

JD: Can you go into that a little bit:

JC: Well you know, I was a partying fool" When I moved to (ash)ille, everybody was older than me" Everybody I worked with was at least 10 years older than me" It seems like most of them was at least 30 years old" I was 19, when I moved to (ash)ille, soon to turn 20" And I drank, my first drink I was with a really nice Canadian who I worked for then, entertainer" We went all the way from (ash)ille to Portland, Oregon, in a Cadillac full of equipment" And we played the (CO Club) in Portland" A lot of Vietnam guys went to Vietnam from Portland, Oregon" They would fly out there from the West Coast so everybody headed to the bar after the first 30 minutes"

JD: And you had just come from (ash)ille, right:

JC: Yeah" That was my first long trip" But the guitar player was the last

then I have had the thing in the back of my mind" One of these days
maybe I will find one I must like it, and I'll restore it" Anyway, I did my
third one in '66 and as it turns out, a month later, I had my last drink"
Two days later April 1, 1966 and April 11 I went from the bar to my
knees and I cried out to God and I told him that I couldn't stop drinking
and the only way I would be able to is if he took the desire for alcohol

JD: When you were there in (ash)ille did you go to !hur!h a lot: Or did you ever go to !hur!h:

JC: *eahA 2!tually I got deli)ered, I got in)ol)ed in the !hur!h" 7efore I #new it I was tea!hing a teen age Bunday s!hool !lass, tea!hing the 7i%le" The Jastor when he as#ed me to ta#e o)er that !lass !ause the #ids didn't li#e the tea!her K>aughterL, they #ind of iden\$8ed with me a li . le %e . er"

JD: What !hur!h was that:

JC: &irst 2ssem%ly of - t #ind~~h~~lle did MEdnedge Bu%e 2s8e tC1ewli . neator whes

JC: (o, (o, (o"

JD: I meant drinkers reform drinkers like you"

JC: Well I just assumed that most of them had some kind of problems similar to that ya know" But there was a place we use to go a while to go, it's called the Lords Chapel" They had a minister there that taught you a

JD: *ou were of the sort that you @ust !ouldn't let one drin#, there was no su!h thing as !o!#tail hour"

JC: (oA

JD: *a #now some people ha)e one drin#, and you are 8ne the neHt day" >i#e most people do they ha)e a drin# or two a 'er wor# and then they ha)e dinner and then they ya #now, you !ouldn't %e li#e that:

JC: (oA 1 was en)ious of those people" They !ould drin#, tal#ing a%out drin#ing li#e - entleman"

JD: Bo when you started out in the industry, e)ery%ody was drin#ing right:

JC: 2lmost, a lot of people, a lot of people"

JD: 7a!# stage and stu l too:

JC: Oh yeahA

JD: *ou were telling a%out the - rand Ole Opry, Noy 2!u l and all would ha)e li9uor around right:

JC: "Yeah, you know in '61 and '62 I worked for the "Latter Brothers" I worked a lot of shows with Jerry Lewis he was a real good draw" "I was Country Music! and he was having Country hits, like one of them was "I That Made Milwaukee Famous" made a loser out of me" "I =e

JC: I did a lot of shows with Merle"

JD: Tell us about Merle, what were your memories of Merle =aggard:

JC: "He was so nice" "He's so good, he had no reputation for being a jerk at all" "He was just good people, he came up really the hard way" "He played lead guitar for Duane Owens and he was a good lead player" "I first started doing shows with him in the 60s like 66" "He had his first hit but it wasn't near as big as it would have been if Roy Frusky hadn't had a hit on it "I'll tell you, from now on all my friends are gonna be strangers" "But we did some touring"

JD

JD: 7e!ause 1 #now the song, 1 thought he was fantas\$! on it" 1 really don't understand your point"

JC: Noy Frus#y, it was idio\$! in the 8rst pla!e to e)en thin# they would do that %e!ause what it did was it split his %ig hit into half a hit %e!ause of it" Bo it split out the two di!erent re!ords %asi!ally" 1t wasn't li#e they wor#ed it out" That's what happened it ruined his 8rst hit" 7ut from then on e)erything he did was a hit" That's pre . y mu!h the way it was"

JD: 5 hen was the 8rst \$me you e)er played with =aggard and when was the last \$me:

JC: 5 e played a show in Iowa and 1 was with the 5 il%urn 7rothers in 66"

JD: That was %efore he really hit it %ig"

JC: Oh yeah, all he had was a pi!#up tru!# !amper to !arry his %and"

JD: Fes!ri%e that, what was that li#e, pi!#up tru!# !amper, was that in 7a#ers)ille:

JC: 5 e were in Fes Moines, Iowa

JD: Fes Moines, Iowa %ut he started out in 7a#ers)ille, right:

JC: Oh yeah. This is a road show" =e s\$ll li)ed in 7a#ers)ille" 7ut
anyhow later on his !amper tru!# was in a wre!#" 1 thin# he might ha)e

JC: 5 ell a 'er he got way ri!h, he had a pla!e up in >a#e Bhasta"

JD: >a#e Bhasta, Qern Ni)er"

JC: Oh yeahA 16m sure he did some /y 8shing

JD

thin# a%out that:

JC: I thin# that's pro%a%ly !lose"

JD: In later years he would eHplain it o I and say, yeah it's #ind of for my Fad and his group" =e seemed to %e em%arrassed a%out it in his later years"

JC: In the later years it was tongue and !hee# thing for sure"

JD: 7e!ause some of his older songs, for eHample a%out Jresident (iHon lying to us all on T"3, and #ind of also feeling of support for the 3ietnam protestors and an element of support for the - 1's that are stu!# in 2fghanistan and all that and that one song he did for eHample a%out ge ng out of 1ra9" R1 thin# it was one of his later al%ums"S Bo anyway it @ust seems to me that there is a lot of am%i)alen!e dealing with =aggard to a !ertain eHtent" 5 hen I say am%i)alen!e I mean, why did you !ater to the red ne!#s: 5 hy did you do it:

JC: I thin# life is a pro!ess, when I mo)ed to (ash)ille I was not the pro-integra\$on poli!e" It too# me li)ing and ge ng to #now !olored people that were ni!e to me and %eing their friends and generous to me %efore I started dropping the Jim Crow a titude" I hate to say that %ut that's where it was" (ow this #ind of thing, CO#ie from Mus#ogeeE ya #now" C7eads and Noman sandals won't %e seen,E now that's the one, that's the line that gets me"

JD: 5 e don't %urn our dra ' !ards on Main Btreet, %eads and Noman sandals won't %e seen"

JC: *eahA

JD

7rothers on many, many shows" 5 e went up to Canada and played 3an!ou)er, 7C, T Negina, Cal)ary" 5 e played the Cal)ary stampede" Old Charley, he was a ni!e %rother" =e really was, it reminds me of a story I got to tell you this, you !an either use it or not, you don't ha)e to use it %ut the story goes, there were two oil wor#ers in TeHas and they were going into a %eer @oint in TeHas and they had a %un!h of !ountry musi! re!ords in the window, al%ums and there was a pi!ture of Charley Jride in there and this guy says, who is this guy says, C 5 ho is that (iggerE, the guy says, C that ain't no (igger, that's Charley Jride man"E =e was a ni!e guy, he was a)ery ni!e guy" =e li#e to do sit in's too" 5 e go to the %ig towns they always had some #ind of ni!e !ountry pla!e" 2nd we'd go and he'd sit in and some\$mes we'd sit in too" 7ut they always !alled him up and they all #new his latest hits" =is re!ords sold" Ja!# Clement produ!ed a lot his stu! Cow%oy Ja!# T he's #nown in Country Musi! =all of &ame too, what a guyA *esA Charley Jride, he's from Bledge, Mississippi, we played his hometown Ja!#son The's a %ig %ear tooA

JD: (ow when you played with him, would the audien!e %e all white or would there %la!# people in there too:

JC: Mostly white I don't remem%er seeing too many %la!# people, 1n fa!t I don't remem%er any at all"

JD: They said he was a great athlete, %ase%all player"

JC: OhA he was a pro, he was a pro" =e loo#ed li#e he !ould pro%a%ly play some pre . y good %ase%all the way he was %uilt and all"

JD: Okay, when you were in (ash)ille, who did you consider were the best writers then:

JC: *a #now it's really hard to say who is the best"

JD

JC: I don't know if I ever been serious, I was a drummer I'm not the guitar player that everybody else is. My rhythm, I keep good time, see that's the deal. My right hand is with it, my left hand sluggish my right hand doesn't always know what my left hand is doing if you know what I mean. But anyhow, I was borrowing guitars. I was home in Florida visiting and - and daddy had written prose and poetry as a young man and I think my grandmamma threw all the stuff away when he went away for a while; days, he had the same problem I did before he sobered up. We did sober up and spent the rest of his life sober. But anyhow, he said, listen, if you would like to get a guitar, I'll pay for half of it if you find one over at Carlton's Music Center and boy it was a deal too. It was a J160 4 - string. Oh man, it was a good one. I ended up trading it off for another guitar because it didn't play good, easy and I should have had it worked on. I had it and made it easy to play. I wasn't smart enough, I was just young and impetuous. I let a great guitar go. I have been looking for one just like it ever since.

JD: Okay, now we are going to look at your time, you had already talked about why you moved back to Florida. We also talked about meeting and marrying Frankie of course. But what you are doing in 1961-1962, what your life was like at that point:

JC: Oh, well I came down in 1958, I had been sober a couple of years I had a little sobriety under my belt. I came down here to make amends to my parents for embarrassing them and not being the son I should have been. I was a prodigal, ya know. Anyhow when I came I had old friends being very kind to me. Buddy Johnson gave me a place to live in DuPont and every time I'd go to give him some money. We would say, "Oh, you need it worse than I do." We'd seen a difference in my life. We were spiritual support, anyhow once I met Frankie I just got more and more involved before I knew it. We were getting married. I

put her on the %and stand" In fa!t 1 put her on the %andstand with me %efore we got married" 7efore long she was part of me, she was part of what 1 was doing for a long \$me" &or three years she played in my %and un\$I the e!onomy went terri%le in the +0s" 1 had sold a pie!e of property in the early +0s and 1 li)ed o! that money for ? years" 3irtually no wor#, no wor# so fortunately 1 had something to eat" 2nd then if we e)er did wor#, they didn't want a %and" 5e did it as a duo and played the 2meri!an >egion, whi!h it ain't what you thin# it is" Its a %un!h of drun#s around the %ar, and they !ontrolled e)erything" They are not ni!e enough to as# you to turn down, it's li#e, Cturn that son of a %it!h downE and mean, they were @ust mean" 2nyhow she 8nally ga)e up" Bhe said, C=ey 1 don't want to deal with this anymore,E and that's when 1 started singing at Ja!#ie's CafV" In 201; 1 was already at Ja!#ie's so it must %e more than 6 years when 1 went to the &lorida &ol# &es\$)al" 1'd pre . y mu!h gi)en up trying to 8nd players who would wor# with me under the %asis 1 had to wor# with" (o%ody wanted to pay any money" In &lorida, !entral &lorida there used to %e %ands e)erywhere that wor#ed 8)e nights a wee# in pla!es, in @oints and they !hanged the FG1 laws" Oh yeah, the one man %ands !ame along 8rst and too# e)ery%ody's wor# in all the @oints and then Qarao#e" These a%bsolute amateurs up there wor#ing a ma!hine and ge ng people who !annot sing out to try to get some applause" They too# all of the rest of the wor# and then they too# all of it" 7efore long there wasn't e)en the one man %ands it was li#e Qarao#e, you !ould ha)e a %ig showroom and you'd)e got people doing #arao#e"

JD: 2nd they are playing musi! and %a!#ground and playing li#e they are singing"

JC: *eaaA 1t6s awful, it6s terri%le"

JD: 1t6s gar%age

JC: Bo, musi!ianship don6t mean a hill of %eans in the state of &lorida" There are some lo!als, and they are mem%ers of the union" There is Orlando union and there6s a lot of people that are wor#ing for Fisney playing for union s!ale and 1 am proud that they get too %ut 1 ne)er !ould plug into that #ind of stu l" 2nd %a!# when we were prosperous in the <06s we did ma@or !on)en\$on wor#" 5 e did ma@or !on)en\$ons for ma@or !ompanies" Oh lord 1 don6t #now how many 1 did for 17M" 1 did Ned >o%ster6s annual party, in fa!t the guy, the 3J from Ned >o%ster handed me his !ard and 1 !ouldn6t e)en #eep it %e!ause of the !ontra!t that 1 had signed" 1 !ouldn6t e)en soli!it, in other words 1 !ouldn6t e)en !all that guy, and in other words !all meA

JD: 7ut all that #ind of dried up in the +06s:

JC: *esa 1t sure did" Bo we were doing real well %efore that and then the %o . om fell out and we found out a%out the !ommodity !heese" *a #now 1 had a friend that would get those ? %ig pound !hun#s of !lear 8eld !heese, it must ha)e %een from 5 is!onsin, and it was so goodA 5 e had Ma!aroni and !heese, grilled !heese sandwi!hes and @ust a%out e)erything you !ould do with !heese" 1t6s a mira!le we !ould e)en use the restroom that day" One of my %uddies we had he got !ommodity !heese and he didn6t reali0e he needed to eat 8%er %read so it wouldn6t stop him up li#e it did" Bo he started gi)ing us his !heese" 5 e li)ed on his !heese that one summer in the +06s" Bo we had %een ea\$ng (ew

*or# Btrips 3 \$mes a wee#" 1t6s #ind of funny, the lord must ha)e a
sense of humor we wal#ed out of the pla!e where we had @ust had a <

Jon Corneal concludes the interview by discussing the difficulties of continuing his playing during the Covid pandemic. Currently he is playing live performances at Hillcrest Coffee in Lakeland, FL. Hillcrest Coffee. These programs are available on through live streaming. Corneal and his band are reaching audiences throughout the US (and worldwide).