

MaleCall

Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Men's Network
UUMeN P.O. Box 5069, Evanston, IL 60204
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Spring 2006



MEN IN

By Rev. Jaco B. ten Hove

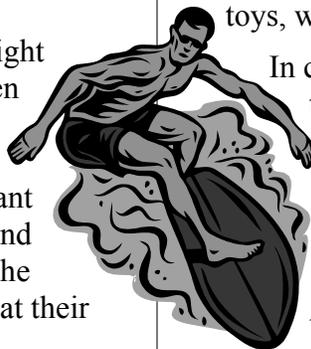
We men need to have and be new models of a conscious masculinity that puts us in motion toward what really matters. We can defy stereotypes, build bridges, deepen relationships—and a lot of that happens in today's men's groups, I'm happy to say.

In or out of such groups, any of us might notice when we are in the presence of men whose interior motion is like a balanced gyroscope, centering them in what really matters. I have some very important mentors who, while certainly imperfect and very human, still seem to move through the world with a nicely humming gyroscope at their core.

We also all, probably every day, run into men in frantic motion, in precarious balance, who propel themselves through life as if it were a race and all the trophies were out there somewhere, to be acquired before someone else does. All too often this style of life is what we men are conditioned for and socialized into. We know we are rewarded for performance, acquisition and success—all measured out there—and our self-esteem depends on this.

Self-esteem. Ah, this may be the crux of the whole matter. It is an honorable cliché that in order to truly love others, in order to share and spread

love, we must first love ourselves—not a narcissistic self-preoccupation, just a healthy self-esteem, which should be inher-



Motion

ent and sustained regardless of our specific performance or any judgments by others.

Well, this sounds great, but in reality it is a supreme challenge—to stay that centered amid all the stimulation and frantic motion that spins around us every day. After all, “He who dies with the most toys, wins.”

In contrast, a true sense of self-worth means that we matter to others in ways relational more than material, that we become worthy of intimacy. The dominant stereotype portrays a stoic, independent, self-sufficient male hero, but actually, healthy males need and benefit from social connections as much as anyone. When will interdependence become heroic?

After college, men often seem to sacrifice or jettison or miss out on social connections, such as having good friends beyond our spouse. I know this first hand, since I've been working in the D.C. area for almost seven years with a wonderful partner, but I have yet to establish a single new, abiding friendship—numerous fine collegial connections notwithstanding.

But I feel pretty good about myself, even like I'm succeeding at parish ministry! So maybe my self-esteem is indeed performance-based more than inherent. I have had to earn it—and if I didn't, well, shame on me. Social connections are maybe just for feeding that drive for success, anyway. This is the water American males swim in, including me. And I was raised Unitarian Universalist, which affirms, at the top of our list of principles, “the inherent worth and dignity of every per-

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About UUMeN

The Unitarian Universalist Men's Network is a continental membership organization for UU men (which also welcomes other gender allies). Our purpose is to build and sustain a mature, liberal religious masculinity. Our primary objectives are to: develop a continental resource network; support the personal and spiritual growth of men at the local, district and continental levels; and collaborate with other UU groups who share our interests and commitments. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, may vote at our Annual Meeting held in June at General Assembly, and are eligible for discounts on materials.

2005-2006 Steering Council

Dave Woods (IL), president, 2007
Jim Jaeger (WI), VP/Sec, 2007
Dick Whitaker (IL), treasurer, 2006
Bob Hospadaruk (MI), 2007
Rev. Drew Johnston (WA), 2006
Rev. Todd Strickland (CO), 2006
Jack Ripple (AZ) 2008
Roy Schwartz (FL), 2008
Neil Chethik (KY), Immediate Past President
Rev. Tom Owen-Towle, President Emeritus

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Sec. 501(c)(3) organization.*

MaleCall

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*Please send all submissions and concerns via e-mail (info@uumen.org) to:
Editor: Ken Beldon
Layout: Bob Hospadaruk
Address Changes: Drew Johnston*

WWW.UUMEN.ORG

MaleCall

From the President...



Dave Woods

I've just returned from the UUMeN Winter Steering Council Winter meeting held Jan 19-22, in the Ft. Lauderdale area. Host, Steering Council Member Roy Schwartz planned it well. His River of Grass UU Congregation welcomed, housed, partied with us, and their Rev. Jackie assisted us to do the Sunday morning service. Jim Jaeger, VP (& Rev to be) did the sermon, which was received well. Contents of it are in this MaleCall. Member Jack Ripple will be hosting us next year at this time in Chandler AZ.

UUMeN Steering Council members conducted lots of business at this meeting and results will show at General Assembly in St. Louis this coming June. Besides having an Exhibit Booth, we'll be conducting two workshops led by past Steering Council members. First, Neil Chethik, Immediate Past President will lead a workshop based on his latest book "VoiceMale" (featured in the previous MaleCall) and a second, "Feeding the Souls of Men" will be led by Revs Jaco ten Hove & Tom Owen-Towle. Much more detail about our presence at GA2006 will be written in a later issue.

Dick Whitaker, Treasurer and I will travel to Madison WI to our District's Assembly April 21-23. With host Jim Jaeger, we'll conduct a UUMeN workshop and man a display table there. Rev Todd Strickland advised us at the meeting that he is on Sabbatical and will leave for Mexico to learn Spanish first hand.

Personally, I've been deeply involved in a "Coming of Age for UU Boys" program at my church and finding it very rewarding. I just read an article (front page featured) in the January 30th issue of Newsweek called "Boys in Crisis" and today's young men certainly are. It is rather evident that boys are getting "the short end of the stick" nowadays. UUMeN wants you to know that we are focusing on this problem now, and have been for quite some time. We continue to work closely with RE people to see to it that our lads get a fair shake. We need your ideas and support more than ever to assist in these endeavors. Let's hear from you out there. Be sure to look over our www.uumen.org website, well-managed by Bob Hospadaruk

If you haven't yet given us a donation of \$25 in the last year, make out your check to UUMeN and mail it to PO Box 5069, Evanston IL 60204. In turn, we can keep sending you MaleCall and continue doing needed men's work.

My Best in the Brotherhood,

President, UUMeN, dnwoods@ameritech.net

Open Call for MaleCall

This newsletter is accepting articles, reviews, and original poems relating to mens' experiences for our upcoming quarterly edition.

If you have something to share with your fellow readers, please submit your writing to our editor at:

revksb@yahoo.com

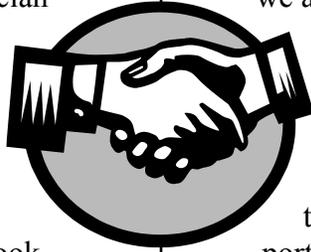
Thank you!



Men As Friends

By Jim Jaeger

How do we nurture male friendship? Tom Owen-Towle a retired (sort of) Unitarian Universalist minister who served the San Diego Congregation and his friend Chris Hassett a musician collaborated to write *The Friendship Chronicles*. Tom describes himself as a straight “citizen of the universe” and Chris Hassett is a gay man. The book is a series of letters they wrote to one another over a period of years and is a testimony to enduring male friendship. The book describes the challenge of friendship, particularly one between a gay and straight man. In a couple of these letters, Tom offers some observations on what can be done to nurture friendship:



“...making and nurturing friendships is not hard, but can be hard work. Friendships cannot be taken for granted.”

“*Our friendship has consisted of calls, regularly scheduled engagements, shared projects, serendipitous contacts, special events where one of us is center stage and the other cheers on the sidelines, and, perhaps most of all, our faithful (for the most part) correspondence. Chris, our friendship shows abundant evidence of careful cultivation, a regular supply of affection and truth telling. ...Our friendship is grounded in loving and teaching, generosity and appreciation. We nurture one another in a way that never seems like tit for tat, only natural reciprocity.*”

Chris responds:

“*A line of communication between you and me is, itself, a unique path. In exploring my truths I need to have a singular audience—a friend to listen. Together, two friends create a spiritual touchstone and measures their words.*”

As can be seen from these words, making and nurturing friendships is not hard, but can be hard work. Friendships cannot be taken for granted. We must intentionally seek out friends and then, like a garden we have planted, make sure that the friendship is watered and nourished by our loving attention. We cannot assume that once started, the friendship will flourish—it requires constant nurturing if it is to survive.

This is part of the work of men’s groups. Men find it easy to get together to watch or participate in sports, to talk about cars and computers, to drink beer

and swap lies. Now there is nothing wrong with these activities (within reason). But they usually don’t lead to the kind of deep friendships that we all need. The men’s group, with its focus on deep and personal sharing in an environment of safety, support and confidentiality, provides an opportunity to develop close friendship. The Unitarian Universalist Men’s Network is dedicated to supporting our UU congregations to support and nourish the men and boys of our congregations. We do this through resource materials, a quarterly newsletter and programming at GA and

District meetings. We encourage men on their journey to a “mature masculinity.”

Now I suspect that

many of you in the congregation today, especially the women and girls, may have asked yourselves, at least once—this is all very interesting Jim, but what relevance does it have to me? Why should I care about issues of male friendship? Tom Owen-Towle, in another recent work, *Save the Males* puts it this way:

“*Since I began men’s work 30 years ago, my bed-rock premise hasn’t altered much, indeed it’s been fortified: changing men changes the world! And why do men need to change? For our very own good and for the well-being of all living entities that we touch. And it will be “change that comes out of foundation, not fireworks,” to use a phrase from Gail Godwin’s Evensong...When men change-soulfully and prophetically, internally and externally—everyone will benefit. Moreover the entire Creation will be mended. Men’s beleaguered bodies and stunted souls will rebound. The majority of women and children will leap exuberantly. Violence of every sort will most assuredly diminish. Animals and plants will be seen to spring heavenward Even the deities can be expected to throw a party. I bet my life on that hope and try to behave accordingly.*”

Jim Jaeger is Vice-President of UUMeN. This article was taken from a larger sermon entitled “Male Friendship in a Homophobic World.”

Clinton Jencks: Union Organizer in Salt of the Earth

By Ronald W. Evans

I write this essay to honor the life of Clinton Jencks, the union organizer whose work inspired the making of the blacklisted film *Salt of the Earth* (1953). Jencks died on December 15 at the age of 87. Clint Jencks was my friend. I came to San Diego in 1989 as a young assistant professor at San Diego State. Though I had heard of Clint from older colleagues, I first met him in 1991 when I joined a men's support group affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Men's Fellowship and First Unitarian Church. Clint was a member of our support group for fifteen years, an elder in our mixed-age group, and a mentor. During most of those years we shared rides to meetings. During those drives Clint's first question to me was often, "How's that book coming?", or, "How are your classes?" When asked what he did for a living, Clint told us, he used to say, "I teach economics as if people mattered."

For Clint, being part of a Unitarian men's support group was closely tied to the larger movement for freedom and social justice, a place to find friendship, support and brotherhood, to help men live out their principles in daily life. In our group meetings, Clint shared his life, his stories, his loves and his problems and concerns openly, clearly and deeply. He loved to come to our meetings and cherished the opportunity to vent his troubles, to share his thoughts and feelings, and to give and receive supportive feedback. I can still hear his voice, in the latter part of a sometimes rambling, often lengthy commentary, asking, "What am I trying to say?" In fact, Clint loved to share so much and for so long that he inspired us to use a timer to limit our check-ins to ten minutes, then five.

As an elder, and a more experienced man, Clint's insights were often crucial for many of us. For example, when one divorced father considered playing a less active role in his daughters life, he responded with observations on the importance of

fatherhood and the need of children for a strong and present father; when another man found a loving, long-term relationship, after a series of ill-fated affairs, Clint said, "I'm so glad that you've found the kind of relationship that you deserve."

On questions of social justice, Clint was unshakable in his belief that we can make a difference, that what we think and what we do matters. Occasionally, Clint spoke of his role in *Salt of the Earth* and of the Jencks case, not as a moment of fame, but as part of what he did, what we all could do, to make a positive difference in the world. What he did not say was that *he* was the *catalyst* behind both the strike and the movie.

Clint was sent to Grant County New Mexico, the Silver City area, in 1947 by the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers to organize miners in an effort to help improve their living and working conditions. Clint's work as an organizer led to a strong union at Local No.

890, made up largely of Latinos.

Its most famous confrontation occurred in 1950-51 when it staged a fifteen-month walkout against a small mine operated by Empire Zinc. "The central issue," Clint later said, "was dignity, equality, being treated like anyone else." Though the 1950 walkout was technically about such issues as salary, worker safety, and paid vacations, the strike soon turned into a struggle for survival. It was during the strike that Clint, or "El Palomino" as he was affectionately known, left with his family for a few days respite at San Cristobal Valley Ranch near Taos. While at the Ranch, Clint and his family shared the story of the strike. No one was more fascinated by Jencks account than blacklisted film producer Paul Jarrico. As he talked about the Empire Zinc strike with Jencks, Jarrico got excited about the cinematic possibilities and set off at once for Grant County. By the time he returned to Los Angeles, it was decided. *Salt of the Earth* would be his next project.

(Continued on page 7)



Male MANifesto*

I. Men are beautiful. Masculinity is life-affirming and life-supporting. Male sexuality generates life. The male body needs and deserves to be nurtured and protected.

II. A man's value is not measured by what he produces. We are not merely our professions. We need to be loved for who we are. We make money to support life. Our real challenge, and the adventure that makes life full, is making soul.

III. Men are not flawed by nature. We become destructive when our masculinity is damaged. Violence springs from desperation and fear rather than from authentic manhood.

IV. A man doesn't have to live up to any narrow, societal image of manhood. There are many ancient images of men as healers, protectors, lovers, and partners with women, men and nature. This is how we are in our depths: celebrators of life, ethical and strong.

V. Men do not need to become more like women in order to reconnect with soul. Women can help by giving men room to change, grow, and rediscover masculine depth. Women also support men's healing by seeking out and affirming the good in them.

VI. Masculinity does not require the denial of deep feeling. Men have the right to express all their feelings. In our society this takes courage and the sup-

port of others. We start to die when we are afraid to say or act upon what we feel.

VII. Men are not only competitors. Men are also brothers. It is natural for us to cooperate and support each other. We find strength and healing through telling the truth to another – man to man.



VIII. Men deserve the same rights as women for custody of children, economic support, government aid, education, healthcare, and protection from abuse. Fathers are equal to mothers in ability to raise children. Fatherhood is honorable.

IX. Men and women can be equal partners. As men learn to treat women more fairly they also want women to work toward a vision of partnership that does not require men to become less than who they authentically are.

X. Sometimes we have the right to be wrong, irresponsible, unpredictable, silly, inconsistent, afraid, indecisive, experimental, insecure, visionary, lustful, lazy, fat, bald, old, playful, fierce, irreverent, magical, wild, impractical, unconventional, and other things we're not supposed to be in a culture that circumscribes our lives with rigid roles.

** from Knights Without Armor by
Aaron R. Kipnis. P. 93*

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By Revs Tom Owen-Towle/Jaco ten Hove

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(Men in Motion... Continued from page 1)

son.” I know how to give good lip service to this noble value, which is nonetheless severely at odds with the traditional conditioning of most men. This hidden conflict may explain, partially at least, why there are usually comparatively few males in our churches.

We men are socialized to believe that our “worth and dignity” depends on our performance, our success. So we can’t really take seriously, can we, a religious value—inherent worth and dignity—that directly contradicts what has been drummed into us by the rest of the culture every day since we were young? It could create a harsh dissonance in our soul, and perhaps some men subconsciously resist settings where they have to pit noble ideals against their unexamined but dominant conditioning.

Meanwhile, an intriguing Swiss study* in the 1990s found that church attendance by a family’s father is by far the largest influence on his children’s future participation in church. When the father doesn’t attend regularly, only 2% of the children ever will, even if the mother does. But when the father does worship regularly (even if the mother doesn’t) almost half of the children (44%) will carry the practice into their adult lives.

*[“The demographic characteristics of the linguistic and religious groups in Switzerland” by Werner Haug and Phillipe Warner of the Federal Statistical Office, Neuchatel. It appears in Volume 2 of Population Studies No. 31, a book titled *The Demographic Characteristics of National Minorities in Certain European States*, edited by Werner Haug and others, published by the Council of Europe Directorate General III, Social Cohesion, Strasbourg, January 2000. Quoted by Henry G. Brinton, Senior Pastor of Fairfax Presbyterian Church, “Praying for More Men,” in the *Washington Post Outlook* section, Dec. 19, 2003.]

However, at least over the past half century, the presence of men in church has slowly but steadily declined. Maybe the recent initiative by our Baltimore/Washington UU Regional Growth Planning Committee is missing a bet. Their “Plan for Vital Congregations” does not include a strategy to bring more men into our congregations, which might just be an efficient approach. The presence of men at worship seems to statistically improve attendance even beyond their own lifetimes.

And men need congregational life, I believe. During the 20th century, the nuclear family model emerged and the stereotyped roles of male breadwinner and female care-giver solidified, but social isolation increased. For men in this system, there have been costs that it has taken us a while to recognize, let alone accept.

In essence and in general, we have traded away our hearts—the warmth of interpersonal connection, including any perception of vulnerability—for the so-called rewards of accomplishment, such as the privilege of special status and external success, which are often accompanied by an deceptive sense of security and superiority.

“When we are in generative motion, we are creatively authentic, growing connections that both support the community and fill our hearts.”

However, the percentage of men who really truly benefit from this trade-off is probably

pretty small; and those who do not keep up the bargain at all, either by choice or failure, are marginalized, ridiculed or worse. Men in all categories seem to show the strains of increased stress. Yet many of us resist change, preferring to defend or at least passively accept a system that actually improves the odds we will die sooner than later.

I find myself wincing now every time I notice a recently retired man dying without getting to enjoy much of his “golden years.” The actual rate of this may or may not be increasing, per se, but I guess I’m beginning to take it more personally, as my own distance from that work milestone shrinks. And this makes me want to ask, one more time: What really matters here, guys? Do you believe that “the only measure of your words and your deeds will be the love you leave behind when you’re done”? If so, what kind of motion does that inspire in you? I know a parent who embroidered that line on a pillow to give to a college-bound child.

I believe that all men, with or without biological children, have fathering energy that is generative, meaning we can pass on our love of life to others, especially those nearby. When we are in generative motion, we are creatively authentic, growing connections that both support the commu-

(Continued on page 7)

nity and fill our hearts. Almost any service to the greater good is generative and can help relieve pain, both the pain of those in need and the pain of those offering the service.

Generative motion also tunes up our inner gyroscope and provides energy to help us stand up to unwelcome, limiting stereotypes. It is indeed time that we more actively pioneer paths for men and women that are better balanced, more just, equitable and compassionate, not to mention healthier. Men can start with our own inner life, our relationship with our gentle self and see what is reflected there. We can ground it, strengthen it, activate it, stir it.

And, to my mind, there is no better place in our culture for this generative energy to prosper than in our UU congregations and camps and conferences. But it's hard, hard to crack the harsh outer layer a lot of men project; hard to persevere in offering opportunities that don't get prioritized in busy, frantic lives; hard to be strong in the face of cultural pressure to line up with seductive stereotypes.

Yes, it's hard, but it may be the best game in town, because it holds out the very real promise of transformation and the health of a whole person. That's my challenge, anyway, and I don't think I'm all that much different from a lot of guys. Sometimes we just have to let go of what we think is fortifying us, and trust a larger motion...

Jaco B. ten Hove is co-minister of the Paint Branch UU Church near College Park, MD with his life partner, Barbara Wells ten Hove. He was recently the two-term President of UUMeN, and then served as Editor of MaleCall. This article is an excerpt from a longer sermon of the same title.

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(Clinton Jencks... Continued from page 4)

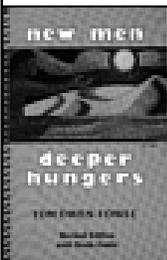
Salt of the Earth is one of only 425 films selected by the Library of Congress for the National Film Registry. It is the only blacklisted film so honored. It is now praised by scholars for its honest examination of Latino-American labor issues and gender relations.

For my part, I must say that I have a deep appreciation of Clint's persona—he lived his values—he embodied a gentle authenticity that I found quite inspiring. I speak for our group when I say that we celebrate Clint's life and his time with us. We will treasure him always.

Ronald W. Evans is a member of the Men's Fellowship of the 1st Unitarian Church, San Diego, and

GREAT BOOKS FROM UUMeN

A Community of Men: A Guide to Men's Programming in UU Congregations is available for \$5—free to new members. *For your copy, contact us at info@uumen.org, or at our mailing address. There is no shipping or handling charge.*



For a book with dozens of worthy conversation-starters related to men, get **New Men, Deeper Hungers**, by Tom-Owen Towle, president emeritus of UUMeN, for \$15 (\$10 for UUMeN members). *Shipping and handling is \$2 per book. Make checks payable to UUMeN, and send to our address.*

SAVE THE MALES: *Changing Men Changing the World*, also by Tom Owen-Towle, boldly engages with stimulating topics such as men choosing to be brothers...men as religious beings...joining ethics and power...saying "yes" to aggression and "no" to violence; graying gracefully as elders. \$14.95 plus \$2.00 (shipping/handling)—order directly from Tom Owen-Towle, 3303 Second Ave., San Diego, CA 92103 (uutom@cox.net).



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