

# ROARSHOCK PAGE

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**S**olstice time, and 2016 days rolling quickly to a close. ROARSHOCK PAGE brings Volume 9 to a conclusion with a special “baker’s dozen” issue Number 13.

## NEW YEARS AT THE COW PALACE

*“But seas between us braid hae roar’d*

*sin’ auld lang syne.”*

*-- Robert Burns*

The Cow Palace of Daly City, such a name and what a place. The name evokes images of well groomed cattle in palatial surroundings and sacred cows of India, and all the cattle mythology and religions, even cowboys in the Wild West, at least it does for me, and did for a long time even before I physically time traveled those bleak blocks at the south-most extreme of San Francisco. Pro Basketball, Hockey, and other sports were played there. It was the location of the Republican National Convention in 1956 and 1964. The Beatles played 3 concerts at the Cow Palace in 1964 and 1965. Many other iconic entertainers and musicians performed there including Elvis Presley and The Rolling Stones. On December 31, 1976, The Grateful Dead played a show there on New Year’s Eve which was broadcast over KSAN FM radio (“The Jive 95 in San Francisco”). I listened to the show across the Bay from inside my head inside my own little room at The Top of the Hill in Martinez. This was the first time I heard The Grateful Dead LIVE (rather than in recordings), and a really long way to go from there until the last time I heard them play live — How fortunate to still be able to hear them play via the recordings, deep into the 21st century, long after the band has been gone, but the music lives on and is now even a part on the Great American Songbook. Luckily, the foresight and insights experienced that first New Year’s Eve, listening to The Grateful Dead from the Cow Palace, did not include knowledge that my father would die in that same room at the Top of the Hill exactly 37 New Year’s Eves after, and that I would spend that turning of the wheel in respectful vigil through the night, there in the room with his corpse.

The Grand National Rodeo, an annual event, had always been held at the Cow Palace. One of the largest Rodeo Events in the United States, it brought rodeo to an urban

audience. The Grand National being a full on agricultural fair even included a cattle drive up Geneva Avenue. Barn and stable facilities and extensive exposition halls were and are located below the main arena.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century dawned those exposition halls were transformed into one of the greatest metaphorical time machines of the age, in the known universe, in *any* universe, and the transformation occurred at the end of each year for a great many years. The Grateful Dead and other groups came along in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1960s when the scene was happening seemingly most everywhere, especially all around the Bay, and all over California and along the Pacific Coast — A heady time of clashing cultures, including explorations of psychedelic sensibilities, that revealed (among much else) the pliability of the concept of TIME. As I was literally a child of the sixties I can attest that whatever one might eat, or drink, or smoke, or otherwise ingest, it didn’t matter, those eccentric and pliable spaces were available to anyone open enough to perceive them and enter them. So there were many times and many realities created, reconstructed and recreated. Pinel School in Martinez was a beautiful reality at that time, and my parents wisely sent me off to school there, and what I mainly learned were many sophisticated and subtle ways to explore time through inner space. Pinel existed and lasted and transformed many people’s lives through most of the 1970s, but finally folded as hard years set in. Some other counter culture institutions survived, like the San Francisco Mime Troupe and The Grateful Dead, and also the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, which from the 1960s became a tradition and vocation for many people, with a Spring Faire each year in Southern California and a Harvest Faire in the Bay Area in the Fall. Then in the Holiday Season occurred a jump in time from Elizabethan to Victorian era in San Francisco at the Great Dickens Christmas Fair and Pickwick Comic Annual. When I was a lad I went to the Dickens Fair with my parents and little brother. It was held along the waterfront and there were amazing two-story sets in recreation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century London of Mr. Charles Dickens. My joyous imagination raced there, and then around the corner I encountered none other than Mr. Pickwick, and I smiled. He shook my hand and said, “Good to see you sir! A Very Happy Christmas to you sir!” And on his way. One year I was there with Dan James, who was my best friend, and we were enjoying Parlor Games at Fizz-wig’s Christmas Party, especially the pretty girls in

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wonderful dresses, so we stayed late and BART was closed when we got back to the station! We had to call his brother in Alameda to come get us, so we stayed the rest of the weekend with him and his college buddies and learned a few new things from the older young men. Much later, in my adult years, the inside of the Fair always smelled like cinnamon and the Streets of London (Cow Palace Exposition Halls) were covered in snow (sawdust) with craft shops, drink and food stalls, and many stages with everywhere people in Victorian costume speaking in varying degrees of phony English accent. In this environment I always found deeper themes and vibrations, and while always sure of my Self, sometimes my identity and universe could shift, even as the universe of the Fair changed and shifted over seasons, so I could be D. A. Wilson, or I could be Roarshock (I could even be a sound effect on a re-mixed Firesign Theatre album). Sometimes I found myself on the *inside* of the Fair, and discovered I was a character in *The Pickwick Papers*: Mr. Pott, Editor of the *Eatanswill Gazette*. On such occasions, as I traversed the twilight streets of Christmas Eve London, there would inevitably come a moment when I'd hear a loud voice behind me, "Mr. Pott!" and turn to see the red glasses glare of the widow Mrs. Potts. As anyone understands, who knows this Story of great and timeless literature, we were betrothed, and if, at last, we were to marry, she would drop the s. It was as Mr. D. A. Wilson attending Fair one season, that I brought along my younger daughter, and against all good advice we went to Mad Sal's Dockside Ale House to hear the Sons of Anacreon sing songs of the common man. Lil B approved. "I would go and see the Sons of Anacreon," said my daughter, "even if I had to go to Daly City." But later when talking about it, she changed it to, "We went to the Dickens Fair and saw the Sons of Anacreon, but we had a good time anyway." It was the last Sunday of a season, and that year my heart was heavy because my beloved Grandpa was dying in a hospital in Oakland. On our way out of old Cow Palace London, as we approached and passed Fezziwig's Warehouse, everyone was singing *Auld Lang Syne* and I was really choked up with emotion. My Grandpa died late that night at age 98. The next season, adding another ring to my life's tree, my older daughter was heavily pregnant, and on Christmas Day (coincidentally her mother and her sister's birthdays) gave birth to her first child, a daughter, and a year and two days after losing my grandpa I became a grandpa. And the New Years continue to roll by, and the Cow Palace still looms along Geneva Avenue, remaining constant as I watch the turning wheel of seasons, close to Mother Earth and Father Time.

— D. A. Wilson

*"And long may the Sons of Anacreon entwine  
The Myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's Vine."*

-- Ralph Tomlinson

01/10	David Bowie died in New York at age 69.
01/19	Sylvia McLaughlin, environmentalist and co-founder of Save the Bay, died age 99.
01/28	Paul Kantner died in San Francisco, at 74.
02/02	Bob Elliott died in Cundy Harbor, Maine.
04/03	International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and the German newspaper <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> published 11.5 million confidential documents of the Panamanian firm Mossack Fonseca about 214,000+ offshore companies, with identities of shareholders/directors, including noted personalities, and heads of state.
04/06	Merle Haggard died at 79 on his birthday.
04/17	Lisbeth Roessler died, Pleasant Hill, CA.
05/18	Senator Bernie Sanders, campaigning for US President, encountered D. A. Wilson on California Street in San Francisco.
06/01	The Gotthard Base Tunnel was opened.
06/23	The United Kingdom voted in a national referendum to leave the European Union.
07/26	Hillary Clinton was first woman nominated for US President by Democratic Party.
09/03	The United States and China both ratified the Paris global climate agreement.
11/07	Poet Leonard Cohen died in Los Angeles.
11/08	Donald J. Trump was elected the 45 <sup>th</sup> President of the United States.
11/25	Fidel Castro died in Havana, Cuba, at 90.
12/02	Ghost Ship fire in Oakland, CA killed 36.
12/31	"And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne."

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Calling for Contributions! ROARSHOCK PAGE invites submissions of art, photographs, poetry, and micro-prose, to be considered for inclusion in future issues.

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