

MAN, ALIVE!

A Journal of Men's Wellness

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Confessions Of A First-Timer by Elwin Nunn

The 15th annual New Mexico Men's Wellness Conference was my first. I assure you, it won't be the last. For me, it was a truly life-transforming experience, and with 63-1/2 years of life experience (I was the ninth oldest of 105 attendees), you may think it's about time!

I confess that I approached this conference with some reluctance. I've never been much for the touchy-feely crap. On the Myers-Briggs personality test I'm an INTJ (100% introvert, 80% intuitor, 85% thinker, and 90% judge-controller). I'm also a physicist, and my whole career has been with the military. Since 1961 I've been in research and development of missile tracking systems. I now work on radar signal processing concepts and procedures. In other words, I live in my head most of the time.

I must also confess that I haven't been fully into the Las Cruces Men's Group. Oh, I feel welcome. They're a great bunch of guys. But I never seemed to need it as much as they do. Either I didn't have the same problems or I'd worked through them years ago. Besides, being a rugged individualist, I know I can work through any problem by myself. (Remember I'm an INTJ.) I worked through the problems of childhood physical and mental abuse. I worked through finding out who I was and why I didn't fit in with the rest of the guys. I worked through pain and shaken confidence when my first marriage hit the rocks after 22 years. Each time I just reach down, grab the bootstraps, and pull myself up. I defined myself, I built myself, I built my career, I built my life. Right now, my life has never been better. I'm retired from federal civil service after nearly 40 years, although I'm back doing what I love, working part time for a contractor. I'm happily married to a woman who is ideally suited to me personality-wise (since she's also an INFJ), and one of the most loving and lovable people I've ever met. I'm active in church and other volunteer work. I'm reasonably secure financially. And I'm in good health, even if the joints are a little creaky.

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Man, Alive! is a journal of men sharing from the heart the joys and problems of being male.

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Submission Formats and Requirements

Paper is okay, but please send submissions as a text file on a floppy disk or as an e-mail attachment if you can, to save us having to type your words into the computer. We'll be happy to help you do this. Please try to keep submissions below 1200 words.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. No fees are paid and no submissions are returned. Copyright of all published material reverts to the author on publication.

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The Men's Circle on the Radio

The Men's Circle, a new weekly radio feature devoted to men's issues which began airing on December 1, 1999 and continues every Wednesday at 5:05 p.m. on KSFR 90.7 FM, is a regular segment on Diego Mulligan's weekday two-hour commuter program, *The Journey Home*.

The Men's Circle is hosted and produced alternately by Max August, David Pazdernik, Carl Diamond, and Al Moore. We discuss the thoughts, feelings, and activities of men with our featured guests. So far we've had the following interviews/discussions: Bruce Barton, *Men & Sex*; Michael Hopp, *The Fear Men have of Touching other Men*; Barry Cooney, *Gender and Power in the Workplace*; Jeff Hood, *The Silver Back Gorilla Syndrome*; Ross LewAllen, *Starting and Keeping Going Men's Circle*; Max August, Carl Diamond, and David Pazdernik, *Gifts to Yourself for the New Millennium*; Barry McIntosh and Johnny Wilson, *The Challenge of Fathering*; Robert Larkin and Chaz Schatzle, *Changing the World is an Inside Job*; and Hank Blackwell, *How do Real Men Talk about Their Feelings*.

Future guests will come primarily from the men's community of New Mexico and will highlight their unique knowledge or special interest in a specific area. Anyone interested in being a guest on *The Men's Circle* is invited to contact one of the hosts: Max August (505) 820-1248, Carl Diamond (505) 983-1450, David Pazdernik (505) 983-1644, or Al Moore (505) 988-4988. ►►

So why did I go to the Men's Wellness Conference? Truthfully, I went on the basis of the convictions of Hale Huber and Tony Harris, who started the men's group in Las Cruces. I didn't know what I was getting into, but I knew these two guys believed it to be important—and what the hell, it wouldn't be the first weekend I'd ever wasted. I also knew it wouldn't hurt me—we strong, silent types can take whatever you throw at us; the defenses are always up and they're multi-layered.

But go I did, and damn it, you got through to me! I have never been welcomed into a more open, caring and loving community, much less a community of men. I've served in the military with men, I went to school with men, I've worked with men, I have close friends who are men, but never before had I met an entire culture of men based on openness, loving, caring, honesty, and yes—authenticity. Never had I seen the masks not just lowered but left at home. Never had I seen men so eager to share their stories. Never had I been in a large meeting where I felt safe to walk up to anyone and share my life's experiences, hopes, dreams and concerns. Never had I experienced the sharing of such honesty and wisdom across the generations (yes, in both directions). Never had I seen such caring and love between men at a time of grieving. Never had I experienced such an absence of small talk. And never had I experienced such an absence of what I call "butt sniffing," which is what dogs do to get acquainted. Men do this when they try to determine what you do for a living, what degrees you hold, and how well off you are, while dropping little hints about their own degrees, portfolio, vacations, titles, honors and what-not.

The whole conference was superb. I really got into the drumming. Deep, throbbing rhythms speak to my soul. (I was ecstatic when the Las Cruces Men's Group was given custody of the traveling drum for the next year.) I became very close to the other men in my core group. Their stories, their humor, their love were all in abundance. I was deeply moved by the grief ceremony. Such stories of love and loneliness, hope and despair, senseless abuse and neglect, and finally, affirmation, gratitude and hope for the future.

I attended an incredible workshop entitled *The Authentic Elder*, where I was able for the first time to heal the hurt and anger caused by the breakup of my first marriage. I was deeply moved by the ceremony admitting me into the circle of elders. I just wish I had been able to think of something more profound to say. Of course, most of the other men said what I wished I'd said.

I really liked all the large group activities. You guys cut through so much bullshit so quickly and with so much love and humor. Side conversations were kept to a minimum. Everyone was focused and connected with everyone else. And I loved hearing the wisdom of the young men and the ceremony of welcoming them into the circle of elders, as well as the closing ceremony. (God, I could have used some of that loving affirmation when I was first going out into the world, or earlier—going out into the world was a piece of cake compared to my childhood.) The whole conference was superb, and I'm deeply grateful to Jerry, Cliff, and everyone else who worked so hard to make it happen. I know it had to be a labor of love because nothing else could work so well.

So where do I go now. Well, I'm committed to being at the next NM Men's Wellness Conference. I've signed up to go to Cook's cabin this month. And I'm meeting with the Las Cruces Men's Group tonight, where we'll undoubtedly relive the conference. We'll also explore ways to expand Men's Wellness in southern New Mexico. We may enlarge our group a little, but we know it'll soon be necessary to start new groups. Wish us luck.

There's one additional thing that I'd like to say to the young men: Learn about personality types, your own and others. I recommend the book entitled Please Understand Me II by David Keirse (about \$16), which contains two personality tests. Learning about personalities will help you make better decisions about your life in general, your career choice, working with others, whom to share your life with, and raising and teaching children. For me, learning about personalities was a "Voila!" experience—everything fell into place for the first time. I wish I'd learned sooner and avoided a lot of uncertainty, insecurity and pain. ►►

Millennium Two Thousand

by David Johnson

It has begun again like the shifting plates on the ocean floor, that momentous
turning over of time, that upheaval that loosens the linings of the stomach—

When one age dies and another is born. Recorded in the heavens the sun cycle moves
from the legends of Pisces to the vision of Aquarius.

Early this century, seers and magicians saw it coming—Madame Blavatsky, Rudolph Steiner,
Krishnamurti, Edgar Cayce, Elizabeth Clare Prophet—the list is long.

But this time as the serpent swallows its tail, the spiral moves up a notch on the eternal
cycle. A new tooth is added to the gear.

This time Persephone's husband also eats the pomegranate and both ascend out of Hades
to meet Mother Demeter, and Orpheus refuses to look back.

This time when Theseus winds his way into the Cretan labyrinth he embraces the Minotaur
and they dance together out of the cave.

This time Moses descends from Mt. Sinai and rubs palm oil on the Golden Calf. Crossing
the Jordan, he shakes hands with the Palestinians, who kiss him on both cheeks.

This time Brutus and Cassius throw Caesar a party, and Anthony brings Cleopatra
a pet monkey rather than a snake.

This time Jesus has no need for penance. He finds a loving wife and, in a bower of almond
petals, they have children. He leaves his keys to Mary Magdalen.

This time no one chases Muhammad out of Mecca, and, while dreaming about paradise
in the desert, he lays down his sword.

Guinevere has an identical twin sister named Guinevere for Lancelot, and Arthur finally
asks the right question at the Castle Perilous. Napoleon is eight inches taller.

This time when Humpty-Dumpty falls on his head, all the king's horses and men put him back
together again, and Henny-Penny is taken seriously.

This time we will join native peoples in the Ghost Dance, and the buffalo will return,
along with the Passenger Pigeon, dodo bird, and Mexican lobo.

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This time the Melting Pot becomes a crazy quilt with black, brown, red, and yellow,
tall, fat, thin and bald, old young, crone and widower,
straights, gays, bi's, and lesbians,
Jews, Christians, Buddhists, pagans, Taoists & Unitarians.

This time no one religious group claims ultimate, exclusive truth, since all spiritual paths—
East and West—lead to the same place.

This time there will be no intensive care unit in some Senior Center for my mother—
she will live her last year with dignity and die in the arms of family.

This time, no more breast cancer, no more cancer of any kind, and people will finally turn
off their TV sets so that they have time to write poems and tell each other stories.

And my story begins like this: Every day, Mona and I repeat a miracle—we fall in love
and have three bright, flaky, compassionate children—Peter, Sarah and Maia.

We hitch a ride on this amazingly beautiful blue planet into the new millennium,
thankful for each other and ten thousand blessings. »»

Men Die

by John Laughlin

How like a handshake do men die
Their lives squeezed out of them in pleasantries
And platitudes
And handshakes that palm away their identity
In sleight-of-hand
Slaps across the back
Floggers keeping time
To a hostile refrain
That ripples its muffled power
Across the hearts of comatose souls.

How like the strength of held-back tears
Do men live lives intense as suicide
In their carbon-copy world
Where recognition eclipses wonder
And none hallow their diminishment
Passing time, sipping wine
Admiring trophies that honor extinction
Walking the walk
Talking the talk
Of death with resurrection. »»

Michael Hopp

Interviews

Dave Breault and David Johnson

Michael Hopp, leader of the 1998 Fall Conference, interviewed former conference leaders during the summer of 1998 to gain their advice about leading the conference and to make a record of their experience and thoughts on various subjects concerning Men's Wellness. The following interview was with Dave Breault and David Johnson, two of the "founding fathers" of New Mexico Men's Wellness. Dave Breault is currently a psychotherapist at the Father and Family Center in

Albuquerque. Dave and Paul Steinkoenig, another long-standing member of New Mexico Men's Wellness, do regular short-term therapy groups for men with the intention of helping them prepare to join long-term men's groups.

David Johnson is Emeritus Professor of English at UNM, just retired. This is the second of two parts of the interview, the first of which appeared in the last issue of *Man, Alive!*

August 11, 1998

HOPP: Let's talk about *Man, Alive!* for a second. Where did it come from?

JOHNSON: *Man, Alive!* came after the 1987 conference, *Keeping the Balance*. We were driving home afterwards, excited. This was our second conference and we were as high as you can get, aglow and also exhausted. You are empty and you are full, you know, that's a paradox. In the car was Chuck Cockelreas, and he suggested that we needed a newsletter, and he said "Well, I'll volunteer to do that," and he had one of those early computers, and we said, "Wow, that's great!" So we began to meet. I don't remember if we met before the beginning of that year. You met with us, too, Dave. You were part of that board.

BREAULT: Yes, I remember the name discussion. We were coming up with different names and *Man, Alive!* came up, sort of caught on, and then died, and then you really fought for it, David, and then we said, "Ok, we'll take *Man, Alive!*".

To me, those early days with *Man, Alive!*, I just felt the passion of the swords. I just remember how we

valued our own stories, getting a chance to tell about being boys, about being hurt in different ways, and about the joys of being a boy or having sex the first time, and telling other men about it, any stories, wishes for fathers, and all this stuff. There was this passion, that these stories are valuable. Like this—we need an outlet. We have to capture these stories. There is power in these stories. And that to me is what *Man, Alive!* was about. Like creating a vehicle for men who want to write, put their story into print, and these are such valuable events. Men talking from the heart. That's what we wanted was those stories. Those stories are so valuable, we have to document them. It's really a beautiful thing. Last year, when I went back to the summer conference, I was so excited and had such a good experience because with fifty men you could still have this powerful talking circle. And I thought, "Oh, this is part of what is getting lost at the bigger conference—the power of just going around the circle and men telling these simple, profound stories." To me, that's the energy which the whole thing revolves around.

JOHNSON: The first couple of conferences at Ghost

Ranch ended with a talking circle in the lower pavilion, and as Dave said, that's one of the most powerful parts of the whole conference, listening to these stories. We just stayed there for several hours making our way around the circle, and I remembered times when we just wept and were hugging the men as they wept, and that was a very powerful way of closure. It was a way of reflecting on the whole weekend and saying, "This is what's happened to me." And by listening to others, of course, you find out what it meant to you. And you learn that it's okay to tell your story and someone will listen, and it's not so different from other stories. As bad as it has gotten or as black as it's been, there's somebody else that says, "Yes, I have gone through that," and that was the breaking down of the isolation. It was not something that alienated you, but what identified you with the larger community.

I wanted to add something to what Dave was saying, which was that part of the energy of these early conferences was what was going on nationally, because it was catching on—the men's movement was in the newspaper, it was in *Newsweek*, it was in *Time* magazine. Eventually, the *Albuquerque Journal* came around and interviewed Dave, David Kuenzli, myself, and others. There was this incredible sense of something going on and changing. It was like the 60's, you know, we're going to change society. Men need to change the way they go about living and the way they go about relating to themselves, to their spouses, to their kids, and we are a part of this and it's going, and we are doing this. That wasn't at the first conference, but the third and the fourth. I felt that we were part of a larger group, and I would tell my colleagues at the university that we would spread the word, because the women's movement, you see, had set the pace for us. They were clearly changing society, and society was standing up. Women's issues, women's employment, women's health, and now men could do this. And Robert Bly began to write and do his

thing, and Sam Keen and others were doing these conferences, and we felt we were part of a larger movement. And I just want to make sure this is understood, because it's not true anymore. And part of what's eating away at what we are doing now is the fact that we feel somehow that, although we were doing good work, and it didn't fail, exactly, national interest dropped. We plateaued in terms of numbers, and by and large men are still changing, but it's not through the men's movement. And we would kind of like to go back to grass roots, wouldn't we, Dave? But society did not change. That's clear. Men are more driven than ever. Men are working harder than ever. Men are more stressed than ever. We did not turn the society around, and I don't mean to say that as a grandiose dream—I thought we were going to. I thought we really had something, and we do. But most men are not into it. They are doing their thing, trying to survive.

HOPP: I can say as a younger man that I look at the two of you and many of the other men who have been conference leaders or have just been around the

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Dave Breault and David Johnson at the 1999 Fall Conference

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conferences, the role model that you provide for me has changed society. In my perspective, you are my society, and I aspire to what you guys have become. But now I want to talk about the young men's thing and how that's influenced the conference, and also the idea of service. You talked about that, that you are of service. Is there a bigger, though maybe not national, picture that Men's Wellness is still connected into, and how does that lead into mentorship and young men?

JOHNSON: I think what was different about women's and men's things is that the women's movement became political and they had a political agenda, and so there were things that they could march for, equal pay and voting, and those are issues that all women could get behind in some sense. Our issues were internal. They had to do with health and sanity, spirituality, breaking isolation and creating a community. These issues are a little harder to mark, and they are not political—you don't vote about them. But I think we were terribly successful. We did create a community, and we are enjoying it. So in that way we have to keep reminding ourselves, "Look what we have done. We have made changes. Here is this Father and Family Center." You know—pockets of men doing wonderful things!

*I am going
to bleed now
for a while...*

BREAULT: Every day, working with fathers and men here, I can't tell you how much the community of Men's Wellness keeps me going. I get frightened or tired, you know, want to give up, or something. But I know David is down the street. I know I have a community that values me as a person, and they also value this kind of work. That support is palpable, and it's the Men's Wellness support. It's hard to convey, but I know I am not alone. People say "Well, what do you do?" I am just doing my little piece of something that needs to be done, and I have people backing me up who listen to me and who share with me. There is a groundswell now, nationally, with father issues.

There's just tons of money for that now. A lot of it is in the minority communities as well as the more affluent communities, and the Promise Keepers and the National Fathers Initiative. So, there's actually a huge political push for fatherhood and mentorship at the same time. This may be a bigger groundswell than we have had as yet.

JOHNSON: And it's just one by one, shoulder to shoulder. We are still creating a help to the society. And something like the Promise Keepers is terribly healthy for all of us—even if we don't agree particularly with their methods, they are raising consciousness about the role of the father in the family. And if we don't agree with their role, it pushes us to redefine what our role is.

HOPP: Let's talk about that more for a minute, because Men's Wellness is going to deal with the issue of initiation in the next two planning meetings. We agreed *not* to do a young men's initiation this year. We all agreed that the word *initiation* was something bigger than we were ready to take on, and there needed to be some preparation and a relationship between the initiator and the initiate. So we agreed somehow to honor these young guys instead. What do you have to say about that?

JOHNSON: You made a good choice not to have the initiation. I don't think that's the situation at a conference for an initiation. It has to come out of a sustained community relationship between adults and the young men, so that after the initiation there's a continued contact. I don't think you can just initiate them and throw them into the community. I think that was a good decision.

BREAULT: Yes, I think there is tremendous "father hunger," and that's part of what the conference is about, and that led us to have the elder ceremony. And these other things, like just telling these stories about pain and success, show that we do have a lot to learn from each other as men, that we're resources for each other. And that's what the young men will get if we just be with them and do what we do in terms of talking from the heart and including them

and learning from them, and they will get the juice of all the different ages of the men there, and they're hungry for it. I think we need to let it emerge and create a container, so the young men can tap into some wisdom and experience of the older men, and for us to honor their wisdom as younger men and get educated by them about what they are doing, but not so much that we minimize the elders. We need to hold them, you know what I mean, and kind of nurture them. I asked several of them, "How are you doing? How are you feeling?" and they said, "I was scared at first, but now, I want this. I'll remember this the rest of my life." I think it's the older men just talking from their hearts. They're not saying, "Let me tell you something, young fellow, and you need to do this and this." That isn't the spirit of the conference. The conference is, "I am going to bleed now for a while. If you want to stay, you can stay. If you are still uncomfortable, you can leave." That's the spirit of the conference, and I think they are hungry for that.

JOHNSON: I sense that they get the opportunity to begin to talk, and tell their stories, and to tell the stories of their father wound, because many of them have been wounded by their fathers in one way or another. We have all been wounded in some way. Being the father, in some way, is to wound. Unfortunately, that's kind of how it works. And I don't think it's necessarily the best format for them, to share that with the whole group. I think sometimes it's more effective to be one-on-one with an older man who sits for a time with a young man and simply and patiently says, "Yes, I understand. That is painful."

BREAULT: Yes—one of the most powerful things for me ever was a few years ago when I turned fifty and was recognized in the elder ceremony. For that one I walked with a younger man to the place where we had the ceremony, and I shared with him some lessons about life and being a man that I learned. And he shared some things that he had learned, and asked me questions. And that created such a bond that when we see each other to this day, it's just like—we light up! But it was a mentorship kind of thing. It was very special. Such an obligation to search my



Michael Hopp

soul, just to share, you know, not teaching a lesson but to share. When I get really scared in new situations, I learned that this is what I need to do now. If we could create a container for older and younger men, to go off on a discovery process together and then come back and share the experience with the group. Because the elders can show us a way into the world and how to compete and how to stay centered when we need to, how to not be violent and not be addictive.

JOHNSON: When I look back, I think there's been a larger force that's worked with us. I don't want to make that sentimental, but there were always these incredible moments that weren't planned, but changed things. These are not by accident. I know there is some kind of spiritual network that was continually working at this conference. And going back to the black helium balloons, for example, where we were going to put all our grief in balloons and send them aloft—such a powerful thing! But before we did that, we stood in small groups and simply shared the grief that we were going to invest in the balloons. And I remember standing with five or six men, and we went around once and I said, "I really feel that I need to go again." We didn't get quite there and we went around

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again, and it just took the grief to a new level. At that time, I realized what my grief was, because my daughter was experiencing anorexia, and it was so very, very painful, but she was turning around. But you know, you carry that pain around, and I told the others about my daughter, and the man next to me said, "I know what you mean. My wife died from anorexia." How do you account for that? That's not an accident. It is those moments that you can't plan. And the spirit was working. That changes you. I remember we sent the balloons aloft, and with all that stuff I walked about a foot and a half off the ground. I just felt I finally released some of that.

HOPP: The two of you have held a space now for fourteen years in the Men's Conference and have chosen *not* to become the gurus of it. For me, that takes a huge amount of trust on your part that says it can work this way, to have such an equal distribution of authority that we are all equal. What led you to have that confidence that it could work this way, rather than having paid people to come in and present?

BREAULT: For me, it's the discovery and liking to be a man. With so much shame and male bashing, I feel that what we need to do is just value men. We are looking for help in people who come and share their pain and their pathology, and I'm thinking, "Well okay, let's look at that, but let's also look at where's the health in this person, where's the resiliency?" All of us have brilliance in us, we all have gifts, and what better way to value each other than to look for the gifts? Let every man lead a workshop, find something he is passionate about, that he's interested in. So, to me, it's almost necessary that we create an equality by doing that. We are a very hierarchical society, CEOs and the quarterback of the football team. It just seems it needs to be the other way sometimes. We allow leaders to emerge who are going to be primary leaders, but there needs to be this other recognition that every man has gifts, just needs to be honored. There's a place for you to honor them. I think if you hold that door open, men will fill it, and that may be it. It's just holding the door open. You know, every year we say we need people on the committee to create this conference. We honor the leaders from before, but we

need other people to take up the mantle. The door is open. And men hold it in such reverence. They say, "I'm not ready. I don't ever think I could do that." And two years later they're coming to the committee and wanting to do it. It's such a beautiful thing.

JOHNSON: It's been wonderful to see that happen, and you can almost see it year by year. One year a younger man speaks out a few times, and then again the next year, and then maybe the third year he actually does a small group facilitation or something. That's been one of the joys is to see how men have grown and evolved. And it's a way of mentoring, I think, and giving something back, to actually step back from the conference, to help men get down to the planning group and then help them do a facilitation, give them ideas, critique them before they actually do them so they get a little experience from the past, because there is a great deal of experience now.

BREAULT: That's one of the tensions now, and Victor again with his humility saw that, and that's why it was important for him to step back and pass the torch to somebody else. Pass it to me and I pass it on. Some men have complained that the planning committee was too competitive, too dominated by a few people, and that's why they only go to the summer conference. There's all that kind of thing, but I guess that just reminds us to deal with the issue, and holding the door open may be one of the most important things that we do. Certainly what we have to do with these young men who come is to find a way to hold the door open and see who will walk through.

HOPP: Last question. Any advice that you can give a conference leader such as myself who is now taking that torch on and wanting to hold the door open for other men?

JOHNSON: Well, we can reiterate some things that would seem to be basic. Telling one's story still seems to be crucial. That seems to be what we are about, to find an arena, to find a place of safety where we can share something about who we are. I think the

most healing and the most visionary potential comes out of the context of some kind of sharing of stories, and I don't think that changes particularly, even with your present theme, *Healing the Healer Within*. I think there's private healing the healer, feeling the sense that I am okay, that I am various aspects of who I am that can be shared. And that there are strengths and I need to find ways of expressing them. But to find ways of expressing them means opening the doors inside that have been closed, that have been sealed off because of shame and hurt, and there's only one way to go forward, and that is also to open those doors in the basement and explore down there. You can't go straight to the attic. I am enough of a Freudian to say that you have to do both sides, you have to see what's in the basement and open those doors, because there is so much energy we use up trying to keep those doors shut. And it's just not a productive way to use your energy. You have to find ways of airing it out so that you can be a healer. A healer is someone who has done some healing within. And so I think we are always working with this kind of dialogue between what we need to do personally and then what that leads us to do in a larger society, communally. Part of the tension now is how we go out into the community, how do we keep healing within, how do we keep growing? I don't think we ever reach a point where we are done with the basement stuff—the grieving stuff. I think that's there. How can we look at what men are still doing in the world and not feel grief, even if we are not involved personally in acts of violence? Men are still killing and abusing, and we share in that. I mean, as men, we participate in that larger world, and so we have that healing continually to do.

BREAULT: I think the part of being a healer, you know, is very frightening. It's a scary thing to take responsibility for that. I know people who have been running away from it, and then they're finally able to go toward it and say, "Well, I better chase this fear in another kind of way," and that's what I would say is to follow your vision and take risks with it, with us, and at the same time get feedback from the team and from men and be open to that. But just take the risk to put your kind of healing vision out there for us,

trusting that we'll hold you, but we need you to take the risk of the healer, to gamble. It may cause more pain sometimes to go into an issue that needs to be gone into, and you're the person who can take us there, Michael. You have the gentleness and the wisdom and the brilliance to take us there, so take the risks. We'll go with you.

JOHNSON: But when you do that, I think you have to plan it. I don't think it can be done extemporaneously. I think you have to chart the way to open a new window, you have to say what you are going to see out there.

HOPP: Any closing comments? Any topics that we haven't touched on, or that Men's Wellness hasn't touched on? Anything?

BREAULT: I don't know. I just thank you for battling the experience and coming to talk with us.

JOHNSON: I am very honored by this.

BREAULT: Yes, very honored that you would take the time and energy to do this, and to try to learn and stay on and carry it on.

JOHNSON: I also appreciate being with you and with Dave, who has been my mentor as well as Dave Kuenzli, continually modeling, walking their talk. That was what we were—that was a lot of the early stuff—let's try to walk our talk, and then believe in each other. We are going to do it. We are going to be better for this. I feel that community. We are doing things, little by little.

HOPP: Thank you for pointing out the tip of the iceberg! ►►

Editor's note: *Thanks to Rosemary Hopp for transcribing this and Michael's other interviews with the former conference leaders of Men's Wellness.*

DIRECTORY OF CONTACT PERSONS FOR MEN'S GROUPS IN NEW MEXICO

Northern Region

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Men's Resource Center of Northern New Mexico			

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This directory is a work in progress. Please send corrections, additions and subtractions to GaryMcFarl@aol.com. Let's get *every* men's group in New Mexico represented on this list. It will provide a rapid means of disseminating information pertinent to Men's Wellness to and between groups. Also, if you are interested in joining a group, you can use this list to find a group in your area and then contact the representative to find out if the group is open or not, its exact meeting place, and if it meets your needs.

That's Why I Keep a Smile

by C. J. Meek

I love to look at pictures of my son.
All I can do for now is remember how we used to have fun.

He has my eyes and ears too
But his skin and hair came from you know who.

He is so cute, and that's why I wanna change
Because now I don't have him and it ain't the same.

I am only 17 so I guess I still have a pretty long ways,
But for now I am just doing my time, taking it day by day.

I am locked up for the next two years.
I can't see my son and that's why I shed tears.

It takes really special people to make me smile,
But if I really want to I just think of my child.

Note from Paul Steinkoenig: *C. J. Meek is a 17-year-old father who is currently incarcerated at Camino Nuevo Prison for young men in Albuquerque. He participates regularly in the New Mexico Young Fathers Project support group at the prison. He works hard at making changes in his life so that he can spend more time with his son, Angelo, who is now one year old.*

The New Mexico Young Fathers Project works with young fathers around the state of New Mexico in a variety of locations, including high schools, community settings, treatment centers and correctional facilities. The Project is always looking for volunteers to help with events or being a mentor for a young father. If you have interest, please call Francisco Ronquillo or Johnny Wilson at 265-5976.

Separation

by Jake Tausch

I miss the taste of you on my tongue.
I miss the feel of your soft breasts on my bare chest.
I miss the feel of your cheek gently rubbing against mine.
I miss sitting at your kitchen table, sharing secrets.
I miss walking hand in hand through the park.
I miss sitting on our favorite park bench in the dark, with you on my
lap, telling each other stories and fantasies.
I miss getting to know the real you I was just beginning to catch
glimpses of.

I miss you.

A Modern-Day Rip van Winkle

by Jeff Hood

As I lay down in the grass, my pack on a rock for a pillow, an odd rumble sounded up the mountain. It was a crystalline New Mexico November day, blue sky framing the full branches of ponderosa pine trees above me. The rumble was obviously not thunder. It must have been rock fall, but a big one by the depth of the boom. It was a single boom at that, and there was no scrabble of loose debris. The mystery faded as I lay back, allowing the sun to warm me inside and out.

This grove had beckoned to me before. I had stopped here a month ago, aware of a peculiar silence as I hustled down the trail on my way back to work. When I had turned to look behind me, a shadow flitted through the tree trunks, causing a shiver across my shoulders. I paused long enough to register that something extraordinary was available in that moment. Carlos Castaneda came to mind with visions of sorcery and power. There was no feeling of fear or dread, but of possibility. I had a quick conversation with my faithful hound and considered stopping the world to sit for a while, but that gave way to a glance at my watch and reentry to the twentieth century. Yet for the next half hour on the trail down, the skin on the back of my neck crawled and I kept turning quickly, expecting to find fairies grinning from branches.

Today as I entered the grove I was determined to take the time to feel it, to meet the grove, the fairies, the power, whatever had been calling me a month before. The world down there could wait. In fact I had stomped out of my office earlier, slamming the door on computer snafus and upsetting phone calls. The smell of ponderosa bark in the sun swept that anxiety away, and a whiff of butterscotch flicked the switch in my mind that allowed me to hear the trees. It will be all right, you are here with us, Tall Pine Tree. Of course they would know my name.

I let my mind wander as my feet sought a sunny, grassy spot. Just a rest here, a chance to let the mountain in, to let my tension go. The big dog pushed his nose into my neck, then lay down in the shade. Perhaps he felt the power, too, or just sensed my plan. In any case, the boom confirmed that I was to lie down and be quiet. A few moments of fidgeting, adjusting my pillow, and shading my head gave way to stillness. Racing thoughts of proposals and deadlines slowed down to a dip in a pool and a ride with a dolphin.

An eternity later, consciousness returned.

Have you ever caught someone in a fall, tense with anticipation, and then felt them get heavier as they relaxed and let go of the stress? At that moment, my body let go of something and I felt a physical surrender as the earth received me deeper. It was as if I was inside a giant drum being struck, the reverberation flowing down into Mother Earth. As she received me, a flash of acceptance, of belonging, of security flowed through my being.

Someone else might have lain there a while, pondering, writing, laughing, weeping. I gazed at the mica reflecting in the dust on my boots, felt the warmth of the sun working through them to my feet, stood up in unison with big dog and staggered to a tree. "Oh my God," I thought, "I'm Rip van Winkle, I've been here twenty years!" I felt my chin to see if a beard had grown. Another whiff of ponderosa and I realized my shirt was clean, and that winter had not come and gone while I lay there with the earth. My rational mind decided I was groggy from a midday nap. My heart wanted more. But something had changed. The light was different. Was it possible that the sky was more blue, the trees more green?

I started down the trail I've been up and down twenty or thirty times, in all seasons and conditions. I didn't recognize it. I knew where I was, the sun was in the west, down was still down, but everything was

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. . .different. A fork in the trail and an odd, twisted tree appeared. A rock outcropping came up where I'd never seen one before, then I'd be back on familiar ground. It happened again and again on my descent.

Was my mind playing tricks on me, or had I truly stepped through Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception*? He said, "An unexciting truth may be eclipsed by a thrilling lie." A big part of me leapt in excitement at the possibility of magic in my life. Every cell in my body wanted to go for the thrill, while a corner of my mind stuck to reality. But Huxley also said, "Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him."

What if I could create any world I wanted? I could hear traffic down below, so the apocalypse had obviously not come. That's not the world I would want anyway. What kind of world would I want to create for myself? "Effective and affirmative" popped into my head. OK Jeff, you get a shot at it tonight with the school parent presentation you're doing. Knock their socks off! The magic was simple: say it, see it, feel it, be it, and know that it's true. I leaped down the trail as confidence and assurance filled me. Appreciation for my life, my health, my work, the opportunity to take off and hike on a mid-week afternoon, grew like a smile. What else might I create?

What about a new truck? If there could be paths and rocks and trees where I'd never seen them before, why couldn't I have a new truck waiting for me in the parking lot? Why couldn't I change my bank balance, create world peace, or at least help make an effective and affirmative world? These thoughts were confirmed by the appearance of a whole new road where I'd not seen one before. I began to see the new red truck in the space where I'd parked my old one. I could even see that the key in my pack fit the lock in the door and started the engine. And my dog fit in the cab just fine! Then I laughed at myself. As if I were reaching up to feel my twenty-year beard, the doors swung in and the possibility of a new truck in the parking lot started to fade. It tickled my imagination, but was by no means a done deal. I was allowing the magic of the ponderosa grove to slip away. As I rounded the corner to the road with an impish grin, I half expected to see a big shiny new pickup, but no, there was just my old friend. Thank God it runs so well.

OK, a new truck may take a little more magic, a few more trips up the mountain, but effective and affirmative? We're already there. »»

Calendar

The life transition formerly known as Retirement is the name of a new discussion/workshop group forming in Santa Fe. Its purpose is to create a safe and supportive environment in which to explore and share the emotional, psychological and economic issues present when making the transition from active full-time employment to ? For information regarding the initial planning meetings, please call either Max August at (505) 820-1248 or Carl Diamond at (505) 983-1450.

Wednesday Brown Bag Lunch – Wednesdays noon–two p.m. at the Men's Center (above Haagen-Dasz on the Plaza in Santa Fe). The "Brown Bag Lunch" is a "come one, come all" men's lunch group which has been meeting in Santa Fe for nearly ten years.

If you're looking to join a men's group, or your group is looking for new members, the contact for Albuquerque is Paul Steinkoenig (505) 255-1013 (days), and the contact for Santa Fe is Israel Serr (505) 471-1952 (days).

The New Mexico Men's Wellness Fall Conference at Ghost Ranch, Oct. 12-15, 2000.

Men's Cross-Country Ski Weekend, the semi-official Men's Wellness Winter Gathering

Cook's Cabin at Blanco Basin in Southwest Colorado, Feb. 18-20, 2000

Natural beauty, camaraderie, sharing, solitude, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, merry making, reflection and companionship in a safe, supportive men's environment. Bring what you wish to share: poetry, songs, stories, queries, games, talking sticks, drums and other musical instruments. The time can be as laid-back or as structured as you wish to make it.

Spend two nights and days in a 3500-square foot log home with 20-25 other men. There are five bedrooms with a total of ten beds, and a large second floor loft for mattresses, foam pads and sleeping bags.

Bring your own food, bedding, etc. Cost of the weekend is \$15. Contact Lawrence Cook for details at (505) 898-2206 in Albuquerque.

The New Mexico Men's Wellness Spring Meeting to discuss business matters and how we can make Men's Wellness better will be held 1:00 p.m., March 5, 2000 at the New Mexico Arts & Crafts Fair Office, 5500 San Mateo Blvd. Suite 105, in Albuquerque. The office is between Osuna and Mcleod. On the east side of the street, turn at the Oak Tree Apartments sign and go to the complex on the left. For more information, call Cliff Taber, (505) 281-1166 or e-mail: clifftaber@aol.com

The New Mexico Men's Wellness Summer 2000 Conference Is coming in late July!

Look for information and registration in the next *Man Alive!*

Please join us if you would like to help with the planning.

Contact Gary McFarland at

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