

# Pompano Bill's Wild Ride!

## The Lives and Loves of a Living Legend

By Ian Drew

It was a quiet evening in June of 1946 when a striking young naval officer sauntered into the Old Crow Bar on a winding street in San Francisco. Officer Calcaterra was ready to relax after receiving an honorary discharge from the army upon his return from serving in the Phillipine Islands during World War II. As he sat down and ordered a drink, his eyes slowly met with the surrounding atmosphere of the establishment. After coming to the not uncomfortable realization that he was, indeed, in gay hustler bar, his eyes soon transfixed on another young man at the end of the bar.

This handsome stranger's name was Bud Porman and it wasn't long before he sidled down the bar to join the officer for a drink. The couple then went to the nearby Saint Francis Hotel for drinks and a sumptuous dinner in the Fairmont Hotel.

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Both men were 21-years-old and solidified their immediate connection with one another by making love after dinner in Porman's apartment. After one more date the following night – a romantic excursion to see the scintillating Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* – the handsome officer returned to his home state of Michigan to begin a new life.

Bud continued to write and pleaded with Calcaterra to return to San Francisco so that they could begin a life together. The officer, still confused about the brief lifestyle he had entered, decided to remain in his home state and attend college. His darling Bud remained his first true gay love experience only in his mind and he never saw nor heard from him again.

Fifty-five years later, John William Calcaterra, known within the South Florida community as Pompano Bill, still thinks about Bud from time to time with a tear in his eye. The experience he had in 1946 started a life knowing love for the local photographer and beloved community figure. He boldly emanates warmth and openness to everyone who crosses his path.

Pompano Bill was born in Norway,

Michigan in 1926. After graduating from high school in 1944, he entered the Navy where he was assigned as a radio operator on the *U.S.S. Fentress* bound for the Phillipines. Young Bill, who so far had been a self-proclaimed womanizer and had several flings with women, eventually returned to Michigan after the War and enrolled at Farris State University in Big Rapids.

While working for a degree in business administration that he later received in 1951, Bill drove into Detroit on weekends to recapture some of the experience that he had had in San Francisco. The 10/11 Bar on Farmer Street became a favorite hangout and Bill eventually moved down the street from the bar upon graduation after accepting an administration job in IBM's Detroit office.

He worked in the same capacity for the company until his retirement in 1987.

His various roles brought him to work for IBM in cities across the nation.

In 1953, Bill was promoted to work in Chicago where he discovered a new openness in his life as gay man. It was here that Bill met what would become the true love of his life while sunbathing on Chicago's Oak Street Beach.

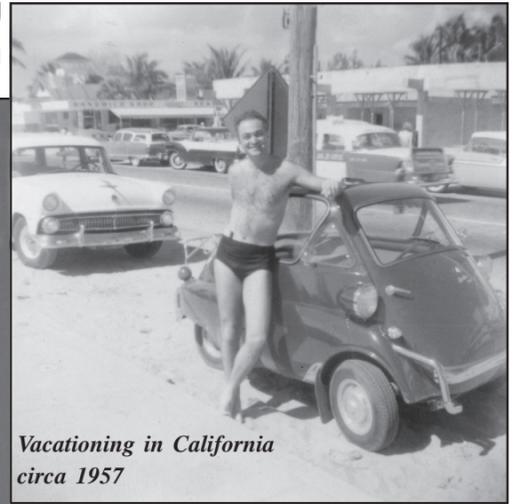
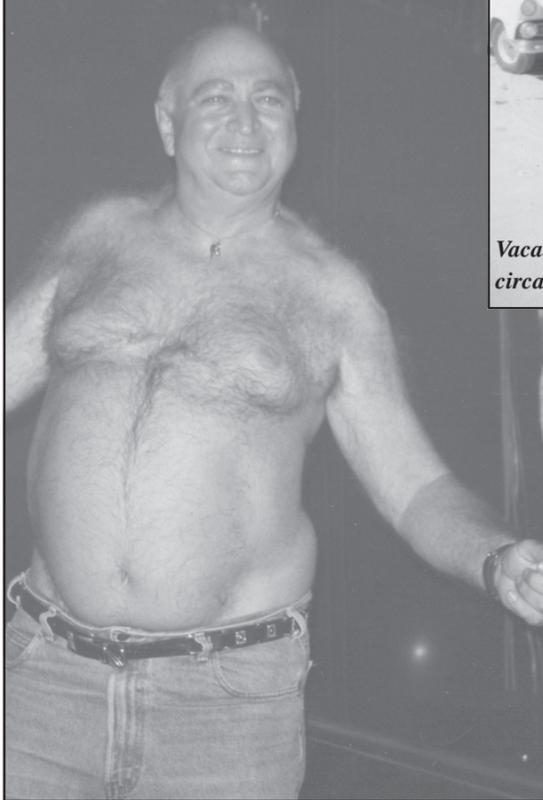
Peter became Bill's partner for four years and the two were inseparable when Peter moved to Los Angeles in 1957. Bill applied for a similar job transfer to allow him to be with Peter but was instead transferred to IBM's New York City headquarters.

Bill was ready to quit IBM at that point to move to California so he could be with Peter, but Peter convinced him to stick with his chosen career path. Though eventually they separated romantically after Peter found a new lover in 1961, the two have remained best friends ever since and have spent vacations and holidays together every year.

Moving to New York City's bustling West Village in 1958 opened up a new life for Bill. The openness of downtown's gay subculture and such hotspots as Aldo's, Mary's and the Bird Circuit brought Bill a series of lovers and a time that he now refers to as his 'glory days.'

Two years later, he moved to suburban

A proud and happy Pompano Bill bares all at a 1998 benefit underwear auction. He sold his shirt...



Vacationing in California circa 1957

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The then 34-year-old Bill met 19-year-old construction worker Donald while leaving a downtown bank. The two continued to see each other once-a-week for evening sexual encounters.

In 1978, Bill was sent to San Francisco on what he thought would be a six month temporary assignment to help with IBM's legal battles against Memorex and Transamerica. The assignment ended up lasting over two years, during which time he was working eighty hours a week and had no time for more lascivious pursuits.

Bill would sometimes spend the weekends with Peter and his lover in Laguna Beach, and once every month he returned to White Plains where he spent random evenings with Donald.

Upon returning permanently to White Plains in 1982, Bill received a stunning announcement from IBM – they were finally transferring him to Los Angeles. Bill broke off the affair with Donald and moved to Los Angeles where he continued his friendship with Peter, who by now was living with a new companion.

Bill moved in with a friend in Los Angeles's Silverlake area before retiring to a condo he owned in Pompano in 1987 shortly after turning 60 years old. Once in South Florida's thriving gay community he began to enjoy his retirement.

Bill started going to the Club Caribbean on Sunday afternoons. The sizzling scene around the resort's pool and the boredom of retirement life got Bill, who had since been renamed Pompano Bill by friends to differentiate himself from another Bill in their circle, to pick up a camera for the first time. "I couldn't resist with all of the beautiful sights," Pompano Bill says with a wink. "I just had to capture the scene and the people."

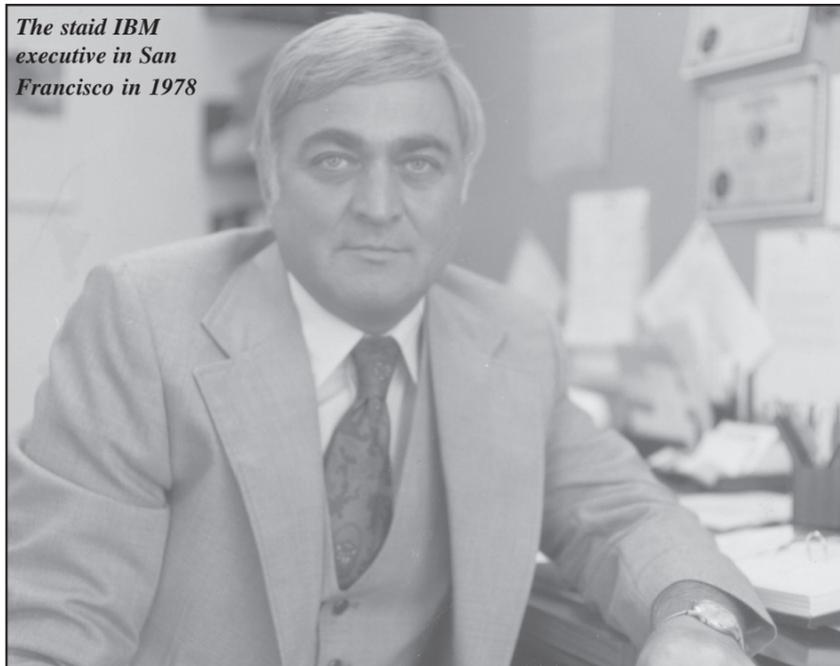
Brad Casey, publisher of the now-defunct *Scoop Magazine*, had an office at the Club Caribbean complex and asked Bill to shoot for the publication after Bill showed him his pictures. Since then, Pompano Bill is constantly seen snapping pictures at every party, gathering, benefit and event within his roving earshot.

"I didn't want to just retire and sit on the beach anymore. I love to be around people and am a naturally social person. I was moving around so much over the years that I am used to different people, although I think it is the main reason I also never had a longtime companion," he says.

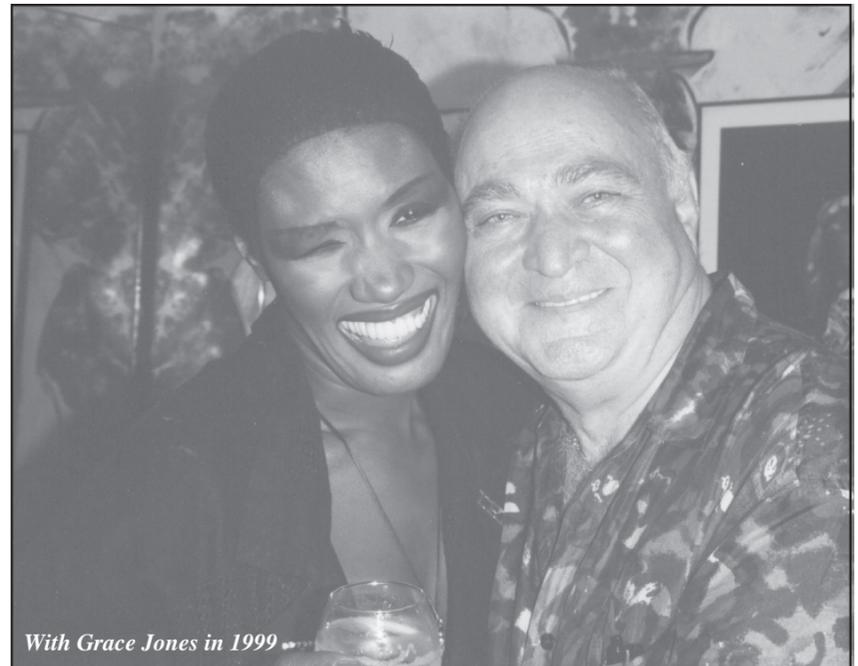
Pompano Bill has continued his new career as a photographer for *Outlook Magazine* and *The Express*. He has become a fixture within the South Florida community and is perennially on the list everywhere in town.

Pompano Bill continues to find love locally and still spends time with Peter, who now lives in nearby Naples. Although his newfound passion has found him in South Florida, he still looks back at a long life filled with love and void of regrets.

Judging from who and where he is now, Pompano Bill has clearly lost nothing in the process.



The staid IBM executive in San Francisco in 1978



With Grace Jones in 1999

