

LEWIS STALLWORTH, JR.

African Americans like Lewis Stallworth's family did not migrate to Stockton to strike it rich. Instead, they sought stability in changing times: a home, a job, a place to worship and a chance to raise a family. Lewis was born in Wewoka, Oklahoma in 1944. As the eldest child, he was looked up to by his brothers and sisters. The family moved to Stockton when Lewis was still a young child, and he has lived here the rest of his sixty years. He and his family had found a home base.

The best piece of advice that Lewis received growing up was that "there is more to know about this world than you can ever master." Reality is so complex, he was told, that it would take forever to see, much less understand, every aspect. But this didn't discourage him from trying—in fact, it did just the opposite. From an early age, Lewis set out to learn everything he could about the world. His life has been full of experiences, each one helping him to grow and mature.

Though primary school and high school, Lewis had a passion for learning and put all of his energy into any assignment the teachers provided. He recalls that he lived from one school project to the next, looking forward with eager anticipation to each new assignment. After high school, He attended junior college before continuing to Bible College in his pursuit of learning. Along the way, he noticed his talent for machines and accepted numerous machine apprenticeships to hone his skills and develop a mastery of technology.

Religion also played a central role in his growing up. He sang in choruses and in church, activities that provided him an opportunity to travel. He always felt that singing helped him express himself more fully.

As Lewis matured, he prayed to live life ever more fully. His relatives are, indeed, from Africa, but since he was born and raised in America, he identifies himself as African-American. Still, he does feel he observes the traditions black people share. In general, he notes that customs and traditions vary from one person to another. However, he would like future generations to know that his culture always reaches out to others. African-Americans always have and always will find a way to persevere, regardless of circumstances.

For Lewis Stallworth Jr., coming of age meant coming to express himself, to learn from his travels to other regions of the United States and to develop ways to celebrate the diversity of the world's gifts. He does not point to a particular time, place, or action that made him know he had become an adult. He was nurtured and reached that stage by an endless stream of small but not insignificant encounters.

In fact, he says, he may be still "growing up"! After all, he has never forgotten that "there is more to know about this world than you can ever master."

Still, he hopes to learn as much as he can—and to pass on his knowledge to future generations, some day.

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Ethnic Group: African-American
Generation: Middle