

• Sterling Joyce •



Bradley Stookey

Local hospitality legend **Sterling Joyce Jr.** has become the de facto nuptial expert at the Casa Marina Hotel and Restaurant, which hosts about 100 weddings a year. The 60-year-old maitre d', always dressed to the nines, has been with the 1920s-era beachfront hotel six years. Joyce, a Georgia native, moved to Jacksonville in 1984 installing TV cable. He's since worked in medical sales, catering, and even owned his own restaurant. He managed Max's in Jacksonville Beach for 18 years. It was there that he started hosting an annual fundraiser for local children's charities on his birthday. The 2009 bash lured in more than 500 partygoers and collected eight truckloads of toys, canned food and books for BEAM (Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry). Joyce and his wife Marcia live in Arlington. They have four children.

Full Name: Sterling Joyce

Birthday: December 14

Occupation: Maitre d' of Casa Marina Hotel and Restaurant; president of the Beaches Hospitality Network

First job: A server on roller skates at Young's Barbeque in Warner Robins, Georgia, while I was going to school. It was a drive-in restaurant, sort of like Sonic. That was some of the best barbeque you could find.

Childhood ambition: As a child, I wanted to be a helicopter pilot. Later, when I served in Vietnam, I admired the heroism of helicopter pilots—they saved many lives, getting wounded soldiers out of harm's way.

Business philosophy in six words or less: The customer is always right.

Hardest lessons learned: Do not burn bridges, because once you burn them, there's no going back. Treat every one as you would want to be treated. Also—and this is very important—never discuss wedding crashers with a bride before she walks down the aisle.

Proudest accomplishment: I am grateful that I have been able to use the occasion of my birthday to help children in need. I've been doing this for 11 years and I will keep on doing it as long as I have a birthday to celebrate.

Recent Trip: I love to bowl and recently competed in a tournament in Savannah.

Dream vacation: I have been all over the world, but one place that I have not had the opportunity to visit is Rio.

First car: I had a Chevy Corvair. Now, I'm not a small man, but that was one small car. I think I actually drove that thing with my kneecaps.

What I had for lunch yesterday: Salmon, broccoli and corn. It was good, too.

Last person I spoke to on the phone: Harvey Williams, one of the best local singers, by the way. And a good man.

Wealth, fame, love or respect? Respect, fame and wealth have their place, but there's no point in getting up in the morning if you don't have love.

Person I'd like to meet: I think meeting President Obama would be very inspiring. No matter what your politics, his election opened the door of opportunity for so many people.

Scariest moment: When I was 12 years old, my house burned to the ground. I was pulled out of the house from my bedroom window. Unfortunately, my mother and two sisters did not survive.

Favorite movie quote: "Some of the best things in life are total mistakes," from *Paycheck* (2003). Anyone in any service industry can tell you how true that is.

What I don't understand about kids today: In our industry, appearance is important. I will never understand how it can be fashionable to wear your pants around your ankles.

My trademark: Service with a smile.

Final meal: Sunday brunch at the Casa Marina. If it is your last meal, you'd be a fool not to pick a buffet.