



Dennis Wiancko

# SOGGY BOTTOMS

Memories of sneaking into the fair at dusk. ■ By Marina Taylor

A couple of lifetimes ago, I found myself in a willow bush, a feast for mosquitoes, cramped from squatting for three hours, waiting for the time of my life. That was the first and last time I ever snuck into the Oregon Country Fair.

The fair feels to me like a celebration out of another time. It's like The Great Gadsby's week-long parties, Elizabethan hunting trips, Native American potlatches, parties that bring a group of people together for days to celebrate, whatever the occasion. There aren't many rituals these days that justify a three-day party, and that's part of what makes the fair so special. No one can afford to host one, not everyone can schedule one in.

I've been a Fair child, off and on, since I was 5 years old. The family would pile into the van and camp out with friends. My memories are dim: I remember heat and swimming, naked men dancing with fire, jugglers and bubble blowers. I remember a great time, most of it happening at night when the consumer-driven crowds had gone home. So when I came to Eugene for college, the fair was again the thing, and I wanted to stay all night.

However, now there was no parent to pay, and no camping passes to be had anyway. The *seemingly* logical plan was to sneak in. Legends of great break-ins abounded. Friends told of a 14-year-old girl who could make totally real-looking wrist bands out of Fimo modeling clay. One guy claimed to have hidden in a tree, another recommended hiding in the sleeping bags in a camper's tent. That sounded dangerous, or stuffy, so my friend and I opted for the water method.

Sneaking into the overnight fair is made

difficult by many things. The more people who stay overnight, the more security is needed. If too many people stayed, all kinds of horrible things would be necessary, like street lights. So the fair community has tried hard to keep people not related to the business of the fair out. For some, that has created a mighty tasty looking for-

bidden fruit.

The sweep patrol is the first line of defense. A group of people hold hands and walk the entire fairgrounds, gently ushering out people who don't have wrist-bands showing that they belong. The ones shuffled out get put on the bus back to Eugene, without the benefit of the exclusive night-

time celebrations and free admission the following day.

The water method we tried would avoid the human chain, but had a couple drawbacks we hadn't anticipated. (Not that we really were anticipating types!) The way it worked was, when we heard the sweeps were coming through, we found a bank with a gentle slope, took off our pants and waded, waist deep in very icky water, to the brush on the other side. There we crouched, with nothing to read or do, getting eaten by bloodthirsty insects, unable to speak above a whisper, for three full hours. Canoes paddled up and down the waterway, looking for us. Yellow Jackets in a papery hive in a nearby Alder tree buzzed menacingly, also looking for us. We were fugitives.

Finally night fell, and we climbed the bank back to fair territory. It was chilly that year, at 9:30 pm anyway, and we were wet and underdressed. The flush of victory from eluding the patrols was brief. The highlight of the evening had to be the Pad Thai we convinced Bangkok Grill to fix up for us: Nothing ever tasted better.

We'd forgotten to pack any food, or extra clothes or flashlights or bedding for that matter. We spent hours searching the dark for other friends who may have made it through the sweep, and found a few. At midnight we made it to the show at the mainstage, where we sat way in the back of a surprisingly large group of people, and totally failed to see any naked fire dancers. I fell asleep.

By 2 am the rocks in the grass and the cold had me wide awake. We stumbled over to the saunas, and spent the rest of the night trying to stay warm. I heard beautiful music: a flutist playing in the dark, acoustic guitars around a campfire and chanting, but there was no rest anywhere. By the time the fair finally opened the next morning, and the stream of LTD buses began their to and fro, I was more than ready to go home, take a hot shower, slip into something clean and sleep that fair away. I go in the daytime now, and I still bear scars from those ferocious mosquitoes. ★

## HEAD TO TOE HIPPIE Deckin' Out for the Fair ■ By Erin Lusk

Oregon Country Fair is here once again and that means it's time, of course, to plan your festival attire.

For advice on how to be best dressed at OCF, you've come to the right place. De Rigueur would suggest a total unmakeover; from your shiny hair and matte skin to your pale legs and stocking-clad feet.

Let's start at the top. For the most mod in Country Fair hairdos you'll need more of a head start than this, but I've heard the best dreads begin with pieces of an old wool sweater, a home perm kit, and a massive amount of patience.

For the face, I recommend SPF 30+. Kiva has the whole ALBA Botanical sunscreen line. On top of that it should be all glitter-licious. Check out Backstage Dancewear for the shiny stuff. They'll have you so sparkly you'd look like a disco ball if you hung from the rafters by your heels. But wait, that's a different decade. Back to the fair.

For women, I suggest body paint and glitter swirled in various mystical patterns across the torso. If clothing up top is preferred, leave your bras at home and sport one of the backless cor-

duroy and floral print patchwork tops from Sweet Potato Pie. For men wishing to remain clothed, tie-dyed shirts are the trippiest things around. RIT dye, some rubber bands and some ingenuity can spice up even the most uninteresting apparel. Circle of Hands or Sweet Potato Pie has shirts for those not wishing to also sport tie-dyed hands.

Below the waist, I recommend hemp or cotton shorts in darker neutral colors with plenty of pockets. Grass, dust and various spilled food items tend to make lighter-toned pants and jeans look particularly un-festive. The more pockets, the more freedom you'll have from toting a bag stuffed with sunscreen, water, sunglasses, and of course, your wallet.

For me, OCF is all about the accessories you also carry in. Flying

Clipper has the best hackysacks and devilsticks. Greater Goods has great drums and hats at pretty decent prices. If you need a bit more adornment,

Little Toad Designs makes the best masks, capes, hats, and headpieces in the most fanciful designs for the whole family.

Make sure to drink plenty of water. Fairy days are often HOT. Nalgene water bottles in a variety of sizes and colors are available at McKenzie Outfitters for excellent prices. ★



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