

MaleCall

Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Men's Network
UUMeN P.O. Box 5069, Evanston, IL 60204
Web: www.uumen.org E-mail: info@uumen.org
Phone: (800) 227-6670



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VoiceMale: Men and Marriage

By Neil Chethik

Over the past fifty years, America has adopted a gold standard for marriage. A good relationship, we're often told, involves two partners who express their emotions freely, talk openly about their hopes and fears, and show physical affection while not necessarily seeking sex.

In reality, this is marriage primarily from the female perspective. And it's only half the story. There's a masculine style of loving too.

For my new book, *VoiceMale*, I recently surveyed more than 350 married men, from all over the U.S., to find out about their style of loving. In in-depth interviews with 70 of these men, I asked each one: *When do you feel closest to your wife?* Based on these individual responses, I sought to outline a masculine style of loving.

Here are what I found to be the three components of this masculine style:

First, while the female style of loving emphasizes *sharing feelings*, the masculine style focuses on *sharing space*. How does this manifest itself? The men I interviewed spoke of feeling close (or intimate) with their wives when they were in her presence. They

didn't need to be communicating directly, but instead could be gardening, doing house projects, playing sports, or watching sports, TV, and

movies.

While conversations might break out during these space-sharing moments, men said, talking was not the point. "I make no apology," one husband told me. "Words don't interest me much."

Overlapping with this first element, a second element of the masculine style of loving emerged: While the female style stresses *talking* as a way of relating, the male style emphasizes *doing*. Husbands told me about things they did to demonstrate their love for their wife: working hard at their job, planning vacations or weekends away, making the bed each day, washing her car.

One retired editor told me that he expressed his love for his wife every Tuesday afternoon when he gathers together the household recycling and places it in boxes on the front lawn to be taken away. He explained that his wife is a passionate environmentalist, but can no longer carry heavy loads. So by handling the recycling, this husband says, "I'm doing something for the two of us." This man has come to believe that for many men,

loving is "about deeds, not creeds.... What men do is often very deep, and reflects a devotion that they can't express in

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words."

Men's interest in doing can be seen in their approach to sex as well. While it may be difficult for some husbands to express love in words, many feel comfortable expressing it through sex. "I want her to enjoy sex as much as I do," one husband told me. "I want her to have the same kind of pleasure."

The third major component of the masculine style of loving is this: While women's way of loving tends to focus on *face-to-face* time, the masculine way emphasizes *side-by-side* experiences.

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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

UUMeN is a Sec. 501(c)(3) organization.

MaleCall

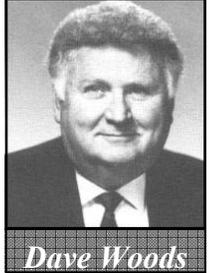
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Please send all submissions and concerns via e-mail (info@uumen.org) to:
Editor: Ken Beldon

Layout: Bob Hospadaruk
Address Changes: Drew Johnston

WWW.UUMEN.ORG

From the President...



Dave Woods

It's been an active & productive summer for our new UUMeN Steering Council.

First, we welcome **Roy Schwartz & Jack Ripple** as new Steering Council members. They've gladly accepted assignments as follows:

Roy will host our 2006 Winter Steering Council Meeting in Southwest Ranches, Florida (near Ft. Lauderdale) 1/19-22/06. His congregation's Men's Group will select the GA2006 UUMeN Sermon Award Winner from those submitted by 4/15/06.

Jack will host our Winter Steering Council Meeting in Chandler Arizona in 2007. He's taken on responsibility of managing our quarterly phone conference calls. We just completed a successful one on 9/10

We continue supporting UU male programs/issues/UU Men's Groups as follows:

- Midwest Men's Conference at the Unitarian Church of Evanston, IL on 1/14/06. Immediate Past President - Neil Chethik will present interesting research findings about coupled heterosexual males from his new book called "VoiceMale"
- We are studying Baden-Powell Scouting as a possible alternative to BSA's prejudice organization (BSA does not allow gay men/boys & their scouts must believe in God).
- Chapel Hill, NC, UUs are experimenting with a boys program for 2nd to 5th graders called "Finders Keepers." Dad's, other churchmen, take planned trips with the boys throughout the year. Boy's interest in RE stays keen. UUMeN is monitoring this effort.
- We continue to work with young adult UU men, sponsoring free memberships for those 25 & under. UUMeN also will co-sponsor a program for young men at GA2006.

You can see, UUMeN Steering Council continues working for members & all UU males. (see www.uumen.org website - for more information).

Keep the Faith,

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!

Turning From Competition to Attention

By Rev. Drew Johnston

It's possible that our most important choice is to pay attention to what we choose to look upon. For ourselves, considering that we may become part of what we notice and that it may become part of us should, at least, give us pause . . .

For those of us who have some interest in and responsibility for the growth and development of others, maybe we would be wise to ask ourselves if we are making available the things that will become a whole and healthy person. Can we provide an environment that inspires, that adds to the humanity of others, that opens wider the possibilities? Are we doing all we can, using what privilege we possess, to improve the odds for ourselves and others?

It may start when we each go forth every day, and we have a choice to notice, or not, the world we are in. The tangible world offers much fodder for poets and all of us – the part that may matter most is less tangible. Are we making choices because someone else thinks we should? Even these days I know men who wonder what John Wayne would do, or they ask if Donald Trump would have made such a choice.

For men, in particular, there are blatant societal pressures to be competitive, to conquer others, to be fastest, first, and best at everything all the time. Even the simplest math will demonstrate how ridiculous this is, how impossible it is. And yet . . . and yet one of the true hazards of being male is continuing to think that our worth and value is directly connected to how much we win in the game of life.

If there is one crucial piece of information that every man needs to know, and that everyone who cares about a man can help him accept, it might be this:

Life is not a game.

In the sense of winning and losing, in the sense of conquering and acquiring, in the sense of discovering value and identity through competition – life is not a game. Life is many things – a gift; a blessing; a challenge; too short; and too precious to spend not growing up. Life can certainly be playful (and that playfulness is a source of great joy!) when the play is attentive to life and love rather than scorekeeping and

victory. (If you must, try this thought – the greatest victory is to remove yourself from the harm of competition. You will then conquer the whole culture and acquire peace and self-realization. How's that for a prize? If you must keep score . . .)

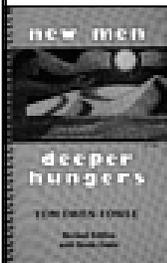
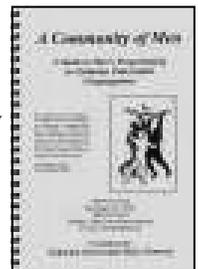
... it's your choice how to spend your precious life. I try to choose to peruse all that is really life – that which is true without having to be explained – the chirping of a bird needs no explanation, the curiosity of a child needs no excuse, the longing for connection in community is innate – even for introverts.

If males are naturally competitive (or culturally modified to be that way), why not choose to conquer injustice, poverty, hunger, and violence? That should keep us busy and useful for awhile.

Rev. Drew Johnston lives on Bainbridge Island, WA

GREAT BOOKS FROM UUMEN

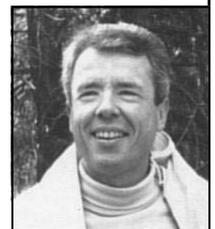
A Community of Men: A Guide to Men's Programming in UU Congregations is available for \$5—free to new members. *For your copy, contact us at info@uumen.org, or at our mailing address. There is no shipping or handling charge.*



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).



Right Field: One Man's Love-Hate Relationship with Sports

By Jim Jaeger

I took up golf at the age of 53.

In one sense, that is nothing remarkable (I learned to down hill ski at age 40 and went skiing with my 70 year old law partner at the time). On the other hand, for me to take up a new sport represents a step forward my life long love-hate relationship with sports.

As I've often commented to friends (especially after a particularly frustrating round of golf), I was not a good athlete as a kid and I haven't improved with age. Athletics were a challenge (to put it charitably). I was small and not very coordinated. I had bad eyesight. My only saving grace was that I was a fairly good sprinter. I played football for a couple of years, until two injuries convinced me that this was not for me. I ran track for three years, not because I particularly enjoyed it but because I felt that I needed to be involved in some high school sport (my forte being debate and drama where I did excel). Finally, my senior year we had a tennis team, a sport I actually enjoyed playing.

My father, while not having any better physical endowments than I, had been a fairly good athlete both in high school and in college. He had also been a coach, both at the youth sports and high school sports level.

While I never felt explicit pressure from my father to excel in sports (he could see the handwriting on the wall) nonetheless there was the implicit pressure for a teen age boy growing up in small town Wisconsin in the 1950's. Sports, especially football and basketball, were central to the social life of the town, for students and townspeople alike. Friday nights, much of the town could be found at Nelson Field or the Central Gym for football or basketball. As a male student, one could be there as a spectator, but your status was not the same as those on the field (or on the bench for that matter). In those days the athletes were the elite.

I was the kid who played right field—put out there since few young baseball players hit the ball that direction. When I batted, I tried to take advantage of my small size to get walked, or I would try to bunt. I lived in fear that the ball would actually come my

direction and generally “choked.” I had no fear of appearing in front of hundreds of people as an actor, but any sports activity that had any degree of competition would cause me to freeze up (a condition that afflicts me to this day).

So why is this important? Today, the pressure on young people, especially boys, to excel in athletics remains strong. While efforts are made to address the issue (like “recreational” soccer and no cut policies in some freshman sports) there is still the unstated assumption that your worth as a boy (or a man) depends in part on your ability to play competitive sports well. Those who aren't good athletes often don't quite measure up.

Unfortunately, this can have undesirable effects. If physical activity is confined to competitive sports, then for those who can't play well, a sedentary lifestyle may be the end result, with the corresponding harm to health. What can we as men do to counteract these forces with our sons, grandchildren, friends and others?



- If we are coaches, make sure that all of our athletes, not just the gifted ones, are given opportunities to play, even if that might cause the team to be less than successful. When I coached soccer, I had a policy that everyone got to play at least ½ of the game. In later years, the mother of one of my athletes told me how important this was to him.
- Encourage, don't belittle the less talented athletes. Help them to realize their full potential.
- Encourage individual sports, where the competition can be setting challenges for yourself that don't beating the other guy. In skiing, the challenge can be taking on a run that may be a bit harder than your comfort zone; in golf, beating your own previous score; in running or cycling, going further than you thought you could. Even if someone else does better than you, if you improved your own performance, you have met the challenge.
- Keep sports in perspective. Let the kids know that “it's only a game” and that there are other

(Continued on page 7)

A STREET RETREAT

GA 2005 FORT WORTH, TEXAS

With the **FAITHFUL FOOLS**

By Jack Ripple

What holds us separate? What keeps us separate?
As we walk the streets, what still connects us?

It started with a mutually agreed upon meeting arranged by the Faithful Fools Ministry to those people at General Assembly who were willing to walk the streets among the homeless people to bear witness to the poverty and deprivation that exists on the streets of America. More specifically, of Fort Worth, Texas. We met in a circle, on the ground with some friendly people who had spread a cloth on the ground and had a purple ball of yarn that was passed back and forth as a "Talking Stick". We learned that the Rev Alex Darr, the outreach minister from the tenderloin district of San Francisco, had arrived three days earlier and lived on the streets as a "Point Man" to scout out the area in preparation for the "Street Retreat".

The only guidance was that, although we travel as a group to the homeless area, we are expected to travel within the area on our own. My reaction was "GULP". All we are asked to do was to pay attention to what arises from within ourselves in terms of judgments, assumptions attitudes and feelings. Any "Eye Contact" or other interaction with the people was completely up to us.

As we walked away from the Convention Center, passed under the freeway "stacks" and went up Lancaster Avenue we noticed a large, block long fresco painted on the side of a building that depicted various inter racial and happy families. We parted our ways and I walked on down Lancaster Ave. and past several homeless shelters, a motorcycle shop, and down to the Fort Worth Transportation complex. The temperature was hovering around 95 degrees in Fort Worth with high humidity that day and many of the homeless were under the shade of the trees. Across from the transportation complex was a rather large mental health complex.



As I walked across the street I made eye contact with a elderly black gentleman who was wearing a new pair of bib coveralls and we started a conversation. Gene indicated that he was involved in a "Man to Man" men's group that met on the second floor of the Day Resource Center for the homeless. Gene indicated that his thoughts were "Get the Men off the streets and the Women will follow".

As I later understood it, the men meet in small groups, talk about their situation, and decide what they can do to help the area. (Sounds like a Men's Group to me!!)

Gene indicated that they wear a kind of identifying "Uniform" and are identified as a "Good Group" as opposed to a "Bad Gang" and have had a positive effect on the neighborhood.

Gene got me into the Day Resource Center where I talked to several homeless people.

Susanne showed me her Texas Cosmetology License and bragged that she could get a job anywhere, but she likes her independence.

Gene's take on the Missions was that they "Feed you soup and keep you in the Loop"

And he is convinced that men getting together to talk out their frustrations can change the situation.

I walked the streets of Fort Worth and found myself.

People are People and Men are Men

What holds us separate? What keeps us separate?
As we walk the streets, What still connects us?

For more information and to **hold a Street Retreat in your area** contact:

Alex Darr
Outreach Minister
234 Hyde Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
begforchange@earthlink.net



*Jack R Ripple is a
UU Men Steering Committee Member
from Chandler, Arizona*

(VoiceMale... Continued from page 1)

Many of the men I interviewed named among their closest marital moments leisurely time spent with their wives in the front seat of a car. One explained why he likes it so much: "We can talk. We can be quiet.... There's no pressure to be there, and no one's going away."

This man, who was sixty years old when I spoke with him, admits to being uncomfortable when his wife approaches him for face-to-face conversations about relationship issues. He said it reminds him of when he was a child and his mother lectured him about his bad behavior. Just as then, he tends to feel criticized and inept. However, pack up the car and hit the road, and the conversations are not nearly as threatening. "Her eyes aren't boring in on me," he said.

Based on today's definition of a good relationship, the masculine style of loving may not seem adequate. But to practitioners of this style, it's an approach to loving that reflects who they are and how they've learned to experience closeness.

As Melvin Konner, author of *The Tangled Wing*, writes: "If a man forgets an anniversary or neglects to say 'I love you,' it doesn't necessarily mean his heart is cold. If he finds conversations about 'the relationship' as enticing as fingernails on a blackboard, it doesn't mean he is psychologically defective. At some level, it simply means he isn't female."

Neil Chethik is immediate past president of UUMeN. He can be reached at:

www.voicemalebook.com, or nchet@aol.com.

Meet Author Neil Chethik on His Book Tour for "VoiceMale: Men and Marriage"

Neil will be appearing in early 2006 at the following UU churches. Contact information is provided. Please check to confirm times/dates.

Saturday, Jan. 14 – UU Church of **Evanston (IL)** – "VoiceMale: Marriage/Partnerships in Men's Lives," 9:30 a.m. to noon. Event sponsored by the UU Men's Network. Contact Dave Woods, dnwoods@ameritech.net.

Sunday, Jan. 15 – North Shore Unitarian Church, **Deerfield, IL** – "VoiceMale: Marriage From the Men's Perspective." Sunday morning sermon. For more information, go to www.nsuc.org, or call 847-234-2460.

Sunday, Jan. 22 – Birmingham Unitarian Church, **Bloomfield Hills, MI** – "VoiceMale: Marriage From the Men's Perspective." Sunday morning sermon. Go to www.bucmi.org, or call 248-647-2380.

Sunday, Jan. 29 – Starr King UU Church, **Hayward, CA** – "VoiceMale: Marriage From the Men's Perspective." Sunday morning sermon. Go to www.starrking.org, or call 510-581-2060.

Sunday, Feb. 5 – Paint Branch UU Church, **Greenbelt, MD** – "VoiceMale: Marriage From the Men's Perspective." Sunday morning sermon. Go to www.pbuuc.org, or call 301-937-3666.

Sunday, Feb. 12 – First UU Church of **Columbus, OH** – "VoiceMale: Marriage From the Men's Perspective." Sunday morning sermon. Go to www.firstuucolumbus.org, or call 614-267-4946.



VoiceMale: **Marriage and Partner-** **ships in Men's Lives**

What: A workshop with UU author
Neil Chethik

Who: Adult men and male youth 13 yrs & up

Where: Unitarian Church of Evanston (UCE)
1330 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201

When: Saturday, January 14, 2006

8:45am – Continental Breakfast starts

9:30am - Noon – Program, then Lunch

How much: \$15 in advance (\$20 at the door)

Information: Dave Woods, President,
UUMeN, (847) 864-7869, or email:

dnwoods@ameritech.net

Make check to UCE – (Write "VoiceMale
1/14/06" in lower left corner)

Mail to above address Attn: Dave Woods,
UUMeN with \$15 check

Join Neil (author of *FatherLoss*) as he shares
the findings of his research on men & relation-
ships. Signed copies of Neil's new book,
VoiceMale, will be available for sale.

Also, Watch for Neil on ABC's
"Good Morning America" Jan. 5th
Sponsored by the UUMeN's Network

Voices from the Younger Generation of UU Men

By Ken Beldon

If you participate in a UU Men's group, who is the guy often seated next to you? What's the age of the average man who attends? Is the typical guy likely to have hair that's starting to go gray (or have little hair at all)? Does the conversation turn toward PSA's and IRA's? Mid-life crises or later-life opportunities? Is the dialogue centered (positively or critically) on the "classics" of the Men's Movement like "Iron John"?

While there's no one typical UU Men's Group, I've observed that many of the men participating in congregational men's groups are likely to be baby boomers or older. Many men draw solace and strength from being with guys of a similar age and experience. I think such groups are valuable in and of themselves. But, what about the younger men—the guys who are age 35 and younger? The ones who are right in the middle of experiencing numerous "firsts": first time living away from home, first loves, first jobs, first children? Is there a seat in the circle for them?

UUMeN is committed to being an organization that hears and responds to the voices and deep yearnings of men from all walks of life within our churches. In this spirit, UUMeN co-sponsored a workshop at the recent Ft. Worth GA called "The Other Side of the Bridge", which featured the voices of four young men in their late-teens and twenties. Introduced by Joseph Santos-Lyons, the UUA Director of Campus Ministry and Field Organizing, we heard insightful and inspiring personal and faith reflections from Nathan Ryan (a DRE from Austin, TX), B. Scott McNeill (a college student from North Carolina), Marcus Cooley (a member of the 1st Unitarian Church of St. Louis since he was 5), and Erik Kesting (a student studying for the UU ministry). Together these four young men painted a provocative and purposeful picture of themselves and of the challenges and joys that young UU men face. They tackled head on issues concerning men and competitive sports, the place of authentic and engaging religious education in our congregations, the need for meaningful rites of passage, and the relationship between male identities and feminism. They also seemed open to the idea of participating within Men's Groups in their



GA, Ft. Worth 2005: Joseph Santos-Lyons, Erik Kesting, Marcus Cooley, B. Scott McNeill, Nathan Ryan, Ken Beldon

home churches, but said that sometimes invitations, or instructions on how, to join were not forthcoming.

Which brings it back to you who read this. If you're a member of a men's group, is there a Nathan, Scott, Marcus or Erik in your midst? If not, why not? And what would it take to welcome them? These men have recently crossed the bridge from youth into young adulthood. Wouldn't it be great if those of us who crossed that passageway some time ago, build a bridge back towards those who have just made the journey?

Ken Beldon is Editor of MaleCall.

(Right Field... Continued from page 4)

activities that can be just as rewarding. In my case, for example, my father recognized my limits as an athlete, but always supported my dramatic and debate endeavors (in fact he came to more plays I was in than athletic contests). He let me know that these activities were as important as athletics, even though he was a life long sports fan.

- Keep your interest in sports, if you have one. Just because you cannot be a star yourself doesn't mean that you can't appreciate the skill of others (and enjoy the opportunity to second guess the coach). Just keep it in perspective.

Sports can be a positive influence growing up—or it can be a source of life long pain. As adults we have the ability to help the children have a positive experience.

Jim Jaeger is a member of the UUMeN Steering Council from Madison, WI

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Members receive *MaleCall*, a quarterly newsletter, may vote at the UUMeN Annual Meeting and are eligible for discounts on UUMeN materials and event registrations.

() Check if you would rather have MaleCall sent by email, when available...

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