

Like others my age, I remember the moment when I heard about the death of Karen Carpenter, the space shuttle Challenger explosion, and Princess Diana's fatal car crash. I also remember when I watched Steven Carrington stand before his family and declare, "I'm a homosexual, Dad. I'm gay." With the rich, shoulder-padded members of his family staring him down, Steven said the words that I hoped to one day be able to say to my family -- perhaps with the affirmation of a sibling like Fallon who acknowledged her brother's orientation stating, "Steven is gay."

As a young, gay fan of dramas such as *Dynasty*, *Dallas*, and *Days of Our Lives*, I remember watching these shows hoping for the day they would feature a gay character, someone that I could relate to in some way. So when *Dynasty* introduced me to Steven Carrington, I was hooked. In Steven, I saw someone who struggled with at least a few of the issues that were running through my confused, teenage mind. Even though the show later altered Steven's face by recasting the actor, adjusted his homosexuality by making him more bisexual, and killed off two of his lovers (one at the hands of his father Blake and one in the show's famed Moldavian massacre), as young gay man searching for people like me on television, I was grateful for Steven.

Three years after *Dynasty* was canceled in 1989, Fox brought me *Melrose Place* and its gay character, Matt Fielding. Ten years had passed since Steven Carrington came out to his family and not much had advanced in terms of gay characters on television. In fact, I recall the "hype" surrounding an on-screen kiss that was supposed occur between Matt and one of his boyfriends, which never aired due to concerns from the network and its sponsors.

Thankfully, things have improved quite a bit since those days. I now enjoy watching Will and Sonny on *Days of Our Lives*, and gay characters populate many shows on television and online. And, yet, I still keep thinking that there is room for more.

All my life, friends and family have told me that I should be writing for television. As those who know me watched as I engaged with my TV dramas, they saw in me something that, until recently, I didn't see -- a true passion for interesting characters and continuing storylines.

Once I recognized that passion myself, an idea was born. What if I created my own continuing drama that consisted mainly of gay characters? I started to ponder the idea more and more, and in June of 2013, I began writing my drama focused on gay characters, BOYSTOWN.

Like all good soaps, BOYSTOWN needed a “core” family; thus, the Mancini family was born. The Mancini brothers -- as well as their friends and significant others -- are at the center of BOYSTOWN. Emmett Mancini, the youngest of the brothers, is a bright, caring guy whose boyfriend has a few secrets Emmett has yet to discover. Derek Mancini, and his wife Joyelle, are BOYSTOWN's straight couple...but a recent encounter with hunky Cole O'Brien could have life-altering consequences for Derek. And Justin Mancini, the oldest brother, brings with him a family history that both Emmett and Derek were hoping to forget.

I decided to publish one BOYSTOWN "episode" online per month, each ending in a cliffhanger. To my surprise, the story became so popular that people from all over the country began to email me demanding to know what happened to their favorite characters and wanting the episodes to be released faster.

Readers then suggested that I publish the first 10 episodes as a book. I took their advice -- and “BOYSTOWN Season One” was published. The book began to sell well locally and nationally. In the meantime, I continued to write additional episodes. Since then, nine BOYSTOWN books have been released and the tenth will be released in September of 2020.

I have been so intrigued by the fans' responses to the characters and couples in the series. For example, I never anticipated that so many people would be fans of "Kemmett" (Keith and Emmett). And I have to admit that some of the characters have taken on a life all their own. I created Michael Martinez simply because I needed a police officer for a brief scene and then, all of a sudden, came up with a huge idea and now he is one of BOYSTOWN's most liked characters.

Because BOYSTOWN is written like a TV series, it reads quickly and keeps people on the edges of their seats. And, because of people's comments that BOYSTOWN “needs to be on TV,” I am now working to bring BOYSTOWN to television.

Writing the BOYSTOWN series has been the most fantastic experience of my life. I have been so touched by the outpouring of kindness and support that I have received from BOYSTOWN readers, and I am excited to see what the future holds for BOYSTOWN, both as a book series and TV series. And maybe, just maybe, I have Steven Carrington to thank for it all!