

## Allen Brown

by Doug Kent

For some unexplained reason our story this month does NOT begin in New York. A very adventuresome and creative boy was born on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1933 in the midwestern town of Chicago, Illinois. The first of five brothers and only child for 7 years, Mr. January (Mr. J) quickly discovered the ways of the world. At age five he decided to wander off into the nearby woods at a family gathering. He soon discovered that he was hopelessly lost, but eventually found his way back to the security of his family. He also discovered that policemen are very friendly when a young boy on a tricycle travels too far from home. These adventures taught Mr. J to be independent and stimulated his desire to take chances in life. His early schooling was uneventful, a good student his whole life, he graduated from Mary Lyon School in 1947.

His high school was very large and had a Branch for Freshman and Sophomores near his home. He was interested in Journalism, so he started a school paper at the Steinmetz Branch School the "Branch Bark" in his freshman year. Then he became editor-in-chief of the "Steinmetz Star" at the main school in his senior year. He graduated in 1951. The summer between high school and college, he worked for a chain of community newspapers and enjoyed the experience.

Mr. J attended the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and took liberal arts classes for the first two years and then was allowed to attend the School of Journalism in his Junior and Senior year. His creative talents and desire for adventure were put to great use at his college fraternity Pi Lambda Phi. He was elected to be the social chairman in his senior year. Not to be outdone by previous party planners, Mr. J created a moat in front of his fraternity house so party attendees would have to be brought to the house party via Gondola. Another party involved a hospital theme where everyone had to be dressed as either a doctor, nurse or patient. Most of the party attendees came as patients in their pajamas. The fraternity house was turned into a hospital ward with bunk beds, charts and the like. What do you think happened with a group of college students dressed in pajamas, with alcohol and beds readily available? And guess who neglected to arrange a party chaperone from the faculty. The party was memorable, but Mr. J worried for several days as pictures of the party began to circulate. Fraternity parties without chaperones were not allowed and could result in serious consequence. However, Mr. J graduated in 1955 with honors, his Bachelors degree in Journalism and with fond memories of his hospital party. Mr. J worked for a year, was married and then was drafted into the Army. He spent 2 years in Korea and returned to Chicago to work in his family's transportation/freight business. He was successful in the business, and promoted to V.P. of the Mid-West Region. That involved a considerable amount of travel

and a re-location of his family to New York. He and his wife had three children during his 48 year marriage.

All was well, but in 1986 Mr. J decided that he needed a change. He left the freight business and began looking for something that would allow his creative side to be used. He found that by establishing "Photo Pro", and opened his first store back in Chicago in 1988. The one hour photo business took off, and creative juices flowed and the business began putting pictures on mugs, t-shirts and other things in just one hour. No other business in the Chicago area was offering such service at that time. He soon opened more new stores. It truly was the "good life". His travel had brought him to Miami and a close friend took him to the Alibi in Wilton Manors. It was here that he had decided to live a life that he really wanted. All of Mr. J's family was grown and out of the house and in 2005 Mr. J asked for a divorce.

After the divorce, he met a friend online from Spain. That developed into a wonderful relationship that lasted over three years with trips to Spain with his friend working in Chicago teaching Spanish. In 2008 the teaching position ended and Mr. J's friend had to return to Spain. Mr. J was a snow bird in 2010, and finally relocated to Fort Lauderdale in August of 2013.

Mr. J is an amazing person. Successful, happy, with a great sense of humor that makes him easy to be with. Mr. J enjoys his occasional vodka and still enjoys an occasional party. He has many interests stemming from his creativity and sense of adventure. He has taken ceramic classes and has many interesting pieces throughout his condo. He also created art in Stained glass, and created art pieces from Blue Glass (Skky vodka bottles). He is active in Prime Timers, Sage and the Pride Center. This Prime Timer was a joy to interview and get to know. I know who he is, can you identify him?

