

Key West Karacters - Bigger than Life

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KEY WEST KARACTERS

By: U.G. Fontana

LON MICHELS: BIGGER THAN LIFE

At six foot six inches, Lon Michels, self-described “artist and exhibitionist” reveals that he is the shortest of his male siblings. “I come from a family of giants” he reports with mock irony. Indeed, everything about Lon Michels is bigger than life. Lon’s childhood in “isolated” Marquette, Wisconsin was in sharp contrast to his high visibility career in New York as a flamboyant young artist.

His near idyllic childhood was not the stuff of Ozzie and Harriet. Lon clearly idolizes his dad who was a fifth generation stone mason. “My dad was the constant in the family. He was the responsible adult. And he was very large”. Lon’s father was an important Influence on his son’s interest in art. “All of us worked with my father. I learned my line from him. He had a unique, floral style. He gave me my first canvas when I was 9 and he encouraged me to paint. He also taught us that there was nothing we couldn’t do.”

Lon’s mother, an artist who continues to produce at a prolific pace, filled the family home with art. “She painted on all the walls which were covered with reproductions of great art as well as her own and other original pieces. We were surrounded by masterpieces. My mother was comical and off the wall. I came home from school one day and there were 110 baby chicks running around the house. Someone had given her the chicks and she didn’t know what do with them so she Just set them free in the house.”