

Tom Rice

By Ken South

In 1950 Harry S. Truman was President, the Korean War starts, and Charles Schulz introduces his *Peanuts* comic strip. Diners Club issues the first credit card and James Dean gets his big break with his appearance in a Pepsi commercial. The first TV remote control appears on the market and President Truman sends the first US troops to Vietnam. And, on Staten Island, NY, on March 21st, our Mr. May came into this world with his twin sister (8 minutes the elder) to the delight of their parents.

Mr. M spent all of his grade, high school, and college years in Staten Island. He graduated from a vocational high school with expertise in automotive skills in 1968. The following year he was drafted into the Army and deployed to Vietnam, but, as things go in the military, his orders were changed and he was sent to South Korea. He served in the infantry in the DMZ where he was exposed to Agent Orange, (recently receiving a 30% disability status from the VA). He was then transferred to the Special Service Police. He served on details that guarded several "big wigs" including Vice President Spiro Agnew, Bob Hope, during his "Gold Diggers" tour, and Hall of Fame catcher Johnny Bench.

Following his discharge from the Army in 1971, Mr. M enrolled in the College of Staten Island.

That same year he married Rosalie, and they were the proud parents of a son and daughter. The marriage ended in 1991. His daughter has since provided him with two grandsons, the family remains close, including supporting his life in the gay community.

Mr. M worked for many years at Procter & Gamble, also on Staten Island. The manufacturing plant produced Crisco oil, Duncan Hines cake mix, and the company's signature product, Ivory Soap. He was offered a retirement buyout in 1989 in anticipation of the plant's closing in 1991. He found himself at a gay owned insurance agency called Greystone Insurance as an agent. They insured many of the most famous gay businesses in NYC. It was also during this period that he did some modeling and acting, appearing in several commercials. His next career move was to Maintech, Inc., which provided IT services to large corporations. After 23 years as a purchasing agent for the company, he was again offered a buyout, and

retired in 2016.

Mr. M attributes 1989 to his coming out in the gay community in NYC, where he met his partner Keith of five years, and with whom he purchased a condo in Forrest Hills, Queens. As far back as his childhood, he developed a love of classic cars. During this period, he was able to live out his classic car passion. Over the years he has participated in several gay classic car clubs like the Lambda Car Club, and drove several different models of these cars in various Gay Pride parades in the northeast.

Mr. M moved to South Florida in 2016, at first, staying with his sister and brother in law while looking for his own place. He enjoys his participation at the Sunshine Cathedral and programs at the Equality Center, and, of course, Prime Gentlemen!

