

Chapter 2.1 Life With Dahmer

This section details the eighteen months when Billy was assigned a room with Dahmer who then tortured and controlled him. Billy struggled every day to find a way to survive.

When Jeffrey Dahmer was asked why he acted as he did, he replied that it was the only way he knew to feel close to someone. Dahmer wanted to have a secure and continuing relationship with his victim while at the same time being in complete control. For almost all of the victims, the only way to do that was to kill them; however, what if he had a situation previously in which he was able to completely control his victim and isolate him from everyone else? Perhaps he had that situation with Billy Capshaw and perhaps that is the reason he didn't kill him.

Billy is the seventh of eight children. His parents separated when he was a toddler. His older brother has had emotional problems since returning from service in Vietnam; he has a younger brother. Billy was his mother's favorite and was pampered by his sisters. The family was poor, and he was made fun of in school because of his clothes. Because he wanted to help the family financially, particularly an older sister with a congenital heart condition, he enlisted in the Army in 1977 when he was barely seventeen years old. After training as a medic, he was sent to Germany and assigned a room with Jeffrey Dahmer.

At first, Dahmer seemed like a likeable person and had a certain amount of charisma, but within a few days Billy became frightened as Dahmer began his process of completely controlling Billy by various means. He physically beat him. When Billy complained to those in authority, he was told that he was a "pussy" and was not taken seriously. The severity of the physical abuse increased, and Dahmer used an iron bar, which was part of the apparatus for the bed, to hit Billy across the joints. This caused the most pain, particularly in his knuckles and shins.

Somehow Dahmer arranged it so that Billy did not have regular assignments, and Dahmer controlled the only key to the room. When he left, he would lock Billy in the room. Dahmer also somehow arranged that his family's mail or phone calls did not reach him. Billy was listed as AWOL at a time when he had not left the base. Both Billy and Dahmer were medics, and when Dahmer injured Billy, he went with Billy to the doctor and convinced them that he was taking care of him. He also convinced them that he was not the one who had injured him, even though Billy said otherwise. Billy said he got one doctor to believe him, but the doctor told him to report this to the same authorities who had previously not listened to him.

When Billy tried to escape by going out the window and down the fire escape, he

found he had no place to go. He did spend some nights in a hotel room when he was getting his pay. When Billy came back, which he eventually had to because he had no place else to go, he was beaten severely. Somehow Dahmer made sure Billy didn't get paid or pull duty assignments.

Billy would have flown home AWOL, but being in the service, he needed a pass to board a plane. Billy learned to watch Dahmer's moods to try to minimize the attacks, and this became a life-saving preoccupation. When Billy dissociated during an attack and his eyes glazed over, Dahmer would insist that he look at him and would not allow Billy to dissociate. Dahmer beat Billy harder when he screamed and cried, so he eventually learned not to do either. The result of this was that he had a feeling of being numb. There was another side to Dahmer; sometimes he said he loved Billy, petted him, and would also grab him in the crotch as though he were grabbing a woman. At times he was insistent in teaching Billy about medicine and anatomy, particularly the bones.

Billy thinks that Dahmer drugged him. He remembers waking up and being tied with ropes and unable to get loose. On several occasions he was choked unconscious. Dahmer had anal intercourse with him while he was tied up. Billy felt ashamed and guilty about this, and for years he didn't tell anyone. He had plans to kill Dahmer and make it look like an accident. Dahmer often drank until he passed out. Billy planned to hit him in the head with a piece of metal and say that he was drunk and had fallen out of bed. However, Billy doubted that he could get away with it, and he knew that if convicted, he would be in jail in Europe and never get to see his family again. He has since felt guilty that he didn't kill Dahmer.

When people hear of Billy's story, they often ask, "How did he let this happen to him?" In searching the Web, Billy read about the Stockholm Syndrome and thought that it applied to him. The syndrome got its name because, in a hostage situation in Stockholm, at least two of the women had love feelings toward the hostage-takers and one wanted to marry her former abuser. Bonding to one's captor (abuser) is a survival strategy for victims and has been observed in a variety of hostage-taking situations. The four situational factors that are precursors to the Stockholm Syndrome were present in Billy's situation. They are 1) perceived threat to one's physical or psychological survival and the belief that the captor would carry out the threat; 2) perceived small kindness from the captor to the captive, (Note: Letting the captive live is enough); 3) isolation from perspectives other than those of the captor; 4) perceived inability to escape.

Applying the situational factors to Billy, I concluded the following:

- 1) Billy believed his survival depended on reading Dahmer's moods and doing whatever he could to keep him from getting angry. He had tried every way that he knew to escape and was unsuccessful;
- 2) At times Dahmer did profess love for him and act as his teacher.
- 3) Billy was with Dahmer or alone. He was isolated from anybody else's viewpoint or ideas;
- 4) After a while, Billy gave up

hoping that he could escape or get anyone to help him. His total attention was directed to reading Dahmer's moods.

Billy said, "I never showed up for formation. I never showed up for work assignments and yet I got promoted." He said, "The crazy military was really screwed up. The Army had not recovered from Vietnam and most soldiers got drunk every night." Except for Billy and Dahmer, everyone there had been to Nam.

Billy requested repeatedly to be transferred to another room. All his attempts to get help were either ignored or made fun of. He is particularly resentful of one person I will call Paul. Billy said, "Paul found it all amusing. I'm sure he knew everything—the black eyes, the injuries. He made poor decisions. He didn't listen. When people don't listen, I still get upset. I felt he went behind my back. Dahmer would go into his room and I would hear them laughing and stuff." Billy said that Paul acted gay. He was effeminate, and sometimes Dahmer had effeminate mannerisms. Billy suspected that Paul was giving Dahmer blowjobs, but he said he had no evidence to support this.

Billy said a soldier from another barracks started going to Paul's room. Dahmer went to Paul's door and knocked and got no answer; all night long he continued to knock on his door. Dahmer seemed very upset and increased the torture of Billy. Paul and Dahmer had a falling out, and didn't talk to each other. Soon after that Billy was given an assignment in the field. He said, "When I came back that sorry SOB (Dahmer) was gone. I heard that they had to drag him out of there."