

Henry Penas

by Doug Kent

What thoughts were running through Mr. November's (Mr. N) mind on that cold January night around 8:30 as he stood on the platform waiting for the 4th Avenue local subway? "I hate working overtime" or "I am really late for dinner" were some possibilities, but NOT the thought that he was about to meet his life-long partner. As he entered the car, he sat down, still thinking about how he had to work very late that night, and as he looked around the car his eye caught a man looking directly at him. They exchanged many glances during the trip, but they intensified as the subway approached the 36th Street stop. Mr. N saw the mysterious but handsome passenger get off the train, so he decided to exit with him even though his stop was far away. They spoke and arranged a meeting for the next night. Mr. N's closest friend lent his apartment for the first date. This story continues today as Mr. N and his partner have been together ever since that fateful day.

Born December 20, 1945 just 11 months after his older sister, Mr. N enjoyed a relatively normal childhood growing up in the largest of the 5 boroughs, Brooklyn, New York. His father immigrated to this country from Spain where he married his Italian wife. Mr. N had to learn Spanish along with his mother to make the family language cohesive. Of course on the streets of Brooklyn, English was the universal language among the young kids of immigrant families that lived in Mr. N's neighborhood. School posed no problems and PS105, Pershing Junior High and New Utrecht High School all gave Mr. N diplomas, but Pershing Junior High also gave him the "Ninth Grade Dance Contest Trophy".

After finishing High School in 1963, Mr. N decided to work and became a teller at the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Bank. He held this position for 4 years, but after 2 years realized that education was important and began night classes at Community College of New York and that eventually led to his BA in Education from Brooklyn College in 1970.

He began his teaching career in September of 1970 at PS213 and stayed with the New York City Board of Education for 26 years (except for a brief 5 year leave of absence) serving in various teaching

and administrative capacities. He completed two Masters Degrees along the way. It was in the early 1970's after the Stonewall riots, that Mr. N became involved with the "Gay Activist Alliance" and was instrumental in founding the Brooklyn Chapter. He was politically and socially active, engaged in fund raising for the group and helped many politicians in the Brooklyn area who were not supportive of the gay agenda, become educated through their group activities.

Mr. N retired in 2001 and moved to Dunedin, Florida. He and his partner spent 8 years there making frequent trips to the East coast of Florida to look at property and to depart on their many cruises, and eventually they came to their senses and moved to Fort Lauderdale in 2009. Now enjoying the leisurely life in Fort Lauderdale, Mr. N engages in many activities. He is an avid reader, enjoys creating works in stained glass, plays tennis and has been active in the Prime Timers since 2008. Quiet, reserved, never assuming, Mr. N is always composed and in control, and is a natural leader. Always fun to be with, Mr. November will be a big surprise when you finally identify him.

