

5-1-1991

Deadheads Boycott the Radius

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Recommended Citation

Miles, Marti (1991) "Deadheads Boycott the Radius," *Forces*: Vol. 1991 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol1991/iss1/4>

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"A rag-tag caravan of gypsies, minstrels and troubadours who call themselves the Dead family descended on New Orleans turning parts of the city into a psychedelic happening reminiscent of the 1960s. There were long-haired men playing guitars and teeny-boppers peddling tie-died t-shirts. There were quartz crystals and meatless hotdogs. There were flower children and LSD."

The Times-Picayune
10/19/88

Deadheads Boycott the Radius

by Marti Miles

Today on my
lunch break I saw
rainbows of peace
floating past Pontchartrain's
southern shores.
Explosions of times remembered
colored my mind
as these arched beings
sang 'round me, to me,
tunes from before
that reminded me of how life was then
and how rigidity
led me to the fall from grace
into this chaotic realm
I now call normalcy.
And now these curved spirits
warn me that straight lines are brittle,
should flex and curve,
wind, bend,
or spiral,
or they'll break in half;
that before I become too
burdened with the
quadrangles of life,
I should once again
allow strong forces to
make me the eye
of their whirlwinds.
Life itself is a circle
that needs no
radius or diameter.

But I remembered Dead music and college,
the sand storms of Lubbock,
and the white cashmere sweater
stained red my freshman year
by those grinding winds that
buffed me smooth.
I thought of the tornadoes
and the years it took me
to clean up the damage.
The few trees of those Texas plains
were lifted up and pulled apart
as if God were picking them as daisies
and playing "He loves me, he loves me not."
Tumbleweeds rolled,
rolled for miles on that panhandled
caprock with nothing but
piles of manure to stop them.
Then I thought of the forests of home,
and remembered what comfort there is in trees.

Watching these orbs
spread their colors
around the crescent city,
I was seduced by freedom,
then thought of my life.
For me to return, I'd have to stay between
the lines, a solid white on the right,
a dotted yellow to the left.
The road back was a straight one.
I thought of Mrs. Kline and kindergarten,
and my box of 36 crayolas
with the built-in sharpener.
She told us to keep the points sharp,
that sharp colors made it easier to stay
between the lines.
She yelled at me when I colored
my tree pink and purple;
she yelled when I didn't stay in the lines.

I bought a tied-dyed shirt
for my daughter,
stopped at K&B for crayons,
then forged a new and winding
route back to the office
to color away the afternoon.
I drew straight lines of yellow, red, blue, pink, and purple
remembering what comfort
there is in trees.