

NEW MEXICO MEN'S WELLNESS

MAN ALIVE!



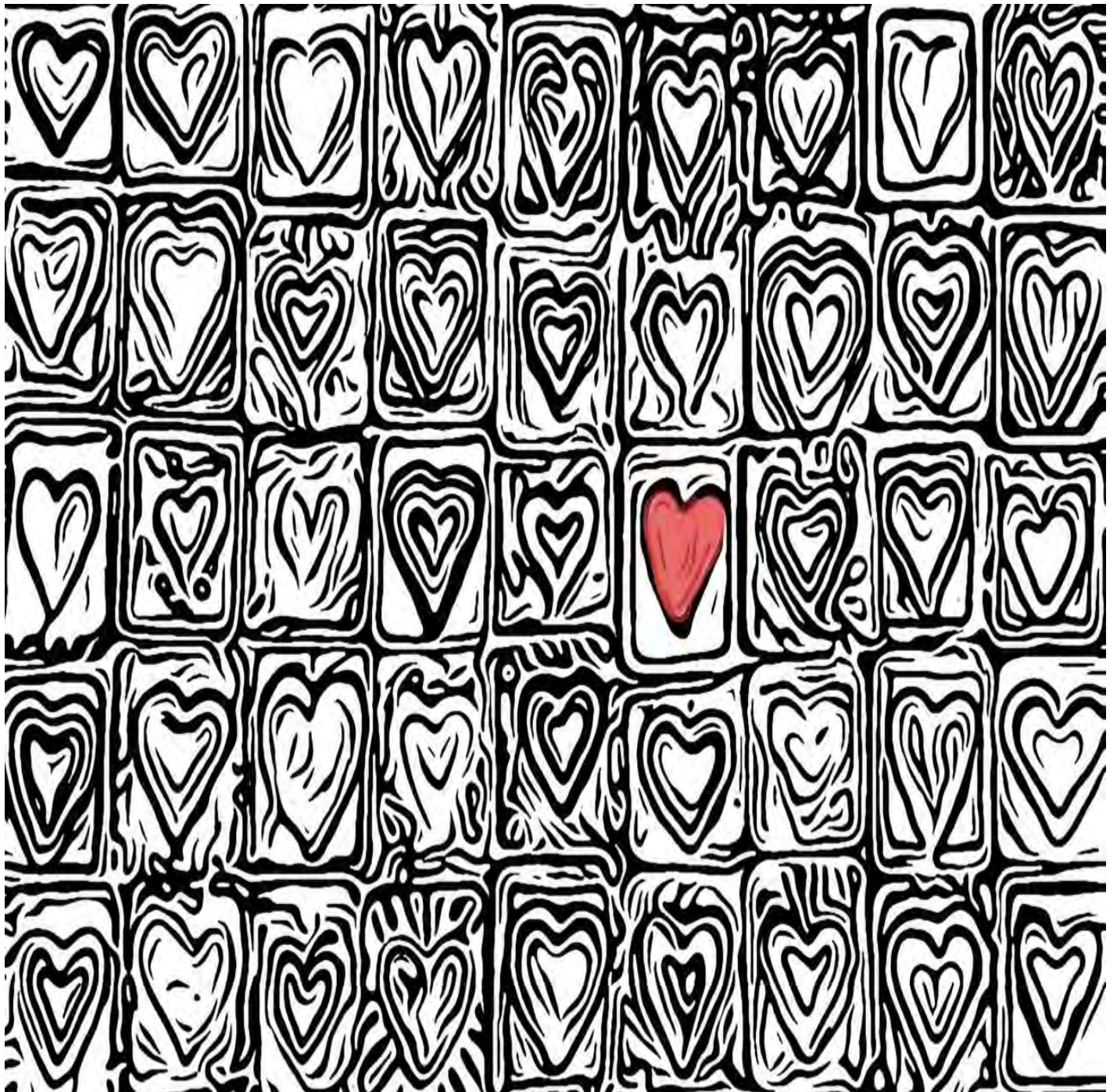
HOPE

SPRING EDITION 2019

The trees begin to wake with early buds. The sun's rise above the horizon is suddenly noticeable. Birds are warm enough to sing. The promise of sunlight and warmer days is announced by chevrons of cranes pointing north. All of these might be metaphors for hope, and sometimes, in darker times, hope might be the glue that helps all things remember their kindred-ness, their relation to one another. So, as we move toward the equinox, we offer the thoughts, feelings and gifts of hope from the men who have generously contributed to this spring edition of Man, Alive! May we continue to hope for times of peace, equality, beauty and compassion. May we embrace the possibility of connectedness and the thought of our resolve to awake and spend more time with and in our higher selves. Thank you to all of the contributors, to all of those incredible, generous individuals that have made these quarterly publications possible. It is my hope that this circle continues to grow both in contributors and readers. I remain grateful, optimistic, and indebted...thank you.

Blessings and thanks,

Hank



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Aging's Paradox

Jeff Hood

My mirror belies seventy winters.
Nor does my spirit shrink
from celebrating work and play.

Spending an hour in the ditch
with pick and shovel however
—no stranger in the past—
prompts a visit to the Doctor.

And despite ligaments coming undone,
my loved one's urges to slow down, rankles.

For these five fingered hands singing
through shoulder and back
arc up and around with all
the youthful power of the earth,
be it pick or maul or hewed spear.

And these breathing, bleeding, tree trunks of legs
love nothing more than pumping up the mountain
in anticipation of flying our way down.

I hope to end my days inhabiting the miracle,
singing, flying, crying, chasing my joy,
so eager to drink this earthy life.

all these years.
I think I'll skip this run
and sip hot chocolate in the cabin."

As long as you don't
expect me to stay home
on the next powder day.
Or abandon my worms,
hungry for the compost
I've taken such care
to prepare.

On Hope

Rand Lee

When a child is born into physical reality, from a psychological perspective it has no hope or despair, for it is aware only of the present moment and the universe of itself. When a child "hopes for" something, it is not hope that one speaks of, but desire: craving, wish, longing, which all humans possess from inception. If it were not so--if the human infant did not feel and communicate its cravings--it might well die before its caregivers, or those around it, noticed it needed anything. The same is true of dogs and cats and other domestic animals. At birth they live in the present, and their internal lives are characterized by desire: for the warmth of the body of the caregiver; for the milk the caregiver provides, or other sustenance; and for the chance to exercise, play, and learn from their environment and peers.

Hope and despair become conscious emotions or experiences when the child reaches the age when its brain is sufficiently developed for it to be aware of the passage of time, and when it is able to distinguish between self and others. This may take place by the age of 8 in many cases. This is why little children were able to play even in concentration camps. Fatigue, exhaustion, and terror were all available to them, but not despair as such, although they could become afraid and depressed at the despair of the adults around them.

We mention these things because to understand hope one must understand that hope, like despair, arise when one achieves the maturity to sense boundaries to gratification and also the possibility of a positive or negative outcome in time. Put simply, if I lack hope, it is because I lack a sense of support for some longed-for condition or goal of mine. To increase hope, therefore, it is necessary for me to increase my sense of support.

How does I do this, particularly when I am discouraged or depressed? By seeking out those who share similar beliefs to my own: similar values, similar cultural backgrounds, similar mindsets, similar thought processes, similar interests and experiences. As support grows, so does belief that positive outcome is possible. It is extremely difficult to rebuild one's sense of hope without interaction with other

sentient beings. It is very difficult to climb out of despair alone, or in isolation.

Twelve Step recovery programs work in part because they offer addicted individuals the hope that, if they work the introspective and self-revelatory meditative exercises expressed in the Twelve Steps, and find a sponsor and attend regular meetings with others like themselves, they will find relief from addiction. For it is a fact that despair can become an addiction: a habituated pattern of emotional response to life that is driven not necessarily by present difficulties, dramatic though they may be, but by the brain having become so drenched in force, threat, and blame in the past that it cannot right the chemical imbalances created by such drenching.

[OBJ]

To lift one's brain out of despair-drenching, one must begin by accepting that one is trapped in despair with a desire to learn from the experience. Then one must begin asking questions: How did I get into my present situation? What actions or inactions did I perform, and what strategies did I use, to create or fall prey to my present difficulties? By coming to grips with the physical and psychological processes that led to the choices that have led to one's force-threat-blame experiences, one then must begin inquiring into whether there are deeper forces at work—spiritual, intellectual, or evaluative patterns that are feeding into one's despair. If one asks and keeps on asking for enlightenment on this issue, one will certainly be rewarded with an answer or answers. And the answer or answers discovered will contain within them clues as to how one may escape from, or work with, the present difficulty that has led one to give up hope.

When light begins to dawn, and one begins to see the reasons physical and spiritual behind one's difficulties, one must then commit oneself to finding the path of Love through one's difficulties. How can I learn to love myself given the choices I have made? How can I learn to love my enemies to the extent to which they will allow and without violating myself in the process? Taking these questions to one's inner self, and to one's support systems (friends, family, doctors, counselors, teachers and so forth), one will eventually come up with a plan of action the sole purpose of which is to find the most direct route to

giving myself the solace, information, help and resources I need to change my difficult circumstance into one that is more life-affirming. For some persons (and some circumstances), science yields clues to the most direct route to harmony. For others, philosophy or religion; and for still others, the taking of practical physical action to find support for the next step in one's strategy for self-rescue; or a combination of the utilizations of all these tools.



Hope
Hank Blackwell

The ground is still soft
from summer rain.
Thunder still grumbles
behind the ridge.
This stand of Ponderosa,
swaying with monsoon wind,
long needles wet
with needed water,
safe, serene, sacred.
The elder is waiting,
branches high above the duff,
vibrant and patient.
rich with vanilla and wisdom.
There, relatives embrace...

Thou art the man
Robert Bern

Thou art the man
who often fails
his deluded plan
run off the rails
A man of art
who often swells
to open his heart
to what compels
A man thou art
who often fears
to finish his part
with dreams unclear
Thou art a man
who thinks these often
achieves what he can
and aims to soften

The Word Reality

Jim Connolly

The word Reality is over rated
It's one of those words that sits perched on your shoulder
Telling you what **is**, and what **is not**
Informing you that everything else is only wishful thinking
Reality is always pushing its viewpoint
Arrogantly believing that it is always right
with inside information that it brags about
But won't share or explain
Acting like its inside track on humdrum truth
somehow makes it more valuable
Or better than those frivolous made-up rivals
Fantasy, dreams, and imagination
Reality will insist you keep your feet on the ground
And move intently in the direction it has laid out
Shrewdly concealing that ultimately
Reality is no better than those other words
And that it gets a lot of attention because its rivals
Fantasy, dreams and imagination choose
To spend their energy on more interesting things
Than telling you what to do



On Life and Hope

Michael Chavez

August 3, 2017 is a day I will never forget. David, my spouse of 42 years,¹ was being admitted to the hospital for an operation. Two months earlier David had been diagnosed with laryngeal cancer. The doctor gave him one of two options; do nothing and most likely die within the year or opt for an operation. Stark options!

The operation was called a laryngectomy. In the surgery David's larynx (voice box) would be removed and an opening in front of his neck, called a stoma, would be created to allow him to breathe. The surgeon planned to fit a tracheoesophageal prosthesis (TEP) in the tissue between his windpipe and esophagus. The TEP could eventually help David speak again, although not higher than a loud whisper. Since David would no longer breathe through his mouth or nose, much of his sense of smell would be gone. Moreover, his esophagus would be narrowed and, consequently, his diet would be limited because of his reduced swallowing capacity.

As we tried to wrap those somber facts around our heads, the doctor hit us with another whammy. Our quality of life would be impacted. Some people who have had this operation become embarrassed and lose their confidence to go out in public, he told us. The change in appearance, the need to occasionally clear the stoma of fluids, particularly in the beginning, and the inability to speak well or to be heard or understood discouraged some people from socializing. Some laryngectomees become hermits in their own homes.

David was 67. Among our favorite fun things were traveling, dining out, entertaining friends and golfing. We're churchgoers. I have a Christian bent but scoop generously into Buddhist meditation and mindfulness traditions. Since retiring, our life's ship had navigated mostly calm waters. At the time we had one particularly close friend and neighbor who would come by for dinner and drinks several times a week and stay for hours. We'd sit on the patio, sip wine, tell stories and laugh hysterically.

¹ Although David and I have been together all these years, our nuptials occurred in 2013 with the passing of the Supreme Court's ruling on gay marriage.

Unfortunately, shortly after David shared the devastating news with our friend, she decided it was time to end the relationship.

As I sat alone outside one night trying to take in life's latest pitch, I was overcome by fear and anxiety.

In the days leading up to his operation we had seemingly endless appointments with Speech Pathologists and ENT doctors at the VA Hospital. They were giving David bags of supplies and advance instructions on how to care for his esophagus and stoma. Later, there were meetings with the Dietician and the Cancer Coordinator. Everyone we met with at the VA was pleasant, empathetic and extremely skilled in their work, and our appointments were always on time. In spite of the negative stories frequently reported about the VA, they rocked. In the evenings David and I would spend a lot of time talking and occasionally wiping a moist eye or clearing the lump in our throat. I bought a small tape recorder to record David's voice days before his operation so I could have a remembrance.

The operation, which occurred at UNM, took about six hours. David was scheduled to be in the hospital for two weeks, but within days of the operation he was up and walking the hallways. Because David was making such remarkable progress, greatly attributable to his resilience, the surgeon's superb skills and the hospital's consummate postoperative care, the decision was made to release him early. He left the hospital after only five days.

When I brought David back home he weighed 136 pounds. To say that anything would stay the same as before would be a huge understatement. It was like entering the same door to a different home. David couldn't speak so he communicated with a boogie board tablet. Our back and forth exchanges were difficult, frustrating and wearisome. He was taking his nourishment through a feeding tube at the time, which I administered five times a day. We bought an adjustable bed for the extra bedroom because he needed to be propped up when he slept. Throughout the night he would get up frequently to use the aspirator, a portable suction machine used to extract mucus and other fluids from his stoma. The aspirator made an ungodly rumbling racket. In the morning David spent hours cleaning and sanitizing his trach tube and stoma very carefully because the area was still extremely sensitive.

David was not in a good space and the slightest provocation set him off. Those months after his operation were the most difficult for me because we argued constantly. Most often the arguments were over trivial matters, like whether to open or close the blinds, or forgetting my dirty sox in the living room. But we were loath to confront the elephant in the room. That being, coming to terms with the new normal we were facing. Billy Crystal said it best: “Change is such hard work.” My stress and anxiety worsened. Sleep grew difficult. My sister became my sounding board, offering me encouraging feedback. At one point I got so angry that I had to leave. I drove to San Diego to be close to the ocean, walk the beach and look for a modicum of peace and serenity; something I desperately needed. I spent three days there.

The Speech Pathologist invited us to a support group of laryngectomees which the VA Hospital sponsors every two months. Since I usually shadow David to all of his appointments, I went to this meeting, as well. We met James, a young man half our age. James is slender, good-looking, and wears his thick black hair in a short pony tail. He is not a laryngectomee as his cancer had not been in his larynx, but on his tongue. In 2015 James had undergone two surgeries; the first to remove part of his tongue and the second to completely remove what was left of his tongue when the cancer reappeared. In the beginning it was difficult to understand James when he spoke, but the more I focused on his words, the clearer they became. Because of the nature of the operation James would never be able to eat or drink through his mouth. All his hydration and nourishment was taken through a feeding tube. Yet, despite this circumstance, James’ amusing manner and personality was infectious. His key to life, he said, was finding one thing to be grateful for every day and holding it throughout the day. Despite their burden, all the others in the room seemed to have similar positive, cheery attitudes. They offered us so much encouragement, practical advice and reassurance that we could overcome this glitch, intact. By the time we left the meeting, our souls had been touched. We were inspired in ways we couldn’t put into words.

In the time since the operation our life has gotten so much better. The people we’ve met on this journey have been incredible and the lessons and experiences we’ve taken, invaluable. Today David’s attitude is lighthearted, upbeat and laid-back. His appetite has even returned—he’s packing 172 pounds. His golf swing isn’t too bad, either. We regularly attend the VA support group meetings. Prayer, meditation and mindfulness have helped immensely. I’ve joined a men’s wellness group

with three great guys and together we keep the ball rolling. Throughout all of this, David and I have grown closer than ever before. We're still making adjustments to our new normal and while we don't do many of the things we used to do, we celebrate every day with joy and appreciation. As for any future squalls that happen to blow our way, my hope is that I navigate them with seasoned courage and self-assurance.



Scars
Hank Blackwell

I have watched the wounds
knit together, slowly
the rough edges of the tear,
like blanket ends,
searching for an even line.
The dagger wounds, though deep,
healed more readily;
cleaner edges than expected.
The ripped fabric, though,
leaves uneven scars,
sore to the touch;
distorted in appearance.
Of all of the woundings,
these last have been the most difficult.
Deeper, irregular,
they have been layered over
older ones, a knotty gauze
tying others together.
These are the roadmaps
Of my life,
Keeping me separate and apart.
Though I fear isolation
from this historical disfigurement...
unseen, deep inside this old body,
remains a grateful and loving heart...

I Am Broken

Michael Wilkinson

I am broken.

I've always known it. I never felt like I fit in, always the odd man out, on the edges of humanity, looking in.

I hated myself for this fracture, and thus made it worse. Why can't I be like others, who seemed to be able to relate to each other? What is wrong with me?

No matter what I tried, I seemed to repel others of my species.

Despite my best attempt, I alienated people. So, I finally settled on the obvious: I *was* an alien.

It made sense: if I took into account that I was not of this species, that I had somehow been seeded on this planet by incomprehensible beings, the disconnection was understandable. What didn't make sense was why. What was I supposed to be doing, anyway? Observing? Learning? Learning what? Accepting my possible immigrant status only helped so much.

Then one day in meditation, I learned something about myself: I am not an alien. I am a human being, indeed, but suffering from something I call pre-conceptual psychopathology. In short, my mother didn't want me. From the moment my father's sperm fertilized her egg, I was doomed. I was the last thing she needed at that point. Raised to be a Chicago-society debutante, she woke up one day in dusty Alamogordo, New Mexico, married to a man she didn't love, and pregnant.

She chuckles as she tells the story about her difficulty getting me to sleep. She would rock me until I fell asleep, but as soon as she tried to put me in my crib, I would wake and cry.

Under the humor, the truth was darker. She wanted me to go to sleep so she could get on with her life, and I knew it. She practiced Ferberizing, the current philosophy of child-rearing, where parents were encouraged to leave infants in their cribs and let them cry themselves to sleep. I dimly remember the darkness, the despair. No matter how loudly I cried, needing someone, anyone in that moment, no one came. I was all alone. In that emptiness and in the absence of my mother's love, I broke. My psyche, pre-verbal, pre-cognitive, was denied that primal glue that assembles an identity. Before I could make decisions, I decided that life wasn't safe, and that lack of safety

became my identity.

When I understood this about myself, things made more sense. This is what psychologists call attachment disorder. As we know from Harlowe's Rhesus monkey wire mother experiments, when robbed of that crucial initial bonding, all mammals turn psychotic.

So, I am broken. Accepting my fractures has been very difficult. Even now, at age 56, getting close to people is very difficult. It's as if my cells themselves warn me to keep my distance, almost like an allergy. The illusion of separation that I imagine many people feel is much thicker for me, a vaster distance, a harder armor.

This is why I practice aikido.

It is said that in order for true aikido to exist, the defender must be connected to his attacker. Embedded within that conundrum is the key. If I can learn to be connected to someone who means me harm, surely I can connect with my wife.

Each time I step on the mat to tie on my *hakama*, I feel that familiar cellular reaction. "What are you doing?" that voice says. "Are you crazy? You're going to try to connect with people? Again? Are you stupid? They're going to hurt you, you know. Open a little, and you'll see. These people will betray you, like everyone else has."

I bow to that voice, long familiar now, and continue to wrap myself into the voluminous samurai pants aikidoists use as outerwear. Each *hakama* has seven pleats, each representing ideals of samurai philosophy: benevolence, courage, justice, honor, loyalty, courtesy, and sincerity.

That voice notices that connection isn't one of them. "See?" it says, "You can do aikido, but you can stay disconnected. That's safer."

"Maybe so," I retort, "but I'm going to do my best to connect anyway."

When my cherished vase breaks, I am faced with a choice: repair or chuck? If the answer is repair, the choice is what glue to use. If I use epoxy, sure enough it will be "fixed." But my eye, primed for negativity and lack, sees only the crack. In my perception, because of the break, it will never be whole again.

In Japanese culture there is a concept called *kintsugi*, the art of golden joinery. If I take the shards to a master of this art, he will "glue" the pot together, but instead of epoxy, he will use a thin seam of gold, copper, or platinum. This creates a striking visual contrast between the color and texture of the vase and the shine and glow of the metal. Thus "repaired," the vase becomes more beautiful broken than it was whole.

So it is with my heart. Broken from conception, I have tried every type of adhesive there is. Nothing worked for long. But now, three days a week, I strap on my courage, my benevolence, my honor. I wrap myself in a garment that asks me to do the thing I fear the most, and thus continue the painstaking process of putting myself back together, a vessel that someday might, scandalously and radically, honor its purpose, and carry water.

The Meditation Retreat

Doug Booth

The meditation retreat in Burma (Myanmar) ended on a challenging but happy note. (*Warning: this report contains some vivid descriptions, which some may wish to avoid*).

Dogs are generally treated badly in Burma. Seldom do they become pets for humans and more rarely do they live inside homes. They are treated pretty much like vermin. Even at the monastery, a dog's unhappy lot is often explained as due to their "bad karma" from a previous existence - but this is changing. Several dogs were fed regularly by the resident nuns, and they became trusting enough that we could pet them when they got to know us. But, the greatest achievement involved a dog who had apparently escaped from its owner who had tied a braided wire around his neck to confine him. He had managed to break the wire, but in the process, and over time, the wire became imbedded in his neck. When we saw him he was wandering the monastery grounds searching for food, with the wire trailing behind him. One day I saw that the wire had gotten looped around his foot, so that with every step he jerked the wire, further injuring his neck. The wound was developing gangrene.

Clearly, something had to be done, so one of us spoke to the Sayadaw (abbot) of the monastery, who was moved by our concern and spoke in a following talk of caring for all beings. We decided on a plan to catch the dog, inject an anesthetic, remove the wire, scrub his wounds clean and inject strong antibiotics. We bought the medications from a local vet, who loaded them into syringes. The dog slept under the meditation hall, but after several tries to catch him, we were unable to get close enough to inject him. He just snarled and ran off.

Then the retreat ended, but two animal-loving yogis, my New Zealand friends Maya and Andy Spence, were staying on an extra day. On that last day they managed to corner the dog, catch him and inject him without getting bitten.

They held him until it passed out from the anesthetic, then cleaned his wounds thoroughly and removed the wire, which by then had lodged several inches into the dog's neck. As they cleaned the wound and injected antibiotics the dog began to regain consciousness, so they had to hurry.

When they finished, leaving the dog to wake up fully, they saw him begin to wag his tail.

He's still wary of humans, but one of the nuns now feeds him three meals a day - he's become a favorite.

We celebrated with a week of snorkeling off the coast of a Thai island.

We named the dog with the honorary Burmese prefix, "U Doggie."



Speaking Up

Larry Ribnik

The first time it happened, I was pleasantly surprised. A couple of years ago I was at a fund raising dinner for the renovation of our local town hall, a beautiful old school building no longer used as a school. At the start of the dinner, a person I vaguely knew of (Joe) gave a convocation and used, in various approximations, the words, "Jesus Christ, our lord," or "in the name of Jesus Christ our lord." Although being raised Jewish, and definitely not being Christian, in the past I had never spoken up about such public speeches. I can remember being at my 40th high school reunion a decade and a half ago, where a classmate gave a similar convocation. I was sitting next to my best friend from high school, and I knew he was not Jewish. He was incensed at the presenter's assumption we were all Christian, and I don't think it was on my account. My best friend did nothing that I was aware with his anger, nor did I with whatever feelings I had. There were other instances when I remained silent. Somehow, when it happened at the town hall, something was different for me. After the convocation, I approached Joe and told him I felt left out with what he had said because I wasn't Christian and Jesus Christ was not *my* lord. He apologized, and we spoke at length about being inclusive in one's attitude, speech and actions. It was a very pleasant interaction with much agreement. As I remember, we continued to converse for a short time thereafter.

It's important to know Joe and I live in (or near) a very small community, population 300. So it's not unusual for Joe and I to see each other in our normal activities. Our interactions thereafter indicated that Joe and I had formed a friendship that was beyond what could be described as "casual acquaintance." We had a connection.

This "process" of connection seemed to me to be an anomaly until a few weeks ago. A men's group I belonged to before I moved away has a car camping event regularly the last weekend of August. I attend fairly

consistently, and attended in 2013. One or two men take responsibility for preparing a breakfast or a supper. Jonathon and Mike had prepared Friday night's supper. I had felt somewhat less connection with Jonathon than with most of the other men in the group, and there were times in the past when I resented him for taking the group on a "spiritual journey" (sometimes lasting an hour or more) without asking us. When Jonathon said he'd like to offer a prayer before dinner, I strongly (I thought) asked that it be VERY non-sectarian. I'm sure you're guessing what mostly occurred: Jonathon's prayer had "Jesus Christ, our lord" and (this I remember distinctly) "in the name of Jesus Christ." I'm sorry to say I wasn't quite as polite (maybe I felt safer in this group of men) and told Jonathon I resented his use for all of us of "Jesus Christ, *OUR* lord," and that I didn't do anything in the name of Jesus Christ. Earlier in the day, I had divulged that my Hebrew name was "Shalom." Jonathon and Darrell (also with whom I had felt less connection) approached me using my Hebrew name with its meaning of peace. We were able to discuss my anger; Jonathon apologized; and Darrell was there to support my sobbing relief on his shoulder at not having been rejected by the group for expressing myself. Darrell made the comment that he supported my speaking my truth. I think speaking up had drawn me closer to Jonathon, Darrell and Mike

One final example of speaking up, this one with no religious content: I had been backpacking in a party with Ben a number of times and avoided being near him because he would constantly interrupt me. I could not get a complete sentence out, much less a complete thought. My only contact with Ben was in this context. About the third or fourth time we were out, I finally worked up the courage to tell him how much his interruptions bothered me. In a private setting at a campsite, I let him know. I was amazed when Ben said he had no idea he was interrupting; he apologized and agreed to listen to me at the very moment when I felt interrupted. He was interested in changing this behavior. For the rest of the trip I felt closer to Ben than to other members of our party. We also had some very meaningful conversations.

The aftermath of my speaking up in these three situations was a much closer connection with Joe, Jonathon, Darrell, Mike and Ben. So this is looking like a pattern. Speaking my truth—that is, speaking up—especially when in conflict with the situation, creates a connection unlikely to have occurred if I had remained silent.

(Names throughout have been changed.)

From Boddhisatva
Raymond W. Johnson

When you step into the ring
with intention that you bring
you'll hear the sing song sing
of Boddhisatva.

With what spark and thrust you enter
the rope box ring assuring the outcome
with a resounding ding
from Boddhisatva.

Eye to eye you cling
as your heart takes sudden wing
with the stoic ushering
by Boddhisatva.

And you gift an offering
a bona fide magic ring
you hear the register's ching-ching
from Boddhisatva.

Men's Wellness Saved the Day
Poem/Song, (with a Texas Twang)
Todd Tibbals

Well, I live in a Texas holler; and I ain't seen many a dollar;
I'm not long on looks, and I don't read books; and my clothes are
strictly blue collar!!!

I guess you'd call me R-Rated; and my trailer park ain't gated;
And when it comes to learnin', I ain't got much yearnin'; and I'm sure
not sophisticated!!!

It was 2009 no doubt, and I'd just about bottomed out!!
The wife had done split; my pickup got hit; and they downsized my job
at the Stomp n' Shout!!

CHORUS: Men's Wellness saved the day; I learned to put my real self
on display; I now hug other men, and eat tofu now and again! Men's
Wellness saved the day; in a sensitive new age way; where you don't
have to get lit; and the feelings are legit; and red necking don't even
pay!!!

My life was low down and dire; and then I seen this here flyer; saying
"come take a chance, and learn to advance", by getting with men who
fly higher.

I was tired of being a boozier, and a genuine first class loser.
So, I got into a shuffle, packed my duffle, and caught me a Greyhound
cruiser

Well, I liked the Ghost Ranch view; as I stepped off near Abiqui!
And I didn't wander far to meet the conference registrar, who pointed
to bunkhouse #22.

There were fellas here there and everywhere; old and young; and some
with funny hair. Around my neck they put a sort of lariat; saying I'm
now in the sacred clan of the Bear!

CHORUS:

Men's Wellness saved the day; I learned to put my real self on display;
I now hug other men, and eat tofu now and again! Men's Wellness
saved the day; in a sensitive new age way; where you don't have to get
lit; and the feelings are legit; and red necking don't even pay!!!

Next come this big ass circle, that was out of sight; with a funny
lookin' stick, that gave ya the right, to be a klutz, or spill yer guts;
lastin' well on into the night!

Next morn I still had the butterflies, as they broke us into gangs of a
smaller size! But I was ready to flee, as we sat knee to knee; 'cause I
couldn't hardly look nobody on the eye.

Finally I spun some tales; about my life in and out of jails; and they
were all ears, with even some tears; this strangest bunch of males!!

As looked around at these mugs; I didn't see no thugs; but real dudes,
with all of their moods; and ready for lots and lots of hugs!!

CHORUS:

Men's Wellness saved the day; I learned to put my real self on display;
I now hug other men, and eat tofu now and again! Men's Wellness
saved the day; in a sensitive new age way; where you don't have to get
lit; and the feelings are legit; and red necking don't even pay!!!

Meal times were a nice break; but sometimes I felt like a fake;
With lots of doubts about eating sprouts; when what I really wanted
was a chicken fried steak!!

Later my belly was still churny; when this guy says "Hey Ernie, let
there be no doubt that you can trip, out on this here sweat lodge
journey"!!

So, with real anticipation, I joined the great Lakota Nations; I got
myself naked, and didn't have to fake it; as I poured it out to All My
Relations!!

I was still feelin' a little shifty; but what happened next was mighty
nifty. I've always been a welder; but now they say I'm an Elder; 'cause
I passed the magic age of fifty!!

CHORUS:

Men's Wellness saved the day; I learned to put my real self on display;
I now hug other men, and eat tofu now and again! Men's Wellness
saved the day; in a sensitive new age way; where you don't have to get
lit; and the feelings are legit; and red necking don't even pay!!!

Well, I was gettin' over being shy; so Saturday night was one big high.
On the book shelf I found some poems that was bound; so I did a
reading from Robert Bly!!

By now it seemed like I'd been here about 10 nights; but Sunday morn
'twas time for last rights. We drummed up and ending; and left
nothing pending; as we hugged and hugged to great new heights!!

Well, in the end it wasn't such a battle; as I felt mostly at home in
this new saddle. So, I packed my sacred dirt, and my cool tee-shirt;
and then I did skedaddle!!

Well back here in Texas there isn't a day that I don't think about the
Ghost Ranch soiree; so I tip my Stetson, and shun my Smith and
Wesson, in honor of the Men's Wellness way!!!

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The traveler: not so far from home
Cyvil Burks

Slowly drifting along
A four lane black top
Bordered on each side by
Stunning views that
Captivated the eyes
Flooding the mind with eager delight
Sure tendrils of urban confinement
Will be left behind

Turns are meant
To be known, not discovered
When the beauty of the road
Slowly abducts the traveler
Away from the intended destination
Seduced by lines on winding curbs
The traveler is
Lulled into a false sense of
Temporary calm
But you're lost

Remember ...
Remember ...
Okay ...

Course change in the vast
Beauty of trees
The traveler drinks in
A changed state of mind
Rest begins to drape over shoulders
As though covered by a welcome cloak
Penetrating down in the soul
Peace arises to fuse itself
To the fabric of one's being

In a welcoming space
Fire crackles in the hearth
Sparks explodes among
Multi colored flames licking at the air
Aspen logs fuel the Warmth
That draws the traveler in
To shed the vestige
Of things left behind

Humming is heard above
Soft strumming of strings
Attached to refined wood
A peaceful mood fills the air with
Hope, expectations, and things looked for
Rise on each note in the song
That settles gentle upon the ear
And soothes the restless spirit within

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.

The annual Couples Retreat sponsored by New Mexico Men's Wellness opens for registration at Noon today. March 1, 2019. The retreat is limited to 12 couples (including the leaders). We have set up an online reservation page that will enable people reserve a spot at the Retreat beginning at noon on March 1. No payment is required to make a reservation, but reservations entered before noon WILL NOT be accepted. To find out about the retreat, please see the main retreat page at <http://www.nmmw.org/couples2019>. At the bottom of that page is the link to the online reservation page.

After the page has be filled out and submitted, the first couples entered will be contacted with information about how to complete the payment (either online or by check). This will insure that everyone has a chance at the limited places available.

The Couples Retreat is a great way to enhance your relationship in a safe and supportive group, and we hope you and your partner will consider participating. We hope to see you there.

Robby Beck and Gina Windle
Couples Retreat Facilitators

Please save the date for the NMMW Father-Daughter Gathering from Friday, May 31st at 3:00 pm through Sunday, June 2nd at 1:00 pm at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu NM.

The Father/Daughter Gathering offers a safe space for Fathers and Daughters to explore their special relationship away from daily life.

"It opened windows into a different way of seeing and being with each other and has changed the dynamic of our relationship completely!" – Past participant
More information coming soon!

There's a young poet in the area, Timothy P. McLaughlin, and you can subscribe to his newsletter at:

poet@timothypmclaughlin.com

Todd Tibbals, a frequent contributor to Man, Alive! and long-time NMMW participant and supporter has been selected to show his art at the Master Works of New Mexico, Friday, March 29, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Expo New Mexico Hispanic Arts Building in Albuquerque, 300 San Pedro, NE. Let's support Todd!

Please join us! Santa Fe and Albuquerque gatherings; check NMMW website.

Aarin Richard will be participating in the upcoming art exhibit at the Fuller Lodge Art Center in Los Alamos, NM. Two of his paintings plus one photograph were selected for this juried show.... "Sentinels Of The Sacred Belief", "Deviare" and "Winter Arroyo de Santa Fe #6".

The exhibit opens this Friday, March 8, with an opening reception from 5 - 7 and runs through April 20. Aaron will be at the opening. If you are in the area during the next six weeks, please stop in and check it out. The gallery is located at 2132 Central Ave, Los Alamos, NM.

More of Aaron's work can be viewed at: <http://aarinrichard.com>

Seeking the Wild Heart, a wilderness quest for men in northern New Mexico June 4-14, 2019 in a secluded forest location approximately 3 hour drive from Santa Fe. *We extend an invitation to all who identify as men to join us in the wilderness to seek your heart in the heart of nature, and claim your gifts for the benefit of yourself, your communities, and the world. Through storytelling, creative expression, council practice, and living simply on the earth, you'll reconnect with yourself and with what you need right now in your life. As our ancestors from many cultures have done, you'll walk alone into the wild and discover the awesome magic and power of turning to the earth with the needs, yearnings, fears and dreams of your life. After this period of solo time, you'll return to the sanctuary of our small group where you'll spend the next few days understanding more deeply the teachings nature has offered you and how they fit into your life. For more information visit: wildernessquests.com or email Munro Sickafoose: munrosickafoose@gmail.com

Remember that NMMW has partnered in brotherhood with NM Men (see nmmen.org) to co-sponsor FREE Bring a Buddy Events once a month in both Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Please join us, alone or with a friend. Check the regular e mail announcements sent by NMMW for details. To get on the emailing list, just e mail Uwe: uweschroeter@comcast.net

