

HISTORY OF CARMEN WOODS AND CHESTER LAWS JUNIOR

I lived in the Overbrook section of West Philadelphia. My family was struggling to survive; I'm the youngest of 11 children. As a child at an early age I found innovative ways to survive. I bagged groceries, shoveled snow and cut grass. I hung out with my brothers and friends. I started out as an innocent child but the streets consumed me. I gambled, gave dollar parties, and etc. In the mid to late 70's when I was in the neighborhood I found myself hanging down Lansdowne Avenue and Felton Street a lot. If I wasn't chasing the girls I was hustling. The area in which I often visited was the 1400 and 1500 block of Felton Street.

Chester Laws, Jr. lived in the 1500 block of Felton Street. I didn't know him at all but I saw him in the neighborhood.

By 1981, my brother, friends, and I were exploring different ideals of making money. Some of us had jobs, myself included, but the money wasn't enough (we had to be innovative to make money).

In the summer of 1981, basement parties were popular and much safer compared to now days. My brother and I gave a few dollar parties, a dollar to dance, sweat, and get your groove on. The parties were held at 721 N. 63rd Street. Many people in the neighborhood attended our parties, and with popularity came envy! I was renting the basement from someone. It was costing me to make money, which I had no problem. This is the American way! It takes money to make money.

One night at one of our parties, in the summer of 1981, Laws, Jr., came to the door drunk, refusing to pay me and my brother to come in. Laws felt because we didn't live there he could come in at any time without paying. My brother was getting frustrated with Laws, Jr. so I told him that I would cover the door and that he could go back into the party. I explained repeatedly to Laws, Jr. that I had to pay to rent this spot; therefore, he had to pay to get in. He refused and became belligerent. I asked him to leave because now, he was out of control, and he was not getting in the party even if he wanted to pay. He was drunk! He went as far as to tell me, he was going to knock me out. Laws, Jr. got up on me and drew his fist. We started fighting for a minute. He grabbed his face, mumbled something and went home.

The party was over about 3:30 am. My brother, friends, and I were tired; we decided to get something to eat with a few young ladies and call it a night. However, I had to walk a couple of other young ladies to the corner of 63rd and Media Streets. While I was there talking with the ladies, Laws, Sr. walked up from Media Street with Homer Lane and Daryl Lee. Laws, Sr. had his hand on a gun in his pocket and a cigar in his mouth. I asked him, "What's the problem?" In my mind, I was saying, "I hope Yonnie and my boys come on down here. They got to see me talking to this dude." Sure enough, Yonnie comes down by himself after reading the situation from a distance. I told him to hold up and let me handle the situation. So I asked, Laws, Sr., "What's the problem?" He told me that his son stated, I beat him with a bat and broke his jaw. This is when I realized his jaw was broken.

I told Laws, Sr., "The truth is your son was drunk and out of order and belligerent to me. He threatened me when I wouldn't let him in the party because he was drunk. He refused to pay because he knew I didn't live here." I proceeded to tell Laws, Sr., I asked his son