

Harvey Chasser

by Doug Kent

The oldest of three children, Mr. June (Mr. J) was born on August 6, 1944, in where else, but Brooklyn, New York. His early childhood was strained by parents that did their share of yelling and showing anger. This did have an effect on Mr. J, and he began acting out. He was keenly aware that he was different (gay) at the age of 5 and this added to his behavior problems. He began seeing a therapist at the age of 10 and things slowly got better. He kept a low profile in school, not wanting to stand out at all, but was a very good student.

In high school, he felt like an outcast but managed to participate in band, glee club, and was in the honor society. He had casual superficial encounters with men throughout high school. He graduated in 1962 and had visions of escaping his parents by applying to out of state colleges. He was accepted to UCLA and Iowa but his parents would not fund his education if he went out of state. Depressed by their decision, he attended Brooklyn College and managed to do so poorly that the college sent him for counseling. Again, therapy helped him weather this crisis. In January of 1966, Mr. J graduated with a Bachelors in Psychology and in December of that same year was married. His son was born in February of 1968.

Mr. J's first position was with the NYC Department of Welfare as a case worker. He also enlisted in the Army Reserve and served in Military Intelligence. It became apparent to Mr. J that he needed his degree in Social Work to advance. He began evening classes in 1968. His daughter was born in 1970. Trouble in the marriage ended with a separation, and his wife took both of his children. In May of 1972 he received his Masters in Social Work. He took a position that same year with the NYC School System as a Social Worker. Mr. J received his Doctorate Degree in Family and Community Education from Columbia University in 1983. Shortly after he received his degree, he was promoted to Supervisor. He also set up a private practice as a psychotherapist in a neighborhood mental health clinic in 1975, moving that practice to his apartment from 1980 thru 1990. In 1984 Mr. J sued for custody of his children and won. Mr. J remained with the NYC School System until 2002 when he retired and moved to Delaware and remained there for 7 years. In 2009 Mr. J finally moved and settled in Sunny South Florida.

There are many other facets to Mr. J's life. In elementary and in high school he wanted nothing more than to blend in and not stand out. In 1973, after accepting himself and his sexuality, he was free to explore life taking on all challenges. He joined the acting company at the Jewish Community House, and then in 1979 joined the Brooklyn Heights Players. His new found freedom allowed him to act and to sing, something he had always wanted to do. He also became an activist. He joined the New York State Lesbian and Gay Lobby in 1979, and co-chaired it in 1986 and 1987. He was active in the New York State Gay Teachers Association in 1974 through 1979 and gave many talks abthroughout the state about gay life.

He twice ran in 1991 and 1993 for Town Supervisor as an openly gay man in Penfield, New York on the Democratic Ticket. He has had significant relationships since coming out in 1973.

Mr. J, despite his hectic and involved life, managed to pursue many hobbies. He has written poetry for over 34 years, mostly shared with family. He is an active photographer and has shared much of his work with his friends. He has been a swimmer his whole life, and he has enjoyed traveling throughout the world. He is a SCUBA diver and enjoys cooking. He is still enjoying his acting and singing hobby. An active Prime Timer, can you identify this interesting, engaged individual from all this information?

