



## JOSH CASSIDY

In 1968 over the Memorial Day weekend, Josh Cassidy, a popular go-go dancer at the Yum Yum Tree, met Billy Jones, a retail display designer from Atlanta, on a white-sands beach in Pensacola, Florida. A divorcee in his late forties, Billy was hanging out with an Atlanta contingent, when his Pensacola friends introduced him to Josh, a young man of twenty. Josh, Billy, and all the revelers on this particular part of the beach were there for an Emma Jones party.

In "The Discreet Lovers of Emma Jones," Robert D. Shaw Jr., staff writer for the *Miami Herald*, wrote in a March 1975 issue of the weekly *Tropic*: "She was 'born' in 1957, as a mail-order cover for the gay community of Pensacola. During the next 17 years, she grew to be the grande dame of the South's homosexuals, hosting large beach parties and lavish conventions."<sup>1</sup> What began as small house parties had become well-known events by the late 1960s, attracting hundreds of gays from across the South.

Sometime later, Billy convinced Josh to move from Pensacola to Atlanta, where the gay scene had taken off in the heady days of gay liberation. With his all-American good looks, athletic build, and exhibitionist inclinations, Josh became a local legend in Atlanta's gay nightlife. In 1972, he won the Mr. David contest, which was named after the Florida-based publication, *David*. Today, he is a community historian of sorts, one of the last known members of Georgia's Gay Liberation Front and a survivor of the AIDS epidemic. Josh is, in fact, a living memorial. — **John Q**

<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Shaw Jr., "The Discreet Lovers of Emma Jones," *Tropic*, 16 March 1975, 8. Emma Jones parties also are discussed in John Loughery's *The Other Side of Silence*.