

**Interview with Bettie Allen**  
**Tape 3, November 13, 2003**  
**Interviewer: Cullom Davis**

Davis: This is continuing an oral history with Bettie Allen on November 13th, 2003. You were talking about – your sister was – ran out of the church, I guess –

Allen: Well, she was made to come up before the church – she was the only one who didn't privately confess to her sin. (laughter) So she had to go before the church in order for her to get back into the church – and she was a good singer.

Davis: Yes.

Allen: She was one of the soloists. So she wanted to continue to do that – you know, that'll lead you –

Davis: Sure.

Allen: – back to doing a lot of things.

Davis: Of course.

Allen: Well anyway, I said now [I've just?] had this. I'm not going to be involved with –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – this church and so I decided that I would go to join Zion Church.

Davis: Yes, OK.

Allen: And the other thing that happened that – simultaneous was that my grandfather, when he became blind, didn't have the kind of money –

Davis: Yes.

Allen: – to put in the church, and so he felt he shouldn't be attending church. And he stayed at home.

Davis: That's too bad. That's too bad.

Allen: And the minister did not come and say, "It's OK, Brother Fuddie."

Davis: Oh, now, that's too bad.

Allen: So then our church – that minister died and our church got a new minister, and he came to visit my grandfather. And so he said to my – he talked to my grandfather, my grandfather was very honest, and he said, “I’ve been angry with the church because no one has come to see me except my friend, and I don’t feel that he’s representing the church – while he is a deacon, he’s not representing the church. He’s coming to see me because we have been friends for years.” And he says, “So I’ve been angry with the church for not coming to see me” – [anyway, and that’s the?] – I happened to be there that day that my – that the preacher was there and he – he said – and the preacher said, “You mean to tell me you have that animosity in your heart? Why, you – I can’t give you communion because” –

Davis: Oh, boy.

Allen: – “you need to confess your sin in the church.” And I was through with that. You know, I said – well, I don’t want to serve that God. ’Cuz I’d already seen a difference –

Davis: Right.

Allen: [I always?] – I – you know, I had already begun to be aware about God – just because I was reading to my grandfather –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – and all that. I – I understood God and I understood the Trinity at that time, which was not being preached, although we had it in the church –

Davis: Right(?).

Allen: – basically(?). So anyway, I went to Zion. And Zion didn’t have a lot of young people. So – and young is – by meaning [down – I’m in?] – currently in my twenties or whatever. And so they just allowed me to become a part of them by doing anything I wanted to do –

Davis: Oh, OK.

Allen: – so I started to teach in their church and I became [a recorder?] of money and –

Davis: OK.

Allen: – you know what I mean –

Davis: Yes –

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

Davis: – just(?) took on responsibility, sure(?).

Allen: Every time the door opened –

Davis: Yes, that's right. (laughter) Yes.

Allen: – I was there. And Zion at that time had a tradition of training ministers that would come out of the seminary –

Davis: OK.

Allen: – which meant we really had some high-class preachers.

Davis: So you had some students fresh out of seminary who were – still needed some more –

Allen: Needed –

Davis: – training, like an internship almost –

Allen: Right. Needed to learn how to preach.

Davis: Sure.

Allen: You know? And it was the(?) – good sermons, you know, I'm saying they weren't – wasn't that sing-song thing primarily –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – it was really educational.

Davis: Yes.

Allen: Some of them were good. Some of them were open. But anyway, I got into trouble with one of them. And when I got into trouble with him, that created a problem with the – Zion –

Davis: Oh.

Allen: – because he felt that I was being – I was usurping his responsibility –

Davis: OK.

Allen: – which was the spiritual thing.

Davis: He was threatened by you.

Allen: Yes. And I think – (laughter) – you knew him, too. Nigel McPherson.

Davis: Oh, was this – this is – so he'd been at Zion –

Allen: Yes.

Davis: – a pretty long time.

Allen: Oh yeah.

Davis: OK.

Allen: Yes.

Davis: No, I knew him very well – well, not very well, but I knew him, yes.

Allen: Yes. And so that's when I started having trouble with Zion. But in the – during that time, my niece – of(?) – fifteen years younger than I – she and some girl said we want – we need to study the Bible and so [we're going to have?] a Bible studies class –

Davis: Oh.

Allen: – if you will lead us. Well, I started with them and then I – a group of boys came to me and said they wanted to do the same thing. It was really, for them, primarily social. They were getting together and –

Davis: Sure.

Allen: – so I said, well, I can't have all – two different groups – come on and [we'll do?] together. And then we started doing some things like going to different places, doing things – I guess St. Louis and whatnot [as a youth group?] –

Davis: Now this wasn't under any church's auspices, this was just you.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: OK.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: OK.

- Allen: And so we – I spent about five years with those groups. And it was at a time that I – I bought probably my first new car, so I had transportation –
- Davis: Yes.
- Allen: And that(?) –
- Davis: Yes, you were, what, a young adult?
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: And when my – the height of my disagreement with my parson is when I – probably went on to Africa, and that sort of defused it. But when I came back, he took my name off the membership roll.
- Davis: Oh boy.
- Allen: And when I came back, I had already been exposed to the Anglican Church –
- Davis: Ah, of course.
- Allen: – in Africa. So I was going to both Zion and Christ Church.
- Davis: Aha.
- Allen: I joined Christ Church and was, you know, every Sunday going to both places – going to the early service at Christ Church –
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: – and eleven o'clock service and teaching Sunday school at –
- Davis: Give me an idea of when this occurred, that you began going to Christ Church.
- Allen: I came back from Africa in 1967 –
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: – 1968?
- Davis: OK, OK. So you got to know Hobie then.
- Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: Right.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: Mm-hmm.

Allen: And he was a guy who'd let anybody do anything, too, you know (inaudible)

Davis: Yes, right.

Allen: I have – I always appreciated him. I saw him as a very spiritual man.

Davis: Yes.

Allen: But it was also through the Episcopal Church that I realized that preachers are just like everybody else. They're just sinners.

Davis: Right.

Allen: We are all sinners say Isaiah –

Davis: We're all sinners, right.

Allen: – [saved by?] – but in the Baptist church, that wasn't it. See, I saw all the ministers as gods.

Davis: Right.

Allen: And [since I was?] – you know, I needed to lose that.

Davis: But it often turned out they were sinners, too, but that wasn't – that was –

Allen: Well, they were, they were. And so that –

Davis: – yeah, but the doctrine of the church was that they were above sin.

Allen: Mm-hmm. Not – you know, I – I think the ministers preached –

Davis: Yes.

Allen: – that. I don't think the church really did. I'm saying that I –

Davis: Oh, I see.

Allen: – I really believed that the ministers – preached that, wanted to be treated as such – and that’s what happened. I don’t think it was ever the doctrine of – I think [that’s a – that’s the?] –

Davis: I see, it’s just – it gave them a certain exalted position.

Allen: Right. And so there was – you know, when I began to see a \_\_\_(?) – when I began to receive the kind of freedom in Christ – I wanted to pass that on. I really have had a fantastic education within the Anglican church – I mean I – by attending and taking different classes – not as Anglicans but, you know, just exposed to it –

Davis: Yes, right.

Allen: – as like a seminary, because they have a lay seminary class that I finished four years –

Davis: Really?

Allen: – got a degree from down there – their college down in Tennessee.

Davis: Oh, sure, the – I know what you – yeah.

Allen: Mm-hmm. And I – and some of the other charismatic group(?) kinds of things – I’ve really had a fantastic – but I wanted to share this – (laughter)

Davis: Yes.

Allen: – with those raptors(?), man, I never was allowed.

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: Never was allowed.

Davis: We got – I know we have to quit now.

Allen: Got to quit, yeah.

Davis: OK, we’ll stop there, we’ll pick that up, though –

Allen: OK.

Davis: – at our next meeting. Do you want me(?) –

(break in audio)

**End - Bettie Allen Interview - Tape 3**