

“The Early Years”
(A Collection of Memories from Members)

Those Were the Days

Joan Kleinrock, Bethesda, MD
Rocky Stone Humanitarian Award 1992
SHHH Board of Trustees 1982-1988
Former SHHH Chapter Development Coordinator, 1981-1998

I was searching for meaningful work that could make a difference. Out of the blue, I saw a newspaper notice of an initial meeting of a Chapter for an organization for people with hearing loss. I'd never had anyone to share my hearing loss with. The founder Howard Stone would be there. I could barely wait for that day to come. I was tempted to call him before the meeting. I looked his address up in the phone book. Wow – he lived on Lily Stone Drive. A street named after him? Was his wife's name Lily? I restrained myself, secretly hoping this was a timely omen.



At the small meeting, Mr. Stone asked for help. (I later learned he was then considering throwing in the towel because he couldn't do alone all that needed to be done. Then I came along.) I offered to help. He asked me to come to his house to talk. I did. His mannerism and relaxed casual appearance (that belied his unknown “former life”) calmed my nervousness and gave me confidence.

I listened, readily embracing his vision of the organization. It excited me. Instinctively, I knew this was a gift and what I would do with my life. Then he said he wanted to start SHHH Chapters. Would I write a guidance manual for people based on the self help principal? I had absolutely no qualifications to do this but darn it, I wanted to be a part of this so knowing my confidence curve was exceeding my ability, I said I would try.

I did know self help meant taking responsibility for oneself, learning, and being assertive but not aggressive. It did not mean giving the hungry man the fish, but teaching him how to fish. It meant teaching, sharing, offering support and encouragement to others to help themselves and in turn, help each other. So for a month, I barricaded myself at home in a room with a typewriter. To this day, much of that early guidance is still in the Chapter manual.

I just knew someone “up there” directed me to this new life. Reflecting, I'm certain Rocky knew he'd found a very green, somewhat immature and inexperienced, often stubborn person. I was a challenge, I was raw material with potential buried deep that I did not know I had – but he did. Another gift, one in which I would grow to be all that I could be and do. The bonus was help for my hearing loss. I once felt that in many ways hearing loss did not allow you to be who you are. I was wrong.

Rocky became my mentor, my friend and at times, my father. He was a builder of people. I was only one of hundreds of people who as a result of his influence, made positive changes. Around Rocky, you reached deep inside yourself to live up to his expectations.

So I, along with our small staff, grew as we dedicated ourselves to the foundation of a national organization of and for people with hearing loss. We were privileged to share a man's dream becoming a reality, a man undeterred by commitment to hard work, a man with an intense drive and determination to make a difference.

Regressing, once the Chapter manual was done, I began going to "the office" daily. (The office with two back to back desks, one file cabinet and piles of books all about, was the lower level family room at the home on Lily Stone drive. No – Mrs. Stone was not Lily, but Ahme – short for Alice Marie.) Each day, either Rocky or I would make one or two daily trips to the post office box in the hope of any new memberships. If there were any, Rocky would sit right down and write a letter of appreciation. It was slow going but it was uphill. One day as Rocky was writing a letter, he looked up and said how does this sound? "We want to make hearing loss an issue of national concern." With that our rally cry was born.

Progress includes taking risks. The decision to rent a small office in 1983 was a risk we had to take if we were to grow. Was it another lucky omen that we ended up on a street named "Battery Lane?" Luck was with us because we gained two full time volunteers and several part time helpers. We were a strong team and SHHH grew in leaps and bounds – especially the Chapters. We asked them to "think nationally but act locally," and they did – enthusiastically. By the end of 1983, there were 60 local organizations. A unified voice was surfacing.

Most people remember a laughing joking Rocky with that Irish sense of humor. There was not much of that in the early days. This was serious business in uncharted territory. We did not know what we didn't know! He was careful and confident, but things did not always go as he expected. For example, he did not understand why people did not jump to join the minute they heard of SHHH. Seeing this was not going to be as easy as he thought, his determination deepened.

Money was only a tool to Rocky – but a necessary one. He worried about it but did not show it. He knew it was his responsibility and did not want our creativity affected by it. Incredibly, sometimes it seemed miraculously, money came. Still, every penny was turned over twice. It would be more than four years until wages could be paid – and never did Rocky take any money. He gave it instead.

In 1988 fire destroyed our offices; I can still see the look of devastation on Rocky's face as he stood apart from the rest of us – unapproachable. But if there was any doubt of the value of SHHH to hard of hearing people, the fact that the membership gave over \$80,000 to the "Fire Rebuilding Fund" proved differently.

The office tenor was first and foremost one of inclusion and respect. Rocky kept all of us fully briefed and up to date with everything going on. We shared his and each other's triumphs and problems. We did not feel like we worked FOR Rocky – rather we worked WITH him. Rocky treated staff with the utmost respect and courtesy. We followed his lead.

This was a National office and a tight ship. We were labor intensive and Rocky did expect a great deal. He could be quite firm. Deadlines were carved in cement. There were no

excuses. He was always available to answer questions or provide patient guidance. He taught us to think and to be articulate.

Rocky was a people builder who simply loved humanity. Those touched by him had much to reflect on. He had a keen sense of a person's strengths and pulled it out of them. When praise was merited it was freely given. He either corrected you with gentle guidance, or he was blunt and to the point with criticism – yet it left no wounds because somewhere in there, you knew you were loved and respected. Tutored by Rocky, we grew – as individuals and as a team.

The greatness of HLAA today and the differences we now enjoy as people with hearing loss is largely because SHHH/HLAA, founded and influenced by Rocky, continues to grow through empowered people. Today, Rocky would remind us that we did this together, and together we will move on. Personally, I am still in awe of the privileged opportunity I had to be a small part of making a difference.

My last communication with Rocky was by email. I believe he knew his earthly life was ending. He signed off with two words that will always be with me, “Stay close.”

Two Sisters: The Estimable Volunteers

Marjorie Boone and Betty Bonvillian, VA

M. Boone, Rocky Stone Humanitarian Award 1991

M. Boone, SHHH Board of Trustees 1984-1989

Northern Virginia Chapter (Nova One), Arlington, VA

Central Virginia Chapter, Charlottesville, VA

Collectively, two sisters, Betty Bonvillian and Marjorie Boone, have 50 years of volunteer time in helping people live with hearing loss and creating awareness.



In 1981 when Betty and Marjorie first heard about Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH), now the Hearing Loss Association of America, they not only found support and information for themselves, but they discovered thousands of others who needed help with hearing loss. Betty and Marjorie had combined households in Arlington, Virginia in 1980. Marjorie, having retired as a Foreign Service officer in part due to her hearing loss, had a hereditary hearing loss. Betty, a Navy widow and retired from teaching, did not have a hearing loss at that time, but was supersensitive to the problem.

The sisters joined a cadre of four early members who volunteered at the SHHH National office weekly (every Wednesday) and did work that the small staff did not have the time or expertise to do. Betty enjoyed helping with Chapter development and Marjorie researched partial hearing loss and wrote a column for the magazine. Early on they were also a major instrument in launching the Nova One Chapter and in more recent years initiating the younger Central Virginia Chapter.

Betty: Living with my sister full time was different from our frequent visits together over the years. But when you spend every moment of your day with someone who can't hear well and you don't know anything about getting across the communication gap, it is very difficult. Marjorie just wanted to stay by herself, so I dragged her out the door.

In 1981, there was a notice in the paper about Rocky Stone, founder of SHHH, starting an organization. There was a meeting at the local library and we were so desperate I said we '*we are going*'! We went and I said '*count us in.*'

Marjorie: I responded to what I heard that evening at the library. This was the first time I heard someone [Rocky] talk about the notion that you could improve your situation with hearing loss. I was not deaf, but very hard of hearing, and no one really talked about that situation.

I learned three things from Rocky Stone at that first meeting, and they have followed me all of my life:

1. You are not alone.
2. There are things you can learn about your hearing loss and you can do something about it.
3. There is help out there but you have to go find it.

When I decided to try to research hearing loss, I was shocked to find topics only under the word "deaf." There was nothing for people with partial hearing loss or people who considered themselves not deaf and not hearing. Rocky Stone changed all that. "Hard of hearing" is now in the lexicon.

A Memory of the Beginning

Joanne Gilmore, McLean, VA

October 19, 1979 was a memorable day in my life and my husband, Joe's. The WALL STREET JOURNAL headlined a feature story by David Ignatius entitled, *In from the Cold: A Former Master Spy Spins Intriguing Yarns of his Past Intrigues*; with a subtitle: *Now Organizing for SHHH*. Our reaction was immediate: "Let's see what we can do to help him." (At the time Joe and I were involved in disability issues, I as an associate editor and staff writer for a national education newspaper focusing on the latter issues, and Joe as an administrator in the U.S. Department of Education's Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.)



To no surprise, the JOURNAL could not disclose Rocky's address when we inquired, so I wrote a letter to Rocky for the JOURNAL to forward to him. A few weeks later, this warm, brilliant man called, came to our then home in McLean, Virginia, and discussed in depth and with keen insight, his impressive vision for SHHH. People who are hard of hearing, he said, constitute one of the largest groups in America – 20 million – and there is no reason why we – currently silent and devoid of cohesiveness, can't become a significant constituency, a lobbying force for education and positive change. He told us that he was seeking people with liaison on

many levels – on Capitol Hill, in government and educational agencies, as well as community action volunteers who would establish Chapters throughout the country.

Each Chapter would offer an opportunity for the hard of hearing and their families, as well as specialists on hearing impairment, to share their knowledge and experiences, develop coping strategies and mobilize – in short, educate and advocate. At the conclusion of our first meeting, it was clear to Joe and me that we had met not only a gifted, committed leader and creative problem solver but also a beautiful human being.

We pledged our help and made a small donation which, coincidentally, turned out to be my membership number in SHHH: 007! (CIA take note!) At subsequent meetings at our home with disability specialists from federal agencies and university special education departments and the editor-in-chief of *Counterpoint*, Rocky apprised us of developments to date and outlined current and future strategies for SHHH (now HLAA). A lively exchange of ideas would ensue.

Rocky, in turn, put me in touch with a few wonderful volunteers from the metropolitan Washington, DC area – people whose names you may be familiar with – Marjorie Boone, Betty Bonvillian, Carolyn Crawford, Joan Kleinrock, and the then “kids,” Joe Duarte and Virginia Crocker – among others – and in 1980 we joined with Rocky to launch and grow the first Chapter of SHHH. The rest is history.

Ann Liming, Chair of the Rocky Stone Remembrance Committee, wisely asks: “How have you been touched or made better by Rocky?” In the brief space left, two words say it all: transformative and transcendent. In one of our last conversations, I told him privately what he had meant to me, how he had helped me confront lifelong, progressive “auditory neuropathy,” what a “role model” he had been for me, for us all. (By then he was blind but doing well after months of post-cochlear implant rehabilitation; still full of spunk.) “You took your suffering and transformed it; you turned it into a gift to help others,” I told him. Now I would say “thank you for the gift, you were *and still are* – in spirit.” Your light still shines.

Pat Reflects on Our Beginnings

Pat Clickener, Chicago, IL
SHHH Board of Trustees 1982-1990
Past President, 1984-1986

In these memories, I am going to use the original name of the organization, SHHH, instead of HLAA, because that is what it was during the years that I knew and worked closely with Rocky Stone. (That does not mean that I am adverse to the name Hearing Loss Association of America.)

I learned of SHHH in 1981 from an AARP magazine article. I sent in my membership and got a membership card. A few months later, I called Rocky (I had an interpreter help me with the call...his son Michael assisted him), saying that I was going to drive to the east coast for vacation that October and that I would like to meet him at the SHHH office. We laughed later because “the office” was simply his basement. I expected a 30-minute courtesy meeting; we spent about 10



hours that day, deep in conversation about the organization, the great need for it, and its long-term potential.

Shortly thereafter, at Rocky's request, I joined the Board of SHHH and became vice president. I set out in Chicago to launch local Chapters. Thus, I've been a member 27 years, have served on the National Board as president from 1984 to 1986, and worked fulltime in the National office in 1983-1984. Rocky certainly was persuasive when recruiting workers for the mission!

Rocky and I conducted marathon TTY calls throughout 1982, discussing plans for SHHH and trying to come up with ways to fund the organization. When I flew east for periodic Board meetings, Ahme and Rocky very graciously invited me to stay in their guest quarters, so our conversations about SHHH often extended to mealtimes too. Rocky and I, along with Joan Kleinrock developing Chapters, and Carol Lingley, consummate business manager, spent an extreme number of hours weekly working closely as a team in those early years in the Battery Lane office. We were all volunteers. Rocky not only did the yeoman work to build the organization, he even wielded hammer and nails to build wood shelving units for that first rented office because SHHH didn't have funds for real office furniture.

Rocky's encouragement that prompted my taking on the volunteer staff role in Bethesda obviously changed my life in many ways. Leaving the corporate environment for a small office with a big mission gave me many opportunities to use new skills, learn new things, see the world a new way and step out of my comfort zone. I watched Rocky "schmooze" with all kinds of people – professionals, members, and the media – and I picked up some networking and people skills that have served me well. Obviously, my life and those of millions of others has been enriched by the end results of many SHHH initiatives in the early years.

I strongly believe that the existence of SHHH, which started in 1979 and developed a strong reputation and a large membership by 1990, was vital to the advancement of the interests of people with hearing loss when the *Americans with Disabilities Act* was developed and passed. Were it not for SHHH, I suspect that hearing loss issues would not have factored into that legislation in any meaningful way since there was no other "voice" to represent our interests. That "impact on life" is enormous, and is probably Rocky's greatest achievement as the "father of SHHH."

In the earliest years, information resources were scant, so every journal that was printed, every special report that we wrote, every chart/poster/document that was produced was a learning opportunity for those of us on staff. Rocky had a knack for connecting with the key people in the field of hearing loss and remediation, and he got them involved in appropriate ways in the SHHH mission and educational effort.

The first convention (SHHH-CAGO) in 1984 provided many learning opportunities, and set the stage for subsequent conventions that further broadened educational outreach through workshops and the exhibit hall. Rocky was so committed to the success of SHHH-CAGO that he even was seen carrying a big movie screen from one workshop area to another when no other person was around to do that!

It was in the exhibit hall at the 1988 convention in Rochester that I first learned about the potential for a cochlear implant for myself. I used that information to pursue an implant and have been back in the world of sound for over 20 years. A tremendous benefit for my life! In turn, I have used that experience in speaking at implant forums, writing articles, and providing one-on-

one information to more than 100 hopeful persons with hearing loss. Rocky always took advantage of the opportunity to teach others about hearing loss and to connect that to the SHHH mission.

Rocky's focus was on people. He believed in the ability of people to learn and to develop coping skills, and then use them effectively to improve their own lives and the lives of others. Despite the fact that the word "people" was in the name of the organization (Self Help for Hard of Hearing People), but not in the acronym (SHHH), Rocky never missed a chance to talk about the emphasis on people and why there was not that final "p" in the acronym. SHHHP would sound too much like "sheep." He always said that people with hearing loss were not just a bunch of sheep who would docilely accept conditions that neglected their needs or ignored their hearing loss.

Rocky was an "idea man." He had so much enthusiasm for what was needed for people with hearing loss that he could spin off ideas for projects at a rapid pace. It would have been wonderful if we could have pursued them all, because the world would be a much better place as a result. He had an infectious laugh, and there were times we needed his broad sense of humor to cut through the stress of an office with so much to do and so few people to do it. Rocky laughed with his eyes and whole face; it was easy to know when he was happy and having a good time. He was the one who pointed out the letter that came to SHHH addressed to him and started with the salutation, Dear Porky...and he laughed even more than the rest of us. Rocky always knew the need for SHHH and even in the blackest moments when its survival looked dismal, he was unwilling to throw in the towel. He contemplated it and agonized, but he never gave up. The existence of the organization, 30 years later, is solid testimony to his tenaciousness in those early years when the task was so monumental.

Rocky Exemplified Real Leadership

Sam Trychin, Ph.D., Erie, PA

Author, Educator of People with Hearing Loss

In 1983, I was still a relatively new faculty member at Gallaudet University and teaching stress management classes there in the evenings. Someone told me about SHHH, so I called and made an appointment to meet with Rocky. He inquired about what I was doing at Gallaudet and I mentioned the stress management classes. Rocky suggested that I start a similar program during the day at the National office for the staff and volunteers. Ten staff members and volunteers



Sam with daughters and wife Janet

agreed to meet once a week for eight weeks. Most had some level of hearing loss and one or two people were family members. During the sessions we discussed problems people were experiencing related to hearing loss and shared what they had found helpful in dealing with those problems. In between I went to the library at Gallaudet to see what I could find that might be useful information.

Rocky was most supportive of the *Coping Strategies* group sessions and encouraged us to continue beyond the eight weeks, and we did continue for 19 weeks. Following a summer break,

some members persisted and we continued for a total of 32 weeks. Rocky always wanted to be kept up to date on what we were learning. That initial group was the origin of the *Living with Hearing Loss* program that has been so successful over the years since 1983. It has been presented in 46 states of the United States and across Canada.

I found Rocky to be a unique individual in that he did not require adherence to a set of principles or rules that he had established and believed in. Instead, he encouraged people to develop their own, unique way of contributing to the welfare of themselves and to other people who have hearing loss and their family, friends, and coworkers. In the same way, he encouraged local Chapters to find their own unique style, appropriate to their local environment and circumstances. I believe that Rocky Stone exemplified what real leadership is all about – bringing about the best in other people.

Volunteer/Advocate for All People with Hearing Loss

*John Darby, Former Executive Director
Hearing Society for the Bay Area, CA*

It was about 1979 that I noted an article entitled “What About Us – the Four Million Hard of Hearing Catholics” which appeared in what I believe was called “Listening” – a publication for Deaf Catholics, written by someone named “Rocky Stone.” I had served as Executive Director of the Hearing Society for the Bay Area since 1956, had been on the Board of the (old) American Hearing Society, was active in ASHA, and Rocky's question really “hit a nerve.”



I wrote him what I recall as being a long letter, and shared with him my own transition from being a clinical audiologist to the director of a non-profit agency dedicated to rehabilitative and social services, advocacy, and public education about hearing loss. Thus started a long and wonderful relationship. When Rocky organized SHHH and established a national “Professional Advisory Board” I was one of its first members. In those days I traveled to the Washington, DC area relatively frequently, so I was able to attend meetings with him, other SHHH volunteers and carry out concomitant responsibilities with the other national organizations with which I was involved. I myself had gone from being not only a “provider” but also a “consumer” due to an iatrogenic hearing loss suffered some years earlier and it was, I believe, in 1989 that I wore my first binaural hearing aids to an SHHH meeting in the Washington, DC area.

Rocky was, to me, the ideal “volunteer/advocate” for ALL people with hearing loss. He did not decry alternate methods of communication but accepted whatever was necessary for people to communicate. He also fought steadfastly for public recognition of hearing loss as an issue of national concern, and for greater understanding of the needs of hard of hearing people in particular. He had the courage of his convictions, and did not belittle the efforts of others even though he might not have always agreed with them. He understood, and practiced, the art of diplomacy as well as that of advocacy. The support he received from Ahme was of immeasurable help in all aspects of his life – both personal and as a volunteer/advocate.

Lessons for the Professionals

Jerome C. Goldstein, MD., Wellington, FL

Past Executive Vice-President,

American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery

I am an Otolaryngologist and was executive vice president of the American Academy of Otolaryngology from 1984 to 1995. I forget exactly where I met Rocky; it had to be at one of the many meetings I attended involving people with hearing loss in the mid 1980's; I was very impressed with him and wanted to set up a meeting with him. In his characteristic frank manner, when I told him who I was, he let me know he did not like my predecessor, found him pompous and not willing to listen to him, but was willing to "give me a try." Well, that meeting began a friendship that lasted until I left the Washington, DC area.



Rocky taught me a lot, especially about the communicative needs of people with hearing loss. Following our first official meeting in my office, we arranged to meet for lunch near his office every month or two, and we did this for years. At our first luncheon Rocky taught me where to sit so the sunlight was not in his eyes and he could see my lips. He introduced me to the Williams Pocketalker, an amplifier he could put on the table between us to hear me better. He told me what an ear doctor should and should not do when working with a deaf patient in the office: for example, only talk to the patient when you are facing him/her, not when you are standing on the side cleaning out an ear. He had so many helpful tips I wanted him to be able to communicate to our specialty, so I asked him to write an article for our monthly Academy Bulletin, and appear in person at one of our annual meetings.

Rocky's past life was no secret to me. He attributed his hearing loss to exposure to explosives in World War II. In his 25 years with the CIA he was intimately involved with the 1953 coup that restored the Iranian shah to his throne, and he was chief of operations for the Soviet bloc division of the CIA for years. We never talked about this when we were together, but he often let me know of his admiration for Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense (1961-1968) and that he appreciated my quiet conservatism. I never talked in public about what I knew about his past, and I must admit I was surprised when I saw the title of his obituary in the Washington Post: "Hearing Impaired Activist and Spy Rocky Stone Dies." There were no secrets about his past!

Rocky was a great man and a good friend. By founding SHHH, he was able to teach the world everything he taught me personally and more. His legacy will be long lasting.

Incredible Gift of Connecting With People

*Donna Wayner, Ph.D., Latham, NY
President, Hear Again, Inc.*

In 1984, I was asked to join with Jerry Goldstein, MD, Chief of Otolaryngology at Albany Medical Center in Albany, NY to present a workshop at one of the early Self Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH) Conventions, this one held in Chicago. We presented a program which described our Hearing Rehabilitation Center at Albany Med of which I was director. It was at this gathering that I first met Rocky Stone. Because our goals for providing assistance to people living with hearing loss ran parallel, our friendship was immediate.



Over the years, I had the privilege of presenting at numerous SHHH Conventions and worked with Rocky on various initiatives for blending organizations as well as enhancing services to people with hearing loss. I was always received by Rocky with an open heart and open arms. He had an incredible gift of being able to “connect.” He used his gift generously and gave spontaneously. Although he had a significant hearing loss, he was a remarkable communicator using his observation skills to their limit. Words were not the only way Rocky exchanged ideas, thoughts and feelings, it was with his whole being.

That’s what made him so special. He was a genuine gentleman and a creative and energetic thinker whose ability to bring people together resulted in an organization that has been a help and hope for so many people living with hearing loss here in the U.S. and throughout the world.

It’s a real joy to remember him and to have been his friend.

A Professional Connection

*Judy Harkins, Ph.D., Washington, DC
Gallaudet University Technology Access Program*

One of Rocky Stone’s early advocacy efforts was involving Gallaudet University with SHHH/HLAA. He convinced Jerry Lee, Gallaudet president at that time, to convene a working group for that purpose. A mutual friend, who has been an important advocate in the deaf community for many important causes, told Rocky to ask that I be appointed to the working group. Thus began my long association with SHHH/HLAA.



I served as a volunteer at the 1986 Convention at Stanford University. Soon after, I began to include SHHH members in consumer studies we did regarding visual communication technologies; for example, computer-assisted note taking for Chapter meetings at the time that LCD projectors first came out; and a study of preferences in closed captioning. Later, prodded by

Brenda Battat, I became more heavily involved in the difficult problem of digital telephone interference with hearing aids, and my group at Gallaudet has worked ever since with SHHH/HLAA on that issue.

Rocky and I served on a number of advisory committees and panels together, and while he was executive director, I saw him often. I am grateful to him for organizing hard of hearing people into an association that deftly mixes personal and social connection with the more traditional functions of advocacy and public awareness. I cherish his friendship and his sense of humor, his openness, his serious dedication to hard of hearing people and family.

One of Rocky's many talents was the ability to attract excellent people to his staff and to leadership positions in the association. Brenda Battat, as just one example, is one of the most effective advocates I have ever met, and a joy to work with.

Rocky's grace and strength during his journey through macular degeneration were such an inspiration. The restoration of hearing with his cochlear implant brought him such joy. What a great man! We all miss him but he is always with us in the memory of his huge contributions to individuals and humankind, and the many many friendships he formed.

Rocky Influences Vocational Rehabilitation

*Pat Tomlinson, Brick, NJ
Rehabilitation Consultant*

My memories of Rocky go back to the early '80s when I met him at a meeting of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Committee on Deafness. Rocky tenaciously attended our annual spring meeting for many years and accomplished his mission of expanding the charge of the Committee to include people who are hard of hearing. That change in committee focus, along with Rocky's guidance and support, had a tremendous impact on the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program nationally. He influenced the fourth edition of the Model State Plan for VR Services for People who are Deaf (MSP) to include a Chapter concerning the unique service needs of people who are hard of hearing. The network of rehabilitation professionals who came to understand this as a separate group of people with unique employment issues and needs grew until, in 2008, the fifth edition of the MSP addressed "hard of hearing" throughout the entire document. VR agencies nationwide now realize the unique employment needs of people who are hard of hearing – beyond the provision of hearing aids – and provide services to meet these communication, psychosocial, technology, and employment needs.

Rocky autographed my copy of his book, *An Invisible Condition*, "To Pat for her great influence on my life..." That was Rocky! He made you feel very special and greatly appreciated; when in fact it was Rocky who had the great influence. He was tough – he was tender – he was serious – he was an entertainer – he touched systems – he touched individuals – he cared so much!



The last sentence in that book says, “And so, instead of saying goodbye, I’ll simply say, The torch has been passed to you. Run as hard as you can.” I hope we have met his expectations for bringing “hard of hearing” issues and needs into full VR awareness. I believe it wouldn’t have happened without your sage intervention, Rocky.

An Early Volunteer

Barbara Liss Chertok, Sarasota, FL
Frequent Hearing Loss Magazine Contributor

I met Rocky Stone when the thought of forming SHHH was still germinating in his mind. As soon as he founded SHHH in 1979, I became one of its first members and subsequently a volunteer at the National office in Bethesda. I served on various Chapter boards and committees and volunteered at the Bethesda office in the 1990s. For a time I taught speech reading classes at the office and attended and presented at several SHHH/HLAA Conventions.



I am a freelance writer, and my interviews and other articles appear in *Hearing Loss Magazine* and other journals. I remained in contact with Rocky and Ahme over the years.

An Atmosphere of Commonality, Understanding and Humor

Mary Greene, Rochester, NY
Former SHHH Volunteer and Staff Member
Rochester NY Chapter

While attending a Deaf Awareness Week at the Washington, DC Public Library in the early '80s I came upon a small, slim, green and white brochure with information for helping hard of hearing people. I took one and became very excited! I contacted Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc. (SHHH) and became a volunteer for this newly established organization. I met Rocky and a handful of other volunteers. (We remained volunteers until 1985 when we had grown enough to begin salaries. Rocky took no salary then or ever.)



I was deaf and since no one knew sign language as I did, I learned to lip read. We were a mixture of deaf, hard of hearing and hearing people. We became friends working in a wonderful atmosphere of commonality, understanding and humor. My job was to help with office tasks and mailing. I learned the computer and began setting up the membership data and loved it. Rocky called me “Speedy.”

Our third convention was held in Rochester in 1988 where Rocky presented me with the Keystone Award – a very proud occasion for me. I am glad that I was part of SHHH helping to make a difference for hard of hearing people.



Our SHHH organization grew by leaps and bounds. I have been a member of Chapters in Maryland and New York and I am currently a member of the Rochester, NY Chapter. After I retired I was blessed to see Rocky and Ahme at National conventions and at New York state conferences. I miss my “Boss” very much and cannot thank him enough for everything I learned, such as helping myself and gaining confidence, and for the opportunity to know others like me who have a hearing loss.

Thank you Rocky and our great Hearing Loss Association of America.

The Tangled Cords

*Nancy Dietrich, Columbia, IL
SHHH Board of Trustees 1984-1986
Greater St. Louis MO Chapter*

I've had hearing loss since birth and have used hearing aids since age 8. I thought I was doing okay in the hearing world but did wish I could meet people with hearing loss. At that time, I only knew two other hard of hearing persons who were as young as I was.

In early 1982 I attended an SHHH meeting for the first time in Hinsdale, Illinois, and met Pat Clickener (who would later move to Maryland and volunteer in the young office) who encouraged me to be a leader of the Chicago West Suburban Chapter. I was introduced to the loop at that meeting and couldn't believe how well I could hear with my hearing aid on telecoil. Since then, I sure learned a lot about assistive devices and types of hearing loss. I even spent lots of money, buying different assistive devices!



In May 1982 I first met Rocky Stone at the meeting of SHHH Chicago #1 Chapter in Niles, Illinois. Several times in Chicago, the West Suburban Chapter members and I, along with six other Chicago area group members, met with Rocky in preparing for the first National convention that was held in May 1984 in Chicago.

I was elected to the National Board of Trustees at that convention. By that time, the trustees had learned how to use personal assistive listening devices. In fall 1984, at the board meeting in Bethesda, Maryland, Rocky had the trustees over to his house. Several trustees, using their own devices with their hearing aids on telecoil, were chatting with each other on the patio and soon our cords got entangled. One was using her PocketTalker and someone remarked to her that she was talking to herself because she had pointed the mike towards herself! Rocky had watched us and chuckled.

Because of what I learned through SHHH, I worked with my church to install an assistive listening system. My employer, with my input, installed a system in the auditorium. At work, during division meetings, I used a microphone with my hearing aid via direct audio input. That made it easier for me to hear my associates. Thus, through SHHH/HLAA and training workshops at work, I developed into a more assertive person.

I found Rocky to be a fine, compassionate person and thanks to him, I met many wonderful people with hearing loss.

