

Winter 2003

MAN

ALIVE!

A Journal of Men's Wellness



Fall Conference Reflections

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Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the Winter 2003 edition of Man, Alive! To keep things interesting (for the editors at any rate), we decided not to suggest a specific theme for this issue to our prospective bards and story tellers. Moreover, there were rumors that having a theme meant offerings on alternative subjects were not welcome. We are anxious to disabuse all of that noxious notion. So, just in case, this became another reason for not suggesting a theme this time. Parenthetically, you, the readers, are strongly encouraged to voice your opinions about how Man Alive! might be structured in the future. Otherwise, you will be subjected to the whimsical inclinations of its editors. In fact, we want to inaugurate a column which any self-respecting publication should have, viz. Letters to the Editor. And, thanks to one of our contributors, our wish is coming true. In this issue, we have just such a letter addressing an issue we overlooked in our last issue concerning Men at Work. This is the kind of comment we enthusiastically invite (see Page 6).

You will also find a selection of articles that were inspired by recent Fall Men's Wellness Conferences at Ghost Ranch. Each touched this editor as it reflected deeply on various aspects of our experience as men. One reminded me to honor my body and its emotions, another my spirit. And, as part of the ongoing and passionate conversation in our community regarding the Sword and the Warrior, one man offers his thoughtful views on the subject. From another man's poetry, I felt real relief: "You do not have to be perfect....you only have toallow your heart to embrace all of you." I recalled how wonderful those split seconds are when I am free from the toxic chatter in a head cut off from my heart. And, finally, a wise elder tells us why it may be so important to write anything at all.

Speaking of imperfection, the last edition contained some significant errors. We omitted a critical section from one article entitled, "A Decision for Life" and we are reprinting that article in its entirety. Another piece, "Musings of an S.O.A. RE: Work" is also reprinted with the correct revision. Fortunately, we could do this without excluding any new material. We appreciate the patience and forbearance of the authors.

Other highlights in this issue include photos of the most recent Fall Conference evoking memories of an extraordinary event for those who were there and hopefully inspiring others to attend next year. Also,

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**Photos throughout this issue
are from the
2003 Fall Conference.**

Man, Alive!

is a journal of men sharing from the heart
the joys and issues of being male.

Editor

Gary McFarland

Managing Editor

Bob McMain

Design and Production Editor

René Dominguez

Staff

Bill Jones - Tom Konerth

Jim Sanborn - Wiktor Kuc

Points of Contact:

Gary McFarland
(505) 875-7357

garymcfar@aol.com

Bob McMain

(505) 248-1001

rdrunr@ZiaNet.com

TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS:

Tom Konerth
(505) 994-1210

leekon@swcp.com

The NM Men's Wellness Web sites:

<http://www.nmmenswellness.org>

[http://communities.msn.com/
NMMensWellness](http://communities.msn.com/NMMensWellness)

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Submission Formats and Requirements

Paper is okay, but please send submissions as a text file via e-mail if at all possible, 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 keep submissions below 1500 words.

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Others send inquiry to:

Managing Editor

Man, Alive!

P.O. Box 4732

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Of Joseph Woods © 2003**

Fall Conference Reflections



A Touching Moment Photo courtesy of Paul Golding

MY BODY, THE TEACHER

Bill Jones

I had no idea my body had so much wisdom or that it could communicate it to me.

At the 2003 Men's Wellness Conference in October, I participated in a workshop, Gentle on the Body, led by Michael Hopp. With the help of two other men I surveyed my body for places of intensity. When we went back to two of those places, the left side and the right side of my abdomen, I asked for gentle massage there.

On the left side my body said, "I'm constipated with feelings that I'm still holding in. I'm afraid of anger especially." My eyes filled with tears. Then my right side was touched. "I like to eat," I said and I began to laugh – real deep belly laughs.

I laughed for several minutes when my body said to me, "If you want balance in your life, love your emotions as much as you love your food." §

Free

Victor LaCerva

*(Writing exercise at Ghost Ranch Men's Wellness 2002
based on "Wild Geese" by Mary Oliver)*

You do not have to be perfect.
You do not have to demonstrate your worth
over and over again, night and day, endlessly.
You only have to allow your heart to be open enough to
embrace all of you.
Tell me more about what heals than what wounds.

Free (continued from previous column)

Without doubt, the sun and moon move in their
heavenly arcs.
Without doubt, life's celebration flows joyously,
in the silent beating of a butterfly's wings,
the thunderous roar and fury of a summer storm,
the slow opening of a seed into a tree.
Without doubt, the aging cottonwood at the stream's edge,
still basks in sunset glory.
Whoever you are, no matter your conversation about
who you are not,
The world offers its abundance,
calls you to be free, now and forever,
over and over reminding you of your imperfect
perfection. §

THE SWORD- WIELDING WARRIOR

Jim Mischke

I'm still finding myself puzzling about the true identity of the swordsman. I'm finding that I need to make sense of the Ghost Ranch conflict within the Men's Wellness Community about the essence and value of the sword. Don't we live in a world in which the warrior appears as not much more than a sports champion, and in the action flicks, just one slick step above the barroom brawler? The warrior has fallen. I've been thinking that, in the service of the quest for a more authentic masculinity, we can learn something about the hero from what the warrior has stood for in the other guy's culture.

Spiritual encounter with the deeper part of us seems to be what it's all about with the traditional Navajos in their search for the fullness of human mind and spirit. Very clear and pinpointed conclusions as to personality and behavioral traits of the warrior appear to show up as the identity of this typical warrior. To me, clear understandings of the swordsman as warrior seem so vital to ensuring human survival in the hard times we all seem to see coming at us.

As understood from within the Navajo traditional concept of "na'abaahkk'kehgo" (the warrior way), harm seems not to get into the space of the warrior. It's as if a state of mind exists which leaves him immune to harm and death; they've got no place to enter. Within this Navajo "take," it is believed that because the warrior has a form of intuitive understanding of certain concepts, such as certain aspects of nature, a unique form of protection will exist around this person. The presence of such an understanding surrounding a person may be thought of as a form of mist-like or fog-like condition which continually surrounds that person. Because of the fog-like condition the person will be indistinct or invisible. This

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Fall Conference Reflections

The Sword-Wielding Warrior

(continued from page 3)

aspect of a person will have two types of effects: 1) there will be a protection due to the fact that he will be hidden; 2) there will be blessing because of the feeling and deep respect for aspects of human existence which will make a person deeply fulfilled.

Turning, in a spirit of broader vision, from the tradition of the Navajo to that of the ancient Chinese Taoist, we find a similar way of looking at things as to human inner strength, as to knowing how to live. The Taoists, rather than thinking of it in terms of not being seen, think of it as not being able to be accessed or penetrated! For the Taoists, it's a question of impenetrability, rather than invisibility. Here's how it looks to these folks from a very different time at the other end of the earth:

*Between birth and death,
Three in ten are followers of life,
Three in ten are followers of death,
And men just passing from birth to death also
number three in ten.
Why is this so?
Because they live their lives on the gross level.*

*He who knows how to live can walk abroad
Without fear of rhinoceros or tiger.
He will not be wounded in battle.
For in him rhinoceroses can find no place to thrust
their horn,
Tigers no place to use their claws,
And weapons no place to pierce.
Why is this so?
Because he has no place for death to enter.*

- THE TAO TE CHING

Some people see the warrior as a "master." I suppose that's where the Kung Fu script writer got his ideas. Likening the warrior to "the master," this ancient Chinese Taoist tradition puts it another way:

*The ancient Masters were profound and subtle.
Their wisdom was unfathomable.
There is no way to describe it;
all we can describe is their appearance.*

*They were careful
as someone crossing an iced-over stream.
Alert as a warrior in enemy territory.
Courteous as a guest.
Fluid as melting ice.
Shapeable as a block of wood.
Receptive as a valley.
Clear as a glass of water.*

*Do you have the patience to wait
till your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
till the right action arises by itself?*

*The Master doesn't seek fulfillment.
Not seeking, not expecting,
he is present, and can welcome all things.*

- THE TAO TE CHING

So, what marks the road toward spiritual mastery? It looks like the attributes of mastery may sometimes be compared to the characteristics of warriorhood: patience, a giving up on the need to control, mindfulness, and mental openness. We make the discovery of natural law within our own center at the same time that we arrive at the realization of a center in us more real and more far flung than we had believed

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A Warrior Speaks

Photo courtesy of Paul Golding

On Being Accountable

Manuel Tafoya

One of the sessions I attended at this past conference was about some men who had formed a vision group. Here they would state their goals, their dreams, or their visions, and then in subsequent meetings they would give accounts on what they had done, how their efforts had either succeeded or failed, and what they were continuing to work.

This reminded me of an incident that had happened to me a while back. I had been writing in my journal when two of my grandchildren, who were playing close by, came over and the three-year-old asked, "What are you doing, Grandpa?" "I am writing what I did or did not do today," I replied. "Why?" she wanted to know.

I was stumped. A three-year-old child had asked me a very simple question which I couldn't answer. Yes indeed, why was I doing what I was doing? Certainly what I was writing was not that interesting, exciting, or exotic, and to tell the truth it was downright mundane. It was not that important, memorable, or historical, so it was not destined for posterity. Luckily I was saved from having to answer when the other child interrupted saying, "Let's go play," which they did, leaving me to ponder this most profound question.

It was not until later after much thought that the answer came to me. The reason I was writing things down was to have a record of what I had done. Probably "accountability" was the word that best exemplified this concept. Now, it is true that "accountability" has been cheapened by politicians using it to get elected, but it is still a good word. That is what the vision group members were doing when they gave accounts of their progress to the other members. This is what we promise to do when we enter the work force, to be accountable to our employers in the work we do. In the legal system if we do the crime we better be prepared to do the time.

As for my case, I had just discovered the reason why I wrote down the mundane things I did or did not do daily. It was because I was being accountable to myself. Somewhere along the line, I must have come to realize that, though we have to be accountable to others, first and foremost, we have to be accountable to ourselves. §

Sweat Lodge Prayers

Joseph Woods

I arrived at Ghost Ranch just a little after two in the afternoon on Thursday. Bill was there waiting for me and together we put up the sweat lodge. We could have used more help, but the work flowed and we enjoyed the lightning show that approached us. We threw the blankets and finally the big tarp over the bent willow just as the rain hit. We were wet, but happy. The lodge was up and the Men's Wellness high had begun.

After announcing that we would meet at 4:45 the next morning, several guys came up to me and suggested that I go out earlier and start the fire so we had a shot at breakfast. Going to bed around midnight, I set my digital alarm (with the help of the youngest guy there) for four the next morning. At 3:30, I sat up, wide awake. The lodge called.

The morning air was filled with a promise of fall and a cold winter to follow. A light rain was gently falling and a few snowflakes drifted down. I had the entire world to myself and then the thought hit me that several guys were counting on me to have the fire going when they arrived. The coyotes called as I struck a match. I thought Trickster was telling me that the damp wood would never light, but to my surprise the flames leaped toward the sky as if they were impatiently waiting for the opportunity to heat the morning air.

As the fire began to burn down I started to add small logs to encourage the fire. I said a prayer to each piece of wood before placing it in the flames. With each prayer, I realized what the next prayer should be. I said a special prayer to the last piece of wood concerning my inner child who was abandoned. I held the small log above my head with both hands and shouted my prayer to the Universe. At that moment, a meteor flashed across the part of the sky filled by my piece of firewood, as if to say that my prayer was heard.

As the big fire began to burn down and the lava rocks that I could see began to turn a cherry red, I sat back and began to meditate. I was brought back by the laughter of men, far in the distance. Men who were walking through the darkness and drawn to the fire like moths to a flame. I smiled to myself knowing that I was exactly where I wanted to be and within just minutes we would be entering the lodge. §



An Elder Speaks Photo courtesy of Paul Golding



Pickin' and Singin' Photo courtesy of Charles Fisher

Letter to the Editor

Stanley Rosebud Rosen

In what was a very thoughtful and interesting edition on Men at Work, there was something missing.

As a lifelong union advocate, union organizer and labor educator, I was surprised that there was no mention of labor unions and their role in creating an equitable and fair workplace.

Many alternate movements put too much attention on good intentions and put the burden on individuals to cope with crappy and unfair workplaces. "Take this job and shove it" is anger directed towards self and a misuse of life energy.

Unions and workplace democracy as reflected in Collective Bargaining (collective efforts) is not a perfect solution. However, without a negotiated contract (dealing with financial compensation) and a grievance procedure (dealing with fairness at the workplace), there is little hope to achieve a loving, caring and satisfying place to work.

Rollo May, in his book *Power and Innocence*, provides the reader with a realistic statement of the role of power in all our life relationships. Pseudoinnocence, as he describes it, assumes a naivete, not understanding and dealing with the power dimensions of life. This applies to both men and women in different but similar ways.

Maybe this dimension of life needs to be added to our thinking? §

Fifty

Ray Ortiz

Fifty is what I am today,
for the first time in my life.

Fifty times around the sun,
trying to find my way.

Fifty years tracing out time,
being reborn, yet growing older.

Fifty times past winter solstice,
hard darkness taking me inside.

Fifty times past summer solstice,
abundant light showing me promise.

At my mother's tomb I thank her for life,
and for teaching me how to hope for light.

At my father's grave I thank him for life,
and for showing me how to touch darkness.

In my wife's embrace, we embrace life
with song and poetry in our hearts.

My son's voice on a call from afar
carries his light back to me.

In darkness I have given away time,
have held back some gifts.

Some days I have tried to hold light,
have felt grace inside time's passage.

In darkness I have loved
and loved too much.

Some days I have loved
but haven't loved enough.

I am each year. I am a half century.
I am darkness reaching for light. §

Thanks, Dad

Jeff Hood

You're right,
I wouldn't have
accepted the twenty
had you offered it
before I left.

There is no prize on Earth
equal to spending
the last two days
helping cut
your winter's wood.

But finding your envelope
on my console
half an hour down the road
with a simple
"Thanks, Dad"
wraps me in a
blue sky cloak
and the clink
of Aspen gold
fills my heart. §



Saturday Night Folly Photo courtesy of Charles Fisher

Open Letter to the Men's Wellness Community

Paul Steinkoenig

Hello Brothers of New Mexico,

It's hard to believe I have been gone for more than a year already from New Mexico. I am nearly finished with my degree in international affairs at The George Washington University in Washington, DC. I have only this semester to complete which ends in December. I am looking forward to finishing my studies. Returning to school has been a good step to move me in a new direction, and I am now ready to put my efforts into a socially productive direction.

Over the summer I spent three months in an internship at the State Department as a press officer. I worked in Press Relations with the State Department Spokesman, Richard Boucher, on the daily press briefings. I regularly got to see Colin Powell and even President Bush in action. Being at the Press Office was a terrific experience. I learned so much about the workings of the State Department and about current world affairs. I am eager for the next steps in my life directions. I am continuing to explore options with the State Department, and also with the United Nations. Generally speaking I am looking at the field of public diplomacy at this point in time, which is largely about helping people to respect and understand one another at the international level.

One of the most amazing things I have awakened to in my time here in DC is the incredible uniqueness of the country in which we live and the extent that we as individuals can create and live the kinds of lives that are important to us. The world for Americans is literally at our fingertips. Only through wisdom can we come to know what to do with the power and the opportunity that we wield as a country and as individuals in this wonderful country. My awareness of the opportunities and the incredible potential available has woken in me a love for this country that I can hardly describe. I have come to realize that it really is up to me to help create the kind of world that I want to live in and be a part of. I have also come to be painfully aware about how our tremendous strength can be used in ways that cause hurt and despair. It is up to each of us in our wisdom and insight to decide how we want our world to be and then to go out and help make it that way. Part of the beauty of this country is the diversity of voices and how we all work together to create such a balance and breadth of expression.

The events of New Mexico Men's Wellness have been a tremendous part of helping to shape me in preparation for this journey I am traveling. I want to say "thank you" to all of you who have shared the journey with me, helping me to be more at home within my own self and more fluent in the world of men. Many of you have inspired me to be more outspoken and confident in living the wisdom and spirit that I am. What more wonderful gifts than these could I ask for or give to any other human being? Thank you to all of you who have been such an important part of my life process for the last 10 years. I am so pleased to have been able to share the men's community with the important men in my life. My father still talks about his experiences at the summer gather-

ing from several years ago. He still doesn't quite know what to do with the new ways of talking that he witnessed there, but he keeps on trying. He brings up his experiences there with me every time I see him. My relationship with my brother is forever improved due to his attending men's community events with me.

I also want to acknowledge how much being a part of the New Mexico men's community helped prepare me for what I now pursue. The community helped me to expand a new internal vision of how I might be involved in fostering the kind of respect and openness and appreciation we show one another in our community on a larger scale out in the world. I don't know exactly where the vision will take me, but I am pleased to be on the trail of this adventure fueled by inspirational experiences with so many men in New Mexico. I am excited to follow this vision. I also feel a sense of being charged by the community to take the respect and appreciation that is the vital heart of our men's community with me wherever I go, and to live the life that we converse about living in our talking circles and in our gatherings.

For the past two years I have been unable to attend the Fall Gathering due to my school schedule here in Washington, DC. Each year at the time of the fall gathering I have been very aware of missing the event. This year I decided to celebrate with you even from a distance. On Friday night while many of you were celebrating in a sweat lodge at Ghost Ranch, I joined in with you. At midnight I sat out in my backyard and sent love and respect and prayers to the men of New Mexico. I smoked my ceremonial pipe while you were in the lodge. It was quite moving for me to be there with you in spirit. I was pleased to remember that wherever I go I have a home community of men whom I love and admire.

Those of you who have been an important part of my life know who you are. To each of you I send my love and warmest regards. You are often in my thoughts and prayers. I miss you, my brothers. There is no community of men here in Washington, DC like we have in New Mexico. If there is a wish that I have for each of my New Mexico brothers, it is that you find the willingness and the desire to live to your full potential, and that you live your dreams.

My very best to you all.

Love,

Paul §



More Pickin' and Singin'
Photo courtesy of
Charles Fisher

In Search of the Perfect Track

Reflections on the 14th Annual New Mexico Men's Wellness Cross Country Ski Weekend 20-24 February 2003

Chris Wuest

This year I arrive early at Cook's Cabin in the beautiful Blanco Basin. The Men's Ski Weekend is one of the cornerstones of my calendar. I have missed only one of the last 13 - the year I got married. Now I am going through a painful divorce. *I cannot think of a better way to celebrate my last anniversary - with a bunch of guys!*

It had finally snowed 10 inches just a few days ago. A thick white blanket is covering the otherwise thin base - evidence of the dry conditions in the Southwest. After unloading gear and food I set out by myself in the direction of Fish Creek. *What a privilege to cut the first tracks. It is like the first stroke on an empty canvas. An action that cannot be reversed.*

I ski across narrow ice bridges with Fish Creek gurgling underneath. Through the openings in the snow I see crystal clear water washing over the rocks at the creek bottom. The sunlight reflecting off the ripples greets me with an abundance of sparkles. *This is my way of connecting with the place and the weekend ahead.*

Eventually I have to climb out of the box canyon. I follow the Fubar, an old ditch, back to the cabin. After a soak in the hot tub we prepare dinner. Night is falling and 69-year-old Manuel has not come back yet. Lawrence calls out into the dark forest behind the cabin. We hold our breath and listen until we can hear the response. *I am with men who care.*

The Ski Weekend has its very own flow. Men arrive and leave in their own time. The only fixed program point is the big potluck dinner on Saturday. Everything else falls into place according to the needs and desires of the men gathered. *This is freedom and community all at once. Here I can be me.*

Friday morning. I wake up early. I can't stop thinking about the upcoming court battle for the custody of my four-and-a-half-year old daughter. I go into the kitchen to make some tea where I meet Lawrence. He too has intense emotional stuff coming up. We spend the next five hours in intense conversation. The last time we talked was a year ago. *It could have been yesterday. Time is of a different quality here.*

More men arrive. Some are regulars, others I have never met. It does not matter. We connect. Out here everyone is one hundred percent appreciated. No pressure, no bullshit. Small groups form spontaneously for today's skiing. The scenery is overwhelmingly beautiful. Squaretop, Music Mountain, Bald Eagle Point. The Rio Blanco surrounded by rocks, trees, and poetry. *My worries dissolve in the crisp air.* I am letting go. Everything will fall into place. There is order in the Universe.

Tonight's dinner is fantastic, gourmet as usual. We never plan and it always works out. There are ten of us around the long wooden table feasting on salmon, mussels, tamales, pasta, salad, and wine. Laughter fills the cabin. Some men talk, some read, others do the dishes. John, Pat, and Steve pull out their guitars. It is after midnight when the music finally stops. I am getting into the groove.

Saturday. After a leisurely breakfast, four of us are doing the "loop," a combination of marked and unmarked trails through the South San Juan Wilderness. It is a perfect day: sunny, a few white clouds, a slight breeze. Depending on snow conditions, equipment, and skill level, the "loop" can take anywhere from four to eight hours. The ascent to the overlook is icy and slow but the sweeping view of the basin makes up for it. There are a lot more clouds now, it looks like snow is coming.

A few years ago a storm turned the mesa on top into a maze of toppled trees. Luckily, we follow Guy's tracks. He always leaves very early in the morning on some kind of personal quest to ski further towards Fish Lake than any of the rest of us have ever gone. He knows his way around here following occasional pieces of faded flagging tape. I guess people have always marked their trails.

It is time to part with his tracks and descend down to the creek. A little bit of bushwhacking and we can see the long narrow valley opening up before us. The wind has picked up and we stop for lunch in lee of a giant fallen pine. By now the snow is blowing horizontally across the meadow. We are heading straight into the mountains but it is the only way to get back to the cabin. It is strange to move directly away from your goal in order to reach it.

At the halfway point we cross the creek and head home on the forest service road, directly into the wind. The temperature is dropping. John and Leland are skiing ahead while I hang back with Mike who is getting tired and slowing down. It is 4 pm. There is still time to get home before dark as long as we find a decent track through the aspen glades.

Each time I do the "loop" I am searching for the direct line from the road to the cabin. Each time I come across beautiful places I have never seen before. Each time I watch for familiar landmarks to guide me. Today, the forest appears too dense, the slopes too steep, and every clearing seems new and unknown. Maybe I should have taken the map. I didn't even think to look at it before leaving. I know which direction to go.

We come across fresh ski tracks and follow them for a while. Soon I realize that they are John and Leland's. But they are heading away from the cabin! It is getting dark and more snow is falling. We examine our choices: a) follow the

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In Search of the Perfect Track

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tracks back out to the road: safe, but a long haul; b) make camp. Mike brought survival gear; c) keep going through the trees towards the cabin. I'd rather sleep in my bed. I know I can get us down there. I just hope that Mike has enough strength left.

(Meanwhile back at the cabin: (Lawrence's view) The nine of us had had a fine afternoon of skiing the Hare Ranch Meadow and a portion of the Blanco River Trail. In the morning we had visited an eight-month-old rescued abandoned elk and her imprinted "Mom," Sam, the cowboy caretaker of the neighboring Rio Blanco Ranch. It was he who called at dinnertime saying that John and Leland had skied to his house and Leland had fixed his VCR. So we knew half of the "loop-skiers" were safe. After making sure we were well fueled by another wonderful potluck dinner, five of us set off on snowshoes.)

Finally! I recognize places I have been before (although some of them I could never find again later). Suddenly the sky clears up and Orion stands overhead. I am warm now. The night is silent and absolutely magnificent. Dogs bark in the valley below, we can see the lights of distant houses. My legs are tired. We have been on skis for eleven hours. I must be running on pure adrenaline now. I wonder if they are looking for us.

Time has disappeared. My body moves almost effortlessly. I listen to my breath and the crunching of the snow underfoot. I can see in the dark. I know exactly where we are. A few more minutes to the cabin. Voices cut through the silence. I call back. A flashlight flickers through the trees. It is John. We embrace each other. We made it. All of us. Thank God.

Sunday morning. While I pour myself a cup of tea I look at the quote on the tab of the teabag. They are like fortune cookies. Once in a while you get a good one. This one reads: "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go" (T.S.Eliot). Could the truth possibly be found on a teabag?

In the afternoon most of the men are leaving. Time for good-byes. We will see each other again. Maybe in the fall, certainly next year at the cabin. I can count on it. But I have one more thing to do.

I ski up in search of the direct line. In less than an hour I find our tracks from last night. I know where we went wrong. I memorize every tree in the forest. I consider notching a few trees. But then I decide to make marks in the snow instead. I am at home here now. The perfect track lives inside me. Peacefully I return to the cabin.

*That night we pass the talking stick around the circle. A
fire crackles in the stove.*

*There are five of us. One for each decade
between thirty-four and seventy-two.*

We share our insides with each other.

Life flows through all of us.

I feel complete and connected. §

SOUNDS OF SILENCE

3rd Annual NMMW

Spring Retreat

April 23 - 25, 2004

Kenn Holsten

April 23 - 25, 2004 are the dates for the 3rd Annual New Mexico Men's Wellness Spring Retreat at Hummingbird Music Camp in Jemez Springs. The theme for the retreat is "Sounds of Silence" and the emphasis will be on the word "Retreat." Activities and non-activities will include meditation (both sitting and walking), yoga, deep rest, a visit to the hot springs, hiking and lots of sharing. Periods of silence will be encouraged. Several men have already come forward to offer to teach yoga, meditation and other techniques for going inward and exploring the sounds of silence that each of us carries within. For further information please contact the facilitators: Herb Cherry (505) 955-0498 or Kenn Holsten (505) 992-1385, email: kenn.holsten@att.net. For those interested in early registration, a \$25.00 deposit made payable to NMMW Spring Retreat and mailed to NMMW; P. O. Box 4732; Santa Fe, NM 87502 will hold your space until April 1, 2004 and will be fully refundable if the need for cancellation arises before that date. Watch for the registration form in the Spring Issue of MAN, ALIVE! See you in the spring in the beautiful Jemez Mountains of New Mexico. §

MEN'S CROSS-COUNTRY SKI WEEKEND

FEBRUARY 19-23, 2004

Lawrence Cook

*Natural beauty, camaraderie, sharing, solitude,
cross-country skiing, snow shoeing,
merry making, reflection, companionship
in a safe, supportive men's environment*

Join us at COOK'S CABIN in the Blanco Basin in Southwest Colorado for the 13th Annual Gathering. Our 3500 sq. ft. log home with spa can accommodate twenty or so. The cost is \$20 per person per night. Payable at the weekend.

The essence of the weekend is in the spirit of camaraderie. We continually enjoy proffering to others the opportunities to be at peace in the blanketed Blanco Basin. Please bring what you wish to share via poetry, songs, stories, queries, games, talking sticks, drums and other musical instruments. The time can be as laid back or structured as you wish to make it.

For further information, contact Lawrence Cook at 1503 Lucyle Pl. N.W., Albuquerque, N.M. 87114-8819 or (505) 898-2206 or email: rlcook@rt66.com. §

A Decision for Life

Gary Carlson

It was about this time, seven years ago, that I really began to think seriously about retirement. I had told myself that I would probably retire sometime between 55 and 60, and I was then 55. But I had questions. Was retirement the right decision? Was this the right time? What would I do when I retired? Could I afford to retire? I wanted to make a good decision. My wife Charlotte and I had discussed my eventual retirement previously, and she had told me that whatever decision I made was fine with her. She encouraged me to follow the path that spoke to my heart. I had also talked of retirement with my men's group and gotten their support for whatever decision I made.

I had started working when I was a teen-ager, over 40 years before, and hadn't stopped since. Mowing lawns, gardening and delivering papers in the early years; working on a highway crew for several summers; waiting tables and working for chemical companies during my college years; and seven years of college and post-graduate education before I started my first real professional job at age 25. My career as a research scientist and technical manager at Sandia National Labs was interesting and challenging, and I mostly enjoyed the wide variety of assignments I had over the years. I was highly successful—I had well over 100 publications and presentations over the years, I was honored as Distinguished Member of Technical Staff, and I became a technical manager for the last several years there. But it had become stale. Now it seemed that most of my work was chasing research dollars and dealing with personnel issues. The excitement I had felt in the research arena was no longer there. Was it time for a change?

When I headed for the Men's Wellness Conference in October, 1996, my personal agenda was to work toward a decision about retirement. I would focus my attention, during the conference activities, through talks with friends, and during my own personal time, on the question of my retirement and post-retirement activities. The theme of the conference that year was Making a Difference, quite appropriate for the work I had in mind.

During personal reflection early in the weekend, my first "Aha!" was the realization that I had had a highly varied career, with many challenges along the way, all of which I had been able to meet successfully. So why should I expect my response to retirement to be any different or less successful? Aha!

I also had an important conversation with Reynold Bean, a good friend, who talked about his experience of trusting the internal messages he got from whatever source—heart messages as well as head messages. I knew that I needed to pay more attention to the heart messages—I was already good at listening to my head messages.

Because of my own personal agenda for the conference, the theme Making a Difference spoke to me of my future life as a retired person. Some of my thoughts were "The best is yet to come" and "It's up to me." Ken Betzen and David

Johnson gave a highly appropriate (for me) workshop on "The Challenges of Elder Age," in which we did a life review and I was introduced to a book, *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*, which was soon to become my bible on elder year activities.

I also spent some time that weekend identifying potential retirement activities, beginning with pottery and gardening, two activities I was already pursuing, and adding in a number of potential service activities, including Habitat for Humanity, Community Center work, church work and mentoring work. I got very excited at the prospect of being of service to others — of making a difference!

The bottom line was that as a result of the personal and interactive work I did at the conference around the issue of retirement, I largely lost the fear I had felt at such a momentous step. As I left that Wellness conference, I felt totally committed to retirement at the earliest possible opportunity. That turned out to be only a few months later, when Sandia offered early retirement to ease an internal budget crunch. I jumped on that opportunity and retired in early 1997!

So seven years later, how do I feel about the decision to retire that I made back then? I now realize that at that time, I made a decision for life—hence the title of this piece. There's a double meaning to that. I did make a critical life decision—to finish a major part of my life's work, my primary career of over 30 years, and to begin the next major part of my life, my elder years. But I think I also made a decision to live, to really experience life in new and exciting ways through the freedom that retirement gave me. One of the greatest things about retirement is the tremendous range of opportunities that open up. Assuming that finances are not a major restraint (and with Charlotte still working, we had decided that we were OK financially), the possibilities are endless.

Was my thinking at the conference prophetic? In retirement, did I do the things I had thought I might do? Some things I did, but not all. Pottery, which had been a long-time hobby and part-time business of mine, became my new full-time business. I put heart and soul into learning to be a really good potter, with a focus on water fountains. I surprised myself at how successful I became at this venture. I also got very involved in the local potter's professional organization, which provided me with social interactions, training, and more opportunities to serve (as president of the group for three years and as board member on two major arts and crafts fairs for several years). I've just begun learning a new pottery technique (raku), so it looks like the pottery business will continue to keep me occupied for some time into the future.

On the other hand, I haven't gotten as involved in gardening as I thought I might. Instead, my interests have taken me toward wildlife habitat. For the past three years, I have spent time at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park as a volunteer. I also have taken on a major development project in my living community, converting 5 acres of our land from agriculture to habitat. This has been highly satisfying, and our pheasants and other small birds and animals seem to appreciate it too!

Continued on Page 11

Musings of an S.O.A. RE: "WORK"

R. Lawrence Cook

Sometimes things happen that we can't anticipate. A few years after retirement, I developed a pinched nerve in my neck that left my left arm in pain and my left hand partially paralyzed. Surgery to fuse vertebrae in my neck was successful—my pinched nerve was relieved—but an unfortunate side effect was a paralyzed vocal cord. Even following three years of speech therapy, I now speak with a raspy voice, and I can no longer sing, which had been a strong interest of mine. I have had to grieve these losses, which have had a significant impact on me.

I mentioned earlier that the book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Look at Growing Older*, by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, had become my bible. When I first read it, it spoke to me in important ways about the role of the elder, and of the potential joys and rewards of one's elder years. Over the first several years after retirement, I went to a number of workshops on the subject of Spiritual Eldering, as taught by Reb Zalman and others. This culminated in a training program that my wife Charlotte and I took to become trained to teach others about Spiritual Eldering, or Conscious Aging as it's sometimes called. This has led to my third career, that of a teacher/counselor/workshop leader in Conscious Aging. I find I get great satisfaction from helping others understand the possibilities that are ahead of us as we transition from our earlier years of work or child rearing into later years with their own rewards. In the course of this work, I've also met a lot of other professional workers who have similar interests in elder activities. We have recently organized a new group called the Conscious Aging Network of New Mexico, to facilitate our working together to help seniors to live their elder years positively and productively.

So I look back at the decision I made seven years ago (with considerable help from the Men's community!) and say Yes! For me, early retirement from my first career was absolutely the best decision I could have made. The years since my retirement have been the best years of my life, so far. I don't know what's in the future, but as long as I am healthy I expect to remain busy following my passions, whatever they are at that time. §

Sometime in my adult life I realized that I am an "S.O.A." (son of an attorney). It was my lawyer father (also an S.O.A.) who modeled for me what it meant to go to work and identify oneself with one's occupation. The youth minister at my church re-framed that definition into what I would later learn about one's "true vocation," i.e., where one's passion meets a world need.

I was blessed with a thirty-year career of living my passion as a public educator. When I "couldn't do it any longer," I remember my teenaged daughter saying, "Dad, when you come home, you have nothing left." With her words ringing in my ears, I listened carefully when Parker Palmer spoke to me through his book *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, and I was shaken by his words, "When you lose a job, it may be because you have more important work to do."

So here I am, four years past my retirement dinner pondering the idea of work and labor. My birthday is always close to Labor Day. For several years now, that weekend has become either one to split wood or think about the need to do some kind of physical labor. Also, one of my daily tasks is caring for our horses by shoveling the manure out of their stalls. One day while doing so, I realized that my old man was a "manure-shoveler" and someday I'll be a manure-shoveler, just like my old man.

Now as I wear the amulet of a New Mexico Men's Wellness elder, I am reminded of the intergenerational work I am called to continue. At the 2001 NMMW Fall Conference, "*Every Mother's Son*," the word that came to me about my mother was, "verisimilitude" – the appearance of being true or real; something that only appears to be true or real. I couldn't get myself to announce that word in the ceremony about our mothers and instead, I said, "transformation."

I realize now that one way to look at my work at this stage of my life is to consider how to balance what appears to be true and what really is true. I believe we are each called on to transform our inherited and developed sense of being into the best ways we can live out our passions to meet the needs of the world, for ourselves and for all our relations.

*Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it,
listen for what it intends to do with you.
Before you tell your life what truths and values
you have decided to live up to,
Let your life tell you what truths you embody,
what values you represent.*

Parker J. Palmer §



End of the Journey Photo courtesy of Charles Fisher

The Game

By R. W. Johnson
dedicated to his son

Four years on hardwood toward manhood,
Balanced pointed controlled.
Unbelievably serious
Unmistakably set
On delivery to complete
The final heroic hour.

Don't lose the quick smile
Of victory's brief stay.
Wear it in your heart,
That pride and cosmic legacy
Of all who try and give and rest
To try and give again. §

Wild Mind

Jeff Rahn

All I want to be is an inspiration to myself

to look into my eyes and see a mensch, a park bench,
a playing field, a common university

where I can feel my smile and tears on my lips
not slip into negativity, relativity

or watching movies about projecting millions
but see the Vermilion cliffs

a Navaho riding his horse over ridge after ridge
sees Ship Rock for the first time

Animus Valley without health food stores and mining claims
climb San Juan Mountains

plant my pole on top of Engineering Peak

never speak never seek ridiculous religious pedagogues
or fog up with ideals about spiritual wholeness

I want to open a can of beans on the Chama River
get eaten by mosquitos in cottonwoods

Charlie Brown how does this sound?
tell your father I've found my millions
and they ain't in Carl Sagan's books

I'd like to put my arm round your shoulder boy
drive with you in my pickup

pat my hand on your knee
point out a tree

Do you see the hundreds of millions of years
of evolution, revolution in the human heart?
Can you feel how much you're really loved? §



Fall '04 Leaders Photo courtesy of Charles Fisher



NMMW Fall Conference 2003

Photo courtesy of Charles Fisher

18 or 81?

Rosa LaCerva, aged 15 years

The smell of spring half-heartedly hangs about the sidewalk,
noncommittal, like so many things are,
the love affair between winter and summer a stormy one
with spring as their moderator, self righteous and yet shy...

The pearly pink blossoms of the crab-apple trees
blush with girlish innocence
at the sight of the ever immodest forsythia.
The cracks in the sidewalk
sing

as fresh, crisp blades of grass spring up
among them.

A cool breeze signals a party to
step forth,
moving away from the shelter of a building
as one unit,
indistinguishable
from one another.

From the jumbled mass of people
two balloons ascend,
red and metallic and corporate and unreal,
one with an "eight,"
one with a "one."
18 or 81?

One has to wonder,
as the glorified bags of air
bob about the people's heads
in the spring sunlight.

The end of a life, or
the beginning?
Both things to celebrate,
certainly.

Both evenly beautiful
and uniformly picturesque
and equally unreal.

In my mind is a faded image
of a strong,
resilient young man
standing beside a
soft,
weathered one,
with the difference of a
lifetime
kneeling in-between.

And yet the two,
as they stand there,
morph into one,
and I know that this is really one man
with an essence unchanged
by years of suffering and years of joy.
The same smile and the same laugh,
the same habits and the same dreams...
For what, really, is the difference
between
18 and 81? §

Notes from the Editor

(continued from page 2)

see the letter from an old friend of Men's Wellness who is very close to the action in Washington, DC. There is the long-awaited story of this year's Men's Ski Weekend (a nail-biter). We are treated to some fine poetry as well. Included is one by Rosa La Cerva, age 15, an astonishingly good poet.

We heartily thank all the contributors to this edition and encourage all your comments, articles, poems, photos etc. for future editions. Remember, without your interest, guidance and support, no telling what flights of journalistic fancy might appear on these pages.

Love and Hugs,

Gary McFarland
Editor §

The Sword-Wielding Warrior

(continued from page 4)

earlier. It seems, then, if I am going to be honest with myself, that the value of the sword is determined by the quality or state of mind guiding the hand that withdraws it from the scabbard. In my own personal travels, I have found that peace arises from an awareness of our cyclical nature: how we are involved in the way cycles affect us: our birth, our growth stages, our maturation, and, finally, our dying away.

As a Viet Nam veteran, it has occurred to me that the man who wields the sword well, likewise, well understands that his essence arises from "The Source," that larger center. I have, therefore, tried hard to attain certain forms of peace. In my own life, blessings appear to have come from an experience of "being on to something," seeing a pattern, feeling a meaning, understanding a reason for things as they are, hooking up simple facts to create a larger picture, like we do when we put together a jigsaw puzzle. In my own life, this having the patience to wait to see what is going to pop into my life is not so contrived, but, instead, moves more authentically with the moment, in those rare moments when I can let go and allow. In order to allow, I have to back off from that urge to control which, characteristically, appears to allow me to quickly feel more secure. This ability to hold on and wait seems to come out of a trust, a faith. This faith, in turn, seems to naturally develop within the field of that upward spiral of creating larger and larger models within my imagination - experienced in the process of "being on to something."

So, to study and, as a result, to understand, seems to remove me from a kind of urgency I know all too well. When I stand back and watch why other people do what they do and what it brings them, this seems to help in bringing me compassion. Is this what the Taoists mean by "The Source"? If so, then, I am beginning to suspect that, far in contrast to those patterns of second nature which insist upon using

Continued on Page 15

DIRECTORY OF CONTACTS FOR MEN'S GROUPS IN NEW MEXICO

(This directory is a work in progress. Please send corrections, additions and subtractions to GaryMcFar@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 among 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. Gary McFarland.) §

Northern Region

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

Michael Hamilton — Santa Fe — 699-3936
eagle_call@msn.com

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

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

Bob Hollingsworth — Albuquerque — 294-4908
Writer's group and a regular group

Gary McFarland — Tijeras — 875-7357
garymcfar@aol.com

David Robertson — Albuquerque — 344-5489
robertson_d@aps.edu

Pat Sauer — Albuquerque — 299-6749
pasacom1@yahoo.com

Steve Smith — Rio Rancho — 892-6142 steve-
kendra@newmexico.com

Todd Tibbals — Albuquerque — 898-7351
tbtibbals@aol.com

Sal Treppiedi — Albuquerque — 275-7258
salteaches@yahoo.com

Hartley Wess — Albuquerque — 243-6888
hartleywess@excite.com



Southern Region

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

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

Jim Rogers — Las Cruces — 524-9216
newvisjr@direcpc.com

Websites of interest to Men:

www.nmmenswellness.org
www.menshealthnetwork.org
www.malemenopause.com
www.vix.com/menmag
www.menstuff.org
www.themenscenter.com
www.menalive.com
communities.msn.com/nmmenswellness

**PLAN on Attending the NMMW Winter Cross Country Ski
Weekend; February 19 - 23, 2004;
See Page 9 for more information.**

Brown Bag Lunch – Santa Fe: Wednesdays noon – 1:30 p.m. at the Men's Center (54 1/2 E. San Francisco 2nd floor (just off the plaza, enter the door to the right of the Hagen-Daz store). The "**BROWN BAG LUNCH**" is a "come one, come all" men's lunch group that has been meeting in Santa Fe for the past twelve years. A place to share from the heart and be listened to from the heart. Contact (505) 690-6619 for more information.

Men's Lunch Group - Albuquerque: Fridays 11:45 -12:45 p.m., at the Father and Family Center, 3214 Purdue Pl., N.E. (one block north of Central, west off Wellesley). A drop-in men's support group for men to talk about concerns and issues in their lives. Contact **Dave Breault** (505) 266-9233.

New Mexico Men's Wellness Winter Cross Country Ski Weekend: February 19 - 23, 2004. Contact: **Lawrence Cook** (505) 898-2206, email rlcook@rt66.com.

Men's Wellness Adopt-A-Highway Project: Saturday, March 27, 2004. Meet at Exit 234, I-25 and Tramway, at 9:15 a.m.. [Park on the southeast corner of the intersection in the open area next to the freeway.](#) Contact: **Bob McMain** at 248-1001 OR **David Johnson** at 266-9960, or to be added to the project email list, email rdrunr@zianet.com

New Mexico Men's Wellness 2004 Spring Retreat: April 23 - 25, 2004; Contact: **Herb Cherry** (505) 955-0498 OR **Kenn Holsten** (505) 992-1385, email kenn.holsten@att.net.

New Mexico Men's Wellness 2004 Fall Conference: Starting @ 7 PM Thursday, October 21 ending @ 12 noon to 1 PM Sunday, October 24, 2004. - Ghost Ranch; Abiquiu, NM; Theme: **TBA**. Contact: **Howard Kaplan** (505) 348-4011 (day) (505) 856-7185 (eve) email: howard.kaplan@wilsonco.com OR **Tony Harris** (505) 526-2398 (day) (505) 647-9670 (eve) email: abharris@zianet.com.

OTHER MEN'S ACTIVITIES in and out of New Mexico

LOOKING for PARTICIPANTS in two potential book projects: 1) REAL MEN in the KITCHEN (willingness to be in a photo, provide a brief bio and three of your favorite recipes) and 2) CONVERSATIONS with MY FATHER (a bit more complicated; you need a dad who is alive and willing to talk with you on tape, and answer 12 "essential questions" about his life and relationship to you). PLEASE contact Victor LaCerva at (505) 983-4233 if you have an interest in either of these projects. §

The Sword-Wielding Warrior

(continued from page 13)

force and thus giving away true power, the sword needs to be wielded only from the spiritual space of "The Source." Wouldn't actions based upon principles such as these seem to mark an advance in global statesmanship, if politicians could hold on a bit before declaring war? "Use the force, Luke!" "Use the source, George W.!" "Be on to something, Mischke!"

A 62 year old retired Japanese chemical engineer, a student of mine, writing in the area of Bushido, or "the way of the warrior" within his own tradition sees it this way:

The spiritual aspect of valor is evidenced by composure - the calm presence of mind. Tranquility is a static manifestation of valor while daring deeds are dynamic. A truly brave man is ever calm; he is never taken by surprise; nothing ruffles the calmness of his spirit. In the heat of battle he remains cool; in the midst of catastrophes he keeps a level head. Valor and honor, alike, require that we should retain as enemies in war only those such as prove worthy of being friends in peace. When valor attains this height, it becomes akin to Benevolence.

The question arises: If I develop to a certain spiritual level, does the sword lose its usefulness, and, instead, become a weight around my neck? I will only say this much more: I believe that only the one who has sufficient courage and compassion to erase the distance between subject and object, between the "we" and the "them," has the authority to draw the sword. Only if one is willing to, by putting himself in the place of his "enemy," doing so compassionately - willing to feel the piercing of one's own living tissue with that cold, terrible steel - only that one has the right to plunge the blade into the heart of that "enemy." Ultimately, benevolence dictates the terms of warriorhood and swordsmanship. True warriorhood exists, in the final analysis, only as a function of spirit. §



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