

Steve Byerly
By Ken South

MGM's classic film, *The Wizard of Oz*, premiered in Hollywood, and *Gone with the Wind*, opened in Atlanta. In Washington, DC, African-American singer Marian Anderson performed before thousands at The Lincoln Memorial after having been denied the use of Constitution Hall by the DAR.

In 1939 Adolf Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the USA's neutrality in the war in Europe. And, on August 5th of that year, Mr. J became the first born son of his parents in West Asheville, NC, followed later by two brothers and a sister.

Mr. J spent his early years in nearby Enka, North Carolina, a "company manufacturing town". He graduated from Enka, HS in 1957. He went on to Bristol, TN to study at King College, and then on to Auburn University, graduating in 1961, with a degree in Industrial Psychology.

His professional career in personnel management started with working at the Commonwealth of Kentucky followed by employment with an association at the University of Chicago responsible for constructing examinations for civil service positions. He then spent several more years, under the Richard Daley regime, at the Metropolitan Sanitary District, performing Wage and Salary work. The next 30 years were spent at the University of Illinois Medical Center, in a variety of managerial positions specializing in all areas of personnel, advancing to Associate Director at the time of his early retirement in 1996.

While living in Chicago in the 60's, Mr. J discovered the delights of the gay community. He struggled for many years with self-acceptance as he grew up in a very conservative part of the South, as well as a rather conservative Christian family. Living by himself in Chicago in his 20s was a culture shock, he says he felt like "a kid in a candy store". But his background still applied and meant he was rather cautious where others were pretty wild. In 1967 he met Glenn Perry, a few years his senior. They met through a mutual friend, Ron. They started seeing each other and became partners, experiencing an amazing life together until Glenn's passing in 2016. They married in 2013 in Stowe, VT.

They bought a condo on the Chicago lakefront, close to both their offices. They made many friends including Richard, who is also a member of Prime Gentlemen.

Mr. J and Glenn soon purchased a small (35 acre) farm in Tiskilwa, Ill. as a "get-away" from Chicago. The farm was a lovely place for both guys to indulge in their love of gardening, and a fun retreat on weekends for their many Chicago friends,

as it was only about 125 miles west of the windy city. When Mr. J retired in 1996 they decided to sell the farm and buy a smaller property in Etowah, NC, which they used as their retirement home. The couple also bought a condo in Palm-air and became "snow birds," enjoying the escape from the northern winters. As they found themselves spending more and more time in Florida, they decided to move to a larger unit at Vizcaya.

Mr. J and Glenn were close to both their families. They spent much time together at the NC home with family and during their parent's final years, provided them with loving care. The couple's relationship was never discussed, a sort of "don't ask, don't tell" situation, which seemed to work for all concerned. In the fall of 2016, Glenn passed away after a two-year battle with lung cancer.

In May of 2022 Mr. J decided to move to the John Knox Village community. He enjoys his membership in Prime Gentlemen. Actually, he was active in Prime Timers of Asheville, NC for several years prior to the COVID pandemic. He is also active in the Fort Lauderdale UCC church. He enjoys several of the Prime Gentlemen programs.



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