

Two Journeys to One Wondrous Life

Lee Klein

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Klein's story affirms that the most important thing of all is "knowing that you have loved and are being loved."

Growing up in Lincoln, Nebraska, in a time when being outed as gay would have destroyed his career prospects, threatened his personal safety, and subjected his family to ridicule, Lee Klein took the only option available to him: he lived a double life. *Two Journeys to One Wondrous Life* is the nonagenarian's story of the risky balancing act that brought him success and fulfillment in two very different worlds.

Klein writes that he knew from early childhood that he was very different from others around him, so much so that he asked his parents if he'd been adopted. More interested in activities deemed feminine, he enjoyed culinary arts and disdained rough-and-tumble games and sports.

Inspired by the love and acceptance of his father, he learned the value of focus and hard work in achieving one's goals. Upon graduating from high school, Klein enlisted in the navy, fully aware that he was taking his "conflicted sexual life" along with him. It turned out that he was not the only one, and he was able to maintain a secret gay life while rising through the ranks as a navy pilot with top military clearance, earning a master's degree in journalism, and working as an editor for *Air Force Magazine*. Klein enjoyed multiple careers, including restaurant ownership, and in each he had success and a lifestyle that included encounters with US presidents and other politicians, the shah of Iran, popular entertainers, and stars of Broadway.

The narrative is convivial, informative, and conversational in tone, revealing some of the risks gay men of Klein's generation took to enjoy simple things that straight people took for granted, like living openly and being able to say, "This is who I am, and these are my friends." Instead, fear and repression marked gay life.

Klein writes of a friend who, back in 1952, was kicked out of the American Airlines pilot school because he was gay, details the risks he took in his own life, and movingly recalls the grief of the gay community as AIDS took down so many men in their prime. But he also includes lively tidbits, including the fact that England's Queen Mother liked to hire gay men for her household staff because "she found them more amusing than straights." Celebrating hard-won change in America, Klein proudly writes, "President Obama nominated an openly gay man to a top command post in the army."

Errors in grammar, syntax, and punctuation, together with occasional missing or misspelled words, are distracting, as is the somewhat confusing timeline. The book jumps between military and civilian, gay and straight lives; contributing to the sense of disorientation, the photos included to enhance the text are out of chronological order.

Lee Klein's *Two Journeys to One Wondrous Life* is the engaging story of a gay man who brought all of his intelligence, social adeptness, and ability to be in the right place at the right time to the creation of a vital, positive, successful life. Now, with the perspective and wisdom of advanced age, Klein affirms that the most important thing of all is "knowing that you have loved and are being loved. That," he writes, "makes everything else wonderful."

KRISTINE MORRIS (June 8, 2018)

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