

Report from Wagon Station No. 7, Session 4, Fall 2016

by Amber Eve Anderson



Tucked between rocks, Wagon Station No. 7 is the last to receive the morning sun. Though closest to the living room and other common areas, a low, oblong stone and a creosote bush block the most direct path. Large rocks jut directly upward on the other sides, creating a generous southeastern nook. Situated in this way, No. 7 is aimed at the distance—the violet shadow of faraway mountains visible over the roof of the kitchen, beyond the nearest hill and the disappearing highway.



The stainless steel and plexiglass shells of the Wagon Stations add to the already extraterrestrial desert landscape of the encampment. The terrain is other-worldly and isolating, though comfortable enough to sleep with the hatch open to the alien elements. The intensity of the sky overhead—bearing wind, heat and lightning during the open season—makes the celestial palpable, the twelve Wagon Stations like the twelve signs of the zodiac. The clash or complement of watery, fiery, earthy, airy humanity—the conflict between togetherness and independence played out in nights of dancing at Pappy & Harriet’s and days of lonely desert drives. There is even one doublewide: Gemini.







Time in the desert falls in line with the sun and moon passing across the clear overturned bowl of the sky while we eat and drink from clear bowls cradled in two hands—bowls as half earths. Time elsewhere is a constructed perception, evidenced by the way days pass fleetingly, idly in the encampment. Time in the desert restructures possible futures. Dreams of a day job, health care and a retirement plan are replaced by caves of crystals, lakebeds of absence and baths of sound. Desert time is indulged by staring. Being. Watching the sun set behind a sparkling cholla cactus garden. Noticing the connect-the-dots plants that thrive in sand and sun. The globes of spikes that glow fluorescent pink under a wet, gray sky. Time in the desert, with all of its limitations, is liberation. Limitlessness. Edges and expanses. A week or two to collect crystals and stones of one's own.

