

## Excerpt 4 - Hippies of the counterculture

Although San Francisco still symbolized the very heart of the hippie counterculture, the focus had shifted east to the University of Berkeley. Running south from Sather Gate was the famous Telegraph Avenue, where all the contrasting charisma of the times seemed to line its sidewalks. On the shady side of the street were the pessimists, the cynics, and existentialists. These were children of the night, the jilted, and the lovelorn. Many wore the ravaged faces of hard drug abuse. On the sunny side were the optimists, the spirituals, the hopefuls, those who made direct eye contact, believed in love and peace, and trusted their fellow man. They were the writers, the poets, the dreamers, and philosophers; the sweet scent of marijuana lingered in their clothes.

Street vendors lined the sunny sidewalk while musicians, corner poets and orators, bubble-blowers, and Frisbee throwers created an air of festivity. Handcrafted wares were strewn across brightly colored blankets and sold to passers-by. Hari Krishnas paraded in the street, wrapped in orange mantles, shaking their tambourines, and chanting the praises of Rama. Everybody, it seemed, was an extremist of some type: vegetarian, fruitarian, macrobiotic. There were those who ate only sprouted wheat grass or engaged in prolonged fasting until they barely looked human and resembled walking skeletons. Some had taken a vow of silence and had not uttered a single word for years; others mumbled incoherently, oblivious to everything around them. New-born babies were named Rainbow, Cloud, Tree, or Star. It was the post-Haight-Ashbury era in California – the dawning of the Age of Aquarius...