

NEW MEXICO MEN'S WELLNESS

MAN ALIVE!



WINTER CALLS

WINTER EDITION 2018

Winter is a time of reflection, quiet and a move toward solstice. As we approach the longest night of the year, we also mark the beginning of the earth's slow nod toward the sun and the increasing light.

Winter may be a time of reflection, detail, attention, retreat; it may also mark a change in physical and emotional changes and influences. I believe that winter also calls to our ancestral connections from ages past. Clearly, it is a time of change and opportunity.

The theme, "Winter Calls" has resulted in a breadth and variety of submissions from many authors for which we are most grateful. The hope is that what resides in this winter edition resonates with the readers in a way that reminds us of possibility, creative spirit, community and support. Hopefully, it also will create a space that reassures us of our own slow return to the light, through sharing, generosity, kindness and community...enough to keep us 'warm' as human passengers on this tiny, blue planet.

This is our fourth publication, a year of contribution and creativity! Thank you all, contributors and readers for holding a place for Man, Alive! May the new year be one of peace and kindness. May we all reach out to others in the coming year to expand our circle, to continue to make a difference and to put back much more than we take out.

Blessings and thanks,

Hank



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Yellowstone Winter
Ray Warren Johnson

Geyser dodging in Yellowstone
as breeze picks up
steams us. Crystals
in light dancing on frosty
pines grasses firs
along the Madison.
Ever present mist obscuring
two bull elk grazing
obvious power in
muscle and mass.
Ice crusted big-time
bison head shoving aside
three foot snow drifts
for brown deficient grass.
Ancient moves plodding stares
we shudder click their
steady approach as though
our minds are final destination
when instantly lone coyote pops in
breaking crusted surface
stops to sit and scratch
hesitant on proceeding
unable to conceive mischief
at minus two below.



Norther
Hank Blackwell

Crescendo
clouds carrying
snow winds,
long awaited.
Thirsty grasses
stabbed by dagger ice
racing sideways;
ancient ones low
to the ground.
singing old songs
in sacred circles.
Brittle limbs
wave stiffly.
The storm passes,
howling so that
raven complaint
cannot be heard.
New light enters
from the north,
hung delicately
from heavy clouds.
Winter arrives
For its first visit....

A Winter Call for a Higher Purpose

Michael Chavez

I was born and raised in Santa Fe, but my spouse and I moved away after college. After successful careers we retired in Las Vegas, NV in late 2005, returned to New Mexico and settled in Pecos in May 2006. We bought a quarter acre in a small enclave high in the Pecos Wilderness and were among the first lot owners to build our house. Over the next few years several other retired and semi-retired LGBT couples built their homes close to us and we all quickly bonded and became family.

The ancient village of Pecos with a population of about 1,500 residents is located 25 miles west of Santa Fe. It's situated at an elevation of 6,924'. Pecos is an economically depressed rural community. Over 90% of the population is Hispanic. About twenty-five percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The median household income is \$24,135, substantially lower than New Mexico's MHI of \$45,674 or the national MHI of \$55,322. In this community hunger affect one in every five people and one in every three children.

In 2010, Ellen, a good friend and neighbor, asked me to help her organize a food pantry in Pecos. I agreed. Thereafter, the first Tuesday of every month became Food Pantry Day. For the first few months, which happened to occur during the summer and fall, the food pantry seemed to go fairly smooth. Then winter hit and that became the challenge.

Most often we used Ellen's full size pick-up as my Nissan Frontier didn't have the capacity to carry all the food pantry gear and supplies. That first Tuesday morning in January she picked me up at 8 o'clock. The temperature outside was 25 degrees. When I got in, the cab was still chilly as the heater was just beginning to throw out a bit of warmth. We drove down the mountain about four miles to the Pecos Valley Medical Center to load up the gear and supplies from the outside storage huts on the property. They included about eighty-five plastic collapsible produce crates which we use to hold the food provisions, nine folding wagons to help carry the food crates to our client's cars, plastic gloves, bags and other items we were going to need. The gear and supplies filled the entire bed of the truck and half of the passenger cabin. From there we drove another mile to Griego's Market. The market has an attached event's hall which the owner graciously allowed us to use to sort and distribute the food.

Unfortunately, the event's hall is old and rarely used anymore. It's dimly lit and has no working heater. By the time we arrived several volunteers were huddled together and waiting at the door. Charmagne and Susana were youngish mothers, and Julia and Frank, senior citizens who rarely missed a food pantry volunteer opportunity. A few minutes later John arrived. John has significant health issues, carries a portable oxygen respirator, and pushes himself to work as hard as any other volunteer.

We began unloading the truck and moving all the gear and supplies inside the hall. The hall that morning seemed colder than the air outside. Soon more volunteers arrived to help us open the produce crates and arrange them in the center of the hall. We would eventually fill each produce crate with plastic bags packed with different food items, then load the crate on one of the folding wagons and wheel it out to the client's car.

Despite the cold, by 8:45 that morning clients were already starting to line up on the opposite side of the building to ensure they got their food provisions. On this very chilly morning we handed out numbered tickets and recommended they wait in their cars or go back home and return at 10 o'clock when the doors opened.

About thirty minutes later the large commercial delivery truck from The Food Depot in Santa Fe arrived. The driver backed up about twenty feet from the event's hall door and volunteers began scrambling to unload the food. We never knew in advance what food products we would be receiving. The driver would unload huge cardboard boxes, the size of a toddlers play pen, stacked high with vegetables (bags of potatoes, peppers, carrots, onions, squash, or tomatoes,) or fresh fruits (bags of apples, oranges, cartons of strawberries, grapes or melons.) Dozens of cartons of frozen poultry and canned goods containing beef stew, green beans, corn, refried beans, canned tomatoes, tomato sauce, pasta, spaghetti sauce, peanut butter, or soup, were unloaded. There were always large containers of assorted breads, baked goods and many boxes of varied grocery products such as cereal, instant potatoes, pancake mix, pickles, rice, cookies, crackers and candy. Then there were countless cartons of juice and milk. Once we moved all the food into the event's hall and separated it into the different types, our next task was to inspect it, bag it in plastic bags, and put a collection of all the bagged foods into the produce crates. We discovered that the faster we moved, the warmer we got until many of us were eventually perspiring.

By ten o'clock the outside temperature had risen to the mid-thirties and the line of clients waiting to receive food provisions

was winding around the parking lot. There were many older clients who carpooled to the food pantry. Young mothers and fathers carrying their infants or tending to their small children were common, as were a range of young and middle-aged men and women, some clearly disabled. It wasn't uncommon to see clients standing in line holding on to their walkers or canes. Despite the cold, everybody seemed to be in good spirits, talking, joking and laughing, mostly speaking Spanish.

The logistics of getting the food to clients was simple. After clients checked in, they were handed a ticket which they gave to a greeter who then directed a volunteer to wheel a hand cart filled with food to the client's car.

It was during this time when the day was cold and miserable and gloomy that it occurred to me how desperate and grateful so many of our clients were to receive these food provisions. Having been born and raised in Santa Fe, I knew a great deal about the nature, make-up and personality of this largely Hispanic community. As I wheeled the carts and talked to the clients, many of them felt like family to me. I remember one older lady, a sweet, fragile grandmother who was obviously strapped, invited me to stop by her home for a meal, and then gave me a big hug after I finished loading her food. Walking back to the event's hall a tear trickled down my face.

By noon all the food had been distributed and our next task was to pack up all the gear and supplies into the truck, clean up the event's hall, drive back to the Medical Center and store all the gear and supplies back in the storage huts for the next month's food pantry.

Every first Tuesday thereafter, Ellen and I headed up the Food Pantry. Then in late 2013 my spouse, David, and I moved to Albuquerque. Presently, Ellen and her partner, Susan, along with a cadre of loyal volunteers, continue to host the food pantry, offering their spirit and heart to an amazing, resilient and appreciative Pecos community.

But First, I Cry
David Kuenzli

In 1993 my soulmate, Donna D'Andre, was dealing with the fact that she, genetically, had a high probability of contracting breast cancer. As a result, she had chosen to have a double mastectomy to reduce her risk of breast cancer. Later that year we attended a UNM Breast Cancer Annual Conference in which the keynote speaker's talk was based on her new book, "But First You Cry." We had both been invited to participate on panels, hers with a group of women discussing their experience with breast cancer and mine with a group of spouses and partners of breast cancer survivors.

As a songwriter, I came to the Conference having written a song with the title, "But First I Cry." After I sang the song to the small panel's audience, I was asked by the conference leader to sing the song for the whole Conference.

While I was touched personally by the lyrics when I wrote them in 1993, I was more profoundly affected in 2007 when my dear wife actually died from breast cancer after spending a year in hospice. It was a time of 'bitter-sweetness'. Bitter from knowing how short our time together would be. And sweet because we spent that precious time creating and sharing many special memories together.

I realize that the lyrics speak to all of us during the 'dark winters of our souls,' when we experience profound losses in our lives, when we doubt if the springtime of hope and new life will ever return.

Here are the lyrics of "But First I Cry":

"Sometimes life gives me more than I think I can handle
 That's when I ask myself, 'What do I do now?'
 What helps me make it through, is the Love I still feel from you---
 A love that holds me close and reminds me of what's true.

But first I cry. I must let those feelings flow.
I don't have to hold back the pain that's in my soul.
Somedays I don't feel strong. The nights all seem so long.
I know that life goes on, but first I cry.

Sometimes I wonder why my life's not how I planned it.
At times I doubt if I have the strength to go on.
What helps me make it through is the Peace I feel from you.
Thanks for being in my heart to remind me of what's true.

But first I cry. I must let those feelings flow.
I don't have to hold back the pain that's in my soul.
Somedays I don't feel strong. The nights all seem so long.
I know that life goes on, but first I cry.

I know Winter, Winter turns to Spring.
Maybe then my heart will sing.
But first, first I cry."

It has now been more than a decade since I lost my soulmate. More than ten winters have turned to spring. And her deep presence in my heart continues to inspire my heart to sing.



Ode for a Friend
Steve Kopelman

I think of all the things unsaid
And we all took for granted.
The unplayed music of our souls
The ideas not yet planted.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?q=label%3Asupport-group+padillas-label/Man+Alive>

The dreams that from the clouds descend
Like rain that's gently falling.

Into our streams of consciousness

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?q=label%3Asupport-group+padillas-label/Man+Alive> Forms visions softly calling.

Like a river softly flowing
Like the wind blows in spring.
Like a raven winging to her nest
You're a part of everything.

Now that it's time to bid farewell
And to let your soul take flight.
I'll miss you greatly my dear friend
Good night Samuel, good night.

Road Food
Timothy Hallford

Brother E Clayton West, who was with us at the Ghost Ranch Retreat was leaving Santa Fe and a lifetime of providing music as a very talented bard. He barely had enough money left to pay his bills and get to North Carolina to live with his daughter and granddaughter. I was going to a last goodbye gathering and went to the local ATM machine to get some cash for Clayton. When I got there, there was \$40 in the till of the machine. I waited for about ½ hour at the machine, waiting for the last customer to come back and get their cash. They never came back and I immediately recognized this money was for Clayton. I took it to the gathering and gave it to Clayton, he declared the money would be used on his trek to North Carolina as ‘road food’ money. So I wrote the following poem.

“The glow of one warm thought is worth more than money.” Thomas Jefferson

I sought out the
Allpoint oracular ATM.
purveyor of energetic paper,
Provider of monetized freedoms,
to procure
that in the world,
One chooses.

There laying in its
glowing till,
2 perfectly flat,
Pristine Jefferson’s
Even before I entered my
Secret Code.

Someone else’s Paper
I waited for their hurried return,
they never came,
I smiled.

Synchronicity often
comes unexpectedly
provides what's needed
through an unseen,
yet Generous,
Universe.

My Dad used to say,
"your arse is bare
when you come into this world,
It will be bare again
when you leave it."
so, I figure,
all the rest,
In between,
Is just,
renting money.

So I excitedly carried
these Blessed
Rental Papers
to a Brother in need
instantly knowing
they were meant for him,
embarking on a new chapter
In his life
And not quite sure how he was going
to finance,
the Way to get there.

Accepting them
Into his pocket
he transformed them,
naming them as
"Road Food."
As he planned his travel
down that long highway,
his newest Destiny.

I write this,
Arse Bare,
Happy, Warm,
knowing I was Blessed
to be a Conduit,
for the
Magic Benevolence
from Beyond.

an Automated Teller,
an unwitting previous ATM Customer,
my wayfaring Brother,
and Myself
conspired to make
40 bucks,
Priceless,
filling a Stomach,
warming a few Hearts
And making a small part
of this World,
Brighter,
With a new Story
of
Exponential Abundance.



Winter's Whisper

Hank Blackwell

Crescendo clouds
growing with snow
Winds long awaited,
thirsty grasses
hoping to drink
Dagger ice crystals
whip along the ground
like old ghosts
Brittle limbs
wave stiffly
below the call of raven
New light emerges
from the north
hung delicately
in purple clouds,
calling names
of waiting places

First Snow

Hank Blackwell

It came last evening,
tapping the steel pitch lightly,
coaxing us to sleep.

This winter morning
the first snow greets the dawning,
hope awakening.

Winter Calls...for Light

Uwe Schroeter

I was born and raised in the Ore Mountains, a low mountain range in the German state of Saxony along the border with the Czech Republic. As the name implies, this region was a major center of the mining industry. Today, many former mining sites have become above- and below-ground museums and technical monuments. Most people around the world who have heard of the Ore Mountains, or Erzgebirge in German, learned about the region as the homeland of nutcrackers, incense smokers, candle arches and Christmas pyramids. Most importantly, there is a connection between the mining industry, these wooden arts and crafts, and the light they give during the holiday season.

For much of the history of the Ore Mountains, the mining industry was an important part of the economic base. The miner—especially in the winter time—rarely saw the sun. He started his descent into the mine while it was still dark outside, and by the time his shift was over eight, ten or twelve hours later, it was already dark again. For the workers in these pitch-black mining shafts, light was the symbol of life that was guarded and that was meant to secure a safe return above ground.

During the long winter nights, the burning candles that miners placed into the window sills of their living rooms illuminated their way home. Twirling, candle-powered pyramids were inspired by horse-powered hoists that lifted ore from the mines, and candle arches mirror the shape of the wood-supported mine entrances. The original nutcrackers were not soldiers, but mine foremen, a cunning reference to their treatment of miners. Many of the figures, themes and motives of the woodworking treasures that originate in the region today still include mining scenes and symbols and could not be imagined without the accompanying lights in the form of candles or their electric equivalents of modern times.

At no other time of the year do the lights in the Ore Mountain region shine brighter than during the Advent and Christmas season. One can experience this at the ubiquitous Christmas

markets in every large city. These lights shine from the building-sized mechanical pyramids in many central squares with large figures contributed by local woodworkers. And even in the smallest of towns, every self-respecting Ore Mountainer will display illuminated decorations in the windows of his or her home. Through these joint efforts the Erzgebirge keeps century-old traditions alive and becomes a special place during the holidays through the creativity of local artists and the magical power of light.



Epitaph

Jim Connolly

Here lies Jim Connolly who, despite of much evidence to the contrary, chose to believe that life on this crazy planet in this crazy country has meaning and value in and of itself.

He discovered early that sanity is something prized by the boring and that a bit of insanity could be a path to wisdom.

He had some lifelong friends and lots of acquaintances he wished could have been friends.

He had a daughter so much like himself that he wanted to give her directions he knew she would have ignored.

He had several loves and continued to love and be thankful for them all. The last one loved him in spite of the others, and even through tough times, it was a love he cherished as life itself.

His mark may not have been as large as he wanted it to be, but it was distinctive. He was able to be helpful to some and in small ways assist them on their journey while learning from them at the same time, and for that he was very grateful.



Cold
Hank Blackwell

the ground heaves with cold
this dark winter,
contorting solid, frozen...
the ice is relentless,
will not retreat
and defies the sun
so it is that i
am visited by
a similar, stubborn chill:
an impudent, nagging
reminder
of the line between
frost and thaw.
The boundary where
the returns of my deeds reside
and wait for me
this cold, dark winter.



Winter Wanderings

Victor La Cerva

On my cold winter morning walk today, I found myself (where was I lost?) contemplating the concept of creating useful distinctions. An easy one to help grasp the idea might be the difference between needs and wants. Useful indeed to clarify the contrast between these—especially in intimate relationships! Another example might be between sorrow (primarily sadness) and grief (a more complex brew also involving fear and anger). Like the warmth of the sun on my face as I move along the path, such subtle refinements bring the light of awareness to ever-changing behaviors. Is there a practical useful distinction to be made between introspection, reflection, contemplation, meditation and mindfulness? They all imply an intentional calm inner focus, a process whose purpose is to generate a deeper awareness, a wisdom truth or insight that can be utilized in daily life. Clearly introspection, reflection and contemplation involve going over things in our mind, an active thinking process that can be helpful when examining an issue in our lives, or developing a strategy for moving forward a goal or specific task. There is usually a named key central issue – our state of health, our legacy, or a specific relationship – around which we cluster various exploratory ideas and feelings, hoping to elucidate some clarifying truth. We spiral out and back again, returning over and over again to the core inquiry.

Most forms of meditation attempt to cease active thinking, or make thoughts irrelevant. To discover what is there in the space between thoughts, or to transcend mind completely, perceiving through the “higher self,” the “oneness lens” or “spiritual heart” of the matter. Meditation often involves an anchor, a single point of focus, such as the breath, a sound, a mantra, a candle, a fire, the sun, or some other sound or visual from Nature. This helps to keep us be-ing in the present, without the interruption or corruption of thought. Mindfulness is a form of meditation wherein we nonjudgmentally bring our complete attention to the present experience on a moment-to-moment basis.

In this state we are noticing and paying attention to thoughts, feelings, body sensations, behaviors and movement—fully engaged in the here and now, with complete presence. It can be done anytime and anywhere and does not involve sitting and stilling the body.

To summarize – always a dangerous activity – I might conceive of reflection, introspection and contemplation as *engaging* with the mind's thinking process in a very intentional way. Meditation is *observing* mind, and mindfulness is a playing ball on running water conscious *directing* of mind to the present. Each brings its own form of clarity, but more importantly, each transports us to a central courtyard of awareness that is best described by the Sanskrit term **samprajanya**. Various translations as clear comprehension, clear knowing, fully alert, full awareness, a thorough understanding of impermanence, the concept is a large enough basket to contain all the elements of reflection, introspection, contemplation, meditation and mindfulness. External distractions easily sway us from contact with the source. How long will we wander in search of that which we already have? We access truth directly through our own experience. We may also arrive at its door through our capacity to reason, or even experience direct spiritual knowing beyond words, descriptions or rationalizations. But here is the key for me, found lying in the snowy musings of a winter walk: Change the channel of my awareness to the receptive mode. Listen deeply to whatever is revealed from the fountainhead of insight contained in the secret chambers of my being. Abide at the center of my essence. Hold the questions, like flower petals raining down on snow, precious and beautiful offerings on the altar of existence. Then gradually I can live into the answers I already possess.

WEB INSIGHTS--DO NOT MISS!

Masculine Wisdom weekly podcasts at
<https://heartsongs.podbean.com/>

BrainPickings by Maria Popova at
newsletter@brainpickings.org

New Mexico Mens' Wellness at
nmmw.org

BARNRAISING

This section is intended to hold a place for announcements of relevant events and happenings, as well as invitations for participation, support, in the fashion of pulling your neighbors and loved ones together for an old-fashioned barn-raising.

Remember that NMMW has partnered in brotherhood with NMMen (see nmmen.org) to co-sponsor FREE Bring a Buddy Events usually scheduled the second Tuesday of every month.

Please join us!

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Fruit of the Earth Natural Health

903 Early Street, Santa Fe 87505

Held in the back performance space.

