

Firesign Theatre: "Temporarily Humboldt County"

An American Pageant For Thanksgiving

Adapted From Ancient Moqui Hearsay

by the Firesign Theatre

[Side 1, Track 1 of . . .

Firesign Theatre. Waiting for the Electrician or Someone Like Him. Columbia, 1968.]

—from web transcript—revised (via original soundtrack, and orthographic considerations), 4/04, T. Gannon; including some added "stage directions" in [brackets]

THE SCENE: *Against a backdrop of the prairies, two Indians watch a herd of buffalo passing by. [Rattling & chanting. . . . However, both Natives speak "perfect"/standard American English:]*

INDIAN: Well, I think it's about time—the way the corn's been growing for the last two or three generations. . . .

SECOND INDIAN: Look at that herd of buffalo! They're ready!

INDIAN: Everything's living the Great Spirit's way—in harmony.

SECOND INDIAN: He'll be here soon.

INDIAN: The True White Brother is coming home. Remember what the Great Spirit said? If we did what we were supposed to do, and lived according to the Plan, White Brother would finish his work in the East and come back to us.

SECOND INDIAN: It'll be nice to have the family together again.

A Conquistador, a Padre, and several Spanish soldiers enter to a trumpet fanfare and flamenco guitar music. The buffalo scatter. [All of the newcomers but the priest have thick, exaggerated Spanish accents.]

CONQUISTADOR: Buenos dias, amigos!

INDIAN: Hello! You must be the True White Brother.

CONQUISTADOR: Sure! You must be the Indians!

INDIAN: Yes!

SECOND INDIAN: Welcome Home!

All the Spanish soldiers cheer.

CONQUISTADOR: Welcome to New Spain! This is your new Father—Father Corona.

FATHER CORONA *[with an Irish accent; accompanied by a sinister medieval organ]:* Pax *[gibberish]!* Down on your knees, now! D'ye recognize what I'm holdin' over your head, lads?

INDIAN: It's a cross. The symbol of the quartering of the Universe into active and passive principles.

FATHER CORONA: God have mercy on their heathen souls!

CONQUISTADOR: What the Father means is—what is the Cross made of? Gold! . . . Have you got any?

INDIAN: No.

CONQUISTADOR: What about the Seven Cities of Gold? Phoenix, Tucson, Las Vegas?

SECOND INDIAN: This is gold.

CONQUISTADOR: What's that?

INDIAN: Corn.

SPANISH SOLDIER: Hey—corn! Now we can make tortillas!

ANOTHER SPANISH SOLDIER: We been waiting for this for hundreds of years!

THIRD SPANISH SOLDIER: I just invented tacos!

CONQUISTADOR: So this is all you've got?

INDIAN: Yes, but aren't you the True White Bother who's supposed to come and live with us in peace?

CONQUISTADOR: Sure! Therefore I claim this rich, verdant pasture land in the name of the Empire of Spain!

VESPUCCI: Hey, hey, Capitano! The rain, she's a-stoppa to fall! And the corn, she's all-a dead!

CONQUISTADOR: Shuduppa', Vespucc'h! I claim this stinking desert in the name of the Empire of Spain. Forever! Let's go!

The Spanish soldiers grumble. The buffalo herd mills about.

SPANISH SOLDIERS (singing [to the tune of "God Bless America"]): God bless Vespucciland!
M-m-m-mmmmm . . .

FATHER CORONA: Oh! By the way—Domini, Domini, Domini—you're all Catholics now! God bless you!

CONQUISTADOR [voice fading/leaving]: Come on, Father! No one in their right mind would live in this stinking desert!

THIRD SPANISH SOLDIER: Come on, Cisco!

The Spaniards leave and the Indians hide as a wagon train enters. One Pioneer plays "Oh, Susanna" on a harmonica. Another Pioneer speaks [in an exaggerated Western/"hick" drawl, as they all do]:

ANOTHER PIONEER: Boy! I'm tired o' pushin' West! How long ago'd we leave Goshen?

THIRD PIONEER: 'Bout two hours ago! Ain't we ever gonna stop?

PIONEER: Quiet down now, boys! Wagon Boss is gonna speak!

WAGON BOSS: My fellow settlers! We stand here at the Edge O' Civil-I-zation, on the banks of the Mississippi River, lookin' West, at Our Destiny!

PIONEER: You can say that again!

WAGON BOSS: What may appear to the fainthearted as a limitless expanse of Godforsaken wilderness . . .

THIRD PIONEER: Sure is! [grumbling from others]

WAGON BOSS: . . . is, in reality, a Golden Opportunity for humble, God-fearin' people like ourselves, an' our families, an' our children, an' the generations a-comin', [Pioneer (uninspired): "Hallelujah"] to carve a new life—outa the American Indian!

The Indian comes out of hiding.

INDIAN: Welcome, White Brother! [a bit less enthusiastic, this time]

WAGON BOSS: Injuns! Draw the wagons up into a circle!

INDIAN: Why do you always do that?

WAGON BOSS: We get better reception that way! Do you mind if I put this antenna up on yonder peak?

INDIAN: That's our Sacred Mountain.

WAGON BOSS: This is our Sacred Antenna! It's shaped like a cross! Made out of aluminum. Eh—got any aluminum?

INDIAN: We've still got some corn left.

PIONEER: Hey! Corn! Now we can make whiskey!

ANOTHER PIONEER: We've been waitin' hundreds o' years for this!

THIRD PIONEER: Say! I just invented a Tom Collins!

WAGON BOSS: Here, Injun! Ya want some firewater?

INDIAN: No. We were warned by our Elders not to drink anything that would make us weak or silly.

WAGON BOSS [guffaws]: Put it in their well.

INDIAN: That's not a well. It's the Eye of the Holy Serpent Mound, on which you're standing.

WAGON BOSS: It's a beaut'!

INDIAN: No, it's a mound.

WAGON BOSS: And right purty, too! Can ya' move it?

INDIAN: But—why?

WAGON BOSS: Railroad's comin' thru! Right now!

A railroad train loaded with cowboys and railroaders pulls in. [Gunshots.] The buffalo are scattered and the herd is split.

COWBOY: Hey! What we stoppin' fer?

RAILROADER: Are we in Goshen yet?

CONDUCTOR: Cain't go no further. This here's Injun Territory!

GOVERNMENT AGENT: Well, then! It's—Treaty Time!

A brass band enters, playing "Hail to the Chief" [out of tune].

GOVERNMENT AGENT [*in a glib and supercilious tone*]: My fellow Redskins! Speaking for the Great White Father in Washington and all the American People, let me say we respect you Savages for your Native ability to instantly adapt and survive in whatever Godforsaken wilderness we move you to. . . . Out there. Sign here.

RAILROADER: They did it!

All the cowboys whoop and holler. The train and brass band leave. The Indian gets up on his pony.

INDIAN: No reason to complain. It's not so bad out there. We still have our People and our ceremonies, and the sun, moon, and stars, and the sand and the black-stuff-coming-out-of-the-ground . . .

GOVERNMENT AGENT: Black stuff coming out of the ground?

TRAILBLAZER [*bellows*]: Civilization, ho-ooooooooooooo!

A passle of Okies, dogs, Model T's, and dust storms passes by [to cheesy Anglo music of an unidentifiable genre], leaving the Indian alone. The wind blows.

INDIAN: Oh, it's nice out here in the desert. No rain, no crops, no White Brother.

A Greyhound tour bus pulls up and the passengers file out.

BUS DRIVER: All out for Fort Stinkin' Desert! Last Indian Reservation for two thousand miles.

You got fifteen minutes, folks! Get 'em while you can!

Several shots ring out.

BUS DRIVER: Get the Senator back in the bus!

The Senator fires off more shots at the Indians as he is led away.

SENATOR: Godfrey Daniel! Pesky Redskins! Which way's Goshen?

TOURIST: Howdy there, Colorful Replica of America's Past! When is the exciting-in-its-primitive-splendor Snake Dance going to take place?

INDIAN: It's usually in August, but with all our children off in Indian School, there's no one left to do the ceremonies.

Eddie gets off the bus.

EDDIE: Hiya, Pop! I'm home!

INDIAN: Hello, Soaring Eagle! It's good to have you back from school!

EDDIE: Aw, come on! Call me Eddie! I'm an American now!

INDIAN: What have they been teaching you?

EDDIE: Just what we need for a better life: French horn, Italian, water polo . . .

GOVERNMENT AGENT: Yes, at the Custer Memorial Indian School, Eddie's one of our Prize students. We're giving him away next week.

INDIAN [*in a saddened tone*]: Oh, my White Brother. . . .

A Freak gets off the bus.

FREAK [*obviously "stoned"*]: Hey, man! Don't let him bring you down, now. There's a lot of young people in this country, just like myself, who really know where the Indian's at. And don't worry. Soon we're all gonna be out here on the Reservation, livin' like Indians, 'n' dressin' like Indians, 'n' doing all the simple, beautiful things that you Indians do. Hey—got any peyote?

RICH TOURIST: Say, how much is that necklace you're wearing?

LADY TOURIST: Does anybody here know how to do the War Dance?

TOURIST WITH CAMERA: Hold it! Smile.

RICH TOURIST: Isn't it amazing how they survive on this stinking desert?

LAUGHING TOURIST: Ya got any scalps?

TOURIST WITH CAMERA: Lemme get a shot of you and yer squaw!

RICH TOURIST: Let's see the War Dance!

LADY TOURIST: Let's see the Dance!

TOURISTS [*unison chant increasingly louder and more menacing*]: Let's see the Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance! Dance!

The Indian dances in a circle as more shots ring out.

BUS DRIVER: OK, OK, folks! Fun's over! Back in the bus!

MOTHER: Where's little Billy Joe?

FATHER: He's in that run-down outhouse over there, Mamma!

INDIAN: That's our Sun Altar.

GOVERNMENT AGENT *[in a glib and supercilious tone]*: Well, Indian—just goes to show you there's an obvious need to conserve our priceless National Heritage. The Government is turning your home into a National Monument!

The marching band gets off the bus, playing "America The Beautiful" [out of tune], followed by the Senator, who speaks:

SENATOR *[voice of W.C. Fields]*: It behooves me, 'pon this Historic Occasion, to dedicate the Stinkin' Desert National Historical Monument and Cobalt Testing Range!

TRAILBLAZER *[bellows]*: Civilization, ho-ooooooooo!

As the Indian watches, the cobalt bomb goes off. The sound dies away after a time, and the smoke clears, revealing the two Indians on horseback.

INDIAN: Well, it's about time. There's been no corn growing for the last few generations. The buffalo's gone. There's no one left to live in harmony.

SECOND INDIAN: I wonder where we went wrong.

INDIAN: Ah, let's just keep to the Life Plan. Remember what The Great Spirit said: "Follow the Peaceful Way." The True White Brother is bound to come.

An assistant movie director runs on, yelling through a megaphone.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: All right, Indians! Get ready!

A second assistant director follows, with a clap-stick.

SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: "Winning Of The West: The Massacre." Take four!

He claps the clap-stick to start a "take."

INDIAN: Well, let's go. . . .

He and his partner join a dozen other war-painted Indians who ride up beside him, and then they all gallop away into the sunset, [stereotypically] whooping [in a rising-pitch crescendo that eventually fades].

THE END