

# • 1991 •

That wonderfully charged palindrome year of 1991 is one I've been wanting to write about for some time now. It counts as a personal favorite. I was 27, and freshly graduated from the Academy of Art at the end of 1990 [another great year].

The San Francisco Cacophony Society was in full flight, and I with it. Brian and Jill too!

## **The year begins...**

at Lake Tahoe with Craig and Brian for skiing and enjoying the casinos in New Years eve mode. It was a great time, but recalling concerns in the air about a war against Iraq soon about to become inevitable. Some of the drunken partying youth were expressing dismay about this in the streets out in front of the casinos.

Meanwhile, us bro's were enjoying a fun new year holiday.

Skiing the next day was fantastic fun, with Bri as the downhill expert, while Craig and I wiping out perpetually! We likened it to the Beatles perpetually wiping out while skiing in *Help!*

This was at Sierra Ski Ranch off of I-50.

Back home in the Mission, I wanted to start the year right, so I bought large canvases and built some solid stretcher bars. I also wanted to keep the education momentum going, so I took an Astronomy class at City College. [I had been also planning on taking John Dobson's telescope building class that year, but didn't due to funds ... but I more than made up for this in the following decade! ]

Massive protests against the Gulf war were frequent on Market street, which I joined walking partway, to add to the count.

What fortunately dominated my life during those times was the big fun with the San Francisco Cacophony Society! More late urban walks hosted by Sebastian Melmoth! A fun event that February was sister Jill's Operatic Banquet event! [a popular time, singing in the Italian restaurant! And surreal karaoke later at the Asian restaurant at 19th & Lincoln, where I sang a mock Swedish version of Yellow Submarine], Twin Peaks marathon at Nancy and Niks! A Day with Daedalus, repelling boulders atop Mt Tam! Peter's Blue party! [blue dress, food, drinks, lights, music themes...all the color blue! ] Dada art events by Ronn Rosen! My Burroughs/Gyson influenced cut-up literature event. and the fabulous formal dinner and waltzing on the Golden Gate Bridge! That was marvelous fun, and we all looked extraordinary. I had the tux with tails, and on my arm was the delightfully beautiful Marriane O'Keefe! And I [everyone] was quite looped on champagne.

It took a few hours before the bridge patrol caught on and kicked us off. These were very different times..today the event would barely last a few minutes.

Later that evening we joined forces with another Cacophony event of roller skating on the old shut down Embarcadero freeway ramp [most of us on foot, no skates] until a row of very serious riot police showed up, to find great relief and humor we are merely an eccentric group of formally clad seekers of unique fun, and not protesters. We were also glad that these riot cops with shields, guns and helmets could share a laugh! We were still illegally invading the ramp, so we had to leave. No problem, it was a full evening by then.

### **That February and March...**

I experienced a wonderful acoustic concert of Jerry Garcia with David Grisman! Attended with art college friend Jason, it was a first of a string of their acoustic shows at the Warfield theater.

Later that month the Grateful Dead launched their first run of the year, and broke out New Speedway Boogie! [first since 1970] An apt reaction to the gulf war.

A hot show that March was Todd Rundgren's 2nd Wind tour at the Warfield. Went with Jill and Brian, and loved it! The big band was colorfully dressed like Parliament funk, and it was a sharp performance.



I did this painting around then, based on a stunningly cosmic dream I had, of these astronomical spheres converging to create what seemed a portal to another dimension.

The millennia sped by, with a circulating phase of moons changing as the years flew, as if riding a time machine in the sky!

It was epic. No doubt influenced by my astronomy studies, and thoughts of the upcoming total solar eclipse! [more on that later]

The astronomy class was okay, even though the instructor was a bit dry. We had a few good nights with Saturn seen through CCSF's large refractor telescope, and we studied parallax, and had the homework of tracking the visible planets that season — by drawing them as dots on grid paper. But not me, I made an oil painting!

I was daring back then. Bicycling across the hills of San Francisco while carrying a painting under my arm with one hand. The wind nearly pulling it and me into traffic! Well I brought it in, and the teacher didn't even know how to react. The class was out-done here, and reacted passively.

Return to Tahoe, with more of my annual cross country skiing on Echoe Lake! That area entering desolation wilderness is a paradise to ski in.

Bri was doing downhill, who'd drop me off and pick me up later at a designated time, at the parking lot.

### **April...**

was a busy month of Cacophony events, so much that Rough Draft [the monthly newsletter] was two pages for the first time!

I schemed up a crazy event with help by Jason and his friend Floyd. A speaking in tongues event in the Sutro Baths cave at high tide and full Moon, costumed and combined with a marshmallow roast and stories around a fire. We lined the cave with candles to great effect. The weather balmy and clear. The perfect night! We had a large group of spirited participants, totally dialed into the weirdness! Strange chaos ensued! It was a one of a kind event, And with no police shutting us down.

[Sebastian Hyde years later drew a great comic strip of the event, found in the official Cacophony book. I helped with storyboarding and recollecting facts of the set and setting. But Seb pulled it into a fun semi-fictional story, with great aplomb!]

Earlier that April, Jason and I had crafted masks for the event. Mine came out particularly well, and currently survives at Seb's house.

### **I join the Haight-Ashbury Free Band!**

Thanks to Dan of Burning Man organizing, who had been asking if I'd like to play with them for some time. Dan played sax in this "out" jazz combo who I'd admired



at various Cacophony events, for their fearless leaps into improvisational jazz musical weirdness. I loved it!

That spring we played the crazy piano factory gig, dance studio rehearsals at 17th and Shotwell near me in the Mission, party at Nicks at 46 Belvedere in the Haight, and the Memorial Day deaf postal workers convention downtown at hotel le Meridian! A sea-crean odyssey: a Cacophony event in abandoned warehouse 6. All very unusual and highly unconventional out-there gigs.

I continued to play in the Free Band until mid-2001, often having Sunday afternoon jam sessions at Nick's.



### **Art exhibits of the season**

Great exhibition of Dutch paintings at the De Young, including Vermeer's "A Girl Writing a Letter" which I spent quite a lot of time with. On top of having that from the east coast, later was an amazing Tibetan mandala exhibit at the De Young, with ancient Buddhist art, and Tibetan monks creating a complex sand mandala right there in the museum.

### **May 21st, Robyn Hitchcock solo at the Kennel Club!**

A standout show, almost everyone was there! Brian and Jill got Minneapolis friend Pam from the airport just in time for the show.

Lots of new songs to soon end up on Perspex Island. When Robyn sang the new line "Call his toll-free number, 1-800-Reaper, ask for Dean!", everyone looked at me! [well at least Carrie, Lance, Seb and Jim!] Carrie would later exclaim "you made it into a Robyn song!"

It was a great time, with Robyn in great form.

The standout song was the rare unreleased 'The Vomiting Cross' [I have a recording of the show]

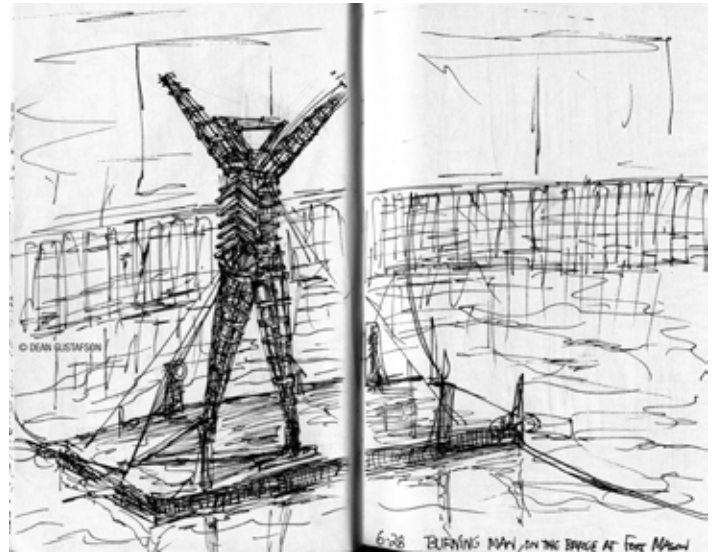
### **Early summer Burning Man promo event at Fort Mason.**

Burning Man grows as an anticipated event. Last year [1990] was such a life-altering time, that everyone knew it should happen again! But with no idea how huge it would eventually become.

This promotional event featured the Man raised on a floating dock between the piers, and fully lined with neon. It looked fantastic on the bay!

There was a Burning Man documentary showing in the Bayfront Gallery inside there

on the end of the pier—featuring most of us from 1990. A big crowd showed up that evening, like a good art opening. We had a ritual lowering and raising of the Man, with crowd participation pulling the rope, guided by Dan Miller. I was the solo drummer in 1990, but now joined by drumming enthusiast Bob Gelman, who was totally into it! Time to expand. So we both played drums at that Fort Mason event, and we sounded good, having a good flowing drum duet! It was a terrific summer event, everyone was there.



And fun to see myself drumming in the documentary showing on a relatively large video screen!

The neon lined Man was out on display on that floating dock for a few good weeks. I enjoyed bicycling by several times to view it from the hill, in variously lit skies.

### **I always wanted to see a total solar eclipse.**

Intensely so. I'd seen a few partials, but now was the year of one of the longest solar eclipses in duration would be over this continent. This is too irresistible to miss. Mexico was the center of the greatest totality. I thought of possibly traveling down there solo, but the better idea was to rally the Cacophony Society to potentially turn this into a group "zone trip"!

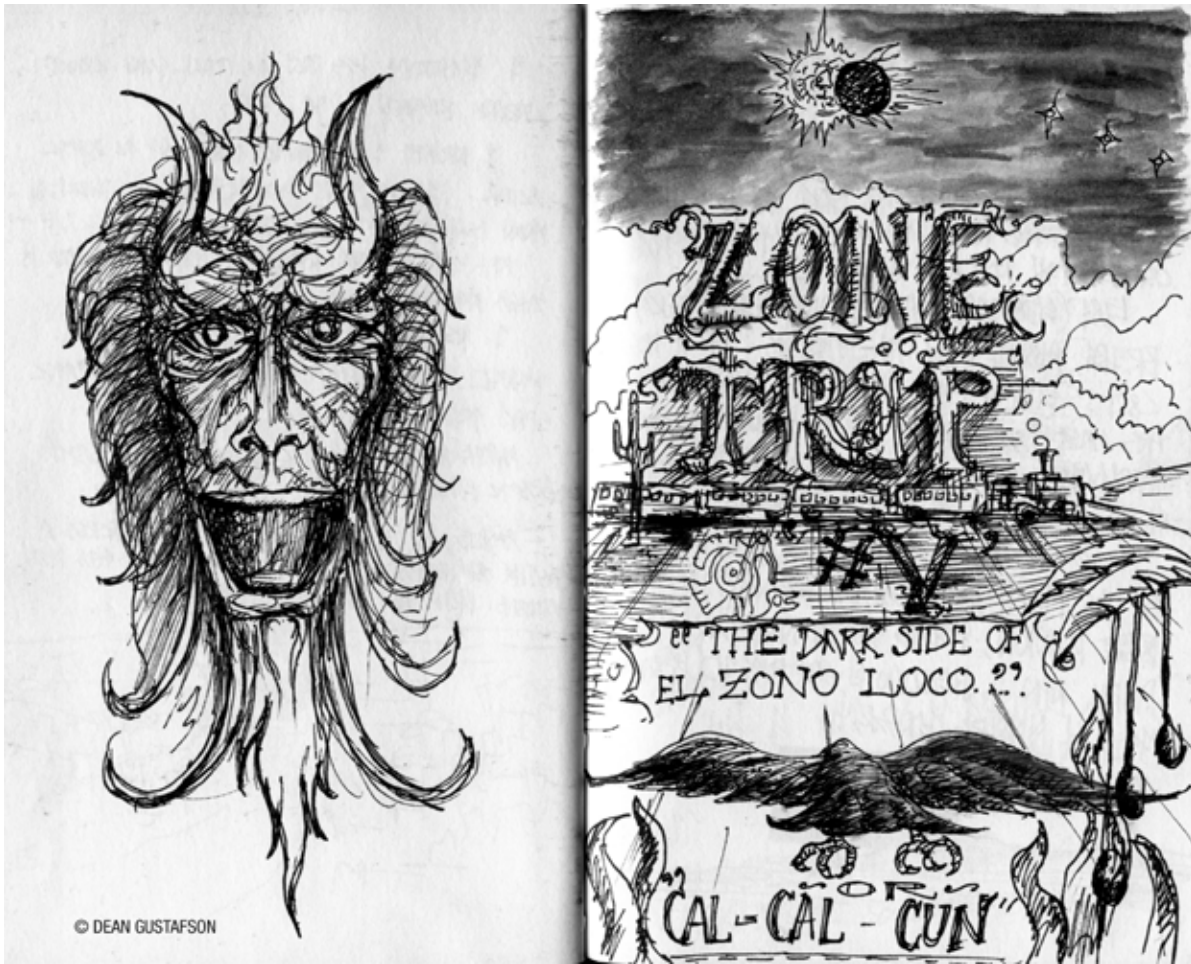
I brought it up at a Cacophony meeting that spring, inspiring only a few members, which ultimately turned out to be perfect. Jon "Mister Science" Alexandr responded positively! As did John Law! Brian was initially into this too!

My original idea with Brian was to drive to Baja, being the easiest shot to center line from here. John Law had a better idea – to take the cheap train from Mexicali to Tepic, where the peak eclipse would reach maximum of 7 minutes – one of the lengthiest eclipses of the century! John had good experience traveling that way, and his idea appealed. So we teamed up for meetings over my atlas, planning our route. Drive in Brian's Jeep to San Diego, to stay at Bri's good friend Dale's apartment. The next day we'd drive to Calexico. Dale takes the Jeep, while we catch the train.

While planning, good Minneapolis friend Anthony became highly interested in our approach, and decided to fly out and join the party!

So before summer began, we had a plan mapped out for a zone trip of five participants!

Here are notes of that truly amazing trek to the Moon covered Sun:



## July — The great total eclipse of 1991. Recalling Zone Trip #5 “the Dark Side of El Zono Loco” [an anecdotal summary]

We drove off from Concord in good spirits at 2am in Brians Jeep to the Allman Bros on KFOG.

Hours later on I-5, we passed through LA briefly after sunrise, saw the smog, the Capitol records building and the Bullwinkle sculpture.

Waited at the San Diego airport for Tony who needed to get on a suit to re-board from Minneapolis with his special business ticket supplied by his brother who worked for the airlines. (why the dress code!?)

We drove to Mexicali to check it out for train access, then returned to get Tony. Stayed at Dales in San Diego and had a nice visit.

The next day.

Listened to Lawrence of Arabia soundtrack & Dead Can Dance ‘Within the realm of a dying sun’ while driving through the vast Yuba desert. We passed by many impressive boulders along the way.

In Mexicali, gave Dale the Jeep. We entered a new foreign zone! We got in line for the train, waiting for hours.

The price? 42,600 pesos = about 8 dollars!

Intrigued that there were drums illustrated on the paper money!  
Was unable to board the train in time for decent seats.  
Suffered a sleepless night with stench and discomfort, with my bag as the chair...  
what an experience!  
Getting up to look out from between the train cars. Desert stars over saguaros. The  
waning Moon, Scorpius looking big, the Milky Way.

Next day was better... felt in a dream, with cerveza  
flowing and cactuses seen for miles in desert heat.  
Reading Arthur C. Clarkes 2061 on the ride.  
Shared seats with a kind family, grandma, young mom,  
son and little baby.  
Ate only trail mix, loaded in my bag.  
In the town of Benjamin Hill on a stop, a local guy with  
a boombox and guitar gets on and plays some jolly  
tunes for us.. I only had a small handful of pesos to give.

At a night stop at a station (Vespugio?) for over an  
hour, kids directed us to an iron crank faucet between  
the trains and doused with refreshing water.. aaah  
It's so nice after riding the stink train for a day and a  
half. ( memory like a dream)  
Braved my first taco at this stop.

Next day, more jungle, less desert, the landscape became more interesting and the  
train cleared out some.

George Washingtons profile likeness was spotted in the distant mountains. (Jon A  
spotted this first, we had a good laugh!)

Laughs have kept this train ride bearable! (and Tecate)  
The train slowed down in these parts. Thatched huts with satellite  
dishes, and some not so luxurious quarters in abandoned trains  
along the way.

Mangos picked along the way by locals and handed out!  
In Mazatlan, braved some local shrimp with plenty of hot sauce. A  
local gave a wild laugh when I poured it on. A Zone trip moment!  
Rode into Tepic very very slowly.  
Arrive in Tepic! The locals bid us heartfelt 'Adios' with handshakes  
and smiles.

5 unwashed grungy gringos with diverse hair styles unloaded their weary selves off  
of the stink train.

Locals yelled 'Hey peace, man' in lighthearted jest at some of our hippie style.



Tepic El Centro a short walk away.. a gorgeous square! The Spanish plateresque style catholic cathedral was beautiful. We enjoyed wandering the town. Found a hotel, split the rooms and slept marvelously well. Tony had some Moody Blues, Floyd and Donovan on a tape player. There was some calm rain that first night.



Next day of exploring Tepic and research for the trip to the eclipse..a VW bus was rented and a trip to the ocean was had! to the town of San Blas, met up with 2 guys from Colorado, and a Belgian eclipse chaser. Swam in the warm waters, drank plenty of Pacifica cerveza, having a great time! it was a vacation resort town feeling. Found a different hotel in Tepic.



## 7/11/91

Tony got us up to a Donovan tape..groovy!  
Went to the 'Wendas' (?) cafe for breakfast, hanging around with US expatriate, Jeff, who we met there. He was once in the Patty Duke show, and loved his photos of young pretty local girls.  
Off to the highways in search of the dark side of the zone.  
Leaning towards the coast, we began early in a burned area clearing , with another



eclipse chaser (Paul, a Texan) with telescope and photography setup.  
The family who apparently owned the land, passively let us go up the hill.

Through the #14 welders glasses,  
we began to notice with pure joy;  
first contact!

Also noticed invading clouds from  
all directions. (can you say Heavy  
Cumulous Thunderheads?!)  
We wisely left.



In high hopes, we wished for a  
miracle of speed and direction, Brian  
asks what was the ancient Aztec

chant that calls up the Quetzalcoatl? I responded with "Cal Cal Coon!" \* So we all  
began chanting the chant... "CAL CAL COON, CAL CAL COON, CAL CAL COON"

....

Just then, the omen bird flies in front of us for about 50 yards: a raptor with a 6 foot  
wing span! realized in total visceral expression of our loud voices raised in united  
surprise!

[\* We were discussing this with Jeff in the restaurant the day before, but actual chant  
was "Koo Kool Kahn", that I recalled it incorrectly as "Kal Kal Koon" during those  
moments in the VW.]

Zooming through the jungle and onto the main highways, dising our San Blas plan,  
we headed north towards Tuxpan, the exact center line of the eclipse.

Racing the clouds, high anticipations by us all and expert driving by Melmoth.

I looking out of the VW window, up through protective lenses watching the eclipse  
build. Moon slowly covering the Sun.

Many minds working on a rapid plan of direction, successfully!

Careening down the road, the VW bus door handle is broken off by Jon A in tense  
anticipation!

We all laugh!

Surreal lighting as we veered to the tiny jungle town of Yago, stopping along the  
way for some pre-eclipse pics, then decided to go forward yet, to the train tracks..  
The point of arrival was made!



Kids on a stack of railroad ties, darkened skies, and one New Yorker was already there. We had minutes to go for totality! Merely a thin crescent of the Sun left visible. Welders glasses about to be temporarily jettisoned, as the diamond ring effect gives way....! sparkly sunlight shines off of the side of the moon; beautiful! A rapid blinding spot in my eyes as that occurred, then quickly readjusted to view the total eclipse of the sun.

Dusk had become dark, as the stars and planets Mercury, Jupiter and Venus appeared in a fine line to the east.

A 360 degree glow around the horizon under the dark noon sky.

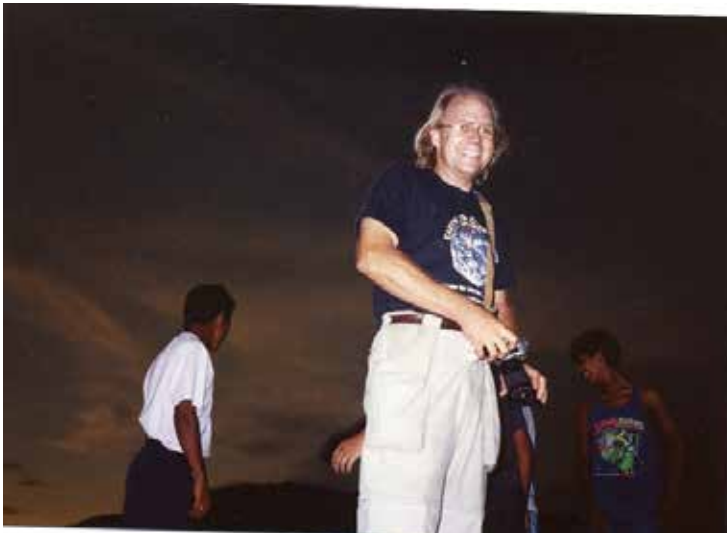
Pigs squealed, birds chirped, crickets sounded.

We were in the room the size of the sky, and some one turned a light off.

The corona around the moon ! Words fail to properly depict.

7 minutes of astronomical bliss. A miniature eternity for an eclipse.

I drew a sketch of the eclipse live, watched the horizon, saw the amazed faces of others, Tony played a snippet of Pink Floyds Dark Side of the Moon, examined the corona, pondered the phenomenon as it occurred. Heck, I drew a live sketch of the eclipse! Amazing how there was enough time to do these things in one eclipse!



## A GRAND SUCCESS!

As the eclipse waned, we followed this by going to the swimming hole nearby, with

the gang of kids we'd just shared the cosmic event with. Arriving at the water, we were suddenly in a massive downpour, and excellently timed! We had clear skies for the eclipse, and now two hours later it was pouring like a monsoon. The dozen or so local teens were showing off their diving prowess from the trees, and John Law joined them in being a daredevil.

Soaked in the rain, Brian and I shared a moment of exotic wonder, while eating freshly picked mangoes — as if we were starring in an adventure movie with a happy conclusion.

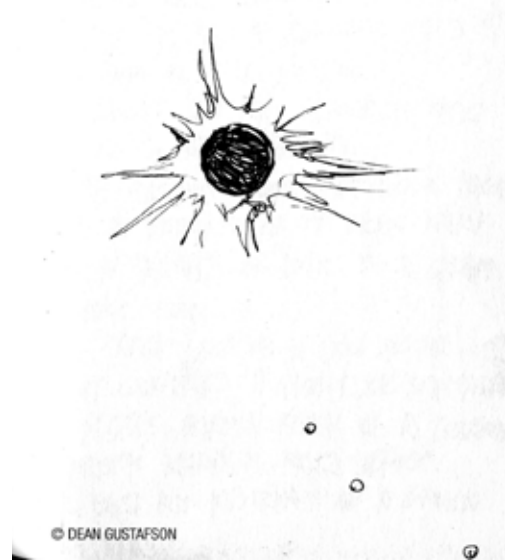
When the rain stopped, we had a little parade to the small town center of Yago, where the adults were now out of their hiding.

What a great day — one of my [and everyone else's] best ever !

We took a bus from Tepic back to the border, spending a bit more, but very worth it for the added comfort and time.

Met Dale in San Diego after enjoying Tijuana. After staying at Dales, we found out that one of us brought in a stowaway scorpion !

When home, I immediately began this painting...



## August '91...

was a great month too, spending more quality time at 1907 Golden Gate, being the center of Cacophony.

Joe had a fun 30th birthday party at Marx Meadows in the park, on a foggy 8/8! Barbecue, ales, frisbees, friends, and combustible toy rockets.

More good concerts that month, was seeing the largest lineup of Yes at Concord Pavilion with Bri. Meat Puppets at the Warfield with Jim and Earl. And more random bands at Paradise Lounge, south of Market.

There was a free concert in Golden Gate park that summer, featuring The Band, Santana, KD Lang and others, where I ran into dear Minnesota friend Dhaivyd Hilgendorf! Sporting long blonde dreadlocks, he stood out. He was now living in Fairfax! Which was great, and we shared many great Bay Area times for the following 6 years.

## Black Rock desert, Burning Man 1991

John Law picks me up in the morning at my Mission flat, with the Man in the back of the big U-haul truck. We set off to an office in Oakland to get a fax from the BLM officiating Burning Man as a legal event! We were cackling upon receiving this....the Cacophonists, with Burning Man officially okay'd by government?! HA! We never expected this.

Next stop, Pleasant Hill to sister Jills office at an electrical supplies company. ...to get stainless-steel poles, donated to use as sign marker poles.

Then we set off for Nevada, alongside Seb and Kevin and two young ladies, driving M2's 5:04 special — the earthquake crushed Olds Cutlass!

Arriving at dusk, to a stunning waning Moon rise on the playa, that resembled a nuclear explosion while low across the playa. It was a cosmic first night out there on the empty vastness of the playa, with only a few of us present. A great start to a magic week.

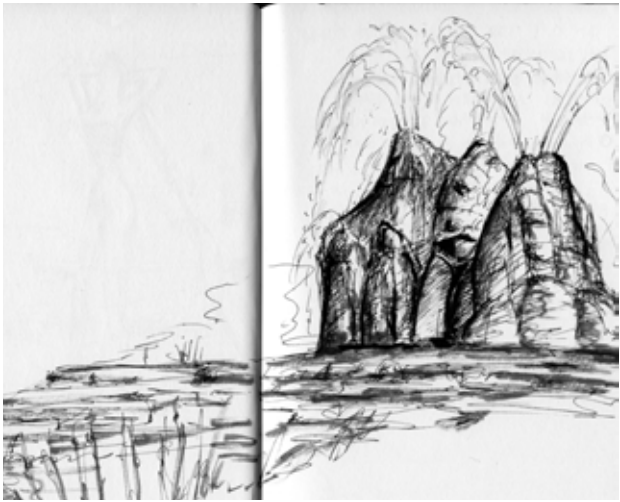
Funny, I pitched my tent a few hundred yards away from the truck, thinking it was an okay place to start camp. When Jerry James, Bill Binzen and a few others representing Burning Man arrived in the morning after finding us, they had more specific ideas about the layout. Relative to where John arbitrarily parked the truck, they wanted the Man to be set up a few hundred yards west...exactly where my tent was! So a few of us dragged it away to where camps edge was to be. The ironic humor and significance





sulphuric geyser emitting both cold water and scaldingly hot water at once, from a towering protrusion of bizarre sulphuric forms of deep orange color. Its blend of waters flow down over chemical strata, and feed the large pool, and its branching tributaries surrounded by the only patches of greenery around for several miles. An amazing oasis a few miles west of the playa. Privately owned, and at the time was okay to trespass if donations were left at their house door a short distance away.

We who arrived to set up the event early were fortunate . We had the place to ourselves for days and nights! Though that year it never became too populous at the springs, with maybe a few dozen people there during the events peak. Over the next few years it became overcrowded, then eventually banned from visitors altogether by the owners.



The place was magic. Surreal, earthy, sculptural, with that distinctive sulphur aroma, steam rising in continuous large plumes, its sound of jets, the strange colorful chemical strata, the large swimmable pool of perfect temperature... and there was an old crane set up near the pool for jumping from into the water!

One could never be too careful when approaching the geyser closely. If perchance to slip, you'd become seriously burned. [this occurred to someone later, sadly] We were VERY lucky to

have survived unharmed during our risky walks near the source, for the sake of getting a better look. We were young, sure-footed, but a bit dumb to approach so closely. Swimming in the large pool was safe though. The temperature was heaven, especially at night. A great way to cleanse the days sweat and playa dust away. You'd feel warm waves of water coming from the sources direction, with cooling water the farther away. A number of us spent a lot of quality time there that year, and during subsequent years until 1998. [not always during Burning Man]

### **The next day...**

was when the crowds showed up, officially starting the event. The familiar friends, and more who were unfamiliar, unlike the previous year. Brian arrived with my drumkit! Jill may have driven separately? Ethyl Ketone was there, and with Eric and Corey, they were the vintage rifle club of the event — and with the style to match. They camped near me, so we had some good times spent having breakfast at their camp. [all I had was a pup tent. They had chairs and table, and kindly welcomed me over]

P showed up and set up a cocktail party camp. Jon Alexandr, Joe [my roommate and good friend] and Jane, Mary and Brewster, Annie, Nancy and Nik, Harley, Dawn,

Peter Doty, Peter Fields, Jenny Lynn, Marc, Martha, and several more familiar folks from Cacophony and 1907 Golden Gate.

I dressed up in white sheets, Arab style. Wise clothing to wear in that heat, I learned that week.

To add to the costume and environment, I carried a copy of 'The seven pillars of wisdom' and would spontaneously read inspired passages to people along the way. Many who couldn't tell who I was, with face covered.

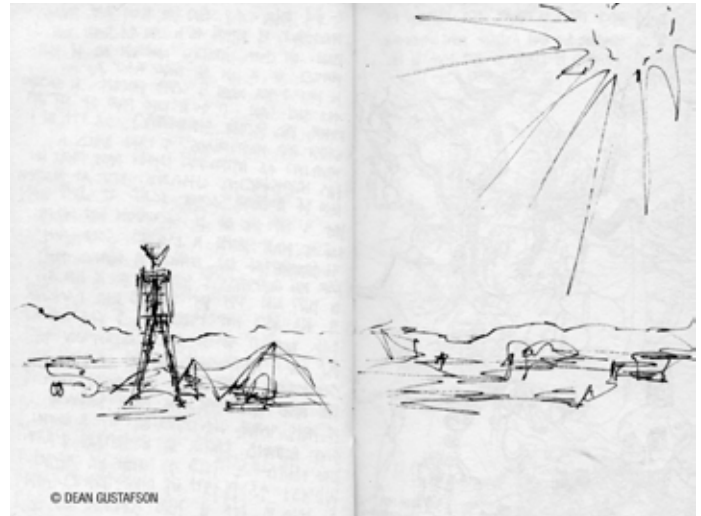
At one point I passed a woman in a black Arabian outfit with dark eyes. She stops to face me, and says "I'm afraid if we touched, there would be sparks"

<whew!>

The playa was perfect that year, with hot days and comfortable nights. I spent quality time walking the playa for miles, and getting rides to Fly Springs at day and late night.

It was a utopia.

I believe attendance was around 300, in keeping with the subsequent years of each year growing exponentially.



During the day, a ritualistic reading occurred at central camp. Bob Gelman had several drums out and generously invited me to play with. I donned the horned mask I made that spring, to good effect. Peter Fields and Dale Scott led the recitations and procession, while Bob and I drummed a nice groove for it. Great moments! Bob was excellent for drum duo playing, and enthusiastic for the burn the following night!

## Day of The Burn

I woke up in my small tent to my cheapo trail mix and water breakfast, when Erik notices this paltry ration to generously make me an omelette and tea! In quality style too, using old military cookware. That started my day right!

Someone was playing the extraordinary Lawrence of Arabia soundtrack —probably Ethyl Ketone. When she wasn't out at the shooting range with Erik and Corey with their vintage rifles, she'd be at camp writing in her sketchbook journal. [handwriting backwards !]

Meanwhile, Seb and Kevin were extraordinary mud men again, with a primitive camp. They lived the impressive part as shamanic desert mediums, conjuring a unique vibe all their own.

More great playa and Fly Springs times. There's something naturally surrealistically psychedelic about that area — especially when spending several days there. While walking out on the playa for a mile or more, there is absolutely nothing as tall as you. The silence is an existential void. The seemingly endless cracks on the playa start to speak to you in a foreign visual language. The mirrorlike mirages in the vast distances seem as alien, science fiction apparitions more vivid than what seems possible. The sulphuric hot springs appear as extra-planetary formations...where even the dragonflies seem unearthly.

And becoming stranger by each year — the people, in costume, or mud only, and only a few nudists during those first few years. [this was far before the term “burner” was ever used.]

The desert brings out some cosmic mojo ....and I was not using any drugs — the playa zone itself was the psychedelic experience!

After a surreal swim at Fly Springs, along goddess women and coloring book dragonflies, it was soon approaching the night of the burn!

## **Night of the burn**

Got back to camp, changed into my tuxedo with tails [like last year], got the drumset with Brians good help, all before sundown.

Convened with Bob and more drummers he found to participate. He took good charge, to make this a good drum team. While I was the esteemed solo drummer for last year, I wasn't much of a social organizer. I did suggest that we spread out to balance the sound from around the man, but Bob was right to keep the team united.

Everyone amped up for this bigger than last year event, and it was different. I missed David Warren that year, who was the igniter of 1990. This was more dramatic by having nude fire dancing woman, Crimson Rose ignite the man. This felt more staged, as a performance art event.

Rolling on the drums with the drum team while this went on, was a spectacle I was more in the mood for taking it all in from a distance — different to the previous year when I was so absorbed in intensive solo drumming at the exclusion of all else.

So after a short while I simply stopped playing, to listen and watch. I really wanted to walk around to appreciate this scene! But I didn't want to leave my drums, so Brian and I packed them up. That part wasted my time, since the peak of the event was going on, the man fell, while moving the drums back.

[years later, Bob expressed that I “wasn't really there.” But even though it may have looked that way, that was actually not true...I was there in a different frame of mind, to hear and see more than performing.]

It was still great, it was a perfect desert night, the party went into the wee small hours,



and the remaining burning man embers glowed on the ground for several hours after. I took some quality solo time in, by walking way out on the playa under a thousand stars you felt you could reach up and touch. Then a spectacular rising of the waning Moon, in still, windless silence...and the occasional haunting sound of a distant train horn/whistle.

## **The last day**

Off to Fly Springs the next morning to clean off the dust and bid goodbye to the awesome structures, where a good bunch of us were enjoying examining the towers of sulphur. Friend Earl Baker was there, but I rarely saw him that week. He was camping in his car far from camp, and wandered the burn night fairly anonymously. He was driving back to San Francisco that very hour and offered me a lift. I was ready to get back home to Mission so I agreed. Got my tent and bag, told Bri so he wouldn't have to worry where I disappeared to, and we drove off a playa in Earl's car. Stocked with cassette tapes of the Meat Puppets [who we both with roommate Jim enjoyed live one month previously]. So whenever I'm listening to 'Up on the Sun' or 'Forbidden Places', I think of that fantastic, bizarre, colorful, other-worldly Black Rock zone trip of palindrome year 1991.

## **Next up: Decompression.**

The first Aquavit party at 1907 Golden Gate! For my 28th birthday

Freshly back from the extraordinary Black Rock desert experience, and glad for a theme party at eccentric party central, with everyone in good spirits. More of a core 1907 party than being Burning Man-wide, hosted generously by the esteemed and delightful diva of quality parties – Miss P Segal. And her many roommates; Kevin, Marc, John, Lance, Harley, Dawn, and Cacophonists Ethyl Ketone, Erik von Erik, Seb, Annie, Melmoth, Brian, Jill, Jim, and I think Joe and Jane, and more...

The theme was the Scandinavian toasting drink: Aquavit! The ceremony entails that all lift their filled shot glass simultaneously, look at the person across the table with eyes meeting, say "Skøl", drink the shot in one gulp, returning the emptied shot glass and eyes back to the same position. The glasses are then refilled and the ritual repeated. The ritual skøling may begin rather formal and maybe stoic. But by the 4th shot it becomes nearly impossible to not be in a state of laughter! The party got more lively as it progressed. A memorable highlight was when Erik, in his inimitable fin de seicle officers style, commanded a special toast — of announcing the bringing of an authentic Russian tank to the desert next year! Followed by drinking a shot then throwing the glass into the fireplace fire!

This went over unanimously as many followed suit, and smash went the glasses into the fire!

Except poor P, whose glassware was being destroyed without consent!

Her grief and disbelief didn't last too long, recognizing the eventfulness of the moment. Spirits were too high to feel anything but joy. So several vintage shot glasses were trashed, including from one of the most hilarious toasts shared with Jim ; when we got to a "skøl!", several hysterical shots later to clink our glasses together too exuberantly, causing them to shatter in our hands!

We didn't get cut, but sure did collapse into helpless laughter. It was a party of wild abandon by that point....lively, but no one got sick. Not much drink mixing helped, and fortification by plenty of suitable Scandinavian hor'deovres to buffer the alcohol. Amidst the loud joyous chatter, I ended up making out with the beautiful hostess beneath the table!

It was a grand birthday, and a memorable party for everyone.

## **September**

That September our great friend roommate Joe moved in with Jane. He was reluctant to leave after being there since 1984, but only moved a few blocks away to Bartlett street, so we still met up frequently.

Fortunately for me, I got his larger room and life changed for the better. The westward view of Twin Peaks was a welcome change from the street view, watching the fog pour over the peaks like an avalanche of whipped cream in slow motion...then burn off before it reached the Mission.

And Jim and I found a great roommate and new lifelong friend, Matt Granz! A mega talented guitarist and songwriter, and all around friendly fellow. He came by through the Roommate Referral service located in the Haight. He stopped by to check out the place while I was playing my LP of Zappa's 'Uncle Meat'. We all instantly got along well, much more readily than the other candidates we'd been interviewing — he's in! We had great times at the Bryant pad soon after he moved in... catching up, cranking tunes, homebrew, inexpensive Mission burritos, and walks up Bernal Heights.

## **JB and the Conspiracy of Equals**

Discovered my new favorite local band at Paradise Lounge that September; Josef Brinkmann and the Conspiracy of Equals.

I met Kimberly there, and enjoyed this refreshingly high quality 6-piece band, with Josef on accordion, vocals and guitar, Bonnie on cello, Eva and Morgan on violins, Dave on drums and Chris on bass. They had what they called a 'Slavadelic' sound, and could they rock it! I fell in love with their sound [and the adorable violinists!] and caught their shows regularly for the next year until they unfortunately split.

The fun coincidence was that Matt was there, who was a longtime fan, going back to Josefs '80's band The Defectors! So back home he told me all about them, and even had tapes ! [I made copies]

## **new Robyn Hitchcock album**

The album release of that September was Perspex Island by Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians! with a new 90's problem — I could only find cd's and cassettes of it in the shops, and I'm a vinyl spinning guy, without a CD player at the time. So I begrudgingly bought the tape. [years later I found a rare vinyl copy]

It's a fab album of jangle pop, with always great Robyn lyrics, and a terrific opener 'Oceanside', with its driving 6/8 beat, like a call to jump on the bike to charge out to the ocean — which I certainly frequently did !!!

## **28 was great**

A wonderful time of appreciating our electric Bay Area autumn.....extraordinary friends and family, art, music, bike rides, all in the beautiful San Francisco Bay Area with its richness of powerful nature mixed with culture. Especially enriching, was spending more quality time with the adorable and widely loved literary hostess of 1907 — Miss P Segal! She was the leader of the Marcel Proust support group with Cacophony, whose goal was for participants to read at least ten pages per day of Proust's massive tome 'Remembrance of Things Past' [the English Montcrief translation of 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu']. I became interested in this literary excursion into detailed memories, with steady strings of eloquent, insightful philosophies and social observations, and so I joined the reading of it as a latecomer. [The reading task began that February. I started in August.] She gave me the silver bound soft cover version for a great birthday present!

The character of San Francisco was so incredibly attractive in details... the old Victorian houses that line the streets with their verticality and old world charm... and the diverse views they inhabit. Some were dilapidated, some pristine, on steep streets, urban zones, parks and ocean views...and I'd enjoyed becoming a connoisseur of SF views from different homes by now. 2720 Bryant was the one I lived in. Details inside of these classic buildings could be more elaborate than their external appearances. 1907 Golden Gate was a rich example of this — with its stained redwood interior of classic details built in 1902, one couldn't help but feel a sense of affluence when inside enjoying the smaller, more spontaneous parties that would emerge with its denizens, usually in the wee small hours.

Nicks pad on Belvedere street was a good interior, where we had Free Band sessions on Sundays. On Downey street, also in the Haight, Peter lived in a fine Victorian where we enjoyed his uniquely fun theme parties during those years.

There are many more fabulous SF homes I'd experienced, so these are just to name a few of the most familiar.

## Phish

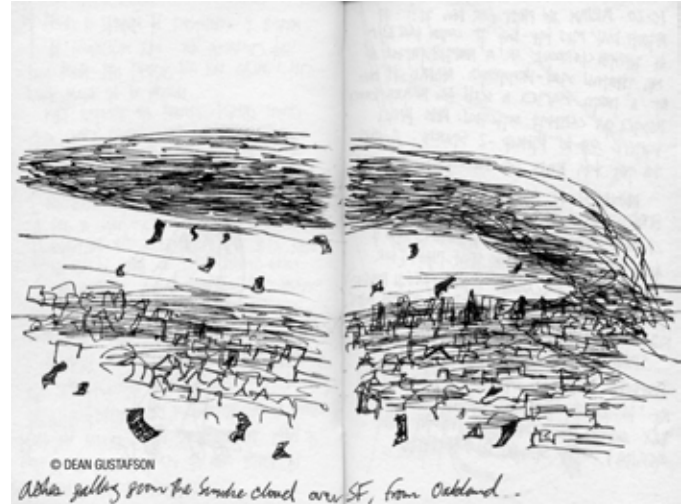
I'd heard of them, and Dhaivyd encouraged me to get a ticket, for \$11 at the Great American Music Hall.

WOW !! We had a blast! This band has amazing musical chops, and humor. Got the cassette of their album 'Junta' at the show, which got a lot of play that fall. So those songs tend to call up that autumn.

## October 20,

Sunday morning awakening to what looked like storm clouds outside the window, enthused me to jump on the bike and charge up Bernal Heights to see this. However, there were what seemed to be black leaves falling from the sky. A fire!

From my perspective it appeared to come from Potrero Hill, and the air was smoky. I raced back, shut the windows and tuned into the radio to discover that this was the Oakland hills fire.



Later, Kimberly came over, and drove us up to Twin Peaks, where the views of the fires were vivid across the bay. Many homes and lives were devastated that day.

## Nearing Halloween,

it was paper maché mask making time, with Dhaivyd, Jim and Matt. We took over the kitchen table for a few days. Playing the Phish 'Junta' tape frequently, and plenty by Robyn Hitchcock, where we crafted a fun set of outrageous Halloween masks! Jim made a huge horned beast head of rich blues, constructed by a true sculptor! Matt made a freaky looking owl mask! Dhaivyd made a towering alien freak head, with blinking lights — well engineered! I made this horned grinning Sardonius devil. Great fun!

A series of Grateful Dead shows were coming soon, by the 27th, Dhaivyd wore his new mask. I brought the cave shaman mask I made in April instead. It turned out to be cumbersome at the show, so only brought it to that one.

Sadly, Bill Graham was killed in a helicopter crash that week. That turned the time into a series of tributes.

## Halloween party at 1907 Golden Gate!

[on the Saturday] those were the all timer San Francisco Halloween parties!

Went to 1907 with Matt, Jim, and Dhaivyd, making a dramatic entry, playing musical

instruments wearing our new handmade masks ! I had a hand held drum, Matt on mandolin! I think Dhaivyd on drum, and Jim on guitar. [?] We were the house band in the crowded hallway for awhile!

Fabulous costumes everywhere...a crazy good night!

I missed the actual Halloween GD show that Thursday, but glad to have attended the big Castro street party, totally loving the many creative costumes, while showing off my grinning devil mask to good responses.

Perfect weather, phenomenal costumes abounded, and ran into several friends.

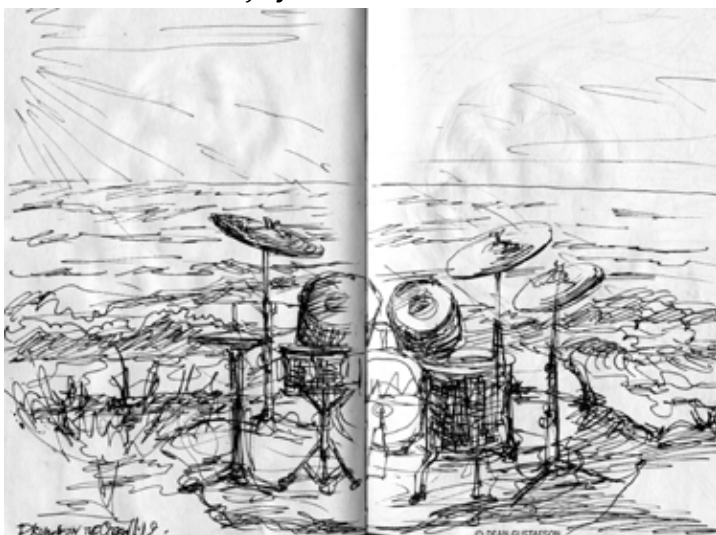
## November

November 2nd was Day of the Dead in my area of the Mission. Being part of the candle holders in the parade was a good experience. Then Dhaivyd and I went to catch Josef Brinkmann and the Conspiracy of Equals at the Bottom of the Hill! [a live music club at Potrero Hill]

I think this was also the same night as the 1907 Golden Gate Halloween — we really packed it in back then!

Sunday the 3rd was the big Bill Graham memorial show in the Polo Fields ....and this event was HUGE. Met Dhaivyd [who made hats that day!], Joe and Jane, met their British friend Vaunie, at a good spot on the field. CSNY, Santana, Robin Williams, and more, with the Grateful Dead headlining. It was an amazing, and very moving day. I ended up riding bikes with my new friend Vaunie to get dinner in the Inner Sunset. We had good times that season riding around San Francisco.

Around this time, Jason brought my drum kit to cliffsides over the beach at Half Moon Bay, for a great afternoon of jamming with the waves! We invited fellow Academy student Bing from China, who was curious what we do for fun. It was culturally unusual for him, but enjoyed.



More good Conspiracy of Equals shows around town. Including one where they opened for **The Mekons** at the Kennel Club that November! [they played too loudly, but was a rousing gig]

An album of the season was 'Curse of the Mekons' with nordic runes on the cover! Also caught Trip Shakespeare at Slims, with Jim and Earl. Fab show, only \$3!

That late November was my first trip to

the east coast, to DC/Virginia. The art in the Mall was extraordinary! where I spent days fully absorbed by it all. surprised to see so many Da Vinci drawings in the special exhibit about 500 years since 1492.

## December

A notable December show was seeing Bowie up close at the Warfield! Closely enough to see his mismatched pupils.

Cacophony had the White Christmas event in the bunkers of Fort Funston...all painted white, white tablecloths, white food, white clothes, and on a full Moon. The weather was perfect that night along the ocean.

For Christmas in Concord, I went with Dad to the Nordic House in Oakland to get lutefisk, lefse, sylte, for a fine Scandinavian holiday with family. Mom loved it! As did we all. Complete as a proper Christmas Eve with flamed glögg!

Ended the year at Paradise Lounge in SoMar San Francisco, for Josef Brinkmann and the Conspiracy of Equals, and the lounge act Bud E. Luv who brought in the new year with fun, loungy pastiche and champagne. Brian, Joni, Craig and Karen dressed up and joined, and met Matt and Kimberly there too, for a fun New Years eve into 1992... another fab year!



**In 1991** I made a few good paintings, and several that were proto-experiments that flopped, but opened the way to better works made the following year. Along the way, several sketchbooks were active.

It was another year of working home remodeling for Brian, though sporadically. So it was one of my poorest financial years. Ah, but so rich in art, culture, homebrewing, love, friends, exploring SF, music, events, experiences...all during a time when you could afford San Francisco on a shoestring budget. These were active DIY boho/beatnik artist years. It was a divine privilege. Privilege that today's youth are not having, but genuinely deserve. I count myself very lucky to have experienced this particular time and space, and in the style I discovered and chose to create within.

– Dean Gustafson; December 2018

