While You Were Out

It's been a busy 50-plus weeks of hameration. 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. In Nov. 2003, the Burning Man Project, an offspring of the Black Rock Arts Foundation, itself an offspring 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.

The burns, like the Gate, are also on the 17-member Project board.

The overall budget for 2010 was $18.0 million, and divided by the population, the cost of providing Burning Man was $345 per anteater. It had held steady around $280 for the other 27 years.

The financial data comes from the annual figure posted on the (old) Burning Man web-site and can be taken with a grain 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 sold tickets that were thrown out but weren't, etc.

Will Chace, editor of the Burning Man 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 even better.

Ticket Snafu #2: Burning Man sold out. DESPERATE. As a result of, or as perhaps a result of, the mad rush for first-day tickets, there's a big metaphorical No Vacancy sign on Black Rock City this year. Working with a 20,000 population cap, mandated by the federal Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau stopped ticket sales late in July. They're not saying exactly how many were sold, but the rush was this year because the BLM permit was only for 2010, not the usual five-year agreement, and the hope is that the population would stay under 20,000.

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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 experience many of these in microcosm.

First Rite.

The earliest rites do not carry any cognizant memory, but echo through our lives. Conception, when egg met sperm to make zygote, was your first rite of passage as the offspring could voice the re-creation of 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 re-member the joy when their offspring could voice the request to "go potty." In BBC we descend into the blue lagoon and relive this rite of passage, perhaps pining for the goodness of 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 are a big exhalatory meal. Some of those rites of passage are reflected in the events that our fellow citizens pose as group events in BBC. Participants fill us in as they find them to enrich your experience and the experience of those around you. We are today. 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 de-mise 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 re-new the support of the collective spirit of those that remain.

BRC offers many opportunities to live and re-live those passages of passion that got you here, and await you in the future. Take them as they come and bring your Mezuzah too.

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 Beacon.

Black Rock City's birth, at least according to its own legends, occurred when the first Burners crossed a live line at the sandtrap at the Sand 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.

Have a Good Week!

I have to confess that ever since I first volunteered in 2005, I have wanted to do a “Bac- con 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.
...while the economic backdrop, as another article notes, gives no sign of an imminent pickup in the housing market. The Bloomberg article, written by the inimitable journalist Paul Singer, points out that the housing market is still in a state of disrepair, with many homeowners in arrears and foreclosures continuing at a record pace. The article quotes a variety of economists and housing experts, all of whom agree that the housing market is not yet out of the woods. The article also highlights the fact that the Federal Reserve has been keeping interest rates low in an attempt to stimulate the economy and encourage housing activity. However, the article notes that this strategy has not yet been effective, and that the housing market remains weak. Overall, the article provides a comprehensive overview of the state of the housing market today and the challenges that lie ahead. I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you have any further questions.