

---

## CARL M. – LUMPKIN STREET NOON TIMERS

Athens, GA

12/18/2019

Stacy A.:

Hello, I'm Stacy A. and I have the honor and the privilege of interviewing Carl M. at Lumpkin Street Noon Timers on December the 18th at 11:05.

Okay, Carl, the first question is, please tell me about your life before you found A.A., when and where you were born, and just some of your childhood memories.

Carl:

Well, my date of birth is July 28, 1933, born in Person County, North Carolina. Grew up in Orange County. Same County with Chapel Hill. Grew up on a tobacco farm. Was chewing tobacco when I was five and six years old, started smoking in front of my parents when I was 12 or 13. My first drunk, I was eight years old, drank some home brew, like the feeling of it. Went back to the barrel, drank another glass. And I remember nothing else. Arrested that day. So, the first time I drank, I loved it and overdid it.

As a student I didn't drink a lot. If I found somebody's trying Moonshine, homemade beer, I would sneak a little as a kid growing up. I didn't want to be a farmer, so I decided I would go to graduate school, go to college. My dad didn't have the money to pay for it, so I had to work my way through college. Went to Mars Hill Baptist Junior College for two years, grades were good enough to stay out of the Korean War. Transferred from junior college to Duke University to finish out my two years. I was planning to teach high school biology, but my profs encouraged me to go to graduate school. So, I went to Rutgers, I got a master's and PhD. I graduated when I was 25 years old. I got married and our first child was born.

I didn't do a lot of drinking while I was in college. I just simply didn't have the money to do it. When I did drink, I usually ended up drunk. But when I took my first job at the University of Florida in Gainesville, with no debt, and now I'm making some good cash, I started drinking like a goldfish in a fishbowl. I just drank and drank and drank. Immediately begin to have problems of drinking too much.

I remember one night we had been out on a party and one of my first PhD students, who graduated, we were having a party. I was too drunk to drive home, and I didn't want to go home so he stopped at the stoplight I jumped on the car, started to run and he caught me and put me back in the car. He was driving my car. And I got mad and balled up my fist and hit the windshield twice with both hands. When I got home, my knuckles were doing torn to shreds.

That's what alcohol did to me, it just... But anyway, I was diagnosed as an insulin dependent diabetic when I was 33 years old. And the doctor told me drinking wasn't a good idea. And I can remember going to a party one night and I knew I wanted to drink. So, I deliberately cheated on what my carb count was, went to the party and drank, came home and checked my sugar. And it was okay. So, I had jimmed it around, so that I could drink and proves that I wouldn't over carb myself to death. So, for the next 12 years I drank with abandon, to the point that my wife finally asked me one day, Carl, if you can't come

home sober today, I wish you would just move out. So, I walk out of our house, left her two teenage boys without giving them a thought, because I needed to drink worse.

And I got to the point where I'd come out of the house I wanted to go to work, car would go right if I go to work, but it always went left to go to the nearest package store so I could get two cans of beer. Cursing myself all the way down. Why are you doing this? I drank one can of beer and my thought was, oh hell, you screwed up today. You can quit tomorrow. Which then gave me the privilege of continued drinking that day. And then went on and on and on until I had run into problems with the police, with driving with no license.

I wasn't arrested, but I was given a ticket for driving with no license. And I began to think about suicide because I wanted to quit, but I couldn't quit. I'd always said, I like drinking, if I wanted to quit, I'd quit. When I finally got to the point I wanted to quit, I found out I couldn't quit. And I'd worked out a suicide plan, but the only way I could commit suicide would be to do it drunk.

And somehow my mind was clear as a crystal. That night I'd realize for every drink I had ever taken, I willingly poured it down my throat and blamed my wife for it. And bless her heart, I didn't know her until I was 25 years old. I had a serious drinking problem before I met her. But that night I could realize that it was my problem, and I couldn't quit drinking. And I wanted off the merry-go-round. And I'd been damning God for years, it was GD this and GD that. That night in absolute desperation I said a simple prayer. God, I can't quit drinking. I want off this merry-go-round, would you please help?

I went to sleep. I woke up, and I haven't had a drink since. And then I started seriously going to A.A... I went for a year trying to stay sober for my first wife. And I was picking up white chips every day, or every week. I can't stay sober for someone else.

**Stacy A:**

Where did you go to your first meeting?

**Carl:**

My first meeting, I think, was it the Biscayne Room.

**Stacy A:**

And when was that about?

**Carl:**

That would have been in about June the 10th, 1975.

**Stacy A:**

Okay. Tell me a little about working through the steps in the beginning and what that was like. Your first few days, or the learning of the A.A. way.

**Carl:**

Well, my first sponsor was Andy Brown. He always gave his full name. He said his name was Andy Brown. And that he had been in A.A. on two or three occasions. He just never cared for it. But when I got

to A.A., he had three years of sobriety. And I asked him to be my sponsor. When it got to the point where we were beginning to go through the fourth step, I told him that my dad and I had a homosexual affair when I was a young kid. And he said, whoa, he says, I don't know anything about what you're talking about. I don't know anyone in A.A. around here that has dealt with it that I can send you to. But he says, I got opinions like hell about what you're talking about. But I have no experience in it. So, he turned me loose and let me go. He didn't demand that I talk to him anymore, but we still remain friends, and I talk with him. But five years later I was remarried and about to commit suicide.

And we went to talk to an Episcopal minister about our marriage. And he sent us to a good marriage counselor that helped us put the marriage back together. But he said, Carl, I have a therapy group starting next week, I wish you would join it. And for some reason, I says, okay. So, for once a day a week for an hour and 15 minutes I was one of about five people in a therapy group with him. And his way of handling it was, who needs to talk today? And no one else would talk, and I started to talk. And I talked through that homosexual affair and all that. And one year later I walked out a free man. That used to embarrass me to tears for people to know that I'd had done such a thing. It no longer frightens me.

That's one of the biggest gifts that I have to offer people in A.A... There are things in our lives that we don't really want to bring out, but certainly once I did all that, my dress code changed. Before that I dressed in drab clothes. I didn't want to be seen. And I see people wearing red, I said, look at that SOB. He's trying to show off. What I would say, God, I wish I could do that. Red, can you believe red is my favorite color? And if you see me without red, you know I'm sick.

**Stacy A:**

That's special to me because my daughter, Chloe, her favorite color is red also. So that's really special to me that you shared that part. Tell me a little bit about A.A.'s reputation in the community. How is it different than it is now?

**Carl:**

When I first got here, it was nowhere near as large an activity as it is today. There were four groups in town. Three of them are still existing: New Freedom, The Biscayne, and Easy Does It. Those are the three main groups. There was another one that folded very quickly after I got here. The main difference, you'd be in a meeting with 10-15 people instead of 34-50, up to 100 or more. And everybody sat in a circle, the chairman would offer a topic. And he would either say, we're going to go left or right. And everyone wants to say their name, like I'm Carl Monk. Or, I'm Carl C., and I pass. Or share. And it'd run around. And if it got around and if there was still time then there was some dialogue back and forth. But everyone at least had to say their name and that they were an alcoholic. And when they stood to say the serenity prayer, or the Lord's prayer, they did not hold hands. They just stood up in a circle and recited whatever the closing prayer was. They began to hold hands after someone had gone somewhere else and they held hands. So, they came back and we became copycats. And we began to hold hands.

**Stacy A:**

So, what was the perception of A.A.'s success in the general population when you were first introduced? How has that perception changed? The community, how did they perceive A.A. and the groups that were being held?

**Carl:**

Ever since I've been here, I haven't run into anyone who has had any derogatory remarks to make toward what Alcoholics Anonymous is doing. I just haven't run in to that.

Stacy A:

Do you have any knowledge of how many meetings were in existence? I know you said four in Athens. But in general, do you have any knowledge of the existence of other groups around?

Carl:

There was a group in Winder. There was a group in Commerce. There was a group in Monroe. There was a group in Watkinsville. There was a group in Greensboro. There was a group in Rail.

Stacy A:

So, you explained a little bit about the formats of how they used to do A.A. in the early meetings. Is there anything else about how they were run that you can think of, how the format was? Anything else?

Carl:

Well at the old Biscayne Room, when I first got here, they had a place there. The hospitals just didn't deal with drunk drunks. And they had a bed there that if someone had someone who was coming over drunk and they thought he might have interest in A.A., they would carry him there. And as long as they could have two people with him, he could stay there up to three days. And they had juice and stuff in the refrigerator, and they would be able to, when they got to the point where they could drink, they would eat a little something. He could at least take a little nourishment by drinking a little juice.

This guy came in drunk and he went into a seizure, he stretched out just as stiff as a board, urinated in his pants. Then a few seconds later, he came to and he looked at you like he'd never seen you before. Absolutely nothing up in his brain. And he slowly began to come out of this seizure.

Stacy A:

So, tell me a little bit about your experiences sponsoring. Sponsoring others.

Carl:

Well that's something that I sort of got started a little late because I was having so much difficulty with me in that affair I had with my dad. One of the things that helped is that when I got through with that therapy, I was at something called a serenity retreat at the Catholic monastery over in Conyers.

And that, over a Saturday night it was a mixture of A.A. and Al-Anon. And that Saturday night they were going to have a speaker. And they asked me if I would share my story. And I said, yeah. And I started talking, and some three to five minutes in the talk and I kept hearing this little voice in the back of my head, you're going to need to deal with that affair you had with your dad. And I wasn't sure what to say. And I continued to talk. And had a few minutes later I just simply said, one day that had haunted me for a long time had been this homosexual affair I had with my dad when I was 10 to 12. That's all I said, and I continued. I don't have enough fingers and toes to count the people who have, because I've been willing to share that from the speaker podium, people would come, Carl, since I'm dealing with that, how did you do that? So something that I thought at one time was a curse, I look at now as a blessing. Because of all the people that have come and says, how did you get to the point where you could say

what you said in front of the podium. It's amazing what God can do once you get sober. And to be honest, it no longer embarrasses me. If it bothers you, that's your problem, it doesn't bother me. So, I pray to be me today. I don't have anything in me that I haven't shared with somebody. And I think that's what A.A. has been the biggest help for me, it's helped me to be me for the first time in my life. But I had to go through all that junk to deal with what I had to deal with.

**Stacy A:**

So sponsee relationships created out of that, were created out of all of your sharing and being so honest about what happened.

**Carl:**

Yeah. And I have had a lot of people come and asked me to sponsor because of what I said about that homosexual affair. And I've had some ladies talk to me about things that they were dealing with because of similar type thing. Because they felt I was safe.

**Stacy A:**

Tell me what you thought about the big book back then. And did you use it?

**Carl:**

More than I do now. I rarely ever look in the big book. I do when I started sponsoring more, I just got through reading it because I started sponsoring a couple of guys about almost nine months ago. One of them fired me because I wasn't going fast enough. He wanted to do all 12 steps in three weeks. And I said, I can't do it. It's too fast. So, he fired me. And I said, that's fine. And we're still friends.

**Stacy A:**

I understand a little of that because I did the same thing that person did. And boy, did I learn from that. That was not the right way to do it, that I really needed to take my time. And I'm working on them for the third time because of that.

**Carl:**

Well, it's a never-ending job.

**Stacy A:**

What about the early conferences or conventions that you may have gone to? Did you go to any conferences or conventions that you could share anything about?

**Carl:**

I know the first one I went to was in Albany. I think that's where they had the state convention. And the thing that I remember about it most is, I went into the bathroom where the meeting was, and went into the stall. But lo and behold there was an empty whiskey bottle there. And I thought, this is odd. There's an A.A. group and there's an empty whiskey bottle. But I don't think knowing drunks, that's not unusual.

**Stacy A:**

Anything else that you want to share on the changes of A.A., as it was before and how it is now? Before we wrap up.

Carl:

I think the biggest problem that I have right now is the groups are too darn large. People can come and hide. And we've got groups, this group here at Lumpkin Street Noontimers, they have a half a dozen or more people who come in and sit down, say nothing, get up and leave. And I haven't heard them open their mouth. You can hide in a group, where you've got so many people. And we have the same people share day after day after day after day. And you can almost predict when they go talk.

Stacy A:

I agree with that. I've seen somebody go back out in my home group who never shared. And I felt like there was a correlation to that sharing and staying sober. It sounds like you agree with that.

Carl:

Yeah. And another thing is that there's no doubt that alcoholics, a lot of them are drug addicts too. And a lot of groups have tried to blend alcohol as a drug addiction under A.A... And that goes against the traditions. It clearly states alcohol. There is an NA meeting. But a lot of people in NA have alcohol problems. They want to come to A.A. and talk about both of them. And you're constantly having to make people mad, to tell him you're welcome here, but leave your drugs somewhere else. Go to NA. They want to go to one shop. I know this group don't buy into that.

Stacy A:

Is there anything you can tell me about your home groups, which home groups have you been a part of?

Carl:

Easy Does It was my home group originally. At that time, about eight o'clock at night, because people would get off of work, come home, take a shower, eat and come to a meeting. And then I would have about a half an hour at the coffee pot, and then have the meeting, then they'd go home. And Easy Does It was at the Emmanuel Episcopal Church. During the winter it is dark as Hades in there. And the women stopped coming because they were uncomfortable walking into shadows where they couldn't see if there were people behind the bushes. So, we started trying to move the meeting time earlier. And we had four to six group conscience meetings. Some would agree to go to 7:30, some to 7:00. But to get where everybody was on the same page. And one night while we were in group conscience], a young college kid says, well some of us are happy with this. If there's some that not pleased with this one, go form another group. I wanted to punch him in the nose.

The next day riding around Athens I thought, that guy is right. So, we got together, had about eight or nine of us, left. Went to St. James and started the Turning Point group that started at seven o'clock at night. And guess what happened? Every group in town began to meet earlier and earlier and earlier. So, we started that group, and the lady that actually came up with the name Turning Point, died just within the last couple of months. We had two meetings a week.

They got so big we wanted to have two meetings every night. And one of our good members, and she will appear from time to time, got all her sponsees to come in. So that's when Bob and I and several others moved and went and started How It Works. And they stayed, and they still don't have two

meetings every night. Partly because they use that big room upstairs. And I was staying at How It Works until I got to the point where I physically was a liability on the road driving at night. So that's when I started coming to Lumpkin Street during the daytime.

**Stacy A:**

And how long has that been?

**Carl:**

I have a hard time saying it. I feel like it's been coming at least 10 years.

But then two years ago I lost the sight of my right eye altogether. And now I do no driving at all because I only see a couple inches. Very, very limited vision. Just enough that with a Kindle I can enlarge my words; I can read all night long. Which is a blessing, because I'd go crazy if I couldn't read. I can't sit and twiddle my thumbs all day.

**Stacy A:**

Well you make it to a lot of A.A. meetings, because I know, I see you there. And I just want to close by saying how honored I am that I had the privilege of interviewing you. And I know you changed a lot of lives in Athens, Georgia, and probably other places too. And I do see men honor you by sitting next to you, one on your left and your right sometimes with the red on that you wear. And I think that's such an honor that they love you and just want to honor you and respect you for all that you've done in their lives. And I just appreciate the time that you've spent with me today.

**Carl:**

You're more than welcome.