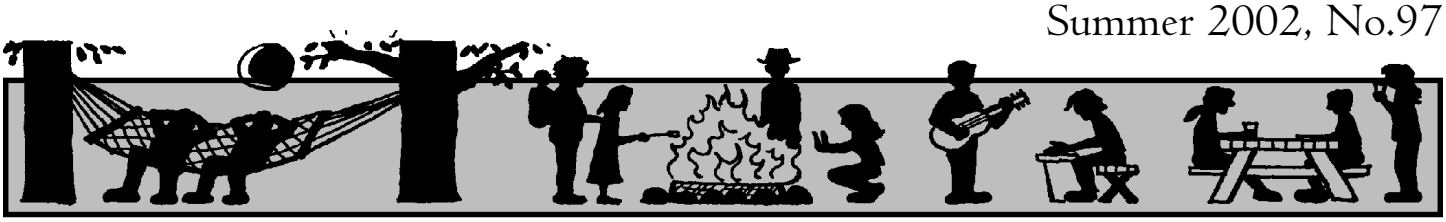
The Leaves of Twin Oaks

Summer 2002, No.97



The News of the Oaks

by Mala

When four visitors from the January visitor group and four more from the February group returned as members, we reached a population peak of 90 adults, the closest we've come to our maximum capacity of 92 in several years. We did a bunch of brainstorming about how to handle a room crunch, recalling creative solutions like Jake moving into the greenhouse the last time we were so full. The problem proved short-lived, however, as various members decided to move on. Jesse, Mosha and Jaz dropped membership but stayed in the area, remaining part of our extended family. Newer members Shiloh and Maggie went on leave to save up money and then travel to Jamaica and Europe. They're planning to return next winter. Siblings Dan and Jane followed their sister Virginia's lead by splitting for the West Coast. We hope we haven't seen the last of the strange and marvelous Currin family . . . Finally, our most vociferous contingent of anarchists departed for Tennesee, burning bridges rather dramatically as they left.

A steady flow of new folks continued throughout the spring, so despite the departures our population remains, at the time of this writing, a respectable 85 adults. The spring's newcomers have provided an incredible influx of energy and talent. We've been blessed with a host of musicians: Matt and Piankhy write brilliant songs; Nathan and Ben are virtuosos on violin and clarinet. Kele brings her massage and gardening skills, and A-driane's offering belly dance lessons. Rita's organizing Shabbat dinners, Pilgrim's single-handedly renovating all our buildings, Lew's organized a meditation group, and Aubrey's cooking delicious vegan meals. Our newest member, Tatiana, just arrived today.

1000 lbs. of plastic (our new tank) to solve our water problems

There seems to be an increased interest in vegetarian, vegan, homegrown andorganicveggies, fruit and meat. Even Tom, formerly one of the most zealous meat eaters, cooking vegan meals from primarily homegrown ingredients for the community. The vegetable garden is wildly abundant and we have no shortage of homegrown ingredients - including our recent harvest of 970 pounds of garlic! The herb garden is equally bountiful. To date, Hildegard has harvested 75 pounds of basil, which Ezra has converted into 45 pounds of pesto.

Our one garden woe has been water problems. Like much of the rest of the southeast, we've suffered from drought, and so we've had to irrigate more than we'd like. In addition, our agricultural well started to give out. We drilled a new well and just finished installing the new water tank in the tobacco barn. If the whole thing is ready to run soon enough, we're eligible to have half the cost covered through a federal drought relief program, so a handful of dedicated members have been working their butts off to get the project completed ASAP. In the course of the drilling, we found gold - really! But just a trace, not enough for us to all retire and spend the rest of our lives lying in hammocks instead of making them.

The hammocks business has had some internal and external difficulties. One of the larger controversies of the spring was over whether we should accept a special order to make red and white striped hammocks that would be sold with a blue starred pillow. People had strong feelings on both sides of the issue, and ultimately, we declined the order. More recently, we were thrown into a panic when Pier I informed us that they wanted to change the color green of the hammocks we sell them and therefore had no use for the 6000 we had already made. Fortunately, they changed their mind. Despite these hurdles, the business is going strong, with a vastly improved ordering system by Kenric, regular community informants by Tom, and a steady flow of orders.

This spring we opened our home to several groups we connect with. Pam hosted the Virginia Association of Biological Farmers for a day. Kristen organized a Green Magic weekend, a pagan gathering which took place at the conference site and celebrated the growing connection between Twin Oaks pagans and the wider pagan community.

The News Continued on Pg. 2

The Healing Carnival hits the C'ville Downtown Mall

In this issue...

Report from the Twin Oaks 35th Anniversary Weekend
Photos by Frodo

The Warehouse Dossier: No really, it's completely bizarre!
Photos by Lawrence

The DC Folklife Festival: East Meets Twin Oaks
Photos by Pilgrim

Editing and layout: Sky Blue
skyblue@twinoaks.org

Three Generations of Twin Oakers:

a piece of shameless self-promotion from the editor

Last issue detailed the birth of Willow Star Falcon to Hawina Falcon, Paxus Calta, and Sky Blue. What we didn't mention was that Willow's birth heralds the second time three generations of a family have lived at Twin Oaks. While I currently live here, Shandin Rudesill, my half-brother, lived here for several years, both as a child, and as an adult between '93 and '96. Our father Dale Rudesill and mothers Gini Rudesill and Jay Blue (now Jay Boyd) lived here in the late Seventies.

The first 3 generation legacy was founder Kat Kinkade, her daughter Josie Kinkade, and grandaughter Lee Ann Kinkade.

For me, that Twin Oaks has aged to the point that this is possible is an amazing thing. It also makes me think that we must be doing something right that the values and ideals on which we have chosen to base our lives have been successfully passed down.

Today I was talking with a woman who was amazed how much easier it is to find information on communal living than just 10 years ago. It makes me think that the Communities Movement, whose beginnings are found back in the Sixties counter-culture, took hold but after time lost the excitement and feeling of adventure that initially carried it. Now that communities like Twin Oaks have been around long enough to seem creditable, it seems that people are starting to take notice again.

If you've been to Twin Oaks and are reading this editorial, you have probably been exposed to the magic of this place. We're making that magic more and more contagious. We're not going to stop at 3 generations.

Shandin, Dale, Sky and baby Willow

Finally, Brenda organized two weeklong camps for homeschoolers, also at the conference site. The first was an outdoor adventure camp, which included activities like orienteering and shelter building, and ended with a delightful and impressive talent show. The second was a drama camp, which culminated with a performance of an updated Cinderella. Twin Oakers were charmed by the homeschooled kids and glad for our kids to, at least temporarily, have more peers. Brenda is organizing more camps for the fall.

Gathered 'round the May Pole

In other kid news: Chris Higgins just graduated high school and moved out, finishing perhaps the most complete tenure anyone's ever put in as a Twin Oaks kid, from infancy to graduation. Tom and Thea's second child, Gwen, will take his place on the kid roster when she arrives this fall. Due to a housing crunch in the kid-friendly buildings, we decided to renovate Degania to house the growing family. It'll be the first time Degania, the old child building, has been occupied since the end of the communal child care program. Many Oakers are excited about reclaiming Degania from the mold that has held sway there for the last several years.

We had a great May Day celebration, including our traditions of wreath-making, face-painting, passing through the gates of the four elements (represented by different Oakers), raising the Maypole, and dancing around it. This year's innovation was a beautiful enactment of the spring union of the Sun and the Earth. Sky narrated while the Sun (Nathan) played his violin to wake the sleeping Earth (Adriane) who danced her response.

In other homegrown culture news: the round singing group is still going strong, meeting three times a week. One of our visitor groups organized a hysterical performance entitled "Romeo Visitor and Juliet Member," a tale of star-crossed lovers who defy the taboo against visitor/member involvements. Our 3-day long 35th Anniversary extravaganza, covered in detail later in this issue, was a non-stop banquet of feasts, performances, and parties. There's been a resurgence of women's culture, with many women's groups meeting, more women's teas, and several women's projects in the works. One exciting one is the organization of an all-women building crew to construct three new outhouses for the conference site in August.

For those who want some city culture, the community has started offering a free shuttle to Charlottesville every Friday evening. Oakers in the city take in the musical performances on the downtown mall; enjoy the open galleries on the first Friday of the month; go contradancing at the Unitarian Church; and perform on the mall as the Healing Carnival. The Friday trip often travels in our newest vehicle, a minivan replacing Swamp Thing, which we christened Soylent Green.

And that's the lowdown on life on the farm. Til next time . . .

19th Annual Twin Oaks Women's Gathering

A Multicultural Event

Aug. 23-25, 2002

Women

Celebrating ourselves in Community

Creative Activities ◆ Dance ◆ Drumming
Camping ◆ Swimming ◆ Mudpit
Singing ◆ Workshops ◆ Sharing
StageRitual◆ Music ◆ Fun

Bring
Your Music
Your Poetry
Your Story
Your Artwork

Sliding Scale $40 -$140 includes camping & workshops

Register by August 1st to help us plan a great Gathering

For Information and registration forms, contact:
Twin Oaks Women's Gathering, 138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa, VA 23093, Phone: (540) 894 5126,
Fax: (540) 894 4112, Email: gathering@twinoaks.org

The D.C. Folklife Festival

(or)

Twin Oakers Found Dazed & Confused Along the Silk Road

by Pilgrim

"The festival was a sonic orgasm. And here I sit in total disbelief, that a slice of the Middle East, from Venice to Nara Gate, did not exist between the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capital. I want to go back for more!" – Kele

"The stupefying level of heat and humidity gave a dream like quality to my day. The van load of Twin Oakers bonded on the return trip singing Scots German, John Denver, Beatles, political songs, and rounds learned over the past months." –Marione

Well, our trip to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival July 3rd started quietly enough. A 3x5 to announce *The Silk Road*. There'd be Sufi and Gypsy music, silk being spun and woven into fabric, paper & jewelry making, sculptors & potters, and did I mention the music?

I reserve the van, put the info & sign-up sheet in my mailbox and wait for the flood of eager festival goers to come forward. A week goes by and mine is still the only name on the list.

It took harassing several people to at least read the information before word got out. Wow, 19 co's show up early Wednesday morning so we ended up taking our 15 person van and a car, yeeha!

We stepped out of the Metro into the blazing sun from our cool subterranean tube; ripples of trepidation washed over our intrepid tribe. "Man it's gonna be hot today!". It's I I am and everyone is already sweating. The Mall had been transformed into what could have been a mirage shimmering through the rising waves of heat. To my right I see the Capitol building and a towering bamboo structure seemingly side by side. The Washington Monument is to my left but I have to pass through Samarkland and Venice to get to it.

By the looks of it, I'd have to astrally project myself to various venues in order to see everything. First stop was a Kazakhstan Folk group. They were incredible. They seemed genuinely surprised to see the level of appreciation from the audience. It turns out they'd made only 40 copies of their CD and it sold out in less than 10 minutes.

I can't sit still, I bring Frodo a glass of ice coffee and I'm off. I walk across the dusty trail to the Jewel Garden. There an old man sitting on the ground is chiseling away at a chunk of rock. It appears by the deep crevices etched in his own face that he may be older than the rock. All around him are scattered smooth and shiny Hindu icons. A few tents down, an Egyptian man is inlaying mother of pearl into hand-hewn table tops. He's the eighth generation in his family to ply this trade. Across from him there's a man sitting in front of a glowing orange furnace. Did I mention it was hot? I'm sure I'd pass out if I tried to hyperventilate into a fiery glass tube in front of a blast furnace. This guy is tough. I can't linger though. Too much to see and do. I spent my day wandering between tents at the Istanbul Crossroads to Crafts Bazaar. Music was everywhere you turned: exotic, rhythmic, sacred, ancient, and futuristic, it was all there. It was for me a study in contrasts. People taking pictures with digital cameras and people painstakingly creating intricate mandalas. There were cars and camels, yuppies and peasants, cell phones and handmade paper. I was in a mad rush to see ways of life that had endured countless generations.

"I was blown away by the whole thing. Being a belly dancer, I was in heaven, I wanted to live at the festival after just one day!" - A-driane

"Not only did my soul get rocked by Armenian Folk music, sufi devotional singing, and Yo Yo Ma but, I saw how a traditional sari was made and watched a master Arabic calligrapher." – Matt

"What I most enjoyed were the demonstrations of glass blowing, so skillfully done, fascinating. The religious playing and chanting by the Tibetan monks was extraordinary, and quite moving." – Cameron

As much fun as I had, I still couldn't help but feel a little sad at the thought that it was very likely that many of these amazing crafts and techniques would be lost when this generation of craftsmen/women passed away. I was indeed growing weary from my travels by the end of the day. But, I'd had the opportunity and privilege to witness and experience a vibrant community of artisans and musicians from across the globe if only for one brief and shimmering day.

By the way did I mention it was hot?

Report from the Twin Oaks quote from the founders,

by Ezra Pound

This past June 16th, amidst great festivities, Twin Oaks Community reached the ripe old age of 35! Twin Oakers welcomed dozens of ex-members, friends and family from near and far to celebrate this birthday in style. What ensued was a whole weekend of performances, festivities, and general revelry that will not soon be forgotten.

The festivities started on Friday night, as the community started to swell with new and returning faces. A feast was laid out on the ZK steam table, and a torrential rainstorm (breaking weeks of drought) brought everyone inside to share their meals in the tightly packed dining room. After dinner, everyone helped to clear out tables and rearrange chairs, preparing the room for the 35th Anniversary Coffeehouse and No Talent show.

For the next three hours the enthusiastic crowd was treated to a wide variety of home-grown and imported talent. The Songha (singing group) started the evening off with the traditional Twin Oaks birthday round. Craig displayed his juggling talent. Twin Oaks kids Elijah and Cedar impersonated the eclectic dance styles of Sky and Frodo. New member Matt serenaded the crowd with songs about getting used to life on the commune, particularly the phenomena of men in skirts. Heather and Bonnie delivered a highly educational demonstration of the correct way to dispose of used toilet paper, for the benefit of all the new and returning audience members. The Twin Oaks Klezmer ensemble, consisting of Nathan, Ben, and Ezra on violin, clarinet, and double bass, entertained the packed dining room with a set of klezmer favorites. And just when it seemed that the audience couldn't take any more, the band of outlaw bluegrass musicians who go by the name Yeehaw Junction took to the stage. This group, wanted in seventeen states for a host of moral outrages, assaulted the crowd with their musical frenzy. Their drunken set ranged from an impromptu rendition of "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" (in which the Devil and Johnny both win), to a smashing performance of "The Family Heirloom Guitar," which left the audience shocked and outraged and the band in tears. Many other acts rounded out the evening, everything from songs of the Scottish highlands, to a performance of Orphan Annie's "Tomorrow," sung by a quartet of deranged chin people. There was general agreement that the coffeehouse was the most entertaining in quite a while.

After the lights went down on the final act (Sean's non-verbal absurdist puppet show), the last of the tables and chairs were cleared away to make room for a wild night of dancing. DJ jAz, in her final appearance as a Twin Oaks member, kept the dance floor packed with wildly celebrating bodies until the wee hours, serving up a non-stop supply of Twin Oaks party favorites. As the dance frenzy intensified, the temperature in the ZK dining room rose to a sweat-pouring inferno, and in typical Twin Oaks fashion the amount of clothing on the dance floor decreased accordingly. Groups of overheated dancers made periodic runs to the pond for late night cooling-off dips, then ran back to ZK for more. The Friday night party, which was meant to be a mere warm-up for the Saturday night dance, took on such momentum that it wound up being the dance of the weekend, lasting late into the night.

The job of feeding such an enormous number of visiting partiers, in addition to the normal hundred hungry Twin Oakers was indeed an enormous one! The ZK kitchen was filled all weekend with our regular chefs and kitchen-clean crews working alongside the many guests who volunteered to keep the non-stop feast rolling along. On Saturday morning, ex-members Jim(?) and Rob Mills took their place at the griddle, serving up plates of home fries and custom-made omelets to all who ordered. At the same time, a small army of cooks, led by supreme chef Mary, prepared a cornucopia of snacks for the upcoming afternoon festivities.

Meanwhile, in the courtyard, an eager construction crew, led by Jay and Kele, were setting up booths and stringing decorations. Banners of silk scarves hung between the trees, creating a festive atmosphere. The afternoon was breezy and unusually cool for mid-June, wonderfully pleasant conditions for the scores of people who gathered in the courtyard. On the upstairs deck of Ta Chai, Coyote was serving up an endless supply of his famous gin-and-tonics, as he has in so many anniversaries past (and hopefully will long into the future!). On the courtyard lawn, Lee was busy with his airbrush kit, decorating the bodies of everyone who wanted to

35th Anniversary Weekend

"what were we thinking?!"

bring a bit more color into their lives. Nearby, folks were dipping wicks into colored wax to make their own candles, receiving massages courtesy of Kele, Hans, and Shal, or having their futures revealed at the fortune telling booth.

Partygoers in the courtyard on Saturday did not have to look far for entertainment. The first performance in the afternoon was by The Road Dog Divas, a gypsy cowgirl cabaret trio from New Orleans who performed a set for kids which also delighted many of those present who were, at least chronologically , adults. Not long afterwards, all present were treated to the exciting first-ever public

appearance of the Twin Oaks belly-dance ensemble. This lovely group, made up of Adriane, Kele, Mala, Val, and Pele, had spent the previous two months learning and perfecting their routine, and the crowd was quite enthusiastic, to say the least! Immediately afterwards, as the audience was still catching their breath from the delightful gyrations of the belly dance ensemble, a band of scary-looking desperadoes entered the courtyard. The audience recoiled in horror as they realized that Yeehaw Junction had returned to further torment them with shameless public drunkenness, outrageous costumes, and raucous bluegrass music about drinking, outlaws, death, and the South. Many of the more civilized attendants chose that moment to eschew the courtyard to engage in more refined activities, such as women's tea or mud-wrestling.

At dinner on Saturday, ZK was even more packed with people than it had been on the previous evening. Every table inside and out was filled, and everywhere you looked, there were happy reunions as friends, members, and ex-members who had not seen one another for years crossed paths. Inside ZK, Matt put the tap to five kegs of home-brewed ale, brought out specially for the occasion. Sean set up a table to sell 35th anniversary shirts which he designed and printed on-demand with a mobile silk-screen unit. And on the outside deck, yet another tireless crew was setting up the Twin Oaks PA system, heralding yet another fun evening of musical entertainment.

Just after dinner, the Road Dog Divas were back on stage with some delightfully upbeat twangy tunes. They were followed by former Oaker Danny Schmidt, who returned to his old stompin' grounds, playing a set of guitar and vocal music. After Danny finished, the audience crowded into the more acoustically intimate dining room to listen to one of the community's perennial favorite musicians, Devon. Having just returned recently from a months-long national tour, Devon wowed many of the adults who had first heard her sing years and years ago when she was a kid. By the time Devon finished, it was definitely time to start dancing again! And getting the party up on its feet was the task taken on by the last band of the night, Twin Oaks' own Soul Couch. In their first—and final!—public performance of the year, this electric six-piece, fronted by the incomparable diva jAz, rocked the deck until late into the night. The dance party at Tupelo that followed was attended by a select group of hard-core partiers, who drank homebrew and munched on leftover snacks until everyone passed out.

In contrast to the wild festivities on Saturday, Sunday's offerings were slightly more sedate. Highlights of the day included an afternoon Dance For Universal Peace (Sufi Dancing), with live musicians. Those who stayed on for dinner were treated to a performance of "Jesus Christ Superstar/Rocky Horror/Muppets/Hair," some of the oddest dinner theatre seen anywhere for the last 35 years. The show consisted of classic musical numbers taken from each of these musicals, generously cross-hybridized with one another, and performed in "biblical drag." A cast of thousands including Kele, Matt, Meredith, Shal, Lawrence, Hawina, George, Hans, Nathan, and Aubrey took on a range of roles from Jesus to Frankenfurter to Fozzie Bear in a triumph of creativity and last minute planning.

By the time darkness fell on Sunday evening, Twin Oaks was finally starting to quiet down. Satisfied guests and ex-members began rolling down the driveway and back to their lives in the outside world while happy, exhausted communards shuffled off to their rooms, their heads spinning with the sights and sounds of the previous weekend. And from the deck of Aurora, where the outlaw bluegrass musicians from Yeehaw Junction had dug themselves in, arose a sleep-shattering cacophony, as they commenced yet another long night of whisky-fueled musical mayhem. Some folks just don't know when to quit!

THE WAREHOUSE DOSSIER: 4/JUNE/2002

by Lawrence

Everyone in our much extended "family" is familiar with that staple and bane of our existence at Twin Oaks, the hammock, as American as the maple trees from which it hangs, as innovative as the bearded hippies who weave it. It's clear that our hammocks spend several days in our laboratory in various states of ghoulish disassembly, then decades in the back yards of yuppies being chewed on by dogs and children. These beginning and ending fates are known. But what of the larval stage of our products, when they are spun into plastic cocoons and stacked atop one another in suspended animation? Where does this take place? Where do our hammocks live when we nudge them out of the nest but before they spread their stretcher bars and fly away?

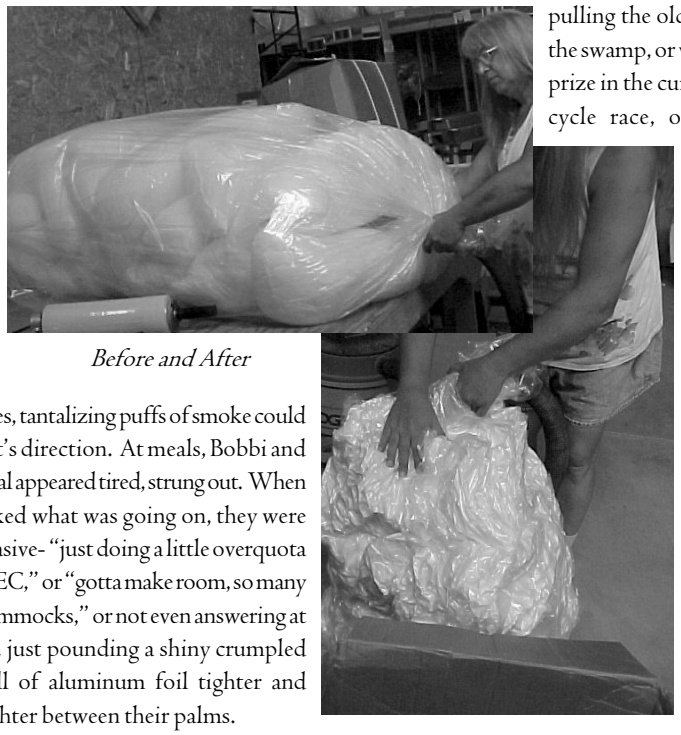
Answer: Emerald City. That enchanted collaboration of dirt roads, sheds and trailers that encircle and lead unto the Twin Oaks Warehouse.

Bobbi and Shal: Our Heroes!!

It is here that our hammocks, under the watchful glare of a floating phoenix painted on our solar wood drying kiln, spend the long slumber between birth and life, between existence and essence. The huge ceilings, the wide walls, the orderly piles of wood, boxes and barrels attest that this is a place for cultivating patience. It is a place for counting and tallying, discerning which batch of our products will join up with the empty embryos of the rumbling, vivid trailer trucks outside, and which will continue. . .waiting. It is a job to test co's patience, and to test co's minds.

The cos who manage our warehouse do not control time. They cannot order our rope creations out the door before the unfathomable behemoth of market forces make certain there are places for all of them to hang. They want each of our products to have a happy home, and a long healthy life, and so are content to wait. They would like to control time, but they cannot. So instead they've learned to control space. That may sound ridiculous at a first glance around the warehouse- the cavernous, echoing labyrinth of stacked products and material, where a co could lose coself, and become entombed among the boxes.

Such were my thoughts as I made my way through the EC Warehouse, to talk to Bobbi and Shal about their "innovations." For weeks strange whispers had been brewing around Twin Oaks proper. The warehouse was up to something. Eerie noises, tantalizing puffs of smoke could be perceived in it's direction. At meals, Bobbi and Shal appeared tired, strung out. When asked what was going on, they were evasive- "just doing a little overquota at EC," or "gotta make room, so many hammocks," or not even answering at all, just pounding a shiny crumpled ball of aluminum foil tighter and tighter between their palms.



Before and After

I was a little apprehensive as I tracked down these two and their work, but when I arrived the air was light, they were full of energy and open to my questions. Apparently they had mastered whatever paradox of the universe was keeping them up nights. It turned out to be just this: besides hammocks at Twin Oaks we also run a pillow business- sometimes these are shipped with the hammocks, sometimes just by themselves. Enormous pillow forms, huge blocks of foam pieces wrapped in tens and twenties and encased in plastic are shipped to our warehouse, where they must be stored and sent as needed to our pillow shop in one of our residences.

With a shudder, Bobbi recounted for me the first time she'd ever laid eyes on such a shipment, calling it the invasion of the Stay Puff marshmallow men. One is reminded of being trapped in an elevator with three pregnant women and an out of control fire extinguisher- clearly the warehouse could not absorb too many more of these shipments.

Thinking fast and furious, for it seemed as though a vortex had opened between the cloudy and tumultuous upper reaches of the earth and the humble factory floor, they devised some ingenious plans for dealing with the overload.

As Bobbi went to prepare the machinery of her masterpiece, Shal directed my attention to an enormous ladder ascending to the heavens, the kind in that children's game that you get to climb for pulling the old lady out of the swamp, or winning first prize in the cure cancer tricycle race, or whatever. "You see," Shal told me, stepping onto the quivering ladder as my heart skipped rope beneath my ribs, "the first problem was where to put these pillow forms in the interim. So one day I looked up, and behold, there was a space that had never been there before." Shal contracted with Keenan, our buildings wizard, to float up on his flying carpet and install a thin layer of metal where the roof to the warehouse begins to slant- an attic of sorts.

Pillow forms being big on space but light in weight, it was the perfect solution. Pillows could be hoisted up the ladder by rope, then tied to posts spaced across the length of the attic- to be fished out of oblivion when needed. Using his native defiance of gravity, Shal, who in his spare time climbs enormous trees with rappelling equipment, and Hans, one of our carpenters, built a wood "bridge" from one length of the attic to the other, standing on the ground they'd only moments before created to make the next segment, hammering home the passage into the roof joints.

As I stared into the sea of floating inert pillow forms, vast and nebulous, I mused with Shal about the implications of fishing off a bridge built over a space that had no reasonable claim to exist. I asked him if he ever brought any girls up here to impress with his defiance of the physical universe.

"Oh no," he said as a warm wind from the sea of tethered pillows blew strands of silver hair across his face, "it would be far too dangerous to bring children up here."

"Oh. . .yeah," I said, recalling the trembling of my body on the climb up, as the ladder swayed and

buckled like the spine of a man who's spaceship has crashed into Jupiter. "But actually I meant bringing up dates, not kids."

"Oh, dates? That's different. Meredith frequently helps me with this aspect of my work."

I have no idea how long we talked, staring into that ocean of implacably calm, imprisoned pillow forms, hovering far above the heads of our warehouse workers from now until eternity. I only remember Bobbi calling up the ladder that the machine was ready.

As I approached the device, my legs wobbly and my eyes glazed, I was a little disconcerted to see a single pillow form, lumped nakedly on the floor, severed from the warmth of its fellows. "Whaa-at are you going to do it?" I asked, swallowing.

Stairway to Heaven

"Well," replied Bobbi, checking the dials and the snaking tube on the Vacuum Vortex Initiator (VVI), "pillow forms are mostly air, right? If we could get the air out of them, we could fit them into a storable space- like that box over there."

My eyes followed Bobbi's finger and I noticed a humble cardboard box a few feet from the pillow- it was dwarfed by it- as the tiny volkswagen looks pitiful next to the band of garish, red nosed, floppy footed fat clowns about to climb into it.

My mind simultaneously recoiled in horror and unfolded in fascination, like a lotus on a pond of igniting kerosene. "Do you really mean to…"

"Watch," Bobbi said simply. A simple insertion of the vacuum tube through the plastic bag, into the innards of the pillows, the flip of a switch- and the proud and voluptuous pillow form crumpled and crinkled like a wedding cake left abandoned in the sun. As Bobbi placed it squarely in the box, I looked upon the scene with wonder and fascination about the implications of her invention- a wonder that couldn't help but inform the interview I had planned.

Lawrence: Does that flimsy cardboard box really possess the tensile strength to contain the kinetics of precariously repressed pillow? Shouldn't you put some packing peanuts in there?

Bobbi: We've not yet suffered any casualties due to pillow shrapnel explosions.

Shal: Besides, the rope holds it!

L: And where did you learn to tie that knot? The green berets?

S: I invented it. I mean, I invented it in the sense that I took the normal knot and made it a slip knot.

B: A slip knot with a half hitch.

S: A slip knot with a half hitch with a crochet chain.

B: Right.

L: Many in the scientific community are concerned about the apocalyptic potential of this technology. Specifically they refer to the Schwarzfield radius, the size limit at which a black hole gets so wrapped up in itself that not even light can escape. And light can go faster than a hundred ferraris, so that black hole is wound pretty tight! Have you taken any precautions to ensure that the SF radius is never breached? An alarm clock attuned to gravitational distortions, for instance?

S: We carefully calculated that this procedure falls at least .2 short of schwarzfield's radius.

B: White pillows don't go well in a black hole, anyway.

L: (to Bobbi) When you were a little kid, did you know you wanted to be an inventor? Or did you want to be a fireco, or a space astronaut?

B: I can best describe my impulse to invent with a story I read by Mark Twain, the gist of which was if you want to get a job done in an efficient manner, give it to a lazy person.

L: Many poets have waxed poetic about the peculiar similarity between the heartrending squeal of the material as it is drawn into itself and the so called "little whimper," the penultimate contraction of the universe that is destined to bring closure to the throbbing wound of existence that the big bang opened. Does this technology echo the end of all being, and if so, when can we expect to be witness to that?

S: This procedure goes by the theory of the little bang in miniature, therefore it does not effect the macrouniverse.

B: This idea is ahead of its time, several hundred billion years so.

Q: (for Bobbi) Archimedes, upon inventing water displacement, leapt out of a bathtub and ran through the streets shouting, naked and besudded. What was your Eureka moment when this idea crossed your mind?

B: I think my quote at the time was: This sucks!

Q: What security precautions are in place to ensure that this potential "doomsday weapon" never falls into the wrong hands? It doesn't take much imagination to envision some cackling evil genius piloting away in a zeppelin with Manhattan's air supply, while the city itself is contracted to the diameter of an elevator shaft.

B: (thoughtful) That would be a bad thing?

B: hmmm. . ..well, we close the doors at night.

Q: (for Shal) As warehouse manager, what are you going to do with all this extra space?

S: (pause)

B: Let me take a stab at that. Warehouse space, like anything else, is budgeted, and like anything else, your needs expand to meet your available budget- for a lot of years the warehouse was the size of the rope shop.

S: When you put it that way it brings to mind the principle that nature "abhors a vacuum"

L: So Shal, are you saying that if Bobbi invents another "space saving" procedure you might have to retire from overwork at the warehouse?

S: Yes, I've asked her to keep her next invention under wraps.

Q: (for Bobbi) Are you still the same co you were before all this international acclaim? Would your friends still recognize you? Do you still eat the same thing for breakfast?

B: I never was the same co!

L: Do you want to mention anything about your breakfast habits?

B: No.