**Episode 3 – Closing time**

**Jen Lee:** Welcome. This is Jen Lee, the host of I Need Blue. I came face to face with danger, now I spend my time giving back to survivors and the heroes that saved us. We share victim turned survivor stories. When you come face to face with danger, you learn not to take your safety for granted. Now more than ever, it is important to use facts from real life situations to reinforce the valuable need of our law enforcement. To hear my story and hear other episodes, visit [www.ineedblue.net](http://www.ineedblue.net) or find I Need Blue on your favorite podcast platforms.

Please note: I Need Blue does feature graphic themes, including but not limited to violence, abuse, murder, and may not be suitable to all listeners. Some episodes also contain themes which may be triggering. Please take care of yourself and don't hesitate to ask for professional help.

I have a special friend with me today. He is here to share his story about being a restaurant owner whose business sadly became part of a growing statistic. Restaurants, particularly those that open early and close late, are especially vulnerable to robberies. Large amounts of accumulated cash kept on-site can be alluring. The set routines, day in and day out, help criminals plan their stealth moves for the least secure times. While this critera is true in most cases, what happens when the robber’s original strategically planned robbery is foiled? What is plan B?

It’s now time to welcome Alan Stone, otherwise known as Stoney, to the I Need Blue listeners. I appreciate you being here today. Can you share with our listeners your story.

**Stoney:** I was a restaurant owner. One evening we had, we're just closing the business. And the next thing I hear is "Get me the money or I'll kill him. Get me the money." Those were the first words I heard evening; we were being held up. A friend of mine, a robber detective was at the restaurant and had met with a group of friends to discuss his high school reunion. After the meeting with this group, they had departed.

The detective stayed in the restaurant as we were starting to close for the evening. Also remaining where the chef, general manager, the bartender, a waitress and myself. As to gunman burst into the restaurant through the heavy saloon doors in the bar lounge area, and hearing the commands, "Get me the money or I'll kill him. Get me the money. Gets your hands up." One of the gunmen held the chef behind with his arm around his chest. I was approximately three feet in front of him and he yelled "Get me the money or I'll kill them." I told them we would get him the money and he yelled, "Don't look at me," as he pointed the gun at my face. I said, "I'm not looking."

The detective was three to four feet to my left and the gunman yelled, "Don't look at me," then shot the detective in the face point blank. I recall saying to myself, we're all going to be killed. At this point, I had positioned myself in front of the bar and looking into the bar mirror. I was trying to get the description of the second gunman. He noticed what I was doing and put a gun at my head and told me not to look at him. I complied and we were all told to lay down in front of the bar. As I was lying on the floor, I was shot. The bullet went through my elbow, and I laid on the floor pretending to be dead.

Around one to two minutes went by, and it was coming completely silent. I could hear the compressors running behind the bar. And a slight tapping of a chain hitting the globe from one of the ceiling fans. I started to press on the floor to get up, but somehow remembered, I didn't hear the saloon doors, they make a back-and-forth sound when being opened or closed. A few moments later, a gunshot goes off, "Pop!" It scared me and I jerked. I didn't know how I wasn't noticed. A few seconds later, another gunshot, "Pop!' Then I hear one of the gun men yell "Bang, let's get out of here."

Next thing I knew, I'd get kicked in the ribs as I hear someone running. Then the saloon doors go flying open, and I hear the glass door being pushed open. I waited around 10 seconds and got up. As soon as I looked around, the detective was lying next to me, next to him was my general manager and next to him was my chef. All I could see was pools of blood and no one moving. I was certain, they were all dead.

After that, I went to the phone to call for help and the bartender was already on the phone. As soon as she saw me, she handed it to me. 911 was on the phone and I told them we needed an ambulance and a helicopter right away that a police officer that was at the restaurant had been shot. The bartender told me that the chef was choking. I returned to the bar and turned the chef over on his stomach. At that point, the detective told me to get his gun. I said, "Help is on the way and you're going to be okay." And he said, "Don't tell me I'm going to be okay. I just had my brains blown out, get my gun."

Which seemed like forever, the paramedics and police arrived. They tended to the officer, chef, and general manager right away. And I was taken to the hospital and later returned to the restaurant to give as much detailed information as I could. What seemed like, and it seemed like the whole county, the police department was there, only to find out the chef and general manager had died. They had both been executed. The manager had three young children. The officer was airlifted to the hospital and survived. The bullet had gone through his front cheek, knocked out some teeth and blew his eardrum out.

Many surgeries later to remove bone fragments, his face droops and he must talk out of the side of his mouth. The waitress fortunately was unhurt as she hid in a little cubby hole behind the bar. The bartender also survived. She had directed the second gun man to go with her, to the office to get money. The only money taken was a hundred dollars out of a cash drawer in the office. Later we found out the second gunman had put the gun to the back of the bartender's head and pulled the trigger. However, the gun had jammed. Later we found out there were five people involved in the robbery. Two came inside with guns, one was a lookout and two more in a getaway car in a bowling alley parking lot, that was across the street from the restaurant. The manhunt was underway.

**Jen Lee:**  I f I remember correctly, your restaurant was not the initial target that night. Am I correct?

**Stoney:** That's correct. There was a different restaurant around the corner from my business and these robbers had been casing it for about a month. And they learned that when the manager would leave in the evening to make a night drop, he would have a bag and a briefcase. And one night he would make the deposit from the briefcase and one night from the bag. That night, they said that the deposit was going to be made from the bag. So, when the manager came out to go to the bank to make his day drop, they robbed him in the parking lot and took the bag. They got into the vehicle and then they reached into the bag, and it was full of cookies. This upset them. They drove around the corner, they saw my business and said, "Let's get them, they got a bank." And they saw the police officer's unmarked cruiser in the parking lot.

**Jen Lee:** I f I remember correctly, you had already made the night drop.

**Stoney:** I had, shortly before this incident took place, I had made a substantial deposit at a night drop at a bank across the street from the business.

**Jen Lee:**  During my ordeal, I've remained amazingly calm. I don't really know how, but I do remember the moment fear started to set in and I had to choke that down. Do you remember that moment?

**Stoney:** Absolutely. I remember initially when they first came in and I saw the gun and I realized we were being held up, that was fine. But when the first gunshot went off, when the police officer was shot in the face, I just thought to myself, we're all going to be killed tonight. Then as we were told later to lie on the floor, I just remember my children's lives passing in front of me.

You know, then the incident took place and after they left, as I said, the doors, I heard the swinging doors from the saloon doors closed and the glass door open from the vestibule when they left. And then the rest took place was support from the police department, the paramedics and so forth.

**Jen Lee:** Sometimes as victims I hear part of the process is they look back and they say they wish they would have done something different. Did you have any feelings like that afterwards?

**Stoney:** I really, you know, you always think that if something like that took place, you can say, well, this is what I'll do and that's what I'll do. And until something like this takes place, you don't know what you're going to do. Obviously when two people have guns on you, you're going to go along with the program and do whatever they've asked you to do or tell you to do. And in our case, the police officer did have a gun, didn't have the opportunity to get it out and use it because this happened so quickly initially. And, yeah, there's nothing you can do differently. Of course, you think about it a million times, what could I have done that would have stopped this, but I don't know of anything that would have changed it at this point.

**Jen Lee:** Can I ask how this affected your family, your business, your community?

**Stoney:** Sure. The business suffered drastically. Number one, we were a family owned and run business and we knew all our customers and they knew us. And initially the business probably dropped about 50% in the first year and it continued. There were town meetings with local politicians about what was going to be done about heinous crime, such as this. People were said that they were going to move out of the area, which a lot of them did. And the business just continued to flounder because people were afraid to come in. At the time I had 47 people working for me at the business, 13 quit right away. Obviously, I had lost two of my main people, general manager, and the chef. I ended up being put into a cast and ended up having to work in the kitchen. The employees or remaining employees were concerned and afraid of working at the business and wouldn't work there unless we had security, so we ended up having to have security seven days a week. And those weren't very helpful to the business because people anytime they see that a police officer has got to be in a business to protect it, they're going to refrain from doing business with you.

**Jen Lee:** How was it for your family?

**Stoney:** Well, it was very difficult. I had two young kids at the time, and I had to go to work every day still, to support the business and support my family.  And then later down the road in time, you know, it created a situation financially, which created a tremendous amount of stress within the family itself. And unfortunately, I ended up going through a divorce after being married over 20 years. The business just kept suffering and eventually I got to the point where I decided just to have to close it. I ended up closing the business because of this initiated incident that took place. The ripple effect that it caused.

**Jen Lee:** Yes. We talked about that. It's not just the incident itself. Almost everything that happens afterwards is almost worse than the incident itself because the incident is like a matter of minutes, it feels like forever. Right? But it's kind of a matter of minutes, but it's a lifetime. It affects a lifetime.

**Stoney:** Sure. The impact, you know, unless you've been through it, you don't know what kind of impact that does create on you. You think about it every day, you think about the people that were involved every day, you think about their families, you think about the community that you were in. I was very involved with the police department, and I was on the board of the crime solvers in the county where we lived. We did a lot of charity work; we did a lot of fundraising for the police departments and these things happen and everybody suffers because of it.

**Jen Lee:** I could not go back to my job. There were too many triggers, so I understand it was probably because that was your livelihood, and you weren't really given much of a choice. I can't imagine how that would be. How did you cope with the triggers every time you walk through those doors?

**Stoney:** It was very difficult. That was very difficult. Obviously, being tied into a lease was the initial problem that I had because financial you're obligated. And it was very difficult to, every day take a deep breath and go back in and rehash and relive everything that took place because customers would ask you, friends would ask you. It was a situation that the press that we got was unbelievable. It was continuous, they were always press in the business, reporters, it always stayed on the surface. I t was very difficult when you would go to work because there were always so many questions being asked to the same situation over and over and over again.

**Jen Lee:**. Did you go to therapy or what did you do to kind of navigate your way through all of this?

**Stoney:** There was a psychologist or psychiatrist, I believe he, was across the street from the business and he offered to have me come speak with him, which I did. And honestly, when I left speaking with him, I didn't feel like it had done me any good at all. And that, I've always been a very hard worker and I learned a long time ago to maybe just work my way through it. So that's what I did, I put my head down and plan out and just kept going, just kept going and kept going. And, you know, years later, things changed. I ended up closing the business and went to work in sales for a food wholesale and company and later remarried and living in Florida now.

**Jen Lee:** If you could say anything to our police officers today, what would it be?

**Stoney:** Oh my goodness. First of all, thank you. Thank you for what you do every day to protect and serve. You are a rare breed of people. Unfortunately, only, I don't think you were thanked enough and shown the appreciation that you deserve, especially in today's climate. But if there's anything I can do to support the police department, I am more than glad to do that. I am very thankful for all of them in my past, being my friend and supporter, and I will do anything in return for them. And my son happens to be a police officer now.

**Jen Lee:** Well, thank him for his service.

**Stoney:** And I do thank him**.** I am so glad to hear my son's voice every day or every other day, we're very close and I'm very glad to hear his voice. And really understand what they go through is something that people really need to know. I mean, if they could do a ride along sometime, or just buy a police officer a cup of coffee and talk, you know, and pick their brain a little bit. They would probably be surprised the stress that they are under and how hard they work to protect everyone.

**Part 2**

Stoney

Knowing that the perpetrators had left, the first thing I did was run to the doors, pull them closed and lock them. I ran back having to witness the tragedy that just took place.

Stoney

The chef, the manager and the police officer all lying on the floor and a massive pool of blood surrounded. I peeked around the corner and saw the bartender was on the telephone with 911. Apparently she must have just made the call. She handed me the phone right away. I told them we had been involved in a robbery and there was a police officer involved and people were shot. We needed a helicopter and help as soon as possible.

Stoney

The 911 operator said, "there's a police officer involved?" and I said, " yes and he's been shot. He's in bad shape.We need help right away. "

Stoney

The bartender said to me the chef was choking. I went back out in front of the bar where everyone was laying.

Stoney

Somehow he had gotten on his back. I turned him over and turned his head to the side. At that point in time, unfortunately I was knee deep in blood.

Stoney

In what seemed like forever, I heard the ambulances arrive at the front door and the paramedics were the first on the scene. They came in and next thing I realized they were probably 30 police officers inside the restaurant lounge area. They began asking me questions, what did they look like? What were they dressed like? What were their height, weight, hair, just asking for all the particulars so they could try to set up a some type of dragnet.

Stoney

 They were trying to find these guys before they gotten too far out of the area. At that point in time, the paramedics were taking the police officer out of the restaurant into the awaiting ambulances. One of the police officers walked over to me and said, "how are you?" I said, I"m okay." He said, "are you hurt?" And I said, "Well, I've been shot." He said, " you've been shot?" I said, "yes. In my arm." It was bleeding pretty well, I guess he couldn't see it from his view. The gunman stood over top of me when he shot me. He actually was trying to shoot me in the head. For some unknown reason, he missed and in it went through my elbow. At that time, I just acted like I was dead. Then, a few minutes later, he moved over to the others and shot them, executed them.

Stoney

When I was shot it like somebody put in a hot poker in your arm. I definitely felt that. I was in pain. I didn't know the severity of it. "We're going to have to get you down to the hospital." the officer said. So they took me down to the hospital which wasn't far from us. Maybe a 10 minute ride. And when I got there a couple of my friends, one was a homicide detective and one was a robbery detective, came into the hospital. They were good friends of mine and police officers that I'd known for many, many years. Of course, they were asking me all the questions, prevalent questions. And they were there for support. They had done x-rays and wrapped my arm up.

Stoney

I needed to go back to the restaurant, back into the lounge area. And of course the amount of blood on the floor was just unbelievable to witness. There must have been 50-60 police officers there. The lead detective on the case started asking me questions; the size, the weight, and if I've ever seen him before. They were relaying the information to other police officers. The police officers were out on the street canvassing in the area. They were setting up roadblocks and really trying to do due diligence and find these guys as quickly as possible. But to no avail!

Stoney

That was the start of the manhunt. My detective friend, a homicide detective, drove me home. When I got home my kids came out and asked me if I was okay. Kind of unwrapped my arm so they could see what happened and cleaned it. The bullet had gone in one side and out the other. I took a shower and they wanted me be back.

Stoney

There was a reporter that was renowned in the Washington DC area. He was there as well. They were very supportive of the police department. They were trying to get as much information out to the public on the news and local news stations as well. So he had asked me many questions of what took place etc. They tried to do whatever they could to get the information out to the public into the metropolitan area to capture these people as soon as possible.

Stoney

 I went back to the restaurant. It's very interesting because your mind, you start thinking and remembering . They wanted to talk to me. No matter how big or small the needed the details. Especially if it was something new I remembered. We decided to close the restaurant until we could figure out what we were going to do; making arrangements for funerals, etc.

Stoney

Meanwhile, the police officer was in the hospital undergoing a number of surgeries. He was shot in the face and the bullet had gone down behind his ear. It blew his eardrum out and knock some teeth out, knoced the jaw out of the alignment. They had to open him up from about the middle of his head, back and try to get a fragment out. There was some kind of fragments that had gotten in his eye as well.

Stoney

It wasn't long after this had taken place, they called me to go to the police department and tried to do an artist's rendering drawing. One of the perpetrators, I only saw half of his face because it was blocked by the chef. The second perpetrator, I got a good view of him and was able to give a good artist rendering. They drew them and got them out to the public.

Stoney

There were reporters each day in front of my home. There was reporting every day. It was a big story, obviously a terrible tragedy took place. This was on the front page of The Washington Post. It was on every TV station, every radio station constantly.

Stoney

After the robbery that night, when they were running out and leaving the building, a shot went off. I guess they had shot the gun by mistake. There was a bowling alley across the street and it caught the attention of a gentleman. He looked and saw people running away from the business.

Stoney

They also had walkie talkies. They had run down a street in the neighborhood and called over to where the bowling alley was where the getaway driver was parked. A female was the get away driver. She went to go pick them up.

Stoney

Fortunately the gentleman had seen them running and saw the vehicle leave. He reported it to the police. They put a dragnet in the whole metropolitan area again, looking for that type of vehicle. Cars were being pulled over, searched in the metropolitan area. A couple friends of mine called me and asked me to call the police department and ask them not to pull them over again. It was like their fourth time they'd been pulled over and searched. The police were doing due diligence.

Stoney

Not long after, detectives at one of the local police stations, had picked up a young man in a neighboring county to question him about another robbery that took place. They simply asked him, "Do you know anythiny about what happened at Stoneys? And he said, "yes. I was there." The police officer, after he said that, couldn't believe it . He gave them that information with just a question they asked him.

Stoney

He gave up all the addresses of where the other people were. So the SWAT teams went to the various homes and arrested them. The one gentleman whom they arrested, had taken the police officers gun that night. He was sleeping on a couch and they found it under a pillow.

Stoney

There were five involved altogether. 2 came in with guns, 1 was a look out, 1 drove the getaway car with the other gentleman.

Jen Lee

What was the age range?

Stoney

Between 17 and 23 years old. They had not been drinking, there had been any drugs. We did find out later they had done three other armed robberies that night. They had gone into Virginia and robbed a video store. Took the gun and put it down the mouth of a 16 year old girl and robbed her. They followed a guy to an ATM where he had a withdrawal at a bank and then they robbed him. They robbed the restaurant around the corner from me. And they saw Stoney's and said let's get Stoney's they have a bank,. They decided to come in and rob Stoney's.

Stoney

They were mad and that was one of the things that we thought was kind of strange. They were really mad when they came in the door.

Jen Lee

Did they live in the area and had they ever been in your restaurant before?

Stoney

No, they had never been in there. One of them lived in a neighboring county. And the other four lived probably 10 miles away.

Stoney

At three o'clock in the morning, I got a really loud knock on my door at my home, which scared me to death. I walked down the steps and turned the light on. It was two detectives. I opened the door, and said, "what's going on, you scared me to death?" They said, "we got him!" I said, "oh my god!" My wife had run down the steps. It was very early in the morning, I turned on the news and they showed him in handcuffs being taken out put in to police cars headed to jail for holding.

Stoney

Part of the tragedy with this whole thing is my manager had a five year old, a three year old and a three month old child.

Stoney

We had no choice but to get back to business. My arm at that point had been put in a cast. 13 people quit. Business owners in the area we're getting phone calls, with people saying "your next." Everybody was scared and wanted to know what was going to be done.

Stoney

The others that were working there said they wouldn't work at the business any longer if there wasn't security. There were police officers in the restaurant about 90% of the time either having lunch or dinner, or to come by and say hello. They were major supporters of the business. When I couldn't find anybody to do security, I had to hire them which is extremely costly. We lost 50% of the business right away.

Stoney

I get a phone call and needed to examine a line up; myself, the bartender, and the waitress were there that night. They wanted me to identify the first guy. He was the one that I can only see half of the his face. Then when they brought out the second set of people the other gunman which had come in, I picked him out right away. I knew exactly who he was. He was the one I got a real good look at.

Stoney

We had to meet with the state's attorney's office and review what was going to take place in the future as far as court. I'm gonna say it was over a year before we started to court process.

Jen Lee

Were they in jail then during this whole time?

Stoney

They were all in jail and no bond. No bond.

Stoney

The first court case we went to, they were going for the death penalty. Evidence is what really backed up what happened. The witnesses obviously had a great impact too, but the evidence, the bullet and the gun they recovered and so forth. It was time for the jury to deliberate. They came back with a second degree murder charge in which we were actually devastated by. The reason being, and I found later, there was a lady on the jury who said that the robber reminded her of her son. There's no way that she could convict him. They ended up caving in and he got second degree murder, but he got a very lengthy sentence from the judge for all the other charges which were made. I think it was 230 years. He's still in jail.

Stoney

Then the next court case was the shooter. This case was very hard, because when you're in a courtroom, you're not far from these guys; within 10-12 feet. What a situation like this brings out in you is something you're probably not. The anger and the frustration in you. You just want to retaliate. He came out in a suit, and was sitting down at the table.

Stoney

We got through all the testimonies again and all the pictures of the autopsies. It was very traumatic. It's like you see on TV to a point, but worse. We go to finish the court proceedings, the jury goes out, and they come back with a guilty verdict. He's given the death sentence, which we were thrilled about.

Stoney

Of course, the TV cameras and everybody were there and want to know how you felt about this sentence.

Stoney

Like they say, if you want to do the crime you're going to have to pay and do the time.

Stoney

The next court procedures were for the female. She was the driver of the getaway car. We go through basically the same situation. She was the sister of the shooter. She had a young child as well about two or three year old.

Stoney

We went to court for the one who was testifying against them. He was turning state's evidence on all the people. He was saying, this one was there, and he did this. He actually ended up getting, I think a five year house arrest.

Stoney

The female when the verdict was reached for her, she got a life sentence. She is still in jail.

Stoney

The second guy that came in with the gun, he is still in jail.

Stoney

The shooter, who was the lookout guy at the front door, was actually killed in jail. He was stabbed to death.

Stoney

 The other shooter that came into our business was also killed in jail. I think it was a old friend of his that also stabbed him to death in jail.

Stoney

So two of them are in jail. One of them is still out.

Jen Lee

These situations affect our families, they affect our communities. It's a sad tragedy that a lot of people don't realize until they're in it.

Jen Lee

People think of our officers and the different duties they take on don't ealize that when somebody dies, like the employees who also were your very good friends who passed away. Police officers were the ones who had to go knock on the door to the their home, and tell their families, he's not coming back. Imagine the courage they must have to have to be able to do that.

Stoney

People think they're not impacted by these things. But they are. And it's not easy for them to do these type of things. It wasn't easy for my friend to call my wife and tell her that I had been shot in a holdup, in a robbery. The officer knew my wife.

Stoney

The police officers that went to my managers home to wake his wife up to tell her that her husband had just been murdered. She had three young children at home. These officers were working almost 24 hours a day, trying to find these people to get them off the streets or to keep it from happening to somebody else.

Stoney

We found out later that these people were responsible for many robberies prior to this. They set up a gang, I think they called it the "gang of five." They were robbing people when they were going to the ATM machines, and they were robbing convience stores. It's just a unbelievable experience.

Stoney

There is always a beginning, middle and ending sory. The ripple effect of these things after they take place, is hard to comprehend. The impact on your friends, your family, your future. What it does to you personally, mentally, it's just a travesty.

Stoney

My guys still bring it up because it had an impact on them. Being involved with the police department for so many years, and been involved in crime solvers for 20+ years, people have to understand, they need to support their police departments. Without them, they're never going to be safe, you have to have law and order. You have to have people that care. You have to have people that are concerned about what's taken place to keep us all safe. They are underpaid, they're overworked. Today it's worse than ever.

Stoney

We're gonna have to be careful, because if people don't change, they're going to become a victim themselves one day, and then they're going to understand why they need these police officers. Our officers are just like us. They want the same thing we all want. They want to enjoy life. They want to take care of their families and they want to enjoy the fruits of their labor. They live like the rest of us and want to be safe. At this they're being victimized. It's unbelievable.

Stoney

Nobody wants to cop until they need a cop. And believe me, at some point in time, everybody needs a police officer. At one point in time, they're going to need a police officer.

Jen Lee

I absolutely agree with you. That's part of the reason for the podcast is to take real life stories, because until you're a victim turned survivor, like you and like me, you don't get it.

Jen Lee

Police officers are retiring. They're leaving every day especially in particular cities. I don't know what they thought was going to happen, but they're finally waking up and realizing, oh, wait a second, maybe we need our police officers. But how many people have to be hurt and how many people have to be a victim before they get it?

Jen Lee

It's very frustrating to people like you and me, who know how essential they are.

Jen Lee

Stoney you brought up some really great points. We are not given every day to live. It's a blessing.

Jen Lee

When we can help others I think we're truly reaching our purpose but also our potential as human beings. That is the reason police officers and teachers and firefighters pick the profession to go into because in their heart, they want to help and serve our communities to make us feel safe. They are part of our communities.

Jen Lee

 How does it get any better than that?

Jen Lee

Stoney, I really appreciate you being here today and sharing your story and letting us know how everything ended. You've been amazing. Thank you.