

# Jim Restrick

By Ken South

In April of 1945, one of **the** greatest Presidents of all time, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was taken by death, on retreat at his beloved Warm Springs, Georgia. World War II was still raging on in Europe and the Pacific, though slowly moving towards allied victory. Our "boys" were listening to The Andrew Sisters sing "Rum and Coca-Cola" and Doris Day croon "My Dreams are Getting Better all the Time" with Les Brown's band. On the home front, people flocked to see Rogers & Hammerstein's *Carousel* and movie goers forgot the war for a few treasured minutes to see Ingrid Bergman and Bing Crosby in "The Bells of St. Mary's", Dorothy McGuire in "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" and Joan Crawford in "Mildred Pierce". And, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of that month, in Birmingham, Michigan (near Detroit), our Prime Gentleman of the Month, Mr. April was born the "baby" of the family, joining his two older brothers, Bob and Jack.

Mr. A spent his elementary and high school years in Birmingham, Michigan, enrolling in Michigan State University in East Lansing, in 1963. In 1967 he graduated with a BA degree in Communication Arts. While attending Wayne State University Law School, the draft board assigned him a 1-A rating, making him aware that he may soon be required to take tours of duty in Vietnam. Instead, he enlisted in the Army to be guaranteed a two-year term of obligation. While in the Army, he used his skills in communications and was honorably discharged in September, 1970.

His parents had moved to Florida, so, following his discharge, he joined them, looking forward to a future career. After a short-time, it became obvious that Florida was not the location for him, so he found himself in Chicago, where he began a career in the insurance industry. Working for Kemper Insurance Co., he specialized in surety. After two years at the Chicago home office, he transferred to the Los Angeles branch. While in LA, he worked for several insurance companies over the next thirty-five years.

During his years in Los Angeles, he stumbled upon a welcoming place for gay and lesbian folks. He attended the All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena one Sunday and saw in the bulletin an announcement of the weekly gathering of GLBTQ members after the service. "Gay Christians?" can it be true? Not only was it true,

and a wonderful community, but it was there he met his first partner Walter, who was one the leaders of the group. He and Walter were together for five wonderful years until his death to cancer in 2001. Mr. A and Walter celebrated a Holy Union at All Saints Episcopal, as legal, same sex marriage was not yet a reality.

Walter was originally from Boston, so the couple visited Provincetown, where in 1996, they bought a variety store on Commercial Street. Living together in "PTown" was a dream come true, but when Walter died, Mr. A had to sell the store and start life anew.

He launched his new life in Plainfield, NJ. Incorporated in 1869, the town had a vibrant gay community, and not just because it is known as "The Queen City". He worked for various insurance companies, including St. Paul and Ace Insurance Company, with a short commute to New York City by train.

Mr. A met his current partner Roman online in 2005. Roman joined him at his home in Plainfield and they have now been together for 14 years.

Mr. A retired from the insurance industry in 2008. Since the couple had enjoyed their many trips to South Florida over the years, they decided to retire here as well. They lived in Coconut Creek and then two years later, decided to buy a condo in Palm Aire, Pompano Beach. Mr. A describes it as their "last purchase", even as they are now enduring a total remodel of their kitchen. The couple was introduced to Prime Gentleman by friends soon after they moved to South Florida. They enjoy the weekly socials at Matty's, plays, trips and dining.

