

# Stephen Barnhart

By Richard Babik

The year 1961 was a time of great change. A charismatic president took office. America was taken with John F. Kennedy and Camelot. The US was locked in the cold war, with the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion escalating tensions with Russia and Cuba. Mankind was stretching its tethers, as the US put their first man in space, Alan Shepard, and set their sights on the moon. Freedom Riders were working fearlessly toward desegregation in the South. A mostly unknown band, the Beatles, played concerts at the Cavern Club in their hometown of Liverpool that would set them on the path to fame. Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth's home run record by hitting 61 round-trippers. West Side Story was the most popular film. The Berlin Wall was erected in Germany to accentuate the great divide in the world. The world's population reached 4 billion for the first time and among the millions born that summer was our Prime Gentlemen Man of the Month.

Mr. November entered the world on August 19, 1961. Little did anyone suspect that such a hot man would be born in the auspicious little town of Cold Water, Michigan.

Mr. N grew up in the southern Michigan town of Deerfield. He describes his close-knit family as consisting of 5-1/2 siblings, one being a half-brother. As a middle child, Mr. N was outgoing and social. He was frequently regarded as the class clown and believed that he would grow up to become a comedian. In childhood, his family moved three times and his parents divorced. Our mystery man was drawn to sports, participating in track, football and tennis. A natural musician who played by ear, he held first chair as a trumpeter in his school band from fifth grade through high school despite never reading music and not having to practice.

High school found Mr. N attending Deerfield High. He describes his high school years as "being all about me," as our gent was involved in countless activities and sports and was among the most popular. Next, he attended Eastern Michigan University and graduated magna cum laude with a degree in business administration in 1985. Among his proudest accomplishments, Mr. November states that he "was the first to graduate from college in his large extended family of siblings and cousins." While at the university in 1981, Mr. N became aware of his orientation and met his first love. This older gentleman was a popular professor of English and drama at EMU and Mr. N was assigned to be his teacher's assistant. Frank Ross taught legendary courses, with over 300 enrollees. His seminars were frequently visited by guest lecturers who were stars of Broadway and film. Frank was 56 and our Prime Gentleman was only 20 when they met. The older man insisted that they wait until after Mr. N turned 21 to act on their attraction. Being cautious, as this was the early 80's, our fellow had to submit to an insisted-upon HIV test before they became intimate. Another interesting aspect of this first attraction was that Frank was already partnered in a successful 27-year relationship with John Boyd. John, age 57, was the vice president of investments at Comerica Bank in Detroit and a train aficionado. Mr. N and Frank arranged to meet John and the three of them became friends immediately, leading to the formation of a three-way partnership that lasted 20 years! The three moved in together and later into a home in Livonia, Michigan that our mystery man still owns 30 years later. Mr. November described their relationship as "a perfect ménage de trios." The three were often seen at social happenings around Detroit, frequented theater and film events, and traveled the world. Mr. November was saddened by the loss of one of his partners in 2001, after 20 years together. Ironically, Frank Ross suffered

from Parkinson's Disease that slowly silenced his powerful, theatrical voice and perfect diction. Mr. N and John Boyd stayed together for a total of 29 years until John's sudden passing in 2010.

Our Prime Gentleman's career included 12 years of service with Minnesota Fabric at their number one location and 18 years as a manager with up-scale retailer Parisian in the Detroit suburbs. Mr. N retired in 2012 and began spending more time in South Florida. Single again, Mr. November found romance at a Palm Springs Prime Timers event in 2011. AJ Ratliff and Mr. N were immediately attracted to one another while at the hotel pool and a relationship ensued. A Prime Timers Board member and 64 years old, AJ and our fellow began exchanging visits between their homes in Texas and Michigan. The couple also visited Florida frequently, renting and later purchasing a home in Wilton Manors.

Mr. N loves to travel and attend Prime Timer/Gentlemen events with AJ and is frequently sighted in the establishments of Wilton Manors. Our mystery man says that a perfect day consists of "sleeping in with his partner, plenty of pool time and lunch with friends." Who could argue with that agenda! He is quick to say that "now, my friends run my calendar." Mr. N loves to connect with others. His outgoing personality is clearly his strength and he takes pride in empowering those around him. His slogan for every day, "life is too short, so make it happen," is a paradigm for all to follow. A close friend of mine for 13 years, I know this fellow well.

