

BLACK ROCK BEACON

rites of passage gate/birth edition MONDAY AUGUST 29, 2011 VOLUME VII, NUMBER I

1:30 @ CENTER CAMP WWW.BLACKROCKBEACON.ORG

WELCOME TO NOWHERE

BY SUZANNE

I've heard rumors that this is going to be the year Burning Man jumps the shark.

But I think it's pretty unlikely. First of all, the Man may have agreed to stand up for an entire week with his legs spread wide — OUCH!!! — but there's no indication that he's going to be able to actually jump. I'm pretty sure that if he could jump, he'd jump off his pedestal and run away and avoid his scheduled date with a lit match on Saturday night.

And even if he didn't want to avoid becoming a big pile of ashes, if I was the Man, I'd rather jump over a duck or a rabbit or a giant shopping cart than a shark. But maybe that's just me.

Expectations

On the other hand, this is Burning Man, and you never know what could happen out in the middle of Nowhere.

You might have a life-changing experience here. You might bring with you a bunch of expectations and not have any of them met and still have the time of your life. You'll probably see some mind-blowing art that you never imagined anyone could create. You might discover that you love bacon even though you're a vegetarian (it hasn't happened to me, but maybe it will happen to you).

Bacon and Pants

And that brings up a couple things missing from the Survival Guide. They mention the importance of things like drinking enough water, leaving no trace, keeping garbage out of the porta potties, and using sunscreen. They fail to mention two important topics: Bacon and pants.

According to almost the entire Beacon staff, bacon is the best food on

the playa. It's also one of our favorite topics. If someone did a word search of the Beacon archives, the word "bacon" would probably appear at least as often as "the" or "and." It's supposedly easy to cook, easy to smell, easy to eat, and easy to share. As a vegetarian, I personally prefer string cheese and sour cream and onion Pringles, but I was outnumbered.

As for pants, they serve many purposes. For

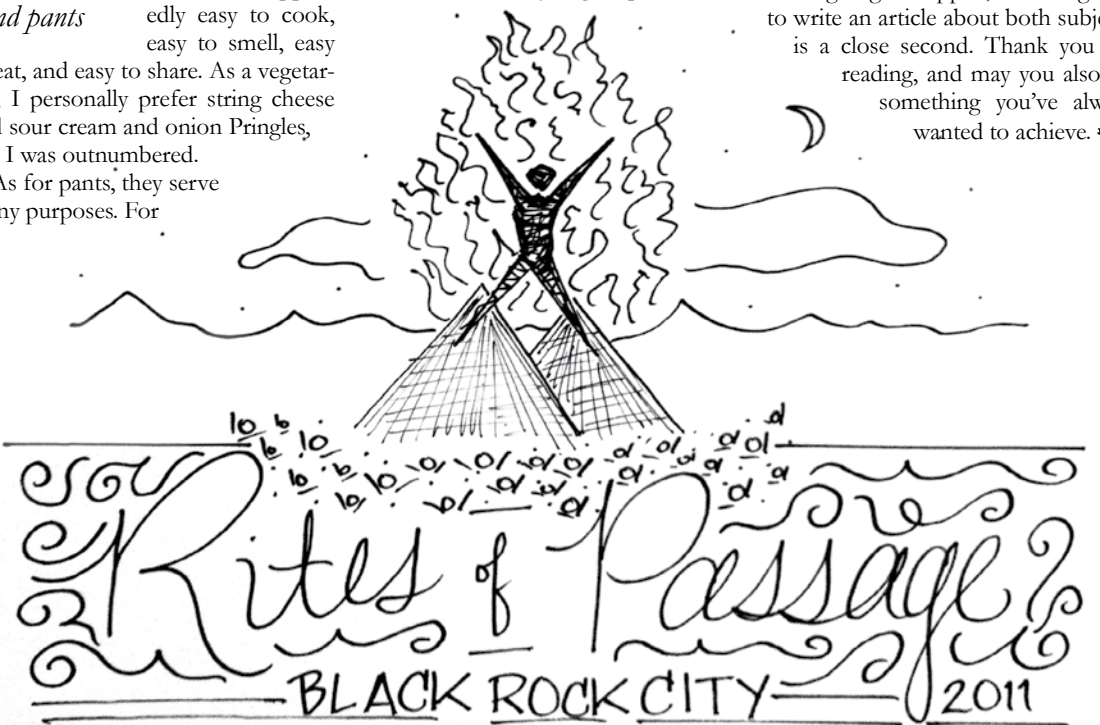
example, pants prevent shirtcooking.

Wearing pants also helps you avoid what our publisher refers to as "juicing the furniture," which is a nice thing to do for whoever is going to sit in that chair after you get up.

Have a Good Week!

I have to confess that ever since the Black Rock Beacon was founded in 2005, I have wanted to do a "Bacon and Pants" edition. It's probably never going to happen, but being able to write an article about both subjects is a close second. Thank you for reading, and may you also do something you've always wanted to achieve. 🐷

Illustration by Theaternuse



While You Were Out

BY MITCH

It's been a busy 50-plus weeks of hibernation. Here's some stuff that's been happening while you were away:

The Burning Man Project. You probably thought Burning Man was the Burning Man project, perhaps because the Burningman.com website used to say so. No more. The Burning Man Project, an offshoot of the Black Rock Arts Foundation, itself an offshoot of the Burning Man project (with a lower-case "p"), is a not-for-profit corporation meant to spiff up the San Francisco Tenderloin area around its headquarters and eventually to take over what used to be called the Burning Man project, including the Black Rock City event. It was launched Aug. 6.

The key here is that the Project with a capital "P" is a not-for-profit, while the current purveyor of Black Rock City is a limited liability corporation owned by six Black Rock luminaries who are planning to cash out after decades of nurturing the event. The exact timing and method of the transfer is either unknown or they're not telling, but it won't happen imminently. The six LLC directors are also on the 17-member Project board.

In a perhaps related development, the Burning Man payroll ballooned last year, rising 155 percent, to \$7.3 million. There wasn't a binge of hiring, and although the population rose to a record 51,525 last year, that was only an 18 percent increase, so there wasn't an obvious need to double the staff. It seems fair that if the board members are going to cash out, the rest of the crew should at least get something, and they did get 401(k)s and bonuses after a pretty fantabulous year.

The overall budget for 2010 was \$18.0 million, and divided by the population, the cost of providing Burning Man was \$349 per attendee. It had held steady around \$280 for the three previous years.

The financial data comes from the annual figures posted on the (old) Burning Man website and can be taken with a grain or two of salt in either direction.

Ticket Snafu #1. The first day of on-line ticket sales, Jan. 19, was pretty much a horror show. The site crashed, people got thrown out of line, people got told they were thrown out but weren't, etc.

Will Chase, editor of the Bmorg's Burning Blog website, wrote, "The annual ritual and excitement for opening day of tickets was matched with an equally overwhelming feeling of frustration at the ticket sales process." In Ticketing, the vendor (and an organization run by Burners), fessed up that "some information given during the course of the day may have been incorrect."

Last year was better, and they promise next year will be too.

Ticket Snafu #2. Burning Man sold out. Despite, or perhaps as a result of, the mad rush for first-day tickets, there's a big if metaphorical No Vacancies sign on Black Rock City this year. Working with a 50,000 population cap, mandated by the federal Bureau of Land Management permit, the Bmorg stopped ticket sales late in July. They're not saying exactly how many were sold, but the issue was touchy this year because the BLM permit was only for 2011, not the usual five-year agreement, and the hope is that the population

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Know Your Rites: A Week of Life

BY DURGY

Throughout life there are personal rites of passage, others' rites of passage that you attend, and shared rites of passage. In the one week of Black Rock City, 50,000 people will experience and re-experience many of these in microcosm.

First Rite

The earliest rites do not carry any cognizant memory, but echo throughout our lives. Conception, when egg met sperm to make zygote, was your first rite of passage as the chromosomes matched up and you were off to the cell-splitting races. Conception is also a rite that our parents were going through at the time, but from a different, creative angle.

Though some babies may get made this week, coming through the Gate is also an analogous moment of conception into life at BRC for each of us; we need to have our chromosomes lined up. Ticket, food, water and shelter formed those essential building blocks for life, and maybe you have some enhancements in your BRC gene pool (art projects, fabulous adornments). After the pregnant pause of the Gate road, you rolled past Greeters (and maybe around on the Playa) and were born into this strange new world with a slap on the butt or a ring of a bell. After taking some baby steps to set up camp, it became time to wander and explore.

Potty training was a rite of passage

that (hopefully) we all went through. Who among us can recall that event? Parents remember it as a day of freedom from changing diapers. The parents among us remember the joy when their offspring could voice the request to "go potty." In BRC we descend into the blue loos and relive this rite of passage, perhaps pining for the good ol' days when we could just poop in our pants and have someone else clean up the mess.

Your Experience

Over the years there were the confessions, the confirmations, the communions, the bar mitzvahs, the merit badges, the proms, the graduations. We lived some of these rituals as the culminations of commitments that we personally made to see a project through to completion. We were observers at others and consequently ate a big celebratory meal. Some of these rites of passage are reflected in the events that our fellow citizens pose as group events in BRC. Participate fully in these as you find them to enrich your experience and the experience of those around you.

Double Rainbows

Some unplanned and sometimes unwanted rites of passage crept into our lives: Schoolyard fights, going to jail, miscarriages, broken bones, getting fired and so many other events that shaped who we are today. Since it didn't kill you, it made you stronger or maybe a bit bitter, but otherwise helped mold the modern you. Ah, if BRC could be a week full only with

double rainbows and perfectly fried bacon. But I expect one will need to take the good with the bad.

BRC offers many opportunities to live rites of passage.

There will be weddings signaling a new life for two committed people. Since 50,000 people times one week

is about 961 years, statistically there might be death and there will certainly be the immolation and spectacular demise of the Burning Man. When the Temple burns we have the reflective funeral as a rite of passage to remember those that are gone but also to renew and support the collective spirit of those that remain.

BRC offers many opportunities to live and re-live the rites of passage that got you here, and await you in the future. Take them as they come and bring your best. Mazal tov! 🐷

THE RITES STUFF

Rites of passage generally break down into five categories — birth, coming of age, marriage and putting down roots, seniority, and the last rites — and they reflect what is important to a culture. We're going to cram those into a week of Beacons.

Black Rock City's birth, at least according to its own legends, occurred when the first Burners crossed a line drawn in the sand at the entrance to the Playa in 1990. They were told that once they passed it, "Everything will be different."

Following in those footsteps, when you passed through the Gate, it was as if you were born again in the middle of Nowhere to a new and different Black Rock City and a new and different you.

QUESTION OF THE DAY: Was it better last year? • Bring answers to the Black Rock Beacon City Desk, 1:30@Center Camp

BLACK ROCK BEACON

PORKTOID: "Barbecue" originated with French-speaking pirates, who called their pork feast "de barbe et queue," meaning, "from beard to tail." The hog is a versatile beast that can be consumed head to toe.

Evening of Empire: Town Vanishes Into Sand

BY ROCKSTAR

There are few things bleaker than the realization that the Gilded Age custom of the company town survived into the 21st century at all. For Burners, one will be the short stretch of Highway 447 past the slow-rotting carcass of the last company town in America. USG Corp., formerly U.S. Gypsum, faced with a housing market flattened for the discernible future, padlocked the pint-sized hamlet of Empire, Nevada, this summer after laying off close to 300 workers at the local gypsum plant on Jan. 31.

Federal Toe Tag

As far as the post office and national media were concerned, Empire ceased to exist on June 20, when its 89405 Zip Code was discontinued, lending the town's defunct status the dignity of a federal toe tag. Except as a wide spot on the road to Burning Man, the place is now one more unincorporated speck and a distant tombstone of some other era.

Grass, as a minor poet named Sandburg noted, covers all, but there's damned little of that. Settled in 1923 by miners working a claim filed by a Portland concrete company, Empire was a little more than a familiarly dusty ramshackle before USG bought the place in 1948.

Parenthetically, the Black Rock desert itself was then best known to the general public as the location for the hit movie version of Harold Bell Wright's durably dreadful bestseller "The Winning of Barbara Worth." Filmed in and around Gerlach and released in 1926, the shoot knew as much hardship as any Burn — complete with injuries, dust storms, Prohibition agents and drug freakouts — but the production left a temporary economic stimulus. A visiting writer from Motion Picture Magazine found the locals hired

as extras "the queerest looking specimens I have ever encountered," consisting of "mountaineers, cowboys, Indians, trappers and ranchers of every description" who "not only looked and acted their part, they were the part."

One of the first epic-length westerns, Barbara Worth was a box office bonanza and the Empire-Gerlach area revealed in the brief influx of cash from the big-spending movie folk.

Of far greater commercial import was the post-WW II housing boom. A nation ideologically committed to an "American Dream" of every citizen owning a house made Empire a viable proposition, and Sheetrock seemed a safe bet to ride out even the worst economic times. Unhappily, thanks to last decade's astonishing mutations in banking practices, an inevitable real estate slump leveraged itself into a Great Recession that shows little sign of receding. Now, most of the residents have left to find work elsewhere,



Now more than ever. The Empire store, circa 2003.

leaving holdouts like Tammy Sparkes, owner and proprietor of the Empire General Store.

60 Years

Sparkes is confident "Burning Man will keep the store open" and many Burners are doubtless willing to spend the last cash they touch over the long week there, grabbing sundries and marveling at the prehistoric gas pump. In business 60 years, "the store is open and will remain open,"

Sparkes told CNN, "The only concerns we have is power and water is supplied from the plant. If they shut that off we will have some serious hurdles to overcome."

Calls to USG's public relations department went unreturned, but a comment from the Burning Man organization casts serious doubt on any incipient plans to remake the ghost town as a year-round Burner resort: "USG has no interest in having anybody else on its property," according to Marian Goodell, the Burning Man director of business and communications. She said the town is essentially a mining site. "From what we understand, it costs more to shut down and clean up a site like that than to leave it on idle."

The Burning Man organization has not contacted USG about potential Burner use of the town.

Still, there might be a silver lining for Black Rock City in the zombification of Empire. Burning Man has become an increasingly important economic and cultural force in Northern Nevada as its population grows, especially in Washoe County, where Gerlach, Nixon, Wadsworth, and Reno, as well as Empire, lie. The annual event's continued success and the revenue it brings can help cushion the loss of the town's consumers on spending, giving the Bmorg some added clout with the locals. 🐷



The processing plant in Empire has ground to a halt.



I HAVE BEEN asked by management to crawl out from under my rock, and introduce myself. To that end, you may call me Zaius. My keepers do. I weigh about 300 pounds, am covered in a filthy mat of orange fur, and hold a well founded distrust of all humanity.

I live in a place so remote, that English is still viewed as the language of the occupier. I make a living ranching animals thought by many, to be mythical. Naugas, mostly. But, we do have some sparkle ponies that corral up behind the barn, in an old, long abandoned Jesuit Discothèque.

About the only time I leave the pleasant confines of my open-air asylum, is when I go to Burning Man. I've been going to the festival since somewhere in the Clinton administration.

I was once fairly normal, but repeated exposure to the soul-warping experience that is The Event, has rendered me unfit for life in the general population. I would like to offer my thanks, to everyone who helped. Back in the hippy days, we dropped all that LSD stuff to "mess with our sense of reality." It didn't really work.

I'll tell you what does. In Black Rock City, there are 50,000 people, who seem to have no goal in life, except to mess with your sense of reality. Some of those people are really good at the task. I've been stone cold sober (well, as close as I ever get), and seen things that would make M.C. Escher scratch his head.

Your assignment this week is to find a way to mess with someone's head. It doesn't need to be mean spirited, but it should be deeply confusing. After all, reality is an agreed-upon concept, and if you ever wanted to disagree, now is probably the time.

While you were out

continued from front

will grow to 70,000 or so in future years if an accord can be worked out.

There was an expectable spike in after-market ticket prices among the unprepared. It seems that there has been a strategy among some Burners of not buying from the Bmorg and instead waiting until the last minute, hoping to get a price below face value from a seller whose ticket would otherwise soon be worthless.

Bet that doesn't happen next year.

Empire Strikes Out. Okay, other than maybe the store, you probably didn't pay too much attention to Empire, Gerlach's low-profile twin city. Now it is gone. One of, if not, the last, company towns in America, was shut by owner USG Corp. as demand for drywall evaporated in the housing crisis. Read more about it elsewhere in this issue.

New Meds. Black Rock City is switching medical services providers, with the Humboldt General Hospital's EMS Rescue Department replacing long-time incumbent, the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority.

Money may be a factor: the Burning Man budget for medical services last year jumped

38 percent, to \$328,000, and the new outfit is charging \$290,000, according to Silver Pinyon Journal, a news website for Humboldt County, which is north of the Playa. It's not clear how much of last year's figure went to Remsa.

Cash factors aside, Remsa is the main ambulance service for the Reno area, though it serves all of northern Nevada and part of California. Humboldt General is more rural in nature (in fact, the peak population of Black Rock City is nearly three times that of Humboldt's 2009 U.S. Census tally of 18,260). That could be a better fit with Burning Man, especially as Humboldt is thought to be more receptive to returning repaired Burners to the Playa.

At the Core. One of the Burning Man organization's goals is to spread Burner culture far and wide. This year, that policy is coming home to roost, almost literally. The Man will be ringed by 22 flammable artworks known as the Circle of Regional Effigies, many 20 feet or so tall. They're made by regional Burn groups, and most of them are pretty ambitious. Better see them quickly, they ALL burn at 9 p.m. on Thursday. 🐷

ROD GARRETT, the designer

of Black Rock City, passed away on Aug. 22. The Burning Man website described him as "a courteous, soft-spoken, and deliberate man whose manners mask a lightning apprehension." Along with the ever-evolving city plan, he designed the Cafe and every base of the Man since 1997. The road encircling Center Camp this year will be named "Rod's Road" in his honor.

Burners who knew Rod and wish to share memories are invited to visit the Beacon (Center Camp and 1:30) on Monday to contribute to an article appreciating his unique contributions.

The Black Rock Gazette 10 Years Ago

Monday, August 27

"Welcome to nowHERE" explained why the first two years on the Playa, 1990 and 1991, were better: fewer Burners.

Degala offered a lyrical look at "The Seven Ages," mentally undertaking the seven-part journey required to complete a game linked to the year's theme.

Tuesday, August 28

A mini-Gazette, 8 1/2 x 11", invited citizens to write their own lead stories. [Editor's note: the computer kiosk at the Gazette camp where this was supposed to be accomplished didn't work so good. The Devil's in the dust tales.]

"Amazing Larry's Cube Club" by sometime novelist Rick Boy was a Sweet Playa Surprise: "The Best Little Jazz Club on The Playa" with the loosest slots was way out past the Man. 🐷

ALMANAC

MONDAY

FIRST LIGHT: 5:53 A.M.
SUNRISE: 6:21 A.M.
SUNSET: 7:33 P.M.
TWILIGHT ENDS: 8:01 P.M.
MOONRISE: 10:07 P.M.

TUESDAY

FIRST LIGHT: 5:54
SUNRISE: 6:22

BRAINTEASERS BY DURGY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52								

ACROSS

- 1 Take a romping romp to the educational building up the hill for the big dance (10,4)
- 9 Pair of teens kept out of the teepee by a sword (4)
- 11 Fight about the bedroom piercing tool (5)
- 13 Backer of a rugrat on a bender (9)
- 15 It sounds like verbal reproaches for alcohol (5)
- 16 Sets backwards in the West and cooks (5)
- 17 Nasty song contains bit about Iron Mike (5)
- 19 The ditch before Theodore took out the stone (6)
- 21 Red eyes go away with bread ingredient (3,4)
- 23 Preserve the South avenue (4)
- 25 The pear with the top trimmed and a piece of corn (3)
- 26 Messed up traits of the creative type (6)
- 30 She has some meringue (4)
- 31 In the extremes of crisis the center of the comet arrives (5)
- 33 The speed at which a tear would start (4)
- 34 Ale Ben is wrong to promote (6)
- 36 No time to tire and anger (3)
- 37 Briefly anonymous again (4)
- 38 Light emitting diode showed the way (3)
- 39 The rat went backwards into black goo (3)
- 41 Casper is confused about the shenanigans (6)
- 43 Steel construction for freezing rain (5)
- 46 Make up for misdeeds at an hour after noon (5)
- 48 The endless decree was confused for a belief (5)
- 49 How right to turn the crank inside of the labor camp (4,5)
- 50 The Extra Terrestrial took in the first half of the record, upon which to build (5)
- 51 The glue unglued on the sled (4)
- 52 Father 's wise to stay behind fires to perform growth rituals (5,2,7)

DOWN

- 1 Bath I took out of the regular way (5)
- 2 Grasps and then brags wantonly (5)
- 3 Saloon without love might as well be the hairdressers! (5)
- 4 Big hug before the start of the event (4)
- 5 At the Oklahoma spa I rediscovered giraffe relatives (6)
- 6 Let Ed lead tracker to temporary housing (6,7)
- 7 Chose to dismantle the depot (5)
- 8 Same owner sees the cat cry (4)
- 10 Irish spoken by the confused seer (4)
- 12 Now let one balk agitatedly about the cover (6,7)
- 14 Flower even when it's Easter and losing energy (5)
- 18 Why earn and strive? (5)
- 19 A proper Mitsubishi has licenses (7)
- 20 Reseats to review the coming attractions (7)
- 21 Go back to re-seed reportedly (6)
- 22 Half a yo-yo goes around a Chinese emperor (3)
- 23 Perceive the sound of the sea (3)
- 24 By way of some aviation (3)
- 27 A naive few go back for a man (3)
- 28 New votes for the cooker (5)
- 29 Some pretentious number (3)
- 32 The age when all are confused (3)
- 35 Repel backwards the shunned one (5)
- 40 Take a right from 11A and cry (4)
- 41 Colorado rig upset the dog (5)
- 42 The star drummer pulled his groin (5)
- 43 Searches to see Kansas (5)
- 44 Swelling brought out by unwanted email (5)
- 45 Designate that tile surrounds the capital of Texas (5)
- 47 A confused and unending route on the road-trip (4)
- 48 Which operations feature a hack? (4)

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