

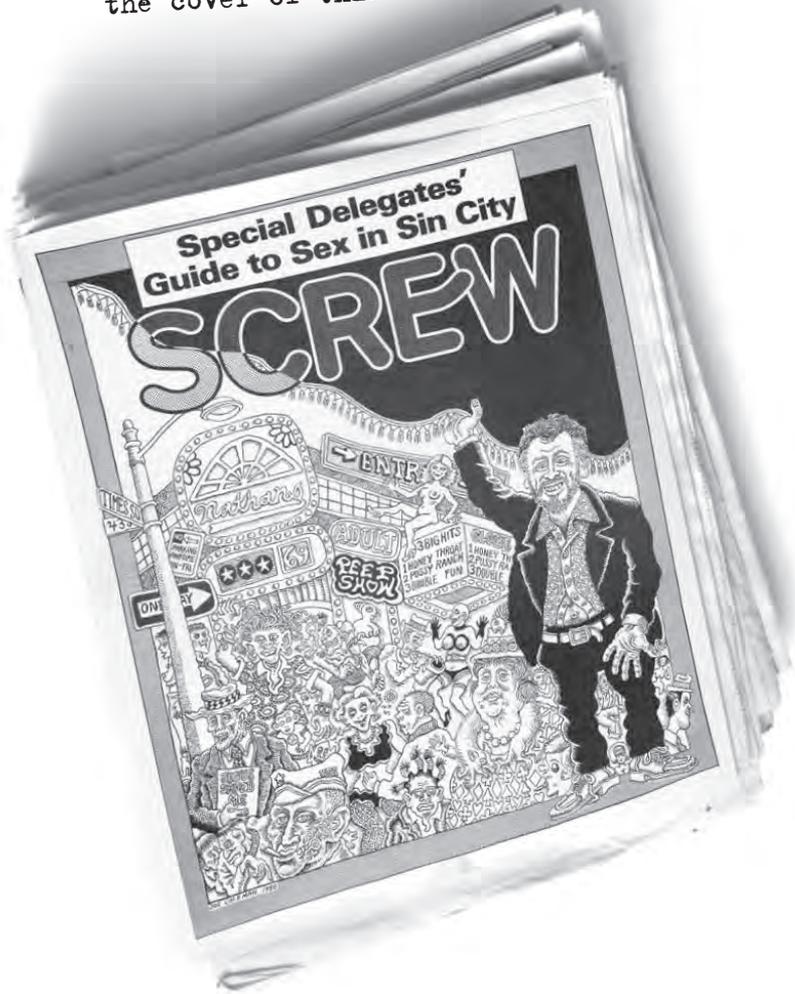
# Introduction

Few transformations have been so jarring and outwardly unfathomable as the one that turned an overweight cab driver and welfare recipient into the most outspoken figurehead of America's sexual revolution. But upon closer inspection perhaps not so unfathomable. The driving force behind America's take-no-prisoners sex tabloid, *Screw*, that did so much to set that revolution in motion was a man by the name of Al Goldstein, who had been taken prisoner all his young life. Taken prisoner by a tyrannical father, by a brutal inner city school system and most of all by a culture of sexual repression that was endemic to forties/fifties America. It was natural enough that he would want to turn the tables. On the whole world. Forever. And, like so many of the other sexual gurus of that era, he was a quiet and introverted youth whose adolescent sexual passivity failed to hint that sex would in fact become his life's great and endless work. Predictably enough, the fact that he was "sexually retarded" (his term) preordained it. The thought never left him.

Goldstein's life and career have been full of jarring transformations. He is like no other celebrity on the American scene; a larger-than-life confirmation of all the stereotypes of the uncouth, foul-mouthed dirty-old-man pornographer, who the next instant reveals a painfully human side and tends to quickly tear-up.

Unlike most corporate publishing bosses who hide behind a wall of lawyers, publicists, and spokesmen, he refused to be "handled." Consuming sex, food, fame, TV sets, gold watches and obscenely expensive cigars with the voraciousness of a garbage dumpster, he burned through five wives and a fortune, blazing a descending arc across

Joe Coleman illustrated  
the cover of this 1980 *Screw* "special".



that dark and misty void known as the adult entertainment industry. He came to symbolize all that was good, bad and oh so ugly about America. He could never have survived, thrived and become what he was in any other culture. But I get ahead of myself. In the beginning, the very beginning, he was cute. Like all babies.

... you think?



Little Al at his Bar Mitzvah.

# CHAPTER 1

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## YOUTH

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With a smack on his scrawny little ass and a scream, Al came into the world in 1936, born into a first-generation immigrant Jewish family of humble origins that lived in a house on Bedford Avenue in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He had a “psychotic” brother he almost never refers to, a “dumb father” and a “delusional” mother.<sup>1</sup> So far so bad. That mother, Gertrude Breslow, tended to the house while husband Sam plied his trade as a shutterbug for the *Daily Mirror*. Although he had served bravely as a photographer during WWII, Al would forever characterize him as a gutless weasel, a man who “walked around his whole life in mortal fear... the personification of Camus’ *The Stranger*... a man who said ‘sir’ to elevator operators.” A man who quietly acquiesced to his wife’s long term affair with her diet doctor. But there was one person on earth he could lord it over – little Al.

And yet he took his stuttering, bed-wetting son to sports events other boys could only dream about. They went to a lot of the Friday night boxing matches at Madison Square Garden, and little Al was there at ringside on October 26, 1951, when a brawling young Rocky Marciano floored an over-the-hill Joe Louis with a left hook in the eighth round, his dad hanging into the ropes trying to get the pic, eye glued to his boxy camera. Little Al was also in tow on frequent forays to Ebbets Field to see the great Dodger teams of the forties. He got his picture taken with Jackie Robinson. He devoured the *Sporting News* every week and became so knowledgeable about the team that he guested as the statistics-spouting “Little Alvin Goldstein” on a post-game radio show. He also assisted his dad on more mundane jobs, such as wedding photo shoots and such like.