

Jerry Loved to Pick

I got a call one afternoon from mandolinist David Grisman, someone I've enjoyed picking with many times over the years. It seems that David had spotted a rare old banjo — this was a pre-World War II, gold-plated, Weyman 5-string banjo — and he had brought it home for his old friend, Jerry Garcia. Jerry, of course, was the leader of the Grateful Dead and a rock guitarist. But originally Garcia was a bluegrass banjo picker, and his very first instrument was a Weyman 5-string that he no longer owned.

The moment Jerry laid eyes on this Weyman, he fell in love with it. He strapped it on, picked a few notes, turned to David and said, "Call up a bass player. Let's do some bluegrass pickin'!"

So, David was calling me that afternoon to see if I could come over *now* to pick some bluegrass with him and Jerry Garcia.

Well, ... I had heard of Jerry Garcia.

So, I cancelled the rest of my life, tossed the bass in the back of the car, and was over at David's before he had hung up on our phone call.

I walk into the living room, and there, larger than life, is Jerry Garcia.

[Continued in the book ...]