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Robert Fitzgerald



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Sunday, October 11, 2009

Memories of Jim - Cleveland Part 1

Cleveland Part 1

PART 5

Our conversations eventually got around to the topic of drugs. I was doing a lot of blow in those days and told Jim about the delivery services that had sprung up. He was intrigued by how easy it was to cop. I detailed the process to him. Call the dispatcher and twenty minutes later a guy is outside your building. You then get in a car equipped with secret little compartments in the doors. The dealer just presses a button and a hydraulic gear pops open the compartment that held your desired product and quantity. Ah the wonders of modern technology.

Jim would rave about the amazing coke they used to get in the band days, not just to me, but also to some of the kids at schools that booked him. He said he could always take it or leave it and it was never a problem for him. He just enjoyed "the really good stuff". Right Jim, who didn't? He began asking about the blow I was getting and if I could get him some, "How good was it? Was it speedy?" Talking drugs was one thing, but copping for him was another. First, I did not want to be responsible for getting him back into drugs. Second, scoring drugs for Jim Carroll? That would be like buying a Christmas present for Santa Claus. The pressure to provide quality goods would be enormous.

I held him off for months but finally caved. I had decided to accompany Jim to Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland where he was headlining their annual, "Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll" conference. I rarely flew to gigs with my clients but this was special. First, there was reason to celebrate, the publicity machine for The Basketball Diaries movie was in full swing and helped me get Jim his biggest payday to date, \$5000 for a single reading. Second, I would get to hang out with my good friend and college roommate Ed Anderson who had just moved there. Ed was a huge fan of Jim's and was thrilled at the prospect of meeting him. Lastly, I love Cleveland, the bars, the women and umm, the bars and the women.

The gig was on a Saturday morning, so the plan was to meet up with Ed at the gig and party throughout the day and night. I was in charge of bringing the blow. In the pre-9/11 world, I didn't think twice about bringing an eight ball of coke on a domestic flight. I told Jim about the plan and he wanted in. Jim and I were flying in on separate flights Friday night and I told him we'd meet at the hotel and do some lines before our required dinner with the students and their adviser.

Most schools insisted on a dinner with the speaker as part of the contract. Usually it was just a couple of kids and a graduate adviser. It gave the students that selected the speaker an opportunity for some one on one. I never had a problem with it. Especially with Jim, he was always great with students and he easily charmed the fawning faculty-types by just being himself. What could possibly go wrong?

When I met Jim at the hotel we were pressed for time. I was getting antsy about being late for the dinner and still somewhat

apprehensive about doing the stuff with Jim. I just wanted to get it over with and threw down a bunch of blow. Jim of course was oblivious to the time; he's was even chattier than usual and fidgeted with each line. Then the phone rang. Fuck. Our ride was there. We quickly snorted what was on the table. And there was a lot on the table.

**TO BE CONTINUED

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Wednesday, October 07, 2009

Memories of Jim - Part 4

PART 4

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I got turned on to Jim sometime around the early 80s after seeing the classic picture of him on stage with Keith Richards in the "Random Notes" section of Rolling Stone magazine. I was a huge Stones fan and went out and immediately bought the Basketball Diaries. I devoured it and became an instant disciple, preaching the gospel of Jim to anyone that would listen. I circulated my dog-eared paperback copy of the book throughout Fredonia State College and succeeded in converting most of my friends. Tacked on to the end of my edition was a major tease. An ad for the album - "Coming soon on Rolling Stones records and tapes." I couldn't wait.

.. ..

When I opened the record jacket and saw it was on Atco Records not Rolling Stones Records, I was disappointed. The disappointment lasted only until the needle dropped. Holy shit. What a sound. It was everything I loved about rock and roll. Instantly classic lyrics that painted the picture of a world I desperately wanted to know. A ferocious band, that drew on the raw power of punk, but who could be subtle when they had to be and never overwhelmed the lyrics.

.. ..

In some of the early promotional copy that I wrote for Jim's lecture tours, I used the term, "rock poet". He hated that. In his eyes, writing poetry and rock and roll lyrics were two completely different art forms (he also considered spoken word and poetry on the page completely different). "You need to make rock and roll 'sing-able'," he would say and that song lyrics needed to be more "immediate and direct" than poetry. He also hated it when critics lumped him in with "fellow rock poet" Jim Morrison whose attempts at poetry he dismissed as amateurish at best.

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I saw the band as soon as I could. It was at a small club near my hometown called "My Father's Place" and I was blown away. I loved them. I sweated my ass off in the pit, doing the pogo and slamming all night long. They did two shows and I stayed for both of them.

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Once Sanchez and Tiven joined the band they were never as powerful. When I first asked Jim why the band began changing personnel he said that original guitarist Terrell Winn was overly reliant on "Chuck Berry licks" and he wanted a more varied sound. Later I got more of the real scoop. Jim said he had written all the songs on Catholic Boy and graciously gave the others songwriting credits to only keep the peace and spread the wealth. He felt burned when the others complained about writing credits and the focus of the group being on Jim. Money and drugs also played their usual insidious role in deteriorating inter-band relationships.

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The next two albums had some great songs, but sound was weak compared to Catholic Boy. I would complain to Jim that the band sounded wimpy on those records, apparently adapting their sound to the new wave flavor of the day. Jim didn't argue that the later albums were inferior but preferred to lay the blame on the mix. According to Jim, it was about money. Bob Clearmountain (Stones, Springsteen) mixed the first album but he was expensive. The band and management didn't want to pay

Clearmountain his asking price. Jim always regretted it, "We should have paid him."

.. ..

One of the great songs on the last two albums was "Love Crimes". We were backstage at Lehigh University as Jim was downing his pre-show ritual, a single margarita without salt, when that song came up in conversation. (BTW the Ivan in the song is NOT former Patti Smith Group member Ivan Kral.) In the staircase on the way down to the auditorium we started singing, "Hollywood looks good at night. The TVs get fine reception..." then upon reaching the climactic line we shouted, "just make sure that your underwear is CLEAN!" There were a couple of frat guys at the bottom of the stairs eye-balling us and we just laughed our asses off. What a blast. Unfortunately, it was the last time I would ever see him.

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The night he died I went out and bought a bottle of tequila, came home, cracked it open, and poured a strong one. I put on "Love Crimes" and cranked it all night long.

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Wednesday, September 30, 2009

Memories of Jim - Part 2

PART 2

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A couple of weeks later I had my first one on one meeting with JC. We met for breakfast at a diner on the UES. I remember trying so hard to be cool but in reality I was more nervous than a kid on his first date. When Jim arrived he was warm, friendly and the vibe was really comfortable.

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We talked a lot about the options for The Basketball Diaries movie. Every couple of years some studio would pay him big bucks for the rights and never make the film. He was fine with that. Originally, brat-packer Anthony Michael Hall was set to play Jim. Jim hated the idea but conceded, "The kid could really play ball". After that fell apart, next in line was Jim's buddy Matt Dillon. Jim was disappointed that after years of script issues and other problems, Dillon had grown to old to play the role.

.. ..

Years later, Jim was flattered and enthusiastic about the choice of Leonardo DiCaprio - except for one thing. He couldn't play ball at all. It took weeks of training to even him get to the awkward skills displayed in the film. He HATED the fact that Mark Wahlberg was cast, "I don't want fucking Marky Mark in my movie." He was so angered that prior to shooting, he lobbied to have Wahlberg removed. Once filming began Jim and Mark hit it off. He recognized Wahlberg's talent and appreciated his work.

.. ..

Having played ball myself, I got up the nerve to ask Jim if he'd like to shoot some hoop some time. I could immediately tell the answer was no. He said he had recently playing in an "artists and writers" game with Paul Simon and others. He said that Simon and crew were such a bunch of hackers that, "they took the artistry out of the game." I don't think he ever played again.

.. ..

It was the first of many remarkably funny, rambling, circuitous conversations with Jim. He ordered rice pudding. It was served with a huge mound of whipped cream on top. He devoured it. I muddled through my bagel and like the kid who scores on that first date, walked out with a huge, stupid grin.

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Wednesday, September 30, 2009

Memories of Jim - Part 3

PART 3

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NOTE: This begins my road stories. No particular order. I'm not going to write about anything said or done in confidence. I'm sure Jim doesn't mind me naming the names I name it this story. In fact, he's probably getting a chuckle out of it.....

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Pre-Basketball Diaries movie, Jim was not an easy sell at universities. It had been a while since his last book or album, and the kids wanted what was hot. I also represented Henry Rollins, and it bugged Jim that Henry got more bookings and commanded a higher price tag. Sure there were times I would come across a doctoral candidate writing a thesis on Jim and ridiculously overcharge them, but for the most part I needed to put my sales and marketing skills in overdrive if we were going to get gigs.

.. ..

I put together a package tour that featured Jim headlining with Professor Griff and Don Bajema as the openers. Griff was a member of the legendary rap group, Public Enemy. He was their "Minister of Information" and led their security force the S1Ws. At the height of their popularity, he was kicked out of PE for making anti-Semitic remarks to reporters. This was huge news at the time and in the lecture business controversy = sales. He publicly apologized many times for the remarks and the interview tape clearly shows the comments were taken out of context. I liked Griff and believed he was sincere. His spoken word shows were uneven but his presence broadened the appeal of the package. Jim didn't think much of his work, but liked him personally and appreciated the "edge" he brought to the bill.

.. ..

Don Bajema is a tremendously gifted writer, actor and spoken word artist. He wrote two incredible books "Boy in the Air" and "Reach" that were published on Rollins' 2.13.61 imprint. (Get them. They are on amazon for \$2 or something. I will reimburse you if you are not satisfied) I caught Don blow Rollins away when opening for him at Irving Plaza and signed him immediately. A lot of acts were reluctant to have Don open for them because he was so talented and intense, but Jim respected him and never feared competition from anyone on the spoken word stage.

.. ..

I booked the show at my alma mater, Fredonia State College and there was no way I was going to miss it. Sixty miles southwest of Buffalo, the weather was as horrible as I remembered. Of course, we were hit with a blinding snowstorm but somehow we all made it to the gig on time. It was a great show and I was proud to have been responsible for bringing it there.

.. ..

After the gig, Griff split with some of the leaders of the local Black Student Union and Jim, Don and I went to a late dinner at Perkins' Pancake House. The dinner conversation was an interminable drag. Jim and Don were going on and on about Burroughs, about the writing craft, and why they were both better than Henry Rollins. Being the non-performer and the agent I dutifully pretended to listen and care. In the car, they kept going. In the lobby, they kept going. Finally in the hotel elevator, I got the balls to liven things up. Out of nowhere I blurted, "So Jim, none of that 'nothing is true' bullshit, who famous have you REALLY fucked?" He wasn't taken aback at all and answered willingly.

.. ..

"Well, there was Shelly Duvall....I fucked Jane Fonda at the Chelsea Hotel back when she was married to Gore Vidal...and of course there was Nureyev." At that very instant the elevator doors opened to Jim's floor, he confirmed the morning pick-up to the airport and nonchalantly strode to his room. Like it was a sitcom, the instant the elevator doors closed Don and I turned to each other and simultaneously gasped "NUREYEV??"

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Tuesday, September 29, 2009

All My Catholic Best (Blessed) - My Memories of Jim Carroll

91-99

All My Catholic Best (Blessed?) - My Memories of Jim 1991-1999
 That's what he wrote on the inside of my Catholic Boy CD jacket, "To Bob - All My Catholic Best (Blessed?) - Jim Carroll, Sept. 3, 1991". I think that's the date. He was getting off stage from a reading at the St. Mark's Church. I was a huge fan in awe. But I was there on business. I had recently landed a job as a booking agent at the Greater Talent Network, a lecture agency in Manhattan. Basically the job was to cold call the Muffy/Buffy types who controlled the program budget at universities and push our roster of celebrity speakers on them. At that time GTN's roster was getting stale, lots of 60s and 70s types - Tim Leary, Bobby Seale, G. Gordon Liddy. I was eager to inject some new blood (so to speak) into the roster and targeted Jim. I had set up a meeting with Jim after the show through Rosemary Carroll, Jim's lawyer and ex-wife. The two shared an odd relationship of not just mutual respect, but mutual reverence. She clearly took Jim's career and best interests very seriously. And for his part Jim worshiped her. He liked to wisecrack "Notice she never gave up my name - heh, heh - take that Danny," Taking a playful jab at Danny Goldberg, Rosemary's current husband and record industry executive. After the reading I waited my turn among the fans and then introduced myself. "Baawb, you look a lot different than I imagined," he said in his shaky Elmer Fudd from The Bronx drawl that I would later master and mock him with. Maybe he was expecting some William Morris-type, not some rookie lecture agent in post-punk garb. During our conversation his eyes took me aback. Not looking elsewhere, but not looking anywhere either, never once making eye contact. I mentioned his stare on my follow up call to Rosemary. She dismissed it with a curt "yeah, I guess that's how he is". I ultimately suppressed my inner fan boy and we cut a deal. I was now representing Jim Carroll and I was psyched.

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Sunday, March 22, 2009**The Hootenany Brothers**

Put up some tracks with my long lost relatives. Check out www.myspace.com/thehootenanybrothers for a good time and musical thrill ride

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Tuesday, July 08, 2008**Tom Petersson you cryptic bast**

Tom Petersson. That guy is a character.

I stumble in drunk late one night, turn on the answering machine (remember them?) and there is this message. "Hello Bob. This is Tom Petersson from Cheap Trick. I want to let you know that you are a winner and I wanted to see if you knew where Marcello was?". That was it.

Huh? WTF? I had won admittance to a meet and greet (CT w/ Motley Crue at Nassau Coliseum) from Trick International. But who was this mysterious Marcello character? Why was Tom Petersson asking me about him? Tom Petersson, you cryptic bastard, what does it all mean???

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