

John Gearrity

by Doug Kent

Mr. October (Mr. O) began his life in Brooklyn, New York on October 10th, 1932, the first of two children of his hard working parents. With both parents working, one days and one nights, early childhood was as normal as it could be in Brooklyn with all the hazards associated with urban living, such as playing stick ball in the streets. PS119 posed no problems for this above-average student, except for the day that everyone was released early and Mr. O had to walk home in the hurricane of 1938. Mr. O began his work career in the 4th grade delivering groceries for one of the local groceries in Flatbush. High School posed no problems other than being overcrowded, and Mr. O had to endure split sessions. For his first two years he began classes at 1pm. Mr. O had a lot of free time and enjoyed going to Riis Park, where he discovered the joys of male bonding in “Bay One”, where all the handsome gay men gathered. He also was able to go to Gay Bars at the age of 16. Here too, he was discovering the joys of male companionship. He graduated in 1951, very wise to the ways of the world, despite all the “Release Time” (time away from his normal classes), securing his Catholic education.

After high school, while working at the Federal Reserve Bank in lower Manhattan, Mr. O followed the example of a close friend and enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1952. He was trained as a Hospital Corpsman and was stationed on a CG Cutter for the next three years. In 1955 he was discharged and began part time classes at St. John's University in Brooklyn, and was working full time at the Joe Hall Clinic. In 1959 Mr. O met Jack in a gay bar in Greenwich Village the day after Christmas. Jack, a lawyer, who lived in Washington D.C. and Mr. O, carried on a long distance relationship for three years. In 1961 they moved to D.C. and Jack insisted that Mr. O get his college degree. In 1965 Mr. O completed his Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and began teaching 5th & 6th grade at Alexander Shepherd Elementary School in Washington D.C. While teaching full time, Mr. O attended George Washington University at night and in 1968 received his Masters Degree in

Administration/Supervision. Shortly after graduation, Mr. O was offered a position with the Prince George County School System in suburban Washington D.C., and began teaching 5th and 6th grade. It was not long after that he was made Vice Principal at Hyattsville Elementary School and just three years later became Principal at Heather Hills Elementary School. It was here that he became active in forming a new bargaining unit and in 1975 he became President of the newly formed Association for School Based Administrators. He continued teaching until 1992 and finally retired from the J. Frank Dent Elementary School in Washington D.C.

In 1972 Jack and Mr. O purchased their home in D.C. and lived happily there till Jack passed in 1997. They had been together for 38 wonderful years. They had traveled extensively and had been to Florida many times. Mr. O's parents and sister had moved to Florida, so logically, Mr. O decided to relocate to Florida. His first purchase was in Boynton Beach and that lasted a very short period of time, before he moved to Boca and then to Fort Lauderdale. While in Boca, Mr. O served as President of SAGE and he began the “Movie Classics” there. For 11 years, on a monthly basis, he was responsible for showing 131 classic movies to the members. In 2001 Mr. O finally settled into his Palm Aire condo. Mr. O enjoys the theater, opera and concerts. He is an active member of Prime Timers in Fort Lauderdale, and still travels extensively. He still loves classic movies and will tell you what you want to know about these classic black and white and Technicolor gems. Always happy, never upset, and always good for a smile, this gentle, well loved and respected Prime Timer is known to me.

