

Deric Bownds

by Doug Kent

World War II was raging, but in a quiet little hospital in San Antonio, Mr. July (Mr. J) was born on May 16th, 1942. His mother was a school teacher, and his father was an aircraft inspector. At age 3 the family relocated to Austin, Texas where Mr. J's life continued. At the age of 5 Mr. J expressed his interest in the piano by making a paper key board and playing it for his family. This eventually drove his parents to purchase a real piano and his love affair with the instrument began. At the age of 6 Mr. J began school and began experimenting with his boy friends. He enjoyed this contact but put up the usual front of dating girls throughout his school experience.

Junior high found Mr. J becoming an exceptional student, playing flute in the marching band and playing piano for the school choir. At the age of 14 he decided not to make the piano his career and ended his formal lessons. He turned his attention to his studies and graduated from junior high as one of the top 3 students.

He entered senior high and continue to excel in his studies, particularly in the sciences, and he participated in many activities. He was Drum Major of the marching band, student director of the concert band, and piano accompanist for the student choir. Despite this hectic schedule, he managed to take a part time job at the University of Texas in a biology lab. He graduated high school one year early and was accepted to Harvard University.

Mr. J attended Harvard from 1959 to 1963 and concentrated in the bio-chemical sciences. From 1963 to 1967 he was a graduate student performing research on the chemistry of vision and received his PhD in Biology. In 1967-68 he did post graduate study in neurobiology at Harvard School of Medicine, working on the chemistry of nerve synapses.

His education now complete, Mr. J took an assistant professorship at the University of Wisconsin in Molecular Biology & Zoology, where his lab discovered several important steps in how our eyes turn light into nerve signals. He became a full professor in 1973 and retired in 2001 at the age of 59.

While at the Harvard School of Medicine he met his wife and together they had a good life with two wonderful children. In 1974 Mr. J met Bill, an ROTC instructor. Their relationship grew and was

accepted by his wife while she pursued her own outside interests. In 1988 Mr. J and his wife decided on an amicable divorce. Mr J moved into his own condo and in 1989 met his current husband. They have been together for 26 years. In 2005 Mr. J purchased his condo in Fort Lauderdale and was a content snowbird. His husband continued to work in Wisconsin until 2012 when he retired. He joined Mr. J and they are now permanent residents in South Florida.

Mr. J continues his many and diverse interests. He still gives an annual piano concert, something he has been doing since 1972. Remember, his formal training in piano ended at age 14. He does extensive writing, maintains his blog on how the mind works, and continues to lecture. He remains close to his children and travels. He is a gym rat and enjoys swimming to stay in shape. He is active with the Prime Timers and Sage.

