

Thriving in an Un-Accepting Society and World

By Karen Lynn

Many, many years ago, I was born into this world. I was a delightful, loving, child who smiled continuously, and, who gave my parents only pleasure. But 5 months after I was born, I became paralyzed due to a DPT shot. I fell into a deep coma, not to awake for 10 days. I slept, and slept, and slept, as the doctors were ready to declare me with severe developmental delays, but my sweet spirit soared. I recovered, but not completely- just enough to change my world and to change others who were touched by my presence.

My almost complete recovery was not enough to make me like all the other children in my world, but enough to make me appreciate the two worlds while bringing them together. It implanted within me a spirit and an iron will to over-come my challenges and to be everything the experts said I could never become. My diagnoses- left side hemiplegic, Cerebral Palsy and learning disabled.

In my parent mind, my family knew I was going to need help, but they wanted that help to make me better. They did not want this help to isolate me from the world. One day, in my mother's busy, active, life, she found a dance school to help build and keep my muscles strong. She found a man with a kind heart, who wanted to give of himself. It was my mama Katie, who was progressive, and wanted me to live a normal life. That was very rare for a child growing up in the 1950's. And, I over-came more obstacles then most people could count.

Despite a patch-work educational system, bullying from peers and experts, alike, I determined to live life on my own terms. During that era, society considered Cerebral Palsy a one way ticket to a sheltered workshop and I wanted nothing to do with that at all- Thus, I made up my mind that I was not going to be categorized by anyone, let alone a professional or a Para- professional by that means. No one realized at the time how hard I was going to have to work. Also, no one knew what kind of personal determination I had, or how that victory would transform the new world to come.

After being labeled for a second time, I had had ENOUGH! I filed a law suit against California State Department of Rehabilitation, and won hands down. I used my victory to earn an AA degree in English and dance. And after graduation, I became a fitness instructor specializing in adaptive aerobics. My unparalleled

contribution is still not known to the common or lay person at hand to this very day. My victory laid the foundation for everything we have achieved since. In everything I have done, I have not only put my life on the line, but I have done it with grace, dignity, laughter, and passion in my heart to help and heal all. My example is one, the rest of the community could learn well from. The reality is there are many people in this expanded world, who have to be dealt with. Some wish to help, some want to get in the way, and others just want to compete. No one, even if they are in the same circumstance, can conquer anything without a combination of a loving, giving heart, and a strong will, and an intransigent mind.

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