

Harvey Greenwald

"THEY'RE GOING TO DROP DRUGS"

AS TOLD TO DAVID PAUL BACHARACH

Betty, our baby daughter Suma, and I had spent 30 days traveling around the country in my '57 Plymouth station wagon. Returning home, we felt fortunate to quickly find a home we could afford, in Orange County, NY.

After a meeting in Sussex, NJ with the home's owner, during which we put \$89 down and scrawled a contract on the back of a napkin, the house in the hamlet of Amity was ours.

Returning from our meeting in New Jersey, Suma sleeping in her arms, Betty glanced toward me and asked, "Do you have any idea how we are going to pay for this house?"

"No."

Our new home had a leaky roof, no heat, no indoor plumbing and little insulation. But it was ours. The

next piece of business was to make our home livable and pay for it.

I had been making custom-fitted, plains moccasins

and selling them, along with other crafts — plus rolling papers, surplus clothing and Turkish Delight — from a small gallery I had christened "Triptych" in New Paltz, NY. With a wife, baby daughter and a home, I needed cash, fast.

I had invented a way to print patterns on full skins

of leather. After cutting the printed material into workable pieces, I made unique headbands, stash bags, bracelets, and of course, moccasins.

I had visited craft shows and observed what others were selling. It was no better than what I was making, but I had never tried exhibiting at a show. I peddled my work on the streets of New York City, sold some at Triptych, and the rest through other small stores. But it wasn't enough.

Recently, word had spread about a new, local show

being held in conjunction with a concert, on a dairy farm in Bethel, NY. The show was about a month away, and the promoters were looking for exhibitors. But the booth fee was an exorbitant \$500, an outrageous sum in 1969, when the average booth fee was \$5-\$10. I needed an idea, quick. I spoke to my buddy Jim, and the two of us formulated a plan.

We would borrow \$500 for the booth fee from Jim's mother, then go up to the farm a couple of weeks before the show to pay and check out the farm, then work day-and-night to create the largest inventory we could, including extra work to peddle in New York, to keep food on our tables and buy more leather. When it was time to leave, we would fill all available boxes with our work and head west to Bethel, NY.



WOODSTOCK '69

Harvey Greenwald



woodstock



3 days of peace
music...and love





Four weeks later, we pulled onto the narrow road leading past Yasgur's farm. Spilling out of the confines of our over-stuffed car, Betty, Suma, and I took in the landscape before us. Wispy, white clouds floated in a bright blue sky. Below us were freshly-mowed, green pastures, circled by white wood fences. Surrounding it all was pristine woodland. In the distance sat scattered farm buildings and ancient farm machinery.

In the pasture below, young men with long hair sat bare-chested astride plow horses. Staring vacantly at the passing clouds, man and horse appeared one with the earth. But no sign of any preparation for a large craft show or concert was apparent.

In time, someone associated with the event arrived.

She told us to stake out a space in the woods, as grand as we required, and set up our booth.

Finding what we thought might be a good location,

nestled in the woods, we created a roof of tarps and blankets hung on lines strung between trees. Two hours later our booth was up. We decorated it with some of the large paper flowers we'd been making in our gallery.

Several hundred yards below our lean-to, we observed progress. Still, no one was installing seats, erecting fences, building ticket booths or other craft booths. It seemed strange that so few were preparing the show site for an event that was supposedly opening so soon but, Woodstock —yes, that Woodstock — was my first show. What did I know?

Settling down under the lean-to, we waited. People had begun to trickle in. Some parked miles away and walked to the show site. Others continued to drive down the small road, trying to park nearby. The first people brought with them darkening skies and by late evening, the first tentative, misty rain.

People arrived all through the night. Wet and tired, some asked to share our lean-to while they waited out the rain. Others made do with shared rain coats and army surplus pup tents.

Waking at dawn, I stepped lightly around the previous evening's arrivals, now crowding 'round our booth, and walked to the edge of the wood lot. Between the woods and the now miraculously-completed concert stage, yesterday's green pasture had become a surging river of people. Wave upon wave of people poured in with long hair, tie-dyed clothing, and sandals. Some were going barefoot. Islands of blankets, small tents, backpacks and banners appeared and disappeared quickly, as groups numbering from two to twenty jockeyed to stake out the best views of the stage.

The farm was rapidly filling with people. With few toilets, no water and insufficient food for the gathering crowds, Betty and I quickly realized this site was no place for our baby daughter. I decided that Betty should take our daughter and leave for home. Immediately! Jim, his girlfriend Lauren, and I would stay and try to sell the work.

Once Betty and Suma were safe, I experienced a very unpleasant

realization; there wasn't going to be a craft show. The crafts would be an afterthought, at best. Everyone was coming for the music. If we were going to sell anything, we had to move to the road, where the people were. Looking around, I located one of our cardboard boxes, filled it with my printed headbands, medicine bags and bracelets, and headed toward the main farm road.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, Richie Havens opened the concert with "The Minstrel from Gault." Like a rock in a storm-swollen stream I stood my ground, reaching repeatedly into my cardboard treasure chest. People of all descriptions poured around me. My first load quickly sold out. I made the short trip from the road to our tarp, smiling broadly at our good fortune. I talked, sold, bargained and bartered continuously for hours.

Pausing only briefly to drink in Sweetwater's "Motherless Child," I sold steadily on.

Having refilled my wet, disintegrating box numerous times since mid-day, by 2 am I was listening to a beautiful, pregnant, Joan Baez singing, "Joe Hill." I was sure I had sold, earlier that day, the very head-band I would see years later, worn by a young woman in the film,

"Woodstock."

Day two. We continued to sell steadily. Country Joe Mac-Donald serenaded my noontime lunch break.

Mid-afternoon, I noticed a girl with crutches and braces, clothed in a long coat, struggling on the rain-soaked hill between my sales spot and the stage. Abandoning my box, I slid down the muddy slope, stopping in front of the struggling woman.

Offering to assist, I pushed from behind, as her crutches braced her in front. We slipped and slid up and down the hill, Sisyphus-like, for 30 minutes or more. Cresting the hill, we simultaneously collapsed on an abandoned blanket.

As we exchanged names for the first time, the girl offered to pay me for my assistance.

"Absolutely not," I replied immediately.

"Are you sure?" asked the young woman as she opened her coat, revealing inner

pockets filled with bags of grass, pills and other pharmaceuticals.

Dinner music was provided by Canned Heat. I continued to sell into the early hours, as the Grateful Dead finished their set and Creedence Clearwater Revival jumped on “Born on the Bayou.” Laying down the remains of my crumbling box, I laid back some food and water and listened to Janis Joplin belt out “Piece of My Heart.”

Three am, day three. Sleep was difficult. The ground vibrated in sync with Sly and the Family Stone. Next, the Who assaulted the air with amplified percussion and bass. Continuing through the night, the music ended in the grey mist of morning, and finally we slept.

The next day, while heading back to my booth in the woods to refill my carton for the evening’s sales, I crossed the edge of a field where numerous motorcycles had gathered. Stopping to show some of the cycle people



my work, I was surprised when one of the bikers suddenly yelled, “Will you look at that!”

Turning around, I saw a nightmarish vision: a large group of naked people, covered with mud. Primeval mud people were crossing the field in the twilight, tumbling, writhing and shouting, as they pointed toward a small helicopter that moved slowly toward us.

Nightmares can have physical causes, like eating late at night, or sleeping in unusual positions. Perhaps I was asleep and this was a bad dream, I thought, like Scrooge. But, unlike Scrooge, I was awake, and this was really happening.

Apparently, someone thought that an airdrop of drugs was to occur. The mass of rain-soaked, mud encased nudity had gathered to await any plane’s arrival. The helicopter seemed the fulfillment of a promise. As the helicopter hovered above a mud man, he raised his arms, shouting, “They’re going to drop drugs!”

To my amazement, hundreds of small objects began to fall from the copter’s side door. The Woodstock Mudpeople screamed, scrambling over each other to gather as much of the anticipated free drugs as possible. I thought, maybe they really are dropping drugs...until one of the items landed at my feet. It was a plastic rose. For the flower children. Not drugs.

We stayed until the bitter end, hearing Jimi Hendrix play his 4 am wake-up call on the last day of the concert.

Betty and Suma returned with the Plymouth the following day, as the muddy vehicles and muddier people began their homeward journeys, while the soft, rutted ground firmed sufficiently to support us. Jim, Lauren, Betty and I divided the sales, setting aside money to repay Jim’s Mom. With our Woodstock money, Betty and I bought another old car. (My ‘57 wagon gave up the ghost less than a month after the show.) I installed central heating in our house and began the plumbing for an indoor bathroom, a radically new concept for our house.

We earned sufficient money at my first craft show to get the three of us through most of that winter. I have been doing craft shows ever since.