

Jim Richardson

By Ken South

On the shores of Lake Okeechobee, Florida, in a town known as Pahokee, on November 4, 1955, residents were listening to Frank Sinatra's, *Love and Marriage*, Roger Williams', *Autumn Leaves*, Mitch Miller's, *The Yellow Rose of Texas* and Pat Boone's *Ain't That a Shame*. They may not have been aware that same month was the official beginning of the Vietnam War, with the North attacking the South. Also, a small, but important family in town welcomed their first son.

Mr. September joined his mom and dad to create a new family. Mr. September's dad had a former wife and parented a boy and a girl until their divorce. Mr. September's family grew over the years to include a younger brother and sister plus his older half sister and brother.

The family, (Mr. September, his parents and his younger siblings), later moved to Belle Glade, Florida where Mr. September stayed through the 8th grade. While in junior high in that city, he found he really liked playing the trumpet in the school band, which he did through high school.

Mr. September's dad was a skilled mechanic who kept machines running on the vegetable farms and sugar cane fields around Belle Glade. Mr. September's family moved for his high school years to Reddick, FL, where he graduated in 1973. Fresh from graduation, he joined the U. S. Navy to "see the world," and spent the first four years of his naval career in Hawaii, after having attended radio schools in Maryland and Virginia.

At 18 years of age, in 1973, he met and married his first wife and fathered a son. A second son arrived in 1980. The Navy assigned him as a 1st Class Radioman on an ocean-going tugboat that saw service from 1978 to 1981 throughout the Mediterranean and North Atlantic. It was while serving on this vessel that Mr. September decided he needed to be honest about his sexuality and announced to his commanding officer that he was gay. He received an honorable discharge from the Navy, but a divorce from his wife.

Following his separation from the Navy, he went to Rhode Island to spend time with a woman friend he met over the Ham Radio system. His now retired father had a bout of ill health, so in the fall of 1981 Mr. September ended up in Tennessee with his parents, where he went to work as a country DJ for some years. His friend followed him to Rhode Island and in 1982 became his second wife, although she knew of his sexual preferences. They were together for 7 years and had a daughter. During this time, he and his new family moved back to Rhode Island where he started working in the cable industry. Mr. September uses the anniversary of the split from his second wife in 1988 as his official "coming out" day. They remained lifelong friends until her death in 2015.

Over the next decade Mr. September worked for various companies in the cable industry, traveled the world and was promoted several times. In 1990 he worked for a company in Homestead, FL but also lived through the 1992 hurricane Andrew. He managed to find a livable

house in Homestead and bought it. His cousin and mom came to live with him through that terrible time. In 1994 he was offered a position in Okinawa, Japan, and the following year in Caracas, Venezuela where he stayed for the next four years. He moved to corporate headquarters in Denver, Colorado in 1998 where he stayed for the next 16 years until his retirement in 2014.

Gay Life: Like many men who read this profile, Mr. September knew from a very early age that he was attracted to men. However, for many reasons, he really didn't act upon these feelings for many years. He was 14 years old when he had his first, and only, encounter with an adult man. They were fond memories that were not repeated for many years. He was in his 30's before he had another gay experience. Given his IT skills, he got involved in a "dial up" CompuServe gay chat room as its manager. During this time, 1980- 1990, he met his first partner - a man 30 years his senior - named John Kurtz. While it was a long-distance relationship, it was very satisfying for both men.

Mr. September spends his free time working on family genealogy, reading, playing on-line video games, bowling, puttering around his yard and pool, and camping at Vitambi Springs. He met his current partner, John Bolinger on a website in 2007. They spent several years as Snow Birds between Colorado and Ft. Lauderdale, before they decided in 2016 to live in Oakland Park permanently.

They found out about Prime Timers through friends and joined the club in 2012. They have a large circle of friends and are thoroughly enjoying their Florida retirement together.

