

Phil Prentice

By Ken South

Herbert Hoover was the 31st US President in 1930. 1,350 banks closed due to the previous year's crash. Betty Boop made her debut, while Haile Selassie became the Emperor of Ethiopia and, in NYC, the Chrysler Building opened.

Plus, on August 21st of that year, Mr. April was born in Muncie, Indiana, joining his parents and older brother. Soon after, the family moved to Auburn, IN where his dad worked for General Motors. By 1941 the family had moved to Dayton, OH where Mr. A completed grade and middle school, and attended Oakwood HS, but graduated from another HS in 1948 in Rockville Center, NY.

Mr. A was an engineering major at Otterbein College in Ohio and later in 1950 an art major at the Pratt Institute in NYC. The following year he joined the US Air Force and served for three years, including being stationed in US occupied, Japan. Upon returning to the states, he studied at the ArtCenter of Design in Pasadena, CA. From 1954 to 1969 he worked as a draftsman at the Hughes Aircraft Company in Culver City, CA. During this time, in 1958, Mr. A met his partner of 52 years, Ernie, who headed the Screen Extras Guild for several years.

While stationed on Long Island, NY, in 1952, Mr. A began his education as a gay man. He was hoping to go to officer training school to become a pilot, but was warned that officers were particular targets during the McCarthyism era. He spent his time-off in NYC where he met lots of gay theatre people and sons of diplomats, even his first gay male couple! He also found his first boyfriend while still in the Air Force.

By 1966, at the Laguna Beach, CA, 'Festival of Arts' he started a new career. Specializing in wild life portraits, he and a business partner attended conventions and art shows all over the US, selling his art. Up until 1976 he collaborated with an agent and an association of big game hunters to promote his work. With contacts from a friend, he became associated with the Donald Art Company in NYC to sell his art prints. In the midst of a disagreement, his disgruntled agent "outed" him to his customers which caused him serious financial business complications. However, his career as an artist moved on. His work was featured in galleries in Santa Fe, NM and Scottsdale, AZ, He was commissioned to paint Ronald Reagan's horse; completed, but because of White House gift's policy, it was never delivered. At a low point in his art career, his partner Ernie made connections for him to become a court artist for the movies. In 1988 he became associated with the University of Nevada, theatre program. He also enjoyed joining the Las Vegas Gay Men's Chorus!

In 2010, Ernie, Mr. A's beloved partner of 52 years, passed away with a heart attack. By 2012 it was time to move to South Florida. He first lived as a housemate with a gay couple, friends he met on a cruise. Then, in 2018, at Coffee and Conversation at the Equality Center, he met his current partner, Doug and moved to his place in Palm Aire.

