

# Ray Gambrell

By Ken South

A precious gift arrived 24 hours after Valentine's day in 1945 to a family in Greenwood, SC. Mr. May joined his older sister and later welcomed his two brothers. WWII pushed on to its end in August of that year. But on his birthday, tens of thousands of U.S. Marines stormed the Japanese-held island of Iwo Jima, while the Allies unleashed a devastating attack on Dresden, Germany. His fellow 45' birthday boys and girls included; Henry Winkler, Goldie Hawn, Bette Midler, Mia Farrow, Davy Jones, Steve Martin and Rod Stewart, though sadly, he never met them!

After his 5<sup>th</sup> grade year in Greenwood, the family moved to Laurens, SC where he attended Laurens District HC, graduating in 1964. He has fond memories of his HS football team days. On to the University of South Carolina for a degree in Business and Business Management.

For the next five years he worked at the Parker Davis Co. and then in 1970, graduated from Beauty School and opened the first of many beauty salons in Greenwood, SC. At one point his business included over twenty stylist salons throughout the area. He became the President of the local Association of Cosmetology and was then recruited by the Governor to become the Chairman of the South Carolina State Board of Cosmetology, where he served for 12 years.

Over the next four years, he served on the National Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology as president. He guided the publishing of a text book on, *Cosmology, Nails and Skin Care*, a resource for those seeking to be licensed as a cosmetologist. During this time, he also owned a Furniture Design Center, but by 1995, looking forward to retirement in South Florida, he sold the furniture center, a salon, and his SC home.

Actually, from 1995 to 2020 he was a "weekly commuter", living in Ft. Lauderdale during weekends and flew back to SC on Mondays. He dates his final retirement as being in 2021.

Mr. M was married in 1964 and had two children, who have given him two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. The couple

divorced in 1981. He rejoices that they have stayed a loving family and fully supportive. Mr. M went on to date women even after his divorce, but did not marry again. He met Ken a number of years later in South Carolina and they had a relationship that lasted several years. Later, through a network of friends, he met his current younger partner Matt. They thoroughly enjoy all that Wilton Manors has to offer.

They remain involved in several community activities including volunteering each year for the SmartRide, and many activities in their church. They were active for many years at Sunshine Cathedral but now worship at the Ft. Lauderdale UCC church. Mr. M describes his current life as "happy as it can be".

