

Bayview Yacht Club is a unique blend of place, history, traditions and people that come together in an almost spiritual way to make it what it is, so dearly treasured by its members. As with any institution, some parts stand out more distinctly than others. Bayview's light shines brightest on Jerome Adams, who holds many titles and assumes many duties, but whose relationship with us can be summarized in a single, simple phrase: our friend.

Jerome was born in Ailey, Georgia, the son of Sarah and Alvin Adams and the oldest of 5 siblings. He had one brother, Edward, and three sisters, Gwendolyn, Deborah and Annette. Ailey was a sawmill town with a population of 500 and a single country store.

We've all seen Jerome working until the last job was done. Work has never been a stranger to him. His first job was delivering papers on a rural route when he was 5 years old. At 7, he started picking cotton. As if that was not enough to occupy his time, he shined shoes in his grandfathers barber shop for the princely sum of .10 cents a pair.

Jerome eventually moved to Atlanta, where he graduated from high school in 1958. A cousin owned a building maintenance service in Miami, and Jerome moved there after graduation to take a job with him. In 1961, his mother took ill and he returned to Georgia to look after her,

taking a job in the local sawmill and turning out 2x4's and 2x8's made of virgin Georgia pine.

Many of Jerome's friends had made their way to Detroit to work in the relatively lucrative auto industry, and they constantly harangued him about how he should follow suit. "No", he always said, life was treating him pretty good in Georgia.

His friends got the best of Jerome in 1964. On a Friday night, they got him good and drunk, and he woke up in a car on this way to Detroit with his bags packed and \$1.50 in his pocket. His kidnapers were Othella Hopkins, Norman Edwards, Willie Frank Bell, and cousin, Ernest Moses. Upon his arrival in Detroit, Ernest told him that he would be staying with him in a home he rented on Algonquin.

Jerome arrived in Detroit on a Saturday. On Monday, he applied for a job at the Chevrolet plant in Flint. On Tuesday, he applied for a job at Ford Motor Company's Sterling Stamping plant. He got that job and started working the next Monday.

Jerome found himself laid-off in January, 1965, but was soon offered a position at the Rouge Plant. When his original job in Sterling Heights opened up, he decided to stay at the Rouge Plant because he could take a bus there. He had no car, and the old Detroit Street Railway (DSR) buses

stopped at 8 mile, making the trek to 18 Mile Road difficult at best.

Jerome made fenders for the Ford Fairlane, starting with a flat piece of steel, going through 19 separate processes, and ending up with a fender. At first, he was an extra, filling in where necessary. It didn't take long before he knew all 19 jobs, making him particularly valuable on the line.

He was 27, and Ford had a program where, if you were 27 or less, they would pay for you to go to school. The line was turning out 450 fenders an hour, and Jerome would dream about the heavy "kerchunk" of each fender being pressed. He decided that the school route was the way to go; either that, or ask for a transfer.

Jerome and a friend both applied to go to tool and die school at the same time, and his friend got accepted in 6 weeks. 6 months went by and Jerome heard nothing. He talked to his shop steward, who advised him to be patient. When that didn't pay off, he went to the Plant Supervisor. "Let me go to school, or let me transfer departments", he begged. The supervisor took him over to an office window over-looking the plant and asked him how many of the people he saw working out there would be working in 5 years. Jerome knew that 25 or 30 were ready for retirement, meaning that only a few would be left. When he told the supervisor that, the supervisor told him that he would never be permitted to go to school, and he would never be permitted to transfer, because he was one of the guys that could do all the jobs of the old guys. "The only way you are going to get out of here", he said, "is to quit".

Jerome realized that he had found himself in a position where he had no social life, working all the time, and constantly thinking about those damn fenders just spitting themselves at him at the end of the line. He told himself, "Ain't no way in the world I can handle this for the next 25 years. I have to get out of here".



By then, Jerome had moved into a house on Connor and Jefferson, the upper rooms which were rented out and Jerome and a friend living on the first floor and taking care of the place. It wasn't long before they figured out that they could make a little extra money by running an after-hours bar in the basement. As Jerome says, "that's when I really learned the business" of bartending. Things went well until they were robbed by two men. In a curious side-note, those two robbers were killed by someone else later on, and Jerome and his friend were investigated by the Detroit Police because of that earlier robbery. He swears they didn't do it!

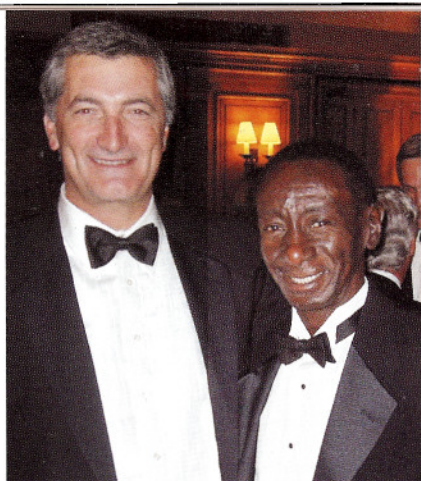
With his life at Ford behind him, Jerome found several different jobs, including one at the Roostertail doing janitorial after midnight. In October, 1967, an acquaintance, Jesse, who washed dishes at Bayview Yacht Club, told him that they were having a big awards dinner for the Mackinac Race and that they needed extra help. Jerome signed on and met Manager Phyllis Campbell and Assistant Manager Harold Smith. The next week, Harold, or "Smitty" as Jerome calls him, told Jerome that the Club needed a porter and asked him if he would like the job. He accepted.

Jerome's job at first was pretty much to make sure that the bar was stocked. Although Bayview had copious drinkers, the selections were limited. One kind of keg beer, a few beers in cans, and three kinds of wine: dry sherry, sweet sherry, and port.

It was at about that time that the then Bayview bartending legend, Curtis Hicks, was bringing his 26 year career at the Club to a close. On one busy night, when special bartenders unfamiliar with the bar were brought in assist with the crowd, Bar and Restaurant Chairman Ed Jacoby noticed how easily Jerome navigated himself around the bar. He mentioned to Harold Smith that the kid looked good and suggested that they train him to be a bartender.

For the next two weeks, Jerome would work his regular shift, walk home to his new residence on Navajo at 4:00 PM, and return at 5:00 PM for two hours of unpaid training. At Christmas time, 1967, he took the job full time.

The grouches on dead-mans curve



were apparently just as grouchy then as they are now, and after two weeks, he thought about quitting. It seems that all they could do was compare him to Curtis Hicks, constantly saying "Curtis didn't do it like that", or "Curtis did it this way". Frustrated, Jerome planned on staying just long enough so that he could afford to move to New Jersey, where his father was. After a while, however, a few members spoke out in his favor and the tide was turned: he started getting compliments for how he did things and his work conditions started getting more tolerable.

In February, 1968, things were slow and Jerome started messing around trying to invent new drinks. Ice cream drinks were all the rage, such as Pink Ladies and Grasshoppers, and he thought it would be nice to invent a drink and not have to look up how to make it in a book when it was ordered. He would come up with new concoctions and try them out on the waitresses, tinkering with them as he went.

One evening, Ed Jacoby came in after a Red Wings game with two friends and asked Jerome what he had in the blender. Jerome explained his experimentation, and Ed asked for some for himself and his friends. After tasting several, they said they were



good and asked what they were called. When Jerome said he had no name for it, one of the men said "after a couple of them, they make you start to hum". Jerome immediately said, "Then I'll call it a Hummer". Of course, the name stuck and today is nearly as legendary as Jerome himself. To this day, Jerome gets calls from bars all around the country asking for the recipe. As always, he obliges.

When Jerome started, he was paid \$1.67 per hour and there were no women allowed in the bar. Bob Roadstrum's wife prohibited him from going to the bar on the theory that, if she couldn't go, neither could he. Eventually, Fran Nagle, Fran Girard and June Markey, whom Jerome describes as "some tough old girls", turned that theory around, staking out the claim that, if their husbands were going in there, so were they. So, the bar became co-ed.

Jerome's first wife, Cookie, whom he married at the Club in 1989, passed away in 2002. He took his second bride, the lovely Denise, this year. He has two daughters, Sabrina, 41, and Deandra, 40, and 4 grandchildren, two girls and two boys. The boys are twins, currently 7 years old, while the girls are 11 and 12. They all reside in Georgia.

Ask Jerome what he likes about Bayview, and he is emphatic: the people. Sure, just like anyplace else, there are some here and there that you have to deal with, but as he says, and in a way that is 100% Jerome, "Ninety percent of the people is good people." He adds, "Unlike Ford, I look forward to coming here every day. It's beautiful down here."

When you watch Jerome work, you can tell that he likes the people, and you can tell that they like him. He protects the children. He spoils the women. He respects everyone. He takes care of those who need care. He gives his pals a rough go. He shows newcomers his unfailing hospitality. He treats the place not as if it were his place of employment, but as if it were his home. And it is. It is his home, and it is our home. Jerome somehow manages to make it just a little more homey for us all.

Jerome Adams, you are my friend, and you are our friend. ♦