

LINDEN MACINTRYE INTERVIEWS MELISSA FRIEDRICH

MELISSA'S PAST

LM: HOW DID YOU EVER GET SUCH AN AMAZING CRIMINAL RECORD? YOUR RECORD IS AS LONG AS MY ARM.

MF: I didn't ever get in conflict with the law until I was 36 years old and at that time my first husband had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease and he had to take chemotherapy and radiation treatments and go through the cancer thing that they all go through. And at that time he was unable to work and my first time I ever wrote a bad cheque or did anything that was illegal was I wrote some bad cheques then. That was 1971 and I was 36 years old. And I had to pay the rent and do basic cover for our family. My two children, myself and my husband and he was in the hospital. He was in the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. He had to have a lot of treatments and he – he just wasn't able to keep up, you know, with the expenses of our household.

LM: SO WHICH MELISSA IS IT THAT WHEN THE GOING GETS ROUGH YOU GET CREATIVE. YOU START TO MAKE THINGS UP, YOU START TO WRITE CHEQUES THAT BOUNCE.

MF: Yes.

LM: IS THAT SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU THAT YOU HAVE NO CONTROL OVER OR IS THAT JUST DESPERATION?

MF: I think it's wrong thinking, it's anxiety. And if I'm in a crisis I just think the wrong way. It has always been that way and I have never had any treatment for it. I've never had any psychiatric type of counselling that might help me to understand it better. I tried to understand it better when I was in the Prison for Women and I took courses in alcohol and drug addiction treatments because – from McMaster University – because I felt maybe I needed to understand that better because I was addicted to prescription drugs right from about that time onward. I couldn't sleep at night. I was diagnosed with sleep apnea and I was taking a massive amount of prescription drugs and I have been for the last 30 years.

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LM: WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOU SIT IN FRONT OF ME AS PERFECTLY PRESENTABLE, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, NEW BRUNSWICK MARITIMER. WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

MF: What is the matter with me? I believe it all goes back to when I was a child, when I was a, a baby. I was born to an eighteen-year-old girl who was an alcoholic. I was born at home. I was left, abandoned at my grandmother's. I was raised there with a known pedophile who had already been convicted of being a pedophile, who abused me sexually from the time I was very little...And my grandmother allowed that to happen. She allowed him to be in the house for many years...when I was five years old, my uncle...my mother's brother, he raped and sodomized me one day. And then he became afraid that I would tell on him. He told me he would kill me if I did not, if I did not keep quiet about that. Then I didn't say anything. But he ran away and joined the army after that. I never got any treatment for those kinds of things happening to me. I never got any

kind of psychiatric or mental treatment that would help me to cope with things like that. I did confront my uncle about this some years back when he left...I confronted him about that then and he denied it of course. But that's just the way my background was. That's the way my childhood had been. I think I had a lot of anger in me towards men because of these things. I couldn't have any power over what they were doing to me, but I think that I personally had began to have a lot of anger inside me.

GORDON STEWART'S DEATH

LM: WHEN GORDON STEWART – WHEN THEY DID AN AUTOPSY HE WAS SO FULL OF BENZODIAZEPINE, DIFFERENT KINDS OF ALCOHOL, HE COULDN'T HAVE STOOD UP.

MF: He was standing up the whole day. We drove around. We went to a restaurant and ate at around noontime. He was certainly mobile because we went in the restaurant and had something to eat and that was in Shubenacadie in Nova Scotia. We were driving around most of that day because this happened like later in the day towards – more toward getting on towards the evening. So he was certainly mobile. A person who can drink a lot of alcohol can tolerate a lot of alcohol in one day and they can still remain functional and moving and mobile.

LM: WELL IT'S AN OLD SORT OF GIVEN THAT ONE THING THAT DOESN'T REMAIN FUNCTIONAL WITH A LOT OF ALCOHOL IS YOUR SEXUAL ABILITY.

MF: Yes.

LM: AND YOU SAID YOU WERE RAPED.

MF: Yes. Well –

LM: THIS MAN WAS LIKE PARALYTIC WITH –

MF: No he wasn't.

LM: BENZODIAZEPINE AND WOOD ALCOHOL AND REGULAR ALCOHOL.

MF: He was drinking shaving lotion at that time. Shaving lotion is what he was drinking mainly. It wasn't something that I told him to drink. It's something he wanted to drink himself. To say that he raped me doesn't mean he has to have sexual intercourse with me. That means he could have performed other kinds of sex on me that is considered rape. And –

LM: YOU'VE LEFT ME HERE.

MF: I'm sorry. Ah you don't always – I think in rape you don't always have to perform sexual intercourse. You have to perhaps perform other sexual acts on the person who is unwilling.

LM: SO WE'RE TALKING SEXUAL ASSAULT AS OPPOSED TO RAPE.

MF: Well – he attempted –

LM: HE MAY HAVE GRABBED YOU INAPPROPRIATELY.

MF: No he didn't, he –

LM: HE MAY HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU INAPPROPRIATELY.

MF: No he didn't. We got out of the car, we went into the woods. We were on a logging road in the woods. We got out of the car, we went there into the woods a ways and he attempted to have sexual intercourse with me. He wasn't able to complete his performance. He did other things to me that were sexual in nature that is considered part of a sexual act.

LM: AND THEN YOU GO BACK TO THE CAR.

MF: Then he wanted to go back to the car. We were to leave then. And – that was when I – he went behind the car. He was going to urinate. He was standing up, walking. He was going to urinate. He went behind the car. I jumped in the car and turned the key on and backed the car up over him.

LM: AND THEN DROVE AHEAD OVER HIM.

MF: And then drove ahead because I wanted to get out of that road and the only way out was to drive ahead.

LM: OVER HIM.

MF: I didn't mean to – I didn't mean to back up the car up over him even. I just put it in the wrong gear and it went backwards instead of forwards. I was –

LM: WHAT YOU PRESENTED AS, HE TRIED TO RAPE YOU BUT COULDN'T.

MF: No, I said he –

LM: AND IN RETALIATION, YOU KILLED HIM.

MF: He – ah – when he – when he tried to perform the sexual act, I'm not – I'm not able to say whether or not he could do it. He – he had every intention of carrying it out. If he couldn't possibly finish what he started it was just his own reactions and –

LM: I'M JUST GOING BY THE AUTOPSY FINDINGS, THE TOXICOLOGY WHICH SAID THAT THIS GUY WAS HARDLY ABLE – LIKE HE WAS GOING TO DIE FROM THE AMOUNT OF STUFF THAT HE HAD TAKEN ON THAT DAY. SO WHETHER YOU RAN OVER HIM OR NOT HE WAS LIKE TOXIC WITH DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.

MF: Well –

LM: I HAVE A HARD TIME VISUALIZING A GUY BEING SO DANGEROUS THAT YOU HAVE TO RUN OVER HIM WITH A CAR.

MF: Well first of all I didn't know when I backed the car up, I didn't know that he was right there. I thought he was behind the car and I thought that I had hit a log because we were on a logging road. I didn't know it was him that I had hit and I ran over him and then I went forward again over him because I wanted to get out of that road.

But it was a very stressful day the whole day. That doesn't warrant anyone killing anyone but I didn't deliberately try to kill him that way.

FLORIDA – STRATEGOS

LM: HOW DID YOU MEET ALEX STRATEGOS?

MF: He had joined an Internet dating club called americansingledating.com. And actually he was the only person I met on there so how they can call me the black widow of the Internet? Once I met him we had started a correspondence and he emailed me. He sent me e-cards every day and he phoned me and we were having a sort of a long-distance relationship over the telephone and that. And so that began in October and it continued on until I came down here in November.

LM: AND ACCORDING TO HIS FAMILY, BY JANUARY HE'S CLEANED OUT OF HIS MONEY.

MF: He –

LM: YOU CAN SEE THE PATTERN.

MF: The pattern, yes. Yes. Well, as I can say, he didn't have a lot of money to clean out and I was spending my own money from the time I came down here. I came down in November and I drove down from PEI.

LM: OKAY. WE KEEP HEARING A LOT ABOUT \$18,000.

MF: Yes. And I say that figure is not correct. He didn't have \$18,000 for me to clean out.

LM: WELL WE KNOW ABOUT AN \$8,000 PAYMENT THAT YOU MADE, \$800 TO YOUR DAUGHTER, A \$5,000 MONEY ORDER.

MF: The police have that \$5,000 money order.

LM: RIGHT. BUT WE'RE GETTING WARM HERE. WE'RE GETTING CLOSE TO \$18,000 WHEN YOU PUT ALL THAT STUFF TOGETHER. AND IT ALL COMES OUT OF MR. STRATEGOS' MEAGRE ASSETS.

MF: No. The figure is wrong. That figure is wrong. Where they get – you're talking \$800 and –

LM: AND \$8,000.

MF: \$8,000 and \$5,000 that's \$3,800. Okay that's still not \$18,000.

LM: NO, BUT WE'RE GETTING IN THE BALLPARK.

MF: Well I still say I did not clean him out of that much money. He had asked me to pay his bills. I got him to sign a power-of-attorney.

LM: WHEN HE WAS PRETTY FAR GONE. HE WAS HARDLY ABLE TO SIGN HIS NAME AT THE TIME BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY EVENTUALLY CLAIM WAS THAT OLD WORD, BENZODIAZEPINE, IN HIS SYSTEM. YOU CAN SEE WHERE THIS ALL ADDS UP TO A FAIRLY INCRIMINATING SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES AS FAR AS MELISSA FRIEDRICH IS CONCERNED.

MF: Well, yes. That sounds very bad. I can't say that - I didn't personally give him benzodiazepines.

MEETING ROBERT FRIEDRICH

LM: HOW DID YOU GET CONNECTED UP WITH ROBERT FRIEDRICH IN THE FIRST PLACE?

MF: Well, while I was at Christian Retreat in March of 2000, I had an experience with the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit told me that this man would be my next husband.

LM: WHERE WAS HE? I MEAN WHERE WAS –

MF: He was at the church and I was in the church.

LM: AND OUT OF EVERYBODY IN THE CHURCH –

MF: Yeah.

LM: THE SPIRIT SPOKE TO YOU AND SAID, THAT TALL GUY WITH THE ...

MF: He told me exactly who the person was. I could see him because he was up on the platform with the pastor and some other people because they were planning a trip to Jerusalem. And so that was just an experience I had. But, it was an experience that changed me. I began speaking in tongues and I really felt the presence of the Holy Spirit.

LM: NOW BUT, YOU AND THE FAMILY HAD A REALLY HOSTILE RELATIONSHIP FROM FAIRLY EARLY ON, RIGHT?

MF: Which family, my own?

LM: THE FRIEDRICHS.

MF: Oh the Friedrichs. They didn't want me from the beginning. They did not think their father should marry again and they were protesting it from the beginning.

...

LM: NOW THERE'S PEOPLE, THEY LOOK AT FRIEDRICH AND THEY LOOK AT GORDON AND HERE'S WHAT THEY SAY. MELISSA MANIPULATES MEN, VULNERABLE MEN EMOTIONALLY AND BY THE USE OF DRUGS SO THAT SHE CAN CONTROL THEIR FINANCES. THIS IS NOT TO SAY YOU'RE A PSYCHOPATHIC MURDERER. YOU JUST LIKE TO CONTROL VULNERABLE MEN AND YOU – IN THE CASE OF GORDON STEWART--YOU LOST CONTROL AND IN THE CASE OF MR. FRIEDRICH YOU'RE DEALING WITH AN OLD GUY WHO DIED FROM THE DRUGS. THAT'S –

MF: No he died of natural causes, Mr. Friedrich. He died of a massive heart attack and that was the death certificate stated that. He was examined by a medical doctor who had known him for years and treated him.

LM: THE DOCTOR PHONED IN –

MF: I don't know how it appeared but it appeared on the death certificate as a massive heart attack.

LM: SO THAT THEORY IS WRONG.

MF: But it's wrong that I pumped [him] full of benzodiazepines because the man, well he didn't – he only took what medications he was prescribed.

LM: NONE FROM YOU.

MF: He wasn't a stupid man. He was a very intelligent man.

LM: AND YOU DIDN'T –

MF: I didn't slip him anything.

LM: YOU DIDN'T SLIP HIM ANYTHING.

MF: No. He was a man that died of natural causes and he had had some prior medical problems even before I met him, like I said, and he had some mini-strokes and things like that. But he certainly – his intellect was not affected and he and I were not hostile towards each other or anything else. We had a very good relationship.

THE FUTURE

LM: HOW LONG COULD THIS GO ON?

MF: It just can't. And this is probably, even if they do put me in prison and keep me there, this is probably going to be how I'll end my life. And it's not a very pleasant idea, or it's not even a very good way for anybody to have to end their life. But anyway, I'm not talking about suicide or anything like that. I'm just talking about the age frame that there's a good chance that I won't survive this whole experience.

LM: ALL RIGHT, I MEAN, LET'S JUST SAY THAT SOME JUDGE SAYS SHE'S OLD AND SHE'S NOT A THREAT TO SOCIETY ANY MORE. BUT THERE IS A PATTERN GOING BACK FOR THIRTY SOME YEARS OF, OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITY, ALL THE WAY UP TO MANSLAUGHTER. CAN YOU CHANGE? BECAUSE YOU, EVEN YOU ADMIT, I MEAN YOU HAVE NOT BEEN A GOOD GIRL ALL THE TIME.

MF: I know that and I am not proud of what happened throughout my lifetime. I just feel that there's a lot of things that I haven't been able to cope with. And there's a lot of things that I have not been able to get a handle on. And I can't say that from now on I'll be a perfect citizen. But, I'm just going to try, day by day to behave myself and to do what I should have been doing all along. But I can't say that is going to be the outcome of how my life will end.