



Collected Letters, 1944-1967

Neal Cassady , Dave Moore (Editor) , Carolyn Cassady (Introduction)

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“Dave Moore's work on this collection is simply awesome.... It should become and remain the definitive reference book for Beat scholars forever.” — Carolyn Cassady

Neal Cassady is best remembered today as Jack Kerouac's muse and the basis for the character “Dean Moriarty” in Kerouac's classic **On The Road**, and as one of Ken Kesey's merriest of Merry Pranksters, the driver of the psychedelic bus “Further,” immortalized in Tom Wolfe's **The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test**. This collection brings together more than two hundred letters to Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, John Clellon Holmes, and other Beat generation luminaries, as well as correspondence between Neal and his wife, Carolyn. These amazing letters cover Cassady's life between the ages of 18 and 41 and finish just months before his death in February 1968.

Brilliantly edited by Dave Moore, this unique collection presents the “Soul of the Beat Generation” in his own words—sometimes touching and tender, sometimes bawdy and hilarious. Here is the real Neal Cassady—raw and uncut.

Collected Letters, 1944-1967 Details

Date : Published January 25th 2005 by Penguin Books

ISBN : 9780142002179

Author : Neal Cassady , Dave Moore (Editor) , Carolyn Cassady (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 512 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Poetry

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Roberto says

Kerouac's muse explored through the letters he sent. March 7th, 1947 is a perfect example of accidental brilliance.

Andrzej says

Some personal and frank discussions between Cassady and his many friends/family as he passed from young, able-bodied railroad brakeman and poolhall hustler to wide-eyed, yet wise, beat poet and tragic hero. I think this book is for completists who also enjoyed similar "letters" books by Kerouac and Ginsberg. Cassady was a man of, and also, ahead of his time, and these letters give a picture-book account of how these characteristics formed his legend as well as how they affected those closest to him. It is staggering how much living this man packed into one short lifetime, especially in the context of the times.

Steven says

I always knew about the legend of Neil Cassady but never really felt I knew about the person. This book gave me Hey good feel for who he was and how brilliant of a person he was.

Jess says

If you havent read the rest of the beat books then u wont have an understanding of this book. Not a book to randomly pick up to get to know Cassady and the reat of the beats. Its the glue between each book written with Cassady as the muse or a player in along with Kerouac.

Gautsho says

Töötab väga hästi ka biograafiana, sest lisaks kirjade vahele jäävate aegade lyhiylevaadetele on konteksti mõttes siia-sinna lisatud ka teiste kirju Nealile või teiste omavahelisi kirju, mis temast räägivad, kõik on kaootiline, yhele kirjutab ta yht, teisele teist ja kokku tuleb rahutult märatsev tervik, aeg-ajalt välgub Neali pastakas nii, et vägev kohe, väga kahju, et tal selleks eriti palju jõudu ega jaksu ei jäänud, kui yhelt poolt kiusasid aina elukohused ja depressioon, teiselt poolt elulõbud ja lõputu *joint*'itamine. Järjekordne tavaline elule allajäänud geenius.

Adria says

Lost patience with Mr. Cassady early on. Brilliant writer and creative soul but I could not take another page of his self-absorbed, psychotic, selfishness. And is it just me, or did both he and Jack Kerouac just keep repeating themselves in their letters?

Mat says

Fascinating.

The majority of Neal's letters in this collection are from the 1950s. Most of the letters from the 1960s are very short and it is sad to see that Neal had mostly given up on his writing ambitions by this stage which is a real shame because some of his letters from the 1950s are up there among the best that I have seen among the beats. Even Carl Solomon (there is one letter from him in here) writes to Neal, somewhat negatively, hoping that Neal will continue to work on his writing because he sees his potential. The famous and infamous Joan Anderson letter is a case in point. Oh how good it would be to have the whole thing in its entirety. Instead, we are forced to be content with less than half of the original. As Kerouac points out, this letter features the best of Proust, Joyce and others and this is the letter that inspired Kerouac to adopt his spontaneous bop prosody style, which lead to his pounding out *On the Road* on his typewriter in about three weeks.

There are some good letters that he wrote in the 60s to Ken Kesey though - one sprawling, rambling letter to Kesey really showcases his incredible knowledge of the automobile and also the inexorable and exhilarating flow of his prose which left me spellbound at times.

The letters back and forth between him and Jack are the most interesting and the letters between Neal and Carolyn also show how tempestual their relationship really was.

I arrived at a few conclusions about some of the people after reading this book.

- 1) I think Carolyn was very patient with Neal and an incredibly strong woman.
- 2) I think Kerouac is an incredibly complex person, both selfish and generous, incredibly sympathetic but at times incredibly spiteful and mean. Fits the T of an artist, doesn't it?
- 3) Ginsberg was really the 'glue' that kept them all together as a group and if it weren't for Ginsberg, none of them, not even Kerouac, may have even gotten published. He was committed, devoted to getting everyone he believed in published and endlessly and incorrigibly forgiving, no matter how many times Jack or Neal or Peter Orlovsky let him down.
- 4) Burroughs - once again an incredibly complex and intelligent person whose style of writing was very different from the others and is somewhat the 'brains' behind the Beat movement and certainly the best read of the group. He was very mean to Peter because he was jealous that he was Allen's lover.
- 4) Huncke (who appears only once here) - an incredibly sly shyster but a fascinating one. He was not a writer but a 'raconteur' who introduced the beats to the underground scene of Times Square etc.
- 5) Corso - a loudmouth genius poet clown who matured beautifully. He could be quite obnoxious when he was younger based on the stories that you read and hear but he probably aged the best of all the beats. At the end of his life he seemed so angelic and interested in fighting the good fight.
- 6) Diane - someone who tragically fell in love with Neal, had one of his children and was basically abandoned by Neal.
- 7) Natalie Jackson - another mixed-up girl who got involved with Neal and who met a tragic fate.
- 8) Anne Murphy - basically a real slut who was probably Neal's major love at the end of his life
- 9) LuAnne - an incredibly free and uninhibited and strong woman who could move on to the next stage of her life regardless of whatever afflictions came her way.
- 10) Neal's dad (Cassady Sr.) - a hopeless drunk who seemed like a nice enough person. He could have been a decent respectable citizen of Denver if it weren't for his drinking.

There are more people mentioned in here, including the Merry Pranksters, but you should just pick up a copy of this and check it out for yourself. As Carolyn Cassady says in the Introduction, this book is bound to become a classic within the great beat canon. Highly recommended. Cassady had his flaws and was far from being an 'angel' but one thing you've got to say about him - he never gave up celebrating life and that's how he will be remembered. As well as being Dean Moriarty the legend and Sir Speed Limit, the driver of the bus Furthur. If you want to read even more of his letters, you can pick up a copy of *As Ever*, which features his correspondence with Ginsberg or *Grace Beats Karma*, which is a volume of his letters to Carolyn and others while he was in prison.

Thomas says

Le souffle de la vie en pleine poire. Des torrents de testostérone qui se déversent dans ses nombreuses lettres à destination de ses amis qui deviendront de grands écrivains. Certaines seront des monuments adaptés au cinéma, et sans elles, "Sur la route" de Kerouac n'aurait jamais vu le jour. Une correspondance indispensable à ranger à côté de celle de Van Gogh.
