

HIP SANTA CRUZ IN THE 1960S

First-person accounts
of the Hip Culture movement
in Santa Cruz, California

Edited by Ralph H. Abraham
with the assistance of
Judy Lomba.

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1. Introduction

In the 1960s, Santa Cruz was a fountainhead of Hip culture. When I arrived in 1968 to join the new university, UCSC, the creative time was nearly over. By 1980, it seemed to me it had been such a miracle that its birth should be recorded. So I created the Santa Cruz Hip History Project in 2002, collecting oral histories and photographs in a website. This book is a compact summary of the material from that website that is most relevant to the creation of the Hip culture of Santa Cruz. From 1964 to 1970, we will follow the stories of some of the main characters of the Hip miracle in Santa Cruz. These are primarily edited transcripts of interviews and verbal story telling. I chose the people that I personally knew as key characters in the Hip culture. I am sorry that most of the voices are male, but our time — preceding the gender equality movement of the 1970s — was predominantly patriarchal.

Here is a brief chronology of the main events of the time.¹

- **1958.** The Sticky Wicket, a cafe and gallery on Cathcart Street, was said to be the first Hip hangout. Later it moved to Aptos.
- **1960.** Ken Kesey moved from the Wallace Stegner writing program at Stanford to La Honda. and began house parties, along with LSD, fluorescent paintings, strobe lights, and music. Later, the house band became the Grateful Dead.
- **1961.** Peter Demma, discharged from military service, moved to Palo Alto, met Ken Kesey and Neal Cassady.
- **1962.** Leon Tabory, psychiatrist, moved into Neal Cassady's house in Los Gatos, and opened an office in Santa Cruz. Kesey published *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.
- **1963.** Peter, while running a bookstore in San Diego, visited Big Sur. In the hot baths with Ron Bevirt a plan was hatched to open a bookstore in Santa Cruz called the Hip Pocket Bookstore. The sign was to be made by Ron Boise, a sculptor living in Big Sur in a bread truck. A set of his works called the Kama Sutra sculptures was then showing at the Sticky Wicket.
- **1964. Beginning of the golden years.**
 - Ken Kesey published *Sometimes a Great Nation*, formed the Merry Pranksters. The bus Further took them to New York for a Kesey book event. Neal, Ron Bevirt, Lee Quarnstrom, Stewart Brand, Ed McClanahan. and others were on the trip.

¹Many thanks to the UCSC McHenry Library Special Collections for help with this.

- Peter and Ron Bevirt opened the Hip Pocket Bookstore on September 13 in the St. George Hotel. The Ron Boise sign and two nude sculptures (covered by a sheet) were on hand. Norman Lezin, the mayor of Santa Cruz, had agreed to unveil the sculptures at the opening, which was busted by the police.
 - Later, Neal and Leon used to hang out and help out at the bookstore. Neal suggested the bookstore have free speech night every friday. Leon started them off, speaking about marijuana.
 - Leon hears Eric ’“Big Daddy”’ Nord was opening the Loft, a cafe at a barn in Scotts Valley. Leon went there, met Cathy, they married.
- 1965.
 - November 21, Wavy Gravy’s Lysergic A GO GO in LA , with light show by Del Close.²
 - November 27, the first Acid Test, in Soquel, near Santa Cruz.
 - UCSC opened in the Fall.
 - The Hip Pocket Bookstore closed. Ron Lau purchased the books.
 - 1966.
 - Bookshop Santa Cruz opened by Ron Lau.
 - In the summer, the Barn opened in Scotts Valley by Leon. It featured dances similar to the acid tests, with fluorescent wall paintings by Joe Lysowski and Pat Bisconti. Great artists such as Janis Joplin and Country Joe performed there. A local band performed on musical sculptures created by Ron Boise. Light shows created by Joe were among the first in the US.
 - In the Fall, the Catalyst Coffee House and Delicatessen opened in the St. George Hotel by Al and Patti DiLudovico next to the Bookshop.
 - 1967.
 - Paul Lee (philosopher, founding editor of *The Psychedelic Review*) and Page Stegner (writer, son of Wallace Stegner) joined UCSC.
 - Jefferson Airplane played in Santa Cruz.
 - Hippies moved into the Holiday Cabins in Ben Lomond.³

²See www.rollingstone.com/music/news/acid-tests-turn-50-wavy-gravy-merry-prankster-ken-babbs-look-back-20151130

³See (Harman, 2015) for the full story.

- **1968.**

- Spring, I visited UCSC and the Barn, and decided to join UCSC.
- Fall, I arrived with family. Moved into a 24-room Victorian mansion at 724 California Street.

- **1969.**

- The Barn closed.
- The Catalyst closed.
- Jack Kerouac died.
- I got into trouble at UCSC for political actions, along with Paul Lee.

- **1970. The end of the golden years.**

- February 26. In the local alternative newspaper, the *Free Spaghetti Dinner*, I wrote in my regular column “Scientific Advice on the Politics of Life,” under my pseudonym, Dr. Abraham Clearquill:

Last Fall I felt that the emerging community in Santa Cruz was at a watershed, and that a development of some importance to the world was possible. Now I am convinced that this opportunity has passed, and the old structure is being recreated.⁴

- June, we vacated the Victorian mansion.

Ralph Abraham; June 5, 2016; Bonny Doon, California

⁴Thanks to Rick Gladstone, founding editor of the FSD, for recalling this.