

SCUTTLEBUTT

Staff

Suzanne B. Hurley
Curator

Sandra D. Hurley
Assistant Curator

Diane Knuckles
Office Manager

Our Mission

The Ocean City Museum Society, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and interpreting the rich natural and cultural history of this coastal community through memorabilia collections, rotating exhibits, educational programs and area research. The Ocean City Life-Saving Station Museum presents:

1. The history of the United States Life-Saving Service on the Delmarva Peninsula.
2. The past lifestyles and culture of the Town of Ocean City, Maryland.
3. The local ancestral records and artifact collections through its internet service.

THE VALUE OF LESSONS LEARNED FROM SUMMER EXPERIENCES IN OCEAN CITY

BY MATTHEWS WRIGHT

My father, James C. Wright, began working as a waiter at the Commander Hotel on 14th Street and Boardwalk under Mrs. Minnie May Lynch in 1940 and later he was promoted to Maitre d'. He learned his trade well and was encouraged and supported by my mother.

dinning rooms were always in immaculate order and his staffs were run like a fine tuned engine. He was taught by his elders in the hotel trade and in turn he continued fine dinning services throughout his career.

making a *smooching sound* to give them assignments and last minute directions. He felt that major sounds and movements in the dinning room were to come from the patrons – staff, he deemed to be invisible! As Maitre d' he provided seating to his guest according to their

There was an art to the

stature and long patronage of the hotel. A good example of his artful efforts was that if a guest did not recognize good service and the tip was less than acceptable when they again requested an ocean-view, my father would seat them at the mirror rather than to give them a true ocean-view. No glass of water was to go beyond half full and each

Later, Mrs. Lynch handed control of hotel operations to her son Mr. John Lynch and the excellent food and service was extended as its trademark and established the Commander Hotel as a sought after refuge for



The Dining Room Staff at the Commander Hotel is shown during the late '50's. James C. Wright is in the dark suit.

relaxation, a cocktail and a delicious evening meal in the dining room. The season began in late March to early April when all of his staff assembled, at our home on Fulton Avenue. People came from Virginia, Florida and all over, but if you were on his staff you left from his house by caravan on a given day. His

work you carved out in the hotel trade as being associated with you. For instance, when my father arrived on the dinning room floor he always double-checked the reservations making sure that his best guests had his most seasoned staff. He would gather his staff prior to opening the dining room by

time a cocktail was about finished, the drink was immediately refreshed until the guest requested nothing else to drink. It was like clock-work from late March until mid-October.

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LESSONS... CONTINUED

The hotel guests were from the big industries of Maryland; Athey's Paint, Bethlehem Steel, the Port of Baltimore, the ship building companies in Baltimore and many others. When they came to vacation, they stayed for weeks at a time. Many of the guests like Mrs. Athey and the Weather's family would always ask for us and I believe it is possible that our visits to Ocean City were timed with the departure of some guest. Mrs. Athey would come to the back stairway of the hotel to see us and she would hold our chin and give us a general inspection and examine our over all deportment. At a later point she would see that our father received some money to cover our back to school costs. Mr. Weathers would do the same, only he would take us to Berlin, Maryland and have our clothes picked out at the huge, but segregated men's clothing store. The last summer we spent before he was to take us shopping, Mr. Weathers passed while on vacation, but one of his last requests to his daughter was to take us to get our school clothes - and she did! We wore Izod clothing, nylon shirts and prep clothing to school in the '50's!

All of the Eastern Shore, including Ocean City was still practicing heavy segregation. The irony is that as a child, I was never confronted with segregationist issues. Our father was well established after nearly twenty years as the

Maitre d' at the Commander and he was recognized as "Brown Sugar" my brother and I were known as "little sugar"! We played with Johnnie; John



*Two L'il Sugars in Dads room
in Ocean City, MD*

Jr., walked the boardwalk with his sister Sue and their Collie "Smokey" and built sand castles with the youngest; Ivey. We ran in and out of their house as we played and walked the boardwalk down to 1st Street where we entertained ourselves with the arcade games, rode the merry-go-round and ate cotton candy, caramel corn and saltwater taffy just like everyone else with no hitch until we went downtown on the boardwalk one day to have pictures taken.

I left before Charles, to get to the photo machine. The pictures were four -on-a-strip for a quarter and I sat in the machine, took my pictures and went back to the hotel. I showed the pictures to everyone when I returned and Charles decided that he too wanted pictures and went to get his taken. When he arrived at the boardwalk shop and attempted to go into the booth he was told

coarsely by an employee that Negro kids could not use the machine! This was our introduction to segregation. It was obvious to our parents that we had grown to the point where we could no longer do things as we previously had done. From that day forward, we were taken to swim at the end of the boardwalk where there were sanitation dumps. We no longer played with the Lynch children or went carefree to their house to seek them for play and never again did we play shuffleboard on the court fronting Baltimore Street near the Lynch's residence. I guess facial hair (fuzz) was the signal that we were no longer seen as children - but perceived as being young men needing to learn the lessons of a segregated society as they existed in the '50's.

In 1964 I graduated from high school during the riots in Los Angeles when black consciousness and pride was heightened among African-Americans. I wasn't fully prepared for my first experience as a hotel worker because as a waiter there were certain indignities that you were expected to accept to get your tip. I decided, after receiving a fifteen cent tip, in pennies, hidden beneath several pieces of dishware and listening to the degrading comments made about me indirectly, that I would work in the dish room cleaning the dishes rather than serving the food. That choice was a big mistake on my part because not only do you wash the dishes - you also

LESSONS.....CONTINUED

have to break-down the room for the next day of service and three meals are served each day. That was my first and last year of work at the Commander. There were lessons learned from these experiences that I've used far beyond the sandy shores of Ocean City, and they are:

LESSONS!

Never work in a situation under your father's scrutiny; you'll work harder than any other employee!

Hotel work is difficult and people are not paid enough for what they do so when you receive good service— leave a great tip!

At times in your life one needs to swallow pride to reach a perceived goal. It's better than choking on the reality of a bad choice.

I chose college and degrees as I learned manual work was not my career choice.

I gained a greater respect for my father's abilities a Maitre d' and saw him in a different light from that point on.



Author, Matthews Wright

This excerpt is taken from Matthews Wright's book;

Lessons Learned; the Never-ending Search for a Purposeful & Significant Life, 2008.

For more "Ocean City Memories" visit our website:

www.ocmuseum.org

**WELCOME ABOARD
NEW MEMBERS!**
The President and Board of Directors take great pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

SUPPORTING

Cliff & Sarah Dypsky
Ocean City, Maryland

Ronnie Engle
Ocean City, Maryland

William & Susan Mariner
Ocean City, Maryland

Brian McCabe
Baltimore, Maryland

Al & Pat Wheltle
Ellicott City, Maryland

Dinah Wimbrow-Warfield
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Evelyn & Barry Hallowell
Berlin, Maryland

Lynne & Jared Sechrist
York, Pennsylvania

INDIVIDUAL

Aaron Thomas Bowden
Sparks, Maryland

Debra Cerase
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania

Julia Mumford Stevenson
Murphy, North Carolina

George Thompson
Dutton, Virginia

30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

Mark your calendars for Sunday **October 26, 2008** to celebrate the 30 year anniversary of the Ocean City Life-Saving Station Museum. The building was dedicated as a museum on December 25, 1978 which was exactly 100 years after the original United States Life-Saving Station was commissioned and opened on Caroline Street.

There will be a general membership gathering at Harrison's Harbor Watch Restaurant with cocktails beginning at 5:30pm, and an Eastern Shore dinner will be served at 7pm. The museum will be open prior to dinner for members to visit. The featured speaker will be Christopher Havern, a historian from the USCG.

Invitations will be mailed in September and members are encouraged to bring guests who might be interested in joining the Museum Society.

MUSEUM ADDS NEW MERMAID TO COLLECTION



Abidjan Walker and Da'aga Hill Bowman present a mermaid to

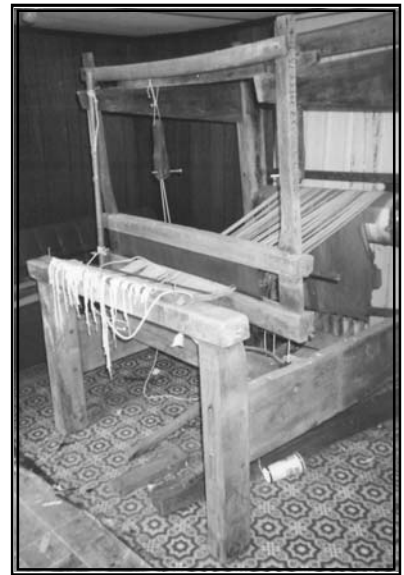
The Museum is happy to announce an addition to the mermaid exhibit!

In order to diversify the collection Da'aga Hill Bowman, of Arlington, Virginia, acquired a vintage 1996 Bubbling Mermaid Black Barbie Doll and donated it to the museum in honor of Abidjan and Safiya Walker, Swimmers, of Hanover, New Hampshire.

Look What We Found!

This circa 1860 weaving loom used by Zipporah "Zippy" Lewis, a legendary figure in the history and folklore of Ocean City, Maryland, is now in our possession. To learn more about this most interesting woman, go to our web site www.ocmuseum.org or write us to request a copy of the story of her life.

Gift of Cinda Rickards and family of Frankford, Delaware who are direct descendants of Zippy Lewis.



Photograph by George M. Hurley



**Ocean City Life-Saving
Station Museum**

813 S. Boardwalk
P. O. Box 603
Ocean City, MD 21843

We're on the Web!

www.ocmuseum.org

*The Times and Tides of
Ocean City, Maryland*

We welcome you to become a member of the Ocean City Museum Society.

Please complete this form and mail with a check payable to:

Ocean City Museum Society, Inc., P. O. Box 603, Ocean City, MD 21843

Student.....\$ 5.00 _____ Supporting.....\$ 100.00 _____

Individual.....\$ 10.00 _____ Sustaining.....\$ 250.00 _____

Family.....\$ 30.00 _____ Benefactor.....\$ 500.00 _____

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