



The Newsletter of the

2024

GRATEFUL DEAD STUDIES ASSOCIATION



From the President

In Montana, Autumn is a season of beautiful changes. As the Grateful Dead Studies Association heads into fall, we look back on what has already been an eventful year. In April, we held our fourth meeting; that will be the focus of the next volume of our *Proceedings*, the first to be edited by G. Ganter, Association cofounder and current Past President. He is one of several new voices who will assume editorial roles in the Association's expanding publications program: Nathaniel Racine will take over as editor of the Working Papers series in 2025 and Chris Coffman will assume the editorship of *Grateful Dead Studies* starting with Volume 8. I am so grateful to Nicholas Meriwether for his work to establish these publications and for editing their first volumes, and to our new editors for their willingness to take the reins.

Our conference is our most visible project, and for our fifth meeting, we will convene in New Orleans (p.2); the Executive Council has been working hard to make this milestone meeting a memorable celebration, and we welcome your ideas. The conference will feature the debut of our newest publication effort, a volume of unpublished poems by band lyricist Robert M. Petersen (p.3). The first of

an occasional series of primary texts, the project reflects our mission to bring to light the wider array of artistic achievement that defines the Dead. With several volumes currently in the planning stages, the series will augment the shorter works presented in the Texts and Documents section of the *Proceedings*.

Our publications are scholarly but they also speak to the larger community of enthusiasts who make the Dead phenomenon a vibrant, evolving culture. Those have always been a part of the Southwest Popular Culture Association, which has hosted a Grateful Dead area since 1998. Its meetings provided a springboard for the Grateful Dead Studies Association, which the Association is proud to honor (p.4). As the field of Grateful Dead studies grows, the collaborative example set by the band also defines that discourse.

And as the Dead phenomenon continues to evolve, it gives the work of Dead studies a currency and relevance that many academic subjects struggle to find. The surviving band members continue to chart new paths for their music, and Rhino's award-winning archival release program continues to deepen our understanding of the Dead's work and performing history. Those releases anchor the scholarly study of the Dead's music, even as the outpouring of new music by the remaining band members and a host of younger performers underscores the continuing vitality of the band's original vision. The Kennedy Center's election of the Dead as 2024 honorees is a tribute to that enduring legacy, which also makes the work of the Association so rich and fulfilling. Thank you for being a part of it.

Susan Balter-Reitz



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New Orleans Skyline

New Orleans 2025

Fifth Annual Meeting Set for April 16–19

Of all the cities the Grateful Dead played, New Orleans occupies a storied niche. That made the announcement of the Crescent City as the site of the 2025 meeting of the Grateful Dead Studies Association especially welcome. “When the Popular Culture Association announced that New Orleans would host this year’s conference, we couldn’t have been more delighted,” Susan Balter-Reitz, President of the Association, commented. “For the past

four years, the PCA has provided an international forum for our members to present their work,” Vice President Natalie Dollar added, “and we’re excited to welcome our presenters and guests to a city so rich in history—and that has particular meaning for the Dead.”

That history provides a fitting backdrop for this year’s meeting, our fifth. We have much to celebrate, from our own publications to our sponsorship of a major university press series. We’ve hosted over 90 papers and a dozen roundtables at our four conference meetings, thousands of researchers have downloaded our articles, and all of this has been supported by a committed and enthusiastic membership that is both interdisciplinary and international.

New Orleans offers a superb setting to celebrate those achievements. Planning has been underway for months, and panels are already taking shape to make this meeting our strongest ever. Papers on all aspects of the Dead are welcome, and presenters are especially encouraged to propose presentations on the work of lyricist and poet Robert M.

Petersen, whose work will be the focus of Volume 8 of *Grateful Dead Studies*. To commemorate that effort, the meeting will also mark the publication of a chapbook of Petersen’s unpublished poems (p.3). The latest effort in the Association’s publication program, the volume is one of several special events the conference will celebrate.

The Dead played New Orleans seven times, not including the 1969 New Orleans Pop Festival, which took place in Baton Rouge. Their three-show stand in January 1970 at the Warehouse is the one that cemented the city’s notoriety in the band’s history: after a raid led to the arrest, the Dead responded with élan, inviting the police to the concert the following night—and in fine New Orleans form, they accepted. Other consequences were less benign, and the band did not return for more than a decade. Those shows have been overshadowed by the ones at the Warfield and Radio City Music Hall, but the Dead’s two-night stand at the beautiful Saenger Theatre was triumphal for many reasons. They are part of why New Orleans is such an evocative context for this milestone event in the Association’s work.

New Orleans 2025

- 4 days, April 16–19, 2025
- All sessions held at the New Orleans Marriott Downtown
- Proposals due November 30
- Early (reduced fee) registration closes December 31
- Regular registration closes January 31
- Late registration ends February 10

Right: New Orleans’ famed Saenger Theatre, site of the Dead’s 1980 visit to the city



A New GDSA Publication: *Bobby Petersen's Unpublished Mexico Poems*

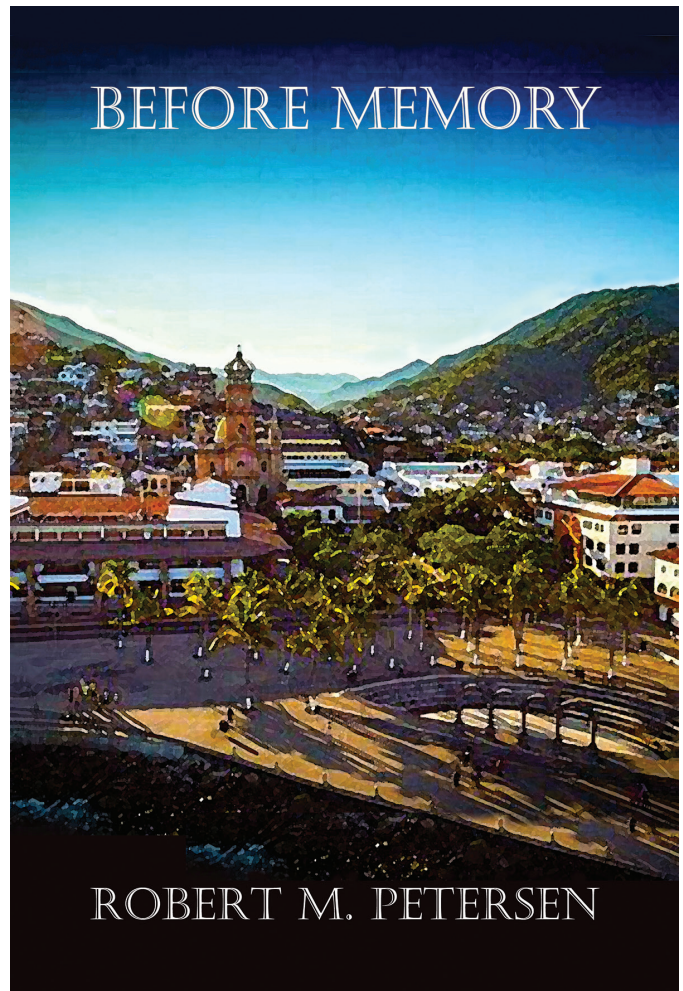
This spring, in conjunction with the fifth annual meeting, the Association will celebrate the publication of the first volume in our primary texts series, a chapbook of unpublished poems by Robert M. "Bobby" Petersen. Though best known as the lyricist of "Unbroken Chain," "New Potato Caboose," and "Pride of Cucamonga," Petersen was an accomplished poet whose work represents a vital wellspring in the larger artistic community of the Grateful Dead. One of the principal figures in the early Palo Alto bohemia that birthed the Grateful Dead, Petersen was a central influence on Phil Lesh, who credited him for "teaching me everything I know, really." Although Petersen's work has been the focus of several conference papers and scholarly essays, this publication illuminates his deep connection to Mexico, a central topic in his poetry that also connects him to major themes in American literary history.

The chapbook is being edited by Association charter member Nathaniel Racine, a professor at Texas A&M University in Laredo whose work has focused on Mexico. He brings a deep knowledge of the larger contexts of Petersen's work to the project. The idea for the publication began to take shape in 2022, when Association Executive Director Nicholas Meriwether told Racine about a notebook of one of Petersen's trips to Yelapa. Written in winter 1974, the notebook offers unique insights into Petersen's writing, life, and poetics. Meriwether scanned and transcribed the pages and sent them to Racine, who gave a conference paper on the notebook at the third annual meeting. That was published in the 2023 *Proceedings*, but it was only a preview of a much more ambitious study.

Racine wrote a successful grant to study the work; part of that included a proposal to publish a chapbook of selected poems from the notebook. For the past year, the two have been working on the project, a collaboration that includes planning the Petersen sessions for the fifth annual meeting. One result of that will be a



Robert M. Petersen in Fairfax, CA, 1985



The cover of Petersen's chapbook, forthcoming from the GDSA in 2025

special issue of the Association's journal focusing on Petersen that Racine will edit.

Credit for preserving and stewarding the notebook goes to Alan Trist. As the editor of *Alleys of the Heart: The Collected Poems of Robert M. Petersen* (Hulogosi, 1988), the volume that for most readers was their first introduction to Petersen's poetry, Trist was responsible for collecting Petersen's work and presenting it to a wider audience. He shared the notebook with Meriwether, and that started the process that led to this publication.

"This landmark contribution to Grateful Dead studies brings to light a trove of Petersen's work at a peak of his powers as a poet and lyricist," President-Elect Deepak Sarma noted. "This chapbook marks a fitting and powerful way to launch our newest publication effort," Association Vice President Ariella Werden-Greenfield added. "These lost writings add a vital chapter to our understanding of this seminal figure in the Dead's work."

Dead Studies Spotlight

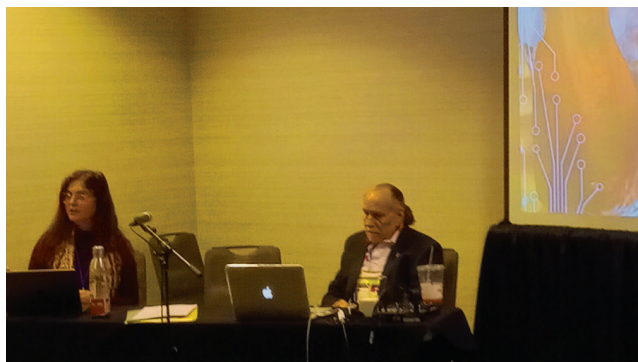
The Southwest PCA's Grateful Dead Area

In February, eight members of the GDSA joined fifteen scholars for a spirited and wide-ranging discussion at the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association conference. Five sessions added eleven presentations and a roundtable to the SWPACA Grateful Dead area's impressive track record, now numbering more than 500 papers and dozens of roundtables and special events over twenty-seven years.

This year's gathering featured an eclectic mix of subjects. Association member and founding Treasurer Beth Carroll led a roundtable on "Women's Identities and Power in Grateful Dead Communities," with additional contributions by Association member Rhoney Stanley and Brendaliz Guerrero-Gallagher. That session added to the work of several papers devoted to feminism and the Dead over the years, continuing the trend of the increasingly rich interplay between the SWPACA and the



The Women in the Grateful Dead Roundtable, SWPACA Conference, 2024. (L to R) Brendaliz Guerrero-Gallagher, Rhoney Stanley, Beth Carroll



Nataly Goldfishch and Barry Barnes at the SWPACA Conference, 2024

band staffer Jon McIntire, whose myriad contributions exemplified the kind of creativity the band cultivated in their business. Other sessions built on work first presented at the Association. Frequent SWPACA presenter and Association member Jeremy Berg chaired a panel featuring three LIS (Library and Information Science) professionals, underscoring the role of that discipline traced by a roundtable at the 2023 meeting. That session included first-time presenter Stewart Brower, whose paper on Timothy Truman's Grateful Dead comics added to that steadily growing dimension of the scholarly discussion about the Dead. Brower was one of six first-time presenters, highlighting the SWPACA's continuing significance as a forum for introducing scholars to Dead studies.

Outreach and inclusion have always been hallmarks of the SWPACA. The Dead area has honored that spirit by welcoming presenters from outside the academy, and that gives meetings a distinctly Deadhead vibe. This year the conference acknowledged that with a distinctly Shakedown Street-like theme in the vendor room, with booths by local artists supplementing the usual academic presses and conference fare.

That history has made the Dead area one of the SWPACA's most vital. Conversations with SWPACA administration about the area's thirtieth anniversary, only three years from now, are already underway; two donors have already made contributions to help the Association commemorate that milestone. Originally planned to mark the area's twenty-fifth anniversary, that celebration was derailed by COVID, but the intervening years have only added to the story. As the birthplace of the Association—the organizational meeting occurred at the 2019 SWPACA conference—it is especially appropriate for the Association to be spearheading that effort. Interested donors who wish to contribute can contact deadstudies@gmail.com. All gifts are tax deductible.

Association. That interplay was a hallmark of this year's conference, with two papers directly presaging presentations that would be given at the Association's fourth annual conference a month later. Dennis Rothermel's "Bo Diddley's Rhythm of Equanimity" set up the larger argument of his paper on Bo Diddley and the Dead in Chicago, a two-part strategy that was a first in Dead studies. Similarly, Nicholas Meriwether's "Robert Hunter's Phantom Chapbook: The Poems for *Dead Heads*" provided a survey of Hunter's early poetics, a foundation that informed his paper on Hunter's long poem "The Bride of Entropy" given in Chicago.

One presentation was developed as a precis of a planned essay for the Texts and Documents section of this year's *Proceedings*: longtime SWPACA area chair and Association charter member Barry Barnes gave a groundbreaking talk on

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