

## **“Chapter and State Development”** **(A Collection of Memories from Members)**

### **With His Vision, We Built a Chapter**

*Carrie and Dave Welter, Augusta, GA*  
*Founders, Augusta GA Chapter*

**C**arrie was the founder of Hearing Loss Association of Augusta, Georgia (SHHH – Augusta, Georgia Chapter) in March 1997 and served as president until September 2001. Dave began serving as president in September 2002 and kept the helm until September 2008. Carrie became a member of SHHH/HLAA in the early 1990s. We both attended our first SHHH Convention in Orlando in 1994. We have since attended all but two.



Carrie remembers meeting Rocky at a Georgia State Conference when he was the keynote speaker. “I hung on every word and later, met the Stones, both Rocky and Ahme.” Carrie was awed by their devotion to each other, their impressive and commanding presence, their love for SHHH and their leadership in SHHH. It made a lasting impression on her and she began sending to and receiving from them annual Christmas cards which continue with Ahme today. Carrie remembers what an honor it was to receive the Nancy Wessner State Coordinator Award from Rocky.



We both looked forward to being with the Stones at each convention and were sad and dismayed at the next convention following Rocky’s death. A real void existed but Ahme’s presence was a great comfort to us.

From the beginning, Rocky was a powerful role model for Carrie’s work in SHHH/HLAA. Dave thrived on his writings and felt the love and support he conveyed to volunteers for the organization. In Rocky’s gentle and persevering way, he provided uncompromising, honest and clear leadership while displaying understanding and incentive. Rocky was a giant both figuratively and literally in our life.

## Appreciating the Value of Leadership Training

*Gayle Capps, Woodstock, GA  
NW Metro Atlanta Chapter*

I am really, really for the education of our members both about hearing loss as well as learning how to conduct meetings; how to lead, and a host of activities that many hard of hearing people neglect to learn because they think they can't do it.

All of us know our limitations, or I should say our perceived limitations brought on by hearing loss. I seem to recall that at one time a Chapter's president would "train" their vice president to assume the president's duties when the term was ended. The idea is that no one should feel left out and hard of hearing people are excellent trainers in working with other people who are hard of hearing.

As Rocky Stone used to tell me...You can't?? I don't hear anybody saying you can't do anything! And you know what? Rocky was absolutely right and I'm so grateful to have had the chance to know that wonderful leader.



## Taking the 't out of the Word Can't

*Barbara Hunter, San Antonio, TX  
Founder, San Antonio TX Chapter*

Rocky Stone – so many wonderful memories. In early 1980 at my family's insistence I enrolled in lip reading and sign language classes. The teacher had met Rocky when she was at Gallaudet University and she told the class about an organization called Self Help for Hard of Hearing People that Rocky had started the previous year. I became a member.

On June 24, 1980 (the beginning of a new life for me), Rocky came to San Antonio. I received a letter inviting me to attend his presentation. My husband Bob took me to the meeting and it was here that I discovered assistive devices such as the FM system. After the meeting, Rocky and Bob talked...Rocky told me later he thought I was mute as I let Bob do all the talking!



*Barbara  
with husband Bob*

I am not sure why Rocky singled me out but he came back to San Antonio on two occasions and called me to meet with him and discuss starting an SHHH group. The thought scared me. How do you do those things when you can't hear?

The third visit he called again and I asked Bob, "Why does he keep calling me?" I met him again though. Again, I said, "I don't know how to start a group. I just "can't" do that." He looked me in the eye,

put his hand on my shoulder and said “I want you to take that ‘t’ off of that word. You use it too much.”

The rest is history. Our Chapter will celebrate 23 years this year. I join with so many who can say, “My life changed because of Rocky Stone and his wonderful work for people with hearing loss.”

## Rocky’s Influence Led to Advocacy

*Edith R. Shapiro, Peekskill, NY*

*Westchester NY Chapter*

I joined the Westchester, NY Chapter of SHHH in 1983 as it was being formed. I became president of the Chapter after a few years and remained in that post for five or more years. We opened an Assistive Device Center at the Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, NY. The Medical Center donated a room for our use once a week and we were able to install devices, telephone aids, and a television set to demonstrate and let people with hearing loss try.



I knew Rocky personally after the first convention in Chicago in 1983. I remember distinctly, after the speaker finished, questions were taken. Among the statements made by the speaker was one relating to hard of hearing Christians faring well with the new approaches to hearing loss. I asked Rocky whether that excluded Jews and other religions and he gave, of course, a beautiful, inclusive answer reassuring us all. I was very impressed and pleased.

Westchester SHHH had the first “Better Hearing Fair” probably in all of the USA in 1986. Many vendors and speakers and organizations participated. We invited Rocky to come and be the speaker and he immediately accepted. That is when I realized that he would travel at his own expense and support Chapter efforts enthusiastically. During his stay in Westchester we became better acquainted and friends.

As my hearing got worse and worse I was very unsure what to do. After Rocky received his CI and at his first convention using it, I realized that his eyesight had become worse. I greeted him and realized he could not see me clearly but recognized me by my voice with the CI! We talked about it and due to his influence I decided then to get a CI in 1997. He spoke about it very positively which made me confident.

His philosophy of self help and inclusion affected me a great deal and encouraged my work in advocacy. He was a wonderful warm person, I still miss him.

## People Come First

*Howard and Georgia Potrude, Portage, MI  
Former Michigan State Chapter Coordinator  
Co-founders, MI-SHHH/HLA-MI*

**O**ur Kalamazoo, Michigan Chapter was formed in March 1984. We learned about SHHH and Rocky Stone at that first meeting. When Rocky visited our young Chapter in 1985, we met him in person for the first time. It was the first big event for our Chapter, with the news media present and a very large crowd. The officers of the Kalamazoo Chapter took Rocky out for dinner before the meeting. We were all impressed by his humility and interest in people. He was a very outgoing people person, always taking an interest in you and asking what you are doing in Michigan.



*Howard & Georgia with  
Beth Wilson*

Before Howard met Rocky and became active in SHHH, he kept to himself, rarely socializing with other people. Rocky's interest in people inspired him to start reaching out to help other hard of hearing people, first as president of our local Chapter, then in 1989 accepting National's request to be the first state Chapter coordinator for Michigan! Of course, Georgia was the unofficial partner in this!

We put on our first State Conference in the spring of 1991 in Kalamazoo. Brenda Battat, new to the National office, was our keynote speaker in her first trip to a local SHHH function! After that, Howard invited Ann Liming to join us as state Chapter co-coordinator. Together we planned and put on a state expo every two years. Rocky was our guest at several of these events. His warm friendly personality inspired a lot of people in attendance.

Together, Ann Liming, Georgia and Howard, along with some other dedicated volunteers, started the state level organization that became Hearing Loss Association of Michigan. After serving as State Chapter Coordinator for eleven years, Howard retired from that position. Georgia and Howard still continue to serve on the Board of Trustees for HLA of Michigan as well as leadership positions in our local Chapter.

Rocky Stone was a person who always put others before himself – a people person! We once heard him say, "People come first, then the SHHH organization." We have attended every National Convention since 1986 and were able to get to know Rocky very well. He always called us by name and if Georgia was alone, he would ask, "How is Howard doing?" If Howard was alone, he would ask, "How is Georgia doing?" No matter how busy he was he always had time to "stop and chat."

Since becoming a member of HLAA (local, state, and national), we have learned to "speak up" about our hearing loss and let people know they have to "slow down" when speaking to a hard of hearing individual. Prior to this, we would never let others know we had a hearing loss. Our lives have been greatly enhanced by our involvement over the years with Hearing Loss Association of America and knowing Rocky Stone.

## A Sense of “Homecoming”

*Sister June Casterton, SFP, Cincinnati, OH*  
*SHHH Board of Trustees, 1986-1989*  
*Founder, Dayton OH Chapter*

**R**ocky was a voice for thousands as he named the issues related to “hearing loss.” In the early 1980’s a friend asked if I had seen the SHHH magazine. I was unaware of SHHH. She lent me her magazines and the journey began. I could relate to the articles in the *Journal*. There was a sense of “homecoming” that another person could identify and relate to my experiences as a hard of hearing person.



I wrote to Joan Kleinrock about starting a Chapter in Dayton, OH. Once we received the materials, I utilized the communication staff at St. Elizabeth Medical Center to advertise and invite people to the first meeting. We had a marvelous turnout and steps were begun to hold regular meetings.

A major highlight of those early days was attendance at the first annual convention in Chicago. I attended with two other persons. It was liberating to mingle and share stories with so many other persons seeking answers. It was in Chicago that I met Rocky for the first time. He seemed larger than life yet very approachable. He instilled in us a “can do” attitude and he showed us the way. The use of technology to allow those attending to “hear” via their “t-coil” released energy and excitement among the attendees. The exhibit hall contained one revelation after another. I think most of us were moving from the dark ages into the age of enlightenment.

After the convention I became more active. I served on the National Board from 1986-1989. The Board meetings were a place to be a voice for the “grass roots” and to grow the organization. The gatherings at Rocky’s home before the Board meetings were a time to share stories and to gain insight into what was happening all over the country. The convention workshops developed skills to cope, to communicate, to advocate. It was through the information that I received at the conventions that I decided to pursue a cochlear implant in 1996, which was very successful.

Throughout these years I have had many opportunities in personal and work settings to share and explain the issues related to hearing loss. My life has been greatly enriched through my experience of learning to live well as a hard of hearing person. Rocky and the organization can take a lot of credit for that transformation. Indeed, Rocky’s vision still shines brightly.

## **If It Doesn't Work, Let it Go**

*Ed McGibbon, Brooklyn, NY  
Past President HLAA-NYS  
Past President Manhattan Chapter*

**W**hen I joined SHHH back in early 1990 and was reminded about the yearly convention, I decided to attend my first convention which was in San Diego in 1993. Since I knew no one when I arrived and being a loner, I recall Rocky asked who I was during the welcoming reception by the poolside reception. He said I should attend the welcoming workshop to get all the highlights of the convention. Rocky always had a great memory for people's names and remembered where they were from. When I attended the SHHH Leadership Training in Bethesda, Rocky was one of the speakers who gave us "Tips" on how to be a good local and state leader. I do recall Rocky's quote which stuck with me for many years, "If it doesn't work let it go."



I tried not to depend on that quote, but sometimes things just don't go as planned, and at times I had to let it go, which is not a pleasant feeling to do. Rocky did leave many of us with bright positive thoughts on how to move forward and expand new horizons with hearing loss.

## **November – Founder's Month – A Time for Reflection**

*Kimberly Jenkins, Far Rockaway, NY  
Manhattan NY Chapter*

**M**y name is Kimberly Jenkins and I am a member of the Hearing Loss Association of America–Manhattan Chapter. I lost the majority of my hearing in 2001 after an illness. At first it was hard to participate in everyday activities but after some time I began doing the things that I used to do prior to my hearing loss.

No matter how much my loved ones and co-workers tried to empathize with me and show compassion, they really could not begin to realize what I go through every day. I felt really alone at times. Participating in this organization and getting to know others that are like me has truly been remarkable. I am so happy to have found others that know exactly what I go through.

I have learned so much over the last year and look forward to the newsletters from National as well as the local Chapters each month. None of this would have been possible if not for our founder Rocky Stone. We have made great technological strides over the years but his dedication and passion is the reason why our community continues to make strides towards equality. Each November (the month of our founding in 1979) I will pause and reflect on how his quest for comfort and compassion for all led to this great organization.

## Thanks to Rocky's Influence and Guidance

*Don Senger, Martinez, CA  
First California State Chapter Coordinator  
Co-founder, Diablo Valley CA Chapter*

**R**ocky Stone was a big teddy bear. Or so he told me one day when we were discussing children and he mentioned that his little granddaughter would try to put her arms around him and would tell him he was like a big bear.



I met Rocky when California was hosting the SHHH National Convention at Stanford University. I had only been a Chapter president for about a year and attending a National convention was something new to me. More so since they put me in charge of publicity and I wound up doing a televised interview among other things that prior to joining SHHH, I would never have considered doing.

My first impressions of Rocky were that he was a very outgoing, friendly person that made you feel at ease. During that Stanford convention, Rocky and I met several times and got to know one another to a point that when the convention was over we parted as good friends. Over the years following, I continued to have a close relationship with him in many ways.

It was probably about a year after I met him that Rocky asked me to be the California State Coordinator. I told him I wasn't familiar with the job and asked what a State Coordinator did? He replied that I was the first person to be appointed as a State Coordinator and that I should define the job. His confidence in me to do this job and define it did a lot to increase my self confidence and self esteem. It had been a long time since anyone had shown such belief and reliance on me and this only added to my belief that joining SHHH was one of the best decisions I ever made.

As State Coordinator, I took a month leave of absence from work and visited the Chapters around the state and gave a leadership workshop. I also initiated the first state conference to provide our California members an opportunity to experience a National convention on a smaller scale. As time went on, I realized that California was too big a state to have just one State Coordinator, so I appointed deputy coordinators for Northern and Southern California. Later, we dropped the "deputy" and made each a state Chapter coordinator for Northern and Southern California.

Rocky inspired me to be a leader rather than a follower, and to become more active in helping others who could not hear well. I helped organized our state association and became its first president. I received a presidential appointment to serve on the FCC's Emergency Alert System National Advisory Committee, and for 10 years helped the government and broadcast industry understand the need for captioning of emergency broadcasts, and helped institute screen crawls at the top of the TV screen for emergency bulletins. I founded a California coalition of TV broadcasters, TV captioning agencies, government emergency services agencies, and organizations for the deaf and hard of hearing, and together we brought captioning to local newscasts and emergency broadcasts to California viewers. Our efforts became a model for the rest of the nation. I was also appointed to the State Rehabilitation Council of the California

Department of Rehabilitation to advocate for the needs of hard of hearing people, serving both as a Council member and as Council Chair. There were dozens of other projects to address the needs and wants of hard of hearing people both in my state and nationwide. All thanks to SHHH/HLAA and Rocky's influence, guidance and for being a role model for us all.

Now, 25 years after joining SHHH and founding a local Chapter, I am back again as president of the Diablo Valley Chapter with renewed energy and a new team that will help take our Chapter to new heights in better serving hard of hearing people in our community.

## “Spooky, Isn't It?”

*Marilyn Finn, Walnut Creek, CA*

*Former SHHH/HLAA Chapter Development Coordinator, 1999-2002*

*Past President HLA-California*

**I**n 1999, fresh from California, I started work at SHHH as Chapter Development Coordinator. I was in awe of my job and amazed at the wonderful state coordinators and Chapter leaders that



I was working to support around the United States. I was very earnest in my charge to be the link between the Chapters and the staff. I was also in awe of Rocky Stone, whom I had heard speak many times since joining SHHH in 1984.

Very shortly after I started my new position, Rocky (then retired), phoned and welcomed me to Bethesda and invited me to lunch. Walking down the street with the most accomplished man that I will ever know, who at that time was using a white cane **and** wearing yellow tinted glasses and a cowboy hat, my main thought was to not forget that the man holding my arm could not see. I REALLY did not want to run him into a sidewalk street light. Forgetting that Rocky could not see was easy to do, personality over all.

When we got settled into our seats at the restaurant, Rocky pulled the microphone of his assistive device from inside his shirt, along with a couple of feet of cord, attached the microphone to an empty glass, and I was reintroduced to the world of personal assistive devices.

He asked me how I like living with the snow, having come from California, and other easy things until the awe in my voice must have come down to an acceptable level. Then he asked me what I thought of my job. I told him, “I am completely amazed at the caliber of people that we have in our leadership positions around the country and what they are accomplishing. I had no idea.”

He said that it had always been that way from the very first.

Then he paused for a minute, his eyes twinkled and then he said, “Spooky, isn't it?”



## **New York State Conference**

***Jeannette Kanter, Canandaigua, NY***  
*Past President HLAA-NYS*  
*HLAA Board of Trustees Member*

**M**y fondest memory of Rocky is attending our New York State Conference in 2002. He was terrific as usual with many stories and experiences to keep us all enthralled. I really only got to know him at that conference and we mostly talked seriously about what we were doing in New York State at that time.



## **A Tender Memory**

***Sharon Eisenhauer, Essex, MA***  
*North of Boston MA Chapter*

**I** first met Rocky Stone in 1984 at the Chicago SHHH Convention. We had a nice conversation about why and how Rocky Stone started SHHH in the family room of his home. He enjoyed helping our young Chapters get started and help with their problems. He was amazing and the smartest man I have ever known.



Rocky always shared jokes with SHHH groups at the conventions. He has a wonderful family. His wife, Ahme Stone, and his family went to the SHHH Convention every year – even since he passed away in 2004. I want to thank Ahme for leading the religious services at the conventions. I know that Rocky and Ahme were deeply religious. When I heard that Rocky Stone had passed away I knew that the SHHH convention would never be the same without him there. But I will always remember Rocky in my heart.

His spirit will always be with everyone at the SHHH/HLAA Conventions.

## **He Gave Us Our Tools**

***Ruth Fader, Aventura, FL***  
*Founder, Del Ray FL Chapter*

**I** made regular visits to the SHHH offices for many years when I visited my daughter who lived in Potomac, Maryland. After visiting her and my grandchildren, I would always leave time for a visit to Rocky. Joan Kleinrock, Chapter Development Director, would be there and we would discuss hearing loss, SHHH and our Chapter in Florida, where my husband and I lived.



Originally, we attended Chapter meetings in Boca Raton, but with Rocky's encouragement we started a Chapter in Delray Beach. It was a lot of work to prepare the room and plan a program. The local bank let us use their conference room. My husband would loop the room for the meetings.

One year, during one of the many historical financial crises of SHHH, the Delray Beach Chapter contributed \$750 to the SHHH National office. I still remember Rocky's letter to the Chapter thanking us for the support.

Rocky was an inspiration to all of us to overcome our hearing loss and I will always remember him for giving us the tools to deal with our difficulty in communication with others.

## **From Help with Her Job to SHHH**

*Pam Foody, Circleville, NY*  
*President, HLAA-NYS*

**I**n 1984, I began a new nursing job. One of my co-workers went home to her father who was the president of the Bergen County NJ SHHH Chapter and said "Dad, there is a hard of hearing nurse at work." He would copy articles from his magazine and send them to her. She would give them to me and say, "Here, my father sent you this." After about a year of this, I decided to get my own magazine and joined SHHH National.



The first journal I received had information about the approaching Denver National convention. I attended this convention. There I met other people from New York and was invited to our local Chapter. I have been participating ever since.

I am active in local leadership running meetings and managing Chapter funds. I am a member of the HLAA New York State Association Board serving first as secretary, then vice president and now president. I have been involved in three Walk4Hearing walkathons, and co-chaired the 2008 and 2009 Westchester/Mid-Hudson Walks. I have learned to be comfortable with and assertive about my hearing loss. Because I am kept abreast of current technology, I have a CI and help others to be more comfortable with their hearing loss.

Annually at the National Conventions since Denver, I would see, hear and talk with Rocky. I considered it my annual therapy session. He was SO inspiring! He had this long range vision, a broad picture of what he wanted to see for people with hearing loss. He kept focused on that vision. What I experienced was a caring individual who focused on his long range vision but who never lost sight of, or interest in, the significance of each individual person he came in contact with. When I spoke with him, I never felt rushed and what I had to say mattered. He was never too busy to chat and tell a joke. I am eternally grateful to Rocky for his vision, caring and for the privilege to be part of it. I am also thankful to his wife Ahme for her sacrifices in sharing him with all of us.

## Clyde Black: A Texas Pioneer

*Ouida Black, Temple, TX*

*C. Black, Rocky Stone Humanitarian Award 1999*

*C. Black, SHHH Board of Trustees 1988-1997*

**T**here is absolutely no way I can describe all Rocky Stone did to change our entire lives – from a telephone call regarding the purchase of a loop system that [my husband] Clyde found advertised in a thumb-ed-out little magazine he found in the dentist’s office called *The Journal*. This was some time before the 1984 Chicago Convention which we were unable to attend. We did make the California Convention and every one since until Clyde started having strokes and ultimately died.

At Rocky’s insistence (and nagging) Clyde got on the Texas Commission for the Deaf and while he was on the commission the name and their services were changed to Texas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The two – SHHH/HLAA and TCCDHH – in Texas are still working very closely together and the result of their work is amazing.

With Rocky’s encouragement, Clyde devoted the last 20 years of his life to SHHH and particularly to Texans with hearing loss. He would make



*Clyde & Ouida, Marjorie Thompson,  
Rocky & Ahme*

speeches, ask anyone for money for SHHH and went many miles to talk to anyone who needed encouragement or help. Our family still consists of many of the old SHHH members here in Texas. Rocky encouraged and inspired Clyde to do a great deal of work for hard of hearing people that Clyde would never have believed he could do. But whatever Rocky wanted

Clyde did without a single thought of whether it was possible or not. It’s a good thing Clyde had played right tackle at Texas Tech.

But that is not all Rocky gave us. To this day the phone will ring at peculiar hours and it is Ahme wanting to know about me, and it is always at a time when I have something not going just right! It has been a wonderful fulfilling friendship between Clyde and Rocky, and Ahme and me. It’s just not possible to explain how great it has been to know this family and to benefit from such a fantastic organization one man created – Self Help for Hard of Hearing People.



*Ouida & Clyde Black*

## **My Mother and I**

*Linda Fowler, Cincinnati, OH  
President SW Ohio Chapter*

**M**y mother, Rose Hodess, was very active in SHHH. I remember her talking about meeting Rocky at National conventions. She loved going to the conventions. Even her first password on AOL was SHHH. Mom always talked about her SHHH Chapter in West Palm Beach. She became president (1993-1995) and often had 40 people at meetings. Being involved with SHHH gave mom confidence to talk to the media about her SHHH Chapter and to take many leadership roles.



Mom [pictured on left] is gone now, and there was a lovely memorial to her in the January/February 2001 *Hearing Loss Magazine* issue. My involvement in a new Chapter is because I want to keep her legacy alive – the same legacy that Rocky left us.

## **Remembering is a Joy for Joan**

*Joan Andrews, Punta Gorda, FL  
Founder, Charlotte Tri-County FL Chapter*

**I**t's a joy for me to remember when I first learned that there was someone to help me live with hearing loss. It was in the early 1980s when I first heard of SHHH (now HLAA). I contacted the office and was put in touch with a sweet lady named Mildred. We became close friends and together we explored resources and learned about the help that was available.

We enrolled in a local speech reading class. The teacher encouraged us to think about starting a Chapter in our area. Three of us did, and the Charlotte Tri-County Chapter is still going strong.

I got to know Rocky personally after meeting him at several of the conventions and from his visits to Florida. Every convention that I went to was wonderful. I was never sorry that I made the trip because I learned so much and want to continue with my life to help others.

Rocky helped us establish a group that could meet and discuss ways to help others in our community. He also encouraged us to form the Florida State Association which I had the privilege of participating in for several years.

I am now 80 years young and every night I pray and thank God for my cochlear implant. That along with the membership in SHHH/HLAA has helped to make my life much more joyful. Rocky's ideas and work continue on.



## Keeping Rocky's Vision Alive

*Teri Wathen, Houston, TX  
Founder, Houston TX Chapter*

I first met Rocky Stone somewhere around 1989 or so. The Houston Chapter had been off to a “rocky” start and now we were attempting to put on a state conference of some sort. We were at the hotel right in the midst of the conference, and Rocky says to me, “You are doing such a great job. Would you consider being on the National board?” I thought to myself, I am so tired, I have done all this work to get this conference going, why is this man asking me to do more?



I am so thankful to Rocky for having a vision for this organization and for getting it started. This group has helped me to face my hearing loss and to deal with both of my sons' hearing loss.

I know that Rocky is up there smiling on all of us. We need to keep this vision going for those who will come after us. Thank you, Rocky!

## Remembering the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*Myra White, Charlotte, NC  
Charlotte NC Chapter*

A group from our Charlotte SHIP/SHHH Chapter (now Hearing Loss Association of Charlotte) came to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Bethesda, MD. We all had a lot of fun and it was our first opportunity to personally meet Rocky Stone. He was the greatest. We had the pleasure of meeting his wife also. Our Chapter received the Community Access award that year. I am so glad that we were able to meet Rocky Stone at several of the conventions and talk with him personally. I admired him very much and all he accomplished.



*The late Bill Cutler, former  
Board Member, Rocky and Myra*

