

## Martinez Oral History Project

Interview Date: July 19, 2020  
Interview Location: Homeless Encampment at Amphitheater, Martinez, CA.  
Interviewer: Deborah Zamaria  
Interviewee: Stoney James Mouton

Stoney was born on April 18, 1959 in Lafayette, Louisiana at Charity Hospital. His father, Rynell Houston Mouton, had a great love of cowboys and horses and named his son after the Jack Lord character, Stoney Burke, in the television series in the 1960s by that name, which featured cowboys and rodeos.

His grandmother on his father's side was Nellie Mouton and his grandfather on his father's side was Homer Mouton. Both were born in Kaplan, Louisiana.

His grandmother on his mother's side was Viola Gibson and his grandfather on his mother's side was Curtis Gibson. Both were from a little town near Rayne, Louisiana and Stoney remembers visiting them in that town.

His parents, Rynell and Marie Ophelia (Gibson) Mouton met in Rayne, Louisiana, eventually married and moved to Kaplan, Louisiana. Stoney's grandmother, Nellie lived with them in their first home. His father owned twelve dump trucks and poured asphalt all around Louisiana. He also loved to shoot pool. Rynell had been married previously and brought his two sons to the marriage with Marie. Their names were Rynell Jr. and Lynell and they were about ten and nine years old respectively.

Marie had been the oldest girl of 14 children in her home and had been the caretaker of all of them, helping her mother. As an adult, she eventually became an LVN.

Stoney's birth had been traumatic and he almost died. After several spinal taps and convulsions, the doctor said that Stoney couldn't take the heat and suggested the parents move to a better climate, so they came to California.

However, before the move, Marie became pregnant again when Stoney was one year old. She gave birth to a daughter, Renee Mouton, but the infant died. Stoney's dad accused his wife, Marie, of having an affair with the son of the judge who's house she was currently maintaining. Marie denied this accusation and was so angry with her husband that she didn't put "Mouton" on the birth certificate, but rather used her maiden name of Gibson.

Stoney, who has an amazing memory, remembers some of the trip out to California although he was only around two years old. He remembers driving with his parents and two step-brothers in a Cadillac and stopping in Cochrane, California to visit his Uncle Jack and his father's sister, Aunt Bernell.

Eventually, they came north to Richmond, California. His father bought a gas station on Cutting Boulevard called the "Flying A" which featured either an "A" or a horse with wings. The gas station is still there but is owned by a different company.

When Stoney was around six years old, his parents separated and his father took his two sons and moved to Oakland where he started "Duke's Auto Shop" on 83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and East 14<sup>th</sup> in East Oakland. (Duke being a reference to John Wayne of cowboy film fame.) Stoney was broken-hearted as he missed the company of his two step-brothers.

However, before Stoney's dad moved out, his mom gave birth to two more children: Michael Keith Mouton, born June 15, 1951 in Highland Hospital and Curtis Michelle Mouton, born August 9, 1963 in Richmond at Doctor's Hospital.

Caring for these children on her own, while getting work around the area was too much for his mom, Marie, so she sent for two of her sisters, Myrtle and Aquata. Stoney refers to them as the "Hit Man" sisters. They were incredibly strict and didn't shy away from using a "switch" to discipline the boys as it was their job to look after the children while mom did odd jobs around the area, including doing women's hair at a salon in Montgomery Wards in Oakland, among other things. She also belonged to a women's club, and Stoney remembers her saying frequently, "I'm going to the Club."

Stoney's first home in Richmond was right across the street from Coronado Elementary School. He remembers that on his first day in Kindergarten, he got punched in the face by a little boy who thought Stoney was trying to steal his girlfriend. Stoney was sent home with a note pinned to his chest but his mom marched him right back to school. Stoney did plan his revenge, however, and smashed the boy's face into a play structure.

In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Stoney moved with his family to Easter Hill, a rough part of Richmond where he attended Cortez Elementary. Easter Hill could be easily identified by large boulders in front of the housing complex and Stoney said he was chased so much by mean dogs in the complex that he "lived on those boulders!"

By 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Stoney and family moved to Carlson Blvd, near El Cerrito. Mostly white children lived here and this was truly culture shock for Stoney. He'd only seen white children on television or at the store. His family was not racist at all and he was taught to be respectful to everyone, but nevertheless he got bullied and teased by many of the white students at El Dorado School.

However, Stoney did manage to befriend a white kid named Jackie, who happened to be a "midget." Although they initially challenged each other, they became good friends.

Stoney's mom had met a man while they were living at Easter Hill, named Joe Augustine. He had a job at National Gypsum making sheetrock and he came to live with Stoney and his family on Carlson. Joe and Marie eventually gave birth to a daughter, Consuela Augustine on June 14, 1971. She was known to the family by the nickname, "Easy."

During the summer of his 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, Stoney had to attend summer school, but he liked this because he got to participate in Traffic Patrol. His friend, Jackie was the Captain of this team, and Stoney was a step below him. They loved the uniforms and the responsibility.

However, while in summer school, some student was "messing" with Stoney so Stoney hung him by his shirt in the student coat rack. His feet weren't touching the floor and Stoney shut the door to the closet. Eventually he was caught and sent to the office where a female staff attempted to use a wooden paddle on him. He grabbed the paddle from the woman and threw it.

This was more than his mother or his aunties could take, so in 1969 he was sent to Louisiana to live with his grandmother for a while. It was Stoney's first time in an airplane.

That year in Louisiana, bussing of children was popular in order to integrate the schools. Stoney didn't feel he had a place. White students called him an "Uncle Tom" and Black students called him a N....." He was in trouble in school all the time for fighting. Teachers made him do the "duck walk" for great stretches of time. This consisted of walking while holding onto your ankles.

This lasted until December 29 of 1969. He returned to California, via Huston, on a small, four prop plane, with his cousin and his aunt. Unfortunately, the plane flew into a flock of geese, scattering blood and intestines all over the plane and clogging one of the propellers. Stoney was terrified and ran screaming out of his seat, dodging stewardesses until he reached the cockpit. There he found the Captain dead, with a dead goose on his lap. A stewardess was trying to calm the co-pilot. Stoney ran back out of the cockpit, still terrified. Oxygen masks had come down for passengers, but he was flailing so much that he ripped his out of the ceiling so didn't have oxygen. He passed out and came to in a crop duster airport. The plane's wheels had not dropped so the plane had landed on its belly, but all were safe.

Stoney had to get right back on another airplane. He eventually landed in San Francisco and was warmly greeted by his mother and his aunts. However, he didn't go back to his house on Carlson. His aunt's twin boys had set the house on fire so the whole family moved to 345 Tuolome in Martinez.

Stoney, still in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, began attending John Muir Elementary on Vista Way. This was his 5<sup>th</sup> elementary school.

At this point Stoney was living with his mom, step-dad, Mike and Curtis in the townhouses on John Muir. His mom was working as an LVN. Martinez felt very alien to Stoney. He had a big afro and there were few Black people. Stoney said, "I thought my name was n....!"

He attended Martinez Junior High and then Alhambra high school for two years. The locker monitor, Steve Green wouldn't open Stoney's locker one day, so Steve hit him and got kicked out of school. However, his parents didn't know. His brother blackmailed him, saying he'd keep it quiet, but he wanted something in return.

Eventually, he attended 11<sup>th</sup> grade in El Cerrito High. He'd been a heavy drinker by this time from the age of 15 years. His drinking got really bad and he was sent to live with his dad in Oakland on 55<sup>th</sup> and Foothill Blvd., where he started attending Fremont High School and joined a gang of boys called the "Apple Boys." He would work with his dad early in the morning, cleaning out stables on 106<sup>th</sup> Ave. then head to school. His dad taught mechanics at Laney College, but Stoney described him as a "psychopath." Stoney finally graduated from Fremont High School in 1977.

After graduating, Stoney moved to Louisiana to live with his grandmother again. He met a girl named Melody who was beautiful and smart and a cheerleader, but Stoney admits he didn't treat her well. Melody's father was a "treater", that is someone who can heal without the usual western medicine. Stoney said he could take spells off of people. Melody and her family lived deep in the Louisiana woods by a cemetery where the father would practice his healing.

At one point, while Stoney and Melody were together walking, Stoney was playing with a bullet, flicked it out of his hand and it hit the ground. It exploded and ricocheted into Melody's leg. Melody continued to be with him for two years after that, even coming with him to California.

Stoney had returned to Oakland, California because his brother Mike was living in an apartment that belonged to him. When he returned to Oakland, he was working as a CNA at Midtown Convalescent Hospital. His job and his living arrangements in Oakland with Melody lasted five months. He sent her home to Louisiana and moved back to Martinez to live for a bit with his mother.

While attending DVC, he did a burglary which landed him some time in the County jail in 1983. After this, he and a friend tried three separate times to join the Marines, but his time in County jail and his pending court dates for other infractions, made his entry into the service impossible.

He served a year at the "Farm" in Clayton and when he was released he worked as an orderly on night shifts at John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek. He was also picking up some private duty jobs caring for people. However his heavy drinking continued and he began snorting methamphetamine.

While in Martinez he met Julie Goss at the Safeway on Alhambra Ave. Although they never married, they lived together from 1983 to 1991 and they bore a child together. Todd Allan Mouton was born April 4, 1991 at the County Hospital in Martinez. The couple separated in 1992 and Julie moved with her son to Washington, where she still lives. Todd gave birth to a son, Nowa Mouton, on April 24, 2012. Todd and Nowa currently live together in Washington.

In 1989, Stoney had begun selling "Crank" in Concord. Due to the danger involved, he had a bodyguard named Marcus. One night, Stoney drank more than usual. He had several loaded guns in his car and during an alcohol-induced blackout, started firing the guns. He woke up in the shower at his house, covered in blood, but not hurt. His car was parked perfectly in the driveway. He remembers Marcus jumping out of the car earlier in the evening.

It was at this point that Stoney knew he had to stop drinking. He went through terrible "DTs" but then sought the help of AA.

Back to Louisiana, he met up with his Aunt Bridget's niece. The last time he saw her, she had been a little girl, but now she was a beautiful, grown woman, pregnant with another man's child. In 1993, the two got married in Reno. Unfortunately, her family was much too involved in their lives for Stoney's comfort. The marriage only lasted one year. They had been living elsewhere, but she wanted to deliver her baby in Louisiana. Stoney drove to Louisiana to support her and when he arrived, she told him she wanted a divorce.

After a stint picking oranges in Florida with his brother Mike and his aunt, he came back to California in 1994.

Still working as a nurse, he met Robin and she introduced him to smoking "crack." Stoney didn't really like it, but continued doing it for a couple of years while with Robin.

He next met Kathy Prosser and they were a couple for about two years. He accidentally sliced her arm with a newly sharpened cleaver, but that didn't dampen her feelings for him. His nurse skills kicked in and he was able to stop the bleeding and bandage her up safely.

In the late 1990s he retired from being a CNA. It was a difficult job and he'd grown tired of it. He met April Smith around this time and the two were married in Reno. They bore a child together. Jake Joseph Mouton was born on May 5, 1998. April had three children of her own and the two families blended together.

April had inherited \$40 million from her father and Stoney and she purchased property up in Corning, California. They built a house on this property, then purchased more property and built another house.

Unfortunately, while walking on his property, a sheriff drove by and saw Stoney with a firearm. As a felon, he was not allowed to carry one, so he was arrested and had to serve time in the prison in Susanville.

April and Stoney divorced after three years and now she lives in Antioch with their son.

Right out of Susanville Prison, Stoney moved back to Martinez and met Cora Dieke. They had a child together. Christopher Allen Dieke was born on August 30, 2002 at the County Hospital in Martinez. Stoney cared for Christopher from the time he was four months old to age nine. Cora also had a daughter by another man. Her name is Christina and she's currently twelve years old. Stoney loves her like his own child.

Late in 2019, Stoney was living with Tammy in Concord. Tammy was a caretaker for a client and she, Stoney and the client lived together. Unfortunately, Tammy suffered an aneurism and went into a coma for several months. Stoney had to move out of the apartment because the client needed space for a new caregiver to live. So Stoney became homeless and has been so since February 2020.

Stoney knows many of the residents at this encampment and he's well liked by them. He has a charming way about him and although he's experienced some very difficult times, he's a survivor and this interviewer wishes him all the best wherever his path leads next.