

MATTIE C.'S BOY— the SHELLEY STEWART story

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“MATTIE C.’S BOY – THE SHELLEY STEWART STORY”

BIRMINGHAM, AL – “Wide-eyed and helpless, the boy watched his daddy murder his momma with an ax. The boy and his older brother cried, begging their daddy not to hurt her. Slim Stewart was drunk, though. He paid no attention to his boys’ pleas.”

Thus begins one of America’s greatest ever tragedy-to-triumph sagas in the chronicle *Mattie C.’s Boy – the Shelley Stewart Story* by NewSouth Books. Written by noted Southern author Don Keith, the book is named after Shelley Stewart’s late mother, Mattie C. Stewart, whose murder Shelley witnessed as a small child.

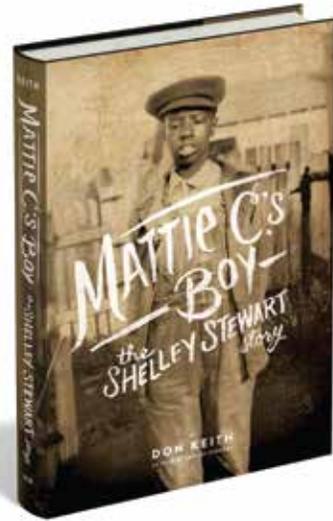
Shelley overcame impoverished beginnings and family tragedies as a child to eventually become one of America’s best-known radio personalities and most prominent African-American businessmen. Born into the then-segregated city of Birmingham, Alabama, in the 1930s, he survived witnessing his own mother’s murder, suffering abandonment as an infant and severe abuse as a child. Out of this story of poverty and neglect emerged a man who taught himself to read, later citing his voracious reading appetite for keying his later success.

Stewart was five when he watched his father murder his mother with an ax. He was then homeless at the age of six, finding shelter in a horse barn, a white family’s basement or with brutal kinfolk. He experienced the cruelest physical, sexual and racial abuse imaginable.

When he enlisted in the Air Force, he was declared insane after objecting to the discrimination he saw. But Shelley never forgot the words of a teacher who told him he could do great things if he read and learned. Despite overwhelming odds, Stewart did just that. Even through heartbreaking setbacks and the racial strife that gripped the South at the time, he graduated high school and entered the radio profession, becoming a hugely popular personality and one of the nation’s first black station owners. He helped launch or expand the careers of many popular music artists such as Otis Redding. Stewart also entered into a silent business partnership with a white friend when such an arrangement could not be made public. It developed into one of the country’s most successful advertising agencies.

As a child, Stewart had seen a vision in which he used his voice to lead others to accomplish great things, to right wrongs. That revelation came true as he and other black radio personalities helped Dr. Martin Luther King mount the historic 1963 Children’s March in Birmingham, Alabama, as police dogs and fire hoses were used to stop the youngsters.

Beginning as a radio personality in the 1950s, his broadcasts during Birmingham’s human rights struggles of the 1960s served as a critical communication path for young African-Americans involved in street protests there. His involvement is chronicled in the Academy Award-winning documentary, *The Children’s March*. Stewart’s “parallel career” in advertising also began in the 1960s. Stewart is now chairman of o2ideas (www.o2ideas.com), a marketing, advertising and public relations firm based in Birmingham. Later Shelley also used his business skills to create the Mattie C. Stewart Foundation, named after his mother, which works to encourage millions of American kids to stay in school.



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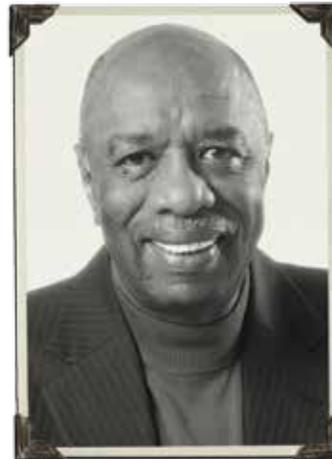


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Award-winning and best-selling author Don Keith has published more than 25 fiction and nonfiction books. As a broadcast journalist, he won AP and UPI awards for writing and reporting. He was the first winner of Troy State University's Hector Award for innovation in broadcast journalism. As a broadcaster for more than twenty years in Birmingham, Nashville, and Mobile, Don twice was named Billboard Magazine "Radio Personality of the Year." His first novel, *The Forever Season*, was named "Fiction of the Year" by the Alabama Library Association. His national best-seller, *Firing Point*, co-written with former nuclear submarine commander George Wallace, is in pre-production as a major motion picture. Don lives in Indian Springs Village, Alabama, with his wife, Charlene. He is a sought-after public speaker and actively supports collection and publication of eye-witness and oral history. His website is www.donkeith.com. His oral history project is at www.untoldmillions.net.

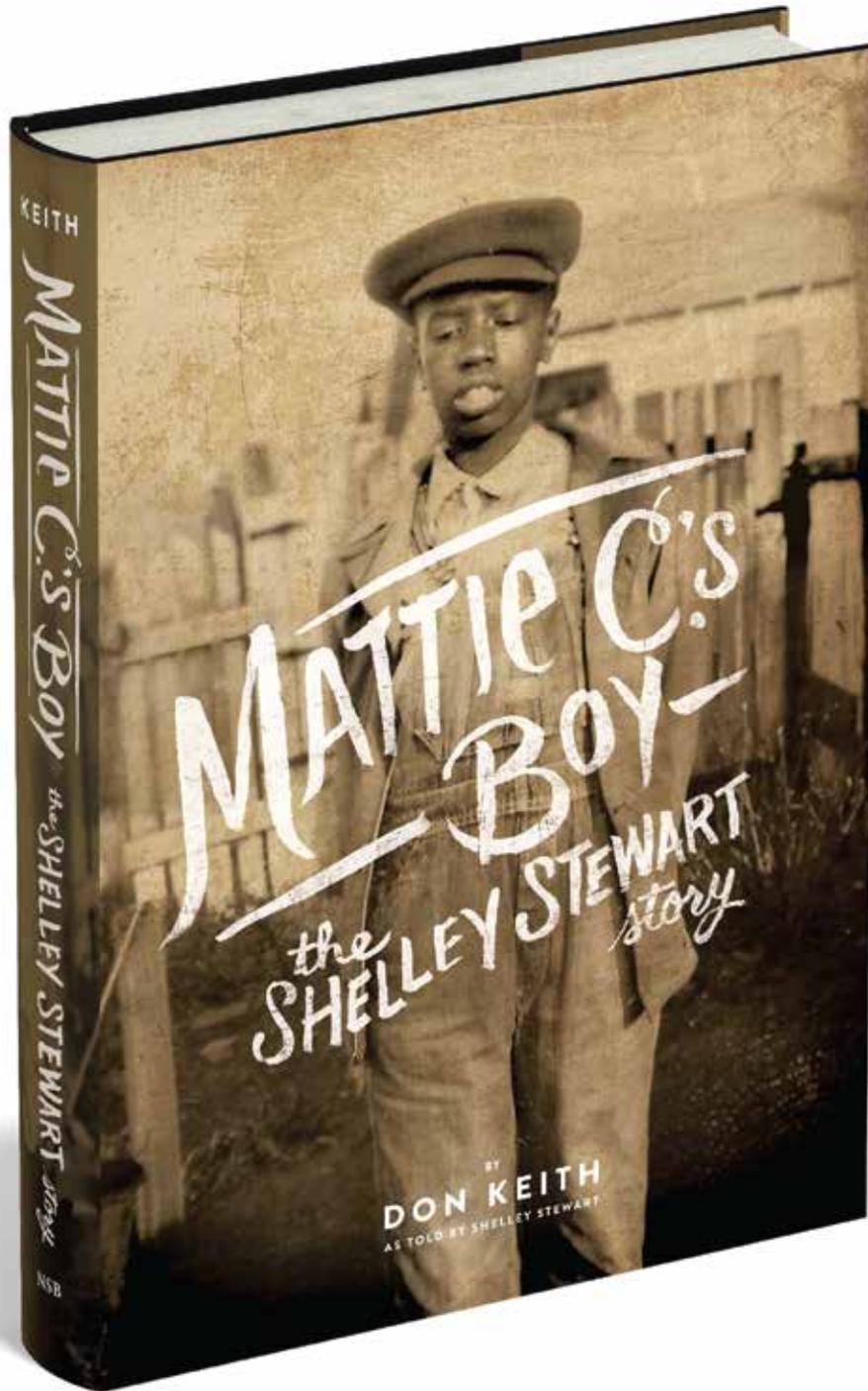
"This book didn't come about specifically because of me or anything I did to deserve it. Rather, this book is a light to those who need the candle of hope. It's a message that human compassion and determination can overcome life's bitterest experiences and obstacles. Whatever life has dealt you, you can make a difference – for yourself, your family, your city, your country and your world."

— SHELLEY STEWART



Mattie C.'s Boy: The Shelley Stewart Story is available through your favorite local or online retailer, or from NewSouth Books, 334-834-3556, www.newsouthbooks.com. Trade Cloth; ISBN: 978-1-60306-313-5; 320 pages; \$29.95. E-book ISBN: 978-1-60306-314-2.

For more information about the book, please visit www.mattiecsboy.com.



“Compassion, grit, intelligence, foresight, generosity . . . these are only a few of the words that come to mind when I think of my friend Shelley Stewart. In this powerful memoir, he demonstrates that a son’s love for his mother is best shown through a life well lived. Hope confronts despair; hope wins!”

– DR. ANDREW WESTMORELAND, President, Samford University

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Excerpt from *Mattie C.'s Boy - The Shelley Stewart Story*:

There was little room for joy in the Stewart home. Slim was rarely there and certainly took little time with or interest in the four boys he had fathered. Days would pass without him coming home. He preferred the company of others like him, the ones who frequented the little houses along Highway 31 at the edge of “Niggertown.”

There was no observable affection between the boys’ parents either. Instead, when Slim was there, the two of them argued fiercely and loudly, even in front of their sons. It often escalated to something frighteningly physical. Mattie could usually hold her own so long as their conflict was verbal. When her husband slapped or punched her, as he inevitably did, she was not nearly big or strong enough to fight back. He was six-foot-three and strong.

She knew instinctively it was best to not even try. Mattie had long since learned to take his blows, allow him to make his point and vent his drunken anger, and then he would leave again until the next weekend. No matter how drunk or enraged he might be, Slim still knew his wife was like a good plow mule. He never wanted to beat her so badly that she would not be able to go to work. Then she could not earn the money that he would, in turn, try to confiscate for gambling or whiskey.

That is until that hot August Sunday in 1939 when Bubba and Shurley Stewart watched wide-eyed as their daddy robbed them of the only anchor they had ever had in their young lives. If there was a wall in front of the Stewart boys before, it was now a dam a mile high and a hundred miles wide.

- *Mattie C.'s Boy*, chapter 1

