

## A few memories of John Sweet in the early days of Inman Park By Cathy Bradshaw

I met John Sweet in the summer of 1971. A small group gathered in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor ballroom of Robert Griggs' rundown, formerly multi-tenant house at 866 Euclid Ave, lovingly referred to as Belle Wretch. John suggested the formation of a neighborhood association, and with John's legal expertise and community organizing skills, Inman Park Restoration was created. IPR was the predecessor to Inman Park Neighborhood Association, the current organization. I had purchased my extremely rundown house that had been divided into 4 units at 215 Hurt Street in June and by July, I was part of a neighborhood organization. There were about 30 of us in those days, and in 2020, John, Susan Bridges and I were among the last of the pioneers of 1971 still living in Inman Park. John's foresight and wisdom will be missed.

In 1971, Inman Park was Red-Lined, meaning that we could not get loans to purchase homes or make repairs or even purchase insurance. Seeing a void, John and friend Stan Wise, started the B.O.N.D. (Bass Organization for Neighborhood Development) Community Credit Union in 1972, the 1<sup>st</sup> community credit union in the country. It was a huge undertaking, but John was not one to shy away from hard work. Read more about this fascinating institution in our community <https://bondcu.com/our-story>. From only a few members, the credit union has grown to 5000 members and \$40 million in assets. One of many memories of John was seeing him driving a large panel truck full of baskets of peaches around the neighborhood. John and board members were selling peaches door-to-door to raise money to pay quarterly dividends to BOND credit union members. John's foresight and wisdom will be missed.

John started his years in Inman Park in an apartment on Seminole Ave, working in the area as a Vista volunteer. In 1972, John negotiated with one of the many neighborhood absentee property owners to sell 4 rundown multi-unit houses on Elizabeth Street. Along with Fred Bradshaw and Beverly Hensley (210 Elizabeth), Gretchen and Bruce Maclachlan (226 Elizabeth), and Ed Turner (230 Elizabeth), John executed the deal and 6 new homeowners began the transformation of 4 adjacent properties on Elizabeth Street. In 1972, John also helped Fred Bradshaw's brother Bo find and buy 206 Hurt St. Because of John, my future husband moved to Hurt Street. John's foresight and wisdom will be missed.

In the summer of 1972, John also coordinated the rezoning of the neighborhood from multi-family, commercial and industrial to residential and specific sites for multi-family units. Along with the indomitable Holly Mull, John led a small group of neighbors on a door-to-door campaign to get signatures of homeowners to successfully have the City pass legislation to protect our neighborhood from commercial and industrial encroachment. If not for John and Holly, your property might have become a service station or convenience store. This re-zoning led to the successful listing of Inman Park on the National Register of Historic Places, the State of Georgia Historic Registration and eventually historic zoning overlay in the City of Atlanta. John's foresight and wisdom will be missed.

John's work in the movement to Stop the Road and save our historic neighborhood from the destruction of an expressway will be part of a book one day. In all the years after 1972, John continued to work to improve Inman Park, to serve as mentor to many and to maintain friendships that lasted through the years.