

*Off the Wall reprint OFFtheWALL™ is a trademarked name for a publication that as such is owned by Wes Wilson,
HCR 1 Box 22, Aurora, MO 65605-9303; USA*

The Straight on the Haight; The Poster Artists

by Reginald Eugene Williams

In 1994, I was invited by Bill Ham and Wes Wilson to join the light show at the Rockart Ball kicking off the RockArt Expo. During the weekend while I worked “The Straight on the Haight” table, many people asked me about the Straight and its posters. This article is distilled from my manuscript “The Straight on the Haight” and focuses on the chronology of extraordinary art published by Straight Theater Enterprises and Straight Graphics during the fabled 60’s

BACKGROUND: In 1966 I was a San Francisco State Senior and active Civil Rights and anti-war protester/organizer but my artistic and intellectual urges had led me to explore the elements of mind using the whole spectrum of pure color and raw energy. My boy hood friends and I, and many peers, were psychedelic rangers; intrepid explorers of the mind and all attainable levels of reality. These revealing mind-manifesting voyages using psychedelics were even legal at that time, but so was the undeclared war in Vietnam.

After hearing Alpert and Leary talk about a Sensorium or Trip Center and then being at the Trips Festival, I became attracted to the potential of the Light Show. After an introduction by Luther Green to Tony Martin I was soon apprenticing in his light show at the Fillmore Auditorium. Here I also worked for Bill Graham as his unpaid assistant during the blossoming of the San Francisco Sound January to April 1966. Bill Graham, a perpetual business machine and Tony Martin, the classical artist, combined to create an avant garde environment around the mostly musical presentations. One night when the combination of the Dead’s music and the lights unified the dancers in undulating waves, synchronized under the strobe I was working, Bill freaked and made a sudden appearance in the balcony light booth where he shouted for the strobe effects to stop.

Tony could create beautifully colored light dishes as vivid as any art in any form could be. He knew the various levels of consciousness from the white light energy dance to the swimming molecular paisley we

referred to by the various Bardo names we had borrowed from the "Tibetan Book of the Dead" via Tim & Dick. But Tony, a professional artist with a beautiful wife and young baby at home, didn't like rock and roll that much and resisted linking the liquids and light effects to the band's performance. Instead he surrounded the bandstand with giant artistic moving forms and projected his latest 16mm movies on the side wall, independent of the show on stage.

As the weeks progressed Bill tapered off on Tony's pay. The money for movie productions went first, a process that led quickly to Tony manning the machines like a factory worker putting in a shift, even eating a brown bag lunch while monitoring the equipment. Tony's interest in the high energy light and swirling retinal circus patterns tapered as well.

I had elbowed my way down front moving from stage lights to strobes and finally manipulating the liquids over the stage playing every weekend with the Quick, Country Joe, The Dead, Big Brother and the Airplane, all the great local bands.

At the end of March when the first big out-of-town headliner, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, came to the Fillmore from Chicago it was the last show Bill and Chet Helms produced as partners. Ironically the band was breaking up as well. Both situations were noticed and taken advantage of by Albert Grossman, Bob Dylan's feared manager, but the explosive chemistry produced dynamite music. Mike Bloomfield's and Elvin Bishop's guitars savagely competing with Paul Butterfield's harp was fast and exciting electric blues as they challenged each other for the lead. I had each player in his own separate liquid light always with the rhythm. Sometimes using a bubble as a spotlight for solos but always projecting a swimming frenzy of colors racing from dancing fire energy throughout the visual "Bardos".

At the afterglow party Greg and Gary of Quicksilver said it was a great psychedelic light show. Their manager Ron Poulte began booking me for road shows with all the bands. (Incidentally, I am seeking any posters or handbills from any of these mostly Northern California shows, especially the Quick and Dead in Atascadero, the Big Brother or Country Joe Shows at the Golden Sheaf in Berkeley, Dead in Modesto, Quick in San Jose, or any Hayward or Pauly ballroom shows.)

By Spring 1966 my vision was to find a “Trip Center” to have non restricted multi media events with light shows that would allow a unified field of consciousness to happen with the participating audience and performers. I was tripping on blue liquid Sandoz when I came over the Yerba Buena park hill stopping to see fellow SF-Stater Peyote Joel Storss (or as Steve Gaskin called him, “Jody Morningstar”) before continuing down into the Haight, then heading for the Pacific Ocean and the setting sun. As I passed Haight and Cole I “ found” an abandoned 1500 capacity movie house. The old Haight Theater had a proscenium stage built for vaudeville, forty foot high walls, and a balcony to project from.

“The Straight on the Haight” is the story of the poets, musicians, artists, artisans, intellectuals and dealers who interacted with the Straight Theater and helped create one of the most colorful generations of the century.

This article is focused on the work of the graphic artists of the Straight as my records can verify. Any omitted material is not overlooked on purpose and I would appreciate it being brought to my attention. Please cite the pertinent information and hopefully include a photocopy of any missing handbills or posters and send it to me.

STRAIGHT THEATER ENTERPRISES’ STRAIGHT GRAPHICS: THE POSTERS AND HANDBILLS

Between Spring 1966 when I began co-managing, with Bill Resner, the Haight Theater’s renovation and rebirth as the Straight Theater and then presenting hundreds of musical, dramatic, poetic, dance, film and mixed media events until the Summer of 1969, my partners and I had the opportunity to work first hand with both the famous and many unde-r appreciated graphic artists of the 60’s by publishing much outstanding and important art. These works, only some of which are cited in the keystone book, The Art Of Rock (AOR), are all valuable items for individuals, archives, and museums wishing complete collection sets from the San Francisco music scene of the 60’s.

From George Jacobs, the ill fated genius who created the first Straight poster, a wildly vibrating electric print in blue and red done for the Grateful Dead, Michael Mc Clure multimedia benefit at the Avalon May 19, 1966 (AOR # 2.16), until Gary Grimshaw, still a successful artist, who created the last major Straight Theater poster, the flying white panther

with pot leaf and lightning for the MC5 performance March 14-16 1969 (AOR # 2.227), the procession of artists and art ranged from the wildly popular Rick Griffin "Grove for Peace" (AOR # 2.230), B. Kliban's pre-cat abstract face for the 2nd Avalon Benefit, and the currently popular Jim Phillips, creator of "The Next Supper", to the barely known C. (Chris) Braga "Go Straight Indian face" for Kaleidoscope, the "flying Dead" (AOR# 2.224) & "The Cat And Hooka" Mad River, Santana Handbill (AOR #2.218).

The Straight Theater's pictorial themes of astrology, tarot, numerology, ancient mysteries, anti-war, free love, freedom to choose cannabis, and to explore self, all issues still with us today, reoccur frequently from 1966—1969 throughout all the Straight Theater's enterprises. These themes weave a story about a group of people whose vision and semantics affected the entire civilization.

The Straight Ashbury Viewing Society and Straight Theater School of the Performing Arts began producing many fine works of graphic arts in poster, handbill, and brochure formats beginning in May of 1966.

The Straight Ashbury Viewing Society coupled Albert Neiman and Woody Haut to the Straight Theater Enterprises family in order to show movies each Friday in the Armenian Hall on Page Street while we brought the theater up to code. This viewing club presented underground experimental and cinema banned from standard movie theaters to a "private" yet open to the public membership. Here I honed my skills in business by dealing with the city and routinely performing emergency equipment repair as Owsley's latest edition was coming on.

One and two color handbills printed on colored stock by various artists, ranging from fine art to very primitive, appeared weekly under the Straight Ashbury Viewing Society single eye logo, to advertise the underground experimental cine. The first were announcements for the premiere screening Friday July 22, 1966 listing Mekias, Brakage, Kenneth Anger, Warhol, Baille and many more. The first real art in this series featured a three-bulb chandelier with large vertical red and orange stripes in the background. The artist was G. Sorkin, the billing for July 22 & 29. A fine pen and ink of winged fantasy figures flying for August 19 & 26, for Ron Rice and Bruce Baillie, by C.C. Bet----(obscured), two collages for Sept 2 and Sept 9 by R. Roc, a WC Fields bust advertising a few SF 50's Films Sept 30, and a very arty negative photo figure for Cinemapoetica Sept 23, completes my collection. The story includes

much more because it was our introduction to the scene; the filmmakers, the underground avant garde shakers, artists, saints, demon worshipers and the public.

The Straight Theater Performing Arts Workshops for the acting and film company (held in the old Masonic Hall next to the Theater) issued handbills like a Straight Film School line drawing of film projectors, reel and LSD & STP in prominent lettering.

Caitlin Huggin,s a Benington Collage Graduate moved to the Haight and rented a historic Shrader and Wailer corner house, sharing it with Bobby Collins and the earliest Oracle people. When she came to the Masonic hall to purchase membership cards in the Viewing Society and saw the spacious studios with large wooden floors she went to find the manager in the theater next door. She found me alone in the office still in suit and tie just back from hassling permits at city hail. She noticed my dirty fingernails. I noticed her good looks, under a hood of a patchwork fur jacket. My partner Bil, upon entering, made a remark about her three wheel Harley parked under the office window in the service entrance off the Haight Street sidewalk. Soon after, Caitlin joined with Annette Rice, a local dancer, to form the Straight Theater Dance Workshop. Later, Caitlin's sister Megan and my sister Connie ran a Children's Workshop in the adjoining long window-lined room, one flight up from Haight Street.

The first handbill printed for Dance workshop was the black and red dancing Krishna by DEY(?). An 8 x 14 all-copy handbill/brochure, done in purple, came out in the Fall of '66. Artist Terre, an Art Nouveau era throw- back in pea coat, black sideburns, and van dike, penned lightly dressed, classical women in head and bust poses, for the next three dance brochures. Terre also produced art for the Theater throughout its history, until the end when his work for the Magical Mystery Tour's appearance, in March, 1969, was one of the last works commissioned by the Straight.

STRAIGHT THEATER POSTERS AND STRAIGHT GRAPHICS

Under the leadership of Hillel Resner, the main thrust of Straight Graphics was to advertise presentations of major and minor performing and musical artists in the theater. The Dead, Janis and Big Brother, Country Joe and the Fish, Quicksilver, Charlatans, Mother Earth, Santana, & It's a Beautiful Day, Steve Miller, Blue Cheer were just a few

of the names featured on our posters and handbills. The Dead, the Quick, Janis and Big Bro were all close friends who rehearsed in the closed theater and hung out, creating a strong bond to the neighborhood and what it stood for.

The Poster procession began with the Dead-McClure Multi Media Show with lights by Reginald at the Avalon. George Jacobs, a tall yet stooped young man with long blond hair, a broad face and natural smile who had just arrived from art school in Kansas City, created the amazing lettering on the poster for this event in an interlocking zig zag pattern. As AOR # 2.16 it's included under unusual Avalon shows. After George arrived in San Francisco with his small blond wife Teresa, he dropped acid and traversed the city cosmically, landing in the blossoming Haight Ashbury, then moved into a converted garage on Page Street. George was soon commissioned by James D. Wilson, the president of STE, to do the Straight Theater's first poster. George approached Fillmore poster artist Wes Wilson who was standing across from the newly renamed Straight and asked, "What color contrast would give the design the most jump?" Wes's answer; "red & blue". The results were an outstanding work, as brightly vibrant - leaping off the page today, as it was decades ago. Unfortunately, soon after joining San Francisco's artistic movement, George and his Wife Teresa reportedly died in a mountain car crash, and the world was cheated from ever knowing what great art would have followed.

The hand bill (AOR # 2.15) for the Avalon Event was created by Linda Nimmer. It is a black and white fantasy of flight, flying rockets, and elephants, bills the Dead, the Wildflower, lights by Reginald and Ed Bullins of Black Arts West. A black and white generic theater opening ad appeared in "Illumination" poetry magazine and was reprinted as a 11x17 poster, also in May of 1966.

In June, Chester Helms needed some backing for his Bo Diddly three venue weekend debacle. Jim Obligated with a \$1000 and every weekend for the next year I was at the Avalon collecting what was possible and enjoying the scene especially Bill Hams Light show. I took 16mm film of this period including the Artist Liberation Front , The Day they made acid illegal 6-66, the Diggers, in the panhandle, the riots, Haight Street and the human Bein in Golden Gate Park and still project it as part of my light show and on video.

On March 5 1967 the benefit for Newstage and the Straight held at the Avalon produced the next major poster; an eight color abstract face by B Kliban, before he became world famous for his cats', starring Moby Grape, Big Brother, Country Joe and Fish, the Sparrow, lights by North American Ibis Alchemical Co.

In June the approaching opening of the Theater resulted in an outpouring of poster art. Jack Digovia's 23 x 17.5 Purple, White and Yellow portrayal of a naked mother giving birth to a snake and a baby advertised "The Dossier" a play presented by the Straight Theater Company Fridays and Saturdays before the evenings concert.

An artist and poet named only, Ama did a handbill in pastels of a sun head man advertising Poets Theater for the weekly Monday night event.

A red and green handbill by C. (Anderson ?) featuring a wreath browed Roman advertising Julius Caesar's run at the theater also appeared at this time.

Frank Melton a poet and pilgrim later proprietor of a coffee house in the Avenues created a large Mayan stone god in red, green, purple, and black for the poster listing Quicksilver, Country Joe, Big Brother and the Dead among others for the opening weekend July 21-23. It appears as AOR * 2.220

Reginald and Straight Lightning which opening weekend included Calliopes Company's Bill Tara, Nancy Parker and Stephen White showered the stage and~ danced loon in psychedelic lights as the people danced in wild abandon. Sunday night I obtained from the still shadowy Michael Rinconshuto (as per last report in Vanity Magazine) the first publicly seen ruby red lazer beam brought from Stanford's "death ray" faculty 's in house light show. I preset the small red dot on Phil's bass amp light later moving it to make a jewel in the naval of Neal Cassady's bare torso as he waxed poetic while the Dead tuned. The paisley audience cracked up.

By that Summer 1967 my partners and I had raised and spent over a hundred thousand dollars to renovate and bring up to code, the long abandoned building. We made a 5000 sq. ft parquet dance floor where the first twenty six rows of seat had been, leaving the proscenium stage at one end and the seats under the balcony with giant 40 foot high light show screens covering all the walls surrounding the dance floor.

Owlsley's temporarily donated sound system was hidden behind the walls.

The city had been forced, step by step, to issue permits and pass us in our inspections, solely because of the perseverance and precise hard work we demonstrated. Finally we had the health, the building, electrical, plumbing, and public assembly permits; all except the dance permit.

In this major metropolitan town, where if the king can't dance no one does, the issuance of permission to hold dances is controlled by the police department. The Chief's police board postponed hearing after hearing and finally voted no dancing allowed.

The appeal process took several months with headline coverage by the Chronicle and Examiner and even though witnesses like Bill Graham and Dame Judith Anderson pleaded our case, ultimately, it was denied. The Board of Permit appeals backed the Chief; No dancing allowed. The dissenting member, 70 year old Chairman Peter Boudurios chided the rest of the board saying that they condemn what they can't do themselves and then complimented the theater for living up to every possible covenant and condition. This bit of background explains the billing continuity on the posters by listing when an event was a dance, concert Dance Class, or even Kinetic Happening. After the last appeal was turned down we began calling our events "dance classes", an outgrowth of Caitlin's Straight Theater Dance Workshop. By not calling them dances we were not a "dancehall keeper" and thus we were now completely immune from police hassle. Just as a year earlier when we called our public underground cinema a "private Viewing Society" and thus were able to show prohibited films, free from legal sanction. It was semantics in action. This bit of word play placated the Gendarmes, our sacred guardians of dance, when no amount of pleading, publicity, and high priced lawyers could.

Terre was the graphic artist for the Aug 4-6 concert, creating a Pan playing flute with appreciative women, vibrating in blue and red. Then Bob Harwayne the resident artist-photographer, did a full size woman's head and then a stepped ragweed motif.

Randy Sala,s arguably one of the most talented Straight Theater artists, gave birth to the Straight logo Moxieman, which was reproduced as a large poster by Berkeley Bonaparte and financed by the well known dealer, Goldfinger. Randy created a memorable Big Brother poster in a

zigzagging red, blue, and black Indian motif for Sept 1—3 (AOR # 2.228). Then a Steve Miller and Little Richard poster in red and green featuring a Tarot theme for Sept 15-17 (AOR * 2.221) Both featured lights by Reginald.

The Sept 17 misfired Little Richard concert was also advertised with a split font red and black soul style cardboard stock poster picturing Little Richard and listing eight other soul acts. The unsigned lettering work was probably done at the printers.

Randy's use of Egyptian figures in his large, subtly colored "Equinox of the Gods", a Kenneth Anger presentation in the theater on Sept 21, is a stand alone work of art. Pictured in AOR #2.226 the knave faced naked lyre player kneels before the hawk faced potent. Headlining was the ill-fated Bobby Beausoleil's Magick Powerhouse of Oz, The SF Mime Troupe, Charlatans, Congress of Wonders and Straight Dancers and Lights by North American Ibis. Bobby " Snowfox " Beausoleil had been portraying Lucifer in Kenneth Anger's work in progress "Lucifer Rising" which was projected as part of the "show".

Kenneth returned to the theater office the next day and accused us of stealing the now-missing film. We said that we had not and as I rose to show him the way out, he accused me of towering over him and threatening him. We cleansed ourselves of the situation by performing a ceremony at the public trash basket to rid ourselves of two bad elements on Haight Street and felt we were protected from both situations at once.

Kenneth soon decided that Bobby had the missing film. Bobby split for LA and looking for stardom, joined Charlie Manson's gang, murdered Gary Hinman and has spent the rest of his life in jail.

The following Sunday, Sept 24, the Straight co-hosted with the Dead a free "Welcome to American Indian Equinox Celebration " and the Pow-Wow certainly cleansed any lingering bad vibes from the former participants. This event posted a beautiful work (poster and matching handbill) by an anonymous artist whose mystic mandala and tender words about the rock we share is moving even today. "Life is grafted on a fractured globe of rock/ we share a carpet of bones for plant and animal love".

In October, Chris Braga, an intense Asian American artist, created the yellow and blue work featuring an Indian head with Libra symbol necklace and the “Go Straight” man and the imperative “In God we Trust” for the Kaleidoscope performance and dance class with Caitlin Huggins, Head Instructress and sound by Dangerfield.

Next was Chris’s predominately red flying Dead in a mandala (AOR # 2.224) promoting the dance class concert as the Dead’s first in months, with lights by Reginald. Chris also created the black and white Poster for the “ Lady Aoi” and “ Kantan”, two modern Japanese Noh plays presented by the Straight Theater Players seven days a week during the end of October and beginning of November 1967. Chris created many handbills over the years most notable is the premiere of Santana Blues Band appearing second under a band called Mad River. (AOR #2.218)

Luther Greene’s b/w photo collage for the Charlatans, C.O.W., Soft Pretzel, Ann Halprin Kinetic Catalyst Workitout, was for Oct 20-21. Luther did a handbill for the Movies showing “face of war” and “How I Won The War” and the premiere of “You are What you eat” Dec 5-18. Luther’s hand bill, “the Straight theater gets you on” for Sons of Champlin, All Men Joy, nude doesn’t have a date, just Fri- Sun shows the roof coming off the theater and a submarine going down the street. Also without date is his drawing of the theater with dimensions and some facility personnel showing him as the Director. He also penned the flyers for MCDUCK presents movies series.

Terre, just to be different, innovated an orange cut-out puppet poster for the next Kinetic event which featured Charlie Musselwhite, and Wildflower Oct 27 & 28, (AOR # 2.222).

Next was LULU’s shocking yellow and purple o- art submarine world of amorous mermaids, for the November 3 & 4 Incredible Fish, pH Factor Jug band, COW, kinetic dance happening. Country Joe had just split from the group for a solo career and this was Barry Melton and the rest of the original Fish’s premiere.

On Nov 5 the Theater presented a free event co-sponsored by the Diggers. •It produced the blue and red “End of the War” poster of Ho and LBJ hugging. (AOR # 2.219) for the poster, but no number for the slightly different accompanying two color handbills with condensed text. Neither is signed.

During the summer of '67, KMPX, the world's first underground fm radio, united Big Daddy Tom Donahue and some early family dog people like Jack and Patty Towle, Chan McLaughlin (Travis T Hip), Lynne Hughes, and the dark haired Prince Valient, Milan Melvin, to create a long play radio format that appealed to the rising tide of fellow heads.

The Straight was persuaded to begin radio advertising to reach our audience and had great success. For a very reasonable weekly expenditure of \$150-500 we could reach 10-20,000 hip listeners. As the competition with Bill Graham and Chet increased, the budget squeeze forced a choice between posters (\$ 350 for art and \$500 for printing) or radio instead of using both as we had been doing. The radio worked effectively until the strike some time later, when it caused us a crisis at the Straight, but also lead to an unexpected bonus. In the long term, it was pennywise and pound foolish.

At the end of 1967 KMPX and the Psychic Research Foundation, who were the same group of original Family Doggers and Virginia City folks, AKA The Psychedelic Cattlemen's Association, presented the "2nd annual GROPE FOR PEACE" at the Straight on December 26. This Rick Griffin poster appears as AOR # 2.230. Paul Grushkin, the author of AOR, writes in the Jan 1995 Guernsey's catalog for 40 years of Rock and Roll that he and Tim Patterson pay "personal homage to an obscure Stanley Mouse 'Grope of Peace' poster" as an example of keeping one's honesty while conducting business. Rick Griffin's only work for the Straight was this 19 1/4" x 28" masterpiece featuring descending bird shaped lettering forming "grope for peace" touching an ascending phuba (Tibetan magic wand) with wings and two hearts below with red and green sun rays radiating in the BG. I place great value on the ones I have retained for mystical as well as artistic reasons.

The handbills for 1967 following the June 16th Christening (the night Goldfinger was manning the door when Jimmy Hendrix showed up) include those for the opening, for Julius Caesar, a frankly phallic work signed with the initial R. for the Second Coming & Wildflower, August 4-6th, and maxed out for the first Straight Theater Dance (class,) a Dead Concert on Sept 29 & 30 and Oct 1st. Bill Resner issued an abstract piece directed at the establishment who couldn't dance mentioning them by name inviting them to dance class that might be safer and better than topless. Two more handbills were done for this Dead concert both unsigned, only one of three is pictured in AOR , it as * 2.225.

Luther Greene's nude handbill was done for the Charlatans "Soft Pretzel" Oct 20-21. The booking and graphics chairman, Hillel Resner, did an astrology chart for the Nov 17th weekend as the handbill for the Appearance of QuickSilver Messenger Service and John Fahey.

Chris Braga's stoned cat and hooka advertising Santana as second on the bill is AOR * 2.218. The group was still called the Santana Blues Band and was fresh off the road where they had been following Caesar Chavez and playing at the Grape Striker's camps. They returned to town and drove their old bus directly to and into the Theater, smashing the marquee. Our friends from Mission High played regularly at the Straight soon becoming Headliners with a following huge enough to be "discovered" by old friend Bill Graham and never again available for us to book. Benefits for Dr. David Smith's Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and the Shire School produced handbills with crude art and long lists of performers.

Terre finished '67 With a handbill of a galloping female centaur being chased by a Sagittarius figure for Mt Rushmore, Clover, with Michael Mc Clures's play "The Blossom", Dec 18—21 also advertising the Dec 22-23 Clover & Black Swan concert.

Stoned New Years 1968 used an invitation format for the Charlatans, Salvation & Clover 9- dawn party. Terre began the year with a naked mermaid for "Notes from the Underground", Jan 9-1,1 on the same handbill with Allmen Joy and Womb. Jan 12-13, and then a nude bust advertising Antonionni's Red Desert, the Charlatans , Sons of Champlin for Jan 23-25.

Posters for 1968 include Tad Hunter AKA San Andreas Fault's 14 1/4" x 21 3/4" black and white spiral lettered Kaleidoscope, James Cotton and It's a Beautiful Day concerts March 19-24.

Malachi: Holy music event, April 21, a 17" wide x 11" high B&W poster, is a portrait of the musician with lettering and three feathers featuring Ashoke Fakir, was unsigned by artist, but financed by Bobby Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman, who had brought Ashoke to this country. The times sure were changing. Malachi's custom made \$800 sacred guitar/sitar was stolen, putting a pallor on the weekend, foreshadowing the urban turmoil that soon followed, when robbers stole a whole truck full of band equipmen,t and thugs assaulted theater patrons occasionally.

The weed dried up, squeezed out by the use of paraquat, coercion, and bribery in Mexico by Nixon's war on drugs "operation intercept". Strychnine laced acid came in from all over. The Love Conspiracy turned sour, kidnapping and the murders of Super Spade and Shaub accompanied more meth and heroin flooding the streets.

By this time the wave of barefoot runaways who had come for the Summer of Love were attracting human predators of the worst kind. Beyond individuals, whole groups in the Haight, like Armed Love Commune, the Black Panthers, the Hells Angels, and the cops, were armed and growing more violent every day. It showed in the streets and in the Theater.

Chris Braga's unsigned handbill "gathering storm on a clear day you can see Aries" was for 2 films and eight bands March 12— 14 & March 15 & 16.

One day after the assassination of Martin Luther King and one day before the murder of Black Panther Bobby Hutton by Oakland Police The Beatles sent a surprise benefit for us to share with KMPX, now besieged by strike and lockout, bringing us the amazing box office of the Northern Hemisphere Premiere of the Beatles' "Magical Mystery Tour". Milan Melvin had fought to get the "dirty" Beatles film through customs at the airport and motorcycled it to the Straight for the 3am showing to 2000 waiting fans and then the around the clock run. The handbill for the April 5 event was a copy of the Beatles telegram congratulating u, printed in red.

Later a second showing, this time a co-benefit with Chet and the Family Dog, exhibited the film at the Straight and the Palace Theater in North Beach, and used the same red telegram format as a flyer.

The "Straight Sheet newspaper" a comic strip format handbill for the Charlatans April 7, was drawn by Paul Brown. He used the same strip format for Allmen Joy , Flamin Groovies, and Curly Cooks' Hurdy Gurdy Band and Petrus for the May 17 & 18 shows.

Our friend, SAFs Tad, did a masked crusader whose message:" What are you apes up to? What goes on in your warped brains?" was probably directed at the Straight's people, advertised the Save the Straight AGAIN with Big Brother and the Holding co April 24. This night Janis had everyone in the palm of her hand while she whispered, wailed

and beautifully sang. Caitlin said she could see angels coming down on clouds all around Janis during this intimate performance/experience.

A color flyer titled "Report on The State of the Straight" featuring the marquee with wording, "Perseverance Brings Success" was put out for a meeting at Grotten School April 2nd, perhaps by the Communications Co.

Two posters were used as a whole and also cut to handbill and posterettes size. For May 28—June 1st, Chris Bragas's red "get yourselves together" headlining Allmen Joy, Indian Headband, Cleveland Wrecking, Notes from UG, Ace of Cups, and Liberty Street, featured a hand-drawn Straight exterior with an overall Gemini theme so the poster worked as a double image connected full size 14' x 24' or cut as single 7.5" x 24 "sheets.

Terre's "Cure All medicine bottle, spoon and a recurring Terre theme, a watch, done for the Charlatans, Cleveland Wrecking co June 14-15, appears in AOR #2.229 as a red, yellow, and blue handbill but was put out primarily six up as a 10" x 21" poster.

Chris's handbill "Flashtime" noted the Straight is back in action thanks to J Joplin Big Brother, the groups, all you beautiful people and especially the Mystery host advertised Kaleidoscope May 7-9 and Santana Blues Band headlining May 10-11.

Terre's turn of the century French post cards advertised the Charlatans, Flaming Groovies, and Room Beyond the Closet" May 12 & 13, Malachai on the 14th, and Mad River & Frumious Bandersnatch the 16th & 17th.

Tad's Captain America, drawn for Allmen Joy and Curly Cook, features a nice Straight Lightning light bulb logo and was, as always, signed San Andreas Fault. The blue, red, yellow, and white lightning for Charlie Musselwhite and Dan Hicks May 14-25, (AOR # 2.231) was also done by Tad Hunter/ SAF.

I did a simple line drawing acid abstract of the Theater and a supernatural space being in various colors handbill for Salvation, Mt Rushmore, and The Tree of Life as well as doing the lights June 5-7.

That summer, Jim Philips, the fabulous artist who did "Dr Moto's Medicine Show" then created "The Next Supper", a wonderful five color

piece of print-ready art that freaked out printers and poster publishers alike. After wide rebuke, he sought me out, bringing the 32 x 25 original to my house. As Caitlin and I saw him for the first time coming up the hill to our pad in Larkspur, he looked like Christ with similar hair, beard, and vibrant demeanor. "The Next Supper" has many of modern life's dilemmas wrapped in a comic format, presented in the context of the "Last Supper". Here Christ, behind a pile of weed, is surrounded by comic heroes all smoking weed while a mob is breaking in the back door under the cross and a paisley roof sky dotted with flying saucer light fixtures. Picasso's Guernica, the California Bear Flag, the wheat-straw and white zig zag packs are fully detailed in the background. All the characters and icons were so prevalent in our common mind, they seemed to become universal symbols and copyrights did not concern us. We loved it. I hocked the MGB Steve White had given me, then Jim and I went to get it printed. Jim's first choice, and several other high quality litho houses, showed us the door. We finally prevailed upon a printer willing to overcharge us, and printed 5000 and then distributed them for pennies above cost. These rare posters, unfortunately, were printed on acid-rich paper which decomposes at the first sign of moisture and many have suffered untimely ruin. I think this poster is classic art and a reprint would do great today with a wider open market, perhaps with altered or generic characters.

Caitlin Huggins' silk screen of a large Leo sun face was for the Congress of Wonders, Allmen Joy, Phoenix and a play, "Room beyond the Closet" for Aug 2-4. for a run of 100 on 17" x 32" billboard paper in green on brown, gold, white. I began managing the Congress of Wonders, then Caitlin and I were married in the Straight Theater, surrounded by friends and family.

As the winter came on, Chris Braga drew block letters saying "1/2 off on all dancing this weekend" Nov 24-25 features Freedom Highway, Clover, Psyche, and Doug Williams, with lights by the (Black Shit) Puppy Farm.

Luther Greene's hand bill for December featured Cartoons, "You are What You eat", Peter Yarrow's film on the Haight, with AllmenJoy, Clover and Indian Puddin' Pipe and the New Years billing in the warm, safe, outrageous, Straight Theat(re) As the street got rougher the two boys and a multilith Communications Company moved out of Caitlin's Dance office, a free to them, space and began more diatribes, inciting street people to take over the Straight on behalf of the community".

By 1969 New Years, the economy was far from the high rolling era of '65-67 and cash was tight. People who risked coming to the district were now regularly assaulted by various groups and individuals. Bill Graham was keeping large and intermediate acts from playing anywhere in NorCal before or after his gigs, by contract and a nod, greased with a river of cash. People were staying away from our theater in droves but we plodded forward.

The '69 New Years gold with black ink 13 x 21 poster was another doubled image poster that used single portraits of a bare breasted female beatifically posed. Terre's self portrait is found on her brooch necklace and earrings. A halo around her head spells Straight Theater New Years and continues to create a nine so both images together, one inverted, create a 69. The billing was Indian Puddin' and Pipe (Matthew Katz's latest "property" one that never got off the ground), Allmen Joy, (Hillel's Band), the Congress of Wonders, (my group), Clover, (Cousin Robert's group) & Freedom Highway.

The people who had been my partners, left after the bleak new year's show but I continued doggedly on. Bill Resner began his transition into the world of printing and advertising with the Paisley Penguin Productions and later American Gemini Advertising printing and publishing many fine graphic works including the PotArt series, Hillel Resner started Tulip Records going on to publish MIX Magazine , Luther Justin Greene Studio C Recording, Brent Dangerfield engineering Santana's and Its A Beautiful Days first albums, Jim Wilson went the way of the poet, and I got more involved with managing the Congress of Wonders.

The Monday night poetry series had died and in its place had come the former San Francisco State English teacher Steve Gaskin leading a huge extended family eventually to the Farm in Tennessee. Now the 500 or so people got together every Monday night on the large wood floor to listen to the teacher talk about metaphysics, family, and reality. Advertising was by word of mouth and free air play. Steve's partner in a marriage of four, Michael, designed a blue red yellow and purple mandalla as a poster which represented the group harmony like a flag.

Another bright spot was the return showing of the "Magical Mystery Tour" with the Congress of Wonders presented by Apple Corps and the Brindle Brothers as a Benefit for Dr David Smith's National Free Clinic March 5—6 at the Straight then in Portland Or. at the Milwaukee Theater.

Terre drew a great Beatles dressed as wizards and combined it with the faces of the Congress for the Handbill and print ad for our friend the good doctor.

Caitlin and her sister Megan had led by example when our daughter Kether's home birth and that of her cousin Shandi, changed the minds of Dr David Smith and Ina Mae and Steve Gaskin who had expressed fears about the wisdom of home birth and have subsequently led the field, David in public health and Ina Mae in home births.

Gary Grimshaw was the artist for the last true Straight Theater poster, done for the MC5 March 14-16 found in AOR as number 2.227. The winged white panther sprouting spears of lightning below a pot leaf heralding MC5, the Congress of Wonders, and Clover, over a flag of stars and stripes and two columns of symbols for the events astrology. The stars must have foretold the financial loss, but heavy beneficial gain in cosmic human contact and personal interaction.

John Sinclair the famous poet and pot revolutionary was the MC5's manager and came to our attic room at the Congress of Wonders Commune where our daughter Kether had been born, to set up the details for the MC5 appearance. We smoked a joint and he told me of the gruesome situation back in Michigan with the narc s hounding poets instead of chasing criminals. One le miserable mutant had hounded John until a freely passed joint turned the poet into outlaw. Other artists were now outlaws as well. Gary, who I didn't meet, had come to San Francisco following the trail of great Detroit artists like Mouse and Jim Gurley before him, only he was underground. Under these dire circumstance he created a revolutionary piece of art that stands as a rallying point even today. Gary has expressed interest in reprinting this icon piece so maybe it will be available once again. Until then I can hope I'll be lucky enough to run across someone willing to sell or trade me one of the originals.

Messiah's One World Crusade, a UFO commune sponsored the last event so the large black and white poster and companion handbill might well be the last Straight Theater graphics. The poster featured a split image photo of the commune posing on top of their bus facing a fisheye photo of the four story commune with the head of Alex Noonan "Messiah" floating in the air under the banner Messiah's World Communion. The text is a calendar for the week of April 1-5 1969 advertising Sons of Champlin, Passion, Marvin Gardens, The Angels

Own Band Chorus, other days featured Bicycle, Asoke Fakir, Morning Glory , The Congress of Wonders, Rush, Last Mile, Glass Mountain all of whom might have played. The featured artist Tim Leary (God Willing) had bigger things on his mind and of course did not show.

What I consider to be The actual last Straight Theater poster wasn't printed until years after I closed the Straight's doors in the summer of 1969.

The final poster printed in 1973 or 4 the depicts the Haight and Cole neighborhood after years of continued Urban decay in a green and black line drawing. The Straight's edifice sprouted with attractive street art and icons of revolutionary heroes towers over people being hassled by cops under the tattered marquees. It was produced by "Tax Funds for People's Enterprises!" 439 Cole. The headline reads " The Straight Theater is Our Building: Fight for It." The building however was destroyed to make way for commercial use and is now an apartment building at the corner of Haight and Cole. What it represents may be for future generations to decide but I'll always believe it was an historical turning point bringing us closer to the Age of Aquarius where people might live in artistic and peaceful harmony.

***Peace, Love, Power to the People,
and as Brother Tosh sang, "Legalize It".***

R E Williams