

New Realities with Interview  
with **Ken Kesey**  
Hosted by Alan Steinfeld  
along with Larry Gerald  
and  
Steve Hager, editor of High Times.



On July 27, 1992 at Wetlands the N.Y.C. environmental club & bar with featured guest Ken Kesey, The Merry Prankster Extraordinaire, who has given an inspirational talk emphasizing that our society needs to be more sensitive to giving encouragement rather than discouragement to each other. Ken pointed to the video cameraman in the room (Alan Steinfeld) calling the camera the new form of Doestoyeski. Ken feels that the video novel is the wave of the future exemplified by his current book, "Furthur" a story presented in a shooting script format with flip images on each corner page of Neal Cassidy. The talk was spiked with the latest footage of his latest film and prank, The Great Smithsonian Caper divided into the segments called the low road, the high road and the call to duty.

Ken agreed to meet with the New York media downstairs in the swamp room of Wetlands. Full of his affable Paul Bunyan energy and enthusiasm he riffed off on the state of fractals and their metaphoric application.

K.K. Never let it be said I was slow with the fire. You know what my diction teacher used to say? Lips, tongue and teeth, that's a great thing to remember. Now, at one point we realized that the bus experience is a fractal, that no matter where you pick it up at any one point it continues to make the same statement. It is as Bob Weir says, "it has integrity.'

*L.G: Buckminster Fuller saw this synergistic principle through the geodesic design.*

Yes... and it's the thing that makes it go forever. That's our salvation. The

Republican consciousness has no integrity and it falls apart once you check it out. If your a Christian why would you want to fry this dude? Or if your a Conservative why aren't you behind conserving the land?

*Like the fundamentalists. They have taken the fun out of the mental.*

That's right. These forms tend to fall apart. But when you go inside the bus you look at the people, talk with them, hey there's something there that comes out that remains the same through and through, something no matter how deep or small it gets. John Barlow's the one that turned me on to the notion of the Mandelbrot Set. (how information or energy doubles itself by year, hour, nanosecond, and it's proportionally riding with social, artistic, and genetic awareness) Everyone who has done acid can see this. The closer you look and then back up from it you can still see the same emergence occurring.

*James Joyce in Finnegans Wake anticipated this mystical thought of Cosmic Consciousness as KOO-KOO-KA CHOO.*

Joyce is a good example of this through language. I'll tell you a good example, Muhammad Ali. You look at his face, his history, his political stands, what he said and his smiles with the twinkle in his eyes. The fact is that he's been broken by bad health, the system and yet he's true all the way through. Fractals provide a handle to understand this stuff. You know the milk cans had a picture of a cow on the side of the can, and on that side was an ad of the cow that made the image seem like it went on forever. All masterpieces have this kind of self-reflection. They got to otherwise they fall apart. As Burroughs says you drop the pieces before you get it out of the store.

That guy I was arguing with tonite who made a right wing remark, "I'm not gonna stand for anyone burning the flag!", he kept bouncing off me with this, "How can you let anyone burn the flag?" I said, no where else in history has there ever been a flag that stands for the right to burn itself.

*AS: Ever see a flag burn?*

No, but I would fight for someone's right to do it. That's what's so important. This is the fractal of our flag. It stands for the right to destroy itself.

Yet there may be just a handful of people in the country that understand it.

*There's a lot of people who don't understand the circle crops in England for that matter. Terence McKenna joked that the circle patterns were non-parking signs for E.T.'s flying over and looking to land. Pure enigma.*

I just finished a new book. It takes place in the future. It has to do with the first shall be last, the poles are gonna switch, things are gonna change. Like this guy in the audience tonite who was anti-flag burning and arguing with me, he came

over later and apologized," Hey, I didn't want to come on too strong!" But he really didn't you know. I told him your tough but I could tell your heart was good. This is really a good guy. (Keseey in his Brooklyn prankster accent) But just went a little too fah, a little too fah over the cracks. I don't think it was the government that ended the 60's it was ourselves. Because of fear that subtle thing happens where you find yourself swept out of yourself, or you lose your ego, or your dreams are lost, everything is going away, you don't have any money in the bank, it's gonna be awful and that's the only way of some of the real pioneers. I know a few who were arrested.

*Psychically arrested?*

Yes, psychically arrested and were trying to break loose from it and that's why Tim Leary is so wonderful. This is an outrageous god dam man. This is the Bill Walton of our league. He can take more dope and go through it and not have snags in his personality. You know the thing I'm talking about here is sedition. In England I could be hung for this 200 years ago. Fifty years from now in this country the way it's going I could be hung for this. I'm talking sedition. I've never done any physical harm to anybody as far as I know. One of the reasons I'm saying this is that I was raised a Christian and was a stone faced acid head.

*Are you a Dharma Bum?*

Yeah pretty much. I went through the whole Buddhist thing. We've got to be tolerant of each other. That war (Persian Gulf), I couldn't believe we were going to that. I knew Saddam Hussein was an asshole for 10 years. Did they just discover that up there in the white house? No! They set him up.

*Like a bowling pin.*

If you didn't know that, your not paying attention. We all know this guy was put there so that we won't have communists. We've been on a war economy since the 50's. If that thing begins to collapse the system starts to panic. You know who Colin Wilson is?

*AS: He wrote "The Outsiders" and "The Occult" and something else I'm not remembering.....*

"The Mind Parasites". It's sci-fi. A chilling book man. The guy gets knocked in the head and he looks around and in his mind he sees these shapes after he comes awake. He sees them seeing him knowing they have to eradicate him cause he knows and battle him for his mind; try to depress him to the point of suicide. It's not a happy book. There was a picture in Life Magazine one time of George Jackson a famous black terrorist who had been caught and put in jail and somehow managed to get a gun to the throat of the judge attempting to flee the courtroom. He's photographed with this revolutionary face on and the judge knows something the black man doesn't. They'll let blow away 15 judges to

shoot this one black guy. It's more important to shoot George Jackson than to preserve the judge's life. After Jackson is killed his father said no one else do what his son do cause there ain't enough of us.

*AS: Who are the real mind parasites?*

The same old guys, the military industrial thing. You ought to read something that'll make the hairs on your neck stand up, "The Spear of Destiny",

*Wasn't Raiders of the Lost Ark related to it?*

Yeah. A scary piece of business about Hitler and what brought all that occult stuff to obsession.

*Ever read Phillip K. Dick's "V.A.L.I.S.?" It reminded me of a parallel of Wilson's "Mind Parasites".*

That's right. The protagonist he's like Hunter Thompson in a way.

*AS: Do you think there's something happening beyond this dimension? That there are astral beings that are sucking it all up around here?*

I think there are demons and I think we're battling them and they have minions that work for them. You can recognize them and get to know them. All these guys doing bad shit are usually working for these demons. The demons catch sight of us and come to get us.

The Grateful Dead played a benefit in Eugene, Oregon and made a huge amount of money for the town. The greatest natural resource Eugene has is it's audience. They support you. That's why the Dead like playing there. Weir and Garcia have talked about this at length. Garcia has said they will listen to him play 5 hours of mediocre shit with a chance to hear that one great lick. It's a resource you can wheel. Listen, wait, and be patient and say yeah, yeah yeah. Every shaman knows you have to deal with the fire that's in your audience's eye.

Then there were twelve letters written saying, "We can't allow the Grateful Dead to come back here, this is saying we're soft on drugs and support the drug culture. I kept reading these letters and saying, No!, this has nothing to do with drugs. It's being used as a smokescreen. It has to do with freedom of religion. The Grateful Dead are our religion. This is a religion that doesn't pay homage to the God that all the other religions pay homage to. This threatens them and they don't want that. The Mind Parasite God doesn't want the Grateful Dead. Garcia is smart enough to know that and that's why he always softens that dogma by not giving them a clear target; like Wavy Gravy says once he started going to demonstrations as a clown they stopped beating him up.

We're only a small number and never with the popular vote. We have to survive

and keep this little flame going. We've had tremendous allies, Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly, Martin Luther King, we've had battlers on our side who can treat George Bush with a half a glass of sauterne. I used to think we were going to win in the 60's. Nixon went out and I thought we won.

As years go by I see we never "killed" that, it just moves out of the way like that thing in Terminator 2. It will never be eradicated. I've talked to feminists about would you kill out this whole macho-chauvinist thing?, anymore than you would kill out the scorpion from the rattlesnake? Nixon's as important as the scorpion in the rattlesnake. Nixon's a bad guy yet he's important. The reason I'm talking so much about this is you have to back up one step and examine it closely, who am I is the demon of not love. If you turn the Nixons then you got 'em. That's the trick.

*Your saying we need to John Lennon them with "All you need is Love" idea.*

That's absolutely John Lennon.

*We also need a little bit of shadow, we need to be angry.*

As Spike Lee says getting inside the head is not enough. We got to be moving and maneuvering and doing stuff. The great tricksters, Roland Kirk, Lord Buckley, and Neal Cassidy they would impress you with the things they did. Cassidy's ways would impress you as time passed by in how he could open another door in reacting to things. He was driving once back from Santa Cruz and I knew he had 28 outstanding moving violations and this cop pulled us over. Oh God! I knew Cassidy didn't have a proper license and thought to myself the cop was going to take us all to jail. So Cassidy looked in the rear view mirror and as he watched the cop approaching said, "Look at him, the brim of his cap is polished, his sideburns are absolutely perfect, and there a gleam in his bootel". The cop comes over and says, "Can I see your license?" (Ken now extends his hands out motioning Cassidy's movements and draws out an imaginary piece of paper from his back pocket) Cassidy faked a monstrous sneeze on this happenstance piece of paper and held out his fist with the paper inside like he was handing it over to the cop. The cop stood there in disbelief and not wanting to bother anymore said, "Ok you can go on down the road. Who would have thought of that? This made me think that there's thousands of other tiny little choices between here and there that we all can be making at any given time. Cassidy had presence of mind to pull it off.

*And defeat those Mind Parasites at the same time.*

You've got to be smarter than them. You got to be smarter than all these things while being supple yet gentle as it says in the I Ching. This is what America can't figure out. Any good martial arts instructor knows that yin is as important as going against yang. When continually pounding against something you got to back off. Now we all know that it's simple, sophomoric. You think you can make

it understood in the senate? What's happened in this nation? What would you do if you found out they were dumping toxic chemicals in your streams or if there's a child molester working in the day care center? What would you do then? The way you would answer that would show who we are. The other day some folks asked for my support for their cause and I declined and they got real angry about it. I said don't make me take my teeth out of the ankle of the monster. I got a good bite here, let me hang on, don't let me turn loose here. Why discourage me?

If we're gonna get this nation by the nuts we have to get them with video and that's the MTV consciousness. We are in a bad time in history and what you learn about history is that there is always going to be more dumb people than smart people. 98% were for the Gulf war and it's gonna be worse. That's not the issue. The truth doesn't have to do with cruelty, the truth has to do with mercy. You can't cure AIDS by putting people in jail but by being merciful and curing people who got it. Anyone whose ever raised a dog knows that.

Do you hear much encouragement in the streets? We need to encourage each other. The issue is carrying this little flame and people passing it on. All it takes is one person. One person to know CPR, one person to stand up and say I'm gonna stand up and fight for what's true. Fascism wants Baptism coast to coast. You can have 400,000 troops marching by and just one guy could be standing along the side of the street yelling fish! fish! fish! It drives them crazy!! and that's something we can all do.