

“There is hope for change and healing available.”

I was born the 2nd of 6 daughters to Fred and Maureen Ryker in the year 1960. My favorite thing to do in life was to play outside. I grew up a tomboy. My mother said that I was climbing trees before I could actually walk. As I grew, my dad taught me how to play football, baseball, and basketball. When we took our family vacations during summer break, I was my Dad's fishing partner.

I remember growing up I did not really fit in. I was a girl but only wanted to do boy things. Even though playing with the boys was fun, I wasn't a boy. I just wanted to be tough like them. I didn't know why, it just seemed to make sense to me. So I played sports with the boys and stayed away from the girls unless there was a fast game of jump rope tag going on. As for having girlfriends, I didn't have any and didn't really want any. I wasn't interested in playing with dolls or things like that.

Growing up in a world of boys exposed me to my sexuality earlier than was proper. There were many occasions where I was put in compromising situations due to a lack of parental supervision. I tried to ignore these moments as best I could so that I could continue having fun playing with the boys out on the ball field. Little did I know how these inappropriate experiences impacted what I believed about myself and about life.

One thing that I did decide is that being feminine was a weakness, one that I did not want. So I went about doing everything I could to make myself strong. I also minimized everything about me that was feminine.

In my early teens, I was sexually abused by an extended family member. By the age of 15 I knew that there was something different about me. I also knew that boys were to be competed against and not to be trusted. I longed for a place where I was known and accepted for who I was. That was also a place where I would not be taken advantage of. To help me cope with all of these things swirling around inside me I began to drink alcohol.

I graduated H.S in 1978 and then attended DeVry Institute of Technology, in Chicago, and there began to explore the idea of my being different from the concept of being gay. In the early '80s the issue of homosexuality was still very much on the fringe of society. It was not discussed at all in the High School or Colleges.

As I turned 19 I had the chance to get together with my older cousin, Lewis. I knew him fairly well because every summer his family visited our home for a few days. We met at a family

gathering in Franklin Indiana. After seeing a movie together, he asked me to join him for a little party in Indianapolis. Thus I experienced my first gay bar.

That experience with my cousin Lewis made a profound impact on me. It was from that experience that I decided that I must be is gay. Although during my growing years I never wanted to play with the girls, I was drawn to them. I can remember times, growing up, watching my older sister with her girlfriends, and thinking to myself, I just wish she (my sisters' girlfriend) would just hold me.

So from that experience, with my cousin, I knew that I needed to explore the idea of me being a lesbian. In 1981 I graduated with honors with an Engineering Degree. I was headed for my first professional job with a company called Applied Materials located in San Jose, CA, just minutes away from San Francisco. San Francisco was known at that time as the "Gay Capital of the World." I knew that I could finally develop my newfound sexuality.

As soon as I was settled in San Jose I jumped right into the lifestyle. I found others who were gay, located where the gay bars were and began pursuing a life partner. After making some friends, and many discussions, it became clear to me that "I must have been born gay."

In early 1983 after several girlfriends, I was very discouraged that I hadn't found my life partner. Then I met Sally (not her real name). Sally was amazing. I was completely taken by her. Sally was beautiful, outgoing, charismatic, and feminine. The only problem was that she was a Christian and I was not. We spent much time together, although she was attracted to me and could not get involved with me.

My life became consumed by her, but we were stuck. That Christmas I went home to WI for two weeks in a very depressed state. The 2nd of those weeks were spent with a small gathering of my extended family, all of who were practicing believing Christians. I had the opportunity to ask all the questions that I had about God. They answered my questions the best they could. They told me how much God loves me and desires to be in a relationship with me. They said that my past wrong choices prevented me from being in a relationship with God.

Then they told me about Jesus, how He died on the cross for me, paying the price for my wrong choices. He was buried and on the 3rd day rose again. They told me I could be reconciled to God by accepting Jesus' death on the cross on my behalf. .By the end of that week I could no longer logically deny Jesus and I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior. I didn't understand the fullness of my faith decision and the changes that lay ahead.

I did share my faith decision with my family but they never knew that I was gay. I left still gay and a brand new Christian. I believed that I could go back to CA and show my friend Sally that you could be both gay and Christian. Upon returning to CA, I met with Sally for lunch. I shared with her that I became a Christian over the holiday. She was overjoyed, gave in to her same-sex attraction to me, and we went about bringing our lives and households together.

Thinking that I had finally found my life partner I wanted my immediate family to know about me and my new life. I contacted them and shared the good news. This news was not well received. The warm reception that I was hoping for from them did not materialize.

Over the next two years, as Sally and I continued to be together, things began changing inside of me. God was working upon my heart. The first thing He did was to show me that I was loveable just the way He had created me. There was nothing about me that was not acceptable to him: my hair, my height, my personality, my skin color, and most importantly my femininity. Everything about me was good and loved by Him.

The 2nd thing He did was to take away my fear of rejection. I couldn't see it at the time but everything that I did was skewed by this inner fear of rejection. I couldn't talk to anyone unless I had a specific reason to do so. Thus I was very isolated. My drinking helped to ease that inner fear but it was always there.

As God continued to teach me how to love myself and as I learned how to live without the fear of rejection I began to change in how I viewed myself and the world around me. Toward the end of the second year with Sally, we made arrangements to go to Hawaii together. Upon arriving in Hawaii we both noticed that there was a considerable amount of tension between us. You see, Sally wanted us to get married and I knew that I needed to end our relationship. Jesus was asking me to choose which life I wanted more. A life with Him, and continued growth and healing, or a life with Sally. This was the hardest choice I've ever made. I picked Jesus over Sally.

Upon returning home, Sally found a new job in another state and we separated our lives. I did ask Jesus one thing before separating from Sally. I was desperately afraid of being alone would He please bring me a husband and teach me how to love and trust him? He did, and on August 20, 1988, I became Mrs. Karl Thorne.

I've been successfully married since 1988, I am the proud mother of four beautiful boys and one beautiful girl. Of course, there is much more to my story. God did not change my same-sex

desires overnight. But I can confidently say that today I stand before you with no confusion about who I am and what God has done in my life.

I know that the issue of same-sex attraction or homosexuality is very controversial. I know that many of you may even believe that people are born “gay.” I would like to challenge that view. I believe we are born heterosexual and factors in our lives can cause us to make choices that can lead us into gay life.

I want to take one more moment of your time to share another story from my past that will help you to see why people can believe that they are “born gay.” When I was just a baby my mother was pregnant with my sister Cindy. This pregnancy was very difficult and my mother could not care for me or my older sister. She sent me to a relative’s home for 3 months.

So from the tender age of 6 months to 9 months, I was in a strange place with strange people. When I was brought home my mother said that I would not go to her but only to my father. I have no personal memory of this event happening in my life and only know about it because my mother shared these things with me.

What I do know is that I grew up with a fear of rejection, not loving myself as created, and with a fear of abandonment. I won’t take the time now to share with you the circumstances surrounding the healing of my fear of abandonment but it is the next issue that God has healed in my life.

Is it so hard to believe that this event, so early in my life could affect me so much, without any conscious memory? How does a 6-month-old child deal with the separation from her mother and her father and everything she knows for such a long period of time?

I am not alone in receiving hope, being changed, and being healed. My friend Sally is now also happily married with a child of her own. There are many others. My whole purpose for being here is to tell you that “there is hope for change and healing available” for those who desire it. There are many organizations all over the United States whose sole purpose is to help people struggling with same-sex attractions find freedom, hope, and healing.