

KING DUTT

Sample Chapter

By Mike Sacks, Scott Jacobson, Jon Wurster

CHAPTER ??: THE WINGED EAGLE CRUSADE

Though already an American music icon, by 1975 Dutton King was spiritually restless and at creative loose ends. He began phasing out his previous persona, the "poppin' and jivin'" Dance Wizard, after an appearance on Soul Train was widely panned as racist.

Jack Robertson, former manager: Did you ever see The Dick Cavett episode when Dutton gets into it with William F. Buckley? Dutton tells Buckley to screw himself, Buckley says the same, and Dutton threatens to give Buckley a "soul injection right up [Buckley's] ass"? Did that never air? That was the Dance Wizard talking. That's why Dance Wizard had to go.

Mick Lewis, guitarist: Bloody hell, I thought we'd go back to basic rock on the next album. Dutt would play these Creedence-style riffs at sound check and the lads and I would jump right in. It was proper music again, none of that disco shite.

Jack Robertson: Sure, I was concerned when he started buying all these records by Yes, King Crimson, Gong and Emerson, Lake and Palmer. But by 1975 he was just this unstoppable force. If anyone could pull this stuff off and put a commercial spin on it, it was Dutton, right?

Buzz Biskind, former Arista Records executive: Dutton wrote an eleven-minute ballad about a baby pelican who falls into the ocean and ends up on Coney Island. The bird crawls ashore and is cared for by an old Italian man, Giuseppe, who sells flavored ice on the boardwalk and is a necromancer. Also, the pelican only had one wing, which was symbolic, and thinking back that's probably why he fell into the ocean.

Dutton played it for us over the phone and afterwards we all looked at each other like, "Well that was weird."

Jack Robertson: Dutt couldn't believe the record company wasn't more responsive. His attitude was, "Hey, I've given you how many platinum records now? And this is how you repay me?" He had a point. Anyway, he switched gears.

Mick Lewis: [Dutton's] album concept always seemed a little...oh, I don't know...daft. Dead stupid, really. Course you couldn't tell Dutt that, could you? You went along for the ride.

Teddy Bigelow, keyboards and vibes: I was always an insatiable music fan, like Dutt. Couldn't really say that for the other guys in the band. So I alone saw what Dutt was going for. There'd been a few concept albums in the years leading up to this. "Rock operas," you know. [Classic 1971 album by The Who] *Who's Next* started out as a rock opera about a futuristic society where rock music is banned.

Dutton's concept was about a futuristic society where rock operas have been banned. And also oral sex. I'll never forget the first time I saw the lyrics for "We Shouldn't Be Doing This." I had to give him points for rhyming "fellatio" with "thar she blows."

Buzz Biskind: Dutton played a song for us over the phone. It was about a paramilitary force called "The Goon Squad" that breaks down an artist's door (that was the character's name, too: The Artist) and stops him from writing a rock opera. After that there was a very tenderly described love scene between two 69ing teenagers ["Give 'n' Take"]. Dutt finished and we all looked at each other like, "Well that was weird."

Jack Robertson: That's when Dutt started getting secretive. If you weren't on Dutt's short list, man, you didn't get to know what Dutt was up to.

When Dutt was interested in something he immersed himself 100%. That could be really great when it came to the creative side of things: "Diamonds or Broken Glass" never would have been the monster hit it was had Dutton not spent a month layering those vocal tracks with [Nazareth producer and helipad owner] Roy Thomas Baker.

But when it was a lifestyle thing, it could be really really bad: the all-bark diet, the rum baths, running ten miles a day in dress shoes. The teepee was just another one of those weird things Dutt did.

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite, roadie: Jesus Christ, the fucking teepee.

Teddy Bigelow: He said the shape of the teepee gave him a different kind of energy that was crucial to helping him write this new music. But we all knew it was because Jon Anderson from Yes had one. And of course Dutt's had to be bigger. And have a chemical toilet. Anderson's only had a porcelain chamber pot.

[Pic: Chemical toilet, with caption "Dutton King's chemical toilet (Photo courtesy the Hard Rock Café)"]

Mick Lewis: He did create some interesting work in the teepee. Which you could just as easily put down to the fucking massive amounts of hash he was smoking in there.

Steve Lamar, bass: Dutt loved hash. In the old neighborhood, hash is something you do not fuck with. Boys in Bensonhurst smell a hash stink on you? That's the last hash stink they're gonna smell. On you. 'Cause they're gonna beat you up.

From Dutton's Diary, May 12th, 1975: Played demos for [Yes keyboardist] Rick Wakeman... He agrees the keyboard parts aren't complicated enough... Turned pissy when I touched his cape...

[Pic: Mockup Dutt with Rick Wakeman, with caption "Dutt and Rick Wakeman. Wakeman did not like his cape touched."]

Mick Lewis: We're halfway through the new record, which we had to convince Dutton could not be a quadruple album, nor have a cover made from marijuana -- not hemp, marijuana -- and we get a call from this massive bleeding git Wavy Gravy.

Wavy Gravy, event organizer/Cosmic Fool: I helped organize Woodstock, man. Woodstock! We did it! Man, I can't believe we did it! The town authorities said you can't have 500,000 grubby peace lovers exploring their reality in one field, but we showed them they were mistaken, man! And like almost nobody died!

After Woodstock ended I was on a long bummer. You try to top 700,000 mud-kissed nature babies frolicking on a farmstead. Good luck with that, man.

It was time for me to hoist my freak flag. I started looking around for another dude with vision, man. And I met Dutt. He was a freak, and I was a freak, and we were destined to freak together.

From Dutton's diary, June 1st, 1975: Looking at naked self in the mirror... For first time in history all my tattoos make sense... The screaming eagle on my abs... The proud Apache with eagle headdress on cheek of ass ... The Philadelphia Eagles logo that still looks fucking amazing... My path is clear... Gotta do something involving eagles or something...

Jack Robertson: So suddenly Dutton's all charged up about eagles. To keep him happy we get Arista to release a record -- oh, don't think I didn't call in *beaucoup* favors from Buzz Biskind, who hated, hated, hated the idea -- called *Harry Wellington Eagle: Earth, Fire, Sky, Freedom*.

From Arista Records catalog, summer 1975: *Harry Wellington Eagle: Earth, Fire, Sky, Freedom*. Available in all formats. Interesting departure from blockbuster recording artist Dutton King. An eagle has adventures and learns things. Nineteen songs, two "tone fables."

Steve Lamar: I hated that album. It was a lot of noodling and synths with Dutt singing all this airy-fairy crap about an eagle who feels guilty for preying on fish. To me, that's a pussy eagle who wouldn't last ten minutes in the neighborhood I grew up in. Which was Bensonhurst. But lo and behold, man, the shit sold.

Buzz Biskind, former Arista Records executive: I personally gave the green light to *Harry Wellington Eagle*. If I may be so presumptuous, I think of it as my baby in a way. To this day it is a huge performer at garage sales. Go to one and look. *Frampton Comes Alive*, *Best of Jimmy Buffett*, *Steve Miller Band: Greatest Hits*, and *Harry Wellington*. You will find all four.

Billy Keller, drums: Suddenly the eagle album's a hit and nobody can say shit to Dutt 'cause motherfucker's all vindicated. Meanwhile he's got this no-tooth-having, patchouli-stinking Wavy Gravy around, egging him on to take the nature boy shit to its extreme. He and Dutt staying up all night in the teepee, smoking and listening to prog rock. They acting like they having some cosmic mind meld.

Wavy Gravy: Dutt kept talking about what a cool time it was in music. I didn't agree, man. Music in the '60s was about giving your soul a mouth-hole so it could sing. Then in the 70s you had prog rock that was just, like, watching guys riff. A 40-minute Jerry Garcia solo was like the cosmos pouring a love sermon down your ear, man. A 40-minute Emerson, Lake and Palmer solo was just self-indulgent. But Dutt was like, "No, man -- it's got everything the 60s had, but the pyrotechnics are cooler."

Dutt told me he wanted to throw a concert. He said he wanted it like Woodstock but bigger and crammed with even more love.

I thought, to myself, "Wavy Gravy, do you really wanna lend your name to this, man?" Our politics were different, mine and Dutt's. Gerald Ford was the big cheese then. I always thought [Ford] was a fool, man. And not like a Cosmic Fool -- that's the good, trippy kind of fool. Dutton thought Ford was god. Like he prayed to Gerald Ford at chow time and it freaked everybody out in an uncool way.

You wanted to get Dutt mad, just mention Squeaky Fromme. Dutt said he wanted to "bone her into the grave."

Jack Robertson: Dutt had been planning a giant, three-fucking-day concert with Wavy Gravy, a guy I honestly thought was dead, and he didn't tell anyone in the band or management about it! [Laughs] I told you: secretive bastard.

It was a real ambitious, wide-screen sort of idea. And the way Dutt imagined it, a quarter of the proceeds would go to a foundation called the Winged Eagle Crusade. This was an organization run by some hippies who nursed badly injured eagles and returned them to the wild.

Of course later we learned these guys were dressing up the eagles in costumes and what have you and using them to get laid at parties. Sick, sick. We didn't know it at the time.

[Pic: Mockup bald eagle in Little Lord Fauntleroy costume, with caption "Bald eagle liberated from Winged Eagle Crusade, 1979."]

With the festival a mere three months away, Dutt and the band returned to the studio.

Mick Lewis: The way Dutt and Wavy Gravy went on about it, this gig was going to be massive, yeah? And when you're playing to a crowd that big, it's no time for subtle nuance, mate. You need to be direct. If ever there was cause for a "greatest hits" set it was this.

Billy Keller: Dutt says to us, "I don't wanna do greatest *shits*." He used to switch up words like that. "I wanna do the new album. The whole thing." We was pissed, man, but compared to the shit that cat usually pulled this was nothing.

Then he goes, "No. I want to do the *new* new album. The one that ain't written yet."

Motherfucker! [Laughs] I go into the practice pad on the first day of pre-production and there's this brand new, big-ass, 18-piece drum kit sitting where my little 4-piece set used to be. I didn't know if I was supposed to play the shit or live in it.

Dutt starts teaching us the first song and it's got like fifty parts to it. Nothing went with nothing else. There was one section where he wanted me to blow into the drums instead of hitting them.

From Dutton's diary, April 3rd, 1975: Band being difficult as hell... Told them this album is make!! Or!! Fucking!! Break!!!! Disappointed in Billy... Instructed him to "huff" on ride cymbal... He "puffed"... Claimed there is no difference between huffing and puffing...

Told him I need MUSICAL MASTERS in studio not MENTAL MIDGETS... He left for 50 min smoke break... Caught him on phone with the Doobies asking if he can be their third drummer...

Mood dark... Teepee drafty...

[Pic: Dutt blowing gently on a bass drum, with caption "Dutt in the studio, April 1975"]

Steve Lamar: An album that hadn't even been fully written yet! We didn't know what the fuck we were going to do. This stuff was just pieced together in the studio; we couldn't play more than two minutes of these songs at one time. In Bensonhurst? Wouldn't pass muster.

Mick Lewis: Bugger me, the chances of us pulling this off live were just unbelievably bad.

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite, roadie: I'm a glass half full kind of dude. I guess you could say we were lucky he never got that far into the show.

Wavy Gravy: From day one, Dutt knew he wanted lasers in the concert. He had this picture in his mind, man. He would try to describe it. It was, like, him on stage, and he's playing a synth that wails super-loud like robots climaxing sexually, man, and the crowd's going ape, and chicks in the audience are crying and getting naked waist-down at all the beauty, man, and then, like, the music turns into light, and over everybody's heads there's a giant shining image of an eagle, man. And it's made out of lasers.

Jack Robertson: Dutton asked me to get involved with the festival's planning. He wanted everything that had absolutely nothing to do with nature: dry-ice machines, fireworks, and that goddamn laser.

He insisted that we buy the very same laser that was used at a "Pink Floyd Laser Light" show he once attended. The thing was only good at making images of giant pigs, teachers shaking their fingers, and a giant penis in the shape of a hammer banging down on a nail in the shape of a vagina. But we configured it to make a flying eagle.

Wavy Gravy: First question, though, was where were we gonna do a three-day festival this size? Dutt wanted to be out in nature. We scouted some sites, but I kept warning Dutt it wouldn't be easy to find a place. Woodstock was originally supposed to happen in Wallkill, New York, but the zoning board drove us out of town, man. Gave us a fascist trip about our "latrine ravine" being too close to a Kindergarten.

Then something happened that blew me away. Dutt wrote some poobah in the Department of the Interior and pulled some strings with his buddy Gerald F-word and all the sudden we had our pick of National Parks, man.

Mock-up on DOI stationery:

United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dutton King
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Mr. King,

President Ford brought to my attention your letter dated January 25th concerning the use of federal parklands for a large-scale rock and roll festival. It is the policy of the Ford Administration and a defining tenet of the Republican Party to make our nation's wildlife resources accessible and enjoyable to all Americans. Furthermore most national parks are just sitting there and no fun things happen on them ever.

In light of your strong public support for President Ford, it is my privilege to convey the President's wish that you choose any federal park and party like a champion.

Though the Department of the Interior does not wish to sway your decision, we submit that Yellowstone National Park -- a crown jewel of our park system spanning the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho -- has a lot of geysers that would look incredible if they popped at the end of a song.

Sincerely,

Rogers C.B. Morton
United States Secretary of the Interior

Dictated but not read

Jack Robertson: *Carte blanche* from the Department of the Interior. That's the kind of thing that happened for Dutt back then. We scouted this place in the Adirondacks called Mount Couch-Sach-Rage. That means "Place Where They Hunt The Beaver" in Mohawk Indian. Dutt thought the name tied into his image. Because he called women's genitals "beavers."

Wavy Gravy: Once we got the location kismet took the wheel. Amazing bands started calling up saying, "Wavy, man, we want in!" Santana called. The Dead were into it. Richie Havens actually went straight to the site and set up his equipment. That was months before the festival even happened.

But Dutt blew a big raspberry at all those guys. [Legendary concert promoter] Bill Graham, too. He wanted to promote this thing but Dutt was still mad at him for spilling Chianti on his white Dance Wizard suit the year previous.

[Pic: Mock-up festival poster, like something airbrushed on the side of a conversion van]

Buzz Biskind: Who ended up performing? Let's see, Gordon Lightfoot. Emerson Lake & Palmer to promote *Love Beach*. They did a twenty-minute version of "Taste of My Love": "Get on my stallion and we'll ride, I want to hold you and enfold you beyond reason, I want to dynamite your mind with love tonight." There was a kettle drum solo that lasted a good long while.

Jeff Lynne without the Electric Light Orchestra performed. Gentle Giant. Boz Scaggs. The Strawbs. A very early version of Marillion, called Bubbles, featuring a young Fish. Christopher Cross, when he was still known as Christopher Geppert.

All superb talent. Top-shelf virtuosos. All at their creative peak.

Steve Lamar: You know how some guys have long hair and it looks fucking cool, but for other guys it just makes them look like chicks? The way I would characterize these particular performers is, they were the chick-looking kind of guys.

Reminds me of that Aerosmith song, "That Dude, That's a Fuckin' Chick."

And let me just say: fine, you put pick-ups on a lute and made an electric lute. You don't gotta solo on it for 45 minutes to prove you're a bad-ass on that particular stupid instrument.

Mick Lewis: As if this wasn't looking like enough of a bloody mess, we learned Captain Daddy-Issues invited his father to attend.

Wavy Gravy: Closer the festival got, the more intense Dutt got. He knew his dad would be there soon and nothing was good enough. He would pop yellow jackets -- that's trucker speed, man -- day and night and get into these real harsh moods. One time I saw him break a roadie's cheek just for wearing a bandanna. I was like, "Dutt, roadies wear bandannas! Be

mellow, man! It's natural, man!" He felt real bad after that and gave the roadie ten dirt bikes.

That was Dutt, man. Always real generous after he broke your cheek or something.

Jack Robertson: Dutt Senior's in town! Quick, everyone to the fallout shelter! [Laughs]

When Dutt had his dad around, you wanted to avoid both of them. As big an ego as Dutt had, Dutt Sr. had an ego *and* a chip on his shoulder.

He'd been a star in the first wave of rock and rollers. "Star" is pushing it, actually. All I could ever gather is he knew the Big Bopper and had an answer song to "Chantilly Lace."

You know the beginning of "Chantilly Lace," when the Big Bopper's pretending to talk on the phone: "Hello baby! Yeah, this is the Big Bopper speaking!" Dutt Sr.'s song imagined what the person on the other end of the line was saying. It was called "May I Please Speak To The Bopper?"

Number seven on the charts in Greensboro, North Carolina.

[Pic: Young Dutt Senior looking fawningly at The Big Bopper]

Steve Lamar: We were balls deep in rehearsal hell and didn't even think about Dutton's dad. Next thing we knew we were on the bus on our way to the site.

Rick Futterman, US Park Ranger: I'd been a Ranger/Naturalist in the Adirondack Park region for going on three years at that time. Just a sapling then. Guess you could say these days I'm old growth!

The site in question, Mount Couch-Sach-Rage -- boy oh boy, it was a real stunner. Just God's sweetest bounty, it truly was. In terms of biodiversity, you had your gray fox, long-tailed shrew, Eastern chipmunk, bobcat, mink, porcupine, red bat, brown bat, bog lemming, flying squirrel -- stop me when you've had enough!

And they'll all be back someday. I need to believe they'll be back someday. They'll be back someday.

[Pic: Ranger Rick Futterman smiling with bog lemming, with caption "US Park Ranger Rick Futterman, bog lemming"]

John "Chief" Cashman, road manager: Usually when you do a one-off gig like that you'd have just a skeleton crew. Five or six guys total. Well, Dutt wasn't doing anything small at that point. This was going to be full production: 25 people. Massive lighting rig, smoke, backdrops, the laser, of course.

Dutt said he wanted all the equipment to be "biographical." Of course, later we realized he meant "biodegradable." Which made just as much fucking sense.

Ranger Rick Futterman: I was up in the Sector 4 fire tower. It was an unseasonably hot and dry day in autumn. I observed through my field glasses what appeared to be a caravan of large, brightly painted buses driving straight up a creek bed. Literally using the creek as though it were an automobile throughway.

I was the only ranger on duty in Sector 4 and I considered this particular creek my responsibility, plus I was pretty sure I'd witnessed one bus swerve out of its way to hit a brown bear. I descended from the fire tower to investigate.

The first man I approached identified himself as "Telly the drum tech." I asked this man if he and his friends had the necessary permits to drive buses on a federally protected nature preserve. To be honest I'm not even sure you can get a permit for something like that.

The man didn't answer but did ask me to "cop a squat" with him and "smoke a couple butts."

[Pic: Ranger Rick, bog lemming, Telly the drum tech, with identifying caption]

John "Chief" Cashman: Among all my other duties, Dutt wanted me in charge of hiring the concession-stand workers. Maybe I was a little resentful of that. I hired about twenty guys, all burnouts hanging out at the local rec center.

They stole everything: tie-dyed T-shirts, alcohol, commemorative devil sticks, all of the food -- I'm talking the "Not Dogs," the "Faux Balls," three gross of "Jive Tofurkey Legs." They did leave a stick or two of "Saltwater Tofaffy."

Wavy Gravy: Everyone else had their hands full, so Dutt put his man Gummy in charge of keeping things hunky dory with Dutt Sr. Gummy was kind of a man-child, just a slow dude, you know, but Dutt trusted him totally. That's cool. Some cultures worship dudes like Gummy as mystics, man. Maybe that's where Dutt was coming from. I had a hard time getting past the fact Gummy ate bugs. That's my uptight trip, man.

Gummy "The Butler" Rhodes: I was Dutt's number one helper. I helped Dutt get burritos Dutt tune guitars Dutt feed rat snakes Dutt brush crumbs out of sideburns Dutt buy batteries Dutt hide nice girlfriend from mean girlfriend Dutt Windex car seat Dutt reupholster car seat Dutt drive Beaver Bus Dutt air out calfskin leggings hell yeah.

Wavy Gravy: I was in charge of security at the festival. I used the same mellow dudes as at Woodstock, man. My "Please Force." "Please don't do that. Please do this instead." The Please Force had some difficulty, man.

[Pic: Wavy Gravy surrounded by aging hippies, with caption "Wavy Gravy (front, blowing bubbles) and members of 'Please Force'"]

Ranger Rick Futterman: I had no explicit orders in regards to supervising the festival. To be honest anything I tried to do came up against a big wall of resistance. It was darn tough even to get access to the festival grounds, and this was my own park!

They wanted me to pay for admission. Told me I could get a one-day "Wildflower" pass, a two-day "Eaglet" pass with additional \$20 "tent tax" to camp on-site, or a pass to the whole festival that was called something like "Keye to the Shyre" with it spelled like they must've thought Robin Hood would spell it or some such nonsense.

I bought a "Keye to the Shyre." Wouldn't pay the tent tax, though. I slept in the fire tower.

With an estimated 55,000 ticket holders, the Winged Eagle Crusade broke all attendance records for a United States nature preserve.

Jack Robertson: Bear in mind, even at this late date with the festival going up all around us, nobody but Dutt and the band knew exactly what Dutt was going to do. Nobody.

Wavy Gravy: Day one of the festival was good times. Fifty thousand happy people, man, just living in the flow. The only bummer was people climbing too high on the trees. Kids were fighting over the branches with the best views. The Please Force was on the scene: "Please don't shove guys off the tree branch or stomp a lady's fingers when she's holding on. Please be gentle instead."

Two tree falls that day, but only one of 'em real nasty with bones popping out. Day two got hairy. A pony keg of Bud fell off a sugar maple and beaned a sweet dancing guy.

Air, "environmental clown": Wavy called and asked if I could clown at the Winged Eagle Crusade, which he had put together to save the eagle—thirty years later, and I'm now the president of the WEC Inspiration Fund. I sold out, but not all the way in! I wear a suit, but also a Jamaican tam. Yes, I carry a briefcase, but I also carry my improv baton. Okay, I wear a tie, but damn if it isn't a bolo! [Laughs]

Billy Keller: Those first couple days we hardly even saw Dutt. And when we did he was freaking out about his pop, or trying to keep his ex-wife and kid happy.

Cheri Barber-King, Dutton's second wife: I was in charge of Peter, of course. Dutton had the kids that weekend, so who's the nanny? I am. I hadn't yet kicked; that would be in '77. I was high as a kite, and it was the only thing that made the day at all bearable.

I actually hallucinated that unicorns came down from heaven to help me watch over the children. Let's say as baby-sitters they were piss-poor. When I came to a few hours later, Peter was gone, and the fucking unicorns were lying there eating pink hay all like, "What?" Useless as the kid's father.

[Pic: Cheri Barber-King, Dutt, son Peter at the Winged Eagle Crusade. Only Peter looks happy.]

Peter King, Dutton's son: I was about ten when the Crusade Fest took place and all I remember is a lot of food and T-shirts being sold and a heady smell that I didn't yet understand. [Laughs]

Carol was there watching me. Dad was in a bad headspace at the time. Probably just nervous. He and Cheri fought. Honestly Cheri could've picked a better time to talk things over.

From Dutton's Diary, September 20th, 1975: Day one of Eagle Crusade... Soul turbulence ... I need a steady woman... Cheri being unsupportive & very uptight about me making more time for kid... Told her I am a tree climber, living out on a limb, because how else do you pick the fruit??... She called that stupid... I said Steven Tyler says it all the time is Steven Tyler stupid too????

Gummy "The Butler" Rhodes: Dutt's daddy came and I said, "Hey Dutt Sr." and he said, "Dutt Sr. bullshit you call me the Original Dutt and don't drool when you say it" then he said, "Woool!" all sharp and high and he swung his arm like he was playing guitar but he didn't have no guitar.

Dutt Sr. told me one man survived that plane crash and lived to rock and he was that man and Dutt wasn't that man and Dutt was just a crappy baby who couldn't sing or play worth a damn.

Dutt's daddy didn't want no usual help like tune guitars or hose off leather bean bags in dressing room he wanted old man help like lace up hernia truss and I didn't like it hell no.

The concert was a beauty and sometimes Dutt would say, "What a beauty huh Gummy? Think the old man's impressed Gummy?" And I'd say, "It's a beauty Dutt I think the old man's drunk he made me grease my hair in a duck ass and called me gay."

Wavy Gravy: [Dutt] comes to me on day two and says, "My old man's gonna be proud. He's gonna see all this and he's just gonna smile this great big smile." Dutt's dad was a tough old guy. He always came down hard on Dutt, like his art was for stupid people and wasn't any good.

And let's say some of Dutt's *oeuvre* -- I didn't get it either, man. That whole hit he had from talkin' into the blow tube and making his guitar say "fuck off" and "I like your titties" in the robot voice? I couldn't groove on that, man.

Ranger Rick Futterman: I cracked down on violations as much as I could. To be honest I had more luck with concertgoers than I did with the event organizers and artists. For some reason those guys found my name very, very amusing.

I'm familiar with the Ranger Rick cartoon character and think it's a fantastic way to get kids interested in ecology. And I don't mind a little bit of ribbing, but these guys wouldn't let it go. I'd give a firm, non-negotiable order like, "you are not permitted to dump cooking oil in the creek" or "you may not dig a 'latrine ravine' in that cave" but they would just laugh and

say, "Oh it's Ranger Rick, man! Hey I didn't know raccoons could talk, man!" Then they'd carry on doing what they'd been doing, happy as you please.

Idiots. Fucking idiots. Excuse me.

Mick Lewis: Fucking shitty bloody hell. Backstage was a pressure cooker those first two days. Dutt skulking about, Dutt's ex skulking about with their cute little kid, everybody going arse-over-teakettle to please Dutt.

And Gummy -- bless the man, he's one of god's gentlest creatures, he is -- Gummy was the wrong guy to handle Dutt Sr.

Gummy "The Butler" Rhodes: Dutt Sr. talked lots about the Big Bopper and how they was partners in crime back in the past and I asked who is the Big Bopper and Dutt's daddy called me an ignorant sumbitch and said the Big Bopper despised ignorance and said he wished the Big Bopper was here so they could pound my face and buy liquor with my wallet money.

I didn't want to be around Dutt Sr. no more I walked to the other side of the room and I hosed off the leather bean bags even though they didn't need no hosing then.

Jack Robertson: One of Dutt Sr.'s boasts is that he was the only person who survived the plane crash that killed Buddy Holly, Richie Valens and The Big Bopper. Swore up and down. Plane manifest be damned, news reports be damned.

Years later I heard there's a name for that. "Sympathy Trauma." Typically experienced between people with a deep emotional bond. I'm talking deep, like between elderly couples or a mother and her daughter. Or, you know. Erotic partners.

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite: So the last day of the festival rolls around, and most of us are still wondering what the flaming fuck Dutt's gonna do. He'd been dropping hints to *Rolling Stone* and *Crawdaddy* that he might be jamming with special guests. Maybe Jackson Browne, Fleetwood Mac, Jefferson Starship. But the crew didn't hear nothing about that at the festival.

Maybe they all turned Dutt down. But I don't think Dutt wanted those bands around at all. He was too afraid they'd ask him to share his hash.

John "Chief" Cashman: It's day 3, Dutton pulls me inside the teepee and starts going on this rant about how he doesn't think we're all "vibing on the same frequency." He says he wants everyone in the band, the sound crew, the lighting crew, management, you name it... to "hash it out."

He showed me this brick of Moroccan Border Hash. Size of a baby's skull. Now there was no way in hell I was going to let my crew get baked before a massive show like this. There was just too much at stake. The songs were maddeningly complex. We had a million lighting cues, a million pyro cues. [Sighs]

The laser.

Wavy Gravy: I remember I got a little nervous when the laser arrived. It was, like, strapped to the back of a flatbed truck. It was about as long as the flatbed. I don't know usual laser size. That seemed like a long laser.

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite: Listen to me. Like clean the shit out of your ears and *listen*. If I got one piece of wisdom for the entire world to hear -- and I actually got a lot of wise shit - - it's that lasers were never meant to be at rock concerts. They're unpredictable. Plus you can't just operate them yourself, you have to have a guy from the company you rent them from come do it. And the guy we had was a total dick.

Jack Robertson: I won't say his last name, but his first name was Todd. Todd was just a real disagreeable guy. He was also what today we call "morbidly obese." Back then we just called it being a "fat fuck." I recently saw an HD nature doc about a naked mole rat colony and I just shuddered. It was like a tribe of Todds.

I will bet that Todd had never touched a girl in his life until that day. Well, when he got to the festival and saw all the groupies he absolutely lost his mind. Basically Todd said he wouldn't fire up the laser until, and I quote, "you guys get me sucked."

Meanwhile, Emerson, Lake and Palmer's starting their set. They're on right before Dutt. That means Dutt's set is only four, five hours away, give or take a gong solo.

[Pic: Obese man in undersized Molly Hatchet, eyes covered by black bar, with caption "Todd X, laser operator"]

Gummy "The Butler" Rhodes: Dutt's daddy said he wanted to give his bare ass some breathin' air so we went out to watch the concert and saw Emerson, Lake and Palmer. I thought they were very very good but Dutt's daddy screamed at Lake he was gay and screamed at Palmer it should have been Palmer in the plane crash not the Big Bopper.

Emerson was playing "Hoedown" real fast on synthesizer and Dutt Sr. yelled it was music for nerds to whack their peters to and Emerson frowned.

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite: We were in a real tough spot with this Todd shithead. We couldn't get anyone to agree to go down on him! Not for 'ludes, hash, money...nothin'. This asshole was that horrendous. This is the kind of guy you'd literally find yourself fantasizing about what he'd look like layin' in his casket.

We finally convinced this girl with bad eyesight that Todd was one of the San Francisco 49ers. We figured, there's *one* unreasonable fucking nutcase out of the way.

John "Chief" Cashman: Dutt was still keen on everyone smoking. So we obliged. In retrospect I guess you could say we "pulled a Clinton" on Dutt. We gathered everyone into the teepee and we all took these massive hits off his hash pipe. But nobody inhaled.. Dutt couldn't tell, though. So the show went on.

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite: Nobody in the band inhaled. Nobody on the road crew inhaled. Nobody in fucking management inhaled. Turns out one guy *did* inhale. Guess which fat cretinous fuckwad it was.

Jack Robertson: Todd took to drugs with the same gusto as oral sex. He smoked, then ate that ball of hash like it was a fucking apple. Meanwhile, Dutt hits the stage.

Buzz Biskind: When it was his turn to go on Dutton made a magnificent entrance! Arista Records values its entire roster of outstanding top-flight talent, but that evening, at that moment, Dutt was the pride of Arista.

Dutt had chosen the occasion to debut a new persona. Piper the Environmental Astronaut.

The idea behind the character was that he traveled around the planets looking for animals who didn't quite fit into their own worlds, for various reasons. Piper would then save them in his rocket ark. From Mars came an animal that was teased because it had a big nose. From Jupiter came an animal who refused to fly because he had an inner-ear disorder. He was teased also. From Mars came a space creature who stammered when he ch-ch-ch-ch-chirped. From Saturn came an animal called "Stuart," with fifteen legs but only one foot.

You know, animals that didn't fit into the scheme of things.

There was an electricity one could just feel: "This is something important. This is something that costs a lot of money, but is well worth it."

Wavy Gravy: He was wearing a space yeoman suit. He had an oiled leather helmet and an iron codpiece and a silver lamé NASA jumpsuit. He was carrying a longbow and everyone was like, what's Dutt going to do with that? Then he raised the longbow like he was going to shoot something -- and he started plucking it like a harp, man!

Ranger Rick Futterman: I'll admit I was curious to see Dutton King perform. I'd spoken to him once during the festival. He struck me as somebody who meant well. I'll tell you, I wasn't expecting much when he brought that snow owl out, but what a duet. I don't know how he got any owl, let alone a snow owl to hoot so rhythmically. Snows are notoriously balky.

Billy Keller: So Piper the Astronaut walks onto the stage with the Zarathustra blaring and the place just goes wild, jack. The band was in the pocket, too, as much as we could be when we're changing time signatures a minimum of ten times a minute. Seriously, man. An internet dude counted.

Gummy "The Butler" Rhodes: Dutt was rocking the stage like a mofo. Dutt plucked the longbow and Dutt played crystal singing bowls and Dutt harmonized with a timberwolf and Dutt yelled, "Gaia spread your charms and accept my gift the greatest gift of all the Phallus! Of! Light!

Then the laser shot and it was very very bad.

Wavy Gravy: Right there in the sky was the eagle Dutt always dreamed of. It was huge, man. Just soaring across the trees, snapping that eagle beak, looking for a big ol' laser fish to munch on. Beautiful, man.

I saw Dutt look over at his dad in the front row, and I'll bet for that split second, man, his dad had that big old smile Dutt always wanted to see. A sight like that -- it puts the joy in you whether you like it or not.

Jack Robertson: There are a hundred stories about what happened next, but I was standing right there and I can tell you that it happened exactly this way: I saw the lasers shoot out. It looked like something from a horror movie. They were green and scattered and then slowly came together above the audience to form an image of a teacher smacking a student on the back of the head. It was the goddamn Pink Floyd laser-light show!

But I then saw an animal, the one that was supposed to look like an eagle. It resembled a pigeon. Or a kitten. Or a kitten that was flying. Then I heard a giant "pop." I saw a huge, single beam come out and hit a tree. The beam stayed there for about a full minute, burning a hole into the trunk, and that was it.

Everybody looked at Todd behind the laser. The guy was totally polluted, passed out, not about to do a thing.

Wavy Gravy: We heard a zap, like what it sounds like at Burning Man when lightning strikes a scrap metal tower. I got a bad feeling, man.

The park ranger guy, Ranger Rick, kept hustling around all nervous before we sparked up the laser. He kept saying the leaves were dry and you shouldn't shoot a laser at millions of dry leaves. But he had that name "Ranger Rick," which is like the raccoon ranger for kids, man, so we goofed on him and didn't take him as seriously as maybe we should have at that time.

Ranger Rick Futterman: Guess we can't avoid it forever. Let's talk about the reason I give away half my weekly salary to the head shrinker! Hey, *you* aren't billing me by the hour, are you? [Laughs]

It's also the reason I never married. And the reason the smell of burning leaves makes me cry and shriek like a newborn.

I did everything I could to stop them from shooting that thing. Short of placing myself bodily between the laser and the trees, and honestly, that's what I should have done. So help me, that's what I should've done.

John "Chief" Cashman: Todd woke up. But he didn't stop the laser. He freaked out and started firing the thing all over the place. Seemed random at first but then we realized he was shooting at the band and crew!

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite: Lasers, man. Those fucking things burn.

Gummy "The Butler" Rhodes: Fire was falling everywhere and trees were exploding and everybody screamed. Dutt's daddy had scared eyes and he kept yelling for the Big Bopper to stay close and this time they'd make it out goddammit and Buddy Holly could suck it he's a faggy poindexter anyhow.

Ranger Rick Futterman: There were so many in need of help, I didn't know where to start. There was an old man in the front row. He looked terrified and confused. I told him my name was Ranger Rick and I was here to help him. He said to me, "Ranger Rich? Richie Valens you unlucky spic you jinxed the Bopper."

He punched me in the jaw and ran away singing "Chantilly Lace." I'll be pondering that as long as I live.

Air, "environmental clown": I was entertaining the fans, there were thousands of them. I was dressed as "Mother Earth" and juggling "planets." I told jokes about the environment and made balloons into extinct animals.

I heard an explosion and I saw a crowd running towards me and I remember feeling happy, almost as if a great warmth were washing over me. It was then that I saw the first flames. Have you ever seen *Titanic*? Remember when the band was playing as the great ship went down? To keep everybody calm, I performed as the people fled.

Peter King, Dutton's son: Air knocked me to the ground. He was wearing horrible clown make-up, real cheap, and lipstick was all over his face. He was in a panic. He was holding a balloon in the shape of a dodo. I looked for Cheri and found her and we then followed Air to the exit, along with the hundred or so other people.

Wavy Gravy: The Please Force was begging, like, "Please don't shove your neighbor into the flames! Please exit in an orderly fashion instead!" But man, I don't think anyone heard them.

I had serious terror vibes. Coming from behind me I smelled the sickest smell ever, man. I didn't want to look but I did. It was Jeff Lynne from ELO, man. His beard was on fire. And he was screaming, man. He was screaming real hard.

I've got this philosophy: if life gives you bupkis, blow bubbles. Usually when I'm having a bumner day I blow some bubbles, man, and it cranks my joy engine. So I pulled out my bubble bottle and started blowing bubbles like crazy, man. I blew bubbles at the fire. I blew bubbles at Jeff Lynne's beard. And it didn't work, man. The bubble wand melted on my hand, man. The bubbles didn't work. [Ten minute silence]

Eventually Ranger Rick dragged me to safety by my jester's cap.

Though the forest fire would go down in National Park Service history as one of the most destructive ever, it was the ensuing event that earned the Winged Eagle Crusade its notorious place in American culture.

Jack Robertson: Have you talked with anyone about the dick incident yet?

Ulster County Police Report, September 23rd, 1975: J.G. Jenkins tells this officer he was working his “Not Dog” stand when he saw a flying eagle done with lasers appear on a “bunch of trees.” Flying eagle “flew” for about a minute, doing “loop-da-loops.” Witness heard a loud “crash” as if something exploded. Saw older man running out from behind the stage and take off for the exit. Eagle laser turned into a single beam and hit a tree. Jenkins saw tree explode and start forest fire. Witness looked to the stage and saw musicians quickly packing up. Witness saw Dutton drop trousers and expose his “thing” to the fleeing audience. Witness pushed the “Not Dog” stand into parking lot and waited for media to arrive. Witness offered this officer a few “Not Dogs” at discount price, which were not accepted.

Buzz Biskind: Now, think about this: Dutton is standing up on stage, people screaming all around him, his dad and kid are out there somewhere, and he chooses this very moment to expose himself to the fleeing crowd? Didn’t happen.

John "Chief" Cashman: Did Dutton show or not show his prick to the fleeing crowd? I’ve watched and rewatched the footage endlessly and I still can’t tell.

Mary Topp, concertgoer: It wasn’t his thing, it was his finger

[Pic: Dutton King's penis, with identifying caption]

Mike "Troll" Smirthwaite: The only time I ever saw [Dutton] sexually turned on by anything other than a woman was when he was on Ecstasy and he started rubbin' himself while watching this *Antique Roadshow* segment about a 19th century pants-folding machine. So I vote no, man.

Teddy Bigelow, keyboard player: It was a falcon he was stashing in his pants as a late-show effect.

Leslie Meigher, concertgoer: It was his cock.

Gore Vidal, author/intellectual: The question is deathless. In Dutton we have a cultural icon trapped in the moment of his life's greatest failure. And quite possibly, this is the same moment he chooses to lay bare his member. To unspool, if you will indulge, his captive virility. Did this hero to millions look out at his public pursued by flames and see himself, consumed, bedeviled by his own celebrity? His addictions? His lust? Did he feel a *frisson* with the surging mass and wish, as Dutt surely would wish [laughs], for consummation?

I remain agnostic. We as a culture need our mysteries. To paraphrase Conrad, some things don't bear looking into.

Gummy "The Butler" Rhodes: I saw Dutt's penis it was his penis hell yeah.

Cheri Barber-King: Have you heard Steve Miller's "Fly Like an Eagle"? He wrote the song about this show, about the fire. Dutton should get royalties every time that song is played. Or exposes his cock.

Jack Robertson: That rumor about Steve Miller isn't true. The song has nothing to do with Dutton. But an upstate New York band called The Silver Shooters did write a song about the fire at the Winged Crusade, and it made it to number eight in Delaware in the fall of '75. It was called "Look Into My Smoky Skies."

"Look Into My Smoky Skies" by the Silver Shooters

Look into my smoky skies, my darling Trudy,

What once was natural beauty

Is now insane

Upstate, downstate, what state are you in?

There's a fire in the crowd,

The workers are a-screamin' loud.

I saw a clown running scared with terror,

Is it God's error?

Or the end of an era?

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