

# SKY RIVER NATION MAKES IT

Berkeley BARB has one more editor than it really need — the U.S. Fuckin' Post Office is our extra ed. Like, last Wednesday, it held up this farout account of the Sky River festival up in Washington, despite the fact that master photo-journalist Mother Boats had covered the whole envelope with special delivery stamps. But the piece is just too good to let the PO poobahs edit it out of existence. So here it is, better late than never. The eds.

by Mother Boats, C.P.

Sky River was not just a rock-pop-bang festival -- it was the creation of Sky River Nation.

It exists despite court hassels and will continue to live. It is an anarchist's utopia; sexual "pervert's" paradise; organizer's orgasm; an ecologist's disaster area; women's training camp; medical student's final exam; a sociologist's nightmare, and pig's fodder.

Less than two weeks before the August 28 opening, Sky River Nation was a quiet 160-acre ranch owned by Ed and Minnie Tate (both in their eighties) and their son John (only in his fifties). A small down payment and good faith purchased the ranch for all the people. It would take a great deal of effort and lots of legal hassel to make the \$20,000 additional payment towards the final goal of \$165,000 needed to finally secure the land.

FOR AND BY

From the start Sky River was created by and for the people. The whole celebration got off the ground for about \$5,000 initial outlay and about 15 dedicated people from the Hydra Collective, a part of the Seattle Liberation Front (SLF).

The new landowners descended from all over the country and within a very short week, a huge two part stage, light tower, fenced-in area, hospital, sanitation facilities, vendors' stands, wells, springs, paths, roads, and even a garbage dump were pulled together.

The festival was probably the world's first co-operative nation building scheme using pleasure in order to establish a continuing community. Whereas the Vortex gig was a concentration camp, Sky River is now a refugee center.

Arriving at our new nation, one felt the sense of being part of a gigantic rural commune, where there are no rules, no laws, no rent-a-pigs, no demanding gate guards, no sheriffs, no town pigs,

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Just freaks all over Hell. However, people's security was really tight. This reporter had to go through all sorts of shit to take photos. People just didn't dig cameras and you had to respect their rights not to be photographed. Straight newsmen were almost unknown.

BULLSHIT

All I heard on the radio was that we were a sea of mud and the last 1,000 of us were sinking into it. This information was establishment bullshit -- there was never less than 5,000 at Sky River at any one time and we were having a fucking ball. The rain didn't start until Wednesday and didn't become a serious problem until Sunday.

The generator providing power to the stage, clinic, and vendors' stands crapped out on Thursday and left the stage dark until a band got a gig together at 4 A.M. Friday morning. Water and sanitation were a problem for a day, but people got together and these difficulties were overcome.

People of all types came and went for days -- we estimate that there was about 40,000 on the weekends with probably about 70,000 persons coming through.

NATION AMUCK

There was no real central authority; Sky River was an anarchy. Do your own thing -- did the people ever!!!! You could do whatever you wanted as long as it did not hurt anyone.

Sky River is a nation because it has a different government, way of life, philosophical base, and different rules for citizenship. Just 30 minutes north of Portland, Oregon across the Columbia River in Washington, it has its own cities, town, communities, and even ghettos.

The city of Gay Camp was the largest community. With more than 60 tents and 200 people under a giant Gay Liberation Front Banner, citizens from all over America gathered. For the first time in the history of a new nation a sexual-social-political group organized their own city.

Next to Gay Camp was Orgy Town, a city of 15 tents with a

totem phallic orgy loft. Down from these two cities was the small community of North Beach, the hippie part of the community. There was Biker City in the Live Tree Region with Bandito Town, Iron Horse Town, Sun Shine Town among others.

High Avenue, or better known as "The Avenue" ran through Vendor Town. Other groovy place names included, Stage City with the Hog Farm Mobile Community inside, Spring Lane, The Tate House, Open Door clinic, Free Food Land, Seattle Liberation Front Bus, Ecology Group, Day Care Town, Live Trees Region, and Live Woods Region, Parkingland, Heliport, Fire Trail Road, Buffalo Party Community Main Gate City, and finally Amphitheater-NoVehicles-Please-Land with Vulva Valley. The Rip Off Community kept getting lost.

HIGH ON HIGH STREET

"I've got 35 pounds of black hash, 27 kilos...bring your papers for a free sample, step right up!" bellowed three dealers from behind the counter. Every stand sold some variety of HIGH along with their burritos, corn on the cob, or tuna fish sandwiches.

What a groovy combination, "The Sky River Doughnut and Salad Emporium" with a side of dope. Wine and beer was sold everywhere. Free enterprise capitalists sold beer in a variety of stands from the trunk of their cars to elaborate stands; prices ranged from 20c to 35c for a cup or bottle. Wine was expensive at \$1.25 a fifth to \$2.00 a half gallon.

The scene was a mind blower, there was at least 50 to 200 free lance dealers at all times on the Avenue.

"Acid a dollar a hit...mescaline seven for five dollars...coke here nickle or dime, excellent quality..." A number of dealers even had megaphones. Many dealers had scales. At first free dope was abundant, but as more people came, supplies and bread got low and things got a little harder.

But if you had the money any psychedelic could be gotten from Panama Red to STP within two minutes walk of your camp. Acids

available were Blue Cheer, Purple Haze, Clear Light, Purple and Blue Barrel, Red Micro Dot, Blue Smear, Yellow and Red Blotter, Orange and Yellow Sunshine, Lemon-Lime Double Dome, Red Minnie Tabs, Window Pane, Strawberry Dome, and our own Sky River Blotter Acid with our own trade mark, no less.

BUM DOPE

The problems of bad drugs and overdoses were almost solved at Sky River. Within a day of the start of the festival a drugstore was established by a free independent collective of concerned citizens. The "Drug Research and Information Center" was always a beehive of activity. At the center was posted samples of good and bad drugs; it was a clearing house for finding out the good stuff before a purchase or checking your merchandise after a buy and before dropping.

Throughout the festival the free Open Door Clinic from Seattle experienced a number of patients with overdoses from M & M coated Mexican Reds. Other bad drugs included white and yellow speed tabs, pink acid, and bogus vitamin C tabs. Continued announcement from the stage and a bum dope patrol by the bikers helped in keeping the OD's down.

OVERDOSE AND LIVE

The Open Door Clinic had almost a full hospital set up by the end of the first weekend at Sky River Rock festival.

"The ODC had first priority on the list," reported John Durakn, 27, coordinator of the clinic. "We had about 50 MD's working here over the 12 day period and had an additional 150 to call on."

Nurses and medical students along with military trained medics and volunteers worked in any capacity they could. Royal ambulance a "Ma and Pop" service brought their three cars for their third season at the festival.

"When we first started we had to make about 12 runs to St. Joseph's Hospital in Vancouver, Wn," continued Durakn. "But after we really got set up we only made from none to two during the week

days and from six to eight on the weekends. Only one case was directly drug related that we sent to the hospital."

"We were able to stand-by in two natural childbirths," Durakn beamed, "But then again we had to send some premature births to the hospital; we don't know how many of the children lived."

Unfortunately one young guy drowned in the Sky River some 3/4 mile below and away from the main area. It must have happened at night because his body was not found until the next day.

The biggest paradox of the event was that the administrator of St. Joseph's Hospital gave the festival his complete co-operation even though he was RUNNING FOR SHERIFF AND WAS THE ONE WHO STARTED THE HASSEL WITH THE INJUNCTIONS.

"The whole community has learned to take care of people," elaborated a young medical student. People who came back after ODing often worked such long hours that they had to be told to leave."

The clinic had a special tent for over dosers. Citizens were kept for up to one half day under intensive care in numbers ranging from six to 18.

There was all sorts of medicine practiced from preventative to psychological. One Sky River citizen who the clinic had to judge 'psychotic' was put under the supervision of a medical student on leave from USC medical school. "He was put to work with traffic and security and by the end of the week was pretty together person again...and without the use of thorzine or bars," emphasized the 'new doctor'.

The physical plant will remain and be developed into a permanent medical facility.

DOPE BUSTS

"Anyone who came here with the intentions of ripping off people is not welcome," chorused a group from the Open Door Clinic. "The number one policeman from Clark County met with us here and is going to bust everyone SELLING BAD DOPE."

"But how do you know who they are," inquired the Barb??

"Well," the group reported, "They have taken pictures..."

BIKERS WIN

Unlike some recent rock festivals in California, notably Altamont, the bikers were a total part of the community.

"Bikers volunteered their services and demanded nothing," declared John Durakn from the ODC. "They were extremely helpful in keeping the overdoses on reds down and guarding against ripoffs at the vendors' stands."

"A rumor got out that they were charging \$3.00 a day for protection and there was a lack of rapport on our part so they just quit.

Besides the Banditoes and the Iron Lords, the Sunshine Bike Club from Las Vegas purchased a generator for the community when the one we had been using crapped out," continued a spokesman for the clinic.

(see p. 19)

# MORE ABOUT SKY RIVER NATION

## WOMEN'S SECURITY

The overabundance of men to women at Sky River Rock Festival apparently caused some problems.

"We're so glad you're here," proclaimed numerous women within an hour of the establishment of the Radical Women's booth at Sky River.

Clara Fraser of Radical Women a collective of working women, minority women, Gay women, and welfare mothers reported, "Some women who had been raped came in secretly. They don't want to talk much...but we knew what was happening. Most of it was verbal hasseling. Guys would for example ask for a hit off a joint and the next thing you knew they were trying to carry the women off to bed."

After a hassel of more than an hour on Friday, Sue Deckard, also from R.W., stormed the stage.

"They said we should write an announcement, but we wanted a woman to do it and make it in the form of a demand," Sue stated. "We claimed the right of self determination for women, the right to decide who, when, and where to screw."

In order to secure this right a security patrol was set up, led and organized by women, but accepting men as volunteers.

"None of the women on the patrol got hassled," Clara mentioned. "One of our jobs, for example, was to accompany single women, who might otherwise get hassled...We had about three volunteers from Women's Liberation but they never got it together to set up a booth."

## MEDIAFREAKS' FANTASY

Sky River Nation had its own newspaper, television network, graphics department, light shows, photographers, and audio systems. San Francisco Bay area people played an important part in the Sky River Media Collective. Members of the Berkeley Tribe, SF Good Times, and Barb were all over doing their thing.

The Sky River Warwhoop--Battle Cry of Freedom came out every other day. Put out by the Tribe and Spokane Natural people with the co-operation of the Seattle Gay Liberation Front's mimeo. It provided the political rhetoric for the new nation.

The Sky River Funnies-Nation Comix came out on the second weekend. It was a co-operative venture of the various graphics people assembled in the new nation.

Video freaks from San Francisco and Santa Clara came together as the Sky River Video Network. They taped the entire happening with two stage cameras and two port-a-packs. The collective intends to put together a simultaneous multi-channel program to be shown locally and nationally in the future.

One of the two light shows, Dr. Zarkov, was also from the Bay Area. The other, Retina Circus, was from Seattle.

The sound system was provided by Harry McCune sound systems of San Francisco. He kept the entire neighborhood awake for days.

The Psychedelic Venus Church called upon "all tribal brothers and sisters to participate in a rain termination ceremony...All

witches, mystics, occultists, Indian and African brothers and sisters, drag queens, and all those in contact with Astral Forces..." were called upon to participate and end the rain.

The rain was called upon to stop twice and it did (But of course the first time someone put a counter spell on the trip and the electrical system mysteriously wouldn't work. There was no rain but no music either.)

Don the Wizard was busy casting various spells and helping out with the counseling of the various citizens of the new Nation of Sky River.

Witches and Warlocks were all over the place, strange things happened, but Sky River was a strange new place; it is saved ground now, nothing can stop the building of the new nation, not even the courts.

## WHIZ KIDS WHIZZLE

The real stars of the Sky River Rock Festival became the Whiz Kids, a new high camp revue, drag extravaganza, called "The Fair at the Cock-a-Cabana." Much like the Cockettes from San Francisco, the Whiz Kids came over hard and heavy.

Rock organizers dropped their load when about 40 of the most innocent looking freaks turned into Martian monsters, witches, spider webs, jesters, nude dancers, muscle men, clowns, and chorus girls. Security volunteers who were guarding the fence, most of whom were more stoned than the Whiz Kids, didn't know whether to jump over the fence and escape or to kick out the acid invaders.

Even a Gappie (a Gay Yippie) covered with body paints got in on the trip and ended up on stage with the rest of the troupe.

Stagetime kept getting set back in the chaos that reigned. Finally in a blast of light from Dr. Zarkov, the stage was covered with 40 mad acid queens both male and female; The World's First Acid Rock Freak Show Extravaganza. It was a fantastic sight, four media channels coming at you at once, the light show, the Rhythm Dukes, the video monitors, and the Whiz Kids.

Their actual performance was a hap-hazard affair. The troupe had been deprived of their piano and it ended up as a screeching mime. Fabulous Vallie Allthetime in her see through dress and Remarkable Gretta and the troupe going through quick rape numbers. The finale was a gigantic silver cock coming all over the performers and the audience.

The Wednesday night show didn't end. Sky River was a liberated area now. Every drag queen, transvestite, clown, jester, witch, and puppeteer came out. The whole nation from Thursday on turned into a mad Disney fantasy land. Women ran around with clown faces on courtesy of the Whiz Kids, guys had on campy hats with silver foil hair, there were night shirts, body paints, or just plain nude, however you wanted to be you could be at Sky River. After all, you were a property owner.

## SANTANA FANTASY

Santana is here and will play tonight, blasted the stage voice, a member of the Hydra Collective from Seattle. As Wednesday night

progressed, repeated calls came from the stage for Santana to please report to the band office. By four in the morning people were still waiting for them to mysteriously appear and bring the supreme to what was otherwise a mediocre rock festival.

Santana never played. Band scheduling personnel reported that two members of the supposed group one claiming to be Carlos Santana, had appeared at the tent and said they were going to play. Since most of the people were unprofessional and doing the whole thing for their first time on a volunteer basis, no one knew what they really looked like. It was finally announced from the stage that, "A former congo player from the group has played a trick on us."

With the exception of the Whiz Kids, the new high camp revue from Seattle, the Youngbloods were the stars of the show. California groups were the strength of the festival. Groups from California that appeared were the Rhythm Dukes, Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen, The Fox, and Good Clean Fun from Santa Cruz.

Other groups mostly from Seattle included the following: the Factory, Sweet Rool, Wayne Silversonic and the Smith VBrothers, Space, Cherry Jack, Mojo Hand, Justice, Xanadu Theater, Peece, Island, Company Band, Lud Stetson, Grisly, Boulder Creek, Thirty First Street Band, One Hand Clapping, Passion, Child, Bluebird, Because, Sand, and High Voltage. The S.F. Mime Troupe played in the audience on the first Sunday -- not being allowed to play on stage.

## BIG NAMES NO SHOW

"Well I think they accomplished what they set out to do, to get the money to pay for the land," commented Jerry Miller, guitarist from the Rhythm Dukes. "It was really beautiful to play here; we played three or four times. However, it is not a good thing that some of these people are standing naked in the rain, you have to be over-amped to stand naked."

When asked by this reporter if he thought there might be a boycott on by the big bands, Miller replied, "I suppose they didn't get the total focus of it." For example, he clarified, "I called Bill Thompson of Hot Tuna and they said they would come, but then again he said that their big band, the Airplane, was sick."

Unfortunately or perhaps for the good no big name bands played. The Youngbloods, although they were supposed to be paid traveling expenses, had paid their own way up as did most of the other bands. Big bands would have caused overcrowding of the already taxed facilities and muddy roads, but would have also provided the needed revenue to secure the land.

This reporter can not help wondering where the beautiful big name groups that have for years given away so much of their time to sometimes questionable projects. Here for the first time was a real chance to help to establish a nation...

Well, the PEOPLE did it, just you and I, and we can well be proud of our achievement. We're important too.