

EMMAUS HOUSE – PEOPLESTOWN DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

Interview with: Albert E. Stone, Jr. (Ned)
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LEEANN LANDS: We're on, if you would like to introduce yourself and tell me your history with Emmaus House.

NED STONE: Ok, My name is Ned Stone. I'm the son of Al and Grace Stone, who brought me here at the age of 14. The year was 1969. I attended services in the old chapel, which is right outside the window from us in Ezzard Hall, during that time.

The summer of 1970 was when I first started working in the children's programs. At the age of 15, I worked with one particular child who was probably five or six years old. He was a Pitts—George Pitts. Willie Pitts is the one whose name you'll hear a lot who was a plaintiff in some of our desegregation suits. But his younger brother George was my particular ward that first year. And he probably—I don't know this for a fact but—back in those days, many, many of our young people exhibited many of the signs of lead poisoning. They were skinny, large joints, uncontrollable tempers, somewhat slow growth, both physically and mentally, and George was probably one of those people. He wore a very heavy pair of leather sole shoes. He called them his "Mo" shoes—Mo for homosexual, I don't know where that came from—but he would lose his temper and my shins were black and blue all that summer from George and his "Mo"

¹ This oral history has been edited according to the "Transcribing, Editing, and Processing Guidelines" established by the Minnesota Historical Society Oral History Office, 2001, accessed at <http://www.mnhs.org/collections/oralhistory/ohtranscribing.pdf>

shoes. So it doesn't sound like a very promising beginning, does it? [Laughs.] But there was obviously a lot more to it than that, stuff that kept me coming back. It was thanks to that opportunity that I got a paid opportunity to work in a day care center part-time while I finished my high school and that was a wonderful experience for me. That was probably the first of several doors that Emmaus House has opened, but I sort of drifted away from, well I traveled a lot as a teenager, and I sort of drifted away from church services. I came back in 1978 as a 23-year old. I was again involved in the summer program, this time more as an instructor.

When I graduated from Emory in the spring of 1979, I was here as an intern for I guess about six months. I still remember my first day as an intern. Gene Ferguson had some kind of a plan for a community organization. I can't remember what it was, but it was something that needed to be discussed at considerable length. So we closed that tavern on Peachtree and Tenth Street, whose name I can't remember right now. And we still had some more discussions, so we closed the tavern over there on Cheshire Bridge. We got back here at 4:00 in the morning. I got up at 7:00 the next morning to start work, and my head was still spinning. [Laughs.] We had staff meeting, went to work in the kindergarten, the person who was five years old, he's now, well he's 40-something and a police officer, had his knee stitched up at Grady and he ran around and hit his knee on a brick and tore it back up again. I took him over to Southside and got his knee bandaged up. That took until the middle of the afternoon when Gene called a meeting to discuss the rest of his project. I think probably we had children again in the afterschool program—I don't remember that very clearly—but I was here minding the telephone from 3:00 until 11:00. About 5:00 that afternoon, one of our local families got angry with each other and they were rushing up and down the stairs chasing each other with steak knives until the police came. Finally we got that done, and I sat at that desk there from probably about until 8:00 until

11:00 when it was time to vacuum up and go to bed. And I was glad to get in bed. [Laughs.]

That was my first day on staff at Emmaus House.

LANDS: Where were you guys sleeping at that time?

STONE: We were sleeping in the old Poverty Rights Office building which was torn down. Columbus Ward and I were roommates. Charlotta Norby was there at the same time. A guy by the name of Michael Pine Carlson, a rather skinny person from Wyoming, somewhat cadaverous in appearance, and everybody of course called him “pine box.” So that was us back in the late 1970s.

I continued after I started graduate school at Georgia Tech. I continued being active in the youth programs through about 1982. I would pick the children up for Sunday school Sunday morning. Of course many of our people were dispersed due to Model Cities and so forth. A lot of traditional Peoplestown residents ended up in the East Lake area, which we called “Little Vietnam” at the time. It’s considerably gentrified since then.

LANDS: Are you calling it “Little Vietnam” because of the residents or because of the appearance or—?

STONE: Because of the level of violence. But I lived in Decatur at the time so I would pick up some of the kids in my own vehicle, bring them down here, and then I’d grab the van and pick up the rest of them. I did that at 7:00 every Sunday morning for quite awhile. This, of course, was also the time of the Atlanta child murders.

I had a group of kids that I would take out on Saturday afternoon and we would go fishing. We would go to Piedmont Park or Lullwater Park at Emory University or wherever. We did a little bit of Bible study, but it was mostly just hanging out. And for several months there, I spent all week knowing that on Saturday afternoon I would be taking these kids out. And

everywhere I went, people would assume that I was the child murderer. You know, plainclothes policemen, private citizens, everybody would come up to me and want to know what my business was going around with these children. In one case, this was right in front of the entrance to Lullwater in Emory University, very upper-middle class neighborhood, one child ran away from me. I chased him, tackled him in somebody's front yard, and took him back to the group and then we went down to the park and started having a Bible lesson. And of course, the police came up—I had just absolutely scared the living spit out of some old lady who had been looking out of her front window and saw this white man tackling a young black boy and carrying him off. [Laughs.]

LANDS: So how did they check your credentials? Did they call Emmaus House?

STONE: I think when they caught up with me, we were all sitting down in a group and I had my little pocket Bible out and we were doing a lesson and I was able to introduce myself. I don't think I even had to show them my ID or anything. People were probably less paranoid then they are now in general, pre-9/11, but the tension in Atlanta was extremely, extremely high.

The scariest incident that I had was over in Grant Park where a young man came up to me with a switchblade knife open and wanted to know what my business was. And at the time, the young men in Grant Park were from Cabbagetown community and they had a reputation for getting high on everything under the sun and prostituting themselves in Grant Park. It was a world-class chicken hawk center at the time. Other than having switchblade knife out, he wasn't very assertive, but he was the kind of person you could expect to get real crazy real quick. That was one of the worst.

One time in Grant Park, an eight-year old child picked up a pay phone, and he said, "Police, this white man is going to snatch me." [Laughs.] I liked to have died. Of course, he

didn't have a dime or anything; there was nobody on the other end. He was just making a joke.

LANDS: But the child murders really pervaded the culture then.

STONE: Yes. I mean, these children had nightmares about people coming in their windows, and when they told me about them, I started having those same nightmares so I was tremendously worried about these kids, but I was tremendously worried about my own safety as well. One family -- the Gay family -- it was the younger Gay brother who was my story with the telephone. You know, the mother had very little idea of when I left and when I came back. On the other hand, [o]ne of my charges was May Helen Johnson's son, and if I was 20 minutes late, which of course our little group ran on CPT, if I was 20 minutes late, May Helen would just be climbing the walls. She would be so worried about us, so quite a varied little group there. There was one person, Phyllis Gay, she would have been about six or seven at the time, she was the younger daughter of that family and I keep up with her and we talked a little bit awhile back about how much she enjoyed going fishing. She had no idea at the age of six or seven what kind of stress and what kind of threats I was under, which is good. She had her own threats. I guess I'm proud of myself that I kept that from the kids, but it was a very dangerous time.

LANDS: The kids that were in your charge, they weren't afraid of you?

STONE: No, oh no, not at all. They were hardly scared of anything. Of course that made me even more worried because they were exactly the extra-brave, extra-intelligent children at the age of about 12 or 13 who were exactly the ones being preyed on. Most of them males, 10 or 13, Phyllis, the six-year old girl was the youngest.

LANDS: So, you'll have to remind me, that's 1978, 1979 when the child murders were going on?

STONE: The child murders started in about 1978 or 1979, but it was quite awhile before people

realized that the problem existed.² The tension was really for about a year and that would have been roughly from the spring of 1981 until Wayne Williams was caught in the spring of 1982.

LANDS: OK. And you're working in the kids' programs the whole time, in 1981, 1982?

STONE: Yes, yes. It's not a formal program. It's basically my own little group that I just would pick them up on Saturday afternoons and carry them wherever, and do my driving for the Sunday school on Sunday morning.

LANDS: So at the time was there, so there would have been the formal afterschool program at Emmaus?

STONE: To my knowledge, yes.

LANDS: And there wasn't necessarily a weekend program?

STONE: I don't recall any weekend programming at the time.

We had a lot of Danish people on staff back then. Charlotta Norby, who is a couple of years younger than I, at the age of about 17 picked up the phone book and saw "Emmaus," and she remembered some kind of other group that she called "Emmaus" and she called up and started volunteering. And as I say, she was on staff over at the Poverty Rights Office at the same time I was. And she started bringing her friends in and we had Danish people here almost constantly from about 1978 or 1979 through 1989 when I left for Colorado. And I don't recall many after that, but of course, I wouldn't have kept up with them at that point.

I completed graduate school in 1982 and traveled for quite a while, came back here in 1984 and was somewhat involved, but less so. I went to Colorado in 1989 and came back in 1996.

² The murders referenced here occurred from 1979 to 1981.

With regards to the Danish people, there's a wonderful story about how the children were talking about how mean and prejudiced white people were and one of our interns said, "But I'm white, and I'm not like that." And they said, "You're not white—you're Danish." [Laughs.]

LANDS: So where does the woodshop come in this?

STONE: The woodshop comes in considerably later. There's some stuff I need to talk about between then. Bishop Frank Allen started a program here in the fall of 2001 doing primarily woodturning, that is using lathes to make ground things. This is part of his group called "Work of our Hands" which is part of a Volkshule program—the people's school—which teaches spiritual awareness through arts and crafts. I came in the fall of, excuse me, in the winter of 2002, and we had younger children who weren't able to participate in the woodturning so I started making very simple projects, birdhouses that they could nail together, and the older children started getting interested in that. I particularly had some girls, age 10 to 13, who were particularly interested and very skilled. I mean I would just really love to have the opportunity to let girls do something that a lot of people didn't think was part of their skill set, but which they really did such a good job with. So I had several girls, one after the other, from 2002 through about 2006 or 2007 thereabouts. My program has gotten more complicated and it goes with the older kids, and I've got more boys in the last couple of years. But for many years, I had some wonderfully talented girls and that was great.

In 2002 our then Vicar, Debbie Shew, asked me to make a Lenten cross for them and you can still see that one up in the chapel, and I supervised kids in making that cross. Started making a lot of other crosses, and that's still something we do a lot of but that was our primary focus for many, many years.

Just a year ago, I got a complete set of woodworking tools so that I can really start with a bare piece of wood and end up with a complete project. Until that time, I had to do about half the work at home and then bring it in and let the kids finish it. And that has been wonderful to have all of that capability, but it's only an hour and half a week. And the early parts of the project is something for the older kids and requires more patience, and so with that increased capability comes increased challenges for me as a teacher in keeping kids interested.

LANDS: Where did you get your training for the woodworking?

STONE: I'm primarily self taught. I did do carpentry as a teenager. When I became keeper for the chapel in 1997 and started becoming more interested there. Of course I read a lot. There's an internet community that you can bounce ideas off of and I learned a lot from them, but I'm primarily self taught. Of course, in my work as an environmental scientist, I have a great deal of training in health and safety issues, and I know all about how to use respirators and that sort of thing. That attitude for safety has been an important part of what I bring to the table. I mentioned very early on my concerns—and I don't know this for a fact—but my concerns about lead poisoning in this community, for awhile there, we were using lead in some of our projects to weight down some of the candlesticks and so forth. There were a couple of times when I thought the kids were exposed and I was pretty fierce about that. I didn't wait to talk it over and achieve a consensus or anything. I just said this is a problem. So we've a little bit skipped ahead there.

LANDS: Yes, sorry about that.

STONE: That's alright. Let's see...

LANDS: So you had gone to Colorado to 1996—

STONE: Let's see. I actually traveled various places from 1982 through 1984, came back from

1984 through 1989 and while I started singing in the choir at that time. I wasn't particularly involved in children's programs, but of course, I knew a lot of the children.

We lost several of our young people at that time. Several of the kids who made it successfully through the child murders did not make it successfully through the epidemic of drugs and gangs and violence that hit us in the mid to late 1980s. Two of those were Michael Armour, John Armour's younger brother, who was stabbed to death by either his father or stepfather at the Vanira Apartments. That was shortly before Thanksgiving of 1986. And then a particularly special young person, George Pulliam, was lost to us in the spring of 1989. George was one of my particular charges during the fishing programs and everything. He was absolutely fearless, absolutely would not submit to any kind of physical discipline. Early on when he was maybe eight years old, one of those summers that I was working in the summer program, it rained every afternoon for a month. We were supposed to take the kids swimming for a month, and we couldn't do that. So, all the kids could do was run up and down the steps out there all afternoon. Finally, after two or three weeks of this, I was down to my last nerve and George got all over that one. I reached out and rapped him on the skull and it was about like hitting a cannonball. That's literally and figuratively how hard headed George was. But people noticed that, and ten years later when George was 18 years old and as tall as I am and started point guard on one of the best high school teams in the city, people would come up to me and say, "Is you the man that hit George?" [Laughs.] And I said, "Yes, but he wasn't quite as big when I did." So I had a lot of personal respects because of my relationship with George, and of course, I have lost that as [the community's] memory of George has faded. As I said, George wasn't scared of anything, and he got into an argument with a nine millimeter over at an after-hours joint and he wouldn't back down.

LANDS: So the 1980s, the crack epidemic is sweeping through this area in the 1980s along with—

STONE: I was so wrapped up in the child murder situation that I didn't really notice the crack situation prior to 1982. And then I was gone until 1984, and that was when I really started noticing it.

LANDS: So you're out to Colorado for a few years and you come back and you are—

STONE: 1989 through 1996.

LANDS: And you're head of the chapel beginning in 1997?

STONE: I'm not technically head of the chapel. I'm an assistant head. What we call it Junior Warden. But Director for Buildings and Grounds is my particular title. So I was singing in the church choir, and I was maintaining the building and learning to do repairs and starting to learn woodworking in the process.

LANDS: And you're still Junior Warden?

STONE: No. Well, in most places, Junior Warden is Director for Buildings and Grounds. We actually split that position up. But I was Director for Buildings and Grounds from 1997 through 2004 or 2005, something like that. And I still get called on to do stuff that other people can't do, but I don't do the routine stuff like that anymore.

LANDS: Now are these staff positions? I'm not sure of the warden structure. Is it staff or is it volunteer as part of the Episcopal Church?

STONE: These would be part of the chapel. One thing that outsiders have trouble with is that we have parallel structures. We have our social programs with the staff and the interns and then we have the chapel with their board of advisors, called the vestry, and with various volunteers who do work for the chapel. Of course, when Austin Ford left—just a few months after I came

back from Colorado—we were involved with serious problems and debates replacing him. We had a Director for Buildings and Grounds for the chapel and then we had a Director for Buildings and Grounds for the advisory board, the advisory board being something that Austin Ford set up right before he left. And people came from the outside and they said, “You’ve got these two competing positions. This will never in the world work.” Then they saw me and my counterpart on the advisory board cooperating with each other and doing the job which was really too big for one of us by ourselves, and they saw that it did work. I feel that example between me and Skip Connett, who was my counterpart doing the buildings and grounds on the advisory board, really feel that people seeing our cooperation there had a lot to do with them supporting Emmaus House through this very difficult period.

It was extremely difficult, particularly—I can’t remember his name right now—but after Austin Ford, there was Barbara who did pretty well but she left before her term was up (took a position in Chicago). Then there was nobody for awhile. Jeanne Brown was Senior Warden at the time, and she did a wonderful, wonderful job. We had a major job fixing the floor of the chapel at that time and Jeanne and I worked together with the diocese to get that work done. And then during this time, Stan McGraw came on.

Stan McGraw was somebody whom we had known over the years and really liked and trusted, and he was just a disaster. I really can’t for the life of me understand what had happened with Stan. I don’t know Zell Miller. I do know his sons. But Zell Miller and Stan McGraw are two people who strike me as somebody who’s seen the light for some kind of new religion which involves vast quantities of praying, and somehow in the process they’ve become much, much less like Jesus in that process. It’s really inexplicable to me but I’ve seen it in those two cases. But Stan was very divisive—he made a lot of white people feel that they didn’t really belong

here. He was very uncomfortable with people like myself who have been here for a long time and was dismissive of that. Finally, he more or less exploded and resigned very suddenly after being here only about eight months, and we very nearly were shut down. We attended a meeting at one point with Bishop Allen and with the group of people who had assumed that we were going to be shut down. They had elaborate plans for how they were going to redevelop Emmaus House as a prison ministry, and we really lit into them. I started up the discussion. I said, “What kind of experience do you have doing this redevelopment work in a site that’s already ongoing?” Making it clear we weren’t going anywhere. [Laughs.] There was a woman who had some experience in Bedford Stuyvesant, and one of our people had been a school principal in Bedford Stuyvesant, and she lit into her about, you know, exactly what she knew about that community.

LANDS: Bedford Stuyvesant, New York?

STONE: Yes. Brooklyn I believe.

LANDS: Do you mind if I ask who else was at this meeting? I hadn’t heard about the meeting.

STONE: Sure, sure. OK, it’s chaired by Bishop Allen. Our warden at the time was Clint Deveaux, who is very, very diplomatic. If they have a gun to your head—which is literally what was happening—then the best thing to do was to keep people talking. And if you want to keep people talking, then Clint Deveaux is your man. But Clint was our Senior Warden, and I really give him a lot of credit for that. Oh boy, I’m trying to remember the principal’s name, a woman who since moved to Colorado, and I’m sorry that I’ve forgotten that. You should probably check back with me and get that name. Charles Weltner was our attorney at the time. He probably was at that meeting, although I don’t remember him being there. May Helen [Johnson] was there but didn’t say a whole lot. Charles, at the time, was involved in identifying properties that were in between our properties but which we did not own and trying to figure out who was paying taxes

on them and how could we incorporate that into Emmaus House. I suspect that Charles impressed people with his identifying properties and giving them to the diocese. I expect he impressed people who were more interested in property than they were in many of the other things that Emmaus House is more interested in. So I think Charles played an important role there. I should mention Vandora Scott, who week in and week out kept the choir going and was a lot for keeping the chapel and our spirit going. And then there was a young man who lived upstairs and was basically, he and Columbus were all the staff that we had at the time. Dewayne Stewart was his name. Dewayne maintained our presence here almost around the clock. You know, if somebody fell out at the bus stop in front of this at 11:00 at night, then Dewayne could respond to that, and that is something we've always been able to do. So Dewayne played a very important role during that time.

But it was very, very thin ice. We very nearly got shut down. And of course, Austin Ford has always taught us to be paranoid with regard to the diocese. And Frank Allen, who was very much a personal friend of Stan McGraw's, was really caught between a rock and a hard place. He was initially very hostile to us, but then when he saw some of the problems firsthand—some of the problems that Stan had left behind him—then he became more sympathetic. And of course, as soon as he retired and was free to do what he wanted to, then he became a very, very, very great benefactor of ours. But we were suspicious then.

LANDS: So you survived this point. Does it cause a change in the mission in any way?

STONE: Well this was just survival until Debbie Shew came along.

LANDS: So Debbie is right after this?

STONE: Debbie really did two important things for us. She helped us to integrate into the diocese. Austin Ford had always been very hostile to the diocese. I mean, they wouldn't let

Martin Luther King Jr.'s children attend Episcopal school [Lovett Academy] so, you know, there was a certain amount to be hostile about. But Austin didn't necessarily need a good reason to be hostile. [Laughs.] So she did integrate us into the diocese, and she did teach us to stand on our own two feet. I mean, Austin Ford, he took a nap in the afternoon when he could and he took a month's vacation every year, but for the rest of that time, he was out there at 5:00 in the morning working on the garden and he was up until 12:00 at night corresponding to his friends all over the world in support of Emmaus House. It was, as Jeanne said right after he left, "Nobody can do what Father Ford did, and in the end Father Ford couldn't do what Father Ford did." So we had a great deal of growing up to do to be a self-sustained community. And surviving the year or two around Stan McGraw's tenure was an important part of that. But surviving with Debbie, who was perhaps less effective than your average director, was a very important part of that too—showing that we could get behind and pull and do what had to be done. We weren't doing as much during that time as we are now. Claiborne is a more effective leader than Debbie was. But realizing that we could get along without a superman was very important, and that was an important lesson that she taught us.

LANDS: Now Debbie is around about five years?

STONE: Yes, yes. She would have come on in 1998 or 1999. And Claiborne came on in early 2005. There were a few months there where we didn't have anybody, but it certainly wasn't nearly the traumatic experience that it was when we didn't have anybody following Stan leaving. Actually, I take that back. We did have some good people in the interim between Debbie and Claiborne.

LANDS: But they were just temporary?

STONE: They were temporary. George—and I get their names mixed up—George who had

completed seminary but wasn't yet ordained was doing the director's work. And then we had a retired minister, John, who was leading our church services. And their names are like Maxwell and Marshall and Mitchell and something and I always choose the wrong one. George still works for the diocese so you can get that straight with him.

It was in November of 2000, Patricia Nuckles was murdered, and that was one of the two great tragedies that our community has survived. The other one, which I don't clearly remember, is when a bunch of children were swimming on the gulf coast and they got buzzed by some rednecks in a speed boat and several of them drowned. I'm sure you can hear more about that from other people. I was certainly very much involved with Trish Nuckles' passing. It was a home invasion by a mentally ill person who was self-medicating on crack. He ended up taking a lot of her stuff, using it to buy crack, eventually coming back and strangling her, and then raping and sodomizing the corpse. And Trish was, I think, probably the most effective person that we've had around here. I've mentioned the Gay family—the brothers of whom I mentored for awhile during the child murders. One of them is working in his daddy's gas station, which is probably about as good of a job as you could expect him to get. The other one is a supervisor and groundskeeper for the City of Atlanta. I see him out there in Oakland Cemetery, which I assume is one of their plum positions, so he must one of their better supervisors. So, he's doing quite well for himself. He's bought a house and so forth. But the daughter Phyllis, who's the person I talked to about not understanding the stress that I was under during the child murders at the age of six, is somebody that Trish got a hold of and would not let go. While I was involved with this family for a few years, she was involved for a lifetime. She made sure that Phyllis went to school and went to college and I think graduate school as well, and Phyllis is now working in the business office at Georgia State. That's a very successful family considering that their

mother is now certifiably mentally ill. She's always been barely functional, but they had one of the worst situations in Peopletown—which is saying a lot—and Phyllis is one of our greatest successes, and Trish Knuckles is the reason. It was a very, very great loss and it was very traumatic in part because Debbie wanted to talk about things, and for those of us who were closest to her, it was just the grief went far beyond anything you could touch verbally. Those I think who weren't so close were able to get something through talking, but the people who were closest to Trish, her friends on the choir, Silva Brett, May Helen Johnson, myself, her friends on the Altar Guild, Betty Jean Waltner, we were just really, really traumatized by having to sit there and listen to Debbie talk about this tragedy, which went far beyond words.

I'm thinking now of the principal from Bedford Stuyvesant, her name is Yvonne Franklin, and she was also a member of the Altar Guild and a particular friend of Trish's.

LANDS: Is she here in Atlanta still?

STONE: No, she's gone on in years and either her health or her sister's health was such that they couldn't be apart anymore, and she moved to see her to be with her sister in Colorado Springs.

Trish was the stepdaughter of Hector Black. Hector came to Mechanicsville or Vine City, I can't remember which, about the same time Austin Ford came here. He found the black power movement was a little more than what he could particularly handle and has lived in rural cooperative situations ever since, first in West Georgia and now in Central Tennessee. While he was in Atlanta, he adopted Trish and her younger sister, and they lived a lot of the time with him. I lived in West Georgia with Trish and Hector for most of the year when I was 18.

LANDS: Formally adopted Trish and her sister?

STONE: I don't know what the legal situation is, but I do know that when there was a question

of whether her murderer would receive the death penalty, the prosecutor considered Hector as the father, as somebody whose opinion should be very strongly considered. And of course, this horrible murderer had himself had a family history of mental illness and had suffered all kinds of abuse so that was a factor as well. But I think the brutality of the crime was such that the death penalty was very seriously considered.

LANDS: Do you mind if I take you back in time for a second?

STONE: Sure.

LANDS: So thinking about when you're first starting here as a teenager, 14 years old, can you describe what was going on at Emmaus House at the time? What did the place look like? What was going on?

STONE: Oh, let's see. What do I remember? It was the 1960s. It was kind of wild. The back room, at Ezzard Hall there was a youth community center with red carpet on the floor and different colored lights and jukeboxes and the pool table—not what you expect from a church by any manner of means.

There's a story about an intern from that era who they put him in the van and said, "Go up to Buckhead," and he got on I-75 and he called two hours later from Chattanooga. Can you spell a-m-p-h-e-t-a-m-i-n-e? I don't know for a fact that was what was responsible for that but there was a certain amount of that going around. At 14, of course, I wasn't participating in that. But I was aware of it, and that's of course the kind of thing that you do when you're too excited.

I remember Four Corners (the Rick McDevitt Center) back before it was anything, when it was just a bare red clay lot with a couple of basketball court. And I remember being 14 and wanting to play basketball with the neighborhood kids and being a little bit intimidated. You've probably heard that Four Corners got its name from one of our staffers back then by the name of

Dennis Goldstein (who's now with Legal Aid). Four Corners became his nickname because it was a popular dance which he thought he could do, but he absolutely could not. [Laughs.] But Dennis was instrumental in getting that youth center built on what always was a playground but just not developed at all. And so we still call it "Four Corners", although the name of course is the Rick McDevitt Center.

LANDS: Now do you recall any of the stadium controversies as they were going on?

STONE: I remember my mother talking about that a lot. My mother worked in the Poverty Rights Office and she talked a lot about people being put out and houses being bulldozed and not replaced and so forth.

I used to dread the day that my mother would come home from the Poverty Rights Office because all at dinner all she could do was complain very stridently about all the injustice that she had seen all day. And I guess I sympathized with the injustices but I did not need to hear about it at dinner. [Laughs.] I particularly remember a time when a woman called up and said that she had a baby in an incubator and the Georgia Power was going to cut her lights off. Not only was there no baby, this was not a woman! [Laughs.] He had a lot of scams like that. I think he probably lived as a woman but he was not biologically a woman. But he completely caught my mother on that one. I think he caught a few people that way.

LANDS: So 1970s? You come back as a 23-year old I think? So did anything change between your teenage years and your college years?

STONE: Ah well, this place had settled down a good bit. We didn't have the youth center over there. As I say, there were a lot of Danish people here as interns. There was no longer the amphetamine being used. I guess that would be my biggest recollection.

LANDS: So change in mission really, the overall point in the social programs element is

similar?

STONE: Well, we gradually during this period became less involved with political activism. There was less protesting—part of the welfare rights' movement. We weren't organizing. We were doing less marching and picketing and things like—you the see pictures up on the wall there people carrying signs. That would have probably mostly died out by the late 1970s.

I decided early on that I didn't have the patience for politics. I wasn't going to listen to people say the same thing over and over and over, and that my mission was really more of a children's mission. And I filled it in various ways in the summer school, in my private program during the child murders, and now during woodshop. So as the situation evolves I continue to get in where I fit in. But my work has been primarily with children, and that hasn't changed so much as some of our other aspects, which is less politically active and more day-to-day needs. Of course, those people who believe strongly in political activism, you know, consider focusing too much on day-to-day needs to be simply band-aids, and I sympathize with that. Having been less involved in that aspect, I haven't seen the changes as much as other people have.

LANDS: We didn't fully develop the woodshop story, so I've got two questions for you. One was your reference to the program having more of the teenage boys now, so can we flesh that out? And then the second thing would be, what do you think the kids gain out of the program. What would you point to?

STONE: OK. Well my capabilities have evolved really from the beginning. Some of that is my own personal capabilities because, you know, I probably started out with two or three years experience in my own woodworking, and now I have ten, so obviously my capabilities have grown during that time. The resources that I have in terms of tools and space have also grown considerably. Aand so that means that as I gradually get more tools and space, my projects

become more complicated. Certain of the tools are simply not safe for the very young children to use, things like a table saw or a nailer that shoots nails with compressed air—basically a gun. I'm very, very careful about supervising, very tight supervision with those tools, but even so, it takes a fairly mature child to handle them, and also as the projects get bigger and when we start from the absolute beginning, then it takes longer and the kids need more patience, and that doesn't necessarily correlate with age. I mean I have ten year olds who have plenty of skill and patience and then sixteen year olds who are more or less off the wall. But then, of course, I still try to identify parts of a project where I can get younger children involved, you know, using a screwdriver, for instance, or using a hand-held drill. And of course, painting and finishing is an important part of any woodworking task, and that's something that the younger kids can do. Painting is actually a skill. You don't just slap around with the brush. There's right ways and wrong ways to do it. And most of them start out assuming that they know how to do it, and when I show them the right way, then most of them catch on fairly quickly. So that's very rewarding.

In terms of the skills that they get, of course, they get a sense of accomplishment. They get a sense of appreciation for quality. You know I may show them that they're off by an eighth or even a sixteenth of an inch and they never would have thought that that wasn't quite good enough, but when I show them the difference, then they appreciate the difference. I can work a little bit of mathematics into it. I wish I could do more, but some.

LANDS: You mentioned the patience before. I guess we might call those soft skills in sense of accomplishment, but do you think this helps with their commitment to specific tasks?

STONE: I think probably that the specific tools that they're learning are tools that you should know. Probably they may not use the fancier ones, but you should be able to use a drill, a

hammer, and a hand-held saw. Probably what you call soft skills are probably are the ones more directly of value. I will say that the skills that I teach are more directly of value than many of the others. Not many people are going to have access to a lathe later on and probably not going to be able to sell things that they make on a lathe except in a very high level. But they will, you know, if they get into carpentry or even remodeling their own house, or whatever, they will use both the specific skills using a drill or whatever and the soft skills—commitment to quality and observing how things fit together and so forth. They will continue to use that, I think.

LANDS: That's an interesting point, that development of spatial thinking and sort of the engineer's mind. I think that's really interesting. I don't know how you would measure that. And the reason I'm asking this is I do public history and museums preservation and things like that, and we've increasingly been trying to think about how to assess the impact of those programs on people's learning. The arts programs have a long history of measuring the influence on communities, in part, because of needs to make money through grants or whatever and show this and so they have a much richer experience in measuring outcomes, and so I'm just kind of curious of what you have seen produced out of the programs.

STONE: Yes, I think that, some of this is of course my own experience but thinking about the sequence of how things go together then you know I if I put that screw in there, then if I put these pieces together then I'm going to cover up that screw hole so that screw needs to go in first—being able to think about things literally from different perspectives. You mentioned spatial awareness—I also do GIS. I do computer mapping as part of my work, and one of my co-workers is either very moderate autism or severe Asperger's Syndrome, something like that, certainly has some lack of social skills, but he has tremendous spatial awareness and that's something that seems to go together.

LANDS: That is a colleague of yours or a person in the program?

STONE: That's a colleague of mine, a former colleague actually in a program at Georgia EPD that I used to work in, and I now work in a different program. But I still see him around some.

LANDS: Do you still have some time? I know I've taken you away from work.

STONE: Sure. No, no, this is OK.

LANDS: I took pictures the other day while I was over there and I thought I'd ask you about them. If you decide later you don't want the discussions of kids on here, we'll change that. I appreciate the nickel tour the other day.

STONE: OK, great. I think some of the things I've said make more sense when we've actually seen them, seen the tools.

LANDS: Some of these guys may not be familiar.

STONE: Oh boy, that's Cody right there.

LANDS: Yes.

STONEs: Cody is a Katrina refugee.

LANDS: No kidding? I didn't know that.

STONE: No kidding. No kidding. He's been in my community right down the street from me for about six months. He's probably ten or eleven so he would have been five or six when his family, who lives near the superdome, had to leave New Orleans. He's lived in Milwaukee and various places. Very bright. Very, very bright kid. Certainly deserves his starting place.

LANDS: Some of these while were in preparation for the puppet show.

STONE: OK, this is Ryant. He's one of our better helpers. He's a particularly good wood turner, but generally talented. Here's some other kids from my neighborhood. This is Tiara and Kewon, who live about a quarter mile from me in one direction, and then that's Freddy who lives

about a quarter mile from me in the other direction. We're all from the Chosewood Park Community and we see each other at the park pretty regularly.

LANDS: Kewon had asked for a copy of the picture. That's why I decided to just go ahead and duplicate a lot for the kids.

STONE: Now this kid I do not recognize.

LANDS: And the gentleman who's with him?

STONE: That's Ed Tierney.

LANDS: OK. This was puppet show practice.

STONE: OK. That's Alia. She's Freddie's younger sister.

LANDS: OK

STONE: There she is again. I can't tell who that is from that angle.

LANDS: Yes, that's probably the only shot I've got of him.

STONE: That's a nice shot of making ballpoint pens.

LANDS: Is that what he is doing?

STONE: Yes.

LANDS: So generally you have a couple of guys working in there at one time.

STONE: It depends on how much adult supervision we have. Bishop Frank Allen, of course, had a lot of contacts and he had a lot of pull with people. Young people would come with the understanding that they would get good college recommendations from him and so forth. I'm not sure they had a formal understanding, but that's how it turned out. So Bishop Allen was able to keep a pretty good crop of volunteers in the turning room, four or five people. That has fallen off, but you need almost one-to-one in the turning room. Depending on what I'm doing, the more complicated jobs, one person does the job under my direct supervision with maybe one

other person watching and then the less complicated jobs. I can supervise two or three people myself, but yes, it is very intensive in terms of the adult supervisors that you need.

LANDS: I also noticed that the kids seemed to be very good about not running. They were running through every other space in the house, but not that room.

STONE: Well, I'm 6'2". I'm well over 200 pounds. I've been doing this all my life so I hope that I can maintain law and order. But also my argument, and I think it's convincing, is that these are extremely dangerous machines and that they are not going to be roughhousing around the machine that can cut their hands off. I sometimes have to tell kids that twice, but they get that idea pretty quickly, I think, but I appreciate that. I find it a little bit frustrating that they are so wild sometimes, but you know my objective is to be there for the kids and to help them to do things rather than to make sure things get done, and that of course, is central to what we do. If you're there to do projects, you're not going to be there very long. But if you're there for the kids, then you might be there as long as I have been.

LANDS: Tell me what we've missed about Emmaus House that you think I should know.

STONE: Well, I guess I hope I've indicated some of the opportunities that Emmaus House has given me over the years—the opportunity to work as a teenager in a paid job in a day care center, which was very important to me.

As I say, I live in the Chosewood Park community, which is about a mile that way, and as a single man working for a state salary, I perhaps could not afford to buy a house in a community where I did not need the inner city survival skills that I've developed here at Emmaus House. Part of that is situational awareness, part of that is being respectful and demanding respect, and you've seen a little bit of that in woodshop. A lot of it is being a good neighbor, making sure your neighbors are looking out for you and you for them. So that has been a real opportunity that

Emmaus House has created—for me to be a homeowner in an Emmaus House-like community. And it's not by accident that I'm a mile from here. If I was much further, I would be further than I need to be (for one thing, I work right up the other end of Capitol Avenue right there), but if I was any closer, I would be closer than I need to be. There's a lot of back and forth between our two communities. Nick Martin was my neighbor at one point. I didn't know him by name, but I'd seen him around. Mae Helen's grandchildren lived over by me at one point. So there's a lot of back and forth between our two communities, but they are separate communities, although they are very similar. And I like the space of being in a different community but I like the interactions and, of course as I say, it's what I have learned at Emmaus House that has allowed me to become a part of that community, which is important to me. I guess I can't think of anything else we haven't covered.

LANDS: You had asked me earlier what was going to come out of the project. Do you have any ideas of how the history of Emmaus House could be used or developed?

STONE: Oh, I'm sure you're familiar with the book, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*. It's the biography of a woman who was very much a part of our community and part of our struggle. In fact that's her picture right there. I think there's potential for something like that to come out of this. I would like to see something that was more popularly available than just, you know, a historical archive somewhere that very few people would want to wade through unless they were trying to condense it down some.

LANDS: Yes, even the book is hard to acquire now.

STONE: Is it?

LANDS: It's available on the used book markets, but again, that's not easy access. You know,

it's not in most of the bookstores around here, so it's tough to track down. Thanks for your time today!

[Break in recording.]

STONE: Ms. Matthews had a song that she would sing at various occasions and one of the verses was that "I don't know, but I've been told, the streets is pearly and the gates is gold." I told her from what I had been told it was the gates that were pearly and the streets that were gold. She told me I could set my mind at ease. As long as I had that kind of attitude, I wasn't never going to see either one of them. [Both laugh.]