# Villa dei Fiori

A Memoir

On the Joshua Tree National Park



Dale Allan Pelton

# Villa dei Fiori


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*O temps, suspends ton vol! Et vous, heures propices,*

*Suspendez votre cours!*

*Laissez-nous savourer les rapides delices.*

*Des plus beaux de nos jours*

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**I discovered Joshua Tree in 1968, the year of the devastating Tet Offensive of the Vietnam War, when I moved to California to pursue a master's degree in film direction at UCLA and visited my cousin Revena Gish whose family had homesteaded in Joshua Tree during the early 1950s. Revena's mother, Cora, the sister of my Grandmother Mary McCant, had moved from Oklahoma in the 1920s to Anaheim, California and upon retirement, Cora and her four daughters, took advantage of the U.S. Small Tract Act of 1938 to homestead 5-acre tracts mandating that homesteaders build a cabin with a minimum of 400 sq. ft. Cora's daughters Gwendolyn and Revena built two houses at the top of Whitefeather Road close to the Joshua Tree National Monument and started a vegetable garden and raised rabbits and goats for meat and milk.**

**When I arrived and discovered the majestic beauty of Joshua Tree, it was so primitive that there was no water service. To bring water to their home, Revena's husband took their pickup fitted with a tank down to the valley to pump water from Celesta Hollinger's well, returning home to pump the water to a tank perched on a wooden tower that provided water by gravity flow to the kitchen and bath. Celesta Hollinger's husband had built his compound and drilled the well during the 1920s when he was creating sets during the silent film era. When I met Celesta in her eighties, one of the first settlers of Joshua Tree, she told me that she and her sister Zenobia were dancers with the Paris Opera at the turn of the century performing on stage with the internationally renowned opera singer Enrico Caruso who Celesta said, pinched her on the buttocks. Celesta gave me photos of her and her sister Zenobia and fellow dancers wearing stage costumes that are preserved in my album. During the time I was making *Death of the Red Planet* using the equipment of UCLA film school and the lasers of the California Institute of Technology, I visited Revena often and fell in deeply in love with the boulders and wildlife of the national park.**



# My Garden - Villa dei Fiori

**At Villa dei Fiori, you can imagine that you are in the rugged Dolomites of Italy, surrounded by boulder outcroppings in an enchanting garden. Established on the boundary of the Joshua Tree National Park, Villa dei Fiori is unlike commercial vacation rentals. It is the creation of a Hollywood film production designer that features French doors opening from every room onto surrounding terraces. Its Mediterranean décor exhibits the art collection of a Parisian painter and a library of a thousand books to peruse. By walking into our Valley of the Moon and the hidden canyons of the adjacent national park, you may discover Bighorn sheep, owls, doves, hawks, bobcats, foxes, Chuckwalla iguanas, horned lizards, bats, and coveys of quail. Upon arrival, guests are offered a tour of the garden, the three chambered cavern with smooth sand and a fire pit, and directions to find the best hiking trails into the park. Villa dei Fiori welcomes guests with children who love to discover wildlife and explore caves in the wild beauty of a boulder estate.**



**The Joshua Tree National Park is adjacent to the boulder outcropping beyond the trees.**

# Guest Reviews for Villa dei Fiori

**Review by Mike**

**Dale is not just a host, he's a historian and this property is the best Airbnb that we've ever stayed in. We've stayed in quite a few Airbnb's from Europe to Japan to New Zealand and this beats all of them by far. The pictures and descriptions give you a feel for what you would expect before arrival but it's not until you actually experience this magical place that you can really feel how amazing and unique this property (and Dale himself) truly are. From the pool and Jacuzzi to the caves and surrounding landscape, you'll always have something to do and will be in constant awe when walking and staying on the property. If you have kids, nighttime fires in the cave are magical (even for adults) and they will always have something to do around the property. Both my wife and I feel truly lucky that we got to experience this wonderful place and we're already trying to schedule some time off to come back in the summertime. Also, plenty to do in town and surrounding areas.**



**Photo by James Goss, 2024**

**Review by Danielle**

**Dale's property was stunning! We came for the magnificent boulders behind the house and the proximity to Joshua Tree National Park and we were not disappointed. The full moon made for perfect nighttime Jacuzzi and campfire sessions, especially since we lucked out weather-wise. During the day, we explored the backyard cave and bouldered up and beyond into Dale's private canyon, hoping to catch a glimpse of the resident bobcats. While we did not see the cats themselves, we saw plenty of scat signs and desert flora after the recent rains. We even found a thoroughly rusted tin can- perhaps from Dale's homesteading ancestors, or some other miners of yesteryear. Very cool experience! Dale is very devoted to his home and patrons. We appreciated his attention to detail and will definitely return in the future. Thank you, Dale!**



**The thirty-six feet by twenty feet saltwater pool is six feet at the deep end with a black and cobalt blue gemstone bottom that looks like granite. The boundary of the National Park is beyond the furthest ridge that forms our back valley.**

**Review by Lindsey**

**Location location location!! Beautiful grounds and gardens. Honestly - the best backyard scenery, gardens, and climbing experiences for our family in Joshua tree.**

## Music Video flying over Villa dei Fiori to the boundary of the Joshua Tree National Park

**https://one.google.com/u/0/storage/management/drive/large?hl=en&g1_landing_page=2&utm_source=gmail&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=storage_meter**



**Review by Hali**

**A hidden gem amongst the boulders, Villa dei Fiori is a majestic escape. We spent four amazing nights relaxing in the hot tub and gazing into an unforgettable canvas of shining stars. From the landscape and wildlife to the serenity and seclusion, we could not have dreamed of a more rejuvenating or memorable vacation. Each morning, we had visits from many geckos and during the days, we saw two roadrunners, multiple hummingbirds, some cute bats flying in the evening, and a few coyotes, and occasionally at night, we heard an orchestra of howls when the moon came up. Best of all, on the last morning, we were treated to a rare sighting of a bobcat sitting atop the head of the George Washington rock. We enjoyed our time lounging by the pool soaking up the sun as well as taking refreshing dips in the saltwater pool. You feel like the only people in the world when at the pool as you are surrounded by boulders and trees. Dale has done a FANTASTIC job with the property; the grounds are breathtaking. You can truly see he has put his love and hard work into every square inch of this property. We can't wait to come back again. Thank you, Dale, for sharing your slice of heaven with us! Fun Facts: You are within 15 minutes from two of the Joshua Tree National Park entrances; there is an awesome cave that you see when Dale shows you around; he will also tell you about the nearby hikes, including one straight into the park; and there is an astounding assortment of books in the house along with gorgeous art and cool décor.**



**Review by George**

**Dale is a true gem and very welcoming. He meets you upon arrival and provides a lovely tour of the property — caves, pool, spa, foliage, bedrooms, books, light switches, etc. He provides detailed knowledge of the property and shares the best ways to access the park, where to picnic, hike, stargaze, etc. Both Dale and the property are one of a kind. Best pool in Joshua Tree.**



**Review by Nicholas**

**Our stay was very peaceful and restorative. Plenty of wildlife and areas to explore by foot straight from the property. We were lucky enough to come across a bobcat right outside the door.**



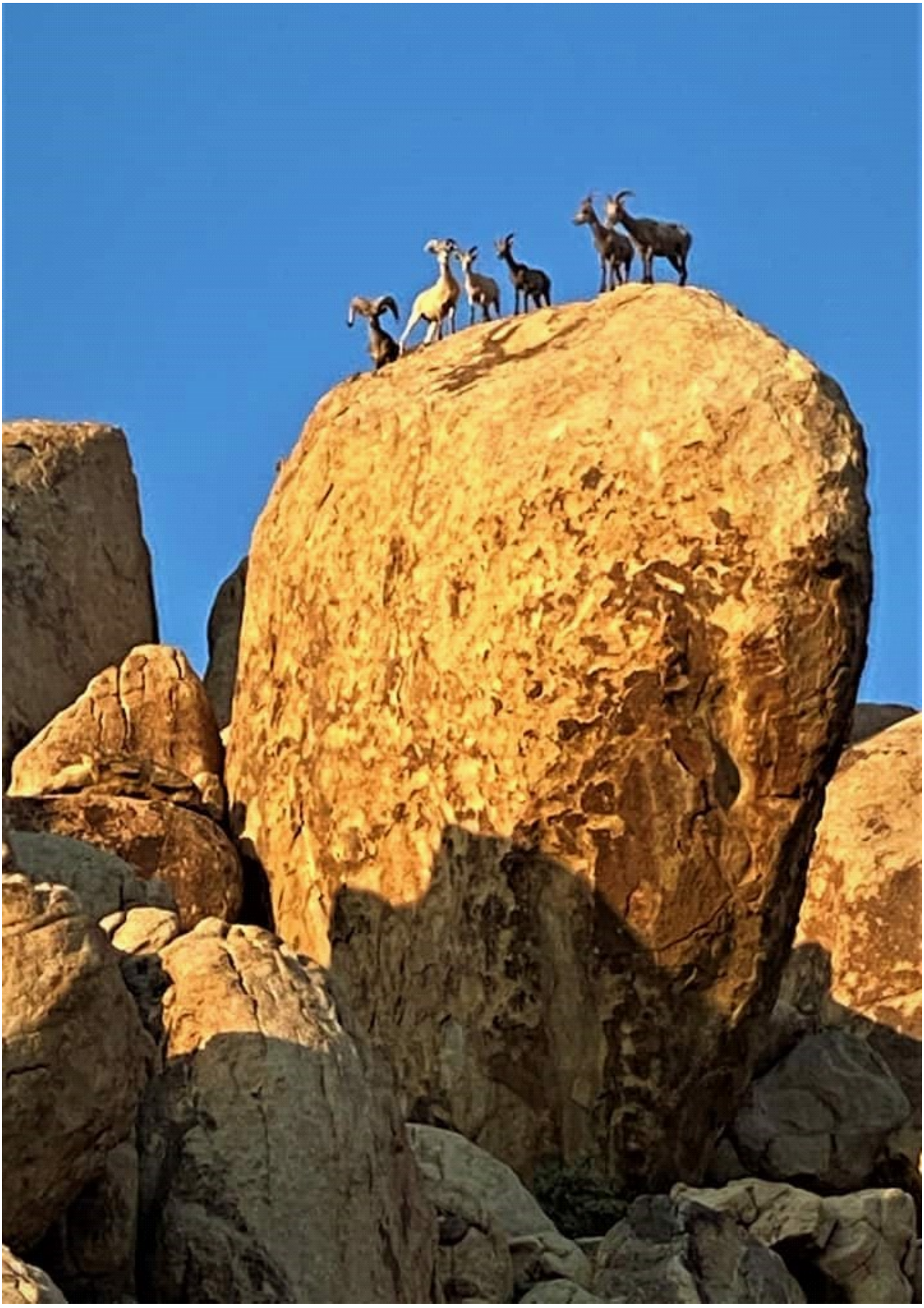
**Review by Jane – Peaceful and Exhilarating.**

**My partner and I stayed in April. The property is nothing short of spectacular and offers many kinds of activities, which are described by the owner, Dale, upon arrival. What I loved best, though, was just climbing up into the rocks with my coffee in the morning, enjoying the scenery and hanging out with the wildlife. My partner spotted three coyotes chasing a bobcat which climbed a pine tree in Dale's grove, which he captured on his telephoto lens. It's so peaceful here! The pool was refreshing and the hot tub afterward was relaxing. The charming house is very comfortable and located just a short drive to the shops and restaurants of Joshua Tree. A nice touch was that Dale brought in fresh cut flowers for us from his well-tended garden. The energy of this place is both peaceful and exhilarating! I highly recommend it for a special occasion or romantic getaway.**



**Kit foxes, bobcats, Bighorn sheep, owls, hawks, roadrunners, Chuckwalla iguanas, Mojave Desert tortoises, and Horned lizards can be encountered in our back valley, adjacent to the National Park.**

**The Kit fox, *Vulpes macrotis,* is a Vulpes species that lives in the semi-arid regions of the southwestern deserts of the United States, Northern and Central Mexico. Noted for their small ears that help disperse heat and give them exceptional hearing ability, the Kit fox is the smallest of the four species of foxes in North America and the smallest of foxes in the world. Mostly nocturnal or crepuscular, they escape daytime heat by burrowing in underground dens, often living in pairs.**





**Our Joshua Tree was adopted from a construction site to save it from being destroyed, transported it twenty miles with an 18-wheel semi-trailer and replanted it. Since the long roots that ensured their survival for a couple of hundred years were cut off, we stabilized it with steel cables for ten years to allow new roots to grow to anchor it during windstorms.**



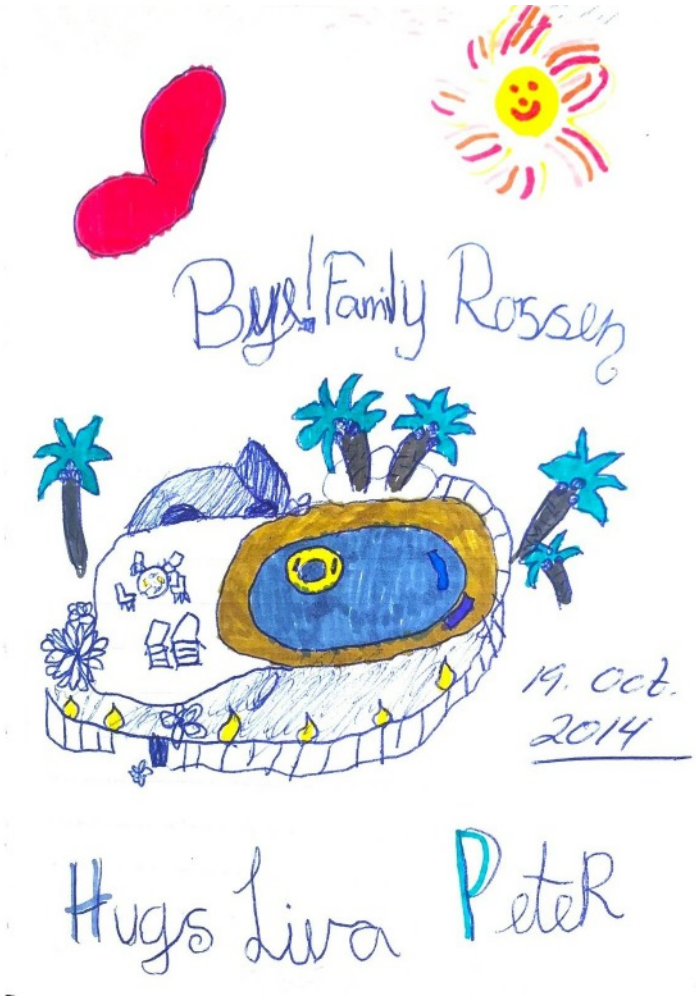
**Review by Geneva**

**An unbelievable property. We rented this place for a weekend getaway with seven friends (we are in our late 20's). Our experience was nothing short of idyllic. Dale is obviously a man who is passionate about this work of art of a property. He is a careful steward, and the care he takes shows in the experience you have of the property. It is very thoughtfully designed. The interiors are comfortable and welcoming. Everything was perfectly clean, everyone slept like babies on the beds, and the kitchen was well-equipped. The real star of the show, though, is all the spaces designed to be conducive to conversation. You can enjoy each other's company in an airy, amply-seated living area, multiple patios (especially the back with the fire pit), a hot tub, a beautiful fenced pool, a little table nook above the pool with another fire pit, an enormous boulder overlooking the pool (which seats several and is PERFECT for viewing sunsets), and perhaps most memorably an amazing cave (with yet another fire pit!). Every place in Villa dei Fiori is a place to have memorable conversations with people you love while enjoying a truly beautiful environment. We really enjoyed climbing over the rocks for a fun hike around the immediate area, too. There are many exciting animals and beautiful plants. As you climb up, the view is more and more breathtaking! A few of us even climbed all the way up to a small cave that is up high on the mountain. The sense of discovery was so fun! Please do not leave without making use of the fire pit in the cave. We started a fire at sunset, and it was a magical experience watching the lighting change within the cave's chambers. It was magical. We loved everything so much we found ourselves completely satisfied with the property itself! I must go back to Joshua Tree soon to see more of it, and hopefully when I do, I can stay here again. It was truly a wonderful experience.**



**Review by Daria**

**After spending an incredible few days at Dale's gorgeous property with my mother and sisters for mom's 77th birthday, I had to come back for a second visit with my family (including our rescue pup). The landscape surrounding the house is nothing short of jaw-dropping. Absolutely awe-inspiring. Inside the house is a bibliophile's dream! Dale's eclectic library is full of wonderful volumes on diverse subject matter. I loved how the collection was grouped and organized. The library is its own trip! The pool is perfect, and nighttime hot tub soaks under the stars were a dream. I took full advantage of the extensive vase collection and garden shears to clip and arrange fragrant blue cypress, mesquite, Desert Bird of paradise, roses, creosote bush, and lavender. I still have some leftover scraps at home in a dish of "desert potpourri" that smells like rain. The caves are otherworldly, a great place to sit in silence or play guitar. Lovely, quirky, romantic, adventurous, and peaceful!**




**Drawing of Villa dei Fiori by Liva Rossen, nine-year old ballerina from Norway whose father, Peter Rossen, captains a ship 1,000 ft. in length that tows oil platforms and icebergs off the coast of Greenland.**



**Liva Rossen and her brother visiting Villa dei Fiori Nature Preserve. Nine-year-old Liva created a drawing of the pool, cave, palm trees, including the finials on the fence. Lisa is from the sunniest part of Norway, Kristiansand, named after the Dano-Norwegian King Christian IV, who founded the city in 1641.**



**This g**
**the ar**
**and all the outdoor set ups for little picnics and snacks. The house is full of books you will want to lose yourself in. The pool is so thoughtfully designed and tucked in the boulders. This is the kind of place that you want to keep a secret. We were myself, my husband, two daughters (5 and 6), my parents and my aunt (70). Everyone adored this place, and it met us where we all were. We didn't even have a need to go into the park, as we were surrounded by a private backyard of boulders and Joshua tree. The kids loved swimming in the pool every day--in March! and even dragged us in, which was surprisingly refreshing and delightful. Dale, the owner, is a magical human being who we were so lucky to get to spend time with. The stories he shared, both of his life and of this space, were part of the best memories we have. If you have the luxury to get to know him during your stay, there is no better souvenir to take from Joshua Tree. There is a 10-page agreement that comes with the rental. It is Dale's love letter to this special property. I loved reading it; I loved following all the rules, knowing that is what keeps it beautiful and allows us all to have really nice things. Highly recommend!**



**Review by Ashliegh**

**Dale was a fantastic host. The property is absolutely gorgeous, and it was a perfect weekend getaway. We felt incredibly welcomed and accommodated throughout the entire process. There much to do at the house beyond the beautiful pool. There is the back canyon to explore, the cave to chill and make a fure, as well as many surrounding hikes onto the Joshua Tree Park. The possibilities are endless. We encountered the cutest animals as well on our hikes, including wildlife, including desert roadrunners, chuckwallas, owls, and kangaroo mice, a surprise to find nature everywhere. You could honestly, without leaving the property, enjoy the jumbo rocks in the backyard! The property is soooo beautiful. You can tell from first glance that it has been curated with the upmost care. Truly an oasis! I definitely recommend this cozy, beautiful stay to enjoy all that Joshua Tree has to offer while staying comfortable with all the amenities you would want during a vacation.**



**Review by Tanya – Magical Getaway in Joshua Tree**

**When we arrived at the home, we were immediately impressed by the property's breathtaking backdrop! Magical! We were greeted by Dale, who gave us an orientation about the home, and a tour of the property. This was extremely helpful. Dale even brought us into one of the caves on the property. The three of us crawled in, and because it was after 5pm, the bats were starting to stir, and fly about. So cool! After we said goodbye to Dale, we put on our swimsuits, and headed down to the gorgeous, pebble tech pool to get in some swim time before the sun went down. While in the pool, I spotted the most wonderful sight. An owl flew above us and landed on one of the giant boulders far above the pool! We also saw our new friends, the bats, who would take a sip of water from the pool. So many cool sights you do not get to see in everyday city life! The next morning, we woke up early to catch the glorious sunrise! We had our morning coffee outside (a spot where you can look at the hollow tree that Dale pointed out the night before where a cute iguana lives). We saw the little iguana when Dale was giving us the tour, and the iguana is very calm around people. Guess what? The iguana was up too, and sunning himself of the giant rock by his hollow tree. After coffee, we went for a hike to the second cave on the property. When we got to the second cave, I discovered where the owl from last night has her nest. After the hike, it was back to the pool where we were treated to beautiful orange & blue dragonflies flying around the pool. I felt like I was in heaven! We never needed to leave the home. We only wish we could have stayed longer. This is truly a property for people who love nature, hiking, and being away from it all. On the last day I roamed the grounds, and I saw my last fun sight...Another (white) Owl flew out of a tree!**



**Review by Steven**

**We forget in the rush of daily life, the value of quiet, and the enriching quality of nature. A charming rustic home nestled in the boulders bordering the Joshua Tree National Park, Villa dei Fiori is the perfect place to renew, relax, and rejuvenate the spirit. We spotted a Merlin falcon, quail, roadrunners, rabbits, and lizards. The personal touches to this home in every room and around the property give you an experience beyond just your normal vacation rental. There is a library of books in every room. Dale is an owner that cares for every square inch of his property with an amazing attention to detail. The Villa is gorgeously designed inside and out with meticulous attention to detail and comfort. Beautiful art and furniture. Every color and material and work of art is coordinated to create a visual delight in each room. Adding a warm touch of hospitality are the flowers that greet you upon arrival.**

**We enjoyed wonderful meals together with the kitchen stocked with every possible dish, pot, and utensil. We enjoyed time relaxing in the spa surrounded by boulders on 3 sides. We enjoyed hiking and climbing on the boulders within just feet of the home. We loved the caves just 50 feet away and the 20 foot cave in the far back of his property that you get to scramble up a hundred feet of boulders to reach. I highly recommend staying at this property. If you feel stressed, tired or in need of respite for any reason, this is the getaway for you! Whether active or restful, you can't make a wrong choice! I haven't been to a property like this ever in my life. Thank you, Dale, for the wonderful weekend.**



**Review by Victoria**

**Location, location, location!!! This place has a splendid view. The house is nestled in front of boulders and the house itself is like a mini museum. Our host Dale has created an environment that will transport you to a tranquil state. My family really enjoyed our trip, the only things we regret is that we didn't add another day to our stay. All the charm and wonder mentioned in the other reviews are 100% accurate, however, I believe my companion and I were the first to bake bread in the cave! Dale was the perfect host, letting us feel special to have chosen his home that he has meticulously created and cared for. The details of the house such as paintings and photographs have a personal connection with Dale. I'm looking forward to the next chance I have to return there to spend a little more relaxing and boulder-filled time.**

**Review by Charles**

**What a magical place to spend a long weekend in Joshua Tree. You're basically in the park and Dale's property truly makes you feel like part of nature, all while you're getting the amenities of a higher-end resort. We were fortunate to have multiple sightings of Bighorn Sheep on the boulders above the pool, as well as loads of stunning lizards, rabbits, and other cool critters running about. Even for the sunsets and star gazing alone, this place is perfect. Dale was such an amazing host and really took the time to make us feel welcomed and taken care of - he even brought us an extra propane tank for the grill as back-up! We can't wait to come back.**

**In the following pages, I will illustrate the history of Villa dei Fiori and my design work in film. When I came to California to attend graduate student at UCLA, I visited my homesteading cousins Revena and Gwendolyn and fell in love with the Joshua Tree National Park. Twenty years later, I began the gardens of Villa dei Fiori.**



**There were no trees on the estate before 1988. On the left are *Parkinsonia aculeata*, Arizona cypresses, and *Halepensis* pines. In the foreground is Tuscan rosemary, to the right, Mediterranean palms, and in the background, a grove of Italian Stone pines. There were four dying trees on the estate when I bought the property in 1988. Thirty seven years later, the west garden includes Parkinsonia *aculeata*, Arizona cypresses, and *Halepensis* pines. In the foreground is Tuscan rosemary, to the right, Mediterranean palms, and in the background, a grove of Italian Stone pines. Guests are encouraged to cut roses and Bird of Paradise to make bouquets and take home boughs of fragrant rosemary, Arizona cypress, and French lavender.**

**Review by Natalie - Incredible Oasis,**

**What an incredible experience we had staying in this beautiful home! The love, care and hard work that has gone into this villa will leave you speechless. Dale has created an oasis in the middle of harsh, dry terrain. Growing flowers you'd never expect to see in a desert! His story is fascinating and his brilliance evident in the home he's spent decades creating. The swimming pool surrounded by huge boulders was enjoyed by all of us, especially in the heat wave Joshua tree was having. It was our anniversary while we were there, and my husband picked the most beautiful bouquet of flowers for me. Dale is so generous and tells you to pick whatever you want. We also collected some fresh rosemary to make our favorite recipe - rosemary potatoes. Truly there are no words for the beauty that surrounds you. Thank you, Dale, for meeting you and for sharing your home, garden, and story with us.**



**Review by Susan**

**Dale’s place is pure magic. There is no other place like it. This was our second stay and we hope to return. The landscape, the location, the home itself—all exquisite.**



**Guests from Paris, France, the Nguyen – Leroux family**

## Review by Florence

**Merci, Dale pour votre chaleureuse accueil et le temps passé avec nous. Nous garderons un excellent souvenir de ce bref passage à Joshua Tree, en espérant avoir l'occasion de revenir voir l'avancement de vos beaux projets. Vous êtes un homme remarquable, Amicalement, Florence Nguyen.**

## Review by Didier

**On n'oubliera jamais votre personnalité particulière, votre grande connaissance des choses st des hommes. Nous avons passé une semaine magique et voyons des bébé lynx. Nous reviendrons pour visiter votre nouvelle création et j'espère que nous pouvons dansé tous ensemble dans votre « ballroom dancing, » à bientôt, ici ou ailleurs, Didier Leroux.**



**There are many caves in our Valley of the Moon that children love to explore.**




**Bobcat drawing by children visiting Villa dei Fiori, Memorial Day .**

## Review by the Jones Family

**Thank you, Dale, for opening your truly magical home to us. We lead a busy life, and it feels sometimes like we have barely mentally survived a long Minnesota winter by this time of year. To be able to sit with, explore, and play in the nature here was purely joyful and healing. I have hiked the Himalayas, visited the Alhambra in Spain, two of the most beautiful places on earth. Your gardens and natural habitat are up there with those beauties. We have had so many moments of awe here, so much newfound respect for mother nature and what man can do to coax beauty from nature by creating a garden like this. We climbed and squeezed through the many caves endlessly, spied the regal bobcat, had a wonderful lunch with a fire in the cavern, hiked into the boulders above the pool, drawn figures in the sand, made a native restaurant in the playhouse, read in the hammock, polar bears jumping into the pool in December and then racing into the hot tub. We changed our itinerary to give as much time as possible to soak up this space. There is nothing else that compares for our kids to the solitude and freedom this unique garden provides.**



**The saltwater swimming pool has four chaise longues, a shade umbrella, and folding chairs that can be moved to enjoy various scenic views. The dark bottom turns the water into a reflecting pool for the boulders, trees and clouds, a glistening painting that is continually changing during the day**

**Review by Fiona**

**Our family enjoyed the most magical stay at Dale's home. You could not ask for a more hospitable host! Dale is communicative, informative & great to talk to. We really enjoyed his orientation on our first night. We arrived later than expected, but Dale waited patiently for us, when most hosts would have just left a key, so he could give us all the information about the house & all the wonderful sights & things to do, he didn't want us to miss anything. The next day he even texted us a map of another great hike in the park, which he thought would be perfect for us. The house is full of charm and beautiful things to look at, it is obvious that he has put a lot of love & care into every detail. The garden is beautifully landscaped with an amazing variety of stunning plants, with a fabulous swimming pool that we swam in every day (despite the November chill) & in the evening staring up at the star filled skies from the hot tub was such a joy. Then there were those boulders! It was such a treat to climb on those, into the back valley searching for the Bighorn Sheep that Dale had told us about and finding them! Climbing up to look in caves and stumbling across a huge beautiful owl. who just stared at us for what seemed like forever before flying away over our heads! It was an incredible experience for our animal loving daughter, she also spotted countless bunnies, roadrunners and teeny, little desert rats running around the garden. Joshua Tree is a very special place, and this trip was unforgettable. I cannot recommend Villa Dei Fiori highly enough. Thank you, Dale!**



**The living room French doors open onto the shaded west terrace overlooking the garden. Couch is a sofa sleeper. The blond cabinet conceals the television and music system.**

## Review by Christine with Six Children

**What more can I say that has not already been said? This property and the owner, Dale, are truly special. I first discovered this property a few years ago while searching for VRBO homes near National Parks. I am so glad I saved it as a favorite and finally decided to book it this summer. My husband and I have 6 children (aged 12 to 1.5 years old) and we travel a considerable amount. Villa de Fiori surpassed our expectations. This place is not only beautiful, it is magical. What makes it so? Villa de Fiori is a labor of love, inside and out; it reflects many years of time and energy devoted to fulfilling Dale's vision for the property. We enjoyed visiting Joshua Tree Park and doing all sorts of things locally (a jeep tour, rock climbing, and star gazing), but mostly, we really enjoyed staying at Villa de Fiori. This is an eclectic, practical home filled with wonderful art, photos, and an extensive library. Guests will be happy to find a well-stocked home that provides everything you might need (and then-some). We were happily surprised that there were plenty of toiletries, products, and all kinds of houseware items available for us to use. The hot tub and pool areas are spectacular. All the boulders and caves kept us busy as we climbed, explored, and built fires. We enjoyed Villa de Fiori so very much that we are already planning to come back! This is a one-of-a-kind property and experience.**



**Living room French doors open upon the west terrace overlooking the garden.**



**Review by Jane**

**Five Stars for "Great" does not do this property justice. I discovered Dale's place 5 years ago when we spent 2 nights there at the beginning of a road trip. I was astounded by his property then and it did not disappoint the 2nd time. My partner and I just spent 4 nights at Villa de Fiori for my 60th birthday. Yes, it's pricey but, for special occasions, it is well worth it because you just can't find any place like it. "Jaw dropping", "other-worldly" and "drop dead gorgeous" are descriptions that easily come to mind. The natural beauty is unbeatable and the care that Dale has shown his property with so many beautiful plantings (rosemary, lavender, roses, palo verde trees, etc.) and fun amenities (fire pit, hot tub, fabulous saltwater swimming pool) are enjoyed at every turn. You can tell he loves this place as much as you will! Especially fun for me on this trip was climbing around the boulders on his property up to the national park boundary; walking right into the national park a few "blocks" away and hiking around (no waiting in line at the park entrance or waiting for a parking space); seeing 2 coyotes run by while we were having a glass of wine out on the sand road in front of his property while watching the sunset. Not wanting to leave paradise, we cooked most of our meals and Dale's kitchen was well-equipped for that. I do love the town of Joshua Tree, though, so we went into town and had a beer at the Joshua Tree Saloon (fun party atmosphere in their outdoor space), poked around the artist enclave (Art Queen, World Famous Crochet Museum, Beauty Bubble Salon & Museum, etc.), had lunch at Crossroads Cafe (great vegan options and service) and delicious coffee at Joshua Tree Coffee Company (offering many non-dairy milk choices). Dale's house is relatively small but sparkling clean when you arrive and has a nice light-filled open area with kitchen, dining and living room all in a row. 3 bedrooms and a single bathroom are off a small hallway which features his stunningly beautiful grandmother in a photograph on the end wall. The queen bed in the master bedroom was super comfortable and the view of the boulders out the window made me excited to get up every morning. Seriously, I love to sleep in. I can't say enough good things about this place and, since I want Dale to continue to offer it, I think you should book it as soon as possible!**



**French doors of the master bedroom open upon a shaded terrace, a few footsteps from the hot spa.**

**Review by Ruth:**

**Our family of four stayed at Villa dei Fiori for seven nights in January and had a wonderful time! The house was the perfect size for us, with room for each kid and a spacious master bedroom. The interior was beautifully decorated, displaying Dale's cultivated and artistic eye from his time as a Hollywood art director. The house was well equipped with everything we needed, including cookware, utensils, spices, and more than enough dinnerware, flatware, and cutlery. We also managed a couple loads of laundry, (detergent and softener provided) which was a bonus given the length of our stay. An additional benefit was the proximity of a Tesla Supercharge in Twentynine Palms, which made for a convenient battery top-up stop during grocery runs.**

**We used the living room for games, and tried out the tarot cards that were part of the collection of games provided. The library was extensive and extremely diverse in subject matter. We made s'mores over the fire pit, and star-gazed from the jacuzzi almost every night. Some of us took a quick dip in the swimming pool in January, which prompted Dale to suggest we might be of Viking stock. But the best part of all was the landscape and access to the National Park. Dale has done a tremendous job of bringing in a wide variety of plants to build a beautiful environment for relaxing patio and hammock-time. We enjoyed scrambling and playing games around the boulders right behind the property and the kids thoroughly explored the caves. When we went for hikes in the park, we were able to avoid the main entrance, so we didn't see anyone else the entire time. We will definitely be back.**



**Guest bedroom paintings by Vivienne Quence of Paris, France. French doors open onto a shaded terrace near the hot spa.**

### Review by Akiko

**This was my third time staying at Dale's house. I have stayed at quite a few homes in Joshua Tree and Dale's place is by far the best there is. The outdoor spaces he has created are exceptional. The pool area surrounded by majestic boulders feels like you are on another planet. In the evenings we enjoyed hiking over the rocks into the park and viewing up close the Bighorn sheep and then sitting by the fire pit and watching the stars. Dale is very detailed and meticulous. He has put a lot of love into this property and takes special care to ensure his guests love it too.**

### Review by Franklin

**Awesome Property! This villa in Joshua Tree is a beautiful property and the perfect place to stay for any trip to Joshua Tree. Its location is great, the nature surrounding the property is gorgeous and the property itself feels like its own world. The backyard has a cave which is very cool, and the interior and exterior design of the property is both intriguing and welcoming.**




**The French doors of the third bedroom open onto a shaded pergola with climbing wisteria and a fire pit.**

## Review by Joshua

**I've been to Joshua tree many times but have never felt quite as at peace as I have while at Dale's place. From the stylish house to the massive boulders, to the extraordinary pool, you may just forget the reasons you care to Joshua tree in the first place. It is very easy to get lost in the wonder of the property. We were greeted by Dale, the owner of the property. A very kind and welcoming gentleman who really helps you feel like the space is yours during your stay there. Was extremely receptive, and quick to answer any questions we had. His property is absolutely stunning. We were keen on exploring the national park, though quickly became caught up on how much there was to do just on the property itself. In the mornings we were greeted by the Bighorn sheep that roamed the property, in the afternoon we lounged and enjoyed the massive private pool, and in the evenings, we were lucky enough to enjoy the great propane grill out in the kitchen patio. The property also has a great library with books from cooking to photography, to novels. Cannot express how wonderful of a time my friends and I had here. We will absolutely be returning as soon as we can and recommending this spot to anyone visiting the area. Until next time!**



**The kitchen is fully equipped for chef's who like sharp knives, blender, large roasting pans, skillets, pasta pots, French press, tea kettle and tea pot, oven ware, baking pans for cookies, cakes, and pies, French serving platters, copper vessels, salad spinner and bowels, kitchen utensils of all types and shapes, even an asparagus steamer and dozens of cookbooks.**

## Review by the Al-Asadi Family

**It isn't an easy task to put our appreciation of the villa into words. We spent ten days here and enjoyed every minute of it. It literally exceeded our expectations. From the house and pool to the picturesque surroundings, everything added to our comfort and ultimately to a truly relaxing vacation. As we return to our normal life, we will nurture our memories for months to come. All of us thank you Dale, for creating this wonderful and tranquil desert oasis on the boundary of Joshua Tree Park and sharing it with us. Thank you, Katja, Grisla, and Zela.**




**The kitchen opens onto a terrace with a shaded pergola surrounded by rosemary, wisteria, and Carolina jasmine**

## Review by Sandra

**Dale's place at Villa de Fiori is a true experience, not just an Airbnb. It has history, scenery, peacefulness, serenity, beauty. The grounds are immaculate and for being in the desert, somehow still surrounded by rich greenery consisting of rosemary, lavender, roses, desert plants, palo verde, pines and many more well kept plants and trees. The pool is refreshing and in great shape. The hot tub is clean and works great. Nothing was overused or broken, which can sometimes be expected at many Airbnb's. The boulders behind the house are a fantastic adventure for those who aren't afraid to boulder around. Complete with a cave where a fire can be lit and star gazing is a must. The AC works great and the kitchen is fully stocked. Dale meets you and walks you through the entire property. This is critical as the house has so many amenities, you have to be here it all in order to capitalize on your stay here. All in all, this was truly one of the better vacations we've ever had.**



**West pergola with an allée of Italian Stone pines beyond. Tablecloths are available upon request before arrival**

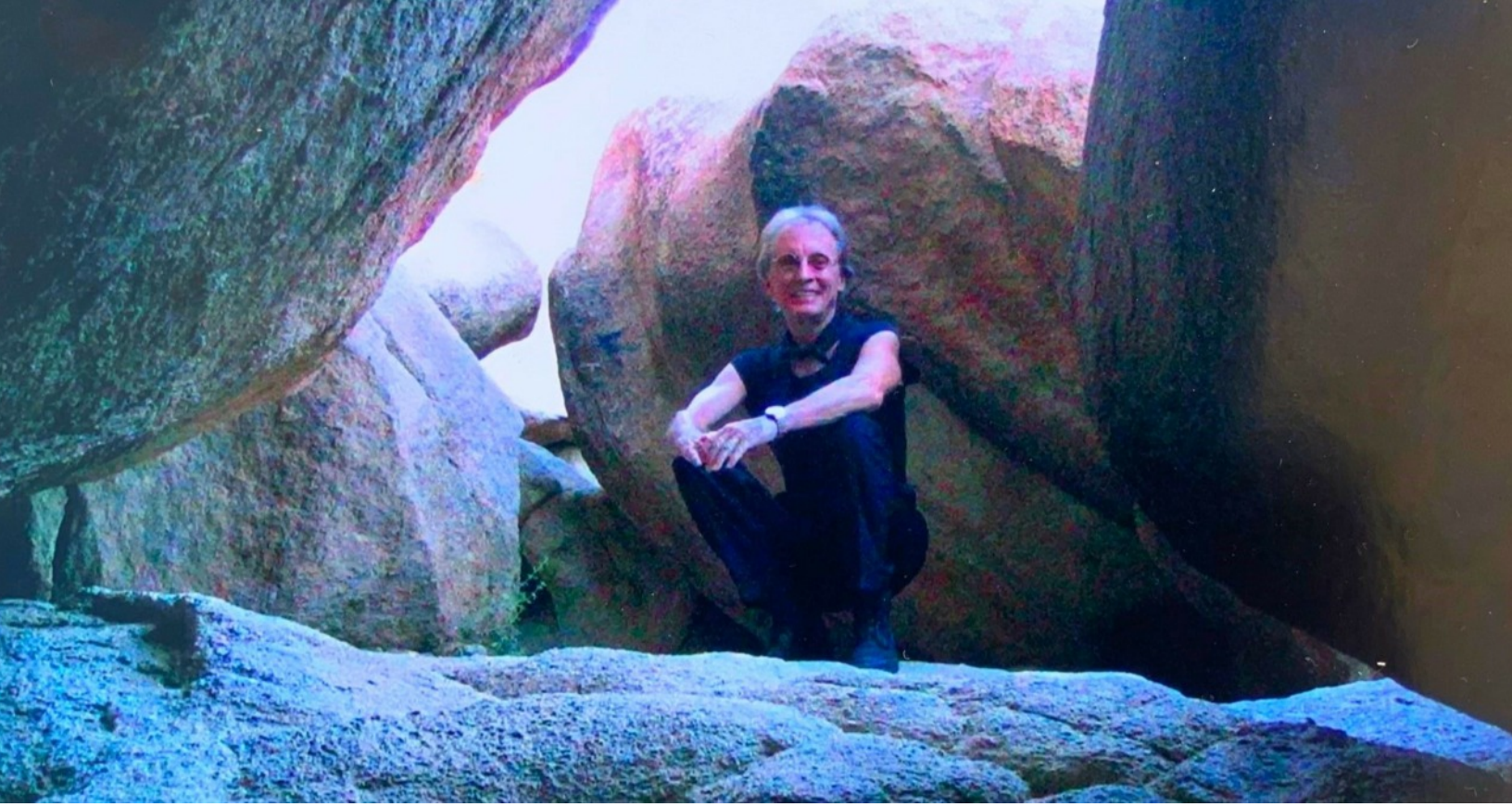
## Review by Gerald

**What a magical place to spend a long weekend in Joshua Tree. You're basically in the park and Dale's property truly makes you feel like part of nature, all while you're getting the amenities of a higher-end resort. We were fortunate to have multiple sightings of Bighorn Sheep on the boulders above the pool, as well as loads of stunning lizards, rabbits, and other cool critters running about. Even for the sunsets and star gazing alone, this place is perfect. Dale was such an amazing host and really took the time to make us feel welcomed and taken care of - he even brought us an extra propane tank for the grill as back-up! We can't wait to come back!**



**Review by Waheeda**

**We highly recommend this magical place to families, and anyone seeking solitude. We spent 14 days at Villa Dei Fiori and created some beautiful lifetime memories with our three children. It was extremely hot, but inside the house it stayed cool and comfortable. The beautiful swimming pool also somehow kept us quite cool in the desert heat. In the evenings we were able to make a fire outside and have smores and conversation. We also ventured into the cave on the property one night and sat on the sandy floor with mats that are supplied. It was so quiet and, in the openings in the boulders ceiling, we could see so many stars. We had a little fire there as well. There were so many places to explore, and we enjoyed climbing the boulders on the property into a huge valley and hiking around we were delighted. There was no one anywhere and we had the whole place to ourselves! While on our trip we saw a wild herd of bighorn sheep, numerous lizards- iguanas and chuckwallas, roadrunners, quails with their cute bobbing chicks and a fast red racer snake too. The house itself had everything we needed for cooking and bathing. We could make cut flower arrangements from the gardens to take inside. Inside the walls seemingly changed color depending on the time of day and quality of the light. It was gorgeous by candlelight too. The fantastic book collection has something of interest for everyone. Dale was responsive and helpful to all our needs. We are impressed that he has created a such a beautiful space that mirrors the beauty of the landscape and that he has chosen to share it. We will forever cherish our family vacation at Villa Dei Fiori. We are lucky to have escaped from the chaos of the world for a bit. It was a great retreat that created memories for us and our children that are priceless.**



**There are dozens of boulder caves throughout our Valley of the Moon.**





## Review by Giancarlo

**The perfect desert retreat! My wife and I, along with a couple of very good friends, stayed here in October for the weekend. It was the perfect weekend getaway in the desert! We came to Joshua Tree to watch the Orionids meteor shower and wanted a quiet place far from the city lights. The property was ideal -- not just a retreat away from town, but a beautifully landscaped property nestled right up among the boulders at the edge of Joshua Tree National Park. The grounds have been reshaped to provide privacy, and the property is simply beautiful! We showed up a little late in the evening on Friday, but the owner nonetheless was happy to greet us and give a detailed tour of the home and property. He reviewed all the info we'd need for the weekend -- pointing-out where all the kitchen items are (there are even pictures posted inside the cabinets and drawers to help find what you need), extra bedding and towels, as well as all of the switches for the outdoor lighting. He also took the time to give us information about the unique artwork found throughout the home and had even placed freshly-cut roses throughout the home! Although it was October, the afternoon weather was warm, and we spent some time by the pool. The pool area is surrounded by huge boulders, some of which were moved specifically into place to create the perfect setting. The pool is very nice, with plenty of room for lounging, and even a private area with a small table and chairs for a nice dinner under the stars! The home has three bedrooms and is the perfect size for six 6 persons. The kitchen is fully equipped, and we enjoyed using the outdoor BBQ grill, too! There are plenty of places to relax and read a book or sit with friends and chat -- inside and outside the house. The house easily accommodated the six of us, and our friends were even able to bring their dog, who loved it, too! We very much enjoyed our weekend and can't wait to do it again! The home and the property are as beautiful as the photos suggest. I hope to make staying here an annual event, it really is the perfect weekend getaway in the desert!**



**Galen and Liam explore Rocky View Loop Trail beginning close to Villa dei Fiori. A map is furnished for the four-mile to six-mile hike.**



**Rocky View Loop trail is on the national park close to Villa dei Fiori. A map is supplied upon request.**



**Half-mile long boulder outcropping near Villa dei Fiori – our favorite recommendation for picnics. We provide our guests with a large two-handled picnic basket.**



**Easy and difficult boulder climbing and Dale's picnic spot.**



**Review by Luis**

**This place exceeded my expectations by far!! Loved the location, the pool, the views, the beautiful wildlife. Explored the rocks and the four chamber cave where you can build a fire. A carpet is furnished to lay on the sand. The moon and stars shining through the crevices in the ceiling were lovely.**



**Guests from London, United Kingdom on the ridge over Villa dei Fiori's Valley of the Moon looking toward the house amid the mesquite trees in the center of the photo. Bighorns come over the high ridge to our water hole and salt lick, and descend the boulders to the house.**

## Review by Jesse

**My wife and I took a trip to Joshua Tree for our 20th wedding anniversary. We were looking for a comfortable place to stay for our trip. I stumbled upon this listing which looked great from the photos and reviews. I will just say the purpose of the trip was to explore Joshua Tree, which we did, however the highlight was this property! We spent most of our time here. We didn't want to leave, lounged in the pool, hot tub and hiked the property and beyond. Dale has created an oasis of beauty and tranquility. The beauty of the landscaping and garden are hard to describe. Dale gave us a great tour and we had a wonderful time talking about art, ballet, and other subjects we had in common. As other reviews have mentioned, the photos do not do this place justice! The pool is amazing and was larger than I expected. I really cannot recommend Villa dei Fiori enough.**



**The entrance cave halfway up the escarpment in the back valley is fifteen foot high. An owl lives in a cave close by. On the other side of the ridge is the national park.**

**Review by John K**

**We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at this special Joshua Tree residence. Situated amongst unique huge boulders lining the back perimeter of the property, this property had it all. Pool, jacuzzi, outdoor BBQ all boasting incredible views which was shown to us by the very courteous and friendly owner Dale. In the back valley, there is a hidden cave which we all hung out in while sitting around the fire we made. Amazingly we saw a kit fox looming in amongst the high rocks, illuminated by the full moon. Very Special Experience and will be back again. 5 Stars! And a hidden cave.**



**Boulder outcropping on the way to Rocky View Loop trail.**



**Rocky View Loop trail.**



**Galen bouldering on Rocky View Loop trail.**

**Review by Vicky**

**Absolutely stunning views! We spent most of our time at the pool taking in the beautiful boulder formations. Photos do not do it justice – just breathtaking. The best part was that we were able to climb and explore the boulders right from the backyard. The various patios on the property were great for outdoor dining at any time of the day. Dale was a great host and was very communicative. The landscaping, art, and library were all thoughtful. And personal touches made this vacation destination really stand out. I will stay here again!**



**Dale on the Rocky View Loop Trail on the Joshua Tree National Park near Villa dei Fiori.**



**Hiking in my favorite canyon  over the ridge from our Valley of the Moon with ochre, umber, burnt sienna, and gold boulders.**



**High on the escarpment of our back Valley of the Moon is a 14 foot high entrance to a boulder cave with a skylight letting in light, one of dozens of caves on the estate.**

**Review by Landyn**

**Villa dei Fiori felt like home away from home! The personal details throughout and all the books and photographs give the space such warmth. My girlfriend and I were looking to turn off the screens for a couple days and enjoy each other's company and this was the perfect place to do so. Thank you for your thoughtfulness, Dale, we will be back!**

**Review by Jennifer**

**It was a pleasure staying at Dale's home. It's very rare to stay in a place like this. Beds were very comfortable and the pool and jacuzzi were very nice to use. The backyard is also a great hike up the rocks and eliminates the need to go to the park. But it is close to the park and was a great experience. We would definitely stay again.**



**Bighorns come from the Joshua Tree National Park to the boulders above the house to munch on creosote and jojoba bushes.**

Review by **An-Chih**

**Our wonderful stay at a desert oasis! We are so happy we booked Dale's villa! It was truly as described. We had a fantastic stay! Dale's villa was exactly what we needed. We got to hike all around the boulders, then played in the pool, grilled for dinner, and star gazed in the spa before bedtime. We did this for 3 nights and we wished we had more days! After booking Dale gave us lots of information about the stay. We asked a few questions, and he was very prompt to reply. AC was great. We saw a rabbit in the yard during our stay. The garden was beautiful, and we could smell the lavender and rosemary growing all around the property. While we were in the spa, we could smell the faint scent of lavender, and it was heavenly. At night, turn off the spa light and look up at the stars. Both nights we saw a shooting star! Thank you, Dale, for sharing your property with us. We loved our stay and would love to come back in the future!**



**Villa dei Fiori lies on the opposite side of the ridge from architect Kendrick Bangs Kellogg's High Desert House, constructed for painter Beverly Doolittle renowned for her camouflage nature paintings. Its reinforced concrete structure suggests a form of a seashell. It is illuminated by clear story windows in the shape of a scimitar lying between ribs of concrete. Boulders remain in the interior, the custom furniture evoking *arte nouveau* forms, a house built with thousands of hours of handcraft, required 25 years to finish. Renowned for his organic architecture, the architect Kellogg designed the Uchimura Kanzo Memorial Stone Church in Karuizawa, Japan. Popular for weddings, the chapel has the feeling of an ancient spiritual site.**

### Review by Johnny

**What a great spot! A great place, a great location with everything you possibly need. The pool is a lot cooler than the online pics so it's really nice when you are right smack dab in the middle of mother nature and see all kinds of wildlife and cool creatures. You can be industrious and climb boulders or just take a leisurely stroll in the Valley of the Moon. The owner is a well-known author and super friendly. It was a great stay, and we'll definitely come back soon.**

### Review by Allexis

**High Desert Oasis in the rocks. We spent our weekend at Dale's place enjoying the late summer heat. We enjoyed the tucked-away location of Dale's sprawling property and the many mature trees and plants. Don't settle for a cowboy bathtub pool when you can have Dale's incredible inground, large, perfect depth, saltwater pool. Our last night was our favorite; we sat outside and watched as a short bust of rain turned the clouds into a long, lazy, spectacular rosy-glow sunset. Our Joshua Tree weekend was time well spent recharging in nature, something we all needed. Thanks, Dale.**



**Review by Nicole**

**Beautiful stay! We ended our 2 week cross country trip here in Joshua Tree, this home was a gem in the desert. We loved our short stay at this property, but the highlight was meeting with the owner. He met us at the property, gave us an extensive tour of his beautiful home and made sure all our questions were answered before leaving. Checking in was a breeze, we loved the pool, the caves and rock climbing right in the back yard. But most of all we really enjoyed the stories and little bits of history during our meeting with the owner. Our family truly enjoyed our stay.**

**Review by Elissa**

**Artscape Experience. Absolutely stunning property providing artful tranquility in every detail. Romantic book lined rooms, the artwork, the sumptuous paint colors, the landscaping, the lighting, the hot tub, and the reflective pool all made this the perfect sanctuary to return to after the Integraton and hiking in Jumbo Rocks.**



**Photo by James Goss, 2024**

**Review by Jim from Oroville**

**If you are going to visit Joshua Tree National Park, this is where to stay. Beyond its proximity to the park entrances, Dale's creation and home makes you feel as though you are in a personal Oasis within the park itself. The eclectic feel and ambience of his home with the books, the art, the grounds, the pool, the wildlife and the picturesque backdrop which makes one feel as though they are in a private amphitheater of God's creation is so very relaxing. The kitchen is appointed well, better than most Airbnb I've visited. I did not want to leave, and I will most definitely be looking forward to my next visit.**



**Review by Chen**

**Amazing place to stay, BEAUTIFUL. Every inch of the land is carefully decorated, big, too. Had a great time at the pool, blue turquoise is beautiful under the sun. Nice book collection and art pieces. Good host, Dale stayed till midnight to check us in and gave us a tour of the place. This place has a lot of class.**

**Review by Nicholas**

**Villa dei Fiori and Dale are spectacular unique gems in Joshua Tree. The thoughtfulness and care that Dale and his French girlfriend Michele put into the property over the decades is astounding. We loved how private the property was, surrounded by groves of trees and a mountain of boulders. There is a magnificent pool, hot tub, fire pits, and even a cave you can crawl into. Dale has a massive library of interesting books. Thanks for the lovely stay, Dale.**



**The gemstone cobalt blue and black pebble bottom of the pool reflects the clouds and trees.**

### Review by Deanna and Mike

**Dale, what a wonderful hidden gem you have here in the desert. The skies were so clear and bright at night. The hot spa was a great thing to have to use after four hours of hiking in the park and on your property as well. We loved your history sharing of you and your family's journeys. The Villa is filled with wonderful pieces of many years of stories. The scents of all your flowers, plants, and trees, brought relaxation each time the wind blew and when we would walk by it all. We would love to come back when it's warmer and take advantage of that gorgeous colorful pool which reflects the trees and clouds during the monsoon season. Peace be with you, my friend.**



**Light at the break of day. The three chamber cavern lies under boulders in the center above the cypresses. The crevices in the boulders let in light during the day and one can gaze at the moon and stars at night.**

## Review by Elizabeth

**The outdoor setting here is almost other-worldly, it's so beautiful. Perfect for hikes, swimming, and connecting with nature. Our family with five children had an incredible experience climbing the boulders, eating dinner in the cave, looking for lizards, and enjoying the peaceful landscape. If you're looking for a unique way to experience Joshua Tree's natural beauty, this is for you. Be prepared to take a little extra care of the house and property as there are many personal touches that Dale has worked hard to nurture.**



**Valley of the Moon forms part of the Villa dei Fiori estate. By the mesquite tree, upper right center, is the watering hole and salt lick for the Bighorn sheep.**

## Review by the Stanley-Hansen Crew

**Dear Dale, thank you for sharing your jewel of a home with us. I was beyond excited when we pulled up and saw your property and met you. We set our ropes and had a wonderful time climbing and bouldering. The Valley of the Moon that you access through a narrow canyon above the pool is great for climbers. The kids were outside almost our entire stay. We enjoyed hiking, sleeping in the cave, campfires, star gazing, bird watching, and just relaxing. My happiest moments were just sitting and reading and being able to see nature from every room in the house. I enjoyed looking through your books. We used the book on gardens, "Places of Tranquility as inspiration for our next vacation, for tranquility is what we found here. We can't wait to come back when it's warmer to see the gardens in bloom. Your home felt so warm and cozy. Thank you for sharing it with us. I hope the baby bobcat returns and thanks for sharing your stories with us.**



**Valley of the Moon is entered from a dry wash near the pool to Villa dei Fiori**

### Review by Jonathan of Anchorage, Alaska

**The location halfway between the two northern entrances to the national park is ideal for driving the loop through the park, which we did multiple times. The neighborhood is quiet. Dale, our host, has assured the privacy of the house with a forest of trees and wonderful landscape that complements the desert boulders that dominate the house and the Valley of the Moon. The interior of the house is unique. The decor is tasteful and reflects an individual's superb artistic curation. Our family stayed a full week. Our two children, 8 and 5, adapted well to boulder hopping, stories around the campfire, exploring the Valley of the Moon and Lizard Rock, and having breakfast in the early sun. Dale himself and his house enhanced our visit to Joshua Tree greatly. His introduction on arrival to the grounds, the art and the library was much appreciated. Additionally, he has some excellent hiking suggestions with spectacular rock formations. You have the park right at your door. No need to get into your car.**



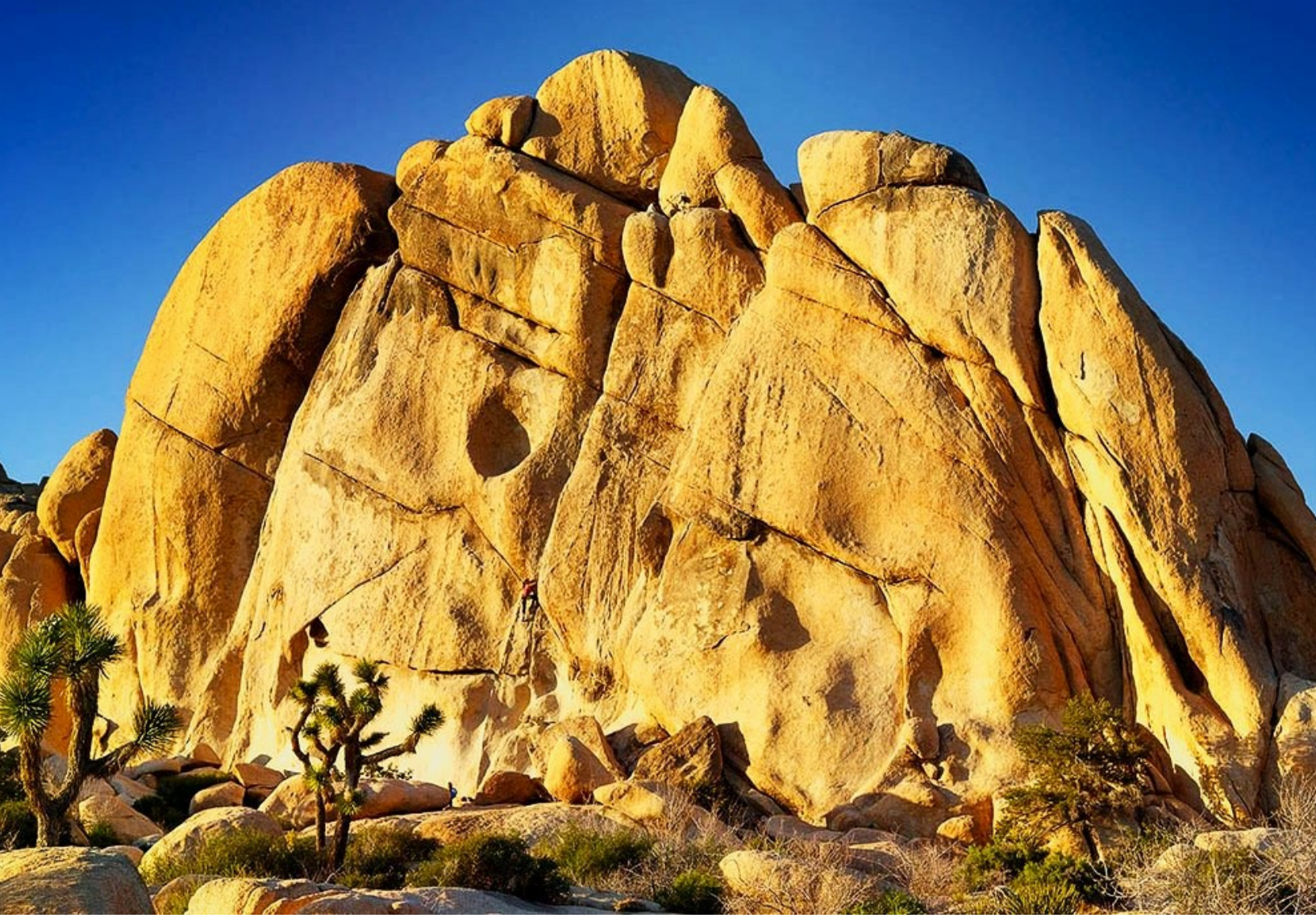
**Dinosaur rock in the Valley of the Moon at Villa dei Fiori.**



**For those who are looking for a more adventurous hike, six miles into the park and six miles back, I direct them to a canyon that leads to the Wonderland of Rocks where you will discover what is probably the largest tree in the national park. In comparison to my height in the photo, it must be over fifty feet, which indicates that its roots have tapped an underground stream, allowing it to grow into a giant tree.**

## Review by David

**Our family just got back from a week at this lovely villa, which we thoroughly enjoyed. We can't really add much to the other great reviews--pretty amazing setting, lovely amenities (pool, hot tub, fire pits, patios), fully outfitted (especially the kitchen, and the great barbecue), fully air conditioned (very private--no real nearby neighbors), and tastefully decorated with a lot of artistic and aesthetic touches. The place is exactly as Dale's pictures show. We loved the direct access to the yard/pool from each bedroom, and the ability to go climbing on the boulders right from the site. Our visit was also enhanced by the nightly bat show (swooping at dusk to grab moths and other insects by the pool), a thunder and lightning show (which Dale says is a rare occurrence), and the appearances of all the wildlife. Dale was readily available for quick consults (he lives just up the road), and it was always fun to talk with him and hear about his life/travels/accomplishments. He cares about the property, which he has had for 35 years, has worked hard to make it a great place for people who visit. The library has an amazing array of books on all sorts of topics (I read the book on the nearby Salton Sea), and the paintings/photos/art added a lot to the eclectic atmosphere. We will keep the Villa on our list for future trips.**



**Old Woman granite rock formation in Joshua Tree National Park – Author, Doug Dolde, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Review by Nadine**

**Amazing Location! Basically, a home in Joshua Tree National Park, This lovely home and property made for the greatest Joshua Tree Holiday we have ever had. To be able to walk right in the park and hike for hours, then return "home" for a swim in the saltwater pool, enjoy the gardens and cook a nourishing meal was the best. The views from the backyard are amazing - we never missed a sunrise or a sunset. Our seven year old found lots to do on the property and was always fully engaged with the surrounding nature. We had visitors that were completely charmed by the home and property - and luckily the house is fully equipped with an abundance of extra linens and bedding, so we could accommodate our guests. The owner offers everything you need for your stay, including special outdoor rugs and bedding that you can take to sleep in the cave on the property. You can tell that the owner has spent many years cultivating such an oasis in the desert. The contrast of the garden and colorful flowers against the desert boulders was breathtaking all day long. The kitchen offers good quality equipment, including a solid BBQ, everything is well taken care of and in good working order. The book collection is incredible too! The home and gardens are very well maintained and there are many special outdoor sitting areas where you can enjoy the sun or shade as the day progresses. We very much enjoyed being able to walk into the park without having to get in a car! We will book again!**



**The five hundred gallon hot spa heats to 104 degrees with a convertible top, accommodates six people a few steps from the master bedroom.**

### Review by Clarisse. Firenze, Italy

**Caro Dale, Villa dei Fiori e bellissima. Siamo rimasti incantati de ogni aspetto, in particolare i piccoli aminali. Ci piace stare seduti a bordo piscina. Ottimo, eccezionale, splendido.**

### Review by Cindy

**Just beyond expectations! Our group ranged in age from 12 to 74, yet this property had something special for each one. I'll start by bemoaning that our time in this magical oasis was way too short! We stayed only two nights, but recommend longer, as long as you can stay. If you love peace, quiet, natural beauty, wildlife sightings, starry skies, a gorgeous pool, sparkling hot tub, easy hikes or more challenging boulder hopping, this is your place! All seven of us were enchanted and fell in love with the property. The owner graciously provided a personal tour upon arrival to show us important features of the property, and interesting historical stories about his family's homestead there. You can hike into the adjacent park, climb the boulders in the backyard to great caves, laze by the pool, and if you are lucky (and are quiet), you will see wildlife everywhere.**



**The Golden Barrel cactus garden on Villa dei Fiori Nature Preserve**

## Review by Christopher

**This home was everything we could have hoped for when we conceived this birthday/graduation/early anniversary trip. Being in a place that was part mediterranean villa, part Martian landscape, and cinematic *espacio sideral* is more that we dared hope for. It was so easy to lose ourselves for hours in the moment. The best part was the beautiful library. It provided the necessary ambiance for me to immerse myself fully in a book for the first time in years. Thank you for bringing our vision to life.**



**One of several cactus gardens on the Villa dei Fiori Nature Preserve, a five-acre garden sustained by sixteen irrigation valves and four miles of pipe underground.**

## Review by Lisa

**Unique retreat on the edge of the Joshua Tree National Park. The location of this house is what makes it so special. Nestled amongst the boulders on the edge of the park, with views across the desert and ranges beyond. There are several beautifully arranged terraces to take breakfast, lunch, and dinner, depending on the view you are looking for. You can hike directly from the house into the park, climb the boulders behind the swimming pool and beyond. There is an amazing cave system to explore, and fire pits to sit by on chillier evenings. The kitchen is compact and well stocked, and there is an excellent collection of books in every room of the house, the darker colors of the house create a cool and cozy atmosphere though we were outside most of the time. The owner is a fascinating character with interesting stories of his filmic past; he fastidiously maintains the house and garden and was on hand whenever we needed him. Take advantage of his vast knowledge. The town of Joshua Tree is five minutes along the highway, Pioneer Town 25 minutes, and Landers (Integraton and Giant Boulder) 30 minutes. We were five adults and two children, aged seven and five, and we could have stayed for weeks, but sadly only had two nights. Plans**



**Review by the Carter Family**

**This was the right place to go to ease my stress. I feel much more at peace and relaxed. Dale's beautiful, awe-inspiring property is the perfect family get-away for my birthday weekend. The kids had the time of their life, climbing rocks, leaping into the deep pool, and gazing at meteor showers. Plus, the bobcat paid us a visit on Saturday morning. What could be more special than that. Joshua Tree is one of my favorite places in the world and I doubt there is a nicer place than "Villa dei Fiori" to stay. We did all of Dale's suggestions for rock climbing and hiking. Everyone's favorite was the cave. On our last night, we built a fire and had a wonderful time. Once the fire had burned down, we could see the stars through the crevices in the ceiling. We'd love to come back when the garden is in full bloom. We loved Dale's artistic touches to the house, very pretty! Sometimes when you choose a place on the internet, you don't get what you think, but Villa dei Fiori is even better in real life. My husband is a photographer and was very camera-happy here. Behind the Valley of the Moon, we found a boulder with small stones to make it look like the head of a dinosaur. Each kid added a new tooth to it.**



**Desert Canterbury Bells blooming in our Valley of the Moon in April and May.**

### Review by Lucy

**I found the most special property in all of Joshua Tree! My family of 5 (kids aged 8, 13, and 15) stayed here for spring break. With two teens and one younger child, we are sometimes challenged to find common ground and enjoy our time all together so completely. The kids explored and played outdoors together constantly, always finding new joys and activities. They meandered the incredible garden, read in the hammock, cut flowers and boughs of fragrant cypress (which Dale encourages!) and used them in the little playhouse for a potion store, snuck through the winding caves and then endlessly climbed above them onto the boulders, had a picnic with fire in the cave, explored and hiked the land above the property and towards the park, polar bear jumped into the pool and settled into the hot tub, basked in the sun on one of the many patios with a snack and quite activity. This is the most special, beautiful, private space you can find. This is not just a jumping off point, this is the destination.**



**Review by James**

**Dale's home is like living in a piece of artwork. The interior and exterior are both exquisitely created. The landscaping is stunning, moving fluidly from the manicured grounds to the natural surroundings. The interior is beautiful with original artwork and floor to ceiling bookcases filled with gorgeous hardbound books. Like a piece of fine artwork, the home requires careful attention. You will be hard pressed to find such a truly exquisite place to stay in Joshua Tree. Dale is very responsive and very conversant. The pool is not heated, but stunningly beautiful like a private oasis within the park. Worth it for this alone.**





**Review by Leila**

**Our family recently stayed at Dale's home, and it was truly a unique experience. From the moment we arrived, Dale was the consummate host. He met us upon arrival and took the time to give us a guided tour of his spectacular property. Joshua Tree National Park is literally the backyard, and Dale pointed out some great places to climb that started only steps from the house. On our first morning, we ventured up to a cave that Dale had recommended. Our kids were thrilled to see a giant white owl swoop over their heads right as they reached the top! Be sure to go out for an early hike for the best chance to see wildlife. We got lucky and saw a small bobcat standing on the boulders waiting for the morning sunshine right above the big cave. All five of us had a fantastic experience we won't ever forget.**



**Review by Robin**

**Amazing and convenient. Over the winter break my wife and I were able to stay at Dale's Villa dei Fiori while we explored Joshua Tree. Dale's place was amazing. It was conveniently located between the West Gate and Twentynine Palms entrances to Joshua Tree National Park. Which made it great for us to explore the park from each end. Having 2 options to enter was also useful because the West Entrance accumulated a lot of traffic getting into the park. Access to the restaurants was very convenient as they were only a short 10 minute drive. Dale was also able to give directions to a few short hikes near the property. During our time there we were able to go on several short hikes, explore some nearby caves, and stroll through the garden which made it nice for the in between days that we didn't go into Park. Since the property is remote and isolated, the views of the sunset were amazing. At the property there was a pool that I really wanted to use but being that it was winter the water was a bit too cold. Luckily there was also a newly installed Jacuzzi which we got to use. There were a lot of tables and chairs setup outside for eating which was a nice addition having so many options. The garden on the property helped set the ambiance and was pleasant to walk around. On one of the days, we were lucky enough to catch a desert Kit fox strolling around the property.**



**The sculpture in the dining area is a model of the fourteen foot sculptures I created for the two-hour film *Battlestar Galactica* that was distributed worldwide before the television series was broadcast. Rock sculptures were suspended from nylon monofilament to create the illusion of asteroids floating in space**

## Review by Paulette

**Thank you so much Dale for such a beautiful place and peaceful time we had. We appreciate your detailed orientation of the place. It's fully equipped and all that we needed were provided. The hot tube is perfect for star gazing and the sunrise at the front of the property is gorgeous in the morning. So much to explore around the property. The boulders and cave were such an adventure to explore. Stores are close by. It is definitely a place with beautiful surroundings. A HUGE THANK YOU DALE for such a beautiful place and peaceful time we had. I hope we can go back soon. Dale - thanks for sharing lots of beautiful stories. We truly enjoyed our time there.**




**The extensive library in the living room and bedrooms is available for the guest's perusal, not only literature, history, politics, anthropology, geography, science, travel, exotic places, and includes books for children, oversize picture books on painting, sculpture, architecture, cooking, wine, fashion, and gardens of the world.**

**Review by Elisa, author of children's books, from Milan, Italy**

**Dale's property is not a simple house. It's the home of an artist, in many senses. Artis of welcoming, words, style, flowers. . . We travel a lot, and we stayed in many Airbnbs but Dale's home is something different. It's not a common house that he rents out. It's his house which is very clear when you enter. There is a proper style in every room and the surroundings of the house are amazing, with a high level of maintenance. The pool was big and exceptionally clean with boulders in the background. The spa is amazing for an after day. The house is very well equipped. I do not have words enough because it was an unexpected experience, and we are so grateful to have been here! Don't hesitate to book this house!**



**View from the west terrace looking towards our Valley of the Moon. Villa dei Fiori estate extends beyond the far ridge. The Joshua Tree National Park lies adjacent to the park boundary. You can hike directly into secret canyons where you won't encounter other hikers.**

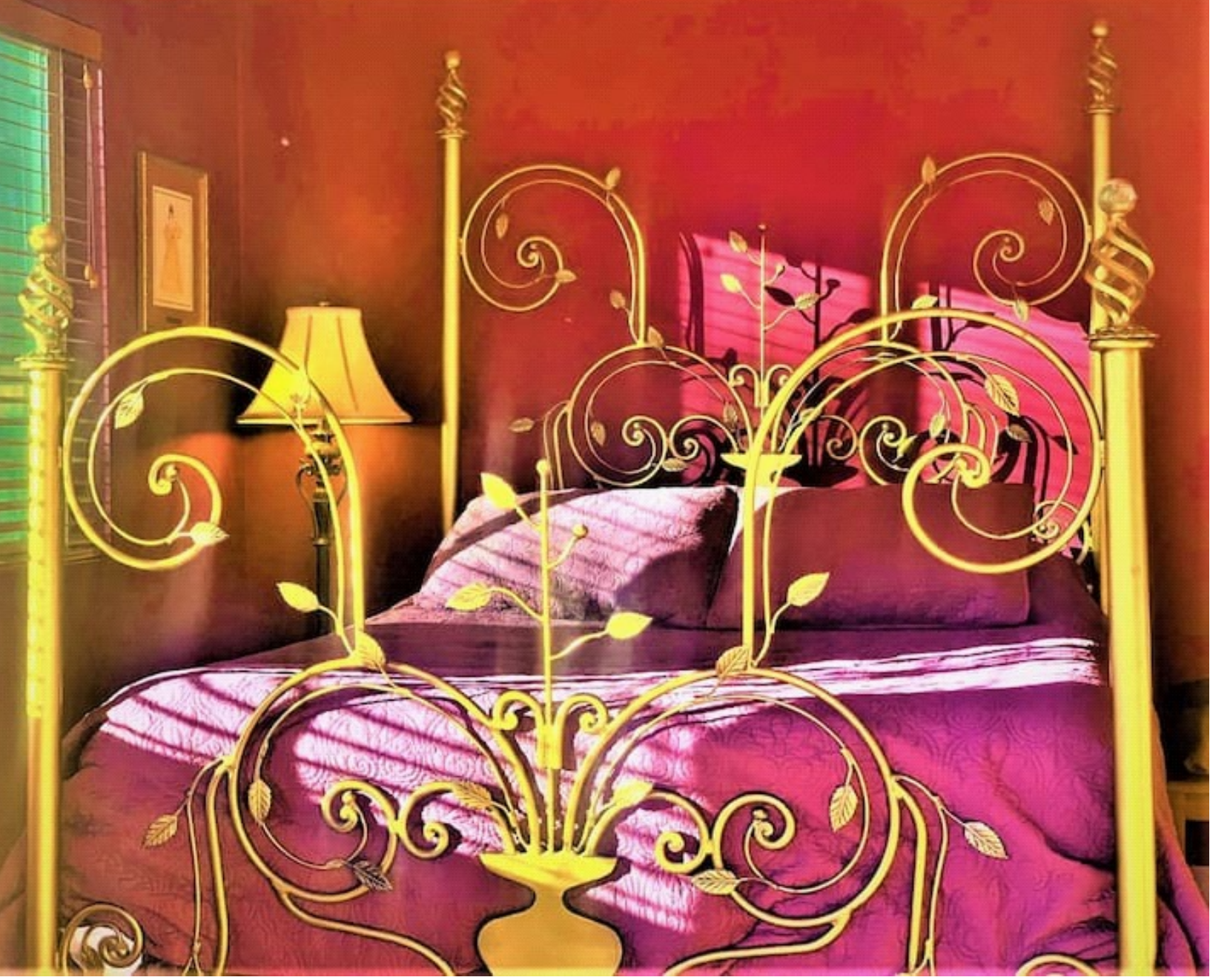
## Review by Mark and Soleil

**This was our second visit to Dale's lovely home nestled amongst the boulders bordering Joshua Tree National Park. Dale takes great pride in his property, and it shows. Soleil, our eight-year-old enjoys hiking in the valley behind the house, and this year were lucky enough to see a family of Bighorn Sheep at sunset time. We enjoy the pool, the cave for S'mores at night and the solitude of coffee in the morning outside on the patio. Dale is great with communication and attentive to needs and questions we have, and we look forward to another future visit.**




**Review by Thomas from Morro Bay**

**Our party of six kicked back for four days at this beautiful spot. The pool is a lot bigger than in the pictures and was used daily by all even in the first week of October. Very clean and private but keep your eyes open because wildlife may pop up at any time. Didn't see any rattlers but reaching for a drink without looking almost contacted me with a tarantula. A herd of Bighorn ran in front of truck as we pulled out of driveway one morning, probably the same bunch who eyed us every morning high above perched on Dale's 100,000 boulders. Brought all our food with us to cook because of the pandemic and the kitchen worked great for all. Highly recommend!**



**Review by Christy**

**What a magnificent and wondrous property and home Dale has created; It's truly an oasis in the desert! Celebrating our 20th Wedding Anniversary was quite magical. On our first night, we were able to sit in the spa and enjoy a penumbral lunar eclipse, full "flower" moon, and meteor shower. How incredible! And Dale's suggestion to lay in the cave, fireside, looking at the stars was really special. Every moment on the property is well-cherished and we'll take it with us forever. We saw many lizards, multiple butterflies and bees enjoying the lavender, and two beautiful dragonflies. The rosemary around the house was so aromatic. I'm kicking myself for not taking some home with me on departure. And I cannot forget about the cobalt pool, just lovely. We cannot wait to share all the pictures taken with our kids! Thanks again, Dale, for helping us celebrate in such a memorable way!**



**Painting is oil on silk by Parisian painter Michele Vivienne Quence.**



. **Viviane Quence paintings are of the costumes of the Chinese classical opera.**



**Michele Viviane Quence with Sabu. An artist based in Paris France, created the oil paintings on silk, charcoal sketches of ancient religious sites, monoprints, and costume drawings exhibited at Villa dei Fiori. Ms. Quence's paintings may be viewed at quence.peinture@orange.fr and on instagram.com.**





**Guests may cut flowers in the garden for bouquets.**

## Review by Sierra

**Wish this were my home!!! We chose this site for our annual Girls Weekend. My friends have pretty high expectations! The photos online do not do this place justice. Dale has gone out of his way to provide beautiful touches and the comforts of home in every room. The kitchen is very well stocked with every essential and then a ton of non-essentials... he even has an asparagus steamer! The bedrooms are decorated nicely, have comfortable beds and doors in every room that open onto their own private verandas. The sparkling saltwater pool has a stunning dark blue bottom and the weather had been 90 degrees, so it naturally warmed the pool up to a comfortable temperature (this was in May). The jacuzzi is very well maintained. The cave is just magical. We built a fire in there one night and stayed in there making smores and laughing for hours. You can make as much noise as you want in there, the sound won't travel. Dale even said so. Then I slept in there on the ground with a friend, and I think it was about 80 degrees in there all night. Everything was as described and as I expected... plus more. You can cut flowers in the garden and take them home! I had no idea from the photos just how stunning the entire property is... from the gardening/landscaping to the natural beauty of the land. So much thought has been put into making this place a dream home. You will not be disappointed!**



**Review by John**

**A Perfect Stay in Joshua Tree. Dale meets guests to give a guided tour of the house and property upon arrival. Part history lesson, part library tour. Special furnishings and art, each with its own story. Topped off with a smattering of fascinating family accomplishments. I could listen to him for hours. Dale takes great pride in his home and the area. And why wouldn't he? It's a special place. The photos are accurate, but you must be there to truly feel what it's like. A peaceful oasis set amid the rugged desert. The area hikes, boulder climbing, and cave exploration are spectacular. The private pool is luxurious. The grounds varied and fragrant. And the house is replete with character and charm, a reflection of its owner. Maybe the Kit fox will pay you a visit on its evening hunt as it did us! Glorious! A perfect stay in Joshua Tree.**



**Review by Kathleen**

**We were looking for great views from the comfort of an air conditioned home...we knew the afternoons would be hot and we wanted to work, read, and relax but still feel like we were at JT! Dale's villa provided that and more than we had anticipated. Dale has built this house and its surroundings with an attention to detail that is remarkable, creative and calming. The sunlight and views from every room bring the spectacular outdoors inside. Dale's meet and greet is more like a walk through history. His stories about the house, his ancestors, his career, and the grounds are mesmerizing! Don't cut this part of the experience short. You'll be intrigued by it all. The kitchen was well equipped, the beds amazingly comfortable, the linens new. More importantly, however. . . Every inch of the experience Dale's created here is a reflection of his love for Joshua Tree. You will not be renting four walls, a roof, and a bed. You are renting an experience. . . rich in history, beauty, and nature. I hope future renters appreciate it as much as we did. It redefines a sanctuary for recharging the mind, body, and soul. If you are in search of peace, tranquility, and de-stressing. This is the place. Leaving completely relaxed. . . an indescribable experience.**






**Kitchen offers a selection of herbs and spices, coffee, blender, French press coffee maker, coffee bean grinder, cocktail shakers, cooking oil and vinegars. There is a large selection of black and herbal teas and two antique teapots.**

## Review by Ruth and Greg

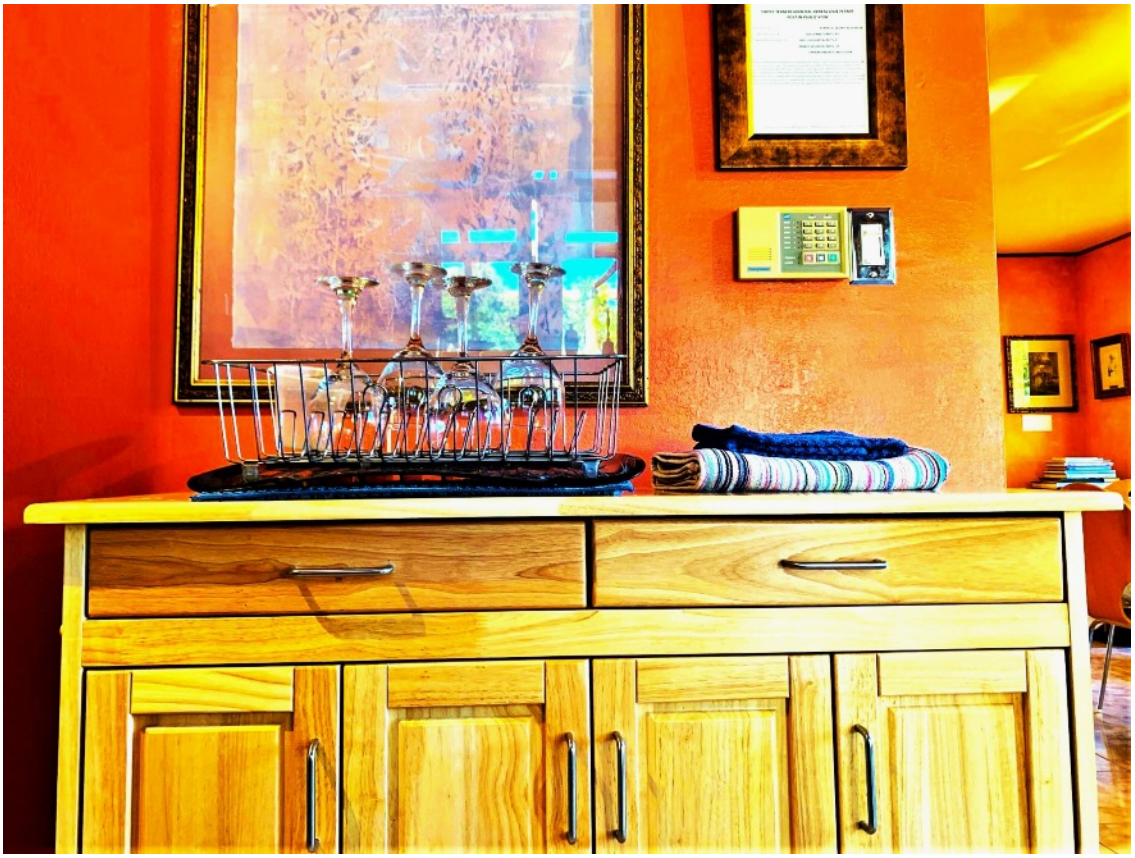
**We really had a wonderful time. We cooked up a storm in a kitchen that every kind of cookware, even an asparagus steamer. Thank you so much for making such an epic and unparalleled experience available to others! We plan to return, hopefully soon, and would also love to see the new property that you're building the next time we're there.**

## Review by Vivian

**My family and I had such an amazing three day get away! My five year old loved it so much she asked if we could live there. We had a blast just being on Dale's property! The compact kitchen had everything we needed to cook great meals. We went boulder climbing, explored the caves, and loved the spa and pool. We grilled and enjoyed the outdoor dining area. The pool is so beautiful, and the water was so clean and clear! Thank you, Dale, for such a detailed tour and even taking us to the caves so we wouldn't have trouble finding it when we were alone. The AC was great, felt nice and fresh inside. It's so beautiful and peaceful we will be coming back and will recommend it to others. We enjoyed nature and saw some lizards, a road runner, baby bats, quails, and doves. The views here are so incredible. We made memories that will last a lifetime! Thank you, Dale, best Airbnb, EVER!**



**Impressive array of cooking utensils, sharp knives, vegetable steamer, salad spinner, baking dishes and pans to make biscuits and cupcakes, and decorative serving platters from Italy and France, and a huge number of cookbooks from world cuisines.**





**The kitchen is fully equipped for chefs who like sharp knives, vegetable steamer, blender, large roasting pans, a number of skillets, pasta pots, French press coffee maker, tea kettle and tea pot, oven ware, baking pans for cookies, cakes, and pies, decorative French and Portuguese serving vessels, salad spinner and bowls, thermometer, kitchen utensils of all types and shapes, an asparagus steamer and scores of cookbooks.**





**Upon request, guests have access to laundry room.**





**Playhouse for little girl's tea parties.**

### Review by Katie

**If you are looking for a sign to book Villa Dei Fiori, this is it. Dale is an exceptional host who went above and beyond to ensure my boyfriend, our dog, and I had the best stay possible. The initial tour he gave us provided great insight into the amount of effort put into creating his incredible home and property. The house was very clean, and the kitchen was equipped with everything necessary to make a tasty meal. The bed in the master bedroom was so comfortable I fell asleep immediately each night. We ate our meals on the beautiful patio off the kitchen and enjoyed a day lounging by the pool, which was perfectly refreshing on a hot day. Dale has created a garden of Eden with an array of plants on the property, and that variety naturally attracts wildlife. My boyfriend and I enjoyed seeing the resident road runner throughout the day and then were accompanied one evening by a dove that seemed as curious about us as we were it. Chuckwallas, long nosed leopard geckos and zebra tailed lizards dot the property and back valley, while a few kangaroo rats accompanied us from afar by the pool. We saw Big Horned Sheep tracks in his back valley as well. On our second night we experienced an incredible display of bats at dusk. There were 10 to 15 either Brown bats or Canyon bats that we watched for around an hour while sitting on the driveway. As we headed back inside, we noticed a couple of very large bats (which we originally mistook for doves because they were so large) flying between the two trees directly in front of the kitchen patio. After doing a bit of reading online we believe they were either the Townsend's Big-Eared bat, or the rare Spotted bat! Villa Dei Fiori is simply magical. Do not pass up the opportunity to stay at a home this unique, and with a host as kind as Dale. We hope to return soon!**



**Two bedrooms open upon the southeast shaded pergola with overhead lighting with dimmers for dining at night.**

## Review by Chris

**Absolutely incredible one of a kind artistic property. Gorgeous, lovingly created home and gardens tucked right up into stupendous rock formations, with exquisite pool reflecting the sky. Though we arrived late, and it was nearly dark, Dale gave us a wonderful tour of both the home and grounds, including a nearby hidden cave and directions on how to hike to other great locations. Super comfortable beds, Villa dei Fiori is a peaceful haven, a place to both linger and relax and use as a home base for further exploration. Dales career in the arts, his family history in the area, and his wonderful writing and ongoing projects were beautiful and inspirational. We were there for five glorious days and hope to come back for a longer stay.**



**French doors of the living room open onto a terrace overlooking the garden. A place to watch the sunset.**

## Review by Alyza and Nancy

**You are such a talented horticulturist! I very much enjoyed the cacti, trees, and other desert plants. We had a special trip! The long days of hiking, exploring, and spending time in your beautiful house, an excellent way to spend our vacation. We fell in love with the rocks, plants, and stars of this amazing desert – Alyza.**

**I second everything Alyza said, plus having the opportunity to enjoy this wonderful house with our three kids, 15, 19, and 21. There were so many kinds of explorations to keep us all busy, books, caves, rocks, movies, Jacuzzi, and cooking together. No one even thought about the big city. We totally loved it and hope we can return soon. I highly recommend the Desert Institute Guide that we used for hikes off the beaten trail, which were extraordinary. We learned so much about the local biology and geology as well as seeing very different, spectacular scenery. Thank you, Dale, and Villa dei Fiori for a truly memorable vacation! – Nancy.**



**West pergola looking south toward the back valley. The Joshua Tree National Park is beyond the last ridge. Near the top of the outcropping ridge you can spot a cave with a fourteen high entrance.**

## Review by Jordana

**If you are looking for an idyllic setting on the border of the park, look no further. There is no place like this in terms of location. The backyard is a beautiful boulder field that leads right into park land if you are into hiking on boulders, which we are. Looking around at other properties, there is nothing else like this in terms of the beauty of the landscape. We saw mountain sheep climbing just behind the house and were visited by a kit fox at dusk. The view of the stars from the immaculately kept hot tub is amazing. It is so quiet. A one-of-a-kind getaway. The owner is great and responsive if you need anything. He can recommend hikes in the area away from crowds. If you do go into the main park, it is just a 20-minute drive to the west entrance. The photos are accurate and will give a good idea of what is available in the house. I recommend this place wholeheartedly.**



**The kitchen French doors open onto the east terrace, one of seven terraces surrounding the house.**

## Review by Yolande

**Your creativity, your sensitivity, and your passion for beauty are true gifts to us who enter your adobe. And the pool is the cool cherry on the pastel cake of Joshua Tree. While cooking here, I devised a culinary invention that I will share with your future guests. I call it "Villa dei Fiori Savory Toast" made of leftover olive bread, milk, two eggs, sautéed garlic, salt and pepper, mixed together to make enough sauce to cover the slices of bread, (similar to making French toast.) Pour the mixture over slices of bread in a buttered pan and heat until browned on both sides. Simultaneously, simmer tomatoes in butter, cool to remove skins, rewarm and spread over the warm toast, Voila, bonne appétit, Yolande**



**Kitchen terrace receives morning sunlight with shade cloth overhead**



**Pyracantha blooms in April on the bedroom pergola.**





**Review by Horatio**

**Wow, this was the place to have fun and relax and visit with friends we haven't seen in a long time. There is just something for everyone here. Whether you want quiet time or social time, hiking or swimming, sleeping-in or reading or writing, or movie-watching, you'll find just the cozy spot to do just what you want. Last September, we finally got a chance to spend a long weekend out at Villa dei Fiori in Joshua Tree with two other families. We found the accommodations all very tastefully decorated and very adaptable to all the visitors (ages ranging from 2 to 49). We enjoyed the many special patio areas just outside the French doors to sit and have breakfast or to look for falling stars. We all decided to share meals and had lots of activity in the kitchen and BBQing on the adjacent patio, all very convenient for the many wine-tastings and appetizers round the clock. No need to drive anywhere. The pool is just the thing to cool off and enjoy storytelling, beverages, and cocktails amid the rocks while the kids play. We had a great hike up through the "valley of the moon" for boulder scrambling. And the whole crew made a flashlight-lit trek to the hidden cave for a campfire for more stories with the resident kangaroo mice listening in. The owner has done a superb job with the landscaping design to create privacy and beauty with roses, lavender, firethorns, cypress, palms, palo-verde and yucca trees. We would love to return and wouldn't hesitate to plan another trip with a bunch of friends and family.**



**The French doors of the dining area open upon the north terrace pergola with climbing Carolina jasmine that blooms in April.**

## Review by Terri Rae

**NIRVANA! Exceeded all expectations! An idyllic setting: peaceful, picturesque, I highly recommend this Villa to obtain a perfect state of happiness! So serene and secluded, the property is surrounded by massive boulders and beautiful landscaping. It has been a very long time sense I've been so completely swept away by an experience; it truly is a sanctuary and almost insists that you relax and reflect. The pool has got to be the most spectacular I have ever seen; it was so delightful to swim and then relax under the umbrella on those hot July days. It was so amazing in fact that we also spent our evenings by the pool stargazing, (the shooting stars are crazy) and marveling at the myriad of mystical bats as they came out for their evening meal. We spent some time boulder scrambling behind the property, such a treat to be able to explore right out the back door! The temperature in the house was perfectly regulated if one does choose to escape indoors from the heat and the art and literature are endlessly fascinating. Dale, the owner of the property, was charming and informative. It's apparent how much he cares for the house, the land and the wildlife by his exceptional knowledge, consideration, and attention to detail. I want to mention that it was a great place for our dogs as well, super dog friendly – we really value the opportunity to share that kind of chill experience with them! We plan to return as soon and as many times as we can; do yourself a favor, if you want to feel part of the natural phenomenon they call Joshua Tree, this is an experience that cannot be missed!**



**Review by Florence de Paris**

**Merci, Dale pour votre chaleureuse accueil et le temps passé avec nous. Nous garderons un excellent souvenir de ce bref passage à Joshua Tree, en espérant avoir l'occasion de revenir voir l'avancement de vos beaux projets. Vous êtes un homme remarquable, Amicalement, Florence Nguyen.**

**Review by Didier de Paris**

**On n'oubliera jamais votre personnalité particulière, votre grande connaissance des choses st des hommes. Nous avons passé une semaine magique et voyons des bébé lynx. Nous reviendrons pour visiter votre nouvelle création et j'espère que nous pouvons dansé tous ensemble dans votre « ballroom dancing, » à bientôt, ici ou ailleurs, Didier Leroux.**



**A two person hammock is under the Parkinsonia aculeata in a grove of Halepensis pines and fragrant Arizona cypresses.**

## Review by Robert

**Relaxing Joshua Tree Oasis. Property is in a beautiful location against the boulders of Joshua Tree. The pool and hot tub are set into the rocks as shown in the pictures. The house has all the amenities necessary for a trouble free and serene stay and the beds were very comfortable. Grocery stores and shops are a few minutes away; however, the property is far enough away to provide a tranquil, relaxing experience. Dale is a very interesting host and is available a short distance away to answer any questions. This was the perfect location for a family weekend.**



**Tuscan Blue rosemary blooming in late February and early March**

## Review by Donald

**Hands down the best property in Joshua Tree. Dale's place is where you want to be. After staying here, you understand why this is the perfect getaway to gain inspiration. Dale was very helpful and walked us through the property to make sure we didn't miss out on anything. The location is close to both the West entrance and East entrance of the National Park and the backyard is right next to the boundary of the park, so close to the park that we saw a herd of Bighorn sheep grazing and two Bighorns come over close to us. The pool is probably the best pool you can find in Joshua Tree. There is nothing more refreshing than taking a plunge at 9 AM when the sun is already out and the temperature is 95 degrees. The landscaping work on the property is out of this world. I was unable to keep track of how many plants there were. The seclusion in the boulders and the cave was what drew us to this property. The kitchen is fully equipped. Look no further - you'll have everything you may need there. The super air conditioning is a godsend, especially during the summer months. Throughout the property, you'll find creative pieces of art. It really adds a nice touch to the property. Overall, I would highly recommend booking Villa dei Fiori. You won't regret it!**



**Ancient erosion of boulder formations above the pool marks the path to explore our Valley of the Moon. The boulders of Joshua Tree are quartz monzonite, an igneous rock, light colored phaneritic (course-grained) porphyritic granitic rock. According to Wikimedia, it looks like granite, but granite contains more than 20 percent quartz, whereas rock with less than 5 percent quartz is classified as monzonite.**

**Review by Paulette**

**Thank you so much Dale for such a beautiful place and peaceful time we had. We appreciate your detailed orientation of the place. It's fully equipped and all that we needed were provided. The hot tube is perfect for star gazing and the sunrise at the front of the property is gorgeous in the morning. So much to explore around the property. The boulders and cave were such an adventure to explore. Stores are close by. It is definitely a place with beautiful surroundings. A HUGE THANK YOU DALE for such a beautiful place and peaceful time we had. I hope we can go back soon. Dale - thanks for sharing lots of beautiful stories. We truly enjoyed our time there.**



**Review by Wataru**

**Dale was a great, and very attentive host. He was thorough with all the guidance before our trip and upon check in. He was helpful with the questions we had, and flexible with some of the specific requests we had. The property was amazing, with the Joshua Tree National Park accessible from the backyard, with rocks and caves on property. Our favorite was the pool! It was large and clean. We spent hours each day in the pool. We definitely want to go back and stay at Villa dei Fiori when we go back to Joshua Tree.**

**Review by Uyen**

**I have had my sight on staying at Villa dei Fiori for quite some time, but it was constantly booked. When my family and I finally did get a chance to stay there it did not disappoint. It is an oasis in the desert and we could not bear to leave the property during our short stay. We spent our days eating our meals al fresco under the vine draped pergolas and swam all day in the saltwater pool. We felt like we were in our own private paradise that Dale has meticulously created through years of care and landscaping. What a wonderful way for us to spend our holiday!**



**Early morning sun on the boulders beyond the *Parkinsonia aculeata,* commonly called the Mexican palo verde or Jerusalem thorn.**

## Review by David

**Gorgeous, once-in-a-life time setting. Beautifully designed and maintained home. Comfortable, tasteful, just perfect for the desert--5 terrific patios, doors from every bedroom and shared space. Wonderful gardens and great landscaping with flowers, plants and trees that provide shade and privacy. Great pool and Jacuzzi sit amidst gigantic boulders. And amazing views of the valley and snow-capped peaks beyond. The perfect place to get away and relax. Also, a great base for hikes and bike rides into Joshua Tree National Park.**



**Arizona Blue cypress and mesquite frame the kitchen pergola.**



**Motor court planted with Arizona cypress, mesquite, and Blue paloverde on the earthen berm.**



**Review by Casey**

**We loved our stay at Dale's house. The property is amazing. The saltwater pool was large and very private. His land goes back a 1/4 mile into the boulders. My son and I loved climbing and discovering large caves. There is hiking access to Rocky Loop View trail on the National Park a few blocks from the house. Dale shared information on routes to take. We had three days of exploring and never saw another person. We would love to return someday.**



**One of several cactus gardens on the Villa dei Fiori II nature preserve, a five-acre garden watered by two irrigation controllers operating sixteen valves with four miles of pipe underground.**



**One of the most beautiful times to experience Villa dei Fiori is when you arise at dawn and go on a walk.**





**Villa dei Fiori at dawn.**



# Ancestors and Childhood



**When my grandmother Mary Agatha McCant was nine, her father brought the family to Oklhoma in a covered wagon during the Oklahoma Territory Land Rush of 1889. In the 1920s Grandmother Mary Agatha McCant's sisters immigrated to Anaheim, California. After retirement, the daughters of Mary's sister Cora, Gwendolyn and Revena staked homestead claims in Joshua Tree.**

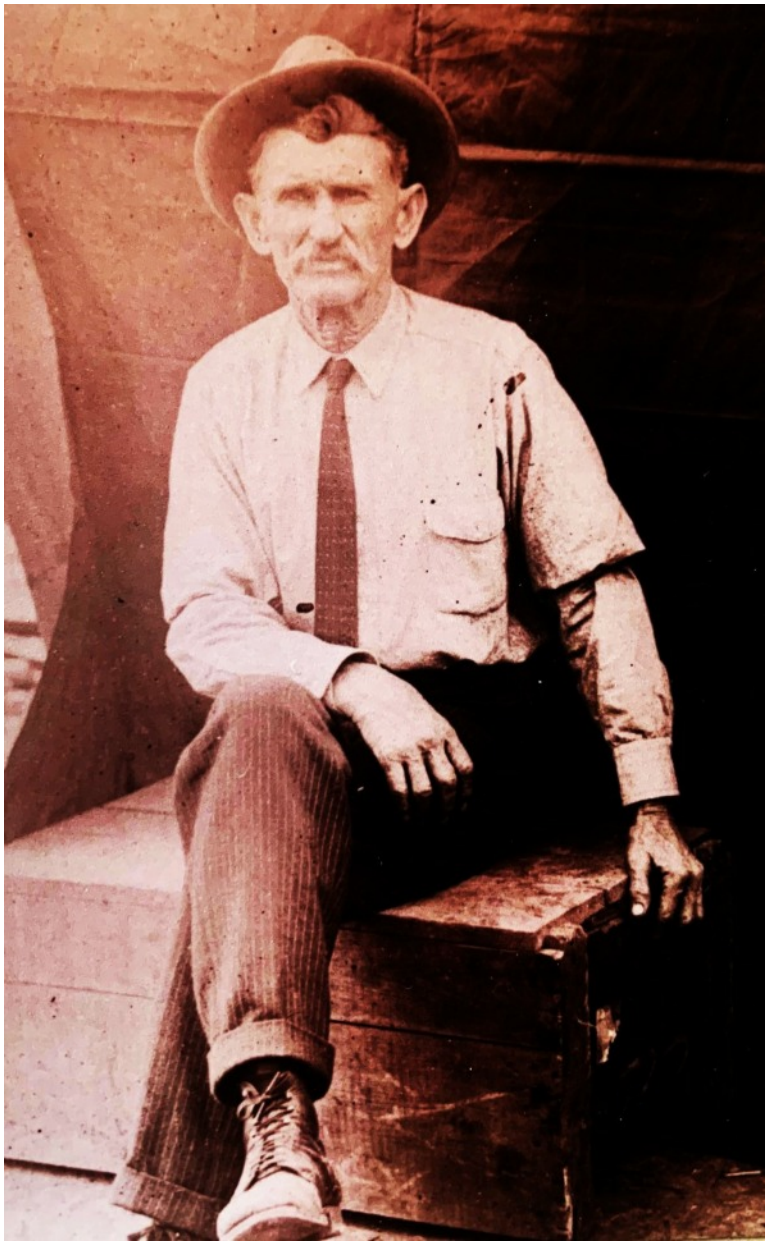


**1889 Oklahoma Land Rush – Unknown author, Source, McClenny Family Picture Album, public domain, Wikimedia**

**My Scottish grandmother Mary Agatha McCant whose nieces settled Joshua Tree, was born in 1880 in a sod house in Kansas. Her family traveled in a covered wagon to Oklahoma in the Land Rush of 1889 where Mary's father staked a claim near the territorial capital of Guthrie. At seventeen, Mary married my grandfather Willis Edward Pelton who was born before the Civil War. Willis built a homestead cabin on the South Canadian River, moving a few years later to Tulsa and building a house near the Eleventh Street Bridge over the Arkansas River. In 1903, Willis invented the first corn harvest, filing the patent in Oklahoma Territory when Theodore Roosevelt was president. During the 1920s, Mary's sisters moved to Anaheim when California was still undeveloped, graced with stone houses and orange groves. When they retired, the sisters claimed homestead land in Joshua Tree where Revena and Gwendolyn built houses at the top of Whitefeather Road near the Joshua Tree National Monument.**

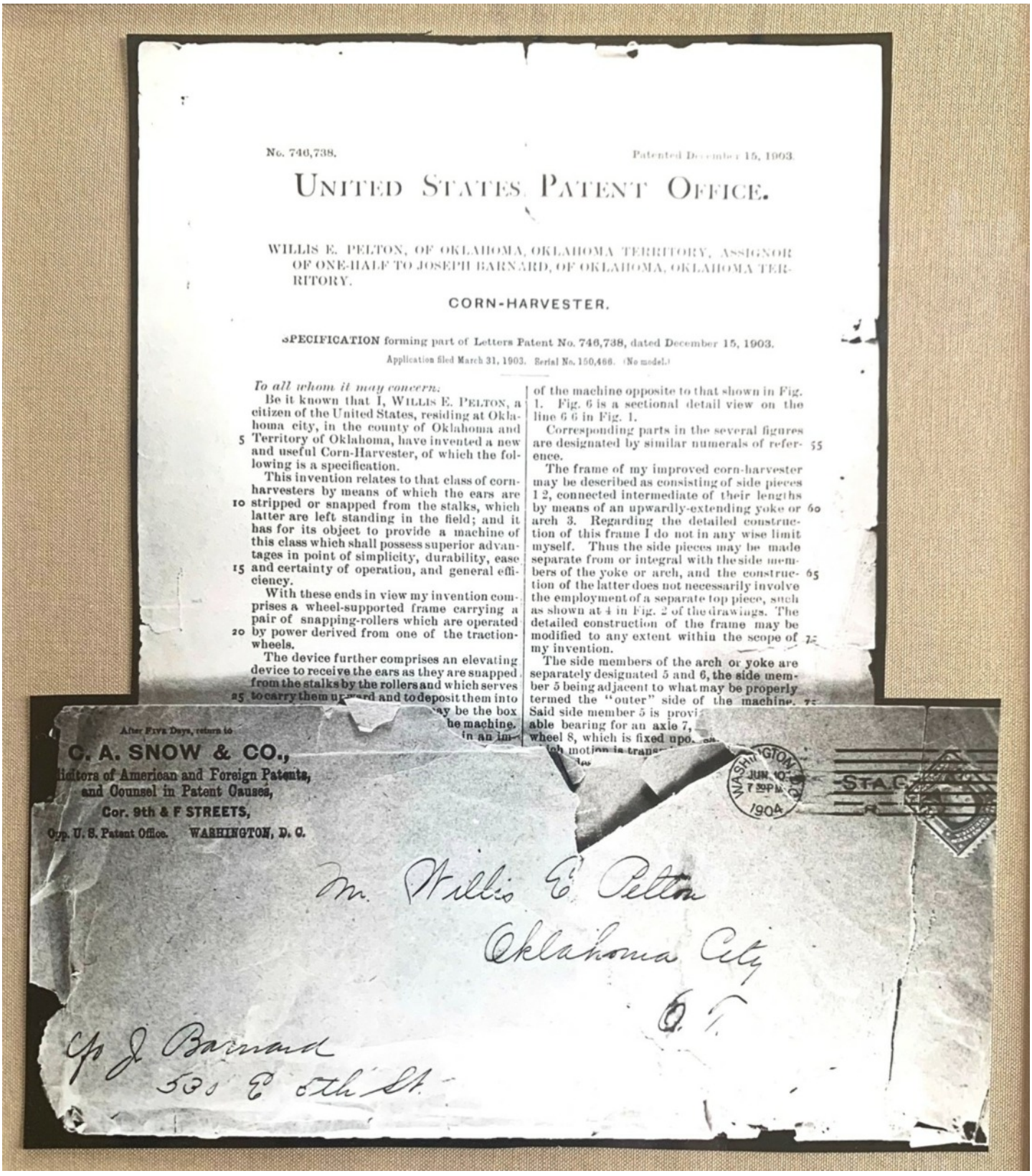


**Grandmother Mary Agatha McCant's family, homesteaders in Canadian County, 1889, Oklahoma Territory. My Grandmother Mary is standing on the far right. Her younger sister Cora who homesteaded in Joshua Tree is in the first row, far left.**



**Grandfather Willis Edward Pelton was born in Maryland on April 12, 1861, the first day of the Civil War when the South Carolina Militia attacked Fort Sumter, South Carolina. At the age of 37, Willis married Mary Agatha McCant in 1898. Homesteading on the South Canadian River in Oklahoma Territory, Willis was granted a patent for the corn harvester in 1903. I was fond of my grandfather, for he was more affectionate than my father. If I had not lost him to a stroke when I was five, my childhood would have been happier.**

**According to J.M. Pelton's *Genealogy of the Pelton Family*, published in 1892, "The first immigrant of the name known was George Pelton, who sailed in the *Furtherance* to Virginia in 1622 and settled at Burrows Hill, James City," but little is known of him. The second was John Pelton, arriving in Virginia in the early 1600s, "All Peltons in America, excepting two or three families in Canada, are descended from this John Pelton and from his second son Samuel, as will appear from the record."**



No. 746,738. Patented December 15, 1903.

# UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

WILLIS E. PELTON, OF OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA TERRITORY, ASSIGNOR OF ONE-HALF TO JOSEPH BARNARD, OF OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA TERRITORY.

## CORN-HARVESTER.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 746,738, dated December 15, 1903.

Application filed March 31, 1903. Serial No. 150,466. (No model.)

*To all whom it may concern:*

Be it known that I, WILLIS E. PELTON, a citizen of the United States, residing at Oklahoma city, in the county of Oklahoma and Territory of Oklahoma, have invented a new and useful Corn-Harvester, of which the following is a specification.

This invention relates to that class of corn-harvesters by means of which the ears are stripped or snapped from the stalks, which latter are left standing in the field; and it has for its object to provide a machine of this class which shall possess superior advantages in point of simplicity, durability, ease and certainty of operation, and general efficiency.

With these ends in view my invention comprises a wheel-supported frame carrying a pair of snapping-rollers which are operated by power derived from one of the traction-wheels.

The device further comprises an elevating device to receive the ears as they are snapped from the stalks by the rollers and which serves to carry them upward and to deposit them into ay be the box he machine. in an im-

of the machine opposite to that shown in Fig. 1. Fig. 6 is a sectional detail view on the line 6 6 in Fig. 1.

Corresponding parts in the several figures are designated by similar numerals of reference.

The frame of my improved corn-harvester may be described as consisting of side pieces 1 2, connected intermediate of their lengths by means of an upwardly-extending yoke or arch 3. Regarding the detailed construction of this frame I do not in any wise limit myself. Thus the side pieces may be made separate from or integral with the side members of the yoke or arch, and the construction of the latter does not necessarily involve the employment of a separate top piece, such as shown at 4 in Fig. 2 of the drawings. The detailed construction of the frame may be modified to any extent within the scope of my invention.

The side members of the arch or yoke are separately designated 5 and 6, the side member 5 being adjacent to what may be properly termed the "outer" side of the machine. Said side member 5 is provi able bearing for an axle 7, wheel 8, which is fixed upo motion is trans

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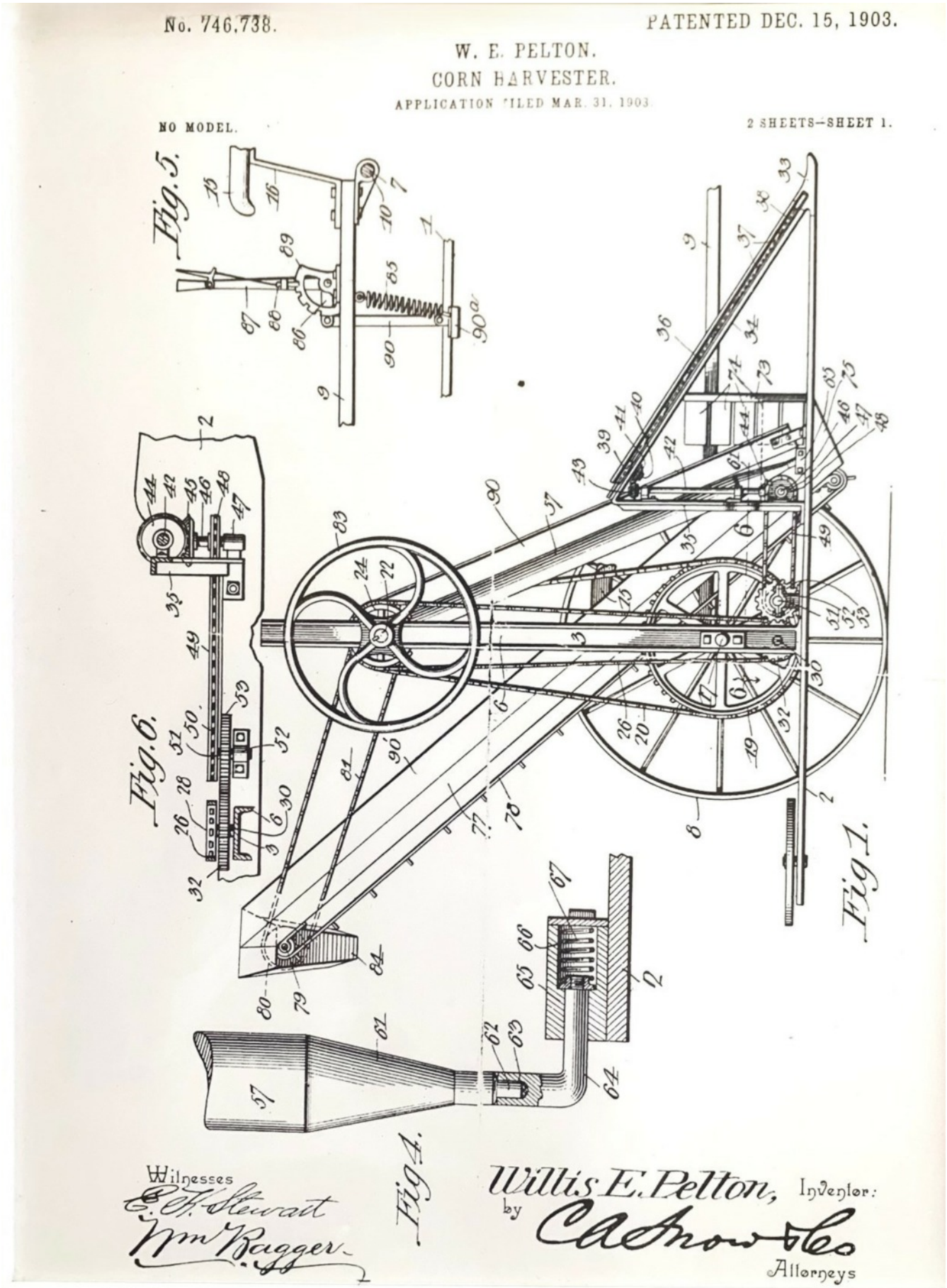
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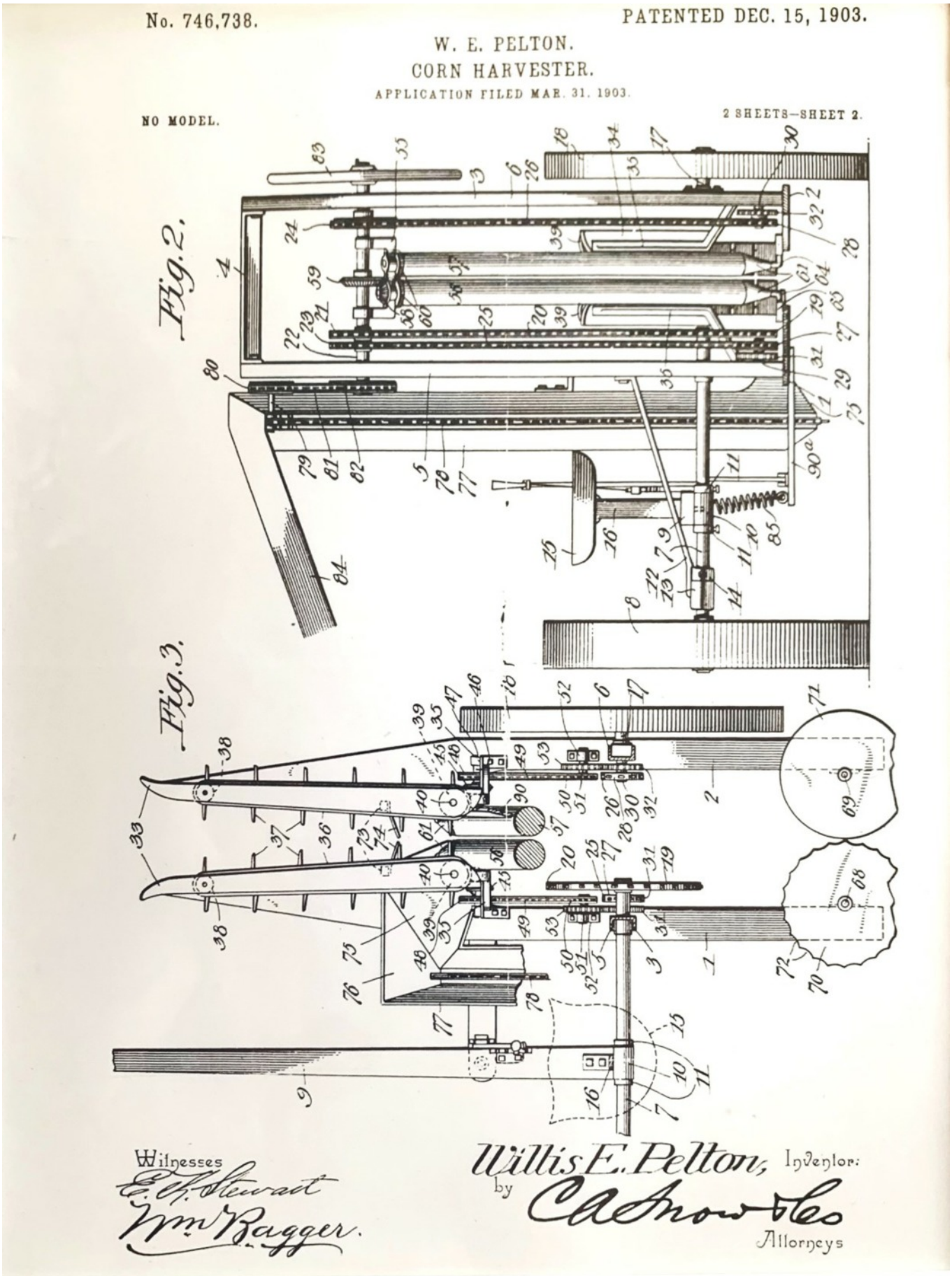
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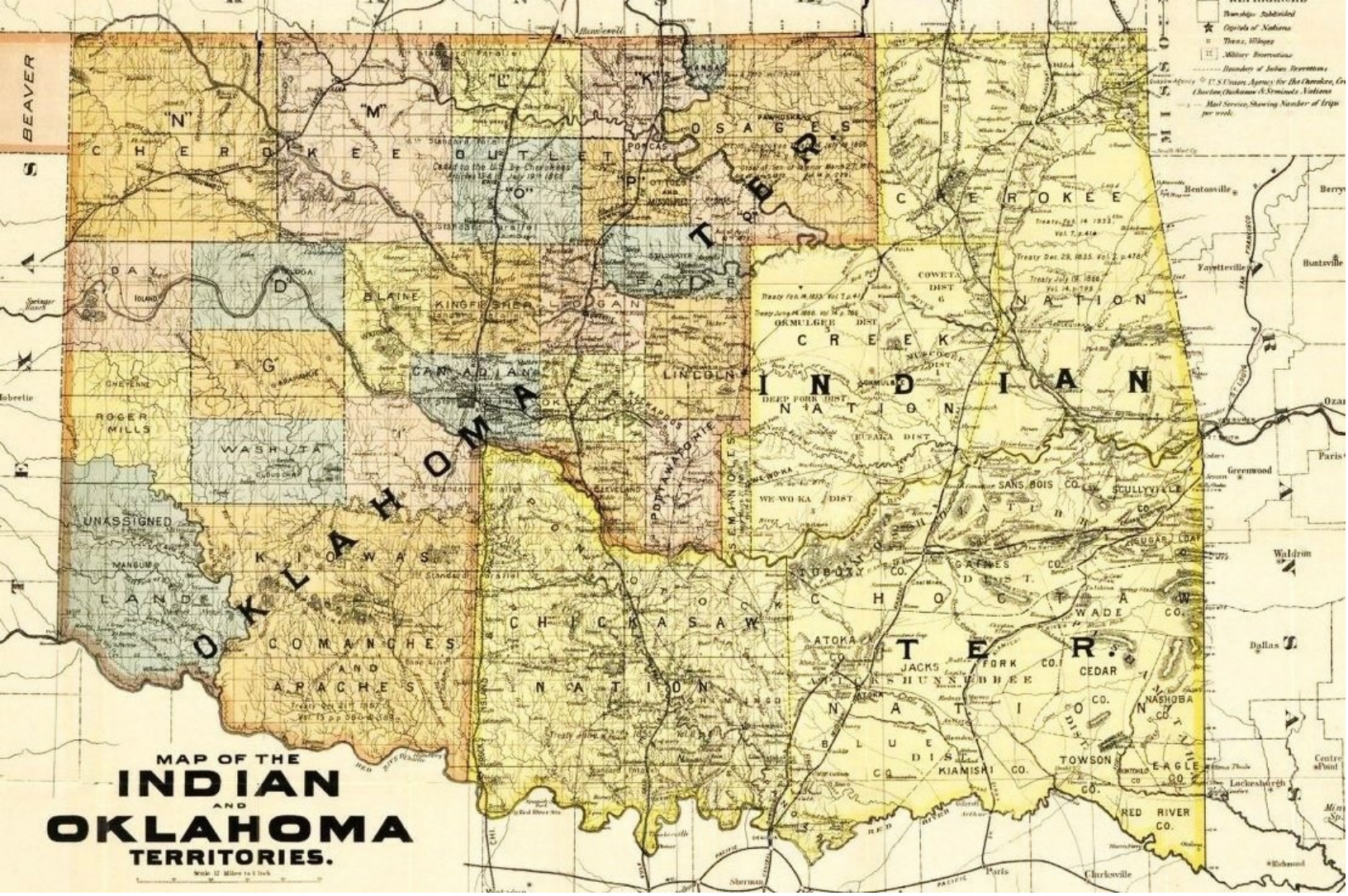
**Grandfather Willis E. Pelton, U.S. Patent for corn harvester, Oklahoma Territory, 1903.**




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**Map of Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory, 29 June 1894, showing Indian lands – Source, U.S. Library of Congress, public domain, Wikimedia. Both Territories ceased to exist November 16, 1907, when Theodore Roosevelt signed the proclamation to establish Oklahoma as the 46th state in the union.**

**The U.S. government purchased the rights from the Cherokee Nation to open the Cherokee Outlet, or Cherokee Strip in western Oklahoma for white settlement, opening a land run in 1893, the same year that Congress set up the Dawes Commission to negotiate agreements with each of the Five Civilized Tribes to divide tribal lands into 160 acre allotments for individual Indians that they were compelled to take or get nothing, a program specifically designed to force the Indians to adopt white culture. In 1898, the year of my grandparent's marriage, the Curtis Act abolished tribal jurisdiction over all Indian Territory. Oklahoma historian Angie Debo's book, *And Still the Waters run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes,* describes how the Dawes Commission and Curtis Act was exploited by white agents and attorneys to dispossess the Native Americans of their lands and resources. Debo's damning indictment of the criminal exploitation of the U.S. allotment policy was suppressed by the political leaders of Oklahoma.**

**In 1902, the leaders of Indian Territory agreed to unify the two Oklahoma territories into an Indian state named Sequoyah. The Indians held a convention in Eufaula, 1905, comprising representatives of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole tribes to draw up a constitution.**
**The convention devised a constitution, a governmental plan, and elected delegates to petition the United States Congress to create the state of Sequoyah, which would be the first state to have a Native American majority, but President Theodore Roosevelt and Congress refused to grant the Five Civilized Tribes the state of Sequoyah. Instead, Roosevelt signed the proclamation establishing Oklahoma as the 46th state of the union on 16 November 1907.**



**The water delivery system near the homestead of my Grandfather Willis E. Pelton and Grandmother Mary Agatha McCant Pelton on the South Canadian River in central Oklahoma. When I first visited my cousins Revena and Gwendolyn in 1968, the 1950s homesteaders relied on their own means to obtain water – driving a pickup with a water tank to Celesta Hollinger's well, bringing it home, and pumping water to a tank on a raised platform to provide gravity flow to their kitchen and bath, a system that ensured the conservation of water.**




**My mother, Flora Elizabeth Buser Pelton before our home where I was born. My father, Irmal Walker Pelton, transformed a 1930's wooden frame house by veneering it with Arkansas limestone, framing the porch with brick supported archways that left me with a lifelong love of arches and stone. My grandmother Polly Beuhler Buser was the sister of singer John (Deutschendorf) Denver's great grandmother, Catherine Buehler Swope.**

**Mom was dead set on making me an obedient child. Driven by a German iron will that she unleashed with emotional fury, mom controlled me with the same authority that she'd endured as a child. For the smallest infraction, she switched my bare legs. She would send, me to the back yard to cut a switch from a bush, forcing me to choose the instrument of my torment. After whipping, I would run to the garage, crawl into a small cabinet and wish I were dead.**

**Flora Buser Pelton was born to German immigrant farmers in northern Illinois. Her father, Karl Buser, a successful farmer, often beat my mother and Grandmother Polly Beuhler Buser. The nights when Karl came home drunk, Polly and Flora would flee to the cornfield until he sobered up. Preferring a son instead of daughter to work in the fields, Karl took mom out of school in the fifth grade, making her operate heavy agricultural machinery, the ensuing damage confining her to a wheelchair in later years. On a visit to the Buser family in northern Illinois in the late 1920s, my cousin Cora Swope Aldridge recognized that mom needed a new beginning and secured approval from Karl and Polly to bring mom to Tulsa Oklahoma to work for Cora at her skating rink and bicycle rental shop across from Lake Yahola at Mohawk Park.**



**Christmas in the stone house, 1923 West Easton Court, unaware of the horrors of World War II. Dad was exempted from service due to his critical skill in producing high technology parts for weaponry.**

**Grandmother Polly Beuhler Buser was the sister of singer John (Deutschendorf) Denver's great grandmother Catherine Beuhler Swope. When I was in my early teens, Cora told me that not too long after mom came to Oklahoma, Karl was suspected of murdering my grandmother Polly. Each morning, Polly started a fire in the cast iron kitchen stove with kerosene stored on the back porch. Unaware that the kerosene had been replaced by gasoline, she put a match to the stove, and it exploded. Polly ran out of the house on fire and burned to death in the snow. I don't know if Cora's story is true, but from what I learned from mom, Karl was capable of murder. She hated her father until her death.**



**Mom locked me up in the back yard and wouldn't let me play with other kids. Imagining that I would get run over like a neighbor child who was hit by a fire truck, she held me captive behind the chain link fence, certain that I would get run over if I left the yard. With nowhere to go, I looked across Edison Road, the Osage County line, at the untilled prairie and an abandoned sharecropper's cabin where I was forbidden to go. When dad was late arriving after work, I wondered why mom gazed out the window overlooking the hill to the west, imploring that dad hadn't been killed in an accident. I had no way of understanding mom's fears until Cora told stories about mom's fiancé. Before coming to Tulsa, mom had fallen in love with a young man on a neighboring farm who proposed marriage, giving her hope that she could get free from her father's brutality. He took a job out of town, to save money for the marriage. One day, mom received a letter. Her fiancé's truck had been hit by a train at a railroad crossing. Mom never recovered from his death. The first blow to her sanity was her father's abuse. The second blow was the death of her beloved.**



**Mother had a fifth grade education and was determined that I would be well educated and enrolled me at John J. Pershing Elementary School one year early. In the second grade, boys would choose up sides to play soccer and basketball. No captain would choose me for their team. They didn't want to play with a tiny boy with the bone structure of a girl. For weeks, I wandered around the playground until one day, I was surprised by three girls holding hands, surrounding me. "You must choose the fairest of the fair," they cried. I didn't hesittate a second. I chose Roseanne, a Cherokee Indian girl. During the third and fourth grade, Roseanne would be the only friend until I was seventeen. A couple of times, I walked her home and helped her clean rabbit cages and feed her pet tortoise but was severely punished by dad when I got home late, the whipping propelled by mom's hysterical fit, inciting dad to lash my legs with a leather belt while mom begged him to stop. But driven my her overwrought worries the hours I had been missing, he didn't spare me, one of the times that I wanted to take my life.**



**Although dad was not able to show affection and never kissed me, he encouraged my romance with Roseanne, taking me shopping at Christmas so I could besiege her with gifts. Because I felt unloved at home, heightened the love I had for Roseanne. But our childhood romance could not survive. After the fourth grade, dad moved us into the unfinished house he was building at Mohawk Park, moving us in when only the garage was finished, tarps hanging in place of garage doors, the wind blowing through the flapping canvas while it rained cats and dogs outside. After our separation, I didn't think of writing to Roseanne, stoically accepting my fate as children do. While wandering the playground of Cherokee Elementary school and every night before going to sleep, I thought only of her. I never saw Roseanne again.**



**When dad was first building the house, he took me to Boy Scouts meetings in Turley, Oklahoma where I learned to tie knots, draw maps, navigate by compass through the hills on 20 mile hikes and return to the starting point, how to catch a rattlesnake, earn a plumbing merit badge, and nearly froze to death swimming in the frigid streams of the Ozark Mountains. Dad taught me how to tie lures for fly fishing, gave me a drafting board to design houses, whetting my lifelong love of architecture. He drove me to Tulsa each week to study the accordion under a maniacal teacher, Johnny Casanova, who put the fear of God in me for not performing perfectly, "Flight of the Bumblebee" by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov from his opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan.* Enamored with the accordion, mom and dad encouraged me to compete in country western talent shows, wearing a yellow and black satin cowboy shirt mom made with black fringe and sequins framing the yoke, a cowboy hat and boots, playing "Tennessee Waltz," and "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered," my favorite, which won first place and a spot performing on the television station overlooking Tulsa's Boulder Park.**



**My father, Irmal Walker Pelton, was the youngest of Mary's children, born in 1913, one year before World War I. Growing up in the depression, he attended Central High school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, working most of his life as a manufacturer engineer, noted for his expertise in designing machinery, including inventing for Rockwell International a parking meter using the fewest moving parts, improved the design of fly fishing reels, and ground the valves on my Jaguar XK120M when I burned the valves by driving it too hard.**





**I could not understand why I was whipped for such small things. But later, when mom told me of her suffering as a child, I eventually gained the maturity to understand her bottomless need for affection. Unloved children feel unloved all their life. Dad didn't know how to overcome the loneliness and fears that ruled mom's life. Avoiding what he could not solve, he poured his time and energy into building a house single handedly, an obsession that lasted twenty years. Mom's great asset was her capability for industry and her agricultural talents, planting a half-acre garden and finding wild strawberries in the forest to plant at home. She made her own clothing from dress patterns, took unwanted dogs that had been abandoned to the Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, fed the birds during the snows of winter, and often took clothing and food to a family of squatters living in the shanty town under the Frisco Railroad viaduct. Although a strict authoritarian at home, she had compassion for the unfortunate and mistreated, but she was haunted by depression, something that I would also suffer. If I couldn't find mom in the house, I would search until I found her in the attic above the garage, huddled in a blanket sobbing like a child. I would hold her in my arms and rock her back and forth until she stopped crying.**



**During the years that dad was working on his dream house on the three acres that Cora had sold to him, I was absorbed by history, reading an endless number of books in my hideout above the garage. Mom's tyranny led me to turn inward. To escape her domination, I spent most of my time out of sight, disenchanted with my life in the family, neither a good son nor a companion to my brother Joe. Three years apart in age, my brother and I didn't share the same interests, attend the same schools, or ride a rural school bus together. While he stayed in the home, whenever not reading a book, I roamed the field of grass west of the house and in the woods across the creek.**

**I grew to dislike the humid summers where I spent most of my hours outdoors, wearing no sunscreen while working in the garden and mowing the one acre yard. I was never given an allowance. To make money, I dug up grub worms and caught grasshoppers, taking insects to Lake Yahola to sell to fishermen. Mom and dad had grown up during the Great Depression and hard work was a deeply embedded ethic. When I was around eleven, my dad got me a job at a rundown amusement park on the hill overlooking Lake Yahola where for ten cents an hour I worked on the baseball batting range, my task being to retrieve the baseballs the batters hit, with balls raining down all around me in the dark, never knowing when one was going to smack me on the head. When I was older, I caddied for inebriated golfers at the Mohawk Golf Course and took up golf for a while, becoming accomplished on the putting green. Excluded from male culture, I didn't grow up taking part in games with boys, instead played only by myself, my only companion being an imagination teeming with medieval knights and American Indians.**







**When we were young, my father was an avid fisherman. Dad took us fishing at Lake Spavinaw, one of my treasured childhood memories. He taught me to fly fish and to make fly fishing lures of bright colored twine and feathers. Besides being a supervisor of precision machine part manufacturing, he did various consulting, including refining the mechanism for a new fly reel. Invention ran in the family. Grandfather Willis Pelton invented the corn harvester in 1903, and Uncle Lester Allen Pelton invented the Pelton Wheel that powered the gold mines in the Sierras.**





**I studied the accordion under Giovanni Casanova, a brilliant musician but a brutal teacher, terrifying me with his harsh scolding. Ashamed of my performance in class, on the way home, I couldn't speak a word and neither did dad. While he was genial with his crew at work or with relatives, for some inexplicable reason, he was unable to be spontaneously affectionate with me. Like mom, he had a strict view of punishment. At social gatherings when I was around five, intrigued by the unusual flavor, I would sample guests' beer, which dad punished by forcing me to drink nearly an entire can of beer, not a good idea for a five year old. I never drank beer again until I entered college. Although I would have preferred playing the saxophone or drums, I enjoyed singing country songs, "The Tennessee Waltz," and "You are my Sunshine. You are my Sunshine. My only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You'll never know, dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away."**

**After winning a contest at a country fair, I was invited to perform on television where I had a memory slip in the middle of the performance. As I faltered, the show's director ran toward me, prompting me to remember my song. I was too shy to enjoy being a public performer but persevered to please dad. In the Boy Scouts, I learned to cook dinners over a campfire, took a twenty-mile hike, joined the Future Farmers of America, and with dad's help, devised an exhibit showing the best way to plow a field to avoid erosion, and helped mom put out fires each summer ignited by the south wind blowing burning ashes from dump fires near Apache Road. One day while pounding the grass fire with a gunny sack drenched in a bucket of water, I fainted, nearly asphyxiated trying to put out the flames.**



**The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa Oklahoma – Author, Dustin M. Ramsey, Wikimedia**

**Across the road was a little creek meandering through the woods of Mohawk Park where I escaped every evening after school. Amid the mounds of earth surrounded by trees where miners searching for coal deposits had many years before dug exploration pits, but finding no coal, had abandoned them, I founded a kingdom in a clearing surrounded by the tree-crested mounds where I imagined myself a member of King Arthur's Round Table. I was reading European medieval classics and in the fifth grade, wrote a play about King Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot, making the costumes, swords, and shields and staged the play before the sixth grade class at Cherokee Elementary School where in the last scene, in the role of Lancelot while dueling with King Arthur, I backed Arthur off the stage and he landed on top of the first row of sixth graders, a more intense finale than the teacher had expected.**

**There comes a moment in your life that propels you in a new direction. When my sixth grade class at Cherokee Elementary in Turley, Oklahoma was touring the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, I was astounded by the Italian Renaissance architecture of the seventy-two room mansion that Oklahoma oil baron Wait Phillips constructed in 1926 during the height of the Oklahoma oil boom, which was unlike anything I had seen before. Phillips and his brothers developed the Phillips Petroleum Company and Wait Phillips built the Philcade Building and the Art Deco Philtower on 5th street and donated 127,00 acres of his New Mexico ranch to the Boy Scouts of America. While in college, my roommate, John Arthur, hired me to model for the portrait painting classes he held in the attic of the museum.**



**The Philbrook Museum of Art, Renaissance style gardens – Author, Wolfgang Sauber, Wikimedia**

**On the tour, the teacher kept admonishing me for not keeping up with the group. I was feverishly drawing sketches in my notebook of swords and armor, Native American pottery and basketry. The architecture of Philbrook was unlike anything I had seen before, captivating me with its terraced garden and a little classical Roman temple, a tempietto, on the far side of the pond, a focal point of the garden, which was I learned much later, inspired by Villa Lante, an estate north of Rome designed by Giacomo Barozi da Vignola in 1566, which the American warplanes mistakenly bombed in World War II. While living in Tuscany, I photographed Villa Lante and other Renaissance gardens, which appear as illustrations for my novel *Celine On Fire.* On winter days during the week with no one about, Philbrook was an enchanted place to bring a girlfriend for romance.**

**I was a child historian in the sixth grade at Cherokee School, designing a poster board, with drawings of Alexander the Great's conqueror an empire that reached from Greece to the Achaemenid Persian Empire and northwestern India. The founder of twenty cities, including Alexandria in Egypt, Alexander III of Macedon's conquests established the dominance of Hellenistic civilization from the Mediterranean Sea to India until the rise of Rome. At the age of ten, I had no knowledge that Alexnder was not a man to be admired. After the defeat of Darius III, Alexander looted the Persian capital city of Persepolis, burned the city to the ground, destroyed hundreds of years of treasures, literature, and art of the Archaemenid Empire as most conquerors have done throughout history.**



**Living in Oklahoma, Indian Territory, land of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole, and many other tribes, I was deeply influenced by Indian history, inspiring me to make native American costumes and a chieftain's headdress, attaching downy feathers to the tips of eagle feathers and stamping decorations on leather. I had dad take me to a slaughterhouse to get a steer's head with horns intending to make a medicine man's costume but never finished because it smelled so bad.**

**During elementary and middle school, I was continually grieving the loss of my beloved dogs that were run over by cars on the highway. To keep Smokey, my Cocker Spaniel, from getting run over, I chained him at night to the doghouse so he would not wander into the road, but one night a pack of wild dogs came from the woods of the park and killed him. Confined by his chain, he couldn't escape the wild dogs. One evening, I was suddenly confronted in my woodland hideout by dogs that had been dumped in the park and formed a marauding pack. There were so many, I was frightened but remained still for what seemed like a very long time until the pack finally faded into the forest. If I had run, they would have attacked me. When threatened by man or beast, the best thing to do is nothing – stay motionless. Don't move a hair. When an abandoned dog appeared desperate for food, mom would get furious at the callous Tulsans who dumped their unwanted pets in Mohawk Park. Mom would rescue the starving dog and take it to the animal shelter. Continually losing my pets to careless drivers on the road, I finally gave up having a dog.**



**As dad became increasingly immersed in building his masterpiece, I gradually withdrew from dad and mom. Due to his obsession, he gave mom little time, leaving her emotionally bereft. On weekends, she would plead with dad to take her for a drive or visit a friend, but obsessed with the house, would refuse, leaving mom forlorn. As a child I didn't fully understand why she cried so much but later in life, I recalled stories of her father's brutality that left her starved for affection. To escape mom's tyranny and distraught emotions, I retreated to my room or roamed over the surrounding grasslands and woods. During fierce arguments, I called mom a Junker – after the Prussian military cast, like Otto von Bismark, a Junker who became the Iron Chancellor of the German Empire. While mom would show affection, dad was emotionally distant like his mother, the opposite of my kind grandfather who, at four, I loved so fiercely that I would hang on to him to keep him from going out the door. Sadly, only a year later, he had a stroke and fell on a hot stove. When I was five, I remembered visiting him before he died at St. John's Hospital. If he had lived, I would have had a far happier childhood. I have no memory of dad picking me up in his arms and kissing me. I suspect that dad's lack of affection was due to the emotional inhibition inherited from his emotionally withdrawn mom.**

**Mother's hysteric spells, anger, and depression resulting from the beatings she suffered from an alcoholic father, provoked a depression that darkened my life – chronic depression that took years to overcome. The absence of dad's affection and mom's constant whippings for small infractions convinced me that I was unloved, driving me to stay in my room alone reading books or escaping into the woods of Mohawk Park where trees grew on mysterious mounds of earth leftover from explorations for coal – a tranquil kingdom that I shared with no one.**



**Dad spent twenty years building a house single handedly, constructing the foundation, framing, roofing, hardwood floors, plaster, fireplace, electrical, plumbing, kitchen cabinetry, all the trades that go into building a house, an exceptional attainment, but his obsession led to his neglect of mom's emotional needs. When dad began in the 1950s to draw plans for his house, he gave me a drafting table for Christmas and I began designing similar American prairie style ranch houses, cultivating at the age of ten, a love for architecture, which culminated in the construction of my baroque palazzo, inspired by my fascination with Renaissance Italy and France.**







**When dad was diagnosed with cancer, I was designing for *The Goonies*, work that I was financially dependent on, preventing me from living in Tulsa during his illness. Devoted to dad heart and soul, mom was beside him when he died. I had married after graduating from college, compelled by a girlfriend who was obsessed with marriage and pressured by two pious mothers obsessed with marriage. Subconsciously, I understood I was on a disturbing path because I had sought out a psychiatrist to counsel us. After psychological testing, he determined that I was off the scale in introspection, where Marilyn wasn't even on the scale, confirming my impending calamity as I sunk into a whirlpool of determined moms and a single-minded girlfriend. Closing my eyes to my dilemma, I designed an exquisite ceremony in the university chapel for a hellish marriage. On the honeymoon, I drove my Karman Ghia from Oklahoma to the Aztec pyramids, Mexico City, and Acapulco, discovering along the way that it was the end of a marriage before it even started as my bipolar bride segued from ecstatic highs to obstreperous lows. While crossing the street in Mexico City's Zona Rosa, I ran into Guillermo Alguin, the guy I was with on the night I met Paola Gonbet when I was 19, the girl I had loved so intensely and had disappeared into thin air. The memory shook me. I was with the wrong woman, but one cannot turn back the past. What the hell had I done?**



**While I was in graduate school at UCLA, working part time in an architectural office and shooting films for other students, the marriage went downhill, largely because we had nothing in common intellectually or artistically. After a year of declining ability to communicate, Marilyn ran off with a stranger she met at the Santa Monica Mall, the best thing that could have happened in the long run but pitched me into a depressed state because I viewed divorce as an enormous failure. Despite my parents' emotionally turbulent marriage, they had always been faithful to one another. Three days later, my dad called – mom had had a third breakdown, worse this time – paranoid schizophrenia.**

**When I arrived at St John Hospital in Tulsa, I found mother huddled on the floor, crying, "They are trying to kill me." The Venetian blinds were closed, through a crack, a sliver of light penetrating the darkened room. "What's that?" she cried, terrified by the light. Her doctor had given her drugs to calm her, but they were not pacifying her. Traumatized by my failed marriage, I could not comfort my tormented moms. It was one of the most painful moments in a life that had been darkened by chronic depression. Dad and I were terribly depressed, barely able to speak, and I could not command the words to ease his grief.**



**After I returned to school, dad called to tell me that her doctors were unable to assuage her paranoia and convinced him to agree to electro-convulsive treatment. Although it reduced her mental capacity, the electric shock broke through her paranoid schizophrenia and in later years, she became a comfort for him, melting years of emotional strife, the jolt of the electro-convulsive shock exorcising the demons spawned by her tragic childhood, transforming an angry woman into a peaceful child.**

**After dad's death, I moved her from Tulsa to an assisted living home in Santa Monica, California, where she could sit on her balcony and watch the sun setting over the Pacific, giving me a chance during her last years to nurture a loving relationship with a mother who had been the nemesis of my childhood and the wellspring of my despair. I didn't have that time of healing before dad died. I deeply regret we never had the chance to show the love that we were unable to express when I was young.**

**Because he needed another laborer in the field, mom's father wanted a boy instead of a girl. From the time she was ten, she was forced to work full time on the farm, jumping up and down on the metal bar of a harvesting machine she told me, difficult to release due to her being so small, the repetitive labor eventually damaging her hip, making it difficult for her to walk as she grew older.**



**Living on three acres in the country, Mom stayed close to her farm girl's roots, maintaining a large garden, growing corn, okra, onions, scallions, lettuce, and turnips. Dad would buy a side of beef directly from the rancher and freeze sirloin, brisket, ribs, loin, and liver which my tyrannical mom forced me to eat even although I detested it. I was horrified to see mom sauteing a calf brain in a skillet because it looked just like a human brain. Mom and I would go into the woods across the creek and find wild strawberries which she successfully transplanted. We raised chickens and rabbits, and I would flee into the woods when dad slaughtered a rabbit and was horrified to see mom cut off the head of a chicken and hang it on the clothesline to drain the blood. I always had my nose in a book, and she would yell at me for not helping her carry buckets of water for the plants. When I brought mom to California, I would take her to my cousin Revena's homestead in Joshua Tree where she felt at home, reliving her childhood, feeding the little calf milk with a baby's bottle or holding a newborn rabbit in her hand.**

**Since hip replacement is an invasive operation requiring blood transfusion due to a loss of blood during the procedure, it was vital for her to use her own blood during the AIDS epidemic to avoid the possibility of contamination from a blood donor. After several journeys to St John Hospital in Santa Monica to acquire the necessary amount of blood, just as she was being wheeled into surgery, mom had a hysterical fit and refused the surgery, forcing the surgeon to cancel the operation. Her refusal resulted in her being confined for her remaining days to a wheelchair, shortening her life as she was unable to exercise. Due to the electro-convulsive shock, she remained serene, happy to have my company while I took her on excursions in her wheelchair along the Santa Monica Palisade overlooking the Pacific Ocean.**



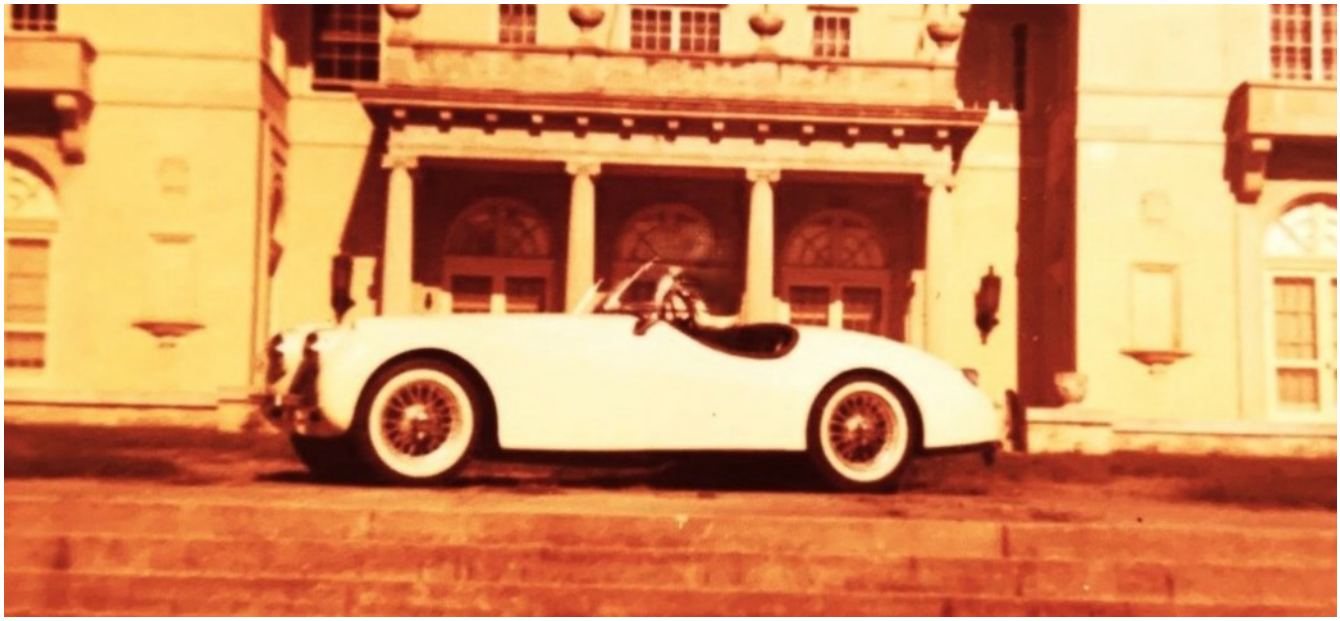
**I never heard dad say a bad word about a black person, but my parents conformed to the common beliefs of whites of that time. When I brought Harvey Rushing, the first black student admitted to the University of Tulsa, to my parent's home in Mohawk Park, my mother excoriated me after he departed, "What will the neighbors think," she screamed. When I defended myself, mom became hysterical, one of her psychoneurotic outbursts. She backed me into the corner of the kitchen and I spit in her face, an involuntary response driven by my rebellion against autocratic control. She screamed and dad came running, pummeling me with his fists. I accepted the beating, knowing that my response was shameful. I stopped visiting after that, living in poverty with two artists in a decrepit apartment. Mom would visit ever so often, bringing clothes that she had washed for me and a little money. Because she disapproved of my interest in philosophy, she would enclose in the clothes articles on the evils of communism. Coming from a lineage of German protestants, she held a common disapproval of the Catholic Church. But when John F. Kennedy ran for president, I managed to convince her to vote for Kennedy and later took her to hear Hubert Humphrey speak, where he signed for me his book *The War on Poverty*. After dad's death, I brought mom from Oklahoma to live in an assisted living home with a balcony overlooking the Pacific Ocean on the park along the Santa Monica Palisade. Although mom had suffered mental decline, sometimes mistaking me for dad, knowing what she had suffered in childhood strengthened my compassion for her. One night, the Santa Monica police called me. Mom had called the police to stop her father from murdering people on Pacific Avenue. She never forgot what she had endured as a child.**



**After getting off work late at night, I practiced racing my 1955 Austin Healey 100A in Mohawk Park. Equipped with a windshield that could be laid down to reduce wind resistance, the Austin Healey was fast and highly maneuverable, competitive today in vintage racing.**

**During elementary and middle school, I received top grades on my report cards and earned money by caddying at the Mohawk Golf Course. But during my senior year in high school, I neglected my academic focus and tried being more sociable, went out for the wrestling team and ignored my studies by working after school and weekends at Sam's Market to pay for a 1955 Austin Healey 100A sports car. I traded the Austin Healey for a 1954 XK120M Jaguar capable of 126 mph, which after work, I honed my racing skills by driving through the winding roads of Mohawk Park at breakneck speed, inspired by the Grand Prix driver Juan Manuel Fangio, the only driver in Formula One history to win titles with four teams: Alfa Romeo, 1951, Maserati, 1954 and 1957, Mercedes-Benz, 1954 and 1955, and Ferrari, 1956. One night, I lost command of the Jaguar turning a corner and flew out of control through the forest. By a miracle, I missed every tree. Shaken by the error, I slowed down after that.**

**Although, I only wrestled during my senior year at Will Rogers High School under the great coach Morey Villreal, I was so fascinated with the sport that I studied wrestling skills at Oklahoma State University under Oklahoma legend Myron Roderick, three-time All-American and two-time NCAA Wrestling national champion. Roderick was named the NCAA wrestling coach of the year three times, coached twenty NCAA champions and three Olympic gold medalists. Under his direction, Oklahoma State University athletic teams won thirty Big 8 championships, and four NCAA national championships. Roderick recommended me for an athletic scholarship at the University of Nebraska under Olympic champion coach Bill Smith who invited Japanese Olympic champion Shozo Sasahara to work out with the team. Sasahara, won a world title in 1954 and an Olympics gold medal in 1956 when he was the flag bearer for Japan. The physical training that I have maintained throughout my life, I owe to the experience of studying under three masters. When I arrived at the University of Nebraska on a wrestling scholarship, I found that I was ostracized by my Iowa roommates who viewed Oklahoma wrestlers as rivals. Having attended high school together, they had formed a close knit relationship that left me excluded from their company.**



**In my solitude, I began going each week to see foreign art films in a small movie theatre on the edge of the campus where I discovered the world of cinema, a passion that led me after graduating from college to make my first film in West Tulsa, *A Season of Visions* obtained my admission to UCLA film school. While living in the Nebraska University athletic dormitory with roommates who never studied and Nebraska football players coming to the basement dorm every night to play cards for money until the wee hours of the morning, it was impossible to either sleep or be a serious student. Disillusioned with my intellectual progress, I returned home to the University of Tulsa, whereupon, inspired by my mentors Professor Emile Ader in political science and Walter Stuerman in philosophy, I developed a passion for literature, history, and philosophy, devouring several books each week outside of class and contemplating a dream that one day, I would become a writer like Bertrand Russell and Jean Paul Sartre.**



**My beloved 1954 Jaguar XK120M that I raced at night on the winding roads of Mohawk Park. Jay Leno's automobile collection has a white 1954 XK120M, which he says was the car that inspired him to begin his collection.**



**Hitchhiking near Vicksburg, Mississippi, 1936 – Author, Walker Evans, U.S. Farm Security Administration, public domain, Wikimedia**

# Hitchhiking Across America

**Inspired by Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, my first hitchhiking adventure was when I returned home from the University of Nebraska at the end of the school year. A friend drove me to the edge of Lincoln and as a joke, dropped me off near the Nebraska State Penitentiary. I was not aware at the time, but the prison held Charles Raymond Starkweather, a 21-one year old mass killer, accompanied by his 14-year-old girlfriend on a road trip across Nebraska and Wyoming, murdered eleven people and in the following month, was electrocuted at the penitentiary. Although respectably dressed in a jacket, white shirt, and tie, carrying a faux alligator Samsonite suitcase, and a sign reading "Oklahoma," standing in front of the prison, it was a long time before I got a ride.**

**After a semester studying anthropology, history, and philosophy, I was dying to escape conventional Tulsa. When my friend Daniel Lang, a painter and professor of art at the Art Institute of Chicago invited me to visit, I leaped at the chance. Daniel introduced me to Marie Biotto, a student in his life drawing class. Since he was leaving town, Marie took me to her place. On our first evening, she took out a stethoscope, opened her blouse and invited me to listen to her heart. From that moment on, I didn't leave her side. The next morning, I was awakened by her sister in the adjacent apartment yelling at Marie for being a child molester and Marie trying to explain that I was really nineteen. Earning her living in a Chicago's millionaire's club, she wore very little while swinging in a red velvet swing. Marie and her sister Chiara, a Playboy Club bunny, lived in the Maryland Hotel on Rush Street near the Gate of Horn, the music club where Joan Baez performed, and comedian Lenny Bruce was arrested onstage for obscenity. I had not had a girlfriend in high school, and only one before college, Sandra, an Osage Indian princess who invited me to all-night Osage In-Lon-Schka dances near Mohawk Park. I was thrilled to be courted by Marie, an exquisite woman twenty-six years old while I was only an inexperienced nineteen – dazzled by Marie's refined beauty and svelte figure, magnificent auburn hair, and onyx cigarette holder. It felt like I was in a 1930s Josef von Sternberg movie. Marie took me everywhere by taxi and cooked sumptuous Italian dinners until it was time to go back to school. Marie and I parted nearly in tears.**



**Baha'I Temple, Wilmette, Illinois – Author, MichaelDPhotos, Wikimedia**

**A few weeks later, I was sleeping when dad burst into my room and slapped the hell out of me, accusing me of all sorts of things. Marie had called asking for me and dad imagined things beyond my ability to imagine, an example of how conservative my family was. The next week, I hitchhiked to Chicago and fell back into Marie's arms. She told me that she had had bad experiences with men, understandable if you know the predator men associated with night life. Her past explained her attraction to my innocence and her efforts to transform her life by studying art. She was into spiritual things, learning about Subud, a Javanese religion founded in Indonesia in the 1920s by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, featuring the spiritual practice of Latihan kejiwaan, the "Great Life Force." Marie took me to the Bahai Temple in Willmette, Illinois for religious services. As a beginning student of philosophy, I was studying the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and the works of the empiricist Bertrand Russell, philosophers with whom she was unfamiliar, and I would not be able to explain. Our backgrounds didn't provide a basis for discussion, and I was not mature enough to bridge the gap. At that time, I was not interested in religious discussions as only the year before I had abandoned the Southern Baptist religion of my birth, determining that it was closed minded, anti-intellectual, and responsible for racial discrimination. One evening when Marie came home from work to make dinner and I had spent the day reading at the Chicago Central Library, she lost her temper for a reason that I didn't understand. She became angry and threw plates against the kitchen wall, shattering porcelain over the floor. I don't remember my reaction, only that my feelings were so wounded that I silently packed my bag and walked out the door. It was a cold Christmas night with snow on the ground and the Hawk blowing off the lake, sweeping down Michigan Avenue. I caught the Greyhound back to Tulsa, and like an immovable adolescent overwhelmed by wounded feelings, I tore myself away from a kind and lovely person.**

**It was so long ago, I don't remember what happened after I returned to Tulsa, but I am certain that Marie called. Only my dad would answer as my bedroom was over the garage, far from the phone. After our first meeting, I had written several letters, but after returning from Chicago on a cold Christmas night, I never wrote to her again. The following year, Marie sent a Christmas card. I did not reply. For many years, she sent a letter every Christmas. A stubborn juvenile harboring wounded feeling, to my shame, I never replied. Much later in life, I realized why she had been vexed with me. Although we slept together, I had never made love to her. A shy virgin, I didn't know that I was expected to be the one to make a move. Brought up in a conservative Catholic religion in a time when women were conditioned to not be sexually forward with men, Marie didn't know how to overcome my reserve. In different ways, both of us were repressed, victims of the sexual cultural norms of that time. Her flash of anger may also have derived from her mistreatment from former boyfriends. As I look back on our love affair, I am tormented by my cruelty to have never responded. It haunts me still. Marie had a beautiful soul. She was exploring spiritual things, taking me to listen to a preacher deliver a Christmas service in an enormous Black church on the Southside of Chicago. Marie was attracted to me because I was different than anyone she had met before. She was attempting to change her life, trying to find spirituality in an environment where she had seen little, and I failed her. I never saw Marie again.**



**McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa – Author, Blake Burkhart, Wikimedia**

**After leaving the University of Nebraska, I rented an apartment with Jack Spillman, a sculptor, and Johnny Arthur, a painter across from the University of Tulsa McFarlin Library where I checked out a half dozen books each week. A year later, I rented a second story room above Spillman's art studio, which I turned into a Zen hideaway, not to live in, but to have a place of serenity in which to read. I carried dozens of boxes of creek pebbles up the stairs, mounted a mattress on a raised pallet at one end and covered the balance of the floor with pebbles in tones of golden brown. I lined the windows on the southern and western walls with gold cellophane, which filled the room with golden to amber light depending on the time of day. I had a fantasy of bringing a girlfriend there, but since I didn't have a girlfriend, it never happened. It was a piece of art that no one else saw. I was the only one who ever visited that room.**

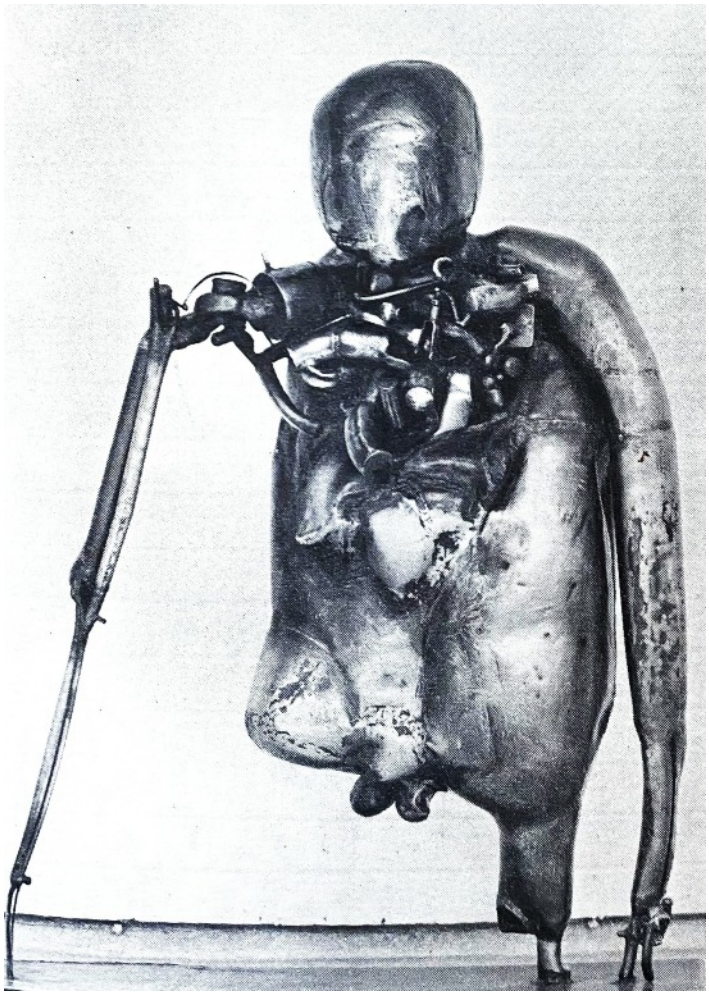


**1959 Eldorado Biarritz Convertible – Author, Saphio79, Wikimedia**

**Today, it is considered too dangerous to hitchhike, but I discovered in the following five years of taking off from my college studies to travel across the United States and Central America that it was highly dangerous even at a time when hitchhiking was more commonplace. One of the closest encounters I had with violence was on a hitchhiking trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles. A muscle bound man in a yellow Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz convertible stopped in central California, asking if I wanted to visit a celebration on an Indian reservation. A longtime admirer of Indian culture, I said, "I sure would." When we got to the reservation late at night, there was only a small Indian bar, probably not on the reservation. He told me to wait inside while he spoke to a young Indian. When I returned to the car, he told me he was going to rape me.**

**In a split second, I flew over the seat and from the back seat commanded him to drive me to town or I was going to kill him. While it might appear ludicrous that a 125-pound nineteen-year-old was going to subdue a mature 250 pound weightlifter who made football star Jim Brown look underdeveloped, my hysterical rage succeeded. My attacker drove me to the nearest town in the dead of night at let me by the bus station. This was long before I had developed my esophagus strangle-hold, so I had no idea how I was going to overpower him, though I had a scarf ready to throw around his neck to strangle him. My crazed maniac act worked a miracle. One thing I would advise women: a frenzied rage can scare the daylights out of attackers – they have no idea what you are going to do, what hidden weapon you are carrying. Most attackers are bullies and will cave when they encounter strength.**

**The crux is that you must make the assailant believe it. A similar predicament is found in my book *Celine on Fire*, when Celine at the age of fourteen annihilates a rapist by tearing off his ear with her teeth. When faced with a life or death situation, one does not play by the Marquess of Queensberry Rules. Out on the road, my talent, or instinct to transform myself into a mad man has saved me on more than one occasion. Later, I mused on how I had survived and recalled that my attacker had said he was a maintenance supervisor at Stanford University, which explained the expensive car and that he had a job to protect. Male predators are as likely to be homosexual as heterosexual, a situation that cropped up time after time on the road. Hitchhiking is not as pleasant as portrayed by Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable in *It Happened One Night.***



**Tomb Figure – Jack Spillman, 1961**

**Across from the university mall entrance on Delaware Place, I rented an apartment on the second floor of an old frame house with Jack Spillman, a sculptor and John Arthur, a painter. Although ancient and in poor repair, it had a second story deck overlooking the university mall and McFarlin Library, and like a primate, hanging on a branch of a tree, I would swing from the deck to the ground. An outstanding draughtsman, I remember John Arthur's stellar painting, *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb after Hans Holbein the Younger*. Arthur would later become a noted art historian and the director of the Boston University Art Gallery. Arthur sometimes asked me to model for his life drawing class at Philbrook Art Museum.**

**Sculptor Jack Spillman, welded junkyard parts into imposing assemblage sculptures, my favorite being a torso composed of sheet metal and steel tubing for the organs, welded by oxygen-acetylene torches, contoured by a body hammer, and connections smoothed by a circular grinder, an imposing sculpture that I mounted on a base in our apartment. In 1963, Jack's metal and welding studio was visited by the Chairman of the Yale Art Department Jack Tworkov, a renowned abstract expressionist painter, who along with Wilhelm de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, Mark Rothko, and Jackson Pollock, founded the New York School, which helped the city to replace Paris as the center of avant-garde art. The New York School's body of work is regarded as some of the greatest paintings of 20th century. Traveling to a gallery show in Los Angeles, Tworkov stopped in Tulsa for a soiree honoring him, and sculpture professor Dwayne Hatchet brought him to Jack's studio where he was so impressed with Jack's preliminary designs that he encouraged him to apply for a scholarship at Yale.**




**Avalon Hotel, Miami Beach architectural district – Author, Elisa.rolle, Wikimedia**

**Other than getting stranded in the middle of nowhere, weather is one the biggest scourges to a hitchhiker. When I was caught in a cloud burst near Lake Okeechobee, Florida, I had to take refuge in a filthy gas station where I slept the night sitting upright on a narrow bench next to a vagrant who had not bathed in months. Thinking that Florida was always warm, I had hitchhiked to Miami at Christmas wearing only thin pants and shirt, no jacket, and was hit by a cold wave of 19 degrees in a hotel room on the mainland where the heat had failed.**

**Exploring Miami Beach on Christmas Eve, I approached a night spot surrounded by throngs of clubbers waiting to get in. Three men in business suits came out, casting slurs on my long hair. I whirled around and confronted them. I don't remember my words, but they were vivid ones. The gentlemen introduced themselves – Miami Beach vice officers. They hauled me into their squad car whereupon in a highly emotional state, I told them how badly they were acting, especially since they were officers of the peace. After a couple of minutes of listening to my vivid opinions on their behavior, the vice squad cops let me go. I don't know how I got away with it, though it might have been because I looked five years younger than my age. They probably thought I was fourteen. It is the single time that I have scolded a police officer. Little did I suspect then that twenty years later I would be designing for *Miami Vice*, starring undercover officer Don Johnson and Willy Nelson as the guest star. With its rich Cuban culture, Miami is a great town.**



**Guatemala's democratically elected President Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown in a coup initiated by the United Fruit company and carried out by the CIA in 1954 – Author, Republic of Guatemala, public domain, Wikimedia**

**On an extended trip through Central America before the Pan American Highway was carved through the mountains, I got my first glimpse of America's history of supporting dictators. Traveling from Mexico into the highlands of Guatemala on a dilapidated bus on muddy roads, I fell in love with Quetzaltenango at the elevation of nearly 8,000 feet, the mountainous city named after the dazzling quetzal, the national bird of Guatemala, its vibrant exotic colors reverenced by the Mayan civilization. The agricultural plots were so steep, I wondered how the workers could manage not to fall into their neighbor's field without using some type of seat belt to keep them anchored to the ground. When we came to a jungle stream that had to be forded, the men exited the bus, taking a machete from pile beside the driver to cut branches to stabilize the mud. Once the mud was reinforced by brush, the driver backed the bus up the hill and accelerated across the muddy stream to the other side of the creek, the brush flying in the air as the bus roared past. The travelers climbed back on the bus and continued to the next ford, where the men dismounted and repeated their engineering work. Enamored with the pretty girl sitting in the front seat, the young bus driver kept turning to look at her while wheeling around curves with precipitous drops of hundreds of feet with no guard rails, white crosses marking the spot where someone missed a turn and perished.**

**In contrast to the magnificence of the tropical highland forest, I was dismayed by the poverty of Central America where American military intervention over the years had prevented land reform. I learned that in the late 19th century Guatemala President Justo Rufino Barrios passed legislation that confiscated the lands of the native Mayan people, compelling them to work on coffee plantations for a pittance and gave confiscated land of the indigenous Mayans to several U.S. companies, including the United Fruit Company, which was exempted from paying taxes. During dictator General Jorge Ubico's iron rule, the United Fruit Company consolidated its control of most of the tillable land, eventually resulting in two percent of the people owning 70 percent of the land and 98 percent of the population owning zero land.**



**President of Guatemala Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán with his wife Maria Cristina Vilanova who had a strong ideological influence on her husband and shared his desire for social reform – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia**

**In 1944, dictator Jorge Ubico was overthrown by students, intellectuals, and progressives and Juan José Arévalo, a professor of philosophy was elected in a landslide. Arévalo introduced reforms, increased spending on education and established a minimum wage that ended labor exploitation by the United Fruit Company. Arévalo's rule was called "Ten Years of Spring," the only years that Guatemala had ever enjoyed a democratic government. The following democratically elected president, Jacobo Árbenz, began expropriating un-farmed land of the United Fruit Company and distributing it to the landless peasants, making it possible for the first time in Guatemala's history for a half million poor Guatemalan farmers to possess their own land.**

**The United Fruit Company was not happy with the redistribution of land to the peasants. Possessing 3 million acres and Puerto Barrios, Guatemala's only port on the Atlantic, 1,500 miles of railways, a fleet of 70 ships, and an operating budget greater than most Central American countries, the United Fruit company mounted a public relations campaign that convinced Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and President Eisenhower that Guatemala was going Communist and directed Dulles' brother, Director of the CIA Allen Dulles to green light a paramilitary invasion of Guatemala to overthrow democratically elected President Árbenz. The violent coup d'etat installed a new dictator, Carlos Castillo Armas who resurrected the same repressive violence against the peasantry that they had suffered under a long line of dictators. Thanks to Dulles and President Eisenhower, Guatemala was doomed to suffer the colonial tyranny that had haunted the country throughout the 19th century.**

**When I arrived in Guatemala City in 1970, President Carlos Arana Osorio had imposed an *Estado de sitio,* State of Siege. Although, as nineteen-year-old, I didn't know what was happening at the time, much later, I learned that Arana Osorio's government, supported militarily and financially by the U.S., was guilty of severe human rights violations, engaging government-sponsored death squads to detain, torture, and execute political opponents, student leaders, and trade unionists. An estimated 20,000 Guatemalans were killed or disappeared under Arana Osorio's rule.**



**Morning at the market in Chichicstenango – Author, Toby Argüelles, Wikimedia. Maya textiles are renowned for their sophisticated design that evolved from ancient Maya art and religious beliefs. Guatemalan women have traditionally created the textile designs in Maya society, which were not just for protection from the elements but for esthetic adornment. To safeguard small craft weavers from 18 linguistic communities from large corporations that have been exploiting Mayan textiles by mass producing their designs, the Guatemalan government, propelled by the National Movement of Maya Weavers, has passed legislation to protect traditional Mayan textiles by granting community collectives the right of ownership of their traditional designs.**

**Hearing marimba music outside, I opened heavy doors onto the balcony of the 18th century pension where I was staying and saw troops with machine guns on the roofs of the Casino Militar across the street. Marimba music was filtering up from the casino and American naval officers were exiting a car with Connecticut plates, which had to be offloaded from a U.S. ship as there was not yet a Pan-American Highway. As a young student, I didn't understand the gravity of the moment, but realizing that I could be mistaken for a rebel and shot, I closed the door.**

**While I encountered widespread poverty in Guatemala, when I arrived in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, I discovered even worse deprivation. Exploring the ravines above the city, I found raw sewage running down the dirt path, houses made of discarded doors, corrugated iron, and pieces of plywood so flimsy they would collapse in a windstorm. The stench from the open sewer was so foul I could barely avoid throwing up. I understood that the people living in those hillside ravines had no choice but to live amid reeking filth. I was told that twenty-one families owned all the wealth of El Salvador. As I walked the streets of the city, I met open hostility, one young man following me, yelling obscenities. I found a bullet hole in my window where an American had been targeted. Traveling by peasant train through Mexico, I had witnessed people living in abandoned box cars with no plumbing, but the ravines of San Salvador had to be the most inhospitable habitation on earth. My early travels left a deep impression on a young man studying history and philosophy.**



**Great Salt Lake Desert, Nevada – Author, Famartin, Wikimedia**

**Hitchhiking appealed to my youthful yearning for adventure, but I experienced great privation and discomfort. When it was raining at the Hoover Dam, I had to sleep on concrete and could hardly move the next morning. Caught in a snow storm on the Continental Divide in New Mexico, I preserved my life by sleeping under pieces of cardboard scavenged from discarded boxes. Crossing the Great Salt Lake Desert, I was stranded many hours in the harsh sun for there were few cars on the road. Many hours later, a car crammed with derelicts stopped and asked if I had money for gas. Marooned in the middle of the Great Salt Lake Desert with little chance for a ride, I contributed five dollars for gas, thankful that I had thought to conceal $3,000 for tuition in my shoes. It was one of the scariest rides I have endured, trapped in a car stuffed with demented characters led by a driver with a wandering evil eye – the perfect Hollywood casting for a mass killer. The complete absence of conversation, their dead silence, and the aroma of unwashed bodies increased my fear that I wouldn't get out alive. If they had known I had money, I might have ended up dead, my body slowly desiccating in the harsh sunlight of the Great Salt Lake Desert.**

**I had an even stranger experience one night in Rock Springs, Wyoming. I arrived in the old mining town on a cold winter's night. Searching for a place to sleep, I crossed through the underpass below the railroad tracks to the rough side of town and discovered a hotel in a 19th century stone building. When I opened the door, the saloon was packed on Saturday night, a deafening roar filling the room, a crowd of ancient alcoholics having a boisterous night, like a saloon in the 1870s lawless West. A yellow-haired lady with white eyeglasses, wearing heavy mascara and a pungent perfume came over to me and yelled over the din of alcoholic laughter, "Whatcha want? "A place to sleep." "How much money you got, kid?" I gave her a few dollars and she directed me up the stairs to the third floor, "Second door on the right." Glad to escape the surreal nightmare of the bar, I bolted up the stairs and opened the door of the second room. There was no electric light, but moonlight coming through the dirt encrusted window illumined a mattress in a room that had been burned in a fire. It was too cold to go out, so I lay down on the filthy floor sleeping fitfully throughout the night, awakened by the country western music from the saloon and footsteps going up and down the wooden stairs. It took awhile, but I suddenly I realized I was sleeping in a whorehouse. Upon the crack of dawn, I fled from the great limestone building, but after a few paces, I turned to admire the massive building, its ancient stone work luminous in the rising sun.**



**Cathedral-Basilica of St. Louis, King of France, New Orleans – Author, Nowhereman86, Wikimedia**

**But there was even a scarier night than the roaring whorehouse. Coming east out of Dallas headed for New Orleans, I got stuck at night on a narrow Arkansas road, when a middle aged gentlemen in a cowboy hat rescued me, or so I thought, but such a rescue should happen to no one. He laid rubber and roared around a sharp curve on a moonless night, sipping on a bottle of white lightning. He turned the music up on the radio and began singing with Patsy Kline as he tore through winding curves in the pitch black mountains, his blown out muffler baffling off the trees. When he braked, he lifted his leg high, wobbling in the air as he struggled to bring his leg under control, then stomped on the brake, nearly pitching me through the windshield. With no seat belt, I was trapped in a car with a wobbly suspension, speeding through the mountains chauffeured by an inebriated polio survivor. Not wanting to incite him, I suggested a slower speed. He laughed, "I love driving fast." After twenty minutes of terror, an Arkansas Highway Patrol car lights flashed behind us, forcing the guy to stop. They took him in but left me stranded on a narrow Arkansas road in the middle of the night.**

**During spring break and Christmas, I would often hitchhike to New Orleans, which is the diametrical opposite of Tulsa, a fascinating city with a mixture of cultures and an eccentric ambiance, a metropolis of Creole cuisine and African American music. I stayed in a merchant mariner hotel on Canal Street and spent my time walking around the city, especially the *Vieux Carré*, hanging out in the evening at the piano bar in Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop at the corner of Bourbon and St. Phillip Street, sitting beside the piano player who treated me as an old friend while I nursed a beer for the entire night. One Christmas, I found myself sitting in a rowdy bar jammed with Alabama football fans revved up for the Sugar Bowl. The middle aged man in a business suit in front of me kept demanding the black man standing by the men's room to bring him a drink. The black man tried to explain he was not a waiter but a toilet attendant, a common practice in upscale places in the South, providing a towel or a shot of cologne. When the black man didn't bring the drink, the drunk cursed the toilet attendant. At intervals, the drunk would leap to his feet and shout, "Alabama, Alabama, number one!" After the tenth time he leaped to his feet to proclaim Alabama was number none, and the third time he cursed the bathroom attendant, I pulled his chair back, so he'd fall on the floor, but when he sat down, he reached back to retrieve his chair, fortunately averting a hostile encounter. I went over to the attendant and suggested that he deliver a drink from the toilet. He chuckled, "I'd like to do that. I really would, but I need to keep my job."**



**A follower of Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Dave Brubeck, and Yusef Latif, I was not familiar with New Orleans jazz until I discovered Preservation Hall on St. Peter Street, a venue created in the 1950s to present acoustic jazz concerts, featuring the legends of New Orleans jazz, George Lewis, Punch Miller, Sweet Emma Barrett, Billie and De De Pierce, and The Humphrey Brothers. Rock n'roll and bebop had overshadowed New Orleans jazz during the 1950s and 1960s, leaving many musicians with no employment until Preservation Hall provided the old timers a place to perform in a space that was rare in South where racially integrated bands and audiences shared traditional jazz during what was still the Jim Crow era.**




**Laffitte's Blacksmith Shop lounge, corner of Bourbon and St. Phillip Streets, French Quarter – Author, Flickr photographer Lobberich, Wikimedia. The abandoned blacksmith shop was transformed as the Café Lafitte in the mid-1940s, drawing bohemians and artists, urbane playwrights Noël Coward and Tennessee Williams.**



**Ellis County Courthouse in Waxahachie, Texas – Author, Rene Gomez, Renelibrary, Wikimedia**

**I always had difficulty getting through Texas. One time I got caught in a driving rainstorm on the freeway south of Dallas and had to slog through the freezing rain to find shelter in Waxahachie Texas. While traveling through small towns in Texas, as a connoisseur of architecture since childhood, I was awed by the impressive 19th century courthouses, many of Victorian design, rivaling the architecture of London in their complexity. While visiting monuments like the Alamo in San Antonio, I was reminded that Texas was violently seized by Americans after slavery had been abolished in Mexico, the Lone Star revolution creating another slave state like Oklahoma, Missouri, and the rest of the South. On another trip, I waited forever in West Texas until I finally got picked up by a eighteen wheel tractor trailer that could only go 45 miles per hour because of a big lump on the tire and the driver didn't have a spare, a terrible ride because the big rig bounced at every turn of the wheel, jolting your organs until you were totally out of sorts, but you were still lucky not to be stuck on an isolated road in West Texas. It was the driver's own rig so he could pick up hitchhikers that big companies didn't allow due to insurance prohibitions. A kind man, the driver picked up a black man who when we stopped at a cafe, had to go to the back door to get something to eat, for in 1960's Texas, African Americans were refused service at segregated restaurants. It was my first exposure to racial discrimination on the highway, a reality that five years later would take me to Alabama to support Martin Luther King, and SNCC leaders Stokely Carmichael, James Forman and John Lewis on the Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery.**



**El Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, Mexico – Author, Jptellezgiron, Wikimedia**

**My first stay in Mexico City and Acapulco was an accident. Understanding that I had a keen interest in anthropology and archeology, my sociology professor helped me get a National Science Foundation grant to work on an Inca civilization archeology dig 9,000 feet high in the Andes Mountains of Ecuador. Foolish kid that I was, instead of flying directly to Quito, Ecuador like smart people would have done, I had the brilliant idea of traveling through Central America to South America even though the Pan American Highway was not complete at that time. Being an avaricious reader of books and hungry for knowledge of every sort, I took my library with me in a large Samsonite suitcase jammed with books and hardly any clothes. Weighing at least seventy pounds, it proved to be a very bad idea. By the time I reached San Antonio, Texas, my hands were blistered and arms aching hauling the ton of books around on foot. While hiking from the freeway into the city, I got the idea of tying the suitcase up with rope over my back like a backpack. It worked for a short distance, but it began to rain, and I slipped and toppled backward with the great weight, landing like a tortoise upended on his back. San Antonio characters hanging out on the terrace of a bar burst out in laughter at the upside down turtle lying in a puddle of water, his feet in the air. The next day, I shipped the books home.**

**Hitchhiking to Nuevo Loredo, I got a look inside the bro culture of American fraternities, when I was picked up by a carload of young men who were heading to the houses of prostitution on the Mexican border, some with walled enclosures like a prison with armed men on the catwalks, saloons crowded with Americans bragging about their sexual exploits. A young girl who looked about fourteen, probably thinking that I was close to her in age, ran to me and jumped into my lap. I later learned that wealthy men purchased young girls from poverty stricken villages and kept them as concubines in Mexico City apartments, a practice that astounded me. The fraternity brothers stopped at several cat houses, exhibiting the conventional demeanor of American young men before dropping me off in Nuevo Laredo.**




**Railroad train station of San Lazaro – Author, Museum of Photograph of the Mexico City, Government of Mexico, Wikimedia**

**On the following day, I boarded an ancient train with seats of wooden slats, carrying peasants with chickens or a small pig as the train chugged along at thirty mph through the high sierras, stopping every few miles in small villages with dozens of churches and abject poverty. I slept fitfully over the three long days, afraid to eat or drink because of the certainty of catching dysentery, only trusting bottled cerveza and nothing more, which left me in a tipsy state during the entire journey. With nothing to eat, the long journey across the high plateau of the Sierra Madre Occidental was a phantasmagoric experience, a kaleidoscope of canyons and mountains, the ancient train carriages swaying and bumping, as slow as a city street car, stopping every few miles, often where there was not even a village, three interminable days where I didn't see one white person, only Indians and burros, often stopping for an hour in small towns with dozens of eroding churches while I fell asleep now and then, and upon wakening, found an entirely new set of voyagers, many with crutches and missing teeth, sores and boils, amputations and missing eyes, showing the lack of health care on the high plateau, until at last the train reached the great metropolis of Ciudad de Mexico, a city teaming with millions of people, astonishing a naïve young man from a sleepy conventional American city. When the train finally pulled into the station, I spotted a blind man pulling my suitcase off the rack while a lookout was stationed between me and the suitcase twenty feet away. I slowly approached as if unconcerned, but close enough to grab them for they were jammed up in the exiting crowd. Seeing that I was on to them, the blind man let go of my little suitcase and I regained my meager belongings. Riding the peasant trains in any country of the world informs one what life is like for the vast majority of the world's citizens.**



**Bibliotheca of the National Autonomous University of Mexico – Author, Gonnrz, Wikimedia. Ciudad Universitaria is the main campus of the National University of Mexico built during the 1950s in Coyoacán, El Pedregal on an ancient lava layer 25 feet thick deposited by the Xitle Volcano around CE 100. At the time of its construction, the building of Ciudad Universitaria was the largest single project in Mexico since the Aztec civilization, designated in 2007 as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Adjacent to the campus is the 84,000 seat Estadio Olimpico Universitario, site of the 1968 Mexico Olympics and the 1986 FIFA World Cup. Wrapping around the façade of the library, Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros designed the largest mural in the world inspired by Conquistador and Aztec motifs.**

**After taking peasant trains through Mexico, I rode in ancient buses on back roads through jungles of Guatemala and El Salvador where I ran out of money in the poverty stricken city of San Salvador where I was not well received by those who hated U.S. intervention in their affairs. Although my frugal parents who grew up in the Great Depression refused to sponsor my traveling, dad finally rescued me with a little money via the Western Union. Instead of continuing to Ecuador, I had become so enamored of the metropolis of Mexico City and was so far behind schedule that I decided to abandon the National Science Foundation excavation of Inca sites and return to the great capital of Mexico. Finding a hotel near Paseo de la Reforma and Avenida de los Insurgentes, each morning, I took the bus to the vast campus of the National Autonomous University of Mexico where I struck up a close friendship with Guillermo Alguin and Lynn Kernwein. While I had been a wall flower with only a couple of friends at the University of Tulsa, my life was transformed by meeting Mexican students and bohemians from New York City and Europe. Andre, a slender Frenchman sporting a beard and beret, took me to his apartment in the nearby ancient colonia of San Ángel in Coyoacán where I fell in love with hundreds of years old crooked streets and Spanish architecture, and the home of artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, the cobalt-blue *La Casa Azul* in Colonia del Carmen. The ambiance of San Ángel stole my heart and later, heightened by living in medieval hilltop villages in France and Italy, kindled a romance that would one day inspire the creation of Villa dei Fiori.**




**Mexican painter Frida Kahol at eighteen-years-old, 1926 – Author, Freda's father, Carl Wilhelm Kahlo Kauffmann, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Villa Coyoacán and colonia San Ángel are one of the oldest colonias of Mexico City, built during the colonial period with stone mansions on winding cobblestone streets and small plazas. As a young man when I was there in 1960 and 1961, I became enamored with its European bohemian ambiance. Today, it is overrun with tourists and restaurants, just as my beloved Venice, Italy has been degraded by masses of tourists brought by the immense cruise ships that are destroying the foundations of the island city.**



**Frida Kahlo's *La Casa Azul*, Colonia del Carmen, Coyoacán – Author, Rod Waddington, Australia Wikimedia**



**Cuadra San Cristóbal, an equestrian estate in Atizapán de Zaragoza Mexico, designed by Luis Barragán – Author, Šarūnas Burdulis, Wikimedia. Luis Barragán, an architect who has influenced my use of light, shade, and color, began a project in the mid-1940s to develop the lava fields of El Pedregal de San Ángel to establish harmony between architecture and landscape. Formed by the eruption of the Xitle volcano during the period of 245-315 CE, the El Pedregal lava flow destroyed one of the most refined cities of Mesoamerica. Although Barragán's work is minimalist, he uses color and shadow to achieve what he calls "emotional architecture." By using materials like stone and wood combined with a dramatic use of light, Barragán achieves a lyrical ambiance: "Any work of architecture which does not express serenity is a mistake."**

**When I first arrived in Mexico City, I was overwhelmed with the immensity of a city with six million inhabitants in 1961. I was astounded by the density of people on the streets, sleeping in the parks, and jammed into buses with kids on bicycles holding onto the bus to accelerate their ride. I was aggrieved to see hundreds of beggars on the street, some crippled, malformed, or holding a small child, ignored by most natives, but hard for me to pass without leaving a few centavos, unaccustomed to a heartbreaking destitution rarely seen in the states. One day while standing with a crowd waiting to cross the street, a man fell over dead onto the pavement beside me. I made friends with two boys whose parents had a palatial home in the middle of a rundown neighborhood who took me see a film, which I vaguely remember was *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor, screened in a cavernous old theatre, with kids running around, running toy cars down the aisles, a bedlam of noise obscuring the sound track, but understandable to an audience unfamiliar with English, reading the subtitles in Spanish. At the national university I saw *Les Sorcières de Salem*, a 1957 French film with a screenplay adapted by Jean-Paul Sartre whose existentialist philosophy I was studying in school. A haunting film based on Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible*, the film dramatized the Salem witch trials in the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1692, which was the playwright's allegory on McCarthyism, a time when the House of Representatives' Committee on Un-American Activities persecuted people accused of being communists.**



Acapulco, Mexico – Author, Microstar, Wikimedia

**Two girls who worked in the beauty salon would watch me from across the park, but having little Spanish and being painfully bashful, although I saw them each day at a distance, I was too shy to say hello. While riding the city buses, women stared at me, probably never seeing a gringo riding a bus before, for tourists only traveled in taxis, which is a mistake for riding with the people is the only way to truly experience another culture. American students were often stopped by the police for a contrived offense, but quick to accept a bribe and tear up the ticket, a common occurrence in a country where poverty and extreme wealth had fostered an entrenched corruption. The vibrancy of the great city was so dramatically different than an American city that each day, I was spellbound by the cacophony of sound and movement. Although I had never favored coffee before, I discovered *café con leche* in the neighborhood cafe, espresso with steamed milk and foam, inspiring me to become an avid café latte drinker for life.**

**Guillermo Alguin arranged for us to live for the summer in Acapulco at his friend's open air bar on the beach at Playa Condesa, close to the Hotel El Presidente, known for its giant murals by Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí. At night, I would string a hammock up between the posts of a palapa, an open air structure with a thatched roof made of dried palm fronds, not realizing that I was hanging it at the lowest point where the roof sloped into two directions directly above. One night, a fierce tropical storm hit, and buckets of water poured down the roof, drowning me. When you are nineteen and living on the beach, swimming every day and watching tropical sunsets in the evening, life is delightful. One Saturday night when the beach was deserted and the bar staff was celebrating the end of the day with tequila, Lynn told me she was going to meet Guillermo at the restaurant down the beach. Moments after she departed, I saw the three men departing in the same direction as Lynn. After a moment or two, I had a startling thought, holy Moses, they are following Lynn. I hurried after her in the absolute darkness, and after a short distance, a man leaped from a beach palapa, locking his arms around my neck from behind. Using my wrestling training, I instinctively dipped low, reducing my center of gravity, executing a fireman's carry, using his momentum to flip him over my head to the sand, knocking the wind out of him. If it had been concrete, he would have been dead.**

**I had no idea how I had gotten into it this fix, but I was facing three desperados on a deserted beach. As I had learned from being in a similar strait before, I remained motionless, showing neither fear nor aggression. Finally, he caught his breath and staggered to his feet, beginning a bombastic speech about what he was going to do to me while his compatriots listened to the mayhem that he vividly described but was hesitant to execute. I didn't have much Spanish, but I understood the word, *matar*. He was going to kill me. Due to his misgivings about taking me on, his theatrical declarations went on and on, resounding down the deserted beach. Hearing the assailant's declarations from afar, Guillermo sprinted up and diplomatically salvaged the man's wounded pride and sent the thug on his way.**



**Paseo de la Reforma, near the Zona Rosa – Author, Gobierno de la Ciudad de México, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Guillermo and I were caught in a rainstorm without an umbrella in the Zona Rosa, an area of restaurants, hotels, and art galleries popular with artists, intellectuals, bohemians, and international tourists. While waiting for a taxi under the awning of an art gallery, three girls dressed in black ran under the awning seeking shelter from the rain. When we finally hailed a taxi, we gallantly offered it to the young women. They climbed in but after a discussion of some length, beckoned me to come over, asking if I'd like to share the taxi with them. They were stunningly beautiful. I quickly accepted. When we arrived at Guillermo's girlfriend's hotel, they took the telephone number of my hotel, asking if I would like to meet them tomorrow in the Zona Rosa. On the following day Guillermo, who always wore sweaters, surprised me by showing up in a suit and tie. The girls took us to a coffeehouse where I learned that Paola, Mirella, and Valentina were originally from Venice, Italy, though I later suspected that it might be part of their fantasy imagination. Having little knowledge of Spanish at the time, Guillermo did the talking while I was mesmerized by dark-eyed Paola's delicate bones and ivory skin, her oval face with an Asian-like quality, her dark hair cut short, shaped like the helmet of a Renaissance knight.**

**Wearing a navy blue Army surplus turtleneck sweater and long hair, had led the girls to imagine I was from France. On the following day, Mirella called my hotel, and we set a time to meet. They asked that I not bring Guillermo. I should come alone. Mirella possessed a little English, which allowed some communication as they took me on tour of their favorite coffeehouses. I discovered the exotic El Gatto Rojo and El Acuario, equipped with aquariums of tropical fish and two levels of booths constructed of heavy timbers with openings like a prison cell that one entered by means of a tiny staircase leading to a private chamber. Once installed in our little cell, they left me alone with each one, directing me to kiss each of them in turn. It was an uncommon request, but as their captive guest, it would not have been good manners to refuse. I solemnly obeyed their command, kissing each one in turn, but kissing Paola the longest for I had fallen for her hook, line, and sinker.**



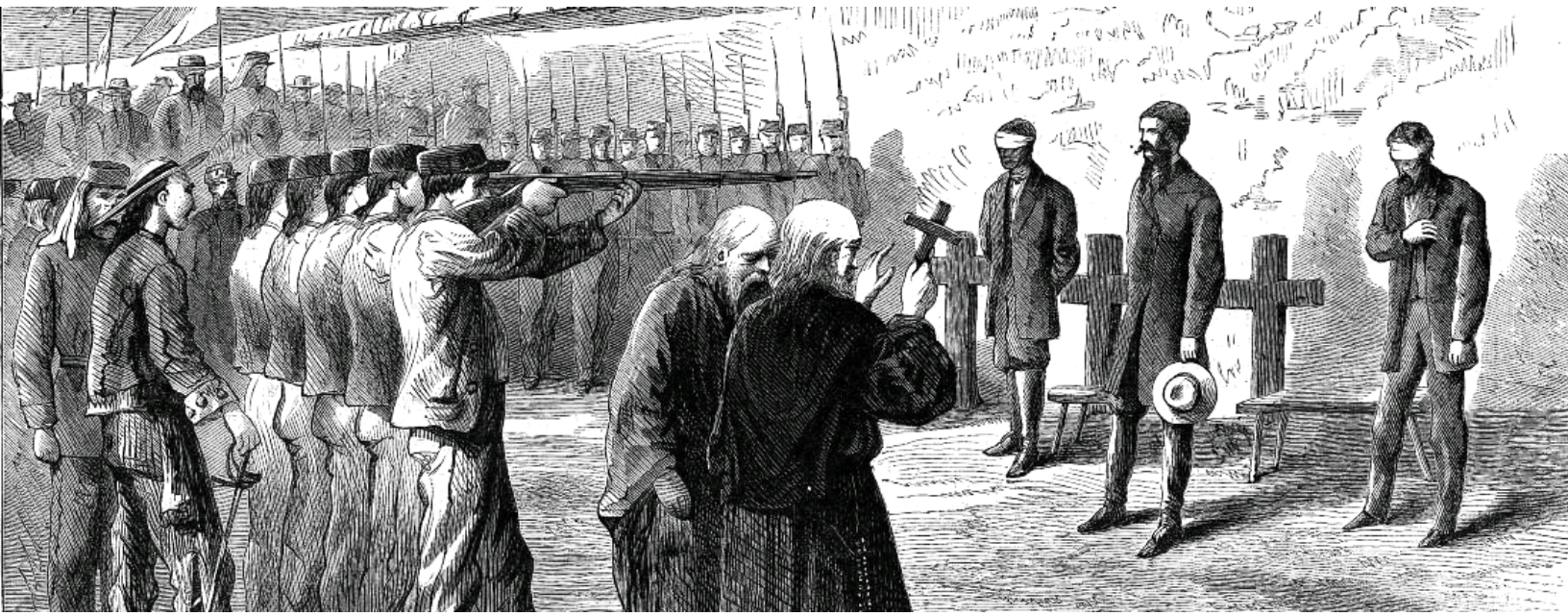
**Landscape painting of one of the lakes of Chapultepec – Author, by José María Velasco Gómez, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Although it was Paola that I treasured, I carefully avoided hurting the feelings of Mirella and Valentina, which proved to be a daunting challenge. During the following weeks, the girls took me with them everywhere, traveling by taxi from one school to another, an aristocratic European education of a past century, education by various masters, inflaming my imagination for I had dreamed of living in an ancient century. Accompanying them each day to art class, language, science, sculpture, fencing, and cello lessons, I realized that they were from extremely wealthy families, and yet possessed unusual freedom in a conservative Catholic country where sixteen-year-old girls are strictly chaperoned. Their wealth explained why Guillermo had dressed in an expensive suit to impress them but failed to interest rich bohemian girls who realized that Guillermo was a suave boulevardier while they were looking for innocence. Entertained by the damsels, Paola, Mirella, and Valentina, I experienced visions from childhood books, living the life of a Renaissance prince in an enchanting dream. The girls took me to a lake surrounded by a forest below Chapultepec Castle where we played blindfold games, gamboling through the woods.**



**Chapultepec Castle, Mexico City – Author, Sisgeo, Wikimedia**

**Once a sacred site and retreat for the Aztec rulers, the Bosque de Chapultepec was the repository of the ashes of the Aztec kings. One of the largest city parks in the world, it comprises 1,700 acres and contains the Rufino Tamayo Museum, Chapultepec Zoo, and the National Museum of Anthropology, one of the most renowned archeological museums in the world that focuses on the pre-Hispanic civilizations, Aztec, Maya, Toltec, and Olmec. After Napoleon III's French army defeated Benito Juarez, the indigenous Mexican president of Zapotec ancestry, the French emperor installed Maximillian I, the younger brother of Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria in Chapultepec Castle in 1864 as the emperor of the Second Mexican Empire. Due to being enmeshed in the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln was not able to enforce the American Monroe Doctrine, but after the end of the Civil War in 1965, increased U.S. aid to Benito Juarez's heroic resistance resulted in the collapse of Maximilian's regime. The French appointed emperor was captured and executed by firing squad two years later.**



**The Execution of Maximilian I, Emperor of Mexico – Author, Harper's Weekly, public domain, Wikimedia**

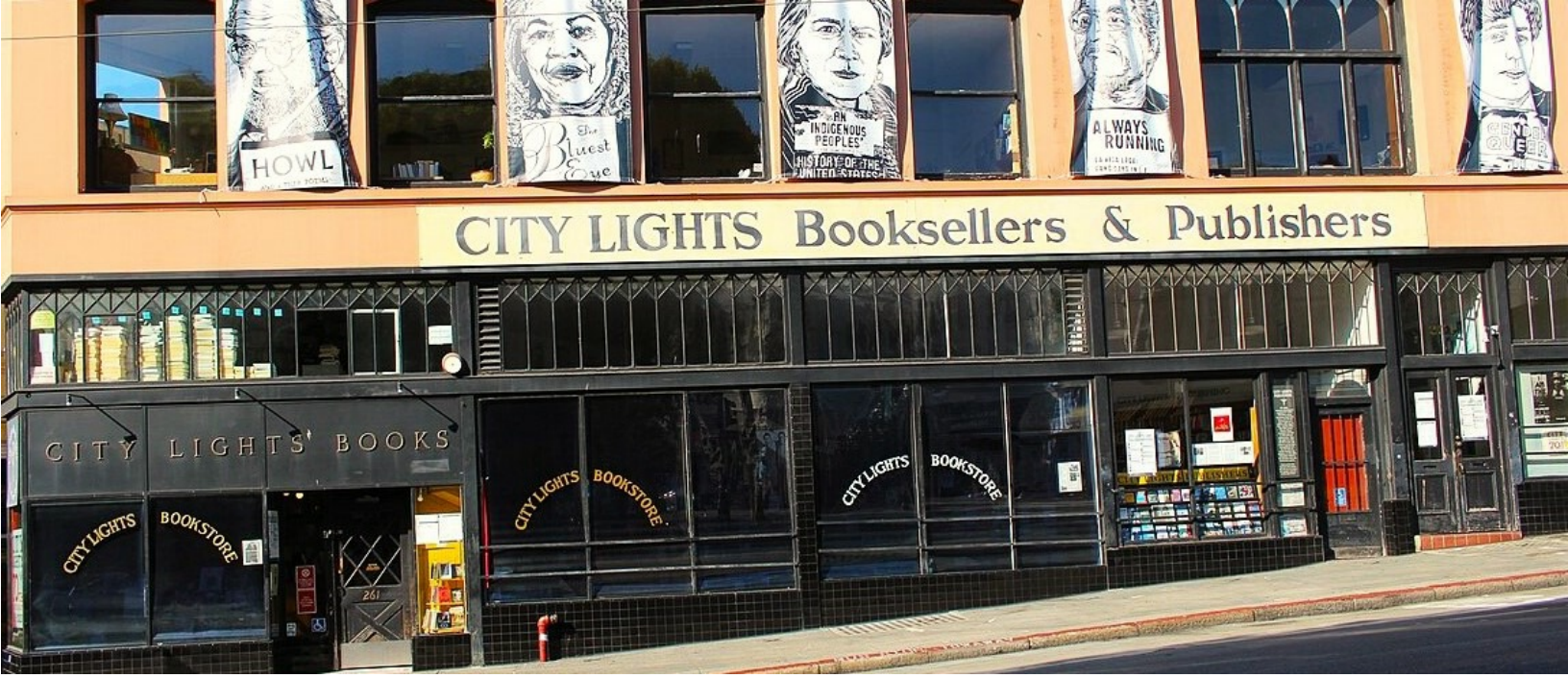


**Romantic afternoon in a garden of Chapultepec, 1780-1790 – Unknown author, Museo Nacional de Historia, Castle of Chapultepec, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Low on funds, I moved from my hotel to Guillermo's parents' house in Azcapotzalco. While Guillermo was in Acapulco, an American searching for Guillermo called and asked me to help find Guillermo. When we set out for Acapulco, he revealed that he was a private eye hired by Lynn's father, an orthopedic surgeon in Chicago, alarmed because he had lost contact with his daughter. When I returned to Mexico City to Guillermo's parent's home, Paola and Mirella had called without leaving a phone number. A few days later, they called to say that I must choose the one I loved. Did I love Mirella or Paola? Without Paola and Mirella before me in flesh and blood, I had no time to reflect. I stumbled. I desperately searched for words, but could not find the words to say what I really wanted to say. Although madly in love with Paola, I treasured sweet Mirella's friendship. I couldn't bear breaking her heart.**

**There are moments in life when one must respond quickly. If the wrong choice is made, cruel consequences arise that cannot be erased. Like an idiot, instead of revealing what was in my heart, I told them that I liked both equally, a falsehood that would haunt me forever. After my failure to speak the truth, I saw them one more time, an evening which sealed my fate. During art class that fateful evening, at intervals Paola and Mirella came into the corridor of the school to spend time with me. Once the teacher discovered their absence, the girls were kicked out of class and their parents notified. The girls left me that night in silence, dismayed at the teacher's notice to their families. That revelation sealed my fate. The following day, they did not call. Each day I stayed at my hotel to receive their call. After days of waiting, they did not call. They had not given their home phone number. If I had called, the parents would have discovered the truth. I was a secret the girls must not reveal. The door was closed. I would never see them again. I could not tell Paola she was the one I loved.**

**After Paola fell off the face of the earth, I sunk into a deep depression. Out of funds, living on *pan dulce* from the bakery, I had no choice but to return to Oklahoma. I traveled by bus for I was too despondent to hitchhike, traveling with a broken heart from town to town across the desert of the Sierra Madre, arriving in Matamoros on the Rio Grande and Gulf of Mexico, a subtropical climate, fiercely hot and humid in August, the bleakest journey of my life. Due to the constant whippings when I was very young, I had suffered from depression since childhood. All through my sophomore year, I could not pull myself out of my depression, sinking into a despair that would not relent. Crushed by remorse and anguish, I told no one. I did not reach out for help, believing that melancholy was the fate of a poet. When a big hole is ripped in your life, it is difficult to be philosophical. The abrupt loss of Paola was a sudden death, inspiring my first short story, "A Funeral in my Brain." I suffered for twelve months, especially in solitude on weekends. After a year of mourning, I hitchhiked to San Francisco to escape despair and begin a new life.**




**City Lights Booksellers on Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, founded in 1953 by poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti – Author, Coolcaesar, Wikimedia**

**I took several years to graduate from college because I spent much of that time traveling around the United States, visiting New York and Chicago, New Orleans. Miami, Key West, and Los Angeles even before the Watts Riot. After suffering the loss of Paola, I thought I could never love another. Tulsa was unbearable after living in Mexico City. But after a semester focusing on philosophy, I regained my excitement for life when I landed in San Francisco's North Beach, one of the wellsprings of the Beat Movement where poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti founded the City Lights Bookstore in 1953 on Columbus Avenue in North Beach. Initially, I stayed in a Chinatown hotel on Green Street, before I moved to Columbus Avenue, around the corner of the Spaghetti Factory and the flamenco club where my future friend Ernesto Hernandez was performing. I was stunned by how a dense urban environment contrasted with sleepy Tulsa, providing my first encounter with gay culture of which I had been totally ignorant in Oklahoma where in that era, gay life lived totally underground. The density of population, the profusion of life on urban streets, the romantic beauty of the fog drifting over ancient houses on Telegraph Hill and the San Francisco Bay seduced me, instantly making the steep foggy hills my beloved adopted city.**

**As an aspiring writer, I was inspired by the spiritual godfather of the Beat movement, San Francisco poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti who founded the City Lights press in 1953 and published the major Beat poets, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and Michael McClure, and in 1956, printed Allen Ginsberg's revolutionary *Howl,* which I would later perform before my drama class at school:**

***I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,***
***dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,***
***angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night . . .***

***Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks! . . .***

***What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skills and ate up their brains and imagination?***
***Visions! Omens! Hallucinations! Miracles! Ecstasies! gone down the American river!***

**The publication of *Howl* led to Ferlinghetti being prosecuted on charges of printing "indecent writings." In a momentous First Amendment decision, the publisher was acquitted and *Howl,* along with Ferlinghetti's collection of poetry, *A Coney Island of the Mind,* became the widest known poems of the 20th century.**




**Columbus Avenue and Broadway – Author, Naotake Murayama, Wikimedia. The Jazz Workshop where I listened to John Coltrane is in the second block on the right side of the street.**

**To save money for school, I got a job working behind the counter of Mike's Bar and Pool Hall owned by Enrico Banducci, impresario of the hungry i nightclub that played a major role in the development of stand-up comedy, fueling the careers of Mort Sahl, Bill Cosby, Godfrey Cambridge, Malcom Boyd, Tom Leherer, Jonathan Winters, Lenny Bruce, Dick Cavett, and Woody Allen. Barbara Streisand begged Banducci for a show, and even though she had never performed professionally, he signed her for concerts in March to April in 1963 that propelled Streisand into nationwide recognition. Located across the street from Banducci's famous drag bar Finocchios, Mike's Bar and Pool Hall, was a wild place. Each night after the nightlife closed, the late night crowd would come into Mike's Pool Hall for coffee and a midnight snack, a turbulent mélange of musicians, nightclub chorines, pool sharks, hookers, hustlers, gamblers, and high society types.**

**The atmosphere at night was so volatile that we had a bouncer, a massive former professional wrestler who threw people out on the street if they drank too much. Pool sharks would play before an audience placing bets while my flamenco dancer girlfriend Rosa Bioni waited patiently for me until closing time at 2 AM. I remember one night on Green Street watching a battle of two angry drunks combating one another by hurling garbage cans at each other, the metal cans rolling down steep streets, a cacophony of night music, cascading through the empty streets at dawn. One night a woman came into Mike's Pool Hall and invited me to hear John Coltrane at the Jazz Workshop down the street, renowned for the performances of bop and fusion jazz artists – Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, Gerry Mulligan, Stan Getz, Horace Silver, Charles Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie, and John Coltrane, becoming the dominant venue to hear jazz in San Francisco after the famed Blackhawk closed in 1963.**



**Flamenco dancing in North Beach, San Francisco, 1960s.**

**North Beach was a rough scene with loft parties mixed with criminal types. One night a young woman frightened by the heavy vibrations at a party, asked me to walk her home. Walking up Columbus Avenue, a man in a car slowly followed us hurling insults, taunting me for my long hair. On his third pass, I became so incensed that I raced into the street, threw open his door and dragged him half out of the car while it was still moving. Terrified, he hit the gas and roared away. He didn't return. Preparedness and surprise are the best defenses, something I have perfected by honing my wrestling skills, which has miraculously enabled me to escape unscathed over the years. As Mark Twain observed, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog."**

**My girlfriend Rosa Bioni studied flamenco under Ernesto Hernandez, a Gitano dancer at the club below the Old Spaghetti Factory, originally a warehouse for olive oil and cheese constructed in after the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake. Watching Ernesto dance, I became a lifelong aficionado of flamenco with its African rhythms, Andalusian scales, and *siguiriyas*, listening to the voice unique to the Gitano – the *eco gitano*, a harsh and wildly exuberant voice that expresses the anguish lying at the heart of flamenco. After Ernesto's performance, Rosa and I would join the flamenco dancers and musicians on a houseboat in Sausalito for an all-night *juerga*, immersed in improvisational dancing until the dawn began to sweep across the glistening water of San Francisco Bay.**




**Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, 1965 – Author, Peter Pettus, public domain, Library of Congress, Wikimedia**

**In 1964, I became deeply committed to the Civil Rights movement, joining with black activists in the Tulsa Greenwood community and writing for the Tulsa black newspaper *The Oklahoma Eagle*, which I represented during the Selma to Montgomery March. Around the turn of the 20th century, Alabama had passed a constitution that disenfranchised most blacks and many poor whites by requiring a poll tax and the passing of a literacy test, rules that blocked them from voting. Eighty percent of blacks in Dallas County lived below the poverty line, working as farmhands, sharecroppers, maids, janitors, and laborers who could not pay the poll tax or pass subjective literary tests conducted by white poll workers. Of 15,000 blacks who were old enough to vote, only 130 were registered. During the 1950s and 60s, many attempts were made to register blacks, but failed because the White Citizen's Council and the Ku Klux Klan threatened blacks from registering to vote by evicting them from housing, firing them, boycotting black-owned businesses or using physical violence.**

**To change the Jim Crow racist rules that blocked black Americans from voting, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) organized the Selma Marches that would culminate in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The idea for the protests evolved from Reverend C.T. Vivian's peaceful march to the Marion, Alabama courthouse, 18 February 1965 to protest the arrest of SCLC leader James Orange, better known for his sobriquet "Shackdaddy," given to him by Martin Luther King. During the protest, Alabama state troopers attacked the marchers and killed deacon Jimmie Lee Jackson, spurring SCLC leader James Bevel to call for a march from Selma to Montgomery to confront Governor George Wallace with Jimmie Lee Jackson's death and demand the right of African Americans to vote.**

**Governor Wallace called the march a threat to public safety and swore he would take all steps to halt it, saying, "There will be no march between Selma and Montgomery," and ordered the head of the Alabama Highway Patrol to "use whatever measures are necessary to prevent a march." SNCC chairman John Lewis and SCLC leader Reverend Hosea Williams led the first Selma to Montgomery march on March 7, 1965. While crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the marchers were confronted by Alabama Highway Patrol troopers and county posse men who savagely beat the 600 protestors with batons, injuring 60 marchers, fracturing the skull of leader John Lewis, and knocking Amelia Boynton unconscious. Photos of Boynton lying on the Edmund Pettus Bridge appeared in media around the world, an infamous day that came to be known as "Bloody Sunday."**



**Bloody Sunday – Alabama police attack Selma-to-Montgomery marchers, March 1965 – Author, Federal Bureau of Information, public domain, Wikimedia**

**One of the most terrifying moments in Alabama was the night we were transporting two black ministers on Route 80 from Selma to Montgomery to meet Martin Luther King. About halfway there, a truck pulled up behind us, nearly bumper to bumper, trying to force us off the road. It was alarming because only a few days before, James Reeb, a Unitarian Universalist minister and two other ministers were beaten by white men with clubs. Since the black hospital in Selma didn't have the facilities to treat brain damage, two hours passed before Reeb arrived at a Birmingham hospital where he went into a coma and died two days later. The day I arrived in Selma, I had used a bathroom in a service station and was told that it was foolish thing to do for Reverend Reed had been killed close by. Since I was sitting in the back seat of the station wagon, I was expecting a bullet in the head. The truck finally turned off and we made it to Montgomery. We had been targeted because a white woman from Argentina, Risa Gilbert, was in the car with two black ministers, a racial juxtaposition that a few days later would cause the death of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo.**

**When Mrs. Liuzzo arrived in Selma, she was put to work registering and shuttling volunteers and marchers to airports and train stations in her 1963 Oldsmobile. The evening of the third Selma to Montgomery march, she was aided in her transportation job by 19-year-old black, Leroy Moton. On Route 80, a car tried to force them off the road just as we had been earlier. On the return trip to Montgomery, while Liuzzo was stopped at a red light, a car with four white men pulled up next to her. Seeing the look on their faces, Liuzzo took off to outrun them, but the assassins overtook the Oldsmobile and shot her twice in the head. Moton was not hit, but covered with Liuzzo's blood, was assumed dead by the killers.**

**One of the men in the car was a FBI informant, Gary Rowe, which led to the arrest to the Ku Klux Klan members, and Rowe testified at their trial that Collie Wilkins had fired the shots on the order of Eugene Thomas, The Department of Justice charged the three defendants with conspiracy to intimidate African Americans under the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1971. The KKK members were found guilty by an all-white jury, and sentenced to ten years, an unusual outcome for Alabama in that era.**



**Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, the beginning point for the Selma to Montgomery Civil Rights March – Author, Altairisfar, public domain, Wikimedia**

**After the beatings on Edmund Pettus Bridge, the NAACP executive board passed a resolution, "If Federal troops are not made available to protect the rights of Negroes, then the American people are faced with terrible alternatives. Like the citizens of Nazi-occupied France, Negroes must either submit to the heels of their oppressors or they must organize underground to protect themselves from the oppression of Governor Wallace and his storm troopers." The second march was set for two days later, but after a federal court issued a temporary injunction against additional marches, King led 2,500 marchers onto the Edmund Pettus Bridge, held a prayer and turned the marchers around to obey the injunction, which was issued on the same day that three men beat Universal Universalist minister James Reeb to death in Selma.**

**Since Alabama Governor George Wallace refused troops to protect the protesters, the third march on March 21 was escorted by the Alabama National Guard that President Lyndon Johnson federalized and placed under control of the FBI and federal marshals. Averaging 10 miles a day on U.S. Route 80, the voting rights protestors reached Montgomery on March 24, and on an improvised stage, a rally was held with singers Harry Belafonte, Tony Bennett, Peter, Paul, and Mary, Sammy Davis Jr., Joan Baez, Nina Simone, and the Chad Mitchell Trio. The following day, 25,000 people marched from St. Jude to the State Capitol Building where King delivered his speech, "The end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. . . I know you are asking today. How long will it take? I come to say to you this afternoon however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long."**

**On March 15, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson presented a bill to Congress and the Voting Rights Act was passed and signed by Johnson on August 6, 1965. Johnson's speech before Congress was televised nationally with the president saying, "Even if we pass this bill, the battle will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and state of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessing of American life. Their cause must be our cause, too, because it is not just Negroes but really it is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice."**



**Unitarian Universalist minister James Reeb marching with Dr. Ralph Abernathy, Juanita Abernathy, and children, Reverend Martin Luther King and Mrs. Coretta Scott King, leading the Selma to Montgomery March 1965 – Author, Abernathy Family, public**

**The lesser known part of the story, Wikimedia reports, was that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, intent upon obscuring that an FBI informant was with the killers, began a smear campaign against Mrs. Liuzzo, leaking false information to the press that there were "puncture marks in her arm indicating recent use of a hypodermic needle; she was sitting very close to that Negro in the car; that it has the appearance of a necking party." FBI Director Hoover's smear campaign was not revealed to the public until 1978 when Mrs. Liuzzo's children obtained documents from the FBI under the Freedom of Information Act, the records showing that Gary Rowe had previously participated in violent Ku Klux Klan acts on the Freedom Riders in 1961 and was associated with the KKK bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Actor Tara Ochs played Mrs. Viola Liuzzo in the 2014 film *Selma* by Ava DuVernay, nominated for Best Motion Picture at the 87th Academy Awards.**

**From 1964 to 1965, I wrote a weekly column in the *Tulsa Collegian,* using my nom de plume, Gavin, a sobriquet given to me by Guillermo in Acapulco. I reviewed literature, theatre, and film reviews: Peter O'Tool and *Lawrence of Arabia*, William Golding's and director Peter Brook's *Lord of the Flies*, director Peter Glenville's *Term of Trial* with Laurence Olivier, Simone Signoret and Terrence Stamp. Director Tony Richardson's *Tom Jones* with Albert Finney, literary review of Saul Bellow's novel *Herzog,* and political, historical, and cultural analysis: "One Night in Hemmingway's Key West, Sex, Narcissism, and Love, The Suburban Culture and its Political Decline, From Fatuity to Meaningfulness: A Radical Hope, Proposal for A Student-Faculty Conference, A Re-examination of Student Life, The Mausoleum of the Mind, The Currents of Revolutionary History, The Statecraft of Ho Chi Minh and the Chinese Shadow over North Vietnam, The Nobel Ideal: The Idealism and Relativism of the Nobel Prize, Thunder in the Ghetto, Why Militancy in the South? The Indomitable Spirit of Hope in Alabama, Discourse with a Muslim, The Wisdom and Art of Jazzman Yusef Lateef."**

# Why Militancy in the South?

## The Indomitable Spirit of Hope in Alabama.

### By Dale Pelton

**"We haven't seen any help at all from the Civil Rights Bill," said Bill Moss, Negro leader in Selma, Alabama. "We file suit after suit, but Judge Cox resists our every attempt with pseudo-legal manipulations. The only relief we have is to get out into the streets. It's horrible we must do it this way, but we have no other choice." One truly feels this horror when one confronts the police of this and other Alabama cities, the hard eyed state troopers and white jeers that surround the demonstrations that demand the right to vote.**

**Lowndes County, Alabama has over five thousand Negroes of voting age while there are around three thousand whites. Over two thousand whites are registered to vote, but at the beginning of this year, there was not one Negro registered in this county of Alabama, which scorns to fly the United States flag, flying instead the Alabama flag with its crimson X upon a white field flying along with a Confederate flag – two symbols of the suppression of Negro citizen rights.**

**Upon being elected, President John F. Kennedy stated that the voting power of the Negroes, particularly in the South, would provide the power for Negro freedom. U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy stated the case even more precisely. ". . . we are quite determined about the elimination of literacy tests and poll taxes as prerequisites for voting. We have already moved through the courts to strike down literacy tests in Louisiana and we are now preparing a case that will raise the same question in Mississippi. Our position is known, and we plan to go all out on Capitol Hill for legislation in this area."**

**Selma, Alabama is a town of 30,000 where a politician must be a member of the White Citizens Council to survive. The Council controls the policy of stifling any Negro voice in the government, while the Ku Klux Klan operates outside the law, working underground to obliterate at any cost the will of the Negro to resist. Terror tactics of assassination are challenged by the indomitable spirit of Negroes who will march all day in the rain every day for a thousand days until they have the right to choose those who govern their lives. There are moderates in Selma, but they lack the courage to speak out. Sheriff Clark has repressive leadership in his grasp and those who know the corruption of his power do not have the will to oppose an administration that overtly sanctions the threat of violence. While both Montgomery and Birmingham have a biracial committee, Selma has vowed not to have one. No progress is tolerated while the back streets of the Negro neighborhood remain muddy, and the houses blackened with neglect. White landlords allow housing to rot without care and Negro house servants work for as much as 60 hours a week for $20 to $25 (30 to 40 cents an hour.) Rural conditions are worse. In the face of such squalor, the Selma Negro is marching in the streets and boycotts the local stores. There will be no new clothes for Easter. An austerity program is in effect while plans are being drawn to form a supermarket cooperative so that Negroes will be more economically independent from the intolerant community. Down at Brown's chapel the demonstrators congregate, sing freedom chants, listen to rousing speeches, and take care of the hundreds of Civil Rights Workers who have come to aid the voter registration drive.**

**When our group entered the office next door to Brown's Chapel, we found chaos, milling people, harried workers, and giggling children. But overall, there is the press of urgency, a solemn dedication and sense of community. It is quite a shock coming from a world of impersonality into a world of genuine brotherhood – spontaneous warmth and spirit. Strangers make friends immediately and no one hesitates to help a newcomer find their directions. There is an undercurrent of tension as no one can forget Reverend Reed who was brutally slain a few blocks away a week ago. At the orientation program one is taught how to crouch under the blow of a club, that one is not to leave the Negro community to wander the hostile town – "Your life isn't worth a nickel down there." These people live with danger but remain certain in their duty. From house to house, man to man, total contact throughout the county will be made with the Negro**

**voters. It is a laborious process, but dozens of ministers and priests feel a fierce determination that is the most Christian expression of this century. And the atheistic, agnostic freethinker youths down from the East Cast schools begin to think that God is not dead as they had thought, but God lives wherever God's spirit is recreated. And yet, they remain doubtful about Christian righteousness as they join the protests of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, marching silently on the capitol in Montgomery holding signs demanding the right to vote. Yet, Governor Wallace denies citizens the right to call for a redress of grievances, and in the words of James Foreman, executive director of SNCC, "denies us the rights for which this country was founded."**

**In Montgomery, southern whites march upon the capitol under the banner of "Citizens for Better Government of Alabama," shouting obscenities, carrying signs: *Who Needs Niggers, Beatniks Backed by Communists. Do we Want a Nigger for President? National States Rights Party, Run King Out of Alabama, Get Out of Our City Agitators, Nigger Lovers go Back to Your Leader Johnson, Keep American White.* Anti-segregationists harangue the crowd while a southern minister gives a benediction in the name of white supremacy. As the supremacists march away, the police order the SNCC demonstrators to disperse – they have no right to protest in silence. When the protestors refuse to disperse, they are arrested as a white bystander yells," Look at them, the lowest scum that ever lived."**

**That night, crowds throng the street before Beulah Baptist Church. Fires are set in the street where piles of wastepaper have accumulated. People sing freedom songs, and thirty police appear to clear the street. Negro leaders resist and accuse the police of brutality. (The previous day they had charged into demonstrators and beat them with clubs.) The police move in while the crowd shouts protests and moves forward. Some pick up bricks and the police grow edgy as they are outnumbered ten to one. A riot is developing until a leader of Martin Luther King's organization quiets the crowd against its will and the hated police withdraw. Hundreds of demonstrators form a many ringed circle, lock arms and sing freedom songs while swaying back and forth. The emotional impact is unspeakable. The potential revolt expressed in those voices is insuppressible. Many will die before Alabama learns to accept change.**

**A week later, the march from Selma to Montgomery culminates at the state capital and Wallace withdraws into inanity and circumlocution. He looks out of his window with his binoculars at the thirty thousand assembled in support of Negro voting rights and learns nothing except that the Alabama code, the Southern system of white supremacy is justified and sacrosanct. His delusions of Confederate grandeur include the realm of murder that happens that night on highway 80, the route of the non-violent march. From a speeding car, a bullet strikes down Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, a murder justified by the fulminations of the governor. Viola Liuzzo, who had never faced violence in her life of motherhood, was slain by a system that condones lynching and murder. Later, I remember how I had first seen her when I arrived, sitting composed and efficiently in the center of a chaotic room next to Brown's Chapel as she registers incoming workers with great patience. The vision of her auburn hair and gentle features seem to come to me out of a dream in the center of a maelstrom of human effort. Now, her face grows dim, and I can no longer recall the image. I had known her only for a moment, but her words rang clear as she warned our group, "Don't tell anyone when you're leaving. It is not safe." She was concerned for others but thought little of her own safety. It is shameful that the rest of us Americans value our own personal safety while thinking little of others who are fighting for a new world. Viola Liuzzo could act while most of us remain frozen. The rising militancy of the Negro in the South after a century of timeless pain – a century of miasmic quietism and murder will bring a new meaning to the deaths of Rev. Reed and Viola Liuzzo. Their deaths will not be futile but will become symbols of a rising hope that we will overcome even hatred and death.**

**The *Tulsa Collegian* published my report on April 1, 1965. Editor's note: while Black is now the preferable term for African Americans, a 1969 Gallup poll for *Newsweek* magazine said that the term "Negroes' was still the preferred term by most African Americans at that time.**



**Yusef Lateef, 2007 – Author, Tom Beetz, Wikimedia**

## Discourse With a Muslim

### The Wisdom and Art of Jazzman Yusef Lateef

**by Dale Pelton**

**"My name is a Muslim name," replied Yusef Lateef. "I became a Muslim when I was 29 because I felt it to be true." And as true as Yusef's religious faith, is the truth of his music – a mix of lyrical and atonal jazz, a melodic blending of West and East.**

**Yusef, who appeared last week in Tulsa at the Rose Room, brings to contemporary jazz his unending search for new expression that has led him from gliding melodic passages to atonality and raw noises that punctuate and stab unpredictably, yet retain form and meaning. Yusef not only employs with resolute force the tenor saxophone, flute, and oboe, he uses the Indian flute, recorder, and tambourine to bring new dimensions to traditional jazz. The effect is more than exoticism; it creates an intelligent balance between "intellect, emotion, and feeling." While atonality was first employed in a more analytic method of composition, Yusef brings a sensuous approach to atonality. "Music," Yusef relates, "should be evaluated with the senses – there must be no analytical or mental blocks."**

**Yusef creations (such as the one entitled "Hospital Ward") evoke an intensely personal sound that is both Islamic and Western, African and American. The exact sources of influence are less important than his power of personal synthesization – "All music is a source of inspiration."**

**Offstage, Yusef radiates a quiet confidence that seems almost stoical in its control, reflectiveness, self-reliance and naturalness. But while reconciled to himself, he is also deeply interested in how other musicians express themselves. "How do you write," Yusef asks. "I'm trying to say some things. I'm wondering about atonality in writing. Is there such a thing? The next evening, a writer friend, David Hon, brings him poems of Gerald Manley Hopkins who uses "running rhythm: or "sprung rhythm," which illustrates that irregularity is also basic to the English language. Hopkins' contrast between a strong primary movement and a variation movement, both heard at the same time, is known as counterpoint.**

**Yusef reads the lines of Hopkins:**

***Through the velvety wind V-winged***
***(When shaked shadow is sun-eyed-ringed)***
***To the rest's nook I balance and buoy***
***With a sweet joy of a sweet joy.***
***Sweet, of a sweet, of a sweet joy***
***Of a sweet – a sweet – sweet joy.***

**Yusef reads another passage:**

***Or a jaunting, vaunting, vaulting, assaulting***
***trumpet letting.***

**"Yes, I see what he's doing," muses Yusef. "Perhaps I can write this way." Yusef creative instinct flows from music to literature where sound and meaning and man's desire to discover something new takes root.**

**At the second night's performance, Yusef brought a copy of Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad Khalifatul Masih II's "Why I believe in Islam." During breaks, Yusef discussed Goethe's justification of history as inspiration and our discussion of history led to the concept of the "Pluralistic Society" and our efforts to create human harmony and inspiration through diversity of thought and action. I said how unfortunate it was that many American university students paid little heed to international students, trapped in their norms that made them fear the strange. They suppress their inquisitiveness that throughout time, has been the source of creation and joy. Despite Civil Rights, the United Nations, and cultural interchange between countries, we still live in a semi-closed society made up of obstructed people – closed to the new, the innovative, and the foreign. But, in opposition, there are many who are seekers and insatiable learners.**

**Yusef believes that the key lies in the degree to which one person cares for another. "I often notice how people care so little about one another." He paused reflectively, "We know so little about love here in America." But his pessimism was only skin deep, for beneath his doubt lay the core of his Muslim faith. Yusef considers himself part of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam that began in Pakistan and has spread into the West with which it shares many contemporary ideals such as maintaining co-existence and aid to under-developed countries.**

**Masif II writes:**

***Islam teaches that no nation should transgress against another nation, nor should one state transgress against another, but that nations and states should cooperate with each other for the purpose of advancing the interests of the whole of humanity. It forbids some nations and states and individuals from uniting with each other in order to conspire against other nations or states or individuals. On the other hand, it teaches that nations and states and individuals should covenant with each other to restrain each other from aggression and co-operate with one other in advancing those that are backward.***

**For Yusef, Ahmadiyya Islam has been a source of "peace and comfort," which is apparent in the serene confidence of his dynamic art. Conflict of great magnitude, while producing the impulse of art, has often retarded its coherent expression. In overcoming the discord, Yusef has realized the truth that links faith and creation.**

**The *Tulsa Collegian* published my conversation with Yusef Lateef 4 November 1964.**



**Yusef Lateef at the Detroit Jazz Festival – Author, Charles Andersen, Wikimedia**

**I met Yusef Lateef in 1964 at the Rose Room, a jazz club on the north side of Tulsa, Oklahoma and returned the following night to interview him for my weekly column for the *Tulsa Collegian*, a discussion of his belief in Amadiyya Islam. Yusef Lateef played tenor sax, flute, oboe, and basoon, but in the 1950s began experimenting with non-western instruments like the bamboo flute, shanai, shfar xun, arghul, and koto, which would eventually influence many jazz artists. In an *DownBeat* magazine interview, Lateef said, "My attempts to experiment with new instruments grew out of the monotony of hearing the same old sounds played by the same old horns. . . When I looked into those other cultures, I found that good instruments existed there." When his album *Yusef Lateef's Little Symphony,* upon which he played all the instruments by overdubbing, won the Grammy Award for Best New Age Recording in 1988, he said he was grateful, but didn't know what New Age music was. During the 1960's, he worked with Charles Mingus, Cannonball Adderley, and the Nigerian percussionst Babatunde Olatunji, before forming his own quartet in 1964. After earning a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1975, he spent four years studying and teaching in Nigeria, during which time, African influences became more prominent in his music. Deeply spiritual, Lateef converted to Amadiyya Islam in 1949, twice making the pilgrimage to Mecca, later influencing tenor saxaphonist's John Coltrane's spiritual awakening in 1957, which helped Trane overcome heroin addiction. Lateef wrote two novellas, *A Night in the Garden of Love,* and *Another Avenue*, and his autobiorgraphy, *The Gentle Giant*, coauthored with Herb Boyd. Many years later, through my friend saxophonist Ralph Jones, I met Yusef backstage at a Los Angeles concert and gave him the article, *Discourse with a Muslem*, *The Wisdom and Art of Jazzman Yusef Lateef,* replying in a letter that I cherish. Honored in 2010 by the National Endowment for the Arts. Yusef Lateef was not only a influential jazz artist, he was a spiritual force and a great man.**



**Five-Way Portrait of Marcel Duchamp – Author, Broadway Photo Shop, New York City, 21 June 1917 – Source, National Portrait Gallery public domain, Wikimedia**

**On my first stay in Los Angeles, a writer friend invited me to the opening of Marcel Duchamp's retrospective at the Pasadena Art Museum. My college roommates, artists Jack Spillman and Johnny Arthur, had inspired me to study modern art. Consequently, I was excited to meet Duchamp, a sculptor, painter, writer, chess player, and originator of conceptual art. Along with Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, Marcel Duchamp is recognized as one of the three most important revolutionary figures of 20th century art. Duchamp first burst upon the American art scene by exhibiting *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* at the 1913 Armory Show in New York City, which scandalized art critics and the public. Beyond the visual aspect, Duchamp wanted art to stimulate the mind. During the first evening of the exhibition, Duchamp, an austere and unpretentious character, was playing chess with several adversaries simultaneously. Knowing that I was a beginning writer, my friend arranged for me to interview Duchamp. I regretfully admit that at the age of twenty, exploding with ideas, I did most of the talking, but Marcel honored me by pulling out a beautiful sheet of paper and with a charcoal pencil presented me with his autograph, dated 1961.**

**As it had been since the mid-nineteenth century, in the 1960s telegrams provided fast communication. On my first stay in Los Angeles, I took a job with Western Union, riding my bicycle in Beverly Hills delivering telegrams to the stars. The only person to ever give me a tip was Ray Bolger, the scarecrow in the *Wizard of Oz.* Bicycling com down Wilshire Blvd, I dodged around social satirist Mort Sahl, who oddly enough was emerging from the exclusive Neiman Marcus department store. As a connoisseur of architecture, I was shocked when I arrived at Jimmy Durante's house to see a square box of white stucco impregnated with sparkles, a kitsch architectural style popular at that moment.**



**Jimmy Durante in TV show, *The Hollywood Palace* – Author, ABC-TV, public domain, Wikmedia**

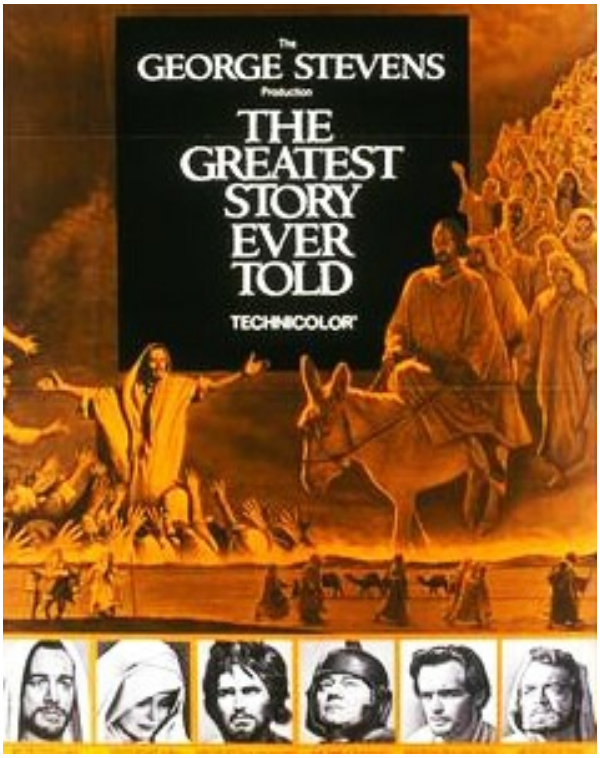


**Ray Bolger as the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*, 1939 – Author, CBS-TV, public domain, Wikimedia**

**When Jimmy came out of his sparkling house to greet me, being an unsubtle young man, I asked him how he could choose a style like that." Instead of punching me out, he laughed in that inimitable voice that made the vaudeville star one of the most popular personalities of America from the 1920s through the 1970s. Jimmy's schnozzola was indeed as distinctive as history has recorded, equally remarkable as the nose of Cyrano de Bergerac.**

**My close friend Lynn Kernwein from my Acapulco days was living with Shary Marshall ,a Hollywood actress who I had first met on Playa Condesa in Acapulco who appeared each evening at the restaurant with a following of male admirers. Shary had broken up with her boyfriend, a producer at Capitol Records, the record label of The Beatles. While she was an established actress living in a magnificent Finish-designed house that appeared like a wooden ship perched in the Hollywood Hills, I was a penniless college student. I never realized that she was interested in me until I looked back many years later. Playing the role of the nurse on *Ben Casey* TV show, Shary invited me to the set where Vince Edwards, playing idealistic neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Casey, goofed around between takes, acting the fool. Over the years, I observed that the actors who play villains are usually nice people off camera, while actors who play serious, heroic roles are often jackasses. I was too bashful to entertain anything but a platonic friendship for an actress five years older than me who acted in *Gidget*, The *Beverly Hillbillies, Dr Kildare, 77 Sunset Strip, Perry Mason,* and *Gunsmoke.* Six years later, I would be filming *Death of the Red Planet*, my thesis project at UCLA film school.**

**The following year when I returned to Los Angeles, a friend gave me his job on the Hollywood epic, *The Greatest Story Ever Told,* that was being filmed in a set of Jerusalem starring Max van Sydow as Christ, and Charlton Heston as John the Baptist on the Desilu- Culver studio lot where *Gone with the Wind, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Intermezzo*, and *Citizen Kane* were filmed. As a kid for the first time on a movie set, I was awed by the magnificence of the forty-seven sets constructed to reproduce Jerusalem, along with a huge cast of dozens of established actor, making it the most expensive American film shot up unto that time. Despite the hordes of money spent on director George Stevens' epic, *Time* magazine wrote. "Stevens has outdone himself by producing an austere Christian epic that offers few excitements of any kind. . . though audiences are apt to be intimidated by its pretentious solemnity, which amounts to 3 hours and 41 minutes worth of impeccable boredom."**




**Poster for *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, 1965 –**
**Author, United Artists, fair use, Wikimedia**

**I remember Max van Sydow, the star of many Ingmar Bergam films, in the role of Christ addressing thousands of extras in Jerusalem as the camera dolly pushed through the spectators while makeup artists moved in advance of the camera, placing glycerin tears on the cheeks of the faithful.**

**On the previous weekend, I had been on the beach in Santa Monica where Salvatore Mineo was playing the drums in a spontaneous concert outside of his beach house. Sal had secured his film breakthrough playing in *Rebel Without a Cause,* receiving an Academy Award nomination in 1955 for Best Supporting Actor at the age of 17, which led to him being mobbed by young female fans. When Mineo saw me on the set of T*he Greatest Story Ever Told*, he recognized me from the beach and invited me into his trailer that he was sharing with his costar Jill Haworth on *Exodus* for which Mineo won his second Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor. I remember Van Heflin coming into the trailer skunk drunk and talking our heads off. Aging actors have a difficult profession for you are only good as the box office of your last film. As one grows older, and fickle audiences' tastes change, an actor can find oneself unemployable overnight, which later occurred to Mineo once he could no longer play boyish roles. Mineo said, "One minute it seemed I had more movie offers than I could handle; the next, no one wanted me."**

**Sal invited me to his beach house where he practiced the drums each day, which had contributed to his success in his role of the American drummer and bandleader in the *Gene Krupa Story*. One Sunday, I became uncomfortable when Richard Conte, who played Barrabas, came over. Notable for his performances in *The Godfather* as Don Barzini, and as a mobster in film noir roles in over 100 film roles. Richard, who was fifty-five began playing strip poker with Jill Haworth, who looked about fourteen, which fortunately stopped when they were down to their underwear. Later, I saw Mineo's staging of the play *Fortune and Men's Eye,* at the Coronet Theatre, starring Don Johnson who I was to later work with on *Miami Vice*. By 1976, Mineo's career bounced back in the comedy *P.S. Your Cat is Dead* in a theatrical performance in San Francisco and brought the play to Los Angeles where he was stabbed to death by a mugger in West Hollywood.**

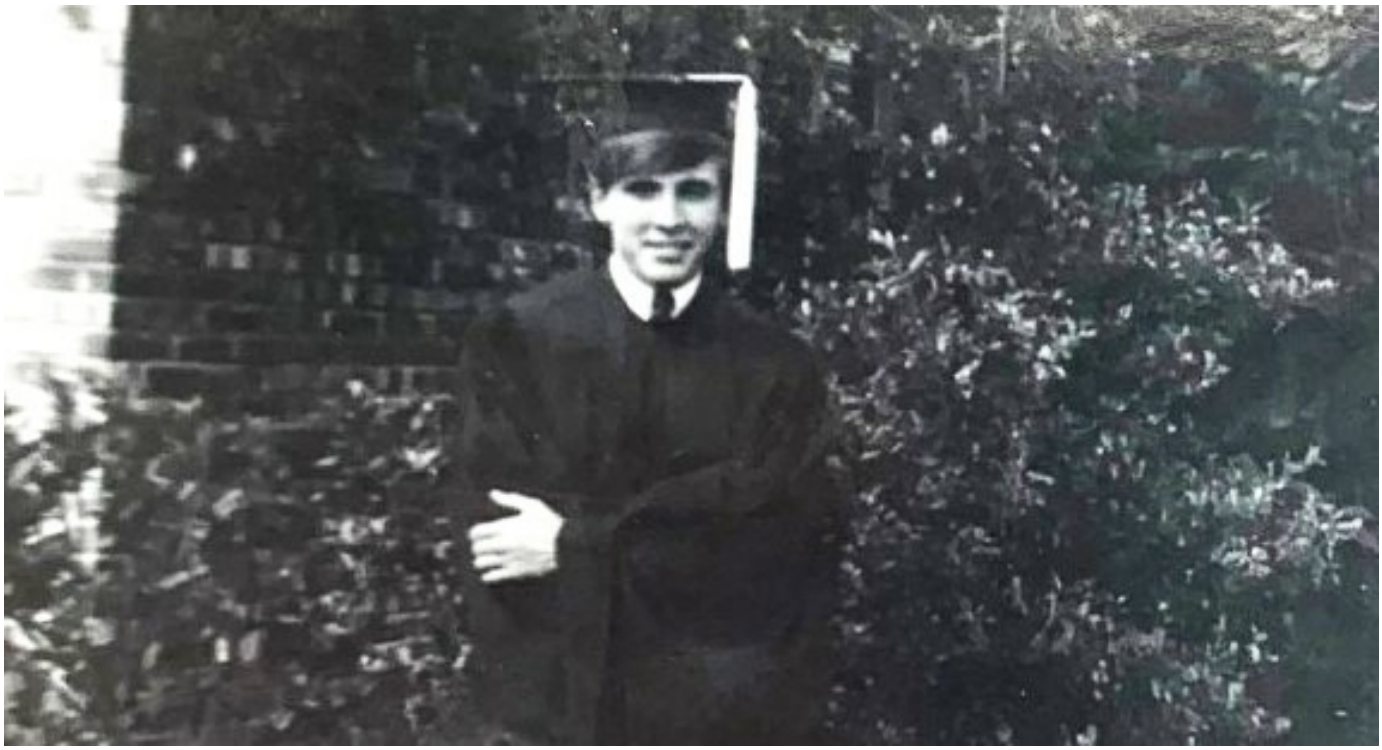
**While living in Los Angeles, I was called up for the military draft. It was before the call for a surge of troops for Vietnam and requirements were lower. Since I was legally blind in my left eye since birth, I failed the physical and was classified by 4-F by Selective Service. Although, I had been in the ROTC at Oklahoma State, I dreaded the army because on camping outings in the Boy Scouts and working with caddies on the Mohawk Park Golf Course, I had felt uncomfortable immersed in male culture without the presence of females, the case at that time because the Pentagon did not allow women to serve in combat roles.**

**Harvey Rushing, the first black student enrolled at the University of Tulsa was headed back to school at the end of August. We decided to hitchhike home together. It was three years before the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1965 and Harvey was black, and I was white. We discovered that nobody would pick us up, neither whites nor blacks. Finally, we decided that I would stand on the roadside to hail a passing car while Harvey hid in the bushes. Whenever a car stopped for me and Harvey stepped out of the shadows, they took off. After hours of waiting, a black man gave us a ride, arriving in Flagstaff under a grueling sun. While we waited for a ride at the bottom of a steep hill, a policeman pulled up and said we couldn't hitchhike in Flagstaff. We'd have to get out of town, which meant climbing the steep hill on crutches because I had cut my foot badly in Los Angeles. It was a hard climb and a long way to the city limits. It informed me what a black man faced in 1962. Once we made it to the edge of town, Harvey told me to get into the bushes and he'd flag down a black ride. In a short time, a thirty-year-old black man headed to Mississippi pulled over to pick Harvey up. When I stepped up, he grinned and hollered, "Come on." It was going to be a lengthy ride, which eased the hardship of the previous days. The problem was that he was headed down to Interstate 10 which ran through Dallas instead of Interstate 40 to Tulsa. Harvey and I began telling stories about how prejudiced the cops are in Mississippi. Since he had friends in Harlem, he could go to New York City where he'd have a swell time. Beguiled by our persuasion, he stayed on 40 to Oklahoma City, took the Interstate turnpike and dropped us off in Tulsa at 51st Street and Harvard.**

**Returning to Los Angeles in the fall, I was approached by a theatre director, who was casting a production of Igor Stravinksy's *L'histoire du Soldat, History of a Soldier*, a joint production of Temple Israel in Utica Square, Tulsa's only Reform synagogue, an architectural gem, and the Unitarian Church on South Peoria. Despite that I had no dance training and due to my shyness, no social dance experience, the director asked me to play the soldier who trades his violin to the Devil in exchange for gold, but in the end, loses his beloved to the Devil who claims his soul.**

**A professional dancer playing the Devil and I worked out the dance sequences, including the final scene where I struggled to resist the Devil's claim over me. I created choreography based on the sinuosity and wildness of movements acquired from wrestling training. It was difficult to be convincing in a romantic role opposite an actress who had been miscast as a romantic lead. However, the role introduced me to dramatic direction - how to command an audience.**

**On my return, since Jack's and Johnny' apartment had been engulfed in a fire, I rented a second story room above Spillman's art studio that I turned into a Zen hideaway, not to dwell in, but to have a place of serenity in which to read. I carried dozens of sacks of creek pebbles up the stairs, mounted a mattress on a raised pallet at one end and covered the balance of the floor with pebbles in tones of golden brown. I lined the windows on the southern and western walls with yellow cellophane, which filled the room with golden light depending on the angle of the sun. I imagined bringing a girlfriend there, but since I didn't have a girlfriend, I brought no one. I was the only one who ever visited that room.**



**Graduation from the University of Tulsa with a BA in philosophy.**



**Mohawk Park in the snow viewed from the terrace of the house that dad built single handedly over twenty years**



***A Season of Visions,*** **45 minutes in length, was shot in West Tulsa with untrained actors, featuring Kelsey Bartholic as the girl and Norman Hawk, a man tormented by his dreams. The score was by folk musician Trosberg and the George Denny Trio.**

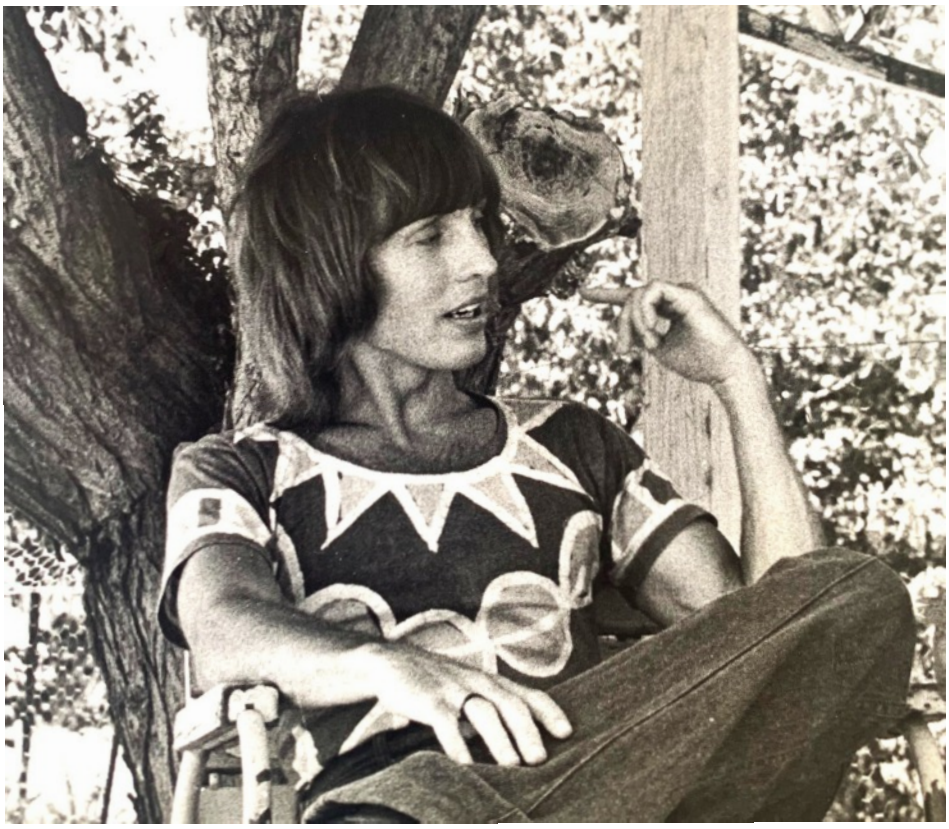
**I worked in engineering for Flint Steel in West Tulsa for a couple of years while making my first film, *A Season of Vision*s, and saving money to attend UCLA Film School. Intrigued by an eccentric man working for Flint Steel who spoke with an accent although born in America and drove an XK120 Jaguar, the same make that I drove before I sold it to pay for college, I was inspired to create a film around a lonely man who longed to escape his somber by fantasizing about a young woman who, due to his unattractiveness and age, would reject him.**

**My second film was made after I moved to California, a film about the canals of Venice Beach, where I lived two blocks from the ocean, a seedy area at the time, with the Black and Mexican communities on one side and the boardwalk on the beach, a playground for hippies and hipsters, drifters and drug dealers, and Muscle Beach where Arnold Schwarzenegger hung out. The canals created by Abbot Kinney in a marshy area of the coast were inspired by the canals of Venice, Italy. The canals were constructed so that they would open at low tide to drain water, and at high tide, would recapture the water from the sea for several days before draining again, a continuous cycle that ensured that the water would not become stagnant. During Venice's glory days in the early 20th Century, there was a boardwalk, gambling casino, and concert hall built over the water, a pier with an ocean aquarium with marine species and a seal, and trolly train tracks constructed from Los Angeles to bring Sarah Bernhardt for a performance at the Opera House.**




**Venice Beach, founded by Abott Kinney, Windward Avenue, 1913 – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia**

**The amusement areas along the Grand Lagoon and beach featured popular attractions, carnival style venues and freak shows bringing hordes of vacationers and fashionable people to Venice Beach, including film directors Von Stroheim and Charlie Chaplin who built cabins on the canals. After a hurricane destroyed the pilings of the opera house and the draining and flooding of the canals with sea water deteriorated, the glamour of Venice's glory days had faded until by the 1950s, it reached low ebb. When I arrived in 1968, living two blocks from the sea on Rose Avenue, Vence was inhabited by artists, but also plagued with high crime and drug use. However, it was the moment when Venice began recovering from its long decline as developers and speculators began purchasing canal properties, which would one day become one of the most expensive real estate communities in Los Angeles. A working axiom for cities: wherever artists move, gentrification and wealth are sure to follow. When I saw developers and homeowners evicting poor folks from the canals, I was inspired to make *Up Against the Wall*, about black people losing their homes during gentrification, a story as applicable in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn as in Venice, California. One of the best scenes was of boys of primary school age who had invented a game on a worn out sofa abandoned in the alley. One team of four boys were trying to flip the couch over backward, while the other team seated on the couch tried to keep it from flipping over, a music by one of the pioneers of Louisiana Creole zydeco, Boozoo Chavez playing the accordion and singing "Paper in my Shoes."**



**While studying film direction at UCLA, I visited my cousin Revena and her sister Gwendolyn who had homesteaded Joshua Tree in the early 1950s. I discovered there was no public water system. She had to drive her truck to Celesta Hollinger's well in the valley and pump water into a tank on the truck, go home and pump it up to a tower where gravity flow would provide water to the bath and kitchen.**



**After the 1973 premiere of my UCLA master thesis film *Death of the Red Planet* at Todd AO Studios, I was invited by film critic Arthur Knight to participate in a symposium at the University of Southern California on the future of technology in film. The film premiere, announced by *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter*, attracted many in the film community to the screening who were fascinated by the first theatrical film to be made with laser light. Projected on a 70 ft. screen with discrete four channel sound in Todd AO's state of the art Studio A, the premiere attracted a diverse audience, including musician Leon Russell and film producer Roger Corman who praised the film.**



**I began writing the screenplay for *East of the Moon* while living in the countryside of Tomales Bay, north of San Francisco.**

**After *Death of the Red Planet* was released in theatres across America, knowing that I wanted to write a screenplay, filmmaker Zoltan Meszaros, an escapee from the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, persuaded me to move to Northern California to live with him and Nani Venegas, a dancer from Chile, on Fallon Road between Highway One and Dillon Beach. I brought my dog Lola to live in the pastoral countryside of farms with grazing Holstein cows and Suffolk sheep where the Estero de San Antonio creek meandered through the rolling hills, their undulating curves crested by towering *Eucalyptus globulus*, willowy forms sculpted by the relentless wind from the sea.**





**One of the most beautiful places I have lived, Tomales Bay divides the Point Reyes peninsula from the mainland of the continental United States by the San Andreas Fault, half of which is below sea level, running 15 miles from Point Reyes to Bodega Bay.**





**Panorama of Drakes Bay from Elephant Seal Outlook trail – Author, Kognos, Wikimedia**

**Tomales Bay separates the Point Reyes Peninsula from the mainland of Marin County. The Point Reyes National Seashore is where during Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the world between 1577 and 1580, he landed in Drakes Bay in 1579, erected a fort and repaired the hull of their ship *Golden Hind*. Drake was renowned for being the second-in-command of the Philip II's English fleet that defeated the Spanish Armada attempted invasion of England. Tomales Bay is noted for its oyster farming and the narrow-gauge North Pacific Coast Railroad constructed in 1874 to carry redwood lumber, agricultural and dairy products from Sonoma and Marin Counties 50 miles to Sausalito, which connected the railroad by means of a ferry to San Francisco.**



**Drakes Bay Historic and Point Reyes National Seashore Archeological District – Author, Shawnobusa, Wikimedia**



**When I first arrived in Fallon, Nani and Zoltan lived in the second story over an abandoned 19th century café. My bedroom room window looked over a hillside where Holstein cows were led by a white horse as the herd grazed over the pasture throughout the day while I listened to the ringing of cowbells and the wind in the eucalyptus trees. Born in Chile, Nani was an accomplished Near Eastern dancer, whose sword dance I loved to watch. As a teenager in Hungary, Zoltan was swept up in the tragic 1956 Hungarian Revolution against the Soviet Occupation, driving around Budapest with a submachine in his lap, a story I tell in *Celine on Fire*, a couple of years after the revolt against the USSR, when Giovanni, a trumpet player in a jazz group tours behind the Iron Curtain. After the Soviet tanks crushed the rebellion, Zoltan and Gabor escaped to American, were awarded a scholarship at Stanford University, and became filmmakers in Hollywood where I met them while filming *Death of the Red Planet* at the California Institute of Technology. Once they lost the lease, Zoltan remodeled Marianna's sharecropper cabin, adding a kitchen with a wood stove. For my birthday, Nani created a gâteau St-Honoré, a pastry named for the French patron saint of pastry chefs, Saint Honoré, a desert made of short crust base with a ring of *pâte à choux* puffs dipped in caramelized sugar, filled with crème *chiboust* and topped with whipped cream, crowning the best birthday of my life. There was nothing that Nani couldn't cook on our wood fired stove.**

**I helped Zoltan gather old window glass stored in Marianna's dairy, opened the walls and installed handmade windows. A young woman of aristocratic lineage, Marianna and her sister served as nurses for the White Army fighting the Bolshevik Army during the 1917 Russian Revolution. Her sister died attending to the wounded soldiers, and Marianna was captured and imprisoned in Berlin where she barely survived. After the war, penniless, she immigrated to American and took a job as an agricultural worker for a dairy farmer between Petaluma and the Pacific Ocean on Fallon Road, a few steps from Highway One. The dairy farmer married Marianna and upon his death, she became the sole owner of a large estate. In exchange for chauffeuring her to town and other chores, Marianna gave me permission to build a small apartment on the lower floor of the old creamery that had been converted into a grand country house. When taking a shower, I would watch birds bathing in my bath water that drained toward the barn. Behind my abode, a calf grazed where I read medieval history borrowed from the Petaluma Library.**



**From my bedroom window, I could see the remaining earthworks of the narrow gauge railroad that was abandoned in the early 1930s. In the years before World War II, Japan depended on American scrap metal to produce alloy steels vital for producing armor plate for their tanks, artillery, aircraft, and ships. After the railroad was abandoned, the tracks were removed and sold to Japan, serving to build the war machine that destroyed our naval fleet at Pearl Harbor. Near the old railroad bed on the other side of the Estero de San Antonio, was an abandoned farmhouse. On a visit to the ancient house, my German Shepherd-Chow, chased after a flock of sheep. Warned that the ranchers would respond by shooting a dog endangering sheep. I raced after Lola, caught her by the collar and gave her a scolding so stringent that she never chased a sheep again. Living in the country, one must learn to observe the rules. One of the most faithful and gentle dogs, half chow chow and German Shepherd with a black tongue, while living on Venice Beach, I woke one morning to find Lola giving birth to seven puppies in my bed, which I named after the seven dwarves.**

**When Nani and Zoltan moved to Palo Alto, I continued living alone in Fallon while researching the 12th century era in which *East of the Moon* was set. At the Renaissance Faire in Sonoma County, I struck up a friendship with young men who had constructed medieval armor and jousted on horseback at the Faire. Excited by the idea of filming a medieval love story set in Cornwall and Ireland on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, we selected a cast of knights and ladies, making costumes, and illustrating my story, which appears in the following chapter. Living without friends left me quite alone, but traveling often to San Francisco to see ballet performances, my love for Lola and a cat who adopted me was an immense solace. Marianna came to tell me that my gray and white cat was dead in the street, hit by an automobile on Fallon Road.**

**Inspired by my college roommate Jack Spillman when he had stayed with me in Venice, California, I kept a journal for several years. I wrote in my journal that day, "For a long time, I sat in the little courtyard outside my abode, grieving her death. At last, I arose to bury her in the row of Eucalyptus trees on the hill. When I picked up her stiff body, I began to cry, remembering that she had never been named. It was Nani's and Zoltan's cat that had been left when they moved to Palo Alto. She had adopted me, and I had grown fond of her. A wind sprang up, ruffling her hair. I looked at her open eyes, as if she would get up at any moment. I had cried the day before over a lost love the previous year, leaving me with unresolved grief. Suddenly, I was overcome with sorrow as intense as if I had lost a child or a lover. I went to the barn to find a pickaxe and dug a grave, digging deeper and deeper, thinking that the exertion would ease my pain over the death of this tender creature. I could not stop crying and let it flow. At last, I stopped digging and prepared to bury her. I stroked her soft fur and laid her gently in her grave. Across the road, I found wildflowers that I lay on her body. She was pregnant with kittens who had died with her. Crying hard, I began sprinkling soft earth over her until she was lost from sight. I went to the top of the hill and dug up a clump of winter grass and yellow wildflowers to plant on her grave. I cleaned the stones, grass, and twigs from around the flower, leaving a smooth mound of soil beneath the flowers. I brought water and poured it over the grave and kneeled, feeling the intensity of life – the bonds of love when one experiences death."**

**When I had finished my work on the screenplay and had to return to Los Angeles to find employment in the film industry, Marianna asked me to leave Lola with her as she had come to rely on her companionship. I couldn't bear leaving her, and yet, knowing that I would not have a home for her at first, I decided that I would grant Marianna's wish and would return for Lola as soon as I could. When it came time to leave, I took Lola on top of the hill where the windmill stood and held her in my arms, explaining to her that I would come back for her. My tears flowed like a river for I had a foreboding that I would never see her again. A few months later, Marianna sent a letter. Lola had been killed by a car on Fallon Road.**



***Tristan and Iseult*, the medieval chivalric romance upon which *East of the Moon* is based – Author Rogelio de Equsquiza, source, public domain, Wikimedia.**

# East of the Moon

## Screenplay by Dale Pelton

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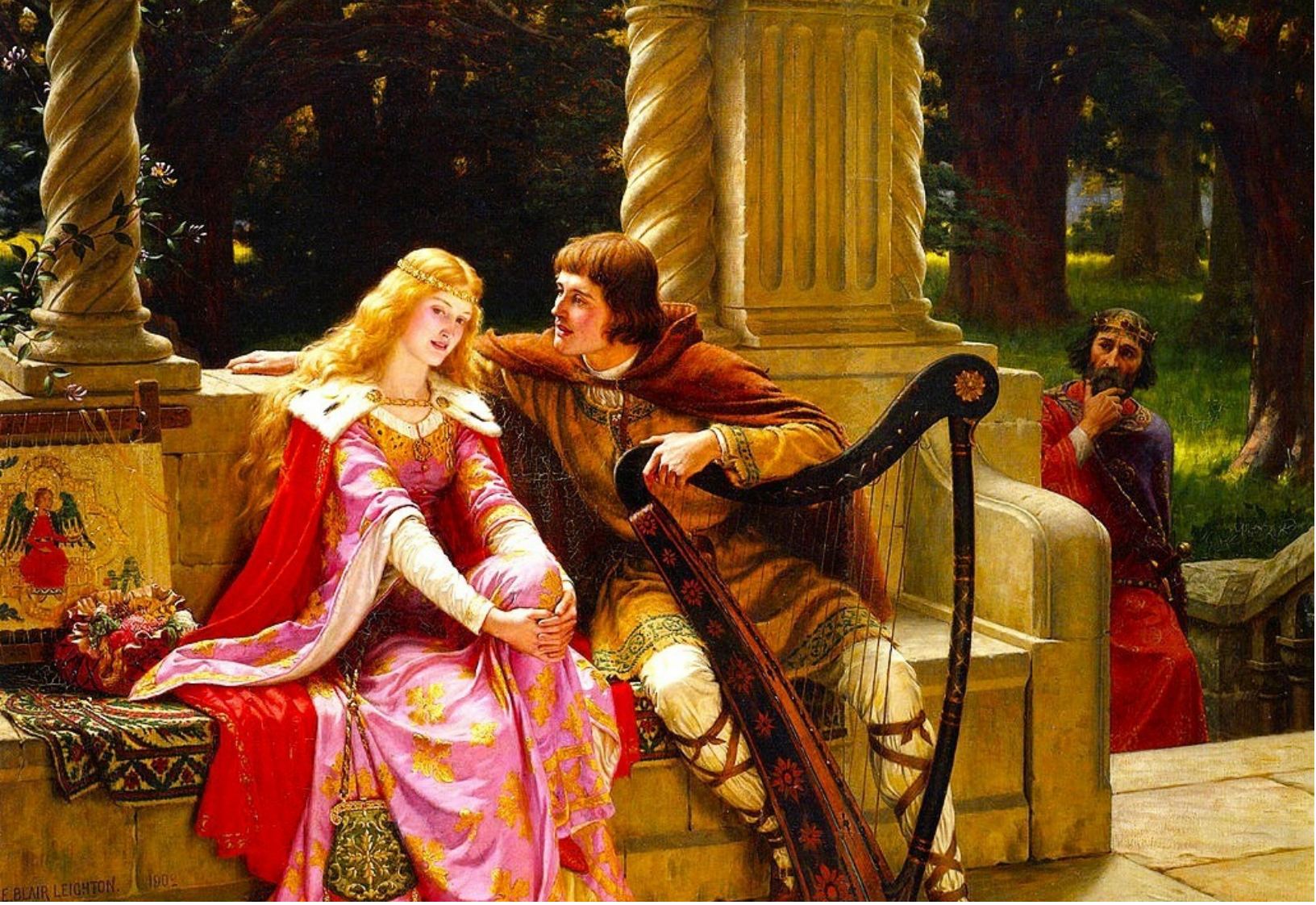


**Lord Morholt, costume design by Geoffry Sharpe**

**At the Petaluma Library, I discovered Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Iseult*, a 12th-century courtly romance originating from Celtic legend that along with Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, is one of the great masterpieces of the German Middle Ages.**

**Synopsis**

**The Irish champion Morholt arrives in Cornwall with an army to seize the children for tribute to the Irish King. To stop Morholt's taking of the children, Quentin, nephew of Gothar, King of Cornwall, meets Morholt in combat on the isle. "My sister wiped my blade with poison. Only she knows the antidote. Give up the children and I'll spare your life." Quentin replies, "There'll be no tribute. Only one of us leaves this isle alive." By his advantages in horsemanship, nimbleness, and speed, Quentin slays the mighty Irishman but is fatally infected by the poison on Morholt's sword. His only hope for survival, is to sail to Ireland. Only the Queen of Ireland possesses an antidote for the poison.**




***End of the Song*, Illustration for *Tristan and Iseult* – Author, Edmund Leighton, oil on canvas, source, Art Renewal Center, public domain, Wikmedia**

**On the coast of Ireland, Princess Gwynore, twenty years of age, daughter of the king and queen of Ireland and her companions Brangaene, nineteen, and Ghislaene, fourteen, and Paranis the page, fourteen, stroll on the cliff above the sea. Hearing a harp on the sea, Gwynore spots a small craft caught in the surging white water, hit by a wave, throwing a man into the sea. Determined to save him, she dashes down the path to the beach, wades into the surf but the undertow drags him back to sea. The three grab Quentin, pull him to shore, unwrap his bandages and discover that he is near death. Brought to the castle, the Queen of Ireland lances the infected wound, prepares a healing potion while Gwynore prays for him in the chapel. Going under the assumed name of Thomas, he convalesces under the queen's care, careful to stay out of sight of the court to avoid being recognized as the slayer of the queen's brother. Thomas teaches Gwynore Breton love songs on his harp, entrancing the young woman who has sworn for his death – the slayer of Morholt. The night before she is to play her song before the court, under the cover of darkness, Thomas steals a boat and pushes off from shore. Gwynore plays her song for the court, expecting Thomas to hear her perform, but he does not come.**



*Reayrt ny Colloo magh ass Creneash* – **Author Eric Bobson, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Irish Sea. Quentin's skiff, its sails full before the wind.**

**Upon his return to Cornwall, King Gothar's and the people whose children Quentin saved from being enslaved in Ireland, were filled with joy. In a not so thoughtful moment, Quentin speaks of Gwynore's beauty to the king, "She's dazzling as the sun." Knowing how much the Irish hate the man who killed Morholt, Lord Andret and his collaborator, the King's Fool Milou, suggest to Gothar to send Quentin to Ireland with a proposal for the king's marriage to Princess Gwynore and thereby end the hostilities between Cornwall and Ireland. Smitten by Quentin's praise of Gwynore, Gothar agrees to send Quentin on the dangerous task.**

**Three ships on the Irish Sea. A delegation of state, Quentin, nobles, and knights and their horses, sail to Ireland.**

**Ireland. On arrival, Quentin encounters the Irish riven with fear. The dragon has awakened after sleeping for twenty years, descended from its grotto and devoured every living being in sight. With his country terrorized by a dragon, in desperation, King Gurmun issues an edict, whosoever kills the dragon will be awarded Princess Gwynore's hand in marriage. Challenged, Quentin mounts his charger and heads for the dragon's grotto.**



**On the way to the dragon's lair, Quentin encounters a Crone who tells him the dragon has poor eyesight. If he holds absolutely still, he becomes invisible. Despite the power of the dragon's claws, whipping tail and toxic fumes, Quentin slays the dragon and cuts off its tongue. A short distance away, he collapses from the dragon's toxins.**

**Gruzac, an Irish knight seeking the prize of Gwynore, finds the dead dragon, cuts off its head and proclaims his conquest. Disbelieving the false knight, the queen goes with Gwynore to investigate and finds the man they knew as Thomas unconscious with the dragon's tongue in his cloak. In court, the queen asks Grizac why there is no tongue in the dragon's mouth. The false knight claims that dragons swallow their tongue when they die. The queen orders in the Cornish delegation with the page Paranis bearing a silver tray. Quentin sweeps the velvet cloth off to reveal the dragon's tongue.**

**King Gurman announces to the Irish court, "The King of Cornwall sues for peace. Quentin has killed the dragon. We will return the children taken in war. Ireland makes peace with Cornwall." Morholt's men recognize Quentin, demand his death. The queen says, "I above all other kinsmen have a right for vengeance. Morholt was my brother. If his death has given anyone rights, then it is to me those rights must fall. For the sake of peace, I renounce my vengeance. Lord Quentin comes as an ambassador for peace. I am granting King Gothar the hand of my daughter in marriage." Gwynore hears the dreadful news. She must marry Gothar. Her marriage was decided without anyone asking her.**

**Before the ship departs for Cornwall carrying the children, barons and knights, the queen boards the second ship bearing her daughter and gives her lady in waiting Brangaene an enchanted potion. "Give this to Gwynore and Gothar on their wedding night. They will share one love until the end of time. Guard it with your life."**

**The ships are becalmed on the Irish Sea with dark storm clouds forming on the horizon, Gwynore and Quentin play a game of chess, her face marked with cold rage at his betrayal. She calls for Ghislaene to fetch some wine. As she ransacks the baggage, a flask falls out of a silk pouch, the love potion given to Brangane by the queen. At the bow, Brangaene turns to see them drink the wine. "Gwynore! Oh God what have you done!" Quentin and Gwynore are outside of time, locked in a trance. The storm strikes, wind raging against the sails, the canvas billowing out. Brangaene grabs the flask and with a terrible cry, hurls the empty flask into the sea. The ferocious wind makes it hard to stand. Gwynore asks Quentin to show her how to steer. Together at the helm, their hands on the ship's wheel, the rain beats down, waves crash on the deck. Quentin calls her name, her arms go around him, her mouth seeking his, kissing him as she has longed to for so long, the potion stirring the fierce attraction of their first meeting, creating a bond that will last unto their death.**

**On the horizon, obscured by rain, runs a ship, its black sail full before the wind.**

**A festival is held to celebrate the marriage of Gwynore and Gothar and to rejoice the signing of peace between Ireland and Cornwall, a weeklong gala, feats of arms, shivering of lances, and many wounded knights, culminating in a banquet in the Great Hall where Quentin and Gwynore argue with the Bishop of Exeter the use of reason versus revelation from God. Bound by a politically dictated marriage, with no way to pursue the desires of her heart, Gwynore must live in a marriage to a man she does not love. Despite mortal danger, Gwynore's passion prevails. She slips out at night to meet Quentin on the island of ancient ruins. Milou, the co-conspirator of Lord Andret, spies on Gwynore, witnesses her midnight embrace of Quentin and scurries to the king. Gazing into his divining mirror, Melot says, "I see all the past and all the future. I see Quentin and Gwynore meeting at night." Gothar asks, "Why should I believe you?" "It is perilous, my lord, to ignore my celestial science."**



**Gothar replies, “Careful, Melot. If I believed Quentin guilty, I would take his life. I can’t kill a man based on what you’ve conjured up in that damn piece of glass.” Milou swings his fool’s scepter, striking Gothar hard on the head. “You’re crazy,” Gothar, roars. Melot howls, “I’m the fool. I’m supposed to be crazy.”**

**The lovers understand the risks, but Gwynore is young and passionate and will not give up her love for Quentin. Using their wits, the lovers thwart Milou each time he plots to reveal them to the king. Finally, Milou proposes a solution to Gothar to prove Quentin’s guilt or innocence, “Banish him from court. If he is innocent, nothing will happen. If he’s guilty, he’ll do something rash.” In a practice dueling session with Quentin, Gothar recalls what Quentin had first said about Gwynore when he first returned from Ireland, “She as dazzling as the sun.” Gothar tells Quentin, “Men have desires of the flesh, but women have desires of the heart. Just as our indulgence is war, their indulgence is romance. You’re a poet and pay the lute. And you sing like an angel. Our marriage was made for political reasons to end hostilities with Ireland. But something has happened that has changed everything. I’ve fallen in love with Gwynore. I love her more than I’ve loved any woman. She is my wife. I intend to keep her. If I thought the rumors were true, I’d kill you.” Quentin lays down his sword and kneels, a gesture of a Knight’s fealty to his king. Gothar refuses his vow of fealty, “From here on, I banish you from Cornwall. Take up your sword Quentin. You’re no longer my knight.”**



**Lord Andret – bitter enemy of Quentin.**

**As Melot foresaw, Gwynore's longing overcomes her. She sends a message to the banished Quentin. He meets her in the castle's garden and in the moonlight, they glimpse in the fountain's pool the reflection of Gothar hidden in the trees. Quentin improvises a ruse. Once Gwynore steps out of the shadows, Quentin calls to her from a distance, "Someone has convinced Gothar that I'm in love with you. You're the only one who can tell him the truth." Gwynore replies, "He doesn't trust me either. God knows, I've never loved any man but the one who took my virginity." She disappears into the shadows. Once again, Melot has failed to trap the lovers.**

**Lord Andret confronts Melot, "You've ruined me, you foul miserable knave. Quentin's banishment has been rescinded and Gothar has ordered me to Brittany." The cunning fool waves off Andret's concerns, *"Eques manifestus stupiditas.* Andret, your trouble is that you're quick as a tortoise and sly as an ox. Quentin's return is how I'll catch them in *flagrante delicto*."**

**On a midsummer night, the nobles sleep together in the castle garden. According to Melot's plan, Gothar has the surgeon bleed Gwynore, "To rid her body of evil humors." At midnight, the king and nobles leave for midnight prayers, leaving Gywnore and Tristan sleeping in adjacent beds, From his hiding place in the rose bushes, Milou casts flour around the beds. After the nobles depart, Gwynore takes a great leap, landing in Quentin's bed. He kisses her bleeding wound. Milou runs to summon the king.**



**Queen Gwynore**

**Hearing the men-at-arms thundering down the stairs, Gwynore leaps back to her bed, leaving a footprint in the flour. Gothar sees traces of blood everywhere, on the sheets and gowns, and Gwynore's footprint in the flour. The most damning evidence of all is Gwynore's blood glistening on Quentin's lips.**

**Outside the castle walls, men fill a pit with dried brush, a pyre for Gwynore' execution. Gothar has condemned her to be burned alive. The Marshal approaches Gothar, "You cannot do this without a trial." Gothar says, "I've witnessed her guilt. I am the king and the judge. She must die." As the executioners throw brush into the pit, the crowd screams in protest, "A trial! We want a trial!" As the people press forward, the soldiers cannot contain them. Dinan, Gothar's oldest friend, kneels before the King, "I beg you to grant me her life." Andret shouts, "She's an adulterous whore, "She must die." Dinan goes to Gwynore, "Beg him for mercy," but Gwynore replies, "I'd rather die than live with him." "Burn her!" Gothar crys. The executioners lay a plank across the fire and order Gwynore to mount the plank. The crowd attack the soldiers as young men pelt the king with stones. The priest raises the cross before her, but Gwynore refuses the cross. A second priest offers her a confession, to save her from going to hell, "Sign and save your soul." On the castle wall, the crone that helped Tristan defeat the dragon appears "Look," she cries. A horde of lepers shaking their rattles push their way through the frenzied crowd who fall back in horror of their horrible disease. Yvaine, leader of the lepers, addresses the king, "My lord, to burn is too quick a death. The fire would end her suffering in a few minutes. If you want to suffer for her sin, give her to us so we can share her. She's accustomed to silk and velvet, but when she lies in bed with lepers at night, she'll wish she'd been burned alive." The king looks at Gwynore as she is led onto the plank over the fire. Gothar rules, "Give her to the lepers."**

**Gothar's soldiers lead their prisoner Quentin along the sea-cliff. In the distance, Quentin sees smoke rising from the pyre. The soldiers approach a small chapel on the edge of the cliff and Quentin asks to make his peace with God before his death. The captain cuts his bounds, "I pray for your soul, Quentin. My son was one of the prisoners that Morholt took to Ireland. You brought him home. I'll turn my back while you make peace with God. Quentin enters and climbs out of the narrow window looking over the sea far below. Summoning his courage, he takes a great leap. A soldier cries, "He's escaped! But none of the soldiers move. The captain observes, "If he survives that fall, it must mean God wants him to live. And who are we to interfere with God's will?"**

**The lepers march along the road, harmonizing their song in minor chords, a multitude of harmonic insects singing in the night. In a glade, they light a bonfire to celebrate saving the queen from the fire. Yvain says, "Never fear my queen, my performance was for the king. Before my illness, I was an actor once. Tonight was the first time I've performed before a king. Some of us lost children to Ireland. For us, Quentin can do no wrong. A leper rushes up, "I found Quentin. He's waiting with horses by the river. Gwynore says to Yvain, "I owe you my life." Yvain blesses her, "Then remember us kindly, my Queen. The priests forbid us communion. We wander the highways and suffer the cold. People think our disease is the result of our sins. Anyone can catch our disease, the wicked and the innocent. I was born a beautiful child and look at me now." Gwynore kisses his cheek, "I will remember thee."**

**After a hard ride, much of it through a stream until they reach smooth rock where their horses will leave no trace, Gwynore and Quentin arrive at a swift river in the Cornish highlands. "Can we rest a bit?" Quentin shakes his head, "No, news will travel fast of my escape." When they reach the Forest of Morois, a magnificent white stag appears. "That is the enchanted stag of Morois," Quentin says. "It's believed that he's a prince bewitched by Morgan le Fay." He dismounts before a waterfall thundering into a pool and leads her to a crevice, an opening in the roof of the vaulted dome of a concealed chamber with a stream of water running across the stone floor. "When I was a lad, I discovered this when I was hunting. What do you think of our castle?" "It is charming," she laughs, "even if the roof leaks." She takes him in her arms, "This is the first time since you brought me to Cornwall that we've been together without feeling guilty."**

**As autumn turns the leaves to red and gold, and winter approaches, Quentin teaches Gwynore how to hunt game with a bow and arrow. Now and then the stag of Morois appears unafraid, gazing at them. "Our prince is here," Gwynore sings. "We are like the Stag of Morois, captives of an enchanted forest.**



**Forest of Morois, a year later. Gothar and nobles cross the moor through flurries of snow. Andret rides up, "We've spotted a white stag, sire." "Where?" "In the Forest of Morois." Hearing the barking of hunting dogs, Quentin climbs the lookout tree and spots the king's hunting party. He conjures a plan, placing his sword between himself and Gwynore. A hound detects their scent and leads a huntsman to the crevice. He brings the king. Gothar peers into the fissure and sees Quentin and Gwynore sleeping, Quentin's sword standing erect between them, a symbol of chastity. Assailed by waves of anger and sorrow, he is swept by the strongest of all, desire for Gwynore. Gothar enters the cave, standing over the sleeping pair, his sword drawn, contemplating Quentin's death. Through her eyelashes, Gwynore watches him, holding her breath. Gothar raises his sword and hesitates. He cannot kill Quentin. Drawing out Quentin's sword, he places his sword in its place and leaves his ring beside Gwynore.**

**As winter solstice approaches, Gwynore hunts with her bow and arrows. Quentin festoons the cavern with boughs of holly and cedar. She builds an oven of stones. Quentin stuffs a wild goose with nuts and dried berries. At midnight, he cuts mistletoe from a high tree, dropping the sacred plant from 20 feet into Gwynore's shawl below just as Ogrin, a holy man appears in the moonlight, "Milady, I bear a writ from the king." King Gothar has pardoned Gwynore. She is still Queen of Cornwall.**

**The solstice dinner is laid out on a flat stone, ringed with handmade candles. Gwynore brings the stuffed goose to table and strikes a flint to light the solstice yule log. Quentin is pensive throughout dinner, finally breaking his silence, "You've been pardoned by Gothar. You must go back." Gwynore is incensed, "What in God's name are you saying? The last few months have been the most wonderful days of my life. I don't have to lie or pretend to be a good wife to someone I don't love. I'm free. Do you understand, Quentin? I am free!"**



**Quentin holds up Gothar's writ, "I've betrayed my uncle who raised me. I've stolen his wife." Gwynore says, "You're filled with guilt because Gothar spared you. You vowed to love me. You said it's purity of heart that counts." She leaps up under the hanging mistletoe, "You care more about loyalty to the king than your love for me. Are we going to live with our own conscience, or with someone else's?" Quentin rages, "For love of you, I've betrayed my oaths of allegiance." In despair, he seizes his sword and cuts down the sacred plant. Gwynore says, "You dolt. I love you, that's why I am here. If your fidelity to Gothar is more important than all I've given to you, then so be it. It's against every bone in my body, but to preserve your precious purity, I will yield to the decree that dooms me – the despotism that forbids me to love who I choose." Gwynore picks up the mistletoe and throws it into the fire. "Keep your vows, Quentin. I will reign as queen of Cornwall. My heart is broken and will never be put back together."**

**Quentin and Gwynore ride through Forest of Morois, returning to take her place as Queen of Cornwall. In a grove of birch, they discover the enchanted stag frozen in the snow, an arrow embedded in his chest. "The king's men," Quentin observes. "He escaped the dogs only to die here," Gwynore murmurs. "Our prince is free at last." Across the river are the pavilions of the King. A sentry sounds his horn. A party of nobles ford the river, climbing the hill to meet the queen. "Here is my ring," she says. "If you ever need me, send this ring and nothing in heaven or hell will stop me from coming to you." She slips her green jasper ring onto his finger, kisses him, her mouth lingering on his. "I love you, Quentin. I will always love you." Tears flood her eyes. Quentin lays his hand on hers, "If I send for you will come?" "Yes, Quentin. I will come."**

**Carriado and Guenelon approach with a dappled roan for the queen. She mounts and they take her away. She crosses the river then looks back at Quentin on the hill. She waves, just once, then urges her horse up the slope to the pavilion of the king.**



**The Siege of Lisbon.** ***Quadros da História de Portugal*** **– Author, Roque Gameiro, public domain, Wikimedia**

## Two years later. Walls of Toledo, Spain – Montage

**A Christian army of the King of Aragon lays siege to the walls of the city. Catapults hurl against the walls, a drawbridge lowers and troops surge across the battlements. Moorish warriors counterattack. Men fall to their deaths. A battering ram smashes the city's massive barbican gate. Knights, archers, and infantry pour into the burning city. Fires rage in the streets as Christian knights slaughter the fleeing Muslims and Jews, soldiers looting houses, putting them to the torch and forcing the Moors back into the flames, the streets littered with corpses, death and madness everywhere.**

**Fighting as a mercenary knight for the King of Aragon. Quentin comes to a church where archers are stealing holy relics. When an archer throws a torch into the church, Quentin spurs his horse, charging the archer, "Stop! That's Mozarabe, a Christian church. Pikemen drag a young girl from the church, tear off her cloak and throw her on the pavement. Quentin draws his sword and charges, scattering the soldiers, dismounts and wraps the unconscious girl in her robe, carries her through the Toledo gate and lays her down beside the Tagus River. Then he realizes he can't save her. She is dead.**



Abbaye Saint Martin du Canigou – Author, LeZibou, Wikimedia

**On a mountain across the river, the bells of a monastery call monks to prayer. Quentin urges his horse down the path to the Monastery of St. Martin-du-Canigou.**



. Iglesia abacial de Santa María de Veruela, Cistercian monastery, Veruela, Zargossa, Spain – Author, Eclean, Wikimedia

**Quentin ascends a mountain in the Pyrenees at dawn. A column of pilgrims appears bearing crosses of wood. Peasants and nobles, thieves and saints, cripples and invalids on stretchers, sing psalms to the Virgin Mary, intoxicated with the spirit of God, their Latin chant reverberating against the walls of the mountain pass. A knight without a country, sick of war, Quentin watches the pilgrimage until they disappear around the bend.**

**On a mountain across the river, the bells of a monastery call monks to prayer. Quentin urges his horse down the path to the Monastery of St. Martin-du-Canigou. White robed monks glide like ghostly shadows through the Romanesque cloister of a Cistercian monastery. A young novice leads Quentin to a small prayer chapel. Quentin lays his sword on the altar for consecration. Listening to the monks in the chapel singing a Gregorian chant, Quentin kneels and prays to the Virgin, the mother of lost men. A draft of air coming through the open window blows out the candles. As the clouds part, the setting sun falls through the chancel window, splintering the chapel with a shaft of light. In the dazzling aureole of light, he sees Gwynore.**



**A battlefield in the rain, Picardy, France, a swamp of mud and blood, dead knights and pikeman half buried in the mire. A hysterical horse gallops in circles, its shrill whinnies mingling with the moans of dying men. Wolves come stealthily from the forest, feeding on the remains of men. An old woman with a torch searches the dead for valuables. Cutthroats slay wounded knights, stealing their weapons and helmets. A crone, much like the one who helped Quentin slay the dragon, gives her torch to a young knight, Kaherdin of Brittany, who is searching for a lost comrade. She leads him to Quentin, "Is this the man you are looking for?"**

**Plastered with blood and mud, Quentin lies against the belly of his dead horse. Kaherdin cuts away the straps to his breastplate, tears his cloak into strips and binds up Quentin's bleeding arm. "You fight like a madman. You saved my life twice. I have never seen anyone quite like you. Who are you?" "Let the wolves have me," Quentin says. "I have nothing more to live for."**



**Castle of Carhaix, Brittany**

**Carrying Quentin on his horse, Kaherdin crosses the moat of the Castle of Carhaix, Brittany. Maidens sit at their looms, singing as they weave. Kaherdin enters with Quentin whose arm is bound with bandages. Kaherdin tells his sister Blanche how Quentin saved his life. Blanche, who looks so much like Gwynore, looks at Quentin, her eyes lingering far longer than good manners would allow.**

**On Lake Carhaix, the people celebrate the swan festival. Led by the clergy, the people go out in boats to chase swans on the lake. Young men dive into the water, chasing the swans as rafts drift by filled with musicians and girls. Wearing a swan's mask, Blanche is surrounded by attentive men, breaks away from the throng, searching for Quentin, finding him alone on the battlements above. "You Celts are so gloomy." She takes his hand, "Come, let's take a boat out on the lake."**



**Swan Festival, Castle of Carhaix, Brittany – Author, Cinder1280, Wikimedia**

**A young boy captures a swan and flings it into a passing boat, nearly tipping it over as the girls scream and laugh. As the light fades, on the boats and rafts, the people light candles and oil lamps, making the lake shimmer with reflections of dancing light. Blanche does not see a half-submerged tree and crashes, throwing Quentin into the lake. As Blanche giggles. Quentin tips the boat, throwing her into the lake. They swim to the island and Blanche slips out of her wet dress, wearing only her under-chemise. She asks, "Are you going home?" "I don't have a home." "You're not looking for the holy grail, are you?" Quentin sighs, "What I'm looking for is just as impossible as the holy grail." "Are you looking for a damsel in distress?" "Do you know one?" he says. "I know one really distressed," she says. In the evening light, Blanche looks much like Gwynore. For a moment, he hesitates, then covers her trembling mouth with his. "On stay with me," she murmurs. "Stay. . . oh stay." Anguished by his loneliness, Quentin surrenders to her kisses. On the lake, two swans glide on the dark water, spirits of the underworld.**

**Tintagel Castle's rose garden in Cornwall. Before a fountain, water flowing from a cherub's mouth, Gwendolyn and Guenelon, Ghislaene and Gondoine listen to Carriado playing the Celtic harp. Ghislaene asks Carriado about Brittany. "I've heard Quentin has married Blanche of Carhiax. She is one of the great beauties of France." On the other side of the roses, Gwynore listens.**



**Forest of Morois – Author, TheSimkin, public domain, Wikimedia**

**A hunting party in the Forest of Carhaix. Riding ahead of Kaherdin, Blanche plunges across a stream too deep for her horse, drenching her robe to her waist. "My God," she cries," I'm soaked where Quentin's never ventured!" Learning the reason for her grief, Kaherdin cries, "That bastard." He confronts Quentin who admits the truth, "Yes, I am chaste. I've swore fidelity to Gwynore. By our vow, I am bound forever. We will love each other until our deaths." Kaherdin explodes, "If I didn't owe my life to you, I would challenge you to a duel until only one of us remains alive. You tell me that Gwynore is married to the King of Cornwall. You are under a sentence of death if you return. Despite an impossible situation, you are determined to keep your vow? You are a lunatic." Kaherdin grabs Quentin and shakes him, "A sorceress has bewitched you. I know a witch talented in supernatural spells. Her magic can destroy Gwynore's evil spells. We'll sail to Tintagel Castle. With our enchanted potion, you can free yourself from this curse and fulfill your marriage vows to Blanche."**

**Quentin's dream: Gwynore and Quentin climb a ravine in the Forest of Morois. In a grove, they discover the white stage, slain by Gothar's arrow. Quentin awakens. Blanche is sleeping. Slipping on his tunic, he steals out the door.**

**On the horizon, runs a ship, its sail full before the wind.**



**Tintagel Castle on a promontory of Cornwall – Author, Michael Stehlik from Czech Republic, Wikimedia**

**Tintagel Castle. Cranes lift massive stones, constructing new outer walls. Near the portal, a wandering fool waits, half-naked and wild. It is Quentin in disguise with a false nose, purple stained face, a tattered tunic, a stout club hanging by a thong around his neck. The drawbridge lowers. King and his men thunder into the castle. Hopping and skipping like a maniac, the hunched back fool runs with the horsemen through the gate.**

**Great Hall, Tintagel Castle. The court is milling around. Gothar and his men, in their hunting habits sweep into the hall. The fool bounces around behind them, entrancing the crowd by his crazy athletic antics, recalling Douglas Fairbanks at his most agile. The damsel Gwendolyn is delighted with the fool. Gothar calls out, "Ah, my fool, welcome to Tintagel. Since we hung Milou, we've had great need for some madness!" The fool cries, "If its madness you crave, look around you, sire. Your court is full of crazy people. I am the only sane one here." Gothar roars, "If you are so sane, and we are so mad, why are you here? "I seek the queen who I love so well." The fool grabs Gwendolyn. "Here's my sister, the exquisite Brunhilda. Take her my lord. I'm sure you're tired of the queen. Take Brunhilda and give me Gwynore." The fool scampers among the court, lifts the skirt of Gwendolyn, bends low to look at her legs. Spies Yolanda, steals a kiss. The court shrieks with laughter. "Call Gwynore," Gothar says, "Maybe this fool can make her laugh." Under his breath, Andret says, "Nothing will make that bitch laugh." Gothar commands, "Bring her. I like this fool." An attendant cries, "She's shut up in the tower." Gothar roars, "I'm tired of her moods. I command you. Bring her down." The attendants rush out. Gothar addresses the purple-faced fool, "And what would you do my fool with a woman who hides in a tower, who rarely speaks and never smiles." The fool replies, "I wouldn't stand for it. I would give her to someone who deserves a shrew. I'd give her to an imbecile like me." The fool chases Gwendolyn through the crowd, catches her lithe body and in one balletic sweep, lifts her over his head and spins her around. The crowd erupts in applause.**

**The king's attendants lead Gwnynore down the stairs of the tower, accompanied by Brangaen, Ghislaene, and Paranis. As they enter the court, musicians are playing a gay air to accompany the fool's mischief. Gwynore is no less beautiful than before, pale and thin, bearing a great sadness. Gothar waves the musicians to silence. "Fool, come meet the queen. Perhaps you can warm her bones." The fool abandons Gwendolyn, staring at the queen like a bumpkin in the woods. "I can warm her bones, and more, down to her pretty toes." Gothar laughs, "Maybe she can enjoy a man who can give her what she wants." Gwynore turns to leave. Gothar says, "What if I gave you, my witty fool, where would you take her?" Striding around waving his arms, the fool says, "I would take her far away, over the rainbow and beyond the sea, west of the sun and east of the moon."**

**For the first time, Gwynore looks keenly at the fool. Gothar says, "And what makes you think she'd love such a foul fool as you?" "Because she is the reason for my madness, because I am Quentin, her first and only love." Some in the court start to laugh but are silenced by Gwynore's cold stare. Gothar roars, "Quentin?" The fool shrugs, "If you don't believe me, I'll prove it." He snatches a harp from a musician, plays a tune, but only produces comical noises and screeching sounds, making the court laugh with his terrible music. Gothar applauds.**

**"He's not funny. He's an idiot," Gwynore cries. The fool says, "I may be an idiot, but I was a wise man before I met you. On the sea we were becalmed, I drank the wine and kissed your lips." Gwynore turns pale, staring at the fool. He returns her stare. After a long moment, Gwynore heads for the door. Gothar thunders, "Wait, how can you walk out on a man who deserves you? My talented fool, besides playing the harp, do you have other talents?" The fool chortles, "I'm a warrior who kills dragons with a stick." He brandishes his club, moving through the crowd, stalking his quarry. With a maniacal grin, he approaches Carriado, swinging his club close to his head. Lord Andret approaches from behind to look closely at the fool. Sensing Andret, the fool whirls, "This is how I flush barons from the bush." Hopping and stomping, the fool whirls his club, thrashing Andret's butt, chasing him around the hall, prompting uproarious laughter. Gwynore mood shifts, her eyes burning with curiosity.**

**Under the stairs, the fool sleeps on a pallet of straw. Bearing a candle, Brangane wakes him up, motions him to follow. In her chambers, Gwynore waits by the window, working on her embroidery by candlelight. "Congratulations, my fool. You're the darling of the court. But I'm not so easily fooled. What brings you here?" "What would it take to impress a woman like you?" "Just the truth." "Alas," the fool says," Truth is like a rabbit. Here today, gone tomorrow." "How did you know about the portion?" "I told you. I drank it with you." Gwynore leaps up, slams down her embroidery, "Stop it!" The fool drops his disguised accent, speaking in the voice of Quentin, "Have you forgotten the one you swore to never forget." Astonished, she exclaims, "Your voice. . . You really are a magician."**

**The fool comes closer, "A magician can turn things upside down, inside out and backwards. He can turn lies into truth or truth into lies. He can make the bearable, unbearable, or the unbearable, bearable." Gwynore is close to tears, "Fool, what are you saying?" Quentin rips off his false nose, rips off the hunchback padding, throws off his tattered tunic to expose his lean figure and holds up Gwynore's green jasper ring.**

**"Oh, my God, it's you!" Quentin takes her into his arms. She draws back and slaps him, "You bastard." She hurls her embroidery frame at his head, drawing blood, "How dare you come back to me, married!" "I believed I would never see you again." "Liar," she cries. "She reminds me of you," he says." "But you married her." "Every morning, every night, I think only of you." "You're crazy. You can't stay here. Lord Andret will kill you." "Come here," Quentin says. "No, you're married." "Come," he says. "It's too dangerous to be with me," she says. He slips her gown over her bare shoulders. She resists, but only a little. "We can't," she says, "they'll come for you." "They'll find only the fool," he says." "You really are the fool." Gwynore yields to his kisses,**

**Gwynore's chambers, dawn. The lovers sleep, legs and arms entwined. Awakened by a pounding on the door, Quentin leaps to his feet, grabs his knife and clothes. Gwynore opens a concealed door behind the tapestry. "Quick, in here. When I give the signal follow the stairs to the river. I keep a boat there." "I didn't come all this way for just one night," he says. "If you don't get out of here, it will be your last night." She shoves him inside, drops the tapestry. "Who is it?" She cries. Through the locked door, Lord Andret says, "Have you seen the fool?" "No, why would you ask?" "The guards cannot locate him. I wanted to be certain that you were safe."**

**As soon as Andret leaves, she runs to Quentin behind the tapestry, "Oh, Quentin, take me with you?" "You'll come?" "Yes, oh yes, my darling." You remember where we once met, the menhir by the sea. Wait for me there, I'll be there at dawn tomorrow."**

**Hammering blows break down the door and soldiers rush in. Gwynore stands in front of a door on the far side of the room as if she were hiding something. The soldiers and Lord Andret push her aside, run through the wrong door, and through a second opening, crashing into a brick wall that seals it shut. Jammed into the small space, the men-at-arms, grunt, curse, and fall over each other, a mass of armored men crushing Lord Andret at the bottom of the heap.**

**Tintagel Castle, postern door. Quentin emerges from the small door concealed in the bushes, pushes off in the skiff waiting there, wraps himself in a fisherman's cloak, and hoists the sail. The drawbridge is lowered. A troop of soldiers on horseback storm from the castle. Below, sails a skiff, steered by a man in a fisherman's cloak.**

**Quentin joins Kaherdin's ship in a sheltered cove. "Did the potion break the spell?" Kaherdin asks. "Gwynore is coming with me." Kaherdin rages, "You knave. Tie him to the mast. He's a lunatic."**



**Land's End, Cornwall, England – Author, Kevin Law, Wikimedia**

**Coast of Cornwall. On horseback, Gwynore flies over the moor, racing to the sea.**

**Kaherdin's ship sails in a great wind. Quentin, bound to the mast, looks to the coast.**

**Coast of Cornwall, sunset, a menhir overlooking the sea. Gwynore arrives. A wind blows with gale like force. She seeks refuge from the wind behind the stone, waiting for Quentin.**



**Menhir, Portal Tomb, Coast of Cornwall – Author, Frank Chandler, Wikimedia**



**Coast of Cornwall. The wind subsides. Gwynore waits for Quentin.**



**Gwynore waits by the menhir as the moon rises, obscured by the sea-mist.**

**Brittany, Kaherdan and Quentin round a bend. The Crone appears on a donkey, the one who helped him slay the dragon. “Son, you don’t look so good. I’ll make you soup with chicken feathers and horse urine. You’d best git fit fast. Gillus the Vile has taken a fancy to Blanche. If she’ doesn’t come out, he’s gonna burn it down.”**

**Castle of Carhaix, Brittany, overlooking the giant Gillus the Vile’s encampment, gaudy yellow pavilions teaming with men-at-arms. “I don’t have armor and a horse,” Quentin says. “See the tree growing between the wall and the moat,” Kaherdan says, “it conceals a postern door. While I create a distraction, you swim across the moat. Here’s the key.”**

**Kaherdin and two knights burst out of the forest, screaming war cries, galloping into Gilus’ camp, slicing down pavilions, turning back to disappear into the forest, leaving confusion and havoc in the camp.**

**Quentin swims across the moat, climbs into the bush, opens the door. Gillus’ soldiers fire crossbows. Arrows slam into the door, close to Quentin’s head.**

**Castle of Carhaix courtyard. Quentin exits the armory, dressed in tournament armor. Blanche kneels to strap on Quentin’s gold spurs. She kisses him with great affection. He mounts his massive war horse. Blanche lifts his heavy helmet up to him. Kaherdin brings his lance. Quentin clangs his visor shut.**

**Castle of Carhaix – The drawbridge lowers. Quentin emerges dressed in scarlet, dazzling in the sun. Gillus the Vile awaits, his horse and armor dressed in black. Trumpets call from Gillus camp. The two combatants accelerate, striking lance upon shield in a shattering collision. Gillus throws down his shattered lance and takes up a battleaxe. Gillus opens his visor to speak. "No man has ever jousted with me and stayed on his horse. I'd be sorry to kill you. Give me the woman and I'll spare you." Quentin replies, "The woman is my wife. Defend yourself." Gillus charges Quentin, swinging his massive axe. With perfect timing, Quentin deflects the colossal blow with his sword.**

**Blanche watches from the tower.**

**In one moment, Gillus dominates with his great strength. In the next, Quentin excels with his superior speed and dexterity. Quentin maintains a conservative attack, waiting for Gillus' horse to tire, then performs the same strategy that unhorsed the Irish champion Morholt. Withdrawing one-hundred feet, Quentin wheels his horse and spurs it forward at maximum speed, driving his trained destrier like a battering ram into Gillus' horse, throwing him on the ground. Quentin vaults from his horse. Shaken by the fall, the giant arises slowly. They assail one another, axe to sword, until with one great blow, Gillus splits Quentin's shield asunder, his axe striking Quentin's left arm and knocking him to the ground on the edge of the castle's moat.**

**In the tower, Blanche cries out. The Crone cast a baleful stare on the giant. Quentin arises, just in time to avoid a wild swing by Gillus that leaves him unprotected for a moment. Quentin strikes with blinding speed, cutting off the fighting hand of Gillus. In shock, the giant sees his severed land lying in the grass. A maddened bull, Gillus bellows in rage, picks up his battle axe with his left hand and swings recklessly, which Quentin smoothly avoids and strikes with his sword, striking Gillus in the seam of his helm, cutting through to the bone. Screaming in pain, Gillus wrenches Quentin's sword from his gasp, draws his dagger and lunges at the unarmed knight who leaps to the low wall beside the moat. Gillus, his black armor shining with his blood, leaps after Quentin on the parapet. Weaponless, except for his hands, Quentin seizes Gillus wrist, using the momentum of the giant's charge to throw the man into the moat. For a long moment, Quentin stands on the parapet, swaying back and forth, weak from loss of blood.**

**On the castle tower, Blanche cries out.**

**Quentin swoons and collapses on the parapet. Over the dark forest, the sun drifts through the late afternoon clouds. Quentin's agitated warhorse gallops wildly in circles.**

**Carhaix Castle, Blanche's chambers – Quentin lies in bed suffering from a fever. Blanche lays a cool compress on his brow to reduce the fever. Blanche shows Kaherdin the blade of Gillus' battleaxe. Kaherdin tells Quentin, "You've been poisoned." Quentin's asks Blanche to leave him alone with Kaherdin for a moment. Blanche leaves, but burning with curiosity, upon reaching the door, slips behind a screen to listen. Quentin tells Kaherdin, "There is only one person can save me. You must bring Gwynore. Only she has an antidote for this poison." Kaherdin is beside himself in anger. "She's in your blood and you can't get her out. She's worse than poison. You're giving me the choice to either betray my sister or watch you die."**

**Behind the screen, Blanche listens. Quentin takes off Gwynore's green jasper ring from his little finger. "If you take this to her, she'll come." Kaherdin says, "May God forgive me. . . because Blanche won't." It is a terrible moment for Blanche. Only her rival can save the one she loves. Quentin tells Kaherdin, "I know I can count on you my friend to save my life. Blanche will take me to the village tower where I can watch the sea. Take two sails, one white and one black. If you bring Gwynore, put up the white. But if she's not coming, put up the black. I'll stay on the tower and watch for your sail." Behind the screen, Blanche cries silently.**

**Kaherdin's ship with all sails unfurled, flying through the mist.**

**Tintagel Harbor, Kaherdin's ship – Disguised as a merchant, Kaherdin displays his wares, silk pennants dancing from the mast. King Gothar and the royal party go aboard Kaherdin's ship but Gwynore is not there. Quentin's enemy Andret is accompanied by the nobles Guenelon, Gondoine, Carriado, and woman intrigued by Kaherdin's wares. Displaying armor from Florence and swords from Damascus to the men, and showing Blanche's fashions to the women, there is a perfume of gaiety in the air. Since Gwynore has not come, Kaherdin gives Gwendolyn a felt hat with egret's plumage, a present to the queen. Inside is stitched a button from Quentin's cloak that she will recognize. The following day, King Gothar, members of the court, Gwynore, Brangaen, and Ghislane come aboard. Andret's hunting dog gets entangled in bolts of cloth, creating confusion. Gwynore uses the distraction to approach Kaherdin, "I must speak to that man alone," she tells Brangaene. "Keep Gothar occupied. Ghislaene, see that Andret and his boys are engaged." Ghislaene flirts with the men while Brangaene occupies Gothar, giving Gwynore the chance to speak quietly to Kaherdin, "Such emeralds and sapphires. Where do you come from to have such marvels?" "Carhaix, Brittany, Kaherdin replies, "I have something more rare." He gives her a leather case. She opens to find her jasper ring. "He's alive?" "Barely. It's poison. Only you have the antidote." Gwynore cries, "Oh God, why didn't he take me with him?' Kaherdin says, "He couldn't. I tied him to the mast. He didn't have a chance." "Why would you do that?" "Blanche is my sister." Gwynore is stricken. "Will you come?" he says. Gwynore replies, "I'll come at dawn."**

**Tintagel Castle courtyard, dawn – Gwynore, dressed for hunting, mounts her horse. Her page Paranis hands her a bow with a quiver of arrows. The falconer brings her falcon.**

**Road to the harbor – Andret sees Gwynore leave the castle and gallops after her. "It's not safe to go alone, I'll go with you." Gwynore says, "Oh, what a nice morning companion," She releases the falcon, which chases after a bird that Kaherdin releases from the ship. The falcon snatches the bird in mid flight and alights with its prey on the mast.**

**Kaherdin greets her, "Milady, what a delightful surprise. Please come aboard." She dismounts, "Wait here, Andret, I'll just be a minute. Andret objects, "I'll go with you. He could be perfidious." As she mounts the plank, Kaherdin gives the command to unfurl the sails. "Raise anchor."**



**Eleonora's falcon, Mallorca, Europe – Author, Jürgen Dietrich, Wikimedia**

**Andret dismounts, draws his sword and leaps onto the wale of the ship. Kaherdin pounds Andret with an oar. Clinging to the rigging, Andret swings his sword, nearly cutting off Kaherdin's head. Gwynore pulls an arrow from her quiver, aims with care, striking Andret in the groin, toppling him overboard. The weight of his armor pulls him under. Screaming and flailing, Andret sinks into the sea.**

**Road from the castle to the harbor. A horse drawn wagon escorted by two servants carries Blanche and Quentin to the village tower overlooking the sea.**

**Kaherdin's ship, white sails gleaming in the sun. Gwynore stands in the prow, the sea-breeze whipping her hair. On the horizon, black clouds threaten a storm.**

**Breton village, seacoast of Brittany – The soldiers carry Quentin's litter through narrow streets, up the winding stairs to the tower.**

**Kaherdin's ship. The storm strikes, boiling clouds engulfing the sun. Struggling against the churning of the ship, the sailors lower and secure all sales, as immense waves crash over them. Immersed in the blinding sea spray, Gwynore clings to the mast.**

**The Tower, medieval village, Brittany – Blanche's retainers carry Quentin's litter to the pinnacle of the escarpment where a tower overlooks the sea. Pale and bathed in sweat, Quentin says, "Turn me so I can watch the sea."**

**Kaherdin's ship, becalmed on a glassy sea. "What can we do?" Gwynore paces the deck in anguish, Kaherdin says, "Wait for the wind." She says, "While we wait, he is dying."**

**A deathly silence, only the creaking of the ship. "We can put out the two boats and row," she cries. "You'd have us row all the way to Brittany?" "Yes, or else, I'll go mad." She begins untying the ropes on the lifeboat. "Help me, damn it."**

**Kaherdin's ship. Kaherdin and Gwynore in one boat, the sailors in the other, tow the ship on the placid sea.**

**Brittany. Inside the tower, Blanche paces the chamber, looks out at Quentin on the terrace, her eyes burning. Quentin struggles to raise up to look at the sea. He is dying. Blanche comes to adjust the tree branch which shades him from the sun. The sea is empty. Seagulls cry.**

**The sun beats down stifling the exhausted rowers. Gwynore looks up, on the far horizon, she sees the hills of Brittany. "Land," she cries. "We can't wait for the wind. Let's take the boat. Suddenly, a gust of wind blows. "The wind!" she cries. The sailors cheer. The wind fills the white sail.**

**Tower, Brittany. Blanche looks out of the tower, scanning the horizon. She sees on the horizon the white sail. Quentin sleeps, murmuring in a feverish dream. Blanche orders a retainer to move Quentin into the tower. Blanche looks out to sea, relieved for Kaherdin has safely returned and destroyed because he brings the woman Quentin loves.**

**Blanche bathes Quentin's face. He awakens, "I saw a sail. A white sail. Why am I inside? Go look. Is there a white sail?" He struggles to get up. Blanche tries to stop him, but fiercely determined, he gains his feet, moves to the door. She tries to draw him back. "Let go of me." She pulls him back, but he shakes her off. Blanche says, "It's no use, Quentin, I didn't want to tell you, but the sail is black." "No, Quentin thunders, "I saw a white sail. Nearly hysterical, Blanche says, "It's black, black, black." Quentin collapses into Blanche's arms. He tries to speak, but nothing is understandable. Blanche helps him to bed, strokes his cheek, tenderly kisses him. He murmers, "Gwynore, Gwynore."**

**Montage. Forest of Morois, twilight, naked trees of winter, dark shadows against white snow. An owl flies over the forest. Gwynore struggles through the snow. From the ridge, she calls for Quentin. The white stage appears. The stag returns her gaze. The owl glides over the forest.**

**Dissolve to: In a grove of trees, the white stag lies frozen in the snow. Above the web of naked tree limbs, in a winter's sky, a ship sails, its white sail billowing in the wind. Superimposition: Wings of the owl, beating and beating. FADE OUT:**

**Harbor, Brittany village. Kaherdin and Gwynore arrive in the harbor. A fisherman mends his nets. All is quiet, except for the occasional toiling of the church bells.**

**Village streets. Gwynore and Kaherdin run through the streets. Quickly outdistancing Kaherdin, Gwynore sprints up the stone steps, spiraling through the village streets. Turning a corner, she meets the Crone. "Why are the bells tolling?" The Crone, "They're tolling for Quentin." Singing an ancient Gaelic chant, the Crone makes a mysterious sign in the air. Running up the stairs, Gwynore trips and falls, leaps up, and dashes up the endless stairs. The church bells toll.**

**Village tower. Gwynore bursts into the tower, runs to Quentin, kneels beside him, cradles him in her arms, kisses his lips and his eyes. "Quentin. Quentin."**



**“I saw you in the Forest of Morois. Was it a dream?” “No, my love, It’s not a dream.” “You’re really here?” “Yes, my love.” “Have you forgiven me for giving you away.” “Oh Quentin, how I have loved you, all these years, the long years you’ve been gone.”**

**In pain and delirium, Quentin says. “I thought you no longer loved me. You tell me you love me, just when I’m leaving you.” “Oh Quentin, you must live.” “I am dying,” he says,” I threw my life away. I had the chance to keep you, and I lost it.” Speaking through her tears, she says, “I have the antidote. I can save you. Nothing is lost my darling. I am here. I am here forever.”**

**Fighting the pain, Quentin says, “I thought you had forgotten me.” “Oh, Quentin. I tried to forget you. I tried ever so hard. But try as I might, I could not for one minute, forget you.” Quentin struggles to his feet. “Where is my sword? My armor? The horses, bring the horses.”**

**She eases him back into bed. “Where are we going?” he says. “You remember,” she says, “west of the stars and east of the moon.”**

**“Oh, yes. . . east of the moon.” Quentin dies in Gwynore’s arms.**

**Gwynore’s ship on the English Channel. Gwynore stands on deck behind the bier where Quentin lies. The black sail hangs limp, the sea as smooth as glass. Dissolve to Gwynore’s ship on a moonlit night, sailing through the mist on a shimmering sea.**

**SCREEN TITLE**

WITHIN THE YEAR, GWYNORE FOLLOWED QUENTIN
TO THE GRAVE. AS THE SPELL PROMISED
THEY SHARED ONE JOY AND ONE DEATH.



***Death of Tristan and Iseult*, oil on canvas – Author, Rogelio de Egusquiza, source, Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, public domain, Wikimedia.**

**Dissolve to the seacoast of Cornwall, sunrise. The sun breaks through the sea-mist. Shaggy highlander cattle drift down the trail to the sea. Two tombs stand on a knoll, entwined in the limbs of a briar in bloom.**

AND ONE NIGHT A BRIAR SPRANG UP FROM
QUENTIN'S TOMB. IT CLIMBED AND SPREAD,
FALLING TO ROOT AGAIN BY GWYNORE'S TOMB.
THREE TIMES THE KING's MEN CUT IT DOWN,
BUT IT ALWAYS GREW AND FLOWERED ANEW.
AND NEVER DID ANYONE CUT IT DOWN AGAIN.

**The Stag of Marois appears on the hill, transparent in the morning light.**
**The stag runs swiftly toward the sea.**
**THE END**



***Running Fence*, installation art by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, running 24-miles across Sonoma and Marin Counties, California., 1976**

# Living in Tomales Bay – Writing *East of the Moon*

**During the two years that I lived in Tomales Bay, I explored impressionist painting, studied medieval literature, and discovered Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gelsey Kirland dancing with the American Ballet Theatre, a time of philosophical reflection about what I wanted to achieve in life. While researching my medieval romance *East of the Moon*, I drove to San Francisco to take French lessons at Alliance Française and watch Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gelsey Kirkland dance with the American Ballet Theatre, two years in which I became a devotee of ballet and all forms of dance.**

**I lived in Tomales Bay during the time that installation artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude were planning their 24-mile *Running Fence*. Designed to be a temporary work of art, it had been conceived in 1972, but due to the complication of getting ranchers' approval to install the fence on their property, engage in 18 public hearings, 3 California Superior Court sessions, and prepare a 450 page Environmental Impact Report, it took four years to plan and build, with the agreement to remove the 24 miles within 14 days, leaving no visible traces.**

**Made of 2 million square feet of woven white nylon fabric comprising 2,050 panels, the 18-foot high fence was hung from steel cables on 2,000 steel poles braced by 90 miles of steel cable, and 14,000 earth anchors, avoiding any use of concrete. Beginning near the U.S Interstate 101, it flowed west across 14 roads and 59 ranches on Sonoma and Marin counties, entering the Pacific Ocean south of Bodega Bay, midway between the Estero Americano and the Estero de San Antonio. When the California Coastal Commission forbade the artwork to cross into the Pacific, Christo solved the impasse by guerilla means, engaging a helicopter to drop a massive concrete anchor off shore, connected to steel cables that allowed the fence panels to be pulled across the forbidden zone to complete the 24 miles of *Running Fence*.**



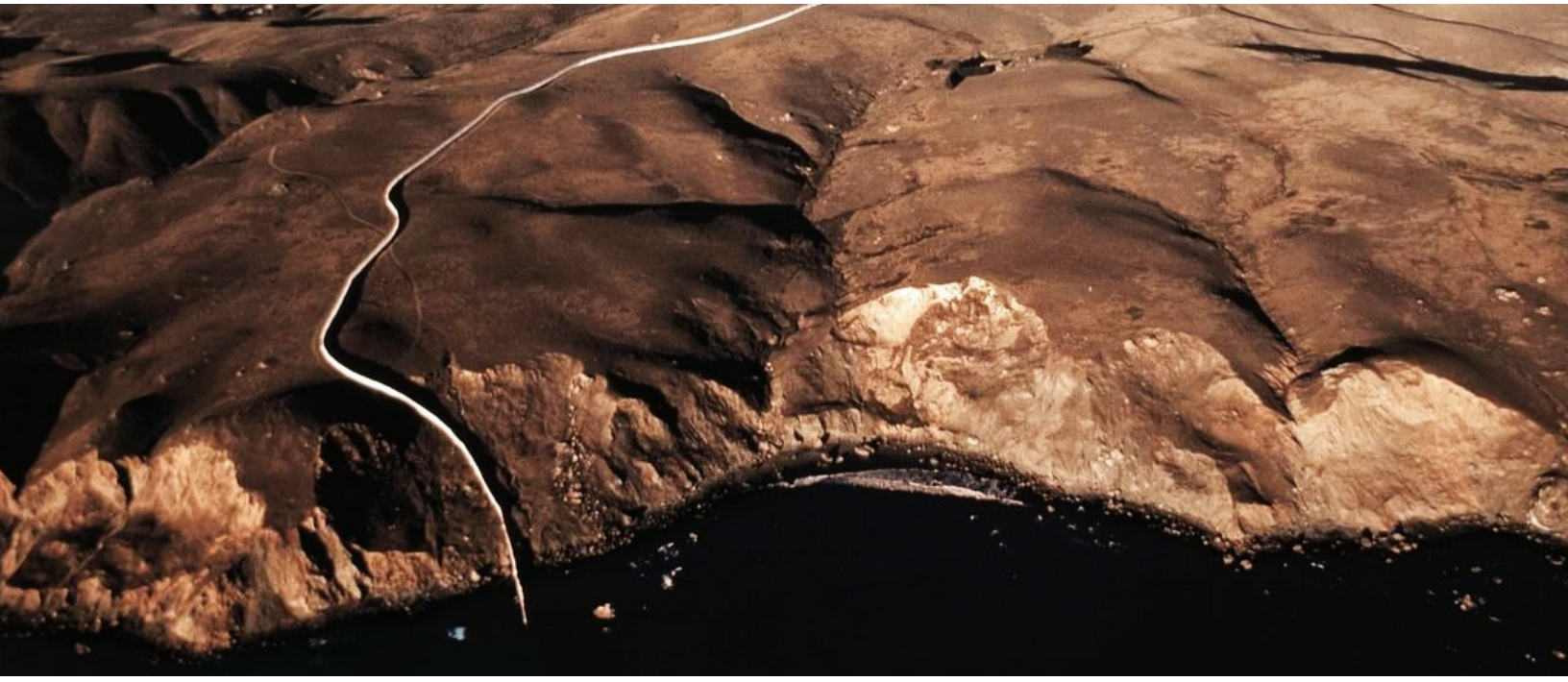
***Running Fence*** **created by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, 24-mile-long art installation crossing Sonoma and Marin Counties to the Pacific Ocean, 1976.**





**Christo and Jeanne-Claude, creators of *Running Fence.***

**Christo's and Jeanne-Claude's*Running Fence* terminated into the Pacific Ocean on my friend Joe Pozzi's 900 acre sheep ranch near where I hiked through a ravine down to the sea. After the fence was dismantled, Christo gave the materials to the ranchers, and Joe sold a 18 foot high x 60 foot long panel to me that I have preserved to this day. *Running Fence* remains the most extraordinary installation art that I have experienced, flowing over rolling hills, billowing in the wind, a ribbon of white accentuating the curving shadows of the hills. By photographing it in varying times of day and weather, I captured a ribbon of light suspended in luminous fog that made the ground disappear, and at other times, in evening sunlight with cattle silhouetted against the band of cloth, a shape shifting phenomenon transformed by coastal light, never the same from one moment to the next.**





**Aurea Lucas**

**In Tomales Bay, I lived on Fallon Road with Nani Venegas from Chile and Zoltan Mezaros, who had survived the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Nani introduced me to Aurea Lucas who lived just around the corner on Highway One, the daughter of an immigrant family from Portugal. Her father and uncle were tasked with milking one hundred Holstein cows. On the way home from Sonoma State University where I was taking a course in conversational French. I would stop by their double wide trailer to spend time with Aurea, her lovely mom and impish three sisters. Adorned with luxurious dark hair, porcelain skin, a voice with a rich resonance, and a magnetic smile. While Aurea and her mom loved my visits, when her dad and uncle came home from milking the cows, her uncle looked at me with such hatred that if looks could kill, I would not have got out of there alive. Due to Aurea's age, we never saw one another outside of her home except for one afternoon when she surprised me by bicycling over to visit at the cabin. We didn't say much on that quiet day, just listened to the wind stirring in the giant eucalyptus trees. Finally, she broke the silence, "Dale, I am not as good a girl as you think." At the time, it didn't occur to me to ask Aurea what she meant by a "good girl" and the moment passed. When I returned to Los Angeles, Aurea would call from time to time to tell me about her life. When she turned 21, she said she would love to fly down to visit me.**

**Although we had not seen one another in five years, it was as if we had never been apart. Our affection turned to romance, and in our intimacy, she told me of the tragedy that she had been too repressed to tell me on that quiet afternoon many years before. Her mom worked in town, taking her younger girls with her, leaving Aurea at the age of 13 in the care of her uncle. She said that for several years, her uncle raped her, threatening her life if she told. Since her mom looked up to her brother, Aurea feared what would happen if she spoke of the unspeakable. I was shattered to hear of the horrific sexual violence she had suffered. I was upset with myself that I had not asked what she mean when she said, "I am not as good a girl as you think." If she had revealed her trauma at that time, would I have been able to counsel her on a revelation that could destroy a conservative Catholic family, possibly turn a mother against her child? In our moment of passion, Aurea let me know she wanted to marry me. Although I treasured Aurea's friendship, her beauty, honesty, loyalty, and goodness, I was anguished because I had married early in life someone with whom I was intellectually and culturally incompatible. The background differences between us in that moment were so considerable that I feared that our marriage would not flourish. I was still launching my film career and on insecure economic ground. Realizing that my decision would break Aurea's heart, to tell her that I was not ready for marriage was one of the most heart-rendering things I've ever done.**

**From the time I entered school at John J. Pershing Elementary School, my relationship with women was different than most men. Because of my size, boys would not choose me as a teammate. Unable to play with males in childhood, most of my close friends throughout my life have been female rather than male. My first friendship was in the second grade with a Cherokee Indian girl, Rose Ann who I loved dearly for three years until dad moved our family to Mohawk Park. Sometimes I would walk Rose home and help her clean the rabbit cages but was harshly punished by mom because I didn't come straight home. Due to my mother's fears, I was incarcerated as a child, not allowed to leave the house. My friendship with Rose was unusually intense because mother's constant punishment convinced me that I was unloved. My love for Rose was a replacement for love that I was missing at home. After we moved, I never saw Rose again.**

**After I lost Rose, I didn't make another close friendship until I was seventeen. Except for a couple of camping expeditions with the Boy Scouts, I had little experience with male culture, in fact, I found boys somewhat alien, leaving me more comfortable with females than males, which has given me insights that most males don't have. Time after time, the most striking thing I have heard from women was how commonplace was their experience with predatory men and rape. Aurea's story haunts me. We retained our friendship until she married, then regrettably lost contact. I never learned if she healed from the psychic damage. It has taken our country forever to fully recognize and oppose the sexual violence that women suffer.**



**Hilda Morales, soloist with the American Ballet Theatre**

# Influence of Ballet and Dance

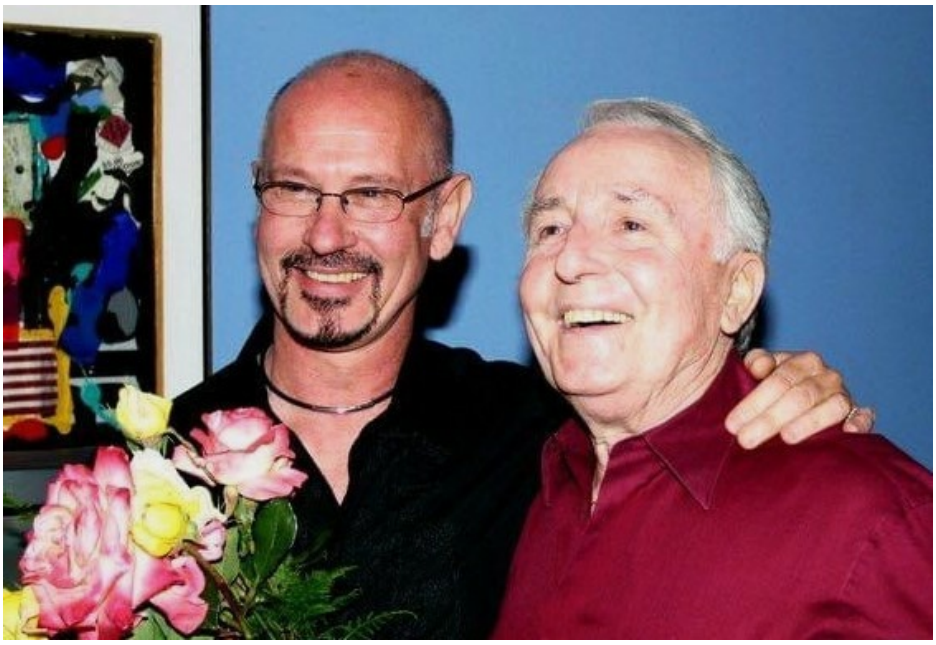
**During the time I was working on the medieval love story, *East of the Moon*, I went frequently to San Francisco for French classes at the Alliance Française and saw for the first time a performance of the American Ballet Theatre at the War Memorial Opera House with Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gelsey Kirkland dancing *Giselle,* a transforming moment in my life. As long as ABT was in town, I went nearly every day to see not only the classics, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but Anthony Tudor's *Jardin aux lilas,* a psychological mood dance set in a garden party where, dictated by social conventions of the Edwardian era, a young woman forced marry a man she does not love, comes to say farewell to the man she loves. As a nascent filmmaker, I was aroused by Tudor's choreography with its cinematic atmosphere, *Pillar of Fire* and *The Leaves Are Fading,* portraying a reverie of contemplative memories danced to Antonín Dvořák's sublime music.**

**When I returned from the countryside of Marin County to Los Angeles to design sets for Hollywood films, being mesmerized by dance, I went often to see American Ballet Theatre perform at the Dorothy Chandler Pavillion. One evening at the stage door after the performance, I began a friendship with Hilda Morales, a soloist with ABT. For several years, whenever ABT was in Los Angeles, I went to see her perform. She arranged for me to watch *Swan Lake* from the wings of the stage. While the ballet corps was waiting for the curtain to rise, the young dancers were jumping, spinning, and whirling like frolicking children. As the fog machines begin spewing out frothing vapor drifting across the stage floor and the curtain begins to rise, in the wink of an eye, the corps begins moving in military unison with the precision of a giant machine, an army of disciplined dancers."**



**Born in New York City and raised in Puerto Rico, Hilda was trained with Ana Garcia of the Ballet San Juan, and at 14, received a Ford Foundation Scholarship to study at George Balanchine's School of American Ballet, and became a principal dancer with the Pennsylvania Ballet before becoming a soloist with the American Ballet theatre, dancing the historic classics and works by George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Agnes de Mille, Anthony Tudor, John Butler, Alvin Ailey, and Jose Limon. Hilda was featured in the movie *The Turning Point* in the role of Sandra, directed by Herbert Ross. In retirement, she was on the faculty of the Central Pennsylvania summer program, and teaches ballet at The Hartt School faculty in Hartford, Connecticut. When I was in New York City, Hilda would arrange tickets to American Ballet Theatre performances at Lincoln Center, which was the pinnacle of my my time in New York City.**

**Smitten by everything dance, I saw a performance of Bob Fosse's *All That Jazz* starring Roy Scheider, Jessica Lange, and Ann Reinking, portraying the life of a womanizing, drug-addicted choreographer in "the midst of triumph and failure," a semi-autobiographical fantasy based on Fosse's life as a dancer, choreographer, and filmmaker. After winning the Palm d'Or at the 1980 Cannes Film Festival, (where my film *Death of the Red Planet*, was invited in 1974) *All That Jazz* received nine Academy Award nominations, for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best Actor, winning four, Best Original Score, Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design, and Best Film Editing. Considered the father of theatrical jazz dance, Fosse won the Academy Award for Best Director for the musical drama *Cabaret* in 1972 and was nominated for directing *Lenny* in 1974. Inspired by Fred Astaire, Fosse's intense modern jazz style, sexy and intense, mirrored his own frenetic life, and years later, influenced scenes in *Celine on Fire.***

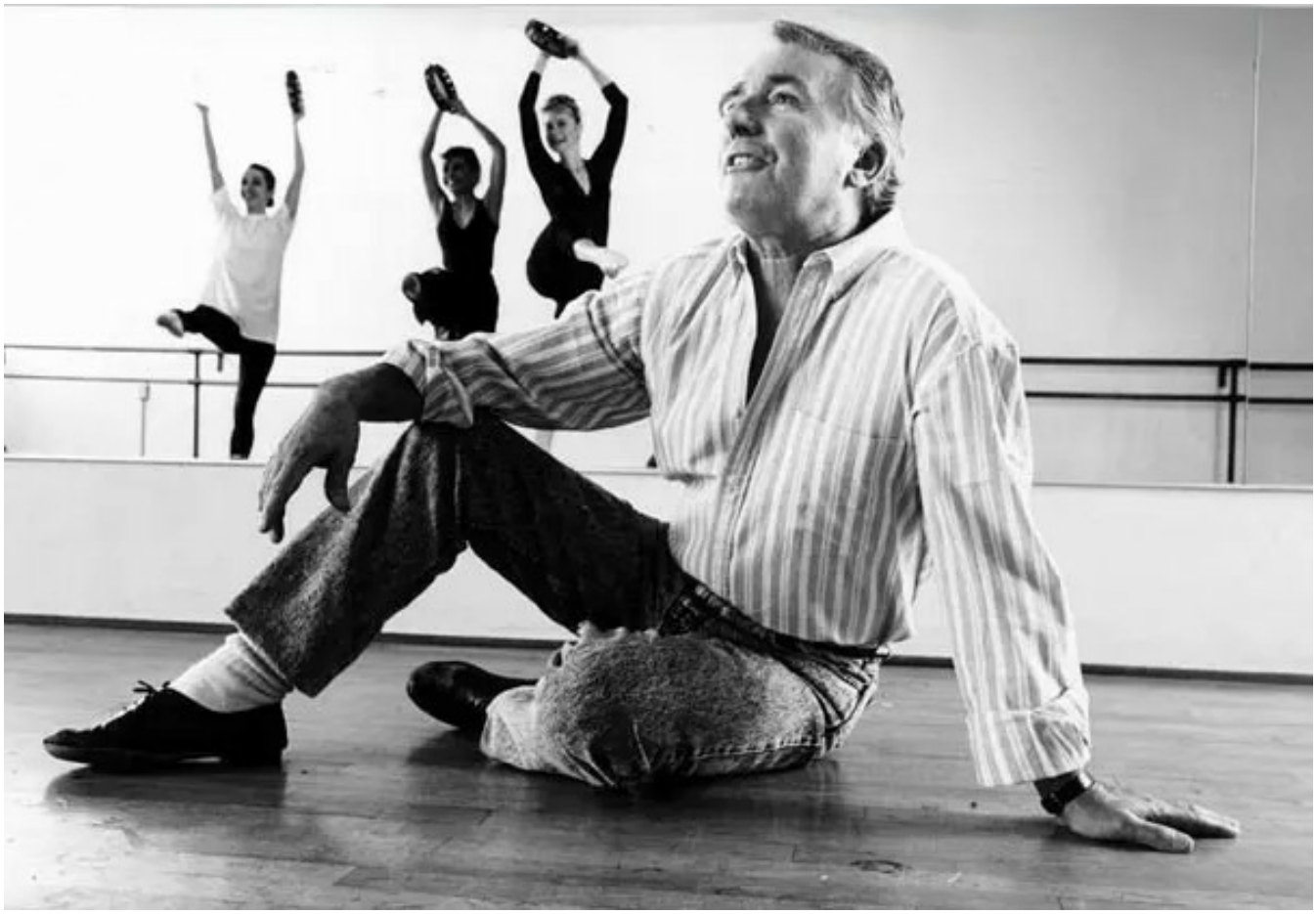


Michael Roberts with former Royal Ballet principal Stanley Holden upon the occasion of Michael receiving the Lester Horton Dance Award

**In 1976, London born pianist and composer Michael Roberts began playing the piano for the ballet class of former Royal Ballet Theatre dancer Stanley Holden in Los Angeles. The following year, while the film *The Turning Point,* starring Mikhail Baryshnikov was being made at nearby 20th Century Fox Studios, Baryshnikov began coming to Holden's class. When Juliet Prowse began taking the bar at the studio, she recognized Michael who had worked with her in London during her starring role on the Broadway musical *Sweet Charity*. Baryshnikov and Prowse became admirers of Michael's music and Michael released in 1978, his first *Music for Ballet Class* album that was an immediate success and followed it with five LP recordings and six CDs for ballet and modern dance class.**

**With the big success of *The Turning Point*, Stanley Holden's Ballet Studio became the place to take class while major companies were performing in Los Angeles. Hilda invited me to watch Holden's class, where besides Baryshnikov, I watched renowned dancers, Anthony Dowell, Natalia Makarova, Allegra Kent, Wayne Sleep, Leslie Browne, and Heather Watts take class. After class, Hilda introduced me to Michael for whom she had the greatest admiration for his sparkling spirit and musical talent. In 1980, Michael became the resident dance accompanist at the Los Angeles Music Center, which gave him the opportunity to play for major dance companies from all over the world. After Michael became the dance accompanist at the California Institute of the Arts, he was promoted to Music Coordinator at Cal Arts, remaining for twenty-two years before becoming the Music coordinator for the Colburn School dance program in downtown Los Angeles.**

**Michael Roberts piano tribute to Stanley Holden - https://share.google/nY3TloYjC7LjcJuKh**



**Stanley Holden's ballet studio on Pico Blvd. near 20th Century Fox Studios was the place to go for dancers to take class when a major ballet touring company was performing in Los Angeles. New York Times said, "Stanley Holden, whose Chaplinesque blend of wistfulness and wit made him one of the finest character dances in Britain's Royal Ballet before he settled in Los Angeles and became one of the area's most popular ballet teachers." After joining the Royal Ballet in 1944 at the age of 16, Holden became renowned for performing character roles, especially "Widow Simone" in Frederick Ashton's *La fille mal gardée*.**

**When Hilda first invited me to watch Holden teach class with the American Ballet Theatre dancers, it was a golden moment in my life. I had only discovered ballet two or three years previously when I began going to the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco to watch Maurice Bejart's Ballet of the Twentieth Century and American Ballet Theatre where unknowingly I saw Hilda in Antony Tudor's *The Leaves are Fading* but would not actually meet her until three years later in Los Angeles. For a connoisseur of ballet, watching the principal dancers Michael Barishnikov and Natalia Marakova take the bar was an extraordinary experience.**

**After retiring from the Royal Ballet in 1969, he opened the Stanley Holden Dance Center, where Mary Tyler Moore, Juliet Prowse, Ron Reagan, son of President Reagan, and ballet stars from American Ballet Theater and national companies from around the world took class under Holden's masterful direction. Many years later, at Stanley Holden's Memorial Service, I ran into Michael and renewed our old friendship, and began attending some of the ballet performances at the Colburn Dance Academy on Bunker Hill in downtown Los Angeles where he was musical director.**

**In her biography *Undimmed Lustre – The Life of Antony Tudor*, Mureil Topaz says, "Tudor's enigmatic personality, his English propriety mixed with his rapier-sharp, often vulgar wit, his overwhelming need for personal privacy, his insecurities, his total inability to compromise artistically, and his Zen Buddhism all made him a lonesome figure in the very communal dance world. While his work is subtle, detailed, and passionate, it eschews star turns and bravura displays of virtuosity. It demands great emotional and technical skills not always immediately obvious to the audience. He imbued the simplest gesture with profound meaning, bringing drama into 'academic' ballet. He mixed everyday gestures with the classical vocabulary and incorporated the ideas of Freud and Stanislavsky into his dances."**

**Tudor is recognized for creating the psychological ballet and how the past informs the present. In the early 20th century, philosopher Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* developed the concept of duration, La Durée, a non-linear experience of time that differs from the static, measurable concept of time used in scientific inquiries. The quantitative view of time in science, Bergson argued, failed to capture the qualitative, the human's lived experience of time. Bergson said, "The pure present is an ungraspable advance of the past devouring the future. In truth, all sensation is already memory." In 1927, Bergson was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, and in 1930, France's highest honor, the Grand-Croix de la Légion d'honneur, for his eloquence in contending that the human process of immediate experience and intuition are more essential in understanding reality than rationalism and science. In Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, he writes, "I cannot escape the objection that there is no state of mind, however simple, which does not change every moment, since there is no consciousness without memory, and no continuation of a state without the addition, to the present feeling, of the memory of past moments."**

**Bergson's concept of time and memory influenced Marcel Proust's exploration of memory in his seven volume novel *A la recherche du temps perdu.* While the focus on experience and memory was later embraced in the modern novels of Virginia Wolf and James Joyce, it was unheard of in the early 19th century. For Bergson and Proust, time was subjective, merging past, present, and the future. While James Joyce's *Ulysses*, published in 1922, reflects Bergson's stream-of-consciousness technique, by replacing a linear concept of time with psychological time, Antony Tudor brought the volatility of memory and time into ballet. The Ballet Rambert presented *Jardin aux lilas* (*Lilac Garden*) in London, 1936, Tudor's story of a young woman who is forced by Edwardian conventions to abandon her true love and marry a man she doesn't love. With its leitmotif of a woman encountering her memories, *Lilac Garden* is an early example of Tudor's ability to convey profound psychological insight and nuance through the art of ballet. Near the end, while the garden party dancers freeze in place, remaining unmoving for a long duration, she swoons in dread, then walks among the frozen dancers, a device that Tudor derives from cinema. *Lilac Garden*, one of Tudor's most beloved ballets, is performed by many companies around the world, still mounted today by the American Ballet Theatre and the Paris Opera Ballet.**

**Walter Terry, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 November 1941, wrote, "There is no other ballet which can match in richness of emotion and dramatic power Antony Tudor's *Lilac Garden*. . . . Tudor has taken the traditional steps of ballet and woven them into phrases of movement as articulate as poetry, as eloquent as spoken drama. . . the tremor of the body, the desperate clutch of a hand, the searching turn of a head reveal the anguish of broken lives, disclose the almost unbearable long of lover who are to be torn apart.**

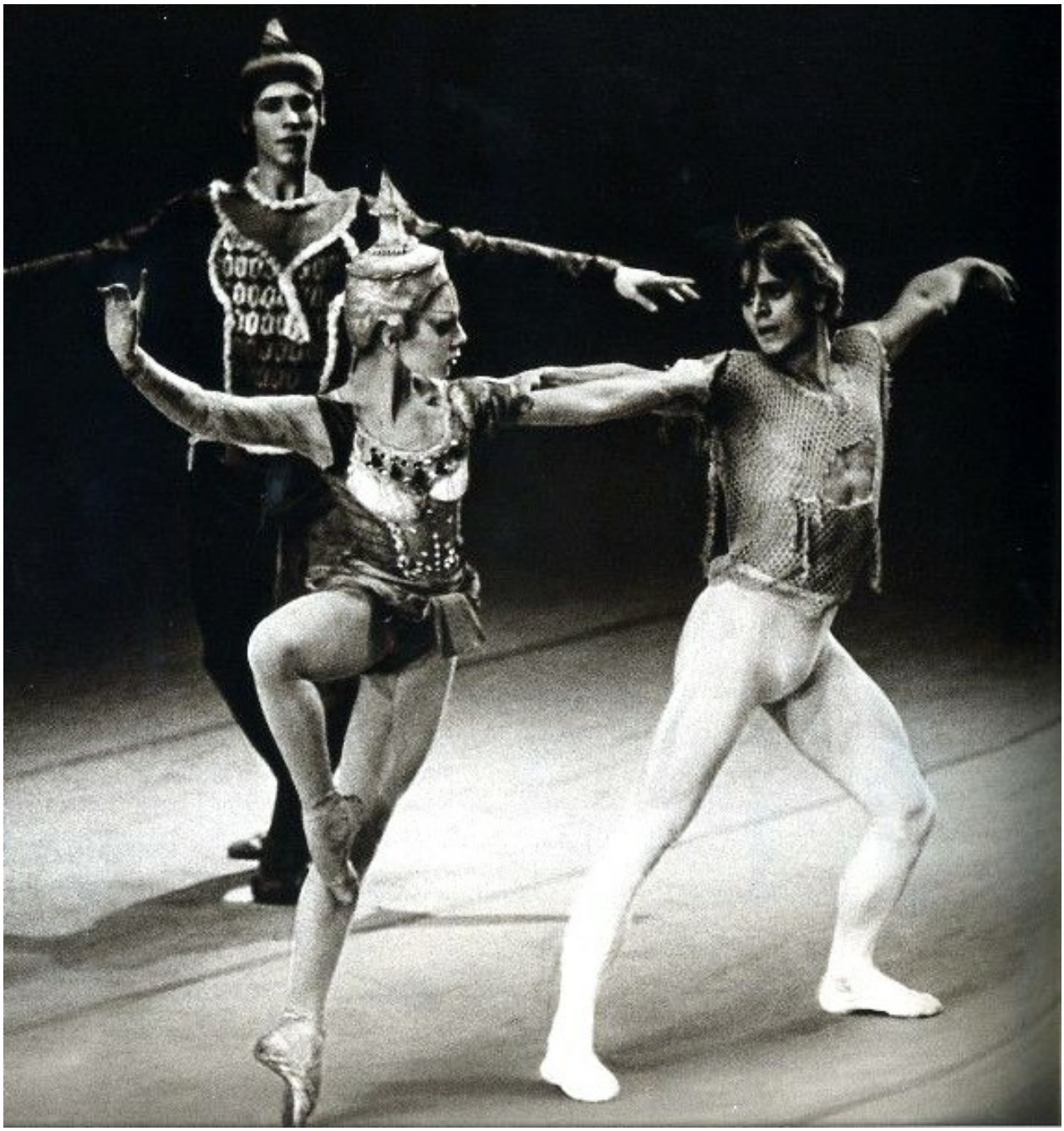


***Jardin aux Lilas*, choreography by Antony Tudor, Gelsey Kirland as Caroline and John Prinz as Her Lover – Author, Don Bradburn, source, *Shadowplay, The Life of Antony Tudor* by Donna Perlmutter.**



***Jardin aux Lilas* pas de deux. Ballet by Antony Tudor**

**Antony Tudor created *Jardin aux Lilas* in 1936, a ballet that broke with tradition when Tudor put dancers in Edwardian period clothing rather than conventional ballet costumes, which had never been done before. An admirer of films, Tudor was the first to use cinematic techniques, using flashbacks, freezes, and other cinematic techniques to enhance the psychological aspects of his characters.**



**Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gelsey Kirkland in Antony Tudor's *Shadowplay***

**Muriel Topaz said in her biography *Undimmed Lustre, The Life of Antony Tudor*, "Nora Kaye spoke of her fascination with Tudor's Stanislavskian rehearsal procedures. After the American Ballet Theater restaged *Pillar of Fire* to celebrate the ballet's 40th year, Martha Graham said, "Not only has he brilliance in handling a gesture, Tudor has a way of bringing the intimacy of the human spirit into gestural form. He has a supremely intelligent and introspective approach." Agnes de Mille said of *Pillar of Fire*, "I don't think since the Elizabethans, has there been this feeling in a theater. Tudor has found another way of saying things. This is a permanent work." Topaz writes, "In spite of his enormous reputation elsewhere, Tudor and his works were little known in France. . . Rudolf Nureyev organized a full evening of Tudor ballets in homage to his choreographic genius." Under Nureyev's direction, the Paris Opera staged twelve performances of *Continuo, Shadowplay, Jardin aux lilas,* and *Dark Elegies*.**



***The Leaves Are Fading*, pas de deux, ballet by Antony Tudor**



***La Class de Dance*– Author, Edgar Degas, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Wikimedia**



**A Joshua Tree homesteader, my cousin Revena with her 1920s Flapper dress. At the age of 77, Revena was still dancing.**

**While I was working for architectural firms and working on my MFA film degree at UCLA, I often visited my cousin Revena and fell in love with Joshua Tree. After my Grandmother Mary's sister Cora Ringler moved to California in the 1920s, her daughters Revena and Gwendolyn built homestead houses on adjacent parcels at the top of Whitefeather Road near the Joshua Tree Monument. Revena and Gwendolyn built a vegetable garden, raised goats for milk and rabbits for meat, hauling their water in a truck from Celesta Hollinger's well in the valley and pumping it up to a tower, providing water to the house by gravity flow. Revena kept her girlish figure by physically working hard all her life, maintaining her dancing skills and still capable of performing the Charleston on the bar counter of the Joshua Tree Saloon in her late seventies. When I moved to California in 1968 to attend UCLA for a graduate degree and visited Revena, she set up a dozen beds in the yard, holding family sleep overs outdoors because the house was so hot in summer.**

**When I bought a homestead cabin in 1988, I regularly observed people in their seventies and eighties walking along the dirt roads, raising vegetables and animals, and commonly living a long life with Revena and Gwendolyn living to 99 and 100. Lifestyles changed during the 1980s and 1990s, the descendants of the homestead generation assuming a sedentary lifestyle, gaining weight from inactivity, buying food from the supermarket, and living twenty years less than Revena and Gwendolyn.**

**I was fascinated with the tortoise contest held each year by the Joshua Tree community. Most homesteaders had a pet Mojave tortoise living in the desert around their home. Each morning, Revena's tortoise would come to her for a snack of lettuce then return to its burrow under a creosote bush. On the day of the tortoise tournament, each settler brought their tortoise to the center of town, placed their tortoises in the center of a field. A whistle was blown, and the race began. The tortoise that traveled the furthest was declared the champion tortoise. Today, the Mojave tortoise is practically extinct in Joshua Tree.**



**Conservationist Minerva Hamilton Hoyt, 1866 – 1845, was the prime mover in establishing the Joshua Tree National Park. Born to an upper-class family on a Mississippi plantation, she moved to South Pasadena, California in 1897 and acquired a passion for planting native desert vegetation. Disturbed by the widespread destruction of native desert plants, Hoyt began exhibiting desert plants all over the United States to introduce Americans to their special qualities and the importance of preserving the desert, transporting seven freight cars of sand, rocks, and plants to her New York exhibition. After her husband died in 1918, Hoyt devoted her life to desert conservation. Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., landscape architect, city planner, and wildlife conservationist. noted for redesigning the National Mall, Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and hundreds of American gardens, asked Hoyt to serve on a California commission to report on desert parks. In the 1930s, most Americans thought deserts were wastelands that did not deserve protection. Realizing that if she could gain national park status for Joshua Tree, it would safeguard its magnificent beauty, Hoyt founded the International Desert Conservation league, hired biologists and ecologists to strengthen her case for preservation and lobbied the state of California to create three desert parks, Joshua Tree, Death Valley, and Anza-Borrego Desert. With little success in the beginning, Hoyt persevered until she persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936 to establish the Joshua Tree National Monument under the 1906 Antiquities Act to protect 825,000 acres. Even though established as a monument, the park was reduced by 400 sq. mi in the 1950s to allow the mining of minerals, land that was largely restored when redesignated as the Joshua Tree National Park by the Desert Protection Act, 31 October 1994. The Mojave Desert Land Trust has conserved 10,000 acres around and in the park and sold 26,000 acres of purchased private property to the national park service. In 1990, the United Nations recognized the transition within the park between the Mojave and Colorado Deserts as a Biosphere Reserve, including Joshua Tree and Death Valley national parks.**



**Roof structure designed by Frei Otto for the main sports facility in Munich Olympic Park for the 1972 Summer Olympics, Munich, Germany.**

**Upon returning to Los Angeles from Marin County in northern California, I located an apartment a few blocks from Museum Row on Wilshire Boulevard featuring a garden with Canary Island date palms, a fig and a lemon tree, in which my friend from Paris, painter Michele Quence and I, staged several large garden parties. Upon joining the IATSE set designers union, I began designing sets for Universal Studios, including TV series, *Rosetti and Ryan*. After I screened *Death of the Red Planet* to Vice President Verna Fields, noted for her re-edit of director Steven Spielberg's *Jaw,* Verna recommended my design skills to Glen Larson who was producing the 3-hour pilot of *Battlestar Galactica.* Promoted to assistant art director, I showed producer John Dykstra and optical effects director of photography Richard Edlund how to make laser effects like my film, *Death of the Red Planet.* Hired by Larsen to design the gambling casino and cabaret on a distant planet, I created a club populated with creatures from different planets in the solar system. My design was Inspired by German architect and structural engineer Frei Otto, winner of the 2015 Pritzker Architecture Prize. Renowned for developing high strength tensile and membranes structures, Frei Otto designed the roof of the Olympic Stadium for the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. The casino and its later transformation into an assembly room for Adama, played by Lorne Green, commander of the Galactica spaceship, was constructed of nylon fabric held in tension by stranded steel cables. Within the nylon shell, transparent and translucent materials in the shape of an enormous butterfly were mounted on stainless steel rods radiating around a central suspended crown in a spiral pattern. The gambling tables were formed of plexiglass with strobe lights in a casino populated by aliens, a comic concept copied from George Lucas' *Star Wars*.**

**Photos of the *Battlestar Galactica* gambling casino appear in later pages.**

**The Prologue and reviews of my novel *Celine on Fire* are in the following segment.**



# *Céline on Fire*

A Novel by Dale Pelton

Reviews by Readers

**Set in 1950's Paris, Lausanne, and Eastern Europe. *Céline on Fire* is a coming of age love story between Celine, a dancer and Giovanni, a trumpet player in the worlds of jazz and dance. Personal tragedy and a passion to embrace the new, propel Céline into the wider world as she finds herself as both an artist and a woman. Bertrand Russell said, "To understand an age or a nation we must understand its philosophy, and to understand its philosophy we must ourselves be in some degree philosophers." Interweaving fiction with philosophical explorations, Céline explores colonialism, war and genocide in the 19th and 20th centuries, events that have led to the conflicts of today, its narrative telling a sweeping tale of loss, romance, and a love for music and dance.**



**Fred and Adele Astaire, publicity photography – Author, unknown, public domain, Wikimedia**

## Manhattan Book Review

***Celine on Fire*** **shows, through engaging discourse, how disparate events shape who we are today. We meet a colorful cast of characters, writers, musicians and dancers, each with their own unique take on life, a book stuffed full of philosophical discourse applied to history and culture. Pelton's attention to historic detail is top-notch. This is a book that belongs in class curricula. It's the brilliance and beauty of chaos theory.** ***Celine on Fire*** **is a book that will make you stop and think, reminding me of Voltaire's** ***Candide*****. Pelton's historical masterpiece is a sweeping drama and beautiful love story.**



**Moargot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev - Shutterstock**

## Midwest Book Review

**An original work of truly impressive literary caliber, *Celine on Fire* is as entertaining as it is thought-provoking, as deftly crafted as it is provocatively insightful. Exceptionally well written, *Celine on Fire* showcases author Dale Allan Pelton's genuine flair for interweaving historical elements into a chronicle about music and dance, populated by vividly drawn characters. The result is a book that will linger in the mind long after it has been finished and set back upon the shelf. *Celine on Fire* is unreservedly recommended for both community and academic library collections.**



**Ballerinas – Author, Anna Jurkovaska**

## Kirkus Book Review

**Young people in postwar Paris yearn for love while talking about historical tragedies in this book of ideas. The most unusual aspect of Dale Allan Pelton's three volume book is the way his deep dive into the catastrophes of history is revealed through the dialogue of dozens of characters. Céline is a 14-year-old ballet student and budding intellectual in Part I, 1955 who matures to 21 in Part III, 1962. Along with her rigorous ballet training, she discovers Paris with her best friend French Algerian Yasmina Hamina and learns about French colonialism from her 28-year-old sister, Yvonne, a Sorbonne professor of history and philosophy. One night, they share a taxi in the rain with Giovanni, 23, a talented Italian-American trumpeter playing Paris clubs with an African-American jazz group. Giovanni falls in love with Yvonne who becomes his philosophical mentor**



**Flamenco dancer Belen Maya – Author, Gilles Larrain, Shutterstock**

**When a terrible accident stills Yvonne's voice, years of emotional turmoil ensue as Céline questions whether her passion for the trumpeter will ever be requited, and in his mourning, Giovanni wonders whether he can commit to anyone. On a jazz tour behind the Iron Curtain in 1959 during a time of de-Stalinization, he learns from his Budapest fans about the USSR's savage repression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Marie Dvoracek, a Prague painter and member of an underground anti-Soviet women's resistance group, reveals to him Nazi and Soviet atrocities during World War II.**

**After Giovanni abandons Céline in Paris to return to New York City, she begins studying history and foreign affairs at the University of Lausanne and dance under Tomás, a master flamenco dancer who tells her about the Spanish Civil War, the Korean War, and Wahhabi Islam. By blurring the line between romance and history, the author introduces some dissonances in theme, tone, and pacing into his intensive exploration of history.**



**Notre Dame – Author, Deng Songquan, Shutterstock**

**Along with the analysis of history, Pelton conjures up impressionist Parisian scenes ("the street sweepers were clearing the grand avenues, the rose and amber light of the false dawn glowing through dissolving remnants of clouds") and colorful characters ("the photographer wore a crumpled mariner's hat, and a long canvas coat that reached to his ankles, his long rust-colored beard festooned with an array of bread crumbs") in clear, evocative prose.**

**Besides being a blossoming scholar, Céline is an athletic gamine, fending off a would-be rapist only to return to the dance floor the following day. From the leader of the jazz group, African American saxophonist Les Gordon, Giovanni learns about Jim Crow, lynching, and the suppression of black voters while Yvonne tells Céline about the consequences of colonialism in Africa and Asia, and informs Giovanni about the history of the Palestinians and Jews during the foundation of Israel.**



**Square du Vert-Galant and Pont Neuf, Paris – Author, Jacob Deboer, Shutterstock**

**Giovanni learns about Amayadiya Islam and the history of black music in America from drummer Mansur Hashim, and the story of the Armenian Genocide from avant-garde pianist Denis Bertrand. The numerous characters are polished lecturers, offering well-informed, cogent, readable accounts of everything from the creation of ballet slippers to French Renaissance King Henri III's band of swordsmen/assassins during the Wars of Religion. Many readers will find an absorbing read here---an intriguing genre blending of history, philosophy and atmospheric romance.**



**Jenna Bridge and Eiffel Tower – Author, Slavko Sereda, Shutterstock**



**Pont Alexandre III – Author, Catarina Belova, Shutterstock**

**An Intimate Story of a Young Woman on a Journey of Self-discovery – by Esther Shaw**

**Dale Allan Pelton illuminates modern history in a way that keeps the reader enthralled. Against a tender love story, conversations depict the traumas of modern and ancient war. This volume of love and war has a poetic flow that makes for an enjoyable read. For those who enjoy deciphering the truth from legend, *Celine on Fire* will keep you fascinated beyond the point of a review of history.**

**Young Celine is studying dance in Paris during post-World War Two, where her beloved sister Yvonne is a professor at the Sorbonne University. Giovanni, a trumpet player and recent immigrant from Italy, becomes involved in the lives of Yvonne and Celine. The historical facts flow throughout their conversations as well as those of the many colorful characters who enter their lives. African American jazzman, Les Gordon relates the story of Emmett Till, a boy from Chicago who went to Mississippi and was killed because of an assumption of flirting. The flamenco dancer and political refugee from Franco's Spain, Tomás Montoya pungently describes the American psyche being responsible for supporting McCarthyism: "He didn't create the fear, he just exploited it — Americans already had the fear."**



**Gargoyle and Chinera on Notre Dame – Author, unknown, Shutterstock**

**Marie Dvoracek, a painter in Prague, and Mansur Hashim, a Muslim African American musician, contribute cultural theories on art and music — while dance and music provides an entertaining contrast to the grizzly historical accounts of a nation's fanaticism and its destruction. The incredible stories of atrocities as well as bravery, altruism, and benevolence move throughout the pages questioning the morality of world leaders. Pelton's thorough research into the "whys and hows" of how we got to where we are today is highly commendable. However, this is more than a historical account of modern history, it is an intimate story of a young woman coming to an understanding of herself and the world around her. *"Celine on Fire"* provides an enchanting center of the remarkable world that we live in. It is a big book that is hard to put down because each chapter is an illumination of our American story.**

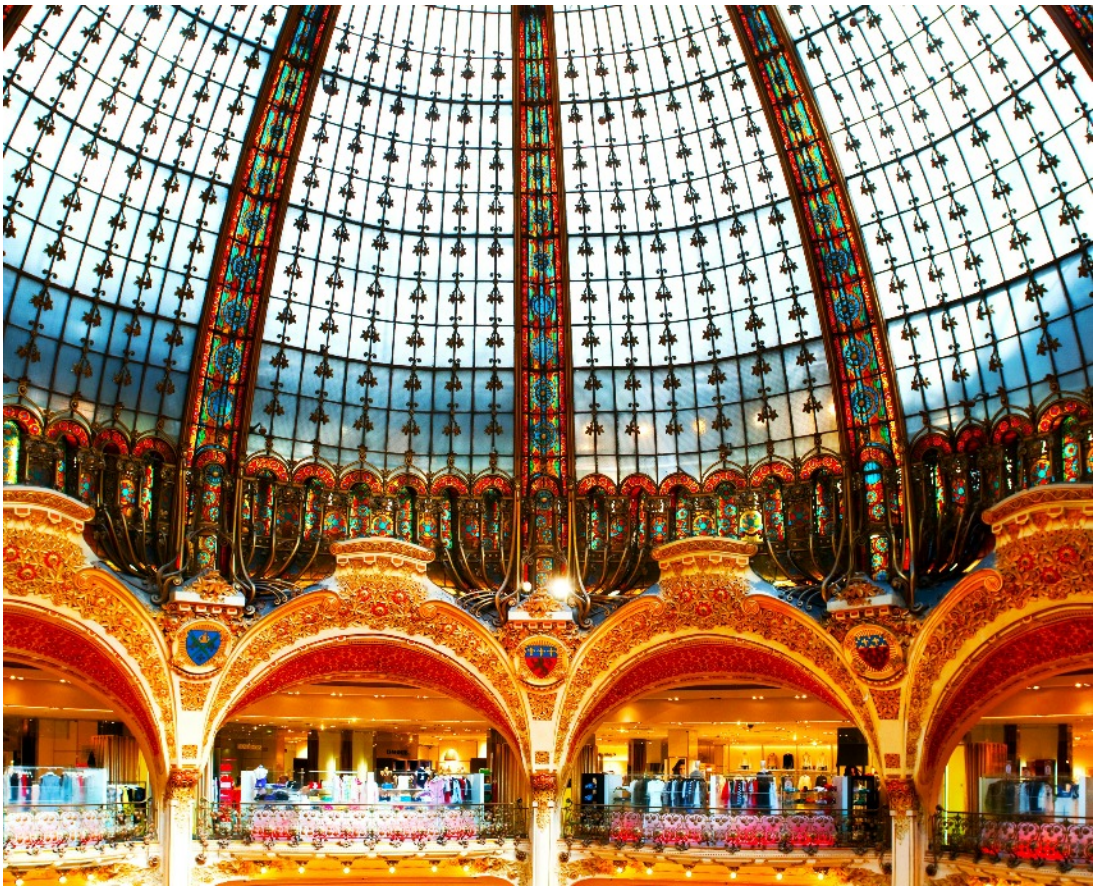


**Place Vendôme, Paris – Author, Petr Konvalenkov, Shutterstock**

## A Must Read, by Mark Konjevod

**Every now and then, a book is published that challenges one's thinking, and *Celine on Fire* masters that challenge. *Celine on Fire* is a tour de force. When two sisters, Celine and Yvonne Colbert, fall in love with the same man, Giovanni Sandretti, a jazz musician and immigrant from Italy, it provokes a complexity of emotions. While it is first and foremost a love story propelled by intense sensuality, what makes the novel so original is Dale Allan Pelton's ability to weave into the story by means of the characters' conversation — the fall of Germany's democratic Weimar Republic, the rise of Hitler and the fatal consequences of World War II in Europe and the Far East, the agony of the French Resistance, the brutal suppression of the Warsaw Uprising by the Nazis, the horrors of Babi Yar ravine in Kiev, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and how European intellectuals and artists dealt with that reality.**

**While the music segues from Maurice Ravel to Claude Debussy, from Irving Berlin to Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra to Miles Davis, Pelton uses music as a multi-faceted lens to bring to life the 1950's night life of African American and French jazz musicians, the many moments reminding me of Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron in "American in Paris." With her best friend, a French Algerian, the worldly 18-year-**



**Galerie Lafayette, Paris – Shutterstock 1017730003**

**old Yasmina Hamina, Celine goes shopping at Galerie Lafayette trying on hats in the millinery department when suddenly before the mirror they burst into a hat dance, hitting a groove, trying on all the hats, making up a dance to fit the hat, trying on berets and toques, bowlers and straw boaters, sailor hats and turbans, felt hats trimmed with "pink roses, yellow jonquils and purple lilies, spinning around and around, whirling faster and faster, wilder and wilder like drunken bacchantes." Yasmina spins a straw hat at Celine who grabs it out of the air and spins it back. While the straw hat is still in the air, Yasmina spins another hat at Celine, with hat after hat flying overhead, till soon the air is filled with a flock of flying hats until they are nabbed by the floor manager, "a lady no taller than a gremlin, an aquiline nose, tortoise eyeglasses, and amber quartz necklaces ringed in heaps around her birdlike neck."**

**On the night that the lovers are forced to separate, in a moment of desperation mixed with manic euphoria, begin to dance ecstatically in the rain, spinning their umbrellas, splashing in the puddles like Gene Kelly in "Singing in the Rain," Giovanni and Celine dancing down boulevard Saint-Michel at rush hour, "sashaying through shoppers and sailors, students and lovers, leaping over trash cans, spinning**




**Les Deux Maggots, Boulevard St. Germain, Paris – Author, Petr Kovalenkov, Shutterstock**

**around street lamps, leaping on top of fire hydrants and benches." Turning down a side street, Celine leaps on the hood of a car and then on the top, with Giovanni following as she leaps to another car and then another all the way down the block, crosses the street, jumps on another car, leaping from car to car back to boulevard Saint-Michel where Celine runs out of cars — the lovers are suddenly trapped in a whirl of automobiles creating a traffic jam — a policeman blowing his whistle as they escape into the portal of a shop. Luxuriating in their sensuality, the lovers make love in the parks of Paris in sunshine and rain, a counterpoint to the violence of the Algerian War of Independence where torture and atrocities rage between French Paratroopers and FLN insurgents.**

**While Giovanni, the Italian-American trumpet player, is traveling on a jazz cultural exchange tour behind the Iron Curtain, we glimpse the grimness of Soviet dominated Eastern Europe in 1959, Tito's break with Stalin, Truman's airlift that saved Berlin, and the heartbreaking tragedy of the Hungarian Revolution — themes eerily similar to many of the forces we are seeing in today's global climate, especially the conflict between the Ukraine and Russia, the results of Wahhabism, the bitter divide between Shia and Sunni, conflict between the Turks and the Kurds, Palestinians and Israelis — animosities still unresolved after World War One and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Not only is *Celine on Fire* a passionate love story, but it will also appeal to amateur World War historians who will devour the drama Pelton delivers. It is intense reading — a profound work of literature and a must read!**



**Maria Tallchief and Erik Bruhn – Cover *Dance Magazine,* Wikimedia**

**A Young Woman's Intriguing Odyssey, by David Hon**

**Although it is set in Paris in the 50s and early 60s, I found that *Celine on Fire* is really a book about where we are now. Celine is a 14-year-old in the process of becoming a dancer and a woman. The story ebbs and weaves through a Paris that has been a vortex in the history of the previous century. I like that its young Parisians, especially Celine, generate a wealth of stories of failed dynasties and strident conquerors that contributed to WWI and II and the Cold War period up to the Cuban missile crisis. Pelton illumines the conflicts of history while conjuring up a world of dance and music that will captivate young people.**

**While *Celine on Fire* follows a young woman's coming-of-age odyssey, it also lets you learn about French cooking and flamenco, jazz musicians and Gypsies, the plight of American Indians and U.S. Marines trapped in Korea's Chosen Reservoir, the author presenting history through photographs, political cartoons, and paintings. As Celine grows from fourteen to twenty-one, readers will delight in a read fraught with war and genocide, women's rights and the Algerian War – moral questions that weigh upon our characters and weigh upon our current moment even more.**




**Bas-relief in the wood of a lime tree by Jean-Louis Berthod, French sculptor from Albens, Savoy, not only a tribute to Alain-Fournier, author of *The Grand Meaulnes*, but also a homage to those who like Alain-Fourner, died in the First World War – Photo by Jesse Pinkman, Wikimedia.**

**The loss of Paola inspired my novel, *Céline on Fire,* set in 1950s Paris. An immigrant trumpet player from Viterbo, Italy, Giovanni grieves the loss of his childhood sweetheart who unexpectedly disappeared one day. Eighteen sample chapters of *Céline on Fire* are found on www.CelineOnFire.com**

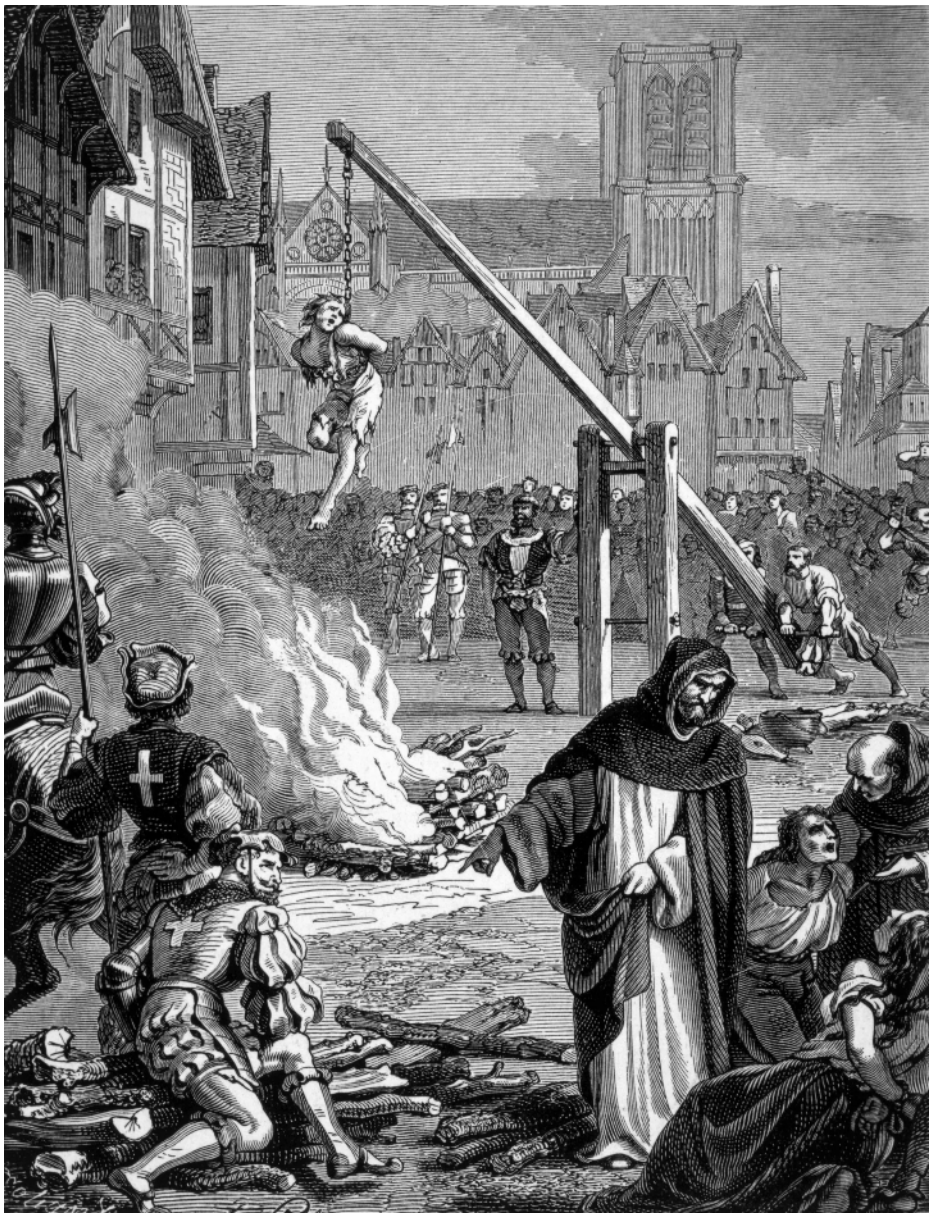
**Actor's reading: Céline and Yasmina meet street musician Père Flute at Les Halles, the Parisian market - Download M4A**

**Actor's reading: After the theatre, Céline and Emile go to the Isle of the Swans - Download M4A - Download MP3**



**Alain-fournier at Chapelle d'Angillon, 1905, author of *Le Grand Meaulnes* – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia**

***Le Grand Meaulnes*, a coming of age novel, was written by Alain-Fournier in 1913, one year before World War I, the most translated and read book in the France after *Le Petit Prince*, but relatively unknown in the United States. In a small school in Sologne, France, fifteen-year-old François Seurel falls under the charismatic spell of a new student, seventeen-year-old August Meaulnes who becomes the leader of the boys who christen him, "*le grand Meaulnes*" due to his height and imaginative escapades. One night, Meaulnes loses his horse far from home. Trying to find his way home on foot, he spies a stone tower rising over the forest, an 18th century manor where an extravagant party is celebrating the engagement of Frantz de Galais, son of the owner of the estate. Upon entering the grand celebration with everyone wearing extravagant costumes, Meaulnes is thunder struck by the beauty of a young girl, Yvonne de Galais, the sister of Frantz. When Frantz's financee Valentina Blondeau fails to appear, the joyous occasion is abruptly terminated. Madly infatuated with Yvonne, Meaulnes manages to speak to her, promising to see her again. As he struggles to find his way home to Sologne that night, he carries with him a burning memory of Yvonne, but upon awakening the next day is in despair for he has no idea how to find the manor again. The novel parallels the life of Alain-Fournier who a year after publication in 1914, joined the French army to fight the German invaders and one month later was killed in combat at the age of 27 near Vaux-lès-Palameix. Alain-Fourner's body was not identified until 77 years later and buried in the cemetery of Saint-Remy-la-Calonne. Over many years, *Le Grand Meaulnes* haunted me. His loss of Yvonne mirrored my loss of Paola Gonbet when I was nineteen. Impulsive and passionate, Meaulnes inspired the writing of *Celine on Fire.* His dream-like quest was the essence of my romantic ideal – the search for something lost and unobtainable in the mysterious world of adolescence.**



**Huguenots tortured after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685 – Everett Historical**

# Celine on Fire

## Prologue

**The news we consume tells us what happened today but does not tell us what happened in the same place in 1918 or 1946. Without historical knowledge, we are ill equipped to stop a demagogue from gaining power through our electoral process. The Nazi Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda Josef Goebbels said, "One of the most ridiculous aspects of democracy will always remain. . . the fact that it has offered to its mortal enemies the means by which to destroy it.'" A dictatorship gets things done rapidly while by its very composition, a democracy is slow and contentious. While leaders in a democracy can be replaced through the electoral process, leaders in a dictatorship cannot be removed without violence. The bedrock of democracy is the freedom of the press and the right to vote, but the United States learned on January 6, 2020, how a democracy might be overturned. In the following pages, I will illustrate the fragility of democracy and how by strengthening our knowledge of history, it can be preserved.**



**Benito Mussolini called himself Il Duce, the leader – Daily Galaxy, public domain**

# Prologue

**Voting rights are under attack in America. Access to voting is being limited in Georgia, Arizona, Florida, and Texas. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in 1964, "The right to vote freely for the candidate of one's choice is of the essence of a democratic society, and any restrictions on that right strike at the heart of representative government." Freedom House Report documents the democratic recession with more countries moving away from democracy than are moving towards democracy. An authoritarian system in the Russian Federation imprisons, tortures, and murders activists. The artists and thinkers of Céline show us that without a free press and a transparent electoral process, a democracy cannot survive.**

***Céline on Fire* is about how the past haunts the present. Like Voltaire's *Candide* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The New Heloise, Céline on Fire* uses dialogue to examine philosophical questions in an extended essay. Set during the Cold War in Paris, Lyon, Lausanne, and behind the Iron Curtain, 1955 to 1963, beginning with the French Algerian War and ending with the Cuban Missile Crisis, the characters of Céline talk about how ultra-nationalism was used by demagogues Mussolini and Hitler to fool the people, overthrow a democracy and establish a dictatorship. With the escalating assaults on the free press and an independent judiciary, and the rise of authoritarianism, we question whether we are marching back to the 20th century when ethno-nationalism devoured more lives than in all preceding centuries. Considering the relentless carnage of man against man, Céline asks: "Why do good men commit atrocities?**

Eighteen sample chapters of *Céline on Fire* are available on www.CelineOnFire.com



**Anneken Hendriks, a Frisian Mennonite, burned in Amsterdam, 1571. Engraving by Jan Luyken, Source, Roger-Viollet, public domain, Wikimedia**

**The study of history is essential because it helps us to understand the origin, success, and failure of the forces active in forming a civilization. History is more than affairs of state and military adventures. As French historians, Lucien Febvre, Henri Hauser, and Marc Bloch declared when they founded the Annales School of history in 1929, to understand the shifting currents in a society, history must integrate the impact of economics, technology, environment, climate, psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, philosophy, the arts and humanities in a holistic way. Marc Bloch stressed the importance of cross-examining people — much like a detective searching for the reality concealed beneath events. Much information is poisoned by false rumors, frauds, and myths. Bloch discovered that the early Middle Ages with its proliferation of forged documents was an example of mankind's predilection for mythomania. Many people are compulsive liars and fabricators. People believe things because it's useful to believe or because their income depends upon it. History must delve into popular culture, the workers and artisans, the forgotten people, those who have been left out of the history books. There is a Nigerian proverb, "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."**

**History does not travel in a straight line but moves like ocean waves striking the beach and receding to break once again, eroding the shore in an endless succession of waves. In the 12th century, Christian Europe experienced a renaissance of knowledge and progress that had not existed since the early days of the Roman Empire, an age of relative toleration and the advancement for all classes — an early enlightenment where philosophical and artistic life flourished. But in the following 13th and 14th centuries there was a reverse of the previous enlightenment — economies collapsed, the bubonic plague and war wiped out cities, destroying the advances of civility, returning to the intellectual and religious intolerance of previous centuries. Jews and Muslims were driven from Europe and thousands of witches burned even into Goethe's lifetime.**



**Defendants in the Beer Hall Putsch trial. From left to right: Pernet, Weber, Frick, Kriebel, Ludendorff, Hitler, Bruckner, Röhm, and Wagner, 1 April 2024 – Author, Heirich Hoffmann, public domain, Wikimedia**

**For every advance in the rights of humankind, the abolition of slavery and serfdom, the establishment of freedom of speech and religion, the separation between church and state, right of trial by jury, the prohibition of cruel punishment, the abolishment of child labor, the right of workers to organize, the right of women to be equal to men — there is a step backward to a more intolerant era. Populism and the fear of foreigners is rising in this moment with hyper-nationalism flourishing in Hungary, Poland, Brazil, Russia, China, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and in our own country as well. We are moving backwards to a darker time when nationalism led to the bloody tragedy of World War One.**

**Whenever there is a loss of a war or an economic depression that arouses popular fury over the disparity of wealth, there will be a leader who demands, "Give me total power and I will restore our nation's glory." During the 17th century Enlightenment, emerging democracies were overthrown by authoritarian rulers. Fifteen years after the French Revolution's overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy in 1789, Napoleon Bonaparte made himself emperor. Four years after the democratic revolution of 1848, in a coup d'état, once again, an elected leader, Napoleon III crowned himself emperor. Mussolini was a constitutional prime minister in 1923 before gradually dismantling the institutions of democracy, removing the opposition through his secret police, outlawing labor strikes, extrajudicial killings by his Black Shirts, passing laws establishing a one-party dictatorship and by 1925 anointing himself *Il Duce,* the supreme leader.**

**After Germany's humiliating loss to France in World War One, the shameful misery of harsh reparation payments and the collapse of German money, the country was ready for a demagogue who told the people what they had been waiting to hear. After Hitler failed to take over the Bavarian government in his Beer Hall Putsch, while writing *Mein Kampf* in prison, he decided to establish an authoritarian government through legal means, appearing to abide by constitutional law while simultaneously demolishing democracy.**

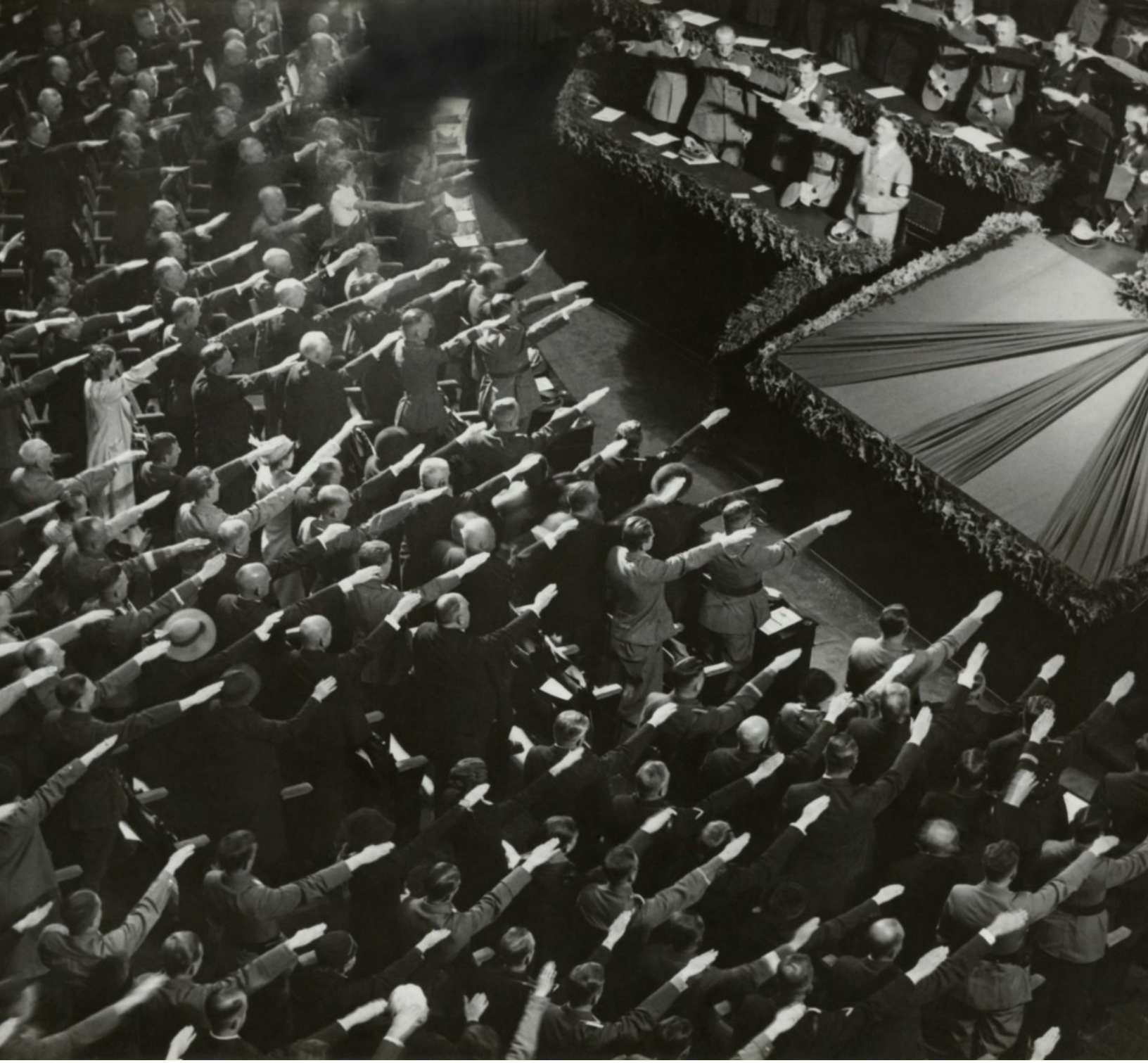
**By 1933, Hitler's Nazi Party still did not have a majority in the Reichstag. Although the corporate leaders had initially opposed him, considering him a ranting clown, their opinions began to change due to his emerging political support and the threat of his shock troops in the streets. In secret meetings, Hitler persuaded the leaders of the large corporations that he would make Germany great again by creating a vast program of rearmament to generate a great economic expansion.**

**German industrialists were not alone in placing their faith in Hitler; the head of General Motors, Alfred P. Sloan, believed that the Nazi form of totalitarianism was a better system of government than Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. IBM's Hollerith data processing machines were used by the *Schutzstaffel* to identify Jews by census data, to track slave laborers and death camp prisoners, and implement the final solution. General Motor's Adam Opel AG subsidiary manufactured many of the trucks for Hitler's invasion of Poland and Russia. GM Opel produced the engines of the Luftwaffe's JU-88 bombers that devastated London during the Battle of Britain, manufactured the land mines of the Wehrmacht and the detonators for the torpedoes that sunk American ships. Hitler was good for business.**



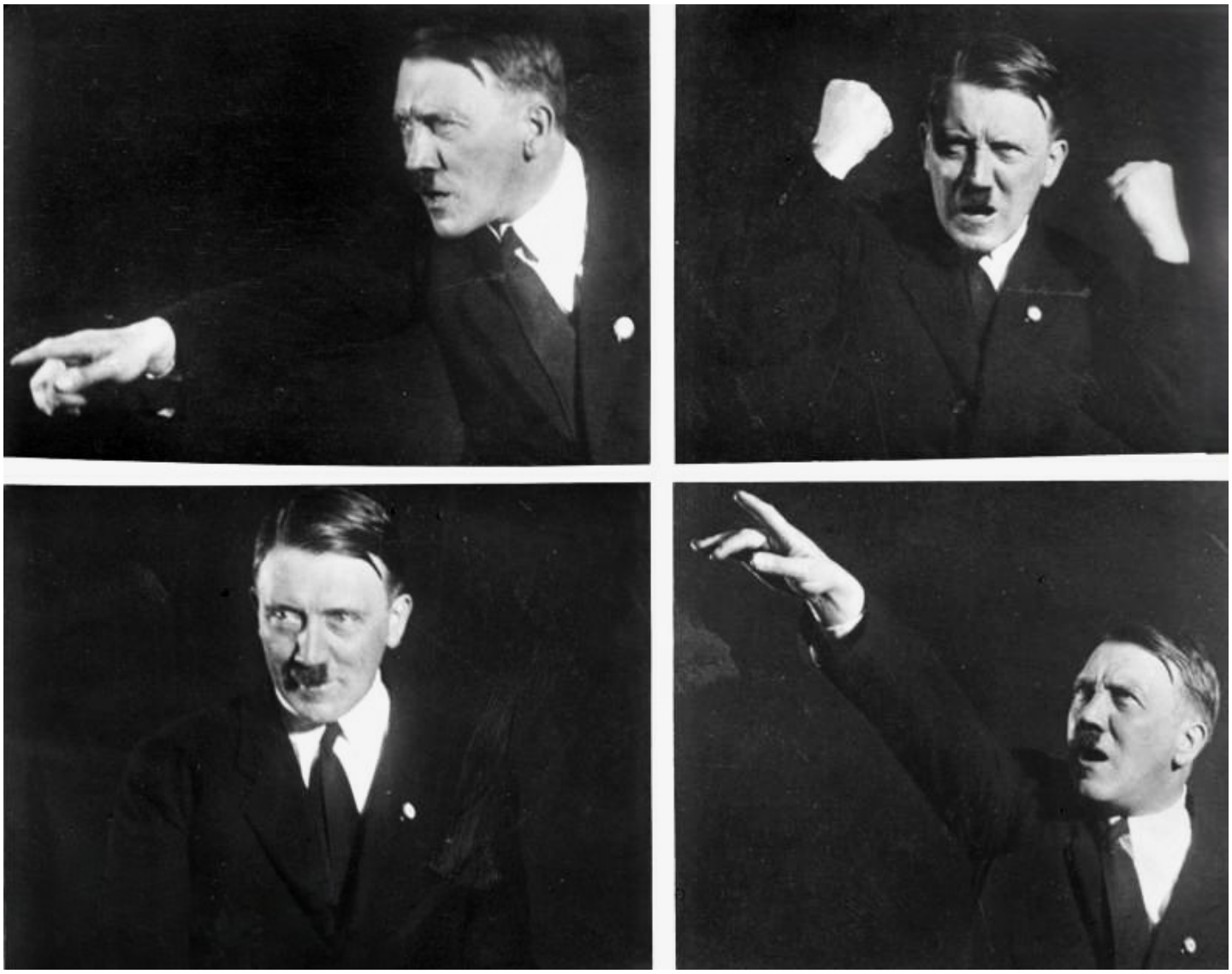
**U.S. owned GM Opel manufactured the majority of the trucks for Hitler's invasion of Poland and Russia – Everett Historical, Shutterstock.**

**Corporate leaders of Germany, fearing the popularity of communism, believing that Hitler would make the economy surge, and confident that his worst instincts would be mollified by their financial power, created a clandestine multi-million-mark fund to finance Hitler's campaign in the 1933 election. But the businessmen were wrong. They could not control him. How could so many people in a democracy go wrong? Once the free press is suffocated, and the judicial system is taken over by the executive branch, democracy is lost. By dramatizing Germany's shame over its loss in World War One, and the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty that left Germany bankrupt, Hitler's theatrical mass rallies and the threat of brown shirts in the streets, convinced the Germans to elect an absolute dictator.**



Reichstag delegates salute Adolf Hitler at the Kroll Opera House after the Reichstag Fire – Everett Historical, Shutterstock

**After President Paul von Hindenburg appointed him chancellor, Hitler proclaimed in the Reichstag that he was the supreme judge of the German people. The burning of the Reichstag assembly hall gave Hitler an opportunity to proclaim the Reichstag Fire Decree, suspending the right to assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and giving the police the right to arrest anyone without charge. One million Germans were thrilled by the mystical drama of the 1934 Nuremberg Rally where Hitler's hysterical speeches inspired fanatical loyalty. "The great masses of the people," Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*, "will more easily fall victims to a big lie than to a small one." The wizard of the Big Lie blamed the demise of Germany on *untermenschen* — subhumans — Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs, aliens who were defiling the purity of the Aryan race. By sanitizing the blood of Germany, the nation would become great again.**



Adolf Hitler rehearsing his speech– Everett Historical

**After hearing Hitler speak, one historian said, "I was seized with a nationalistic pride. Nearly hysterical, I shouted until I was hoarse, *Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!* From that moment on I belonged to Adolf Hitler, body and soul." "Words," Joseph Conrad said, "are the great foes of reality." Ecstasy and politics**

**After President von Hindenburg' death, Hitler called for a national election to decide whether he should be given the position of both chancellor and president. Ninety percent of the German electorate voted yes. Once elected, Adolf Hitler abolished the presidency and declared himself Führer of Germany — a man who was not even a German citizen four years before. After persuading the army to swear absolute loyalty to the Führer, backed by the SS who assassinated liberals and communists, he outlawed the opposition, established the Gestapo secret police, and made the Reich a one-party state. The Führer passed the Enabling Act seizing from the legislature the power to make laws, suspending the constitution, and issuing the Nuremberg race decrees in September 1935, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, forbidding marriages and extramarital intercourse between Jews and Germans, and the Reich Citizenship Law declaring that only those of German or related blood were eligible to be Reich Citizens. The final blow to the Weimar Republic's fledgling democracy was the appointment of Joseph Goebbels to head the Ministry of Public Enlightenment, giving the Nazi Party absolute control of public opinion**




**Burning of the Reichstag - Berlin, 27 February 1933 – Shutterstock, Everett Historical**

**The Reichstag Fire Decree, signed by President von Hindenburg on 27 February 1933, authorized Hitler to arrest the Communist parliamentary delegates, enabling him to wield total power.**



**SS troops carry victory standards, Nuremberg Rally, 1933 – Shutterstock, Everett Historical**




**SS troops carry victory standards, Nuremberg Rally, 1933 – Shutterstock, Everett Historical**



**Luftwaffe fly-by in honor of Hitler's birthday - Shutterstrock, Everett Historical**



Joseph Goebbels ordered free radios to be distributed in Berlin on his birthday, October 1938 – Author, Nau, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia

**One of Hitler's most devoted followers, Joseph Goebbels was renowned for his public speaking ability and virulent antisemitism, advocating the extermination of the Jews. After obtaining a doctorate in philology from the University of Heidelberg and joining the Nazi Party in 1924, Goebbels became intrigued with the new media of radio and film. Once placed in control of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Goebbels gained complete command of the news media and the arts to shape German public opinion and morale.**




German Reich poster – Everett Historical




German Reich poster – Everett Historical



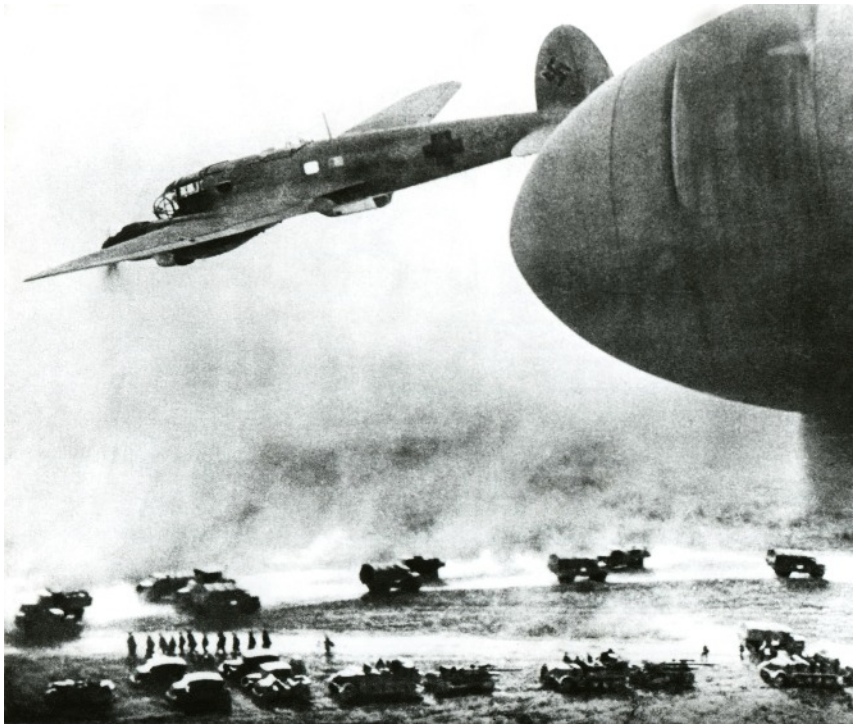
**Nazis ransack the library of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, Director of the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin – United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Wikimedia**



**Nazi Book Burning – Source, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia**

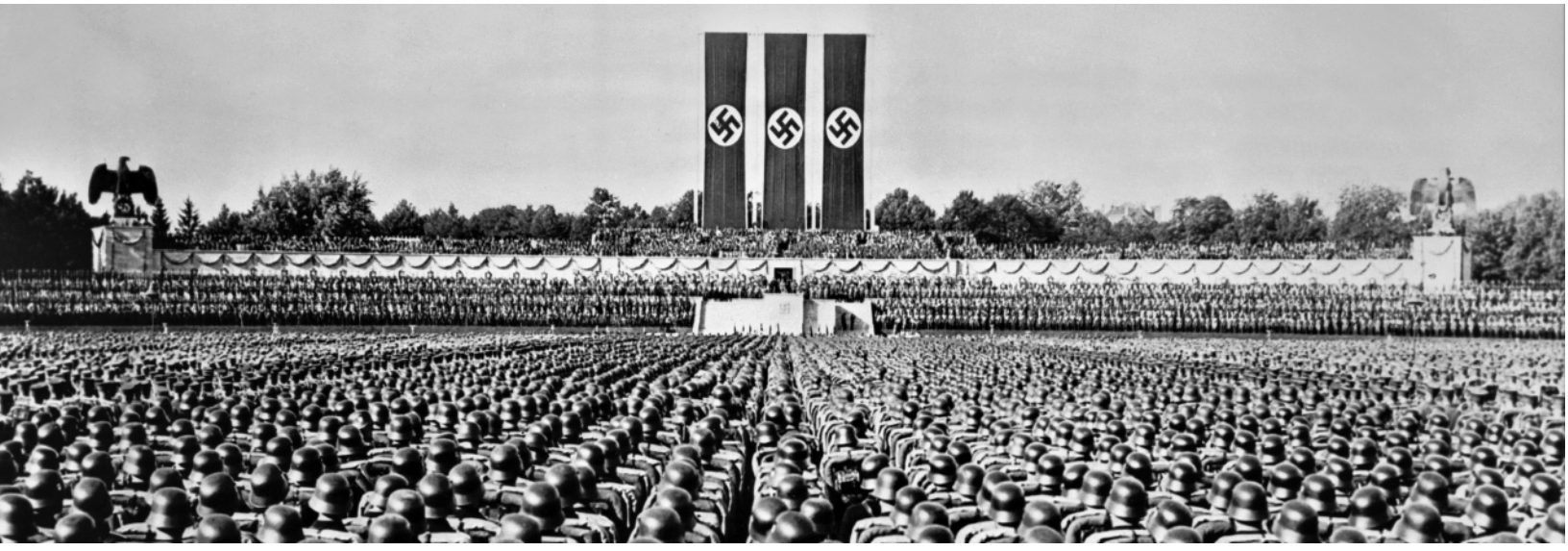


**Buchenwald Concentration Camp, 1945, Russian, Polish, and Dutch slave laborers – Everett Historical, 249574138. Constructed by the SS in 1937, Buchenwald held Jews, French, Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Roma and Sinti Gypsies, Freemasons, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and prisoners of war to provide slave labor for the adjacent armament factories. It is estimated that 56,000 died at Buchenwald near Weimar, Germany where the writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had strolled in the surrounding Beechwood forests. Buchenwald was liberated by the US Army, 11 April 1945**



**Operation Barbarossa, code name for the invasion of the Soviet Union, 22 June 1941, authorized by Hitler, 18 December 1940 – Everett Historical, Shutterstock**

**Hitler's program of Lebensraum, the capture of land for German people to resettle, compelled the invasion of the Soviet Union. On 18th December 1940, Hitler ordered Operation Barbarossa with the invasion commencing on Sunday, 22 June 1941 with 3.8 million troops, 600,000 motor vehicles, and over 600,000 horses, the largest land offensive in history that, captured five million Soviet troops and killed 3.3 million Soviet Prisoners, millions of civilians, and murdered over a million Russian Jews. Named after Frederick I, Barbarossa, the red beard, the Holy Roman Emperor and Crusader of the 12th century, Operation Barbarossa had the goal of acquiring the oil reserves of the Caucasus, the agricultural fields of Ukraine and Byelorussia, the seizure of workers for enslaved labor in German factories, and the mass deportation of Slavic people to Siberia, a failed assault that eventually engaged 10 million combatants and resulted in 8 million deaths.**



**Nuremberg Rally, 1936 – Shutterstock, Everett Historical**

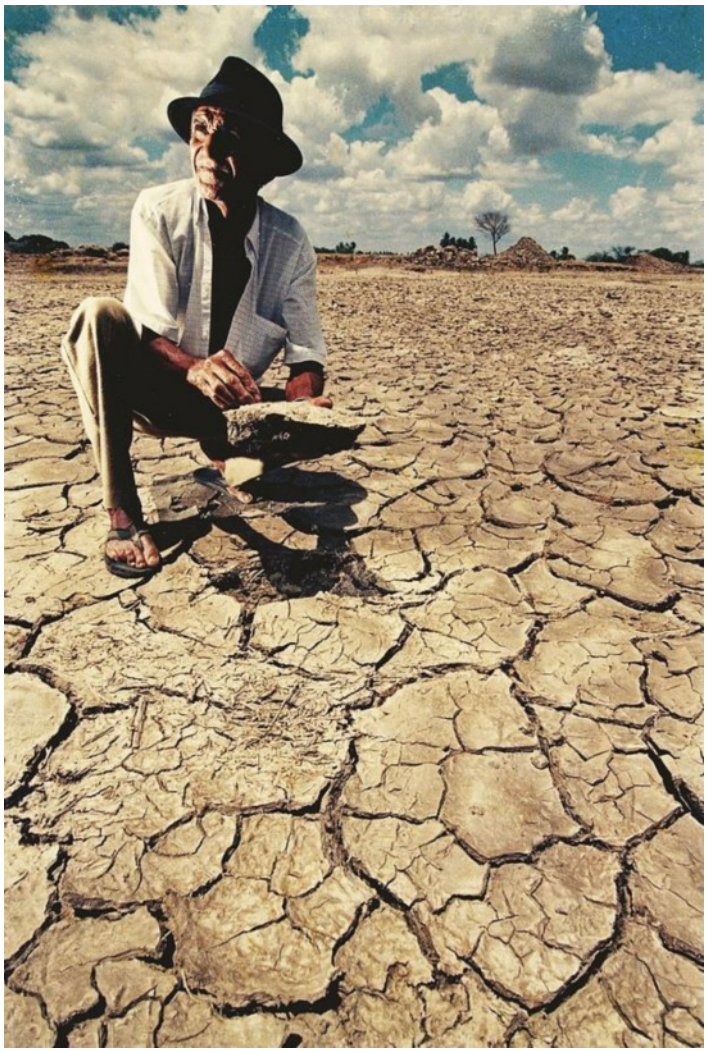


**Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, 1933 – 1945 – Unknown author, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia**

The tongue has the power of life and death – Proverbs 18:21

**All the democracies in the West misjudged Hitler. The more they appeased him, the more powerless they were to stop him from taking even more totalitarian measures. The absence of a democratic tradition in German history was an enormous factor in the failure of the democratic Weimar Republic. Authoritarianism had strong roots in Germany. Before the Weimar Republic, the people had never lived under a democracy. By 1933, Hitler's aggressive intent was apparent. Had the European nations systematically opposed his hostile intentions, they could have possibly contained him. From the moment of Hitler's assent to power in 1933 to 1945 — Thanatos, the Lord of Death, cast his shroud over the western and eastern hemispheres and eighty million people died.**

# How Climate Change Has Injured My Garden



**Desertification in Brazil – Author, LeoNunes, Wikimedia**

**My struggle with drought in Joshua Tree, is paralleled on all five continents. Out of six of trees I planted over 35 years, an average of only one tree of the six has survived. Even drought tolerant trees died during the nine months without rain. Drought tolerant Mojave yucca, mesquite, and palo verde perished, some six and seven years old. Long established, Leylandii and Arizona Blue cypress died, over forty trees dying during peak temperatures of 111 degrees continuing seven weeks straight. The dried up lake beds, dried forests of California and all the West wait for an inevitable spark that will ignite massive fires in forests decimated by boring beetles and severe drought throughout the American and Canadian West while rainstorms generated by hurricanes drown Houston and completely obliterate the mountain town of Swannanoa, North Carolina. Despite the mounting droughts and floods, many Americans still refuse to commit to what must be done to combat the destruction caused by a radically changing climate.**



**Desertification in Brazil – Author, Sergio Valle Duarte, Wikimedia**

**For most of history, humans have lived on lands where comfortable temperatures made it possible to produce an abundance of crops, but in next fifty years, the World Bank Groundswell report estimates that increasing heat will produce uninhabitable living conditions on twenty percent of the earth's land, forcing a third of humanity to either live in uninhabitable conditions or migrate to cooler climates.**



**Addaxes threatened by drought – Author, cuatrok77, Wikimedia. Like the Big Horn sheep of Joshua Tree, the antelope addax is able to live without water for prolonged periods of time, but due to over hunting by tribes dependent upon their meat and leather, habitat destruction and extreme drought, the addax is extinct in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, and Sudan, with only a few existing in the wild in Chad, Mauritania, and Niger.**



**Farmer and sons walking in the face of a dust storm, Cimarron County, Oklahoma – Author, U.S. Farm Security Administration. Library of Congress, public domain, Wikimedia**

**During the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, great winds blew away the topsoil in black blizzards of dust in America's worst environmental disaster. Originally concentrated in the western Oklahoma Panhandle, the Texas Panhandle, southeastern Colorado, and northeastern New Mexico, the manmade disaster forced millions of people to migrate. The seeds of disaster were cast when Congress passed the Enlarged Homestead Act in 1909 to encourage settlement where farming had previously been considered infeasible. The Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916 provided easy credit for gasoline-powered tractors, resulting in "The Great Plow-Up,' during a time of wet weather in the 1920s, which converted the natural grassland of the prairie to wheat fields on a vast scale. But beginning in 1931, a drought with scorching temperatures with hundred-mile-wide dust blizzards hit the plains. During 1934, the middle of the Great Depression, more than one hundred Black Blizzards blew. With no grass to eat, the cattle starved, dust piled up, burying homes. Unable to breathe in dust storms, people wore gauze masks to survive dust blizzards that spread over the Great Plains, carrying away 100 million acres of plowed topsoil. Timothy Eagan tells the history of a dozen families in *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl.***



**Dust storm approaching Stratford, Texas – Author. George Everett Marsh Jr. U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, public domain, Wikimedia**

**The drought came in three waves, 1934, 1936, and 1939-1940, driven by a combination of factors: severe drought, farming land that was unsuitable for European agricultural practices, lack of surface water, and failure to use dryland farming methods to prevent erosion in an area notable for fierce winds. Some regions were in drought for as long as eight years. After the completions of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, a wave of immigrants began settling the Great Plains, vastly increasing the acreage under cultivation. Misled by a wet period, optimistic settlers and the government became convinced that the changing climate of the semi-arid plains could support large-scale agriculture, a popular myth pushed by real estate promoters. Mechanized plowing and harvesting made it possible to operate larger farms, an example of technological advancement being my grandfather Willis Edward Pelton's 1903 patent for the corn harvester when Oklahoma was a territory. The advantage of internal combustion engine tractors and harvesters encouraged farmers to convert great expanses of grassland into croplands, thereby removing the native, deeply rooted grasses that trap moisture allowing the wild grass to survive periods of drought and sweeping winds. U.S. farmers increased production because of the destruction of European agriculture in World War I and during the Russian Civil War, Bolshevik and White armies disrupted the grain harvests that had fed the world, a situation that is repeated today with the Russo-Ukrainian War restricting grain exports from the breadbasket of Ukraine.**



**Dust Bowl, Texas Panhandle – Author, Arthur Rothstein, U.S. Farm Security Administration. Library of Congress, public domain, Wikimedia**

**After the Treaty of Versailles was signed at the Paris Peace Conference, ending World War I, the increased demand for grain in Europe motivated American farmers to vastly increase cultivation, between 1920 and 1930 doubling the number of acres under cultivation in the Great Plains. When the drought of the 1930s seized hold on the plains, unanchored by the native grass, soil was transformed into fine dust and prevailing winds swept it up into the sky to form immense black clouds, "black blizzards." rolling across the plains, reducing visibility to ten feet, so dense that one couldn't breathe. The resulting erosion of topsoil degraded 100 million acres in Kansas, New Mexico, eastern Colorado, the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles. Unable to grow crops, tens of thousands of stricken families had no choice but to abandon their homesteads and head for the promised land of California in Ford Model Ts, memorialized in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath.***



**Aftermath of the Dust Bowl in the Great Plains region of the United States, Dallas, South Dakota, May 1936 – Author, Sloan, U.S. Department of Agriculture, public domain, Wikimedia.**

**Since many fleeing from their ruined farms were from Oklahoma, they called them "Okies" who arrived in a state that didn't want them. It was the middle of the Great Depression when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was hell bent on saving Americans from starvation in a hollowed out economy. In 1928, Hugh Hammond Bennet, a soil scientist who had studied erosion in America, published a United States Department of Agriculture publication, *Soil Erosion: A National Menace,* which sparked the creation of the Soil Erosion Service in 1933. Bennet's efforts impelled Congress to pass the Soil Conservation Act that was signed by President Roosevelt in April 1935. Farmers were paid to plant two hundred million wind-breaking native red cedar and green ash trees across the Great Plains from Canada to Texas, creating shelterbelts to break the wind and encouraged crop rotation to prevent the depletion of mineral nutrients. On the brink of World War II, the Great Plains turned green again in 1939 when the rain finally returned. Recent research indicates that a drought as great as that of the 1930s is possible today with heat rising exponentially each year. The nine month California drought of 2024, killed 60 of my trees and created the conditions for wildfires that burned thousands of homes in Altadena and Pacific Palisades, including the home I designed for Robert and Claudette Grand on Granola Street. Today, floods and prolonged droughts are exposing topsoil to wind erosion, a phenomenon that is happening across the global – driving mass migration in Africa, fueling rage over immigration, and driving populist rebellion in Europe and America.**



**Somalians displaced by a drought arriving at a camp in Dolo Ado, Ethiopia, 2011 – Author, United Kingdom Department for International Development, Wikimedia**

**The severe Pakistan floods of 2024 forced 33 million people out of their homes, The melting of the Antarctic ice sheets will bring a rise in the sea level and higher tides, threatening the coast habitats of China, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan. Low lying Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes. In twenty-five years, most of the Maldives, an archipelago of islands and atolls in the Indian Ocean, could be uninhabitable. The World Bank projects that eventually, the entire country could be submerged in the Indian Ocean. The warming of the last century – scorching heat, drought, floods, wildfires, cyclones, hurricanes, and coastal erosion have fused their forces to devastate the raising of food, leaving 100 million people with no choice – starve or flee their ancestral homes.**



**Dead oryx on a farm in the South of Namibia, north of South Africa – Author, Dumbassman, Wikimedia**



**Sandstorm during a drought in Somaliland – Author, Oxfam East Africa, Wikimedia**

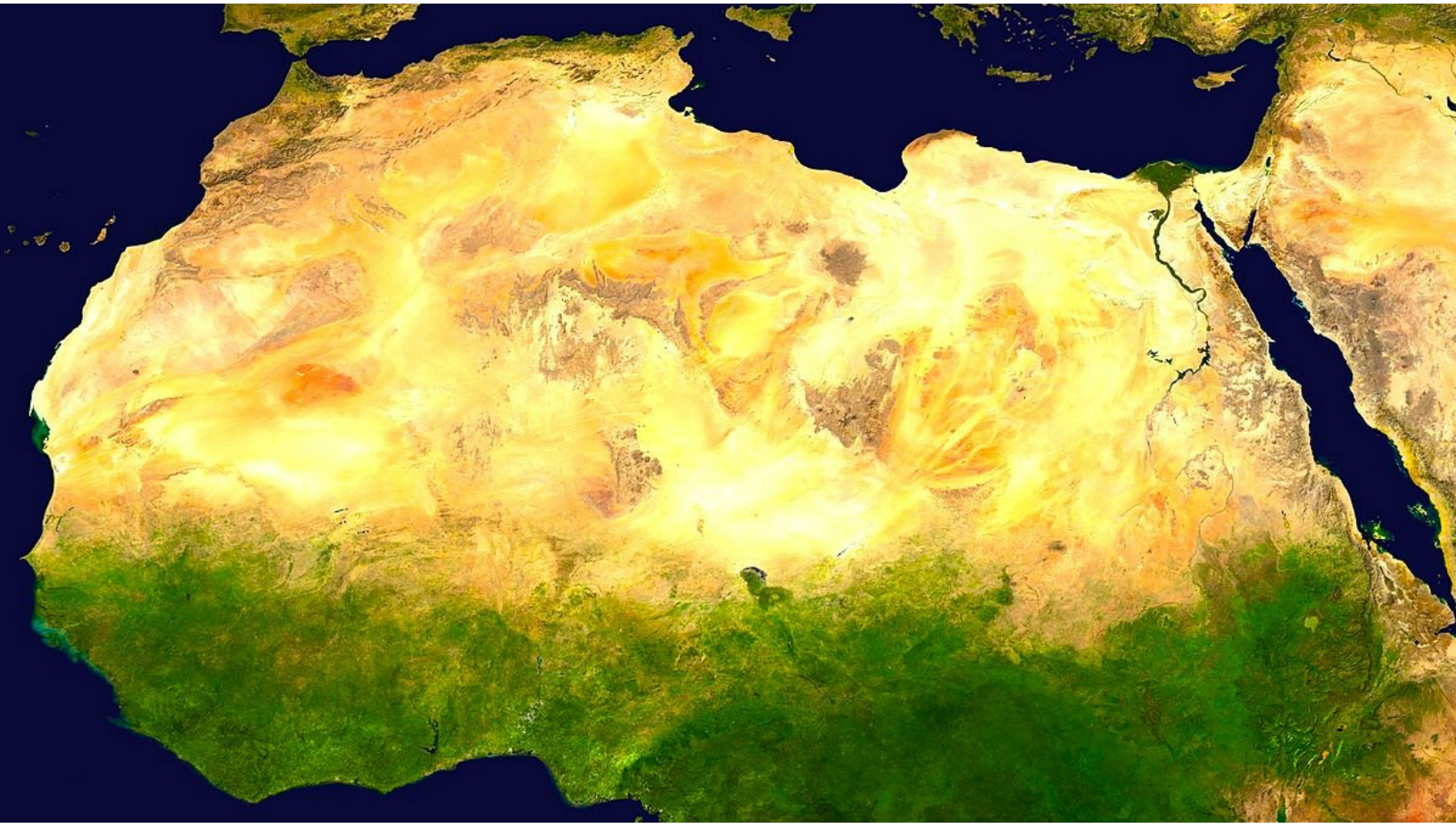
**In the United States, the huge number of people filing for asylum at the Mexican border has aroused a massive backlash against immigrants. Opposition to immigration is being led by The Heritage Foundation, which has produced Project 2025, a Christian nationalist plan to reform the U.S. federal government by removing climate change regulations, increasing the development of fossil fuels, reducing taxes, cutting Medicare and Medicare, abolishing abortion, eliminating emergency contraception, employing the Comstock Act to prosecute the use of contraceptives and abortion pills, stopping the National Institutes of Health from funding research with embryonic stem cells, removing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, ending diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and ordering the Department of Justice to prosecute "anti-white racism."**

**Project 2025 would greatly enhance presidential power by ending the merit-based civil service system, thereby, allowing the president to order the firing of tens of thousands of career civil service employees, replacing them with those loyal to the president – a system used in all authoritarian regimes. Heritage president Kevin Roberts declares, "The notion of independent federal agencies or federal employees who don't answer to the president violates the very foundation of our democratic republic." Project 2025 would place the entire executive branch solely under direct presidential control, abolishing the Department of Education and terminating the long standing independence of the Federal Communications Commission, Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and the Department of Justice.**

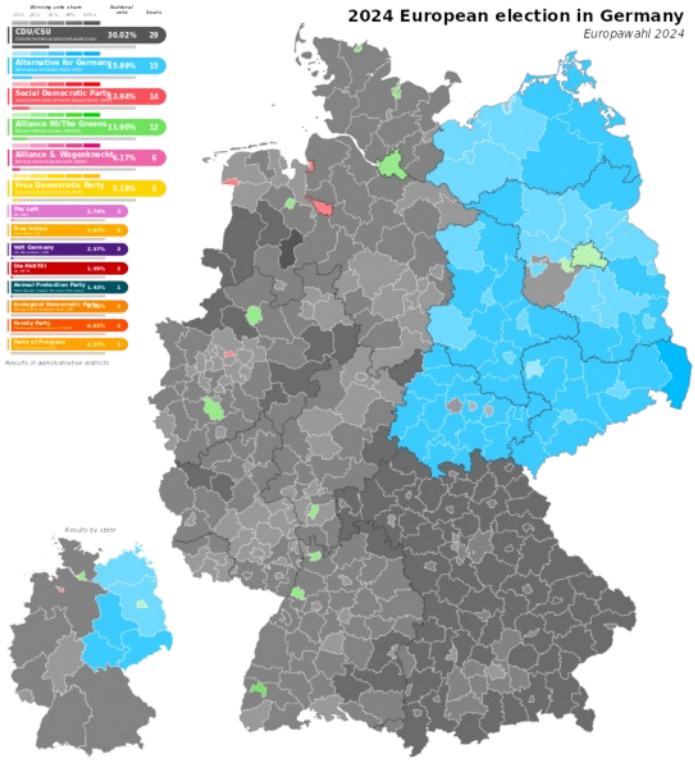
**Project 2025 advocates the arrest, incarceration, and deportation of all illegal immigrants living in the country. Stephen Miller, the key architect of immigration policy in the former administration of Donald Trump, said that the scale of the deportation would compare to the "building the Panama Canal." Although the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act prohibits the president from using the military as a domestic police force, Miller advocates the deputizing of the National Guard and U.S. military, local police and sheriffs to conduct raids across the nation, arrest all illegal immigrants, remove them to enormous detention camps on the Mexican border, and deport them in mass. Our agriculture, animal husbandry, restaurant industry workers, gardeners, and childcare providers depend on immigrant labor. Consequently, the sudden removal of ten million workers would crash the economy. The impossible to calculate economic cost of carrying out a forced arrest of millions of people would be dwarfed by the horrific rupture of America's social fabric. The commission of a moral crime of this magnitude brings to mind the removal of America's indigenous people and the crimes of Hitler and Stalin in the 1930s. Project 2025 maintains that the mass deportation is necessary to preserve the purity of American culture.**



**Sahel region of Mali. Telly, one of the first villages in the Bandiagara escarpment – Author, Ferdinand Reus, Arnheim, Holland, Wikimedia**



**The Sahara and the Sahel Region by satellite – NASA, public domain, Wikimedia.**




**Results of the 2024 European Parliament election in Germany – Author, Erinthecute, Wikimedia**

**The Sahel region of Africa spreads over 3,600 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, a transition zone between the humid south and the Sahara Desert, a region with a high birthrate, government corruption, and terrorist insurgencies, which according to *The Economist* has contributed to 35% of global deaths from terrorism. Characterized by constant, intense heat, the Sahelian acacia savanna region experiences the most severe droughts in Africa, driving immigration to Europe and compelling anti-immigration voters to support authoritarian solutions. In Germany, the 2024 elections have established the *Alternative für Deutschland,* AfD, the second most popular party in Germany, especially successful in East Germany where an authoritarian government, the German Democratic Republic, GDR, a communist satellite regime established by the USSR, ruled for decades after the defeat of Nazi Germany. Characterized by *Völkisch* nationalism, AfD's ideology denies human-caused climate change, opposes welfare, Islam, the European Union, and all immigration from third-world nations. *Völkisch* signifies race, nation, or tribe, an ethno-nationalism that fears foreigners from non-German cultures will corrupt Germany by accepting immigrants who steal jobs, spread crime and terrorism, and pollute German ethnic culture, a political philosophy that has rapidly gained voters in the European Parliament elections.**

**Militant opposition to immigration has flourished in France with Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally Party becoming the single most dominant party in France, its ideology focusing on opposition to immigration, restricting Islamic worship, banning the wearing of hijab and the production of halal and kosher meat. Calling immigration, a "mortal threat to civil peace in France," Le Pen holds immigration responsible for "Islamic terrorism." In the Netherlands, The Party for Freedom, PVV, once the fifth-largest party in parliament, came in first place in the 2023 elections, becoming the largest party in the House of Representatives. Led by Geert Wilders who rails against the creeping tyranny of Islamization. The PVV believes that the Judeo-Christian tradition should be the dominant culture in the Netherlands, advocates the banning of the Quran, closing all mosques, stopping immigration from Muslim countries, and withdrawing from the European Union.**

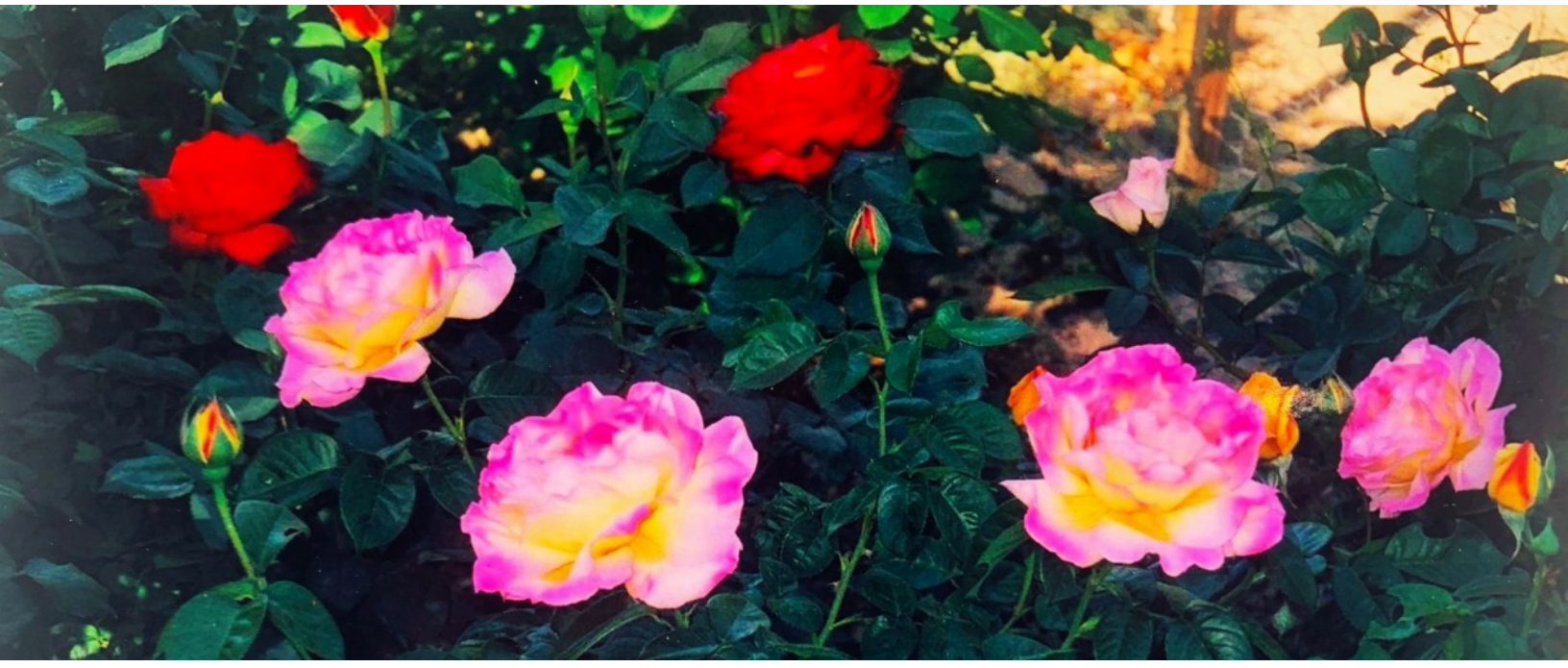


**Due to climate change, we have lost nearly all our original 100 roses, including many European varieties like Yves Piaget. The 50 French lavender that bordered the rose garden also did not survive. We replaced the roses and lavender with Tuscan rosemary that blooms even in winter; although hardier, is not as spectacular. Five pergolas were once covered with either *Floribunda Royal Purple*, Japanese wisteria with racemes 20 inches long, or *Longissima Alba* wisteria, which covered the roof of the north pergola with white racemes 18 inches long. When blooming in early April the long tendril of the wisteria reminds one of a painting of a garden in Kyoto, the Imperial capital of Japan. While wisteria flourished in magnificent abundance twenty five years ago, they have either died or are slowly dying.**





**Twenty five years ago, one-hundred thriving roses of elite varieties produced dozens of bouquets throughout the spring. As temperatures increased in the last twenty years, it was impossible to preserve the health of the roses, forcing the removal of all roses except for a few and replant with Blue Tuscan rosemary that can flourish in the intense heat of the Mojave Desert.**

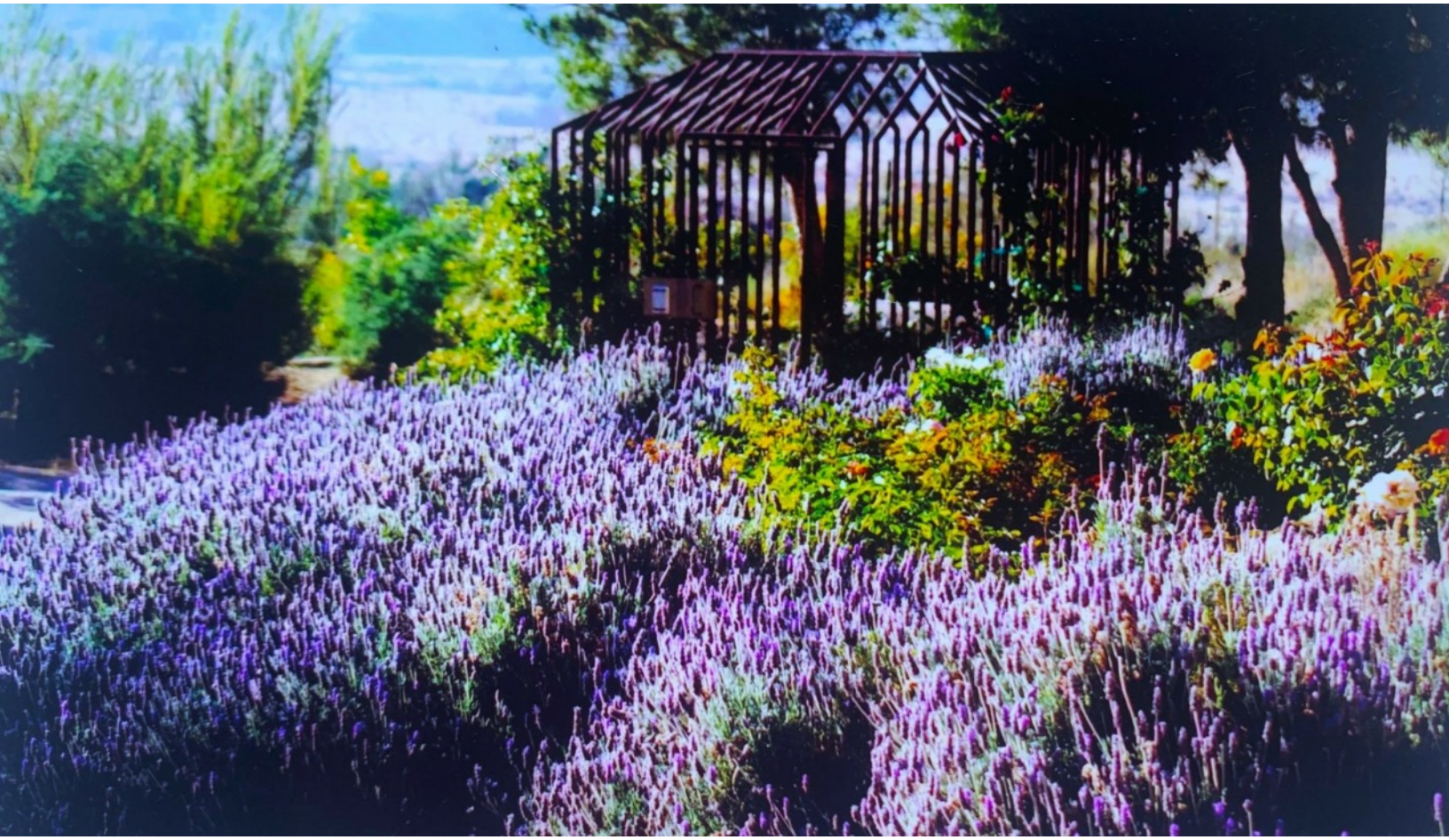


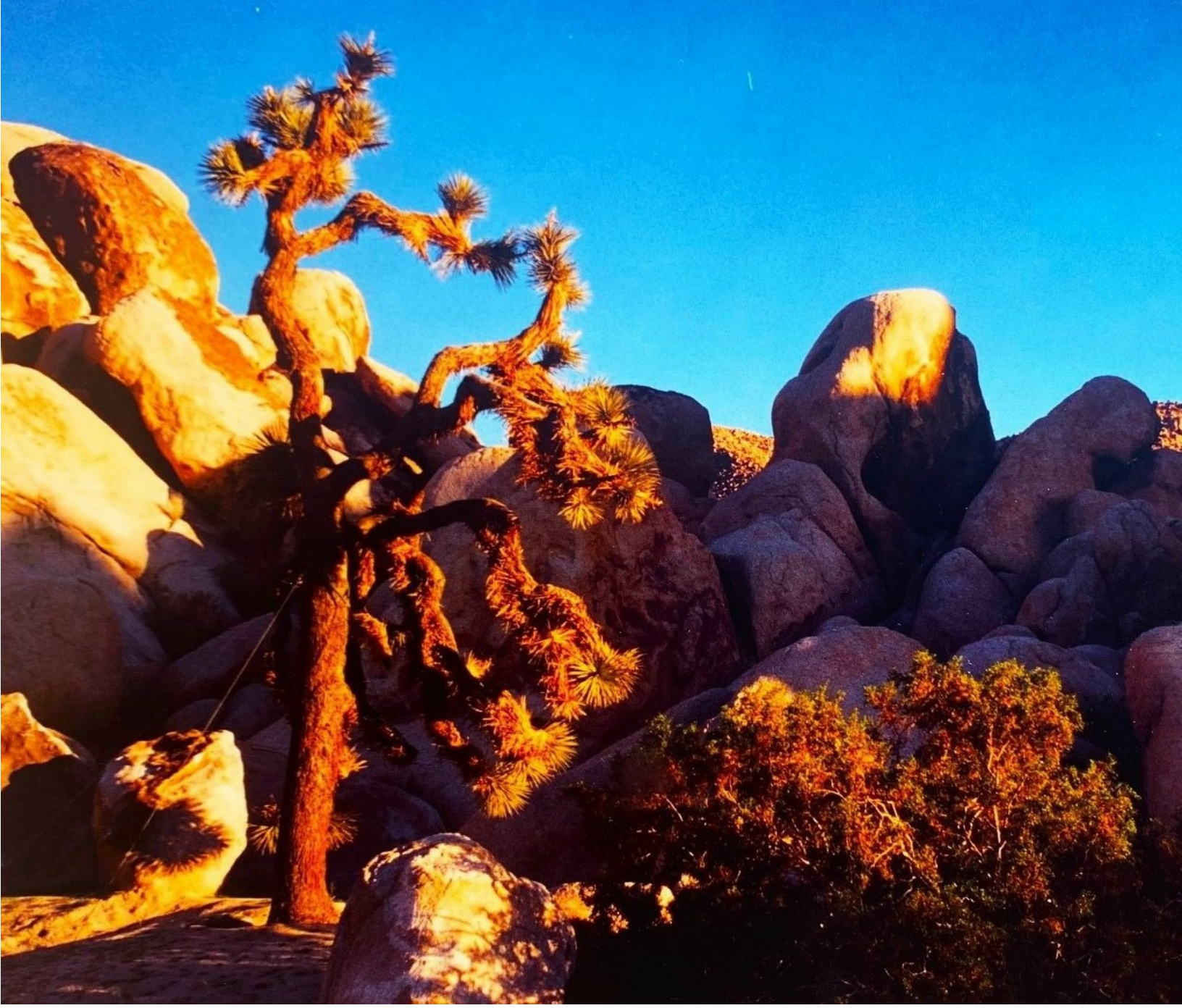


**Climate change and the vanishing rose garden.**



**Climate change and the vanishing rose and French lavender garden.**





**Due to greater rainfall at higher elevations, the Joshua Tree, *Yucca brevifolia,* flourishes at the elevation of 4,000 to 5,000 feet. A top heavy tree, it possesses a wide spreading root system, in some cases reaching out more than 30 feet, many of them surviving for several hundred years. Native to Arizona, Nevada, Utah, California, and northwestern Mexico, it flourishes in the high Mojave Desert. Dependent upon natural rain fall that has becoming increasingly scarce, millions of Joshua Trees are under threat of extinction, with some ecological research predicting that the Joshua Tree population may be reduced by ninety percent by the end of the century and virtually eliminated in the Joshua Tree National Park. Thirty years ago, many *Yucca brevifolias* were scheduled to be bulldozed to construct buildings, which provided me an opportunity to save one by filing adoption papers with Yucca Valley. When a school was built, I obtained Mojave Yuccas, and from a public building site, adopted several Joshua Trees, extricating them from the ground with a backhoe, lifting them by a crane onto an 18-wheel semi-tractor truck, obtaining a wide load permit to move them on the highway 20 miles, planting the adopted trees with a crane, and supported them with stranded-steel cable in three directions to resist the ferocious Mohave Desert winds.**

# The Beginning

The Creation of Villa dei Fiori – 1988





# Creating the Gardens of Villa dei Fiori

**When I purchased the property in 1988, there were only four trees. In 1989, I began grading the land to create three terraces and form earthen berms along Foothill Drive. Although originally planning to demolish the 1950s homestead house, I decided to reconstruct the house by gutting the interior, removing the sash windows, installing 13 glass doors, and adding terraces with pine log pergolas on all sides. In the following year, I began planting trees and began the creation of the garden over the next three decades.**



**I discovered that the homestead house had been clad with asbestos-concrete tiles, which had to be removed because asbestos fibers are tiny, easy to breathe in and cause serious lung problems. The house had not been lived in for several years, the bathroom rotted out, the living room covered with faux wood paneling wallpaper, the Swedish stove backed by tile with gold sparkles, the 1940s windows leaking air. In the first week, a February windstorm blew for three days and nights, 80 mph gusts so fierce that I could not stand up outside. Because it was ten degrees and there was no heating system, I had to stay in bed until the storm was over, only to discover that much of the roof had blown off ruining the paint on my car.**






**Creating the undulating berms surrounding Villa dei Fiori with a bulldozer.**



**Moving boulders to create the path from the east into our Valley of the Moon.**



**Moving Joshua Trees from the plateau north of Yucca Valley twenty miles to Villa dei Fiori. Moving a Joshua Tree requires cutting their widespread roots, demanding that during the transplant, the tree must be cabled to the ground for over ten years with stranded steel cables until their root structure is strengthened to withstand 80 mph winds. Matt Sweeney, the director of special mechanical effects with whom I worked on Steven Spielberg's and Dick Donner's *The Goonies,* furnished the stranded steel cable that Sweeney had used to support the astronauts in *The Right Stuff.* Directed by Phillip Kaufman, *The Right Stuff* was considered a financial disaster but despite being a box office bomb, the film garnered four Academy Awards and eventually was selected for preservation by the Library of Congress United States National Film Registry and ranked No. 19 by the American Film Institute's for being an inspirational movie." The steel cables that Matt Sweeny used to support the astronauts to achieve the illusion of weightlessness in space were eliminated in post-production by computer generated image methods. I have preserved on my nature preserve dozens of stranded steel cables from *The Right Stuff*.**

## Review by Kelly

**What a special gem this home is in Joshua Tree. For five days, we found no reason to leave! Everything we wanted is right here – a beautiful house, an amazing property, endless adventures on every boulder, a mammoth Joshua Tree, a spa, a pool, a secret cave for campfires and smores, and so much more. We have incredible memories for our family and the boys continue to ask when we will return. The spirit of Joshua Tree will remain with us all and we will always cherish our experience here. Until the next time! Kelly, Mandy Finn (9), Bodhi (7) and Shorty, (3) from Laguna Beach California.**



**Of the first Arizona Blue cypresses planted in 1990, none have survived. Of 6 trees planted over 35 years, a ratio of only one out of six has survived. While transporting a Joshua Tree officially adopted from a construction site, the roots must be severed before transporting. Over one to two hundred years, Joshua Tree's roots have spread wide to capture the necessary amount of rainfall. Once the roots are severed, the tree must be supported with stranded steel cables in three directions for ten to fifteen years to provide stability against the fierce desert wind. In this case, a gardener removed a cable while doing landscape maintenance, forgot to reattach the cable and the tree blew down. After it was re-erected by a crane and temporarily supported, the tree died. Once a tree loses its large root system, it must be irrigated for many years. It is difficult for a large Joshua Tree to survive a transplant.**





**With trackhoes, earthmovers, and bulldozers, building a road into Villa dei Fiori's Valley of the Moon.**





**To create a road on the west boundary of the Villa dei Fiori II, to make passage possible, we moved an enormous boulder. Rather than crush it, Matt suggested that we bury it. Being of great depth, once excavated, the vertical boulder was rotated into a horizontal position with its top surface at the same height as the proposed road. The boulder is visible today, protruding from the sand.**



**Several large boulders separated by deep holes had to be removed. The trackhoe bucket's steel teeth pounded the boulders, gradually crushing it, the pieces pushed into the holes by the bulldozer. When the boulder's surface was too hard to be broken by the trackhoe's blows, it was necessary to jackhammer the boulder, boring holes and scraping the surface with an iron rake on the bulldozer, dragging across the holes, scraping off a layer of stone, then repeating the cycle – jackhammer and scrape, jackhammer and scrape until the boulder was cut to size.**



**Moving a Joshua Tree requires an excavator and crane at the original site and at the**





**To move a large Joshua Tree requires employing a backhoe and crane at the original site and final destination, obtaining a wide load permit from Caltrans to move the tree on an 18-wheel semi-tractor trailer, and cabling with stranded steel cable for 15 years until roots can grow to stabilize the tree from fierce desert winds.**



**Mediterranean palms relocated from Twentynine Palms, California**



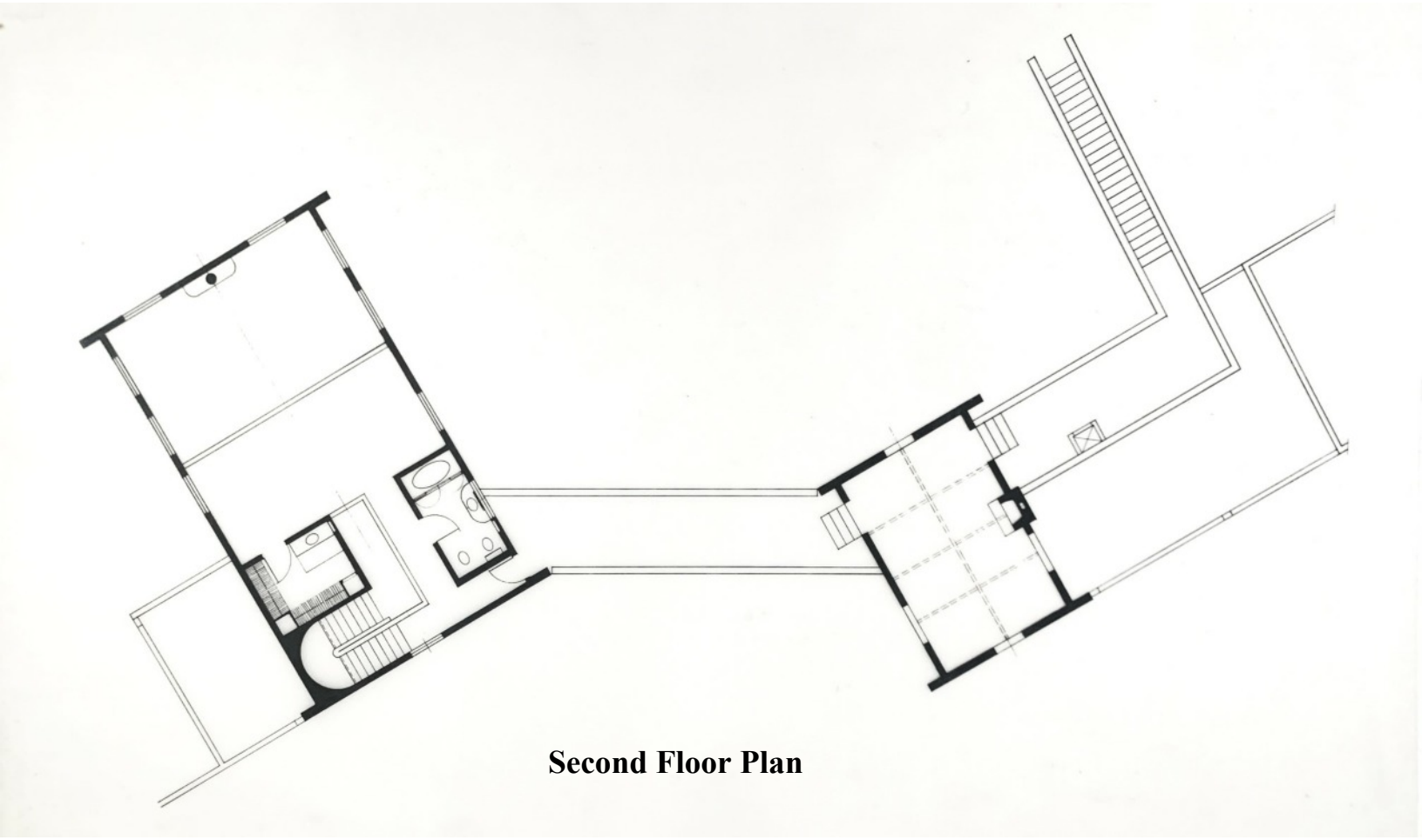
**Moving a boulder requires formidable telekinesis.**





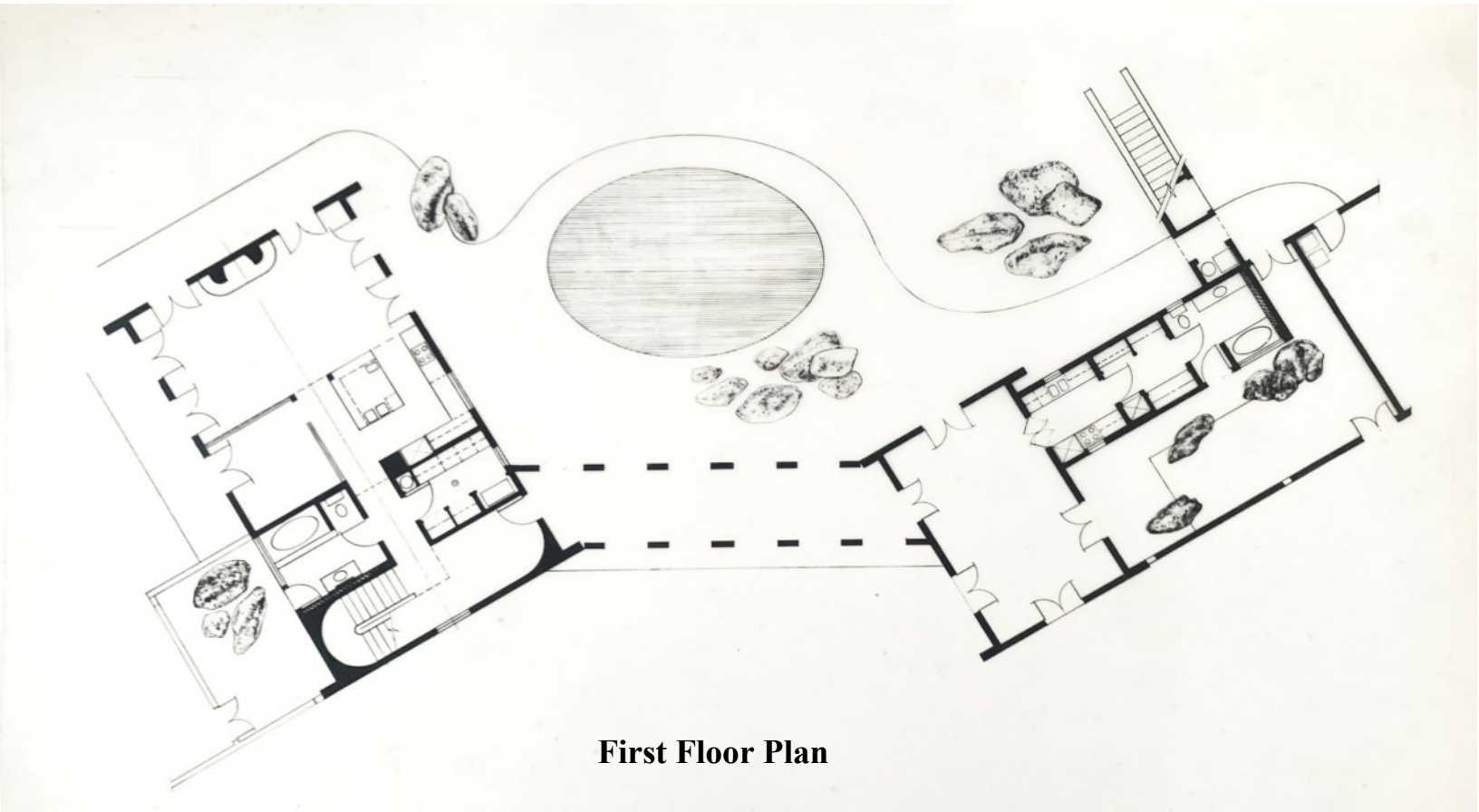
**Moving boulders to create the gardens of Villa dei Fiori.**





**Second Floor Plan**

**The first design I conceived in 1990 for a house on the Nature Preserve with a boulder courtyard, pool, and stairway to a rooftop terrace. While this plan and several other of my designs were not built, a design inspired by a Renaissance Italian palazzo is currently under construction.**



**First Floor Plan**

# Wildlife of Villa dei Fiori



**Review by Megan**

**Dale is an awesome host, and the home is even more stunning in person. We spent the whole weekend on the property, relaxing by the gorgeous pool and exploring the rocks that border the park, and spotting a Kit fox at dawn. The home itself is cozy and has everything you need. Dale even let us take clippings of any plants on the property which was awesome! The fresh rosemary made our car smell amazing the whole drive home. Thanks Dale!**



**Kit foxes play on the rocks by the house.**

**Review by Judith**

**We had a wonderful stay! Beautiful property, great location, responsive host. It was summer so we climbed boulders early in the morning, cooled off in the pool, then star-gazed at night. With foxes playing on the rocks, it is a nature-lover's dream. Dale responds quickly and personably. He clearly loves the property and has spent years building it both inside and out. Do set aside 30 minutes for the tour. Not only does he show you how to work everything but will also tell you about the garden. The walls are full of family portraits, art, and even his grandfather's patent. Super rad. Thank you Dale for sharing your home and part of your story with us.**



**Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos* – Author, Juan Lacruz, Wikimedia**

**The Mojave Golden eagle, one of the largest and most agile raptors in North American has been strictly protected since the Eagle Protection Act of 1962 but are threatened by global warming. Despite their great size, wing spans of six feet allow them when diving to attain a speed of 150 miles per hour. Monogamous and usually mating for life, their nests of six feet in diameter are built on windmills, towers, trees, and cliffs. Noted for aerial gymnastics during courtship, the Golden eagle with razor-sharp talons and mighty wings, can be trained for falconry, however, due to their independence and fierce spirit are challenging to train. Sacred to Native American tribes, the Golden eagle is used for hunting throughout the Eurasian Steppe by the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Chinese, and Mongolians. The Golden eagle serves as a national symbol for Mexico, Egypt, Germany, Austria, and Kazakhstan.**



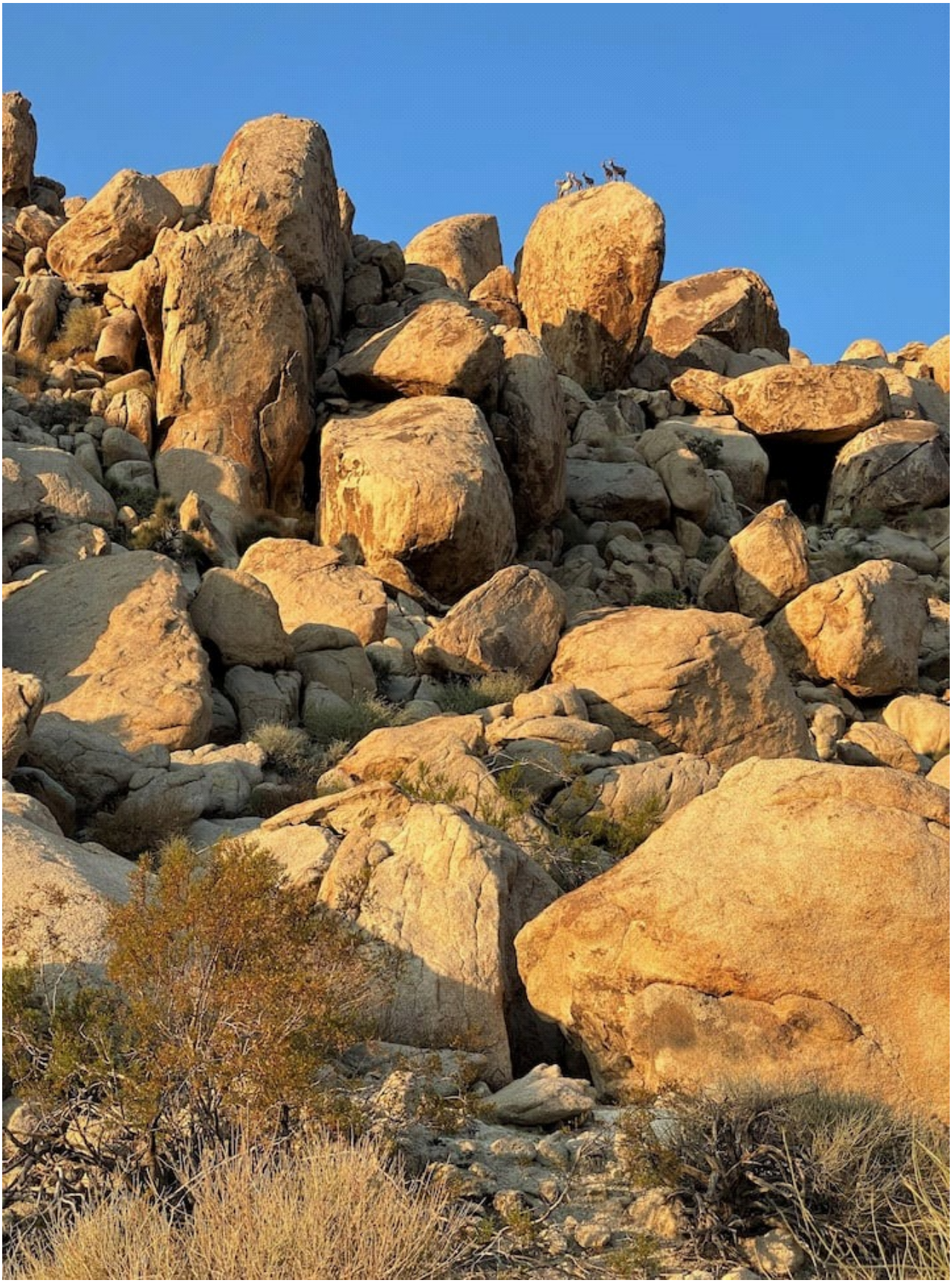
**Golden eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos* – Author, Giles Laurent, Wikimedia**



**Red-tailed Hawk over Estero Bay, California – Author, Mike Baird, Wikimedia**

## Review by Viviane

**Dale's place is set in the boulders in a quiet neighborhood between Joshua Tree and 29 Palms. We saw a Merlin falcon, Red tailed hawk, quail, and roadrunners on the property. We enjoyed a fire in the cave, hiked the trails near the property, and watched the moonlight cast light and create shadows upon the rocks. A couple of our party enjoyed quick dips in the pool. It was brisk as the weather was cool. The house is well appointed and comfortable. The master bedroom bed was awesome. Dale has a lot of pride and a loving relationship with the land and house. It is a beautiful and peaceful refuge!**



**How did those Bighorns get on top of that rock? They have feet designed to grip rocks giving them the ability and the desire to climb to seemingly impossible heights.**



**Review by Chuck and Bridget**

**The property was perfect for us. his was truly the most relaxing vacation that I can remember. No kids, no people, no stress. We hiked from the house to the valley above. We saw seven big horn sheep and a baby. The big horns came within 50 yards of where we were sitting. Bring some water and snacks on your hike because you will want to stay and enjoy. The pool and hot tub were great. We spent a lot of time out there enjoying the scenery and stars at night. The baby quail and their mother could be seen in the garden area. Lots of different outdoor spaces for dinner and coffee. I can't say enough about how peaceful it was. can't think of a better place to unwind and recharge. Thank you, Dale, for this great retreat and being such a wonderful host.**



**Review by Anne**

**The images of Dale's house drew us in - especially the giant boulders stacked up around the backside of the property. Arriving and walking around the grounds with Dale had us all smiling as it is hard for the pictures to do justice to the landscape and scale of the property. Things to note - this is exactly the place you should book if you want to focus on privacy and nature. For my family, this was exactly what we were looking for on our trip. We traveled with five people aged 7 to 77. The gardens and pool area were easy to navigate, and we felt like we were in Joshua Tree without having to jump into a car. My parents shared this in the guest book: "Dale, thanks for preserving and maintaining this beautiful place for those of us lucky enough to visit. We hope we can return to blooming wisteria, lavender, gorgeous roses. We loved our stay. We fed the fox."**



**Petroglyph of a caravan of Bighorn sheep, common in the desert southwest - Author Jim Bouldin, Wikimedia**

**Bighorn sheep were among the revered animals of the Crow, Apsaalooka tribe of the Bighorn Mountain Range. Bighorns were first encountered by the Lewis and Clark expedition sent by President Jefferson to explore the newly acquired territory of the Louisiana Purchase acquired from French First Republic in 1803. For the price of $15,000,000, about $18 per square mile, the U.S. gained 530,000,00 acres inhabited by indigenous North Americans who believed they were sovereign. The journals of the Lewis and Clark exploration recorded the Bighorns, *Ovis canadensis*, from which the Shoshones made composite bows from their horns. Native Americans hunted the Bighorns, not only for their meat and horns, but for use in tribal ceremonies. The Lewis and Clark Expedition named a tributary of the Yellowstone, the Bighorn River, and its tributary, the Little Bighorn River, known for the victory of the Lakota Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes over General George Custer's 7th Cavalry Regiment of the U.S. Army, the most lethal engagement of the Great Sioux War of 1876.**

**Bighorns originally crossed from Siberia to North America over the Bering Land Bridge 750,000 years ago during the Pleistocene area spreading throughout western North America from Canada to Baja Mexico with a population believed to be in the millions, their regal stature making them icons in the mythology of Native Americans. Two hundred years ago, Bighorn sheep had a reduced population of an estimated 200,000 in the western U.S. Canada, Baja California, and northern, Mexico, but hunting, overgrazing of rangelands, habitat destruction, and domestic livestock diseases nearly wiped them out beginning in the late nineteenth century. In 1936, The Arizona Boy Scouts under the influence of Major Frederick Russell Burnham, joined with the National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society in 1939 to found two wildlife refuges to increase the Bighorn herds and strictly regulate the hunting of male Bighorns in Canada and the United States.**



**Review by Thomas**

**Picture Perfect in J.T. This is just what we were hoping for when we opted for a remote, unique location to unplug and unwind for a family Joshua tree adventure. The grounds were as advertised, and the kids had so much fun exploring the area and bouldering. Can't say enough about how kind the host Dale is and how much he truly cares about the property. A plus all the way!**

**Review by Brian**

**Fantastic Stay in Joshua Tree. The perfect place! Went to Joshua Tree for a hiking trip. This is definitely the place to stay. The boulders in the back yard were the best thing ever! We went all over and around the boulders and made our way into Joshua Tree National Park, a hike that can be done by anyone from a beginner to an expert. The house itself was perfect, everything in fine shape. Loved the hot tub and the pool. Dale was very helpful and always available if needed. I plan on going back as soon as I possibly can.**



**Review by Djuna**

**We had an awesome time staying at this villa! It's a beautiful place to stay. The pool is amazing, and the location couldn't be better. It is secluded, private and relaxing. We saw lots of wildlife while staying there including coyotes, lizards, birds and even a bobcat! I highly recommend this**



## Sphinx the Lynx

**More aggressive than Canadian Lynx, the bobcat is known as the "Spitfire of the Animal Kingdom." Bobcats do most of their hunting in low-light conditions, waking up three hours before sunset to hunt, falling to sleep around midnight, then waking up an hour before dawn to hunt again. Some studies suggest they adjust their hunting schedules on the lunar cycle. Adult bobcats can weigh up to thirty pounds. Although they eat rabbits, birds, reptiles, fish, and rodents, they can kill adult white-tailed deer as large as 250 pounds by jumping on the deer's back and biting through the throat. Excellent tree climbers, they catch nesting birds and can pounce on deer from tree limbs. Solitary hunters, their territory can range up to 18 square miles. The bobcat will often stake out two or more different shelters, filling the cave with dead plants for bedding, moving their kittens from one den to another on a regular basis to throw predators off their kitten's scent.**

**For the American Indians, animals were their totem figures. A totem serves as a symbol for a group of people, a clan, a tribe, and even a person. The totem has powers imbued with the spirit of God. To some tribes, there are taboos against killing clan animals, as humans are kin to the animals whose totems they represent. In Joshua Tree, our wild animals are our totem figures. We share the same feelings about the bobcat as we do about the Mojave tortoise, Chuckwalla iguana, Kit fox, coyote, roadrunner, hummingbird, Gambel's quail, Great Horned owl, Red-tail hawk, and the regal Bighorn sheep. Our animals, reptiles, and birds form the spiritual essence of our land. Indians believed wild animals were a gift from the Great Spirit. For primitive man there was no separation between man and the spirits of nature. Everything has a soul. All things are divine.**



**In December of 2013, while working in my garden, I saw our frequent visitor, a female bobcat lying on the boulders above. She loved watching people, often coming to the house to peer into the glass doors. I named her Sphinx the Lynx. She felt so safe here that she chose to give birth to her three kittens in a boulder den just twenty-five feet from the house. I left that day to spend Christmas in Los Angeles. When I returned on New Year's Eve, I never saw Sphinx again. At the end of January, the local newspaper, the *Hi-Desert Star*, reported that astronomer and conservationist Tom OKey had discovered on his land a fur trapper's cage not far from Villa dei Fiori. I realized then why Sphinx had never returned. She had been slain for her beautiful coat. All of us in Joshua Tree thought our bobcats were protected. We were wrong. A commercial trapper violated the mores of our community. The manufacturer of the traps, Mercer Lawing of Barstow, had sold the traps to Nathan Brock, an active-duty Marine who set 30 traps and killed five cats in one night. Without permission one was placed on my friend Tom OKey's land on the border of the Joshua Tree National Park. We learned that trappers lured bobcats off the 720,000-acre park by spreading scent pheromones leading directly into a trap set on private land, furnished with battery-powered fake birds with vibrating feathers to lure the cat into the trap, the trapper returning later to shoot the bobcats dead. If the trapper does not return in a timely manner the cat dies an excruciating death.**



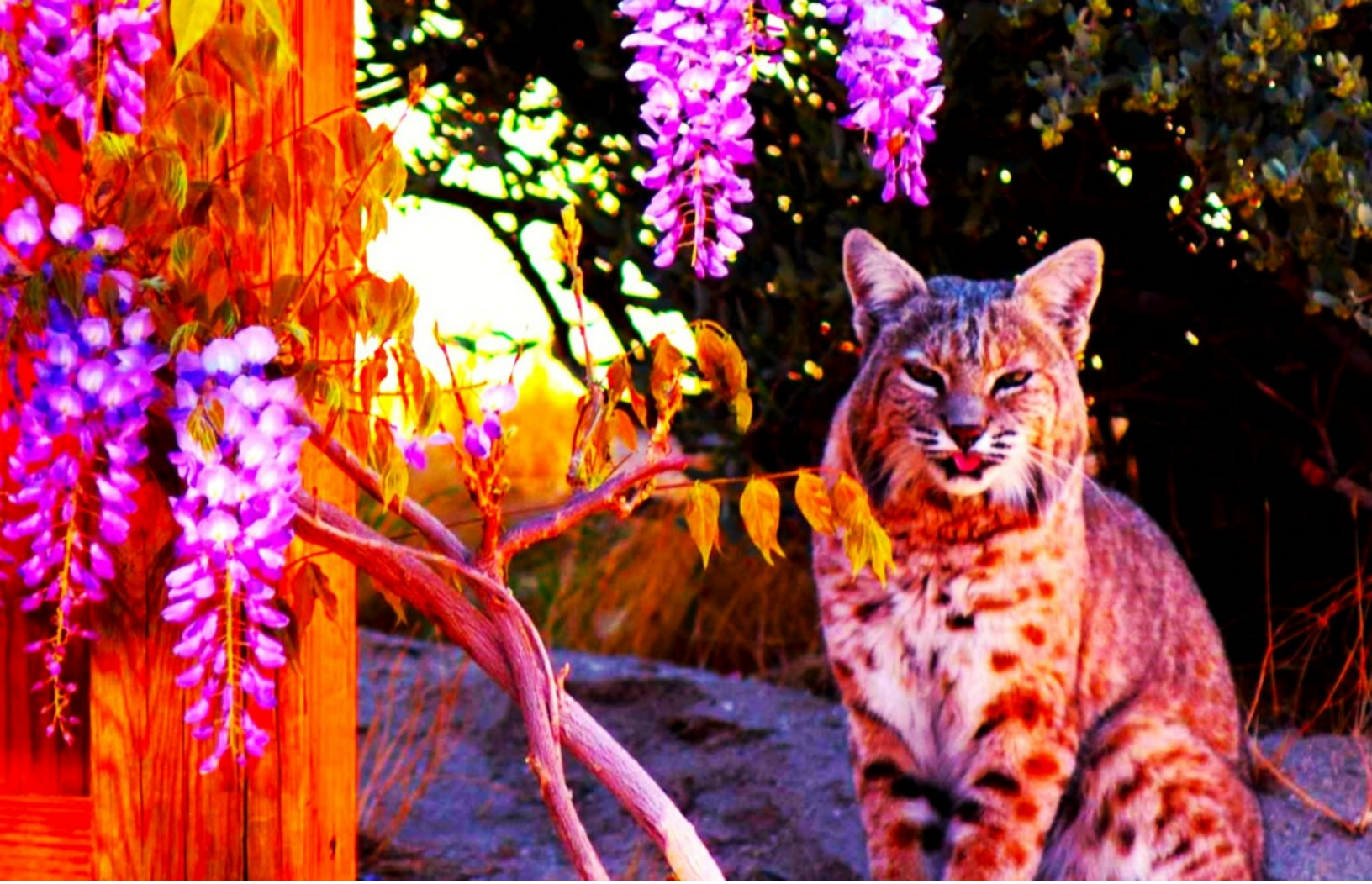
**Prime bobcat pelts that can command a price of $1,200 are shipped to Russia, China, and Greece where they are made into fur coats – a full-length coat costing as much as $100,000 in the luxury markets of Paris, Milan, or Dubai. One of the primary manufacturers of fur apparel is in Kastoria, Greece. Lewis Sahagan, reporter for the Los Angeles Times, interviewed Brendan Cummings and Annica Kreuter who had lost seven of her cats on the border of the park. When we compared notes, we discovered that all along the park border, the bobcats had been wiped out. In the quarter of a century that I have lived next to the national park, nothing has affected me as deeply as the mass killing of our bobcats. Sphinx's intelligence and sinuous grace brought life to my land. Someone who lives alone, I loved her beyond the beyond. She was the queen of all. Enraged by the killings, the activists of Joshua Tree formed Project Bobcat with the passionate goal of changing California law to protect our magnificent bobcats. California Assemblymember Richard Bloom, Democrat representing Santa Monica, aided by his legislative director, Guy Strahl, and guided by Brendan Cummings, director of the Center for Biological Diversity's wildlands programs, introduced the Bobcat Protection Act, AB1213 in the Sacramento legislature.**

**Project Bobcat began building support through the Internet across the state, a movement supported by the Mojave Desert Land Trust, PETA, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and many other conservation groups. The first stage was traveling to Sacramento to speak in a public hearing held by the Wildlife Committee of the California Assembly, where I spoke, showing on closed circuit video the drawing of our bobcat that Kate, an eleven-year old girl had made at Villa dei Fiori, a moment where I cracked up. The Wildlife Committee set the bill to the floor for a vote and Project Bobcat generated a letter writing campaign that eventually succeeded in the bill being passed by the Assembly, and then to the Senate where Project Bobcat activists had to convince the Senators to pass it, with Democrats generally supporting the bill, and Republicans generally opposing the bill.**



**After the endorsement of the *Los Angeles Times*, and thousands of letters and calls by Project Bobcat, Governor Jerry Brown signed the Bobcat Protection Act on October 11, 2013, directing the California Fish and Game Commission to prohibit bobcat trapping adjacent to every national and state park, national monument, and wildlife refuge. The battle was not over. The Project Bobcat people entered the second phase to protect the cats because the bill did not protect the bobcats throughout the state as originally planned but had been revised to protect them only around the national and state parks, a political compromise made to get enough votes to pass in the legislature. However, with boundaries so vague that it would be impossible to enforce with the limited number of wildlife enforcement officers, the California Fish and Game Commission ordered a series of hearings for testimony in venues all over the state. The Project Bobcat supporters attended hearings in Van Nuys, Santa Rosa, Mammoth, and the final one in Fortuna, Northern California. At the hearings, the Bobcats were powerfully represented by a score of women - Jean Su, the Biological Diversity attorney who presented arguments to extend the trapping prohibition throughout the state, and Director Camilla Fox's Project Coyote's members who eloquently championed the bobcats, a total of 100 speakers. Thanks to Richard Bloom's Legislative Director, Guy Strahl, who gave up his designated speaking time to me, I delivered the first speech that I had given since the Civil Rights era. Minutes later, the Fish and Game Commission voted 3 to 2 to extend the prohibition on the trapping of bobcats to the entire state of California.**

**As a child in Oklahoma, I learned that Indians were frugal. They slaughtered only what they could eat and for clothing to keep warm. Nothing went to waste — horns and bones, hide and hair. When Lewis and Clark crossed the plateau west of the Mississippi River, there were 200 million buffalo grazing on the prairie grasslands as far as the eye could see. Soon as the settlers arrived, the killing began---the traders slaughtering 50 million buffaloes every year until only a few hundred survived. A Cheyenne River Sioux said, "Buffalo have to be there for our culture to exist." That is how people in Joshua Tree feel about the bobcat and the Bighorn sheep. They are the spiritual essence of our land — our icons. The Muskogee Creek Indians who founded my hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma had a tribal clan, Koakotsalgi — the Bobcat Clan.**



**Bobcats are nocturnal creatures, difficult to spot in the wilderness. Our bobcat was different than other bobcats. Fascinated by people, at twilight she clandestinely observed me for weeks before she decided to venture closer, reclining on the boulders to watch me as I gardened or did aerobic dance. She felt so safe at Villa dei Fiori that she established her den and birthed three kittens in the boulders above my home. Bobcat kittens are born in spring, nurse for two months before eating solid foods. At five months, the mother teaches her young how to hunt. Around eight to eleven months of age, mama leads the male from the den, leading him to a new territory where the must survive alone.**

**Bobcats are color coordinated with their habitat. They see you, but you don't see them. The bobcat, *Lynx rufus*, is believed to have evolved from the Eurasian lynx, which like the Bighorn sheep, crossed over the Bering Land Bridge during the Pleistocene era 2.6 million years ago. Isolated by the glaciers of the ice age, they evolved into the modern bobcat around 20,000 years ago.**

**For the American Indians, animals were their totem figures. A totem serves as a symbol for a group of people, a clan, a tribe, and even a person. The totem has powers imbued with the spirit of God. To some tribes, there are taboos against killing clan animals, as humans are kin to the animals whose totems they represent. In Joshua Tree, our wild animals are our totem figures. We share the same feelings about the bobcat as we do about Mojave tortoise, Chuckwalla iguana, Kit fox, coyote, Road Runner, hummingbird, Gambel's quail, Great Horned owl, Red-tail hawk, and the regal Big Horn sheep. Our animals, reptiles, and birds form the spiritual essence of our land. Indians believed wild animals were a gift from the Great Spirit. For primitive man, there was no separation between man and the spirits of nature. Everything has a soul. All things were divine.**



**A bobcat was electrocuted while climbing a power pole leaving a two-week old kitten without a mother. Rick Boyd, Twentynine Palms animal control supervisor, took the tiny kitten to the Humane Society's Fund for Animals Wildlife Center in Romona, San Diego County, renowned for rehabilitating wildlife, bobcats, coyotes, Golden eagles, black bears and cougars. Severely under-weight, the kitten was suffering from coccidiosis, a parasitic disease of the intestinal tract, a condition that would have meant certain death in a tiny kitten. With treatment she recovered, doubling her weight within the first two weeks, the center releasing rats for her to hunt so that she could learn to fend for herself in the wilderness.**



**When she was three months old, the center was ready to find a place for her to be released into a habitat identical to her origins. Annica Kreuter, a keen observer and caretaker of wildlife, was visiting the wildlife center in Ramona, and suggested that the center release the cat into the wild on my property on the Joshua Tree National Park.**

**Denis Goolsby, reporter for the Palm Springs newspaper, *The Desert Sun*, published the report, "Orphaned, rehabbed bobcat released in Joshua Tree," which along with a video may be found on the link: https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2015/12/20/orphanedrehabbed-bobcat-released-joshua-tree/77474922/**

**When she was healed from her nearly fatal illness and trained to hunt, the 4 month-old bobcat was transported from Ramona, California by the Humane Society of the United States Fund for Animals to Joshua Tree where she was released at Villa dei Fiori in the boulders leading to our Valley of the Moon.**

**You may watch the release of the bobcat by the Fund for Animals at Villa dei Fiori, https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?ei=UTF-8&hsimp=yhs-att_001&hspart=att&p=Adolescent+rehabilitated+bobcat+released+back+into+the+wild+in+Joshua+Tree&type=E210US714G0#id=2&vid=43dd1abd07f2ec2884db9d4ee0fbd4c3&action=click**



**Our bobcat lives with her cub, sometimes appearing at dawn or in the crepuscular hours strolling around her realm, observing humans from afar.  Photo by Cindy Lynch**



**Desert Spiny lizard, *Sceloporus magister*, lies on rocks in direct sunlight, but when the heat peaks in the summertime, seeks the shade of cooler surfaces, its camouflage scales protecting it against predators. Mainly an arboreal species, for habitat, the Desert Spiny lizard likes the Mojave Yucca and Joshua Tree, adjusting its internal temperature by changing color, darker in cooler weather to absorb heat, lighter during hot weather to reflect solar radiation. In the late fall, it hibernates over winter until emerging in spring.**

**Review by Nora**

**My family had the most amazing time at Dale's place. It could not have been more perfect for traveling during this crazy time. You literally never have to leave the property and still feel you get the experience of being in Joshua Tree. We drove through the national park and that's when we realized that we had the private experience all these people were risking being in public for. This property is on the north side of the park, and you have your own boulders to climb to your heart's content without anyone around and your own huge Joshua Tree on the property. There is a beautiful pool and a hot tub which we enjoyed and a fire pit where my kids roasted marshmallows each night. Bring your own food and cook and you won't ever have to leave this magical property. Exactly what we needed. Thanks for sharing your special space, Dale!**

**Review by Marie**

**My family of 4 adults spent a very enjoyable 5 nights here. The property is like a resort in the middle of Joshua Tree Park like setting. Exceptional access to outdoors with courtyards and French doors on all sides of the home. Sparkling clean Jacuzzi, fire pit with seating nearby, amazing pool looks awesome) and ample light throughout. Lots of pots, pans, dishes, glasses, towels etc. There is easy access to two Joshua Tree entrances (the 29 Palms entrance always has less traffic than the West entrance). We saw a Bighorn sheep, a bobcat and her kittens, quails, rabbits, roadrunners, and many other birds. Best night skies from the Jacuzzi and the fire pit. Dale was always available to answer any questions and a very gracious host. I hope to return to enjoy the sparkling clean pool.**



**One of our cutest creatures, the delightful Mojave ground squirrel, *Xerospermophilus mohavensis,* found only in the California Mojave Desert, is notable for its ability to resist hyperthermia, capable of surviving body temperatures over 104 degrees. Like chipmunks, antelope squirrels have a white stripe along their flanks from the shoulder to the hip. To escape the extreme heat and the cold of the desert, they burrow in the ground and, like kangaroo rats, carry food in their cheek pouches for transport, storing seeds and fruit in their burrows for use during the winter. To beg for nuts, they stand erect until a walnut is thrown. I wondered how do they eat so much? Then, I realized that they are busy storing hundreds of nuts and seeds in numerous hidden caches. To preserve energy on hot days, they lower their core temperature by resting in their burrows, limit their activity when food is hard to find, and distribute their body temperature by lying flat on the ground in a cool spot. If drought continues for several years, it is possible for the entire population to be eradicated with no chance of recovery. The tiny Mojave ground squirrel is preyed upon by snakes, coyotes, falcons, and hawks. They assure their survival by appearing in the open only momentarily, then in a soaring leap, dive to safety in the boulders. Their protruding eyes are rear view mirrors, allowing them to spot predators approaching from behind for Red Racers and California King snakes love to swallow these delightful creatures. While having breakfast on the terrace, their acrobatic exploits are a joy to behold.**



**Hummingbirds have the highest mass-specific metabolic rate of any homeothermic animal, with an anatomical structure that gives it the ability of a helicopter to hover in space and fly in any direction, propelled by rapid wing beats from 12 per second to 80 per second by the tiny Bee hummingbird, the rapid beating of wings producing a humming sound, the reason they are called hummingbirds. They are the smallest of birds, three to five inches in length, with the smallest, the two inch Bee hummingbird weighing only two grams. Incredibly speedy, hummingbirds have been recorded flying 34 mph, and males during courtship, diving from great heights to attain a speed oft 50 mph to impress their paramour. Of all bird species, males have the greatest variety of plumage color, in blues, greens, and purples, their gorget, an iridescent feather assembly around the neck, shimmering and changing brilliance depending upon the viewing angle, a visual display to impress the ladies. Although most hummingbirds do not migrate, the rufous hummingbird travels twice a year, 4,000 miles between Alaska and Mexico. In 2024, the hummingbird was listed as endangered or critically endangered due to rising toxic chemicals in the environment, resulting in many species declining in numbers.**



**The nest of most hummingbirds is no larger than one and one-half inches, attached to a branch with spider webs, lichens, moss, and plant fibers, with eggs the size of a pea – Author, Mike's Birds, Wikimedia.**



**Owls live in caves in the valley of boulders behind the house.**

**Review by Rosa**

**We saw an owl in a cave in the boulders behind the house. Staying at Dale's property was an incredible experience. It is almost hard to put into words how beautiful the scenery is. And the number of animals we saw was also wonderful. There were lots of lizards, a bunny, and so many butterflies. The stars at night were the cherry on top! Thanks again Dale for hosting us and sharing such a magical place with us.**

**Review by Tim**

**Dale has cultivated a beautiful environment. He was very helpful with local suggestions. My daughter loved the caves and clipping flowers and other plants at Dales encouragement. The hikes you can do from the property (or very close) are amazing and suitable for kids. Another great feature, we could avoid the crowds in the center of the park. The pool was beautiful (cold plunge only in the cooler months) and the hot tub was very clean. There's a vast library that was fun to look through. It felt like being a guest at a home more than a managed rental. We will return.**



**The roadrunner, also known as chaparral cocks, are ground cuckoos found in the deserts of Southwestern United States and Mexico. Although capable of taking off quickly when predators appear, they prefer to roam the ground searching for lizards, ready in an instant to accelerate to 32 kilometers per hour.**

**Review by Cynthia**

**Dale's house is located on a beautiful property! Nestled within the boulders allows for daily boulder climbing and exploration! The pool is amazing as well as the hot tub! We were fortunate to see two Bighorn Sheep, Roadrunners, Lizards, bats and even a snake! Desert life also means that you'll experience a few critters in the home such as kangaroo rats. Not an issue though as they're friendly and easy to deal with! Overall, I recommend this stay for anyone looking for instant boulder climbing, hiking, and star gazing!**

**Review by Rhiannon**

**Thank you, Dale! We had a wonderful stay. Your property exceeded our expectations; the photos are beautiful but don't even do justice to the natural beauty and thoughtfully designed home, pool, and gardens. Hiking the rocks and caves directly from the property made this the best, most memorable family-friendly experience for us. Finding a place that makes the entire family very happy day after day is not easy; every day we made memories and had an incredible balance of natural beauty, hiking and rock scrambling, swimming and our favorite way to dine outdoors, for each meal! All your thoughtful work making every corner of the house and property beautiful and functional was much appreciated. We look forward to many more family vacations to the Villa. Grazie mille!**



**A Cooper's Hawk catches a roadrunner, but after a moment, the roadrunner escapes. Ask Wile E. Coyote, roadrunners are hard to catch. If you catch one, they are hard to keep. Photo by Cindy Lynch.**

**Review by Charlie and Laurie**

**How fortunate we were to discover your fantastic house! We've enjoyed Joshua Tree for years but feel we'll be spoiled for any other place now. The Chuckwallas seemed as curious about us as we were about them.**



**California King snakes pray upon rodents, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and venomous rattlesnakes, which is why they are called kings. They are non-venomous, but resistant to the venom of rattlesnakes, killing their prey by constriction, the strongest constrictors by body weight to any snake.**



**A non-venomous snake capable of moving at four miles per hour, The Red racer, *Masticophis flagellum piceus*, subdues its prey by grasping and holding it with its jaws, slowly swallowing its prey whole. Over a period of twenty minutes, the Red racer illustrated above, swallowed a young rabbit.**



**The Chuckwalla iguana wakes up from hibernation in the early spring. Primarily herbivorous, Chuckwallas are partial to the yellow flowers of the brittlebush and can line for more than 24 years.**

**Review by Jessica**

**Joshua Tree may have many options when it comes to Airbnb's but Dale's property is truly one of a kind. You won't find another property as welcoming and unique as Villa dei Fiori. The location of the property nestled against the rocks is ideal for anyone that loves to hike & explore. My 8 friends and I felt lucky to experience such a magical place. We saw several chuckwallas every day during our stay. We brought my Celestron EdgeHD telescope to set up near the house, and we were able to see details on the surface of the moon, Saturn's rings, Jupiter & its moons, and Andromeda galaxy! It's nice to feel like a tiny human in a great big universe at the end of the day and Dale's property provided the perfect escape. It was refreshing to have a host provide such a personal touch with a tour of the cave (SO cool!), stories about the art and plants around the property and even letting us take home clippings of the plants! We can't wait to come back during winter for more hiking, spa time and winter star gazing! The house had more than enough sleeping arrangements for 8 adults with most people in beds and some on sleeping pads.**



**Mojave Desert tortoise - Author, Tigerhawkvok, Wikimedia**

**The Desert tortoise, *Gopherus agassizii,* native to the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts is the official state reptile of California, named in honor of the Swiss American zoologist. Living from 50 to 80 years, the Desert tortoise spends much of its time in burrows to escape the heat and to diminish water loss, remaining immobile in hot weather and more vigorous after rains, the best time to spot one. A young boy discovered a Mojave Desert tortoise in our Valley of the Moon, the last one we have seen in ten years. When I arrived in 1968 to visit my cousins Revena and Gwendolyn who had homesteaded on Whitefeather Road, Revena had a pet tortoise coming every day to her house for lettuce, then returning to the desert. Once a year, the citizens of Joshua Tree would stage a tortoise tournament. Everyone would bring their tortoises and assemble them in the center of a sandy expanse. The tortoise that traveled the furthest from the center of the ring was proclaimed the champion tortoise. In the days when the settlers kept them for pets, they survived. Now they are nearly gone. Lost habitat and ravens have taken their toll.**





**Michele Quence of Paris France, the creator of the paintings displayed at Villa dei Fiori, and Sabu, her baby Chow Chow who preceded my Sabu.**

**After not owning a dog for 20 years, an unexpected one fell out of the sky. While in route to Joshua Tree, I was leaving a gas station in Beaumont, California when I saw a young Chow Chow running alongside Ramsey Street. He looked just like Michele's dog who had died before she returned to France. As the dog raced along the busy street, the evening sun shimmered on his red coat, prompting me to pull over to side of the road to watch its graceful beauty. After running a quarter of a mile, it ran onto the highway and was hit by a car, flipping him into the air. The car backed away from the dog and an older couple cold-heartedly drove away without stopping to see if its life could be saved. I ran to the dog lying in a pool of blood and discovered he was still alive. I was at my wit's end because I didn't know how to get him to a veterinarian. My car's trunk and interior were jammed with 100 pine trees that I was transporting to Joshua Tree. I stood over the dog in the middle of the highway to keep him from being hit a second time, as I frantically tried to flag down someone to transport him to a veterinarian, but no one would stop. At last, a woman stopped, but she didn't want blood to soil her car. I sprinted to the gas station to get plastic bags to wrap him up and sprinted back, but she was gone. Desperate, I ran back and stood in the middle of the intersection until I finally managed to hail a young couple in a pickup. "See that dog lying up the road? We can save him. Can you help me get him to a vet?" The young man said, "Sure, there is a good one just up the road. We picked the dog up on a makeshift stretcher, laid him in the bed of the pickup and raced to Banning Veterinarian Hospital, where the vet said, "I can save him, come back tomorrow."**





**I unloaded the 100 pine trees in Joshua Tree and returned to the hospital in Banning the following day to find the dog standing on his feet, his hind leg bandaged snug to his body. When I took the dog back to the vet to remove the bandages a week later, we discovered that the blow of the car had damaged the hip bone so that his rear leg would no longer remain fixed in the socket. "We'll have to cut off part of the bone so that it will ride free in the leg, "the doctor said. "It must remain unattached to the skeleton." Since he had no identification tag, I became the surprised owner of an adolescent three-legged dog. After losing my dogs to speeding cars many times in my childhood and suffering the loss of Lola to an automobile when I lived in Tomales Bay, my beloved German Shepherd-Chow who adopted three kittens when their mother was killed by a car, I had sworn I would never own another dog. I couldn't face another tragedy. But fate had intervened, bestowing upon me a companion who would faithfully accompany me for 18 years.**

**I named him Sabu and over time, his leg muscles became so strong around the amputated bone that my three-legged friend could run fifteen miles per hour. The Chow Chow breed originated in Manchuria, 8,000 years ago, tribal dogs that pulled carts, remarkable for their powerful chest muscles, dense fur, and blue-black-purple tongue. Sabu's only fight was when he was attacked by a Doberman Pinscher. Sabu won the encounter due to his powerful chest muscles and strong jaw, his thick fur protecting him from his adversary's sharp teeth, leaving the short-haired Doberman in a bloody mess. Sigmund Freud's Chow Chow, Jo-Fi Ling attended his therapy sessions because the psychiatrist believed that Ling had the ability to judge a person's mental state. Marco Polo wrote about the Chinese using Chows to pull dog sleds through swampy terrain, attesting to their strength. Chow Chows have a reputation for being fierce, one-owner dogs, but I taught Sabu to love everyone and shared him with friends. Sabu possessed the most tender personality and loved everyone. Bad dogs are created by their owners.**

# The Influence of Italian Gardens



***Garden of an Italian Villa,* 1764 – Author, Hubert Robert, National Gallery of Canada, public domain, Wikimedia**

**After completing design work on *The Goonies*, I lived in Italy for a half year, studying Italian in Florence while driving from town to town on winding country roads visiting the gardens and ancient hill towns in the regions of Lazio, Tuscany, Umbria, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, and Veneto, which left a deep impression on me. When I returned to America, I suffered culture shock.**



**Villa Medici di Belcanto in Fiesole, aromatic garden, the oldest existing Italian Renaissance garden – Author, Sailko, Wikimedia. While living in Florence, Tuscany in the 1980s, studying Italian language and culture, I was influenced with the Renaissance gardens of Italy, especially Villa d'Este Tivoli south of Rome.**



**Sacro Bosco, Sacred Grove, known as the Parco dei Mostri, Garden of the Monsters, is in Bomarzo in the province of Viterbo, Italy. Designed in the 16th century by Pirro Ligorio with sculptures by Simone Moschino, Parco dei Mostri is located below the castle of Orsini. Many of the**



**The time was living in Italy increased  my desire to create my gardens in Joshua Tree.**

**Painting of the Villa d'Este by Pierre-Athanese Chavin, 1811 – Source, Thorvaldsens Museum at Nysø, public domain, Wikimedia. When I was exploring the garden of Villa d'Este, they closed the garden for the evening, somehow missing me in the distance. It was summer with two hours of daylight remaining, so I luxuriated in being alone in the garden until darkness fell. I passed through the Cardinal's villa, and finding the entry unlocked, walked up the hill to the Roman ruins of the Temple of Vesta and sat for a long time listening to the roar of the cataract of the River Aniene that supplies the hundreds of fountains of Villa d'Este.**



**Statue of Sibyl Albunensa, Villa d'Este, Tivoli, Italy. – Author, Filip Maljković, Wikimedia.**



**Villa Lante at Bagnaia near Viterbo – Author, Jeff from Sacramento, Wikimedia**

**Next to Villa d'Este in Tivoli, Villa Lante at Bagnaia is my favorite garden to spend time in close to Rome. It is near Viterbo, the ancient town where Franco Zeffirelli filmed the 1968 romantic tragic film *Romeo e Giulietta*, (Romeo and Juliet) based on William Shakespeare's play. Viterbo is the hometown of Giovanni Sandretti, the trumpet player and romantic lead in my novel *Celine on Fire.* Beginning at the end of the 16th century, a hydraulics engineer and architect from Siena created the elaborate system of fountains. While there, I learned that American warplanes bombed the gardens after the fall of Rome in 1944. Dr. Angelo Cantoini restored Villa Lante in the 20th century, now managed by Grandi Giardini Italiani.**



**Villa Lante formal gardens, Bagnaia, Viterbo – Author, Brookie**



**Pienza, Tuscany – Author, flicker, sherseydc, Wikimedia**



**Poggio Amorelli winery, Castellina in Chianti, Siena, Tuscany, Italy – Author, Ray in Manila, Wikimedia**



**View from Montalcino, Siena, Tuscany, Italy – Author, Thomas Fabian, Wikimedia**



**Civita di Bagnoregio, *La città che muore,* Province of Viterbo, Lazio, Italy – Author, Dalem, Wikimedia**



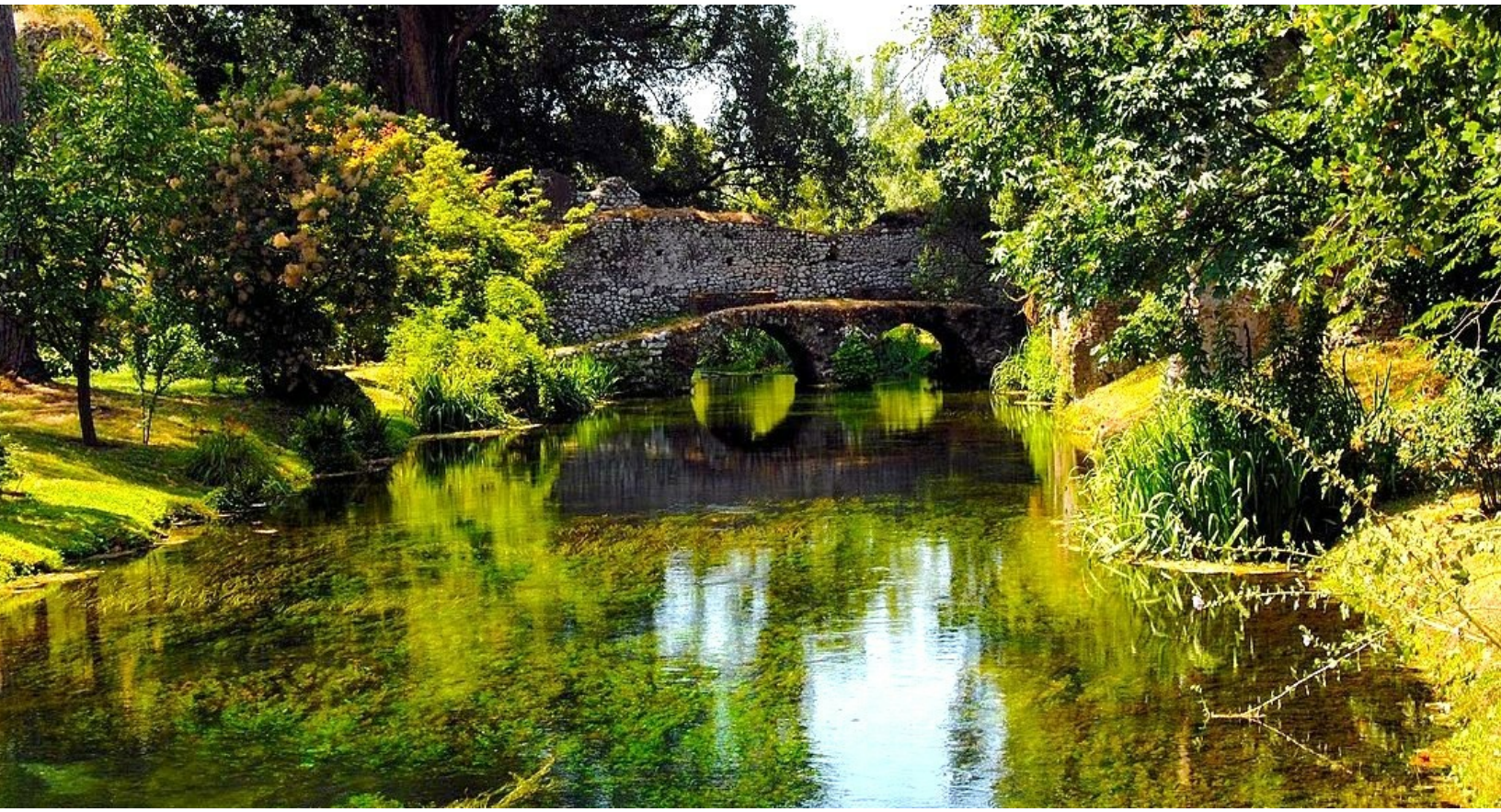
**Civita Bagnoregio, Italy, *La città che muore*, Province of Viterbo, Lazio, Italy – Author, Orlando Paride, Wikimedia**

**I fell in love with Bagnoregio founded by the Etruscans 2,500 years ago, perched on a volcanic tufa rock plateau overlooking the Tiber River valley between Florence and Rome. I spent the day making drawings of the narrow passageways and staircases of a medieval town frozen in time due to its relative isolation and gradual deterioration from erosion landslides as the houses slowly slide off the edge.**



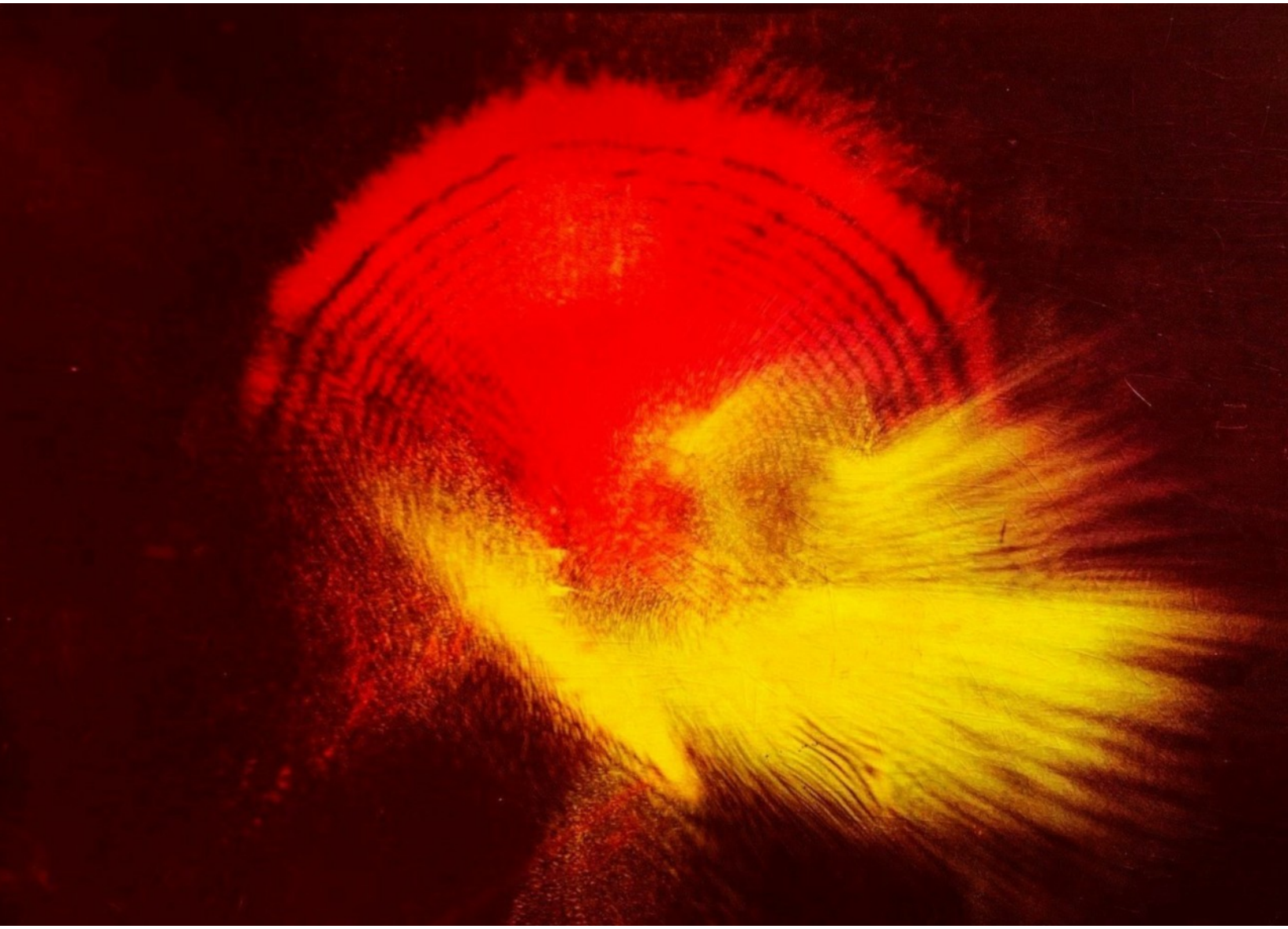
**Giardino di Ninfa in Cisterna di Latina, *Il fiume Ninfa nei pressi del ponte di legno* – Author, Mentnafunangann, Wikimedia**

**The Garden of Ninfa, an Italian natural monument of medieval ruins, bordered by the River Ninfa and many water-courses, with ancient oaks, cypresses, poplars, grassy meadows, and ancient stone walls enveloped by rambling roses and purple wisteria. Revered by gardening cognoscenti as the world's most romantic garden, *il Giardino di Ninfa* is an enchanting landscape, surprisingly located amid the heavily industrialized Pontine Plain, 64 kilometers south of Rome.**



**Medieval stone bridge of Giardino di Ninfa in Cisterna di Latina – Author, Etfruscoloni, Wikimedia**

# My Life in Film



# Death of the Red Planet



**Dale directing a short film at UCLA graduate film school. Victor Nunez, the cinematographer on the shoot, directed *Ulee's Gold*, featuring Peter Fonda as a damaged Vietnam veteran, a beekeeper who raises his granddaughters because his son is in prison and daughter-in-law a drug addict. The Academy of Motion Pictures nominated Peter Fonda for an Oscar for Best Actor and Victor received a Golden Globes nomination for best director.**





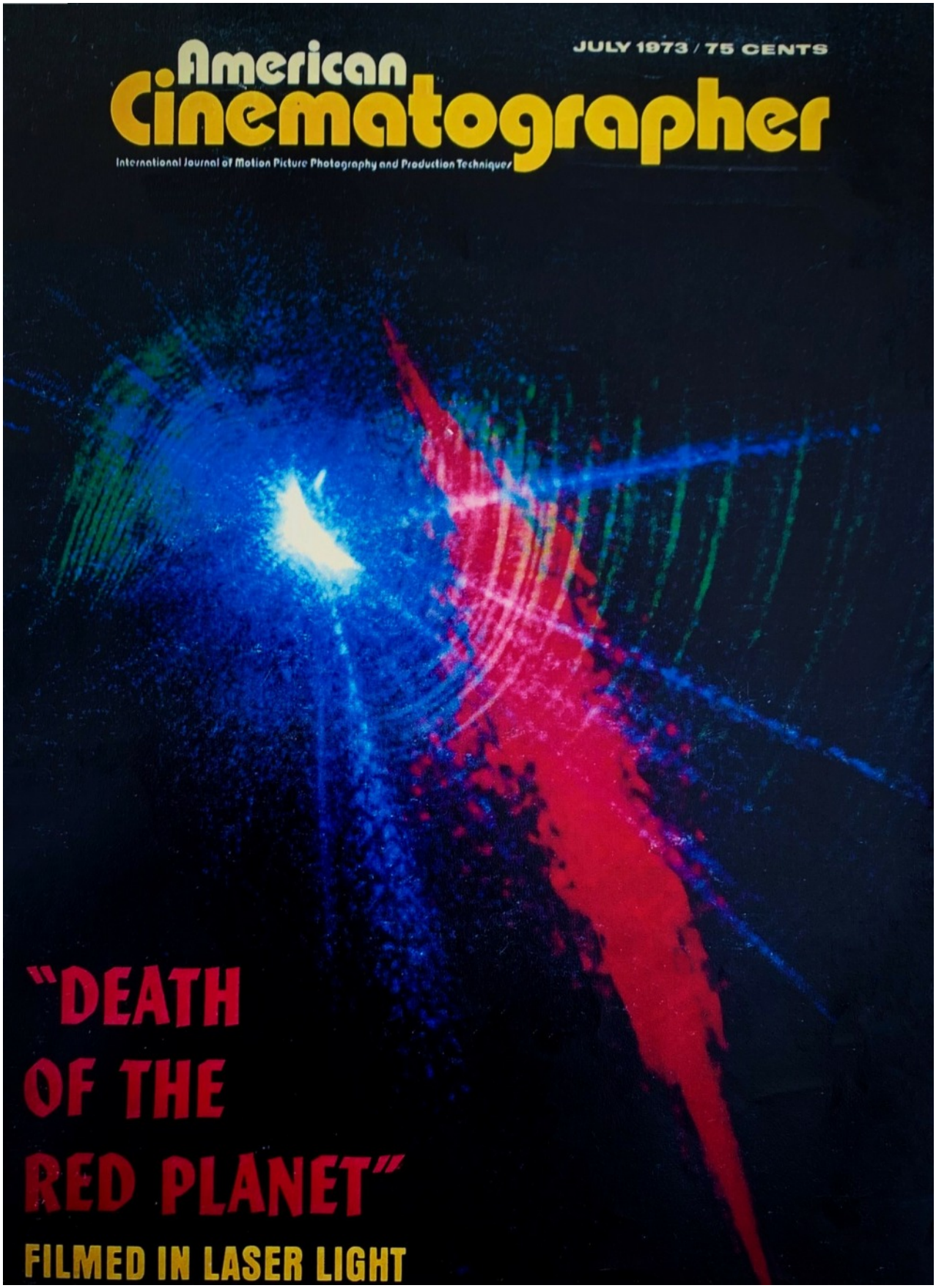
**Susan falls in love with Soo, a friendship disturbed by Soo's depression over a traumatic rape by an American soldier in Korea.**

**Eui Hong, a graduate film student at UCLA and my roommate at Rose Avenue in Venice, asked me to be the cinematographer for *Susan and Soo,* a drama set in a house under construction in Topanga Canyon. Since Eui had little English, I became the co-director. An immigrant from Korea, Soo is obsessed by her rape by an American soldier during the Korean War. One day, while walking down the Venice boardwalk, I entered a fashion design shop run by two Japanese young women. Although she had no acting experience, Joyce Uyeda, a stunning beauty, took the role of Soo. In the opening sequence in the hills of Topanga Canyon, I filmed a leisurely montage of Soo meditating, her silken dress billowing in the wind, while the sun rose over the trees in the valley, evoking a sensual Asian ambiance. Submitted to the American Film Institute competition *Susan and Soo* won a full scholarship for Eui Hong to study at the AFI, the grant awarded by Charlton Heston, chairman of the American Film Institute.**

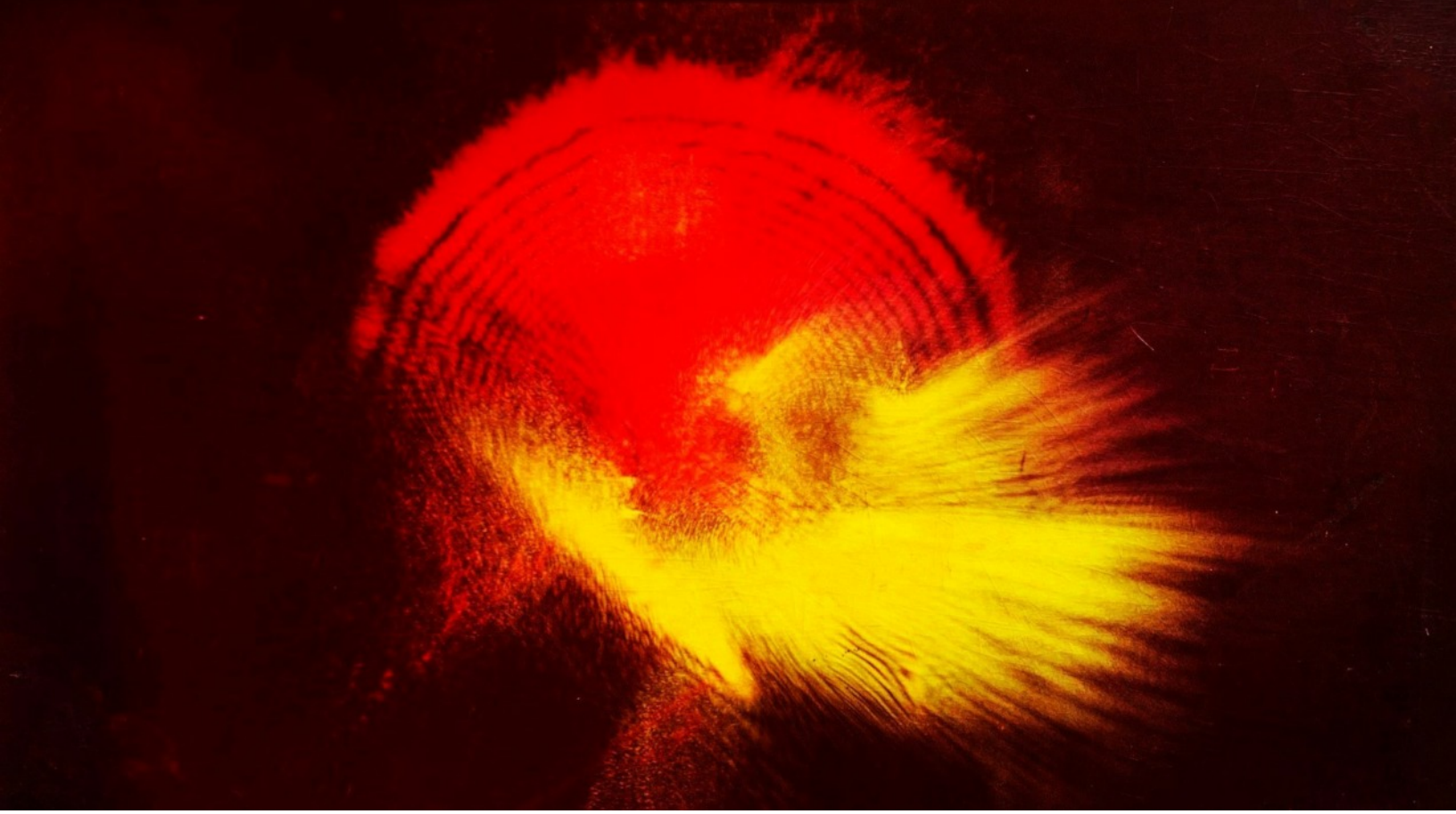


**Cinematographer Dale Pelton and director Eui Hong filming *Susan and Soo* in Topanga Canyon.**

**Submitted to the American Film Institute competition *Susan and Soo* won a full scholarship for Eui Hong to study at the AFI, the grant awarded by Charlton Heston, chairman of the American Film Institute.**



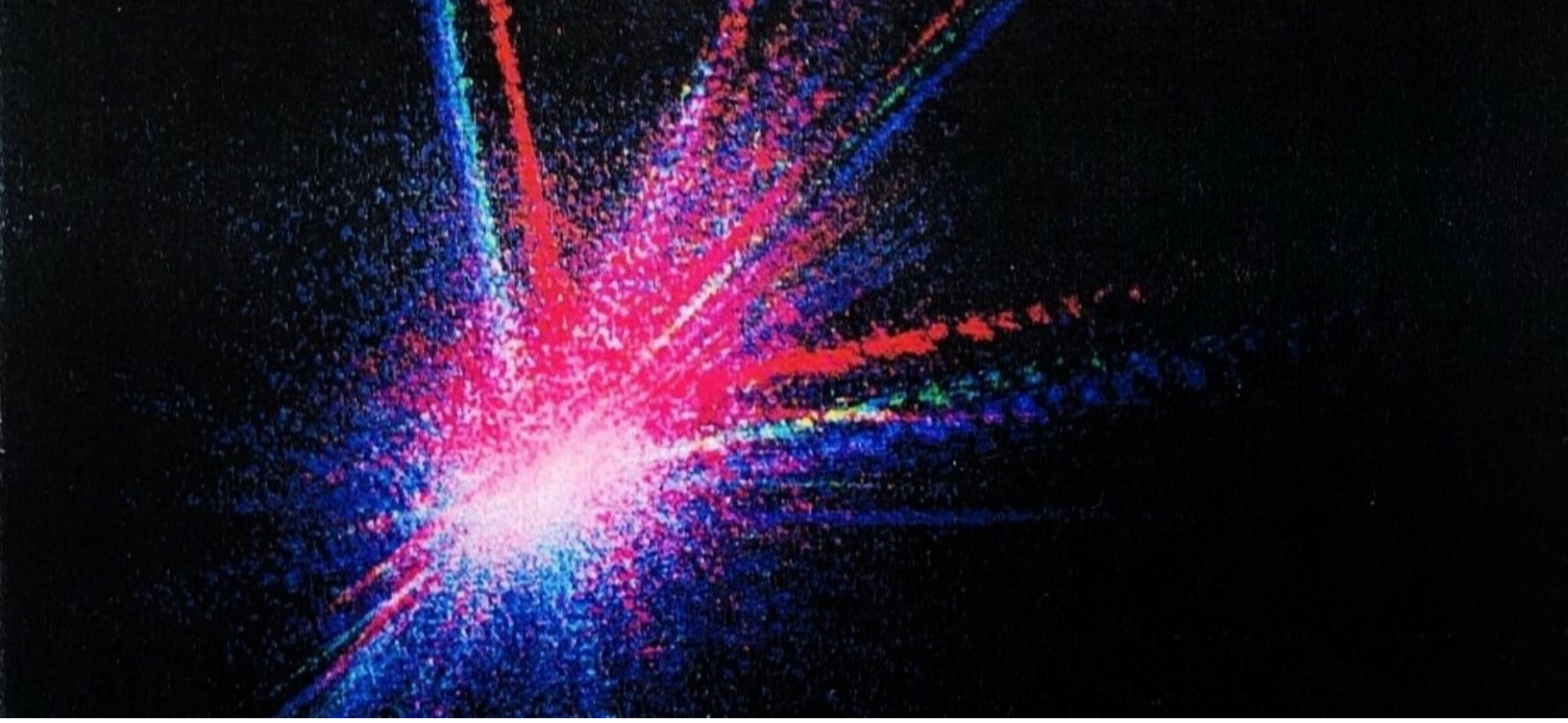

***Death of the Red Planet*** **was released in Cinemascope and Quadraphonic sound, accompanied by the rock film, *Yessongs*, featuring Rich Wakeman, in 600 theatres across the United States.**



**While a graduate student at UCLA film school shooting a documentary on the contemporary city, I met Dr. Elsa Garmire at a technology symposium at the University of Southern California. A ground-breaking artist besides being a scientist, Elsa invited me to the California Institute of Technology physics laboratory to demonstrate laser-generated images – delicate, spidery, or globular, fiery light patterns that did not appear mechanical or computer generated images but rather organic – at once microcosmic and macrocosmic. The constantly evolving forms appeared at times like living tissue and at other times, like creatures found in a distant part of the universe. I decided to abandon the documentary and create a film of these creatures of light. The film came into being over a long time, shot much like a documentary, shooting extemporaneously, and editing the images afterwards, the raw images evoking the release of energy. In the beginning, I shot and edited without a script or pre-conceived reasoning, allowing the images to come and go without direction, gradually becoming aware of the strife implicit in the kinetic forms where like the process of life, opposing forces create new life forms. I decided that my film would be about a cosmic struggle between the forces of blue and the forces of red.**

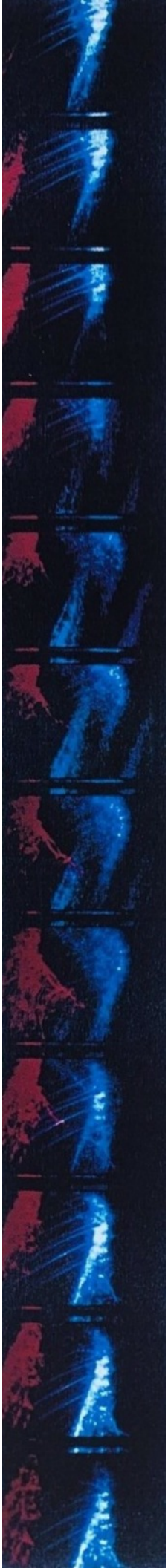
**I began choreographing the interactions between the opposing energy forces, shooting the blue energy force and the red separately, later to be combined in complex ways to achieve the appearance of action-reaction. After several thousand feet of film had been shot, the film began to take shape as a musical composition. Why end the film with the death of the red energy matter? What is death but another transition in the continuum? The structure would be that of philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel – thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The film would terminate in a re-creation of life from the destruction of life – harmony arising from disharmony, the ultimate result being not an ending, but a new beginning of life.**

**Garmire used a two-watt Argon laser for the blue energy force, its intense white beam split by a prism into a band of three color beams – yellow, green, and blue and a 250 milliwatt helium-neon laser was used for the red energy force. A 16 mm Arriflex M camera with a 400 ft magazine was fitted with a variable-speed motorized Angenieux 12-120 mm zoom lens and mounted on a smooth O'Conner fluid head tripod. The laser beams were directed by first-surface mirrors onto a ten-foot square rear projection screen with the camera positioned on the opposite side of the screen, which was superior to our original front projection screen that induced graininess to the light patterns and were not bright enough. Since the light was spread over a large area and we were shooting with a slow F 2.2 lens, the light level was critical. The laser beam patterns varied in scale of brightness, from faint delicate traces to extreme magnitudes when focused. We achieved entirely different results by both overexposing and underexposing the film. Since the eye has a greater dynamic range than film, what we saw was vastly different from what was recorded on film, the spectral sensitivity of Kodak film stocks 7241 and 7242 being quite different than our perceptions, requiring a light meter that could measure the variables. No filters were used because laser light cannot be filtered for a single frequency remains the same. Colored filters merely act as neutral-density filters and cannot change the color of a laser beam.**



**Garmire employed laboratory stands and clamps to ensure precise alignment of the glass. Synchronous clock motors of 4 rpm, ½ rpm, ¼ rpm were used to insure fluid movement. A few effects were shot at 24 frames per second, but more commonly, the camera speed was set at 48 fps to ensure smoothness of movement. When I wanted to induce hesitation or irregularities, we pulsed the electrical power for the motors. Elsa and I encountered a major difficulty when we attempted to re-create a scene or specific movements of the previous week. It was a challenge. There were so many variables – laser power levels, alignment, electric motor speed, angles of glass interference, and mylar thicknesses. It was often four a.m. in the lab, and we were still attempting to duplicate the shot from the previous week. By painstakingly documenting our setups, we eventually succeeded in duplicating and modifying the effect. *Death of the Red Planet* is essentially an optical animation film with much of the final result achieved on Jan Buehre's Acme wet-gate optical printer to transform the original camera images – change color and speeds, fade and dissolve, go from positive to negative film, strobe the light, solarize, and frame by frame, animate the film. Once I began working with the optical printer, script development and story board drawings determined the printing sheets. Some shots were combined so that double and triple impositions resulted in more complex compositions. Often, the effects were the result of stumbling in the dark and experimenting. With over 27,000 frames in the finished film, all had to be individually accounted for when lining up the optical printer cue sheets. Several printer passes were required, and each frame was shot two or more times at widely spaced time intervals. Errors were made and on occasion, fascinating errors were integrated into the film. After spending night after night preparing effect cue sheets while bending over a synchronizer, I felt more like an accountant than a filmmaker. Jan Buehre and I did all the optical printing work, including the blowup to 35 mm film, at which time we encountered the same problem that Martin Scorsese did when making a blow up of his film *Woodstock* fom 16 mm to 35 mm. When Scorsese enlarged his 16 mm original on Kodak 7241 and 7242 stock to the 35 mm release print, the blacks picked up a greenish cast. At the Deluxe General laboratory in Hollywood, I used a Hazeltine Color Analyzer to balance the color by adding gel corrections, varying from 10cc magenta and 30cc blue to 25cc magenta and 60cc blue.**

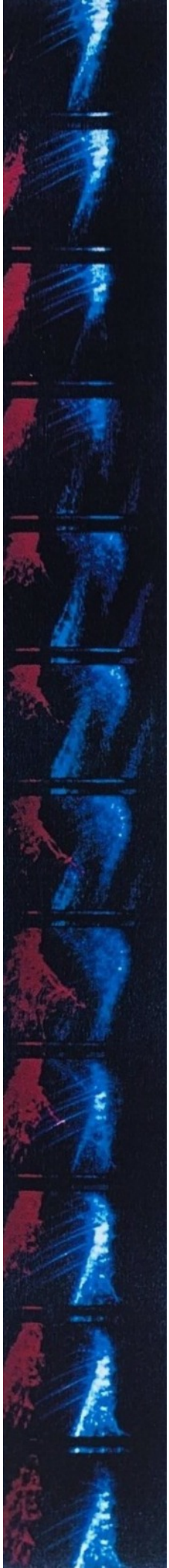
**At the time that Jan Buehre and I were creating the effects for *Death of the Red Planet*, Jan was simultaneously doing optical printing for Mr. Merrick who was the producer of a film on cult leader and killer Charles Mason, although the film was never completed. Owner of an acting school that encouraged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to get government financing to prepare for an acting career, Merrick had burnished his image by changing his birth name to that of the renowned Broadway producer, David Merrick. One day while working alone with the printer, someone burst into the room from behind and shoved me against the wall. Having developed involuntary instincts while wrestling under Olympics gold medalist, coach Myron Rodrick at Oklahoma State and under Bill Smith an Olympic gold medalist at the University of Nebraska, I responded instinctually, lifting the unknown person in a fireman's carry over my hea, and threw him on the floor. My response was so rapid that I hadn't realized what I had done. Merrick's bodyguard and Jan pulled me away and I left the room with Merrick screaming "I'm going to kill him." Realizing that Merrick had a raging temper and carried a gun in his car, I slipped into the kitchen and closed the door while Merrick continued to elaborate on the innovative ways he was going to end my life. I pick up a knife on the counter, which might not be too effective against a gun but was better than nothing. A few months later, as I was walking down Pacific Avenue in Venice, I glimpsed a *Los Angeles Times* on the newspaper stand. Mr. Merrick had been murdered.**



**After the 35 mm print was completed, I discussed the possibility with Linwood Dunn of Film Effects about the possibility of blowing the film up to 70mm or to the IMAX format, because *Death of the Red Planet* is a film spectacular that should only be viewed on an extremely large screen with maximum sound fidelity. Challenged with achieving a score for my outer space phantasm, I worked four months cutting a track from pre-existing electronic compositions, including the work of Iannis Xenakis, the Greek French avant-garde composer, music theorist, architect, and engineer. Although my electronic track enhanced the powerful flux of images, I finally abandoned the track because it was not unified in its voice. To do justice to the startling kinetic power of my film, I realized that I required an original composition that could utilize three-dimensional movement that is possible with a quadraphonic sound system that can move the sound across the audience and spiral around the room in the battle of the space creatures.**

**I searched for several months for an electronic composer when at last, electronic music pioneer Morton Subotnick of the California Institute of the Arts recommended Barry Schrader, a young composer on the faculty. Once, I heard Schrader's *Celebration* generating startling high-energy music, I knew Barry was the composer to score the film. Barry's final quadraphonic mix was produced in the space of two months during all-night sessions with the Buchla 200 electronic music synthesizer. Using complex timbres and as many as twenty layered tracks, he achieved incredible sound densities (sound events per unit of time.) The Buchla sound is different from that of the Moog synthesizer popular in pop music because the Buchla does not use a keyboard. Its various sound events and dialogues amongst its modules are initiated internally and externally by touch sensitive tabs.**





**After synching Barry's tracks with the film on a KEM editing machine, Jack Woolse, master post production sound mixer at Todd-AO sound facility finished the final sound mix at the same time he was mixing the sound for Beatles guitarist George Harrison's and Indian sitar player Ravi Shankar's *Concert for Bangledesh* to fund relief for refugees from East Pakistan during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, in which Bangladesh was fighting for independence from Pakistan. A half million Bengalis had been killed by the Bhola cyclone and General Yahya Khan's Pakistani Army, whose weaponry was supplied by the United States, had slaughtered a quarter of million civilians. Horrified by the humanitarian disaster, Indian musician Ravi Shankar who had ancestral roots in Bangladesh, asked George Harrison to help the starving refugees of Bangladesh. Harrison recruited Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Billy Preston, Ringo Starr, and Leon Russell to play benefit concerts that ultimately earned $12 million for Bangladesh.**

**The first public screening of *Death of the Red Planet* was held at Todd AO on a seventy foot screen with many Hollywood luminaries requesting attendance, with the *Hollywood Reporter* reviewing the film, and Leon Russell, one of the performers of *Concert for Bangladesh*, attending the screening. Leon had graduated one year later than I from Will Rogers High School in Tulsa Oklahoma. *Death of the Red Planet* was released in Cinemascope and Quadraphonic sound, accompanied with the quadraphonic rock film, *Yessongs*, featuring Rich Wakeman in theatres across America, invited to the Cannes Film Festival in France, and screened in the grand amphitheater of the Palais des congrès de Paris.**

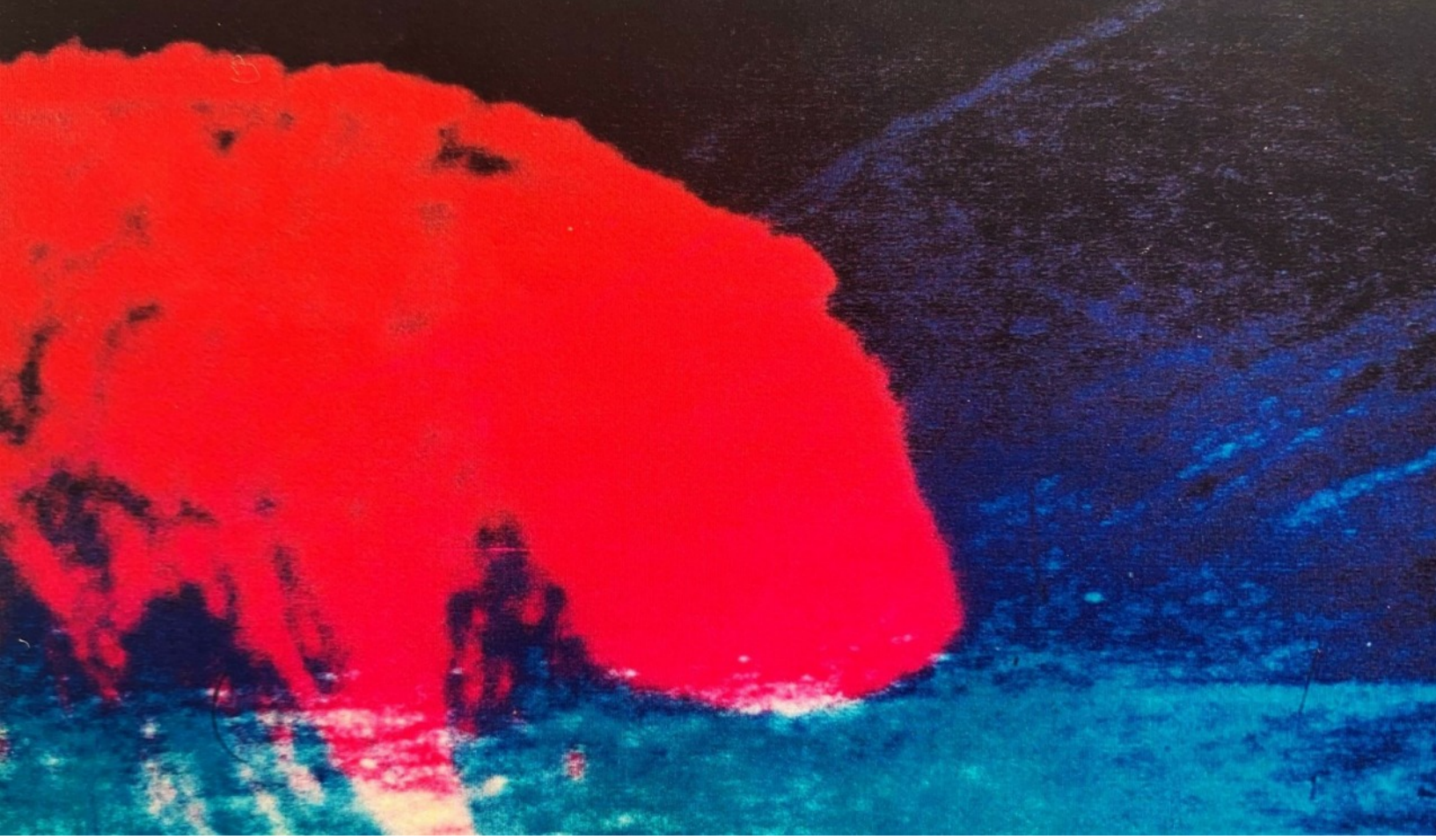




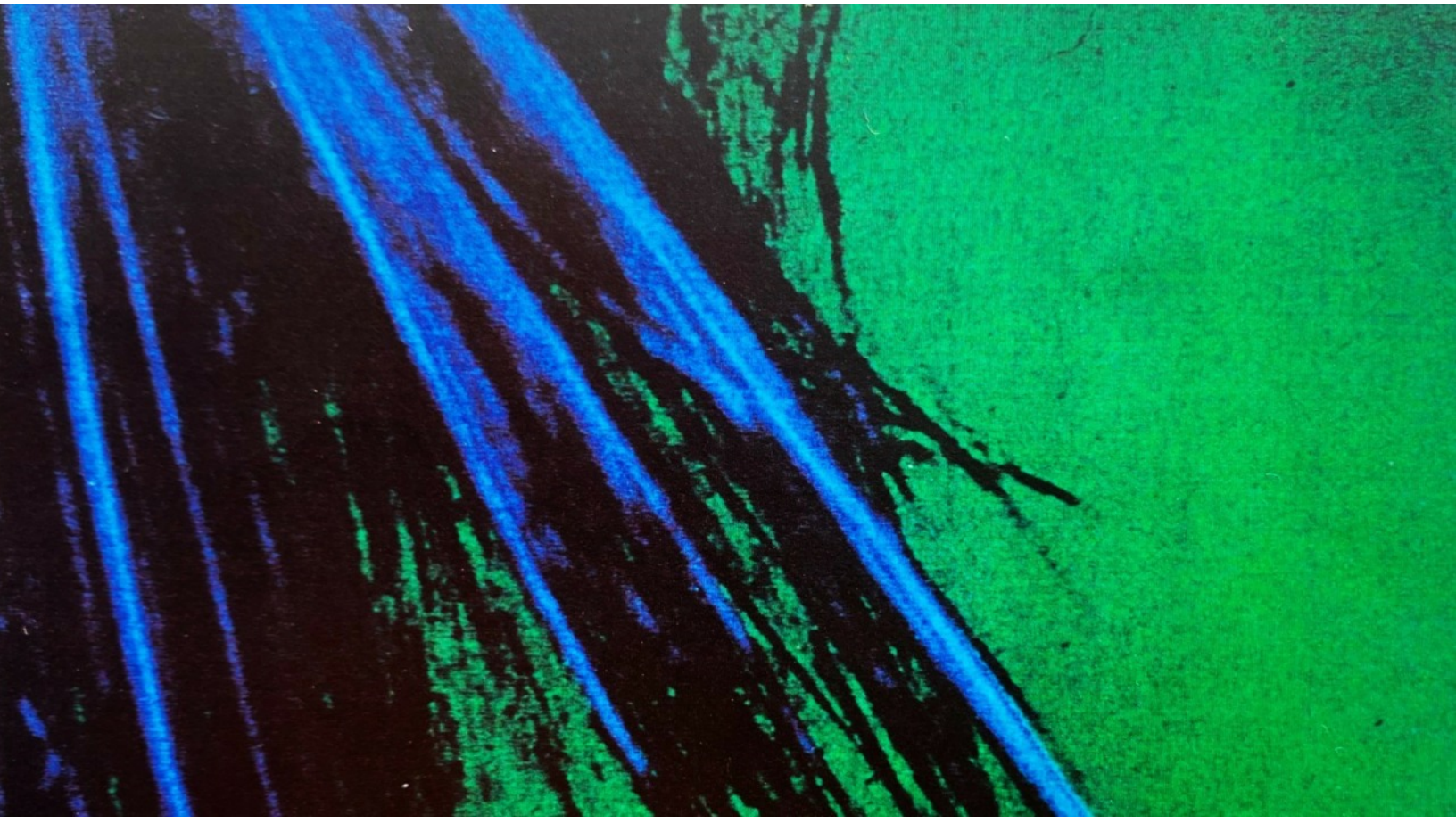
**Editing *Death of the Red Planet* on a Movieola at my apartment in Venice, California.**

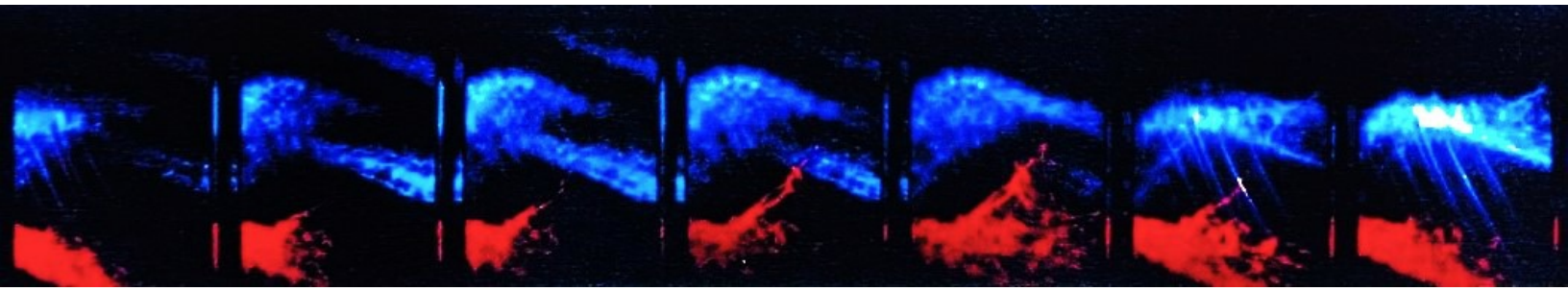


**Editing composer Barry Schrader's soundtrack for *Death of the Red Planet* on a KEM editing machine.**

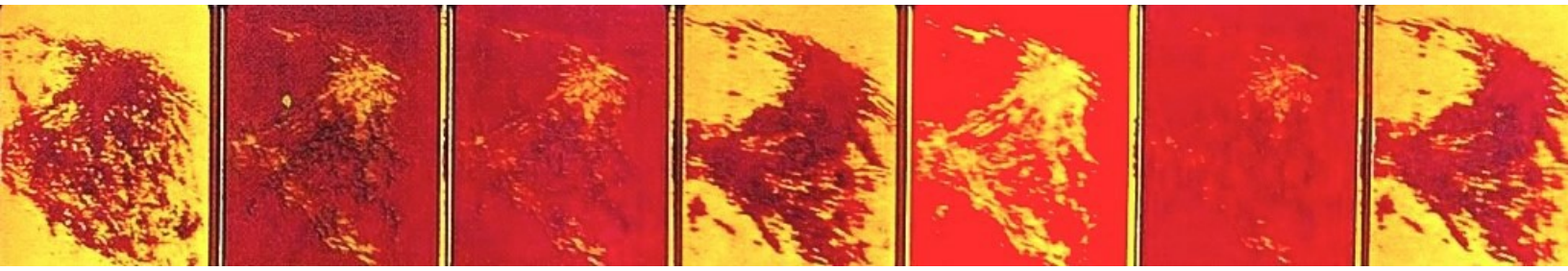


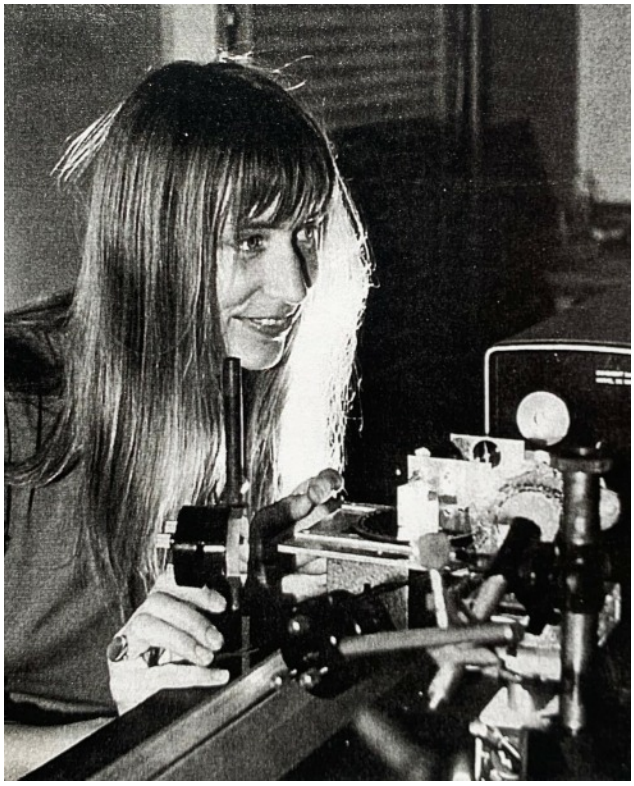
***Death of the Red Planet*** **directed by Dale Allan Pelton.**





**To illustrate the speed of movement: seven frames projected at 24 frames per second is less than one third of a second. Imagine the speed of travel when 35 mm images are projected on a seventy foot movie screen.**





**While a senior researcher at the California Institute of Technology, Dr. Elsa Garmire collaborated with Dale Pelton to generate the initial laser phenomena for the kinetic images of the outer space spectacle *Death of the Red Planet.* Awarded a B.A. in Physics at Radcliffe College, and a PhD in physics at MIT, Ms. Garmire was professor of physics, electrical engineering, and the Director for Laser Studies at the University of Southern California for 20 years before serving as a professor and the first female dean of the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College. "I believe the violence of many computer games results from the testosterone of the young men who design them. Bringing in more women and minorities could reduce the downside of many engineering design projects." An author of 250 journal papers, Ms. Garmire was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Academy of Engineers, and the National Academy of Inventors for her pioneering work in laser technology and nonlinear optics, Ms. Garmire holds nine patents and was a co-founder with Ivan Dryer of Laserium.**



**Barry Schrader, composer, and electro-acoustic music pioneer composed four discreet-channel soundtracks for *Death of the Red Planet.* A professor of music at the California Institute of the Arts, Schrader's works for tape, dance, film, video, and mixed media have been performed worldwide. Noted for *Bestiary, Trinity,* and *Lost Atlantis*. Founder and first president of the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States, Shrader has combined acoustic and electronic music in *Moon-Whales and other Moon Songs.* Although he had attained a graduate degree in musicology at the University of Pittsburgh, after working with the Buchla synthesizer he decided to devote his life to electro-acoustic music. Schrader created the film score for *Death of a Red Planet* with a Buchla 200 electronic synthesizer, recording as many as 20 tracks, then mixing in layers onto the final quadraphonic track. Transfer and final sound editing was done by Jack Woolse of Todd-AO post-production company while Mr. Woolse was mixing the sound for Beatles guitarist George Harrison's and Indian sitar player Ravi Shankar's *Concert for Bangledesh.***

# DEATH OF THE RED PLANET

*Barbara T. Smith*

Los Angeles

Early this year, a film called "Death of The Red Planet' was previewed at the Todd A-O Studios in Hollywood. This is an argon-laser light film written, produced and directed by Dale Pelton with the collaboration of Dr. Elsa Garmire of Cal Tech for the prime laser images. Electronic sound accompanying it was composed and realized by Barry Schrader of the Cal Arts Faculty.

This is like no laser film I have ever seen. The imagery is projected over the entire surface of a huge curved screen which gives tremendous depth to the visual space. And the title and sound create added depths of interpretation and meaning so that what we see or imagine is not the flat play of light on a two dimensional surface. Instead we are given a dramatic conflict whose development and climax is stupendous to preceive.

The film begins with the slow and rapid undulations of white shafts, forms and motions of laser light in a vast space. Then as time passes a red sphere or elipse appears, moving and interacting with the other light phenomenon. As this red light object appears, disappears, extends and changes in shape it variously becomes identified as the RED Planet. Opposing light forces — white, blue, etc. — move to attack and engulf or destroy it. The intensity of the imagery is hard to convey. Sudden shafts of light charge virtually across the entire screen accompanied by intense sound (originally created on the synthesizer.) The light particles move at incredible speeds or become evolving and moving forms. In one part the "Planet" is concealed again and again behind emerging and changing blue crystalline forms, cold and chilling. Gradually the event becomes more aggressive. There is a moment of seeming impact when the light bursts in huge shock waves of sound, yet with every overlay or contact the Red Planet reappears and maintains its integrity.

In time the light becomes a piercing battle of laser rays between the red and white forces — until the Red Planet has not, as expected, become engulfed nor snuffed out but instead has had to internalize its enemy. Its objectness becomes amorphous, straining to digest or escape from its antagonistic inner guest. It flows amoeba-like out from itself, its edges blur and finally, since it cannot contain itself, it momentarily coheres only to explode in a violent burst of red, then orange and white light directly at the screen (happily not the presumption of a central universal explosion but only one of the Red Planet) and passes out of our vision. We are left in a great empty darkness for a time until — perhaps from some other point of view — we begin to see delicate needle-like rays of white light flowing out into infinity. The remaining flow of the "ashes" of the Red Planet wells up and flies away.

It is difficult to give an impression of the sound. The quality and intensity is precise to the imagery. It is often fluid, ethereal, remote, but developing to bursts and passages of such depth or loudness that it threatened to disturb the gigantic speakers of the sound system — and our ears.

This film is a stunning achievement which certainly deserves a larger audience, perhaps in New York where Pelton plans to take it. It is a fine collaboration of technology and art, absolutely requiring both the technology that Dr. Garmire willingly provided and the immense impact of Schrader's score. And even more importantly it requires light, sound and projection equipment at the scale we witnessed. This fact will limit its distribution or its effect in future showings. It is fortunate that the three persons involved were able to work together and brought to bear equivalent talents.

*Art Week* **review**

MOVIE REVIEW

# Death of the Red Planet

Capturing upon many thousands of feet of film the photon bombardment properties of argon and helium-neon laser beams, and then editing and re-editing the results, independent film-maker Dale Pelton has created a different kind of cinematic experience.

"The Death of the Red Planet" is an imaginative 20 minute kinetic light short in brilliant Todd A-O color and Cinemascope sans cast or animation.

The plot, if indeed there is one, concerns the confrontation between two galactic space entities and the eventual emergence of one as conqueror. In this case, despite the title, the red planet does not die after its encounter with the blue planet, but rather re-synthesizes into an altered energy form.

Pelton, who attended the graduate film school at UCLA, uses the storyline as an excuse to experiment with stunning and progressively more dramatic light-in-motion sequences created by the lasers, working in tandem with Dr. Elsa Garmire, a research physicist at Cal-Tech. Visually, the film is near hallucinogenic in its effect, providing the viewer goes with the images and does not purposely resist.

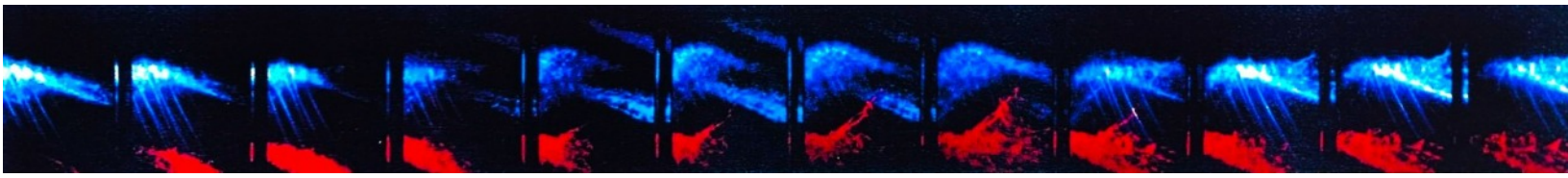
The short was ambitiously scored by Cal Arts electronic music composer Barry Schrader, who utilized a Buchla 2000 system in realizing and mixing as many as 20 tracks simultaneously to produce the final quadraphonic accompaniment. The score took shape in two months, as opposed to the two years the actual project was in production.

Whereas the music and film are both inventive and creative as separate accomplishments, they don't complement each other well in the early portions of the short. This is resolved as both film and music build through an unexpected, heart-pounding staccato in the mid sequences to the crescendo of climax near the end of the short, tagged by a gentle denouement as the red planet undergoes metamorphosis following destruction.

The music does have a tendecy to linger in places a moment after the visual portion of the film has proceeded to other, conflicting themes, and faster cutting might have added to the drama of the climax, but all in all the project is quite entertaining and achieves considerable impact.

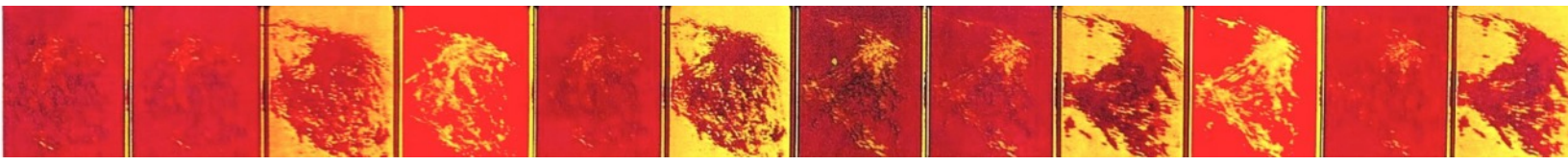
Pelton wrote, directed, edited and produced for his own company, Cataclysmic Cinema. —Lee Reynolds

*Hollywood Reporter* **review**



**While designing models for film director, Monty Python's Terry Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, a psychedelic rock music genre starring Johnny Depp and Benicio del Toro in an adaptation of counter-culture journalist Hunter S. Thompson's novel of the same name, I realized that my film *Death of the Red Planet* would be ideal for the psychedelic light show in the flashback scene set in Bill Graham's Fillmore Auditorium 1965, a San Francisco club renowned for featuring the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane. After I screened the film in quadraphonic sound, Terry Gilliam was so astonished by the ethereal gossamer fluidity of the laser images that he requested two prints to be projected on the walls of the stage during the Johnny Depp-Hunter Thompson scene. When I arrived on the day of the shoot, wanting to honor me for my film, Terry asked the costume designer to dress me in a hippy's white tunic and sat me at the table with Depp and Thompson who was not thrilled with my company. Noted for his womanizing, Hunter asked Gilliam to replace me with a beautiful woman. The director complied by instructing me to dance like a stoned hippy behind Depp and Thompson, and later, sitting on the edge of the stage acting that was stoned out of my mind while an actor playing Grace Slick sang. After the shoot, Benicio del Toro's dialogue was so difficult to understand that a dialogue replacement session was set up for Benicio to clean up his speech. When I attended the recording session, the recording engineer offered to clean up some electrostatic on my quadraphonic soundtrack, giving me the chance to add a French horn from an opera by American composer John Adams to the final scene.**

**Although I loved Terry Gilliam's visionary retro-futurist fantasy *Brazil*, which was critically acclaimed, nominated for Best Original Screenplay and Best Art Direction, it lost scads of money for Universal and 20th Century Fox, but eventually became a cult classic noted for its Kafkaesque critique of technology and corporate statism. I adored Gilliam's fantasy, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, praised by film critics and nominated for four Academy Awards, Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design, Best Makeup, and Best Visual Effects, but like *Brazil* lost millions for the studio. Not to be eclipsed by Gilliam's previous financial failures, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* was another box office disaster. Nevertheless, at the film's premier at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, which I attended, *Fear and Loathing* was nominated for the top award, the Palm d'Or. Terry Gilliam, along with John Cleese, gained stardom as a member of the Monty Python comedy troupe before he began directing black comedy films about bureaucracy and authoritarianism in dystopian worlds. Gilliam's *The Fisher King*, starring Robin Williams was a critical and financial success, earning five nominations at the 64th Academy Awards for Best Actor for Williams, Best Supporting Actress for Mercedes Ruehl, and Best Original Screenplay for LaGravenese, and won the Silver Lion at the Venice International Film Festival. After Robin William's death, a film critic said, "No Williams film can hit harder – or be so fully consoling in such heartbreaking circumstances – than *The Fisher King*," in which his character, "gradually simmers to a boil of bristling insecurities, terror and agonizing pain."**





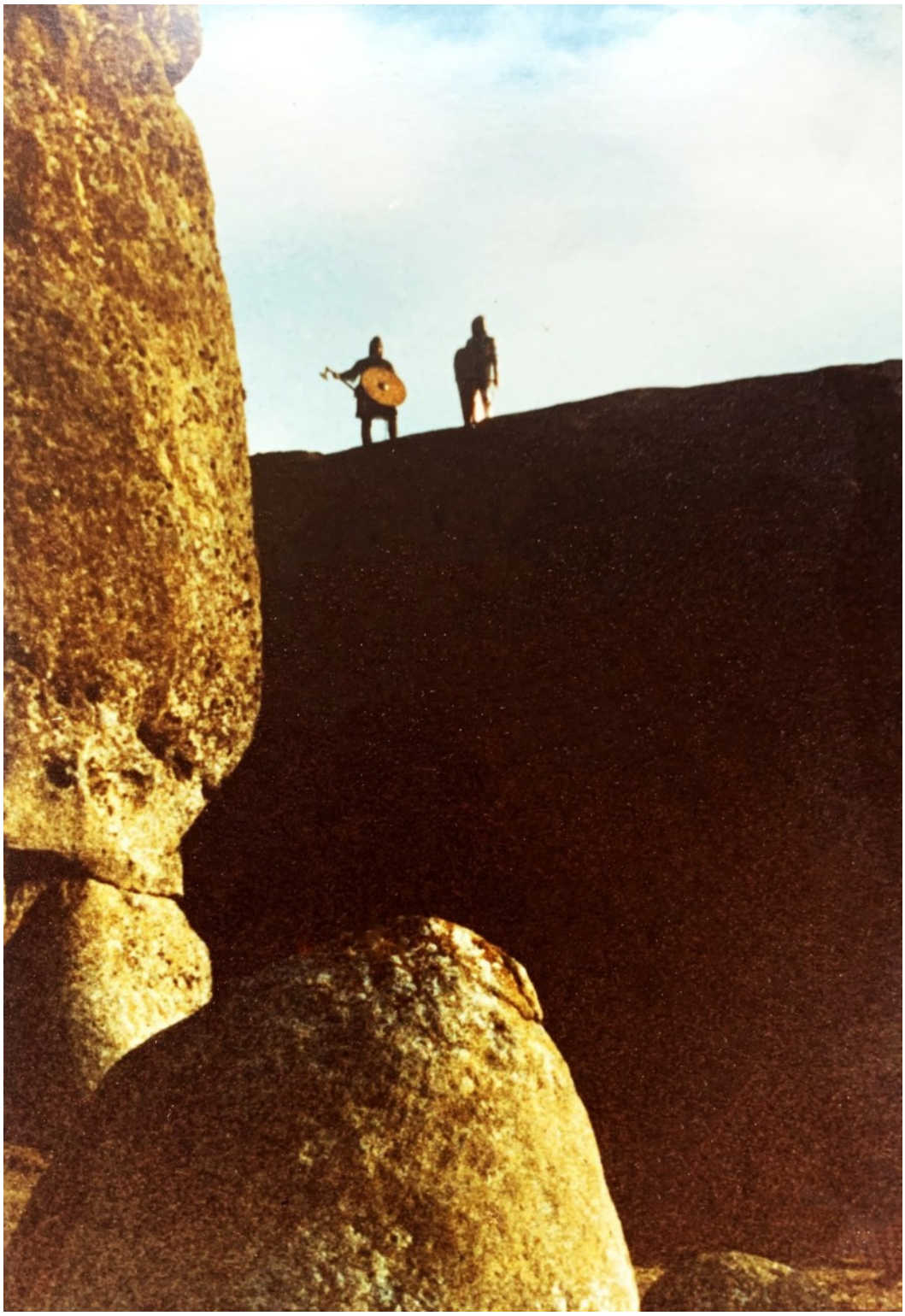
**I wrote the screenplay for *East of the Moon* while living in a cabin in the serene countryside of Tomales Bay, on the coast north of San Francisco.**



**After completing *Death of the Red Planet*, my MFA degree thesis at UCLA, filmed with laser light at the California Institute of Technology and theatrically released in Cinemascope and quadraphonic sound in 600 theatres across the United States, I lived with Lola, a German Shepherd-Chow Chow in a rehabilitated migrant worker's cabin on Fallon Road between Highway One and Tomales Bay where the San Andreas earthquake fault runs into the Pacific Ocean. While installation artist Christo was constructing his 24-mile long *Running Fence* in 1976, flowing across the rolling hills of Marin County from U.S. Highway 101 and terminating in the Pacific Ocean midway between the Estero Americano and the Estero de San Antonio, I ran miles amid the Jersey and Holstein dairy cows and Suffolk sheep. I pursued my love for dance, attending the performances of Mikhail Baryshnikov and American Ballet, the Béjart Ballet, and San Francisco Ballet and wrote the screenplay *East of the Moon,* inspired by the medieval story of Tristan and Iseult.**

# East of the Moon

## Production Design



Photographs by Dale Pelton



**To save the Cornish children from being sent to Ireland as slaves, Quentin fights Irish champion Morholt to the death.**





**Quentin fights Irish champion Morholt to the death.**





**Duel to the death, Quentin of Cornwall against Morholt of Ireland.**





**Princess Gwynore of Ireland.**



**Princess Gwynore practices the Celtic harp.**





**Quentin returns to Tintagel Castle.**





**Gwynore waiting for Quentin at Elephant Rock**





**Gwynore visits her favorite Scottish Highlander, Lord Lochinvar.**





**Gwynore waits in vain for Quentin.**



**Quentin climbs the tower to see Gwynore.**



**Moon over Tintagel castle.**



**Quentin returns from exile.**



**Queen Gwynore and Quentin – East of the Moon**



**In the 1990's, Sandra Marsh, the founder of Sandra Marsh & Associates, a talent agency representing cinematographers, production and costume designers in Hollywood, and her husband Terence Marsh, a renowned production designer, were contemplating moving into film production. Sandra and Terence read *East of the Moon*, fell in love with its romantic scope, and took out an option to shop it at Hollywood studios. With little experience in developing a project, I was thrilled to have the Marshes interested in *East of the Moon* for Terence Marsh was renowned for film production design on two continents, winning an Academy Award for director David Lean's *Dr. Zhivago*, which took two years to film, starring Omar Sharif and Geraldine Chaplin, where he constructed the streets of 19th century Moscow on sets outside Madrid. Previously, Marsh had been the assistant art director under designer John Box for David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*, starring Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif. Marsh created the set of Aqaba, the site of T.E. Lawrence's victory in the Arab Revolt that made him a military icon in British history, and the protagonist for three chapters in my novel *Celine on Fire*, in which I tell his life in photos from Oxford to his tragic death. Marsh's second Oscar was for the musical *Oliver!* which was nominated for eleven Academy Awards, winning six, for Best Picture, Best Director for Carol Reed, Best Art Direction, Best Music, Best Sound, and an Honorary Award for choreographer Onna White. The Charles Dickens classic, a searing indictment of the British class system that relegated the poorest citizens to live bleak lives of toil was shot in England on six sound stages and the studio backlot. Marsh's atmospheric London streets were constructed by a crew of 350 workers and included 10,000 cobblestone slabs. I had met Marsh previously through his long collaboration with my friend Isidoro Raponi, the special effects genius who worked with Marsh to create the submarine for *The Hunt for Red October*, the prison for *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Green Mile*, sets that I visited during construction. Marsh designed the notorious box-office hit *Basic Instinct* with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone, directed by Paul Verhoeven with whom I was the supervising art director when I designed the underground science laboratories in Verhoeven's *Hollow Man* that I have illustrated on following pages.**

**When Sandra Marsh gave *East of the Moon* to Richard Lester, the director with the flamboyant directorial style of the Beatle's break out film, *A Hard Day's Night*, and *Help*, Lester keenly wanted to direct it. Wildly successful with *The Three Musketeers,* starring Richard Chamberlain, Oliver Reed, Michael York, Rachel Welch, Geraldine Chaplin, Charlton Heston, and Faye Dunaway. Lester also had box office success with *Superman II* with Christopher Reeve as Superman, Gene Hackman, Terence Stamp, and Margo Kidder, and *Superman III* that featured the red hot comedian of the time, Richard Pryor. Being an admirer of Robin Hood, I loved Lester's *Robin and Marian*, starring Sean Connery and my favorite actress, Audrey Hepburn. Although studios were interested due to Richard Lester's box office success, it was not a time in Hollywood when medieval love stories were in fashion. Scenes at sea and the horrific battle in Toledo, Spain made it an expensive epic production. With film genres and financing working against *East of the Moon*, the project failed to get a studio green light. Upon later reflection, I realized that despite Lester's reputation, he would not be the right choice for direction. His frenetic, often comic, hyperactive style that was so right for *A Hard Day's Night* and *Superman* would be the wrong filmic style for a 12th century romantic tragedy. If *Celine on Fire* proves to be successful when released on the Internet, I will try once again to launch *East of the Moon*.**

East of the Moon Costume Design by Geoffrey Sharpe, London England



**Irish champion Lord Morholt**



**Lord Quentin of Cornwall**



**Princess Gwynore of Ireland**



**Gothar, King of Ireland**



**Quentin's challenge – Slay the dragon terrorizing Ireland.**



**Lord Andret – King Gothar's Seneschal, bitter enemy of Quentin.**



**Quentin's enemies – Gondoine, Carriado, and Milou the Court Fool, allies of Lord Andre.**

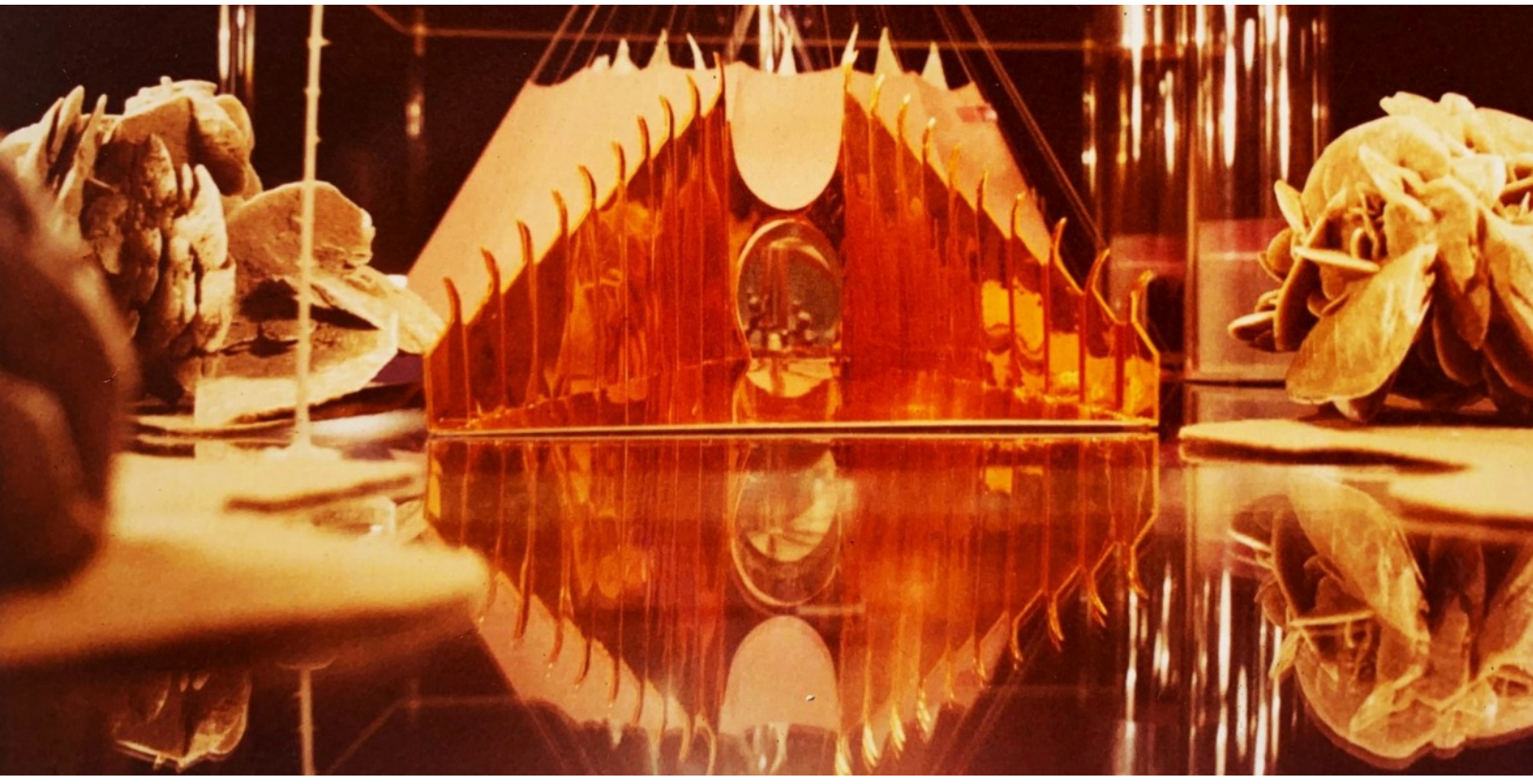


**Irish man-at-arms.**



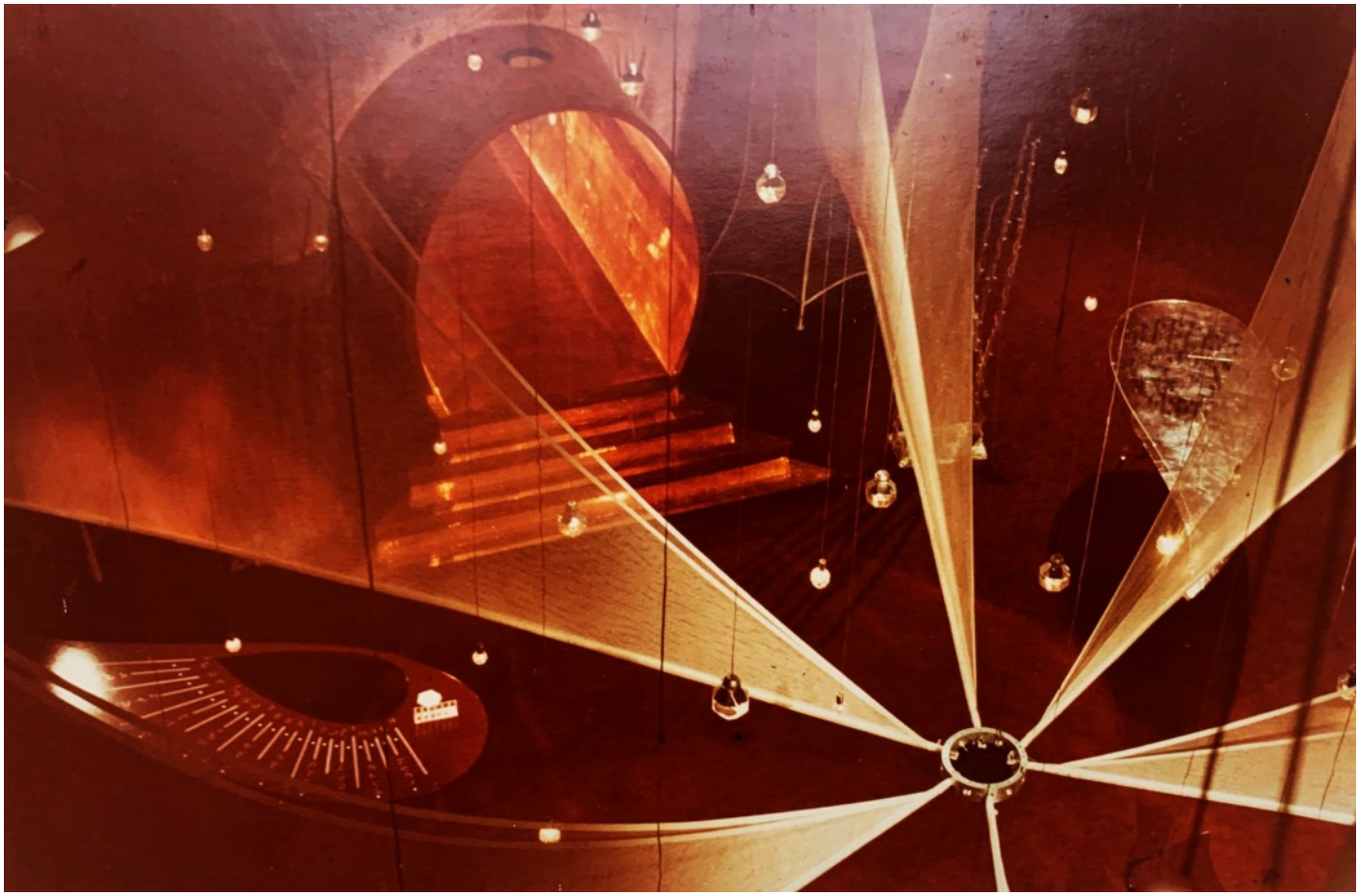
# Hollywood Film Design from *Battlestar Galactica* to *The Goonies*

**Universal Studios special effects constructed a model of my design for the Battlestar Galactica casino. The concept of a tension structure was inspired by the work of German architect and structural engineer Frei Otto who specialized in lightweight tensile and membrane structures. Otto was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2015. Frei Otto's tensile and membrane structures include The West German Pavilion at the 1967 Montreal Expo and the 1972 Summer Olympics Arena in Munich.**



**The Battlestar Galactica gambling casino, inspired by the engineering work of Frei Otto, was supported by a series of steel tubes in the form of a half-arch attached to the floor. Two half-arches formed the dome of the ceiling, each steel half-arch soaring overhead to the center of the circle, where the tubes were inserted into a stainless steel ring. Placed in a radial pattern, the sixteen half-arches formed the vaulted ribs of the 360 degree casino. A transparent rose-colored scrim in the shape of a 25 foot butterfly was attached to each of the thirty steel tubes. The two lower points of the butterfly scrim were anchored to the floor, while the two upper points of the butterfly scrim were stretched in tension to the ceiling of Universal Studios sound stage 19.**





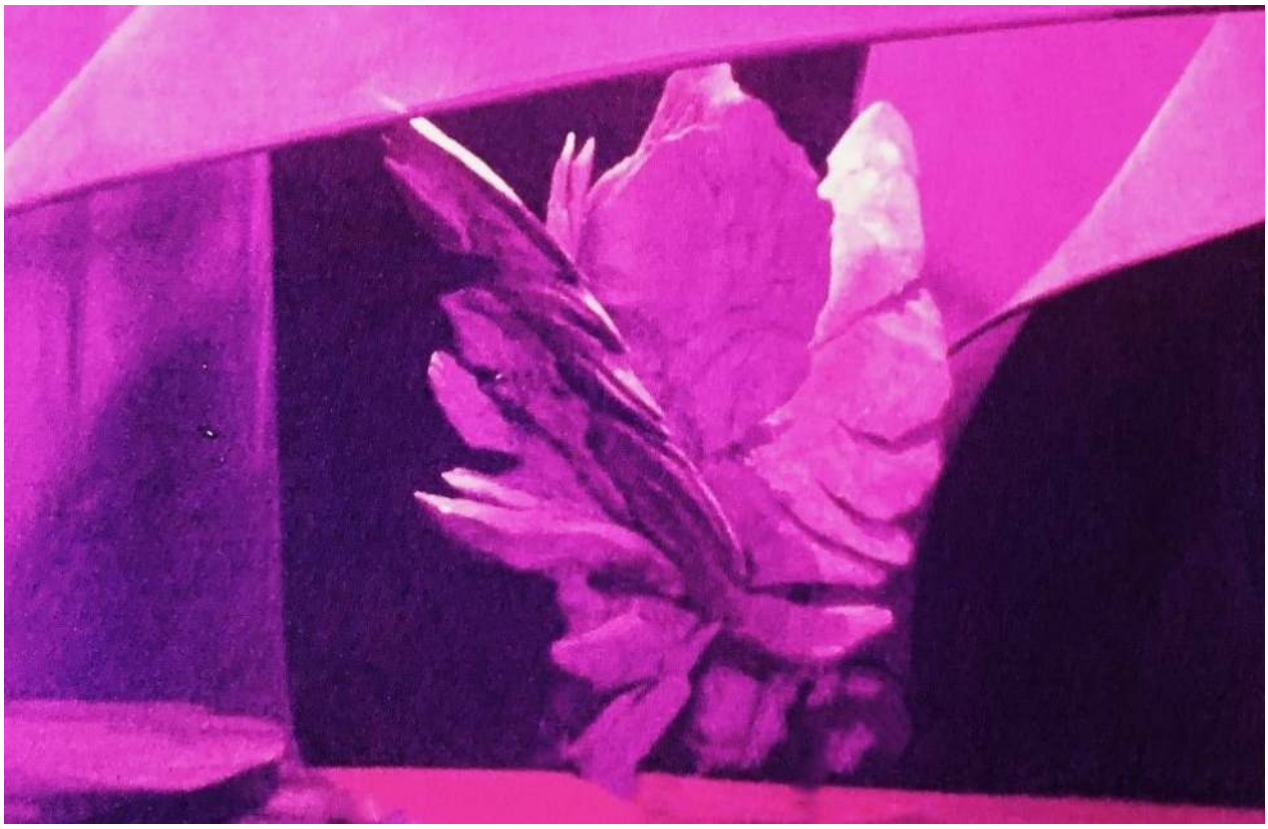
**For the gaming tables, in which the dealer operated within the curved opening, I designed games using Siamese characters. The Plexiglas tables featured strobe lights of various colors that activated upon wining hands. The tension structure of the cabaret theatre featured an Art Deco stage with Las Vegas dancers.**





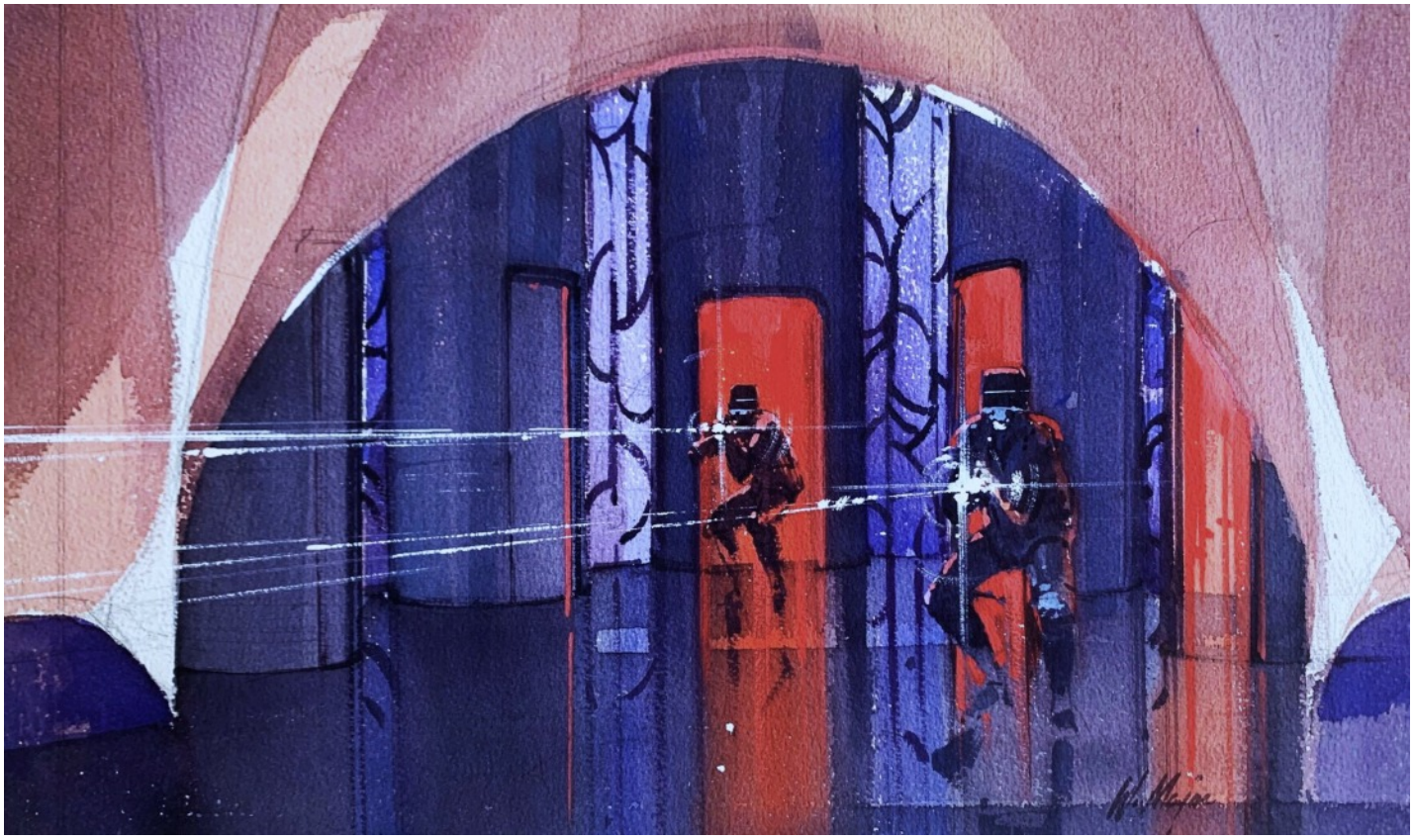
**The miniature rocks of the model of the casino were recreated fourteen feet in height by a sculptor in the special effects department of Universal Studios. Suspended from the permanents of the stage by nylon monofilament line, invisible to the camera, giving the illusion of asteroids drifting in space.**



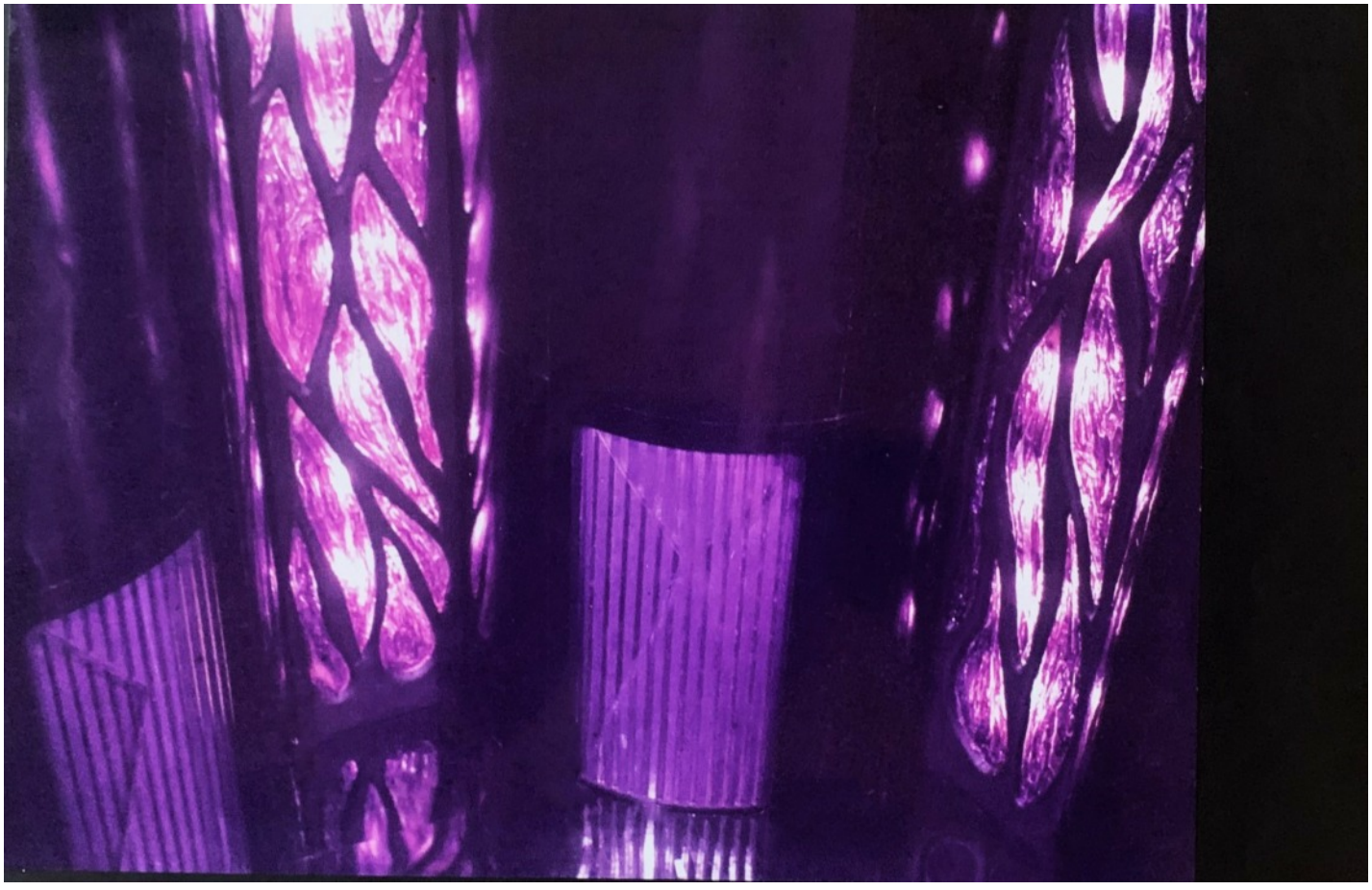


**The structure of the gambling casino was reconfigured for the Battlestar Galactic assembly hall. The fifteen foot tall rocks were suspended by monofilament cables to appear as if they were floating in space.**



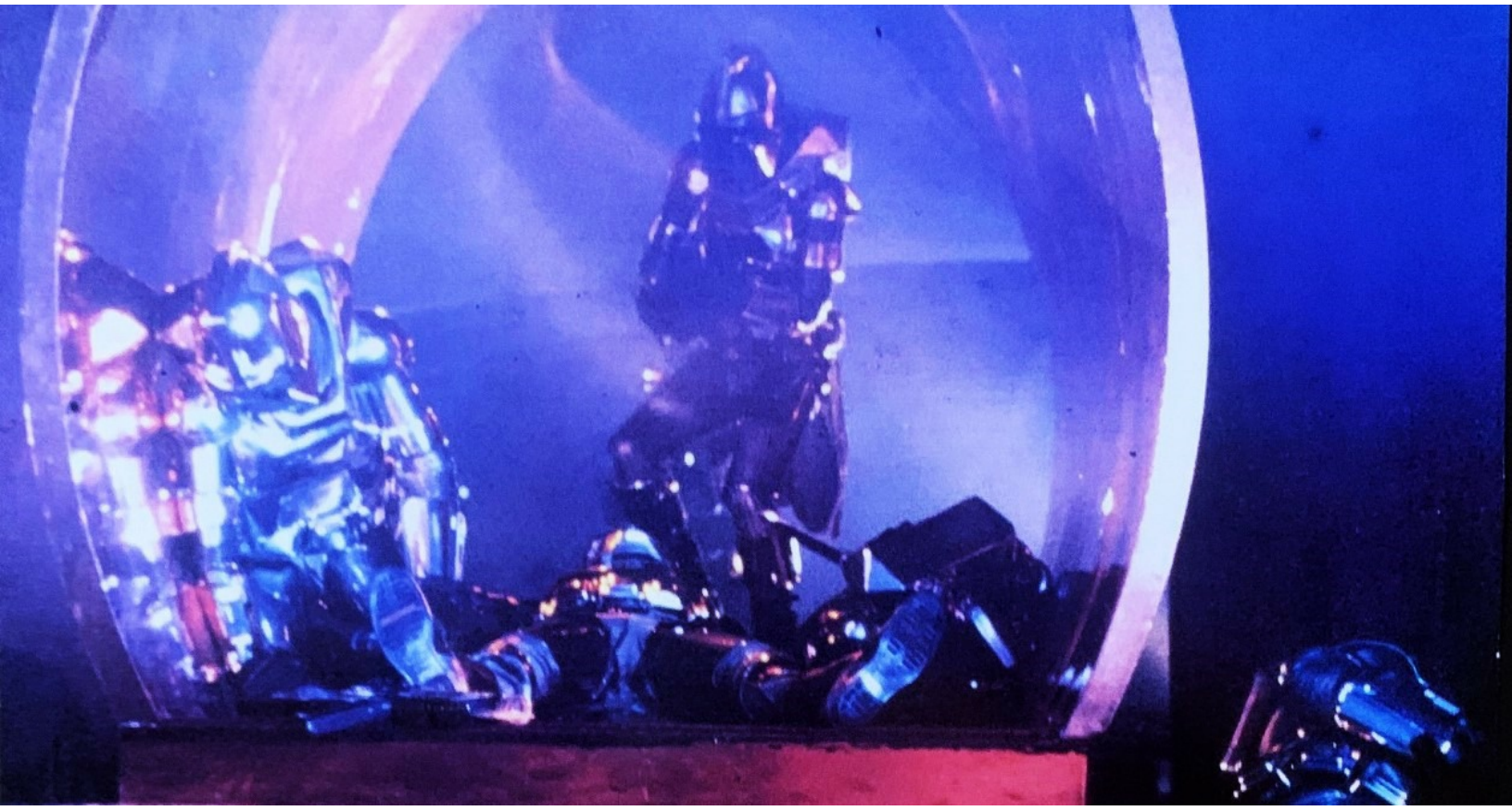


**The Cylon warrior robots attack the casino through the elevator banks.**





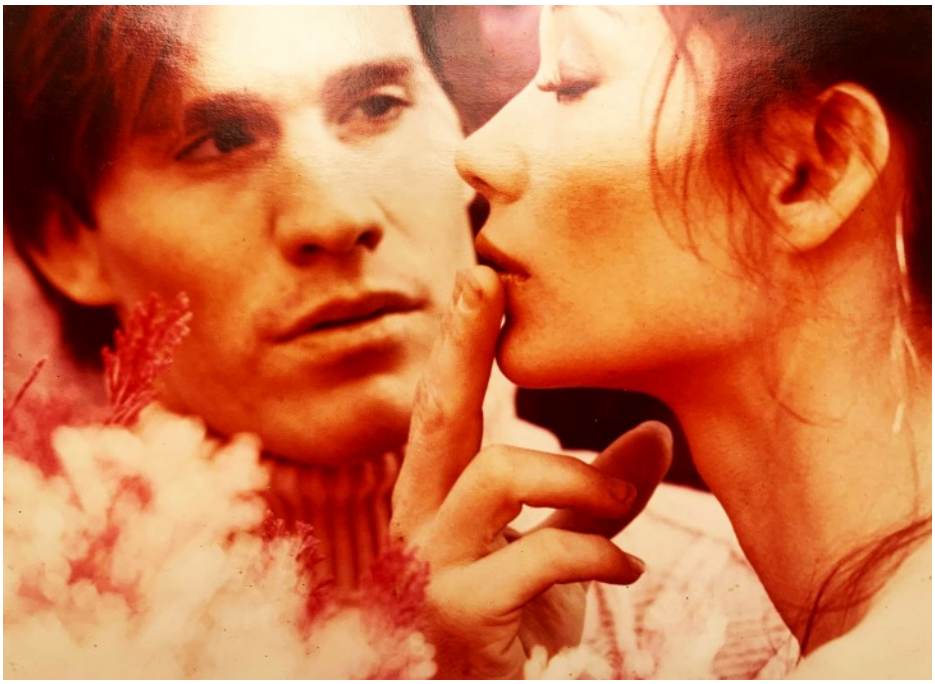
**While one squad of Cylon warrior robots attack from the elevators other Cylon robots strike through the front entrance.**





**Photos for Aimee Eccles' audition for the role of the sorceress in *Dr. Strange*, a Universal Studios production.**





**I shot Aimee Eccles' audition photos for *Dr. Strange* in a forest ravaged by a wildfire in the San Jacinto Mountains. Born in Hong Kong to an English father and Chinese mother, Aimee Eccles is known for the role of Dustin Hoffman's Indian wife Sunshine in director Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man*, as Hilda a victim of murderer Rock Hudson in director Roger Vadim's *Pretty Maids All in a Row*, and as Susan Chow, girlfriend of Stallone's brother Victor in director Sylvester Stallone's *Paradise Alley.***





**A photographer friend asked me to model in a fashion shoot on a roof top near the Los Angeles Water and Power building.**





**Compact disc – Fred Chess, 2006, Wikimedia.**

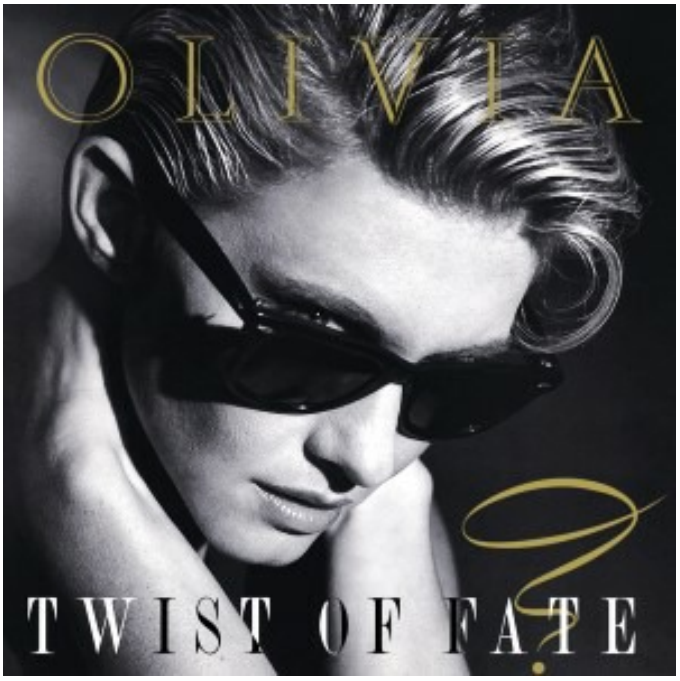
**Philips and Sony introduced to the world the music compact disc at the 1981 Consumer Electronic Show at McCormick Place, Chicago. The compact disc is an evolution of LaserDisc technology in which a laser beam generates high information density to make high-quality audio signals, a technology that Philips and Sony developed independently. In 1979, the two companies agreed to establish a joint design team of engineers to develop a new digital audio disc that could be played on compatible hardware, permitting consumers, beginning in 1982, to play a disc from any manufacturer. The new CD quickly became the unchallenged dominant device for music consumption.**

**Warner Music Group hired me to design the exhibit to introduce the CD to the world. Besides individual booths around the perimeter for the prime manufacturers of CD players, Sony, Philips, Denon, Hitachi, Sanyo, Toshiba, and RCA, Warner Music's concept was to create four habitats representing different demographic segments of the market from young married, to professional and affluent consumers who would pay up to $1,000 for a CD player at that time.**



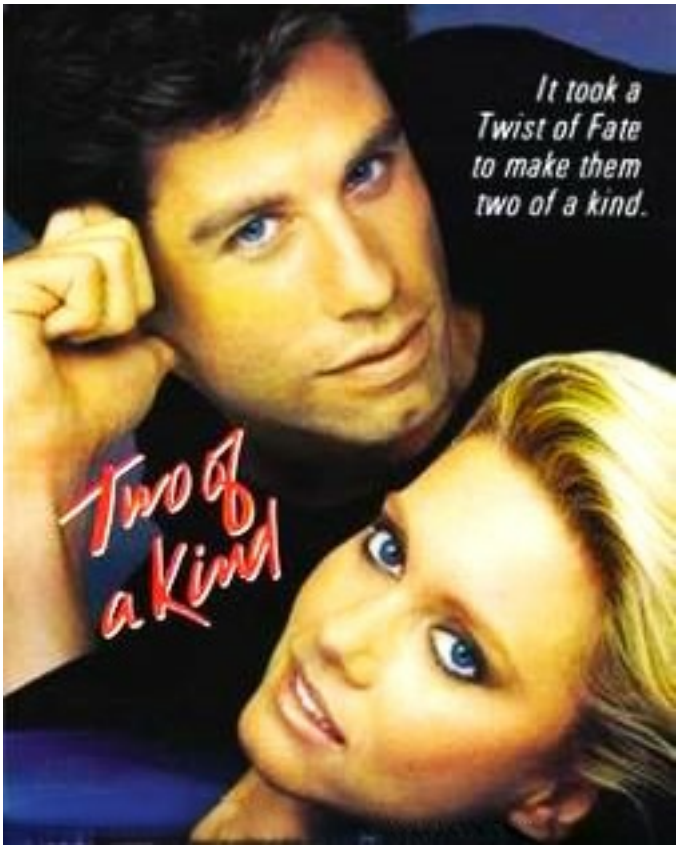


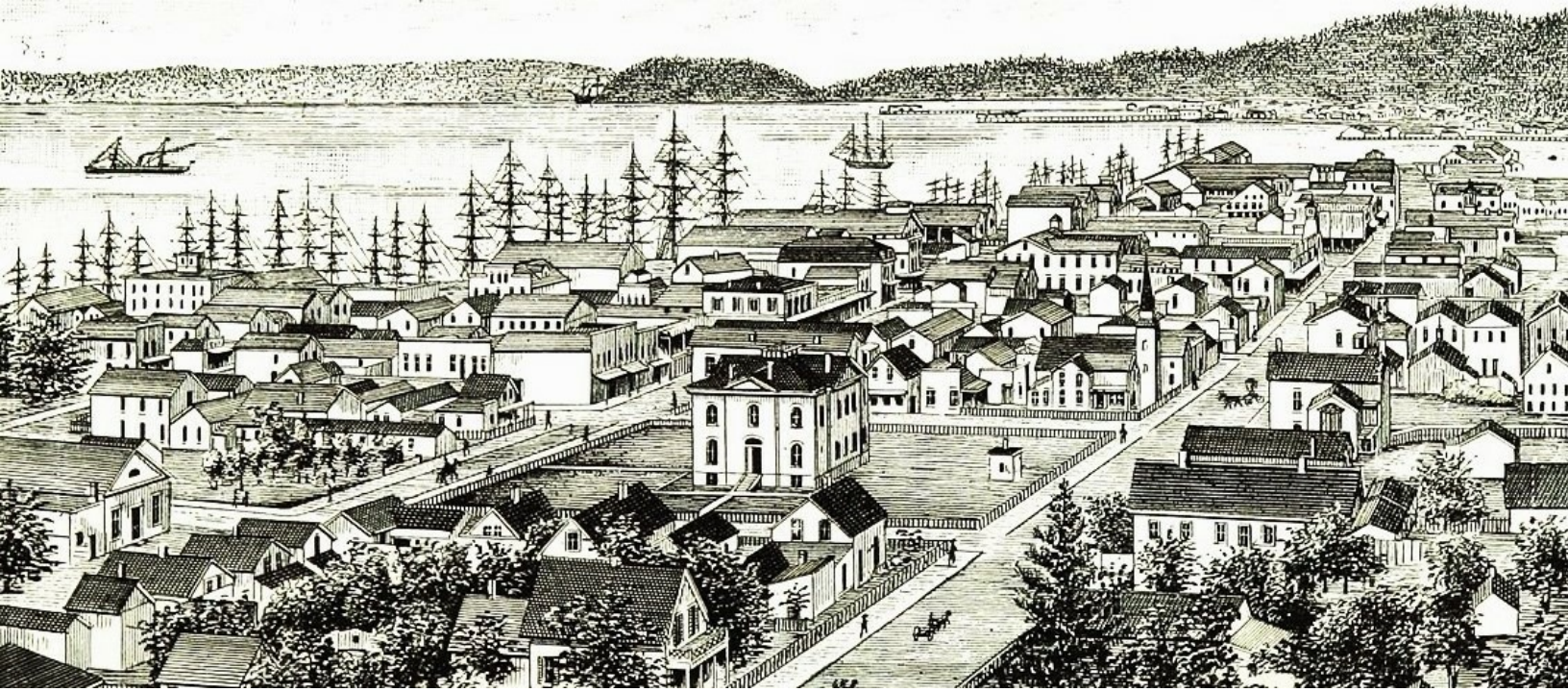

**I constructed a two story structure encased in a faux marble façade with blue neon lighting in Los Angeles, transported it to Chicago and reconstructed it in the McCormick Place exhibition hall. The structure included an elliptical screening room with a 16 ft. x 20 ft. video wall playing promotional videos for exhibition visitors. Set decorator Robert Benton, nominated four times for Academy Awards for Best Art Direction, including *Hud* starring Paul Newman, selected the interior furnishings.**




https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-KdUAYZOf0.

**The "Twist of Fate" music video for *Two of a Kind* was nominated for Best Video, Short Form at the 27th Grammy Awards, but David Bowie's Jazzin' won the award. "Twist of Fate" hit No. 5 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100. My concept for the courtroom was to suspend the judge and jury boxes over a lake of water, the structure of the jury boxes defined in ribbons of blue neon lights reflecting in the dark water while Olivia Newton-John pleads her case. Illuminated cathedral windows were suspended above the judge and jury boxes in a totally black space representing paradise. It was a great song in a silly movie.**





**Astoria, Oregon. Entrance to the Columbia River, 1882 – Unknown author, source, British Library, *The Pacific North-West. A guide for Settlers and Travelers. Oregon and Washington Territory,* public domain, Wikimedia.**

**The location shooting of *The Goonies* was in Astoria, Oregon and along the coast of Oregon, but the final scene after the collapse of the grotto with One-Eyed Willy's pirate ship sailing out to sea was filmed at Goat Rock State Beach in Sonoma County, California. The kids, Mike "Mikey" Walsh, Richard "Data" Wang, Clark "Mouth" Devereaux, and Lawrence "Chunk" Cohen, who call themselves "the Goonies" after the district where they live, the "Goon Docks" of Astoria, are faced with their parents losing their homes to foreclosure for the construction of a country club. Gathering for one final weekend at Mikey's house, while surveying the attic, the kids discover a 1632 doubloon and a treasure map that appears to belong to the renowned pirate "One-Eyed Willy. Thinking that if they could find the treasure, they could save their homes, the kids set off to the location marked on the map, where they find an abandoned restaurant, which unknown to them, is the hideout of the Fratelli crime family, Francis, Jake, Mama Fratelli, and their deformed younger brother, Sloth. Uncovering a tunnel in the basement, Mikey, Data, and Mouth enter the underground to search for the treasure, but Chunk gets accidentally locked in the freezer and is captured by the Fratelli gang who dash into the underground to capture the Goonies who are struggling to escape the deadly booby traps that Willy has set to protect his stolen loot. Encountering crashing boulders and as many Rube Goldberg snares and traps as in the Perils of Pauline, the kids manage to escape each deadly trap until at last, they discover the water slide tunnel, slide down it until they are spit out into the underground lake, splashing down in the great cavern and in great amazement behold Willy's pirate ship. Meanwhile, the deformed Fratelli brother Sloth frees Chuck and they race into the tunnels to save the Goonies from Sloth's evil brothers. Entering Willy's cabin, the Goonies find hordes of gold and gems, but just as they are gathering the loot, Francis and Jake Fratelli capture them and make them walk the plank, just at Sloth and Chuck arrive to throw the gangster off balances, giving the Goonies the chance to leap off the ship and swim to safety. As the Fratellis grab as much of the doubloon and gems they can carry, Willy's final booby trap explodes, setting off a cataclysm from which the Goonies and Fratellis with Sloth's help, barely escape, pitching them out of the underground onto Astoria beach where the police arrive to capture the Fratellis. While Mikey's father is still obliged to sign the foreclosure documents, their housekeeper Rosalita discovers the jewels that Mikey had put in his marble bag, providing enough to pay off the mortgages and save their homes. As the Goonies are attempting to convince the skeptical police about their wild adventures underground, everyone is startled to see Willy's ship emerging from the destroyed cavern and sailing out to sea.**

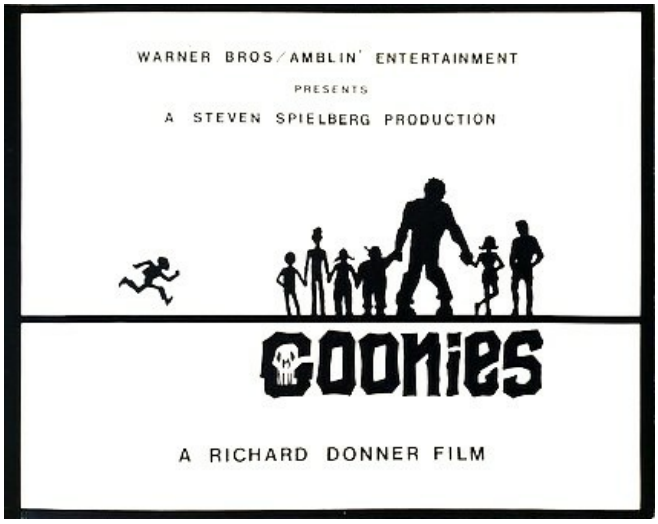
***The Goonies* was written by Chris Columbus based on a story by Steven Spielberg starring Sean Astin, Josh Brolin, Jeff Cohen, Corey Feldman, Kerri Green, Martha Plimpton, and Ke Huy Quan, with supporting roles by John Matuszak, Anne Ramsey, Robert Davi, Joe Pantoliano, and Mary Ellen Trainor. Dick Donner was the director and producer, and Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, and Steven Spielberg were the executive producers. Cinematography was by Nick Mclean, film editing by Michael Kahn and Steven Spielberg, music by Dave Grusin, produced by Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, and released by Warner Bros. *The Goonies* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress in 2017 for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."**

**1813 sketch of Fort Astoria – Author, Gabriel Franchère, Source, *Journal of a Voyage on the Northwest Coast of America During the Years 1810–1814*, 1854, public domain, Wikimedia.**

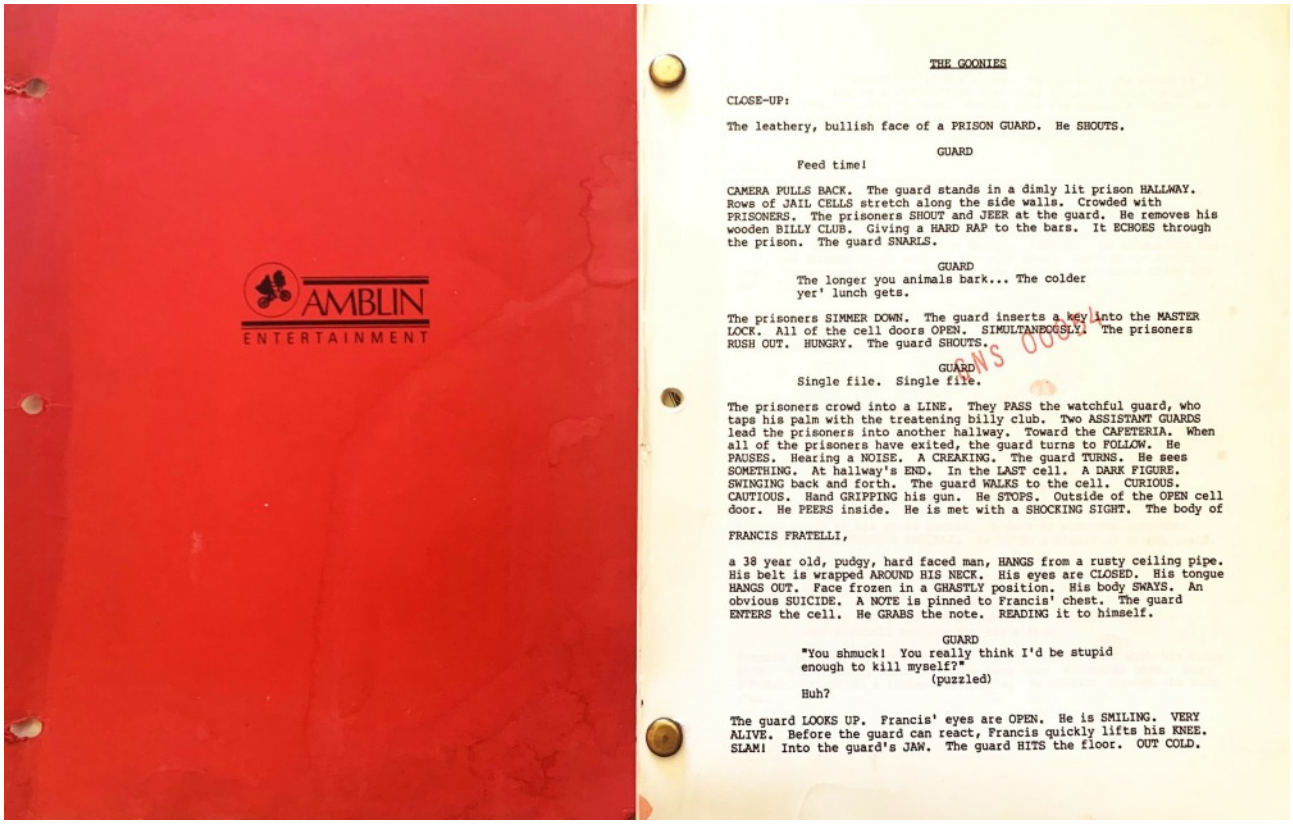
**Founded in 1811, Astoria is the oldest city in Oregon, the first permanent American settlement west of the Rocky Mountains, located on the south bank of the Columbia River where the river merges with the Pacific Ocean. The Lewis and Clark Expedition spent the winter of 1805 – 1806 at Fort Clatsop, close to Astoria, the log fort recreated in the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. The expedition that President Thomas Jefferson sent to explore the Louisiana Purchase acquired from Napoleon's France, hoped that a ship would arrive to take them to the east coast, but never appeared during a miserable winter of pelting rain and freezing cold, forcing them to return on the overland route to the east. John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company founded Fort Astoria, established a fur trade monopoly, and incorporated the port city in the state of Oregon in 1856. By the late 19th century, Astoria's economy was supported by fishing, fish processing, canneries, and lumber, primarily inhabited by Swedes, Finns, Chinese and Sikhs from Punjab, India.**

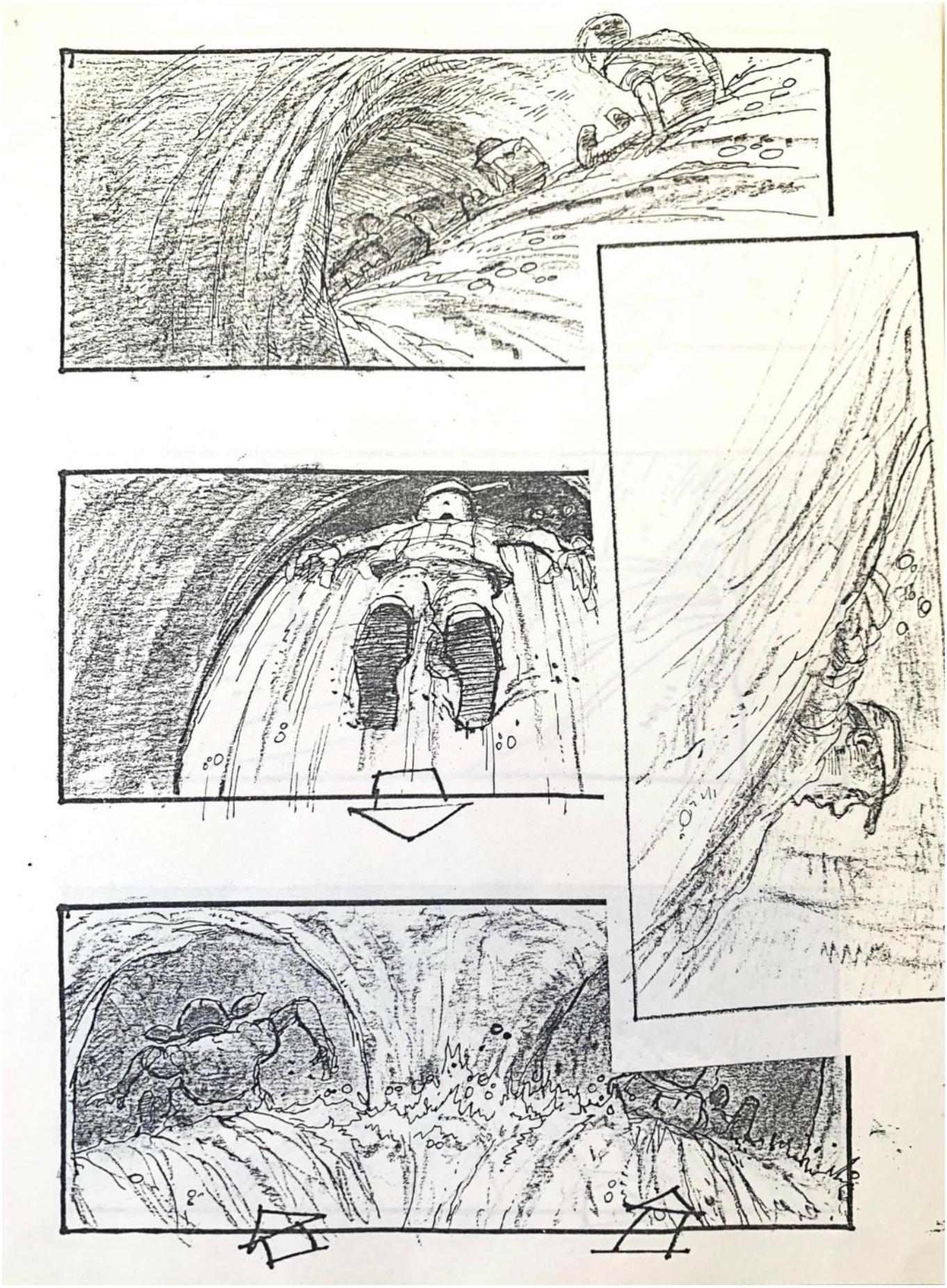



***The Goonies*** **opens with Francis Fratelli and Mama Fratelli assisting Jake Fratelli escape from the county jail and go into hiding in an abandoned restaurant. In the original script, the scene called for an old cemetery. According to Hollywood union rules, art directors are permitted only to design, not to physically create sets or props, work that is restricted by union rules to set carpenters, prop makers, or special effects. Despite the rules, I created the gravestones inspired by the elaborate 18th century stones that I had photographed in cemeteries in England and New England, painstakingly carving the headstone inscriptions with a chisel and hammer. Just as I finished the headstones and prepared to ship to Astoria, the scene was cut.**

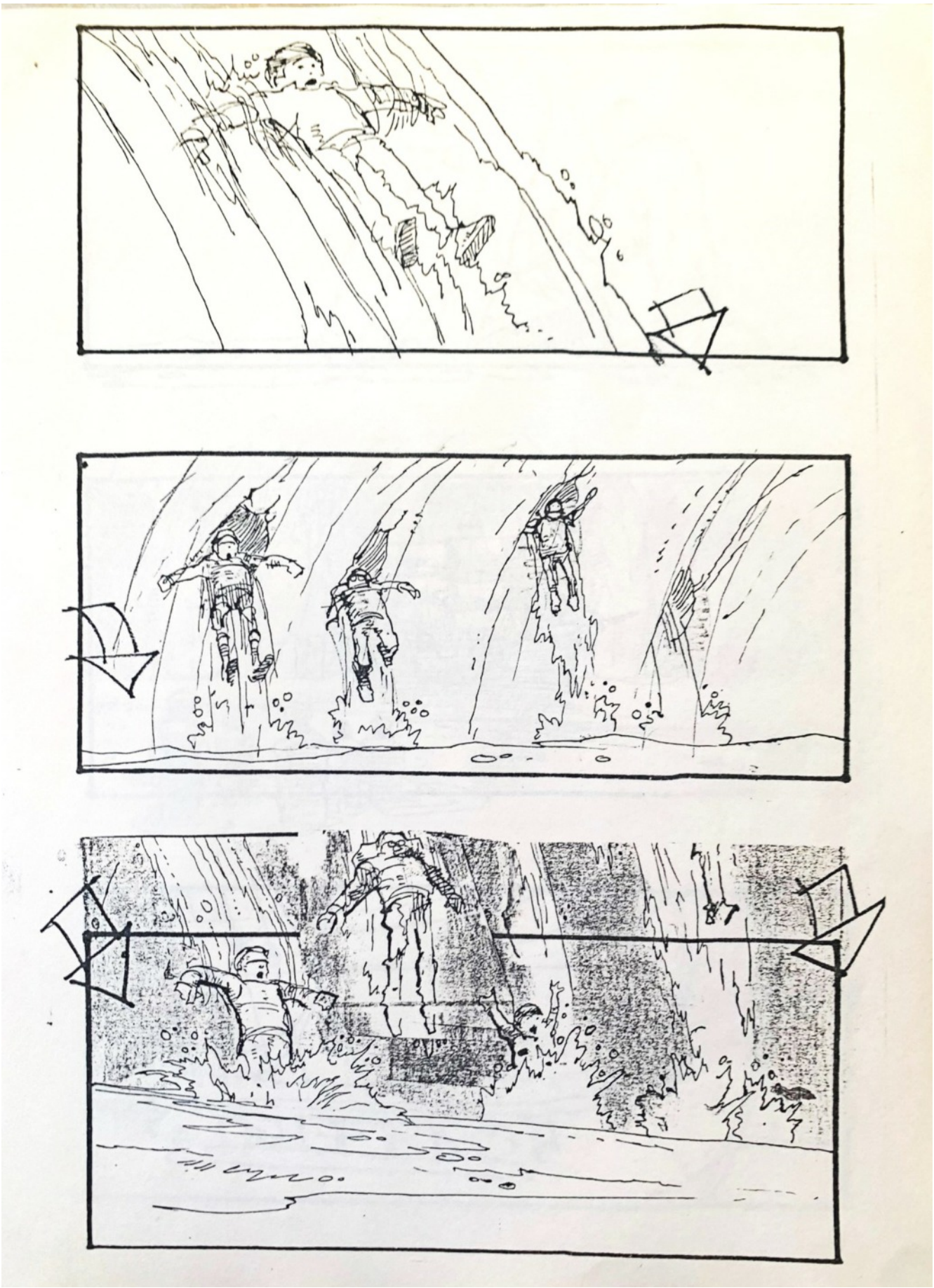

WARNER BROS/AMBLIN' ENTERTAINMENT
PRESENTS
A STEVEN SPIELBERG PRODUCTION
Goonies
A RICHARD DONNER FILM


Don't
ask me about
GOONIES

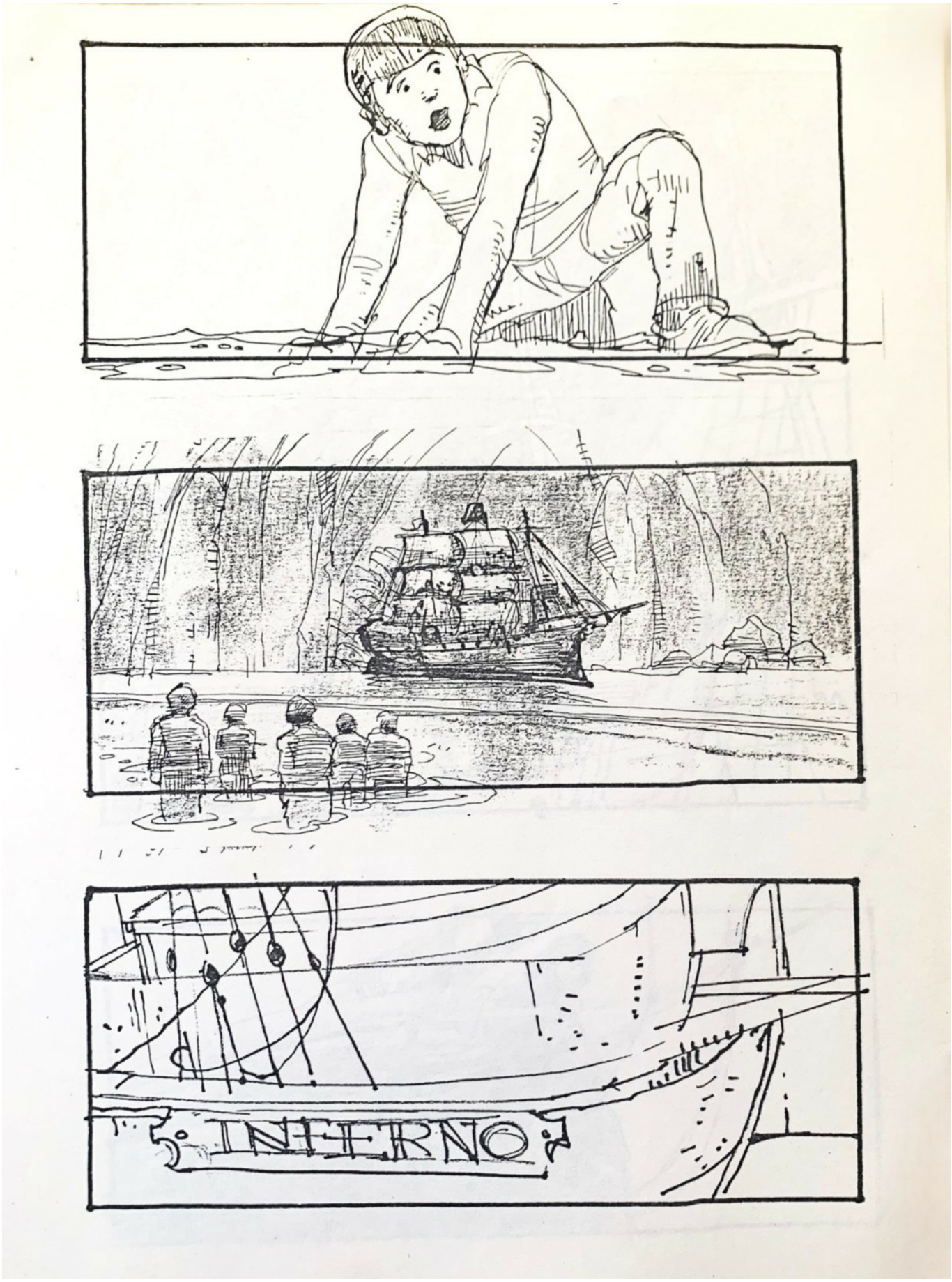

AMBLIN
ENTERTAINMENT
THE GOONIES
CLOSE-UP:
The leathery, bullish face of a PRISON GUARD. He SHOUTS.
GUARD
Feed time!
CAMERA PULLS BACK. The guard stands in a dimly lit prison HALLWAY. Rows of JAIL CELLS stretch along the side walls. Crowded with PRISONERS. The prisoners SHOUT and JEER at the guard. He removes his wooden BILLY CLUB. Giving a HARD RAP to the bars. It ECHOES through the prison. The guard SNARLS.
GUARD
The longer you animals bark... The colder yer' lunch gets.
The prisoners SIMMER DOWN. The guard inserts a key into the MASTER LOCK. All of the cell doors OPEN. SIMULTANEOUSLY. The prisoners RUSH OUT. HUNGRY. The guard SHOUTS.
GUARD
Single file. Single file.
The prisoners crowd into a LINE. They PASS the watchful guard, who taps his palm with the treatening billy club. Two ASSISTANT GUARDS lead the prisoners into another hallway. Toward the CAFETERIA. When all of the prisoners have exited, the guard turns to FOLLOW. He PAUSES. Hearing a NOISE. A CREAKING. The guard TURNS. He sees SOMETHING. At hallway's END. In the LAST cell. A DARK FIGURE. SWINGING back and forth. The guard WALKS to the cell. CURIOUS. CAUTIOUS. Hand GRIPPING his gun. He STOPS. Outside of the OPEN cell door. He PEERS inside. He is met with a SHOCKING SIGHT. The body of
FRANCIS FRATELLI,
a 38 year old, pudgy, hard faced man, HANGS from a rusty ceiling pipe. His belt is wrapped AROUND HIS NECK. His eyes are CLOSED. His tongue HANGS OUT. Face frozen in a GHASTLY position. His body SWAYS. An obvious SUICIDE. A NOTE is pinned to Francis' chest. The guard ENTERS the cell. He GRABS the note. READING it to himself.
GUARD
"You shmuck! You really think I'd be stupid enough to kill myself?"
(puzzled)
Huh?
The guard LOOKS UP. Francis' eyes are OPEN. He is SMILING. VERY ALIVE. Before the guard can react, Francis quickly lifts his KNEE. SLAM! Into the guard's JAW. The guard HITS the floor. OUT COLD.



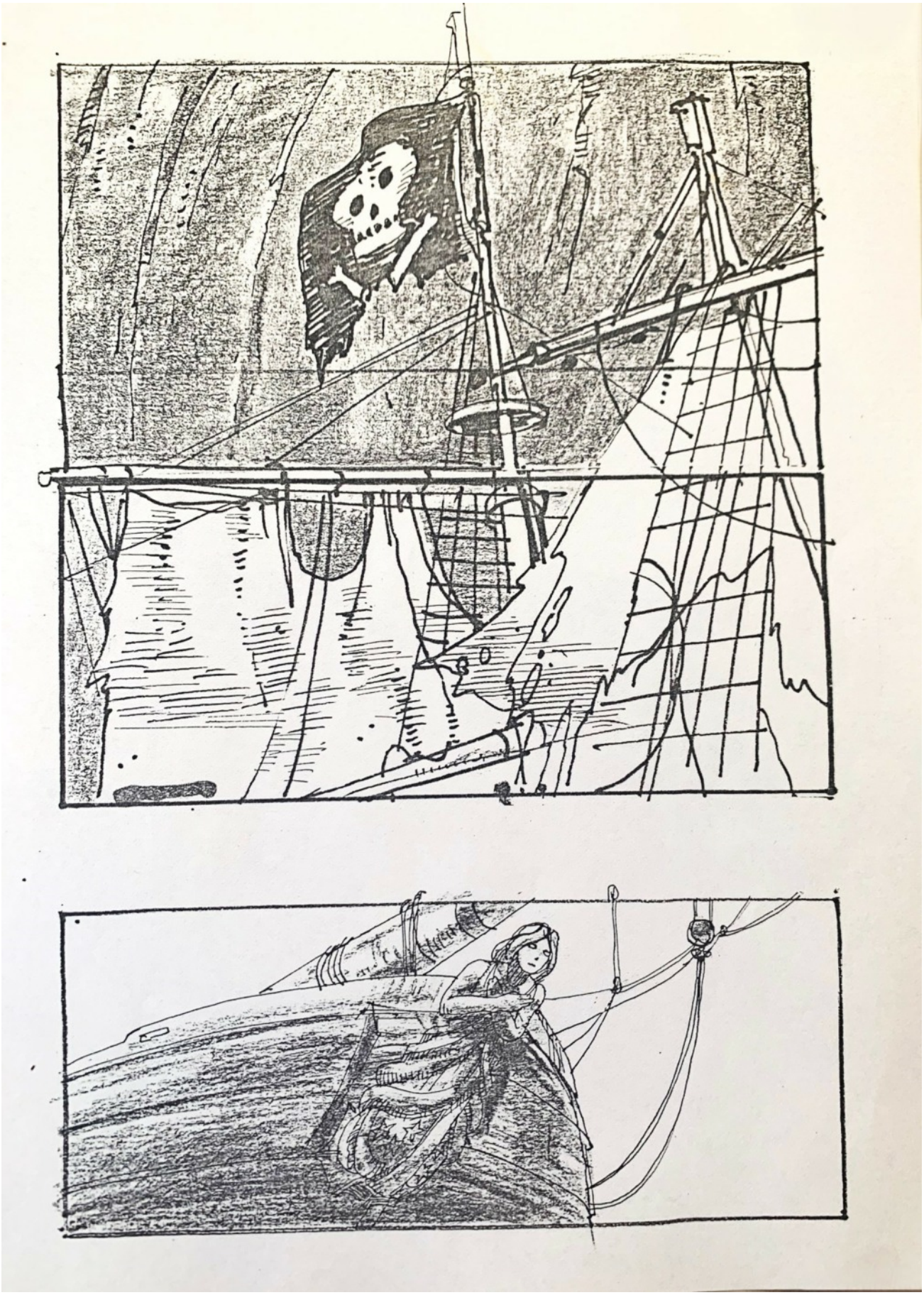
***The Goonies*** **water slide, storyboard by illustrator Sherman Labby.**



***The Goonies*** **enter the underground cavern, storyboard by Sherman Labby.**




***The Goonies*** **discover the pirate ship, storyboard by Sherman Labby.**



**The *Inferno* pirate ship, storyboard by Sherman Labby.**



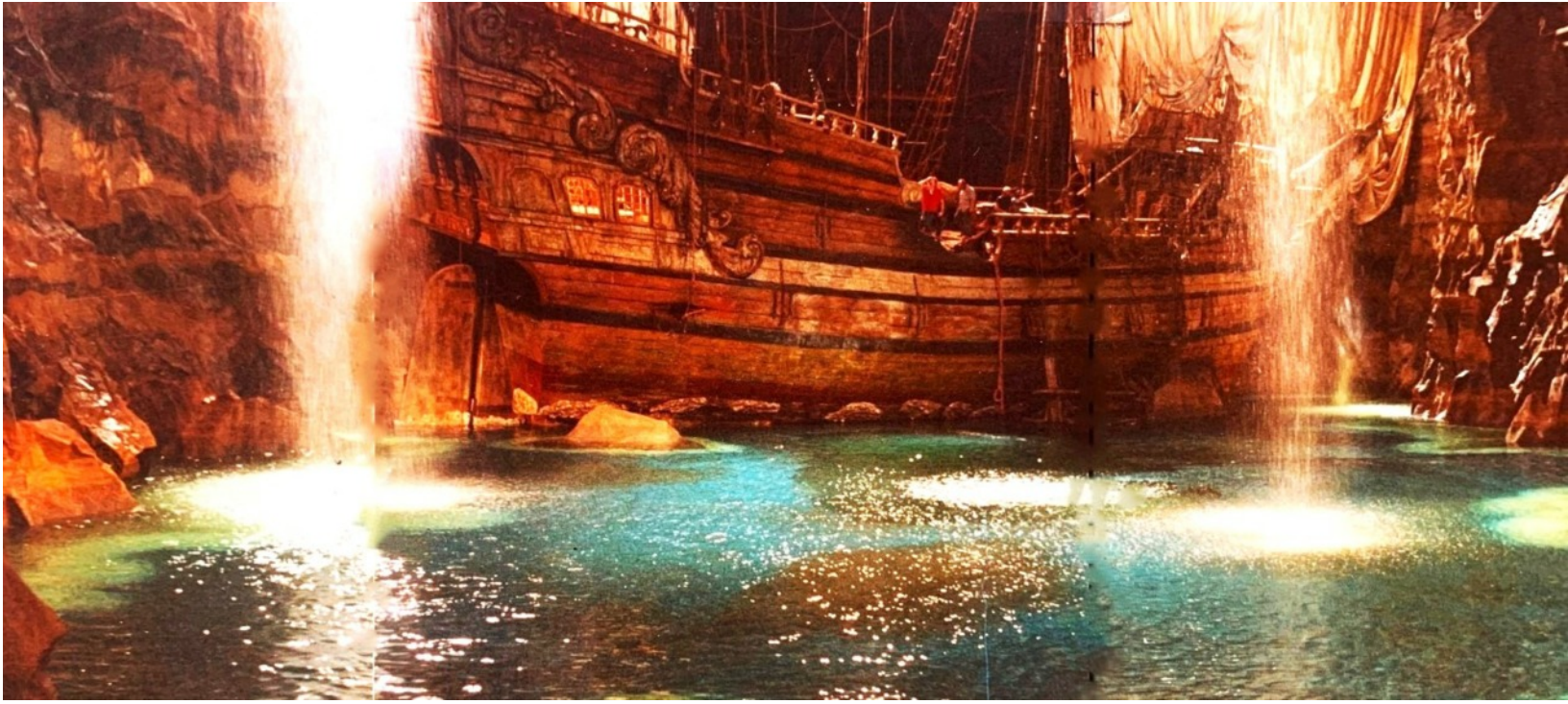
***The Goonies*** **pirate ship was constructed on Warner Bros Studios Stage 16. In 1936, Stage 7 was raised 30 feet to a height of 98 feet and a two-million gallon water tank was installed and the state was renamed Stage 16, the largest stage and water tank in the world at the time. Newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst convinced Warner Bros to raise the stage to that height because his mistress, actress Marion Davies, playing opposite Clark Gable in "Cain and Mable," wanted a giant set built for the film's 9-minute grand finale, "I'll sing You a Thousand Love Songs," a 9-minute sequence that moved from the canals of Venice to the palace of Versailles, with 160 chorus girls dressed as bridesmaids before a ninety-foot pipe organ. To maintain the shooting schedule, there was no time to use conventional construction by taking the roof off to construct taller walls. Instead, several hundred workers mounted jacks at four corners of the stage with the workers cranking the jacks up a foot, inserting railroad ties, then cranking it up another foot, continuously jacking the roof until it rose to 98 feet, and walls were constructed to the roof and pilasters built against the original walls to support the weight of the elevated roof. Despite Clark Gable and the spectacular dance scene, the film flopped at the box-office, which critics blamed on the miscasting of Gable as a boxer, but the spectacular dance scene earned a 1937 Academy Award nomination for "Best Dance Direction." Since the water tank had not been used for many years, to build** ***The Goonies*** **pirate ship set in 2,000,000 gallons of water, the stage floor was removed and mammoth water filters were installed to maintain water purity for a shoot of many months. Due to the humidity and large number of crew, during the long shoot, the crew began to fall sick. Director Dick Donner and producer Steven Spielberg ordered the two million gallons of water drained and refilled, and the show when on. One of my tasks was to keep the water dyed a lovely aquamarine.**



**J. Michael Riva was the production designer, Rick Carter, the art director, Dale Pelton, the assistant art director, and Linda DeScenna, the set decorator. I conceived several conceptions for the underground sets, like the water pipe set, and other sets that were inspired by David Macaulay's 1976 book *Underground,* civil engineering projects like sewer systems with which I had become familiar while working for Fleet Steel in West Tulsa, making drawings for transmission towers in Pakistan, canal locks for the Arkansas River, plate steel girders and concrete trusses for freeway bridges/ Most of my conceptual drawings for the kid's adventures were never considered. Group think is prevalent in Hollywood. I often invented an alternate design in my imagination, imagining sets that the producers could not afford or understand. When I am not the director, I don't have the power to execute my vision. I am much happier designing for myself.**

**Set designer Carroll Johnston and set designer and assistant art director Joseph Nemec III drew most of the ship construction drawings. Donald Woodruff prepared the drawings for several sets and the construction drawings for the water slide and set designer Virginia Randolph coordinated the set design work. The illustration of the pirate ship was by Jack Johnston. Illustrator Tom Southwell and Steven Spielberg's brilliant illustrator Sherman Labby created the magnificent story boards for director Dick Donner and *The Goonies* booklet showing which characters were where in a complex scenario, a booklet for which I conceived a structure that showed the interface of simultaneous action in different places, and Sherman Labby illustrated each parallel scene, a booklet that I have preserved in my archives. Notable to the design of the smaller caves on Stage 15, I single out sculptor Alex Scutti Jr. who directed the creation of the virtuoso textures of the caverns. Painful to see, after the final cut was completed, *The Goonies* pirate ship and caverns were bulldozed the following day**

**Among the notable films shot on Warner Bros Studio Stage 16 were: "The Big Sleep," 1946, "Key Largo", 1948, "Rebel Without a Cause," 1955, "Giant," 1956, "The Music Man," 1962, "America America," 1963, "PT 109," 1963. "My Fair Lady," 1964, "Camelot," 1967, "1941," 1979, "Altered States," 1980, "Annie," 1982, "Ghostbusters," 1984, "The Goonies," 1985, "Batman Returns," 1992, "Jurassic Park," 1993, "Batman Forever," 1995, "Batman and Robin," 1997, "Ocean's Thirteen," 2007, "Inception," 2010.**



**The production designer J. Michael Riva, grandson of Marlene Dietrich, was known for designing *The Color Purple*, 1985, for which he was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Art Direction. Riva designed *The Goonies*, 1985, *Lethal Weapon*, 1987, *Lethal Weapon 2*, 1989, *A Few Good Men*, 1992, *Lethal Weapon 4*, 1998, *Charlies Angels*, 2000, *Spider-Man 3*, 2007, *Iron Man*, 2008, *Iron Man 2*, 2010, *The Amazing Spider-Man, 2012,* and Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*, 2012, which were released posthumously as Riva suffered a stroke during the production of *Django Unchained* and died at the age of 63 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Riva was the production designer for the opening ceremony of the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, and the 74th and 79th Academy Awards in 2002 and 2007, for which his design won a Prime time Emmy.**



**For research to create the pirate ship for *The Goonies,* I was given permission by U.S. Customs to photograph and take measurements of the *Bounty* built for the 1962 MGM film *Mutiny on the Bounty*, starring Marlin Brando as Lt. Christian and Trevor Howard as Capt. William Bligh. While Michele Quence and I were taking measurements and photographing the *Bounty*, it was under a Customs hold until customs fees were paid, the crew also being held on board until the ship's release.**

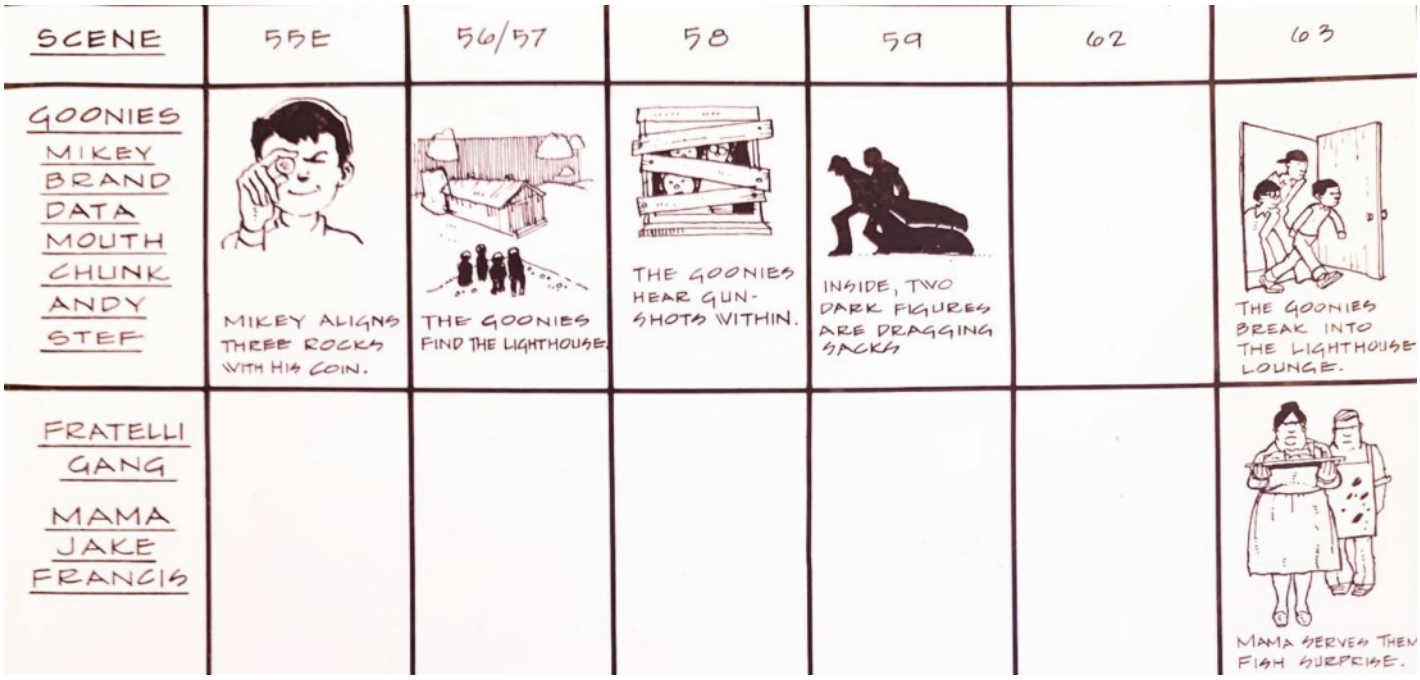




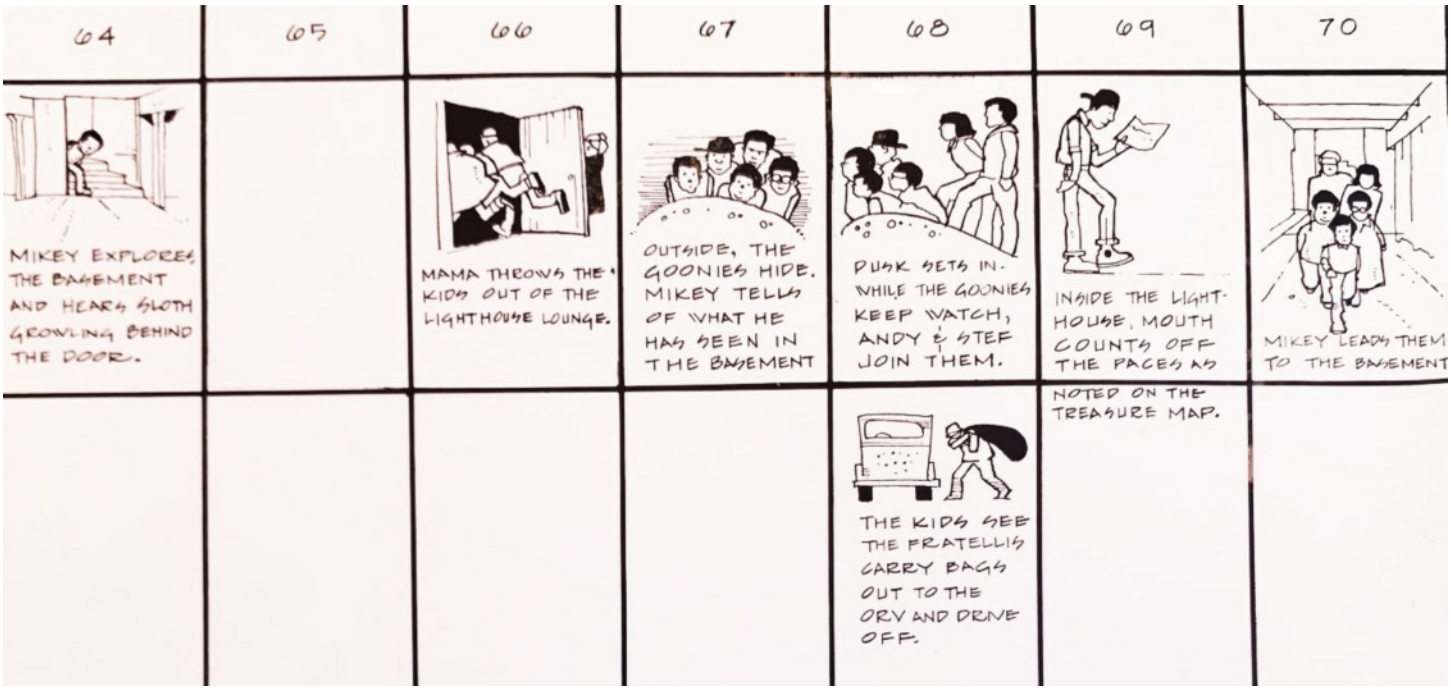
**Constructed in 1960 of oak and fir, the Bounty was based on the drawings in the British Admiralty archives with 200 men working over eight-months in the Smith and Rhuland shipyard in Nova Scotia, which enlarged the ship's proportions to increase room for filming and equipped the ship with diesel power. During *Hurricane Sandy* in 2012, when the captain decided that the ship would be safer at sea than in port, the *Bounty* sank 90 miles off the coast of North Carolina. Fourteen crew members were saved by two U.S. Coast Guard helicopters, deckhand Claudene Christian was killed and Capt. Robin Walbridge, who ordered the crew to abandon ship far too late, was washed overboard and never found. The *Bounty* was used in the filming of *Treasure Island* in 1989 with Charlton Heston and Christian Bale, and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* in 2006 with Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightley, and Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow.**

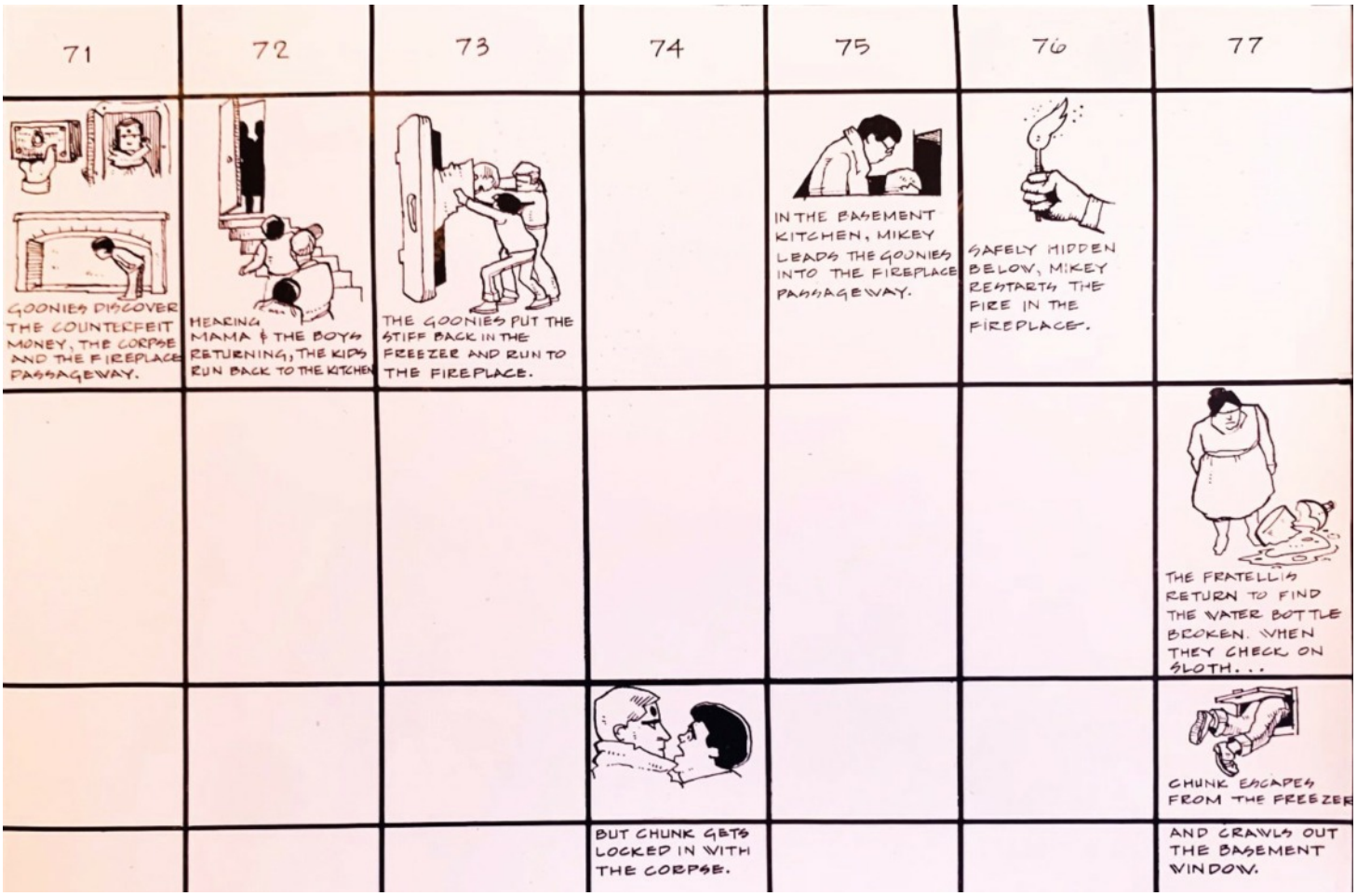


**On board the HMS *Bounty*, Michele Quence employs a rod with one-foot markings which will enable set designers to accurate size objects from a photograph**

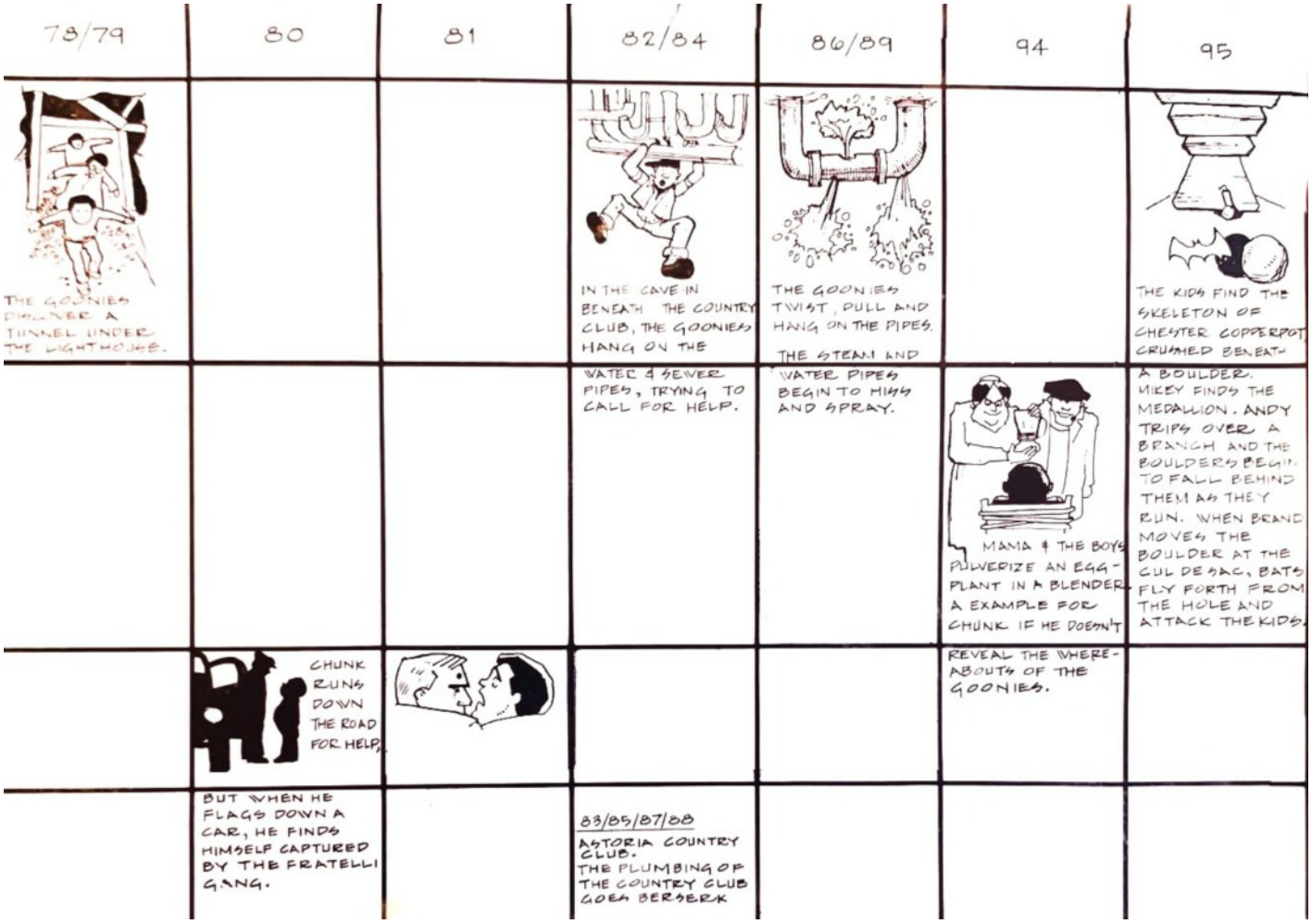



***The Goonies* mini scenario showed which characters were present in various scenes. I conceived a structure based on the script showing the interface of simultaneous action on different sets. Spielberg's illustrator Sherman Labby created cartoon drawings for each scene. I have preserved the booklet in my archives.**

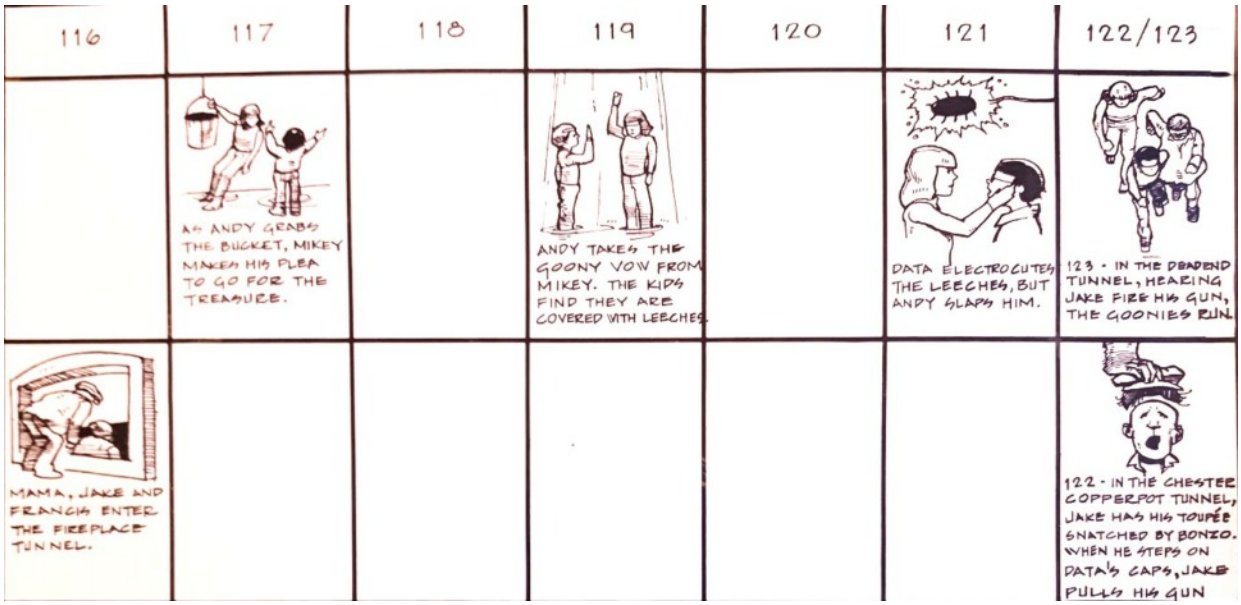


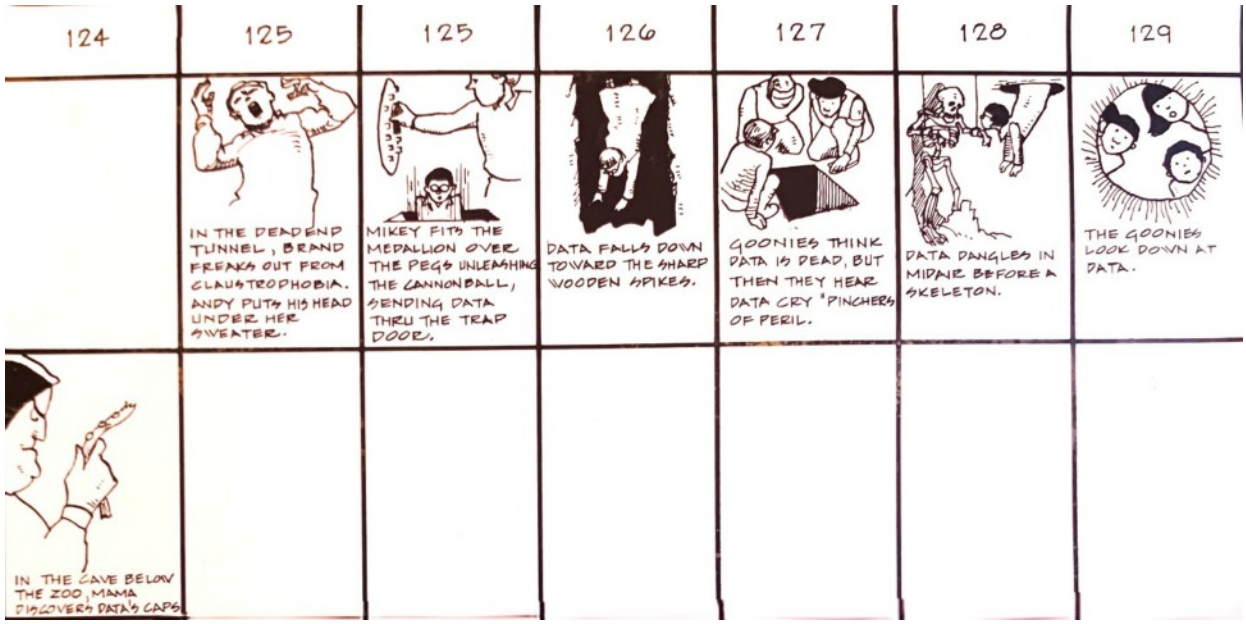



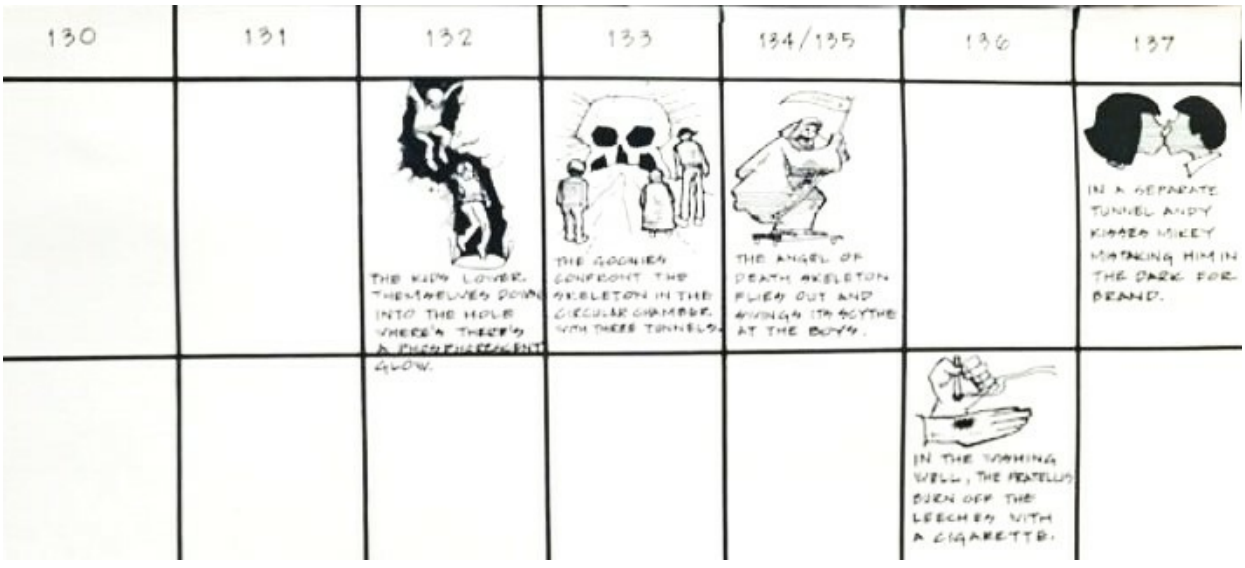

**Cartoon drawings by Sherman Labby for filming company's mini scenario.**




**Cartoon drawings by Sherman Labby for filming company's mini scenario.**

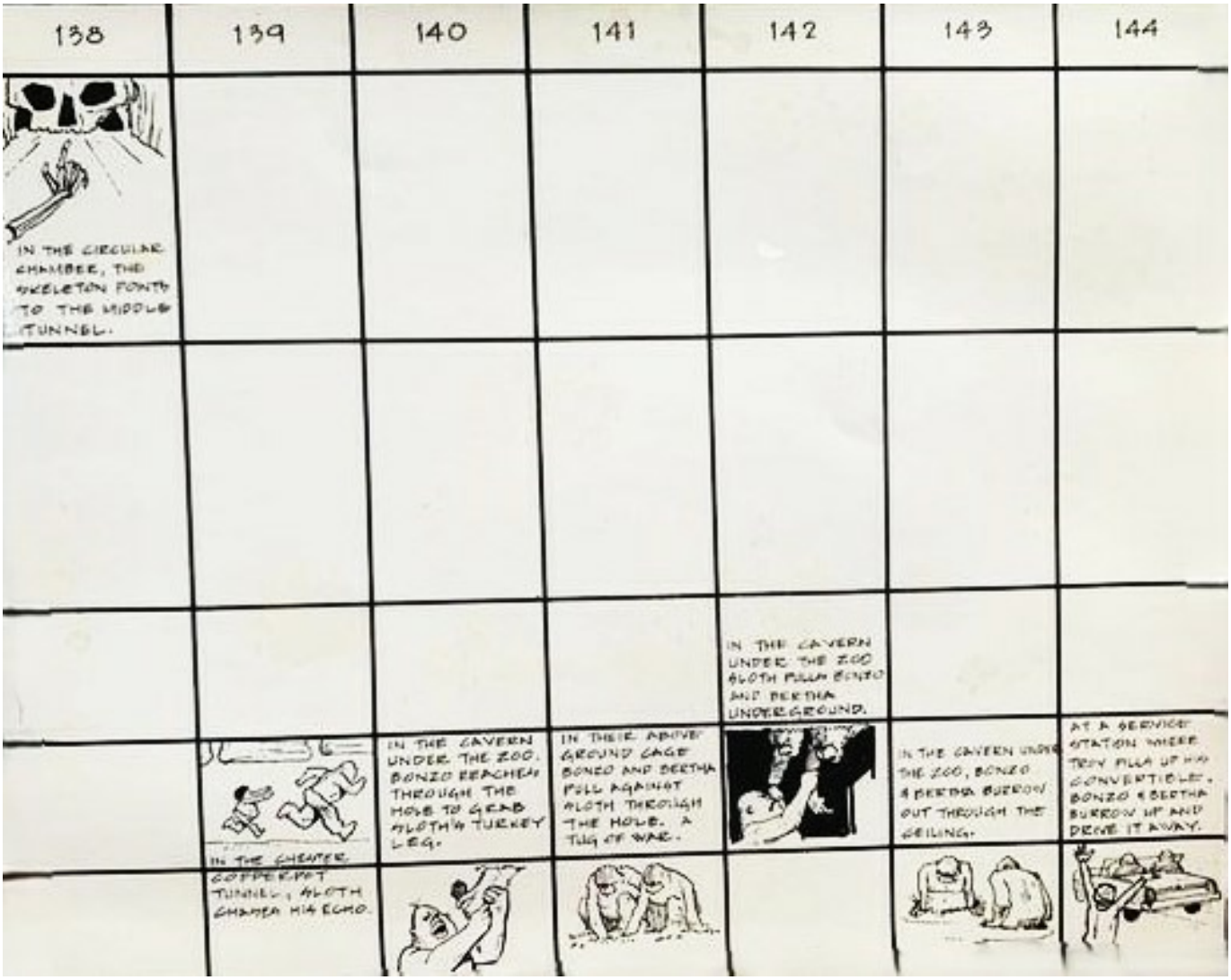


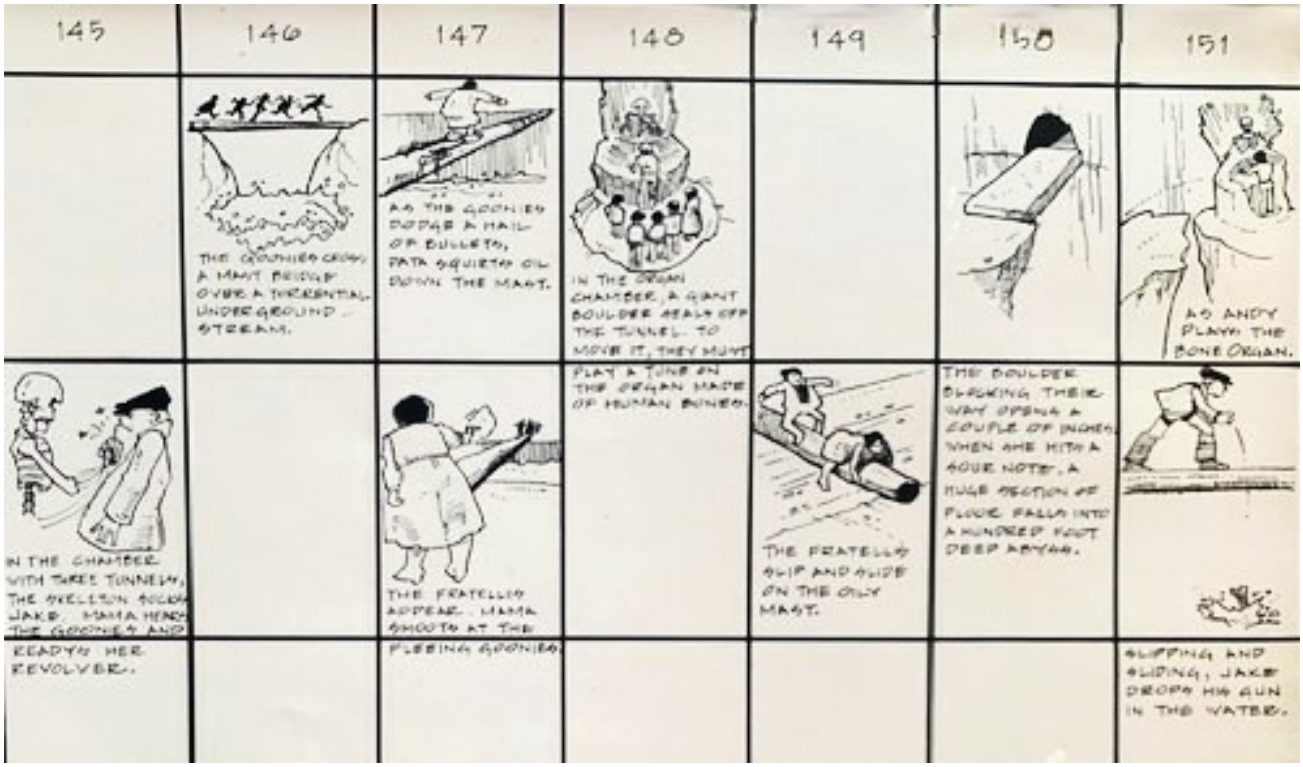




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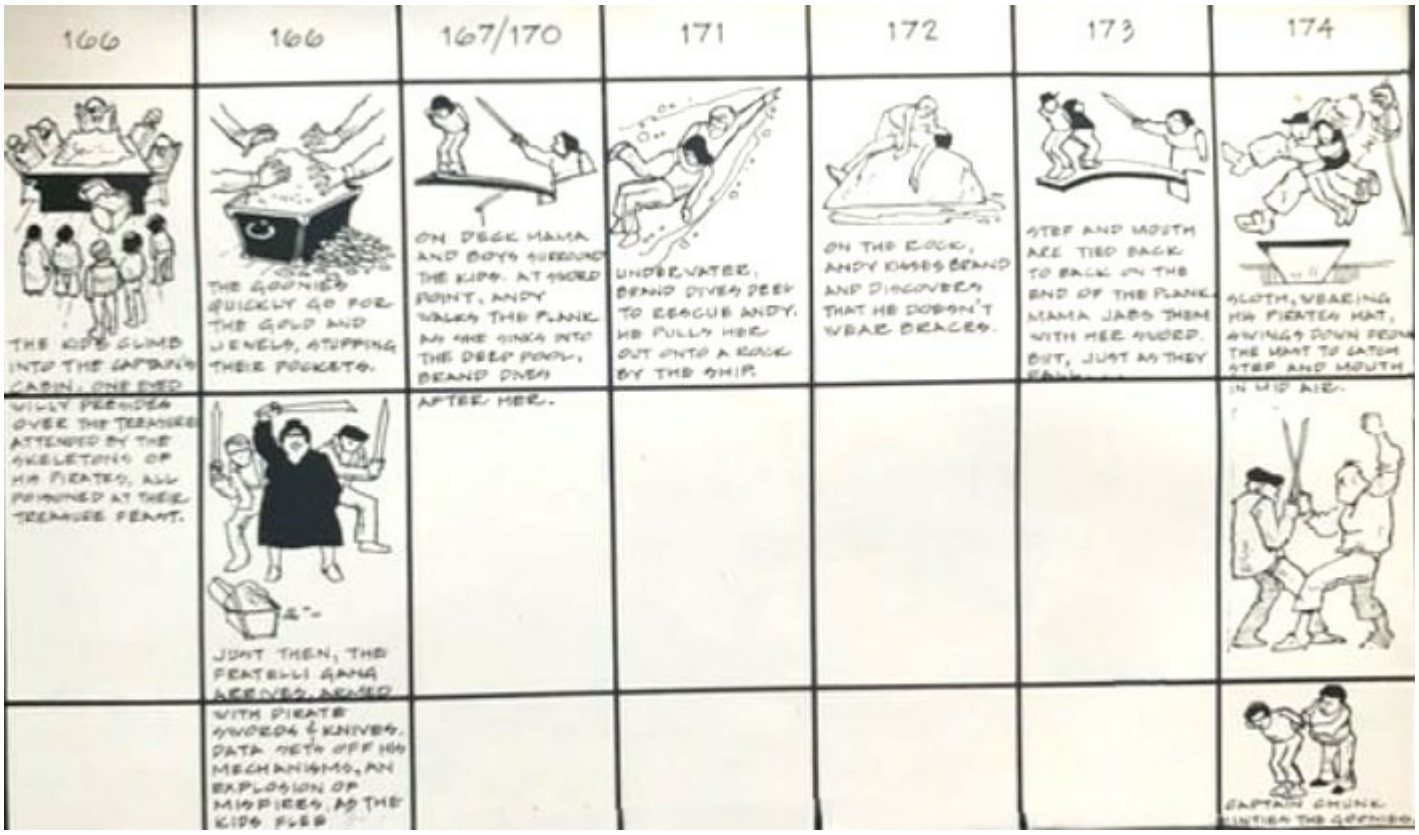


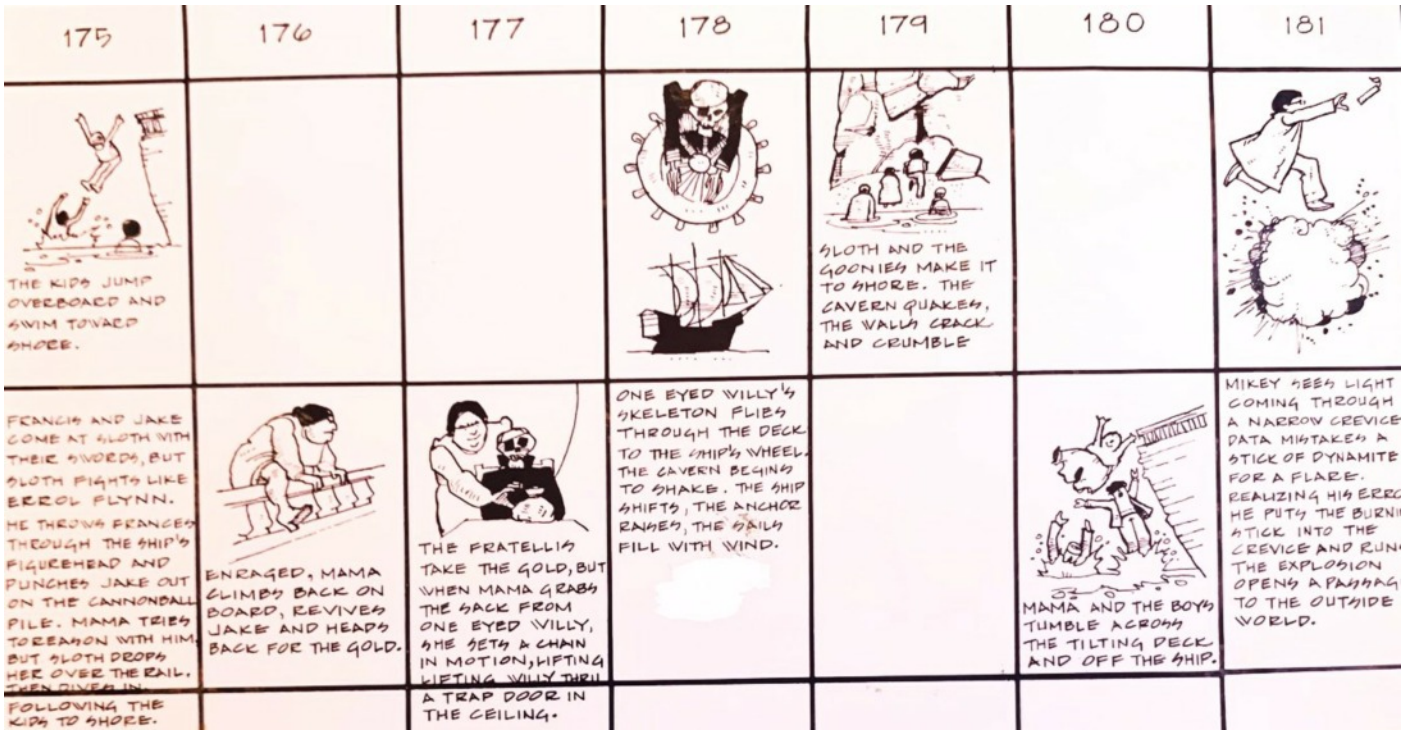




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***The Goonies*** **mini scenario showed which characters were present in various scenes. I conceived a structure based on the script showing the interface of simultaneous action on different sets. Spielberg's illustrator Sherman Labby created cartoon drawings for each scene. I have preserved the booklet in my archives.**



**For the construction of the pirate ship's hull, the art department was provided with the original drawings from the Warner Bros archives, if my memory is correct, of the pirate ship in Hungarian American director Michael Curtiz's 1935 *Captain Blood* starring Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland, or Curtiz's 1940 *Sea Hawk* with Errol Flynn and Brenda Marshall. To fit the ship's hull into the dimensions of the two million gallon water tank on Warner Bros State 16, set designers Joseph C. Nemic III, Carroll Johnston, and Donald Woodruff shrunk the original hull design ten or fifteen percent and tilted it 5 degrees, which while it increased the realism of a deteriorating ship, made dolly shots nearly impossible on a slanted deck. To outfit the ship, I discovered that Disneyland was renovating "Pirates of the Caribbean," giving me the opportunity to obtain many ship parts, including rigging and knots. From the salvage yards of Long Beach and Los Angeles Harbors, I collected nautical set dressing, barrels, ropes, chains, and anchors, and gathered more ropes and pieces from sail boats that were being scrapped in ports on the Gulf of Mexico. For the water slide, I located one sitting in a warehouse in New Jersey that had been ordered then abandoned, convincing the company to ship it to Burbank for $70,000 and help in the erection according to Donald Woodruff's set drawings on Warner Bros Stage 15. Wall panels were attached, textured, and painted like rock, and swathed with hanging vines and seaweed. The kids were photographed by cameramen in swimsuits with handheld cameras sluicing down the slide with the kids. In the film, the story editing cut from the shots in the water slide on Stage 15 to Stage 16 where the kids spurted out of the walls of the vast cavern into the water tank, astonished to behold One-Eyed Willy's pirate ship.**

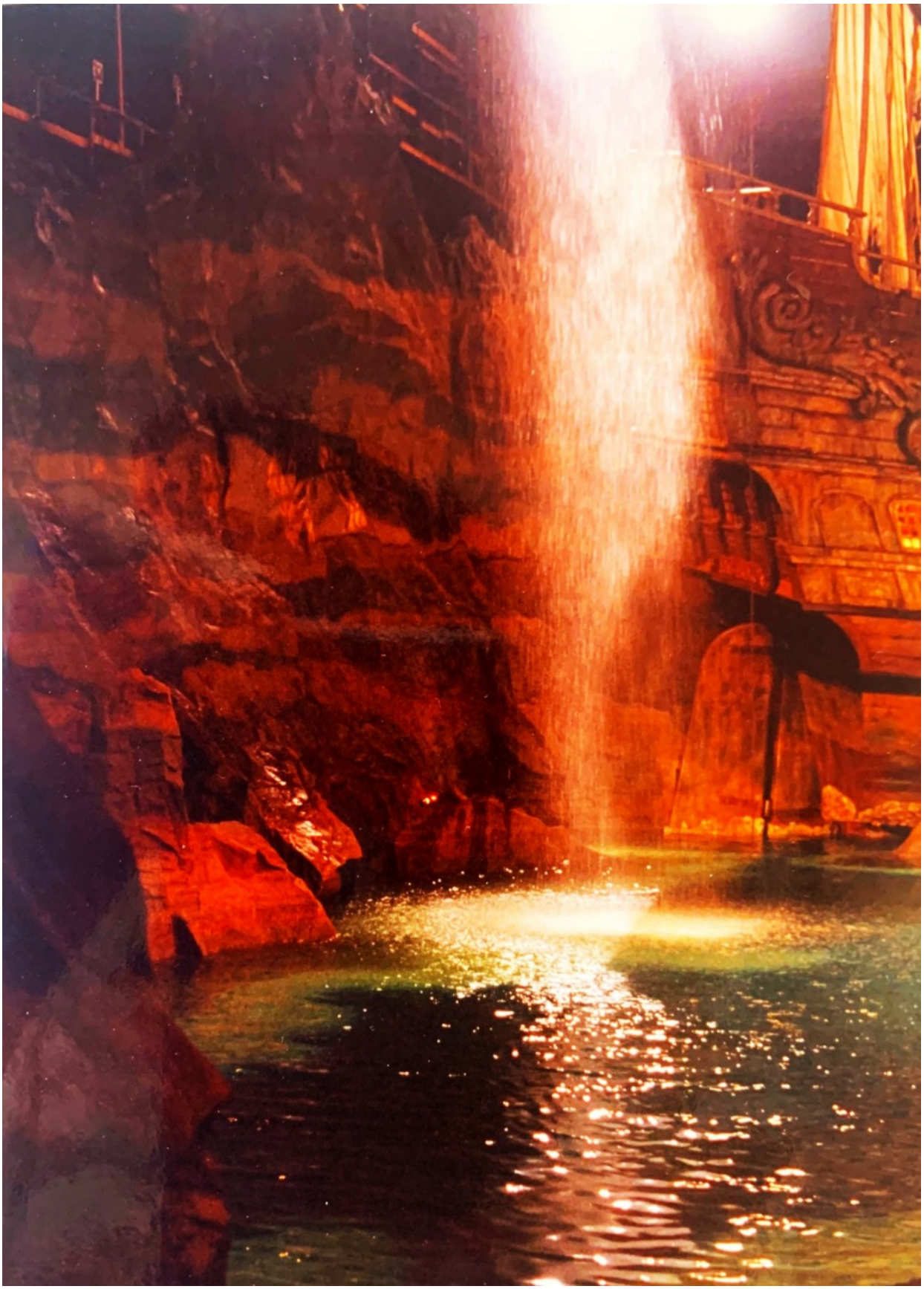


**Construction of the cavern, attaching molded fiberglass sheathing to the wooden framework in Stage 16, sixty feet in height.**



***The Goonies*** **film crew shoots the giant octopus scene in the two million gallon water tank on Stage 16. During the editing, it was evident the animatronics octopus was not convincing, prompting the deletion of the scene. Wearing the rubber suit that comes up to the armpits, I absently mindedly stepped from the four foot depth into the 12 foot depth, my suit instantly filling with water pulling me under. A crew member saved me.**





**Mechanical special effects master Matt Sweeney led the large mechanical effects group that created for *The Goonies*, water falls in the cavern, operated the water slide and devised dozens of mechanical effects, sprinkler systems, and Rube Goldberg style contraptions.**




**I created Cyndi Lauper's family gas station on the back lot of Warner Bros with the Goonie kids and Cyndi 's professional wrestler friends Roddy Piper, The Iron Sheik, Nikolai Volkoff, The Fabulous Moolah, Captain Lou Albano, and André the Giant appearing with her in the video. I made the gas station as homey and tacky as possible, with plaster chickens and geese, a veggie stand, and a surrounding perimeter of discarded auto tires festooned with plastic flowers.**

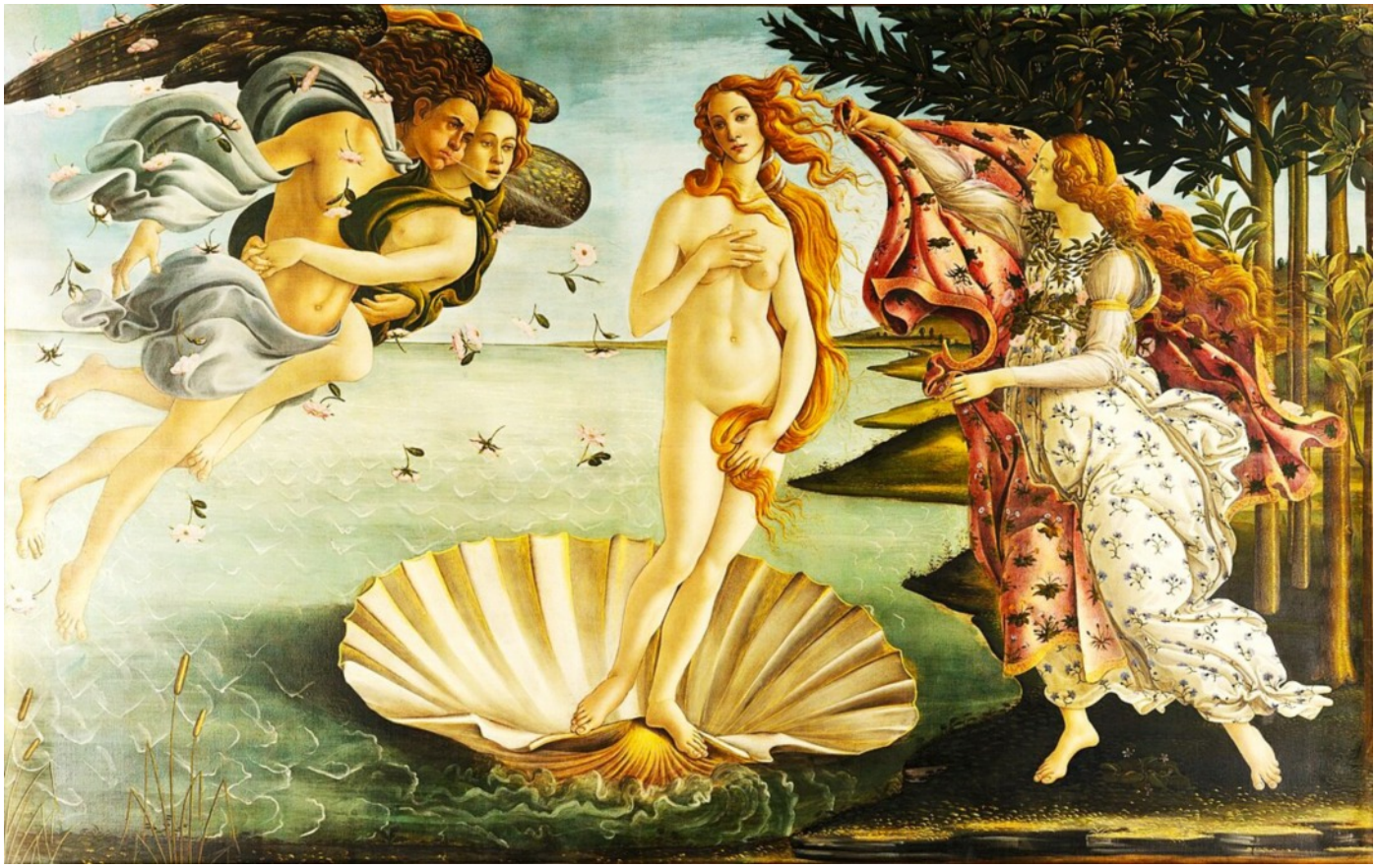





**While Cyndi and I were creating the décor for her gas station, she took me to meet singer Annie Lennox and treated me to dinner in Beverly Hills. Working with Cyndi when she was at the height of her popularity provided a glimpse into the phenomenon of celebrities being relentlessly pursued by fans.**

# Cyndi Lauper – The Goonies 'R" Good Enough

**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxLhytQ67fs**



*Nascita di Venere , The Birth of Venus, painting by Snadro Botticelli, Source,* **Ufizzi Gallery, public domain, Wikimedia**

# The Inspiration of Italy

**After completing design work for *The Goonies,* I took a half-year creative sabbatical to live in Italy, studying Italian in Florence and on weekends, driving from town to town on winding country roads, visiting the ancient hill towns in the regions of Lazio, Tuscany, and Umbria, collecting books and taking thousands of photos of landscapes and details of architecture, which I shot on transparencies, difficult to print today. I felt more at home with the antiquities and lifestyle of Italy than I do in America, which has not respected classic architecture like New York City's Pennsylvania Station, thoughtlessly demolished. Despite the flaws of Italy's incessantly volatile political system and an ofttimes narrow mindedness and sexism similar to that of the United States, I have embraced the beauty of Italian literature, film, architecture, landscape, and the culinary arts. The following pages are a celebration of the culture that has had a profound influence on my life and the creation of the gardens of Villa dei Fiori.**



**Palazzo Vecchio, Florence – Author, Diego Delso, Wikimedia**

**While designing for *The Goonies*, I was studying Italian with Professor Giovanni Trombetta at San Fernando State University. Through Trombetta's and the Italian consulate's aid, I was awarded a scholarship to study Italian in Florence, Italy. The experience of living in Italy for half a year influenced my ideas on landscape and architecture, especially the villas that Andrea Palladio designed in the Italian Renaissance. I lived a few blocks from the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, where families strolled on Saturday evenings enjoying their gelato and the lights of Florence, the birthplace of the Renaissance. The father of Italian language, Florentine Dante Aligheieri's *Divine Comedy* established the use of the vernacular in literature when most poetry was composed in Latin, a practice that Florentine writers Petrarch and Boccaccio followed, making Italian the literary language in Europe for several centuries. After a half a year in Italy, I experienced culture shock when I returned to America. My heart still longs for Italy.**



**Santa Trinita Bridge, Florence, Italy – Author, Longino, Wikimedia**



**San Gimigano, Italy – Author, Maurizio Moro5153, Wikimedia.**



**Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena, Piazza Salimbeni, the oldest surviving bank in the world, founded 1472 – Author, Sean X Liu, Wikimedia**



**San Quirico, Val d'Orcia, Tuscany – Author, Lo.tangelini, Soliera, Modena, Wikimedia**



**Aerial view of San Gimignano, Tuscany – Author, Chensiyuan, Wikimedia**

**In the Middle Ages, Italian villages and towns were built on steep hilltops, with tall watch towers, and enclosed within massive walls to resist attacks from mercenary armies. An aerial view of San Gimignano illustrates how towns were constructed with narrow streets following the crown of the hill. The aesthetic advantage is that it avoids the sprawling development of American towns, thus preserving the beauty of the countryside.**



**Pienza, Tuscany – Author, flicker, sherseydc, Wikimedia**



**Towers of San Gimigano, Torre Grossa and Torre dei Cugnanesi – Author, Roman Harak, Wikimedia**

**During two centuries of conflict between the Guelphs who supported the papacy and the Ghibellines who supported the German Holy Roman emperors, rivalries in San Gimignano led to a competition in the building of tower houses of great height. By the end of the Medieval era, there were seventy-two tower houses, some over two hundred feet in height, forcing the town council to limit their height to that of the Palazzo Communale. Besides Italian hilltowns, I became an avid admirer of Vernaccia di San Gimignano and pecorino cheese.**



**Duomo di Siena, Cattedrale Metropolitana di Santa Maria Assunta, Siena, Italy – Author, Nikolai Karaneschev, Wikimedia**

**The Palio of Siena is a bareback horse race competition in the Piazza del Campo between ten of the seventeen *contrade* neighborhoods of Siena, with thousands of spectators gathered in the piazza, a tradition dating from 1633. A magnificent pageant precedes the race with *Alfierei* in medieval costumes flourishing the flags of each *contrade,* and a squadron of armored carabinieri on horseback wearing suits of armor, charge around the Piazza del Campo brandishing their swords. When I was in Siena for the Palio dell-Assunta in honor of the Assumption of Mary on the 16th of August, a rider hit the wall near the Torre del Magia and fell off his steed, nevertheless, according to Palio rules, the riderless horse was judged the victor. After the race, each of the seventeen *contrade* set up tables in the streets and the entire city dines together in the warm August night.**



**Trees grow on the medieval fortified walls of Lucca, Italy – Author, Georges Jansoone, Wikimedia**



***A view of the Piazza Navona, Rome* – Painting by Hendrik Frans van Lint, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Wikimedia**

**Piazza Navona became my favorite piazza in Rome, filled with people in a festive mood on Saturday night. Romans are late night people. I once called Dante Ferretti in Rome, the production designer who designed films for renowned film directors: Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Liliana Cavani, Franco Zeffirelli Anthony Minghella, Martin Scorsese, and Terry Gilliam, with whom I worked on *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.* Dante was going out to dinner at nine in the evening! I discovered the secret of the Italians staying up late – their siesta at midday when entire towns go to sleep, a practice I have adopted, allowing me the advantage of two short days instead of one long day. Pizza Navona is a treasure of Baroque design with Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers with the Obelisk of Domitian, and Francesco Borromini's church of Sant'Agnese in Agone, and Giorlamo Rainaldi's palace for the Pamphili family. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the piazza was flooded to stage festivals for the Pamphili family with miniature ships staging naval battles.**



**Bridge Vittorio Emanuele II, Bridge Vittorio Emanuele II – Author, Livioandronico2013, Wikimedia**



**Florence and the Arno River – Author, Hagai Agmon, Wikimedia. I lived near the Basilica di Santa Croce, the church in the right center.**

**Noted for its Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassical, and Art Nouveau architecture, Turin was the first capital of the Kingdom of Italy from 1861 to 1865. Called the "cradle of Italian liberty, Turin was the intellectual core of the Risorgimento that created a unified Italy and became the center of the anti-fascist resistance to Mussolini's dictatorial rule. I was enchanted by the elegant 19th century coffee shops, a well-designed and stylish city. Turin's central city is different than most Italian cities, for it was built later in the 17th to 19th centuries on a planned model, more like Baron Haussman's plan for Paris, with the grand buildings on Villa Roma and Via Po having monumental arcades to protect pedestrians from the elements. I took the Torino-Bardonecchia motorway to Piedmonte, France by driving through the Fréjus Road Tunnel, an eerie experience for someone claustrophobic, traveling at midnight through eight miles of tunnel without seeing another human being.**



**Turin, Italy viewed from Monte dei Cappuccini – Author, Hpnx9420, Wikimedia**



**Poggio Amorelli winery, Castellina in Chianti, Siena, Tuscany, Italy – Author, Ray in Manila, Wikimedia**

**I drove several times between Florence, Siena, and Montalcino, admiring the vineyards, fields of sunflowers, and olive orchards, stopping at wineries to buy wines, becoming especially fond of the Brunello di Montalcino made from Sangiovese grosso grapes, one of the most desired wines of Italy. Once Montalcino was conquered by Siena, the commune was caught up in the Florence-Siena and Ghibelline-Guelph wars of the Holy Roman Empire versus the Papacy and was eventually conquered by Florence under the Medici family in 1555, a regime that lasted until under the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Garabaldi, Giuseppe Mazzini, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, Victor Emmanuel II, and other Italian patriots welded the many Italian principalities together and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany merged with a united Italy in 1861.**



**The vineyards of Chianti Classico in autumn near Radda in Chianti – Author, Repuli, Wikimedia**



**Villa La Rotunda by Andrea Palladio, 1566, Vicenza, Italy- Source, *Palladio, I quattro libri dell'Architettura,* public domain, Wikimedia**

**One of the most serene days I experienced in Italy was the day I spent in Andrea Palladio's La Rotunda – spending hours of meditative silence while the sun moved shadows through the harmonious structure. Using mathematical precision based on his rules of architecture published in *I quattro libri dell-architettura*, Palladio emphasized balance, visual clarity, and uniformity in a square plan with identical porticoes on each façade, with a dome over a central circular gallery, the grand stairs leading to each portico transforming the symmetrical square structure into a cross. Four identical staircases lead from the circular domed gallery to the upper floors and down to the servant's work spaces below the piano nobile.**



**Villa Almerico Capra Valmarana, known as Villa La Rotunda, designed by Andrea Palladio, 1566– Author, Mark Beston, Wikimedia**



**Villa La Rotunda, designed by Andrea Palladio, 1566, Vicenza, Italy – Author, Hans A. Rosbach, Wikimedia**

**Thomas Jefferson was inspired by La Rotunda when he designed Monticello, and American film director Joseph Losey, noted for filming Harold Pinter's *The Servant* and *The Go-Between*, filmed Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* in La Rotunda and the surrounding Veneto, one of the finer film adaptions of opera. Andrea Palladio designed 23 building in the city of Vicenza, and 24 villas in the Veneto, listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, with Palladio's church of San Giorgio Maggiore listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site- Venice and its Lagoon. In his youth, Palladio worked as a stonemason making monuments and decorative sculpture, remaining anonymous until his thirties when a poet employed him to rebuild Villa Trissino and he visited Rome to study the architecture of Vitruvius. Cardinal Barbaro sponsored Palladio in Rome where he published his studies of architecture, *The Four Books of Architecture*, which established his enduring reputation for the renewal of Roman architecture.**



**Villa Barbaro, province of Treviso, Italy, designed by Andrea Palladio, 1554 - 1560 – Source, Villa Barbaro, public domain, Wikimedia.**



**Villa Foscari, La Malcontenta, by Andrea Palladio, 1558 – 1550 – Source, City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto, public domain, Wikimedia.**



**Basilica Palladiana by Andrea Palladio, Piazza dei signori, Vicenza – Author, Didier Descouens, Wikimedia**



**Palazzo Bembo on the Grand Canal – Author, Didier Descouens, Wikimedia**

**The moment I stepped on board a vaporetto water bus on the Grand Canal, I was enraptured, entering a dream-like state nurtured since my adolescence, mesmerized by phantasmagoric visions of Venetian Gothic architecture appearing to float on water.**



**The Grand Canal in Venice, Italy, from the Rialto Bridge – Author, chensiyuan, Wikimedia**



**Piazza San Marco – Author, Matthias Süßen, Wikimedia.**

**The best time to visit La Serenissima is in the winter on a foggy day – one feels the mystery of the island nation that dominated the seas during the Fourth Crusade. The powerful Venetian navy pillaged the churches and palaces of Byzantine Constantinople to adorn the Basilica di San Marco and the Palazzo Ducale.**



**Grand Canal by Moonlight, 1890 – Unknown author, U.S. Library of Congress, Photochrome Print Collection public domain, Wikimedia**



**Palazzo Ducale di Urbino, Province of Marche, Italy – Author, Francesco Maria Gabugli, Wikimedia. When visiting Daniel Lang, a painter who lived a half a year in Manhattan and the other half in Montone, Umbria, I drove over the Apennine Mountains to visit the magnificent Ducal palace of Federico III da Montefeltro in Urbino. One of the most successful mercenary *condottieri* of 15th century Italian Renaissance who technically never lost a battle, the Lord of Urbino, assured the loyalty of his soldiers by attending to their welfare, providing dowries for the daughters of soldiers killed or wounded. Fascinated by history and philosophy, Federico assembled a court of scholars and artists and commissioned the creation of the largest library of Italy after the Vatican. The Palazzo Ducale contains the National Gallery of the Marche with works by Raphael, Piero della Francesca, Paolo Uccello and Titian.**



**Assisi, Italy, birthplace of Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan Order – Author, Hagai Agmon-Snir, Wikimedia. Saint Francis of Assisi, a poet and mystic, founded the Franciscan Order. Along with Catherine of Siena, Francis is the patron saint of Italy. The city of San Francisco takes its name from Mission San Francisco de Asis, Spanish for Saint Francis of Assisi.**



**Civita Bagnoregio, Italy, *La Città che muore*, Province of Viterbo, Lazio, Italy – Author, Orlando Paride, Wikimedia**

**I fell in love with Civita di Bagnoregio founded by the Etruscans 2,500 years ago, perched on a volcanic tufa rock plateau overlooking the Tiber River valley between Florence and Rome. I spent the day making drawings of the narrow passageways and staircases of a medieval town frozen in time due to its relative isolation and gradual deterioration from erosion landslides as the houses slowly slide off the edge.**



**Civita di Bagnoregio, *La Città che muore,* Province of Viterbo, Lazio, Italy**



**View from Montalcino, Siena, Tuscany, Italy – Author, Thomas Fabian, Wikimedia**



**Balze di Volterra, Tuscanny – Author, Carlo Grifone, Wikimedia. Consisting of layers of sand, clay, and gravel, the rocks of Balze can attain heights of one hundred meters, interspersed with deep ravines, resulting in rock formations similar to Bryce Canyon in Utah.**



***Cypresses* on the undulating hills of *San Quirico* in *Val d'Orcia* – Author, Carlo cattneo fotografie, Wikimedia**

**I discovered Italy by traveling country roads in an unplanned way. Italy was made up of many kingdoms and duchies for centuries, you can drive forty kilometers and find a region with different architecture, cuisine, and traditions. I agree with Lao Tzu, "A good traveler has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving." When you determine your route spontaneously, you will not get lost for the road will lead to an interesting town. Turning a corner on a country road, I discovered six prostitutes wearing bizarre costumes in a tranquil Tuscan landscape.**



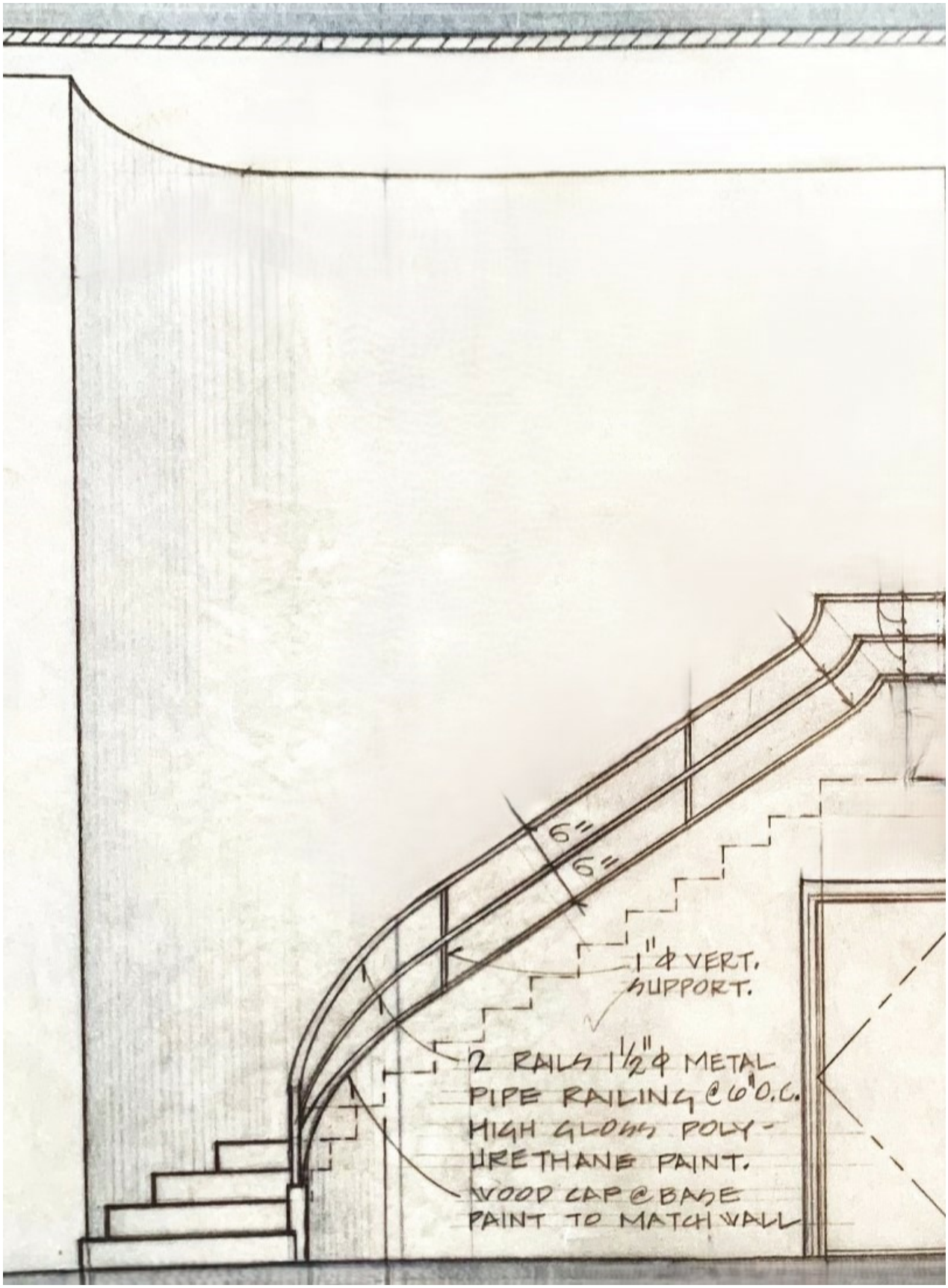
**Field of Sunflowers near Castiglione della Pescaia, Maremma – Author, Giovanni from Firenze, Italy, Wikimedia**



# Design – 1985 to 2000

**Robert Grand, the Warner Bros executive in charge of production for *The Goonies*, asked me to design his house at 331 Granola Street in Pacific Palisades. The first design with a 1930's style diagonal wooden truss over the living-dining room was too avant garde for my client. A more conservative design was conceived with a foyer featuring a sinuous stairway adjoining a curved wall 26 feet in height, the curvaceous stars culminating on a balcony with Palladian windows overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The archway in the façade leads to an enclosed garden with French doors opening from the library upon the garden.**






**My design for the Robert Grand house featured a curved stairway in an entrance hall 26-feet in height, the stair terminating in a balcony that wrapped around the entry foyer with Palladian windows overlooking the Pacific Ocean.**



**Designing for *Return to Mayberry*, I was working on a tight budget. To save money, I went around neighboring farms gathering materials for building the shack on the lake where Ernest T. Bass operates the winch that guides the monster's head through the water. In exchange for set dressing props, I promised the farmers that they could have the shack after the shoot. Since the shack was to be surrounded by water in all directions, I built a post and beam structure that would allow the grips to erect metal scaffolding in the water and pull out the wall.**



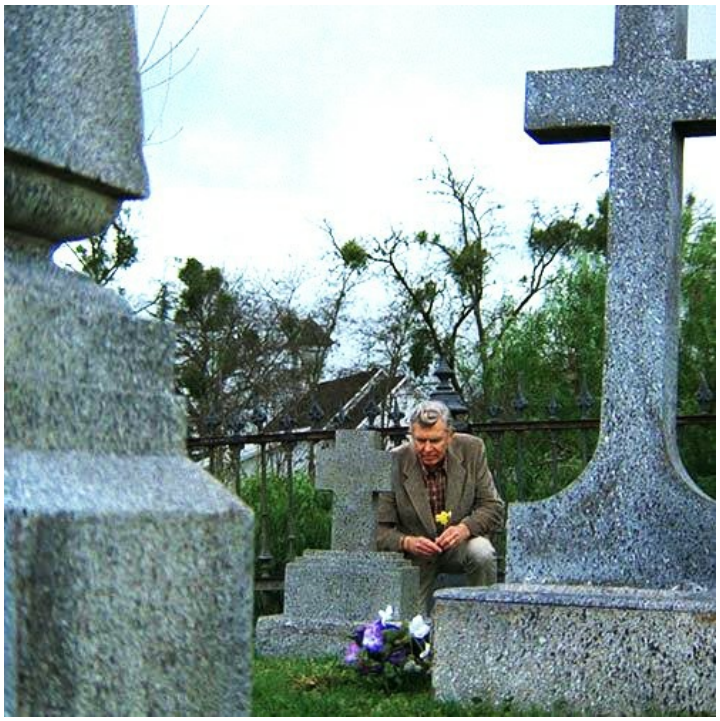
**Searching studio back lots, I found the geared machinery for operating the cable to the monster's head, a device that had once operated a Ferris wheel in Steven Spielberg's *1941*. Special effects magician Isidoro Raponi designed and made the monster's head, and supervised the mechanical effects.**





**Don Knotts as Barney Fife, notorious for accidentally firing his Colt .38 revolver, prompted Andy to restrict him from carrying a loaded gun, keeping one bullet in his pocket for emergencies.**

**Andy Griffith's character, Andy Taylor, returns to Mayberry to see Opie, played by Ron Howard, become a father for the first time. Originally, Andy had planned on running for sheriff, but calls it off when he discovers that his old deputy Barney Fife, played by Don Knotts, is running for sheriff.**



**Andy goes to the cemetery to visit Aunt Bee's grave. I created the cemetery, the cast iron fence from Warner Bros. Studios.**



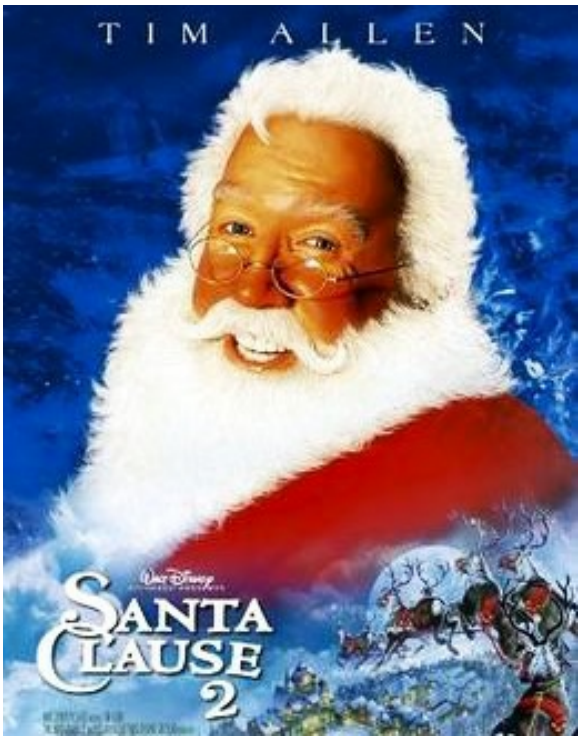
**Isidoro Raponi sculpting one of several versions of the alien in *E.T. the Extra Terrestrial.* While designing for *Return to Mayberry,* I first met mechanical effects master Isidoro Raponi who would become a lifelong friend. Known to all as "Isi," Isidoro began his career in Rome, Italy working with Carlo Rambaldi, designing effects for Italian cinema directors including Pier Paolo Pasolini and Federico Fellini. In 1975, Isidoro came to the U.S. with his mentor Rambaldi to build the 42 foot tall animatronics ape for the film *King Kong* produced by Dino De Laurentiis and directed by John Guillermin. Rick Baker, special prosthetic make-up effects creator, designed the ape and played the role in the ape's prosthetic suit, for which Rambaldi's cable work gave Kong's face a wide range of expressions. Due to problems with the cables on the 42 foot version of Kong, Rick Baker played Kong much of the time in the prosthetic suit. After *King Kong*, Isidoro worked with Rambaldi on the design of the alien in Steven Spielberg's *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, and on Ridley Scott's *Alien*, for which Rambaldi won Academy Awards for Best Visual Effects in 1980 and 1983.**





**The magic of Hollywood is made possible by unheralded artists and technicians like Isidoro Raponi who work in anonymity creating the masterpieces of American cinema. A great admirer of his astonishing skill and inventiveness, I am paying homage to Isidoro's artistry in the realm of cinema. For many years, Isidoro worked for Disney Studios on *Tron*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and *Baby: Secret of the Lost Legend* for which he created several dinosaurs on the 1975 Disney-Touchstone film. In addition to creating the rubber costumes for *Baby* that actors wore using cables to control expression and movement, Isidoro created a mechanically operated 70-foot long, 25-foot wide Brontosaurus. Most of the films about aircraft and submarines during the 70s, 80s and 90s featured Isidoro's special effects, including electronic control panels, periscopes, and science fiction machines. Films featuring Isidoro's works include *Air Force One, The Godfather: Part III, The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor. The Hunt for Red October, The Flight of the Intruder, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, The Running Man, The Green Mile, The Shawshank Redemption, Gangs of New York,* and *The Aviator*, and coming out of retirement in 2012 to work on his last film, the best picture winner, *Argo*." Famed among his friends for his generosity, Isidoro volunteered to build panels for an exhibition at the future Italian consulate near UCLA for artist Michele Quence of Paris, whose paintings are displayed at Villa dei Fiori. When Isidoro and I were partners on my high property estate in Joshua Tree, he gave me his treasured work bench made of solid maple upon which I have written my three volume work, *Celine on Fire.***



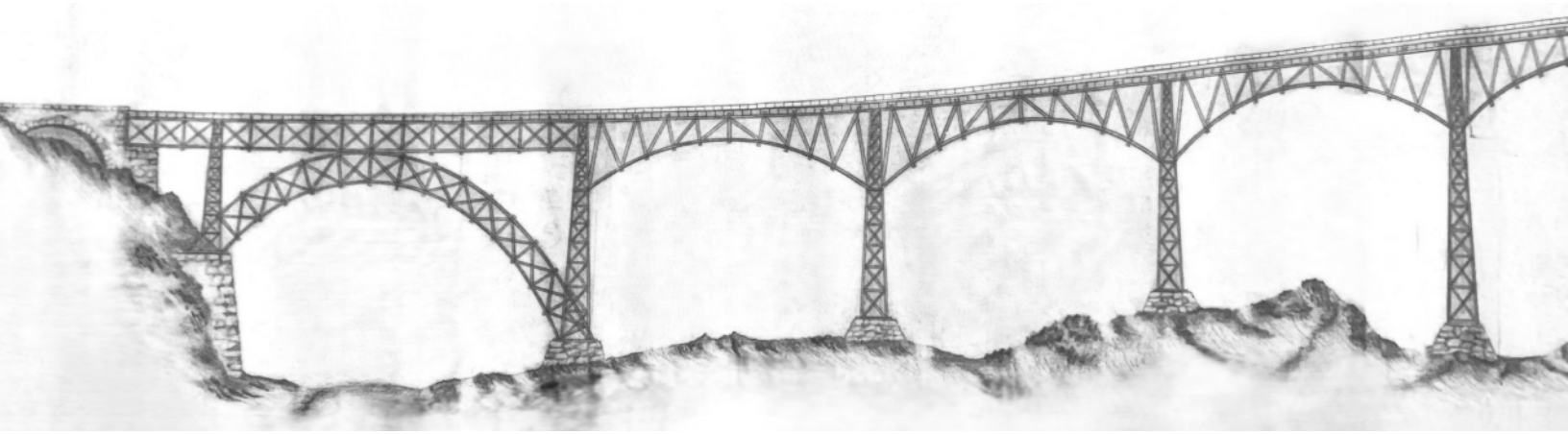



***Santa Claus 2*** **film poster, Walt Disney Pictures**

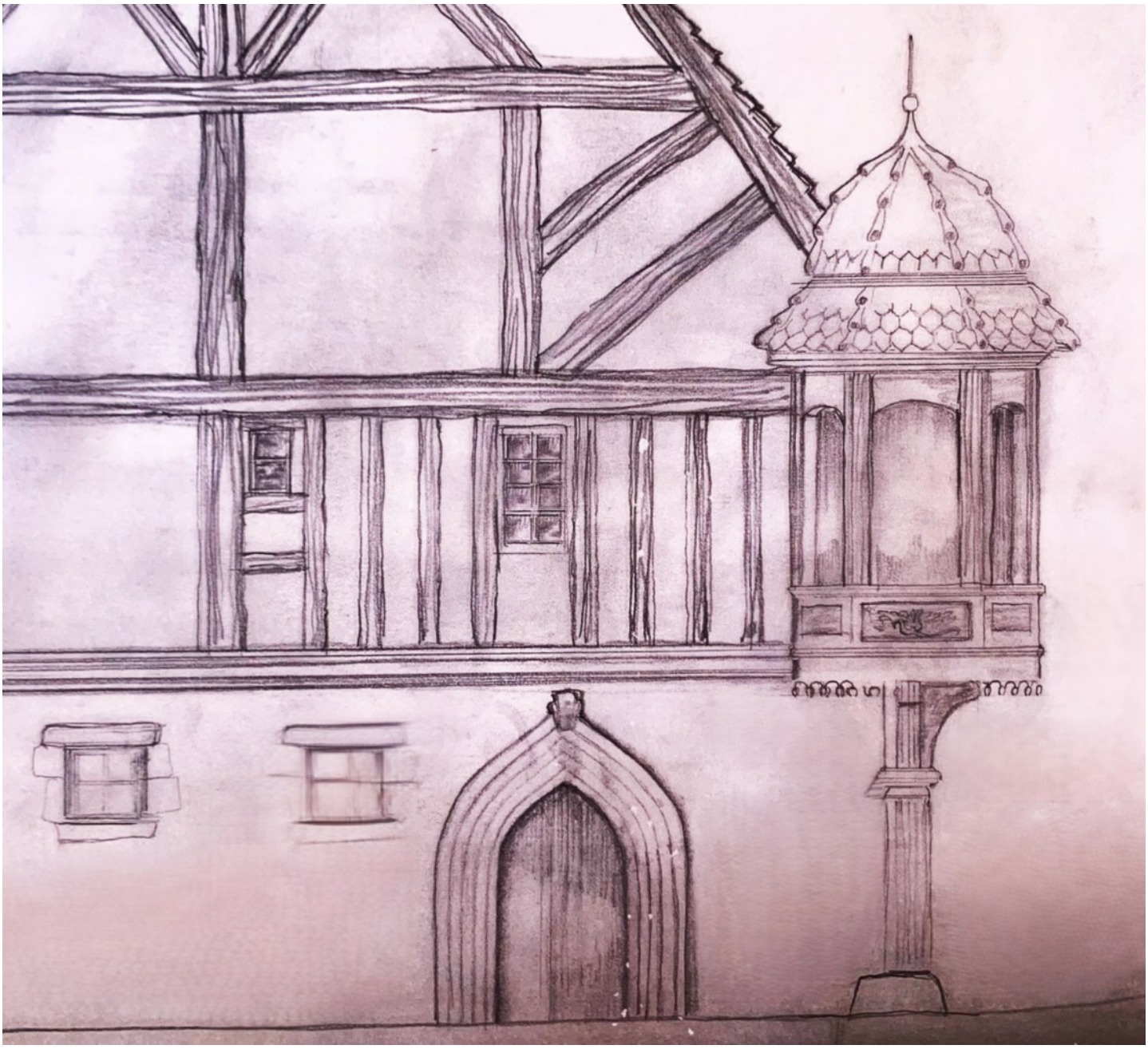




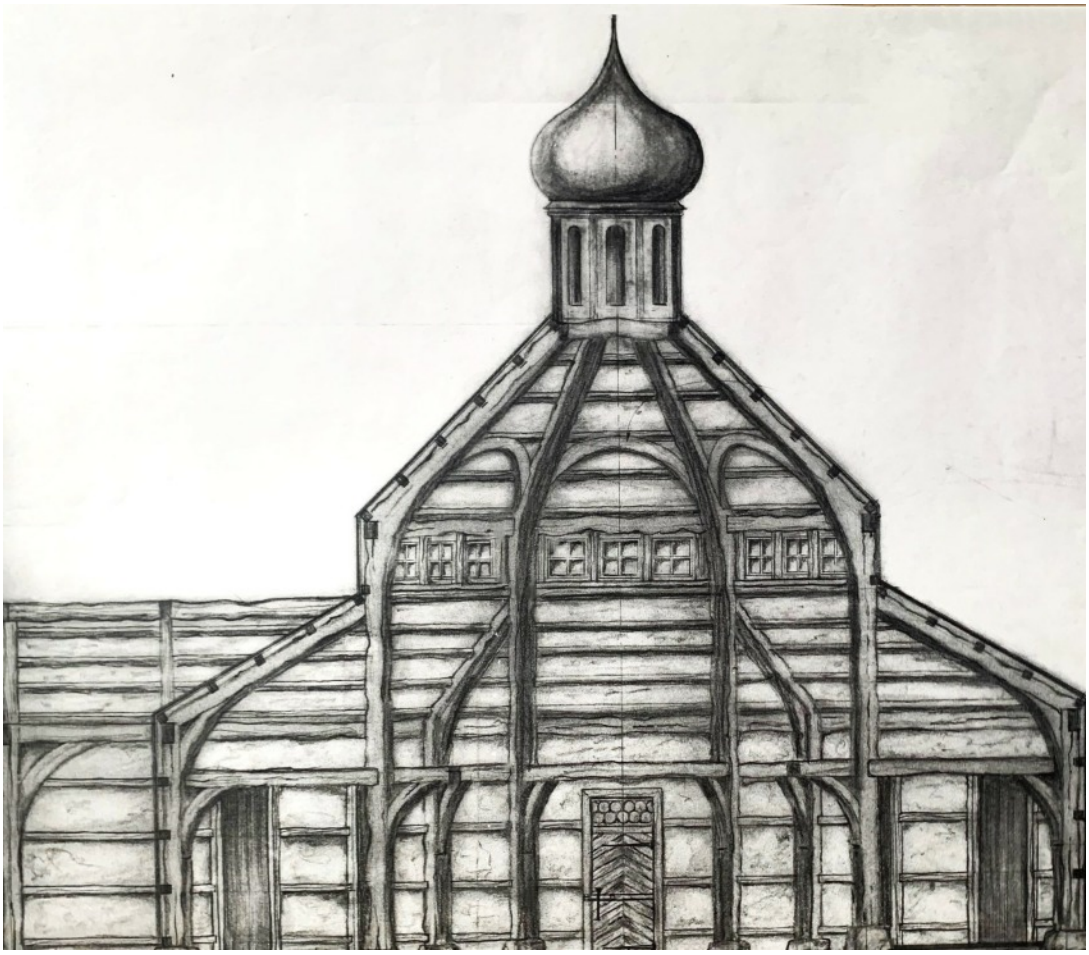
**Concept sketches for Santa Claus' balcony,** ***Santa Claus 2*****, Walt Disney Pictures.**



**Reindeer sleigh runway design for *Santa Claus 2*, Walt Disney Pictures.**



**Sketch for Santa Claus' balcony, *Santa Claus 2*, Walt Disney Pictures.**



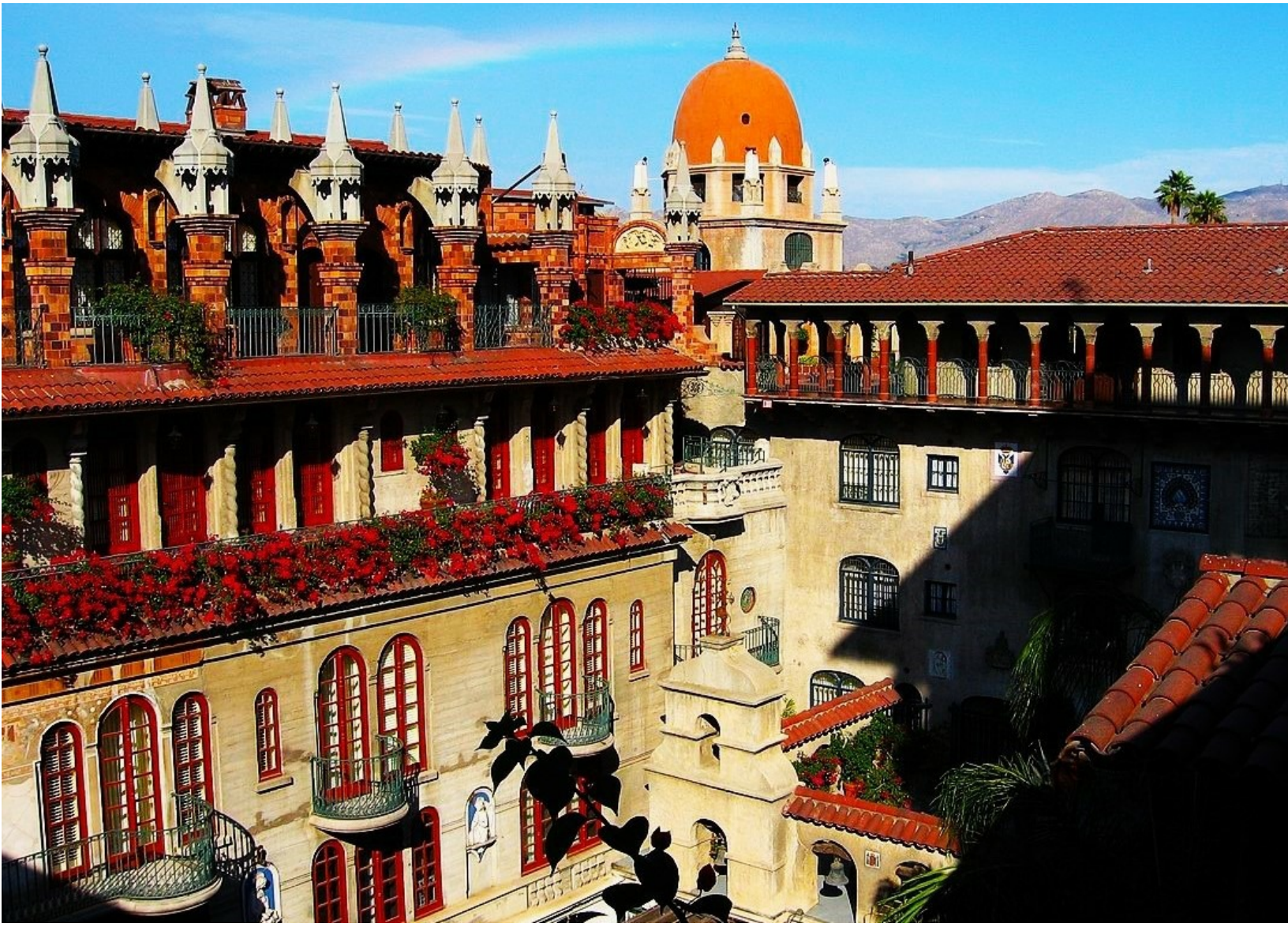
**Design for reindeer stable for Disney's *Santa Claus 2* at the North Pole**



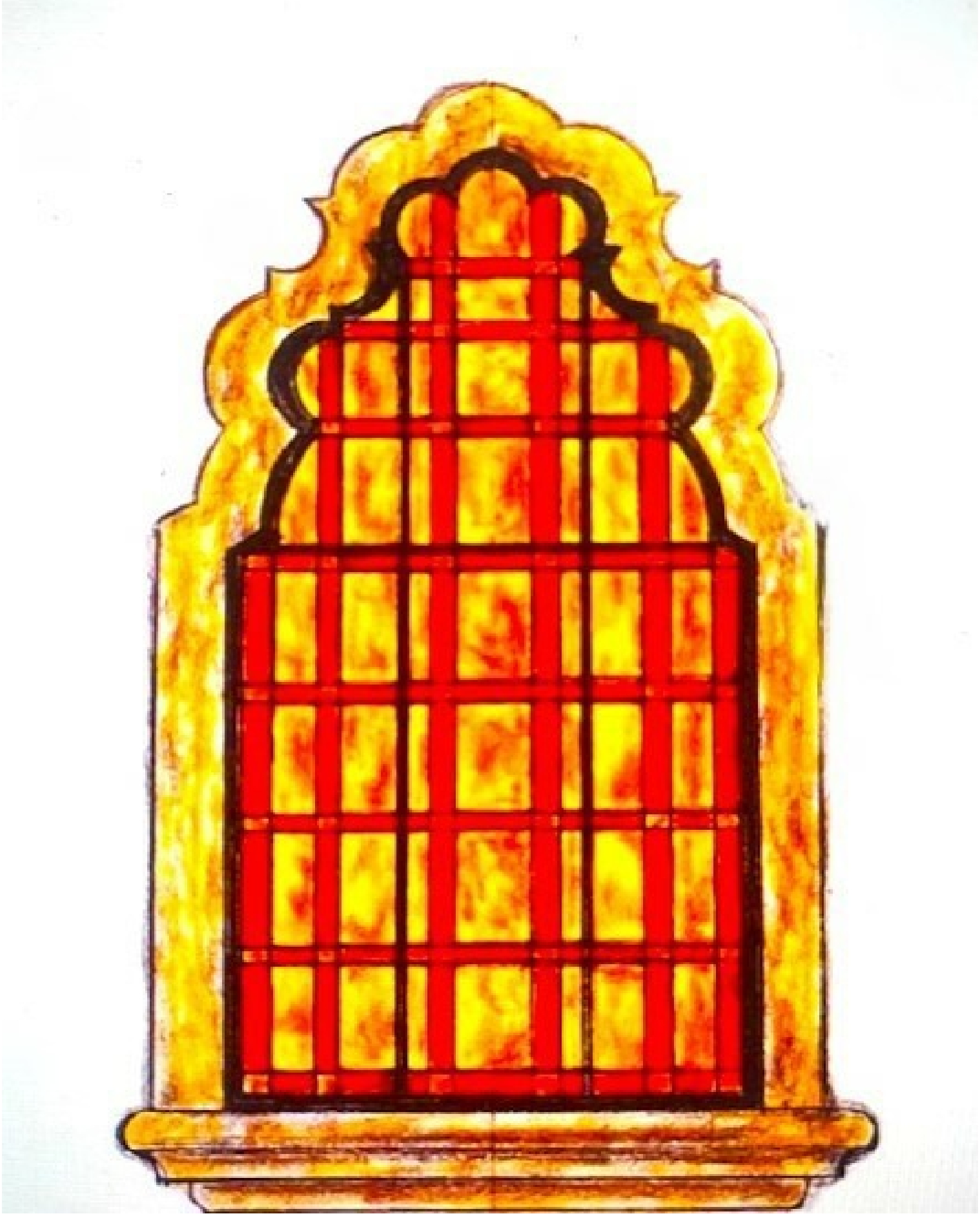
**Thai house I designed for television series *Kingpin,* constructed in the Huntington Botanical Asian Garden, San Marino, California**



**Office of Mexican kingpin Miguel Cadena. During the colonial conquest of Mexico, Islamic architecture from the Moorish conquest of Spain was introduced into Mexico and South America.**



**Exterior of Mexican Kingpin's headquarters, the Mission Inn, Riverside, California – Author, Okeknutlee, public domain, Wikimedia.**



**Sketch for Moorish window for *Kingpin***



**Hỏa Lò Prison, Hanoi, Vietnam. In the 1979 TV film *When Hell Was in Session,* Hal Holbrook plays the role of U.S. Navy Cmdr. Jeremiah A. Denton leading a squadron of A-6 Intruder attack jets to bomb military warehouses at Thanh Hoa, North Vietnam. Antiaircraft batteries defending the Thanh Hoa Bridge on the Ma River knocked out Denton's Intruder's guidance system, forcing him to bail out. The film is based on Denton's memoir of his imprisonment where he endured starvation, beatings, torture, solitary confinement for seven years and seven months. Eva Marie Saint plays his wife who organizes a group to support the wives of POWs. The North Vietnamese staged a television interview of Denton on May 17, 1966, to establish that that POWs were not being tortured. During the Japanese-taped interview broadcast on U.S. television, Denton blinked the word T-O-R-T-U-R-E in Morse Code verifying that torture was being conducted at the Hanoi Hilton prison. Despite the constant brutality in Hỏa Lò Prison, known in the U.S. as the Hanoi Hilton, Denton established a chain of command by inventing ways for the prisoners to communicate by tapping code numbers on a prison wall or coughing signals in a sequence. The resistance of the prisoners subjected them to endless brutality by the camp guards. Upon reading Denton's memoir, I learned that the guards raised pigs in the prison courtyard, inspiring a suggestion to director Paul Krasny to film a scene showing Denton being starved simultaneously, inter cut with a scene of the guards slopping the ravenous pigs. Krasny replied, "No pigs." I admired Hal Holbrook for his devotion to realism. He starved himself for several weeks to portray an emaciated prisoner of war.**



**I designed a courtroom with faux marble columns for *A Perry Mason Mystery: The Case of the Lethal Lifestyle,* starring Hal Holbrook playing "Wild Bill" McKenzie, a motorcycle-riding ranch owner. Holbrook, renowned for his portrayal of Mark Twain over a period of sixty years, was acclaimed for his portrayal of Abraham Lincoln in a series of TV specials based on Carl Sandburg's six volume biography of Lincoln. Honored by President George W. Bush with the National Humanities Medal in 2003, Holbrook won five Emmy Awards, and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role for his performance in Sean Penn's critically acclaimed film *Into the Wild*. Wikipedia reports that although registered as an independent, Holbrook praised Senator Bernie Sanders for his honesty, criticized the increasing politicization of religion, and castigated Donald Trump for not having "the maturity to run the country."**



**I built the horse stable for *Kid Co*, a film produced by Frank Yablans and David Niven, Jr. in 1984, the year I began working on *The Goonies*. I designed the barn, the prime set for *Kid Co,* in the style of a Victorian barn.**



**The producer of *When Hell Was in Session* was confident in making artistic decisions. Although the Hỏa Lò Prison in Hanoi was far from the tropics, the producer dictated that the wooden prefab at Indian Dunes used in Spielberg's 1941, that I had encased in distressed concrete stucco be roofed with palm fronds as if it were in Indonesia. A storm hit unexpectedly at night and destroyed the walls of Hỏa Lò Prison.**




**I met Gil Bettman when we were working on an Master of Fine Arts in film direction at UCLA, the time when I was making my thesis film, *Death of the Red Planet.* Years later, encouraged by a friend, film director Lynn Hamrick, Gil asked me to design *Never Too Young To Die*, that he was directing, starring John Stamos and Vanity with Gene Simmons of the rock group Kiss, playing the transvestite psychopathic gang leader Velvet Von Ragnar. I designed my only generic action film for Gil who was influenced by the 1979 smash hit, director George Miller's *Mad Max* with Mel Gibson, a film made on $400,000 and earned $100 million, setting a Guinness record for most profitable film.**





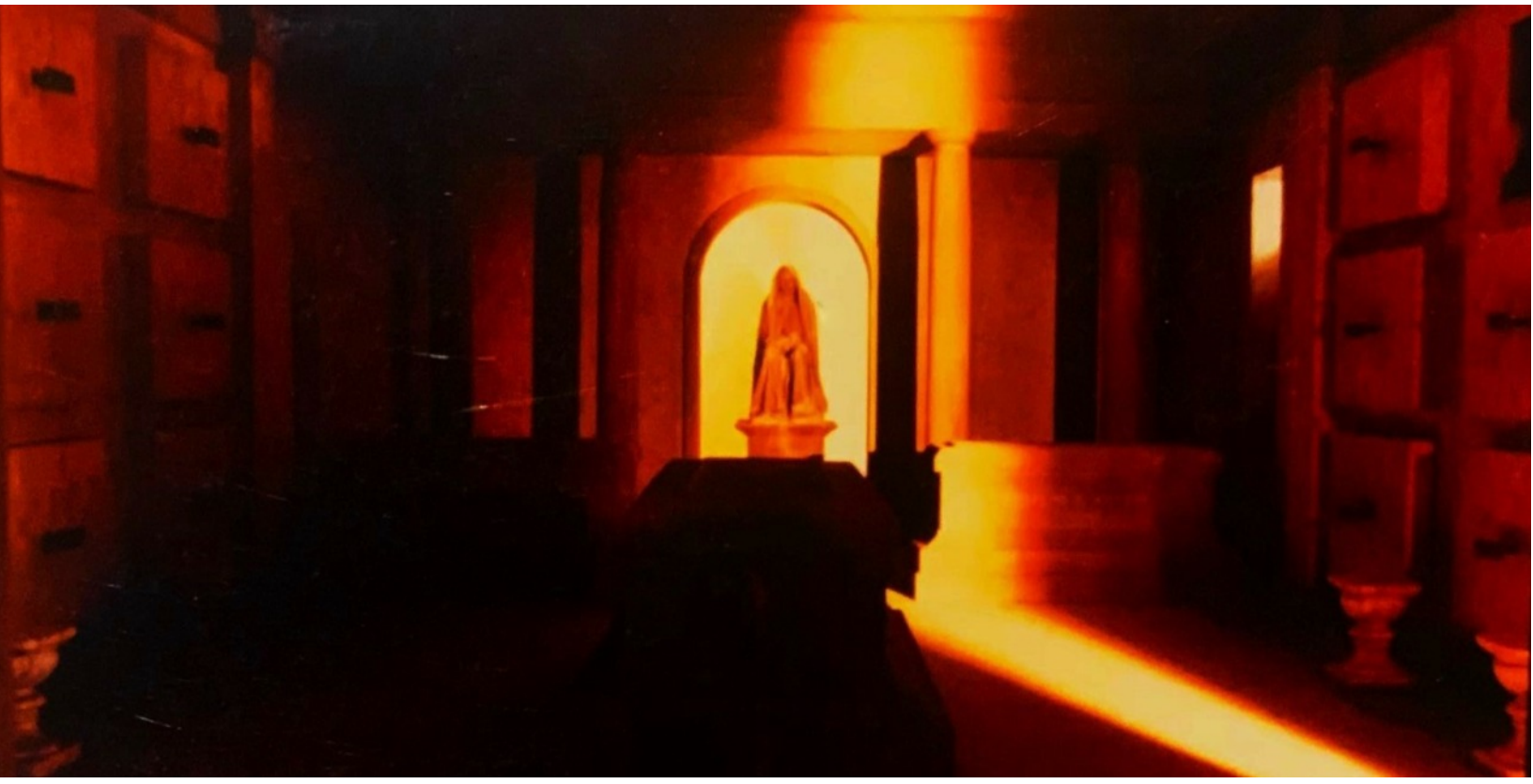
**Illustrations by Dean Tschetter.**

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**In the 1988 film, *Return of the Living Dead II*, a barrel of the toxic gas Trioxin rolls off a U.S. military truck into a storm drain which teens discover and open, releasing the gas in an overgrown cemetery. While grave robbers loot the corpses in the abandoned mausoleum, rainfall washes the toxic gas over the cemetery, seeping into the ground, resurrecting the dead, unleashing hordes of flesh eating zombies on the town. As the zombies go berserk satiating their voracious appetite for flesh, the boys finally succeed in luring the living dead to the power plant and throw the switch, electrocuting the zombie mob.**



**For the sculpture in the mausoleum, I was inspired by the sculpture known as "Grief," created by sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, commissioned by the American historian and author Henry Adams as a memorial to his wife, Marian Hooper Adams,. Suffering from depression, Marian committed suicide by swallowing potassium cynanide.**





***Return of the Living Dead II***





**Wherever I travel, I visit cemeteries. My historical novel *Celine on Fire* ends in the Cimetiere Montmartre.**



**The storm sewer where the kids discover the canister of Trioxin gas was built as if it were penetrating a hill, which the set builders fabricated and landscaped. For the tunnel, I created a series of arches that were connected by straight walls, all of which could be removed by grips to allow the camera to shoot from every direction. While making my first film in West Tulsa, *A Season of Visions*, I financed the film by working for Flint Steel, creating reinforcing steel drawings for civil engineering projects, including storm drains and steel towers, structures that have influenced my designs.**





**The five major Hollywood studios that produce television shows throw an extravagant party each year for clients and associates, a different studio paying for the occasion each year on a rotating basis. Warner Bros. Television Group challenged me to design a $200,000 installation on Warner Bros. Stage 16, the largest stage in Hollywood, the same place we built the pirate ship for *The Goonies.***



**I directed studio grips to cover the 60 feet high walls of the stage with black velveteen backings on three walls to create a completely dark environment. On the fourth wall, we hung a forty by sixty feet painted backing of a sunset. The guests came into the cocktail lounge though an elliptical arch, then entered the dining area by crossing over a Chinese bridge spanning a reflecting pond with waterfalls and floating Nymphaeacae, water lilies.**

**From the mountains, greensmen brought several hundred dead Aspens which we painted a pale grey to surround the festive occasion with a forest of pale trees. An enormous transparent pyramid was erected behind the orchestra and dance floor. Overhead, hexagonal inverted obelisks covered with scarlet glitter revolved, operated by electric motors, with spotlights illuminating the beveled surfaces as the obelisks turned. I arranged bouquets of thousands of tulips on the tables for guests to take home. Hundreds of guests engaged in television production and celebrities came. Ted Turner, founder of CNN, brought Russian astronauts to the party.**






**One of my most fascinating design challenges was transforming the main street in a small town in Florida for *Doc Hollywood,* a romantic comedy starring Michael J. Fox, Julie Warner, Barnard Hughes, Woody Harrelson, David Ogden Stiers, Frances Stemhagen, and Bridget Fonda. The script, based on Neil B. Shulman's book *What? Dead… Again?* set the story in Grady, South Carolina, "The Squash Capitol of the South," but the selected location for the shoot was Micanopy and McIntosh, Alachua County, south of Gainesville, Florida. The oldest community in the interior of Florida to have been continually occupied, Micanopy's downtown is designated the "Micanopy Historic District," listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With a population of a little over 600, its motto is "The Town that Time Forgot." On a vacant lot, I designed the café where all the locals regularly gathered.**

**My first task in transforming the town was to measure the entire main street, a formidable task as many buildings were not aligned as they are in most small towns. I established a base line for three blocks down the main street, then measured the distance from the base line to each building, laying the town out on a large drawing. Since it was not a busy shopping street, the art department transformed Micanopy into a larger South Carolina Town by creating a hardware store, general store, hair salon, café, and a small hospital. By altering building facades, building the café and barber shop, and designing creative signs, we created a town that was more in the spirit of our romantic comedy scenario. Since Grady was the "Squash Capitol of the South," the art department created a statue in the center of Micanopy, a town ancestor in Confederate military uniform holding aloft a squash.**

**Michael Fox's character Dr. Ben Stone who has completed his medical residency in Virginia, dreams of a lucrative career as a plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills and heads to the West Coast in his classic 1956 sports car, misses a sign and takes the wrong exit off the interstate into the boondocks. Dodging stray cows in the road, Michael loses control of his 346 Porsche Speedster, flies into the bushes (on a concealed ramp we constructed) and demolishes a picket fence owned by the town judge. Not only is his prized sports car damaged, but Judge Evans gives him a sentence of community service helping Dr. Hogue at the town hospital. To show his appreciation of the doctor, a farmer gives him a pig, which he leads around town on a rope. Because they grow so fast, Michael's pig had to be exchanged frequently with a younger one, which being very powerful, would often yank Michael out of frame while the camera was rolling. Seeing an opportunity to hire a doctor, the mayor and Grady town council gather at the Anderson café to offer Michael a permanent position at the hospital because Dr. Hogue will soon retire. A film with small town southern atmosphere, director Michael Caton-Jones, cast the film with a throng of Hollywood's outstanding character actors.**



**Location of Doc Hollywood, an unpaved street in Micanopy, Florida – Author, HarrietFest, Wikipmedia**

**It is believed Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto passed through Micanopy in the mid-16th century. One of the first settlers was Moses Elias Levy who founded the first Jewish communal settlements nearby. During the Seminole Wars, the town was the location of the Battle of Micanopy. During the early 1800s, slaves escaped into Spanish Florida, raising a threat to slavery in the states of Mississippi and Georgia, resulting in plantation owners raiding the Seminole settlements they accused of helping escaped slaves. In 1817, the U.S. War Department ordered the hero of the War of 1812, General Andrew Jackson, to bring the Seminoles under control resulting in the First Seminole War in which Jackson invaded the Spanish colony and destroyed Seminole and Black Seminole villages. After lengthy negotiations, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams signed the Florida Purchase Treaty with Spain in 1819, and President James Monroe appointed Andrew Jackson as military governor. Florida become a U.S. Territory three years later and was admitted into the Union in 1845 as a slave state.**

**In 1828, Andrew Jackson, the bitter enemy of the Seminoles, was elected President and his congressional allies passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830 with most congressmen of the Slave States voting for the bill and most Northern congressmen voting against it. Once the U.S. unilaterally voided the 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek, demanding that all Seminoles relocate to Indian Territory under the Indian Removal Act, Seminoles began guerrilla warfare that 30,000 U.S. troops failed to quell. In 1836, General Thomas Jesup began a campaign of attrition to destroy Seminole farms, livestock, and villages, essentially starving them into submission, the same scorched earth policy that General Philip Sheridan would use to defeat the Plains Indians in 1868-69, a policy of total war that treated civilians and their resources as legitimate military targets. Five of the Seminole chiefs, including Osceola and Chief Micanopy, refused to surrender, but by the 1840s, most of the Seminoles had either been killed or forced by starvation to surrender and moved to Indian Territory by force, during which a quarter of the Civilized Tribes, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole died on the Trail of Tears.**



**Seminole Chief Micanopy – Lithograph from a painting by Charles Bird King, 1825, source McKenney-Hall History of the Indian tribes of North America, 1858, public domain, Wikimedia**



**Seminole Chief Tukoo-See-Mathla – Lithograph from a painting by Charles Bird King, 1825, source McKenney-Hall History of the Indian tribes of North America, 1858, public domain, Wikimedia**



**Mick-e-no-páh, Chief of the Tribe – Author, George Catlin, 1838, Smithsonian American Art Museum, public domain, Wikimedia**



**Anderson's Café where the mayor and town council offer Michael J. Fox the job of Grady's town doctor.**

**To prepare for designing Anderson's Café, I researched buildings on main streets in late 19th century small towns, a period of elaborate Victorian architecture. My research showed the prevalence of awnings on store fronts. Using a long rod with a crank, the canvas could be rolled out or rolled back, depending on the angle of the sun, a way of controlling the interior light that would have helped cinematographer Michael Chapman to shape the lighting mood of each scene in the café. As a cinematographer on three films, one of which won the American Film Institute grant for the director, and over my years working in architecture, I believe light is paramount to successful design. The production designer, who was experienced only as a set decorator and knew little about architecture, rejected my eccentric Victorian era design, insisting on a simpler façade. Lawrence Miller thought it better to replace the adjustable movable awnings with a shed roof, which unfortunately would block light from coming through the clerestory windows, a decision that during the shoot would anger cinematographer Chapman who could not remove the shed roof to get natural light into the café. It was a terrible error that I was unable to correct. Instead, chief lighting technician Dick Quinlan had to place lights under the shed roof to direct artificial light through the clerestory windows, a poor alternative to natural light.**

**My memories of small towns in Oklahoma reminded me that there were often two businesses in a building, inspiring the idea of adding a barbershop. If I constructed a glass partition wall between the barbershop and the cafe, a barber could be giving haircuts in the background, providing another layer of realism to the scenes with the mayor, townsmen, Julie Warner and Fox. The director, Michael Caton-Jones, liked the idea so well that he cast a barber, a character who was not in the original cast and joined the deliberations of the town council. In Hollywood stages, a set has no columns to interfere with camera movement. To be able to film in any direction, it is necessary to make as many walls moveable as possible, which dictated that I must construct a building with no columns holding up the roof. To create a mini studio with maximum flexibility, I had a truss company construct at the factory a truss with a span of fifty feet that our IATSE construction crew would erect, thus allowing the old fashioned columns to be moved at the director's discretion. Working in Hollywood Studios, heavy objects can be created in lightweight substances like molded plastic or polyurethane resin-based foam. Ornamental cast iron can be replicated in lightweight materials as we did with the cannons of *The Goonies* pirate ship. In Florida, I had to source the real thing, casting the ornate iron columns of the café's porch and interior at an iron foundry in Birmingham, Alabama. It was an ideal solution until the shooting company had to make room for a complex dolly shot and the grips removed a post only to discover the massive cast iron column weighed a ton.**




**Stranded until his sentence is completed and Porsche fixed, Ben rents a log cabin on a lake where he spies Lou, a young woman swimming naked in the lake. Lou, played by Julie Warner, is a graduate of a New York law school, studying for the bar exam while earning a living by driving the ambulance for the hospital where Ben is sentenced to community service. Since the lake is crawling with alligators with voracious appetites, to protect Lou during the lake scene, the production company employed wet suit skin divers armed with weapons to ward off the alligators. Considering the risk, one wonders why Warner would accept playing a scene in an alligator habitat. Julie Warner was at the beginning of her career and had been chosen by Michael Fox himself to play the romantic role. Considering the opportunity to play opposite an established actor, it would have been unlikely for a young actor to refuse the scene. Opportunity may only come once. Indeed, the role proved to be Julie Warner's breakout role.**

**I learned firsthand that the threat of alligators in Florida lakes is real. Behind the cabin where I was staying between Gainesville and Micanopy, I was startled by an attacking alligator, charging out of the swamp – incredibly swift for such a large creature. I sprinted like a bolt of lightning and got away, pleased to have outrun an alligator. Absorbed in my work, I forgot about the attack until the following morning when I watched a crew behind my cabin, binding it with ropes and hauling the alligator away.**





**The log cabin was designed by Eva Anna Bohn and Lawrence Miller. On the first location scout, Scottish director Michael Caton-Jones and Michael Chapman, (cinematographer of forty features, renowned for the cinematography of Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*) chose the location of the cabin to be built on the edge of an alligator infested lake. When I visited the site and explored the undergrowth, I discovered close to the shore, concealed by overgrown vegetation, a Live Oak that appeared to have a span of 60 feet in width. I recommended clearing the jungle, carving a dirt road, and building the log cabin enmeshed in the branches of the oak, a proposal that Caton-Jones liked. The night the cabin was shot in moonlight, the lens chosen did not capture the majesty of the spreading oak. When I suggested shooting wider to capture the splendid size of the oak, Chappie, as Michael is known, changed to a wide angle lens and shot the tree in its magnificent glory. In some circumstances, the production designer must be present during the shoot, to achieve his visual design.**




**The building next to Anderson's Café that I transformed with set decorator Cloudia Rebar's excellent crew into Melvin's Auto Repair, incorporated an odd log cabin that I turned into a clapboard cabin and added 1930's gas pumps with the Zephyr logo inspired by the god of the west wind, Zephyrus. Although necessary for the story, it was sad to see a tow truck wreck a 356 Porsche.**




**Anderson's Café where the mayor and town council offer Michael J. Fox the job of Grady's town doctor.**

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**Spanish moss – Author, southcarolinalowcoountry.com**

**When filming *Doc Hollywood* on location in Florida, I resolved for the first time to hang out with the film crew in the evening drinking sessions in the bar of the Gainesville hotel. As the drinking wore on, I became concerned with my own indulgence over the years. However, Michel's drinking did not affect his work. His acting skills in *Doc Hollywood* were impeccable, the chemistry between Michael and Julie Warner elevating the film to a higher level than many romantic comedies of that period of time.**

**At the Gainesville hotel, I sat around the bar table with Michael Fox, director Michael Caton-Jones, cinematographer Michael Chapman, and the camera operator. Like the others, I was not aware of Michael's condition. While researching information on my work in film and recalling the making of *Doc Hollywood*, I learned that around the time of the filming, Michael was diagnosed with the neurodegenerative disorder of Parkinson's disease, which Michael revealed to the public several years later. The evenings I spent at the bar with the film crew were strange. Michael was deep in his cups, speaking the entire evening while the rest of us listened intently to a monologue, a custom that I have often seen at wrap parties where a leading actor or director holds forth while the crew raptly listens – an homage to celebrities that is common in Hollywood and the nation at large. I don't believe I said a thing the whole night and shortly gave up on joining the male drinking sessions. The first time Michael noticed something wrong was when he woke up with a smashing hangover after a night drinking with Woody Harrelson who played his rival in the pursuit of Lou. He had no feeling in his finger. A neurologist diagnosed Michael with Parkinson's at the age of 29 in 1991, which he said led him to even heavier drinking. After passing out in 1992 after a drunken night, Michael realized he was an alcoholic. But after attaining sobriety, "as low as alcohol had brought me, abstinence would bring me lower. . . I could no longer escape myself."**

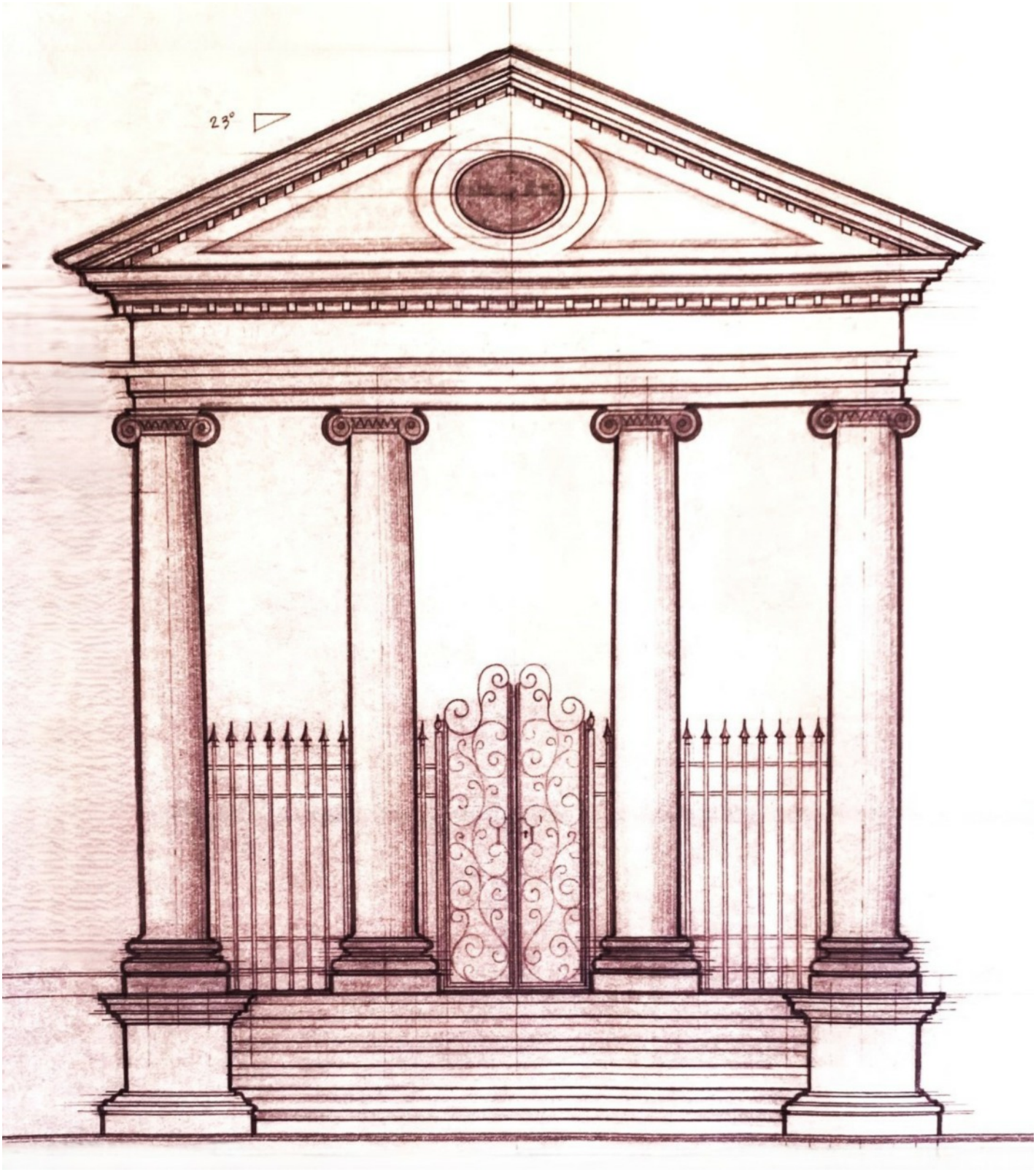
**Michael decided to reveal his struggle with Parkinson's and founded The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research that has raised $2 billion to combat the disease. In the documentary film *Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie,* directed by Davis Guggenheim, Michael tells of his struggle with Parkinson's disease. The documentary premiered at Sundance and received seven nominations at the 75th Primetime Emmy Awards, winning Outstanding Documentary, Directing, Editing, and Music, and five nominations at the 8th Critics' Choice Documentary Awards, winning Best Documentary Feature, Best Biographical Documentary, Best Director, Best Narration, Best Editing for a powerful story. In addition, I would give an award for Best Animal in *Doc Hollywood* to Michael's pet pig bestowed upon him by a grateful patient, or that is, a series of pigs, because pigs grow so rapidly they had to get a new pig every couple of weeks, some of them so strong and willful, they could abruptly yank Michael out of frame.**



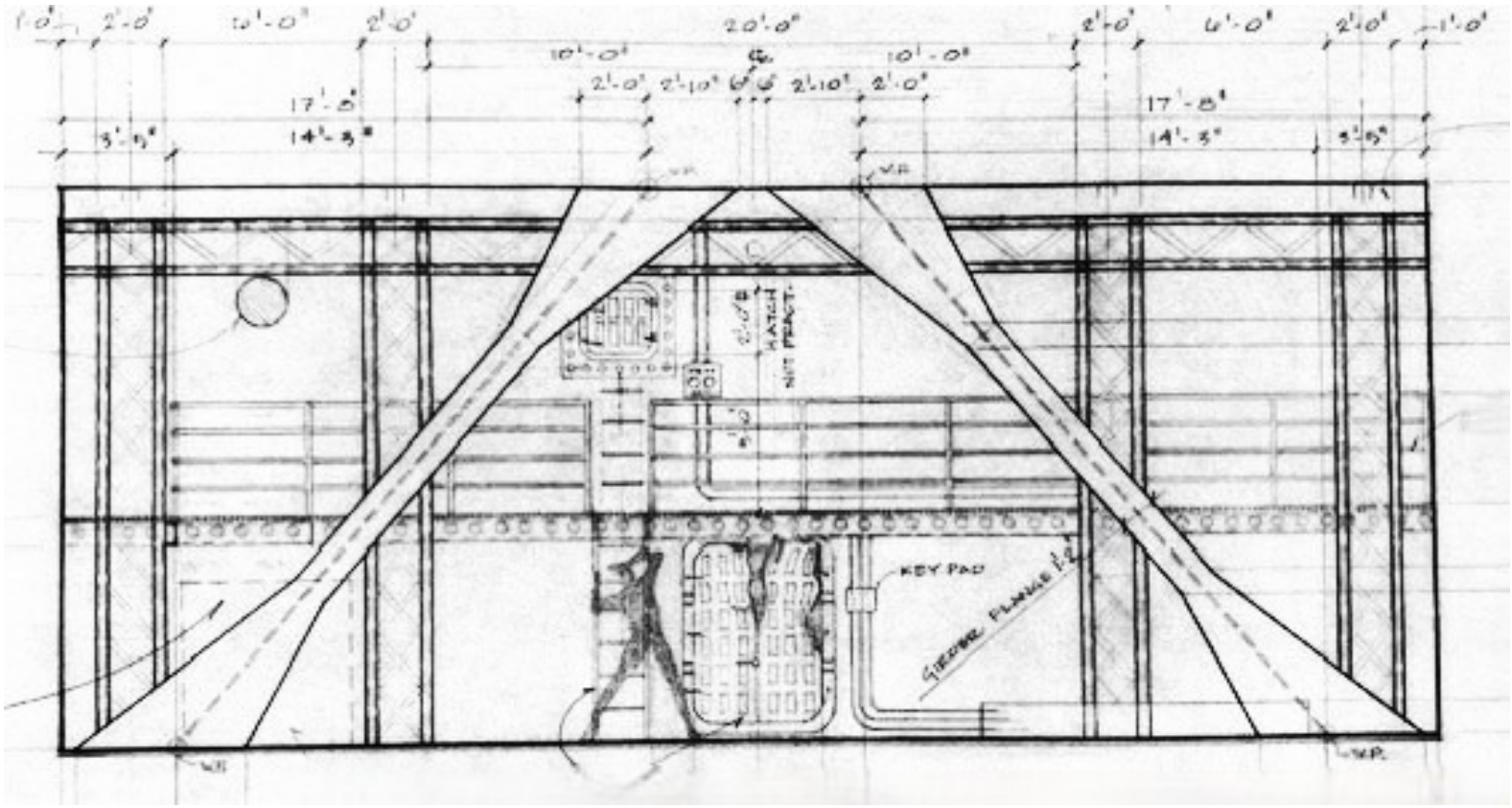
**The oldest home in historic Micanopy, built by Black people, sits abandoned – Author, HarrietFest, Wikimedia**

**Critics complained of *Doc Hollywood's* "mildness and predictability". . . with "the reassurance of a fast-food chain." *Los Angeles Times* film critic Peter Rainer said, "The whole sunny production is like Frank Capra with a lobotomy." I would remind the critics that some things never go out of style. Frank Capra's great success in 1934 with one of the first screwball comedies, *It Happened One Night*, was the first film to win all five top Oscars, Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay, which elevated director Frank Capra, Clark Gable, and Claudette Colbert to fame.**

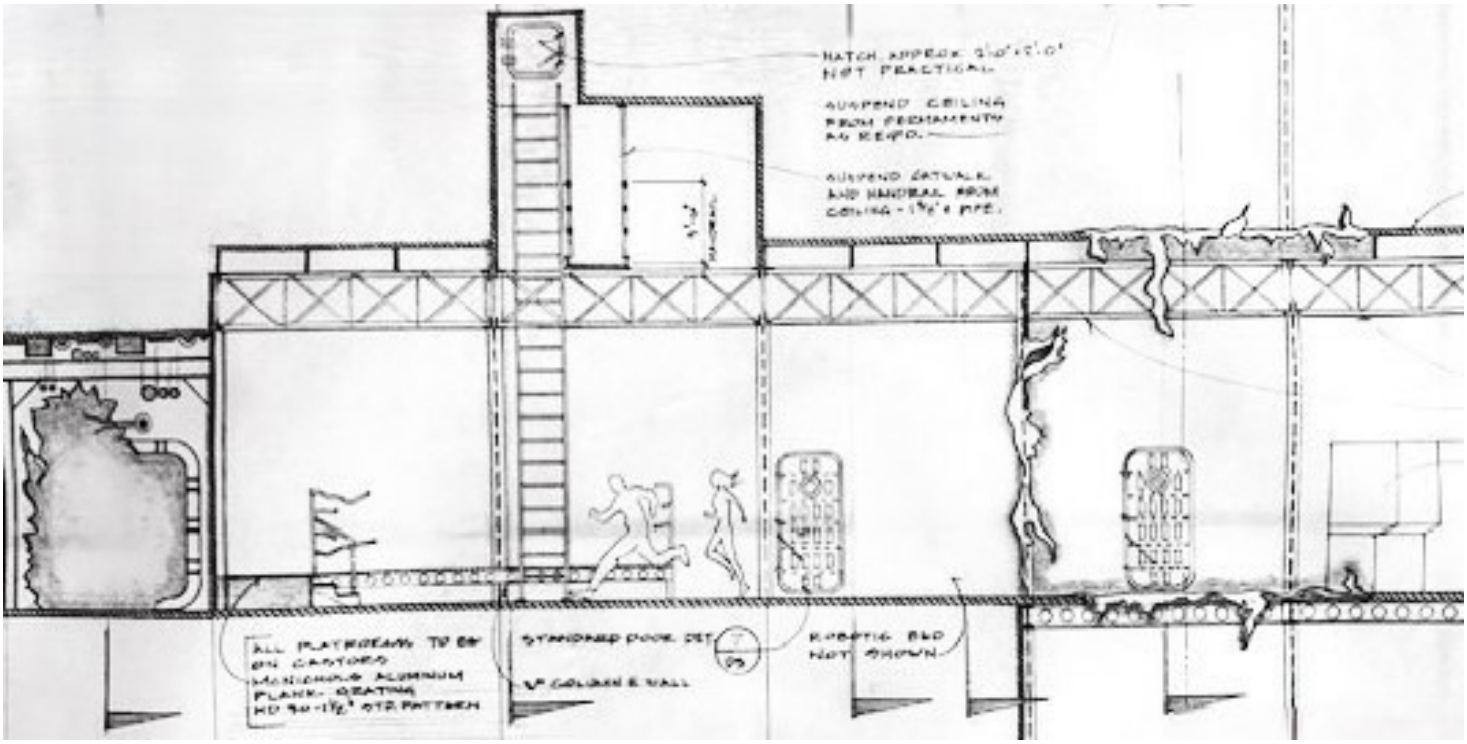
***Variety* panned *Doc Hollywood*, "It has no real taste of its own, but, in its mildness and predictability, offers the reassurance of a fast-food or motel chain." But Roger Moore writing for *Movie Nation* disagreed, "It may have been lightly regarded when it came out, but I think you can make the case that *Doc Hollywood*, a throwback comedy even then, stands the test of time better than any rom-com of its era. Critic Roger Ebert writing for the *Chicago Sun-Times* understood the film's appeal, "The town of Grady (actually Micanopy, Florida) is also a character in the movie, with its statue of a local hero holding a squash in his hand. Like all small towns in Hollywood movies, this one has a parade, an anniversary celebration and a fireworks display during the course of the story, but Caton-Jones has fun with the parade (lots of marching squashes) and the carnival provides the backdrop for a small, tender, perfectly choreographed and photographed love scene; while Fox and Warner dance to Patsy Cline's "Crazy," all of the people drop out of the background and only the bright lights remain. . . Dialogue and plot and all the rest take second place to the conviction that two people only have eyes for one another. Fox and Warner create that feeling, which is why *Doc Hollywood* is a sweetheart of a movie." Michael Fox knew what he was doing when he picked Julie Warner to play Lou in an old fashioned film with heart.**




**Primate House design for *Buddy* produced by Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets. Actress Rene Russo, playing Gertrude Lintz, a 1920s eccentric millionaire, adopts a young gorilla, which she raises as her own child, until Buddy becomes increasingly violent.**



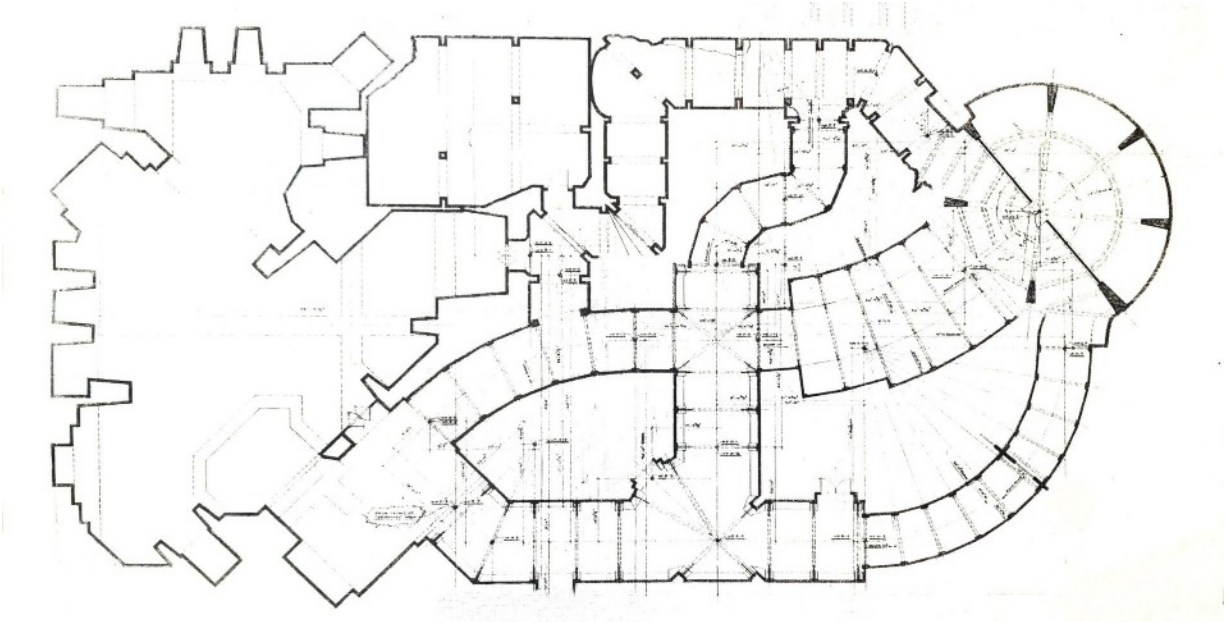

**The director of *Virus*, John Bruno, is known for his many collaborations with director James Cameron on *Avatar, Titanic, Terminator 2*, *Judgement Day*, *True Lies*, and *The Abyss*, for which he won the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects. A Russian ship discovered by Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, and William Baldwin, is taken over by extraterrestrial beings, a virus that has transformed the Russian crew into virulent cyborgs. Although John Bruno's special effects were notable, the predictable story routed the skills of talented actors, making it a box office failure.**





**Dutch Director Paul Verhoeven, noted for the WWII classic film *Soldier of Orange* staring Rutger Hauer, *Basic Instinct, Total Recall*, and *Robocop*, works on his continuity notes in a corridor that would be set on fire and inundated in water, requiring that the entire one-acre set be constructed of steel and nonflammable materials. Working with United Kingdom production designer Allen Cameron, I was the art director at Sony Studios, creating the underground Pentagon Laboratory for Paul Verhoeven's film, *The Hollow Man* with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Shue, and Josh Brolin, filmed in Washington D.C. and at Sony Studios. British designer Allan Cameron, with whom I worked as the supervising art director, had worked with Paul Verhoeven on *Basic Instinct*, and *Starship Troopers*. A prolific British designer, Cameron designed American films, *Angels & Demons, The Mummy,* and *The Da Vinci Code*.**

**Below: my drawing for the *Hollow Man* set constructed on Stage 15 at Sony Studios (formerly MGM,) measuring 42,000 sq. ft., roughly one-acre. Stage 15 was the site for the yellow brick road leading to Oz in the 1939 MGM film *The Wizard of Oz*. The set for *Hollow Man* was the Pentagon's underground laboratory where scientists were tasked by the military to invent a serum to create invisible soldiers. Although the film reviewers criticized it as a horror film, it has achieved a cult status. Paul Verhoeven's *Hollow Man* made $190 million when first released against a cost of $95 million and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects. To preserve continuity for the complex visual effects that created the invisibility of Kevin Bacon, Verhoeven drew most of the story boards himself. After the film wrapped, Verhoeven gave the four volume story boards to me, which are archived in the Villa dei Fiori library.**

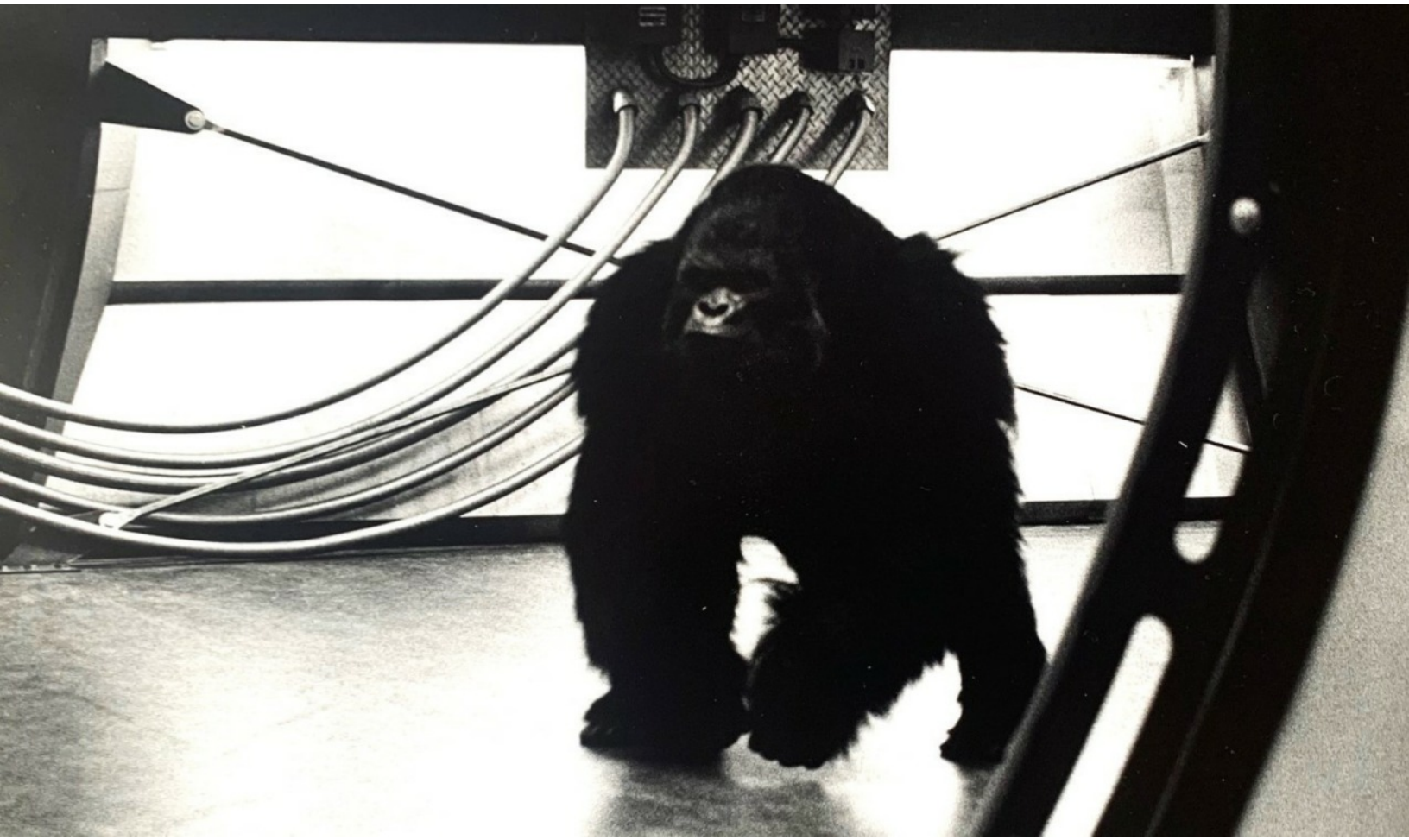




**Director Paul Verhoeven sets up a scene with Kevin Bacon and cast at the Willard Hotel in Washington D.C, a Beaux-Arts style hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue two blocks east of the White House. Wikipedia reports that *The Washington Post* determined "that, in the days leading up to the January 6 protest at the US Capitol, a series of rooms and suites in the hotel functioned as an informal 'command center' run by Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudolph Giuliani for a White House plot to overturn the results of the 2020 election," which meetings included presidential advisors, attorney John C. Eastman, Steve Bannon, Michael Flynn, and Roger Stone. Nathaniel Hawthorne said that "the Willard Hotel more justly could be called the center of Washington than either the Capitol or the White House or the State Department." In 1861, the Peace Congress with delegates from 21 states met at the Willard Hotel to attempt to prevent the Civil War. Wikimedia reports that while staying at the hotel, Julia Ward Howe wrote the lyrics to "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Facing threats of assassination, Abraham Lincoln lived at the Willard Hotel until his inauguration, carrying on business in his room and the lobby. Every president since Franklin Pierce has either slept in or visited the hotel. Ulysses S. Grant liked to drink whiskey and smoke a cigar in the lobby. The *Hollow Man* scene at the Willard Hotel restaurant was continued on the roof of the Labor Department building for a scene between Kevin Bacon and Elisabeth Shue. I constructed a portion of the Willard Restaurant on top of the Labor Department building to provide a view of the Capitol illuminated at night.**



**Laboratory animal, Isabelle, escapes from the animal habitat. The underground laboratory under the old naval yard is the site of U.S. Department of Defense experiments to create invisible military troops. The animal habitat included cats, chimpanzees, and gorillas. Afterward, I transported the gorilla cage to Joshua Tree where I transformed it into a gazebo for climbing roses. Isabelle, the invisible gorilla is still there happy to be living in a garden.**





**A steadicam operator tracks Kevin Bacon and Josh Brolin, fitted with heat sensing goggles, pursuing the gorilla Isabelle after an laboratory experiment has made her invisible**.



**Preparing for the shot, Paul Verhoeven works Isabelle into a rage against his pursuers. Since gorillas don't take direction easily, the gorillas in the shoot are men in costumes adept in gorilla behavior.**



**The research team attempts to resusitate a gorilla laboratory animal.**



**Some of the laboratory invisibility experiments didn't turn out as expected.**



**The research team prepares Dr. Sebastian Caine, played by Kevin Bacon, for the radiation serum to achieve invisibility. Verhoeven shot the film in chronological order since the laboratory would be blown up at the end of the film, photographed by 14 cameras.**



**Sebastian suffers a seizure after the injection of a serum before being placed into the high intensity radiation burst machine. Production designer Allan Cameron designed the laboratory and Daniel R. Jennings created the construction drawings.**

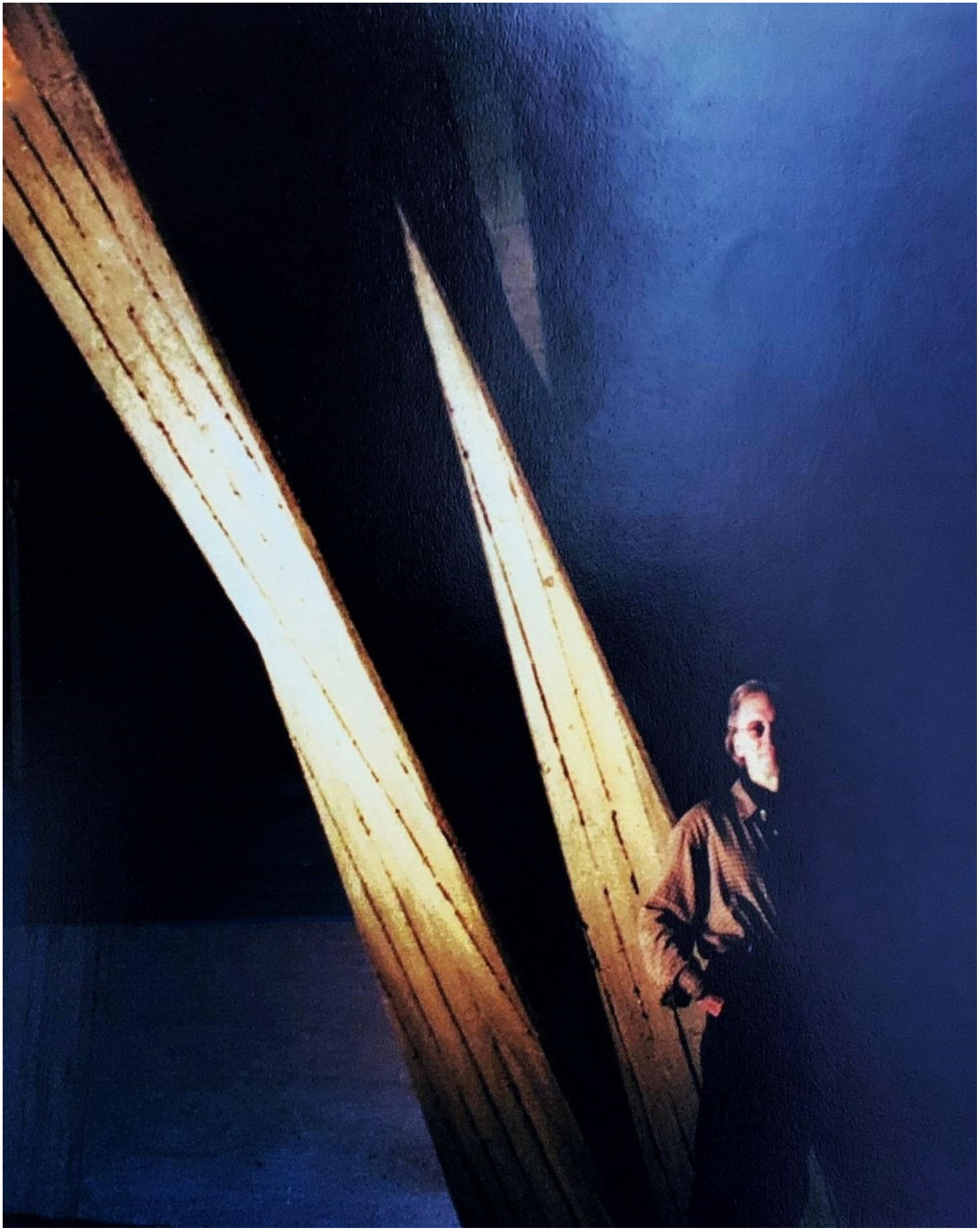


**My design for the abandoned underground bomb shelter, in which the retrofitted Pentagon laboratory was constructed, was inspired by Pier Luigi Nervi, an Italian structural engineer and architect who developed in the 1930s reinforced concrete structures of brutal geometric shapes. Nervi is renowned for the Pirelli Tower in Milan, Italy that he designed in collaboration with Italian architect Gio Ponti, a 1956 tower that inspired the Pan AM building in New York.**





**Construction in progress on Stage 15 Sony Studios of an abandoned bomb shelter constructed under Washington D.C. in the 1950s Cold War, that the Pentagon re-purposed as a cutting edge laboratory for the creation of invisible warriors.**



**Pillars of the room where the blood plasma is refrigerated.**




**After the attempt to return Caine to visibility fails, a latex suit is made, and he is quarantined until they can devise away to bring him back to his previous state.**



**Jost Vacano, the cinematographer for *Hollow Man*, was noted for shooting the West German anti-war classic *Das Boot*, directed by Wolfgang Peterse and nominated for six Academy Awards, including Petersen for Best Director and Adapted Screenplay. Jost was challenged to photograph the claustrophobic confines of WWII German submarine *U-96*. To work in the tight spaces of a submarine, where a Steadicam system would be too bulky, Jost invented a gyro-stabilized hand-held camera that gave him high mobility, a system still in use today. For his riveting cinematography in *Das Boot*, he was nominated for an Oscar. Jost Vacano was the cinematographer for several Verhoeven films, *Robo Cop, Total Recall, Starship Troopers, Basic Instinct,* and *Hollow* The favorite film of his career was for Volker Schlöndorff's *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*, based on the novel by Heinrich Böll, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972. The film's condemnation of the predatory right wing tabloid newspapers in West Germany aroused the fury of conservatives in Germany. Regrettably, the low light level adopted for the corridors in the film did not clearly illuminate the brutal geometric forms that I designed for the abandoned underground bunker.**

**After stage three in the high intensity radiation burst machine, Dr. Sebastian Caine, leader of the experimental laboratory is transformed by digital effects supervisors Craig Hayes and Scott Anderson, Sony Pictures Image works and Tippett Studio into the invisible man.**

**Below: Verhoeven sets up a shot with Bacon's stunt man double in blue screen latex, wielding a crowbar weapon made of rubber. To achieve the effects of invisibility, each scene was shot twice, one time with the actor and another without so that the background would be seen through Caine's body. The two versions were combined during post-production. For the moments when invisible man can be seen, Caine was either outlined in smoke, water, or blood. During many hours of performing, Bacon wore an uncomfortable latex body suit, face mask, contact lenses, and a dental plate of a single color. Depending on the substance used to outline Bacon, the latex was of different colors: green for blood, blue for smoke, and black for water. Wikipedia notes that the spectacular visual effects, which comprised 50 million dollars out of the 95 million dollar budget, earned visual effects supervisors Craig Hayes and Scott E. Anderson an Academy Award nomination for Best Visual Effects but lost to *Gladiator.***





**Kevin Bacon, the invisible man, stalks Elizabeth and Josh. The only time the invisible man can be seen is when water, smoke, or wrapped in material substance that reveals the outline of his otherwise invisible body.**

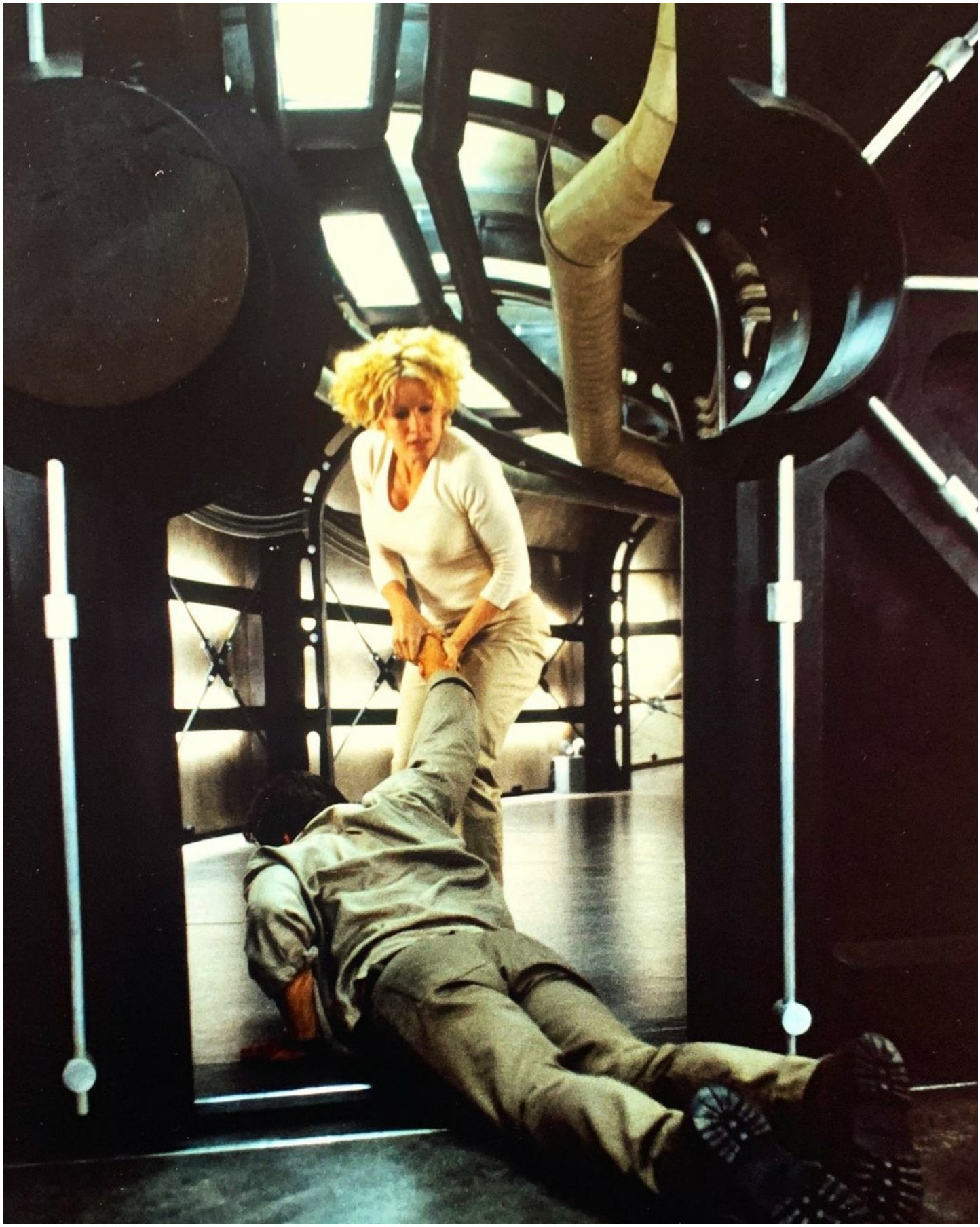




**Josh is trapped when the invisible man seals the blast door. The figure of the invisible man can be faintly visible on the left. Whenever the invisible man is enveloped by clothing, mist, smoke, or fire, he can be seen as the substance cloaking his body reveals his figure.**



**Sebastian Caine goes on a killing streak, strangling  Frank Chase,  played by Joey Slotnik.**



**I originally designed the blast door to be constructed of various metals, titanium, brass, and copper like structures found in outer space capsules and satellites but was overruled.**



**Linda McKay, played by Elisabeth Shue, jerry-rigs a flamethrower to fight the invisible Caine, played by a stunt man wearing an asbestos fire suit.**





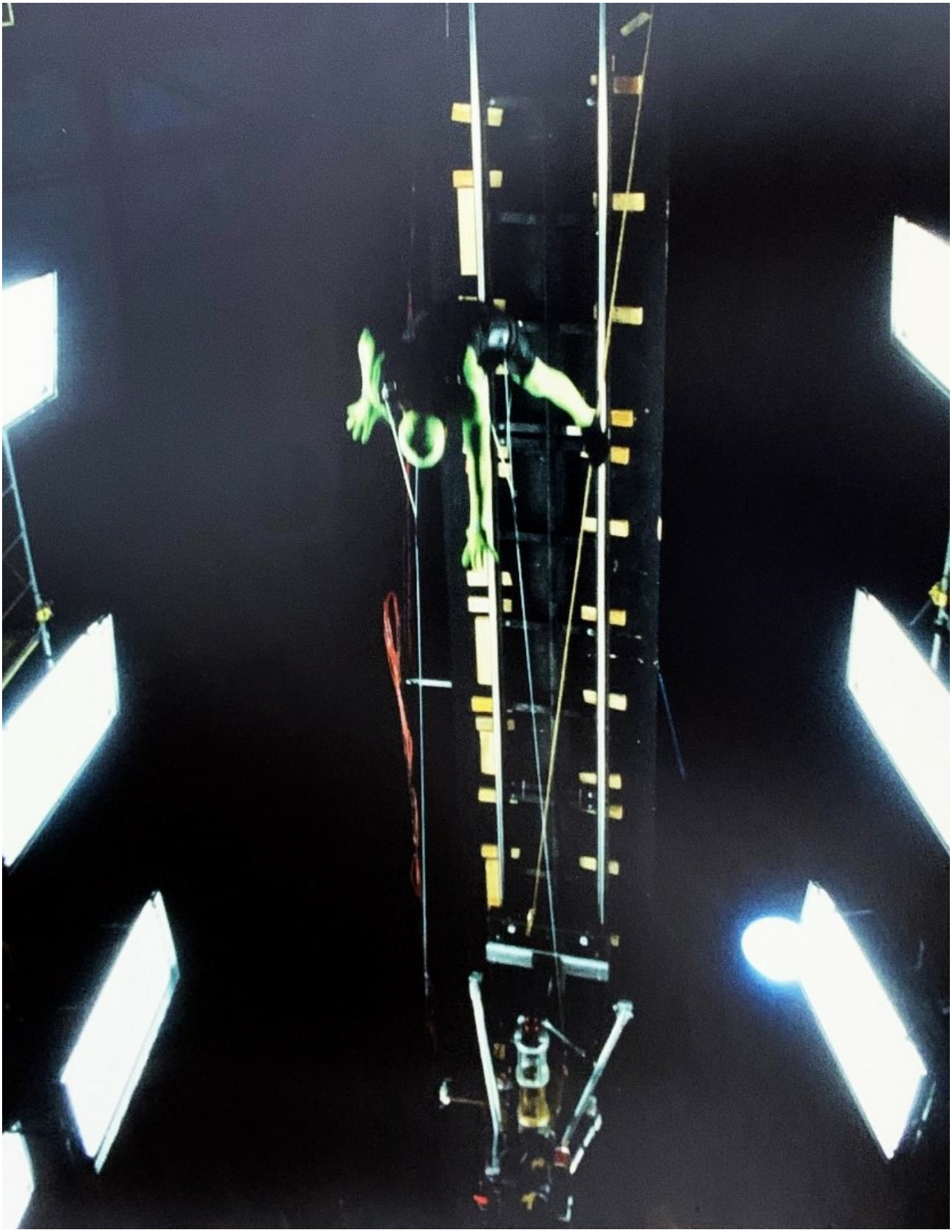
**Sebastian constructs a bomb to destroy the laboratory and sets the keyboard so that no one can shut it down. As he enters the elevator to escape, Linda fires the flamethrower. Although severely burned, Sebastian escapes in the elevator.**



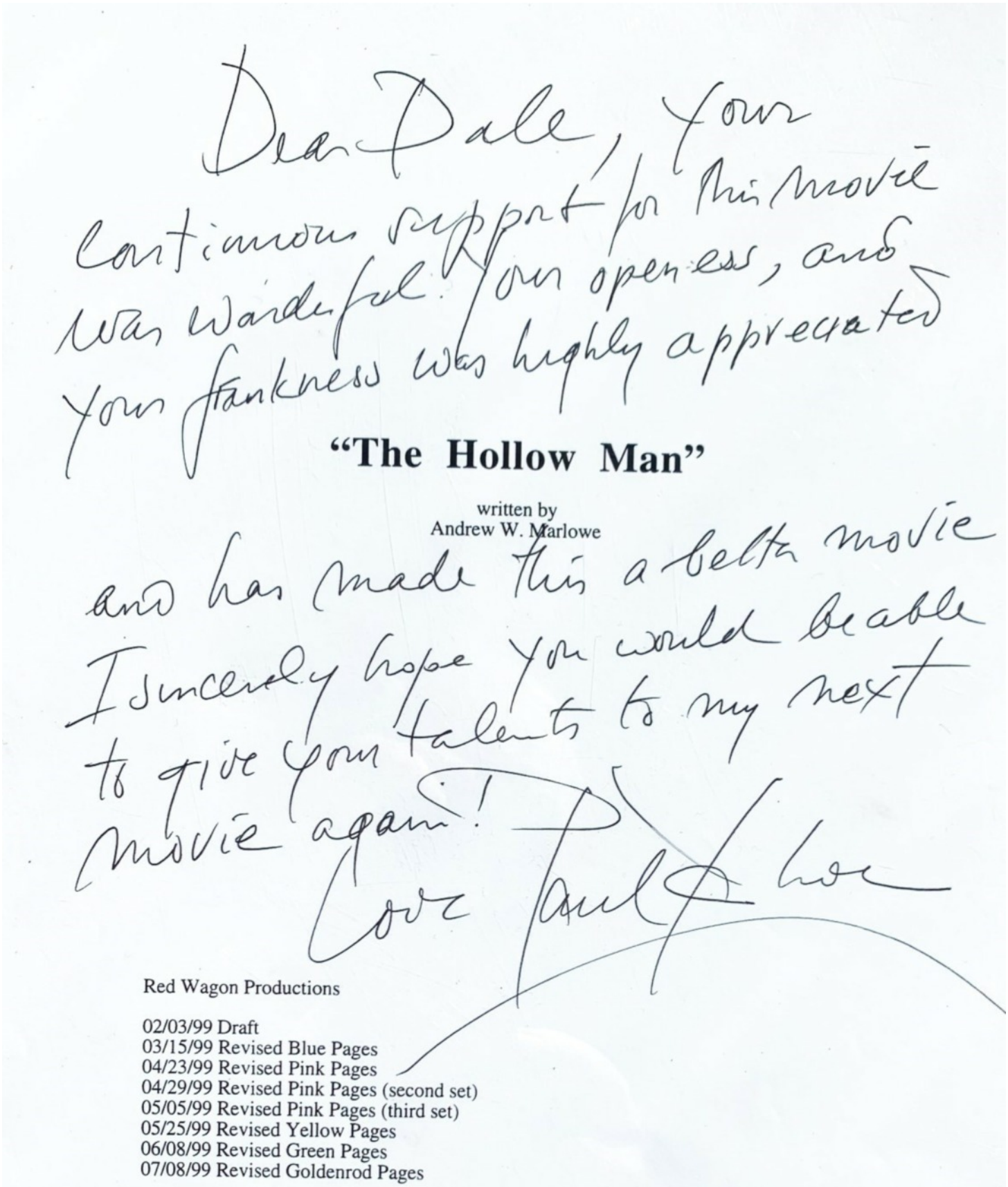
**Moments before the laboratory explodes, Matt and Linda climb the ladder on the wall of the shaft. Assistant art director, George Lee, accomplished the construction drawings for the elevator and helped coordinate the shooting sequence. The elevator was constructed at Sony Studios, adjacent to a six story parking structure, making it possible to film at six different elevations.**



**Sebastian appears on top of the elevator and pulls Linda off the ladder onto the elevator, forcing her to kiss. As she pretends to succumb, she leaps back onto the ladder and disconnects the elevator cables, sending Sebastian to his death.**



**The ascending camera rig enables a traveling camera perspective of Sebastian falling to his death, being performed by a stunt man in a green suit, which will be replaced in the final composition by digitally inserting Kevin Bacon.**



Dear Dale, Your continuous support for this movie was wonderful. Your openness, and your frankness was highly appreciated and has made this a better movie. I sincerely hope you would be able to give your talents to my next movie again!

Love Paul

"The Hollow Man"

written by
Andrew W. Marlowe

Red Wagon Productions

02/03/99 Draft
03/15/99 Revised Blue Pages
04/23/99 Revised Pink Pages
04/29/99 Revised Pink Pages (second set)
05/05/99 Revised Pink Pages (third set)
05/25/99 Revised Yellow Pages
06/08/99 Revised Green Pages
07/08/99 Revised Goldenrod Pages

**I was supervising art director, creating the sets for Paul Verhoeven's film, *The Hollowman* with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Shue, Josh Brolin, filmed in Washington D.C. and Sony Studios.**

# Nature Preserve Studio and Garden





**My writing studio located on the Nature Preserve, a renovated 40-foot travel trailer.**





**Courtyard of the writing studio on the Nature Preserve.**



**Aleppo pines on the west road on the Nature Preserve.**



**Native Beavertail cactus in bloom on the Nature Preserve.**



**One of several cactus gardens on the Nature Preserve.**



**View to the south from the writing studio.**



**Tuscan Blue rosemary, Sea Green and pfitzeriana juniperus on the Nature Preserve**



**Amboy Volcano, which last erupted 10,000 years ago, lies forty miles northeast of Villa dei Fiori, south of the Mojave National Preserve and two and one-half hours south of Las Vegas, near Amboy Road and Historic Route 66. The paved Crater Road leads through the lava flows to the picnic area and Amboy Crater Trail.**





# Construction of Villa dei Fiori II

**All the film sets that I worked on over the years were destroyed after filming. After retiring from the industry, I was determined to create a house that one hundred years later would still be lived in. I remember the day that bulldozers destroyed *The Goonies* pirate ship on Warner Bros Stage 16. It was a sorrowful sight. After filming was finished, the studio had contemplated moving the ship to preserve it at another location, but it was impractical for it was not constructed with an integral foundation to allow moving. When Walt Disney Imagineering designs structures for Disney World, the construction has high engineering standards to assure durability. To the contrary, movie sets are constructed rapidly and after filming is complete, are removed immediately due the enormous cost of renting a sound stage on a Hollywood lot.**





**Metal lath installed over a weather resistant barrier forms the foundation for three coats of stucco.**





**Max Rio's ten-man crew installing the second coat of stucco.**







**Stairway to the rooftop terrace and dance floor. Part of my weekly training exercise is to run the stairs thirty times. There will be an outdoor kitchen on the roof with views of the national park to the south and 12,000 ft. Mt. San Andrea to the west. Wires are for future lighting. An acrylic cement finish over metal lath will provide the finish for the stairs and the roof deck. The door at the top will be constructed from oak timbers from an 1880s Victorian mansion demolished fifty years ago for construction of the skyscrapers on Bunker Hill, Los Angeles.**



**Villa dei Fiori II is being built on the nearby nature preserve. The roof top terrace will have a dance floor and outdoor kitchen. The elliptical openings will allow breezes to cool the rooftop, the ellipses featuring ornamental hammered copper ironwork that will contrast with the chipotle reddish-brown finish coat.**



**The shadows cast by the parapets move as the sun passes overhead. Since the four seasons have different angles of the sun, the pattern of shadows changes throughout the year.**



**Roof top dance floor. Elliptical openings for ventilation will be fitted with Art Nouveau hammered copper ornamental iron work**



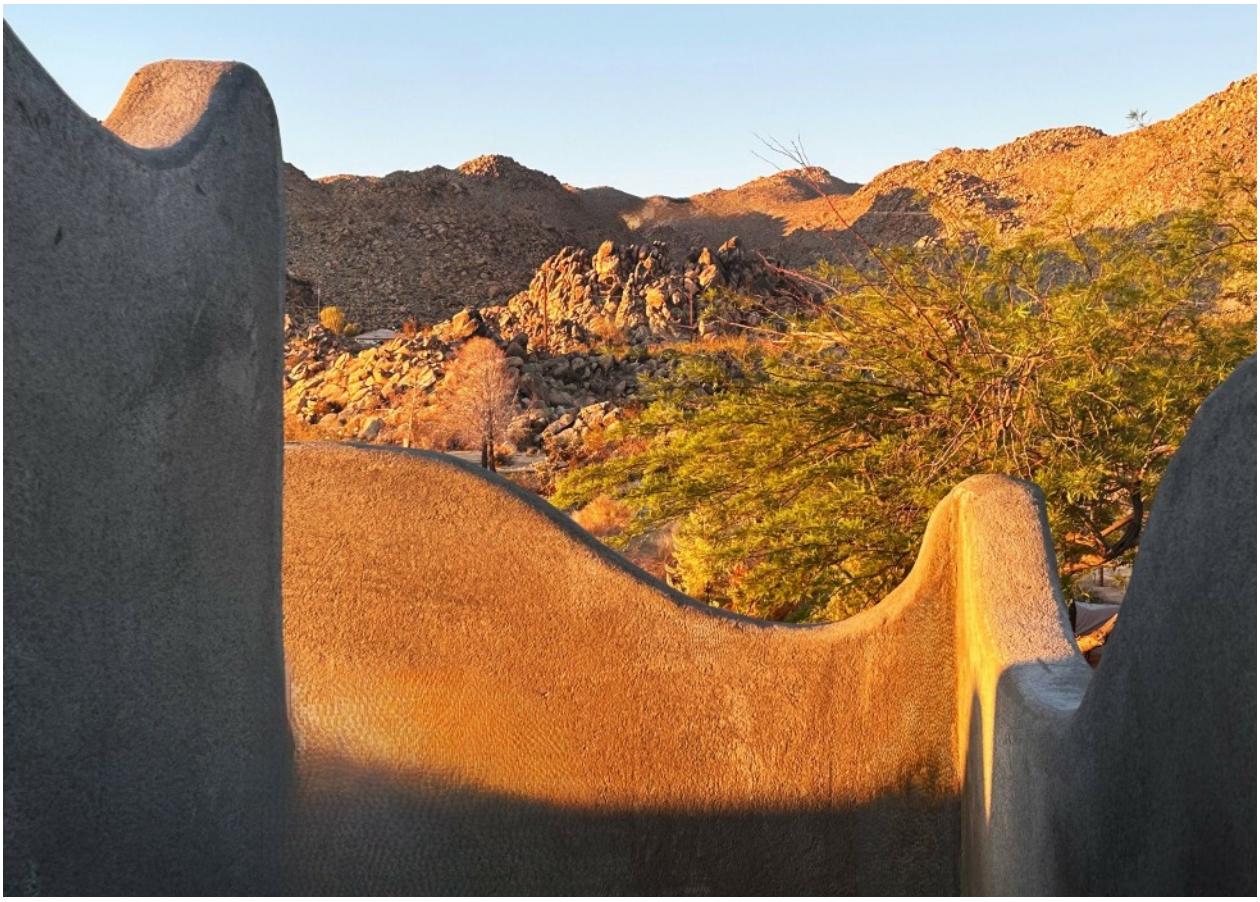


**Elliptical openings for ventilation cool the dance floor.**





**Four elliptical openings allow breezes to cool the rooftop dance floor. Ornamental ironwork will be created for the four vents.**





**Stairway to the rooftop terrace, outdoor kitchen, and dance floor. A Joshua Tree casts a shadow on the wall.**





**My Sabu whose life I saved when he was dying on the highway after being hit by a car. Sabu roamed me with me over the boulders and gardens for eighteen years. I buried him under a pile of boulders as our pioneer ancestors were buried in the past century.**

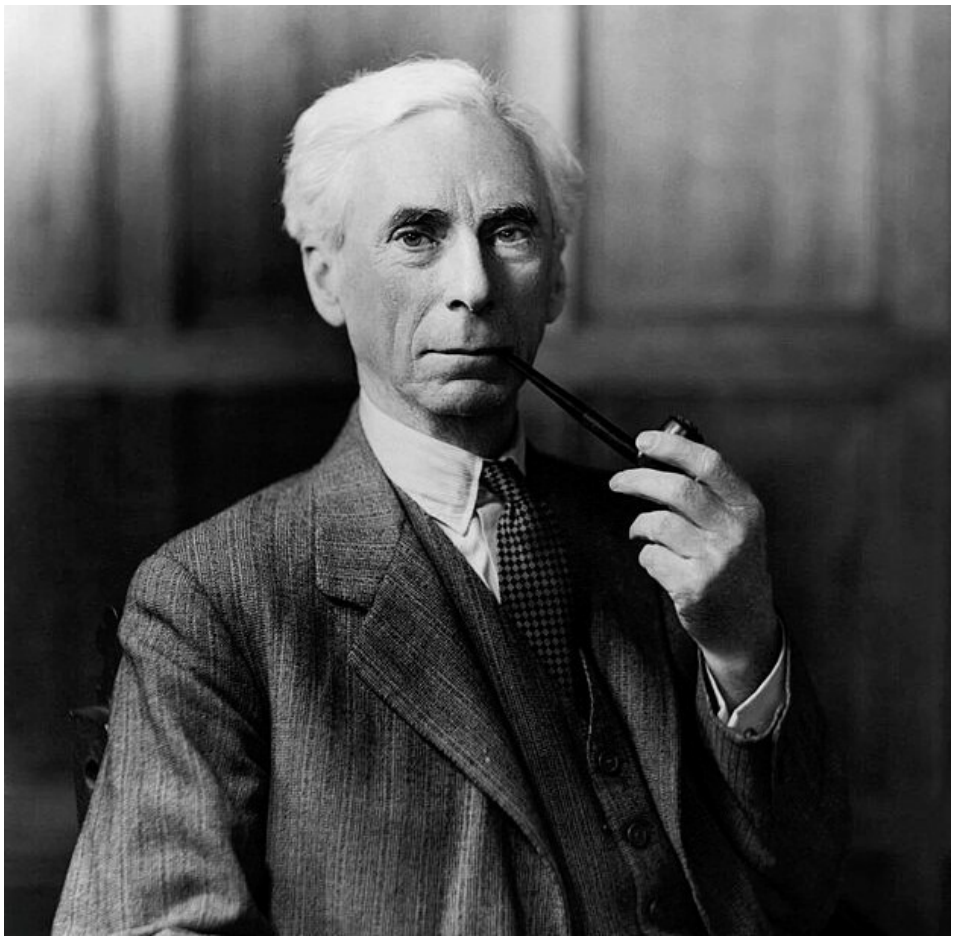


**It rarely snows in Joshua Tree. Due to our climate heating up in recent years, if it snows, it melts by the following day.**



# The Climate threat to the Joshua Tree

**With the rapid advance of climate warming, it is not certain my desert gardens can survive in the next century. The trillions of trees in the Joshua Tree National Park store water in their trunks. They can live only so long in conditions of increasing drought. If there is not more rain in the coming years, there will be a die-off of millions of Joshua Trees. Without adequate rainfall they cannot survive. I discovered this fact the hard way. Twenty-five years ago, I saved the life of a 25 foot Joshua Tree by adopting it from a construction site twenty miles distant. The local old timers told me not to water it. Under conditions of little rain, my transplant survived by using the stored water in the reservoir of its trunk, but after two years, to my great shock, it perished within a few days. The natives had not considered that when moving a Joshua Tree, all the roots are cut off – roots that have grown outward over a hundred years to efficiently collect as much water as possible. A mature Joshua Tree moved to a new location can survive on natural rainfall only after it has grown new roots over a twenty year period. Until then, it must be irrigated. Suffering from droughts of increasing duration, the Joshua Tree is an endangered species.**



**Bertrand Russell, philosopher, mathematician, social reformer, 1936 –
Author, Bassano Ltd, source, National Portrait Gallery, Wikimedia**

# On Education and Democracy

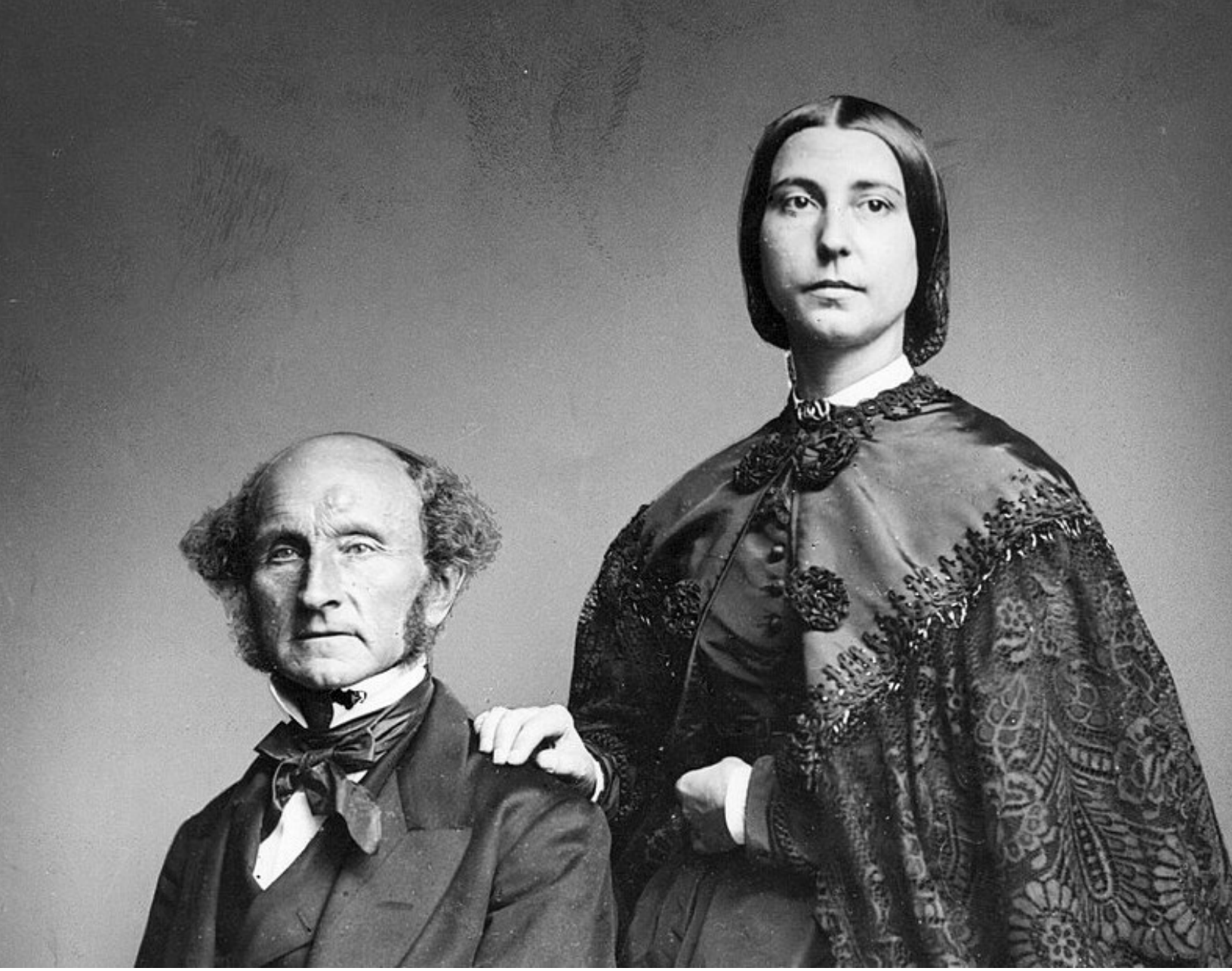
**There is a deep concern with education in American schools, low test scores not only in math, but in language comprehension. On both the political left and right, the testing results provoke a chorus of criticism, but little agreement follows on what can be done. It has been a problem for decades. I didn't get an excellent education in my Oklahoma high school, though it was probably on an average level for a public school. The general atmosphere was not scholastic, more driven by sports, which produced a high degree of competition success ranging from wrestling to football, tennis to basketball and baseball. Today, Oklahoma, where I grew up, is ranked nationally at the bottom in education. Although Oklahoma was ranked 39th in economic output, it was ranked 45th for health, and 49th in education. 35% of children were from single parent families, 75% of fourth graders were not proficient in reading, and 84% of eight graders were not proficient in math. During the creation of Villa dei Fiori, I discovered that the common disadvantage of my workers was the inability to use language to communicate well. Of all the workers who passed through my house in thirty five years, no one opened a book in my vast library. It was as if the library did not exist. One said that when she grew up, there were no books in her home.**

**Reading and writing is how we master communication. I first discovered the difference in reading skills among schools when I worked one summer operating a bookmobile. We went each day to elementary school in different neighborhoods of Tulsa – the middle class south side, the poor north side, and rural black communities where I encountered widely varying reading skills. In a middle class school on the south side, hordes of kids came on board and checked out piles of books. At a poor white school, north of downtown, not one child came to the bookmobile. Instead, they attacked it, rocking the bookmobile back and forth and hurling insults, frightening the librarian. At a black rural community, only three students came on board. While helping them choose books, I discovered that the sixth graders could not read a second grade book. It was deeply disheartening. I realized that there was a vast difference in the resources and atmosphere in the schools serving those with low income, a sense of profound neglect. If Americans could see firsthand how education of the poor suffers from lack of resources, it would help motivate a drastic change in our system.**

**Our schools are overcrowded. Due to the insufficient funds available to reducing class size, a teacher does not have time to correct essays. By writing extended essays, we learn to research, analyze, organize, and develop a fluid thread of thought. Reading and writing teaches us how to think. To rigorously correct essays takes many hours. With students using the generative artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT to write their essays, a teachers are now confronted with plagiarism. We cannot expect a teacher to do that kind of supervision in the evenings on their own time. The teacher must be given the time to do the work during the eight hour school day. That means more teachers and more money. The crucial difference between below average and superior schools is determined by the number of students in each class and the amount of time a teacher has to focus on each student. Only 14% of the K-12 educational budget comes from the federal government while the balance comes from state and local governments generated by state income and sales taxes. Consequently, poor states suffer the most, requiring an infusion of federal funds to close the gap between the more affluent states like Illinois and California.**

**Minnesota was the first state to pass a law in 1991 to establish charter schools, with the City Academy in St. Paul opening in 1992, leading the way for the charter school movement to spread across the nation, allowing more flexibility in setting curriculum and instructional methods. Free of national and state mandated policies, charter schools may specialize in arts or theatre, or focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Because there is a wide variation between different states' funding, student populations, regulation independence, and teaching contracts, there are no definitive studies that establish whether charter or public schools have the best performance. Moreover, charter schools can cherry pick their students, screening out students who are struggling by declining to provide transportation, or participate in the government funded lunch programs, or provide school information in languages other than English. Charter schools can maintain higher testing results by keeping only the students they want and pushing out their most challenged students who are forced to return to local public schools that must accept all students.**

**The U.S. President has pledged to terminate the Department of Education that collects data, oversees discrimination laws, distributes funds for schools with low-income students and those with disabilities, and generally monitors equity in education, one of the foundations of democracy. However, education is largely administered by the states and local communities. While the U.S. federal government provides roughly 14% of the nation's school's budget, it varies depending on factors such as poverty levels, the financial wealth of states, and whether the district is urban suburban or rural. During 2021-22, usafacts.org reports that public schools received $124.9 billion or $2,536 in federal funds per student. The corporate rulers in China realize their nation's industrial power has risen on the backs of millions of**



**English philosopher John Stuart Mill, along with Jeremy Bentham, a founder of utilitarianism, an early champion of women and his collaborator Helen Taylor – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia. Utilitarian philosophy advocatess behavior that lead to the greatest good for the greatest number of people, a profoundly democratic principle.**

**highly educated and motivated students. Dwight Eisenhower who was a president of Columbia University said, "The true purpose of education is to prepare young men and women for effective citizenship in a free form of government." The current destruction of the Department of Education by the Trump Administration, dramatizes the disrespect Americans have for education in our era. One of the first casualties of decentralization would be the absence of educational data from states, counties, and cities, one of the prime roles of the department. Without reliable data, it is quite likely to disregard systemic failures. It unifies the national goals for education, the way nations in Europe maintain a national standard. In the Southern States, including Oklahoma, it assures that Jim Crow doesn't slip back in. Make no mistake about it, the administration's attack on diversification, equity, and Inclusion is a not so subliminal step toward Jim Crow. In the way that the Department of Agriculture helped farmers, the Department of Education supports teachers, providing teacher training grants at a time there is an acute teacher shortage.**

**We have a problem – the possibility of getting killed at school. As Lenny Bruce said, "I won't say ours was a tough school, but we had our own coroner. We used to write essays like 'What I'm Going to be If I Grow Up.'" I remember during math class at Alexander Graham Bell middle school, a boy was removed for carrying a gun. The mass killings of children in school has resulted in training students how to barricade doors to their classroom and has stimulated the demand for teachers to carry guns but has nevertheless failed to save lives from an assault by an enraged killer. One study showed that over half of teenagers were worried about the possibility of gun violence in school. Despite the increasing demand for Congress to pass national laws requiring all guns to be registered, with competency and mental assessment required for ownership, due to America's unyielding frontier mentality, Congress has refused to pass laws that would decrease the mass killing of students, leaving students no choice but to practice lock down drills in a perpetual state of anxiety. A second psychological issue is the bullying of students by their peers. It has become endemic since the rise of social media, leading in some cases to children committing suicide.**

**Mindful that the obsessive reliance on social media is hurting kids, teachers are in general agreement that cell phones are a distraction at school. Australian Parliament has passed a law setting a 16-year-old age limit for users of platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and X, the first country to pass such a sweeping ban. Australia requires cell phones to be switched off during school hours, which has resulted in fewer behavior issues, less distraction, a quieter classroom environment, and kids interacting more at lunchtime.**

**Prestige has a great impact on the creation of highly trained teachers. The existing salaries of teachers in many of our rural states do not attract the brightest candidates. Unlike in European countries, there are no national standards for teacher salaries. Each state sets their own salaries. Salaries have steadily decreased over the past few years and teacher unions are under attack. For example, my home state of Oklahoma has experienced a 16% decrease in teacher salaries. While the average beginning teacher salary in the U.S. is $45,000, in Germany, it is $70,000. The top of scale average salary in the U.S. is $75,000, while in Germany, it is $110,500. Consequently, teaching in Germany is considered one of the most sought-after careers. Prestige in a profession is significantly linked to salaries, one reason that teachers are less respected in the United States where a rap singer or an influencer gets more respect.**

**Students select fields of study not only because of their love of biology or physics, they also choose depending on the rate of pay, why many bright students go into engineering, medicine, law, business, and finance instead of teaching. It is astonishing that the corporate world does not support better education in the United States for they need well educated employees. Teachers are targeted for criticism from parents and politicians, and yet, it is the electorate and politicians who don't provide enough funds for quality education. While employers lament the communication skills of applicants, they forget that they have failed to financially support universal high quality education like a number of countries in the European Union. In the United States, statistics show that more than 50% of the public-school population is made up of low-income students, compared to 38% in 2001. Many of these students are from broken homes with a single parent holding two jobs to make ends meet, leaving no time for educating kids at home, while the affluent can hire tutors for struggling students.**

**I did not read the work of French Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne while in school. Admired at that time more as a statesman than an author, Montaigne lived in the time of the War of Religion between Protestants and Catholics in 16th century France, an age much like our own, plagued by dishonesty, corruption, violence, and hypocrisy. Voltaire and Denis Diderot saw Montaigne as a**



**Philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, author of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, *The Second Sex*.**

**a forerunner of the Enlightenment. Jean-Jacques Rousseau published *The Social Contract* in 1762, establishing that the will of the people as a whole conveys power and direction to the state, an idea that profoundly influenced the American Constitution. Rousseau considered Michel de Montaigne as the model of a man in search of his identity, one who is fearless in exploring his inner being – the driving force of my book. Reading Montaigne, I understood that I was walking in his footsteps. Opposed to the educational practices of his time, Montaigne disagreed with learning solely through books, the reason I traveled and worked at odd jobs intermittently during my university years. Montaigne believed Children should not be told that the information they were being taught is absolute truth. To learn truly, students should be encouraged to entertain doubt. Whether it is the ethics of Aristotle, Epicureans, Stoics, or Existentialists, question everything, reflect upon it over time, and make the ideas their own.**

**The question arises, why do not only those with high school diplomas, but people with advanced degrees have so little understanding of history? Watching the demise of historical knowledge in popular culture, I decided to create *Celine on Fire* to help stem the tide of ignorance that has engulfed our country. In researching the reasons for cultural decline, I recognized that advanced study in the fields of medicine, engineering, math, law, and science are essentially conducted in occupational trade schools. If students in primary, high school, and college do not get a background in history or learn how our system of government works, they are not going to discover it in graduate school.**

**The stress in undergraduate programs on STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics leaves little time for course work in SHAPE – Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts for people and the Economy. The danger of the current educational focus is that it leaves students inadequately prepared to live in a democracy increasingly threatened by authoritarian movements. Besides creating a love story about music and dance, a key motivation in writing *Celine on Fire* was to provide STEM graduates with an overview of history, politics, the arts, philosophy, and ethics. In the form of a love story, I offer to Americans what they need to know about the history of Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and Australia. Secondly, I convey to the world what they need to know about the United States. Without a profound understanding of American history and the history of other nations, we cannot understand the present and prepare for the future.**



**My brother Joe Pelton and wife Eloise Janssen Pelton upon graduating from the University of Tulsa.**

# My brother Joseph N. Pelton, Scientist and Futurist

***The advancement of science and the diffusion of information is the best aliment to true liberty.***

**— James Madison**

**As a child, living in the country far from other kids his age, my brother Joe Pelton became a prodigious reader, watched the stars and planets through a telescope and read the classic Russian novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. He also read science fiction such as *Rip Foster Rides the Grey Planet*, his reading and star watching inspiring him with the possibilities of astrophysics and space travel. At Will Rogers High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Joe studied under Dr. August Klentos in an elite math course, "Probability and Statistical Inference" that stirred him to study physics, math, and political science at the University of Tulsa, and then to earn a scholars ship for his master's degree at New York University and a PhD at Georgetown University. This led to five years with Comsat, authorized by U.S. Congress in 1962 to develop commercial communications satellite systems. Eventually, this led to him becoming the Executive Assistant and speechwriter for the Director General of Intelsat, and then Director of Strategic Planning for Intelsat, the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization that established a global commercial communications network. His work and writing of books and articles about space, satellites, and futurist studies resulted in relationships with satellite scientists worldwide and in becoming the founding President of the Society of Satellite Professionals, Chairman of ACES Worldwide (https://www.acesworldwide.org) and one of the founders of the International Space University, headquartered in Strasbourg, France, and Executive Director of the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation.**



**My Brother Joe's colleague, British science fiction author Arthur C. Clarke, author of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, February 1965 – Author, ITU Pictures, Wikimedia**

**In 1983, Joe's life entered a fascinating new era when he met Arthur C. Clarke, the physicist who at the age of 28 conceived the orbital mechanics of a geosynchronous satellite, an extra-terrestrial relay network in 1945, a special orbit 22,230 miles away from the earth, about one tenth of the distance to the moon. His groundbreaking presentation of geosynchronous satellites led to Clarke being recognized as the father of satellite communications that we rely on today for communicating across the planet. It was a life changing moment for my brother to meet Clarke, the visionary scientist, futurist, inventor, undersea explorer, television series host, science fiction writer who is celebrated for his science fiction work *2001: A Space Odyssey,* the book that inspired film director Stanley Kubrick's seminal 1968 film. His numerous associations with Clarke developed into a lifelong friendship that resulted in the founding of the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation dedicated to sharing outer space and telecommunications technology for the benefit of humankind.**

**When Joe visited Clarke in Sri Lanka, he learned about non-linear math, Mandelbrot Set Fractal curves and played ping pong. He always lost because of Clarke's practice with a robot that served the ball at 70 miles per hour. A copious writer of books on space exploration and the future, Joe's book *The Oracle of Colombo: How Arthur C. Clarke Revealed the Future* reveals Clarke's predictions that spanned not only the field of space travel but also predicted the Internet, DNA testing, tele-cities, telecommuting to work, and dozens of other innovations. Former professor of communications at George Washington University and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the International Space University and Pulitzer Prize nominee for his book *Future Talk,* brother Joe has visited over 70 countries, taught and lectured in many of these locations. He is the author of over 70 books on space exploration and the future, Joe Pelton's most recent book, *Future Challenges for NASA: The Moon, Mars and More" (2025)* is available on Amazon.**

# The importance of Free Universities and Research to America's Future

**By Joseph N. Pelton, Ph.D. Dean Emeritus of the International Space University**

**For many centuries the strength of a nation was measured by the size of its army and navy. In today's world, a country's strength is measured in a more complicated way. National armed forces, intelligence and surveillance capabilities, nuclear weapons, air, space, missile defense systems and cyber security for vital infrastructure are all necessary. But this is just the beginning. Alliances with other countries such as through NATO and the Organization of American States are also important. These can take decades to build, but only moments to destroy. Then there is the strength of the national economy. This is based on a nation's overall productivity (as measured by GDP) but also relies on stable markets and trade agreements with trusted partners. Because of the elimination of many scientific research grants by the Trump administration in 2025, the market for treasury securities have been shaken and may not be easily repaired. The U.S. dollar is now under attack as billions, and perhaps soon trillions of dollars in U.S. bonds are being off-loaded—not only by China but other investors around the world. Indeed, the U.S. dollar, which has long underpinned the global economy, may no longer serve as the accepted international currency it has for most of our lifetimes.**

**What is not as well understood by many people is the importance of a strong and thriving scientific and research community. Since at least World War II, innovation has powered U.S. economic growth. Over a century and a half ago there were about an equal number of scientists and engineers in Argentina and the United States. Today the U.S. has a scientific and industrial complex second to none. It has a vast and admired higher education system that excels in scientific and engineering capabilities. There is a network of U.S. government and industrial scientific laboratories, and an aerospace and high tech industry showcased in Silicon Valley but actually spread across the nation with important centers in Boston, Dallas, Denver, Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia, as well as New York and California. Of the newest, largest and most successful high-tech companies in the world, U.S. companies top the list. Apple is number one at $3 trillion, Microsoft is number two at 2.8 trillion, NVIDIA is number three at $2.5 trillion, Amazon is number four at $1.96 trillion, and Alphabet-Google is number five at $1.92 trillion.**
**(https://companiesmarketcap.com/assets-by-market-cap/ )**

**The U.S. leads the world today because it has a large and powerful army *and* a thriving economy supported by a powerful research and technology establishment. The U.S. is currently a world leader in aerospace, electronics, computer systems, and applications, AI, robotics, and biosciences. Until three months ago the U.S. had a robust economy that was envy of the world. It had overcome the Covid 17 pandemic and the global supply chain problems that fueled inflation and damaged the entire global economy.**

**But there is now a wave of changes that are pushing the U.S. and the world economy toward not only a recession marked by slowed productivity and economic growth and high unemployment but paired with rapid inflation that is known as "stagflation." Economists have indicated that significant tariffs will raise consumer prices, slow spending and trigger further industry layoffs. Slashing the federal workforce and public funding for research labs and universities will further undermine the economy. Cornell University has more than $1 billion of federal funds frozen and Northwestern nearly $800 million. And other universities will be next on the list. Punitive tariffs will add to a surge in unemployment. It will quickly hasten the way to "stagflation." It will weaken U.S. efforts to compete in the world market with China and is already serving to create a brain drain of key workers and researchers in science and engineering.**

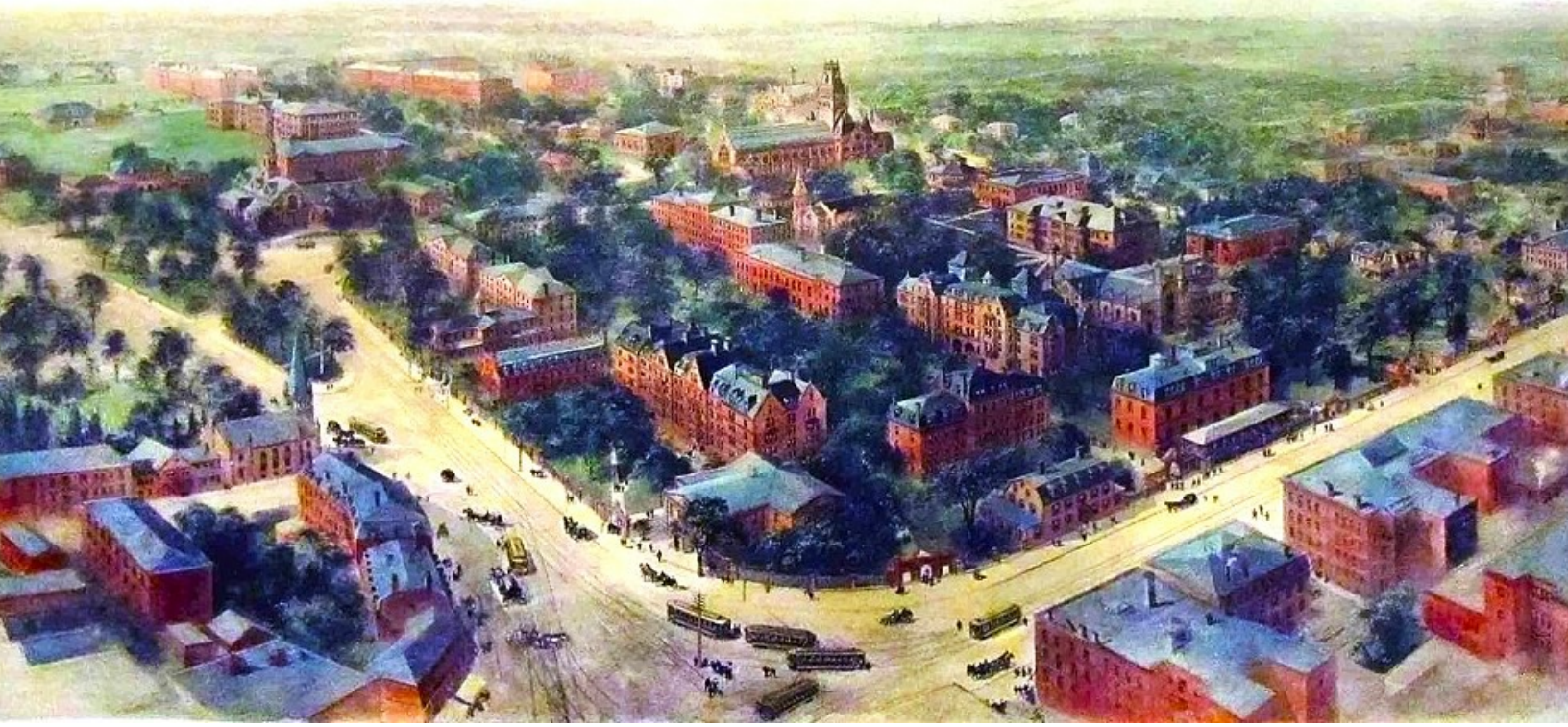
**Since the start of 2025 China has announced it capabilities in the area known as Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) with first Deep Seek and now Manus. https://themunicheye.com/chinese-ai-manus-artificial-general-intelligence-12890 ) These "smart" AI capabilities seem well positioned to compete with the best what U.S. companies now have on offer. Cuts to U.S. science, technology, engineering, and research is like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.**

**Recent cuts in food safety inspections, medical research and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) present a direct threat to public health and safety. AID funding that was serving to contain disease outbreaks in Africa may now produce new global pandemics. We are already seeing some of these impacts at home. Cuts at Health and Human Services, NIH, and CDC are prompting concerns about public health as reports emerge of as avian flu mutations infecting humans. But these cuts are not only in medical research and public safety. NASA's space research budget has been cut by more than half. A recent USA news article was entitled: "NASA Spending Cuts May Make Failure an Option". In addition to NASA, science, research and development is also being cut at the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy, and the Department of Commerce.**

**The most recent federal attack is focused on leading U.S. research universities. Harvard University suddenly had $2 billion in research funding cuts. Johns Hopkins University (where I live in the Washington, D.C. area) has endured massive cuts as well. Between losses of federal research grants and its Advanced Physics Lab, (which rivals California's Jet Propulsion Lab in aerospace and high-tech research) over 2000 employees have been summarily let go. This will not only steepen the curve of unemployment in the D.C. area, but it will also lead to lost research competence and "brain drain." Foreign nations, including China, have offered employment for our scientists who have been laid off. President Trump has barred most international students from entering the U.S. to study at Harvard University. The administration claims Harvard "is no longer a trustworthy steward of international student and exchange visitor programs," and claims that students have links to researchers based in China. The current government visa policy makes 1.5 million international students deeply concerned over their status as thousands of students have their visas terminated along with their legal status, leaving them confused and fearful for their future.**

**First, the State Department revokes the student's visa, then the Department of Homeland Security terminates students' record in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, revoking their legal status in the country, making them vulnerable to fines, arrest, and deportation, in many cases not giving them an explanation for the reason their visas and legal status were terminated and giving no chance of appeal. Other than current students, the visa terminations include recent graduates working in postgrad professional programs, faculty, scholars, and researchers in exchange programs, the reasons for termination including even the smallest infraction, a traffic violation or in one case, a violation of a fishing license restriction that had been dismissed. In most cases there is no stated reason with the State Department declaring, "Due to privacy considerations and visa confidentiality, we generally will not comment on department actions with respect to specific cases" – clandestine procedures which flourish under an authoritarian government.**

**One in four students at Harvard and other top universities come from foreign countries, a long time U.S. educational practice that has led to students returning to their countries where they become leaders of industry and government while others become U.S. citizens and contribute to the American hegemony in science and industry. The revocation of visas for thousands of foreign students who are currently in the U.S. leaves them in ignorance and purgatory and will assuredly discourage future brilliant international**



View of Harvard University, 1906 – Author, Richard Rummell's watercolor, source, Arader Galleries, public domain, Wikimedia

**students from planning an education in our country, thus delivering a great blow to American educational dominance. Other notable universities have even a higher share of foreign students than Harvard. Forty percent of Carnegie Mellon students, thirty-nine percent of Johns Hopkins, thirty-two percent of Caltech, thirty percent of M.I.T. are from abroad while a quarter of the students at Princeton, Columbia, Stanford, USC, Brandeis, Rice, Penn, Duke, and Yale come from foreign countries. The severe loss of tuition will annihilate the financial security of our great universities and reduce employment opportunities for our most qualified professors. University endowment cannot be used to pay the daily bills of a university because of restrictions donors have dedicated to support scholarship, to support faculty chairs, donated for a specific area of scientific inquiry or medical research, with the university legally responsible to uphold the contract. Consequently, the vast amount of tuition from foreign students drives excellence in our schools. Ultimately, Trump administration's goal of halting visas for foreign students is an imminent threat to America's long-term dominance in science.**

**In a free society it is important to fund and support education, encourage research and discovery, and produce a continuous map to future advancement. Cutting science and attacking universities is a big mistake. It will push the U.S. economy toward stagnation, increase unemployment, weaken our future economic growth potential and the ability to compete effectively with China. The bottom line is that current U.S. policies on science and education are risking loss of highly skilled jobs, high inflation due to lost efficiency gains, reduced education and research competence, and most critically, falling behind China in critical areas of future growth. In short, I believe it is a strategic mistake to undermine U.S. leadership in science, engineering, and medicine by recklessly canceling billions of dollars in previously approved research funding. We are cutting our lifeline to the future and crushing our economy. We are also risking our immediate health and well-being as well as that of future generations. This is not a political protest, but rather a call for logical thinking about what *America First* might actually mean—especially in terms of where to invest for our shared future.**



**Sisyphus, painting by Titian – Museo del Prado, Madrid, public domain, Wikimedia**

# Coups Against Democracy

**Albert Camus began the *Mythe de Sisyphus* in 1940 when the Nazis invaded, France's government surrendered, and millions of refugees fled in panic from the German Army. After he failed the French Army physical because of tuberculosis, Camus founded the underground resistance newspaper C*ombat*, using false ID cards to avoid capture by the French Gestapo. His novels, *The Stranger* and *The Plague,* and essays, *The Fall* and *The Rebel* won Camus the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature at the age of 44. In his examination of the work of Karl Jaspers, Søren Kierkegaard, and phenomenologists Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl, Camus addressed the essential issue of humankind – "There is only one really serious philosophical question and that is suicide." Camus said we have been thrown into an absurd Kafkaesque universe where reason and science are unable to justify our lives. When we ask the reason for existence, we find only silence. As a metaphor for the monotonous life of a factory or office worker – the incomprehensibility of life – Camus tells the story of Sisyphus who angered the King of Corinth, the sky and thunder god, the ruler of the gods on Mount Olympus. For revealing Zeus' secrets, the mighty god ordered Thanatos, the god of death, to throw Sisyphus in chains. When Thanatos arrived, clever Sisyphus asked him how the chains worked. When Thanatos complied, Sisyphus chained him up instead, making it impossible for anyone to die as long as the god of death remained chained. Outraged because no one could die in battle, Ares, the god of war, freed Thanatos who punished Sisyphus for his crimes by condemning him for eternity to roll a huge boulder up a steep hill. But upon reaching the top, Thanatos had so enchanted the boulder that it would fall from his grasp and roll to the bottom, where Sisyphus was destined to go back down the mountain and carry the boulder to the top, an endless cycle of labor until the end of time, a metaphor for the absurdity of life.**




**Frontispiece of Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes, 1651– Author, Abraham Bosse engraving, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Historical events have a powerful influence on political philosophy. English philosopher Thomas Hobbes lived in the time of a series of rebellions between Royalists and Parliamentarians from 1642 to 1651, which Sir Walter Scott called the Great Civil War. During the Renaissance and the Reformation, the doctrine of the nation state and absolute power by a monarch evolved. The feudal nobility became dominated by Louis XI of France, Edward IV of England, and Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. However, In England, the Puritans resisted the despotism of the monarchy and under the military leadership of Oliver Cromwell overthrew the monarchy in a series of bloody conflicts that led Hobbes to abhor any democratic movement which would result in the chaos of anarchy.**

**Hobbes argued that in a natural state, man desires to preserve his liberty by acquiring dominion over others. "The condition of man is a condition of war of everyone against everyone." In a state of nature, there is no property, no justice or injustice, all is in a state of anarchy and war. Life was "nasty, brutish, and short." In his monumental *A History of Western Philosophy*, English philosopher Bertrand Russell points out that Hobbes was obsessed by the fear of anarchy. The best form of government is monarchy. Individuals must give up their rights and establish a social contract ruled by a sovereign who would exercise power over all subjects, with no right to rebellion, thus ending the natural state of war.**



***Diogenes Searching for an Honest Man* – Painting by J. J. W. Tischbein, public domain, Wikimedia.**
**Greek philosopher Diogenes was one of the founders of the Cynic philosophy in the Hellenic Period.**

**Democracy is threatened by the rise of cynicism, which eviscerates our trust in the free press and government. President Ronald Reagan said in 1981, "Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." In the last few years, contempt for government has been increasingly used by those with great wealth to debase the role of government and thereby aid them to reduce their taxation and industrial regulation, serving to enrich themselves while deceiving people with little capital. Although the American majority maintains its faith in effective government, the proliferation of distrust in democratic institutions provoked by demagogues, podcasters, and the dark web have exploited the distrust in democratic institutions and the system of justice that are essential to democracy. The ensuing demise of confidence in elective government has created an atmosphere in which authoritarian ideology thrives.**

**The growth of cynicism has increased the possibility of inciting rage in America. Current cynicism questions the sincerity and goodness of human motives. Life is a zero sum game – "my economic success is possible only at the expense of others." America's current cynicism is the opposite of the Cynic school of philosophy of Hellenistic Greece, 3rd century BC that believed people are reasoning animals – the purpose of life and the way to happiness is to live in agreement with nature, rejecting conventional desires, free from the craving for power, glory, social recognition, and worldly possessions, a philosophy that later influenced Stoic philosophy.**



**Benito Mussolini and the Quadrumvirs during the March on Rome in 1922 – Unknown author, public domain, Wikimedia**

**By heralding hardship and living with few possessions, cynicism parallels the teaching of Jesus four centuries later. Under today's cynicism, everything is transactional, everyone is out for themselves, a philosophy that produces fertile soil for authoritarians to flourish.**

**There is much to learn from Benito Mussolini overthrowing democracy. On Christmas Eve 1925, Mussolini passed a law that made him no longer responsible to Parliament and during the following two years, Mussolini gained control of a democracy through a philosophy of Italian national superiority, and a policy of *spazio vitale*, the expansion of territorial size, like the policy of *Lebensraum* that Hitler would advocate a few years later. Mussolini would make Italy great again as it was under the Roman Empire. Mussolini's fascism supported the belief in a "natural law" for superior people like the Italians to dominate inferior "barbaric people" like the Ethiopians, which led to the invasion and genocide against Ethiopia in 1935. By passing legislation favoring the wealthy industrial and agrarian classes, outlawing labor strikes, using extrajudicial violence, and the creation of a cult of one-man leadership, Mussolini transformed an Italian democracy into a dictatorship.**



**Members of Mussolini's Arditi Corps, The Black Shirts, 1918 – Author, Ministero Della Difesa-Esercito, public domain, Wikimeida**

**In the 20th century, during the time between World War I and World War II, fueled by accusations of financial decline, societal decay and decadence, dictatorships were established by extreme left and right movements in Russia, Italy, and Germany. The revolts were based on a cult of a leader who promised national restoration by suppressing minorities, immigrants, and traitors who were a threat to the character and history of the nation. By means of an obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, and victimhood, fascism flourished in the last century. The mass popular movements promised to return the nation to historical greatness by suppressing corruption, eliminating unclean elements, and conquering foreign lands to create a new civilization. By collaborating with elites who control wealth, organizing the corporate state, eradicating contaminated elements from society, glorifying masculinity and charismatic authoritarian leadership, threatening violence without judicial restraint, and using bellicose rhetoric to venerate power and conquest, dictatorships seized absolute power. By using the myth of decadence and a promise of a return to past glory, the fascist movements of the 20th century suppressed the free press, suspended habeas corpus and due process of law, deported the undesirable, and imprisoned dissenting citizens into concentration camps.**



Revised boundaries of the former Soviet republics after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 – Author, Aiyazovsky, public domain, Wikimedia

**After the collapse of the USSR in 1992, the former socialist republics declared their independence, but during the 1990s, the same methods that Mussolini used in the 1920s were used to seize power. Although Belarus established a democratic government in 1992, Belarus reverted to an authoritarian state by the same methods that have been used throughout the 20th century to overthrow democracies and establish dictatorships that were democratic in name only. To give a short history of the fall of despotism to democracy and the return to despotism, I will begin with the Soviet Union's Brezhnev Doctrine that was used to rationalize the Soviet-led occupation of Czechoslovakia. The Brezhnev Doctrine proclaimed that any threat to "socialist rule" in the Soviet Bloc states in Central and Eastern Europe was a threat to all, consequently justifying Soviet intervention of fellow socialist states. In the late 1980's, reformist leader Mikhail Gorbachev was selected by the Congress of People's Deputies to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR and abolished the Communist Party's monopoly of power. Although initially dedicated to sustaining Marxist-Leninist ideals of the Soviet state, Gorbachev pushed for reform that he thought necessary for survival of Russia. He withdrew from the failed Soviet Afghan War and conducted meetings with U.S. President Ronald Reagan to limit nuclear weapons with the goal of terminating the Cold War. Gorbachev initiated Glasnost to sponsor openness and transparency in government institutions and promised freedom of information. Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika de-ideologized international politics, abandoned the concept of class struggle, and established in its place the primacy of universal human interest rather than the interest of any one segment of Russian society. He promised mutual security based on political rather than military power, ultimately resulting in Gorbachev's policies ending the Cold War.**



**Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko during the Russian-Belarusian military exercise – Author, Presidential Press and Information Office, Kremlin.ru**

**Communist hard-liners driven by elements of the military-industrial complex launched a coup that Russian President Boris Yeltsin and other reformers, with support from the military, were able to suppress. After the coup, Soviet republics, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgystan seized control of their resources and began privatization and economic reform. Gorbachev resigned the presidency of the Soviet Union on 25 December 1991 and the Soviet Hammer-and-sickle flag was lowered from the Kremlin and replaced by the pre-revolutionary red, white, and blue flag of Russia. At midnight on New Year's Eve, the 31st of December 1991, the Soviet Union was formally dissolved.**

**Ukraine had previously declared independence by a referendum on 1 December, and former USSR Belarus declared independence to create the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. After the adoption of a new Belarus constitution, Alexander Lukashenko won the presidency in the first presidential election in 1994. Wikimedia documents that in 1995, Lukashenko named Adolf Hitler as a role model, saying, "The history of Germany is a copy of the history of Belarus. Germany was raised from ruins thanks to firm authority and not everything connected with that well-known figure Hitler was bad. German order evolved over the centuries and attained its peak under Hitler. This corresponds with our understanding of a presidential republic and the role of a president in it." Lukashenko statement foreshadowed his repressive rule in Belarus for the next three decades.**

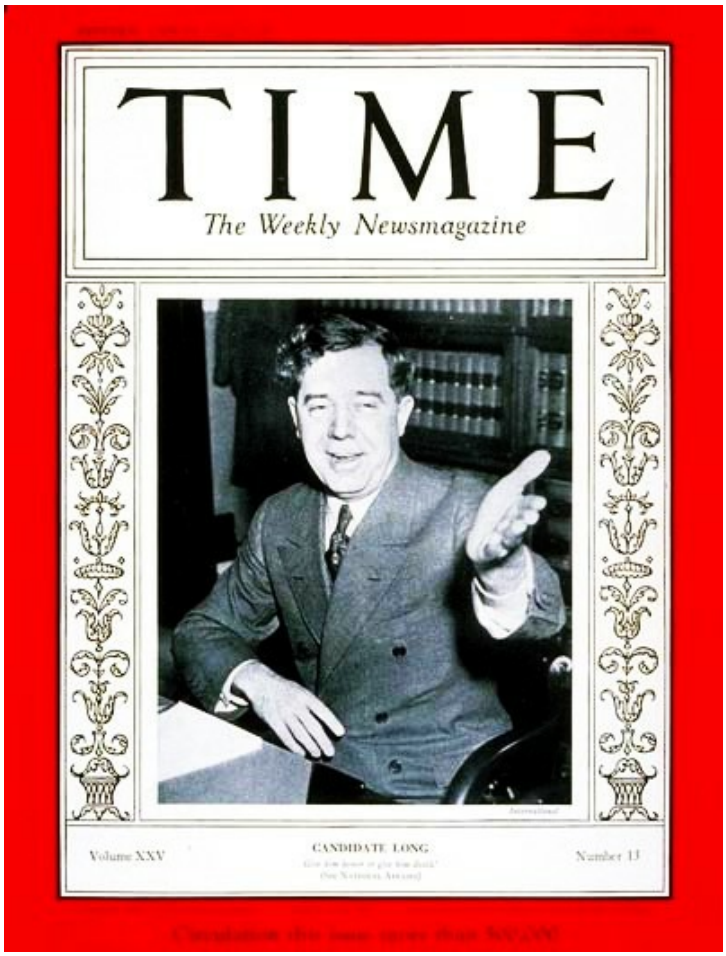
**By constitutional referendums and rigging election results, Lukashenko consolidated absolute power by taking control of both the legislature and the judiciary. He maintained power by ruling by fear, imprisoning all opposition leaders including the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski, and passed a law to ban journalists from reporting on mass protests. He gave himself power to close television and print media without a judicial decision, resulting in all leading journalists being imprisoned or forced to flee to exile in neighboring Baltic state. When he won re-election in 2020, which was viewed by international observers as falsified, mass protest erupted that Lukachenko brutally repressed, arresting 65,000 people. In what was a brief democracy after suffering years of Stalinist repression, Alexander Lukashenko has wielded absolute power in one of the most repressive governments in the world for thirty one years**




**Poster for the stage adaptation of Sinclair Lewis' novel, *It Can't Happen Here*, 27 October 1936 – Author, Lafayette Theater, Source, U.S. Library of Congress, public domain, Wikimedia**

# Existential Moment for Democracy

**Considering where American democracy is today, I am drawn to the plot of Sinclair Lewis' dystopian novel, *It Can't Happen Here,* set in the 1930s Great Depression. An American politician, Buzz Windrip, a con man with a bombastic oratorical style, whipped up a message of fear in desperate voters who were unable to earn a living. Windrip's key supporter, Bishop Prang, was based on radio priest Charles Coughlin, who had captured the minds of millions of listeners and in real life, planning to defeat Roosevelt in the 1936 election. Windrip depicted himself as the champion of American values and the "forgotten man." He offered each citizen $5,000, ($113,00 in today's money) proposed nationalizing industry, enacting drastic economic reforms, banning labor unions, and establishing a minimum income. By extolling American patriotism, he advocated eliminating Congress and the Supreme Court to give him the power to solve the problems of the common man. To purify America, Windrip promised to banish the rights of Jews, Blacks, women, and communists, and purify the media, ending any semblance of free speech. In giant rallies, Windrip's bombastic speeches created a cult of fanatical followers who saw him as their savior. Impelled by his passionate cult, Windrip defeated Franklin D. Roosevelt in the primary, and his Republican opponent in the presidential election to become President of the United States. Windrip sent his paramilitary Minute Men to arrest Congress and disband the Supreme Court. Windrip deployed the army to secure order, banned all political parties, rounded up all who opposed him and imprisoned them in concentration camps. While most Americans saw Windrip's oppressive regime as painful, they supported Windrip's dictatorial rule as necessary to restore American power.**




**Candidate Huey Long, *Time* magazine cover, April 1935 – Author, *Time* magazine, public domain, Wikimedia**

**A demagogue in American political history who like Donald Trump, achieved a mass political appeal, was Democratic Senator Huey Long, governor of Louisiana from 1928 to 1932, and U.S. senator from 1932 until his assassination in 1935. While Trump is on the far right, Long was on the far left, a populist who gained power during the Great Depression by opposing President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal that Long attacked for being too feeble to solve the problem of mass unemployment and starvation. By appealing to the underclass of Louisiana, Long won the governorship, promoted massive public works projects, and solidified his dominance of Louisiana politics. After backing Franklin Roosevelt's 1932 campaign, he broke with the president to propose the Share Our Wealth program in 1934. In his first campaign, he abandoned the typical Louisiana race baiting and glorification of the Southern Glory, zeroing in on the real crisis, a corrupt government controlled by the planter class, which had resulted in Louisiana being one of the most backward states with few highways and at the very bottom in literacy. Like most populists, Long formed a new coalition of poor people that Sherwood Anderson described, "the beaten, ignorant, Bible-ridden, white South."**

**Innovative in his political style, Long delivered fiery speeches, using sound trucks to spread his voice through the streets and on the radio. Like Sinclair Lewis' President Windrip and the current U.S. president, Long fired hundreds from the government from cabinet level down to manual labor. He immediately established control through a patronage system and demanded state employees to pay a percentage into his campaign fund, thereby building a well-greased political machine, putting his brother in charge of handing out appointments, demanding absolute loyalty from government workers and businessmen.**



**Senator Huey Long of Louisiana immediately after delivering a five-hour filibuster in the Senate, 27 August 1935, 13 days before his assassination – Unknown author, Harris & Ewing Collection, U.S. Library of Congress, public domain, Wikimedia**

**When the legislators would not pass his bills, like Donald Trump, he bullied them, governing by innuendo, attack and fear. When challenged that he was breaking the Constitution, Long said, "I'm the Constitution around here," words from the mouth of President Trump – the judiciary exists to rubber stamp executive orders, like in Belarus and Hungary. Long placed his brother Earl in charge of allotting patronage appointments and in exchange of guaranteed loyalty, handed out contracts to businessmen. Long explained his modus vivendi, "The end justifies the means." Like Trump, he placed loyal supporters in charge of all governmental divisions even if unqualified, but unlike Long, Trump gave tax breaks to the rich and did nothing for the poor, even reduced their health insurance under Medicaid. In exchange for reducing regulations for energy companies, he demanded cash for his campaigns, building an unchallenged machine that made him dictator of Louisiana. Despite Long's brutal and pay for play methods, the governor had success, creating public works programs that were uncommon in the South, building hospitals and his night schools teaching 100,000 to read, modernizing health facilities, but like in the South today, teacher pay remained poor. When he was criticized, Long called newspapers, "the lying press," and published his own newspaper, the *Louisiana Progress,* widely read by government workers and the poor, a propaganda paper that foretold Trump's social networking service, *Truth Social.* Harboring no inhibitions about using extra-judicial methods or threats of violence, he traveled with a phalanx of bodyguards. The Constitution didn't matter. He was the champion of the poor. The people loved Huey Long.**

**Popular with the masses, Long's bombastic speeches were unpopular in the Senate, dooming the passage of his motions throughout his three years. After opposing Roosevelt's National Recovery Act with a filibuster, Long reached the apogee of his popular appeal but not long after was assassinated by Carl Weiss who was quickly slain by Long's bodyguards, the "skullcrushers." Roosevelt adopted some of Long's proposals in his Second New Deal and won by a landslide in 1936. Although Long's comet had flamed and burst, he bequeathed to Louisiana a political dynasty, his wife, Senator Rose McConnel Long, his son, Senator Russell B. Long, and brother, Governor Earl Long.**




**Herbert Block coined the term "McCarthyism" in a cartoon published 29 March 1950 in the *Washington Post* – Author, Herbert Block, source, *A cartoonist's Life*, 1993, Library of Congress, fair use, Wikimedia**

**As Senator McCarthy ruled by fear in the 1950s, seventy-five years later, President Donald Trump would rule by fear. Trump's strength would be far greater than McCarthy for he took de facto control of the presidency, congress, and to an increasing degree, the Supreme Court, giving him the power to hurl baseless allegations to destroy careers, attack corporations, universities, and the U.S. government itself. Similar in its destructive reach, Senator McCarthy employed fear by launching an inquisition in the Senate that claimed communists had infiltrated the U.S. government. The climate of the time – the Cold War, the Soviet domination of Eastern European countries, communist conquest of China, explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb, the Korean War, and the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenbergs for securing U.S. atomic secrets for the Soviet Union, produced an anti-Communist paranoia that swept across the United States.**

**In February 1950, Senator McCarthy gave a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, an incendiary address that would later become known as the "Enemies from Within," in which McCarthy claimed without evidence that the many U.S. officials were part of an international communist spy ring, saying "The State Department is infested with communists. I have here in my hand a list of 205 — a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department. . . State Department harbors a nest of communists and communist sympathizers who are helping to shape our foreign policy," By launching highly publicized probes into alleged communist infiltration of the U.S. State Department, the Treasury, the U.S. Army, and the White House, McCarthy's Red Scare reached a feverish pitch, terrifying the country by calling for investigations of Americans for being agents of communism – schoolteachers, college professors, artists, labor organizers, military officers, politicians, and journalists. McCarthy and his counsel relentlessly questioned and insulted witnesses, prompting the Dean of Harvard Law to describe McCarthy as "judge, jury, prosecutor, castigator, and press agent, all in one. Fearful of being guilty of being smeared as a disloyal American, government officials failed to stand up to him.**



**Roy Cohn, Chief Counsel for House Un-American Activities Committee and Senator Joseph McCarthy, 23 August 1953 – Author, Los Angeles Times, source, UCLA Library, Wikimedia**

**Ray Bradbury said because of his alarm at the threat of books being burned, he wrote *Fahrenheit 454*. Bradbury said in *The Nation,* "Whether or not my ideas on censorship via the fire department will be old hat by this time next week, I dare not predict. But when the wind is right, a faint odor of kerosene is exhaled from Senator McCarthy." Former President Harry S. Truman, said, "This is the first time in my experience, and I was ten years in the Senate, that I ever heard of a senator tying to discredit his own government before the world." Journalist Agnes Meyer, whose daughter Katherine Graham would helm *The Washington Post* during the Watergate Investigation that led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon, delivered speeches accusing McCarthy of being a threat to academic freedom, saying, "Security is not an aim itself, for without freedom it reduces life to that of the prison. . . He is our modern Grand Inquisitor. . . a dangerous, clever, and ruthless demagogue.**

**Communist agents had stolen atomic bomb secrets. Prosecutor Roy Cohn, the future counsel for Senator McCarthy's inquisition, and later the mentor and attorney for Donald Trump, built a case against Julius and Ethel Rosenberg around critical testimony from Ethel's brother David Greenglass. Cohen later wrote in his autobiography that he encouraged the judge to order the execution of Julius and Ethel, a major breach of ethics. Although Greenglass would later admit to lying under oath about his sister's involvement, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed in the electric chair in 1953. Consensus among historians holds that Julius Rosenberg was guilty of being a valued NKVD spymaster against the U.S. but his trial was stained by Cohn's prosecutorial misconduct. Consequently, the Rosenbergs should not have been executed. Former Communist Party member Whittaker Chambers accused Alger Hiss of espionage. Although Chambers admitted to lying under oath, despite Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and Adlai Stevenson testifying in Hiss's defense, the first trial ended in a hung jury, and in a second trial, Alger Hiss was convicted, not for espionage, but rather lying under oath. Impressed by his prosecution of the Rosenbergs, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and Cardinal Spellman convinced McCarthy to hire Cohn as chief counsel rather than Robert F. Kennedy for the interrogation of alleged communists and gays in the government. Cohen's ruthless interrogation of gay suspects served to conceal his own homosexuality.**

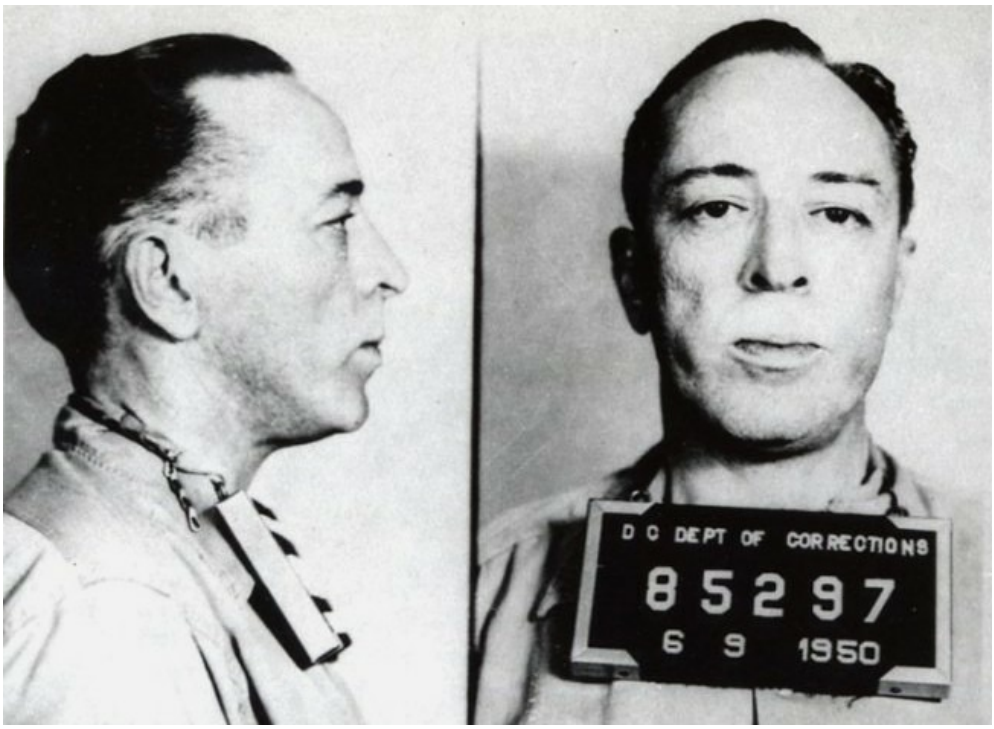


**Margaret Chase Smith on *Face the Nation* in Washington, D.C, 11 November 1956 – Unknown author, source, U.S. National Archives, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Margaret Chase Smith was elected in January 1949, U.S. Senator from Maine, the first woman to serve in both houses of Congress, wearing a single red rose throughout her career. As a member of the House of Representative, she won a reputation as a moderate Republican who voted for Democratic bills, supported much of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation, and voted against making the House Un-American Activities Committee a permanent body. While Chase was initially impressed by McCarthy's accusations of communists working in the State Department, she became disturbed when McCarthy only presented accusations and no evidence. Outraged by his undemocratic tactics of bullying witnesses, Smith was the first and only Republican senator to criticize the tactics of Joseph McCarthy, a resistance that is echoed today by Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine and Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska who voted to convict Donald Trump of impeachment charges for the January 6 attack on the Capitol, voted against Pete Hegseth's nomination as Secretary of Defense, and spoke strongly against the president's tariffs on foreign nations. Like the Republican senators who failed to oppose McCarthy, Republican Senators today have cowardly surrendered to Trump's threats of retaliation against anyone who opposed him – the modus operandi of fascism.**

**Senator Murkowski said in 2025, "We are all afraid. It's quite a statement. But we are in a time and a place where, I don't know, I certainly have not – I have not been here before." Alarmed by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency's cruel and chaotic slashing of congressional enacted federal programs, and President Trump's violation of the Constitution, Senator Murkowski told PBS, "I'm oftentimes very anxious myself about using my voice because retaliation is real. And that's not right. . . . And so, I'm going to use my voice to the best of my ability. . . "You've got everybody just zip-lipped, not saying a word because they're afraid they're going to be taken down – they're going to be primaried. . . We cannot be cowed into not speaking up, I'm not going to compromise my own integrity by hiding from my words when I feel they need to be spoken. . . . It may be that Elon Musk has decided that he's going take the next billion dollars that he makes off of Starlink and put it directly against Lisa Murkowski, and you know what? That may happen."**

**Margaret Chase Smith was a rare Republican who became the first member of Congress to condemn the anti-Communist witch hunt led by an anti-democratic monster. Smith said, "As an American, I condemn a Republican Fascist just as much as I would condemn a Democrat Communist. They are equally dangerous to you and me and to our country. As an American, I want to see our nation recapture the strength and unity it once had when we fought the enemy instead of ourselves." On 1 June 1950, Smith delivered a 15 minute speech on the Senate Floor, a Declaration of Conscience, in which she denounced "the reckless abandon in which unproved charges have been hurled from this side of the aisle." While she hoped for Republicans' political success, she did not want to see the Senate debased to "the level of a forum of hate and character assassination." Smith defended every American's right to criticize, to protest, to have the right of independent thought, and hold unpopular beliefs, "I don't want to see the Republican Party ride to political victory on the four horsemen of calumny—fear, ignorance, bigotry, and smear." Only six Republican Senators signed on to her Declaration. In retaliation, McCarthy removed Smith as a member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations and turned her seat over to Senator Richard Nixon, and helped finance a failed primary challenger against her reelection in 1954. At the end of her historic career in the Senate, Smith said, "If I am to be remembered in history, it will not be because of legislative accomplishments but for an act I took as a legislator in the U.S. Senate when on June 1, 1950, I spoke in condemnation of McCarthyism, when the junior Senator from Wisconsin had the Senate paralyzed with fear that he would purge any Senator who disagreed with him."**




**Mug shot of screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, Federal Correctional Institution Ashland, 9 June 1950 – Author, Federal Bureau of Prisons, public domain, Wikimedia**

**The publisher of *The Hollywood Reporter*, William R. Wilkerson, named screenwriter Dalton Trumbo as a sympathizer of the Communist Party in 1946. The House Un-American Activities Committee, searching for communist agents that were planting propaganda into American films, subpoenaed 42 in the film industry. For refusing to answer questions, ten screenwriters and directors were cited for contempt. The Association of Motion Picture Producers blacklisted the Hollywood Ten, suspended them without pay and pledged that the Hollywood studios would never employ a communist. The blacklist of subversives eventually extended to 151 others who were forbidden to work on American films.**

**Based on their First Amendment rights, the Hollywood Ten appealed their conviction to the Supreme Court, but the court upheld their conviction, and Dalton Trumbo was forced to serve eleven months in the Ashland federal penitentiary. Banned from writing screenplays in America, after he completed his sentence, Trumbo moved to Mexico where he wrote 30 scripts under pseudonyms, including *The Brave One*, *Exodus*, *Spartacus*, and *Roman Holiday*, starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck. Trumbo's great talent was later recognized when the Writers Guild of America reinstated him and The Academy of Motion Pictures recognized Trumbo, the previously incognito author, as the winner of the Oscar for *Roman Holiday* and *The Brave One*.**

**When McCarthy began accusing government personnel of communism, prompting the Senate to have the committee on Foreign Relations set up the Tydings Committee hearings to investigate whether the Department of State employees were disloyal to the United States. Once the Tydings Report determined that McCarthy's charges were a "fraud and a hoax." an attack to "confuse and divide the American people. . . to a degree far beyond the hopes of the communists themselves," Republican senators responded that the Tydings report was "the most brazen whitewash of treasonable conspiracy in our history." McCarthy fought back, publishing *McCarthyism: the Fight for America.* To retaliate against the head of the committee, Senator Millard Tydings, he campaigned for Tydings' opponent John Marshall Butler and falsified a photograph to make it appear that Tydings was in conversation with Earl Russell Browder, the Communist Party leader. Early in his senate career, McCarthy was not one of the more prominent senators, but he supported the Taft-Hartley over Truman's veto, angering Wisconsin labor unions and earning praise from Republicans. Once McCarthy accused Democratic candidates of "protecting Communists," and "shielding traitors," and began campaigning for Republican candidates, he achieved a victory for Republicans in each of his campaigns, establishing him as one of the most powerful Republicans in the Senate. McCarthy allied with right-wing radio broadcaster Fulton Lewis Jr. to smear Anna M. Rosenberg, President Truman's nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense, a campaign advanced by anti-Semite Gerald L. K. Smith who accused Rosenberg, a Jew, of being a communist. McCarthy accused Truman and the Democrats of "twenty years of treason," and Truman responded, saying McCarthy was "the best asset the Kremlin has." McCarthy said of Truman, "The son of a bitch should be impeached."**

**A Catholic, McCarthy established a bond with the Kennedy family, becoming a close friend of Joseph P. Kennedy, an ardent anti-Communist, dated Kennedy's daughters Patricia and Eunice, and chose Robert Kennedy for counsel on his committee. Representing 20% of the national vote, the Catholic community was fervently anti-Communist and consequently, Joseph Kennedy helped to finance McCarthy's campaigns. When John F. Kennedy, who served in the Senate with McCarthy, was asked by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, why he didn't criticize McCarthy, Kennedy said, "Hell, half my voters in Massachusetts look on McCarthy as a hero." McCarthy sent his counsel Roy Cohn to Europe to investigate the International Information Agency where he and his associate Gerard David Schine examined State Department libraries, searching for works by un-American books, and ordered cuisine author Julia Childs' husband to return to the U.S. for testimony on his communist activities. Cohen ordered the State Department to remove books by communists and fellow travelers, provoking some libraries to burn controversial books.**

**During the following four years, Joe McCarthy became increasingly unhinged, publishing in 1951 *America's Retreat from Victory: The Story of George Catlett Marshall,* charging Truman's former Secretary of State for losing China to communism. McCarthy said that Marshall was part of "a conspiracy so immense and an infamy so black as to dwarf any previous venture in the history of man."**



**California Institute of Technology scientist Dr. Hsue-shen Tsien (Qian Xuesen) with his family onboard SS *President Cleveland*, being deported to China during the Red Scare, 18 September 1955 – Author, Los Angeles Times, source, UCLA Digital Library, Wikimedia**

**McCarthy's Red Scare resulted in the deportation of Qian Xuesen, also known as Tsien Hsue-shen. Qian received a mechanical engineering degree at National Chiao Tung University in Shanghai in 1934 and traveled to the United States in 1935 to take a master's degree in aeronautical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1936, Qian joined Theodore von Kármán's research group at the California Institute of Technology. Working under von Kármán, a Jewish Hungarian American mathematician and aerodynamic theoretician, aerospace engineer, and physicist responsible for advances in supersonic and hypersonic airflow, Qian received a doctorate in aeronautics and mathematics in 1939, becoming an associate professor at Caltech in 1943. While at Caltech, Qian cofounded NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Consequently, in the race with Russia for ballistic missile development, the U.S. Department of War recruited him for research consulting with the rank of colonel, conterminously working as an associate professor at MIT in 1946 and full professor at Caltech in 1949.**

**During the Red Scare in the 1950s when Americans were building bomb shelters, and the depredations of Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee were filling Americas with fear, scientists that were key to our defense industries were accused of being disloyal at the very same moment that the U.S. had imported Wernher Von Braun and hundreds of Nazi scientists and engineers to develop ballistic missiles, a bizarre suppression of scientists that would harm American technology and help our rivals in the race for space. Wikipedia records that Qian was accused by the U.S. government of communist sympathies without any evidence and despite his colleague's protests, was given a deferred deportation order by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, placing him under house arrest for five years and not being freed until 1955 in exchange for American pilots who had been captured in the Korean War, then was immediately deported on the *SS President Cleveland* to mainland China. Upon his return, Qian began developing the Dongfeng ballistic missile and became a major developer of rocket technology in the Chinese defense industry, and at the end of his career, celebrated as the "Father of Chinese Rocketry."**

**In January of 1954, McCarthy focused his investigation on the U.S. Army. When McCarthy accused the U.S. Army of harboring communists, President Eisenhower, the five-star general who led the D-Day invasion against the Nazis, was enraged. To stop the senator's irresponsible use of subpoenas to compel witnesses to testify, Eisenhower ordered administration and executive branch managers to ignore McCarthy's calls to testify and ordered a dossier to be surreptitiously collected on Cohn. On 21 January 1954, Eisenhower's aids gave him a report about counsel Roy Cohn and his assistant David Schine, Cohen's clandestine lover who had recently been drafted into the Army, the report substantiating that he had used threats and intimidation to force the Army to give Schine prestigious assignments that the White House leaked to the press, Army, and Congress, accusing McCarthy and Cohn of abuse of power.**

**ABC television decided to televise gavel-to-gavel the Army-McCarthy hearings from 9 to 17 June 1954 with 80 million people watching at least part of the hearings, giving the nation the chance to observe up close McCarthy's and Cohen's bullying tactics. On day 30, Welch challenged McCarthy's counsel Roy Cohn to furnish their alleged list of 130 subversives in defense plants to the FBI and the Department of Defense "before the sun goes down." To defend his actions, Cohn introduced a photograph of showing Schine alone with Army Secretary Robert T. Stevens, which Welch discovered had been cropped, cutting out Air Force wing commander and one of McCarthy's agents, and revealed a letter that McCarthy claimed was sent by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to a major general, warning of communists in the Army Signal Corps, was a spurious fabrication, making McCarthy look more and more untrustworthy before millions of Americans. When McCarthy attacked a lawyer on the staff of Joseph N. Welch the Army's chief counsel, Welch delivered a rebuke that became renowned in American history, "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"**

**It was the beginning of McCarthy's disgrace. After the testimony of 32 witness and millions of words, the committee concluded that while McCarthy had not intervened in Schine's interests, McCarthy's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, had acted with "unduly persistent or aggressive efforts" for Schine. The television broadcast by ABC of the Army-McCarthy hearings, watched by millions of Americans, many of whom saw the senator as "bullying, reckless, and dishonest." The hearings exposed McCarthy's brutal and unethical interrogative tactics and became a major catalyst in precipitating McCarthy's fall from power.**

**The attack on Marshal was a turning point in McCarthy's power because George C. Marshall had been Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State under President Truman, the architect of the Marshall Plan that rebuilt Europe, the man that Winston Churchill called the "organizer of victory" for his leadership in the Allied triumph against Germany and Japan in World War II. For Marshall's accomplishments in World War II, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.**

## Edward R. Murrow's Broadcast on Joseph McCarthy – 9 March 1954

**Pioneering journalist and war correspondent Edward R. Murrow produced a CBS, S*ee It Now* half-hour special entitled, "A Report on Senator Joseph McCarthy," showing clips of McCarthy accusing the Democratic party of "twenty years of treason." Murrow said McCarthy "held a distinctive place in American history for being one who claimed to uphold American values while in the act of destroying them. Murrow's portrayal of McCarthy in 1954 is an accurate description seventy-one years later for Donald Trump's presidency in 2025: "The actions of the junior senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies."**



**CBS broadcast journalist and war correspondent Edward R. Murrow and Harry S. Truman – Author, unknown, source, University of Maryland Library, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Murrow's broadcast on 9 March 1954 helped to impel a public backlash against McCarthy, marking a turning point in the power of television, provoking tens of thousands of letters, telegrams, and phone calls to CBS, 15 to 1 in favor of Murrow's critique of the senator. In his conclusion, Murrow said of Senator McCarthy: "No one familiar with the history of this country can deny that congressional committees are useful. It is necessary to investigate before legislating, but the line between investigating and persecuting is a very fine one and the junior Senator from Wisconsin has stepped over it repeatedly.**

**"His primary achievement has been in confusing the public mind, as between the internal and the external threats of Communism. We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine and remember that we are not descended from fearful men – not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.**

**"This is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom, wherever it continues to exist in the world, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home.**

**"The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it – and rather successfully. Cassius was right. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."**




**Protestors against Hollywood communists during McCarthy's Red Scare, 1950-1954 – Unknown author, Wikimedia**

**McCarthy used the federal employee loyalty oath that President Truman had created by Executive Order 9835 in 1947 that empowered McCarthy to not only accuse people of communism but target homosexuals as subversive sexual perverts. Eisenhower campaigned with McCarthy in the presidential campaign, and failed to defend George Marshal from McCarthy's attacks, the winner of the Nobel Prize for peace, the Secretary of Defense who was Eisenhower's boss in World War II. Eisenhower remained silent while artists were accused of not being loyal Americans. Scholars later uncovered reasons that explained Eisenhower refraining from opposing McCarthy. Eisenhower hoped that the Senate would manage the senator, saying privately in 1953, "I will not get in the gutter with that guy." In the climate of the time, there were political reasons for Eisenhower's reticence. Like Eisenhower, McCarthy was a Republican and strongly supported by Republican senators, as nearly all Republican senators supported Donald Trump in 2025. If Eisenhower opposed McCarthy, it would create a civil war within the GOP and the president required senators' support to pass bills. Furthermore, due to the public's hysterical fear of communism in the 1950s, Eisenhower didn't want to appear soft on communism.**

**In a June 1st speech, Vermont Republican senator Ralph E. Flanders compared McCarthy to Adolf Hitler, saying, "Were the Junior Senator from Wisconsin in the pay of the Communists he could not have done a better job for them." Flanders introduced a resolution to censure McCarthy, saying "It was not his breaches of etiquette, or of rules or sometimes even of laws which is so disturbing," but his overall pattern of behavior. After two months of discussion, the Watkins Committee recommended that the senator be censured on two counts: McCarthy had failed to co-operate with the Sub-committee on Rules and Administration and had "repeatedly abused the members who were trying to carry out assigned duties." Secondly, McCarthy had accused the committee members of deception and fraud, of being lynch party and the "unwitting handmaiden of the Communist Party." They concurred that McCarthy had "acted contrary to senatorial ethics and tended to bring the Senate into dishonor and disrepute, obstruct the constitutional processes of the Senate, and to impair its dignity." On 2 December 1954, the Senate voted to condemn McCarthy on both counts by a vote of 67 to 22, all Democrat senators and half of the Republican senators voted in favor of condemnation.**

**After his condemnation and censure, McCarthy remained in the Senate for two and a half years endlessly denouncing communism, "Our long-term objective must be the eradication of Communism from the face of the earth." But his reputation had been destroyed – shunned by colleagues, ignored by the press, his speeches delivered to a nearly empty Senate chamber. Always a heavy drinker and addicted to morphine supplied by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, McCarthy suffered from cirrhosis of the liver and frequently hospitalized. In the end, McCarthy, the terror of the Senate, and the nation drank himself to death, dying at the age of 48 in the Bethesda Naval Hospital, 2 May 1957.**



***Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States* – Author, Howard Chandler Christy, source, United States Capitol, public domain, Wikimedia**

# Menace to Democracy – Project 2025

**The second administration of Donald Trump is much different than the first. Not only does the president have control of the three branches of government and the propaganda outlets of the social network X and Truth Social, his plan of action has been prepared by the Heritage Foundation's 922 page Project 2025 that seeks to radically transform government by launching the unitary executive theory – a constitutional law theory in which the President of the United States exercises complete authority over the executive branch. Since the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the Supreme Court has envisioned stronger presidential power, primarily advocated by conservative justices molded by the judicial philosophy of the Federalist Society. The unitary executive theory gives the president total power in hiring and firing members of the executive branch, including the independent prosecutors, special counsel, and inspector generals.**

**James Madison, acclaimed as the "Father of the Constitution" for his role in drafting the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights, explains in the Federalist Papers No. 51 how the separation of powers between three branches of government establishes a system of checks and balances to guarantee that no one institution would become too powerful. Madison introduced the Bill of Rights on 8 June 1789, ten amendments that restricted the federal government's power by protecting freedom of religion, freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly, the right of habeas corpus, and to ensure jury trials. Madison said, "The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny."**




**Detail of Preamble to Constitution of the United States – Author, Constitutional Convention, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Due to the great number of people filing for asylum at the Mexican border and the current American backlash against immigrants, following the battle plan of Project 2025, the Trump administration has ordered Immigration Control Enforcement, ICE, to arrest, incarcerate, and deport all illegal immigrants living in the country. Stephen Miller, the key architect of immigration policy in the administration of Donald Trump, said that the scale of the deportation would compare to "building the Panama Canal." Although the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act prohibits the president from using the military as a domestic police force, Miller advocates the deputizing of the National Guard and U.S. military, local police and sheriffs to conduct raids across the nation, arrest all illegal immigrants, remove them to enormous detention camps on the Mexican border, and deport them in mass. Trump has mobilized agencies of the government from the Internal Revenue Service to the Postal Service, to find, detain, and expel immigrants, including those working in food preparation, restaurants, farms, hospitals, churches, schools, and hospitals, shipping them without due process to foreign countries. Our agriculture, animal husbandry, restaurant industry workers, gardeners, and childcare providers depend on immigrant labor – millions of whom are woven into the economy of America. Consequently, the sudden removal of ten million workers will debilitate our economy in many sectors. While it is impossible to calculate the economic cost of carrying out the forced arrest of millions of people, the economic loss would be dwarfed by the traumatic rupture of America's social fabric.**

**The Alien and Sedition Acts, enacted in 1798 by President John Adams and the Federalist Party during a threat of war with France, gave the government during time of war the power to imprison and deport non-citizens determined to be "dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States." President Trump has used the Alien Enemies Act to move against an "invasion being perpetrated or attempted by the Venezuelan criminal gang, Tren de Aragua," although there is no war declared against Venezuela. The Act has only been invoked three times, the 1812 War, World War I, and World War II when in response to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used the Act to warrant presidential Executive Order 9066 to arrest and incarcerate Japanese Americans in internment camps, solely based on their Japanese ancestry. President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, conceding that the internment of Japanese Americans had been based on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership," and authorized compensation for the Japanese survivors. Similarly, Trump is fanning hysteria by designating all undocumented immigrants as 'invading criminals, although 93% of those being incarcerated have no serious criminal convictions.**




ICE federal enforcement officers in MacArthur Park, Los Angeles - Author, Los Angeles Times

**Videos have proliferated on the Internet and social media showing masked Immigration Control Enforcement agents tackling people based on racial profiling, beating them up, throwing them into unmarked vehicles, and attacking public officials and legislators. In May 2025, masked ICE agents arrested Newark, New Jersey Mayor Ras Baraka who attempted to inspect a detention center. In April, Milwaukee Judge Hannah Dugan was arrested by the FBI for concealing an individual to prevent his arrest. On 12 June, California Senator Alex Padilla was thrown to the floor by ICE agents, handcuffed and dragged from Homeland Security Secretary Kristin Noem's press conference. On 18 June, Democratic mayoral candidate, New York City Comptroller Brad Lander was arrested at the federal immigration court while escorting people to immigration court. Lander saw that ICE agents were not reading the detained their Miranda rights and not letting their families know where they're being held. ICE agents are given authority to arrest people without a warrant if they have reason to think they are not legally authorized to be in the U.S. ICE arrests are often conducted upon "expedited removal procedures" that allow them to bypass a judge. Republicans in Congress voted down a Democratic attempt to confirm that ICE agents cannot detain or deport U.S. citizens.**

**A video went viral of seven masked ICE agents attacking a 48-year-old Narcisco Barranco while working as a landscaper at an IHOP restaurant in Santa Ana, throwing him to the ground, repeatedly punching him in the head, and hauling him off in an unmarked vehicle. Barranco is subject to deportation although he has lived in the U.S. for 30 years and his three sons have served in the Marine Corp. His son, Alejandro Barranco, a Marine Corps veteran who evacuated personnel and Afghan allies from Afghanistan in 2021 said, "I believe the administration said that they were going after criminals. And from what we've seen, I think it's the complete opposite. I think the majority of people that they are getting are hardworking people who have been here for decades, providing for their family and providing for this country. Santa Ana city council member John Hernandez, said, "We are seeing an extreme abuse of power on the screens of our phones. . . Barranco is a hardworking Santa Ana resident of over three decades who has raised three children who have all decided to sacrifice their freedom for this country that we love."**

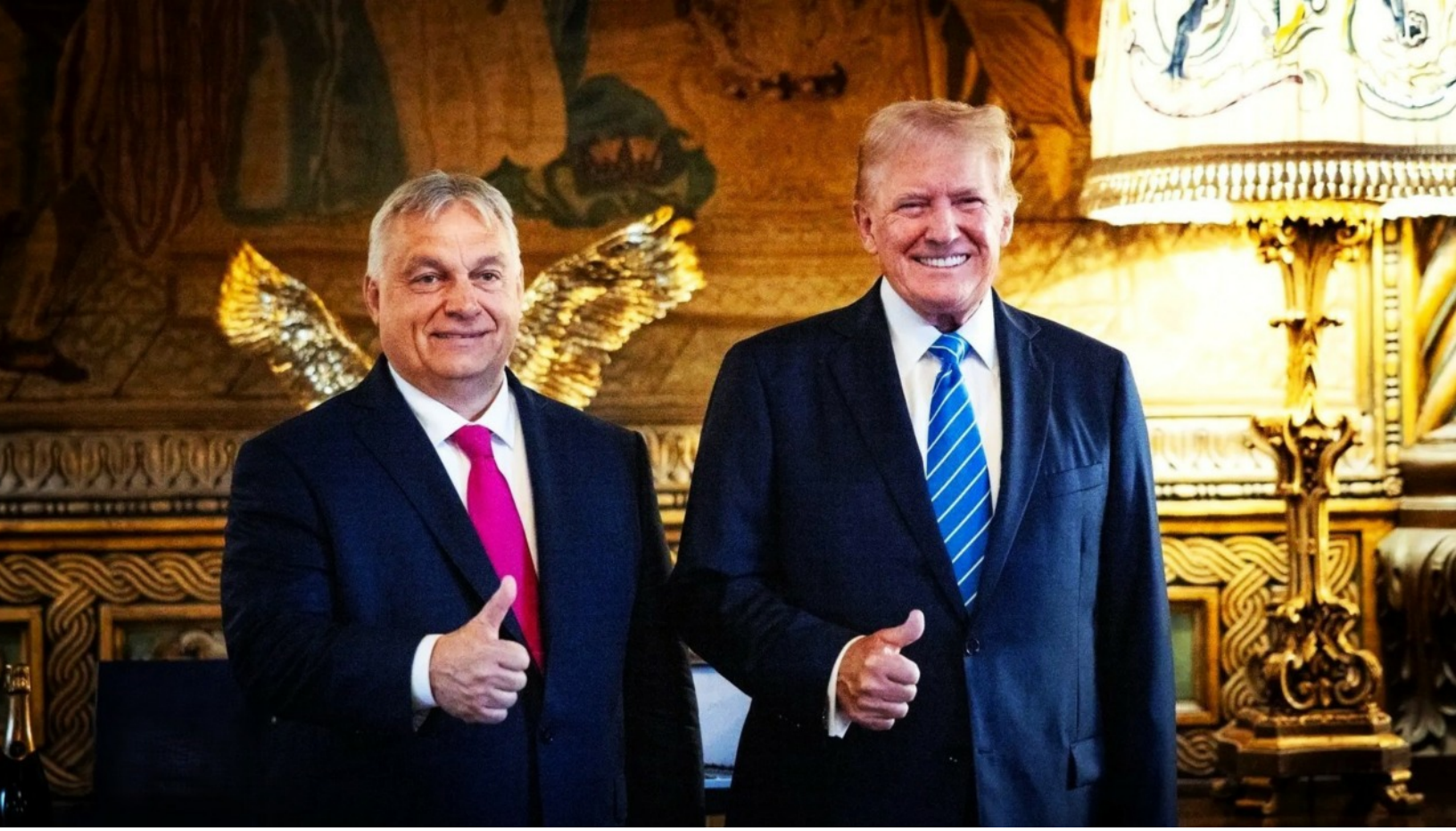
**Angeleno's are fighting back against ICE. Michelle Goldberg reports for the *New York Times*, Ron Gochez, a spokesman for Union del Barrio, said, "We have people patrolling all over the city starting at 5:30 in the morning. . . We get on the megaphone. We denounce the terrorists for being there, and then we inform the community in the immediate area that they are present. And then we say to the people, 'If you are documented, come out, Come outside. Join us. Help us to defend your neighbor." Unión del Barrio's slogan – *"Solo el pueblo salva al pueblo.* Only the people can save the people."**



U.S. Supreme Court Building, Washington, D. C. – Author, Joe Ravi, Wikimedia

**On 1 July 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 6-3 decision that presidents have absolute immunity for acts committed as president within their core constitution purview and no immunity for unofficial acts. Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor said in her dissenting opinion that granting immunity from prosecution would change the Presidency and "risk permitting criminal conduct by presidents because the ruling on immunity would expand what may be considered official acts beyond their core duties, thus depriving prosecutors of a successful means of bringing charges." By dismantling long-standing doctrine that courts will adhere to precedent in making their decisions, *stare decisis*, the Supreme Court will lose the trust of the public. On July 1, 2024, John Michael Luttig, former U.S. circuit judge on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, said, "There is no support whatsoever in the Constitution or even in the Supreme Court's precedents, for the past 200 years, for this reprehensible decision by the Supreme Court. Needless to say, the decision is irreconcilable with America's democracy, the Constitution, and the rule of law. . . America's democracy and the rule of law are this country's heart and soul. Our democracy and the rule of law are what have made America the envy of the world and the beacon of freedom to the world for almost 250 years. Now, today, the Supreme Court cut that heart and soul out of America."**

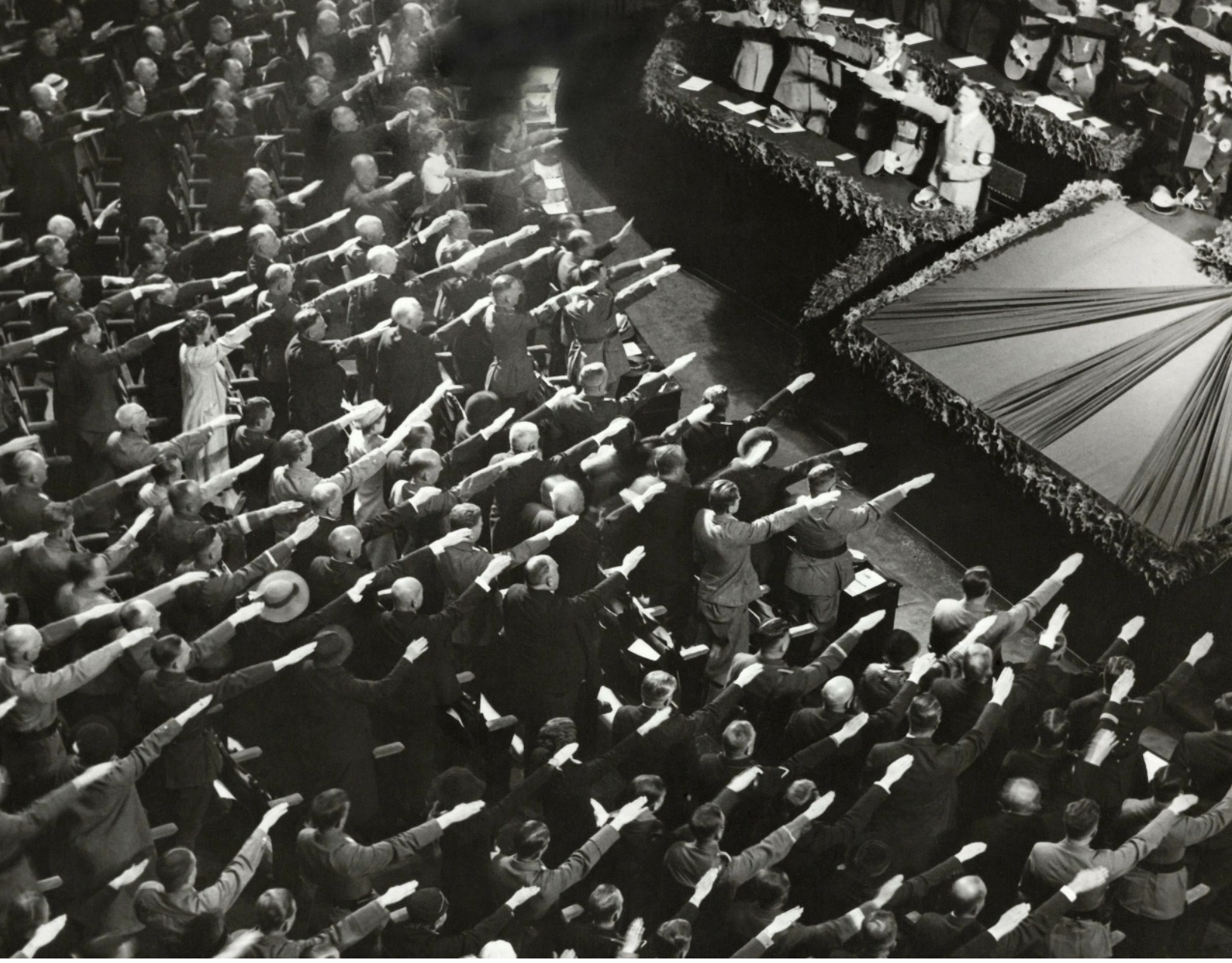
**The six conservative justices support of the unitary executive theory of presidential power affirms that the Constitution's Article II gives the president unchallengeable authority over the entire executive branch and gives him power to withhold funding of the agencies that Congress has authorized by law. Ruling by executive order and emergency declarations, President Trump has bypassed Congress as a co-equal power. He has removed due-process protections for universities, immigrants, and removed security clearances from law firms associated with investigations of him, crippling them from representing clients. By wielding regulatory power he forces the media to bend to his will, fired government employees who pursued investigations of him, and ordered criminal investigations of political adversaries. Fearful that the president will support a primary election candidate to replace them, members of Congress obey the president's every dictate, reminding me once again of James Madison's warning, "The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny."**



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban with President-elect Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago, July 2024 – Author, AFP Photo, fair use, Hungarian Prime Minister's Office

**After Hungarian Prime minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz Party achieved a super majority in parliament, step by step, Orbán dismantled what was once a Hungarian democracy. By using the Great Replacement conspiracy and xenophobic fear mongering, Orbán gained dominance over the press and drafted a new constitution that established conservative religious themes and cemented his control of government. During the COVID-19, the parliament passed a bill giving Orbán the emergency power to rule by decree, but due to funding cuts and emigration of doctors and health care workers, Hungary's death rate was among the highest in the world. Parliament passed a "Stop Soros" law, criminalizing anyone who helped irregular immigrants and passed a law that threatens to force thousands of Ukrainian refugees onto the streets or back to Ukraine. Over the past 15 years, Orban has filled the Hungarian courts with loyalists, reduced the salaries of judges and limited their freedom of expression. Essentially the judiciary was put under the control of the prime minister. Not only was judiciary and press constrained, educators and scientists were also targeted. After amending the constitution twelve times in his first year in office, he decreased the number of seats in Parliament from 389 to 199, announcing that "We do not want to be diverse and do not want to be mixed: we do not want our own color, traditions and national culture to be mixed with those of others. . . We do not want to be a diverse country."**

**David Pressman, former U.S. ambassador to Hungary from 2022 to 2025, wrote in the *New York Times*, "I met leaders of Hungary's sole independent judicial body in October 2022 to discuss their work. For months afterward, their faces (and mine) were plastered in the papers, branded as traitors and foreign agents, just because they had raised concerns about the rule of law in Hungary. The response from other powerful judges? Silence." Pressman documents that the Hungarian state awarded billions in public contracts to his son-in-law and associates, required companies to give his family a percentage of profits, setting up a system of kleptocracy while the Hungarian financial elites power remained silent to the corruption.**



Adolf Hitler saluted by members of the Reichstag, Knoll Opera House, after the burning of the Reichstag, Berlin, public domain, Wikmedia

**In describing the government's seizure of public universities, Pressman said, "What the Hungarian government did was effectively take what were public universities and public assets and transfer them to private hands. They set up something called public-private foundations, transferred all the assets of that university to the public-private foundation and then appointed a board of trustees made up of Fidesz party loyalists who had tenure for life. So, what it did effectively was take what were public resources and put them under the infinite control of a single political party." The Ministry of the Interior "gave the government the authority to be able to more liberally fire teachers, punish them or transfer their positions." Orban forced Central European University to shut down, a school founded by Hungarian American investor George Soros after the fall of the Soviet Union to champion the principles of democracy. The CEU was ordered to leave its campus in Budapest immediately, forcing a U.S. institution out of a country that is a NATO ally. Gradually, education and research fell under control of the Fidesz Party. Parliament passed a law allowing the government to take command of research groups under the two-hundred-year old Hungarian Academy of Sciences, an attack on scientific research which is currently being replicated in America, which Joseph Pelton documented in previous pages. In Hungary, it became clear who was in control of scientists and universities – one of the first steps in the rise of all dictatorships.**




**Women saluting German troops entering Cheb during Hitler's Anschluss of the Sudetenland, 3 October 1938 – Unknown author, German Federal Archives, Wikimedia.**

**Pressman notes that after Orban's first term, he failed to win the following election. Orban learned that to stay in power, he had to take control of the media. Once he won the next election, he took power over 85 percent of the media by getting Hungarian billionaires to purchase media outlets and donate them to an independent foundation, KESMA, which is controlled by Orban's Fidesz party loyalists, thereby giving the government the power to dictate what stories to write, similar to the threat posed to our free press as the U.S. financial elite purchases newspapers, radio, and television networks in our country. Billionaire oligarch Jeff Bezos bought the *Washington Post*, leading to journalists and Pulitzer Prize commentators to resign. Biotech billionaire Soon-Shiong bought the *Los Angeles Times*, provoking editorial writers and Pulitzer Prize winners to resign in protest. Larry Ellison, executive chairman of the software company Oracle Corporation, worth an estimated $280 billion, the second-wealthiest person in the world and a strong supporter of President Trump, has funded a $8.4 billion merger of Paramount with his firm Skydance Media, run by his son David Ellison who met with President Trump and Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr to negotiate the deal. Ellison's cash will give him the ability to transform the historic CBS network to conform to Trump administrations initiatives, an agreement by CBS which entailed the canceling of Trump's critical adversary, comedian Stephen Colbert's highly rated late-night talk show. Trump appointed FCC chair Brendan Carr praised the coming changes in the CBS broadcast network. "Americans no longer trust the legacy national news media to report fully, accurately, and fairly. It is time for a change. . . In particular, Skydance has made written commitments to ensure that the new company's programming embodies a diversity of viewpoints from across the political and ideological spectrum. Skydance will also adopt measures that can root out the bias that has undermined trust in the national news media."**



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán with Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin, February 2016 – Author, kremlin ru, Wikimedia

**In defiance of the European Union's policy of isolating authoritarian Vladimir Putin, Orbán has met with the Russian Federation president to promote a policy of appeasement on the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014. Orban was the only leader in the European Union to oppose sending military support to the Ukraine, Orban supports Vladimir's Putin's vision of a "neutral, demilitarized" Ukraine, a "peace settlement," which would be the payoff for his invasion. He can boast that he is rebuilding the Russian Empire. Putin would be rewarded with twenty percent of Ukraine – the industrialized southeast, the coast of the Black Sea, of great importance to Ukraine's economy. Maiden made it clear. The Ukrainians were tired of the corruption they had inherited from the Russians, where everything had a price. Bribery existed on all levels Ukraine remembered 300 years of Russian domination. They wanted to be free of Russian control, just as the Americans wanted freedom from British colonial rule. Ukraine wanted to join the European Union and become a functioning part of the European market instead of a being a Russian satellite. In response to Orban's "peace mission" to Moscow and Bejiing that has outraged other countries of Europe. President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said, "There are still some who blame this war not on the invader but on the invaded. Not on Putin's lust for power but on Ukraine's thirst for freedom, so I want to ask them: would they ever blame the Hungarians for the Soviet invasion of 1956? Or the Czechs and Slovaks for the Soviet repression of 1968? . . . The people of Ukraine are freedom fighters, just like the heroes that freed Central and Eastern Europe from Soviet rule."**

**Hungary has not only refused to join European Union's efforts to forge a united foreign policy, Orbán has continuously reached out to autocratic nations, Belarus, Iran, and China, and signed up for China's Belt and Road Initiative, the largest infrastructure project in history, built along the Silk Road that Marco Polo traveled during the 13th century Yuan dynasty. The anti-democratic rule of Victor Orbán has found support in our own country, applauded by U.S. President Donald Trump, and praised by American political commentator Tucker Carlson whose support of Vladimir Putin is driving the growth of anti-democratic ideology – an ominous threat to our long standing belief in democratic government. In 1933, German industrialists stood by while Adolf Hitler took over a democracy, thinking that their profits would remain intact, but discovered if they spoke in opposition to Hitler they would be thrown into prison and their assets seized. Former ambassador Pressman, said, "One of the things that is most alarming to me is just how easy it is to control people. It doesn't take secret police. It doesn't take guns. It doesn't take gulags. The reality is that if you have the ability to overwhelm the media ecosystem with lies, you make the cost of engaging in public debate so high that it becomes an existential one."**



Mass Euromaidan protests in Kyiv, December 2013 – Author, Nwssa Gnatoush, Wikimedia

# Euromaidan Movement for Democracy in Ukraine

**To summarize the events leading to the Russo-Ukrainian war, I will begin with the negotiations that Ukraine undertook to establish an association agreement with the European Union that was set to be signed in November 2013, an agreement that Vladimir Putin attempted to halt by restricting Ukrainian imports to force President Yanukovych to reject the Ukraine-European Union agreement. A week before the agreement was to be finalized at a summit in the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, although he had promised to sign it, Yanukovych announced he would reject the agreement and strengthen economic ties with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union, which he claimed was offering more favorable trade terms than the European Union, a switch that provoked a large protest in Independence Square, known as Maidan Nezalezhnosti, in the capitol of Kiv, demanding that Yanukovych either fulfill his promise to sign the agreement or else resign. When Yanukovych refused to accept their demand, the protests grew larger accusing Yanukovych of the abuse of power, human rights violations, and demanded an end to the corruption of the oligarchs who controlled the economy, not only the grand corruption of Yanukovych's peers but the need to bribe a teacher, a doctor, or the traffic police, the everyday corruption that oppressed everyone. The protestors assembled in Independence Square accused the president of usurping the authority of the parliament and demanded a return to the 2004 Constitution of Ukraine to stop Yanukovych's appropriation of power. The peoples' intense eruption of anger became known as "Euromaidan."**

**Protests against Yanukovych's government became the largest mass movement for democracy since 1989 when the United Democratic Front in South Africa opposed the white dominated National Party government, a movement led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other religious leaders to establish a united South Africa in which segregation was abolished and society freed of racism. In Ukraine, Independence Square became a giant protest camp of thousand protestors behind assembled barricades with first aid posts, broadcasting services, kitchens, and stages for speeches, debates, and performances. The Berkut special police under Yanukovych's command assaulted the protestors, arousing even greater defiance from the protestors. After Yanukovych signed harsh Anti-Protest Laws on 16 January 2013, violence increased and the Berkut police killed the first protestors on Hrushevsky Street during 19-22 January, provoking enraged protestors to occupy government buildings all over Ukraine.**



Euromaidan protestors in Kyiv, Ukraine, 18 February 2014 – Author, Mstyslav Chernov, Wikimedia

**As thousands of protestors marched from the Maidan plaza toward parliament on 18 – 19 February 2014, police snipers killed nearly 100 protestors and 13 police with Yanukovych justifying the killings by declaring that the police had the right to use their weapons against protestors. On 21 February 2014, President Yanukovych and the parliament agreed to establish a unity government, voting 386 to 0 to reinstate the 2004 Constitution and hold elections before December 2014. The police abandoned Independence Square, the protestors took over central Kyiv, and Yanukovych fled to Kharkiv, claiming that he had not given orders to shoot protestors, that an armed coup of "pro-fascist thugs" had taken over the government and he was still the legitimate president. The parliament voted to remove Yanukovych, schedule a presidential election, and release former President Yulia Tymoshenko from a prison hospital where she had been imprisoned for three years. Russian forces flew Yanukovych to Moscow where he was given asylum. Vladimir Putin denounced the Euromaiden Revolution of Dignity as an unconstitutional coup, ordered the Russian special forces without insignia to invade the Crimean Peninsula in February 2014, and formally annexed the peninsula.**

**Yale University historian Marci Shore, wrote in *The Ukrainian Night, An Intimate History of Revolution*, "The Ukrainian revolution of 2013-2014 on the Maidan was the most extraordinary thing I have seen in the quarter century I have been coming to Eastern Europe. . . I saw friends and colleagues I had known for years making decisions they would have found unimaginable a few months earlier. People who valued their privacy suddenly laid bare their souls. . . All of them experienced a moment when it was imperative to make a choice."**




Russian missile strike on Kyiv, Ukraine, 20 October – Author, State Emergency Service of Ukraine, Wikimedia

**Following the resignation of President Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin was elected President of Russia in March 2000. By gradually erecting a personality cult, controlling the media, and suppressing his opponents, Putin was re-elected in 2004, 2012, 2018, and 2024. In his fourth presidential term, claiming that he was demilitarizing and denazifying Ukraine, Putin invaded Ukraine on a massive scale in February 2022, which was met by international condemnation and sanctions by the United States and the European Union. In September 2022, Putin annexed four Ukrainian oblasts into Russia, and area the size of Portugal. Putin justified the invasion by asserting that Ukraine had always been a part of Russia and was never an independent nation, claiming, "there was no historical basis for the idea of Ukrainian people as a nation separate from the Russians." Ukrainian language and customs are different than Russia, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is separate from the Russian Orthodox Church, and Ukraine was long separate from Russia before being seized by Russia in 1792. From the year 1569, Ukraine was part of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth until it created a new constitution modeled in part on the United States Constitution of 1787, a movement toward limited monarchy to which Fredrich William II of Prussia and Catherine II, Empress of Russia, fearing democratic reform in their countries, responded by invading and annexing Poland and Ukraine.**



Putin's attack on Kyiv. Russian military column destroyed by Ukrainian Armed Forces, Vokzalna Street, Bucha, Kyiv Oblast, Ukraine, 27 February 2022 – Author, Ukrinform TV, Ukrainian Armed Forces, Wikimedia



**Apartment buildings destroyed by Russian forces, January 2024 – Author, National Police of Ukraine, Wikimedia**

**Putin's initial invasion failed because he expected to overcome the Ukrainian government within 10 days, the same mistake that Germany made in its invasion of France in World War I, planning a quick victory over the allied Triple Entent and failing to take Paris. Putin's invasion forces became bogged down in the attack on Kyiv, harassed by more mobile Ukrainian forces that were highly motivated, forcing Russia to retreat. To inflict damage on the Ukrainian people, Russia used stand-off strikes by cruise and ballistic missiles fired from MiG fighters and Tu bombers, FPV drones and artillery fire to terrorize Ukrainian civilians, destroying thousands of dwellings and driving Ukrainians to flee to other countries. Putin waged a war of attrition, using dismounted infantry in human wave attacks, but failed to foresee what military strategist Carl von Clausewitz said is a grave error to believe there is "a skillful method of disarming and overcoming an enemy without causing great bloodshed." In the first year, the absence of fortified defenses allowed free maneuver and rapid breakthroughs, as Ukrainian forces retook the city of Kharkiv and Kherson, and recently advanced within Russian territory in the Kursk surprise offensive which moved rapidly against unprepared defenders.**

**In 2025, both Russians and Ukrainians fight along extensively fortified lines. Protected by minefields, trenches, concrete dragon teeth, anti-armor obstacles, and fortified artillery positions, the battle lines have become more fixed. During recent offensives on the Kharkiv front, Russian troops advanced only 150 feet per day, slower than in the Somme offensive in WWI, costing the Russians enormous fatalities. In total, a quarter of million Russian soldiers, many from poorer regions in Eastern Russia, have died, with a total of 950,000 casualties, which is expected to become one million casualties by the summer of 2025. Within three years, Russian fatalities are fifteen greater than in the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan and ten times larger than Russia's long war in Chechnya. Fighting against great odds and Russian superior firepower, Ukraine has used great ingenuity, smuggling drones deep inside of Russia in a container in June 2025, releasing them remotely to strike and destroy Russian Tupolev bombers. Poor Russian corps morale, defective equipment, top down military control, loss of experienced officers, a failure to gain air superiority, U.S. and European Union's military and financial support for Ukraine, and the innovation of drone warfare, has led to a protracted conflict for which the Russian Army was unprepared.**



President Donald Trump attacking Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House, 28 February 2025 – Author, Shutterstock

**Despite the devastating loss of hundreds of thousands of soldiers' lives, obsessed with the reconquest of Russia's former territories, Putin calculates that the election of Donald Trump will lead to the United States terminating American military aid to Ukraine, which indeed happened when he took office. In his second term, Trump claimed he would end the war quickly, demanding that Ukraine accede to Russian demands, resulting in Ukraine losing twenty percent of its territory, a loss to which President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people refuse to accept. Putin knows that Trump will be replaced by a future president who can reverse U.S. policy, therefore making it paramount that he acquire during Trump's term a treaty clinching the conquest of Eastern Ukraine.** During Trump's and Vance's angry meeting with Zelenskyy, the vice president told the Ukrainian president, "I think it's disrespectful for you to come into the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media. Right now, you guys are going around and forcing conscripts to the front lines because you have manpower problems. You should be thanking the president for trying to bring an end to this conflict." When Zelenskyy tried to explain that no one stopped Putin from taking Crimea in 2014 and no one stopped him from invading the Donbas region of Ukraine. Vance responded by berating Zelenskyy for not using diplomacy and Zelensky pointed out that the ceasefires that he signed with Putin were always broken. Diplomacy didn't work. **Trump said, "What you're doing is very disrespectful to the country, this country that's backed you far more than a lot of people have said they should have." Vance accused Zelenskyy for not being thankful for American aid, although Zelenskyy had appeared before Congress and across the nation thanking American many times. In anger, Trump said,** "You're not in a very good position. You don't have the cards right now. With us, you start having cards." Zelenskyy said, "I'm not playing cards."

Trump: "You're not winning this. You have a damn good chance of coming out OK because of us." Zelenskyy: "Mr. President, we are staying in our country, staying strong. From the very beginning of the war, we've been alone. And we are thankful." Trump: "If you didn't have our military equipment, this war would have been over in two weeks." Zelenskyy: "In three days. I heard it from Putin. In three days." **Trump said, "You've got to be more thankful because let me tell you, you don't have the cards. With us, you have the cards, but without us, you don't have any cards. . . This is going to be great television. I will say that." Immediately after the meeting, Zelenskyy was asked to leave the White House. The rest of his U.S. visit was canceled.**



***Writing the Declaration of Independence, 1776*, depicting Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson composing the Declaration – Author, Jean Leon Gerome, public domain, Wikimedia**

**Stanford University professor of political science Adam Bonica tells us, "Democracies today are rarely demolished by a single, decisive blow. Instead, they are dismantled piece by piece, not by breaking the law, but by systematically weaponizing it." Princeton sociologist Kim Lane Scheppel, calls this phenomenon, "Autocratic legalism." Rather than suspending the constitution, they rewrite it. They pack the courts with loyalists and rig the election rules so they can't lose, methods by which Viktor Orbán, President of Hungary, and Alexander Lukashenko, President of Belarus used to demolish democracy.**

**For over a century, Congress has created independent agencies, The Federal Reserve manages the money supply, the Federal Trade commission enforces antitrust laws, and the National Labor Relations Board oversees labor disputes. By design, the leaders of government agencies are shielded from political control. They cannot be fired just because the president disagrees with them. They can only be fired for cause, neglect of duty or malfeasance. By this separation, a president cannot order the Federal Trade Commission to approve a corporate merger or order the Director of the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates to win an election. The division of powers prevents a president from appointing people loyal only to his whims to replace managers that require specialized technical knowledge for governance. The Unitary Executive Theory claims that this long established division of powers is unconstitutional – that only the president possesses total power. Congress cannot limit the president's ability to fire an official at will or without reason.**



George Washington and Marquis Lafayette at Valley Forge – Author, John War Dunsmore, public domain, Wikimedia

**Another indication of a vast usurpation of law enforcement by the Trump administration is the mass firing of FBI agents who worked on Special Counsel Jack Smith's investigation into Donald Trump's role in the January 6, 2021, attack on the United States Capitol that aimed to force Vice President Mike Pence to invalidate the 2020 election results. ABC News reports that an email sent by the Justice Department orders the FBI to identify which of 38,000 FBI employees had worked on Jack Smith's investigation into the capital attack, the attempt to overturn the 2020 election, and Trump's removal of U.S. classified documents to his Mar-a-Lago residence. Upon taking office, Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove fired eight of the FBI's most experienced managers, including executives overseeing national security, cyber security and criminal investigations. Over several months, many top managers and national security experts have been fired, pressured to resign, or demoted to lesser roles, obliterating decades of experience in criminal matters.**

**As a presidential candidate, Donald Trump said he would end birthright citizenship, and once in office, signed Executive Order 14160, "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship," which ordered the children born to illegal immigrants or visa holders to be no longer recognized as citizens, which will impact an estimated 150,000 children born each year. The executive order was quickly blocked by district court judges issuing universal preliminary injunctions based on the 14th Amendment which included the Citizenship Clause, which overturned the 1857 *Dred Scott v. Sandford* ruling against slave Dred Scott's quest for freedom. The Dred Scott ruling, written by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, declared that people of African descent "are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word 'citizens' in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States" Taney's decision is considered the worst in Supreme Court history for its *de jure* recognition of slavery, a decision that four years later fueled the American Civil War.**

**The Fourteenth Amendment, one of the Reconstruction Amendments, was adopted on 9 July 1868, overruling the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision that African Americans could not become citizens, The Citizenship Clause established the granting of citizenship to all born within the United States, except**



***Declaration of Independence,*** **depicting the five-man drafting committee of the Declaration of Independence presenting their work to the Second Continental Congress – Author John Trumbull's painting, public domain, Wikmedia**

**except the children of foreign diplomats. The Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* of 1898 confirmed that children born in the United States receive birthright citizenship, regardless of whether their parents are non-citizen immigrants. Citing the 14th Amendment's granting of birthright citizenship, several federal district judges levied a nationwide injunction against Trump's order to end birthright citizenship, to which the administration made an emergency application to the Supreme court.**

**Writing for the majority on *Trump v CASA,* a 6-3 decision along ideological lines, Amy Coney Barrett said that lower courts could not use injunctions to block the implementation of executive orders nationwide. Barrett's opinion, derived from an Textualist Constitutional philosophy, held that the injunctions were an overreach based on the Judiciary Act of 1789, "Under our well-established precedent," Barrett wrote, "the equitable relief available in the federal courts is that 'traditionally accorded by courts of equity' at the time of our founding. . . Nothing like a universal injunction was available at the founding, or for that matter, for more than a century thereafter. Thus, under the Judiciary Act, federal courts lack authority to issue them." In her dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote, "The Court's decision to permit the Executive to violate the Constitution with respect to anyone who has not yet sued is an existential threat to the rule of law." Jackson added, "The Court has cleared a path for the Executive to choose law-free action at this perilous moment for our Constitution – right when the Judiciary should be hunkering down to do all it can to preserve the law's constraints. I have no doubt that, if judges must allow the Executive to act unlawfully in some circumstances, as the Court concludes today, executive lawlessness will flourish."**

**New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin said that the court had chosen not to address the issue of universal injunctions during the Biden administration but decided on the first order that came up during the Trump administration to use the opportunity to ban the injunctions. Stanford political scientist Adam Bonica noted that while injunctions against the Trump administration came from a bipartisan set of judges, every single nationwide injunction blocking Biden's policies was issued by a Republican-appointed judge. When the Biden Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to limit the injunctions, the Court refused. Bonica, reminds us, "Yet, just five months into the second Trump administration, the Court seized the opportunity in *Trump v. CASA* to do exactly that, stripping away a key check on executive power precisely when it most benefited its political allies."**




***Foundation of the American Government*** **– Author John Henry Hintermeister, public domain, Wikimedia. George Washington watches Gouverneur Morris sign. Behind him, stand Roger Sherman, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, and James Madison, and at right, Alexander Hamilton and Edmund Randolf.**

**The most dangerous measure, Bonica says, is the fusion of the unitary executive theory with presidential immunity. It gives the president total control over the Justice Department and the FBI while the immunity ruling allows an order of the Justice Department that prosecutes a rival to become an "official act" protected from criminal prosecution. The Trump Justice Department has launched a criminal investigation into John Brennan, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and James Comey, former FBI director, prominent critics of a president who uses his power to target political adversaries under cover of "prosecutions are official acts." We believed our democracy was strong, but when enveloped by a malignant, amoral chief executive, its weakness has been unclothed. We are in the midst of a struggle over whether our country remains a republic ruled by law or becomes a government where power is concentrated in one person – unrestrained and unimpeachable. Lucia Way, a political scientist at the University of Toronto, said the strength of American democracy has been revealed to be something akin to the power of the Wizard of Oz: seemingly all-powerful but in fact, much weaker than almost anyone imagined." Harvard political scientists Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt caution, "When citizens must think twice about criticizing or opposing the government because they could credibly face government retribution, they no longer live in a full democracy."**



**An American author who advocated for the acceptance of Jewish immigrants fleeing from persecution in Imperial Russia, Emma Lazarus' words are inscribed on a bronze plaque on the Statue of Liberty.**

**Give me your tired, your poor,**

**Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,**

**The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.**

**Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,**

**I lift my lamp beside the golden door!**



**While democracy can result in bad government, it provides a means of changing the government through the ballot box. Although a dictatorship is more efficient in getting things done, it cannot be ended without violence. Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, said, "The big joke on democracy is that it gives its mortal enemies the tools to its own destruction." The 2016 presidential election created a schism in American culture as dissonant as the rupture that the Vietnam War inflicted upon our country. Overthrowing democracy by means of an authoritarian ideology becomes certain once a leader pledges to use the instruments of government and judicial system to seek vengeance on his political opposition. Nazi writer Ernst Rudolf Huber, said, the National Socialist German Workers' Party "had the single purpose of destroying the parliamentary system from within through its own methods."**

**We must not forget that Hitler came in at the ballot box. When the voters are poorly informed, when trust in the free press weakens, when advanced education is not available to all, the inherent fragility of democracy makes it vulnerable to a takeover by an authoritarian demagogue. As anguished as I am in this moment, I recall Mahatma Gandhi's words, "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall." Since our memories are short, *Celine on Fire* records the threats to democracy so that we can avoid duplicating the delirium of America's violent past.**