

THE 10TH ANNUAL ISLAND POODLESHOOT AND BBQ THANKSGIVING, 2008

This year the 'Shoot began with uncommon festive ceremony in view of the Tenth Anniversary of this traditional holiday.

As usual rosy-fingered Dawn parted the curtains of the night to step lightly across the dew-dappled fields under Michelangelo skies, muscular with gods and gleams of fast-approaching Phoebus, until she reached nigh unto the hedge privy to make there the streams of gold that ease us all pleasurably into the day.

Gently she kissed the eyelids of still-sleeping Padriac, mighty Innkeeper and Guardian of the Hunt, but he stirred not except for a brief snort of somnolence for Morpheus held him firmly in his shadowland.

That's when rosy-fingered Dawn gave Padriac a mighty wack startling him awake and banishing abruptly that dull old Morpheus for Dawn O'Reilly was not to be trifled with at any time of day or night.

By the time Padriac and Dawn had arrived at the "Pit" there in Washington Park, the Island Atonal Marching Band and Hoophole Choir were setting up their instruments.

This year, the band included Rex Suru on tuba, Kirk Johnson on dweezil harp, Professor Schickele on Hardart with Inflatable, Karen Rega on broomstick-washtub bass, Helen on Hapless 85-Key Harmonium, Goody Thompson and Lucky on percussion and conch shell, Pat Aston on kettledrum with tapas, Doctor Smallberries on oud and five-string Acme Vaporware Fantod, Ken Collins on the Banjo-Bandsaw Anomaly. Oscar Matzarath on Tin Drum, Oscar Kring on spittoon and stuffed monkey, Carol Traylor on horned crepuscular and bass zither, and Rachel Linzer on Brass Shrieker with Mugwhumper while Shawn and Nancy Grey performed the oboe-bassoon-clarinet-trumpet-resin tooter Occlusion Device.

Ken's 20 minute solo on the Bandsaw Anomaly has been described by critics as "unique in the annals of music".

After the band performed a spirited rendition of the well-loved Venezuelan National Anthem, arranged by Terry Gilliam and John Cleese, the Island Chapter of the Native Sons of the Golden West entered from the one side and the Native Daughters from the other, all dressed in white and wearing crowns of golden poppies. They gathered in a circle and intoned the traditional Poodleshoot Chant in the ancient language of Nuovo Zembla as arranged by E Clampus Vitus.

They turned in a circle clockwise, then anti-clockwise, then interlocked their pinkies with arms raised and each then emitted a delicate fart.

Padraic took a few moments to read the Rules and introduce the Special Guests for this year's event: members and clergy from The First Recondite Unitarian Church and Stabery of Sonoma.

The annual White House Representative, "Buckshot Dick" sent apologies for his inability to attend.

Libations and offers were made to honor the gods, and Glaucous Athena, Goddess of the Hunt, sent down a token in the form of an owl who perched upon the buckeye tree with imperious mein.

With a jolly crescendo from the horn section, the line of hunters then moved out into the field under a grey sky -- the Tenth Annual Island Poodleshoot and BBQ had begun. Soon, the merry sounds of the hunt drifted across the Island: shouts of "Poodle there!", the sharp crack of freshly oiled Winchester rifles, the occasional sputter of AK-47's and the frequent whump of percussion grenades adding to the Holiday Cheer.

Jeff Silva won a prize for First Bag of the Day, by using a cleverly-designed hand-thrown cluster bomb.

Eugene Gallipagus sallied forth with his updated fifty-cal rhino-gun and quickly found himself hot on the trail of a brace of silverhairs who turned off of Grand Street and attempted to seek sanctuary in the Church of the Sanctified Elvis on Central Avenue.

Unfortunately, it was in the nave of this church that Ms. Morales was ardently attempting to change her name with Mr. Ramirez in a a long delayed joint wedding with Susan and Lynette, Tommy and Toby.

Because the Catholic Archbishop had put the screws to the pastor of the Church of Our Lady of Incessant Complaint upon hearing about the same-sex marriage events to be included in the program, Father Guimon had been forced

to bow out, such that the loving couples had need to go in search of a minister for some weeks, until they finally found a sympathetic ear in that of Reverend Sanctus Sanfroid. With a Reverend and a church edifice, it was no problem to haul in Rebbe Mendelnuss, and Pastor Nyquist of the First Presbyterian Church for a genuine mixed wedding in thorough-going California style. The Church of Our Lady of Incessant Complaint sent a token Deacon to stand there looking uncomfortable in an effort to save somebody's soul on behalf of the One True Church.

Since Church and State are separate by law and Constitution, Proposition 8 had no effect upon any of the proceedings, some of which had been handled at City Hall by clerks with very sweaty palms, but a wedding is a ceremony in a church and a civil union is what everybody else gets regardless.

Pastor Lisa Freethought of the Unitarian Church was engaged in marrying off Andre and Marlene the same day, so the Island was just as chock full of joy as it was of churches on the day of the Poodleshoot.

One person, most decidedly not ever joyous, stood outside the Church of the Sanctified Elvis with a crowd of picketers who shouted the most base and obscene things imaginable. Among the milder picket signs, was one that read, "GOD HATES YOU!" That person outside the church was the irate Fred Phelps, the very same man who finds Billy Graham a false prophet, the Pope a demon, Ireland a nest of serpents and the country of Sweden to be Sodom and Gomorrah. Fred Phelps hates so many people and institutions that the only person ever recorded to have liked him was Saddam Hussein.

Phelps has his own church of course, in the state of Kansas where they tolerate his ilk, and where the primary credo is that all gay people are hated by their god and deserve to die terribly. It might be added that Mr. Phelps is not a nice man.

Into this melange, just at the critical moment of "I do" happened beneath the nine foot high poster in velvet of Elvis in his white suit, charged several poodles, followed by Eugene blazing away and several other hunters armed with the usual assortment of firearms, morningstar flails, katana swords, crossbows with explosive-tipped arrows and the general sportsman set of paraphernalia complete with nets and steel-jaw traps.

The Phelps congregation scattered like Chaff upon the Wind blown by the Lord, dropping signs and bullhorns in their haste.

One erring shot blasted the sign hanging from the armature there at the street, causing the heavy board to crash down on the unfortunate Mr. Phelps, who went down in turn like a sack of rocks to lie out there, spreadeagled and unconscious.

That's the odd moment when everybody noticed he had left his fly unzipped.

In any case, the poodles ran amok in the church, causing all sorts of mischief and stealing from the collection plates and the big fruit basket offering until Bear drove them out by flailing a chain from a 1939 Shovelhead Harley -- which he had worn about his waist as a cummerbund for his tuxedo. Lynette also performed with valor, using the crescent wrench she always kept about her for

mechanical emergencies, with great effect and she was rewarded in the doorway with a warm kiss from Susan.

As he stood panting at the door, watching the poodlechase head pell-mell for the Unitarian Church across the street, Sophie, his consort of many years laid a hand on his arm in admiration.

"Bear, you are a filthy beast, and I love you." she said. Such are the ways of love, inscrutable and mysterious.

As it turned out, once everything had sorted itself out, it was she who caught the first bouquet.

Sound of trumpets tooting victory here.

But to leave that happy scene we turn to the disorder upsetting the normally sedate church of Reverend Freethought where hunters chased poodles who had been reinforced by a battalion from the Island Dogwatcher's Association. As Marlene, Andre and the Reverend snuck out the side door a pitched battle ensued which caused much hurt to the old building. Out of respect for the Reverend, the hunters abandoned firearms and explosives, resorting to bladed weapons, knuckledusters, and truncheons.

The Dogwatchers were armed with terrible leash flails and impermeables, while the poodles had their natural defences of teeth, claws, and their chemical arsenal of bodily fluids as well as semi-solids.

Reinforcements arrived from all sides and every angle and every window a gunport, every pew a trenchline of war in smoky semidarkness, for all the lights

had been shot out and a murk from the burning hung a pall over all as the battle spilled into the street.

It was all a terrible orgy of destruction, an atavistic regression into primitive savagery worse than a Raiders football game in which Lex Talonis became the only law as everyone descended into bestial violence, going at it hand to hand in the pews, tooth and nail. Soon the battle overwhelmed the Baptist Church next door and the marquee there became riddled with machinegun bullets.

Not even the Archbishop could halt the carnage, for he was thrown by a percussion grenade from his replica Popemobile and brought low among the fallen leaves of autumn where he lay groaning.

All seemed hopeless and the battle lost, when an emissary from the Native Sons of the Golden West managed to break through the lines to reach the portal of the Island's First United Church of Wiccan Faith, where he made a plea for succor unto the Goddess. His plea was heard and it was brought to the attention of the Primary Witch of Witches, who set down her drumstick and said, "Christ, can't any of you people act civil for even one day?"

Nevertheless the Coven was gathered and potions stirred about and chants were made in the Old Langage of the Earth Mother. The circle moved to the left and then moved to the right and then to the left again around the sacred pentangle laid in quartzite upon black basalt – which really was a great tile job, if you ask anyone about it – and then the coven interlinked their pinkies and jumped then simultaneously into the air and each then emitted a delicate fart.

They all then took off their robes and sat down to their Thanksgiving Dinner for what would happen would happen as the Goddess decrees.

It was then, during the island's Darkest Hour, a great Miracle did happen. There, amid the smoke and reek of battle strode the form of a mighty God, larger than life, a God fierce of mien and bearing a long cigarette holder in his clenched teeth and the glitter of a monogram on his shirt cut through the viscous air: HST.

The spirit of Hunter S. Thompson had returned to earth, called forth from the Hereafter by the women in the First United Church of Wiccan Faith. With a wave of his hand he distributed Purple Windowpane, mescaline, Brown Death, Crystal Blow, Cut Rock Cocaine, PCP, and a thousand other things equally as devious as the mind of the most perverted swine of the Neo-Con Movement, them that deflower virgins in barnyards and stripmine the Nation's Treasury with their Whores of Babylon, fornicating upon the desks of Congressmen to prove a point.

Yes, worse things than so conceived. And the minds of the Enemy were deranged and so ran amok down to the water where a contingent of the Iranian Navy had just landed. This was the Special Delegation invited to the Mixed Wedding Reception (to be described later) from the Iranian submarine *Chador*.

When the Iranians encountered the demented poodles they drew their sharp scimitars and slew them upon the Strand, exclaiming, "Infidel dogs!" But they attended not the BBQ, for such flesh was considered by them devoutly as "*trafe*". The Dogwalkers fled across the infamous Bicycle Bridge and were seen no more and there returned peace to the Island.

Back at the Pit, many a weary hunter returned with little to show for all his trouble save for his intact skin and his life.

But the great keg of Padriac was broken open to allow the Water of Life to flow freely and assuage all wounds while a flank of Ahi was thrown on the barbi so that none would go hungry and so there was feasting and merriment into the night.

So ended the Annual Island Poodleshoot and BBQ of 2008, which shall be remembered for many long years to come.