

Jesse Monteagudo

by Doug Kent

In the 1950's Havana Cuba was filled with American tourists. Unbeknownst to many, it was in 1953 that our Mr. December (Mr. D) was born in Havana. It was May 6th, 1953 to be exact. It was a good life, his father was working in the tourism industry and doing well for his family. After the Revolution, his father decided to leave the island and take his family to Miami, Florida. It was 1962 and Mr. D was nine years old and now living in a foreign country. His father spoke English, but the rest of the family had to learn. Mr. D attended several different schools and found it a bit difficult but managed to graduate high school in 1972. He felt strange and different, although his family gave him all the support they could. Many of the kids in school bullied him.

After high school, Mr. D attended Miami Dade College, and he became an American citizen in 1973. He graduated Miami Dade College in 1974 and immediately enrolled in Florida International University. Working part and full time through out his education, he graduated with his Bachelors degree in 1978, with majors in art and history. Thinking he would become a teacher, the best laid plans sometimes never work out. He became a facility assistant upon graduation, and for the next 34 years supported members of the facility at F.I.U. with their academic projects.

The feeling of being “different” that he experienced in High School were being suppressed as he was securing his Bachelors degree. While in college, he began to read books, that were now available in the library, on famous persons who were coming out as being gay. This new found freedom to express who he was, gave Mr. D the courage to explore his sexuality. As he spent time

reading in the library, he became aware of the third floor rest room and soon discovered that it was a very active place. He began to discover gay bars in Miami, like the “Warehouse VIII” and the “Bachelors West”, and the Club Miami bath. He was attracted to men in their 30's and enjoyed this new found freedom.

Mr. D found additional freedom in writing for the local gay newspapers throughout most of his career. He wrote interviews, news stories, and wrote a weekly Journal that was featured in several papers from 1980 through today. His writing thrust him into the lime light of the gay community and he became an activist for the gay movement in Miami. The 1977 “Save Our Children” campaign backed by Anita Bryant also was a catalyst for his activism. It was in 1976 that our Mr. D entered his first long term relationship. Stephen and he were together for 9 years. After that relationship cooled, he met the love of his life, Michael, and they have been together since 1985.

Mr. D enjoys the fine arts, enjoys reading, walking and music. He has been involved with the Stonewall Library and served as the president from 1985-87. He is a member of the Dolphin Democrats, through which he continues his community activity. He is also a Board member of the Etz Chaim Congregation that meets at the Pride Center.

