

Xen Stewart

Xen Stewart was born in Weaver, Indiana in 1930. His family moved to Marion in 1934 and resided on S. Harmon St., one block away from where he lives now. Upon graduating from Marion High School in 1948, he joined the military. Stewart served until 1949, then joined the Reserves and moved to Chicago. Xen was studying to be an auto mechanic, but took on a job in meat processing. It was during this time in 1951 that he got called to serve in the Korean War. Upon his return from several months of deployment, Stewart got a job working for Anaconda Wire & Cable Co. where he served 14 ½ years, then became employed with the U.S. Postal Service where he served a devoted 32 years.

Stewart says he was called to serve others and help people. Aside from his military service, Stewart helped people by cleaning up his neighborhood in Marion. He purchased blighted properties and had them demolished. He now owns several houses in his neighborhood, takes good care of them, and rents them out.

Xen believes that people should take more pride in their properties. "If they did, we wouldn't have as many problems as we have now with run-down properties. If I wouldn't want to live in it, why would I want to charge rent for others to live in it?"

Stewart served on Marion's Board of Public Works and Safety, and then the Marion Redevelopment Commission which aims to find ways to eliminate blight in the community.

Stewart has also been active in his church, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal, since 1951. He was a big part of their bi-annual fundraiser where they served ribs and other homemade food to the community through a program called "Bethel Barbeque."

Xen says that young people need to get more involved in their community, but it all starts with the parents. He stresses that parents need to communicate the values of being involved and also set a good example for their children. "They must be self-motivated. It has to come from within. No one can make you do it."

Stewart comes from a family of ten. He says nearly half of his siblings stayed in Marion. "They liked Marion. And to me, it is a nice place to live. Of course, we have our problems too, but I'd rather be here than in a big city."