

BRING OUT YOUR DEAD

EUGENE REFLECTS ON ITS GRATEFUL DEAD LEGACY ON THE BAND'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

BY SOPHIA JUNE

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In 1994, I was one year old, sitting in the grass wearing a blue floral dress and eating a Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia Peace Pop. This made sense: Like many children of Deadheads, my parents had brought me to the Grateful Dead show at Autzen Stadium on June 17, 1994.

My parents met in the summer of '88 on their way to a Dead show at Autzen. My mom had never been to Oregon and needed a ride from Los Angeles; my dad gave her one.

Five years later, I was born and they were taking me to Grateful Dead concerts.

Growing up, the Grateful Dead held a strange mythological sway over my parents. My dad attended around 100 shows and sold about 1,000 pink tie-dye shirts that had Charlie Brown wearing a shirt with the *Steal Your Face* emblem — the Grateful Dead's signature lightning bolt in a skull icon that comes from their 1976 album. The shirts read "Mr. Charlie Told Me So."

When my brother was born in the Eisenhower Medical Center adjacent to the Betty Ford Center in Rancho Mirage, California, in July of '95, Jerry Garcia was there for drug rehab. When he died a week after my brother was born, my parents joked that Garcia had put a spirit in him.

My dad tells stories about driving from Boulder, Colorado, to San Francisco in one night for a weekend of Grateful Dead shows, "but we were kind of crazy," he admits. My mom uprooted her life as a grad student in San Diego to eat veggie burritos and follow the band as far as Kansas City, Missouri. "We went on tour," my parents like to tell me.

Jerry Garcia himself famously said, "Our audience is like people who like licorice. Not everybody likes licorice, but the people who like licorice, really like licorice."

Deadheads are the people who gobble up, dissect the meaning of and build lives around that licorice.

Despite the numerous signifiers surrounding its cultural status — as both a cult and mainstream rock band — nothing better illustrates the band's current relevance than the Fare Thee Well shows, June 27 and 28 at Levi's



THE AUTHOR SOPHIA JUNE
WITH HER MOTHER AT THE 1994
AUTZEN GRATEFUL DEAD SHOW

Stadium in Santa Clara, and July 3-5 at Soldier Field in Chicago. WOW Hall and Hi-Fi Music Hall will be streaming the shows live for free, because let's face it — Eugene is obsessed with the Dead.

But judging by the Dead's tour history, it seems this obsession isn't entirely one-sided.

The Grateful Dead have played Autzen Stadium five times, Mac Court three times, South Eugene High School, the EMU Ballroom and Lane Community College, not to mention the 1972 "Sunshine Daydream" show at the Oregon Country Fair that funded the Springfield Creamery. Jerry Garcia's ex-wife Carolyn Garcia even relocated to Eugene and still lives here today.

So grab the kids and settle them in for a story. Let's take that long strange trip of how our small city south of Portland gained a reputation for being the Dead's second home, and how that legacy thrives today.

YOU'RE GONNA MISS ME WHEN I'M GONE

May 5, 1965, was the Grateful Dead's first paid gig, a show at Magoo's Pizza Parlor in Menlo Park, California, back when they were still called The Warlocks.

Half a century later, in January 2015, Trixie Garcia, Jerry's daughter, announced that the world's most influential jam band would be reuniting for three last shows to celebrate its 50th anniversary. This is the first time Bill Kreutzmann, Bob Weir, Mickey Hart and Phil Lesh would play together under the name the Grateful Dead since the 1995 death of frontman Jerry Garcia. Much to the chagrin of Deadheads on both coasts, however, the shows were scheduled to occur in Chicago's Soldier Field — the site of Jerry's last show.

The announcement didn't create just a ripple, but a whirlpool in the Dead sea of fans.