



Edward Adams Bagwell

Harlem Photographer & Sound Engineer
News Voice International (NVI)

Edward Adams Bagwell, was born on November 21, 1931, in Harlem, New York, to George Lenard Bagwell and Erminie Adams-Bagwell. He had an older sister, Jackie, and a younger sister, June. The family lived at 267 West 113th Street in Harlem, New York. The Bagwells were long-time members of All Souls' Episcopal Church, located at 88 St. Nicholas Avenue, New York.

The Adams family, including his Mother, eight sisters, and three brothers, immigrated from Bermuda to New York by way of Ellis Island. Growing up with his family and the "aunts" Edward became the beloved boy in the family who was doted on by all. He often shared stories of being the only boy in Harlem, who wore knickers and carried a violin to school! As a child, Edward spent summers with his paternal family in Accomac, Virginia.

Edward was always an innovative thinker. He loved flashlights and electronic gadgets. He often gazed in amazement at the electrical display in the Woolworth Department Store windows on 125th Street. At a young age, he taught Morse code to his younger sister, June, which provided her and their neighborhood friends with a buzzer-signaling system. Edward's foundation in electronics, math, and blueprint design sharpened while attending Central Commercial High School.

Edward served in the United States Marine Corps from January 17, 1952, to February 18, 1954. He received the United Nations Service Medal, Korean War Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and a Good Conduct Service Medal.

Upon returning home from service, Edward attended Collegiate Institute. He became intrigued with the mechanics of photography and audio engineering. He quickly became known for his 120mm, 4x5 large portrait photography, and 8x10 view camera. Edward's ability to capture the natural essence of people made him a valuable resource as a photographer covering social-protest activities in support of the Civil Right Movement.

In the 1960s, Edward established News Voice International (NVI), located at 110th Street and Lenox Avenue. NVI was a one-stop resource for Black businesses seeking professional photography and sound-system installation services. The office was a hub for the Harlem elite, prominent social activists, and cultural artists.

During this time Edward met Lilly and was smitten by her striking natural beauty and intellect. It was love at first sight. Edward began booking her for some of his prominent advertisements. Edward happily embraced Lilly's two young children Nelson and Sharon. Later, they were married and raised two daughters, Dorinda and Kadesha. Edward was a loving father, fully dedicated to his children, and always incorporated his family into his active career.

During the era of Black Empowerment, Edward Bagwell's photographs were featured in: The National Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), The Amsterdam News, Time Magazine, Look Magazine, New York Age, Jet Magazine, Ebony Magazine, New York Courier, Saturday Evening Post, Physicians News Service, and the Library of Congress.

He produced advertising campaigns for: Johnny Walker Red, Clairol, Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Henry Street Settlement, and The Children's Television Workshop (Sesame Street). In 1966, Edward was named Photographer of the Year by the Photographers Guild.

Edward had extensive knowledge of sound-system installations. He installed and maintained all the original audio and intercom systems in Harlem's Historic Black Churches: Antioch Baptist Church, Convent Avenue Baptist Church, Salem Methodist Church, Mother AME Zion Church, All Souls' Church, and La Sinagoga Pentecostal Church. He designed and coordinated all the audio needs for the political tours for Senator Jacob Javits, Senator Kenneth Keating, Secretary of State of New York Basil Paterson, and American civil rights leader Whitney M. Young funeral service to name a few.

Under Mayor John Lindsay's administration, Edward Bagwell was the sound engineer for the 1969 "Harlem Cultural Summer Festival", which was held throughout the five boroughs of New York City. He set up all the stage productions, grandstands, and light towers for performers like Stevie Wonder, James Brown, and Jimi Hendrix.

Edward was also the audio engineer for the Broadway show "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope" (1972), and he managed community sound events at The Studio Museum for musicians like Babatunde Olatunji. He also was the sound engineer for events at the Audubon Ballroom, Renaissance Ballroom, Rockland Palace, the West Indian American Day Carnival, and the annual African-American Day Parade grandstand located in front of the State Office Building, which was a highlight for our entire family from the onset until the 1990s.

Looking for more space the family moved to a house in The Bronx. Edward discovered that he had a green thumb and diligently groomed the rose bushes, planted annuals, and perennials, and made mean, juicy burgers on the backyard grill!

Edward was a kind, humble, and polite man. He was always a sharp, well-dressed gentleman, with a button-down shirt, tie, or an ascot. Edward loved listening to jazz music and would whistle his favorite tunes. He sported a black Tam, carried a newspaper under his arm, and wore a tan overcoat like his favorite detective, Columbo.

On Sunday, April 24, 2022, Edward Adams Bagwell, who was 90-years-old, passed away, quietly in his sleep, at the Hebrew Home in Riverdale, New York. While he suffered from Alzheimer's Disease, he could still sing along to one of his favorite tunes, John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman's "My One and Only Love".

NOVEMBER 21, 1931 – APRIL 24, 2022