

Announcer: Welcome to the Extra Mile Podcast for Bar Exam Takers. There are no traffic jams along the extra mile when you're studying for your bar exam. Now your host, Jackson Mumey, owner of Celebration Bar Review.

Jackson Mumey: Well, hey everyone. Welcome to the Extra Mile Podcast. This is Jackson Mumey. I'm so glad that you're with us today. This is a very, very special episode of today's podcast. We're going to be interviewing a successful Florida bar taker, a man by the name of John Carter. John's story is impressive enough in its own right. He graduated from law school 25 years ago. Was a member of the Washington, DC, bar, very successful in his law practice.

A couple of years ago he came to Florida and then decided he was going to take the Florida bar exam. He passes the exam with our help on his first try. That's a great story in of itself, but what makes the story really special, I think, is that just after he began his studies, his college age daughter passed away. The tragedy of that, really the unspeakable tragedy and the way that he and his family handled that, the way that John put that experience into his life and dealt with it is a story of extraordinary grace and faith. It's also incredibly inspiring in terms of what you can overcome when you have to and when you feel compelled to do so. I think you're going to be touched, and I think very deeply moved by what John has to say about the entire process.

We also, in the show notes today, have some links to some information about John and his family that I really encourage you to check out. His daughter was really a special young lady. She is clearly the inspiration behind much of what John has done, certainly over the last year or so. As a new member of the Florida bar, we're really excited to be able to have gone on the journey with him and to share it with you in our audience today.

Now if you like these kinds of stories of successful bar takers, as well as the other information we provide on this podcast, I really invite you to subscribe. We put out these episodes twice each week. We're really excited. This is Episode Number 30, so we've been doing this for a while now, 15 weeks. We love getting your honest ratings and reviews. You can subscribe on iTunes in the podcast section, or you can go to our website at celebrationbarreview.com. Just click on the podcast link at the top of the page. You'll find all of our past episodes as well as the show notes, and you can subscribe from that site as well. I invite you to do that.

I also want to invite you to a free live MasterClass that I'll be holding this Thursday at 3:00pm Eastern, 12:00pm Pacific time. The title of the MasterClass is "How To Make The Next Bar Exam Your Last Bar Exam." Whether you're a first time bar taker, or maybe you're a repeat bar taker, or maybe, like John, you're someone that's been away from the bar for many years, or perhaps you're just someone who's coming from a foreign country and has to take the bar exam in the US, regardless of which of those situations applies that describes you, you're going to find in this webinar 90 minutes worth of content that you can use right away. It's the four steps that every bar taker has to know in order to pass the

bar. The reaction from the prior participants in this live Master Class has been nothing short of remarkable, really quite extraordinary. I really invite you to join us. It is totally free.

The only requirement is that I keep the size of the MasterClass small so that there's plenty of interaction. You do need to go online to register and claim your seat. You can do that one of two ways. You could actually register just using your text messaging service. If you text the phrase 'nextbarexam' to 33444. Again if you text, all as one word, 'nextbarexam' to 33444, we'll register you just from your text message. Or you can go to our website at celebrationbarreview.com/webinar, so that's celebrationbarreview.com/webinar, sign up for your free seat. You'll also receive a Mind Map for free. It's the Mind Map that we'll be using in the Master Class. I think you're going to find it really useful and quite helpful. So I invite you to join us on Thursday 3:00pm Eastern, 2:00 Central, 1:00 Mountain, 12:00 Pacific. I think 8:00pm in London.

With all that having been said, I want to jump into today's interview. Spoiler alert I guess, have your Kleenex ready, but I think you're going to really, really be impressed with this extraordinary man and his great story. With that in mind, let's jump into our interview with John Carter.

Well, hey everybody. This is Jackson Mumey at Celebration Bar Review and welcome to hanging out with successful bar exam takers. This is Episode 15, and we're in the midst of talking to some of our successful Florida bar exam takers from July 2015. I picked two or three students that I just thought had remarkable stories. Today might be the most remarkable of all them. You're going to hear from a man that I really admire and respect who's got a rema- ... Well, I said remarkable. He's got an incredible story. Probably going to break your heart a little bit. He's done some wonderful and amazing things, and I wanted to be able to share his story and the inspiration of his life with you all. Please join me in welcoming a new member of the Florida bar, John Carter. John welcome.

John Carter: Hi Jackson. How are you? Thank you.

Jackson Mumey: I'm delighted to see you hear, and just so glad that you're willing to come on with us today. Congratulations on passing the Florida bar. It's only been a week now since you got results.

John Carter: Yeah.

Jackson Mumey: And you're still smiling.

John Carter: Exactly one week, exactly.

Jackson Mumeey: That's great. We'll talk about that moment of finding out about the bar results in a minute, but let's start back at the beginning. Maybe you could share with our audience a little bit about your background and how you came to take the Florida bar.

John Carter: I graduated law school in 1990 from the University of Virginia. Took the Virginia bar in July of 1990 and passed it. Started working in DC, [waved 00:07:07] into DC. Worked for Skadden, Arps and then the SEC. Then got a nice job here in Florida, so moved down here to Florida. Got married in Florida. Started working for companies. In Florida, you don't have to take the bar if you don't want to. I had this authorized house counsel designation for a long time. Then rose up through the ranks in these companies, was general counsel, chief compliance officer, and then was president and CEO of one of them. Then with some corporate restructuring was severed out and had this big severance package, and thought what am I going to do? So I started a recruiting firm and a consulting firm for a couple years. Then I decided I want to go back to the practice of law. Now in Florida right now, although there's a lot of controversy going on, there's no reciprocity, so here I was 25 years later having to take the Florida bar. As Jackson would tell you, I was a little bit psyched out about having to take the Florida bar with people half my age quite frankly.

Jackson Mumeey: Although I got to say, in all honesty, I mean 25 years, you look way younger than me.

Jackson Mumeey: I would have never guessed you for a 25-year out guy. Of course, my daughter, who's a UVA law grad, she was like, "Yeah, go John. Go John." I don't know, there's something about you guys from UVA. So there you are. You got to take the Florida bar. It's been a long time. You've had a very successful career. Now you're looking at taking the exam. What did that feel like to you?

John Carter: I don't know why, even though I passed it 25 years ago, but somehow I felt overwhelmed getting back into the study mode, being very disciplined, plus I had a lot of things going on in my life. The first thing I did was I researched all the different bar review courses, and that's where I found Celebration Bar Review. I researched it and read all the online reviews. They were mostly all good. I thought this one kind of matched the way I study. Therefore the back last July, or June, I actually ordered the materials from Celebration Bar Review with the hopes of taking the February bar exam.

Jackson Mumeey: Then things changed.

John Carter: Yeah.

Jackson Mumeey: I know this is not easy to talk about, and I appreciate you being willing to discuss it. You had what I think every parent dreads and that is the loss of a child. I don't even know the right words to say John, but I know that your daughter Courtney was very, very special and very special in your life. I'd like you to share a little bit

about Courtney's story, and then how that impacted you in taking the bar if you don't mind.

John Carter:

Absolutely. As Jackson said, I have three children. Courtney was my oldest. She was a sophomore at Florida State. She was just a remarkable girl. Was always one of those kids that was always disciplined, popular. She was a student ambassador when she was in high school, traveled the world. Her goal was to be a combination of Oprah Winfrey and Tyra Banks. She wanted to be the next media mogul if you will. She had started her own media company while she was in Tallahassee at Florida State. She was doing a media internship. Joined a sorority.

Courtney, around eighth grade or so, I remember she was an avid tennis player, smart, and she started to develop joint pain. Through a lot of diagnosis, my wife is a physician, we just couldn't quite figure it out. Then we ultimately got the diagnosis she had lupus, and she had a fairly aggressive form of lupus, but we had it under control. There would be a couple of hospitalizations every year. So here she was, she was at Florida State, starting her second year. Had done really well her first year, which I would expect, and was starting to get sicker and sicker. Obviously I couldn't study for the bar. It was the last thing on my mind. I was taking a lot of trips up to Tallahassee.

Then around this time last year is when we started to get very concerned. The disease just got progressively worse. She got a major attack right before Thanksgiving, and on November 23rd, Courtney passed away. That ripped my heart out, my wife's heart out, plus we have two other children as well. It was like all of a sudden, this girl that was larger than life ... You hear these stories about people who pass away, but she was all that. She was just a great ... If you're ever on YouTube and you Google Courtney E. Carter Media, you'll see some of the most inspiring videos that you ever really want to see. I mean she was just a bright light if you will. So here we were having to pick up the pieces from that. The community, our church, our friends were very good to us. I would get over that. You just exist with the pain of it. Every day I think about her. After Thanksgiving and then Christmas and certainly I didn't take the Florida February bar. I think I had emailed Jackson, told him that I'd try to take the July bar and explained to him what was happening. Then at some point, February, March, I had to say, "Okay, let's start up the Bar Review again." What ...

Jackson Mumey:

Let me just stop you at that point in the story, because I think it's important to point out that studying for the bar is important, and the bar exam is important, but it clearly doesn't overtake life and family and these other things. So you stepped out of that role for a while to deal with your family and to deal with the problems and the concerns there. By the way, we'll link to Courtney's YouTube channel and some other links because it's inspiring stuff folks. I mean this girl was something. I never met her, but I can tell you she was something. It doesn't surprise me, the apple didn't fall from the tree. I mean you're pretty amazing yourself. I think it's important to point out that you had to now pivot and decide

what you were going to do after this point in time. Go ahead and pick up the story from there.

John Carter:

Thanks. One of the things was I felt a way of honoring Courtney and her positive life and attitude and how she dealt with her struggles was to get back in the game and to go for my dreams. Thus I picked up my bar studies and started the Celebration Bar Review materials. One of the things I wanted to say, I was thinking about this, is what's unique about the problem that you're embarking on, for people watching this, that Jackson pretty much makes it easy for you. Really he gives you the materials, which are excellent, but he also gives you the roadmap. Now sometimes we get stubborn and we want to go off, and when he says four hours, we might do six or eight or ten. That's just human nature. But in reality, it's all laid out for you.

After I took the bar exam and I went back and I thought about it, and I said, "You know, really here's a cheat sheet. Here are the materials. There are the lectures." But what's really important is he gives you the format. You go step by step by step. He gives you the topics. He gives you the hours, and you really don't have to exceed those hours because the bar is not going to test you on every single nuance of the law. It's going to test pretty much on the big picture. They have to for the most part.

So I jumped back into it. There were times where I would get too obsessive with it. I would talk to Jackson, and he'd say, "Well, I think you need to slow down a little bit. You're racing too far ahead," because I was psyching myself out a little bit, because honestly I'm dealing with the grief of my child. I'm also thinking about somehow in my mind I thought these 25 year olds were going to be so much smarter than me. I don't know why I thought that. I just felt like I had to just go for it and spend as much time on it as possible. Then I would talk to Jackson. He'd bring me back to center. Then I'd say, "Okay, let me just slow this thing down and just not burn myself out," because it's like a marathon. You have to just do a little bit every day, a little bit when you can, master things as you go along. You absolutely do not have to memorize anything, because the way the thing is structured ... I remember when I ticked the last check box on the checklist, I thought, "I think I got this. I think I got it."

Jackson Mumei:

I think you got it too.

John Carter:

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Jackson Mumei:

I appreciate ... That's great. I think that study guide and roadmap, that's great advice for people. One of the things that you did John was that you used PhotoReading. I'd like you to talk a little bit about that because I know that's unusual to people. I had Jenny Duclair on the last episode, and she was also a PhotoReader who passed. I'd to hear your thoughts about it, and what it was, and how it worked for you.

John Carter:

I would say that's another one of those secret sauce kind of things. Even though I had been a lawyer and been a chief executive and you read a lot, I would say that I probably was a slower reader on average, or I would have to read things a couple times to really get it. What I did before I actually started the bar study is I went to through the PhotoReading course. You don't think it works. You think this is not going to work, moving the pages. Let me tell you something, I got through all those bar materials. Even now, my wife and I were both reading a book here recently. She was, "You're not reading that book." I said, "Yes I am."

It's sort of counter intuitive the way we've been taught all along, but it actually does work if you just do it and practice it and just continue to do it. That actually is what caused me ... Because you're going to get a lot of materials from Celebration Bar Review if you haven't gotten them already, but once you pick up the book and you practice PhotoReading, and you've pretty mastered it or you got the process down, it actually goes a lot quicker. I can flip through all the materials, and it's not just flipping through the materials, but actually you're comprehending it. As Jackson keeps saying, "The law will come to you," it's true.

I remember at the bar exam, first day, first question was a contracts question and oh, you know, there's a formation argument. There's a mailbox rule argument. There's a parole evidence argument. It's just comes to you. You feel like you're cheating, but you're not cheating because it's all somewhere in this crazy thing that God gave us. It worked. You might say, "Well, he's just saying that Jackson's paying him to say this." No, no, no, no. It's absolutely works. I would say listen to somebody who just went through it, who has not been in academia for a long time, and who passed the bar. When I left the Florida bar, you never know, but I kind of knew that, if I didn't pass it, I came close. Ultimately, of course, I passed it. But that's the secret sauce. The PhotoReading is actually something you really owe yourself two or three weeks to do before you dive into the real materials.

Jackson Mumey:

I love hearing that. Jenny said the same thing. It feels like you're cheating and getting people to understand that they can trust themselves and that they've got all that access to the information by doing it that way is a great thing. I know that when you were studying, John, that you were working really, really hard, and you were really intense in that process and that there were moments of just really grinding a little bit. Then you had to back away periodically and re-center yourself. Can you talk a little bit about that, that part of the process?

John Carter:

Absolutely. I had all the materials. I had everything, but yet it's like that belief that this is going to work. I didn't want to fail that exam. There were times where I would just study, study, study, study. All my free time I was studying. I was studying. Then what happens is the mind needs a break. It needs a rest. So I'd have to pull back. I'd have to set things down for a few days. One time I set it down for a week, and my wife was like, "Are you good?" I was like, "Well, yeah, I'm good." But that's what I did. So my advice to myself was you have to just pull back.

If you're just looking at stuff and answering practice questions or whatever, you're not really getting it, you might want to just ... You probably are more efficient if you just take a step back, listen to your body, go to a movie, go to a play, do what you like, take a weekend vacation off with your loved one, and then come back to it. You'll find that you'll be more productive if you do that. I certainly had to do it. Also towards the end, as Jackson started sending these daily emails out, these inspirational emails, you was pretty much saying don't ... start to relax and if you're a believer in whatever, whatever your belief system is, just to start to get tuned with that. That really helped me too. The last week or two, I'll be honest, I was in cruise mode because I had done everything. I was in cruise mode.

Jackson Mumeey: Yeah, you were. I recall that you had gotten through your assignments very quickly and had done them very thoroughly. The work was passing quality, and I could tell it was passing. It was sort of like, "Okay, John, just fine tune, just take it easy, just kind of move gently through this process." You followed that direction really well. When you got to the exam and you looked around at those younger kids, the ones that you were worried about, what was that like for you when you're actually there and you're seeing the whole thing?

John Carter: I'll be honest, when you walked into this big room in Tampa, there was a big clock in the front, the monitors' all around, and you're like, "Oh, my goodness, what have I done?" It's like herding cat-. It was like 3,400 people. You hear all these people. They're talking, talking, talking. At first, I'll be honest, you get a little bit intimidated. Then after the morning session for the bar, that's the essay session, although you shouldn't do this, you start hearing people, "What'd you da, da, da." I'm like, "Oh. I think I'm okay here. I think [inaudible 00:24:16] with you." I think I got a sense that, no, they really don't have any more advantage over me. In fact, I think I might have an advantage over them, quite frankly. But it was intimidating. Then it became like, "No, I think I'm good. I think I just got to just stick with my plan and tune everything out as best I can. That's basically what I did.

Jackson Mumeey: So we get to the exam. You PhotoRead, you do the multi-state. You do all of that. Now you're waiting for exam results. Last Monday results come out. Tell us what that was like. Share that moment, if you would, with us.

John Carter: Absolutely. Thank you. They had told us that the bar results would be out, I think, it was the 21st, which was last Monday, September 21st at 2:00pm. Here I am in my office, and I'm all nervous. I thought, "Well, let me just go and run some errands. I'm not going to be able to concentrate." Here I am, I'm running some errands. Then a friend of mine who worked for a law firm in Tampa called and said, "The bar results are out already." I guess they put them on the website at 9:00am versus 2:00pm. I'm thinking should I click on my cell phone and get them, or should I get back to my office and then get them? I decided to wait.

I quickly ran my errand, got back in my car, came back to my office. Started to click ... You have your applicant number and you find the PDF with your applicant number. You start scrolling down and you see some pass, fails, pass, fails. Your heart started race and race and race. You get to your number, you look across: pass. You're like, "Yes! I pass. I pass. I pass. I did it. I did it. I did it." I can't imagine, the people around my office must have thought I was crazy or something.

I cannot tell you just how elated I was given everything that had happened to me, with my dear daughter who passed away, with my family, I have two other teenagers. I'm also getting my master's of theology here as well, and then running a business. I just felt so elated. I can't even tell you. It was like a weight just came off my shoulders. I was going to call my wife. I said, "No, no, no," so I got in my car, drove over to her office. I waited until she was free, came back. I just said, "Honey, guess what?" She goes, "What?" I said, "I passed the bar." We celebrated obviously. It was the most thrilling feeling with some ups and downs along the way, but that was one of those highlight, mountaintop experiences. I did it.

Jackson Mumej:

I'm so proud of you, John. That's such a great ... Oh, man. I love this job. When I get to hear a story like that I just ... Then I got the email from you, and I was like, "Yeah, I knew he was going to do it. I knew it was going to happen." It's so great when it does. What you had to overcome emotionally and in terms of time and distance and 25 years and all of the challenges that go into that to have that moment of being able to say, "I did it, I accomplished it," is just the best. I'm so proud of you. I don't even have the right words to tell you. I'm sure that there are a lot of people who are like me probably have not entirely dry eyes at this moment. As you're talking to people now who might be in a circumstance where it's bit a lot of years since they've taken the bar exam, and they're nervous about the process and anxious about what's going on, what advice would you offer them as somebody who's been successful in spite of monstrous difficulties?

John Carter:

Yes. First I would say just take a moment and really believe that you can do it. I mean you obviously finished law school. You're now trying to pass whatever bar you're taking. You've found Jackson. So you really are ahead of the game. I mean unfortunately I know a couple people who did not pass the bar. When I talked to them a month or so before the bar, and they paid a lot of money for their courses and all of that, you would have thought that they were shoo-ins. First thing what I would say is you're on the right track because, like me, you've done your research, and you found a course that works. Secondly, try your best to believe in the process.

One of the things that helped me was those first few lectures of Jackson's where he's setting the stage for the multi-states and telling you how they scored in all of that, but also he was setting the stage, for Florida in my case, exactly what you're going to experience with the essays, and what are you going to

experience with those multiple choice, and what you should focus in on. If you have that in your mind as you go through the process, you're not going to obsess about every single thing that you missed, because you got to have the big picture.

I would say when you get those materials, do not go fast through that first part but to really listen as he's explaining to you multi-state and how it's factored in, like in my case it was Florida, the essays, and then the multiple choice, and where you should focus your time. Otherwise you may wind up spending your time, and it's not really going to help your score, because I listened and it paid off. I'll say that's some advice I would give to everybody. Then the last thing is work the process. Work the process. Also I have to say this too, let's be honest, went through law school with IRAC and it took me a long time to get that out of my mind. Issue, issue, issue, issue, issue. Jackson would tell you, he and I had this battles over my essays. Ah, you missed a point. Well, whatever.

Let me tell you something, when you're sitting there and the proctor says, "Open your booklets," and you see a contract problem and you see a criminal law, constitutional law problem, and you see a tort problem or whatever it is, and you read it and you see the arguments and you start typing away, just making your arguments, the plaintiffs argue this, the plaintiffs argue this, that you're not memorizing anything. You're just arguing logical arguments, and then you're done, and you're like, "Yes." That's what I did. Yes, follow the process. Eat, sleep and drink fact/law/applications for your essay and listen to the beginning of the lectures where he talks about the big picture.

Jackson Mumey:

Man, I love it. I should put you on payroll. Okay, yeah, he's right folks. Do what John did, he passed. John, it's really been a delight to have you here today. I know I'm speaking for everybody in the audience when I say congratulations and job well done. It's just fabulous stuff. It's a fabulous outcome for you. I know that you're going to be always successful in the Florida bar and in all the things that you're doing, your theology program, your work, your family, raising the two youngsters that you've got with you and just being an inspiration for me and for probably everybody who's been listening. Everybody that knows you, I think, feels that way. I know Courtney was an inspiration to you and she was an inspiration to me as well, being able to watch her videos and get her story as I was first being introduced to you. Thanks for sharing her life with us and being really a testimony to her courage and her optimism and her faith. I couldn't be happier for anybody passing the bar that I am for you. Folks, there you've got a successful bar exam taker, probably one of the most successful that we could ever bring before you today. Best of wishes to you, John. Thanks for being with us. Thanks for sharing your story. We just wish you all the best.

John Carter:

Thanks a lot Jackson. I say thanks for all your hard work, and guess what? Today or tomorrow I'll be registering my law firm, the Law Office of John K. Carter. I already got a couple people that want to come see me. It's wonderful, so dreams do come true. So thank you.

Jackson Mumey: Absolutely, absolutely. We'll link up to that firm. I promise in the show notes. All right, well, listen everybody, thanks for joining us. We'll be back again soon for another chat with a successful bar exam taker. Bye-bye.

Well, that wraps up today's episode. Thanks so much for listening. If you'd like to be part of our Extra Mile for Bar Exam Takers private Facebook group, just check the show notes, you'll find a link in which you can request an invitation. We'll see you along the extra mile.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to the Extra Mile Podcast for Bar Exam Takers at www.celebrationbarreview.com.