

## Richard Babik

by Ken South

Mr. December was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on June 5, 1960 and was adopted by his loving parents, William and Mary, in August of 1962. Mr. D was an only child and had a wonderful childhood in Carteret, New Jersey. His mother took such a special interest in him and; while she was quite protective of him, she instilled a love of reading and learning that would serve him well all his life.

Mr. D attended both public and parochial schools and graduated with honors from Carteret High School in 1978. During his high school years, he served as editor-in-chief of the school's literary magazine, became a volunteer with the town's first aid squad, and played in the school band. He was also active in the Boy Scouts earning the Eagle badge and the Vigil Honor of the Order of the Arrow. In addition, he served the Catholic Church as an altar boy for many years and even considered entering the priesthood.

He graduated from Seton Hall University with a BA in Education degree and was certified as a K-12 teacher. During his college years, he continued his interest in music by becoming a DJ at the College radio station, played in a pep band, and was active with the college's literary magazine. Also during this time of his life, he became a volunteer fire fighter and started on a career in the fire service that included his promotion to Captain of the Carteret Fire Department and culminated in his retirement from the department at the rank of second-in-command officer in 1999. He earned his masters' degree from Kean University in 1996. Then in 2015, Mr. D graduated with a doctorate in educational leadership from Barry University, with the dissertation topic *Higher Education Selection among Gay Male Students*.

Mr. D's professional career included working at the American Red Cross, founding The Music Company Disc-Jockey-Entertainers, teaching in various schools and universities, and even becoming an arson investigator.

Mr. D knew from an early age that he was attracted to older men, but he did not have a name for it and did not act on those feelings for many years. He had his first sexual experience with girls, followed by men, at the age of 22. Like many gay men, he dated girls because "that was the thing to do."

Love came into his life when he met Hugo Perez in 1982, and they shared their lives for 23 years. They enjoyed extensive travel throughout Europe, and the couple also made several trips to Hugo's home town in Cuba, to help out his relatives there. The couple moved to Florida in 1999. Hugo died suddenly of a heart attack in 2005 at 78 years old. Over the years, Mr. D had also been involved

in developing real estate. Hurricane Wilma attacked Florida four days after Hugo's death and devastated Mr. D's real estate ventures, so he now had to manage both intense grief and a financial catastrophe.

Silver Daddies was the catalyst for Mr. D to find a new love of his life. In late 2005, he met Walter Shamie on the popular website. They were long-distance partners for the next 11 years, frequently visiting each other. Walter moved to Florida in 2015, but death took him at the age of 95 in 2016.

1998 was a pivotal year in Mr. D's life when he was diagnosed with a large arachnoid brain cyst. After a long year of sickness and distress, he underwent brain surgery. A medical device was installed to relieve the problem, and it is still in operation.

Life continues to be a wonder for him. In 2009 he took a DNA test to find out more about his background, as he was not aware of his birth parents. Thinking he was a French Canadian, he found his mother was an Ashkenazi Jew, his father a Basque Spaniard, and he had a brother living in Canada!

Mr. D officially retired from Barry University in 2015 at the age of 55. He is currently enjoying his retired life, an incredibly active one. He still maintains some real estate investments, has loads of friends, and continues his interests in music, film, theater, politics, travel, and beaches.

Mr. D is a proud resident of Palm-Aire, where he moved in 2016, and thoroughly enjoys Prime Timers and the many, many friends he has made there.

