

TRANSITIONS

JOURNAL OF MEN'S PERSPECTIVES

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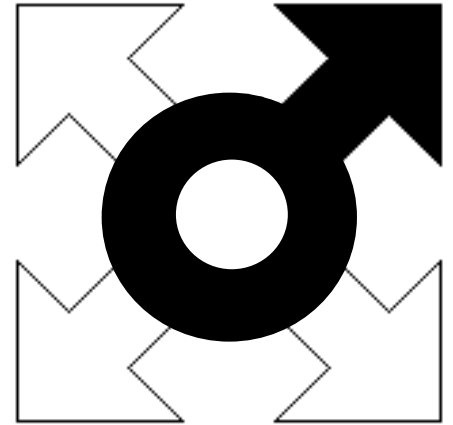
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The Father's Day I Wish For

By Dr. Linda Nielsen

As a 55 year old daughter, what do I wish for Father's Day? Foremost, I wish my father was still alive. I don't have to wish we had loved each other. We did. I don't have to wish we had been proud of each other. We were. I don't have to wish we had resolved the conflicts that plagued us during my twenties. We had. I don't have to wish he had been spared a painful or lingering death. He died quickly and unexpectedly one winter evening -- toppling forward in his reclining chair after eating a bowl of chocolate ice cream, my mother nearby knowing immediately that he had died -- instantly, peacefully -- just after saying "that was good, Fran".

And yet I wish -- I wish we had been more comfortable and open talking about the things that mattered most -- the personal, significant parts of our lives like my divorce, his being a grandfather, his childhood, the deaths of his parents and his lifelong friend Paul, his aging, spirituality, regrets, fears, hopes and plans for the future -- mine and his. And as Father's Day approaches, again I am reminded that my father and I were most relaxed with each other when other people were around and when the TV was on. And it was always harder for me to choose a gift for him than for anyone else I loved. Why was that?

Now I know why. And so I wish -- I wish I had realized that *loving* my father was not the same as *knowing* him -- and that *loving* him was not the same as allowing him to *know* me. Had I really *known* my father, choosing gifts

for him would have been easier. And had I known *how* to get to know him, spending quiet time alone with each other would have

been a relaxing pleasure. *Loving* one another was easier than *getting to know* one another -- easier than exploring and sharing the real "stuff" of our lives.

Why? Why didn't I make time to be *alone* with my father? Why didn't I ask him meaningful questions or explore his life and mine with him? I wasn't a kid. I was 40 when he died. Besides, I'm a psychologist, a professor, an author. I'm good at getting people to open up and engage in meaningful conversations. Sure, Dad could be sullen, difficult, withdrawn, moody. But I've gotten to know plenty of people with those traits better than I got to know my own father.

So what was I thinking all those years -- that because he was a man or because he was my father, he wouldn't want us to get to know one another better? That he would refuse to tell me anything important about his life? That he didn't have anything wise or insightful to share with me? That he didn't have the ability to be self-disclosing or introspective? That even if I was sincere and persistent, he would laugh at me or reject my attempts to be more emotionally intimate?

And so I wish -- I wish for a Father's Day where I would spend hours *alone* with my father, asking the personal, meaningful questions that I have spent the years since his death trying to teach other daughters to ask their fathers. I wish I had fully *embraced* my father, rather than simply loving him.

Dr. Nielsen is a Professor of Adolescent Psychology & Women's Studies at Wake Forest University Winston in Salem, NC and the author of Embracing Your Father: Building the Relationship You Always Wanted With Your Dad. See her website at wfu.edu/~nielsen.

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Editor's Comment

I'm going to take off my editor's hat for a moment and address you as national secretary. The board had its annual teleconference a couple weeks back, and as usual we held elections. As a result, we have a new president, Michael Rother. Here is his first news bit, which I grabbed from his posting on the NCFM newsgroup. I don't think he realizes yet that he's responsible for *Transitions* news. <grin>

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

(by Michael Rother)

June 12th was the date of the annual NCFM teleconference. Among other things, we elected new officers for the coming year. Our new slate of officers is as follows:

President: Michael Rother

Vice President: Stanley Green
Treasurer: Deborah Watkins
Secretary: Jason Leatherman
PR Director: Steven Svoboda

Congratulations to our new president and vice-president! Everyone on the board was very excited that they volunteered to take on these positions. Michael and Stanley are two very motivated and talented individuals, and I look forward to their leadership over the next year.

On a sadder note, at this teleconference we also had to bid farewell (at least for now) to two of NCFM's greatest leaders and contributors, Tom Williamson and Pradeep Ramanathan. They are both faced with great responsibilities in their personal and professional lives, and therefore must take leave of NCFM.

I know I'm not alone when I say they have both been great inspirational

activists. They have brought NCFM to where it is today, and I hope they will return.

Ok, time to put the editor's hat back on. *Transitions* is in need of writers. The submissions I get are wonderful, and I thank everyone who has searched themselves, poured their feelings into articles, and then submitted them to be printed. However I think the newsletter would benefit from a few columnists who could contribute on a regular basis. If you have the time and desire to educate your fellow NCFM members, please contact me at jwleath@yahoo.com.

I hope everyone had a Happy Father's Day.

Jason Leatherman

Has ACFC Abandoned Fathers?

By KC Wilson

I have great admiration for Stephen Baskerville. For almost two decades he has contributed a disciplined academic voice to the defense of fathers and families. His articles have appeared in prestigious publication such as *Political Science* and *Politics and Society*, and he has been tireless in seeking the publicity we need.

In January, 2004, Baskerville became president of the American Coalition for Fathers and Children (ACFC), and has inspired a vigor and direction to this previously marginal group that has seen its membership and activities mushroom.

But what is that direction? One would think that a father's advocacy group would be asserting the equal importance of fathers in their children's lives. Instead, their recent ad in the *Washington Times* (www.acfc.org/advertisingcampaign.htm) and Baskerville's articles as president of ACFC all focus on no-fault divorce and marriage. ACFC seems to see easy divorce and government bureaucracy as more the enemy of fathers than the perceptions behind their implementation. ACFC may be

headed in a similar direction to the Nation Fatherhood Initiative (NFI): not so much a father advocacy group as an anti-divorce group.

I believe marriage is very important. In this superficial, materialistic world, anything that promotes fundamental human attachments is badly needed. Further, no-fault divorce begs many issues not convenient to many to acknowledge, and Baskerville eloquently addresses them. But marriage is its own, separate set of issues from fatherhood and family. They are not one and the same, and if taken so, one undermines the other. Let me explain.

Family is defined by blood. We are biological beings and need to know our biological roots. Marriage, while an important social institution, is exactly that: a social institution. It is bred of adult choices, not blood.

Using marriage to define family, instead of blood, strikes me as the root of the problem we all face: A man is only a father within a marriage; Dad as subordinate parent. He is subordinate to marriage and /

or the mother. This is not Dad as equally primary in his own right, with his own unique, independent contribution to the child's welfare, growth, and life. The latter statement (equality of parenthood) would be my choice for a father advocacy group.

The very reason the courts are a problem is that society says, "When a marriage ends, so does the family." Marriage is taken to define family instead of the genetics that does. There is no longer an integral social entity so it's up to us (society) to do what we please with the resulting parts, thus destroying that natural, real integral social entity for the child. We have made divorce into the end of the child's family, when it is the very time its family should be most actively defended.

The 2001 census found that one-third of all children born in America that year were born out of wedlock. I saw an NFI paper that declared that one-third of all children were born fatherless.

I'm no biologist, but I don't think one can be born fatherless any more than

born motherless. Isn't this exactly the perception and treatment problem we face?

You see the problem with using marriage to define family, and the difference between defending marriage and defending fatherhood and family? It hardly matters if we reduce the divorce rate if whatever number of divorced or never-married fathers are not considered, and hence not treated, as the fathers they naturally and eternally are. And why are non-wedlock children not equally entitled to both parents? The Children's Rights Council is one of the few family advocacy groups I know of that can legitimately call itself that because they explicitly include never-married families among their constituents. Suddenly, ACFC's focus is not fathers and fatherhood nor even families, but marriage and divorce. However much both may be valid issues, I believe it's important to keep them distinct.

Besides, if the objective is to reduce the divorce rate, a 1997 study by Guidubaldi and Kuhn showed that practical application of equality in divorce (a presumption of equal parenting) does exactly that. The higher the level of joint custody, the greater the fall in the divorce

rate. So there may be some confusion between the dog and its tail.

Another reason to keep issues of marriage and fatherhood distinct is to avoid the trap of political polarization: left versus right. I believe it would hurt the cause of equal parenthood (and play into reactionary Feminists' hands) if we allowed ourselves to be characterized as right-wing reactionaries seeking to use marriage to control women and children. (I know it's not true and in any case is nothing compared to what many women use for control. That's not the point. The point is avoiding political polarization over fatherhood and the family.) On the other hand, few things hold more universal appeal than equality.

No-fault divorce and evil government, however valid or not, are right wing issues. Fatherhood is universal. It can and should be treated as its own issue. It is the difference between advocating for families and for marriage.

Men go to the doctor one-fourth as often as women. While we men continue to fall all over ourselves to give women all manner of protection, such as the Violence Against Women Act and Title IX, we forget to protect ourselves. Fathers do not have

equal protection in divorce. We are not regarded as having equal value, particularly by most men. Equal regard for fathers would seem a more reasonable objective for an organization calling itself a coalition for fathers and a family advocacy group.

I would assert a child's right to both parents, equally, irrespective of marriage. (And irrespective of parental conflict, I might add.) Not any rights of parents, and nothing to do with social relationships such as marriage, but that regarding both parents as equally valuable and needed by children is the reason both should be treated with the apparently un-American notion of equality. Advance this revolutionary social concept and the laws and practices will follow.

KC Wilson is a columnist and author of Co-parenting for Everyone: Context Definition Co-parenting, Male Nurturing: Is There Such a Thing and Does it Matter, The Multiple Scandals of Child Support, and other e-books on family and gender issues. See his site at wheres-daddy.com.

TRANSITIONS

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NCFM Awards for 2004

By Michael Rother

Although we had a slight delay in issuing our annual awards for 2004, I'm happy to report that they have now been delivered to their winners. Read on for more information about our honorees.

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF MEN'S ISSUES

MR. STANLEYA. GREEN

Mr. Green is an internationally-recognized spokesman for male victims of domestic violence and a certified advocate for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Mr. Green's workshops and presentations emphasize the human aspects of intimate violence, stepping away from the polarization of gender-wars stereotypes. Mr. Green was one of the first male survivors of domestic violence to break the silence on a social problem which many claimed did not exist. Nationally-syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker wrote of Mr. Green as "the battered male's poster boy." He has been interviewed regarding gender issues by ABC "20/20," "The Oprah Winfrey Show," National Television of Chile, *Newsweek*, the Associated Press, and radio stations in the Los Angeles and Seattle areas.

He served for four years on the Legislative Committee of the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, and

has served on the Public Information Committee of the Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Council. He has conducted training on gender and sexuality bias issues for programs including the YWCA, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Four Quarters Institute, a First Nations training centre in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Christina Wolf, an honors graduate in psychology from Whitman College, writes, "Mr. Green is an excellent presenter who is obviously well-researched and passionate about what he teaches. He opens trainees' minds to looking at many angles of gender in domestic violence and sexual assault that are so often overlooked. He presents his material in a clear and interesting manner, easily engaging us in discussions of the issues."

Stanley Green has become the first male survivor of DV to be a keynote speaker at a mainstream, professional DV conference, which was held in April, 2004 at Ft. Benning and co sponsored by the University of GA.

The text of Mr. Green's award acceptance reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Rother,

I am honored to accept the 2004 award described in your letter of Apr. 29, 2005.

Stanley A. Green

AWARD OF HONOR MR. PETER ALLEMANO

Mr. Allemano is co-founder of our Greater New York chapter. He has shown extreme commitment to its success. Peter has also worked tirelessly helping to create activity for the chapter and has succeeded

in building ties with father's rights groups in the New York area. Peter has also done public appearances on our behalf. He appeared with Marc Angelucci on the "Phil Donahue Show." If you go to our web site and click on "Past Activity," you'll see a picture of Peter marching over the Brooklyn Bridge on NCFM's behalf during a protest. Peter has never asked national for any reimbursement for expenses.

The text of Mr. Allemano's award acceptance reads as follows:

Dear Michael:

Last night I received your May 1 letter about my being chosen for NCFM's Award of Honor for 2004. It feels great to have my work acknowledged by NCFM-national's Board of Directors in this manner, though I feel a bit amused by your reference to my "tireless efforts." Like any human, I do get tired — sometimes very tired! — and can only proceed with my "efforts" after I rest a bit and refresh myself, both physically and psychologically.

I am happy to accept the award.

For me, however, the best reward for my involvement in NCFM is the camaraderie I experience with fellow members and the stream of new insights they provide me into the realm of gender issues in general and men's issues in particular. Truly, my experience in activism is a journey of personal growth as well.

Peter Allemano

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING GENDER FAIRNESS IN THE MEDIA MR. GLENN SACKS

Mr. Sacks is a men's and fathers' issues columnist and a nationally-syndicated radio talk show host. His radio

Transitions Needs Your Talent

Transitions is always looking for your contributions in writing on issues affecting men. If you have an article or essay, please submit it for publication. Send all work to : **Jason Leatherman, Editor-in-Chief, at jlweath@yahoo.com**. Please put "Transitions" in the Subject line. Also, see <http://www.ncfm.org/writel.htm>.

show, "His Side with Glenn Sacks," can be heard on KMPC 1540 AM in Los Angeles and on KKOL 1300 AM in Seattle.

His columns have appeared in dozens of the largest newspapers in the United States, including the *Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsday*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, the *Orange County Register*, the *Newark Star-Ledger*, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Sacramento Bee*, the *Detroit News*, the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, the *Hartford Courant*, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the *Los Angeles Daily News*, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the *Salt Lake City Tribune*, the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, the *Providence Journal*, the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, *Insight* magazine, the *Washington Times*, and others.

He has made over 100 radio and TV appearances, including the "O'Reilly Factor," CNN's "TalkBack Live," "Fox News Live," "Fox News America at War," ESPN, the "Mike Gallagher Show," the "Michael Medved Show," the "Tom Leykis Show," "Fox News Live with Alan Colmes," the "Al Rantel Show," the "Gary Nolan Show," the "Charles Goyette Show," the "Bill Handel Morning Show," the Australian Broadcasting Company's "Morning Program," the "Michael Jackson Show," the "Chris Core Show," the "Stacy Taylor Show," the "Ricci Ware Show," the "WOR Morning Show" with Ed Walsh, the "Blanquita Cullum Show," the "Michael Graham Show," "Ken & Co." with Ken Minyard, the "Sterling Show," the "Michael Fleming Show," "American Family Radio," "America Live," the "George Noory Show," the "Dennis Prager Show," "Allred and Taylor" and "The Dolans."

Glenn's work is regularly featured or has appeared on hundreds of websites, including NewsMax.com, WorldNetDaily.com, BBC.co.uk, Heritage.org, Pravda.ru, JewishWorldReview.com, WorldTribune.com, CybercastNewsService.com, RushLimbaugh.com, iFeminists.com,

MensNewsDaily.com, DrLaura.com, AntiWar.com, IndyMedia.org, MediaTransparency.org, FreeRepublic.com, Rense.com, LewRockwell.com, CatholicExchange.com, AgapePress.com, IWF.org, Mensactivism.com and FrontPageMagazine.com.

Glenn's work has been translated into over a half-dozen languages, including French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Hebrew, Russian and Italian.

He appeared on a Sacramento radio show specifically to defend NCFM-LA's lawsuit against state funded DV shelters that exclude men. He has co-authored several articles with NCFM-LA. He has had NCFM-LA members on his show numerous times representing NCFM-LA. He has mentioned NCFM a number of his articles. He helped publicize, and spoke at, a fathers' rally organized by NCFM-LA. When NCFM-LA held a rally against a rape awareness event put on by Cal State University Northridge that was being done in a very sexist, anti-

male manner, Glenn came with his staff, audio-recorded the event, interviewed people, and did an entire show on it while hosting two NCFM-LA members. He has referred a number of people to NCFM-LA. He has also helped support the activities of other NCFM chapters.

The text of Mr. Sacks' award acceptance reads as follows:

Michael — of course I accept your award, and thank you very much for the kind words.

Glenn Sacks

By the time you read this, 2005's awards will already be determined, so expect more news about awards soon!

Letters Campaign

In recent years we have learned that writing letters to media people, advertisers of products, politicians, publishers, etc., can have an effect, especially if there is a group of letter writers willing to mobilize under the direction of a coordinator. We want you to write to our coordinator and volunteer to be contacted to write letters and we would appreciate knowing about any ideas you have for campaigns.

Please volunteer and write to:

Bob McInnes
NCFM
P.O. Box 582023
Minneapolis, Minnesota
55458-2023

Book Reviews

By J. Steven Svoboda

The War Against Men: Why Women are Winning and What Men Must Do if America is to Survive

Dr. Richard T. Hise

Oakland, Oregon: Red Anvil Press, 2004.

www.elderberrypress.com

800-431-1579. 290 pages.

Texas A&M Marketing Professor Richard T. Hise has issued the promisingly titled book *The War Against Men*. In essence, the author selectively reviews issues of interest to gender equity activists, then sets forth some guidelines for action in the final chapters.

Hise makes no bones about his political conservatism, coming across as a slightly more modulated, if less brilliant, version of Daniel Amneus. The longer I participate in the men's movement, the more I realize the irrelevance of the standard political labels, as well as the value of what those labeled as right wingers have to teach me and others who initially hailed from the liberal side of the political spectrum. In a way, I enjoy such writers more than I enjoy authors closer to my own background, as there is a greater potential for me to learn and expand my horizons.

While certainly worth a read and some serious consideration, Hise's work

must also be taken in doses and with, uh, liberal sprinkles of salt. Yet I did find some good value in certain segments of the book, most notably in its effective summations of complex issues, its thought-provokingly broad definition of men's issues, and its novel perspectives.

At the same time, I can only take so much discussion of God in a book, at least a God of one presumed denomination. For my taste, Hise goes too far with his evident assumption that readers will necessarily share his Christian perspective. Supportive as I am of all genuine, heartfelt forms of worship, I just don't find the bare words of the Bible all that compelling regarding complex modern issues.

The best part of the book is Chapter Five, in which Hise launches a stunningly trenchant series of summaries of a broad range of men's issues — discrimination in various aspects of education (including Columbia's stunningly unconstitutional sexual misconduct policy), health care, job discrimination (even less tolerable, the author points out, in today's tougher economy), the legal system, discrimination in the definition of hate crimes, false accusations of child abuse, the military, Title IX. A number of hellacious tales were new to me, such as a nightmare false allegation story involving an airline

pilot and his lying ex-wife, and a sickening witch hunt against a public-spirited doctor who was also a wonderful father. Hise provides alarming information on plans in certain women's studies departments to even further encroach on sanity and balance in university coursework. In short, the author galvanized me afresh in a way I genuinely appreciated.

Professor Hise has a broad vision of men's issues, including some topics not necessarily always considered: the need to clamp down on the National Education Association, and the desirability in the author's opinion of ending the personal income tax and instituting a flat consumption tax like the European value added taxes. Gun control and abortion are also treated in great detail; I was interested in and engaged by the author's perspectives, including a case he makes (with mixed results) that abortion may be anti-male discrimination. However, Hise's fanaticism on the abortion issue started to grate after a while. And it is hard to take seriously his suggestion in the action section of the book that gender activists should push "the discriminatory outcome of abortions since they murder more males than females."

The author is at his most awkward in the final sections of the book, in which he alternates between proposing rather far-fetched "counter-attack strategies" (e.g., push male's position as a minority as a way to gain political support), and unhelpfully suggesting various far-reaching options (open an Office of Men's Health, start all-boy schools) with little or no suggestion as to how to get there from here in a politically feasible way. Certain surprising holes pop up in his knowledge, as with his belief that the average man spends ten minutes a *week* with his kids and his unawareness that the law forecloses his suggestion that men's teams closed down by Title IX be resurrected and supported by private funds.

The author's tone at times descends into embarrassingly dated and improbable sexual innuendo, as with his comment regarding a not entirely unworkable suggestion that men sue under

Volunteer Needed for Men's Hotline

NCFM is in need of someone to operate our "hotline". What this means is that you would get about one call every week or two from someone needing assistance. You should be familiar with the court system as well as men's resources and be able to offer some support to callers. All calls are returned COLLECT, so you won't incur any costs. If this sounds like something you'd like to try, please contact Naomi at 516-482-6378 or susansusansusan@hotmail.com.

equal protection to join women's teams in sports lacking male teams at a given university: "What a grand experience this would be: playing a sport you love at the college-level, using the same locker rooms and showers, and having attractive (hopefully) ladies for team mates!" And for whom precisely is his advice intended warning, "There is nothing more demoralizing to a man than to work a lifetime and find that he has less than \$250 in the bank and will have to rely solely on social security to survive..." Well, uh, yes, that may be true, but it would be a pretty sad man who wouldn't check his bank balances at least, say, once a decade.

The author's unsupported assumption that conservatism equates with pro-male causes should at minimum receive some attempted justification at some point.

The War Against Men should be read for its superlative overviews of a broad range of issues in Chapter Five and for its interesting attempts to broaden the usual definition of gender equity issues. Richard T. Hise is clearly a well-meaning man who has pondered these issues for years and has plenty to offer us, if we are able to take the best and leave the rest.

*In Search of Fatherhood:
Transcending Boundaries*

Diane A. Sears

Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2003.

180 pages. \$17.84. www.xlibris.com.

BSI International, still a relatively new player in pro-male publishing, has been putting out its *IN SEARCH OF FATHERHOOD® Forum For and About the Fathers of the World* for well over half a decade. Now BSI has released this fascinating and wide-ranging volume collecting 17 pieces by 16 contributors, all focused in one way or other on the ever-important issue of fatherhood. I personally read it cover to cover on a recent plane flight.

BSI's publications — both its journal and this book — have a unique flavor. For one thing, substantial representation is given to men of color. Its authors vary in literary skill though everything it publishes is engaging and easy to follow. Some of its articles tend to have a somewhat politically reactionary flavor though despite my own personal largely

progressive background, I don't view this as a negative factor. At the same time, BSI's style is very male in its sensibility: stories are put out there as the authors see them, with no apologies and no punches pulled. Many of BSI's writers do not shy from throwing in personal anecdotes proving a point or demonstrating how tough lessons were learned.

As much of a fan as I am of BSI's journal, *In Search of Fatherhood: Transcending Boundaries* easily outdoes them. We know we are on to something very, very special right from the very first piece, Stephen Baskerville's absolutely magisterial masterpiece entitled, "Father's Rights are Father's Duties." Baskerville writes that "[t]he very act of separation and divorce, aside from any accompanying behavior or words, itself sends a myriad of terrible messages to children." But, the writer notes, "perhaps, a worse effect is to destroy

parental authority... How can parents instill lessons of selflessness in children when their own actions demonstrate precisely the opposite?"

Noting the extreme harm caused by domestic litigation, in which "we declare civil war on our loved ones," Baskerville observes that a father who participates in legal proceedings related to separation and divorce "is participating in the destruction of his own authority" and his own fatherhood. The author persuasively contends that political involvement on behalf of dads "may be the best thing you can do for your own case and for your own children" and lists no fewer than seven "direct and immediate benefits of political action." In a breathtaking conclusion, Baskerville invokes and then fully justifies an analogy of current treatment of fathers

REVIEWS continues next page

Special Thanks Due

Special thanks are in order to the following recent financial contributors. Your donations make a great deal of difference.

Lou Ann Bassan, CA

Steffan Carroll, MI

Arthur Corum, NC

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Douglas Galbi, VA

Charles Jones, AZ

Jason Leatherman, MA

Robert Lytz, WA

Gregory J. Scammell, NY

Terry Ward, CO

James H. Waters, VT

Reviews

Continued from Page 7

with the slave system. Then, having proven his point, he goes on to draw useful analogies from the struggle to end this historic horror. The writer reminds us that “the decisive argument against slavery was not so much its physical cruelty as the corruption it wrought in the political system and in the minds and souls of what should have been free citizens. It fostered tyranny in the slaveholder, servility in the slaves, and moral degradation in both.”

Editor Diane A. Sears wisely follows by jumping the reader into about as different a piece as you could possibly imagine, a personal, heartfelt revelation of the joys and challenges of being a Dad from African-American journalist Muhammad Nasser Bey. Disability rights activist Randy L. Collins, who lost his only son in 2002 from the same genetic condition he himself has, contributes excerpts from lessons he himself has learned. “I’ve learned from my father,” Collins writes, “that a mistake is only a lesson in disguise.” Later he notes, “A father is a man who has delayed his own personal gratification to meet the needs of a child and who displays his character through his sacrifice.” The author concludes an excellent long paragraph on men’s health with the observation that, “By becoming an active participant in the management of our lives, we will feel so empowered that it will be a great privilege to pass it on to our children.”

As much as we may have read of Dr. Warren Farrell’s writings, the man never ceases to find a new turn of phrase or a previously undiscovered fact with which to delight, disturb, and amaze us. His article here, “Santee, Columbine... Why Boys Are the Way They Are” shows him absolutely at the top of his form. Warren fingers the “Vietnamization of our sons” that is simultaneously “rewarding them for playing the old role and condemning them for having the mentality the old roles breed.” On the ever-pressing issue of those who take their own lives, Warren writes, “Suicide is decreasing for our daughters as we increase our daughters’ ways of

succeeding; it is increasing for our sons as we increase our sons’ ways of failing.”

Warren crystallizes what might be called the triple jeopardy of young males and expectations that they will initiate sexual contact: “If they do it too slowly, they are still called a wimp, but now, if they do it too awkwardly, they are sued for sexual harassment, and if they do it too quickly, they are a date rapist.” One major problem is the relative invisibility of the male plight: “Boys’ experience of depression and low self-esteem is hidden in the cracks. By calling it aggression or delinquency or drinking or drugs, we skip past the depression until we stand before his coffin.” Through pure force of personality if nothing else, though, the dean of men’s issues authors retains his optimistic vision in the conclusion to his piece: “For the past third of a century, we have introduced our daughters to a multi-option world; now it is time to introduce our sons.”

Therapist and men’s author Thomas R. Golden relates a wonderful story of connecting with his father through the preparations for his funeral in which he was joined by his buddies. At the same time, he cautions of men’s precarious state in our current culture due to the subcontracting of almost all action activities related to death (and related to just about everything else, I might add). I am still haunted by Golden’s tale of Abraham Lincoln inviting a male friend to the White House to play “sad songs” and thereby open the doors to his tears and grief. The writer reminds us that “[w]e need more culturally endorsed ‘active’ rituals that give us ‘hooks’ into our grief.”

While contributions such as those by Dale Frazz, Thomas Hoerner, James Kennedy, Alvin F. Poussaint, M.D., and Everyman’s Martin G. Ramey are not as tightly paced and are generally less instructive on the literal level, they provide their own complementary contribution to this impressively varied book. One particular value of the relatively high representation of black men is a subtle change in the book’s consciousness as well as the subtle yet

powerful presence of more faith between the lines.

Gary Johnson changed his career so he could spend more time with his children, and hearing his story is an inspiring experience. Right or wrong, Ramey is provocative in some of his positions (as one example, he favors corporal punishment) and far-reaching in the breadth of the topics he addresses. Ramey writes of the “legacy packets” he prepares and sends to each of his children including his columns, letters and other material to give them a record of who he is and what he stands for.

Almas Jamil Sami’ motivates empathy and learning with his admirably genuine description of problems he has confronted and overcome as a man and as a father. Joep Zander closes out this singular volume with an inspiring tale of the concrete results achieved in his European activism on behalf of men’s rights.

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The Need To Embrace Men at Multiple Stages of Healing

By Charles Wood

When I first became acquainted with the National Coalition of Free Men, I was delighted that such an organization existed. I was intensely interested in all that NCFM did, and wanted to support the organization as best as I could. Reading the web site and newsletter was fine, but for me the next step was to go to a chapter meeting. When I actually did this I experienced a strange and disturbing phenomenon. I could not hang out with the guys present. It was too painful to do so. I left the meeting early.

I thought that perhaps it was a bad day for me, or perhaps the topic we were then discussing was just a little bit too tense. Given all of my prior excitement about the organization, I thought I should at least give it another try. This second time I again felt as though it was just too painful to hang out with these men. I observed what was happening on a deeper level and I started to appreciate the dynamic between the men, and why I didn't want to be part of that dynamic.

At that time, which I admit was about 13 years ago, I had recently come through an acrimonious, litigious, and emotionally-taxing divorce process. On a certain level I was committed to once again loving women, on healing what seemed like a red, raw, and weeping wound in my relationship with women. The men in the NCFM chapter were angry about women, were openly expressing their anger at women, and were furious about the current structure of American society. I support them expressing their feelings, if indeed that's what they need to do in their healing process. But for them to express this anger and rage only threw me back into the red, raw, and weeping wound. I never again went to a NCFM chapter meeting or conference. I have since attended many men's events,

but I have steered clear of NCFM events (I contribute other ways like writing letters).

I write this article today because I believe we need to structure NCFM do be able to embrace all men, no matter where they are in their personal healing process. There needs to be a place that they can go to get support and information, and this place may very well be different based on what stage they find themselves in the healing process. I'm not sure exactly what this would look like, but I suggest one possibility below. The proposed structure is based on the work of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, and is notably taken from her book, entitled *On Death And Dying*. That book states that grief is a normal reaction to any significant loss. As it relates to NCFM, this loss might be divorce with a spouse, or perhaps the loss of on-going contact with one's children.

People, and in this case specifically men, must move through five stages of grief defined by Kubler-Ross: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. A man does not necessarily pass through these stages in that order, nor does he do this with a predefined schedule. A man may also move forward or backward in this healing process, depending on his own unique needs.

The first stage in this process is denial. As I see it, this is a very big problem for most of us men in America today. Often dealing with the shock of a loss, men at this stage often feel numb. As this feeling of numbness subsides, a man may employ denial as a buffer, a temporary defense against the reality of the situation, saying things such as "this cannot be happening to me." NCFM could have some very specific material helping men to understand exactly what is happening to them, and what its causes are in the social, legal, economic,

and related domains. Perhaps we could have tests that men could take on-line, tests that could help men understand the seriousness of what they are going through, tests that could help men come out of denial. As I see it, this is the most difficult part of the men's movement today (getting men out of denial), and I believe we would best place most of our resources and emphasis at this stage.

The second stage finds a man who has recently gone through a serious loss dealing with his anger, having feelings of rage, of wanting to strike out at God, at a former spouse, the Church, or other people. Men at this stage can be comforted to know that others are going through the same thing. Men at this stage can be helped by having a forum to blow off steam and get it out of their system. This is the stage where the NCFM chapter was when I visited. For someone at another stage of the healing process, or even for someone who is not actively engaged in a healing process, this can be a very difficult place to be when a man is going through it. I suggest we need to hold a tight and safe container for men going through this stage. This container would probably include strict confidentiality agreements and other boundaries in order to allow men to express themselves in an authentic and accepted way. These boundaries could also protect the involved men from outside interference, from outside condemnation, and from outside influence.

The third stage involves bargaining, where there is an attempt to "fix things up." This may include a last attempt to plead with the former spouse, or make a bargain with God "to take it all away." This stage is characterized by feelings of unrealistic guilt. This stage may be where

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men may need good legal advice, where they need the support of their brothers lest they make decisions or concessions that they would later regret. Some sort of a support-group, perhaps with sponsors, as is used in AA, could be employed. A referral network for lawyers who know men's issues may be employed usefully here. Men need to be grounded here, need to clearly understand all of their options, and need to think logically even though they may be going through an intensely-emotional process. An on-line decision support process, involving questions and answers, could also guide men in making the best decisions here.

The fourth stage is depression. In this stage men typically feel the reality of the loss is too heavy to be accepted. A man going through this stage feels helpless, floundering, low, lifeless, and, in the extreme, could he be suicidal. In this stage, NCFM could help men identify themselves differently than "the provider" or "the husband," or whatever other role society told them they should take on. NCFM could help men come to terms with their true worth, rather than repeatedly listen to the feminist media further degrade what it means to be a man. This is a more spiritual stage, where men are recreating who they are, and it could be an emancipating and joyous time, if men allowed it to be. As I see it, this is where the mythopoetic men's movement could make its greatest contribution. NCFM could have some very specific assistance for men at this stage, something that speaks to self-worth, personal identity, and what a man is up to in the world. There could also be a variety of links to books and other sources to help men move out of this depression stage. A list of psychologists who know men's issues could also be provided by NCFM.

The fifth stage involves acceptance of what's true. Here a man sees

the reality of his personal loss, here a man has dealt with and accepted that loss. Here a man sees what is happening to other men in American society. Here a man feels peaceful and hopeful, and a new beginning is experienced. Here is where a man could be actively engaged in helping his brothers, in helping to get unfair laws changed, and in some other way reaching out and making this society a better place. This is the stage where reaching out to others takes place. In this stage, lobbying, volunteering, and letter-writing could be a great expression of a man's desire to contribute. In summary, I suggest that NCFM may be significantly smaller in numbers than it could be, in part because when men checked in with others associated with NCFM, they found people who were at other stages of healing. To the extent that the work being done at another stage doesn't speak to a man, he will go elsewhere.

Unfortunately, if a man does not understand why he didn't click with the other people associated with NCFM, the man will be unlikely to come back to NCFM. If NCFM had some sort of a process to assist men at different stages of their healing process, then we could perhaps appeal to more men, and perhaps also get them more involved with NCFM in a more active and on-going way.

Although I don't like it, I have learned that most people (yes, men too) don't do anything about a problem until it gets extremely painful. Evidently, the damage being done to modern men hasn't yet gotten painful enough for most people to do something significant about it. The way things are going, that pain looks like it will get significantly worse. NCFM will, as a result, soon be dealing with a great many more wounded men, men who are in a great pain, men who are suffering profound grief

and loss. It is our job at NCFM to embrace these men and give them what they need so that they can heal personally, as well as heal their relationships with women, with their family, and with society at large. And as for me, I think I'll try another chapter meeting.

Charles Wood is an author and psycho-spiritual counselor based in Sausalito, California. You can reach him at ccwood@ix.netcom.com.

Letters to the Editor

Editorial Policy: *NCFM and the Transitions staff welcome letters from readers and will print them as space allows. We reserve the right to edit letters for editorial style and space restrictions but will continue to publish letters in their entirety when possible. Send article responses, corrections, or other comments about the newsletter itself to the Editor: Jason Leatherman at jwleath@yahoo.com. Letters sent directly to the Editor will be addressed "Dear Editor". Send opinions, stories, requests for advice, or other letters to the Webmaster: ncfm@ncfm.org. Letters sent to the Webmaster will be addressed "Dear NCFM".*

DEAREEDITOR:

I have visited your site several times in the past. I'm a Canadian who spent years trying to get the access given to me by the courts, while my wife moved from place to place with my boy (Canada is a very big nation to avoid giving access). As many men on your website have experienced the state doesn't seem to give a damn.

I went a step further by going to a parliamentary committee on this issue that was touring the country asking for input. I received absolutely no help from the government and saw no better changes on men's behalf for all my and other men's time-consuming efforts.

I have remarried and have another son, but have refused to lie down and see there are others who haven't either all over the English-speaking world and beyond!

I will be publishing a book in the US that took me well over 5 years to put together named *Honor vs. the Amazonian World*, and am wondering whether your website is willing to assist me in any way. Everything is on the table from book reviews to simple word-of-mouth. My book is an attempt to get at the core of what's wrong in a greater sense, than say just my own mire suffering.

Mitchell Edward Milo
milonet@gol.com

DEAREEDITOR:

As the residential custodian of the three minor children for nearly four years now, we've experienced anything but full and fair disclosure on our rights.

I am completely baffled on decisions regarding the physical, mental, and well being of my minor children.

Deceptively, a visitation was enforced by the local sheriff's office in which my children were never returned.

I've visited professional services frequently. It is very common for proof of custody, birth certificates, and more be requested of me. However, a woman without any legal guardianship transported y children on Nov. 24 and they have not been returned. No questions were asked.

In addition, case workers, Guardian Ad Litem, magistrates, prosecutors, juvenile detectives, sheriff departments, police officers, and attorneys over three counties and now my recent presentations to public forums and a congressman are apparently not enough to invoke assistance.

The Ohio law declares that a parent is required to provide food, shelter, education and medical attention. It should present the utmost responsibility is to let your livelihood diminish to reallocate sweat-equity for personal due diligence. Amazingly, only one individual in three counties could suggest anything.

Over 80 hours of personal time and research in one week to have another county juvenile detective coordinate my return back 107 miles to my original point of contact — the sheriff's department; interference with custody.

How difficult is it to offer ethical and professional services? So now, all my research, tears and concerns are increased by timeliness.

This is not a game. This is about life — children, peace and joy.

Anyone can pray for you. Anyone can express empathy. Often validating and praying for another is not enough. We have to help one another. Wake up people!

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." — Psalms 118:8

David Moore
www.gender-prejudice.org

DEAREEDITOR:

I read your comments in the March/Apr 2005 *Transitions* on Harry Brod's talk on date rape prevention. I took particular interest on your "astute" observation that "it's not politically correct to assign responsibility to women" -- by

weak and gender-conditioned men and women. The main concern is that men (especially men) and women be educated on what to hold women RESPONSIBLE FOR in a likely sexual encounter. See the "Sexual Consent" forms that spun off from the Kobe Bryant/Kate Faber fiasco at <http://web.archive.org/web/20040316010003/http://www.toptown.com/hp/larjen/sexform.htm> or <http://www.mttlg.net/stuff/consent.html>.

Men may use this information to become educated and educate other men as to what should definitely be discussed with a likely female partner-who has no responsibility for her actions. I also think your point is excellent that, "if an organization wants to call itself a men's organization, it should look out for men's welfare"...and not be blind to the man's side of a discussion.

I was very active with a local NCFM until I got into a discussion with one of the officers who didn't have the insight or fortitude to hold women responsible for their PERSONAL actions (just because a woman gets penetrated etc does not automatically mean she was not also responsible at that time) but chose rather to focus on the ridiculous issue of trying to micro define rape between a man and woman when both were under the influence of alcohol -- of course taking the PC position of holding the man responsible and not the woman.

Here is a good argument to assist some open-minded men/women in clearly seeing the disparity based on "gender" alone when a woman is under the influence of alcohol: Should a woman climb behind the wheel of an automobile while under the influence of alcohol and become involved in an automobile collision, she will be held criminally liable; however should the SAME woman under the same degree of alcohol influence climb into bed with a man she may claim to be a victim of rape-weeks or even months later, such a woman is at minimum an ACCESSORY to whatever crime is alleged to have occurred. Why don't we have the balls/guts to admit it? Moreover, false and so-called buyer's remorse rape allegations diminish true rape that happens to males or females.

Elton

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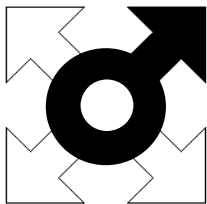
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