

From: Lisa Stone <lstone@saic.edu>
Subject: **Re: Salvation Mountain update**
Date: February 14, 2010 1:31:08 PM PST
To: Daniel Paul <danielpaul@gmail.com>, "Lisa Stone & Don Howlett" <lstone@centurytel.net>, Jo Farb Hernandez <jfh@cruzio.com>

Daniel,

Thanks for the update. Very sorry to know more about Leonard's fragile state and that others are not as sensitive as they should be in their efforts to "help". An age old story.

Jim is going to Palm Springs tomorrow, for 8 days, mostly for Modernism Week but will be going to see Leonard for at least a day. His cell = 312. 515-8108. Let me know if you want him to do anything, or feel free to call him.

Jo, I think we should discuss the ways that SPACES can advocate for assistance and preservation of sites, and take a public stance on specific site preservation issues, at our upcoming meeting.

The main problem I perceive is that there isn't a family member or trusted friend who can represent Leonard's interests--so those who wish can freely come on site and do whatever they want, and even represent themselves as acting in his best interest. Leonard has to do it for himself and is not completely able to do so.

to be continued, thank again,

Lisa

At 1:12 PM -0800 2/14/10, Daniel Paul wrote:

Lisa and Jo,

I want to give you the nutshell version of the Salvation Mountain update. If you desire to hear more, just call me at (213) 215-4161. Please be a little careful as to who gets this email as I don't want it somehow ending up back with the people I met out there yesterday, or any of the other potential faction folks associated with the Mountain.

Leonard seems very good! And I was pleasantly surprised at this. Older yes, no dementia that I saw, though looking into his eyes directly there was a little blankness that I've seen in other elderly people.

My understanding is that last summer was extremely hard on him. His car was stolen and he really was relegated to the mountain, and the heat. Apparently there is talk of him living with his brother in Ohio over the Summer or part of it, but he may not go for that.

I met three people yesterday who are taking it upon themselves to "help him." I really do not think that they mean any harm, and I don't think they are taking advantage of him. With that said, I do sense that their egos are becoming very enmeshed with Leonard, Salvation Mountain and its preservation. They were way too much in Leonard's space, and not complimentary of any others who may perceive in them what they accuse these others of. They need to let go.

Talk to you later,

Daniel

--

Lisa Stone
curator

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From: Daniel Paul <danielpaul@gmail.com>
Subject: Hello/ Salvation Mountain
Date: February 6, 2010 1:28:25 PM PST
To: "Lisa Stone & Don Howlett" <dlstone@centurytel.net>, info@spacesarchives.org

Dear Lisa,

Hello,

How are you? I hope that this message finds you well. Thank you again for stopping by Simi Valley to check out the ARG presentation. I wanted to convey some news to you about another folk art environment out here, and please convey it to any entities that might be interested. It is about Salvation Mountain. I need to preface all of this by saying that I have not yet been out there myself, and I plan to go out there probably next weekend. I know that you went out there and Leonard seemed kind to you-- I'm happy to hear that.

I have heard it from three separate sources now that things are rapidly deteriorating out there. There is some concern that Leonard is suffering from the affects of advanced old age, and there is even greater concern that various parties are trying to take advantage of Leonard, Leonard's money, or take Salvation Mountain for themselves. Leonard constructed Salvation Mountain on land owned by the State of California, and a few years ago they were willing to unload it for something like \$3,000.00. If anyone wants to make a purchase, now may a good time.

From what I have heard, people are starting to take over Leonard's tours, in some cases charge admission, and these same people are keeping Leonard at bay from his guests. Perhaps they are coming from well intended place deep in their own hearts-- one can only hope. There is the massage guy from San Diego and his friend. There are the two people from a Seventh Day Adventist church who come just about every day. There is the recently divorced single lady who has found Jesus and doesn't hold back in inserting that message in the tours she now gives.

There is some concern that the massage guy might be inserting himself into Leonard's bank account. Apparently there is talk that the two church people are trying to get Leonard to give Salvation Mountain to their church. The divorcee is conveying a fundamentalist message about God that Leonard never asserted, which was the appeal of going there. He "let the mountain do the talking."

I think the saddest thing I have heard involves Larry Yust, who first took me to the mountain in 1995 and created a remarkable documentary about Leonard and the Mountain that first broke the news big time about the environment back in the mid-90s. Larry has always been a friend and supporter of Leonard-- to the point where Leonard would spend Christmases at the Yust family home in Los Angeles. Larry was very concerned about what he saw when he recently went out there and got into a bit of a verbal altercation with the masseuse. The next time Larry went out there, Leonard called Larry "the Devil." and was extremely cold to Larry and his daughter, Victoria. Leonard has also become cold to the owner of the local cafe he used to frequent every day--- she too was concerned about him, and these other weird folks.

The whole point is that Leonard now has a bunch of "handlers" that all seem a little questionable and suspicious. If there is going to be a decision to preserve Salvation Mountain beyond Leonard, that decision needs to be made now, by foundations, agencies, or other interested parties who may be willing to make the purchase, and work out the liability and other access issues. I should mention that one of the emails I received was from someone who lives at Slab City, and he wasn't to fond of Larry-- who he thought approached Salvation Mountain "as if he owned the place." But just from my experience, Larry has always been good to Leonard, and I think Larry is genuinely concerned now.

So, in a nutshell, things really are problematic out there, and it sounds like Leonard may need some help--- one hopes that he'd accept it.

Take Care,

Daniel

From: Lisa Stone <lstone@saic.edu>
Subject: RE: Hello/ Salvation Mountain
Date: February 6, 2010 2:12:48 PM PST
To: "Jo Farb Hernandez" <jfh@cruzio.com>, "Daniel Paul" <danielpaul@gmail.com>
Cc: dbarth@dbnewmedia.com, kberry@nu.edu

Daniel,

Thanks so much for the update. When Don and I visited recently, Leonard definitely had aged much in the last year (based on videos of him that Jim has taken in 2009 and 2008). We were there on a weekday and there were lots of visitors, and Leonard was giving all the tours, very anxious to do so. (We went on a few of them, and hung out for several hours, and he would ask us periodically if we wanted a tour, so forgot he had already done so.) The two guys from San Diego were there and I didn't get any bad feeling from them. They seemed genuinely helpful, getting dvds and postcards for everyone, sharing information, etc. We brought a bunch of paint from Sarah Velas and the one guy I talked to most (Alex? I forget his name), was very protective and wanted to make sure it was only latex paint. He and his buddy were re-painting sections of the Mountain, and I overheard him training the other guy, making sure that he would do it exactly as Leonard wanted it done. It seems like he does all the adobe building, under Leonard's direction. I desperately hope he isn't messing w/ Leonard's \$. But now I recall that he was encouraging Leonard to go to town and check on his post office box, to see if there was something from the state. The way he said it sounded like he was helping but not taking over control, but who knows.

Leonard couldn't possibly be more vulnerable. He's literally out in the open, aging, and very likely not in the best shape to evaluate people who are "trying to help". The site is clearly at a crossroads, from being Leonard's and under his control, to moving beyond his control, and eventually, beyond his life. It's arguably one of the highly significant sites of its time, and like so many other sites, embodies the challenging issues of how can it function beyond the life of the maker. In this case, ownership will be critical.

The guy from San Diego said that the California Teacher's Union owns the property--they bought up tons of property in CA for their retirement fund portfolio. If they're going to sell it, it may be very very difficult to find an entity that would/could take on the management of the site, including liability insurance.

I'm ccing my friends Karla Berry and Don Barth, who live in San Diego and who visited with us, in case they have ideas of San Diego institutions that might be interested.

I don't have any answers at the moment but I agree with Jo's idea to share the info and invite others to join in the conversation: Terri Yoho, Phil Linares, and anyone else in California that might be able to assist Leonard.

Daniel--thanks so much for filling us in. And keep us posted on Bottle Village,

best,

Lisa

Hi Daniel,

Wow, this sounds terrible! I just had a long conversation yesterday with Phil Linares, Chief Curator of the Oakland Museum, who said that he'd been out last month and was able to get a good 1 1/2 hour video of Leonard. He said that Leonard was trying to still do all the tours himself-said he had up to 450 people each weekend!-but didn't mention any of the distressing elements you've outlined. If you don't mind, I'm going to forward your letter to Phil to see what he thinks about this.

If SM is for sale for such a small price, it'd be the bargain of the century, but someone still needs to be there to protect it, etc. Sigh.

Let me try to follow up a bit and check this out.

All best, and thanks for bringing this to our attention. Do let us know what you find out if you get out there next weekend. I'm overdue for a visit myself! Haven't been in 1 1/2 years.

All best, and more soon, no doubt!

jo

From: Daniel Paul [<mailto:danielpaul@gmail.com>]
Sent: Saturday, February 06, 2010 1:28 PM
To: Lisa Stone & Don Howlett; info@spacesarchives.org
Subject: Hello/ Salvation Mountain

Dear Lisa,

From: Daniel Paul <danielpaul@gmail.com>
Subject: **Re: Hello/ Salvation Mountain**
Date: February 6, 2010 1:57:05 PM PST
To: Jo Farb Hernandez <jfh@cruzio.com>

Thank you for your quick reply Jo.

Larry and Seymour worked together often regarding Salvation Mountain, and that \$3,000 quote was given to Seymour about a year before he passed. I think that Leonard has got too much of what he once wished for and I'm guessing it is probably starting to get to him. I can definitely see the need for such help, I just don't want him (or the message of the Mountain) to be taken advantage of or hoodwinked.

I'll let you know if I get out there next weekend,

Be Well,

Daniel

On Sat, Feb 6, 2010 at 1:38 PM, Jo Farb Hernandez <jfh@cruzio.com> wrote:

Hi Daniel,

Wow, this sounds terrible! I just had a long conversation yesterday with Phil Linhares, Chief Curator of the Oakland Museum, who said that he'd been out last month and was able to get a good 1 ½ hour video of Leonard. He said that Leonard was trying to still do all the tours himself—said he had up to 450 people each weekend!—but didn't mention any of the distressing elements you've outlined. If you don't mind, I'm going to forward your letter to Phil to see what he thinks about this.

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Let me try to follow up a bit and check this out.

All best, and thanks for bringing this to our attention. Do let us know what you find out if you get out there next weekend. I'm overdue for a visit myself...haven't been in 1 ½ years.

All best, and more soon, no doubt...

jo

From: Daniel Paul [mailto:danielpaul@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, February 06, 2010 1:28 PM
To: Lisa Stone & Don Howlett; info@spacesarchives.org
Subject: Hello/ Salvation Mountain

Dear Lisa,

Hello,

From: "Phil Linhares" <PLinhares@oaklandnet.com>
Subject: **RE: Hello/ Salvation Mountain**
Date: February 8, 2010 2:34:23 PM PST
To: "Jo Farb Hernandez" <jfh@cruzio.com>

Hi Jo, Thanks for Daniel Paul's letter re: Salvation Mountain. I didn't sense any of that happening while we were there, although two young men, one from San Diego (the culinary arts student) and the other from back east (the social worker) were "helping out".. The CA student escorted Leonard to breakfast and generally hung close to sort of "translate" what people were saying when Leonard couldn't hear so well,, and the social worker greeted visitors and talked with them while Leonard was touring others. I saw or heard no mention of money being exchanged. There was another guy retouching the paint on the mountain, and Leonard said he was expecting 10 men "on Monday to help out".

I don't quite understand the logic of wanting to take over Salvation Mountain...after Leonard goes to his reward, the place will inevitably deteriorate. The place is too remote to entice others to devote their lives to it, and the labor is too intensive. I can't imagine the property selling...it's three miles east of Niland, and Niland is no fine destination itself. The nearest gas and general civilization is about 30 miles north or south. As for Leonard's money, people have donated some to the cause, but I don't know how he keeps it or where, so it (if it exists) is probably the most vulnerable part of the whole scheme

This does make me ponder going out there soon again to see what's happening. Perhaps late spring. Leonard is getting a bit balmy, and the elements have taken their toll on his body. Thanks again for the letter, and please keep me posted on this.

Best Wishes,
Phil L.

From: Jo Farb Hernandez [<mailto:jfh@cruzio.com>]
Sent: Saturday, February 06, 2010 1:40 PM
To: Phil Linhares
Cc: 'Jo Farb Hernandez'
Subject: FW: Hello/ Salvation Mountain

Hey Phil,
Great to speak with you yesterday. Given your recent visit to SM, I thought I'd forward this note that I just received to see if you had any response to what Daniel is describing. I don't know if you know him, but Daniel is a really good guy who put a lot of energy over several decades into Prisbrey's Bottle Village.
Let me know what you think/know about the below.
Thanks...all best!
jo

From: Daniel Paul [<mailto:danielpaul@gmail.com>]
Sent: Saturday, February 06, 2010 1:28 PM
To: Lisa Stone & Don Howlett; info@spacesarchives.org
Subject: Hello/ Salvation Mountain

Dear Lisa,

Hello,

How are you? I hope that this message finds you well. Thank you again for stopping by Simi Valley to check out the ARG presentation. I wanted to convey some news to you about another folk art environment out here, and please convey it to any entities that might be interested. It is about Salvation Mountain. I need to preface all of this by saying that I have not yet been out there myself, and I plan to go out there probably next