

Marqus Ristau

By Ken South

In March of 1944, *Casablanca* won the Academy award, the USAAC starts bombing Berlin, Italy's Mount Vesuvius erupts again, and by November, FDR is re-elected for an unprecedented 4th term as President. Plus, on March 21st Mr. July was born as an only child in the town of Kinzua, PA. His home town is now under 250 feet of water, due to the construction of the Kinzua Dam in 1965.

While a youngster, Mr. J's family moved to the tiny town of Furnish Creek, CA., in Death Valley. He remembers the thrill of being in early TV ads for *20 Mule Team Borax*. His education was provided by a traveling tutor, and his father arranged for him to learn math from a neighbor, Dr. Edward Teller, the "father" of the hydrogen bomb!

Mr. J completed his elementary and high school years in Warren, PA, graduating in 1962. He graduated from West Point, receiving his commission in 1966. He served as a staff officer for the 101st Airborne Division at its headquarters in Saigon, Vietnam.

During his twenties, Mr. J decided to take time to explore the world. He bought a 650 BSA motorcycle in London and used it to tour all through Europe. Following that, he rode other bikes and explored Brazil, China, Canada and many sites across the US.

He earned his law degree from Case Western University. He became a member of the Pennsylvania and Philadelphia Bar Associations in 1969 and though inactive, he retains his membership. In the 80's, though a registered Democrat, he was a federal appointee under the Reagan administration.

Mr. J's professional career was, and still is, a kaleidoscope of interests, his incredible drive, energy and his entrepreneur spirit. He has formed companies in the petroleum field like Petrex, Inc. and has created and owned numerous patents.

Gay life started very early for him, as he says he was "out" at the age of 10 and has been open about his life ever since. He remembers the dark days in the gay community when police bar raids were a matter of course. While working in New York State, he met his first partner, Tom, on an early social media bulletin board site for gay men. Tom was a college professor and ten years Mr. J's junior, but after a 14-year relationship, a stroke took his life. The love of his life, Robert and he met in November of 2017 on the Prime Timers bus trip to St. Augustine. He

loves to tell the story of how there was only one seat left on the bus; Robert filled it, and now fills his life.

While semi-retired from his businesses, he still keeps up a very active life. If you have ever read a Yelp review of a restaurant or bar in Wilton Manors, you may already know Mr. J's identity. He relishes in his avocation of a Yelp reviewer, having not only written over 3,500 reviews, but submitted over 17,000 photos as well. In 2013 he was Yelp's Gold Elite Achievement Award winner, and one of the first reviewers to ever include gay bars, bath houses and sex clubs.

