



**Joan Aragone**  
**TIME OF YOUR LIFE**

## Legends on film

**T**HE public connects author Ken Kesey with 1960s La Honda, where he threw LSD-laced parties and frolicked with the Merry Pranksters, and from where he set off on the wild cross-country bus ride chronicled by Tom Wolfe in the "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test" (1967).

But before La Honda, Kesey lived in Menlo Park.

A graduate student in creative writing at Stanford University, he rented a cottage on Perry Lane, a one-block street in an unincorporated area of the town near Alameda de las Pulgas. There he wrote "Cuckoo's Nest" and "Sometimes a Great Notion." At frequent gatherings, he and his wife entertained neighbors and friends, including a young musician named Jerry Garcia, who had lived in Menlo Park during junior high years (The Grateful Dead was yet to come).

By the end of the 1960s, Kesey and Garcia, who is usually associated with San Francisco, had achieved world recognition, but 40 years later, local memories of the two remain strong.

Now anyone who wants to hear or share those memories can come to a special event Saturday, Nov. 4, at the Menlo Park Public Library, 800 Alma St. starting at 11 a.m. "A Celebration to Share Memories of Jerry Garcia and Ken Kesey," will feature a 33-minute film of taped local reminiscences about the two made at the library a year ago, remarks by Kesey's Menlo Park neighbor, by the

current owner of Kesey's La Honda home, live music and an invitation to the public to record on open-mic their additional memories for inclusion in a completed film.

"Jerry and Ken were very much in touch with the community," said artist Leah Lubin, one of the planners with librarian Roberta Roth, of the Saturday event. Her son, filmmaker Daniel Raim, will be taping the memories.

The celebration grew from an exhibit of "Landmarks" at the San Mateo Historical Museum, where Lubin exhibited a collage of photos of Kesey and the Pranksters during a stop-over at a La Honda cafe on a bus trip to New York. A community party ensued. Also on display was her oil portrait of Garcia, "Jerry Forever Young," painted in 2001. He died in 1995.

For the portrait, Lubin "cleaned him up a bit" and dressed him in a white tee shirt instead of his trademark black.

"People went bonkers at the exhibit," Lubin said. "The work rekindled stories. So many local people 55 and over have memories of Ken and Jerry."

On display at the library until their recent return to the museum, they've been replaced by Rubin's new work, "Read This," a newspaper collage of Kesey and Garcia.

Raim, nominated for an Academy Award for his documentary "The Man on Lincoln's Nose," sees the current film — edited from two hours of interviews — as "archival," not a theater-ready documentary. He plans to incorporate Saturday's interviews/reminiscences into the current film to create a finished product.

Today, Perry Lane is dotted with comfortable homes. But in

the early 1960s, the homes shared acreage with several small cottages sprinkled around a common space.

"The space was perfect for gatherings," said Paul De Carli, 76, retired scientist at SRI and Perry Lane resident since 1960. "The drug of choice was alcohol, beer or wine. Musicians came and jammed, a neighbor used to play the guitar and sing. Occasionally a few of Ken's entourage showed up. The gatherings were quite sedate."

Kesey's next-door neighbor until the author moved to La Honda in the mid-1960s, De Carli, said Kesey suffered from "the macho disease."

"He did hard work, but he would never admit to it," De Carli said. "He worked at night. A night person myself, I would see him hunched over his typewriter at 3 a.m."

Others have stories of the teenage Garcia, who taught guitar in the area when he lived in Menlo Park with his mother and stepfather, and of the Grateful Dead.

Kesey and Garcia are recalled as people, not icons.

"Ken didn't change when he became famous," De Carli said. "He still had the same attitude. He was the same Ken."

For information on the event, call the Menlo Park Library at (650) 330-2525. Free van service is available for Menlo Park residents.