

Continued from page 22

After high school, I came to Oregon to go to college. It was 1967 and I was a student at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario. I had known I was "different" (gay) for a long time. But I had not really explored those feelings because at home the only things I heard about gays and lesbians were "I'd like to kill all those f***** fags." or "They are really sick and should be locked up." At TVCC I remember reading about one young man who was jailed for sodomy. This made me certain that I didn't want to tell about my orientation. It was not until 1969, after transferring to school in Monmouth, that I met a number of lesbians and gay men. This was the first time I didn't feel so alone.

Shortly after that I began coming to Portland to the bars. I went to Demas Tavern (now Darcelle's), Dinty Moore's, and The Lotus. Later it was Dahl & Penne, The Other Inn, and Tasha's Club Northwest (now Magic Gardens). I felt shy but welcome. I finally knew where I belonged.

I was drinking and taking diet pills in junior high. In college I began drinking more heavily. Speed and alcohol became my favorite drugs for many years and nearly caused my death several times. I wrecked 10 cars in 12 years, between the ages of 16 and 28. In 1971 I moved to Portland and was living in my car and staying with friends. My addictions were running rampant in my life. The bars were my "home away from home" and I knew most of the bartenders and bar owners.

Around that time I hung out with the Knights of Malta and was involved in the early leather scene. I felt much closer to and safer with gay men. Although that was not always "politically correct", I never cared. I began working at Bradley Angle House in 1974. At the time its main focus was housing women from the streets who wanted to get away from prostitution. Later its focus turned to sheltering battered women.

In 1976 I became involved in a new relationship. It became evident that the only time we fought or really had problems was around our alcohol and drug use. In 1978 we tried several times to quit by switching from alcohol to pot, or only drinking on "special occasions." None of these attempts worked. I would sneak to the bar while my partner was at work and drink or smoke pot. I always started early, so that "she wouldn't know later!"



On October 31, 1978, I went to the first Gay Masquerade Ball while my s.o. went to a party for the kids at the day care center where she worked. That night, after not drinking for almost two months, I took many different drugs and drank continuously. Finally someone drove me home and said "get out of the car!" In our apartment I vomited for what seemed like hours. Then I began having convulsions. I'm not sure how or why I lived through that night, but I have never had another drink.

Continued on page 25