

ALL YOU NEED IS AN OPPORTUNITY!



JOHN JACKSON SR.... Professional Driver

Oh how I love me some good ol' southern hospitality! When a person refers to me as ma'am, I'm not the type to get offended. Regardless if he or she is younger than me or older. To me, there is a likable factor that exudes from a person that portrays their manners. Just ask any female, she'll tell you. If any man has an ounce of chivalry in them, we can detect it in a matter of minutes. And his cool points will begin to tally up. That is also how I was raised. My southern granny moved around with us to help raise my brother and I while my father was in the military. So we did chores growing up and picked our limbs from the tree ourselves if we misbehaved. Or switches, as my granny called them. I think she even referred to them as hickories before. Manners and home cooked meals came hand in hand. You greet with a firm handshake, address one another in a welcoming manner and always say sir or ma'am. I remember being told that you don't necessarily have to like your neighbor but if they are in need of help, then you help them out. We played phone

tag back and forth for a couple of days when I first tried to con-



tact this nominee. I was already forewarned about his work ethic and to be patient while we dance around each other's schedules. He has been selected by his employer, Bennett Motor Express where he has been a loyal driver for 53 years. The staff at Bennett speak nothing but high praises of this dedicated gentleman. His wife states that he has been with this company long enough to earn the seniority among his co-workers that look up to him but he treats them all in a way that if they needed anything at all, they know he is the man to

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come to. His name is John Jackson Senior but everybody knows him as J.W. He was born and raised in my neighboring state of Georgia, in the small town of Bonaire. It was in the middle of the summer on July the 18th, 1944 that Syrtha and Bennie Lewis Jackson welcomed their sixth child, J.W. The Jacksons had a full house with a total of 11 kids in all. Giving him seven sisters and three brothers. His father, Bennie was a share cropper and his mother stayed at home to tend to the house and kids. Together they all lived on the family farm and everyone had their duties of work to do. In 1946 at the age of 6, J.W.'s mother inherited her grandfather's house. Syrtha and Bennie saw this as a huge blessing and moved their family to Perry, Georgia. As they settled in their new city, his father found work at the local lumber company and his mother took a few jobs as a house keeper to also help support their family. I asked J.W. what kind of kid was he growing up...was he mischievous? Maybe always running around like the typical kid, looking for things to get into? "Well I always enjoyed being outside," he said. I'm thinking, the way things were back then, you didn't have much a choice if you liked playing outside or not. Now days, kids don't have much of a rea-

son to go outside unless they are involved in some sort of sport. Otherwise, kids at any age can be found cooped up in their own bedrooms for hours at a time. Of course he had his share of work on the farm that he had to do but



to him, he didn't consider this to be a bad thing. He watched how hard the both of his parents worked and took all of that in. At the early age of 12, J.W. was driving the family truck on the farm and doing everything he could to help out. Little did he know that was just the beginning of his career. Those first few moments behind the wheel had sparked a fuse inside of J.W. I can remember what I was doing at the age of 12, playing hop scotch on the sidewalks outside of our house and swimming at the public city pool with friends. Definitely not driving. Maybe if I had, it would've given me a little more experience because Lord knows that I need

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as much help as possible but we won't get into that. For J.W. driving and farming came natural to him.

It wasn't until the 60's when his father took a job as a fork lift operator at Rollins Air Force Base, when things in J.W.'s life started to fall into place. As a teenager, he worked on the base also, doing construction. It was during this time that he met a contractor by the name of George Bennett. Even though he had a good job and was making good money, J.W. knew that he wanted more. "I wanted to see the world," he explains. He made up his mind and decided to ask for a shot. He approached Mr. Bennett by asking him if he needed any help; referring to driving and making any deliveries. Mr. Bennett replied back with, "If you want to and think you can do it, I could show you what to do." And that folks, is all it took. From that day forward, at the young age of 17 J.W. went to work for Mr. Bennett, who was the founder of the company, George Bennett Motor Express. He started out driving back and forth from Macon, Georgia to Rollins Air Force Base delivering airport parts and different items for the military. J.W. recalls his first major job. They put him in a 1953 yellow Mack and he headed out to Miami, Flor-

ida. He would delivery from one air force base to another. Right after this load was dropped off in Miami, he had to turn around and head to Detroit, Michigan for his next scheduled delivery. This is what he signed up for and he never looked back. He traveled all over the country, nationwide



weeks at a time. In his schedule, he had three weeks to make his deliveries. Bennett gave him the choice of running the weeks all together or breaking them up and taking his off days at his convenience. J.W. wanted to get all of his work out of the way and come home to enjoy his time off with about 7 or 8 days in a row with his family. When I asked J.W. what is it about working for Bennett that has kept him there for 53 years, he replied back with an honest answer, "They treat me

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how I like to be treated." Hmm, simple enough! I guess nobody would want to stay with a company for that long if you were not appreciated and taken for granted. He goes on to say that from day one, when he first met George Bennett, he knew that they would get along fine. "I really appreciate the opportunity of what he gave me." Within his time with Bennett Motor Express, J.W. has racked up on his share of awards for his many years driving with the company and all of his combined safe miles on the road. Including the Bill Ford Award and the JD Garrison Award. When he reached his 1 million mile mark, the company awarded him with a ring and then later a watch for reaching his 2 million mile mark. As of today's date, J.W. has surpassed the 5 million mile stretch and still continues to add to it. He lets me know that he has never been one to keep up with all of the awards or medals, that this life is his calling regardless of any impressive paperwork. He simply loves what he does for a living and who he works for. The rest is just icing on his cake.

On his spare time, he likes to unwind and relax. Can't blame him there. He enjoys his days off spent at home with his family or taking his wife Calondra, who is a nurse at Mary Persons High

School, out on a nice dinner date. She is a graduate of that school and returned 8 years ago to do what she does best. Calondra laughs as she tells me how different the halls are now days, compared to her days there. They have been married for 10 years so she is pretty much use to the truck driver's life but admits that his best time is spent with the



two of them together. Calondra describes her husband as a very hard worker and a great family man. "He is always there for his family and friends or whoever needs him...he can be a little stubborn at times but he's a good, good man!" We both laughed when I asked, "What man isn't stubborn?" J.W. says that his favorite places to ride through are Orlando and Jacksonville, Florida. Mainly because he likes to look out at the water on the beaches

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there but that's the jest of it. Do not expect to catch him in the water though. He explains, "I like to look at the ocean and watch the people at the beach but I don't like to get in it." Good to know! I thought I was the only one. When he can, he gets in his quality time with his kids and grandkids. He has two children, his son John Wesley Jackson Junior and his daughter, Stephanie who is the youngest of the pair. In all he has a total of 15 grandkids and 8 great-grandkids.

J.W. is still keeping the roads hot, driving back and forth from Charleston, North Carolina to

Anniston, Alabama hauling parts for city buses. Him and Calondra currently reside in Forsyth, Georgia and are enjoying each other's company while they can until it's time for J.W. to hit the road again. I think I speak for Bennett also when I say that we are thankful for the amount of years that J.W. has dedicated to the many miles stretched over the states. It is not his hard work and the way he conducts his busy lifestyle that is rewarding to J.W. It's the people that he has touched and the lives that he has impacted along the way, that is inspiring. J.W. is great example of, if you work hard...it will pay off.

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