

MAN, ALIVE!

A Journal of Men's Wellness

Winter 2000

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Out of My Head at Ghost Ranch Lodge

Yan Ross

I went out of my head at the New Mexico Men's Wellness fall conference this year. For the past few months, as part of my easing out of a three-and-a-half year sabbatical and back into the "real world," I have been very much present in my head and mind and thoughts. But as I approached the Ghost Ranch on Thursday, a feeling or spirit came over me that guided me out of my head and into my heart.

That spirit manifested itself in the activities that I chose (or perhaps in the activities that chose me). Certainly, they were neither the results-oriented or disciplined

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Photo by Rick Heptig

Main craft activity at the New Mexico Men's Wellness Fall Conference at Ghost Ranch. See Page 11 for more pictures.

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

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Submission Deadlines
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August 5, 2001
November 5, 2001

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. Photographs should be in .jpg format. 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.

Man, Alive! is published quarterly by the Men's Network Press Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Notes from the editor

Man, Alive! is now well into its second decade of existence as a quarterly publication of the New Mexico Men's Wellness community. During those years many talented, caring men have served on its all volunteer staff. During and after the Fall Conference the staff went through another transformation, with a new team stepping forward to take on the responsibilities, aggravations and joys of carrying the publication forward a ways further into the future.

Sal Treppiedi (salteaches@yahoo.com) is the new Managing Editor. He has taken on overall responsibility to see that an issue gets out (at least close to) on time four times a year. He will be soliciting and developing copy and directing our longer term planning, overseeing printing, and making sure distribution happens.

Gordon Mustain (that's me: mustain@azstarnet.com) is the new editor. I will also be soliciting copy and artwork, writing an editorial each issue, gathering and sorting through the submissions, selecting the copy for each issue, editing it, and planning a general layout for the issue.

René Dominguez (renedom@aol.com) is our Design & Production Editor. He will take all the copy and artwork, design and execute the layout, and provide Sal with printer-ready copy. In essence, he actually makes a publication out of all our separate efforts.

Scott Dow will oversea all the finances, **Tom Konerth** will continue to maintain the mailing list, and **Jake Tausch** will contribute to the mailing process.

This issue is the first fruit of our efforts. We are still working the kinks out of our long-distance working relationships, but everything seems to be falling into place. For the future, we already have some tentative plans in place, including book reviews and interviews of interest to the Men's Wellness Community, expanded use of our web site, a listing in each issue of websites containing resources for men's wellness, and a possible anthology of some of the best articles from back issues of the publication.

The realization of some of these plans will require contributions from you, the readers. If you read a good book that you think might interest others in the community, take time to write a short review of the book (250-500 words) so we can let others know about it. Be sure to include in your review what benefits you found in it. If you run across a good website in your surfing which you believe offers something of value to others in the community, take time to e-mail me with the web address and a 25-30 word description of what is available at the site. If you have favorite article from past issues, or one which had a major effect on you, and which you think should be contained in an anthology, if we go ahead with the project, drop one of us an e-mail, or letter with your nomination.

Continued on back page

The Mountains Mourn and Hummingbirds Weep

Gordon Mustain

On Monday November 27, this year, Caitlin Cantrell-Miller, daughter of Benjamin Miller and Sharon Cantrell-Miller died in a tragic accident. Memorial Services were held December 2, in Albuquerque.

Words cannot describe the intensity of the wave of shock and grief which rolled through the Men's Wellness Community, still coping with the sorrow of Avi Milstein's lamentable death last summer.

At times like these there is little succor or healing to be found in seeking understanding. In the face of death's implacable mystery and finality our deepest understandings seem little more than fragile thought constructs. Comfort and healing come at a more profound, less rational level, in the comfort of physical touch, hugs, and shared tears, in murmurs of solidarity and moments of prayer, in the deep power of ritual and ceremony. If words have a role to play, it is in their similar capacities for prayer and poetry.

So Benjamin and Sharon, we offer you these inadequate words, trusting you will find amongst them the sentiments our souls ache to share.

The mountains mourn at night,
heavy with our grief.
Hummingbirds weep on the wing.
Coyote leaves tear-tracks
in his dark-silent passing.
The moon hides her face in despair.

In our devastation
our hearts cry out to yours,
our tears and love
an attempt to share
the unspeakable burden
of your loss.

With the ancestor rocks
and willow ribs of the sweat lodge,
with the pinons and fire spirits
and raven clan,
with the deer and the sage
and the soul of the sacred drum
we pray your grief
be deep and cleansing,
freely flowing and widely shared,
that when the dark days are past
and summer is once more upon the
land
you might find room amongst your
tears
for just a smile or two
at the comic joy of the Mother's
eternal creative dance;
that you might find room in your
hearts,
amongst the shards of broken dreams,
for the first faint hints
of future laughter to take root.

Like the mountains,
we mourn with you now,
sharing your tears
as you wander
the timeless reaches of your pain,
and like the dawn
we will be here still
waiting to share your laughter
when its time has come
to be reborn.

activities that my head would have selected.

I was transported. The formation of the circle on Thursday evening was highlighted for me by Harold's exhortation to enter upon this journey. The feeling his words evoked led me through that night's brief but dreamy sleep, until the two of us re-joined for the pre-dawn walk to the sweat lodge. As we walked in the moonlight, I probed Harold for some elaboration of how those words (which had flown from my mind) could evoke such powerful energies. He shared uplifting thoughts with me, and I felt them strongly, but the mystery of the words remains.

So many attempts have been made to verbalize an adequate reflection of Benjamin's sweat lodge [the mime/vocal description by Harold's coyote was the best]. I can only add that the place I went during the sweat was not only out of my head but deep into my heart.

I returned to the big circle, but the dream called me again, and I responded, to the point that I am afraid that I missed all the "inner ropes" work -- but at the same time, my inner knots were untying themselves.

My next high point was Lon's drumming circle. I am not a drummer, or at least have received no training in percussion. But I connected at a level far from my mental or physical experience -- the Bembe rhythm was healing in ways I don't and can't understand. I was in the circle, I was of the circle, and in a way I was the circle. Thank you, Lon, and thank you to the drummers who drummed me out of my head once again.

I spent a lot of my time at Ghost Ranch out of the waking state, the one that we - perhaps erroneously - usually think of as a higher state of conscious-

ness. On reflection, I am only now gaining a better appreciation for the healing that occurred while I was "out of my head."

My sleep was untroubled and undisturbed. I slept through - without even the usual pee calls - for seven, eight, even nine hours. I awakened refreshed and eager for the day.

I was unable to stay for the closing ceremony. But as I left Ghost Ranch, my last image of the weekend was the sight of a lone bald eagle, his powerful wings carrying him up the sidehill toward Chimney Rock. My spirit lifted with him.

I find myself in this moment at the end of the retreat weekend in a very peaceful and energized place -- at home in my heart.

REALM WITHOUT WORDS

Charlie Cawley

That sound you hear,
that filp-flopping about
like some great fish out of water;

that is my soul
trying to convey to you
messages from the realm
without words.

It has learned
it must speak to me
in dream images now,

then slip quietly back
into that ocean of the unconscious
that knows God.

(Writing this poem as an expression of my feelings about sleep, dreams, and where they come from, has helped me understand sometimes my dreams are God sending messages through my soul which can only speak in images. Charlie Cawley.)

The Gathering

Joseph Woods

We dropped our shields at the gate
and entered with hearts open.
We gathered under blue sky, red cliffs, and yellow leaves.
Silently, with a sense of urgency
we entered the kiva
not knowing what was before us.
Familiar spirits gathered around us
as we selected our token
and began our journey.

The huge moon lit our way in the early morning.
A herd of deer cleared our path as we walked to the lodge.
The spirit of a man who had just crossed over, walked with us.
We said a prayer for every stone and every piece of wood.
The fire was lit with love and understanding.
The heat cleared our way down the dark passage
and we reentered the world renewed.

The pounding of two huge tribal drums called us together.
Good men spoke their truths
and laughter echoed off the walls
as we confronted our shared experiences.

As the sun rose again we gathered around a circle of candles
and grieved together for those who had joined the spirit world.
Strong men exposed their pain in a circle of good hearts.

Our passion, money, bodies and even death were discussed.
Nothing was left unsaid.
We acknowledged our elders around a fire of our emotions
and we welcomed a new and younger energy into our circle.

We followed each other's steps in silence up a sandy creek bed
under elder trees and ancient cliffs
to a box canyon where our prayer sticks
were placed in the warm sand
pointing to an impossibly blue sky.
Loving words were exchanged
while we shared the same dream.

We turned and walked towards our own lives
chanting, "My life, my own."

(Written the day after the fall Men's Wellness Conference at Ghost Ranch Lodge. Joseph Woods.)

Another Day in the Magic Kingdom

Victor LaCerva

The scene is Disneyland at the end of a long day. I am with my two daughters, aged 8 and 12 at that time, a cousin and her boyfriend. It is hot and sticky in that East coast kind of way, and though everyone is exhausted, we have decided to stay for the fireworks finale.

A few feet in front of us is another family with younger children, who appear to be in a more advanced state of exhausted-clinging-crying-why-are-we-still-here-dom. Both parents are simultaneously yelling at the two children, and finally the dad whacks the toddler twice, who then falls on the ground and ups the level of crying to a new decibel range while climbing up dad's leg, as the fireworks begin and the violence simmers. My cousin's boyfriend wants to punch his lights out, and my children are paying more attention to this scene than the cascade of brilliant colors overhead. What to do?

Many cultures around the world have unique ways of honoring their children. In Bali, for example, there is the celebration known as *Nyambutan*, a ceremony when a baby is first allowed to touch the ground. Until a few months of age, babies are believed to still be part of the spirit world, and are carried everywhere. The Navajo people have *Chidelglo*, a special celebration of a baby's first laugh; the party is put on by whomever first elicited the laughter, which is revered as a special form of prayer. The Boran people of Kenya embody the "takes a village" theme, as they gather for a two day-long special naming and welcoming event known as the *Jilla*.

In any culture, the blessings of a young baby sometimes get lost in the difficulties of endless caretaking in the early years. The fatigue, frustration and lack of experience sometimes slip over into abusive behavior, even when the initial bonding connection was well established. A Pediatrician in Colorado looked at ten years of fatal child abuse data, and found that over 90% of such tragedies were triggered by seven normal developmental phases:

1. Colic, those fussy nothing-can-make-me-feel-better scenarios in the first few months. Poor sleeping habits, before routines get established, when baby wants to be up in the middle of the night when the world is more toned down and womb-like.

2. Separation anxiety around 9 months of age, when clingyness achieves unparalleled levels.

Between one-and-a-half, and two-and-a-half years, four additional challenging developmental aspects emerge:

3. Normal negativism when the mantra is "no!", which the toddler screams for the tenth time in as many minutes.

4. Normal exploratory behavior, as in the joys of trying to keep a toddler in a chair who doesn't want to be there, and would rather be scooting around on the restaurant floor.

5. Normal poor appetite. Most babies triple their birth weight by one year of age, and then proceed to gain only 3-5 pounds a year, seemingly existing at times on nothing but air sandwiches, peanut butter and carrot sticks.

6. Toilet training. This is guaranteed to be a frustrating time, unless one is willing to continuously give up personal expectations, and let nature take its own natural time.

These seven situations are when new parents are most likely to have a tantrum themselves and do damage to their young by shaking, hitting or worse.

Sometimes such anger flows in public places. Many of us have witnessed a child being hit, roughly grabbed, yelled at, or spoken to harshly in a park, restaurant or grocery store. Perhaps we felt our own anger rise in witnessing such treatment. Maybe we slipped into negatively judging that caregiver in our minds, smugly reassuring ourselves that we would never do that. Or maybe we felt some guilt, knowing that we too are capable of such. If there was an urge to intervene, what prevented us from becoming involved?

I have personally responded to many of these situations, so that it seems second nature to me now. Here is my suggested ABC's of action in such situations.

A - Approach in a calm non judgmental manner. If you are about to get in someone's face because of how they are treating their child, better to continue down your own grocery aisle, rather than create more suffering by adding your anger to the mix.

B - Blend with the difficulty the caretaker is having. Somehow in a small way acknowledge their suffering, and why they may not be at their personal best in that moment. "I remember when my children (nieces, nephews, cousins, friend's child) were that age. It was so hard to get anything done. And I felt so fatigued and cranky."

C - Create the possibility of change. Share a coping strategy that you used successfully. "What I learned to do was bring a few different toys with me so I could take out a new one for them to play with every other aisle in the market." "You know the junk food they always want at the end of the shopping trip. Well I'd get something at the

beginning so they could be eating it while we were shopping."

D - Offer to DO something concrete that might be helpful. "Would it be okay if my girls and I walked along with you and entertained the baby for a bit while you shop?" "Would you like us to get some of the things on your list?" Most of the time people don't accept your offer, but by then the energy has changed. They have calmed down and see you as an ally in the difficult job of parenting.

E - Engage the child in a positive fashion. Depending on the situation, the age of the child, and how the caretaker has reacted, I may take a moment to be a "fair witness" to the child. I can be someone who acknowledges and mirrors that what happened isn't right, isn't fair, isn't their fault (even if they were the trigger, they are not responsible for a parent's abusive behavior), and doesn't always have to be like this. At eye level I might say something like: "all of us as grownups sometimes get angry and don't act right. It's not your fault. Please forgive us when that happens. Things will be better now."

I used these same principles in the Disneyland situation. I also modeled for my children an important lesson about standing up for what one believes, but doing it in a way that honors the basic philosophy of *primum non nocere*. Above all else, in your attempts to help, try to do no harm.

(Victor LaCerva is the founder of Men's Wellness in New Mexico, and is Medical Director for the Family Health Bureau with the NM Department of Health. His latest book is Worldwords: Global Reflections to Awaken The Spirit, a daily meditative collection of concepts from around the world that don't directly translate into English. It can be ordered by calling 505-983-4233.)

REUNIONS AND RED PICKUPS

Gordon Mustain

When I returned from the fall conference at Ghost Ranch I found waiting for me a letter from a daughter I had given up for adoption 37 years ago (she was 18-months old at the time) and whom I had neither seen nor heard from since. It was a wonderful letter revealing a sensitive, caring, strong woman who had been looking for her father for twenty years. We talked by phone the next day and that weekend I drove to California to spend four days reuniting with her and meeting a 19-year old granddaughter, a 17-year old grandson, and a 3-year old great grandson I never knew I had. The love and trust and openness and forgiveness were immediate and healing and full of joy. A couple days after I got back to Tucson, I sat down to write her a letter, and this came out instead.

RED PICKUPS

I see you in red pickups now, daughter,
passing me in traffic,
dotting Tucson parking lots,
tugging at my attention
as I move through the city
and routine of my day.

I had no idea there were so many here
but I'm glad because in each,
for just the briefest moment
of anticipatory joy
I see you --
and I smile.

It's got my serious wrinkles
all confused.

Maybe I'll buy one
and park it in front of the house,

so each time I look out the window,
and each time I leave the front door,
and each time I come home,
I will see you and smile.

A feasible make-do
until we can be together again.

So many red pickups. So many smiles.
So many gifts you bestow
with your reemergence into my life
like a luminous butterfly
born of a desperate dream
long cocooned away
in the most secret recesses
of my soul.

Thank you, dearest daughter,
for being back in my life,
and for sharing with me
the magic of red pickups.



Author and Daughter

I Will Be With You

Ray Ortiz

I will be with you, sorrowfully,
when your father and mother
who held you so tenderly
are themselves first held
by the cold darkness of ground;
when, in your loneliness,
you walk the path of an orphan
and let cries of heartache
go out over mourning fields.

I will be with you, joyfully,
when your mother and father
converse in the language of dreams
and you wistfully embrace them
in the heaven of memories;
when, in your happiness,
their eyes gaze upon you
from the eyes of your children,
from yours in the truthful mirror.

Conversation With My Soul (Can We Talk?)

Ray Ortiz

I met the hidden partner in my soul
as I walked along a lonely path
on the edge of a great wilderness.

There was a gentle, open light
all around her, flowing softly
from the eyes of my grandmothers.

I walked past trembling and fear
through a veil of the unknown
and came up tenderly beside her.

Bypassing all pleasantries, I said
“There is a great light around you,
I want to touch and embrace it.”

We spoke for an instant, a day;
my fears and regrets became intimacy,
my darkness had eyes and I whispered,

“You know the labyrinth of life,
walking through time with open heart;
I see the divine I first glimpsed as a
child.

You breathe a quiet, powerful spirit,
at times for me a shadow in the mists
over this wide, hard wilderness.”

My soul was very modest and
unaccustomed to lavish attention.
“Enough,” she said, “tell me of the gifts
entrusted to you.”

By then we had journeyed to the shores
of a mysterious sea whose name was
bittersweet waters of divine wisdom.

Our fleeting farewell embrace
could have itself embraced a year,
but she released hers before I mine.

Her gracious and kind grey eyes said
“You cannot take in all the ocean at once,
you cannot get your arms around light.
You must let the light come in slowly
around the shadows of the mountains
and into my celestial softness.

You must feel water
seep through fissures eons long,
unseen inside cliffs which,
in their hardness,
have defeated centuries.

Yet stoic cliffs
cannot resist humble drops
trickling down at the speed of dreams
to the profound depths of my secret well.”

- October 14-15, 2000 -- Ghost Ranch

DIRECTORY OF CONTACTS FOR MEN'S GROUPS IN NEW MEXICO

(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, it's exact meeting place and if it meets your needs. Gary McFarland.)

Northern Region

Max August -- Santa Fe -- 820-1248 --
maxaugust@earthlink.net Intergenerational
group and the "Wounded and Clueless" group

Scott Dow -- Santa Fe -- 450-4650 --
scottjdow@earthlink.net

Rob Hawley -- Taos -- 758-8176 --
rob@taosherb.com -- New Warriors group

Bill Kaul -- Farmington -- 327-6396 --
fb&gclub@acrnet.com

Victor LaCerva -- Santa Fe -- 983-4233 --
victorl@doh.state.nm.us

Robert Spitz -- Santa Fe -- 988-3541 --
robtspitz@aol.com -- Wednesday Lunch Group

Paul Zelizer -- Taos -- 758-9066 --
mrc@laplaza.org -- Men's Resource Center of
Northern New Mexico

Central Region

Dave Breault -- Albuquerque -- 266-9233 --
dbreault@lobo.net

David Cain -- Albuquerque -- 346-8157 --
wcain@email.usps.gov

Michael Hamilton -- Sandia Park --
eagle_call@msn.com

Bob Hollingsworth -- Albuquerque -- 294-4908 --
- hollingsbooks@thuntek.net
Writer's group and a regular group

Gary McFarland -- Sandia Park -- 281-9477 --
garymcfar@aol.com

Central Region (cont.)

Tim Murphy -- Mountainair -- 847-1850

David Robertson -- Albuquerque -- 344-5489 --
dkr5489@aol.com

Pat Sauer -- Albuquerque -- 299-6749 --
psauer@accessinn.com

Stephen Smith -- Rio Rancho -- 892-6142 --
stephen@spinn.net

Hartley Wess -- Albuquerque -- 243-6888 --
hartwess@excite.com

Southern Region

Neal Apple -- Silver City --
apple-allen@gilanet.com

Tony Harris -- Las Cruces -- 524-1899 --
antix@zianet.com

Men's Wellness Adopt-A-Highway Project Underway

The New Mexico Men's Wellness Adopt-A-Highway Project is underway! Look for the New Mexico Men's Wellness signs on I-25 southbound at mile marker 240, and northbound at mile marker 238. So far, 20 men from Santa Fe and 23 from Albuquerque have signed up for the project. All are welcome. The first clean-up will be held Saturday, January 13th, 2001. Mark the date on your calendar and plan to meet at McDonald's on NM 44 in Bernalillo (just west of I-25) at 9:15 a.m. that day for coffee and orientation before we go out on the highway. Carpool to Bernalillo, if possible. Also, we'd like to go to lunch together afterward. Bring a friend and share in the work, fun, and fellowship. For more information, call Bob McMMain at 248-1001 or David Johnson at 266-9960. To be added to the project email list, send request to rdrunn@zianet.

Wednesday Brown Bag Lunch

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

Saturday, January 13th, 2001

Men's Wellness Adopt-A-Highway Project

McDonald's on NM 44 in Bernalillo (just west of I-25) at 9: 15 am.

A.M.E.N. Albuquerque Men's Evolvment Network, meets monthly on the second Saturday of the month at St. Luke's Lutheran Church 9100 Menaul, east of Moon from 9am to noon. See back cover for more information.

Yes, it is possible

Thank you for trying to find
your feelings
Thank you for exploring
difficult memories
Thank you for visiting
your inner aloneness
Thank you for wanting
to dance with Spirit
Thank you for wanting
to dance with me.

The future seems
to move with
endless possibilities
for oneness.

May we simply
be present
with ourselves
and with each other.

By Lee Davis. (Read at the 2000 Fall Conference closing Ceremony by Phil Davis).

Photos of the Fall Conference courtesy of Rick Heptig

Rick has put all his conference photos on the web where they are available to anyone who is interested. The address is <http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/nmmenswellness>.



Notes from the editor continued from page 2

Now, I know from what I have seen in past issues, and from what I have seen created at the many conferences I have attended, that there are a lot of artistically gifted men in our community. We would very much like to include more artwork in each issue. So if you have done a painting, or drawing, or sketch, or photograph (or any other kind of visual creation - even sculpture and pottery can be photographed well), which you would like to share with the community, please submit them. And I know there are some wonderful senses of humor out there as well. Any aspiring cartoonists looking for an outlet? Let us hear from you.

A final note about artists. As editor, I would love to have an illustrator who would be willing to volunteer to be on call for the publication. Many articles would benefit from illustration. In concept, I would forward a story or article to you and ask for an illustration to accompany it. Any volunteers?

In closing, a word about how we see our mission at Man, Alive! We believe the publication exists to serve as a voice for the Men's Wellness Community, as a mirror for the community, and to serve that community as collective mind, body and soul, a place for story telling and announcements, informational articles and poetry, discussion and plans, communal celebration and communal mourning, and last but not least the recording of the community's history. We believe this has always been the mission of the publication, and we pledge to carry that mission out to the best of our abilities. In the end, however, it is the community's publication, and without your participation our mission is at first more difficult, and eventually impossible to carry out. We look forward eagerly to working with you to serve you.

- Gordon Mustain

A.M.E.N. (Albuquerque Men's Evolvment Network) is a monthly gathering of men whose purpose it is to explore issues within the men's wellness community. In our first three gatherings, we have tackled the subjects of grieving, cancer plus had an open forum. Meetings take place on the second Saturday of every month at St. Luke's Lutheran Church at 9100 Menaul, east of Moon from 9am to noon.

Tentative topics for future gatherings include:

January: open forum

February: Combating Loneliness

March: Revisiting the Grieving Process

For further information, please contact Sal Treppiedi by phone (296-0902), snail mail (11224 Morocco Drive NE; Albuquerque, NM 87111), or email (salteaches@yahoo.com).

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