

A PERFECT FIT AT REMY'S TAILOR

Where VIPs go to look good

BY RENEE NOVELLE

Tucked into a quiet corner at the Shops at Jamaica Bay on U.S. 41 in south Fort Myers, it would be easy to overlook Remy's Tailor as just another alterations shop. But this unsuspecting location has played host to a myriad of government officials and celebrities—all requesting the unrivaled services of the man who founded it.

Remy Fenelus appears from a back room that's overflowing with perfectly organized garments and material samples, projects he has been working on for his exclusive international customers. He greets visitors with sincerity and a formality that evokes the nostalgia of days gone by. Drawn in by his pleasant smile and calm demeanor, you can instantly see why people are eager to work with him.

As he begins to speak, a melodic accent rolls gently off his softly spoken words, and he emanates a level of confidence that instantly reassures his talents are trustworthy. And rightfully so.



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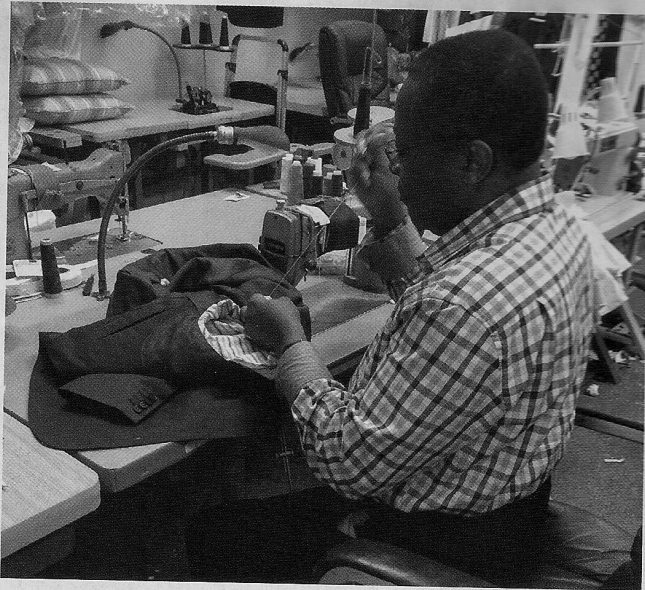
“I can look at anything and create it without a pattern,” confesses Fenelus, who has been learning the craft of creating custom clothing since he attended high school in France, then continued his education for two more years in Italy. Though he paused in these endeavors to pursue a law career—a profession that didn’t resonate with him—he returned to his first passion around 1984 and has kept himself busy ever since. “When I first started, it wasn’t that easy because no one knew who I was,” he says. Word of mouth quickly provided him with a steady flow of clients, however, as his beautiful garments made their way around the social scene, and rumors of his talents gained speed. “It always turns out perfect,” he says of his masterpieces, “without having to do a second fitting.”

Now he makes custom suits, evening gowns and wedding dresses—sometimes fetching as much as \$50,000—for clients all over the world. Though he keeps their identities private, he boasts a clientele that includes CEOs from New York, Chicago and Dubai; Florida governors; former presidents, senators and Speakers of the House; and many professional athletes with recognizable names. His wall is filled with news stories and accolades, testimonies to his unique talent. This has



Tailor Remy Fenelus displays one of his custom-made creations.
Top photo: A wall of accolades lines the south Fort Myers tailor’s shop.

COASTAL COMMERCE



Fenelus gives his personal attention to a custom-made suit jacket. Below, off-the-rack options line up like well-dressed soldiers.

kept his career flourishing during an era of economic recession and off-the-rack purchases.

For Fenelus, the reactions of his customers are as rewarding as the financial gain. "Sometimes the girls start crying after they put the dress on," he says, smiling warmly at the memories from the many brides he has styled. A satisfied twinkle appears in his eyes from behind the wire-rimmed glasses he wears. "A lady from Naples had a parachute that had saved her grandfather's life in World War II, and she brought the parachute here. I was

able to use that parachute to make a wedding dress for her. That was one of my favorite pieces."

Fenelus knows how to make a client feel valued, and the reviews on websites such as WeddingWire support that. "I never felt rushed and they took the best care of me as a bride," writes one recent customer. "Not to mention while I was getting my dress I was introduced to Magic Johnson, as he was in the store to pick up his suit!"

Though he offers other services such as alterations and dry cleaning, he explains his is more of a one-stop shop for VIP clients rather than a drop-off service for the average individual. "When I have a high-end customer come here, and they have a high-end fabric suit, there is no one that is qualified enough to know how to care for those types of quality materials," says Fenelus. His customers often mail him their garments, trusting \$10,000 suits to his care and attention, and when Fenelus is satisfied that they've been cleaned or mended properly, he mails them back.

The quality of his work speaks for itself. "I treat all my clients the way they're supposed to be treated," he says. Whether the garment they're ordering is \$50 or \$50,000, the respect and attention he offers remains consistent. "And when someone comes to me, I want to be sure they're happy with what I do." Even as I watch him work, he's taking meticulous care to adjust the shoulders in a suit jacket for a man with scoliosis, adding a little extra padding to one side to give him the appearance of a straightened posture. "I don't think anyone is better at it than me," he says, "and it makes me really happy to know that I'm doing something that people love."

Renee Novelle is an author and journalist living in Southwest Florida.

FOR MORE INFO

Remy's Tailor

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