

Aaila Arif

Professor Ziobro

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### Interview With Andy Skokos

Andy Skokos was born on May 13th, 1949 in Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune. He was raised in Asbury Park, where he attended Bond Street School for grammar school, and then continued on to Asbury Park High School till 1967. After high school he attended Monmouth College for about two and a half years for his Associate's Degree in business administration. During that period of time he began serving in the army reserves: his service lasted from 1968 to 1974. He also pledged to Teak University, where he forged lasting friendships with his peers. After college, he met his wife Susan Skokos and got married in 1970. Andy's hobbies include going to concerts, collecting Asbury Park memorabilia, as well as generally being involved with Asbury Park (hosting high school reunions, joining the Asbury Park Historical Society, etc.).

Andy's love, devotion, and sense of duty to Asbury Park led to him joining the Asbury Park Historical Society. Here, he finds great pride in educating others about Asbury Park as well as preserving its remarkable history. As a member of the Asbury Park Board of Trustees, his background in accounting allowed him to pursue being a treasurer. His duties include fundraising by selling calendars, ornaments, and other merchandise. One of the ongoing projects of the board is remodeling the Stephen Crane House, which has been a costly yet meaningful undertaking.

To start off his career, he began working the racetracks at Monmouth Park in 1970, where racing was seen as the only legal gambling venue for those who wished to take part in it. He

worked there until 1976, when he found a job at Meadowlands Racetrack that was open all year round. He spent an impressive 30 years there, where he worked as an auditor. His favorite aspects of the job included becoming friends with the frequenters of the racetrack, meeting celebrities that attended the races, and speaking to the race horse owners. Notable celebrities that produced cherished memories include Robert Wagner and Governor Byrne. While working with Meadowlands at night, Andy worked in Eatontown at the Motor Vehicle Agency during the day. He met many musicians as well as celebrities, as getting a license is mandatory for all. He worked in driver testing, where he enjoyed perfecting the art of driving with young drivers. After retiring from the Meadowlands and the Motor Vehicle Agency, Andy kept busy by becoming a sales associate in Century 21 Real Estate. His work at this company came in use when buying the lot of his current house, as well as assisting friends and family in buying and selling property. He enjoyed all of his jobs, but the large amount of time invested in the Meadowlands racetrack made a large impact on him. He enjoyed not having to commute a large distance to the Motor Vehicle Agency, and real estate continues to be a large interest of his.

The Asbury Park riots were an integral yet tragic part of Asbury Park history. Although Andy was at Camp Drum during the worst of the riots, the effects of the riots such as the burning down of buildings and parks caused him great strife. The riots occurred in New York and advanced from town to town, eventually leading to Springwood Avenue. It took over 50 years for Springwood Avenue to be replenished to the thriving business district that it is. Even more unfortunate was the negative perception of Asbury Park that bloomed due to the riots. The work of the LGBT community in starting up businesses and fixing up old houses as well as musical artists such as Bruce Springsteen converted this perception into a favorable one. Gentrification, to Andy, is a positive that rejuvenated and attracted more people to the area. It doesn't affect

Andy's family directly, but it allows the town to flourish. Cookman Avenue in particular has become a large tourist location, as well as a favorite of Andy's family.

Andy is a car person, and his favorite car currently owned is a 1971 MGB.

He has always had nice cars, and his cousin is enjoyable to visit due to the car museum in his basement as an exotic car investor. He has been to the international auto show in New York many times due to his interest. His favorite part of Asbury Park is the boardwalk and the beach, as he is a large fan of surfing and being in the water in general. He enjoys the music of Bruce Springsteen, and his favorite genre of music is doo-wop. Andy and his wife relished in the excitement of building both of their houses as well as finding lots near their daughter. They were able to fully customize their house, making them ranch-style in order to avoid the grueling process of climbing up and down staircases. The process of building the houses was seen as somewhat overwhelming, but Andy's real estate experience worked to make the job easier.

Andy and his wife still feel as though there is a racial divide in Asbury Park. There aren't many black-owned businesses, and people of color aren't seen in many higher-paying positions. Andy feels sympathy for these groups because even though his family is "colorblind" to different skintones, some Asbury Park residents still have prejudice against different races and religions.

Andy feels as though the greatest accomplishments in his work with Asbury Park is keeping his friends and family connected with reunions, as well as his membership with the Asbury Park Historical Society. He hopes to gather funds via donations as well as his sale of merchandise in order to completely restore the Stephen Crane House. Lastly, he hopes to preserve Asbury Park history and encourage more people to take part in it as well as visit by getting the word out to a larger audience.