

# Week 2: Lenny Bruce



# Lenny Bruce

- Born as **Leonard Alfred Schneider** in Minneola, NY, Oct. 13, 1925
- 1941 Ran away from home at age 16 and joined U.S. Navy in 1942.
  - Served on merchant marine on USS Brooklyn in North Africa and Italy.
  - 1945, after doing comedy routine dressed in drag for shipmates, was given dishonorable discharge.
- 1946 took to stage as Lenny Marsalle, a stand-in MC for one of his mother's (Sally Marr, b. Sadie Kitchenberg) comedy shows
- 1947 changed his name to Lenny Bruce to do standup in Brooklyn, NY.
- 1948 Appeared on "*Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*" radio show

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- 1949 begins to play in “good” clubs such as The Strand on Broadway and the Tick Tock in Milwaukee.
- 1950 Meets stripper Honey Harlow, his future wife (m. 1951-1957). They move to Florida where he forms the “Brother Mathias” foundation to solicit funds for a leper colony in New Guyana. Quickly busted for it.
- 1954 major car accident in Pittsburgh, PA, that puts Honey in a wheelchair for four months.
- Moves to California to work in burlesque clubs.
- 1955 daughter Kitty is born
- 1957 divorces Honey, moves to San Francisco at Ann’s 440 Club

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- 1959 releases LP records from nightclub performances:
  - The Sick Humor of Lenny Bruce
  - I Am Not A Nut, Elect Me!
  - Togetherness
  - Interviews of Our Time
- 1959 appears on Steve Allen Show “Airplane Glue” sketch
- 1961 February 2<sup>nd</sup> Concert at Carnegie Hall

# Lenny Bruce Busts

- 1957 Florida for impersonating a priest
- 1961 September Philadelphia arrested in for narcotics; charges dropped when police realized it was for prescription drugs
- 1961 October: SF Jazz Workshop, for obscenity. “To Come” bit, plus using the word “C\*\*\*\*\*”--acquitted. Law enforcement monitor every performance after this.
- 1962 Dec. 5, Chicago, Gate of Horn, convicted
- 1962 October banned from Australia
- 1963 April banned from United Kingdom as undesirable alien
- 1963 October 12<sup>th</sup> West Hollywood for saying “shmuck”.
- 1964 April, Café Au Go Go, Greenwich Village, NYC. Convicted for obscenity.

# Lenny Bruce—The End

- 1964 May, hospitalized with pleurisy
- 1965 autobiography, “How To Talk Dirty and Influence People”, is serialized in Playboy magazine and published by Playboy Press
- 1965 October Lenny declared legally bankrupt in SF. Since the Gate of Horn, busts of Lenny now include busting the nightclub owners as well, so no one will book him.
- 1966 July 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, Fillmore auditorium concert with the Mothers of Invention
- 1966 August 3<sup>rd</sup>, dies in Los Angeles of morphine overdose