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Summer of Love, 1967

A photographic reporting

Dennis L. Maness

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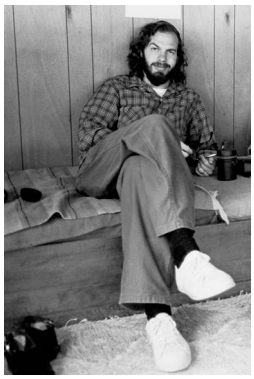
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Summer of Love, 1967

Dennis L. Maness



Dennis L. Maness is 75 years old. During 41 years, he worked in the San Francisco Public Library. In 1967, he arrived in San Francisco from Los Angeles and took photo of the* Summer of Love*, as a witness and soon as participant. He lives since 53 years with his wife Gloria who works with young deaf persons. Dennis collectes Konkow Maidu (a California tribe) crafts and literature, Aloha shirts, old cameras, photographs, and photographica in general, Hawaiian music (including 78rpms), Celtic music, musical instruments and, of course, books. His wife gave up macramé and made knitting and cross-stitch.

Summer of Love, 1967

photographic reporting by
Dennis L. Maness

In the summer of 1967 protests against the war in Viet Nam were in full bloom, we had just experienced the Six-Day War with Israel vs. its Arab neighbors, there were race riots in Tampa, Buffalo, Newark, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. Who wouldn't want to Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out?

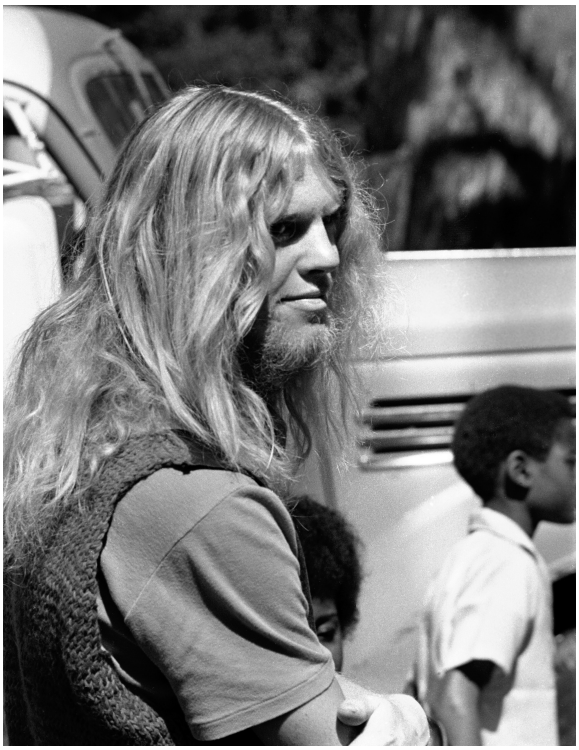
Although some say it started the previous summer, the Summer of Love could properly be said to have begun in January of 1967 when the "Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In" (as it was called in the very first issue of the San Francisco Oracle) was held in Golden Gate Park. Speakers included Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Timothy Leary. The Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Jefferson Airplane played to a crowd of about 20,000 to 30,000, a preview of what was to come at gatherings in the Park later that summer.

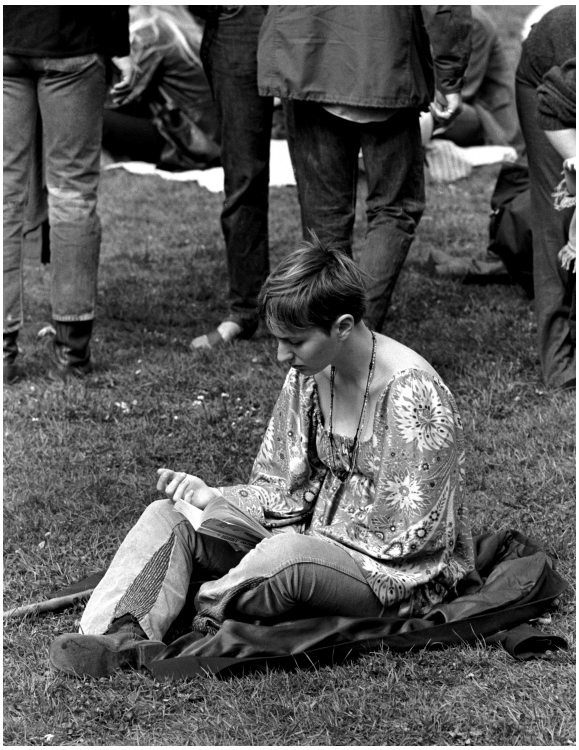
The Summer gathered even more momentum in June at the Monterey International Pop Festival where more than 50,000 people heard Big Brother and the Holding Company, the Grateful Dead, Country Joe and the Fish, the Mamas and the Papas, the Who, the Byrds, Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, Grace Slick, and Janis Joplin. Whew! And the Summer of Love had a "death date" too. Because of the rise of crime, the changing drug scene, paranoia about the FBI, and just too much commercialization and too many "day-trippers" there was, on October 6th, a "Death of the Hippie" parade and ceremony in which a grey coffin labeled "Summer of Love" was either a) burned in a mock funeral or b) buried in the Panhandle, depending on who is remembering.

In between those two occasions the Haight Ashbury (or the Hashbury as many of us called it for more than one reason) was the place to be. There was fantastic psychedelic poster art advertising the many bands playing in venues such as the Fillmore, Winterland, or the Avalon ballroom. The constant parade of "freaks" and "heads" was amazing! The smell of incense and patchouli oil was everywhere, and the fantastic odor of foods that many of the gawking "straights" had never tasted before. If you walked through the thirteen-foot square yellow "Free Frame of Reference" of the Diggers' store you could find free clothing and rolling papers and at the Free Clinic there was medical care. At 4:00 every day the Diggers gave out free food in the Park's Panhandle. There

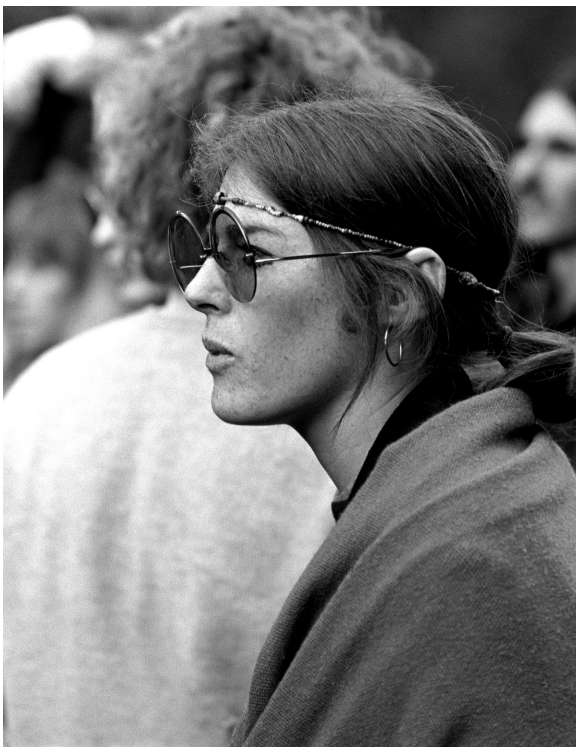












was the almost hypnotizing "cling-cling-cling" of finger cymbals accompanying the Hare Krishna devotees.

But the place to be for me was at the Love-Ins and Be-Ins at the Polo Fields or Sharon Meadow in Golden Gate Park or on Hippie Hill, blissing out to the sounds of the ever-present drums. Not just to groove with the bands, as fantastic as they were, but to be with the free-spirits who were sometimes in a place by themselves, tripping out on the music and the vibes and the use of certain "controlled substances". If you weren't high on Mary Jane or LSD or those funny little mushrooms you had a "contact high" just from being there. (Note: No matter what Donovan sang about "mellow yellow", oven-dried banana skins don't work.)
And even the cops could be friendly; when my almost two-year old daughter wandered off into the crowd, we eventually found her smiling and laughing in the arms of a cop that I swear was high too! She's almost forty-two now and recently told me she remembers sitting on the laps of people who were smoking funny-smelling cigarettes (!) and asking them if she could go home with them.

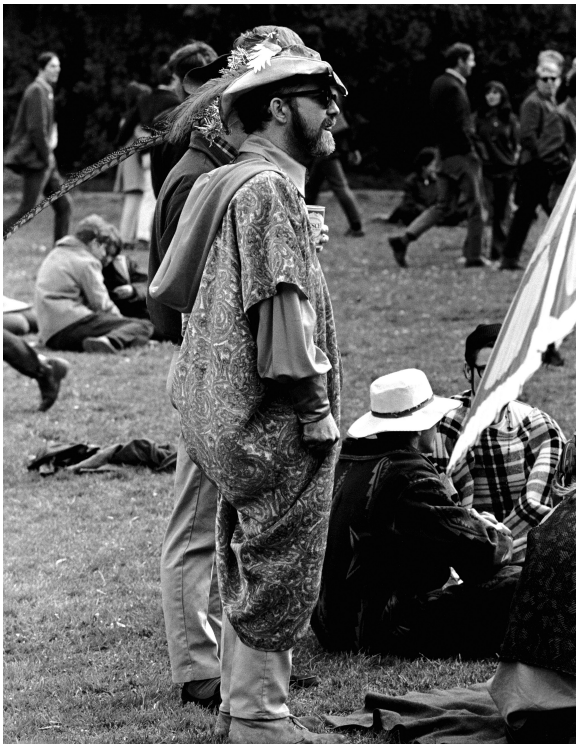
When the Gray Line Bus Company started a two-hour "Hippie Hop" excursion through the "Sodom of Haight" (advertised as "the only foreign tour within the continental limits of the United States") hippies held up mirrors to the bus windows so the tourists would see only themselves. J Head shops sold drug paraphernalia and handmade crafts and jewelry – love beads and necklaces and pins and feathers and peace signs and leather and some things that were literally indescribable. Along Haight I saw signs advertising "Love-burgers" for 25 cents. Most of us hadn't yet had time to grow beards and long hair (that would come with time) but we could wear paisley and tie-dye – everywhere tie-dye! Public nudity was not unknown but we will let any "free love" stories stay obscured behind the mists of time.

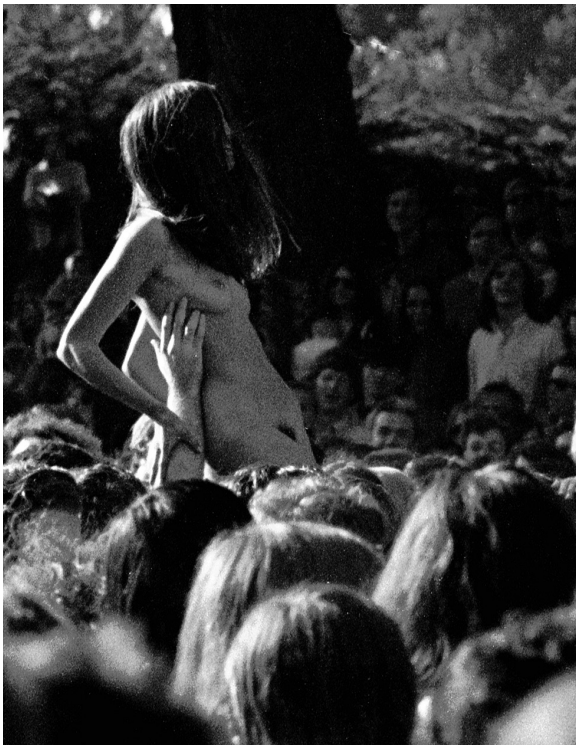
You won't find any photos of the Hashbury here because I couldn't afford color film at the time and black and white just wouldn't have done the atmosphere justice. And you won't see photos of any of the bands; that is what most of the other photographers were taking. I wanted to fix in time the people in the crowds – the ones who were there to become a part of the Happening. The ones who later would be killed in Viet Nam or would die of a drug overdose or who would become average citizens – doctors and lawyers and store clerks and housewives and yes, even librarians.

When I once wandered too close to the performing stage a trio of Hell's Angels stopped me and asked me what I would do if they took my camera away. I guess I gave them the right answer because they all laughed and let me go my way. They acted differently two years later at the Rolling Stones' Altamont Free Concert when they stabbed Meredith Hunter five times and kicked him to death near the stage. Such had the times changed.

This was the summer before the Tet Offensive and the My Lai massacre; it was the summer before the police clashed with anti-war protesters in Chicago outside the Democratic National Convention; it was the summer before they killed Martin and Bobby. It was the Summer of Love.
Peace. ✿























"Hide yourself, object!"; "Bend down and graze!"
Graffiti in La Sorbonne, Paris, May 68. Picture from the documentary film *Avec nos sabots* (*With our clogs*), 1980, produced by Yves Billon.