

**LOCAL news**

**W**hile Michael Joseph Broderick no longer considers himself particularly photogenic, he could serve as something of a poster boy for the devastating effects of sexual repression.

Broderick, a news director at Portland-based KBOO community radio, is almost 50 years old, but in some ways his life is just beginning. He came out only two years ago.

Like KBOO's newscasts, which provide an alternative to conventional wisdom, Broderick hopes his story will reach people with a message seldom heard in mainstream U.S. culture: "Never allow the dynamic of your own sexual energy to destroy you."

"My bisexuality has been a major issue all my life," Broderick says. "I've lived nearly half a century with Catholic Church repression biting me in the ass."

Broderick grew up the third of seven children in an Irish Catholic neighborhood on the south side of Chicago, in a place he dubs "Archie Bunkerville." He recalls three kinds of people in the world of his youth: men like his father, who were the masters, and women like his mother, who were the slaves. Everyone else was a pervert.

From early adolescence, Broderick felt an insistent sexual attraction to other boys. He never acted on his desire. Instead it shadowed him. "I convinced myself I was a freak," he recounts in a rapid-fire recitation. "I treated myself as a pervert and accepted the self-identity of my oppressors."

As a Catholic schoolboy, Broderick believes, sexual repression was suffused into his bones. Knowing that he didn't fit neatly into the check-off boxes of heterosexual male or female, he headed off to prep seminary, a place he could be "neutral and neuter."

By the time he got to college in the late 1960s, Broderick's outrage over rampant sexism and racism and the Vietnam war turned him away from the church and toward leftist activism.

Sexual liberation, however, remained out of reach. He recalls, "The sexual revolution filled some of us with grief as well as joy."

Broderick tried to keep up with the times by doing his best "to be a raging heterosexual screw machine," as he describes it.

Yet his desire for men continued to exert itself as he threw himself into the performing

PHOTO BY LINDA KLEINER



Mike Broderick

## NO MORE LIES

**From repression to compassion: one man's story of coming out and coming to terms with a complex sexual identity** by Holly Pruett

arts and other pursuits that intersected the gay community.

Throughout the 1970s—a time Broderick describes as "a morally vacuous ozone of people trying to get high and get laid"—gay men continually hit on him.

"I was aghast," he remembers. "I wondered if I had a big Q [for queer] on my forehead."

Finally, the choke hold of his childhood prohibitions loosened enough for him to respond to one of the propositions. "I took him up on it and crossed the line," says Broderick.

Years of secret and anonymous sex with men followed, mixed liberally with the alcohol that was another family legacy.

Around the time Broderick turned 40, he faced the fact that much of his life felt unrewarding and superficial. He quit drinking and reverted to his teen-age conception of himself as "sexless."

In 1990, the death of an older woman friend

left Broderick shattered. He resolved to move to Portland for the new year, where he planned to live with his younger brother and finally come out.

The move went as planned but the coming out took another four years.

"I struggled with how much I didn't fit into the gay community," Broderick explains. After a lifelong journey to arrive at that door, he still wasn't sure he held the key to get in.

No longer sporting the hard-body looks prized by parts of the community, Broderick grappled with the logistics of finding a mate. It wasn't just the cigarettes and alcohol of the bar scene that he found challenging. As a bisexual man, Broderick had experienced intensely intimate connections with women. By contrast, he found "many gay men keep away from deeper connections to each other. Making love matters less than getting your rocks off."

His bisexuality itself posed another barrier to

acceptance in the gay community. "I would have preferred to be 100 percent gay or 100 percent straight. Bisexuals are rejected by both," he contends.

But at this point in his life, an aging child of the '60s in a rumpled "I'm a Beatles Fan" T-shirt, Broderick is ready to move beyond the confines of the male/female, straight/gay dichotomies he grew up with. "I've lived enough of my life on the outside of feeling acceptable, that I refuse to lie anymore to fit someone's notion of which square to check off," he says.

As Broderick came to accept the complexity of his own sexual identity, he began to discover a correspondent complexity in the queer community.

"There are such an enormous number of agencies, events, organizations," he says. "If only the straight world recognized what an incredibly diverse community we are."

Broderick has begun to make connections in the queer community via groups like the Portland Bisexual Alliance, Cascade AIDS Project and Portland Gay Men's Chorus.

Broderick also finds KBOO, where he is responsible for the weekday 5:30 p.m. newscast, "a very supportive environment for gender and sexual minorities."


Like the gay community, KBOO provides an alternative to the status quo. Broderick believes "KBOO exists to scream out the fact that debate is necessary."

He adds: "There are profound issues facing us as a society, and the mainstream news deludes us into thinking that the leaders have the answers. [But] the leaders want to keep things the way they are. The people who have and will find the answers are the ones at the bottom getting ground down by the machine."

Despite the fervor of his rhetoric, Broderick finds that, as he gets older, "truth is not as important as compassion." It is a compassion he tries to extend to the "Joe six-packs" of his childhood as well as to himself.

"My deepest regret," Broderick concludes, "is that it didn't happen 30 years ago. If only I'd had the guts to fuse what I knew was true inside myself with the outside world."

His advice: "Come out, get healthy, and talk with people like yourselves. Sexual repression is too expensive. This isn't a dress rehearsal."



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