

Dick Huitema

by Doug Kent

Mr. January (Mr. J) was born December 20, 1936 much to the joy of his father, who received a whole year's tax deduction just 11 days before the New Year. Now, in tight with his father, Mr. January spent most of his time growing up in Northern Indiana and Illinois. His life was taken up with the usual childhood things, including listening to what we now call Old Time Radio programs, like the Lone Ranger, but it was in High School that he began to realize what fun was.

As freshman football manager he handed out towels to the athletes as they came out of the shower. He felt he was very discreet about his interest in certain parts of their anatomy till one day one of the football players laid his "junk" out and said "here, take a good look". Embarrassed and with a heightened sense of caution about his interests, Mr. J went on to become the photography club president, and was the president in his senior year of the Presidential Advisory Board which was made up of all the club presidents and athletic team captains. He was the "Stage Manager" for all the school plays, he took movies of all the football games, and he built a "dimmer" board for all the stage lighting, and built a Public Address mixer for the school. He graduated in 1954, tired but happy with his involvement in all the school projects.

He decided to attend the University of Illinois and in 1958 graduated with his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering He began work at Illinois Bell (which became Ameritech) and for 30 years devoted his career to improving communications.

In 1967 Mr. J finally came out. He had just had a few sips of beer at a local gay bar when he was picked up for a night of debauchery. The rest of his life had now changed forever. He had a fling with another Illinois Bell employee and soon discovered his upstairs neighbor was gay. They are still very close friends. It was shortly after his coming out that he met his first love on the North Avenue beach in Chicago and they stayed together for about 20 years.

In 1991 Mr. J retired from Ameritech and took a position of Director of Planning with WBEZ Public Radio in Chicago. After two years, he

decided to devote time to gay political activity. He was very active with "Impact", serving on their Board and doing volunteer work. He also was involved with Chicago's Human Rights Campaign Steering Committee.

It was in 1996 that Mr. J met his current partner John at Saugatuck, Michigan. John was an architect living in South Bend Indiana and the two maintained a commuting relationship until John found a position in Chicago and they moved in together. They both enjoyed traveling and had made many visits to Fort Lauderdale, and it's Marlin Beach Hotel. In 2004 they decided to purchase their home in Fort Lauderdale and maintain their condo in the Chicago area. They both enjoy the "Snowbird" status.

Mr. J is an active member of Prime Timers, enjoys the opera and attends many of the Metropolitan Opera HD presentations. He skied at Gay Ski Week in Aspen for many years. He swims, works out regularly, and still loves to dabble with sound and electrical equipment. He enjoys writing and editing financial publications. Inspired by his memories of old time radio, he is involved with Classic Radio Re-productions. He builds equipment to create sound effects and runs the sound system for their performances. He is a facilitator and member of "Senior's Acting Up". I have always enjoyed the company of this low key, highly productive, always behind the scenes individual.

