Meet A Member Of The Actual Manson Family: Valentine Michael Manson

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As the son of America's most infamous cult leader, growing up wasn't easy. Fortunately, Valentine Michael Manson became his own man and assumed a new identity as Michael Brunner.

Before the 1960s came crashing down with the Sharon Tate murders of 1969, Charles Manson had established an impressive following of loyal devotees. He called this band of delusional outcasts his "family" — but the infamous cult leader had actual children of his own.

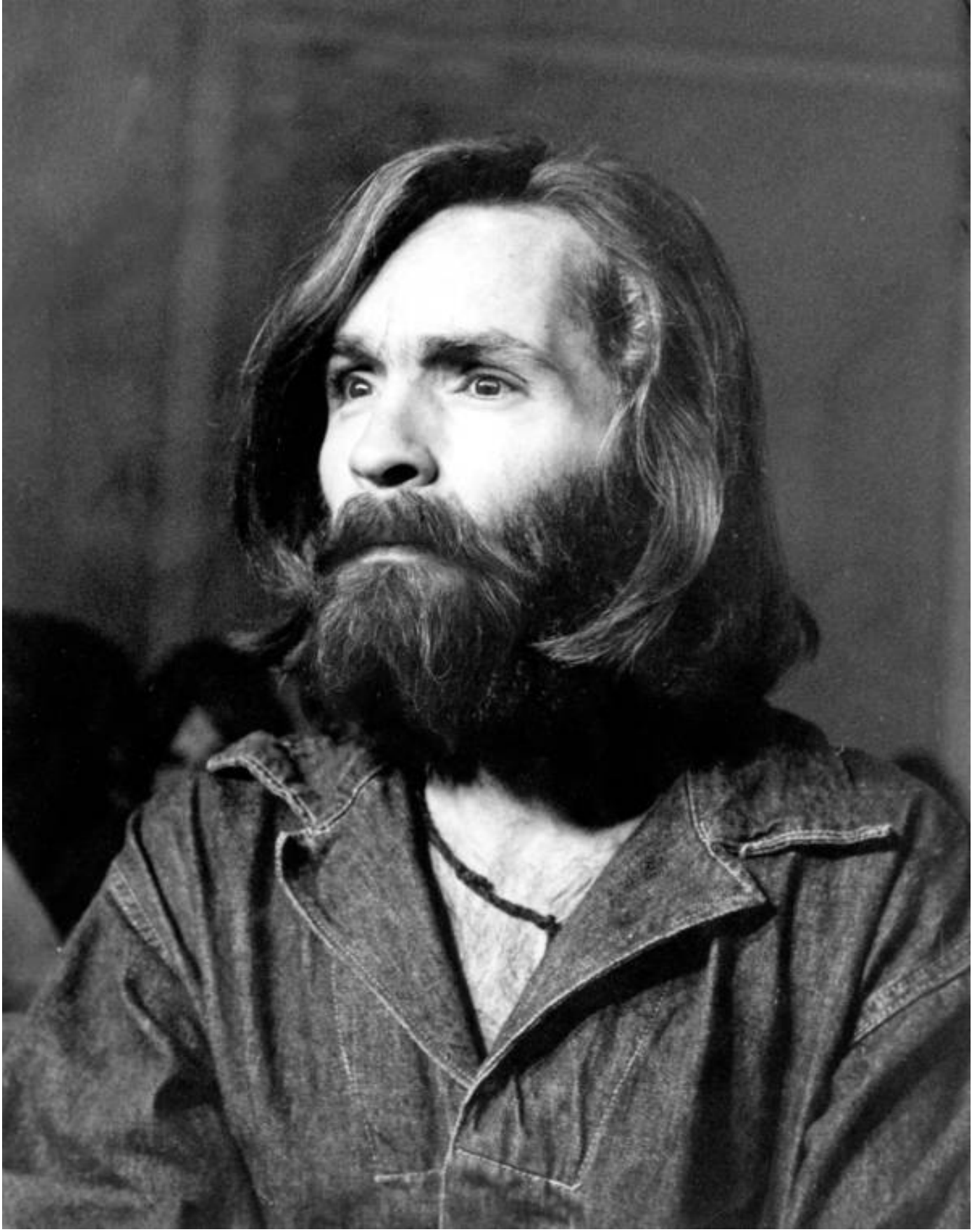
As far as the official record goes, Manson had three biological sons. Only the third son is believed to be the last living son of the cult leader. Charles Manson's son Valentine Michael Manson — now living under the name Michael Brunner — was born on April 15, 1968, to a devoted Manson family member named Mary Brunner.

Charles Manson's son, Valentine Michael Manson, now

going by the name Michael Brunner, gives a rare interview in 1993.

Though Valentine Manson has largely stayed out of the public eye, his contributions to the Manson discourse have offered an unparalleled look inside the life of someone directly tied to one of the most infamous figures in modern American history.

Valentine Michael Manson's Family Tree



Michael Ochs Archives/Getty ImagesCharles Manson at trial in 1970.

According to *International Business Times*, Charles Manson's first son was born to Rosalie Jean Willis in 1955.

This child was named Charles Manson Jr.

Willis divorced Manson while he was imprisoned and changed their son's name to Jay White. White eventually committed suicide during a seemingly innocuous stop in Colorado and White's son said that his father never managed to process what indescribable pain Manson had wrought unto others.

The cult leader's second son, Charles Luther Manson, was born to his second wife, Leona "Candy" Stevens, in 1959. He changed his name, just as White did, to Jay Charles Warner. According to *Yahoo*, nobody is certain of what happened to him.

Charles Luther Manson has virtually stayed out of the spotlight and his father's shadow for his entire life. Though he would be in his fifties today, some records indicate that he died in 2007. Stevens was granted a divorce in 1963, the same year she announced she'd given birth to Manson's second son.

The cult leader was indicted three years earlier for sex trafficking-related charges, and once again incarcerated for violating his probation. With no public interviews or media appearances to his name, Charles Luther Manson may be the most invisible, actual Manson Family member of them all.

Bettmann/Getty ImagesManson family members and murder suspects Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkle, and Leslie van Houton.

Valentine Michael Manson, Manson's third son, was named after the cult leader's favorite book, *Stranger In A Strange Land* by Robert Heinlein. The novel revolves around a man raised by Martians on Mars and returns to earth as a young adult.

With Valentine Manson's father violently shocking the nation out of its 1960s trance with a series of orchestrated murders on Hollywood and California's elite, Mary Brunner's parents petitioned to take full custody of his son. They were successful and renamed the 18-month boy Michael Brunner in a bid to rewrite his fate.

Valentine Michael Manson remains Michael Brunner to this day and has allegedly told outlets in the past that he is grateful for the upbringing his grandparents were able to provide for him in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

In order to fully appreciate, though, how the son of Charles Manson managed to have a somewhat normal childhood, a look at both of his parents in the years before his birth is imperative.

Meet The Parents: Charles Manson And Mary Brunner

Before Mary Brunner became a mother, she was the first loyal follower of Charles Manson. Letting him stay at her apartment mere weeks after first making his acquaintance wasn't even a question for her, and when their relationship turned romantic, she quit her job and followed him to California.

The pair explored California together until they eventually settled on renting a house in San Francisco. Over time, the residence became more of a gathering place than the quiet residence of two new lovers. More and more people began crashing there, and ultimately staying for good.

Getty ImagesSpahn Ranch, where the Manson Family lived in the years prior to their arrest.

Like all of Charles Manson's offspring, Valentine Michael Manson wasn't born in a hospital because the cult leader preferred that his wives — all of them were devotees to his cause — give natural births at home. Michael Brunner happened to come into this world in a condemned house in Topanga Canyon surrounded by Manson family members. His mother smoked marijuana to relieve her labor pains.

After Mary Brunner gave birth, Manson allegedly bit through the umbilical cord with his teeth. Manson nicknamed his third son "Pooh Bear."

Shortly after Valentine Manson was born, Mary Brunner and a few other housemates were arrested. Brunner and other women of the Manson family including Susan Atkins were

found naked lying around a stolen bus in a ditch. One-week-old Michael Brunner was discovered there as well, underdressed and chilly. The newborn was consequently placed under the care of a local hospital.

In 1969, Brunner allegedly joined Manson family member Bobby Beausoleil to the home of musician Gary Allen Hinman. Hinman was reportedly well-acquainted with the Manson family but had spurned Charles Manson by refusing to contribute to his musical career. He was found stabbed to death on July 31. Brunner offered up testimony against Beausoleil and consequently earned herself immunity.

That is until the night of the LaBianca and Sharon Tate murders.

RXSTRA newspaper clipping from the late 1960s of Mary Brunner holding her son Valentine Michael Manson, nicknamed "Pooh Bear."

After the Manson family members involved in the Tate-LaBianca murders were incarcerated, Brunner organized with various other members of the family to protest their release, including getaway driver Linda Kasabian. It was during this time that Brunner's son Valentine Michael Manson was sent to live with her parents.

Brunner, along with other Manson members, soon after held up a Western Surplus store and cracked a plan to hijack a Boeing 747. These activities ended in a shootout with the police and she was subsequently sentenced to 20 years to life in prison. She joined Manson family members Leslie Van Houten, Susan Atkins, and Patricia Krenwinkel in the California Institution for Women until her parole in 1977.

By all accounts, Valentine Michael Manson's biological mother hasn't reunited with other Manson family members since. Nothing substantial about her personal life has hit the public in decades, and in his 1993 interview, Michael Brunner described his early relationship with his biological mother as "sibling"-like.

Valentine Michael Manson Assumes A New Identity As Michael Brunner

YouTubeA still from then-25-year-old Michael Brunner's 1993 interview with KCBS.

Even though Valentine Michael Manson changed his name and was raised by his maternal grandparents since he was two years old, Brunner has not been able to escape his legacy altogether. Brunner was told in the third grade who his father was when students began to bully him for his background.

By the 1990s, it became clear to Brunner that he'd likely never escape the second-hand spotlight of his father's heinous legacy. Thus, he decided to enter into the public eye and try to control his own image as best he could.

In an attempt to create his own identity that wasn't founded on being Charles Manson's son, Brunner said in a 1993 KCBS interview that he felt no significant connection to his father at all.

"He's somebody far, far away, and he doesn't come up," Valentine Michael Manson said. "I know he had a real bad upbringing," Brunner says of Manson's childhood with troubled teenaged-mother, Kathleen Maddox, "While I had one of the best. I was raised by the greatest people on the face of the Earth, he was raised by not the greatest — we'll just leave it at that."

He explained further that all he wanted was normal treatment from others and to not be seen as a curiosity.

Michael Brunner discusses his father and son during the 1993 KCBS interview.

Perhaps most notably, he said he considered his grandparents to be his real parents and that he is grateful for the new lease on life they gave him.

"People who don't know me have a tendency to not try to get to know me," he said. "I was given a second chance. My parents gave me a second chance...and I love them a lot for it. I really do."

During this interview, Valentine Michael Manson discussed

how the birth of his own son, who was two years old at the time, affected his relationship with his mother. The experience of becoming a father made Brunner reflect on his own upbringing and how he managed his personal issues.

Primarily, Brunner intended never to mention that his son's grandfather was America's most famous cult leader — unless it was absolutely necessary to do so.

Life Today For Charles Manson's Son

Whether Manson's now-adult grandson is aware of his lineage is unclear, but Micahel Brunner actively continues to separate his immediate family from the man as much as he can.

Twitter/CieloDriveComSgt. Paul Whitely (left) takes Mary Brunner, Valentine Michael Manson's mother, to jail for her connection to the Hinman murder. June 16, 1970.

One of his friends claimed that Brunner tore up every letter that his father ever sent him and that he has no interest in knowing him. That 1993 interview of Brunner was one of the last appearances by him regarding his infamous father.

In 2018 following the death of Charles Manson the year before, Brunner engaged in a lawsuit against an individual named Jason Freeman who is thought to be a grandson of Manson. He and the cult leader's long-time pen pal claimed to be in possession of two different versions of Manson's will. Brunner asserted, however, that no such will existed

and that the two men were not entitled to Manson's estate.

The cult leader's body was eventually given to his purported grandson, Jason Freeman, the son of Charles Manson Jr., who had him cremated and scattered his ashes.

As for Michael Brunner, who was asked in his 1993 interview whether he feared having inherited his father's psychosis, he remained adamant that no, he did not fear this, and added that he had his grandparents to thank for his stable life. One of Brunner's former teachers even said that his grandmother was a hero.

The case of Charles Manson's son, Michael Brunner, is a heartening reminder that one's unfortunate genes may not necessarily define their identity but rather that with the right kind of environment, one can overcome their biological fate.

After learning about Charles Manson's son, Valentine Michael Manson, read about Charles Manson's sinister right-hand man, Tex Watson. Then, read up on some oddly thought-provoking quotes by the cult-leader himself.