

Leon Barnard

interviews Leon Barnard

* about his days with The Doors. . .

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Forward:

Leon was the The Doors' press agent
from early 1969 thru September 1970

when Bill Siddons fired his ass

for misbehaving:

See story inside. . .

Keep in mind Leon is interviewing himself:

As I began thinking about writing this story I was a bit confused about where to begin. And then after a few days of pondering that question, I decided to do an interview with myself. For what better way would there be for me to get to my, truth, than to dig for it in places only known to me. It seemed like a good idea at the time, so lets get started. . .

First question: “Leon, why are you writing this with double spacing?”

“Well mainly so it can be read easily and there is plenty of room to pencil in corrections if I need to. I see this as a *type of treatment* – even though I know it is not -- and it makes me feel like I’m living in a movie that is playing continuously inside my head. I see it as a film for all seasons, with no real

commercial value, but hopefully my make-believe movie will entertain those who read it as I continue to write it, and as my story unfolds. Writing it, is half the fun of it. And the storyline is true.

Basically it's a *free association* project, and I find out things about myself I didn't know before I tapped these first few words single-finger'dly on my laptop computer."

"That's interesting, do you think everyone has a story to tell?"

"Yes, I think everyone should write a movie script of their own, assuming they are living a life about which to write. It's hard to tell these days though, because so many people I encounter don't have much to say, let alone tell a story to write. Unfortunately, TV has replaced imagination in our present day society and video games have dulled

our senses. I hear people all around me who talk?
in question? And they don't even know? they are
doing it? Like robots.”

“Robots? please continue. . .”

“A lot of people seem to have a programmed
response to just about every question; everything is
amazing. Have you noticed? We are living in a
world of dumb'd-down automatons.”

“Oh my God! like seriously?” (he's kidding)

“You got that right Leon, sometimes you're a real
wiz kid aren't you?”

“I'm curious, why are you typing this story single-
finger'dly? (poetic license) if there is such a word.”

“I don't think there is, but who cares? I hurt my

back a few months ago and when I sit in a chair it compresses a nerve, and that is painful. So I'm writing this while lying flat on my back in bed with my laptop on my chest. Tapping on these keys single-*finger'dly*. It's a slow & tedious process, but I like it because it causes me to think, and to take time to *choose my words* a little more carefully."

"When & where did you get this respect for words?"

"Well obviously enough, I think I got it the first time I read Jim Morrison. His poetry, and the way The Doors put their music to song. I didn't realize it right away, because in the early 60's I was studying to become a painter. I had painted ever since the 7th grade, and most of what I did artistically was oil brushed on canvas."

"And then?"

“And then without my knowing about it, I began to write poems. I call them: Terrible Parables; and Words of Wisdumb.”

“Did Jim ever read any of your parables?”

“Yes, and even though he rolled his eyes a few times, his favorite was the one you see below:

*“Simple cunt
shall not sit
on elaborate
Thrones.”*

“He said he thought that one was a good one, and then he rolled his eyes.”

“Do you have a favorite line of his Leon, and why?”

“Can you picture what will be so limitless and free.”

*Free association OCD kicks in and Leon digresses:
“Hey Jim, we now have this thing called cat-fishing. I saw it on MTV. Do you know what MTV is? Oh that’s right, MTV came along after you had died; even though some of us didn’t believe you had died at all. Well, it’s this thing where people misrepresent themselves while looking for love on the web. They pretend to be someone else because they think no one will love them for who they really are. They put pictures of someone else up on the internet – do you know what the internet is? – and tell the other person that they are the person in the pictures they put up looking for love on the internet. Does that make any sense to you? Probably not, because it’s just too far out of this world to believe. I can’t believe it either but I do. Because I saw it on MTV.”

Jim’s reply:

“This is the strangest life I’ve never known.”

“Now where was I? Oh yeah, two nights ago on July 2nd I awakened at three in the morning with an ‘*overwhelming*’ sense of well being, and inside my head I heard these words, slowly, repeating themselves to me in music:

*“Can you picture what will be
so limitless and free.”*

“Do you think this was a visitation?”

“The *feeling* I had stayed with me for quite a while --so yes, to answer your question, it sure felt like one.”

“That’s interesting you say that Leon, because a few years ago Jim came to me in a dream, and said these words: “*You’re looking down longnecks of*

bustiers on fine horses Leon, searching for someone who has already found you.”

“It seems strange huh, Leon, that you and I are the same person – and yet, we both have had separate dreams about Jim Morrison. On two different occasions. How does that work?”

“I’m not sure, but lets return to my former line of questioning, if you don’t mind.”

“Whatever blows your dress up good-buddy.”

“Getting back to the question of people living lives worth writing about, what more can you say about that? Are all lives worth a movie?”

“Jim once told me he didn’t think there was such a thing as a *bad movie*. It has taken me a while to think about this, and sometimes I think I know

what he meant. And then at others, I'm not so sure."

"Excuse me, let me interrupt you for a minute. . ."

"You always do. . ."

"You, and Jim Morrison talked about *Life* as a *movie*?"

"Yep, a few times when we were alone, and for sure when we flew to Paris. We were talking about my, life: *Out of Arkansas* growing up at *The Foot of Golden Avenue* in Long Beach. He liked both of those autobiographical book titles, and seemed fascinated when I told him my stories."

"You were born in Arkansas?"

"Midland, like you don't know? Well you were

pretty young then weren't you? Do you remember how mama screamed as she was pushing out a ten pound baby? And with no anesthetic. Midwives were there, and I believe a country doctor came from Hartford. The conditions were primitive but somehow we made it."

"Yep, I made it and you did too. Two and a half years later *The Barnards* moved to *The Foot of Golden Avenue* in Long Beach where you and I grew up. That's a story in itself."

"Did Jim tell you stories about his life as a child?"

"Not so much, he seemed more interested in my life than talking about his. Jim was a curious guy - in more ways than just one - and he always seemed to be *exploring*. It was as though he was visualizing my movie, rather than directing his own. He knew his own story, and put it to words & antics on stage

during a variety of performances. Sometimes drunk and out of his mind, but always honest in his insanity. Those of us who loved him – and still do – gave him license to behave so radically – mainly because we loved him, and still do.”

“When we went to trial in Phoenix for example, I got up on a coffee table and started yelling obscenities at his drunken ass for being so uncooperative. Bill Siddons and I had tried for at least half an hour to keep him from going out in public. ~ drunk as a skunk ~ He had been charged with *interfering with the flight of a national airline* and had he gotten loose that night before the trial? he probably would not have survived it. So I called him a fuckin’ asshole! and that shocked him. I was so mad I had tears in my eyes. And he had never seen that side of me. Only a very few people have.”

“And what did ‘The Lizard King’ do?”

“As I said, it shocked him. Stunned, laidback on a couch, he looked up at me and asked why I was treating him like a seven year old child. And all I could think of to say was the obvious: ‘Because you’re acting like a seven year old child and I’m tired of baby-sitting for you!’ And then I went to my room, and Frank & Bill came along to console me.”

“Such a drama king. . .”

“Shut the fuck up, you would’ve done the same thing. In fact, you did. The last thing I saw as I was leaving his hotel room was a cute young groupie getting her blouse unbuttoned on the couch on which she and Jim were sitting. Jim looked like a Cheshire cat getting ready to pounce on nip that was now nearly out of the package. The next morning he thanked me over breakfast.”

“He thanked you? Shut the fuck up!”

“Yes, during breakfast the next morning with Max Fink, The Doors’ lawyer, Jim apologized to me and thanked me for *‘coming down so heavy’* on him. And then we went to court.”

“What happened there?”

“We were sequestered in a small waiting room and I was the last person to testify. I told my story about what had happened on the plane that day, and was asked one question: *‘Did you see Mr. Morrison touch the stewardess as she walked down the aisle? No sir, I saw Tom Baker reach out and touch the stewardess as she walked down the aisle’*. And that was it. Slam dunk! and Mr. Morrison was free to leave the courtroom.”

“Was that the end of it Leon? Is there anything else you’d like to add?”

“Are you kidding? There is so much more to this event. A bonafide (sincerely; without intention to deceive) publisher should tape-record me telling this entire story from start to finish. . . to get all the facts out about *‘just another day in the life’* of Jim Morrison. I see a blockbuster book of details happening here. What a movie! and what a life.”

“Leon, has your life been good enough to make a movie? And who would you choose to star in your film of Independence?”

“Well I’d like to test for it myself; after all, I know the part, even though I might need to brush-up a bit on *‘my method’* – what a crock of shit that is! *‘The method’ ‘the method’, I must think like Marlon Brando as I self-hypnotize and now move into my method, and go within’*. Did Jimmy Stewart use *‘the method’*? Betty Davis? Burl Ives? Lana Turner?

Marilyn Monroe? Gregory Peck? Pat Boone?
giggles Rudolph Valentino?” Well may be.

“Okay okay that’s enough Leon! Snap out of it!
Dude, chill, no need to get all worked-up about it.
Do you want to take a break?”

“Nah, I’m okay, nothing serious, it’s just my
personal opinion. I don’t like fads, but I’m cool,
what’s your next question? The first time I met Val
Kilmer he was *‘in character’*. He’s a cool guy and I
think he should’ve been nominated for his role in
The Doors’ movie. He picked me up at the 50
shades of Greyhound bus station when I came down
from the ranch to give him character advice in
1990. And while we were cruising around
Hollywood, chatting about this and that and the
other thing, he was in *‘Morrison character’* – or at
least he was trying to be, hoping to impress me. I
didn’t like it but I said nothing. It was like he was

an abstraction in cowboy boots pretending to be Jim Morrison. My Jim Morrison. As I know and knew him. And then after about 15 minutes, Val glanced over at me and said, '*Leon, you're a real person aren't you?*' After that, we just talked like friends do when they're having a good time cruisin' Hollywood. His '*Val Kilmer*' energy impressed me. He told me he never had to struggle like so many aspiring actors do. He got jobs right out of coming out of Julliard and went to work immediately. A very nice guy. And as I said, his depiction of Jim Morrison on screen was as good as good can be. Do you think maybe it was because of *his, method?*"

"Speaking of Marlon Brando Leon, a lot of people were comparing Jim Morrison to Brando in those days. Do you know how he felt about that?"

"People were comparing Jim to James Dean too, even though I've never been able to see the

comparison. Both Jim & James were so uniquely their own; there is no comparison. That's what individuality does, it separates you from the befuddled masses; the status quo of being like everyone else. Most people go for *sameness*, in hopes of being *accepted?*"

Speaking of Marlon Brando:

"In the winter of 1970, just after 'Morrison Hotel' had been released and The Doors were playing New York, Jim and Pam and I were coming back from dinner one evening, when we noticed 'A Streetcar Named Desire' was playing at a movie theater near the restaurant where we had eaten. So we bought tickets and went in. We got balcony seats and Jim sat in the middle. But shortly after the opening credits Jim fell asleep, and when he woke up there was not much more to see so we left and went back

to The Hotel Navarro to chill, and chat about the new 'Morrison Hotel' album, concert schedule, etc."

"So Jim slept through the whole movie?"

"Well nearly all of it, and Pam and I just let it happen realizing restful sleep for Jim under many circumstances could be a good thing. Especially since The Doors were scheduled to perform at the Felt Forum the next day."

"Wow! and let me tell you, that really did turn out to be an historic event. Elektra Records put a picture of you on the cover of their monthly news magazine, as you were center stage trying to pry that stage-jumper guy's hands off Jim's microphone; while Bill Siddons and Tony Funches were laughing their asses off backstage doing nothing to help you." (Tony Funches was our 6 foot 5ive body-guard)

“Yeah, I saw them. I’d get one of his fingers loose and then he’d grab the mic with a handful of others. That’s when you can hear Jim say on the ‘Absolutely Live!’ album: *‘Well, that’s New York for you – the only people to rush the stage are guys!’* Man, that guy was a strong dude, and he meant business. I sure wish I could get a copy of that photo.”

“Anything else mister ‘**Star**’ of the show?”

“As a matter of fact, there is something more. If you listen closely during the intro to ‘Soul Kitchen’, you can hear me, and John *‘dueling it out’ ‘whooping it up!’* at how tight The Doors were playing at the beginning of their classic song: *‘Let me sleep all night in your soul kitchen. . .’* I mean those guys were tight that night, and John, Jim, Robby & Ray

had come to New York to get down and boogie! So I guess you could say **LEON BARNARD** once sang backup for The Doors. Can I sue for that? I'm non-union. Shouldn't I get a royalty?"

"For sure Leon, why not? Those guys were hitting it! You can really hear John pounding those tomtoms; it was as though he was driving an 18 wheeler across the Arizona desert with no speed limits. You were dancing – and weren't you wearing fringed leathers that night too?"

"Sure was, and I was shaking my tail feathers like nobody's business! Dancing like nobody was watching. It's kind of embarrassing to think about it now – but in the 60's? we had no limits. Unfortunately, that ruined a few lives, but somehow I escaped it."

"Yeah, sex, drugs, and rock & roll: *Rock-out with your rooster out!* Well, you know what I mean. . . ."

And the beat goes on. . .

“A few months later Jim & Pam joined me at Ray & Dorothy’s house where I was houses-sitting for a few days while they were traveling. We had dinner, put a fire in the fireplace, and then got all cuddly on the couch ready to watch ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’ for the second time, & Jim fell asleep again, on the couch, head resting on Pam’s shoulder.”

“You’re kidding, so is that to say that as far as we know, Jim Morrison never got to see Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski yelling ‘*Stella! Stella!*’ on film in A Streetcar Named Desire?”

. . .

“Excuse me folks for just one minute! but I’m getting a text message from myself about an All Points Bulletin concerning a Press Release I wrote in 1970 about the arrest in PHX.”

April 29th 1970

Press Release:

For Your Information:

On April 20th Jim Morrison was acquitted in Phoenix, Arizona on a charge of “simple assault” on an airline stewardess. Sherry Mason, a key witness in the trial, reversed her testimony due to her inability to identify Jim Morrison as the culprit, mistaking seating arrangements & persons involved. On the basis of conflict of testimony U.S. District Court Judge William P. Copple threw the case out of court & Jim was released free of all charges. Not guilty.

As usual, the events surrounding the original incident were highly exaggerated.

--Leon Barnard

Press Agent

“Leon, are you on drugs? You are One very crazy sauna vabitch! An ‘**All Points Bulletin**’ via a text message to and from yourself? From out of fuckin’ nowhere? Where do you get these ideas?”

“As Jim used to say:

‘Ideas are not conceived in a vacuum’.”

“Our brains are like radios; they receive & transmit simultaneously. Some are more finely tuned than others, and a few more are even more powerful than most. Jim Morrison, for example, experienced life very intensely, and when he performed on stage he was living it. For us. And that hurt his feelings. Because his - *streetcar named desire* - was to share those intense moments with an audience, hoping they too would leave their seats & get up & dance! Dance, and celebrate the moment. Be alive and *feel* it! Live life! While you have it.”

To the Reader:

“It is my intention to publish this as an 8 and a half by 11 inch physical floppy-paper manuscript that can easily be read and shared with your friends. It is - as a matter of fact – *a first draft outline written to be read just for the fun of it.* I would like to make you laugh and feel good about yourself, as well as inform you about my experience traveling with The Doors – and most of all, to share with you some of my memorable moments with The Poet, Jim Morrison; the rock star who left us at age 27 along with Janis & Jimi.”

“Leon, can you tell us about the time you met Jimi Hendrix for the first time? That’s kind of a funny story isn’t it?”

“Yeah, Jim & I were on a plane to New York to deliver the Master Tapes of ‘Absolutely Live!’ to Jac

Holtzman at Elektra Records as a surprise gift from The Doors. In fact, I was actually *instructed* by Bill Siddons, The Doors' Manager, to carry the tapes on my lap for safe keeping (just a few million bucks riding on my trembling knees).

Needless to say, I was a bit concerned about my safety as well as my well being had I lost them. But we made it to the meeting, and 'Absolutely Live!' lives to this day as one of the greatest live! albums recorded in rock & roll history. In my opinion."

"May I call a sidebar? I have something more on this subject I want to say."

"Yes you may, but I'm a bit confused as to who is now speaking, and who is asking the questions."

"Does it even fucking matter?"

“Getting a little testy are we? Okay, I’ll ask the questions and you give the answers: What happened next Leon? that you feel is so important.”

“As we were riding in the elevator up to Jac Holtzman’s office, Jim made this challenging suggestion: *‘What would happen Leon, if we told Holtzman the title of The Doors’ new album was to be. . .’*

“Lions In The Streets”

“Well the shit would hit the fan! and Robby, Ray, and John would probably fire me - but wait, they wouldn’t couldn’t do that; because *you*, would be on *my*, side - and that my friend, is power!”

“What did Jim have to say about this?”

“Well he pondered the question, and after a couple of minutes he decided that *Absolutely Live* was an alliteration, which he liked – and since The Doors were an ‘*all for One and One for all*’ Democracy – he chickened out; that is, he stayed with Ab so lute ly Live as the title of the album. But we came close to slamming some doors and starting a new re-vo-lu-tion.”

“Okay Leon, but how does meeting Jimi Hendrix fit into this equation?”

“Hendrix was on the same plane that we flew on from L.A. to New York. He was riding up front with one of ‘*his people*’, and Jim and I were in the back of the plane. And none us knew this until it was time to disembark. Jim turned to me and said, ‘*Oh look Leon, there’s a celebrity!*’ People were scrambling around Hendrix trying to get autographs, whereas Jim and I had been completely unnoticed.”

“Nope, nothing more was needed; we just kept it sweet & simple.”

“One more question Leon, while we’re near the subject; why did Jim want to call the album ‘Lions In The Streets’?”

“As we were riding the elevator Jim explained that he had had a vision – not a literal vision – *but a sense of chaos reflection* – Jim loved chaos – of wild Lions - right out of Africa - running wild through the streets throughout New York City; is that wild or what?”

“You’re asking me? Read your run-on sentence. It sounds a bit *chaotic* to me. Don’t you think you’re going a little wild on this wild Lion theme? But whatever, I get your point, Leon.”

“Spell it backwards and it’s Noel.”

“As I say in my book, Projected Rumour, ‘Jim’s affection for outrageous activity that leads nowhere and has no meaning, entered my memory of him as I replaced the talking apparatus back into the cradle of its receiver’.”

“I don’t know if it was strategically placed chaos, or from where he originally got the idea, but I do know an evening out drinking with Jim Morrison could land your ass in jail. Knowing this, I usually left the party early just about the time the rowdy arm wrestling began. Cigar smoking & arm wrestling just ain’t my thing. Babe & Frank and Tom Baker were a few of his drinking buddies, and I’m sure they’ve got stories to tell.”

Leon continues: “One of the main reasons John, Robby, and Ray hired me as their publicist was because I was one of a very few people Jim Morrison trusted; and respected. And the boys in

the band saw evidence of that when I joined them in London during their first tour of Europe in 1968. When I asked Jim to do a photo shoot for example, and/or an interview with whomever, he usually said yes. Of course we'd talk it over but on just about every occasion he'd go for it. At the time I didn't know what the rules were so therefore I had none to break. John, Robby & Ray saw our friendship growing and that's how I got power. Even though I didn't realize it until years later, *when it finally dawned on me*, that my friendship with Jim Morrison was a matter of trust."

"Dude, I remember that, I was with you when we were having '*breakfast at epiphany's*' and you lit up like a light bulb."

"Did you just call me dude? My name is Leon."

To be continued. . .

“A friend is someone you can trust;
when trust is gone
trust is gone,
sometimes it comes back
but only half as strong.”