

Michael Odell By Ken South

The 1954 session of the US Supreme Court ruled on *Brown v. Board of Education* and declared that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The words "under God" were added to the United States Pledge of Allegiance, and Swanson introduced TV Dinners.

NBC's "The Tonight Show" was first aired with host Steve Allen, while evenings were spent glued to 9" black and white TVs watching "Father Knows Best", "I Love Lucy", "The Lone Ranger" or "The Adventures of Superman".

But, on February 15 of that year, Mr. December was born the second oldest sibling in a growing family of five boys and two girls in the small village of Bondsville, a part of Palmer, MA. While living there, he attended eight years of grammar school and four years of Palmer HS, graduating in 1972. At 14, he became the organist and choir director at St. Bartholomew RC Church, his parish. The aging pipe organ needed updating, so he organized fund raising events for 4 years to have the organ updated. He and a fellow female student started a musical team and performed at many weddings throughout the region.

Mr. D's musical talents bloomed in high school where he played the Clarinet, Trombone and Bassoon in band. In HS he was very active in the school band and chorus, in fact, becoming the practice band director in his junior year and concert choir director in his senior year! He also played Andrew MacLaren in the musical *Brigadoon*, as well as Sir Lancelot in *Camelot*. He played the piano on the football field for his own graduation.

After High School, the music continued with 3 years in Barbershop Quartets, 1 year singing with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra Chorus, and a male Jazz octet that sang the national anthem for the San Jose Earthquakes. Mr. D thought he wanted to follow a path to become a veterinarian, but after a first year in pre-med, he realized his grades, while decent, were not going to get him there. So, he worked in a local factory for a while, and then went to a technical school in Boston to get his TV and radio repair license. He then re-opened O'Dell's TV Sales & Service, a company his grandfather and father started in 1949.

After additional electronic training at night school, he moved to the Boston area to work for a company repairing POS (cash registers, printers, computers, etc) in 1982. Later he moved to Pittsfield, MA with the same company, before being promoted to a headquarters role in San Jose, CA in 1985. In California he met his first partner Ernie. They spent 7 lovely years together until Ernie's untimely passing at the young age of 49.

Mr. D held a number of positions, including 20 years as the IT Infrastructure Manager for the company that ultimately became Fujitsu. In late 1992 he met his soulmate Steve Lapham. They bought a home together in San Jose and enjoyed hiking, camping, bowling, and travel. They spent almost 22 years together until his passing in 2014 from cancer. They were regular visitors to Florida and moved to Oakland Park in 2003.

He retired from Fujitsu after 32 years, at 60, 3 months after the loss of his soulmate. Mr. D has a variety of interests that include music, volunteering at Poverello's, playing tennis with fellow PG members, biking, hiking, and staying at gay campgrounds throughout the U.S. Mr. D. is very passionate about bowling, including attending tournaments across the country. He also enjoys domestic travel and outside the U.S. including a biking trip in Italy, and transatlantic cruises, all over Europe.

You can find him on the bowling lanes with PG Wednesdays, or Thursdays and Sundays at Manor Lanes.

