

Stanley Kastner: Remember the Sons of Champlin? (chuckling) They were this group from the San Francisco area and this big vehicle shows up and all these guys pile out and they said, "Do you have a place where we can stay? We don't stay in hotels and motels." Eddie and I looked at each other like, *what?* You want a *room*? So, we had this empty room at the Tea Party we called the mafia beat-up room. It was a windowless cave with padded walls and a steel door. We never knew what the origin of that room was but that's what we called it. So we said, "Sure, you can stay here." I don't know how many people were in the band but it was a sizable number. Their manager rented one hotel room and they would go there to take showers. They were these Northern California guys and they had sleeping bags, and they had these sacks of granola and stuff they called road gruel, right? So they said, "Yeah, this'll work." Then they said to me, "Can you get us some pot?" At the time this wasn't a big deal, so I said, "Okay, so how much do you guys want?" And they said something like a pound, maybe more, it was some ridiculous amount. So we went, "Okay." (2a)

Andrew Kastner: Back in Boston where we grew up, the weed we were used to was just sort of this Mexican shake, I had never even seen a bud before or anything like that. I thought pot was the stuff we were smoking. It wasn't that strong but you would get stoned, you know? So Bill Champlin comes to me and he says, "Listen, we're running out of pot and I've got to score a pound. Can you help me find one?" So I brought him over to see a friend of mine and Bill took one look at the stuff and said, "This isn't pot. I don't know *what* this shit is." So he said, "I know a guy, why don't you come with me and I'll show you what real weed is." So we drove across town and scored like a pound of, I think they called it sinsemilla. Afterwards we went back and they dumped the whole thing onto the floor in the middle of their circle. Then these guys rolled up, almost like *cigars* of this stuff. And before they went out on stage every one of them smoked one of these things. And I smoked one too. And I'll tell you right now, I had *never* been this high before, or had seen a band this high before. Bar none. Remember now, I saw virtually every band that came through there, so that's saying something. When the Dead came and played, Owsley traveled with them and his job was to make sure that everybody backstage in the club was tripping, right? Whereas with the Sons, they just gathered up and got stoned out of their minds. They weren't concerned at all with who was or wasn't getting high. Then they went out and played an amazing show. (2b)

Even by the lofty standards of the San Francisco music scene, by that point the Sons of Champlin had earned a well-deserved reputation for consuming prodigious amounts of

always top quality weed. They were from Marin County, California, and this was the kind of lifestyle that many outside the region had only heard about but never encountered. Later, films such as *Monterey Pop* and *Woodstock* would forever cement the imagery of counterculture mythology in people's minds. But when the Tea Party guys experienced the real thing for the first time, it was something else altogether.

Stanley Kastner: The Tea Party was right in Boston, on the same little street as Fenway Park where the Red Sox play. When you opened the front door onto the street, you'd be looking at the back of Fenway, and when there were games going you could hear the crowd cheering, it was right there. Baseballs would come flying over the wall right onto our street. It was a great spot. And it was just astounding who played our club. We were on the same circuit as the Fillmore, and the biggest acts would come and play multiple nights. All the great blues artists, everyone. The bill could be Eric Clapton, Fleetwood Mac, Joe Cocker, The Who, Little Richard, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, the Dead, Santana, and everybody else who was out there. I was hired for an insanely low amount of money, but I went from being a college student to working with every huge fucking rock and roll star in the world, you know? No one would have believed it. It was mind-boggling. So, my job as the stage manager was getting the bands inside and all their stuff unloaded and making sure everything was right. And that's why I was there when the Sons showed up. And these guys were definitely an unusual outfit. Normal bands would come in, and they were obviously staying at some hotel. Their equipment managers would bring in their gear and they would do a rehearsal or sound check and then leave. But when the Sons rolled in, they came inside right away and asked, "Is there a room here we can stay in?" Like I said, it was hard to believe what I was hearing. So once we arranged it, they went back out and brought in all their stuff, their sleeping bags and their camping gear and shit, and they laid it all out in a big circle in the middle of the room. For us, it felt a little like a circus act coming through, the way they poured out of that van and got set up right there inside the club. Unconventional, that's for sure. I remember one guy was on crutches, I think. They just did not look at all like the normal rock bands that came through the doors of that club. Definitely different from the Boston types or the British bands that were always there. These guys were the real deal, though, straight from Northern California. We'd never met actual Marin County hippies before, so it was something I'll never forget. What a group of guys. (2c)

By the time the Sons arrived on that chilly December afternoon, enacting the unconventional was nothing new for them, it was how they operated. The Kastners and

their crew were witnessing the stuff of legend that defined for many what northern California's counterculture lifestyle was actually like. Although the Summer of Love's media sensation established San Francisco as the nerve center, it was toward Marin County where many of the bands and artists migrated. Along with Marin locals Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Sons, other notables including the Grateful Dead, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Carlos Santana, and Van Morrison were soon calling it home. Places to live were plentiful, rents were cheap, and access to some of the most beautiful coastline and physical landscape on earth was further enhanced by the temperate year-round climate.

And for the guys in Boston as they endured another freezing winter on the East Coast? The contrast wasn't lost on them as they imagined life in California for the Sons and their musician cohorts on the other side of San Francisco's Golden Gate.

Stan Kastner: One thing I have to say is, they're fucking lucky to be from Marin, man. My God, you're already in heaven. Living in paradise and smoking herb? Not bad if you ask me. (2d)