What A Long Strange Trip It’s Been Essay, Research Paper

What a long strange trip it has been? was the theme from my graduation last year. The only reason that I am telling you that is because that is a classic quote from the leader of the band, Grateful Dead. And if you stop and think about it, it makes complete sense. Life seems to be this strange trip and we are all on this same boat. Jerry Garcia was a great musician, and also a poet. Everything that he said either in his music or through his guitar, which some people would argue that it?s the greatest ever played. So what if The Grateful Dead played together like a well oiled-machine? So what if Jerry Garcia put blood, sweat, and tears into everything he did? To all of those who still believe in him do. Jerry Garcia will still touch people for years to come. And those that still love him, and all that came with the counter-culture; he will be a legend forever.

Well with that in mind I want to talk about some assumptions that I had prior to this assignment and meeting my roommate. The word ?hippie? and ?dead head? are words that I would use to comment on people who had that look: long hair, sandals, tie-dye, and what I consider smelly: Petrolia. These kind of people I saw as tree-huggers, the kind of people that I thought had low paying jobs, and just lived life day by day, just to make enough money to get by and to have the lifestyle that they wanted. Another assumption that I had was that all dead heads were potheads. That all they wanted to do in life was to listen to jam bands and do drugs. That?s what is was like in the 60?s. Almost all of the bands that I listen to that come from the 60?s, like Jimi Hendrix, and Led Zeppelin were heavy users of drugs. And like most they used heavy narcotics. So every time I saw a person that looked like a hippie I thought was under the influence of some thing. But I was soon to be proved wrong.

My real big encounter with a dead head was my roommate. He came from Indiana, and before I came to college I had know idea what Mike was like. I had only talked on the phone to him, just to figure out what each of us would bring to the dorm and to discuss the loft question. That first day of college, I will never forget. I came in with a hand full of belongings, and there was Mike, just sitting there in a futon, smoking a cigarette. He had a short haircut, a bob Marley shirt, sandals, and some khaki shorts. We shook hands and from then on we were like best buds from back home. He popped out his tape collection; all of it was full of live shows from the Grateful Dead to Phish. I was amazed on how many he really had. He had all the dated memorized, and he even had his very first Dead concert. Already I thought that mike was the coolest roommate that a guy could ever have. I mean, I just met the guy and he treated me like one of his own friends, not even thing about who I was or where I came from. Later on that afternoon, after all the unpacking was done, he invited me to go out and throw the ?b? with them. The ?b? is their term for a Frisbee. So me and a couple of his buddies went out to the fountain in the middle of campus, and for 2 hours we were throwing around the ?b?, showing of and laughing most of the time. Sweaty and tired, we retired back to the cafeteria for some refreshments. Mike?s friend Chris opened up his refrigerator and gave everyone a beer. I am use to cheap beer, brands like Coors light and Budweiser. But instead I was handed a ?dank? beer. My eyebrow rose, as I pondered what dank meant. The word dank means good, and its opposite ?schwag? means cheap; bad. I agreed and drank my Sam Adams for the first time. Boy was it strong! Then I looked around Chris?s room and saw all the Phish posters, all the memorabilia about the dead, and of course, that stinky bottle of patrolia.

The guys that I met that day I was some of the coolest group of guys that I have ever met. It totally blew all of my stereotypes away.

One day while hanging out with the guys, this guy named Pat came outside to play some ?b?. Pat had long hair, but he was dressed pretty nice, with some khaki pants and a polo shirt. He jumped in the middle of it all and him and me stared to toss to each other. After another exhausting game, my roommate and I went back to Pat?s room.

Mike and I live on the 3rd floor in building NE, and Pat lives on the 1st floor. As soon as I walked in and tie-dyed tapestry smacked me in the face! Pat?s room was so much more decorated than Chris?s room. In the middle of the room right in front of the window, he had a 10 gallon fish tank was 4 tropical fish and a 12 inch eel. On the billboard to my right there were about 20 tickets tacked up, bands like Grateful dead, Phish (lots of them!), Moe, and String Cheese Incident. Most of the bands were jam bands, and most of them band that I have never heard of. Pat said, ?you have never heard of String Cheese?? All I could say was ?no?. He scoffed in disgust and put in a CD and played me some Cheese. The entire song was a big jam, with lots of improvisation and harmonic singing. Mike and Pat told me that all the bands they listen to is almost improvisation, because that just goes to show how good they are. They never listen to that \*censored\* on MTV or anything mainstream. I told them that I listen to a lot of different kinds of music like rap, metal, rock-rap, and classic rock. Then the arguing began. Mike is a strong will person. He told me bands like Korn, Dr. Dre were all a bunch of \*censored\*. I said that all bands are different and that they all had talent to show. But that was not good enough for them. The only way that they would consider a band good is if they band could play each instrument to its full potential, if each member could play solo. I totally disagreed, but I drank my dank beer and enjoyed the night.

Another hot spot for a Saturday night is a house called ?the Pink House?. In thought why would anyone call their house a pink house? But in took in consideration that you can?t judge a book by its cover. So I went there expecting nothing but a good time.

Outside the pink house there was this old style VW van, loaded with peace sign stickers and bumper stickers with the saying ?mean people suck!? Mike, Pat and I walked right in on a group playing Grateful Dead?s Terrapin Station. There were about 50 people there in the house. I went down stairs to get me a cup and to find the keg. Once again I was forced to drink dank beer, so I knew that I would be nursing this one all night! I went back upstairs to join my friends but only to find them joining in on the band. Pat grabbed some Bongos and Mike was on the acoustic guitar. They played some Phish, then some Marley, and then quit so someone else could play. While they were jamming, I sat down next to this couple. I stared to chat with them, you know, just shooting the \*censored\*. His name was Todd and his girlfriends name was Jessica. They told me that almost every weekend there is something going on here. Usually there are instruments laying around for anyone to go up there, and jam to what ever they feel like. He told me to go up there but I hesitated and said that I was to drunk. There was no way that I was going to go up there and play so Phish that I didn?t know! So me Todd went down stairs to fill up our cups, but on our way down I saw this guy putting CD?s in a case, but this case help like 200 CD?s! I asked if I could check them out and all I could see for 5 minuets was Grateful Dead, Phish and Marley! They were all burnt CD?s, which probably took him months to do. Todd told me that everyone is a collector of live shows and B-side rarities. I my self would rather work on my car rather than sit by the computer and burn CD?s all night. But that?s the difference between them and me. But I mean that in a good way.

Putting aside all of that hoopla and stereotypes, all the hemp and all the stinkin? petroli, the people that I considered ?dead heads? I want to apologize for that comment, because that word in itself is a slanderous word. Almost like if someone called me ?white trash?! I learned to take people how they are, and not to base it on a certain culture.

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