Community & Paradox

by Lee Gilmore

Burning Man is a paradox of artistic fertility, blossoming in an infer- tile land, born out of the flesh of human community and balanced between multiple realities. The stunning emptiness of the land invites us to recreate ourselves within its barren context—through individual and collective creativity the land comes alive. The unique geography of the Hualapai Playa inspires our vision and informs the physicality of our encampment, yet the heart of Black Rock City’s magic lies within its human spirit. Ours is a unique subculture that has evolved over the course of more than a decade. Within the context of our shared histories, special bonds have emerged. Yet the community remains emphatically open to new participants who bring fresh insights and inspirations, infusing the community with raw energy. Burning Man embraces the unknown and unexpected, sharpening our awareness and ensuring our continued evolution.

Community is born via active participation in a shared context. In this spirit, some have created villages—groups of camps united by a common vision or related theme. Several villages now circle their waggons within our city including the Blue Light District, Camp Camp, the Illumination Village, and others. In villages, we pool our resources and maintain relationships through shared events. Get to know your neighbors and form your own village.

Burning Man exists between the paradoxes of fertility and infertility, individual freedom and collective responsibility. Manifest your wildest passions, live on the edge of chaos, but respect the veil that keeps our community on this side of life and death.

continued on back page

<obsessed>
by rusty@sirius.com

Well, I just heard that internet addiction is a ‘real addiction,’ treatable with a 12-step program. No kidding. A bona-fide addiction. And they just figured this out?

Hi, I’m Rusty, and I’m addicted to the Burning Man e-mailing list. I’m not in denial on this one. I’ve tried to unsubscribe but then I’d spot a nifty post about where to buy cheap ski torches or some meaningless blather about a takeover project. Once I did unsubscribe, I went on vacation and imagined my disappointment when I came home to just 3 e-mails. Ha! I was offline for 2 weeks while my computer was being upgraded—2,230 posts. Score!

It’s simultaneously annoying and ego-boosting to download 100 or more posts a day. Most threads I delete right off the bat. But others I save on my hard drive for eternity, who knows when I’ll need to have rebar info quickly? How else would I keep up with all the

Fashion victims beware... San Francisco’s Space Cowgirls, a flagrant, rip-roarin’ team of partywear goddesses-turned-cultural vigilantes, have been spotted disciplining, cat-calling, and otherwise invading the space of certain “style-challenged” desert denizens. Posing as local law enforcement officials, the duo have reportedly declared an obsessive vendetta against the unfashionable, publicly humiliating their chosen victims and, in many cases, outing their own obnoxious clothing line as the only viable solution to society’s collective blindness. The Space Cowgirls, aka Kim and Bryne, were last seen sporting fuchsia and blue hair, respectively, with perfectly coordinated fake fur chaps and various accessories. They are armed and very loud.

IN CHARGE

by Leon Chase
**Brody's Nature Challenge**

Brought to you by Dr. Brody Culpepper of Bigrig Industries®

Watch your toes, and be careful where you step. At this year’s Burning Man, what you don’t see may kill you, or at least hurt you a whole hell of a lot. Unlike the the dry, sterile playas of years past, in this year’s camp we will be neighbors with dozens of little critters that you may never even notice. Nature has a way of dealing with what it considers dangerous, and to the animals in this neck of the desert, you are the intruder that is to be feared. Many of the creatures that have lived here for eons may not be too fond of your type and may leave you with a kindly reminder of your encounter. If you watch your step and take a few basic precautions, there is little worry that you may be on the other side of a poor creature’s attempt to protect itself.

The first question ignorant urban visitors ask is if there are any venomous snakes around here. Some Burning Man organizers and some veterans will claim that there are no dangerous snakes, but that’s because they don’t know better or don’t want to scare away desperately needed money. In fact, there is a subspecies of rattlesnake that lives only in this area, the Great Basin rattlesnake (Crotalus viridis lutosus), and I saw seven adults in the area earlier this summer. Rattles are fascinating and highly evolved snakes, but have a poor public relations problem and there is more b.s. about them than I can even begin to deal with. So, here is the scoop about our native rattlesnake.

First, they are venomous and potentially deadly, but few deaths have ever been reported because they have a relatively weak venom, they don’t grow much over 4 feet long, and are quite shy. Rattlesnakes strike without warning you with their tell-tale buzz, but our rattler tries hard not to be seen, and rarely rattles because it gives itself away. Additionally, they avoid the heat of the day and are more active at night, but around here they go into a sort of a summer hibernation to avoid the hottest part of the year. What should you do if you see one? Give the guy a little space, take a few photos, and leave it alone. They don’t go looking for a fight and usually freeze or quickly crawl away when they see you, which is usually before you see them. The few people in the U.S. bitten by surprise usually step on the thing without even watching where they walk, but over 75% of all snakebite cases in the U.S. are due to people actively killing or attempting to handle live (or mistakenly dead) rattlesnakes.

Bad move. The Great Basin rattlesnake only strikes when cornered or taken by surprise, and can only lunge about half its body length away; they don’t jump and they won’t chase after you.

Luckily, a high percentage of bites are "dry," meaning that no venom is even injected. If you are bitten, stay calm and seek a Ranger immediately. If treated quickly, fatalities from snakebite are rare, and you have little to fear in the way of immediate death, but localized tissue damage may be your souvenir. Most of you will never see one of these rattlers, but encounters are possible, and one may even enter your camp. If one does, a large trash can be used to scoop up or place over the snake, but call OP’ Brody (via a Black Rock Ranger) who carries rattlesnake handling gear with him, and who will graciously relocate the wayward serpent. *Tomorrow’s Challenge: Scorpions*

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**STARGAZING AT BLACK ROCK**

By William Stevenson

Connecting those little dots in the sky seems to transcend time and culture. For thousands of years people have used the sky to understand nature and themselves. Whether corresponding to a myth, marking the seasons or providing a metaphor for greater reality, what we see in the sky somehow seems to reflect who we are.

This year, Burning Man will be graced with an almost empty moon. With our location in the desert and distance from major cities, the sky will come alive with stars. Taking notice is simply a matter of looking up.

The easiest way to orient yourself is to find the Big Dipper: No matter what time of night, any evening of the year; the two stars on the end of the bowl farthest from the handle point towards Polaris, the North Star.

Draw a line through them and extend it about five times the height of the bowl and it will reach Polaris. Polaris also forms the end of the handle of the Little Dipper. All the constellations seem to rotate around Polaris, so where they are in the sky during a given night depends on when you look.

After you’ve found Polaris tilt your head back until you can see the Milky Way. Look a little ways up and down it until you see an inverted cross.

This is the main part of Cygnus, the Swan. The bright star at the short end of the cross is Deneb. The long end is the neck and the “horizontal” part begins the outstretched wings.

In addition to the constellations we can often see four of the nine planets with the unaided eye. All are usually in the southern sky and from west to east (right to left if facing south) will be: Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Venus and Mars will set the earliest, followed by Jupiter, while twilight will swallow Saturn.

On Thursday and Friday evenings a constellation seeing excursion, complete with starmaps and stories, will leave from the Ranger Station at dusk. Everyone is invited.

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**Story Ideas? Event Listing?**

**Bring it to the Gazette**

"...Chelsea (Clinton) may be attending Burning Man this year."

—recently posted on the internet
Do not drive your car in camp. Be prepared to come to Black Rock City and anchor your vehicle at your campsite. No cruising! Except for specially-marked vehicles, no cars will be allowed on the open playa. Black Rock City is designed for pedestrians and bicycles. When entering and leaving our site, please observe posted speed limits within camp. In order to diminish traffic, a limited number of survival supplies may be purchased at our frontier store.

Use fire only on the playa. The flat and fuel-free surface of the playa (the dried lake bed of Hualapai Flat) is suitable for fire. The land along its shoreline is not—covered with grasses and shrubs; it is highly combustible and fire in any form is banned in this area. Furthermore, the use of fireworks (bottle rockets, landmines, explosives, etc.) and, in particular, parachute flares, is very dangerous—drifting to ground in unpredictable spots. These flares present an extreme hazard to our community. Do not use them.

Finally, the practice that's grown up in recent years of burning public structures at the final of our festival—Sunday night—is not acceptable. The Man and other designated artwork will be burned by the artists who created them. Please do not burn the lamp posts, bulletin boards or other people's property.

The open display or discharge of firearms is prohibited. Should you bring a firearm, please keep it in your vehicle. Neither our campground nor the greater playa is suitable areas for recreational shooting. We have scheduled no such events.

Respect public boundaries. The immediate margin of the playa will occupy is private land. Its boundary will be clearly marked. The area of the playa beyond this boundary line is administered by a federal agency, the Bureau of Land Management, for purposes of public recreation. You're free to travel here on foot or by bicycle. Do not, however, attempt to install artwork.

As a participant in Burning Man, you must bring all necessities to the desert: food, shelter, water, fuel—everything you need to survive. Above and beyond this provision for individual survival, we request you help ensure our collective survival. The following rules are necessarily cast in negative terms. They are ultimately intended, however, to preserve the integrity and creative freedom of our community. They are very simple and relate to public safety at this event—the necessary and shared concern of everyone. Upon tendering your ticket and entering our private site you become a citizen of Black Rock City and will be expected to abide by these standards. Community membership is a privilege. Any violation of these simple requirements could result in the loss of your right to be among us. In short, you can be required to leave. If you need guidance, please speak to a Black Rock Ranger.

You might be new to Burning Man if...

Submitted by Herman Cortez, originally posted on the Burning Man Mailing List

1. You arrive Wednesday and naively announce "Hey these porta-johns ain't so bad!"
2. On the way eat all your Oreo's, Doritos and drink those 2 six packs of beer you thought would be enough.
3. Don't realize that this is a gun friendly crowd and take shortcuts through heavily tented areas pulling down as many tent stakes and tents as possible.
4. You think everybody appreciates getting woken up at the crack of dawn despite the fact that they may have fallen asleep 30 minutes ago.
5. Come to the realization that drinking a gallon of water each day is a royal pain in the ass and stop drinking it.
6. Steal souvenirs from every camp you go to.
7. Don't pick up your trash because 'someone else will pick it up for me.'
8. Get married to a complete stranger.
9. Ask strangers to sell you drugs even though they look like they are from Langley, Virginia.
10. Walk around asking women to show you their tits!
11. Think sunscreen is a big joke.
chaos, anarchy, and liberty are themes central to the Burning Man mythos, yet they are easily given to misinterpretation since the common vernacular these terms are frequently used to refer only to one half of their full meaning. For the layman, the term chaos has come to describe only a part of chaotic dynamics, the concept of a state having no discernible structure. In regard to anarchy, most Americans think only of the absence of traditional governmental structure. And most think of liberty merely as one's right to do as one pleases. This incomplete perception is unfortunate, for the full definition of each of these terminologies is as practical as it is profound.

The mathematics of chaos theory demonstrate that within chaotic motion there arise complex, turbulent motions: fundamentally interconnected motions that presently defy simulation on all but our most powerful supercomputers. However, chaotic dynamics are not purely random, and this is demonstrated by the observation that even an infinitesimally small change in the state of a chaotic system will send its evolution careening off in a wildly different direction.

The Renaissance philosophers Rousseau, Locke and Kant demonstrated that in all societies, an unwritten social contract exists between all people, a contract which must be adhered to for a society to function. Inherent in this contract is the concept of liberty for all: a liberty predicated on the responsibility of each and every individual to control themself, to rein in their actions before interfering with the liberty of their neighbors. This responsibility is succinctly stated in the classic phrase, “your right to swing your fist ends at the tip of my nose.” The validity of this formulation is clearly evident when any individual fails to control themself, resulting in the loss of another individual's liberty. Nietzsche's Ubermensch, the Overman, is mistakenly perceived to be above the law; again, only half of the story was told—the truth is that the Ubermensch has no need of law because he is capable of controlling himself from within, and therefore does not need to be controlled from without. Thus, the personal responsibility of the Ubermensch results in the maximization of personal liberty.

The seminal anarchist writers Bakunin and Malkhov set forth their theories of spontaneous social organization near the turn of this century, theories which were later partially vindicated by events in the Russian countryside in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution. When the Czarist regime was toppled, vast areas of the Ural mountains were suddenly freed from any rule or authority, creating the “state of nature” so often speculated about by Renaissance philosophers. Small geographic groupings of people rapidly formed, based essentially on a primitive village structure. These villages ruled themselves by popular decree, with no means of social control save peer pressure: these groups were small enough that everybody knew each other, and hence had no need for law enforcement. In a community so small, if you’re a jerk, everybody knows it, and the loss of your friends demonstrates the need to integrate yourself into the existing social dynamic. Occasionally roaming bandits would attempt to raid these villages, resulting in the formation of vigilante patrols that protected the villagers. These enforcers were ordinary villagers, unlike the police forces of large centralized societies. The inhabitants of these village communities were termed anarchists, referring to the intrinsic social organization which required no external enforcement, as it came from within. In recent decades, most people have forgotten that anarchy was originally coined with this meaning, that in an anarchistic state there is no external governmental organization because each individual governs themself. The Ural mountain anarchists, or Malkhovists as they were called, prospered for nearly two decades before the growing Communist government eventually conquered these temporary autonomous zones, preventing the experiment from reaching completion.

A similar dynamic has developed at Black Rock City. Brought together with no form of external control, the creative spirits of Black Rock City spontaneously originated their own tribal ethos. The high level of personal responsibility forced on all by the extreme environment of the Black Rock Desert, coupled with the willingness of all participants to police themselves, resulted in an environment which maximized personal liberty, allowing the freedom for radical self-expression that is an essential element of the Burning Man Experience. As the society grew, an inherent structure evolved within it. The volunteer patrols of Black Rock Rangers were formed to protect the citizenry from themselves and from the increasing number of gate-crashers intent only on satisfying their own needs, at the expense of the community at large. Last year, the failure of certain individuals to adhere to the social contract induced the external authorities to attempt to shut us down. We must prove to them that we can develop our own internal system. The rise of villages within Black Rock City is the next step of our natural evolution, eliciting order from chaos to create a truly anarchic society. This is an attempt to bring citizens closer, to create a structure where peer pressure can again enable us to be self-enforcing. Your cooperation is critical: you are now a citizen of Black Rock City. Meet your neighbors, get to know those around you. They are your most immediate source of aid in the event of an emergency, and they are your connection to the society at large. Get involved. Help others build their structures, and don't be afraid to ask assistance from those around you. Make new friends. If you observe antisocial behavior, ranging from fire dangers to littering to sexual harassment, intervene. Speak up. We must all protect ourselves, and our neighbors—there is no external authority to do it for us. If we stand idly by and do nothing, our society will crumble.

Our interactions and behaviors define the existential space of the Burning Man Event. Our choices, and the choices of those around us, weave the tapestry that is the fabric of our society. We are all performers in a dance which is not choreographed, but which evolves sponta-
At Playa In The Fields Of Fire

As summer winds down and the dry season crackles with possibility, a good many of us have plans to make an exquisite and unforgettable fire here on the playa. Labor Day weekend depopulates our respective cities and towns as effectively as a neutron bomb. But rather than go nuclear, an increasing number join this vast adoptive family, or movement—some might call it a cult—and come to Nevada for the Burning Man Festival. This year marks the 12th iteration of this incendiary celebration; a far cry from its apocryphal beginnings in 1986 on Baker Beach. Barred from burning the man in San Francisco by fire authorities since 1990, Burning Man has kept on trucking with a move east of Eden into this desert north of Reno.

A forty foot wooden man lined by a neon skeleton stands for less than a week, then is burned. This year more than 12,000 will trek to the back of this beyond and revel in the Temporary Autonomous Zone that is Black Rock City. Most are from California, but participants are coming from all over—Canada, Costa Rica, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Germany, even South Africa. For the few short days of this long weekend, a self-sufficient metropolis is coalescing on the playa (beach) of the ancient lakebed of Lake Lahontan. Like Essenes who quit Jerusalem in the first century of the Common Era (A.D.), we have rejected the commerce of the Temple for an experiment in intentional— even, spiritual—community, however ephemeral it may be. The only commandments are: bring everything that you need to survive—this is a desert!—and leave nothing behind. Do not interfere with anyone else’s immediate experience. No spectators—everyone is a participant, whether they are drawn to the desert for ascetic reasons, or the bacchanalia.

Everyone comes for their own reason—there is no unifying belief, apart from an active love of freedom and unfettered expression. The desert provides the most perfect blank slate for bringing dreams to life in an otherwise pitless and unforgiving environment.

Look for artists like Ripper the Friendly Shark. Theme camps abound to express elective tribal and artistic affinities. There are villages like the Blue Light District; an Alien Abduction Camp, S&Meternal City, plus numerous coteries of Barbiedoll worshippers. No doubt there are disgruntled postal workers delivering this daily newspaper and several competing pirate radio stations buzzing the airwaves.

Towering over all is a Man who will be torched Sunday evening in a pyrotechnic frenzy that will burn several thousand points of light against a velvet new moon.

Woodstock or Altamont? was the refrain at last year’s festival.

The Agony Ant

A sex column specifically geared for Black Rock Citizens

Dear Ant,

Do you think Playa dust might degrade condoms? I didn’t get a chance to find out last year, but my boyfriend’s coming with me this time.

Grinder

Dear Grinder,

While immeasurable quantities of free-ranging gypsum do present certain challenges, this seems more likely to be a nuisance than an actual danger. Without question, P-dust is a major anti-lubricant, but a wipe-down and a generous application of the usual water-based substances should suffice. Wash again immediately afterwards, of course, or you may find yourselves quickly mumified by the resulting death-mask-like crust which will form when that mess dries.

Have fun,
Agony Ant

Do you have a sex question for The Agony Ant? Stop by the Gazette RV and submit your question, anonymously if you wish...


Sister Dana Sez All the Dirt from the Desert

**Hiya, howaya...from Kualapua Playa!**

All is righty then...you are in the middle of the burning desert, and what is the most important issue? Water? Well, yes, I suppose so...but there's something much more vital: FASHION!

True, you could die from lack of H2O, but worse yet you could die of embarrassment when issued a fashion citation because of your boring, improper playa attire. You say all you brought was a white t-shirt and shorts? Not to worry. Pour some of that water you brought (oh gawd, please tell me you didn't forget to bring water!) onto the playa floor: Dunk that pristine tee into the mud until you have a nice desert sand tone. Rip the shirt into strips and tie a knot in each. Now go through the same steps with your shorts (better yet, your undies, which tear easier and look sexier). Pour on orange juice or any other liquid that stains your clothing. Now for your face. Forget Clinique, m'dear,'cuz this is the desert. Mud makes an excellent makeup base. Remember, it's just the opposite on the playa: a lighter coat at night and a thicker one during the noonday sun. Do NOT forget eye shadow. Try to find some burnt wood (hard task) and apply the charcoal to your lids and anywhere else on your person. For blush, there is nothing like the blood of a freshly slaughtered playa chicken, but baring that you will need a red vegetable (beets are best) smeared on your cheeks. Lips look great in berry juice. Highlight everything with carrot juice. If you can find someone who brought henna, the long-lasting tattoo effect can't be beat.

Finally, be sure to accessorize, accessorize, ACCESSORIZE! Anything you can find to hang from some twine around your neck, and to wrap around your extremities (ALL of them) and to stick on top of your head. Now just look at the new you: delectable in the desert!!

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Stop at Red Lights by Blake Wiers

I Grew up on the East Coast. My mom was an artist. Look, Blake. This is art. She painted watercolors.

Eventually, I went to art school at a big university. Fluxus? I'd rather be drinking beer. I didn't get it.

A few years later, I moved to San Francisco with my friend Tim. It was a little different. These guys I knew are going to be the new guys in the desert.

We didn't go. Instead, we learned our way around town from our new friend Claudia. OK, so nobody goes to fighter man's? No. And it was called Frisco? No. She was very negative.

Continued tomorrow.