

THE BLADE

One of America's Great Newspapers

Limo service delivers a good time on the town

4/30/2016

BY MARY ALICE POWELL



Mary Alice Powell

Eight women settled into the long black limousine, uncorked a bottle of champagne, and left the driving to downtown Toledo in the capable hands of Scott Jackson.

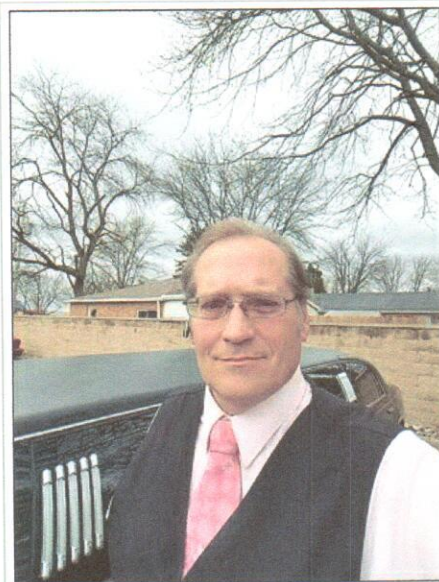
The party celebrating the birthday anniversary of Ruth Anne Walsh was old hat to Mr. Jackson. He has been driving limos for Total Image for 11 years and has many stories of his experiences pleasing people on short and long distance trips. His reputation of making sure clients' plans are fulfilled and that he takes them back home in a happy mood, was proven before the limo left Ms. Walsh's driveway and headed into the city's warehouse district.

To help Ms. Walsh's friends and relatives cap the surprise, Mr. Jackson agreed to knock on her door at the same time she was expecting a neighbor to pick her up to go to dinner. He not only escorted the surprised Ms. Walsh to the limousine but also joined the group singing the birthday song when he opened the door.

Compared to many of Mr. Jackson's limo trips, the ride from Swanton to the warehouse district in Toledo was short with three stops but it was long enough to show his attentiveness to keep passengers on schedule and having a good time.

Being dropped off at the Durty Bird for drinks and bar food, then picked up and taken to Osteria for dinner, and finally adding an elegant touch at Georgio's, the third stop, for birthday cake all happened within four hours, including driving time.

"I try to make them feel good," Mr. Jackson said, referring to the limousine customers who have ranged from bridal couples to Make A Wish recipients.



Scott Jackson shares his experiences as a limousine driver.

The year-round full-time job keeps him behind the wheel six days a week driving vehicles that range from a party bus to the 18-passenger limo that is 38-foot long. Mr. Jackson praised David and Debbie Miller, company owners, for the close family feeling employees enjoy. The Millers have owned the company 30 years.

During the winter months a high percentage of limo trips are to Detroit Metro or Chicago O'Hare Airport. Holiday partygoers prefer not to drive if they are drinking.

From now until October, limo orders are mostly for proms, graduations, weddings, and downtown Toledo.

Mud Hen and Walleye fans often hire a limo for the games, and since Hensville has been in full swing there have been increased requests for those businesses. Parking is not a problem, Mr. Jackson said, because the Toledo police are understanding.

When Mr. Jackson knows in advance he will be transporting a wedding party, he enjoys adding a personal fashion touch to the celebration.

"I try to find out what colors the bridesmaids will be wearing. Then I wear a vest in the matching color," he said. In addition to a choice of glass sizes, ice, and napkins that are furnished in all Total Image vehicles, he adds wine glasses the newlyweds can keep.

One of his longest trips, in miles and time, was from Toledo to Yazoo, Miss., for a celebration. His passengers were members of one of several Yazoo clubs around the country.

The Toledo group planned on being in the parade in the limousine, but when it came time for the parade line up they were turned down.

“We couldn’t be in the parade because I am white,” he said.

Even though his passengers were unhappy about the parade, the trip continued to a casino in Vicksburg, Miss. In addition to making trips to Chicago airports, customers leave the driving to him to go to Chicago restaurants and return the same day. But he also recalls driving to a Chicago spa where the customer stayed several days. On long overnight trips, Mr. Jackson said his favorite pastime is people watching.

A regular customer who travels with her cat is well remembered by Mr. Jackson.

She takes her cat everywhere, including to California, he said, and often hires a limo to take her and the cat to the airport.

“But I am allergic to cats,” he said. “I just have to tell her to be sure to keep the cat in the back.”

Driving a limo has emotional bumps in the road as well as happy times.

For Mr. Jackson driving the family of Toledo Mayor Mike Collins the day of his funeral was one of those bumps.

“I felt very proud to be chosen to drive, he said, recalling the outpouring of grief the city of Toledo showed.

“There were people lined on the side streets all the way to the cathedral. Obviously Mayor Collins was well liked.”

Mr. Jackson believes that he often is scheduled for the Make A Wish reservations because he has 21 grandchildren and has a connection with children developed at Springfield High School, where he taught math and also drove a school bus.

“You can become very attached to a child in a short time,” he said, adding that they are sad experiences.

He covets a treasured souvenir of one Make A Wish assignment when he took a boy to an Ohio State game. At the end of the trip the boy offered Mr. Jackson the hat that the coach and the team players had autographed.

Mr. Jackson declined the boy’s generosity. At the boy’s funeral a few weeks later, his father gave him the autographed hat explaining that he really wanted him to have it.

Mary Alice Powell is a retired Blade food editor. Contact her at poseypowell@aol.com.