

Jim Hance

By Ken South

Readers of this column have been used to a chronological presentation of the monthly Gentleman's biography. This month's Mr. May, has asked that we "change-up" the pattern. So, this profile will be more of a Highlights and Memories story. When people ask, "and how long have you been in Florida?", Mr. May sees their shock when he says, "Oh, since 1971". If you would like a tour of what Wilton Manors was like in the 70's and 80's...sit down with Mr. May. He smiles when he remembers being in Miami Beach in those days, enjoying what gay life there was. He smiles when he remembers over hearing the old ladies sitting on their front porches, dressed to the nines with perfect hair, say, "we love to sit out here and watch the fairies!"

In the 70's and 80's, Mr. May was engaged in his education and was awarded a PhD in Public Health. Jim Filippino, also a PhD, was his loving partner of 18 years, dying suddenly and young. Before the days of Gay marriage, the couple lost everything to the families. He currently shares his life with Roderick Trelease from Bournemouth, England. They have shared their life together now for several years and live in Deerfield.

Mr. May attended Kent State University. A dear friend of his was killed on May 4, 1970 during the Kent State protest. He became active in LGBT organizations like Black and White Men Together, which later became Men of All Colors. He first faced raw discrimination when he and a black friend appeared at the door of a local gay bar and his friend was refused entrance. He was also a member of the Kent State Gay Liberation Front. Years earlier he experienced several friends getting beat up by the Chicago police in 1968 protesting the Vietnam War at the Democratic National Convention. On June 28, 1969 he was at another bar in Greenwich Village, when the Stonewall bar riots broke out.

When thousands of people were listening to the premier broadcast of Groucho Marx's radio show, "You Bet Your Life" on October 27, 1947, Mr. May arrived in Ohio. Of his birth family he said, "some people should not be parents", which motivated him to become rather self-reliant. He learned to "turn lemons into lemonade".

As a health professional working at the Cleveland Clinic, he first encountered HIV when the syndrome was then known as GRID. He saw first-hand the fear and horrible medical care being offered by medical professionals including nurses who refused to treat dying patients. In the early 90s he became a member of ACT UP in NYC and marched many times with them protesting the fact that many Persons With AIDS (PWA) suddenly became homeless. And he joined Queer Nation to help secure their rights so PWAs would not be evicted from their apartments. He still grieves the deaths of so many of his friends who died in the midst of the epidemic.

There is not much to report, but Mr. May was also married twice. In the 80's and 90's he had a plum of a side job being a DHL carrier when he took dozens of trips to Europe with tickets for pennies on the dollar.

His early introduction to "all things gay" came about when a he and a friend jumped into his Cadillac convertible and headed off to see the ocean and San Francisco for the first time! For several years he was a "snow bird" visiting North Miami and getting involved in some real estate and the bar business. However, most of his working years in South Florida were as a professional in addiction services and public health.

He joined Prime Gentleman, (then Prime Timers) when we had our socials on Tuesdays at Scandals. He is tickled when he remembers a popular member with the nickname "Moose" who was in charge of the pizza distribution. Apparently he managed the doling out of the tasty treat as if we were all in the army!. No one dared to grab a second piece without permission!!

He remembers when Wilton Manors was a far cry from what it is today. When guys going to the old Chardees on Wilton Drive, had to be escorted to their cars, because of the lots filled with abandoned cars, which were make-shift homeless shelters. Many of the small shops on the west side of the drive were rented by religiousbookstores. In the 90's, north of the Alibi, an industrious gay man bought the trailer park on that spot and made it quite the "Gay Village" for several years until he was offered a rather large sum for the real estate.

Mr. May has been very active in Prime Gentleman over the years. Recently he formed the club's walking group, which meets each Tuesday. He also serves on the club's visitation committee sending volunteers to visit with members recovering at home, in a hospital or nursing home.

