



**Peter GELZINIS**

# THE SUITE LIFE

## At 84, Lenox bellman still runs like clockwork

A pair of cherished English antiques grace the lobby of Boston's Lenox Hotel. The first is a 310-year-old grandfather clock affectionately known as "Mr. Thornton."

The second is Jimmy Fisher — a spry, 84-year-old wisp of a bellman who's been winding Mr. Thornton every Friday night for most of the last 60 years with as much devotion as he's hauled several tons of luggage up the elevator.

The other tie that binds the old clock to the old bellman is a starched air of discretion. Mr. Thornton can't tell you all the crazy things that have unfolded by his ancient pendulum.

And Jimmy . . . well, let's put it this way: On the 50th anniversary of his tenure at The Lenox, Oprah invited the dapper gent, who joined the English Navy at 16, to sit on her national couch and dish.

"(Oprah) wanted me to tell tales out of school," Jimmy said yesterday, his smile twisting into a stinging frown. "She wanted all the crazy

stuff, you know, all the juicy stuff. How could I do that?"

"I've always said to do this job, you must be pleasant; you have to like taking orders and the most important thing . . . learn to keep your mouth shut!" With that, Jimmy's lips draw together as if pulled by an invisible zipper.

So, where does that leave a nosey scribe who's come for a dollop of dirt? Better off than Oprah.

Let's see, there was Jimmy's affection for Yogi Berra and Joe DiMaggio. "They tipped me \$1 each, where Casey Stengel was only 10 cents." Red Auerbach, who used to live in Suite 900 during the Celts' season, was a hero who showered Jimmy with tickets and basketballs for his two boys, in return for making sure the beer didn't run out during his marathon card games.

There was the sad tale of Sally Keith the tassel dancer and her dog in Room 709. When Sally expired there, Jimmy informed one of her friends that her dog followed her

into eternity.

How could Jimmy ever forget the night a stick-up man took pity on the pleasant bellman and his partner. "I don't want your money," the crook said. "I know you work hard for it." It was a good thing, too, because that night we hit the number and Doc, the bookie (Jimmy doesn't think it was Doc Sagansky, but he's not sure) who sat in the lobby, just paid us off in cash."

Then there was the envelope Jimmy found stuffed with a hundred \$100 bills and the Singapore tourists who stiffed him when he returned it to them.

The Saunders family will honor Jimmy's 60 years tonight by christening the bellman's closet as "The Jimmy Fisher Suite." The faithful bellman will be grateful . . . but not long-winded.



STAFF PHOTO, BELOW, BY ANGELA ROWLINGS  
**AT YOUR SERVICE:** Jimmy Fisher, shown above in 1964, will celebrate 60 years as a bellman at the Lenox Hotel today, when the bellman's closet is named for him.

