THE AQUADOME

a love story.
There once was a place I called home. It was a rundown, falling its ass apart warehouse on the corner of harrison and Main. The Downstairs was 2 parts punk rock apartment building and one part Kindergarten classroom. There were books, and couches, and zines, and records, and crayons, and Band posters, and Artsy stuff, and a PA system for blasting hot tracks and anti-robot battles, and a kitchen where anyone could come and eat a hearty homecooked meal any day of the week, and hundreds of friends, strangers and lovers coming together to live and learn like a community that believes that anything is possible, and nothing made mandatory was ever worth doing at all.
The upstairs was always a little more on the side sketchy, Dangerous and Fun. On separate occasions it served as a Bicycle Deathtrakk and graveyard, Tom Thumb art gallery and devastation maze, Rock and Roll training grounds. Fancy pants Dress-up station, "studio space", and cardboard shantytown for rejects, Hobos and Bandit outlaw pirates.
And of course no description of the Aquadome would be complete without mentioning the Roof top Get-a-way hideout, where uncounted dreams were conceived, bodied and minds explored, and nights passed in love and wonder.

The Dome was not always home for everyone. At times it was guilty of being Too dirty, smelly, unorganized, Intimidating, uncomfortable, exclusive, Fraudulent, inefficient, Sexist, Racists, classist, age-ist, able-ist, Heterosexists/normative, uncohesive, expensive, and just generally a pain in the ass, to be home to anybody. But for all of its faults, or maybe even in part because of them, The Aquadome was the last place I could ever truly say that I belonged in and felt needed and loved and appreciated in, just for being me. In the end, The Aquadome is really just a cheap, rundown, peice of shit building on the edge of downtown that is filled with junked and unfilled dreams. But for almost a good four years it was a place where people who cared about eachother, art, music and world they lived in, could go and share in their experiences of life. Yeah, For me and my fucked up ways of looking at the world; the Aquadome was home. And although I think it's long past time to let the sinking ship drown, I don't know that I'll ever find another place in the world I will call home with the same innocence or conviction.
The summer before I moved to Kirksville I had been planning to move to New York City amongst other places. It's complicated why my choices of where to move when New York, Washington State, or Kirksville. Regardless, I was torn. But, all summer long a little voice in my head just kept whispering Kirkville, Kirkville. And I didn't want to listen. In the end I decided to go because the feeling inside that something was waiting for me in Missouri was so strong. The truth is by the time my summer job ended I was really excited to make the move.

The first weekend I was in Kirkville, by yet another chance of fate, I found my way to The Aquadome. As soon as I rode past this little building on my bike (while everyone stared) the first thing I thought was, "Well, here are all my friends." And I'm pretty sure the only person I talked to all weekend long was this cute drummer from out of town who turned out to be a little crazy. It took two whole years for me to really believe I was a part of that community. Partly because I'm crazy and partly because everyone I met while living in Kirksville was crazy too. Well almost.

The only reason I found my way there so quickly was because of a small sign made out of cardboard and sharpie sitting on a table in the SUB. And that was just one of many yet to come and yet to be made with my own two hands.

That first weekend was full of anxious glances, awkward conversation, and flaming cardboard robots. The two years that followed went much the same way but also included lots of food, fighting, dancing, loving, hugging, crying, and general Rock 'n Roll. The Aquadome was almost always a place I felt at home, due mostly to spending my Bonus Bucks on bread, fruit and soy milk to bring to pot lucks.

Through much determination and desperation The Aquadome gave me a lot of good friends, good times, and great knowledge. I often find that measuring my love against the simultaneous hate for something or someone is a good gauge of how successful and important it is. And if that's so The Aquadome is up there on my list.

I've talked a lot of shit, and shouted out my frustrations but friends of mine across the world will tell you how much I've loved the 'dome as well.

So Blah. I'm trying to get out all the things out I'm thinking. But I'll explain it like this. I hated living in Kirkville. So I left. But last night at 11:30 p.m. I found myself buying a train ticket over the phone and frantically calling my friends in Kirkville so someone could pick me up at quarter to ten on a Saturday morning at the station in La Plata. Word.

Much love, and cinnamon rolls.
Oh, yeah and the thing that I love most is coming back to Kirkville and seeing people I know wearing clothes I had forgotten I owned.
Rock on.

---

dear Aquadome,

The Aquadome is where I first played with Julie Andrews and the Front Porch Ramblers, where I got to know my 1st REAL girlfriend and where we began to plan our long distance bicycle tour (which we actually got to ride last summer).

The Aquadome is where Doug Stewart showed the film series portion for his Queer Theory class and I got to watch queerness unfold before me for an entire semester (every Thursday night).

The Aquadome is where I use to watch the paint trees onto my fingers in my studio space updates.

The Aquadome is where I drew my 1st nude model.

Where I attended my 1st potluck.

My 1st Critical Mass Bicycle Ride.

My 1st Antiwar Protest March.

Roll on.

Forever in my head.
All my love, Lita Strope Louise.
THE AQUADOME (or, how I learned to rock)

by, NIKKI B.

I have always been a very, very bad dancer.

at the aquadome, everyone danced kind of funny, and they wore rooster hats.

they also made tasty food & burned stuff, which I liked.

I met some of the people I love the most.

and even though I am still a bad dancer, now I never, ever stand still.

(by Nikki B.)

I will deeply miss the Aquadome. This is the only really good thing in this piece of shit town, the bad thing is the time I got kicked in the balls by a lead singer...
So, once upon a time, there were daily dinners at the Aquadome. For a brief span of time, people actually took turns cooking these dinners. One day it was my turn. Boy was I excited. I planned all the goodies I would cook—food that I liked, and I knew others would like as well. Somewhere along the line, I got paired up with another cook, Paid Paul. Now, Paid Paul also was very excited about cooking and had also planned what food he was going to introduce the Aquadome dinner eatin' community to. The day arrived and the cooking began. I started pounding out dough to make homemade Perogies. Paul was crackin' open the cans of del Monte fruit to make his sauce for the noodle salad. Every once in awhile he'd ask me my opinion on how his creation was coming.

Should I add another can of peaches to the sauce? Or maybe this can of mixed fruit? I have no experience eating or creating noodles with fruit sauce, so my replies were mostly limited to, I have no idea, Paul and Sure. When the dinner was ready we had Potato Perogies with buttery fried sauerkraut and sweet biscuits a la Kathy and noodles with fruit sauce and mashed potatoes with peanut butter and celery a la Paid Paul.

I don't know what everyone else ate, but I know I didn't touch Paul's food, and he didn't touch mine.

What I wore in the Aquadome, winter 2001, 2002: underwear to keep the bootie warm, long underwear, knee high socks, pants, regular socks, super warm quilted shoes, bra to keep the boobies warm, undershirt, long sleeve shirt, short sleeve shirt, gloves, hoodie, sweatshirt with sleeves ripped off, hat, sometimes a coat and if sitting down, a blanket. ahh those were the days.

Things I remember:
Ex-Mennonite Leon
Ted complaining about those crazy people who forgot to put the Tuna in the Tuna Casserole Band Practice with numb fingers Dancing in the Streets during the Hazard Show and with those Iowa Kids Crazy good shows like Fat Day, Horse the band, and Pine Hill Haunts How the dude from Horse the band was in love with Kristen Eating some damn good food Freezing my patootie off in the winter Sweating all the winter fat off in the summer Dancing on the Countertop Every inch of the Dome covered in freshly screenprinted posters The reek that came outta the bathroom/light room How long meetings used to take Logan and the chainsaw at the Haunted House Roosters v. Robots and the time Ben almost died The Eighties Prom Frustration over not enough money The Garage Sales When Mikey broke the glass door

When Nick crashed into the wall Eating fresh veggies from the garden Building rooms in the upstairs outta anything and everything Standing in front of my peers at my Senior Seminar Presentation discussing and watching us crazy kids dance at the Zombie Zombie show.
The feeling of Love and Community
Dust to dust Aquadome

Sweet sad big space creates whole parts of bodies and fluids, parades of bodies strung string to string making lines across states, across oceans, to Germany and further, these pieces of something like hope stretch out in anything can happen, they smell a little like armpits and feet and sudsy old food dishwasher, dusty cold feet carpet.

Something you could call open arms and open hearts, sometimes so wide open that white sharp ribs and bones like bike frames spill out like silver spray paint blood into the street.

It was all anyone had, because it made itself from everyone, even the slim ladies in stiff shoes walking by to the tanning booths, sometimes in the lonely kid corner by the darkroom at the late sunset time, the sky was so bold through the window that even wood paneling was so delicious, abstract things like freedom came in and made sense and punched open that space between gut and spine that was so tight before.

The wide open refrigerator pulsing white heart beat with this sweat dancing and pounding feet and arms thumping pores slowly opening with hot rhythms and the feeling of humans being made of skin and blood and hopes. What remains is all the skin cells shed, all the strands of hair, and the mud.

on shoes and under fingernails, hands holding plates, and voices warming up a room too cheap for electric heat. -Dana Kuhnline

This thing art pours out, flicks up like thick paint and laps at foundations of buildings, it's inside pockets, and laced through those certain evenings when it hurts your chest to be alone, the Aquadome.

love story, eRIC T.

As I was sitting in the quiet dark of the back seat of Courtney's car late last night, riding home from the Eleni Mandell show in Kansas City, I got to thinking about what I would like to communicate in a zine lamenting the Aquadome's closure. The car ride had reached the point at which you begin to believe that nothing at all exists in the darkness outside of the car to the left, the right, behind. All that I could see, and therefore understand or even believe, existed ahead of us - the long gray road glowing in the stubborn illumination of our headlights. It is during such middle of the night road trip moments that I find myself clinging, almost desperately, to the sight of that glowing stretch of road. To be without it would be to see nothing, understand nothing, and, ultimately, believe nothing, hurtling alone through seething darkness propelled by a roaring mindless machine.

For me the Aquadome was a bright light in a dark place. It was something in the middle of nothing. I do not mean to write dismissively of Kirksville. I love this town, but in the Aquadome and (more importantly) the creative, loving community found there, I was able to find some meaning, some order, some life in the middle (literally) of America. The Dome was a haven for creation and creators in the face of a culture of consumption, competition, disposability, and homogeneity. The Dome was never perfect. It was no Utopia. But for about four years it was the best goddamn thing around.
It all started my second semester. I was drifting away from what few friends I had. Neither my friend Nicole, nor Tim was in my WACT class anymore, and I stopped hanging out with Tim altogether (his lackadaisical style didn't fit with my high-strung academic antics). I also felt myself growing more distant from my friend Eric. We saw each other Friday nights, but every visit we just got stoned and didn’t talk too much.

Some weeks into the semester I decided there must be more highly intelligent, socially inept people on campus, and I was going to start a club, post fliers on campus, and stop having a sucky social life. I named it The Lonely Minds Club. (The irony in this name was that in all the people who participated, I was the only one who was lonely.) Nicole (as mentioned previously) told some people at the Aqua Dome about it and we started having meetings there.

Having meetings at the Aqua Dome turned out to be a shrewd idea, because it drew Aqua Dome regulars (who were unaware of the club’s existence) into the mix. Among the list of people who took part were Todd, Amanda, Ben, and Afro Mike. Among the things discussed: the nature of randomness and pirate literature.

The Lonely Minds Club dissolved when its founder got sick and was forced to withdraw from school. Its demise was in congruence with its existence: every Tuesday at 9, you had no idea who you were going to meet, what you would talk about or even if the Aqua Dome was open. (As a postscript, I dropped in one Tuesday when a concert with a folk singer had been scheduled. As I am a huge heavy metal fan, it was somewhat awkward.)
The Aquadome is my savior. I was a wayward, destitute child falling quickly into the blackness of the diploma awarding mental ward. I was without hope and certain that escape from my dark, tear-stained cell, my bed is like the straight jacket I wish my mom would have made me wear before all of the times I was hurt, was impossible. Physically, the Aquadome was as far from my prison as Barbara Dixon would let me wander, I wandered further, she could never know. Instead of the scheduled electroshock administered by the faculty of Truman, I could shock myself with the sounds of the Kirksville underground. Which reminds me, the Aquadome is the Underground Railroad and its music is fetter-releasing. I was led through the black tunnels by flames held by those who had freed themselves before; this freedom presents the possessor with seeming divine powers, light, eternal and pervasive, in the midst of the darkest of man's creations. I was just a child, I am still. But I am free of the dingy sweatshops and attempting to grow without scars and deformities considered so normal by Bill Gates and Ayn Rand.

In three days, the stone will be thrust aside and the Aquadome will be reborn and full of glory, screaming with joyous music and youthful chants for justice and love.