



# UMB News

## Up Close and Personal with President Bruce Jarrell

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If you know University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, you're surely aware that he's a surgeon by trade and that metalsmithing is his favorite hobby. But did you know he has a degree in engineering, restored antique cars as a high schooler, has six grandchildren, and recently acquired a fondness for listening to music on YouTube?

These are just a few of the insights into Jarrell's life that were discussed Dec. 3 during a special episode of *Virtual Face to Face with President Bruce Jarrell*. Normally the online program's host, Jarrell instead was the special guest as Denise Koch of WJZ-TV served as guest host asking him questions in a virtual event titled *Up Close and Personal with President Bruce Jarrell*.



*(l-r) Bruce Jarrell in middle school in Caroline County, at home with grandchildren today, and in his ironworking shop*

Koch and Jarrell talked about his early life, career as a transplant surgeon, hobbies, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and other topics before the longtime Baltimore TV anchor asked a simple question: Is there anything about President Jarrell that would

surprise people?

"I would say that, like many other people, I'm a paradox," said Jarrell, who was named UMB's leader in September after serving eight months as interim president. "I love being with people and talking and interacting. That's the way I do business: face to face.

“And yet on the opposite end, there’s nothing that gives me greater pleasure than being in my workshop with the door shut. In there, it’s totally quiet and I can focus on exactly what I’m doing. So I need both of those things in my life.”

Koch kicked off the interview by saying she was surprised to learn that Jarrell had grown up in Caroline County on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, asking how a child from a farming family came to be a surgeon. Jarrell said working at his family’s tomato canning factory taught him many life lessons and skills, and that living in a small town with one general practitioner showed how important a doctor can be to a community.

“It was a wonderful place for a kid because I learned how to do everything,” Jarrell said of working in his family’s cannery. “I learned how to fix machinery, how to weld and do metalwork, how to pick tomatoes, how to put labels on tin cans, and how to sell them. I learned it all from soup to nuts.

“That general practitioner was a pillar in the community and something of a role model. My father certainly thought that medicine was important, too, and he pushed my older brother to do that. But not me. He knew I was an engineer.”

As an Eastern Shore native, Jarrell said he looked to the University of Delaware in Newark as his “Delmarva” state school and was attracted to its well-regarded College of Engineering. As a senior, he attended a conference about mass transfer and dialysis that proved to be life-changing.

“All of a sudden, a whole new world opened up to me, because I learned about dialysis from an engineering point of view and said, ‘Wait a minute, I think I want to be on the doctor side of this,’ ” said Jarrell, who went on to earn a medical degree from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and settled into the field of transplant surgery before joining UMB in 1997 as chair of the School of Medicine’s Department of Surgery.

The program was interspersed with photos of Jarrell as a boy and a transplant surgeon, shots of him playing with his grandchildren in his Severna Park home, and examples of his metalwork, including the window art he made with Ukrainian blacksmith Anatoliy Rudik in 2012 that was installed in the SMC Campus Center. Koch quizzed Jarrell on his metalwork, music appreciation, and newfound affection for YouTube. All the while, he extolled the benefits of having outside pursuits and work-life balance.

“It’s absolutely essential to have an outlet besides your job, a hobby or a passion for something, and I’ve appreciated that with my metalwork,” Jarrell said. “But I’ve also grown to love YouTube. I don’t look much at videos, but I like to listen. And it’s allowed me to really broaden my knowledge of music — orchestral, opera, things like that. There are modern composers who are really good, and I would have never discovered them if not for YouTube.”

Asked about other outside interests, Jarrell said he enjoys books that are artistic or historical in nature — he’s enjoying one now about Sparrows Point — but that you won’t find him reading them on a beach vacation. His travel generally has an educational purpose — to learn about UMB programs abroad, take courses on other crafts, or study experts in other fields. As for pursuing new hobbies down the road, he’s keeping an open mind. After all, his mother, who lived to 101, was taking embroidery courses at age 90.

“The key thing about my mother is that she was always learning, and what makes me tick is that I’m going to do everything I can to be intellectually challenged,” Jarrell said. “A day without learning is a day wasted, so I need to be learning something new every day.”

Watch the entire program by accessing the video link at the top of the page.

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