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Editor's Column 3

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**Special Section**

The Sixteenth Annual Grateful Dead Scholars Caucus 7

Schedule 9

Abstracts 15

Presenters 31

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**Features**

Time with the Dead: The LA Acid Tests 41  
*Tim Scully*

"Are You in Control of All This?" The Folk Scene,  
the Acid Tests, and Witnessing the Birth of the Dead 53  
*Don Douglas*

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**Essays**

"Your Mind Has Left Your Body": Thematic Signposts and  
Arrivals in the Grateful Dead's Jazz-Rock Jamming, 1969–1974 65  
*David Malvinni*

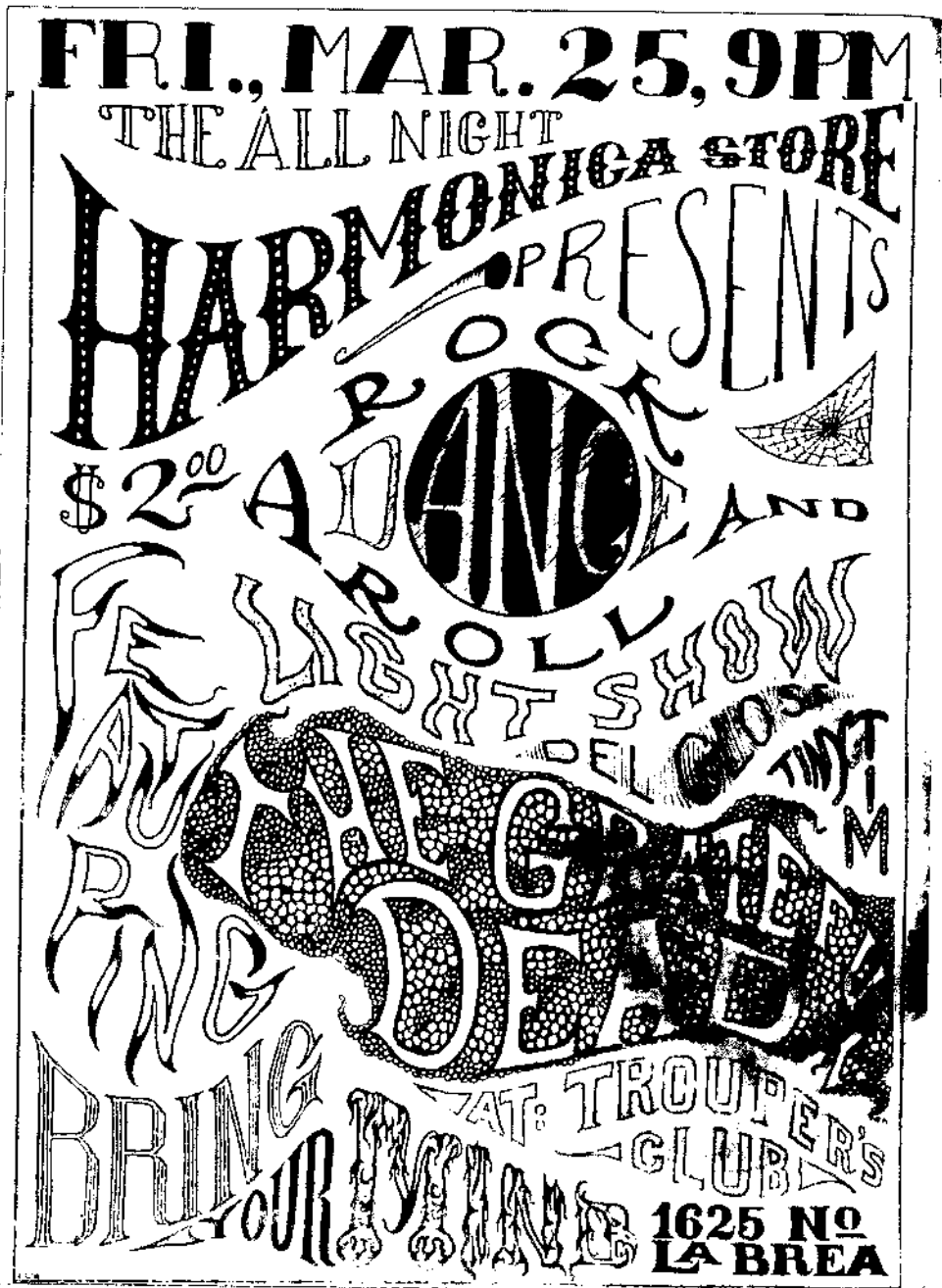
Terrapin Station: "Storyteller Makes No Choice" 93  
*Peter J. Apfl*

"Laying it down"—or Not: Phil Lesh and the Art of  
Improvisational Rock Bass 107  
*Michael Kaler*

---

**Reviews**

Grateful Dead Fiction and the Life on the Road 127  
*Jay Williams*



The All-Night Harmonica Store: Troupers Hall, Hollywood

Owsley Stanley

FEATURES

Time With the Dead: The LA Acid Tests

*Tim Scully*

In the spring of 1966, I moved to Los Angeles with Owsley "Bear" Stanley, the Grateful Dead, and the Merry Pranksters. I was invited because my skills as an electronic designer were useful. My motives went beyond designing better sound systems, though. At the time, I was convinced that it was important for a lot of LSD to be made and preferably given away. I thought that was needed to save the world. But after doing some research, I learned that the key ingredient, lysergic acid, was not easy to obtain, and I learned that Bear had a lot of it, as well as the know-how to turn it into LSD. Bear was well known in Bay Area bohemian circles, so I was really happy to meet him.

Bear had a different agenda, though. When he heard about me from a mutual friend, he wanted to meet me. He was not looking for an apprentice in making LSD, but (simplifying a complex story) he was fascinated by the Grateful Dead and wanted to find an electronic designer and technician who could implement some of the ideas he had for the band. I agreed to do that, in the hope that passing that "acid test" might lead to becoming his apprentice at making LSD. In my mind, working for the Grateful Dead was an extended job interview for a position as Bear's lab assistant.

For me, traveling around with the Grateful Dead was a lot like running away to join the circus must have been in the nineteenth century. It was a

real adventure and took me far outside my personal comfort zone. When it happened, although I had been in the drug scene for a while, I was still very introverted—not part of the social scene at all. I had very rarely been anywhere near a rock and roll dance, I didn't watch spectator sports, go to parties, or date girls. I was also a virgin (that didn't last long with the Dead). I read and worked a lot. I was totally unsophisticated, socially. Leaping from that life to traveling with the Dead, Ken Kesey, and the Acid Test would be a dramatic change for anyone—especially me.

My existence up to that point mainly centered on academic life at the University, the Radiation Lab, and doing a lot of electronic design work. I got into LSD from more of an academic, philosophical point of view than from the Dionysian, rock and roll dance, orgiastic view espoused by the Pranksters and the Grateful Dead. My introduction came in early 1965 when a longtime friend, Don Douglas, who was studying oriental philosophy, told me about a few of the books he'd been reading in class. I began reading Huxley, Watts, Thomas Merton, Walt Whitman, Martin Buber, Idris Shaw and others. I read articles about psychedelic drugs by Alpert, Pankh, Savage, Clark and other researchers who were studying the use of psychedelics in inducing experimental transcendental religious experiences.

I was attracted to the ideas expressed in these books and articles. For the first time in my life I became interested in religion. The idea of taking God's existence and will on faith had never appealed to me, but here was empirical mysticism. Instead of being asked to take anything on faith, I was being offered a chance to test the reality of a transcendental experience. I saw no reason why a drug induced experience should be less valid than one reached through prayer, meditation or mortification.

On April 15, 1965, I took LSD for the first time. For a while I felt at one with God and with the living things in the universe. As Leaf Fielding said in his recent book, it was like being struck by lightning. That may not sound very impressive, but it was the most important experience of my life up until then. I saw many visions that evening. Some taught me more about myself; others opened my eyes to the beauty of the world around me. For a while I knew what it feels like to be a poet, an artist. Whole new universes of perception, thought and feeling were revealed to me. From that time on I was much more sensitive to the beauty of the world around me and to the feelings of others around me.

My friend Don Douglas took LSD for the first time that night too. Previously he had only smoked pot. The next day we talked over the things we had seen and felt. We both repeated over and over to each other that we should share this fantastic experience with others. We couldn't imagine

how hatred, cruelty and destruction could continue to exist in the world if everyone were to share this experience. Keep in mind that this was during the Vietnam War.

I saw the world as a place where most people lived lives of quiet desperation; working in jobs they hated to earn rewards that turned out to be tasteless and unsatisfying. Hypocrisy and hatred, double-dealing and cheating seemed to be the way of life in the business world. Ecologically, the world was clearly headed for disaster, with all of our resources running out, pollution increasing, and population exploding. Our technological power to control (and destroy) our environment and fellow humans was increasing at an explosive rate, but our understanding of ourselves, of our relationships to each other and to the universe around us, was not. An ever widening gap between technological power and sociological, psychological, anthropological, and spiritual insight was the terrifying result of this process. Each individual's power was being vastly increased without a balancing increase in maturity and responsibility.

This was the gap that I believed psychedelics could help close. I believed that psychedelics were keys to self-knowledge and self-development and I wanted to make them available to everyone who wanted them. I believed that psychedelics could bring new insights into a troubled world along with a sense of the brotherhood of all beings in the universe and their closeness to God. From the spiritual renewal my friends and I experienced through taking LSD, we became convinced that LSD was a sacrament that could revitalize the world.

My approach to LSD was to take it with one to three friends, either at home in front of the fireplace or in a quiet place like Golden Gate Park (in those days the park was quiet at night). So tripping with the Pranksters and the Grateful Dead was quite an experience. In theory, the Pranksters were making a movie. Their bus was filled with equipment: 16-mm color motion picture equipment, an expensive Nagra tape recorder that synched to the motion picture camera, portable light bars, and all of the professional gear for making movies. They rented buildings, at least during some of the time we were in Los Angeles, by saying they were renting a studio to film in—in fact, two of the LA Acid Tests were held in sound stages because that turned out to be the easiest kind of place to rent.

It worked like this: Once the place had been set up—all the electronics gear installed, strobe lights and ultra-violet lights in place, liquid projection machines ready—then everyone had to leave the building. Everyone could come back in, but they were charged admission. Everybody paid admission: all the people in the Acid Test, all the members of the Grateful Dead, and anyone else who was seduced off the street. It was very democratic.

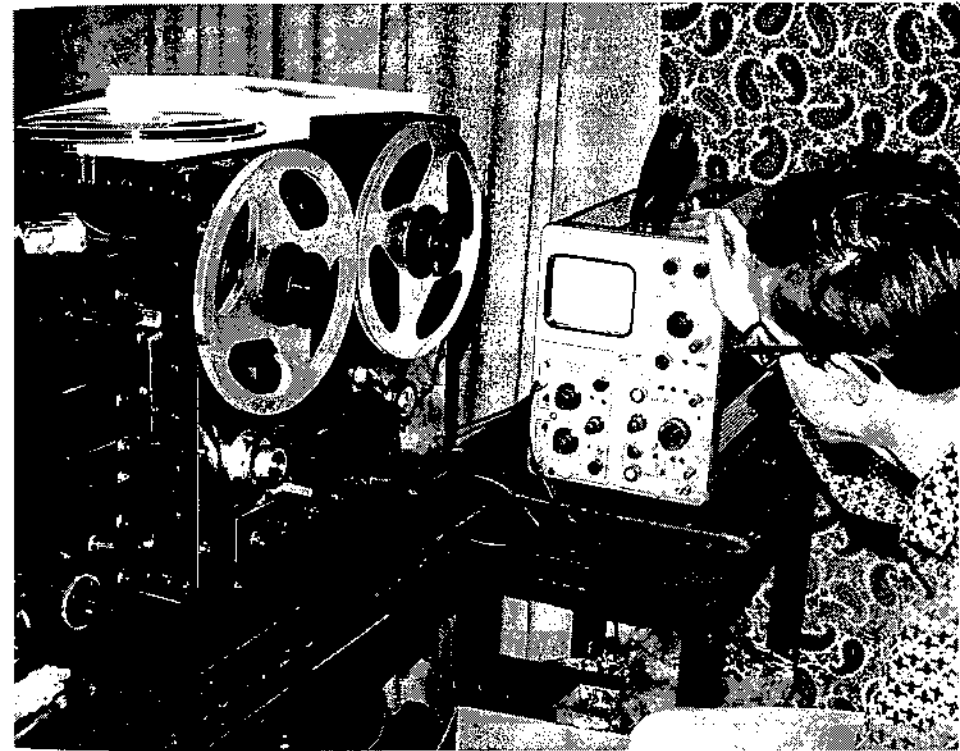
And also potentially problematic. At the Watts Acid Test, for example, folks who had never heard of LSD came in, drank some Kool-Aid, and started getting high. If you were surrounded by strobe lights, with the Pranksters doing things with their sound systems—all designed to disorient—the experience could be really fun, if that’s what you were into. But it could be terrifying if you didn’t know what to expect.

The Pranksters had worked out some pretty clever effects: things with reverberation, using tape recorders to produce time delays. One arrangement fed the sound from a microphone into a loudspeaker on the wall, delayed it a quarter of a second and fed it into another loudspeaker, delayed it another quarter of a second, then fed it back to the first speaker, bouncing the sound back and forth around the room. The effect was remarkable—far out, as we said—and it could be really fun, in the right mindset. But if you just walked in off the street, drank some Kool-Aid, and began to feel really strange, that could be very scary. Especially if someone put a microphone in front of your face, turned on very bright lights while someone else pointed a movie camera at you, asked you to say something, and your words started bouncing all over the room.

At the Watts Acid Test, I was off in one corner of this big warehouse, high on LSD and having fun with this big pile of new electronics gear which Bear Stanley had bought. There were power amplifiers and tape recorders and mixers and pre-amps—enough stuff to make a nice little cave to sit in: piles of equipment with lots of knobs and lighted dials, which I have always loved. I didn’t witness the widely reported freak-outs because I was off working behind my pile of electronic gear, but later I heard the stories. Both Don and I remember that the morning after the Watts Acid Test, there was considerable debate about the ethics of putting LSD in Kool-Aid where unwitting visitors would get stoned. The “who cares” lady was the icon of people who had bad trips as a result. (Wolfe describes this scene at length in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, pp. 291–294.)

At the time, the Dead were using Fender amps. Bear had worked at radio and TV stations and had developed his own firmly held opinions about good quality sound gear. He had several ideas that are worth recounting here:

- Minimize hum and noise by replacing the high-impedance, unbalanced connections between electric instruments and their amps with a low impedance balanced line.
- Improve the signal quality by replacing poor quality microphone connectors and wire with high quality, low triboelectric noise cables and connectors.



Tim Scully at Troupers Hall, Hollywood (1966)

Rosie McG

- Improve the sound by replacing the low-fidelity Fender loudspeakers with high-fidelity "Voice of the Theater" speakers (the kind used in large movie theaters).
- Improve the amplification by replacing the limited power, low-fidelity Fender amplifiers with high-fidelity, low-distortion McIntosh vacuum tube power amplifiers (which had enough "headroom" to avoid clipping, one of the worst forms of distortion).
- Improve recording quality by replacing the use of microphones for recording electric instruments with direct electrical recording, feeding the electrical signals from the instruments to a tape recorder without the distortion introduced by the PA system.

Some of Bear's ideas could be implemented with off-the-shelf equipment, but he wanted me to do the technical work to pull the system together. I had four tasks. First, I needed to modify the electric instruments by installing transformers that converted their high-impedance, unbalanced outputs into low-impedance, balanced signals, much less susceptible to hum and noise. Second, I had to design and build a custom "mixing board" to accept the signals from the modified instruments and the high-quality microphones that could supply outputs to the McIntosh amplifiers for the PA (for vocals), and outputs to a high-fidelity, 10-1/2 inch reel-to-reel stereo tape deck. He recorded everything the band played, including practice sessions. I also had to make a lot of good quality cables with good quality connectors and provide monitor speakers so the band could effectively hear themselves as they played.

I brought a stock of electronic tools and parts from my shop, including a Tektronix oscilloscope which I used to monitor the signals at each stage to verify that there was plenty of headroom and that we weren't clipping. Clipping happens if the electrical signal is too strong for that part of the circuit; it is a severe form of distortion created when the preamp or power amp is being asked to produce a higher voltage signal than it is capable of producing, so instead of faithfully reproducing the peaks and valleys of the electrical signal, the tops of the peaks are flattened, or clipped off. We avoided that by using the scope to monitor and adjust levels. An oscilloscope can catch fast "peaks" that a conventional VU meter would miss, so it has some advantages in this application.

My previous experience at doing sound work was limited. Don Douglas and I briefly operated the Hung Up Advertising Company (HUAC) in late 1965 which recorded radio ads (that we wrote and produced in my

bedroom), along with some live tapes of a couple of local musicians. I had a Uher tape recorder and covered the ceiling and walls with egg flats to improve acoustics, but the whole venture was modest and brief enough that it didn't merit mention on my CV. It ended when I left to travel with Bear and the Dead. I certainly can't claim to have been any kind of audio expert.

Bear had much more of an audio background than I did, from his work in radio and TV, but he was less versed in electronic circuit design—though, as usual, he had many strong opinions about how things should be done. My friend Don Douglas came along because he shared my desire to make LSD. He knew little about electronics, but helped with all the less technical parts of the work for the Dead.

Don and I put together the beginnings of the system for the Watts Acid Test. Bear had found a "super bass" speaker which we added to the system at the last minute. This was a large loudspeaker that had extreme low frequency response and was driven by a 400-watt amplifier. It coupled powerful sub-100 Hz audio into the ground or floor. You could feel it in the ground some distance away. There was a separate preamp, power amp and theatre speaker for each electric instrument, and separate preamps, power amps and speakers for the PA system. The preamps, with crude bass and treble controls and mixing controls for the tape deck and monitor channels, were all located in the home-made mixing board I built. The preamps were solid state, using low-noise field-effect transistors in the front ends.

Don and I also schlepped equipment and laid cables, and I soon bought a former Sunshine cookie truck (a 16-foot GMC van) to haul the band's equipment during the first half of 1966. Later, I used the same truck to haul lab equipment. Don was particularly skilled at driving a truckload of equipment while stoned on acid. The big power amps were bolted to a large sheet of plywood with large metal handles at each end, nicknamed the "lead sled" due to the weight of the transformers in the power amps. The theatre speakers were also bulky and heavy, and there were a lot of them. The logistics of packing up all the equipment, loading it in the truck, unloading it, hauling it up or down stairs, unpacking it, laying cables, taping them down, setting up mike stands, and testing everything, made the job of getting ready for the band to play a major production. This was a source of friction with the band because this made it impossible to be spontaneous. On the other hand, they liked the power and clarity of the system and learned a lot from being able to review recordings of every gig.

Bear's ideas were good. Direct electrical recording of electric instruments was wise, and I also liked his idea of using theater speakers

and good quality amplifiers with low-impedance lines from instruments to preamps. But there were intermittent reliability problems that, together with the logistical nightmare of hauling, setting up, and tearing down so much equipment eventually led the band to switch back to Fender amps. None of us understood the abuse the equipment would have to withstand—everything from being immersed in Coca Cola to getting dropped down stairways. Of course, some of the reliability issues may have owed something to everyone being stoned on acid while setting up and operating the equipment. Sometimes that included the audience: At a couple of Acid Tests it seemed that a psychic connection developed between the crowd and the sound system, and this feedback overloaded the speakers, blowing them out.

The Grateful Dead household took LSD frequently, often (at Acid Tests) with the Pranksters who made up the remainder of the Acid Test troupe. This was a deliberate experiment, fueled by ideas that many of the people in the group had read in Theodore Sturgeon's *More than Human* (1953). This classic science fiction novel describes a group of outcast and seemingly defective youngsters who have paranormal abilities such as telepathy and telekinesis. Individually, they can barely survive in the world, but together they form a gestalt entity much greater than the sum of their parts. Sometimes at an Acid Test, when the Pranksters and Dead and the audience took acid together and the Dead played, it felt to everyone involved as though a similar gestalt organism was formed. The intensity of this experience varied from mild to very strong. In its strongest form, we experienced a single consciousness that could use, or express itself through, any of the group's bodies. The experiences lasted for an hour or more at a time.

In Sturgeon's story, the group of kids could tell that there were still some essential parts of their gestalt being that were missing. They searched for recruits to fill in the missing pieces. Likewise, one of the reasons for Acid Tests was for the group to get high with lots of people to find the missing parts of the gestalt that sometimes formed. We joked that we would all leave the planet together when we found the right people.

I was with the band from late January through late July 1966. In addition to designing electronics, keeping the equipment working, hauling it, setting it up, tearing it down, and sometimes operating the mixing board at gigs, I also did some of the grocery shopping for the household and even helped find a place for us all to live. During the time we were in LA, Bear, Melissa Cargill, Don Douglas and I (along with other members of the Grateful Dead family) lived with the band in a big pink house at 2511 3rd Avenue. Don Douglas remembers going from the Watts Acid Test to the

pink house, which he recalls already having been rented by Phil Lesh; my memory is that we rented it shortly after the Watts Acid Test. We rented it for the spring for \$300 a month. It had been built for either a bishop of an obscure African American sect, as I recall, or a mainstream Catholic priest (according to Don Douglas), and included such conveniences as a confessional in the living room. The rooms had high ceilings and carved cherubs flew around at least one of them. There were plenty of rooms for all of us and the living room was big enough for all of the band's equipment (big theater speakers and all). Practice sessions were *loud*.

Our time in LA revolved around performing. The band played at Acid Tests and later, without the Pranksters, in halls we rented. We all took LSD together about once a week. Bear supported the band, renting the house, buying and renting equipment as needed, and paying for groceries. This wasn't cheap: I have receipts for two Altec A 7-500 Voice of the Theatre speakers for \$533.06, bought on 14 February 1966; five days later Bear paid \$1,910.4 for two McIntosh C22 stereo preamps, one McIntosh 240 stereo amplifier, and one Sennheiser MKH404 condenser microphone. A little money came in from the "gate" at the Acid Tests, but I'm not even sure this was enough to pay the rent for the halls we played in. I paid for some of the electronics parts we used and Bear paid for the rest. I don't remember having a salary.

When Bear ran low on cash in March, we tableted some of the crystal LSD he had left over from his 1965 LA lab, making about 4,000 LSD tablets in the attic of the pink house. These were sold to an acquaintance, "Margie," in a large peanut butter jar, who took them to "Capsule Corner" at Cantor's, where a group of street dealers were playing Monopoly and chatting with Lawrence Schiller of *Life* magazine. Proudly announcing, "Look what I just bought from Owsley," Margie sent a wave of paranoia through the group. Bob Hamilton was there and telephoned the pink house to warn Bear of Margie's big mouth.

By now, we were all beginning to get concerned about the media portrayal of LSD. That negative publicity forced the fourteenth Acid Test, nicknamed the Pico Test, to be moved from UCLA to Carthay Studios on Pico Boulevard (a sound stage) at the last minute. It was the last Acid Test held in LA. Bear recalls that "the owner was there to 'keep an eye on things' and totally freaked out at what he heard and saw, pulling the plug on us. Babbs backed the Bus in and we hooked into the onboard generator; I remember a funky little jug band who played on that genset's power and were mind-blowing. Don't recall their name."

A few days later, on March 25, Schiller's story appeared, with the cover of *Life* blaring "The Exploding Threat of the Mind Drug that Got

Out of Control: LSD.” It was time to leave. When the band left LA around May 1, they rented Olompali, north of Novato, and I went along. I think that’s where I met Ruth Pakkala, who was Phil Lesh’s former girlfriend. By late June we had all moved to a former Girl Scout camp on Arroyo Road in Lagunitas. Not long after we moved there, Bear and Melissa Cargill went off to set up a lab in Point Richmond. Once they had the lab set up, Bear let me join him there as his apprentice.

When Bear and I went off to make more LSD, the band went back to using conventional gear. My memory is that the band was uncomfortable with having us too involved with them while we were actively making acid, although Bear remembers the reason for the parting as the difficulties with the sound equipment. Regardless, it ended a fascinating chapter in my life and a formative time in the band’s career. The LA sojourn taught us all a great deal about sound engineering, event production, and the power of media. The rising tide of anti-LSD hysteria that chased us out of LA was a harbinger of difficulties to come, but the memories of that time for many of those fortunate enough to have experienced it are also bright with the promise of what we hoped for: a better, more just, and peaceful society. The story of that promise, and those hopes, still needs to be told. This memoir is part of an archive I am assembling to help tell part of that story, one that complements the work being done with the Grateful Dead Archive at UC Santa Cruz.



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The Pico Acid Test, Los Angeles (1966)

Rosie McGee



The Pico Acid Test, Los Angeles (1966)

*Rosie McGee*

“Are You in Control of All This?”  
The Folk Scene, the Acid Tests, and  
Witnessing the Birth of the Dead

*Don Douglas*

I suppose it's fairly common for people to remember the first time they smoked pot, even if all the later times blur together in a fog. Mine was in the fall of 1963, early in my sophomore year at San Jose State. What made it stand out was meeting several local musicians on the same day.

A fellow student and a musician himself, Pete Grant, introduced me. Although, like many others, he now eschews psychoactive substances, at the time he was sort of a campus Johnny Appleseed of weed. It was still a rare commodity at the time. When he asked me if I wanted to smoke some, I was beyond ready. I said yes almost before he got the question out.

We went first to East San Fernando Street on the north side of the San Jose State campus, to the apartment of Pete's friend Paul Kantner. At the time, Paul was half of the folk duo, Rand & Paul. He rolled a joint and we smoked. Nothing happened—or so I thought. My first impression was that, in terms of inebriation, this ranked perhaps a one on a scale of ten, and then the subject of the effects—or non-effects—of pot was set aside as Peter opened up his ever-present banjo case and began to play “Sailor's Hornpipe.” Despite not feeling particularly high, I *really* enjoyed the music—my first taste of what it meant to be stoned.

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*Dead Studies*, Vol. 3 (2013)



After some time we decided to go have some coffee. Just down the street was one of two San Jose coffeehouses that featured live music. The first and better known was Paul Foster's Offstage, on First Street, which was more of a non-alcoholic nightclub. The other, whose name has vanished in the mists of time and the vagaries of memory, was just down San Fernando Street from Kantner's apartment. It was open during the day time.

As Pete and I were sitting and sipping, "Sailor's Hornpipe" kept running through the back of my mind. Not only was it running around back there, but it was fully fleshed out with bass and guitar in addition to the finger-picked banjo. It was as though I could actually hear it, however faintly, sounding like a bluegrass band far off in the distance. I thought maybe it was an auditory hallucination. After a while it seemed too real to be imaginary, grass or no grass, and I asked Pete, "Do you hear that?"

"I was going to ask you," he said. We got up to look around. There were small, sound-dampened practice rooms in a hallway in back of the coffeehouse and he proceeded to open doors. He opened one and suddenly the music was loud and there it was, "Sailor's Hornpipe"! It was blasting out of that tiny cubicle of a practice room, performed by three members of the Black Mountain Boys: Jerry Garcia, Robert Hunter, and David Nelson. The acoustic-tiled ceiling was so low, Garcia seemed to have to stoop a bit. He was grinning.

Not knowing how minds might interconnect and what marijuana might have to do with some sort of ESP—and in my naïve willingness to believe damn near anything—somehow I thought that their coincidentally playing the same tune as Pete was not actually a coincidence.

I asked Garcia, "Are you in control of all this?"

He had a devilish goatee beard to go with his devilish grin and answered, "Yes."

Ask a silly question ... It was a great introduction. As time passed and the number of smokers grew to become "the scene," somewhere in the back of my mind I always half-believed that Garcia was orchestrating it all. Even then, he had that aura.

\* \* \*

Some of those who performed at the Offstage, as well as the Tangent in Palo Alto and the Kabal in Berkeley and similar venues, went on to become well-known rock musicians. Others, of course, did not. At the time it was all very egalitarian. There were some, such as Jorma Kaukonen, David Freiberg, and Jerry Garcia who were already virtuoso

musicians. Others were less so, but simplicity can be a virtue in renditions of traditional folk ballads.

One of these was Ron McKernan, whose solo blues performances were delivered with an elemental directness that added to their power. An intricate finger dance up and down the fretboard would have been a distraction. Another regular was Sherry Snow, a solo performer who later sang with Dan Hicks and his Hot Licks. Others included Pete Grant, David Nelson, and Page Brownnton (not to be confused with Page Browning, discussed below).

One of the guitarists who was something of a star on the folk music stage but didn't go on to become a famous rock musician was the late Perry Lederman. Diminutive and impish, playing a steel string guitar that seemed as big as he was, Perry was phenomenal. If talent were the only determining factor, he would have become a rock star. Others were amateur musicians from the get-go, with never any intention to be anything else. Rory Condon, who later worked with us in the basement, was one of those.

One day, Pete asked me if I wanted to go and see "the incipient hippies." It was the first time I had ever heard the term hippies. I was up for almost anything, though, and said sure. So he led the way to 270 South Ninth Street, a craftsman-style house occupied by two coeds. Being so close to the campus (and long since swallowed up by it) and having a front door that was always open to visitors, it was a natural student hangout and the site of many parties.

Many of the musicians would come by at one time or another and some would hang out regularly at 270, as it was simply known. Among these was Ron McKernan, nicknamed Pigpen. He had a job delivering doughnuts to retail outlets, a night route that he would finish around three or four in the morning. I remember him coming by 270 after finishing his route with a tray of leftovers. He would always have a gallon jug of Red Mountain wine and break out his guitar, singing his blues and sharing his wine and doughnuts. Often it was just two or three of us, sitting on the floor leaning against the wall, as he played and sang. I never knew him to smoke any pot; he just drank his wine.

Lots of other people did take up smoking it as it became more widely available, though. Three groups of smokers formed, all friendly with each other but nonetheless distinct cliques. There were the drama students, notably Luis Valdez who went on to become a famous screen writer and playwright, and his good friend the late Iver Flom. The drama crowd was the smallest of the three groups. Another group was the fraternity crowd. They had the appearance of fraternity boys everywhere at the time: short

hair with no facial hair, Madras shirts in vivid colors, penny loafers, the works. Among these was a guy who had been a pilot in Vietnam and had returned to school after his tour of duty, Steve Lambrecht. He was bright and focused, but also a superlative example of the serious partier. He earned his later, well-deserved nickname of Zonker. Another was Page Browning, gentle and kind but another psychedelic wildman.

Last and most prominent were the folk musicians, and those of us who hung out and identified with them. The people associated with these three groups were generally friendly with each other and often partied together. I wouldn't want to suggest that the distinctions were sharper than they actually were, but it was interesting to see how that division endured: Later, at the Acid Tests, one could see the same distinction, this time between the Grateful Dead and the Merry Pranksters. Nor was this surprising, given the presence of so many of the same people from that earlier campus scene.

\* \* \*

I had an interest in Asian philosophy and studied Japanese along with taking classes in the philosophies of India, China and Japan. This had started with reading D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts before I went to college and my interest only grew stronger in the classes taught by J. R. McCullough. He became a mentor to me as he was to many others, although he unfortunately was unable to convince me that studying philosophy was fine but actually majoring in it was ridiculous.

McCullough was the faculty advisor for an Asian philosophy group on campus called the Sangha Club. One day, in Mac's office, one of the other members said that the group was going to host a symposium on LSD. I had never heard of LSD and had to ask what it was. Ron Jue, the person who introduced the subject, had taken it under the guidance of a psychiatric professional and was very enthusiastic about its potential for expanding human consciousness when used in that set and setting.

The symposium consisted of individual talks followed by a panel discussion. Presented on May 9, 1964, it was entitled, "LSD: Basic Problems and Potentialities." Speakers included Frank Barron, Charles Savage, and others. Richard Alpert, along with his collaborator Timothy Leary, had recently been fired from Harvard University's psychology department for their work with LSD. This made inviting Alpert to be a member of the panel inappropriate—the university administration would have nixed it. What the Sangha Club did instead was plan to have him in the audience so that one of the other panel members could say, "Oh, look who's here,"

and invite him to come up on the stage. That's exactly what happened, and I was one of many in the audience who was enthralled with the renegade professor.

After the symposium, the Sangha Club and the speakers, including Alpert, all went out to dinner at Ming's Restaurant in Palo Alto. We alternated seating, with students placed between the speakers at a big round table. The seat I was assigned was next to Alpert. He told me of social groups in New York where LSD was taken as often and as casually as alcohol might be at more conventional parties, and also talked of the scene in upstate New York. My attention was superglued.

One of my close friends from Japanese class and the Sangha Club was Ed "Doc" Kawazoc. In the summer of 1964 we went down to West Los Angeles to work in a clothing factory where his old friend, Jim Nakagawa, was head of accounting. I worked in the cutting room, learning to use the motorized knives.

The important thing to me about this experience is what it meant for my own personal growth and cultural broadening. Mine was the only white face in the company. Most of the rest of the staff was Japanese, Filipino, or other Asian descent, typically with some roots and family in Hawaii. At first this was a difficult adjustment for me: Although I'd always had some friends of Asian descent, I'd never been a minority of one. Over the summer I became comfortable with it, and more and more came to see them as my people, as much if not more so than those of my own race.

At night, if we went out, it would be to jazz clubs in South Central LA. Ed was a real jazz fan: He could listen to a record and tell you who was playing each instrument, although he didn't play music himself. We would go to after-hours clubs, which I could get into since no alcohol was served, and sometimes to black nightclubs where they didn't bother to check ID. I just kept my head down and listened. On one particularly memorable night we saw Aretha Franklin with just a piano-bass-drum trio in a small club. She was, at the time, a mere slip of a girl, but she already had that big, beautiful voice.

All of this is an aside, since it has only to do with my own experience and not the South Bay folk musicians and the emerging San Francisco rock scene. Its relevance to this narrative comes later, in nights I spent carousing with Pigpen during the time of the Pink House in LA.

In the following semester, fall of 1964, there was another event which caused a significant change: the Beatles film, *A Hard Day's Night*. Its impact on the scene—and especially the musicians in the scene—can hardly be overstated. Overnight, die-hard folk music purists were forming

rock and roll bands. In a blink, the scene changed. The British Invasion had spawned a wholesale musical conversion.

Group acid trips were now happening at Ken Kesey's place in La Honda, with a number of San Jose State students taking part. I think I eventually would have been involved with that, but after the end of the fall semester I transferred to UC Berkeley. The elder brother with whom I'd been living was getting married, and it was more practical for me to live at home in Pleasant Hill and commute to Berkeley, rather than try to support myself while going to school in San Jose. Some father-son friction made that situation unworkable and thankfully Tim Scully invited me to live at his house in Berkeley. We started getting high together and friends of mine from the San Jose scene, including Rory Condon, would visit.

The Beatles album, *Rubber Soul*, was released on December 3, 1965. Like *A Hard Day's Night*, it had a major impact on the scene: The best word to describe the mood the LP imparted was *exuberance*. I was no exception: In my own private psyche, my elation stemmed from a combination of what I had heard less than a year earlier at the symposium on LSD and the optimism of the peace-and-love hippies who took acid just to party. And the Beatles made everything fun again.

It wasn't all fun. We were faced with a deepening war in Vietnam. In the previous semester at San Jose State, I had been thrown out of the Student Peace Union because I refused to take part in marches and demonstrations. My feeling at the time was that they would only get the collective militarist dander up with counterproductive results. Although I agreed wholeheartedly with their motives, I wanted to find a different way. That didn't happen, however, and in time, I came to believe that marches and demonstrations were a good and necessary thing.

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Tim and I took acid together, the first time for both of us, sometime early in the spring semester of 1965. I had been interested in trying to synthesize chemical psychedelics, not personally but with the help of a schooled chemist, before moving to Berkeley. I even had tried to talk my straight-laced (but otherwise quite jovial) elder brother into it, without success. When we were coming down from our first LSD trip, Tim said, "You know, we could make this."

Well, to be honest, *he* could make it. I had only enough high school chemistry to be able to follow instructions. As it turned out, I had nothing to do with the chemistry for the first several go-rounds. There was someone else in Tim's milieu who did that work. My contribution was to bring in

my old friend Rory, who brought in his pal Al Moss. Between them they helped to distribute what Tim's associate made.

In addition to their efforts, Tim and I also distributed some of the product ourselves. Another friend of mine from San Jose, whose name is lost to memory, made some contacts for us. One of the customers was Margot St. James, who at the time still had a brothel, the Saint James Infirmary, in North Beach. I remember going there, horny as a bear in spring, wishing I could influence Tim to accept trades. No luck. Everything in its season, I grudgingly supposed. They paid cash.

At the same time that we were doing this, we were producing radio commercials. This was fun. My brother Jim recruited jazz musician friends of his, we got stoned, we produced commercials, and, in a small way, we got paid. This continued until we offered the service to a bar owner who happened to be an officer of Local 6 of the Musicians Union. That was the end of the Hung Up Advertising Company, or HUAC. A local radio station, KSAY, which aired our spots, had suggested that we produce with them, coordinating our work with their sales staff. The offer was perhaps more tempting to me than to Tim, but it coincided with a more compelling opportunity, one presented during our first meeting with Bear, AKA Augustus Owsley Stanley III.

Bear had heard about what was going on with us and wanted to meet. Tim has a better recollection of the details of how this happened, but what I do recall is the actual day when he walked in the door. Bear said he was getting together with a rock and roll band—the Grateful Dead—and they were going to go "on the road." Moreover, he was interested in joining forces with a few strategic partners in the area of psychedelics. The road turned out to end in Los Angeles, at a large house on Third Street between Interstate 10 and West Adams Boulevard. It is sometimes referred to as the Watts House, but it is actually around 13 miles outside of Watts. It was, however, where the Dead were living at the time of the Watts Acid Test.

It was a great house. When you walked into the front door, there was a large living room where the band would practice and the household would gather. Off in the left corner was a small room with a confessional booth, a legacy from a time when the house had belonged to a clergyman. This was Garcia's bedroom, the only one on the ground floor. Toward the rear of the house was a large, country-style kitchen. Meat comprised the entire menu, purchased in the form of huge chuck roasts that were carved into steaks. Owsley was paying the piper and calling the tune, and for his entire life meat was the only thing he believed in eating, something he espoused well in advance of Atkins.

On the second floor were bedrooms, enough for almost everyone. In the front corner of the second floor was a small room furnished only with a big bowl on a small table. The pot was in the bowl and the rule was that it didn't leave the room. Roaches were collected there, so that should there be any sort of legal emergency, it all could be disposed of and we could be sure that there weren't roaches strewn all over the house.

The top floor was the attic which was developed into a couple of rooms. This is where Bear and Melissa lived and also where Tim and Bear worked on building the electronics. I was willing to help with that but not able to do much. My father, a home builder, used to say that only two kinds of people work with electricity: fools and electricians. I tried to avoid being a fool.

Tim had a Hillman convertible which he let me drive and sometimes at night I would go out carousing with Pigpen. Tim and I had turned 21 the summer before, I in late June and he in late August, but Ron was still under 21. Bear and the band were opposed to him drinking alcohol, wanting him to join in the pot smoking and acid taking like the rest of us. But I used to drink with him at 270 during my student days, and I always believed in the right to choose. So we would go out, I would buy the jug of Red Mountain, and we'd catch some live music. Some of the places we went were where I had gone in the summer of 1964. Once we went to the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, where they had a section for people between 18 and 21, for a performance by the Temptations. Another time we went to a small place where a friend of Ron's was playing what sounded like fifties dance band music. He explained to me that while fans are often zeroed in on one particular musical taste, musicians themselves usually appreciate a much wider range of genres.

These excursions did not go unnoticed by the group. One time the whole household was gathered on the top floor in Bear and Melissa's room, with everyone except Pigpen stoned on acid. Something was said about our disappearing for long hours, and I commented that we'd been out looking for an all-night harmonica store, a throwaway line that later popped up on a poster (see p. [ ]).

My inability to contribute to the development of sound gear led to the realization that, other than driving the equipment truck to and from concerts every week or so, there wasn't much for me to do that justified a seat at the dinner table. I had been working on gig promotion, hall rental, and that kind of logistics, but when Rock Scully (no relation to Tim) joined the group there was less for me to do in that area as well. Rock wanted his friend Danny Rifkin to join and I was rather in the way. Unlike later, when even the roadies had their own chartered jet, these were lean times. When I

was called away to take care of some business in the Bay Area, it gave me some time to reflect on the situation, and ultimately I decided that it was time for me to move on.

Later that spring when the band was preparing to move back to San Francisco, they got in touch with me and asked me to come back down and drive the equipment truck up north. As I was getting ready to leave, I commented that it was a pretty long drive and it would be nice to have some company. Garcia, ever the gentleman, volunteered, and he and his girlfriend, a petite brunette, rode with me.

The truck was a flat-front cabover design, a new style back in 1966. It had a four-speed transmission with a two-speed axle. This gave it eight forward and two reverse gears. The transmission shifted in the usual way and the axle shifted by using the second and ring fingers of the right hand to raise and lower a flange around the gear shaft. On flat ground with a normal load you could just drive the normal way. Going up and down hills with a heavy load, however, required being able to work all eight of them.

It was warm, with summer approaching, but as we got to the top of the stretch of interstate nicknamed the Grapevine, the night air was chilly, and we turned on the heater. This caused the engine temperature to rise rapidly, while the power dropped. It turned out that there was a rip in the heater hose and turning on the heater blew all the coolant out. I got caught in between axle speeds, and our momentum prevented me from revving the sputtering engine high enough to get it back into gear. I might have been able to force the transmission into gear, if that had been the problem, but to get the axle in gear I needed engine speed. So there we were, freewheeling down the north side of the Grapevine with the axle in neutral, the brakes getting hot and approaching failure, and a very heavy load in back. I tried to brake as little as possible and only then on straightaways. But Jerry was the best person to have in the shotgun seat in this tense situation. He was unflappable.

Finally we got to a level spot and the truck rolled to a stop. It was the middle of the night and long before they started putting up roadside emergency telephones. There was little or no other traffic on the highway. I had on high-heeled Beatle boots, not the best footwear for hiking, but hiking was the only option. Jerry and his girlfriend stayed in the truck and I set out up the road. After about five miles I came to an open service station. A tow truck driver took me to the truck. Once back at the station, he tilted the cab forward, quickly found the split heater hose, and replaced it. We were back on the road.

Once back in San Francisco, I returned to my place on 17th Street and ended my formal association with the Dead. But I stayed involved

as one of their hundreds, then thousands, then millions of fans. Watching them evolve from those early Palo Alto days was a unique privilege, and participating in that spring in LA left me with memories I will cherish forever. My story is one of many that map the fascinating and myriad ways that the Grateful Dead changed America, one mind at a time.



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Troupers Hall, Hollywood (1966)

*Rosie McGee*



Troupers Hall, Hollywood (1966)

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