

My Life: Overcoming Adversity
by
William Kruger

As a child, my life was rather normal. I had several neighborhood friends. We played the usual games, rode bikes, played roller hockey, and swam.

As I grew older, I began to realize that I did not think quite the same as the other boys I played with. I was not sure what the difference was, but there was one. In my high school years I began to notice I did not care about girls the way the other guys did. Truthfully, I did not really care about sex, at least the way the others talked about it. I eventually did get a girl friend, but I could care less if we kissed or had any intimate relationship. She was more like a good friend to me. In my high school years I liked looking at the Spiegel catalog, the men's section. I thought the men in that catalog looked so good. I did not have a name for the way I felt but I knew it was not the normal thing for a teenage boy to do. So I repressed it.

I tried to do all the right things: keep my room clean, stay out of trouble, listen to my teachers and do well in school.

After high school I went to work for Duke Power Co. During the fall of that year, I had a salvation experience in a Pentecostal church. And I was baptized and later filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now I knew all was going to be well. There was nothing that Jesus could not help me with and get me through.

The next spring, because of my draft number, I joined the Navy. The first two years went by well till I got onto my first submarine. Here I saw men playing around with other men, and although to them it was just male bonding, to me down deep inside it was much more. My religiosity I thought was offended. Now I realize that it was my urges that were peaked. But anyway, my trying to be something I was not was causing duality in my thinking and it was taking a toll on me. One night I woke up and was seeing ectoplasmic manifestations flying around my bed. I hid my head and prayed. Then I sat up in bed and had another vision. This time of hundreds of hands reaching toward me. I did not know if they were there to push me away or if they were reaching for help. I was scared and could not figure out what to do. The next morning I told the chief of the boat, whom we called Doc, what had happened. The next thing I knew was that I was at the Portsmouth Naval hospital locked up on the nut ward. I was listed as paranoid schizophrenic. I was subsequently discharged for this condition. This did not settle well with my parents, especially my father who now looked on me as a failure.

When my final release papers came through, I was asked to come to Washington State to work as an associate pastor while

I prepared to enter officer training school with the Salvation Army. After about 7 months with the church, one of my parishioners came to me and told me he knew I was gay and he was going to prove it. This blew me away because I had done nothing to provoke this type of accusation. How could I be gay if I did not do anything? So this led to a meeting with my pastor and his wife, because in the Salvation Army both partners are officers and share equal power. Subsequently I ended up leaving the church and going to work for a design engineering company.

After awhile, for family reasons, I ended up coming back to Charlotte. I was going to CPCC and working at Lebo's and Sears. It seemed that everywhere I went there were always people talking behind my back. So finally I decided that if everyone was going to accuse me of being queer, then I better find out what this was all about. So I went to Scorpios bar and checked out what this man to man thing was all about. I was scared stiff. After several visits, I was picked up by a guy and we went to his house and had a nice and very informative evening. After I got back to my apartment, I thought I was going to die and go straight to hell. But as time progressed I felt less and less bad about what I was doing but I never felt really good about myself. There was always the sense of being a sinner when I engaged in this activity.

Then I finally met the most wonderful man of my life. His name was Buddy Bishop. We dated for a month and then decided it would be more economical if we shared a home together and split the cost. So now for the first time I had to admit to me and God and everyone else that I was truly gay. This was the most liberating thing I had ever done. I quit being schizophrenic and started living my life for real. I got back to work with Duke Power Co. and never looked back. As I moved on from Duke Power to contract engineering jobs, I never hid the fact that I was gay again and the honesty showed in my self esteem and in my quality of work. Trying to hide in the closet and work in the real world had done me nothing but harm. Being open with myself and others has brought me great joy and a wonderful 30 year relationship.

Therefore I would say to anyone who is struggling with their life trying to please two worlds: it isn't worth it. It is better by far to be true to yourself. Those who truly loved me and cared about me came around after they saw I was settled and happy. They became happy for me. The people who were still judging me, they were the ones judging everyone but themselves. I do not miss them.

So I tried being a Methodist, a Lutheran, a Pentecostalist, and a Salvationist, but in the end I was just a really good homosexualist.