

BIOGRAPHY OF JERRY J. BELL

Street Corner Naming - Redfield St. & Columbus Ave.

Sept.
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Jerry Jay Bell, fondly known as "Mr. Bell," was born on February 20th, 1929, in the quaint town of New Bern, NC. As a young child, he embarked on a journey that would shape his life, moving to the vibrant Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. It was here that he spent his formative years until 1956, when he decided to call New Haven, CT his new home.

Arriving in New Haven with a foundational principle of establishing a strong community, Mr. Bell achieved this vision by becoming a homeowner of "dollar houses" in the Hill Neighborhood in the early 80s. His commitment to community development was unwavering, and he dedicated himself to various roles, including service at the Housing Authority, Veterans Hospital, Jewish Home for the Aged, and Staff Builders. Notably, he continued this impactful work until his retirement at the age of 70.

Throughout his professional journey, Mr. Bell developed a remarkable ability to uplift others and build community bonds through any means necessary. His dedication extended beyond the workplace, as he volunteered extensively with various community groups. From providing art classes to local children and playing drums, including drum repair services for the Bowe & Peters Dance group, to actively participating in voter registration, Mr. Bell's contributions were diverse and far-reaching.

One of his most enduring and passionate projects was serving as the garden coordinator of Redfield Street for over 30 years. In this role, he played a pivotal part in transforming a former dumping site into a thriving community garden. Mr. Bell's meticulous planning and hard work not only created a beautiful space but also showcased his commitment to community well-being.

Year after year, Mr. Bell tirelessly maintained the garden, continually improving it and providing a vital space for the Ageless Mature Adults group members to cultivate their own fresh produce for the past 8 years. His dedication extended beyond mere gardening, as he actively sought ways to promote healthier eating habits within the community.

In recognition of his endless contributions, Mr. Bell was recently honored with the 2023 Senior Volunteer of the Year Award. This accolade celebrated his exceptional dedication to the community and his extensive volunteer work with the Senior Citizens of New Haven. Jerry Jay Bell's life story is a testament to a life well lived; a journey marked by a steadfast commitment to community and the transformative power of one individual's commitment to building a better community for all. His legacy continues to inspire, reminding us all of the power of one individual's dedication to making a positive impact on the world around them.