

Dick Sabol

By Ken South

1937 was a year full of dramatic events. Walt Disney produced his animated feature, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", Joe Louis defeated James Braddock making him the heavy weight champ, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for "Gone With the Wind", and in Lakehurst, NJ, the Nazi airship Hindenburg exploded upon landing.

And, on April 5th of that year, in Yonkers, NY, Mr. February joined his family of parents and older brother. His mother was an early "Rosie the Riveter" and his dad worked in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When he was eight years old, they all moved to Fairlawn, New Jersey.

As a child Mr. F contracted scarlet fever which left him with an awkward limp. He was enrolled in a dancing class to help him manage. He enjoyed the experience and went from there to excel in tumbling and gymnastics as well. He wanted to improve his skills as he was the brunt of bullying, even being called names like "sissy" and "fag". He managed, however, to navigate high school, even earning a varsity letter on the school's swim team.

Following graduation in 1954, Mr. F joined the US Navy, serving on a destroyer, visiting ports in the Middle East and Korea. Surrounded by young, attractive ship mates, peaked his increasing awareness of his homosexuality, sometimes finding himself punching the ships' bulk head, and self-medicating by drinking. His only choice was to keep his sexuality a deep secret. With an honorable discharge, he left the service in 1958.

Mr. F moved to NYC where friends suggested he make use of his good looks, chiseled features and tall frame to explore acting. He studied at the Stella Adler School and the Actor's Studio. He finally found his role in life as a working actor, a place where he could be himself as well as earn a living. During this time, he met Karleen and was married to her for twelve years, having a son together. They divorced over his struggles with alcohol, though his sexuality was no longer a secret. Karleen has since died, while his son, a corporate executive, stays in meaningful relationship with his dad.

Mr. F lived as a successful actor in Chelsea, NYC for 35 years. His acting career credits included: Movies: *Come Back, Charleston Blue;* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, TV movies: *Key West, The Man Without a Country; If you Dance, You Gotta Pay the Band.* Broadway: *A Little Night Music; Promises, Promises;* and *3 Bags Full.* And TV: *Dark Shadows series; Muggsy; The Hulk; Lady Liberty; The Jackie Gleason Show; The Honeymooners;* and *Route 66.* He ended his career as the Executive Director of the Prescott Park Arts Festival in Portsmouth, NH.

Mr. F retired from acting after the events of 911 in NYC. He was deeply affected by the death of his friend, Father Mychal Judge, the NYFD chaplain taken in the disaster. But he also has many fond memories of gay life in NYC. Though the bar scene was not his favorite, he worked hard to confront his struggle with alcohol and has been sober for over 46 years!

In 2011 he moved to Southern Florida, via the auto-train. Through a friend, he bought his current condo in Margate, sight unseen, and has enjoyed it ever since. He can be seen almost any Monday night at the Matty's social.

