

the intergalactic

OBSERVER

"We saw what you did last burn..."

DECEMBER ISSUE 02

WHY I RUN A THEME CAMP

John Henry Tells All

ASKQUATCH ISV's Agony Aunt

PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH: GIFTING

THE CRYSTAL GRID

Your monthly music corner

WHY I RUN A THEME CAMP

(THE LEGENDARY) JOHN HENRY

Hey there, you sassy 'Squatches. May I begin this letter by saying hello and that I love you all very much. Without campers, we would have no camp. Thank you all for your continued support and encouragement.

For many years now, I have been happily operating our beloved theme camp with the hard work and helping hands of our spacey tribe. The Intergalactic Sasquatch Village is a sacred place that holds some of my dearest memories and stories that have helped shape who I am today. I fell in love there. I have laughed with you, I have cried with you, and I know the same stands to reason for each and everyone of you as well. The magic that our camp embodies is something I am truly proud of and it brings me so much joy to be a part of it.

But please allow me to circle back to the point... Why, oh why, do I do all of this? I cannot speak for my fellow leaders but I am quite certain they feel a similar sentiment. I do this for you... Watching all of you (old friends and new) grow and change over the years has been priceless. We come together once a year from every imaginable walk of life and become something greater than ourselves.

Together, we are stronger and more incredible than we are as individuals. The combined passion of all of our individual characters creates something ephemeral and beautiful. We shelter the wayward playa travelers. We quench the dry lips of the thirst-stricken. We band together to support the needs of strangers as our gift to both the playa and our fellow citizens of Black Rock City.

Over the years, we have grown and changed because of your passions and requests. We have come a long way from the 40-person theme camp we once were. This last year was our biggest and best ever.

Thanks to the contributions of some very passionate individuals, we are now home to some of the most amazing gifts the playa has to offer. We served over 220 gallons of our famous ice tea this year. On two separate days, we had a line around the block for frozen yogurt (*IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FUCKING DESERT*) and served more than 500 gallons of delicious frosty fantasticness. For the second year in a row, we hosted the most amazing circus show the playa has ever seen. Oh yeah, and we fed 150 people a night in our amazing restaurant... and we built a circus tent. Am I forgetting anything!?

Thank you all for constantly inspiring me to be better and do more.

I do it because I can. I do it because I love it. I do it for you.

Sincerely,

J.H.

Three O'Clock Plaza & The Esplanade

Katie Swalm

Hello campers! As the sun now disappears behind the mountains at 3:00 p.m., you might be looking for some ways to get rid of that seasonal depression. Here are some local events to ease your winter blues.

Burner Mondays

What: A time to connect with other Vegas burners.

When: 6:00 p.m., December 2, 19, 16, 23, and 20.

Where: Phoenix Bar and Lounge, 4213 W Sahara Ave, Las Vegas, NV 89102.

[More Information](#)

Petaluma AfterBurn

What: From the Black Rock Desert to Petaluma. This fall the Petaluma Arts Center is hosting AfterBurn, a series of exhibitions and events that celebrate Burning Man and its roots in the North Bay area.

When: November 23–January 18

Where: Petaluma Art Center, 230 Lakeville Street Petaluma, CA 94952.

[More Information](#)

Las Vegas Decompression | \$15–20 per person, free for children

What: Las Vegas Decompression is a radically inclusive and expressive outdoor street faire style event produced by your local Burning Man community. Featuring music, performers, art, mutant vehicles, costumes, participation, and much playa love.

When: All day, December 7, 2019.

Where: 6475 W Gary Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89139.

[More Information](#)

Winter Santa Rampage

What: Dress up and drink like Santa on Fremont Street.

When: 8:00 p.m.–2:00 a.m., December 20, 2019.

Where: Fremont Street Experience, 425 Fremont St, Las Vegas, NV 89101.

[More Information](#)

BLM reports a near-perfect score and the greenest map ever for 2019 MOOP inspection!

Originally reported by Jane Lyons, Burning Man Journal: "We Did It! 2019 BLM Inspection Reveals Near Perfect Score & Greenest MOOP Map to Date"

On October 5, the Playa Restoration Team, known as "Resto," was informed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that—in spite of inclement weather and tougher test standards—Burning Man achieved the best inspection results it has ever received in the almost-20 years that event's environmental impact has been measured.

Resto team members cleaned over 150 million square feet of land post-Burn. The environmental standard for Burning Man is measured in terms of "residual debris" and states that the Burning Man site must not exceed an average of one square foot of debris per acre during BLM's post-event inspection, one month after the event. Under new inspection standards passed by the BLM in July, 2019, no more than 10 percent of 120 randomly selected test sites could exceed the designated limit of MOOP. Burning Man has never failed this inspection, which first began in 1999.

The improved results were due not only to the hard work of Resto, but to the leave-no-trace practices of Burners. The remarkably windless week could have contributed to these results, as well as Resto's new designated team that performed MOOP tests throughout the week.

Playa Restoration Team members worked through rain delays that brought more MOOP to the surface and required multiple passes over the land. The rescheduled test was held on October 5. The MOOP map is not yet available, but will be released soon.

Here's to being welcomed back by BLM next year, and thanks to our camp cleanup team for doing a spectacular job with the MOOP effort!

"All of the cons and none of the pros!"



Side effects: This drug may induce a powerful desire to buy cryptocurrency, stop paying your taxes, and start a permaculture commune. Cryptocurrency is a volatile asset class and can cost you thousands of dollars in tax liability; talking about permaculture is annoying as fuck and can cost you dozens of relationships with your friends and family. If desire to purchase cryptocurrency lasts longer than four days, consult your attorney and CPA. Conzac® may contain up to 100% ketamine. Do not be concerned if you experience spontaneous combustion. Do not take Conzac® if you are missing one or more limbs. Conzac® may cause a feeling that you should take a year off of Burning Man. Do not take a year off of Burning Man; your camp needs your labor. Conzac® is not vegan, organic, or pesticide-free; however, it is gluten-free. This drug has been proven to cause celiac disease in as many as half of all users. This drug may induce powerful erections in both men and women. Loss of appetite is common, as Conzac® contains 110% of your daily recommended carbohydrate consumption.

Tales From A First-timer

Jacob Henry

As the caravan began to pull away, the dust kicked up off the dirt road at the ranch and just like that, they were gone: Harrison, Katarina, MJ, and Eva. My three best friends and my new girlfriend were on the road home to Black Rock City. Without me. Again.

When I moved to Las Vegas several years ago, little did I know the marvelous humans and fantastic adventures that would await me. My life in Nevada has been nothing short of extraordinary, and the story of how I came home to BRC is but one of a thousand tales I have to tell of my time in this dry, sandy place. But before I begin, let me introduce myself.

Call me Sippy Cup. For I am the man who cannot be spilled.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"But maybe we can figure something out?"

"I really don't think that's an option; I just hope you all have fun."

Every year, for five years, I had this conversation. Harrison, Kat, and MJ went to Burning Man every year. And every year, I either didn't have the money or the time to attend. 2019 didn't seem any different, so when tickets became available I didn't even try to purchase one: this year would be like the rest, with my best friends leaving for BRC and the nirvana that awaited them on the Playa. I would be on the other side of

reality, working on my start-up business and taking calls from the office.

You see, when I moved to Las Vegas six years ago, I was running from my past. Two years prior, a flu virus had mutated and, in a freak turn of events, began to eat away the muscles in my heart. Days and nights in the hospital turned into months and years of physical and mental recovery, but I made it. Yet I wasn't the same. Normally outgoing, happy, and confident, the new me was reserved, anxious, and sad. I needed a change. Manhattan seemed too small, the people too familiar. So, when an old friend offered me the chance to start a non-profit that focused on literacy reform in Nevada, it seemed like a fresh chance at a new life.

I was 70 pounds overweight and deeply depressed. So, despite not knowing anything about education reform or anyone in Nevada, I quit my corporate job, packed up my NYC apartment, and moved to Las Vegas. It was here that I would meet Harrison, Katarina, and MJ. The three friends who would begin my obsession with a place I thought I'd never go: Black Rock City. And I might not have ever made it, had it not been for Eva.

Eva and I had only met three months before the Burn, but our connection was instant and we quickly began dating. She had a ticket for the Burn prior to meeting me and planned on going solo. She seemed so brave to tackle the Playa solo for her first Burn, and I dreamed about being able to go with her and the experience of sharing such a magical first life event. The idea of being with my best friends, along with my wonderful new girlfriend, was intoxicating. But the situation was the same: no time, not enough money, no tickets available. I didn't have a ticket and \$1400 was the going FOMO price, IF you could find a ticket. So I did the next best thing and introduced her to my friends, who immediately brought her into their camp:
Intergalactic Sasquatch Village.

Trying to be as supportive as possible despite my deep disappointment in not being able to attend, I went with her to every pre-Burn activity held in Vegas by ISV: we attended bike tunings, pre-Burn barbecues, and all sorts of fun events with Sasquatches from every corner of life. Each event brought the camp together and heightened the excitement of what was to come. Except for me, that is: I felt like I hadn't worked hard enough to earn the ticket and time off, despite my best efforts at starting my own business.

When the Saturday before the Burn came around, and our group began to load into cars for the drive to Northern Nevada, I couldn't do much else but hold it together and smile as best I could as they slowly pulled away into the sunset and left me behind. Resigned to another year of disappointment, I felt alone and began to tear up. My folks, still back in NYC, called me and made a promise: if I could find a ticket for a reasonable price, they'd gift it to me for my 30th birthday.

And then, a crazy yet simple idea hit me: what if I could find a ticket for close to face value? Sure, getting a ticket was hard. But what if?

I guess I'd need to get to Reno. Well, what if I could get to Reno? I guess I'd need to get to BRC. And what if I could get to BRC?! Well I'd have a whole camp ready for me, with supplies and a tent at ISV with all of my friends.

So off to Facebook groups I went, eager to find a 'BM Ticket Exchange Group' and try my luck. But what I actually found could best be described as "burner memes and broken dreams"; namely trolls and tricksters trying to scam money for fake tickets. Each group on social media related to Burning Man seemed to suggest the same thing: unless you have a physical ticket from a trusted source, you're likely to get victimized by the thousands of fake offers made to desperate buyers each day. I knew I needed a physical ticket and that social media exchanges made me a

target for thieves so, on a whim, I reached out to a friend in LA who I knew had attended in the past.

He (1) tells me he has a friend (2)... Who has a friend (3)... Who has a friend (4)... Who has a ticket and is willing to sell.

As he messages me this, it is Tuesday at midnight.

By 3:00 a.m. Wednesday morning, the actual ticket seller calls me: The ticket can be mine for only \$600 (she paid \$1400) if I get it from her by 8:00 a.m., that day. Only problem? She's in Venice Beach, California, and I have less than five hours to figure out how to get this ticket to Las Vegas. Friends across L.A. are called, yet none can make the 8:00 a.m. deadline. In an act of desperation, I use a courier service: the first courier refuses my request, claiming the route is too long. The second courier I ask says the same thing. It's 7:00 a.m., and I need to get this ticket from the seller by 8:00 a.m. or she's giving it to someone else. My last chance is slipping through my fingers and I start to panic. Finally, the third courier agrees and they'll send it via airmail at LAX.

By Wednesday afternoon, my ticket was in hand. By Thursday morning, an old friend had donated airline miles. By Thursday afternoon, I was in Reno airport.

I hitchhiked with friendly strangers until I arrived at the gates of BRC.

And at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, I walked into ISV to find Harrison, Kat, MJ, and of course, Eva.

The look on their faces was, and always will be, one of the great joys of my life—complete and total shock, the perfect surprise. Fuck your burn.

THE CRYSTAL GRID



Music and the playa go hand-in-hand these days. Even though Burning Man isn't a music festival, musical performance has become a huge part of the gifting culture that exists on the playa today, and it's a main attraction for many citizens of Black Rock City, Nevada. Late nights at Camp Q, the heat of the day at District, and mornings spent dancing in front of an art car in deep playa as the sun crests the horizon: I love it all.

Playa time, however, can sometimes get in the way of these fantastic occasions. You might find that the performance you were hoping to see isn't on schedule or, in some cases, isn't even where you thought it was. These realities can be disheartening, but sometimes the best adventures begin with happy accidents.

I take a pretty open-minded approach to making plans when I'm on playa. When I notice a bunch of people gearing up for something they seem very set on attending, I'll usually just tag along. I like to engage in "zen navigation," so I just follow whatever group or individual seems like they have the most passion in their movements.

This has led to some very awesome surprises over the years, and I would suggest it to anyone who might not know what to do or finds themselves overwhelmed with options.

When there isn't any clear path to follow, my next favorite thing to do is to pick a shiny light and chase it down until I'm satisfied (or until something else comes along to inspire me.)

Art cars are especially satisfying in my opinion. They move like lumbering beasts in the night with their little loyalists in tow like ducklings following their mother. Finding the one you were looking for is one of the most fantastic feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction you will ever have the luxury of feeling. Even when you stumble across one you weren't looking for, the payoff is usually pretty great.

Don't waste time worrying about who's playing or wandering off to see the super special DJ that everyone in camp was talking about that day. Let the vibe be your guide and remember to chase the shiny lights.

—John Henry



The Intergalactic Observer is on Spotify!

The Crystal Grid brings you the music of the playa as heard by a different Sasquatch every month, so follow us closely and keep your ears peeled for hot new sounds each issue.

If you think you've got what it takes to write for *The Crystal Grid*, scan the QR code on the back of this magazine and submit your idea today!

You can listen to John Henry's *BRC Music* playlist by scanning the Spotify code or by clicking the link below.

spoti.fi/33jY4XH

Images: Thomas Ward and u/tygrrear (thetravelingtygrr.com)

Askquatch

with Taskwatch



Hello friends, it's me again, your favorite Intergalactic Observer columnist Taskwatch with a lot of opinions and very little actual information. Starting this edition, I thought it would be fun to answer reader questions, from readers like you! With questions! You got questions? I'll have answers... eventually.

In this first edition, I have asked for questions specific to Burning Man to keep us on theme before next month's edition, where I will be answering questions about your relationship problems and sex lives. (Spoiler alert: It's your fault!)

Let's check out the questions!

"What's the number one piece of advice for someone going to the Burn who has never been before?"

—J, Sweden.

Dear Virgin,

As part of my research in to answering this for you, I've done what any good advice columnist does, and copy/pasted your question in to Google. Edward Sullivan, entrepreneur & executive coach who wrote a whole article on this subject for Medium.com suggests that the single most important piece of advice is to stay "Open, open, open to the unknown."

I build on his advice and suggest a more realistic approach: open, open, open your legs.

"What time does Daft Punk play?"
—D, New York.

Dear Good Music Lover,

You can catch the beloved French DJ duo playing a rip-roaring dance set nightly at 2:00 a.m. at the trash fence!

"Should I bring my baby? Should I bring my mom?"
—Greedy Ms. Two-questions, Las Vegas.

Dear Greedy,

I answer your question with a question back to you; do you hate fun?

Sure, you can bring both of these people. Everyone is welcome in the dust, but do you really wanna be breastfeeding in the middle of a dust storm in deep playa? Of course you do! But that will be difficult to do

if you have to leave camp Healthy-breast-goddess to get back to your mother and baby in time for solid-food-dinner.

"How much water should I bring?"
—J, Las Vegas.

Dear Thirsty,

A common question for us experienced dust-bunnies. Of course the main number to consider is how often you'll expect to do certain hygiene routines: teeth-brushing, showering (with or without hair-washing), extra foot washing, et cetera. With these hygiene practices in mind, I for example, bring zero water.

"Can I take ketamine on Tuesday?"
—C, Reno.

Dear Cancelled,

C IS FOR CANCELLED. You're cancelled, C in Reno, if that is your real name.

"How much money should I expect to spend on my entire Burning Man experience, including ticket price?"
—J, Los Angeles.

Dear Moneybags,

To begin to answer this, it's important to understand that the Burning Man ticket-pricing system uses a sliding scale, based on how cool you are.

More cool = cheap ticket
Less cool = expensive ticket

So, using this math system, and based on where you live, I would expect you could do seven days at burning man for well under \$36,000.

Thanks so much for all of the informed questions, readers!

I leave you with a pledge for more questions to be answered in next month's Observer, and a question from me to all of you: Does this article make my writing look fat?



Got questions?
Ask them here.

Principle of the Month

Gifting

—Dave Levy

The topic of Radical Inclusion sparks an endless amount of discussion. I wanted to hear more from campers, but life is busy and some might not know how to contact me. In lieu of responses, I pulled two issues to examine.

According to the Burning Man census, the percentage of white/Caucasian attendees has been on a downward trend in the last five years, with groups of minority attendees on the rise. However, the number of black and Native American attendees has stagnated, barely reaching one percent each. There are many factors in the construction of these statistics. "Other" is the category which I typically mark; it doesn't correctly identify me, but I select it for simplicity's sake. With that in mind, black and Native American numbers should be on the rise in an ideally radically inclusive environment.

While I don't personally believe that there is a perfect proportion to be achieved, or that there are any particular actions to be taken to change the demographic, it is something to consider when being radically inclusive. Black people's lack of desire to participate has been discussed at length and can be attributed to many reasons. Ultimately, Burning Man is amazing, and we should share it with those who are willing because it can offer a unique experience as one of the few places where it doesn't feel like you are being looked at differently for being different.

How do you include people who have personalities or ideals you don't identify or agree with? This is a difficult question with no single answer. Ultimately, Radical Inclusion—when practiced effectively—is beautiful, and practicing it does not dictate that you have to accept every person or their views and beliefs, only that you allow them to participate and engage in a meaningful way.

Here is a story of it going right; "Radical Inclusion: How Burning Man is Helping Create a New Breed of Entrepreneur", written by Cynthia Johnson for Entrepreneur.com.

This month, I want to discuss Gifting:

"Burning Man is devoted to acts of gift giving. The value of a gift is unconditional. Gifting does not contemplate a return or an exchange for something of equal value."

Gifting is often misconstrued, leading to the belief that Burning Man runs on a bartering system.

It can be argued that there is no truly selfless act, and motive can be traced back to even a small amount of personal gain. I believe gifting at Burning Man is as close as you can get. To understand what a gift is, it helps to understand the five love languages: Words of Affirmation, Physical Touch, Giving Gifts, Quality Time, and Acts of Service.

Generally, everyone expresses caring in these ways, although some more than others. Oftentimes, it can be difficult for others to express or recognize other languages different from the ones they talk in. As an example, I heavily really on Acts of Service and participate in Gift-giving and Quality Time, but I tend to neglect Physical Touch and Words of Affirmation. For this reason, I often see more value in Acts of Service and, in some cases, might not even gain from Words of Affirmation, let alone be able to deliver them. However, I realize that gifts come in many forms. While fully understanding the receipt of every gift is impossible, understanding that people have different perceptions when it comes to love can aid in gifting appropriately.

Interestingly enough, we can all recall situations in which we received unwanted gifts, which is the equivalent to MOOPing someone on-playa. Lip balm and ear plugs are amazing if you need them, but you only require so many before you become inundated and therefore responsible for disposing of them. Jewelry is classic; however, poorly constructed items can break and leave countless pieces scattered over the playa, sometimes too small to be detected.

I want to interact with you, the reader! Please tell me some of the best Burning Man gifts you have received. What are some of the worst?

Email your response to intergalacticobserver@gmail.com



Thomas Ward



Katie Swalm



Kyle Harmon

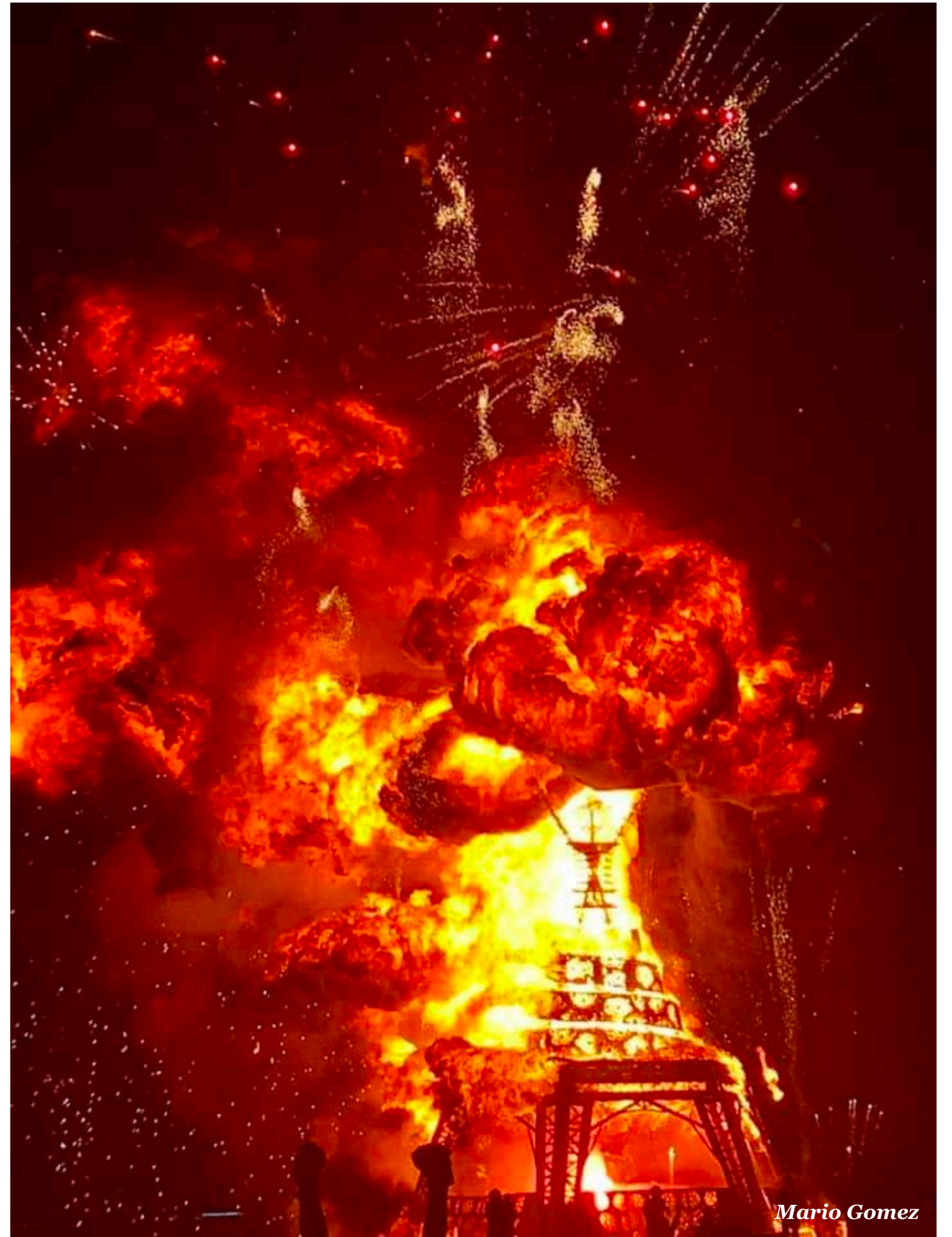
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Katie Swalm



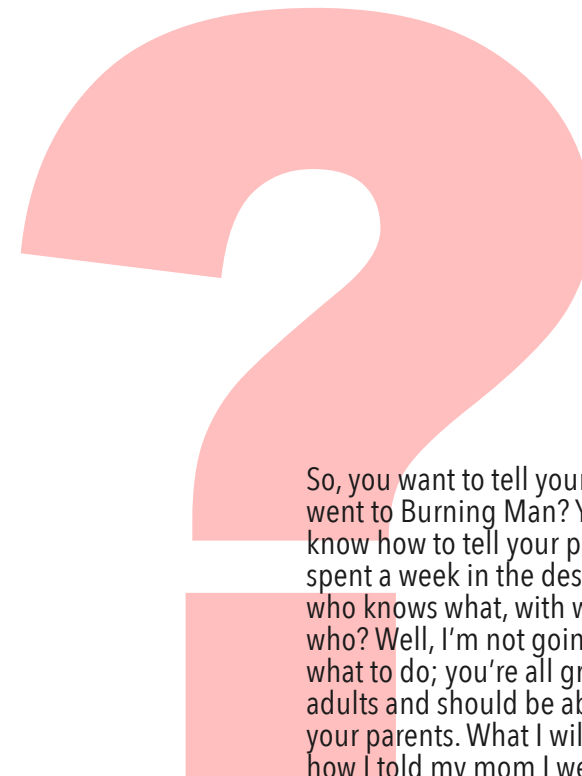
Thomas Ward



Mario Gomez



Hairy Balls' Tea. Now with pulp and available at Center Camp.



So, you want to tell your mom you went to Burning Man? You want to know how to tell your parents you spent a week in the desert doing who knows what, with who knows who? Well, I'm not going to tell you what to do; you're all grown-ass adults and should be able to talk to your parents. What I will tell you is how I told my mom I went to Burning Man.

My parents are slightly conservative and mildly overbearing, but ultimately caring people. I'm pretty sure at least one of them voted for Trump, so I was naturally a little hesitant tell them I was going to Burning Man. I had scheduled a trip to go see them right after Burning Man and I figured I'd tell them then, if at all. The complication arose when I had to tell them I was going to be incommunicado for a week.

Since I had decided I wasn't going to tell them beforehand, to avoid any potentially annoying and nagging phone calls about wellness and safety, I told my parents I was going camping in the desert with some friends for a week. As nosy and overbearing parents

So You Want to Tell Your Mom You Went to Burning Man?

—Tom LeMaistre

are wont to do, they wanted to know where I was camping, who I was going to be with, how they could get a hold of me, et cetera. A few hours later my brother texted me about being safe in the desert, to let someone know where I was going to be, and to tell him how he could get ahold of me. Fun times but, at the end of the day, they nag because they care.

Burning Man comes and goes, and I ask for advice from some of my friends. Bunny thinks I should just be direct and tell them so, after Burning Man, I decide that's what I'll do. I go to see them and they ask about my camping trip. It's now or never, so I say "Mom, Dad, I was actually at Burning Man. That's what I meant by camping in the desert with friends." Okay, here comes the onslaught of scoldings about drug use and safe sex and all that hippy-dippy nonsense, right? Wrong. My parents just said "Oh, we wish you would have told us. That's way safer than being in the desert alone with your friends." And that was that.

Moral of this story: just tell your fucking parents.

✂

3% OFF *One* **No Imagination Plane Ride**

Coupon valid from Sunday, December 1, 2019, to Tuesday, June 30, 2020. Limit one coupon per customer. This offer excludes the purchase of gift cards. All applicable taxes shall be payable on the full value of the merchandise. While supplies last.



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