

Mud Bay Quarterly

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Photo by Chris Nelson

**In Search of a Greener President ♦ Your First Computer
Labor Center Endangered ♦ Evergreen Vancouver
The Legendary Meadow Parties ♦ Mud Bay Races ♦ AlumnNews**

Crawl for the roses

◇
*A Mud Bay
graduation*

BY DOUG RIDDELS

The Evergreen State College — a brand-new educational experiment, in brand new concrete buildings, perched on the far edge of a brand new, recently conquered continent.

Evergreen — a brand-new structure, stark concrete slabs thrust into the legendary mud of Cooper Point. Topsoil, trees, moss and mushrooms torn from the earth, replaced with rebar and cement, red bricks and steam tunnels.

And we were a new brand of student, too. Westerners who ran out of West to run to. In our beads and moccasins, with our Birkenstocks and boho-buddhism, our secret herbs and spices, our midnight dances and buck-naked frolics, we knew the magic that Evergreen held — a beautiful, powerful thing.

A magic that drew its power, not from the blank concrete accretions, but from the mud on which they lay.

Sacred mud. Birthing ground of the Indian Shaker Church, source of Native American millenarianism, site of the death and rebirth in 1881 of Squ-sacht-un, called John Slocum by whites, who brought his vision of a new church, a direct, ecstatic contact with the Almighty, and a power of healing touch,

back from the other side.

His apostles, led by Mud Bay Louie, spread a message of redemption and spiritual renewal from Mud Bay, throughout the Northwest, and beyond. Apostles in the Willamette region turned on a young dreamer named Wovoka, who went on to found the Ghost Dance movement, which swept the Plains tribes in the 1890s, converting Sitting Bull and other shamans — the last wave of spiritual renewal in the face of American genocide.

After the massacre at Wounded Knee, the Ghost Dance faded, as did the Shakers. Today, a single church near Mud Bay carries on the tradition of Squ-sacht-un. And on the site of his miraculous death and rebirth, a new cultural force is slowly birthing.

Without roots, unbound by old traditions, we Greeners have been free — or perhaps forced — to experiment, to create new traditions. Earth-centered traditions. Born of the mud. The Mud Races.

The unofficial starting line for the Race to the Real World, the Mud Race has been held every Graduation Day for the last decade (except for one year

when the Tide God simply would not permit it). Originally organized by the households behind Blue Heron Bakery, it has since become a more or less self-organizing tradition. A self-perpetuating phenomenon, a phoenix reborn from the ashes of oblivion each year by the faith of the runners, by the grace of the Mudfolk. A tradition imperiled now, as the runners stumble from the starting gate....

A quarter-mile each way, across the mudflats at the end of Eld Inlet, from the point nearest Blue Heron Bakery, straight across the channel to a point near the Highway 101 bridge, and back again. Running through the channel is not allowed; this is a Mud Race, not a channel run.

Not a run at all. In fact, a long, hard crawl, a genuinely grueling slog — if the tide is recently out and the mud is at its most mudful. Someone actually timed it one year: The winner returned in 18 minutes; the last "runner" took over 40 minutes. It takes even longer to get the mud off afterward.

Veterans anxiously ask the time, but no one seems to have a watch. Timing is crucial, finding that window between tides, and still giving racers at least a fair chance of making it to their graduation ceremony in the ugly, new geo-dome.

Racers frantically prepare as racetime approaches. Tennis shoes are duct-taped

to ankles, legs are vaselined, bras are tightened, or abandoned. Stupor Saturday hangovers are nursed with aspirin. Some racers choose to run nude, but all must wear shoes; there is broken glass near the bank, and sharp barnacles throughout the course. The first father to arrive at the race site, in keeping with longstanding tradition, is given a referee's shirt, and responsibility to explain the course and the rules, and then to start the race.

The mad dash into the muck grinds to an immediate near-halt. One after

another, thigh-deep racers drop to their hands and knees, struggling to extricate themselves and push on.

Two dozen souls, laboriously pulling their limbs, one at a time, from the sucking ooze, crawling under the loving gaze of the Buddha of Mud Bay, a pair of buddha-eyes on a five-by-fifteen foot mural. One eye on the incoming tide, the other on the distant finish line. The flats suddenly plunge down into the water-filled channel. The racers slide

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Photo by Janine Rogers



Photo by Janine Rogers



Photos by Tammy Losey

The Meadow Parties



*A fond look back at those wild
and crazy days of yesteryear*

BY TAMMY JOY LOSEY

Throughout the 1980s, the annual Meadow Party was the Evergreen alternative community's complement to Super Saturday, an off-beat, underground multi-media extravaganza that, despite its legendary reputation, has never been adequately chronicled. We asked one of the Meadow Party's organizers, 1983 Evergreen graduate and Olympia photojournalist Tammy Losey, to give Mud Bay Quarterly readers a feel for the people and passions that created those parties.

Wild abandon, "multi-media madness" and "community" are just a few of the descriptive terms brought to mind when flashing back on this spring fling of the past. For those of us who were there it was a shared experience, a bonding hard to surpass.

What exactly was this spontaneous synchronistic event? It was an outdoor graduation party that was the effort of dozens of creative people who pulled together, in the name of fun, a miniature community in a meadow just off the beach trail, behind Evergreen.

The party was music, dancing, strange visuals, the graduation slide show, a bon fire, Mud Bay Jugglers, good food, raffles, Bilbo art shirts, and even a child care tent. Just as importantly, there was a shared responsibility to take care of the meadow and leave it just the way we had found it.

"The party was a rite of passage that kept you in touch with new alumni, and the older ones," reflected Meadow Party slide show instigator Chris Nelson.

But that's not all. A generation of Olympia-area media people and community leaders also learned the art of organizing a major event.

"The Meadow Party," recalled Michael Diamond, "was an opportunity to try out instant multi-media technology where we would shoot graduation photos, process, edit, and stage a

computer controlled multi-projector slide show — complete with animation loops — all in one day," he said. "It was instant history in front of a live audience."

"Synchronicity" best described the first Meadow Party, said 1983 graduate Peter Moulton. In effect, the party was born from the ashes of disaster.

Since 1980 Chris had shown graduation slides at parties held at The Last Resort, a house near the shores of Mud Bay behind the Blue Heron Bakery. The parties offered music, movies and Chris' two-or-three projector show. Right before the 1983 graduation, however, The Last Resort burned to the ground.

"We only had a week to put together this party, so we looked at Evergreen," said Peter, the group's logistics wizard. "They charged us \$100 to rent the meadow."

"We got some staging from campus, pulled together all of the sound stuff, and threw up a tower in the middle of the field with some tee-pee poles and a flipped-over bottom of a staging flat," he said.

The result?

"There were probably 600 people there," said Peter. "It was an amazingly spontaneous, synchronistic event. It worked so magically because it was so thrown together."

The next year Chris enlisted Michael and his six projector, computer-controlled multi-image system to add a high-tech flair to the party. Michael had a rear-projection screen which hung over the stage.

Graduation images were projected over the band. Later, a hydraulic lift from Lew Rents, and live video projection were introduced by Peter. Technology and live entertainment were integrated into one big techno-fun trip.

It was amazing! To think that 600 to 1,000 people could get together for an outdoor party in the woods, shake their "bag of bones" all night and leave the magic of the meadow intact by the time the sun came up the next morning.

Why did people like Chris, Michael, Peter, myself, and others donate time, money and an incredible amount of our energy year after year to pull off this gonzo meadow media trip?

"It's our archives," said Chris. "You knew you were part of history and that was enough gratification and motivation to keep it going."

Chris explained how he came up with the idea of capturing history and playing it back the same day.

"I was inspired by a muralist from Portland who used his murals to reflect life in his neighborhood. I asked myself: Why wait 20 years to take a look at what you look like now?"

The graduation slide show was a way to make history immediate, and to acknowledge that we are all making history in the present.

"There was a feedback loop that allowed people to reflect on their passages of that weekend," said Peter. "It was a wonderful way to finish off a weekend that involved Super Saturday, graduation and the mud races."

We may have been lunatics to put ourselves under such



1987 was the year of the three screens. The year of the skylift. The year my sister graduated and my girlfriend had an out-of-body experience.

pressure to present a zippy multi-screen slide show from scratch in just a few hours. But for me there was a secret pleasure that arose from pouring a part of myself into a team effort with a common goal: to give back to the community we treasured.

"It was the best party of the year," exclaimed Michael. "Everybody got to try out their new ideas plus see all their old friends. It was tribal therapy."

Sue Patnude, a 1982 grad and party participant, shared her memories of the slide show.

"There's nothing like going to the Meadow Party and seeing yourself graduate on the screen, and seeing people on the screen graduating 10 years ago and then seeing what they look like now."

The Meadow Party wasn't without its hitches, however, as Peter, who acted as the liaison between the alumni and the administration, remembered.

"1985 was the year we got closed down by the county for sound complaints. We had some sound complaints during the first two years in the meadow, so we tried rearranging the stage so that it wouldn't be directed towards campus, because we were getting most of our complaints from Ash," he said. "What we ended up doing was

pointing the sound toward the water, so you could hear it crystal clear from Mud Bay to Steamboat Island. This was on a Sunday night.

"Tony Eckert was (the band) Heliotroupe's sound man then and scored a bunch of great gear from Music 6000," said Peter. "We were blasting probably the finest outdoor audio that there's ever been in Thurston County all over Eld Inlet."

"For me it was a long night of dialog with the law enforcement personnel in Thurston County," he said. "We finally got shut down about 1 a.m. It was a meltdown. There were about 1,000 people there."

1986 was the year the party was moved to behind the library. Peter described his experience.

"We sucked power right out of the second floor and ran it to the stage," he said. "We didn't use our own generators and have a completely autonomous scene like we did before. It was very clean, went off without a hitch, very simple, just stowed the

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equipment back in the library, returned it the next day. It was a piece of cake, but because of that it lacked personality," he lamented. "It was a bland year."

1987 was the year the party moved back to the meadow. It was the year of the three screens. The year of the skylift. The year my sister graduated and my girlfriend had an out-of-body experience.

"That was a great year," said Peter.

Dani Kelly, lead singer of Heliotroupe, said he enjoyed playing the party, but when it came to the slide shows he feigned confusion.

"I never knew what was going on. We're up there playing, hearing 'Wooww!' 'Wow!' — We must be having an effect on the audience," I thought. (But) my heart was broken when I found out it was the slides that were moving them."

1988 was the last year of the Meadow Party. We tried to hold the party in the meadow, but it looked like rain so we fled to the library. It turned out not to rain.

Peter explained.

"Fifteen minutes after we left there was a garage band from the MODS that had gone down to the meadow with a keg of beer and did this whole other scene while we were doing a library dance. A lot of people never knew that our party existed."

When I went to look at the meadow the next day I became depressed. This other group had left alcohol containers everywhere. The meadow was trashed.

Many call 1988 the year of the "weird schism," reflected Peter. It symbolized how the student body had evolved away from the "old guard" who had kept the party alive.

That's when many of us decided, "Okay, forget it." We just didn't feel in sync with the campus anymore.

Joel Kluger, a graduation photographer and media-madness participant for a couple years, believes someone should carry on the tradition.

"Get your final credit for graduation — do a documentary," he said. "What better way for you to learn how to be an event photographer than to do it all in one day. I believe there

Eeekk! The meadow goes prowling down south

The Meadow Party may be a thing of the past, but a graduation party is still definitely boffo. Last year the Mud Bay Mafia pulled together a huge bash called the Prairie Prowl. Folks had such a great time that they're planning an encore Sunday, June 9 in Rochester. The party's code name: Operation Prairie Storm.

Festivities begin at 7 p.m. with a spaghetti and salad dinner for only \$1. Wild gyrations on Swede Hall's dance floor begin soon thereafter (that'll cost you \$5). Of course, there'll be plenty of slides, videos and other visual aids to help you reflect on your foolish and fleeting youth. Kicking off their "Mounds of Mystery" reunion tour, Heliotroupe will play their requisite psychedelic folk/rock tunes.

To get to Swede Hall, take I-5 exit 88 and head west on US 12. Take a left at the light in downtown Rochester and look for the big blue and yellow barn on your right about three blocks down.

should always be someone taking photos from the class that's graduating."

Peter, Michael and Chris shared their feelings about a "new guard" carrying on the Meadow Party tradition.

"It really needs to evolve out of the current campus community," said Peter. "It needs to be reinvented."

Michael agreed. "It has to be happening for and by the graduating students. Us old folks can't take the responsibility to teach these people how to party."

Chris believes the Meadow Party/graduation slide show "is one of the few experiments that's really worth keeping going. It's a living project."

He sees a lot of potential for a new kind of Meadow Party.

"With the gymnasium, field, etc., Greeners could have a mini Oregon Country Fair. Shoot for it, it could go quite a distance."




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Mud Races

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down the slippery banks, like otters into the brisk water. In seconds, 15 pounds of mud sloughs off into Eld Inlet. On the other side, a climb up — actually, a bizarre uphill swim — to the flats on the other side.

To the far bank and back again, legs and arms filled with lead in place of bone, sweating in the cold mud, a handful of serious contenders followed by a score of others, reconciling themselves to their plodding sojourn in the smooth, creamy mud, helping one another to pull loose, making sure no one slips unseen into one of the many sinkholes.

At the end of the race, the mud frolic begins. A new burst of enthusiasm, or perhaps stress-induced semi-hysteria, overtakes the racers. Soon onlookers are joining in their belly-flop contests, mudfights, and pagan romping.

A modest victory ceremony takes place before the serious cleanup. The winner is presented with the trophy, to be kept until the next year's race. The



*Will our fine
and sacred
tradition survive?
Or will it pass the
way of the Social
Contract and the
Ghost Dance?*

trophy is a huge bar of iron, sculpted into an abstract resemblance of a traffic cop, hand out to halt progress. Legend has it that the iron bar was Evergreen's first speed bump, surreptitiously removed by the Evergreen Liberation Front in the dead of night many years ago, turned into art and briefly displayed in the CAB building, then anonymously donated to the kind denizens of Mud Bay.

Afterward, a collective hose-off and Blue Heron pizza-fest, hugs and tumbles, cuts bandaged, breakfasts lost, tears and laughter, and rides found to our grey and blessed alma mater, for the dismal, slow, inevitable march into that damned gym

— another wave of alumni, thrust into the maw of late monopoly capital.

Last year, through inexcusable inattention and post-Reagan anomie, no one remembered to warn the long-suffering neighbors about the upcoming event. The visiting grandchildren experienced the dreadful thrill of full frontal nudity, as racers vainly attempted to remove their hard-earned share of the fecund mud. Phone calls were made, absentee Seattle landlords freaked with visions of liability, lawyers and long-haired mayhem, propriety feet were put firmly down: This shall not occur again!

Today, veteran mudsters probe the neighbors' resolve, pleas are pled and plans are planned. Will our fine and sacred tradition survive? Or will it pass the way of the Social Contract and the Ghost Dance, the timber wolf and the student-initiated Group Contract? Only the Mud knows....

Doug Riddels, who graduated from Evergreen in 1981, is the Alumni Association's longest-sitting board member. Amazingly, he's enthusiastically looking forward to another tour of duty when his current board position expires in June.

Global

Continued from page 20

ideas.

◆ Developing a capacity for institutional and academic support for intercultural events, with some equivalent of a "Program Board."

◆ Acting as a clearing house for academic programs, the college itself, the community, & organizations at large (locally & globally) to facilitate outside ideas entering the college and the energies of TESC to be applied outside.

The ICI has the potential to vastly increase our options for community service while putting into place and practice some concrete aspects of multicultural literacy.

We have begun discussions with groups and people on campus who would likely take a significant interest in this endeavor: Faculty Agenda Committee, Multicultural Learning Center staff, Affirmative Action staff, First Peoples' Coalition, any active DTF's dealing with Multiculturalism and Strategic Planning, the President, Deans, Trustees, ECCO, etc.

Alumni are the bridge between the institution and the community — both locally and throughout the world. This network of Greeners can help the college plug into the global milieu of incredible cultural expression so usually hardpressed for outlet — with Evergreen as a nexus fostering intercultural activity and communication.

Jimmy Mateson and Andy Stewart are 1984 graduates who are Alumni Association board stalwarts.

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