

Two late greats

Local party honors Ken Kesey and Jerry Garcia
with music and film

by Julie Park

The late, legendary figures Ken Kesey and Jerry Garcia both had strong local ties.

Back in the day, Ken Kesey was a creative writing fellow at Stanford University. He wrote "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" while working at the Menlo Park VA hospital and became something of an icon. He was friends with Grateful Dead musician Jerry Garcia, who also lived in the area.

This Saturday, locals who knew—or knew of—Kesey and Garcia are invited to gather at the Menlo Park Library to share their stories of the famed figures.

There will be an open-mic session, a screening of a documentary film, and music and spoken-word performances. The current owner of Kesey's La Honda home will speak, as will Paul DeCarli, Kesey's former neighbor on Perry Lane in Menlo Park.

Organized by local artist Leah Lubin and Menlo Park outreach librarian Roberta Roth, the event is called "A Celebration to Share Memories of Jerry Garcia and Ken Kesey." It's a follow-up to a similar

event that was held last year, Roth said.

Lubin is a new instructor at the Pacific Art League in Palo Alto, teaching abstract art and photo collage. Although she didn't know Garcia or Kesey, she said she is fascinated by the two artists.

"He was a living, functioning, successful writer," she said of Kesey. "That says a lot. Most of us (artists) are still struggling."

She added of Garcia: "When Jerry played, it was like water flowing. People talk again and again about the emotional connection they felt to him."

Lubin decided to organize the event after the strong responses she received in 2004 when she exhibited artwork in San Mateo that was inspired by Garcia and Kesey.

"An old man walked up to me and said, 'I was friends with Ken when he was writing "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." We used to go to the Oasis for dinner,'" Lubin recalled. "Twenty minutes later this elementary-school teacher from Menlo Park told me she lived on Perry Lane, and that people there



Nicholas Jensen

"When Jerry played, it was like water flowing," artist Leah Lubin (pictured at the Pacific Art League) says of Jerry Garcia. She's helping organize a party honoring him and Ken Kesey.

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Last year Lubin organized a similar event with the library to remember Kesey and Garcia. She said, "People came from far and around, enough for us to tape two hours of stories."

The video footage, shot by Lubin's filmmaker son, Daniel Raim, has now been made into a 30-minute documentary, called "Memories of Jerry Garcia and Ken Kesey." It will be shown at Saturday's event.

Raim will also film the open-mic session at the library.

This year there will be more stories and music. The Gary Gates and Friends Acoustic band plays "eclectic Hawaiian rock 'n' roll" and is influenced by the Grateful Dead," Lubin said.

MysticCowboy, also known as James Worthington, will perform spoken word about what it was like for him to be in the parking lot of a Grateful Dead show, selling burritos to try to make enough money to buy a ticket. He will also play Grateful Dead music on acoustic guitar.

Lubin recalled that she did meet

Kesey once, in La Honda in 2000. He was revisiting the area for four hours with the Merry Pranksters, the entourage of friends that traveled with him on a bus painted in psychedelic colors.

Lubin said she was surprised that Kesey didn't really look like a hippie: "He was wearing an orange shirt, but he looked like a farmer."

So what did she think of meeting the famed partier and his friends? "It was amazing. It was like another world. It wasn't 'rah-rah,' but it was colorful and gentle." ■

What: A party to celebrate the lives of Ken Kesey and Jerry Garcia, including music, speeches and a documentary-film showing

Where: The Menlo Park Library, 800 Alma St.

When: Saturday, Nov. 4, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Cost: Free

Info: Call Roberta Roth at 650-330-2512 or go to www.leahlubin.com.

Go behind the scenes of a Peninsula production of "The Laramie Project." Head to arts editor Rebecca Wallace's blog by going to www.PaloAltoOnline.com and scrolling down to **Ad Libs**.