year!" His excitement was palpable and easily reeled me back into the fire.

Joe had been several times and even assisted with the ritual burnings and various goings on!

"Perfect!" I thought. Joe and I used to be inseparable in days gone by but life sent us in different directions and we got together less than we'd like. A week together under such wacky circumstance would give us time to reconnect; catch up on the new and ruminate the old. He had already set the retirement ball in motion which is cause for celebration anyway!

THE BACK STORY

In 1960 I stepped through the doors of the fabled Ackermansion and was sent into the whirl of fandom and transformed into a lifelong fanboy. With the generous help of [Forry Ackerman](#) I instigated my first convention in 1963 with a gang of kids; none of whom had ever attended a real convention. "The First Long Beach Science Fantasy Convention" was fearless and unapologetic occurring in the party room behind a fellow's house with our collections of movie posters, monster magazines, pulps and movies on a sheet hung in the garage.

Forry, bless his heart, used his own mailing list and shelled out for postcards going to who knows how many area fans for which 30 pimply-faced teenagers heeded the call and found themselves gazing at our splendid collections of books and movie posters!

< Westercon XVIII 1965

Top Row:

Tim Rusk, Jerry Fiore

Bottom Row:

Joe Viskocil, me,

Dr. Donald A. Reed,

Mark Shepard, Eric

Hoffman & Donald Glut.





Joe Cutting Up



Rod Serling and Joe



1968 WorldCon. Paula Christ on left, Joe on Right

It must have been an odd sight for this quiet neighborhood to have a parade of cars deserting their children at a house inhabited by complete strangers but these were days before such things seemed irresponsible if not criminal.

If anything in particular came from this event it was meeting Joe Viskocil, a youngster fashioned from the same doughy scrapple as myself; heavy on enthusiasm, sparse on wisdom we hit it off and spent the next few decades inseparable.

In 1964 we hosted *another* Long Beach Convention, but 1965 delivered the big time when Westercon XVIII came to Long Beach and fired up the crucible by which we were molded into whatever the hell we were to become.

By and by it was time to leave the nest and take Hollywood by storm. I threw a hot plate and 6 cans of Butterbeans into [Tom Scherman](#)'s van, kissed [Long Beach](#) goodbye and took refuge in a Hollywood home once owned by [Tom Mix](#) and now by a crazed gypsy woman. Getting by doing T-shirt designs didn't quite smack of "Hollywood", but I could see the Hollywood sign just by looking up so I must be getting closer. I become manager of a [movie theater](#) right on Hollywood Boulevard - Hah! Getting closer to stardom every day! The benefit of being manager was making a rule that any monsterkid declaring himself such at the box office got in free!

Don Reed's Count Dracula Society was the hub of wannabe genre action and Joe and I hobnobbed with some of our favorite horror celebs from [Lon Chaney Jr.](#), to [Christopher Lee](#), [Ray Bradbury](#) to [Robert Bloch](#). Something occurred every month that made us glad to be fans.

As dust settled from the 1968 [WorldCon](#) Joe and I were off to the UK for a gullet bending month of bangers and mash! We were in search of tons of British and French movie posters for resale at US cons and any wild oats in need of sowing. In the States the stuff was an immediate gold mine and our huckster tables packed the damn aisles; so much so,

Joe and I on roof of Claremont Hotel, Worldcon, 1968





Joe & I on Bob's "War of the Worlds" set with Mike Minor & Al Jermanis



Joe and I bending nails

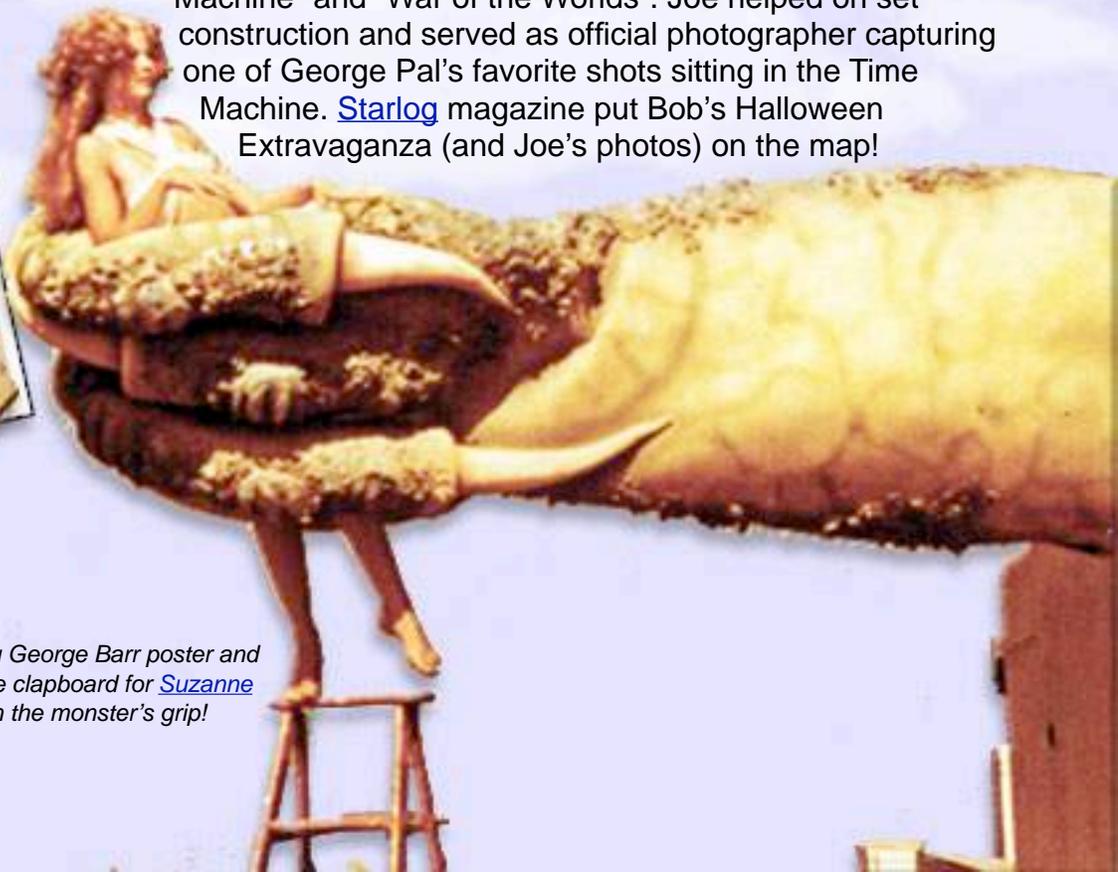


Bruce Pelz once threatened to throw us both from a dealers room for “. . .taking money away from the other dealers!” I responded: “Can we help it if we’re selling something people want!”

The '70s were SoCal's hotbed of fannish activity; [The San Diego Comic-Con](#), [WesterCon](#), [Equicon](#), [Witchcraft and Sorcery Conventions](#), even a wrestling convention or two. Fan events were coming of age and you'd get the flakey-shakes any weekend you couldn't find some fannish clambake to blow your youth and hard earned cash!

Sometimes fans have to make your *own* fun and just over the hill, [Bob and Kathy Burns](#) were expanding their front yard Halloween Show from a clever fright to a mind boggling effects heavy extravaganza that would make Michael Bay plotz!

Otherwise known to the cognoscenti as “[The Mad Mummy](#)” or “[Kogar the Gorilla](#)” Bob had published “[Fantastic Monsters of the Films](#)” with pals [Ron Haydock](#) and [Paul Blaisdell](#) back in the early 60s. But now he assembled an impressive bunch of monsterkids to make his Halloween dreams come true; [Tom Scherman](#), [Dennis Muren](#), [Mike Minor](#), Al Jermanis, [Bill Malone](#), [Rick Baker](#) and many others. Joe and I worked on four of the shows: “Forbidden Planet”, “Exorcist”, “The Time Machine” and “War of the Worlds”. Joe helped on set construction and served as official photographer capturing one of George Pal's favorite shots sitting in the Time Machine. [Starlog](#) magazine put Bob's Halloween Extravaganza (and Joe's photos) on the map!



The stunning George Barr poster and Joe does the clapboard for [Suzanne Fields](#) in the monster's grip!

In 1974, a low-budget, soft-core porn film would help change motion pictures forever. The production team of "[Flesh Gordon](#)" consisted *mostly* of those with little or no experience but combined their talents to redefine special effects and motion pictures! Get this lineup: [Ralph Ferraro](#) was orchestrator for "[Beneath the Planet of the Apes](#)" and went on to "[Star Trek IV](#)", "[Masters of the Universe](#)", "[RoboCop 2](#)" and "[Dragonheart](#)". Art Direction by [Donald Lee Harris](#) kept him working in the biz through today's "[Grey's Anatomy](#)". Fan favorite [Bjo Trimble](#) and Star Trek tub thumper was makeup designer while "[Trumpet](#)" editor [Tom Reamy](#) scored in the Art Department along with [George Barr](#) who did the groovy poster; [Joseph Musso](#), long time production artist for [Irwin Allen](#) built an impressive career from production art. [John Brasher](#) on Sound and [Mike Minor](#) who gave both Star Trek shows and movies a brand new look.

[Robert L. Harman](#) would one day have over two hundred films to his credit and a few had Oscars in their future! [Rick Baker](#), [Tom Scherman](#), [Dave Allen](#), [Doug Beswick](#), [Corny Cole](#), [Jim Danforth](#), [Gregory Jein](#), [Dennis Muren](#) and then there was Joe who had never worked on a film before. He helped with set and miniature building; even played a part or two but what is more important Joe paid close attention to everything around him.

The day came to destroy the castle of "Wang the Perverted" played by [William Dennis Hunt](#)! Proving there are indeed serendipitous goings on and miracles *do* happen, the pyro guy didn't show up and Joe blurts "I'll do it!" Joe had learned well, set the charges and destroyed the model in one take. "Flesh Gordon" was a wrap!

When Dr. Donald A. Reed and I set up "[The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films](#)" in 1972, I asked Joe to get us a screening of the film and he pulled it off. On retrospect "Flesh Gordon" may not have been suitable for this crowd, but hey "That's showbiz."

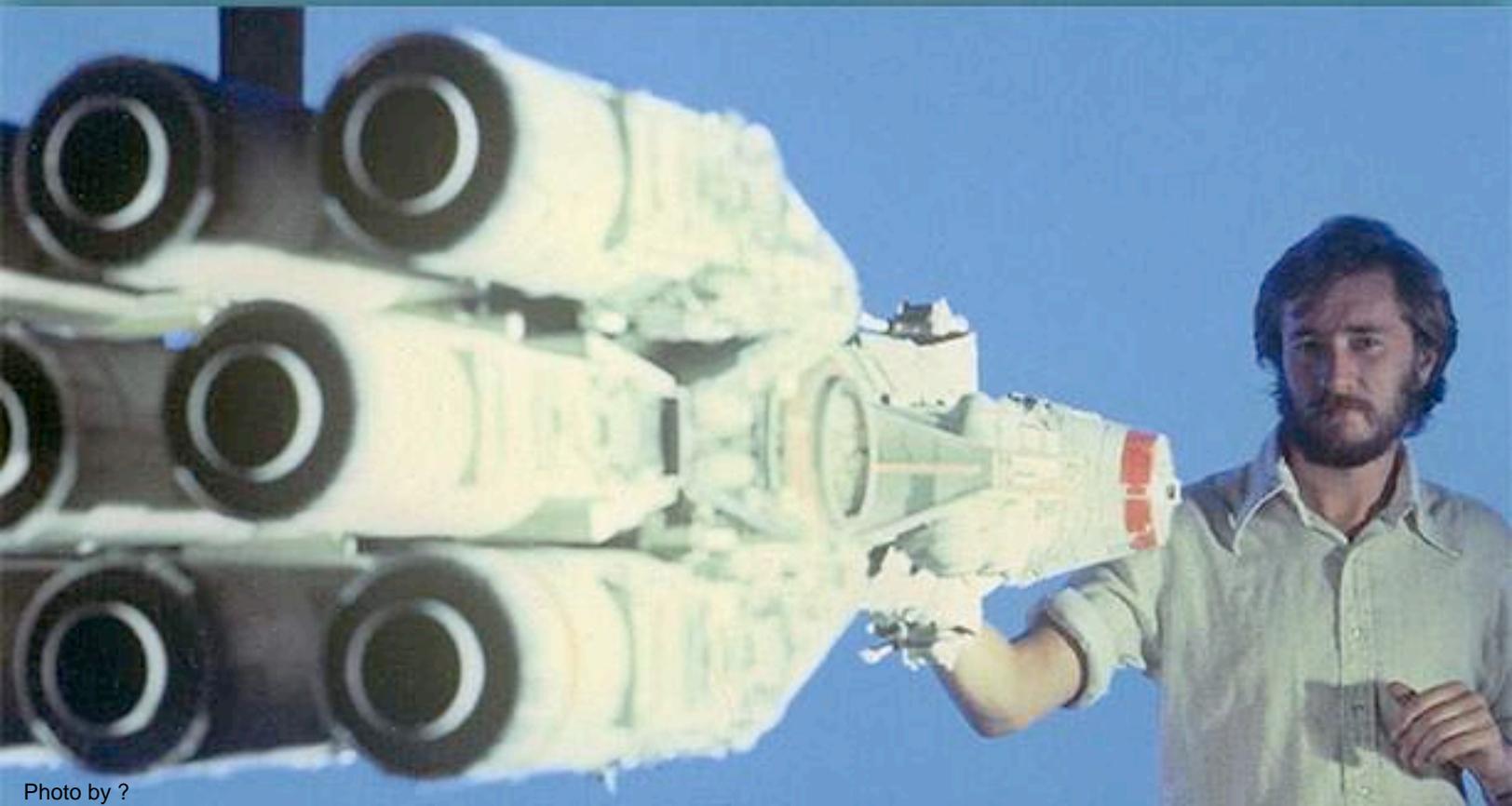


Photo by ?



Photo by Amélie Frank

Getting chummy with zombies on set of "Return of the Living Dead"

Joe says "Action", Plane Goes "Boom"

Joe Inspects Wreckage

It was a grand night with "[Danny Elfman's](#) new band "[Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo](#)" playing in the street outside the theater! The entire cast was there and even [Buster Crabbe](#) made a cautious appearance!

1975 we were back in Europe. One of Joe's unforgettable lines from our London hotel room was "WE GOT RATS!" discovering mice had burrowed through his suitcase and eaten his candy stash! Joe claimed he'd set us up with a great hotel in Paris, but it was a holiday of some-such; every hotel and alleyway was packed and thus we spent several night sleeping on park benches!

Meanwhile, back in the States, [George Lucas](#) had seen "Flesh Gordon" and was so impressed with that explosion he hired Joe and much of the Flesh crew for a little project called "[Star Wars](#)". Joe went from blowing up a castle on the planet Porno to being "That guy who blew up the Death Star" in one leap! Pretty damn cool.

From here on, Joe was at a gallop from one location to another and we rarely got together. He nabbed some big budget films and didn't pass up the smaller flicks like [Dan O'Bannon's](#): "[Return of the Living Dead](#)" where he created the nuclear explosion at the end of the film.

Didn't see much of Joe, but it wasn't long before he met the wonderful Susan and took the plunge. Even practicing [Peter Pans](#) like ourselves have to get real sometime. The wedding ala "[Gone with the Wind](#)" was held at Universal Studios; everyone came in period drag as they were hitched in antebellum splendor surrounded by their friends. Tom Scherman took me aside and whispered rather flippantly "Hey Big Al, I got cancer!"; ah crap, that's the last time I saw Tom.

Not long after, another tragedy struck with the lingering death of [Mike Minor](#) from complications of AIDS. Mike was an immensely productive fellow with limitless creativity always there to help with

Joe danced with the demons, marched down the aisle and gave everyone a peek at Heaven!





anyone's project. He worked on all the Bob Burn's Halloween Extravaganzas and won two Emmy nominations for "[Winds of War](#)". He and Joe were great friends and Joe spent an immense amount of bedside time helping how he could until Mike slipped away.

In all those years, I only worked on one film with Joe and for just a brief moment at best. We showed up at a small back lot where a skeletal structure of a model airplane about four feet long waited to die. If you hadn't been told it was an airplane you might have missed it, but regardless it was Joe's job to blow it to pieces! It seemed simple enough: a condom full of gasoline, a handful of vermiculite and two wires attached to a battery.

I asked "What's the name of this movie?"

"All I know is a plane blew up." He replied; just another job. Have fire will travel.

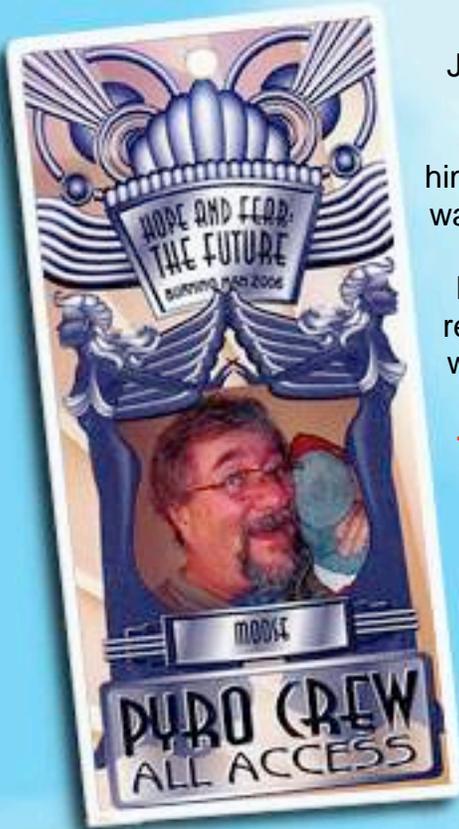
And so it went: [Terminators](#), [Aliens](#), [Ghostbusters](#), [Lies](#), [Finks](#), [Flames](#) and [Independence Day](#) which scored him an Oscar, a Saturn Award and BAFTA wink in 1996! Topps even had him do a signed chase card for the [Star Wars 30th Anniversary card set](#)!

By now, I had twenty years of graphic art in Hollywood for any number of fly-by-night shysters. The last few years were doing advertising for [Landmark Theaters](#) and I had grown tired of it. I slung a Mac Plus over my shoulder, headed to Vegas and began doing graphics for a few of the casinos.

In the meantime, Joe was living large. Oddly, he too would wind up in Vegas *on occasion*. He had become a high roller at the casinos - who knew? He got room comps from one hotel or another and when in town would treat DeDee and I to a dinner or show.



All Pics © by whomever took em



Joe had made himself an undisputedly impressive page on [IMDB](#).

Oops! He had a close call on a shoot where an ill-timed explosion put him in the hospital and left him with a scarred left arm. That came as a warning call it might be time to hang up his electrodes.

He had confessed to being dreadfully tired of the late night shoots on remote mountaintops in cold weather and had had enough. Perhaps it was indeed time to pack it in. That in itself was cause for celebration.

< *Joe's crew pass for a past Burning Man. Check his Playa name "Moose".*

He was ready to hit Burning Man, needed to get away and we traded emails almost daily with the latest plans and wacky ideas. As a newbie, it was a good idea for me to attend with someone who had been there and knew the ropes.

HERE'S WHERE IT GETS SAD

It was a "Go!" After chasing down every RV rental who would allow their vehicles to hit Burning Man. It would be a costly venture, but between the two of us, manageable. We Christened our ride "The Burning Virgin". Months passed in anticipation.

Two weeks before Burning Man. . . I received an email from Susan; Joe was in the hospital with complete liver and kidney failure and wouldn't make it through the night! By morning he had passed. August 11, 2014, at the age of 61.

I was dumbstruck on every conceivable level. He was far too young, far too busy, too full of potential and hadn't even gotten to retire. After 50 years of friendship, he was very much "My brother from another mother" and there was still so much to do. We had plans for some fun projects that will never see the light. What a shame and I am still incredulous just thinking about him not being around. So let this be one big-ass lesson for everyone to get it said, get it fixed, get it done; you never know when a big part of your world will shift without the slightest warning.

HERE'S WHERE IT GETS SILLY

Tragedies aside for the sake of this narrative; it dawned on me I was now past the deadline for getting a refund on the RV and hell, I'd already bought the none-to-cheap ticket, clothes, food for a week and even a bike! I was in too deep to cancel unscathed. Oh, there were plenty of people wanting to share the RV, no doubt about that, but not a one willing to share the expense (*cheap bastards!*). I had ads on the Burning Man Classifieds, Facebook pages and elsewhere. No practical nibbles. Looked like I'll be squeezing blood from plastic.

HERE'S WHERE IT GETS RIDICULOUS

I was scrambling for ways to unload the entire project, or find anyone to share the burden; there were none to be had. Thought of selling something - nah, ain't got nuthin', bummer.



I found a notice on File 770 a fan gal was running an [Indiegogo](#) campaign to raise funds for what she called a "[Convention Odyssey](#)". Fans (as a whole) are not a particularly generous lot, especially if you have a self-serving campaign with virtually no perks.

In this case, Indiegogo is like selling [Girl Scout Cookies](#). Once you sell to your family, you go out of business. Petr ea Mitchell asked for a mind-numbing \$191,000 to hit cons for a year but had no cookies. In the end, she scored a paltry \$140 bucks, but was unable to keep a cent. Not that the idea was completely without merit, but little grasp on fannish reality.

True, you need a quality product, but most importantly, you need a quality perk to inveigle the unwary fly who may not give a damn about your actual campaign but will shell out for some enticing goods. Neither Petr ea nor I had either but what the hell, I had nothing to lose and expected a lot less.

I cranked out a trio of 16x20" Burning Man posters and thought up some cheap and tangible promo pieces to go for less than \$20. I asked for a piddling two grand just in case some Daddy Warbucks catches wind of this, but if I scored \$300 that would cover two tanks of gas and I would be happy as a clam. Who knows, maybe Glycer would plug me too!

Hmmmm, if I did a video making fun of myself, maybe everyone would know I was in on the joke that anyone should give me money for *anything*, particularly to go play for a week! Petr ea was better delivering her lines than I could ever do, so DeDee took a bunch of pics I arranged as a wacky slideshow and narrated over it! Who knows, if somebody busts a gut, I'll be in the bucks! The video is [HERE](#).

HERE'S WHERE IT GETS STUPID

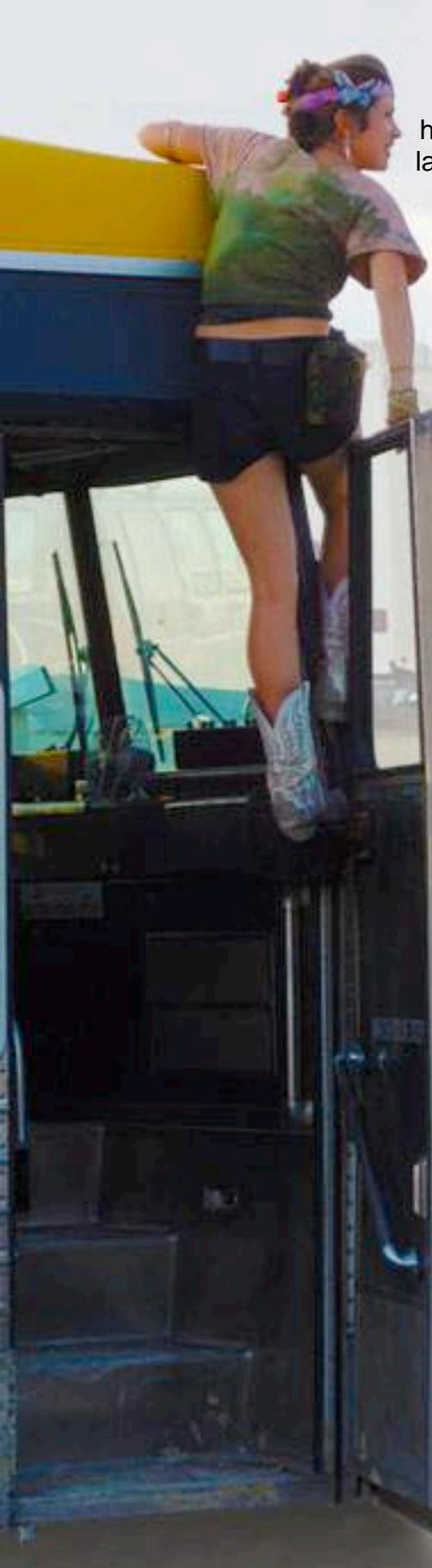
The video goes up, the emails go out. Just maybe *somebody* I'd been feeding art to for the last forty years would slip me a fiver; I could only dream. A few days later, obliging friends had my tally up to \$452 and was feeling pretty swell about it. No, nothing from the fans as expected.

Then something happened I *wasn't* expecting. I received an email from the Burning Man legal department! The initial letter was cordial enough, even pleasant, but it was that cut and paste job at the bottom stating, oh, how did they put it? "Use of Burning Man's intellectual property to purchase tickets and pay for expenses to attend Burning Man is something we simply do not permit of anyone."

And continued with something to the effect: Should I not have the offending page removed in twenty-four hours they'd start legal proceedings.

Crap, just what I needed; some rat bastard from the Burning Classifieds squealed about my posters. I was in no condition to argue with anyone holding all the cards so I shit-canned the Indiegogo page at \$452 which had thankfully already been deposited to my account.





Another hundred bucks came in later in cash so I was bucks up and had nothing to complain about; I *guess*. If Joe had been there, he'd be laughing his ass off.

HERE'S WHERE IT GETS REAL

It was a week to blast-off and any chance of finding a partner was dwindling quickly. DeDee had absolutely no desire to wallow in the dust! I found a young jolly couple flying in from New York and needed a one-way lift to the Man. In exchange they would fill up the tanks and help with driving. At that point I couldn't turn it down and we became a trio heading five hundred miles north behind the wheel of The Burning Virgin! At this point I must confess the whole idea felt more like an obligation than a pleasure cruise. An obligation to everyone who chipped in and certainly an obligation to Joe who should have been there from the get-go.

ON THE ROAD

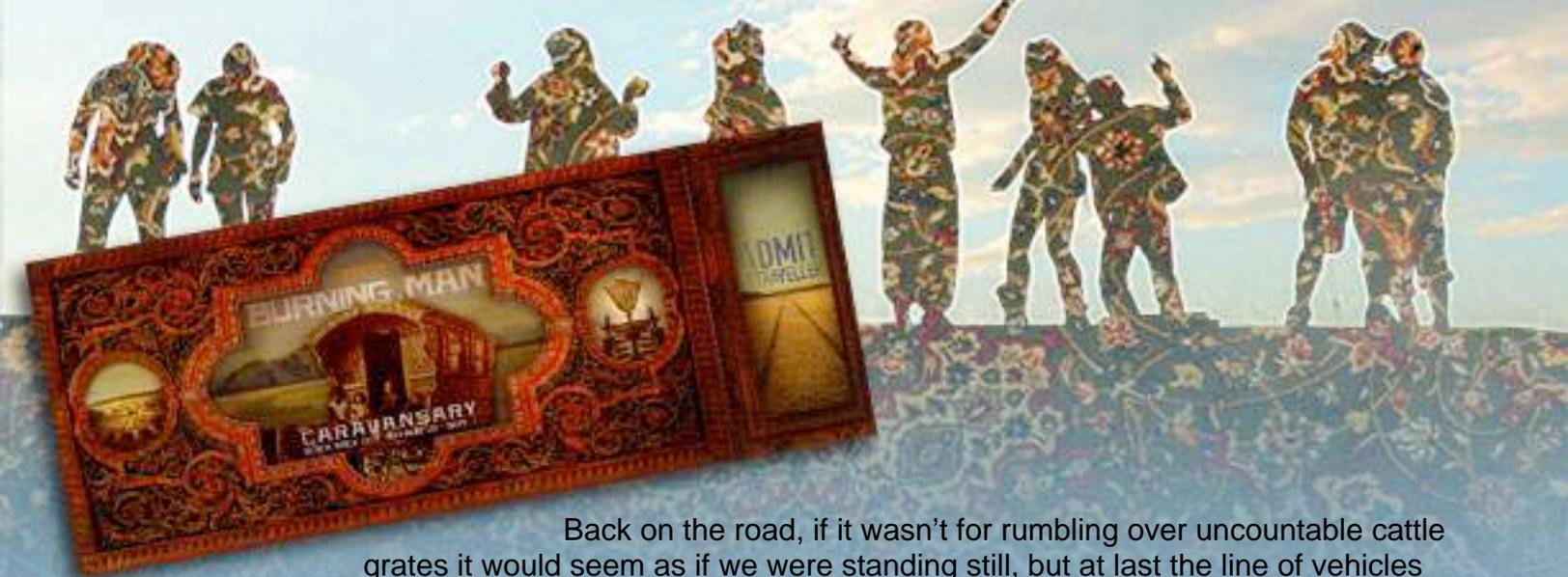
At 6:00 am, Sunday, August 25 we were in the wind. Never having driven a 25 foot RV I had all manner of horrors taking out a mailbox or light post making a right turn or wiping out a gas station awning but it was a thankfully uneventful trip.

Through [Tonopah](#), [Wadsworth](#), [Nixon](#), [Schurz](#), past [Little Jenny Creek](#), and [Empire](#). Barely existing spots on the road whose sole purpose is to extort money from unwary travelers caught exceeding the speed limit. Of this we had been warned and continued cautiously. I remembered my mother's words of wisdom when handing me keys to my first car "Never set yourself up and if you get stopped, it's Yes Sir, No Sir." Words to live by that have never failed me.

My New York companions, Andy and Juliette were half my age and full of enthusiasm. He was a young filmmaker hoping to capture some great footage and she . . . well, she: elegant, free and toled an old Polaroid Land Camera. The kind where you take a picture and it ejects from the bottom of the camera. She must have had a dozen boxes of film for the thing but alas, the film was decades old and the best results it produced were several shades of gray not resembling anything in the known universe, but the self expression of every shot pleased her to no end and I wondered how long all that film will last.

It was just getting dark as we hit the Burner friendly Walmart in [Fernley](#). A good place to refresh, fill the tank and load up on last minute supplies. My companions picked up several bags of goodies and a pair of bikes! The Man was only 80 miles away up the serpentine [447](#) past the ever dwindling [Pyramid Lake](#) and beyond. It was on this road we found ourselves in a northbound line of tail lights; but for which the road was black as pitch. The headlights seem to cast not the slightest hint of light and the terrain and sky were indistinguishable from one another.

Around 9pm we stopped in [Gerlach](#), the jumping off place for Burning Man and home of the awesome [Fly Geysers](#). Roadside booths promised your last chance to load up on [EL wire](#), [LED lights](#), flashy things and other gimcracks you'd have little use for anywhere else on earth!



Back on the road, if it wasn't for rumbling over uncountable cattle grates it would seem as if we were standing still, but at last the line of vehicles now bumper to bumper snaked off the highway onto "Gate Road" 8 miles of crags and rocks. Hardly a yellow brick road but guaranteed to terminate at THE MAN!

STUCK

In the distance the sky came alive with lightning and thunder was followed by rain, *lots* of rain then a blanket of hail machine-gunned against the body of the RV. [Burning Man Radio](#) announced everything had come to a halt. The wet road doesn't cotton to travelers and umpteen thousand were stranded where we stood. Those who didn't make it onto "Gate Road" were forced to deal with it and find elsewhere off road to [spend the night](#). The three of us and thousands of others remained in the mud till morning. A very overcast, chilly and wet morning indeed. Entrance to Burning Man would be permitted only after the road had dried! And when *that* should occur was anybody's guess.

At the first hint of daylight, my travelers were eager to explore the muddy terrain, while I was content to remain inside, as I knew I'd have to clean this RV stem to stern before I returned it to the dealer and didn't relish any tracked-in mud. Hundreds of others spilled onto the roadway who spent the night in crampier quarters than we and needed to stretch just about everything that *could* be stretched.

As the sun peeked through the clouds, it gave promise to continuing our road trip! There were those who felt at home where they stood and began their partying early and on the spot. Some sorry folk were forced to seek the Porta-Potties initially placed for a quickly moving crowd, not 20,000 waylaid Burners. I will die with image of this circumstance in my brain. It was here I was struck with the epiphany: "An RV at *Any Price*."

Meanwhile, bands had taken roost on RV roofs and crazed sycophants danced and gyrated in the mud! Others built mud sculptures while wimpy sorts such as myself stepped gingerly among the mud puddles. It was beginning to warm and the soil slowly returned to its hard-packed state. All ears were glued to the radio for news of entrance! Twenty-Three hours had past when we got the go-ahead!

The RV lurched forward. We passed through the inspection gate where they tear our tickets and search for freeloaders, then reached the greeters who hand out the event books, maps and printed thingies. I bought a case of beer specifically for these folk as I hear they get dry on the range.

Soon we arrived at what we determined to be legit streets. Torches and camp lights cast *some* glow on the road. Suddenly, right in front of us in the glare of the headlights; a half dozen what appeared to be kids on bikes, each wearing a werewolf mask. Zoom they flew past, bells ringing as if to say "You're not in Kansas anymore, buddy." And truly we weren't.



IT ONLY YURTS WHEN I LAUGH. . .

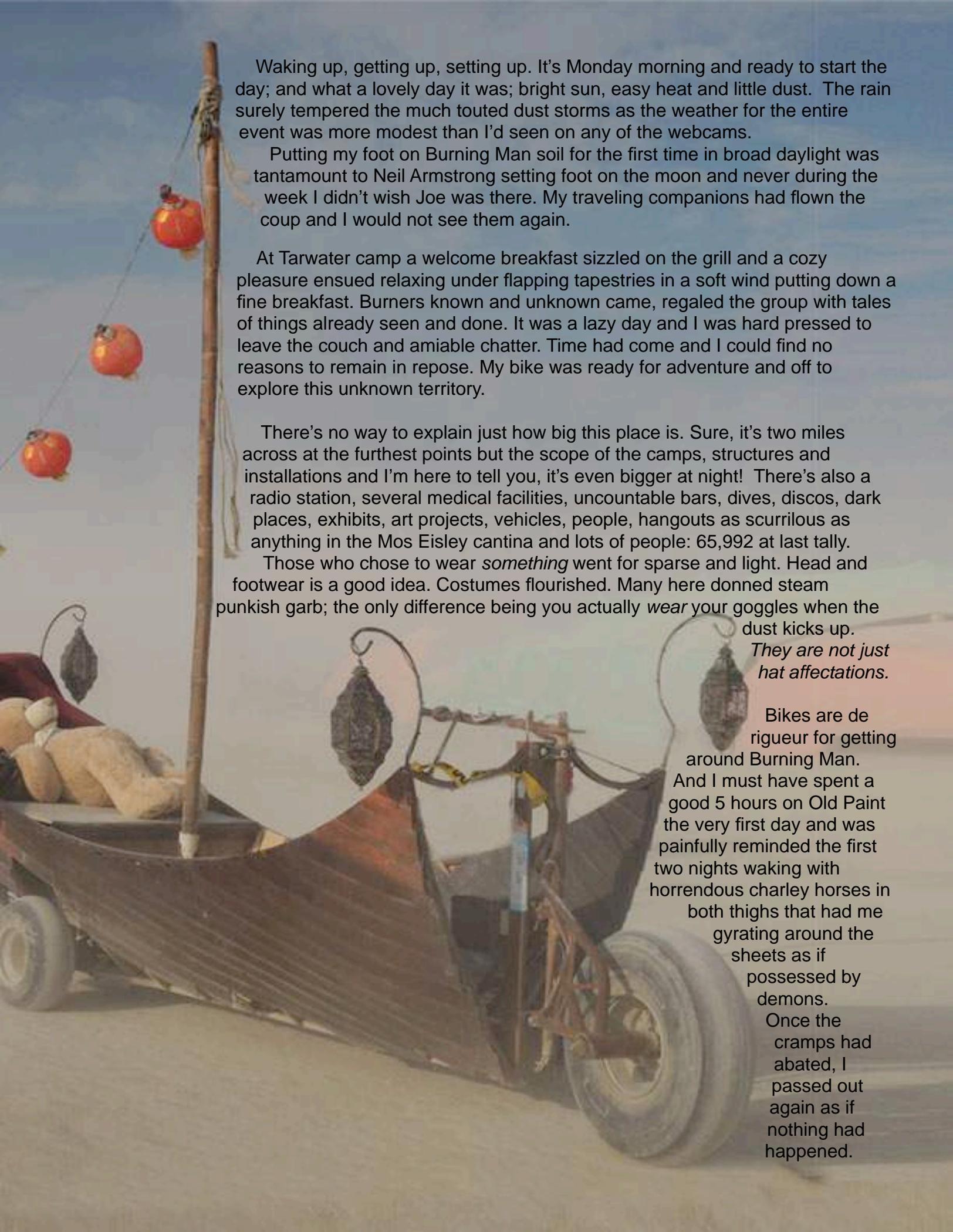
I was fortunate to be introduced to some longtime Burners collectively known as "[Tarwater](#)", a band of hearty archeologists (really) and scalawags who call the Playa home. And get this, the head Tarwetter has written several genre bits and a fantasy novel "[Bad Gods](#)".

After I'd located the camp near the jolly intersection of 6:00 and Gold and with RV secured, a half dozen in-house Tarwaterians and I spent an hour chatting it up and passing 'round a bottle of tequila which always seems to put things in perspective.

While *some* of us were stranded on the old rugged road, a few early birds had already tamed their territory and sported all the comforts of home with a pair of couches, chairs, rugs, tables, and a makeshift kitchen that could have easily been approved by Martha Stewart. It wasn't long though before another band of indeterminate number arrived and commenced assembling their yurt from a pile of foam panels into a comfy bungalow that went together like a [Jacob's Ladder](#) in just a few minutes; complete with generated power, air conditioner and plenty of comfy pillows. The finished domicile ooked like the clubhouse I always wanted as a kid.

Afterwards, everyone chose to wander off into the night in search of adventure. I was still beat from the drive and chose to stay at the RV this first night getting the interior in order and waiting for daylight to explore the city.



A custom-built wooden cart on wheels, likely used for transport at Burning Man. It features a tall wooden mast with a string of three orange lanterns hanging from it. The cart is made of dark wood and has two large, light-colored wheels. A stuffed animal is visible inside the cart. The background is a clear, bright sky.

Waking up, getting up, setting up. It's Monday morning and ready to start the day; and what a lovely day it was; bright sun, easy heat and little dust. The rain surely tempered the much touted dust storms as the weather for the entire event was more modest than I'd seen on any of the webcams.

Putting my foot on Burning Man soil for the first time in broad daylight was tantamount to Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon and never during the week I didn't wish Joe was there. My traveling companions had flown the coup and I would not see them again.

At Tarwater camp a welcome breakfast sizzled on the grill and a cozy pleasure ensued relaxing under flapping tapestries in a soft wind putting down a fine breakfast. Burners known and unknown came, regaled the group with tales of things already seen and done. It was a lazy day and I was hard pressed to leave the couch and amiable chatter. Time had come and I could find no reasons to remain in repose. My bike was ready for adventure and off to explore this unknown territory.

There's no way to explain just how big this place is. Sure, it's two miles across at the furthest points but the scope of the camps, structures and installations and I'm here to tell you, it's even bigger at night! There's also a radio station, several medical facilities, uncountable bars, dives, discos, dark places, exhibits, art projects, vehicles, people, hangouts as scurrilous as anything in the Mos Eisley cantina and lots of people: 65,992 at last tally.

Those who chose to wear *something* went for sparse and light. Head and footwear is a good idea. Costumes flourished. Many here donned steam punkish garb; the only difference being you actually wear your goggles when the dust kicks up.

They are not just hat affectations.

Bikes are de rigeur for getting around Burning Man. And I must have spent a good 5 hours on Old Paint the very first day and was painfully reminded the first two nights waking with horrendous charley horses in both thighs that had me gyrating around the sheets as if possessed by demons.

Once the cramps had abated, I passed out again as if nothing had happened.

I had accoutered my wheels with a flag to aid in locating the thing in the sea of bikes and bizarre contrivances that pile up outside watering holes and attractions. I must also report that although the altitude of Burning Man is a mere two thousand feet above Vegas approaching four thousand feet I noticed a marked change in performance and increased lethargy from the change in oxygen supply. Hell, I never realized I was sucking up so much air. Over the entire week I had eaten very little and most of my enthusiasm was relegated to just sitting and staring at stuff. Even kicking back at the camp, there is a steady stream of sights passing by, riding by, driving or careening past that promised even immobility can be entertaining.

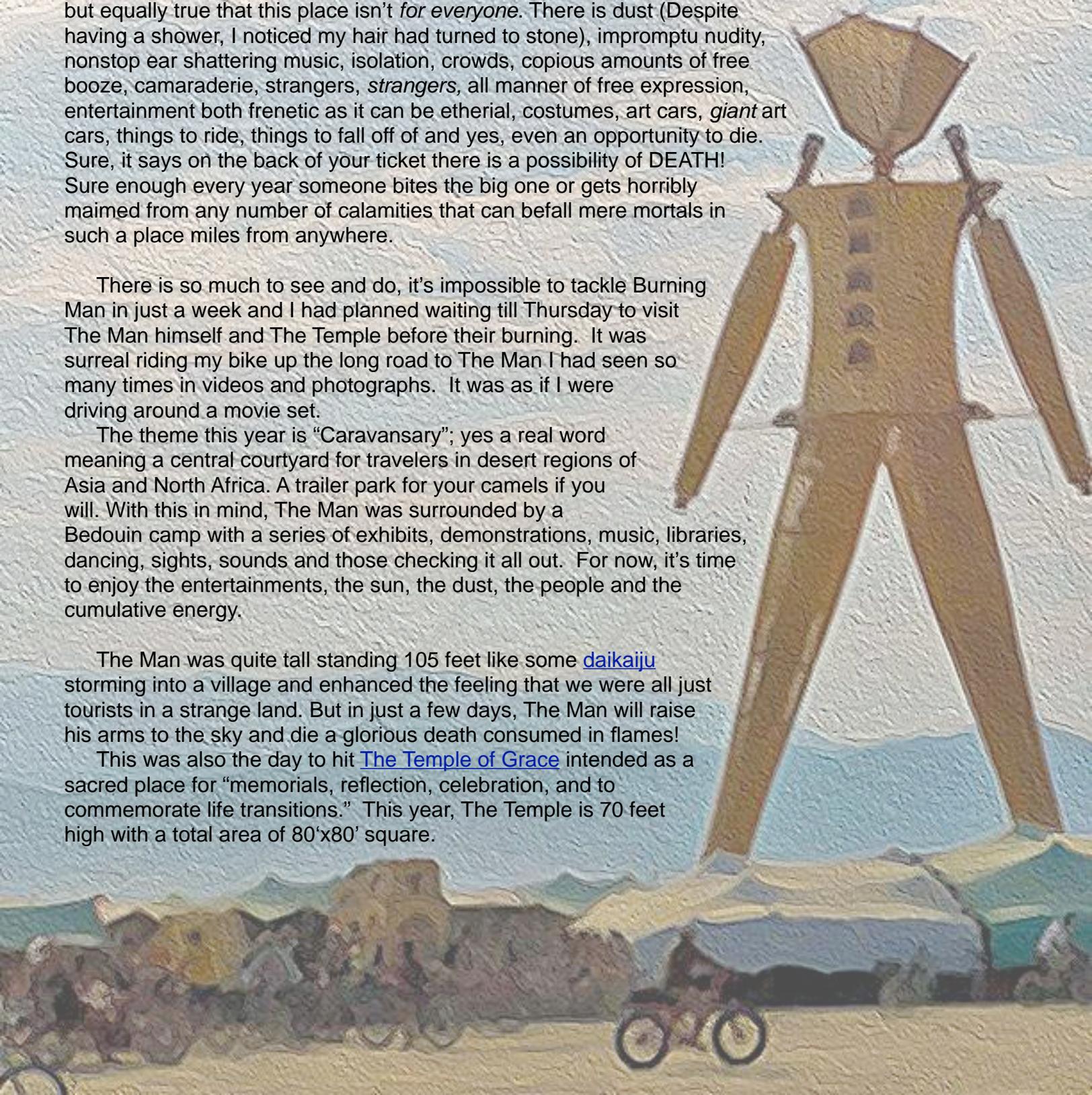
Burning Man is a social oxymoron. It could be truthfully said there is something here for *everyone*, but equally true that this place isn't *for everyone*. There is dust (Despite having a shower, I noticed my hair had turned to stone), impromptu nudity, nonstop ear shattering music, isolation, crowds, copious amounts of free booze, camaraderie, strangers, *strangers*, all manner of free expression, entertainment both frenetic as it can be ethereal, costumes, art cars, *giant* art cars, things to ride, things to fall off of and yes, even an opportunity to die. Sure, it says on the back of your ticket there is a possibility of DEATH! Sure enough every year someone bites the big one or gets horribly maimed from any number of calamities that can befall mere mortals in such a place miles from anywhere.

There is so much to see and do, it's impossible to tackle Burning Man in just a week and I had planned waiting till Thursday to visit The Man himself and The Temple before their burning. It was surreal riding my bike up the long road to The Man I had seen so many times in videos and photographs. It was as if I were driving around a movie set.

The theme this year is "Caravansary"; yes a real word meaning a central courtyard for travelers in desert regions of Asia and North Africa. A trailer park for your camels if you will. With this in mind, The Man was surrounded by a Bedouin camp with a series of exhibits, demonstrations, music, libraries, dancing, sights, sounds and those checking it all out. For now, it's time to enjoy the entertainments, the sun, the dust, the people and the cumulative energy.

The Man was quite tall standing 105 feet like some [daikaiju](#) storming into a village and enhanced the feeling that we were all just tourists in a strange land. But in just a few days, The Man will raise his arms to the sky and die a glorious death consumed in flames!

This was also the day to hit [The Temple of Grace](#) intended as a sacred place for "memorials, reflection, celebration, and to commemorate life transitions." This year, The Temple is 70 feet high with a total area of 80'x80' square.



The structure featured a dome within a graceful curved body of intricately cut wooden panels on both exterior and interior. There were eight altars surrounding the temple spaced along the low-walled courtyard. For all the work building this sacred place like The Man it too will burn to the ground in just a few days. Before that happens however, I had made a tribute for Joe to hang among the hundreds if not thousands of memorials to be found within. It was impaled to the outside of The Temple near the doorway to greet all those who entered this place where resides the heartiest helping of tranquility you will find at Burning Man.

There's a heavy emphasis on spirituality here; a veritable buffet of such things. Spirituality is where you find it I suppose, or where you put it after you bring it yourself. Everyone should be blown where the winds take them and as you maneuver from place to place you hear a lot of words like "Life Journey", "Gaia", "Karma", "Namaste", "Consciousness".

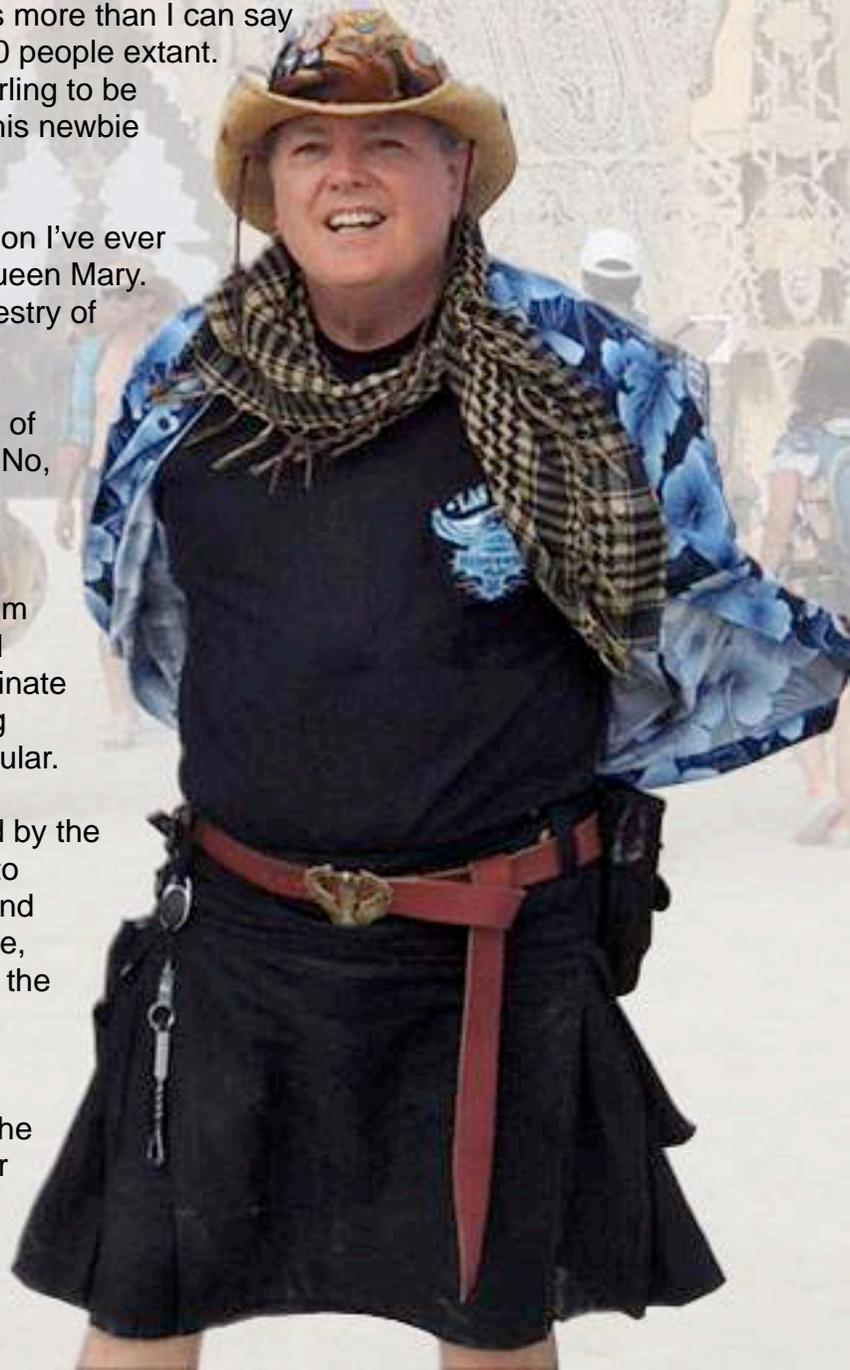
The senses reel at the variety of visual delights and sometimes, just standing alone in the middle of nowhere taking in the festive horizon can be pretty amazing. But you can't completely isolate yourself anywhere on the Playa as there is always music wafting across the desert from any number of sites unknown.

I must confess a certain surprise; I saw absolutely no public drunkenness, nor a single soul passed out anywhere, nor public puking which is more than I can say for the VSFA Halloween party that had *maybe* 50 people extant. I'm sure there was plenty of stupefaction and hurling to be found if you knew where to look, which means this newbie didn't find the venue's most riotous goings-on.

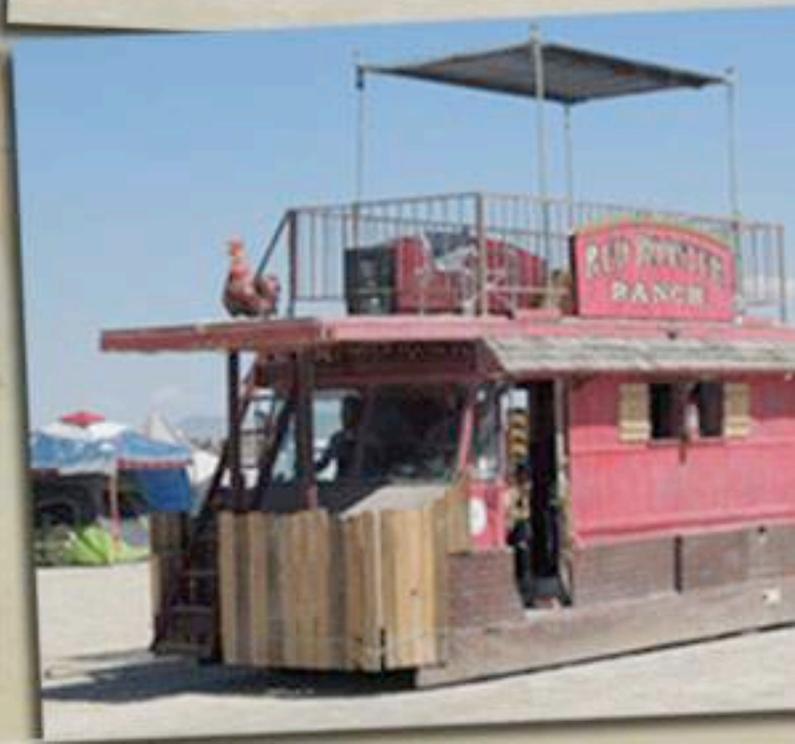
The most dynamic projectile vomiting barfathon I've ever witnessed was a New Years party aboard the Queen Mary. The lovely floors had become a psychedelic tapestry of excess. Who says history can't be colorful?

For many, kilts are the preferred manly dress of Burning Man and I bought one for the occasion. No, not one of those fussy Prince Charlie outfits, but something that'll stand up the dust, wind, falling down and looks better the dirtier it gets. Yeh, it's tryin' on some of that Connor MacLeod thing. I am now here to admit there is a definite comfort and practicality of the thing although I spent an inordinate amount of time in "Excessively Conscious Sitting Procedures" but I could see why kilts are so popular.

Rambling across the Playa, you'll be amazed by the Art Cars, loosely defined as vehicles mutated into something wholly other. Some small and cozy, and juggernauts capable of carrying dozens of people, maybe a band and sound system blaring across the desert and blasting flames as they go! At night, *everything* comes out of hiding. Peaceful camps become wild, bacchanals in a frenzy of music, dance and lights. Maybe easy in the city, but in the middle of nowhere you are required to bring your own power systems to crank up a disco as bright and hypnotic as any big city blowout!







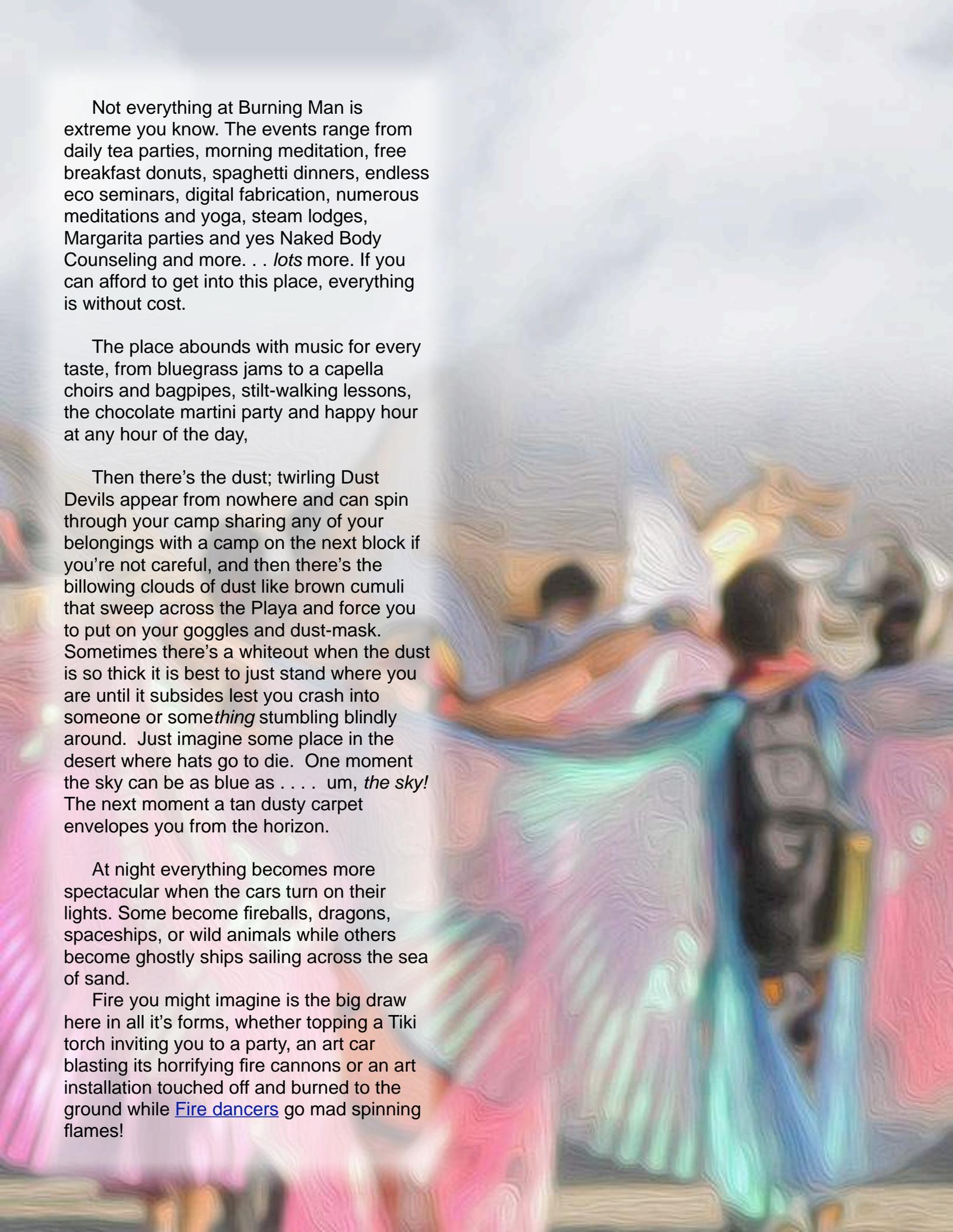
Not everything at Burning Man is extreme you know. The events range from daily tea parties, morning meditation, free breakfast donuts, spaghetti dinners, endless eco seminars, digital fabrication, numerous meditations and yoga, steam lodges, Margarita parties and yes Naked Body Counseling and more. . . *lots* more. If you can afford to get into this place, everything is without cost.

The place abounds with music for every taste, from bluegrass jams to a capella choirs and bagpipes, stilt-walking lessons, the chocolate martini party and happy hour at any hour of the day,

Then there's the dust; twirling Dust Devils appear from nowhere and can spin through your camp sharing any of your belongings with a camp on the next block if you're not careful, and then there's the billowing clouds of dust like brown cumuli that sweep across the Playa and force you to put on your goggles and dust-mask. Sometimes there's a whiteout when the dust is so thick it is best to just stand where you are until it subsides lest you crash into someone or *something* stumbling blindly around. Just imagine some place in the desert where hats go to die. One moment the sky can be as blue as um, *the sky!* The next moment a tan dusty carpet envelopes you from the horizon.

At night everything becomes more spectacular when the cars turn on their lights. Some become fireballs, dragons, spaceships, or wild animals while others become ghostly ships sailing across the sea of sand.

Fire you might imagine is the big draw here in all it's forms, whether topping a Tiki torch inviting you to a party, an art car blasting its horrifying fire cannons or an art installation touched off and burned to the ground while [Fire dancers](#) go mad spinning flames!











As if drawn by some unseen calling into the wasteland, a thousand upon thousand Burners leave their tents, their yurts and RVs to step into the night and wander purposely toward The Man.

Down the lighted roadway concluding at the great figure who in a few hours will be reduced to so much soot and ash.

Like the best Hollywood spectacle, the bells, gongs, the low thrum of chanting, a ceremonial cart carrying the sacred flame followed by hundreds of robed Keepers of the Fire, the shuffling of thousands of feet across the sand and lapping of wind-tossed flames on torches passed solemnly like specters in the night, closer and closer they come

It's called.

BRINGING FIRE TO THE MAN



The Bedouins and their badawyas had disappeared into the night and left the man vulnerable to attack.

Thousands of people arrive this Saturday night and begin to crowd around the perimeter in expectation of what was to come. As the Keepers of the Flame arrive at the base of The Man, chaos ensues as the ceremony continues. Hundreds of fire spinners - selected groups from around the globe have joined the melée and the air fills with the sound of flames whipping as they're spun about. Dancing girls gyrate to the dizzying drums like a spectacle from [Intolerance](#) and the air becomes palpable with the thunderous thrumming as flame cannons burst all around us and the excited crowd becomes as one!

Something mystical is going on and suddenly you notice The Man's arms begin to rise skyward. Higher and higher as if rejoicing his inevitable fate. Colorful lazar beams play about The Man while the spectators can't decide whether to scream and wildly wave their arms about or become hushed and solemn in wrapt antici. . . .*pat*ion!

And then. . . .





The Man explodes into flames amid a barrage of fireworks! Cheers and screams fill the air, the crowd goes wild! Thousands of people watched for a good forty minutes until The Man buckled under the fire and toppled-crumbled to the ground amid a flurry of sparks and gasps from the crowd; it is done. Slowly much the crowd disperses while others wait till morning and the last ember fades away. Perhaps some are sad as they wander back to their camps, but soon they will be reveling the night away as for many this will be their last night.

I decided to leave at midnight after the burn in hopes of avoiding the longer exodus that can take literally 8 hours to funnel thousands of vehicles from nine lanes on the Playa to one lane on the state highway. A post apocalyptic exodus of humanity! Somehow they make it work! This night, it took just an hour from Tarwater camp to 447! I was making the trip home alone - a ten hour trip and getting out of the valley in pitch blackness was the hardest part for *me* anyway.

Reaching the Fernley Walmart, I slid into the farthest slot and hit the sack. When my peepers finally peeped, there was a faint hint of dawn coming over the horizon on Sunday morning, exactly 7 days to the hour I left Las Vegas. I filled up the tank and hit the road for home.

Ten hours later, I pulled up to the house squealing the tires against the curb. I can't consider this trip done until I return the RV. But for now I'm hitting the sack and will leave the Burning Virgin for tomorrow. Alas, I'm still wired and won't sleep for two days.

Come Monday morning DeDee (bless'er heart) helped me clean out the innards of the beast as there was at least an inch of dust in, on and around *everything!* I took several floor fans, placed them in the windows pointing out and with a leaf blower, blew everything into the air and whoosh out the window it went! It took maybe three hours to get the vehicle mopped, slopped, spic and span!

Tuesday morning it was off to the dealer whose office is an international station; when I picked up the vehicle the place was packed - all heading for The Man and rang with any number of accents. There were French, German a Nordic couple and several Asian voices. Fortunately, at this moment they were all somewhere on the road heading back to Vegas and my getting out of there with little delay was a snap. DeDee picks me up and off we go home. Done and done.

REFLECTION

When you come down to it, Burning Man is Brigadoon, rising from the desert for only ten days a year then disappearing without any trace.

People claim revelations and epiphanies and it has been described as a cross between "Mad Max meets Blade Runner" and "10 Commandments" devoted to "Radical Self Expression".

I'm glad I went and though expensive I can see where the money goes. From planning the event, an army of heavy equipment to get the roads navigable and art installations up, hiring every Porta-Potty in the state (God forbid I should have to use one), but there they are nonetheless standing like a row of drunken politicians - staggering and full of shit. Not to mention an airplane landing strip for you high rollers, several hospitals, plus paying the government near two mil for using the area in the first place. They claim total expenses for putting on the event over [8 million](#) bucks which is nothing to sneeze at no matter how much dust you push around!

The big bugaboo about Burning Man being you are expected to participate in some fashion. Regrettably, as a first timer, what time I spent on my feet was being more of a tourist than participant. If I go again it will be with several hearty souls. At the very least, it's a learning experience.

Burning Man Videos: [Sights](#) / [People](#) / [More Sights](#) / [Burning Man by Drone](#) / [Pics on My Website](#)



I Want YOU to Get Burned!

I threatened to go again *only* if I could find some hearty folks with a sense of humor, taste for adventure and a wad of cash. Interested?

Go [HERE](#) and get back to me.



Joe Moves On And So Do We

First off, can the sad stuff. This is a wake for Joey and the way he wanted it. Party down at his favorite eatery with his pals gathered 'round. Joe will be in attendance in spirit only.

If you've lived in L.A. for any length of time, you've dined at the [El Coyote](#); no doubt about it. The oldest Mexican restaurant in town (and the restroom looks it). Even so, the food has always been tops. Right across the street from [Paramount Studios](#), [RKO](#) and [Raleigh Studios](#) and many a well travelled hangout. I hadn't been there since I left L.A. twenty years ago and the streets are just as crowded but seem so much narrower now, I wonder why? The traffic is *still* appalling and save the "Medicinal Marijuana" shops blossoming along our route it looked pretty much the same. This side of town is like a comfy pair of slippers. You have the Old Hollywood folks on their last gasp living in some of the fine old buildings or perhaps out in the valley and then there's the cinematic young turks who love sci-fi movies and rent control.

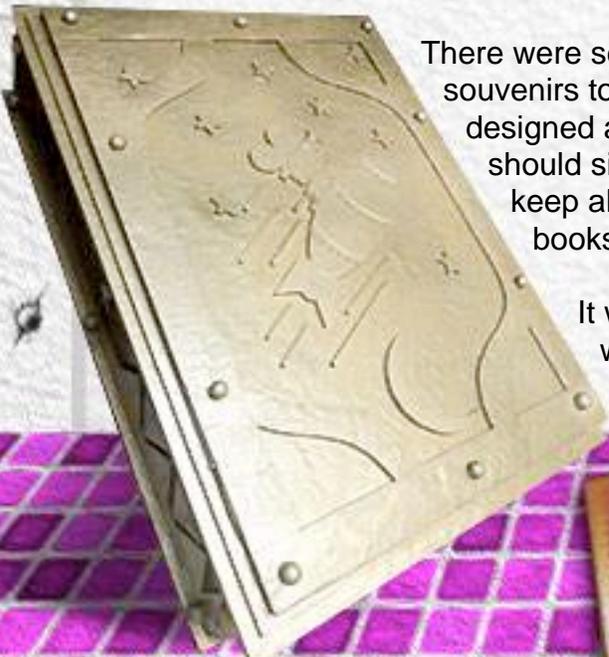
The El Coyote as been there through all of it, having been built the same year [Cimarron](#) took the Oscar for Best Picture.

Today was the celebration of the life of Joe Viskocil, pyrotechnician, art lover, party animal, innovator, monsterkid and friend. Sure enough Susan instigated a terrific sendoff and the room was filled with coconspirators, friends and fellow technicians.

There was a lovely buffet of El Coyote's finest, a slick bar and a lot of people I hadn't seen in years with decades of catching up to do. Susan began the programing beginning with a retrospective covering forty years of Joe's work followed by a parade of old chums telling tall tales and experiences with/about Joe. I was tempted to say a few words, but that kind of stuff gets me goopy.

There were several displays of old Joe pics and a few souvenirs to remember the day. Joe Musso designed a clever logo for a book everyone should sign and I made a jolly box for Susan to keep all the Joe memory stuff in; cards, books, pictures and such.

It was quite fun but over all too soon as we had to hit the road back to Vegas.

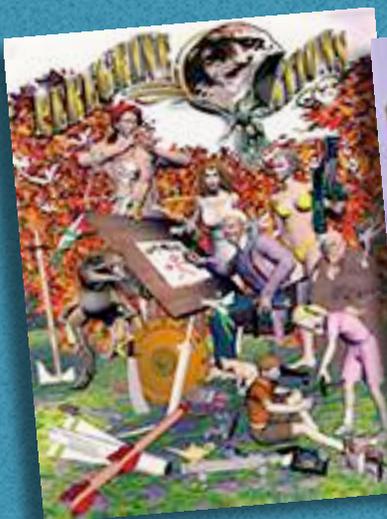
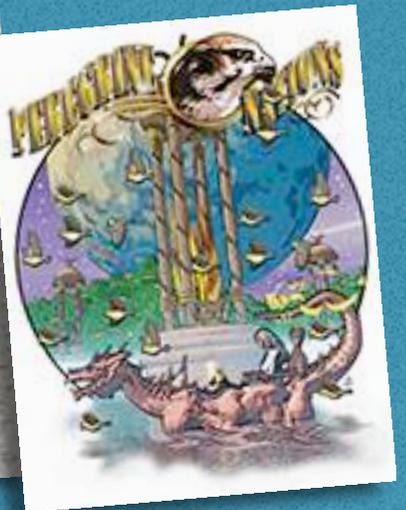
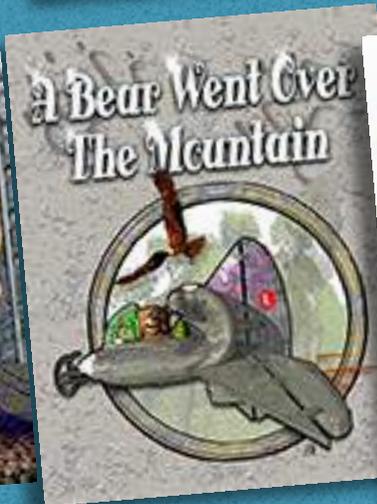
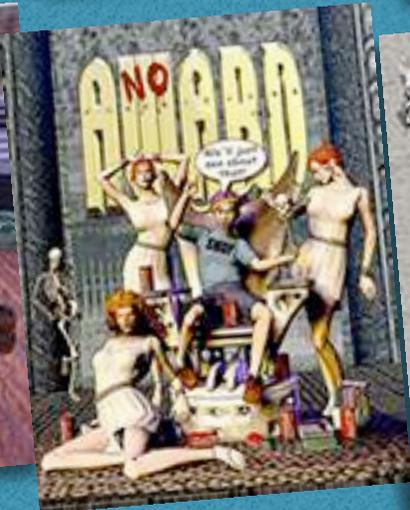
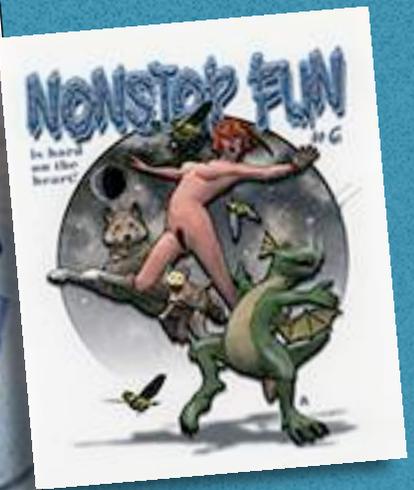
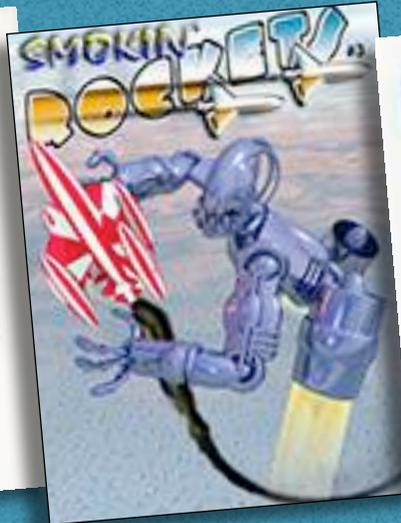


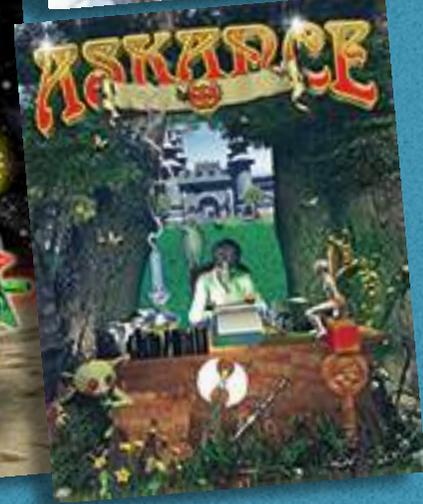
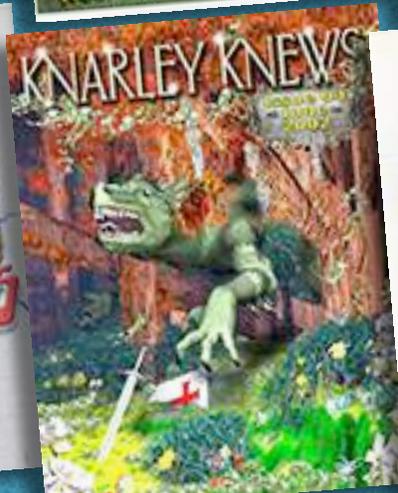
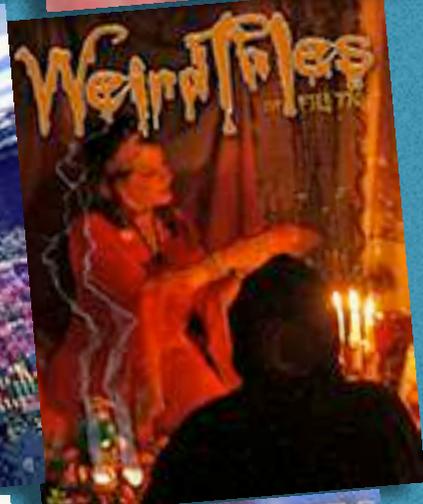
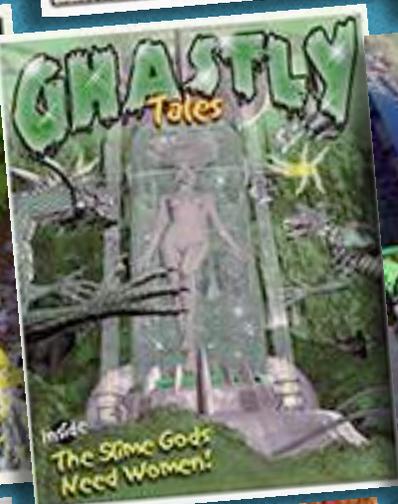
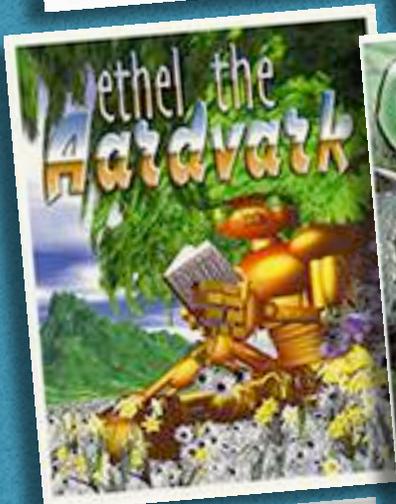
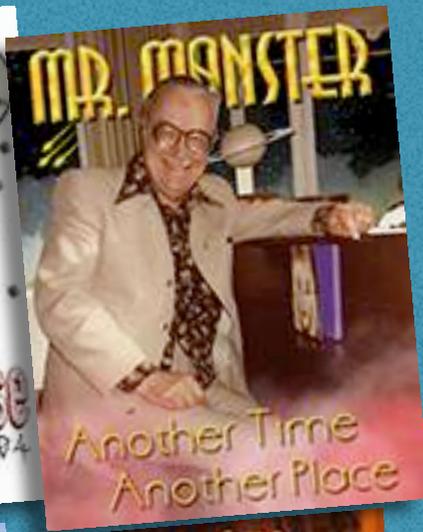
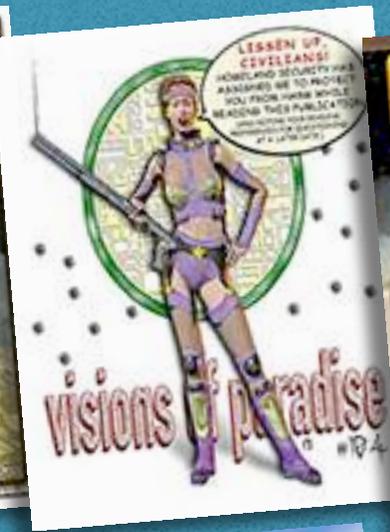


Do not go gentle into that good night,
Burn and rave at close of day; rage, rage against the dying of the light.
With Apologies to Dylan Thomas

THESE OLD FANZINES:

Wrapping this up we enter the jolly '90s where I get into programs such as Bryce, Poser and Photoshop. They all seem perfect for taking fanart a step further. In the early years fan artist Bob Lee had designed some basic graphic shapes with a computer that were printed in [Verbum Magazine](#). Today we can take things much further.







And thus, our 54 year rumination of my old zine covers has finally come to *The End*

THINGS HAPPEN!

Fanzine Cons for those who *really* like pubbing and not just retentive old men sitting in hotel rooms whining over the past:

A pair of things we missed you might consider next year:

SF Zinefest August [Website](#) LA Zinefest Nov [Website](#)

A few things for 2015:

SteamCon 1 Vegas Feb. 6/8 [Website](#)

Super Toy Con Vegas Feb 27/Mar. 1 .. [Website](#)

Feminist Zine Fest NYC ... Mar. 8/9 [Website](#)

Brooklyn ZineFest April 25/26 [Website](#)

Portland Zine Symposium (?) [Website](#)





Lloyd Penney

Another Orpheum has made it here via the miracle of download, and as I am slowly catching up with all the zines the come my way, here are comments on issue 7 that might just make some sense, wild guess, stranger things have happened...

Another great cover. but your model really has to watch what she's drinking there, it's giving her a strange skin tone. The surrounding menagerie might have something to do with it.

Greetings to all the Westside Insurgents, and hope you all enjoyed contributing to this fine fan magazine. There always seems to be something happening where you are.

Unbeknownst to the outside world, Vegas has plenty of things for the . While we don't have a remarkable fannish history we have done much with the present. Looking forward to [Steamathon 1](#) and [SuperToyCon](#) here come early next year.

We're finally getting temperatures in the 80F range, but where we are, we also get high humidity, and it gets pretty sticky. We might have gotten more people at our Worldcon now 11 years ago if the weather had been a little drier. We certainly appreciate your offer of crash space should we ever get back to LV. It may yet happen, for the conventions where you do sound good. You may get a call one day...

Alas, sunny days are on the wane and the temp is plunging once more; and a horrible can of freon it is. Oh, the days may hit a momentary 66° but night is plunging into the 30s. Now this may not be anywhere near cold as much of the country, but we consider the difference between the highest temps of 120° to freezing, that's a big spread.

Yes, the Strip is amazing, astounding, etc., but there's so much more there. The most amazing sight was the difference once you move a few blocks west or east of the Strip. It's a whole 'nother place. When were were there for the last Corflu, we had a good time on Fremont, and Yvonne got to talk to some of the scantily-clad young ladies on the street, many of whom were doing this to make extra money for university, and it was better than slaving away in an overly-air-conditioned office.

We too were amazed years ago finding once you go off the Strip, you're in anytown USA (except for the slot machines in the markets).

Burning Man always sounded like an amazing time, and now I am at the stage where I can say that it's a trip for a younger man, but a few years ago, a group from up here brought down there a giant steampunk metal beating heart for the show, and it was well received by just about everyone. Lots of places are staging their own versions of Burning Man, why not LV? Get yourself one of those four-wheeled bicycle contraptions with some shade, so you and DeDee can look sweet upon the seats of a bicycle built for two. Or, tow a small car behind the RV for some remote transportation.

Nah, there's plenty of room for you at Burning Man. I'm sneaking up on 70 and was happy to be far from the oldest goat in the place. But they do like their Steampunk. Visit the [Burning Man Steampunk Workshop](#) [HERE](#).

There's always some righteous jackass out there who has determined that someone they don't especially like is going to Hell, so hey, let's all go. We'll take it over, Satan can make some money off the catering arrangements, and it will always be party time in the sun, sun, sun.

Just this past weekend, Yvonne went to ConBravo!, a relatively new con down the highway in the city of Hamilton. It caters to a teens to 20s crowd, and they all like anime, gaming, comics and Doctor Who. We don't especially like any of that, but there days, as wandering vendors, we thought we'd check the place out to see if it would be good for selling stuff to the unsuspecting, and I think we will next year. It did look like Granny and Grandpa hanging with the grandkids, but we still ran into old friends, we chatted up a storm, and we had ourselves a good time, and give ourselves an education...the kids are in charge, and they are smart enough to be able to run a convention with the best of them, and they look good and cool. Good for them, and good for us, who were convinced that no one would come after us.

(What DO we like these days? Fanzines, of course, and conventions, but Yvonne is a huge Harry Potter fan, and we are really enjoying steampunk. Yvonne gets to be Queen Victoria at a special event this weekend.)

When you're in Vegas, there's a [Harry Potter MeetUp](#) [HERE](#), and [Harry Potter Alliance](#) is [HERE](#).

Hiya, **Jacq!** *hugz* I can blame my mother, rest her soul, for getting me on the track to fried foods, like French fries and burgers. However, I can credit Yvonne for getting me into spicier stuff, like Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, etc. I have seen the Oscar Meyer wienermobile up here a few times, and we wondered how on earth do you drive that thing? I also remember a picture on Facebook of the wienermobile upside down in a ditch, so I guess it takes some learning to do it. I remember B.B.Batts chocolate suckers, penny candy, and chocolate pastries from Vachon of Montreal.

Who were the visitors from Toronto? The Moores from Mississauga? We MUST come and visit! And no, we won't puke our guts out...

The local...an old tradition of fannish cartoonists is for one to draw one half of the cartoon, and someone else the other half. How about you and Brad, or any other fan artists you can think of? Fandom today has never heard of Forry or any other fannish icon we remember, and to honest, there's no reason they should. So much of what happened in our own fannish history texts took place before they were born. They also have no interest in history; they are here for the NOW, and then it's forgotten for a newer NOW. However, we might be joining up with a new group who is staging conventions in Hamilton, down the highway, and now, in Toronto, and we might team up to produce something with a steampunk flavour. More on that as it happens.

Fandoms on Facebook? I am rapidly learning that a Facebook friend is often no friend at all. A recent personal attack showed me that. Perhaps that's a proud fannish tradition, too.

Gonna fold, and get this to you asap! Many thanks, don't let them getcha down, and just keep fanning. Too many tell how it's done, and now, they're not doing it, so do what you please. See you with the next issue.



Alas, this is our last issue, I'm done. Thanks for your unflagging support Lloyd. ■