What I've Learned

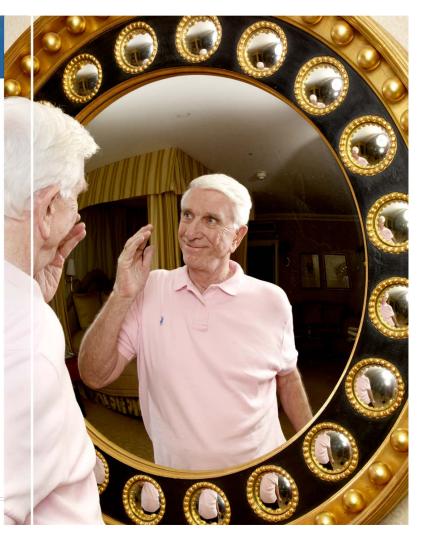
Leslie Nielsen

Actor, 82, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Interviewed by Cal Fussman / Photograph by Jeff Minton

- >It was a boy's name first.
- >One thing a person won't do when he's laughing is try to beat you up.
- >When I was a boy, I delivered newspapers on my bicycle at 64 below. The worst part is, I wanted to impress the girls, so I had to look good. I couldn't wear a hat with earflaps. I had to sport the wave. So I'd put some water through my hair and push that wave up over my forehead. Then I'd step outside and splicccchhh-it would freeze
- >On the Arctic Circle, where I grew up, laughter is part of the food of the day, Nobody wants to hear you say, "Gee, it's really cold." >There are many lessons my father gave me. But there was one that always stuck with me: He said to me, "Just remember, never say 'That is,' Say 'That's,'
- >If you're going fishing, make sure you don't bring your sperm-whale line with you. A sperm whale goes down to twenty-five
- hundred feet and can hold its breath for eighty minutes.
- >Evenif you did catch a sperm whale, when you put it in the boat, he'd sink it.
- >It took me a long time to realize that I came from a dysfunctional family. But, you know, at least I had the revelation.
- >I remember as a young man seeing Death of a Salesman, with Lee J. Cobb. When the play was over, nobody in the audience moved. All you could hear was a little sniffling. The silence was just overwhelming. It was a remarkable demonstration of the power of the theater. I'll never forget that, Never.
- > Yes, it's true, I've been called the Laurence Olivier of spoofs. I guess that would make Laurence Olivier the Leslie Nielsen of
- >There's an old saying that God exists in your search for him. I just want you to understand that I ain't looking.
- >I have a fart machine that I usually bring with me. I was at a bar once, going down toward the john, and these two guys were in a confrontation and things were getting a little dicey. As I got in between the two of them, I said, "Where's the john? Is it straight back there?" Fffffhpppppffffft. Well, these guys look at each other and then look at me, and they both start laughing. Fight was over.
- >People ask me, "What would you like to be remembered by?" It really doesn't make any difference. I've done Airplane!, three Naked Guns, Wrongfully Accused, and Dracula: Dead and Loving It. The way I look at it, I've built my own little pyramid and it's gonna be around for as long as people have eyes to see. > You can't be a cop and survive well without a sense of humor.
- > **Pve been honored** by many police departments, but this story sort of sums it up: I was playing in a celebrity golf tournament with presidents. Clinton was there. Ford and Carter. We're going around as foursomes. There was a stall. I come up with the cart, and this guy walks over, stops directly in front of me, stands at attention, and says, "Ten-hut!" And then he salutes me.
- >When you're signing an autograph, there are people who want to give you directions. "Will you please write 'Don't call me Shirley'?" When there are a lot of people waiting, people should understand that it takes twice as long.
- >What happened was that I left my daughter with four friends who were sunbathing by the pool. I said, "Hey, keep your eyes on Maura." She must've been six years old at the time. Well, they started talking. I cross the yard, go up these stairs, and see her at the $bottom\ of\ the\ pool.\ You\ react\ instantly.\ I\ remember\ diving\ into\ that\ pool\ and\ grabbing\ her.\ She\ spluttered\ when\ she\ came\ up,\ so$ she wasn't drowning. She hadn't been down for that long. After I knew she was okay, two feelings ran through me: I was livid at my friends for not watching her. And, not that I was a hero or anything, but it felt really good to know that without even thinking, I would do anything to save her. The feeling that I had when it occurred is no different than it is now at the thought of it. >I don't like oceans, because you can't see the other side.
- >The whole trial was about reasonable doubt. My take is, I have a reasonable doubt that no one but O. J. could have done it. >I remember a buddy from the police department was gonna open up the car door to get out, and he pushed against it but it didn't fully open. I thought, He's maybe ten years older than I am. Jesus Christ, is that what they call getting old?
- reason there's a question mark on my front door is just in case I forget my address
- >Living in Fort Lauderdale makes me feel like I'm always on vacation.
- >Ican't be around Barbaree without being aware of her love. I remember one time Barbaree looked at me and said, "Are you aware how much I love you?" And I said, "Well, I have some idea." She said, "Do you know, if anything at all should happen to you, I think I would kill myself." There was a long pause. Then she said, "How do you feel?" I'll never forget that one.
- > I really have to keep an eye on myself, because sometimes I think I might say something important.

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