

Tennessee Tremain

Professor Ziobro

HS-102

04/27/22

The Most Important Part About A Community

Every city, town, and/or community has their own unique, interesting history. All successful places have faced adversities, made it through crises, and defeated tough odds to have a rich and exuberant history. Asbury Park is without a doubt an excellent example of this description. About a week ago, I had the opportunity to talk to a very informed and active member of the preservation of Asbury Park history: Don Stine.

Mr. Stine has many intriguing perspectives on Asbury Park's characteristics, historical events, and transformations over the many previous decades. Starting with Mr Stine's personal connections with Asbury Park, he was born in Neptune in 1950, but spent much of his time in and around Asbury Park. In about 1970, Don left to pursue other life things, and when he returned in about 1985, he describes the change in Asbury Park as a "cultural shock." It almost did not even feel like the same town to him.

This cultural shock as he explains does definitely have to do with a town aging and going through different phases, but he believes that a big part of this change had to do with the demise of its educational system. Don went on to state how one should never underestimate the impact of a school system, as the role it plays in any town or city is crucial and has a substantial effect on the success and growth of a town.

To briefly sum up Don's thoughts on Asbury Park, its beauty, and how to preserve it, he explained that perhaps Asbury Park's most unique and important characteristic is its diversity,

which has been preserved over the last number of decades. Even from decades ago, the town has always been very racially, religiously, and ethnically diverse. After being asked what a young adult should take away from his thoughts on Asbury Park, he claimed that if a town loses its diversity, it will end up losing everything that makes it special. This is also a reason why Mr. Stine fears what he calls the “Miami Beach Gentrification” of Asbury Park. If Asbury Park’s beach culture and community is slowly influenced toward a more Miami Beach/party vibe, then Asbury Park could really lose a large portion of identity and diversity.

One thing that has always had an impact on tourism and the town’s identity is the boardwalk. Being right by the beach, and from connecting different areas of the town including the coastal, commercial, and leisure areas, to the ethnicity/cultural diversity this area supported, the Asbury Park boardwalk has nonetheless always provided the feel to the town that Asbury Park is “open to everyone.”

Music has also always played a massive role in the identity of Asbury Park. Some of the most iconic bands, singers, and artists have played at least once in Asbury Park, and new artists continue playing here today. Perhaps the most influential and prevalent artist to ever perform in Asbury Park is Bruce Springsteen, however as Don explains once again, one of the most special parts about the music scene is how diversified it is from genres, to types of groups, and much much more. In addition to this, it draws in people from all over Asbury and other cities to all meet at a common place and enjoy some of the greatest music on Earth. Furthermore, there are numerous venues in Asbury that provide listeners and artists with that “small venue” vibe, which often makes a performance more personal and exciting. This reminded Don about perhaps his favourite music memory in Asbury where he saw Bruce and Patty perform live in front of few people. The moment felt incredibly personal and almost felt like the “perfect moment.”

One of the things that influenced the “cultural shock” mentioned earlier was the civil uprisings and riots in 1970. A very intense time with burning buildings, crime increase, and an arguably somewhat corrupt government, Don still sees these as just as much of a product of the cultural shock as the cause. Of course these events played a massive role in shaping Asbury Park’s future, but the events that led up to it including the demise of the educational system also played a role in provoking the riots/civil uprisings. Don is reminded however, that things like this can be prevented and/or softened if the right measures, educational systems, and governmental advice are in place and working properly/functionally.

Don Stine has played a massive role over the last several years in preserving the history of Asbury Park. As a former president of the Asbury Park Historical Society, Don has participated in certain events such as saving the Stone Pony (a popular music venue), establishing monuments, and much more. The goal of the APHS is essentially to remember and save pieces of Asbury Park, as the history of the city is so rich, interesting, and unique. When asked why the APHS is so unique compared to other societies in the United States, Don mentions that Asbury Park’s history is simply so rich that the APHS has the opportunity to preserve incredibly crucial and interesting pieces of Asbury Park and U.S history. After all, Don explains the “diverse melting pot” of Asbury Park is something that makes Asbury Park unique, and preserving it is essential to the town.

Mr. Stine also owns a rare book collection, and his store for this opened in 1999, which was a crucial time for the “revitalization” of Asbury Park. He mentions some people he was able to work with during this time including Bruce Springsteen, Clarence Clemons, and Soozie Tyrell, who he mentions certainly had an impact on the revitalization of Asbury Park, however Don also

reminds us that you cannot simply rely on this type of thing to re-grow a city, as you also have to count on the general population and citizens.

Mr. Don Stine provided me with several wonderful pieces of information that I had never considered (being a student from a different part of the world), and really made me appreciate Asbury Park and its diverse and rich history. To conclude, Don really wanted to remind me that for someone who wants to preserve and remember great pieces of history like those from Asbury park, you have to experience first-hand, talk to people with live experiences, and really expose yourself and provide yourself with opportunities to see the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. Although already mentioned, I think perhaps the most important quote from my interview with Don regards Asbury Park's cultural diversity and what makes it special. When talking about AP's cultural diversity, Don concludes, "If you lose that, you lose everything."