



MEN TALK

THE MEN'S CENTER NEWS

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My Father's Hands

— © 2007 BY BOB ANDERSON

One day my father asked me to help him clean out the trap under the basement sink. It was a simple job, requiring little skill -- some quick adjustments to the jaws of the wrench for a snug fit, a few firm shoves on the end of the long orange handle to loosen the nuts, and the trap could be removed easily by hand. Hardly open-heart surgery.

As I sat cross-legged on the cool concrete floor, ducking my head to avoid the tub, I muttered under my breath at this disruption of my Saturday routine. Besides, I wasn't getting along all that well with Dad; his drinking, always a problem, had gotten worse since retirement. By evening his speech was slurred, he was irritable, and he sometimes forgot what he said from one sentence to the next.

With the morning's semblance of sobriety settling uncasily on his face, he hovered over me, fussy with inactivity. His hands hung at his sides like a boxer who knows he's been defeated and only awaits the verdict of the judges. He tried to be useful, providing me with moral support and coaching me through the steps of the simple procedure. "Jesus Christ," I thought, "Mission Control." Afterwards I asked Mom why he needed my help.

"It's his hands -- he thinks they're clumsy, he's always been ashamed of them," she said. The drinking can't be helping much, I thought, for once checking my sharp tongue.

Dad's hands, one of the givens of childhood. I had never paid much attention to them. Now they suddenly seemed large and blocky, thick-fingered and big-knuckled, fleshy and slow to move as if trapped in thick gloves.

It was another of those intimate details about the private lives of parents. You were sprung from their loins, raised by them, lived with them for years, knew their curious and irritating habits, smelled their stink when they left the bathroom, but you didn't know beans about their all-too-humanness, what made them vulnerable. Either that was kept hidden from you, or you chose, for reasons of your own, to ignore it.

My father's hands, what did I know of them as a child? I remember them laying out his keys, wallet, pipe, tobacco and mints in a tidy row on the top of the dresser every night so he could leave for work at exactly 7:10 the next morning. Was he ever late?

Those hands gripped the buckling bottom of his briefcase when he came home from work every afternoon, tie loosened, grey fedora tipped back on his head. Inside the worn leather pouch, scrawled on yellow legal pads in his almost indecipherable script, lay those case histories of his elderly clients so elegantly written they were read and admired by his colleagues at the welfare office.

During the fall he'd schedule his clients so he could come home

early and take me hunting in the fields and sloughs west of Robbinsdale. I remember those hands, strong and sure, grasping the barrel and stock of his twelve-gauge shotgun, leading with a long, steady arc the startled flight of a pheasant flushed from the stubble of the corn rows. They shone bright with blood as he knelt before the fallen bird and ripped its belly open with his thick-hafted hunting knife before wiping his fingers clean on the dry field grass.

On paydays, every other Friday without fail, he came home later than usual, his face flushed, those hands full of booty, clutching a six-pack of Pepsi and a bag full of comic books and candy bars for me and my brother, and a bottle of Four Roses for him and Mom. On one of those drunken Friday nights, in our cramped kitchen, those hands flashed in front of my face, knotted in fists, as he danced round me, a tall, thin sissy boy of thirteen, taunting me to box with him: "C'mon, it'll make a man of you."

How could I have known then the full story behind those jabbing fists, their mysterious mix of mastery and insecurity, accomplishment and failure? Not till much later, when I was grown and had a child of my own, did I learn from my Aunt Virginia how devotedly those hands had scrubbed his mother's kitchen floor, scoured her pots and pans, steadfast in their toil even when the neighbor kids came calling to invite him to join in one of their sandlot baseball games.

And not until later still, when it was no longer possible to deny his alcoholism, did I grasp the full extent of the bitterness that lay behind those sharp jabs at the air with his thick fingers whenever he was in a mood to indict his own father. Grandpa was a proud, aloof Swede

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Library Corner

– RAY CLARE, LIBRARIAN



We are pleased to offer our members a unique and extensive collection of quality reading on men's topics.

As a Men's Center member, you are eligible to check out books from our library. The next issue of Men's talk will list the recently donated books – watch for it!

And while you are enjoying our many book resources, consider a browsing our large and growing selection of periodicals.

- Men's Health
- Lavender
- Transitions
- Bi All Means
- Edge Life
- D.A.D.S #1
- Voice Male
- Men's Journal
- Rainbow Families
- Essential Wellness
- G.R.I.P.
- And even more

Book Returns Needed:

Some of these books have become so important in our members' lives that they seem to have been out since I had hair. While we have no specific time limit, please consider if you are still using any Men's Center books you now have, and return them to availability.

Address Change Notifications

from the post office cost the Men's Center \$1.14 each. Please let us know in advance of mailings! Thanks!

Men Talk is a bi-monthly publication of the Twin Cities Men's Center, a non-profit organization. Call 612-822-5892 for subscriptions, or e-mail us at tcmc@tcmc.org

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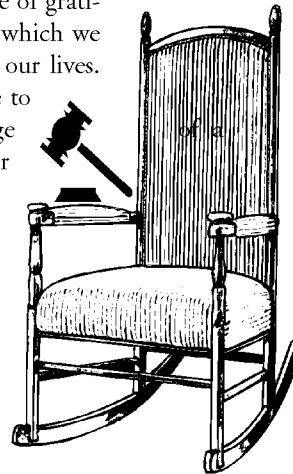
Greetings from the Chair

The holiday season has now arrived and we are reminded of reasons that we are thankful. It is a time of gratitude for the numerous ways in which we have experienced abundance in our lives. For many of us, it is also a time to reflect on years past and to engage in a tradition of setting goals for the coming year

Travel is common and some of us who are struggling with addictive behaviors need to be especially vigilant about the "travel beast" (that inner voice that attempts to convince us that we will not suffer the same consequences of our misguided behaviors when we are away from home). We may find additional needs for support surrounding uncomfortable issues as we experience our families that are otherwise distant for most of the year. Holiday gatherings can also remind us of how some of our families have not yet accepted us for who we are.

At times I struggle with gratitude as I

face my own darkness. Yet, I have huge support in my life which was initiated at a time of my greatest adversity. Possibly you have had a similar experience. It seems to me that there is no greater gift than that friend who has survived jointly experienced tribulation.



I am personally grateful to the presence of the Men's Center for over 31 years as a place where men can gather and receive support around sharing their experiences and their desires to grow. It is an important part of my family of choice. It is a place where I feel free to express my truth without the fear of negative judgments. I hope to see many of you during this holiday season at the Men's Center.

Wishing you and yours the happiest of holidays and prosperity in the new year,

**BOBBY SCHAUERHAMER,
BOARD CHAIR**

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whose large, skillful hands had painted houses and churches, built cabinets and remodeled basements, directed the activities of countless work crews. Grandpa doted on his daughters, disparaged his sons. Dad used to joke that if by some chance he had been elevated to the presidency, Grandpa would have thought the office somehow demeaned. Once, in a fiery "j'accuse," with that lucidity of despair peculiar to the drunk, Dad held Grandpa accountable for the death of my Uncle Kenneth, who died at 38 from acute alcoholism in a flophouse in L.A.

But these hands were not the hands I knew as a boy. Those hands expressed quiet mastery. They turned the earth, raked in peat moss and manure, culled out the rocks and glass, transforming hard, lumpy clay to fertile loam. Spring after spring they planted tomatoes, beans, onions, cucumbers and strawberries. They laid in the tender shoots of our buckthorn hedge, then watered and weeded and pruned it year after year till it grew thick and matted, an impenetrable wall. Every Saturday I saw those hands, floured and poised above the large crockery bowl, ready to begin the ritual of punching and kneading the bread dough, whose mysterious risings under the damp towel set the rhythms of the day for more than thirty years. And though my father has been dead for five years now, I can still see those hands wrapped in tender embrace of the bowl of his briar pipe as he sat alone, silent, on the front stoop in the deepening dusk, fingering and fussing over the sweet tobacco, repeatedly tamping it down to keep the coal pulsing and alive, perfuming the humid summer air with its pungent smoke.

That Saturday morning, as I cleaned the trap, stuck in my resentments, the awkward remnant of an unfinished childhood, what did I know of those hands that now hung heavy and useless at his sides? It was more than the drinking -- that was a symptom of something deeper, a long, slow slide into defeat and despair. A life in which the forces of creation and destruction, order and chaos, had been kept perilously, beautifully in balance, was unraveling before all our eyes.

Bob Anderson is a long-time Men's Center member and Anger Management facilitator.

SUPPORT/ADVOCATE GROUP

For anyone who has been falsely accused of anything.
Call the Men's Center at 612-822-5892 or 952-270-2833.

The Men's Center ALL-PURPOSE FORM

Clip this form and mail to The Men's Center. A regular annual membership at The Twin Cities Men's Center is \$20. With that you get access to the extensive reference library on Men's Issues, receive the Men Talk newsletter, participation in the annual meeting, and enjoy reduced fees to Men's Center sponsored events. If you are able to afford a membership at the Patron (\$40) level, you get free admission to all Wednesday workshops in addition to all the regular membership benefits.

- I want to sustain the activities of The Men's Center by becoming a "20 x 12 Honor Roll Member."
- Please ENTER/RENEW my membership at The Men's Center for the next 12 months:
Enclosed please find \$_____ \$20 (Regular) \$40 (Patron).
- I want to make an additional, tax-deductible gift of \$_____. Thanks much.
- My new/correct address/phone is printed below.
- Please remove me from The Men's Center mailing list; the pre-addressed gummed mailing label is attached.
(You won't receive Men Talk if this box is checked.)
- I have these feelings, thoughts, opinions, ideas, news items for The Men's Center:

Date _____

FROM: name _____
 Mailing address _____

 Home phone _____
 Work/other telephone _____

Anger Management Program

The focus of the twelve week anger management class is both education and support. Through class interaction, experiential exercises, lecture, and homework assignments, men will develop new ways to manage their feelings of anger. Following completion of the class, participants can join an ongoing support group to reinforce their new skills. These ongoing support groups will also be facilitated by the trained volunteer facilitators.

Length of Class: 12 consecutive weeks
Number of Participants: Limited to 12 participants per class
Cost: \$215 for Men Center Members (\$225 for Non-Members)

Starting Dates:
 Classes are filled on a first come, first served basis. Please call TMC at 612-822-5892 to be placed on the waiting list. State name, address, telephone, preferred starting class. Or if you need further details, call our Anger Management coordinator, John Hesch, on the Anger Management phone 612-229-3102.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

On Friday, December 28th hosted along with the TSGK monthly potluck. We invite all members, friends and families of the Men's Center to join us as we celebrate our journey throughout the past year and welcome the anticipation of a new year. The doors will be open from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Please bring a favorite dish to share and if you would like to receive a Holiday Gift, you are welcome to bring one of those also. There will be door prizes, music, singing and open-mic opportunities for anyone interested in enlightening. The evening will be hosted by A Special Guest MC. A prize will be given to the individual who displays the best use of the Holiday colors of silver, gold, red, white or green.

THE GRAY EAGLES
 A social/support group
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The Men's Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave. S., #55
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MEN TALK ADVERTISING RATE SCHEDULE

Full Page	7 1/2" x 10"	\$200
1/2 Page	7 1/2" x 4 7/8"	\$125
1/4 Page	3 5/8" x 4 7/8"	\$65
Biz Card	2" x 3 1/2"	\$25

E-mail the editor at tcmc@tcmc.org

TMC Office Hours: M, Tu, Th, F ;1-4:30pm. Our telephone (612) 822-5892 is answered 24-hours per day by US West voicemail, and an attempt is made to return calls within 1 or 2 days. Our FAX number is (612) 821-6424.

TMC is in the lower level of "Uptown Office Park," a brick office building on the Northeast corner of West 33rd Street and Hennepin Avenue in south Minneapolis, Enter through the door on the north (3249) end of the building (it has 2 numbers: 3249 and 3255!), immediately turn left and descend the stairway through the fire door to Suite 55. (Formerly) handicapped access is easiest through a side door on West 33rd Street.

Check out our web site: www.tcmc.org or correspond at our e-mail address: tcmc@tcmc.org

The Men's Center
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Annual Meeting Notice & Proxy Statement

THE MEN'S CENTER ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE ON

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 2008 AT 9 AM

AT THE MEN'S CENTER IN SUITE 55, 3249 HENNEPIN AVE., MINNEAPOLIS, MN

The Annual Meeting will include election of new members to the Board of Directors, thanks to our volunteers, review of our achievements this past year, and socializing with your fellow Men's Center members. We have moved forward on many projects this year so come and celebrate what has been done and where we are going. If you have any questions, call the Men's Center offices at 612-822-5892.

The Men's Center By-Laws require a quorum of members to elect new board members. This mailing constitutes notice to all active members that a vote will be conducted by those members who are present at this meeting. If you cannot attend and wish to vote, please return this page to TMC prior to Jan 12, 2008. Please include your address label. All members who do not vote by mail or in person, consent to the appointment of the Chair and the Vice-Chair the power to vote on their behalf, on all matters that come before the Annual Meeting.

I VOTE **FOR** THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, JAN. 12, 2008

I VOTE **AGAINST** THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, JAN. 12, 2008.

I **ABSTAIN** FROM VOTING AT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, JAN. 12, 2008.

signed _____ date _____.

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