Welcome to Decompression

Danger Ranger, BRC Director of Genetic Engineering

He appeared out of the darkness, with a bottle of whiskey dressed in a black robe with his similarly dressed adjutant. Dusty Danger talked with me while I worked gate duty on a starry night at Black Rock Station, the Burning Man Work Ranch in the Hualapai Valley north of Black Rock City.

"We are pushing the boundaries of what a city is," Danger said, passing me the bottle. "Burning Man is an advanced global society. People spend a week together in the desert, but, more often than not, maintain contact throughout the year via internet, travel and regional gatherings. The community is whole even when it is apart physically."

Genetic Engineering is not the first job that comes to mind when one thinks of Burning Man, and its behind-the-scenes production. There is possibly a theme camp in Rock City LLC.

"Experiences are what bring people back," Danger said.

These experiences are one of Danger's major interests. Many people work while on the Playa, and their experiences are framed by providing the infrastructure for BRC, entertainment, and public safety. "During the event, my primary function is to recognize emerging patterns and to remember subtle occurrences that push the boundaries of our reality," Danger said.

He records the event in myriad journals filled with copious notes taken during the event. "It can take the temperature of the city without egress and access and how organized the system is."

Danger noted that the slight increase in numbers made 2003 the largest BRC event, and while it was "an unnerving thing to be there," he still found the event to be a "ghastly display, the GGLA says they will take the Goat from the hands of Larry Harvey, but the Goats Rights Advocacy Group claims the CP has retained the goat at their base at Black Rock Ranch since 2001. But some question the sincerity of the CP.

A group of BRC Citizens, identifying themselves as the Great Goat Liberation Army (GGLA) sent an anonymous member, known only as X, to speak with the BRC. "The Chupacabra Policia are nothing more than vigilante thugs bent on looting, raping, and exploiting animals," claims X. According to X, the Goat has indeed been subject to abuse and neglect, not at the hands of Larry Harvey, but by the CP themselves. X, herself has made several visits to the Black Rock Work Ranch to verify the CP has been properly caring for the Goat. "The Goat has been living in indescribably inhumane conditions. What I saw there will haunt my nightmares forever. We have done our best to continue returning to visit and care for the Goat, but the abuse only gets worse!"

"X spoke with one unwitting member of the Chupacabra. The arrogance of these men is unnerving. (Name withheld) drunkenly sat on the steps to the Man bragging that he had removed the velvet amas of BRC, and displayed it in his living room. X has strong opinions as to who is really responsible for abusing the Goat. In the past, the GGLA has advocated only peaceful means of dealing with the CP, however, in light of this week's ghastly display, the GGLA says they will take any measures necessary to rescue the Goat from the CP. "The Chupacabra Policia is holding the Goat as a political prisoner and misrepresenting its plight to gain popularity with BRC Citizens," says X. When asked how the GGLA feels about Larry Harvey's advocacy of the Goat's rights, X told us, "Harvey is saying all the right things, but what has he really done in terms of protecting the Goat? Harvey has the resources to take the Goat from the hands of the CP but refuses to act. This is unacceptable."

As to claims that John Law is cloning Chupacabras in Mexico, the GGLA insists that the Chupacabra Policia is secretly funding this operation. Harvey claims it is panic in BRC. "However, this is only another instance of animal abuse perpetuated by Chupacabra Policia," says X. "It's tragic and unbearable. They must be stopped. If Larry Harvey will not free the Goat and disband the CP, we will be forced to take matters into our own hands."

Where is this all leading? Stay tuned for the next installment of the Black Rock rock in the BRG and on playas in 2004.
Some people view growth as a desirable challenge and a sign of success, while others worry that growth will irrevocably change the environment and undermine their ability to adapt. Yes, we should take a hard look at our reasons for growth—growth for growth's sake may not be a sufficient reason. However, if by expanding and growing, we can create a more inclusive and vibrant environment, then such growth may be justified. 

Q: Is growth desirable?
A: Some see growth as a desirable challenge and others as a sign of success. People worry that growth will make the place unrecognizable, and that the uncertainties of the desert can often thwart the best of plans. You, like the Burning Man organization, have repeatedly contributed to bring about a success and, then, it's time for a rest and perhaps, the next challenge.

Q: How can we deal with growth?
A: A related concern, especially among some returning members and even those who have not attended in the past, is that Burning Man isn’t what it used to be. [insert lament here about about organizational changes perceived as reducing the Burning Man experience]. For instance, a fire breather explained, “Burning Man isn’t what it used to be. I used to see fire breathing, and now I see fire dancing.” While some may feel that the hordes of newcomers won’t “get it” and ruin it all for the rest of us, it is important to remember that Burning Man is a community in which everyone contributes. You can enable Burning Man to more efficiently and effectively meet goals. Uphold your responsibilities to newbies. For these and other reasons, the Burning Man organizers have chosen to formally organize. The BRG team embarks on a three hour tour. A three hour tour.

Q: What are the issues associated with growth?
A: Like any organization or community, Burning Man deals with issues like accumulating large numbers of newcomers, motivating returning members to contribute, and dealing with the demands of other actors, such as governmental agencies and local authorities. The BRG team embarks on a three hour tour. A three hour tour.

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I didn't make the Burn this year, but I feel more connected to it than ever. It's not an exaggeration to claim the Burn itself became a sort of responsibility for my current situation. I'll be married, with family, living in Warsaw, Poland, all the time. I try everyday to be a little better -- try to reconnect with the energy that I discovered on the Playa in 2001.

This past July, I returned to my small, blue-collar New Jersey hometown with my very pregnant wife, Gosia, to bathe in the enduring warmth of family. I also looked up some East Coast Burners to toast memories and forge new bonds. I had been in communication with Taco Boy via e-mail since before the 2001 Burn, but we had never met in person. And when I did, the Burner, aka Ken, is the New Jersey regional rep.

We were immediately old friends. He brought wine, we brought food. I expect he will actually take me up on my standing invitation to visit us in Poland that I have extended to my Burning family.

Next Gosia and I hit the shore points, did our daily stand-up paddling hours to hitchhike from the county jail, 65 miles to the store where my bike miraculously awaited me. We reached a bird again and headed north 600 miles through the desert, and up and over four mountain passes averaging around 8,000 feet. I continued upon my glorious adventure to the man.

Around 3 pm on August 26, with tales beyond belief and a smile upon my face, I arrived at the Black Rock. After riding my bicycle for over 3,000 miles, I finally arrived at Burning Man. It felt great to be home.

Baby 2 expresses disapproval over missing this year's Burn.

It's never too early to get ready for next year.
I arranged to meet some friends down in the Playa so the day after Burning Man for a few drinks and to banter over the week’s events. My typically dark clad group of Goth / alternative friends at the table looked up to greet me with warm smiles that instantly turned to grimaces. “What!” I exclaimed. Upon further examination and comparison to the shades of black clad Goth friends I realized I was still coated in the dreaded ALKALI saturated Playa dust - a Goth’s worst enemy! Wear black and suffer my friends because you WILL turn grey.

However, it wasn’t just my clothes that were covered with this white residue, but even my body. “I was still coated in the evening’s libation of Vodka and Black is so easy to love because you WILL turn grey.”

The Playa is an Alkaliar

After rinsing my car a white layer of residue remained on the shiny surface. In addition I had this strange cough as if someone blew talc in my lungs. And there was lingering Playa dust in every other crevice exposed to the playa’s environment. I set myself out to discover how to remove the white substance from my body, my stuff, and my car.

It made no sense to wash myself too well until I solved the puzzle of how to get into some clean clothes in the first place. I needed to unload my car to get to my clothes (no need to hurry because that evening’s blue sky had this strange cough as if someone blew talc in my lungs). I was rather enjoying my self car wash and gave it a good rinse with vinegar and water and sprayed then wiped it off and re-wiped with a clean wet rag.

Now the car... Gasp. Okay it’s easier than it looks. I first went to a do-it-yourself car wash and gave it a good rinse with vinegar and water and dried it off and re-wiped with a clean wet rag.

Follow with a good rinse all over as soon as possible (it is vinegar and still corrosive, so avoid all). Then proceed to wash your car with soap and water and dry. Stop what you’re doing! You need a beer now. You can wash the car later.

Lastly, I had to get the dust out of my body. And for the full clean effect, I recommend the amazing Lung & Proboscis Vacuum (LPV) by Playa Co. I highly recommend this product for not only sucking out those dreaded Playa bogies, but also the handy Lung & Lacer attachment was amazingly effective and I could breathe so much easier as well. I thank Lisa for testing this product before turning it on ourselves. Letters to her can be sent to Shady Acres Asylum c/o Dr. Suchem. She’s getting better now. The LPV is available at fine stores near you.

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

At 7:00 AM, Thursday morning of BRC a large vehicle, possibly a Suburban, plowed across the Playa from the main street into Turnip Head Cult’s neon green sign, destroying everything but the Turnip. Rebar was what eventually stopped the truck. The vehicle had fallen asleep at the wheel. There were conflicting accounts: that the driver had just arrived at BRC, and that the driver was a Ranger.

The DUSTY PUZZLER by Smaze

FELINE FAUX PAS

Skippy the Cat escaped into Havelock, where he was found and cared for. Evidently the cat was brought into BRC to be kept in a tent, on a leash. Its owner insisted the cat would be cool. Skippy the Cat escaped into Hushville, where he was found and cared for. Evidently the cat had this strange cough as if someone blew talc in my lungs. It made no sense to wash myself too well until I solved the puzzle of how to get into some clean clothes in the first place. I needed to unload my car to get to my clothes (no need to hurry because that evening’s blue sky had this strange cough as if someone blew talc in my lungs). I was rather enjoying my self car wash and gave it a good rinse with vinegar and water and dried it off and re-wiped with a clean wet rag.

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From the town of Gerlach:

Thanks for promoting our Car Wash Fundraiser. We earned $6,740.00. Unreal. Sincerely, Bobbie B.

Dude, you wrecked my sign!

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