

DEFINING MOMENTS WOODSTOCK



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Chapter Five

THE SCENE AT WOODSTOCK



By the third day, it had become a survival camp.... This was their country. Their space. But it wasn't all that pleasant all the time. Sometimes, there were great highs. But by the third day with the mud and the food running out and the discomfort, it became like a camp of people who were in retreat from something.

—Concert promoter Bill Graham in “Woodstock Nation,”
Rock and Roll Is Here To Stay: An Anthology

The musicians and bands who played at Woodstock provided the soundtrack for a weekend that concertgoers and festival crew members described in a million different ways. Some people said that Woodstock was fun, exciting, and liberating. Others described the three-day festival as chaotic, miserable, and frightening. Most, however, seemed to view their time at Woodstock as a strange blend of both positive and negative experiences. The concert was both fun *and* chaotic, exciting *and* miserable, liberating *and* frightening.

Traffic Madness

For the hundreds of thousands of rock fans who traveled to Bethel for Woodstock, the festival's horrible traffic snarls would provide many of their most vivid—and frustrating—memories. They came by car, motorcycle, truck, and commercial bus in such great numbers that roadways were paralyzed for miles around. “It's hard to know why everyone knew to come,” said writer Susan Silas, who attended as a sixteen-year-old. “All over the country young people packed their cars, got on airplanes, hitchhiked. Before I set out I had no idea



The crowd at Woodstock was so much larger than expected that it overwhelmed local roadways, businesses, and residents.

that the urgency I felt about going—I had to go—was being felt by tens of thousands of other kids in big cities and small towns all across the United States.”¹

By the time the festival officially opened on the afternoon of Friday, August 15, thousands of people had abandoned their cars on the shoulders of local roadways and walked in to the event with little else but the clothes on their backs. “Lines of cars were stretching up to 20 miles from the fair at midnight,” reported the *New York Times*. “Traffic on the five key roads that lead and feed into Bethel—Routes 17, 17B, 42, 55, and 97—was bumper to bumper up to four and one-half hours today. An auto club spokesman called the situation ‘an absolute madhouse.’”²

The Woodstock organizers convinced local radio stations to broadcast announcements warning listeners that the festival crowd was already far too large. The announcements urged people who were not already at Woodstock to avoid the area. These messages, which were echoed by newspaper reports,

have been credited with reducing the flow of concertgoers. By the time they were delivered, however, White Lake and other villages in the Bethel area were already overwhelmed. “The residents of the hamlets around Yasgur’s land felt trapped,” wrote journalist Jack Curry. “Resentment caught on early. Opportunists were already preying upon the unprepared kids, charging a dollar for a slurp of hose water, more than that for a raw tomato from a garden.”³

Fortunately for concertgoers, these predatory practices were the exception rather than the rule. Many local farmers, storekeepers, and homeowners provided food and other forms of aid to attendees over the course of the weekend, despite suffering property damage from careless youth.

Woodstock Becomes a Free Concert

The Woodstock Art and Music Festival had always been conceived as a moneymaking venture, and in the weeks leading up to the concert more than 100,000 tickets had been sold. The huge and early arriving crowd and last-minute change in location, however, made it impossible for Woodstock organizers and crew to complete its ticket-for-entry system. Fences were never completed, and by Thursday afternoon about 60,000 people had planted themselves in the bowl in front of the stage without handing over a ticket. By early Friday afternoon, hordes of young people had trampled the half-finished fencing system and flooded into every nook and cranny of Max Yasgur’s farm. After consulting with top staffers like John Morris, Mel Lawrence, and Wes Pomeroy, event organizers Michael Lang, Artie Kornfeld, John Roberts, and Joel Rosenman were forced to concede that they had no realistic way of securing tickets or money from anyone. Woodstock was going to be a free concert.

Given this swift turn of events, the question came up as to whether the promoters should just cancel the show. The idea was quickly shot down, however. As Bill Belmont, road manager for Country Joe McDonald said, “Crowds turn ugly, especially when things don’t go the way they’re supposed to. I saw crowds get pissed off [at other festivals] because bands wouldn’t do encores. The whole concept of peace and love was a state of mind. It was not a reality. Crowds are always crowds.”⁴

“The one major thing that you have to remember tonight, when you go back up to the woods to go to sleep or if you stay here, is that the man next to you is your brother,” Woodstock promoter John Morris told the giant crowd. “And you damn well better treat each other that way because if you don’t, then we blow the whole thing.”

Morris subsequently took the stage on Friday afternoon to inform the crowd that “it’s a free concert from now on.” When the crowd roared its approval, though, Morris added, “That doesn’t mean that anything goes! What that means is we’re going to put the music up here for free.... The one major thing that you have to remember tonight, when you go back up to the woods to go to sleep or if you stay here, is that the man next to you is your brother. And you damn well better treat each other that way because if you don’t, then we blow the whole thing.”⁵

Rain, Mud, Sex, and Drugs

Over the next three days the conditions on Max Yasgur’s farm steadily declined as heavy rains, broiling heat, inadequate food and sanitation facilities, and rampant drug use all took their toll on the crowd. Three people died during the course of the weekend—one from a burst appendix, one from a heroin overdose, and one who was run over by a tractor while sleeping next to a road. Wide swaths of the festival grounds reeked of human sweat and bodily waste well before the final evening of performances, and the main bowl area was transformed into an amphitheatre of mud.

Some people who came to the show found it all too crowded, chaotic, and uncomfortable to enjoy. “If you like colossal traffic jams, torrential rain, reeking portable johns, barely edible food, and sprawling, disorganized crowds, then you would have found Woodstock a treat,” wrote journalist Mark Hosenball, who attended Woodstock as a seventeen-year-old (see “Bad Memories of Woodstock,” p. 176). “For those of us who saw those things as a hassle, good music did not necessarily offset the discomfort.”⁶

The extent to which heavy drugs were consumed at Woodstock also shocked some people. “Among the youngsters in the crowd, the generation that had grown up with drugs, the amount and type of drug use were perceived as worrisome by many,” according to Curry. “Hardly anyone in the crowd objected to pot and its mild high, but harsher drugs were common too. Kids who had been longstanding potheads were suddenly shocked by the prevalence of amphetamines, psychedelics and downers.”⁷ One young attendee said that “the drugs that were being done at Woodstock just made zombies out of everyone.... People were burning out left and right, big holes in the brain. I wasn’t shocked, just disillusioned.”⁸

Peter Beren, who worked at the food concessions at Woodstock, had similar memories. “There were little groups of people with some playing guitars,



When heavy rains turned the festival site into a muddy mess, concertgoers made the best of it by sliding down a hill.

and there were some really sweet aspects to this landscape,” he acknowledged. At many campfires, though, it looked “not like a pastoral scene of hippies, but more like what you would imagine in a circle of hell: fires, people fighting with one another, shouting, people freaking out on drugs.”⁹ This onslaught of drug use produced a lot of people who required medical attention over the course of the weekend. The festival’s medical care facility, which was manned by volunteer doctors and nurses, was filled to capacity with young men and women on “bad trips” for the entire weekend.

Nudity was common at Woodstock, and some concertgoers openly engaged in sexual activities without regard for the sensibilities of passersby. These uninhibited displays of sexuality delighted some attendees and elicited disapproval from others. For the most part, however, criticisms of sexual behavior—or any other kind of behavior aside from selfishness—were muted. The countercultural emphasis on “doing your own thing” and rejecting the “uptight” morality of older generations was in full swing at Woodstock. “The environment in general was just wild,” recalled Rona Elliot, who helped with public relations for the festival. “Every ten feet, you could see anything... Anything you could imagine was happening and in a very supportive environment. It wasn’t threatening, people were getting stoned and they were doing whatever they were doing.”¹⁰

Keeping the National Guard Away

Once the concert actually began on Friday, Woodstock organizers and crew breathed a huge sigh of relief. They then spent the rest of Friday and all day Saturday working feverishly to keep the festival going and avoid any major disasters. On Sunday morning, though, a potential catastrophe emanating from the state capital of Albany was only narrowly averted.

On Sunday morning, August 17, New York governor Nelson Rockefeller became so disturbed by reports about the deteriorating conditions at Woodstock that he threatened to declare the festival grounds a disaster area. Rockefeller could then send in National Guard troops to clear the entire crowd from Yasgur’s farm and all surrounding villages. On the one hand, the men and women running the festival could understand the governor’s anxiety. “Here was this ten square miles where no traffic moved, all the arteries were clogged, the kids were essentially in control, and it was lawless,” said Roberts. “No one can get there to stop people from doing whatever mischief they wanted to do. If a band of



The crowd's energy level rose and fell throughout the weekend-long concert, with periods of wild excitement followed by periods of mellow recovery.

kids wanted to go and ransack a house, the police couldn't get through to stop them or find them. They would all disappear into the crowd. From the outside, that must have looked very dangerous."¹¹

Roberts even admitted that the organizers wondered among themselves about the likelihood that the “anything goes” atmosphere at Woodstock might inspire someone to put LSD in the water supply or engage in other dangerous acts. By Sunday, however, the promoters and crew had received two days' worth of upbeat and generally positive reports from the festival grounds—and even from local residents who found that the Woodstock “kids” were peaceful and well-mannered. They knew that the peaceful vibe circulating through the generally antiwar crowd would be extinguished in a hurry if the festival was invaded by rifle-wielding Guardsmen. “They panicked in Albany,” said Morris.

They thought it was a bunch of dope-soaked hippies who were going to tear the place apart. In those towns, there were a number of people who were afraid that there was this horde that was going to come up over the hill and rape their daughters and eat their cows. Or rape their cows and eat their daughters.... Rockefeller's people said we are going to close down the area. We are going to surround it with National Guard and clear it out. And I went, no, you're not. What you're going to have is a gigantic massacre, which doesn't make sense.¹²

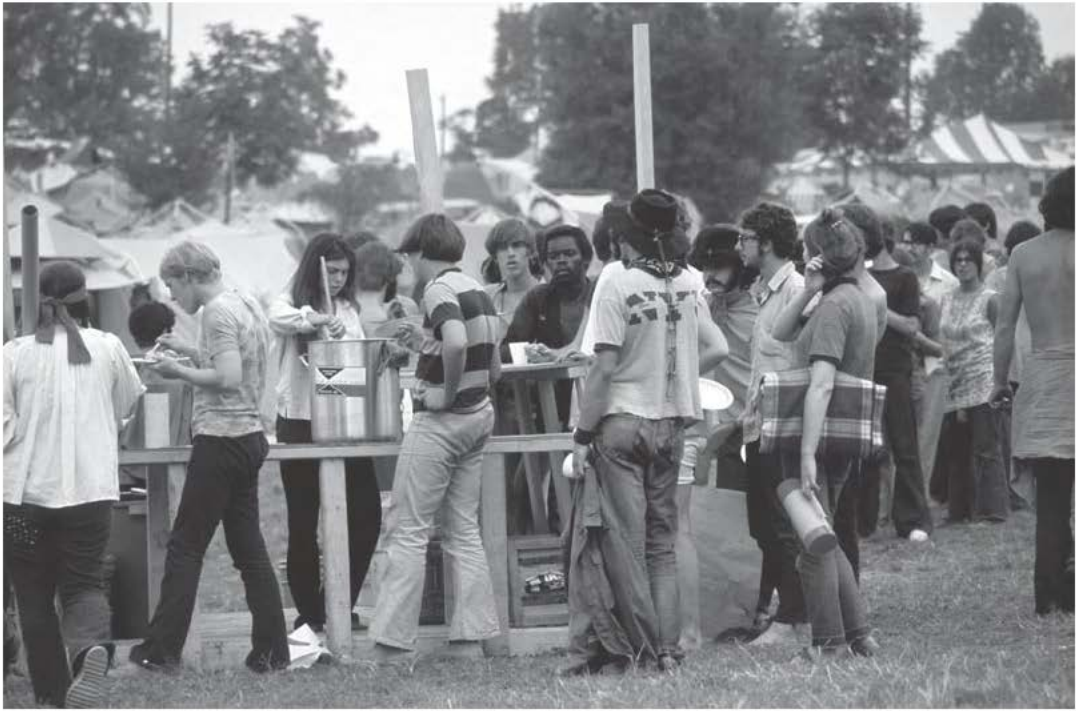
Morris, Roberts, and other staff members ultimately convinced Rockefeller and his aides to keep the National Guard away from Woodstock. Then, in what journalist Stephen Dalton described as a "deft bit of diplomacy,"¹³ they actually managed to persuade the governor and his staff to fly in food and medical aid.

Most of these supplies were gathered by local groups who launched major donation drives in response to reports of food and medical supply shortages at Woodstock. "The food came from everybody's pantry, everybody's stores," said Gordon Winarick, a local hospital executive who helped coordinate the relief effort. "It was the church, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the synagogues, firehouses—any organization.... [The attitude was] they have a problem, we have an obligation, there was care, concern, let's help. And of course, they were all stunned because when the hordes of people came back in the town, they were all so polite and they would all say thank you, and all be so grateful."¹⁴

Some Woodstock people insist, though, that all the talk about food shortages was exaggerated. "If people wanted to eat, we had the food, if they wanted to walk over to the Hog Farm," said Lisa Law, a commune member who helped prepare and distribute food at the Hog Farm tent. "There was this talk about hunger and I always said, 'What hunger?' If they didn't want to get up and walk over then that was their problem. But there was no lack of food at Woodstock."¹⁵

A General Spirit of Peace and Harmony

Virtually everyone involved with Woodstock—performers, organizers, crew, and audience members—agrees that the festival was dogged by numerous problems and inconveniences throughout its three-day run. Yet for all the people who soured on the festival because of these difficulties, there were at least as many young men and women who found the entire experience to be an ulti-



Free kitchens set up by the Hog Farm commune provided sustenance to concertgoers who were unprepared for the three-day event.

mately rewarding and affirming one. “We were ... in the middle of a crowded mass of humanity that was truly unbelievable,” remembered one member of the Woodstock audience. “No one complained about the rain, the heat, the rain, the lack of food, the mud, the rain. In spite of the unpleasant conditions, we were all a bunch of happy clams having the greatest time of our lives, drugs or no drugs, food or no food.”¹⁶

Woodstock veterans speak warmly about numerous aspects of the festival scene (see “Breakfast in Bed for 400,000,” p. 167). There was the “hum of hippie commerce”¹⁷ in the woods, where colonies of artisans sold crafts and other wares to young people. There were the ponds, where legions of pale hippies ditched their clothes and frolicked to get relief from the heat. There were the makeshift campgrounds, where people compared their impressions of the musical acts and shared their life stories. There was the pavilion area, where the Hog Farm distributed huge amounts of food to hungry young people. And there

“We Could Have the Largest Mass Electrocution in History”

One of the most famous events of the entire Woodstock festival was the Sunday afternoon storm that buffeted the concert site just after Joe Cocker finished his set. The fierce storm brought such high winds and heavy rainfall that Woodstock organizers feared a massive loss of life. One problem was the concert site’s sixty-foot-tall light towers, which began to sway back and forth during the storm. With dozens of young people huddled up in the tower’s scaffolding and hundreds more all around its base, a tower collapse would claim many lives. This crisis was averted when John Morris grabbed the stage microphone and convinced the kids hanging on the tower to climb down. When the added weight from the concertgoers disappeared, the towers stabilized.

The other big fear on Sunday afternoon was that as concertgoers churned the rain-soaked bowl into mud, they were exposing buried power cables that ran to the stage area. According to Morris, the concern was that if the “cables wear through and fray and all those people are wet and packed together—we could have the largest mass electrocution in the history of the world.” This nightmare scenario was firmly put to rest, though, by lighting director Chip Monck and other engineers. They assured the Woodstock promoters that the cable coverings could withstand far more than the tread of thousands of muddy feet.

Source:

Fornatale, Pete. *Back to the Garden: The Story of Woodstock*. New York: Touchstone, 2009.

was the stage itself, where Santana, Sly and the Family Stone, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, the Who, Richie Havens, Jimi Hendrix, and others delivered song after song of great music.

According to many people at Woodstock, these qualities were more than enough to make up for the rain and mud and bad smells (see “A Military Veteran Remembers the Festival,” p. 180). “The hippies shared whatever they had—food, carrot salad with raisins, tents, a joint—how they shared everything,” remembered Carlos Santana. “Four hundred fifty thousand, or howev-

er many people were there, it was a living organism of people. A lot of people saw the mud, a lot of people saw the ugly things, but this is what I saw. I can only give you my vision of what I saw, and what I saw was a true harmonious convergence.”¹⁸ According to one concertgoer who was nineteen years old at the time, this spirit of generosity and patience extended even to the most overcrowded sections of the festival. “The closer you got to the stage, the less room there was,” recalled Harriet Schwartz. “It was like a mosh pit—*worse* than a mosh pit. So I was literally like an accordion. I would sit, my back would be on somebody else’s knees, and somebody else’s back would probably be on my knees. If you don’t love people that are around you, you’re in a lot of trouble. But everybody there generally was sweet, loving, caring. We were all in the same boat together.”¹⁹

It was that spirit of kindness and brotherhood that Max Yasgur focused on when the organizers convinced him to address the crowd from the stage on Sunday morning. “I’m a farmer,” he began nervously, to encouraging roars from the crowd.

I don’t know how to speak to twenty people at a time, let alone a crowd like this. But I think you people have proven something to the world. Not only to the town of Bethel or Sullivan County, or New York State. You’ve proven something to the world. This is the largest group of people ever assembled in one place. We have had no idea that there would be this size group, and because of that, you had quite a few inconveniences as far as water and food and so forth. Your producers have done a mammoth job to see that you’re taken care of. They’d enjoy a vote of thanks.

But above that, the important thing that you’ve proven to the world is that a half a million kids—and I call you kids because I have children that are older than you are—a half a million young people can get together and have three days of fun and music and have nothing *but* fun and music. And God bless you for it!²⁰

When the festival finally drew to a close on Monday morning, only a small remnant of the mighty crowd remained. Most attendees had departed during the course of Sunday afternoon and evening (see “Leaving Woodstock,” p. 188). Whether they headed home on Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, though, the people who experienced Woodstock shared a common bond. “What outsiders failed



On the final day of the Woodstock festival, landowner Max Yasgur praised attendees for their good behavior.

to understand was that, like the mud clinging to the sneakers of each of the kids trudging homeward, something stuck to the souls of these 500,000,” wrote Curry. “[Woodstock] Nation disbanded even more abruptly than it had begun, fairly bursting apart like an incubating pod grown heavy with seeds. But the members of that Nation would carry forever an indelible stamp in the passport of their souls that they would cherish as a special brand of honor giving them the privilege to say, ‘We were there.’”²¹

Notes

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- ⁷ Curry, p. 166.
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- ⁹ Quoted in Makower, p. 209.
- ¹⁰ Quoted in Makower, pp. 195-96.
- ¹¹ Quoted in Makower, p. 247.
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- ¹⁷ Curry, p. 198.
- ¹⁸ Quoted in Fornatale, p. 126.
- ¹⁹ Quoted in Fornatale, p. 110.
- ²⁰ Quoted in Landy, Eliot. *Woodstock Vision: The Spirit of a Generation*. Rev. ed. Milwaukee, WI: Backbeat Books, 2009, p. 171.
- ²¹ Curry, pp. 229-30.

Michael Lang (1944-)
*Concert Promoter and Co-founder of the
Woodstock Music and Art Fair*

Michael Lang was born on December 11, 1944, in Brooklyn, New York. He was raised in a middle-class neighborhood by his parents, Harry and Sylvia Lang, who owned and operated a heating system installation business and had financial interests in several other Brooklyn-area businesses. As young Michael grew older, his parents would occasionally take him to listen to live music at local nightclubs in which they had part-ownership. These experiences gave Lang a taste of the glamour and energy of live music—as well as a realization that entrepreneurial business opportunities could take all kinds of shapes and forms.



Ups and Downs in Florida

Lang's high school years included experimentation with marijuana and the hallucinogenic drug LSD. Around this same time he became fascinated by the counterculture movement emerging in some American cities and college campuses. After securing a deferment from the military draft and thus avoiding a potential posting in Vietnam, Lang began taking classes at New York University (NYU) in 1962. In 1964 he transferred to the University of Tampa, only to return to NYU after a few months.

In 1966 Lang's boredom with college studies and his increasingly countercultural lifestyle led him to once again leave New York for Florida. This time he moved to Coconut Grove, a community at the southern end of Miami. Lang quickly opened a head shop where he sold a wide assortment of "hippie" goods, including posters, strobe lights, beads, bong pipes, and other smoking paraphernalia. Lang's shop became a popular gathering place for Miami's hippie crowd, and before long the ambitious Lang was also trying his hand as a rock concert promoter. He started with a few small events, but in 1968 he played a pivotal role in organizing the Miami Pop Festival, which featured national acts like Jimi Hendrix, the Mothers of Invention, and Steppenwolf. The two-day con-

cert drew a big crowd of 100,000 people, but the high expense of putting on the show made it a financial failure for Lang.

After the festival, Lang became increasingly unhappy with his life in Coconut Grove. “Police continued to hassle hippies, rents and condos were going up, the old wooden houses were being torn down, and head shops were proliferating,” he wrote in his autobiography, *The Road to Woodstock*. “Broke and a bit burned out on South Florida, I thought it was time to head back to New York.”¹

Turning the Woodstock Dream into Reality

Upon returning to New York State, Lang bought a small house in Woodstock, a small arts-oriented town located about ninety miles north of New York City. Although he had left his head shop behind in Florida, Lang was still working as a band manager and concert promoter. Shortly after settling in Woodstock, he went to the New York offices of Capitol Records to see if he could interest the company in signing a band he was managing. On his visit to Capitol he met Artie Kornfeld, a young record executive who had also grown up in Brooklyn. The two young men bonded over their mutual love of rock music, and before long they became good friends.

In the fall of 1968 Lang and Kornfeld began talking about arranging a rock concert in order to raise funds to build a recording studio in Woodstock. In early 1969 they met two young entrepreneurs, John Roberts and Joel Rosenman. Roberts and Rosenman were not enthused about the recording studio, but they agreed to provide funding and legal assistance for the concert. The four men subsequently created Woodstock Ventures, a partnership built for the purpose of organizing a big multi-day rock festival in upstate New York.

The next several months were chaotic for Lang and his partners. They had to move the concert site twice—the final time only a month before the August 15-17 concert was scheduled to open—publicize the festival to rock fans across the country, and put together a lineup of musical acts capable of stirring up excitement. Another top priority for Woodstock Ventures was hiring concert people with the expertise to make the show a success. Lang took the lead on this score, and by all accounts he put together a top-notch staff of production people and technical engineers.

By late July, Lang and his partners were in a state of perpetual motion at the concert site in Bethel, New York. “We were trying to finish a four-month job in a month,” Lang recalled. “We were in the midst of dealing with endless

building permits, which were actually the only permits we were required to have. Stage construction was the main priority. The scaffolding had been delivered and we were starting to build the kids' park, clear the woods and put roads in. I remember desperately trying to get the phone lines eight miles down the track to the site.... There were 300 of us on 24/7 duty.... At Woodstock, we were building a city from scratch."²

During these final frantic days of preparation, some members of the construction crew and Lang's business partners expressed frustration with Lang, who in many ways had become the public face of the upcoming festival. They criticized him for displaying a smug attitude and being careless with other people's money and time. Other staff members, though, said that Lang's optimistic disposition and confidence were essential in making Woodstock happen. "He had this cosmic aura to him," recalled one Woodstock staffer. "I don't mean to overdo this, but he always had this little smile on his face like he knew something that none of us knew. Which, as it turns out, was not necessarily true.... But he managed to glow a lot of things into existence that I don't think any other one of [the partners], given the personalities—none of them could have done that."³

A Free Concert for the Ages

When the Woodstock Festival finally arrived, it was a disaster in some respects. The crowd was so huge that it paralyzed roadways for miles around, overwhelmed the concert site's facilities, and made it impossible for Woodstock Ventures to collect or sell tickets for the event. Lang and his partners had no choice but to make Woodstock a free concert—a development that took a big financial toll on Roberts and Rosenman, who had paid for a good portion of the festival's costs out of their own pockets.

Despite the immense crowd (as many as 500,000, though no one knows for sure), downpours that drenched the festival, and several disappointing musical performances, however, the concert as a whole was widely hailed as a stunning success. The festival goers remained peaceful and enthusiastic through every setback, and performers such as Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, the Who, and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young delivered legendary sets.

Years later, Lang still marveled at how Woodstock succeeded against all odds. "For me," he wrote,

Woodstock was a test of whether people of our generation really believed in one another and the world we were struggling to

create. How would we do when we were in charge? Could we live as the peaceful community we envisioned? I'd hoped we could.... Over that August weekend, during a very tumultuous time in our country, we showed the best of ourselves, and in the process created the kind of society we all aspired to, even if only for a brief moment. The time was right, the place was right, the spirit was right, and we were right. What resulted was a celebration and confirmation of our humanity.⁴

After Woodstock was over, hard feelings between Lang and Kornfeld on one side and Roberts and Rosenman on the other made it impossible to keep Woodstock Ventures together. Roberts and Rosenman ultimately bought out Lang and Kornfeld after long and acrimonious negotiations. After leaving Woodstock ventures, though, Lang remained an active presence in the American music industry.

In the four decades since Woodstock, Lang has managed nationally known recording artists, owned and operated his own record companies, and produced numerous music festivals. He even reconciled with Roberts and Rosenman to help produce the controversial Woodstock '94 and Woodstock '99 concert events and rejoined the Woodstock Ventures group. In 2009, in honor of the fortieth anniversary of the famous concert, Woodstock Ventures unveiled Woodstock.com, a Web site that celebrates the history and music of the original Woodstock event. That same year Lang published *The Road to Woodstock*, an autobiographical account of the festival that was warmly received by critics and music fans alike.

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Breakfast in Bed for 400,000

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Woodstock Music and Art Fair operations was that the membership of a hippie commune known as the Hog Farm assumed responsibility for much of the festival's food, medical assistance, and security needs. Lisa Law was one of the most prominent Hog Farm members, and she was deeply involved in the preparations for Woodstock. In the following essay, Law fondly recalls her experiences at the weekend festival.

Since the Hog Farm, of which I was a member, was a large communal group, the Woodstock festival organizers thought we would know how to take care of masses of people, especially if they were taking drugs. We were well versed in those departments, so agreed to become caretakers and food preparers for what was expected to be about 50,000 people a day.

Our party of about eighty-five, with fifteen Indians from the Santa Fe Indian School, turned up on the assigned day at the Albuquerque International Airport to take the American Airlines jumbo jet the organizers had sent down from New York to fly us to the festival. My husband, Tom Law, and I decided to take our tipi to stay in while there, and the baggage handlers looked like Keystone Kops loading the poles into the baggage compartment. It had to have been a first.

Many reporters met us at New York's Kennedy Airport. They wanted to know if we were handling security at Woodstock. One reporter asked Wavy Gravy, our "minister of talk," what he was going to use for crowd control. He answered, "Seltzer bottles and cream pies."

From the airport, we were whisked off to White Lake in big, comfortable buses and made camp with members of our crew who had arrived earlier, having driven from New Mexico in buses loaded with supplies. Ken Kesey's bus, along with four others, came from Oregon loaded with forty Pranksters, minus Kesey himself, with his best friend Ken Babbs at the helm.

We had nine days to put together the free stage, medical tents, free food kitchen, serving booths, and information centers, and to set up the trip tents for those who, having partaken of mind-expanding drugs, needed to escape the noise, lights, people, and rain.

The advance crew had built a wooden dome, covered it with plastic, and had set up a kitchen inside. Max Yasgur, our host, provided us with milk, yogurt, and

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eggs every day. Bonnie Jean Romney, Wavy Gravy's wife, was in charge of the kitchen and had gathered together odds and ends of aluminum pots and pans.

We got a flash that the concert could be much, much larger than what was projected. I traveled to New York City and spent \$6,000 on food and supplies, including 1,200 pounds of bulgur wheat and rolled oats, two dozen 25-pound boxes of currants, almonds, and dried apricots, 200 pounds of wheat germ, five wooden kegs of soy sauce, and five big kegs of honey, 130,000 paper plates and spoons and forks, about 50,000 paper Dixie cups, pots, pans, five huge stainless steel bowls, and thirty-five plastic garbage pails to mix large portions of muesli. I also bought 250 enameled cups for our crew and our volunteers. (There was no recycling in those days and we were into conservation.)

As Friday approached, things were looking good. The stage was almost built, but there were too many fences to be built and the turnstiles never got up. More and more people would just walk right up to a fence, lay it down and walk over it. Then they would plop themselves down on tarps, making a cushion of their sleeping bags, take off their tops to enjoy the sun, and wait for the music. There must have been 50,000 of these squatters on the main field Friday morning. The promoters told Tom and Wavy Gravy it was time to clear the fields and to start taking tickets. Wavy said, "Do you want a good movie or a bad movie?" The producers had a palaver [conference] and decided to make the festival free.

People just kept coming, a tidal wave of people. When the amphitheater ran out of space, communities popped up everywhere else. The free stage across the forest and down by the Hog Farm camp had its own music and audience. Some of those groups, and some of the crew, never even saw the main stage. The festival chiefs had hired off-duty police to help with traffic and crowd control. They wore T-shirts that read Please Force. It was supposed to establish peaceful security. It worked.

It rained Friday night and on and off all throughout the festival. What were once beautiful grassy fields became mud bogs and slides. It would start to pour, and people would stand up and just let the water rush over them. Then they would sit down again, not wanting to leave their place lest they lose it. Everyone was sharing their food with their neighbors. All the food concessions started giving their food away and the National Guard dropped supplies from planes. I would go to a neighboring farm with a truck and buy whole rows of vegetables. On Saturday morning, after Tom taught yoga off the main stage, Wavy got up and said, "What we have in mind is breakfast in bed for 400,000."

Realizing that a lot of people on the main field were not eating, late on Saturday we filled twenty-five of the plastic trash cans with muesli mix and served it out of Dixie cups at the side of the stage along with cups of fresh water to wash it down.

I had a Super 8 camera and about forty reels of film and was shooting everything that was happening with that and my trusty Nikon. Once a day I would hail a helicopter, say I was with the Hog Farm, and get a lift into the sky. Yeow, what a view! We had created our own city, a half a million loving, sharing freaks. I could see the traffic for miles. People were still coming. Traffic was backed up all the way to the interstate. The lake behind the stage was filled with naked bathers. Helicopters were everywhere, dropping off and picking up performers who had no other way to get into the festival.

Sleep was the furthest thing from my mind. I think I got one hour a day. I was seven months pregnant with our son, Solar. Tom and I were pretty busy multitasking, so Pilar, our two-year-old daughter, spent most of the time with the rest of the Hog Farm kids. On Sunday I got my first shower when the Hog Farmers rigged up a hose at the top of a ladder to be aimed down on the naked bodies below.

I know the music at Woodstock was phenomenal. They said Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young played their second gig there and that Santana wooed the crowd with master drummer Michael Shrieve backing him up. Jimi Hendrix played the National Anthem and made that guitar sing like no one else had ever done. But for me, Woodstock was the people, the masses getting along with each other, sharing, caring, doctoring, feeding. Woodstock marked the dawning of the Age of Aquarius and revealed the soul of the sixties generation awakening. The vibe that made Woodstock a household word lives on in many parts of the world. It's the force that drives us to save the planet, to bring aid to other countries, and to make things right for native cultures. The spirit of that soul, that Woodstock vibe, will endure. After all, we are all members of the same family on Turtle Island.

Source

Law, Lisa. "Breakfast in Bed for 400,000." In Reynolds, Susan, ed. *Woodstock Revisited*. Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2009, pp. 7-10.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TERMS

Acid rock

A type of rock music with elements of folk rock, blues, and pop that glorified recreational drug use, sexual freedom, and individuality; also known as psychedelic rock.

Baby boomer

Person born in the United States during the postwar “baby boom,” a sustained period of high birth rates usually defined as the years between 1946 and 1964.

Baez, Joan (1941-)

Folksinger and political activist who headlined the first night of Woodstock.

Beat movement

A cultural movement of the 1950s that rejected American “middle-class” values and traditional institutions of authority and emphasized the importance of individual choice and freedom.

Communism

A political system in which the state controls all economic activity, distributes resources evenly among the populace, and exerts significant control over citizens’ rights and freedoms.

Counterculture

A cultural movement of the 1960s that centered around sexual freedom, recreational drug use, a return to “natural” living, and the rejection of middle-class America’s emphasis on acquiring money and consumer products.

Dylan, Bob (1941-)

Folksinger-turned-rock star whose lyrics and attitude hugely influenced rock and roll during the 1960s.

CHRONOLOGY

1945

World War II draws to a close and the United States begins an extended period of strong economic growth. *See p. 7.*

1954

The U.S. Supreme Court hands down its *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which outlaws segregation in American public schools. *See p. 8.*

Vietnam successfully pushes longtime colonial ruler France out of the country. Terms of the peace agreement call for the temporary partition of Vietnam into northern and southern halves. *See p. 12.*

1956

The United States derails elections designed to reunite Vietnam under a single government. Instead, it lends its support to the creation of an independent South Vietnam. Communist leaders in North Vietnam and Communist rebels in South Vietnam take up arms in a bid to force reunification. *See p. 12.*

Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel" becomes his first Number One single on the U.S. pop charts. *See p. 24.*

1957

The Philadelphia-based *American Bandstand* becomes a nationally syndicated music show. *See p. 25.*

1959

An airplane crash claims the lives of Buddy Holly, Richie Valens and J. P. "Big Bopper" Richardson. *See p. 24.*

1961

The United States begins sending military advisors and supplies to South Vietnam to support the pro-American government against the Communist threat. *See p. 12.*

1963

February 19 – Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* is published in the United States. *See p. 16.*

May 27 – *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* is released. *See p. 25.*

SOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

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- George-Warren, Holly. *The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: The First 25 Years*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. This heavily illustrated resource provides in-depth biographical portraits of every inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in its first quarter-century of existence. Each profile, whether on a musician, band, or producer, blends Hall of Fame memorabilia, photographs from various points in the individual's career, quotes and anecdotes, biographical background, and lists of top-selling records, hits, and awards.
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