



WINDSOR  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Lou Sorrentino: Share Your Windsor Story

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Interviewer: Michelle Tom and Colette Yeich

Interviewee: Lou Sorrentino

Transcriber: Sulema DePeyster

Editor: Sidney Andrew

**Colette Yeich**

All right, you have to tell us who you are [and] where you live in Windsor. Or if you grew up in Windsor, where you grew up. Are you looking at this?

**Lou Sorrentino**

[laughs] My name is Lou Sorrentino, and I came to Windsor about 30 years ago to the Windsor Recovery Club. One of my fondest memories there was realizing that the people here thought just like me and I felt at home again, even though I grew up in Uncasville, Connecticut, near the Mohegan tribe. And although I went through a divorce and it was challenging, I came up here and got a much better life than anything I could have imagined thanks to Windsor and a lot of the people here.

**Colette Yeich**

So where did you live in Windsor?

**Lou Sorrentino**

I lived in East Windsor and still do, [00:01:00] but I spend almost all my time in Windsor at the Windsor Recovery Club because I'm 35 years in recovery thanks to Windsor. And that recovery club that started about 29 years ago has changed thousands of lives and I've been a part of that because I ended up going to school to become a licensed alcohol and drug counselor. I've seen many people rise from the death of their old life because of what happens in that Windsor Recovery Club, and I've been a part of it.

**Colette Yeich**

Where is that club located?

**Lou Sorrentino**

It's on Palisado Avenue right next to the Historical Society!

**Colette Yeich**

Oh, that's perfect.

**Michelle Tom**

And then what brought you to the Windsor Recovery Club if you didn't live here? What brought you to that place?

**Lou Sorrentino**

Well, like I just said, I was married to a girl here and we got divorced. At St. Gabriel's is where we went and that was a wonderful place that she had gone to school. [00:02:00] And the fact is, I can leave the past behind thanks to Windsor and have a better life because when I got up here, I ended up getting involved in the state capitol through Windsor and changing a lot of laws. For

example, alcohol and drug counselors used to be a nonprofessional class, equal to a janitor. Not that there's anything wrong with janitors, but nurses and other doctors get much better benefits, and I changed those statutes by standing up and getting a lot of signatures from people in Windsor and other places and we went to the legislature. They said, "You're right. Those laws were made in the 1970s. This is now 2015. We might as well do it." That's when alcohol and drug counselors became equal to nurses and doctors. That's one of my fondest memories about Windsor. But also, the Windsor Recovery Club has open mics and [00:03:00] there's much more fun in those kinds of places.

### **Lou Sorrentino**

But I couldn't have imagined. I thought alcohol and drugs was what I was going to have fun. But after I turned my life over to the care of my higher power and Windsor Recovery Club and people like all of you, I ended up finding out that you can have more fun than a pub. And so in the song I'm creating, I'm going to be singing it for the town of Windsor on October 20th. It has the line 'Windsor Recovery Club, more fun than a pub.' [laughs] And the fact is, that's a miracle and I would like to thank all of the people in Windsor for being so open to letting people like me rise up from the old life. To think they didn't do much before, but what I've done in the last 35 years of my life, thanks to all of you, has been beyond my wildest dreams. [00:04:00] I got a great life today and I travel around the world and exhibited the Smithsonian Museum and written lots of songs for a lot of towns.

### **Michelle Tom**

What's your exhibit at the Smithsonian?

### **Lou Sorrentino**

It's about the millstone at Devil's Hopyard State Park in East Haddam. And when I was crying one day at the bottom of the waterfall and remembering my parents' picnics there, I saw a millstone there and I said, "What is that?" And one thing led to another, and I found out that that millstone was thrown in there in the American Revolution by the Sons of Liberty, who destroyed the mill because they wouldn't kill anybody. They were doctors and nurses and preachers who all lived in that same mill – Beebe's Mill. Because they wouldn't kill anybody, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington had them tarred and feathered and they destroyed their business [00:05:00] and put them in prison. The people we think of as heroes. Thomas Jefferson and George Washington did that. They allowed that to happen. We did the research on that and I presented it to the state and they said, "We'll think about it." But then I presented it to the Smithsonian, and 10 years later, while the state hadn't even got around to it yet, the Smithsonian said, "This is one of the most important things in American history," and they put it on permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian American Democracy section that opened in 2017.

### **Colette Yeich**

So did you extend your time in Windsor at all other than these meetings? Did you extend?

**Lou Sorrentino**

Yes, I do a lot of volunteer work for a lot of people who have a drug and alcohol problem and I don't ask any money for it. I write letters to the courts, and the fact is that I've done a lot of musical performances. For example, the town. I didn't [00:06:00] ask for any money for the song I wrote. It [took] me two months working at it many hours. But because I've got the backup of all the good things in my life, I can do that now. I can give service. And I think that's a message that will live on beyond all of us, just like the other people who lived in Windsor. Their messages still live on to the good things they did.

**Colette Yeich**

Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Mike Cook**

I got one question. I've been asking a few people who get interviewed. Any fond memories of any events, whether Shad Derby, Memorial Day, concerts, anything?

**Lou Sorrentino**

Yes, I have a lot of fond memories, and one of them was I was out on the lawn in front of the Windsor Recovery Club, and I saw people throwing [00:07:00] eggs on the John Mason statue and putting paint on there and swearing about it and realizing that it was only there because it was taken away from somewhere else down near where I lived near Groton, Connecticut. That statue is still there now, but the town has decided they want to keep it, and I agree because sometimes the fond memories of the past really have a dark past to them. But I think we can all rise up and have a better life thanks to people in Windsor.